

Expatriate Insider 2021 Survey Reveals: The Best and Worst Destinations for Living and Working Abroad

Expats in Indonesia struggle with a low quality of life but find it easy to settle in.

- Taiwan, Mexico, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Portugal, New Zealand, Australia, Ecuador, Canada, and Vietnam are the best destinations for expats in 2021.
- The worst countries for expats are Kuwait (59th), Italy, South Africa, Russia, Egypt, Japan, Cyprus, Turkey, India, and Malta (50th).
- Indonesia comes 31st out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It ranks extremely well for the ease of settling in (8th) but very low for the quality of life (55th).

Munich, 18 May 2021 — For the seventh time, [InterNations](https://www.internations.org), the world's largest expat community with around 4 million members, has published its *Expatriate Insider* survey. With more than 12,000 respondents, it is one of the most extensive surveys about living and working abroad, sharing insights into expat life in 59 destinations. The survey offers in-depth information on expats' satisfaction with the quality of life, ease of settling in, working life, personal finance, and the cost of living in their respective country of residence. Additionally, the respondents share **how they have been experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic** and how it has impacted their life.

Indonesia comes 31st out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. The country lands in the top 10 for the ease of settling in (8th) and narrowly misses out on them for the cost of living (11th). While it also gets a fairly good result in the Personal Finance Index (17th), it performs poorly in the Working Abroad (47th) and Quality of Life (55th) Indices. Overall, Taiwan, Mexico, and Costa Rica are the best expat destinations worldwide: all of them attract expats with their ease of settling in and good personal finances. On the other hand, the bottom three countries, Kuwait, Italy, and South Africa, all perform poorly in the Working Abroad Index. Additionally, Kuwait is the hardest country for expats to feel at home in, Italy is the worst for personal finances, and expats in South Africa do not feel safe.



Indonesia in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

In the Bottom 5 for the Quality of Life

Overall, Indonesia ranks 31st out of 59 countries in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. It receives its weakest results in the Quality of Life Index (55th), even ranking second to last in the Health & Well-Being subcategory (58th) — only ahead of the USA (59th). Over one in three expats (35%) rate the affordability of healthcare in Indonesia poorly (vs. 21% globally), and 44% are unhappy with the quality of medical care (vs. 14% globally). An Italian expat says: *“The healthcare system is not good and does not appear to be improving.”*

Indonesia also lands among the bottom 10 in the Travel & Transportation subcategory (53rd), with 45% of expats rating the transport infrastructure negatively, compared to only 15% globally. The country also does badly in the Quality of the Environment subcategory (53rd). For example, half the expats (50%) are dissatisfied with the water and sanitation infrastructure — a much higher share than the global average of 12%. *“The sea gets dirtier and dirtier! All kind of rubbish fills in the rivers and goes to the sea,”* complains a German expat. Despite all this, the majority of expats (80%) is generally happy with their life in Indonesia (vs. 75% globally).

Easy to Settle In thanks to the Friendly Population

Indonesia ranks in the top 10 of the Ease of Settling In Index (8th). This is mostly due to the great results in the Friendliness (7th) and Finding Friends (8th) subcategories: 90% of expats rate the general friendliness of the population positively (vs. 69% globally), and 86% say the local people are generally friendly towards foreign residents (vs. 67% globally). And while just 44% of expats worldwide find it easy to make local friends, this is the case for 63% of respondents in Indonesia. In fact, half the expats (50%) say their circle of friends and acquaintances includes a mix of locals and expats (vs. 48% globally), and 29% are mostly friends with local residents (vs. 20% globally). A US American expat shares: *“It is a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, and I feel welcome wherever I go. The locals are always helpful and open to sharing their experiences and lifestyles.”*

Dissatisfaction with the Local Economy

Indonesia ranks very poorly in the Working Abroad Index (47th), with 39% of expats rating the state of the local economy negatively — 20 percentage points more than the global share (19%). Additionally, more than two in five (44%) are unhappy with the local career opportunities (vs. 33% globally). The most popular career paths in Indonesia are in education (16%), finance (11%), and manufacturing and engineering (11%). Less than half the expats in Indonesia (49%) work full time (vs. 55% globally), while 15% have a part-time job (vs. 12% globally). On average, expats in Indonesia work longer hours than the global average: full-timers work 46.9 hours per week (vs. 43.2 hours globally). Perhaps this is why only 61% of expats are satisfied with their working hours (vs. 66% globally).

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Indonesia

Over half the expats in Indonesia (56%) say the COVID-19 pandemic has not affected their plans for their stay abroad, which is below the global average (63%). For example, 22% say they will not be moving home anytime soon due to COVID-19 (vs. 18% globally). For survey respondents in Indonesia, the most important sources of information regarding COVID-19 and related regulations are social media (53%), followed by expat news and international media (42%), and local news (33%). A large proportion of expats in Indonesia (34%) are dissatisfied with the official communication regarding COVID-19 (vs. 17% globally). Out of those expats that rate the official communication

negatively, 73% find it unclear, confusing, or contradictory, and another 30% criticize that it was only made available in the local language.

The Best and Worst Destinations for Living and Working Abroad in 2021

According to the *Expats Insider 2021* survey, the top 10 destinations for expats are Taiwan (1st), Mexico, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Portugal, New Zealand, Australia, Ecuador, Canada, and Vietnam (10th). All these countries stand out with above-average results in the Ease of Settling In Index, with Mexico ranking first, followed by Malaysia (2nd) and Costa Rica (3rd). Moreover, half of these countries also rank among the top 10 in the Personal Finance Index. Taiwan (11th) and Portugal (14th) narrowly miss out on a top 10 spot in this index, while New Zealand (28th), Australia (39th), and Canada (50th) have a weaker performance in this regard.

The worst countries for expats are Kuwait (59th), Italy, South Africa, Russia, Egypt, Japan, Cyprus, Turkey, India, and Malta (50th). Besides Japan (21st), all these countries rank far below the global average in the Quality of Life Index. What is more, eight out of the ten worst-rated destinations are also among the bottom 10 in the Working Abroad Index — the only two exceptions being India (46th) and Malta (31st), which, however, also receive mediocre results at best. Lastly, India is the only country in the overall bottom 10 that performs very well in the Personal Finance Index (4th), while the others — such as Italy (59th), Kuwait (58th), and Cyprus (57th) — rank below the global average or even land among the bottom 10.

Expats Life during the COVID-19 Pandemic

On a global scale, 45% of survey respondents say that COVID-19 had an impact on their current stay abroad or their relocation plans: the **share of expats** who say so (**37%**) either decided to *not* move back home in the near future (18%), planned to move to another country but had to change these plans (8%), will move to another country due to the pandemic (6%), or will move back home sooner than originally planned (5%).

The **share of local respondents whose relocation plans were affected by COVID-19 (61%)** is a lot higher: some of them were living abroad but moved home sooner than planned (18%), others were planning to move abroad but had to change their plans (35%), and about one in ten have now decided to move abroad because of the pandemic (9%).

The Pandemic's Impact on Everyday Life

Of course, COVID-19 has not only disrupted the relocation plans of expats worldwide. When asked where they see the biggest impact of the pandemic on their personal life *right now*, the survey respondents point out its effects on personal travel (25%), social life (23%), and their work or business (16%) in particular. In the *long run*, respondents are still concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on their social life (17% of all respondents), and there are also considerable worries regarding personal travel (22%).

How Expats Stay Informed on COVID-19

Expats across the world mostly rely on official government channels (48%), local news (47%), and

social media (40%) for news on the COVID-19 situation and the related regulations in their country of residence. Considering the importance of government channels, just **how satisfied are expats with the official communication regarding COVID-19 and related regulations?** Worldwide, not quite two-thirds (66%) rate this factor positively, with close to a quarter (24%) saying they are completely satisfied. The main complaint among expats who are *not* satisfied with the official communication on the pandemic is that the information is unclear, confusing, and/or contradictory (67%).

For further information on the global impact of COVID-19 on expat life, please take a look at the full press release in the download center of our e-mail.

About the InterNations Expat Insider 2021 Survey

For its annual [Expat Insider survey](#), InterNations asked 12,420 expats representing 174 nationalities and living in 186 countries or territories to provide information on various aspects of expat life, as well as their gender, age, and nationality. Participants were asked to rate up to 37 different aspects of life abroad on a scale of one to seven. The rating process emphasized the respondents' personal satisfaction with these aspects, considering both emotional topics and more factual aspects with equal weight. The respondents' ratings of the individual factors were then bundled in various combinations for a total of 13 subcategories, and their mean values were used to draw up five topical indices: Quality of Life, Ease of Settling In, Working Abroad, Personal Finance, and Cost of Living. The first four of these indices were further averaged together with expats' general satisfaction with their life in order to rank 59 expat destinations around the world. In 2021, the top 10 are Taiwan, Mexico, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Portugal, New Zealand, Australia, Ecuador, Canada, and Vietnam. Moreover, expats were asked about how COVID-19 has impacted their life abroad; however, these responses did not influence the overall ranking.

For a country to be featured in the indices and consequently in the overall ranking, a sample size of at least 50 survey participants per destination was necessary.

About InterNations

With around 4 million members in 420 cities around the world, [InterNations](#) is the largest global community and a source of information for people who live and work abroad. InterNations offers global and local networking and socializing, both online and face to face. At around 6,000 events and activities per month, expatriates have the opportunity to meet other global minds. Online services include discussion forums and helpful articles with personal expat experiences, tips, and information about life abroad. Membership is by approval only to ensure we remain a community of trust. InterNations is part of the New Work SE, a group of brands that offer products and services for a better working life.

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