

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

Expats in Ireland enjoy the career opportunities but are unhappy with the healthcare system.

- 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).
- Ireland comes 29th out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It ranks among the top 10 countries in the Working Abroad Index (8th), but lands in the bottom 10 for the cost of living (56th) and the quality of life (50th).

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.

Ireland comes 29th out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. Expats are particularly happy with their working life (8th). While the country also does well in the Ease of Settling In Index (21st), it only lands in a rather mediocre 37th place in the Personal Finance Index. Finally, it performs worst in the Quality of Life (50th) and Cost of Living (56th) 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.



Ireland in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

Great Job Security and Friendly People

Coming in 29th place out of 59 countries in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey, Ireland performs best in the Working Abroad Index (8th). The country is actually first worldwide in the Career Prospects & Satisfaction subcategory, with 70% of expats rating the local career opportunities positively, compared to just 45% globally. Additionally, 82% of survey respondents are satisfied with their job security (vs. 61% globally), and over two-thirds (67%) rate the state of the local economy favorably (vs. 62% globally). Ireland also performs well in the Work & Leisure subcategory (14th): most expats are happy with their working hours (71% vs. 66% globally) and their work-life balance (73% vs. 66% globally). Expats with a full-time job in Ireland work about two hours less per week than the global average (41.3 hours vs. 43.2 hours globally).

Ireland also performs better than average in the Ease of Settling In Index (21th), even coming in the top 10 for the general friendliness of the population (9th): 89% of expats describe the local residents as friendly (vs. 69% globally). Additionally, 82% of expats also consider them friendly towards foreign residents (vs. 67% globally). Exactly half the expats (50%) find it easy to make local friends (vs. 44% globally), and three-quarters (75%) have no trouble getting used to the local culture (vs. 65% globally). Moreover, 64% of expats feel at home in the local culture (vs. 63% globally). *"I like the Irish culture — especially the festivals and storytelling, and how easy it is to chat with people here,"* shares an Italian expat.

Terrible Cost of Living, Transportation Infrastructure, and Healthcare System

Ireland performs worst in the Cost of Living (56th) and Quality of Life (50th) Indices. Almost two-thirds of expats in Ireland (65%) are dissatisfied with the cost of living (vs. 34% globally). *"A lot of things are more expensive here,"* shares a Danish citizen. The country even ends up in the bottom 3 of the Health & Well-Being subcategory (57th) — just ahead of Indonesia (58th) and the USA (59th). Only 41% of expats are happy with the quality of medical care (vs. 71% globally), and 43% do not find healthcare in Ireland affordable (vs. 21% globally). Ireland also places 55th in the Leisure Options subcategory, with just one-third of expats (33%) rating the climate and weather positively, compared to two-thirds (66%) globally. The country performs nearly as poorly in the Travel & Transportation subcategory (54th): 39% of expats are dissatisfied with the transportation infrastructure (vs. 15% globally), and 13% rate their travel opportunities negatively (vs. 7% globally).

Mixed Results for Digital Life

When it comes to the quality of life, Ireland also ranks rather low in the Personal Happiness subcategory (49th). Even though 64% of expats in Ireland are happy with their life in Ireland, this proportion is low compared to the global average of 75%. At least, Ireland comes in a slightly above-average 22nd place in the Digital Life subcategory, with 93% of expats finding it easy to get a local mobile phone number (vs. 87% globally) and 75% being satisfied with the availability of government services online (vs. 63% globally). However, 20% are not happy with their access to high-speed internet at home (vs. 12% globally). A US American expat specifically says that the *"poor internet"* is one of his least favorite things about living in Ireland.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Ireland

The pandemic has changed the relocation plans of 36% of survey respondents in Ireland (vs. 37% globally). More than one out of three expats in Ireland (35%) also say the pandemic has mostly affected their social life so far (vs. 24% globally), followed by personal travel (29% vs. 28% globally) and their mental health (15% vs. 7% globally). Few have noticed an impact on their general health (2% vs. 2% globally), business travel (4% vs. 6% globally), or their work or business (7% vs. 15% globally).

Exactly seven out of ten expats in Ireland (70%) use official government channels as a source of information on COVID-19 and related regulations, which is more than 20 percentage points above the global average (48%). And less than three in ten respondents (29%) stay up to date through social media (vs. 40% globally). Lastly, the large majority of respondents in Ireland (78%) is satisfied with the official communication regarding COVID-19 (vs. 66% globally).

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

According to the *Expat 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.

Expat 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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Press Contact

Caroline Harsch
Media Spokesperson

InterNations GmbH
Schwanthalerstrasse 39
80336 Munich, Germany

Email: press@internations.org
Homepage: <https://www.internations.org/press>