

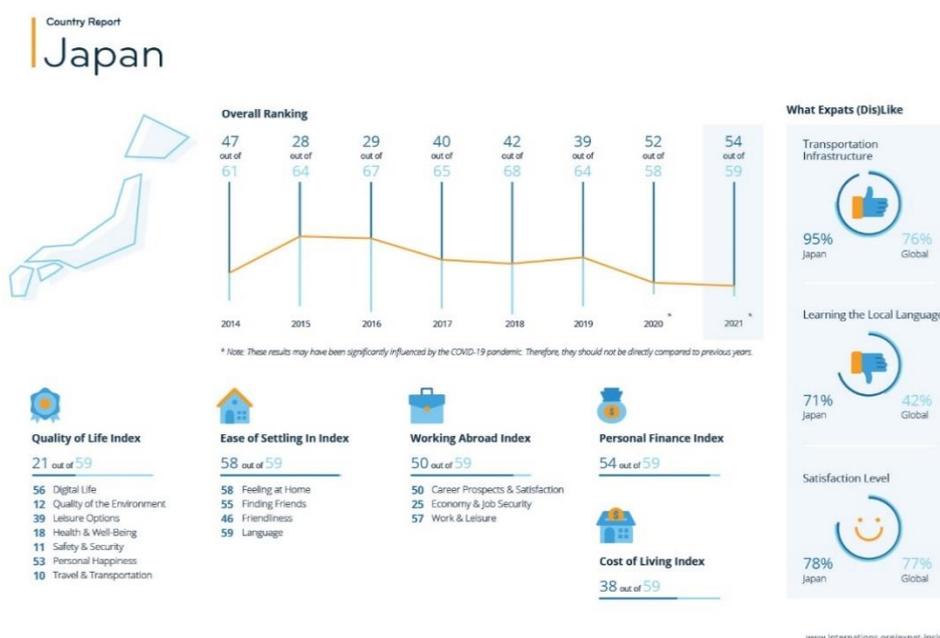
Expatriate Insider 2021 Survey Reveals: The Best and Worst Destinations for Living and Working Abroad

Expats feel safe in Japan but struggle with their work-life balance.

- 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).
- Japan comes 54th out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. While it ranks second to last worldwide for the ease of settling in (58th), expats enjoy the above-average quality of life (21st).

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.

Japan comes 54th out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. Expats find it particularly difficult to settle in — placing Japan 58th, and thus second to last in this index. The country also lands in the bottom 10 of the Personal Finance (54th) and Working Abroad (50th) Indices. However, it performs better for the cost of living (38th) and even lands in 21st place in the Quality of Life Index. 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.



Japan in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

Expats Are Dissatisfied with the Work-Life Balance in Japan

Japan ranks 54th out of 59 countries featured in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey, thus landing in the bottom 10 worldwide. Performing particularly poorly in the Ease of Settling In Index (58th), Japan only ranks better than Kuwait (59th). Just 36% of expats find it easy to settle down in Japan (vs. 62% globally). Similarly, only 45% say they feel at home in the local culture, nearly 20 percentage points less than the global average (63%). In the Working Abroad Index, Japan ranks 50th: 30% of expats are particularly unhappy with their work-life balance (vs. 17% globally). A US American expat living in Hashimoto even says that *"the work-life balance here is atrocious"*. Education is the most popular field that expats in Japan work in (25% vs. 12% globally), followed by manufacturing and engineering (13% vs 7% globally) and IT (11% vs. 11% globally). Japan also receives poor results in the Personal Finance Index (54th): 26% of expats are dissatisfied with their financial situation, compared to only 19% globally.

"Safe to Walk on the Streets at any Time"

On the upside, Japan has an above-average performance in the Quality of Life Index (21st). With Japan coming 12th for the quality of the environment, 94% of expats rank the water and sanitation infrastructure positively, a much higher proportion than the global average (77%). Additionally, nearly all expats (97%) rate Japan positively for personal safety (vs. 84% globally). The country is also described as peaceful, with the majority of expats (95%) rating Japan positively for this factor (vs. 80% globally) and merely 2% stating the opposite (vs. 9% globally). A Brazilian expat shares: *"In Japan, there is a low crime rate throughout the country. It is very safe to walk on the streets at any time."* And a South African expat says: *"Japan offers a safe environment, and most things are done properly with respect for others in mind."* Lastly, Japan also scores high for its transportation infrastructure (3rd), with 95% of expats rating it positively (vs. 76% globally).

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Japan

In Japan, 63% of expats say the pandemic has not affected the amount of time they intend to stay in the country, and only 6% say they will move home sooner than expected due to COVID-19 (vs. 5% globally). Three in ten expats in Japan (30%) say that COVID-19 is mostly affecting their personal travel, just a little more than the global average (28%). However, over a quarter of expats in Japan (27%) say they are dissatisfied with government communication about the pandemic and COVID-19 regulations, which is a much higher proportion than the global average (17%). Most of these dissatisfied expats (72%) say the information was unclear, confusing, or contradictory, and 36% also state that the information was only available in the local language.

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.

Expatriate 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 *Expatriate Insider 2021* Survey

For its annual [Expatriate 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.

Find more information about InterNations on our [press page](#), [in our company blog](#), or in our [magazine](#).

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