

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

Expats in New Zealand enjoy life abroad to the fullest, but it comes at a cost.

- 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).
- New Zealand comes 6th out of 59 destinations in the Expat Insider 2021 survey. Except for the cost of living (50th) and personal finance (28th), the country gets excellent results across the board.

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 *Expat 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.

New Zealand comes 6th out of 59 destinations in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. Expats are particularly happy with their working life (2nd) and the local quality of life (11th). While New Zealand also performs well in the Ease of Settling In Index (16th), it lands in a fairly average 28th place in the Personal Finance Index. Lastly, it ranks worst in the Cost of Living Index (50th). 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.



New Zealand in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

Great Career Opportunities for Expats

New Zealand almost makes it into the global top 5 of the *Expat Insider 2021* ranking, coming 6th out of 59 countries. It performs particularly well for working abroad (2nd): 81% of expats consider their job secure (vs. 61% globally), and 64% feel optimistic about local career options (vs. 45% globally). At the same time, expats enjoy a great work-life balance: New Zealand lands in the top 5 worldwide in the Work & Leisure subcategory (4th), with 83% of expats rating their own work-life balance positively, compared to about two-thirds globally (66%).

Highly Rated Digital Life, Amazing Scenery, Lots of Peace and Quiet

Though not quite good enough for the top 10, New Zealand's 11th place for the quality of life is still a great result. It does especially well in the Digital Life subcategory (5th): 98% are happy with the cashless payment options (vs. 83% globally), and 89% rate the availability of government services online favorably (vs. 63% globally). *"Everyday issues such as getting a driver's license, paying bills, etc. can be easily done online,"* says an expat from the UK. Expats also appreciate the gorgeous scenery and unspoiled nature: New Zealand has the best ratings worldwide for its natural environment (100% positive vs. 84% globally), and it comes in 6th place in Quality of Environment subcategory. Last but not least, it is a very safe and stable country to settle down in: 95% of expats describe New Zealand as peaceful (vs. 80% globally), and not one single respondent rates its political stability negatively, compared to about one in six (16%) globally. *"I love my peaceful, calm, and safe existence in New Zealand,"* a US expat comments.

Friendly Locals, Forbidding Cost of Living

The results for the ease of settling in are only slightly worse (16th). It is easy to settle down in New Zealand (77% positive ratings vs. 62% globally), and 82% of expats describe the local residents as friendly (vs. 69% globally). More than half the survey respondents in New Zealand (52%) also find it easy to make local friends, slightly more than the global average of 44%. Indeed, fewer than one in four respondents (24%) say that they are mostly friends with other expats (vs. 32% worldwide), while 58% have a fairly mixed group of friends that includes both expats and locals (vs. 48% globally). The country receives some of its worst results in the Personal Finance Index (28th), though. Just 54% say their disposable household income is *more* than enough, roughly the same as the global average (52%). This is hardly surprising, since more than half (53%) also consider the cost of living too high (vs. 34% globally).

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in New Zealand

Expats in New Zealand are very happy with the official communication regarding the COVID-19 pandemic (95% positive ratings vs. 66% globally). They especially appreciate that the communication is so clear and easy to understand (89% positive answers vs. 60% worldwide). It is very telling that nearly seven in ten respondents (69%) get their COVID-19 updates from official government sources (vs. 48% globally), and only 28% rely on social media, compared to two in five worldwide (40%). Moreover, few expats are currently affected by the pandemic with regard to their social life (6% vs. 24% globally) or their work and business (10% vs. 15% globally). *"New Zealand is the only country that has gone back to normal after a short lockdown,"* a US expat sums it up.

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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