

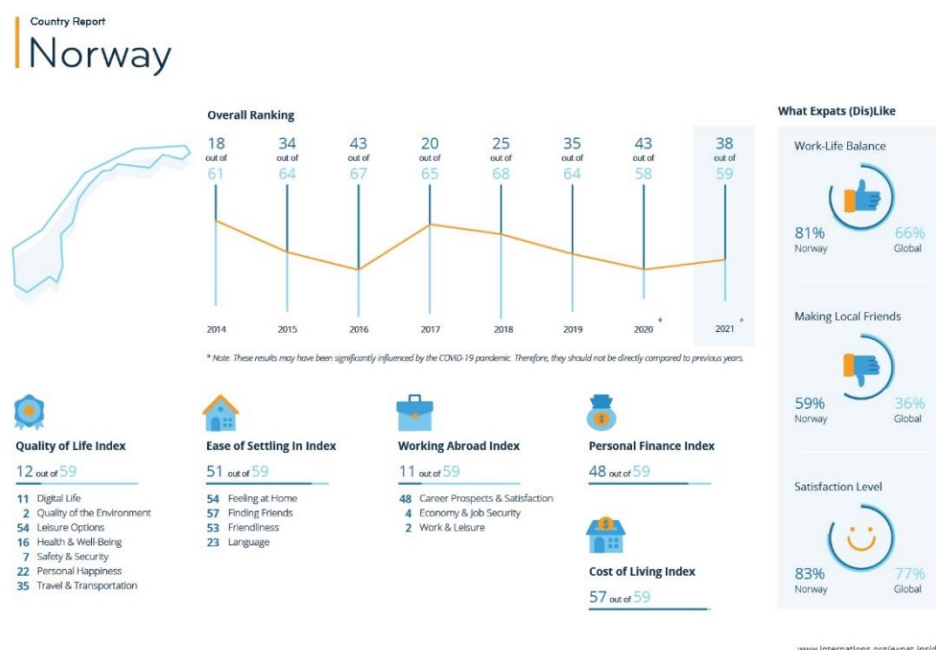
Expatriate Insider 2021 Survey Reveals: The Best and Worst Destinations for Living and Working Abroad

Expats consider Norway not very social – and far too expensive.

- 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).
- Norway comes 38th out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It ranks best in the Working Abroad Index (11th) and worst in the Cost of Living Index (57th).

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.

Norway comes 38th out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey and receives rather mixed results. Expats are very happy with their working life (11th) and the quality of life (12th). However, the country ranks low in the Personal Finance Index (48th) and even ends up among the bottom 10 worldwide for the ease of settling in (51st) and the cost of living (57th). 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.



Norway in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

Relaxed, Peaceful, and Safe — But a Little Boring

In the *Expat Insider 2021* survey, Norway lands in a below-average 38th place out of 59 destinations. On the plus side, it has great results in both the Working Abroad Index (11th) and the Quality of Life Index (12th). Expats even give Norway the second-best rating worldwide for their working hours (84% positive responses vs. 66% globally), only those in Denmark are even happier with this factor. *"I love the work-life balance and the focus on family life!"* says a British expat in Stavanger. Another 82% of respondents are satisfied with the state of the local economy (vs. 62% globally), although they feel less positive about the local career opportunities (47% negative ratings vs. 33% globally). About one in three expats in Norway (32%) moved there for a work-related reason (vs. 36% globally), but a larger than usual share (26%) relocated for love, compared to just 12% worldwide. This might be one reason why some expats are now struggling career-wise.

With regard to the local quality of life, expats in Norway especially appreciate the quality of the environment (2nd), as well as the safety and security (7th). An impressive 99% rate the natural environment positively (vs. 84% globally), and another 96% feel safe (vs. 84% globally). However, the leisure options (54th) leave a lot to be desired. Nearly one in four expats (24%) judge the available leisure activities unfavorably (vs. 14% globally), and only 51% rate their own socializing and leisure activities positively (vs. 67% globally).

Hard to Make Friends, Difficult to Afford

The dissatisfaction with leisure activities might be connected to Norway's poor performance for the ease of settling in (51st). Expats find it difficult to find new friends — 54% rate this factor negatively, compared to 32% globally, and another 59% say it is hard to make local friends in particular (vs. 36% globally). A further 31% of survey respondents do not feel at home in the Norwegian culture (vs. 20% globally), and 27% think the local population is generally unfriendly (vs. 16% globally). *"Norway is not a very social country, and making friends is hard,"* an expat from Ghana shares. It is definitely not a cheap country either: Norway ranks 48th for personal finance, and a quarter of respondents (25%) are not happy with their financial situation (vs. 19% globally). Moreover, three in five expats (60%) describe the local cost of living as too high, compared to 34% worldwide.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Norway

A slightly higher-than-average share of respondents (11%) say they see the biggest impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their personal finances (vs. 8% globally). However, the areas in which the ongoing pandemic is affecting expat life in Norway the most are individual rather than economic: 37% say that their personal travel is severely restricted right now (vs. 28% globally), and the social life of another 30% is suffering (vs. 24% globally). However, COVID-19 has not disrupted the relocation plans of most expats in Norway: 73% say that their life abroad has not been affected in this way (vs. 63% 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.

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

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