

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

Though expats in Poland rate the cost of living positively, they may still struggle financially.

- 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).
- Poland comes 43rd out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It performs very well for the cost of living (12th) but ranks low in the Ease of Settling In and Personal Finance Indices (46th for both).

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.

Poland comes 43rd out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. The country performs poorly in the Personal Finance and Ease of Settling In Indices (46th for both). While it does slightly better for the quality of life (38th), it lands in an above-average 23rd place in the Working Abroad Index. Finally, it achieves its best result in the Cost of Living Index (12th). 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.



Poland in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

Great Career Opportunities despite Low Incomes

Overall, Poland lands in a low 43rd place out of 59 in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. The country performs slightly better than average in the Working Abroad Index (23rd). Close to three in five expats in Poland (59%) are satisfied with the local career opportunities (vs. 45% globally), and 63% are happy with their job security (vs. 61% globally). However, just 63% are satisfied with their job in general, compared to 68% globally. The most popular fields expats in Poland work in are finance (18% vs. 8% globally), education (18% vs. 12% globally), and IT (12% vs. 11% globally).

Nearly three in four expats (72%) are satisfied with their work-life balance, six percentage points more than the global average (66%). *"Most people are focused on their family life, so work-life balance here is quite good,"* shares a Ukrainian expat. The majority of expats (73%) is also satisfied with their working hours (vs. 66% globally). Expats with a full-time job in Poland work an average 42.4 hours a week, compared to 43.2 hours globally.

While Poland performs best in the Cost of Living Index (12th), with 69% of expats rating this aspect of life abroad positively (vs. 48% globally), it only comes in 46th in the Personal Finance Index. In fact, 28% of respondents in Poland say their disposable household income is not enough to cover their expenses (vs. 23% globally). Indeed, more than half the expats in Poland (57%) have a gross income that does not exceed 25,000 USD per year (vs. 30% globally) — 32% even have an annual income of less than 12,000 USD (vs. 15% globally).

The Local Language: Challenging, but Necessary

Poland also ranks 46th in the Ease of Settling In Index, with 37% of expats finding it difficult to make local friends (vs. 36% globally). Another 22% are unhappy with the friendliness of the local population towards foreign residents (vs. 18% globally), and only 58% of expats are satisfied with the friendliness in general (vs. 69% globally). Nonetheless the majority of expats in Poland (51%) says their social circle of friends and acquaintances is a fairly mixed group of expats and locals (vs. 48% globally).

Close to three-quarters of expats (73%) find it difficult to learn the local language (vs. 42% globally). Perhaps this is why 19% of expats in Poland cannot speak it at all (vs. 13% globally). Additionally, less than half the expats (48%) find it easy to live in Poland without speaking the local language (vs. 54% globally). An expat from the Philippines states: *"The Polish language is a bit challenging, and not everyone is able to speak English."* However, an Ethiopian expat adds: *"Even if most of the locals do not speak English, they try to explain things as well as they can."*

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Poland

The majority of expats in Poland (66%) says the pandemic has not affected the planned duration of their current stay abroad (vs. 63% globally). But the two major areas that the pandemic has affected are personal travel (25% vs. 25% globally) and social life (24% vs. 17% globally). In the long run, nearly one in four expats in Poland (21%) also see their work and business being affected by the pandemic (vs. 16% globally).

For expats in Poland, the top sources of information on COVID-19 are social media (53% vs. 40% globally), official government channels (39% vs. 48% globally), friends or neighbors (30%

vs. 19% globally), and the local news (30% vs. 47% globally). Just over half the expats (55%) are 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 *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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