

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

Expats find living in Qatar expensive but are happy with their working life and the quality of life.

- 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).
- Qatar comes 17th out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It ranks best in the Working Abroad Index (19th) and worst in the Cost of Living Index (49th).

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.

Qatar comes 17th out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. Expats are most satisfied with their working life (19th), followed by the local quality of life (23rd). While the country also ranks quite well in the Ease of Settling In Index (29th), it lands in a below-average 38th place in the Personal Finance Index. Lastly, it even ends up among the bottom 10 destinations for the cost of living (49th). 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.



Qatar in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

High Safety and Great Healthcare

Overall, Qatar comes 17th out of 59 in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey, placing 23rd in the Quality of Life Index. It does especially well in the Health & Well-Being subcategory (4th), with 92% of expats rating the quality of medical care positively (vs. 71% globally). Additionally, 82% consider healthcare in Qatar affordable (vs. 61% globally). The majority of expats feels safe in Qatar (93% vs. 84% globally) and rates the country's political stability positively (86% vs. 64% globally). Due to these results, the country places 9th in the Safety & Security subcategory. A British expat says that *"it is a very safe place, crime rates are very low, and people are treated respectfully"*.

However, Qatar ranks low in the Leisure Options (49th) and Quality of the Environment (47th) subcategories. In fact, 21% of expats are dissatisfied with the local leisure options (vs. 14% globally). And while 89% of expats rate the water and sanitation infrastructure positively (vs. 77% globally), 29% are unhappy with the natural environment (vs. 8% globally). An expat from New Zealand says that *"the air quality in Qatar can be terrible"*. More than one in three respondents (34%) agree, rating the air quality negatively (vs. 20% globally).

A Stable Economy, but High Living Expenses

Qatar performs better than average in the Working Abroad Index (19th), with more than half the expats (51%) rating the local career opportunities positively (vs. 45% globally). What is more, 69% give their overall job satisfaction a good rating (vs. 68% globally). Most expats (86%) are also happy with the state of the local economy (vs. 62% globally). Interestingly, 84% of expats in Qatar are currently working full time, compared to just 55% globally. And just 2% have a part-time job (vs. 12% globally). The top 3 fields that expats in Qatar work in are education (22% vs. 12% globally), construction (11% vs. 3% globally), and transportation and logistics (10% vs. 4% globally).

On the other hand, Qatar places 38th in the Personal Finance Index, with 23% of expats saying their disposable household income is not enough to cover their expenses (vs. 23% globally). This may also be due to the cost of living in Qatar (49th), which 47% of expats rate negatively, compared to just 34% globally. *"The cost of living is very high, and people here are mostly money oriented,"* says an Indian expat.

Connecting with Locals Is a Challenge

Qatar lands close to mid-field in the Ease of Settling In Index (29th), with 64% of expats feeling at home in the local culture, about the same as the global average (63%). However, the country still performs below average in the Feeling at Home (36th), Friendliness (36th), and Finding Friends (39th) subcategories. A Japanese expat says that *"it is difficult to connect with the locals in Qatar"*. Indeed, more than half the expats in Qatar (53%) are mostly friends with other expats, 21 percentage points more than the global average (32%). At least, the majority of expats (91%) finds it easy to get by without speaking the local language (vs. 54% globally), placing Qatar second for this factor.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Qatar

In Qatar, 89% of expats are happy with the official communication regarding COVID-19 and related regulations (vs. 66% globally). In fact, 70% of them say the information was clear and easy to find (vs. 60% globally). Close to two in three expats in Qatar (63%) use official government channels as sources of

information (vs. 48% globally). Additionally, 45% stay up to date through social media (vs. 40% globally) and 38% by following the local news (vs. 47% globally). The biggest areas expats in Qatar struggle with during the pandemic are personal travel (33% vs. 28% globally), personal finances (16% vs. 8% globally), and work and business (14% vs. 15% globally).

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

According to the *Expatriate 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 *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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