

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

Expats in Brazil find it relatively easy to settle in but do not feel safe.

- 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).
- Brazil comes 35th out of 59 destinations in the Expat Insider 2021 survey. While it ranks low for its quality of life (46th), expats consider it relatively easy to settle in (24th).

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.

Brazil comes 35th out of 59 destinations in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. While expats do not perceive the country as peaceful, politically stable, or safe, they are still happy with their life in Brazil. Additionally, expats find it quite easy to settle in and are happy with the friendliness of the population. 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.



Brazil in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

Not Peaceful, Not Politically Stable, Not Safe — But Happy

Coming 35th out of 59 countries in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey, Brazil lands in a low 46th place in the Quality of Life Index. The country even ranks second to last in the Safety & Security subcategory (58th) — just ahead of South Africa (59th). In fact, 40% of expats rate their personal safety in Brazil negatively (vs. 8% globally), and close to half (47%) are unhappy with the country's political stability (vs. 16% globally). Another 28% do not consider Brazil to be peaceful (vs. 9% globally).

Brazil places 50th in the Travel & Transportation subcategory, with well over one in three expats (38%) rating the transportation infrastructure negatively (vs. 15% globally). Still, all things considered, 85% of expats are happy with their life in general — 10 percentage points more than the global average (75%). Additionally, 94% of respondents rate the local weather and climate positively (vs. 66% globally).

A Friendly and Welcoming Population

Brazil performs a lot better in the Ease of Settling In Index (24th): 86% of expats describe the local population as friendly towards foreign residents, compared to only 67% globally. A further 81% rate the general friendliness of the population positively (vs. 69% globally). *"Before COVID-19, you could find people playing music and dancing in the streets on any given weekend, and we were always welcome to join in,"* shares an Australian expat. Moreover, 61% of expats find making local friends easy (vs. 44% globally). Perhaps this is why over half the expats in Brazil (51%) say that they are mostly friends with local residents (vs. 20% globally). A Chinese expat says that *"the people are very friendly, which makes a big difference in my life in Brazil."* The majority of expats also feels at home in the local culture (79% vs. 63% globally), finding it easy to get used to it (76% vs. 65% globally).

However, Brazil performs less well in the Language subcategory (45th): 59% of expats find it difficult to live in Brazil without speaking the local language (vs. 29% globally). On the other hand, 51% say learning the local language is easy (vs. 39% globally). In fact, 72% of expats in Brazil can speak the local language fairly well or very well, compared to just 47% globally. An Indian expat shares: *"Even though I do not speak Portuguese, I have been helped so many times in so many different ways. The small random acts of kindness by strangers have warmed my heart and made me want to learn the language, so that I can learn more about the Brazilian culture."*

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Brazil

Similar to the trend across the globe, the majority of expats living in Brazil (66%) says the pandemic has not affected the period of time they are planning to stay in Brazil (vs. 63% globally). However, the pandemic has had a big impact on their social life (25% vs. 24% globally), personal travel (20% vs. 28% globally), and work or business (15% vs. 15% globally).

For expats in Brazil, the top 3 information sources on COVID-19 are local news (58% vs. 47% globally), social media (36% vs. 40% globally), and expat news or international media (32% vs. 32% globally). But 43% of expats are not satisfied with the official communication regarding COVID-19 and related regulations — a much higher share than the global average (17%). Of those dissatisfied, 71% find the information too unclear, confusing, and contradictory (vs. 67% 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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