

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

Expats in Kenya do not feel safe – but still at home.

- 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).
- Kenya comes 21st out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It ranks best in the Ease of Settling In Index (11th) and worst in the Quality of Life Index (48th).

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.

Kenya comes 21st out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. Expats are particularly happy with the ease of settling in (11th) and their personal finances (18th). While the country gets slightly below-average results in the Working Abroad (33rd) and Cost of Living (37th) Indices, it performs rather poorly in the Quality of Life Index (48th). 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.



Kenya in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

Great for Making Friends

Coming in 21st place out of 59 countries, Kenya shows an above-average performance in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. The country receives its best results in the Ease of Settling In Index (11th), coming 3rd in the Language subcategory. In fact, 45% of expats agree that learning the local language is easy (vs. 39% globally). More than half the expats in Kenya (56%) find making local friends easy (vs. 44% globally), and 77% rate the general friendliness of the population positively (vs. 69% globally). An Indian expat says: *“The people are welcoming and friendly.”* Additionally, 66% of expats feel at home in the local culture (vs. 63% globally) — 30% of them even very much so (vs. 23% globally).

High Job Satisfaction despite Lack of Career Opportunities

Kenya comes in 33rd place in the Working Abroad Index, performing especially well in the Career Prospects & Satisfaction subcategory (15th). The country even lands in the top 10 for overall job satisfaction (6th): 77% of expats are happy with their job (vs. 68% globally), and another 65% are satisfied with their job security (vs. 61% globally). A South African expat says: *“The work environment is good and fulfilling.”* However, 38% of expats rate the local career opportunities negatively (vs. 33% globally). Kenya lands in 45th place for the Economy & Job Security subcategory: just 34% of expats are satisfied with the state of the local economy (vs. 62% globally), while 36% are unhappy with this factor (vs. 19% globally). Moreover, fewer than two in three expats (64%) are satisfied with their work-life balance, which is just below the global average (66%). On the upside, 69% rate their working hours positively (vs. 66% globally).

Lagging Behind in Healthcare and Safety

Kenya performs worst in the Quality of Life Index (48th), which is mainly due to its poor results in both the Health & Wellbeing (55th) and the Safety and Security (52nd) subcategories. Only 42% of expats are satisfied with the affordability of healthcare, compared to 61% globally. Additionally, just over half (52%) rate the quality of medical care positively (vs. 71% globally). The country also lands the bottom 10 for personal safety (57th), with merely 61% of expats feeling safe in Kenya (vs. 84% globally). Another 19% rate their personal safety negatively (vs. 8% globally), and only 63% find the country peaceful (vs. 80% globally). Kenya also performs below average for political stability (38th), with just 53% of respondents being satisfied with this factor (vs. 64% globally). But there are two major upsides when it comes to the quality of life: 94% of expats rate the natural environment positively (vs. 84% globally), and 90% are happy with the climate and weather (vs. 66% globally).

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Kenya

While the pandemic has changed the plans of 37% of survey respondents on a global scale, this also applies to 40% of expats in Kenya. Moreover, the pandemic has mostly affected their personal travel (27%) so far, followed by their work or business (17%) and their personal finances (13%). Fewer have noticed an impact on their general health (2%), mental health (4%), or business travel (11%). More than half the expats in Kenya (53%) use social media as a source of information on COVID-19 and related regulations, which is a higher proportion than the global average (40%). Moreover, only 40% stay up to date through official government channels, compared to 48% worldwide. And just 57% of respondents are satisfied with the official communication regarding COVID-19, which is nearly ten percentage points below the global average (66%).

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](#).

Press Contact

Caroline Harsch
Media Spokesperson

InterNations GmbH
Schwanthalerstrasse 39
80336 Munich, Germany

Email: press@internations.org
Homepage: <https://www.internations.org/press>