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AUSTRALIA THE TOP SPOT FOR EXPAT KIDS: HSBC RESEARCH CHEAPEST, HEALTHIEST AND MOST ACCEPTING PLACE FOR OFFSHORE CHILDREN

Expatriates say Australia is the best place in the world to raise children, according to the *Offshore Offspring* report from HSBC's *Expat Explorer* research. Australia outperformed five other countries to place first overall, and in nine of the 17 categories considered in the research. Ranked behind Australia was Singapore and Hong Kong, while the UK placed last.

The *Offshore Offspring* report found that Australia provides the best environment for healthy and active children with more than three quarters of expat kids in Australia spending more time outdoors than in their home country. Expat children here also find it easier to make friends and adapt to their new schools than in any other country. By contrast, the US and the UK are the two least child-friendly countries for expats.

Expat Explorer is the largest-ever independent research into expats, questioning over 3,100 expatriates from more than 50 countries. *Offshore Offspring* explores the challenges faced by expat families raising children while living and working in Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, the UK, USA and UAE. Expat parents rated their host country on a number of factors including: childcare; education; ease of integration; costs of raising children; time spent outside; and time spent on outdoor activities.

According to Graham Heunis, head of personal financial services for HSBC in Australia: "I emigrated from South Africa to Australia with my family so I know how tough it can be raising children in another country. You worry about how your kids are going to cope with making friends and fitting in at school. But there are huge benefits that come from living an international lifestyle.

"I think the great thing about Australia, which emerges clearly from this report, is that it really is a wonderful place to raise children – expat kids play more sport, watch less TV and eat better than they did in their home country. And, importantly, Australia is the cheapest place to raise kids, a major consideration for parents.

"HSBC, as a bank that specialises in financial solutions for internationally-oriented customers, uses these findings to better meet the unique banking needs of those living and working abroad," Heunis said.

Healthier lifestyles

According to the *Offshore Offspring* report, Australia provides the best environment for healthy and active children. Seventy-eight per cent spend more time outdoors than in their home country and almost as many have increased the amount of time playing sport (68% compared to 44% globally). They watch a third less television and the majority (59%) eat less junk food than they did before.

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The research also found that, compared to their home country:

- Almost half (47%) of expat children in the US eat more junk food
- Forty-four per cent spend more time watching television in the US
- Forty-two per cent spend less time outdoors in the US
- Just a quarter (24%) of expat children in the UK spend more time outdoors

Adapting to a new environment

Australia tops the list in terms of expat kids making new friends (83%) and adapting to the schooling system (76%) more easily than they did in their home country. Over half of respondents in Australia (56%) said that their children had adapted 'really well' to the new culture and almost two-thirds (63%) said that their children's overall level of social integration had increased upon moving here.

Of the six countries, Australia offers the most family-friendly environment with nearly half of respondents (48%) reporting that the quality of their family life has increased, compared with 32 per cent globally. Three-quarters (75%) of expats in Australia also said they felt the safety of their children had increased since moving abroad.

The research also found:

- Most likely to integrate into their new culture were expat children in the UK with 83 per cent adapting 'well' or 'really well'
- In Singapore, almost two-thirds (65%) of expat kids found it easier to make new friends
- Ninety-three per cent of Singaporean parents felt their children's safety improved since they moved to the country, compared to 64 per cent more broadly
- Expats in the UK are the most likely to feel their children's safety had decreased

Costs of raising kids abroad

Forty-seven per cent of expat parents said childcare was more expensive in Australia (compared to 25% globally) and that the cost of social activities increased (65% compared to 45% globally). However, expat parents here are less likely to see an increase in education costs – while half (53%) of respondents said they had experienced an increase but this was much lower than the global average of 75 per cent. Overall, Australia was the cheapest place for expats to raise kids.

The research also found:

- The cost of raising children in the UK is the highest – 84 per cent of expat parents agree that the overall cost of raising children is higher in the UK than in their home country
- Ninety-one per cent of expatriate parents in Hong Kong reported an increase in the cost of education compared with 75 per cent globally

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About Expat Explorer

The Expat Explorer survey, now in its second year, is the largest global survey of expats. Commissioned by HSBC Bank International and conducted by third party research company FreshMinds, more than 3,100 expats were questioned between February and April 2009.

Individuals from four continents described the opportunities and challenges they experience living away from home. The survey provides an insight into how expat life differs from country to country, continent to continent and from an expats' country of origin.

A sample size of 30 or more respondents from each country was required for inclusion in the league tables, in order to be considered robust and indicative of the views and trends of the specific population it relates to. The league tables are based on a series of interrelated factors (rather than a single factor or question) to ensure a fair assessment of how individual countries rate across the full criteria. Each criterion is equally weighted to arrive at a score. The overall ranking is based on the average score for a country across the criteria.

An expatriate is defined as someone over the age of 18 years old and currently living away from their home country (country of origin). It was designed so that we could capture the views of the internationally representative expat population.

About Offshore Offspring

Offshore Offspring is the third report to be produced from the Expat Explorer research. It explores the opportunities and needs an expat has when raising children abroad in six of the major expat centres around the world, looking at those factors directly impacting upon their families and the way they bring their children up in their country of residence. In addition, the report also explores the crucial factors of integration and assimilation for children into a new culture, such as the ability to organise and integrate into a new schooling system and the ability to make friends.

The ranking table is determined by a number of key factors relating to the needs of a parent when raising children including childcare, social activities, cultural integration, the ease of organising schooling/education, ease of finding childcare, the ability to make friends and of course, the safety of your children. Learning the local language, whilst an important aspect of expat life for both adults and children, was not included in the league table in order to avoid skewing results away from English speaking countries.

It is, however, still covered throughout this report to shed light on how this particular aspect differs from country to country. Each criterion is equally weighted to arrive at a score. The overall ranking is based on the average score for a country across the criteria.

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Notes to editors

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