

2004 WORLDWIDE BENCHMARK STUDY

Emerging Trends in Global Mobility: The Assignee Perspective

**Undertaken in conjunction with the
Atkinson Graduate School of Management,
Willamette University**

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WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

Employee mobility is inevitable for companies competing in global markets. How companies are deploying their global workforces, however, is changing, with the introduction of new assignment forms as shown below. Driving this trend are employers who are looking at containing costs of international assignments, employees and their families who have become more reluctant to take on long-term assignments abroad, and tightened regulatory environments that are making it increasingly difficult to obtain visas and work permits.

This research project, *Emerging Trends in Global Mobility: The Assignee Perspective*, explores the effects of both traditional long-term assignments and emerging types of global mobility from the viewpoints of assignees themselves, leading to insightful conclusions about the impact of different types of assignments on employees, involved practitioners, and companies.

Cendant Mobility, in conjunction with Willamette University's Atkinson Graduate School of Management, authored this study. The intention of this research is to provide top-level company executives, international human resource and other involved practitioners, and assignees with useful information that allows stakeholders to make informed and strategic decisions regarding the options available when staffing a globally mobile workforce.

The catalyst for this current research was Cendant Mobility's *2002 Worldwide Benchmark Study: New Approaches to Global Mobility*, which defined the various forms of global mobility and their features, benefits, and management challenges. In that study, HR practitioners quantified the percentage use of each type of assignment, as defined and indicated below. This current research adopts the same types and definitions.

Type of Global Mobility	Definition	2002 Percentage
Traditional long-term expatriation	Relocation from one country to another for the length of the assignment – more than one year	44%
Extended business travel	Employee does not relocate, but travels regularly to the assignment location	20
Short-term assignment	Relocation from one country to another for the length of the assignment – six months to one year	16
Localized transfer	Cross-border move in which employee is ultimately moved to permanent local status	11
International commuting	Employee works in one country of assignment and commutes frequently to the home country	9

Specific objectives of this study are to:

- View global mobility from the standpoint of the employee.
- Examine the support that employees receive from their companies (e.g., policies, training, relocation, repatriation).
- Explore the impact of different types of global mobility on employee growth, quality of life, and well-being.
- Identify how companies can use the findings in developing approaches to global staffing and assignee support.

THE SAMPLE

- 548 globally mobile employees
- From 43 countries
- On assignment in 52 host countries
- From companies with headquarters in 17 different countries

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

Assignment Effects

- Almost half of the sample (45%) has been on previous assignments. Those on some forms of alternative assignments are more likely to have been in a previous long- or short-term role, suggesting not only that companies are being smart in utilizing their international talent pool and that employees are willing to take further assignments, but that companies may increasingly be looking to these new assignment forms to put their employees' global experience to use.
- While more than nine out of 10 assignees (91%) consider their type of assignment the best way to accomplish company objectives, respondents on long-term assignment feel more strongly that this is true compared to those on alternative assignments; respondents on alternative assignments are more likely to believe that their work could have been accomplished satisfactorily using another type of assignment.
- Respondents feel that companies send them on assignments mainly to get the job done and then to hone their global skills, while they themselves accept assignments for the interesting work challenge, the opportunity for development and advancement, and to gain international experience.
- Only a handful (1.8%) accepts assignments for increased compensation, and even fewer (.5%) do so for increased benefits. Equally interesting, only 1.3% of respondents accepted an assignment due to a perceived inability to refuse it.

Impact of the Assignment

- The top four factors, as identified by respondents, that improve an assignee's quality of life are: adjusting to a different culture for the family/significant other, communicating in another language, receiving educational benefits for family members, and living in another country. Not being able to effectively keep in contact with friends and family/significant other is reported as diminishing an assignee's quality of life.
- More than 90% of assignees report that, overall, all forms of assignment are helpful for professional growth. Long-term assignments are more frequently rated "very helpful" in terms of developing managerial and leadership skills. When it comes to development of those skills, assignees point to traditional long-term assignments as the best avenue.
- From a personal growth perspective, assignees feel that, overall, assignments contribute to cultural awareness, strengthened adaptation skills, and increased flexibility but also result in a loss of stronger family relationships. Long-term expatriation has a less negative impact on stronger family relationships than the alternative types of assignment. One can ascertain, therefore, that long-term assignees are strengthening family relationships while abroad, while the others have more difficulty doing so.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Compensation is not found to be a driving factor in assignment acceptance.
- Long-term assignments are viewed as more helpful than alternative assignments in developing managerial and leadership skills.
- Family adjustment leads the list of identified assignment challenges.
- Assignees rarely turn to HR for assistance with assignment issues.
- World events are not a significant factor in assignment acceptance.

Assignment Issues

- The most common relocation services that assignees receive are shipment and storage of household goods, tax compliance, and visa/immigration assistance. The least common services received are technical training, repatriation, and candidate assessment. These responses indicate that companies are still taking care of the necessary tactical details, the “hard services,” but failing to provide support for the “soft services,” such as repatriation and candidate assessment.
- Assignees on long-term assignments need and receive more services than those on alternative types of assignment. These findings contribute to the industry perception that it is more cost-effective to send employees on alternative types of assignment.
- The top five assignment challenges listed by respondents are family adjustments, repatriation, burnout, working with local management, and pressure for cost control. Interestingly, burnout is viewed as a challenge fairly equally across all assignment types.
- When seeking assistance, assignees primarily turn to their home- or host-country manager for professional help and to their family or peer groups for personal support. With some exceptions, HR, whether home or host country, is rarely relied upon.

The Future of Assignments

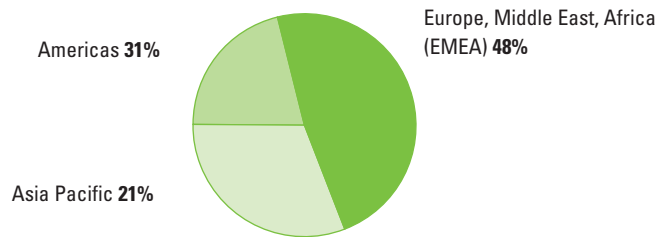
- Survey findings indicate that one’s experience is just as likely as world events to influence someone’s ability to turn down another assignment. Both reasons are cited, in equal proportion, for employees being less likely to accept another assignment.
- Long-term assignees are more likely to accept future assignments, while assignees on alternative types of assignment are less or only equally likely to accept another assignment as a result of their assignment experience.
- International assignees feel that, even beyond assessment and risk management planning, companies can help assignees cope with hazardous situations through a well-established program that focuses on training, information and communication, support in crisis situations, and empowerment.

These findings, further analyzed in Next Practices (page 15), provide current information to enable companies, involved practitioners, and assignees to make better-informed decisions about global assignments.

SAMPLE & METHODOLOGY

The survey sample on which this study is based includes 548 employees currently on some type of international assignment in 52 host countries. HR executives at 45 global companies identified the employees on global assignment. Respondents received an invitation via e-mail, with a live Web-site link (URL) to the structured questionnaire.

Exhibit 1: Assignee Location by Host Country



The robust sample of 548 responses is comprised of 70.0% long-term expatriation, 10.4% short-term assignment, 9.1% localized transfers, 6.0% extended business travelers, and 4.4% international commuters. The high percentage of assignees on traditional long-term assignment could be due to the convenience sampling by HR practitioners. HR may have difficulty identifying employees on alternative types of assignment, since companies tend to have poorer in-house tracking mechanisms for alternative types of assignees than for long-term expatriates. Therefore, in some instances, alternative assignment types are grouped together, with significant differences between specific assignment types indicated wherever found.

To test for significant differences between nominal data, the Chi-Square method was used; and for testing significant differences among means, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. Statistical significance levels were set at $p=.05$. The reliability of the survey was maintained primarily by using Likert scales to measure impacts, perceived needs, and services offered. Likert scales are among the most commonly used tools to measure respondents' perceptions on issues that are otherwise difficult to quantify. Other questions were measured using appropriate ordinal, nominal, interval, or ratio scales.

ASSIGNMENTS & THEIR EFFECTS

PRIOR ASSIGNMENT EXPERIENCE

Almost half of the respondents (45.1%) has experienced at least one global assignment prior to the current one. This implies that those employees who have been on assignment are willing to do it again and that companies are being smart in utilizing the employee's experience and competencies.

When these findings are broken out by type of assignment, differences surface. Assignees on long- and short-term assignments are less likely to have been on a prior assignment, while assignees on extended business travel or engaged in international commuting are more likely to have been in either long- or short-term assignment roles. This implies that these two

alternative forms of assignment may be being used more frequently as the “next” global role for employees. From the company’s perspective, sending globally experienced assignees on alternative types of assignment may be viewed as cost-effective; from the assignee’s perspective, however, they may also satisfy his or her globetrotting needs.

Exhibit 2: Prior International Assignment Experience

Have you been on a global assignment prior to this assignment?

	All Global Assignees	Long-term Expatriate	Short-term Assignee	Localized Transfer	International Commuting	Extended Business Traveler
Yes	45.1%	44.5%	26.3%	48.0%	54.2%	72.7%
No	54.9	55.5	73.7	52.0	45.8	27.3

EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSIGNMENT TYPES

More than nine out of 10 assignees (91.4%) consider their type of assignment as being suitable, meaning that it is the best way to accomplish company objectives. When evaluating this by assignment type, respondents on long-term assignments feel slightly stronger than those on alternative types of assignment that theirs is a more suitable type of assignment to accomplish the company’s objectives.

Exhibit 3: Suitability of Assignment Type

Is your current type of cross-border transfer the best way to accomplish your company’s objectives?

	All Global Assignments	Long-term Expatriate	Alternative Assignees*
Yes	91.4%	93.7%	86.0%
No	8.6	6.3	14.0

* "Alternative assignees" combines all assignees not on long-term expatriation, including: short-term assignment, localized transfer, international commuting, and extended business travel.

Respondents were also asked if their assignment could have been accomplished using another form of assignment. More than three-quarters (77.2%) indicate that the work could not have been accomplished satisfactorily with a different type of assignment, while almost one-quarter of the assignees (22.8%) believes that another type of assignment would have gotten the job done.

When evaluating this question by assignment type, more assignees on alternative types of assignment agree that work could have been done satisfactorily using another type of assignment.

Exhibit 4: Appropriateness of Assignment Type

Could the work have been accomplished satisfactorily with a different form of cross-border transfer?

	All Global Assignees	Long-term Expatriate	Alternative Assignees*
Yes	22.8%	20.0%	29.3%
No	77.2	80.0	70.7

* "Alternative assignees" combines all assignees not on long-term expatriation, including: short-term assignment, localized transfer, international commuting, and extended business travel.

REASONS FOR ASSIGNMENT

Why consider an international assignment? It depends on whom you ask. The reasons why companies send employees on assignment differ somewhat from the reasons why employees accept global assignment roles. Respondents reveal that companies first send them abroad for company-focused reasons and then personal development reasons. Employees accept global roles primarily for personal gain (e.g., interesting work challenges, opportunity for leadership development, international experience, and opportunity for career advancement).

Top Company Reasons

- Fill local skills gap
- Transfer knowledge
- Career development
- Develop global competencies

Top Employee Reasons

- Interesting work challenge
- Opportunity for development
- Gain international experience
- Opportunity for career advancement

While many believe that increased compensation and benefits entice employees to accept globally mobile roles, this research indicates otherwise.

While many believe that increased compensation and benefits entice employees to take globally mobile roles, this research indicates that these drivers are no longer the primary ones behind assignment acceptance. Only 1.8% of assignees accept these positions for increased compensation, and even fewer respondents (.5%) do so for increased benefits. Also interesting is the indication that refusal to accept a global position may no longer have a negative career impact. In fact, despite a currently tight job market, most assignees do not feel pressured to accept the assignment for fear of losing their job; only 1.3% of respondents indicate they accepted the position due to an inability to refuse the assignment. It appears that companies send employees abroad primarily to get the job done and to transfer knowledge to local operations, while employees accept international assignments because they represent an interesting work challenge and a chance to grow and develop a career.

Does this discrepancy really matter? When the international assignment fails (i.e., burnout, failed assignment, turnover after repatriation), as commonly reported in international assignment literature, the reason for accepting the assignment may be an issue. When the assignment is successful, on the other hand, no one is likely to question the motivational discrepancy. Moreover, companies can capitalize on common goals and deliver value to employees both by seeking ways to use the assignment to enhance careers and by keeping assignments interesting.

IMPACT OF ASSIGNMENT

International assignments impact assignees' quality of life. A number of factors were measured, with some found to contribute to improved, and some to diminished, overall quality of life for both assignees and families.

Exhibit 5: Quality of Life Impact of International Assignment (Mean)

	Mean*
Improved	
Adjustment to a different culture for the family / significant other	7.6
Communicating in another language	7.5
Educational benefits for family / significant other	7.5
Living in another country	7.3
Diminished	
Contact with colleagues	5.2
Contact with family members / significant other	4.2
Contact with friends	3.6

* The mean is the arithmetical average of a set of responses (based on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is diminished and 10 is improved), or the total value of all scores divided by the number of participants.

The changes in quality of life also impact the assignee's family/significant other; in some cases, quite differently. For example, many industry practitioners feel that talented employees in dual-career families are not accepting assignments. The survey results prove that concern is legitimate: Nearly half of respondents (38.9%) feels their assignments greatly improve their career opportunities. On the other hand, more than half of assignees (57.7%) feel that career opportunities plummet for their spouse/significant other.

Exhibit 6: Quality of Life Impact of International Assignment (%)

What is the effect of your current transfer on your quality of life? Use a scale from "1" to "10," where "1" means "Diminished QoL" and "10" means "Improved QoL."

Impact Factor	Improved	Limited	Diminished
	QoL (8 - 10)	Impact on QoL (4 - 7)	QoL (1 - 3)
Living in another country*	48.9%	45.3%	5.7%
Career opportunities (self)	38.9	53.1	8.0
Adjustment to a different culture (self)	36.9	56.1	7.0
Communicating in another language	35.8	49.8	14.5
Adjustment to a different culture (family / significant other)	31.6	50.5	17.9
Extensive travel*	30.2	54.5	15.3
Compensation	25.0	66.8	8.2
Contact with colleagues*	22.5	57.5	20.1
Housing conditions*	19.8	57.1	23.1
Educational benefits (family / significant other)	19.5	54.4	26.1
Working conditions	19.0	61.0	20.1
Health and medical benefits	12.3	60.0	27.7
Career opportunity (spouse / significant other)	10.4	31.9	57.7
Contact with family / significant other*	8.1	40.2	51.7
Contact with friends	5.2	36.9	57.9

* Significant differences in the mean were determined using the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for this factor, based on the type of assignment. Statistical significance levels were set at a probability factor of less than .05.

The data indicate significant differences in six of the 15 quality of life factors listed in the previous chart.

Living in /Adapting to Another Country. Long-term assignees report that adapting to a new country has a more negative impact on their quality of life than do assignees engaging in international commuting or extended business travel. Assignees on these two latter forms of assignment have less of a need to make permanent adaptations to a new environment and, thus, their quality of life is not impacted as greatly.

Contact with Colleagues. Those undertaking long-term expatriate assignments report that their inability to interact with colleagues at home has a more negative impact on their quality of life than is the case for other types of assignment.

Housing Conditions, Contact with Family /Significant Other or Friends, and Extensive Travel. Assignees undertaking international commuting or extended business travel report that their quality of life as it relates to housing conditions, contact with family member/significant other and friends, and extensive travel is more negatively impacted by their assignment than do those on other types of assignment.

The significant differences in the lower quality of life levels for international commuting and extended business travel are likely due to travel and other related factors. Whereas these two assignment forms often involve hotel stays or other temporary lodging, the other assignment types typically require a home in the host country. Intuitively, this also implies more contact with the immediate family, less stress from traveling, and more relaxed living conditions.

PROFESSIONAL & PERSONAL GROWTH

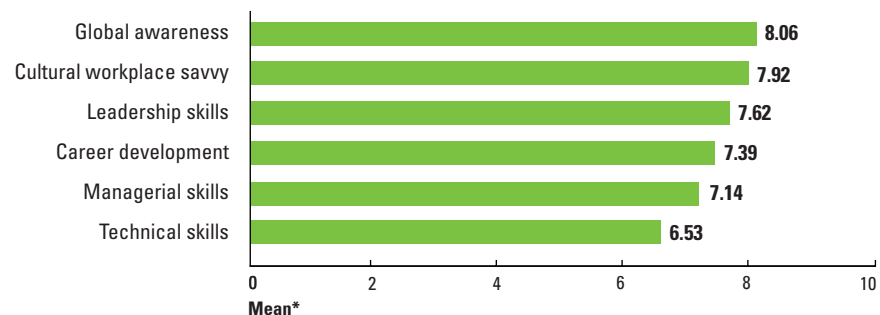
Professional Growth

On average, more than 90% of the assignees rate their assignment as either moderately helpful or very helpful for their professional growth. Specifically, assignees rate their experience as very helpful from the perspective of global awareness and cultural workplace savvy and least helpful in developing technical skills.

Exhibit 7: Helpfulness of International Assignment for Professional Growth of Assignee

Has your global assignment helped you to grow from a business perspective? Use a scale from "1" to "10," where "1" means "Not helpful" and "10" means "Very helpful."

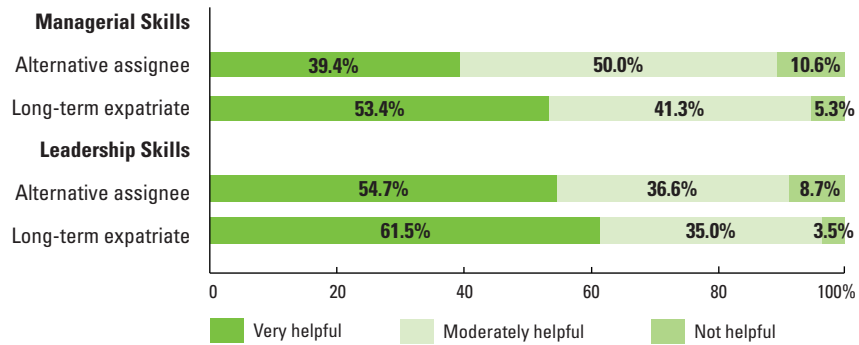
Professional Growth Factors



* The mean is the arithmetical average of a set of responses (based on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is diminished and 10 is improved), or the total value of all scores divided by the number of participants.

The positive growth factor changes significantly, however, once assignee responses are separated by type of assignment. Overall, traditional long-term expatriation is rated more frequently than the other alternative types of assignment as very helpful in terms of professional growth, suggesting that, when it comes to developing those skills, assignees find that traditional long-term expatriate assignments provide the best opportunities.

Exhibit 8: Professional Impact by Type of Assignment



Note: "Alternative assignee" combines all assignees not on long-term expatriation, including: short-term assignment, localized transfer, international commuting, and extended business travel.

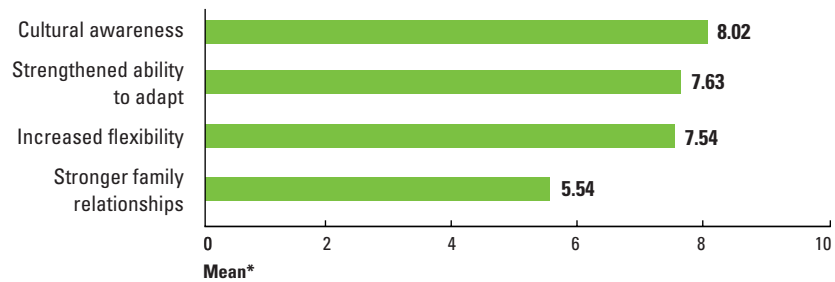
Personal Growth

From a personal growth perspective, more than 95% of respondents rate global assignments as very helpful or moderately helpful, most significantly in increasing or creating cultural awareness, strengthening the ability to adapt, and increasing flexibility.

Exhibit 9: Helpfulness of International Assignment for Personal Growth of Assignee

Has your global assignment helped you to grow from a personal perspective? Use a scale from "1" to "10," where "1" means "Not helpful" and "10" means "Very helpful."

Personal Growth Factors

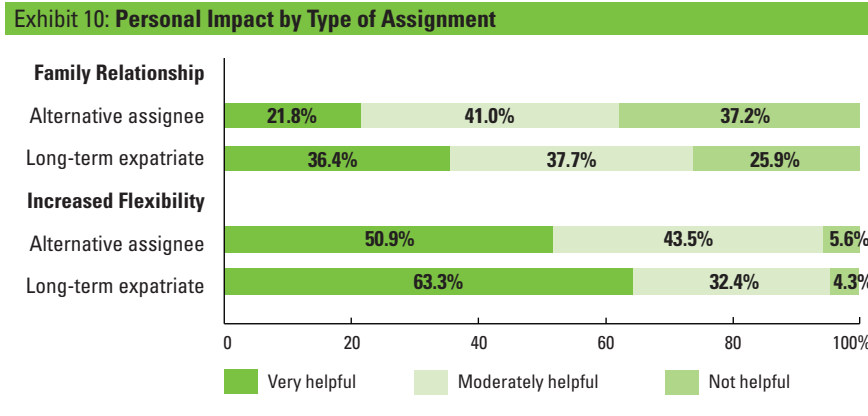


* The mean is the arithmetical average of a set of responses (based on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is diminished and 10 is improved), or the total value of all scores divided by the number of participants.

When comparing assignment types with regard to personal growth, two factors show significant differences.

Family Ties. Alternative types of assignment have a greater negative impact on maintaining family ties than the traditional long-term expatriate. Assignees on long-term assignments perceive their experience as being the most helpful way to maintain stronger family relationships. This draws on one of the findings, mentioned earlier, that improvements in quality of life have effects on the family/significant other and, as well, on the assignees themselves.

Increased Flexibility. Employees on traditional long-term expatriation find their type of assignment to be more helpful in increasing flexibility than do employees on alternative types of assignment.



Note: "Alternative assignee" combines all assignees not on long-term expatriation, including: short-term assignment, localized transfer, international commuting, and extended business travel.

ASSIGNMENT ISSUES

ASSIGNMENT SERVICES

What assignment services are utilized most? Responses indicate that companies take care of the necessary tactical details of the international relocation such as moving and tax services, commonly referred to as the “hard services,” but are less likely to provide “soft services” such as assignee selection and repatriation, in spite of the fact that these services may be more in line with the reasons why employees were sent on the assignment, why they accepted it in the first place, and their roles in successful assignment completion.

Exhibit 11: Assignment Assistance

Which of the following relocation assistance services did you receive for this assignment?

Assignment Services	Received Assistance	Did Not Receive Assistance	Not Applicable
Household-goods shipment / storage	84.5 %	6.0%	9.5%
Tax compliance	79.2	13.9	6.9
Visa / immigration	74.5	10.0	15.5
Benefits administration	66.6	21.7	11.7
Destination / settling-in	66.2	23.5	10.2
Explanation of performance management expectations	36.1	48.2	15.7
Property management	33.6	30.7	35.8
Policy counseling	32.1	44.9	23.0
Home sales	31.4	29.9	38.7
Cross-cultural training	29.7	46.4	23.9
Language training	28.3	33.9	37.8
Educational benefits for family	23.9	32.3	43.8
Coaching / mentoring	22.4	53.5	24.1
Language training for family	22.4	26.5	51.1
Cross-cultural training for family	20.4	37.4	42.2
Partner assistance	16.1	42.2	41.8
Candidate assessment	14.1	42.7	43.2
Repatriation	12.8	44.5	42.7
Technical training	11.9	52.0	36.1

Note: Categories are defined as: received assistance = offered, did not receive Assistance = not offered, not applicable = service not necessary or assignee did not take advantage of it. Assignees were not given definitions of each service or asked about the level of service.

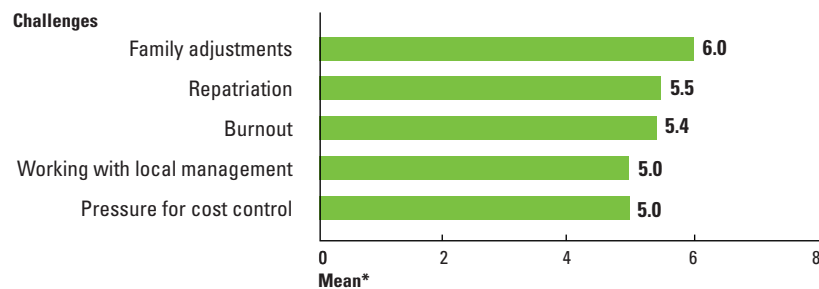
With the exception of only one listed service (performance management expectations), all other types of relocation assistance services show statistically significant differences between long-term and alternative assignment forms. Assignees on long-term assignments need and receive more services than those on alternative types of assignment, reinforcing the perception that, if only from a service assistance perspective, it is easier and also more cost-efficient to send employees on alternative types of assignment.

ASSIGNMENT CHALLENGES

As indicated in the chart below, the top five challenges cited by respondents are family adjustments, repatriation, burnout, working with local management, and pressure for cost control. With assignees rating these challenges on a scale of 1 to 10, it is also clear that, while all the challenges exist, none are of an extremely high magnitude.

Exhibit 12: Assignment Challenges

What challenges, if any, are you encountering as a result of this assignment?
Use a scale from "1" to "10," where "1" means "Minor Challenge" and "10" means "Major Challenge."



*The mean is the arithmetical average of a set of responses, or the total value of all scores divided by the number of participants.

“Family adjustments” rates as the most significant challenge and, consequently, also the one fewest assignees see as a minor challenge. Globally mobile professionals have been facing this challenge for years; and, still today, it remains an issue. While repatriation issues, which rank second, do not apply to all respondents, those for whom it does apply rate it in the following way: 32.7%, major challenge; 35.4%, challenge; and 31.9%, minor challenge. These responses reinforce the industry view that a clear understanding of repatriation remains elusive.

When further viewed by assignment type, significant differences appear among some of the challenges.

Cost Control. Assignees engaged in international commuting see pressure for cost control as significantly more of a challenge than do any other types of assignees. This could easily be due to the fact that assignees engaged in international commuting require higher travel and lodging expenses. Assignees on short-term assignments and localized transfer report that pressure for cost control is less of a challenge than do assignees on traditional long-term expatriation, which may simply reflect the differences in the length of time required for long-term vs. alternative types of assignment.

Working with Local Employees. Extended business travelers report the greatest challenges in working with local employees, followed by those on traditional long-term expatriation and then those on short-term assignments. This suggests that a lack of sustained time required to develop strong working relationships is impacting business travelers, while the short-term assignees may find it easier since they may be more project-based.

Burnout. Also of interest is the fact that there is no significant difference in the perception of burnout as a challenge when viewed by assignment type, refuting a perception that burnout might be a higher concern in some of the newer assignment forms.

SUPPORT FOR CHALLENGES

To whom do assignees turn when faced with challenges? The data suggest that assignees turn to their home- or host-country manager for professional assistance, whereas they turn to their family or peer groups for personal assistance. Family is relied upon for daily living adjustments, family adjustments, and burnout. Peers are relied upon for dealing with cultural adaptation and, to a lesser extent, working with local employees, family adjustment, and burnout. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and the Internet are rarely utilized as sources of support for the challenges that assignees encounter. HR, whether based in the home or host country, is rarely relied upon for assistance with the exception of challenges related to repatriation and inadequate policy provisions. Even here, however, HR is not relied on to the same extent as home- and host-country managers. A possible reason for this low utilization is that assignees may see HR as dealing mainly with tactical issues.

Exhibit 13: Assignment Challenges – Primary Resource for Support

Challenge (listed in order of importance)	Primary Resource
Family adjustments	Family
Repatriation	Home-country manager
Burnout	Family
Working with local management	Host-country manager
Pressure for cost control	Host-country manager
Inadequate policy revisions	Host-country manager
Assignment extension	Host-country manager
Unclear assignment expectations	Host-country manager
Daily living adjustments	Family
Working with local employees	Host-country manager
Cultural adaptation	Peer group
Working with home-country management	Home-country manager

FUTURE OF GLOBAL ASSIGNMENTS

IMPACT OF EXPERIENCE & WORLD EVENTS ON GLOBAL MOBILITY

When asked about their likelihood of accepting another assignment, based on either world events or assignment experience, the difference is proportionately indistinguishable, as indicated in Exhibit 14. Interestingly, these findings suggest that one's experience may be just as likely as world events to influence someone's refusal to accept another assignment.

Exhibit 14: Likelihood of Accepting a Future Assignment

Are you more or less likely to accept another global assignment in the future?

	Based on Current Assignment Experience	Based on World Events
More likely to accept	51.3%	21.0%
Less likely to accept	12.0	13.0
About the same	36.7	66.0

While it is encouraging to see that, overall, international assignees are willing to accept future global roles based on their current experience, this generality changes when answers from long-term expatriate assignees are compared to those from assignees on alternative types of assignment. Assignees on long-term assignments are more likely to accept future assignments, while those on alternative types of assignment are less or equally likely to accept another assignment in the future.

Exhibit 15: Likelihood of Accepting a Future Assignment by Type of Assignment

Based on this experience, are you more or less likely to accept another global assignment in the future?

Type of Assignment	More Likely	Less Likely	About the Same
Long-term assignment	57.0%	11.0%	32.0%
Alternative assignment	38.5	15.2	46.3

Additionally, the location of company headquarters affects the likelihood of employees accepting future assignments. When based on world events, international assignees with company headquarters in the Americas (mainly U.S. companies) are less likely to accept another assignment than their peers whose companies are headquartered in other regions. On the other hand, employees with company headquarters located in EMEA are more likely to accept future assignments.

Employees of companies with European-based headquarters rate world events as less of an issue, possibly reflecting their longer exposure to security and safety risks and to the greater maturity of security measures already in place.

COMPANY SECURITY MEASURES

What is the most important thing a company can do to effectively protect employees in hazardous situations? In response to this open-ended question, assignees clearly reveal their belief that, while companies should avoid these situations whenever possible, safety and security can be bolstered through a well-established hazard-management program, including:

- Assessment and risk-management planning
- Training for emergency/hazardous situations
- Information and communication
- Protection, including evacuation services and hazard insurance
- Crisis-management support
- Empowerment

NEXT PRACTICES

The findings from this study generate potential new approaches and recommendations for companies, international human resource and other practitioners, and for globally mobile employees as they view long-term assignments and alternative types of assignment: short-term, localization, international commuting, and extended business travel.

NEXT PRACTICES FOR COMPANIES

1. Make strategic choices on global staffing options based on assignment goals.

While all forms of assignment are found to contribute to professional development, long-term expatriation is still viewed as most appropriate when the company's purpose is to develop employees' leadership and managerial skills and to transfer knowledge to the local operation. If the company's goal is simply to fill a skills gap and get the job done, an alternative type of assignment may be more appropriate.

2. Consider – and align – motivations.

A gap between organizational and assignee motivations exists where global assignments are concerned: Companies are focused primarily on “getting the job done,” developing local operations and employees, and developing assignee career and global competencies. Assignees mainly accept global assignments for the overall interest factor of the opportunity and for career development. (*Significantly, assignees do not cite increased compensation as a major motivation in assignment acceptance.*) Since companies have multiple expectations, but share their assignees' desires for personal and professional development, focusing on and sustaining those desires will align the goals of both parties and contribute to successful assignments.

3. Maximize assignee experience.

With almost half of all respondents indicating that their current assignment is not their first, it is clear that companies are putting assignees' international experiences to use in subsequent assignments. Findings also confirm that companies may be increasingly turning to alternative assignment types to

fulfill their mobility objectives. As organizations continue this trend, they should keep in mind that assignees on some forms of alternative assignments are somewhat less likely to accept another assignment in the future due to their current role. This is probably due to the findings for these alternative assignment types regarding lower quality of life and less opportunity for employee development.

What happens following the assignment is also critical to maximizing assignee experience. Companies should identify employees who have successfully completed their assignments and, upon their return, utilize their competencies by either sending them on further global assignments or using the knowledge and experience that they have gained to mentor first-time assignees – a strategy that could very well prove to be an antidote to assignee attrition or repatriation problems.

Assignees continue to list “family adjustments” as the number one challenge. Companies should recognize the value of family support services as a means to a more successful experience.

4. Recognize the importance of family.

While many assignees feel the quality of life improves for their family members/significant others, they are also well aware of the potential effects that assignments have on the home front, listing their most significant challenge as “family adjustments.” In light of this, companies should recognize the value of educational, language, and cultural support for families/significant others as a means to a more successful experience.

5. Consider assignees’ overall happiness.

The findings reveal that employees on traditional long-term assignments, short-term assignments, and localized transfers have a higher quality of life in certain areas than those who are commuting internationally or on extended business travel. Some of the primary reasons are found in the housing conditions, where a lower quality of life for international commuters and extended business travelers may be due to the association of these assignment types with hotel and other temporary stays. The other three types of global assignments are associated, in most cases, with establishing a home in the host country, promoting a higher level of comfort, more contact with the immediate family, and less stress from traveling.

6. Offer services in line with assignment goals and assignee needs.

Companies continue to take care of the necessary tactical details of the international relocation, the so-called “hard services.” They are less likely to provide the “soft services,” such as assignee selection and repatriation, in spite of the fact that this type of service is more in line with the reasons why employees are sent on assignment, the skills they need to generate assignment success, and their major motivation for accepting assignments in the first place. For example, if companies offer more coaching and mentoring assistance, assignees may feel they are still productively developing their careers even if the work itself is less rewarding.

7. Improve utilization of HR by providing needed services at corresponding times.

Respondents indicate their tendency to turn to host- or home-country management, their family, and peer groups for support on most assignment-related issues. The reasoning may be that assignees view HR as dealing mainly with tactical issues. HR has an opportunity to align its services to better support the international assignee throughout the assignment.

8. Crises don't necessarily mean halting assignments.

While assignees feel strongly that companies should avoid putting employees in hazardous situations, where possible, only a small minority of respondents say they are less likely to accept a global assignment based on world events. Well-established risk-management programs that include risk assessment and provide training for employees and families on handling hazardous situations, information and communication, and protective services, as well as empower employees and locals to handle these situations, are welcomed as effective tools for enabling assignments to continue.

9. Develop tracking for assignees on alternative assignments.

The trend toward alternative types of assignment, documented in the *2002 Worldwide Benchmark Study: New Approaches to Global Mobility* and reflected here, is clearly continuing. Yet, equally clear from the sample development in this study, HR practitioners may be having trouble identifying employees on alternative types of assignment, indicating that companies tend to have poorer tracking mechanisms for alternative types of assignees than for long-term expatriates. Tracking employees on alternative types of assignment should be an HR responsibility, together with line management in the business units. The number of days per year that employees are abroad on alternative types of assignment has implications for the employee's tax and visa status.

10. Develop metrics to measure true cost/benefit of assignment types.

Although employees on alternative types of assignment need and receive fewer relocation services than those on traditional long-term expatriate assignments, and industry practitioners seem, on a broad scale, to perceive that alternative types are less expensive, we still have no evidence regarding real cost differentials of different types of assignments. It may be in a company's best interest, with HR taking a lead role, to at least begin to discuss not only how to track alternative types of assignment, but how to put measurement tools in place to uncover their true benefits, costs, and human performance and productivity results.

NEXT PRACTICES FOR ASSIGNEES

1. Use experience to leverage global career development.

The responsibility for global career development lies, to a great extent, with employees themselves. Based on the four "Ts" of global leadership development, identified by Black, Morrison and Gregersen in *Global Explorers: The Next Generation of Leaders*, (New York: Routledge, 1999),

employees develop global leadership through travel, teams, training, and transfers. Hence, global assignments contribute greatly to global leadership development. Companies appear to be utilizing those employees who have been on previous international assignments and placing them on future assignments. Employees can use that leverage to further develop their global careers.

2. Weigh professional benefits when accepting alternative forms of assignment.

Employees may gain interesting work challenges and be able to utilize prior experience through alternative forms of assignment; however, their ability to gain managerial and leadership skills may fall slightly short. When considering assignments, recognize that, as long as the work is exciting and global competencies have been developed through past experiences, alternative assignments may be a choice.

3. Assignments that may be good for your career carry risks for relationships.

While the cultural and educational opportunities of living in another country have a positive impact on the quality of life of the assignee, the international assignment may also negatively impact the assignee's quality of life due to reduced contact with family, friends, and colleagues. Assignees are well aware of the promising opportunities of an international assignment and view the global assignment as a moderately helpful or very helpful way to improve their cultural, adaptability, and flexibility skills. However, they are also aware that it may diminish their personal relationships. Stronger family relationships rate less favorably when the assignment is an alternative type. On the other hand, assignees on long-term expatriation assignments perceive their experience as one of the most helpful ways to create stronger family relationships, as some families grow closer in a new host country.

4. Understand and take advantage of services available to you.

While household-goods shipment and tax preparation are important services, cross-cultural training, language training, partner assistance, and candidate assessment, among others, support productivity and help assignees flourish. Assignees should take advantage of those "soft services," when offered.

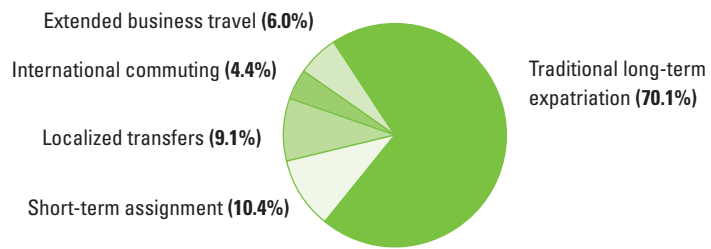
RESPONDENT PROFILE

ASSIGNMENT TYPE

The most common assignment type represented by the respondent sample is the traditional long-term assignment, representing seven out of 10 cross-border assignments, with three out of every 10 respondents on alternative assignments. These alternative types of assignment are short-term assignment (10.4%), localized transfer (9.1%), extended business travel (6.0%), and international commuting (4.4%).

Exhibit 16: Types of Global Mobility

Which of the following best exemplifies your current cross-border status?

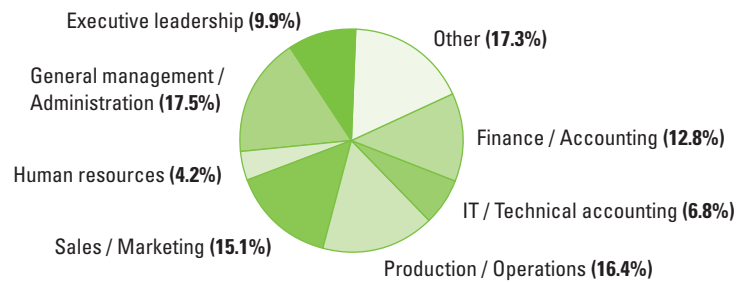


JOB FUNCTION

The sample represents a fairly equal distribution of job functions, with slightly lower percentages in HR and IT/Technical accounting.

Exhibit 17: Job Function Distribution

What is your job function?



GENDER

The study shows that 17.5% of the respondents are female, which is in line with current industry data that place the percentage of females on international assignments in the 15% to 20% range.

When gender is cross-tabulated with years in the workforce, significant differences exist, primarily because females in the current sample, as compared to males, have not been in the workforce for 30 years or more.

Exhibit 18 : Years in the Workforce by Gender

Years in Workforce	Male	Female
Less than one year	2%	5%
1 - 5	16	21
6 - 10	20	20
11 - 15	18	25
16 - 20	18	13
21 - 25	13	10
26 - 30	6	6
More than 30	7	0

When gender is cross-tabulated with job function, males are significantly more likely to be on a global assignment, while females are more likely to be working in sales/marketing positions. Based on the assumption that executive leadership is associated with a longer tenure in the workforce, as compared to sales/marketing, the responses support our finding that males are more likely to be on a global assignment due to their longevity in the workforce.

Exhibit 19: Job Function by Gender

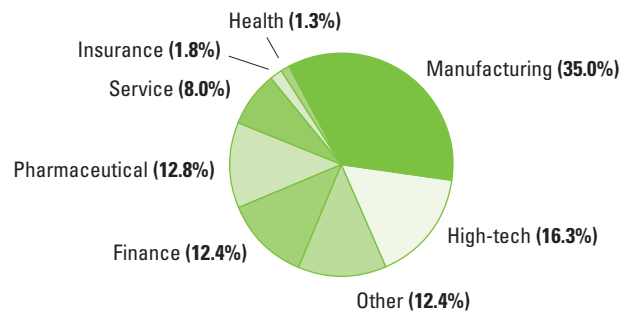
Job Function	Male	Female
Executive leadership	12%	1%
General management / Administration	18	17
Finance / Accounting	13	12
IT / Technical accounting	7	7
Production / Operations	17	14
Sales / Marketing	14	19
Human resources	2	13
Other	17	17

INDUSTRY

When industry representation is examined, manufacturing constitutes more than one-third of the responses (35%), with high-tech, pharmaceutical, finance, and “other” industries each contributing between 12.4% and 16.2%.

Exhibit 20: Industry Representation

What industry best represents your parent organization?



ASSIGNMENT DURATION

Almost two-thirds of the global assignments (63.9%) have an expected end date; slightly more than one-third of the assignments (36.1%) have no expected end date.

CO-SPONSOR

The survey was co-sponsored by the SHRM Global Forum.



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