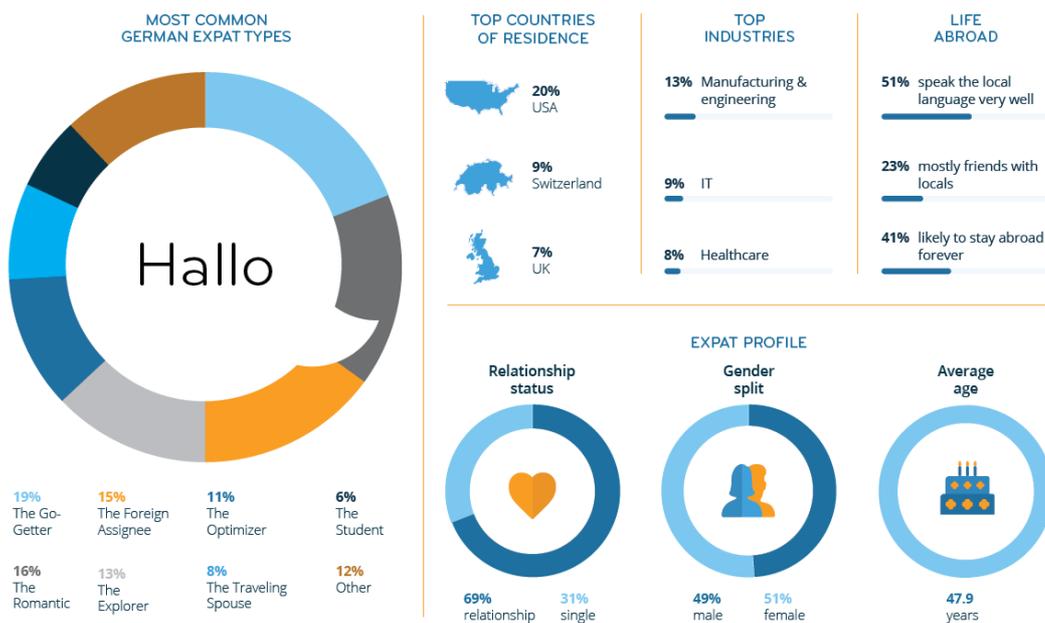


# The 7 Most Common German Expat Types and Why They Move Abroad

- Based on the latest *Expat Insider 2018* research, InterNations presents the first comprehensive German expat typology.
- The typology is based on expats' primary motivation for moving abroad and identifies job opportunities and the search for a better life as the most important reasons for expatriation
- The 7 most common German expat types are the Go-Getter (19%), the Romantic (16%), the Foreign Assignee (15%), the Explorer (13%), the Optimizer (11%), the Traveling Spouse (8%), and the Student (6%).

Munich, 10 July 2018 — Although each expat journey is unique, there are certain similarities when it comes to the motivation for moving and the lifestyle abroad. Based on the insights of more than 18,000 expats living in 187 countries and territories in the annual *Expat Insider* survey, [InterNations](#), the world's largest community for people who live and work abroad, [presents the first comprehensive expat typology](#) with the 7 most common German expat types.

## I Germans Abroad



The research shows that expats from Germany are different from their international counterparts in many ways: German Go-Getters, for example, move abroad for work-related reasons and prove to be much more highly educated. On a global scale, just ten percent hold a PhD, but this actually applies to 27 percent of all Go-Getters from Germany. Similarly, the share of German Romantics (who moved abroad to be with their partner) speaking the local language fairly or even very well is 31 percentage points higher than the share among Romantics worldwide (88% vs. 57%). Foreign Assignees from Germany, sent abroad by their employers, on the other hand, stand out due to their difficulties in settling in abroad: close to one quarter of German Foreign Assignees (24%) think they will never feel at home abroad, compared to just 17 percent worldwide.

## 1. The German Go-Getter (19%)

### Reasons for moving abroad

- found a job abroad on their own: 65%
- recruited by a local company: 26%
- start a business abroad: 9%

### Life abroad

- speak the local language very well: 41%
- mostly friends with locals: 15%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 34%

German Go-Getters are highly educated expats who move abroad to boost their career: over one in four (27%) hold a PhD, 17 percentage points more than the global average among all Go-Getters (10%). In their new country of residence, they mainly work in education (13%), manufacturing & engineering (12%), and IT (11%). A German Go-Getter living in the USA appreciates that *“it is very easy to open a business there”*, while another one living in China likes her work because it allows her *“to make a lot of decisions on her own.”*

Spending 46.1 hours per week at work, German Go-Getters are even busier than the average Go-Getter worldwide (44.7 h). With them working such long hours, it is no surprise that 23 percent are unsatisfied with their working hours (vs. 19% globally). In addition to that, the hard work does not always seem to pay off: just 54 percent of German Go-Getters believe that their income abroad is higher than what they would make in a similar job back home job (vs. 59% globally). Lastly, they are less satisfied with their career prospects than Go-Getters in general (52% vs. 59% globally).

Putting work first might have an impact on their personal life: close to one in five German Go-Getters (19%) are currently not living in the same country as their partner —this share is only higher among German Foreign Assignees (21%). Moreover, close to half the German Go-Getters (47%) find it hard to make local friends abroad, compared to 41 percent of Go-Getters globally. A German living in France struggles with the *“closed social circles, which are impossible to get into”*. Maybe this is one of the reasons why 24 percent of German Go-Getters believe that they will never feel at home in their current country of residence, compared to 18 percent worldwide.

## 2. The German Romantic (16%)

### Reason for moving abroad

- for love / to live in their partner’s home country: 100%

### Life abroad

- speak the local language very well: 72%
- mostly friends with locals: 41%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 49%

Although the German Romantics moved abroad for love, their romantic relationship did not necessarily last: ten percent of them are currently single. Those Romantics who are (still or again) in a relationship could not be any happier, though: close to nine in ten (85%) are satisfied with their relationship, and for half of them (50%) things could not get any better. *“My husband is my only reason for moving to the US,”* a German Romantic explains.

German Romantics really make an effort to adapt to their partner’s home country: close to nine in ten (88%) speak the local language fairly or even very well, compared to 57 percent globally. Additionally, half the German Romantics (50%) find it easy to make local friends in their new country of residence (vs. 44% globally). *“The people are warm-hearted, very friendly, and helpful towards both each other and foreigners,”* says a German living in the Philippines. In fact, the Romantic is the German expat type

most likely to be mainly friends with local residents (41%).

Among the German Romantics, the largest share describes their employment status as employee (27%), followed by 20 percent teachers and ten percent self-employed professional. However, with 35 percent of German Romantics being unhappy with their career prospects, their career does not look as rosy as their private life. *"The options to continue on a chosen career path are limited,"* a German Romantic living in the UK reports. Moreover, 55 percent of German Romantics believe that their income is lower than what they would make in a similar job back home, 14 percentage points more than among all Romantics around the globe (41%).

### 3. The German Foreign Assignee (15%)

#### Reason for moving abroad

- sent abroad by their employer: 100%

#### Life abroad

- speak the local language very well: 37%
- mostly friends with locals: 16%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 23%

Nearly every Foreign Assignee from Germany (95%) works full time, and with an average of 47.5 working hours per week they spend by far the most time at work — compared to 46.1 hours for the average Foreign Assignee worldwide. However, the hard work seems to pay off: 30 percent have an annual gross household income of at least 150,000 USD, four percentage points more than the global average (26%). A German living in China appreciates the *"salary and the feeling that he contributes with his work"*. Their generous household income might also be related to the fields German Foreign Assignees frequently work in: manufacturing & engineering (24%), finance (13%), and commerce & trade (9%).

Close to three in five Foreign Assignees (57%) are satisfied with their career prospects, just four percentage points less than the global share among all Foreign Assignees (61%). However, more than three in five (62%) are happy with their job security, the highest share among all German expat types. All in all, 67 percent of German Foreign Assignees are happy with their job in general — slightly less than the global average (73%).

Despite a generally satisfying job situation abroad, 56 percent of German Foreign Assignees think it likely that they will return home at some point — only the German Traveling Spouse considers this even more likely (60%). In fact, 18 percent of German Foreign Assignees do not feel at home abroad yet, and close to one-quarter (24%) think they never will (vs. 17% globally). Maybe their struggles with settling in are partly due to 29 percent finding it hard to make new friends abroad. *"Getting to know people is difficult as a foreigner,"* says a German living in the USA.

## 4. The German Explorer (13%)

### Reasons for moving abroad

- looking for an adventure: 48%
- want to live in this particular city/country: 35%
- simply enjoy living abroad: 17%

### Life abroad

- speak the local language very well: 56%
- mostly friends with locals: 25%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 44%

German Explorers seem to find it easy to settle down in their new country of residence, with three-quarters (75%) feeling at home there. Maybe their ease of settling in is due to the fact that the majority (67%) finds it easy to make new friends abroad — together with the Optimizers, this is the highest share among all German expat types. *“People are very friendly and easy-going, and everything seems to be simpler than at home”*, a German Explorer living in Australia reports.

In addition to that, German Explorers are very happy with the available leisure activities abroad (82%); only German Students (86%) are more satisfied with this factor. *“France is a very interesting country, which offers so many different things from culture to nature to lots of local festivities,”* according to a German Explorer who moved abroad because she wanted to live in this particular place.

While the Explorer in general seems to appreciate a good work-life balance and only spends around 42.4 hours per week at work, this is not the case for the German Explorers. With them working an average 45.7 hours per week, it might not be a surprise that just 59 percent are happy with their work-life balance, compared to 68 percent globally. Additionally, a lower share of German Explorers (54%) is satisfied with their job security than among Explorers in general (64%). On the other hand, German Explorers are just slightly more satisfied with their career prospects (61% vs. 59% positive ratings).

## 5. The German Optimizer (11%)

### Reasons for moving abroad

- better quality of life: 69%
- financial reasons: 28%
- political, religious, or safety reasons: 3%

### Life abroad

- speak the local language very well: 36%
- mostly friends with locals: 24%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 67%

Out of all German expat types, Optimizers see the most potential benefits in moving abroad, and it seems like they were right: an above-average share of German Optimizers are satisfied with the weather (83% vs. 74% globally), and 80 percent are happy with the available leisure activities abroad. A German Optimizer living in Australia appreciates *“the great weather and the fabulous landscape”*. Additionally, more than four in five German Optimizers (83%) rate their personal safety positively, and 75 percent are satisfied with their financial situation. *“I got out of constant financial trouble I had due to the high costs of living in Germany”*, a German now living in Bulgaria reports.

When it comes to their professional life, 85 percent of German Optimizers work full time, slightly more than the global average among all Optimizers (81%). Additionally, they spend 3.3 hours per week more at work than the average Optimizer (46.7 h vs. 43.4 h). However, the hard work does not always seem to pay off: just half of the German Optimizers (50%) believe that their current income is higher than what they would get in a similar job back home, while 58 percent of all Optimizers worldwide say the same.

Lastly, German Optimizers do not seem to struggle much with settling in abroad: more than seven in ten (71%) feel at home in the local culture, the second-highest share among all German expat types, beaten only slightly by the Explorer (73%). Maybe it helps that German Optimizers find it is easier to make local friends (63%) than the average Optimizer worldwide (56%). A German Optimizer living in India is very happy with *“the friendliness of the people all over the country”*.

## 6. The German Traveling Spouse (8%)

### Reason for moving abroad

- for their partner’s job or education: 100%

### Life abroad

- speak the local language very well: 45%
- mostly friends with locals: 8%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 25%

While most other German expat types have a fairly balanced gender ratio, close to nine in ten German Traveling Spouses (88%) are female. Due to moving for their partner’s sake, Traveling Spouses are more likely than other German expat types to stay at home and take care of their home and/or their children (22%) or to be currently looking for work (8%). *“It is not easy to find work,”* a German Traveling Spouse living in Morocco reports, while one in Indonesia is unhappy with the *“missing career opportunities for partners”*. However, compared to Traveling Spouses in general, the share of employees among German Traveling Spouses is eleven percentage points higher (24% vs. 13%). Moreover, just 29 percent of German Traveling Spouses are unsatisfied with their career prospects, compared to 41 percent globally.

However, German Traveling Spouses struggle with settling in abroad on a personal level: more than one in three (34%) find it hard to make new friends in general, and an even higher share has trouble making local friends in particular (45%). Maybe this is one of the reasons why 36 percent do not feel at home in the local culture, slightly more than the global average for all Traveling Spouses (33%). Moreover, 22 percent of Traveling Spouses from Germany believe they will never feel at home abroad, which is also slightly above the global average (20%). However, while out of all expat types worldwide, the Traveling Spouse is the most likely to believe this, the share among German Students (23%) and Foreign Assignees (24%) is even higher than the share among German Traveling Spouses.

## 7. The German Student (6%)

### Reasons for moving abroad

- go to school or university: 89%
- improve their language skills: 11%

### Life abroad

- speak the local language very well: 63%
- mostly friends with locals: 25%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 33%

German Students do not seem to have a problem with making local friends abroad: just one-third (33%) rates this factor negatively, compared to 41 percent globally. Maybe this is due to the fact that the share of German Students speaking the local language fairly or even very well (75%) is 17 percentage points larger than the global share among all Students (58%). *“I feel welcome as a foreigner and can easily get in touch with locals as well as other expats”*, says a German Student living in the Netherlands. Perhaps these aspects also contribute to the fact that 60 percent of German Students feel at home in the local culture, compared to 54 percent worldwide.

While the Student is the expat type is most likely to be single on a global scale (54%), this only applies to 40 percent of German Students. In fact, German Go-Getters (42%) and German Explorers (40%) are just as likely not to be in a relationship. Among those expats who are in a relationship, though, German Students (65%) are more likely to have met their significant other in their current country of residence than Students in general (58%).

In addition to being highly educated — 21 percent of German Students hold a PhD, the second-highest share among all German expat types, only beaten by the Go-Getters (27%), and ten percentage points more than among all Students worldwide (11%) — they are also likely to work in education themselves (12%). Other common fields of occupation include healthcare (12%), IT (10%), and coaching & consulting (10%). With 57 percent positive ratings, close to the global average of 58 percent, German Students are quite satisfied with their career prospects. A German Student living in Denmark especially appreciates *“the possibility to make decisions on her own due to the low hierarchies”*. Moreover, 63 percent of German Students are satisfied with their financial situation, more than the global average (56%).

## Read More about Expat Types



### The Go-Getter

Go-Getters are highly educated expats who move abroad for job-related reasons. While they are happy with their career prospects, their personal life often suffers a bit.



### The Optimizer

Optimizers see many potential benefits in their move abroad, and usually they are not disappointed. They value a good work-life balance and do not have trouble settling in abroad.



### The Romantic

Romantics move abroad to be with their partner and do their best to fit in (e.g. by learning the local language). While they find it easy to make local friends, their job situation is often unfavorable.



### The Explorer

Explorers move abroad for a personal challenge and seem to master it very well. While they find it easy to make friends and appreciate the options for socializing abroad, they are not always happy with their career prospects.



### The Foreign Assignee

Being sent abroad by their employers, most Foreign Assignees are extremely satisfied with their job and career. However, they struggle to feel at home abroad, and most of them already have plans to return home.



### The Traveling Spouse

Moving abroad for their partner's job, Traveling Spouses often face an unsatisfying life abroad. They struggle with low career prospects, find it hard to make friends, and many want to return home at some point.



### The Student

Students move abroad for their education and are very eager to learn the local language. While they are highly educated and satisfied with their career prospects, their financial situation does not seem too bright.

### About the Expat Typology 2018

For the Expat Typology 2018, InterNations identified the 7 most common expat types across the world as well as among British, French, Germans, Italians, and US Americans abroad. The typology is based on the expats' primary motivation for moving abroad. More than 18,000 survey respondents representing 178 nationalities and living in 187 countries or territories revealed their reasons by choosing one out of 19 possible answer options, including one open-text field.

The data was obtained from the *Expat Insider 2018* survey. The complete results will be published in detail in September 2018. For a nationality to be featured in the Expat Typology, a sample size of at least 31 survey participants per type and nationality was necessary. However, for most of the featured nationalities, the sample size per type exceeded 100 participants.

### About InterNations

With 3.1 million members in 420 cities around the world, InterNations ([www.internations.org](http://www.internations.org)) is the largest global community and information site for people who live and work abroad. InterNations offers global and local networking both online and face-to-face. At around 6,000 official events and activities per month, expatriates have the opportunity to meet other global minds. Online services include country and city guides created by a team of professional writers, guest contributions about life abroad, and discussion forums to help members with topics such as the local job or housing search. InterNations membership is by approval only to ensure we remain a community of trust.

The InterNations app is available for Android and iOS and can be downloaded for free on [Google Play](#) and the [App Store](#).

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