

Expatriate Insider 2021 Survey: The Future of Working Abroad

US American expats talk about their career abroad and how they envision their future working life.

- *US American expats are older than the average working expat, more likely to work part time, and often self-employed or working in the field of education.*
- *While the concept of New Work is important in the US, US American expats move to countries where it does not play a big role.*
- *US American expats love working remotely, but with regard to their dream job a good compensation and/or good benefits, a good work-life balance, and creative/interesting tasks are more important.*

Munich, 14 September 2021 — Why do US Americans move abroad? According to the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey by InterNations, 36% of US Americans working abroad name their career as the most important reason for relocating to another country. While this is the most frequently mentioned reason among US Americans, it is a considerably smaller share than the global average of expats moving for job-related reasons (47%). Most of the US American expats found a job on their own (14%), followed by 11% being sent by their employer and 9% being recruited internationally. Only 2% moved abroad to start their own business.

Aside from work-related reasons, an above-average share of US Americans working abroad originally relocated because they wanted to live in their partner's home country / for love (16% vs. 10% globally), because they were looking for an adventure / a personal challenge (8% vs. 6% globally), for their partner's job or education (6% vs. 4% globally), or because they simply enjoy living abroad (5% vs. 3% globally).

The key focus of this year's *Expatriate Insider* survey, conducted by [InterNations](https://www.internations.org), the world's largest expat community with more than 4 million members, is the future of working abroad. Expats all around the world shared what it is really like to work abroad and described their working conditions. They also provided insights into how new working arrangements (e.g., remote work) are changing their working life and what they would like to see in the future.

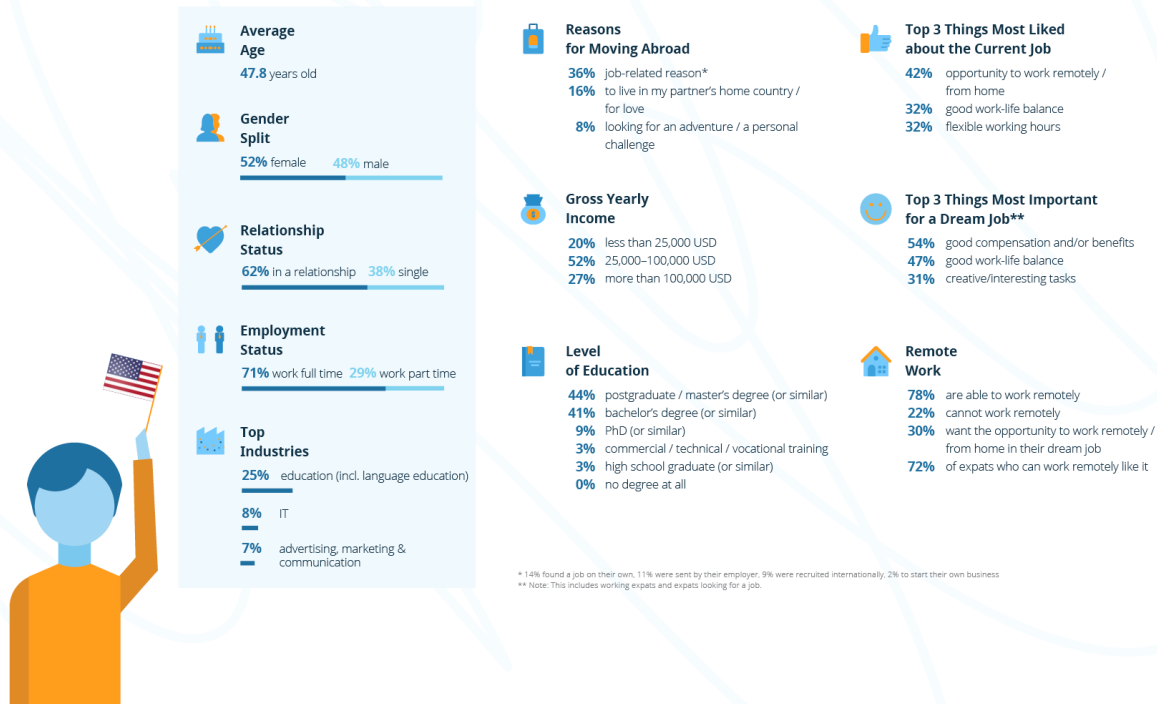
US American Expats Are Older and Well Educated

The typical US American working abroad has some interesting characteristics. On average, they are 47.8 years old, which is more than four years older than the average age among working expats (43.1 years globally). More than half the US American expats working abroad (52%) are female, while the majority of working expats worldwide is male (53%). This is just the case for 48% of US American expats, though. (The remaining 1% prefer to self-describe their gender identity.)

Overall, they are well educated: over nine in ten have a bachelor's degree (41%), a postgraduate / master's degree (44%), or a PhD (9%). Just 3% cite a high school diploma as their highest level of formal education, which is half the global average (6%). Similarly to the below-average share of US American expats moving abroad for their career, only 71% of them say that they work full time. This is eleven percentage points below the global average (82%).

US American Expats

The Future of Working Abroad



They Tend to Work in Education or Run Their Own Business

Exactly one US American expat in four works in the field of education (25%), which is 13 percentage points more than the global average (12%). This might be related to English native speakers being much sought after: the share of British and Canadian expats working in education is also considerably higher than the global average (22% each). Other fields of work US American expats frequently mention are IT (8%) and advertising, marketing & communication (7%).

The high share of (language) teachers might also explain the lower share of US American expats in a senior / specialist position (21% vs. 30% globally). One in ten each is a top manager / executive (10% vs. 13% globally) or works in lower / middle management (10% vs. 17% globally).

US American expats seem to like being their own boss: More than one in five (21%) say they are self-employed or a freelancer, compared to just 11% of expats worldwide. And while just 2% moved abroad to *start* their own business, 10% of US American expats *have* their own business now (vs. 7% globally).

Great Work-Life Balance but Mediocre Career Opportunities

Close to three-quarters of US American expats (74%) are satisfied with their job in general, which is about the same as the global average (73%). A look at the individual factors involved shows that some are rated very well, while others score below average.

On the one hand, nearly three in four (74%) rate their work-life balance positively, which is six percentage points above the global average (68%). They are also very happy with their job security (71% vs. 67% globally) and their working hours (73% vs. 70% globally). In fact, both full-time and part-time workers spend about three hours less at work than the global average. The average working hours among US Americans amount to 21.6 hours per week for part-time workers (vs. 24.2 hours globally) and to 36.7 hours a week among full-time workers (vs. 39.9 hours globally).

On the other hand, just 45% of US American expats rate their local career opportunities positively, compared to 49% globally. And while close to two-thirds of expats worldwide (65%) are satisfied with the state of the local economy in their host country, just 61% of US Americans working abroad would say the same about their current country of residence.

An Interesting Mix of Expat Destinations

The most common destinations among US American expats working abroad are a quite interesting mix: Germany, Italy, Mexico, China, and Japan. China (4th) and Germany (6th) rank among the top 10 destinations worldwide in the Working Abroad Index of the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. Expats living in these countries are particularly satisfied with the local career opportunities, their job security, and the state of the local economy.

However, Italy (58th) and Japan (50th) land among the ten worst destinations for working abroad. While Italy ranks very poorly across the board, expats in Japan are particularly unhappy with their working hours and work-life balance. Lastly, Mexico (22nd) ranks mid-field with average to good results: Expats living there are particularly happy with their work-life balance and enjoy their job overall.

US Americans Leave Modern Ways of Working Far Behind

More than two in five US American expats working abroad (41%) say that factors like autonomy, freedom, creativity, personal development, and self-fulfillment are *less* important in the business culture of their current country of residence than in the US. These values are closely related to the concept of New Work, which describes the new way of working in the global and digital age. Aside from Dutch expats, 48% of whom say this about their home country compared to their host country, this is the biggest share among all nationalities featured in the survey. On a global scale, just 23% of expats say the same about their host country.

"The most common destinations for US American expats are really interesting", says Malte Zeeck, InterNations Founder and Co-CEO. "You might assume that people would move to countries with a work culture that is similar to their home country. When it comes to countries with more modern ways of working, the UAE, Finland, Estonia, or the Netherlands would have been a more obvious choice for US Americans."

In fact, these four countries rank among the top 5 destinations when it comes to expats comparing the importance of New Work in the local business culture. The number one country in this list, however, is the US itself: 74% of expats living in the US find that New Work plays an important role in the local business culture. Globally, just 58% of expats say this about their host country.

Among the most common destinations for US American expats, Mexico (33rd out of 55) and Germany (35th) rank at least mid-field as far as the importance of New Work in the local business culture is concerned. China (46th) and Italy (49th) end up among the bottom 10 destinations, and Japan (55th) is even voted the worst country in this regard. Just 32% of expats working in Japan say that New Work is important in Japanese business culture.

Country Ranking: The Importance of New Work in the Local Business Culture

1	USA	20	Greece	39	Brazil
2	UAE	21	Czechia	40	Philippines
3	Finland	22	Poland	41	Indonesia
4	Estonia	23	Switzerland	42	Chile
5	Netherlands	24	Luxembourg	43	Romania
6	Bahrain	25	Malta	44	Thailand
7	Australia	26	Kenya	45	Cyprus
8	Canada	27	Taiwan	46	China
9	New Zealand	28	Portugal	47	France
10	Sweden	29	Hungary	48	Spain
11	Ireland	30	Colombia	49	Italy
12	Norway	31	Russia	50	Kuwait
13	Denmark	32	South Africa	51	India
14	Singapore	33	Mexico	52	Turkey
15	United Kingdom	34	Austria	53	South Korea
16	Malaysia	35	Germany	54	Egypt
17	Oman	36	Vietnam	55	Japan
18	Qatar	37	Hong Kong		
19	Saudi Arabia	38	Belgium		

US American Expats Love Working Remotely...

So, what do US American expats enjoy about their job abroad? The most frequently mentioned aspect that they like best about their current job is the opportunity to work remotely / from home (42%). Close to four in five (78%) are currently able to work remotely, which is the same as the global average (78%). However, US American expats enjoy it much more (72% like it vs. 65% globally)! Close to two in five (39%) even like it *very much*, compared to 28% globally.

US American expats also work remotely much more frequently: close to half (48%) work fully remote, compared to 39% globally. Another 20% work remotely for more than 15 days per month (vs. 18%), while just 16% work remotely for up to 5 days a month (vs. 25% globally). The COVID-19 pandemic does not seem to have had much of an impact on their remote work policies: just 15% of US American expats say that remote work was newly introduced and will remain a part of their job, while this is the case for 20% of expats globally.

...But a Good Compensation Is on Top of Their Dream Job Wish List

Other commonly mentioned aspects that US Americans like about their current job abroad are a good work-life balance (32%), flexible working hours (32%), and a good compensation and/or good benefits (29%).

While the latter is just the fourth-most frequently mentioned aspect that US American expats appreciate *now*, it is on top of the list when imagining their dream job. More than half (54%) say that a good compensation and/or good benefits would be especially important to them in an ideal work environment. This is the same as the global average (54%).

Other aspects often mentioned by US American expats are a good work-life balance (47%), creative/interesting tasks (31%), the opportunity to work remotely / from home (30%), and flexible working hours (29%).

About the Future of Working Abroad Report

This report is based on data from the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey by InterNations. In total, 12,420 expats participated; the general *Expatriate Insider* report and an overall country ranking were published in May 2021. However, the report “The Future of Working Abroad” uses mainly data sets from expats currently doing any kind of paid work: 8,313 survey respondents — living in 175 destinations and representing 166 nationalities — match this definition of working expats.

In the *Expatriate Insider 2021* questionnaire, all respondents, regardless of employment status, were asked to provide information about themselves and to rate various aspects of life abroad on a scale of one to seven. The rating process emphasized their personal satisfaction with these factors; the average ratings of six such factors were bundled into three subcategories, and their mean values were used to draw up a topical index for working abroad. The Working Abroad Index is not only part of the overall country ranking, but it also gets referenced in this report. In 2021, the top 5 destinations for working abroad — out of 59 countries in this index — are Taiwan, New Zealand, Czechia, China, and Denmark.

Moreover, working expats answered some additional questions to describe their working life. Some of these questions explore how COVID-19 has been transforming the workplace and how expats envision their ideal work environment. Lastly, the survey included two more rating questions for working expats. They cover the topic of New Work, the new way of working in the global and digital age. Participants were asked to rate how important this concept is in the business culture of their host country and how the latter compares to their home country. The country averages from the first question were used to compare the importance of New Work in various expat destinations.

For a country to be featured in the New Work ranking, a sample size of at least 50 respondents was necessary. This requirement was met by 55 destinations. New Work is extremely important in the business culture of the USA, the UAE, Finland, Estonia, and the Netherlands.

About InterNations

With around 4.2 million members in 420 cities around the world, [InterNations](https://www.internations.org) 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

Stephanie Anko-Hubik
Media Spokesperson

InterNations GmbH
Schwanthalerstrasse 39
80336 Munich, Germany

Email: press@internations.org

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