

10/10 Global Mobility Survey: 10th Anniversary Edition

Between 2011-2020 a total of 10,226 Global Mobility professionals and 296 business leaders participated in Santa Fe Relocation's annual Global Mobility Survey (GMS), and here are the ten key trends from the last ten years.

In 2011, in response to consistent client feedback for more mobility industry insights and trends across sectors and geographic regions, we commissioned the Global Mobility Survey with an independent research company, now part of Savanta. The questions covered a range of themes, including mobility team structures, policies, compliance and risks, demographics, and technology. The findings were developed into a report and independent subject matter specialists provided their insights.

The Annual GMS Report maintains a core of year-on-year questions, for example, activities of Global Mobility teams (what they think they should be doing versus what they are actually doing). Additionally, other questions evolved each year as we listened to what industry professionals felt were hot topics or areas of generic interest.

Mid-decade, a truly significant addition saw the inclusion of Business Leaders, responding to a shorter set of the same questions asked in the main survey. As with 360-degree feedback in human resources performance and development activities the contrasting responses proved to be very useful for mobility professionals, using the in-depth data when discussing change (policies, structures, and technology) with their own leadership teams.

In this article we provide the salient findings. The full graphs and narrative can be downloaded in the full version of the 10th Anniversary edition: <https://www.santaferelo.com/en/mobility-insights/global-mobility-survey/global-mobility-survey-10th-anniversary-edition/>.

Global Mobility And The Pandemic

Organisations have undergone a reset due to the pandemic and leaders are more aware of the data and potential contribution of Global Mobility. The growing influence of digitalisation is also likely to enable Global Mobility advisory teams to create more insightful contributions as they flourish to become an extension of business teams rather than a purely transactional

support function. Between 2016 to 2020, 80% of Global Mobility professionals consistently agreed or strongly agreed that employees who have undertaken international assignments achieve greater career progression than employees who have remained in their home organisation or headquarters.

Leadership has high expectations of Global Mobility to deliver a world-class mobility programme, in the capacity of both a strategic business partner and technical advisor, navigating highly complex technical issues.

Over the past decade uncertainty and disruption have strongly influenced the evolution and transformation of workforce and mobility programmes. Thought leadership indicates that they will play a pivotal role in how the events of the next decade will unfold too.

To succeed, we must continue to evolve our Global Mobility functions at pace, futureproofing them in the context of globalisation, digital innovation, and new, more fluid hybrid ways of working.

The Top Ten Global Mobility Trends Across The Decade, Focusing On Three Themes – Transformation, Talent And Compliance And Covers:

1. A regional approach to Global Mobility service delivery.

Intra-regional trade and workforce movement heightened the desire for in-region presence for operational and inter-cultural reasons.

2. Change in skillsets and shift towards a more strategic/advisory contribution.

Mobility's role morphs into uncharted troubleshooting and moves away from the traditional approach of only managing those on long-term assignments, expanding to the entire mobile population.

3. The growing importance of technology and data analytics as an enabler of Global Mobility functions.

Securing the buy-in and investment from key stakeholders to embrace the new digital era continues to prove problematic for some Global Mobility functions.

4. Increased diversity of Global Mobility policies and change in assignment types.

We observe a broad range of Global Mobility policies across multinational organisations, reflecting both the change

in working patterns and the increasing diversity of mobility opportunities.

5. Growth of remote and hybrid working arrangements.

An increasing proportion of Global Mobility teams have seen virtual assignments as a significant change and challenge.

6. Shift from employer to employee-driven programmes (including core/flex).

With new generations entering the workplace, employee and employer expectations of international experience and the Global Mobility programme have evolved.

7. Integration of equality, diversity and inclusion programmes (ED&I) policies, procedures and programmes.

ED&I policies drive progressive organisations to ensure that their people, process and policies attract both internal and external talent to undertake international career development initiatives.

8. Compliance complexity of new assignment destinations.

Organisations have consistently reported venturing into new locations (40% in 2020). Many of their jurisdictions have complicated laws and regulations which pose barriers to mobility.

9. Impact of geopolitical and protectionist climates on immigration and safety issues.

The utilisation of experts to navigate these issues will be imperative for organisations to mitigate risk and achieve a successful deployment.

10. Importance of duty of care.

Duty of care is a top priority for Business Leaders increasing from 26% in 2019 to 38% in 2020.

Predictions For The Next Decade

Projecting forward another ten years, we anticipate continued transformation for Global Mobility to be agile in adapting to changing priorities. At a macro-level, possibly doing more with less, especially as overhead costs and the fixed costs of permanent headcount erode. Overlapping this agenda is the evolving role that artificial intelligence (AI) will play in the future workplace.

Transformation

- Global Mobility remains a standalone function or is absorbed into another department such as a people focussed business, talent or analytics team

- Global Mobility is required to provide bespoke personalised solutions to mobility scenarios as the workforce demographics and expectations evolve
- Skillset in Global Mobility will include AI delivering all core Global Mobility operational tasks

Compliance

- A continuation of globalisation and mobilisation of talent from developing markets to more traditional developed markets in order to support the continued high growth trajectory in the world's fastest growing economies.
- Some global multinationals have expanded so significantly that they have outgrown individual countries' economies:
 - Treated as a single entity by international tax and immigration authorities, e.g., liable to a global corporate tax rate and in possession of global visas/work permits.
 - Easing the compliance surrounding the deployment of talent worldwide and boosting jurisdictions' revenues.
- ESG is at the core of Global Mobility's strategy and programme.
- Sustainable assignments are a fundamental expectation of the mobile talent pool and a mandatory requirement of clients and investors.

Talent

- Evolution from segmented policies to personalised assignment packages to meet the demands of tomorrow's workforce.
- A higher proportion of contingent workers fulfilling contracts for work and international gigs (not contracts of employment or assignment).
- An internal and external marketplace exists, representing a transition from the concept of a workforce to a skills/talent pool.
- Blind selection integrated into the recruitment and selection processes to support achievement of ED&I targets.
- An increase in part-time/flexible assignments and workcations, incorporating supplemental learning and development and/or corporate social responsibility elements.
- A widening of the assignee pool, improved duty of care, health, and wellbeing.

Conclusion

We shall be publishing the findings of the 2021/22 Global Mobility Survey later this year and we expect there to be a continuation of many of the themes raised in this 10th Anniversary edition.

Transformation, agile working, seeking the best global talent, remaining compliant and leveraging digital innovation will all be part of the emerging Global Mobility world. Boundaries are blurred – global working is no

longer ring-fenced to a discrete international talent programme. It has widened with the rapid change in hybrid, remote and virtual workstyles. Keeping abreast of the compliance legislation to protect the organisation and the employee have also become more challenging.

As environmental, societal and governance agendas become more visible and critical at corporation level, so too will the impact on mobilising talent – working either physically or remotely across borders.

Education and advisory support to key internal stakeholders will become increasingly important for Global Mobility leaders and to help them with this mission, a sharper set of data tools will help their case to be seen as a business leader specialising in Global Mobility rather than a specialist in Global Mobility who supports the business.

Keeping talent healthy, safe, and secure in the progressively diverse, challenging assignment locations will be imperative.

For more details on how we can make Global Mobility easy for you and your relocating employees, email consulting@santaferelo.com or visit www.santaferelo.com.

References:

All data is from Santa Fe Relocation's Global Mobility Survey reports from 2010 to 2021 unless otherwise stated.

1. *GMS awards: 2021, Winner, Relocate Global, Best research contribution, thought leadership or book. 2020, Winner, Relocate Global, Best research contribution, thought leadership or book. 2018, Winner, FEMEMMA, Best thought leadership. 2017, Winner, FEMEMMA, Best thought leadership.*



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Recognised as a thought leader and speaker on strategic international HR, talent management and Global Mobility, John has 15 years of global consultancy experience. Having previously held senior HR leadership roles in global businesses across a range of industry sectors, John now works with global organisations to create value and improve the structure of Global Mobility programmes, focusing on aligning strategic objectives with operational delivery.

John is a Chartered Fellow of the Institute of Personnel and Development.

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Embarking on her journey as a Big 4 expat tax consultant, Selina undertook client secondments which ignited her passion for global mobility and her desire to move in-house. During the tenure of her most recent in-house position as Group Director she progressed through a variety of hybrid senior HR leadership roles, including global ownership for Mobility, Benefits, Expatriate Compliance and Strategic HR projects.

Selina is currently self-employed as a Freelance Consultant and has also been appointed as an External Advisor to a leading management consulting firm.

Selina is a Chartered Fellow of the Institute of Personnel and Development and a Chartered Tax Adviser.

About Santa Fe Relocation:

Santa Fe Relocation is a Global Mobility company specialising in managing and delivering high-quality relocation services worldwide. Our core competence is providing services that help corporations, their employees and their families to relocate and settle in new places. These services are delivered to a consistently high standard, locally and globally, through our own operations and approved partners.

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