

Adapt



TO WORK
EVERYWHERE

T° TOPIA



What the Great
Resignation can teach us
about employee priorities



The global pandemic has transformed employee attitudes about the nature of work, and companies must adapt to retain and attract the best talent.

Do companies know what it takes to stay competitive in this fast-changing world? And do employees feel valued enough to stick around?



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Executive Summary

In spring of 2020, the world embarked on an unprecedented global experiment to see if remote work is feasible, scalable, and sustainable. The results are in: remote and distributed work is not only a viable way to get work done, but for many employees, it is now their top demand.

To meet shifting employee priorities, flexible work arrangements are more critical than ever to maintain relevance in such a competitive job atmosphere. While remote work comes with many benefits to the employee and employer alike, it adds challenges and complexity to an already complex space. Employers need sophisticated technology to ensure they know where their employees are, to ensure compliance for all mobile employees, and to ensure employee satisfaction remains high.

With a new normal brought on by the pandemic, employees want flexibility to work remotely.

At the onset of the pandemic's third year, employees are slowly returning to the office, but at levels far behind that of pre-pandemic life. The traditional idea of "office life" is unlikely to come back, and it seems few employees are interested in this anyway.

- 94% of employees agree that they should be able to work from anywhere, so long as they get their work done. This flexibility to work anywhere is among the top drivers of an exceptional employee experience.
- 48% of employees feel that remote work policies are in place just to make requests easier to reject.
- 91% of employees are comfortable with their employer knowing their location at the city level. Employees are comfortable being tracked for the right reasons.

Flexible work arrangements are vital for employee retention and hiring.

The Great Resignation is not just a buzzword: 29% of employees changed jobs in 2021, and 34% are planning to resign in 2022. What is driving this exodus?

- 41% of employees say flexibility to work from home is or was a reason to change jobs.

- 96% of employees rank flexibility in working arrangements as a key factor when finding a new employer.

With these kinds of numbers, flexibility is no longer optional to remain competitive — it is essential. And enforcing outdated norms may increase employee turnover: among those required to return to the office full time, 64% say this makes them more likely to look for a new job.

HR professionals often don't know where their employees are working.

Most employees (66%) do not report all days working outside their home state/country to HR. Thus, it is no surprise that — compared to last year — HR professionals are significantly less likely to be confident in knowing where their employees are working. 40% of HR professionals discovered employees working from outside their home state or country, but many more additional employees likely went unnoticed. Despite this, HR professionals are overwhelmingly confident (90%) that employees will perfectly self-report when working out of state/country.

Remote work is the future of work — and that's a good thing for companies.

HR professionals largely feel that remote work has provided their organization with tangible benefits, such as increased productivity, reduced costs, and better employee retention. These benefits are only expected to increase in 2022. And technology, in particular, is becoming a key resource to manage a distributed workforce: 88% of organizations with a remote work policy are investing in remote work tooling and technology.

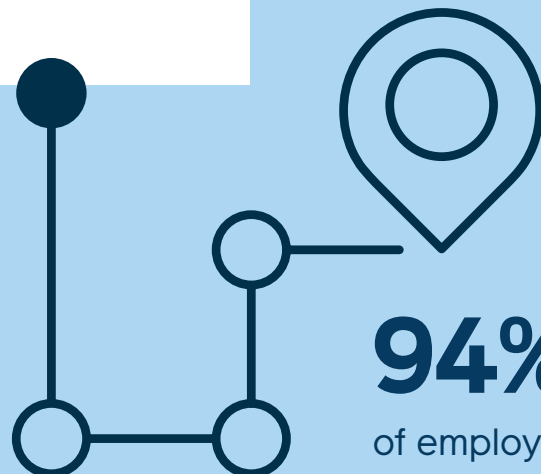
Flexibility and Remote Work

Employees overwhelmingly agree: productive workers should be allowed to work where they want.



In this day and age, it's hard to get consensus on almost anything. Controversy seems to find its way into every conversation, and even ice cream flavors have become political. One notable exception? Work flexibility. In 2022, 94% of employees — virtually all of the nearly 1,500 surveyed — feel they should be able to work wherever they want as long as they get their work done. This feeling has increased over the past year in all regions (up from 91% in 2021). When examined according to job rank, the group that is most likely to strongly agree is C-level and president executives. (At least, this is what they say. In reality, those in charge of actually creating company mobility policies are not being nearly as accommodating. See page 14 for more on this.)

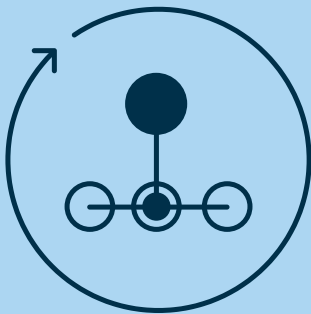
I should be able to work from anywhere I want as long as I get my work done.



94%

of employees agree

Employees are working all over the globe. But most are not telling HR.



The global pandemic put a temporary damper on worldwide travel, but not as much as you might assume. Even before vaccine availability, roughly **1 in 3** employees were working outside their home state or country. At present, employees continue to work outside their home state/country on a regular basis, with a significant upward trend since the rollout of vaccines. If this trend continues, we could soon see up to half of employees working outside their home state/country during the year.

With such a large mobile workforce, monitoring who is working from where is becoming increasingly challenging. While most employees occasionally report when they worked outside their home state or country, well over half (**66%**) failed to report everything to HR. This is a critical compliance issue that could have severe consequences for companies.

Only 34%
reported all
days to HR

 **66% failed to**
report days
to HR

Employees don't mind being tracked.



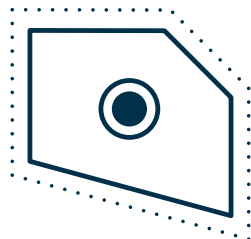
So what are companies to do if over half their mobile workforce is not accurately reporting their working location? The easy solution is to enable employees to share their location automatically. The tools we use every day are already location aware — google searches, social media, commerce sites. Why should employers be left in the dark? In fact, the overwhelming majority of employees are comfortable with their employer knowing their location at the city level (91%), which balances privacy concerns with tax and immigration compliance.

% of employees that are comfortable with their employer tracking...



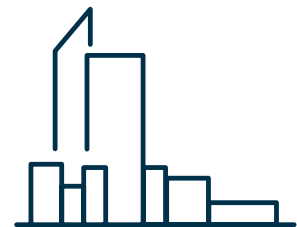
94%

What country I am in



93%

What state/county I am in



91%

What city I am in

The bottom line: Employers must embrace remote work to retain their talent, but also need to invest in tooling and technology to properly manage a distributed workforce.

The Employee Experience

Flexibility is everything.

Gone are the days when a ping-pong table and free office snacks were enough to attract top talent. Today, the #1 driver of an exceptional employee experience in the US — and the #2 driver overall — is the flexibility to work from anywhere. Work flexibility was cited more often than technology, career growth, office perks, and a feeling of belonging.

What drives an exceptional employee experience?



Employees also feel that experience is more important than location. More than 4 in 5 employees agree that companies should focus on finding the right talent, regardless of physical location, and that teams should be built on skills needed, not geography.



81%

agree that companies should focus on finding the right talent wherever it might be in the world



80%

agree that teams should be built on experience and skills, not location

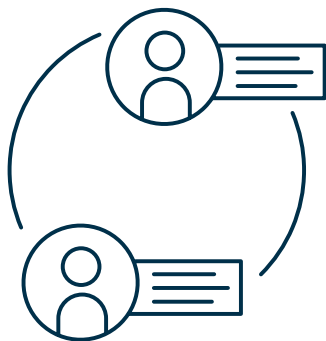


78%

agree that teams in the future will be agile, and it won't matter if everyone is in the same location

The Great Resignation is real, driven largely by a need for flexibility.

Employees are walking off the job in record numbers, and the data suggest the problem is only getting worse: **29%** of workers changed employers in 2021, and **34%** reported plans to change employers in 2022. What's causing this exodus? Two of the top four reasons relate to work flexibility. In addition, the overwhelming majority of employees (**96%**) feel that flexibility in working arrangements is important when seeking a new job. This near-universal consensus is yet a further increase from last year (**93%**).



Reason for Employer Change



The bottom line: Workers are prepared to leave their job to get what they want, and what they want is clear — the ability to work anywhere.

Traditional global mobility isn't dead — it's more alive than ever.



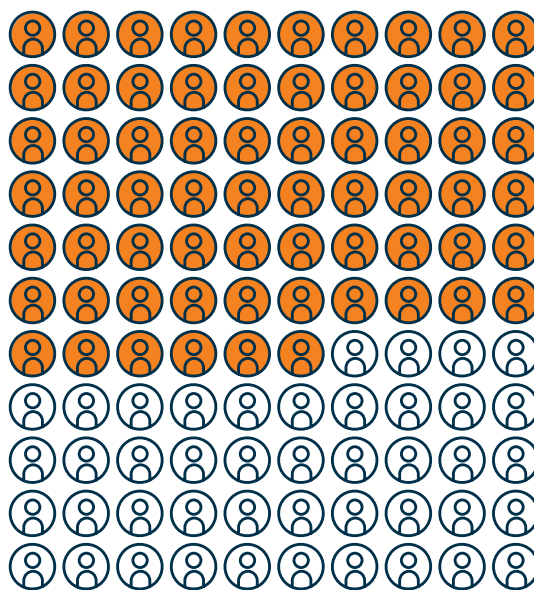
Many falsely believe that COVID-19 has worried would-be travelers enough to change their minds about mobility.

But in 2022, more than **3 in 4** employees (**76%**) would consider moving abroad for an overseas assignment. In addition, **66%** agree that international experiences are critical to career growth and mobility. Employers who maintain a mobility policy are more likely to meet these employees' needs.



76%

would consider moving abroad for an overseas assignment



66%

agree that international experiences are critical to career growth and mobility

The bottom line: The global pandemic has caused many employees to rethink their careers, working conditions, and long-term goals. Key drivers of a positive employee experience include flexibility in working arrangements and the availability of international experiences; without these options, employees will walk.

The HR Perspective

As workforces become increasingly distributed, HR professionals are less likely than ever to know where their employees are working.

In the days of punch cards and 9-to-5 office days, HR managers rarely had to wonder where their employees were working. Daily face-to-face interaction ensured workers were on the job. But times are changing. With the ability to log in and work from anywhere, fewer and fewer HR professionals are sure about where their employees actually are. In 2021, only **60%** of HR employees reported being very confident about where the majority of their employees were working. This year, the figure plummeted to **46%**. Such a significant drop in confidence shows that, with a mobile and distributed workforce, keeping track of employees is a growing challenge. In addition to the frustration this causes, there are genuine tax and immigration concerns which could have severe consequences spread out across time zones and countries. Finding the right way to manage distributed workforces must be a priority for organizations.

I feel very confident that we know where the majority of employees are working

60%
2021

46% ↓
2022

Employees are working where they shouldn't be — and getting away with it.

Since the start of the pandemic, **39%** of HR staff have discovered employees working remotely where they should not be. In the UK, in particular, nearly half of HR professionals (**48%**) have detected someone in a country they are not allowed to work. And these are just the employees who were discovered. How many more traveling employees went unnoticed?

These figures should alarm HR employees and upper executives alike, and are likely contributing to HR's low confidence in knowing where their employees are.

39%



of HR staff have discovered employees working remotely where they should not be

HR staff believe their employees are accurately self-reporting — but the data suggest otherwise.

Despite low confidence in knowing where their employees are working, and despite the discovery of numerous employees working where they shouldn't be, HR professionals are nonetheless highly confident in their employees' accurate self-report practices. In 2022, a full **90%** of HR employees are confident that, when working out of state/country, employees would self-report **100%** of the time. This represents a **12%** confidence boost from 2021.

90%

of HR leaders are confident employees will report all days



Only 33%

employees actually reported all days

Is this excessive overconfidence? In a word: yes. In 2022, **66%** of employees admitted they did not report all days working outside their home country/ state to HR. Despite HR's trust, employees are not accurately self-reporting.

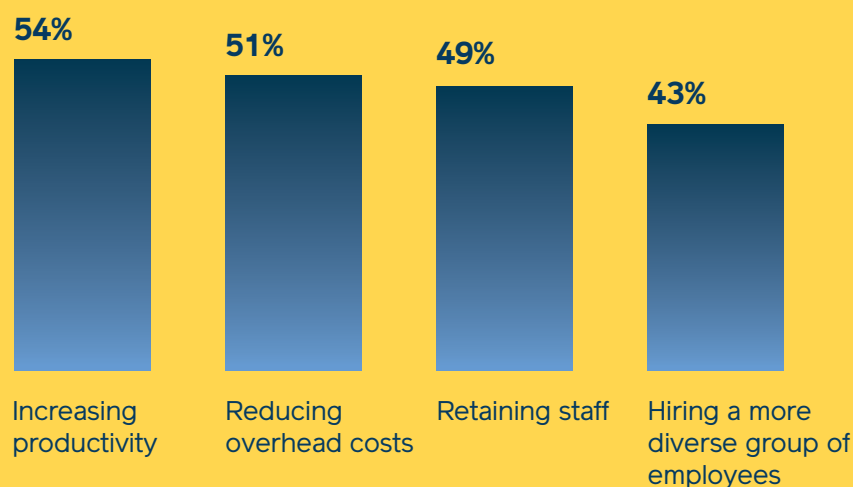
The bottom line: HR professionals must come to terms with the fact that managing a distributed workforce is a highly complex task, and classic self-report measures are woefully insufficient to ensure compliance across an entire mobile population. Better tooling and technology is badly needed.

The benefits of remote work are becoming increasingly clear.

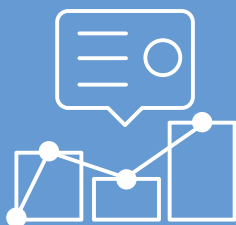


Despite the challenges in keeping track of an ever-mobile workforce, the benefits of remote work are largely undisputed. When asked how remote work has helped their organization in the past 18 months, HR employees pointed out increased productivity, reduced costs, better talent retention, and improved hiring abilities. These results show that, despite compliance concerns, HR professionals are quite clear on the many benefits of remote work.

% of HR that has seen the following benefits from remote work

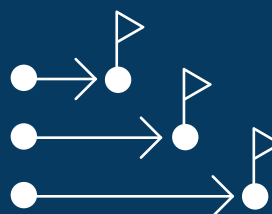


And these benefits are leading to real-world outcomes. Not only do **85%** of HR managers expect remote work requests to increase in 2022, but **84%** agree that flexible and remote work is a key part of their talent strategy. And as a result, **84%** of HR professionals say their company is investing in remote work tools and technology. These are staggering figures, showing that companies are working hard to keep pace with these rapid changes in working arrangements and employee expectations.



85%

I expect remote working requests to increase in 2022



84%

Flexible/remote work is a key part of our talent strategy

Employee Retention

Work flexibility is key.

Employers are scrambling to avoid falling victim to the Great Resignation. But how can HR managers be sure what employees want? Simple — just ask them.

When asked what attributes employees are looking for in a new employer, the top four features were high pay, a focus on employee well-being, the ability to work from home, and the ability to work remotely. These factors were cited more commonly than culture, autonomy, reputation, D&I, and professional development. This provides clear evidence that, after pay, employees are seeking work-life balance and flexibility.

Mandatory office attendance is antiquated. Employees expect better.

Now that the pandemic is in its third year and vaccines are widely available, many employers are enforcing a return-to-office policy. But this is a risky move: **64%** of workers forced to return to the office full-time say this makes them more likely to seek a new job. To avoid falling victim to the Great Resignation, employers should avoid implementing mandatory work-from-office policies.

When looking for a job, what attracts you to a company?



Interest in remote work is increasing, but company policies are lagging behind.

The pandemic has not decreased employee interest in remote work. If anything, it has bolstered it. And HR professionals have taken note: **85%** expect remote work requests to increase in 2022; **84%** are investing in remote work tools/technology; and **84%** cite flexible/remote work as a key part of their talent strategy. In addition, nearly half of HR staff (**49%**) believe their company lost employees due to an inadequate remote work policy.



84%

My company has/is investing in remote tools/technology



84%

Flexible/remote work is a key part of our talent strategy



85%

I expect remote working requests to increase in 2022

Employees largely agree:

while **82%** work at a company with a remote work policy, almost half (**48%**) feel the policy is in place to make remote work applications easier to reject, and **39%** of employees feel their company makes it too difficult to work remotely. Despite a strong desire to work remotely, employees are becoming frustrated by the friction and roadblocks created by current remote work policies.

NO

48%

My company's remote work policy is there to make it easy for the business/HR to say 'no'



39%

I'd like to work remotely but my company makes it too difficult

The bottom line: To remain competitive, attract top talent, and prevent attrition, businesses must provide a robust remote work policy and flexible working arrangements to meet the demands of an ever-mobile workforce.

Methodology

This research is part of an annual survey given to employees and HR professionals from the US and the UK. The aims of this research are to better understand how often employees work outside their home state or country, the top drivers of an exceptional employee experience, and the importance of mobility in the workplace.

This study was conducted by CITE Research on behalf of Topia. This survey was distributed online. Respondents were made up of 1,481 employees, 299 of which were HR professionals. Respondents were aged 18-64, evenly split between the US and the UK (743 were from the US, while 738 were from the UK), and roughly evenly split between male (57%) and female (43%). In order to take part, respondents were required to be employed full time, work at an organization that operates internationally, and work in a traditional office setting. HR professionals were additionally screened to ensure they worked in the field of Human Resources.

Respondents took part in the survey between December 22, 2021 and January 11, 2022. The project initially began in 2020.



About Topia

Topia is the leader in Global Talent Mobility. We empower companies to deploy, manage and engage employees anywhere in the world.

The Topia platform enables organizations to deliver mobility as part of a broader talent strategy encompassing all types of employee movement – remote and distributed workforces, business travel, and more traditional relocations and assignments. This drives enhanced employee experiences and competitive advantage by ensuring the right people are in the right place at the right time, while staying compliant no matter where they are. The Topia platform automates the entire global talent mobility process, including scenario-based planning, expat payroll, tax and immigration compliance, reporting and more. Topia powers global talent mobility programs for world-renowned brands such as Schneider Electric, Dell, Veolia, Equinor and AXA. Topia has raised over \$100M from NewView Capital (formerly New Enterprise Associates), Notion Capital and others, and is a global company with offices throughout the Americas and EMEA.

Learn how Topia Compass can help you understand where your employees are working and proactively manage distributed workforce risk: topia.com/compass

Learn how Topia's Remote Work Solution can help manage the end-to-end lifecycle of remote work: topia.com/solutions/remote-work



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