cartus

what does your mobility program look like for 2023?

pulse survey report

The employee experience, program optimization, and remote workforces are just some areas HR and mobility professionals will have to consider when creating a mobility strategy that meets both long and near-term needs in 2023. Our recent pulse survey—which received 59 responses—highlights current priorities and challenges for the year ahead.
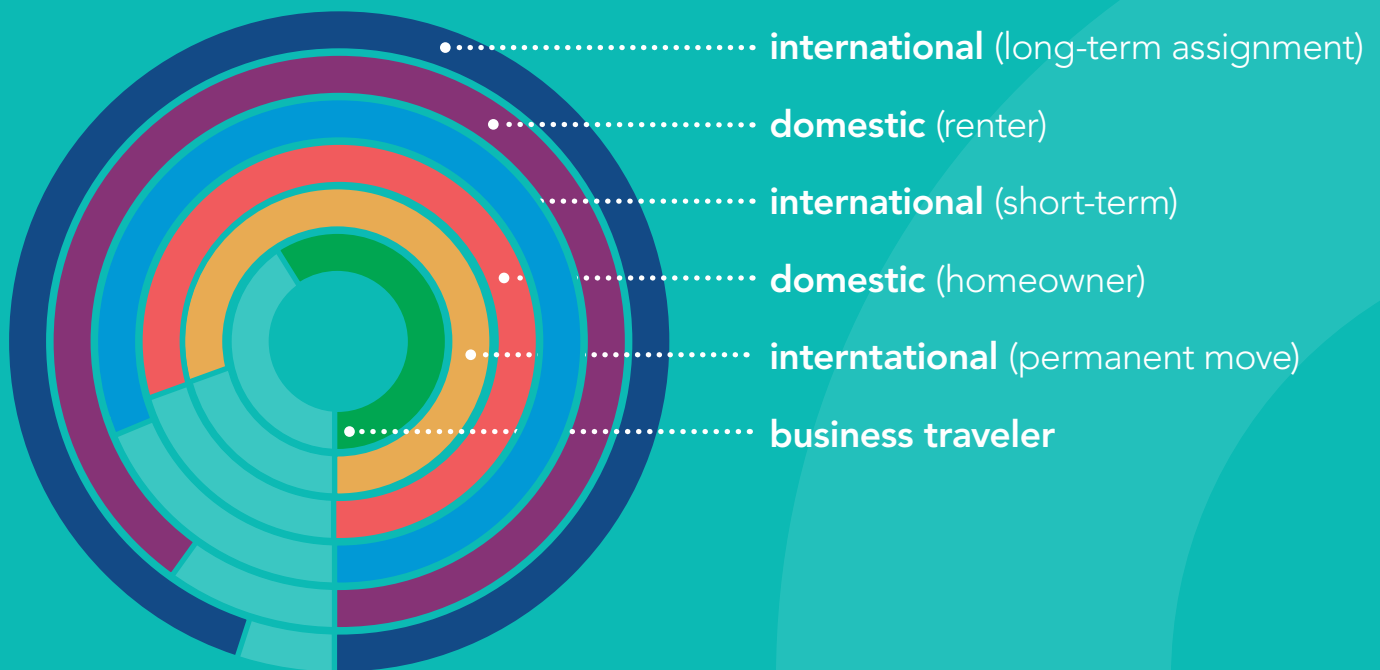
expected move patterns

The majority of respondents (36%) expect to move between 100 and 500 relocating employees in 2023, with an additional 22% indicating their company will move between 501 and 1,000. Making a year-on-year comparison, mobility remains critical to business, with most companies (48%) indicating their move volume will remain the same compared to 2022. An additional 37% of respondents expect move volume to increase this year.

Our recent pulse survey—which received 59 responses—highlights current priorities and challenges for the year ahead. Survey respondents represent the following industries: manufacturing, construction, tech, consumer goods, pharma, food services, logistics, retail, oil and gas, finance, life sciences, and aerospace.

what type of activity is anticipated in 2023?

- international (long-term assignment)
- domestic (renter)
- international (short-term)
- domestic (homeowner)
- interntational (permanent move)
- business traveler

When looking at the type of mobility program supported in 2023, **21%** expect a shift from historical activity supported in the past

global mobility priorities

When asked what their top global mobility priorities are for the year, respondents highlighted three stand-out areas:

1. Employee experience
2. Program optimization
3. Compliance

Two of these three trends (employee experience and compliance) were top priorities listed by respondents in our "What Does Your Mobility Program Look Like For 2022?" Pulse Survey Report. Although program optimization, or finding the most effective way to deliver mobility, is not a new industry trend, it appears to be an emerging 'top priority' for companies this year.

employee experience

Unsurprisingly, employee experience is the top focus, most likely due to the many challenges mobile employees experienced in 2022 with supply chain slowdowns, high costs, complex immigration requirements, and a lack of affordable temporary accommodations around the globe, in addition to mortgage interest rate spikes in the U.S.

To counter this pressure, many global mobility teams offer flexibility in their policies, whether that is by adding inclusive policy language and support, tiering policies, focusing on duty of care, or providing core and choice policies in which the employee can choose diverse support suitable to their family's specific needs. In addition, organizations continue to distinguish between company-sponsored moves and those initiated by the employee.

program optimization

Regarding program optimization, global mobility managers are looking to adopt technology solutions, specifically those that streamline and optimize the most effective way to deliver mobility (including remote workers and business travelers), track demographics, and reduce complexity. Overall, there is a need among our respondents to improve program consistency and structure, program flow, and automation.

compliance

The rise in the number of remote workers may be the reason compliance made the survey's top three priorities for 2023. Another factor could be the rising digitization of compliance, which makes it easier to share information across borders, enabling different governing authorities to work together to identify non-compliant individuals.

For those with a remote workforce, we recommend having a formal policy and deciding who within the business owns the policy. This will help mitigate potential compliance complexities. Robust remote worker policies should aim to achieve a balance between ensuring an organization adheres to local and global laws and legislation while providing employees and future talent with the flexibility they desire.

Read our Remote Work Landscape Pulse Survey Report

global mobility challenges

The top 2023 mobility challenges cited by respondents included:

1. Rising global costs in a difficult macroeconomic environment
2. Talent availability and deployment
3. The evolution of mobility to fully incorporate cross-border or remote work moves

In one form or another, these challenges reflect similar trends found in our 2022 pulse survey. Notably, compliance has been omitted this year as a major challenge although still features on respondents' list of top priorities. This shift may be due to the new work environment, which has meant—in addition to being a challenge—compliance has now also become a focus and priority for companies.

Rising global costs in a difficult macroeconomic environment

Identified as the most anticipated challenge in 2023, rising costs have meant HR and mobility professionals must seek ways to reduce cost to offset market increases. In addition, they must balance that need simultaneously with one that strives to deliver an excellent relocating experience for the assignee and their family.

Encouragingly, program costs are expected to decrease as timely shipments of goods return and housing and temporary accommodations become more available. Companies with U.S. domestic programs should learn about mortgage programs that can support transferring employees when rates are high. However, it is recommended to adopt a "wait and see" approach in 2023 while rates hover around 6%, an "average" rate historically.

For the near-term, developing a suite of global mobility policies commensurate with the employee level or the purpose of the assignment/transfer can help to contain relocation costs. Whether that requires additional policies added to your existing policies or looking at a more flexible approach contained by a pre-approved budget

may depend on your company's culture and philosophy.

Adopting a more flexible approach to mobility may combine these two seemingly competing focuses (cost containment and employee experience). Policies may be targeted tiered policies by level or move purpose or core/flex policies providing relocating employees with choice and control while presenting opportunities for cost containment. A core/flex approach provides the assignees the benefits they need and cap the amount an individual can cash out from unused relocation services.

A flexible policy approach can also provide the innovative and inclusive options that need to be implemented as part of macro-organizational initiatives. Such initiatives can influence mobility policy and also enhance the employee experience, e.g., allowing a friend or relative to join a single-parent assignee on the final trip to help babysit children, while the assignee unpacks and settles in.

Starting your flexible mobility journey? Download our white paper series on how to begin or learn how Amy Spiker, Global Talent Mobility Leader, Eaton helped to build her company's successful core/flex program.

talent availability and deployment

Survey respondents cited talent availability and deployment as another key challenge this year. It relates to attracting key talent in competitive markets and then ensuring you retain talent by providing them with the relocation benefits they expect, which almost always relates to providing them with some type of choice and flexibility. In addition to the critical role flexible policies play in delivering a positive employee experience, mobility programs should also reflect Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) and Environmental Social Governance (ESG) or sustainability options.

For DEI, proactively reviewing mobility policies to add inclusionary language or letting new hires know about Affinity Teams or Employee Resource Groups are great first steps to ensuring employees feel they belong. Follow-up initiatives may include addressing family-specific needs in mobility policies, e.g., wheelchair accommodations/accessibility, non-visible disabilities, and safety and security measures, which further demonstrate an employer's inclusive approach and dedication to duty of care.

From an ESG or sustainability perspective, providing some candidates with an inclusionary policy that addresses their "green" interests, for example, may convince them to join an organization. Seeking sustainable resources and solutions from suppliers, e.g., reduced packaging and recycling, discard and donate, and providing virtual communications instead of paper copies, can go a long way with an employee or candidate considering an assignment with your company. Encouragingly, 76% of respondents have a corporate sustainability strategy covering the whole business and supply chain.
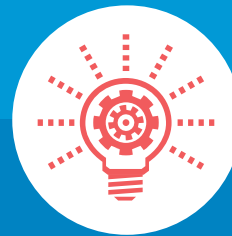
evolution of mobility

As the corporate relocation industry evolves, global mobility teams inevitably encounter new challenges, including remote work, self-initiated moves, and compliance for cross-border moves/business travelers. Allowing employees to work remotely can expose companies to potential compliance, tax, and immigration risks, but it can also significantly benefit organizations by expanding talent pools, attracting and retaining employees, and reducing facility costs.

The global mobility function must balance and integrate flexible working and location preferences with the organization's preferred ways of working. In addition, it is important to understand how these areas impact talent pools.

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policy redesign

As the global landscape continues to evolve, so too have the needs of relocating employees and their families.

Meeting the requirements of a multi-generational and increasingly varied employee base is one of the most significant challenges global organizations face today. To win the talent war and provide the right level of duty of care, businesses are looking for innovative ways to approach mobility policies, with more than half of respondents (56%) considering a policy redesign in 2023, up 17 percentage points from last year.

Most responding companies (64%) are considering redesigning both U.S. domestic and international mobility programs. The top reasons for doing so reflect current priorities and challenges for 2023: **flexibility, cost,** and a **focus on talent** (e.g., employee satisfaction). Additional reasons cited by respondents included diversity, equity, and inclusion, and **employee volume**.

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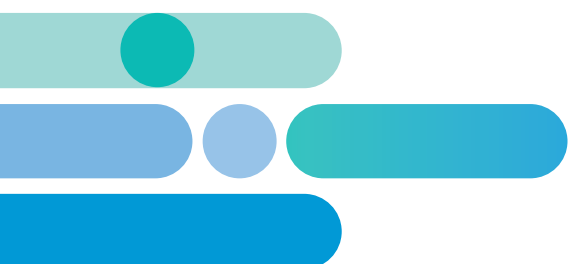
pressure on HR and mobility professionals

Trends previously mentioned (cost containment, DEI, competition for talent, remote workers) each come with their own set of projects, initiatives, and focuses that the global mobility function is expected to deliver. This, in itself, coupled with a lack of time and resources, could be argued to be the biggest challenge facing HR and mobility professionals today.

If we take the increase in remote workforces as an example, 25% of respondents to our "**Remote Work Landscape" Pulse Survey Report** estimated that managing remote work requests may take up to 40 hours per month. At Cartus, we have found many HR and mobility professionals feel overwhelmed by the volume of remote work requests and queries they receive, specifically around immigration requirements in different world locations. In some cases, companies have been reluctant to roll-out the option of remote working to a wider population within their business, due to the lack of solution in place to manage the expected uptick in requests, as well as the ability to proactively manage potential compliance risks.

Technology solutions like a remote work management platform may help support mobility and HR teams in this endeavour. Such tools can house all remote work requests and approvals, while also highlighting compliance concerns before a remote work assignment is approved.

Other challenging areas include DEI and sustainability-focused initiatives. Despite the obvious need to incorporate these into global mobility, they can be challenging and time-consuming to implement. Yet, the business (including senior leadership) expects DEI and sustainability to not only be addressed but continually monitored and improved upon.

The role of relocation within an organization has also increased the pressure put on HR and mobility professionals. Developing policies and working with internal stakeholders has become an expectation of the global mobility team, positioning them as a strategic internal partner. However, the challenges to effectively manage this additional work include a lack of resources, the complexity of mobility support needed by assignees, and the wider needs of the business.

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With new and evolving challenges and priorities, both within mobility and from wider economic influences, the need to build an innovative and strategic mobility program is critical. For more information on how Cartus can help support your mobility needs, please contact us at **cartussolutions@cartus.com**.