

global talent mobility survey 2024

pharma: industry trends summary



Our [Global Talent Mobility Survey Report 2024](#) is a comprehensive exploration into the dynamic intersection of macroeconomic challenges, employee experience, and the ever-evolving landscape of global mobility strategies. With the final report out now, we have taken a deep dive into specific industries—including Pharma—to see what the data tells us.

FOLLOWING ARE KEY FINDINGS FROM OUR 11 PHARMA RESPONDENTS:

mobility volume

When measuring yearly domestic (intra-country) non-US relocation volume, the Pharma industry has a smaller share of respondents who had fewer than 100 relocations (27%) than the whole report (48%). This sector had the same proportion of respondents as the whole report in the 100-500 (27%) and 501-1,000 (9%) volume categories. Relocations as part of an international (cross-border only) assignment program are nearly equally divided between fewer than 100 relocations (45%) and 100 to 500 relocations (55%).

The data shows that the Pharma industry has experienced more fluctuations in its mobility activity over the past two years than the overall survey population. While 36% of Pharma respondents reported an increase in their mobility activity over the past two years, 46% reported a decrease, and only 18% reported no change. In contrast, the overall survey results show that 30% of the respondents decreased their mobility activity, 26% remained the same, and the rest increased it. This suggests that the Pharma industry has faced more challenges and opportunities in its mobility programs than other industries.

Drivers for increasing volume

There was no clear winner in terms of key factors that played a significant role in increasing mobility activity over the past two years, but reasons cited by respondents included:

- Talent not available locally
- Company growth
- Increase in remote workers
- Merger or acquisition

Drivers for decreasing volume

The top two factors that played a significant role in decreasing mobility activity for Pharma respondents over the past two years are cost containment strategy and negative company growth.



How do you foresee Artificial Intelligence (AI) impacting your global mobility program in the future?

“Continue to enhance efficiency and effectiveness and ROI.”

Looking forward to increased automation and enhancements that can be achieved with limited resources.”

To recommend the best relo package/assignment based on data provided by the employee.”

- 2024 Cartus survey respondents (Pharma sector)



anticipated move types for 2024

There were four move types that came in joint-first for this industry:

- Business traveler
- Employee requested moves
- International long-term assignments
- International short-term assignments

It is notable that employee-requested moves featured so highly. While self-initiated moves and associated policies have existed for decades, the original intent to support occasional requests from employees who might have a familial need to relocate—e.g., a partner's career change—has evolved to be more talent driven, even prior to the recent pandemic.

Some additional insights from the data:

- Intra-country moves came second in the full report but were only ranked fifth by Pharma respondents.
- Just under half (46%) considered lump sum moves as a priority for their mobility programs.
- Most respondents (91%) were not interested in a "technology-only" solution for any of their mobility populations. This reflects a clear preference for service that includes a human touch and a trusted expert in the field, rather than relying solely on technology.



mobility priorities vs. challenges

The survey asked the respondents to rank their top two global mobility priorities for 2024:

2024 mobility PRIORITIES	
pharma industry	full report
1 improve in-house mobility processes and optimization	1 improve in-house mobility processes and optimization
review or redesign mobility policy AND improve the employee experience 2	improve the employee experience 2

The findings indicate that the Pharma industry segment prioritizes enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of its global mobility operations. It also gives equal weight to the need to revise or restructure mobility policies and boost employee satisfaction levels, with both tied for second.

The following are the top two global mobility challenges for 2024:

2024 mobility CHALLENGES	
pharma industry	full report
1 rising mobility costs AND extended business travelers or remote workers	1 rising mobility costs
tax and compliance AND meeting relocating employee expectations 2	meeting relocating employee expectations 2

As in the full report, Pharma respondents pointed to increasing mobility costs as their main mobility issue. They also listed extended business travelers and remote workers as a major challenge, even though it was only the fifth most common challenge in the overall report.

cost management

Most companies in this industry were worried about cost control. All respondents reported that their organization's attention to cost control was either higher this year than the last two years or unchanged. The respondents recommended the following methods to reduce costs in their global mobility programs:

- Improving administrative processes
- Changing or renegotiating external providers
- Reforming or updating policy

Curiously, and possibly showing ongoing commitment to the mobility function within a company, 73% of Pharma respondents indicated that their relocation budgets had not changed compared to the previous year. This was 10 percentage points higher than the full report, with two-thirds saying the same.

policy review and redesign

One of the topics covered in the survey was the frequency and intention of policy review and redesign. The data reveals that 46% of Pharma respondents usually evaluate their mobility policies every one to two years, which matches the frequency reported by most of our full report survey takers, across all industries. For this year, only 36% of Pharma respondents are considering a policy review, compared to 62% of full report respondents.



hybrid, extended business travel, and remote worker moves

What do we mean by Extended Business Travel (EBT), hybrid, or remote moves?

- **Extended Business Travel (EBT):** Business-initiated request for the employee to work from a different business location for a defined period (e.g., employee travels from the UK to France to work from their Paris office for an extended period, typically 30 to 90 days.)
- **Hybrid:** Employees work partly at home and partly in the physical office, 1-2 days a week.
- **Remote work:** Employee-initiated request to work from a location that is different from their permanent residence for a defined period (e.g., an employee based in the US wants to work from Spain for two months during the summer).
- **Work from home:** Everyone works at their place of residence.

A little more than half (55%) of respondents have international remote workers, tracking closely against the 57% who reported as such in the full report. Most Pharma respondents (73%) did not offer any company-sponsored benefits to these employees. Those that do offer benefits provide compliance support and immigration services. As we discussed earlier in this report, business travelers are one of the most expected move types for 2024. Interestingly, 46% of Pharma respondents reported that business travel volume has returned to pre-pandemic levels (almost 16 percentage points above findings in the full report).

international compensation services

Our Global Talent Mobility Survey 2024 also asked about the administration of international assignment compensation services. The results showed that the majority (55%) of Pharma respondents worked with a relocation management company, and 18% used a global tax provider. In contrast, the full report showed that only 31% used a relocation management company, and 42% of the respondents across all industries chose to manage the services internally, compared with 9% doing it themselves in the Pharma industry. These findings suggest that the Pharma industry has a more outsourced model for managing the compensation and tax aspects of their international assignments than the average respondent.

flexible mobility

When discussing demand for more flexibility in mobility programs, 64% of Pharma respondents reported a rise, and 36% indicated demand remained the same.

Key drivers for such an approach in the Pharma sector included:

- Changing employee expectations
- Changing employee needs
- Need to reduce policy exceptions
- Budget constraints and macro-economic environmental pressures

mobility DEI and sustainability

According to Cartus data, most Pharma respondents are “making progress” when it comes to aligning their global mobility programs with their organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) objectives. When asked what diversity categories their global mobility team are most focused on better understanding in the next 12 months, 29% of

Pharma respondents said all kinds of diversity, with another 13% saying their focus was race/ethnicity or culture.

Regarding sustainability, the Pharma industry respondents are also ahead of our overall survey results, as 73% (seven percentage points higher than the full survey) reported that their organization has a corporate sustainability strategy that encompasses the entire business and its supply chain.



read our full report!

Drawing global insights from 138 respondents across diverse industries, our **Global Talent Mobility Survey Report 2024** unravels the intricate balancing act of dichotomies that define the current corporate relocation landscape. Themes emerging from the data highlight an unwavering focus on employee experience and cost-effectiveness. Striking a delicate balance between these two imperatives requires innovative (and often flexible) mobility policies. Other dualities facing HR and mobility professionals include the need for a human touch against a backdrop of rapid technological advancement. As artificial intelligence (AI) evolves at lightning speed, the timeless necessity for an empathetic (and human) guide and advocate persists.

Pressed for time? Catch the survey highlight reel [here](#).

