

Expatriate Insider 2021 Survey: The Future of Working Abroad

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

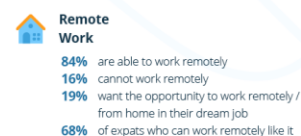
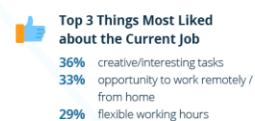
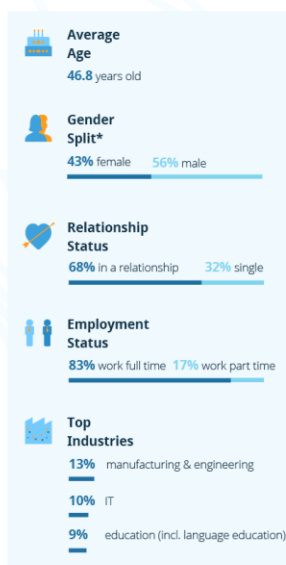
- German expats are more likely to have a six-figure income than the global average of expats working abroad.
- Having creative/interesting tasks, the opportunity to work remotely, and flexible working hours is what German expats enjoy most about their current career.
- However, when they are asked to imagine their dream job, a good compensation and/or good benefits, a good work-life balance, and creative/interesting tasks are most important to them.

Munich, 14 September 2021 — Why do Germans move abroad? According to the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey by InterNations, 52% of Germans working abroad name their career as the most important reason for relocating to another country. Foreign assignments are far more common among Germans than among the global average: 21% of German expats were sent abroad by their employer, compared to 13% globally. Moreover, 17% found a job on their own, 11% were recruited internationally, and 3% moved abroad to start their own business.

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.

German Expats

The Future of Working Abroad



* Respondents also had the option to self describe — so the total may not always add up to 100%.
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*** Note: This includes working expats and expats looking for a job.

German Expats Work Long Hours and Make Good Money

The majority of German expats works full time (83%), and they spend a bit more time at work than the average expat: The average working hours among all working respondents from Germany amount to 41.4 hours per week, compared to 39.9 hours per week globally. This might explain why just 65% are satisfied with their working hours, which is somewhat below the global average (70%). However, around two-thirds (67%) say they are happy with their work-life balance, about the same as the global average of 68%.

However, the long hours seem to pay off: Close to two in five Germans working abroad (39%) make 100,000 USD or more per year, compared to just 23% of expats worldwide. The share of German expats with an income of more than 250,000 USD annually (7%) is even more than twice the global average (3%). On the other hand, just around a quarter (26%) earn 50,000 USD or less, compared to 44% globally.

What German Expats Like about Their Current Job

Considering these numbers, it might be a surprise that a good compensation and/or good benefits is just the fourth-most-cited aspect that German expats like about their current job. Close to three in ten (29%) say they particularly appreciate this factor. What they enjoy just as much or even more is having creative/interesting tasks (36%), the opportunity to work remotely / from home (33%), and flexible working hours (29%).

These factors are all closely related to the concept of New Work. Interestingly, just about half the Germans working abroad (53%) say that New Work is an important part of the business culture in their host country. And only two in five (40%) think that the concept of New Work is more important in their host country than in Germany's business culture — globally, 49% have moved to a country where New Work plays a more important role than in their respective home country.

German Expats Live the Concept of New Work Abroad

This might be related to the most common destinations where German expats work: the USA, Switzerland, and China. While the USA is voted first worldwide as far as the importance of New Work in the local business culture is concerned, Switzerland lands in a mediocre 23rd place out of 55 countries in this regard. China, however, even ranks among the worst destinations when it comes to the importance of New Work (46th). Germany ranks 35th.

“Although German expats do not only move to countries where New Work plays an important role, they still seem to land in jobs that enable them to live and work according to these values,” says Malte Zeeck, InterNations Founder and Co-CEO. “Seeing that they enjoy having creative tasks, the opportunity to work remotely, and flexible working hours, it seems like German expats find fulfillment in their jobs abroad. And taking the above-average incomes into consideration, their careers abroad seem to offer German expats everything they could wish for.”

Working Remotely Is a Nice-to-Have, Not a Must-Have for Their Dream Job

With remote work being one of the factors German expats like most about their current job, 84% are able to work remotely / from home (vs. 78% globally). The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact for more than half the German expats in this regard: 32% are now able to work remotely more often than before, and 21% say that remote work was newly introduced by their employer and is now here to stay.

Still, the share of those working remotely for more than 15 days per month (16%) or even fully remotely (37%) is just a little lower than the global average (18% and 39%, respectively). *“Germans working abroad seem to enjoy a mix of working remotely and going to the office as many spend less than half the month in a remote setting,”* says Malte Zeeck. In fact, around one quarter (24%) work remotely for 6 to 15 days a month, which is considerably more than the global average (18% globally).

Working remotely is also not among the most important aspects that German expats mention when asked about their dream job. In fact, a good compensation and/or benefits (50%), a good work-life balance (48%), and creative/interesting tasks (42%) are more important to German expats as far as their ideal work environment is concerned. These factors are followed by flexible working hours (27%) while just 19% cite the opportunity to work remotely / from home.

Germans Working Abroad Are Older and More Likely to Have a PhD

Germans living and working abroad are on average 46.8 years old, which is considerably older than the average working expat (43.1 years). German men (56%) tend to work abroad slightly more often than women from Germany (43%). Overall, German expats working abroad are highly educated: close to half (48%) hold a postgraduate degree / master’s degree, and 16% even have a PhD, which is twice the global average (8%).

Despite their education level, the share of German expats working in a senior / specialist position (27% vs. 30% globally) and being top managers / executives (15% vs. 13% globally) is not that different from the respective global average. Another 21% work in lower / middle management (vs. 17% globally), while just 3% hold an entry-level job (vs. 7% globally). Moreover, close to a quarter are either self-employed / freelancers (12%) or have their own business (11%), compared to a global average of 11% and 7%, respectively.

The top 3 fields German expats work in are manufacturing & engineering (13%), IT (10%), and education (9%). Other frequently mentioned fields of work include coaching & consulting, healthcare, and finance (6% each).

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		

About the Future of Working Abroad Report

This report is based on data from the *Expat Insider 2021* survey by InterNations. In total, 12,420 expats participated; the general *Expat 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 *Expat 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](#).

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