RELOCATING PARTNER
SURVEY REPORT
2023

NetExpat
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CONTENTS

2023 RELOCATING PARTNER SURVEY

Key Findings

- **Well-Being:** Following the pandemic, well-being of the relocating partner, and, the entire family of mobile employees is a top priority for everyone/employers, employees and families. The concept of family experience is now recognized as a key component of Employee Experience (see pages 5 & 6).

- **Growing Importance of Dual-Income:** The percentage of professionally active relocating partners and families relying on two incomes continues to grow: 74% of them consider the partner income as “crucial” or “significant”, up 5% from 2018 (see page 4).

- **Partner Support:** 2023 comes with good news and better practices – a growing majority of employers are now offering partner support to their mobile talent (international assignees, local hires, and permanent transfers). There is still a disconnect with employees expecting their employers to offer more support to their Partners, but the gap between employees and employers is shrinking (see page 3).

- **DE&I:** 41% of employers support relocating partners to enhance their DE&I agenda (see page 7).

- **Shifting from “Cash” to “Care”:** 69% of employers offer support for working partners, and 51% are offering Integration Support to non-working partners. Cash allowances are losing popularity, with just 36% of corporations choosing this option, down from 61% just 10 years ago (see page 6).

- **Split Family Option:** 67% of policy owners and 85% of all employees find split family assignments arrangements to be challenging and disruptive for the family. Only 22% of policy owners consider split families as a good way to solve partner issues (see page 7).

SECTION 1

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In 2018, NetExpat and EY released the largest survey to date on the relocating partner. Since then, this benchmark survey has helped thousands of companies evolve their relocation policies and bring awareness to the importance of the relocating partner. The world has changed immensely since that first initial report. In the years since the report was published, we have seen an exponentially increased focus on the Employee Experience, the well-being of employees and DE&I. The pandemic and the rapid shifts in the global socio-political landscape have altered the outlook and focus of the entire family unit of mobile employees.

The survey focuses on multiple objectives:

- Understanding, at a global level, all matters affecting relocating partners/spouses/families
- How to help employers understand the challenges their mobile employees face and how to affect change to decrease challenges and address current trends
- Listening to mobile employees, their partners; creating change based on lessons learned
- Tuning in to the relocating family; addressing well-being to ensure continued positive experiences

The 2023 survey also updates the data with more topics which have become important after the events of the last few years:

- The effect of hybrid and cross-border remote work
- Family Experience
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Benchmarking your global and domestic relocating partner and family policies and practices against those of other global employers and industry peers is essential in these transformational times.

EY and NetExpat have joined forces to conduct the largest ongoing annual survey of Relocating Partner policies and practices. The resulting database is already the most robust of its kind on a global scale, with input from 320 multinational organizations representing all industries.

Target audience

This 2023 survey leveraged the historic data since 2018. The 2023 survey gathers feedback from 650 corporate HR representatives, mobile employees and their partners. The 2023 survey reflects data collected from 650 respondents and provides perspective from these three different viewpoints of parties committed to the mobile

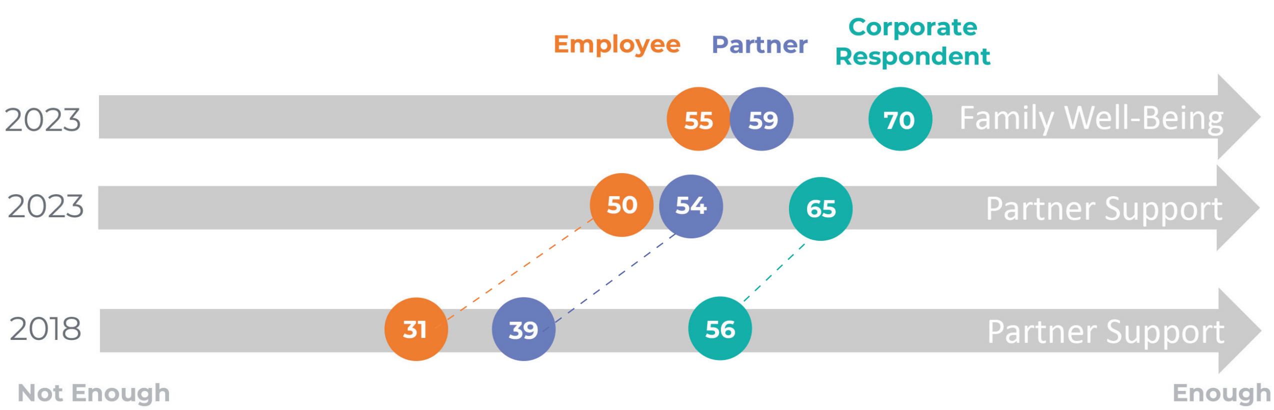
Download the historic full RPS report which surveyed 3,412 respondents, located in 121 locations, representing corporations, employees and their partners. >>

SECTION 2

NEW INSIGHTS

Attention to Partner Support and Family Well-Being

Employees and their partners feel that corporations have listened to their concerns and the gap between corporate program owners and both employees and their partners on Partner Support has started to close.



Family experience (FX) is central to the employee experience. It is no longer considered a separate concern. **The well-being of the family is a key component of the services companies should consider offering in an international relocation package.** Well-being is supported through a person with whom the family/partner identifies with - a person who understands the social/emotional needs of the relocating family. As the nature of services offered is evolving, the potential for leveraging peer-to-peer support is extremely important. For example, implementing a “buddy” program is a perfect solution with double advantages. It leverages the current investment – and does not increase the cost of providing services. The interactions increase self-esteem and cultural awareness which creates a positive impact for both the family/partner and the buddy. As a result, helping others directly contributes to the well-being of the buddy.

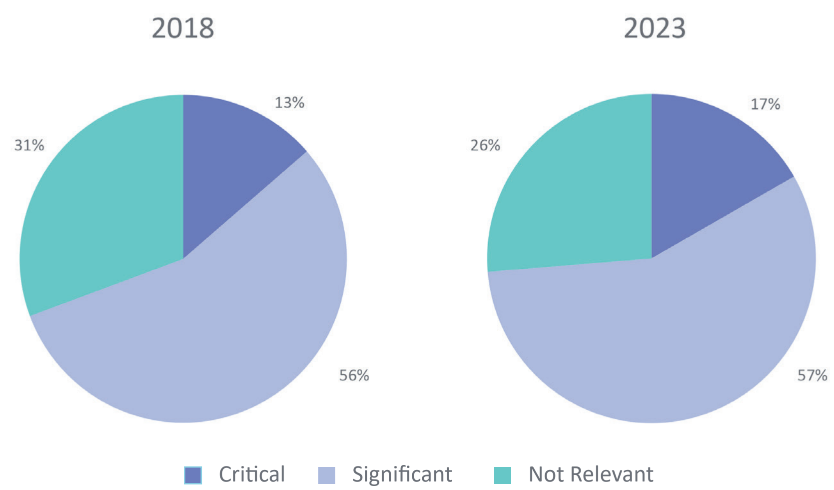
“We are actively seeking to move the needle on gender parity in our assignee population, and one clear focus area for us is improving our partner support, from reviewing the services offered to updating our respective communications. We are listening to our assignees and adjusting as needed.”

— Tracy Paech, Head of Crossborder Workforce at Bayer AG

Partner Employment Situation

The voice of the non-working partner has gained momentum and will continue to be seen and heard by employers. In the updated 2023 data, the number of employed partners has decreased yet more partners are looking for work. The job market, made difficult due to the pandemic, has created a need for non-working partners to find alternative paths to happiness and integration. **This has boosted the need for employers to not only be aware of the needs of non-working spouses but to also support their needs.** The pandemic has revealed not only a need to support the non-working but to also be mindful of their well-being. As the job market continues to be in a state of flux, the proportion of working partners, and partners looking to work, will continue to increase because sociologically, the number of dual-earner families is exponentially increasing. **For Generations Y and Z, in particular, this is a socio-economic global trend—the principle is that to survive you need two incomes – two earners.** The trend of families relying on a second income continues to increase.

Importance of Second Income



The importance of a second income to families has increased from 69% to 74% in just 5 years—a growing and large majority of households.

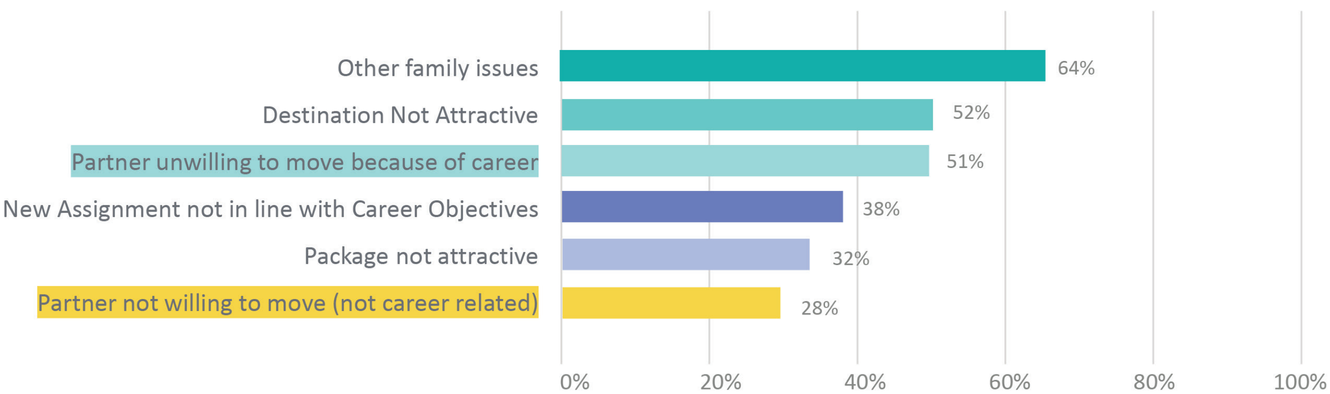
"International mobility opportunities almost always provide a significant benefit to an employee's long-term career progression. And if they cannot take advantage of such an opportunity because they do not feel confident that their family will be supported or integrated well into the new location, both the Company and the employee lose."

— Tessa Boone, Talent Mobility Manager at Ford Motor Company

Common Reasons for Relocation Rejection

Mobility is a significant investment of time and resources for employers, their employees, and if the opportunity is not the right fit, the assignment will often not move forward. In terms of looking at why assignments are rejected, the great news is that not everything is tied to cash.

Common Reasons for Assignment Rejection



With the more common reasons for rejection being around family items or the destination itself, companies may want to look at the **emerging concept of pre-decision consultations** through which employers can reassure and educate their employees about the decision to become mobile. These consultations that support the employee and family - through active listening, reassuring the mobile family, understanding needs—can be done by internal HR as well as external providers. Creating the pre-decision consultation helps provide education which may help give people confidence and comfort in where they are going and result in more acceptance of and a more open-minded approach to mobility.

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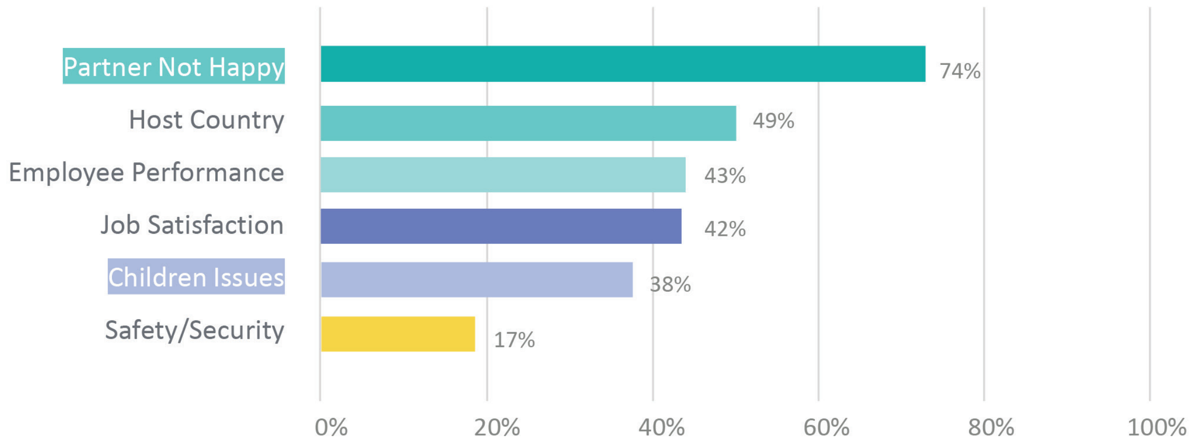
Common Reasons for Failed Relocations

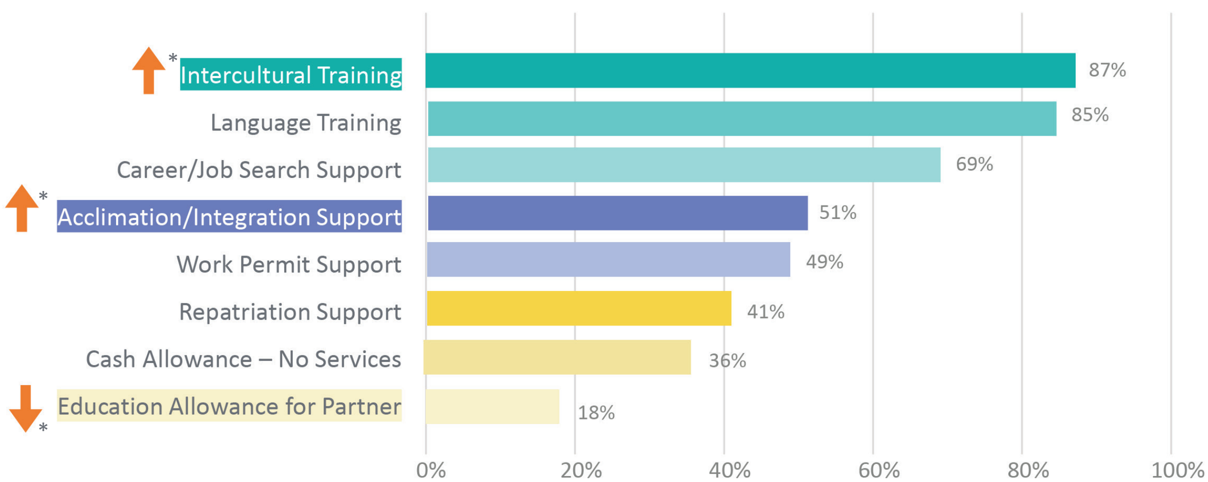
As expected, Partner and family unhappiness is again and by far, the #1 reason for failed assignment. In looking at how to help battle this unhappiness, partners and families are growingly supported by corporations through a range of support including Acclimation/integration Support, intercultural training which are both rising compared to 2018. All forms of Cash allowances and Education Allowance are losing popularity. This has resulted in an increase of positive assignment outcomes.

During the EY 2023 Mobility Reimagined Conference, attendees were asked "What Experience element do you believe/have you heard from participants is the most challenging for mobility program participants?" Responses indicated that **"…family experience tops the list of most influential factors** for the family's international experience." 51% of respondents stated that the number one influential factor for an employee to relocate the family for an international experience is for better family opportunities in the new location.

Common Reasons for Failed Assignments



Family Partner Benefits Offered



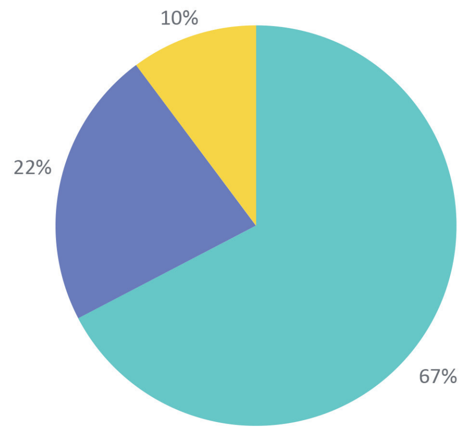
*Notable increase or decrease since 2018.

"The most helpful resources for families in support of their relocation is not cash, but rather "Cultural Training", "Housing" and "Spousal/Partner Support."

Split Family

Alternative formats of mobility have emerged over the years, which are splitting the family instead of sending the entire family unit together. At first glance, it looks flexible and attractive: you keep the partner in the home location, not disrupting their career, and aim for a shorter assignment for the employee sent unaccompanied and therefore potentially saving money for the corporation. In reality, these split families—commuting of short term assignments - pose challenges not only for families, but also for companies. We draw on data from the RPS since 2018 to provide insight. The data clearly suggests there is a concern: 67% of policy owners – 2023 - and 85% of all employees find split family assignments arrangements to be challenging and disruptive for the family. Only 22% of policy owners consider split families as a good way to solve partner issues.

Opinion of Split Family



Implications for Employees and Families

It is now time to look at the broader implications of split family assignments, which ultimately impact employee productivity and engagement. The effects on family members of long and frequent separations are well-known. They can include breakdown in communication, resentment, and feelings of abandonment. As a result, the family dynamics may irreparably be impacted. Roles and responsibilities often change substantially, potentially leaving long-lasting marks on the family dynamic. We have seen that this transition becomes increasingly challenging the longer it lasts, justifying the need to limit such arrangements.

Implications for Companies

It is debatable how effective and productive commuting arrangements are for employers. Commuters and short-term assignments are something of a productivity paradox: being split from the family does allow an employee to focus more and spend longer hours on the job at hand, but the constant back and forth and readjustment requires physical and mental effort from the employee. Additionally, the 'visitor' mentality also impedes integration with local teams and colleagues. This is unlikely to promote either engagement or retention."

"Living apart from my husband as he was commuting for the last 7 months has been extremely challenging for all of us. I wish we knew what we committed to."

— LV, Partner of a Commuter

"The last months living and working far from my family have turned out to be very difficult. It has impacted my private life and also somehow my professional life. Duration is probably key: this could have been sustainable for a few months, but this short-term assignment has been extended way too much."

— Assignee, 8-Month Short Term

SECTION 3

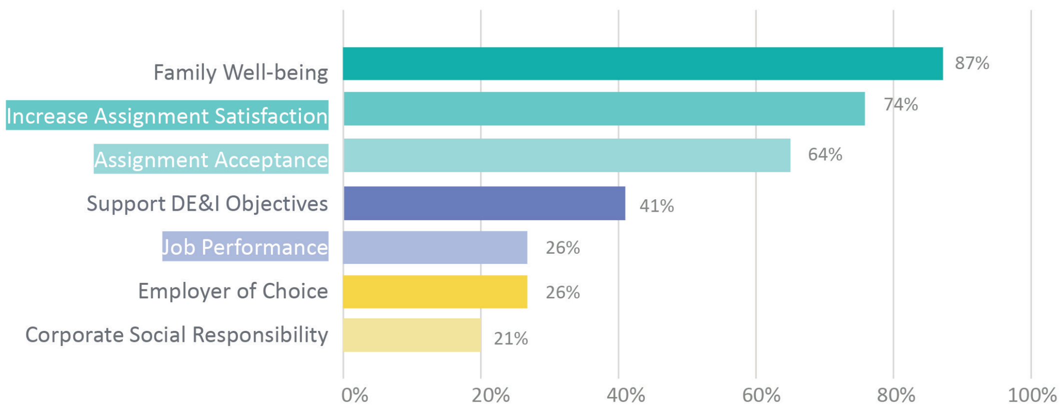
CONCLUSIONS

The *Relocating Partner Survey 2023* comes with multiple good news: international employers have confirmed that they have heard and understood mobile families' demands! Looking beyond basic compliance objectives, employers are now offering genuine support systems as part of their domestic and international mobility programs, while decreasing the cash and lumpsum which have proven to be ineffective.

The #1 and #2 reasons employers offer Partner support in 2023—see graph - are linked to their duty of care: "family well-being'' emerges way ahead, right before "Assignment satisfaction". The #3 reason corporations have become more family-friendly is confirming another positive trend: "Assignment Acceptance" benefits from a solid Partner support policy, which relieves a deeper partnership between the Global Mobility and the Talent Management function! Partner support works wonderfully to stimulate talent mobility.

The last good surprise of the *Relocating Partner Survey 2023* comes with #4 reason why partner support is offered: 41% of employers support partners to enhance their DE&I agenda!

Objective of Offering Partner Support



The major shift from "pay to care" has also a positive impact on talent retention, offering better perspectives post-assignment to all mobile talent in their repatriation phase. These are new aspects that we will be covering in our RPS 2024, along with others that you have requested us to include.

Please join us in this global conversation and share your comments! Contact us to benchmark your current or future policy and test if you are future-ready in terms of *Family Experience*. And most importantly, tell us what you would like to see covered in the Relocating Partner Survey 2024!

> *"The positive experience of the entire family of our mobile talent is extremely important at Airbus, and we see in return a positive impact on our talent mobility agenda. The RPS 2023 survey is key to keeping track of these transformative forces impacting Family Experience."*
>
> *— Benoit Pivin, Head of Global Mobility at Airbus*