

mobility is looking up

signs of optimism for 2022 and beyond



plus relocation®

why it's OK to feel good about the future of mobility

It may be hard to believe, but 2022 is here, and March 11 marks two years since the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

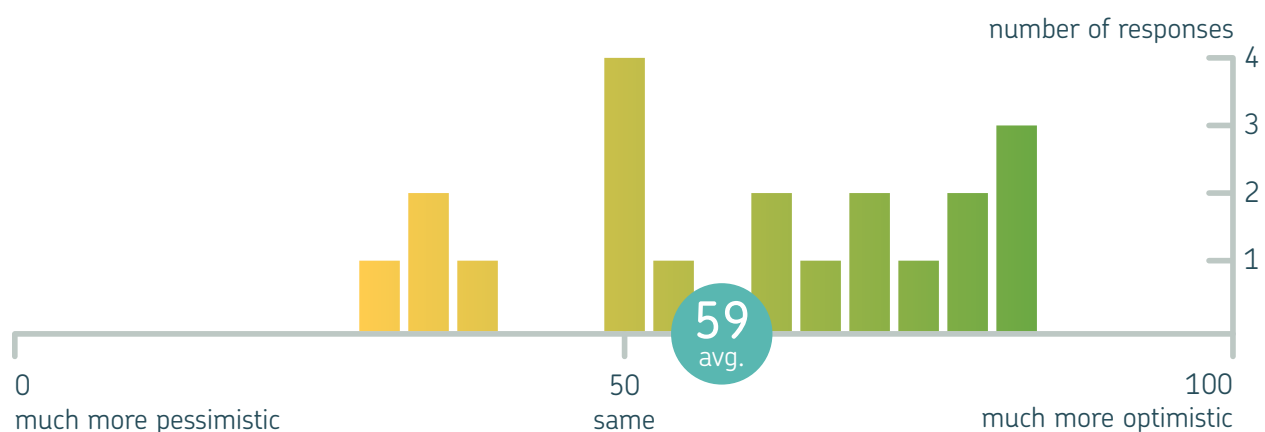
In the past 24 months, businesses have gone through a rapid transformation. With so many employees pushed toward remote work as the pandemic intensified, the talent environment looks drastically different today. You likely weren't talking about "hybrid work models" at the end of 2019, but they're front and center now. Search for "future of work" on Google and spend a minute scrolling through the results. *A lot* of people are wondering what the workplace will look like in 2022 and beyond.

Mobility programs are transforming, too. At the onset of the pandemic, global travel slowed to a halt, and many expats found themselves in [uniquely stressful and uncertain situations](#). Since then, however, various travel restrictions have been lifted and people are relocating again, though emerging move types such as "de-location" are expanding the scope of mobility teams.

Where does that leave us as we flip the page from 2021 to 2022? We conducted in-depth surveys with nearly two dozen leading mobility professionals and reviewed trends we've been watching over the past 12 months to set the stage for what could be ahead in the industry. In a nutshell: [It's been a loooooong two years, but things are looking up!](#)

We asked these mobility leaders specifically how optimistic they are about the next 12 months compared to the previous 12 months. You can see the results in the scale below — while the optimism is a bit reserved, respondents at least generally lean toward the more positive side. Considering how challenging 2020 and 2021 were, it's encouraging to see even guarded optimism emerge.

We also asked for one word that mobility leaders think will describe their programs in 2022. While a few cited words such as "uncertain" or "unpredictable," responses generally skewed more positive — "opportunity," "progress," "optimistic," "hope" and "evolving" all showed up at least once.



So why do mobility leaders see light at the end of the tunnel? In the rest of this report, we'll explore three key trends and explain why they should be good news for mobility programs and the industry overall.



global travel is
ready to take off



the talent market is
in a unique place



people want to move
— and work — all over

global travel is ready to take off

Remember what the travel landscape looked like in early 2020? Global borders closed and airports emptied as various stay-at-home orders took effect worldwide. This clearly had a negative impact on mobility.

But things are improving. Airline executives are banking on a [surge in international travel in 2022](#), and major players such as United, Southwest and Delta announced plans to grow their fleets in anticipation of traveler demand. Of course, this rebound may be uneven — a rise in COVID-19 cases or emergence of a new variant, such as [Omicron in late 2021](#), can quickly disrupt plans.

However, as borders eventually reopen, travel restrictions lessen and more people get comfortable traveling again, we should ultimately see more global movement in 2022. We saw this phenomenon play out within the U.S. in the summer months of 2021, as the bottleneck on domestic travel loosened and [records were shattered when it came to vacation spending](#).

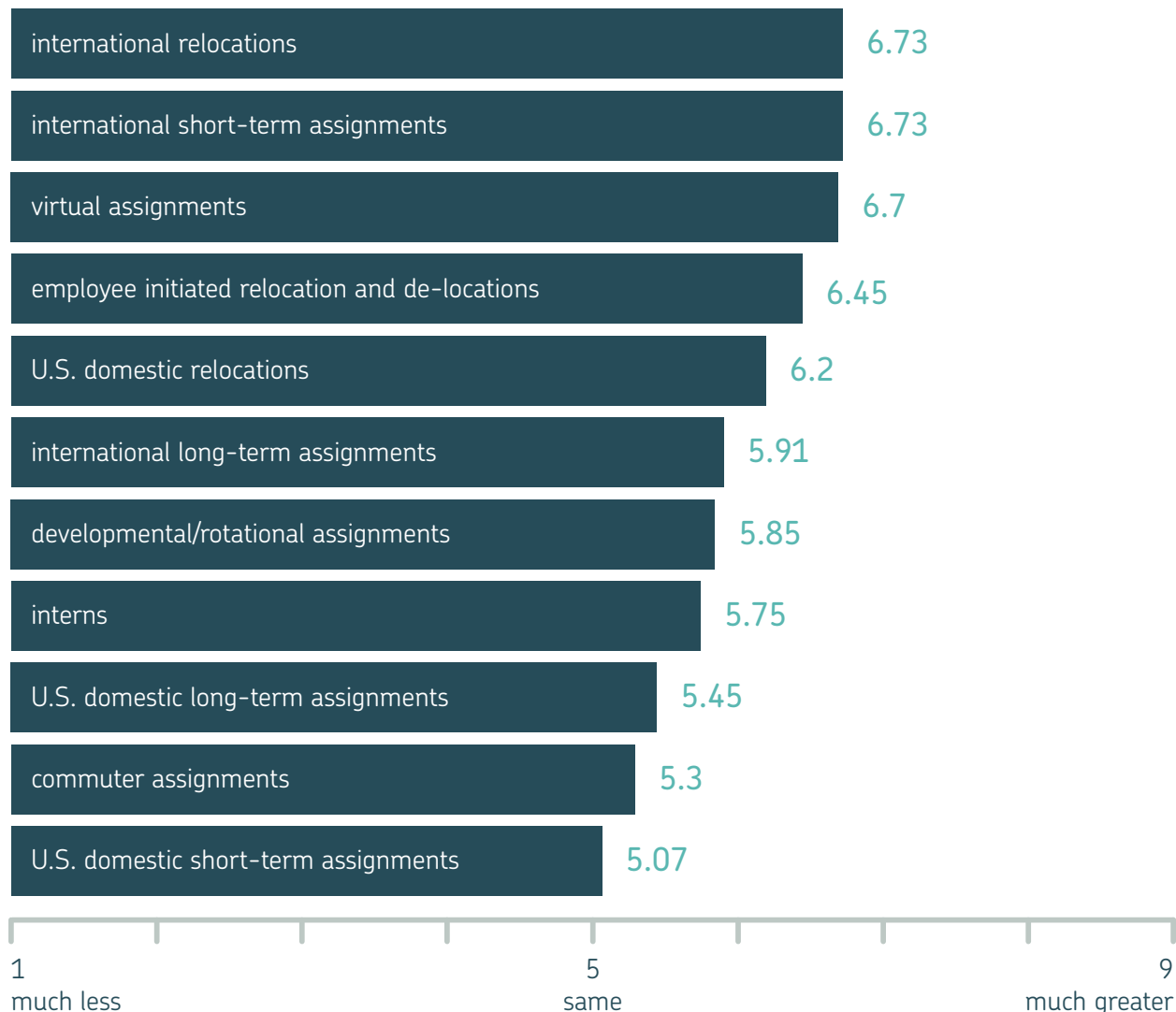
For mobility programs, a similar experience is expected to occur as moves come off hold. More than half of the mobility leaders we surveyed identified “increasing mobility volume/resuming ‘on hold’ moves” as one of their top five priorities for the year ahead (see page 5 for more on that).

We also asked about volume expectations when it comes to 11 different move types. For all 11, respondents said they expect at least a slight increase in activity in the coming year. International relocations and assignments are expected to see the most significant upticks, followed by virtual assignments. You can see the full list on the following page.

If 2020 put the car in park when it came to global mobility and 2021 only shifted into first gear, 2022 could be the year the engine starts to roar. One mobility leader said the biggest challenge in the year ahead will be climbing out of the “doldrums and getting people moving internationally again.”

international travel is expected to rebound in 2022 — will mobility teams be ready?

what will volume look like in 2022 compared to 2021 for the following move types?



the talent market is in a unique place

You've probably heard the term "[Great Resignation](#)" by now. The number of people quitting their jobs in the summer and fall of 2021 hit record levels, as many workers decided to take a step back amid the pandemic and reevaluate their personal and professional priorities.

Business leaders, not surprisingly, are paying attention. CEOs identified "labor/skills shortage" as the top external issue that will influence or disrupt their business strategy over the next 12 months, according to a [Fortune/Deloitte survey](#).

Mobility leaders are also taking notice, as nearly two-thirds identified "aligning with talent strategy (attracting/retaining employees)" as a top-five priority for the year ahead. And most said they expect to play a bigger role in talent recruitment or retention efforts in 2022 than they did in 2021.

As one respondent said, attracting and retaining talent is the mobility program's main focus because it is also the "company's top priority for 2022."

While the challenging talent market is presenting obstacles to many companies, leaders still see 2022 as a year for expansion. Two-thirds of CEOs said they expect "very strong" or "strong" growth in the next 12 months, according to the Fortune/Deloitte survey.

This gives mobility a unique opportunity to deliver value, particularly as global travel starts to pick up steam. With more and more jobs to fill, organizations are likely going to need to be creative when it comes to meeting talent needs. Options such as rotational assignments — where employees are moved between locations for developmental reasons or to help reach business goals — could be particularly useful in this environment. A bonus is that these types of opportunities can be particularly appealing to new hires, which can help employers stand apart from other companies.

the top priorities for global mobility programs in 2022

aligning with talent strategy (attracting/retaining employees)	63%
improving the employee experience	63%
increasing mobility volume/resuming "on hold" moves	53%
addressing remote work issues/"de-location"	47%
increasing flexibility for policy/program	47%
managing risk and compliance	42%
budgeting and cost containment/reduction	42%
upgrading technology	37%
adding, removing or revising policies	37%
reducing/eliminating exceptions	32%
focusing on DE&I	26%
sustainability	11%

*respondents were asked to identify their top five from this list;
percentages indicate how often each item was selected*

As one mobility leader told us, aligning with talent strategy is the mobility team's top priority for 2022 because the program operates as a true "talent mobility program." With the talent market expected to remain competitive for employers in the year ahead, the relationship between talent and mobility will be more important than ever.

people want to move — and work — all over

If you had to describe the U.S. housing market from the summer of 2021 in one word, "scorching hot" would be a great answer. OK, that's two words, but you get the idea. Pent-up demand from buyers who had to delay plans in 2020 got mixed with record-low interest rates and a modest inventory of new homes to create a great atmosphere for sellers. Prices soared and many buyers resorted to drastic measures — such as waiving inspections or offering tens of thousands of dollars over the asking price — to stay competitive in this environment.

While the frenzy started to cool some in the fall, the 2022 outlook remains good for sellers.

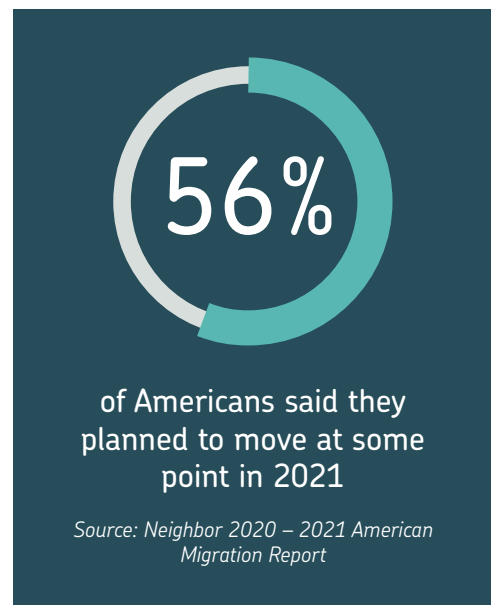
"The market will not be able to meet the supply/demand deficiency that we experienced throughout 2021 — we will continue to have significantly more buyers than homes available," said Plus Manager of Real Estate Services Kelly House. That means home prices [should continue to climb in 2022](#) and sellers should remain in a strong position for the foreseeable future, House noted.

Of course, those who sell a home typically have to also contend with the challenges of buying a home in the same real estate market (unless they decide to rent), but this hasn't kept people from wanting to move. In the early stages of the pandemic, about one in five Americans said they had [either relocated themselves or knew someone who did](#). Many said they moved to reduce their risk of contracting the coronavirus, get closer to family or improve their financial situation.

That trend continued into 2021, with 56 percent of Americans saying they [planned to move sometime in the year](#), up more than 20 percent from 2020. Finding a "lower cost of living" was the top reason why people said they planned on moving.

There's no reason to expect the interest in moving to slow down much in 2022. With the rise of remote work, more and more people find themselves no longer tethered to a particular location because of a job. Given the freedom to choose somewhere else to live, many are doing exactly that. And the hottest locations have generally been [more affordable \(and less crowded\) areas outside of major metropolitan centers](#).

It's a big reason for the emergence of "de-locations," or moves away from job locations. Just under half of our survey respondents identified "addressing remote work issues and 'de-location'" as a top-five priority next year. On average, the volume of employee-initiated relocations (including de-locations) is expected to increase by about 30 percent in 2022.



As we've said before: [de-location is relocation](#)! Just because these moves are initiated by the employee doesn't mean that mobility teams can't provide guidance and support. And in the larger world of remote and hybrid work, mobility teams have a [great opportunity to deliver real value](#) to an organization by playing a key role in figuring out how to manage a decentralized workforce.

it's not all positive — but mobility will be ready!

While “optimism” has been the prevailing theme in this report, that doesn't mean 2022 won't be without obstacles. Mobility leaders cited a number of key challenges for the next 12 months, including:

- putting moves back on hold if COVID-19 cases spike or new variants arise
- building back a program while remaining cost conscious
- managing duty of care concerns
- adapting to remote work and virtual assignments, particularly internationally
- dealing with [global supply chain issues that are expected to persist well into 2022](#)

With these challenges and others on the horizon, it makes sense that mobility leaders are more reserved in their optimism for 2022. But as we've learned in the past two years, our industry is up for any challenge! Heading into the next 12 months, mobility leaders can channel their cautious optimism into positive energy for their programs. Now is the time for big goals and big ideas, while remaining ready to adjust on the fly when the next big hurdle comes our way.



Looking for a partner to help make your mobility future brighter? Let us know! www.plusrelocation.com/contact