

GLOBAL STUDY FOCUSES ON BUSINESS TRAVELERS AND THEIR PREFERENCES



The sixth Global Business Travel Survey from SAP Concur, examines the primary challenges that business travelers face. The study involved 3,750 business travelers from 24 countries and was conducted between April 5 and 26, 2024, using a combination of online surveys and in-depth interviews. This year's study highlights how global developments, such as smaller travel budgets and increased travel disruptions like cancellations, delays, or strikes, impact business travel. The survey also addresses pressing issues such as using AI in booking and equal opportunities on business trips.

According to the survey, a significant 76% of respondents enjoy traveling for work, and an even more impressive 67% believe business travel is not just a necessity but a central factor in advancing their careers. **It was found that Generation Z, the future of business travel, considers it more essential than the older boomer generation**, with 72% of Generation Z and 58% of boomers seeing it as important. Despite this, 66% of business travelers feel they have different opportunities to travel for work than their colleagues, highlighting the need for equal opportunities and recognition of their efforts.

Men and women have differing opinions regarding equal rights about age (17% vs. 20%), parental status (13% vs. 17%), and gender (9% vs. 14%). These differences in perception can have significant implications for the inclusivity of business travel. Men are also less likely than women to feel disadvantaged regarding business travel opportunities (29% vs. 38%). LGBTQ+ employees also perceive a lack of business travel opportunities, particularly regarding their appearance (20% vs. 12%) and sexual orientation (20% vs. 7%).

Business Travelers Suffer from Travel Disruptions

Most global business travelers (88%) experienced disruptions like flight cancellations, itinerary changes due to weather conditions, and delays in the past year. Due to frustration, almost one in three (29%) say they would refuse to travel if there was a possibility of long wait times or cancellations. However, the primary reason for not traveling remains safety concerns (44%), followed by political and social concerns about the destination (35%).

Apart from affecting business appointments, travel interruptions also present a challenge for travelers' work-life balance. Almost four in ten respondents had to spend additional, unplanned days on a business trip (38%) or make longer and additional stopovers (33%). To ensure punctuality for essential appointments or a safe return home in the future, four in five travelers (80%) take proactive measures when booking travel. They plan time buffers for arrival (34%), departure (19%), or both (27%).

Reduced Travel Budgets Reduce Flexibility

In the survey, business travelers were asked to identify their company's current priority in business travel management from three options:

1. 40% of respondents believe that companies are primarily concerned with meeting employees' needs

for flexible travel options.

2. 31% believe that companies primarily want to reduce their costs.
3. 29% believe that companies prioritize the greater use of sustainable travel options.

Despite focusing on employees' needs, the survey found that 91% of respondents worldwide reported that their company has restricted flexible travel options in the last twelve months, which seems contradictory. These restrictions include less flexibility in choosing flight times, limited options for extending business trips for personal reasons, and stricter adherence to company travel policies. Business travelers are increasingly less likely to be allowed to work on the road to save vacation days (27%) or to extend business trips to include personal trips (25%). Also, long travel days are now preferred over overnight trips (28%), and surcharges for direct flights (28%) or business class (27%) are being rejected.

These restrictions have had a noticeable impact on travelers: around 22% would reject a trip if it couldn't be extended by a few vacation days at the destination, and almost 24% would do so if they were not allowed to make travel adjustments outside of company policy.

Travel managers are in a tough spot, stuck between the needs of travelers and their companies' requirements. They face the challenge of saving costs, with 42% prioritizing this. However, they are divided on whether flexibility (35%), sustainable travel options (33%), or cost reduction (32%), is their company's current priority. These findings are based on a survey of 600 travel managers across six markets, who are responsible for managing travel policies, ensuring compliance, and balancing the needs of the company with the needs of the travelers.

Date: 2024-06-24

Article link: <https://www.tourism-review.com/study-business-travelers-seek-flexibility-news14508>