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What's top of mind for global mobility professionals in 2025?

Exploring the results
of a 'wish list' survey



Survey Highlights

- ▶ The need to deliver better, more positive employee experiences is the top priority for global mobility leaders this year.
- ▶ Implementing cost-saving measures is also important, but is on an even par with achieving greater alignment across the business and improved reporting.
- ▶ Companies will rely most heavily on the permanent transfer or one-way move option as the approach of choice for getting talent where they need it, followed by long-term assignments or project-based work.
- ▶ While it appears there's still some room for improvement, organizations are making good progress in meeting the need to build more flexibility and choice into their overall employee benefits and suite of relocation policy options in particular.
- ▶ Even as AI continues to make business headlines, only a small number of companies are currently planning to invest in it to specifically support the GM function.

What's top of mind for global mobility professionals in 2025?

Sterling Lexicon and Deloitte recently hosted a joint research initiative to ask global mobility (GM) professionals what's top of mind for them and their global workforce in 2025. The aim was to capture and share a better understanding of:

- **The most important workforce mobility priorities**
- **Which approaches to talent mobility or assignment types are expected to be used most frequently this year**
- **Which global mobility support services have the greatest value**
- **What global mobility technology strategies are planned or already in place**
- **What do they want most to help them better fulfill their roles and responsibilities**

Survey Methodology and Demographics

The survey was conducted in late 2024/early 2025 and garnered just over 100 responses from individuals representing more than 20 industry sectors. The majority (67%) are headquartered in EMEA, followed by the Americas (31%). For just under half of the respondents, the global mobility function sits within HR, either in a centralized HQ, shared services or HRBP model, followed next by total rewards, compensation and benefits, or people and culture.

Most have annual move volumes of between 101 - 500 employees (41%), followed by a program size of between 1-100 moves a year (34%). Approximately 12% reported move volumes of either 501-1000 employees or more than 1,000 assignments a year.

Top Priorities

We asked respondents to choose the areas of greatest importance for their global workforce and mobility initiatives in 2025 from a list of options, with the ability to select more than one, or write in their own alternatives.

Delivering positive employee experiences topped the list.

2025 will see a continued focus on securing and keeping top talent by creating positive workforce experiences. With 66% of respondents selecting improving the employee experience as a top priority, it was a clear outlier.

In recent years, we've seen balancing positive employee experiences and containing costs seemingly carry equal weight as business priorities. Implementing cost-saving measures is still very much on the agenda, but cited by only 38% percent of respondents as a top focus for this year. This could indicate that organizational leaders are recognizing those two goals are often in conflict, and are opting to place a higher emphasis on creating a culture that encourages talent attraction and retention.

Other top priorities include:

- Achieving better integration and more strategic alignment between GM / HR and other areas of the business (37%)
- Improving data collection, analysis and reporting (33%)
- Realizing better alignment between GM and talent management (30%)

In those cases where respondents selected more than one priority, we asked them to identify **the most important** one. Here, the employee experience and greater business alignment and integration were named about evenly. All this paints a clear picture, as it stands to reason that greater internal collaboration, more seamless integration across functions and clearer insights into holistic program data all support more positive talent mobility experiences.

What the numbers reveal about the areas of lowest prioritization for 2025 can also tell an interesting story. "Implementing or improving an employee well-being program" takes that title, indicated by only 4% as a top priority. The disconnect between wanting to deliver a better employee experience and low interest in well-being programs is notable, and perhaps worthy of further exploration.

Top 5 in 2025

Biggest Priorities for Global Mobility This Year

**Respondents could select more than one answer*



Assignment Types

Respondents expect to use the one-way move or permanent transfer approach for most of their global mobility activity in 2025, followed by long-term assignments (LTAs) - defined as a year or more – and project-based work.



Top Assignment Types

Approaches anticipated to be most frequently used in 2025

**Respondents could select more than one answer*

- 37%** Permanent transfers / one-way moves
- 25%** Long-term assignments
- 11%** Project-based assignments

Details about the overall investments a company makes into different assignment types sheds a bit more light into what may be driving these choices. When asked about which types of assignments require the most time, human, financial and technology resources to manage, LTAs top the list at 51%.

Short-term, or less than one-year assignments, were reported by 14% of respondents, and only 10% identified permanent transfers as being their most resource-intense option.

Assignment Support

We also sought to gain a better understanding of which services are in greatest use across respondents’ employee populations to support their moves.

Given options to rank, respondents shared that immigration- and accommodation-related services topped the list, followed by settling in services, household goods shipping and in-person area orientation visits.

Traditional, or self-serve?

Respondents also indicated by a 56% to 44% margin that traditional relocation benefits, managed and administered by a third party, will be more valuable in 2025 than the provision of self-serve tools.

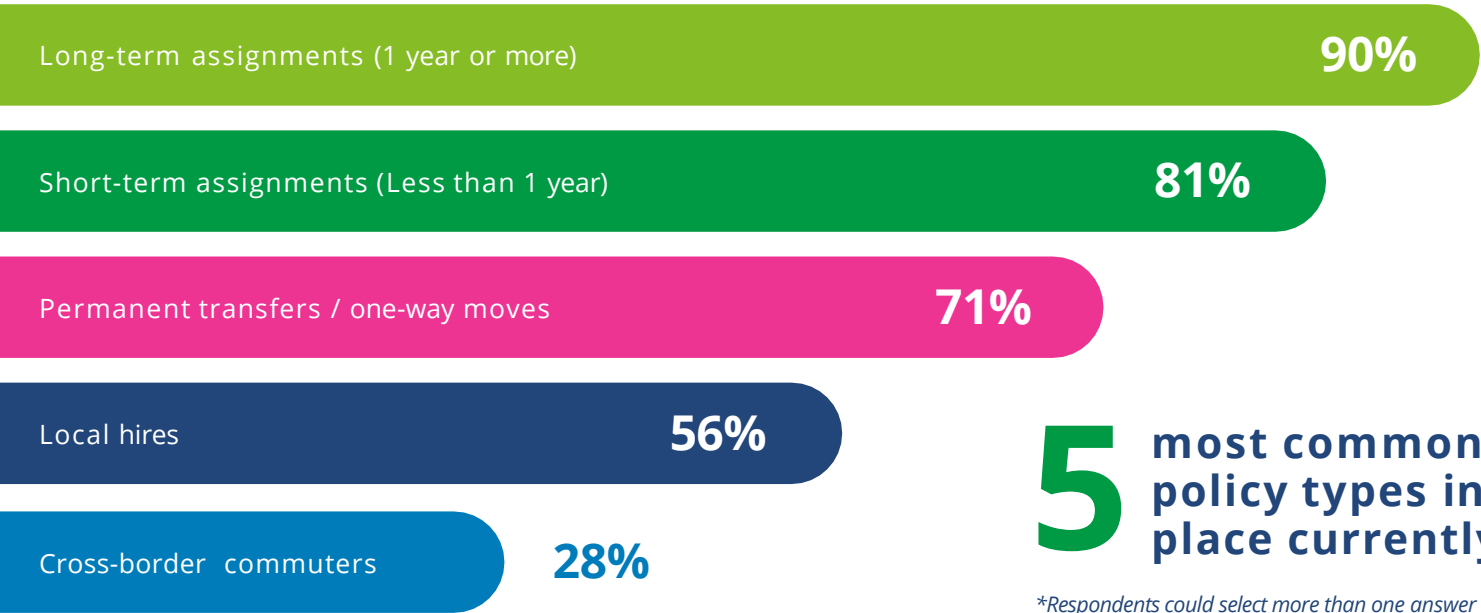
Program Flexibility

Organizational leaders are increasingly called on to respond to changing workforce dynamics and the need to develop more flexible benefit programs. Most of the respondents (64%) felt that their policies were adequately flexible to meet their needs, suggesting that this has been an area of recent focus. Of the 36% who indicated they have room to improve on flexibility, their top three challenges were listed as:

- ▶ Meeting different demographic preferences (41%)
- ▶ Insufficient repatriation / succession planning strategies (33%)
- ▶ Inadequate solutions to address high housing costs / low property inventories (26%)

Policy Types

A closer look at the different policy types that organizations currently have in place helps to explain the positive sentiment around sufficient flexibility. Respondents were given a list of 14 different policy options, and all of them have been developed. By far, long term assignment (90%), short term assignment (81%), permanent transfer / one-way move (71%) and local hire (56%) policies top the list of which types are most frequently found in organizations’ libraries. Other commonly cited policy types included those supporting developmental, cross-border commuter, project-based and intern programs.



5 most common policy types in place currently

**Respondents could select more than one answer*

Just because a policy exists on the shelf doesn’t mean it’s necessarily in use, however. When asked which ones are most commonly applied, organizations identified long term assignment (37%) and permanent transfer / one-way move (37%) policies as their top two. Interestingly, none reported currently using their remote worker, hybrid, intern or graduate program policies.

Tax treatment: The majority of respondents (67%) use an equalization approach to manage the taxation of relocation benefits, though some indicated a blend of equalization and tax protection / gross-up, depending on the type of move.

Technology Strategies and AI

Sixty-five percent of respondents indicated that their organization does not intend to invest in AI to enable their global mobility program in 2025. Those percentages could very well increase as the year goes on, however. As more businesses adopt AI for other uses, and respondents frequently cited greater efficiencies among their 'wish list' items to help them improve their jobs, it's quite possible those numbers could look very different by the end of the year or in early 2026.

Those who are in the 35% of companies who **do** intend to invest in AI may very well have their wishes granted, as most indicated creating efficiencies and reducing administration time as the top goals for its use.

As far as existing technology strategies go, respondents reported equally that this year, they intend to:

- **Invest in or optimize their current programs (23%)**
- **Look for opportunities to enhance integration with internal and supplier technologies (23%)**
- **Maintain the status quo, fully relying on vendors' systems (23%)**

About 13% intend to implement a new global mobility technology solution.

Sixty-five percent of respondents indicated that their organization does not intend to invest in AI to enable their global mobility program in 2025.



What we can conclude

When asked the open-ended question: “If you could have one wish granted to improve your role or responsibilities in 2025, what would it be?” the answers overwhelmingly supported three key themes:

1. **Greater automation and efficiencies to free up time for more strategic priorities**
2. **More support / increased staff**
3. **Better integration and collaboration with other areas of the business**

Global mobility is an integral tool in supporting talent acquisition, development and retention. As business leaders increasingly recognize the importance of delivering positive employee experiences, mobility professionals are well positioned to share unique perspectives, data and knowledge on what that looks like, particularly at vital snapshots in time along an employee’s professional and personal journey with the organization.

In the quest for global mobility professionals to add more strategic value to their businesses, they want greater efficiencies and more support to reduce some of the heavily administrative tasks, and further integration within other areas of the business, particularly talent acquisition. Supplier partners and continuously improving technology solutions can play an important role in helping them achieve both.

2025 'Wish List' Survey

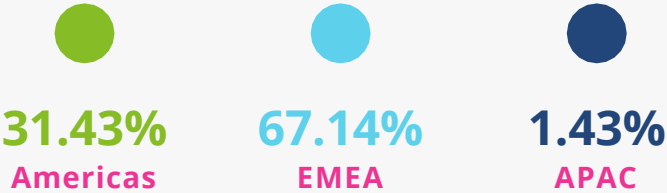
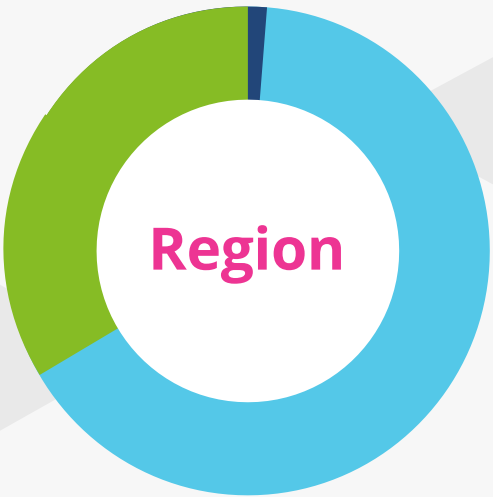
Data Appendix



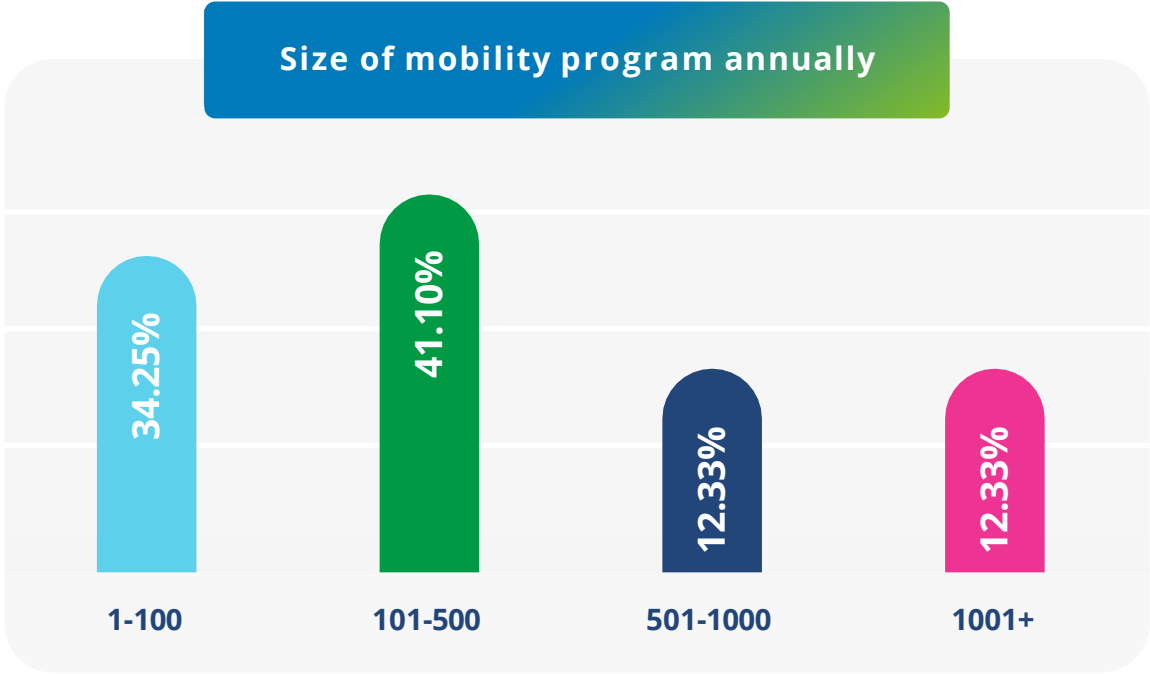
Demographics Section

A closer look at respondents' company data.

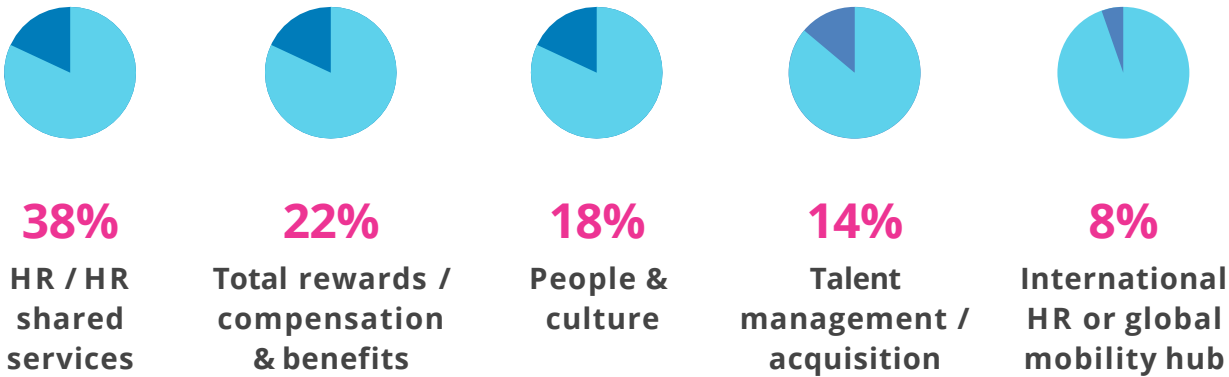
20+ industry sectors represented



Size of mobility program annually



What function manages mobility?

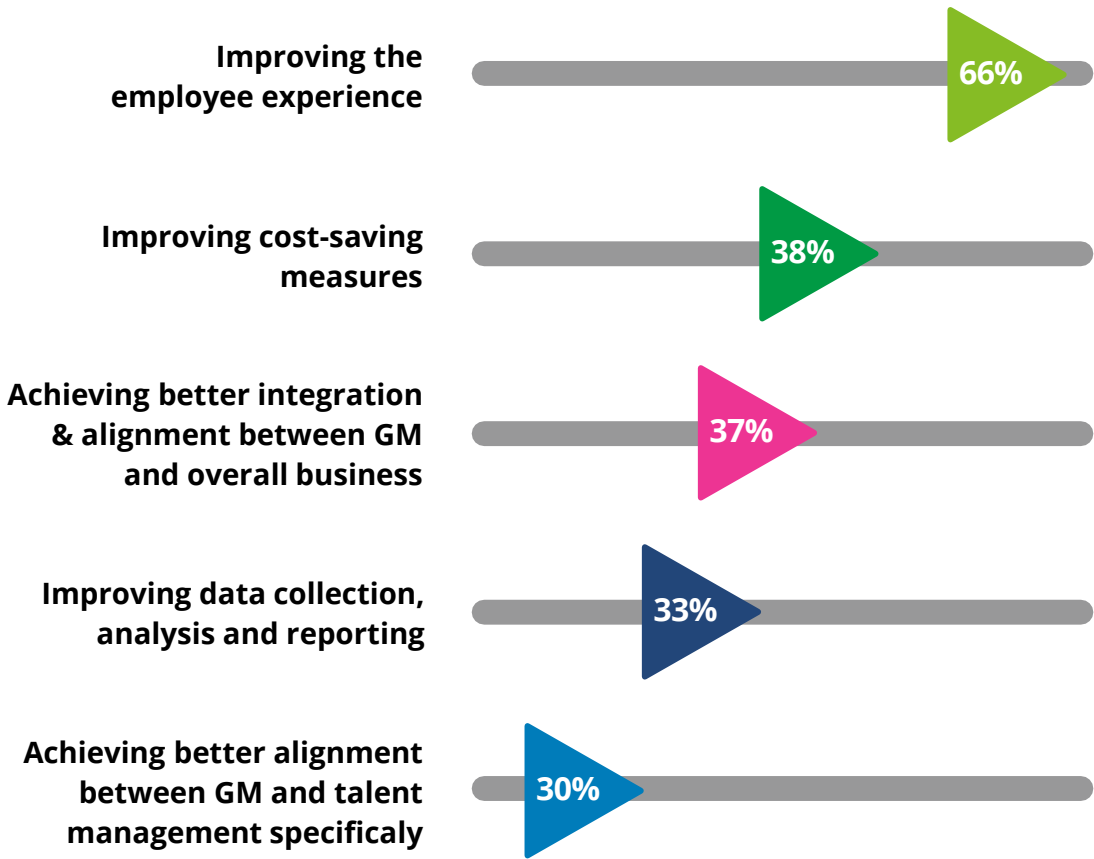


Survey Highlights

A deeper dive into the full survey results.

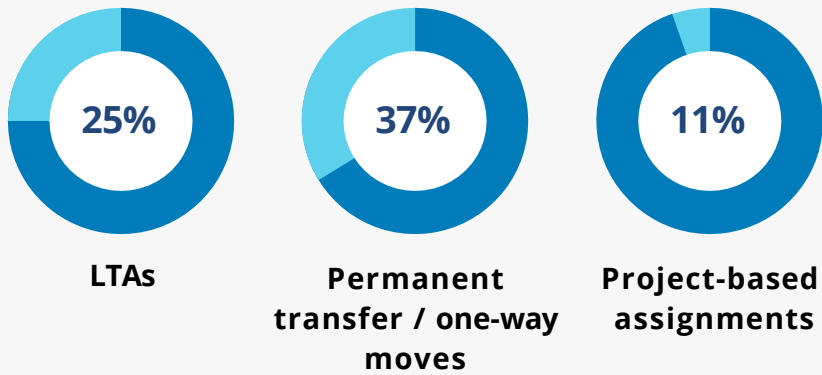
Top 5
priorities in 2025

Improving the employee experience was the top choice if multiple options were selected

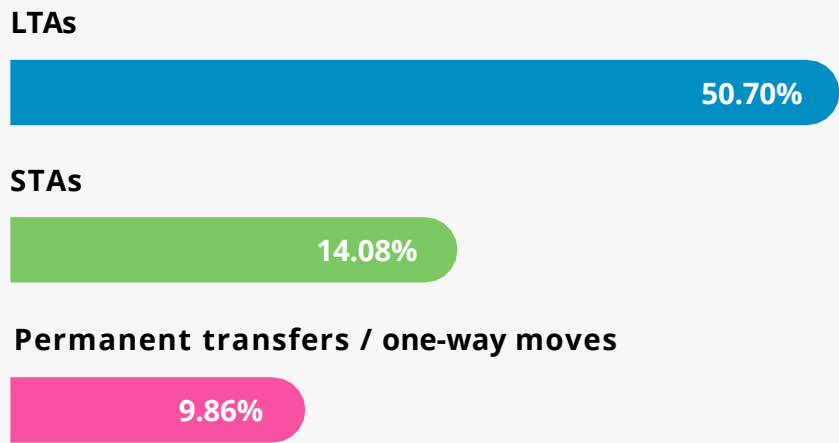


Top assignment types

Approaches anticipated to be most frequently used in 2025



Which requires the most resources



Most frequently used services

Services ranked in order based on average frequency of use

- 1 Immigration (visa and work permit)
- 2 Home search (permanent)
- 3 Temporary accommodation
- 4 Settling-in services
- 5 Household goods shipping
- 6 Area orientation (in person)
- 7 Education support (school search)
- 8 Area orientation (virtual)
- 9 Intercultural / language training
- 10 Spousal support

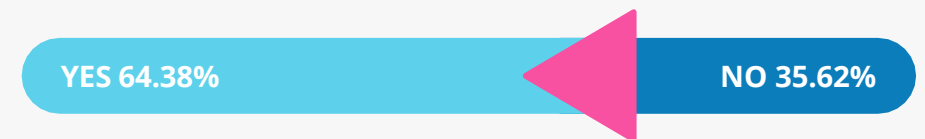
Talent mobility approaches most valuable in 2025



56.16% Traditional relocation benefits

43.84% Access to more service tools

Are your policies **flexible** enough to meet today's requirements?



► If no, top three biggest challenges

41%

Insufficient flexibility to meet unique demographic preferences

33%

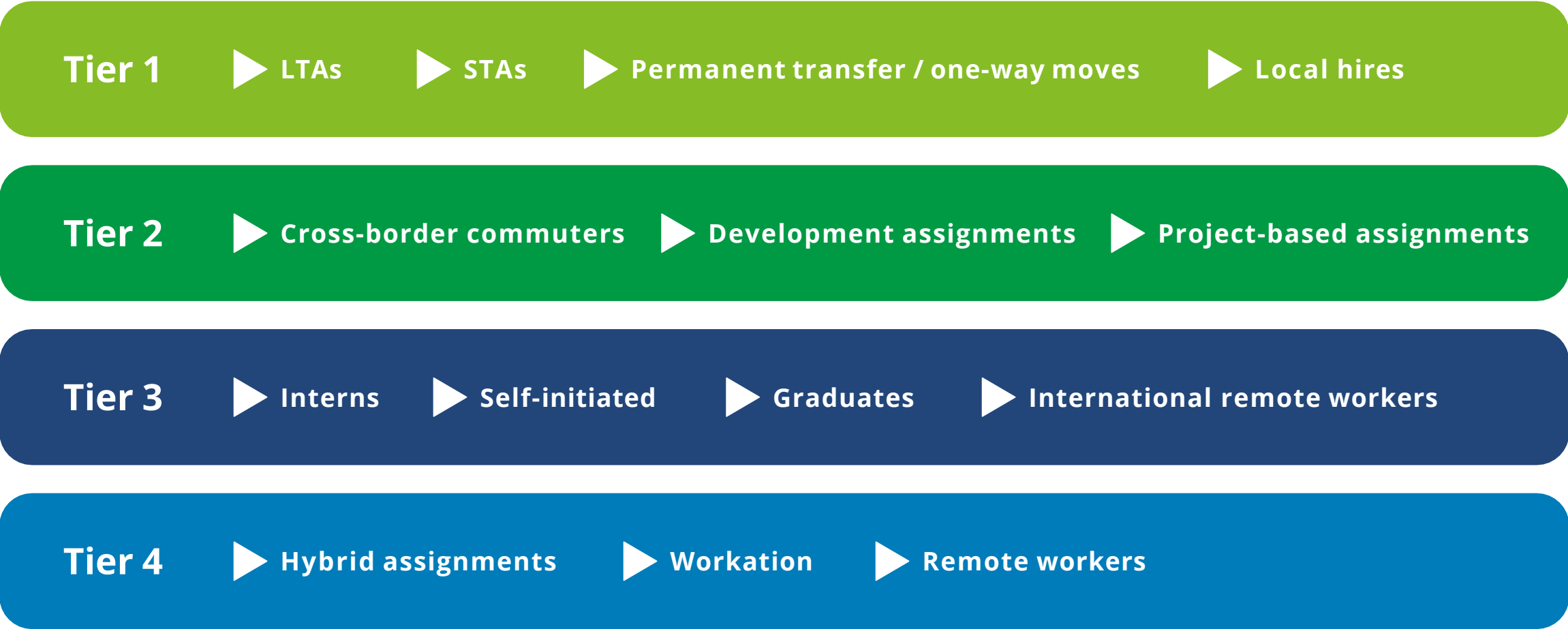
Insufficient repatriation / succession planning strategy

26%

Solutions to address high housing costs / low property inventories

Policies currently in place

Tiers based on volume of responses, with Tier 1 types being the most frequently cited



Policies currently utilized

36.62%
LTAs



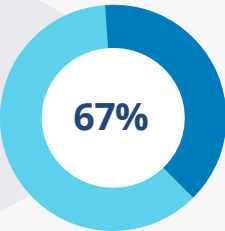
36.62%
Permanent transfers
/ one-way moves



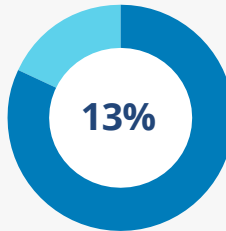
9.86%
Local hires



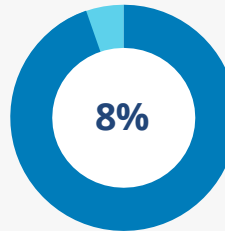
Tax approach currently in place



Tax equalization



Tax protection



Depends on type of move

AI Investments for GM



▶ If yes, top AI priorities for GM

** Respondents could select more than one answer*

80%
Create efficiencies

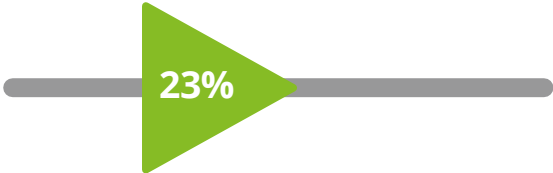
80%
Reduce team admin time

60%
Enhance employee experience

52%
Gain data insights

Global mobility tech strategy

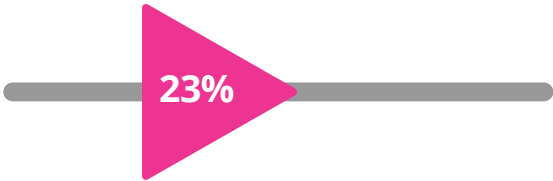
All three tied for top place



Optimize / upgrade existing technology



Integrate GM processes and vendors with internal technology systems



No change: We rely on vendor systems



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Your people. Our passion

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