

# GLOBAL BUSINESS TRAVEL TRENDS REVEALED



SAP Concur's fifth Global Business Travel Survey investigates how the role of travel managers has changed over the years and what challenges and priorities remain in shaping business travel programs and related roles.

The role of travel managers has undergone significant changes in recent years. They are no longer just responsible for travel budgets, but also for managing travel policies and ensuring health and safety during a pandemic. **A travel manager's job constantly changes due to various socio-economic factors such as inflation, sustainability, and international conflicts.** These factors significantly impact the tasks of those responsible for business travel.

## Travel Managers' Stress Levels Are Rising

According to an annual survey of 700 travel managers in seven markets, almost half of the respondents (47%) mentioned that their job has become more stressful in the past year. As the economic situation is tough, it is unsurprising that high inflation has been rated as the most significant challenge (41%), increasing business travel costs. However, the travel managers surveyed also identified other significant challenges in their position, including:

- Ensuring the safety of business travelers, even in areas where employees from marginalized groups may be exposed to hostility (38%)
- The safety of business travelers with a view to their safety ensuring health or natural disasters (38%)
- Finding more sustainable travel options (37%)

Travel managers are searching for tools to provide a comprehensive overview of all aspects of business travel. According to a recent survey, nearly all respondents (98%) feel their work is more challenging due to insufficient data and analysis. This is particularly true when it comes to ensuring the safety of business travelers, demonstrating the return on investment of their role to management, creating business travel emissions reports, complying with regulations and industry standards, setting budgets, and updating travel policies.

## External Factors Affect Smooth Business Travel Management

Business travel has rebounded and is now increasing steadily. According to the data, the total spending on airline tickets is expected to surpass the levels of 2022 soon and continue to grow towards the pre-pandemic levels of 2019. The rise in ticket prices could also be a contributing factor, as the average airfare has increased by 11% compared to the prices in 2019. However, a survey of travel managers revealed that the biggest potential risks of business travel are delays and last-minute cancellations by airlines (45%) and changes made by travel providers in booking and paying for business trips (38%).

## Sustainability Factors Are Becoming Increasingly Important

Many travel managers feel the pressure to act in sustainability, which is considered one of the most important aspects. Companies themselves add to this pressure, as more than a third of business travelers expect their employer to offer sustainable travel options, even if they fall outside of travel guidelines. The growing awareness of sustainability supports this. 98% of business travelers plan to take additional measures to reduce the environmental impact of their business trips in the next 12 months.

According to a survey, external factors such as stricter regulations pose a challenge for travel managers. About 28% of the respondents identify a lack of sustainable travel options as one of the biggest risks to their company's business travel. As a result, they anticipate that the pressure to report on travel-related emissions from companies will increase, making their job more difficult. However, travel managers need to be able to transparently disclose the carbon footprint of business trips due to the lack of reliable data, affecting 38% of them.

### **Business Travel Programs in Changing Mode**

Business travel and travel guidelines are constantly evolving and will continue to do so. A recent survey of travel managers revealed that 98% expect their company to change its travel policies in the next year. The primary objective of these changes will be to enhance tracking capabilities. Additionally, the survey identified several other priorities that are likely to receive attention over the next 12 months:

- Meeting business travelers' need for flexible options, e.g., booking directly with preferred providers (38%)
- Meeting internal and external sustainability goals (37%)
- Reducing travel costs (37%)
- Improving cost transparency and availability of business travel data (36%).

**With business travel on the rise again, the habits and trends prevalent before the COVID-19 pandemic are returning.** As a result, the travel guidelines are being adjusted to align with the pre-pandemic policies. According to a recent survey, about 34% of travel managers intend to revert to pre-pandemic travel policies.

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