COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot #37: Global Talent Mobility

Understanding the migration & mobility implications of COVID-19

These COVID-19 Analytical Snapshots are designed to capture the latest information and analysis in a fast-moving environment. Topics will be repeated from time to time as analysis develops. If you have an item to include, please email us at research@iom.int.

New research & analysis on global talent mobility & COVID

The potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on occupational status, work from home, and occupational mobility by Amit Kramer and Karen Kramer

How does global talent mobility function during a pandemic?, by global mobility platform TOPIA.

Immigrant Key Workers: Their Contribution to Europe’s COVID-19 Response, by Francesco Fasani and Jacopo Mazza.

The future of mobile staff in global supply chains

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vulnerabilities of global supply chains, and specifically jobs which require a high amount of international travel, from plant managers to engineers. Over half of respondents to a survey of Japanese companies operating in Thailand said that measures such as quarantine has obstructed business activities, for example.

As a result, it has been predicted that once the crisis has passed, companies will localize their supply chains and expertise, reducing their reliance on globetrotting staff.

Not all expertise can be put on Zoom or Skype, some expertise has to travel and now all the flights are grounded.

Alex Dolya, Procurement Specialist, BCG Singapore

Talent of tomorrow

With statistics from Denmark, Australia and the US indicating that large numbers of international students remain in their country of study to work following their graduation, the COVID-19-induced disruption to universities poses a significant obstacle to global talent recruitment. A recent survey of prospective international students found that around 60% had changed their study plans due to the pandemic. However, around half were interested in starting their studies this year even if it meant doing the beginning of the course online.

Did you know?

The Global Talent Competitiveness Index analyses which countries are best at recruiting high-skilled migrants.

Taking into account countries’ ability to enable, attract, grow and retain high-skilled workers, the 2020 report found Switzerland, Singapore and the United States to be the most competitive, with 13 European countries in the top 20. You can view the results here.

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The impact of COVID-19 on business travel

COVID-19 has almost completely halted business travel in the short term—98% of companies who responded to a Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) poll in April 2020 said they had cancelled or suspended ‘most’ or ‘all’ international business trips. The majority expect domestic travel to resume within 2 to 3 months (62%), while 39% believe international travel will resume in 6 to 8 months.

![Image showing percentage of companies cancelling international trips]

Source: Global Business Travel Association (28 April 2020)

The pandemic has driven a huge rise in the use of video conferencing platforms—according to Eric Yuan, CEO of Zoom, in April the platform had more than 300 million daily meeting participants, compared to 10 million in December 2019. Similarly, Chinese platform Dingtalk had to add 20,000 temporary servers to support their increase in traffic. It is unlikely that this move towards digitalisation will be completely reversed once the pandemic has passed.

Aviation analyst Mark Manduca believes that the potential for quarantine requirements upon arrival, or entry restrictions based on recent travel history, could lead to a change in the structure of those business trips which do occur. For example, a number of individual trips could instead be replaced by a “three-month, meetings-filled stint”.

These shifts may lead to a longer term decline in business travel. While it is difficult to predict the extent to which business travel will decline, Ben Baldanza, the former CEO of Spirit Airlines, has predicted a permanent loss of 5-10% compared to before the pandemic.