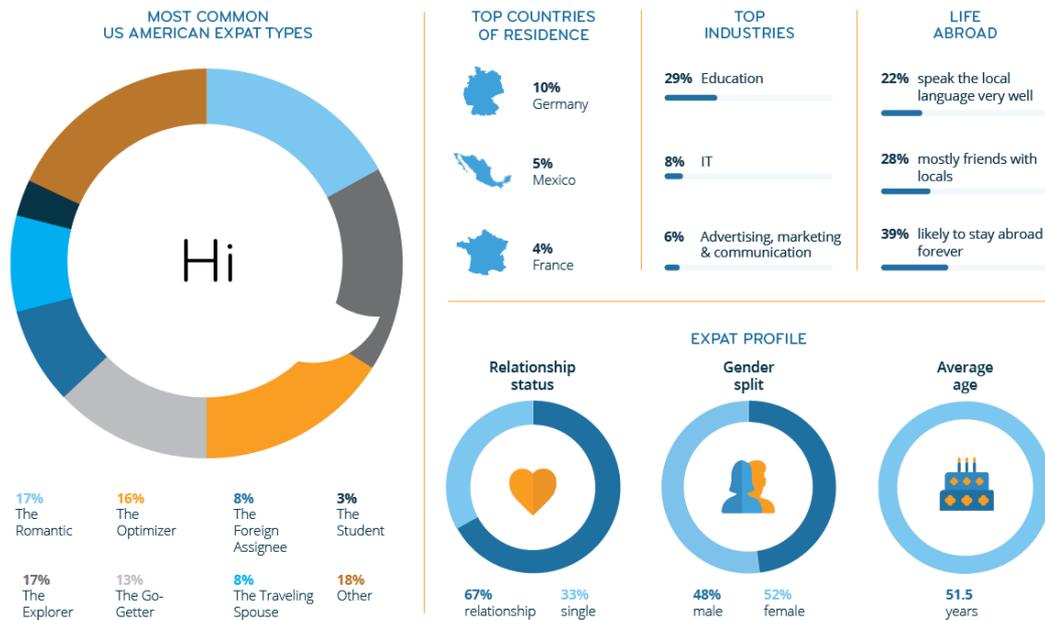


# The 7 Most Common US American Expat Types and Why They Move Abroad

- Based on the latest *Expat Insider 2018* research, InterNations presents the first comprehensive US American expat typology.
- The typology is based on expats' primary motivation for moving abroad and identifies job opportunities and the search for a better life as the most important reasons for expatriation.
- The 7 most common US American expat types are the Romantic (17%), the Explorer (17%), the Optimizer (16%), the Go-Getter (13%), the Foreign Assignee (8%), the Traveling Spouse (8%), and the Student (3%).

Munich, 10 July 2018 — Although each expat journey is unique, there are certain similarities when it comes to the motivation for moving and lifestyle abroad. Based on the insights of more than 18,000 expats from 187 countries and territories in the annual *Expat Insider* survey, [InterNations](#) the world's largest community for people who live and work abroad, [presents the first comprehensive expat typology](#) including the 7 most common US American expat types.

## I US Americans Abroad



The research shows that expats from the US are different from their international counterparts in many ways: globally, Go-Getters who move abroad for their career are the most common expat type, but US American expats are most likely to be Romantics. They move abroad for love and are much more often friends with local residents than the average Romantic worldwide (49% vs. 38%). Some US American expats like the Foreign Assignee — sent abroad by their employer — also seem to benefit financially from their move abroad: the share of US American Foreign Assignees who have an annual gross household income of at least 150,000 USD (32%) is six percentage points higher than the global average (26%). Similarly, more than four in five US American Optimizers (82%), who move abroad for a better quality of life, are satisfied with their financial situation, compared to just 74 percent globally.

## 1. The US American Romantic (17%)

### Reason for moving abroad

- for love / to live in their partner's home country: 100%

### Life abroad

- speak the local language very well: 26%
- mostly friends with locals: 49%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 41%

Despite making up only the third-largest share of the expat types worldwide (12%), the Romantic is the most common expat type among US Americans. Although US American Romantics initially moved abroad for love, their romantic relationship did not necessarily last: ten percent of them are currently single. Those Romantics who are (still or again) in a relationship could not be any happier, though: close to nine in ten (88%) are satisfied with their relationship, and for 58 percent things could not get any better. *"I am happy to be with the person I love,"* says a US American Romantic living in Spain.

US American Romantics really make an effort to adapt to their partner's home country: close to half of them (48%) speak the local language fairly or even very well —the respective share is only larger among US American Students (66%). Additionally, the Romantic is the expat type most likely to be mainly friends with local residents (49%), eleven percentage points more than the global average among all Romantics (38%).

With just one percent of US American Romantics currently looking for work, their career options seem to be a lot better than those for Romantics around the world (8%). However, when asked about the satisfaction with their career prospects, 37 percent of US American Romantics are unhappy with this factor, slightly more than the worldwide average (34%). A US American Romantic in Spain, for example, is unhappy due to the *"very limited options in terms of earning potential and career opportunities"*. In fact, 54 percent of US American Romantics believe that their income abroad is lower than what they would make in a similar job back home (vs. 41% globally).

## 2. The US American Explorer (17%)

### Reasons for moving abroad

- looking for an adventure: 39%
- want to live in this particular city/country: 33%
- simply enjoy living abroad: 28%

### Life abroad

- speak the local language very well: 24%
- mostly friends with locals: 27%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 40%

US American Explorers seem to find it easy to settle down in their new country of residence, with almost four in five (79%) feeling at home there, compared to 73 percent of all Explorers worldwide. Maybe it helps that the majority of US American Explorers (71%) also finds it easy to make new friends abroad (vs. 68% globally). This is the second-highest share among all US American expat types, only beaten by the US American Optimizer (79%). A US American Explorer really appreciates *"the friendly people and the great social life"* in Ireland, for example.

In addition to that, 87 percent of US American Explorers are satisfied with the available leisure activities abroad; again, only US American Optimizers are just slightly happier with this factor (88%). *"There is always something to do"*, says a US American Explorer living in the Netherlands, while another one thinks that *"Mexico City offers almost everything"*.

Apart from making friends, a good work-life balance seems important to the US American Explorers. If they have a full-time job, they spend just about 41.9 hours per week at work, which is shorter than the average work week of Explorers worldwide (42.4 h). It is therefore hardly a surprise that more than seven in ten (73%) are happy with their work-life balance, five percentage points more than the global average (68%). While US American Explorers rate their career prospects just slightly less positively than the average (56% vs. 59% globally), the share of those worrying about their job security (13%) is smaller than the global share among all Explorers (18%).

### 3. The US American Optimizer (16%)

#### Reasons for moving abroad

- better quality of life: 56%
- financial reasons: 35%
- political, religious, or safety reasons: 8%

#### Life abroad

- speak the local language very well: 22%
- mostly friends with locals: 22%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 55%

Out of all US American expat types, Optimizers see the most potential benefits in moving abroad, and it seems like they were right: they are very satisfied with the weather (84%) and the quality of the environment (77%) in their new country of residence. A US American Optimizer especially appreciates the *“beauty of the country and the weather”* in Costa Rica. Additionally, more than nine in ten US American Optimizers (91%) feel safe abroad (vs. 88% globally), and 82 percent are satisfied with their financial situation (vs. 74% globally).

When it comes to their professional life, only 63 percent of US American Optimizers work full time, which is far below the global average for all Optimizers (81%). With an average work week of just 40.8 hours, they are also less busy than Optimizers around the world (43.4 h). *“Life is easy here. I do not work much and make enough money to travel, save for the future, and afford all my expenses,”* a US American expat living in China reports. Despite their satisfying financial situation, more than half the US American Optimizers (53%) believe that their current income is lower than what they would get in a similar job back home, more than twice the share among all Optimizers worldwide (25%).

Lastly, US American Optimizers do not seem to struggle much with settling in abroad: more than four in five (82%) feel at home in the local culture — the highest share among all US American expat types and ten percentage points more than the global average (72%). Maybe this is partly due to the fact that 69 percent of US American Optimizers also find it easy to make local friends (vs. 56% globally).

### 4. The US American Go-Getter (13%)

#### Reasons for moving abroad

- found a job abroad on their own: 61%
- recruited by a local company: 26%
- start a business abroad: 12%

#### Life abroad

- speak the local language very well: 17%
- mostly friends with locals: 17%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 29%

US American Go-Getters are highly educated expats who move abroad to boost their career: 16 percent of them hold a PhD, six percentage points more than the global average among all Go-Getters (10%), and another 44 percent graduated with a master’s degree. In their new country of residence, they are very likely to work in education (43%), close to three times the share among Go-Getters

around the world (16%). *“My job as a scientific university professor is fantastic”*, says a US American Go-Getter living in China. Other fields of occupation include IT (8%) and the arts (5%).

With an average work week of 43.4 hours, the US American Go-Getter is not quite as busy as the average Go-Getter worldwide (44.7 h). Therefore, it is not particularly surprising that 68 percent are satisfied with their working hours, compared to 64 percent globally. Moreover, three in five US American Go-Getters (60%) are happy with their career prospects, about the same as the global average (59%). *“If you are a skilled worker, stable, and responsible, you can do well”*, says a US American Go-Getter living in New Zealand. However, just 43 percent of US American Go-Getters believe their salary abroad is higher than what they would make in a similar job back home, compared to 59 percent worldwide.

Putting work first might have an impact on their personal life: 15 percent of US American Go-Getters are currently not living in the same country as their partner — only US American Foreign Assignees have a larger share of expats separated from their significant other (19%). Moreover, more than two in five Go-Getters (41%) find it hard to make local friends abroad, exactly the same share as the global average. *“It is difficult to make friends here,”* says US American Go-Getter living in Japan. Maybe this is one of the reasons why 18 percent do not feel at home abroad yet, and another 17 percent believe that they never will.

## 5. The US American Foreign Assignee (8%)

### **Reason for moving abroad**

- sent abroad by their employer: 100%

### **Life abroad**

- speak the local language very well: 15%
- mostly friends with locals: 17%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 19%

Nearly every US American Foreign Assignee (94%) works full time, and with an average of 46.2 working hours per week they spend by far more time at work than any other US American expat type. However, the hard work seems to pay off: 32 percent have an annual gross household income of at least 150,000 USD, six percentage points more than the global average among all Foreign Assignees (26%). Their generous household income might also be related to the fields they frequently work in: manufacturing & engineering (12%), IT (11%), and finance (9%).

Close to three in five US American Foreign Assignees (58%) are satisfied with their career prospects, which is just below the global average (61%). On the other hand, 71 percent are happy with their job security, which is slightly above the global average (69%) — together with the results for the Explorer (71%), this is also the highest share among all US American expat types. *“The options for personal growth and the business potential are unlimited,”* says a US American expat living in Cambodia. In general, 74 percent of US American Foreign Assignees are satisfied with their job (vs. 73% globally).

Despite their relatively high job satisfaction, 57 percent of US American Foreign Assignees consider it very likely that they will return home at some point, the highest share among all US American expat types. In fact, 22 percent of US American Foreign Assignees do not feel at home abroad yet, and another twelve percent do not think they ever will. Maybe their struggles with settling in are partly due to them finding it hard to make friends abroad: close to three in ten US American Foreign Assignees (29%) find it hard to make friends abroad, exactly the same share as the global average.

*“The Swiss are very closed,”* a US American Foreign Assignee thinks, while another one says they *“do not feel part of the community”* in Germany.

## 6. The US American Traveling Spouse (8%)

### Reason for moving abroad

- for their partner’s job or education: 100%

### Life abroad

- speak the local language very well: 9%
- mostly friends with locals: 19%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 25%

While most other US American expat types have a fairly balanced gender ratio, close to nine in ten US American Traveling Spouses (86%) are female. Due to moving for their partner’s sake, US American Traveling Spouses are often likely to take care of their home and/or children, rather than work (25%) or to be currently looking for work (16%). In fact, only six percent of US American Traveling Spouses are employees a far smaller share than the global average for Traveling Spouses (13%). *“In Japan it is really hard for me to get a job other than teaching English or working labor jobs”*, says a US American Traveling Spouse. Therefore, it is hardly a surprise that half the US American Traveling Spouses (50%) are unsatisfied with their career prospects, compared to 41 percent worldwide.

Apart from frequently unsatisfying careers, US American Traveling Spouses also struggle with settling in abroad on a personal level. More than one-third (36%) do not feel at home in the local culture, compared to 33 percent globally. Moreover, 18 percent believe that they will never feel at home abroad, the highest share among the seven US American expat types. One-third (33%) finds it hard to make new friends abroad, and an even higher percentage (52%) has difficulty making local friends in particular. Both shares are the highest among all US American expat types. A US American living in Ireland explains: *„It took us a very long time to make friends. Everyone is friendly, but that does not mean that they hang out with someone they do not know well.”*

## 7. The US American Student (3%)

### Reasons for moving abroad

- go to school or university: 82%
- improve their language skills: 12%

### Life abroad

- speak the local language very well: 43%
- mostly friends with locals: 22%
- likely to stay abroad forever: 35%

Among the US American expat types, Students have the highest share of those speaking the local language very well (43%), and it seems to help them with making local friends abroad. Just 36 percent of US American Students find this hard, compared to 41 percent of Students worldwide. Maybe these factors also contribute to the fact that 70 percent of US American Students feel at home in the local culture, compared to 54 percent of all Students worldwide. *“I feel very much at home here,”* says a US American Student living in Czechia.

Just about two in five US American Students (41%) are in a committed relationship, which is by far the lowest share among all US American expat types — with an average age of 43.2 years, they are also by far the youngest. Globally speaking, however, the average Student is even more than ten years younger (32.4 years). Those US American Students who are in a relationship are far more likely to

have met their significant other in their current country of residence than the global average (74% vs. 58% worldwide).

In addition to being highly educated — 14 percent of Students hold a PhD, the second-highest share among all US American expat types, only beaten by the Go-Getter (16%) — they are also very likely to work in education themselves (27%). Other common fields of occupation include IT (10%) and manufacturing & engineering (10%). With 56 percent positive ratings, US American Students are quite satisfied with their career prospects, compared to a similar share of 58 percent among all Students across the world. A US American living in Bolivia likes *“the work potential as an educated foreigner”*. Additionally, 65 percent of US American Students are satisfied with their financial situation, nine percentage points more than the global average (56%).

## Read More about Expat Types



### The Go-Getter

Go-Getters are highly educated expats who move abroad for job-related reasons. While they are happy with their career prospects, their personal life often suffers a bit.



### The Optimizer

Optimizers see many potential benefits in their move abroad, and usually they are not disappointed. They value a good work-life balance and do not have trouble settling in abroad.



### The Romantic

Romantics move abroad to be with their partner and do their best to fit in (e.g. by learning the local language). While they find it easy to make local friends, their job situation is often unfavorable.



### The Explorer

Explorers move abroad for a personal challenge and seem to master it very well. While they find it easy to make friends and appreciate the options for socializing abroad, they are not always happy with their career prospects.



### The Foreign Assignee

Being sent abroad by their employers, most Foreign Assignees are extremely satisfied with their job and career. However, they struggle to feel at home abroad, and most of them already have plans to return home.



### The Traveling Spouse

Moving abroad for their partner's job, Traveling Spouses often face an unsatisfying life abroad. They struggle with low career prospects, find it hard to make friends, and many want to return home at some point.



### The Student

Students move abroad for their education and are very eager to learn the local language. While they are highly educated and satisfied with their career prospects, their financial situation does not seem too bright.

### **About the Expat Typology 2018**

For the Expat Typology 2018, InterNations identified the 7 most common expat types across the world as well as among British, French, Germans, Italians, and US Americans abroad. The typology is based on the expats' primary motivation for moving abroad. More than 18,000 survey respondents representing 178 nationalities and living in 187 countries or territories revealed their reasons by choosing one out of 19 possible answer options, including one open-text field.

The data was obtained from the *Expat Insider 2018* survey. The complete results will be published in detail in September 2018. For a nationality to be featured in the Expat Typology, a sample size of at least 31 survey participants per type and nationality was necessary. However, for most of the featured nationalities, the sample size per type exceeded 100 participants.

### **About InterNations**

With 3.1 million members in 420 cities around the world, InterNations ([www.internations.org](http://www.internations.org)) is the largest global community and information site for people who live and work abroad. InterNations offers global and local networking both online and face-to-face. At around 6,000 official events and activities per month, expatriates have the opportunity to meet other global minds. Online services include country and city guides created by a team of professional writers, guest contributions about life abroad, and discussion forums to help members with topics such as the local job or housing search. InterNations membership is by approval only to ensure we remain a community of trust.

The InterNations app is available for Android and iOS and can be downloaded for free on [Google Play](#) and the [App Store](#).

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