



The Issue

India has evolved from a high-volume talent market into a strategic growth platform. As organizations expand capability centers, manufacturing, and engineering operations, mobility has become essential to closing skill gaps, transferring knowledge, deploying leaders, and supporting growth.

The challenge is keeping mobility strategy in step. Move complexity varies by business purpose, employee and family needs, destination, compliance exposure, and infrastructure, yet many organizations still apply support too uniformly. Successful programs balance cost and consistency with flexibility, giving each move the right level of support.



The Mobility Impact

There's no single India mobility experience. Inbound programs are mature but increasingly stretched by team capacity constraints, destination support needs, and employee expectations. Intra-India mobility is becoming more important as businesses expand into new manufacturing, industrial, and capability-center locations, but policy maturity has not always kept pace. Outbound mobility brings another set of pressures, particularly around tax, immigration, assignment structure, compliance, and return planning.

Across all three, cost is the common thread. It is cited as a challenge by 68% of inbound programs, 69% of outbound programs, and 83% of domestic programs. But managing cost does not simply mean providing less. The opportunity is to right-size support based on the reason for the move, its complexity, destination conditions, and employees' and families' needs.



Client Impact

On the ground in India, mobility programs work best when support reflects the purpose, complexity, and risk profile of each move.

- One size doesn't fit every move. A relatively straightforward relocation into an established metro area may require different support than a business-critical deployment, returning-national move, complex family relocation, or move into a less mature location. Differentiating support can help organizations manage cost without compromising the employee experience.
- Domestic mobility deserves a closer look. Only 47% of respondents formally cover intra-India mobility, although 72% of those with domestic programs describe it as important. As expansion reaches beyond traditional talent hubs, companies need clearer domestic tiers, destination standards, local resources, and exception guidelines.
- The destination has to work for the family, too. School quality, medical access, partner employment, transportation, eldercare responsibilities, special-needs support, safety perceptions, and social networks can all influence whether employees are willing to relocate, particularly to emerging and non-Tier 1 locations.
- Returning Indian nationals are changing the inbound picture. More than half of respondents rank returning Indian nationals as the top inbound driver, reflecting factors that include U.S. visa uncertainty, global immigration constraints, repatriation needs, and India-based leadership demand. Clear role expectations, career positioning, family support, and practical reintegration all matter in making these moves successful.





By The Numbers

90%

Organizations reporting inbound India mobility activity.

97%

Organizations with all or most inbound moves going to Tier 1 cities.

91%

Inbound programs reporting a lack of mobility-team resources.

47%

Organizations formally covering intra-India mobility.

83%

Domestic programs citing cost pressure.

82%

Outbound programs reporting compliance difficulty.

44%

Outbound programs reporting employee reluctance to return to India.



One Market, Three Different Mobility Pressures

Inbound, outbound, and intra-India moves may share the same geography, but they don't share the same challenges. Inbound programs face execution and capacity pressures. Outbound programs carry greater compliance and return risk. Domestic programs combine significant cost pressure with uneven policy maturity and location-specific employee and family needs. Stronger programs recognize those differences and adjust policy, services, and governance accordingly.



Our Recommendations

Start With the Business Purpose

Before determining benefits, get clear on why the move is happening. Define the business need, who owns the outcome, what success should look like, and how it will be measured. Then build the policy, services, budget, and governance around that purpose. This makes it easier to right-size support, manage exceptions, and evaluate whether the move ultimately delivered value.

Segment Support by Move Complexity

Move beyond broad, uniform packages. Differentiate support based on move type, business purpose, destination complexity, family circumstances, employee needs, and compliance risk. A straightforward move into an established location shouldn't automatically receive the same support as a complex family move or business-critical deployment.

Build a Stronger Intra-India Playbook

Don't wait for domestic volume to grow before defining how these moves should work. Establish policy tiers, minimum standards, vendor requirements, destination support, and exception criteria in advance. For emerging and industrial locations, understand local housing, schools, medical resources, transportation, service availability, and other factors that could influence move acceptance.

Put Destination and Family Readiness into the Plan

Relocation decisions rarely affect the employee alone. Assess whether the destination works for the family, too. City profiles, pre-qualified vendors, school and medical guidance, buddy or local-host programs, and practical settling-in support can reduce uncertainty and help employees feel more confident about saying yes to the move.



Make Compliance a Front-End Decision

For outbound moves in particular, compliance cannot wait until after a mobility offer is made. Address tax, immigration, assignment structure, employer-of-record considerations, dependent eligibility, work location, travel patterns, duration, and return expectations upfront. Resolving those questions early helps determine whether the move is feasible for both the employee and the business.

Plan for the Return Before Departure

Return planning should begin before the assignment does. Establish expectations around the employee's next role, career path, assignment duration, localization, and return commitments early, and align home and host stakeholders around them. Greater clarity at the outset can help reduce repatriation friction and retention risk later.

Measure What the Move Delivered

A successful move is about more than getting an employee from one place to another. Document the business purpose, accountable owner, expected outcomes, compliance dependencies, return assumptions, and success measures before the move begins. Then use those measures to understand whether the investment achieved what the organization set out to accomplish.

“India mobility is not mobility for mobility's sake. The strongest programs start with a clear business purpose, then right-size the policy, services, and governance around the move.”

- HR Mobility Leader, Financial Services Industry





The Bottom Line

India mobility is becoming an increasingly important tool for enabling growth, building capability, delivering projects, and accessing critical skills. The strongest programs will start with the business purpose of each move, then align policy, destination support, compliance planning, family assistance, and success measures accordingly.

That more differentiated approach gives organizations a stronger foundation for managing cost and risk while creating moves that work for employees, their families, and the business.

Looking for More Information?

For more on mobility strategy in India, check out our video series, [Mobility in India](#), download our latest research, [India Talent Mobility in Motion](#), or reach out to a member of our [Advisory Services Team](#).



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