

Hey! What's New? 2025-73

Worth the Trip: Driving Travel Value in a Time of Change

Companies across the globe continue to believe face-to-face meetings are necessary for business, and most CFOs expect travel budgets to hold steady or increase in the next year, a global survey found.

Now in its seventh year, the Global Business Travel Survey, conducted by Wakefield Research between April 30 and May 12 2025 in partnership with SAP Concur, offers a fresh view of business travel in today's complex business landscape. This year's edition draws insights from 5,000+ travel stakeholders across 29 countries, including 3,750 business travelers, 700 travel managers and (new this year) 600 CFOs.

Despite geopolitical and economic pressures, the survey found that 89% of business travelers, 93% of travel managers and 90% of CFOs globally still expect their organization's travel budget to increase or stay the same this year. However, says the research, "rising costs – a consequence of inflationary pressures – often cancel out bigger budgets, so organizations may turn to subtle cutbacks on expenses and budgets associated with business travel: a practice we call 'travelscrimping'."

What is travelscrimping? The survey says that as corporate travel budgets are stretched, "business travelers are increasingly reaching into their own pockets to maintain a comfortable experience. From window seats to hotel upgrades, many are self-funding small luxuries once covered by company policies. U.S. travelers are among those most willing to pay out of their own pocket for a better experience, with 91% willing to do so, while in India the figure is a striking 99%. In contrast, just 66% of French and 73% of Japanese business travelers are funding their own upgrades."

Fifty-five percent of business travelers say travel is indispensable for their job, while for 39% business travel is helpful but not essential, and only 6% said it wasn't needed at all.

Another finding was that "69% of travel managers say that budgets are too small and don't reflect the importance of business travel to business success. Moreover, 81% of CFOs say budget limitations mean employees aren't travelling enough to be effective."

The survey also found that travel managers must focus on safety to meet business travelers' concerns "Fifty-eight percent of business travelers say they are concerned about air safety, and 16% are so concerned they hesitate to fly at all. Forty percent say they would refuse to travel to some parts of the world on safety/social grounds."

Then there's anecdotal evidence suggesting "the loyalty perks that make business travel more pleasant are harder to earn. Adding CFOs, the ultimate budget-holders, to our survey provides a more holistic view of business travel. Most report stable or rising budgets, but 43% believe over half of their company's business travel could be replaced by teleconferences or other non-travel means of connecting. This raises a question: are they measuring the full value of business travel?"

On the other hand, CFOs are still funding it. Why? "Because face-to-face meetings still drive business outcomes. Fifty-five percent of business travelers say it is essential to do their jobs."

While AI and cybersecurity are changing the game, the survey noted, "technology brings both promises and threats. Seventy-five percent of business travelers say it is at least likely that coworkers are using AI to falsify travel expenses, while cybersecurity is now a top concern for travelling employees."

At SAP Concur, says the report, “the answer lies in smarter tools, seamless integrations and AI that preemptively and autonomously resolves issues before they affect travel or finance teams. While AI can do more, human oversight and personal touch remain essential to business – and business travel. Business travel isn’t disappearing – it’s evolving. The value of face-to-face connection endures: building trust, closing deals, launching projects. Companies that adapt with smarter strategies and better tools will be the ones that thrive.”

Learn a lot more from the survey at [uk_global_business_travel_report_2025.pdf](#).