

# U.S. WORKERS

## A LITTLE LESS SWAGGER

**F**IND A COUNTRY WHERE the population speaks English—or a place in Europe with cobblestone streets and great museums—and you have a fairly reliable list of the places Americans say they would move to for work. That is, if they would consider such a move at all.

Among everyone in the world, people in the U.S. are the least enthusiastic about moving abroad for work. Only about 35 percent of Americans say they would consider such a move, compared to 64 percent of people worldwide, according to a survey by BCG and Beyond.com, an employment website that is part of The Network. Some 12,000 people in the U.S. participated in the survey, which looked at worker attitudes and global mobility trends. (See Exhibit 1.)

Living in a country with one of the highest standards of living in the world, and with leading companies in fields from finance to media to Internet services, Americans don't see a lot of financial upside in going

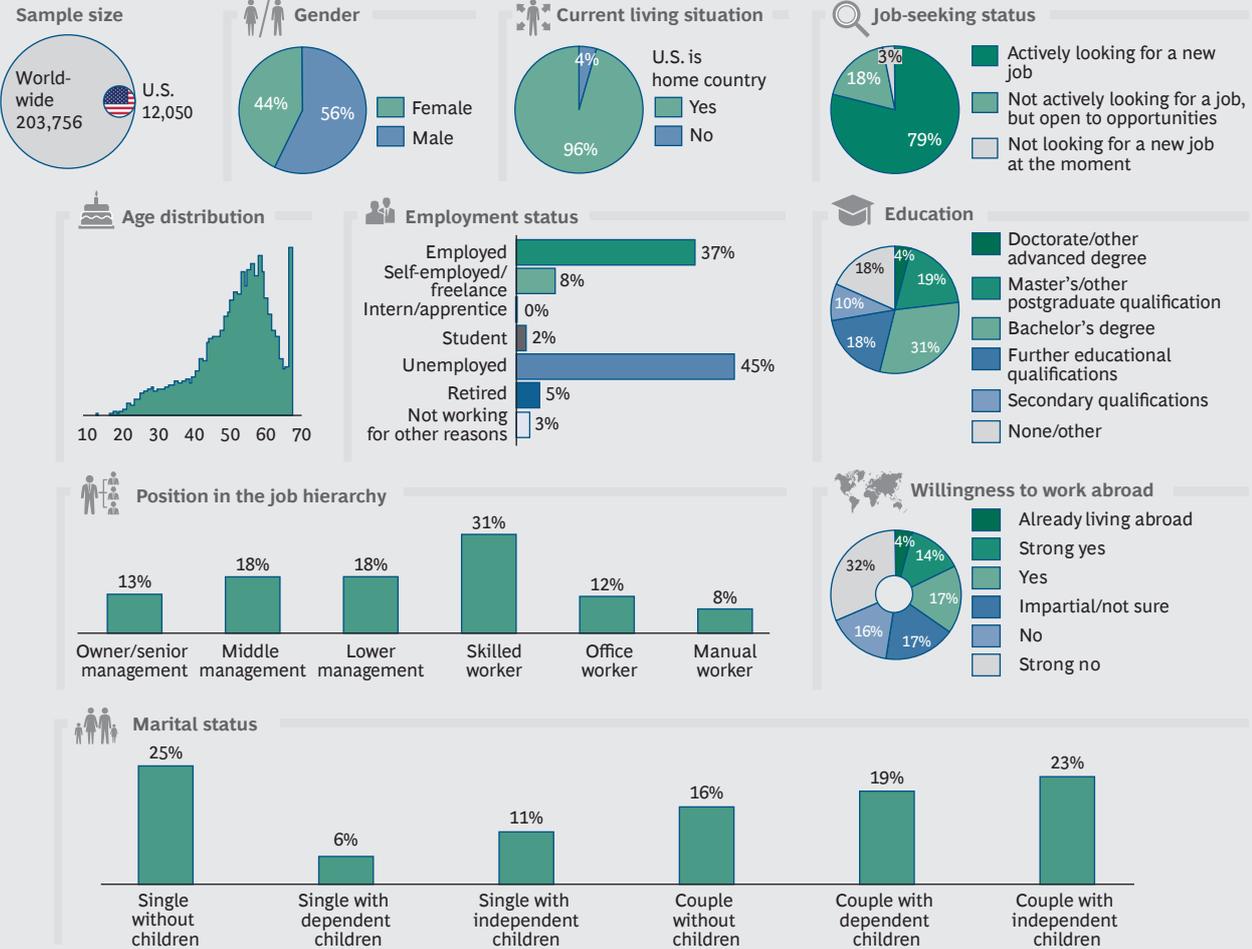
abroad for work. Actual and would-be U.S. expatriates are much more interested in broadening their personal experience or getting the chance to live in a different culture, the survey shows. (See Exhibit 2.)

With the exception of Canada and Australia, the potential work destinations that appeal to Americans are all European. (See Exhibit 3.)

The U.S. was hit hard by the 2008 financial crisis, with the unemployment rate doubling from less than 5 percent to 10 percent in little more than a year and a half. In the wake of that jolt, the first concern of U.S. workers is the financial stability of their employers, with appreciation for the work that they do considerably lower. While appreciative feedback ranks first among workers globally, it's only the fifth most important workplace factor for Americans. (See Exhibit 4.)

If Americans have lost some of their swagger, others still see the U.S. as a land of op-

## EXHIBIT 1 | Breakdown of U.S. Survey Participants by Demographic Factors



Source: 2014 BCG/The Network proprietary web survey and analysis.  
 Note: Because of rounding, not all percentages add up to 100.

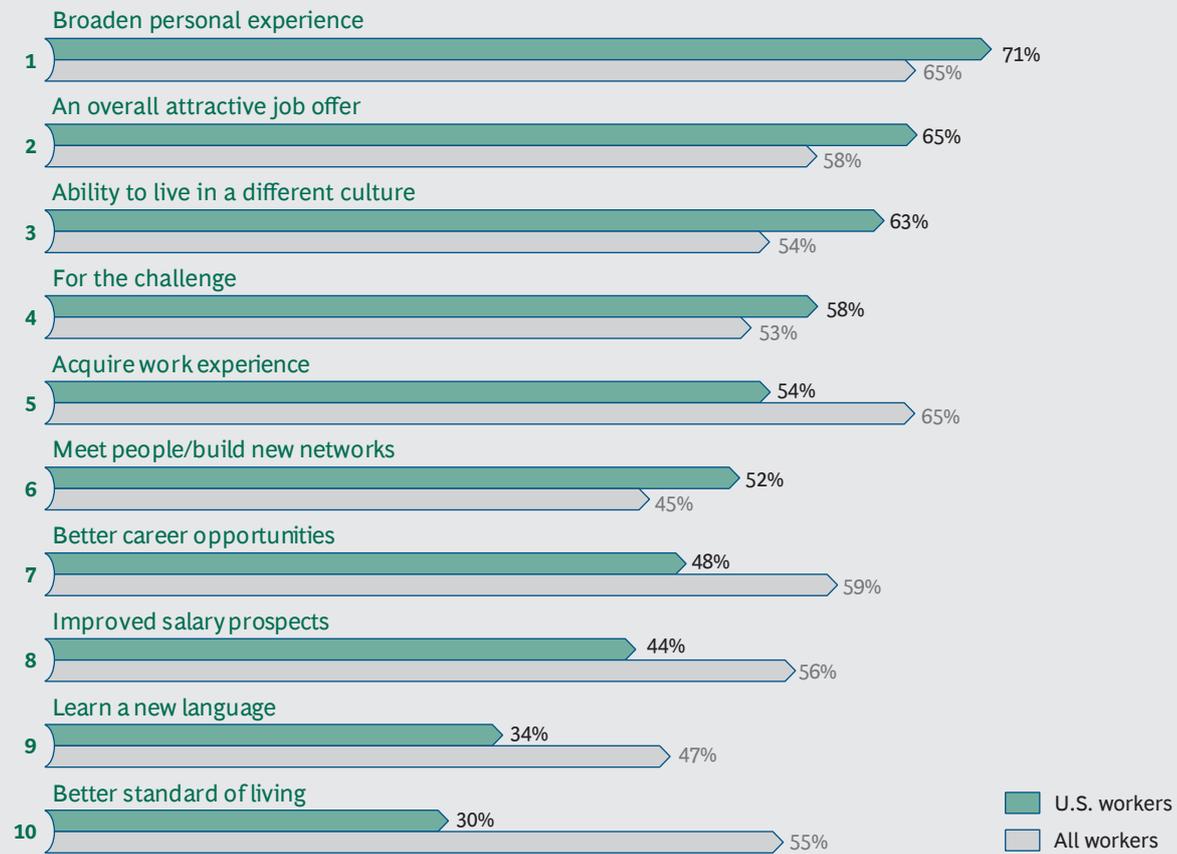
portunity. Of all the countries in the world, the U.S. is the one that the largest proportion of foreigners (42 percent) say they would be willing to move to for work. The size and diversity of its economy and the attractions of cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Miami draw workers from all over the world. The U.S. is the number one work destination of people from more than half the countries in the G20 and is also appealing to workers in many smaller countries.

When foreigners come to the U.S. for work, how much they like it depends heavily on the kind of work they do, the people they work with, and their education. A foreigner without any postsecondary training might end up washing dishes in a restaurant;

from that vantage point, it would be hard to see America as glamorous. By contrast, someone from Asia or Europe with a PhD who winds up in Silicon Valley is likely to have a much better experience. But even skilled foreigners can get sidelined for all sorts of reasons in the U.S. job market, from a lack of facility with the language to other cultural differences.

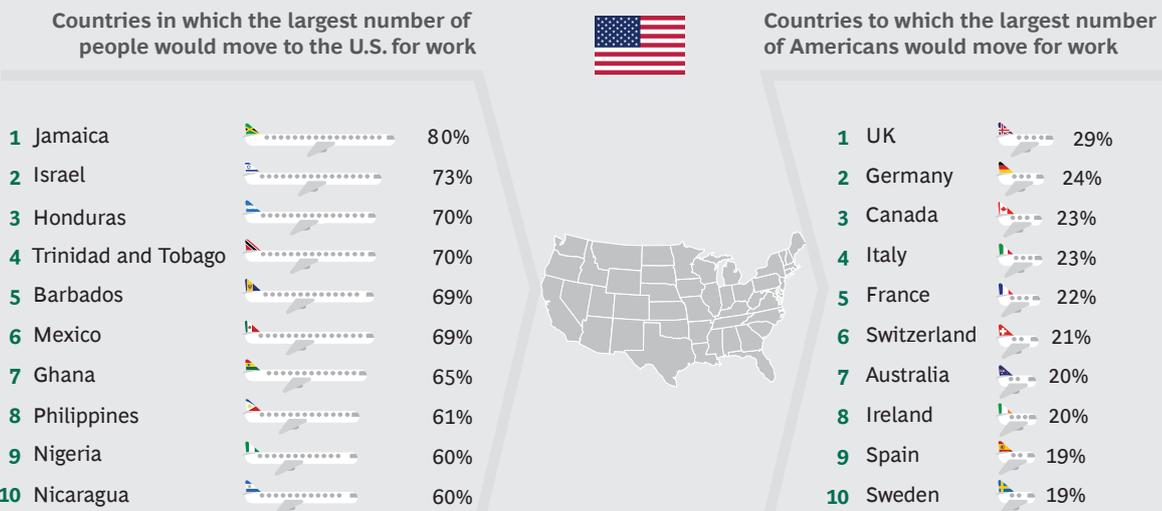
To foreigners able to land a job with a successful U.S. company in a fast-growing industry, one thing the U.S. does seem to offer is a unique chance for career development. That is why Li Leo Ma, a chemical engineer, came to America from China eight years ago. Now 35, Ma is employed by a chemical company near Philadelphia that does business in 130 countries

## EXHIBIT 2 | Reasons Why Americans Would Work Abroad



Source: 2014 BCG/The Network proprietary web survey and analysis.  
 Note: The number of respondents in the U.S. was 12,050; multiple answers were allowed.

## EXHIBIT 3 | Who Would Work in the U.S. and Where Americans Would Work



Source: 2014 BCG/The Network proprietary web survey and analysis.  
 Note: Total sample size was 203,756; the number of respondents in the U.S. was 12,050.

## EXHIBIT 4 | Workplace Factors That Matter Most to Americans



**Source:** 2014 BCG/The Network proprietary web survey and analysis.

**Note:** Total sample size was 203,75; the number of respondents in the U.S. was 12,050.

and has more than \$4 billion in revenue. He says there are “huge differences” between Chinese companies and U.S. companies. For instance, U.S. companies are better at operating across cultures and are more sophisticated in their approach to decision making. Still, if an opportunity arises to go back to China in the future, Ma says he would be interested—especially if he believes that the company recruiting him has a real chance of making an international push. For now, he is learning everything he can about business, technology, and management so that he is ready for the global leadership role he would like. “That’s the type of very exciting, rewarding career I may want to have in the future,” Ma says, adding that his job in America—to him—is the best way of preparing.

### For Further Information

If you would like to discuss the results of this research or obtain further insights about the U.S. results, please contact Rainer Strack ([strack.rainer@bcg.com](mailto:strack.rainer@bcg.com)), Carsten von der Linden ([vonderlinden.carsten@bcg.com](mailto:vonderlinden.carsten@bcg.com)), or Thomas Gaissmaier ([gaissmaier.thomas@bcg.com](mailto:gaissmaier.thomas@bcg.com)) of BCG, or Rich Milgram, Joe Weinlick, or Gina Deveney of Beyond.com ([at media@beyond.com](mailto:at%20media@beyond.com)).

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