



# Global Life-Work Balance Index

Thinking of relocating to a new country for work in 2024? Find out which countries offer the best life-work balance in our leading global study.

2024



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# Introduction

Work-life balance is not a new concept. It may have come into sharper focus in recent years, but it's a tug-of-war many generations of employees have experienced.

It's also an evolving area. What we understand by work-life balance today is not necessarily what we considered it to mean many years ago. And of course, many employers have different ideas about what work-life balance is — and how to achieve it.

In 2024, work-life balance (or life-work balance, a deliberate reversal of the traditional term we use at Remote) is considered non-negotiable for many of the world's employees. According to a recent report, [71% of UK employees](#) rate work-life balance as the main driver of job satisfaction — ahead of their salaries.

At Remote, we're firm in our belief that life-work balance isn't just about the ability to work remotely. It's emphasizing results delivered over time spent at a desk, facilitating time off for employees to recharge, and supporting [parental life-work balance](#) through fair leave policies.

These factors aren't just crucial for employee wellbeing, either. Improving life-work balance for teams can introduce various advantages from an employer's point of view, from an increase in retention to the ability to attract candidates from wider, more diverse global talent pools.

An update of our industry-leading 2023 study of global life-work balance (and introducing additional metrics such as employee safety), our 2024 index reveals which of the world's top 60 GDP countries have the best work-life balance in 2024. If you're considering relocating to a new country for work, these are the nations that lead the way in putting life first.



# The 10 countries with the best work-life balance in 2024

The 10 nations below scored highest out of 100 in our global study, based on a combination of important workplace factors such as statutory annual leave, paid maternity leave, and average hours worked per employee.

To find out where other countries ranked, click [here](#) to see the full data table featuring the top 60 nations.



## Index score

01 •  NEW ZEALAND

Overall index score: 80.76

The Antipodean nation of New Zealand holds the top spot in our index, having also ranked #1 in our 2023 study. Backed by a strong economy, New Zealand's working culture may be considered laid back, but the country's workforce is equally characterized by its "can-do" Kiwi attitude and emphasis on open communication and self-reliance. Of course, the country also boasts some of the world's most stunning scenery (an obvious draw for anyone planning to relocate), but it also offers a high minimum wage along with a generous annual leave entitlement of 32 days. Additionally, New Zealand scores well on the "happiness index" and is considered one of the safest countries to live and work.

[New Zealand employment guide](#)

## 02 • IRELAND

Overall index score: 77.89

Featuring in the top 10 for the first time, the “Emerald Isle” scores consistently well across many of the metrics we analyzed. Backed by a universal government-funded healthcare system, Ireland also offers one of the highest minimum wages in our index. This country of just over five million people is also considered one of the safest in the world.

The global perception of the Irish is that they tend to be warm, friendly, and casual, and this attitude generally extends to the workplace. Hierarchy is not typically seen as overly important, and it’s common for work colleagues to socialize together. Family values also play an important role in Irish culture.

[Ireland employment guide](#)

## 03 • BELGIUM

Overall index score: 73.45

Also breaking into the top 10 this year, Belgium achieves its high 2024 ranking thanks in part to an [update in its sickness policies](#). While individual attitudes vary, Belgians tend to subscribe to the “work to live” mantra rather than the other way around, rarely letting the two mix.

The country famed for its beer and chocolate scores well in several categories, such as rate of pay (its minimum wage is among the highest in Europe) and average hours worked per week, which at 35 is below the average of the countries included in our index.

[Belgium employment guide](#)

## 04 • DENMARK

Overall index score: 73.45

Tied with Belgium for third place, Denmark is considered the world's second-happiest nation according to the [World Happiness Report](#). The Danes' contentment must surely be somewhat down to their healthy attitude to life and work — only [2% of Danish employees work "very long hours"](#) according to OECD data, reflected by a shorter-than-average working week of 33.91 hours.

Denmark also offers a generous statutory annual leave entitlement (35 days), while it adopts one of the world's most parent-friendly leave policies. Moreover, the country that brought the concept of "hygge" to the world is considered one of the safest places to live, as well as one of the leaders in promoting LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

[Denmark employment guide](#)

## 05 • CANADA

Overall index score: 72.75

The world's second-largest country by area (and considered one of its most breathtakingly scenic), Canada ranks highly primarily due to having one of the shortest average working weeks (the average Canadian works 32.1 hours, fewer than all but three countries analyzed) while also being considered one of the safest and most LGBTQ+-friendly countries.

The Canadians are well ahead of their neighbors in the US (with whom they share the world's longest international border) in terms of their attitude toward work, with Canadian working culture tending to be professional but inclusive — expand the table above to see where the United States placed in our index. (Hint: it's near the bottom!)

[Canada employment guide](#)

## 06 • GERMANY

Overall index score: 71.84

Germany is another new entry in our top 10 after placing 12th in 2023. The country has long been associated with productivity and efficiency, and it's true that many German companies value factors such as punctuality and precision. However, there's also a strong emphasis on keeping life and work quite separate.

Germany's strong position owes in part to its generous rate of pay, with its minimum wage of \$14.68 (USD equivalent) the highest of any European country on our list. The country operates a combined public/private health insurance system, and the number of hours worked per employee is lower than average at 34.24 hours a week.

[Germany employment guide](#)

## 07 • FINLAND

Overall index score: 71.55

Finland could well be renamed "Funland" given that the Finns are consistently named the happiest people in the world. Their society has developed an ["infrastructure of happiness"](#) — a system encompassing a strong education system, access to high-quality healthcare, a robust economy, and a commitment to human rights, among other factors.

But this happiness is surely also influenced by the working culture in Finland, with a strong emphasis on life-work balance underpinned by a generous amount of statutory annual leave (36 days) and a shorter-than-average working week (34.43 hours) compared to other countries in our study.

[Finland employment guide](#)

## 08 • AUSTRALIA

Overall index score: 71.35

It's hard not to value time spent outside work when you're blessed with almost year-round sunshine, so it's not surprising to see Australia in our top 10 for a second year running.

But it isn't all about the country's favorable climate, laid-back culture, and stunning scenery. For one thing, the country comfortably offers the highest minimum wage (\$17.47 USD equivalent) of any nation in our list, with Australians among the highest-paid employees in the world. They also enjoy one of the shortest working weeks on average, clocking up just over 32 hours per week (the average number of hours worked across the countries we analyzed is 39.19).

[Australia employment guide](#)

## 09 • NORWAY

Overall index score: 70.85

Having come out on top in our recent study of the world's [best countries for parental life-work balance](#), Norway is certainly an attractive destination for young families or those planning to have children and looking to relocate. This isn't the only reason for its high standing here, though.

In addition to offering 35 days of statutory annual leave (where the average of the countries we studied is around 28), Norwegians rarely work long hours and rank among the happiest nations in the world. The country also has the best record when it comes to championing the rights and freedoms of LGBTQ+ communities.

[Norway employment guide](#)



## 10 • SPAIN

Overall index score: 70.60

We can't talk about the working culture in Spain without mentioning the traditional "siesta," even if this has become something of a national stereotype — a recent survey found that [around 1 in 6 Spaniards](#) still take a long post-lunch break at least four times a week.

Whether or not Spanish employees opt for a siesta during the afternoon, they're still encouraged to take ample time off, with Spain having one of the most generous statutory leave entitlements (36 days a year) in Europe. The country's parental leave policies also mark it as one of the most parent-friendly.

[Spain employment guide](#)



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## Global life-work balance trends

- While Oceania (New Zealand) takes the top spot, [European countries dominate the list](#). Seven of the top 10 (and 16 of the top 20) nations are in Europe; in 2023, the top 20 featured 12 European countries.
- [The United Kingdom lost its place in the top 10 from 2023](#) (falling to 15th here) primarily due to a reduced happiness score and a relatively low safety rating.
- Known for its restrictive workplace policies, the [United States](#) remains one of the [lowest-ranking countries](#) on our list (55th out of 60).
- Nordic countries are the [happiest in the world](#), with [Finland](#), [Denmark](#), and [Sweden](#) ranking highest and [Norway](#) also scoring well.

- The **United Arab Emirates** and **Qatar** are the most overworked nations on the list, with employees in the UAE working over **50 hours per week** on average.

The countries that value efficiency and free time the most are the **Netherlands**, **Iraq**, and **Ethiopia**, with these nations having the **shortest average working weeks**.

- Employees in **Iran**, **Kuwait**, and **Algeria** typically have the most time off, as these countries offer the most **generous statutory annual leave** entitlements.

- **Australia** and **New Zealand's** employees are the most generously paid, with these two countries having the **highest minimum wage** of the top 60.

- **Norway** leads the way for **LGBTQ+ inclusivity**, closely followed by **Denmark**. These countries score highly in relation to LGBTQ+ rights and freedoms.

- A new metric introduced to our 2024 study, the **safest countries** to live and work in are considered to be **Denmark**, **Ireland**, and **New Zealand**.



# What is life-work balance and why is it important in 2024?

We deliberately avoid using the term work-life balance (preferring the reverse, life-work balance) because we believe the traditional term has a problematic undertone. By placing the words in this order, the implication is that our personal endeavors and family commitments should be secondary to our careers, which they shouldn't.

In essence, life-work balance isn't a singular concern but a system of ethics. It involves several factors — from the hours we work to the healthcare support we receive — that work in unison to ensure we can perform to the best of our capabilities when we're at work while enabling us to live a happy, healthy life outside of the workplace.

This doesn't mean that our careers should be seen as unimportant or that we should take any less pride in working hard, but it ensures the time and effort we put into our jobs never comes at the expense of our physical or mental wellbeing — or the quality time we're able to spend doing the things we love.

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At Remote, we are driven to promote the value and importance of a strong work-life balance and sustainable workplace culture. This inspired our Global Life-Work Balance campaign.

**BARBARA MATTHEWS**  
Chief People Officer





# Why should life-work balance be a priority in 2024?

The conversation around life-work balance remains as crucial as ever in 2024. As the working world evolves and employee expectations shift, we understand more about the importance of keeping our personal and professional interests in harmony — and begin to realize that factors such as the hours we spend at our desks are less important than the results we deliver.

Employers must continue to make strides, too. One recent study uncovered that [93% of women have experienced mental health issues](#) as a result of poor work-life balance. While many of the countries we analyzed are championing employee wellbeing, statistics like this illustrate that globally there's still a long way to go.

At Remote, we want to demystify some of the myths and misconceptions that still surround life-work balance in many countries and industries, especially when it comes to factors such as working location, time off, and hours worked. For instance, we believe that:

- [A hybrid model is not four mandatory days in the office and an optional one at home.](#) True flexibility enables the employee to determine when and where they're most productive.
- [The time an employee spends at their desk is not always an indicator of their productivity.](#) Positive outcomes are more important than clocking up a certain number of hours.
- [There should never be a stigma around taking time off.](#) Spending time away from work should be actively encouraged through fair leave policies.

Taking regular breaks doesn't hamper productivity. Employees who take

- breaks during the working day often maintain better focus and are less likely to burn out.

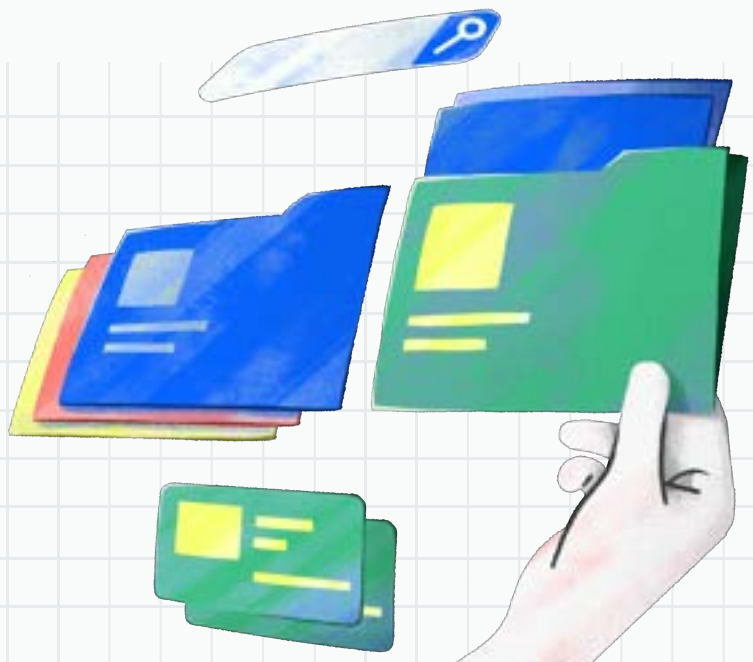
Time differences don't have to get in the way of progress. An async work

- model keeps projects moving forward without requiring everyone to work the same schedule.

At Remote, we live and promote these values across our global teams every day, recognizing that a healthy life-work balance is key to a happy, productive, high-performing workforce — and we champion companies worldwide that share this ethos.

Looking to relocate to a new country for a better life-work balance? Our **Remote Relocation** services offer vital support with immigration, tax, insurance, and more.

Striving to hire the best global talent for your business? Our **Employer of Record** services help you seamlessly hire and onboard international employees, while our leading **HRIS Software** enables you to manage a global team from one place.





# Methodology

We conducted an index data analysis of the world's top 60 GDP countries to reveal which global players offer the best life-work balance for employees.

Our goal with this study is to accurately represent each country's life-work balance, tweaking the familiar concept of "work-life balance" to showcase how the businesses of each country look after the lives of their employees and put life before work.

The study reviewed the following indicators:

- Statutory annual leave (total days of paid leave, including public holidays)\*
- Minimum statutory sick pay (percent of wage, or a flat amount)
- Statutory maternity leave (weeks paid)\*
- Statutory maternity leave payment rate (percent of wage)\*
- Minimum wage (USD per hour) (dividing the annual minimum wage rate by 52 weeks and then by the length of the standard workweek)
- Healthcare system (for example, a private or government-funded system)
- Happiness Index score (1-10, with 10 being the highest)
- Average hours worked per week per employed person

LGBTQ+ inclusivity (0-100, with 100 being the highest; the Legal Index highlights

- the legal rights and freedoms LGBTQ+ people have, while the Public Opinion Index reflects how the general public feels in each region)
- Safety, based on the Global Peace Index (1-4, with lower being better)

The metrics were adjusted with index weights to reflect their relative importance, giving each country an overall score out of 100. All data points are ranked highest to lowest, apart from the healthcare rating which is ranked out of 5 (with 1 being the best), and average hours worked per week and the safety score, which are both ranked lowest best.

The data were collected and analyzed in April 2024.

(\*) When a range was offered, the minimum amount was listed.





# Find out how global life-work balance is evolving

Our second annual study of life-work balance across the world shines a light on the leading countries for employee wellbeing, but it also highlights how global attitudes to life-work balance are changing.

We've honed our approach with this latest report, introducing new and more precise criteria to provide the most accurate and holistic view of today's global work landscape.



## Global Life-Work Balance Index 2023

Want to compare against the 2023 Index Results? Download our 2023 study to see where our top 10 countries ranked last year, and to discover which nations have improved their life-work balance — and which have regressed.

Download



Interested in Europe or the United States in particular? Check out our [European Life-Work Balance Index](#) or our [US States Life-Work Balance Index](#).

