



# Global Life-Work Balance Index 2025

Dreaming of a better life-work balance?  
Discover which countries are setting  
the global standard in 2025.



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# Why the top life-work balance countries stand out

In 2025, life-work balance is about so much more than just time management. With economic, technological, and societal factors impacting much of the world's workforce, it's vital that we drive home the importance of personal and professional alignment.

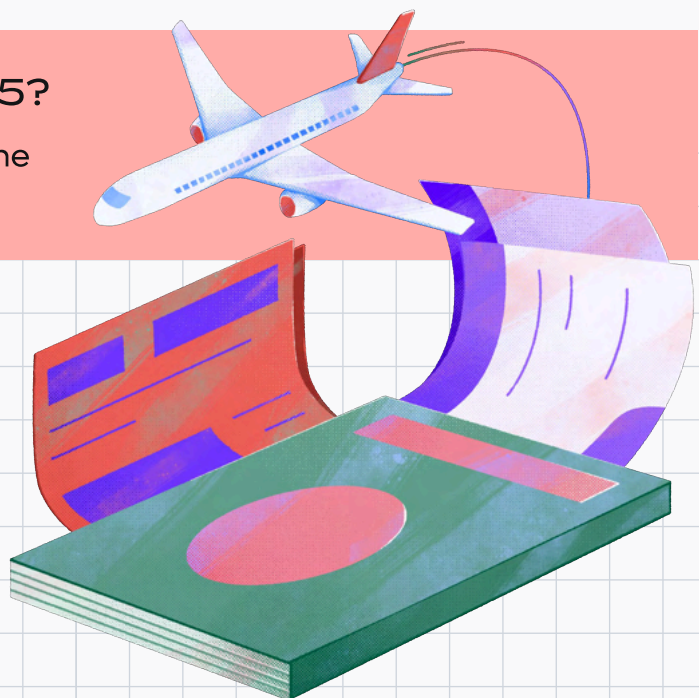
After launching Remote's leading global life-work study in 2023, we continue to publish our annual report to emphasize the growing need for life-work balance across the globe, spotlighting the nations that are leading the charge, as well as those with work still to do.

Our 2025 index places consistent performers alongside countries that have made large strides, and others that have regressed. The top ten are nations that prioritize factors like time off and fair pay.

Ready to relocate in 2025? Discover which countries have the best life-work balance.

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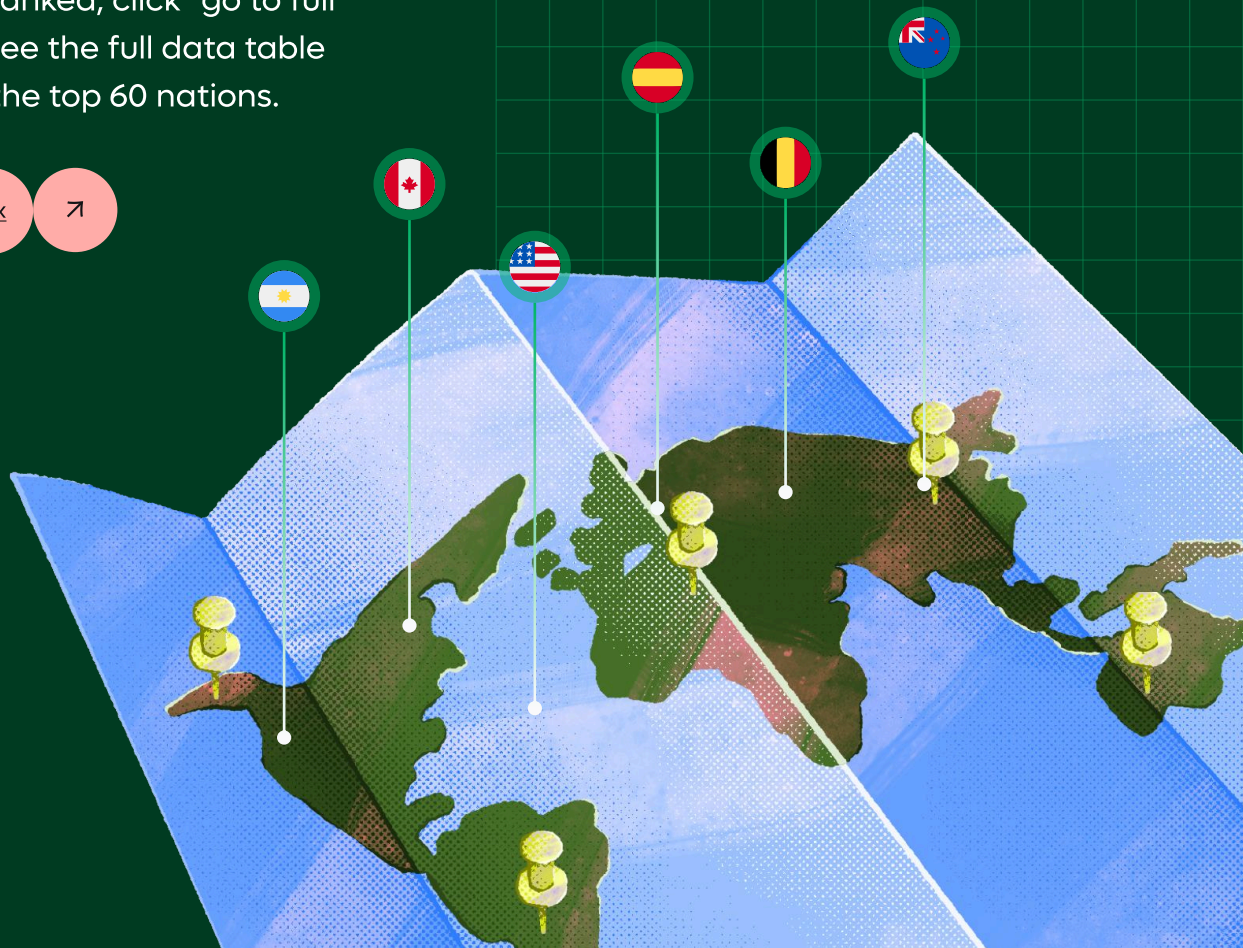
# The best countries for life-work balance in 2025

Assessing important work-related factors such as statutory annual leave, access to healthcare, public safety, and average hours worked per week, we assigned each of the world's top 60 GDP nations an overall 'life-work balance score' out of 100. These are the ten that came out on top.



To find out where other countries ranked, click "go to full index" to see the full data table featuring the top 60 nations.

[See full index](#)



# 1. New Zealand, Wellington

[Learn more](#) ↗



Region	Oceania
2025 Country population	5,251,900
Index score	86.87 <div><div></div></div> 100
Statutory annual leave (days)	32
Minimum statutory sick pay percentage	80 - 100%
Paid maternity leave weeks and payment rate	26 100%
Minimum wage (USD per hour)	16.42
Healthcare system	Universal government-funded health system
Happiness index	6.95 / 10
Average hours worked per week	33.00
LGBTQ+ Inclusivity	75 / 100
Safety: Global Peace Index Ranking (low is better)	1.32 / 4

## 2. Ireland, Dublin

[Learn more](#) ↗



Region	Europe
2025 Country population	5,308,040
Index score	81.17 <div><div></div></div> 100
Statutory annual leave (days)	30
Minimum statutory sick pay percentage	70 - 100% (Social security only)
Paid maternity leave weeks and payment rate (wage %)	26 100%
Minimum wage (USD per hour)	13.96
Healthcare system	Universal government-funded health system
Happiness index	6.89 / 10
Average hours worked per week	34.30
LGBTQ+ Inclusivity	72 / 100
Safety: Global Peace Index Ranking (low is better)	1.12 / 4

### 3. Belgium, Brussels

[Learn more](#) ↗



Region	Europe
2025 Country population	11,758,600
Index score	75.91 <div><div></div></div> 100
Statutory annual leave (days)	30
Minimum statutory sick pay percentage	80 - 100%
Paid maternity leave weeks and payment rate (wage %)	15 75%
Minimum wage (USD per hour)	14.58
Healthcare system	Public insurance system
Happiness index	6.91 / 10
Average hours worked per week	34.10
LGBTQ+ Inclusivity	74 / 100
Safety: Global Peace Index Ranking (low is better)	1.51 / 4

## 4. Germany, Berlin

[Learn more ↗](#)



Region	Europe
2025 Country population	84,075,100
Index score	74.65 <div><div></div></div> 100
Statutory annual leave (days)	30
Minimum statutory sick pay percentage	80 - 100%
Paid maternity leave weeks and payment rate (wage %)	14 100%
Minimum wage (USD per hour)	15.16
Healthcare system	Public-private social insurance system
Happiness index	6.75 / 10
Average hours worked per week	33.20
LGBTQ+ Inclusivity	81 / 100
Safety: Global Peace Index Ranking (low is better)	1.54 / 4



## 5. Norway, Oslo

[Learn more](#) ↗



Region	Europe
2025 Country population	5,623,070
Index score	74.20 <div><div></div></div> 100
Statutory annual leave (days)	35
Minimum statutory sick pay percentage	80 - 100%
Paid maternity leave weeks and payment rate (wage %)	49 100%
Minimum wage (USD per hour)	0.00
Healthcare system	Universal government-funded health system
Happiness index	7.26 / 10
Average hours worked per week	32.60
LGBTQ+ Inclusivity	87 / 100
Safety: Global Peace Index Ranking (low is better)	1.64 / 4

## 6. Denmark, Copenhagen

[Learn more](#) ↗



Region	Europe
2025 Country population	6,002,510
Index score	73.76 <div><div></div></div> 100
Statutory annual leave (days)	35
Minimum statutory sick pay percentage	80 - 100%
Paid maternity leave weeks and payment rate (wage %)	18 100%
Minimum wage (USD per hour)	0.00
Healthcare system	Universal government-funded health system
Happiness index	7.52 / 10
Average hours worked per week	32.50
LGBTQ+ Inclusivity	80 / 100
Safety: Global Peace Index Ranking (low is better)	1.38 / 4

# 7. Canada, Ottawa

[Learn more](#) ↗



Region	Americas	
2025 Country population	40,126,700	
Index score	73.46	<div><div></div></div> 100
Statutory annual leave (days)	17	
Minimum statutory sick pay percentage	80 - 100%	Employees in Canada are guaranteed protected time off for sick leave, the annual entitlement varies per province. Social security only.
Paid maternity leave weeks and payment rate (wage %)	18 55%	
Minimum wage (USD per hour)	11.60	
Healthcare system	Universal government-funded health system	
Happiness index	6.80 / 10	
Average hours worked per week	35.20	
LGBTQ+ Inclusivity	78 / 100	
Safety: Global Peace Index Ranking (low is better)	1.45 / 4	

# 8. Australia, Canberra

Region	Oceania
2025 Country population	26,974,000
Index score	72.10 <div><div></div></div> 100
Statutory annual leave (days)	30
Minimum statutory sick pay percentage	80 - 100%
Paid maternity leave weeks and payment rate (wage %)	12 National minimum wage
Minimum wage (USD per hour)	18.12
Healthcare system	Public-private insurance system
Happiness index	6.97 / 10
Average hours worked per week	32.29
LGBTQ+ Inclusivity	75 / 100
Safety: Global Peace Index Ranking (low is better)	1.54 / 4

## 9. Spain, Madrid

[Learn more](#) ↗



Region	Europe
2025 Country population	47,890,000
Index score	71.94 <div><div></div></div> 100
Statutory annual leave (days)	36
Minimum statutory sick pay percentage	Less than 60% of wages
Paid maternity leave weeks and payment rate (wage %)	16 100%
Minimum wage (USD per hour)	8.39
Healthcare system	Universal government-funded health system
Happiness index	6.47 / 10
Average hours worked per week	36.30
LGBTQ+ Inclusivity	83 / 100
Safety: Global Peace Index Ranking (low is better)	1.60 / 4

# 10. Finland, Helsinki

[Learn more ↗](#)



Region	Europe
2025 Country population	5,623,330
Index score	70.86 <div><div></div></div> 100
Statutory annual leave (days)	36
Minimum statutory sick pay percentage	80 - 100%
Paid maternity leave weeks and payment rate (wage %)	15 80%
Minimum wage (USD per hour)	0.00
Healthcare system	Universal government-funded health system
Happiness index	7.74 / 10
Average hours worked per week	33.80
LGBTQ+ Inclusivity	74 / 100
Safety: Global Peace Index Ranking (low is better)	1.47 / 4



## 1. New Zealand

Overall index score: **86.87**

If you're thinking of relocating to a new country for work in 2025, New Zealand comes out on top for many. In fact, "The Land of the Long White Cloud" (the English translation of the country's Māori name Aotearoa) holds its place at the top of our index for the third year in a row, even improving on its score from 2024 thanks in part to a slight jump in minimum wage.

Why is New Zealand so life-work-balance-friendly? First off, it helps to be surrounded by diverse, beautiful scenery. Secondly, while the country doesn't rank at #1 for every factor we assessed, it scores consistently well across the study — particularly in areas like statutory annual leave, public happiness, safety, and minimum wage (where it is ranked the second-highest of all countries assessed).

Hard work is seen as important in Kiwi culture, but as the New Zealand government's [guide to the NZ way of working](#) points out, "Life is for living and employers generally respect that."



[New Zealand employment guide](#)



## 2. Ireland

Overall index score: **81.17**

Ireland retains its #2 ranking in 2025. With the locals having a global reputation for being warm and welcoming, the country synonymous with St. Paddy's Day is (along with Austria) considered the safest country to live and work in of all those we analyzed.

The Emerald Isle scores well across the board, with a relatively high minimum wage and a generous maternity leave policy compared to many other countries (with 26 weeks off at 70% of income payment rate). The work culture in Ireland tends to favor a balance between hard work and a real sense of community and camaraderie.

 [Ireland employment guide](#)



## 3. Belgium

Overall index score: **75.91**

Cementing its place in the top three — after sharing the spot last year with Denmark — life-work balance is becoming just as much a hallmark of Belgian culture as chocolate, waffles and beer. Plus, this isn't just because it has one of the highest minimum wages in Europe either (topped only by the United Kingdom and Germany).

Belgium scores well across several other metrics too, including statutory sick pay and maternity payment rate, while the country's happiness rating is among the highest in Europe at 6.91/10. Belgians also work relatively short working weeks (34.1 hours) on average compared to many of their overseas counterparts.

 [Belgium employment guide](#)





## 4. Germany

Overall index score: **74.65**

Rising two places from the 2024 ranking, Germany climbs to position four in our 2025 life-work balance index. Punctuality and professionalism are traditionally seen as “German values,” but there’s also a strong emphasis on working smarter, not harder, which is partly why Germany is considered to have one of the best life-work balances in Europe.

Several factors have contributed to Germany’s improved score in 2025, but a key change is an [increase in statutory sick pay](#), especially for parents. We’ve also seen a slight increase in overall happiness, and a decrease in the average hours worked per week, while the country’s LGBTQ+ inclusivity has improved since 2024, too.

 [Germany employment guide](#)




## 5. Norway

Overall index score: **74.20**

Making the biggest jump of any of our top ten countries, Norway moves from ninth in the 2024 study to fifth this year. This improvement is mainly due to an [extension of parental leave options](#) (Norway has the most generous parental leave policy of all countries studied).

But we’ve also seen a slight drop in working hours. At 32.6 hours, and Norway has one of the shortest work weeks in Europe on average.

The work culture in Norway tends to steer towards equality and cooperation, which is bolstered by the fact that it’s considered the most LGBTQ+-inclusive country in our list. Like many of its Nordic counterparts, Norway is also seen as one of Europe’s happiest nations.

 [Norway employment guide](#)




## 6. Denmark

Overall index score: **73.76**

The Danes have long been associated with a harmonious personal-professional divide. So many point to Denmark's strong emphasis on balancing work and life as a key reason it consistently ranks among the world's happiest nations. Although the Danes' fondness for the [hygge](#) lifestyle may also be a factor.

Despite dropping out of the top three this year (Denmark shared third place with Belgium in 2024), the country is synonymous with a high quality of life, second only to Finland for public happiness levels. It also has one of the shortest average working weeks (32.5 hours), and is considered one of the safest and most LGBTQ+ friendly countries.

 [Denmark employment guide](#)



## 7. Canada

Overall index score: **73.46**

Canada may have fallen two places this year, but it remains the only country in the Americas to feature in the top ten for life-work balance. In stark contrast to its neighbour to the south (the United States ranked 59th out of the 60 countries reviewed), "The Great White North" scores solidly across many of the metrics we analyzed for our 2025 life-work balance study.

For example, Canada ranks among the world's top countries for statutory sick pay, while it also performs well when it comes to public safety and LGBTQ+ inclusivity. Plus, one thing it has that the U.S. doesn't is a universal, government-funded healthcare system.

Canadian workplaces tend to value punctuality and dependability, but employees typically maintain a healthy separation between work and family life.

 [Canada employment guide](#)





## 8. Australia

Overall index score: **72.10**

The global perception of Australian culture is that it tends to be very laid back, with Aussies generally adopting a “no-worries” attitude to life. Their workplaces broadly reflect this, prioritizing openness and egalitarianism. The country maintains a strong focus on employee wellbeing, holding its position at number eight for life-work balance for the second year running.

While Australia trails behind its Antipodean neighbor New Zealand in most categories, it boasts the highest minimum wage of any country we studied — the equivalent of \$18.12 in U.S. dollars. Perhaps unsurprisingly for a country with such a relaxed outlook (and year-round sunshine, too), Australians tend to work short hours (32.29 per week) compared to most other countries.



[Australia employment guide](#)



## 9. Spain

Overall index score: **71.94**

Has the idea of the traditional Spanish “siesta” become a dated, inaccurate national stereotype? Possibly (it’s believed that [most Spaniards never take a midday nap](#)), but the country still has a generally healthy attitude towards work and life, rising one place in our 2025 study to cement its place in the top ten.

While Spain’s public happiness rating is perhaps surprisingly low compared to other European nations, it largely performs well across the factors measured. Spain is considered the second-most LGBTQ+-friendly country of the 60 we analyzed. Spanish workers also enjoy a generous annual leave entitlement and maternity payment contribution.



[Spain employment guide](#)



## 10. Finland

Overall index score: **70.86**

Rounding out the top ten is Finland, “officially” the happiest country in the world in 2025, according to a [recent study](#). In fact, the Finns have ranked as the world’s most upbeat nation for the past eight years. Why? It’s often attributed to factors such as a high level of societal trust and freedom, as well as a closeness to nature and the outdoors.

Finland has actually dropped three places in our global life-work balance this year (with one factor being a slight drop in LGBTQ+ inclusivity) but clings on to its top ten standing thanks to the aforementioned happiness score, alongside a generous statutory annual leave policy, a high rate of sick pay, and a relatively short average working week.

 [Finland employment guide](#)



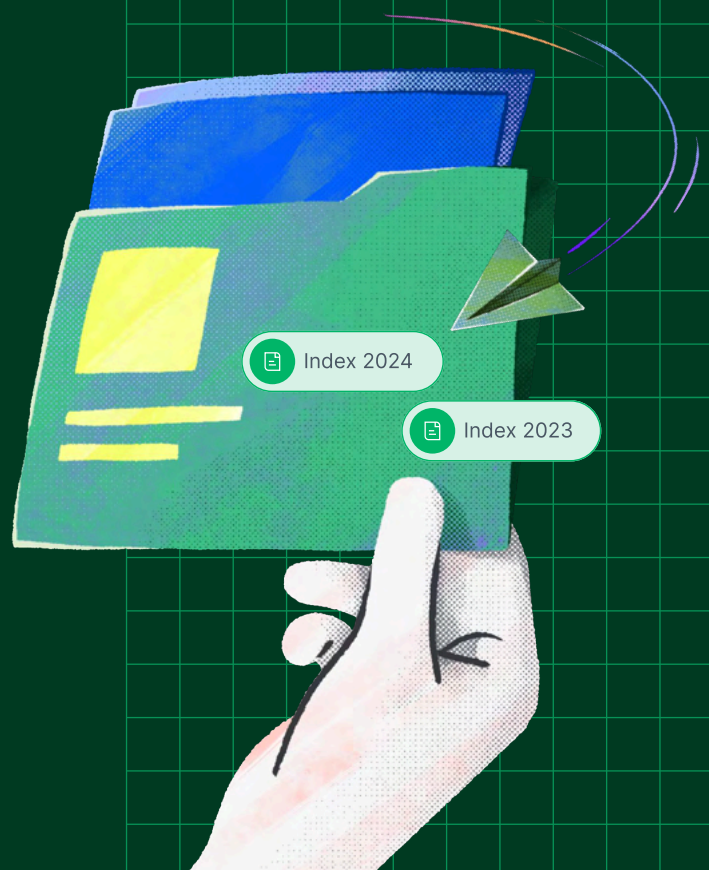
### Want to compare against previous results?

Which countries have improved their life-work balance in 2025?  
Which nations have fallen behind?  
Download Remote’s past studies to see which countries ranked in the top ten.

See the 2023 results



See the 2024 results



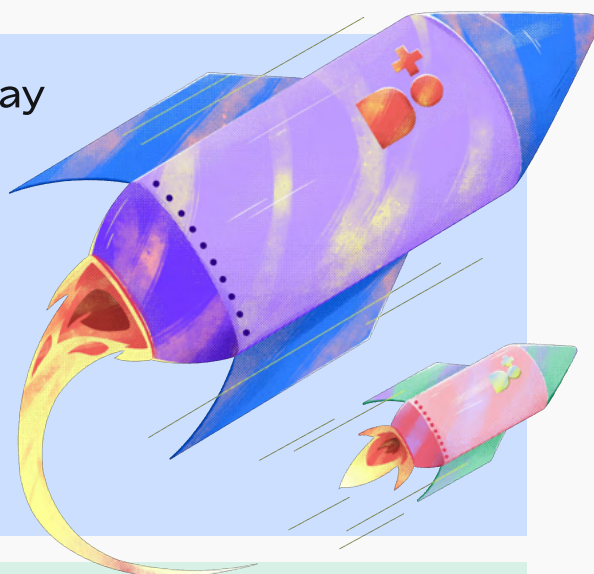


# The strongest performers in 2025



## 1. New Zealand leads the way

Topping the rankings for a third year in a row, New Zealand cements its position as the country with the best life-work balance in 2025, improving its score by more than six points thanks partly to a slight increase in minimum wage.



## 2. Europe continues to dominate

Despite an Oceanian nation coming out on top, Europe is the leading continent for life-work balance overall, with seven European countries appearing in the top ten. No countries from Africa or Asia feature in the top 20.



## 3. Norway jumps into the top five

Despite just making the top ten in 2025, Norway places fifth this year, making it the top-performing Nordic country ahead of Denmark and Finland. The rise is in part due to an extension of parental leave policies.



# Global life-work balance highlights



## 1. Finland is the world's happiest country

Finland tops the happiness index again in 2025, with Nordic and Scandinavian countries faring particularly well. Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Norway round out the top five happiest countries.



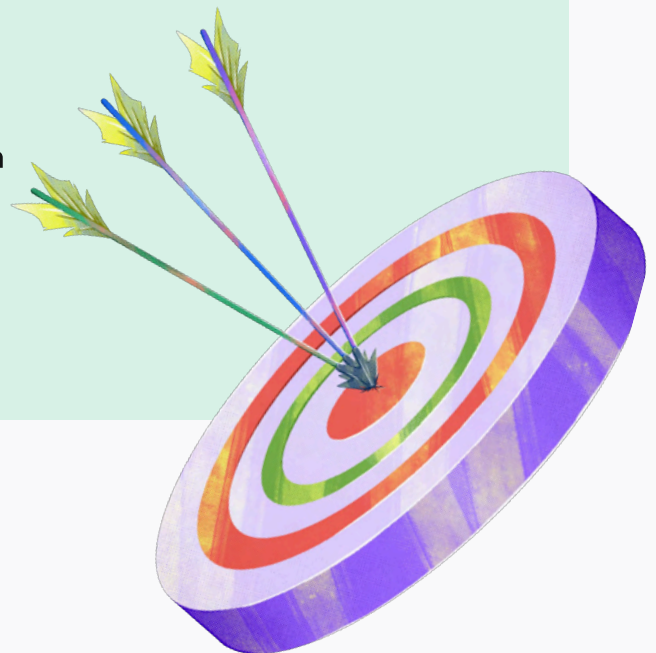
## 2. The Netherlands has the shortest working week

With an average of 30.5 hours, the Netherlands has the shortest average work week. Workers in Iraq and Ethiopia also enjoy ample free time, while the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have the longest working weeks.



## 3. Austria and Ireland are the safest countries

Analyzing data from the [Global Peace Index](#), Austria and Ireland are the safest nations included in the study. New Zealand (the #1 country overall), Singapore, and Switzerland are also considered very safe to live and work in.



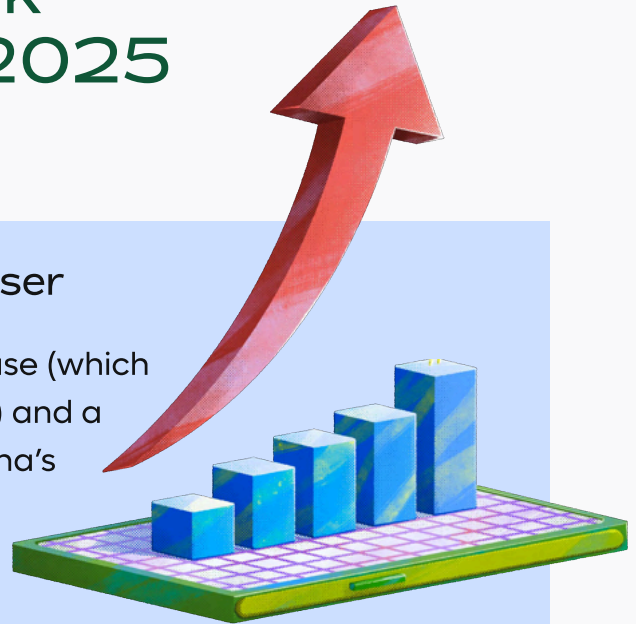


# The biggest life-work balance changes in 2025



## 1. Argentina is a notable riser

Thanks to a minimum wage increase (which became effective in January 2025) and a boost in public happiness, Argentina's score has risen by 7.09 points. The South American nation has moved from 19th to 14th in 2025.



## 2. The United States falls further behind

With public safety and LGBTQ+ inclusivity decreasing, the United States now has the second-worst life-work balance, according to the data. The U.S. falls to 59th out of 60, having placed 55th last year and 53rd in 2023.



## 3. The UK bounces back

After dropping from eighth to 15th in 2024, an increase of 4.56 points sees the UK sit just outside the top ten in 2025. The improvement is down to an increase in minimum wage combined with a reduction in hours worked per week.





# What is life-work balance & why is it important in 2025?

We reject the traditional term “work-life balance” because we believe it to be backwards, literally and philosophically. Our preferred phrasing, life-work balance, emphasizes that life comes first, and work should exist in service of enriching, not overshadowing it.

Life-work balance is not simply a measure of how much time an individual spends at work or how many hours are left for personal pursuits. It’s more nuanced than that. That’s why our study seeks to paint a holistic view of what it truly means to live and work well in different parts of the world.

But of course, we also acknowledge that life-work balance doesn’t have a universal definition — it will mean something different to every individual and in every culture. Our aim is not to generalize, but to present the core statutory benefits and workplace systems in place across the world to help bolster a culture of strong life-work balance.

Across the globe, life-work balance remains fundamental to our physical and emotional wellbeing. We should all have the time and freedom to engage meaningfully with our lives outside of work.



By promoting life-work balance, we acknowledge that work is a means to support life and not its defining purpose. At Remote, our Global Life-Work Balance study is more than just a comparative table. It’s a reflection of our core belief that people perform their best when they’re trusted to live fully outside of work, not just within it. We advocate for life-work balance because flexibility and wellbeing are more than just perks. Our mission is to build a future where global talent thrives not just professionally, but personally too.

**BARBARA MATTHEWS**  
Chief People Officer at Remote





## Why life-work balance remains more critical than ever

For the first time, life-work balance is now considered the number-one motivator for employees all over the world, with workplace flexibility outranking salary in importance in a recent [survey](#) of thousands of international workers.

But why is life-work balance becoming non-negotiable in the modern working landscape?

- **Employees demand flexibility.** In our recent [Remote Workforce Report](#), 73% of hiring leaders said they've lost employees to companies offering greater flexibility.
- **The boundaries are blurred.** The widespread adoption of hybrid and remote work has many positives, but it can be harder for employees to 'disconnect.'
- **We live in an always-on culture.** Technology has broadened our horizons, but expectations for 24/7 responsiveness have increased.
- **Economic uncertainty is widespread.** Amid rising costs of living worldwide, many employees are overworking to stay relevant and secure in their roles.
- **Parental demands are taking a toll.** Almost three-quarters [of the global workforce](#) have some kind of caregiving responsibility to juggle with a career.
- **AI has introduced additional stress.** While AI can help us work smarter, it also fuels fears of redundancy and a need for continual skill development.

As our study shows, countries such as New Zealand and many in Europe are helping their employees navigate the balance between life and work with employee-first policies, but nations like the United States risk walking into a burnout epidemic with a culture that continues to prioritize long hours and limited paid leave.











Without decisive action, this approach will drain the talent pool and compromise the future resilience of the workforce.



# Life-Work Balance Index survey methodology

As leaders in global HR and employment, we conducted our index data analysis of the world's top 60 GDP countries to discover which global player offers employees the best life-work balance. The top 60 GDP countries were selected as a global sample.

The study reviewed the following indicators:

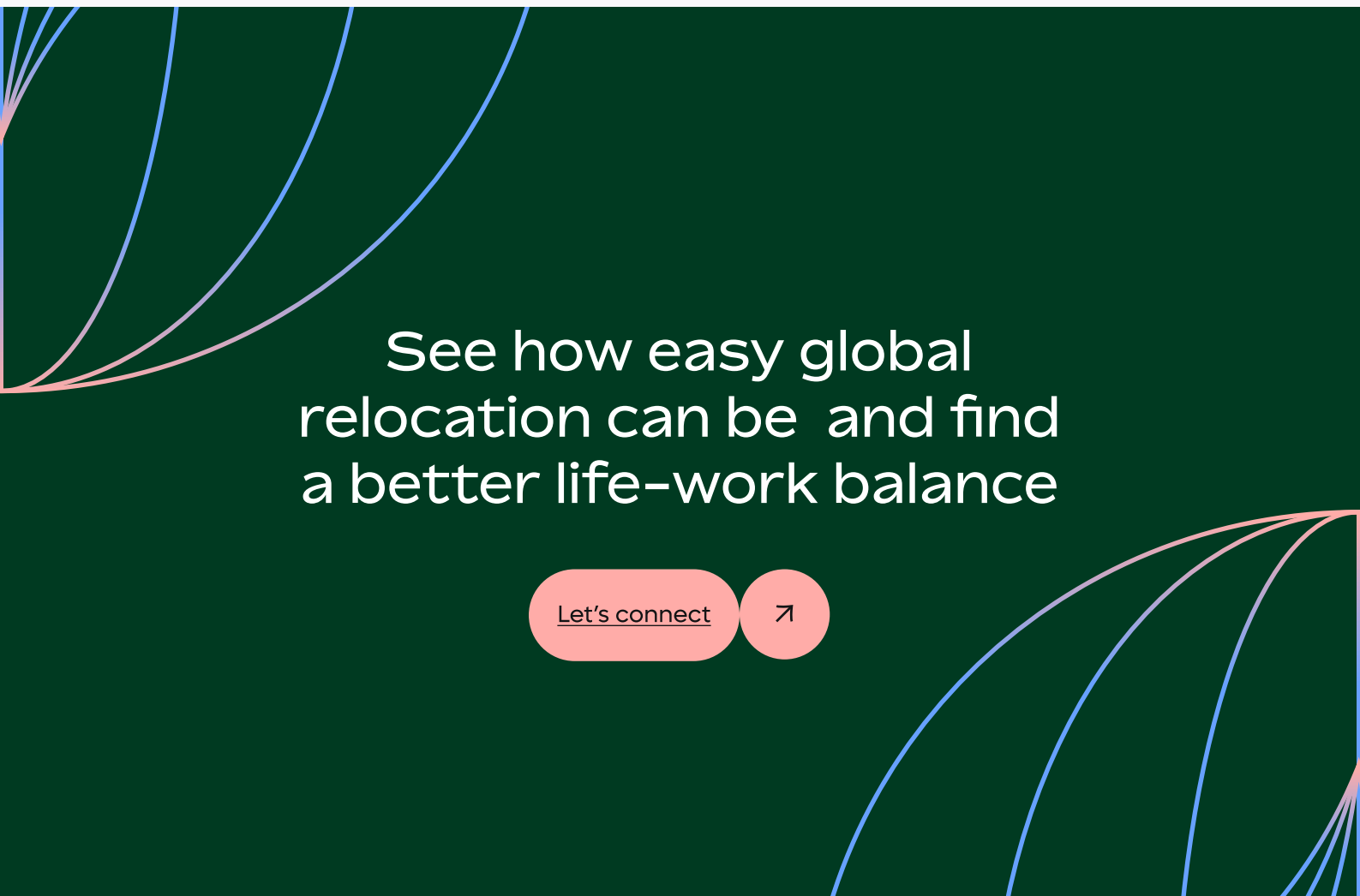
 <b>Statutory annual leave</b> (total days of paid leave, including public holidays)*	 <b>Minimum statutory sick pay</b> (percent of wage, or a flat amount)*	 <b>Statutory maternity leave payment rate</b> (percent of wage)*
 <b>Statutory maternity leave</b> (weeks paid)*	 <b>Minimum wage</b> (USD per hour)*	 <b>Healthcare status</b>
 <b>Happiness index score</b> (1-10, 10 being highest)	 <b>Average hours per week per employed person</b>	 <b>Safety: Global Peace Index</b> (1-4, lower is better)
 <b>LGBTQ+ Inclusivity</b> (0-100, 100 being highest to reflect the Legal Index scores the legal rights and freedoms LGBTQ+ people have, while the Public Opinion Index scores how the general public feels in each region)		

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

The goal was to accurately represent each country's life-work balance, reframing the familiar concept of "work-life balance" to showcase how businesses in each country are looking after the lives of their employees and putting life before work.

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 five (with one being the best), and average hours worked per week and the safety score, which are both ranked from lowest to best.

The data was pulled and analyzed in April 2025.



See how easy global  
relocation can be and find  
a better life-work balance

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