

Dipstick Travel Policy Benchmarking

2024 February

Final Report | February 2024

This document is shared as a public document, towards strengthening our ability to support our employees, and is meant as an input to decision-making for Indian non-profit organization leadership.



RAAHI:IMPACT
WITH GIRISH ANANTH

About This Document

Reports like this, that help organizations widely, can only be done if data is pooled in by each of us. In the next such exercise, do consider participating as well!
#StrongerTogether

About Raahi : Impact

One of the recurring queries over the last year in the non-profit HR community has been on travel reimbursements and travel policy benchmarking. Given the changing fuel costs, the resuming of movement among team members in the post-COVID world, this takes significance.

To that end, this public document has been created, with the data provided by some wonderful organizations – to provide a aggregated, preliminary idea, to review and update NGOs’ travel policies.

I hope the analysis is helpful for you as you strengthen your approach to supporting your employees. At the end of the day, it is going to be about your own context and journey – so do use the information wisely, and wish you luck with that.

I have been running some pilot ventures to strengthen the social sector ecosystem in the last many months, including:

- on the org development side, **driving these benchmarking exercises** and supporting some non-profits in strengthening their operations and functions
- to engage talent into the development sector and explore the nuances of driving social impact, a YouTube channel / a **video podcast called [Raahi: Impact Journeys](#). (do check it out! 😊)**

In an attempt to separate the personal and professional, I decided to create an umbrella of “**Raahi:Impact**” under which to continue these experiments.

Wish me luck!



Regards,
Girish Ananthanarayanan
February 2024

Personal: [LinkedIn](#) | [Website](#) | [Instagram](#)

Raahi: [Email](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Instagram](#)

How to use this document (and how not to)

- **Use the document to form an indicative idea, but leave room for error.**
 - Utmost care has been taken to make sure the data in the document is accurate and verified.
- **Respect everyone's confidentiality, and use the document judiciously.**
 - This document has been made through the trust of many organizations, sharing their data for common use. Please use the document judiciously.
 - There has been immense care taken to ensure no personally identifiable information about any organization is made available. In case there is something you do notice, please write to me.
- **Ultimately, what matters is your own individual strategy.**
 - Remember, all participants are at different stages of growth and different funding situations. Ultimately, the use of the document will depend on the organization strategy and ability. We've all been through the ups and downs – so don't let anything in the document concern you.

Table of Contents

★ Potentially most useful

Page

5

Executive Summary

- All the major points of the document in one place

12

Local Travel

- Geographies and Modes of Transport
- General norms
- ★ Personal Vehicle Reimbursement benchmarks
 - Electric Vehicle Reimbursement approach
 - Food Reimbursement

20

Outstation Travel

- General norms
- ★ Food and Accommodation Reimbursement benchmarks

27

International Travel

- Existence of policy
- Provisions of organizations for int'l travel
- Details of provisions

31

Pay-as-you-wish option

Agenda

Executive Summary

Overview of Participants

Local Travel

Outstation Travel

International Travel

Pay-as-you-Wish

Executive Summary (1/6)

Participation

- The Travel Policy survey 2024 saw participation of 27 organizations
- A majority of the organizations have 20-150 members; a few are 250-350 members and two are 1000+ members
- The percentage of field staff is a wide range from 0 to 90%

Local Travel

Geographies of local travel

- Most of the organizations participating work across a range of geographies – 85% in urban areas; 74% in rural and between cities/districts; 64% in suburban areas

Modes of travel

- A majority of organizations permit all modes of travel - public transport, Ola/Uber/taxi, personal travel by bike and car.
- Some organizations, however, have more nuanced permissions. Some examples:
 - *allow taxi only in rural areas*
 - *allow only public transport or personal bike, but not cars and taxis*
 - *allow all modes except taxis*
 - *allow bike for frontline staff and car only for supervisor roles*
- Naturally, it seems that the context of the organization largely determines what is allowed.

Executive Summary (2/6)

Reimbursement for personal vehicles

- The reimbursements for personal vehicles is as provided in the table below:

Reimbursement (Rs. Per km)	Two Wheeler	Four Wheeler (Petrol)	Four Wheeler (Diesel)
Average	5.47	10.63	10.26
Median	5	10	10
Mode	4	10	10
Min	4	7	7
Max	10	15	14

Additional perspectives shared as below:

- 1. Some organizations set flat reimbursement amounts:** Set as an annual amount or per travel amount.
- 2. Some put overall limits:** Limits by KMs per day, or by total reimbursement amount per month.
- 3. Reimbursement for travel to office:** One organization provides reimbursement only for bikes; for field visits at actuals, and Rs. 2 per km to and fro the office.

Executive Summary (3/6)

Reimbursing Electric Vehicles

- Most organizations have not actively considered reimbursing electric vehicles. For those who do, the approach has been to consider Electric Vehicles at the same rate as petrol/diesel vehicles, and reimburse at the same amounts.
- One way this was justified in the comments was that this amount is inclusive of the cost of maintenance of the vehicle.

Food reimbursement

- Typically organizations do not provide food reimbursement for local travel; in many cases, it is a regular daily visit of the team members

Outstation Travel

General norms

- Depending on their situation and context, the organizations have rules for the outstation travel.

For example: Only upto 3AC train; 2/3 AC train or economy airfaire allowed; road/train till 8 hours away, and flight if > 8 hours away; flights allowed for the leadership team, train for the team

- Reimbursed amounts:
 - In general, both the travel to the location and local travel are reimbursed on actuals
 - In one case, annual amount per team member per year budgeted.

Executive Summary (4/6)

Food reimbursement for outstation travel

General norms:

- Usually a per day cap
- Often differentiated by location: higher for Tier 1 cities vs. Tier 2-3 cities
- Sometimes differentiated by level in the organization as well

Specific cases:

- In general bills are required; an organization has allowed claims upto Rs. 500/- without bills
- In one case, the organization provides food to the employees, so the amount is lesser than typical (Rs. 300 / day)

Typical caps (INR per day):

	Tier 1 City	Tier 2 City
Average	861	830
Median	800	775
Mode	800	700
Min	450	450
Max	1500	1500



This is an approximate benchmark, based on reading and interpreting the entries provided by the participants.
Please see the detailed section for the actual comments, and how this was interpreted and created.

Executive Summary (5/6)

Accommodation reimbursement for outstation travel

General norms:

- In some cases, taken care of by office; in others, employee expected to reimburse. In some cases, organization has a preferred list of hotels at various cities and has negotiated corporate rates with hotel chains.
- In half the cases, the reimbursement limits are same for all employees; in half of the cases, it differs by level
- Often, there is a differentiation between locations – e.g. Mumbai vs. non-Mumbai; Tier 1 / Metro City vs other locations, etc.
- In one case, there was no cap provided; the guideline was to ensure it is economical option
- Some organizations allow the doubling of limit in case of shared room (e.g. Rs. 5000 / person * 2 is the limit in case room taken on twin-sharing basis)

Typical caps:

	Tier 1 City	Tier 2 City
Average	3,927	3,288
Median	3,000	3,000
Mode	3,000	2,000, 3,000
Min	1,200	1,200
Max	10,000	10,000

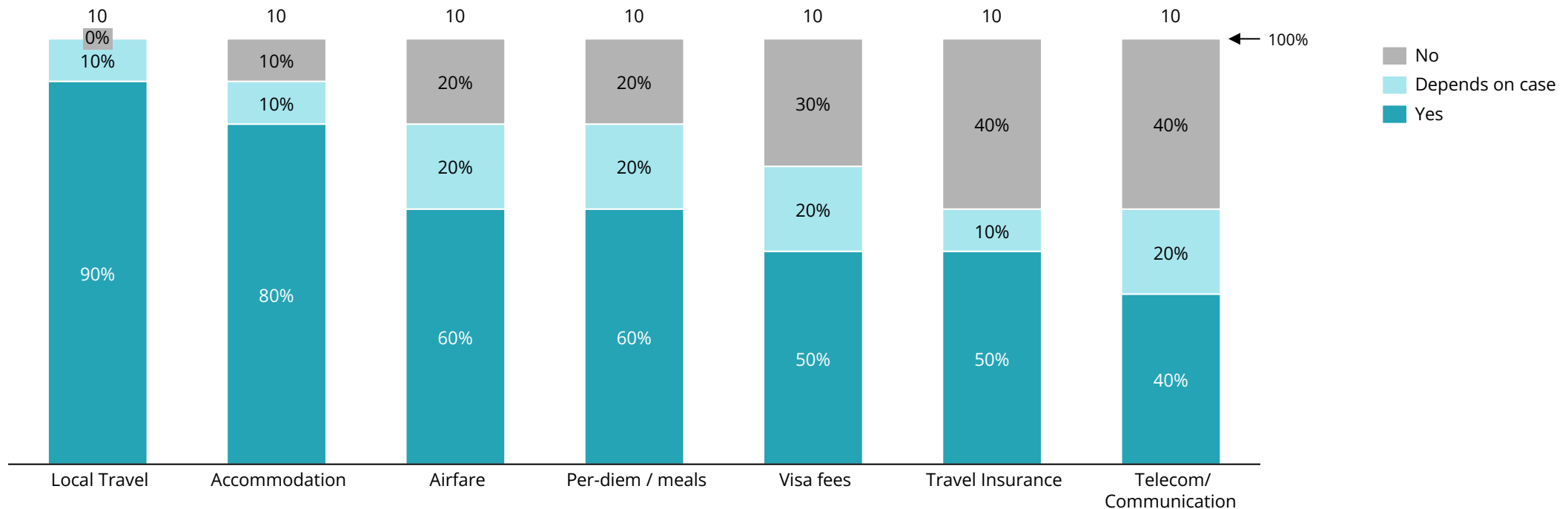


This is an approximate benchmark, based on reading and interpreting the entries provided by the participants.
Please see the detailed section for the actual comments, and how this was interpreted and created.

Executive Summary (6/6)

International Travel

- **Existence of policy:** Only ~38% of the organizations surveyed (i.e. 10 out of 27) have an international travel policy.
- **Provisions:** Of the 10 organizations who said "Yes", this is what support they provide to their employees during international travel:



Disclaimer: All values as self-reported by participants of the survey, clarified and interpreted to the extent possible.

Agenda

Executive Summary

Overview of Participants

Local Travel

Outstation Travel

International Travel

Pay-as-you-Wish

Thank you to all the participating organizations!

Your participation has enabled and empowered this report – and for that, you deserve a shout-out!

- 17000 ft Foundation
 - 321 Education Foundation
 - Ambedhkar Yuvajana Samkshama Sangam
 - Anushkaa Foundation for Eliminating Clubfoot
 - Arpan
 - Avanti Fellows
 - Bhumi
 - Educate Girls
 - Foster & Forge Foundation
 - i-Saksham Education and Learning Foundation
 - Indus Action Initiatives
 - iTeach Schools
 - Karunya Trust
 - Muskaan Dream Creative Foundation
 - NalandaWay Foundation
 - Peace For All Nations
 - Rocket Learning
 - Simple Education Foundation
 - Sol's ARC
 - Swades Foundation
 - The Akanksha Foundation
 - The Apprentice Project (TAP)
 - The Convergence Foundation
 - Ummeed Child Development Center
 - United Way Mumbai
- ...and others*

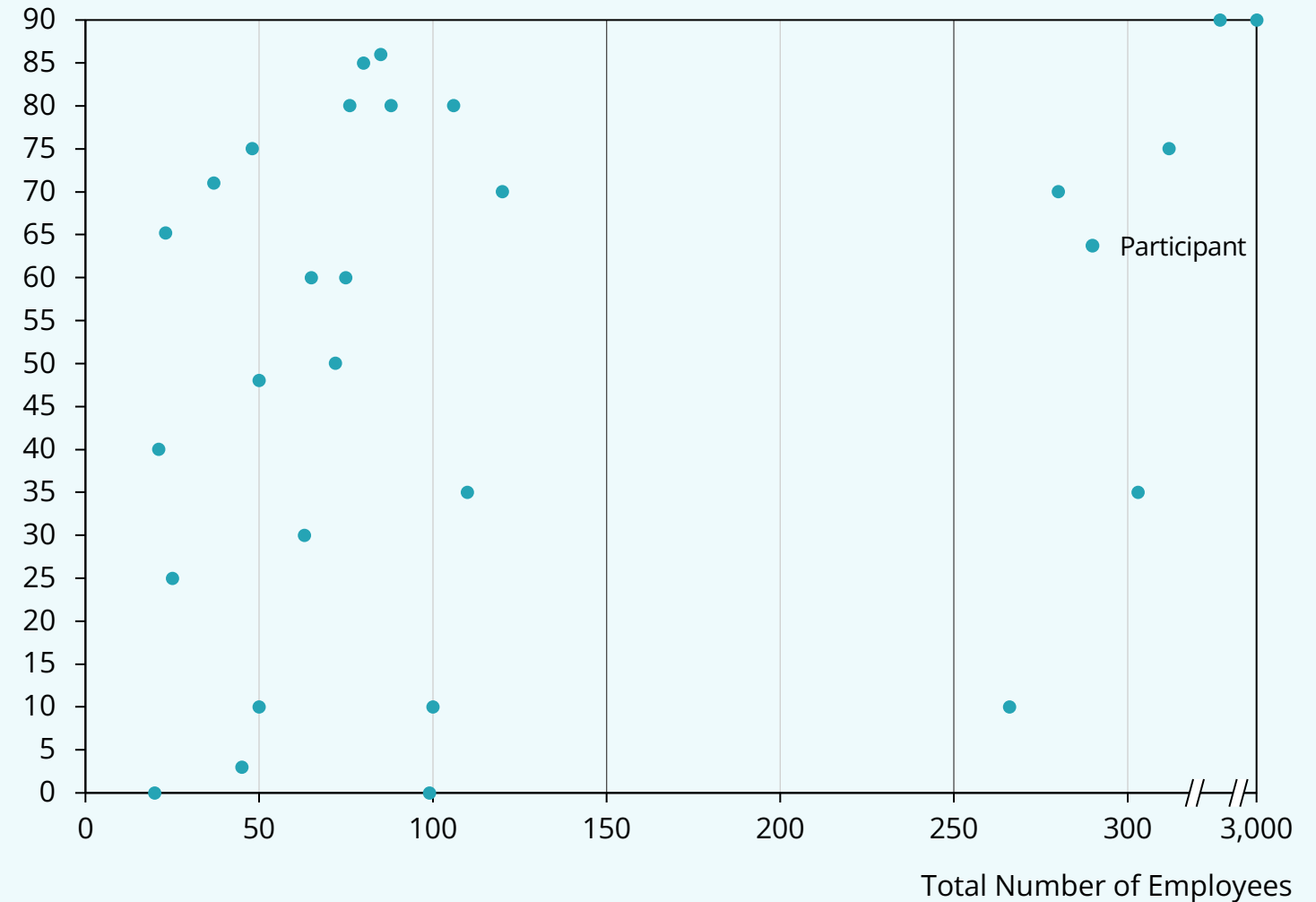
Overview of participants

- The Travel Policy survey 2024 saw participation of 27 organizations
- A majority of the organizations have 20-150 members; a few are 250-350 members and two are 1000+ members
- The percentage of field staff is a wide range from 0 to 90%

Spread of participants by number of employees and % of field staff

Based on 27 entries

What percent of total employees are field staff?



Agenda

Executive Summary

Overview of Participants

Local Travel

Outstation Travel

International Travel

Pay-as-you-Wish

Area of local travel

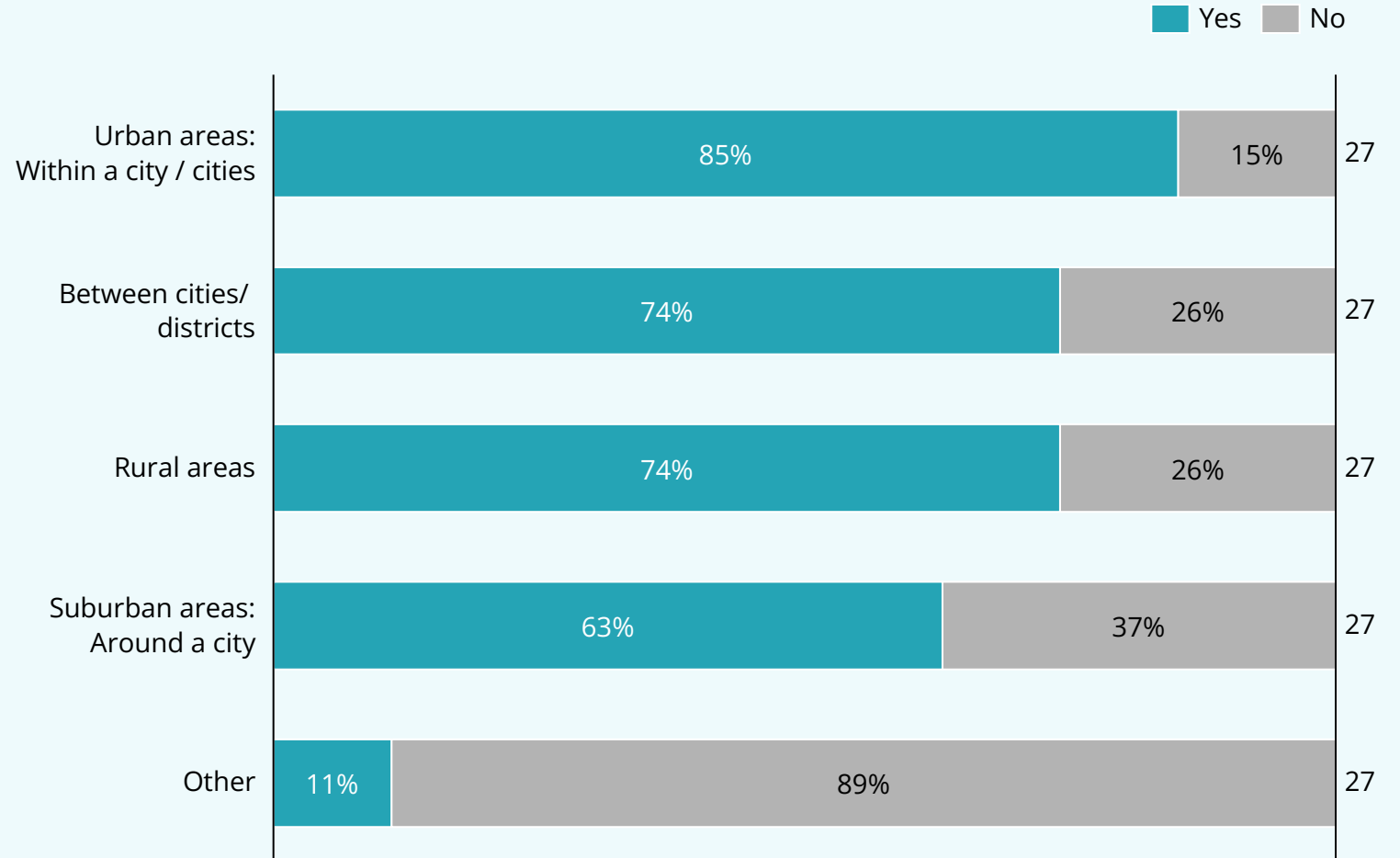
The participating organizations work across urban, rural and inter-city travel; hence the policy results will likely be broadly applicable.

Key Highlights

Most of the organizations participating work across a range of geographies – 85% in urban areas; 74% in rural and between cities/districts; 64% in suburban areas.

Geographies typically traveled by employees for local travel

% of respondents | Based on 27 entries



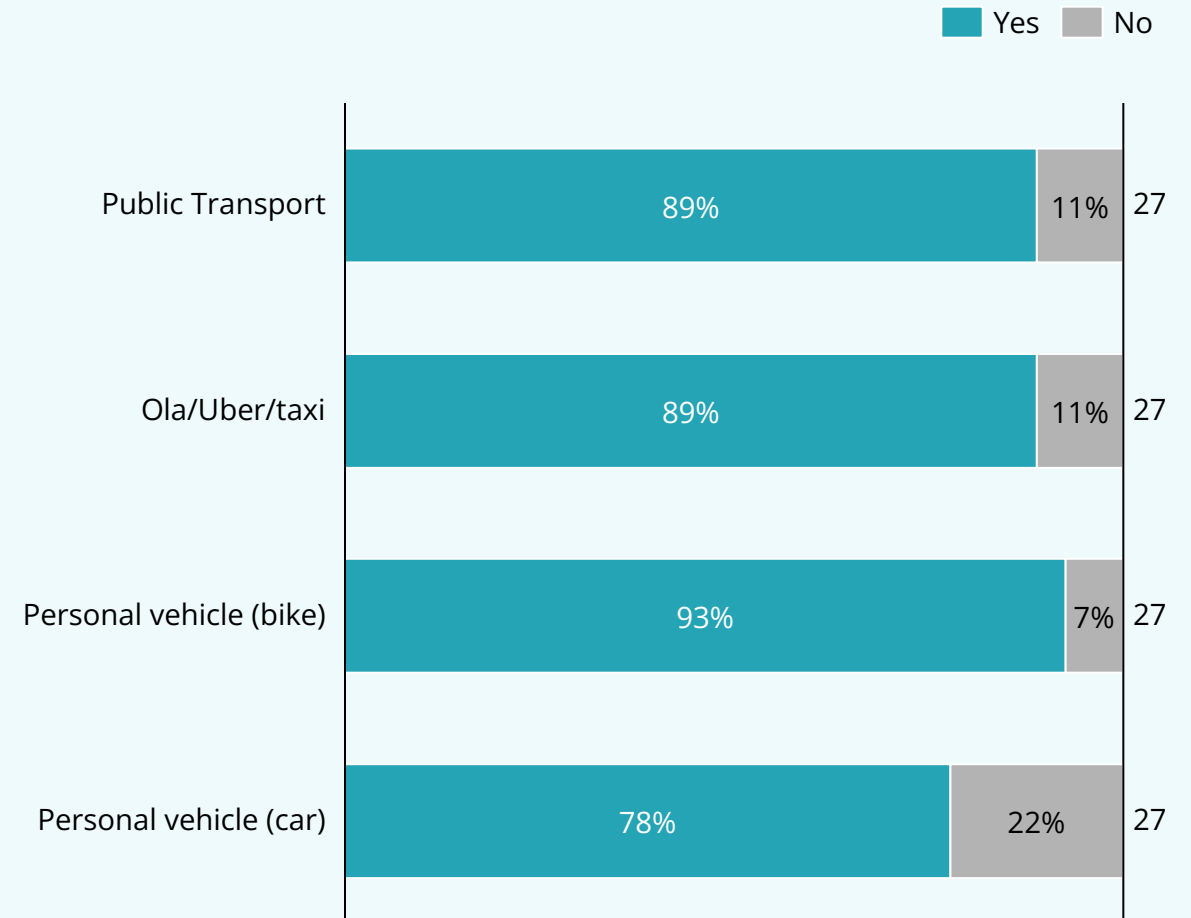
Modes of transport allowed

Key Highlights

- A majority of organizations permit all modes of travel - public transport, Ola/Uber/taxi, personal travel by bike and car.
- Some organizations, however, have more nuanced permissions. Some examples:
 - *allow taxi only in rural areas*
 - *allow only public transport or personal bike, but not cars and taxis*
 - *allow all modes except taxis*
 - *allow bike for frontline staff and car only for supervisor roles*
- Naturally, it seems that the context of the organization largely determines what is allowed.

Modes of transport that are allowed for employees for local travel

% of respondents | Based on 27 entries



Reimbursements for personal vehicle

Key Highlights

The reimbursements for personal vehicles is as provided in the table.

Additional perspectives shared as below:

1. Some organizations set flat reimbursement amounts: Set as an annual amount or per travel amount.

- *"We don't provide mode specific reimbursement amount. We provide a differentiated (based on role's responsibilities requiring high/low travel) annual total reimbursement amount & encourage our team members to be cost-effective & efficient. High is Rs. 60,000-80,000/-, low is Rs. 10,000-15,000/-."*
- *"Rs. 700 per local travel is reimbursed."*

2. Some put overall limits:

Limits by KMs per day, or by total reimbursement amount per month.

- *"70 kilometres per day. Excess needs approval (bike travel)"*
- *"Cap is Rs. 1800 per month"*
- *"Plus toll tax as per actuals based on receipts"*
- *"Vehicle service for Associates using personal vehicle for field travel capped to Rs. 700 for a quarter"*

3. Reimbursement for travel to office:

- One organization provides reimbursement only for bikes; for field visits at actuals, and Rs. 2 per km to and fro the office.

Summary benchmark for reimbursement for local travel with personal vehicle

INR per km | Based on 19 entries

Reimbursement (Rs. Per km)	Two Wheeler	Four Wheeler (Petrol)	Four Wheeler (Diesel)
Average	5.47	10.63	10.26
Median	5	10	10
Mode	4	10	10
Min	4	7	7
Max	10	15	14

Reimbursement for Electric Vehicles and Food reimbursement



Reimbursing Electric Vehicles

- Most organizations have not actively considered reimbursing electric vehicles. For those who do, the approach has been to consider Electric Vehicles at the same rate as petrol/diesel vehicles, and reimburse at the same amounts.
- One way this was justified in the comments was that this amount is inclusive of the cost of maintenance of the vehicle.



Food reimbursement

- Typically organizations do not provide food reimbursement for local travel; in many cases, it is a regular daily visit of the team members.
- However, some do provide for the same:
 - *Monthly refreshment during daily field travel capped to 500 per month*

Agenda

Executive Summary

Overview of Participants

Local Travel

Outstation Travel

International Travel

Pay-as-you-Wish

Modes and Amounts for Outstation Travel

Rules for outstation travel

- Depending on their situation and context, the organizations have rules for the outstation travel. For example:
 - Only upto 3AC train
 - 2/3 AC train or economy airfaire allowed
 - road/train till 8 hours away, and flight if > 8 hours away
 - Flights allowed for the leadership team, train for the team

Reimbursed amounts:

- In general, both the travel to the location and local travel are reimbursed on actuals
- In one case, annual amount per team member per year budgeted.

For across cities & states travel for specific team members, we budgeted annual total amount of Rs. 1,50,000/- per team member (1 trip each for 10 months at 15,000/- per trip, inclusive of travel, stay & food). Also as much as possible we directly organizationally make the travel & stay bookings for these.

Food Reimbursement

The rough food reimbursement benchmarks (cap of INR per day) seen among participants are provided in the right side.

Rules:

- Usually a per day cap on food provided
- Often differentiated by location: higher for Tier 1 cities vs. Tier 2-3 cities
- Sometimes differentiated by level in the organization as well

Specific cases:

- In general bills are required; an organization has allowed claims upto Rs. 500/- without bills
- In one case, the organization provides food to the employees, so the amount is lesser than typical (Rs. 300 / day)

Summary benchmark for food reimbursement caps for outstation travel

INR per day | Based on 16 entries

Per day Cap	Tier 1 City	Tier 2 City
Average	861	830
Median	800	775
Mode	800	700
Min	450	450
Max	1500	1500



This is an approximate benchmark, based on reading and interpreting the entries provided by the participants.

Please see the next page for the actual comments, and how this was interpreted and created.

Food reimbursement: Details provided by participants, and interpretation

Food allowance/reimbursement details	INR Cap per day (Tier 1)	INR Cap per day (Tier 2)
Generally food is taken care of by office, out of pocket expense around Rs. 300 per day	300	300
Breakfast 150, Lunch 150 and dinner 150	450	450
475 per day	475	475
Breakfast @Rs.150/- and lunch/dinner @Rs.250/- per person on submission of proper bills/receipts.	650	650
Reimbursable up to Rs. 200 per meal per person for breakfast, lunch and dinner and upto Rs. 100 for evening snack.	700	700
700rs -per day for 3 meals. We are making it 750 rs per day start April 2024.	750	750
Rs. 800 per day per person for Middle Management and Rs. 1000 per day per person for senior Management	800	800
700 for Non Metro 800 for Metro per day per person. 250rs for 6hr to 12hrs	800	700
Senior level and Mid-Level: Ceiling of 800 per day based on bills	800	800
Metro/Big Cities: Rs. 800 per day Smaller cities /towns = Rs. 700 per day	800	700
1000	1000	1000
While on work-related outstation travel, meals and incidentals will be reimbursed on actuals (bills/invoices mandatory) subject to a limit of Rs 1000/- (for three meals) per day.	1000	1000
On actuals subject to a limit of INR 350 per meal per person, and a maximum of INR 1050 per day per person (if 3 meals are included). Note that expenses on alcoholic drinks will not be reimbursed.	1050	1050
incidental allowance of 1200/- per day out of which 500 could be claimed without bills.	1200	1200
500 per meal	1500	1500
1200 - Tier 2 & 1500 Tier 1	1500	1200

Other comments

- As per actuals. Most economical way
- On actuals
- Reimbursed on actuals
- On actual
- Dependent on City Type (Tier1/2) and Level wise (Details in attachment)

Disclaimer: All values as self-reported by participants of the survey, clarified and interpreted to the extent possible.

Accommodation Reimbursement

The rough accommodation reimbursement benchmarks seen are provided in the right side.

General Norms:

- In some cases, taken care of by office; in others, employee expected to reimburse. In some cases, organization has a preferred list of hotels at various cities and has negotiated corporate rates with hotel chains.
- In half the cases, the reimbursement limits are same for all employees; in half of the cases, it differs by level
- Often, there is a differentiation between locations – e.g. Mumbai vs. non-Mumbai; Tier 1 / Metro City vs other locations, etc.
- In one case, there was no cap provided; the guideline was to ensure it is economical option
- Some organizations allow the doubling of limit in case of shared room (e.g. Rs. 5000 / person * 2 is the limit in case room taken on twin-sharing basis)

Summary benchmark for accommodation reimbursement for outstation travel

INR per night cap | Based on 17 entries

	Tier 1 City	Tier 2 City
Average	3,927	3,288
Median	3,000	3,000
Mode	3,000	2,000, 3,000
Min	1,200	1,200
Max	10,000	10,000



This is an approximate benchmark, based on reading and interpreting the entries provided by the participants.

Please see the next page for the actual comments, and how this was interpreted and created.

Accommodation reimbursement: Details provided by participants, and interpretation (1/2)

Accommodation allowance/reimbursement details	Tier 1 Limits (INR/Night)	Tier 2/3 Limits (INR/Night)
On actuals upper limit of hotel etc 1200 INR per day	1200	1200
1300-1500rs per person per night for hotel is reimbursed.	1500	1500
1500	1500	1500
Cap is Rs. 2000	2000	2000
2800 per day	2800	2800
3000 per day	3000	3000
On actuals subject to a limit of INR 2500/- per night per person for all cities except Mumbai. A limit of INR 3000/- per night per person is allowed for Mumbai.	3000	2500
Category 1 has 4 metros and the next eight big cities. Everything else is Category2. Senior Level is 3000 and 2000. Mid-level is 2500 and 1500. Executive Level is 1500 and 1000. Places where we stay regularly have a standard list of hotels around these rates. Rates are inclusive of breakfast and taxes.	3000	2000
2000 - Tier 2 & 3000 Tier 1	3000	2000
Rs. 4000 per person per day	4000	4000
2000 for level A non metro, 2500 for Level A metro. 2500 non metro level M, 3500 metro level M, 3000 non metro Level L, 4500 metro level L	4500	3000
For Metro cities it is Rs. 4500/-, other cities - Rs.3000/-	4500	3000
Varies from cities . Rs 5000 minimum for metro cities (*incase more than one person is traveling, the above rates will be applicable only on twin sharing basis. * Inclusive of breakfast)	5000	4000
Metro/Big Cities: Rs. 4500 per night + GST Smaller cities /towns: Rs. 3000 per night + GST	5040	3360

Accommodation reimbursement: Details provided by participants, and interpretation (2/2)

Accommodation allowance/reimbursement details	Tier 1 Limits (INR/Night)	Tier 2/3 Limits (INR/Night)
<p>Accommodation costs:</p> <p>While on work-related travel, accommodation should ideally be booked through the Procurement team which has a preferred list of hotels at various cities and has negotiated corporate rates with leading hotel chains. At least a week's notice should be provided for booking hotel rooms. In the event hotel accommodation is booked directly by the employee, it shall be as per the limits prescribed in this policy.</p> <p>Accommodation costs will be reimbursed at actuals subject to the limits prescribed below: Reimbursement Limit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Metros (Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bangalore) - Rs. 6000/- per room /night (inclusive of taxes). ■ Other cities including Pune, Nagpur Rs. 5000/- per room /night (inclusive of taxes) <p>Whenever two or more people are traveling together, they are expected to share accommodation. In cities where guest houses of our corporate partners may be available, employees are requested to use the same.</p>	6000	5000
metro : 6000 + GST , Non metro : 4500 + GST	6720	5040

Agenda

Executive Summary

Overview of Participants

Local Travel

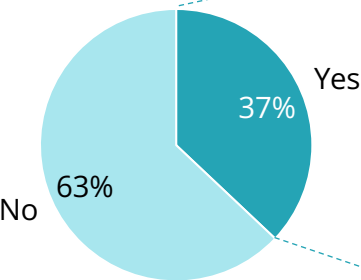
Outstation Travel

International Travel

Pay-as-you-Wish

International Travel Policy Provisions

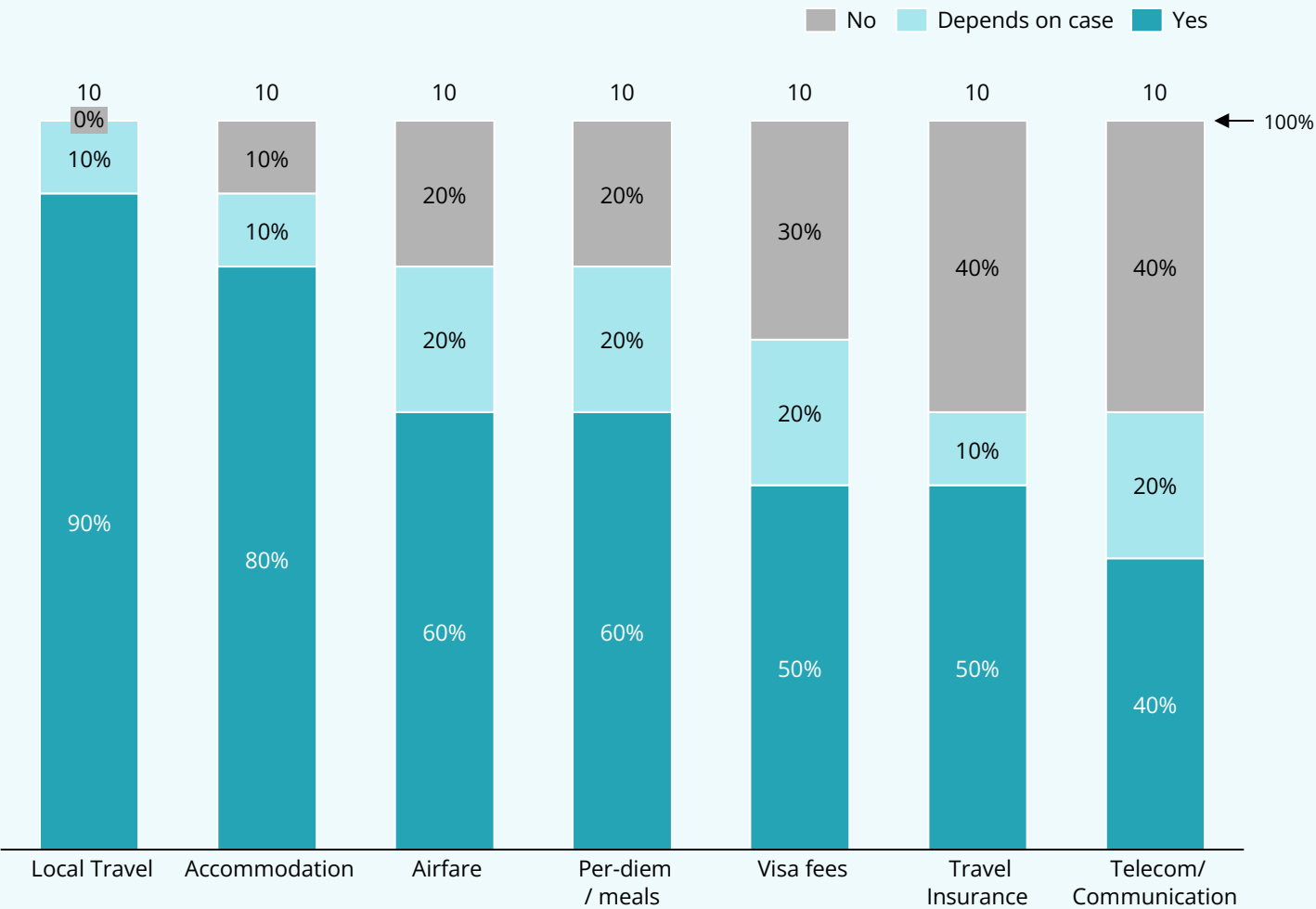
Existence of International Travel Policy



Only ~38% of the organizations surveyed (i.e. 10 out of 27) have an international travel policy.

Summary benchmark of international travel provisions

Based on 10 entries



Details of Provisions for International Travel (1/2)

Additional information provided by the participants:

Local Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cab on actuals • On actuals, public transport • A daily allowance for meals and incidentals will be payable at a maximum amount of \$120 per full day of travel. For low and middle income countries (LMCs) this allowance will stand reduced to \$80 per day. All claims will need to be supported by bills/invoices or electronic charge slips. The daily allowance will be payable proportionately based on time of travel. For example if the flight is post 8 pm, 1/3 of the allowance will be payable and for travel post 3 pm it will be 50%. • On actuals. To be reimbursed to employee against submission of bills & receipts.
Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On actuals subject to a limit of USD 150/- per night per person • Booked by admin. Decided on safety, convenience and cost. • Accommodation expenses will be reimbursable at US\$200 per room per night. Again, for LMCs this limit will stand reduced to US\$ 150. Exceptions will be made in special cases for justified reasons and will need prior approval from the CFO • Up to 70% of the Maximum Lodging Rate prescribed in the US Department of State Website as per location
Air fares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A daily allowance for meals and incidentals will be payable at a maximum amount of \$120 per full day of travel. For low and middle income countries (LMCs) this allowance will stand reduced to \$80 per day. All claims will need to be supported by bills/invoices or electronic charge slips. The daily allowance will be payable proportionately based on time of travel. For example if the flight is post 8 pm, 1/3 of the allowance will be payable and for travel post 3 pm it will be 50%. • Economy fares • Economy

Details of Provisions for International Travel (2/2)

Additional information provided by the participants:

Per-diem / Meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On actuals subject to a limit of USD 75/- per day per person (alcoholic drinks not included) Reimbursable up to USD 20 per meal per person for breakfast, lunch and dinner and upto USD 10 for evening snack. Fixed 70% of the M&IE Rate prescribed in the US Department of State Website as per location
Travel Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Booked by admin Overseas travel insurance if incurred, will be reimbursed by the organization on actuals. On actuals
Visa fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A daily allowance for meals and incidentals will be payable at a maximum amount of \$120 per full day of travel. For low and middle income countries (LMCs) this allowance will stand reduced to \$80 per day. All claims will need to be supported by bills/invoices or electronic charge slips. The daily allowance will be payable proportionately based on time of travel. For example if the flight is post 8 pm, 1/3 of the allowance will be payable and for travel post 3 pm it will be 50%. On actuals
Any other costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Actuals Miscellaneous costs (incurred for official purposes) such as toll, airport taxes, print out, Employees will need to take prior approval from their Budget Head/Team Lead before planning/undertaking travel to any location outside India, for official purposes. We had defined a partial policy as we had a case where a co-founder was anyway travelling to the USA for her college convocation but we asked her to stay there longer for some fundraising and international partnerships. So, flight, visa or other additional costs were not covered and hence not defined. Only work related travel, food and stay for the work period was covered. We rarely have international travel. If ever there is, part of it sponsored by the organisers, part is borne by staff and the balance is paid on actuals.

Agenda

Executive Summary

Overview of Participants

Local Travel

Outstation Travel

International Travel

Pay-as-you-Wish



Pay-as-you-Wish for this Report

Was this report helpful for you?
If so, do consider compensating
for the time and effort in getting
this to you.

I understand the diverse nature of organizations and their financial capacities. If you find the insights valuable and believe it has made a positive impact on your organization, I invite you to contribute in a way that feels right for you.

To provide context, it required approximately **18 hours of meticulous work to review, clarify and curate the insights presented in this report**. Your contribution is not viewed as a necessity, but rather as a gesture that helps sustain and encourages such voluntary effort towards creation of valuable resources.

If you wish to express your appreciation through a financial contribution, you can do so by accessing the details provided below:

UPI:



UPI ID:

ananth.girish@okhdfcbank

OR

Bank: Please drop me a short email at Raahi.Impact@gmail.com for bank details.

And in case you require an invoice, I would be happy to provide the same.

In case you require an invoice, I would be happy to provide the same for your records.

Thank you for this! 🌸

Regards,
Girish Ananthanarayanan