

With support from the:



Federal Ministry
of Labour and Social Affairs

on the basis of a resolution passed
by the German Bundestag

In spite of having a relatively open immigration system for highly-skilled labour and persistent labour demand, labour migration to Germany has been rather modest. What can Germany do to become more attractive and accessible to international talent? What is the potential of those who are interested in Germany (skill-profile, language knowledge, etc.) and what barriers are they facing when immigrating to Germany? How can these barriers be overcome? Who does Germany lose along the way and for what reasons?

To shed light on these questions, the OECD, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, is conducting an unprecedented online panel study among skilled workers abroad who are interested in Germany. Participants were recruited via the "Make It In Germany" website and Germany's missions abroad. As the first study of its kind, the survey is aimed at professionals living abroad at the time of the first survey.

*The following **data brief** presents the results of the first survey wave, which has reached almost 30,000 international professionals between August and mid-October 2022. It also includes the results of a first follow-up survey among almost 11,000 respondents of the first wave, focusing on the participants' assessments of reform proposals of Germany's skilled labour immigration law. Two further survey waves are planned in February and September 2023, respectively, with a view to find out how the participants' migration intentions as well as any individually perceived barriers develop over time.*

Who is interested and plans to migrate to Germany to work?

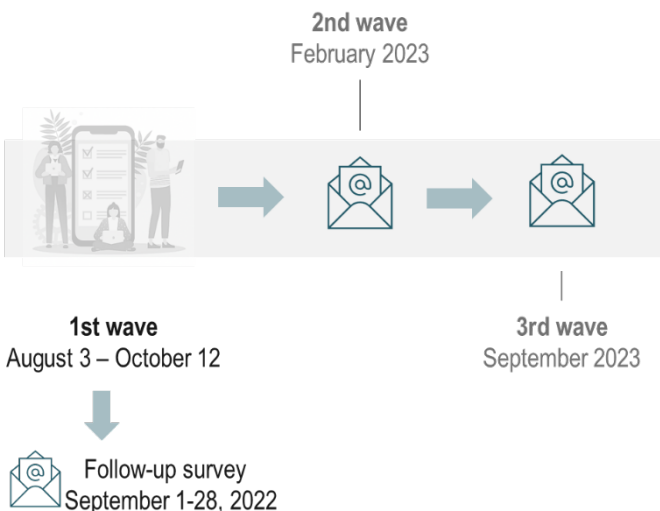
Key messages

- There is a large potential of highly qualified professionals abroad who are interested in Germany.
- Germany can tap into a large pool of highly motivated and qualified workers abroad. More than half of the respondents have firm plans to move to Germany. 4 in 5 already took steps to prepare their move.
- 3 in 4 respondents have a university degree. Among university graduates, 70% have a bachelor's degree as highest educational attainment.
- 9 in 10 participants in the follow-up survey would be willing to complete further training should this be necessary to certify their skills. The majority would, however, only do so under certain conditions, e.g. if they were allowed to work alongside the training and would be allowed to stay in Germany afterwards.
- Almost half of the respondents report to be in a shortage occupation field: almost a quarter are in engineering while 15 % are IT professionals. The majority of respondents have at least 5 years of professional experience in their field; 1 in 3 even bring more than 10 years of experience.
- In order to fully exploit this potential, effective job search support is needed above all...
- For the majority of participants, finding a suitable job offer constitutes the biggest barrier to come to Germany. Almost 4 in 5 respondents would appreciate more support in this area.
- A 12-months job-seeker visa is an attractive option. 9 in 10 participants in the follow-up survey would be willing to apply for such a visa. However, a third would only do so under certain conditions, especially if they were allowed to work alongside the job hunt or if they were supported in their job search.
- ... as well as greater appreciation of existing German language skills and increased support for German language learning.
- More than half have at least some basic knowledge of German and 15% report to have an intermediate or higher level. Among beginners and those with no command of German, 1 in 2 have at least a very good level of English.
- In the follow-up survey, 3 in 5 participants who do not yet speak German would definitely be willing to learn German before coming to Germany or have already started. Another quarter would be willing to do so if the course offer improved, for example if costs for German courses were reduced or if more courses were available

Survey design

How to best accompany international professionals interested to relocate in Germany throughout the immigration process from when they first start considering the idea until their arrival and settling in Germany - or until they abandon their migration plans? The survey the OECD is conducting on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, is exactly trying to address this question. ∴ The survey was designed as a longitudinal survey with 3 survey waves, administered at intervals of 6 months, respectively. All participants in the first survey wave were asked to provide a contact email address for subsequent survey waves.

In light of a planned reform of the Skilled Workers Immigration Act, a short follow-up survey was set up after the first survey wave, to which participants in the first wave were invited by email. The objective was to obtain assessments of a possible change in important legal parameters.



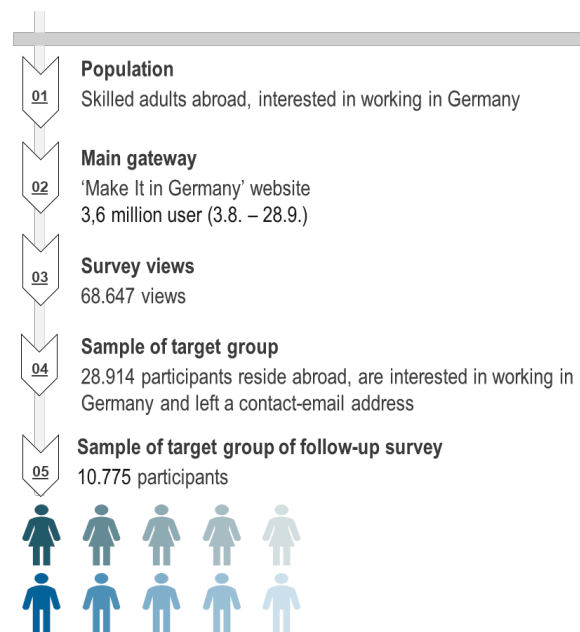
Population and sample

The underlying population of this survey is very broad, comprising every non-German skilled adult abroad who is interested in pursuing a professional career in Germany. Since this population is not known, the results of the survey are not representative of the population. They do, however, provide insights into the group of people that Germany would like to attract: international, well-educated workers with a professional interest in Germany.

Participants of the first survey wave were recruited via various online channels. Most participants accessed the survey via the website "Make It In Germany", the official portal of the Federal Government for skilled workers from abroad.

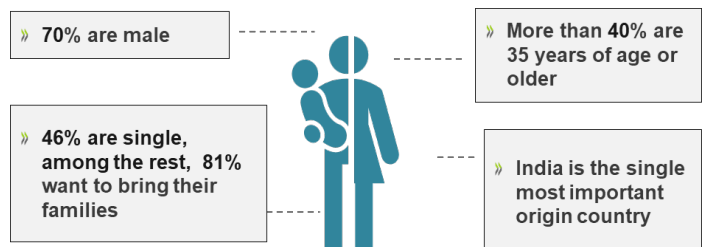
Besides, the survey was advertised by a range of other institutions, including German missions in key origin countries, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and the Federal Employment Agency. In total, the questionnaire of the first survey wave was accessed 68,647 times. Almost 30 thousand of these views represent unique visitors that form the sample presented in the following and belong to the target group: they completed the entire questionnaire, provided an email address for follow-up surveys, resided abroad at the time of the first survey and intent to come to Germany for professional reasons.

10,775 people took part in the follow-up survey, which represents about 40% of the participants in the first wave of the survey.



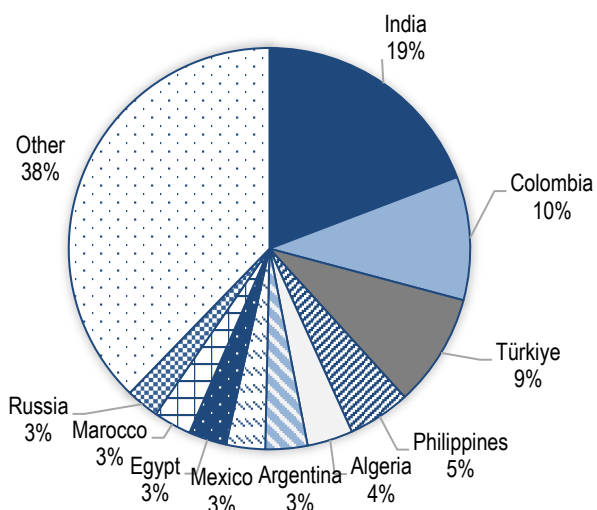
Demographic profile of respondents

2 in 3 respondents are between 25 and 44 years of age; 40% are 35 or older. Men make up the vast majority. Almost half of the respondents are single; of those with a partner or children, 4 in 5 plan to bring their family to Germany.



1 in 5 respondents is from India (19%), followed by Colombia (10%), Türkiye (9%), the Philippines (5%) and Algeria (4%).

Top nationalities

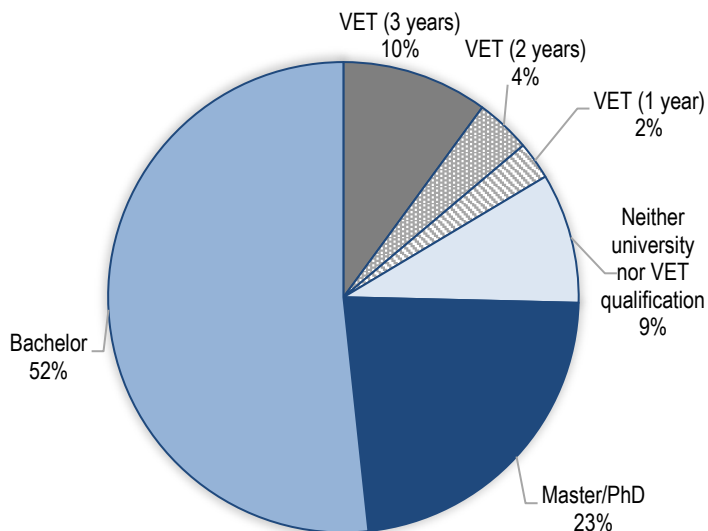


Source: 'Your way to Germany' survey, 1st wave, OECD, 2022.

Educational attainment

74% of the respondents have a tertiary education level. Among those with a university degree, more than two thirds hold a bachelor's degree as their highest educational qualification. Just under a quarter of all respondents have a Master's or PhD title (doctorate). The proportion of Master's/PhD graduates is highest among Russian respondents, of whom just under 1 in 2 has a Master's or PhD. This is followed by Albanian (47%), Algerian (42%), Tunisian and Indian respondents, among whom a third hold a Master's degree or PhD.

Highest educational attainment



Source: 'Your way to Germany' survey, 1st wave, OECD, 2022.

Language skills

More than half of the respondents have at least some basic knowledge of German, while 1 in 7 already has an intermediate or higher level of German.

The majority of respondents have firm plans to come to Germany



More than **half** have firm plans to move to Germany

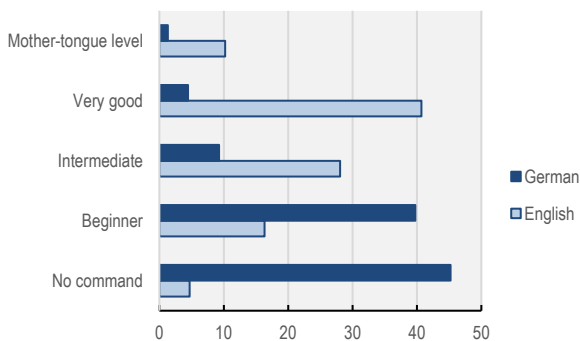
4 in 5 already took steps to prepare their move: More than half started looking for a job and over 40% started learning German. But only 8% have already received a job-offer.

Almost **1 in 5** would like to come but do not think they are eligible for a work visa. Among them, 59% hold at least a bachelor-degree, 53% are below 35 years of age and 11% have at least intermediate command of German.

2 in 3 plan to stay longer than 5 years, but only **half** want to migrate permanently.

Participants who do not yet speak German can at least partially compensate for this with English: Among beginners and participants with no knowledge of German, 1 in 2 has at least a very good command of English. Overall, 8 in 10 respondents report to have an advanced or higher level of English.

German and English language knowledge, by level (%)



Source: 'Your way to Germany' survey, 1st wave, OECD, 2022.

In general, participants with advanced German language skills also tend to have a slightly higher educational attainment.

Among the 15 most important countries of origin, Iran stands out with the highest proportion of respondents who have at least advanced German language skills (40%). Respondents from Tunisia (29%), Egypt (1 in 4), Morocco, Algeria and Syria (1 in 5) and Türkiye (1 in 6) also frequently report to have good German language skills.

“Would you be willing to learn German before coming to Germany, if an advanced level of German would allow you to come and work in Germany?”

Respondents who do not yet have a good command of German were asked in the follow-up survey whether they would be willing to learn German before coming to Germany. 3 in 5 participants answered that they would definitely be willing to do so or had even already started learning German. Another quarter reported that they would generally be willing to do so, but only subject to certain conditions related mainly to an improved course offer (lower costs, greater availability, etc.). Only 1 in 6 respondents would not be willing to learn German prior to moving to Germany. The vast majority, however, plan to learn it after arriving in the country.

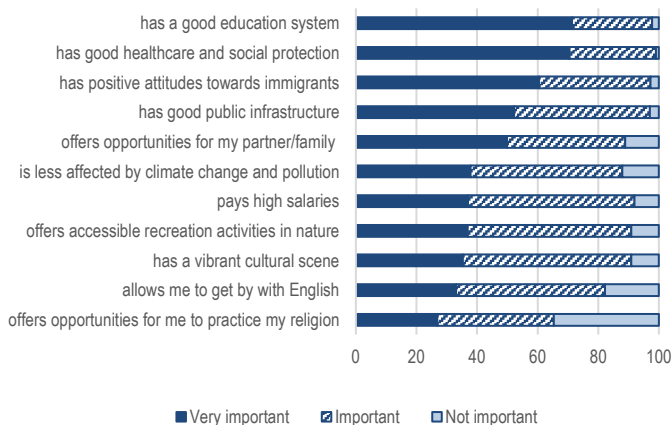
Motivation

When asked what qualities are particularly important in a country of immigration, more than 3 in 5 participants consider positive attitudes towards migrants to be very important. Among the most important countries of origin, this is particularly true for participants from the Philippines, of whom almost 4 in 5 care very much about a welcoming culture towards newcomers.

“Think about the country of your dreams. What do you care most about?”

Only the quality of the education system and the health and social system is more important to most participants: on average, 7 in 10 respondents rate both as very important. Not surprisingly, a good education system is particularly important to those who plan to bring their children along. But even among single participants and among those who plan to move to Germany alone, a good education system remains one of the two most important characteristics of an attractive immigration country. By contrast, only about a third of all participants rank high salaries among the most important aspects of an attractive immigration country.

„The country of my dreams ...“ (%)



Source: 'Your way to Germany' survey, 1st wave, OECD, 2022.

When asked whether Germany is their first choice as a destination country for emigration or whether they find other countries just as attractive or more attractive, 4 in 5 respondents rank Germany as their first choice.

Among those who do not put Germany first, Canada dominates among the preferred destinations, followed by the United States and the United Kingdom.

The particular interest in Germany is most often motivated by a hope for good job and career opportunities. In addition, 2 in 3 respondents associate Germany with a high quality of life. Safety, in turn, constitutes an important aspect for more than half of the participants.

„Why are you interested in Germany?“ (%)



Source: 'Your way to Germany' survey, 1st wave, OECD, 2022.

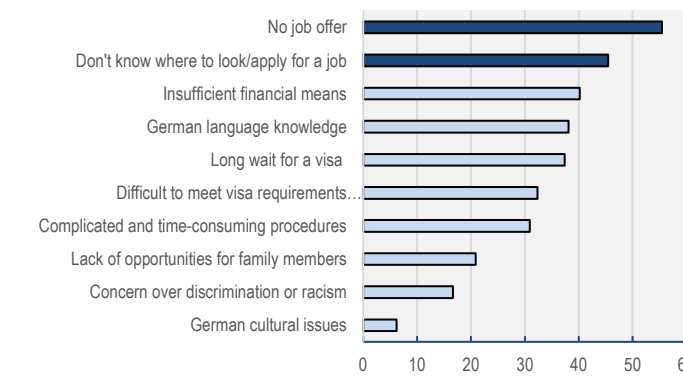
1 in 5 participants does not know which sources of information are reliable. Existing support offers, such as the hotline "Working and Living in Germany" or the specific counselling services for foreign professionals provided by the Federal Employment Agency are known by very few participants only.

“What are for you the biggest barriers that might keep you away from coming and working in Germany”

Job search difficulties are also reflected in the areas where respondents would like to see further support measures. Almost 4 in 5 respondents would appreciate further support with finding a job. By contrast, less than half currently see a need for additional support with the recognition of foreign qualifications.

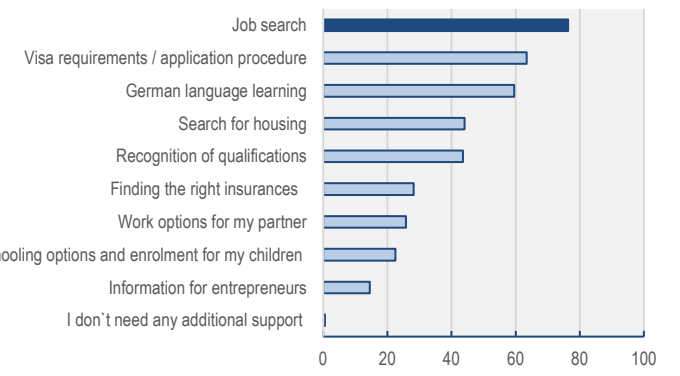
Job-search and matching issues stand out among the most important obstacles mentioned and areas for further support

„What are for you the biggest barriers that might keep you away from coming and working in Germany?“ (%)



Source: 'Your way to Germany' survey, 1. wave, OECD, 2022.

„Which area would you like more support in?“ (%)



Barriers

For most participants finding a job constitutes by far the most important obstacle to come and work in Germany. More than half have difficulties obtaining a job offer and almost as many do not know where to look for suitable job postings. A quarter are unsure how to contact employers, often because of insufficient German language skills.

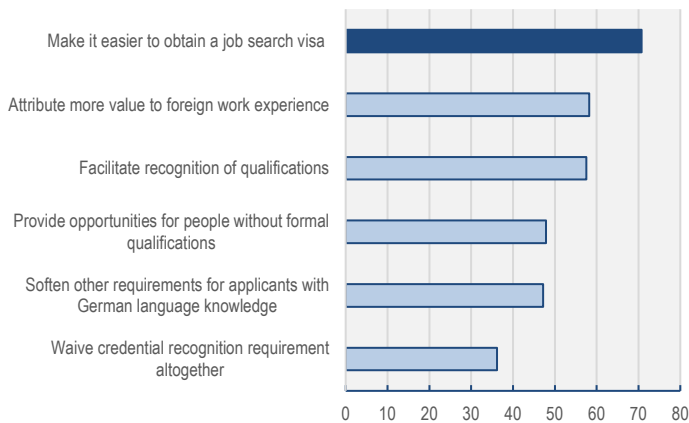
This may be due, among other things, to the fact that many participants have not yet started a recognition procedure. In fact, only 1 in 8 respondents has initiated a procedure for the recognition of foreign qualifications and only 5% have already received a decision regarding the recognition of their qualifications.

Potential remedies

A job-seeker visa is seen as an attractive option by many, as is a points-system.

When participants for whom meeting visa requirements is a major obstacle are asked about changes that would make it easier for them to enter the country, 70% state that having easier access to a job-seeker visa would be helpful.

“If you could propose any changes on the conditions to come and work in Germany, what would you suggest?” (%)



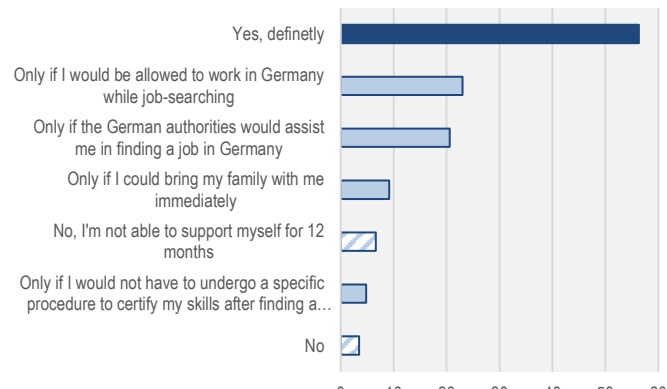
Source: ‘Your way to Germany’ survey, 1. wave, OECD, 2022.

The follow-up survey also reveals a great interest in job-search visa: 9 in 10 participants would in principle be willing to apply for a job-seeker visa. At the same time, a third of all respondents would only do so under certain conditions. 1 in 5 participant, for example, would only be willing to do so if they were supported by the German authorities in finding a job in Germany.

“If the German government would offer you a job-search visa giving you 12 months’ time to find a suitable job in Germany, provided that you are able to support yourself during this period, would you take this opportunity?”

Those who would definitely take advantage of a visa to look for work tend to be somewhat younger and have a lower level of education than participants for whom a job-seeker visa would not be an option. At the same time, proponents of a job-seeker visa have on average a slightly higher chance to have at least intermediate command of German.

“Would you take a job-search visa for 12 months, provided that you are able to support yourself during that period?” (%)



Source: ‘Your way to Germany’ survey, follow-up survey, OECD, 2022.

About half of the participants in the follow-up survey believe that the introduction of a points-based job search visa, as proposed by the government, would make it easier for them to come and work in Germany. According to the other half, the benefit of such a tool is at best not apparent: 1 in 5 report that it would not make a difference and another 20% do not know whether this would make it any easier for them to enter the country. 1 in 8 believes that this would not facilitate anything at all. Whether such a tool is seen as facilitating entry or not is largely independent of the level of education.

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🔗 Useful links

www.oecd.org/migration