



As part of the efforts of Germany to attract qualified workers into the country, the OECD, on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, conducted an online longitudinal survey between August-October 2022 and October-December 2023. Almost 30,000 people living abroad who wanted to move to Germany as migrant workers participated in the first survey. Six months later, a follow-up survey was conducted to understand the progress of participants in their migration plans. And, one year later, a final survey took place. 23% of participants of the first survey answered the last follow-up wave. The results of this unprecedented study show the characteristics and experiences of those who successfully moved to Germany, of those who are interested in moving but are still living abroad, and of those who have abandoned or postponed their migration project. Results also show where participants struggle most in making Germany their new home; and where they need more support.

## Final results from the online survey among professionals interested in working in Germany

### Key findings

After one year surveying qualified professionals wanting to move to Germany for work, interest is still high. However, **only a few participants have managed to meet their objective of living and working in Germany so far**. Between August-October 2022 and October-December 2023,

- Only 5% of participants **have moved to Germany**;
- 92% of participants **still live abroad** and are interested in migrating to Germany; and
- 3% of participants have **lost interest in Germany**.

**Participants who have made it to Germany** perceive **fewer obstacles** to pursue their migration plans and are **more active** in taking concrete steps to achieve their goals than participants who are still living abroad.

Germany remains an **attractive destination country** for many highly qualified people abroad.

- Interest in Germany remains high among most participants who reside abroad and are willing to migrate. Among them, 48% have the same interest in moving as in wave one and 41% are even more interested.
- Among those who are no longer interested in migrating to Germany, only 9% have definitively written off Germany as a destination country. They abandoned their plans mainly to explore opportunities in another country or in their country of residence.

Germany has a **positive image** among participants.

- Good job and career opportunities (69%), safety (43%) and a good education system (42%) are reported as the top three criteria for moving to Germany by those who still live abroad.
- Among those who now live in Germany, more than half are satisfied with their life in their new home country (59%). They are particularly satisfied with the quality of life (94%), the German culture and mentality (83%), and the welcoming culture (79%).

Progress in taking steps towards achieving migration plans is **slow**.

- Around half of participants based abroad had made initial steps to move (collect information; look for a job, learn German) at the last survey, but only a few had made concrete steps (have a job interview, apply/receive a visa). Further, progress is similar to that observed six months previously.

- Progress is observed, however, in the increased share of participants who is learning German. This is true for both now residents and those living abroad.

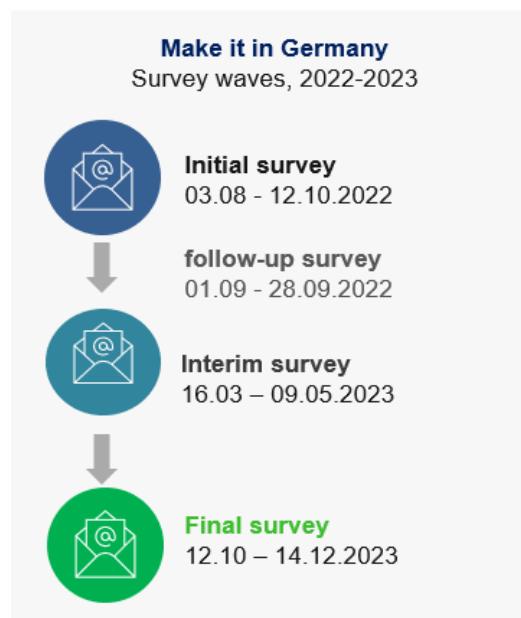
Most **important barriers** for participants are **learning the German language, and the duration of visa procedures**. For **participants who are still based abroad, insufficient financial means** is also an **important** obstacle to their migration plans.

Participants would like **more support to learn German** and **more help with finding a job**. A higher share of participants is using existing hotlines or advisory services than at the first survey. However, most support services are still underused.

The survey does not yet include the effects of the New Skilled Immigration Act. **Only one in three** participants **knows about the New Skilled Immigration Act** which facilitates substantially skilled labour migration to Germany and addresses several of the obstacles identified by survey participants. In general, those who know it **evaluate it positively**.

## Survey design and sample

The final survey took place between 12 October and 14 December 2023 and hence does not yet include the effects of the New Skilled Immigration Act. The objectives of this last wave of data collection were to identify the profile of participants who have made it to Germany and that of their partners; to assess participants' progress in their steps to move to Germany; to identify the barriers and support needed during the migration process; and to learn their opinion about the new Skilled Immigration Act.



The target population were the 28,914 persons who completed the first wave questionnaire, provided an email address, resided abroad at the time of the survey, and intended to move to Germany for professional reasons. Around **23%** (6,275 participants) of the targeted sample answered the last survey via a link sent by email.



## Demographic and socioeconomic profile of participating groups

In the first survey, most participants had already taken initial steps to prepare their move (for example, look for a job, learn German, collect necessary information). However, in the last survey, only a few had made progress in taking concrete steps to move (for example, apply for a job, apply for a visa, request recognition of qualifications). One year later ...

- 5% have moved to Germany;
- 92% live abroad and are still interested in migrating to Germany; and,
- 3% have lost interest in Germany.

**Participants who have made it to Germany** are mostly men (67%), young (around 61% are under 35 years old), have a partner (55%), and the main groups are from India (12%), Turkey (10%), Iran (6%) and Russia (5%). They have little work experience (40% have between 0 and 5 years of working experience). They are slightly better educated than participants who reside abroad (36% has a masters or PhD, compared with 30% of those still living abroad).

They are more likely to speak German (well) than other participants: 34% have at least intermediate level, compared with 16% of those who are still based abroad. They have often been working as engineers (26%), IT specialists (17%) or in commercial enterprises (11%). Around 7% are medical doctors and 4% are nurses.

**Participants still residing abroad and interested in migrating to Germany** are mostly men (75%), less young than those who have moved to Germany (half are 35 years or more (49%)), have a partner (53%), have kids (40%), and are mainly from India (13%), Turkey (12%), and Colombia (10%). Around 40% has at least 10 years of working experience. They tend to have a slightly lower level of education and have less German language proficiency than participants who recently moved to Germany (75% has a university degree compared with 81% of those who moved; and 42% has no command of German language versus 18% of those who moved).

**Participants who have lost interest and still took time to respond** are mostly men (74%), older (around 20% are over 44 years old compared with 11% of those who made it to Germany) and have a partner (54%). They have more extensive work experience than other participants (44% have more than 10 years of working experience, compared with 33% of those who have recently moved to Germany). They are as well educated as those who have moved to Germany (36% have a masters or PhD, a similar rate to those who have succeeded in migrating). They also have the highest share of participants reporting mother-tongue level English (18% compared with 14% of those who have moved to Germany). However, they have lower levels of German knowledge than those who are now based in Germany (41% of the former have no command of German, compared with 18% of the latter).

### Motivation and Image of Germany

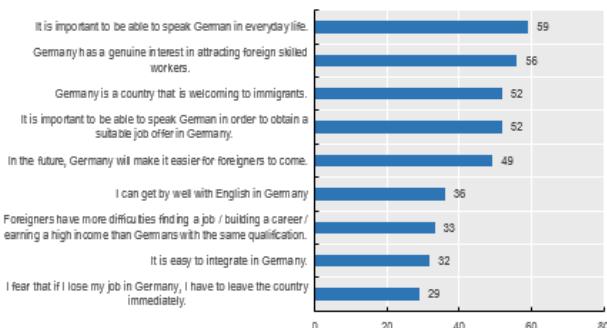
Germany remains an attractive destination country for highly qualified people abroad. Among those willing to migrate but still residing abroad, around 48% of respondents expressed the same level of interest in the final survey as the one they had in wave one, and 41% reported increased interest. Further, among participants who are no longer interested in moving to Germany, only 9% have definitively written off Germany as a destination country. These figures are similar to those reported six months previously.

The top three criteria for moving to Germany among those who are still abroad and interested in moving include good job and career opportunities (69%), safety (43%) and a good education system (42%). Good job and career opportunities is also the top motivation for those

who are now living in Germany (75%), followed by safety (58%) and high quality and affordable health care (50%).

The final survey confirmed that participants have a positive image of Germany. More than half (52%) of those who answered our survey strongly agree that Germany is a country that welcomes migrants. Likewise, almost six in ten (56%) strongly perceive Germany as having a genuine interest in attracting foreign professionals. Participants also perceive speaking German as important for everyday life (59%) and for finding a job (52%). This is especially true for participants who moved to Germany. They consider German language skills more relevant than other participants (69% of residents fully agree that German is important for everyday life compared with 59% of those living abroad).

**Think about Germany. Would you agree with the following statements?**  
Percentage of participants who "strongly agree"



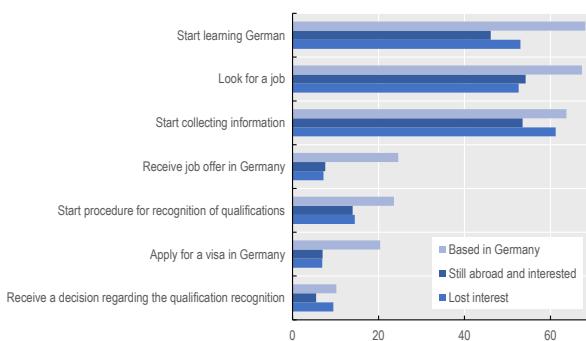
Among those who now live in Germany, more than half are generally satisfied with their life in their new home country (59% are either very or fairly satisfied). They are particularly satisfied with the quality of life (94% are very or fairly satisfied), the German culture and mentality (83% are either very or fairly satisfied), and the welcoming culture (79% are very or fairly satisfied). However, two out of five are either fairly or very dissatisfied with their contact with Foreigners' offices, and their income and financial situation (40% each). Further, around a third of those who originally planned to come with their family moved without their partner and/or children.

The main reason for abandoning their migration plans to Germany among those who are no longer interested include exploring opportunities in another country and in their current country of residence (18%); having applied for jobs without obtaining a job offer (11%); identifying new opportunities in their current country of residence/origin (8%); and not having the German language skills required by employers (8%).

## Progress

Participants who made it to Germany were more active in preparing their migration plans than participants who are still living abroad. This difference between groups is observed for both initial and concrete steps, and it is seen since the first survey. For example, in terms of learning German, while 68% of those who moved to Germany had started learning the language as of wave one, only 46% of those still based abroad and interested in Germany did so. Similarly, participants who recently moved to Germany reported being more active in taking steps to their move prepare in the second survey than participants who are still residing abroad.

Steps taken in wave 1 among those living abroad, who in the final wave ...  
... were either based in Germany or were still living abroad and interested.



Most participants based abroad and interested in moving to Germany make little progress in their migration journey. Overall, in the last survey, around half had made initial steps (52% collected information; 48% looked for a job, and 47% started learning German), but only a few had made concrete steps, such as starting the process to have their qualifications recognised (9%); receiving a decision regarding their qualifications (5%), having a job interview (5%), or applying for (3%) or receiving a visa (1%). These figures are similar to those observed six months earlier.

On the other hand, interest in moving to Germany continues to increase, as witness in the growing share of participants learning German. One year after the first survey, among those still abroad and interested in migrating to Germany around 70% have at least beginner's level. This is an increase of 14 percentage points compared with wave one (from 55% to 69%). Further, the share with at least intermediate German language knowledge increased by 7 percentage points (from 13% to 20%). Similarly, language skills improved among those who made it to Germany. One year after wave one, the share with at least beginner's level increased by 7 percentage points (from 81% to 88%), and the share with at least intermediate level rose by 8 percentage points (from 34% to 42%).

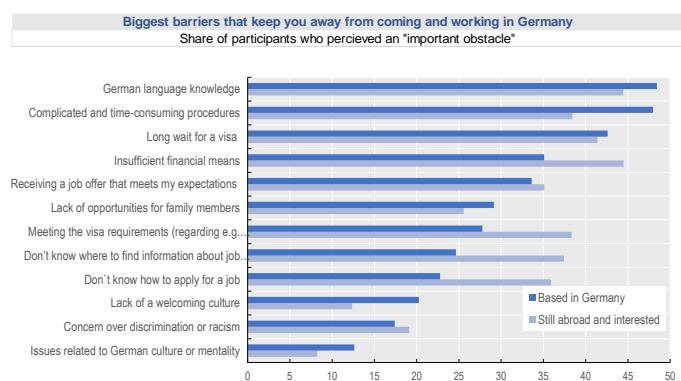
## Migration experience and barriers before and during migration

Around half of all participants who have experienced the German immigration system have a positive overall impression of the system (48% of those still abroad and 59% of those now living in Germany are very or fairly satisfied with their experience).

At the beginning of their journey, participants who recently moved to Germany perceived less obstacles in their migration plans than participants who are still based abroad. During the first survey, the former systematically reported a lower share of important obstacles that would keep them away from coming to work in Germany than the latter.

In the last survey, participants now based in Germany were somewhat more critical in certain aspects than their peers still abroad. They were more likely to list (lack of) knowledge of German, lengthy and complicated visa procedures, and long wait for visa as an important obstacle (48%, 48% and 43%, respectively) than their peers residing abroad (44%, 38% and 41%, respectively). The top three obstacles for moving to Germany according to participants living abroad were insufficient financial means, knowledge of German and long wait for visa (44%, 44% and 41%, respectively).

When participants who have made it to Germany were asked what advice they would give to friends interested in moving to Germany, the most common answer was consistently the recommendation to learn German early.

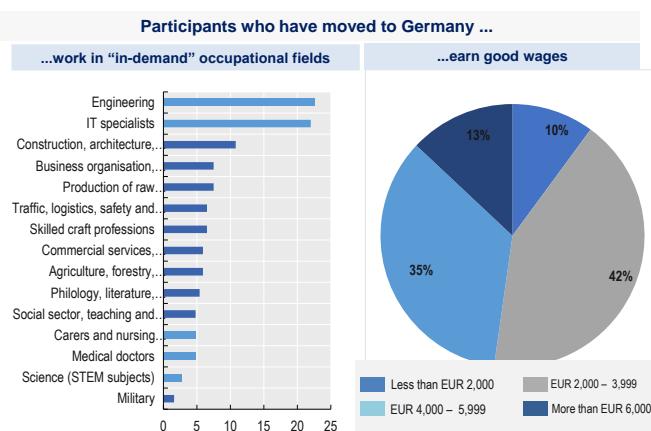


Concerns about a lack of welcoming culture, racism and discrimination, and of the German culture and mentality were at the bottom of the list of possible obstacles. Less than one in five reported these criteria as an important obstacle to pursue their journey to Germany.

Participants who have moved to Germany are mostly living in large cities (60%). Most of them are based in Berlin (13%), Munich (10%), Frankfurt (8%) and Hamburg (7%). Around one in five live in a small city or town, of up to 100,000 inhabitants (22%). Before coming to Germany, the majority preferred living in a large German city (58%), but many were also willing to live in a small city (40%). And, two in five had a clear preference for small cities and rural areas (42%).

Around two thirds of those already living in Germany would like to stay permanently (67%) – this applies particularly to participants who arrived with their partner (61%) and/or children (70%). Participants with children usually have small children (up to 12 years old). This applies to both residents of Germany and those still living abroad. Participants' partners are highly educated. Partners of participants living in Germany have an even higher level of education and better knowledge of German than partners of those residing abroad (83% of residents have a partner with university degree versus 75% of their peers based abroad; and 84% of residents have a partner with at least beginners' level of German versus 40% of their counterparts abroad).

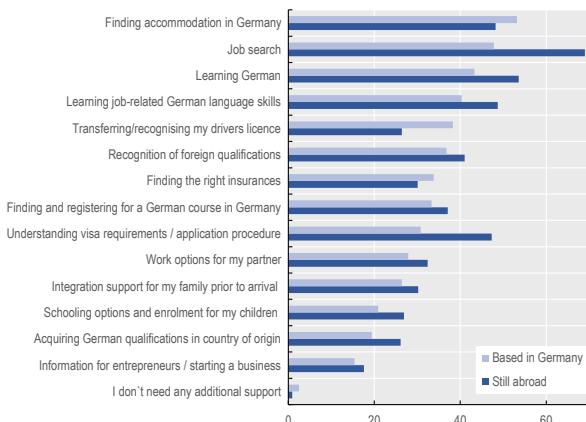
Participants who have moved to Germany have often found a job in Germany that is in an “in-demand” field, such as engineering (23%), IT specialists (22%), medical doctors (5%), carers or nurses (5%). Most of them work as professionals (61%), followed by technicians (12%) and first/mid-level managers (8%); 4% hold executive/senior positions. Participants who managed to move to Germany often earn high incomes: 35% earn a monthly gross salary (before taxes and other deductions) between EUR 4,000 and EUR 5,999; and 13% earn a gross salary above EUR 6,000 per month.



## Support

Most respondents residing abroad would like more assistance in finding a job (69%) and learning the German language (54%). This is also the case for residents in Germany: close to one half would like more support in finding a job (47%) and two out of five would like more help in learning German (43%). However, for participants who made it to Germany, help in finding suitable housing is the most important area of desired support (53%).

In which area would you like more support?



In addition, to better navigate the migration process, the great majority of participants residing abroad would like the government to offer faster visa procedures (58%) and close to half would like more individual support services via embassies, hotline/chat options (49%).

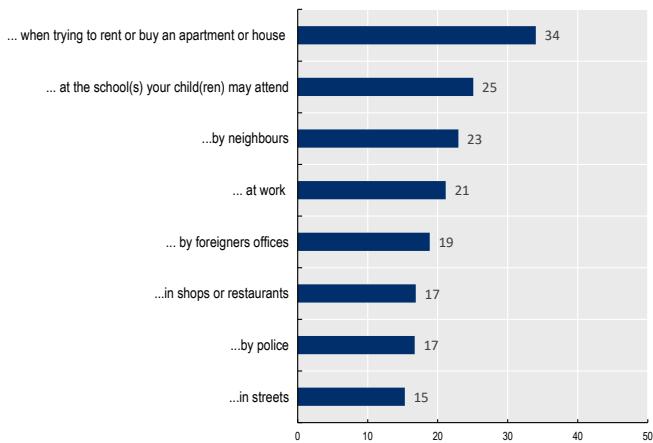
Overall, the use of support services increased in the past six months. At the last survey, more than half of those still living abroad and interested in migrating to Germany had used the website “Make it In Germany.” This share is 10 percentage points higher than the one reported six months before (from 45% to 55%). Similarly, the use of the “Working and Living in Germany hotline” increased by 10 percentage points in the past six months (from 22% to 32%). In addition, the use of the special information and advisory services for skilled workers abroad (ZAV), and the information supplied by the Goethe Institute (*Mein Weg nach Deutschland*) increased markedly (by 9 percentage points) between the second and last survey (from 20% to 29% and from 16% to 25%, respectively).

Nevertheless, although a higher share of participants is using the support services, still most services are rarely used. In general, less than one in three participants living abroad have used the existing hotline services or the advisory services for skilled workers. The exception is the website “Make it in Germany” (55% have used it).

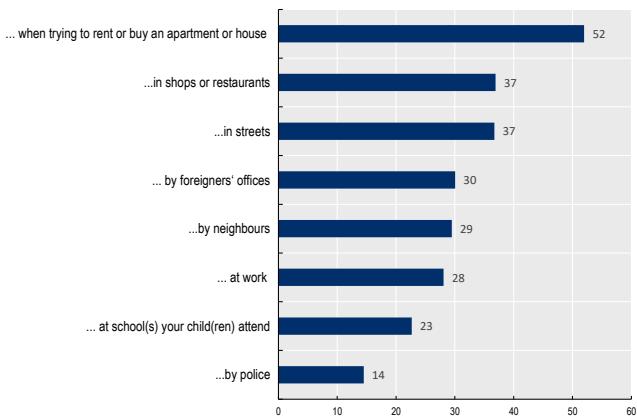
## Views on being treated differently because of origin

Participants were asked on their views and experiences on being treated differently in Germany because of their perceived country of origin. Participants reported the housing market as the primary place where they perceived or had experienced unfavourable treatment or discrimination (34% of those still living abroad and 52% of those based in Germany). However, for other places or institutions, views on being treated differently varied between those who are living abroad and those who have already moved. Experiences of discrimination or unfavourable treatment associated with public institutions (police, children's schools) were less often reported by those based in Germany than what participants expect before moving to Germany.

**Do you think you would be treated differently or discriminated against because of your origin...? Percentage of positive answers among those living abroad**



**Since you moved to Germany, have you been treated differently or discriminated against because of your origin...? Percentage of "often+all the time+sometimes" answers among those living in Germany**

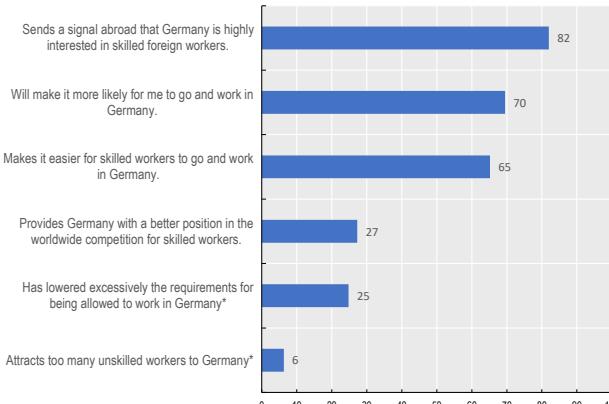


## Opinion New Skilled Immigration Act

Only one in three participants is aware of the New Skilled Immigration Act (31%) which had not been fully rolled out at the time of the survey. Overall, participants who had reviewed the new law had a favourable opinion. Most agreed that the new law signals that Germany is

highly interested in skilled foreign workers (82%); it will make it more likely for participants to go and work in Germany (70%); and it makes it easier for qualified professionals to go and work in Germany (65%).

### Do you think this new law...?



Note: The bars show the percentage of respondents who answered "yes", except for the last two items\* (respondents answered "no").

## Useful links

- [OECD Migration](#)
- [Make it in Germany](#)
- [Information on the New Skilled Immigration Act: The new Skilled Immigration Act \(make-it-in-germany.com\)](#)
- [Summary of findings of the first survey: \*https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/Who-is-interested-and-plans-to-migrate-to-Germany-to-work-Migration-Data-Brief-July-2023.pdf\*](https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/Who-is-interested-and-plans-to-migrate-to-Germany-to-work-Migration-Data-Brief-July-2023.pdf)
- [Presentation of the findings of the second wave \(in German\): \*Wer will nach Deutschland? Erkenntnisse aus einer zweiten Befragung von ausländischen Fachkräften - Mitgeschnitten: Debatten, Daten, Dokumente\* \(oecd-berlin.de\)](#)
- [Presentation of the findings of the third wave \(in German\): \*Wer will nach Deutschland? Und wer schafft es? Neue Erkenntnisse aus einer Befragung ausländischer Fachkräfte - Mitgeschnitten: Debatten, Daten, Dokumente\* \(oecd-berlin.de\)](#)

## Support Services

- For personal advice, use the hotline [Working and Living in Germany](#)
- [Federal Office for Migration and Refugees](#)
- [Handbookgermany](#)

- [Goethe Institute](#)
- [German embassy / German consulate](#)
- [The special information and advisory services for skilled workers abroad \(ZAV\)](#)