YOUR WAY TO GERMANY

Analysis of Germany’s prospective skilled migration profile and the attractiveness of its migration system

This analysis is based on the results of the first wave of a longitudinal online survey among prospective migrants to Germany. Participants were surveyed about their socio-demographic characteristics, their migration plans and their experience with the German migration system. Two further survey waves are planned in February and September 2023, respectively, gathering respondents’ data over the time span of one year. The study, unique in its nature, will be the first longitudinal study monitoring the intentions and experiences of prospective migrants to Germany over time.

In August 2022 the OECD launched, through the migration information portal “Make it in Germany”, a far-reaching online survey among skilled workers abroad who are interested in working in Germany. Between August and October 2022, 68,000 respondents, stretching across 184 countries, participated in the survey. The analysis comes forth at a time when Germany is developing new immigration pathways to better attract, recruit and retain foreign skilled workers, especially in shortage occupations.

The following analysis gathers insights from 28,914 individuals who, at the time of the first survey, were living abroad and are planning to come to Germany for work-related purposes, to carry out vocational training or pursue doctoral studies. All 28,914 participants left an email address to be contacted for forthcoming survey waves.

The preliminary results show clear migration intentions to Germany among survey respondents. However, only a small share speaks German and many still face challenges to find a job in Germany. Most respondents are within the working age-population and are primarily seeking to move to Germany for work-related purposes (start working or find a job).
Socio-demographic characteristics

Respondents are predominantly male, young, and would like to bring their family with them

Overall, seven in ten respondents are male, although this is not the case for all nationalities. Respondents from the Philippines and Cuba, for example, are predominantly female (56 and 55 percent, respectively). The base group is relatively young, with most respondents being of working age. Roughly two in three respondents are 25 to 44 years of age and four in five are younger than 44 years (see Figure 1).

Regarding the family status of the respondents, 46% are single, 48% have a partner and 35% have children. Among those with partner and/or children, around four in five plan to bring family members to Germany in the future.

Figure 1 – Age distribution of the base group (n= 28,782)

Respondents from the first survey stem from 184 different countries. India emerges, by far, as the top nationality with nearly one in five respondents (see Figure 2). Colombia and Türkiye also stand out as important nationalities (10% and 9%, respectively).
Educational profile, professional expertise, and language command

Most respondents hold a university degree or have completed Vocational Education and Training (VET), but their German language knowledge is limited

Most respondents reported to be highly educated. Three in four reported to hold a university degree (see Figure 3). Among those with university education, most have a bachelor’s degree (seven in ten respondents) as their highest educational qualification, while one in four also completed a master’s degree (see Figure 3). Furthermore, around one in six respondents completed VET.

Source: ‘Your way to Germany’ survey, 1st wave, OECD, 2022.
The level of educational attainment also varies across occupations. For instance, between 80 and 90% of respondents in engineering, IT, science (STEM subjects) and healthcare (medical doctors) hold a university degree. In addition, roughly three in seven in science hold a master or PhD/Doctorate, more than in any other occupation. By contrast, the share of university graduates is much lower among craft and nursing professionals (40% and 60%, respectively). Notably, more craft professionals completed VET (40%) than in any other occupation.

Knowledge of the host-country’s language is one of the most important aspects in the integration process, allowing migrants to participate fully in the host-country’s society (OECD, 2021). Only one in seven respondents reported to have some knowledge of the German language beyond beginner or elementary level (see Figure 4). By contrast, a majority reported proficiency in English. Roughly four in five have at least an intermediate level of English, and half reported advanced levels (very good or mother tongue level).

**Figure 3 – Highest educational attainment base group**

- Bachelor: 52%
- Master/PhD: 23%
- VET: 16%
- Neither university nor VET: 9%
- Neither university nor VET: 9%

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

**Figure 4 – German language knowledge**

- No command: 45%
- Beginner: 40%
- Intermediate: 9%
- Very good: 5%
- Mother tongue: 1%

Source: ‘Your way to Germany’ survey, 1st wave, OECD, 2022.
Germany tries to attract foreign workers to meet skill shortages in sectors such as engineering, IT, healthcare, or skilled craft professions. Among respondents, engineering and IT services are the two main professional fields (22% and 15%, respectively). However, there are some divergences across nationalities. Among respondents who reported to be engineers or IT specialists, India is the most important origin country, while Colombian nationals form the most important group among respondents in the healthcare sector (medical doctors, carers, and nursing professions). Among skilled craft professionals Türkiye is the most important origin country.

Overall, respondents report to have considerable professional experience in their respective fields. One in two report to have at least five years of previous working experience. Respondents have generally specified only one field of expertise (nearly five in six), with very few reporting multiple professional fields.

Motivation and migration plans

Most respondents are planning to migrate to Germany, mainly because of career opportunities and a high quality of life

Germany appears to be highly attractive to survey participants. Around four in five respondents consider moving or have already initiated their plans to move to Germany. A larger share of those who completed VET or university education indicated firm plans to move to Germany, relative to those with no self-reported higher education. Willingness to move also varies across nationalities. While a large share of respondents from India and Türkiye indicate a firm intention to move to Germany (64% and 67% respectively), those from Latin American countries, such as Argentina or Colombia seem to be less sure if they will actually migrate, at least in the short term. Almost half of them believe that they would not be eligible for a working visa.

Overall, more than one in two respondents have already started looking for a job and two in five are currently learning German, which further underpins the notion that prospective migrants are genuinely interested in migrating to Germany. However, only a few respondents have taken more concrete final steps to migrate to Germany. On the one hand, 12% of the respondents have either applied or received a visa to work in Germany. On the other hand, 18% have started or completed the process to recognise their qualifications in Germany. In addition, among those who want to move, nearly half would like to move on a permanent basis.
The vast majority of respondents would like to move to Germany either to work (roughly four in five respondents) or to search for a job (one in two).

Although many respondents have not specified a concrete city of preference in Germany, those who did would like to move to Berlin (three in ten respondents), Munich (around one in six respondents) and Frankfurt am Main (one in ten respondents).

According to the respondents, Germany’s attractiveness originates mainly from its good job and career opportunities (seven in ten respondents) as well as its high quality of life (nearly two in three respondents). Other relevant factors affecting the migration decision are the belief that Germany is a safe country as well as a taste for the German culture.

When asked about their dream destination country, respondents highly value a good education system as well as a high-quality healthcare and social protection system alongside positive attitudes towards migrants.

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

Note: The figures display the ratio of respondents who rated these characteristics as “very important” in an attractive destination country.

In addition, family status seems to shape migration preferences. Among respondents with partner and/or children, three in five valued that the destination country provides opportunities to their family members. Furthermore, participants with children place more importance on the education system than those without children. Roughly four in five individuals with children find the quality of the education system to be very important for their decision to migrate.

Experience with Germany’s immigration system

Overall satisfaction with the German migration system seems high, while difficulties related to job-search and language issues stand out among the main barriers mentioned

Most respondents reported a satisfactory experience with the German immigration system so far (two in three reporting a fairly or very good experience). However, participants also experience obstacles to effectively move to Germany.

Roughly half of the respondents believe that searching for a job or obtaining a job offer represent important obstacles to move to Germany. Similarly, two in five perceive that knowledge of the German language is an important barrier, impeding or delaying their decision to migrate to Germany. This relates to the fact that most respondents lack knowledge of the German language (see Figure 4).
Three in four respondents would like more support in the job search process while three in five wish assistance in the visa application procedure. Nearly three in five also wish for further support with learning the German language (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5 – Areas in which respondents would like to receive more support (n=28,776)**

Individuals use a variety of platforms and networks to find a job in Germany. Among those who started looking for a job, most are using internet platforms and social networks (around three in four) while more than half are looking at the job listings on the Make it in Germany webpage (see figure 6). LinkedIn is the most widespread online job-searching tool among prospective migrants (40% of those who use internet platforms), followed by Indeed (13%) and Google for Jobs (11%).

**Figure 6 – Main channels to look for a job in Germany (n=15,357)**
Furthermore, individuals who already obtained a German visa are generally satisfied with the visa issuance time (three in five reported to be fairly or very satisfied). Results show that 45% of visa holders have received their visa within less than a month from the submission of their application.

In a similar vein, respondents who already completed a procedure to have their foreign qualifications recognised were mostly satisfied with the length of that procedure (more than half reported to be fairly or very satisfied). Besides, most respondents had their qualifications fully or partially recognised.

Annex A. Country profiles

India

Indian nationals are younger and better educated than the base group. They are mainly specialised in engineering and IT.

India represents by far the largest nationality in the sample. With more than 5,490 respondents, it accounts for 19% of the base group. Overall, less women come from India relative to the base group (23% vs. 29% respectively).

Prospective migrants from India are younger than the base group (see Figure A.1). More than half of the Indian respondents are aged 25 to 34 and 90% are younger than 44. Regarding their family status, 49% are single, 47% have a partner and 30% have children.

Figure A.1. Age distribution; India and base group

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

Among Indian nationals, a larger share is tertiary educated than in the base group. While three in four respondents from the base group hold a university degree, the respective share among Indian nationals rises to nine in ten. Among those with a university degree, 63% hold a
bachelor’s degree while 36% hold a master’s degree. By contrast, the share of Indian nationals with VET drops relative to the base group (39% vs. 52% respectively).

English fluency is widespread among Indian nationals. Nearly all (97%) reported at least an intermediate level of English while four in five reported an advanced level (very good or mother-tongue). By contrast, less than one in ten Indian respondents reported a command of the German language beyond the beginner level.

Prospective migrants from India are mainly specialised in engineering and IT. Taken together, more than half of Indian respondents have specialised in either field.

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

Indian nationals are more inclined to move to Germany relative to the base group. In fact, 65% are planning to move to Germany. Few Indian participants (less than one in ten) believe that they are not eligible for a visa in Germany, compared with almost one in five participants in the base group.

Figure A.2. Firmness of plans to move to Germany (India vs base group)

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

Furthermore, Indian respondents show a high interest in Germany’s career opportunities (three in four participants) as well as Germany’s high quality of life (more than three in five respondents).
In general, Indian nationals are more content with the Germany immigration system relative to the base group. More than half of Indian respondents reported a “very good” experience with the German immigration system so far.

Colombia

Colombian nationals are more likely to have completed VET than the base group. Colombian professionals are mainly specialised in engineering and commercial activities.

Colombia is the second largest nationality among the base group with 2,842 respondents, accounting for roughly 10% of the sample. More women are present in the Colombian sample compared with the base group (39% and 29% respectively).

Prospective migrants from Colombia are slightly older than the base group (see Figure A.3). In fact, one in four Colombian participants is older than 44 years of age, compared to one seventh in the base group. Regarding their family status, 41% are single, 50% have a partner and 43% have children. That is, more Colombian nationals in the sample have children and the share of those with a partner is also somewhat higher than that of the base group.

![Figure A.3. Age distribution; Colombia and base group](image)

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

A smaller share of Colombian respondents hold a university degree than in the base group (around three in five respondents vs. three in four). However, the share of Colombian nationals who completed VET is higher (three in five respondents). In addition, Colombian respondents, on average, reported more years of professional expertise in their respective fields. Approximately three in eight Colombian respondents indicated to have at least five years of professional experience.
Overall, Colombian nationals in the sample reported a lower command of both German and English language knowledge relative to the base group. Only six percent reported some command of German beyond the beginner level. Furthermore, less than half reported at least an intermediate level of English, while only 15% reported proficiency level (very good or mother tongue).

One in four Colombian respondents is specialised in engineering. Other important professional fields are commercial services including trading, sales, the hotel business, and tourism.

Figure A.4. Firmness of plans to move to Germany (Colombia vs base group)

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

Most Colombian respondents value Germany’s job and career opportunities (around seven in ten) alongside its high quality of life (more than three in five).

Yet, Colombian respondents, like other respondents from Latin American, largely believe that they are not eligible for a working visa in Germany. The share of Colombians who feel that they would be denied a working visa more than doubles that of the base group. In line with this, the share of those planning to move to Germany is also significantly lower (see figure A.4).

Not surprisingly, the share of Colombian respondents who agree with the statement “Germany’s laws allow skilled workers to come and work in Germany” is low. Only 27% of
Colombian respondents agree with this affirmation while the share among the base group rises to 44%.

Although Colombian respondents seem to encounter more barriers to effectively move to Germany, their overall experience with Germany’s migration system remains positive. In fact, more than two in five respondents reported a very good experience so far with the German immigration system.

Türkiye

Turkish respondents are younger, better educated and possess a higher command of German than the base group. They are mainly specialised in engineering and construction.

Turkish nationals account for ten percent of the base group with 2,603 individuals. The share of Turkish female participants is lower than in the base group, with women accounting for less than one-fifth of all Turkish participants (against three in ten respondents in the base group).

Prospective Turkish migrants are younger than the base group. In fact, 43% of the respondents are between 25 and 34 years old and 88% are younger than 44 years (see Figure A.5). Regarding their family status, 43% are single, 54% have a partner and 39% have children.

**Figure A.5. Age distribution; Türkiye and base group**

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

Turkish participants also represent a highly educated group, with four in five respondents holding a university degree. Among those with a university degree, three in four hold a bachelor’s degree while one in five hold a master’s degree. Furthermore, roughly three in five respondents completed VET, a larger share than in the base group.

Respondents from Türkiye reported better German language skills than the base group. Around one in six respondents from Türkiye have some command of German beyond the
beginner level. Furthermore, seven in ten respondents have at least an intermediate level of English.

Turkish respondents tend to be specialised in engineering (one in four participants) and construction-related fields such as architecture and technical building services (one in seven respondents).

Besides, the share of Turkish respondents planning to come to Germany is higher (roughly seven in ten respondents) than that of the base group (less than three in five respondents).

Figure A.6. Firmness of plans to move to Germany (Türkiye vs base group)

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

Turkish respondents highly value Germany’s job and career opportunities as well as a high quality of life (roughly seven in ten respondents). Furthermore, more believe that Germany offers opportunities for their family members (around half of them) relative to the base group (roughly three in ten).

However, experiences with the German immigration system are not as positive among Turkish respondents compared with the base group. Only one in four respondents reported a “very good” experience with the immigration system so far (against nearly two in five in the base group).
Philippines
Respondents from the Philippines are predominantly female. Most are tertiary-educated and have a good command of the English language.

Participants from the Philippines represent five percent of the base group with 1,438 individuals. The share of women among respondents from the Philippines is the largest in the sample at 56%.

More than four in five respondents from the Philippines are younger than 44 years of age and two in five are between 25 and 34 years of age (see Figure A.7). 54% are single, 38% have a partner and 34% have children. The share of single individuals is higher than that in the base group, while the share of those with children is lower.

Figure A.7. Age distribution; Philippines and base group

Most respondents from the Philippines are tertiary educated, with more than four in five holding a university degree. Those with university education predominantly hold a bachelor’s degree (nine in ten). While the level of German command is low among this group, participants from the Philippines reported high levels of English command. The vast majority (94%) reported to have at least an intermediate level of English, while 60% self-declared to be proficient (very good or mother tongue level).

Professional fields among participants from the Philippines vary widely. Commercial services and business organization (accounting, law and administration) are the most common fields of expertise.

Roughly one in six participants from the Philippines selected business organization as their field of expertise.

Roughly one in six participants from the Philippines selected commercial services as their field of expertise.

Source: ‘Your way to Germany’ survey, 1st wave, OECD, 2022.
Among respondents from the Philippines, the share of those planning to move to Germany is slightly lower compared with the base group. Participants from the Philippines are more hesitant to move, and many have not made a firm decision yet. The share of those who fear that they might not be eligible for a working visa is also somewhat higher than in the base group (see Figure A.8).

**Figure A.8. Firmness of plans to move to Germany (Philippines vs base group)**

Among respondents from the Philippines, Germany’s attractiveness emanates mainly from its job and career opportunities (three in four participants), as well as its high quality of life (two in three participants), in line with the views in the overall sample. Additionally, two in five respondents from the Philippines want to gain working experience in Germany to increase their employability back home, more than in the base group.

Overall, respondents from the Philippines reported a positive experience with the German immigration system. More than half reported a “very good” experience so far, exceeding the share among the base group.

**Algeria**

Respondents from Algeria are young, mostly single, and tertiary educated. They are mainly specialised in engineering and commercial services.

Algerian respondents represent almost four percent of the base group with 1,051 individuals. There are slightly less women among Algerian participants (one in four) compared with the base group (three in ten). Algerian respondents are relatively young, with nine in ten being younger than 44 years of age (see Figure A.9). Regarding their family status, 61% are single, 32% have a partner and 23% have children. The share of singles is larger than that in the base group. In addition, the share of those with children is lower.
Most respondents from Algeria reported to hold a university degree or have completed VET. The share of tertiary educated is similar to that of the base group (around three in four respondents). Among those with tertiary education, the share of those with a master’s degree or a PhD/Doctorate is one of the highest in the sample. More than half of tertiary educated Algerian respondents hold a master’s degree (against more than one fourth in the base group). Furthermore, the share of individuals who completed VET is also higher. Three in five Algerians reported having completed VET (against around one in two in the base group). Furthermore, Algerian respondents reported good German language skills, relative to the base group. In fact, one in five reported at least an intermediate level of German. By contrast, although four in five reported at least an intermediate level of English, only two in five reported an advanced level (very good or mother tongue level).

Prospective migrants from Algeria tend to be specialised in engineering (one in five participants) and commercial services (around one in seven).

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

Most Algerian respondents are planning to come to Germany or have firms plans on doing so. The share of Algerians currently planning to move to Germany is slightly higher than that of the base group as many believe that they are eligible for a working visa (see Figure A.10).
Participants from Algeria also believe that Germany’s career opportunities and high quality of life are the two main aspects that make Germany attractive to international talent. Compared to the base group, a somewhat lower share of Algerians reported having friends or family ties in Germany.

Most respondents from Algeria, similarly to the base group, reported a positive experience with the German immigration system. More than three in five reported a “very” or “fairly good” experience so far with the immigration system.
References