

# FINDINGS OF THE PILOT STUDY ON THE WELTWÄRTS PROGRAMME VOLUNTEER SURVEY

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Richtig fragen.

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Dear reader,

This report presents the findings of the 2013 survey of returning volunteers. We would like to start by highlighting one result in particular: 94% of the respondents were satisfied with their voluntary service overall. This impressive figure confirms that the weltwärts programme meets the needs of young adults. And it shows how diligently the sending and partner organisations run the development volunteers service.

Each year, there are more than 3,300 volunteers in service in more than 60 host countries, sent there by 180 different organisations. In 2013, for the first time since the evaluation of the weltwärts programme in 2011, a survey was conducted among the returning volunteers. 1,929 volunteers participated in the survey, conducted by Umfragezentrum Bonn, putting the response rate at a pleasing 63%.

The volunteer survey is part of the weltwärts quality system introduced in 2013. The system provides a methodology and standards for the participating organisations' efforts to improve their volunteer services. The quality system comprises the following components:

- quality certification of the sending organisations by external certification bodies,
- quality development by the sending organisations in the quality associations,
- the work group on quality, which conducts quality management at the programme level, and
- the annual volunteer survey.

The quality criteria for the development volunteer services are set out in the weltwärts guideline and quality standards.

The sending organisations and their partner organisations in the Global South are responsible for running the services. The quality of the services results from and evolves in a dialogue between the various players involved: the volunteers, the partners overseas and the sending organisations. Within the different partnerships different instruments are used for quality development. A number of the sending organisations also use the weltwärts "accompanying measures" funding tool.

The volunteer survey reflects volunteers' opinions and views regarding their period of service a few weeks or months after their return. The weltwärts quality work group and the quality associations, with their member organisations and their partner organisations, then consider and process the findings. The data collected in the annual volunteer survey serves as an indicator of quality and quality issues.

The volunteer survey is the part of the quality system that, through standardised questions, enables all of a cohort's volunteers to give anonymous feedback on their period of service. It supplements the forms of feedback and evaluation used by the sending organisations and their partners in their support activities for volunteers.

The volunteer survey therefore plays a dual role in the programme:

- The programme's quality work group discusses and evaluates the data from the survey.
- The quality associations, the sending organisations and their partners overseas can share information about the volunteers' views regarding their satisfaction with and the quality of the programme as a whole. This enables the players involved in the voluntary work to verify whether their own evaluation and quality instruments are adequate and appropriate.

The findings of the volunteer survey are one building block in a comprehensive quality system, designed to constantly evolve the programme into a development learning and exchange service for the volunteers and the partners in the North and South.

Looking at the first year of the survey, we can say that the volunteers' overall assessment of the service is good. This rating applies to each of the individual phases: preparation, assignment and post-assignment. But the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development and the civil society organisations behind the programme do not see this as a licence to leave things as they are. Even when problems or dissatisfaction are only voiced by a few volunteers, we will still analyse the causes and work on improving what needs to be improved.

The weltwärts programme is intended to be a development learning service. So it is also pleasing to see that the volunteers feel the programme had a positive impact on their personal development, their interest in development issues and their motivation to play an active role in society. A large majority of the returnees are already involved in post-assignment voluntary work or plan to do so – confirmation that the weltwärts programme is on track for success.

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## FINDINGS OF THE PILOT STUDY ON THE WELTWÄRTS PROGRAMME VOLUNTEER SURVEY

### Survey sample and response rate

The target group of the first volunteer survey for the weltwärts programme comprised all of those volunteers who completed their service overseas in 2013. A total of 1,929 individuals participated in the survey, making the response rate 63%.

The respondents did their development service through 165 different sending organisations and were active in 67 different countries. The five top destinations were South Africa, India, Tanzania, Peru and Bolivia.

All of Germany’s 16 federal states were represented among the respondents. At 29%, the state of Baden-Württemberg had the most. With North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria and Lower Saxony each accounting for more than 10% of the volunteers, these federal states had fairly large groups too. Compared to their total populations, only Baden-Württemberg and Berlin had a disproportionately high number of participants in the weltwärts programme. Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia were slightly underrepresented compared to their populations.

The share of women among the respondents was 69% and therefore much higher than that of men (see Figure 2). Having said that, the ratio does roughly correspond to that among the weltwärts programme volunteers who returned in 2013 and were contacted as part of the survey.

The respondents were in the age group 18 to 30, with the average age being 21. The age structure was relatively homogeneous – only 12% of the volunteers were 23 or older.

The overwhelming majority of the volunteers (82%) joined the weltwärts programme straight after they finished their schooling. Consequently, most of them had not yet undertaken any professional training. The share of volunteers who held an “Abitur” or “Allgemeine Hochschulreife” school-leaving qualification was 92%. In most cases, the volunteers who did have a professional qualification had gained it from a conventional university or a university of applied sciences. The share of volunteers who had qualified through Germany’s dual system of vocational training was 5%.

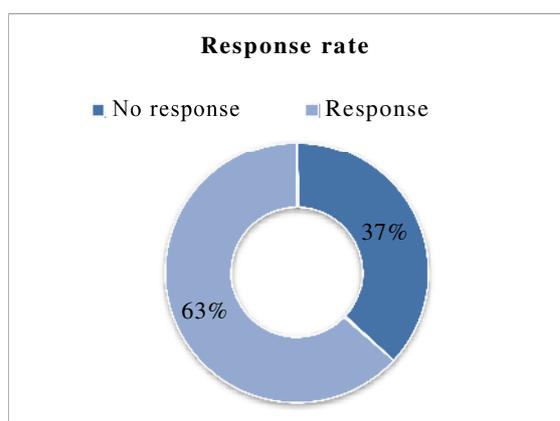


Figure 1: Response rate

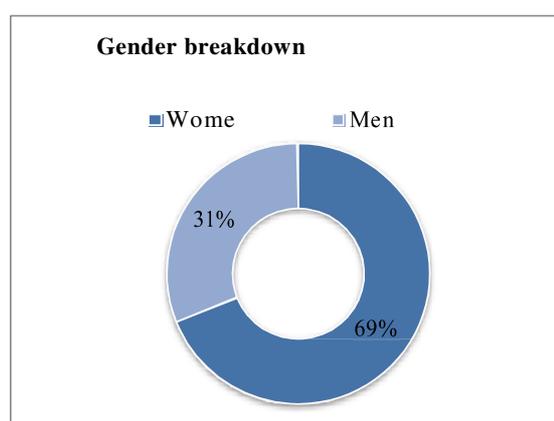


Figure 2: Gender breakdown

At 12%, the share of volunteers with a migrant background was slightly lower than the corresponding share in Germany’s population (20%)<sup>1</sup>. However, compared to the share of the country’s population who have German citizenship *and* a migrant background (11%), the share of volunteers with a migrant background on the weltwärts programme was very similar.

Fewer than ten of the respondents had an officially recognised disability or a certificate of disability (as defined in Volume IX of the German Social Code). As such, there are still not many disabled participants in the weltwärts programme.

### Satisfaction

Overall, the volunteers were very positive in their evaluation of the weltwärts programme. Two in three were very satisfied with their voluntary service overall. Taking the volunteers who were “quite satisfied” into account too, 94% of all volunteers were satisfied overall (see Figure 3).

The information given in the open comments section by those volunteers who were (quite) dissatisfied overall with their voluntary service on the weltwärts programme shows that this was mostly due to the specific situation at their place of assignment (cf. results of the assessment of overseas assignments as well).

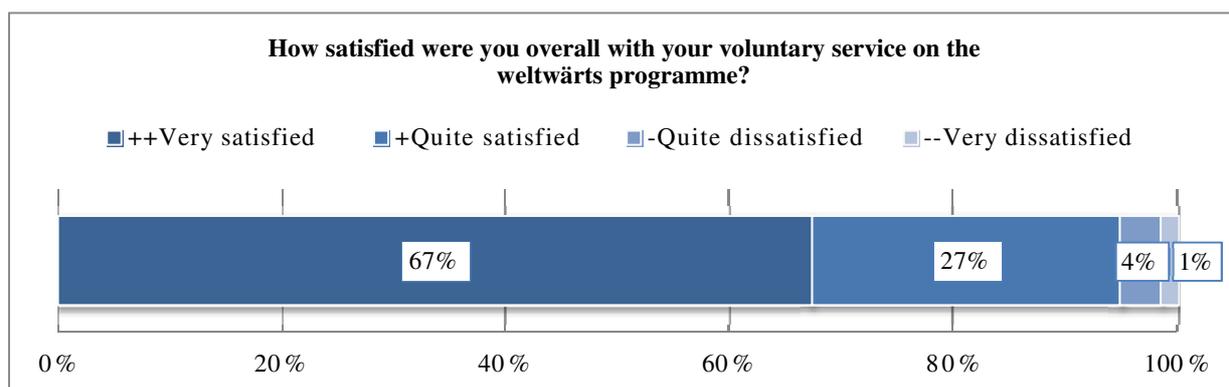


Figure 3: Respondents’ overall satisfaction with their voluntary service

This positive assessment of the respondents’ voluntary service overall is also reflected in their degree of willingness to recommend the weltwärts programme to their friends. Just under two thirds of the volunteers were very likely to recommend the programme overall to others and the same number were very likely to recommend an assignment in the country they went to. The work of the sending organisations was also viewed positively by the majority, with more than two thirds of the volunteers reporting that they would recommend volunteering on the weltwärts programme through their sending organisation. The ratings for the places of assignment and the host organisations in the host countries were more heterogeneous and more cautious: the share of volunteers who were very likely to recommend these to their friends was 40% in each instance (see Figure 4).

<sup>1</sup> Germany’s Federal Statistical Office defines a person with a migrant background as someone who holds foreign citizenship or was born abroad and immigrated to Germany post 1949, or someone who was born in Germany and naturalised or who has a parent who immigrated to Germany, was naturalised or is a foreign national. The 20% referred to above therefore includes both Germans and foreign nationals, some of whom are immigrants themselves.  
<https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/Bevoelkerung/MigrationIntegration/Migrationshintergrund/Tabellen/MigrationshintergrundLaender.html>

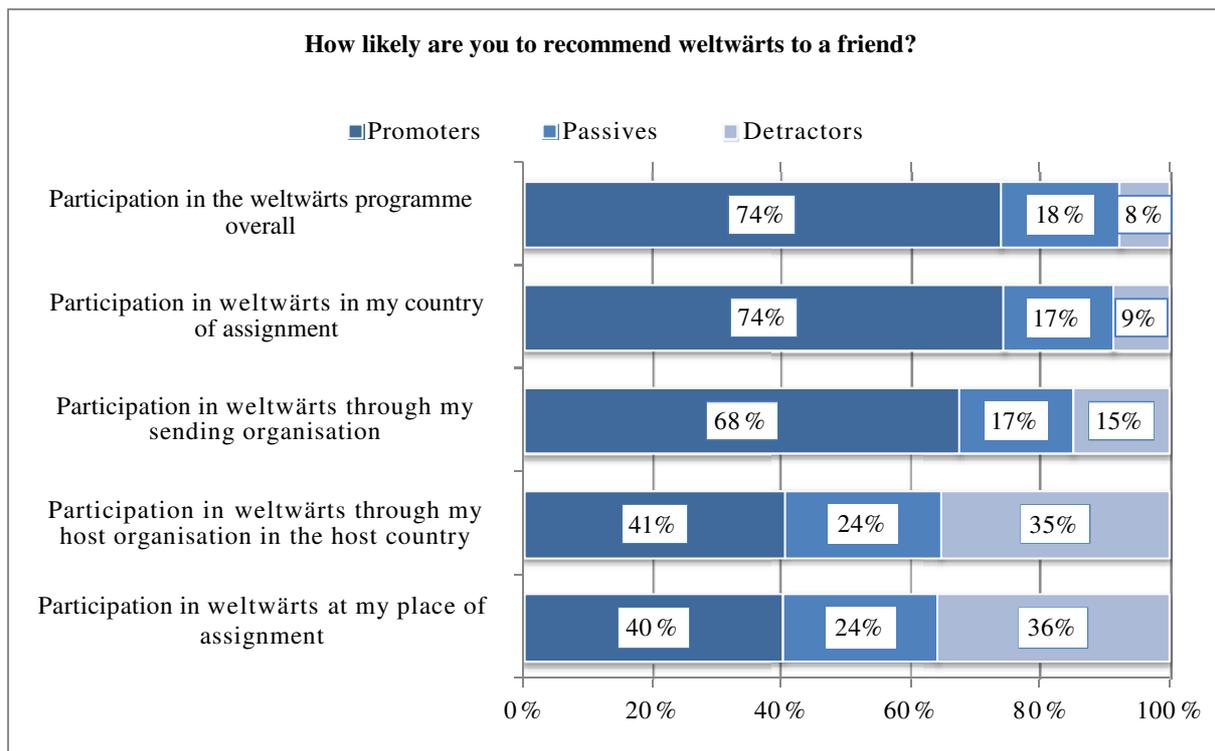


Figure 4: Willingness to recommend the weltwärts programme overall, the country of assignment, sending organisation, host organisation and place of assignment<sup>2</sup>

## Preparation for the voluntary service

The volunteers were positive in their overall evaluation of how the sending organisations prepared them for their voluntary service overseas. The overwhelming majority were very or quite satisfied with the preparation they received from their sending organisation overall (see Figure 5).

The information reported in the open comments section by those volunteers who were not particularly satisfied with the way their sending organisation prepared them suggests that the volunteers would like more preparation in line with the specific place or country of assignment. Similarly, the lowest rating was given for the information supplied by the sending organisations regarding the specific place of assignment and the work to be done there. Indeed, almost half of the volunteers stated that they were (quite) dissatisfied with this aspect (see Figure 5).

The majority of the volunteers were very positive about the support the sending organisations gave with formal aspects of their entry into the respective country or their overseas assignment, e.g. visas, residence permits and work permits (see Figure 5). The findings of the volunteer survey also indicate that there were only a few cases of difficulties with visas or residence permits during the volunteers' overseas service (7%). 91% of all volunteers reported that they had a residence permit or a visa throughout their period of service<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Willingness to recommend the programme to others was measured on a scale of 0 (very unlikely) to 10 (very likely). The responses were then grouped in the following categories: ratings of 10 and 9 were promoters; ratings of 6 or lower were detractors; and the rest were passives.

The majority of the volunteers were very satisfied with the information the sending organisations gave regarding preventive healthcare (e.g. on recommended vaccinations or health insurance during the assignment) and how to protect their health while on assignment overseas (e.g. information about drinking water) (see Figure 5).

The preparation given by the sending organisations in terms of safety and security was also viewed positively by the majority. The volunteers were particularly satisfied with the information concerning and the contact data for the key contact people on the ground (e.g. the emergency card). They were slightly more cautious in their assessment of the information the sending organisations supplied with regard to the general security situation in the country of assignment and what to do in the event of an emergency or crisis. Nonetheless, 85% of the volunteers were satisfied overall with these aspects too (see Figure 5).

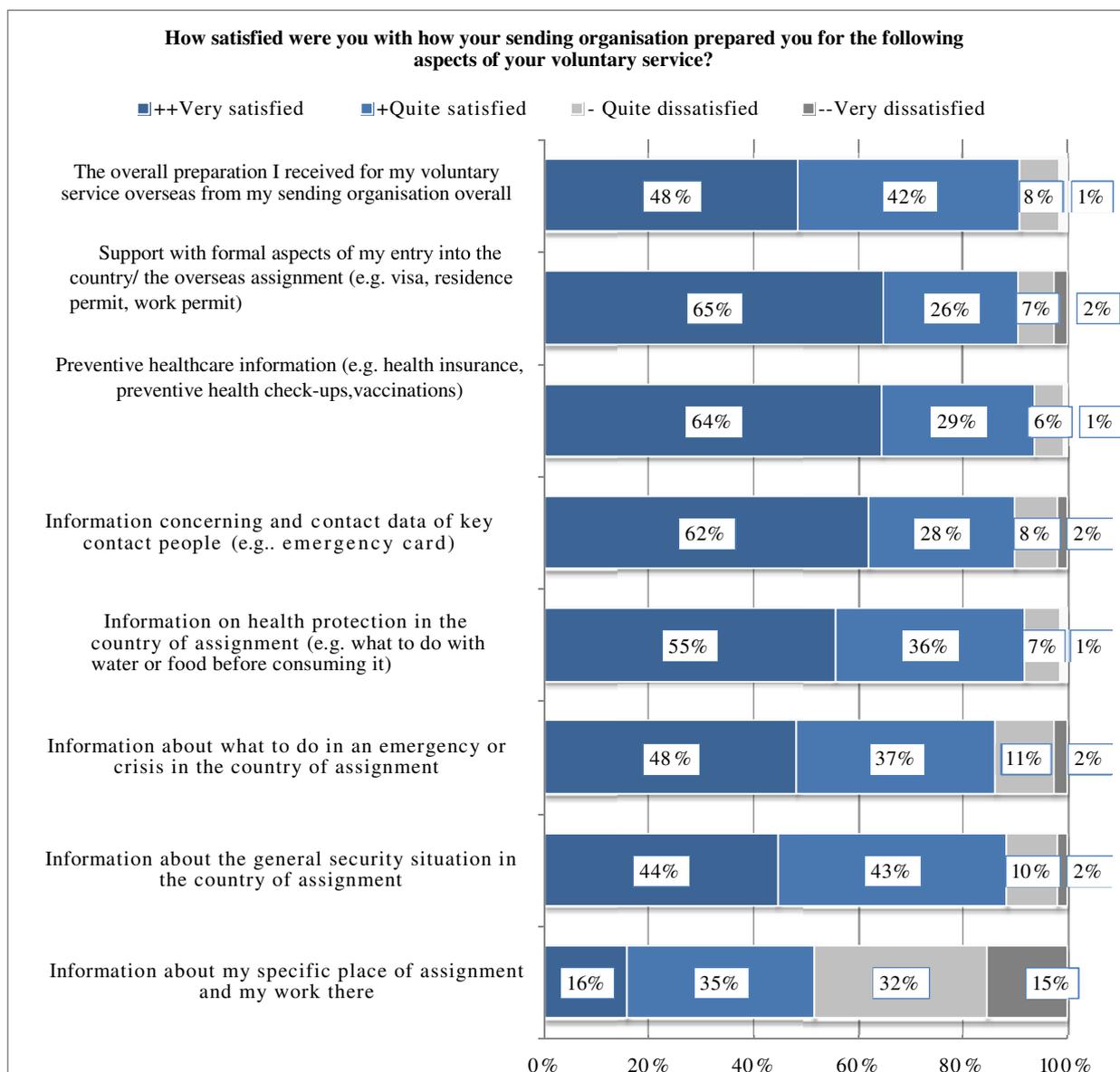


Figure 5: Volunteers' satisfaction with aspects of how they were prepared for their voluntary service

<sup>3</sup> The other 2% of respondents did not give a clear answer to this question.

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The findings of the volunteer survey indicate that around three quarters of the volunteers (72%) helped set up a fundraising group as part of their preparations for their overseas service. The overwhelming majority of these volunteers were supported in their efforts by their sending organisation (e.g. information material, reports on past experiences and knowledge-sharing on lessons learned). However, just under one quarter of the volunteers who helped set up fundraising groups felt that the support they received from their sending organisation was not particularly good.

Since collecting donations and helping to set up fundraising groups is not a prerequisite to participation in the weltwärts programme, the volunteers were also asked whether their sending organisations made the voluntary nature of these activities clear to them. More than half said this was the case. The share of volunteers who felt that the voluntary nature was not conveyed clearly enough was relatively high. More than one in three stated that it was not really true or not at all true that the sending organisation had made it clear that collecting donations was a voluntary activity.

### **Assignment in the host country**

The places of assignment overseas were given a positive rating overall. The overwhelming majority of the volunteers were quite or very satisfied with their place of assignment (see Figure 6).

They were especially positive in their assessment of their personal experiences and social contact during their overseas assignment. The majority were satisfied both with the way in which they were socially integrated into their place of assignment and with the contact they had with people outside their immediate working environment (see Figure 6).

The opportunities for active involvement in the place of assignment and the work content were also viewed positively by the majority of the volunteers. Having said that, roughly one in four were not particularly satisfied with their involvement and their work content at their place of assignment (see Figure 6). Similarly, almost three quarters of the volunteers had the impression that their place of assignment /host organisation in the host country was well prepared for their assignment whilst one in four felt this was not really the case.

The findings of the volunteer survey show that personal support for the volunteers during their overseas assignments was usually ensured. More than 80% of them had a fixed contact person (e.g. a mentor) during their assignment in the host country, whom they could contact for personal support. The share of volunteers who did not have a contact person to provide personal support in the host country was 13%. The personal support provided during the assignment in the host country was rated positively by the majority of the volunteers. Two in three were satisfied with the personal support overall. One in three was quite dissatisfied. The information reported in the open comments section by the volunteers who did not have a contact person to provide personal support indicates that in many cases, although a contact person had been appointed, he or she was only available to the volunteer to a limited extent (e.g. because it was difficult to contact them or they were too far away).

The aspect of the overseas assignments that the volunteers viewed most critically overall was the instruction and guidance given for their tasks at their place of assignment. Generally speaking, two in three volunteers had a contact person to give them introductory training and instruction at their place of assignment. However, at 21%, the share of volunteers for whom this was not the case was relatively high<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, only just over half of the volunteers were satisfied with the instruction and introductory training they were given for their tasks at their place of assignment (see Figure 6).

Many of the volunteers who did not have a contact person at their place of assignment to give them work-related guidance reported that nobody at their place of assignment felt directly responsible for them. In addition, a number of volunteers considered it a problem that the staff at the places of assignment had too many other tasks to be able to spend much time on providing guidance.

The responses in the open comments section by the volunteers who were (quite) dissatisfied with their place of assignment overall show that this dissatisfaction was mainly due to them feeling they were not adequately involved in the activities there and/or there not being enough personal and job-related support there. In a few isolated cases, the language and an inability to communicate properly posed a problem, which contributed to the volunteers' dissatisfaction.

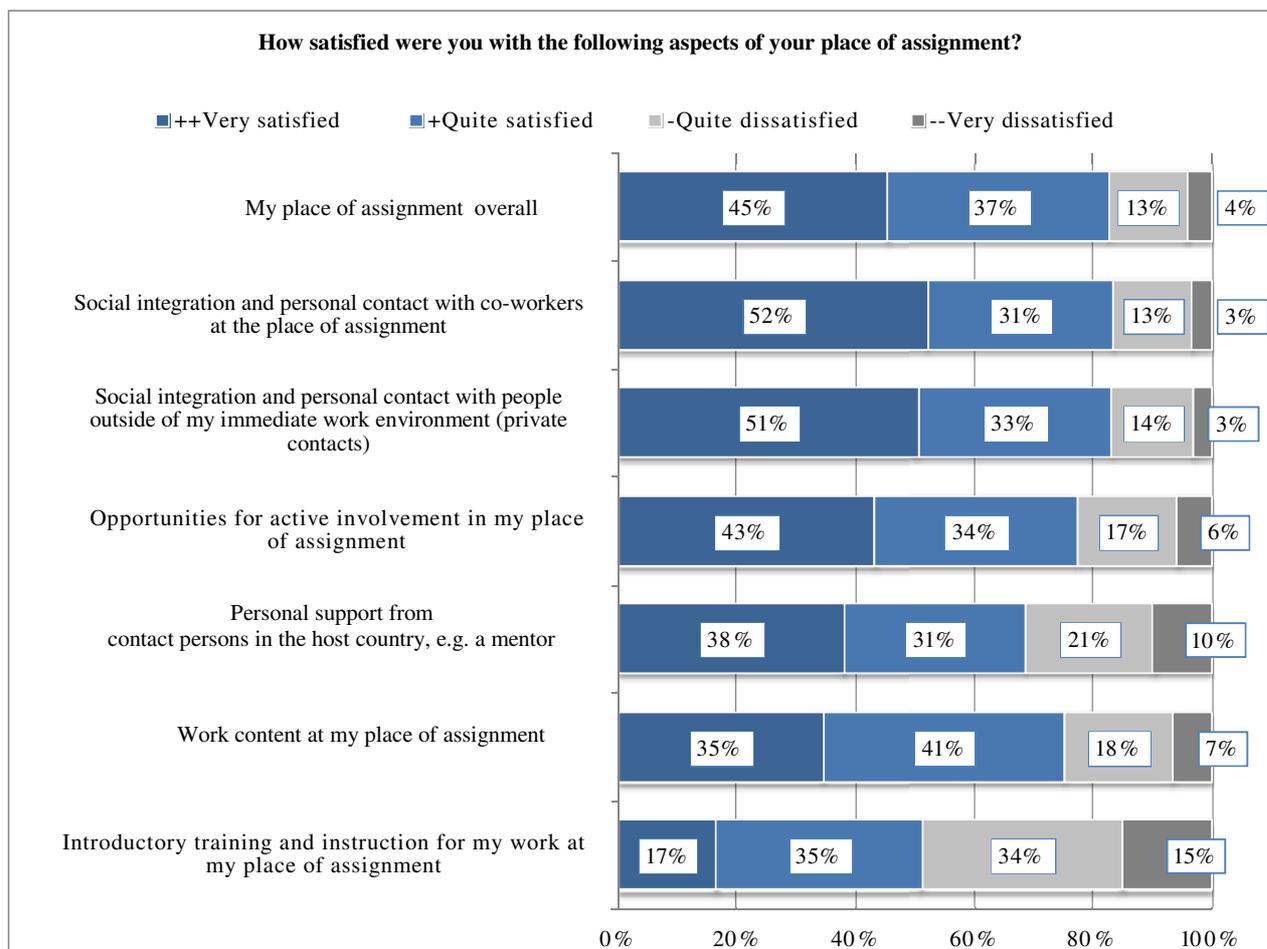


Figure 6: Volunteers' satisfaction with aspects of their place of assignment

<sup>4</sup> The other 10% of respondents did not give a clear answer to this question.

Ensuring the safety and health of the volunteers during their year abroad is extremely important for the weltwärts programme. As part of the quality development process, the volunteer survey was therefore also intended to gather information on whether the volunteers are confronted with situations that they feel are potentially or very definitely hazardous or dangerous during their overseas assignment. The findings show that the majority did not have any negative experiences of this nature during their voluntary service. Furthermore, the volunteers' responses overall highlight the effectiveness of the preparation and support provided by sending and host organisations in the host countries. Even in the case of volunteers who were confronted with hazardous situations, 89% stated that they felt generally in good hands – despite the possibility of security issues – due to the preparation and support provided by the host organisations in the host country and the German sending organisations.

Most of the volunteers did not experience any situations that they felt to be (quite) threatening during their time overseas (60%). Nor did the overwhelming majority find themselves confronted with situations in which they felt personally threatened (78%). There were even fewer cases in which the volunteers said that it was quite or absolutely true that they had experienced physical violence (7%). The share of volunteers who said it was quite or absolutely true that there were situations in which they felt sexually harassed or threatened was 17%. There were many more women than men for whom this was the case (women=22%; men=6%). This result must be taken seriously, especially when preparing the volunteers for their service, but it should not be interpreted as a programme-specific problem. Sexual harassment is a common form of sexualised attack or violence, which plays a role throughout society internationally. Indeed, in Germany too, the data from a representative study on violence against women indicates that nearly 60% of the women surveyed had experienced sexual harassment<sup>5</sup>. The finding in the volunteer survey makes it clear that this issue also affects volunteer services (including those overseas).

## Seminars

The preparatory, mid-term and returnee seminars are compulsory elements of the weltwärts programme. Apart from a few exceptions, all of the respondents had attended a preparatory seminar and at least one mid-term seminar during their time overseas. The share of volunteers who had already attended a returnee seminar at the time of this survey was 90 %. Most of those who had not yet attended one were scheduled to do so on a date after the survey; there were only a few isolated cases of volunteers not having been offered a returnee seminar.

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<sup>5</sup> Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (2005): Lebenssituation , Sicherheit und Gesundheit von Frauen in Deutschland. Eine repräsentative Untersuchung zu Gewalt gegen Frauen in Deutschland. <http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/Service/publikationen,did=20560.html> [accessed on 14 July 2014].

The seminars offered by the sending and host organisations to accompany the programme were considered useful overall by the overwhelming majority of the volunteers (see Figure 7).

The volunteers gave a particularly positive rating for the preparatory seminar, which they felt was especially useful as a way of preparing for work with development issues and for the general requirements of the volunteer service. More than 85% considered the preparatory seminars useful in each of these areas. The preparation given for everyday life during the voluntary service was considered less useful – one third of the volunteers stated that the preparatory seminar was not very or not at all useful in this respect.

In the volunteers' view, the main benefit of the mid-term seminars was that they could share their experiences with other volunteers. In total, 94% considered the mid-term useful. The overwhelming majority (81%) also felt that the mid-term seminars were a useful tool for reflecting on and reviewing what they had experienced so far during their voluntary service. In addition, most of the volunteers felt they were useful in helping them deal with the challenges they faced during their overseas assignment. However, around one quarter reported that the mid-term seminars were not particularly or not at all useful in helping them deal with challenges. Slightly more than half of the volunteers (55%) benefited from the mid-term seminars as a way of learning more about development issues.

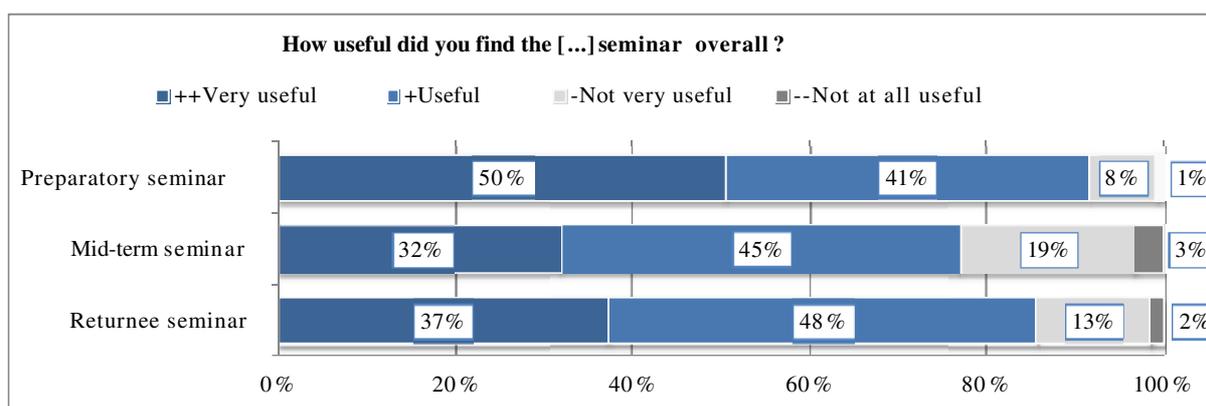


Figure 7: Assessment of the preparatory and accompanying seminars

### Returnee seminar

The overwhelming majority of the volunteers also felt that the returnee seminar was useful overall (85%). As with the mid-term seminars, the opportunity to share experiences with other volunteers was considered very positive. In total, 96% considered the returnee seminar useful. The overwhelming majority also saw it as a useful way of maintaining the contacts they had established and networking with other volunteers on the weltwärts programme. The volunteers felt that the returnee seminars provided a similar level of benefit when it came to finding out more about how to get involved in development work after they returned to Germany. In addition, the majority benefited from the seminars in terms of their motivation to continue their active involvement in development work. In all three of these areas, over 80% of the volunteers said that the returnee seminar was useful in their view.

Nearly 80% of the volunteers reported that the returnee seminars were useful as a way of reflecting on and reviewing their personal experiences during their overseas service. However, approximately one in five felt that they were not particularly useful in this sense.

The feedback from the volunteers indicates that the returnee seminars were only of minor help in supporting volunteers readjust to life in Germany after their time overseas. Slightly more than half considered them useful in this respect.

The post-assignment activities were rated positively overall. More than 80% of the volunteers were satisfied with them (see Figure 8). Most of those who were not particularly satisfied or not at all satisfied with the post-assignment activities overall had not (yet) attended a returnee seminar.

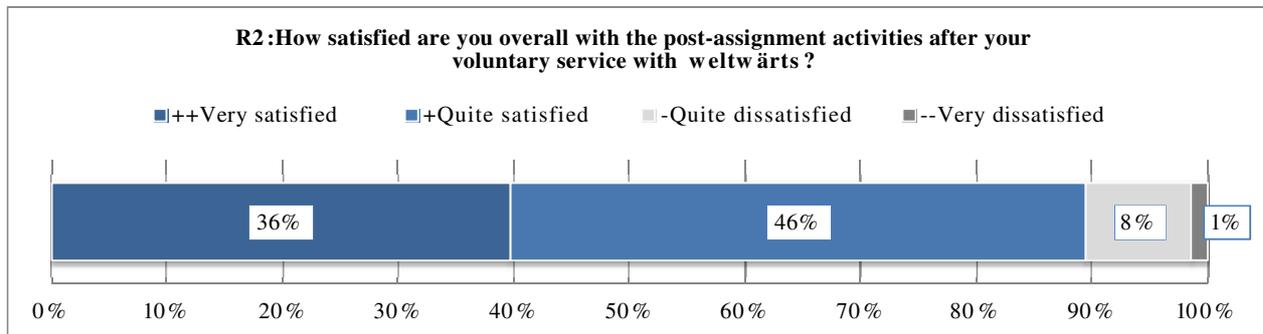


Figure 8: Satisfaction with post-assignment activities

### The weltwärts programme as a development learning service

In order to determine what effect participation in the weltwärts programme has, especially with regard to global learning, the volunteers were asked to give an assessment of how they thought their voluntary service had influenced various areas of their personal development.

The findings show that the overwhelming majority considered their service on the weltwärts programme an enriching experience. They gave a particularly positive rating for the influence their voluntary service had on their openness towards other cultures and people. More than two thirds of the volunteers thought that their voluntary service had had a very positive influence on their personal development and that it had strengthened their ability to think and act for themselves (see Figure 9).

The majority of the respondents also felt that the development volunteer service had a (very) positive effect on their motivation to assume responsibility in society, on their global awareness and their interest in development issues and social or political subjects. They did not feel that their voluntary service on the weltwärts programme had a particularly major influence on their general career choice or their specific interest in a career in development cooperation or other development areas. Having said that, more than one in five volunteers did see a positive influence in this respect as a result of their experience during voluntary service (see Figure 9).

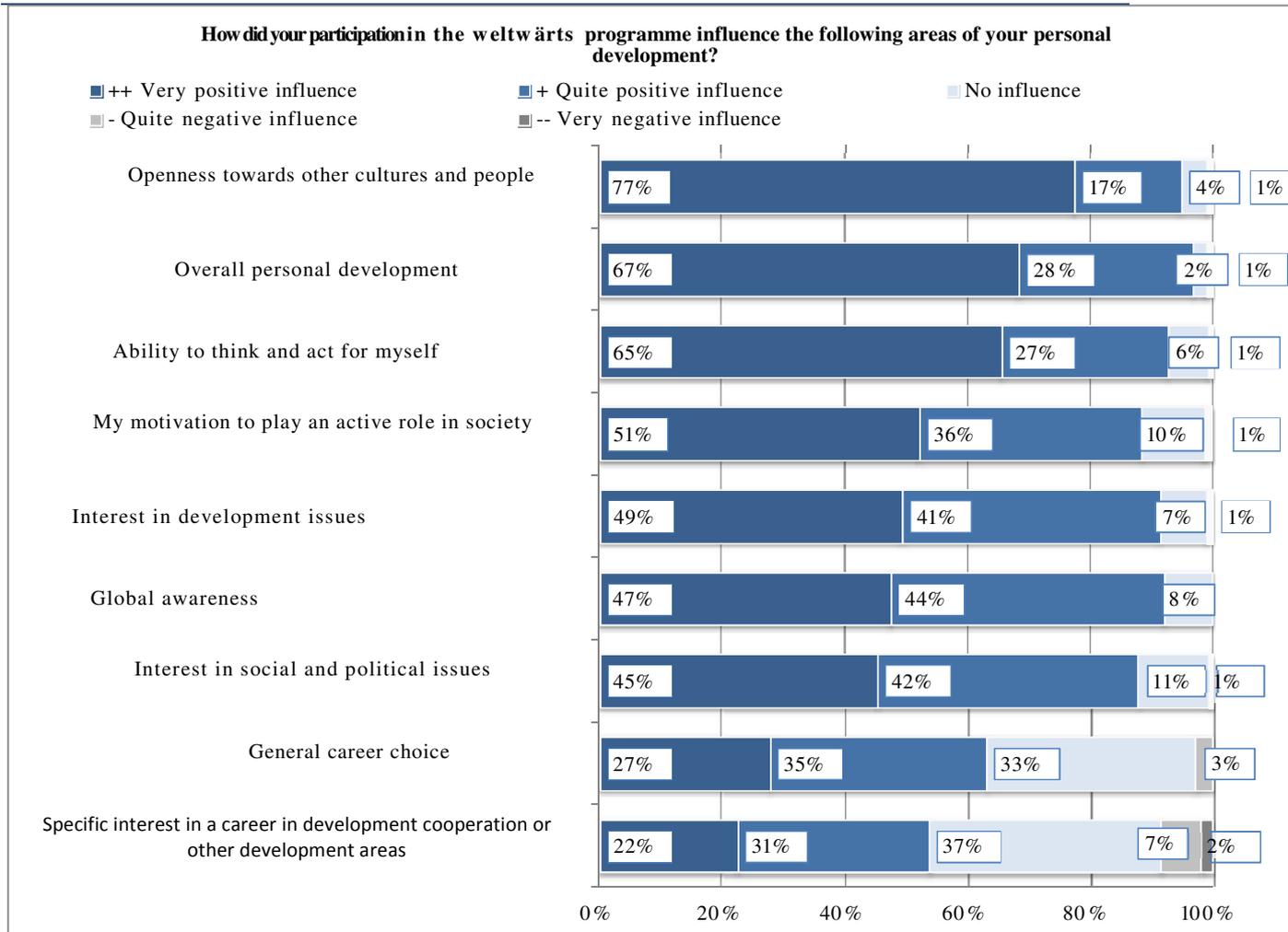


Figure 9: Assessment of how voluntary service on the weltwärts programme influenced various areas of personal development

The findings of the 2013 volunteer survey show that returning participants are extremely willing to engage in post-assignment voluntary work. For this question, “voluntary work” was defined as any unpaid activity for the common good – not only in the area of development. 42% of the returning participants were already engaged in post-assignment volunteer work. 58% were not at the time of the survey. However, the majority of the volunteers not engaged in voluntary work at the time of the survey were very certain or felt that it was at least probable that they would volunteer in the future. In total then, over 80% of the volunteers were either already engaged in post-assignment voluntary work or are likely to be at some time in the future. At 6%, the share of volunteers who did not have information about post-assignment volunteering possibilities was low. In total, 9% of the volunteers were unsure about or rejected the idea of engaging in further voluntary work in the future (see Figure 10).

A mere 8 of the 1,929 volunteers surveyed stated that they would definitely not engage in voluntary work again.

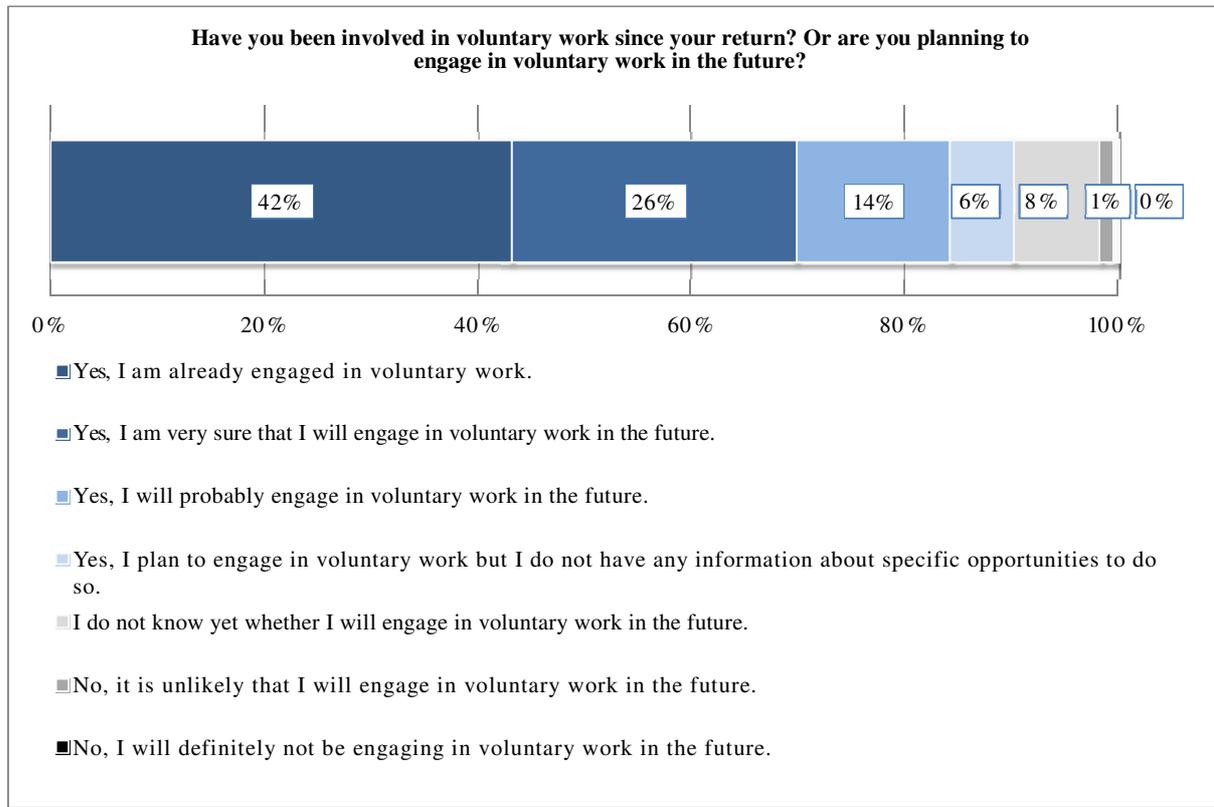


Figure 10: Post-assignment voluntary work

The fields in which returning participants were already engaged in voluntary work or showed an interest in volunteering in the future are very diverse.

Most of those already engaged in post-assignment voluntary work were involved in work with children and young people (40%). This was also an area of particular interest to those who were not yet engaged in post-assignment voluntary work. One in three of those already engaged in post-assignment voluntary work was working in the field in which their sending organisation was active. Those who were not yet engaged in post-assignment voluntary work were also very interested in continuing to work with their sending organisation. 15% of those currently engaged in voluntary work were volunteering in their host country through their own host organisation. One in five of those not yet engaged in post-assignment voluntary work was interested in volunteering for their host organisation. Around 20% of those doing post-assignment volunteering were involved in development education work; another 20% approximately were working in the area of international exchanges/relations. At 11%, the share of returning volunteers who were already engaged in post-assignment development cooperation work was lower. The three fields (development education, international exchanges and development cooperation) were also of particular interest to those who were not yet engaged in post-assignment voluntary work. Roughly one third each stated that they would like to engage in voluntary work in these fields.

Other fields in which a number of the returning participants were engaged in voluntary work and that were of particular interest to the returnees who were not yet engaged in post-assignment voluntary work were anti-racism/migration/asylum and human rights. One in five of those doing post-assignment voluntary work was working in the areas of antiracism, migration and asylum. This was also the field that most of those currently not engaged in voluntary work found

interesting (43%). One third of those not (yet) engaged in post-assignment voluntary work were interested in volunteering in the human rights field. 12% of those already volunteering were doing so in this field.

One in four of those currently not engaged in voluntary work was interested in volunteering in the areas of environmental protection, conservation or climate protection. At 11%, the share of those actually engaged in post-assignment voluntary work in these areas was lower.

The returning participants' interest in further training in the development field is also an indication of their generally high willingness to continue volunteering in the area of development or development cooperation.

Almost 60 % of the volunteers were interested in further training, e.g. training for multipliers. Roughly one quarter of the returning participants were not yet sure whether they would be interested in this type of further training. 13% were not interested in further training in the development field. The volunteers had very diverse interests and suggestions with regard to further training. Some of them would like methodical training, e.g. for team members, mediator training or training on project management and conflict management. Some of them would like further training to do with development education work and/or development cooperation. Often the volunteers themselves raised the subject of further training as a way of continuing their work in the volunteer programmes run by the various sending organisations. Examples given were courses for mentors or training on how to conduct preparatory, mid-term and returnee seminars. Apart from the weltwärts programme itself, a number of the volunteers mentioned other training offered by Engagement Global or special courses run by the sending organisations. Asked about further training that they felt was needed or would be of interest, many volunteers stated that they would like to receive training on specific topics so as to improve their chances of finding employment in development cooperation or development education.