

weltwärts 

FINDINGS OF THE 2018
WELTWÄRTS PROGRAMME
VOLUNTEER SURVEY

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Dear reader,

This report presents the findings of the sixth annual volunteer survey for the weltwärts programme. Following the surveys of the 2013 to 2017 returnees, this survey looked at the volunteers who returned from service in 2018. The survey was again conducted with the help of Umfragezentrum Bonn.

The new findings corroborate the previous years' positive results, with 94% of respondents stating that they were satisfied overall with their voluntary service. This consistently positive result confirms that the weltwärts programme continues to meet the needs of young adults and that the organisations responsible in Germany and abroad implement the development volunteers' service in a diligent manner.

Each year, there are more than 3,300 volunteers from Germany in service in around 60 host countries. 2,361 volunteers participated in this year's survey, putting the response rate at a sensational 67%. We would like to thank everyone who took part in or supported the survey.

The volunteer survey helps ensure that the programme constantly evolves as a development learning and exchange service for the volunteers and the participating organisations in the North and South.

The quality criteria for the development volunteers' service are set out in the funding guideline for the weltwärts programme and the weltwärts quality standards.

This validation of the previous years' findings strengthens our commitment to ensuring that the stakeholders in the weltwärts programme collaborate successfully to continue to improve the quality and impact of the programme.

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Governmental Coordinator on the weltwärts
Programme Steering Committee

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FINDINGS OF THE 2018 WELTWÄRTS PROGRAMME VOLUNTEER SURVEY

Who took part in the survey?

The target group of the latest survey comprised all weltwärts volunteers who completed their service by the middle of November 2018. The questionnaire was completed in its entirety by 2,361 volunteers; the evaluation for 2018 is based on their responses. With a response rate of 67% (see Figure 1), volunteers' willingness to participate was the highest it has been since the launch of the volunteer survey in 2013.

The volunteers surveyed participated in the weltwärts programme through 153 different sending organisations and worked in 60 different countries. As in the previous years, the most common destinations for weltwärts volunteers were India, South Africa, Peru, Bolivia and Tanzania.

All in all, the findings of the 2018 volunteer survey largely correspond to those established for 2013 to 2017. It is therefore now possible to paint a very precise picture of the target group reached through the programme.

There continue to be more women participating in the weltwärts programme than men: 70% of the target group of the 2018 volunteer survey were female. This corresponds roughly to the gender breakdown of those who participated in the survey. 73% were women and 27% men (see Figure 2). Females tend to be more willing to participate in the survey.

The volunteers surveyed were between the ages of 18 and 29 when they returned from service. The average age was just under 20 years.

It is still the case that most of the volunteers (82%) take part in the weltwärts programme immediately after they have finished their schooling. The majority of the respondents held an "Abitur" school-leaving qualification or a general qualification for university entrance (92%). A further 5% held a "Fachabitur" school-leaving qualification permitting them to study at a university of applied sciences. The share of volunteers with an intermediate school-leaving qualification or a qualification from a "Hauptschule" remains small at 2%.

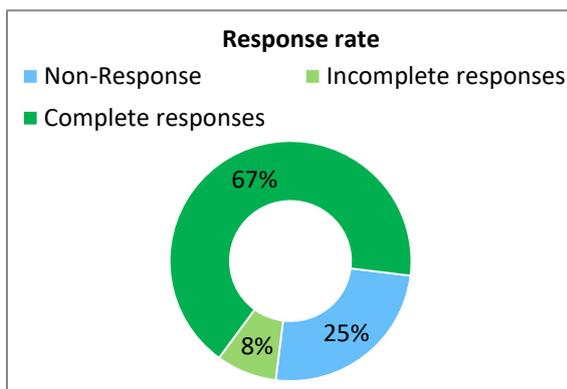


Figure 1: Response rate

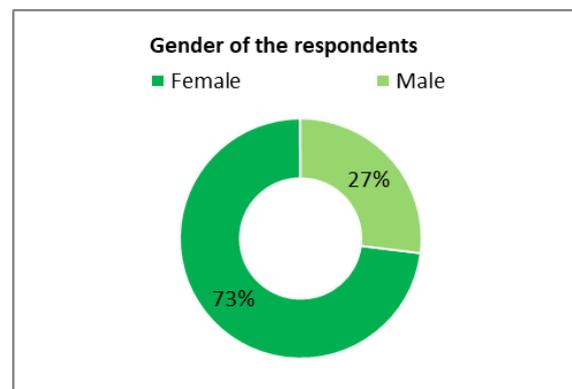


Figure 2: Gender breakdown

The proportion of volunteers who stated in the survey that they had an officially recognised disability or a certificate of disability (as defined in Volume IX of Germany's Social Code) was

slightly lower than the previous year (down from 1% to 0.4%). To learn more about the inclusion of persons with a disability in the weltwärts programme, the survey also asks the participants to specify whether they have a disability or impairment that is not officially recognised. As in the previous year, 1% of the respondents stated that this was the case. Together then, around 1.5% of the volunteers surveyed had a disability or impairment of some kind. Since this too was approximately the same as in the previous year, the removal of obstacles to participation in the programme remains an important part of its continuing development.

Satisfaction

Overall, the volunteers remain extremely satisfied with their time on the weltwärts programme. This year’s findings again show that two in three (68%) were very satisfied. Taking the volunteers who were “quite satisfied” into account too, 94% were quite satisfied to very satisfied with their time on the programme. Since its introduction in 2013, almost 12,000 volunteers have taken part in the survey. The volunteers have been almost consistently positive in their assessment of their voluntary service every year (see Figure 3).

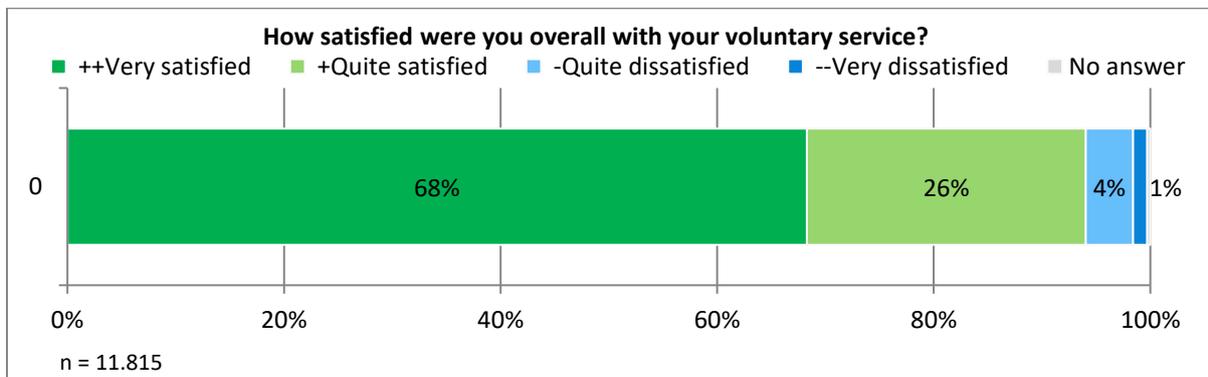


Figure 3: Overall satisfaction with time on weltwärts programme – Overall results from the 2013-2018 surveys

This very positive assessment of the respondents’ voluntary service is also reflected in their high degree of willingness to recommend the weltwärts programme to their friends. More than two thirds (69%) were very likely to recommend volunteering on the weltwärts programme to their friends (see Figure 4).¹

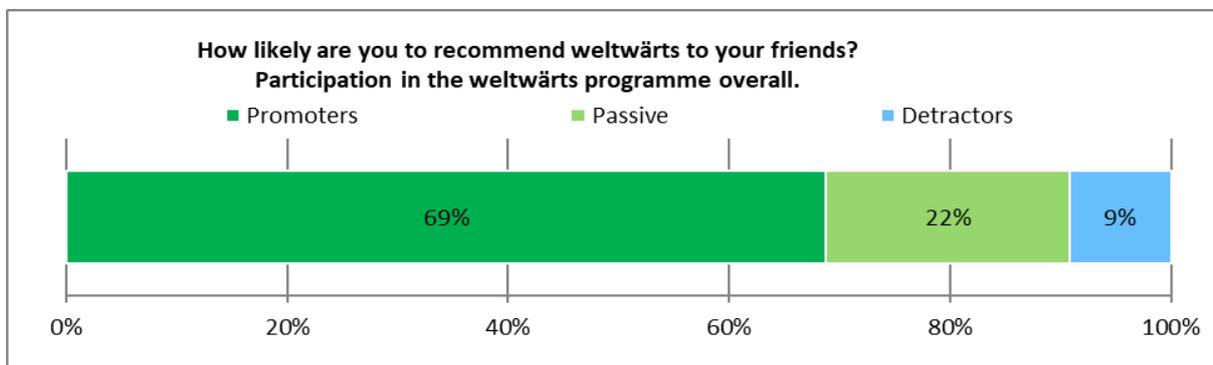


Figure 4: Willingness to recommend volunteering on the weltwärts programme²

¹ 9 and 10 on a value scale from 0=Very unlikely to 10=Very likely.

² 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.

Termination of assignments

At 9%, the share of respondents who ended their voluntary service prematurely was similar to the previous year. This figure includes both assignments terminated at the volunteer’s request (70%) and those terminated by the sending or partner organisation (26%) due, for example, to a deterioration in the security situation in the country of assignment. In the evaluation of the data from the latest volunteer survey, the responses from volunteers who ended their service prematurely were systematically compared to those from volunteers who ended their service as planned. This comparison revealed that the former were considerably more negative in their assessment of all aspects of the weltwärts programme than other volunteers.

Preparation for voluntary service

Since the first survey in 2013, there has been a constant increase in volunteers’ satisfaction with their preparation for their voluntary service. In the latest survey, 96% were very or quite satisfied with the support they received from their sending organisation during the preparation phase - a new record (see Figure 5).

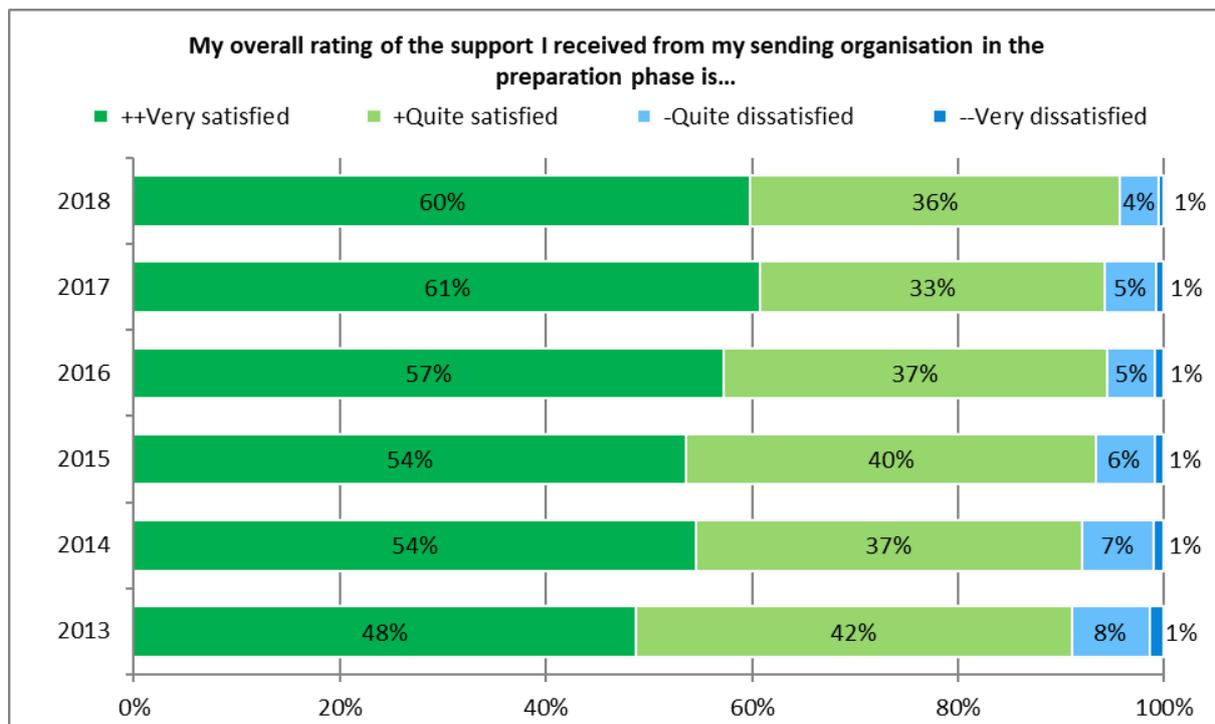


Figure 5: Satisfaction with the support given by the sending organisations during the preparation phase - Comparison of the 2013-2018 findings

The health-related information provided by the sending organisations by way of preparation was rated positively by the volunteers. 95% of the respondents were very or quite satisfied with the information regarding preventive healthcare (e.g. vaccinations or health insurance during their voluntary service) (see Figure 6). Satisfaction with the information given by the sending organisations on the topic of health precautions in the countries of assignment was even higher than in the previous year, with a total of 93% very or quite satisfied in this year’s survey (see Figure 6).

The preparation given by the sending organisations in the area of safety and security has improved greatly, with a positive trend evident in all aspects covered. 95% were very satisfied or quite satisfied with the information concerning and the contact data for the key contact people on the ground (e.g. the emergency cards) (see Figure 6). At 70%, the share who were very satisfied with this aspect was approximately 10 percentage points higher than in the first two surveys (2013 and 2014). Satisfaction with the information on what to do in the event of an emergency or crisis in the country of assignment was also high. As in the previous year, 90% were very or quite satisfied with this information. The findings of this latest survey also indicate that the sending organisations meet the volunteers' requirements for general information on the security situation in their country of assignment: 92% were very or quite satisfied (see Figure 6). The satisfaction rate is thus similar to that of the previous two years and considerably better than before 2016.



Figure 6: Volunteers' satisfaction with aspects of how they were prepared for their voluntary service

This year again, most of the volunteers felt that the sending organisations had supported them well in the preparations for the formal aspects of entry into the respective country (e.g. visas and residence/work permits). 91% were very or quite satisfied with this aspect (see Figure 6). The findings of the latest survey also confirm that the vast majority of volunteers had the required visa or residence permit throughout their period of service abroad. In the few cases (7%) where they did not, the cause was more often than not a delay in the issuing of the visa in the country of assignment concerned, i.e. factors that the sending and partner organisations have no direct influence over.

The last few surveys had already shown that it was difficult to meet volunteers' need for information on their specific place of assignment and the work to be done there. In this year's survey, the respondents again gave this information category a lower rating than the others. However, with an increase of seven percentage points in the past three years, there is a clear positive trend here too. In the latest survey, 57% of the volunteers were very or quite satisfied with the preparatory information (see Figure 6) - the best result to date.

The latest survey also again revealed that almost all the respondents had helped promote the work of the voluntary service before they left for their international assignment (98%). In most cases, this took the form of them drawing their friends' and families' attention to the voluntary service, their place of assignment, host country or development issues. However, there was a decline in this area compared to the previous year (from 87% in 2017 to 82%). Over time, the share of volunteers who inform the general public about the voluntary service by, for example, giving presentations at schools, decreased slightly again (16%). 4% of the volunteers informed the general public about development-related issues – exactly the same percentage as the year before. Some of the respondents promoted the work of the voluntary service in some other form and provided details in the open comments section (3%).

All of the volunteer surveys to date have shown clearly that many volunteers take part in these pre-departure activities by collecting donations or helping to set up fundraising groups for the voluntary service. As in previous years, the latest findings show that this applies to 79% of respondents. Their answers confirm that the sending organisations offer support specifically for these activities (e.g. additional information material). 85% felt that this was completely or quite true. There has thus been a significant rise in the last few years – and a stabilisation compared to the previous year – in the perceived level of support given by the sending organisations for donation-collection activities.

Since collecting donations and helping to set up fundraising groups is not a prerequisite for selection or participation in the weltwärts programme, in 2014 the survey began asking volunteers whether the sending organisations made the voluntary nature of these activities clear to them.³ In recent years, it has become apparent that the sending organisations are improving significantly when it comes to ensuring transparency with regard to this point. In the latest survey, 79% of the volunteers confirmed that it was completely or quite true that their sending organisation had made it clear to them that donation collection was not a prerequisite for selection or participation in the weltwärts programme (see Figure 7). This is the highest figure since the surveys began.

³ Since the question posed in the 2013 pilot study was worded differently than it is now, the findings for the 2013 cohort have been omitted in the chart in order to ensure comparability.

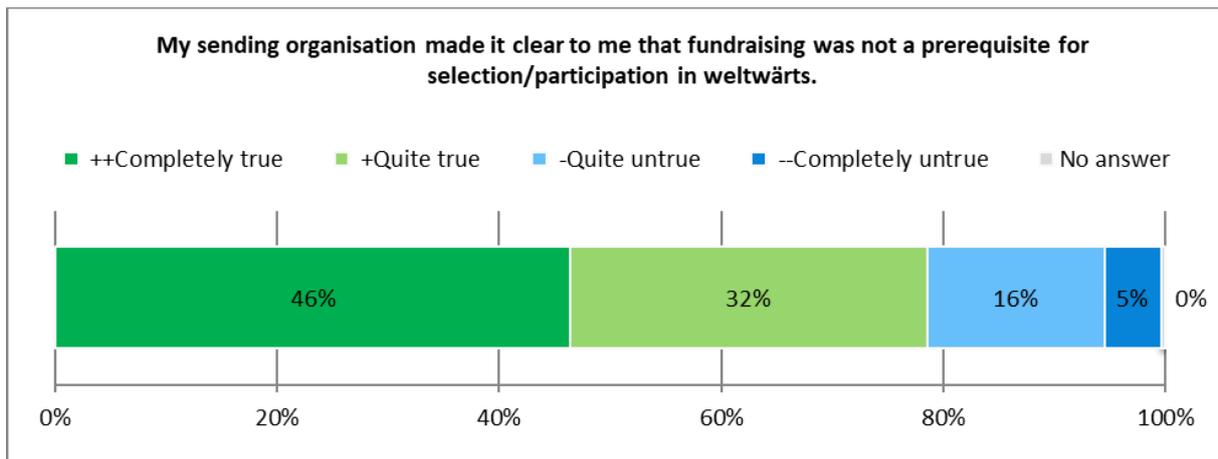


Figure 7: Volunteers' opinions on whether it was made clear to them that donation collection was not a prerequisite for selection

Assignment in the host country

As in the previous years' surveys, the volunteers were positive overall in their assessment of their places of assignment: 86% were very or quite satisfied. The volunteers were also very positive about the way in which they were socially integrated into their place of assignment and their contact with their colleagues: 83% were very or quite satisfied with this aspect. Their responses regarding personal contact with people outside their immediate working environment painted a similar picture, with 80% saying this aspect was (very) satisfactory. These assessments are similar to those given in the previous years' surveys.

Another aspect that remains unchanged is volunteers' satisfaction with their work content at their place of assignment: 77% were very or quite satisfied in this respect. The latest survey therefore shows again that just under a quarter of volunteers are less satisfied with the work content at their place of assignment than expected (see Figure 8).

Looking back at their place of assignment, most of the volunteers had the overall impression that their host organisation in the host country/their place of assignment was well prepared for their assignment. 76% felt that this was completely or quite true while a quarter were less satisfied with the preparations made by the host organisations and places of assignment. The respondents' assessment of how well the places of assignment were prepared for the volunteers' assignments has hardly changed since the first volunteer survey in 2013.

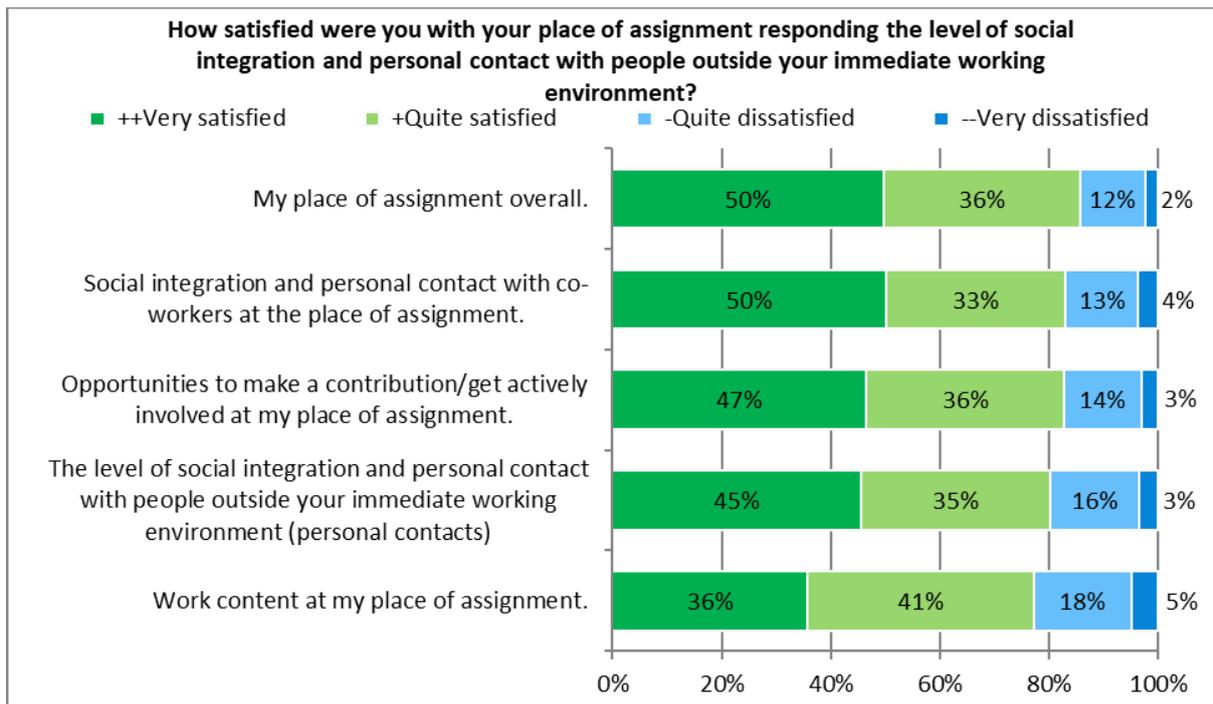


Figure 8: Volunteers' satisfaction with aspects of their place of assignment and their social integration outside of their place of assignment

The proportion of volunteers who stated that they had a contact person at their place of assignment who was there to give them instruction throughout their assignment was similar to that of past years, i.e. a good two thirds. However, the latest findings also reveal that approximately one third of respondents did not fully confirm that contact persons were available for instruction. The level of satisfaction with the introductory training and instruction given at the place of assignment is also largely unchanged compared with previous years. 63% of this cohort were very or quite satisfied with this aspect, while 37% were quite or very dissatisfied (see Figure 9).

The most common reason for volunteers being (quite) dissatisfied with this guidance was the permanent or prolonged lack of a contact person for this task at their place of assignment. Having said that, this reason was cited in fewer instances than ever before (33%), marking a significant change compared to earlier surveys. Personal problems with the contact person were cited significantly more as the reason for respondents' dissatisfaction (23%) than in the previous year, when this figure had actually seen a drop.

Following the significant decrease in 2017, the share of volunteers citing poor availability on the part of their contact persons as the reason for their dissatisfaction in this regard fell slightly again (31%). The original contact person being replaced, however, was a factor in 12% of volunteers' partial disappointment with the introductory training and instruction given at their place of assignment. As in previous years, the latest findings also show that a number of the volunteers who were dissatisfied with this aspect looked for (new) contact persons themselves (16%).

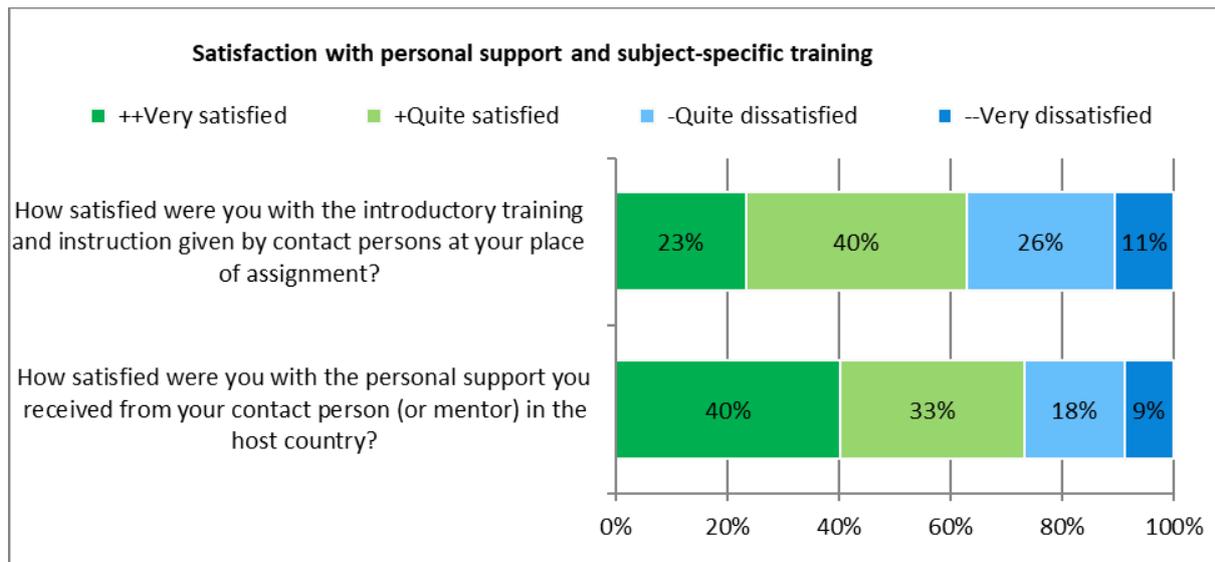


Figure 9: Satisfaction with the personal support provided during voluntary service overseas and the instruction given with regard to tasks at the place of assignment

The past volunteer surveys had already established that personal support (through mentors, for example) for the weltwärts volunteers during their overseas assignments was ensured in most cases. However, the latest findings show a significant improvement in the support provided in the past three years. In the 2014 and 2015 surveys, 75% of the respondents stated that it was completely or quite true that they had a contact person throughout their voluntary service, whom they could contact for personal support. But the figure now is 81%.

In a repeat of recent years' findings, satisfaction with personal support was higher than for the instruction given at the place of assignment. 73% were at least quite satisfied with the personal support (e.g. from mentors) and 4 in 10 were very satisfied. Both of these figures were the highest they had been since the launch of the survey as well as being significantly higher than in previous years. By contrast, 27% were not so satisfied or very dissatisfied (see Figure 9).

As in previous years, the most common answer given by volunteers who were quite or very dissatisfied with the personal support was the permanent or prolonged lack of a contact person whom they could ask for personal support (23%). The poor availability in emergencies of the person designated to provide personal support came a close second (18%). Personal problems with the contact person were an issue for 15% of the dissatisfied respondents. A lower percentage stated that they had looked themselves for a different person than originally planned to provide them with personal support (11%). A new contact person (3%) or place of assignment (2%) was also only rarely cited as the main reason for the personal support not being considered very satisfactory). In a number of cases, however, the volunteers felt the need to explain the main reason for their dissatisfaction with the personal support in the open comments section instead of choosing one of the options given (26%).

Ensuring the safety and health of the volunteers during their year abroad is extremely important for the weltwärts programme. The findings of the latest survey show that 47% did not have any negative safety-related experiences or experience any situations that they considered potentially threatening. This is a significant improvement on the previous years' findings.

Where volunteers provided details of situations of this nature, they were mostly situations that were subjectively seen as threatening without there necessarily being a real danger. In the latest survey, 41% reported situations of this type. Again, this is a positive trend since the figure in each of the previous two years was 47%. Cases of volunteers actually being threatened personally are still much rarer – 88% of them had not been confronted by such a situation. There were even fewer cases of volunteers experiencing physical violence first hand (5%). The share of volunteers who reported situations in which they were sexually harassed or threatened fell to 20%. Among the female respondents, who are confronted with this threat much more often, the percentage decreased from 30% in the previous year to 25% in the latest survey.

The feedback from the volunteers also confirms the particular importance the German sending organisations and host organisations attach to this specific issue and to the general safety of volunteers when preparing them for and supporting them during their assignments. Respondents continue to report that the support provided ensured that most of them felt in (quite) good hands despite these difficult situations. With a total of 93% agreeing with this statement, this was another aspect to reach its highest rating.

Seminars

The preparatory, mid-term and returnee seminars are compulsory elements of the voluntary service. The latest survey again shows that it is very rare for volunteers not to attend these seminars. Almost all the volunteers surveyed had attended a preparatory seminar and at least one mid-term seminar during their time overseas.

At the time of the survey, the majority of the returnees had already attended a returnee seminar (93%).

The seminars offered by the sending and host organisations to accompany the programme were considered (very) useful overall by the overwhelming majority of the volunteers (see Figure 10). The increases observed in recent years have thus remained stable.

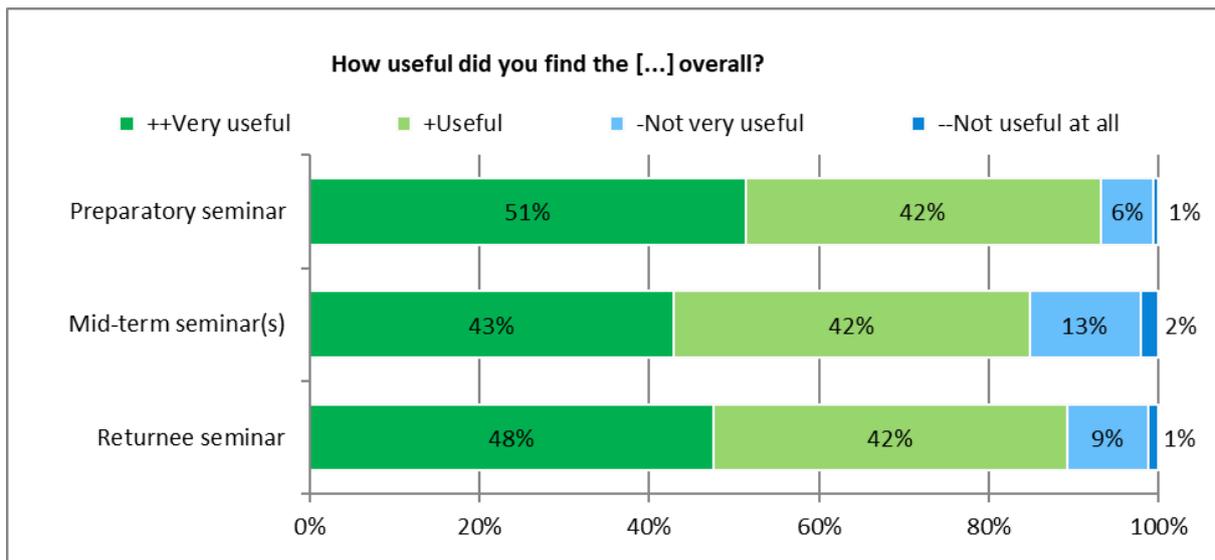


Figure 10: Assessment of the accompanying seminars on the weltwärts programme

The *preparatory seminars* were (very) useful for 93% of the volunteers. The latest findings also reveal an improvement in the quality of the preparatory seminars in the past few years. For the first time, 50% of the respondents rated the preparatory seminar as very useful with regard to the preparation given for work with development issues; in total, 91% felt it was (very) useful in this respect – a new record. The positive assessments given in terms of the general requirements and the role of the volunteer (85%) and everyday life during voluntary service (70%) remained at a stable level or slightly below the record figures achieved in 2017.

It would appear that the modifications made to the design of the seminars in recent years have helped to ensure that the volunteers draw increasing benefit and are better supported through the *mid-term seminars* than in the past. The latest survey shows another clear increase on the positive findings of the previous year. Never before was the assessment of the mid-term seminars so positive. In total, 85% of the volunteers stated that they were (very) useful. The number of respondents citing a very high overall benefit was thus significantly larger than in previous years. This was also true of specific aspects of the mid-term seminars that the respondents were asked to assess. Compared with previous surveys, the findings mostly revealed significant improvements – both in the total positive ratings and the awarding of the best rating, “very useful”:

- Personal mid-term assessment of the voluntary service (89% (very) useful, previous year: 85%)
- Dealing with challenges during overseas assignment (79% (very) useful, previous year: 75%)
- Learning about development issues (70% (very) useful), previous year: 61%)

One particular strength that the volunteers continue to see in the mid-term seminars is that they provide an opportunity to share experiences with other volunteers: 79% considered them very useful for this purpose and 17% quite useful, a total of 96%.

Most volunteers also felt that the *returnee seminars* were (very) useful. In a similar result to that of previous years, a total of 89% stated that these seminars were very or quite useful for them overall. As with the mid-term seminars, the respondents felt that the returnee seminars were particularly useful as an opportunity to share experiences with other volunteers. As in the previous years, almost all of them (97%) felt that the returnee seminar was very or quite useful in this respect. The feedback concerning specific aspects of the returnee seminars was slightly more positive than in previous years, as can be seen in the following.

The volunteers consider the returnee seminars very or quite helpful for...

- maintaining the contacts they have established and networking with other volunteers on the weltwärts programme (89%),
- reflecting on and reviewing their personal experiences overseas (87%),
- finding out about how to get involved in development work after returning to Germany (88%) and
- encouraging them to continue their active involvement in development work after their return (86%).

Post-assignment activities

Overall satisfaction with the post-assignment activities is at a similarly high level as in recent years, with 88% stating that they were very or quite satisfied with this aspect.

The weltwärts programme as a development learning service

In order to find out more about the effects of participation in the weltwärts programme, especially with regard to global learning, the annual online surveys ask volunteers to give an assessment of how they think their voluntary service has influenced various areas of their personal development.

The previous years' and the latest survey's findings reveal that voluntary service on the weltwärts programme is an enriching experience and the participants benefit personally in a variety of ways. This is true both of their personal skills and of the knowledge they gain in the area of international development. The responses given by the 2018 returnees differed only slightly from the findings of the previous surveys.

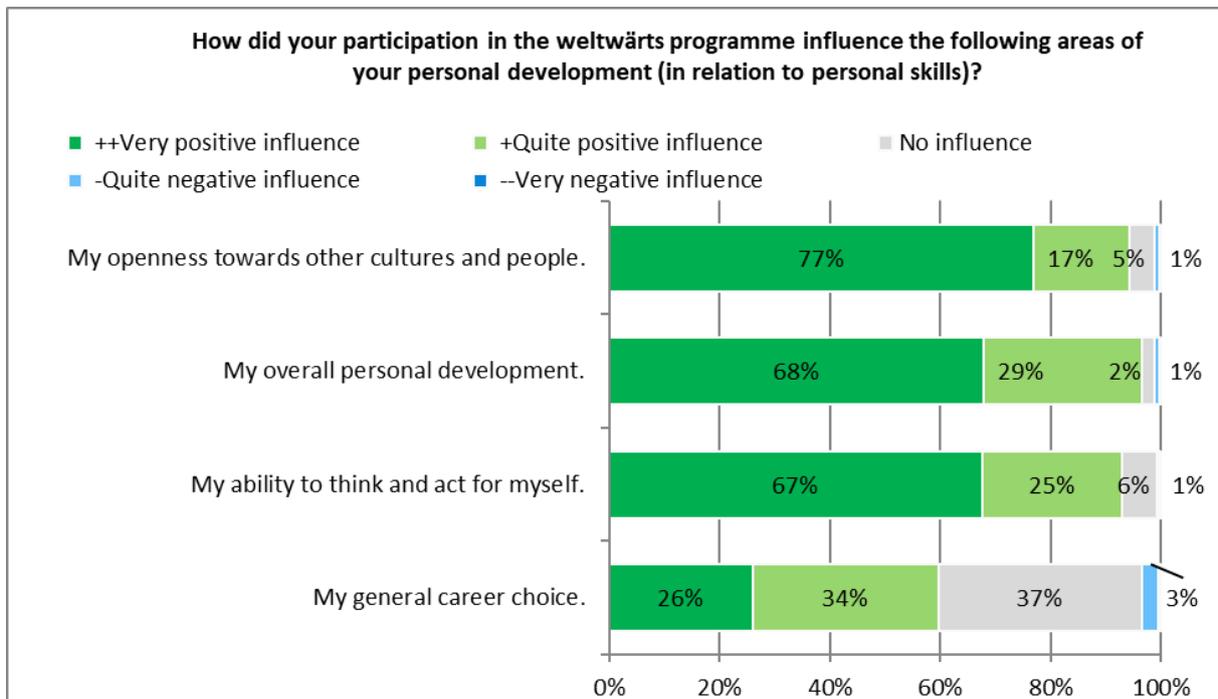


Figure 11: Volunteers' assessment of how voluntary service influenced the development of their personal skills

With regard to their *personal skills*, the volunteers observed particularly positive effects on their openness towards other cultures and people. More than three in four saw a very positive influence and a total of 94% saw a very or quite positive influence. Most of the volunteers also felt that volunteering with weltwärts had influenced their general personal development, with a total of 96% reporting a very or quite positive effect. In addition, very or quite positive influences were seen in terms of ability to think and act for oneself (93%).

Reflecting previous years' findings, the respondents' opinions varied a little more when it came to the influence of weltwärts on their general career choice. Approximately one quarter felt that the influence was very positive; a total of 60% considered it quite to very positive. (see Figure 11).

Many volunteers feel that participating in the programme had positive influences with regard to development-related aspects. As in the previous year, more than 90% felt that their participation had a (very or quite) positive influence on their global awareness; the figure was the same for volunteers’ interest in development issues. At 91%, the share of volunteers who felt that their participation had a (very or quite) positive effect on their motivation to play an active role in society was also very high. The feedback in the surveys also shows that voluntary service fosters participants’ interest in social and political issues, with a total of 90% volunteers reporting a (very or quite) positive influence (see Figure 12).

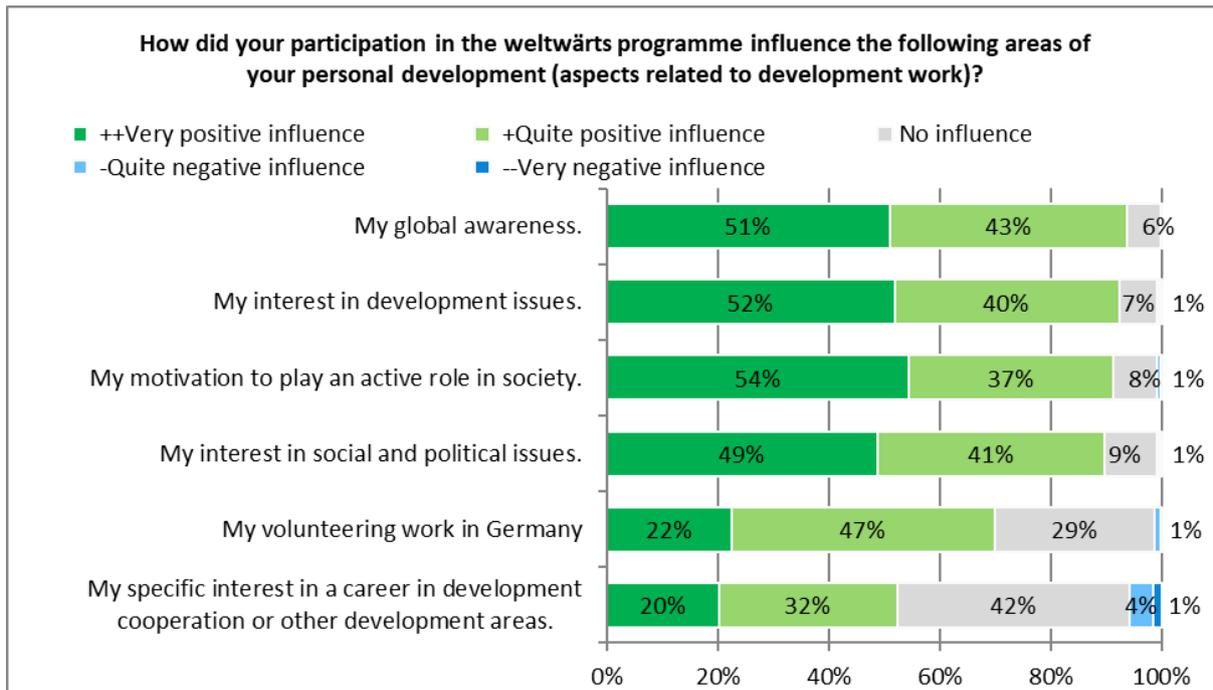


Figure 12: Volunteers’ assessment of how voluntary service influenced them personally with regard to development-related aspects

A substantial share of the volunteers felt that participating in the weltwärts programme had a positive impact in terms of their specific interest in a career in development cooperation or other development areas, with roughly half reporting a (very or quite) positive influence. 42% saw no effect in this respect. However, some respondents stated that their volunteering experience had resulted more in a decline in their interest in a career in development (cooperation): 5% reported a quite or very negative effect (see Figure 12).

Returnee engagement in volunteering activities

Following the introduction of a new question in 2017, this is the second survey to ask respondents how their voluntary service had affected their volunteering activities in Germany after their return. The findings show that, in this respect too, 70% saw (very or quite) positive effects. Compared to the previous year, this share grew significantly by three percentage points.

The latest survey again shows that returnee willingness to volunteer⁴ and actual volunteering activity have remained at the same high level: 39% were already engaged in volunteer work

⁴ For this question, “voluntary work” was defined as any unpaid activity for the common good – not only in the area of development.

(again) at the time of the survey. In addition, more than a quarter (27%) were very certain that they would engage in voluntary work in society in the future or felt it was at least probable (19%). In total then, 85% of the volunteers were either already engaged in post-assignment voluntary work or would (probably) be at some time in the future. 12% were unsure about the idea and there were only very few who said that they would probably or definitely not engage in voluntary work in the future (2%) (see Figure 13). These findings are identical to those of the previous years.

The fields in which returnees were already engaged in voluntary work or showed an interest in volunteering in the future are generally very diverse. In the latest survey, the range of options for areas of returnee volunteering activities was expanded considerably. This year's findings again reveal that a particularly high proportion of those already volunteering do so in the areas of work with children and young people (39%) and in collaboration with the weltwärts sending organisations (35%). A new finding is that volunteering activity in the church/religious sector, which was included for the first time, was the third most common area of returnee engagement (32%). The level of engagement in the areas of anti-racism, migration and asylum (22%), environmental protection, conversation, animal welfare and climate protection (21%) and representation of student or professional interests, e.g. university groups (21%) was also high. The latter area was also included for the first time as a separate category in the latest survey.

Those who are not yet engaged in voluntary work display a significant interest in the areas of environmental protection, conservation, animal welfare and climate protection (55%), anti-racism, asylum and migration (53%) and human rights (50%). As in the previous year, with both the level of current volunteering and the interest in volunteering increasing for environmental protection, conservation, animal welfare and climate protection, this field is continuing to gain significance.

As was done for the first time in the previous year's survey, the areas in which the returnees engage in voluntary work or would be interested in doing so were grouped together under the heading "Global citizenship"⁵ for the purposes of the current survey.

According to the survey results, the majority of returnees who engage in post-assignment volunteering do so in the area of global citizenship: four in five volunteer in an area that falls into this category (81%). The strong inclination for topics in the global citizenship category becomes even more evident upon examination of the areas in which respondents would be interested in volunteering in the future. 97% of them would like to volunteer in at least one of the areas in this category (see Figure 14).

⁵ This category included development cooperation, development education, work for the sending organisation, work for the host organisation overseas, international exchanges/relations, human rights, environmental protection/conservation/animal welfare/climate protection, anti-racism/asylum/migration, inclusion/persons with a disability, gender equality (new in 2018) and tackling poverty/rooflessness/homelessness (also new in 2018). The areas considered relevant for the concept of global citizenship were chosen by Engagement Global.

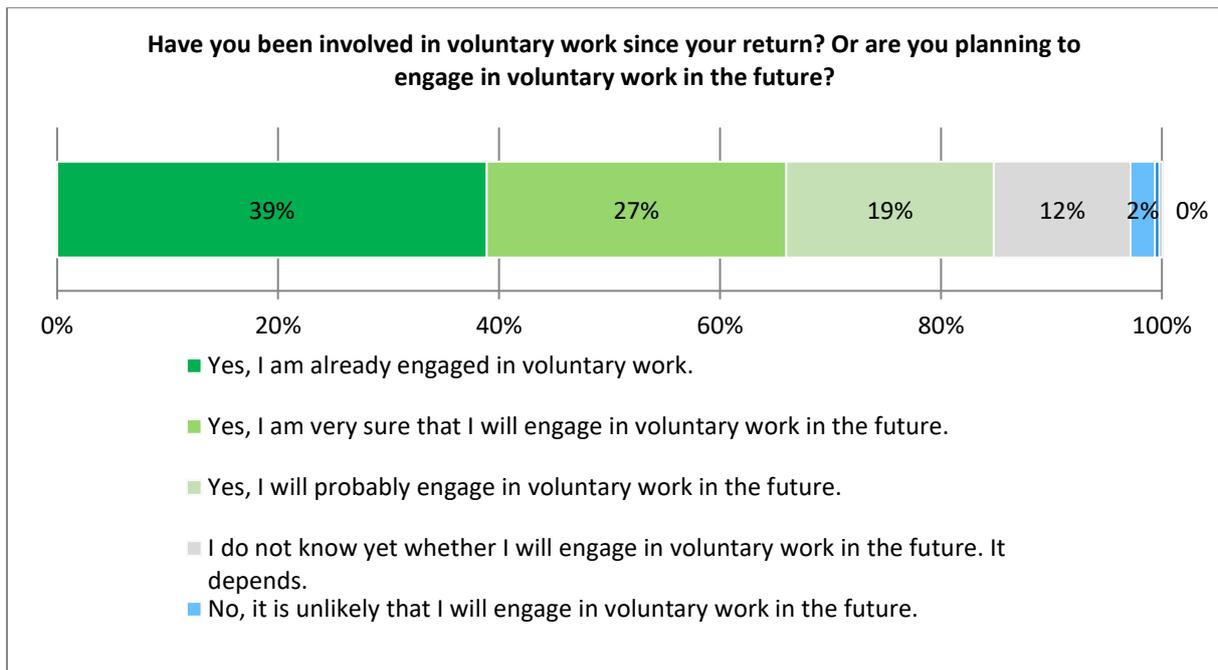


Figure 13: Post-assignment voluntary work

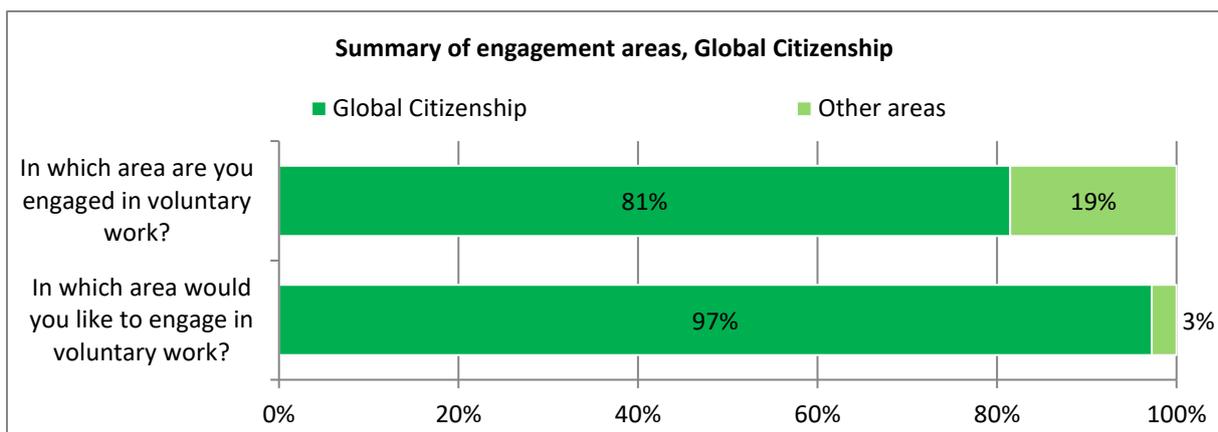


Figure 14: Current volunteering activity and interest in volunteering in the global citizenship category

Irrespective of their current volunteering activity, 60% of the volunteers surveyed stated that they would (quite) like to have more information about specific post-assignment volunteering options. There was thus a slight increase in the need for information, following several years of decline.

At 51%, returnees’ interest in further development-related training (e.g. seminars on specific subjects or project management) is almost as high as in the 2017. There has thus not been a clear continuation of the decline in interest. However, at 30% the share of respondents who are uncertain about this aspect was relatively high in the past two years.

The latest survey was the second to ask the returnees about their interest in working in development cooperation at a later stage.

The volunteers’ responses confirm the previous year’s finding that interest is extremely high: only 14% were not interested and a total of 84% were interested. There was particular interest

in working abroad - 69% of all volunteers displayed an interest in this area alone. Approximately half were interested in working in development cooperation in Germany. 46% of the respondents stated that they were interested in working in development cooperation in the country where they were on assignment (see Figure 15).

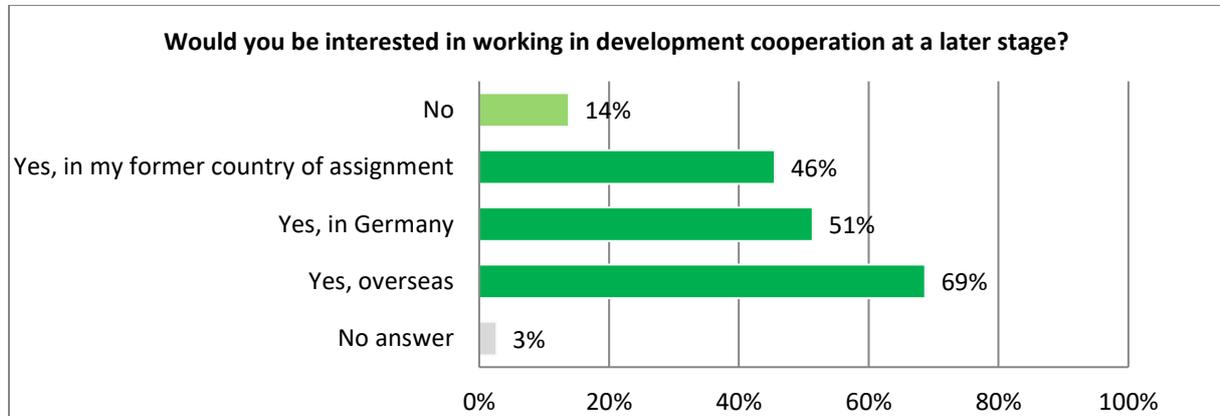


Figure 15: Interest in working in development cooperation in the future⁶

⁶ Apart from the “No answer” option, multiple answers were possible.