

weltwärts 

Findings of the 2019  
weltwärts programme volunteer survey  
(South-North)

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Dear reader,

This report presents the findings of the first annual volunteer survey for the South-North component of the weltwärts programme. The survey, conducted by Umfragezentrum Bonn, was aimed at all volunteers who had completed service in Germany between 1 January 2019 and 15 November 2019.

The positive findings indicate a very high level of satisfaction with the programme on the part of South-North volunteers. 97% of respondents were satisfied overall with their voluntary service. This very good 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 diligently.

2019 saw more than 600 volunteers from the Global South on assignment in Germany. Of them, 243 took part in this year's survey, putting the response rate at 41%. We would like to thank everyone who took part or supported the process.

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

The quality of the development volunteers' service is measured on the basis of the *Guideline for the development volunteers service "weltwärts"* and the weltwärts quality standards.

The positive findings inspire us to continue with our approach as well as attesting to the successful and continuous work by the programme stakeholders to improve the quality and impact weltwärts.

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## FINDINGS OF THE 2019 WELTWÄRTS PROGRAMME VOLUNTEER SURVEY (SOUTH-NORTH)

### Target group and participation rate

The first volunteer survey to be conducted in the South-North component of the weltwärts programme was aimed at all volunteers who had completed service in Germany in the 12 months between mid-November 2018 and mid-December 2019. It was carried out online between the end of November 2019 and the middle of March 2020 and respondents could choose between five different language versions (English, Spanish, French, Russian or German).

The feedback from the 243 volunteers who completed the entire pilot survey formed the basis of the data evaluation process. The participation rate was thus 41% (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

### Survey population

The survey population was made up of volunteers from 51 countries, who took part in the weltwärts programme in Germany through 55 different host organisations. The countries most represented were Colombia (11%), Mexico (7%) and India (6%). The share of respondents from Indonesia, Peru, Uganda and Ecuador was 5% each.

50% of the population identified as female, 39% as male and 10% as “diverse” (see Figure 2). Willingness to participate in the survey was similarly high in all gender groups. The respondent gender breakdown reflected the overall volunteer gender breakdown very well.

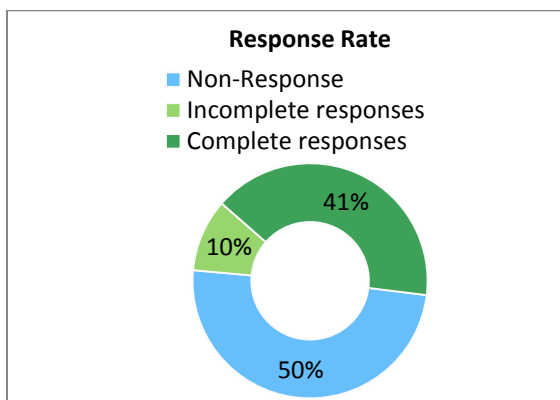


Figure 1: Response rate

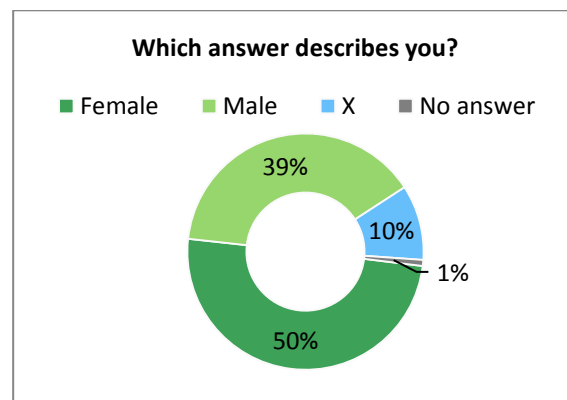


Figure 2: Gender identification

<sup>1</sup> The proportion of incomplete questionnaires is low in relation to common empirical values. Furthermore, an analysis of these questionnaires did not reveal any weaknesses in the survey design, e.g. comprehension issues or critical questions that might have resulted in a high abandonment rate. In total, 70% of the incomplete questionnaires were abandoned at the beginning.

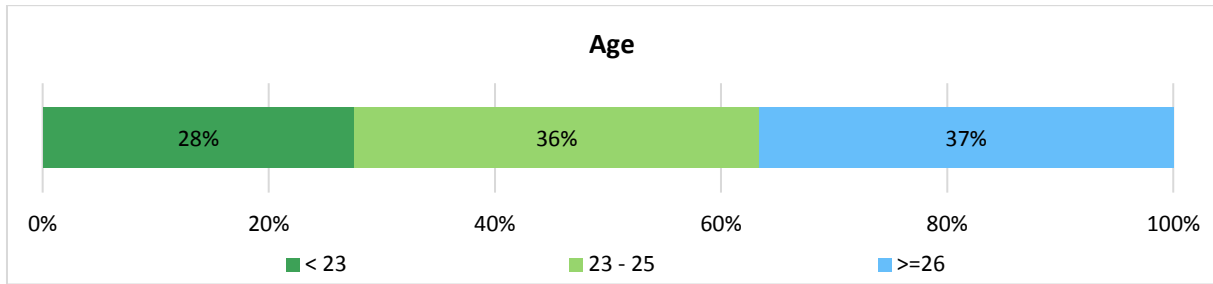


Figure 3: Age at end of assignment

The volunteers surveyed were between the ages of 19 and 33 at the end of their assignment in Germany. The average age at the end of assignment was 24 and more than a third were between 26 and 33 years old (see Figure 3). The volunteer age structure in the South-North component is thus very different to that in the North-South component (where the average age in the latest volunteer survey was just under 20).

The survey population had a high level of formal education, with 56% already having completed a course of study (BA, MA or similar). A further 22% had a school-leaving qualification that allowed them to study at a university (see Figure 4).

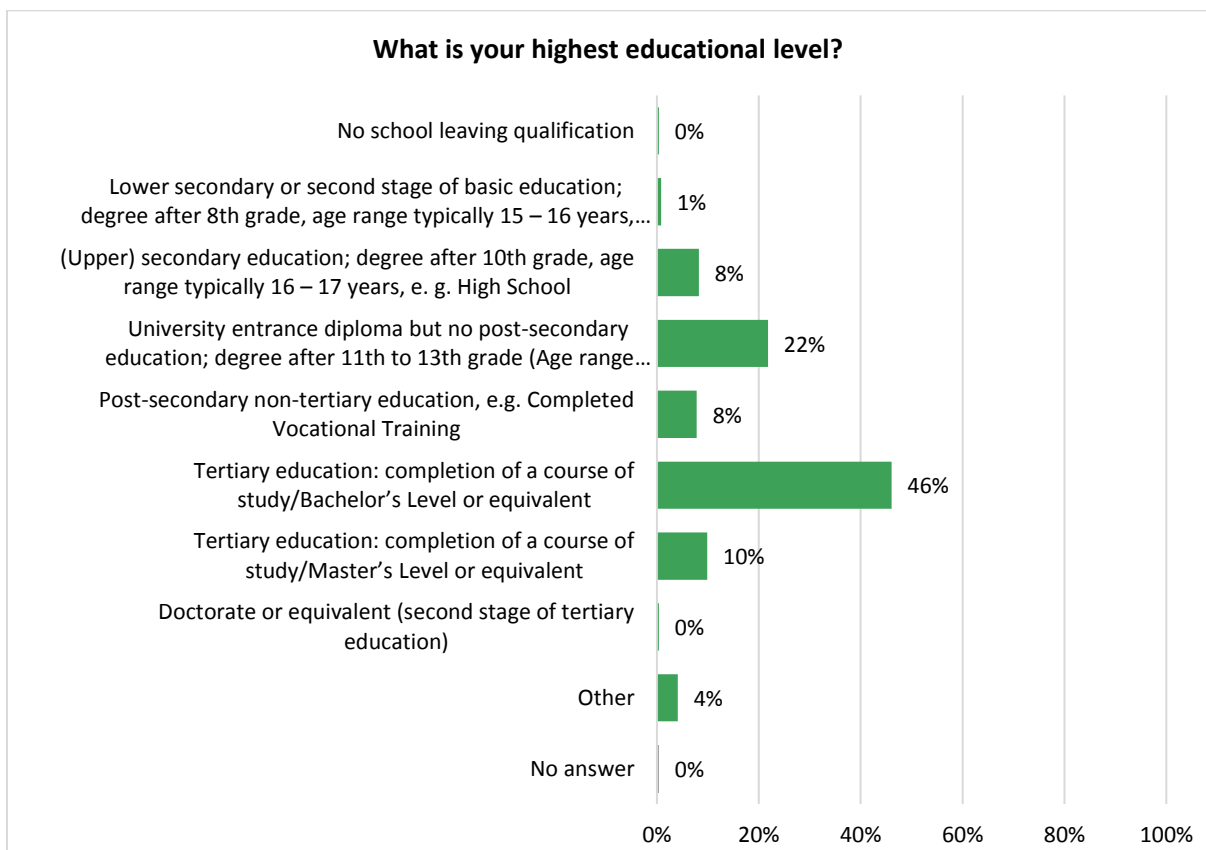


Figure 4: Level of education

Linked to the findings relating to volunteer age is the fact that many of the participants had already begun a course of study before their assignment in Germany (39%) or were already mainly in gainful employment (full or part-time) (30%). Only a small number (7%) were still in school prior to their assignment (see Figure 5). Post-assignment, 34% of the survey participants were mainly in gainful employment. 25% had commenced an (additional) course of study and 11% some form of training. It is striking to note that the share of volunteers seeking

employment after participation in weltwärts (13%) is higher than in the period prior to participation, when this was true of only 4% (see Figure 5).

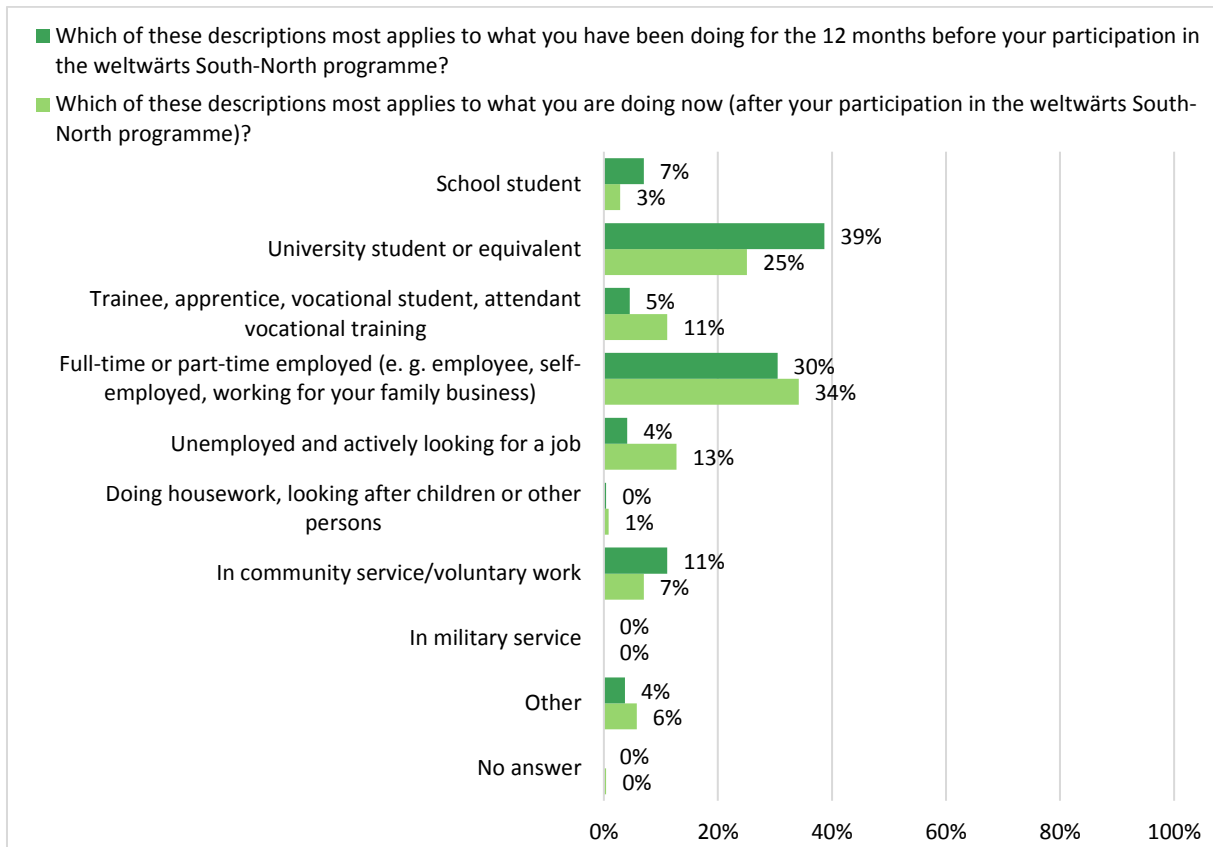


Figure 5: Main activity before and after assignment

## Inclusion

To learn more about the inclusion of persons with a disability in the weltwärts programme, the survey also asks participants to specify whether they have a disability or any medical conditions, including physical and mental health. In the pilot survey, 5% (n = 12) answered “yes” to this question (see Figure 6).

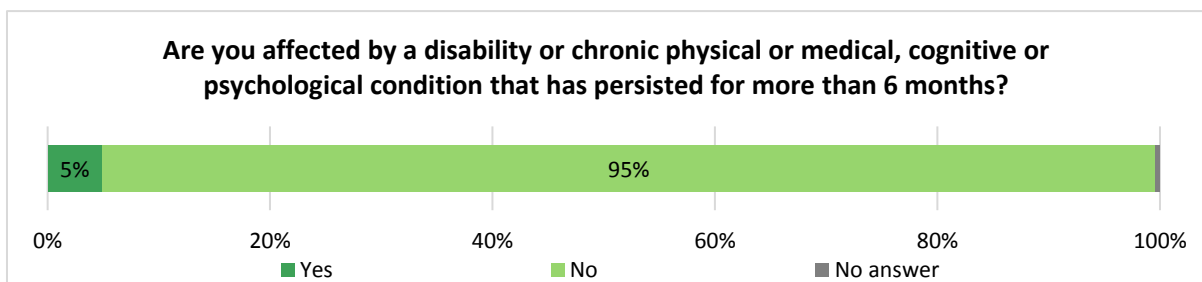


Figure 6: Disabilities or medical conditions, including physical and mental health

Since inclusion and equal participation are important topics for the weltwärts programme, the survey also addresses the question of whether volunteers faced particular difficulties during their assignment directly linked to personal aspects (e.g. gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation,

physical or psychological state).<sup>2</sup>

The majority did not feel there had been any specific challenges of this kind in their case (79%). However, 20% of the respondents stated that they *had* faced particular challenges before or during their assignment as a result of personal aspects (see Figure 7).

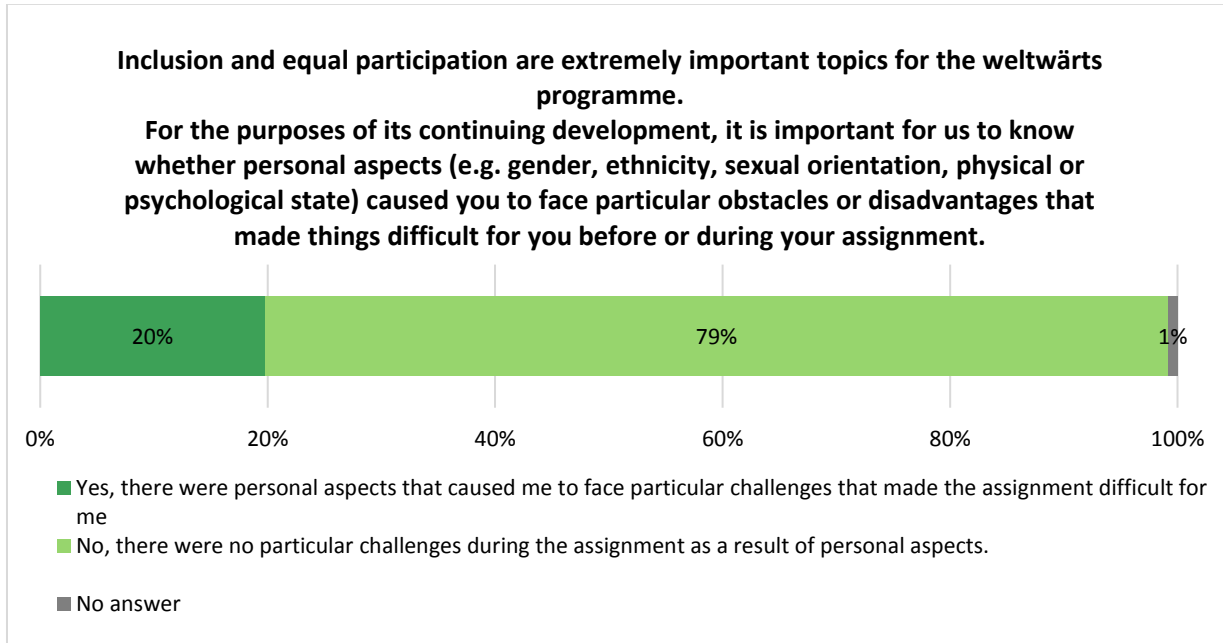


Figure 7: Particular obstacles and challenges due to personal aspects

### Premature termination of voluntary service

8% of the survey population had terminated their assignment in Germany prematurely (i.e. before the end date originally agreed) (see Figure 8)

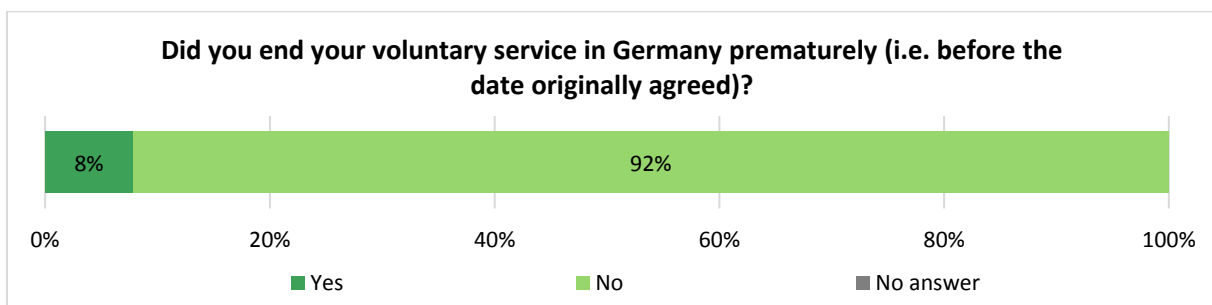


Figure 8: Premature termination of voluntary service in Germany

### Preparation and orientation phase

The findings of the pilot survey in the South-North component confirm that participants in the weltwärts programme are given good preparation for their assignment in Germany. The various partners in the programme contribute to, and perform tasks aimed at, volunteer preparation. Only 2% (n=6) of the volunteers surveyed said they had not been given any preparation for voluntary service. The sending organisations abroad play a key role in preparing weltwärts

<sup>2</sup> The question was worded to make it clear that it was not referring to general challenges faced during the assignment.

participants for their assignment in Germany, with 74% of respondents stating that the sending organisation in their home country had prepared them. The volunteers' feedback also shows that (in addition) the host organisations in Germany (45%), other weltwärts volunteers from their home country (28%) or from Germany (17%) performed preparation tasks at least for some of the volunteers (see Figure 9).

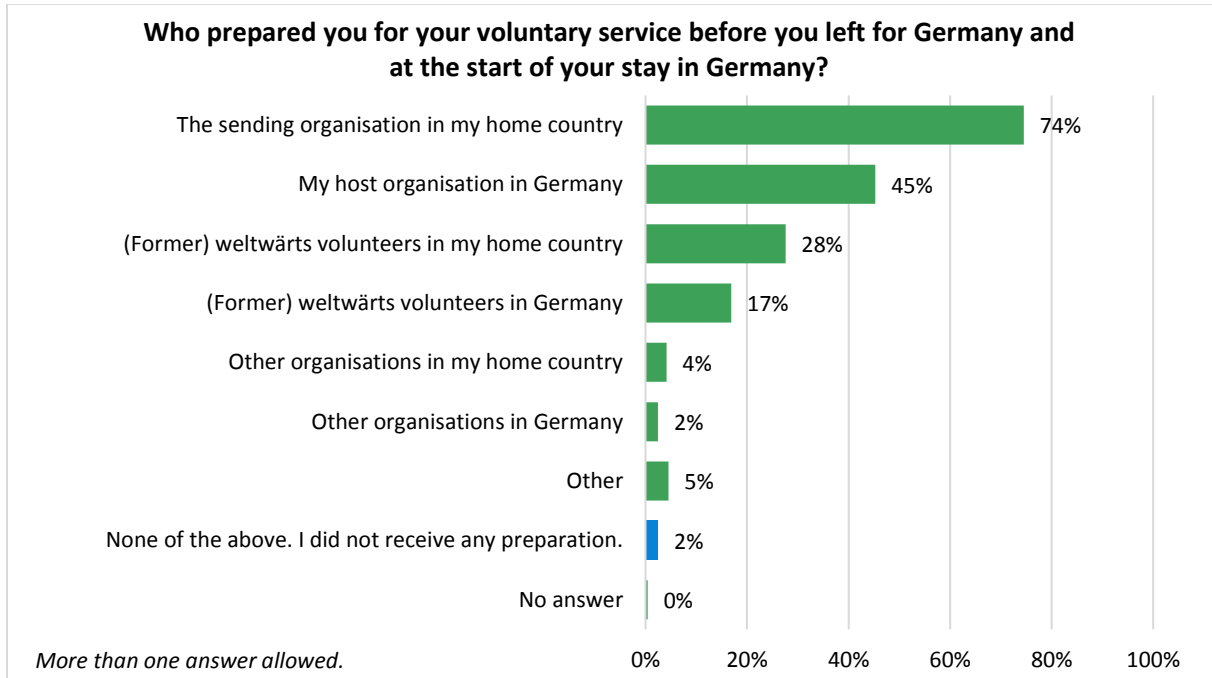


Figure 9: Stakeholders involved in preparation for voluntary service in Germany

The volunteers' responses are testimony to the quality of the preparation given for assignments in Germany. The majority confirmed that the partners involved in preparation provided them with the relevant information and supported them in key areas. This was particularly true when it came to support with formal aspects of their journey/stay abroad, e.g. visa or residence permits ("true"=95%). The majority also confirmed that the relevant information regarding preventive healthcare was communicated during the preparation stage ("true"=89%). In addition, the findings indicate that the volunteers received the necessary safety and security information during preparation, e.g. contact data for key contact people ("true"=89%), information on the general security situation in Germany ("true"=87%) and what to do in the event of an emergency or crisis during the assignment in Germany ("true"=83%). The volunteers' feedback also reveals that, in most cases, the stakeholders involved provided information during the preparation phase on the general requirements concerning voluntary service ("true"=87%), everyday life during the assignment ("true"=80%) and the volunteer's specific place of assignment and the work to be done there ("true"=78%). According to a total of 85% of the respondents, it was also true that the preparation had given them a good basis for further exploration of development-related issues. Roughly one in three said it was true that it was made clear to them during the preparation phase that fundraising for weltwärts was voluntary and not a prerequisite for selection/participation in the programme (see Figure 10).

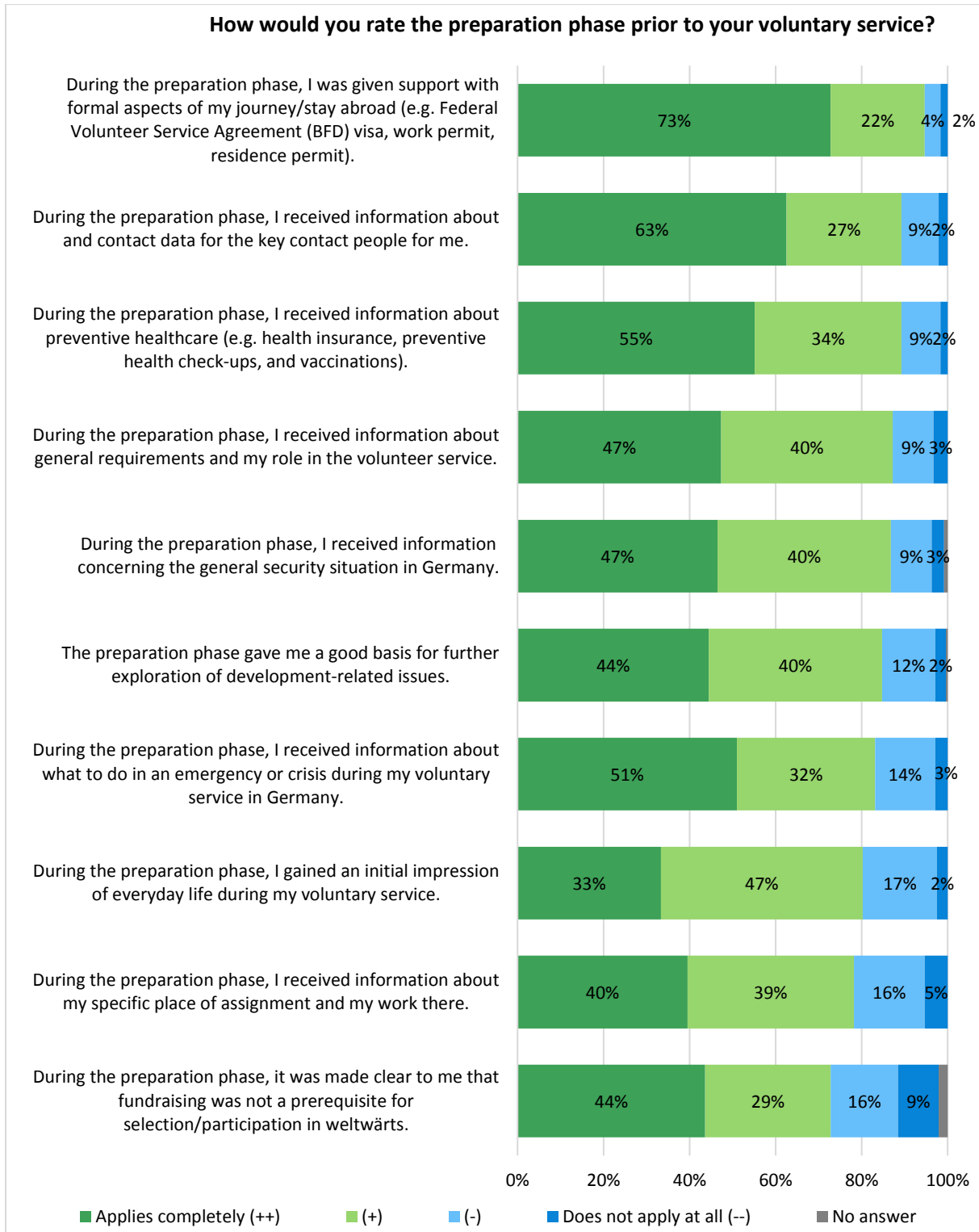


Figure 10: Assessment of information provision and support during preparation for assignment

The largely very positive ratings for the preparation phase go hand in hand with a high level of subjective satisfaction, with more than 90% of volunteers (very) satisfied with each of the following: support from the sending and host organisations, the information provided and the overall preparation for their assignment (see Figure 11).



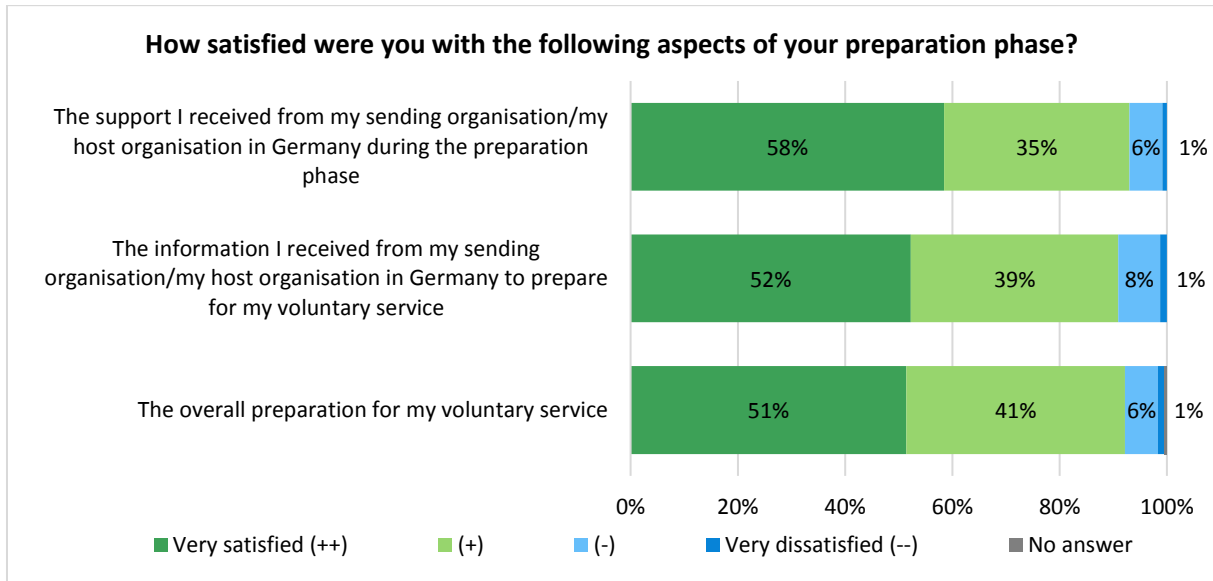


Figure 11: Satisfaction with preparation for assignment

## Time in Germany

All in all, the volunteers had a very positive impression of the places of assignment in Germany. 93% were (very) satisfied with their place of assignment overall. Moreover, the greater part of the survey population was (very) satisfied with their work content at their place of assignment (89%) and with their social integration and contact with co-workers (88%) (see Figure 12).

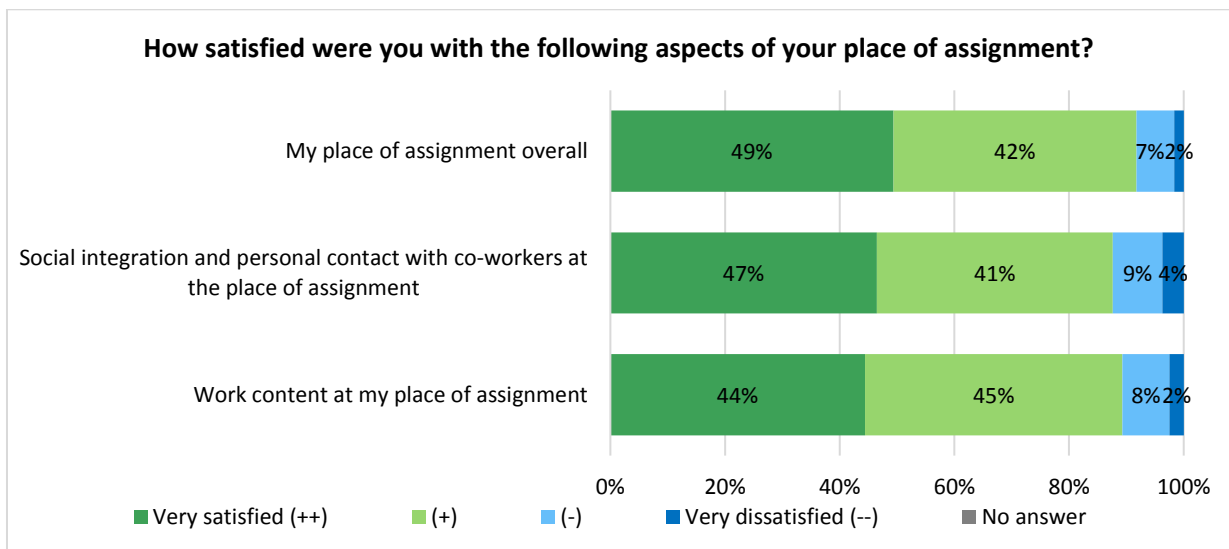


Figure 12: Satisfaction with places of assignment in Germany

The volunteers' responses in the pilot survey indicate that, for the most part, introductory training and instruction are ensured at the places of assignment. 90% said it was true that there were people at their place of assignment in Germany whom they could contact about questions relating to their day-to-day work (see Figure 13). These volunteers gave a very positive assessment of the introductory training and instruction they received from these people, with 93% stating that they were (very) satisfied (see Figure 14).

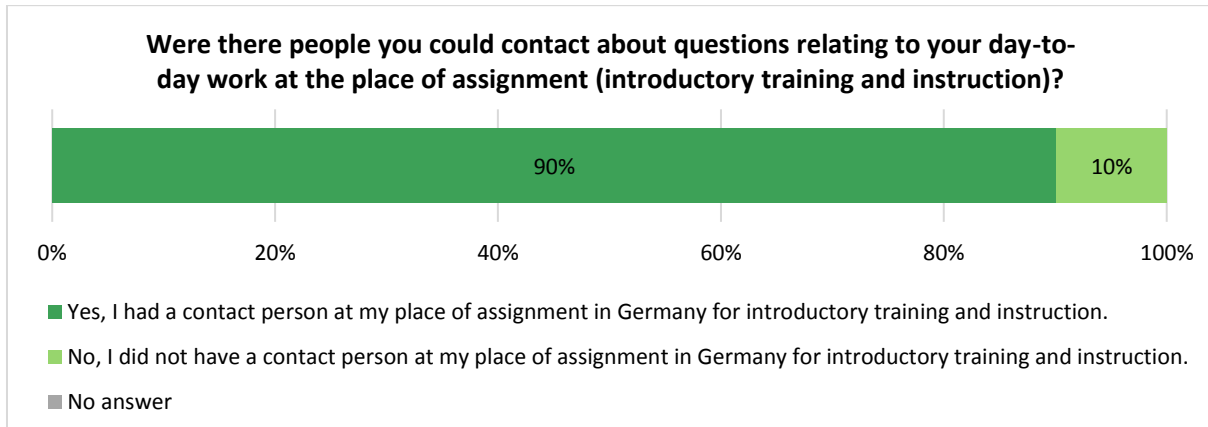


Figure 13: Contact persons for introductory training and instruction at the places of assignment

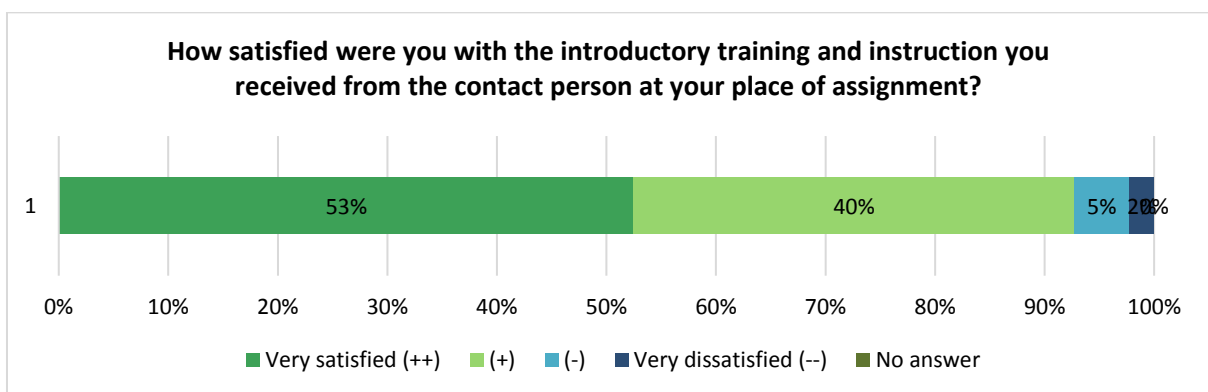


Figure 14: Satisfaction with introductory training and instruction at the place of assignment

The findings of the pilot survey show that personal support (through mentors, for example) for the weltwärts volunteers was ensured in most cases during assignment in Germany. 97% stated that there were one or more contact persons they could contact for personal support. This personal support was mostly provided by people at the host organisations in Germany (63%). Having said that, almost half of the volunteers surveyed (also)<sup>3</sup> had a mentor to provide personal support (47%) or were able to contact people at their place of assignment in Germany for this purpose (46%). In addition, in the case of 43% of the respondents, the personal support was (also) provided by people from the sending organisation in their home country (see Figure 15).

<sup>3</sup> Multiple answers were possible for this question.



Figure 15: Contact persons for personal support during assignment

Satisfaction with the personal support provided by the various stakeholders during voluntary service is high, with 90% of respondents saying they were (very) satisfied with this aspect (see Figure 16).

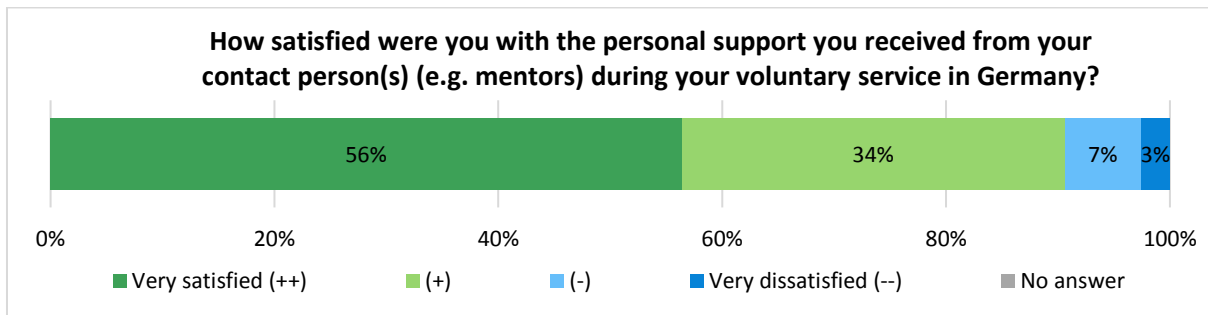


Figure 16: Satisfaction with personal support

Ensuring the safety and health of volunteers during their year in Germany is extremely important for the weltwärts programme. The pilot survey in the South-North component shows that most respondents who volunteered in Germany (63%) did not have any negative safety-related experiences at all, nor did they experience any critical situations. By contrast, approximately one in three (36%) stated that at least one of the critical situations listed occurred during their time in Germany.<sup>4</sup>

Where volunteers did cite critical situations in Germany, they were mostly situations in which they experienced discrimination or threats of a racist nature. 23% reported situations of this type during their time in Germany. The number of cases in which volunteers experienced situations in Germany that they felt were threatening or dangerous was lower (13%) and that of situations in which they were actually threatened personally was lower still (8%). In total, 5% of the survey population reported having experienced situations in which they were sexually

<sup>4</sup>Multiple answers were possible for this question but most of the volunteers only clicked one answer. Only 12% reported experiencing more than one of the situations listed.

harassed or threatened. The share of women in this group was higher than that of men (8% to 1%). The volunteers' responses indicate that there were isolated cases of physical violence against them during their voluntary service in Germany (n=7).

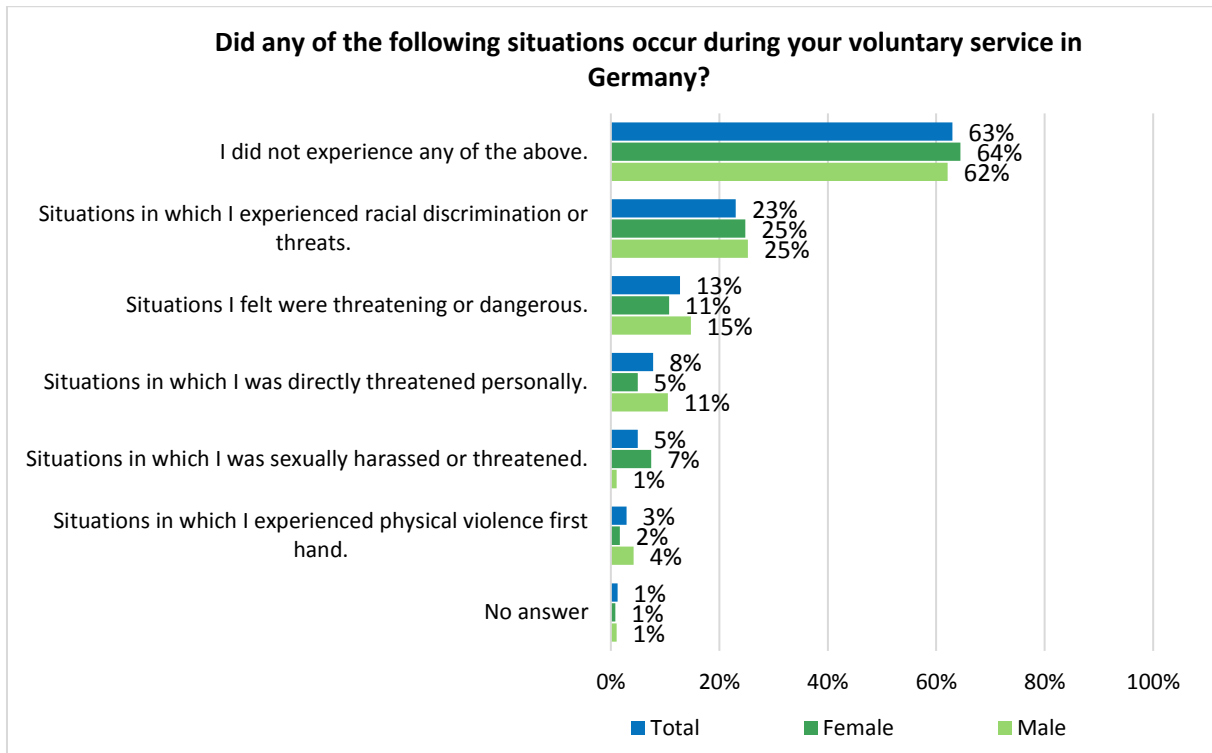


Figure 17: Potentially dangerous situations during voluntary service in Germany

The feedback from those volunteers who faced dangerous situations indicates that the preparation and support provided by the various partners involved were very often of help even in such problematic situations. 86% of them said it was (completely) true that they felt in good hands overall – despite the problems – due to the preparation and support provided by the various partners (see Figure 18).

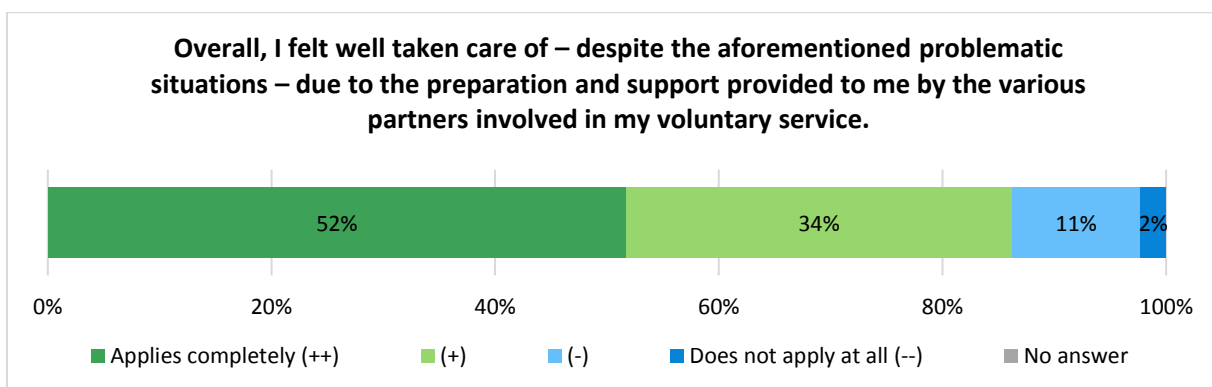


Figure 18: Perceived level of safety due to support and preparation provided by the various partners in the weltwärts programme

## Seminars

The vast majority of the survey population attended several seminars during their time in Germany, with only three volunteers stating that they had not. 87% had attended the accompanying seminars specifically for the development volunteer service. Around three in four had (also) attended a political education seminar (see Figure 19).

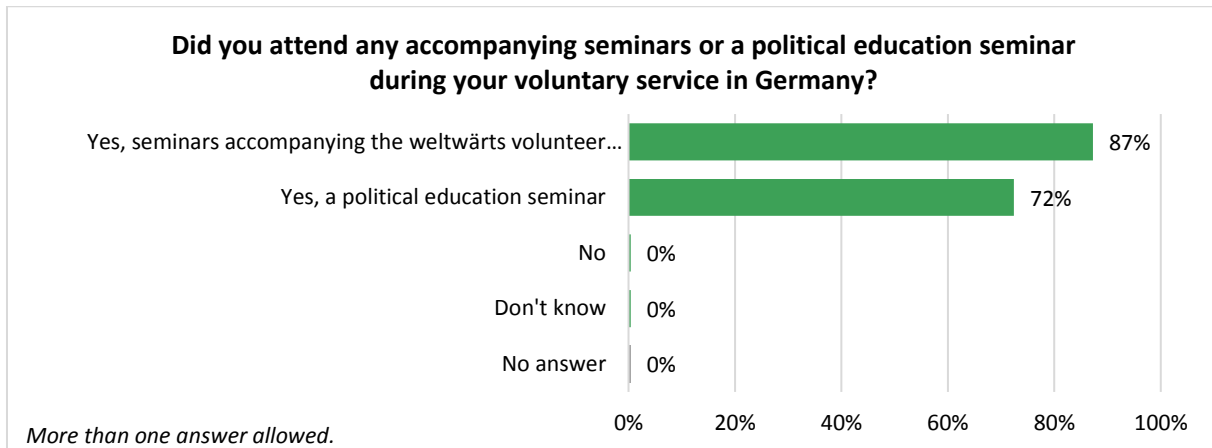


Figure 19: Attendance of accompanying and political education seminars

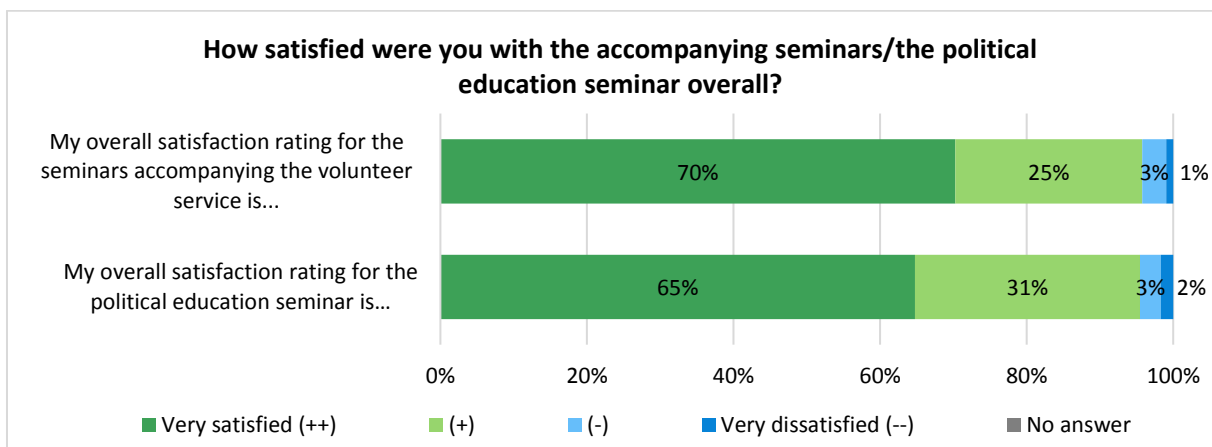


Figure 20: Satisfaction with seminars

Both the accompanying seminars and the political education seminars received extremely positive ratings from the participants, with a total of 95% and 96% respectively stating they were (very) satisfied (see Figure 20).

The volunteers' feedback offers clear evidence that the accompanying seminars for the weltwärts volunteer service can support the attendees in a variety of ways. The respondents confirmed that these seminars gave them an opportunity to share experiences and to explore intercultural issues ("true"=98% agreed in both cases). The responses also indicate that the seminars provided an opportunity for volunteers to consider what they had learned and their experiences so far during their voluntary service ("true"=96%). A similarly large number of volunteers said it was true that the accompanying seminars gave them an opportunity to discuss ways of dealing with challenges during their assignment in Germany (95%). In addition, the seminars were seen as a way of exploring development issues ("true"=94%) (see Figure 21).

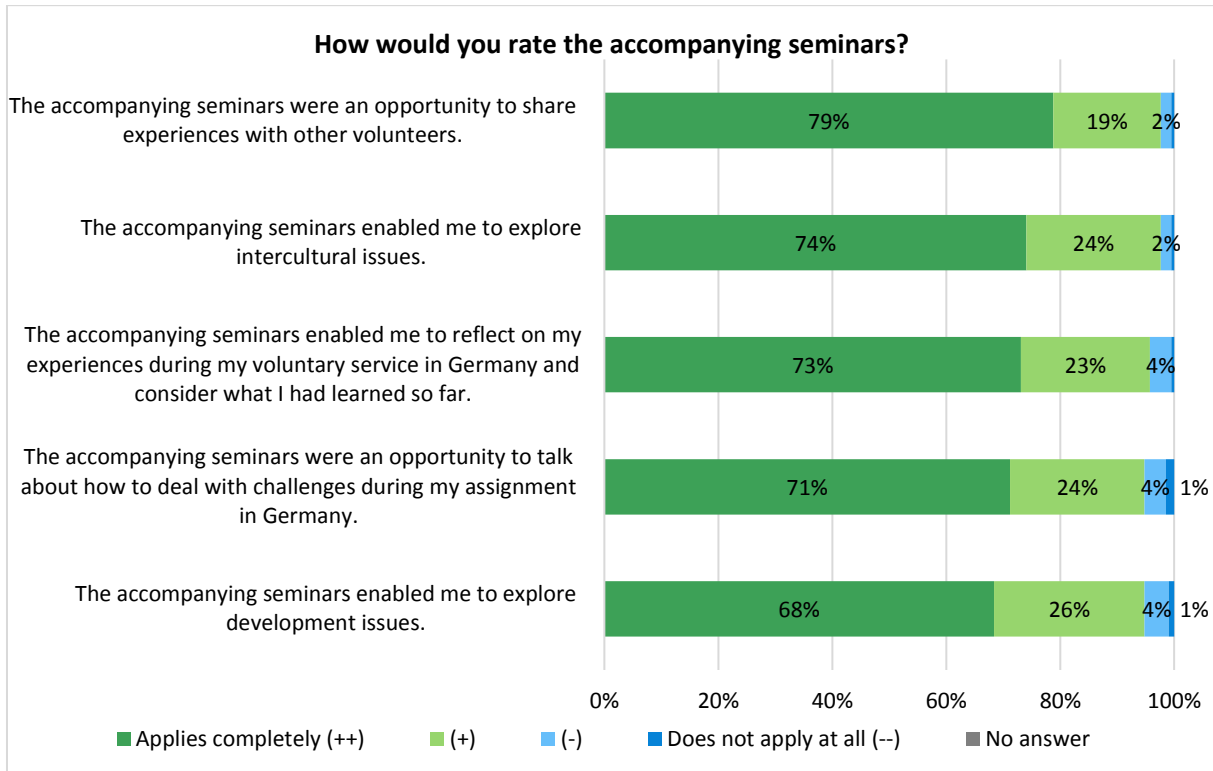


Figure 21: Assessment of accompanying seminars

Volunteers who had attended a political education seminar confirmed that it had been useful overall (“true”=93%) (see Figure 22).

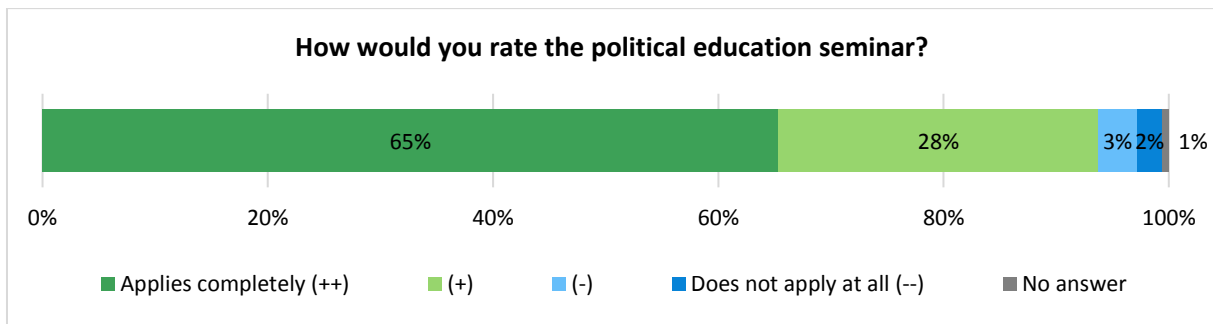


Figure 22: Usefulness of the political education seminar

## Communication

The findings of the pilot survey show that, prior to their voluntary service in Germany, approximately two thirds of participants did not have any German skills (23%) or only beginner skills (44%). However, their feedback also shows that their German skills improved significantly during their assignment. At the time of the survey, two in three (67%) rated their German skills as intermediate (B1), upper immediate (B2) and even advanced (C1) (see Figure 23).

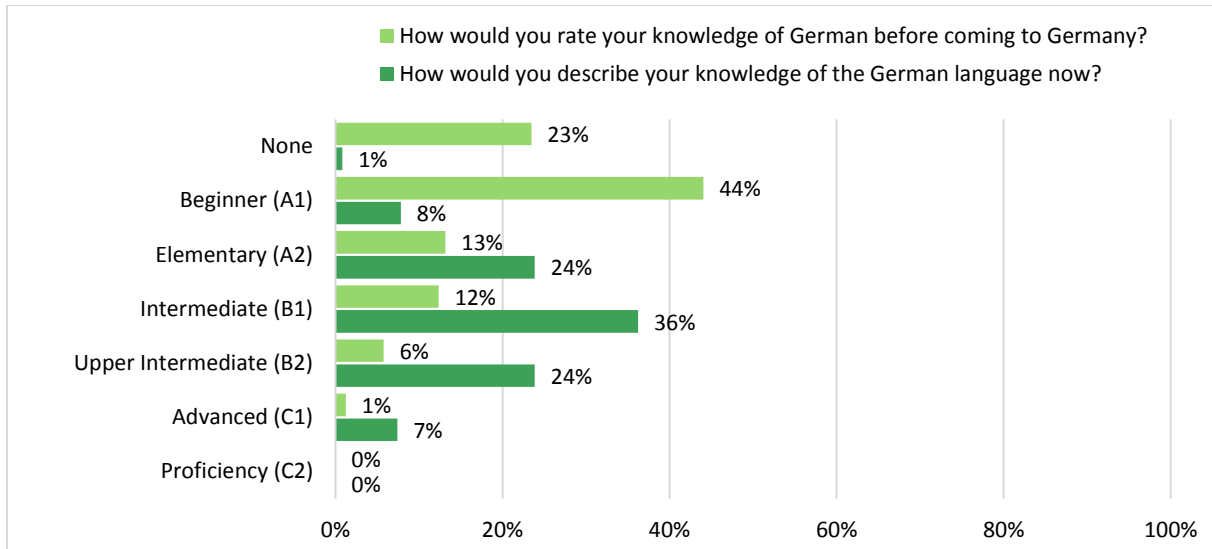


Figure 23: German skills before and after voluntary service

Almost all the volunteers surveyed (98%) had in some form actively worked on improving their German before or during their assignment in Germany. Three in four attended language courses in Germany, more than half had (also) attended language courses in their home country (58%), 35% used a language exchange format (with a German speaker seeking to learn their language) and 29% online language courses (see Figure 24).

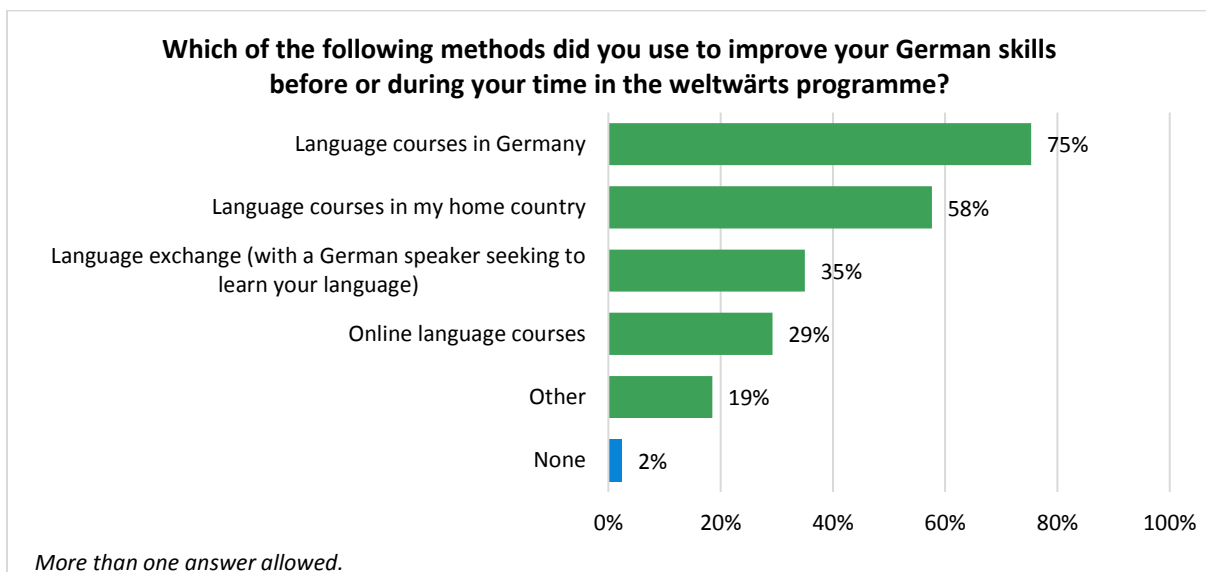


Figure 24: Attendance of language courses and similar formats

## End-of-service reflection and follow-up review<sup>5</sup>

According to the findings of the pilot survey, almost all volunteers were given an opportunity during the final phase of their assignment to reflect on their experiences in Germany (93%). At the time of the survey, most of them had already taken part in a form of end-of-service reflection (90%) (see Figure 25).

<sup>5</sup> In the translation of the North-South volunteer survey, this is referred to as “post-assignment activities/support”.

According to the responses concerning the stakeholders involved in the follow-up review for volunteers' assignments, the host organisations in Germany often played an important role. In 75% of cases, the host organisation supported the volunteers in the end-of-service and follow-up review process. 46% (also) received support from the sending organisation in their home country. In some cases, volunteers were also supported by other (returned) weltwärts volunteers in Germany. (Returned) weltwärts volunteers in respondents' home countries, other organisations and other groups of people were only rarely involved in follow-up activities for voluntary service (see Figure 26).

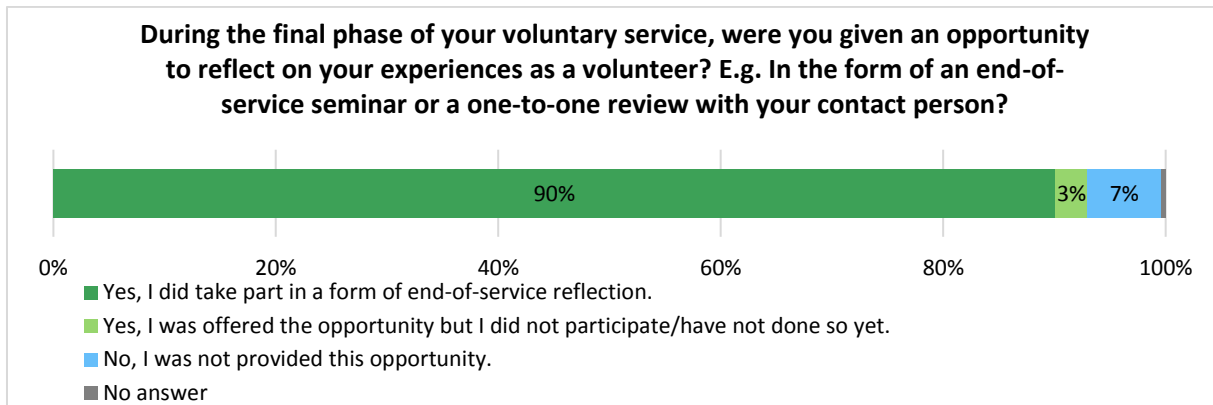


Figure 25: Opportunities for end-of-service reflection

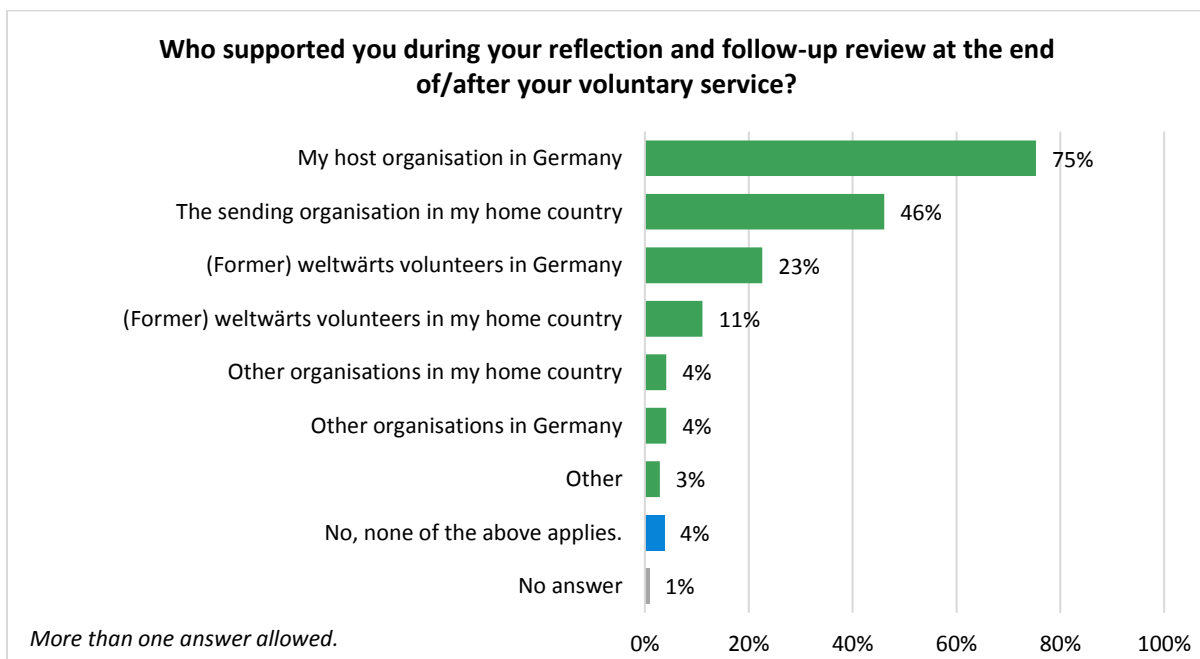


Figure 26: Support with follow-up review

The overall assessment of the post-assignment follow-up activities was very positive, with a total of 86% of the survey population stating that they were (very) satisfied (see Figure 27).



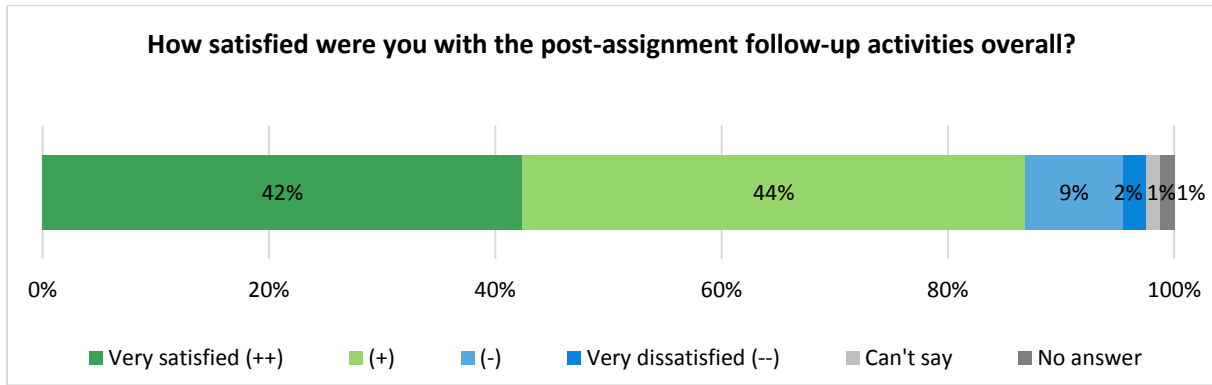


Figure 27: Satisfaction with post-assignment follow-up activities

The ratings given for various aspects of the follow-up review were also positive. Volunteers were particularly satisfied with the opportunities to share experiences with other volunteers (“true”=94%) and many of them confirmed that the follow-up review process provided opportunities to review their personal experiences (“true”=86%). The responses concerning other aspects of the follow-up review showed that these aspects were usually – but not always – addressed. 75% of the volunteers in the survey felt that it was (completely) true that information was provided and knowledge shared on how to re-acclimatise better upon return from assignment in Germany. 73% confirmed there was information about ways to engage in social action after voluntary service. The figure was similar for information concerning other ways to engage in development work after voluntary service (“true”=72%) and information on maintaining contacts made and networking with other volunteers on the weltwärts programme (“true”=72%) (see Figure 28).

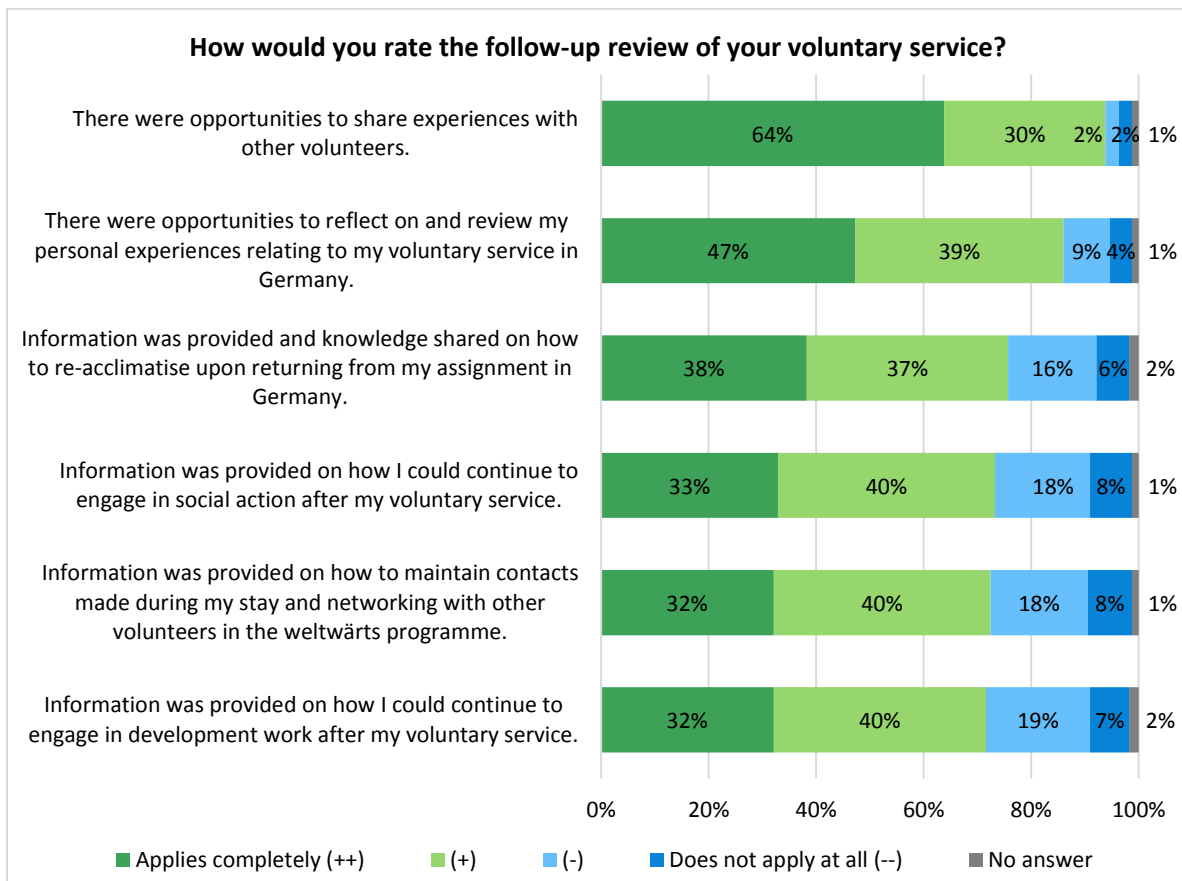


Figure 28: Assessment of various aspects of the follow-up review

## Overall assessment of voluntary service

Overall, the volunteers surveyed in the South-North component were very satisfied with their time on the weltwärts programme. 97% were (very) satisfied overall with their voluntary service and 69% explicitly said that they were very satisfied (see Figure 29).

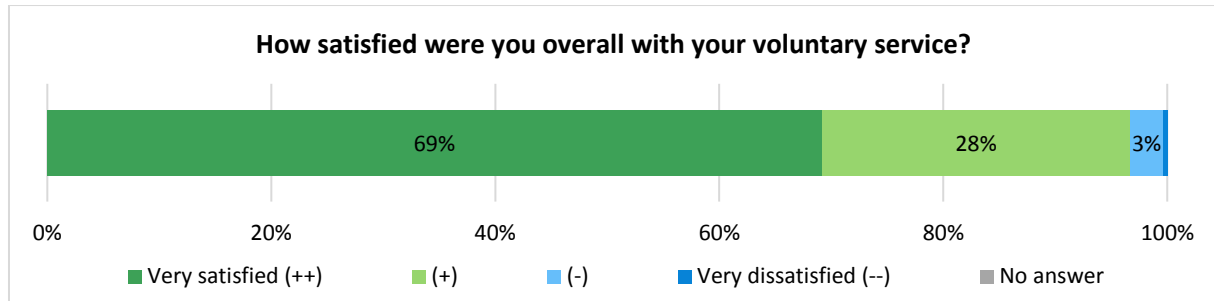


Figure 29: Overall satisfaction with voluntary service on the weltwärts programme

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. Just under three quarters (74%) considered it very likely that they would recommend voluntary service with weltwärts to their friends (see Figure 30).<sup>6</sup>

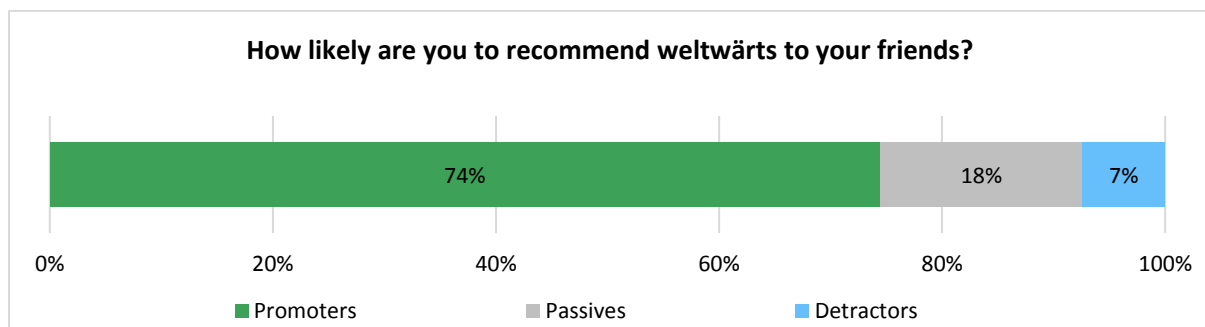


Figure 30: Likelihood of respondents recommending weltwärts to others

## Global learning - the role of weltwärts as a development learning service

The findings of the pilot survey show that volunteers draw a range of benefits from participating in the weltwärts programme and have learning experiences in various areas. All of the statements concerning individual global learning were supported by the vast majority of the survey population.

By participating in the weltwärts programme, they

- developed on a personal level (“true”=98%);
- became more aware of the importance of international/intercultural partnership and collaboration (“true”=96%);
- improved their global awareness (“true”=96%);
- were more motivated to continue engaging in development work (“true”=95%);
- felt more confident/comfortable when using/communicating in foreign languages (“true”=95%); and

<sup>6</sup> 9 and 10 on a value scale from 0=Very unlikely to 10=Very likely.

- learnt how to interact/work better with international teams and contacts (“true”=94%)  
(see Figure 31).

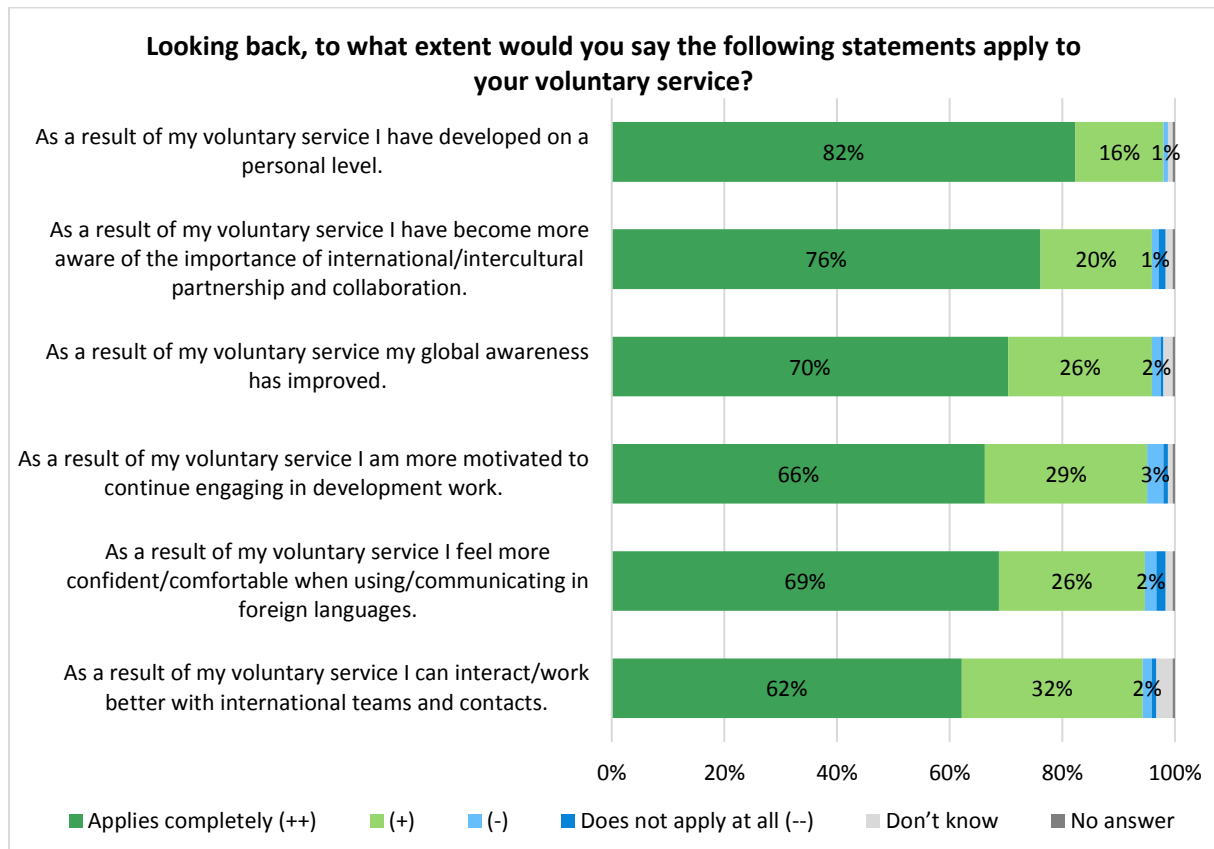


Figure 31: Global learning through voluntary service

### Returnee engagement in volunteering activities

The pilot survey in the South-North component indicates a high level of returnee engagement in/willingness to continue engaging in voluntary work. At the time of the survey, 34% were (again) involved in voluntary work. Most of the others were very sure that they would engage in voluntary work in the future (36%) or felt they would probably do so (14%). Consequently, more than 80% of the survey population were volunteering again or were at least likely to do so in the future. Only 14% were uncertain whether they would engage in voluntary work again in the future. The share who stated they would not do so or were unlikely to do so was even lower (5 out of 243) (see Figure 32).

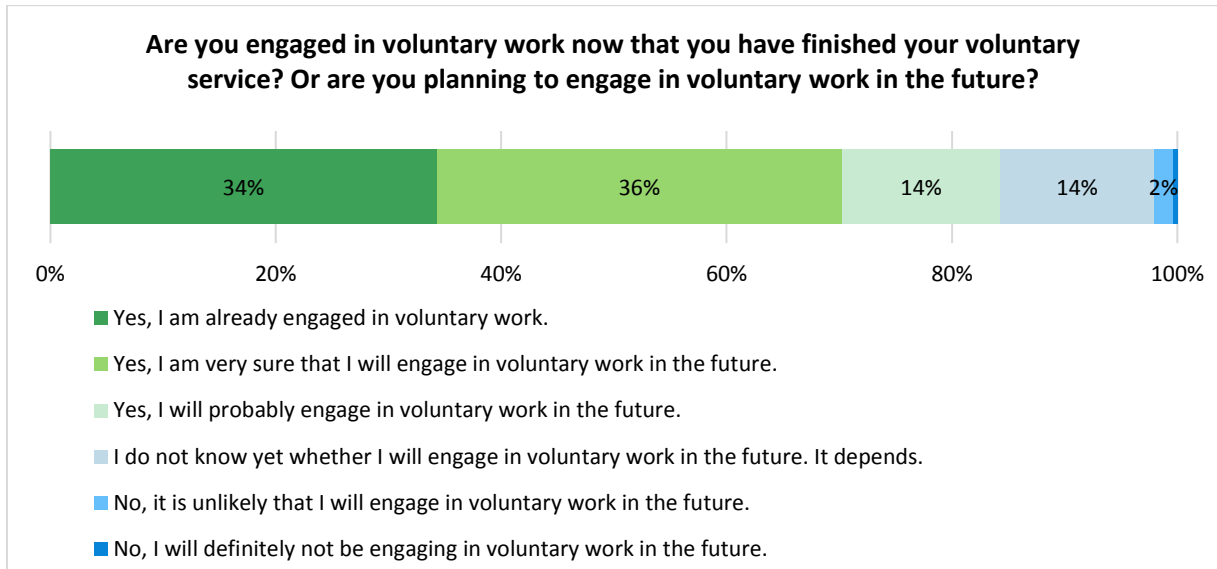


Figure 32: Post-assignment volunteering

The feedback from the volunteers who were already engaged in voluntary work at the time of the survey (n=83) shows that these activities covered a wide range of fields. The survey listed 18 different fields of voluntary work and there were weltwärts returnees engaged in all of them. The most common ones were work with children and young people (42%), work for sending organisations (43%) and development education (42%) (see Figure 33).<sup>7</sup>

The feedback from the volunteers who were not yet again actively involved in volunteering at the time of the survey but felt it was an option for the future (n=121) also clearly illustrates the wide range of fields in which returnees would be interested in volunteering. Interest in volunteering in the field of international exchanges/relations was particularly high (51%). At least 40% showed an interest in volunteering in the future in each of the following areas: work with their host organisation in Germany, work with children and young people, development education, environmental protection/conservation/climate protection, work with their sending organisation, tackling poverty, work in the field of human rights or anti-racism/asylum/migration (see Figure 33).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The high level of volunteering activity in the last two fields corresponds well with the finding described above that the majority of volunteers considered participation in weltwärts to have had a positive effect on their motivation to continue engaging in development work (see Figure 31).

<sup>8</sup> The high level of volunteering activity in the last two fields corresponds well with the finding described above that the majority of volunteers considered participation in weltwärts to have had a positive effect on their motivation to continue engaging in development work (see Figure 31).

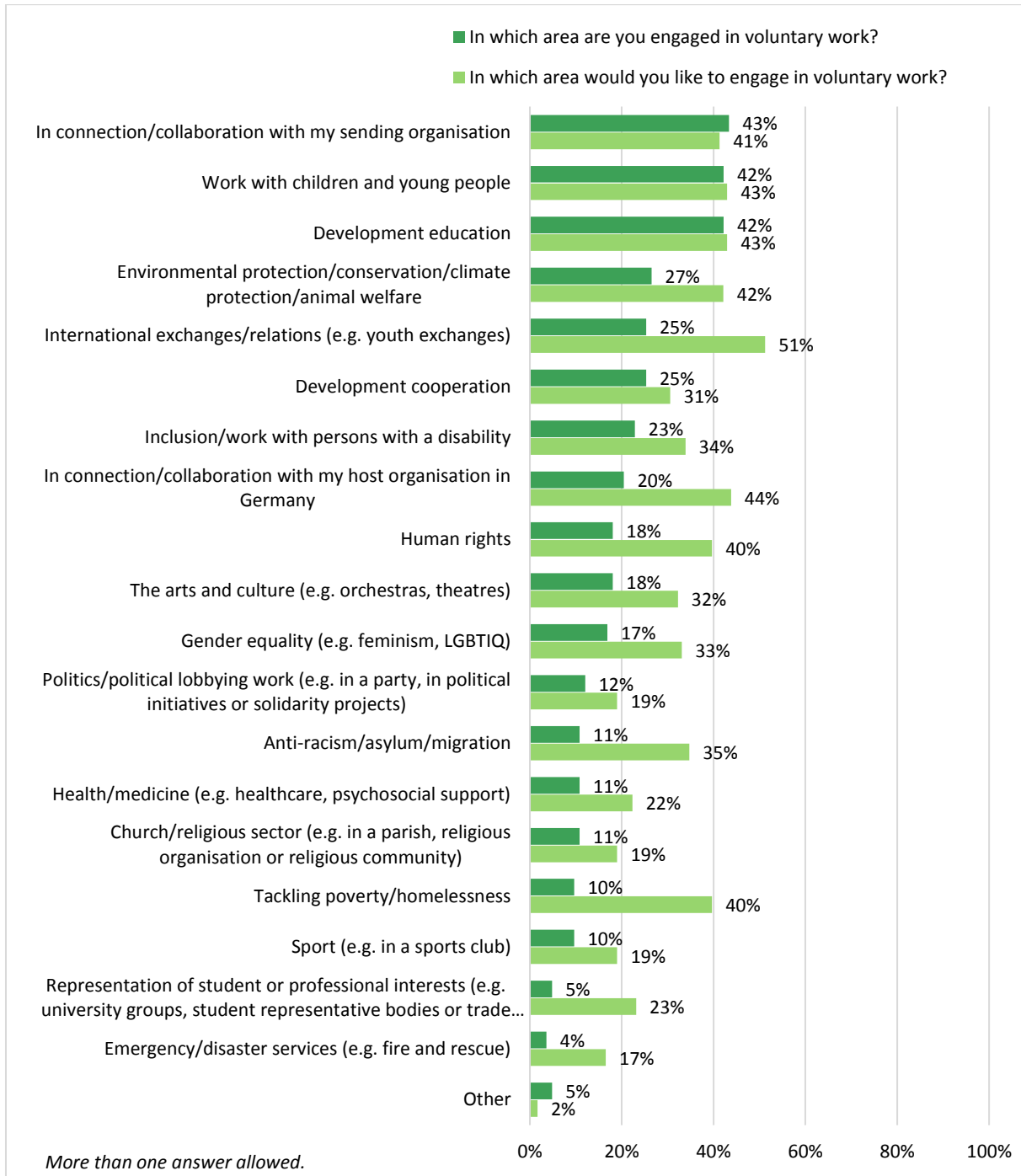


Figure 33: Fields in which returnees engage in voluntary work or would be interested in doing so in the future

If the areas in which the returnees engage in voluntary work or would be interested in doing so are grouped together under the heading “Global citizenship”<sup>9</sup>, the returnees’ thematic focus again becomes very clear: 92% of those already volunteering were involved in at least one area

<sup>9</sup> 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/work with persons with a disability, gender/gender equality and poverty/rooflessness/homelessness. The areas considered relevant for the concept of global citizenship were chosen by Engagement Global.

that falls into this category. 97% of those interested in volunteering in the future intended to become actively involved in at least one part of this category (see Figure 34).

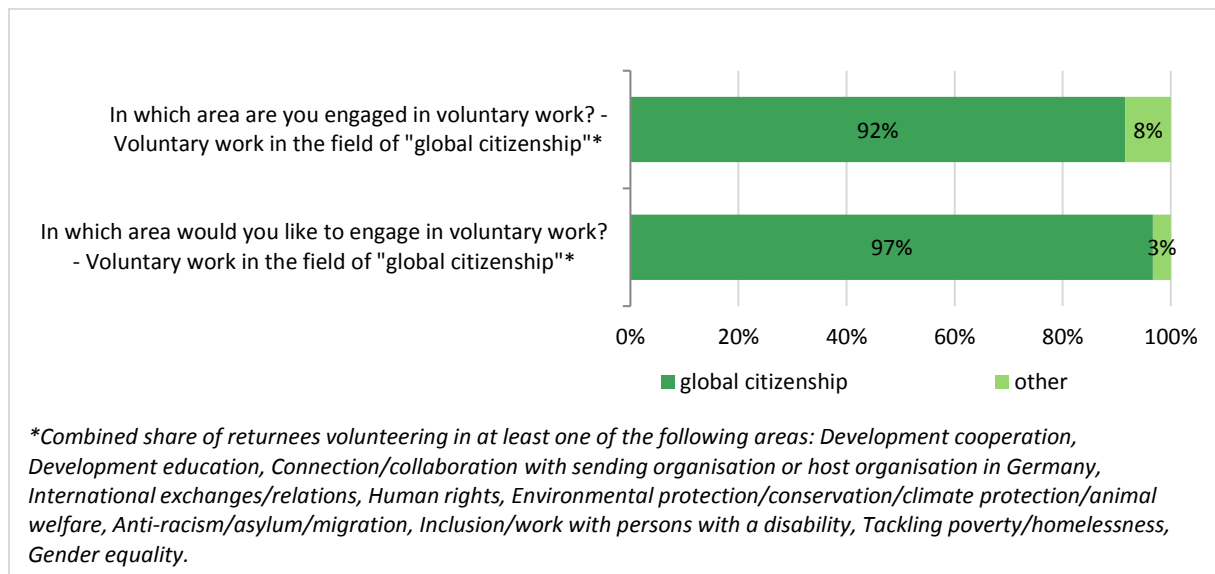


Figure 34: Current volunteering activity and interest in volunteering in the global citizenship category