



PERMITS
foundation

INTERNATIONAL DUAL CAREERS SURVEY REPORT 2022

PART 2

Feedback from
Partners of Highly-Skilled
International Employees



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Permits Foundation has been tracking trends in global mobility and dual careers since 2008 when our first ground-breaking survey highlighted that a lack of spouse or partner employment opportunities adversely affects the global mobility of highly-skilled international employees.

This 2022 survey report reflects the views of spouses and partners of highly-skilled international employees. It was carried out in the wake of the pandemic, when organisations, employees and their families were rapidly adapting to new ways of working. The results confirm that partner employment access has a direct impact on talent attraction, retention and the experience of the mobile family while in the host country.

From the data, it is clear that partners of highly-skilled international employees are themselves likely to be highly-qualified and with experience in a broad range of sectors. Three quarters of participants were female. 90% of partners were working pre-move but less than half of respondents were in employment post-move. Over one quarter were considering leaving the host country because of restrictions on their work access. This should be a point of note for governments facing skills shortages.

The evidence shows that many respondents had encountered difficulties accessing employment in their host country. Partners who could work while retaining their dependant status were less likely to face

obstacles. Most respondents signalled they would not move to a country where it is difficult for a spouse or partner to get a work permit upon recognition of dependant status. Partners of international employees who were not working were more likely to report a negative impact on their adjustment to the host country, family relationships, health and well-being.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on how mobile families will assess their global mobility destinations in future. Many families had experienced challenges relating to travel restrictions and quarantine rules. Given the opportunity, many respondents would be interested in remote employment, including for an employer outside of the host country.

The data revealed a notable gap between the types of employment and career support partners would like and whether they actually received it. Only one in five respondents had been given the opportunity to share their employment concerns with their partner's employing organisation.

The report findings confirm that since our partner survey in 2008, there is increasing expectation among mobile families that partners and spouses should be able to access work while in the host country. Addressing this issue would help international employers and host countries to attract and retain talent while supporting diversity, equity and inclusion (D,E&I).

INTRODUCTION

Between October 2021 and April 2022, Permits Foundation gathered feedback from **730** spouses and partners of highly-skilled international employees. Participation was truly global – with representation from **67** nationalities, in **103** host countries and with **130** employers cited from both the private and public sectors.

The report provides feedback on the issue of partner work authorisation.

It covers :

- The profile of the mobile family and factors behind the move
- The benefits of facilitating dual careers
- How work authorisation restrictions affect well-being and integration
- The importance of help and support offered to partners.

Throughout this report, unless otherwise stated:

- the term “partners” covers married or civil or non-married partners of both same-sex and opposite-sex
- the term “international employees” covers highly-skilled mobile employees (e.g. intra-corporate transferees, new recruits from outside the host country, locally recruited foreign staff)
- where there is reference in the report to “partner work access”, this relates to the direct work access of married or civil or non-married partners of highly-skilled mobile employees.

This report is the second in a two-part summary of findings from the Permits Foundation International Dual Careers Survey. Part 1 (published in June 2022) focused on the feedback from global mobility professionals and is available on the Permits Foundation website www.permitsfoundation.com.

FEEDBACK FROM

730



GLOBAL REPRESENTATION

67



103



130



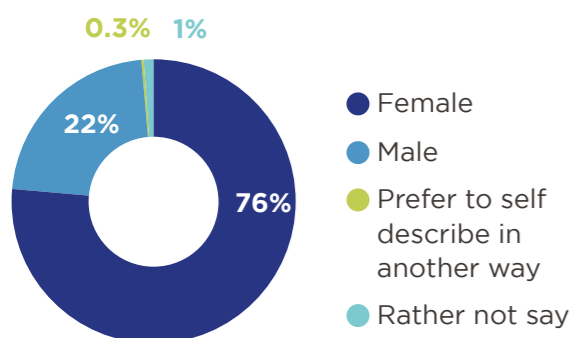
THE GLOBALLY MOBILE FAMILY

Respondents' profile

To help us benchmark the diversity of the mobile family and so that we could see what has changed since our 2008 partner survey, we asked participants to provide information on their gender, age group, marital status, nationality, mobility history and host country.



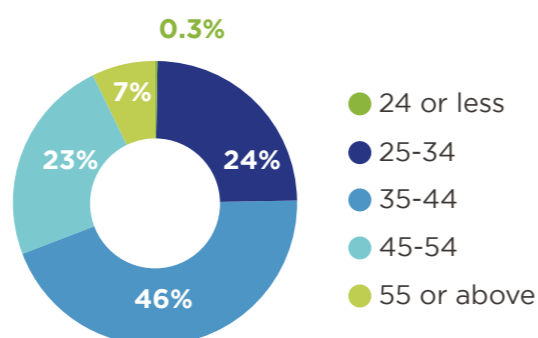
What is your gender?



Gender

In our 2008 survey, 85% of accompanying partners and spouses were female. From the 2022 results, it is clear that although the percentage of accompanying male partners is increasing, **at 76%, women still make up the majority of partners of international employees.** A small number of respondents preferred to self-describe in another way.¹

What is your age?



Age

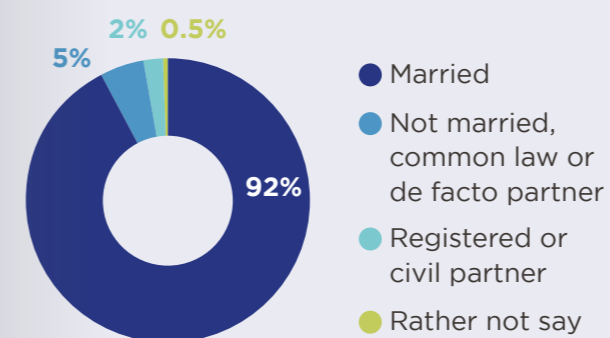
The greatest portion (46%) of respondents were in the 35-44 age bracket, with 24% aged between 25-34 and 23% aged between 45-54. Only 7% were aged over 55. Just two respondents were aged under 25. As was the case in 2008, the majority of partners taking part in 2021-2 were likely to be in the host country towards the middle of their own careers, with some years of experience under their belt.

¹ In the responses to this question we received the following comment "My biological sex is female. My gender is woman/fluid and this question is really frustrating to answer." Although this question helps us to benchmark and compare the difference between the make-up of the dual career couple against our survey in 2008, it is important to recognise that the diversity within the modern mobile family is more nuanced than the traditional male/female gender definition.

"So many of my friends and colleagues have faced similar challenges in their international assignments that only one partner is employed in the host country and the other half of the couple struggles to find employment. This is a major diversity issue as it means only people who are single career families will be willing to take up these posts in the future."

"In 2022 it is easy to imagine how many households are dual working spouses. For more women to grow into senior leadership roles we need to see better access to work when relocating to other countries."

What is your marital status?

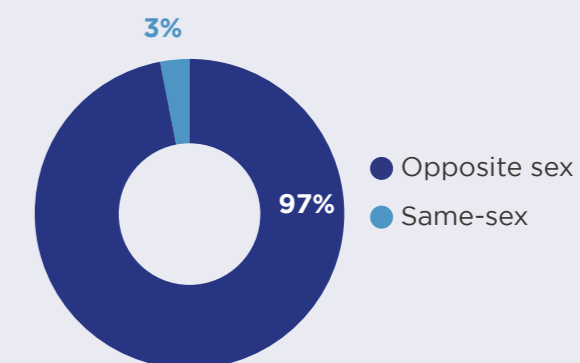


Marital status

The data on marital status largely reflected our 2008 survey, with a slight increase in the percentage of non-married partners. In our 2021-2 survey, we also asked if respondents were in same-sex or opposite-sex relationships.² Where the percentage results are small they are significant.

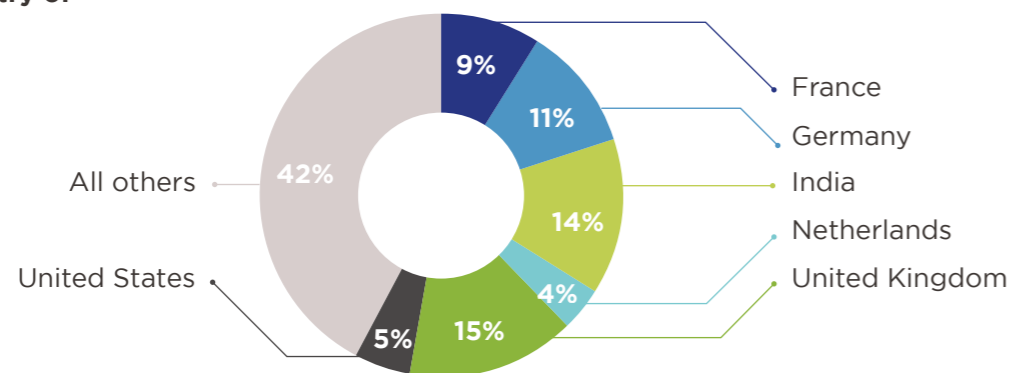
² 1% of respondents opted not to answer this question.

Your partner is:



An inclusive international workforce should reflect the demographics of the general workforce (and population). In part 1 of the survey, global mobility professionals confirmed preference for a broad definition of family members who can access employment in host country.

What is your country of nationality?



Nationality

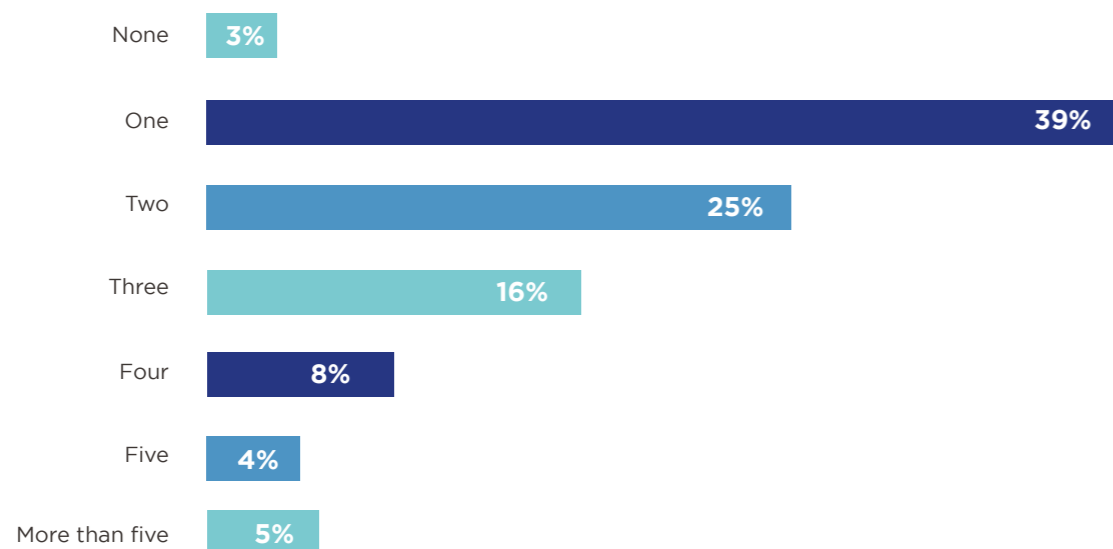
The survey had truly global participation. 67 nationalities were mentioned by respondents.

The most common nationalities cited were the United Kingdom, India, Germany, France, the United States and the Netherlands. The countries mentioned most may be linked to the employing companies/ organisations of partners that participated. 2% of participants mentioned that they held dual-nationality.

Previous accompanied assignments

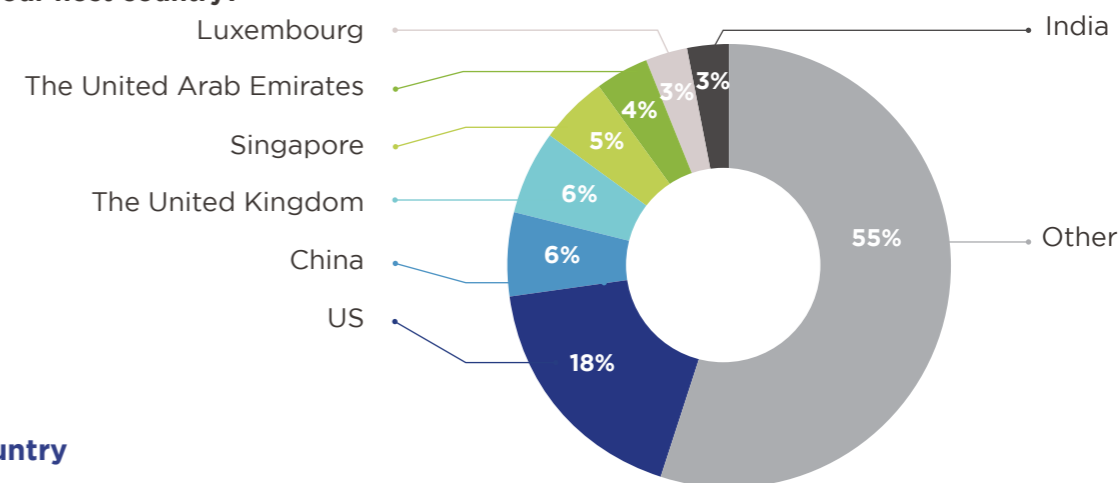
More than half of respondents had been on more than one assignment, one third had been on three assignments or more.³ Because mobile families take their experiences forward, partner assistance can have a long-term impact on the success of an organisation's overall global mobility policy. In addition, where organisations can show that they support efforts to improve partner work access in host countries, this can also help to demonstrate to the workforce and their families that they are being advocated for throughout their global mobility journey.

On how many assignments (including this current one) have you accompanied as a partner?



³ Some partners had not yet joined the employee.

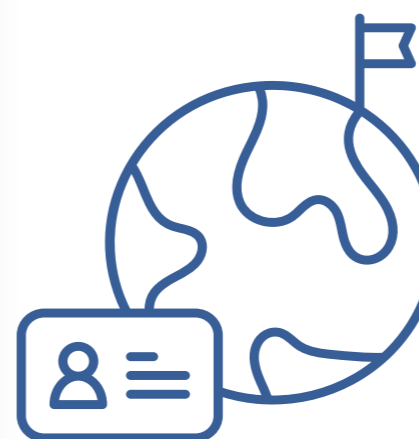
What is your host country?



Host country

The Foundation's 2021-2 partner survey was open to participation across the world. 103 host countries were named with 94% of respondents completing the survey from within the host country. The highest percentage of respondents were hosted in the United States. Other countries most frequently mentioned included China, the United Kingdom, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), India and Luxembourg.⁴ These countries are established international or business hubs. The data may also reflect countries where partners would like to provide feedback on their work access or lack thereof.

Permits Foundation carries out work in countries that are highlighted by our sponsors and wider network as priority destinations.⁵ The Foundation priority countries for advocacy currently include the United States, China, India, Singapore, South Africa and Ireland. Going forward and given the survey replies, we may now look to include other areas.



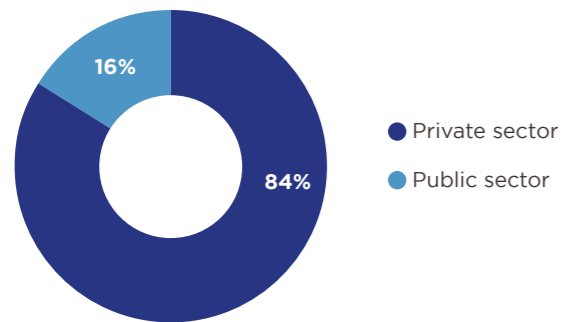
"I always wanted to work. It is part of knowing the culture, integrating into the country and having a full experience."

⁴ Luxembourg and the US do have provisions in place that enable work access for dependants of international employees in certain categories, however for others there is no work access or the process is not straightforward. In the UK there is direct work access for family members of highly-skilled international employees.

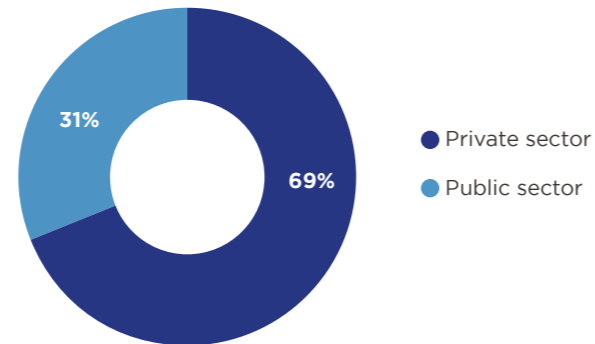
⁵ In part 1 of the International Dual Careers Survey Report, employers gave the US, China, India, UK, Switzerland, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and Singapore as destinations where further legislation to improve partner work access would be most welcomed.

Organisations and sectors

Employing organisations identified

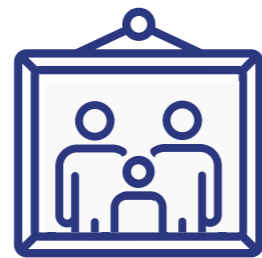


Respondents by partner employing organisation



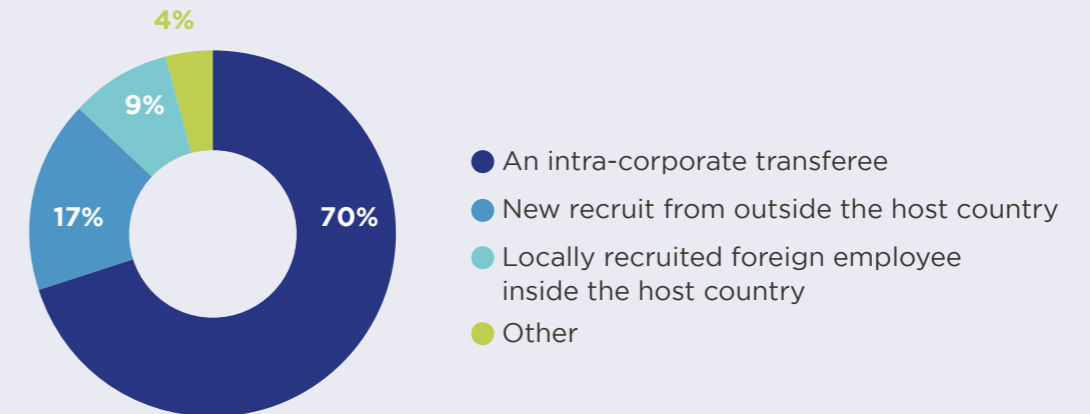
When respondents were asked to name their partner’s employing organisation, 130 were identified. The full list is in the [appendix](#) of this report. The responses to this question show that both the public and private sectors were represented in the survey findings.

Certain organisations were mentioned frequently. This is likely because some sponsor organisations, keen to support the issue of dual careers in the global workplace, were able to circulate the survey widely among their globally mobile populations. The responses here may also explain the higher percentages of certain nationalities and host countries mentioned in the report.



Diversification of international employment

At the start of this assignment was your partner:



The decision to relocate is often as a result of another family member’s career move or job offer. For the vast majority, 70% of participants in this survey, the move was connected to an intra-company transfer. However other types of international employment can also prompt a global move, and are increasing.⁶ This diversification of international employment is a trend that the Foundation has been made aware of in our one-on-one conversations with sponsors and via the responses from global mobility professionals in part 1 of the survey report.

There is no one size fits all definition of a dual career couple. For this reason, global mobility partner support can provide a perfect vehicle for employers to better understand the varying needs and experiences of the diverse mobile family and to help ensure inclusive company policy.

“The more you can do to provide guidance and support to partners, the more you’re likely to attract couples to relocate.”

⁶ In 2008, 86% of partners were accompanying intra-company transfers, 11% new recruits from outside the host country and just 3% locally hired foreign staff. Of those who selected “other”, some referenced diplomatic placements or secondments.

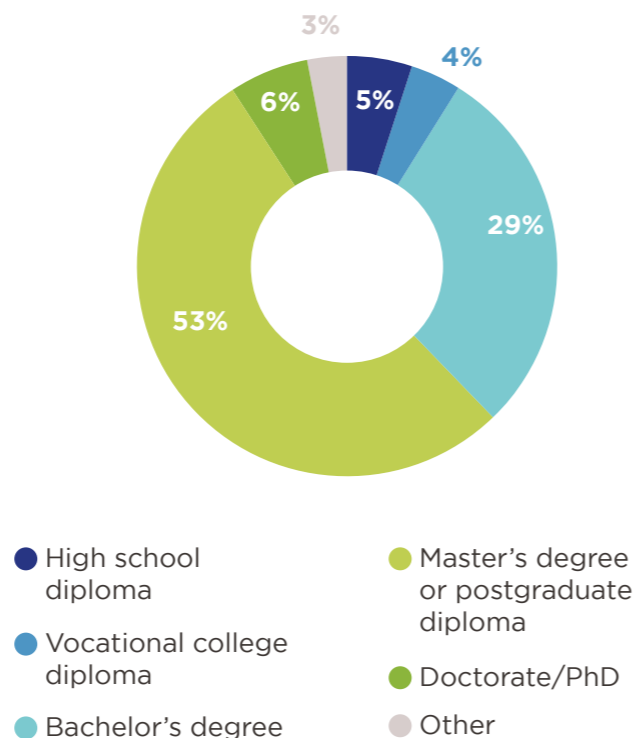
ACCOMPANYING TALENT

Qualifications

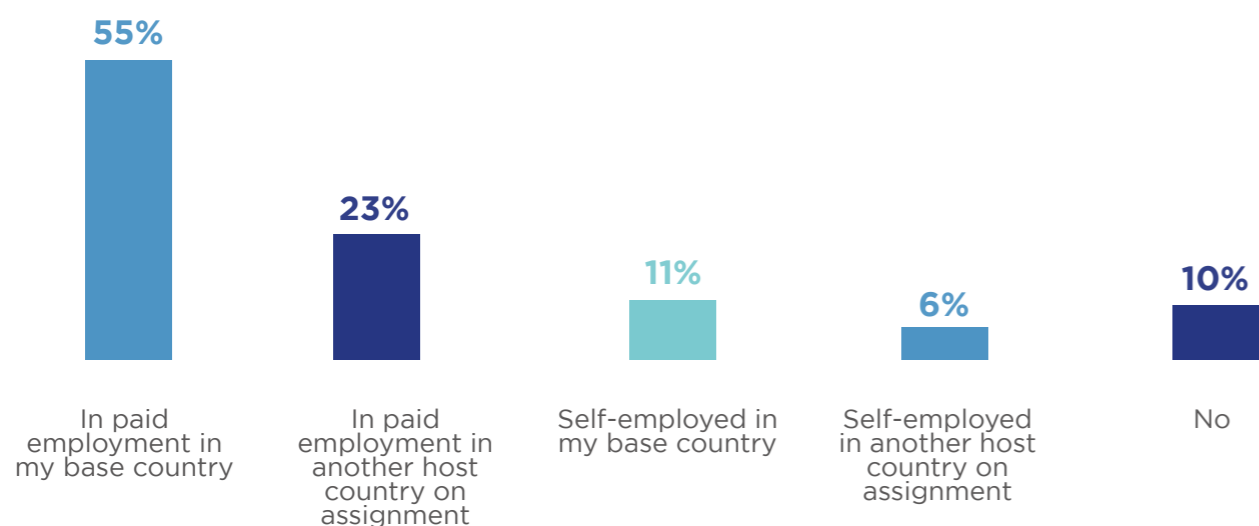
The data shows that accompanying partners are themselves likely to be highly-skilled and offer a wealth of employment experience in a range of fields. This talent should be utilised.

88% of respondents held a bachelor's degree or higher. Over half of respondents held a master's degree or postgraduate diploma, up from 40% in 2008.

What is your qualification?



Were you in employment or paid employment prior to moving to your host country?

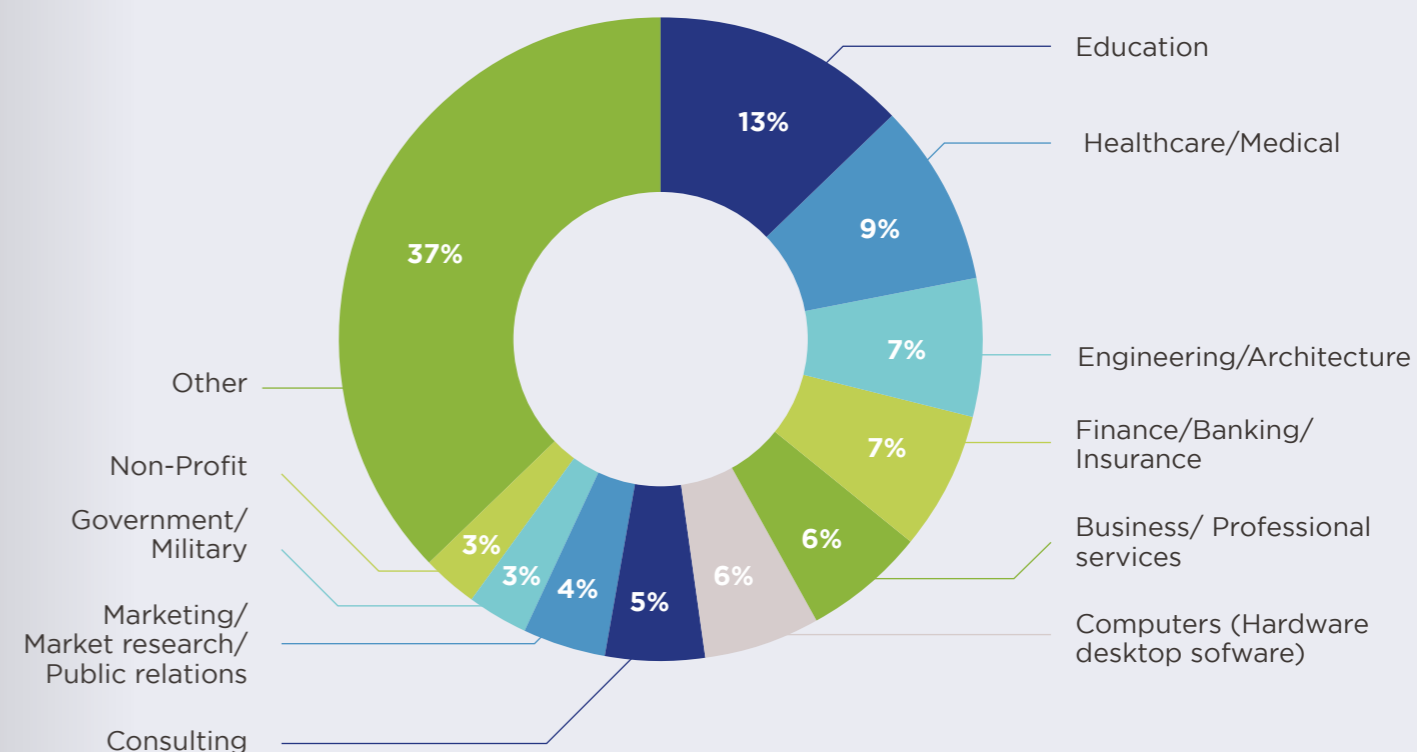


Experience

The vast majority of partners were working before the move to the host country and in an array of sectors. Education and healthcare were the sectors with most responses. Only 10% of respondents were

not employed or self-employed prior to moving to the host country.⁷ Some of those not employed pre-move mentioned that they had been completing studies.

In which occupational field were you working?



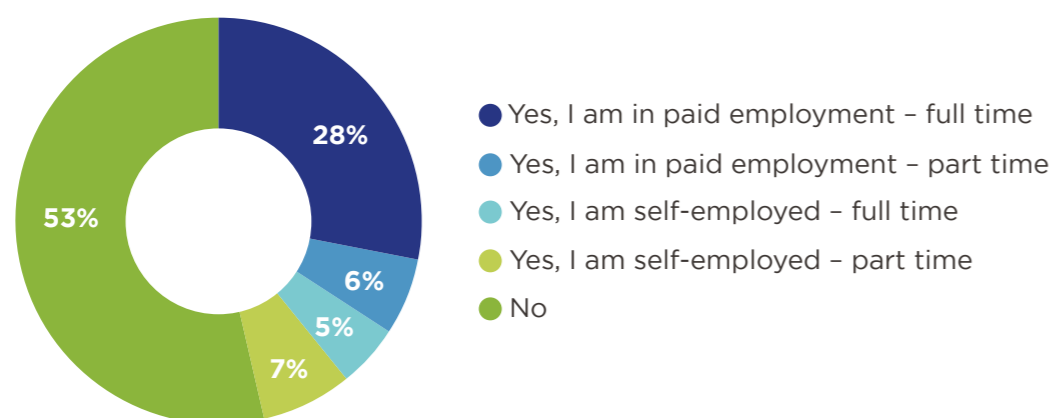
⁷ In 2008 this figure was slightly higher at 13%.

Expectation

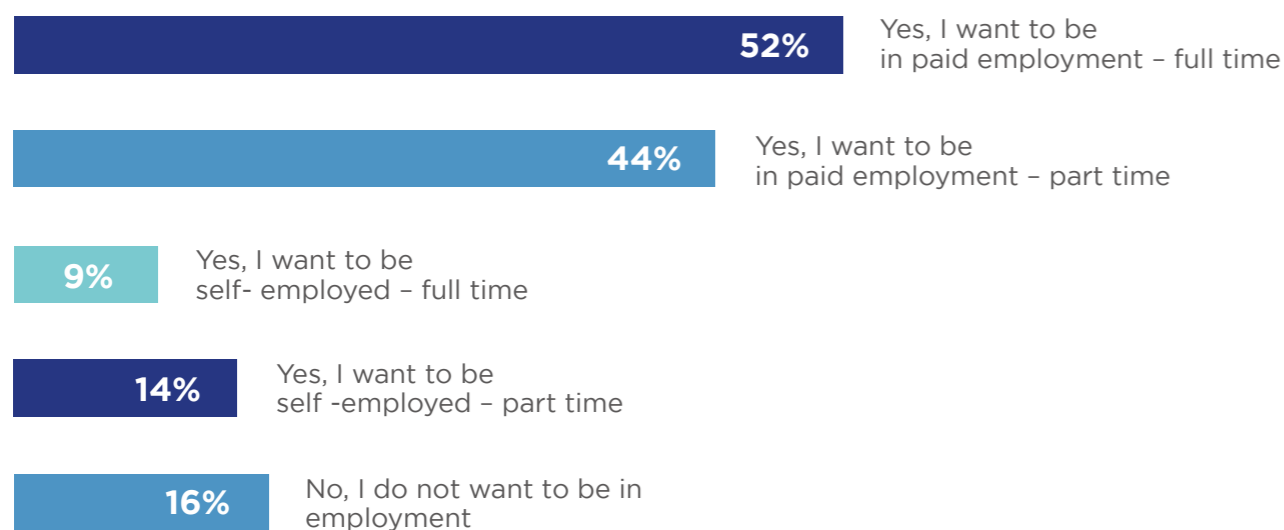
More than half of all participants were not in employment or self-employed in the host country but 84% of these respondents wanted to be.

Those who were employed were most likely to be in full time paid employment.

Are you currently in employment or self-employment in the host country?⁸



Feedback from respondents not currently in employment (respondents could chose more than one option)

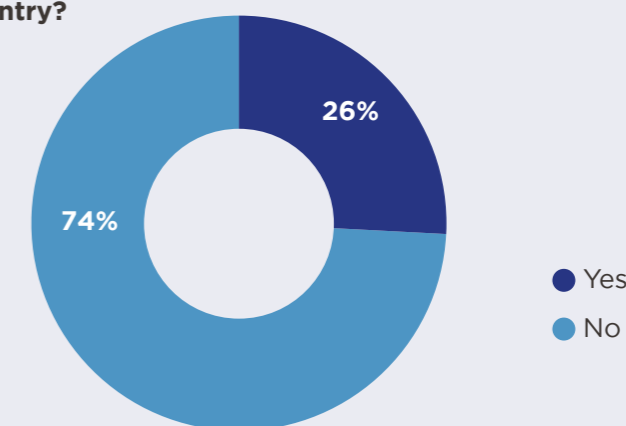


⁸ Pie chart: actual percentages total 100% (52.70%, 28.22%, 7.33%, 6.36%, 5.39%).

Over a quarter of all respondents were considering leaving the host country due to work access restrictions.

These findings should be taken seriously by both international employers and host countries looking to attract and retain talent and support diversity, equity and inclusion (D,E&I), particularly when taking into account the fact that accompanying partners are themselves highly-qualified and that they hold experience in a range of sectors.

Are you currently considering returning to your home/base country because of restrictions on your work access in the host country?



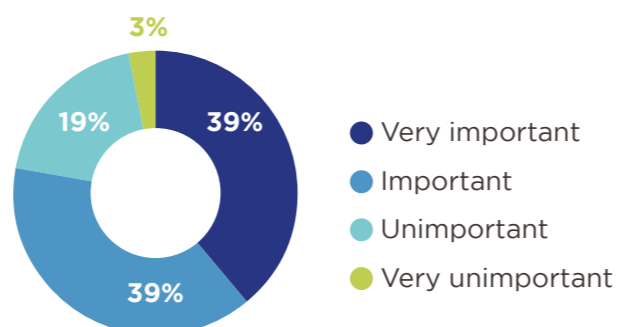
"I needed certainty about my ability to work six months before we moved. I am an asset to the economy in my host country. My skills are in short supply, but none of that helped me get certainty about whether I could work."

"The ability for both partners to work is so important. We gave up two salaries in our home country and - if we had known how badly affected my employment continuity would be - my spouse may not have accepted the assignment overseas. Dropping to one salary has had a large (negative) impact on our relationship and on our long-term financial planning."

ISSUES THAT MATTER TO ACCOMPANYING PARTNERS

Consideration of partner's career in the decision to move

How important was your employment or career aspiration in the decision to accept the current assignment?



For over three quarters of survey participants, their career was an important or very important factor in the decision to accept the current assignment. Male partners were more likely to answer that their career aspiration was considered as very important. Comparing with the data from 2008, the percentage of female respondents answering "important" or "very important" increased from 67% to 75%.

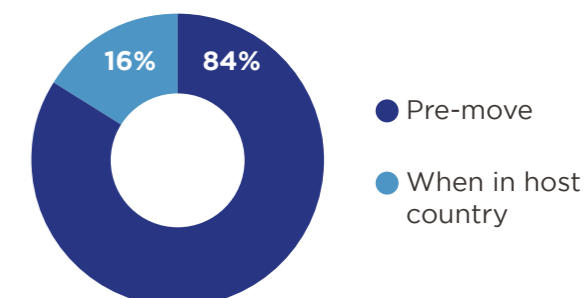
Many of the comments shared the same thread of making a difficult choice between work and family, others mentioned that they did not want their partner to miss out on an opportunity.

Respondents who answered important or very important



Finding out about partner work authorisation

At what point do you consider it most helpful to know for certain that you will be allowed to work in the host country?



The comments in relation to this question show that communication and timing has a significant impact on employee and family experience in the host country. This demonstrates again how helpful information at the **pre-move** stage can be for organisations considering when to offer partner support.

Indeed, 16% of respondents said that their partner had previously declined a job opportunity in another country due to restrictions that would impact their work access as the accompanying partner. It seems therefore that where governments can assure that there is direct work authorisation for partners, the country is a more attractive destination for talent.

"Obviously! If you didn't find out that you couldn't work before coming on a posting, it could mean destabilising a family unit with an unhappy partner who is being underused, under-valued and feeling upset."

Where family members find out in country that they do not have work authorisation, this can have a detrimental impact on the success of an assignment. In our employer survey, over 43% of global mobility professionals mentioned that assignments had failed or been cut short due to concerns about the partner's career.

"With hindsight we would not have accepted the post."

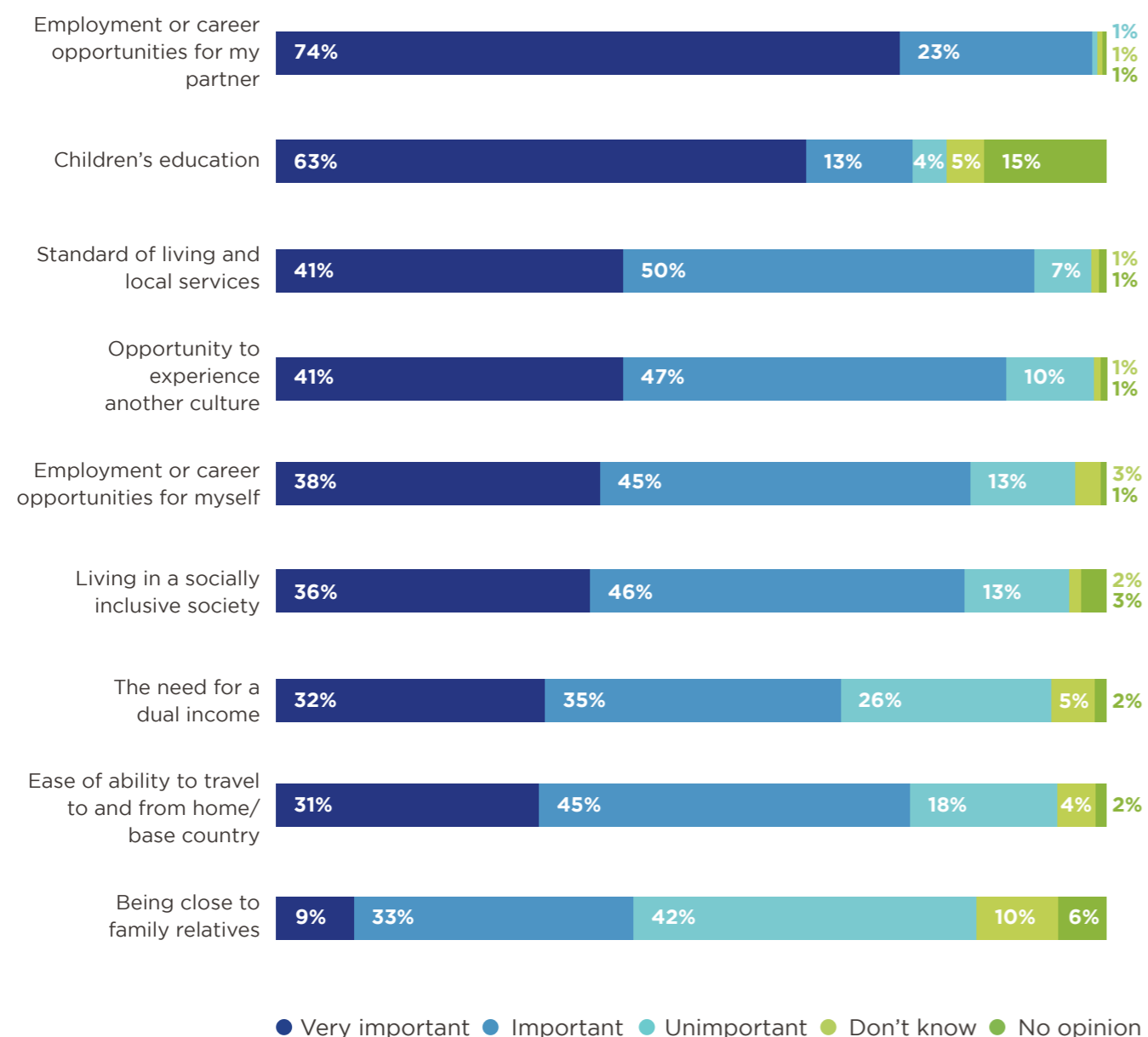
"For me it's a very important issue to have a working permit! During our first expatriation I didn't get it in advance (didn't think I wouldn't be able to work) and I regret it. I was a highly qualified specialist and couldn't work!"

Factors alongside employment access

Many other issues associated with employment access were highlighted in the results. Children's education featured

prominently in the survey responses. For over two-thirds of families, it was important or very important to have a dual income.

When making the decision to take up an international assignment, please rank how important you consider the following factors?

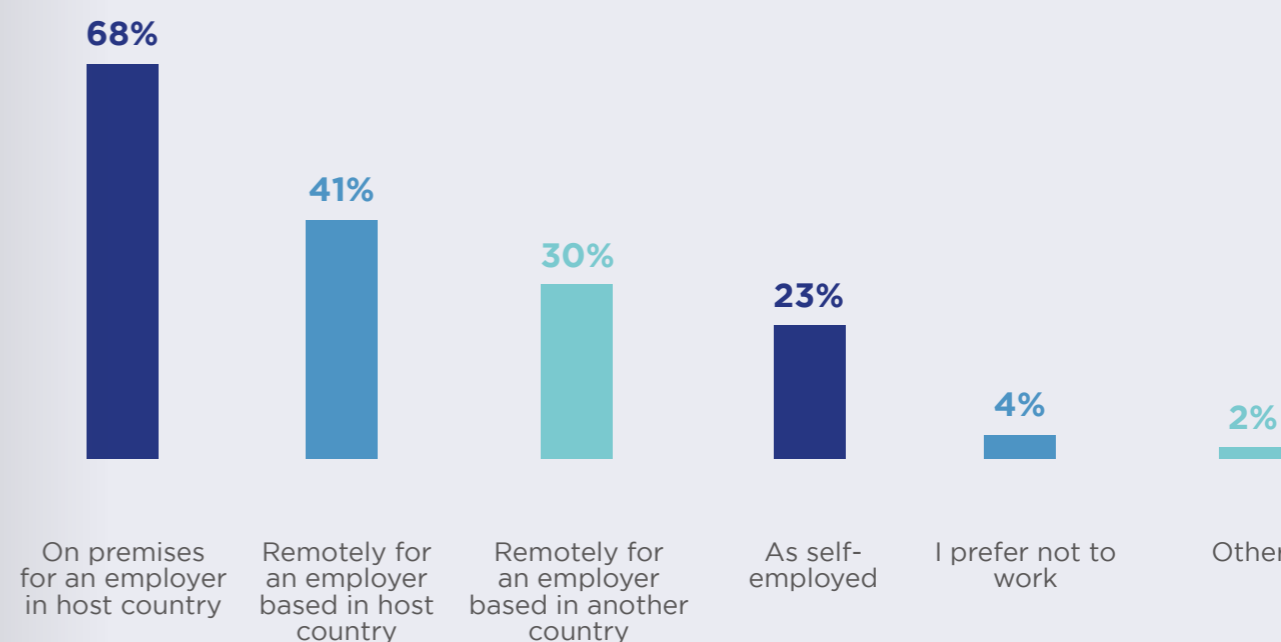


Preferred ways of working

Given the choice, the majority of respondents said they would prefer to work on premises in the host country. A significant percentage selected that they would like to work remotely in the host country. Almost one third said they would like to work remotely for an employer based in **another country**. Virtual/remote employment for dependants is clearly a point of interest.⁹

Almost one quarter of partners surveyed would prefer to be self-employed. Some of those who selected "other" clarified that they were open to all or a mix of options.

If you had the choice, while in the host country, how would you prefer to work?



⁹ In our survey of global mobility professionals, 60% of respondents had been asked by employees about the right of their partner to work remotely.

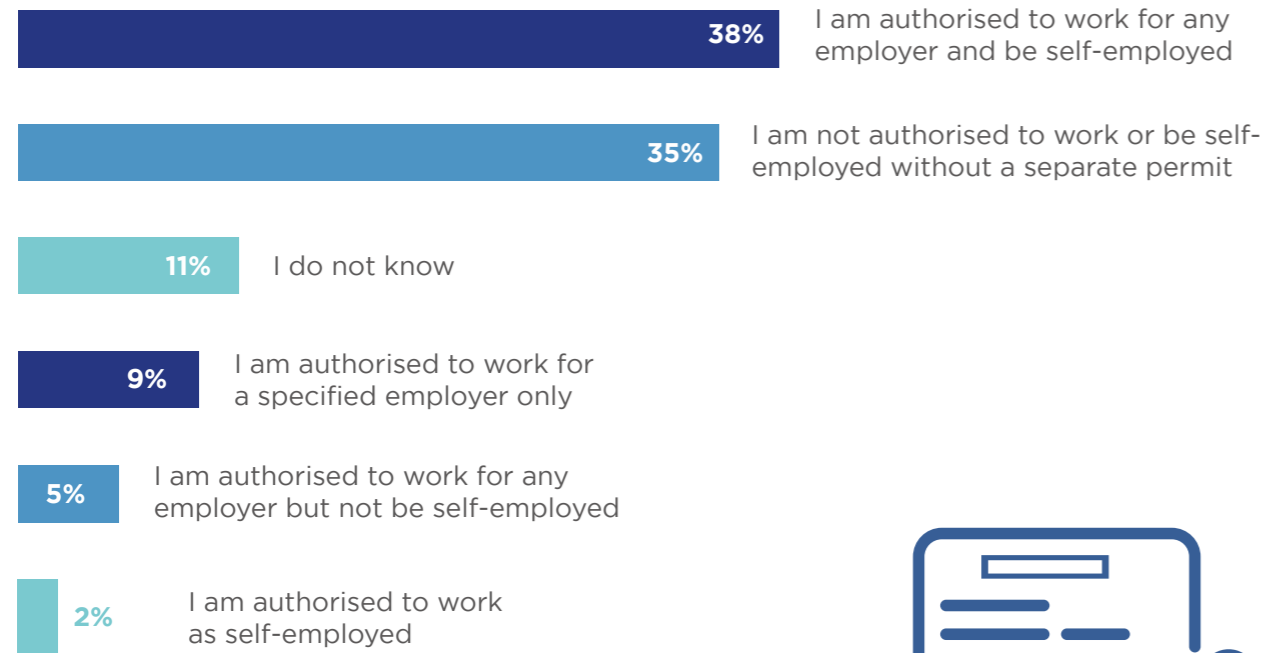
WORK PERMIT RESTRICTIONS AND THEIR IMPACT

Employment authorisation

At the time of carrying out the survey, 38% of respondents said that their host country visa status granted open work authorisation. Just over a third were not authorised to work for any employer or be self-employed. A significant minority faced extra conditions on their employment access.

The fact that 11% of respondents did not know if they were authorised to work signals that more could be done to help inform partners of their work access rights in the host country.

To what extent does your residence visa/permits status authorise you to work during your current assignment?

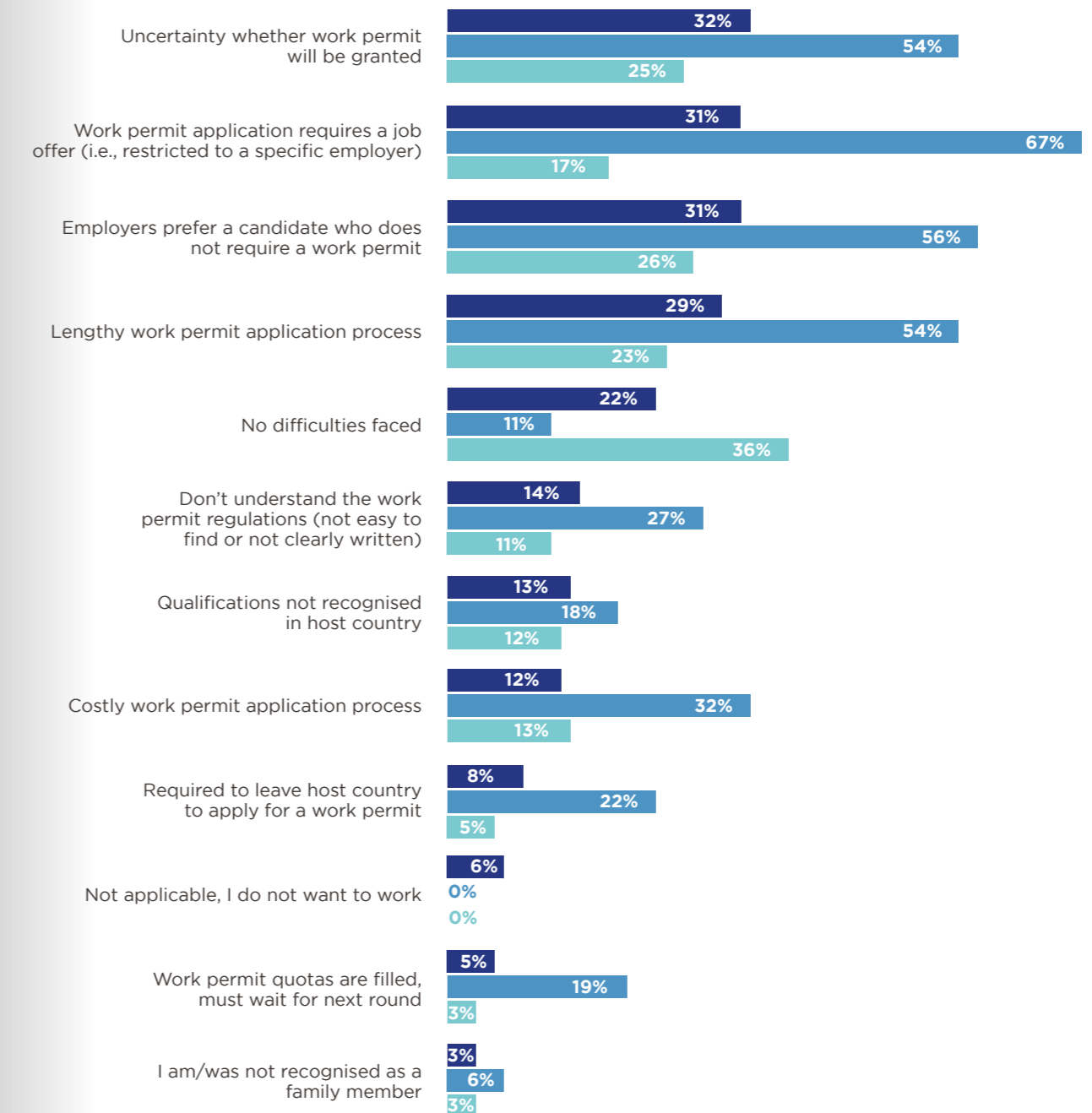


Difficulties faced

The top four difficulties faced by partners with respect to obtaining work access were that employers prefer a candidate who did not require a work permit,

the work permit application required a job offer, uncertainty around whether work permit will be granted and lengthy work permit application processes.

What difficulties have you faced with respect to your work authorisation?



- All respondents
- Respondents who gave up their dependant status in order to access work
- Respondents who did not give up their dependant status in order to access work

The significance of giving up the dependant visa

Permits Foundation’s preferred option for partners of international employees is that upon recognition of their dependant status, direct work access is assured. This gives assurance pre-move to dual career partners that they have the possibility to look for employment with any employer and ideally also have the option to be self-employed.

In some destinations partners wishing to seek employment have no option but to give up their dependant status. In this survey, 19% of respondents said that they gave up their dependant visa in order to work.

However, this group were more likely to encounter problems with work authorisation, lengthy, costly or complicated work permit processes. Respondents who did not need to give up their dependant status in order to work were less likely to encounter obstacles. Here difficulties were more likely to be faced in host countries where partner work access was not direct.¹⁰

The Foundation in speaking with government representatives and when advocating legislative change, continues to make the case that direct employment access via dependant status is the preferred policy model.

“Sometimes I could not interview for the position I was deemed suitable for because I did not have a work permit.”

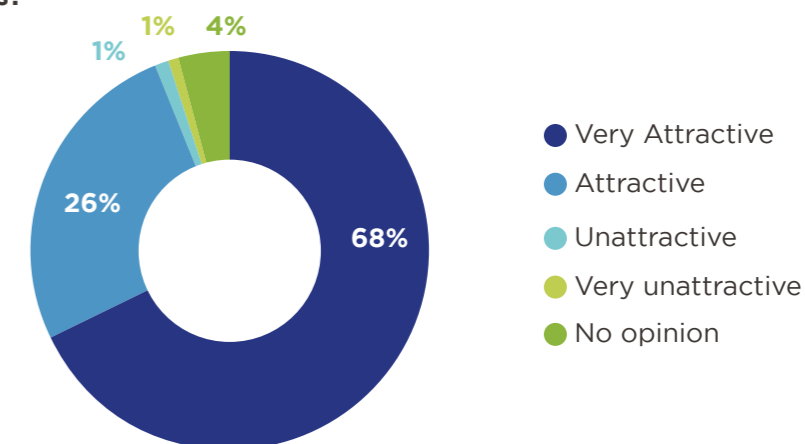
“I couldn’t apply for the work permit before moving to the host country, and had to then wait for almost 4 months to get the permit, which inevitably made a gap in my work life. The permit is also costly.”

“Don’t make spouses suffer with government delays for processing a separate work permit... I personally had to quit my job twice due to government inefficiency in processing the work permit.”

“Spouses should have open work permit incident to status that can be renewed before expiry and should last for the entirety of that status.”

¹⁰ The highest percentage of respondents facing difficulties where they did not have to give up their dependant status were hosted in the United States and Singapore.

With regard to countries that allow spouses and partners to work easily, how do you view these countries as a potential destination for future relocations?



Country attractiveness

The vast majority of partners - **94%** - said that where countries allow spouses and partners to work easily, these countries are viewed as attractive or very attractive future relocation destinations.

Moreover 66% of respondents said that they would probably not or definitely not relocate to a country where it is difficult for a spouse or partner to get a work permit upon recognition of dependant status. In our 2008 survey this figure was lower at 56% .

Integration, well-being and relationships

Partners of international employees who were **not** working were more likely to report a **negative impact** on their adjustment to the host country (44%), family relationships (36%), general health or well-being (47%). Significantly, 56% said that not working had negatively impacted their mental health.¹¹ 40% said that it had negatively impacted their willingness to stay in the current assignment, 42% said it had negatively impacted their willingness to extend the current assignment if offered the opportunity.

For governments looking to attract talent and boost their standing as a preferred business destination, the clear link between direct partner work authorisation, country attractiveness, family integration and well-being should be considered.

¹¹ Those surveyed were given the option of: no impact, positive, negative or prefer not to say.

LEARNING FROM THE PANDEMIC

The past few years have been challenging for mobile families. 17% of respondents reported that they had to live in a separate country from their partner due to Covid restrictions. 11% of all respondents said that they would not be willing to accompany their partner on another international assignment during a pandemic.

When asked to provide further insight on how the pandemic has changed attitudes and experiences, the responses fit into several themes. Many people had been through some very challenging months. Participants spoke of difficulties seeing family, some had lost family members and were unable to travel home. Respondents talked about feeling isolated and the detrimental impact on mental health and integration. Some highlighted that they had experienced strict Covid restrictions and quarantine. Several said they would give more consideration towards the host country's quarantine measures, healthcare provisions and medical facilities. The increased importance of having a dual income was also cited, for example if one person lost their job or was unable to work. The role of employers was highlighted with some partners experiencing less empathy than they had expected. For a number of respondents there were upsides, including more family time at home and increased teleworking opportunities.

The pandemic changed global mobility both for employers and for international employees. The family experience will no

doubt influence future assignments and attitudes to employing organisations and host countries. It follows that where there is increased attention to and care of mobile families, there are increased chances of assignment success.

“Based upon friends experience we would ensure we travel to assignments together so there is minimum risk of being separated. Too little thought is given to the physical and mental wellbeing of the spouse on assignment.”

“We have been unable to go back to our home country for over two years. We have not seen our families for that length of time too. The impact has been very bad – home schooling for 18 months, stuck inside a flat with very little support. It has not been easy”

“Teleworking has become more accepted and opened even many more doors in my current host country. I hope this will be more and more accepted at the long run everywhere.”

“Not seeing family or them being able to visit has been tough emotionally. My husband's mother died of COVID in the UK and not being able to get back for the funeral was just devastating: standing alone in our home watching the funeral online was so very surreal and painful with lasting impact. Now we will be much more cautious about considering another overseas placement.”

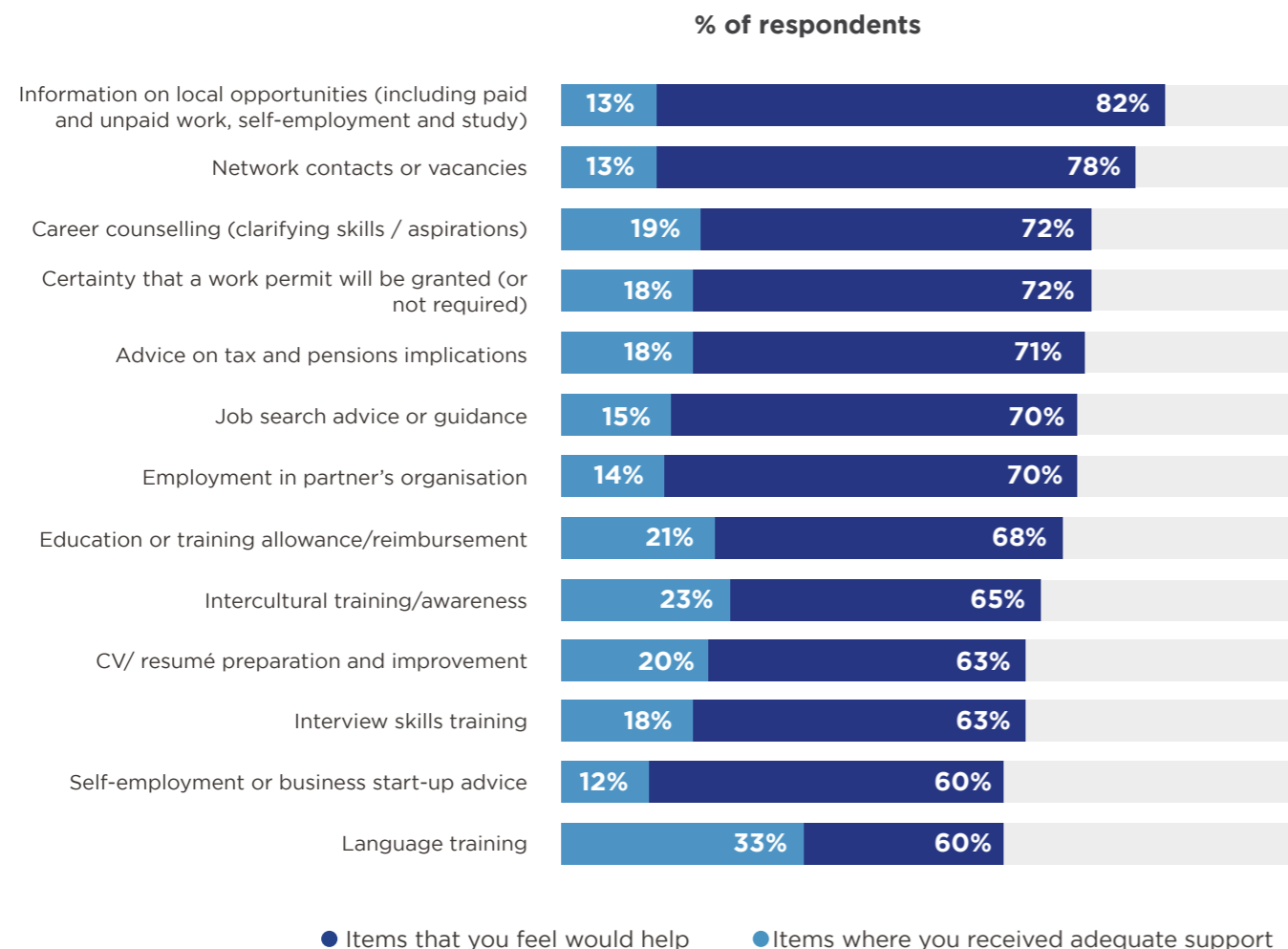
PARTNER ASSISTANCE

Help and support

There was a notable gap between where partners would like to receive employment and career help and whether they actually received it. The two most requested areas of support (information on local opportunities and network contacts or vacancies) also received the lowest instance of practical help. These figures may be useful to organisations considering expanding their support services for partners of

international employees. When asked for other suggestions, participants mentioned they would welcome career counselling from local experts, a better quality of language training and professional courses to help upskill. Respondents also said that they would really have valued support being proactively offered to them rather than being something they had to seek out.

When considering how to manage your career or employment upon relocation, please indicate all items that you feel would help and all items for which you received adequate support

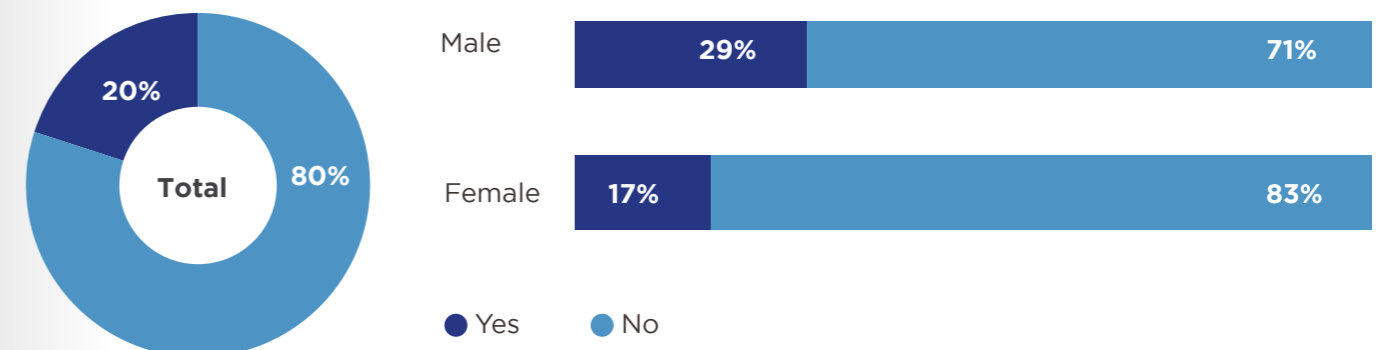


Communication with employing organisation

Only 1 in 5 partners had been given an opportunity to communicate their employment and career concerns with the international employee's company or organisation. This feedback is a clear opportunity for employers looking to

show their workforce that they are adopting a proactive, inclusive and more attentive approach to global mobility assignments and local hires.

Did your partner's employing organisation ever provide you with an opportunity to share your career concerns with them?



"Making it easier and clear for help with my career. I should NOT have to apply for help."

"Most of the above would help - including pre-assignment. It was a bit shocking to find out all of this after arrival - and I had to do all the hard finding out myself"

FURTHER INPUT FROM SPOUSES AND PARTNERS

Participants were offered the opportunity to give further feedback to employers, governments and to Permits Foundation. We received over 1000 replies. The selected comments reflect the issues most often raised.

Themes covered included: recognition of accompanying talent, how dual careers are becoming the norm, employer duty of care, early communication with families, diversity, equity and inclusion, health and well-being and the importance of streamlined and efficient processes.

If you could speak directly to employers about spouse and partner employment issues, what would you want to say or recommend?

“I would say please assume that spouses and partners are highly qualified individuals with much to add to the economy and community. Too often the assumption is that a dependent is just that - dependent and redundant - but more often than not they are highly skilled and experienced professionals in their own right.”

“Let’s change the narrative where one partner has to be the “leading” career and the other is not. This format is somewhat outdated in the modern world and many couples are truly dual-career with competing aspirations.”

“Relocation support is going to be necessary in the future as more and more families are dependent on dual incomes.”

“It’s nice to have an employer that worries about keeping the family together and that looks out after families in times of Covid. We’re very happy with how this has been handled with my husband’s employer.”

“I appreciate all support the company has provided so far to dual-careers to make decision of relocation an easier process. It would be more helpful if there was a dedicated service/department at the destination countries to support the spouse in language and cultural training, guidance on local employment regulatory requirements (tax, etc.).”

“Give very clear information on spouse opportunities before application for jobs and include spouses in conversations about visas/relocation/work permits early on, people have a variety of career backgrounds and want to continue working on their chosen career path. Being told to just work as an English teacher or yoga instructor for expats is not the support I want.”

“Provide clear information about the possibilities of employment at the beginning of the process would be key, so the spouse’s possibility to work can be recognized as important and be properly part of the decision process.”

“Give us CORRECT information in a timely manner.”

“It would be great if the organisation can help the spouses find employment within the organisation or other organisation in the host country based on their qualifications and experiences.”

“Keeping partner and dependants together.”

“I would want them to advocate on behalf of partners/spouses who are facilitating and supporting the careers of their employees with the governments of the countries in which they operate to allow them to work without restriction. We live in the 21st century, and most partnerships are dual career - yet in many cases spouses/partners lose years of career development and struggle to regain it. Sadly, it’s often women who end up impacted by this as moves coincide with growing families and it’s “easier” for the mother to take a career break.”

“They must support and lobby for legislations that allow spouses to work even if they have dependent status to attract and retain talent.”

“That every possible support is given as this makes a big impact on one’s ability to relocate or remain on the assignment longer.”

“To deny someone the basic right to work has a fundamental impact on their mental health (in my (HR) jobs I’ve dealt a lot with expat partners). The mental health of the

partner affects the mental health of the expat. If a partner develops a grudge against the company, the employee is very likely to leave. Many companies underestimate the effect relocation has on the partner.”

“Change documentation to be more clear about same-sex couples.”

“Untapped talent potential needs to be utilised for a society to be truly inclusive and diverse in its work and life aspects.”

“Dual career opportunities are one of the major aspect that motivates people, without the need of added cost to company. It provides financial stability to families, teaches our children work ethics and sets examples, makes them independent. If companies are serious about promoting women at work, which is likely a higher percentage of spouse population supporting relocating with their partners, they can actively help in promoting dual careers.”

“Be clearer in your communication documents about work opportunities. More assistance required in navigating paperwork. Better negotiation of spousal employment opportunities with host countries. Better welcoming support on incoming families.”

“There is a large pool of very experienced and capable talent amongst partners of international employees. This pool is currently underutilised, and demotivated by the lack of access to in country or remote opportunities.”

If you could speak directly to governments about work permits and employment for spouses and partners, what would you want to say or recommend?

“Please assume that spouses and partners have their own careers and much to add to the economy. Governments that do not allow work permits or local employment are missing out on highly skilled individuals who could make an impact in their own way.”

“Usually spouses also have a high level of education, can speak several languages and have a global-inclusive mentality. This potential shouldn’t be wasted.”

“Why don’t you allow partners to work, then they are able to contribute to the labour market and pay taxes?!”

“Highly-educated professional couples nowadays work as partnership, and value each other career. If one is granted a work permit, they expect that the other would have unfettered access to the job market. Anything less, is a dealbreaker.”

“Families need to be together, but permits sometimes lead to separation.”

“Partners should have work permits granted at the same time as the employee’s. It benefits every one and it helps the families adjust better.”

“Governments need to automate their processes and should make the process of getting the work permit transparent.”

“Sadly, the ones being impacted by slow processing of dependent visa work permits are most often women. You are contributing to the infantilization and financial dependency of women on men in the 21st century when one of the UNs sustainable development goals for 2030 is to increase gender equality.”

“Spouses have value to add to the economy. We don’t want to be burden on the government, we want to add value. High cost of living, especially rent, makes it impossible for single income families to thrive. We sacrifice so much, leaving our support structure behind, starting over in a new country - not being allowed to work, adds immense pressure on a family. It affects your self worth, and mental health and ultimately, your health as well.”

“We should all have the right to work without giving up any of our diplomatic status.”

“For many young, highly-educated and mobile couples, the automatic right to work and unrestricted access to the job market for the partner is a pre-requisite condition for a move. Following a change in the law, after our arrival, we are now cutting short the assignment. This has been very disruptive to us and my partner’s employer.”

Do you have any additional feedback for Permits Foundation?

“Thanks for raising awareness and your precious work.”

“Something I found particularly difficult while settling in to my first overseas assignment as an ‘accompanying partner’ (as opposed to on my own) was that employment prospects seemed rife but in reality were poor for me as a foreigner in country. Job boards were full of interesting roles on local pay bands, which I would have been very happy to take up but later realised I was not being considered. International pay bands were many times higher but jobs more restricted to internal recruitment, making it tricky to find work. The information available to me was so poor and I felt like I had no one to turn to. My partner’s employer were not interested, my partner helped how she could, friends could only give anecdotal advice. It was really difficult time, which I am glad is now over. I feel like I was very naïve to move country without considering this issue more thoroughly. I thought it would be fine and I would find a job! I have a very good CV for many jobs in national and international organisations in my host country, which I thought would be enough - I didn’t realise work permits would be such a painful issue.”

“Since my first expatriation (in 1998), it’s my first time that somebody is asking me how is it to be in a host country! Hope HR and decision-makers of my husband’s company will be informed about the importance of families well-being in a host-country! Thank you for your initiative!”

“Thank you so much for asking me and recognising these issues. It gives me hope for the future and a feeling that someone will advocate for us. For so long I feel like I’ve been screaming into the void.”

“This is my first encounter with Permits Foundation.”

“As an established professional with a masters degree, it has been so disappointing to not be able to work. My skill set is in high demand where we are located and I have had to turn down many job opportunities due to our work visa situation, it has put a financial strain on our family, not to mention, I miss my career.”

“Thanks for putting together this survey. It immediately lifted my spirits to feel like I have an advocate in your organisation. These questions seem to address every concern I have had in the past three years of being married and having to move countries twice and have two children in the process. I hope companies that have a large expatriation can make use of your findings and make the world a better place. It’s the little things!”

“Too little thought is given to the physical and mental well-being of the spouse on assignment.”

“I would love to know the results of this poll!”

CONCLUSION

It is striking to see that 14 years after Permits Foundation's first widescale international dual careers survey, many of the headlines remain the same. Accompanying partners are themselves highly-qualified and with experience in a broad range of sectors. With dual career families on the increase, the expectation pre-move is that both members of the couple should be able to work once in host country. Yet in 2022, we still find ourselves facing some difficult facts. Less than 50% of respondents say they were in employment post-relocation. With women still making up the majority of accompanying partners, there is clearly more to be done to improve diversity, equity and inclusion in the global workplace.

The low percentage of survey respondents in non-married or same-sex relationships is also a point of attention. A broader definition of family members eligible to access employment in host countries would go some way to making global opportunities more accessible to a wider demographic and would be welcomed by international employers – as shown in part 1 of the survey report.

A simple measure that would undoubtedly make a difference would be for governments to facilitate work access for accompanying dependants. Where there is a direct, clear and efficient process that allows partners to work incident to dependant status, families experience far greater health, well-being and integration outcomes. For companies the results are shown in the reduced number of failed

assignments and the increased attraction and retention of talent. Families are far less likely to consider leaving prematurely where the partner can access work. As a result, the host country becomes a preferred business destination, acquires a competitive edge and benefits from the skills and talent harnessed.

There is also an important role for employers. The survey results show a gap between the assistance that mobile families hope to receive and the experience on the ground. Most respondents never had an opportunity to share their work concerns with their partner's company or organisation. As part of the decision making process, partners would value information about work permit regulations in the prospective host country. At their destination, they would like to know there is a source of help available so that they don't feel abandoned to seek answers themselves. All of these measures could have a critical influence on the attraction and retention of talent, integration and well-being, as well as on country and company reputation.

Behind every set of data is a family and the hundreds of comments provided reveal the real life impact of global mobility policies in practice. Families have faced many difficulties in the past few years, experiences that will shape future choices. New ways of working are emerging. Value can be added where employers demonstrate duty of care. As well as offering individual help, there is much to be gained where organisations can get behind advocacy that will enable dual careers in the global workplace.

APPENDIX: ORGANISATIONS THAT EMPLOY THE SURVEY PARTICIPANTS' PARTNERS

- ABB
- Accor
- Adidasl
- AIB
- Alcon
- Alstom
- Alten
- Amazon
- AON
- Apple
- April
- ASPL
- Audil
- Austrian Government
- BAE Systems
- BAIC BJEV
- Baker Hughes
- Bayer Pharma
- BC
- Belgian Government
- Bentley
- Birlasoft
- BNP Paribas
- Booking.com
- Brueckner Group
- Brunswick Corporation
- BSP (Bank in Caribbean)
- Catalent Pharmaceuticals
- Centaur Technologies Inc.
- China France Bohai Geoservices Co.
- Coforge
- Commerzbank
- Covenant
- Daimler
- DICE
- dm
- Dowell
- DTAG
- Dutch Government, including embassies
- Electrolux
- EUROCAE
- European Investment Bank
- European Stability Mechanism
- EXL
- UK Government, including embassies, HM Revenue & Customs, Ministry of Defense, Royal Airforce, Royal Navy, National Crime Agency, Metropolitan Police
- Ford Motor Company
- FTI Consulting
- GIZ
- Google
- GSK
- HCL Technologies
- Hearst
- Heineken
- Highmark bcbs
- Hornbach
- IHI
- Infosys
- ING
- INSEAD
- IRISNDT
- Italdesign
- Intential
- Kempinski Hotels International
- Keysight
- LNG Canada
- L'Oréal
- McFarland Clinic
- McKinsey & Company
- M-I-LLC
- Microsoft
- Mohawk Industries
- Moody's
- National Savings Bank
- National University of Singapore
- Nayang Technological University Singapore
- North Caspian Operating Company
- Nike
- NTT Data
- NVIDIA
- OCBC Bank
- One Inc
- Oracle
- PayPal
- Pierre et Vacances Center Parcs
- ProBys
- QHSE Group
- Qualcomm
- Quantcast
- Randstad
- Riot Games
- Roche
- Royal Friesland Campina
- SAIC
- Santander Bank
- SAP
- Scania
- Schlumberger
- Schouten China
- Sean Brady Engineering and Fabrication
- Seat
- Shell Group
- Skoda
- Sky Tanking
- SPM
- Stryker
- Synpulse
- Tech-M
- Tesla
- Thales
- UN
- UNDP
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- UNIV
- World Meteorological Organisation
- Unilever
- United Healthcare Group
- University of Luxembourg
- University of Central Asia
- Uppsala University
- Value Labs
- Viginia Transformer Corporation
- Visa Inc.
- VMS Inc. Oncology Systems
- VW Group
- Walls Construction
- Wipro
- World Bank
- WPRS

This list is based on survey respondents answer to the question "On this current assignment, in which company/organisation is your partner employed?". Not all respondents chose to answer this question. Where the response was not clear, it was not included in this list.

About Permits Foundation

Permits Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit corporate initiative. We support global mobility by promoting direct work authorisation for spouses and partners of highly-skilled international employees. The Foundation raises awareness of best practice regulations around the world and advocates change through focused representations to governments.

This is one of a series of survey reports carried out by the Foundation, gathering feedback from partners and employers. All resources are available on the Permits Foundation website.

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