

Summary of
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Link4Skills Migrant Survey Handbook v2.0

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<http://link4skills.eu>



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Summary of

Link4Skills Migrant Survey Handbook

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This is a summary of the Link4Skills Migrant Survey Handbook, published in December 2025 by the Link4Skills research project. The Handbook documents each step of the survey design, implementation, data management, cleaning and anonymisation, outlines key ethical safeguards, and provides a brief overview of the dataset and key sample characteristics. The data originates from computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI)/ an online survey that was fielded in Austria, Germany, Poland and the Netherlands between January 2025 and June 2025, and in Canada between May 2025 and October 2025. The final sample size is 2,317. The survey was led by Erasmus University Rotterdam, with support from ICMPD, Toronto Metropolitan University (Canada), University of Osnabrueck/ IMIS, and Kozminski University (Poland). The Handbook covers detailed information for researchers who are interested in working with the dataset and offers inspiration for designing and implementing similar surveys among (skilled) migrants in destination countries.

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Purpose and target group definition

The Link4Skills Migrant Survey examines how medium- and highly skilled migrants from non-European countries in Austria, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and Poland think about staying in the destination country, returning or migrating onwards, and which factors shape these preferences. Skilled migrants are defined as individuals with post-secondary education or higher. It aims to inform state and private initiatives and feed the AI-assisted Link4Skills Navigator to improve fair skill flows and address shortages with a particular focus on the Link4Skills focus migration corridors and the sectors healthcare, construction and STEM.

Survey design

The online survey was designed based on an in-depth literature review of the drivers of medium- and highly skilled migration and follows the example of similar surveys (e.g., MIGNEX, EUMAGINE, THEMIS). The survey asked 65 core questions divided into five blocks: 1) Education and work (covering inclusion criteria), 2) move to the destination country, 3) experiences in the destination country, 4) future migration or staying preferences and underlying motivations, 5) socio-demographic characteristics. The survey was available in six languages (Arabic, English, French, German, Russian and Ukrainian). The median completion time was 22 minutes. The Handbook includes a full list of all variables, a blank questionnaire and details on how the survey was programmed in Qualtrics, detailing the use of expandable sections and mouseovers.

Data collection

The Link4Skills Migrant Survey used a purposive, non-probability design with indicative quotas by origin, education and sector to reach around 500 skilled migrants per destination country. Since no reliable sampling frames exist for the target group, representativeness was not feasible; instead, diversity was prioritised. Recruitment combined multiple channels: social media campaigns (Meta, LinkedIn, Facebook

groups), Prolific and other online platforms, partnerships with employers, expat and migrant organisations, service providers, schools, universities and personal networks, plus snowballing and some paper surveys. Strategies were tailored per country and corridor and adjusted weekly based on monitoring of sample composition and fieldwork experiences. Data collection ran from January to June 2025 in Austria, Germany, Poland and the Netherlands, and from May to October 2025. Before data collection commenced, we received ethical clearance from the DPAS Research Ethics Review Committee of Erasmus University Rotterdam (ETH2324-0932 and ETH2425-0467) and Toronto Metropolitan University's Research Ethics Board (REB 2025-044).

Brief data overview and key sample characteristics

The final non-representative sample comprises 2,317 respondents, mostly in the Netherlands (n=644), Poland (n=546) and Germany (n=508), with smaller numbers in Canada (n=448) and Austria (n=171). Highly skilled migrants dominate in all countries except Poland, which has a more mixed skill profile. Around 42 per cent were educated in STEM, 11 per cent in health and 6 per cent in construction; about half of workers are employed in other sectors. Respondents come from 117 origin countries, with focus corridors such as Ukraine–Poland and India–Netherlands well represented, though some targets (e.g. India–Austria, Ghana–Canada) were not fully met. Overall, 52 per cent of respondents are women, with an average age of 35.6 years. Migrants are relatively recent arrivals: average length of stay is 6.8 years, ranging from about 4 years in Germany to over 12 years in Canada.

Data availability

Data is repositied in the DANS Data Station Social Sciences and Humanities. The restricted-access version of the Link4Skills Migrant Survey will be available only for the Link4Skills consortium. There will also be an open-access version made available at the end of the project on 31 December 2026. All shared datasets will be fully anonymised and prepared in line with the ethical procedures described in the Handbook.

Citation of the restricted-access dataset:

Reinold, Julia; Engbersen, Godfried; Grabowska, Izabela; Chrol, Emil; Kyliushyk, Ivanna; Schwenken, Helen; Ullmann, Johanna; Maegan, Hendow; Huss, Daria; Triandafyllidou, Anna; Shirazi, Homayoun, 2025, "Link4Skills Migrant Survey Restricted Access", <https://doi.org/10.17026/SS/1IK0NT>, DANS Data Station Social Sciences and Humanities, v1