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## “Wissenschaft weltoffen 2024”

Since 2001, the DAAD has been analysing data on the internationalisation of studies, research and higher education from Germany as well as from particularly relevant countries and regions such as the USA, the United Kingdom or Asia. The current edition presents the most important results and graphics.

These include figures on international students in Germany, data on mobility behaviour, an overview of students' countries of origin and host countries as well as developments in the field of doctorates. Special data analyses shed light on the status quo and trends at universities and research institutes during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The study integrates international data from OECD and UNESCO as well as national data from the Federal Statistical Office in Germany. In combination with other indicators, it provides a valid basis for long-term analyses.

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A country's attractiveness as a study destination for internationally mobile students depends on a variety of aspects. In addition to reasons directly related to the university, subject and study programme, the politics, economy, culture and conditions in the respective study destination also influence students' decisions. "The Student Survey in Germany", which is conducted nationwide, asked respondents to indicate significant country-related reasons for studying in Germany. The following percentages and explanations refer exclusively to the international students who were pursuing a degree at a German university in summer semester 2021. International visiting students who were in Germany on temporary study-related visits were not taken into consideration on account of their special study situation.

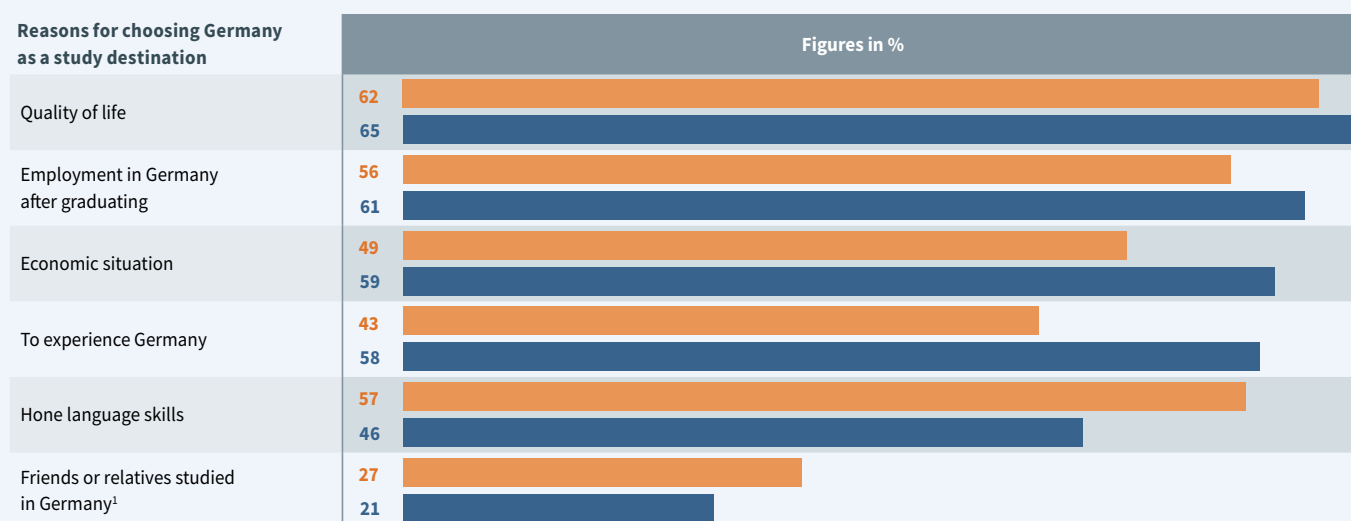
The international students' decision to study at a university in Germany was based on four main reasons: 65% felt that the high quality of life in Germany played a (very) important role. The importance of quality of life in choosing where to study is not a new finding: in the 21st Social Survey 2016, a remarkable 62% of international students regarded this aspect as important. Of equal weight for the study choice was their intention to take up employment after graduating in Germany. This objective was (very) important in determining the choice of host country for 61% of international students. The corresponding figure for 2016 was 56%, which means that the potential of international students who can see themselves working in academia in Germany has increased. Another aspect should be noted in connection with these two motives: some 59% of international students opted to come to Germany on account of

### Database

The Student Survey in Germany represents an amalgamation into a single study of three major, previously independently conducted, long-term studies on the definition and analysis of higher education and students at German universities – the Social Survey, the Student Survey of the University of Konstanz and "best – Studying with disabilities and chronic illnesses". The first wave of this new study, which will be repeated every four years, took place in the 2021 summer semester. The survey addressed a nationwide representative sample of all students at German universities apart from those at colleges of public administration. In total, approximately 188,000 students at 250 universities responded, including 11,100 international students. See also [www.die-studierendenbefragung.de/en/the-student-survey](http://www.die-studierendenbefragung.de/en/the-student-survey).

the economic situation here, a rise of ten percentage points over 2016. These developments show, firstly, that economic issues are becoming increasingly pivotal to international student mobility and, secondly, that Germany was perceived by students – at least at the time of the 2021 survey – as an economically stable country. Moreover, students' interest in Germany itself also looms ever larger in their choice of host country. 58% of international students indicated that they were studying here because they wished to experience Germany. In 2016, just 43% of

BS1 Selected reasons given by international students for choosing Germany as a study destination, in 2016 and 2021



Figures in %: 2016 2021

Values 4 + 5, on a scale from 1 = I strongly disagree to 5 = I totally agree.

Source: DZHW, The Student Survey in Germany 2021, 21st Social Survey

BS2 Selected reasons given by international students for choosing Germany as a study destination, by region of origin, in 2021

Reasons for choosing Germany as a study destination	Western Europe	Central and South Eastern Europe	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	North America	Latin America	North Africa and Middle East	Sub-Saharan Africa	Asia and Pacific
	Figures in %							
Quality of life	38	72	78	77	78	73	68	67
Employment in Germany after graduating	32	62	74	54	73	75	66	64
Economic situation	30	68	67	46	69	72	65	62
To experience Germany	29	54	63	70	66	61	57	72
Hone language skills	29	51	52	52	59	39	41	52
Friends or relatives studied in Germany <sup>1</sup>	18	18	26	12	31	32	38	28

Values 4+5, on a scale from 1 = I strongly disagree to 5 = I totally agree.

Source: DZHW, The Student Survey in Germany 2021

respondents cited this aspect. Although the motive may be based on very different reasoning, the increased interest probably corresponds to considerations regarding a professional future in Germany.

However, their interest in Germany does not necessarily imply that students' also wish to acquire the relevant language skills: 46% of international students embarked on a degree programme in Germany to hone their language skills, compared to 57% in the 2016 survey. Thus, some of the students who enrolled at a German university in order to be able to work in Germany afterwards did not grant equal importance to gaining appropriate proficiency in German, at least when embarking on their degree. Lastly, 21% of international students decided to study in Germany because friends or relatives<sup>1</sup> had already studied here. Studying in Germany had clearly been communicated to them as a positive experience. In some cases, these friends or relatives were still in Germany and the students were thus – quite reasonably – hoping that they would help them gain a foothold at university and in society. In 2016, this share was even higher, at 27%. Nonetheless, the currently lower figure also illustrates the potential of international alumni associations.

Varying motives are mainly observed among students from different regions of origin. For students from Central, South Eastern and Eastern Europe, the quality of life, the economic situation and learning the language were of above-average significance. Eastern European students were most likely to indicate that embarking on a degree was

connected to their intention to pursue employment in Germany. They evidently believe that studying here will open doors for a professional career in Germany. This aspect played a somewhat less major role for students from Central and South Eastern Europe, possibly because the EU membership of most of these countries, and the associated freedom of movement, means that moving to Germany is always an option. While all aspects under review were of exceptional importance for students from Latin America in choosing a host country, North American students made their decision first and foremost with regard to the high quality of life, their interest in Germany and learning the language. The economic situation and taking up employment in Germany were less significant for them. Just roughly one in ten stated that their decision was influenced by the study experience of friends or relatives. Students from North Africa and Middle East were particularly strongly guided by the quality of life, economic situation and career prospects when deciding to enrol in Germany. This also applies to a somewhat lesser extent to students from Sub-Saharan Africa, for whom the reference to friends and relatives having studied in Germany is especially typical. The sizeable group of students from Asia and Pacific is characterised by the fact that their choice of host country is particularly likely to be determined by their interest in Germany and also in learning the language. By contrast, it is striking that students from Western Europe seldom cited any of the motives listed in the survey. This indicates a comparatively high proportion of students, for whom only one or two of the reasons presented were decisive in choosing to study in Germany.

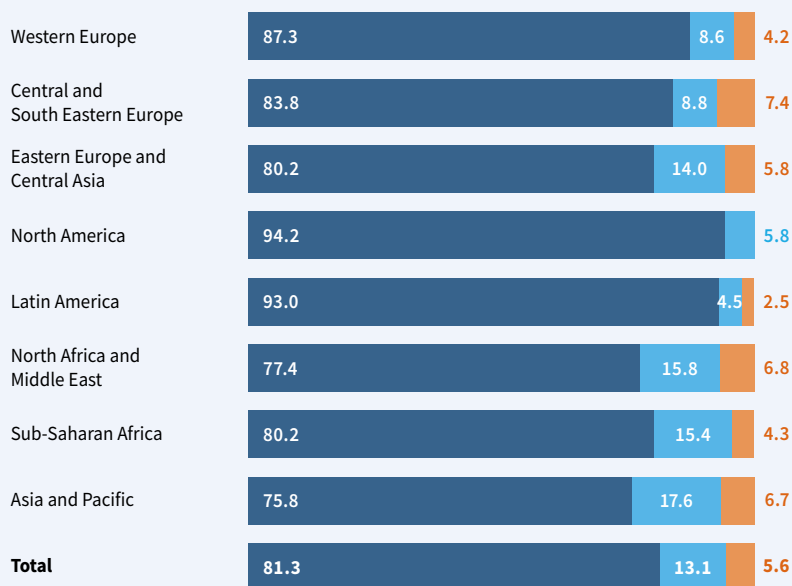
One aspect that is likely to be crucial for respondents' motivation and study satisfaction is being able to feel safe as an international student in Germany. The vast majority of 81% of international students felt (very) safe in Germany in the 2021 summer semester, despite the pandemic. It may be assumed that, for quite a few international students, this aspect is one of the reasons for choosing Germany as a study destination. There were no major differences between the various regions of origin in this regard. Students from North America (94%), Latin America (93%) and Western Europe (87%) felt particularly safe, whereas students from Asia and Pacific (76%) and North Africa and Middle East (77%) were slightly less so.

Feeling accepted in Germany is another major requirement for consistently strong motivation among international students. Here again, with a score of 58%, the majority of international students felt (very) welcome. 27% had to make concessions and 15% felt hardly or not at all welcome. As with the other findings on study motivation and study satisfaction, it may be assumed that these assessments were heavily influenced by the exceptional conditions that were dictated by the pandemic at the time of the survey, in the summer semester 2021. The limited study programme and the reduced opportunities for personal encounters and direct exchanges will certainly have affected the lifestyle and well-being of some international students.

Without doubt, a high level of study satisfaction is crucial for academic success. At the same time, 74% of international students declared that they were (very) satisfied with the subject knowledge gained in the 2021 summer semester. 18% only agreed to some extent, while 7% were slightly or very dissatisfied with their increased knowledge and skills. Fewer differences can be observed between students in early and late study phases than between students from different regions of origin. Whereas those from Latin America (83%) and Western Europe (82%) were more likely than average to be satisfied, the figure was lower for students from North America (65%), Asia and Pacific (69%) as well as North Africa and Middle East (70%). Besides academic achievements, this assessment is obviously also influenced by students' expectations and requirements, based on the educational experience in their countries of origin.

The overall satisfaction expressed by international students with regard to their visit to Germany was at a similar level. 71% claimed to be (very) satisfied, 21%

BS3 International students feeling safe in Germany, by region of origin, in 2021<sup>2</sup>



Figures in %: (Very) safe To some extent Hardly/not safe at all

Values 4 + 5, 3 and 1 + 2 on a scale from 1 = not safe at all to 5 = very safe.

Source: DZHW, The Student Survey in Germany 2021

were partially satisfied and 8% were slightly or very dissatisfied. Above-average levels of satisfaction were found among students from Eastern Europe and Central Asia (82%), Latin America (81%) and Western Europe (77%). Conversely, lower satisfaction scores were given by students from North America (64%), North Africa and Middle East plus Asia and Pacific (67% each).

In addition to general study satisfaction, many individual study aspects were sometimes rated very differently. Respondents reported a very high level of satisfaction with regard to the specialist expertise of the teaching staff. 85% of international students were (very) satisfied. Although most respondents also rated other aspects positively, they were somewhat more restrained in comparison to subject expertise. 67% were satisfied with the preparation and teaching of the curriculum, 60% each with the

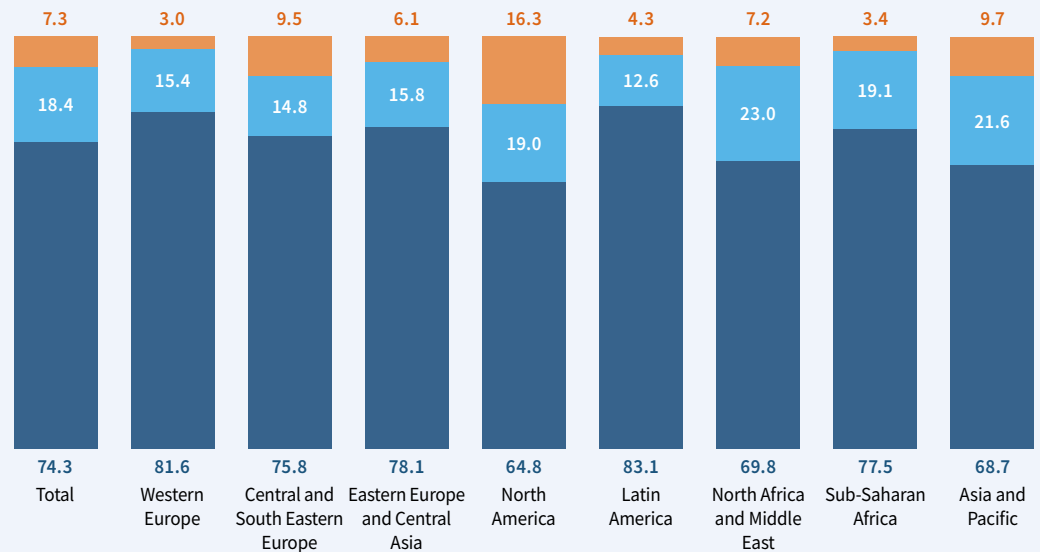
### \* Footnotes

- 1 In the 2016 survey, this reason was worded as "Friends/acquaintances have studied in Germany".
- 2 Deviations from 100% are due to rounding.
- 3 Domestic students refer to students holding German citizenship and Bildungsinlaender.

support and advice provided by the teaching staff as well as the climate and atmosphere in the study programmes, and 59% in terms of the organisation and structure of the study programmes. Moreover, 64% of students took a favourable view of the overall studying conditions, compared to 61% of their domestic fellow students<sup>3</sup>. With regard to individual aspects, they are more critical of the organisation and structure of the study programmes (55%), the teaching of the curriculum (53%), plus the support and advice provided by the teaching staff (48%). On the other hand, they viewed the specialist expertise (87%) and the climate and atmosphere in the study programmes (67%) somewhat more positively. It should be noted with regard to the satisfaction scores for both international and German students that they are affected, in part at least, by their experience during the pandemic.

There are marked contrasts between the study programmes leading to different types of degrees. For example, some international students in master's programmes were a great deal more satisfied with the teaching of the curriculum (72% vs. 59%), the support (64% vs. 53%) and the climate in the study programmes (62% vs. 57%) than their fellow students in bachelor's programmes. For degree programmes leading to a state examination, this applies above all to assessments of the overall studying conditions, with 70% of international students expressing their satisfaction.

BS4 Satisfaction with subject knowledge gained among international students, by region of origin, in 2021<sup>2</sup>

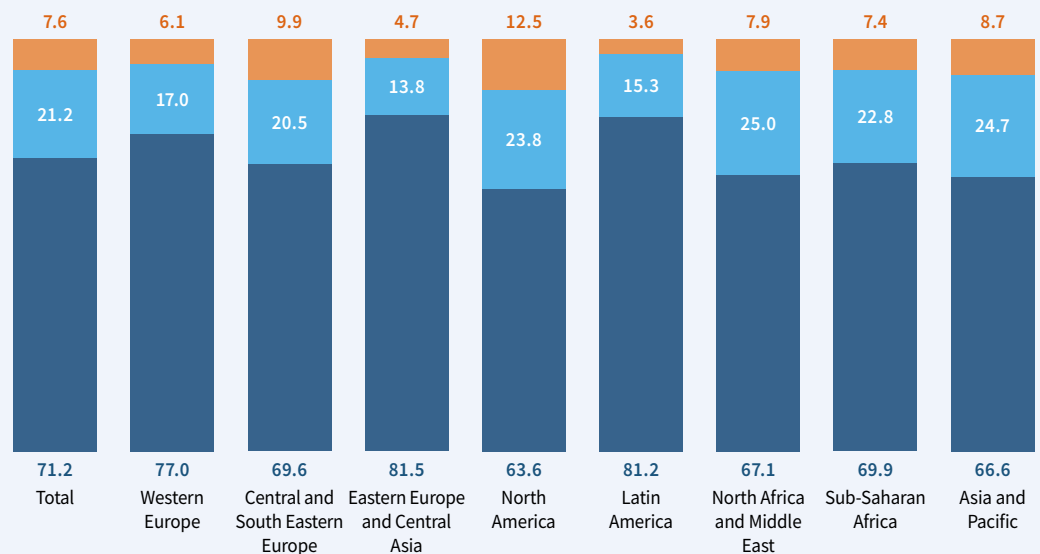


Figures in %: (Very) satisfied To some extent Slightly/very dissatisfied

Values 4 + 5, 3 and 1 + 2 on a scale from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied.

Source: DZHW, The Student Survey in Germany 2021

BS5 Overall satisfaction with their visit in Germany among international students, by region of origin, in 2021<sup>2</sup>

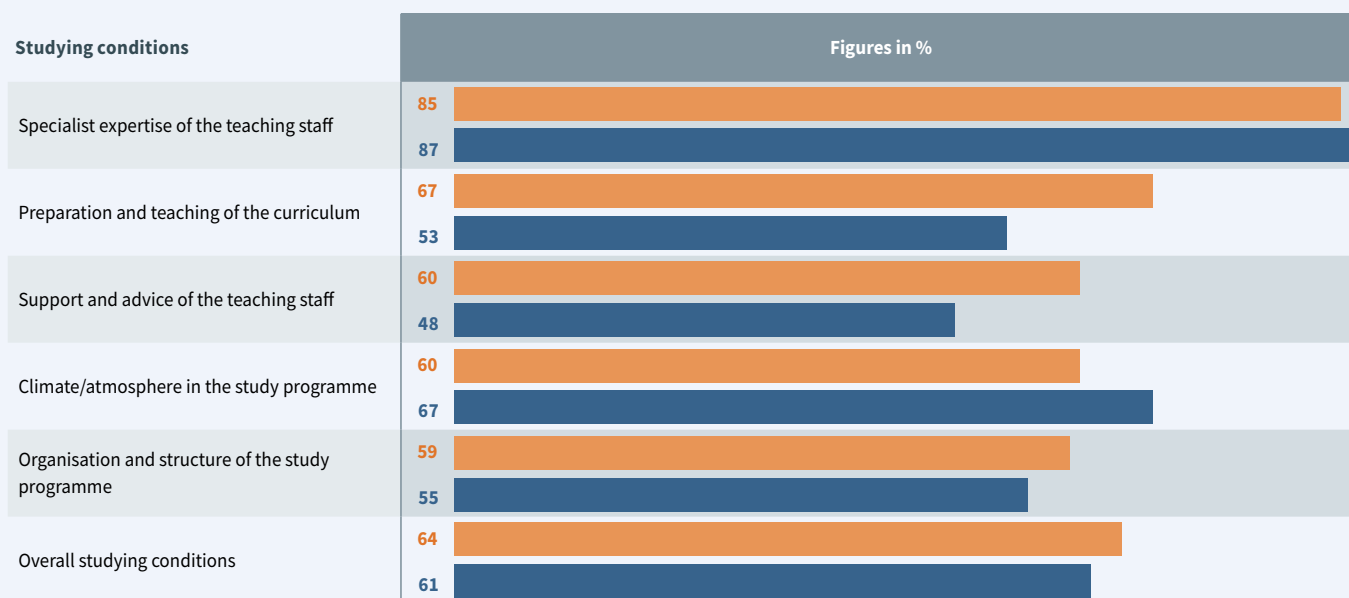


Figures in %: (Very) satisfied To some extent Slightly/very dissatisfied

Values 4 + 5, 3 and 1 + 2 on a scale from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied.

Source: DZHW, The Student Survey in Germany 2021

BS6 High level of satisfaction with selected studying conditions among international and domestic students, in 2021<sup>3</sup>



Figures in %: ■ International students ■ Domestic students

Values 4 + 5 on a scale from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied.

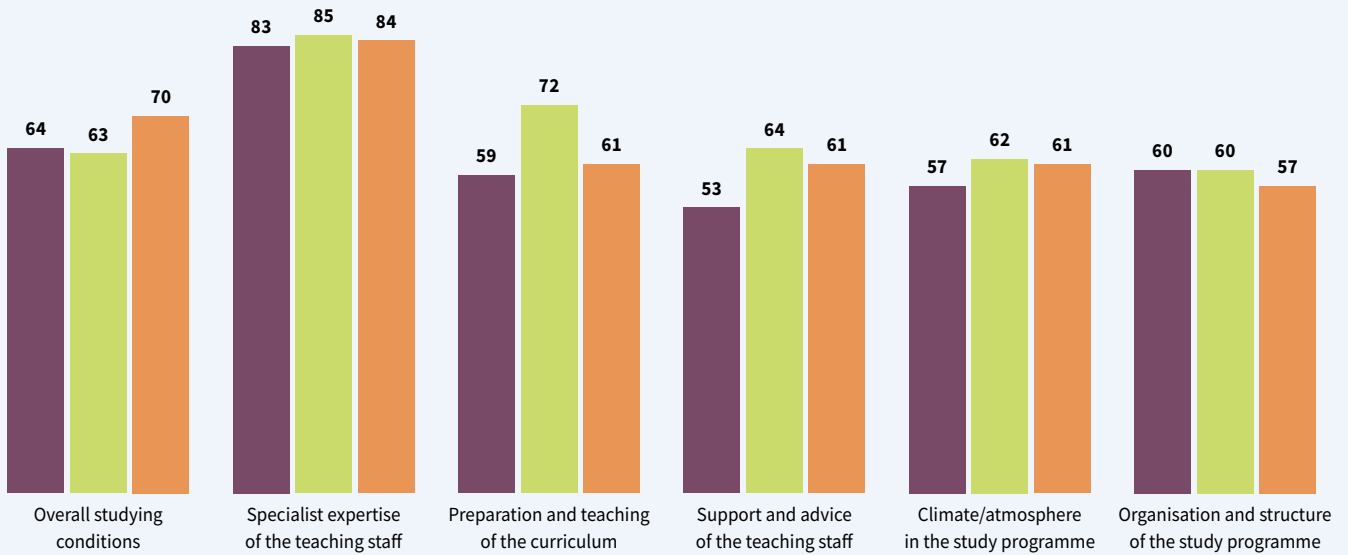
Source: DZHW, The Student Survey in Germany 2021

The varying study experiences of international students are the decisive factor as to whether, and to what extent, they would recommend studying in Germany to their friends and acquaintances. In summer semester 2021, 78% – the overwhelming majority – stated that they would recommend pursuing a degree at a German university. A remarkable 49% had no reservations whatsoever, answering “definitely”. 16% were undecided and 6% found it unlikely or could not imagine making such a recommendation under any circumstances. Thus, in summer semester 2021, the number of international students who would recommend Germany as a study destination was higher than the number of those who were satisfied with their visit or with the overall study conditions. Other country-related aspects obviously figure prominently in terms of a recommendation. However, it should not be overlooked that dissatisfaction with the studying conditions clearly decreases the proportion of international students who would recommend Germany as a study destination. Students from North America (68%) and Asia and Pacific (73%), whose satisfaction

with certain aspects was lower, were more reluctant to give such a recommendation. By contrast, students from Western Europe (82%), Central and South Eastern Europe (83%) plus Latin America (88%), whose satisfaction scores tended to be high, were also more likely than average to believe they would recommend Germany as a study destination.

A summary of the findings shows that Germany is highly regarded as a study destination by the majority of international students. The high quality of life, good economic situation and the option of taking up employment after graduating in Germany are key factors in the country’s attractiveness. Students felt very safe in Germany during the summer semester 2021 and expressed a high degree of study satisfaction. Nevertheless, considerable variations can be observed between students from different regions of origin. Above all, students from the two key regions of origin for Germany, North Africa and Middle East plus Asia and Pacific, were less satisfied with the conditions of their visit and studying in Germany.

BS7 Satisfaction with selected studying conditions among international students, by type of degree, in 2021

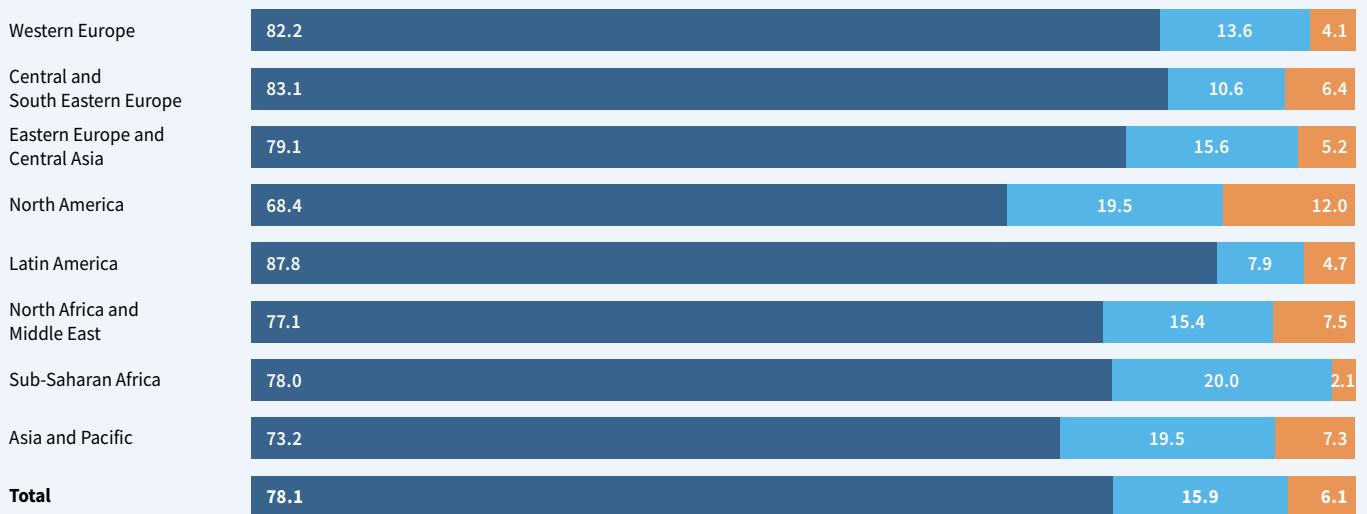


Figures in %: Bachelor's Master's State examination

Values 4 + 5 on a scale from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied.

Source: DZHW, The Student Survey in Germany 2021

BS8 Share of international students who would recommend Germany as a study destination to their friends and acquaintances, by region of origin, in 2021<sup>2</sup>



Figures in %: Definitely To some extent Unlikely/definitely not

Values 4 + 5, 3 and 1 + 2 on a scale from 1 = definitely not to 5 = definitely.

Source: DZHW, The Student Survey in Germany 2021