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SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

The profile of Moldovan citizens who have the potential for legal migration to Bulgaria

Under the Project *"Fostering of legal migration from Moldova and Georgia to Bulgaria"*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the profile, motivations, challenges, and expectations of Moldovan citizens considering migration to Bulgaria. The demographic profile of respondents indicates that potential migrants are predominantly young adults, with a relatively balanced gender distribution and diverse educational backgrounds. A significant proportion of respondents are either unemployed or students, underscoring the role of economic opportunities and educational advancement as key migration drivers. Family responsibilities also play a role in shaping migration decisions, as individuals seek better living conditions and improved financial stability for themselves and their dependents. Language proficiency emerges as both an asset and a challenge—while Russian is widely spoken, limited Bulgarian proficiency may create barriers to employment and social integration.

Work experience and employment backgrounds among respondents reveal distinct migration motivations based on occupation and industry sector. Younger individuals and students largely view migration as an investment in their education and future careers, while professionals seek higher salaries and more stable employment. Skilled and unskilled workers, particularly those with prior migration experience, regard Bulgaria as a viable labor destination. The findings highlight a dual narrative—migration is both an opportunity for those seeking upward mobility and a continuation of existing labor mobility patterns among those with prior migration experience.

Migration motivations are shaped by a combination of employment prospects, education opportunities, and personal considerations. While some respondents perceive migration as a pathway to professional development, others, particularly unemployed or low-income workers, see it as an economic necessity. Proximity to Moldova, cultural familiarity, and legal accessibility further influence migration preferences. These findings illustrate that migration decisions are multifaceted, driven by both pragmatic and aspirational factors.

Potential migrants anticipate various challenges, which differ based on their prior migration experience, employment status, and familiarity with legal procedures. The most frequently cited concerns include securing employment, navigating administrative and legal processes, and overcoming financial constraints. Those with prior migration experience, such as former labor migrants, focus on job security and working conditions, while first-time migrants are more concerned about bureaucratic requirements and financial preparedness. The study underscores the need for enhanced access to migration resources, particularly job placement services and legal assistance, to improve migration outcomes.

Support needs among respondents emphasize employment assistance, legal guidance, and housing support as critical areas of intervention. While some migrants are open to structured informational resources, such as expert-developed guides and training events, many prefer to rely on personal networks or direct employment opportunities. This divergence in preferences highlights the importance of flexible support mechanisms that accommodate both first-time migrants and those with previous migration experience.

Employment preferences among respondents indicate strong interest in trade, education, hospitality, and construction sectors. However, many respondents remain uncertain about their ability to secure employment in Bulgaria, underscoring the need for better access to job market information. Most respondents expect equal pay and workplace rights, yet concerns persist regarding the additional costs associated with migration. Employment security remains a key determinant in migration decision-making, influencing both the willingness to migrate and long-term settlement prospects.



Despite a general awareness of migration opportunities in Bulgaria, only a small proportion of respondents have taken concrete steps toward relocation. Many remain in an exploratory phase, assessing the feasibility of migration based on employment prospects, administrative challenges, and financial considerations. Notably, the majority of respondents would not actively recommend migration to Bulgaria, citing concerns about job security, salaries, and bureaucratic difficulties. These findings suggest that while Bulgaria presents opportunities for certain groups of migrants, it is not universally perceived as a straightforward or highly desirable migration destination. Future policies and support programs should focus on improving access to employment opportunities, streamlining legal procedures, and addressing financial barriers to enhance the attractiveness and feasibility of migration to Bulgaria.



BACKGROUND

Traditionally, Bulgaria has been a country of emigration, with more citizens leaving than migrants arriving. National statistics now show that net migration has been positive since 2020.¹ However, while immigration is gradually increasing, it remains low compared to the rest of the EU countries.

In terms of asylum governance, Bulgaria established its State Agency for Refugees (SAR) in 1992. SAR is responsible for granting international protection. Some integration measures for both third-country nationals (TCNs) and beneficiaries of integrational protection are included in the overall National Strategy on Migration of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2025.²

According to Eurostat's Migration and migrant population statistics, as of 1 January 2024, there were about 64 600 third-country nationals (TCNs), representing 1% of the population, and another 18 600 EU citizens (0.3%) living in Bulgaria at the time.³

According to the European Migration Network (EMN)'s 2022 country factsheet for Bulgaria, in 2021, the most residence permits issued to TCNs in Bulgaria were related to family reunification (35.4%), work (21.3%), and studies (11.3%).⁴

Further detailed statistical data is available in the EMN 2022 country factsheet for Bulgaria, with insights about the age and gender of TCNs, the most common types of residence permits issued and international protection statistics.⁵

In terms of citizenship, a total of 7 410 foreigners acquired Bulgarian citizenship in 2022⁶, national statistics reveal. In line with national priorities, the top countries of origin among these naturalised citizens are countries which have traditionally had Bulgarian minority populations: the Republic of North Macedonia (1 992), Ukraine (1 639), Serbia (556) and Albania (517). In addition, as of 2022, Turkey is also part of this list (1 290). No aggregated data on Bulgarian citizens with third-country background has been made available.

The Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Moldova signed an agreement on the regulation of labour migration in 2018. The agreement is meant to facilitate labour migration between the two countries for several categories of workers.⁷

¹ <https://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/3072/външна-миграция-по-възраст-и-пол>

² https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/national-strategy-migration-republic-bulgaria-2021-2025_en

³ https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-bulgaria_en

⁴ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-08/EMN_Factsheets2022_BG_0.pdf

⁵ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-08/EMN_Factsheets2022_BG_0.pdf

⁶ <https://www.president.bg/docs/1674645834.pdf>

⁷ https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/agreement-between-bulgaria-and-moldova-regulation-labour-migration_en



METHODOLOGY

Aim and objectives

The aim of this study is to identify and analyse the specific characteristics and motivations of Moldovan citizens who have the potential to legally migrate, and stay in Bulgaria. The findings will inform the development of targeted information campaigns and training events, enhancing the effectiveness of initiatives designed to support potential migrants.

Objectives of the study:

- To identify the demographic and personal characteristics of Moldovan citizens who are considering legal migration to Bulgaria, including factors such as age, health conditions, and other individual traits relevant to employment.
- To assess the educational background, specializations, and qualifications of potential migrants, distinguishing between levels of education and fields of expertise.
- To examine the work experience and other professional experiences of potential migrants.
- To explore the reasons driving Moldovan citizens to consider legal migration to Bulgaria, including the various legal pathways available for migration.
- To identify the challenges faced by Moldovan citizens in pursuing legal migration to Bulgaria.

Study design

This study employs a mixed-methods design to comprehensively explore the profile of Moldovan citizens who have the potential for legal migration to Bulgaria. The research includes both quantitative and qualitative components, combining a structured survey and in-depth interviews. The survey provides broad quantitative data, while the interviews offer deeper insights into the motivations and challenges faced by potential migrants.

Setting

The study was conducted within the Republic of Moldova, targeting Moldovan citizens who are considering or have the potential to legally migrate to Bulgaria. Respondents were mainly located in Chisinau, the capital of Republic of Moldova, Taraclia and Comrat (cities inhabited by ethnic Bulgarians).

Study population

The study population comprises Moldovan citizens aged 18 and above who are either actively considering migration to Bulgaria or are eligible to do so. The quantitative component involved 100 participants, while the qualitative component included 3 in-depth interviews with selected individuals who met the study criteria.

A non-probability sampling approach, encompassing both “convenience sampling” and “snowball sampling” was used to recruit participants. The following socio-demographic criteria as migration intentions, sex, age, living environment, as well as studies and occupation, were considered during participant selection. The methodology ensures heterogeneity of data and the inclusion of respondents from different regions.



Research tools development

Both tools were developed based on a review of existing literature and consultations with migration experts.

The research tools were developed by the researcher in collaboration with EI team and consist of a structured survey (Annex 1) and an interview guide (Annex 2). The survey includes questions on demographics, educational background, work experience, motivations for migration, and challenges faced in the migration process. The interview guide is designed to elicit more detailed responses on these topics, allowing for a deeper understanding of individual experiences and perspectives, so an open-ended list of questions will be used. The research tools were developed in English and then translated to Romanian and Russian. Special attention was paid to how the questions are formulated to avoid misunderstandings.

Data collection

Data was collected in two phases:

1. Survey – 100 surveys were administered on paper.
2. In-depth interviews – 3 interviews were conducted via audio calls.

The data was collected with the voluntary participation of respondents and observing ethical standards in qualitative research. All data was collected and analysed by the researcher that developed the research tools and is familiar with the research topic. In total, 103 respondents were interviewed.

All persons were asked for their voluntary participation in the study. The respondents were briefed on the study aims and participation conditions, and afterward were asked to give the informed consent. Informed consent in Romanian or Russian was obtained from the respondents prior proceeding with the data collection (both for surveys and IDIs). The respondents were able to choose the language that is most familiar to them. They were provided information about the study in the language understood by them and had the opportunity to discuss the purpose of the study. They were informed that their decision to participate or not to participate in the survey would not affect the migration process and that they have the right to stop his/her participation in the survey at any moment.

On average, a survey lasted for 15-20 minutes, and an in-depth interview lasted for 30-45 minutes.

The surveys and interviews were carried out mainly in two languages – Romanian and Russian. All the surveys answers are stored in a SPSS file while all the interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the respondents. Afterwards, the interviews were transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis

Quantitative data from the survey was analysed using statistical software (SPSS) to identify trends and correlations within the population. Descriptive statistics were used to outline the demographic and professional characteristics of the participants.

The qualitative data from the interviews were analysed thematically, with the goal of identifying key themes and subthemes related to the motivations, challenges, and experiences of potential migrants.

The analysis of this report was written in English.



Data protection and ethical considerations

The protection of patient confidentiality is essential, the research was carried out in line with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.⁸

The information obtained from surveys and interviews is kept safe and secured, without any access to third parties. The collected data does not include the name of the respondents or other information that might identify the person. Codes were generated based on the order number in which the data was collected, specifying the sex, the age and the occupation of the respondents.

After data analysis, all primary documents related to the study were archived. The collected data and the report will be kept for at least five years after the end of the study. The study results, including all the obtained data are under the ownership of the EI.

Study limitations

Given the limited number of surveys designed for this study and the use of non-probabilistic sampling methods, the data collected may have certain limitations, particularly regarding the representativeness of the results. However, despite these constraints, the study's objectives – to outline a general profile and describe the main characteristics of Moldovans considering migration to Bulgaria – were successfully met. As a result, the findings and recommendations derived from this study remain valid and relevant for operational decision-making and the development of related policies.

⁸ <https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/>

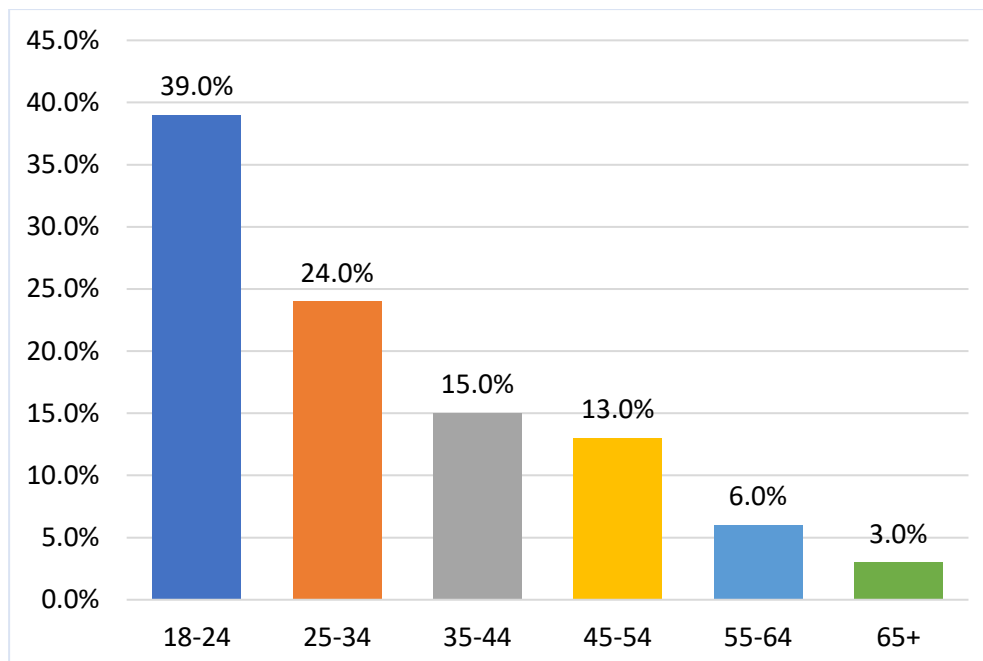


I. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

1.1 Age distribution

The survey data reveals that the majority of respondents (39%) fall within the 18-24 age group, followed by 24% in the 25-34 category (see Figure 1). The proportion of participants decreases with age, with 15% in the 35-44 group, 13% in the 45-54 group, 6% in the 55-64 range, and only 3% aged 65 and above. This indicates that the majority of Moldovan citizens considering migration to Bulgaria are young adults, likely in the early stages of their careers or education. The low percentage of respondents aged 55 and above suggests that migration intentions diminish with age, potentially due to factors such as family stability, established careers, or a lower likelihood of seeking employment abroad.

Figure 1. Age distribution



For younger respondents, migration is often perceived as an opportunity to pursue education and build a professional future abroad. Many students, like a respondent from Taraclia, see Bulgaria as a viable choice due to cultural familiarity and educational opportunities. However, migration is not solely a concern for young individuals. Adults in their late 20s and 40s also express interest in migration, often driven by economic factors. A 28-year-old unemployed man from an urban area considers Bulgaria for work after previous experiences in Germany and Poland, while a 43-year-old teacher from Chisinau hopes for better salaries and improved job prospects. This diversity in motivation underscores how migration appeals to different age groups for varying reasons.

“I always knew I wanted to study abroad, and Bulgaria was the most obvious choice. The education there is much better, and I already have family who can help me adjust.” (M, 20 years old, student, rural resident)

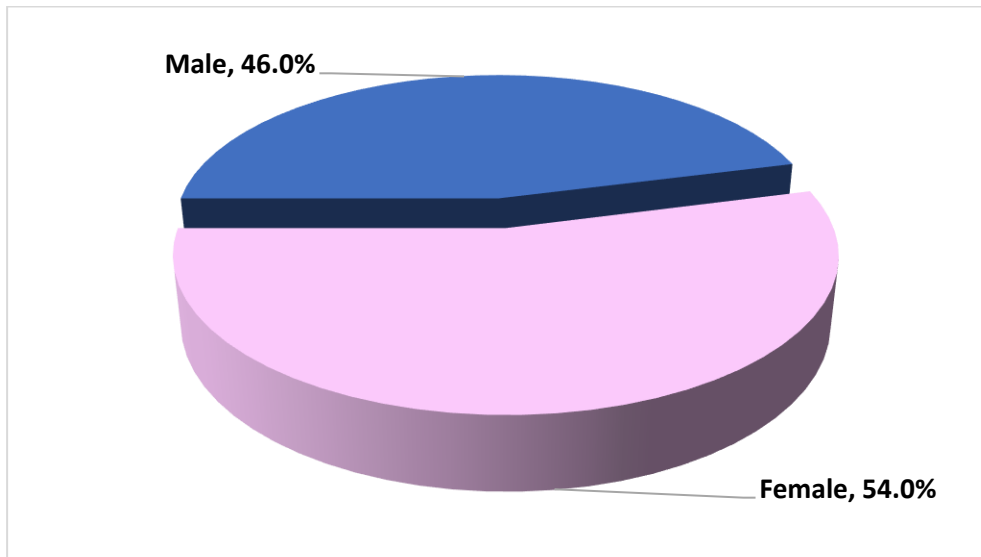
1.2 Gender distribution

The gender distribution of respondents is relatively balanced, with 54% identifying as female and 46% as male (see Figure 2). This balance suggests that both men and women consider migration as a viable opportunity, possibly influenced by similar economic and personal motivations. Given that migration trends in many contexts show higher rates of male labor migration, the significant



female representation in this study may indicate a growing trend of women seeking employment or educational opportunities abroad.

Figure 2. Gender distribution



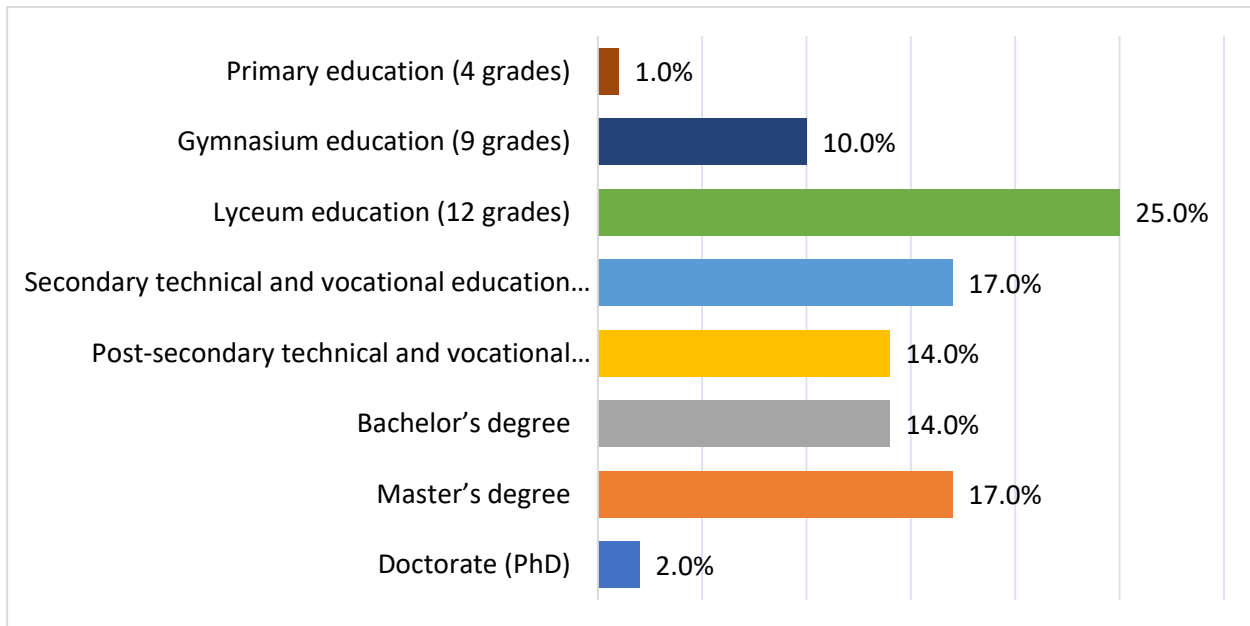
The motivation for migration differs slightly between genders. Male respondents, like a 28-year-old unemployed man, see migration primarily as an opportunity for stable employment. Having already worked in Germany and Poland, he hopes that Bulgaria will provide similar work prospects. Meanwhile, female respondents are often driven by financial security for their families. A 43-year-old teacher from Chisinau, for example, sees Bulgaria as a promising destination due to its proximity to Moldova and the possibility of higher wages in the education sector. These differences suggest that while both men and women seek better economic opportunities, their personal circumstances shape their migration choices.

“I want to live in a European country, but I don’t want to go far from home. Bulgaria seems like the right option for me because it offers better opportunities, and I don’t speak Romanian, so Romania isn’t an option.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

1.3 Educational background

The respondents exhibit a diverse range of educational qualifications (see Figure 3). The largest proportion (25%) has completed lyceum education (12 grades), followed by 17% with secondary technical and vocational education. Additionally, 14% have obtained a bachelor’s degree, and another 17% have completed a master’s degree. Only 2% hold a PhD, and 1% have completed only primary education. This data suggests that a significant number of potential migrants possess secondary or vocational education, which may indicate a focus on semi-skilled or skilled labor migration. The relatively high percentage of respondents with university degrees suggests that some individuals may be considering migration for higher-skilled employment opportunities or further academic pursuits in Bulgaria.

Figure 3. Educational background



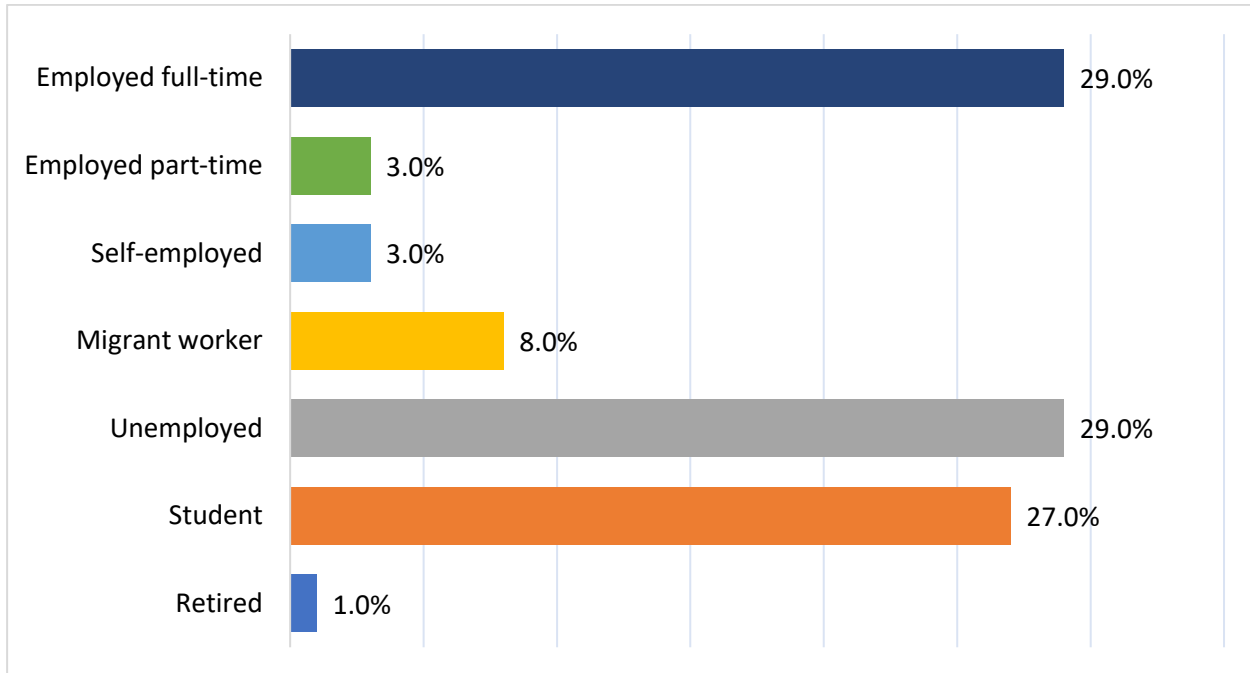
Education plays a central role in migration decisions, especially among younger respondents. Many view Bulgaria as a place where they can achieve academic aspirations that may not be possible in Moldova. For some, like the student from Taraclia, studying in Bulgaria is a way to improve long-term career prospects. However, other respondents with lower educational qualifications, such as the 28-year-old unemployed man, view migration as an opportunity for job security rather than academic advancement. In contrast, a 43-year-old teacher with advanced education sees Bulgaria as a place to continue her professional career with better financial rewards.

“The schools here are not bad, but for university, I feel like I need to go elsewhere. Bulgaria has much better opportunities.” (M, 20 years old, student, rural resident)

1.4 Employment status

Employment status varies significantly among respondents (see Figure 4). The largest groups include full-time employed individuals (29%) and unemployed persons (29%), followed closely by students (27%). A smaller proportion consists of migrant workers (8%), part-time employees (3%), and self-employed individuals (3%). The presence of a large unemployed group, combined with a significant student population, suggests that economic and career prospects are key drivers of migration interest. Those who are unemployed may view Bulgaria as a potential job market, while students might be exploring opportunities for continued education or entry into the labor force. The small percentage of migrant workers indicates that while some respondents already have migration experience, most are still in the consideration phase.

Figure 4. Employment status



Among those seeking work, perspectives vary. A young student aims to continue his studies in Bulgaria, expecting job opportunities to follow. A middle-aged teacher, on the other hand, views migration as a means to access better-paying employment while staying close to Moldova. Meanwhile, an unemployed man with experience in the construction industry sees Bulgaria as a viable work destination, inspired by acquaintances who successfully found jobs through the National Employment Agency.

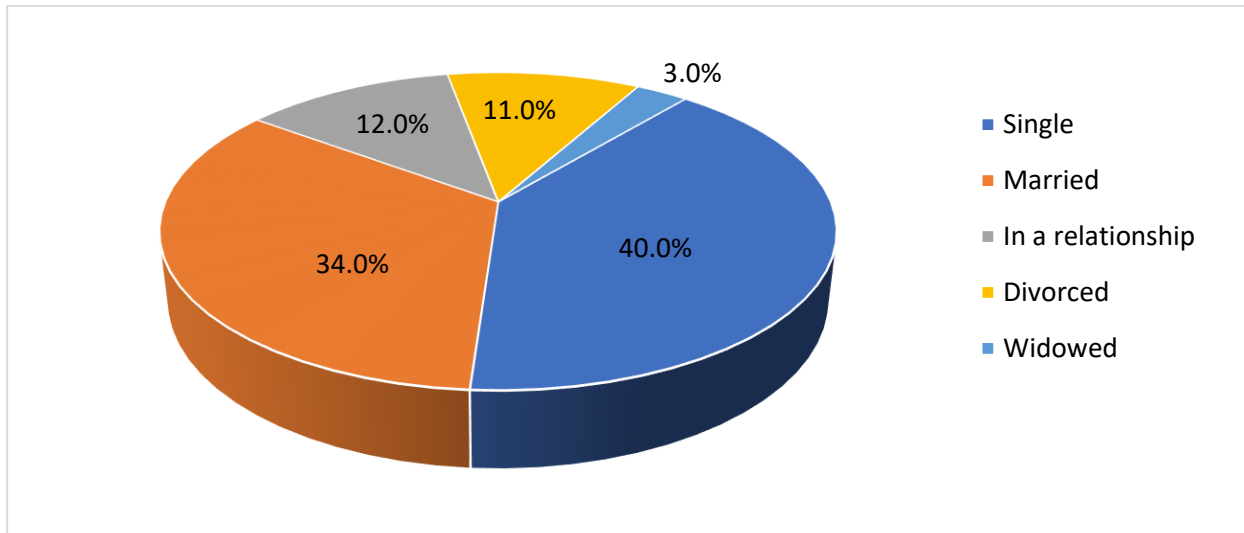
“I worked in construction in Germany and Poland, and now I want to try Bulgaria. I know people who found jobs there through the National Employment Agency, and I want to see if I can do the same.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

1.5 Marital status

The majority of respondents are either single (40%) or married (34%) (see Figure 5). Additionally, 12% are in a relationship, 11% are divorced, and 3% are widowed. Single respondents, who make up the largest proportion, may be more open to migration due to fewer family constraints and greater flexibility in career and personal choices. Meanwhile, married respondents and those in relationships may be considering migration for family reunification or improving their economic conditions together. The 11% of divorced respondents might be seeking new opportunities abroad, possibly influenced by financial independence or personal changes following their marital status shift.



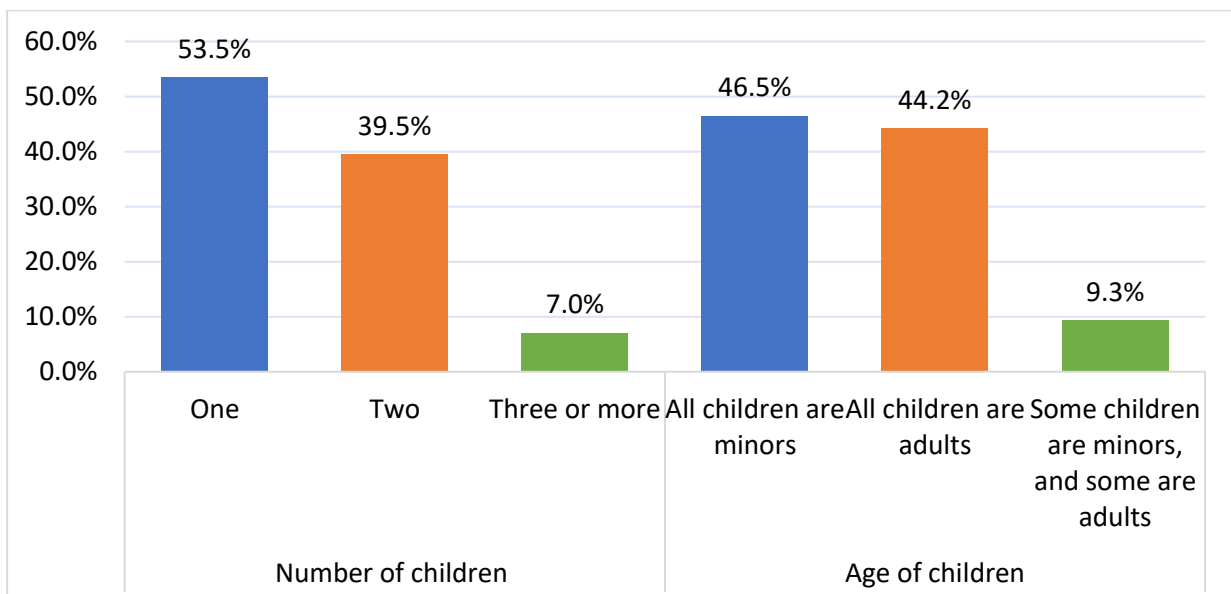
Figure 5. Marital status



1.6 Parental status

A total of 43.4% of respondents have children, while 56.6% do not. Among those with children, most have one (53.5%) or two children (39.5%), with a minority having three or more (7%). In terms of child dependency, 46.5% have only minor children, 44.2% have only adult children, and 9.3% have both minor and adult children (see Figure 6). These findings suggest that family considerations play a significant role in migration decisions. Respondents with minor children may be particularly concerned about factors such as educational opportunities and healthcare availability in Bulgaria. Conversely, those with adult children may be considering migration for economic reasons without the burden of child-rearing responsibilities.

Figure 6. Number and age distribution of respondents' children



Family responsibilities are an important factor in migration decisions. Many parents, particularly those in their 40s, view migration as a way to provide better opportunities for their children. A 43-year-old teacher with two children is one such example. She hopes that relocating to Bulgaria will allow her to secure a better-paid teaching job, ensuring financial stability for her family. Meanwhile, younger migrants without dependents, such as the 28-year-old unemployed



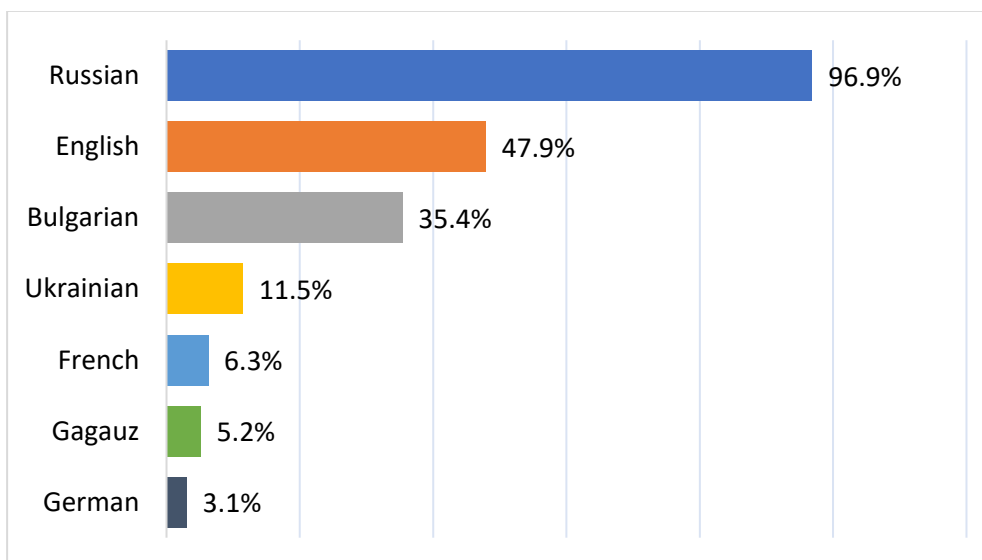
respondent, may be more flexible in their migration decisions, prioritizing job opportunities over family concerns.

“I love my job, but the salary is too low. It’s hard to support my children. I want them to have a better future, and Bulgaria is close enough that I don’t have to completely uproot their lives.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

1.7 Language proficiency

Language proficiency is a critical factor in migration readiness. Impressive 96% of respondents reported speaking a foreign language other than Romanian. Among them, Russian is the most commonly spoken language (96.9%), followed by English (47.9%) and Bulgarian (35.4%). Other languages spoken include Ukrainian (11.5%), French (6.3%), German (3.1%), and Gagauz (5.2%) (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Foreign languages spoken



In terms of language proficiency levels, the majority of Russian speakers (83%) have an advanced (C2) level, while English speakers are more evenly distributed across intermediate levels (B1 – 34%, B2 – 23.4%). Bulgarian speakers show varying proficiency, with 29.4% at the advanced (C1) level and 23.5% at the intermediate (B2) level. The significant percentage of respondents with Russian proficiency suggests that linguistic adaptability may not be a major concern for those planning to migrate to Bulgaria, given the presence of Russian-speaking communities in the country. However, the lower percentage of Bulgarian language proficiency indicates that many respondents may face challenges in professional and administrative integration unless they acquire further language skills.

Language ability can significantly influence migration prospects. While some respondents, like the student from Taraclia, speak fluent Bulgarian and expect an easy transition, others face language barriers. The 28-year-old unemployed man, for example, may need additional language training to secure stable employment in Bulgaria. The 43-year-old teacher, despite her fluency in English, does not speak Romanian, which limits her options in neighboring Romania but makes Bulgaria a more suitable choice.

“I speak Bulgarian fluently, and we keep a lot of Bulgarian traditions in our village. I don’t think language will be a problem for me.” (M, 20 years old, student, rural resident)

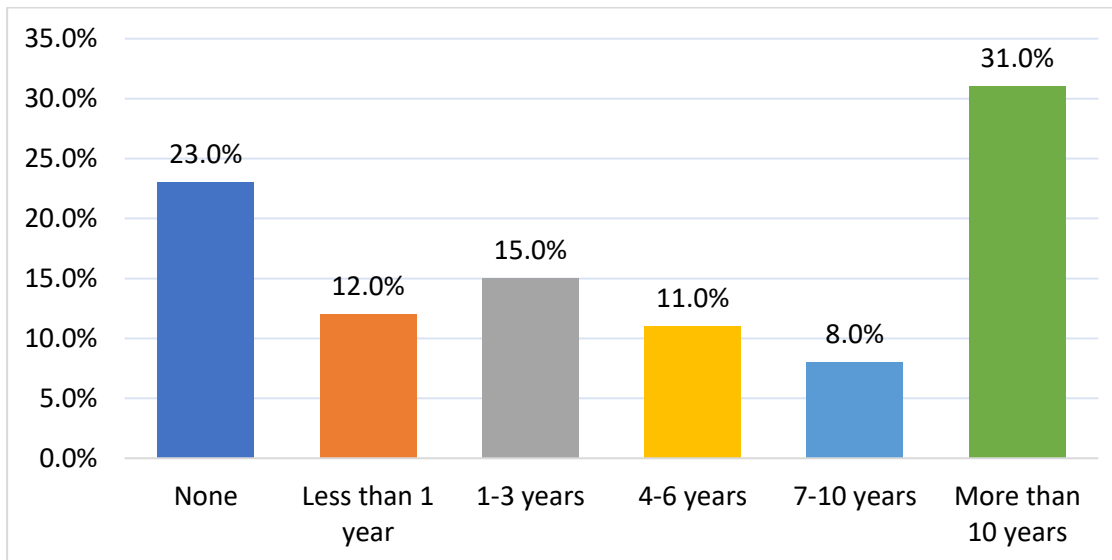
II. WORK EXPERIENCE AND EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND

2.1. Work experience



The survey data indicates that work experience among respondents varies significantly. A notable portion, 23%, reported having no work experience, while 12% have less than one year of experience (see Figure 8). The largest group, 31%, have more than 10 years of work experience, highlighting a significant number of individuals with established careers. Additionally, 15% have 1-3 years of experience, 11% have 4-6 years, and 8% have between 7-10 years. This diversity suggests that while some respondents are new to the labor market, others have substantial professional experience that could influence their migration decisions.

Figure 8. Work experience of respondents



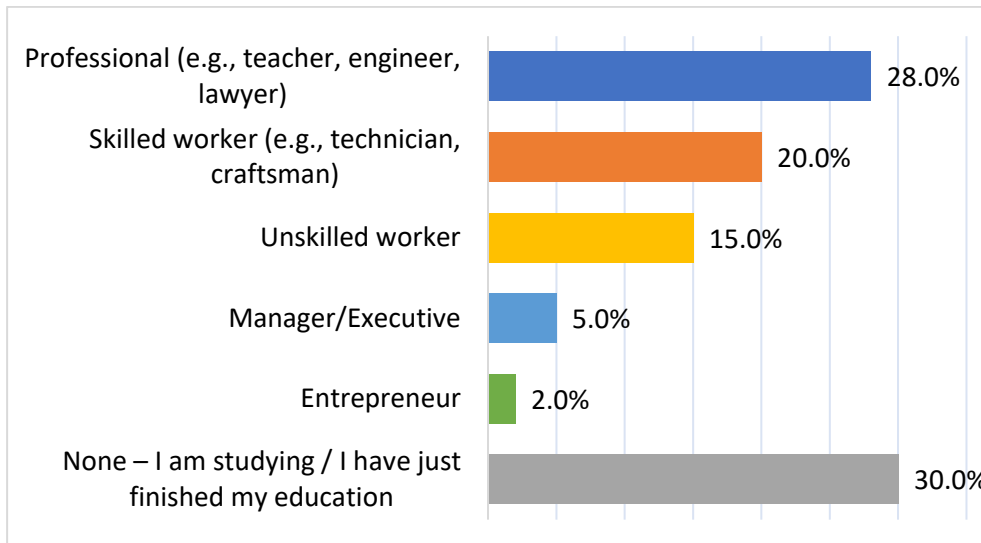
The qualitative data reveals that motivations for migration differ based on experience levels. Those with no or limited experience, such as students and young job seekers, view Bulgaria as an opportunity to start their careers. The 20-year-old student from Taraclia, for example, sees Bulgaria primarily as an educational destination but acknowledges the long-term benefits of securing employment after graduation. On the other hand, mid-career professionals and skilled workers, such as teachers or construction workers, see migration as a means of securing better-paying jobs or advancing their careers. A 28-year-old unemployed man, for instance, has previously worked in construction in Germany and Poland and is now considering Bulgaria for similar opportunities. Meanwhile, a 43-year-old teacher with extensive experience is hoping to leverage her skills in the Bulgarian education system to secure better income and stability.

“For years, I have worked as a teacher, but the salary in Moldova is not enough to provide for my family. If Bulgaria offers better opportunities, why not try?!” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

2.2. Occupational background

Respondents reported a diverse range of occupations. The largest group (30%) are students or recent graduates with no formal work experience, while 28% are professionals, such as teachers, engineers, or public servants (see Figure 9). Skilled workers account for 20%, while unskilled workers make up 15%. A smaller percentage (5%) identified as managers or executives, and 2% as entrepreneurs.

Figure 9. Occupation of respondents



The interviews highlighted that the occupation type significantly impacts migration motivations. Students, such as the 20-year-old respondent from Taraclia, prioritize education but may eventually enter the labor force. Professionals, like the 43-year-old teacher, hope to continue working in their fields while securing better pay and stability. Conversely, unskilled workers and those with vocational training often seek migration as a means to improve financial conditions through manual labor jobs. The unemployed respondent, for instance, has experience in construction and sees Bulgaria as a viable work destination. This highlights the different ways migration is perceived depending on occupational background.

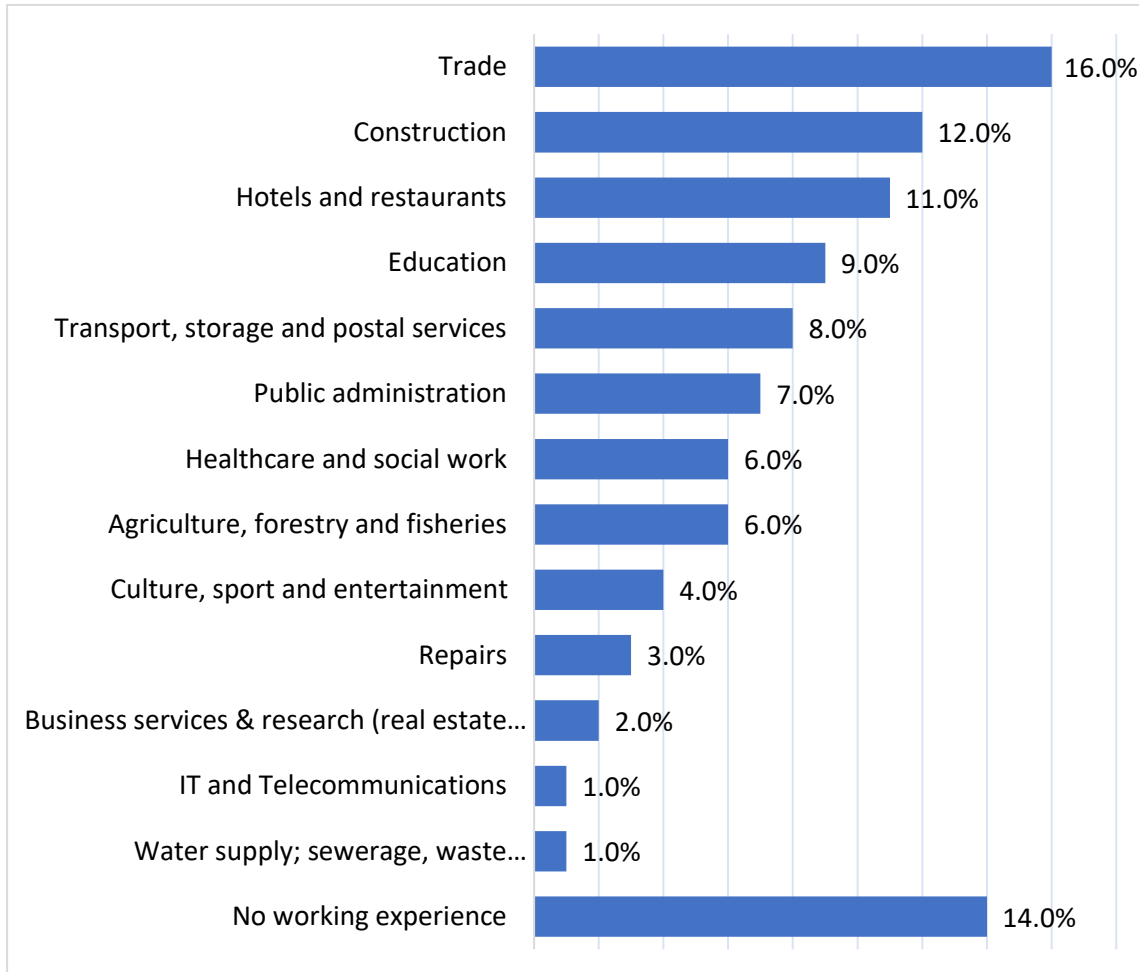
“I want to live in a European country, but I don’t want to go far from home. Bulgaria seems like the right option for me because it offers better opportunities, and I don’t speak Romanian, so Romania isn’t an option.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

“I have worked in different manual jobs before, and I think Bulgaria will be a good place for me to continue. There are always construction jobs available.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

2.3. Industry and sector of employment

When analyzing the industry sectors, 16% of respondents have experience in trade, 12% in construction, 11% in hospitality (hotels and restaurants), and 9% in education (see Figure 10). Other notable industries include transport (8%), public administration (7%), and healthcare (6%). A total of 14% reported having no prior work experience.

Figure 10. Employment sector of respondents

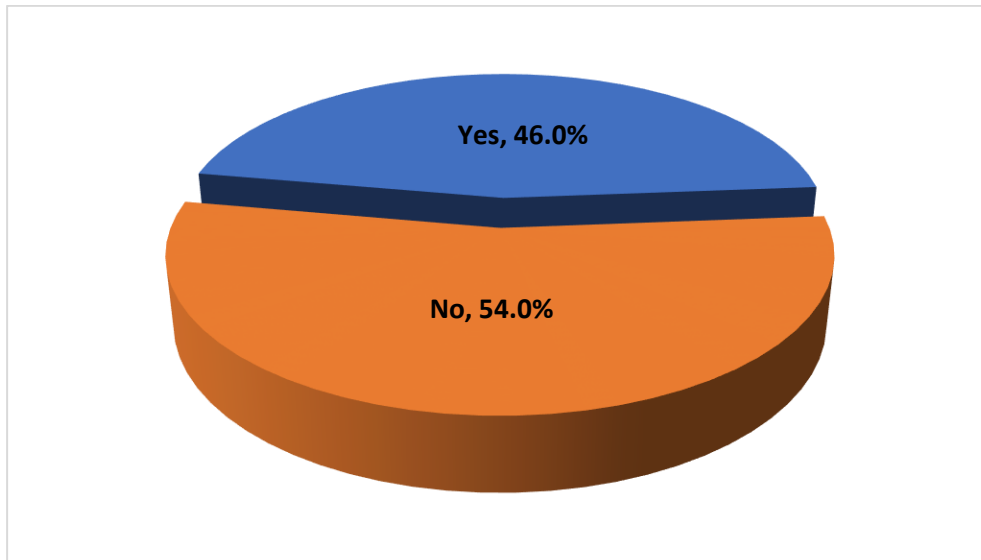


2.4. Work experience abroad

The data shows that 46% of respondents have worked abroad, while 54% have not (see Figure 11). This suggests a relatively balanced division between those who have prior migration experience and those considering it for the first time.



Figure 11. Work experience abroad



Among those with experience abroad, motivations for migration tend to be more pragmatic. The 28-year-old respondent, for instance, has already worked in Germany and Poland, giving him prior exposure to labor migration. He sees Bulgaria as another option for employment. In contrast, the 43-year-old teacher has no prior migration experience but is considering Bulgaria for economic reasons. Lastly, the 20-year-old student has not worked abroad yet but is open to the idea after completing his studies.

“I speak Bulgarian fluently, and we keep a lot of Bulgarian traditions in our village. I don’t think language will be a problem for me.” (M, 20 years old, student, rural resident)
“I have never worked abroad, but I have friends who moved. It’s something I am considering seriously now.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

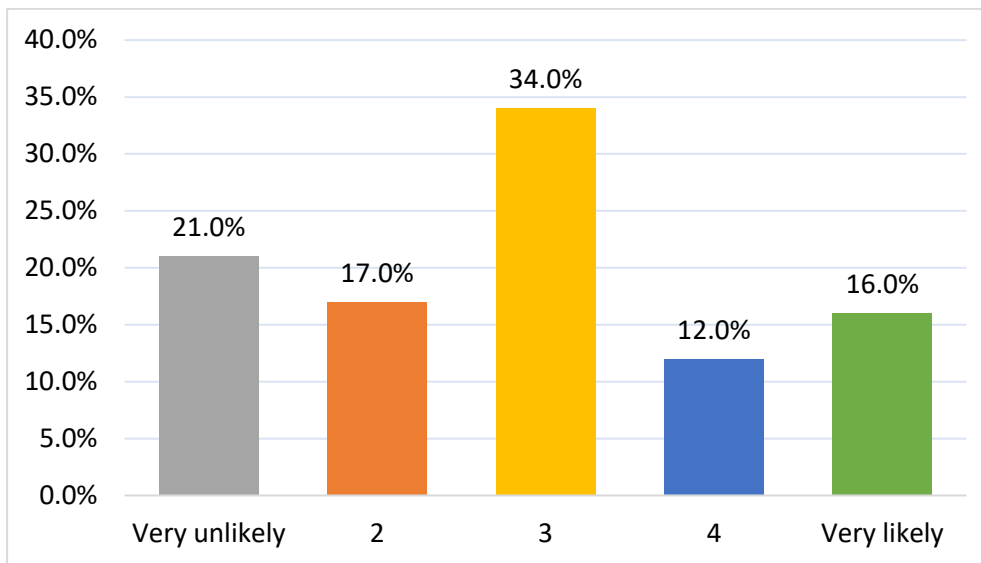
III. MOTIVATIONS FOR MIGRATION TO BULGARIA

3.1. Likelihood of migration

The responses indicate varied levels of commitment to migrating to Bulgaria within the next two years. A significant portion, 34%, selected a neutral response (3 on a 1-5 scale), suggesting uncertainty or a willingness to explore opportunities before making a final decision (see Figure 12). Meanwhile, 16% of respondents indicated they are very likely to migrate, and 12% rated their likelihood at 4, showing a high degree of intent. On the other hand, 21% stated they are very unlikely to migrate, and 17% leaned toward the lower end of the scale (rating 2), reflecting concerns or hesitations about migration.



Figure 12. Likelihood of migration to Bulgaria



The variation in migration likelihood reflects differing personal circumstances and motivations. Younger respondents, such as the 20-year-old student from Taraclia, view Bulgaria as a destination for higher education, making them more likely to consider migration in the near future. In contrast, the 28-year-old unemployed respondent, having prior migration experience, evaluates Bulgaria based on job availability and earnings potential. Meanwhile, the 43-year-old teacher is weighing financial prospects against the challenge of relocating her family. These different perspectives highlight that migration decisions are shaped by both economic necessity and long-term aspirations.

“I already spoke to my uncle, he lives in Sofia, he suggested I come in May, earn some money during the summer and then start studying in Autumn. I think this year I will breathe sea air.” (M, 20 years old, student, rural resident)

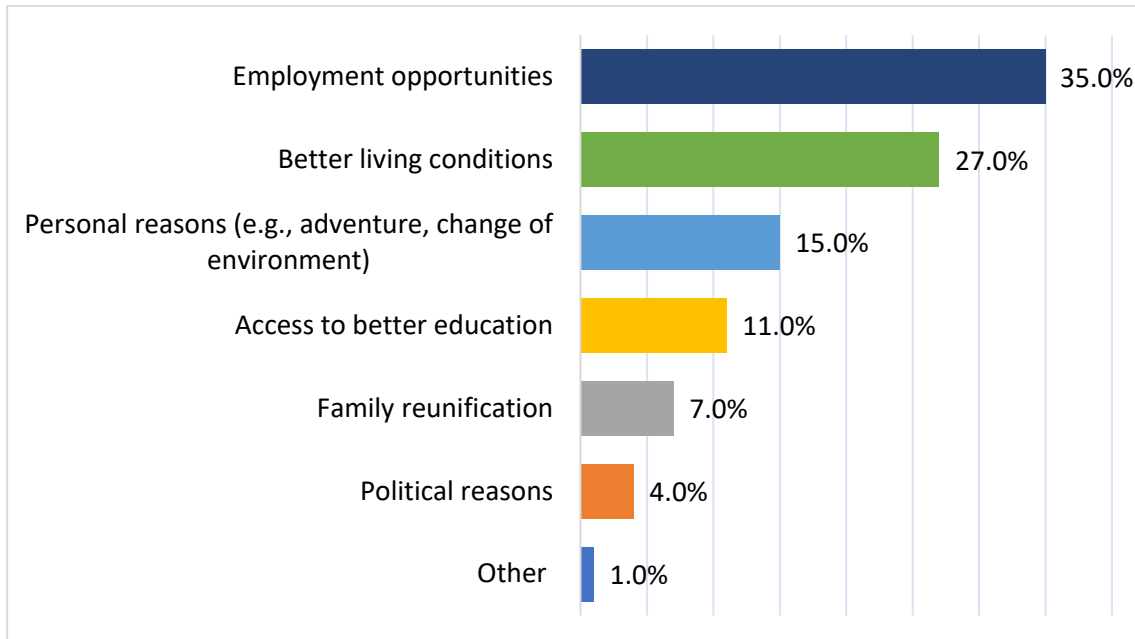
“If I can find a stable job, I’ll move without hesitation. I just need to make sure it’s worth it.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

3.2. Primary reasons for considering migration

Employment opportunities were cited as the most common reason for migration (35%), followed closely by better living conditions (27%) (see Figure 13). Education was the primary factor for 11% of respondents, while 16% indicated personal reasons, such as adventure or a change in environment. Family reunification (7%) and political reasons (4%) were less commonly cited.



Figure 13. Primary reasons for migration



Employment and financial security remain the dominant drivers of migration. The 28-year-old unemployed respondent, for example, is seeking a construction job in Bulgaria after previously working in other European countries. Similarly, the 43-year-old teacher is motivated by the potential for higher wages and a more stable economic situation. On the other hand, the 20-year-old student is part of the group prioritizing education, as he plans to attend university in Sofia. Additionally, some respondents, especially those with no immediate economic concerns, are drawn to Bulgaria for personal reasons, such as seeking new experiences or a different lifestyle.

“Of course, I need to establish some new contacts in Bulgaria first. But, from what I have heard, in European Union they pay teachers much more than what I receive here.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

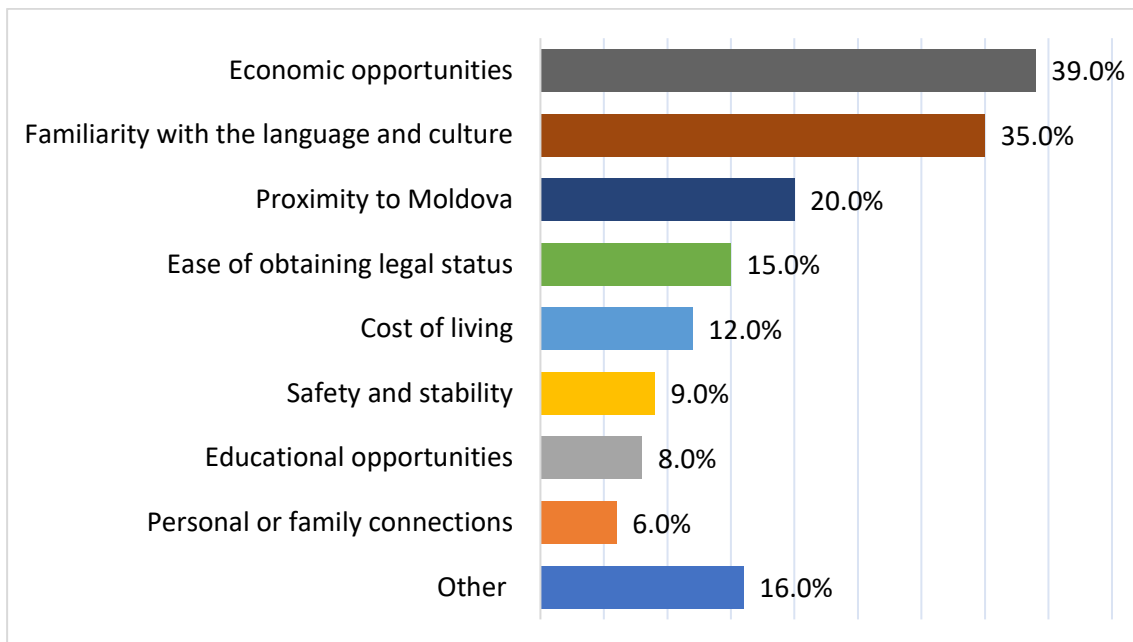
“I have worked abroad before, and I know the routine. If I find something stable, I’ll go.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

3.3. Reasons for choosing Bulgaria over other countries

When asked why they preferred Bulgaria over other European destinations, 39% cited economic opportunities, while 35% pointed to familiarity with the language and culture (see Figure 14). The ease of obtaining legal status was a key factor for 15% of respondents, while 20% valued Bulgaria’s proximity to Moldova. Other motivations included cost of living (12%), safety and stability (9%), and educational opportunities (8%).



Figure 14. Reasons for choosing Bulgaria



The influence of cultural and linguistic familiarity is evident, particularly for Bulgarian-speaking respondents such as the 20-year-old student from Taraclia, who already feels at home in Bulgaria. The ease of integration plays a significant role in migration decisions, especially for individuals who may struggle with language barriers in other European countries. Economic opportunities, however, remain the most cited factor, suggesting that financial considerations continue to outweigh cultural and legal aspects for most respondents. The 28-year-old unemployed respondent, for instance, views Bulgaria as a logical work destination due to its relatively accessible labor market and connections with Moldova’s National Employment Agency.

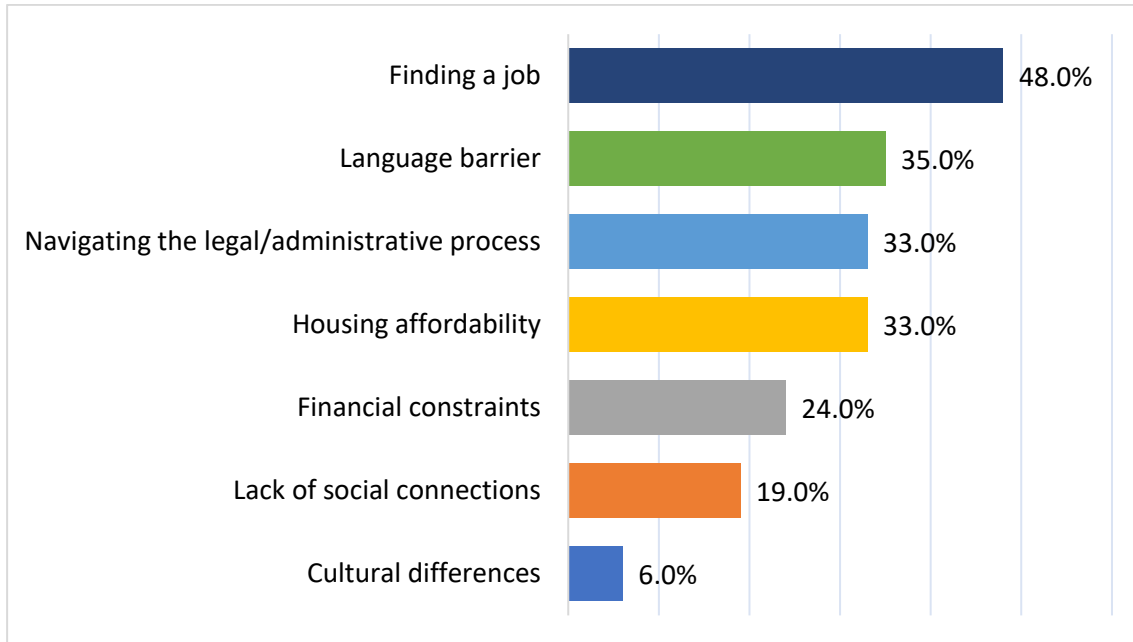
“Even if I was born in Moldova, in my family we always spoke of Bulgaria as a home country. I just waited for the favorable time to get there.” (M, 20 years old, student, rural resident)
“The worker from National Employment Agency told me that it’s easier to get work permits in Bulgaria compared to Western Europe. That’s why I’m considering it.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

IV. ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES IN MIGRATION

4.1. Anticipated challenges

Survey respondents identified a range of challenges they expect to face when migrating to Bulgaria. The most common concerns include finding a job (48%), language barriers (35%), housing affordability (33%), and navigating the legal or administrative process (33%) (see Figure 15). Other anticipated difficulties include financial constraints (24%) and a lack of social connections (19%). Cultural differences were mentioned by only 6% of respondents, indicating that most potential migrants feel relatively comfortable with Bulgarian customs and way of life.

Figure 15. Anticipated challenges to migration



The most frequently cited challenge—finding a job—highlights the uncertainty many respondents feel about employment prospects in Bulgaria. This is particularly relevant for individuals who have limited professional experience or have faced difficulties securing stable work in Moldova. The 28-year-old unemployed respondent, for example, acknowledges that securing reliable employment is his main concern. Similarly, financial constraints and housing affordability pose difficulties, especially for those without prior migration experience or social connections in Bulgaria. Meanwhile, the 43-year-old teacher is primarily concerned with administrative and legal challenges, as she has never migrated before and is unfamiliar with the bureaucratic process.

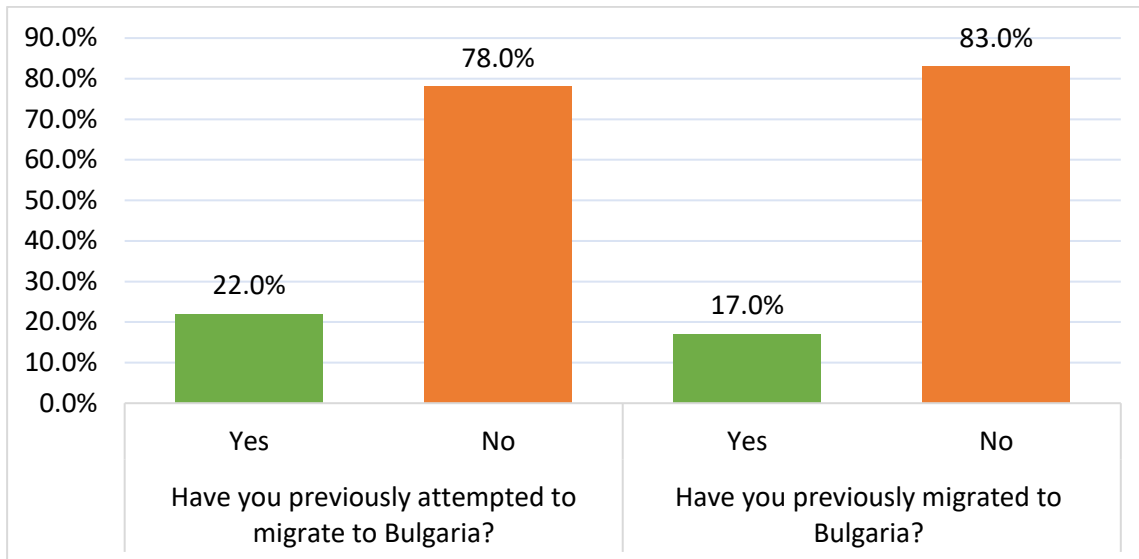
“The National Employment Agency can help me find a suitable job. This and only this is my only concern. But you have to understand me, if I find the same job opportunity in Spain or France, but with better money, I will go for the money. I am not interested in their culture or politics; I am seeking to earn money abroad.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

“I have no experience with migration, so I worry about the paperwork and legal procedures. I am afraid of making mistakes.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

4.2. Previous attempts to migrate to Bulgaria

The data shows that 22% of respondents have previously attempted to migrate to Bulgaria, while 78% have not (see Figure 16). However, only 17% have successfully migrated, indicating that some attempts were unsuccessful or did not result in long-term settlement.

Figure 16. Previous attempts to migrate to Bulgaria



The 28-year-old unemployed respondent, who has worked abroad in Germany and Poland, emphasizes that finding reliable information and job security is crucial for making a successful migration decision. Meanwhile, the 20-year-old student from Taraclia, who has not yet attempted migration, expresses concerns about bureaucratic requirements. In contrast, the 43-year-old teacher is entirely new to the migration process and is most worried about financial constraints and securing a job before relocating.

“I know people who went to Bulgaria for work, but they didn’t always get the jobs they expected. That’s why I want to make sure I have a plan before going.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

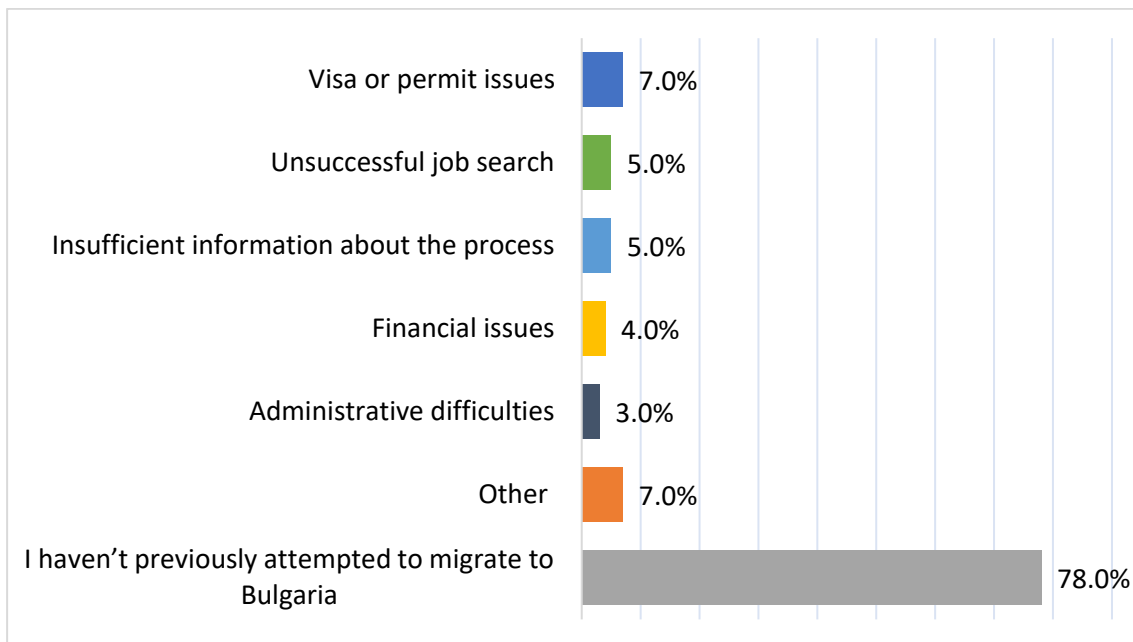
“I haven’t tried migrating yet, but I’ve heard the paperwork can be difficult. I hope I can get the right information before I apply.” (M, 20 years old, student, rural resident)

4.3. Main obstacles faced by previous migrants

Among those who have tried to migrate, various obstacles have been encountered. These include visa or permit issues (7%), unsuccessful job searches (5%), financial difficulties (4%), and administrative challenges (3%) (see Figure 17). Notably, 5% cited insufficient information about the migration process as a barrier, suggesting a need for better access to guidance and resources.



Figure 17. Obstacles faced by previous migrants



Qualitative findings suggest that while Bulgaria is seen as an accessible migration destination, bureaucratic and economic challenges remain. The legal aspects of migration, such as obtaining work permits and visas, appear to be among the most significant hurdles. Additionally, securing a job before arrival is a major concern, particularly for those without established networks in Bulgaria. The 28-year-old respondent, who has experience working abroad, stresses that employment stability is a key factor in migration success. Meanwhile, the 43-year-old teacher highlights concerns about transitioning professionally without support from local contacts.

“I have never worked abroad, but I have friends who moved. It’s something I am considering seriously now.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

“I need to make sure I can find work and have the right documents before I go. Otherwise, it’s not worth the risk.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

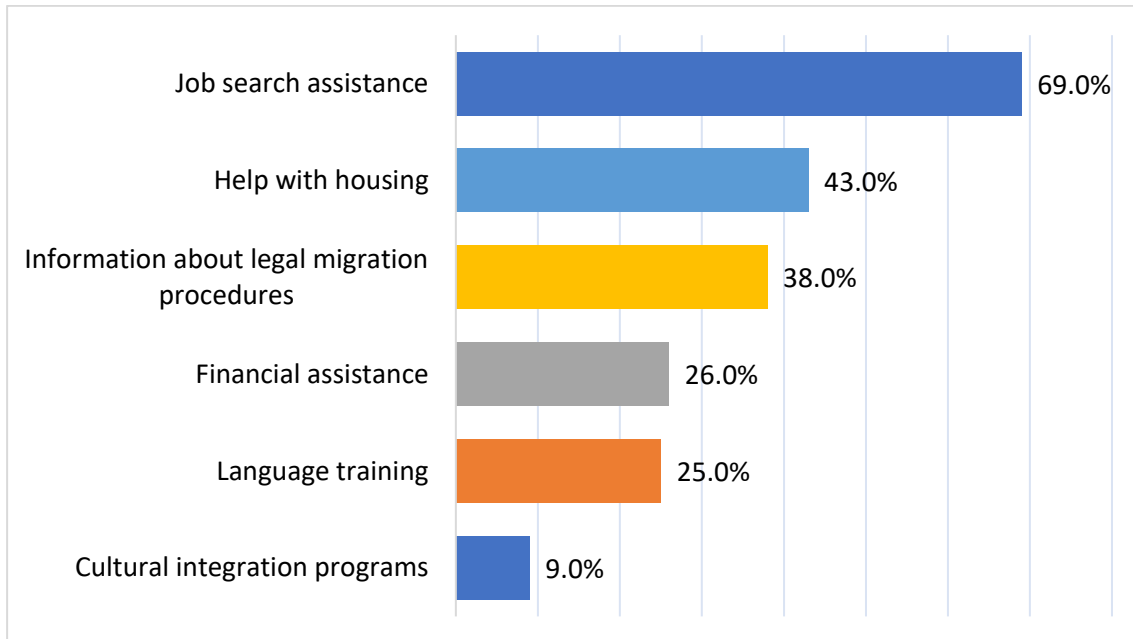
V. SUPPORT NEEDS AND PREFERENCES

5.1 Preferred types of support

Survey respondents identified several forms of support they believe would be most helpful in their migration process. The most commonly requested type of assistance was job search support (68%), followed by information about legal migration procedures (38%) and housing assistance (43%) (see Figure 18). Other notable preferences included financial assistance (26%) and language training (25%), while cultural integration programs were less frequently selected (9%).



Figure 18. Preferred types of migration support



The high demand for job search assistance reflects the central role of employment in migration decisions. Many respondents, such as the 28-year-old unemployed man, view Bulgaria as a labor migration destination and recognize the importance of securing employment before relocating. Meanwhile, the 43-year-old teacher, even though is concerned about the job and the income, is also thinking about the legal procedures and housing availability, as she would need to establish stability before moving her family. The 20-year-old student from Taraclia, while less concerned about immediate employment, acknowledges the value of cultural integration programs in preparing for university studies and eventual integration into the labor market.

“Finding a job is my biggest priority. If I know I’ll have work, I can handle everything else.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

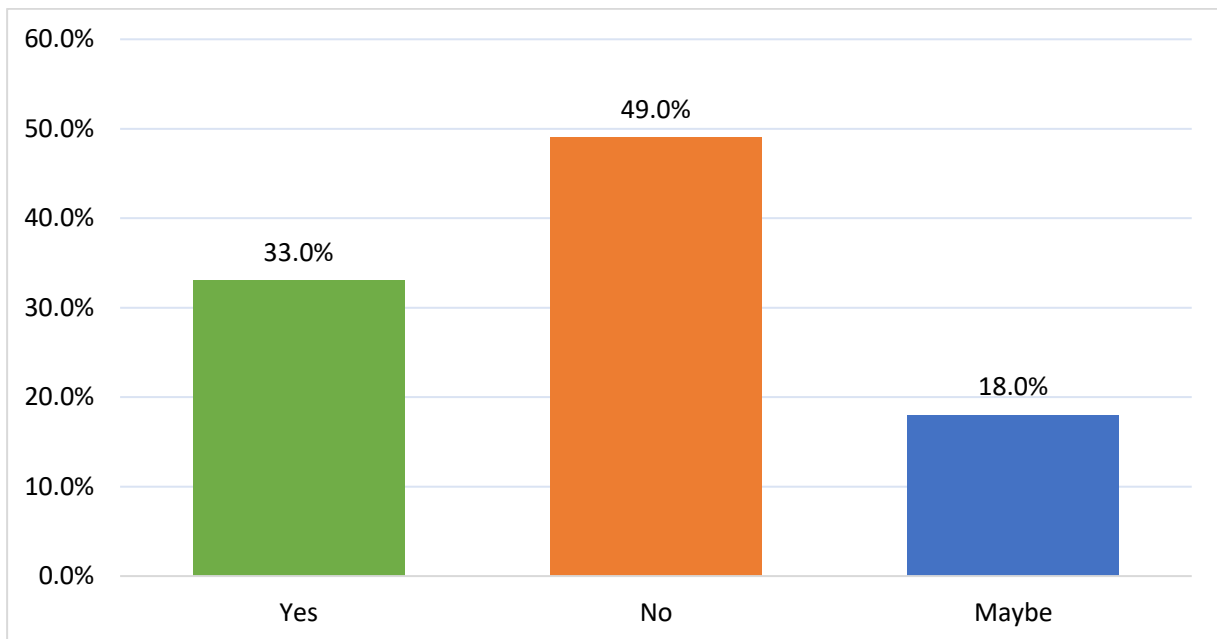
“For me, understanding the legal procedures is essential. I don’t want to start something and realize later that I missed an important requirement.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

5.2 Interest in informational training events

When asked about attending in-person informational training events about migration to Bulgaria, responses were divided. While 33% expressed interest, a larger proportion (49%) said they would not attend, with another 18% unsure (see Figure 19).



Figure 19. Interest in migration training events



The relatively low interest in such events suggests that many respondents prefer alternative ways of obtaining migration-related information. Those with prior migration experience, such as the 28-year-old unemployed respondent, may feel confident in their ability to navigate the process independently or with the support of the National Employment Agency. Others, like the 43-year-old teacher, may find in-person events impractical due to work and family obligations. However, respondents who are unfamiliar with migration procedures, including the 20-year-old student, may see value in attending such sessions to gain structured guidance.

“I probably wouldn’t attend an event in person, but I’d still want access to the information in another format, probably online, this would be much easier for me.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

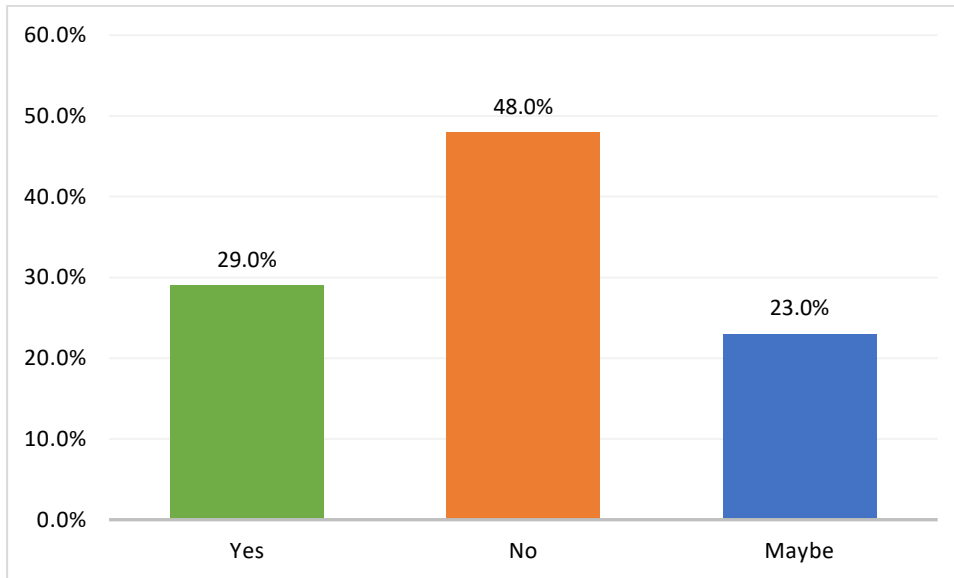
“If the event had real job offers or direct connections to employers, I’d go.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

5.3 Interest in expert-developed information packs

When asked about using an expert-developed information pack, 29% of respondents said they would use one, while 48% said they would not, and a further 23% were unsure (see Figure 20).



Figure 20. Interest in expert-developed information packs



This data suggests that while some respondents see value in structured guidance, others prefer to seek information independently. The 20-year-old student from Taraclia, for example, is likely to benefit from structured resources as he prepares for migration but may rely on family connections for practical details. The 28-year-old unemployed respondent, having already worked abroad, prefers informal networks or firsthand experiences from acquaintances. Meanwhile, the 43-year-old teacher, despite valuing structured information, may require more personalized support tailored to professionals seeking career continuity in Bulgaria.

“I would read an information pack if it had clear steps and examples of real cases.” (M, 20 years old, student, rural resident)

“I usually rely on people I know who have migrated before. They can tell me what really happens.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

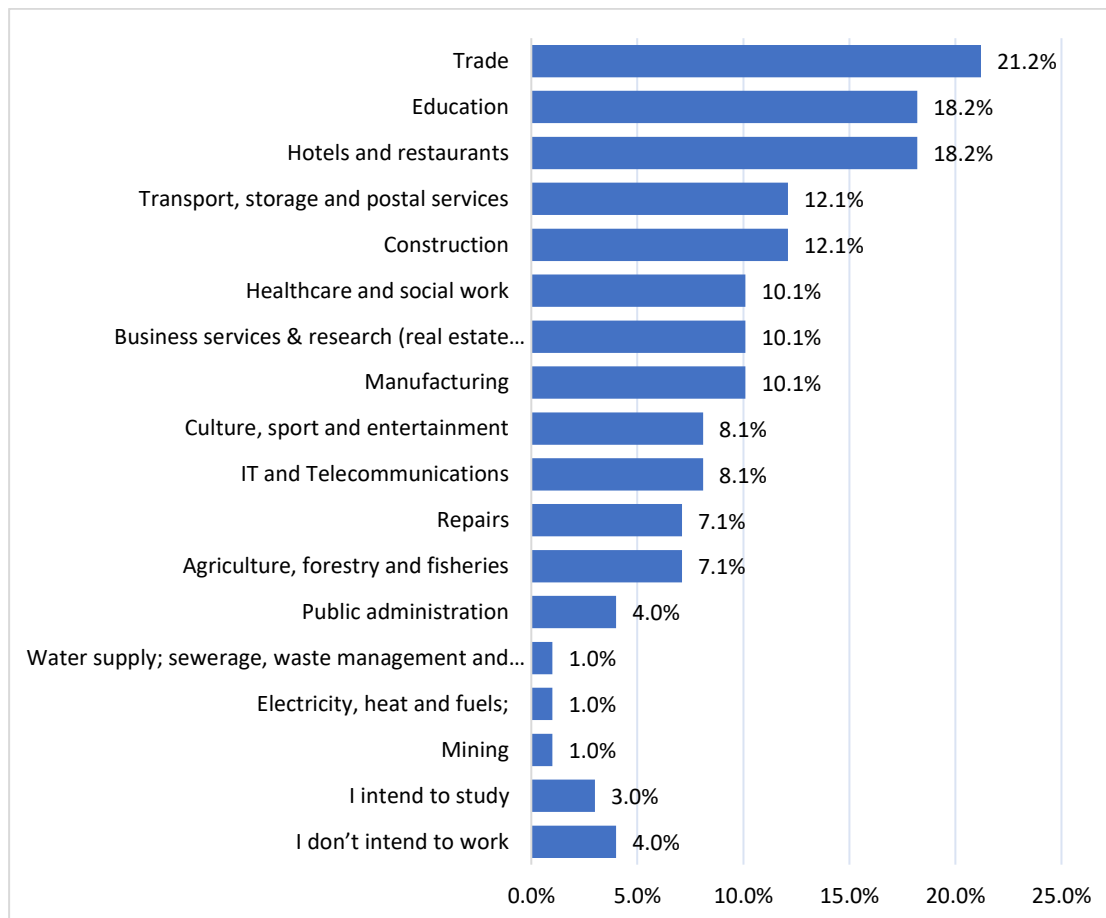
VI. EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCES IN BULGARIA

6.1 Preferred employment sectors

Respondents expressed interest in a variety of employment sectors in Bulgaria, with trade (21.2%), education (18.2%), hotels and restaurants (18.2%), and construction (12.1%) being the most preferred industries (see Figure 21). Other notable sectors include healthcare and social work (10.1%), manufacturing (10.1%), and business services & research (10.1%). Fewer respondents selected agriculture (7.1%), IT and telecommunications (8.1%), or culture and entertainment (8.1%). A small percentage of respondents (4%) indicated that they do not intend to work in Bulgaria, while 3% stated they plan to focus on studying.



Figure 21. Preferred employment sectors in Bulgaria



These preferences align with the respondents' existing professional backgrounds and migration motivations. The 28-year-old unemployed man, for example, has experience in construction and is seeking similar work in Bulgaria, aligning with the 12.1% of respondents selecting construction. Meanwhile, the 43-year-old teacher sees Bulgaria as an opportunity to continue her teaching career in a better-paid position, reflecting the interest in education. The 20-year-old student, while not immediately looking for work, acknowledges that job prospects will be important after completing his studies.

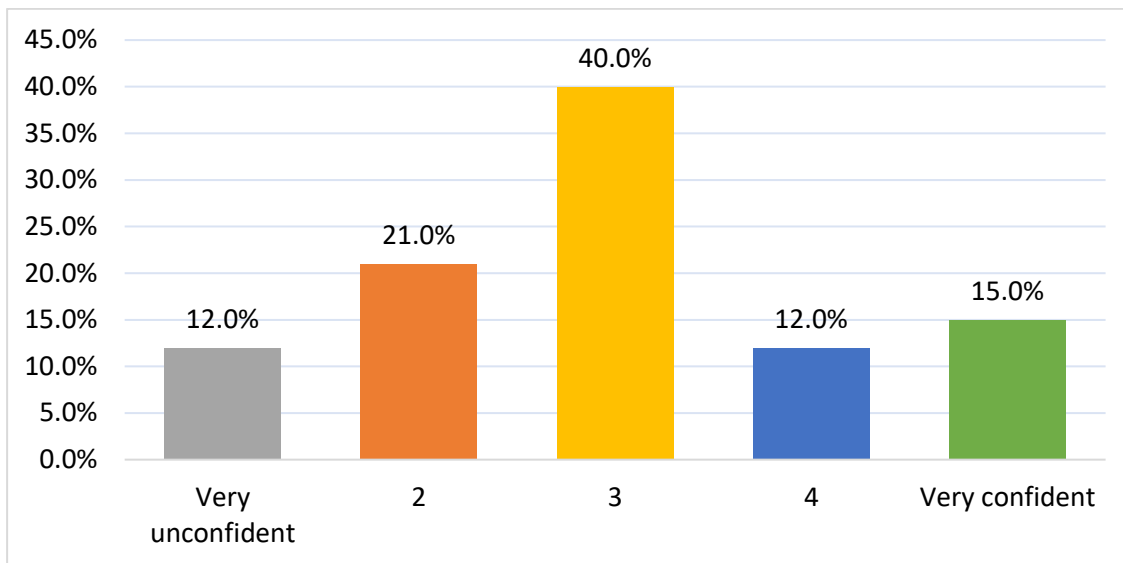
“Teaching is my passion, and if I can continue doing that in Bulgaria for a better salary, it would be ideal.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

6.2 Confidence in finding a job

When asked how confident they were in finding a job in their preferred sector, responses were mixed. The largest group (40%) selected a neutral rating (3 on a 1-5 scale), indicating uncertainty (see Figure 22). While 15% expressed high confidence and 12% were very confident, a combined 33% leaned toward lower confidence levels (12% very unconfident and 21% rating 2).



Figure 22. Confidence in finding employment



This reflects varying levels of preparedness and prior migration experience. The 28-year-old unemployed respondent, who has worked abroad in construction, expresses some optimism but remains cautious due to job market fluctuations. In contrast, the 43-year-old teacher is more uncertain, as she is unfamiliar with the hiring process for foreign educators in Bulgaria. The 20-year-old student, while not immediately job-seeking, acknowledges that employment prospects will be a key factor in his long-term migration decision.

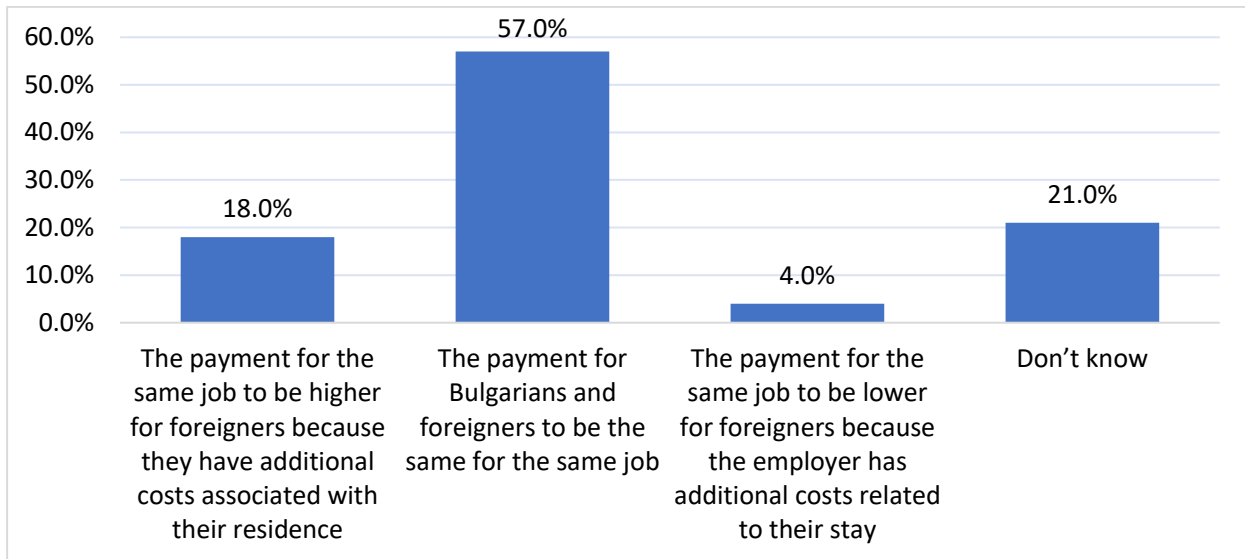
“When someone tries to sell you something, it is usually something appealing and interesting, but the reality may be different. I prefer to ask real people that work there about the conditions, the payments, the taxes, everything. I am not so sure Bulgaria has much to offer when we speak of job opportunities, Bulgaria is the poorest country in Europe, but I heard they have good salaries in construction.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

“I don’t know much about the Bulgarian education system, so I would need to understand the job requirements first.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

6.3 Expectations regarding payment

The survey data on payment expectations for foreign workers in Bulgaria reveals a strong preference for equal treatment in terms of salary. The majority of respondents (57%) believe that foreigners and Bulgarians should receive the same wages for the same job, reflecting an expectation of labor market fairness and equal opportunity (see Figure 23). However, a notable 18% of respondents believe that foreign workers should be paid higher wages due to additional costs associated with their residence, such as legal fees, accommodation, and integration expenses. A smaller proportion (4%) expect lower wages for foreign workers, possibly reflecting concerns that employers may offer reduced salaries due to administrative burdens or the perception that migrant labor is less competitive in the Bulgarian job market. Interestingly, 21% of respondents stated that they “don’t know” indicating uncertainty regarding salary conditions in Bulgaria.

Figure 23. Payment expectations for foreign workers



These expectations reflect a general belief in fair labor conditions but also highlight concerns about cost-of-living adjustments for migrants. The 28-year-old unemployed respondent sees fair pay as essential but acknowledges that migrant workers often face additional expenses. Meanwhile, the 43-year-old teacher hopes that professional qualifications will ensure salary parity with Bulgarian colleagues. The 20-year-old student, while not directly affected yet, is aware that wage fairness could impact his decision to stay in Bulgaria long-term.

“If I’m doing the same job as a Bulgarian worker, I expect to be paid the same.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

“Living in another country comes with extra costs. It would be fair if salaries reflected that.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

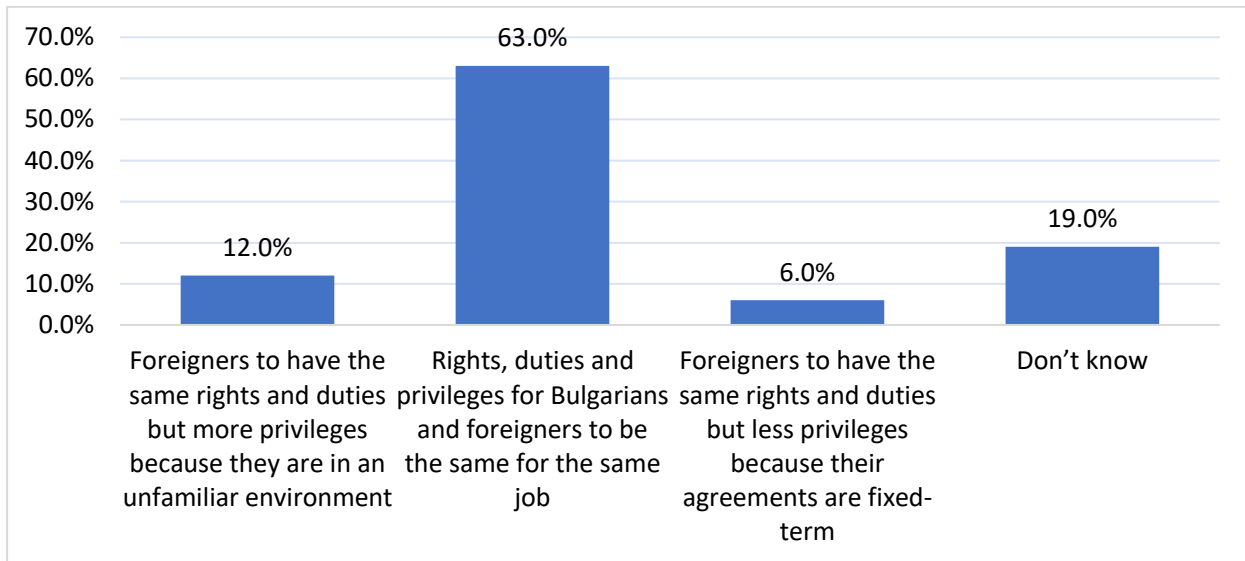
6.4 Expectations regarding workplace rights and duties

The quantitative data highlights that the majority of respondents (63%) expect that foreigners and Bulgarians should have the same rights, duties, and privileges for the same job (see Figure 24). Many respondents likely associate job security and stability with equal workplace rights, which could be a crucial factor in their migration decision.

A smaller proportion (12%) believe that foreigners should have additional privileges due to the challenges they face in adjusting to a new country. Conversely, 6% of respondents think that foreigners should have the same rights and duties but fewer privileges due to the nature of their fixed-term employment contracts.

Notably, 19% of respondents answered “Don’t know”, indicating uncertainty regarding workplace policies and labor rights in Bulgaria.

Figure 24. Expectations regarding workplace rights



The expectation of equal treatment aligns with broader principles of labor equality, but the data also suggests that some respondents recognize the need for additional support mechanisms for foreign workers. The 28-year-old unemployed respondent is primarily concerned with job stability rather than legal nuances but appreciates fairness in labor conditions. The 43-year-old teacher, however, is particularly interested in ensuring that foreign professionals have the same protections and opportunities as their Bulgarian counterparts. Meanwhile, the 20-year-old student sees equality in workplace rights as a factor that could influence his decision to remain in Bulgaria post-graduation.

“It’s only fair that foreigners and Bulgarians have the same rights at work.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

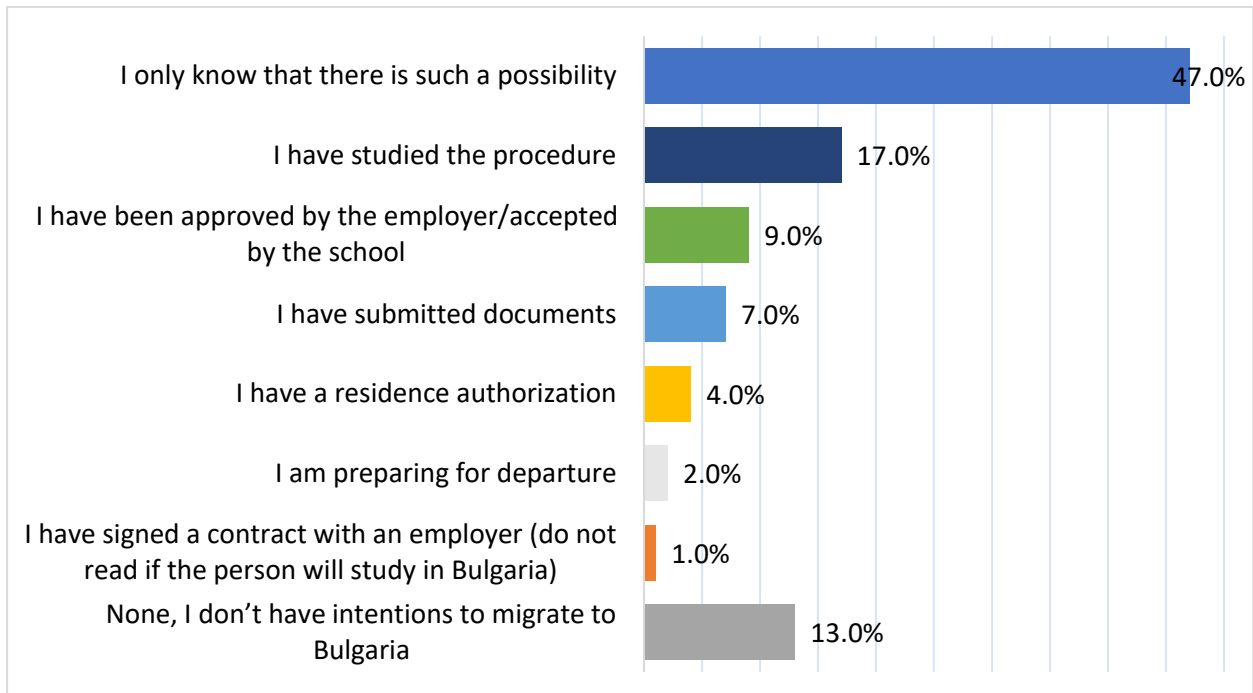
“I would need to understand how work contracts are structured in Bulgaria before I can say for sure, but I hope foreign teachers are treated equally. To be sincere, I didn’t even think about this, Bulgaria is in European Union, this must not be an issue I need to be afraid of.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

VII. MIGRATION READINESS

7.1 Current stage in the migration process

Respondents were asked to indicate their current progress regarding migration to Bulgaria. The largest group (47%) stated that they are only aware of the possibility but have not taken any further steps. Meanwhile, 17% have studied the procedure, and 7% have already submitted documents (see Figure 25). A small proportion (9%) have been approved by an employer or educational institution, while only 1% have signed a contract with an employer. Additionally, 4% have already obtained a residence permit, and 2% are preparing for departure. Notably, 13% of respondents stated that they do not intend to migrate to Bulgaria.

Figure 25. Stage in the migration process



The data suggests that while many respondents are considering migration, most are still in an early phase of gathering information. The 20-year-old student from Taraclia is actively planning his studies in Bulgaria but is still navigating procedural details. Meanwhile, the 28-year-old unemployed respondent is in an exploratory phase, assessing job opportunities before making a commitment. In contrast, the 43-year-old teacher has begun studying legal aspects of migration but remains hesitant due to family and financial considerations.

"I know that I want to study in Bulgaria, but I am still figuring out the steps I need to take to apply and get settled there." (M, 20 years old, student, rural resident)

"I haven't made any decisions yet, but I'm looking at job options and how easy it is to get a work permit." (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)

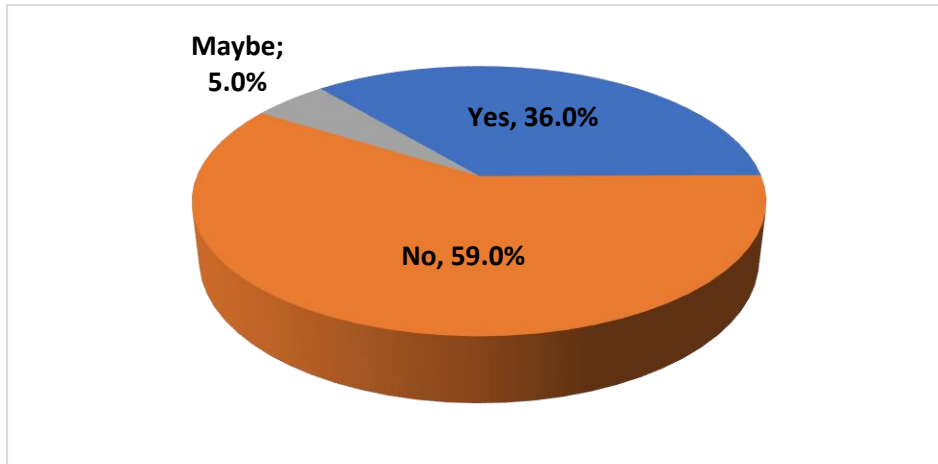
7.2 Willingness to recommend migration to others

The survey data indicates that the majority of respondents (59%) would not recommend migration to Bulgaria to others, while 36% would encourage it, and 5% remain undecided (see Figure 26). The high percentage of respondents who would not recommend migration may reflect uncertainties about economic stability, job security, and wages. Despite Bulgaria's proximity to Moldova and its cultural familiarity, respondents may perceive it as a less attractive destination compared to other European countries with stronger economies and more developed migrant support structures. Concerns about legal procedures, financial constraints, and workplace conditions could also contribute to this hesitancy.

On the other hand, the 36% who would recommend migration likely see Bulgaria as an accessible and feasible option, particularly for those seeking employment, education, or family reunification. These individuals may have positive perceptions of Bulgaria's labor market, cost of living, or opportunities for social integration.

The 5% who responded with "Maybe" likely reflect uncertainty due to a lack of information about migration procedures or job prospects. Their responses suggest that while Bulgaria might be an option, they are not entirely convinced about its benefits or feasibility.

Figure 26. Willingness to recommend migration to others



The in-depth interviews offer further context on why respondents hold different views regarding migration to Bulgaria. A level of skepticism or caution among respondents is sensed, possibly due to concerns about employment opportunities, wages, or bureaucratic difficulties. The 28-year-old unemployed respondent, for example, is open to migration but acknowledges that job availability can be unpredictable. The 43-year-old teacher expresses doubts about salary prospects and legal processes, which make her hesitant to recommend Bulgaria to others. Meanwhile, the 20-year-old student remains optimistic, believing that for those in his situation—young and fluent in Bulgarian—the transition could be beneficial.

“It depends on the person. If someone speaks the language and has connections, it might be a good choice. Otherwise, it can be difficult.” (M, 20 years old, student, rural resident)
“I wouldn’t recommend it unless someone has a guaranteed job offer. It’s too risky otherwise.” (M, 28 years old, currently unemployed, urban resident)
“For professionals like me, it’s hard to know if the pay and conditions will be better. I wouldn’t rush into recommending it.” (F, 43 years old, teacher, urban resident)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The demographic analysis reveals that the majority of potential migrants are young adults, with a balanced gender distribution and diverse educational backgrounds. Many respondents are either unemployed or students, reinforcing the idea that migration is seen as a pathway to better job opportunities or higher education. Family responsibilities also play a significant role, as individuals with dependents may weigh migration differently compared to those who are single. Language proficiency is another critical factor, as many respondents speak Russian fluently but may face integration challenges due to limited Bulgarian proficiency.

The analysis of work experience shows a broad range of professional backgrounds, from skilled and unskilled workers to professionals such as teachers and engineers. Many respondents have prior migration experience, indicating that labor mobility is a well-established trend among Moldovan workers. However, the balance between those with and without previous migration experience indicates that Bulgaria is being considered both as a new destination and as part of a broader migration trajectory.

The study identifies employment opportunities as the primary motivation for migration, followed by better living conditions and access to education. Respondents who have worked abroad before tend to view migration as a practical economic decision, while students and professionals see it as a long-term investment in their future. Bulgaria's proximity to Moldova, cultural familiarity, and relatively accessible legal pathways also makes it a preferred destination over other European countries. Migration is not solely driven by financial need but also by broader aspirations for stability and career growth.



The main challenges identified by respondents include securing employment, navigating legal and administrative procedures, and overcoming financial constraints. Language barriers and housing affordability are also significant concerns, particularly for those who do not have personal networks in Bulgaria. While experienced migrants focus on job security and contract stability, first-time migrants express greater anxiety over bureaucratic processes and legal requirements.

Respondents express a strong need for employment assistance, legal guidance, and housing support. While some are open to attending informational training events and using expert-developed resources, many prefer to rely on personal connections and direct job opportunities. Migration support programs should offer a combination of structured resources and informal networking opportunities to effectively meet the needs of different groups.

Respondents indicate a preference for employment in trade, education, hospitality, and construction. While some are confident about finding work, many remain uncertain due to a lack of information about the Bulgarian labor market. Most respondents expect equal pay and workplace rights for foreign workers, but concerns persist about the additional costs associated with migration.

Despite awareness of migration opportunities, the majority of respondents remain in an exploratory phase, assessing the feasibility of relocation. Only a small proportion have taken concrete steps toward migration, such as submitting documents or securing employment. Additionally, a significant number of respondents do not actively recommend migration to others, citing concerns about job security, salaries, and bureaucratic hurdles. While Bulgaria offers potential opportunities, it is not universally perceived as an easy or guaranteed migration destination.

Based on the findings, several policy recommendations emerge:

- Enhancing employment support: establishing stronger job placement programs and partnerships with Bulgarian employers to facilitate employment opportunities for Moldovan migrants.
- Providing legal assistance: simplifying migration procedures and improving access to clear, up-to-date information on visa and work permit requirements.
- Addressing language barriers: expanding language training programs for potential migrants to enhance their employment prospects and social integration.
- Improving financial support mechanisms: offering targeted financial assistance, such as housing subsidies or relocation grants, to mitigate initial settlement challenges.
- Raising awareness through targeted information campaigns: developing practical resources, including digital platforms and in-person training sessions, opportunities of exploring informal networks to equip migrants with the knowledge needed for a successful transition.

This study underscores that migration to Bulgaria is a multifaceted decision influenced by a range of personal, economic, and structural factors. While many Moldovans consider Bulgaria a promising destination due to its economic opportunities and cultural proximity, challenges related to employment security, legal procedures, and financial stability remain key barriers. Addressing these issues through well-designed policies and support initiatives will be crucial in ensuring that migration pathways are accessible, sustainable, and beneficial for both migrants and host communities.



ANNEXES

Annex 1. Survey questionnaire



Questionnaire for Moldovan citizens who have the potential for legal migration to Bulgaria

Hello, my name is Patricia Vieru, and I am a researcher and consultant with the European Institute. I am leading a study titled “The profile of Moldovan citizens who have the potential for legal migration to Bulgaria”. This research aims to identify and analyse the specific characteristics and motivations of individuals considering migration to Bulgaria.

The insights gained from this study will help develop targeted information campaigns and training events, enhancing support for potential migrants. Your participation is crucial to our understanding of these profiles.

Please be assured that your involvement is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions. We are committed to protecting your privacy; all responses will be kept confidential and anonymised. No identifying information will be shared. Thank you for your valuable contribution to this important research.

Section 1: Demographics

1. What is your age? (*one answer*)

- 18-24
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55-64
 - 65+
-

2. What is your gender? (*one answer*)

- Male
 - Female
 - Other
 - Prefer not to say
-

3. What is your highest level of education completed? (*one answer*)

- Primary education (4 grades)
- Gymnasium education (9 grades)
- Lyceum education (12 grades)
- Secondary technical and vocational education and training (professional school)



- Post-secondary technical and vocational education and training (college)
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Master's degree
 - Doctorate (PhD)
 - Other (Please specify)
-

4. What is your current employment status? (*one answer*)

- Employed full-time
 - Employed part-time
 - Self-employed
 - Migrant worker
 - Day laborer
 - Unemployed
 - Student
 - Retired
 - Other (Please specify)
-

5. What is your marital status? (*one answer*)

- Single
 - Married
 - In a relationship
 - Divorced
 - Widowed
-

6. Do you have children? (*one answer*)

- Yes
- No

6.1. If yes, please indicate the age of each born child: (*one answer per row*)

- Child 1: _____
 - Child 2: _____
 - Child 3: _____
 - Child 4: _____
-

7. Do you speak foreign languages? If yes, please indicate your level for each language you speak. (*List all languages, start with the highest level. One level per one language.*)



A.		B. Language	C. Level		
D.	0	E. No			
F.	1	G.	H. 1. A1 (Beginner)	K. 4. B2 (Intermediate)	
			I. 2. A2 (Beginner)	L. 5. C1 (Advanced)	
			J. 3. B1 (Intermediate)	M. 6. C2 (Advanced)	
N.	2	O.	P. 1. A1 (Beginner)	S. 4. B2 (Intermediate)	
			Q. 2. A2 (Beginner)	T. 5. C1 (Advanced)	
			R. 3. B1 (Intermediate)	U. 6. C2 (Advanced)	
V.	3	W.	X. 1. A1 (Beginner)	AA. 4. B2 (Intermediate)	
			Y. 2. A2 (Beginner)	BB. 5. C1 (Advanced)	
			Z. 3. B1 (Intermediate)	CC. 6. C2 (Advanced)	
DD.	4	EE.	FF. 1. A1 (Beginner)	II. 4. B2 (Intermediate)	
			GG. 2. A2 (Beginner)	JJ. 5. C1 (Advanced)	
			HH. 3. B1 (Intermediate)	KK. 6. C2 (Advanced)	
LL.	5	MM.	NN. 1. A1 (Beginner)	QQ. 4. B2 (Intermediate)	
			OO. 2. A2 (Beginner)	RR. 5. C1 (Advanced)	
			PP. 3. B1 (Intermediate)	SS. 6. C2 (Advanced)	

Section 2: Work experience

8. How many years of work experience do you have? (*one answer*)

- None
- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-10 years
- More than 10 years

9. What is your current occupation or most recent job title? (*one answer*)

- None – I am studying / I have just finished my education
- Unskilled worker
- Skilled worker (e.g., technician, craftsman)
- Professional (e.g., teacher, engineer, lawyer)



- Manager/Executive
- Entrepreneur
- Other (Please specify)

10. In which sector are you currently or were you last employed? (*one answer*)

- Agriculture, forestry and fisheries
- Mining
- Manufacturing
- Electricity, heat and fuels;
- Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation services
- Construction
- Trade
- Repairs
- Transport, storage and postal services
- Hotels and restaurants
- IT and Telecommunications
- Business services & research (real estate activities; professional services and scientific research; administrative and support services in business)
- Education
- Healthcare and social work
- Culture, sport and entertainment
- Public administration
- Other (please specify)
- No working experience

11. Have you ever worked abroad? (*one answer*)

- Yes
- No

Section 3: Motivations for migration

12. How likely are you to migrate to Bulgaria within the next 2 years? (*one answer*)

Very unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	Very likely
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13. What is your primary reason for considering migration to Bulgaria? (*one answer*)

- Employment opportunities
- Better living conditions
- Access to better education
- Family reunification
- Political reasons
- Personal reasons (e.g., adventure, change of environment)



- Other (Please specify)

14. Why did you choose Bulgaria as a potential migration destination over other European countries? *(multiple response)*

- Familiarity with the language and culture
- Proximity to Moldova
- Economic opportunities
- Ease of obtaining legal status
- Personal or family connections
- Cost of living
- Educational opportunities
- Safety and stability
- Other (please specify):

Section 4: Challenges to migration

15. Which of the following challenges do you anticipate facing if you migrate to Bulgaria? *(multiple response)*

- Language barrier
- Finding a job
- Housing affordability
- Cultural differences
- Navigating the legal/administrative process
- Lack of social connections
- Financial constraints
- Other (Please specify)

16. Have you previously attempted to migrate to Bulgaria? *(one answer)*

- Yes
- No

17. Have you previously migrated to Bulgaria? *(one answer)*

- Yes
- No

18. If you have attempted to migrate, what were the main obstacles you encountered? *(multiple response)*

- Insufficient information about the process
- Administrative difficulties
- Financial issues
- Unsuccessful job search
- Visa or permit issues
- I haven't previously attempted to migrate to Bulgaria
- Other (Please specify)



Section 5: Support needs and preferences

19. What type of support would be most helpful to you in the migration process? (*multiple response, maximum 3 options*)

- Information about legal migration procedures
- Job search assistance
- Language training
- Help with housing
- Financial assistance
- Cultural integration programs
- Other (Please specify)

20. Would you be interested in attending in person informational training events about migration to Bulgaria? (*one answer*)

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

21. Would you use an information pack developed by experts (e.g., the European Institute) to help you understand the migration process? (*one answer*)

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Section 6: Employment preferences in Bulgaria

22. In which sector would you prefer to work if you migrate to Bulgaria? (*multiple response, maximum 3 options*)

- Agriculture, forestry and fisheries
- Mining
- Manufacturing
- Electricity, heat and fuels;
- Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation services
- Construction
- Trade
- Repairs
- Transport, storage and postal services
- Hotels and restaurants
- IT and Telecommunications
- Business services & research (real estate activities; professional services and scientific research; administrative and support services in business)
- Education
- Healthcare and social work
- Culture, sport and entertainment
- Public administration



- I intend to study
- I don't intend to work
- Other (Please specify)

23. How confident are you in finding a job in Bulgaria within your preferred sector? *(one answer)*

Very unconfident	1	2	3	4	5	Very confident
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24. What are your expectations concerning payment in Bulgaria? *(one answer)*

- The payment for the same job to be higher for foreigners because they have additional costs associated with their residence
- The payment for Bulgarians and foreigners to be the same for the same job
- The payment for the same job to be lower for foreigners because the employer has additional costs related to their stay
- Don't know

25. What are your expectations regarding rights, duties and privileges at work? *(one answer)*

- Foreigners to have the same rights and duties but more privileges because they are in an unfamiliar environment
- Rights, duties and privileges for Bulgarians and foreigners to be the same for the same job
- Foreigners to have the same rights and duties but less privileges because their agreements are fixed-term
- Don't know

Section 7: Final thoughts

26. In your actions related to migration in Bulgaria, what stage have you reached? *(one answer)*

- None, I don't have intentions to migrate to Bulgaria
- I only know that there is such a possibility
- I have studied the procedure
- I have submitted documents
- I have been approved by the employer/accepted by the school
- I have signed a contract with an employer (do not read if the person will study in Bulgaria)
- I have a residence authorization
- I am preparing for departure
- Other (please specify) _____

27. Would you recommend others to consider migrating to Bulgaria? *(one answer)*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Section 8: Contact details

28. Please share with us your phone number and email address so that you can be informed about future activities within this project and the opportunity to attend informational training events.



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Phone number:
Email:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses are valuable and will contribute to a better understanding of the profile of Moldovan citizens considering migration to Bulgaria.



Annex 2. Interview guideline

Guideline for in-depth interviews

with Moldovan citizens who have the potential for legal migration to Bulgaria

Introduction of participants and discussion rules:

- **Greeting and introduction:** hello, my name is, I am a researcher and I am conducting a study on behalf of the European Institute. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. We're exploring the experiences and motivations of Moldovan citizens who are considering legal migration to Bulgaria. Your insights will help us develop better support programs for potential migrants.
- **Purpose of the interview:** the aim of our conversation today is to understand your perceptions, thoughts and experiences regarding the possibility of moving and working in Bulgaria. We're interested in learning about your background, motivations, and any challenges you've faced or anticipate.
- **Confidentiality assurance:** please know that your responses will be kept confidential and anonymized. You can choose not to answer any question or stop the interview at any time.
- **Permission to record:** for accuracy, I'd like to record our conversation. Is that okay with you?
- **Socio-demographic data:** age, gender, education, occupation, marital status.

I. Demographic and personal characteristics

1. Could you please tell me a little about yourself? How old are you? Where do you currently live? Who do you live with?
2. Do you have any relatives or friends abroad? If yes, where?
3. How would you appreciate your living conditions? How satisfied are you with your life? Why?
4. How do you assess your life comparing to those you know live abroad? What are the main differences you observe?
5. If you would could change anything in your life, what would you change and why?

II. Motivations for considering migration

6. When did you first think of emigration? In what context?
7. What are the main reasons you are considering emigration? What else?
8. What made you start considering Bulgaria as a destination?
9. How familiar are you with their culture, their language?



10. Why did you choose Bulgaria over other European countries?
11. What are your main expectations if you move to Bulgaria?

III. Educational background and qualifications

12. Can you briefly describe your educational background?
13. What specific qualifications or specializations do you have that you believe will be valuable in Bulgaria? Why do you think so?
14. Have you taken any additional training or courses that might help you find a job in Bulgaria? If yes, which one? If no, to what extent do you intend to do so?

IV. Professional and work experience

15. Could you walk me through your work experience so far? Where did you work? For how long?
16. What other work experience do you have, formal or informal?
17. How do you think your professional experience will influence your ability to find work in Bulgaria? What makes you think so?
18. In your opinion, are there any skills or experiences from your work history that you think will be particularly relevant in Bulgaria?
19. What field do you expect to work in Bulgaria? Do you have any other options?
20. To what extent did you think or plan to take some additional courses in order to adapt to Bulgarian labor market?

V. Challenges and concerns

21. What challenges do you think you might face if you decide to migrate to Bulgaria? How do you plan to overcome them?
22. What obstacles did you encounter so far in your preparation for migration?
23. To whom/ where can you address for support in overcoming these challenges? Who else?
24. To what extent have you explored the legal pathways available for migration to Bulgaria? Where did you get the information?
25. What do you think about the legal requirements for migration to Bulgaria? To what extent are they clear to you?
26. What other concerns do you have regarding your potential emigration?
27. If any information activities, events were to be organized in Moldova regarding this subject, how interested would you be in joining them? Why?

For the most part these were the topics we wanted to cover. If there are any other aspects regarding emigration to Bulgaria that you would like to share with us that we didn't manage to discuss, please let us know!

Thank you for your time and your answers!



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Annex 3. Univariate frequency tables

1. What is your age? (one answer)		Number	%
	18-24	39	39,0%
	25-34	24	24,0%
	35-44	15	15,0%
	45-54	13	13,0%
	55-64	6	6,0%
	65+	3	3,0%

2. What is your gender? (one answer)		Number	%
	Male	46	46,0%
	Female	54	54,0%
	Other	0	0,0%
	Prefer not to say	0	0,0%

3. What is your highest level of education completed? (one answer)		Number	%
	Primary education (4 grades)	1	1,0%
	Gymnasium education (9 grades)	10	10,0%
	Lyceum education (12 grades)	25	25,0%
	Secondary technical and vocational education and training (professional school)	17	17,0%
	Post-secondary technical and vocational education and training (college)	14	14,0%
	Bachelor's degree	14	14,0%
	Master's degree	17	17,0%
	Doctorate (PhD)	2	2,0%
	Other (Please specify)	0	0,0%

4. What is your current employment status? (one answer)		Number	%
	Employed full-time	29	29,0%
	Employed part-time	3	3,0%
	Self-employed	3	3,0%
	Migrant worker	8	8,0%
	Day laborer	0	0,0%
	Unemployed	29	29,0%
	Student	27	27,0%
	Retired	1	1,0%
	Other (Please specify)	0	0,0%

5. What is your marital status? (one answer)		Number	%
	Single	40	40,0%
	Married	34	34,0%
	In a relationship	12	12,0%
	Divorced	11	11,0%
	Widowed	3	3,0%



6. Do you have children? (one answer)		Number	%
	Yes	43	43,4%
	No	56	56,6%

6.1. If yes, please indicate the age of each born child: (one answer per row)	Mean age		
	Child 1: _____		17,98
	Child 2: _____		18,3
	Child 3: _____		19,67
	Child 4: _____		10,5

6.2 How Many children? (one answer)		Number	%
	One	23	53,5%
	Two	17	39,5%
	Three or more	3	7,0%

6.3 Type of children? (one answer)		Number	%
	All children are minors	20	46,5%
	All children are adults	19	44,2%
	Some children are minors, and some are adults	4	9,3%

7. Do you speak foreign languages? (one answer)		Number	%
	Yes	4	4,0%
	No	96	96,0%

7.1 If yes, please indicate What language you speak?		Number	%
	Russian	93	96,9%
	English	46	47,9%
	French	6	6,3%
	German	3	3,1%
	Ukrainian	11	11,5%
	Gagauz	5	5,2%
	Bulgarian	34	35,4%

7.2 If yes, please indicate your level for each language you speak.		A1 (Beginner)	A2 (Elementary)	B1 (Intermediate)	B2 (Intermediate)	C1 (Advanced)	C2 (Advanced)
	Russian	1,1%	1,1%	2,1%	5,3%	7,4%	83,0%
	English	17,0%	25,5%	34,0%	23,4%	0,0%	0,0%
	French	0,0%	50,0%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
	German	33,3%	33,3%	33,3%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
	Ukrainian	0,0%	18,2%	18,2%	9,1%	45,5%	9,1%
	Gagauz	0,0%	20,0%	0,0%	0,0%	20,0%	60,0%
	Bulgarian	5,9%	8,8%	20,6%	23,5%	29,4%	11,8%



Section 2: Work experience

8. How many years of work experience do you have? (one answer)		Number	%
	None	23	23,0%
	Less than 1 year	12	12,0%
	1-3 years	15	15,0%
	4-6 years	11	11,0%
	7-10 years	8	8,0%
	More than 10 years	31	31,0%

9. What is your current occupation or most recent job title? (one answer)		Number	%
	None – I am studying / I have just finished my education	30	30,0%
	Unskilled worker	15	15,0%
	Skilled worker (e.g., technician, craftsman)	20	20,0%
	Professional (e.g., teacher, engineer, lawyer)	28	28,0%
	Manager/Executive	5	5,0%
	Entrepreneur	2	2,0%
	Other (Please specify)	0	0,0%

10. In which sector are you currently or were you last employed? (one answer)		Number	%
	Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	6	6,0%
	Mining	0	0,0%
	Manufacturing	0	0,0%
	Electricity, heat and fuels;	0	0,0%
	Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation services	1	1,0%
	Construction	12	12,0%
	Trade	16	16,0%
	Repairs	3	3,0%
	Transport, storage and postal services	8	8,0%
	Hotels and restaurants	11	11,0%
	IT and Telecommunications	1	1,0%
	Business services & research (real estate activities; professional services and scientific research;	2	2,0%
	Education	9	9,0%
	Healthcare and social work	6	6,0%
	Culture, sport and entertainment	4	4,0%
	Public administration	7	7,0%
	Other (please specify)	0	0,0%
	No working experience	14	14,0%

11. Have you ever worked abroad? (one answer)		Number	%
	Yes	46	46,0%
	No	54	54,0%

Section 3: Motivations for migration



YY. 12. How likely are you to migrate to Bulgaria within the next 2 years? (one answer)		Number	%
	Very unlikely	21	21,0%
	2	17	17,0%
	3	34	34,0%
	4	12	12,0%
	Very likely	16	16,0%

ZZ. 13. What is your primary reason for considering migration to Bulgaria? (one answer)		Number	%
	Employment opportunities	35	35,0%
	Better living conditions	27	27,0%
	Access to better education	11	11,0%
	Family reunification	7	7,0%
	Political reasons	4	4,0%
	Personal reasons (e.g., adventure, change of environment)	16	16,0%
	Other (Please specify)	0	0,0%

BBB. 14. Why did you choose Bulgaria as a potential migration destination over other European countries? (multiple response)		Number	%
	Familiarity with the language and culture	35	35,0%
	Proximity to Moldova	20	20,0%
	Economic opportunities	39	39,0%
	Ease of obtaining legal status	15	15,0%
	Personal or family connections	6	6,0%
	Cost of living	12	12,0%
	Educational opportunities	8	8,0%
	Safety and stability	9	9,0%
	Other (Please specify)	16	16,0%

Section 4: Challenges to migration

DDD. 15. Which of the following challenges do you anticipate facing if you migrate to Bulgaria? (multiple response)		Number	%
	Language barrier	35	35,0%
	Finding a job	48	48,0%
	Housing affordability	33	33,0%
	Cultural differences	6	6,0%
	Navigating the legal/administrative process	33	33,0%
	Lack of social connections	19	19,0%
	Financial constraints	24	24,0%
	Other (Please specify)	0	0,0%

FFF. 16. Have you previously attempted to migrate to Bulgaria? (one answer)		Number	%
	Yes	22	22,0%
	No	78	78,0%

		Number	%
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GGG. 17. Have you previously migrated to Bulgaria? (one answer) HHH.	Yes	17	17,0%
	No	83	83,0%

III. 18. If you have attempted to migrate, what were the main obstacles you encountered? (multiple response) JJJ.		Number	%
	Insufficient information about the process	5	5,0%
	Administrative difficulties	3	3,0%
	Financial issues	4	4,0%
	Unsuccessful job search	5	5,0%
	Visa or permit issues	7	7,0%
	I haven't previously attempted to migrate to Bulgaria	78	78,0%
	Other (Please specify)	7	7,0%

Section 5: Support needs and preferences

KKK. 19. What type of support would be most helpful to you in the migration process? (multiple response, maximum 3 options) LLL.		Number	%
	Information about legal migration procedures	38	38,0%
	Job search assistance	68	68,0%
	Language training	25	25,0%
	Help with housing	43	43,0%
	Financial assistance	26	26,0%
	Cultural integration programs	9	9,0%
	Other (Please specify)	1	1,0%

MMM. 20. Would you be interested in attending in person informational training events about migration to Bulgaria? (one answer)		Number	%
	Yes	33	33,0%
	No	49	49,0%
	Maybe	18	18,0%

NNN. 21. Would you use an information pack developed by experts (e.g., the European Institute) to help you understand the migration process? (one answer)		Number	%
	Yes	29	29,0%
	No	48	48,0%
	Maybe	22	22,0%
	Don't know	1	1,0%

Section 6: Employment preferences in Bulgaria

OOO. 22. In which sector would you prefer to work if you migrate to Bulgaria? (multiple)		Number	%
	Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	7	7,1%
	Mining	1	1,0%
	Manufacturing	10	10,1%
	Electricity, heat and fuels;	1	1,0%
	Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation services	1	1,0%
	Construction	12	12,1%



<i>response, maximum 3 options)</i>	Trade	21	21,2%
	Repairs	7	7,1%
	Transport, storage and postal services	12	12,1%
	Hotels and restaurants	18	18,2%
	IT and Telecommunications	8	8,1%
	Business services & research (real estate activities; professional services and scientific research;	10	10,1%
	Education	18	18,2%
	Healthcare and social work	10	10,1%
	Culture, sport and entertainment	8	8,1%
	Public administration	4	4,0%
	I intend to study	3	3,0%
	I don't intend to work	4	4,0%
Other (please specify)	0	0,0%	

PPP. 23. How confident are you in finding a job in Bulgaria within your preferred sector? (one answer)		Number	%
	Very unconfident	12	12,0%
	2	21	21,0%
	3	40	40,0%
	4	12	12,0%
	Very confident	15	15,0%

QQQ. 24. What are your expectations concerning <u>payment</u> in Bulgaria? (one answer)		Number	%
	The payment for the same job to be higher for foreigners because they have additional costs associated with their residence	18	18,0%
	The payment for Bulgarians and foreigners to be the same for the same job	57	57,0%
	The payment for the same job to be lower for foreigners because the employer has additional costs related to their stay	4	4,0%
	Don't know	21	21,0%

RRR. 25. What are your expectations regarding <u>rights, duties and privileges at work?</u> (one answer) SSS.		Number	%
	Foreigners to have the same rights and duties but more privileges because they are in an unfamiliar environment	12	12,0%
	Rights, duties and privileges for Bulgarians and foreigners to be the same for the same job	63	63,0%
	Foreigners to have the same rights and duties but less privileges because their agreements are fixed-term	6	6,0%
	Don't know	19	19,0%

Section 7: Final thoughts

TTT. 26. In your actions related to migration in Bulgaria, what stage		Number	%
	None, I don't have intentions to migrate to Bulgaria	13	13,0%
	I only know that there is such a possibility	47	47,0%
	I have studied the procedure	17	17,0%
	I have submitted documents	7	7,0%



have you reached? <i>(one answer)</i> UUU.	I have been approved by the employer/accepted by the school	9	9,0%
	I have signed a contract with an employer (do not read if the person will study in Bulgaria)	1	1,0%
	I have a residence authorization	4	4,0%
	I am preparing for departure	2	2,0%
	Other (please specify)	0	0,0%

VVV. 27. Would you recommend others to consider migrating to Bulgaria? <i>(one answer)</i> WWW.		Number	%
	Yes	36	36,0%
	No	59	59,0%
	Maybe	5	5,0%