

WORKING ABROAD

# South Africans want to stay

SOUTH Africans are less willing to relocate to a new country than they were in 2018, according to a new study, *Decoding Global Talent, Onsite and Virtual* by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and The Network, including local partner organisation Career-Junction.

The study included almost 209 000 participants in 190 countries and 1 421 in South Africa.

The study shows that the pandemic has had a major impact on people's attitudes towards work abroad, reducing their interest and inclining them towards countries that have done the best job of containing Covid-19.

Only 59% of South Africans are willing to move to another country for work, down from 72% in 2018. Young and highly-educated South Africans aren't willing to move abroad either: only 56% of young people and 61% of highly educated people said they would be willing to relocate.

"This is in line with the global trend of decreasing mobility – which is likely due to the pandemic, but also because of tighter immigration and less welcoming policies by some of the big destination markets," said Rudi van Blerk, principal and recruiting director at Boston Consulting Group, Joburg.

However, people in some of the most sought-after fields are still extremely mobile and willing to move and work abroad; these include digitalisation and automation (85%), science

and research (78%), law (76%) and IT (74%).

"This could indicate a risk of brain drain in these fields, where employers typically struggle to fill roles," Van Blerk says.

The US remains the number one destination where people from South Africa would move to, but the next most popular destinations have shifted slightly.

The UK overtook Australia, and New Zealand and the United Arab Emirates are also more popular targets than in 2018, moving up a spot to fifth and sixth choice respectively.

"This is in line with global trends, with Asian and Middle East destinations growing in popularity, likely due to their comparably better management of Covid-19," Van Blerk said.

Overall attractiveness of South Africa to global workers dropped slightly, from ranking 40th in 2018 to 45th last year, but the country remains an attractive destination for other African countries such as Zambia, Angola and Gabon, as well as the Netherlands and the UK internationally.

While there is less willingness now to move to a foreign country, the survey shows a high level of enthusiasm for virtual mobility – staying in one's home country while working for a foreign employer. Some 73% of South Africans say they are open to working for an international remote employer.

| Mercury Correspondent