

SPOUSAL WORK RIGHTS IN SOUTH AFRICA: FROM POLICY SHIFT TO PRACTICAL IMPACT






WEBINAR POLL INSIGHTS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

Xpatweb, in collaboration with the Permits Foundation, hosted a focused session exploring South Africa's evolving approach to spousal work rights for foreign nationals.

The discussion unpacked the Revised White Paper on Citizenship, Immigration and Refugee Protection and what "relaxed" access to work for spouses means in practice.

WE EXPLORED

-  The shift toward enabling dual-career mobility as part of global talent strategies
-  How spousal work authorisation may function under a Points-Based System (PBS)
-  The practical implications for employers, including recruitment, retention, and compliance

The session was oversubscribed with more than

350
REGISTRANTS

POLL INSIGHTS

AWARENESS OF DEVELOPMENTS AROUND SPOUSAL WORK RIGHTS

63% of organisations have heard of developments regarding spousal work rights but lack clarity on the details, underscoring a major awareness gap.

63%

Heard about it, but unclear

25%

Not familiar

8%

Somewhat familiar

4%

Very familiar

IMPORTANCE FOR TALENT ATTRACTION

53% of organisations view spousal work rights as a deciding factor for candidates, confirming its critical role in talent attraction.

53%

Extremely significant, often a deciding factor

42%

Important, but not always decisive

5%

Nice to have, but limited impact

PREFERRED WORK AUTHORISATION MODEL

85%

of respondents support automatic work authorisation for spouses, indicating a clear preference for simplified and globally competitive policy. While **15%** agree with the White Paper's relaxed Work Visa access via the Points-Based System.

IMPACT ON TALENT ATTRACTION & RETENTION

78%

of respondents believe spousal work rights would significantly, or otherwise somewhat improve talent attraction and retention, reinforcing its strategic importance.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Based on the feedback during the webinar, there is clear and broad organisational support for the introduction of spousal work rights, whether direct or in a more relaxed form. This support remains evident despite a lower percentage of respondents indicating it will impact on attracting and retaining talent. Even where organisations believe work access for spouses will not massively impact their ability to attract or retain talent, they still support it as an important policy change.

WHAT IS HAPPENING NEXT

2026 INTERNATIONAL DUAL CAREERS SURVEY

As **Permits Foundation celebrates its 25th anniversary**, organisations are invited to participate in the 2026 International Dual Careers Employer Survey and contribute to evidence-based research that supports the global mobility community. The survey takes just 10 minutes to complete, and all responses remain anonymous.

Scan the QR code to take part in the survey.



XPATWEB ANNUAL MOBILITY CONFERENCE

Save the date for the Xpatweb Annual Mobility Conference on **9 July 2026**, featuring a keynote address by the **Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Leon Schreiber** and bringing together business leaders, policymakers, and mobility specialists to explore the latest developments in immigration, global talent, regulatory change, and investment mobility.

Keep an eye on our social pages for further details.

XPATWEB ANNUAL CRITICAL SKILLS SURVEY

Xpatweb's Annual Critical Skills Survey is now open, giving organisations the opportunity to contribute their input as updates to the Critical Skills List get underway. The findings help inform the Department of Home Affairs' National Critical Skills List, making your participation important in addressing South Africa's skills shortages and supporting future economic growth.

Scan the QR code to complete the survey.

