



International
Labour
Organization

PROSPECTS



Kingdom of the Netherlands

► Skills profiling of Syrian returnees



© International Labour Organization 2026
First published 2026



Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International. See: creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0. The user is allowed to reuse, share (copy and redistribute), adapt (remix, transform and build upon the original work) as detailed in the licence. The user must clearly credit the ILO as the source of the material and indicate if changes were made to the original content. Use of the emblem, name and logo of the ILO is not permitted in connection with translations, adaptations or other derivative works.

Attribution – The user must indicate if changes were made and must cite the work as follows: ILO, Skills profiling of Syrian returnees: Assessment Report, Geneva: International Labour Office, 2026. © ILO.

Translations – In case of a translation of this work, the following disclaimer must be added along with the attribution: This is a translation of a copyrighted work of the International Labour Organization (ILO). This translation has not been prepared, reviewed or endorsed by the ILO and should not be considered an official ILO translation. The ILO disclaims all responsibility for its content and accuracy. Responsibility rests solely with the author(s) of the translation.

Adaptations – In case of an adaptation of this work, the following disclaimer must be added along with the attribution: This is an adaptation of a copyrighted work of the International Labour Organization (ILO). This adaptation has not been prepared, reviewed or endorsed by the ILO and should not be considered an official ILO adaptation. The ILO disclaims all responsibility for its content and accuracy. Responsibility rests solely with the author(s) of the adaptation.

Third-party materials – This Creative Commons licence does not apply to non-ILO copyright materials included in this publication. If the material is attributed to a third party, the user of such material is solely responsible for clearing the rights with the rights holder and for any claims of infringement.

Any dispute arising under this licence that cannot be settled amicably shall be referred to arbitration in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). The parties shall be bound by any arbitration award rendered as a result of such arbitration as the final adjudication of such a dispute.

For details on rights and licensing, contact: www.ilo.org/rights-and-permissions. For details on ILO publications and digital products, visit: www.ilo.org/publns.

ISBN: 9789220430378 (web PDF)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54394/TDIT0667>

The designations employed in ILO publications and databases, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the ILO concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. See: www.ilo.org/disclaimer.

The opinions and views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinions, views or policies of the ILO.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the ILO, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

► Table of content

Acknowledgement	04
1.Executive summary	05
2.Introduction	07
2.1 Background and context	07
2.2 Objectives and scope	07
3.Methodology and analytical framework	09
3.1 Data collection approach	09
3.2 Data processing and cleaning	09
3.3 Statistical and analytical techniques	10
4.Demographic and employment overview	11
4.1 Demographic distribution of returnees	11
4.2 Employment status	15
4.2.1 Employment status in the country of asylum	14
4.2.1.1 Contract type of paid employees in asylum countries	16
4.2.1.2 Work experience duration in the country of asylum	16
4.2.1.3 Employment sectors in the country of asylum	17
4.2.1.4 Last previous job in the country of asylum	18
4.2.2 Current employment status of returnees in Syria	19
4.2.2.1 Contract types of paid employees in Syria	22
4.2.2.2 Returnees' work experience duration in Syria	23
4.2.2.3 Employment sectors of returnees in Syria	23
4.2.2.4 Economic sectors of employment for returnees in Syria	24
4.3 Economic and social status of returnees	25
5. Skills assessment and gap analysis	28
5.1 Existing skills profile	28
5.1.1 Education levels	28
5.1.2 Vocational training (TVET) enrolment	30
5.1.2.1 Fields of vocational and technical training	32
5.1.2.2 Vocational and technical training providers	32
5.2 Identify skill gaps	34
5.2.1 Challenges in getting work	36
5.2.2 Challenges in accessing training	36
5.2.3 Gender and disability-related barriers	38
5.3 Identify training needs	39
6. Regional comparative analysis	42
6.1 Country of return and skill comparison	42
6.2 Key industries per region	43
6.3 Effect of country of asylum on training experience	43
7. Conclusion	45
8. Recommendations	46
9. References	49
10. Annexes	49

► Acknowledgement

This report, entitled “Skills Profiling for Syrian Returnees,” was developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) under the “Partnership for Improving Prospects for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities” (PROSPECTS), a global initiative spearheaded by the Government of the Netherlands. PROSPECTS is a four-year partnership bringing together the Government of the Netherlands, the ILO, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank. The programme operates across eight countries in the East and Horn of Africa and the Middle East, supporting education, employment, and protection for forcibly displaced persons and host communities.

In Lebanon, the ILO’s work under PROSPECTS focuses on strengthening the resilience of crisis-affected labour markets and promoting sustainable livelihoods for both Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees. Interventions are structured around three integrated pillars: (1) Education and Learning, which promotes market-driven skills development and career guidance to enhance employability; (2) Economic Inclusion, which includes value chain development through the Access to Inclusive Markets Systems (AIMS) approach, support for entrepreneurship and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs)—with a focus on agriculture and socially and environmentally impactful enterprises—strengthening labour market governance and employment services, and promoting fundamental principles and rights at work; and (3) Protection and Social Protection, aimed at strengthening social protection systems for vulnerable groups. The second phase of the programme (2024–2027) builds on lessons learned while introducing new interventions aligned with Lebanon’s evolving priorities.

Within this framework, this report presents the key findings of the skills profiling assessment for Syrian returnees, analysing collected data and highlighting emerging trends related to skills, employment prospects, and labour market integration.

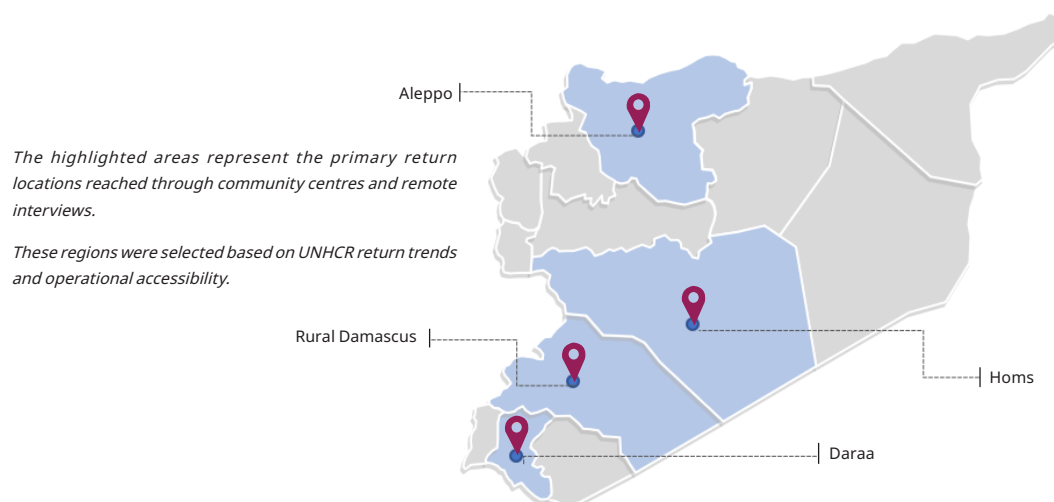
This study was conducted in cooperation with the UNHCR Syria Office and prepared by ILO consultant Imad-Addin Almasri, under the technical guidance of the ILO SKILLS Team and Shatha Eisouh, Regional Skills and Employability Officer of PROSPECTS. The analysis also benefited from the support of Alaa AlArabiati, PROSPECTS Data Analyst, and the overall guidance of Shaza Al Jondi, ILO Regional Chief Technical Advisor for PROSPECTS.

► 1. Executive summary

This report presents the key findings of the Skills Profiling for Syrian Returnees project, implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in partnership with UNHCR. The project sought to assess the skills, employment histories, and training needs of Syrian returnees, with the aim of better aligning their capacities with local labour market demands and supporting their access to decent work.

The assessment is based on 5,335 valid responses collected through structured questionnaires in four governorates: Aleppo (38.39 per cent), Homs (26.71 per cent), Daraa (19.33 per cent), and Rural Damascus (15.57 per cent). The data collection process took place between December 25, 2024, and 13 February 2025 through a combination of methods: personal interviews in UNHCR community centres (22.4 per cent), phone interviews (70.9 per cent), and household visits (6.7 per cent) conducted across key return areas in the four governorates.

► **Figure 1: Key Syrian governorates where data were collected.**



A range of analytical tools was used—including SPSS, Excel, and Power BI—with TURF analysis (Total unduplicated reach and frequency) used to identify high-impact combinations across multiple-choice answers. The findings show that although a significant share of returnees had previously worked abroad—primarily in Lebanon—over 80 per cent were unemployed at the time of the survey, with limited access to training, social protection, or formal work. The data also show that construction, agriculture, and manufacturing were the most common sectors of both past and potential employment. Key barriers to employment were identified, including a lack of recognised qualifications, gaps in job-specific skills, and constraints related to gender and disability.

Notable differences in skills were observed both in the country of asylum and the governorates to which returnees returned, underlining the need for localised, data-driven responses that reflect the actual conditions of returnees in each area.

1.1 Summary of key insights

This section provides a strategic synthesis of findings that directly impact skills development, vocational training, and the economic reintegration of Syrian returnees. While the full report presents comprehensive data across various themes, this summary highlights the most policy-relevant insights. It distils key patterns affecting returnees' readiness for the labour market, highlighting critical gaps in formal qualifications, foundational and digital skills, and equitable access to employment support. These insights are intended to guide readers towards priority areas where targeted investments and programming can have the greatest impact.

- ▶ **Low TVET participation:** Only 6.5 per cent of respondents reported enrolling in a vocational or technical training programme, and among them, just 56.3 per cent received a nationally recognised qualification. This indicates that most returnees lack formal technical certification, limiting their employability in structured labour markets.
- ▶ **Weak digital and foundational skills:** Self-assessments revealed that 82.6 per cent of returnees rated their digital skills at a beginner level or lower, while over 50 per cent reported only basic or beginner-level literacy and numeracy. These deficiencies pose significant barriers to both training access and integration into modern workplaces.
- ▶ **Gender gaps in skills and access:** Female returnees were more likely to participate in training programmes, yet their access to formal employment remained limited. A gender gap was also observed in digital literacy, with males reporting higher proficiency despite females showing higher rates of job-seeking activity.
- ▶ **Minimal entrepreneurship training:** Only 1 per cent of respondents had received any training in entrepreneurship, highlighting a critical gap in livelihood diversification—particularly important in areas with limited wage employment opportunities.
- ▶ **Geographic disparities:** Over 50 per cent of those who received training did so while residing in Lebanon, while in-country access remained low. This underscores the need to expand localised TVET infrastructure within Syria.

These findings point to an urgent need for scalable, inclusive training programmes tailored to returnees' backgrounds, especially in high-demand sectors. Strengthening foundational and digital skills, expanding recognised TVET options, and investing in gender-responsive programming will be crucial to supporting long-term economic reintegration of returnees.

► 2. Introduction

2.1 Background and context

Syria is entering a new phase after more than 13 years of conflict that profoundly affected the country and its people. Millions of Syrians were forced to leave their homes due to war, violence, and the policies of the former regime, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey.

Following significant political and military developments in Syria, increasing numbers of Syrians are returning to their towns and villages. Several of these areas, previously damaged during the war, are now reopening with improved security and support. The new government is encouraging returnees to come back and participate in reconstruction efforts, creating opportunities for people who have been away for years to rebuild their lives and help their communities recover. Despite their diverse work experience and skills, there is limited information on the capacities returnees bring and the types of jobs they are looking for. According to UNHCR reports, returns have increased sharply. Between December 2024 and April 2025, more than 798,000¹ people returned to Syria, with the highest numbers observed in Aleppo, Homs, Daraa, and Rural Damascus. These return movements reflect both hope and a need for stability. Although many returnees bring valuable skills and experience, they continue to face challenges in securing jobs, accessing training opportunities, and obtaining services.

To address this evolving context, the International Labour Organization (ILO), in collaboration with UNHCR, launched the Skills Profiling for Syrian Returnees initiative. The objective is to produce evidence-based insights into the qualifications, skills, and employment potential of returnees.

This intervention responds directly to growing demand from both returnees and local employers. While many returnees bring valuable work experience gained abroad, employers in sectors such as construction, agriculture, garment manufacturing, and engineering continue to report notable skills shortages.

2.2 Objectives and scope

The ILO's approach combines rapid assessment with stakeholder engagement, ensuring that the perspectives of returnees and labour market actors are reflected in future planning.

In light of the rapidly evolving landscape of refugee returns, there is a critical need for timely, reliable, and disaggregated data. Such information is essential to support evidence-based planning for job creation and training programmes that are aligned with actual market conditions.

The main objective of this assignment is to conduct a comprehensive skills profiling of Syrian returnees, mapping their educational background, work experience, training history, and current employment status. This profiling exercise also aims to identify the gaps and barriers that hinder returnees' access to decent work, while highlighting opportunities for skills development and job placement across different regions.

The initiative supports the joint ILO-UNHCR agenda of promoting sustainable livelihoods and decent work for displaced populations.

¹United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Syrian Governorates of Return Overview: As of April 2025, ¹⁷. UNHCR Border Monitoring and Movement Tool. April 2025, ¹⁷.

The scope of the assessment includes collecting and analysing data on returnees' employment history, educational background, participation in training, and the challenges they face in securing work. It also examines issues related to access to training opportunities, employment barriers faced by women and persons with disabilities, and regional differences in skills and opportunities. The final outputs provide evidence to support the design of programmes, policies, and services that enhance returnees' access to decent work and contribute to Syria's recovery. The data collected will help align skills with job opportunities and inform the development of more effective training and support systems, easing the transition for returnees as they rebuild their lives. The results of this study will guide the efforts of the ILO, UNHCR, and national partners to promote sustainable livelihoods for Syrian returnees.

► 3. Methodology and analytical framework

3.1 Data collection approach

Data for this assessment were collected through a structured questionnaire developed by the ILO in collaboration with UNHCR. The tool was carefully reviewed and finalised following consultations between the two organisations, ensuring that its content aligned with the project's objectives and the context in Syria. The questionnaire covered a wide range of topics, including education, work history, vocational training, skills, employment challenges, and preferred job sectors.

UNHCR's partner NGOs in Syria played a central role in implementing the data collection. Ten participating NGOs were involved in the fieldwork, supported by more than 100 trained volunteers and staff from 54 community centres across four governorates: Aleppo, Homs, Daraa, and Rural Damascus. Prior to deployment, all enumerators received training on the questionnaire, digital data entry, and interview techniques.

A pilot phase was conducted to test the tool and introduce necessary adjustments. The main data collection took place between 25 December 2024 and 13 February 2025, through in-person interviews at community centres, remote phone surveys, and field visits. This hybrid approach ensured broad coverage and allowed the project to reach returnees living in hard-to-access or rural areas.

While the data provide valuable insights, two key limitations should be noted. First, although the sample size of 5,335 returnees is substantial, it was not selected through a probability-based sampling approach. A more representative sample would have allowed for broader generalisation to all returnee populations in Syria. Second, the data reflect conditions during a specific period (25 December 2024–13 February 2025). Given the dynamic nature of return patterns and local economic conditions, findings may evolve over time. Acknowledging these limitations supports accurate interpretation and responsible use of the findings for planning, advocacy, and programme design.

3.2 Data processing and cleaning

The dataset received on 9 March 2025 required extensive cleaning and restructuring due to multiple structural and content-related issues. These problems were mainly due to two reasons:

- First, frequent mistakes by data collectors during fieldwork.
- Second, a few minor issues related to questionnaire design were identified, such as overlapping answer choices and the overuse of multiple-response questions. In several cases, respondents were allowed to select more than one answer from very long lists of options, sometimes reaching 14, 18, or even over 30 choices. This may have caused confusion and response overlap. These issues were less frequent but still affected the consistency of some responses.

The original sample consisted of 5,371 respondents. However, 36 individuals were excluded from the final dataset due to incomplete participation. After these cases were excluded, the final sample size used for analysis was 5,335 respondents, resulting in a response rate of 99.33 per cent. To prepare the dataset for statistical analysis, visual dashboards, and geographic mapping, the following cleaning steps were undertaken. The process began with a thorough review of the dataset to understand the questionnaire structure and variable definitions. This helped identify inconsistencies, missing values, input errors, and conflicting responses.

Data entry errors such as incompatible options, unclear entries, missing values, duplicates, and inconsistencies were reviewed and corrected. The focus was on ensuring high-quality data to maintain the reliability of future statistical indicators.

Special attention was given to open-ended questions, which often included multiple variations of the same response. Processing these entries was particularly challenging, as many answers were recorded using inconsistent phrasing, spelling variations, or confused descriptions, especially in sections related to job titles, training, and employment sectors.

All open-ended responses were translated, standardised, and grouped into new categories. The reclassification process underwent careful review to ensure accuracy and clarity without losing key distinctions between roles or sectors.

All multiple-response questions (questions allowing the selection of more than one answer) were recoded into a separate binary variable (Yes/No). This approach enabled accurate percentage calculations and facilitated the application of TURF analysis.

Also, to prepare the dataset for geographic analysis, location names were corrected and standardised to align with GPS coordinates (longitude and latitude). These details were then added to each entry record, allowing the mapping of returnee distributions and skill profiles across Syrian regions.

Records of individuals who refused to complete the questionnaire were excluded from the main analysis. However, the reasons behind non-participation, namely refusal, lack of interest, reluctance to share information, husband disapproval, and other reasons were documented and summarised in an annex.

Despite the challenges encountered, all data were cleaned and classified using logical and consistent methods. The final dataset was delivered in both Arabic and English, along with a comprehensive codebook, included as an annex, to support the analysis and reporting phases of the project.

3.3 Statistical and analytical techniques

The analysis of the cleaned dataset was conducted using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 27, alongside Excel and Power BI for data visualisation and interactive reporting.

A combination of descriptive statistical techniques was applied to extract meaningful insights.

TURF analysis was used for multiple-response questions to identify the most common combinations of answers selected together. Exploratory data analysis (EDA) was also applied to explore general trends and relationships within the data. Frequency distributions and percentage calculations were used to summarise categorical variables such as education level, employment sector, and types of training.

Measures such as mean, median, and mode were calculated to understand central tendencies in numeric variables, such as age, years of experience, and household size, among other quantitative indicators.

A geographic analysis was also conducted, visualising the distribution of returnees across Syrian governorates and comparing patterns based on their countries of asylum.

To present the findings in a clear and user-friendly format, interactive dashboards were developed using Power BI. These dashboards incorporate reports and maps, enabling geographic comparison and visual exploration of key indicators across different governorates and demographic groups.

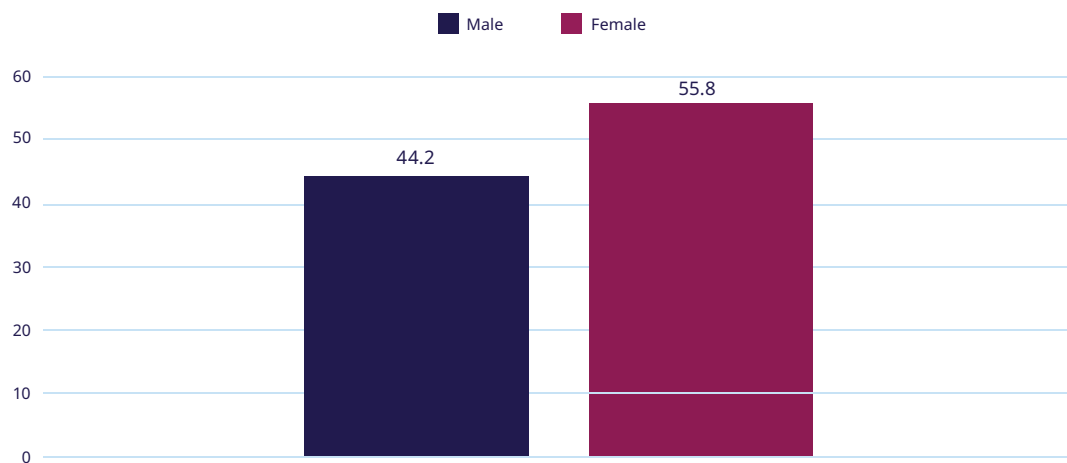
These dashboards included filters for governorate and gender, enabling stakeholders to easily examine complex trends through filters and visual summaries. The overall analytical approach was designed to translate raw data into actionable insights, supporting practical, evidence-based decision-making aligned with the project's objectives.

► 4. Demographic and employment overview

4.1 Demographic distribution of returnees

The demographic profile of the surveyed returnees reveals a balanced and inclusive representation, highlighting the diversity of the population reached through the assessment. The sample included a slightly higher proportion of female respondents (55.8 per cent), compared with male respondents (44.2 per cent), indicating a notable level of female participation in the assessment process. This may reflect women's greater availability during interviews or their higher engagement in community centres where most data collection took place.

► Figure 2: Gender distribution



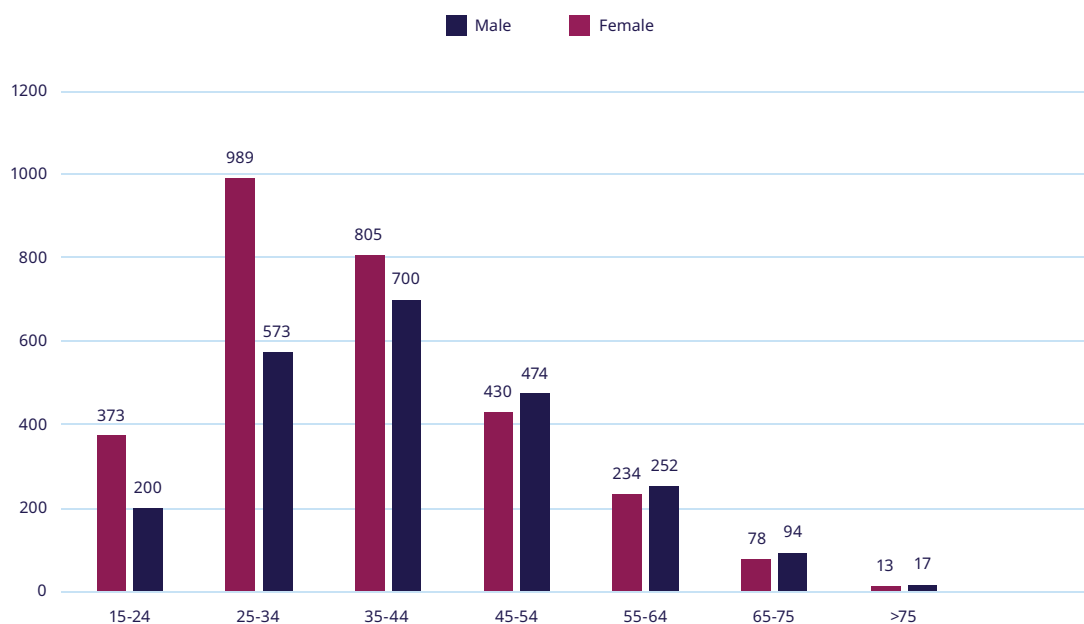
A total of 5,232 respondents provided valid information on their date of birth, representing 98.1 per cent of the sample. During data cleaning, 1.9 per cent of records were excluded due to clearly incorrect or extreme values. Ages above 75 years were removed to improve the accuracy of age-related indicators. The cleaned dataset shows that respondents' ages ranged from 15 to 75 years, with an average age of 39.15 and a standard deviation of 12.71. The median age was 37, indicating that most participants were within the working-age population.

► Table 1: Age of respondents

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Min	Max
Age	5 232	39.15	12.71	37	15	75
	Female			Male		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
	37.61	12.39	41.08	12.85		
	Age Group	Female	Male	Grand Total		
	15-24	373	200	573		
	25-34	989	573	1 562		
	35-44	805	700	1 505		
	45-54	430	474	904		
	55-64	234	252	486		
	65-75	78	94	172		
	>75	13	17	30		
Grand Total		2 922	2 310	5 232		

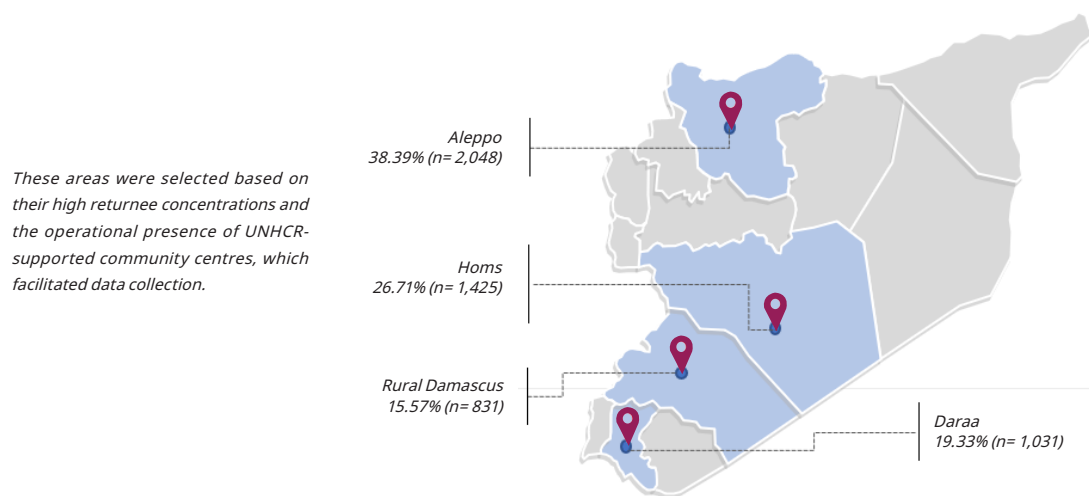
Male participants had a higher average age (41.08 years) compared with females (37.61 years), These findings indicate that most respondents were in the economically active age range, which aligns with the labour market focus of this assessment.

► Figure 2.1: Gender and age group distribution



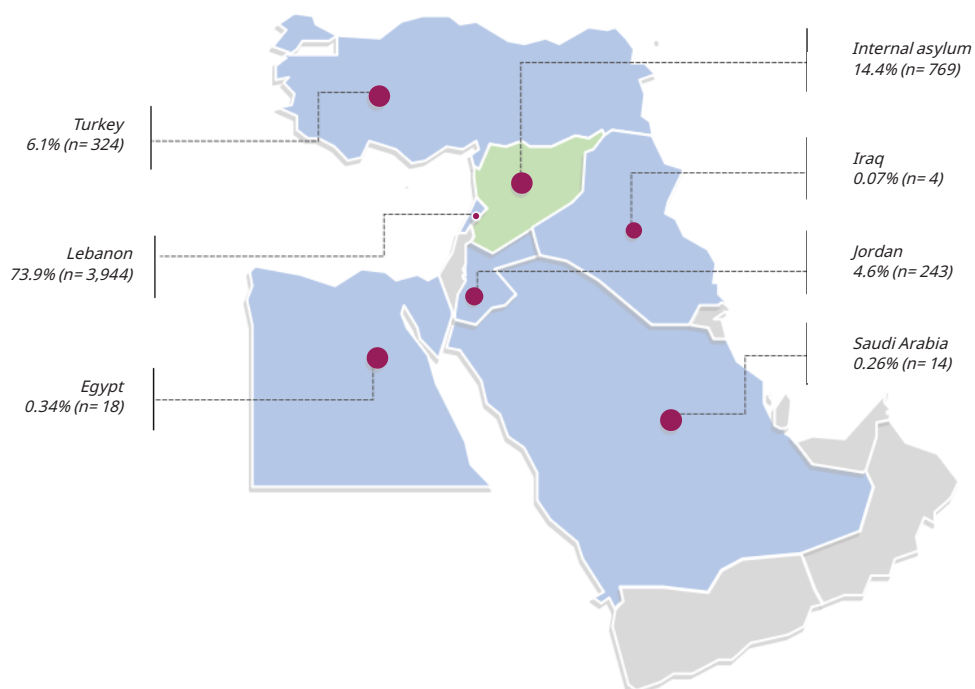
The geographic distribution of returnees was uneven across the four governorates included in the assessment. This pattern reflects broader national return trends observed by humanitarian actors in recent months. Aleppo recorded the highest concentration of respondents, followed by Homs, Daraa, and Rural Damascus, underscoring Aleppo's role as a primary return destination. Each governorate presents distinct economic and social dynamics, which must be carefully considered when designing localised employment and reintegration programmes.

► Figure 3: Key Syrian governorates where data were collected



Before returning to Syria, most respondents had lived as refugees in neighbouring countries. According to the data, 73.9 per cent of returnees had been in Lebanon, followed by 14.4 per cent who had experienced internal displacement within Syria.

► Figure 4: Distribution of returnees by country of asylum



Smaller percentages had lived in Turkey (6.1 per cent), Jordan (4.6 per cent), Egypt (0.34 per cent), and Iraq (0.07 per cent). A few others reported returning from countries such as Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Germany, Qatar, Libya, and Ethiopia. Some of the respondents who selected "Other" mentioned refugee camps, particularly Rukban Camp, which accounted for 134 cases.

► Table 2: Distribution of respondents by country of asylum or return

Country of asylum/return	N	%
Lebanon	3 944	73.9
Internal asylum (Syria)	769	14.4
Turkey	324	6.1
Jordan	243	4.6
Other (Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan)	55	1.03
Total	5 335	100

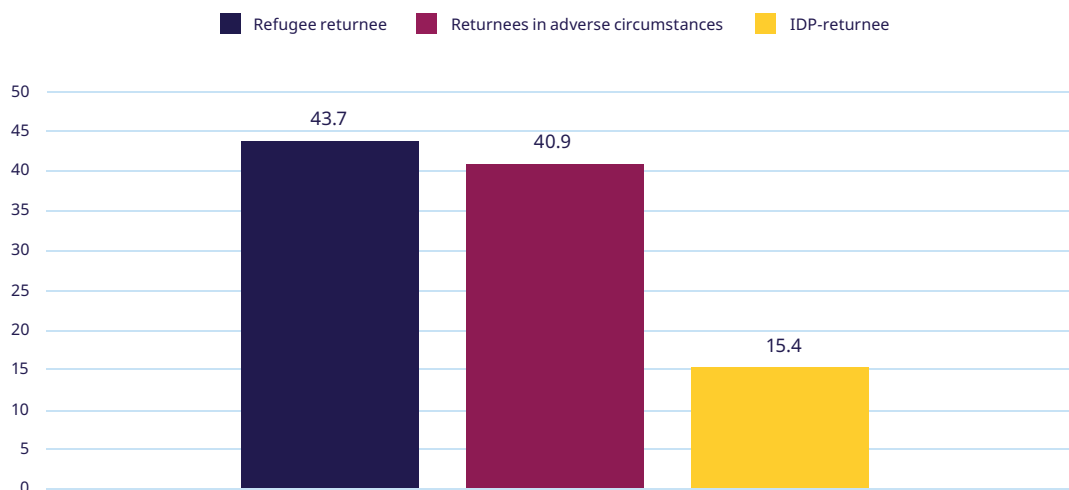
This distribution highlights Lebanon as the primary country of asylum for Syrian returnees in this sample. These differing displacement environments influenced returnees' access to employment, training, and services prior to return, helping explain variations in their current employment status in Syria.

Respondents were also asked about the return status of their household. Most identified as either refugee returnees (43.7 per cent) or returnees in adverse circumstances (40.9 per cent). Internally displaced persons (IDP returnees) represented a smaller share of the sample (15.4 per cent).

► Table 3: Returnee household status by gender

The status of beneficiary/family	N	%	Male (N) %	Female (N) %
Refugee returnee	2 330	43.7	(978) 41.49	(1 325) 45.40
Returnees in adverse circumstances	2 182	40.9	(918) 38.95	(1 264) 42.44
IDP returnee	823	15.4	(461) 19.56	(362) 12.16
Total	5 335	100	(2 357) 100	(2 978) 100

► Figure 5: Returnee household categories



It is notable that female respondents were more represented across all three categories. This distribution illustrates the mixed nature of the returnee population, with varying vulnerability levels that could influence reintegration needs and employment readiness.

4.2 Employment status

Understanding employment status of returnees is essential to assessing their economic reintegration. The assessment included questions about their previous employment status in the country of asylum and their current employment status in Syria. This helped identify changes in employment conditions, barriers to finding work, and the sectors in which returnees are currently active or seeking employment.

Findings show significant differences between employment conditions in host countries and those in Syria. Many returnees who had worked abroad were no longer working after their return. Others reported changes in job type, working hours, or access to contracts or social protection.

Employment situation was analysed in two stages:

- First, employment status during displacement in the country of asylum.
- Second, the current employment status in Syria after returning.

This two-stage analysis provides a better understanding of labour market participation among returnees and informs the design of targeted support programmes.

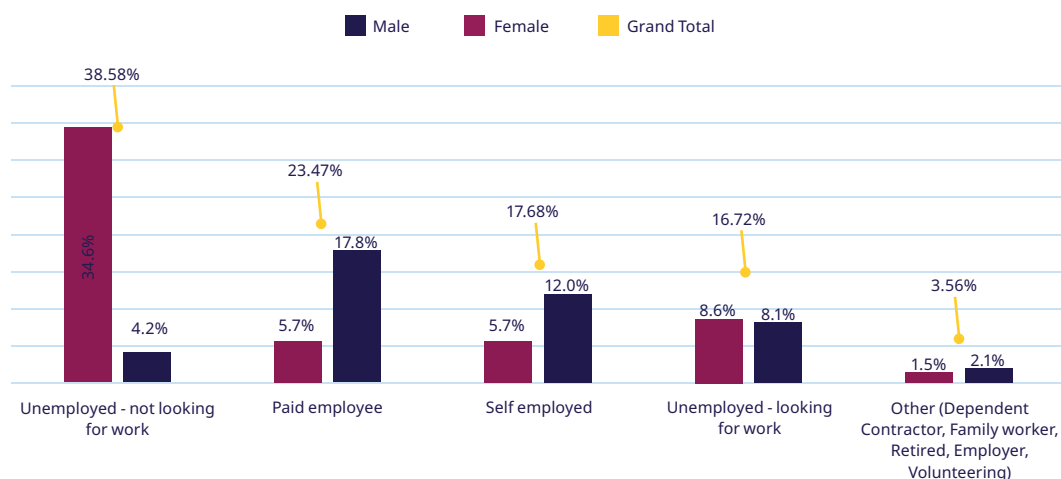
4.2.1 Employment status in the country of asylum

Returnees were asked about their employment status before and after returning to Syria, to assess changes in work conditions. The data indicate clear differences between employment experiences in host countries and post-return conditions in Syria.

► Table 4: Employment status of respondents in the country of asylum

What was your employment status in the country of asylum?	Total %	Female %	Male %
Unemployed - not looking for work	38.58%	34.38%	4.20%
Paid employee	23.47%	5.66%	17.81%
Self-employed	17.68%	5.66%	12.01%
Unemployed - looking for work	16.72%	8.62%	8.10%
Other (dependent contractor, family worker, retired, employer,volunteering)	3.56%	1.50%	2.06%
Total N (5,335)	100.00%	55.82%	44.18%

► Figure 6: Employment status in countries of asylum



While in the countries of asylum, 38.5 per cent of respondents were unemployed and not looking for work, and 23.5 per cent were paid employees. Around 16.7 per cent were unemployed but actively seeking work. The remainder were engaged in informal or irregular work, including day labour, unpaid family work, or personal services.

4.2.1.1 Contract type of paid employees in asylum countries

Respondents who reported being paid employees in the country of asylum were asked about their contract type and expected duration.

► **Table 5: Contract type in the country of asylum (paid employees only)**

If you were a paid employee in the country of asylum, What was your contract or agreement and its expected duration?	N	%	Total %
I didn't have any kind of contract	690	54.94	12.93
Short-term and casual employee	293	23.33	5.49
Fixed-term employee	184	14.65	3.45
Permanent employee	78	6.21	1.46
Paid apprentice, trainee or intern	11	0.88	0.21
Total	1 256	100	23.5

A total of 1,256 respondents (23.5 per cent of the full sample) answered this question. Among them:

- 54.94 per cent reported having no contract at all, representing 12.93 per cent of the total sample.
- 23.33 per cent had a short-term or casual contract, representing 5.49 per cent of the total sample.
- 14.65 per cent were fixed-term employees, equal to 3.45 per cent of the total sample.
- 6.21 per cent reported having permanent contracts, representing 1.46 per cent of the total sample.
- 0.88 per cent only were employed as paid apprentices, trainees, or interns, equal to 0.21 per cent of the total sample.

These findings indicate that most returnees who worked abroad had no formal contract, reflecting limited job security during displacement.

4.2.1.2 Work experience duration in the country of asylum

Employed respondents were asked about the number of years they had worked in the sector, with reported experience ranging from 1 to 27 years.

► **Table 6: Years of work experience in the country of asylum**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Min	Max
If you were employed in the country of asylum, how many years did you work in that sector?	7.08	8.13	5	1	27

The average experience was 7.08 years, with a median of 5 years, indicating that half of respondents had five years or less. A standard deviation of 8.13 years reflects wide variation in work experience across the sample.

4.2.1.3 Employment sectors in the country of asylum

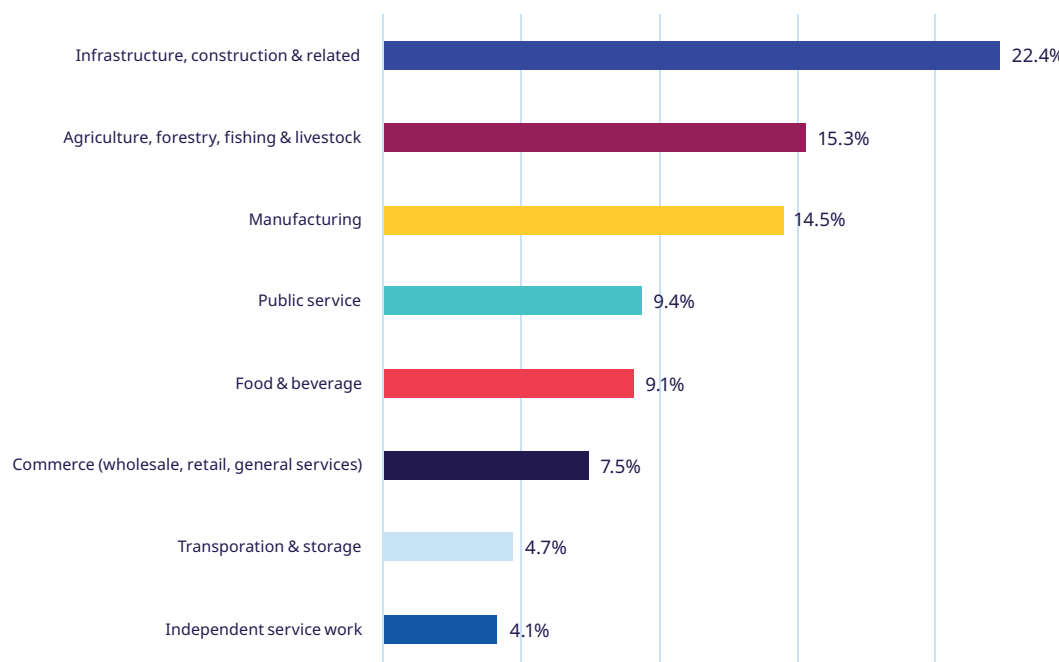
Respondents with work experience abroad were asked to identify their employment sector. A total of 2,402 individuals, representing 45.05 per cent of the full sample, provided valid responses. The results indicate the following distribution:

- ▶ 22.36 per cent worked in infrastructure, construction, and related sectors.
- ▶ 15.32 per cent in agriculture, forestry, fishing, or livestock.
- ▶ 14.49 per cent in the manufacturing sector.
- ▶ 9.37 per cent in public service, and 9.08 per cent in the food and beverage sector.
- ▶ 7.45 per cent in commerce, including wholesale, retail, and general services.
- ▶ 4.7 per cent in transportation and storage, and 4.12 per cent in independent service work.
- ▶ Smaller percentages (1 per cent or less) reported working in education, utilities, health services, auto repair, hospitality, IT, tourism, arts, financial services, military, or religious sectors. A few respondents identified as housewives, volunteers, freelancers, or indicated working through personal networks.

Note: Each category listed in the table is accompanied by a brief explanation in parentheses to clarify the type of employment or activity it represents.

Independent service work (house cleaning, portering, freelance work, and building guard duties).

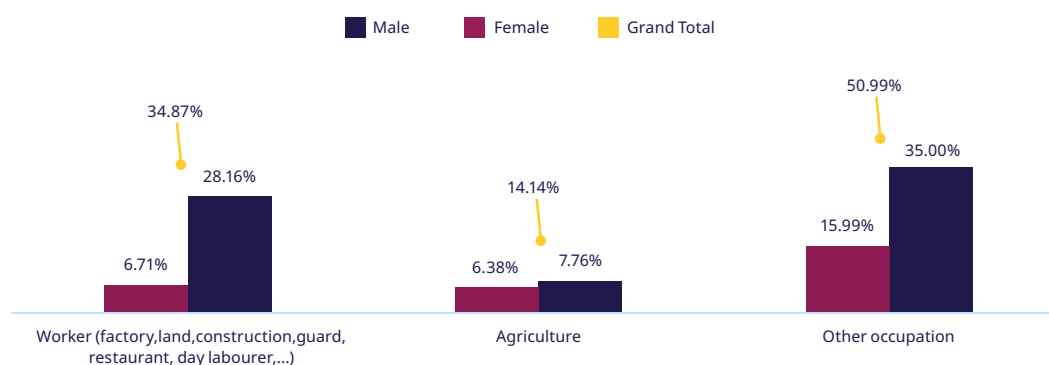
▶ **Figure7: Employment sectors of respondents in the country of asylum (employees only)**



4.2.1.4 Last previous job in the country of asylum

Participants with work experience abroad were asked about their last-held occupation before returning to Syria. A total of 2,402 respondents (45.03 per cent of the total sample) answered this question. While employment sectors and last-held occupations generally correspond, minor differences in percentages are expected. Sectors represent broad economic activities, whereas occupations refer to specific job roles, often overlapping across sectors. Variations also arise from self-reported data, differences in respondent interpretation, and the wide range of response options. Therefore, exact numerical alignment between sectors and occupations should not be anticipated.

► Figure 8: Last occupation in the country of asylum (employees only)



The results showed that the most common job category among respondents was general labour including factory work, construction, land work, security, restaurant work, and day labour. This category accounted for 34.87 per cent of respondents (28.16 per cent male and 6.71 per cent female).

The second-largest category was “Other occupation”, representing 50.99 per cent of respondents (35 per cent male and 15.99 per cent female).

Agriculture was less frequently reported, representing 14.14 per cent of respondents (7.76 per cent male and 6.38 per cent female).

The significant gender gaps across these occupations point to varied work experiences and skill sets acquired during asylum, which could influence targeted reintegration and employment strategies.

Smaller proportions worked in metal work, hairdressing, carpentry, plumbing, electricity, education, aluminium/glass work, and freelance or humanitarian activities, each representing between 0.5 per cent and 1.6 per cent of respondents. Very few had experience in IT, accounting, air conditioning, media, design, arts, religious services, or jewellery making—each comprising less than 0.5 per cent of the total. A small share (3.91 per cent) reported having no occupation at all, while a few identified as housewives, students, or retirees. This diversity of occupational backgrounds demonstrates the wide range of practical experience and competencies gained abroad, which can guide future reintegration and employment programmes in Syria.

Alignment between employment sectors and last occupations

Overall, the reported occupations are broadly consistent with the identified employment sectors, indicating a coherent pattern of labour market participation among returnees during their time abroad.

A comparative analysis of employment sectors and last-held occupations shows strong internal consistency in respondents' answers. The three most frequently cited sectors—infrastructure and construction (22.36 per cent), agriculture and livestock (15.32 per cent), and manufacturing (14.49 per cent)—are closely reflected in the most commonly reported occupations, including general labour roles such as factory and construction work (36.05 per cent), agricultural work (14.45 per cent), and tailoring and handicrafts (6.24 per cent and 3.58 per cent, respectively).

► **Figures 7 & 8: Last occupation and employment sectors in the country of asylum**

	Employment sector	%	Last occupation	%
1	Infrastructure and construction	22.36	General worker (construction, guard, etc.)	36.05
2	Agriculture and livestock	15.32	Agriculture, livestock, fishing	14.45
3	Manufacturing	14.49	Factory worker, tailor, handicrafts	9.82
4	Commerce (trade and services)	7.45	Sales, trade	5.41
5	Health services	1.04	Nursing and therapy	0.46

Further alignment is evident in service-oriented sectors. For example, transportation and storage (4.7 per cent) corresponds closely with driver occupations (4.00 per cent), while the food and beverage sector (9.08 per cent) aligns with roles such as bakers or pastry cooks (4.45 per cent) and restaurant workers included in the general labour category. Similarly, the presence of commerce (7.45 per cent) is reflected in respondents who reported last working in sales (2.75 per cent) or trade (2.66 per cent).

Other sectors with smaller shares, such as health services, education, and community services, also show corresponding occupational roles, albeit at lower frequencies. This clear alignment between sectoral and occupational data reinforces the reliability of the findings and supports evidence-based planning for labour market reintegration in Syria.

Final Note: While the overall alignment is strong between reported employment sectors and last-held occupations, minor differences in percentage values are expected. Employment sectors reflect broad economic activities, whereas occupations describe specific job roles, and a single sector can encompass multiple occupations. In addition, the questionnaire is based on self-assessment, whereby participants classified their occupations and sectors according to their own understanding and interpretation.

This subjectivity, alongside varying levels of education and awareness among respondents, and the wide range of response options available to enumerators, contributes to the observed variations. Full numerical alignment between sectors and occupations should therefore not be expected.

4.2.2 Current employment status of returnees in Syria

Before presenting the results on current employment status, it is important to note that most respondents (97.5 per cent) expressed their intention to remain in Syria, while only 2.5 per cent stated they did not plan to stay. This strong desire to settle locally highlights the importance of improving employment opportunities and supporting sustainable reintegration.

► Table 9: Respondents' intention to remain in Syria

Do you intend to stay in Syria?	N	%	Male (N) %	Female (N) %
No	135	2.5	(61) 2.59%	(74) 2.48%
Yes	5 200	97.5	(2 296) 97.41%	(2 904) 97.52%
Total	5 335	100	(2 357) 100%	(2 978) 100%

Despite this strong intention to remain, many returnees continue to face significant challenges in finding employment. At the time of the survey, just over half of all respondents (50.1 per cent) reported actively looking for a job. This high level of job-search activity indicates a strong willingness to work among returnees, despite the complex social and economic constraints they encounter after returning.

► Table 10: Active job search status among returnees

Are you actively looking for new employment opportunities?	N	%	Male (N) %	Female (N) %
No	2 662	49.9	(2 280) 96.73%	(2 793) 93.79%
Yes	2 673	50.1	(77) 3.27%	(185) 6.21%
Total	5 335	100	(2 357) 100	(2 978) 100

The data show that both male and female returnees expressed similarly strong intentions to remain in Syria, with 97.41 per cent of men and 97.52 per cent of women expressing their willingness to stay. This reflects a shared commitment across genders to reintegration and community rebuilding.

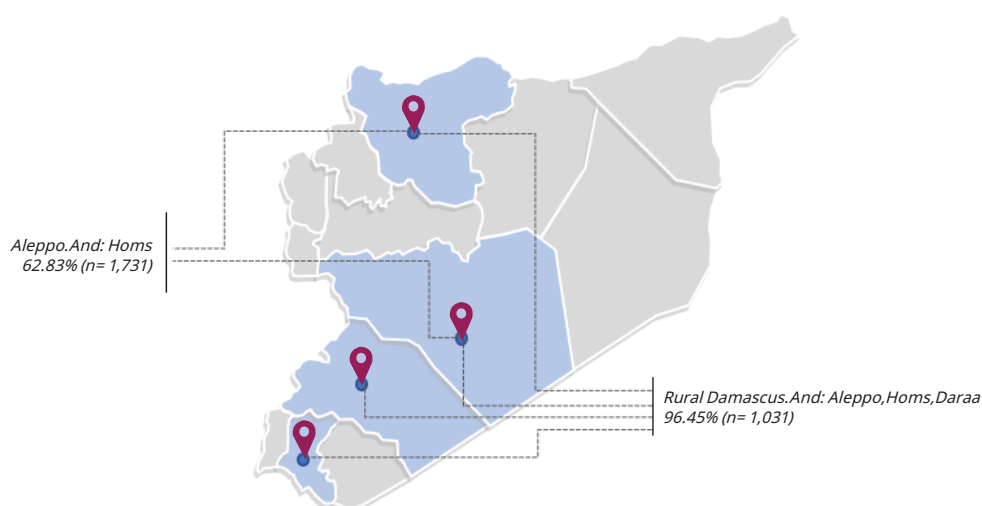
However, notable gender differences emerge in job-seeking behaviour. Only 3.27 per cent of male respondents reported actively looking for work, compared to 6.21 per cent of female respondents. This means that women were nearly twice as likely as men to be engaged in active job search at the time of the survey. This highlights the importance of gender-responsive employment initiatives, as women may face greater economic pressure or barriers to entering formal employment. Tailored reintegration and livelihood programmes are therefore essential to address their specific challenges and aspirations.

► Table 11: Governorates where returnees are seeking job/note: Total percentage has no analytical meaning due to multiple-answer format.

If you are seeking employment, in which governorate are you seeking employment?	N	%	Total %
Homs	895	33.48	16.78
Aleppo	839	31.39	15.73
Daraa	574	21.47	10.76
Rural Damascus	354	13.24	6.64
Damascus	79	2.96	1.48
Other Governorates	19	0.68	0.37

The data provide a clear illustration of the labour market conditions faced by returnees who are actively seeking employment. Returnees who reported looking for work were asked in which governorate they were seeking employment. As participants were allowed to select more than one governorate, the total percentage exceeds 100 per cent.

► **Figure 9: Governorates where returnees are seeking jobs**



Homs emerged as the most preferred governorate, chosen by 895 respondents (33.5 per cent of all job seekers), representing 16.8 per cent of all answers given. It is followed by Aleppo, chosen by 839 respondents (31.4 per cent), and Daraa—574 respondents (21.5 per cent).

► **Table 12: Job search outcomes among returnees actively looking for work**

Did you get the job?	N	%	Total %	Male (N) %	Female (N) %
No	2 496	93.4	46.8	(1 485) 91.38%	(1 011) 96.47%
Yes	177	6.6	3.3	(140) 8.62%	(37) 3.53%
Total	2 673	100	50.1	(1 625) 100	(1 048) 100

This high rate of unsuccessful job search reflects not only the scarcity of available positions but also a range of potential barriers, including limited mobility, skill mismatches, and employer reluctance to hire returnees. Despite their active efforts to re-enter the workforce, most returnees remain disconnected from formal employment channels. Only a small fraction (6.6 per cent) of those actively seeking employment were able to secure a job. This means that, across the entire sample, less than one in twenty respondents both sought and successfully obtained a job.

The remaining job seekers, representing nearly 47 per cent of the total sample were left without employment despite their active search. This wide gap between willingness to work and actual access to employment highlights structural mismatches in the labour market. Although returnees demonstrate a clear desire to participate economically, the system often lacks the absorption capacity, opportunity channels, or supportive frameworks needed to convert this motivation into real work opportunities. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to bridge the gap, whether through short-term job creation programmes, market-oriented training, or partnerships with the private sector to promote inclusive hiring practices.

To further assess the economic reintegration of returnees, participants were also asked to report their current employment status after returning to Syria.

► **Table 13: Current employment status of respondents in Syria**

What is your current employment status?	Total %	Female %	Male %
Unemployed - looking for work	54.80%	15.48%	39.32%
Unemployed - not looking for work	11.79 %	7.22%	4.57%
Independent worker without regular employees (own business or agriculture activity)	14.52%	3.23%	11.29%
Paid employee	16.79%	2.69%	14.10%
Other	2.09%	0.46%	1.63%
Total	100.0%	29.09%	70.91%

The results reveal high unemployment and limited access to formal employment. A large share of respondents (54.80 per cent) reported being unemployed but actively looking for work, while 11.79 per cent were unemployed and not seeking work. This indicates that more than four out of five returnees were outside the formal workforce at the time of the survey. Only 16.79 per cent were working as paid employees, and 14.52 per cent were independent workers without regular employees. A smaller group (2.09 per cent) reported engagement in various service-related jobs, including restaurant and shop work, tailoring, construction, electrical work, carpentry, agriculture, and street vending. Other employment types—each representing less than 1 per cent—included day labourers, retirees, freelancers, family-business helpers, transportation workers, contractors, employers, and people involved in housework, volunteer work, tutoring, or informal jobs. Some respondents also mentioned studying, facing health-related constraints, or having family members abroad.

These findings reveal a significant gap between returnees' willingness to work and the actual job opportunities available to them. Without dedicated support through training, job creation initiatives, and reintegration programmes, many returnees are likely to remain excluded from the labour market. Facilitating their access to stable and decent employment is therefore essential not only for their personal future, but also for the broader recovery of the local economy.

4.2.2.1 Contract types of paid employees in Syria

Paid employees in Syria were asked to indicate the type of contract they held at the time of the assessment. A total of 452 respondents, representing 8.47 per cent of the full sample, answered this question. The majority (58.63 per cent) reported having no contract at all, representing 4.97 per cent of the total sample.

► **Table 14: Returnee's contract type in Syria (paid employees only)**

If you were a paid employee, what was your contract or agreement and its expected duration?	N	%	Total %
No contract	265	58.63	4.97
Permanent employee	38	8.41	0.71
Fixed - term employee	63	13.94	1.18
Short-term and casual employee	86	19.03	1.61
Total	452	100	8.47

Smaller proportions (8.41 per cent) reported having permanent contracts. Others said they had short-term or casual contracts (19.03 per cent) or fixed-term contracts (13.94 per cent).

These results indicate that most returnees employed in Syria are working without formal or secure agreements. The absence of written contracts exposes them to limited protection, income instability, and restricted access to labour rights. This situation underscores the need for stronger employment regulation and enhanced worker protection mechanisms during the post-return phase.

4.2.2.2 Returnees' work experience duration in Syria

Returnees who reported being currently employed in Syria were asked how long they had been working in their current job or activity. Responses were recorded in months to better assess the duration of employment following their return.

► **Table 15: Duration of current work (in months) for employed returnees in Syria**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Min	Max
If you were employed, how many months have you been working in this sector?	13.33	22.81	4	1	30

The average duration of current employment was 13.33 months, with a median of 4 months. Reported durations ranged from 1 to 30 months, with a standard deviation of 22.81. These results indicate that while a small number had longer work experience, many returnees had only recently entered the labour market. The short employment durations reflect both recent return trends and challenges associated with securing stable job opportunities. They also suggest that returnees often move between informal jobs or struggle to secure long-term opportunities within the Syrian labour market.

4.2.2.3 Employment sectors of returnees in Syria

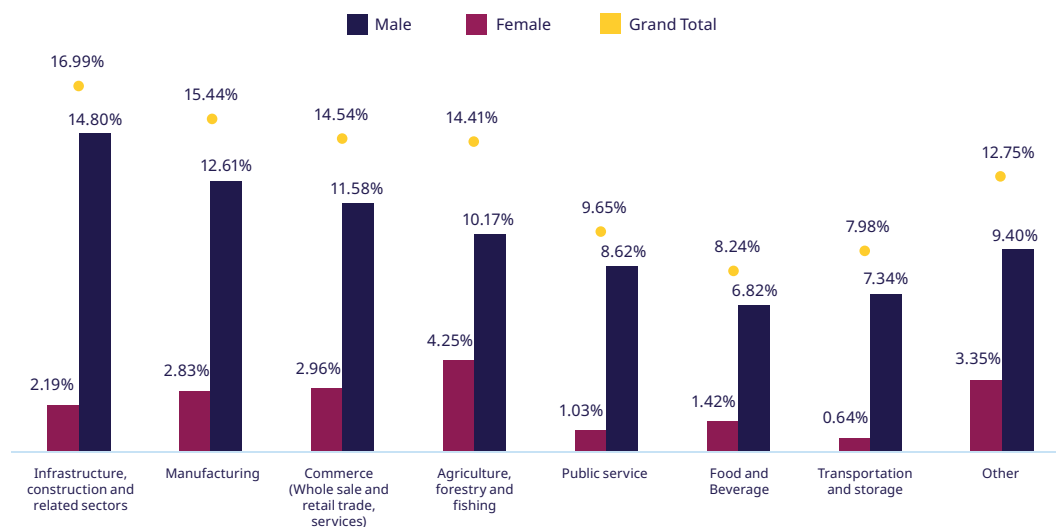
The distribution of returnees across employment sectors in Syria reflects both their previous experiences and the structure of the local labour market. Examining the type of work they are currently engaged in helps identify the dominant sectors of activity, as well as gaps in sectoral representation.

Among currently employed returnees, the most common sector was infrastructure, construction, and related fields, accounting for 16.99 per cent of responses (14.80 per cent male, 2.19 per cent female). This sector was followed closely by manufacturing (15.44 per cent; 12.61 per cent male, 2.83 per cent female) and commerce—including wholesale, retail trade, and services—(14.54 per cent; 11.58 per cent male, 2.96 per cent female). Agriculture, forestry, and fishing accounted for 14.41 per cent (10.17 per cent male, 4.25 per cent female). Other significant sectors included:

- Public service: 9.65 per cent (8.62 per cent male, 1.03 per cent female).
- Food and beverage: 8.24 per cent (6.82 per cent male, 1.42 per cent female).
- Transportation and storage: 7.98 per cent (7.34 per cent male, 0.64 per cent female).
- Other unspecified sectors: 12.75 per cent (9.40 per cent male, 3.35 per cent female).

These findings underscore gender disparities across employment sectors, with infrastructure, manufacturing, and commerce emerging as key areas for returnee employment, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive reintegration strategies.

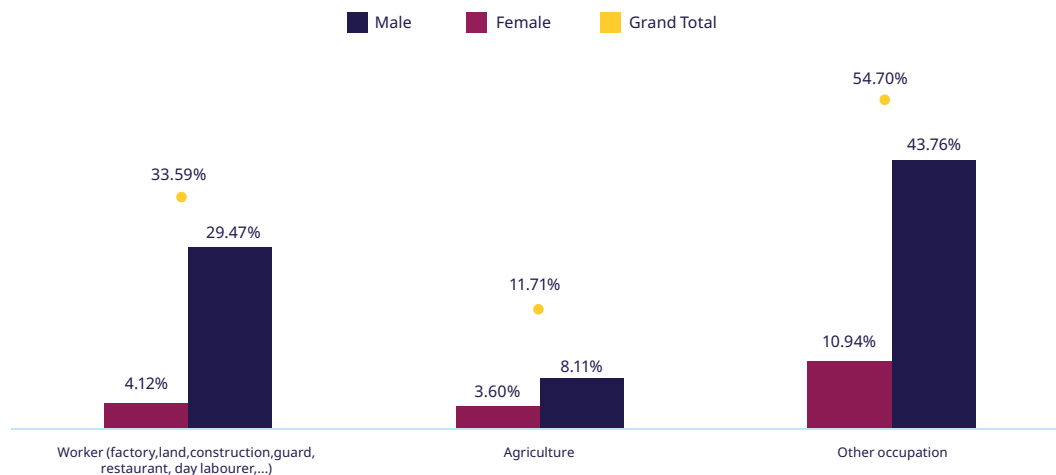
► Figure 10: Current employment sectors of returnees working in Syria



4.2.2.4 Economic sectors of employment for returnees in Syria

A total of 956 returnees, representing 17.92 per cent of the full sample, reported their current occupations at the time of the survey.

► Figure 11: Current occupations of returnees working in Syria



The data indicated that returnees are active in a range of economic activities, mostly low-skilled or informal jobs, reflecting both limited job availability and the practical skills they bring. Expanding access to more stable, skilled, and formal employment remains a priority.

The data also reveal structural challenges: most returnees are absorbed into informal work due to a lack of protective labour mechanisms and limited pathways to secure stable employment. If unaddressed, this trend risks entrenching precarious working conditions for a growing segment of the workforce.

The most common occupations among returnees currently employed in Syria were general labour, including factory work, construction, land work, security, restaurants, and day labour, which accounted for 33.59 per cent of responses (29.47 per cent male, 4.12 per cent female). This was followed by:

- Agriculture: 11.71 per cent (8.11 per cent male, 3.60 per cent female).
- Other unspecified occupations: 54.70 per cent (43.76 per cent male, 10.94 per cent female).

The significant gender disparities in occupation distribution underscores the importance of tailored approaches to enhance employment inclusivity and job diversity among returnees in Syria.

Also, the range of jobs currently held by returnees in Syria provides insight into the structure of the local labour market and the types of employment that are accessible after return. These patterns indicate the extent to which returnees can transfer or apply their previous skills within the current economic context.

4.3 Economic social status of returnees

The economic and social situation of surveyed returnees reflects a fragile household economy, shaped by limited income sources, gendered roles, and minimal access to formal financial services.

Together, these factors contribute to heightened vulnerability shaped by household size, gender dynamics, economic activity, and limited access to financial systems.

This section provides a deeper analysis of household composition and the roles that different family members play in income generation and decision-making.

First, understanding who holds economic and social decision-making within the household is crucial for interpreting patterns of work and income. A majority of respondents reported being heads of household, strengthening the relevance and accuracy of the collected data.

► **Table 16: Respondents' head of household status**

Are you the head of the family?	N	%
No	1 502	28.2
Yes	3 833	71.8
Total	5 335	100

The data indicate that 71.8 per cent of respondents identified themselves as the head of their household, while 28.2 per cent did not. Household size among returnees varied significantly, ranging from 1 to 25 members. On average, households consisted of six individuals, typically comprising three males and three females.

► **Table 17: Household size and economic participation**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Min	Max
How many people are in your family?	6	2.63	5	1	25
Number of male members	3	1.61	2	0	22
Number of female members	3	1.72	2	0	16
How many males work in your household?	1	0.66	1	0	8
How many females work in your household?	1	0.40	1	0	6

The balanced gender composition of households does not necessarily translate into equal economic participation. Gender balance remains essential, however, as it influences how resources are allocated within the family and which members are able—or constrained—from contributing economically. Regarding the number of working household members, respondents reported an average of one working male compared to one working female per household. Although this suggests numerical parity, a closer look reveals that in many cases, only one family member (usually male) was economically active. Female participation was often linked to exceptional circumstances or limited to informal or irregular forms of work. As a result, a clear disparity emerges in income contribution, with most households relying on one male earner to provide financial support for the family.

Second, nearly half of the surveyed households (47.8 per cent) relied on the respondent as the primary income provider. Another 34.1 per cent depended mainly on a spouse. Very small proportions reported relying on relatives (5.5 per cent) or humanitarian aid (1 per cent). 0.4 per cent indicated that no household member was currently employed.

► **Table 18: Main income providers in the household**

Who is the main person contributing to your household income?	N	%	Male (N) %	Female (N) %
Myself	2 552	47.8	(2 003) 84.98%	(549) 18.44%
Spouse/Husband	1 821	34.1	(102) 4.33%	(1 719) 57.72%
Father	160	3.0	(64) 2.72%	(96) 3.22%
Mother	30	0.6	(9) 0.38%	(21) 0.71%
Siblings	112	2.1	(24) 1.02%	(88) 2.96%
Relative	296	5.5	(62) 2.63%	(234) 7.86%
Other (Various sources)	365	6.8	(93) 3.95%	(271) 9.10%
Total	5 336	100	(2 357) 100	(2 978) 100

These patterns reflect traditional gender dynamics within returnee families, where men are more commonly recognised as the primary decision-makers and main income providers, while women are more frequently situated in supportive or caregiving roles. In addition, fewer—both male and female—identified themselves as children, siblings, or other relatives, with women appearing more often in caregiving positions such as daughters or family supporters.

A clear gender-based disparity emerges in the roles and responsibilities of household members. Among male respondents, the vast majority (2,003 individuals, 84.98 per cent) identified themselves as heads of household, whereas only 549 females (18.44 per cent) reported holding this position. Conversely, a significantly larger proportion of women (1,719, or 57.72 per cent) described themselves as the spouse of the household head, compared with just 102 men (4.33 per cent).

Access to financial services was also extremely limited. Over 90 per cent of respondents reported having neither a bank account nor access to mobile money platforms. Beyond income and employment, access to financial systems is a critical component of household resilience.

► **Table 19: Access to formal financial services**

Do you have an account with a bank, financial institution, or mobile money service provider?	N	%
No	4 839	90.7
Yes	496	9.3
Total	5 335	100

This lack of financial inclusion reduces households' ability to manage income securely, save, or receive formal income.

Taken together, these findings highlight households that are often large, male-led, and economically dependent on a limited range of income sources—typically a single male earner. With minimal participation from female family members and almost no access to formal financial services, household resilience remains low. Strengthening women's economic participation is key to building resilient returnee households and supporting their full reintegration into the local economy.

Addressing these challenges requires integrated solutions that promote gender-inclusive employment, encourage shared financial responsibility within households and expand access to financial services across returnee communities.

► 5. Skills assessment and gap analysis

5.1 Existing skills profile

To assess the skills and training levels of returnees, this section provides a clear overview of their education background, vocational training experience, and the challenges they face when trying to find work or access training. The findings also highlight gaps between their current skills and labour market requirements, with particular attention given to gender, disability, and access to training and support services.

Surveyed returnees reported a wide range of educational and training experiences, shaped by both formal education and practical work undertaken during displacement. This section presents key findings on their education levels and vocational training (TVET), which together illustrate the existing skills base among returnees.

Overall, the data show that while many returnees completed basic or secondary education, access to higher education or formal professional certification remains limited. A notable share gained practical skills through work, informal training, or on-the-job experience, especially in sectors such as construction, agriculture, and tailoring.

Although some returnees had access to vocational training during displacement, participation in structured training programmes remains low.

This suggests a gap between the desire to improve skills and the actual opportunities available. The following subsections present the detailed results and key indicators related to education levels, vocational training, and other aspects of returnees' skills.

5.1.1 Education levels

The results show that most respondents attained only basic levels of education. About 43.1 per cent reported completing elementary school, while 28.8 per cent had lower secondary education. A small portion (13.3 per cent) did not complete any formal education. Gender differences in educational attainment were evident: a slightly higher percentage of women (14.17 per cent) reported not completing any level of education compared to men (12.13 per cent). However, men were more represented in higher education, particularly at university level, with 3.10 per cent holding a first-level degree versus 2.85 per cent of women. Similarly, second-level degrees were more common among men (0.21 per cent) than women (0.03 per cent). Women, however, were slightly more represented in both lower and higher secondary levels, pointing to a gradual narrowing of the gender gap in educational attainment."

► Table 20: Highest level of education attained

What is the highest level of education you have attained?	N	%	Male (N) %	Female (N) %
Did not complete any level	708	13.3	(286) 2.13%	(422) 14.17%
Elementary	2 298	43.1	(1 085) 46.03%	(1 213) 40.73%
Lower secondary education	1 535	28.8	(653) 27.70%	(882) 29.62%
Higher secondary	523	9.8	(207) 8.78%	(308) 10.61%
Community college/Intermediate diploma/Vocational training after secondary	107	2.0	(48) 2.04%	(59) 1.98%
First - level university degree	158	3.0	(73) 3.10%	(85) 2.85%
Second - level university degree	6	0.1	(5) 0.21%	(1) 0.03%
Total	5 335	100	(2 357) 100	(2 978) 100

Only 9.8 per cent of the respondents had reached higher secondary level. A further 2.0 per cent completed community college, vocational training, or a post-secondary diploma. Meanwhile, 3.0 per cent held a first-level university degree (bachelor's), and only 0.1 per cent reported holding a second-level university degree (master's or doctorate).

These findings suggest limited access to higher education and highlight the importance of basic education in shaping the returnees' current skills profile.

Respondents were also asked to self-assess their basic skills in reading and writing, numeracy, and computer use. The results showed considerable variation, with most respondents rating themselves between beginner and intermediate levels.

► **Table 21: Self-assessment of respondents' skills**

Please assess your skills		N	%	Male (N) %	Female (N) %
Literacy	Basic	929	17.41	(404) 17.14%	(525) 17.63%
	Beginner	1 398	26.20	(601) 25.50%	(797) 26.76%
	Intermediate	1 471	27.57	(669) 28.38%	(802) 26.93%
	Proficient	1101	20.64	(457) 19.39%	(644) 21.63%
	Highly proficient	436	8.17	(226) 9.59%	(210) 7.05%
	Total	5 335	100	(2 357) 100	(2 978) 100
Numeracy	Basic	967	18.13	(401) 17.01%	(566) 19.01%
	Beginner	1 753	32.86	(730) 30.97%	(1 023) 34.35%
	Intermediate	1 469	27.54	(627) 26.60%	(842) 28.27%
	Proficient	857	16.06	(422) 17.90%	(435) 14.61%
	Highly proficient	289	5.42	(177) 7.51%	(112) 3.76%
	Total	5 335	100	(2 357) 100	(2 978) 100
Digital	Basic	428	8.02	(216) 9.16%	(212) 7.12%
	Beginner	4 408	82.62	(1 844) 78.24%	(2 564) 86.10%
	Intermediate	340	6.37	(196) 8.32%	(144) 4.84%
	Proficient	115	2.16	(72) 3.05%	(43) 1.44%
	Highly proficient	44	0.82	(29) 1.23%	(15) 0.50%
	Total	5 335	100	(2 357) 100	(2 978) 100

In terms of reading and writing, more than a quarter (27.6 per cent) identified as intermediate, followed closely by 26.2 per cent at beginner level and 20.6 per cent as proficient. Meanwhile, 17.4 per cent rated themselves as basic, and only 8.2 per cent as highly proficient.

Digital skills were the weakest area. Nearly one-third (28.6 per cent) of returnees rated themselves as beginners, and 8 per cent as basic users. Only 6.4 per cent assessed their digital skills as intermediate, while fewer than 3 per cent considered themselves proficient or highly proficient.

These findings suggest that while many returnees feel confident in their literacy and numeracy, most lack strong digital skills. This gap could limit their chances of accessing modern job opportunities or training programmes that require even basic digital competence. Female respondents reported slightly higher literacy and numeracy levels compared to males, especially at the proficient level. However, males showed better digital skills, with 9.16 per cent reaching at least intermediate level compared to 4.84 per cent of females. This indicates a gender gap in digital literacy that could affect women's access to modern job opportunities.

5.1.2 Vocational training (TVET) enrolment

Participation in vocational and technical training remains limited among the surveyed returnees. Only 6.5 per cent of respondents reported having previously enrolled in a technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programme, while the vast majority had not received any form of such training.

Training experiences varied in both quality and duration.

► **Table 22: Enrolment and certification in technical and vocational training**

	N (Yes)	%	Total %
Have you ever enrolled in Technical Vocational Education and Training?	265	58.63	4.97
Have you ever received entrepreneurship training from an organisation?	53	-	1.0
Have you ever completed an apprenticeship?	152	43.2	2.8
Did you receive a nationally recognised qualification after the training?	198	56.3	3.7

Additionally, when asked about completing an apprenticeship or on-the-job training, 43.2 per cent of trained respondents indicated that they had done so, compared with 56.8 per cent who had not. These apprenticeships represent only 2.8 per cent of the total sample, underscoring the very limited reach of practical training components.

Certification outcomes also varied: 56.3 per cent of those who completed vocational training reported receiving a nationally recognised qualification, while the remainder did not obtain any formal certificate.

The data further show that female respondents were almost twice as likely as males to have participated in vocational or technical training. Although participation rates for both groups remain low overall, this indicates a somewhat higher level of engagement among women in skill-building activities.

Finally, returnees were asked whether they had ever received entrepreneurship training from an organisation in their community. The results reveal a significant gap in this area.

Only 1 per cent of all respondents (53 individuals) reported having received such training in entrepreneurship, while 99 per cent (5,282 individuals) had never received such support.

This extremely low level of access suggests that entrepreneurship development is almost entirely absent from the services available to returnees. It also shows that very few returnees have been supported in starting their own businesses or developing the skills required to manage small projects.

Given the high unemployment levels and limited job opportunities in many regions, entrepreneurship could represent a valuable alternative for returnees, especially those with trade skills or prior experience working independently.

Geographic location also influenced access to training. More than half of those who received vocational training did so while living in Lebanon (52.7 per cent), followed by 34.2 per cent in Syria. Smaller proportions reported receiving training in Jordan (6.9 per cent), Turkey (5.8 per cent), and Sudan (0.4 per cent). These variations reflect the uneven availability of training programmes across host countries.

► **Table 23: Country of completion for TVET training/note: The asterisk (*) reflects valid responses after excluding missing data.**

In which country did you complete the TVET training?	N	%	Total %
Jordan	18	6.9	0.34
Turkey	15	5.8	0.28
Lebanon	137	52.7	2.6
Syria	89	34.2	1.7
Sudan	1	0.4	0.02
Total	260*	100	4.94

Training duration ranged 1 to 36 months, with an average of 5 months. The number of training sessions attended ranged from 1 to 10, with an average of two sessions per respondent.

► **Table 24: TVET training duration and sessions attended**

If you completed the training:	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Min	Max
How long was the training period in months?	5	7.08	3	1	36
How many training sessions have you attended?	2	1.02	2	1	10

Training levels varied significantly. Nearly half (46.9 per cent) of the participants completed non-formal training, while 20.6 per cent did not complete any recognised training level. Only 13.7 per cent reached tertiary level, with smaller proportions completing secondary (16 per cent) or post-secondary (2.7 per cent) levels.

► **Table 25: Level of completed TVET training/note: The asterisk (*) reflects valid responses after excluding missing data.**

If yes, at what level?	N	%	Total %	Male (N) %	Female (N) %
Non-formal	123	46.9	2.3	(36) 46.75%	(87) 47.03%
Did not complete any level	54	20.6	1	(9) 11.69%	(45) 24.32%
Secondary	42	16	0.8	(14) 18.18%	(28) 15.14%
Post-secondary	7	2.7	0.1	(3) 3.90%	(4) 2.16%
Tertiary	36	13.7	0.7	(15) 19.48%	(21) 11.35%
Total	262*	100	4.9	(77) 100	(185) 100

These results show significant gaps in access to structured, certified, and workplace-based vocational training among returnees. They underscore the need for more inclusive and accessible training programmes that lead to recognised qualifications and tangible job opportunities.

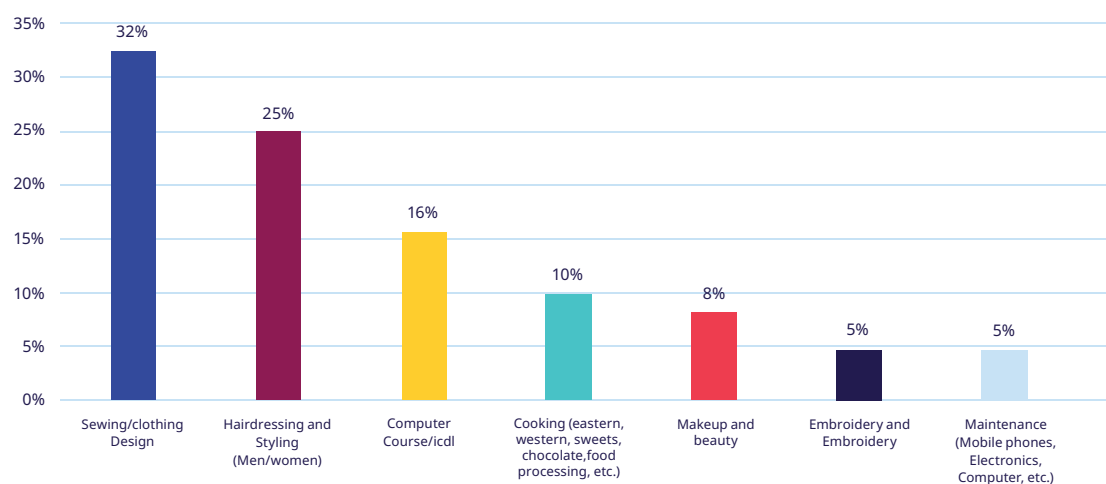
Gender disparities were notable in the levels of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) attained. Participation in non-formal training was nearly identical between males (46.75 per cent) and females (47.03 per cent), indicating a similar reliance on informal learning opportunities. However, a significantly higher proportion of females (24.32 per cent) reported not completing any training level, compared with only 11.69 per cent of males. This suggests that women may face additional obstacles in accessing or completing training programmes.

Conversely, men were more likely to attain higher levels of training. For instance, 19.48 per cent of males completed tertiary-level training, compared with just 11.35 per cent of females. Similarly, more males reached the secondary level (18.18 per cent) compared with females (15.14 per cent). These disparities point to a gender gap in access to advanced training opportunities and highlight the need for targeted efforts to improve women's participation in formal and higher-level vocational training.

5.1.2.1 Fields of vocational and technical training

The analysis of vocational and technical training fields shows a diverse range of courses attended by respondents. Among the 352 individuals who received training, most were concentrated in a few common fields, while fewer individuals mentioned a wide variety of other trainings.

► Figure 12: TVET training topics among participants



The most frequently reported training topic was Sewing and Clothing Design, attended by 32 per cent of participants, followed by Hairdressing and Styling (men and women) at 25 per cent. Computer/ICDL courses were chosen by 16 per cent of respondents. Cooking (Eastern and Western cuisines, sweets, chocolate, food processing, etc.) accounted for 10 per cent, while Makeup and Beauty courses represented 8 per cent. Embroidery and Maintenance courses (including mobile phones, electronics, computers, etc.) were each attended by 5 per cent of respondents.

This distribution reflects a strong interest in practical and accessible fields such as tailoring, beauty, healthcare, and computer skills, and, at the same time, the presence of more specialised or individual training interests. Expanding the variety and availability of high-quality, demand-driven training programmes could help better support both the aspirations of returnees and the needs of local labour markets.

5.1.2.2 Vocational and technical training providers

Most returnees who attended vocational or technical training received it from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or international organisations. Specifically, 33.24 per cent of the respondents reported receiving training from local NGOs (charities or community associations), while 29.55 per cent had been trained by international organisations.

Other sources of training included private training institutions (16.76 per cent) and public training institutions (8.81 per cent). A smaller percentage (5.68 per cent) received training in private workplaces, such as shops or salons, while a few others reported learning through family or friends (1.70 per cent) or online platforms (1.42 per cent).

Only a minimal share cited religious institutions (0.57 per cent) or universities (0.28 per cent) as training providers, while 1.99 per cent could not remember or did not know who provided the training.

► Table 26: TVET providers list

What type of organisation provided this training?	N	%
International organisation	104	29.55
NGO (local community organisation/charity/association)	117	33.24
Private training institution	59	16.76
Public training institution	31	8.81
Family, friends, etc.	6	1.70
Private work (shop, salon.)	20	5.68
Online	5	1.42
I don't know/remember	7	1.99
Religious training institute	2	0.57
University	1	0.28
Total	352	100

These results highlight the strong reliance on civil society and international actors for vocational training. However, the lower participation in public institutions suggests an opportunity to strengthen the role of national providers in delivering accessible and certified training programmes.

In addition to formal vocational institutes and education centres, returnees were asked where else people in their area could receive skills training. The answers show a wide range of alternative sources but also reveal gaps in structured access. NGOs and INGOs were identified as the most common alternative providers, mentioned by over 56 per cent of respondents.

► Table 27: Alternative sources of skills training in the community/note: Total percentage has no analytical meaning due to multiple-answer format.

Besides vocational training institutes or formal education, where else can one receive skills training in your area?		N	%
1	NGOs/INGOs	2 998	56.19
2	Local business associations or cooperatives	1 897	35.56
3	Family, relatives, friends	1 588	29.77
4	Individual traders, producers or service providers (mentorship)	458	8.58
5	There is none	197	3.69
6	Not interested in training	58	1.09
7	I don't know	54	1.01
8	Labour market	6	0.11
9	Workshops	2	0.04
10	Community initiatives	2	0.04
11	Professionals	2	0.04
12	Freelance work	1	0.02

These results confirm the active role that international and local organisations play in supporting skills development, especially in areas where government services are limited.

Local cooperatives and business associations were also reported by over a third of respondents (35.6 per cent), highlighting their potential as community-based training providers.

Almost 30 per cent of respondents reported receiving training from family, relatives, or friends, which suggests that informal social networks still play a key role in knowledge sharing and skill building. However, such training may lack structure and quality assurance.

Only 8.6 per cent mentioned mentorship from individual professionals, and even fewer cited workshops, labour market exposure, or community-led initiatives as sources of training.

These results indicate that, although there are many alternative sources of training, they are neither equally accessible nor standardised. Additionally, 3.7 per cent of respondents reported that no training options were available to them, and 1 per cent said they were unaware of any, highlighting gaps in awareness and outreach.

Returnees were also asked whether they had ever received any career guidance or professional counselling from an organisation in their community.

► **Table 28: Receipt of career guidance or counselling from organisations**

Have you ever received career guidance or counselling from an organisation in your community?	N	%	Male (N) %	Female (N) %
No	5	7.08	3	36
Yes	159	3	(42) 1.8%	(117) 3.9%
Total	5	7.08	(2 357) 100	(2 978) 100

The results show a major gap in support services: only 3 per cent of all respondents reported receiving any form of professional career guidance or counselling. This means that most returnees (97 per cent) have not been guided or supported in their career planning or job search.

This gap in career counselling may explain the challenges many returnees face in finding appropriate training, choosing the right job path, or identifying market-relevant skills. It also reflects a missed opportunity for organisations to help returnees build confidence.

5.2 Identify skill gaps

Understanding the skills that returnees lack is essential for designing effective employment and training programmes. Among those who reported being unable to find a job, 2,111 individuals—representing 39.6 per cent of the total sample—were asked about the key skill gaps that prevent them from securing employment.

► **Table 29: Skill gaps preventing returnees from accessing employment/note: Total percentage has no analytical meaning due to multiple-answer format**

Have you identified any skill gaps that are preventing you from getting a job or starting a business?	N	%	Total %	Male (N) %	Female (N) %
Business skills	1 044	49.46	19.57	(536) 44.85%	(508) 55.46%
There are no gaps	668	31.64	12.52	(465) 38.91%	(203) 22.16%
Literacy	273	12.93	5.12	(141) 11.80%	(132) 14.41%
Language skills	230	10.90	4.31	(120) 10.04%	(110) 12.01%
Numeracy	211	10.00	3.96	(111) 9.29%	(92) 10.04%
Job-specific or occupation-specific technical skills	102	4.83	1.91	(29) 2.43%	(73) 7.97%

The most reported gap was business skills, cited by nearly half of respondents (49.5 per cent), representing 19.6 per cent of the overall sample. This indicates widespread need for skills in entrepreneurship, sales, marketing, and small business management, particularly relevant in the Syrian context, where livelihoods often depend on self-employment or informal business activities.

Interestingly, nearly one-third of respondents (31.6 per cent) stated they had no skill gaps, suggesting that their inability to find employment may be driven by labour market constraints, lack of opportunities, or broader structural issues, rather than individual capacity. These individuals represent 12.5 per cent of the overall sample.

To gain a clearer understanding of the specific skill gaps reported by respondents who identified a lack of job-specific or technical skills, a follow-up question was asked. A total of 100 individuals responded, representing 1.88 per cent of the overall sample.

Among those who indicated a gap in technical job-related skills, 100 individuals provided further details (1.88 per cent of the total sample). More than half (55 per cent) reported lacking sufficient experience in fields such as sewing, confectionery, agriculture, hairdressing, cooking, plumbing, solar energy, or dealing with modern curricula and children. This group alone accounted for 1.03 per cent of the total sample.

► **Table 30: Types of technical skills gaps among returnees/note: The asterisk (*) reflects valid responses after excluding missing data.**

If you answered "Job-specific or occupation-specific technical skills" specify which		N	%	Total %
1	I do not have sufficient experience	55	55.0	1.03
2	Need training in (sewing, hairdressing, etc.)	16	16.0	0.30
3	Need to learn the basics of the profession	8	8.0	0.15
4	Lack of capital/equipment/place to practice	14	14.0	0.26
5	Illiteracy	1	1.0	0.02
6	Lack of opportunities	3	3.0	0.06
7	Lack of specialisation	1	1.0	0.02
8	Advancing age	1	1.0	0.02
9	Low wages	1	1.0	0.02
Total		100*	100%	1.88%

Note: Each category listed in the table is followed by a brief explanation.

I do not have sufficient experience in: sewing, confectionery, agriculture, hairdressing, cooking, plumbing, solar energy, dealing with modern curricula and children, roads.

In addition, 16 per cent reported the need for vocational training, particularly in areas such as sewing and hairdressing (0.30 per cent of the total sample), while 14 per cent cited the lack of capital, equipment, or access to a place to practice (0.26 per cent).

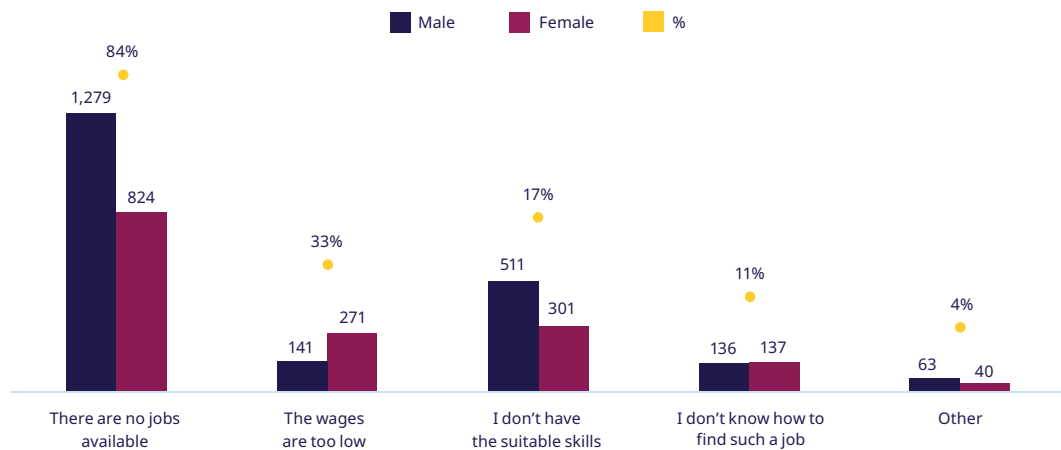
The data show that both men and women identified business skills as the most significant gap hindering their access to employment. However, the percentage was higher among women (55.46 per cent) than men (44.85 per cent). Female respondents also reported slightly higher challenges in literacy (14.41 per cent) and language skills (12.01 per cent) compared with male respondents. On the other hand, a larger share of male returnees (38.91 per cent) said they had no skill gaps, compared to only 22.16 per cent of female returnees. This suggests that women perceive themselves as less prepared for the labour market and may require more targeted support.

Overall, these results indicate that addressing three main gaps—business skills, literacy, and language— would cover the vast majority of skill-related barriers reported by jobseekers. They highlight the urgent need for targeted training programmes that focus on these areas as a strategic priority for reintegration efforts.

5.2.1 Challenges in Getting Work

Among returnees who were looking for a job but did not succeed (n = 2,496; 46.8 per cent of the total sample), several major barriers were identified.

► Figure 13: Challenges in getting work in Syria



The most common barrier was the lack of available job opportunities, reported by 84.25 per cent of respondents. The second major challenge was low wages, affecting 32.53 per cent of jobseekers who said the salaries offered were insufficient to meet their basic needs.

The comparison between males and females regarding barriers to employment reveal both similarities and differences. The most reported barrier for both groups was the unavailability of jobs, affecting 86.13 per cent of males and 81.50 per cent of females. However, a significantly higher percentage of females (26.81 per cent) reported lacking suitable skills compared to males (9.49 per cent). Additionally, low wages were a concern for both (34.41 per cent of males and 29.77 per cent of females). While men were less likely to mention challenges such as not knowing how to find a job (9.16 per cent vs. 13.55 per cent for females), women faced additional constraints, including household responsibilities (0.99 per cent vs. 0 per cent for males) and social restrictions, namely customs, traditions, and limited access to energy or transportation. These findings highlight the importance of gender-sensitive employment interventions that address both economic and social barriers.

5.2.2 Challenges in accessing training

When returnees were asked about the barriers they face in accessing vocational or technical training, most pointed to challenges related to availability, cost, and personal responsibilities.

The most frequently reported barrier was the lack of available training in their area, selected by 58.5 per cent of respondents. This indicates that many returnees live in locations where training centres are either absent or difficult to reach.

► **Table 30: Types of technical skills gaps among returnees/note: The asterisk (*) reflects valid responses after excluding missing data.**

Are you facing barriers to accessing technical, vocational, or skills training?	N	%	Male (N) %	Female (N) %
No training available in the area	3 121	58.50	(1 515) 64.28%	(1 606) 53.93%
Training is too expensive	1 704	31.94	(716) 30.38%	(988) 33.18%
Cannot attend training due to work or family responsibilities	1 345	25.21	(167) 7.09%	(294) 9.87%
Lack of required qualifications	461	8.64	(6) 0.25%	(1) 0.03%
Not interested in training	118	2.21	(455) 19.30%	(890) 29.89%
Excluded due to disability	111	2.08	(2) 0.08%	(49) 1.65%
Health problems	86	1.61	(64) 2.72%	(47) 1.58%
Age-related barriers	69	1.29	(27) 1.15%	(9) 0.30%
Not applicable	55	1.03	(1) 0.04%	(1) 0.03%
Excluded due to gender (male/female)	51	0.96	(33) 1.40%	(31) 1.04%
Lack of time (busy with studies, work, etc.)	38	0.71	(41) 1.74%	(45) 1.51%
Not allowed to go out or restricted by societal customs	8	0.15	(0) 0.00%	(2) 0.07%
Lack of required identity documents	7	0.13	(24) 1.02%	(18) 0.60%
No information about available training	7	0.13	(58) 2.46%	(60) 2.01%
War-related barriers	2	0.04	(8) 0.34%	(8) 0.27%
Lack of passion	2	0.04	(7) 0.30%	(6) 0.20%
Did not search for training opportunities	2	0.04	(1) 0.04%	(1) 0.03%
Lack of training in the field	2	0.04	(0) 0.00%	(1) 0.03%
Prioritising finding work	1	0.02	(1) 0.04%	(1) 0.03%

The second most common barrier was the high cost of training, reported by 31.9 per cent of respondents. Even when training is available, many returnees cannot afford the fees, transportation, or other related expenses.

Additionally, 25.2 per cent of respondents said they were unable to attend because of work or family responsibilities, highlighting the need for flexible training schedules or remote learning options that better accommodate working individuals and caregivers.

A smaller share (8.6 per cent) reported lacking the required qualifications to enrol in training programmes, while 2.2 per cent stated that they were not interested in training at all.

Some respondents also reported exclusion due to disability (2.1 per cent) or health problems (1.6 per cent), and 1.3 per cent indicated that their age was a barrier. These groups may require more inclusive and adapted training opportunities.

Other less frequently mentioned barriers included:

- Gender-based exclusion (0.96 per cent).
- Lack of time due to other responsibilities (0.71 per cent).
- Cultural or social restrictions (0.15 per cent).
- Missing identity documents (0.13 per cent) or lack of information about available training (0.13 per cent).

Isolated responses referred to factors such as war, lack of motivation, or not actively searching for training (each under 0.05 per cent). Only 1 per cent of respondents said they faced no barriers, and one respondent (0.02 per cent) stated that finding a job was a higher priority than attending training. The data also reveal notable gender differences. Female respondents were more likely to report certain challenges compared to males, particularly the lack of available training (53.93 per cent vs. 64.28 per cent) and the high cost of training (33.18 per cent vs. 30.38 per cent).

Women were also significantly more affected by caregiving responsibilities (29.89 per cent vs. 19.30 per cent) and gender-based exclusion (1.65 per cent of females vs. 0.08 per cent of males). In contrast, male respondents were more likely to report the absence of training in their area (64.28 per cent vs. 53.93 per cent) and a general lack of interest in training (2.46 per cent vs. 2.01 per cent).

These patterns highlight the importance of gender-sensitive strategies that address access barriers, particularly for women who balance household responsibilities or face systemic exclusion. They also underscore the need to design training opportunities that are more local, flexible, affordable, and inclusive, especially for individuals with disabilities or family duties.

5.2.3 Gender and disability-related barriers

Although most returnees shared similar challenges in finding work or accessing training, some barriers were reported specifically in relation to gender and disability.

Respondents were asked whether they have any form of disability. As shown in the table, 9 per cent of returnees reported having a disability, while 91 per cent said they did not.

► **Table 32: Disability status of returnees**

Do you have any disability?	N	%
No	4 857	91.0
Yes	478	9.0
Total	5 335	100

This means that nearly one in ten returnees lives with some type of disability. This represents a significant segment of the population and should be carefully considered when designing training programmes, job placement services, and reintegration support.

The presence of disability may limit access to physical spaces, learning environments, or workplaces, especially in areas lacking inclusive infrastructure or services. Without targeted support, persons with disabilities risk being excluded from opportunities for employment and skills development.

A small group of respondents (0.96 per cent) stated they were excluded from training due to their gender. This includes both women and men who were prevented from attending training because of cultural expectations or social norms. Although the percentage is low, it highlights the presence of gender-based exclusion in some communities, particularly in conservative or rural areas.

► **Table 33: Exclusion from training due to disability or gender/note: Total % has no analytical meaning due to multiple-answer format.**

Have you been excluded from training because of a disability or gender?	N	%
I am excluded from training because of my gender (male/female)	51	0.96
I am excluded from training because I have a disability	111	2.08

In addition, 2.08 per cent of respondents reported exclusion from training because of a disability. These individuals often face physical access issues, a lack of adapted programmes, or discrimination from training providers. Disability was also mentioned as a reason for being unable to work or participate in economic activities by some returnees.

These barriers point to a broader issue of limited inclusion in training and employment programmes. Women, especially those with caregiving duties, and people with disabilities, may be systematically left out if services are not designed to accommodate their needs.

5.3 Identify training needs

To understand the training needs of Syrian returnees, participants were first asked whether they were interested in receiving technical or vocational training. Over half of the sample (54.3 per cent) expressed interest, suggesting a strong willingness among many returnees to acquire new skills and improve their chances of finding decent work. However, 45.7 per cent reported no interest, underscoring the need to explore the underlying reasons and potential barriers to their participation.

► **Table 34: Respondents' interest in further technical or vocational training**

Are you interested in receiving (more) technical, vocational, and/or skills training?	N	%
No	2 436	45.7
Yes	2 899	54.3
Total	5 335	100

On the other hand, a substantial 45.7 per cent of respondents reported no current interest in training, which may be attributed to factors such as:

- Existing work or family responsibilities.
- Financial or logistical constraints.
- Lack of trust in available training providers.
- A mismatch between training offerings and labour market demand.

This split indicates the need for further qualitative inquiry into the motivations behind both participation and reluctance. Some returnees may face challenges that prevent them from joining training, such as work and family responsibilities, travel difficulties, or not finding programmes that match their needs.

Understanding these motivations can help refine training outreach strategies and improve returnee engagement. Among the 2,899 respondents who wanted training, the main reason was to increase their income (77.2 per cent). Many also wanted to find a job (67 per cent) or learn a specific trade (45.8 per cent). These results show that most returnees want training that leads to real, practical results. Other motivations included networking, improving job-specific or soft skills, and developing business or digital abilities.

► **Table 35: Main reasons for receiving TVET/Note: Total percentage has no analytical meaning due to multiple-answer format.**

	What are your primary motivations for pursuing vocational or skills training?	N	%	Total %
1	Increase income	2 238	77.20	41.95
2	Get a job	1 943	67.02	36.42
3	Learn a trade	1 328	45.81	24.89
4	Opportunity to network	758	26.15	14.21
5	Learn or improve occupation-specific skills	299	10.31	5.60
6	Learn or improve my core skills (communication, teamwork)	218	7.52	4.09
7	Learn or improve my business skills	178	6.14	3.34
8	Learn or improve my entrepreneurship skills	172	5.93	3.22
9	Learn or improve my numeracy skills	136	4.69	2.55
10	Learn or improve my language skills	113	3.90	2.12
11	Learn or improve my literacy skills	92	3.17	1.72
12	Learn to use new equipment/technology relevant to trade	71	2.45	1.33
13	Learn or improve my digital skills	39	1.35	0.73
14	Be a breadwinner for my family	6	0.21	0.11
15	Self-development	5	0.17	0.09
16	Children want to train	3	0.10	0.06
17	Love of the profession	2	0.07	0.04
18	Get a job opportunity that suits my health	1	0.03	0.02

These motivations show that training programmes should not focus on a single goal. Many returnees view training as a means to grow economically, improve job prospects, and build social and personal skills.

The results emphasise the critical role of vocational training in the reintegration process and highlight a strong latent demand among returnees that policy and programmatic efforts should address.

These results also show that a significant majority of respondents expressed strong interest in vocational and technical training, particularly in areas with high market demand. Preferred fields included construction and maintenance (electricity, carpentry, plumbing), industrial skills (mechanics, welding, manufacturing), and service-oriented occupations (tailoring, food production, beauty, and hospitality services). These preferences closely correspond to the sectors in which returnees previously worked abroad or are currently seeking opportunities in Syria.

Importantly, many returnees also expressed interest in acquiring cross-cutting skills, including IT and digital literacy, soft skills (communication, teamwork, problem-solving), and language training, particularly in English, to enhance their versatility in the labour market.

A breakdown of preferences highlights clear gender differences. Women disproportionately selected training in fields like tailoring, beauty, and food production, reflecting both cultural norms and perceived employment accessibility. Men, on the other hand, preferred training in construction-related trades, driving, and mechanical maintenance. Returnees indicated that they seek training to:

- Increase their income.
- Find jobs faster.
- Improve both hard and soft skills.
- Build networks for support and opportunities.

To be effective, training programmes should:

- ▶ Be short, practical, and located close to people's homes.
- ▶ Provide certification and real job experience.
- ▶ Take into consideration gender, cost, time, and family responsibilities.

By listening to returnees' needs, training programmes can help them build better futures and support Syria's economic recovery.

► 6. Regional comparative analysis

Employment conditions differed significantly by country of asylum. In Lebanon, more returnees reported working as employees or in construction, while in Jordan and Turkey, higher rates of unemployment were observed.

For example, among those who were in Jordan, 29.6 per cent were unemployed and not looking for work, and 26.3 per cent were unemployed but actively seeking employment. In Turkey, the largest group was also unemployed and not looking for work (40.7 per cent), but paid employees made up a larger share than in Jordan. In Lebanon, a higher proportion of returnees had worked in construction, agriculture, or manufacturing compared to other countries

Analysis by sector of employment further highlights differences:

- In Turkey, nearly half (45.5 per cent) of working returnees were in manufacturing, much higher than in Lebanon (11.8 per cent) or Syria (14.4 per cent).
- In Lebanon, 25.4 per cent of working returnees had jobs in construction and related sectors, much higher than in Turkey (13.5 per cent), Jordan (11.2 per cent), or Syria (12.3 per cent).
- Agriculture, forestry, and fishing were also more common in Lebanon (19 per cent) than in other countries.
- Commerce and retail trade was highest among returnees from Jordan (23.4 per cent). Regarding TVET training by country, among returnees who received technical or vocational training, most completed their training in Lebanon (52.7 per cent), followed by Syria (34.2 per cent). Fewer received training in Jordan (6.9 per cent) or Turkey (5.8 per cent). This underscores the role of host countries not only in providing work opportunities, but also in shaping returnees' access to skills development.

6.1 Country of return and skill comparison

Returnees were asked to self-assess their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. The results were compared across four groups based on their country of asylum prior to returning to Syria: Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, and areas of internal displacement.

Overall, returnees across all host countries expressed greater confidence in basic reading and math than in using digital tools. However, foundational skill levels remain generally low, particularly digital literacy.

Literacy skills received the highest average scores, with minimal variation across groups. The average literacy score was 2.79 for returnees from inside Syria, 2.76 for Jordan and Turkey, and 2.75 for Lebanon. The median score for all groups was 3, indicating moderate confidence in reading and writing abilities.

Numeracy skills showed slightly greater variation. Returnees from Jordan reported the highest average score (2.74), while those from Turkey reported the lowest (2.5). Returnees from Lebanon and internally displaced individuals had similar scores (2.58 and 2.55, respectively). The median numeracy score was 3 for Jordan, but only 2 for the other three groups.

Digital skills were consistently rated the lowest across all groups. Returnees from inside Syria reported the highest average score (2.09), followed closely by Jordan (2.08), Turkey (2.06) and Lebanon (2.04). The median digital skills score was 2 in all cases.

6.2 Key industries per region

The type of work held by Syrian returnees during displacement provides important insight into their skills and the sectors they are most familiar with. The data show distinct patterns of work experience depending on the country of asylum.

Returnees from Lebanon represent the largest group and show the most diverse employment backgrounds. Many of them worked in construction (37.6 per cent), followed by agriculture (22 per cent), and manufacturing or industry (11.8 per cent). A smaller percentage was employed in retail and trade (7.2 per cent), while others were involved in cleaning, hospitality, or beauty services. These patterns indicate that most returnees from Lebanon gained experience in physical labour and informal service sectors.

Returnees from Turkey had a different pattern. Nearly half (45.5 per cent) worked in manufacturing and industry, making it the dominant sector for this group. Construction (13.5 per cent), and retail (10.6 per cent) followed at much lower rates. This suggests that returnees from Turkey are more likely to possess technical or production-based skills. Returnees from Jordan worked primarily in retail and trade (23.4 per cent), construction (18.7 per cent), and agriculture (17.8 per cent). Their employment profile is more balanced across sectors, though the proportion of manufacturing workers was much lower (only 11.2 per cent) compared with those from Turkey.

These differences highlight that each group of returnees brings back distinct sets of skills shaped by the labour market of the country of asylum. Those from Turkey tend to have more industrial and technical experience. Those from Lebanon most worked in construction and agriculture, while returnees from Jordan present a more varied skill mix with a slight concentration in retail and services.

6.3 Effect of country of asylum on training experience

Vocational training experiences also varied depending on the country of asylum they lived in before returning to Syria. The data highlight distinct patterns among returnees from Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and areas of internal displacement within Syria.

Returnees from Lebanon, the largest group (264 individuals), reported the most diverse range of training opportunities. The most common training was sewing and clothing design, attended by 17.4 per cent (46 individuals), followed by hairdressing and styling with 14 per cent (37 individuals). Around 8 per cent (21 individuals) reported attending computer or ICDL courses, while 6.1 per cent (16 individuals) received general vocational training, and another 6.1 per cent (16 individuals) completed nursing courses. Others participated in first aid, beauty, cooking, and even accounting-related training—reflecting broad access to NGO-supported programmes.

In contrast, returnees from Turkey (23 individuals) had more focused training experiences. Nursing was the leading area at 26.1 per cent (6 individuals), followed by sewing and clothing design at 17.4 per cent (4 individuals). A smaller number attended computer courses or training in accessories production. Their training profile suggests stronger exposure to technical and production-oriented vocational fields during their time in Turkey.

Returnees from Jordan, though fewer in number (15 individuals), showed greater concentration in life and health-related skills. About 20 per cent (3 individuals) received training in nursing, cooking, and general vocational skills. Others reported attending English language and makeup/beauty courses. The narrower training range may reflect more limited access to formal programmes, but with focus on personal and home-centred competencies. Among those displaced within Syria (46 individuals), the most frequently reported activity was awareness and protection training, covering sensitive topics such as child labour, early marriage, and online safety. This pattern, reported by 19.6 per cent (9 individuals), indicates a shift from technical training to community-based and protective learning. Other participants mentioned sewing (10.9 per cent, 5 individuals), hairdressing (8.7 per cent, 4 individuals), cooking (6.5 per cent, 3 individuals), and computer skills (6.5 per cent, 3 individuals). These results show that returnees arrived in Syria with varied training backgrounds strongly influenced by opportunities in their host countries. While returnees from Lebanon had the most exposure to multiple vocational fields, others—especially from Syria and Jordan—experienced more limited or focused training.

Understanding these patterns is essential for designing reintegration programmes that build on existing competencies while addressing critical skill gaps in the labour market.

► 7. Conclusion

After presenting extensive data, in-depth analysis, and key findings across employment, skills, training, and household conditions, it is evident that this report captures only part of a far more complex reality. The patterns observed can be further expanded in future studies. However, the current assessment allows us to draw several core conclusions:

- Returnees are motivated but marginalised: Despite strong willingness to work and improve their skills, over 80 per cent of returnees are currently unemployed and depend largely on informal or unstable sources of income.
- Significant skills gaps and lack of recognition: Many returnees bring experience in construction, agriculture, and manufacturing, yet most of these skills were obtained informally and are not officially recognised, constraining employability.
- Barriers to training access: Training opportunities are unevenly distributed, costly, or incompatible with returnees' schedules and caregiving responsibilities, especially for women and persons with disabilities.
- Gender and disability disparities: Female returnees are more likely to seek work and training but face greater social and logistical obstacles. Persons with disabilities remain significantly underrepresented and underserved.
- Digital and foundational skill deficits: Self-assessments indicate very low digital literacy and moderate challenges in basic skills (reading, numeracy), hindering both training access and job readiness.
- Significant regional variation: Returnees' skills and needs differ according to the country of asylum and area of return. This calls for highly localised and flexible programming.

► 8. Recommendations

The mandate of the consultant conducting the assessment included comprehensive review of all questionnaires and detailed analysis of the complete dataset. In line with this responsibility, the report presents practical, evidence-based recommendations grounded in the findings. These recommendations reflect the expressed priorities of returnees and align with the human-centered objectives of the project. They are intended to support inclusive reintegration processes, enhance employment opportunities, and contribute to sustainable outcomes for returnees in Syria.

1. Expand local TVET and skills training

- Scale up localised TVET programmes in Syria, focusing on sectors with high employment potential (construction, agriculture, manufacturing, and services).
- Prioritise practical, short-term, and modular training aligned with existing skills and local labour market needs.

2. Strengthen skills recognition and certification

- Develop mechanisms to recognise informal and different work experience through certification systems or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) frameworks.
- Provide pathways for returnees to transition from informal to formal employment.

3. Invest in foundational and digital skills

- Launch community-based training programmes targeting basic literacy, numeracy, and digital skills.
- Ensure full accessibility of programmes for women and persons with disabilities.

4. Promote women's economic participation

- Design specific interventions to boost female employment and entrepreneurship, including:
 1. Childcare support.
 2. Safe transportation to work or training centres.
 3. Targeted financial incentives for employers hiring women.

5. Support entrepreneurship and livelihood diversification

- Expand access to entrepreneurship training and microfinance programmes for returnees, especially for rural returnees and women.
- Provide mentoring and coaching for small business development.

6. Enhance access to financial services

- Promote mobile money, microcredit, and savings groups to improve household resilience and support income-generating activities.

7. Implement targeted employment services

- Establish or strengthen job placement services linked to local employers and industries.
- Provide tailored career guidance and counselling aligned with returnees' profiles.

8. Improve data and monitoring

- ▶ Institutionalise regular skills assessments and labour market surveys for returnees to adapt programmes based on changing needs.
- ▶ Ensure data are disaggregated by gender, disability, and region to guide inclusive policy responses.

To ensure clarity and effective implementation, these recommendations are grouped into three categories based on key actors: international organisations, local organisations, and national authorities including the new government in Syria and private sector employers.

8.1 International organisations

Expand access to vocational training:

- ▶ Establish or support TVET centres in underserved areas.
- ▶ Use mobile units to reach remote communities.
- ▶ Offer subsidised or free courses with flexible timing and inclusive design (childcare, accessibility for disabled individuals).

Bridge informal skills with formal recognition:

- ▶ Provide certification programmes for skills acquired abroad or through experience.
- ▶ Promote apprenticeships and on-the-job training aligned with local market demand.

Provide short-term income opportunities:

- ▶ Support Cash-for-Work programmes that build community assets.
- ▶ Focus on labour-shortage sectors such as housing and infrastructure.

Support entrepreneurial returnees:

- ▶ Provide micro-grants or loans for small businesses.
- ▶ Offer mentorship and business development training.

8.2 The new government in Syria

Invest in employment-rich sectors:

- ▶ Launch public works programmes in construction, agriculture, and essential services targeting governorates with high returnee numbers.

Ensure inclusive labour policies:

- ▶ Strengthen enforcement of fair contracts, safety standards, and non-discrimination.
- ▶ Develop national systems for certifying informal skills.

Enable self-employment:

- ▶ Simplify micro-enterprise registration procedures.
- ▶ Offer tax incentives to employers hiring returnees, especially women and persons with disabilities.

8.3 Local organisations

Deliver community-based training:

- ▶ Provide practical courses in tailoring, agriculture, repair services, and IT.
- ▶ Align training with local job opportunities and participant availability.

Promote job access and readiness:

- ▶ Organise job fairs, CV-writing workshops, and career counselling.
- ▶ Provide safe learning spaces and social support services (childcare, transportation stipends).

Support inclusion and empowerment:

- ▶ Design programmes that increase participation of women and persons with disabilities.
- ▶ Strengthen peer networks and community savings groups to boost resilience.

8.4 Private sector employers

Create inclusive job opportunities:

- ▶ Offer internships or entry-level training for returnees.
- ▶ Ensure fair recruitment and promotion policies, with special attention to women and persons with disabilities.

Collaborate with training providers:

- ▶ Shape curricula to align with current market needs.
- ▶ Sponsor vocational tracks in key sectors (e.g., food production, construction).

Promote returnees as assets:

- ▶ Highlight success stories and reduce stigma.
- ▶ Recognise returnees' experiences abroad as valuable contributions to local industry.

Final note:

Based on close engagement with field realities and comprehensive review of dataset, the findings and recommendations presented herein reflect the challenges and opportunities facing Syrian returnees at the time of the data collection in April 2025.

Moving forward, it is essential that all relevant stakeholders, including government authorities, international actors, local institutions, and private employers, translate these insights into practical programmes and policies. Such action will not only enhance reintegration outcomes for returnees, but also contribute to national recovery efforts and economic resilience across Syria.

► 9. References

United Nations. 2025. "‘A Syrian-led future’: Security Council highlights priorities ahead." UN News, January 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/01/1158836>.

International Labour Organization (ILO). Terms of Reference (TOR): Skills Profiling for Syrian Returnees in Syria. Internal document. ILO Syria Office, 2025.

International Labour Organization (ILO). Inception Report (Version 0.3): Skills Profiling for Syrian Returnees Project. Prepared by Imad-Addin Almasri, National Consultant. Unpublished report, 2025.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Syria: Registered Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Population Overview – April 2025, UNHCR Data Portal, April 2025

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Syrian Governorates of Return Overview: As of April 17, 2025. UNHCR Border Monitoring and Movement Tool. April 17, 2025.

► 10. Annexes

Annex 1: Interactive power BI dashboard

A dynamic, user-friendly dashboard built using Microsoft Power BI, enabling stakeholders to explore key findings interactively. The dashboard allows filtering by governorate, gender, age group, training preferences, and employment status. It is designed as a core decision-support tool for programme designers and policy planners.

Annex 2: Cleaned and coded dataset (Arabic and English)

The full dataset used in the analysis, cleaned and coded in both Arabic and English. Includes all variables collected through the structured questionnaire, prepared in a format suitable for further research, monitoring, and planning purposes. Data are provided in Excel and SPSS-compatible formats.

Annex 3: Data cleaning and coding notes

A detailed record of the procedures and logic applied during the data cleaning phase, outlining how errors, duplicates, and open-ended responses were managed. Includes key decisions on variable standardisation, reclassification, and missing data handling.

Annex 4: Supplementary tables and descriptive analysis (available upon request)

Additional tables and visualisations derived from the dataset, providing deeper and exploratory descriptive statistics. Available upon request to support partners seeking more detailed breakdowns beyond the main report.

ilo.org

International Labour Organization
Regional Office for the Arab States
Aresco Centre - Justinien Street - Kantari
Beirut - Lebanon