



International
Labour
Organization

PROSPECTS



Kingdom of the Netherlands

► Skills profiling of Syrian refugees in Lebanon



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This report, entitled “Skills Profiling for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon” 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 refugees in Lebanon, 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 Lebanon Office and prepared by ILO consultant Mohammad Makki, under the technical guidance of the ILO SKILLS Team and Shatha Eisouh, Regional Skills and Employability Officer, 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.

► Executive summary

This report presents the findings of a comprehensive skills profiling assessment conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), in collaboration with UNHCR Lebanon, targeting Syrian refugees across various regions in Lebanon. The aim is to profile and group refugees based on their return intentions to inform tailored programming under the PROSPECTS partnership. Based on survey data from 1,069 Syrian refugees, the findings highlight a population eager to work and access training yet constrained by systemic barriers. These include limited access to market relevant technical and vocational education and training (TVET), low levels of formal employment, and inadequate job matching support, especially among women and those with caregiving responsibilities. A significant number of refugees, particularly women, face intersecting challenges, including lack of digital literacy, transportation difficulties, and the need for permission from male relatives to work or attend training.

Importantly, the report identifies distinct needs and opportunities for three key groups: those who expressed a desire to return (Yes), those not wishing to return (No), and those who chose not to disclose their intentions (i don't want to answer). Return intentions are positively associated with age, education, and participation in TVET. However, actual plans to seek employment in Syria remain limited without job availability. Employment outcomes are influenced by numeracy, sex, education, and skill gaps. While TVET is popular, it shows no significant statistical link to employment, underscoring the need for better alignment with real labour market demand. Based on these insights, the report provides action-oriented programming recommendations, including short-cycle foundational skills training, entrepreneurship support, flexible on-the-job training programmes, and gender-sensitive employment pathways. According to the report, programmes should be rooted in up-to-date labour market assessments and responsive to both Lebanese and Syrian contexts, ensuring inclusivity, adaptability, and long-term resilience for targeted Syrian refugee groups.

► Context and objectives

Background and rationale

The global forced displacement crisis has escalated in both scale and complexity in recent years. By the end of 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported over 117.3 million¹ forcibly displaced persons worldwide, including refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and others needing international protection. Forcibly displaced persons (FDPs) often face significant and interlinked vulnerabilities, including loss of personal and economic assets, psychological trauma, limited legal rights, restricted access to education and employment opportunities, protection risks, and a lack of long-term planning. Furthermore, host communities accommodating large numbers of FDPs often experience development pressures, including strained infrastructure, social services, and job markets.

In response to these challenges, the PROSPECTS partnership—Partnership for Improving Prospects for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities—was launched in 2019 by the Government of the Netherlands. This initiative brings together five international agencies with complementary mandates: the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank. The partnership aims to create coordinated and mutually reinforcing interventions across eight different countries, including Lebanon, focusing on three pillars: **education and learning, economic inclusion, and protection/social protection.**

In Lebanon, the PROSPECTS partnership operates in an exceptionally challenging environment. Lebanon hosts one of the world's highest per capita populations of refugees², primarily due to the ongoing Syrian crisis. Simultaneously, the country is undergoing one of the most severe economic collapses in modern history, marked by hyperinflation, currency devaluation, mass unemployment, and the breakdown of public services. These conditions exacerbate vulnerabilities for both FDPs and host communities, intensifying competition over limited jobs, housing, and social services.

The ILO's role within the PROSPECTS framework, in Lebanon, focuses primarily on improving access to decent work and inclusive labour market systems. Activities include labour market assessments, developing market-relevant skills training programmes, promoting labour rights, and facilitating job creation through local economic development. In collaboration with other PROSPECTS partners, the ILO also supports legal frameworks, social protection expansion, and access to essential services for both displaced populations and Lebanese nationals.

In Phase 1, the project has significantly contributed to fostering socio-economic stability through an integrated approach that addressed both immediate and long-term needs. It focused on vocational training, career guidance, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and infrastructure development. Its importance lies in its holistic, market-oriented design, providing skills development aligned with labour market demands, particularly in agriculture, construction, and digital services. The project also included inclusive cash-for-work programmes within community shelters and provided targeted financial support to micro and small enterprises, with a special emphasis on underserved areas in northern and eastern Lebanon³.

¹United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2024). Global trends: Forced displacement in 2023. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>

²World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Centre on Forced Displacement. (n.d.). Refugees in Lebanon. <https://www.jointdatacenter.org/activities/refugees-in-lebanon/>

³unicbeirut.org

Since its launch, the project has positively impacted hundreds of individuals across the country. In northern regions alone, more than 600 Lebanese and Syrian participants benefited from comprehensive support, including career counselling, life-skills development, soft-skills training, and three-month workplace apprenticeships. These efforts created tangible employment opportunities and boosted self-confidence among trainees across diverse fields such as carpentry, pharmacy, and solar panel installation⁴.

In the agricultural sector, 400 individuals completed financial education courses, and approximately 205 loans totalling USD 650,000 were provided to farmers and agricultural workers, empowering livelihoods across Akkar, Beqaa, and Baalbek-Hermel. Moreover, cash-for-work infrastructure projects in Beirut and Tripoli improved communal shelters, generating income opportunities for displaced families and host communities⁵.

In January 2024, Phase 2 of the PROSPECTS initiative was launched, extending the program for another four years. This phase added a pillar focusing on critical infrastructure and reconstruction, while recognising the need to strengthen the skills that support refugees seeking to return to their own country. As Phase 2 of the PROSPECTS initiative unfolds, the ILO and its partners aim to deepen their efforts in Lebanon by addressing both immediate needs of FDPs and host communities, as well as supporting long-term resilience through capacity building and infrastructure development to foster durable solutions in one of the most strained displacement settings in the world.

Objectives of the profiling report

Lebanon's prolonged and multifaceted crises, including severe economic recession, political instability, and the aftermath of escalated conflict in late 2024, have left the country's socio-economic landscape fragile. The November 2024 ceasefire has brought temporary relief, yet Lebanon continues to face significant demographic shifts. On one hand, Syrian return movements have accelerated since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, with approximately 30 per cent of 356,200 returnees coming from Lebanon. On the other hand, new inflows of approximately 90,500 individuals into areas like Akkar, Baalbek, and North Bekaa have further strained the labour market⁶.

These dynamics have created both disruptions and opportunities in sectors such as agriculture, construction, and services, where Syrian refugees have historically played a vital role in Lebanon's informal economy. The departure of Syrian workers from these sectors creates labour gaps, while returning individuals raise new questions about reintegration and sustainable livelihoods on both sides of the border. In this context, **understanding the skills profile of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, both those intending to remain and those considering return**, is crucial for shaping effective labour market interventions.

To address this, the ILO, in close collaboration with UNHCR Lebanon, conducted a comprehensive skills profiling assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. This initiative builds on a pilot assessment by ILO and UNHCR Syria, which informed job-matching and skills development programmes inside Syria. Similarly, the Lebanon-based assessment aims to identify vocational capacities and employment potential of Syrian refugees currently residing in the country. Findings will inform interventions under PROSPECTS Pillar 1 (Education and Learning) and Pillar 2 (Economic Inclusion), guiding market-relevant skills training, livelihoods opportunities, and potential referrals to employment opportunities in Syria for those planning to return.

⁴ilo.org

⁵nna-leb.gov.lb+³lebanon.un.org+³ilo.org+³

⁶UNHCR. (19 March 2025). Flash update #63 - Escalation of hostilities in Lebanon: New arrivals to North Lebanon. [Post]. Reddit. <https://www.reddit.com/r/lebanon/comments/1jeueio>

To better understand the needs and aspirations of Syrian refugees, the ILO developed a comprehensive survey-based assessment tool. This tool was administered to over 1,000 Syrian refugees by trained enumerators identified by UNHCR, operating across 19 community development centres (CDCs) in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, North Lebanon and Akkar, Bekaa, and the South. After summarising the five-step methodological approach, this profiling report presents the survey results in two main sections.

Section 1: Findings and results

This section is divided into two subsections:

- ▶ **Determinants of return intentions and employment: An empirical investigation**
This subsection provides empirical insights into the factors influencing Syrian refugees' intentions to return to Syria, as well as the determinants of their employment status in the host country, Lebanon, or in Syria. It represents a key methodological component of the report, as it draws directly from survey findings to identify significant determinants of return intentions and employment. These factors are central to the refugee profiling process. While other variables are also considered, they are regarded as complementary or exert an indirect influence on profiling criteria.
- ▶ **Skills profiles of Syrian refugees planning for return or integration**
This subsection presents the survey findings, categorising respondents into three main groups: those intending to return to Syria, those wishing to remain in Lebanon, and those who chose not to disclose their intentions. Within the group intending to return, further distinctions are made based on expected return timelines: within 3 months, within 6 months, within one year, or unknown. Each group is profiled according to several socio-economic and skills-based indicators, providing insights into skills needs.

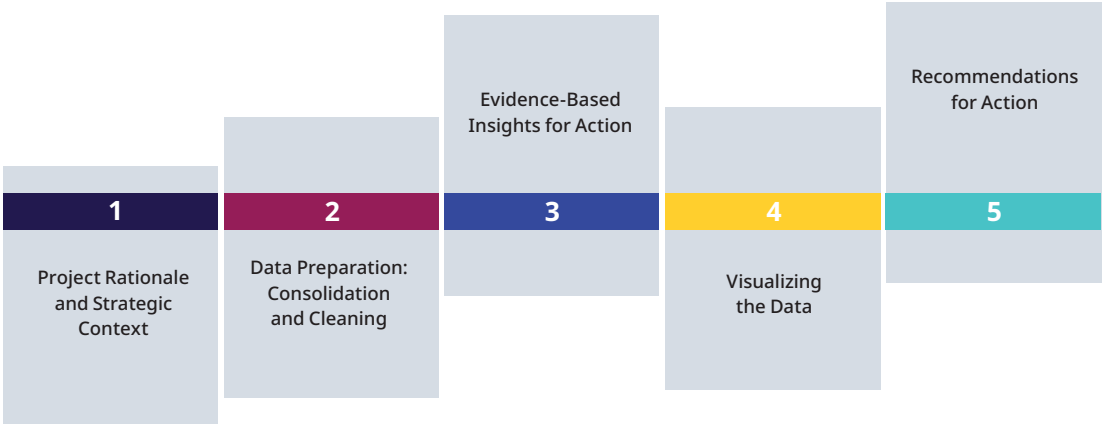
Section 2: Recommendations for action

This section builds on the findings from the previous sections to provide practical, evidence-based recommendations. These recommendations guide the development of tailored programmes aimed at equipping Syrian refugees with the skills needed to access sustainable employment opportunities in Lebanon and, where relevant, upon return to Syria.

► Methodological approach

This profiling report primarily aims to identify skills relevant to the current labour market context and to profile Syrian refugees based on their return intentions to inform the design of tailored programmes. A mixed-methods, data-driven approach was used, grounded in quantitative analysis and strategic profiling techniques. The five-step methodological approach is illustrated in Figure 1 below and described in further detail subsequently.

Figure 1: Five-step methodological approach



1. Project rationale and strategic context

To better understand the objectives of the consultancy, a comprehensive review of all relevant supporting documents was conducted, providing insight into the project’s background, previous outcomes, and key lessons learned. Several meetings with the ILO team captured insights, reflections, and expectations for the current phase.

2. Data preparation: Consolidation and cleaning

The data-cleaning methodology for the questionnaires included several systematic steps to ensure accuracy and consistency. Responses were validated for completeness, logical consistency, and duplication. Open-ended responses, where respondents added their own input, were reviewed and categorised to ensure uniform coding across entries. Several qualitative responses were coded into numerical values (dummy variables, Likert scale variables) to support quantitative analysis, including correlations and regressions. This process ensured that the dataset was reliable and ready for meaningful analysis and reporting. The survey initially included 1,071 responses, of which two were empty and subsequently removed. Thus, the total number of responses considered for analysis is 1,069.

3. Evidence-based insights for action

Following the data cleaning and the transformation of several variables into quantitative form, correlation and regression analyses were conducted. Two primary sets of variables were examined to identify the key determinants of return intentions and employment. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was employed, with detailed results presented in the first section of the findings. To ensure the robustness and validity of the regression models, a series of diagnostic tests were performed, including normality, serial correlation, heteroskedasticity, and model stability. The results confirmed that both models meet the fundamental assumptions required for reliable OLS estimation.

4. Visualising the data

To present the survey outcomes in the second section, a series of visualisations were developed to highlight key findings and insights. Moreover, comprehensive skills profiling matrices were created to summarise the most prominent skill gaps and core competencies needed among the Syrian refugees surveyed. To further enhance data accessibility and stakeholder engagement, an interactive Power BI presentation has also been prepared, offering clear and intuitive visual representations that highlight the major findings of the survey.

5. Recommendations for action

Building on the key empirical evidence and outcomes outlined in the findings and results section of this report, tailored, and action-oriented programming recommendations have been developed. These recommendations address the distinct needs of Syrian refugees based on their stated intentions, whether to return to Syria or remain in Lebanon, and are designed to inform targeted interventions for both groups.

► Findings and results

Determinants of return intentions and employment: An empirical investigation

This section of the report introduces two conceptual models designed to guide the analysis and establish empirically grounded profiling criteria. The first model examines the key determinants influencing return intentions among Syrian refugees, while the second focuses on the factors affecting employment outcomes. Each model is presented in detail, followed by the corresponding regression analysis results and an in-depth discussion of the findings.

Return intentions: A conceptual model

This conceptual model aims to identify the key factors influencing Syrian refugees' decisions to return to their country of origin. It is built on a set of ten independent variables derived from the conducted survey, including sex, age, head of family, employment, primary income earner, autonomy in decision-making, education, skills gaps, and participation in technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

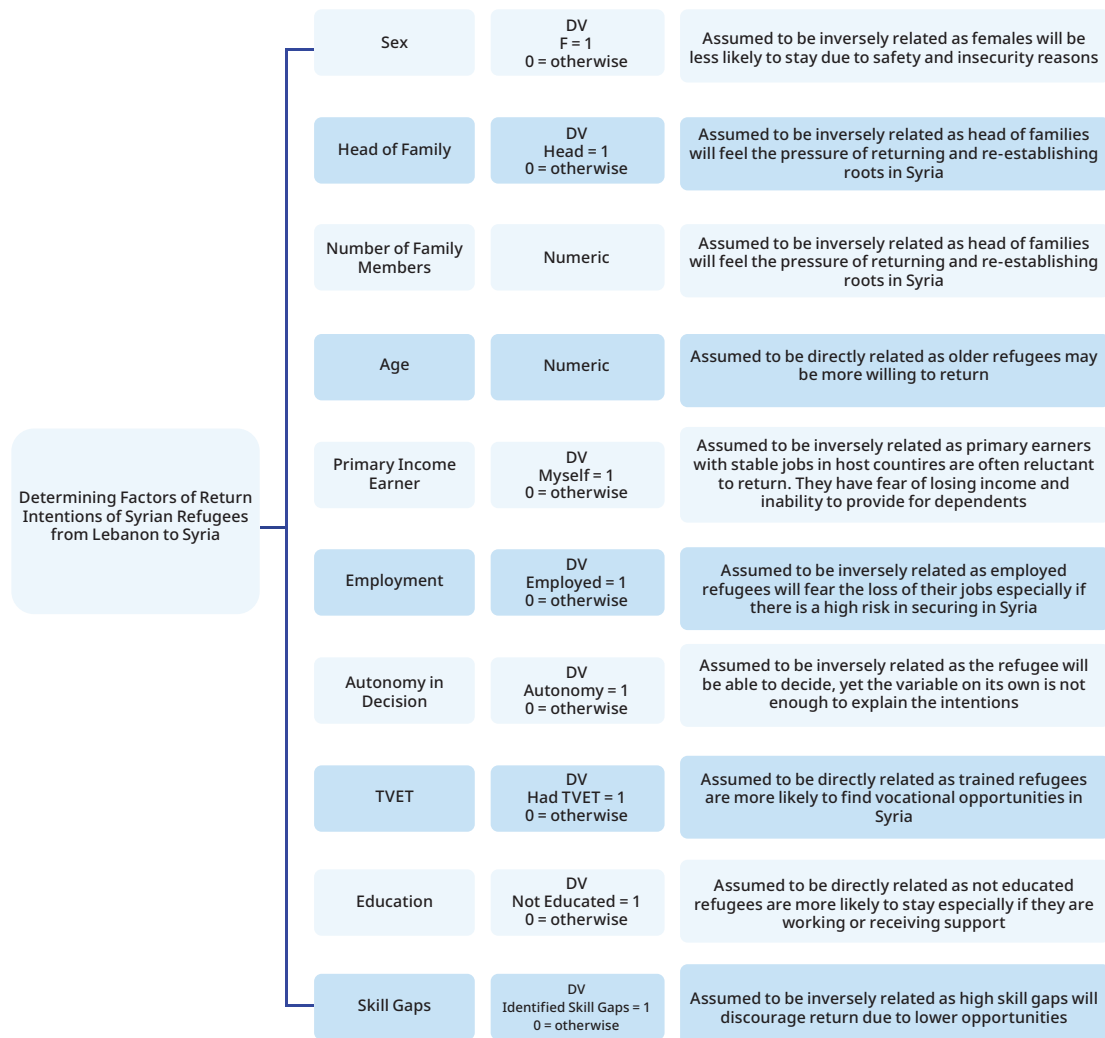
The model posits that return intentions are significantly shaped by a refugee's age, with older individuals more likely to consider returning, and by sex, with women generally less inclined to repatriate due to perceived security and stability in the host country. Education and participation in TVET are assumed to directly influence return intentions, suggesting that those who feel more prepared or capable of reintegration are more open to the idea.

Conversely, primary income earners and heads of families are assumed to be less likely to return, given their financial responsibilities, the pressure of resettlement, and economic insecurities. Autonomy in decision-making is considered an important determining variable influencing return intentions. However, it cannot be observed as a standalone variable, and should instead be interpreted alongside other variables including those stated in the model. On the other side, household size is expected to have an inverse relationship with return intentions. Larger families often face greater logistical, financial, and emotional challenges associated with relocation, making the prospect of returning less feasible unless conditions are notably favourable.

Employment status is also assumed to be inversely related to return intentions. This highlights the multifaceted nature of return decisions, which extend beyond economic factors to encompass emotional, familial, and socio-political considerations. Furthermore, higher skill gaps are assumed to reduce the likelihood of return, as refugees lacking strong skills may fear limited opportunities, especially if they have already achieved some degree of stability in Lebanon.

The conceptual model for return intentions is presented in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Return intentions – conceptual model



The correlation and regression results are presented in Tables 1 and 2 below. The correlation matrix reveals a strong positive correlation (0.8558) between sex and autonomy in decision-making, indicating multicollinearity between the two variables. To avoid this issue, autonomy in decision is excluded from the regression model, as it does not independently provide a strong explanatory contribution to return intentions. No other variables showed high correlations, suggesting that multicollinearity is not a concern among the remaining predictors.

Table 1: Model 2 – correlation matrix

Correlation matrix	Age	Autonomy in decision	Education	Employment	Head of family	Family members	Income earner	Sex	Skill gaps	TVET
Age	1									
Autonomy in decision	-0.0314	1								
Education	0.08843	-0.00132	1							
Employment	0.04789	-0.294513	0.036441	1						
Head of family	0.3318	-0.230707	0.074365	0.304062	1					
Family members	0.06764	0.017637	0.028797	-0.002243	-0.116667	1				
Income earner	0.20817	-0.449593	0.071495	0.474692	0.649333	-0.117276	1			
Sex	-0.0756	0.855873	0.022968	-0.357858	-0.362736	0.030699	-0.583681	1		
Skill gaps	-0.0518	0.127415	-0.056663	-0.468405	-0.034156	0.012903	-0.099078	0.058	1	
TVET	-0.0138	0.228381	-0.067027	-0.071032	-0.097615	0.004586	-0.169788	0.199	0.01901	1

Table 2: Model 1 – regression results

Dependent variable: return intention				
Method: least squares				
Sample: 1 1069				
Included observations: 1069				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-statistic	Prob.
C	0.096304	0.043956	2.190922	0.0287
Age	0.002273	0.000839	2.709861	0.0068
Sex	-0.049399	0.024563	-2.011084	0.0446
Education	0.067175	0.033053	2.032332	0.0424
Employment	0.010744	0.027421	0.391822	0.6953
Head of family	-0.013925	0.027837	-0.500247	0.617
Family members	0.000116	0.004397	0.026416	0.9789
Income earner	-0.068578	0.031032	-2.209887	0.0273
Skill gaps	-0.031567	0.024114	-1.309075	0.1908
TVET	0.06615	0.02575	2.568969	0.0103
R-squared	0.025573	Adjusted r-squared		0.017291
F-statistic			3.088018	
Prob(F-statistic)			0.001145	

Return Intentions = 0.096 + 0.002 Age - 0.049 Sex + 0.067 Edu - 0.068 Income Eraner + 0.66 TVET
(0.0287) (0.0068) (0.0446) (0.0424) (0.0273) (0.0103)

Based on the regression results presented in Table 2 and the corresponding equation, several key variables significantly influence Syrian refugees' intentions to return to their home country. Age emerged as a statistically significant and positively associated factor with return intentions, indicating that older refugees are more inclined to consider returning. This aligns with the conceptual model and may reflect stronger emotional and cultural ties to their homeland, a desire to spend later years in a familiar and meaningful environment, or reduced adaptability to the challenges of prolonged displacement.

Sex also proved to be significant, with an inverse relationship to return intentions. Female refugees are less likely to return, which supports common assumptions regarding security concerns, gender-based risks, and the greater sense of safety that women often find in host countries, particularly during protracted crises.

Education shows a significant positive relationship with return intentions. Educated refugees are more likely to express willingness to return, potentially due to their expectation of post-conflict opportunities and belief in their ability to contribute to reconstruction or secure meaningful employment once conditions stabilise. The variable capturing whether a refugee is the primary income earner in the household is significant but inversely related to return intentions. Refugees who financially support their families, particularly those with stable jobs in the host country, face higher economic risks and pressures that make returning more difficult. Their decision is often driven by the need to maintain income security and family stability. Finally, participation in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) also has a significant positive relationship with return intentions. Refugees who receive training appear more confident in their ability to reintegrate economically in their home country, as these skills increase their employability in post-conflict labour markets.

Conversely, variables such as head of family, number of family members, employment status, and skill gaps were statistically insignificant. Despite expectations, employment status did not meaningfully shape return intentions, suggesting that the quality and stability of employment matter more than mere employment presence. Household size may not affect return intentions, as logistical challenges can be outweighed by broader considerations including access to education, healthcare, and safety. Moreover, skill gaps did not appear to influence return intentions, possibly because refugees believe they can adapt or acquire new skills upon return, or because economic readiness is not their primary concern in repatriation decisions.

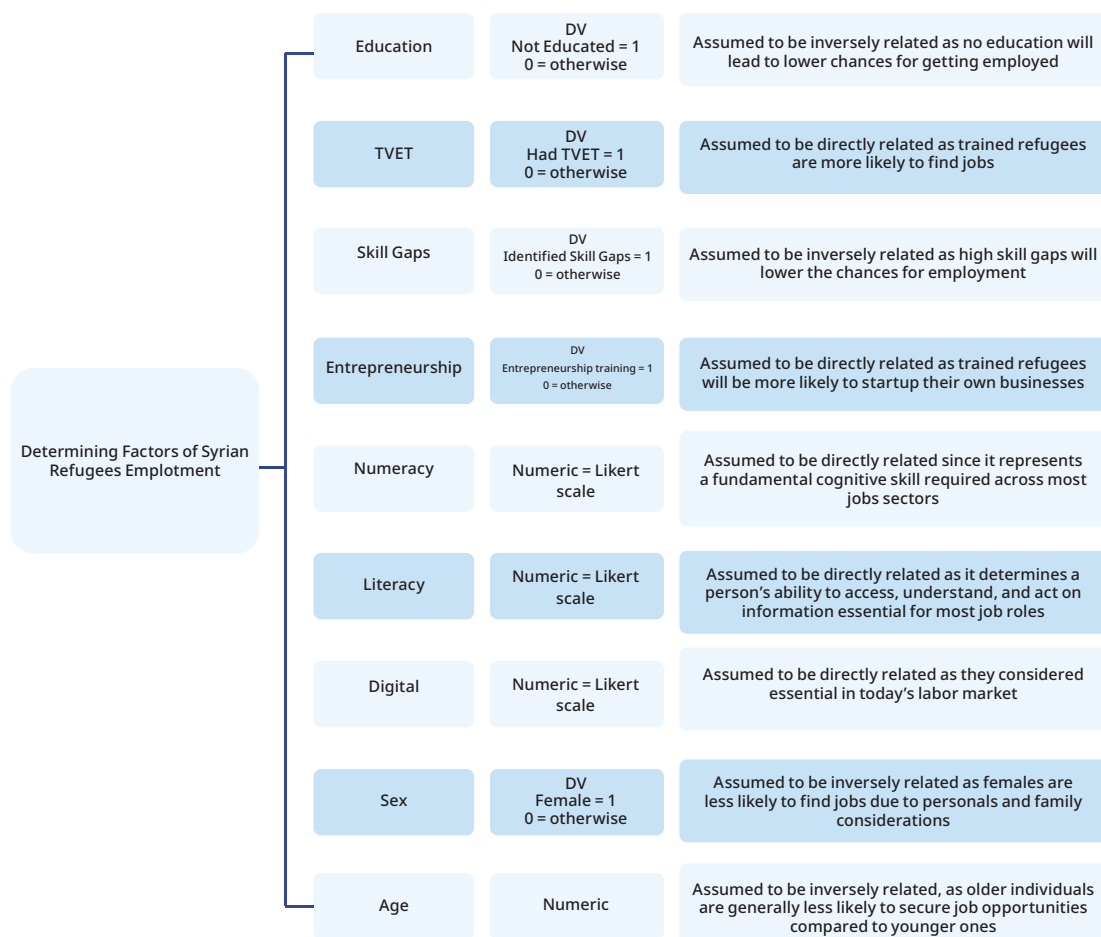
In addition to the variables included in the regression model, several other factors may significantly influence refugees' return intentions but were not captured in the current analysis. Perceived security and political stability in the country of origin are among the most critical determinants, as many refugees are unlikely to return unless they believe it is safe. Access to housing and property restitution is also important, especially for those who have lost homes or land during the war. Family reunification and social networks also play a key role, as refugees with close relatives still abroad or dispersed across multiple countries may be less inclined to return alone. Psychological trauma and emotional distress resulting from conflict or displacement experience can further inhibit return, particularly if the return process might trigger past traumas. Additionally, legal status in the host country, such as pending resettlement or temporary protection, may shape how refugees perceive their long-term options, including the possibility of return.

The overall model presented in this section is statistically significant, with an F-statistic p-value below the 5 per cent threshold, indicating it reliably explains variation in refugees' return intentions. It provides empirical insight into the key factors influencing these decisions, identifying age, sex, education, participation in TVET programmes, and being the primary income earner, as significant predictors shaping refugees' intentions to return.

Employment: A conceptual model

The employment conceptual model identifies key individual and structural factors that influence the refugees' ability to secure work in displaced contexts. The model incorporates a mix of human capital skills including numeracy, literacy, and digital skills, which are assumed to directly impact employment. Education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) participation are also expected to directly enhance employment prospects. Skill gaps are assumed to inversely affect employment: larger gaps reduce employment likelihood. Although entrepreneurship might not provide direct employment, entrepreneurship training, considered here, can generate income and potentially create jobs for others. Sex is assumed to inversely affect employment, as women usually find it hard to secure employment due to personal and family-related constraints. Age is also assumed to inversely impact employment, since older refugees may find it more difficult to access job opportunities.

Figure 3: Employment – conceptual model



The correlation matrix presented in Table 3 below shows a high correlation between sex and autonomy in decision-making, consistent with Model 1. Thus, autonomy in decision-making is excluded from the model. No other high correlation was detected.

Table 3: Model 2 – correlation matrix

Correlation matrix	Age	Autonomy in decision	Digital skills	Education	Entrepreneurship	Literacy skills	Numeracy skills	Sex	Skill gaps	TVET
Age	1									
Autonomy in decision	-0.0314	1								
Digital skills	-0.13956	0.0896689	1							
Education	0.088432	-0.00132	-0.188497	1						
Entrepreneurship	-0.01841	0.093291	0.12942	-0.048939	1					
Literacy skills	-0.1026	0.174299	0.332789	-0.51602	0.08163	1				
Numeracy	-0.0101	0.120401	0.424109	-0.386745	0.084073	0.656953	1			
Sex	-0.0756	0.855873	0.030808	0.022968	0.070383	0.093988	0.061682	1		
Skill gaps	-0.05181	0.127415	-0.027992	-0.056663	0.009479	0.118726	-0.014914	0.057518	1	
TVET	-0.01382	0.228381	-0.201039	-0.067027	0.196321	0.133878	0.180197	0.198722	0.019006	1

Table 4: Model 1 – regression results

Dependent variable: employment				
Method: least squares				
Sample: 1 1069				
Included observations: 1069				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-statistic	Prob.
C	0.467927	0.056225	8.322355	0.00
Age	5.96E-05	0.000954	0.06249	0.9502
Digital skills	0.007999	0.008812	0.907693	0.3642
Literacy skills	0.016852	0.010977	1.535131	0.1251
Numeracy skills	0.019416	0.010392	1.868402	0.062
Education	0.11909	0.04599	2.589446	0.0097
Entrepreneurship	-0.083911	0.082207	-1.02073	0.3076
Sex	-0.318657	0.0241	-13.22244	0.00
Skill gaps	-0.449691	0.025417	-17.69228	0.00
TVET	-0.01108	0.031897	-0.347379	0.7284
R-squared	0.341336	Adjusted R-squared		0.335739
F-statistic		60.97787		
Prob(F-statistic)		0		

$$\text{Employment} = 0.4679 + 0.0194 \text{ Numeracy Skills} + 0.119 \text{ Education} - 0.3186 \text{ Sex} - 0.4496 \text{ Skill Gaps}$$

(0.0) (0.062) (0.0097) (0.00) (0.00)

Based on the regression results provided in Table 4 and the corresponding regression equation, numeracy emerged as a significant and positively associated variable with employment. Numeracy skills are essential across a broad range of jobs, and even basic numeracy improves performance in tasks such as budgeting, calculating, or data entry. It is therefore likely that higher numeracy correlates with greater cognitive ability or education, which in turn boosts employment prospects. Assuming numeracy was measured independently of employment (no reverse causality), and errors are homoscedastic, this result reflects a real relationship that is aligned with the assumption in the conceptual model.

Skill gaps are found to be significant and negatively associated with employment, indicating that individuals lacking the necessary competencies are less likely to secure jobs. Sex also plays a significant role, with the inverse relationship suggesting that women face greater barriers to employment due to personal or family responsibilities. Conversely, education shows a positive and significant effect on employment, meaning that even refugees with low levels of formal education can still access employment opportunities. Although the results contradict the initial model assumption, this is possible due to the nature of employment that usually doesn't require education and is based on low-skill qualifications.

TVET, however, was not statistically significant. Several factors may explain this outcome. First, the training provided may not align with current labour market demands, resulting in a mismatch between acquired skills and available job opportunities. Second, the quality or recognition of TVET programmes may be limited, reducing their impact on employability. Third, refugees face broader barriers including legal restrictions, discrimination, language constraints, and limited professional networks, which can overshadow the potential benefits of vocational training. Furthermore, even when TVET participants do find work, it is often informal or underemployment, which may not be fully captured in standard employment indicators. As a result, despite its intended purpose, TVET did not significantly influence employment outcomes in this context.

Digital skills, which are highly demanded for employment, also came out insignificant. This may be due to the low levels of digital proficiency among the surveyed population, resulting in insufficient variation to detect a significant relationship with employment. Additionally, digital skills were self-reported or measured imprecisely, and such measurement error can reduce the observed effect. Literacy often correlates with other variables, such as numeracy, education level, or TVET participation, which are stronger predictors of employment, thus obscuring any independent effect of literacy.

Entrepreneurship does not guarantee income or job security. Many people start small businesses out of necessity rather than opportunity, often because they cannot access formal employment. It is possible that unemployed individuals are more likely to become entrepreneurs, not the other way around. This reverses the expected causality and can bias the coefficient toward insignificance.

Beyond the variables included in the model, several other factors may enhance the employment model for refugees by capturing broader dimensions of employability and labour market integration. Social networks and community connections play a central role in job access, especially in informal economies where referrals and word-of-mouth hiring are common. Language proficiency, both in the host country's language and in business or technical terminology, plays a critical role in communication, participation in training, and job interviews. Legal status and work permit availability directly influence whether refugees are permitted to work, creating structural barriers to employment regardless of skills. Moreover, access to transportation and childcare support are practical but often overlooked factors that shape whether refugees can realistically reach and maintain a job.

The overall model presented in this section is significant with an F-statistic p-value of 0, well below the 5 per cent threshold. This indicates that the significant variables are important, determining factors for employment and will be considered alongside other variables during the profiling process.

Skills profiles of Syrian refugees planning for return or integration

This section of the profiling report presents the key findings of the survey and is organised into several subsections. It begins with an overview of aggregate data related to participants’ demographic and family characteristics, followed by their educational background and participation in TVET. The analysis then proceeds to two core thematic areas: return intentions and employment. The analysis highlights major trends and insights, supported, where applicable, by graphical representations and matrices, to ensure a clear and comprehensive understanding of the survey results.

Demographics and family status

A total of 1,069 participants were surveyed, comprising 55 per cent females and 45 per cent males. Respondents were distributed across six governorates, as illustrated in Figure 4. Most interviews were conducted in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, followed by North Lebanon and Akkar. Figure 5 further disaggregates participants by sex and governorate as shown below.

Figure 4: Participants’ geographic distribution per governorate

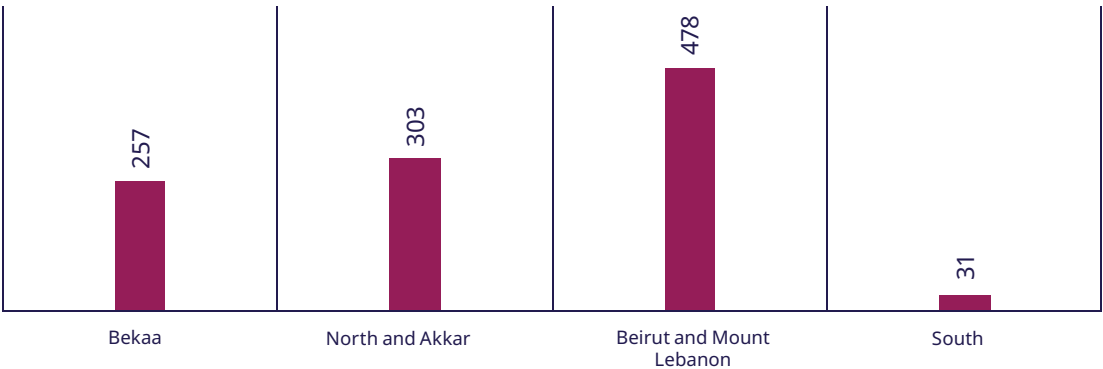


Figure 5: Participants’ sex distribution

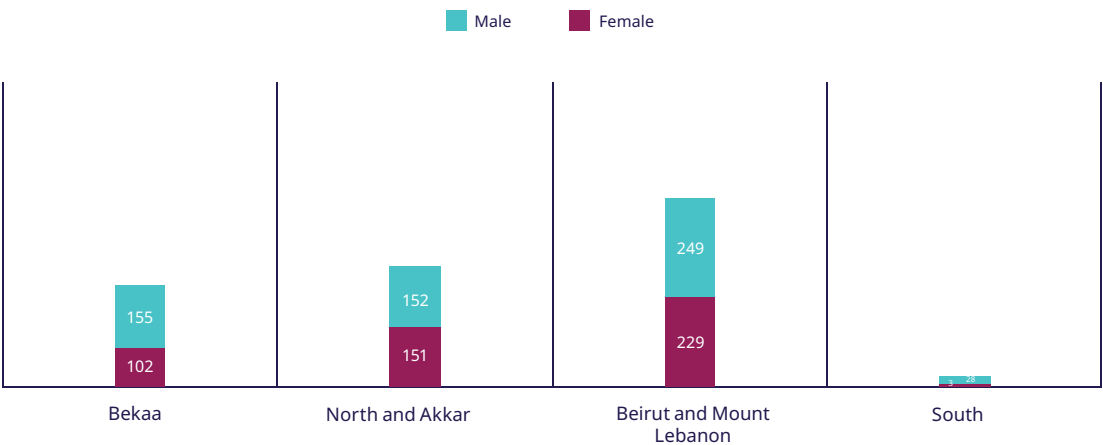
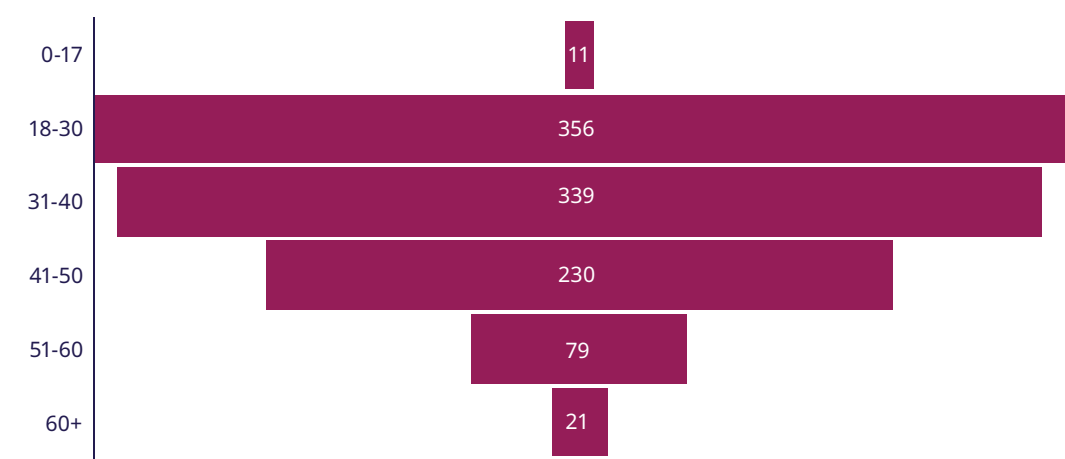


Figure 6 displays the age distribution of participants, showing that the largest proportions fall within the 18–30 and 31–40 age groups.

Figure 6: Participants' age



A significant portion of participants identified themselves as heads of household, with 65 per cent reporting direct responsibility for their families—58 per cent of whom are men. Furthermore, 51 per cent of the participants stated that they are the primary income earners, while the remainder depend on support from other family members or relatives. Figure 7 below illustrates how heads of household and main income contributors are distributed by sex. It is also worth noting that the number of family members ranges from 1 to 16 members, as shown in Figure 8 below.

Figure 7: Family status: Head and primary income earner

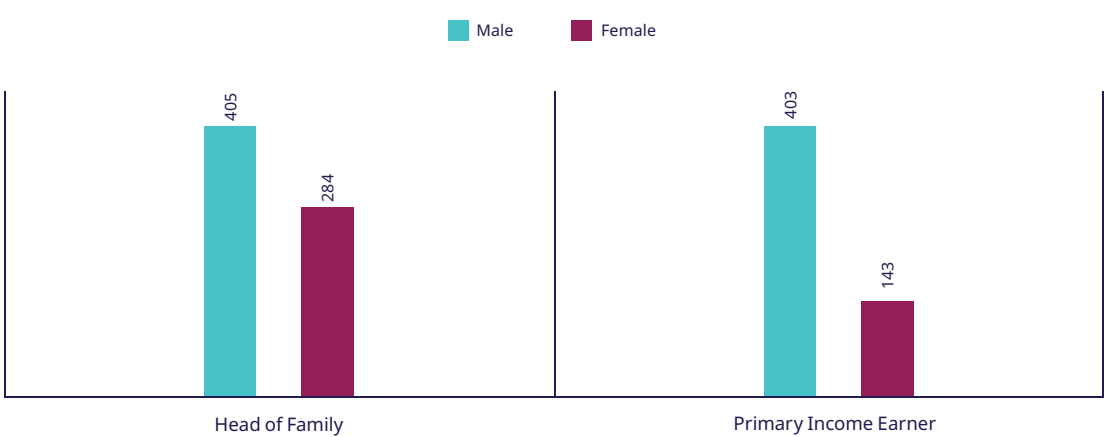
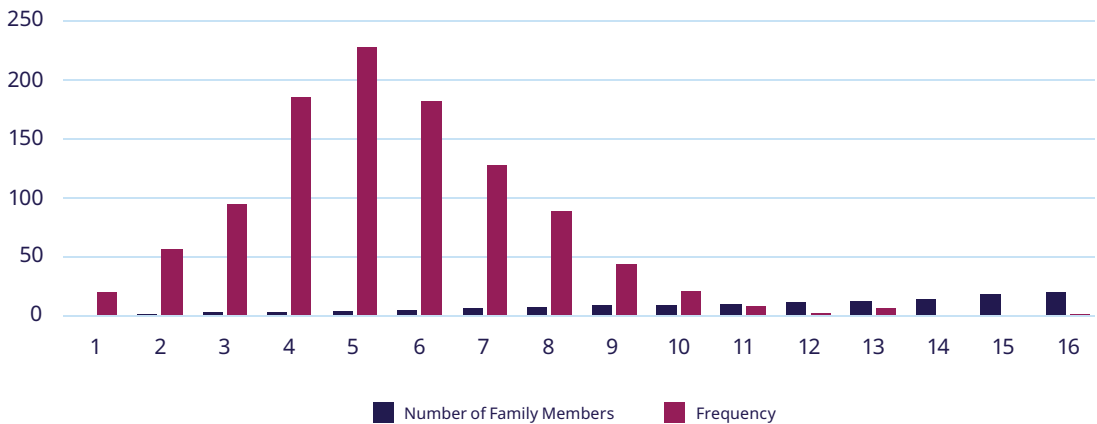
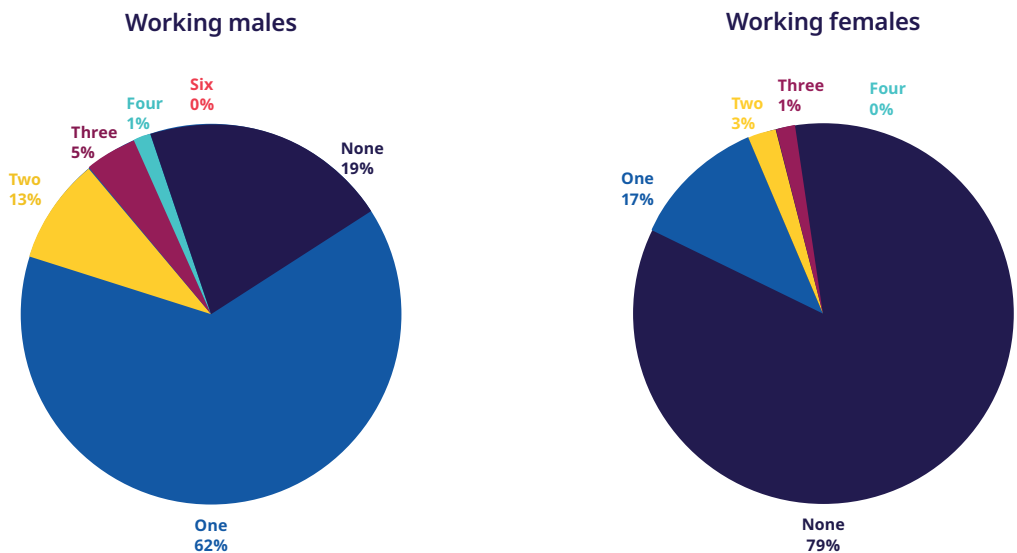


Figure 8: Number of family members



The data reveal considerable sex disparities in employment within refugee households. In most families—869 in total—only one male member is employed, while fewer households reported having two, three, four, or even six working males. In contrast, female employment remains significantly limited. Only 181 families reported having one working female, and just 42 families indicated having two or more employed female members. This contrast underscores persistent gender-based barriers to labour market access, particularly for refugee women, who may face cultural, social, or logistical challenges including caregiving responsibilities or limited safe work opportunities. Figure 9 below illustrates the distribution of working male and female household members, highlighting these gendered dynamics in income contribution.

Figure 9: Number of working males and females per family

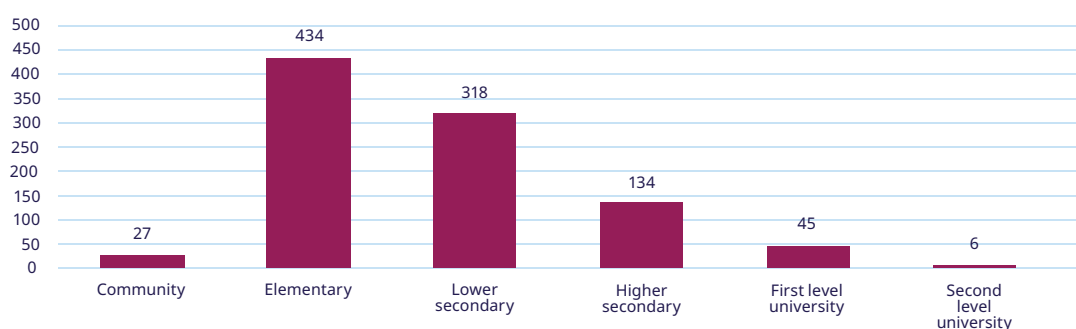


Education and Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

Education emerged as a critical variable in both conceptual models presented earlier, reflecting its strong association with return intentions and employment potential among refugees. According to participants' responses, approximately 10 per cent reported having received no formal education at all. Among those who attended school, educational attainment remains generally low: 45 per cent completed only elementary education, 33 per cent reached lower secondary, and just 14 per cent completed higher secondary education. A small portion (3 per cent) pursued post-secondary options including vocational training, intermediate diplomas, or community college. Only 5.2 per cent of participants reported attending university; either first or second-level studies.

The findings highlight significant challenges in both access to and continuity of education for refugees, likely exacerbated by prolonged displacement, economic hardship, and disrupted schooling systems. Low levels of formal education constrain refugees' opportunities for upward mobility, hinder their integration into host country labour markets, and reduce their capacity to contribute to long-term recovery if they return home. Figure 10 below shows the number of participants who reported receiving formal education, disaggregated by education level.

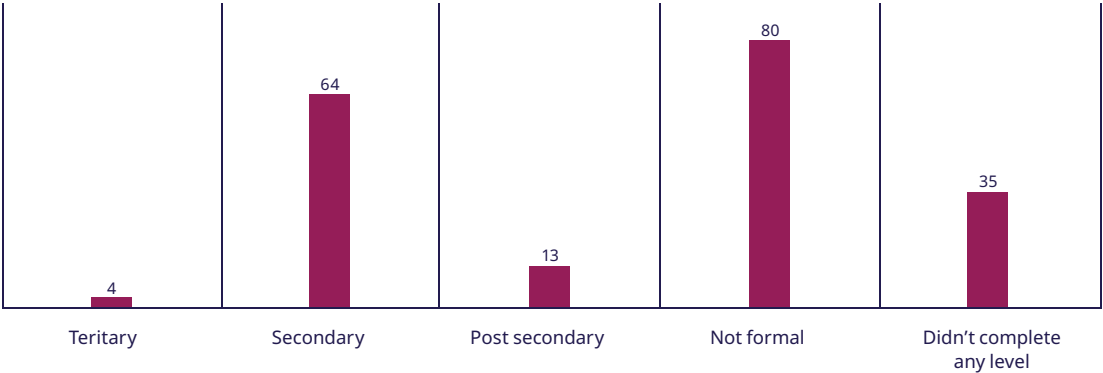
Figure 10: Number of participants by education level



TVET plays a crucial role in shaping both return intentions and employment outcomes among refugees. Although TVET was not statistically significant in the employment model, this does not diminish its practical relevance. Instead, the findings highlight a mismatch between available training opportunities and actual labour market demand. When training is not aligned with market needs, it is less likely to lead to employment. This underscores the necessity of pairing training programmes with robust demand-side labour market analyses to ensure that the skills being developed match real-world job opportunities.

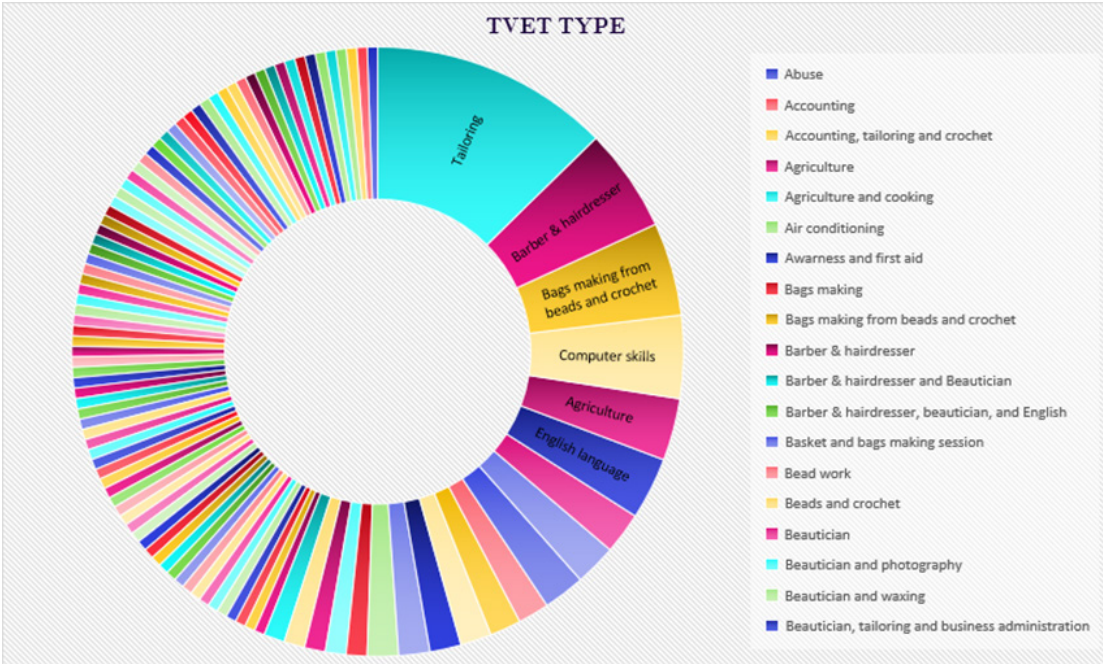
According to the survey results, 873 participants (approximately 82 per cent of the total sample) reported not having received any form of vocational or technical training. The levels of TVET are shown in Figure 11 below, as indicated by the participants.

Figure 11: TVET level



Among trained participants, the topics varied across sectors, as outlined in Figure 12. The most common areas of training included tailoring, hairdressing, agriculture, English language, and computer skills. Yet, the figures remain low, reflecting limited access to TVET opportunities and potential underutilisation of a key tool for economic self-reliance. Expanding access to demand driven, accredited, and inclusive TVET programmes, especially for women and youth, could significantly enhance refugees' prospects for sustainable livelihoods and reduce dependency on aid.

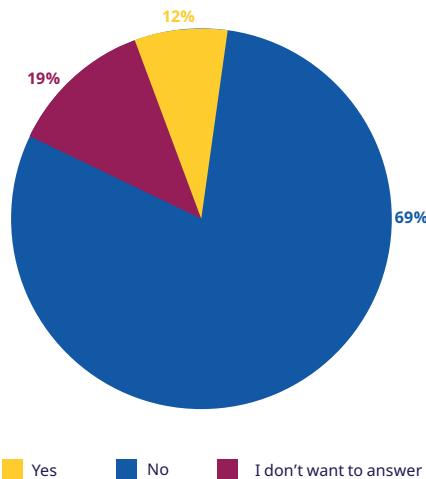
Figure 12: TVET type



Return intentions – profiling

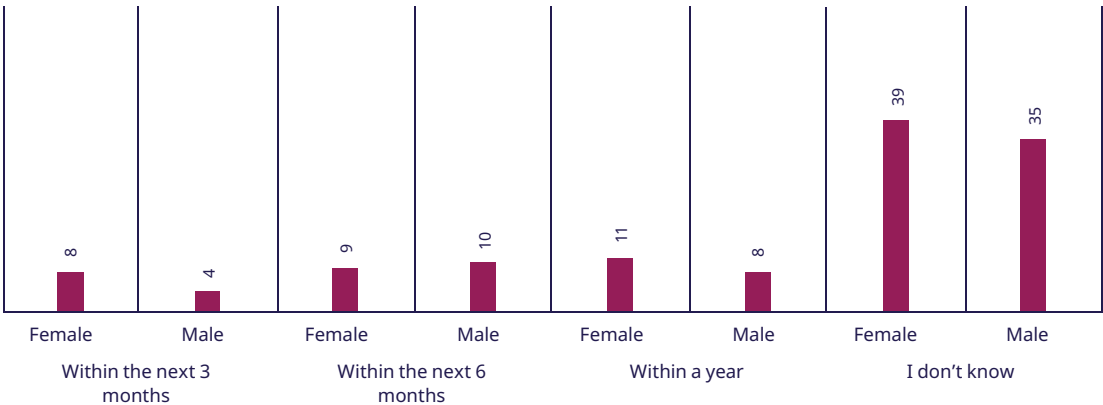
This section categorises participants into three primary groups based on their return intentions: those who express a desire to return (YES), those who do not wish to return (NO), and those who chose not to disclose their intentions (I DON'T WANT TO ANSWER). Figure 13 below illustrates the percentage distribution of participants across these three groups.

Figure 13: Return intentions – percentages



Furthermore, those who wish to return are divided into four groups: those who wish to return within the next three months, those who wish to return within the next six months, those who wish to return within the next year, and those who are unsure about the timing of their return. Based on participants' responses, the total number of those who wish to return to Syria is 124, and Figure 14 below shows their distribution across the four groups, disaggregated by sex.

Figure 14: Return intentions – groups



Based on the first conceptual model, the key determinants of return intentions—sex, education, income earner, and TVET— were selected alongside skill gaps, employment, and apprenticeship experience to profile the three main participant groups, as presented in Table 5 below. The data indicate that only 9.8 per cent of participants have not completed any level of education, suggesting a relatively low rate of educational exclusion. However, a significantly high proportion, 82 per cent, reported not having received any form of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), a gap clearly reflected in the table. Moreover, only 7.2 per cent of participants reported having completed an apprenticeship, highlighting a substantial shortfall in practical, hands-on training opportunities. While 51 per cent of participants identified as income earners, only 28.6 per cent are currently employed, indicating that income generation is largely informal or unstable. In addition, only 31.7 per cent have identified their skill gaps, leaving 68 per cent without clear awareness of the skills they may need to improve their employability or support future reintegration.

Table 5: Profiles of return intentions' groups

Return Intention	Intention	Category	Sex	Number	No Education	No TVET	Skill Gaps	Apprenticeship	Income Earner	Employment	
	Yes	Within the next 3 months	Female	8	3	4	0	3	0	1	
			Male	4	0	4	3	0	4	0	
		Within the next 6 months	Female	9	1	6	4	2	1	0	
			Male	10	1	7	0	1	8	0	
		Within a year	Female	11	2	3	5	6	2	0	
			Male	8	0	6	3	1	7	0	
		I don't know	Female	39	4	28	11	4	9	5	
			Male	35	7	33	5	1	23	0	
	No	Female	424	46	315	77	35	115	83		
		Male	317	36	285	130	16	277	170		
	I don't want to answer	Female	93	5	80	47	6	16	10		
		Male	111	0	102	54	2	84	37		
	Total				1 069	105	873	339	77	546	306

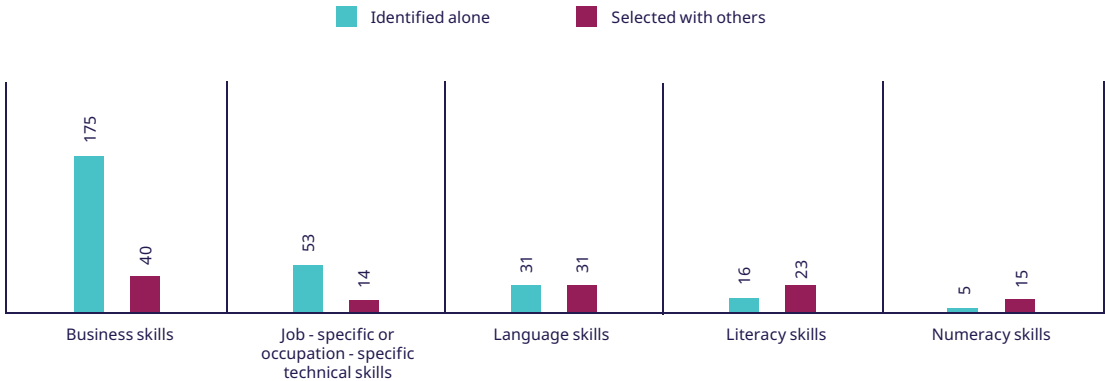
In addition to the identified skill gaps presented in Figure 15 on the next page, participants were also asked to self-assess their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, as shown in Table 6 below. The values highlighted in green indicate that most participants either lack these skills entirely or possess them mainly at a basic or beginner level. Remarkably, digital skills emerged as the most critical area of deficiency across all participant groups. This trend points to a significant digital divide and underscores the urgent need for foundational digital literacy training. Enhancing these skills is considered essential not only for improving employment prospects but also for enabling access to information, services, and broader socio-economic participation. Furthermore 78 per cent of the participants indicated interest in receiving TVET.

Table 6: Profiles of return intentions' groups

Return Intention	Type of Skills		Literacy						Numeracy						Digital						Number
	Level		No	Basic	Beginner	Intermediate	Proficient	Highly Proficient	No	Basic	Beginner	Intermediate	Proficient	Highly Proficient	No	Basic	Beginner	Intermediate	Proficient	Highly Proficient	Interested in receiving TVET
	Intention	Category																			
	Yes	Within the next 3 months	1	1	2	1	3	4	1	1	2	2	4	2	6	0	3	1	1	1	9
		Within the next 6 months	1	1	2	6	3	6	4	0	1	5	4	5	12	0	1	3	2	1	15
		Within a year	0	1	2	2	7	7	2	1	0	3	7	6	5	0	3	4	5	2	18
		I don't know	9	3	9	16	23	14	9	6	8	21	20	10	46	3	11	8	4	2	58
	No		79	48	90	177	180	167	113	62	107	197	167	95	425	35	120	93	38	29	583
I don't want to answer		4	23	40	34	35	68	37	16	63	43	30	15	104	10	56	24	9	1	154	
Total		94	77	145	236	251	266	166	86	181	271	232	133	598	48	194	133	59	36	837	
Percentage		0.09	0.07	0.14	0.22	0.23	0.25	0.2	0.08	0.17	0.25	0.22	0.12	0.56	0.04	0.18	0.12	0.06	0.03	0.782974743	

Figure 16 below illustrates the types of skill gaps identified by participants. The majority pointed to the need for business skills and job-specific or occupation-related technical skills. This indicates that many participants are aware of the practical, market-driven competencies required to access sustainable livelihood opportunities. These findings underscore the importance of targeted skills development programmes aligned with labour market needs.

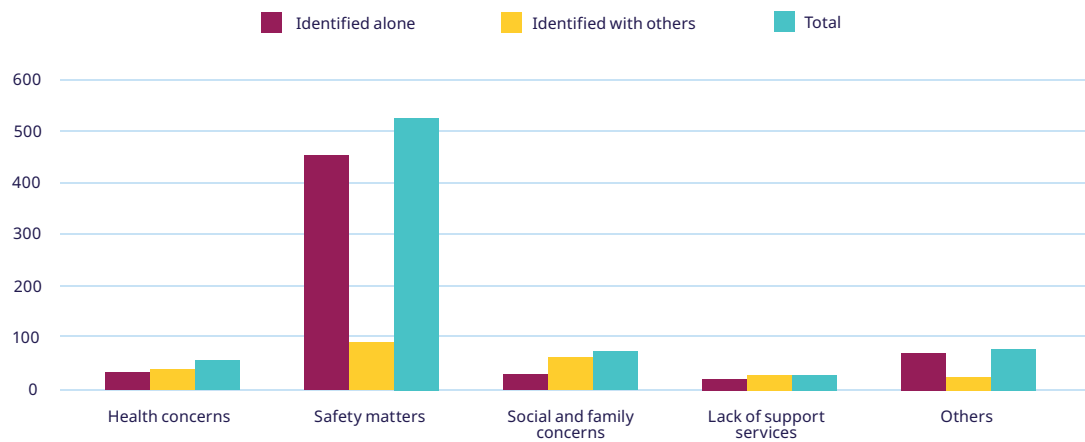
Figure 16: Type of skills identified by participants



Furthermore, to improve access to training and educational programmes, participants identified several barriers that need to be addressed to ease the process of acquiring the skills necessary for employment whether in the country of asylum or back in Syria. While 501 female respondents reported autonomy in decision-making, a significant number (408 women) noted that involving family members, particularly spouses or parents, can facilitate their participation in training programmes. This highlights the complex interplay between individual autonomy and family dynamics, suggesting that supportive family engagement can play a crucial role in enabling women to pursue skill-building opportunities. Household responsibilities also emerged as a major concern. Approximately 11 per cent identified household care as a major barrier to accessing training or employment, while an additional 18.5 per cent considered it a significant obstacle among other challenges. Moreover, 41.8 per cent of female participants emphasised that access to childcare services would greatly enhance their ability to participate in work or training programmes. They expressed a strong preference for childcare support to be provided on-site at the workplace or training location.

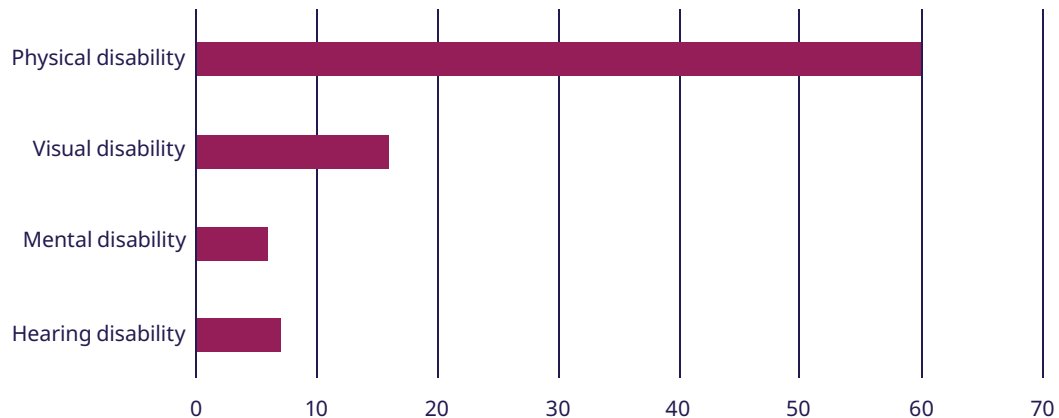
Figure 17 provides a comprehensive overview of the key barriers that need to be considered when designing and implementing training programmes, particularly to ensure the smooth participation of females. Among the most frequently cited obstacles are safety concerns, including fear of harassment or abuse at training or work sites, fear of crime, and tensions arising from local conflicts. Participants also highlighted the lack of safe and reliable transportation, poor workplace or training environments, and fear of checkpoints as major deterrents. Health-related issues were highlighted as additional challenges, alongside social and family concerns, including fear of social disapproval and restrictions imposed by family members, especially spouses. Furthermore, several participants pointed to the absence of support services, such as legal aid and accessible complaint mechanisms, as significant barriers. Practical constraints, including lack of available time, limited transportation options, and financial difficulties, were also commonly reported by participants as factors that hinder their ability to participate in training or work opportunities.

Figure 17: Participation barriers



Another critical concern that must be addressed is the inclusion of persons with disabilities. As shown in Figure 18 below, 8 per cent of participants reported having some form of disability. Most of these individuals have physical disabilities, while others experience visual, hearing, or mental impairments. Therefore, training programmes must be designed to be accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of individuals with different types of disabilities.

Figure 18: Types of disabilities



Return intentions – needs

Building on the information presented above, the three main participant groups, and the subgroups within those intending to return to Syria, are outlined according to their specific needs. Table 7 below summarises the recommended interventions for each group, linking them to key variables that can support either a smooth return to Syria or successful integration into the host country, Lebanon.

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Table 7: Needed interventions

Needed intervention Yellow: no need Blue: there is a need				Education	TVET	Business skills	Job-specific	Literacy including language	Numeracy skills	Digital skills	Apprenticeship	Employment opportunities	Childcare services	Safety concerns
Return intention	Intention	Category	Sex											
	Yes	Within the next 3 months	Female											
			Male											
		Within the next 6 months	Female											
			Male											
		Within a year	Female											
			Male											
		I don't know	Female											
			Male											
	No		Female											
			Male											
	I don't want to answer		Female											
			Male											

Employment – profiling

This section of the report focuses on the main factors affecting refugees' ability to secure employment, whether they intend to return to Syria or remain in Lebanon. Table 8 below outlines data for the three main participant groups, including subgroups among those planning to return to Syria. According to the employment conceptual model, skill gaps, education, numeracy (which will be presented in the needs table), and sex are the most significant determinants of employment. Additional factors are also presented in relation to these core variables, serving as tools to address skill deficiencies and enhance overall employability. While entrepreneurship training may not directly lead to formal employment, it plays a critical role in income generation, particularly for refugees who aspire to establish their own businesses. Moreover, entrepreneurship has the potential to create indirect employment opportunities for others. Table 8 highlights that the number of refugees who have not received any entrepreneurship training is significantly high, indicating the need for such training programme.

Table 8 below presents the relevant variables and clearly flags the areas where urgent intervention is needed. As shown, most participants have completed some level of education, with only 9.8 per cent reporting no formal education. The most pressing issue is employment; only 28.6 per cent of respondents are currently working. Although relatively few participants explicitly reported skill gaps, the variable remains significant and should be considered alongside TVET to help refugees address these gaps and improve their access to employment opportunities.

Table 8: Employment profiling

Employment	Return intention	Category	Sex	Number	Have jobs	No education	Skill gaps	No TVET	No entrepreneurship training
	Yes	Within the next 3 months	Female	8	1	3	0	4	8
			Male	4	0	0	3	4	4
		Within the next 6 months	Female	9	0	1	4	6	9
			Male	10	0	1	0	7	9
		Within a year	Female	11	0	2	5	3	10
			Male	8	0	0	3	6	7
		I don't know	Female	39	5	4	11	28	37
			Male	35	0	7	5	33	35
	No	Female	424	83	46	77	315	410	
		Male	317	170	36	130	285	311	
	I don't want to answer	Female	93	10	5	47	80	92	
		Male	111	37	0	54	102	110	
	Total				1 069	306	105	339	873

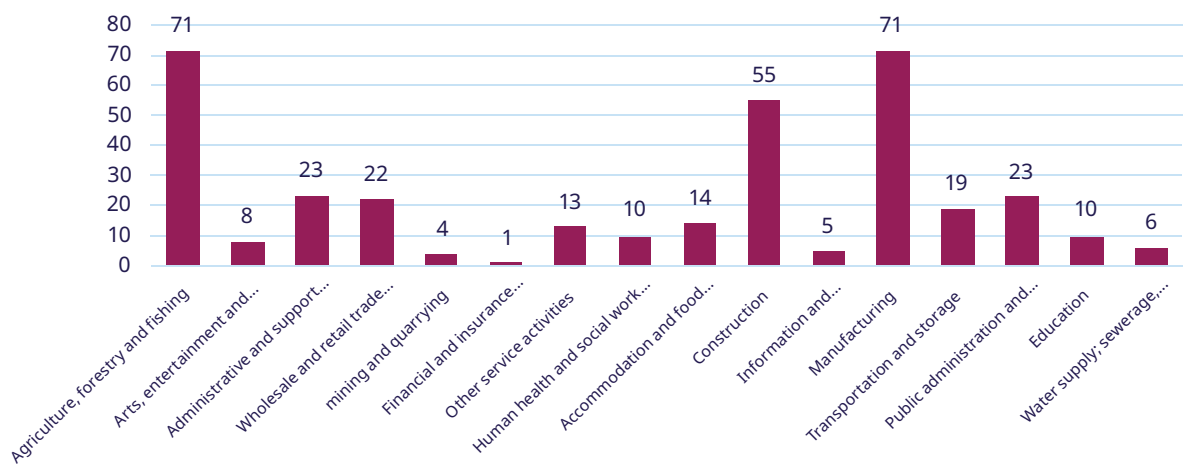
Employment – needs

Based on the information presented in Table 8, the needs expressed by the grouped refugees closely mirror those identified in the earlier section on return intentions. This consistency indicates that, whether refugees plan to return to Syria or remain in Lebanon, their employment-related needs remain largely aligned. However, an additional and critical need emerging from this section is empowerment through entrepreneurship programmes. Such programmes should provide comprehensive support, guiding participants from the ideation phase to the actual launch and sustainability of start-ups. These initiatives can foster self-employment, promote income generation, and enhance resilience and economic independence among refugee populations.

Understanding the sectors in which refugees have previous work experience is crucial for designing targeted employment interventions. Employment history provides insight into transferable skills and relevant experience, which is essential for effective job matching. Figure 19 illustrates the primary sectors in which refugees have been employed, offering valuable insight into their patterns of workforce integration and the types of jobs they are most familiar with.

Most refugees have experience in agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. These sectors often rely on manual labour and offer relatively accessible entry points for displaced populations. This data is essential for planning future employment support, both in Lebanon and in the context of potential return to Syria, ensuring that existing skills are effectively leveraged to facilitate sustainable livelihoods.

Figure 19: Employment sectors



Understanding the nature of employment that refugees previously held is very critical, as it offers valuable insight into the stability, quality, and potential trajectory of future employment prospects. Figure 20 below presents the types of employment contracts reported by refugees. A significant portion of them were engaged in short-term or informal work, often without formal contracts. This prevalence of insecure and non-contractual employment highlights their vulnerability in the labour market and underscores the need for interventions that promote decent work standards. Addressing this issue is vital, not only to ensure legal and social protection for refugees but also to enhance their chances of accessing stable, long-term employment opportunities, whether in Lebanon or upon return to Syria.

Figure 20: Employment – contract type

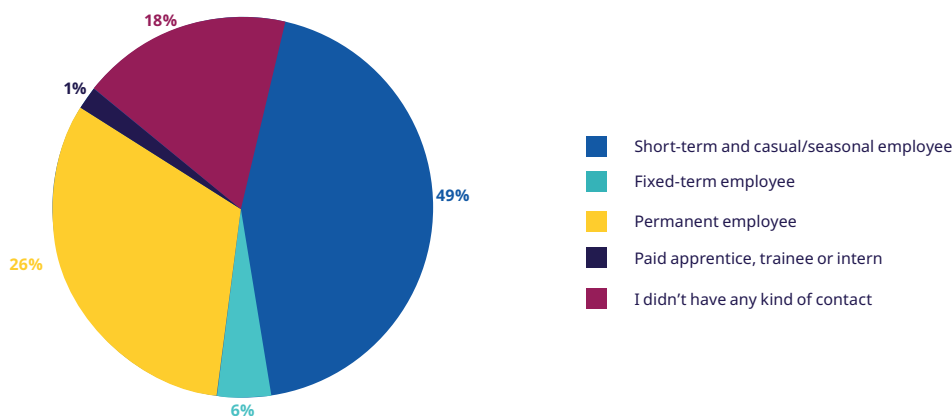


Figure 21 below presents the last occupations held by surveyed refugees. Many respondents reported working as daily wage labourers in factories, construction sites, restaurants, or as security guards. Others were employed in cleaning services, tailoring, food processing, retail sales, hairdressing, driving, handcrafts, car maintenance, and other forms of informal or semi-skilled occupations. These jobs are concentrated in low- to semi-skilled sectors, requiring a combination of physical power, manual dexterity, basic service orientation, and, in some cases, technical or vocational skills. For instance, tailoring, hairdressing, food processing, and car maintenance require hands-on vocational competencies and sometimes certification, while roles in cleaning, construction, and factory work rely more heavily on physical strength and basic task execution skills. Sales and driving, on the other hand, demand communication skills, basic literacy or numeracy, and, in the case of driving, valid licenses and safety awareness. This experience-based information is crucial for designing targeted upskilling programmes, both to improve the employability of refugees in their current sectors and to facilitate transition into more stable and formal employment.

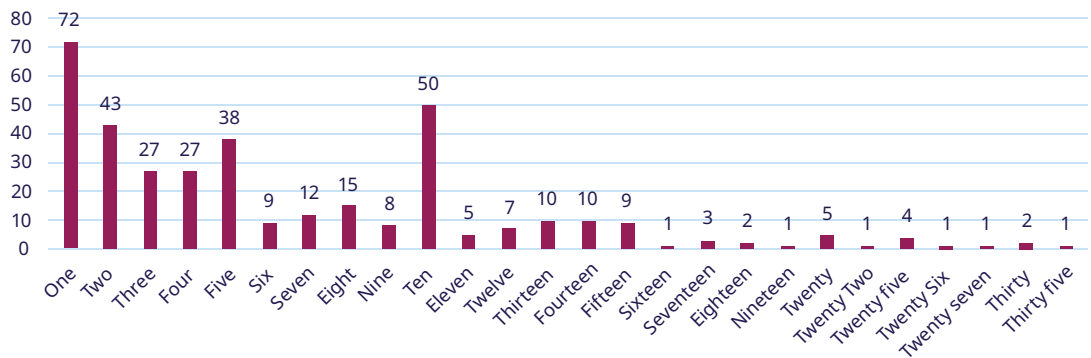
Among the surveyed female refugees, 85 per cent reported that although it is socially acceptable for women to engage in paid work outside the home, they may require approval from a spouse to do so. This highlights the gender norms and power dynamics that continue to influence women’s autonomy and limit their access to employment opportunities.

Figure 21: Occupations previously held by refugees



Years of work experience play a critical role in shaping the employment prospects of refugees, particularly for those seeking more stable and sustainable job opportunities. As shown in Figure 22 below, among refugees who reported having work experience, 82.6 per cent had between 1 and 10 years of experience, while 17.3 per cent had accumulated more than 10 years in their respective occupations. This distribution suggests that most have established a solid foundation of practical experience that could be further strengthened through targeted skills development and job placement initiatives. Meanwhile, the smaller group with over a decade of experience may possess more specialised skills or leadership potential, which could be leveraged for higher-responsibility roles or for mentoring others within their fields.

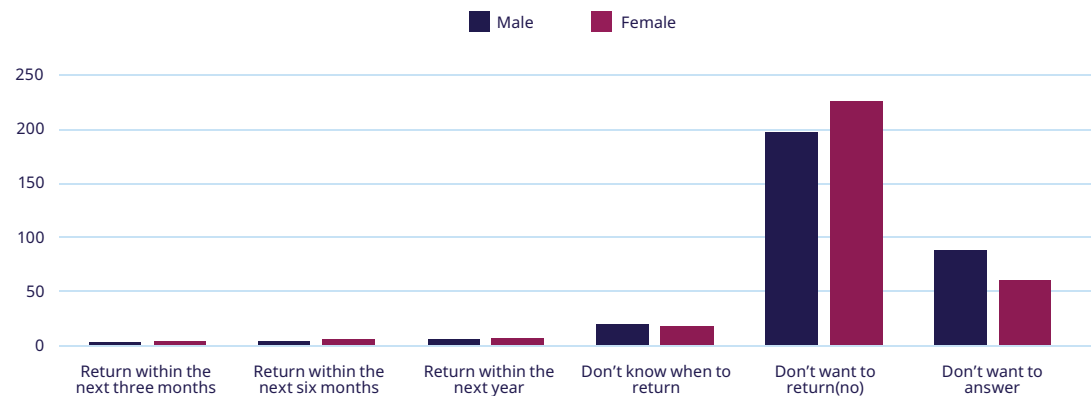
Figure 22: Years of work experience



Employment – current situation

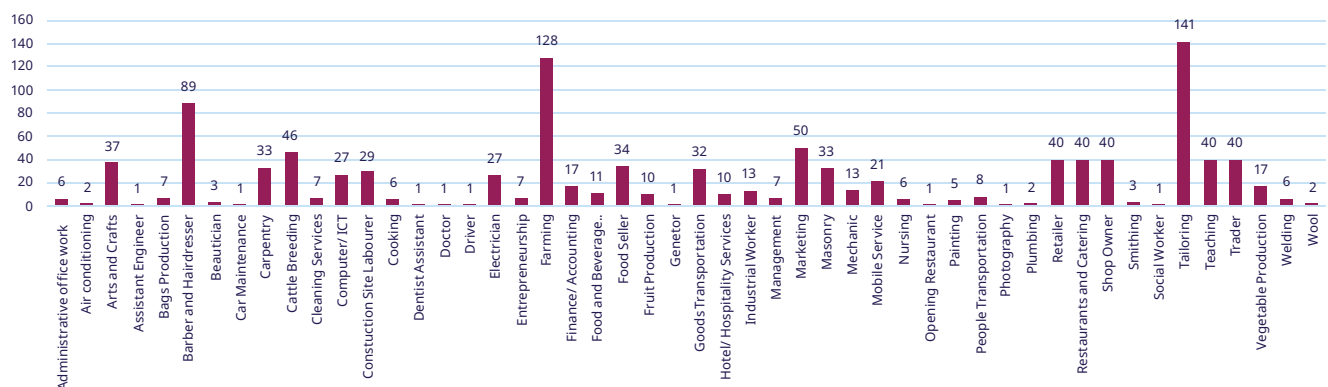
A total of 641 surveyed refugees reported that they are currently looking for employment. Figure 23 below presents their distribution by sex.

Figure 23: Number of refugees seeking employment



In addition, the surveyed refugees who are currently seeking employment have identified the specific types of jobs they aspire to secure. As illustrated in Figure 24 below, the most sought-after occupations include hairdressing, farming, tailoring, marketing, trading, cattle breeding, carpentry, construction, retail work, shop ownership, catering, and arts and crafts.

Figure 24: Employment opportunities currently being sought



Refugees currently seeking employment have also identified the key barriers preventing them from securing employment opportunities, in either Lebanon or Syria. The most frequently cited challenges include the lack of market-relevant skills, low wages, and limited knowledge of how or where to search for jobs. In addition, a significant number of respondents pointed to the overall unavailability of jobs as a major obstacle. Figure 25 below shows the barriers to finding employment opportunities.

Figure 25: Main barriers to finding employment opportunities

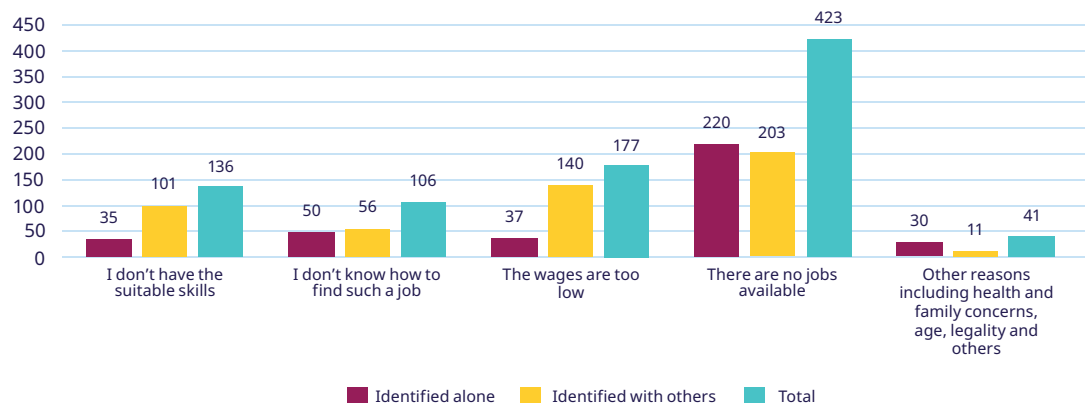


Figure 26 below further disaggregates these barriers by subgroups: those wishing to remain in Lebanon, and those who did not disclose their return intentions. Across both groups, the primary constraints remain consistent: lack of jobs, insufficient skills and career guidance, and low wages.

Figure 26: Main barriers to employment for refugees wishing to remain and those with no stated return intentions

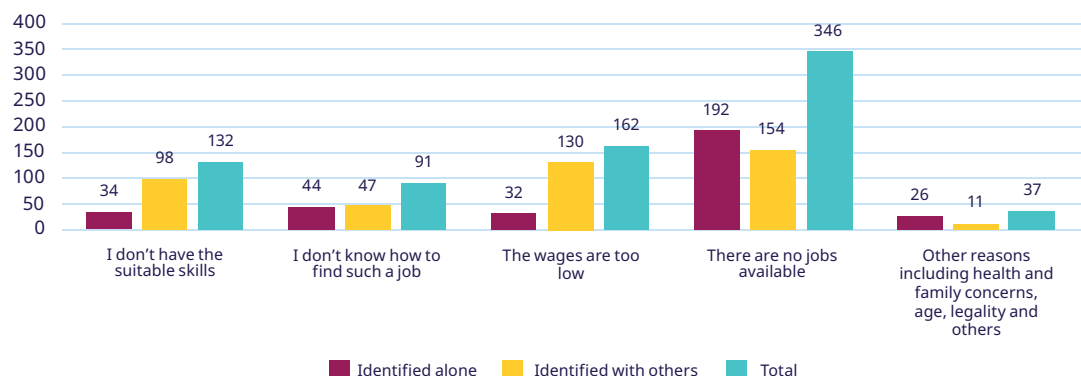


Table 8 below shows the distribution of refugees currently seeking employment opportunities in Lebanon by sex. Out of 945 surveyed refugees, 570 respondents (approximately 60 per cent) reported actively looking for job opportunities, while the remaining 375 indicated that they are not. This substantial demand for employment among the refugees underscores both the economic pressures they face and the importance of designing inclusive labour market interventions. At the same time, the sizeable group not seeking work suggests the presence of significant barriers, such as caregiving responsibilities, legal and administrative constraints, limited skills alignment, or discouragement due to scarce job opportunities.

Table 9: Seeking employment by sex distribution (refugees who wish to remain or with no stated return intentions)

	Category	Looking for jobs	
		Female	Male
	No (wish to remain)	225	196
Return intention	No stated return intentions	61	88

Among the 124 refugees who expressed an intention to return to Syria, 71 individuals reported actively seeking employment. However, only 26 of them are searching specifically for jobs in Syria. Table 9 below presents the distribution by sex.

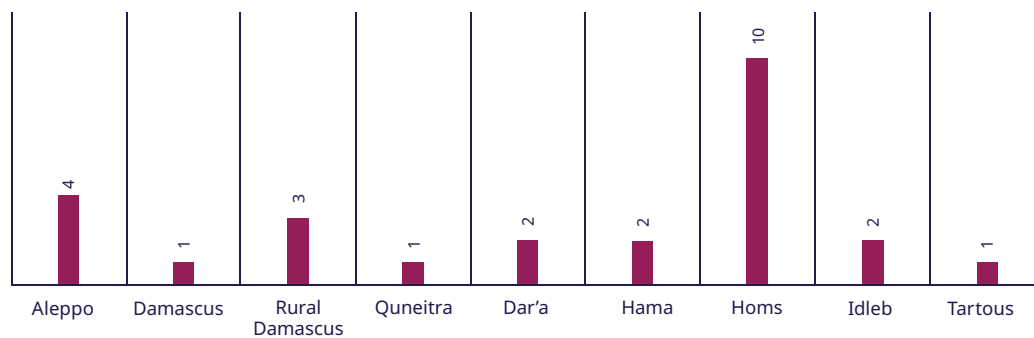
This finding underscores an important insight: stating an intention to return does not necessarily translate into an active decision to return, particularly when employment opportunities in Syria are limited. The fact that 45 of these individuals are seeking jobs outside Syria suggests that securing work in their current host country or elsewhere may influence their return plans. This highlights the pivotal role of job availability in shaping return decisions and indicates that return intentions are closely tied to economic security rather than solely to personal or political preferences.

Table 10: Refugees intending to return: Seeking employment by sex distribution

Return intention	Category	Looking for jobs		Looking for jobs in Syria	
		Female	Male	Female	Male
	No (wish to remain)	5	3	3	2
	No stated return intentions	6	5	3	3
	Within a year	7	6	5	2
	I don't know	19	20	5	3

Among those seeking employment in Syria, the preferred governorates are shown in Figure 27 below.

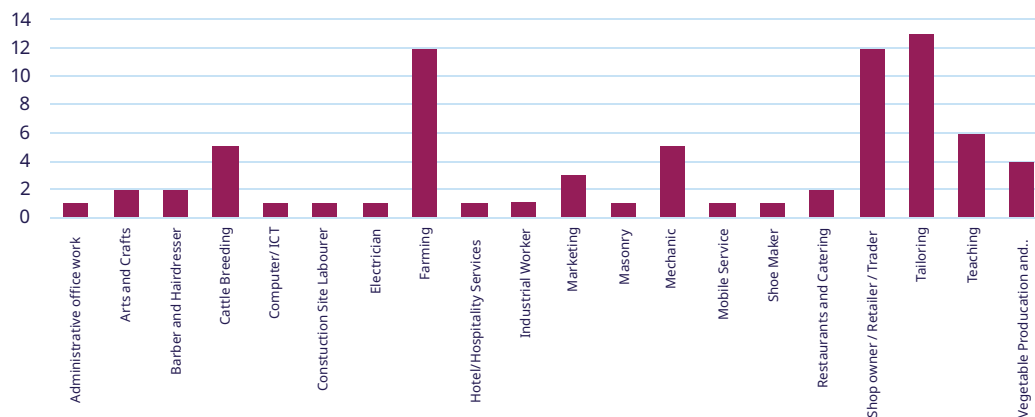
Figure 27: Governorates for employment opportunities



Furthermore, 67.7 per cent of refugees intending to return to Syria identified the type of businesses they aspire to establish upon their return. As illustrated in Figure 28 below, the most frequently mentioned areas include farming, cattle breeding, tailoring, shop ownership and trading, marketing, mechanical work, and vegetable production.

These preferences reflect a strong inclination toward agriculture-based, artisanal, and small-scale commercial activities, which are often rooted in local markets and familiar skill sets. This insight is valuable for designing return-support programmes that focus on agricultural revitalisation, vocational training, and microenterprise development to ensure that returning refugees are equipped with the tools and resources necessary to successfully reintegrate and sustain their livelihoods.

Figure 28: Areas of starting own business



Reasons for seeking TVET and corresponding barriers

The surveyed refugees were asked about their motivations for enrolling in technical and vocational education and training (TVET), with the responses summarised in Figure 29 below. The primary reasons include the desire to increase income, secure employment, and expand professional networks.

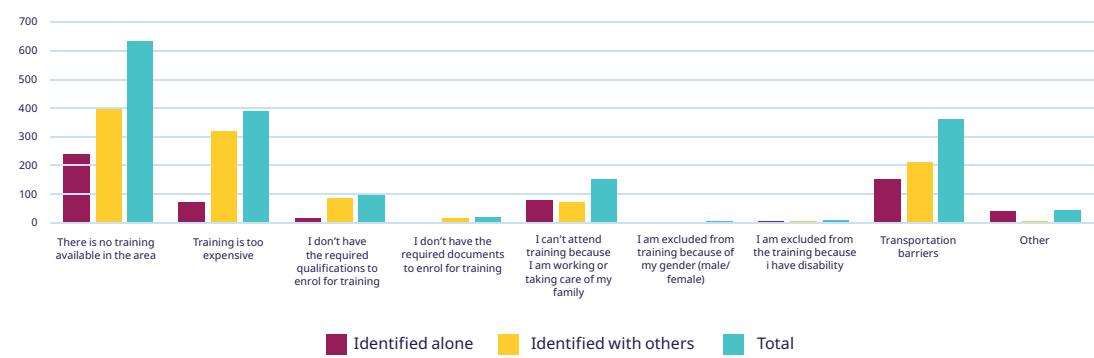
These responses reflect a clear recognition among refugees of the practical value of TVET in enhancing economic opportunities and employability. The emphasis on income generation and job acquisition highlights the role of vocational training as a strategic pathway toward financial independence, while the importance placed on networking underscores the need for social capital in navigating the labour market.

Figure 29: Reasons for joining TVET programmes



In addition, the surveyed refugees identified several key barriers preventing them from accessing TVET programmes. As shown in Figure 30 below, the most reported obstacles include the unavailability of training programmes in their area, high training fees, and transportation challenges. Those who selected “other” cited factors such as health conditions, commuting costs, legal or residency restrictions, and childcare responsibilities. These findings highlight the importance of designing TVET initiatives that are not only relevant and accessible but also responsive to the broader social and logistical challenges facing refugee communities.

Figure 30: Barriers to accessing TVET programmes



► Recommendations for action

Conclusions

Based on the survey results, this report reveals a Syrian refugee group that is highly motivated to work and build sustainable livelihoods, yet faces multiple, interlinked constraints. These include limited access to training opportunities, structural and social barriers, and a persistent mismatch between existing skills and available labour market demands. To address these gaps effectively, the following key findings offer a foundation for developing targeted, action-oriented programming recommendations. Below are the major findings of the report:

- A critical challenge lies in skills awareness. Approximately 68 per cent of refugees were unable to identify their own skill gaps, largely due to limited access to career guidance and self-assessment tools. Among those who did identify gaps, the most common areas were business skills, job-specific technical competencies, and digital literacy. These findings point to the urgent need for an integrated approach that combines career counselling, foundational skill-building including literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, and sector-specific upskilling in areas like agriculture, tailoring, construction, and retail, where many refugees have either expressed interest or held prior experience.
- Education and technical training are also notably scarce. While 9.8 per cent of refugees reported no formal education, an overwhelming 82 per cent had never accessed any form of technical and vocational education and training (TVET). This lack of foundational and practical education severely restricts their return and undermines efforts to promote sustainable livelihoods. However, there is strong demand: 78 per cent of surveyed refugees expressed a willingness to enrol in TVET programmes. Future programming must therefore prioritise expanding access to inclusive, relevant, and accredited TVET and literacy programmes, with a focus on practical skills that align with current and future labour market needs.
- Despite this high demand, regression analysis revealed that participation in TVET was not significantly associated with better employment outcomes. This counterintuitive finding highlights that current training programmes may not be effectively aligned with labour market realities. Broader systemic barriers including legal restrictions, gender norms, and limited job absorption capacity, may also be diminishing the effectiveness of such training. Future TVET programmes must be demand driven, developed with employers, and include clear post-training pathways to ensure real impact.
- Employment among surveyed Syrian refugees remains very low. Only 28.6 per cent of the participants were currently employed, mostly in short-term, informal jobs without contracts, primarily in low-skilled sectors including agriculture, construction, cleaning, tailoring, and food services. These trends highlight the vulnerability of refugee employment and the absence of decent work conditions. Therefore, programming must go beyond training provision to include job-matching services, legal assistance for contract-based employment, and formalisation of work arrangements, particularly in sectors with high refugee participation.
- Another gap is in practical, hands-on learning and entrepreneurial support. Only 7.2 per cent of respondents had participated in an apprenticeship, and the vast majority had not received entrepreneurship training, despite showing strong interest in self-employment. Many have identified farming, tailoring, shopkeeping, and hairdressing as viable livelihood paths. To support this, programming should scale up structured apprenticeships (on-the-job training), business development services, microfinance access, and mentorship, especially for returnees who intend to start or rebuild livelihoods in Syria.

- ▶ Return intentions among refugees are closely linked to skills and economic prospects. Regression findings indicate that age, sex, education level, and participation in TVET significantly influence the decision to return. Refugees with better skills and training are more likely to return, especially when confident in their ability to reintegrate into Syria's labour market. However, among the 124 respondents expressing an intention to return, only 26 were actively looking for jobs in Syria, underscoring that return is largely contingent on employment availability. Therefore, programming must support job creation in Syria, reintegration-focused training, and cross-border job referrals, particularly in agriculture and trades where many returnees seek to re-engage.
- ▶ Accessing employment is also constrained by informational and logistical barriers. Many Syrian refugees reported difficulty finding job opportunities, limited professional networks, and low wages as major obstacles. Programmes must therefore invest in labour market information systems, employment counselling, and practical solutions that reduce transportation and legal barriers.
- ▶ Finally, gender dynamics remain a substantial barrier to economic inclusion. Female refugees remain severely underrepresented in employment, and many may require approval from a spouse or other family member to work or attend training. Commonly highlighted barriers include childcare responsibilities, safety concerns, and restrictive gender norms. To improve women's access to economic opportunities, programming should incorporate on-site childcare services, gender-sensitive outreach, safe transportation options, community awareness campaigns, and targeted support for women-led businesses.

Programming recommendations

Based on the detailed findings from the report, the following action-oriented programming recommendations are proposed for the three distinct groups of Syrian refugees in Lebanon:

- ▶ 1. Refugees who express a desire to return.
- ▶ 2. Refugees who do not wish to return.
- ▶ 3. Refugees who chose not to disclose their intentions.

These recommendations are tailored to each group's specific profiles, employment barriers, skill gaps, and aspirations, while addressing overarching constraints including sex, lack of formal work, and limited access to training.

Refugees who express a desire to return

It is important to note that the subgroups of the Syrian refugees share similar profiling and needs characteristics; therefore, the recommendations below apply to all.

- ▶ **Skills preparation:** Deliver short-cycle foundational training in literacy, numeracy, and digital skills to support refugees in reaching at least an intermediate competency level. Complement this with market-relevant vocational training aligned with economic demand in Syria, mainly in agriculture, livestock, tailoring, mechanics, manufacturing, carpentry, and small-scale retail. Training content should reflect the expected needs of rural and semi-urban areas where many returnees are likely to resettle.
- ▶ **Apprenticeship pathways pre- and post-return:** Develop structured on-the-job training programmes in Lebanon with components that can be replicated or continued after return. This approach is essential to provide practical experience that improves the likelihood of securing employment in Syria.
- ▶ **Entrepreneurship and business start-up support:** Offer business incubation, microfinance access, and tailored coaching for returnees interested in self-employment, especially in agriculture, farming, shopkeeping, and trades. Additional sectors may be considered based on clearer insights into the evolving Syrian economic context.
- ▶ **Cross-border job matching and referrals:** Establish referral systems linking job-ready returnees with employers and economic projects inside Syria, potentially in collaboration with local actors and ILO Syria.
- ▶ **Reintegration planning sessions:** Provide individualised support plans combining career counselling, skill certification, and information on reintegration, to reduce uncertainty and improve preparedness.

Refugees who do not wish to return

For this group of refugees, the programming recommendations include:

- ▶ **Skills preparations and inclusive, demand driven TVET:** Deliver short-cycle foundational training in literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, aiming to equip refugees with competencies at least at an intermediate level. Expand TVET offerings according to Lebanese labour market needs in sectors such as agriculture, food services, construction, caregiving, tailoring, and solar installation. Ensure training is modular, flexible, and accessible, particularly to women and youth.
- ▶ **Link training to employment:** Integrate job-placement services, internships, and partnerships with employers into training programmes to support the transition from learning to work. This can include designing paid on-the-job training that links refugees to employers who may later offer formal employment.
- ▶ **Legal support:** Provide legal and administrative assistance to help refugees transition from informal work to contract-based and protected employment where feasible.
- ▶ **Business and financial literacy:** Deliver integrated training in entrepreneurship, and financial management to help households diversify income sources and strengthen economic resilience.
- ▶ **Women's Economic Empowerment:** Establish on-site childcare services, promote female-led businesses, and conduct community sensitisation to challenge restrictive gender norms.

Refugees who chose not to disclose their intentions

For this group of refugees, the programming recommendations include:

- ▶ Foundational skills and career guidance: Prioritise basic literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, especially for individuals with low educational attainment or unclear career direction. Pair with career counselling to help participants identify suitable pathways.
- ▶ Flexible TVET programmes with portable skills: Provide short-term, multi-sector training that develops portable skills such as tailoring, mobile phone repair, and basic health services—skills that can be used in both host and origin countries.
- ▶ Promote apprenticeships and mentorships: Introduce flexible apprenticeship models that allow undecided individuals to gain workplace experience, develop confidence, and improve employability without requiring long-term commitment.
- ▶ Build social capital and job search skills: Offer networking support, job-seeking workshops, and digital employment tools, particularly for individuals disconnected from community or professional networks.

Monitor and reassess intentions regularly: Develop mechanisms to track shifts in return intentions and adjust programming accordingly, enabling participants to move between reintegration-focused and local integration support.

Cross-cutting recommendations

The following cross-cutting recommendations should be applied across all three groups:

- ▶ Gender-sensitive design for programmes: Address mobility, childcare, and safety concerns for female participants.
- ▶ Inclusive access: Ensure participation of youth, older adults, and persons with disabilities through tailored accommodations.
- ▶ Barrier reduction: Subsidise transportation, training fees, and provide legal assistance to alleviate key constraints.

Data-driven market alignment: Link all programmes to updated labour market assessments in both Lebanon and Syria.



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