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**IMPROVED ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEBANESE
AND REFUGEE GRADUATES FROM SKILLS TRAINING PROJECT
TRACER STUDY OF GRADUATES**

AICS-SUPPORTED SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMMES

March 2022

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ABBREVIATIONS

AICS	Agenzia Italiana Cooperazione allo Sviluppo
ARCS	Arci Cultura e Sviluppo
ASTP	Accelerated Skills Training Programmes
AVSI	Association of Volunteers in International Service
COSV	Coordinamento delle Organizzazioni per il Servizio Volontario
GVC	Gruppo Di Volontariato Civile
ICU	Istituto per la Cooperazione Universitaria
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
KII	Key Informant Interview
LBP	Lebanese Pound
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
Tdh	Terre des hommes
USD	United States Dollar



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) supported the implementation of a one-year programme to improve access to employment opportunities for Lebanese and refugee graduates. The accelerated skills training programmes (ASTP) consisted of theoretical and practical courses and periods of paid internship within private companies, cooperatives and local public institutions. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) provided support to programme stakeholders through capacity building and guidance on non-formal market-based skills training. A total of 1,436 vulnerable persons living in Lebanon received a certificate after completing the training and internship.

Two years later, this tracer study aims at assessing the outcomes of the vocational training programme in terms of graduates' appreciation of the training, employment and income trajectories, relevance between skills learned and jobs obtained, and, more generally, the enabling and disabling factors to participation in the labour market among the population of graduates.

The multi-faceted crisis that Lebanon is currently experiencing (financial crisis, anti-government protest movement, the Beirut Port explosion in August 2020 and its repercussions, and the Covid-19 pandemic) makes the context exceptional. The results of the programme in terms of employment should be read bearing this context in mind.

METHODS

The main component of this tracer study was a phone survey with 500 graduates selected using proportional representation of gender, nationalities, and implementing partner INGOs. The quantitative study was complemented by qualitative interviews with employers and individuals who have not completed the training programme (drop-outs).

MAIN FINDINGS

The graduates of AICS-funded VT programme surveyed had a **very favourable view of the training courses**, especially in terms of personal development. However, as confirmed by the transition from training to work and current employment status, **the usefulness of the training in finding a job was perceived as more limited**. The multiple crises experienced by Lebanon (financial, political, sanitary) have had a tremendous impact on this population of graduates. However, these crises are not the only factors explaining the **dire employability issues** faced by the target group.

Training-to-work transition

Over half (54.9%) of all respondents did not work from the time of training (2018, i.e., before these crises) until the time the survey was conducted (end of 2020). **The constraints from the labour market side** help explain this number (few jobs available, at low wages, in distant places, etc.), but **personal reasons are also important**, especially among female graduates (marriage, pregnancy, etc.). In fact, while nearly half of the graduates (48.4%) did not look for a job after graduation, significantly more male graduates reported looking for employment.

Among the respondents who worked in the years following the training, about half **(51% - who may or may not still be employed, and may or may not have changed jobs since that time) worked in the same field as the training course they followed**. Younger beneficiaries are less likely to work in their field of training. These findings further confirm the need for career guidance and counselling services. Graduates from fields such as food services, agriculture, and beauty tended to find work in their areas of expertise, while in other fields, such as sales and health, graduates faced much more difficulty.

Current employment status

After looking at what trainees have done since they graduated from the training programme in 2018, the study goes deeper into analysing their status at the time of the survey (2020) to get some understanding of the employment market in Lebanon today, barriers to work, and the state of mind of this population group.

Nearly three-quarters (73.4%) of the graduates interviewed had not worked in the week preceding the interview, with a much higher proportion of female graduates not working, but no difference between Lebanese and Syrian respondents. Among the graduates who did not work for pay/profit at least one hour in the week preceding the interview, 62.9% were available for work but only 51% were actively seeking work. This finding can be inferred from various other questions, because of perceived non-attractiveness of the labour market in terms of wages, opportunities in their specialty, distance, etc. Among graduates who are not actively looking for work or not available, the main reasons were family-related; this could explain the high proportion of female respondents not seeking work, but there are also reasons linked to the situation of the labour market itself.

Those who worked the week preceding the interview reported being **mostly short-term/casual employees**, confirming the highly unstable nature of the Lebanese labour market. Most (44%) work for individual persons rather than companies. Female graduates work more in permanent positions, which probably relates to the fact that more men are employed in sectors that rely more on temporary work. Disaggregation per nationality shows that there are more Syrian graduates in short-term or casual positions. Among graduates who are employed, the vast majority (87%) did not have a written contract, a very common reality and practice in Lebanon that can lead to abuses and denial of labour rights. The median monthly income value was LBP 600,000, bearing in mind that Lebanese law sets the minimum wage at LBP 675,000 (prior currency devaluation) and almost no graduates received any work benefits other than their direct wage.

Among 26.6% of graduates who were working at the time of the interview, only about half (53%) did so in a job related to the training they took in 2018. In most cases (67.7%), it was because **working graduates not employed in their field of training had not found an appropriate job in this specific field**. Graduates who were working at the time of the survey reported using the skills they acquired during the vocational training to a limited extent, and 41% of the working graduates declared not using the skills acquired at all; this calls for improvement in training design as competency-based.

Key characteristics

Some key findings emerged from the study in terms of gender: the proportion of **women who did not work since the end of the training** was much higher than men, so was the proportion of women who did not work for pay/profit in the week preceding the interview. In addition, from the survey results, it appears that women were not seeking work as actively as men. From a nationality perspective, there was **no significant difference between Syrians and Lebanese in the proportion of those who worked since 2018**. Likewise, the proportion of Lebanese and Syrian respondents who worked the week preceding the survey is similar. However, **Syrian graduates were found more in short-term or casual positions**.

The table below details some key findings of each section of the report:

<p>General information on the sample</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Beneficiaries belong to the poorest groups in Lebanon, with a median family income of 800,000 LBP per month. → The main specialties followed during the training were in construction, agriculture and beauty. Construction training was mostly attended by men and beauty-related training mostly by women, while agriculture attracted both. Syrian beneficiaries tended to favour the agriculture and beauty sectors, in line with what is usually observed in Lebanon.
<p>Evaluation of the training programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Graduates had a very favourable view of the quality of the training courses, especially in terms of personal development. → Satisfaction with the training, however, slightly differed depending on training providers, with some rated higher than others by the trainees. → The direct usefulness of the training in finding a job was perceived as more limited, with graduates rating this aspect at 3.1 on a scale from 1 to 5. → Very few students dropped out or considered doing so, and it was mainly for personal reasons rather than dissatisfaction with the courses.
<p>Transition to Employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → About half of the graduates (48.4%) did not search for a job after the training programme. The constraints from the labour market side were strong (few available jobs, low wages, in distant places, etc.), but personal reasons were also important, especially among female graduates (marriage, pregnancy, etc.). → Job search followed a hybrid pattern where both informal methods (connections, family, etc.) and formal methods (applications, job ads, etc.) played a role. → Over half (54.9 %) of the graduates did not work from the time of training (2018) until the time of the survey (end of 2020).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Among those who worked following the training programme, the majority had temporary rather than permanent jobs. Around half (51%) of the graduates who worked did so in a field related to the training course. → According to the graduates' own assessment, there is moderate (49%) interest from employers in their vocational training degrees. → For most of these graduates, work migration is a desire, but not a concrete option.
<p>Current status and conditions of employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Nearly three-quarters (73.4%) of graduates interviewed had not worked in the week preceding the interview. → Men were more often in temporary jobs, while women were more often in permanent jobs. → Most graduates who worked did not have a written contract. Many worked for individuals rather than for companies, especially men, both Lebanese and Syrian (but more common among Syrians).
<p>Current status and conditions of employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → A significant proportion (11%) of the graduates had certain disabilities, which, for a significant number, created obstacles, especially with finding a job in their field of study. → The various crises experienced by Lebanon had a serious impact on the graduates of this training programme, reducing their chances for work, and for those who worked, the amount of work and income. Male respondents and Syrians were more severely impacted. → The programme was implemented by several layers of partners, which sometimes led to loss of information or control by the INGO over the activities. → Implementing organisations found ILO training on labour laws and regulations in Lebanon useful because of its practicality, and they presented what they have learned to SMEs and trainees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

<p>For VT programmes design</p>	<p>Any future planning for skills training should take into consideration the strategic objectives set in the National Strategic Framework for Technical Vocational Education and Training in Lebanon 2018–2022 for successful delivery and meaningful impact.</p> <p>VT programmes should allow time for thorough and locally held market assessments so that training is designed in response to labour market demand and identified job opportunities.</p> <p>Enhance compatibility of VT certificates with the Lebanese education system, so that trainees can then integrate longer education pathways.</p>
<p>VT programmes' organisational set-up</p>	<p>Opportunities raised by the partnership between Lebanese training providers and International NGOs could be strengthened, with INGOs advocating before employers, and designing tailor-made training for business improvements. INGOs should work on empowering their local partners to better manage and monitor training projects, develop stronger counselling systems and support graduates after the training. The expertise of local training providers and their knowledge of the local context should be summarised to donors by the INGOs. In the division of tasks between INGOs and local training providers, INGOs could also play innovative roles by, for example, bringing successful curricula from other implementing countries, fostering relations between graduates and employers in different regions (when this is beyond the reach of local training providers), or even, when relevant, by supporting work migration. They could also focus on reinforcing M&E, data management and survey tools at local training providers.</p> <p>Monitoring and follow-up systems could be enhanced. Training programmes must document their assessment of beneficiaries' motivation. A tracking system should be implemented within the programme/training providers to regularly track changes of status, especially in terms of employment after the training, and allow for real-time adjustments.</p>
<p>Participants' selection</p>	<p>Pre-selection of trainees should follow specific processes to ensure that interest and need for the training are aligned.</p>
<p>Vocational training delivery</p>	<p>Interventions should look into ways of incentivizing motivation and minimising discouragement. Training should also be accompanied by counselling services during the course and post-training support services to assist graduates in finding suitable jobs.</p> <p>Vocational training programmes should be seen as contributing to work improvements and conditions for workers. Planning should take into consideration the availability of workers to take on training (offering evening classes or one day training per week), so they can benefit from these opportunities.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

	<p>Similarly, VT should be seen as contributing to business improvement and thus training providers could display to employers that releasing workers for training has added value and return on investment.</p> <p>For further alignment to work requirements, VT providers may consider customised training programmes for employees/workers and/or paid internship opportunities as incentive schemes to encourage employers in life-long learning opportunities for the existing workforce as well as internship opportunities for new beneficiaries.</p> <p>Likewise, programmes could enhance compatibility with family obligations, especially for women. This includes ensuring that efforts to encourage women to participate in the workforce (including education and training) are well designed so they can overcome the existing barriers women face, as well as provide flexibility to accommodate different needs. It is also necessary to make sure efforts are effectively positioned to address questions of status for all trainees and to challenge social perceptions. These efforts need to be properly targeted to specific contexts and groups.</p> <p>Implementing partners could think about how to improve exposure to work in their programmes. In addition to internship and on-the-job training, other options could be considered such as orientation sessions from experts in related field of studies, study visits to work sites, job shadowing.</p> <p>For successful internships, a training plan stipulating specific competence and learning outcomes should be agreed upon in advance with the employer.</p>
<p>After the courses</p>	<p>Training programme duration should take into account post-training impact assessment and post-training support services such as employment counselling, job matching and placement, and business development support.</p> <p>Training programmes could include more coaching to empower students in deconstructing preconceived ideas about the labour market and guidance on how to search for a job. Post-training support should include job search support services, referrals to job search platforms, and networking with a placement bureau.</p> <p>Though gender equality seems to be respected during the training and within the different sectors, additional resources should be allocated to supporting women's economic participation.</p> <p>Training programmes should include awareness raising towards trainees, and potentially towards employers, on employees' rights and what decent work means.</p>

	<p>Additional support should be granted to trainees with disabilities, especially in finding a job related to their field of study.</p>
Future studies	<p>Specific indicators addressing informality and seasonal work, well-suited to the reality of employment in Lebanon, should be developed and added to guidelines of tracer studies in economies where informality is common.</p> <p>Further labour market research would need to be done on specialties that graduates would not unanimously choose again, to assess needs for curriculum improvement, and/or reorientation towards other specialties.</p> <p>Other potential future research could address the opportunities for working abroad for VT graduates in Lebanon. Research into potential employment counselling and guidance support for accessing regional markets, further research to understand regional market demand for VT graduates, and market research for potential entrepreneurship opportunities should be explored.</p>



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND



In 2018, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) supported the implementation of a one-year programme to improve access to employment opportunities for Lebanese and refugee graduates. AICS selected six Italian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to implement skills training activities through a network of Lebanese partners. The intervention took into account, through labour market analysis, skills requirements for selecting the training sector and to ensure employment outcome of the training.

The accelerated skills training programmes (ASTP) consisted of theoretical and practical courses and periods of paid internships within private companies, cooperatives, and local public institutions. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) provided support to programme stakeholders through capacity building and guidance on non-formal market-based skills training.

A total of 1,436 vulnerable persons living in Lebanon received a certificate after completing the training and internship. The duration of technical training ranged between 30 and 80 hours and was delivered by local training centres. After this, trainees completed a paid internship at companies, cooperatives or municipalities identified by the project.

Two years after the ASTP, this tracer study was conducted to assess the employment outcomes of this programme. This study aims to:

- Review the employment outcomes of graduates from the programme.
- Assess the extent that graduates found employment where they could apply the skills acquired through their training.

Beyond the impact assessment of this past programme, the results of this tracer study will support ILO and AICS in improving their ongoing and future programming for training and access to employment in Lebanon.

This tracer study also pays attention to:

- The social and economic barriers graduates face – especially women, persons with disabilities, and refugees – in securing employment.
- Working conditions from a decent work¹ perspective.
- Market relevance of the skills training.

This tracer study is part of ILO's larger initiative to collect evidence on its actions in Lebanon. Therefore, the questionnaire used here is based on questionnaires from previous studies², as well as on the ILO, ETF (European Training Foundation), and Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) guide on conducting tracer studies in order to facilitate aggregation.

As mentioned, the multi-faceted crisis that Lebanon is currently experiencing (financial crisis, anti-government protest movement, the Beirut Port explosion in August 2020 and its repercussions, the Covid-19 pandemic) makes the context exceptional. The results of the programme in terms of employment should be read considering this context.

¹ Using ILO's definition for decent work: "decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men." <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>

² Upgrading the technical agriculture education system in Lebanon project, The Consultation and Research Institute, August 2020; and Tracer Study for UNICEF's programme on Competency-based and Vocational Skills Training for Adolescents and Youth, November 2019.



METHODOLOGY



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The whole database of graduates (1,436 contacts) was updated through phone checks. Complete phone interviews were then conducted with 500 graduates.
- Representativeness was achieved through a large sample (over one third of total population), proportional quotas, and randomisation. The sample was determined using proportional representation of gender, nationalities, and implementing partner Italian NGOs. The proportional quotas by gender and nationality were achieved. Quotas by Italian NGOs were nearly achieved (some limitations due to non-answers on the phone).
- This survey on graduates was complemented by a few qualitative interviews with drop-outs and employers.
- Beneficiaries belong to the poorest groups in Lebanon, with a median family income of 800,000 LBP per month.
- The main specialties followed during the training were in construction, agriculture, and beauty. Construction training was mostly attended by male graduates and beauty mostly by female graduates, while agriculture attracted both. Syrian beneficiaries tended to favour the agriculture and beauty sectors, which correspond to sectors in which the Syrian workforce is known to work in.

2.1. Inception Phase

Following a kick-off meeting with ILO, a desk review of projects, documents and reports on the labour market in Lebanon was conducted. A set of key informant interviews (KIIs) were carried out with the representatives from six Italian NGOs implementing the project and with an AICS representative.

A questionnaire was developed in line with the European Training Foundation, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, and ILO guidelines³. Questions were formulated to answer the objectives of the tracer study, taking into account the lessons learned from previous tracer studies conducted by ILO.

Due to the Covid19 lockdown and in agreement with ILO, the questionnaire was adapted to phone interviews.

2.2. PHONE SURVEY AND INTERVIEWS

2.2.1. SURVEY

All the contact details of the training graduates received through implementing partners' databases were called to confirm the identity and contact details of beneficiaries.

ILO determined a sample size of 500 beneficiaries for the phone survey. The sample's quota was set using proportional representation of gender, nationalities and the

³ Carrying out tracer studies: Guide to anticipating and matching skills and jobs, Volume 6, available on: https://www.ilo.org/skills/areas/skills-training-for-pover-ty-reduction/WCMS_534331/lang--en/index.htm

implementing partner Italian NGOs. It was decided to limit the survey to Syrian and Lebanese graduates, who represented most of the beneficiaries.⁴

The table below summarises the number of beneficiaries from the AICS programme, the sample targets and the numbers achieved through the phone survey.

Table 1: Summary of beneficiaries, targets and achieved respondents to the survey

	Lebanese								Syrians							
	Female				Male				Female				Male			
	B	T	C	(C/B)	B	T	C	(C/B)	B	T	C	(C/B)	B	T	C	(C/B)
ARCS	126	45	44	35%	125	44	49	39%	61	22	22	36%	88	31	30	34%
AVSI Oxfam	110	39	42	38%	104	37	39	38%	66	23	24	36%	25	9	10	40%
COSV	62	22	26	42%	81	29	26	32%	18	6	5	28%	40	14	12	30%
CVC	120	42	44	37%	71	25	26	37%	52	18	20	38%	17	6	6	35%
ICU	12	4	4	33%	12	4	4	33%	5	2	2	40%	5	2	3	60%
TdH	126	45	47	37%	34	12	12	35%	31	11	12	39%	24	8	12	50%
TOTAL	556	197	207	37%	427	151	156	37%	233	82	85	36%	199	70	73	37%

B: number of beneficiaries

T: target

C: completed

?: percentage of completed to number of beneficiaries

The data collected by the enumerators was checked on a periodic basis. This allowed for the identification of duplicates (one respondent called twice), typos, and ambiguous answers that the enumerators clarified. Data exported from survey-CTO software was then analysed using the statistics software SPSS.

The large sample size on a limited total population of graduates (500 surveyed on a total of 1,415), achieved a high representation (**overall margin of error of 3%⁵**). Furthermore, the proportional quotas and randomisation allowed for **good representativeness by gender and nationality**.

Throughout the report, the data is mostly presented by gender and by nationality, which are the most important breakdowns, while analysis by Italian NGO is less important since the NGOs did not implement the training themselves.

2.2.2. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

During the inception phase, phone interviews were conducted with representatives from the six Italian NGOs implementing the programme for AICS. They were asked questions on the project, the support they provided to the Lebanese training providers, the follow up of trainees during and after graduation, the involvement of ILO, and, more generally, their lessons learned on vocational training in Lebanon.

While conducting the survey, additional key informants were asked qualitative questions over the phone:

⁴ Graduates from the AICS training programme also included: three Egyptian beneficiaries, one Jordanian, one Moroccan and 15 Palestinian, as well as one marked as "Other".

⁵ The margin of error expresses the amount of random sampling error in the results of a survey. The larger the margin of error, the less confidence one should have that the result would reflect the result of a survey of the entire population. It is generally considered that 5% and below constitute an acceptable margin of error for surveys.

- Four drop-out trainees, two Lebanese (male) and two Syrians (one female, one male): In addition to questions similar to the ones from the survey (reasons for study, satisfaction, employment status, etc.) they were asked to explain why they left the programme.
- Five businesses that hosted students from the programme for internships: The business was asked to assess the skills of the trainees, the possible challenges they had faced, if the internship had led to employment, and their perception of vocational training in Lebanon in general.

2.3. GENERAL STATISTICS ON THE SAMPLE

Both the gender and the nationality distribution in the sample strictly follows the structure of the total population of graduates, since these variables were used to determine the quotas:

Figure 1: Gender distribution

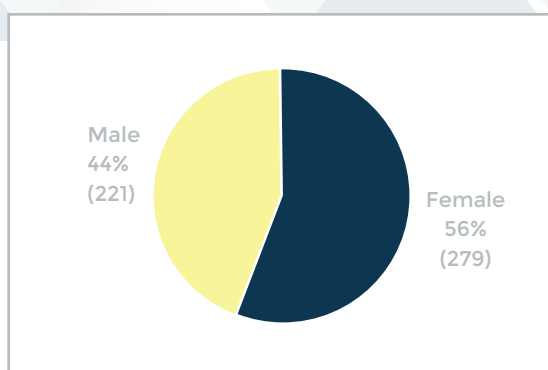
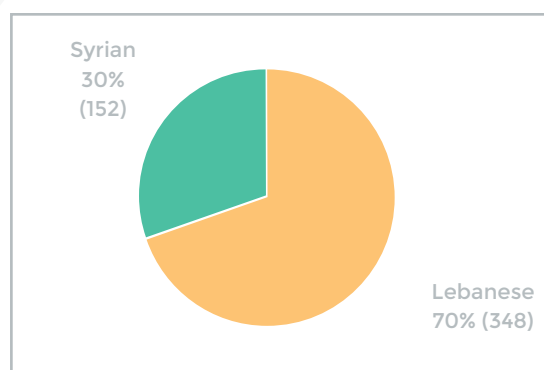


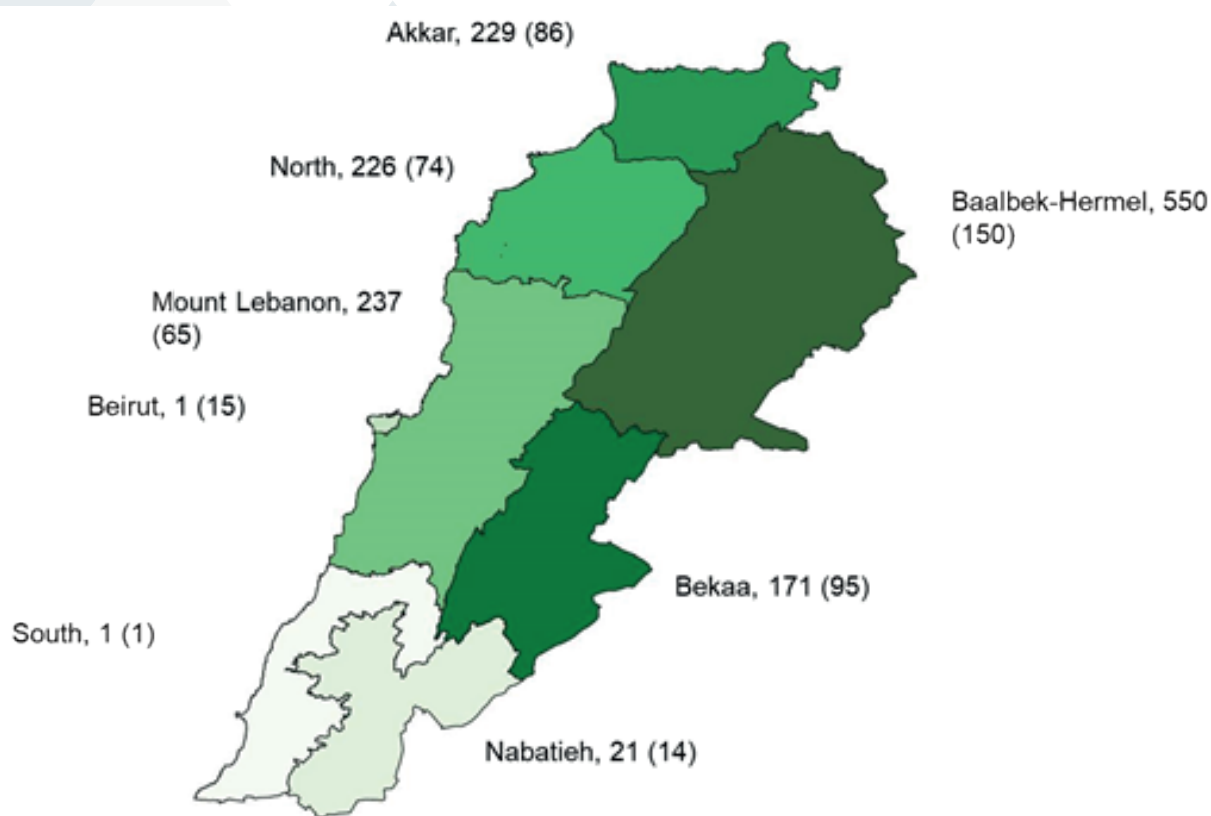
Figure 2: Nationality distribution



The average **age of graduates** was 24 (median age 21). Most were young adults (58% between 18 and 34), but beneficiaries under 18 (29%) and above 35 (13%) were also represented. The latter was presented by Italian NGOs as a deliberate strategy: there was a high demand from the older population groups for training, and these individuals were more willing to learn and complete the programme. Women, for instance, have less duties at home as their children grow up. Younger people also tend to favour non-qualified, daily jobs that bring income more quickly in the short term, while adults are looking for stability.

AICS training programme was implemented in several governorates, each INGO presenting the rationale for their geography of intervention in their project proposal. **Governorates of residency** were not retained as a quota-defining variable. As a result, the sample of respondents is not proportional to the full population group when disaggregated by location. It should be noted that some respondents may have changed places of residence between the training and the time of survey. For example, while only one participant to the training programme was from Beirut, at the date of the survey 15 respondents resided in Beirut.

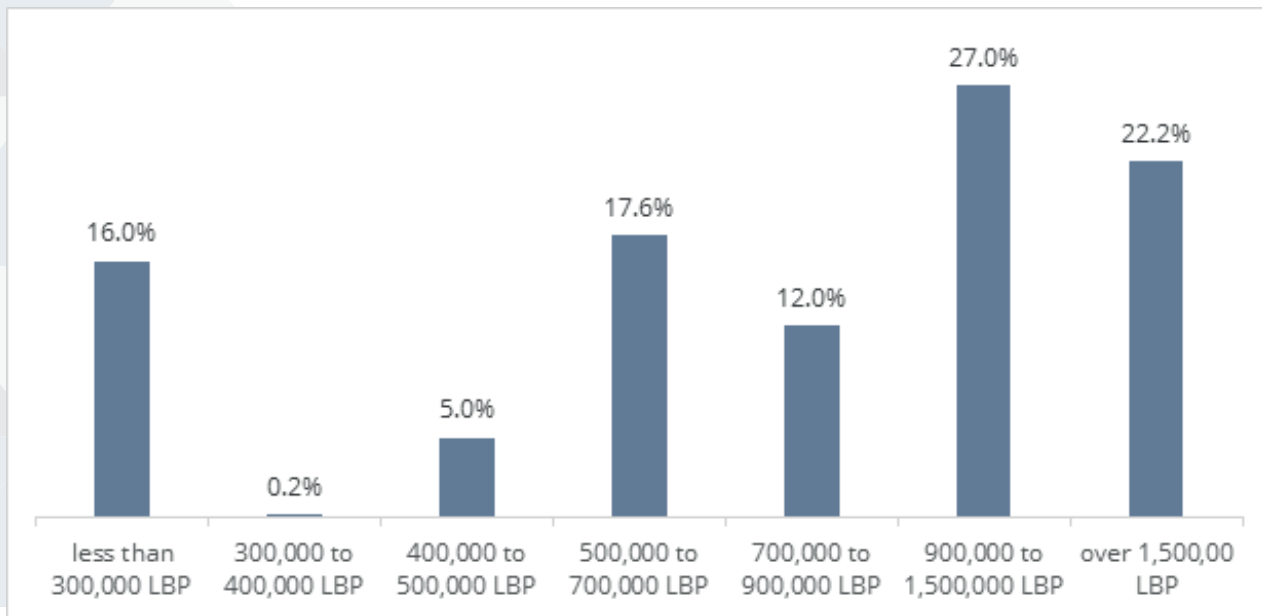
Figure 3: Number of graduates by governorate – Total and sample



The numbers in brackets correspond to the sample. Sample size higher than number of graduates means graduates have moved since the time of the training programme.

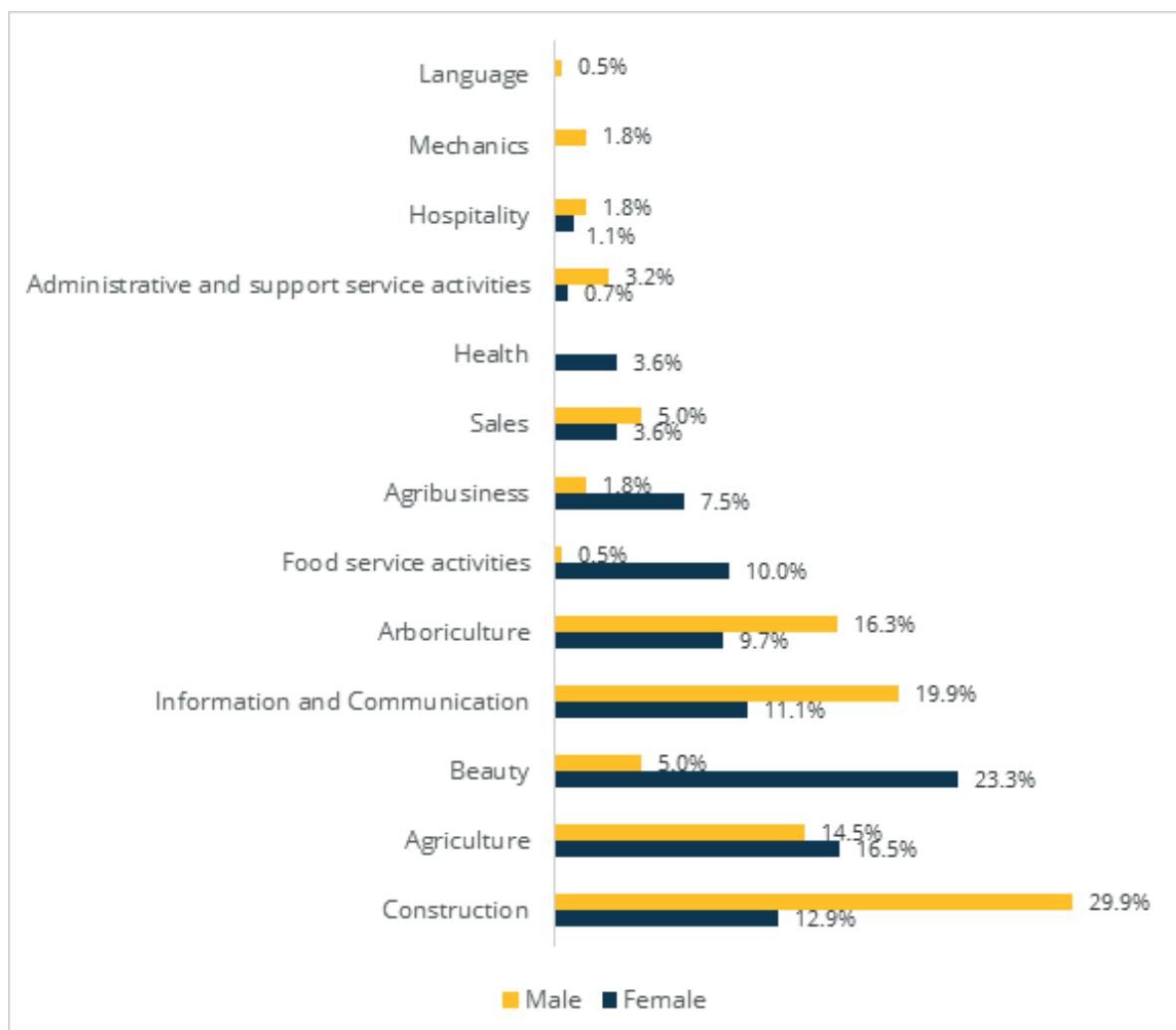
The total household income (derived purely from work) averaged at around 1.3m LBP (equivalent to around 160 USD at the rate of 1 USD = 8,000 LBP, the prevailing approximate rate on the informal exchange market at the time of the study, the only one accessible to the general population). The median value was only 800,000 LBP (equivalent to around 100 USD). This tracer study hence confirms that the TVET programme was focused on vulnerable groups, at least in terms of income.

Figure 4: Household income groups



The training courses the graduates enrolled in displayed a concentration on construction, agriculture, beauty and the information and communication sectors.

Figure 5: Training course sector enrolled in by the sample - Gender

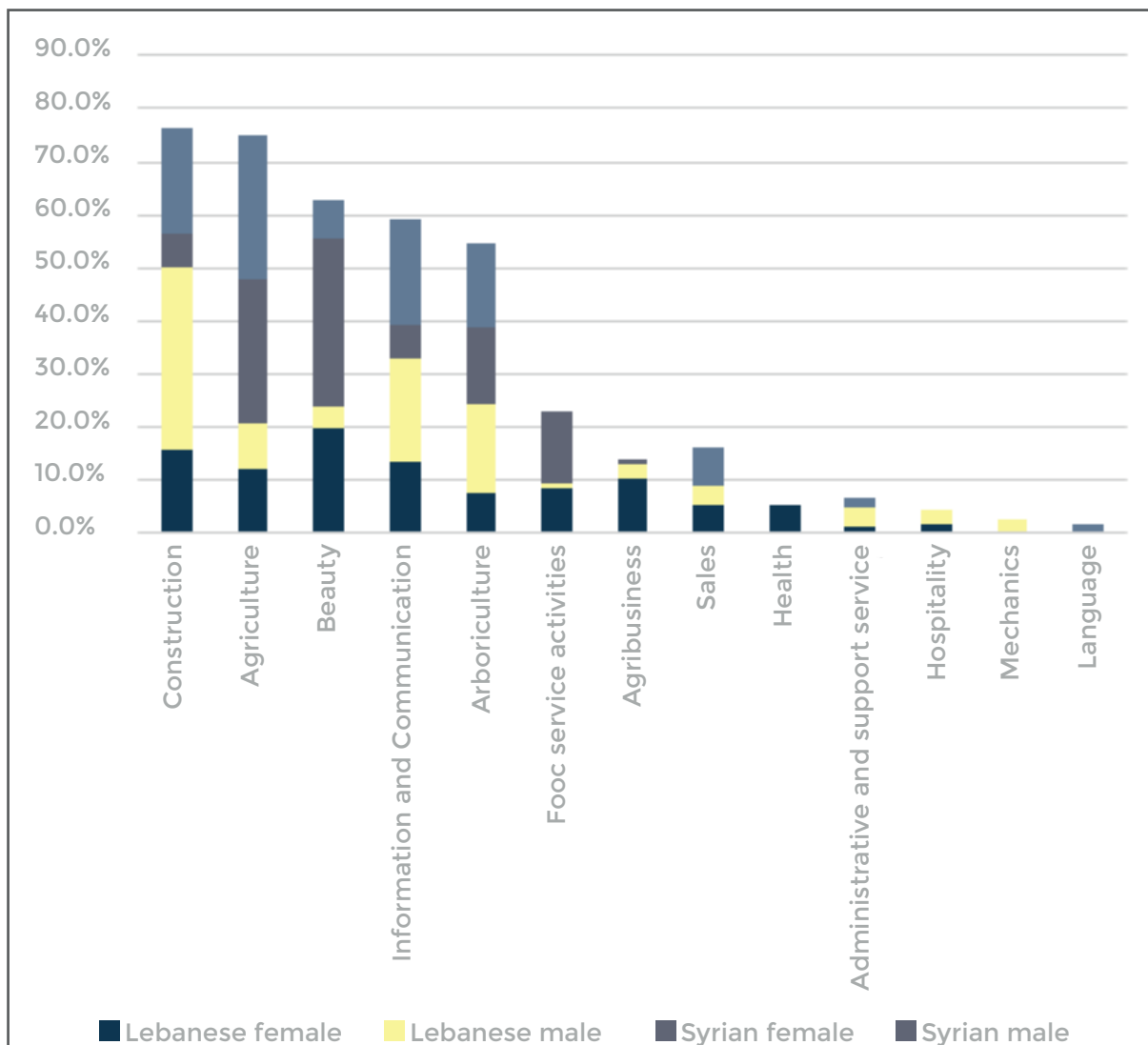


- Construction training was mostly attended by men (29.9%), though women were not completely absent from this field (12.9%).
- Beauty was mostly attended by women (23.3%).
- Agriculture attracted both men (14.5%) and women (16.5%).
- Information and communication was male-dominated (19.9%), though there is, most probably, room to increase the proportion of women (11.1%).

There were strong differences by age groups. Agribusiness training attracted much older beneficiaries than other fields (and nearly all Lebanese), and construction attracted mainly middle-aged adults (25 to 54); on the other hand, beauty attracted mainly younger beneficiaries, and IT even more so. Syrian beneficiaries tended to favour the agriculture (20.0%) and beauty (20.4%) sectors, which correspond to sectors in which the Syrian workforce is known to heavily participate in. An assessment conducted by ILO in 2013 found that agricultural activities and domestic/personal services provided most of the employment for Syrian refugee workers, followed by construction.⁶ Lebanese graduates enrolled mostly in construction courses (23.9%), followed by information and communication courses (16.1%).

The following graph presents a combination of gender and nationality:

Figure 6: Training course - By gender and nationality



⁶Assessment of the impact of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and their employment profile, 2013, International Labour Organisation Regional Office for the Arab States.



EVALUATION OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMME



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Graduates had a very favourable view of the quality of the training courses, especially in terms of personal development.
- Satisfaction with the training, however, slightly differed depending on training providers, with some rated higher than others by the trainees.
- The direct usefulness of the training in finding a job was perceived as more limited, with graduates rating this aspect at 3.1 on a scale of 1 to 5.
- Very few students considered dropping out, and it was mainly for personal reasons rather than dissatisfaction with the courses.

3.1. STUDIES AND WORK EXPERIENCE OF THE TRAINEES

3.1.1. PREVIOUS TRAINING RECEIVED

Most of the graduates (around 85%, with no significant difference by gender or nationality) had never participated in a vocational training programme, which underlines the additional opportunity that this AICS programme represented.

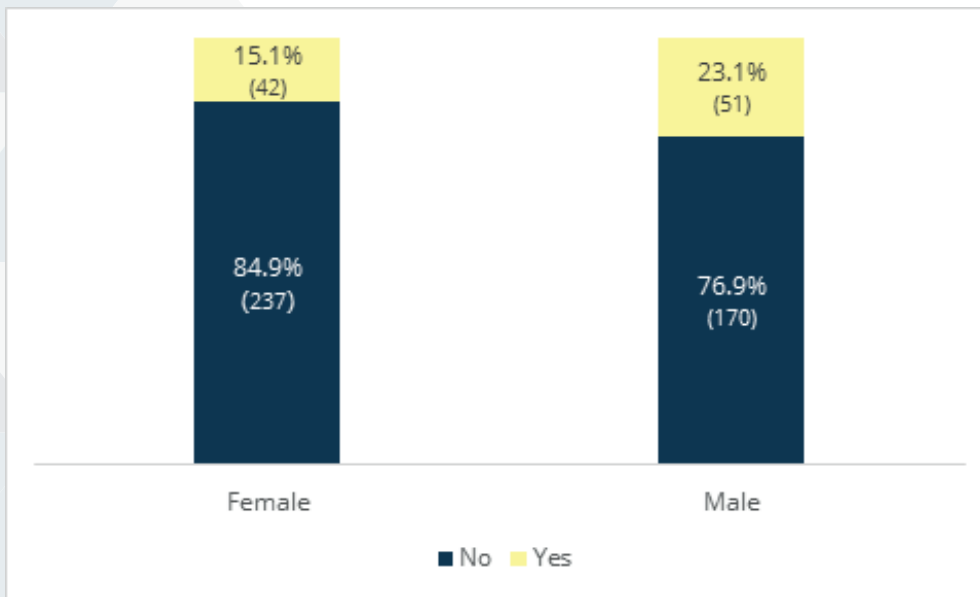
Among the minority (14.6%) who attended other vocational training courses, most (89%) had done so before the AICS training (rather than at the same time). On average, these respondents had participated in 2.78 other training courses, which is significant and might indicate that there is a small group jumping from one training course to the other, probably primarily for lack of jobs in the labour market, filling time, or hoping to get additional skills to increase their employability chances. Some individuals may also participate in several training courses to benefit from the limited advantages provided during training (transportation fees, etc.).

The same proportion of female (14.7%) and male (14.5%) respondents attended other vocational training courses before the AICS programme. No relevant difference could be observed among age groups, either. A slightly higher proportion of Lebanese respondents (15.2%) had participated in previous training, compared with Syrian respondents (13.2%). In relation to the training course sector, a higher proportion of respondents in agribusiness (28%), mechanics (25%) and food services activities (24.1%) had undertaken previous training. Slightly more graduates participated in previous training in Bekaa, North and Baalbek-Hermel, compared to other governorates

3.1.2. WORK STATUS BEFORE OR DURING THE COURSE

Nearly a quarter of males were working, either before or during the course, which relates to the fact that most beneficiaries were young adults (rather than teenagers, for example). Comparing their working status at the time of the training (2018) and at the time of the survey (2020) puts into perspective the work status at the time of training: at the time of the survey, 37.1% of male and 18.3% of female respondents had worked for pay/profit at least one hour in the week preceding the interview (see Section 5.1.1.): despite the fact that, at the time of the training (in 2018), the labour market situation was better than at the time of this survey (end of 2020), a slight improvement in employment is discernible.

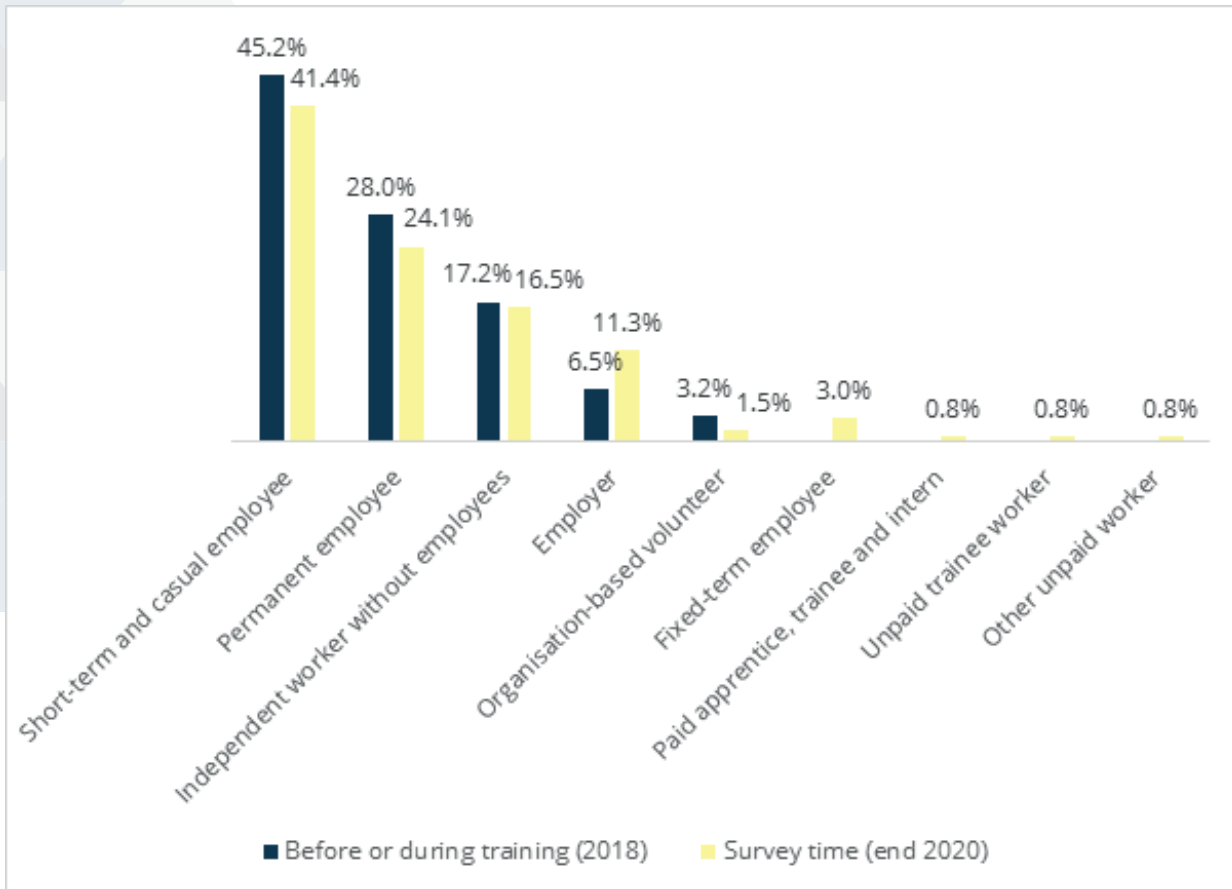
Figure 7: Were you working before and/or during your study at this institution?



There is no significant difference by nationality, but there is a significant difference by gender, with about eight more percentage points of men working than women. The contrast is even stronger by age, with naturally many more who were working in the older age groups (around 25% between 25 and 54 years old), compared to only around 15% under 24 years old.

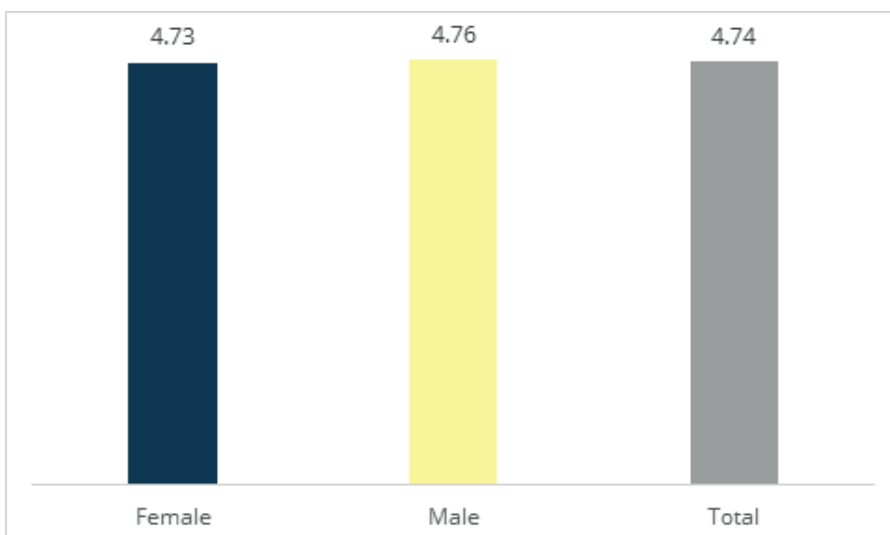
Among those who reported working before and/or during the training, 57% were working **in the same field as their vocational training**, which indicates a certain consistency between work experience and the training specialties chosen. The proportion was higher among men than women (61% compared to 52%), and higher among adults (19 to 54 years old: 61%) than among younger and older groups (44% and 33% respectively). Of those who were working, 20.4% reported an increase in their income as a consequence of the training, which is a significant result revealing that, at least before the crises, these training courses did bring an immediate positive impact to some beneficiaries.

Most of the graduates were working in short-term positions, with no significant difference between the situation before and during the training, and now (for those who currently work). Current employment status and conditions are discussed in more detail in Section 5 of this report.

Figure 8: Employment status - Comparison over time

3.1.3. SATISFACTION WITH TRAINING

Most of the respondents were very satisfied with the training in general. On a scale from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), they rated the programme at 4.74 (on average), with no significant difference by gender, nationality, age, or Italian NGO implementing the programme.

Figure 9: Looking back, to what extent are you satisfied with your vocational training at this institution in general? - Gender

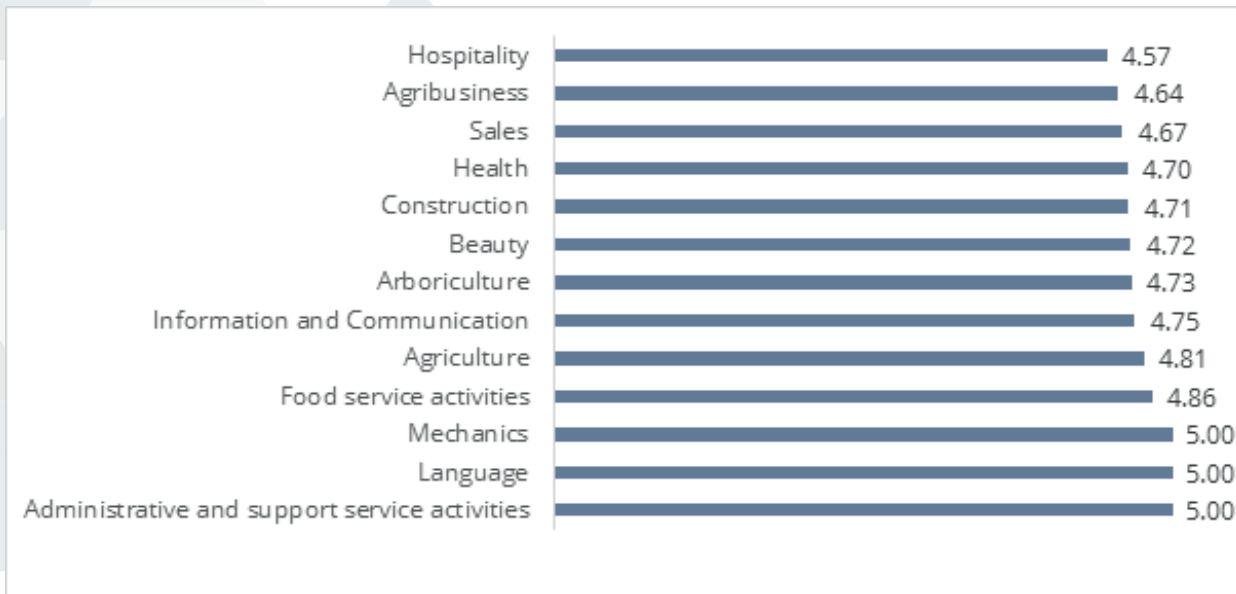
There are some differences by Lebanese training provider, but they remain small and the grading remains generally high:

Table 2: Looking back, in general, to what extent are you satisfied with your vocational training at this institution? - Lebanese training provider

Training provider	Average satisfaction	Number of respondents
Bcharre Technical School	5.00	1
LOST-Herml	5.00	3
IECD	5.00	4
CCIAZ	5.00	14
Shift	5.00	2
Fanar	5.00	5
Training provider (in Bkarsouna municipality)	5.00	7
GVC	5.00	2
LUPD Expert	4.92	24
Nasriyer Rizk	4.87	23
Ruwwad Al Tanmeya	4.87	15
IRAP	4.80	5
Makhzoumi Foundation	4.78	23
MADA Consultant	4.77	96
Training provider (in Nabatiyeh municipality)	4.77	13
LOST	4.76	25
Makhzoumi Foundation (subcontracted to Memo, Wamatec, or Domiciles)	4.75	67
RC Consultant	4.71	17
LOST-AIN	4.68	28
Abdeh	4.63	19
Alafaq Institute	4.61	57
Training provider (in Bkaasafrine municipality)	4.53	15
CCIAZ+ NewHorizons	4.53	34
Madhi Tarhim	4.00	1

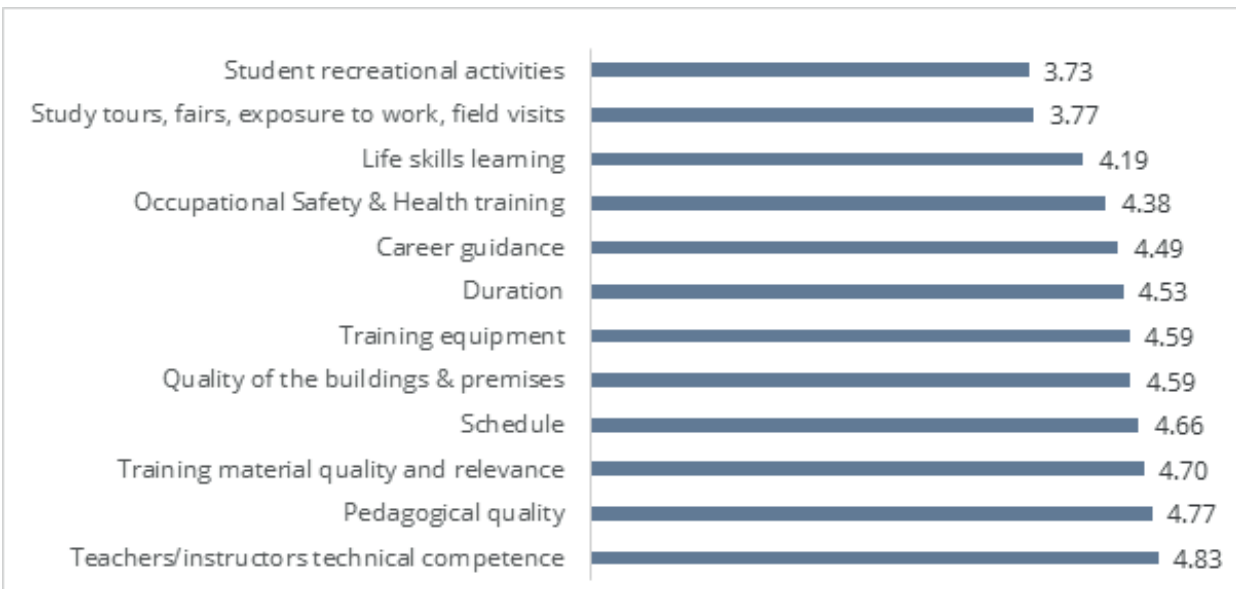
By training course, the differences were minimal, with a slight indication of room for improvement in hospitality:

Figure 10: Looking back, in general, to what extent are you satisfied with your vocational training at this institution? – Course



In more detail, satisfaction with specific aspects of the training shows more contrasts: it is lower for recreational activities and exposure to work. The latter should not be neglected since exposure to work is one of the benefits one would expect from vocational training courses:

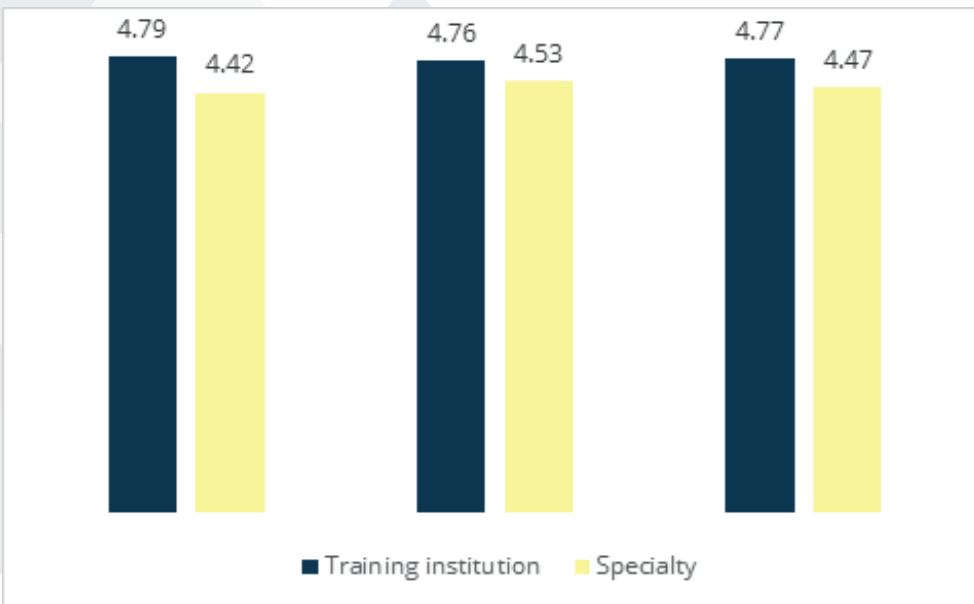
Figure 11: How would you rate the following characteristics of the training course?



There are no significant differences by gender, age, or nationality.

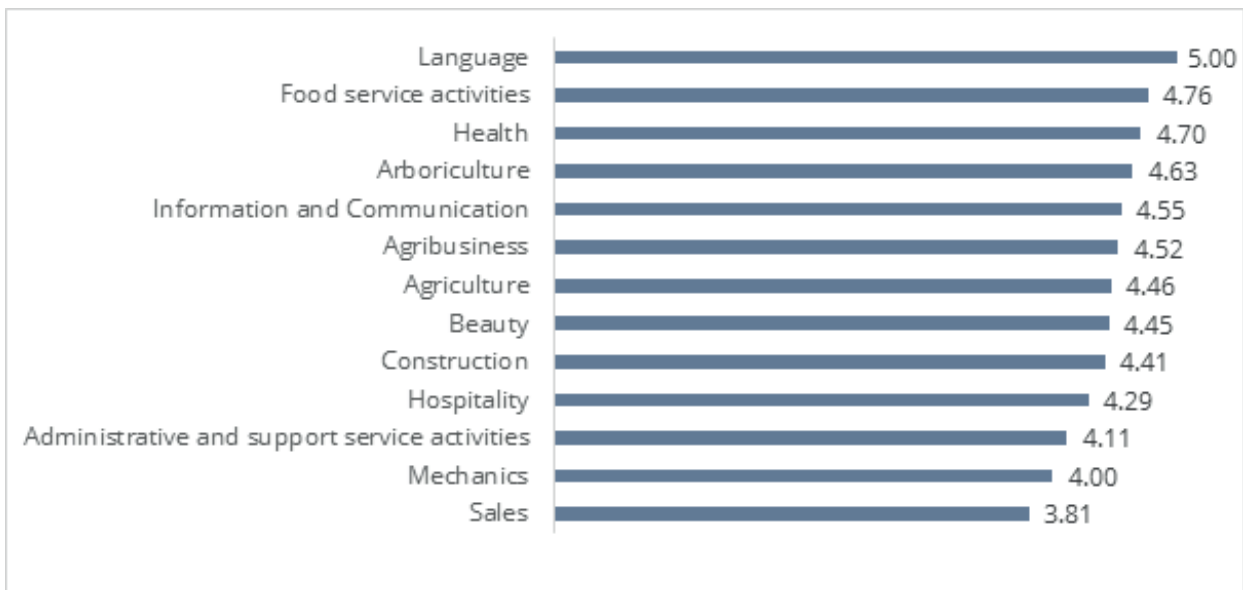
This satisfaction in the training can also be observed when asking the sample to what extent they would choose the same Lebanese training provider. On a scale from 1 (“I would definitely not choose this institution”) to 5 (“I would definitely choose this institution”), the average was 4.77. The specialty was a bit less well rated, although still very positive (4.47 on average).

Figure 12: Looking back, if you were to choose again, to what extent would you choose the same: training institution and specialty?



However, there are some specialties that graduates would not unanimously choose again (particularly mechanics and sales).

Figure 13: Looking back, if you were to choose again, to what extent would you choose the same specialty? - Training course



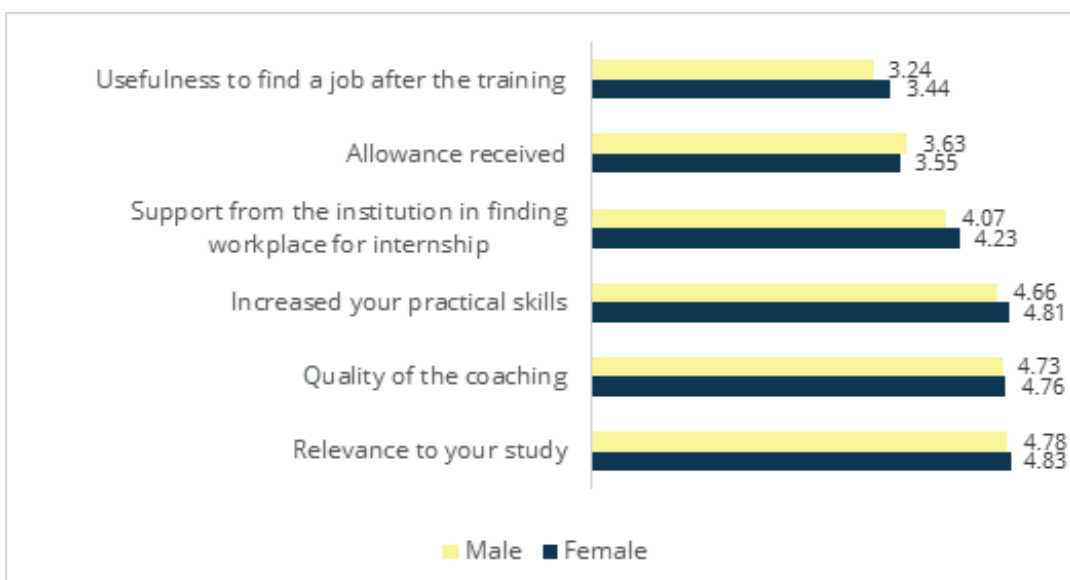
When asked to rate the usefulness of their study, the trainees found it most useful for their personal growth, and least useful to find a job after graduation. This contradicts the main goal of a TVET programme of employability, but this feedback might relate to the general economic situation of Lebanon.

Figure 14: How do you rate the usefulness of your studies?

3.2.SATISFACTION WITH THE INTERNSHIP

3.2.1. GRADUATES' VIEWPOINT

This TVET programme included internships for all trainees. Interns received an allowance (salary) from the Italian NGOs, which was 403.41 USD on average for the full internship. The internships lasted 162.69 hours on average, with a range from 16 to 403 hours. When asked to rate some characteristics of the internship, usefulness to find a job received the lowest rating, which again might relate to the general economic situation of Lebanon. However, some other aspects that are more under the control of programme partners also show some room for improvement. For example, the support of the Lebanese training providers to find internships and allowances receive rather good grades but still leave room for improvement (although allowances cannot be increased disproportionately).

Figure 15: How would you rate the following characteristics of the internship?

3.2.2. EMPLOYERS' VIEWPOINT

This section is based on five qualitative interviews conducted with business managers who had employed interns. This number is too small to generalise the findings to the whole training programme; however, some points enlighten conclusions from the survey.

From the employers' perspective, **the level of satisfaction with the interns was high**. They all reported good interpersonal soft skills (politeness, motivation, punctuality, team spirit) and good theoretical skills (knowledge in their specific field of study and capacity to understand).

The principle of vocational courses is well-perceived by employers, but they differentiated between the trainees who were really interested in mastering a craft, and those who "just wanted a degree" and "did not care about what comes next". One employer deemed the courses too short to acquire enough skills, and several reported weaker practical knowledge among the interns. This last point actually makes the internships relevant within the training programme, as the purpose is to learn how to apply theoretical skills to practical tasks. In general, employers did not consider that the interns were skilled enough to immediately work autonomously and were especially afraid of losing clients because of interns' mistakes. Therefore, they preferred the intern watched tasks being performed, and, after a while, they let the intern practice some tasks, but only under constant supervision.

All five employers interviewed had been initially approached by the Lebanese training provider, rather than the intern. That puts into question the rather low appreciation that graduates had about the Lebanese training providers in linking them to the job market (see Section 3.1.3). With that said, these are internships rather than jobs.

Most of the employers did not hire the trainee after the internship, mainly because they already had enough employees. In one exception though, the intern was hired immediately upon the end of her internship, while in another case, an intern was presented with an employment opportunity but could not accept it as s/he was still enrolled at school. One employer reported calling the trainee for freelance work during specific events

"She was happy, she really wanted to work, arrived early at work."

-Phone shop, Baalbek-Hemel, statement from an employer about a Syrian female intern who benefitted from training by LOST-AIN

"She was very good, since they started the training she kept looking at what they were doing in the salon to learn, the next day she wanted to practice what she saw and it would work for her."

-Beautycentre, Baalbek-Hemel, employer statement about a Lebanese female intern who benefitted from training by Alafaq Institute

“In theory: some people have degrees, but they stay at home. Practical is more important than theory. In the Arab countries, everything is practical, not theoretical.”

-Phone shop, Baalbek-Hemel

It should be noted that some employers receive large numbers of trainees: a beauty salon in Baalbek-Hermel, for example, welcomed nearly 50 interns over time, in batches of 6-7, organising shifts so that each intern would come once or twice per week. Firstly, this could convey the difficulty met by training providers to identify businesses willing to host interns. Secondly, this could prevent businesses from hiring graduates after the internship, as they cannot absorb a large number of trainees.

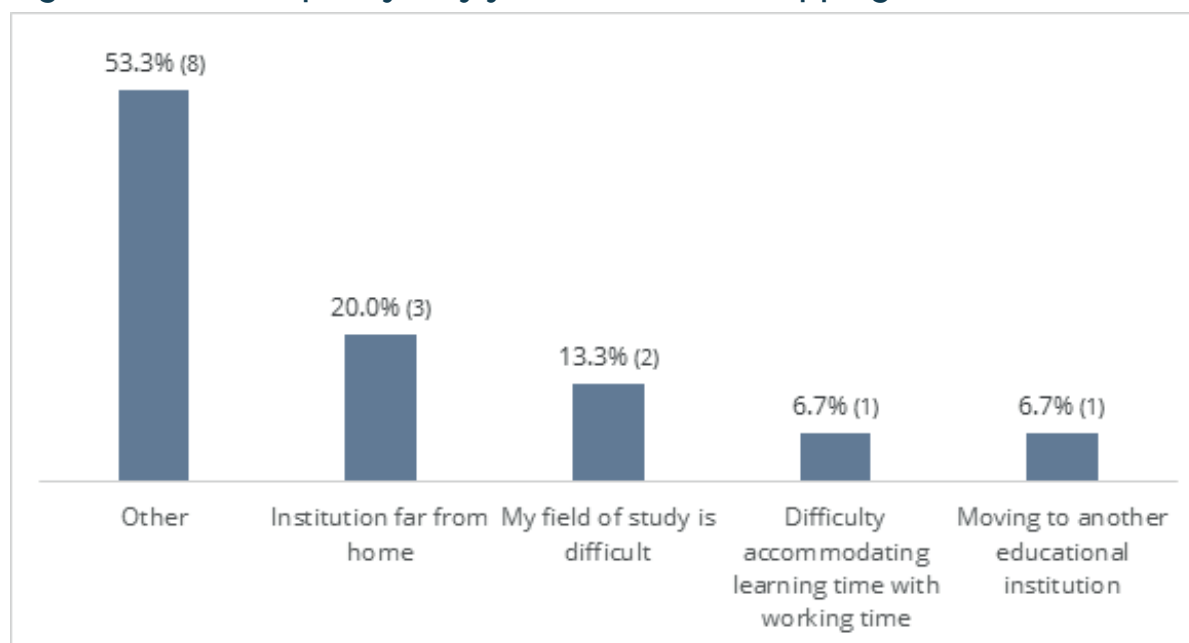
In the current situation of very few opportunities for work, some employers reported that they would not take interns anymore, even at no cost.

3.3.DROP-OUTS

None of the respondents to the main phone survey had dropped out - this was induced by sample design since only graduates were called. Only a very small number (3%, 15 respondents) ever considered dropping out, with no significant difference by gender, age or nationality.

Among those who considered dropping out, the reasons were related to personal constraints rather than deficiencies of the Lebanese training providers:

Figure 16: Please specify why you considered dropping out?



When analysing the “others”, the majority of respondents explained considering dropping out for personal reasons (37.5%), followed by financial issues (25%), and the lack of jobs in the sector (25%).

From the four qualitative interviews with drop-outs, it seems that the main reasons for not completing the training were:

- Financial reasons, which meant prioritising finding work over studying. This can be for very immediate needs: for example, one of the respondents left the course to work because he needed money to repair his car.
- Conflict of schedule between the vocational training programme and work or other study (one respondent was completing his brevet exams, for example, in parallel with the course).
- Personal reasons (conflicts with other trainees).

“Very good, the TVET teachers were modern, following the trends, very good way of managing the relationship with student.”

- Syrian female beneficiary of training, 30 years old

Even those who dropped out still saw the training courses positively. Only one regretted the high number of trainees in the programme.



TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT

(CHARACTERISTICS OF TRANSITION FROM TRAINING TO WORK)

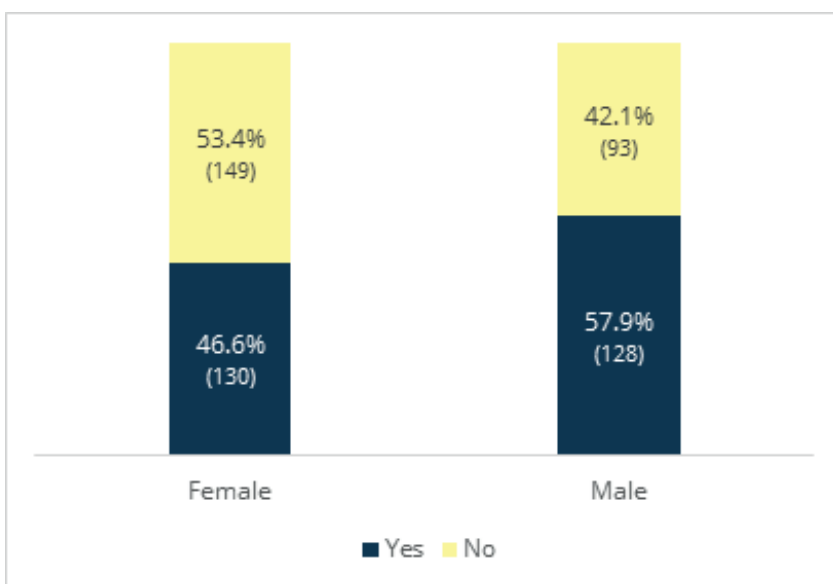
KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Almost half of the graduates did not search for a job after the training programme. The constraints from the labour market side are strong (few available jobs, low wages, in distant places, etc.), but personal reasons are also important, especially among female graduates (marriage, pregnancy, etc.).
- Job search follows a hybrid pattern where both informal methods (connections, family, etc.) and formal methods (applications, job ads, etc.) play a role.
- Over half (54.9%) of the graduates did not work from the time of training (2018) until the time of the survey (end of 2020).
- Among those who worked following the training programme, the majority had temporary rather than permanent jobs. Around half (51%) of the graduates who worked did so in a field related to the training course.
- According to the graduates' own assessment, there is moderate (49%) interest from employers in their vocational training certificates.
- For most of these graduates work migration is a desire, but not a concrete option.

4.1. LOOKING FOR A JOB

It is striking to note that nearly half of the graduates (48.4%) did not look for a job after graduation. Significantly more men looked for a job than women, which relates to gendered perceptions around female work outside of the home.

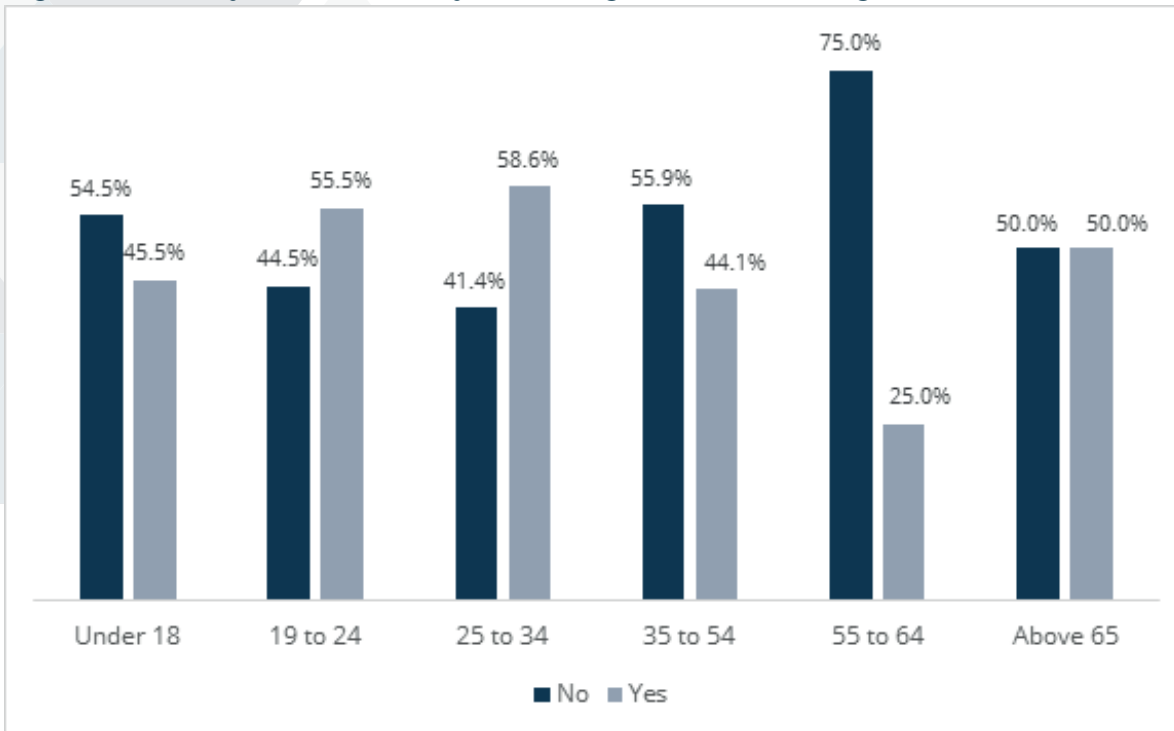
Figure 17: Did you look for a job after graduation? - Gender



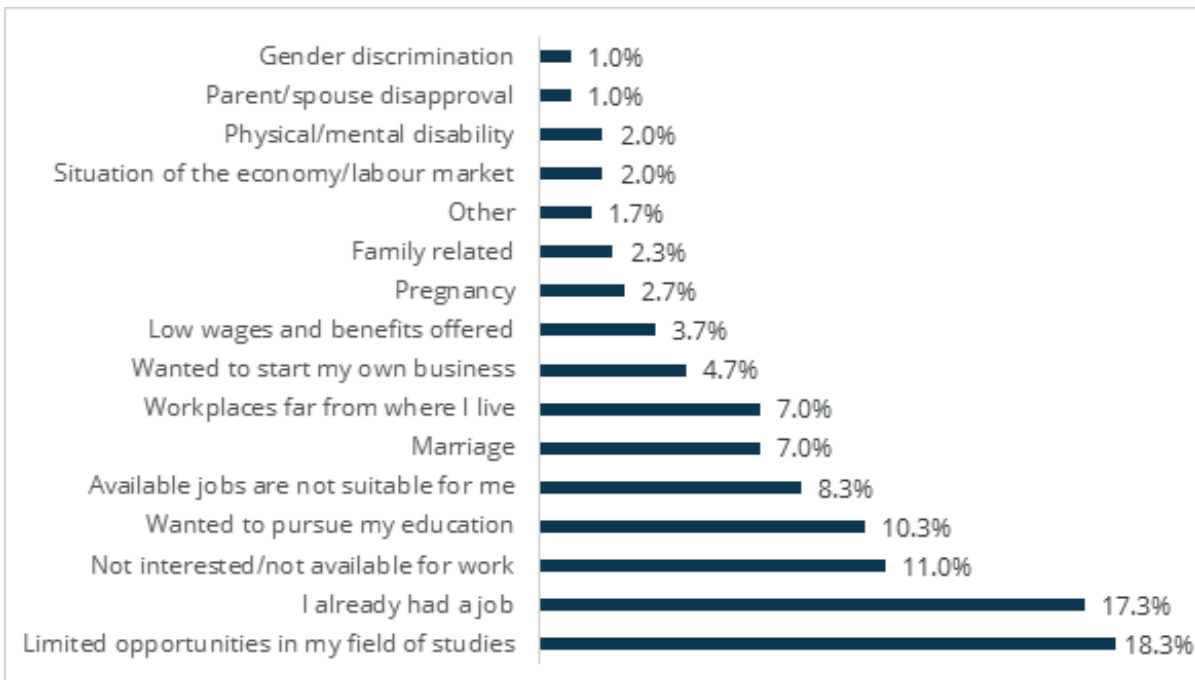
The difference according to nationality is not significant, with 53.9% of Syrian respondents having looked for a job, compared to 50.6% of the Lebanese respondents.

Younger and older age groups were less likely to look for a job (among graduates above 55, the main reason was already having a job):

Figure 18: Did you look for a job after graduation? – Age



The reasons not to look for a job were varied:



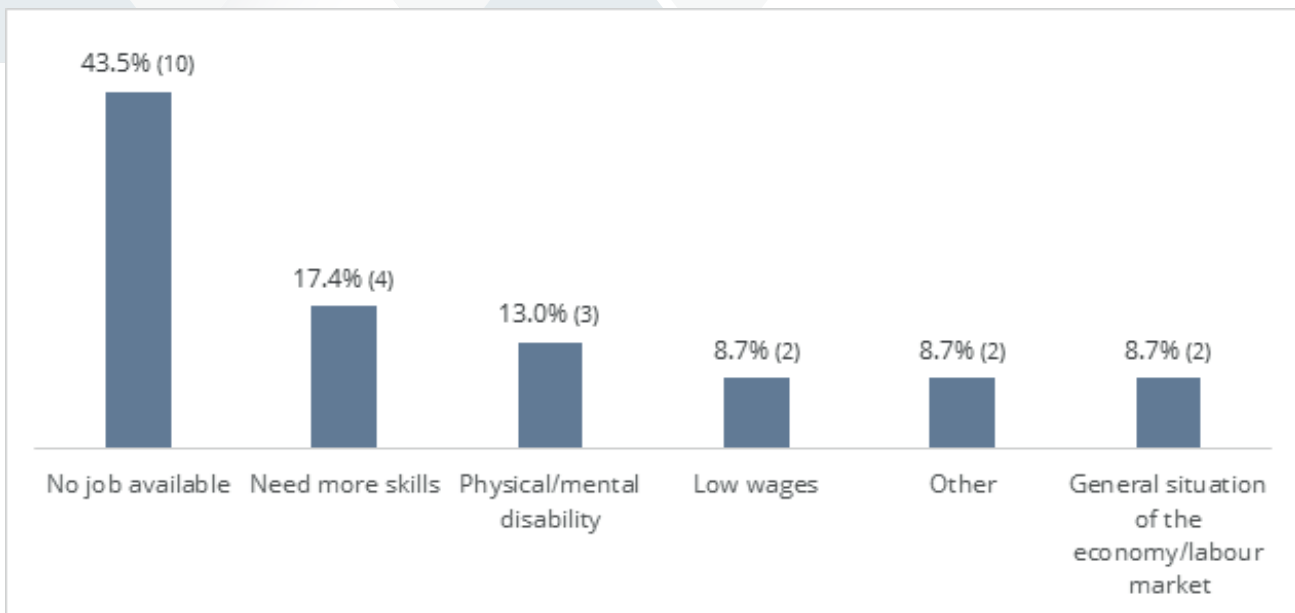
These various reasons were regrouped into three main categories:

- The majority (40%) were linked to constraints in the labour market: limited opportunities in their field of studies, available jobs not suitable, distance to workplaces, low wages, and benefits offered, etc.

- Also, importantly (34%), personal events, situations and choices played a role: not interested or available, wanted to pursue education, marriage, pregnancy, etc.
- And lastly (22%), there were positive reasons: already had a job, wanted to start their own businesses, etc.

Respondents who answered “available jobs are not suitable for me” (one of the sub-categories of “labour market constraints”), were asked to explain their answer. Again, most stated that they considered there were no jobs available, but also, 17% (four respondents) said that they needed more skills, which paves the way for further training programmes. It is, however, key to note that among the 43.5% (10 respondents) whose answers were summarised as “no job available”, none had looked for a job after graduation. This may reveal some preconceived ideas about the labour market, or such a high level of despair that some graduates give up even before searching.

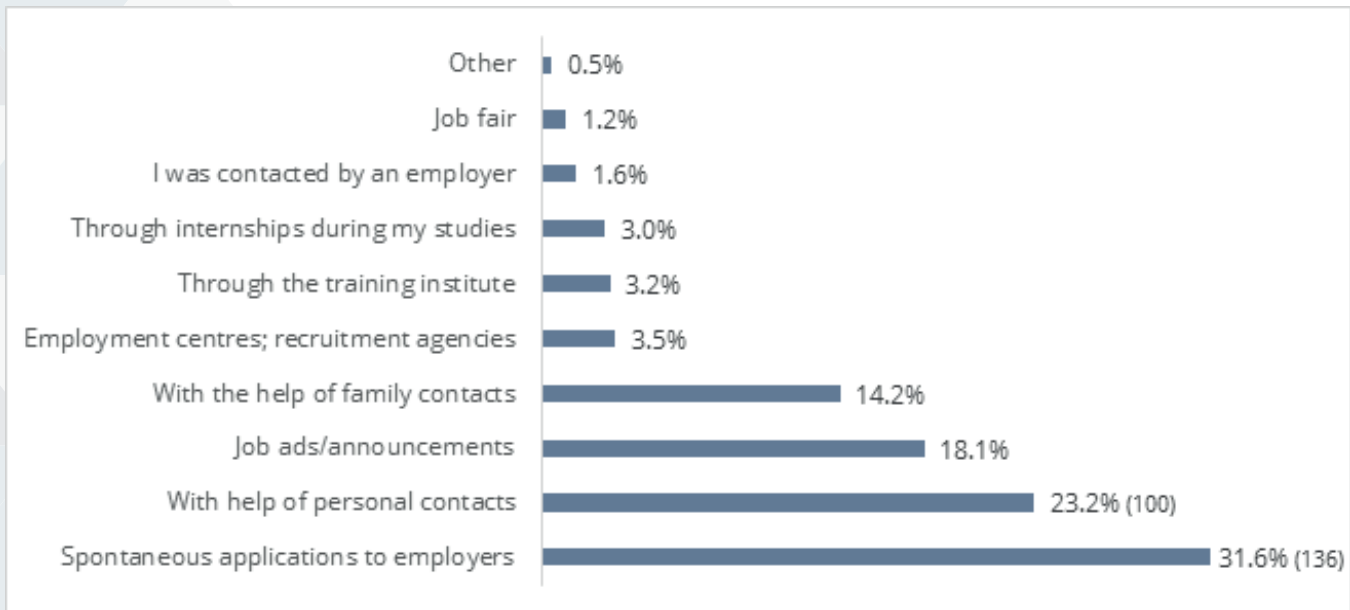
Figure 20: Explain “available jobs are not suitable for me”



4.2.PROCESS OF JOB SEARCH

Among respondents who reported looking for a job, the majority did so through spontaneous applications to employers or with the support of personal contacts. This segment of interviewed graduate jobseekers thus appeared to be mid-way between completely relying on traditional systems such as family connections, wasta, etc., and more formalised systems, like job ads, employment centres, and the like.

Figure 21: How did you search for your first job after graduation?



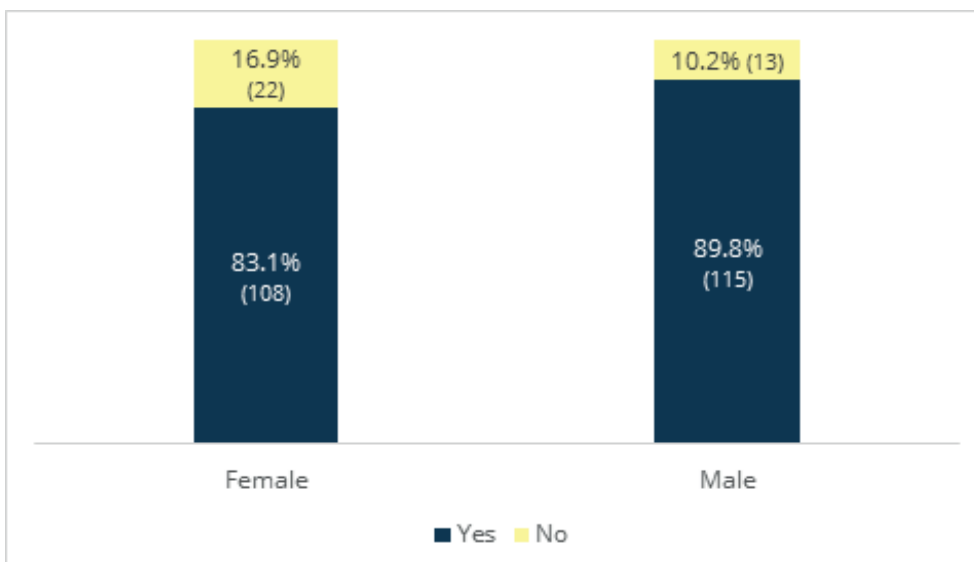
Respondents designated spontaneous applications to employers as the most useful way to search for a job (32.2%) before job ads/announcements (21%) and the help of personal contacts (20.3%). Men counted even more on spontaneous applications (34%, compared to 29% among women), while women tended to use more formal pathways (21% through job announcements, compared to 15% for men).

4.2.1. JOB APPLICATION

To better understand how graduates researched a job, the survey included questions to those who reported looking for a job after graduation. The assumption was that job search and job application were different processes, with applications being a formal process for submitting a CV and only one of the possible paths to search for a job.

Again, the labour market appears to not be so traditional. Most graduates who looked for a job actually submitted formal job applications:

Figure 22: Respondents that submitted formal job applications



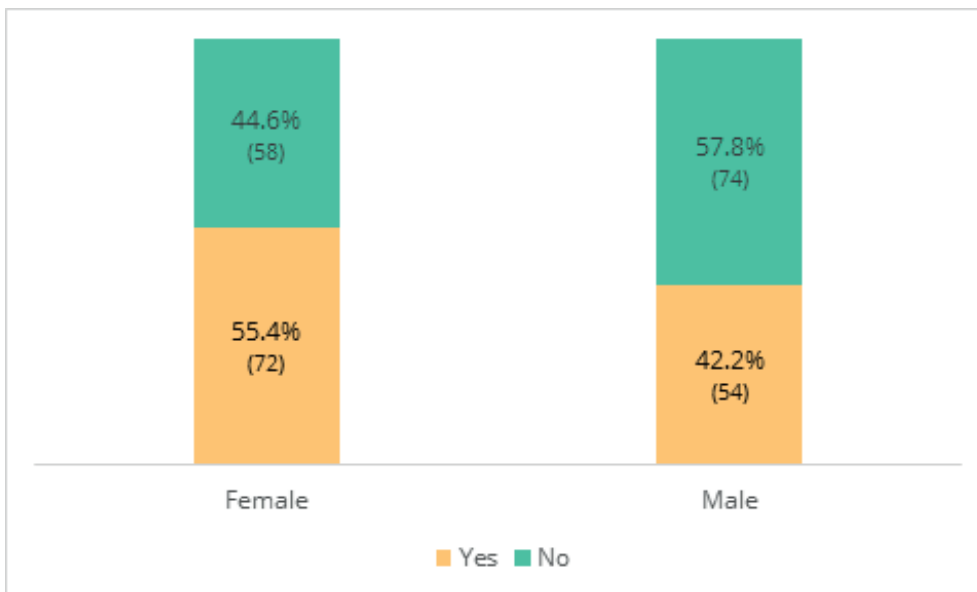
On average, those who applied for a job applied to 5.21 jobs after their graduation and were responded to by 1.19 employers for an interview. However, nearly half (48.9%) of those who applied for jobs were never contacted.

4.2.2. APPRECIATION OF THE TVET CERTIFICATES BY EMPLOYERS

The certificates issued at the completion of training were very different according to the Lebanese training providers. When they are accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education, they deliver an official certification. However, this was not the case for all training. The literature⁷ reports that, aside from public VET institutions, the number of NGO initiatives offering short-term non-formal training in Lebanon has increased considerably as a response to the Syrian crisis. Reportedly, the lack of a clear vision and strategy across the TVET sector has been compounded by increased fragmentation of the programmes, absence of impact data, and lack of oversight over private training providers. This tracer study confirms that the interest of employers for vocational training certificates is moderate.

According to the graduates' own assessment, there was moderate (49%) interest from employers in their vocational training degrees, with more interest in certificates for female graduates.

Figure 23: Were employers interested in the certificate/degree you received from the course? - Gender



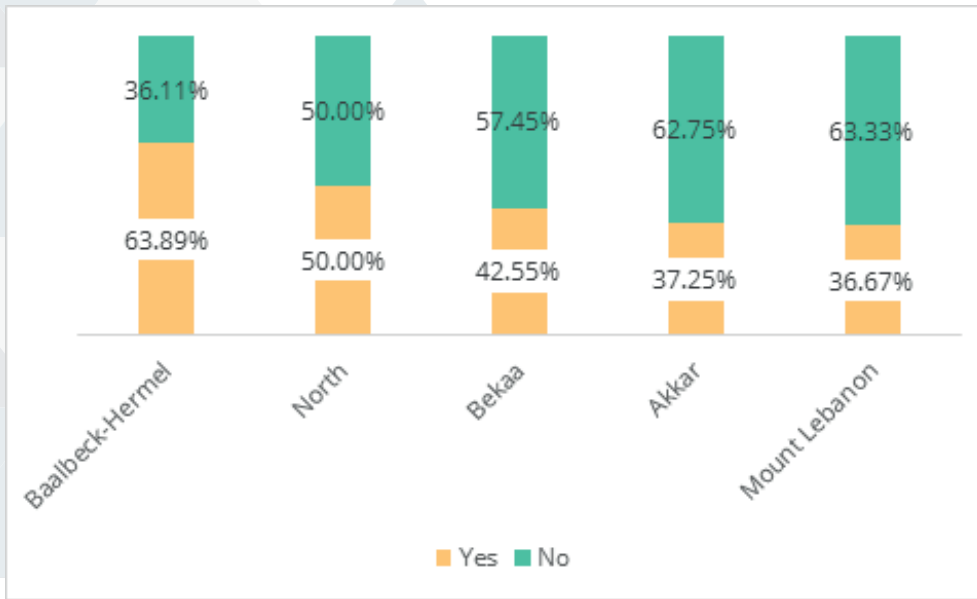
Among female graduates, employers were most interested in health, beauty, and agribusiness, and least in administrative and support service activities, arboriculture and construction.

Differences between nationalities was small, with 47.7% of Lebanese respondents reporting interest from employers, compared to 51.2% of Syrian respondents.

Differences by governorate (of residency of the graduate, at the time of the survey) were more significant:

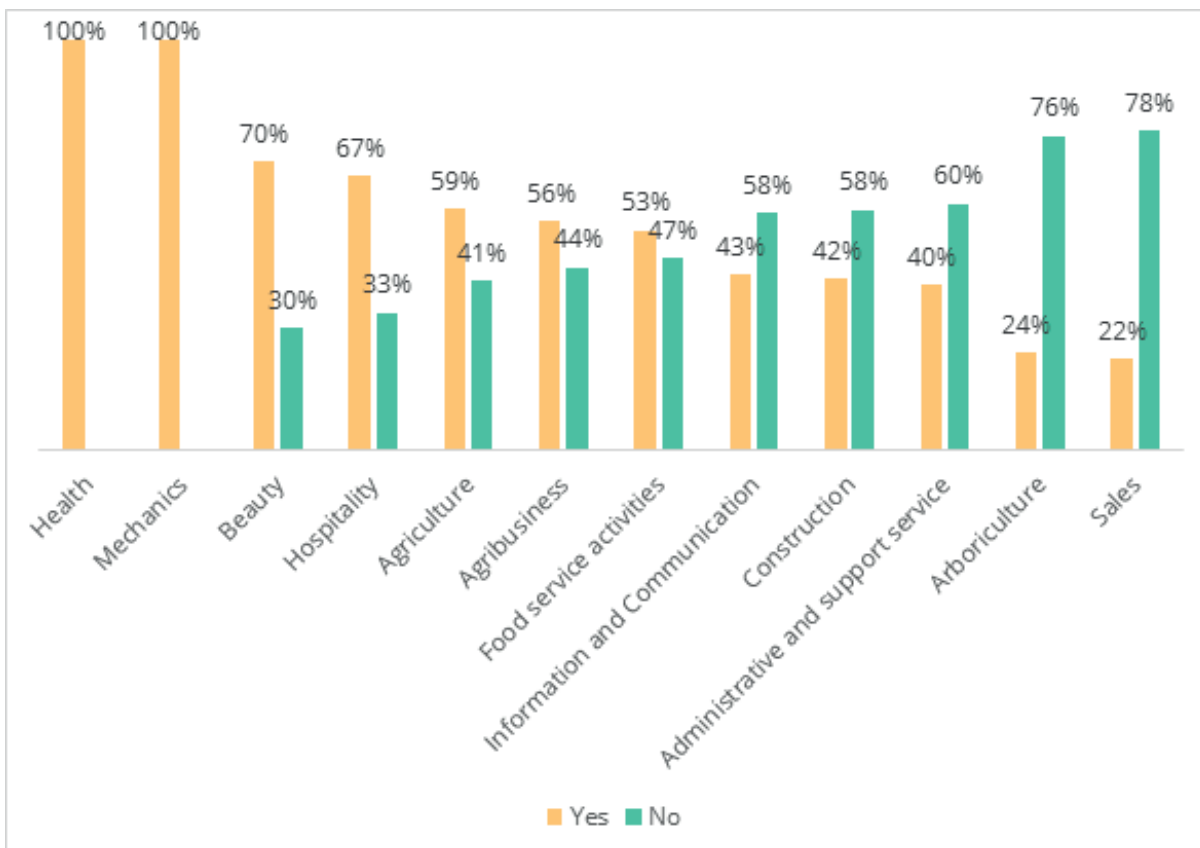
⁷ See for instance GIZ, Employment and Labour Market Analysis Lebanon, 2017.

Figure 24: Were employers interested in the certificate/degree you received from the course? - Governorate



When disaggregated by training course, health and mechanics certificates seemed more valued by employers. This was further confirmed by the qualitative interviews with Lebanese training providers, who stressed that health and care sectors are priorities for the Lebanese labour market today. On the contrary, there was little interest from employers in training certificates related to arboriculture or sales.

Figure 25: Were employers interested in the certificate/degree you received from the course? - Training topic

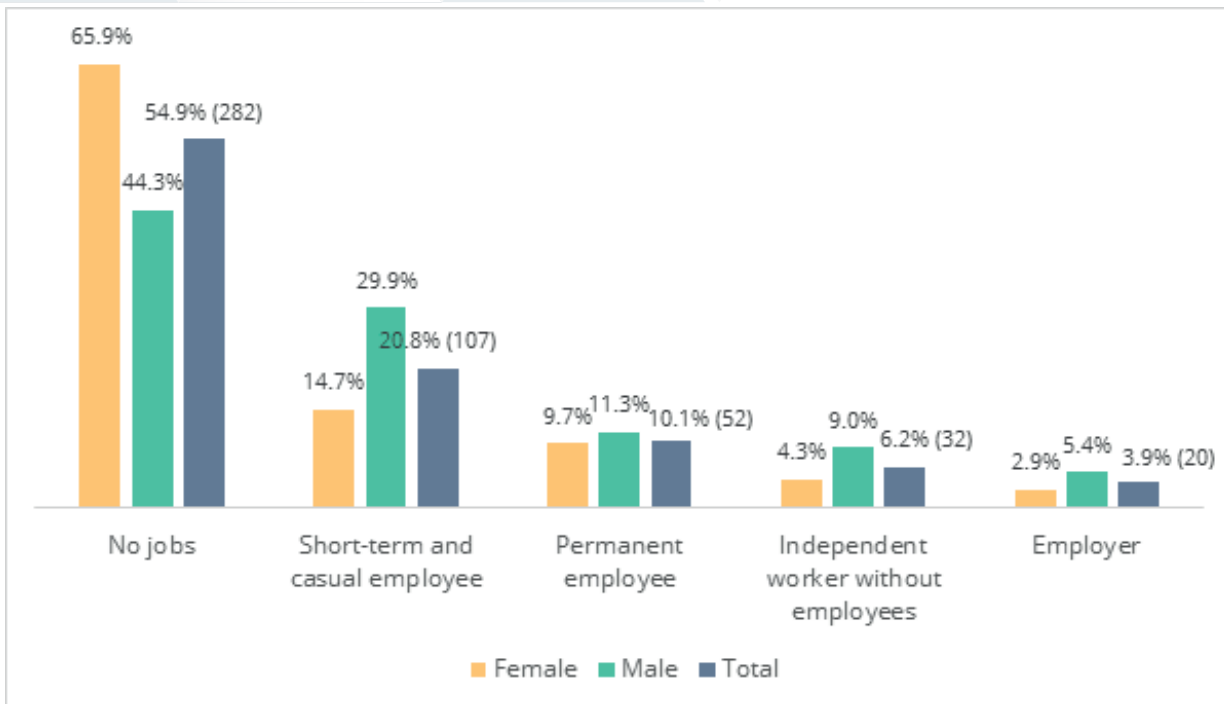


4.3.EMPLOYMENT STATUS FOLLOWING THE TRAINING

Over half (54.9%) of the graduates did not work from the time of training (2018) until the time of the survey (end of 2020). This cannot be explained only by the financial crisis and Covid-19 restrictions, since about half of this whole period (from 2018 until autumn 2019) was before the financial crisis and Covid-19. The situation was even worse for women – over two-thirds (65.9%) did not work, and among the youngest graduates – 65% did not work.

Among those who worked after the training programme, 40% found jobs within three months, but the remaining 60% took much longer (14 months on average). The overall average duration to find this first job was 7.5 months.⁸ The majority (46.1%) of working graduates were short-term and casual employees, confirming the highly unstable nature of the Lebanese labour market, especially for the job levels corresponding to TVET graduates.

Figure 26: What job or jobs have you had in the past two years following your graduation?

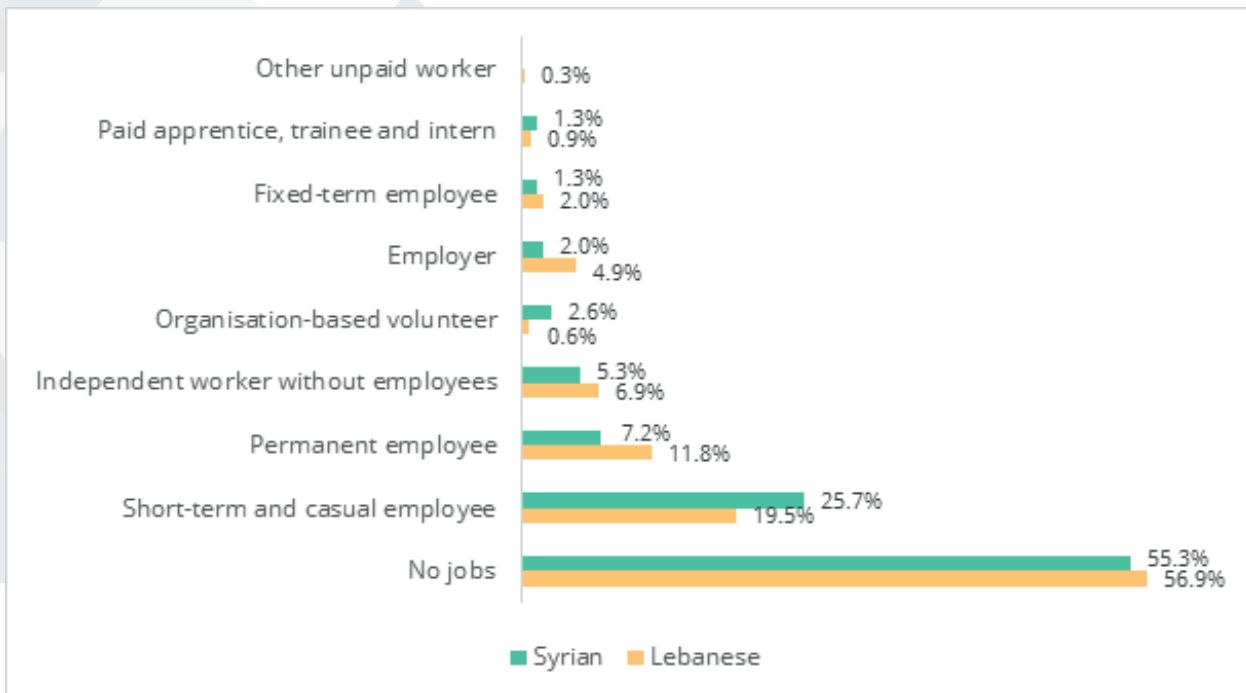


The figures above did not include respondents who reported being fixed-term employees (1.8%), paid apprentices, trainees and interns (1.2%), organisation-based volunteers (1%) or other unpaid workers (0.2%).

There was no significant difference between Syrians and Lebanese graduates: only slightly more Lebanese had not worked at all. Conversely, there were more Syrians in temporary jobs, while more Lebanese reported permanent jobs.

⁸ As the precise dates of training, beyond the year (2018), were not known, the computation is done as of January 2019 (duration 1 month) and until December 2020, time of the survey (duration 24 months), for those who indicated a date in this range (others indicated previous dates, which therefore correspond to jobs they already had at the time of training, rather than new jobs).

Figure 27: What job or jobs have you had in the past two years following your graduation? - Nationality



Even among those who had been a permanent employee and/or fixed-term employee at least at some point over 2019–2020, the number of jobs held reveals a deteriorating situation:

Table 3: Number of jobs, by year

Number of jobs	2019 - %	2020 - %
0	9.8	23.0
1	86.9	73.8
2	1.6	1.6
4	1.6	0
6	0	1.6

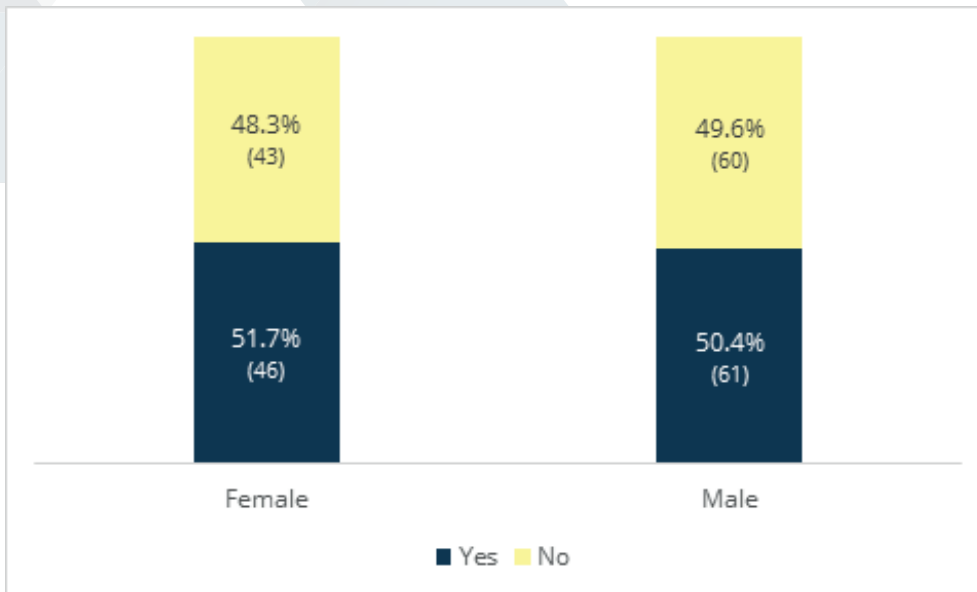
This deterioration was also apparent in the total amount of work: 8 months on average in 2019, down to 6.54 months in 2020. The number of days worked per month did not change significantly (17.32 in 2019, 17.35 in 2020).

Each implementing partner conducted a market analysis before selecting the specialities it would offer, as planned in Output 1 of the AICS programme: “improved availability and quality of labour market information”. These analyses reportedly allowed implementing partners to adapt the interventions and the training offered in relation to market demand, and to identify companies to host interns. However, according to the independent cluster evaluation, “it was reported that the market assessment conducted was too broad. A possible recommendation for the market studies is to be more targeted towards specific

aspects and priorities, and piloted at the community-based level where the specific sector(s) will be assessed per community/area, and with consideration for local context issues.” This led to challenges in identifying skill gaps and market demand. In addition, the short timeline of the AICS development programme (one year) did not always allow for designing or refining training curricula according to the needs identified.

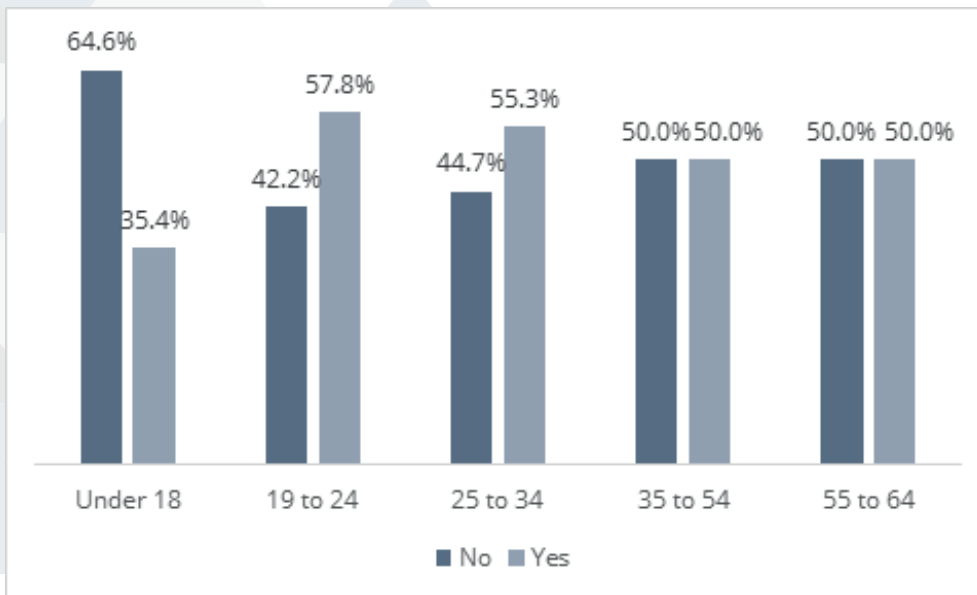
Among the respondents who worked in the years following the training, about half (51%) worked in the same field as the training course they followed, with no major difference by gender. This is a key result, showing the relevance of the specialties taught.

Figure 28: Was your job/the majority of your jobs related to the field of your training at this institution? – Gender



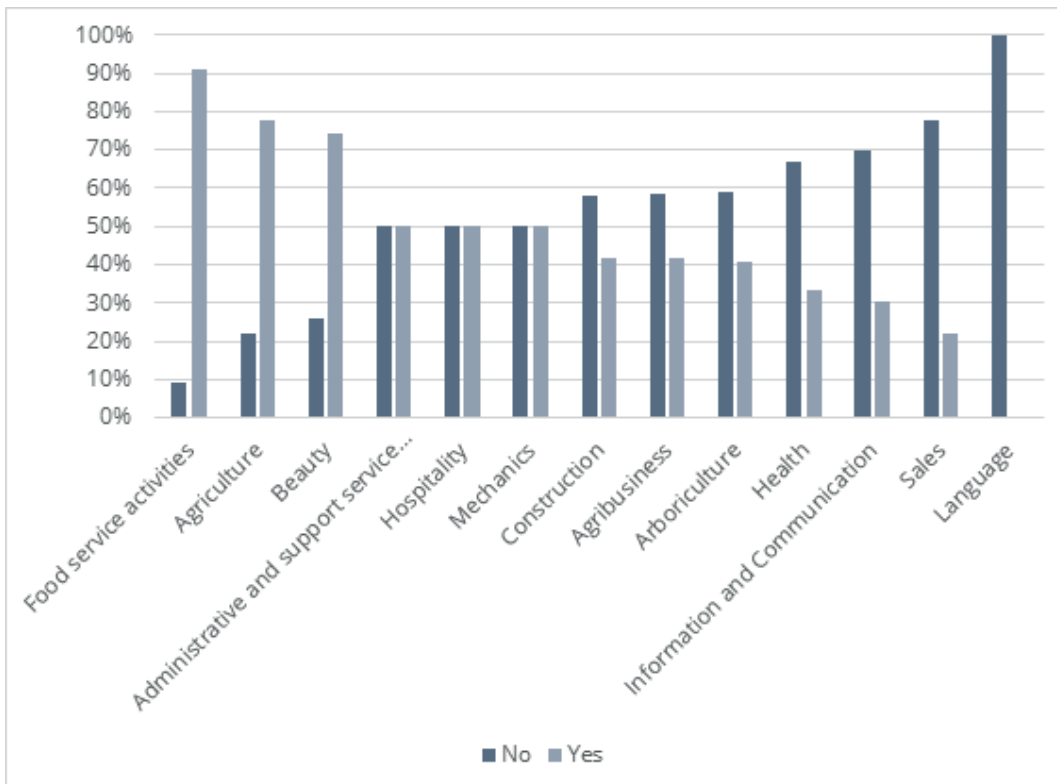
Younger beneficiaries were less likely to work in their field of training, which further confirms the need for career guidance and counselling services more knowledgeable and better aligned to job market demand and trends. This finding tends to corroborate the strategy followed by the Italian NGOs, which tried to target adults as well as youths, in part because adults have more chance to work in their specialty, while youths tend to take any daily job whether related to their specialty or not (see below Figure 29: Was your job/the majority of your jobs related to the field of your training at this institution? – Age group).

Figure 29: Was your job/the majority of your jobs related to the field of your training at this institution? - Age group



There were very strong differences depending on the training course. Graduates tended to work in their specialty for food services, agriculture, and beauty, while they did not in other specialties such as sales and health. Languages, information, and communication constituted a specific case, since they are most often more cross-cutting skills than employment sectors.

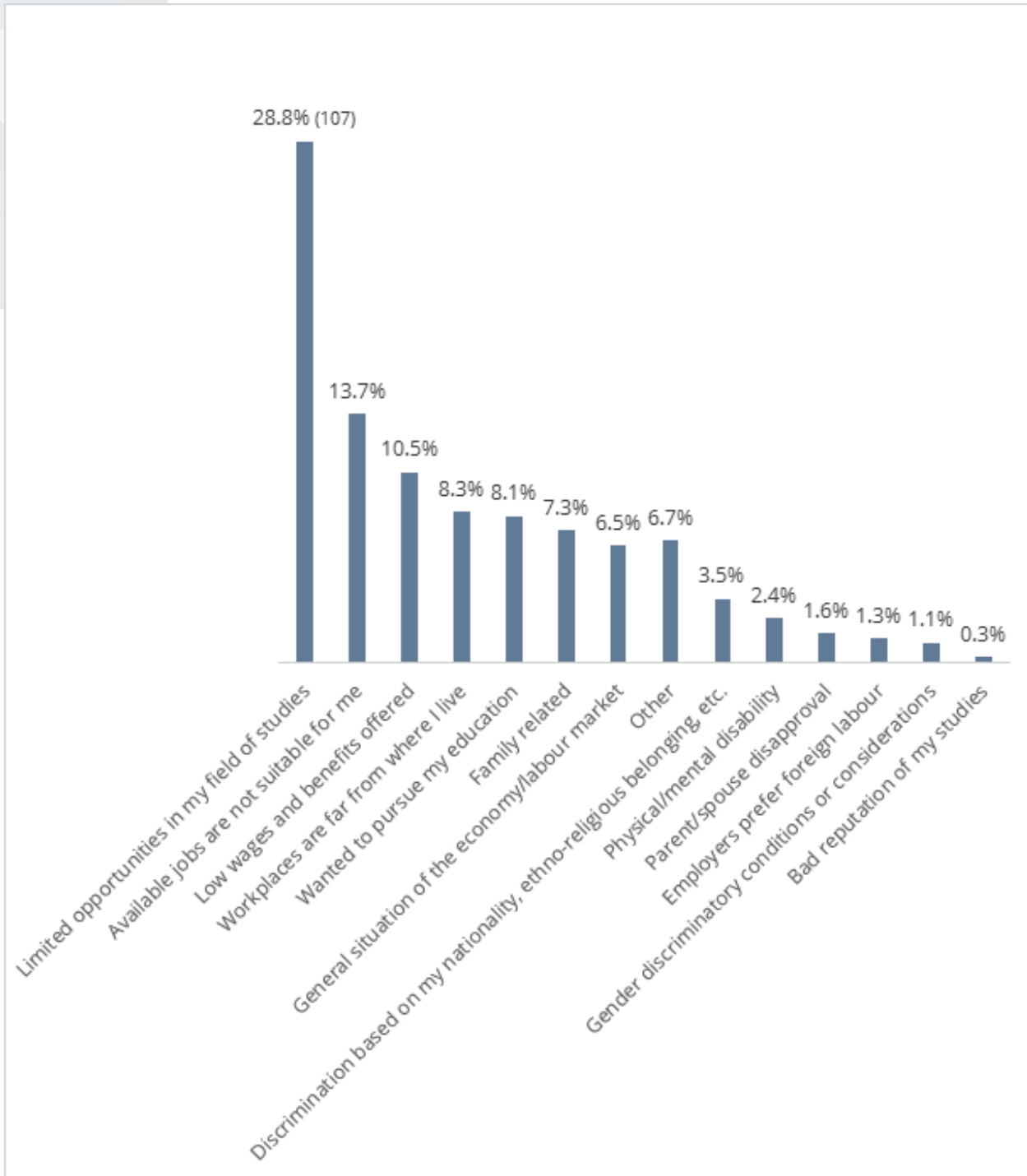
Figure 30: Was your job/the majority of your jobs related to the field of your training at this institution? - Training course



4.4.REASONS FOR NOT WORKING

Among graduates who did look for a job but did not work from the time of training until the survey, the main obstacles were constraints from the labour market side (limited opportunities, unsuitable jobs, low wages, etc.).

Figure 31: In your opinion, why didn't you work?



There are however strong differences by gender. While men put forward “limited opportunities in my field of studies” more than women (37%, compared to 24%), distance was more an issue for women (10%, compared to 6% among men), as well as parent/spouse disapproval (3%, compared to 0% among men). Among the responses “other”, 9% of women invoked family reasons (being married, pregnant, having to raise children, to take care of a parent, etc.), while almost no men (0.5%) did so. A significant percentage also mentioned the continuation of study as a reason not to search for a job (7.5% among women, 4.5% among men). Syrians also mentioned discrimination (7.8%, compared to only 1.6% among Lebanese).

4.5.WORKING ABROAD

Employment abroad is not an option for these vocational training graduates. Although a lot considered it (42.8 %), which is not surprising given the high popularity and long history of work emigration among Lebanese communities, very few went beyond this consideration to take concrete steps (10% of the respondents sought employment abroad), and almost none (0.2%) received actual offers or worked abroad.

This fact is important, as it shows that unlike many graduates in university specialties that are in demand abroad (doctors, engineers, architects, IT specialists), accelerated skills training programme graduates do not have access to this alternative in a depressed domestic labour market. There might be ways to enhance work migration perspectives for this social group.



CURRENT STATUS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT OF GRADUATES

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Nearly three-quarters (73.4%, representing a total of 367 respondents) of the graduates interviewed had not worked in the week preceding the interview.
- Men were more often in temporary jobs, while women were more often in permanent jobs.
- Most graduates who worked did not have a written contract. Many worked for individuals rather than for companies, especially men and Syrians.

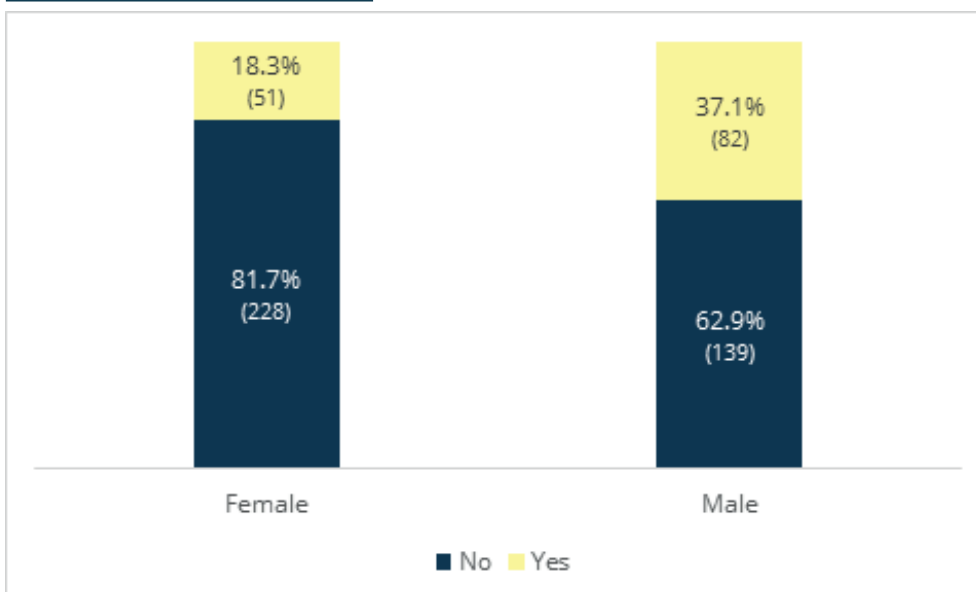
5.1.EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

5.1.1. WORK STATUS

Employment and unemployment are complex concepts to define and can cover multiple realities. Under this survey, respondents were asked if they had worked for pay/profit at least one hour in the preceding week. Respondents who answered “Yes” were then asked to define their employment status, to better understand the different realities behind “employment”. Those who did not work the week preceding the survey were asked if they were actively seeking work and if they were available for work, again to bring some nuance to the “unemployed” status.

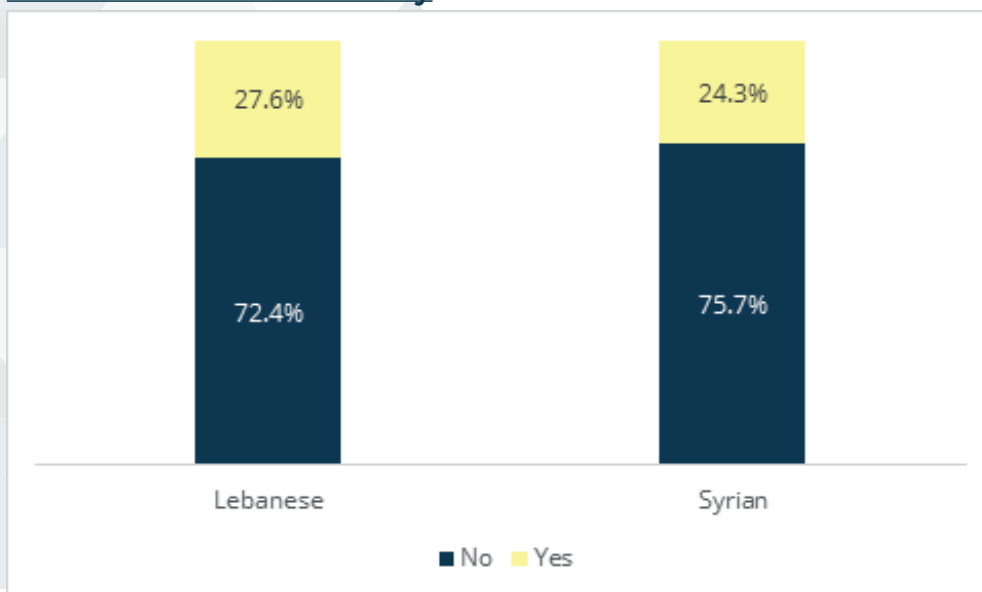
In the week preceding the interview, 73.4% of the respondents had not worked for pay/profit. The difference in gender is worth highlighting, with 81.7% of female respondents reporting that they had not worked compared to 62.9% of male respondents.

Figure 32: Beneficiaries working for pay/profit at least for one hour in the week preceding the interview - Gender



On the contrary, there was no big difference between Lebanese and Syrians:

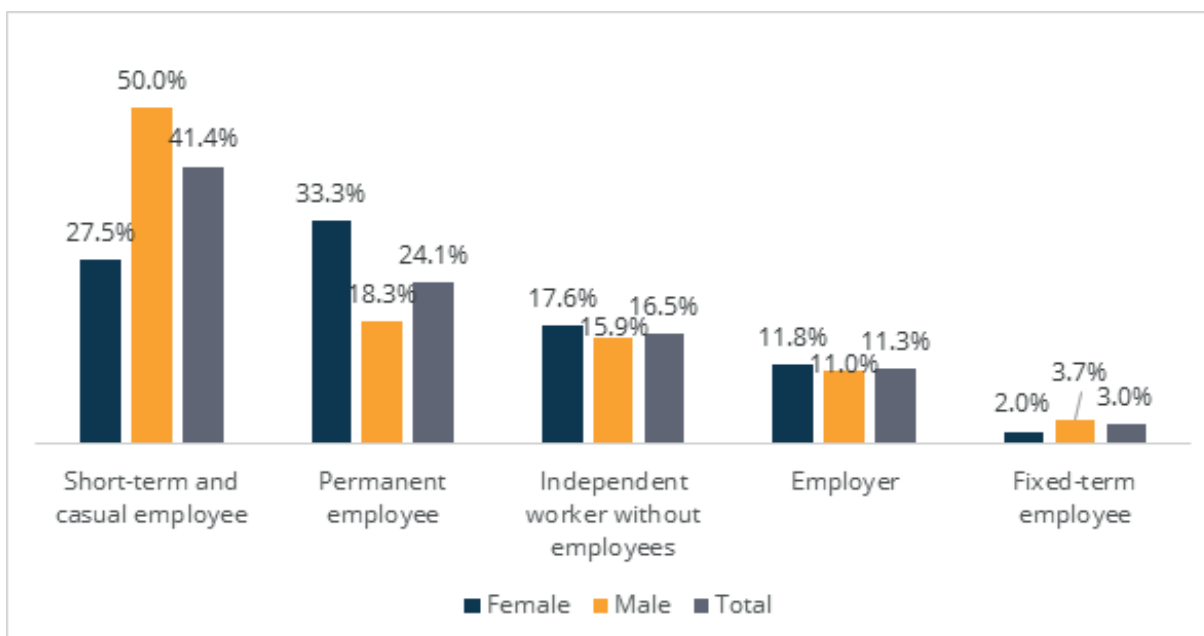
Figure 33: Beneficiaries working for pay/profit at least for one hour in the week preceding the interview – Nationality



There were also no significant differences by age group or disability.

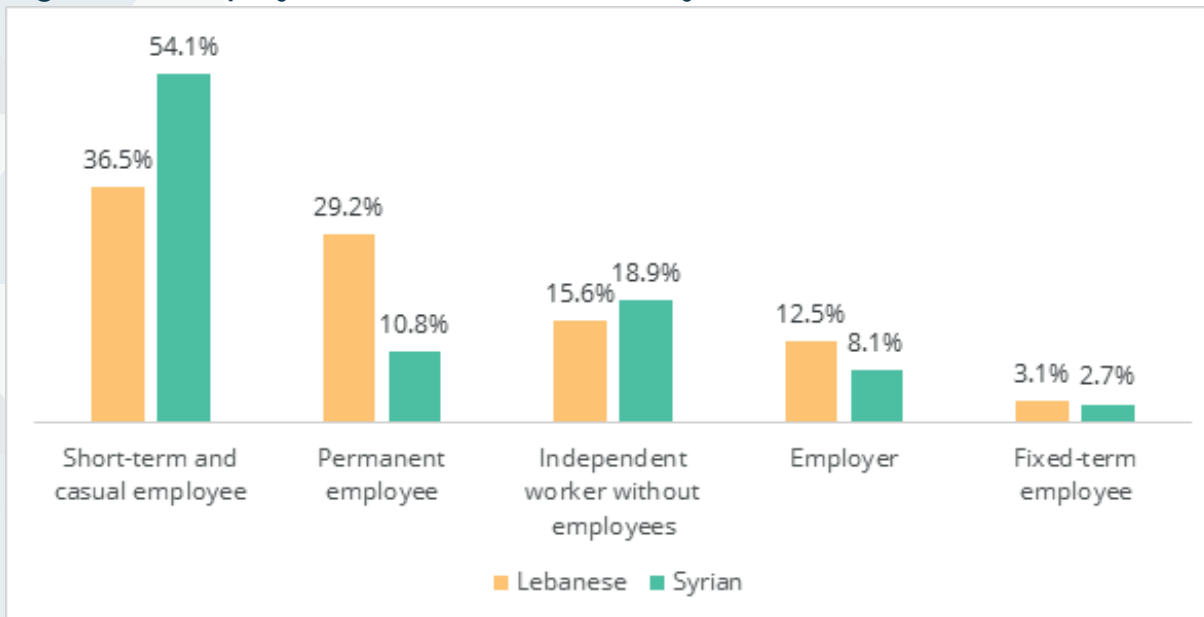
Those who worked the week preceding the interview reported being mostly short-term casual employees. Female graduates worked more in permanent positions, which probably relates to the fact that more men are employed in manual sectors (construction, for example) which rely more on temporary work.

Figure 34: Employment⁹ status – Gender



Disaggregation per nationality shows that there were more Syrian graduates in short-term or casual positions. However, they also opted for micro-enterprises (independent worker without employees), slightly more than Lebanese. This might be a result of the many donor-supported programmes supporting Syrian refugees to find livelihoods through such entrepreneurship or micro-enterprise.

⁹ This graph does not include answers with less than 2% of responses: organisation-based volunteer (1.5%); paid apprentice, trainee and intern (0.8%); unpaid trainee worker (0.8%); other unpaid worker (0.8%).

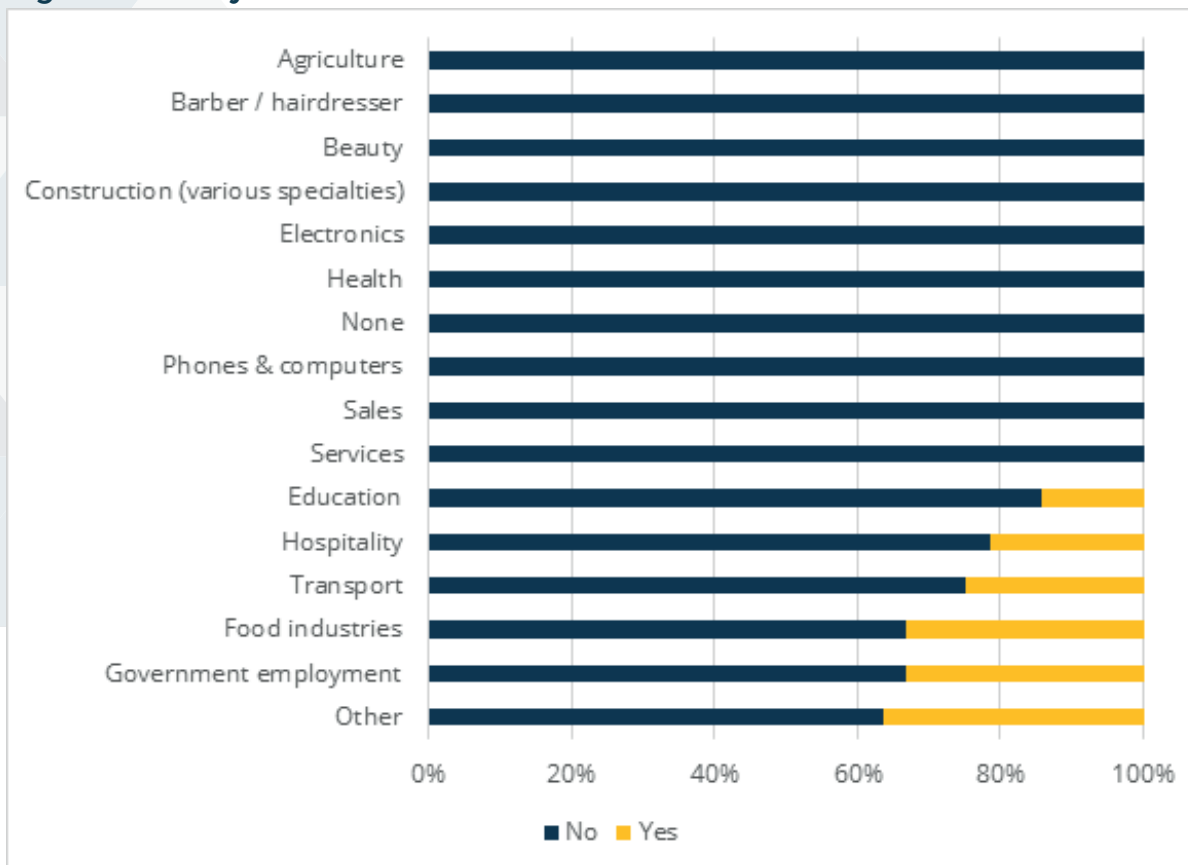
Figure 35: Employment status - Nationality

5.1.2. WORK CONTRACTS

Among graduates who were employed, the vast majority (87%) did not have a written contract, which is a very common reality and practice in Lebanon but can also lead to abuses and denial of labour rights. The phenomenon touches men (89.8% do not have a written contract) more than women (81.8%), which is related to more men being in temporary employment, as described above.

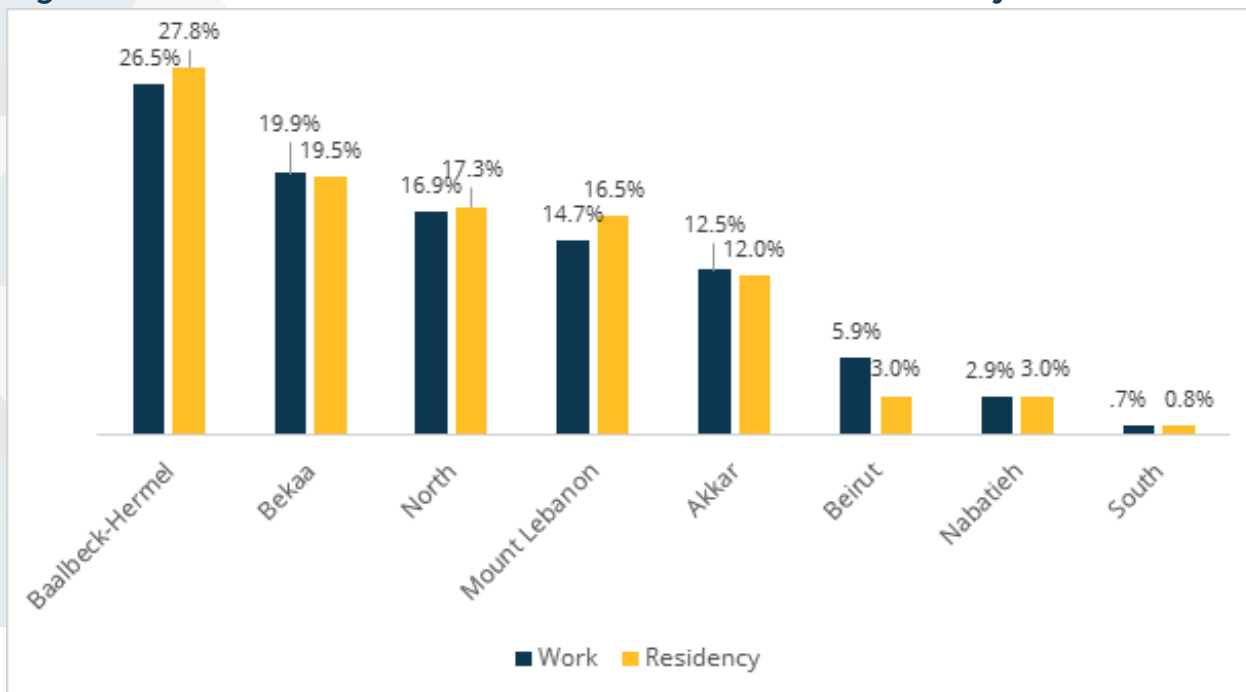
The difference is even stronger by nationality. Basically, the “norm” for Syrians was not to have a written contract (96.2%), which might be related to the fact that most Syrians do not have a valid residency permit. However, it should also be noted that, at this level of education, most Lebanese (83.3%) did not have a written contract either.

There were only few and limited exceptions to this general pattern, with slightly more written contracts in government employment, food industries, hospitality and transport. While this is self-explanatory for government employment, for the other sectors, size may play a role, with bigger enterprises more likely to sign contracts with their employees. Indeed, firms tend to be smaller in sectors such as sales (5.75 employees on average), phones and computers (4), agriculture (2), barber/hairdresser (2), compared to food industries (22.5), transport (10) or hospitality (18.14).

Figure 36: Do you have a written contract? - Sector

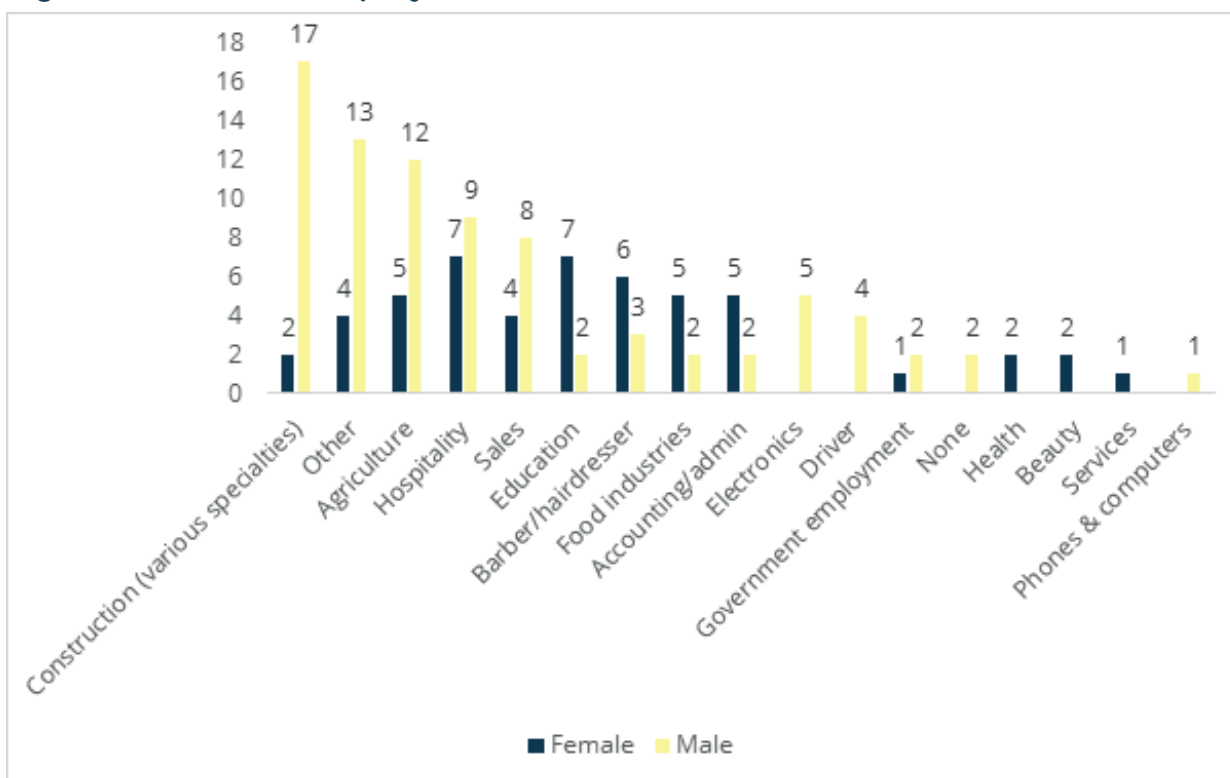
Among the 133 respondents who currently had a job, the vast majority were rather recent jobs (30% since 2020, 22% since 2019, 31% since 2018, and only 18% from before 2018), which can be explained by the fact that most of these graduates were young and just entered the labour market after, or shortly before, the training courses.

There were only very small differences between the places of work and residency, which tends to indicate that the population of graduates access local jobs, rather than commuting. The significant exception is Beirut.

Figure 37: Governorates of current work and current residency¹⁰

5.1.3. SECTORS

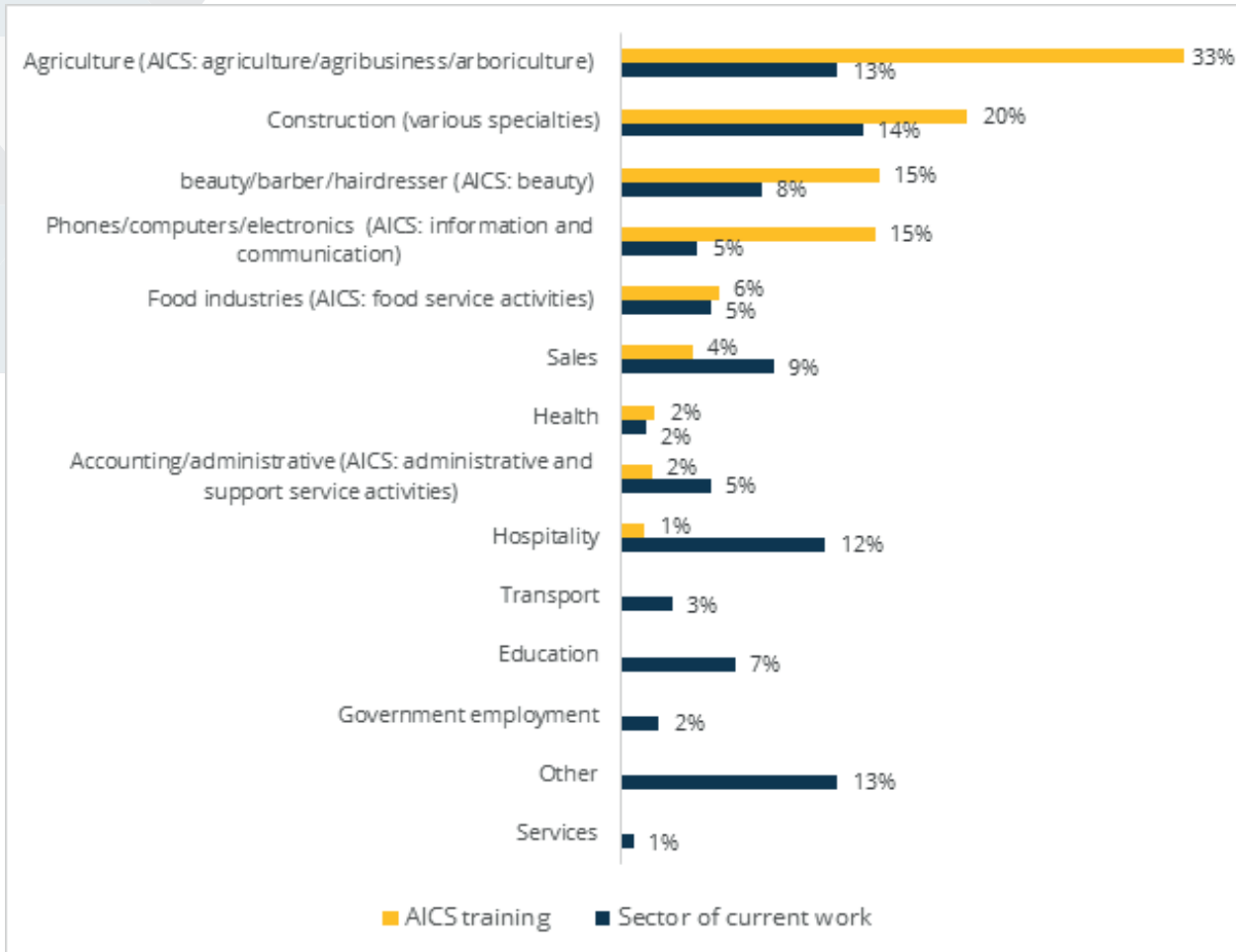
Among the graduates who were working at the time of the survey, the main sectors were construction and its various sub-sectors (plumber, electrician, painter, etc.), agriculture, hospitality, and sales:

Figure 38: Current employment - Sector

¹⁰ Residency is computed on the same group, i.e., only for those who were working at the time of the survey.

The classification of sectors was not exactly the same for the AICS training and for current work. Where possible, the following graph compares these proportions. It appears that, compared to AICS training, less people worked in the agricultural field and in phones, computers, and electronics, while more worked in hospitality and education. This could indicate a perspective for adjustment of the TVET courses offered.

Figure 39: Field of training vs field of employment



To understand which sectors seem more promising in terms of employment, the following figure presents a computation of three findings:

- Graduates whose job or jobs were in majority related to their field of training (orange bar).
- Graduates who had one or more jobs in the two years following graduation (green bar).
- Graduates who worked for pay/profit at least for one hour in the week preceding the interview (grey bar).

Food services activities, mechanics, agribusiness, and beauty appear as the sectors where graduates had higher chances to work, and to do so in their field of study.

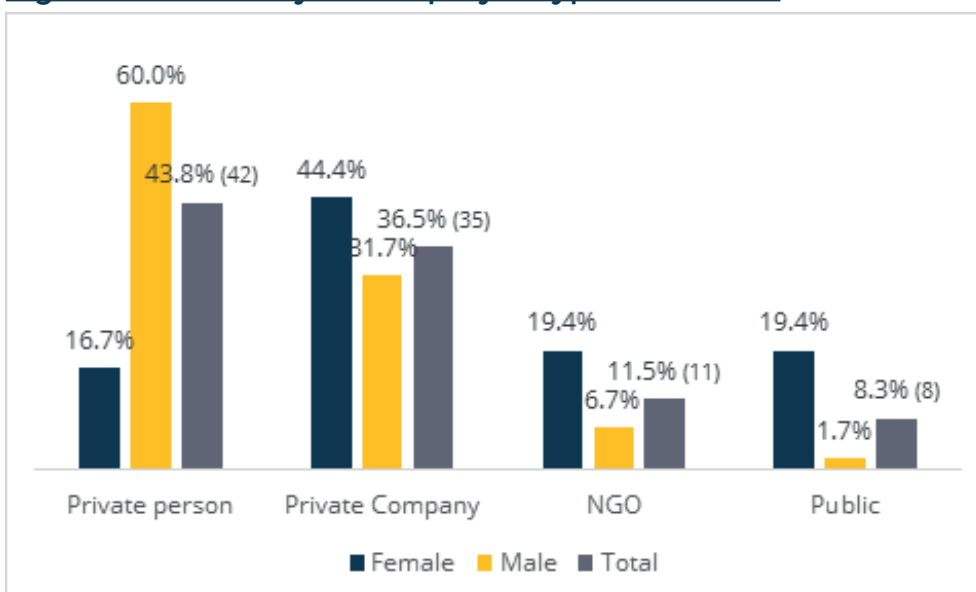
Figure 40: Computation of promising sectors



5.2.TYPES OF EMPLOYERS

Most graduates who were working (44%) worked for individuals rather than companies,¹¹ but the responses were contrasted by gender: men worked more for individuals, while women worked for private companies. This corresponds to the previous remarks about women working more in permanent employment, while men were more in temporary employment, which tended to be more related to individual contractors. Such a situation also underlines the fragmented nature of the labour market in Lebanon, at least for the level of TVET graduates.

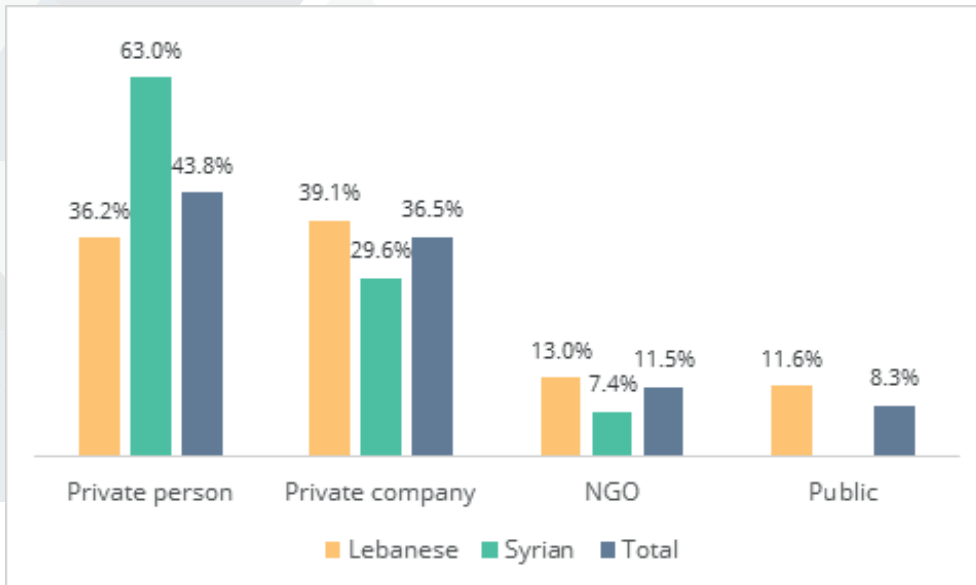
Figure 41: What is your employer type? - Gender



¹¹ Meaning that the employee is employed by one person, without formal legal structure (for instance, to cut trees in a garden).

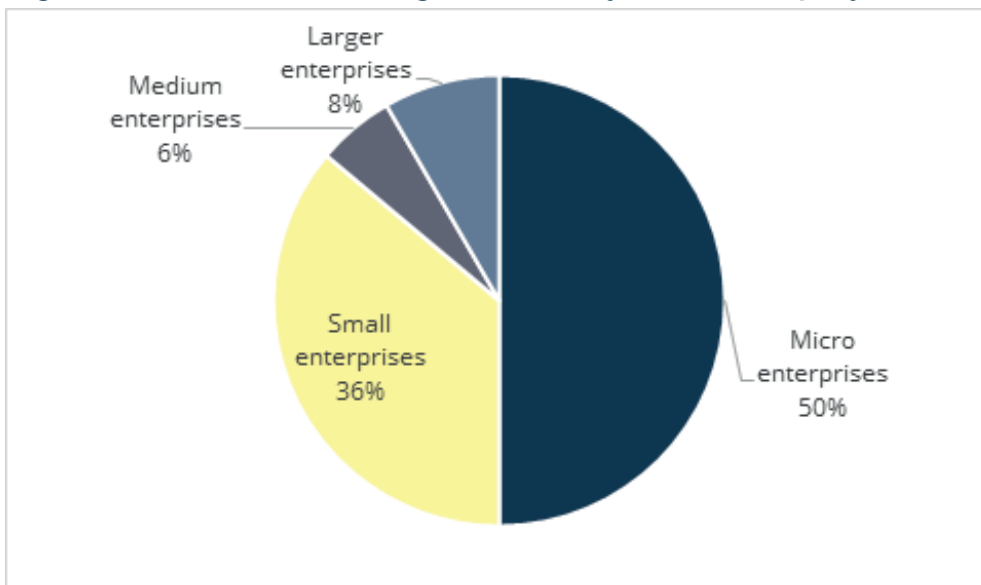
Employment by individuals rather than companies was prevalent among Syrians, who tended to work more in informal positions:

Figure 42: What is your employer type? - Nationality



Among graduates who worked in companies rather than for individuals, many were in SMEs, and more specifically (86% of them), in micro and small enterprises:

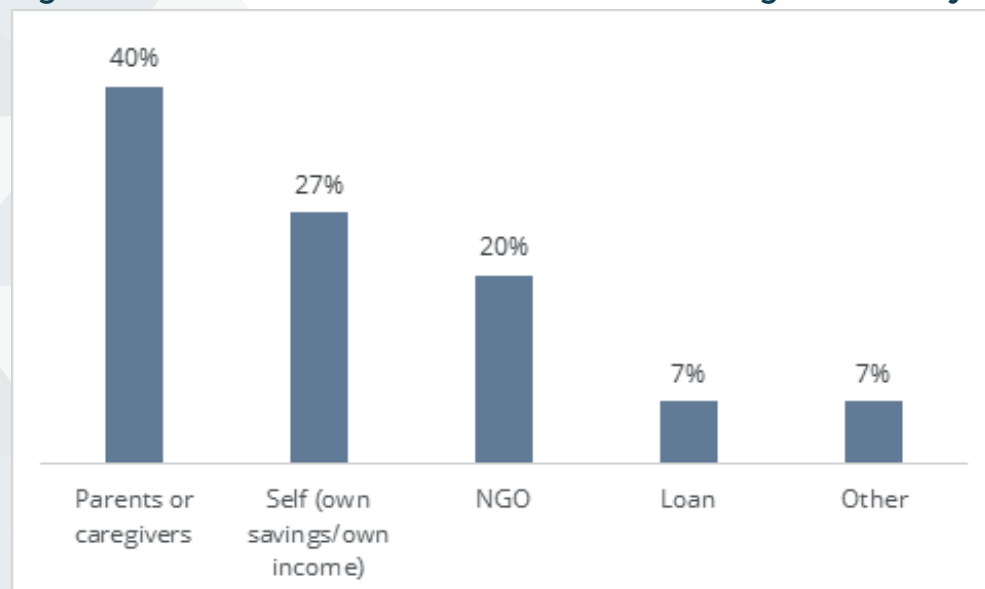
Figure 43: Distribution of graduates by size of employers¹²



5.3.EMPLOYERS

Fifteen respondents reported being employers. They employed between 0 and 14 people, but only 1.6 on average, which indicates that these were mostly single-person enterprises. A significant proportion had access to NGO funding or loans to launch their business.

¹² The size thresholds are taken from Lebanon SME Strategy: A Roadmap to 2020, Ministry of Economy and Trade: micro-enterprise up to 10 employees, small between 11 and 50, medium between 51 and 100. The conditions of turnover have been ignored here since the survey did not probe that aspect.

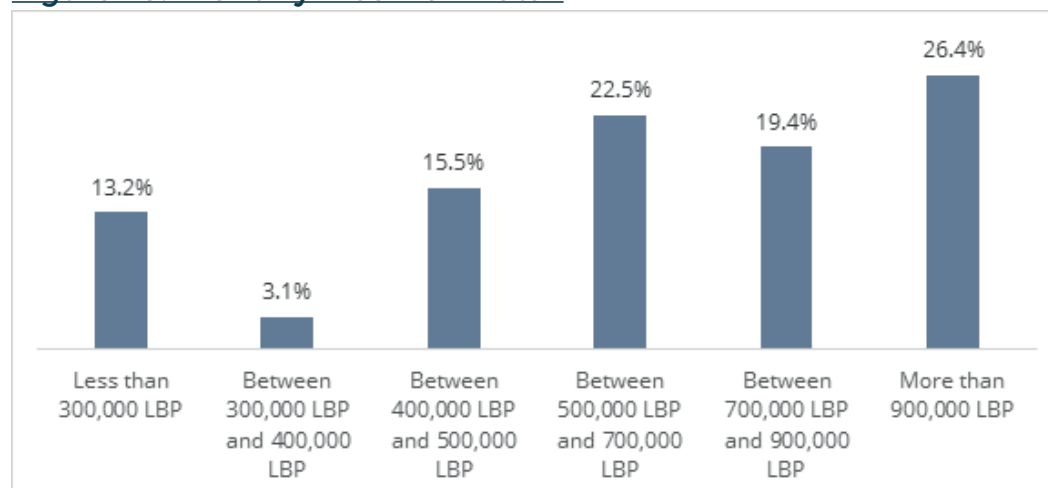
Figure 44: What was the main source of funding to launch your business/project/enterprise?

The reasons put forward to start businesses were sometimes an alternative to the absence of wage employment (“no other option”, “couldn’t find a job”, etc.), but also in some cases were more self-driven (“liked to be independent”, “wanted to work on my own”, etc.).

5.4.DECENT WORK

Among graduates who were in employment at the time of the survey, the working times average was 7.4 hours per day and 5.15 days per week. The total weekly working time ($7.4 * 5.15 = 38.11$ hours) therefore seems to remain under the official limit in Lebanon (48 hours per week).

Regarding the respondents’ incomes, this question was positioned in various ways, namely daily/weekly/monthly, and USD/LBP. The recomputed monthly income in LBP¹³ averaged at 1.7m LBP (equivalent to around 210 USD per month), but a small number of much higher salaries increased this average.¹⁴ The median value was 600,000 LBP (equivalent to 75 USD a month). In more detail, the income groups were as follows:

Figure 45: Monthly income - Total

¹³ The unofficial exchange rate at the time of the survey was 1 USD = 8,000 LBP, which represents the average value on the informal exchange market, the only one accessible to this population.

¹⁴ Incomes were classified according to income ranges proposed in the previous ILO tracer study ‘Upgrading the Technical Agriculture Education System in Lebanon’ project, in Enhance the capacity of the MOA for evidence-based planning through pilot tracer studies, Final report, August 2020

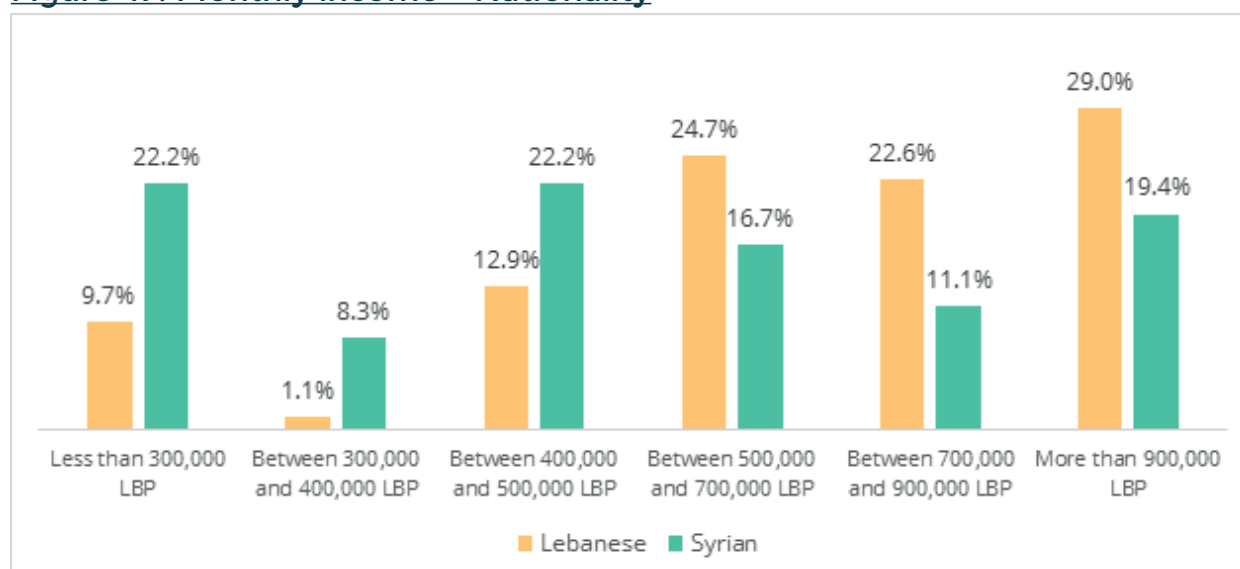
There are important differences between genders in term of income. The median value is 500,000 LBP for women and 700,000 LBP for men. By income groups the differences are important:

Figure 46: Monthly income (thousands LBP) - Gender

Monthly income (thousand LBP)	Women	Men
< 300	20.8%	20.8%
300 to 400	2.1%	2.1%
400 to 500	16.7%	16.7%
500 to 700	25.0%	25.0%
700 to 900	20.8%	20.8%
> 900	14.6%	14.6%

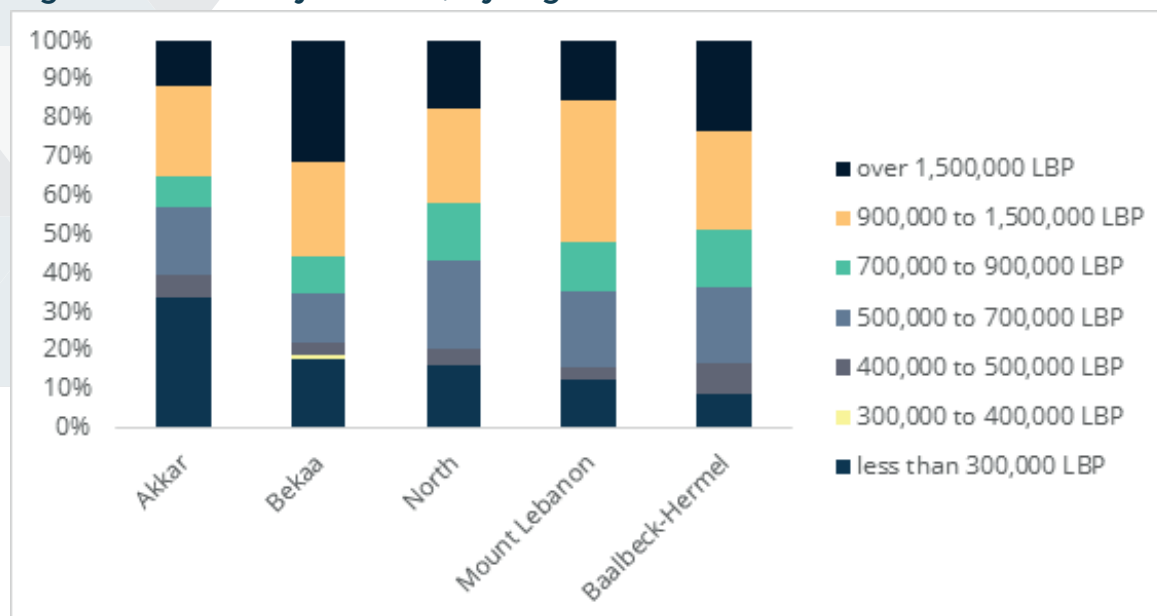
The difference by nationality is approximately of the same magnitude: median value of 700,000 LBP for Lebanese, and around 450,000 LBP for Syrians. Lebanese were more frequently in income groups over 500,000 LBP per month, while Syrians were more frequently in the under 500,000 LBP per month income group.

Figure 47: Monthly income - Nationality



The following graph shows regional contrasts in family income, with the Bekaa region (east Lebanon) showcasing the highest earning threshold and Akkar (north Lebanon), showcasing the opposite trend, with the highest number in the lowest wage category. Baalbeck-Hermel had the lowest number of graduates in the lower income bracket, and the second highest, after Bekaa, in the over 1,500,000 LBP bracket.

Figure 48: Monthly income, by region¹⁵



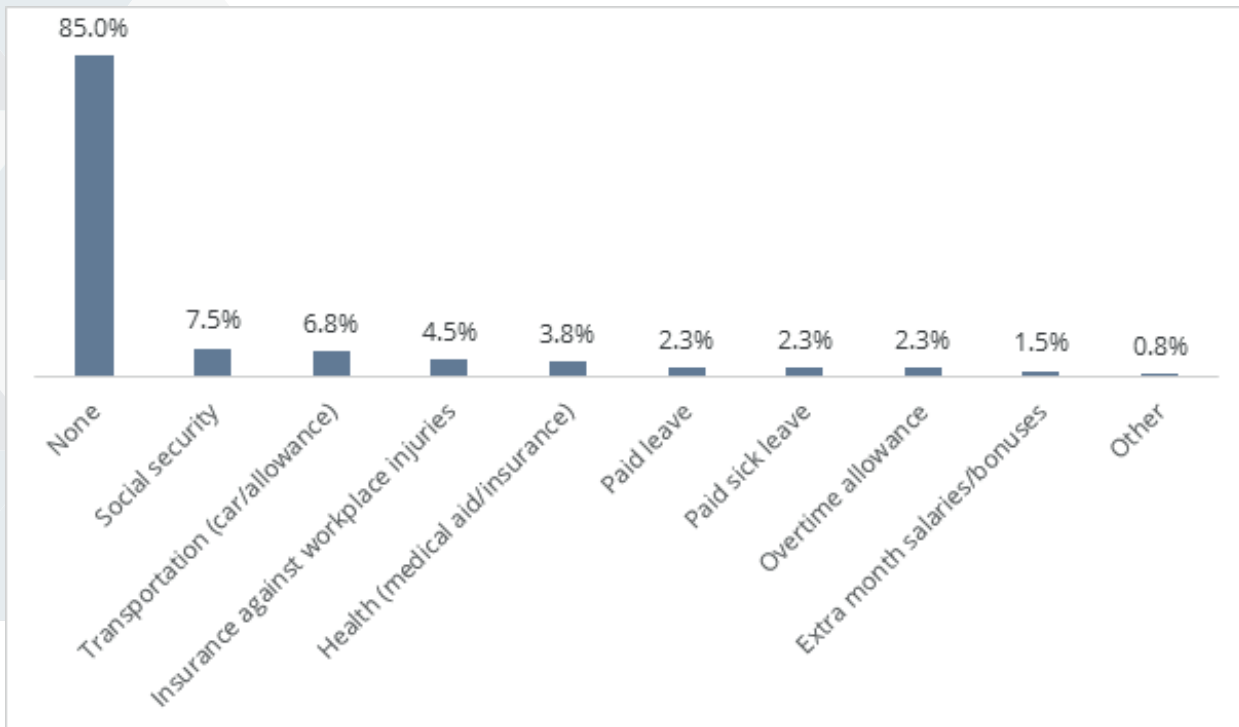
By training category, on average, graduates who studied sales, mechanics, construction, and agriculture had a higher family income (above 1.4m LBP/month) than other specialties.

Almost no graduates received any work benefits other than their direct wage. In particular, very few (%7.5) were affiliated with social security, and even less had specific health or accident insurance, paid leave, etc. It seems therefore that decent work conditions pose more of an issue than the reported working hours.

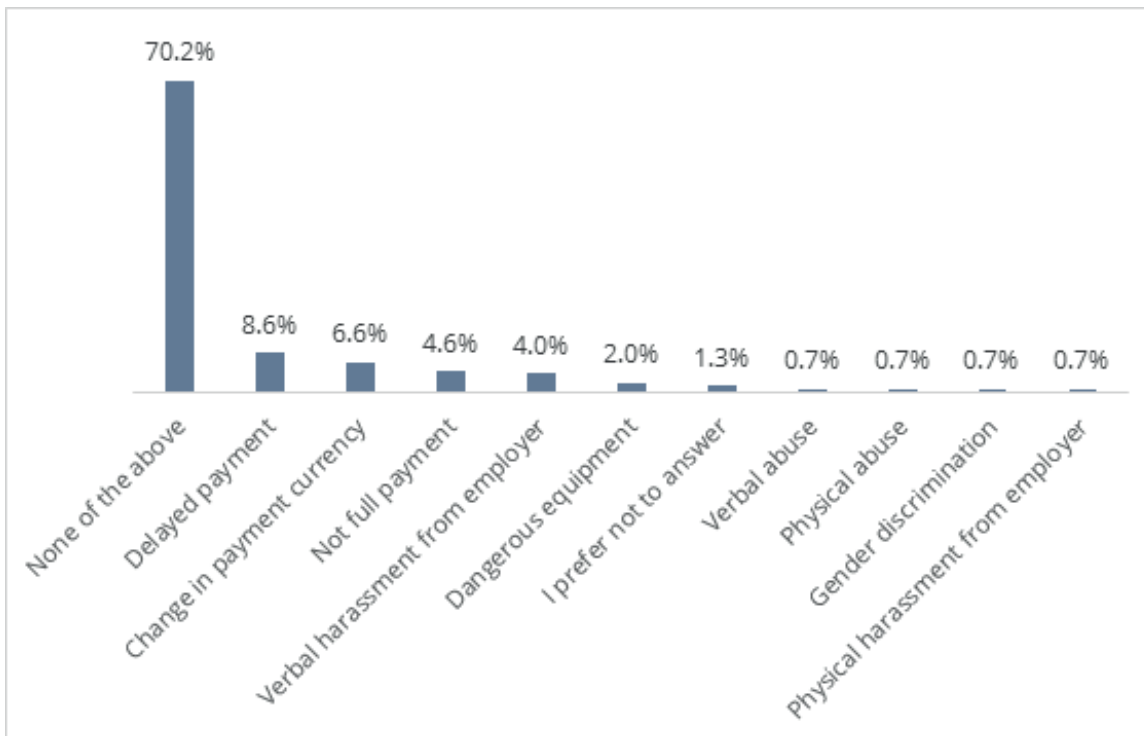
There are, however, strong differences by work status:

- Short-term and casual employees, as well as employers and independent workers without employees, generally had no benefits (%93, %91 and %100, respectively).
- Permanent employees had more benefits (%28 have social security, %9 transport allowance, %19 insurance against workplace injuries, %13 health).

¹⁵ Beirut, South and Nabatiyeh have been ignored in this figure because the number of respondents was too low to provide significant data (15, 1 and 14 respectively).

Figure 49: What kind of other benefits do you receive?

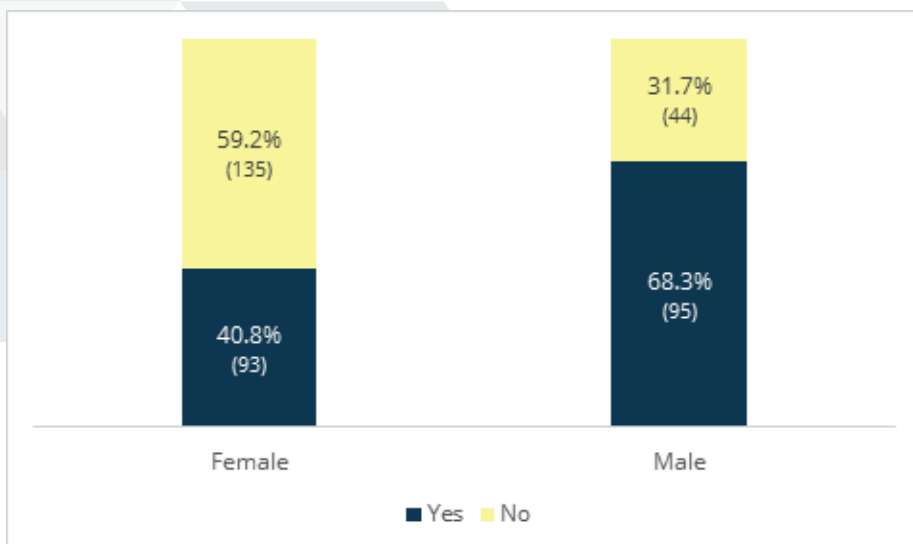
Most graduates working at the time of the study (70.2%) reported not facing particular challenges at work. However, 8.6% of working graduates had experienced delays in the payment of wages, and 6.6% experienced switches in currency (which can amount to dividing the purchasing power by three or more, given the rapid depreciation of the Lebanese Pound):

Figure 50: Have you faced any of these challenges at work?

5.5. GRADUATES NOT WORKING AT THE TIME OF THE STUDY

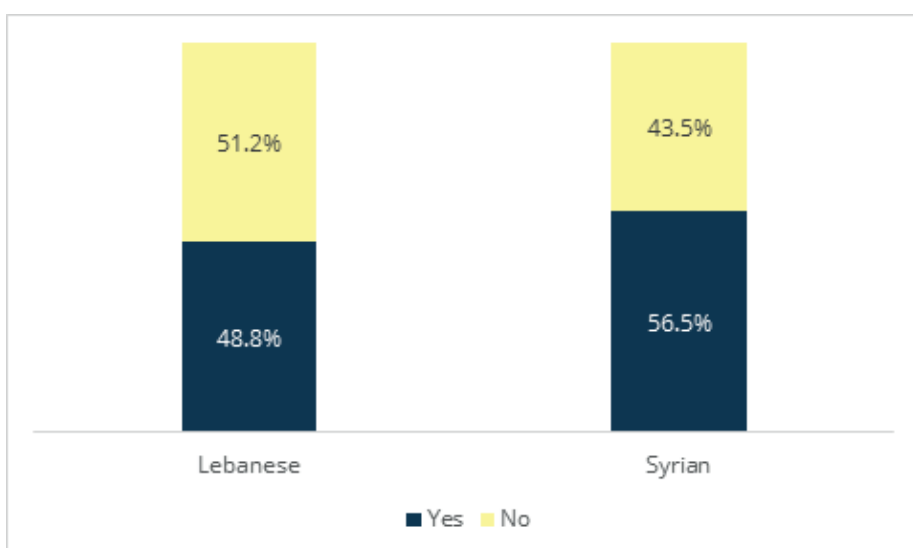
Among the graduates who did not work for pay/profit at least one hour in the week preceding the interview, 51% were actively seeking work, with a noticeable difference between men (68.3%) and women (40.8%) which reflects a strong cultural pattern (common to many MENA countries), leading to a much lower labour force participation among women.

Figure 51: Are you actively seeking work? - Gender

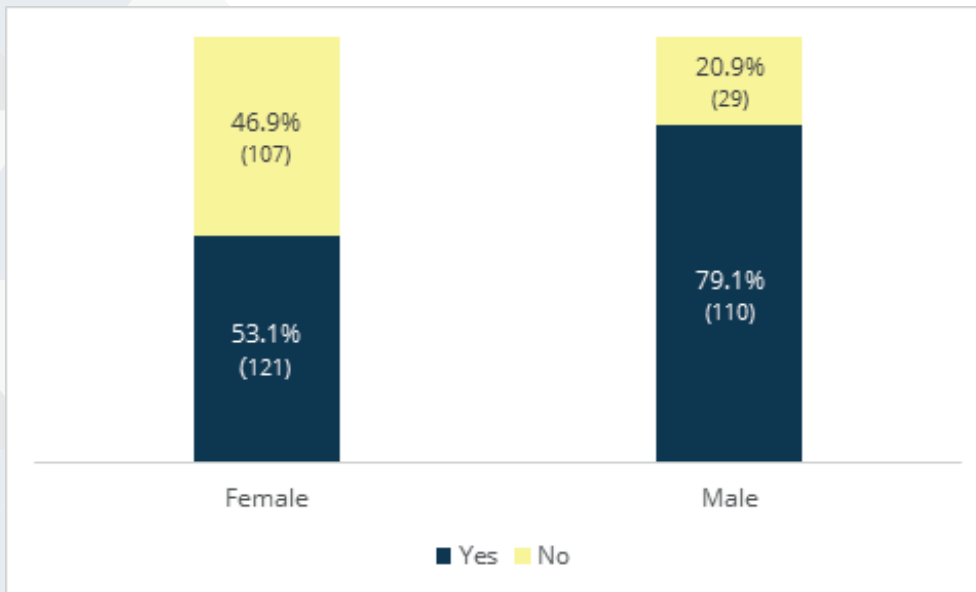


Syrian respondents were actively seeking work in a higher proportion than Lebanese respondents.

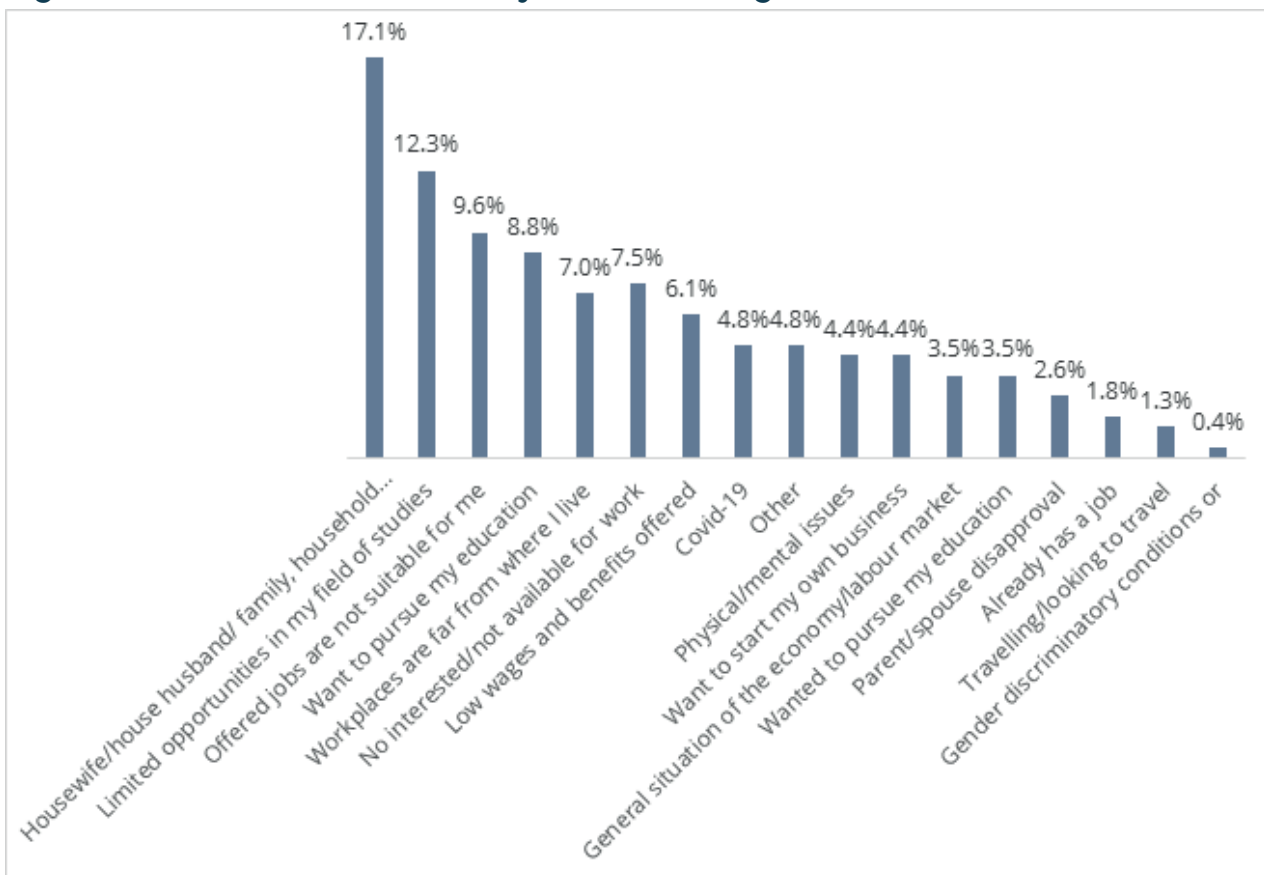
Figure 52: Are you actively seeking work? - Nationality



A notable percentage (62.9%) of the non-working respondents were available for work. This means that a number of beneficiaries available for work were not actively seeking work (as can be inferred from various other questions, because of perceived non-attractiveness of the labour market in terms of wages, opportunities in their specialty, distance, etc.). The difference between male and female respondents is again striking, with 53.1% of women available for work, compared to 79.1% of men.

Figure 53: Are you available for work?

Among graduates who were not actively looking for work or not available, the main reasons were family-related which could explain the high proportion of female respondents not seeking work. However, there are also reasons linked to the situation of the labour market itself:

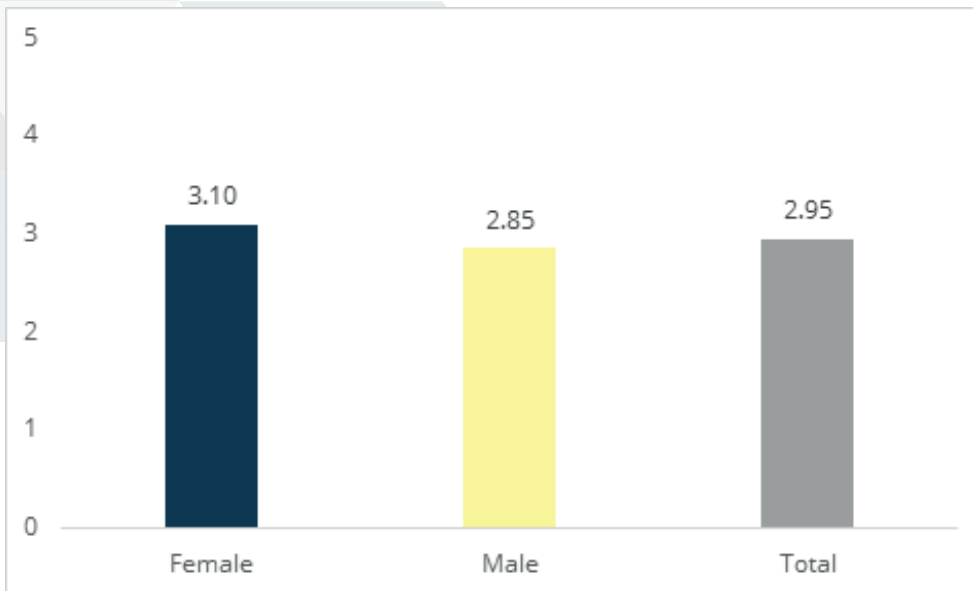
Figure 54: For what reasons are you not seeking/available for work?

The category “other” included several answers related to the fear of Covid-19.

5.6.RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDY/TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Graduates who were in employment at the time of the study reported using some of the skills they acquired during the vocational training, but to a limited extent only: 2.95 on a scale from 1 (not utilised at all) to 5 (utilised a lot):

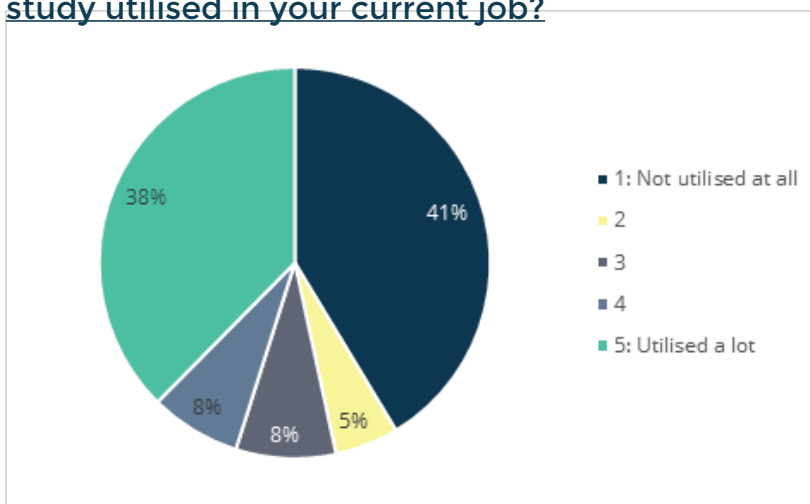
Figure 55: To what extent are the knowledge, skills and attitude you acquired during your study utilised in your current job? - Gender



Younger graduates tended to use less the skills acquired during the training in their current job: respondents who were less than 18 years old at the time of the programme rated this utilisation at 2.12. This grade increases with the age of the graduates: 3.17 for the 19 to 24 age group, 3.30 for respondents between 25 to 34 years old, and 3.50 for 35 to 54 years old.

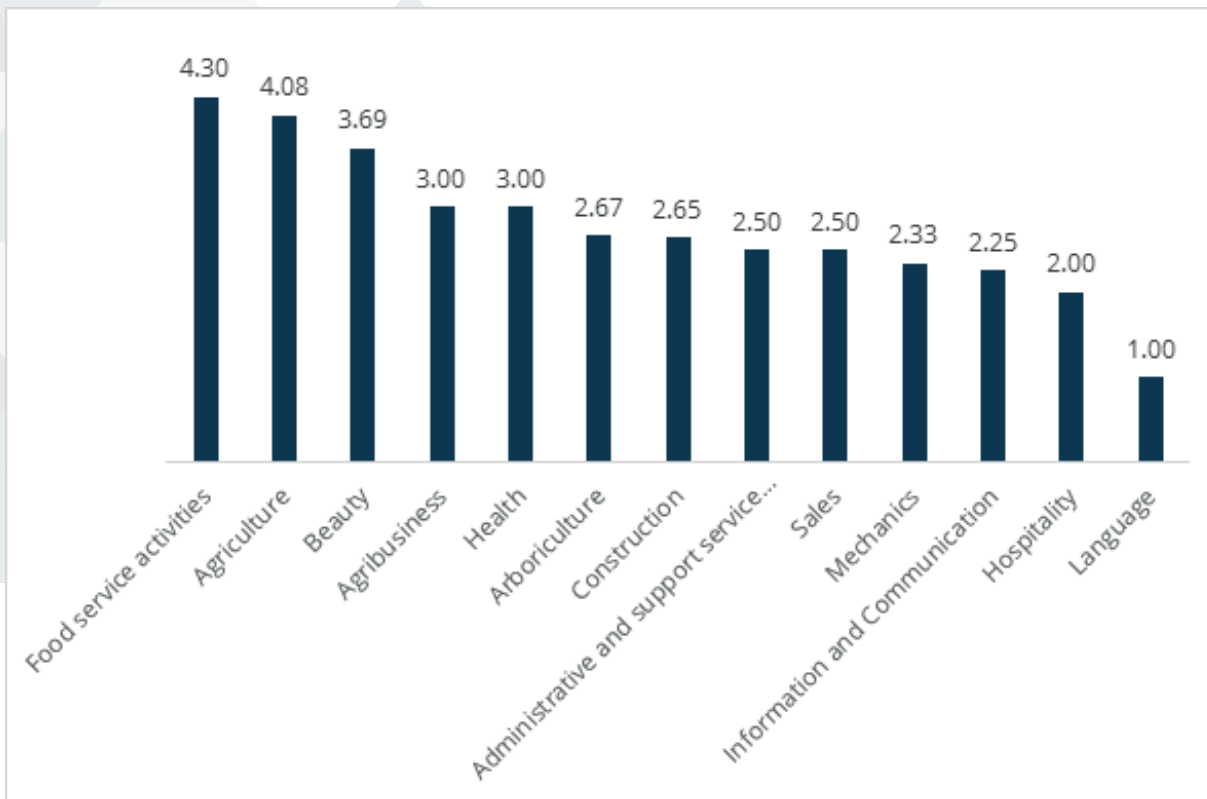
The survey clearly shows that working graduates either did not use the skills acquired at all (41%) or used them to a very high extent (38%). A small proportion of respondents used some of the skills acquired. This calls for better alignment to labour market skills needs and competency-based occupation standards.

Figure 56: To what extent are the knowledge, skills and attitude you acquired during your study utilised in your current job?



The skills were used in a higher proportion for trainees in food services, agriculture, and

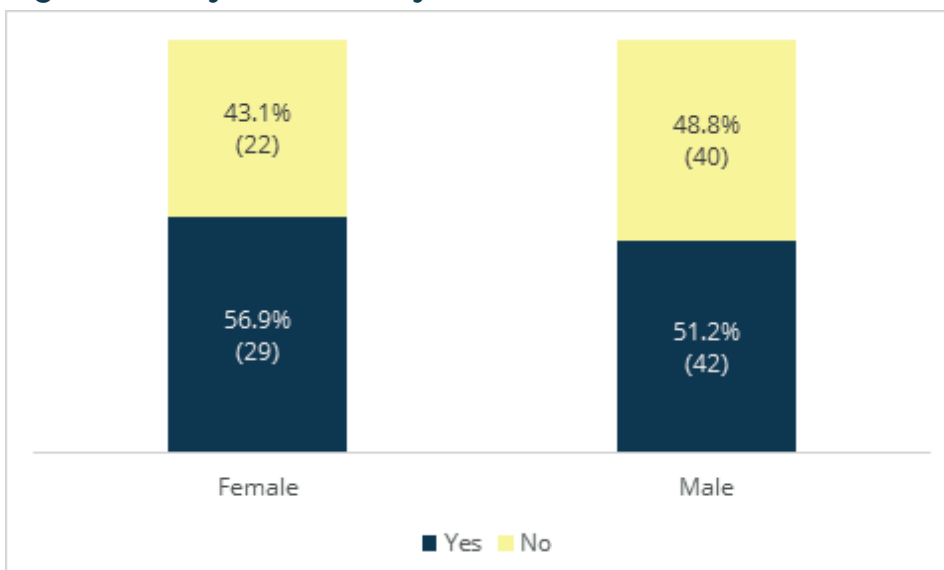
Figure 57: To what extent are the knowledge, skills and attitude you acquired during your study utilised in your current job? - Training course



The results are similar when looking by current sector of activity (for those who work), with skills highly used in beauty, agriculture, and food industries, and least used in sales and hospitality for example.

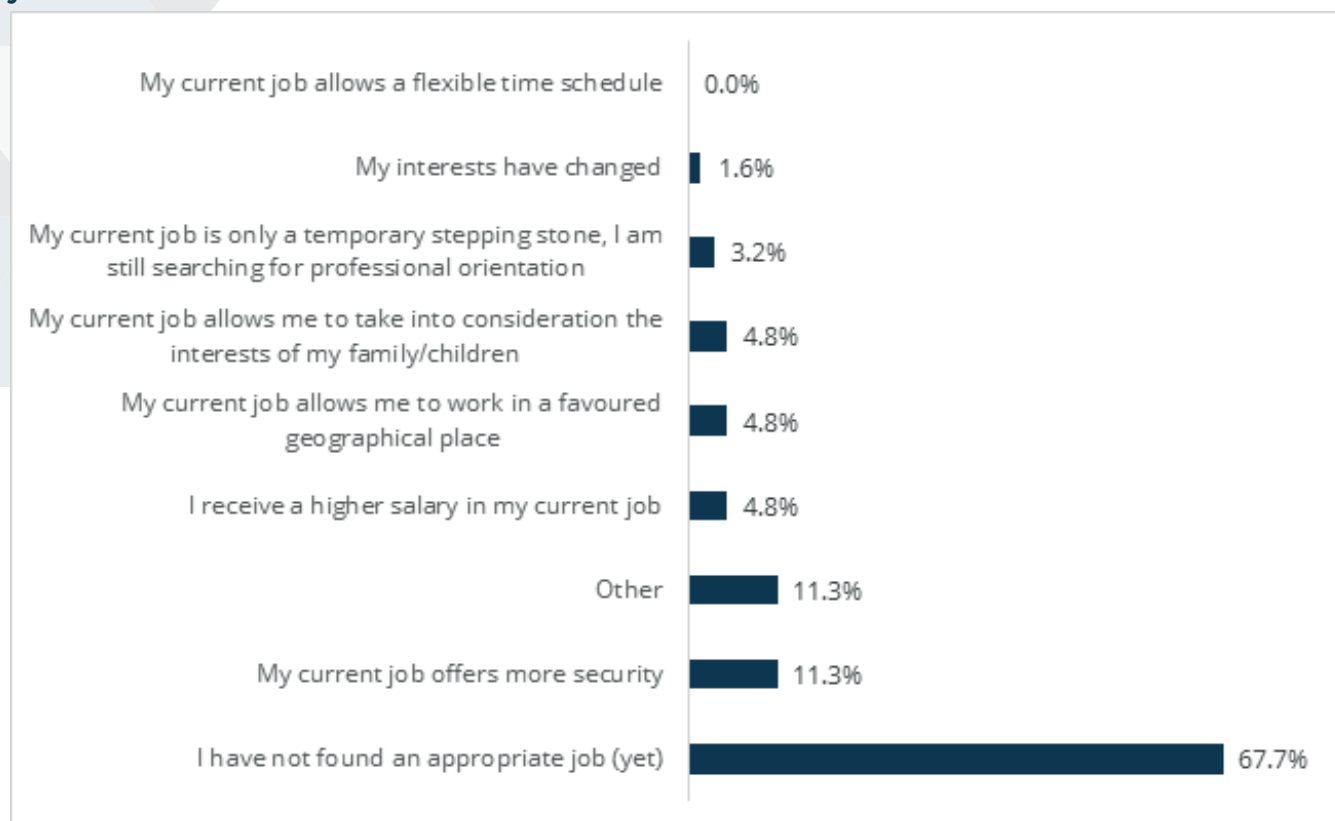
This rather low usage of acquired skills relates to the fact that, among graduates who were working at the time of the survey, only about half (53%) did so in a job related to the training they took in 2018.

Figure 58: Is your current job related to the course of studies/training you took?



In most cases (67.7%), the reason why the respondents' work was unrelated to their training was because they did not find an appropriate job in the field of this specific training. This disconnect highlights an area of improvement for future market studies that help determine training topics.

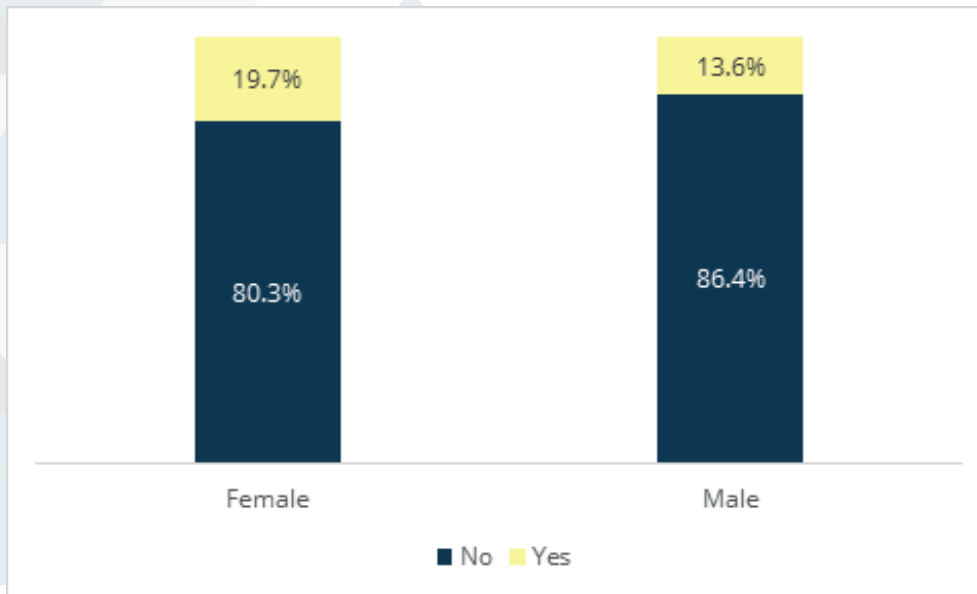
Figure 59: If your job is not closely related to your course of study, why did you choose this job?



5.7. OTHER STUDIES

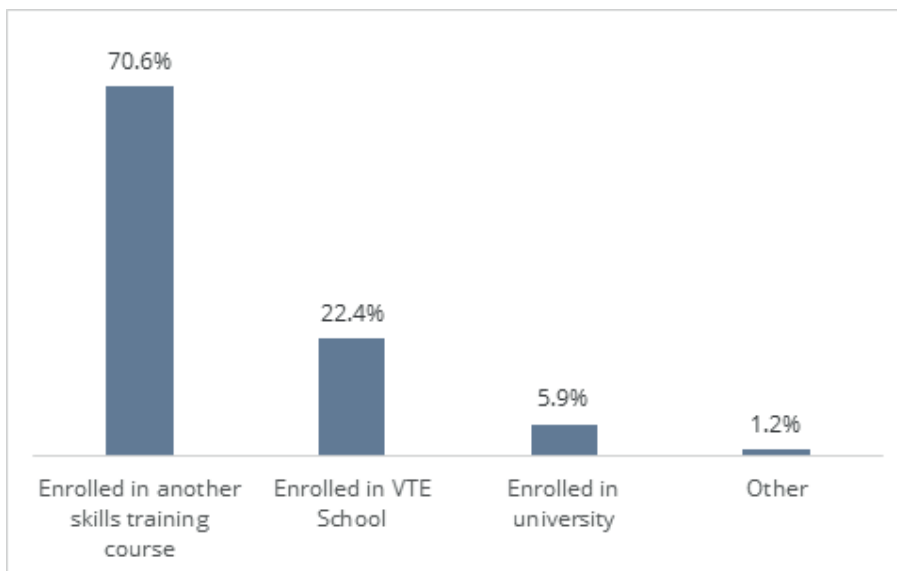
Only few graduates (17%) enrolled in other vocational training courses after the AICS programme, which is reassuring: the “training shopping” phenomenon (whereby beneficiaries jump from one training to the next as a sign of failure to integrate in the labour market), which has been discussed among humanitarian and development actors in Lebanon, remains limited. Slightly more women had enrolled in other courses (graph below), and slightly more Lebanese respondents than Syrian, and more among the younger age groups.

Figure 60: Have you started another course of studies after your graduation from this institution?



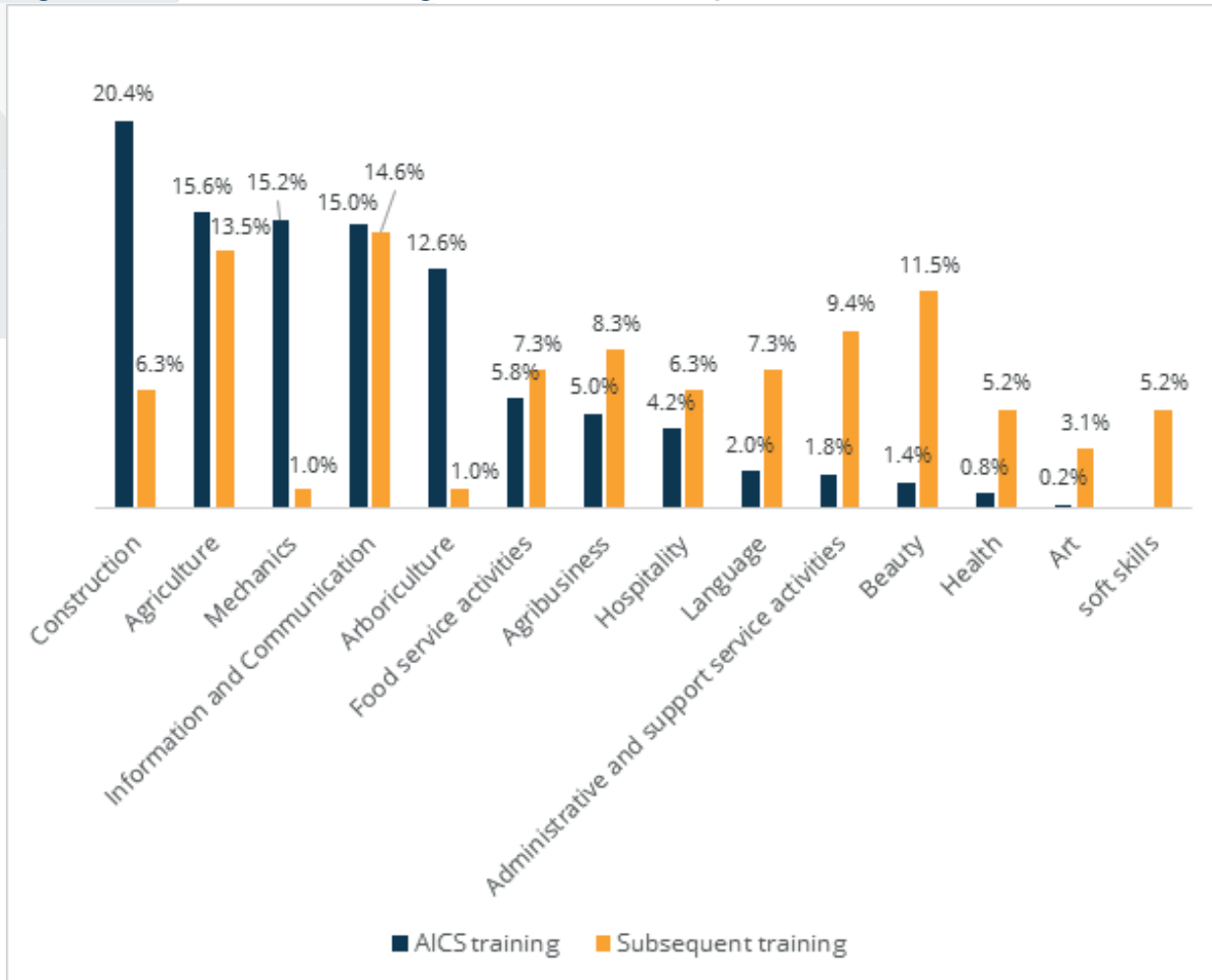
Among those enrolled in other vocational training courses, the majority (70.6%) took another skills training course, rather than going to a vocational school or university (the latter being often inaccessible to them in the first place, since many have not completed high school, while vocational schools may also be difficult to access for Syrian refugees).

Figure 61: Specify the type of course



The following graph compares the distribution by training category between the initial AICS training and the subsequent training that some (17%) of the graduates chose to attend afterwards. It displays strong differences between sectors. For example, almost as many respondents that underwent the AICS training in the information and communication sector (15%) had subsequent training (14.6%), while subsequent training percentage points were higher for beauty, health, and languages compared to construction and mechanics.

Figure 62: Fields of training, AICS and subsequent courses





VULNERABILITY, IMPACT OF THE CRISES AND OTHER ASPECTS

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A proportion (11%) of the graduates have certain disabilities which, for a significant number, created obstacles especially in regard to finding a job in their field of study.
- The various crises experienced by Lebanon had a serious impact on the graduates of the training programme, reducing their chance to work, and for those who did work, the amount of work and their income (especially men and Syrians).
- Implementing organisations found ILO training on labour laws and regulations in Lebanon useful because of its practicality and presented what they had learned to SMEs and trainees.

6.1.DISABILITY

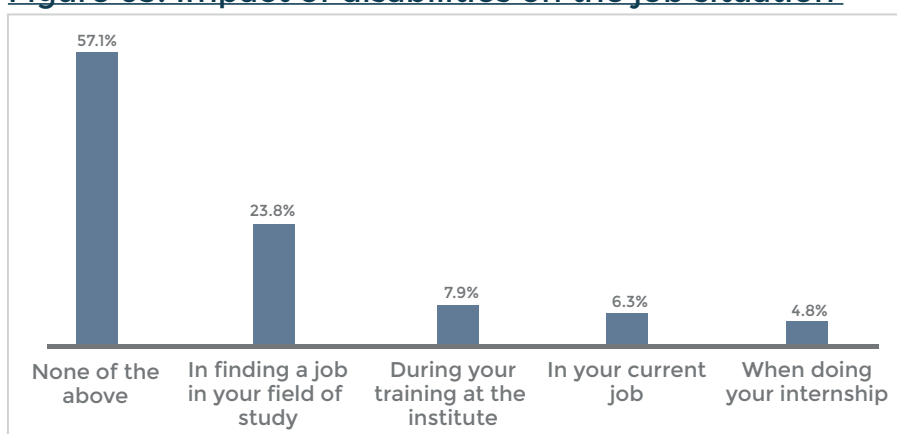
The survey tool included questions on difficulties with:

- seeing, even if wearing glasses
- hearing, even if using hearing aid(s)
- walking or climbing steps
- remembering or concentrating
- self-care, such as washing all over or dressing
- communicating, for example, understanding or being understood, while using their usual language

Eleven per cent of respondents experienced one or several of these difficulties, which is a high proportion especially for this rather young population (24 years old at the time of training, on average). This could be explained by the programme targeting vulnerable populations, hence people with disability. It could also reflect a lack of treatment since the disability was appraised after correction (“even if wearing glasses?”, etc.). There were no major differences by gender or by nationality – the main factor was age (under 10% of disability for respondents under 25 years old, but 13%, 24%, 25% and 100%¹⁶ respectively for the age groups 25 to 34, 35 to 54, 55 to 64 and above 65).

Although these disabilities had no impact on about 57% of respondents, for a significant number they did create obstacles, especially in regard to finding a job in their field of study:

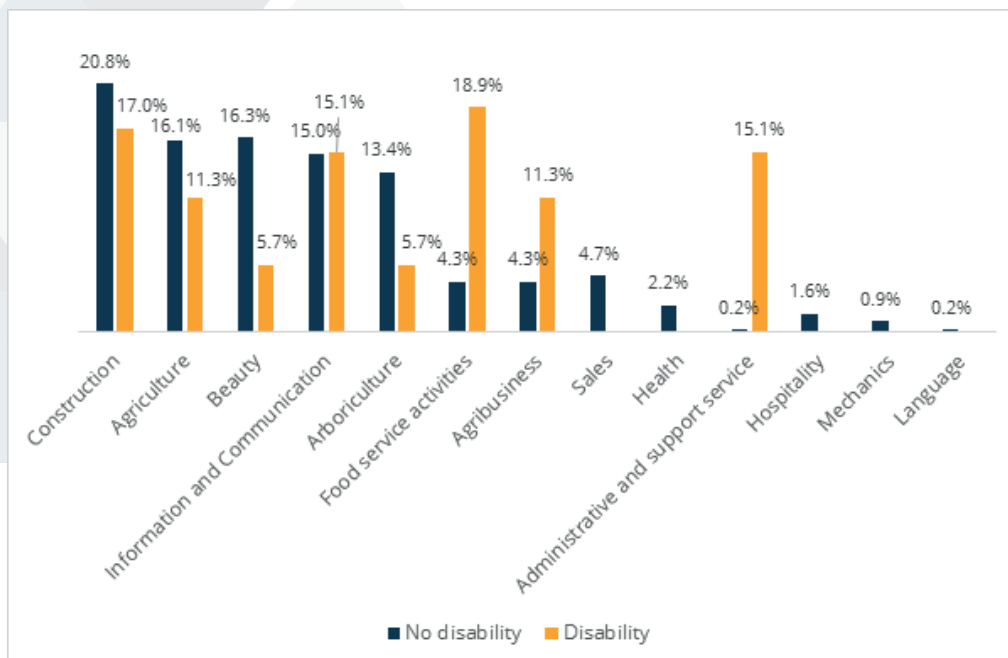
Figure 63: Impact of disabilities on the job situation



¹⁶ Only two respondents in this group age.

As shown in the graph below, food service activities represent the highest number of respondents with disabilities. People showing disabilities were also highly represented in the administrative and agribusiness sectors.

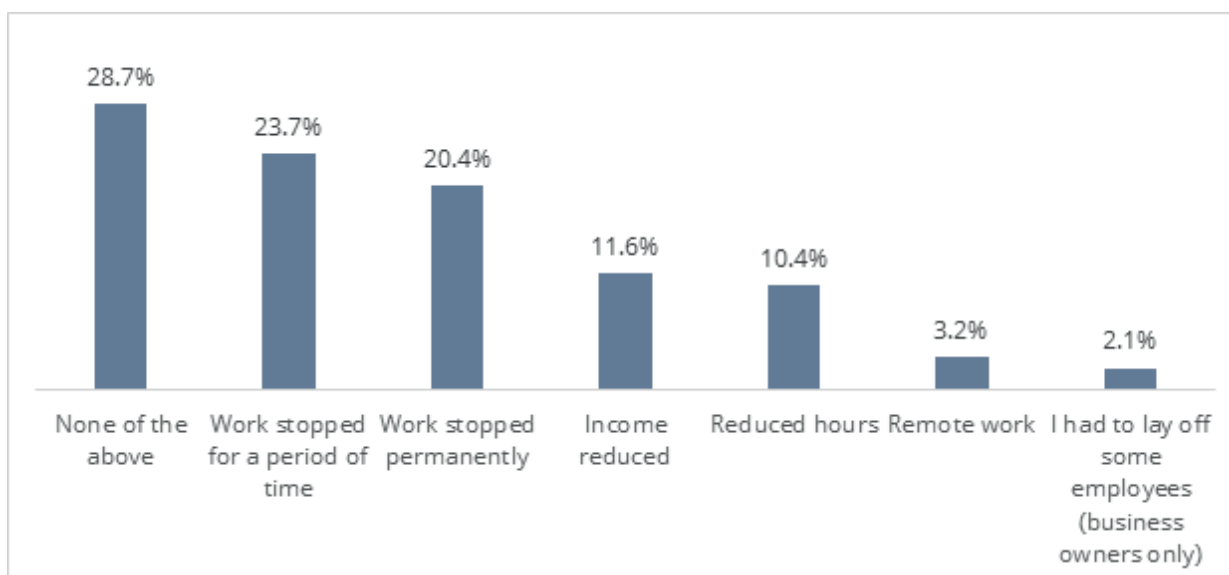
Figure 64: Training course categories - Disability



6.2.IMPACT OF THE CRISES

The multiple crises experienced by Lebanon (financial, political and sanitary) have had a tremendous impact on this population of graduates. Two-thirds (71.3%) of the whole sample experienced a direct negative impact (temporary or permanent interruption of work, reduced wage, reduced hours). Unlike jobs occupied by university graduates, these tasks could not switch easily to remote work, or at least not in practice (3.2%):

Figure 65: Impact of the crises on work situation¹⁷

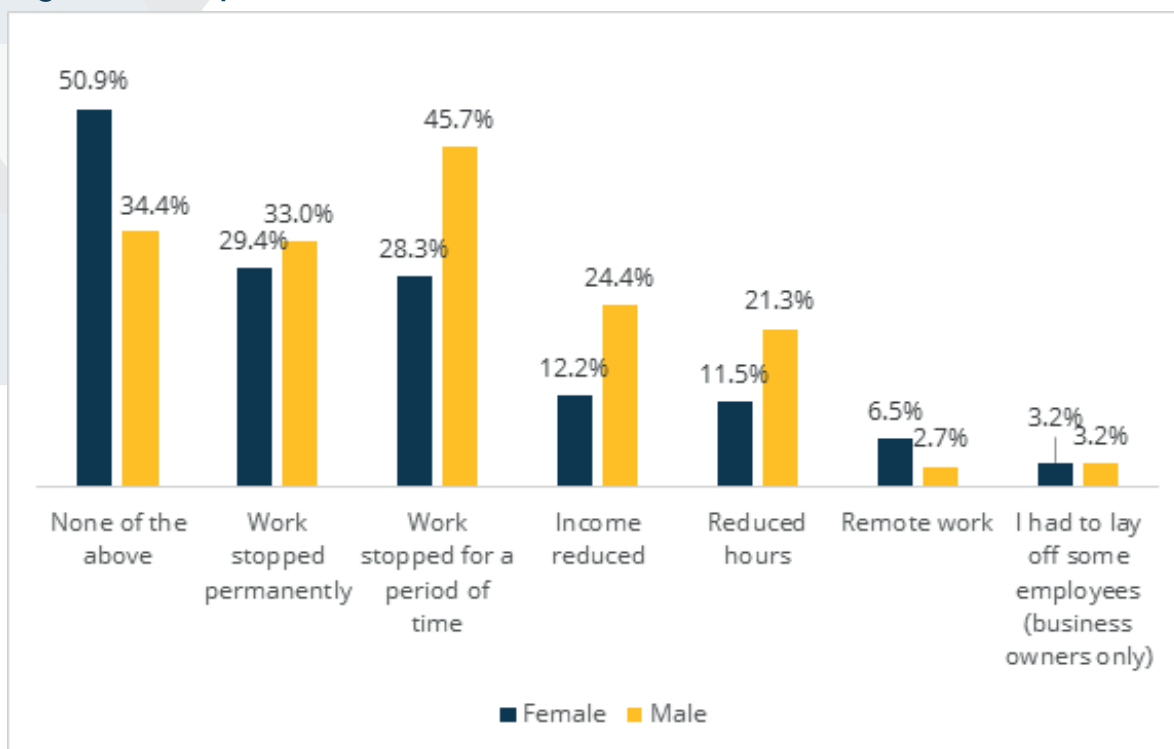


¹⁷ The survey question was phrased as "Was your work impacted in the following ways by the multifaceted crisis (Covid-19, protests, financial, etc..) in Lebanon?"

Among those who witnessed an income reduction, the decrease was quite sharp (59.49% on average).

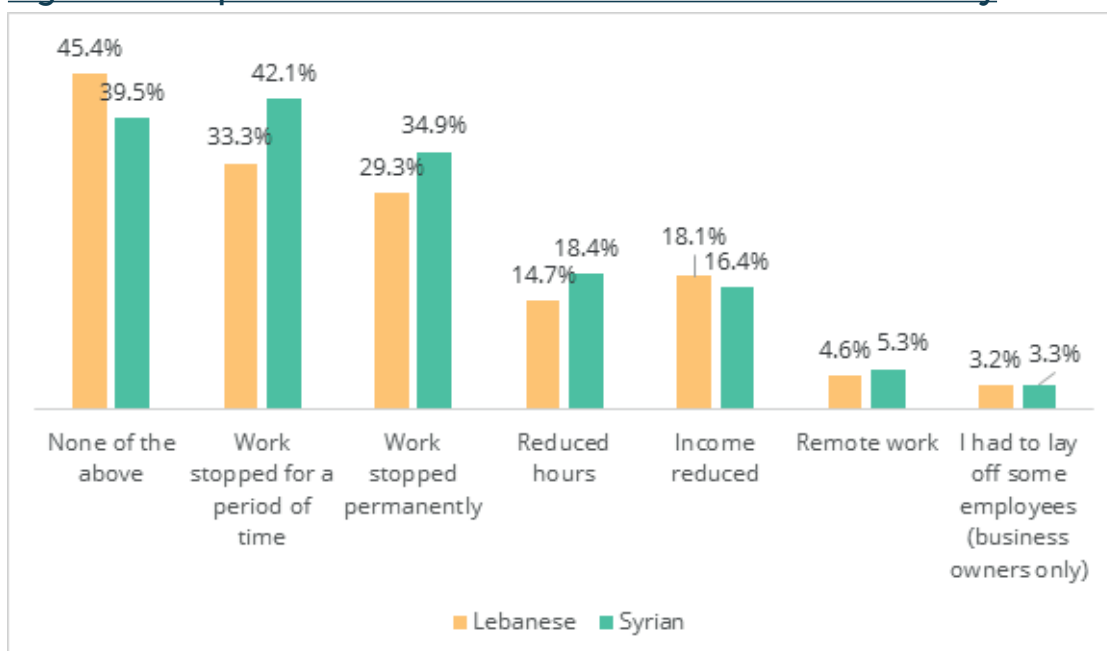
Since the primary effect was temporary reduction of work, men (who work more often in temporary jobs) were affected disproportionately:

Figure 66: Impact of the crises on work situation - Gender



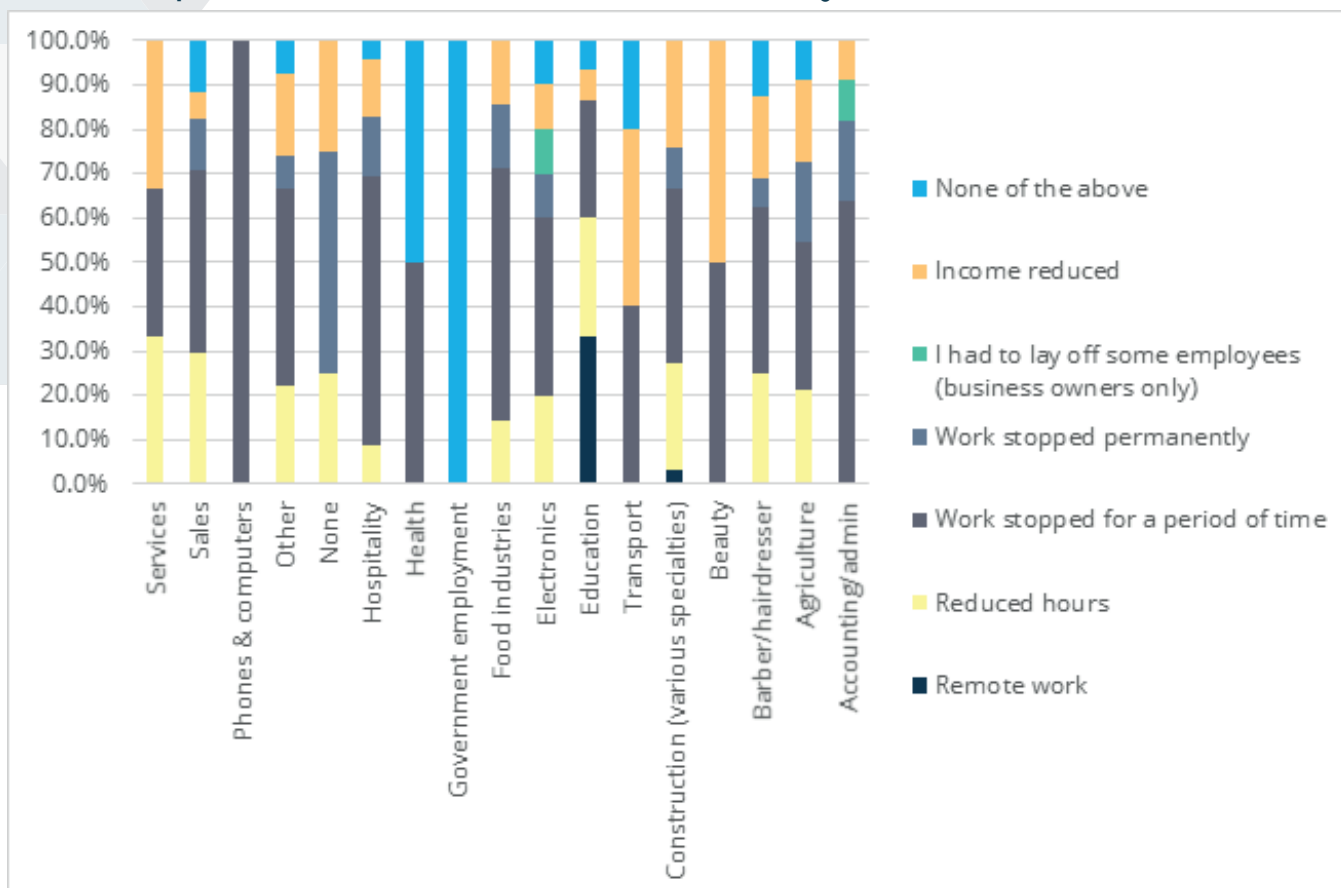
Syrian graduates were also more affected, for the same reasons:

Figure 67: Impact of the crises on work situation - Nationality



There is no major difference by region, but when considering only the graduates who were working at the time of the survey, the impact of the crises is strongly contrasted by sector, with services most impacted, while government employment and health remained less affected, and education partly adapted through remote work:

Figure 68: Was your work impacted in the following ways by the multifaceted crisis (Covid-19, protests, financial, etc..) in Lebanon? - By sector of current work¹⁸




6.3. PROGRAMME LEVEL: SUPPORT FROM ILO AND ITALIAN NGOS

Six Italian NGOs received grants to conduct vocational training. They relied on Lebanese training providers, that sometimes themselves called for other providers for specific courses. This tended to create many layers in the programme's implementation and the likelihood of loss of information or control over the activities. From the interviews conducted, it seems that the Italian NGOs were involved in different degrees in the different phases of the programme. Some of them were strongly involved and managed to secure partnerships with public actors, conducted the market study themselves and closely followed the training delivery. However, it seems some Italian NGOs let Lebanese training providers conduct most of the activities with little support. This finding is in line with the conclusions of the ILO independent cluster evaluation conducted in June 2018,¹⁹ that found that the coaching and mentoring of local providers in post-training activities was an area that requires improvement.


¹⁸ There are values above 100% because this was a multiple choice question.

¹⁹ Independent cluster evaluation of improved and market-based provision of vocational training for Lebanese citizens and refugees, July 2019.

The programme's partners found the role of ILO useful. They really enjoyed the training, with a special mention to the practical areas such as the rights and duties of employees, type of employment contracts and legal rights for locals and foreigners. Following this training, some partners presented what they had learned to SMEs and trainees. The training on labour law, legal status, how to issue residency and work permits, and legislation around freelancing were very useful for Syrian beneficiaries. However, some training sessions were delivered quite late for such a short programme (how to conduct a market assessment, for instance) and some of the Lebanese training providers (as subcontractors) did not participate.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



7.1.FINDINGS

• Employment outcomes of graduates from the programme

The graduates of the AICS funded VT programme surveyed had a **very favourable view of the training courses**, especially in terms of personal development. However, as confirmed by the transition from training to work and current employment status, **the usefulness of the training in finding a job was perceived as more limited**, with graduates rating this aspect at 3.1 on a scale from 1 to 5. At the time of the survey, 26.6% of the graduates interviewed reported working. The multiple crises experienced by Lebanon (financial, political and sanitary) had a tremendous impact on this population of graduates, with two-thirds experiencing a direct negative impact (temporary or permanent interruption of work, reduced wage, reduced hours, etc.). However, these crises are not the only factors explaining the dire employability issues faced by the target group. Over half (54.9%) of all respondents did not work from the time of training (2018, i.e., before these crises) to the end of 2020. The constraints from the labour market side are an explaining factor (few jobs available, at low wages, in distant places, etc.), but **personal reasons** are also important, especially among female graduates (marriage, pregnancy, etc.).

Among the 45.1% of graduates who worked in the two years following the training programme, 40% found jobs within three months, but the remaining 60% took much longer (14 months on average).

The proportion of respondents reporting working at the time of the survey (26.6%) was higher than the proportion of respondents who were working before or during the AICS training programme (18.6%), conveying **improvement in the employment status of graduates**.

Fifteen respondents reported being **employers**. They employ between 0 and 14 people, but only 1.6 on average, which indicates that these are mostly single-person enterprises. A significant proportion had access to NGO funding or loans to launch their business, though the majority relied on their family or own savings as sources of funding.

• Use of the skills acquired through training and market relevance

Graduates who were in employment at the time of the study reported **using some of the skills they acquired during the vocational training**, but to a limited extent only: 2.95 on a scale from 1 (not utilised at all) to 5 (utilised a lot). The skills were used in a higher proportion for trainees in food services, agriculture, and beauty sectors. The survey clearly shows that working graduates either did not use the skills acquired at all (41%) or used them to a very high extent (38%). The fact that 41% of the working graduates declared not using the skills acquired at all calls for **better alignment to labour market skills needs and competency-based occupation standards**.

There is moderate interest from employers for vocational training degrees, but the many non-recognised certificates are increasing confusion amongst employers and appear to be diluting the appeal somewhat.

Younger graduates tended to use the skills acquired during the training in their current job less. They were also less likely to work in their field of training, calling for better designed guidance prior to enrolment in any training.

The results of the study show that there is still room for specialties to align closer to the labour market. Only about half (53%) of the graduates employed at the time of the survey worked in jobs related to the training that they took in 2018. Those who worked in a different sector explained that they did not find an appropriate job in their field of training, which suggests there is room for improvement in the market assessments in terms of choosing training topics.

- **Social and economic barriers in employment**

Some key findings emerged from the study in terms of gender: the proportion of **women who did not work since the end of the training** was much higher than men, so was the proportion of women who did not work for pay/profit in the week preceding the interview. In addition, women were less actively seeking work than men. As expressed above, this could be explained by **family reasons** (marriage, children, etc.).

Women were more often in permanent jobs while men were more often in temporary jobs. As such, **men have been affected disproportionately by the crises in Lebanon** compared to women. According to the survey, women respondents tended to work less, but in more stable jobs.

From a nationality perspective there was **no significant difference between Syrians and Lebanese in the proportion of those who worked since 2018**. Likewise, the proportion of Lebanese and Syrian respondents who worked the week preceding the survey is similar. However, **Syrian graduates were more prominent in short-term or casual positions** and tended to work for individuals rather than companies. **Syrians were also more affected by the economic crisis and Covid-19 restrictions** than Lebanese (higher proportion of Syrian respondents saw their work stopped for a period of time or permanently or experienced reduced hours), perhaps due to the temporal nature of the jobs they were employed in.

A significant proportion (11%) of the graduates had certain disabilities, explained by the fact that the AICS training programme targeted vulnerable population groups. Although these disabilities had no impact on about 57% of respondents, for a significant number they did create obstacles, especially in regard to finding a job in their field of study.

- **Working conditions from a decent work perspective**

Among graduates who worked after the training programme, the majority were **short-term and casual employees**, confirming the highly unstable nature of the Lebanese labour market, especially for the job levels corresponding to TVET graduates. Among graduates who were employed, the vast majority (87%) **did not have a written contract**. Most graduates who were working (44%) worked for individuals rather than companies, but the responses were contrasted by gender: men worked more for individuals, while women worked more for private companies.

Almost no graduates received any work benefits other than a direct wage. Very few (7.5%) were affiliated with **social security**, and even fewer had specific health or accident insurance, paid leave, etc. Although most respondents (70.2%) reported not facing particular challenges at work, notable proportions had experienced **delays in payment of wages or changes of currency**.

The monthly income in LBP averaged at 1.7m LBP, but a small number of much higher salaries increased this average. **The median value was 600,000 LBP**, bearing in mind that Lebanese law sets the minimum wage at LBP 675,000 (prior currency devaluation).

7.2.RECOMMENDATIONS

For VT programme design

- According to the GIZ study, *Employment and Labour Market Analysis Lebanon (2019)*, the fragmentation of TVET programmes in Lebanon and the absence of impact data and lack of oversight over private training providers reflects the lack of a clear vision and strategy across the TVET sector. In June 2018, the **national strategic framework for TVET²⁰** was launched. The framework sets a clear vision and strategy for the sector. Given that AICS programme had already started, potential adaptation or adjustments could not be implemented. Any future planning for skills training should take into consideration the strategic objectives set in this framework for a successful delivery and meaningful impact.
- The tracer study highlights that the **market assessments** might not always have been done thoroughly, maybe because of a lack of time, in addition to ILO training sessions on how to conduct a labour analysis coming late in the life of the project. Respondents to this survey explained not looking for a job after the training because of the limited opportunities in their field of studies. It is recommended that VT programmes allow time for thorough, locally held market assessments so that training is designed in response to labour market demand and identified job opportunities
- Some **specialties** that tend to seem promising to donors, such as in the information and communications field, do not show strong results in terms of employability. For example, compared to the AICS training numbers, fewer actually found work in the area of phones, computers and electronics. On the contrary, the food services, agriculture, and beauty sectors seemed to be stronger in terms of employability than other specialties. Therefore, TVET programs should carefully examine the relative size of employment sectors and adjust the cohorts of students accordingly.
- Enhance **compatibility of VT certificates with the Lebanese education system**, so that trainees can then integrate longer education pathways. The tracer study shows that a significant number of beneficiaries undertook further study after the AICS programme. Involvement of official entities in VT programmes should be the norm, as should graduates receiving an **official certification by an accredited training provider** after completion of the course. The high number of training providers in Lebanon can lead to confusion for employers and certificates being less attractive.

²⁰ National Strategic Framework for Technical Vocational Education and Training in Lebanon 2018–2022, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, available on: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_633487.pdf

VT programmes' organisational set-up

- Opportunities raised by the partnership between Lebanese training providers and international NGOs could be strengthened. Local partners could engage INGOs in advocating on-the-job opportunities before employers and in designing tailor-made training for business improvements. INGOs should work on empowering their local partners to better manage and monitor training projects, as well as develop stronger counselling systems and support graduates after the training. Such partnerships could also serve to further promote training among employers and their engagement in life-long learning and exposure to work.
- Related to the above, the partnership must be considered as two-sided, with the expertise of local training providers and their knowledge of the local context highlighted to donors by the INGOs.
- Monitoring and follow-up systems could be enhanced. For example, databases of beneficiaries should be harmonised. They should include date of birth and not age, should include drop-out students, and should clearly indicate when they were filled in order to know when the information is from (employment, for instance). A tracking system should be institutionalised within the programme/training providers to regularly track changes of status, especially in terms of employment. Ideally, such a tracking system would provide real-time data on the placement into employment or entrepreneurship of the graduates of various specialties and local training providers. This could be realised through rolling rapid surveys on a random proportion of the graduates, a certain time after graduation (typically three months). Such a system could provide continuous feedback to the program and enable it to adapt quickly to changes in the labour market. The key questions and indicators for this tracking should be determined at project set-up (whether it should capture only employment, or also decency of work, usage of skills, working conditions, etc., and the respective importance of these). This real-time tracking system should be rather light-touch, in order to allow for rapid surveys at a reasonable cost. More detailed questions should be kept for final evaluations, along with qualitative exploration of the why, how, etc. (motivations to join TVET and employment, cultural and other barriers, etc.), as well as data collection from other stakeholders (employers of interns, employers of graduates, drop-outs, etc.) after the training.

Participants' selection

- Nearly half of the graduates did not look for a job after graduation. Among them, 11% explained not being interested or available to work. This puts to question the motivation of beneficiaries. **Pre-selection of trainees** should follow specific processes to ensure that interest and need for the training are aligned.

Vocational training delivery

- As touched on, the motivation of beneficiaries is vital for a successful training programme, so interventions should look into ways of **triggering motivation and minimising discouragement** throughout the beneficiaries journey (during and post-training). For example, training should also be accompanied by **counselling services** during the course and by post-training support services to assist graduates in finding suitable jobs (distance, field, working conditions). This is especially true for younger beneficiaries since the study confirms they are less likely to work in their field of training. Career guidance and counselling services for youth would support them, define their interests, values, and goals and design relevant training programmes. Discouragement that can rise from searching and not finding a job should also be tackled, during and after completion of the training programme.
- The study shows that participation in the programme has a **significant impact for beneficiaries who were working while studying**. For 20.4% of trainees who were working while studying, there was a reported increase in their income as a consequence of the training. This calls for the following recommendations:
 - VT should be seen as contributing to work improvements and conditions. Planning should take into consideration availability of workers to take on training. i.e., offering evening classes, one day training per week, etc., so they can benefit from these opportunities.
 - Similarly, VT should be seen as contributing to business improvement and this training providers could explain to employers that releasing workers for training provides added-value and return on investment for the employer.
 - For further alignment to work requirements, VT providers may consider customised training programmes for employees/workers and/or paid internship opportunities as incentive schemes to encourage employers in life-long learning opportunities for the existing workforce as well as internship opportunities for new entrants.
- Likewise, programmes could enhance **compatibility with family obligations**, especially for women. Two possible ideas are to have a place to care for children at the training centre or nearby, or to offer training in small groups at the home of one of the trainees. More ideas can be explored with the input of relevant cohort and training providers.
- The **multi-faceted aspect of the training programme** (theoretical knowledge, practical training and soft skills) must be maintained. Business owners all reported the good interpersonal soft skills (politeness, motivation, punctuality, team spirit, etc.) and theoretical skills (knowledge in their specific field of study, capacity to understand, etc.) of the interns. Therefore, these types of interpersonal skills should continue to be promoted together with the competencies.
- **While satisfaction with the internship was high** and motivation of trainees during the internship was reported as great, exposure to work was to a certain extent less satisfactory. As emphasised by some business owners who hosted interns, no evidence was observed whether a training plan was agreed upon in advance between the three

involved (i.e., employer, trainee, training provider) to better organise these internship opportunities. In fact, the duration of the internship ranged between 16 to 403 hours, showing a great difference in exposure to work.

- For successful internships, a **training plan stipulating specific competence and learning outcomes** should be agreed upon in advance. Exposure to work and on-the-job training should be planned according to competence required to be taught on-the-job, and necessary duration to acquire them. Implementing partners could think about how to improve exposure to work in their programmes. In addition to internships and on-the-job training, other options could be considered such as orientation sessions from experts in related field of studies, study visits to work sites and job shadowing.

In the current Lebanese context with very little work, some employers reported that they would not take interns anymore, even at no cost. VET programmes need to **consider incentives and business support to employers** to facilitate and promote/engage employers to take on trainees and to better manager their relations with employers.

After the courses

- Training programme duration should take into account post-training impact assessment and post-training support services such as employment counselling, job matching and placement, and business development support. Counselling should continue even after the training and placement for potential additional support. An option would be to link graduates with other service providers and placement services to sustain their motivation.
- Respondents designated **spontaneous applications to employers** (sending an application without any open position advertised) as the most useful way to search for a job, before job ads/announcements and the help of personal contacts. Training programmes could include more coaching to empower students in deconstructing preconceived ideas about the labour market and guidance on how to search for a job. Post-training support should include job search support services, referrals to job search platforms and networking with a placement bureau.
- Findings related to gender conveyed that women were less actively seeking work than men and were less likely to work after graduation from the training programme. Though gender equality seems to be respected during the training and within the different sectors, **additional support should be allocated to supporting women's economic participation**. Efforts to help encourage women to participate in education, training, and the workforce needs to be targeted to specific groups and contexts; designed to overcome existing barriers, which includes flexibility in meeting different needs; and positioned to address questions of status and to challenge social ideas.

- **Additional support should be granted to trainees with disabilities**, especially in finding a job related to their field of study. Also, there is the need for concrete measures to make TVET training more inclusive. Some measures include building TVET staff's capacity to teach trainees with disabilities, increase the accessibility of TVET centres, provide reasonable and accessible accommodation, as well as take into account disability-related needs when adapting entry criteria, teaching methods, materials, and evaluation methods. In addition, workplace-learning, particularly apprenticeships, for people with disabilities should be a part of mainstream TVET programmes. There is also the possibility to connect with available NGOs and provide employment services targeted to people with disabilities and consider awareness raising among employers for an inclusive working environment.
- In terms of **decent work**, the study pointed to benefits (income, social security, insurance, paid leave, etc.) as a major issue. Training programmes should include awareness raising for trainees, and potentially towards employers, on what decent work means and the employees' rights.

Future studies

- The standard tracer questionnaires do not take informal and seasonal jobs into account enough, although they are common in the sectors covered by this programme and in Lebanon in general. Specific indicators addressing informality and seasonal work, well-suited to the **reality of employment in Lebanon**, should be developed and added to guidelines of tracer studies in economies where informality is common (number of hours worked per month, number of different employers per month, etc.).
- This survey found that there were some specialties that graduates would not unanimously choose again (for example, mechanics and sales). **Further labour market research would need to be done on these sectors and specific sub-sectors** to assess the demand in the sector and needs for curriculum improvement for better alignment to skills required and/or reorientation towards other specialties.
- Other potential future research could address the **opportunities for working abroad for VT graduates in Lebanon**. This tracer study found that very few graduates took concrete steps to seek employment in another country. Rather than encourage international migration for this group, some other areas that tackle job scarcity that could be explored are employment counselling and guidance support for accessing regional markets, further research to understand regional market demand for VT graduates, and market research for potential entrepreneurship opportunities. Job creation happens even in times of crisis, and VT programmes could work on mobility, opportunities for jobs in Lebanon for companies abroad, improving digital skills for cross-border jobs, etc.