LINK IT

Linking pre-departure and post-arrival support to facilitate the socio-economic integration for resettled refugees in the EU

Skills Profiling Report
July 2019

IOM
UN MIGRATION

PUBLISHER

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents and analyses data from Syrian refugees collected through the LINK IT project. LINK IT is managed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Migration Agency, and funded through the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

The project has been delivered in partnership with:

- International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)
- British Refugee Council (RC)
- Asociatia Serviciul Iezuitilor Pentru Refugiatii Din Romania (JRS Romania)
- Caritasverband für die Diözese Hildesheim e.V. (Caritas Friedland)
- Conselho Português para os Refugiados (CPR)

LINK IT aims to deliver better socio-economic integration outcomes for Syrian refugees resettling in four EU Member States (Germany, Portugal, Romania and the United Kingdom) from three MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region countries (Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey) by strengthening the link between pre-departure and post-arrival support.

LINK IT activities include the piloting of a pre-departure skills profiling tool, tailored post-arrival support and products for resettled refugees, information sessions for receiving host communities and mutual learning and exchange on best integration practices amongst partners[1].

Across the timeline of the LINK IT project (January 2018 to July 2019) IOM undertook a multi-stage process, including adapting the *EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals*[2], to develop and deploy a Skills Profile Tool for usage by Syrian refugees prior to departure to the participating EU Member States. This involved:

- Conducting a research and mapping exercise of existing tools and initiatives.
- Undertaking a needs assessment survey.
- Developing and testing an initial prototype.
- Running workshops with IOM staff in departure countries.
- Designing guidance content (short video and presentation) in Arabic for participants.
- Deploying the new tool in two phases to allow for adaptation and improvements.

The developed pre-departure Skills Profile Tool consists of a concise questionnaire[3] aimed at collecting information on refugees education history, work experience, personal skills, digital skills, lingual abilities, aspirations, and other relevant health/caring considerations. The accompanying digital tool takes this information and generates a Skills Profile, similar to a basic CV, in both English and Arabic summarising this information in a coherent and accessible format (See Annex). The Skills Profile is provided to the individual refugee to own and present, when relevant, to complement their resettlement and integration – particularly in regards to labour market integration.

IOM was able to collect, analyse and present the data being collected by the Skills Profile Tool to identify trends and areas of potential future project intervention. This report presents the analysis, findings and recommendations from the data collected in both Phase 1 (June to September 2018) and Phase 2 (February to May 2019) of piloting the Skills Profile Tool[4]. The data sample in this report covers 1,018 Syrian refugees being resettled in Germany, Portugal and the United Kingdom[5].

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

All refugees participating in the skills profiling were of working age (18 to 64), with the majority (64%) aged between 25 and 44. Half (50%) of the sample indicated that they would like to find employment or start a business, while more than a third (35%) indicated they aimed to gain professional experience through an internship or volunteering role. This is a good starting point for labour market inclusion.

The majority (86%) of the sample indicated that they were educated to at least a primary level, with more than a third (38%) completing secondary education or above. Around one in ten respondents (9%) reported having no education however this was disproportionally distributed across age and gender with, almost half (49%) of women aged between 55 and 64 reporting having no education, compared with men (13%) in the same age group. Just one fifth (20%) of the respondents indicated that they were in possession of a certificate demonstrating their education. A large majority (81%) of those that indicated they would like to find employment or start a business, reported not having a certificate demonstrating their education presenting a potential obstacle to employment.

The results vary substantially by age and gender. For example, men on average were much more likely to indicate a desire to find employment or start a business (64% of men compared to 35% of women). Slightly more women than men indicated a desire to improve their language skills (91% compared to 88%) and to continue education (67% compared to 62%). Male respondents on average indicated stronger personal and digital skills than women. Still, reported digital skills were on average low, with the exception of smartphone usage which was high for both genders (85% of women and 91% of men). Digital skills were particularly low across the older age groups. These differences are likely to be important when planning inclusive integration strategies.

A significant majority (90%) of the sample indicated they would like to improve their language skills. Almost all of the sample (99%) indicated knowledge of Arabic, with one third (33%) of the sample reporting some level of English language skill, however this was likely to be basic, with, Kurdish (22%) and Turkish (22%) following behind this. The majority of respondents however did not report any English language skills and very few respondents reported another EU language skill (4%). Data collected indicated that for stakeholders in host communities English language skills are the most commonly desired language next to the native language of their host country[6]. The high proportion of those wanting to improve their language skills indicates potential awareness of the limitations to job prospects presented by a limited language capacity.

Respondents in the sample as a whole were relatively confident in their soft skills represented in the questionnaire, with men on average more confident than women. Respondents scored highest on confidence to organise personal time and tasks (88%) and confidence to make important decisions at work or home (82%). The area where their skillset was weakest was in the public speaking domain; 51% of refugees overall and 43% of women as a portion of the sample indicated that they had public speaking skills. This is important data for policy development and labour market integration – as many jobs require some form of soft skills.

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6   International Organization for Migration, LINK IT pre-pilot needs assessment (2018)

DATA OVERVIEW

Demographic information

Figure 1: **Participating refugees by gender**   Figure 2: **Participating refugees by departure country**
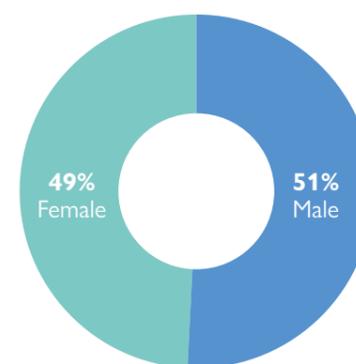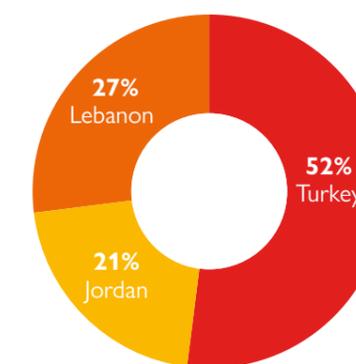
The sample consists of 1,018 Syrian refugees resettling to Germany, Portugal and the United Kingdom from Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey between June to September 2018 and February to May 2019. Of the sample:
- 501 (49%) were female and 517 (51%) were male.
- 218 (21%) resettled from Jordan, 273 (27%) from Lebanon, and 527 (52%) from Turkey.

Table 1 and Figure 3 below show the balance of age and gender in the sample. These statistics broadly match the global statistics on asylum in the EU-28[7]. The breakdown of gender by age group is as follows:

Table 1: **Participating refugees by age and gender**

Age	Female	Male	Total
18-24	**17%**	**17%**	17%
25-34	**38%**	**28%**	33%
35-44	**28%**	**35%**	31%
45-54	**10%**	**14%**	12%
55-64	**7%**	**6%**	7%
Total	**49%**	**51%**	100%[8]

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7   Eurostat, "Asylum statistics", 6th December 2018. Available from:
     https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics.
8   Figures rounded to the nearest percentage point.

Figure 3: **Participating refugees by age and gender**
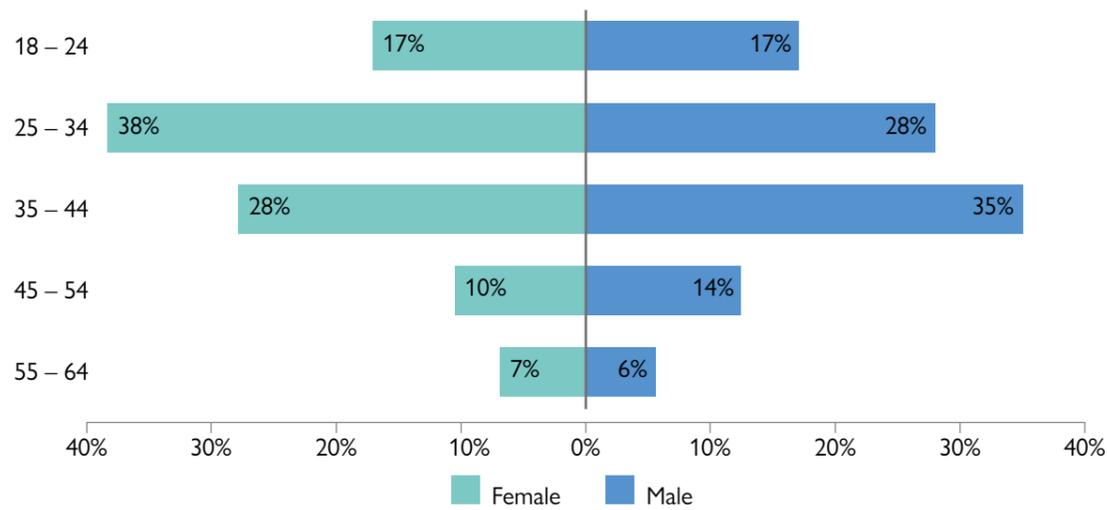
Source: IOM LINK IT Skills Profiling Data, 2019. Total = 1,018.

Aspirations

Figure 4 illustrates the aspirations selected by the refugee sample. The standout figure is 91% of women and 88% of men stating that they would like to improve their language skills. Women were slightly more likely to report a desire to start or continue education as well as improve their language skills. Men were more likely to report a desire to find employment or start a business, to volunteer, or to undertake charity or community work.

Figure 4: **Aspirations expressed by refugees (% answering positively)**
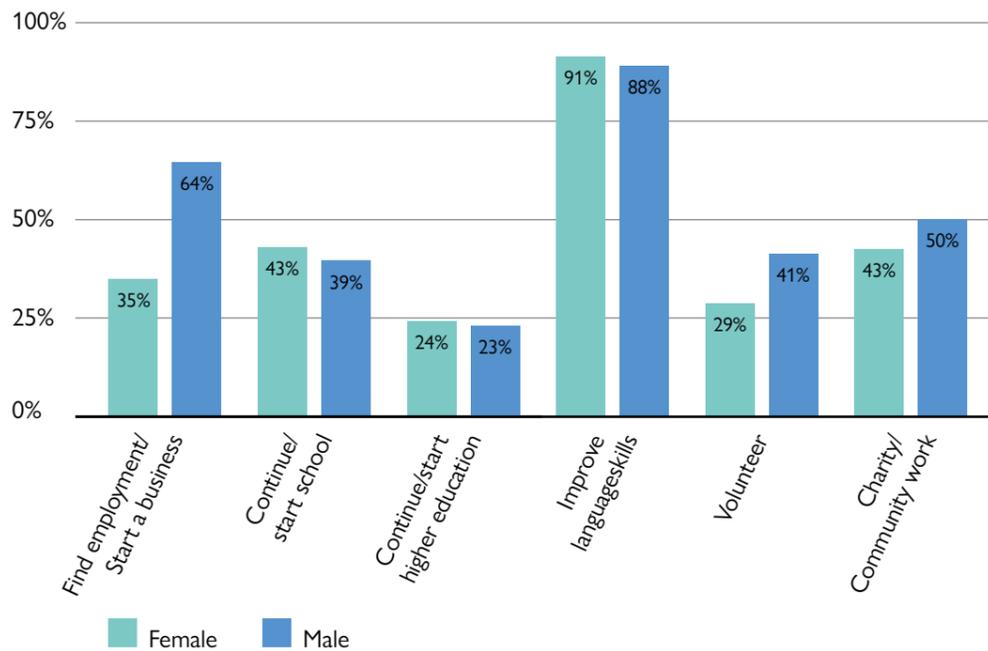

Source: IOM LINK IT Skills Profiling Data, 2019. Total = 1,018.

Education and training

A total of 91% of both men and women indicated that they have some level of education. The 9% of respondents that reported having no education are disproportionally distributed across age and gender with 49% of women aged between 55 and 64 reporting having no education, compared with 13% of men in the same age group group as can be seen within Figure 5 below:

Figure 5: **Highest reported completed level of education by age and gender**
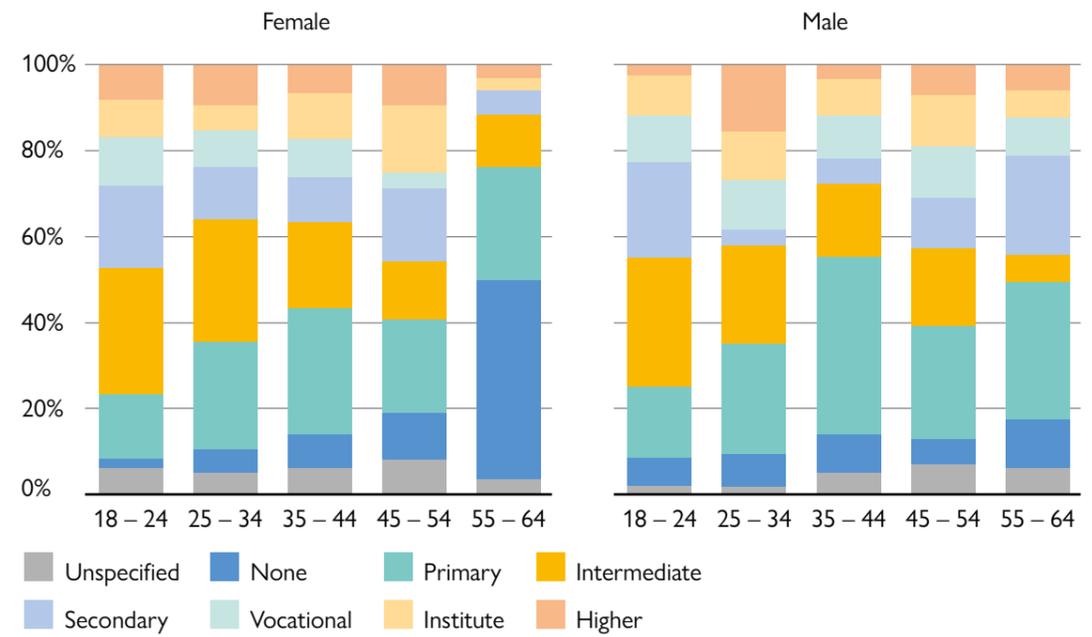
Source: IOM LINK IT Skills Profiling Data, 2019. Total = 1,018.

Note: Categories adapted from Syrian Arab Republic educational levels and defined here as:

Primary: The first phase of basic education is compulsory and lasts 6 years, normally between the ages of 6 and 12.

Intermediate: The second phase of basic education has been compulsory since 2002 and lasts a further 3 years, normally between the ages of 12 and 15.

Secondary: Following completion of the first two phases of education students can pursue a further 3 years of non-compulsory education through either Vocational or General Secondary Education. This normally takes place between the ages of 16 and 18.

Vocational: In the context of this dataset, vocational refers to training and skills courses completed after school years, and is superseded here if the respondent indicated institute or higher educational experience.

Institute: Following completion of secondary education students that wish to pursue a more direct vocational/ professional education can apply to an educational or technical institution. These institutions offer programmes usually of a 2 year duration in areas including agriculture, industry, technology, administration, economics, business, teaching, transport and tourism.

Higher Education: Following completion of secondary education students can also apply for admission to any study programme offered within public and private universities and other higher institutes. These follow the internationally recognised Bachelor's, Master's, and PHD structure[9].

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[9]   World Education News + Reviews, "Education in Syria", 30th June 2019.
       Available from: https://wenr.wes.org/2016/04/education-in-syria

Just 2% of women and 7% of men aged between 18 and 24 indicated having no education. The majority of the sample (61%) indicated that their highest level of education was of primary, intermediate or secondary level.

Figure 6 below looks at those who reported being in possession of an educational certificate. Only 20% of the sample indicated that they were in possession of a certificate demonstrating their educational achievement. Those in age group 25 to 34 were most likely to answer positively to this question (33%), followed closely by those in 35 to 44 age group (30%).

Figure 6: **Possession of educational certification by age and gender**
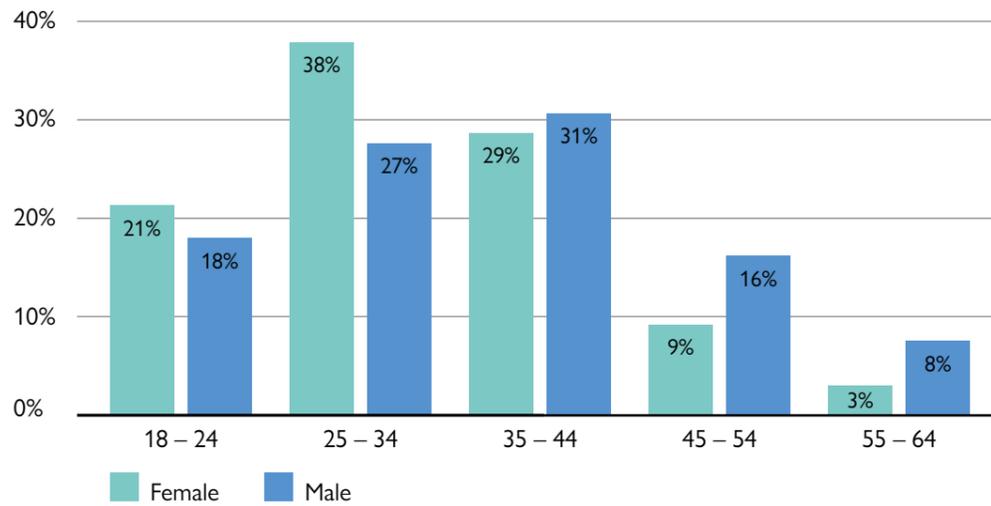
Source: IOM LINK IT Skills Profiling Data, 2019. Total = 1,018.

Language abilities

Figure 7 presents the most commonly selected languages across the sample. Respondents were able to indicate multiple languages and proficiency levels.

Almost all respondents reported Arabic language skills (99% of both women and men). The most commonly reported language knowledge after Arabic was English (33%). Just 39 out of the 1,018 respondents (4%) reported knowledge of other EU languages, with French being the most common (3%). Of those reporting non-EU languages, 22% of the sample reported some level of Kurdish, and 22% reported some level of Turkish.

Figure 7: **Language knowledge by gender**
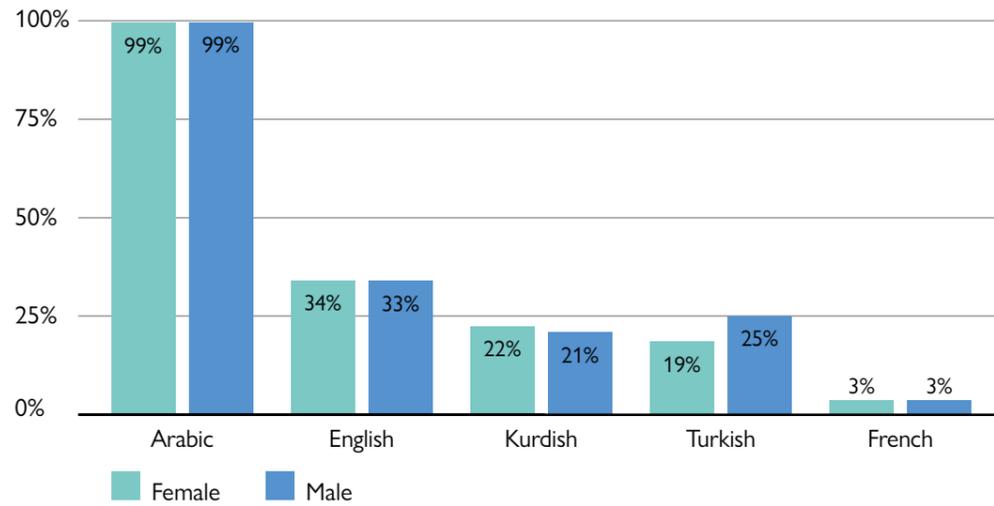
Source: IOM LINK IT Skills Profiling Data, 2019. Total = 1,018.

A large majority (91%) of those who indicated that they had English language skills were either at the basic or comfortable level. Figure 8 below demonstrates the age and gender breakdown for those reporting English capability. Women aged 18 to 24 were most likely to report capability (41%), and women aged 55 to 64 were least likely (12%).

Figure 8: **English language competence by age and gender**
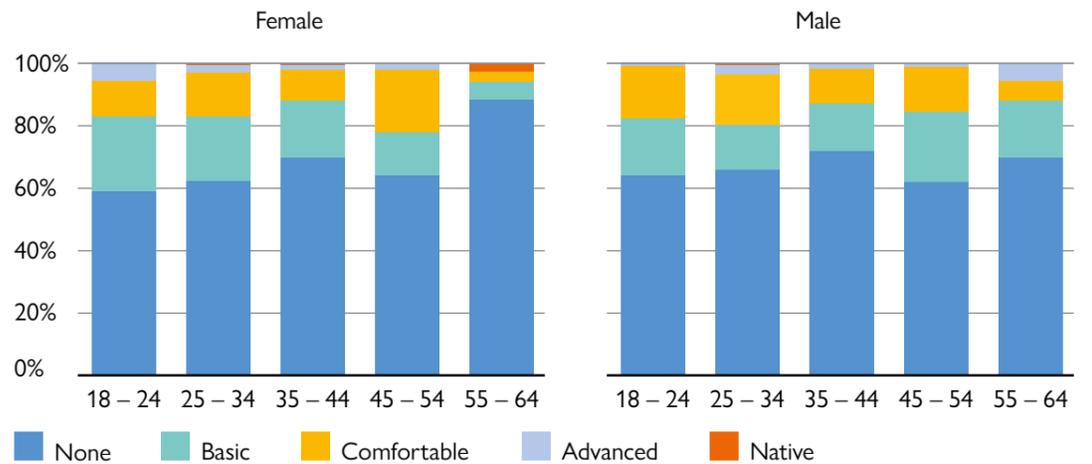
Source: IOM LINK IT Skills Profiling Data, 2019. Total = 1,018.

Soft skills

Refugees in the sample were confident in the skills represented, with the exception of 'Speaking in public', which only half (51%) of the sample reported being comfortable in. Women were less likely overall than men to answer positively to questions on their soft skills, particularly in the categories 'Group work', 'Resolving issues' and 'Public speaking'. A full overview can be seen in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: **Soft skills (% answering positively by age and gender)**

Source: IOM LINK IT Skills Profiling Data, 2019. Total = 1,018.
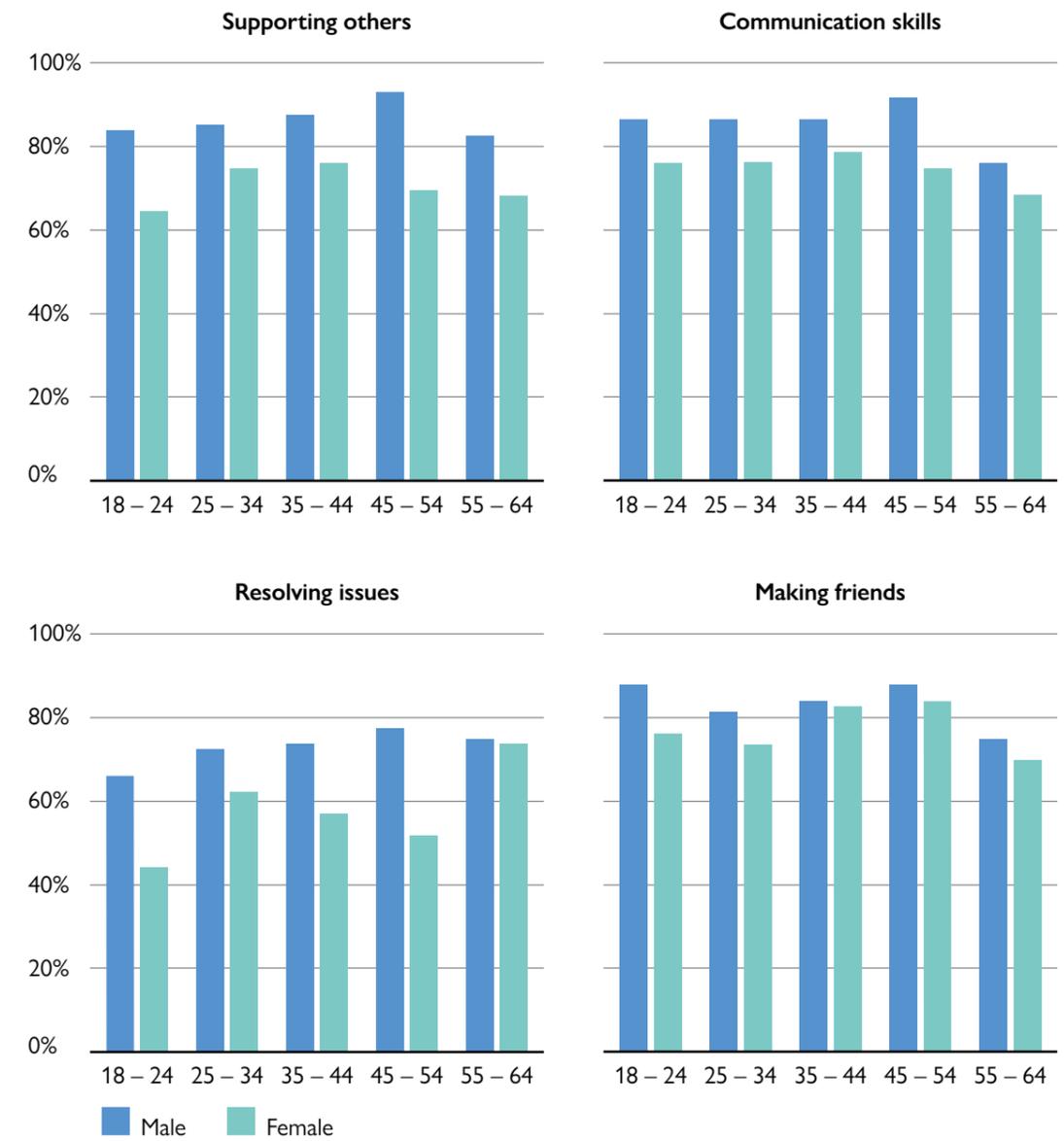
Source: IOM LINK IT Skills Profiling Data, 2019. Total = 1,018.

Digital skills

Refugees in the sample as a whole reported low levels of digital skills, with the prominent exception of the ability to use a smartphone or tablet. There are large differences between male and female respondents visible throughout Figure 10 below. In each skill category, male respondents are more likely to report capability. In some cases, such as with writing emails and computer skills, the difference is substantial. Only in Microsoft Office skills or making tables and graphs categories is the gender disparity more balanced.

Figure 10: **Digital skills (% answering positively by age and gender)**
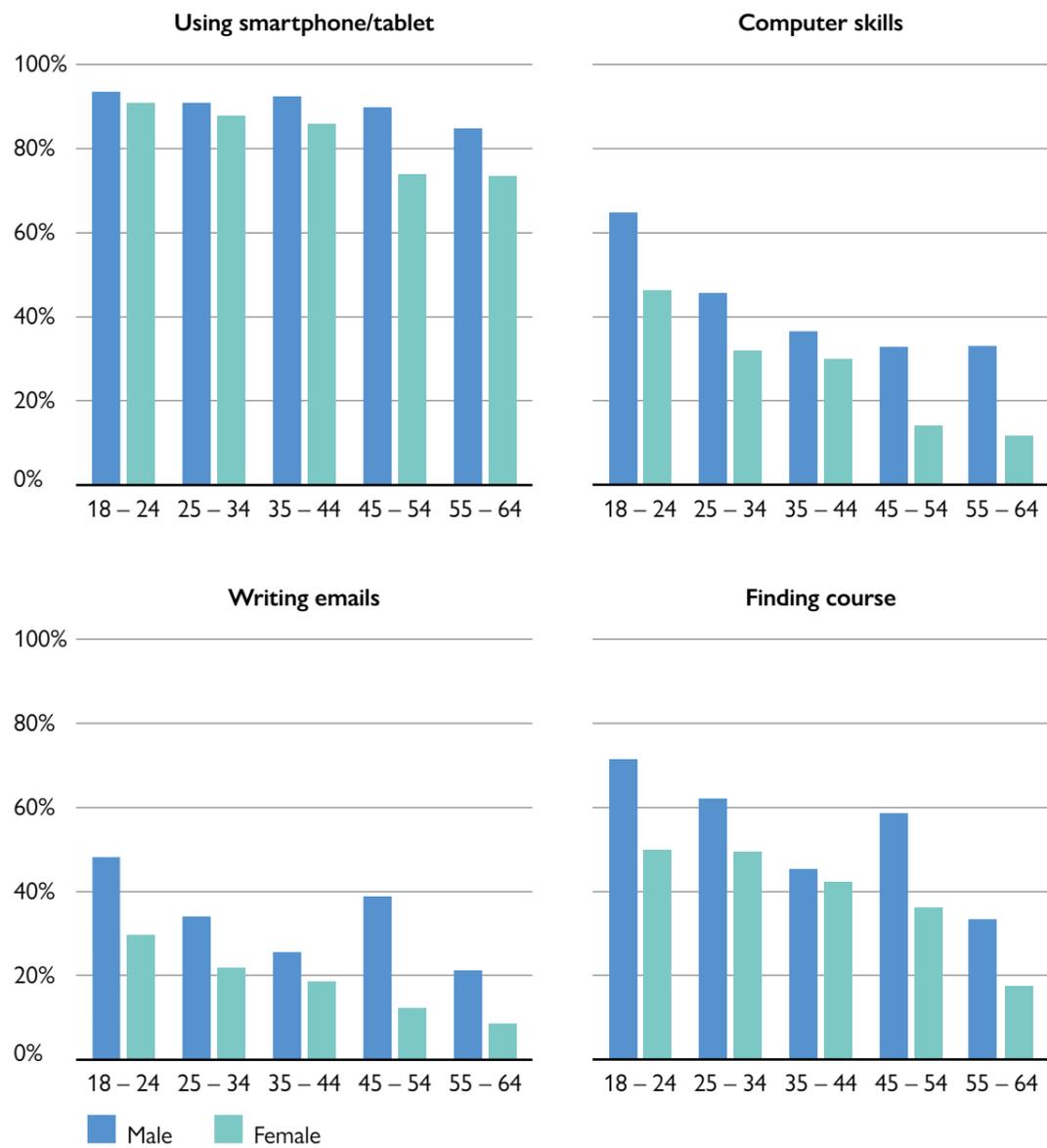
*Source:* IOM LINK IT Skills Profiling Data, 2019. Total = 1,018.
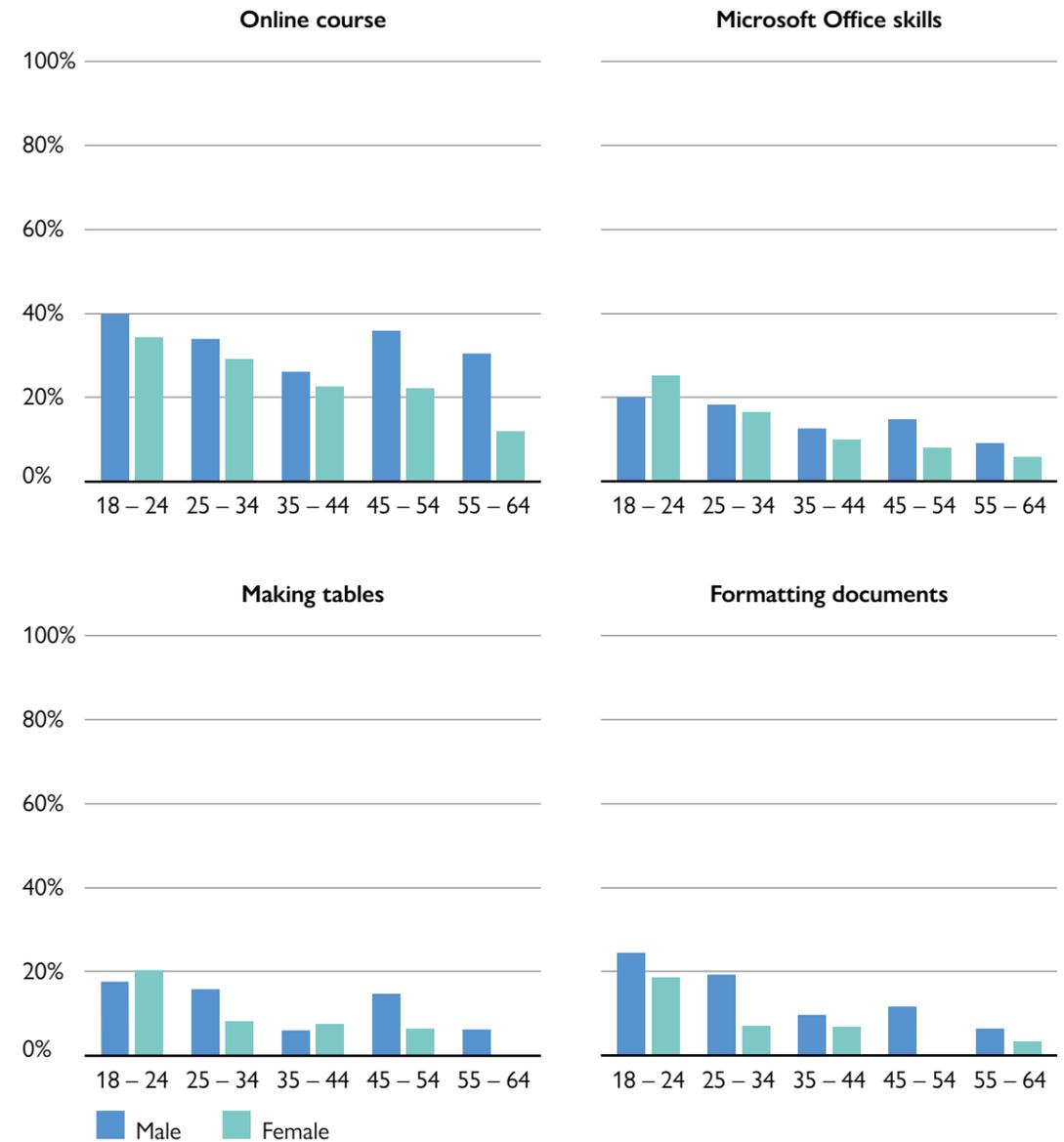
Source: IOM LINK IT Skills Profiling Data, 2019. Total = 1,018.

Work experience

Refugees indicated their level of work experience in different sectors, including how long they had worked in that sector, and whether experience was gained in the workplace or outside of the workplace.

The majority of the work experience is reported as 'workplace' experience., however there were some standout highlights in the 'outside the workplace' categories. For women outside the workplace, 68% reported experience in 'Preparing food and working in a kitchen', 18% reported experience in 'Social Work' and 9% reported experience in 'Teaching'.. For men outside the workplace, 17% reported experience in 'Preparing food and working in a kitchen', 8% reported experience in 'Agriculture and farming', 8% reported experience in 'Manual work', 7% in 'Transportation and logistics' and 7% in 'Construction and repair'.

The graphs in Figure 11 demonstrate the refugees' answers in this section for 'in the workplace' broken down by gender. The graphs demonstrate gender differences across the sample, with male respondents having greater representation across manual work sectors, and female respondents having greater representation in teaching and care sectors. The sample has a diversity of experience in work, and men demonstrate a greater diversity of experience overall.

Figure 11: **Percentage of refugees reporting workplace experience by gender**

Workplace – Female

Workplace – Male

■ <1 year ■ 1-5 years ■ 5+ years

Source: IOM LINK IT Skills Profiling Data, 2019. Total = 1,018.
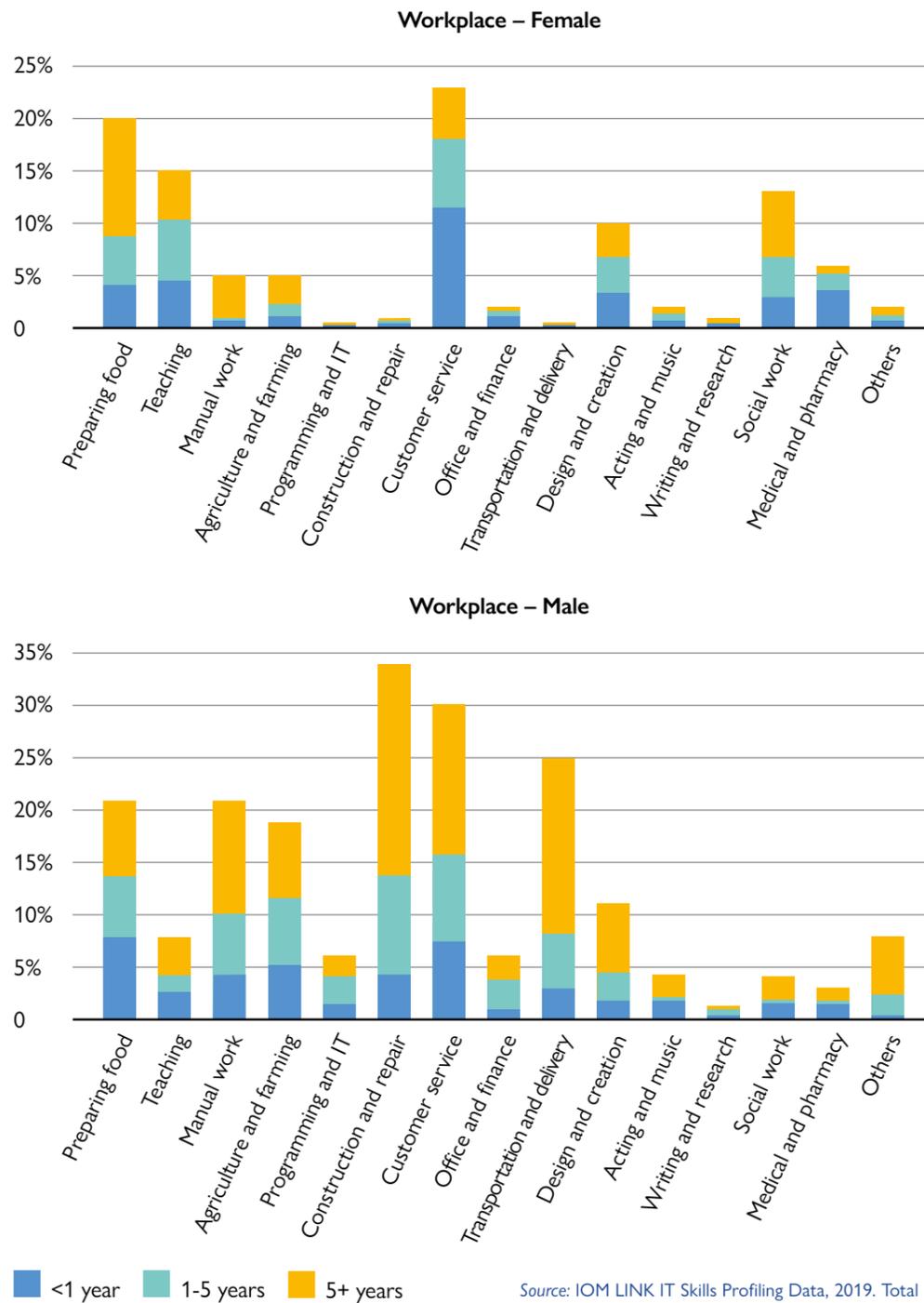
Health and childcare / elderly care considerations

This section covers the health and childcare / elderly care considerations of the sample. The data in Figure 12 demonstrates that health considerations are needs that require addressing across the Syrian refugee population being resettled, in order to better facilitate access to the labour market, or further education. The data obtained as part of this process is deliberately limited, and there is no indication on the severity of the health problems, or the level of consideration that the refugees would require.

Figure 12: **Percentage of refugees reporting health considerations by age and gender**

■ Female ■ Male
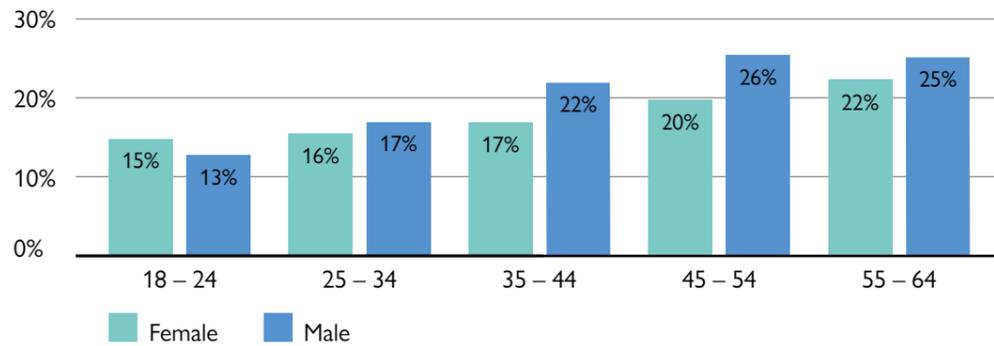
Source: IOM LINK IT Skills Profiling Data, 2019. Total = 1,018.

Figure 13 represents respondents from the sample who reported requiring childcare or elderly care in order to pursue work or education[10]. A large difference is visible between genders, as well as between the older and younger groups, with those in age groups 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 being most likely to require assistance. Young women were disproportionately more likely to require assistance than men in the same age categories (18 to 24 and 25 to 34).

Figure 13: **Percentage of refugees reporting childcare or elderly care considerations by age and gender**

■ Female ■ Male
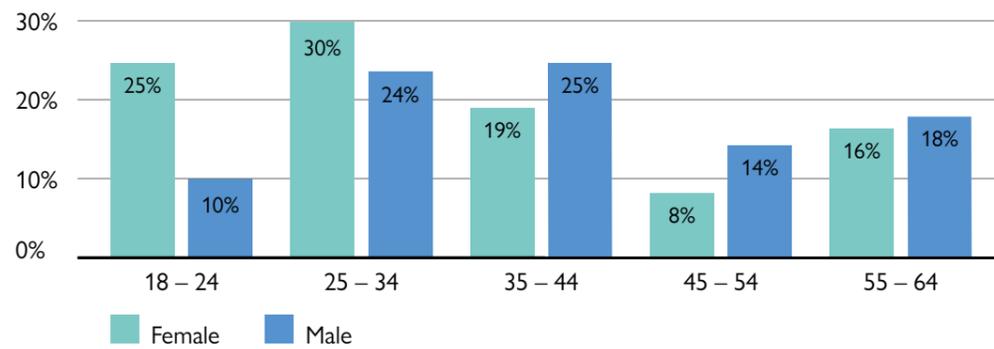
Source: IOM LINK IT Skills Profiling Data, 2019. Total = 1,018.

[10] Often refugees resettle with young children, but may also resettle with older relatives with care needs. In order to keep the questionnaire brief these options were combined into a single question.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the conclusions drawn from the skills profile analysis presented within this report as well as previous research conducted by IOM. They are targeted at stakeholders that support Syrian refugees in their integration process and help increase their employability. These stakeholders include policymakers, NGO's, public employment services, vocational training institutes, and other actors along the resettlement journey.

Assuming labour market inclusion as an integral part of societal integration

Labour market inclusion should be considered as a crosscutting asset of the overall integration process of resettled refugees. The path of the beneficiaries to becoming employable can start in the pre-departure phase by thinking about relevant skills, areas of interest and development needs, to increase the chance to enter a job later on. Activities that increase the employability from an early stage, such as skills profiling, job interviews and work testing could be explained and understood as a multistep approach towards work, even if concrete employment is not visible or possible yet.

The topic of employability and skills development could be introduced from the beginning of the resettlement process as an integral part of overall inclusion without isolating it as mere labour market access, which is more likely to appear as relevant only when all other issues are solved. Expectations raised by the assessment of skills would be fulfilled with an empowering dialogue on future steps towards employment as a goal, rather than as far-away point, which is difficult to reach. Stakeholders are encouraged to implement this employability-centred view in their resettlement work in order to make it an integral component of their overall inclusion support of beneficiaries.

Tapping into existing skills

The data demonstrates that the sample population has a wide variety of skills, but are lacking in certain crucial areas. Digital skills, for example, are required in an increasing diversity of jobs, and lacking these skills would present a significant barrier to many sectors of the job market. Age and gender are significant factors here, as young males from the participating sample were most likely to have the minimum required digital skills.

A cursory look at the sample's professional skills tells us that while very few refugees indicate that they have IT and programming skills (3%), some in the sample do have teaching skills (12% professional experience, 7% experience outside of the workplace). Taking advantage of these skills in an IT training course for teachers, who could then be used to pass on skills to other refugees, could have great benefits. Targeting women and older age groups should be prioritised to address the gender and age gap.

Supporting beneficiaries in valuing and presenting their skills and experience

While the majority of the sample had some level of education (91%), a low percentage (20%) indicated that they were in possession of a certificate demonstrating their educational qualification. Of those that do hold certifications, these are unlikely to be easily transferrable in the host country, for lingual reasons at the very least. This could be a barrier to obtaining employment, especially in specialist fields.

In order to convince employers to hire skills, those skills need to be well presented and matched. Beneficiaries should be supported to practice identifying and presenting their hard and soft skills, even if they are not certified or did not undergo institutional education. Offering advisory and coaching services to recognize own skills and gain the self-confidence and professionality to present them in a marketable way is key to employability. Employment services in countries of resettlement have online and onsite trainings and counselling at disposal to help profile and match skills as well as composing meaningful CVs to reach out to employers or vocational training institutes.

While refugees in the sample as a whole reported low levels of digital skills, the sample did show confidence in the use of a smartphone. This ability could be capitalised on as an asset for further education of refugee populations, as a way to provide information on and education about other skillsets that might need developing. For instance, many apps are available for language learning and digital education, and as such this can be a useful way for furthering refugee education at a low cost.

Formulating realistic language requirements and offering language training

Language can often be the biggest barrier for labour market integration. The data collected in this report highlighted that many resettling Syrian refugees lack the language abilities required to integrate in their new host communities. Only 33% of the sample indicated that they held some level of English language skill, and of these, the majority (91%) reported this skill at a Basic or Comfortable level only. Only 4% of respondents reported another EU language skill. Previous research undertaken as part of the project[12] has shown that language skills are highly desirable in the workplace, and that while English language is desirable as an international language, host countries for which English is not the first language prefer language skills in the host country's language. This means that the refugees in the sample will be disadvantaged in the workplace, and likely struggle to integrate into wider society. Those with more specialist training will additionally struggle to be employed in their sector, which is more likely to be competitive and require knowledge of the host language.

A high proportion of the sample indicated that they would want to have further language training. This desire could be tapped into in order to facilitate integration. However, with just under 1 in 10 of the sample reporting having no education, and 62% educated to below secondary level, it is important to consider these individuals when designing and implementing language training initiatives.

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[11] International Organization for Migration, *Analysis of Skills Profiling Data collected within the EU Relocation Programme* (2018):
https://eea.iom.int/publications/analysis-skills-profiling-data-collected-within-eu-relocation-programme

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[12] International Organization for Migration, *LINK IT pre-pilot needs assessment* (2018).

Prioritising health requirements and childcare / elderly care assistance policies

The data indicates that health requirements and childcare / elderly care are a notable consideration across the Syrian refugee population, although certain groups are more likely than others to require assistance. Providing for this should be a priority, as this will free up resources to pursue the training or education needed for labour market integration. This is also likely to prevent a disproportionate burden of care falling on women, who traditionally provide domestic care in the family. Without the provision of care arrangements, it is likely that women will be at greater risk of under-employment and other disadvantages.

ANNEX : EXAMPLE OUTPUT SKILLS PROFILE

Note: Output *Skills Profiles* consist of a double sided A4 document, one side in English, one side in Arabic. Below is an example of the English side.

FIRSTNAME LASTNAME
Skills Profile

Date Of Birth: 01/01/1980
Gender: Female
Country Of Birth: Syria

ASPIRATIONS

- Find employment / Start a business
- Start or continue higher education
- Improve language skills
- Undertake internship, volunteering or unpaid experience
- Undertake charity work

EDUCATION

Primary education
Intermediate education
Secondary education
Vocational training
  - Painting
Institute education
  - Art & Design (Certificate)

LANGUAGES

Arabic (Native/Fluent C2)
- Reading Ability
- Writing Ability
Turkish (Advanced C1)
- Reading Ability
- Writing Ability
English (Basic A1/A2)

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE		
PREPARING FOOD & KITCHEN WORK: *Total experience: more than 5 years' in the workplace, 5+ years' outside the workplace*		
Cooking food	5+ years' of experience	
Preparing food	5+ years' of experience	
Cleaning/dishwashing	5+ years' of experience	
TEACHING, EDUCATING OR TRAINING *Total experience: 1-5 years' in the workplace,*		
Teaching in primary and/or secondary education	1-5 years' of experience	Certificate available
Teaching languages	1-5 years' of experience	
DESIGN, CREATIVE & ARTISAN: *Total experience: 5+ years' in the workplace, 5+ years' outside the workplace*		
Graphic design/animation	5+ years' of experience	Certificate available
Photography	1-5 years' of experience	
Product design	5+ years' of experience	
Textile industry/fabric design	1-5 years' of experience	Certificate available

PERSONAL SKILLS

- Working within a group
- Public speaking
- Decision making at home/work
- Time management
- Offering support to others in the workplace
- Engaging with other cultures
- Resolving conflict/issues between people
- Making new friends or contacts easily

DIGITAL SKILLS

- Using a smartphone/tablet
- Using a laptop/computer
- Writing emails
- Using the internet
- Following an online course
- Using Microsoft Office software
- Designing tables and graphs
- Editing, formatting and printing documents

CONSIDERATIONS

- I require childcare or elderly care considerations
- I require specific health considerations

This Skills Profile was funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.   IOM UN MIGRATION

Note: Output *Skills Profiles* consist of a double sided A4 document, one side in English, one side in Arabic. Below is an example of the Arabic side.

FIRSTNAME LASTNAME

ملف المهارات

تاريخ الميلاد : 01/01/1980
الجنس: أنثى
بلد الميلاد: سوريا

اللغات

العربية (متحدث أصلي/بطلاقة C2)
• القدرة على القراءة
• القدرة على الكتابة
التركية (المتقدم C1)
• القدرة على القراءة
• القدرة على الكتابة
الإنجليزية (المستويان الأساسيان A1/A2)

التعليم

تعليم أساسي
تعليم متوسط
تعليم ثانوي
التدريب المهني
Painting -
تعليم في مستوى المعهد
Art & Design - (الشهادة)

الطموحات

• العثور على عمل / بدء عمل تجاري
• بدء التعليم العالي أو الاستمرار به
• تحسين مهارات اللغة
• بدء فترة تدريبية أو عمل تطوعي أو خبرة عمل غير مدفوعة الأجر
• الشروع في عمل خيري

المهارات والخبرات

تجهيز الطعام وأعمال المطبخ: *الخبرة الإجمالية: خبرة أكثر من خمسة أعوام خارج أماكن العمل*		
	خبرة أكثر من 5 سنوات	الطبخ
	خبرة أكثر من 5 سنوات	إعداد الطعام
	خبرة أكثر من 5 سنوات	التنظيف/غسيل الأطباق
التدريس أو التعليم أو التدريب: *الخبرة الإجمالية: خبرة من عام إلى 5 أعوام في أماكن العمل*		
الشهادات متوفرة	من سنة إلى 5 سنوات من الخبرة	التدريس في التعليم الأساسي و/أو الثانوي
	من سنة إلى 5 سنوات من الخبرة	تدريس اللغات
التصميم والابتكار والأعمال الحرفية: *الخبرة الإجمالية: خبرة أكثر من 5 أعوام في أماكن العمل/خبرة أكثر من خمسة أعوام خارج أماكن العمل*		
الشهادات متوفرة	خبرة أكثر من 5 سنوات	تصميم طباعي/رسوم متحركة
	من سنة إلى 5 سنوات من الخبرة	تصوير فوتوغرافي
	خبرة أكثر من 5 سنوات	تصميم المنتجات
الشهادات متوفرة	من سنة إلى 5 سنوات من الخبرة	صناعة النسيج/تصميم النسيج

اعتبارات خاصة

• بحاجة إلى رعاية أطفال أو رعاية مسنين
• بحاجة إلى رعاية صحية خاصة

المهارات التكنولوجية

• استخدام هاتف ذكي/جهاز لوحي
• استخدام الكمبيوتر المحمول/والكمبيوتر المنزلي
• كتابة رسائل البريد الإلكتروني
• استخدام الإنترنت
• متابعة دورة عبر الإنترنت
• استخدام برامج Microsoft Office
• تصميم الجداول والرسومات
• إنشاء مستندات وتحريرها وتنسيقها وطباعتها

المهارات الشخصية

• العمل ضمن مجموعة
• التحدث أمام العامة
• اتخاذ القرار في العمل/المنزل
• إدارة الوقت
• تقديم الدعم للآخرين في مكان العمل
• الانخراط مع الثقافات الأخرى
• حل الخلافات/المشكلات بين الناس
• تكوين صداقات جديدة أو علاقات بسهولة