

Rapid Market Assessment- Basra
**"Improving prospects for peace and stability in vulnerable
& food insecure communities, in Southern Iraq"**

Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid

October, 2021



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
List of figures	3
List of abbreviations	4
Background	5
METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION.....	7
household Survey.....	8
KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS	10
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGD).....	10
DESK REVIEW	10
Ethical considerations	12
Limitations.....	12
RECOMMENDATIONS	14
KEY FINDINGS	15
Demographics.....	15
Age and gender	15
Education	16
Employment	20
The current skill levels of the youth living in different communities in Basra.....	26
Skills or Knowledge “most needed” by companies versus “most lacking” among recent graduates.....	29
Main barriers faced by young people when looking for a new job opportunity.....	30
Training Opportunities and Job Seeking.....	31
The Market Demand.....	34
Gender Equality In Employment.....	38
Women’s Economic Participation.....	39
CONCLUSION	42
ANNEXES	45
FGD- Questionnaire	45
Survey – Questionnaire	46
KII – Questionnaire.....	49
LIST OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWEES	51

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1 -Iraq's unemployment rate increased to 13.74 percent in 2020 from 12.76 percent in 2019. source: Central Statistical Organization Iraq (COSIT)</i>	6
<i>Figure 2 Location of Al-Karma suburb in Basra City.</i>	8
<i>Location of targeted neighborhoods 3 Figure</i>	9
<i>Figure 4 Providers of Vocational Training in Basra</i>	14
<i>Figure 5- Age and gender distribution.....</i>	16
<i>Figure 6 Levels of Educational System in Iraq</i>	17
<i>Figure 7 - Education Level of Survey participants</i>	18
<i>Figure 8 Employment Status of University Students</i>	20
<i>Figure 9 – Gender Distribution by Employment Status</i>	22
<i>Figure 10 Employment Status by Gender.....</i>	23
<i>Figure 11 Educational Background of Business owner / Self employed</i>	24
<i>Figure 12 Educational Background of Employees.....</i>	24
<i>Figure 13 - Educational Background of Unemployed</i>	25
<i>Figure 14 Employment Status by Level of Education</i>	26
<i>Figure 15 - Recruitment problems faced due to lack of skills.....</i>	27
<i>Figure 16- Assessment of the skill level of the youth in Basra for each employment category ..</i>	28
<i>Figure 17- Perception on whether the youth in Basra have the necessary skills and knowledge</i>	29
<i>Figure 18- Type of job that youth in Basra are seeking.....</i>	32
<i>Figure 19 Job-specific Skills Training Young People Need to Improve Their Chances of Getting a Job in Basra.....</i>	32
<i>Figure 20- Does the labor market meets the needs of young people living in Basra Governorate</i>	34
<i>Figure 21- How Job Seekers Know About New Job Openings</i>	35
<i>Figure 22 - Perception of the interviewee on the professionalism of youth in Basra</i>	36
<i>Figure 23- businesses willing to effectively hire young women as employees and/or apprentices</i>	38
<i>Figure 24 should young men and women be paid equally for the same job</i>	39
<i>Figure 25 Comparison of Employment Status Between Women Head of Household and Women Not Head of Household</i>	40
<i>Figure 26 Percentage of Women Faced Recruitment Problems due to Lack of Skills to Perform the Job</i>	41
<i>Figure 27 What Kind of Jobs Women Would Like to Have.....</i>	42
<i>Figure 28 Effect of lack of job opportunities on the social stability</i>	43

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoI	Government of Iraq
DoLSA	Department of Labor and Social Affairs
INGO	International Non-governmental Organizations
KII	Key Informant Interview
WFP	World Food Programme
MH	Mercy Hands
CSO	Civil Society Organization
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
HR	Human Resources
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

BACKGROUND

Basra is the second-largest city in Iraq by population (Basra 2021 population is estimated at 1,381,731)¹. It is very well known as being an oil-rich city as its oil fields contain oil reserves of some 65 billion barrels, representing 59% of total Iraqi oil reserves.² Its port, Umm Qasr, offers the rest of the world access to one of the biggest oil-producing countries, a huge potential consumer market. Hydrocarbons are abundant in the area, and the deposits are cheap to exploit, giving substantial profit margins no matter how much the price of oil varies. Prior to 2003, Basra was known for its cosmopolitan society, intellectual elite, and skilled workforce – a real city that should have become a manufacturing power and a platform for regional trade. Its fertile hinterland is suited to rice and dates, for which it was once famed.

Nevertheless, the socio-economic situation is very different in reality. In 2018, mass protests erupted. Unemployment was central to the rhetoric and mobilization strategies of all the key political actors – protesters, government officials, party elites, and tribal leaders. Basra protesters chanted slogans about rampant joblessness – first in small disjointed groups and ultimately coalescing into massive crowds that attacked nearly every significant government and party building. Protests erupted again in October 2019 to protest corruption, unemployment, and inefficient public services.

With more youth joining the workforce every year and less jobs offered in the public and private sectors, there is a real job crisis in Iraq. According to the Iraqi Central Statistical Organization, Iraq's unemployment rate increased to 13.74 percent in 2020 from 12.76 percent in 2019 (figure 1). Regarding youth unemployment, in 2016 Basra's unemployment rate for youth age 15 to 24 was 25% while the national average was 20.4³. Youth unemployment was recorded at 36% in a 2018 World Bank primer,⁴ with projections suggesting there will be an additional five to seven million Iraqis in need of new jobs over the next ten years. This underscores the point that the job crisis amongst Youth in Basra, is a long-term phenomenon that must be addressed. This is particularly worrisome because youths' economic grievances have been known to lead to political unrest.

Public expenditure in Iraq has been increasing in recent years, and the main reason for that increase is the inflation in the public wages bill⁵, which has grown in recent years, becoming the largest component of public spending. In 2019, the public wages bill was equivalent to over 39%

1 <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/basra-population>

2 <https://resourcegovernance.org/sites/default/files/052706.pdf>

3 Iraqi Central Statistical Organization <http://cosit.gov.iq/ar/>

4 World Bank, Jobs in Iraq: A Primer on Job Creation in the Short-Term, February 2019

5 World Bank group: ADDRESSING THE HUMAN CAPITAL CRISIS A Public Expenditure Review for Human Development Sectors in Iraq. 2021. <https://www.iraqdatabank.org/>

of total spending, compared to less than 27% in 2014. The high public wages bill is the result of successive governments in Iraq choosing the creation of more jobs in public sector as a quick approach to absorb the increasing number of unemployed people in Iraq. Adopting such approach becomes easier to accept by lawmakers in Iraq at times when state revenues increase due to increasing oil prices. However, for clear reasons, this becomes problematic when oil prices go down. In recent years, successive governments have tried to cut down public sector employment, and the first genuine attempt came in 2016 when the government implemented a partial hiring freeze⁶. However, the perceived ability of government to create more jobs in the public sector and the employment benefits that come with it, has led Iraqis to seek and feel entitled to public sector employment.



Figure 1 -Iraq's unemployment rate increased to 13.74 percent in 2020 from 12.76 percent in 2019. source: Central Statistical Organization Iraq (COSIT)

While promoting government accountability over local administrations and state control over natural resources and employment should be a key policy objective, the GoI and international partners must be realistic about where this is possible on the ground.

Basra is a difficult context for engagement and reform, especially with the presence of different political parties, local powers, and regional and international interests. However, the ongoing protest movement in Basra is acting as a driving force for reform and presents an exceptional opportunity to actively engage at different levels. In Basra, the private sector and civil society

⁶ LSE's Middle East Center: Analysing Growth Trends in Public Sector Employment in Iraq. 2018

institutions are widely seen as a neutral actor; therefore, partnering with the private sector and civil society organizations will facilitate reform at all levels of the governorate.

Mass unemployment is likely to continue generating greater public resentments and protests in the future in Basra, especially with the continuous reliance of the government on creating more jobs in public sector as the main strategy to tackle unemployment.

Actors within the GoI and international partners should support Basra's civil society activists and organizations to bolster their capacity to demand economic reform and social justice in Basra. Moreover, the GoI and the international partners should focus on building the capacity of governmental agencies at the federal and local levels to find and develop effective and sustainable alternatives to public sector employment.

The objective of conducting a dual conflict and market assessment in Basra City is to improve the effectiveness of WFP resilience programming in contributing to conflict prevention and reduction and increasing WFP conflict sensitivity. The assessments will evaluate the risks of programs or policies exacerbating conflicts and the opportunities to improve the effectiveness of resilience interventions in contributing to conflict prevention.

The study is expected to produce an increased understanding of labor market needs and opportunities in Basra as well as how job seekers match those needs, and provide insight into the key dynamics and focal point actors within the labor market for more effective program planning. This will be conducive to design focuses programming in line with market demands.

The Rapid Market assessment study seeks to answer the following question:

- What are the current skill and education levels of youth living in different communities in Basra, their employment profile, the barriers to employment? How are they looking for jobs?
- What are the major industries, businesses, and sectors in Basra? Do these have growth potential? What skill sets do they require? On what basis do they select employees?
- Where are the gaps and overlaps between skills in demand and skills offered? Where do opportunities exist, and which areas need further support?

METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION

The primary data collection for this study was conducted through three different activities:

1. Household Survey: The main bulk of data for this study was collected through a Household survey with 770 respondents, of whom 37% of respondents were females.

2. Key Informant Interviews (KII): 30 KIIs were conducted with business owners (national and international), representatives from local authorities, Mukhtars, community representatives, vocational training institutes, and NGOs that work on economic support and livelihoods in urban areas of Basra.
3. Focus Group Discussion (FGD): Five FGDs were conducted. In order to ensure diversity, the FGD guaranteed the inclusion of different political and ideological currents, as well as economic classes, residential areas, and genders.

In addition to primary data collection, data was collected through desk review (secondary data collection).

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

The survey is considered the main part of this study. It targeted youth from 18 to 30 years old and covered the following urban districts in Basra City:

- Al-Karma suburb: A northern suburb of Basra city, close to the oil fields. The map below shows the location Al-Karma in Basra.

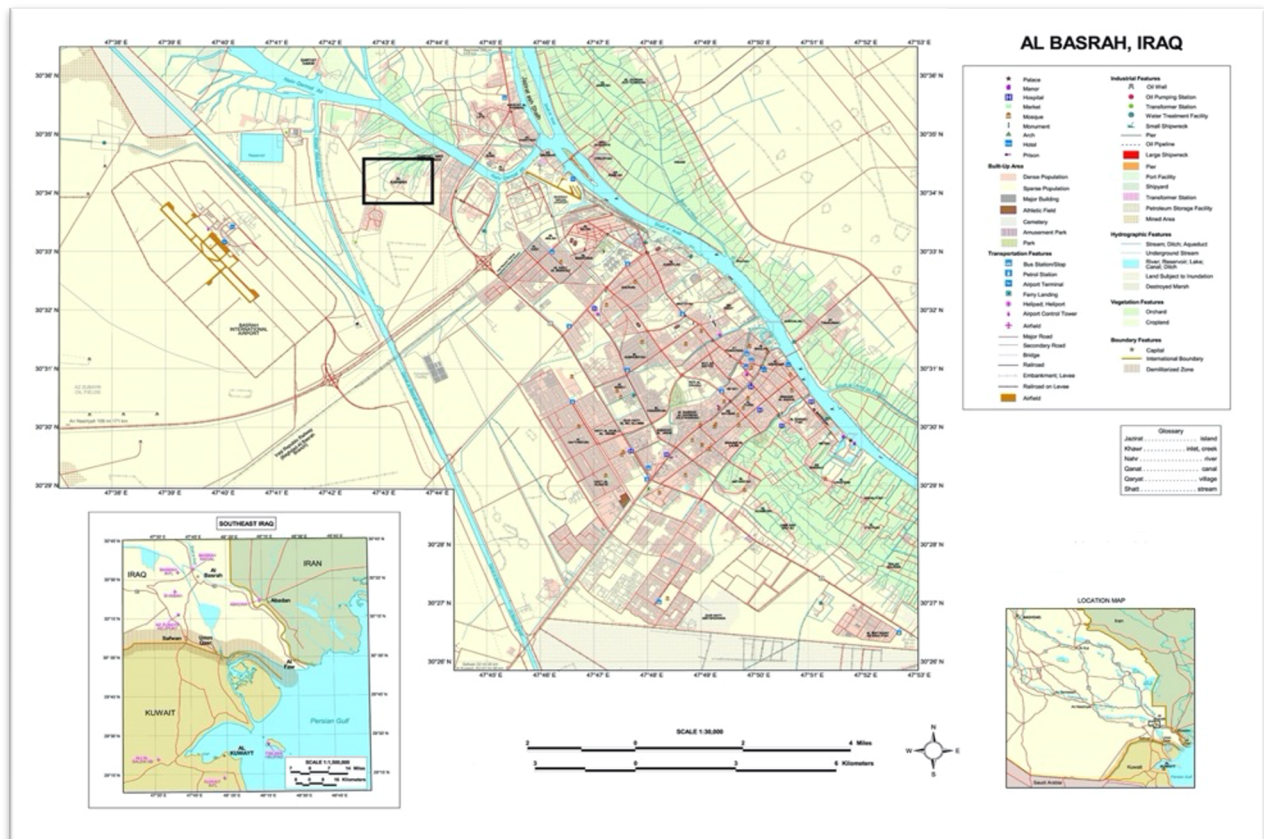
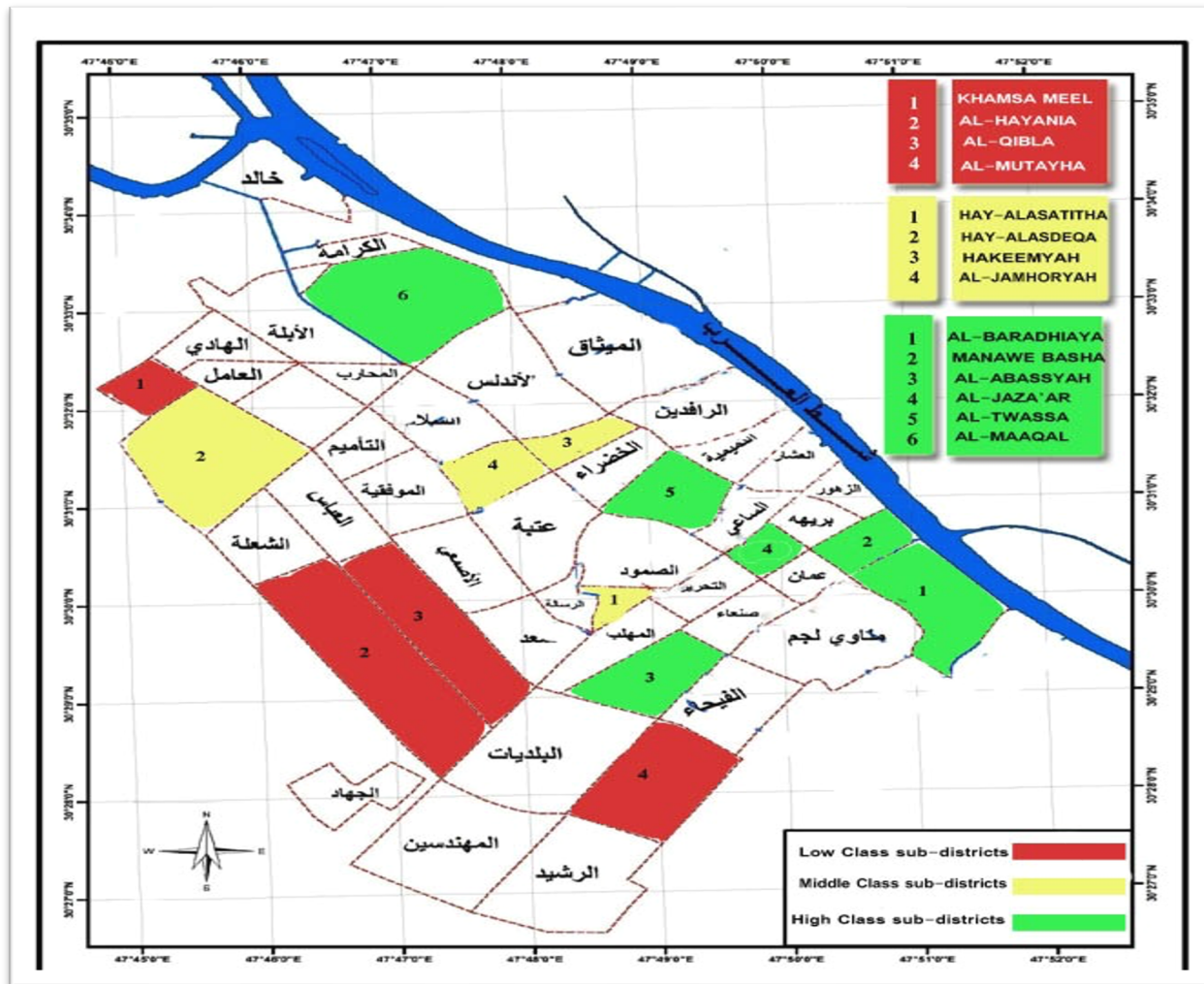


Figure 2 Location of Al-Karma suburb in Basra City.

- Al-Bardhiaya, Manawee Basha, Al-Abassyah, Al-Jaza'ar, Al-Twassa, and Al-Maaqal (high-class sub-districts)
- Hay Al-Asatitha, Hay Al-Asdeqa, Hakeemyah, and Al-Jamhoryah (middle-class residential sub-districts)
- Khamsa meel, Al-Hayania, Al-Qibla, and Al-Mutayha (low-class sub-districts)

The map below shows the location of neighborhoods included in this study.



3 Figure Location of targeted neighborhoods

770 survey interviews were conducted, with 15% additional interviews were done for quality assurance. The survey was done based on a random selection of the interviewee in the targeted areas. The head of household of very third house located in streets with odd numbers were interviewed. Due to internet problems and some technical problems that Kobo faced at the global level, the survey was collected on paper forms or by google form. The data analysis of the survey was done on SPSS.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Data was collected through the KII that targeted representatives of the city of Basra. The list of the interviewees is added to the annexes. The main targeted representatives were: representatives of the Local Authority (governor office, chamber of commerce, ministry of youth and sport, ministry of education), business owners, economists, tribal leaders, and civil society activists.

The opinion of those stakeholders was very important for the study, especially for the recommendations and at the operational level.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGD)

Five FGDs were conducted to collect the opinion and perceptions of Basrawi people from different backgrounds on local labor market. The title of all FGD was the same, “Analyzing and Assessing Labor Market in Basra”.

Table 1.1 below presents a summary of FGD participants. Regarding the Business Owners FGD, three out of the twelve business owners were women and the participants were representatives of local private businesses: four oil sector companies, one drinking water bottle plant, one ice cream factory, one telecommunications company, and one general contracting company

Table 1 – Summary of Rapid Market Assessment FGDs

FGD	No. Participants	Participants Gender	Facilitators	Venue
Household Providers	10	Men	2 Men	Events Hall in Al-Hayania
Business Owners	12	Mixed	2 Men, 1 Women	Events Hall in Al-Jaza'ar
Household Providers	12	Women	3 Women	Events Hall in Al-Hayania
Youth 18 – 30 y/o	14	Women	2 Men, 1 Women	Vocational Training Center in Abu Al Khasib.
Youth 18 – 30 y/o	18	Men	3 Men, 2 Women	Conference Room at Mercy Hands Office in Basra City

DESK REVIEW

In recent years, numerous economic and market studies were conducted focusing on Basra, especially after the protests erupted in the center and south of Iraq in 2018.

To compare between our findings and the findings of other researches, an online literature review was conducted for studies published in English and Arabic about market assessment in Basra.

Table 2 lists the reports that were reviewed during this study.

Table 2: List of reports used for the desk review

Report	Author	Year
Community Stabilization Handbook: An overview of community transition and recovery achievements in Iraq	IOM	2016
Provincial Development Strategy Basra Governorate	UNDP	2017
Future Vision To Diversify Economic Base in Basra Through Benefiting from Arabic and International Experiences رؤية مستقبلية لتنويع القاعدة الاقتصادية بالبصرة بالاستفادة من التجارب الدولية والعربية	University of Cairo/ University of Basra	2017
The Basra Protests and the Future of Iraq	FDI (Future Directions International)	2018
Basra Fact Finding Mission	NRC	2018
Market Assessment Report Basra City	NRC	2019
Iraq Economic Monitor – Protecting Vulnerable Iraqis	World Bank	2019
Basra Emerging Markets: Opportunities And Challenges	IOM	2019
The Politics of Unemployment in Basra: Spotlight on the Oil Sector.	IRIS Policy Report	2019
Youth Livelihoods Development Project description.	Save the Children	2019
Basra Urban Profile	UN-Habitat	2020
The Social and Economic Implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Family in Basra (geographic study)	University of Basrah	2020
Iraq Key socio-economic indicators For Baghdad, Basra and Erbil	EASO (European Asylum Support Office)	2020
Economic Relief, Recovery, And Resilience Assessment For Southern Iraq	Cash Consortium for Iraq and ILO	2021

It was observed from literature review that more attention was paid to assessing the market and employment in Basra since the first major protests erupted in 2015 and even more after the second wave of major protests erupted in 2018. In the previous years market assessment in Basra was done by research and academic organizations more than humanitarian and development organization; however, this ratio has been reversed in recent years.

The reviewed literature supported the findings of the primary data collection. All literature agrees that the public sector is the largest employer in Basra but it cannot take in all the local workforce in Basra. The literature also demonstrated that a mismatch between the skills or the academic

background of the workers and their jobs is a common problem, along with weakness in language and IT skills. In our study, many of the surveyed young people were working in jobs that are not related to their field of study, e.g. graduates of vocational training schools working as taxi drivers or food delivery men, or graduates of college of engineering working as clerks.

There is a general agreement that the private sector in Basra is weak and the lack of governmental strategic vision and effective policies contributes to the weakness of the private sector and the local market as a whole. For example, there is a lack of laws that attract and protect investors in Basra and the tariffs imposed on imported products is low or non-existing, which discourages production of goods locally.

A common limitation of the reviewed market assessments is not addressing the challenges/opportunities of lack of modern jobs skills in Basra. In contrast, in our study, the reality and prospect of modern jobs in Basra was discussed during FGD meetings.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Informed consent forms were used to assure that the fundamental rights and welfare of subjects were protected. Risks and benefits have been explained, participants agreed to participate, and a contact has been given in case of any complaints or queries. Informed consent was obtained in advance from each individual who participated during data collection.

LIMITATIONS

1. Informants and FGD participants might have altered responses according to how they perceive NGOs to select beneficiaries or allocate resources. To mitigate this potential bias, all reported findings have been cited by multiple sources using triangulation of the data collected from different resources and tools.
2. Due to the limited geographical scope, findings of this assessment may not be fully representative of the general population of youth in Basra. As mentioned in this report, informal settlements were underrepresented in this study. There are about 667 informal settlement areas in Basra⁷. and would require follow-on data collection to gain more rigorous, representative results.

⁷ UNHABITAT: Informal Settlements in the Arab Region. February 2020.
https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/12/regional_is_report_final_dec_2020.pdf

THE DEFINITION OF AN IRAQI

INFORMAL SETTLEMENT

is a housing community built informally on state-owned or private land within municipal boundaries and without proper approvals or pre-set designs. Most of these are in conflict or not conforming with earmarked land uses defined by the approved urban master plans and detailed plans. Many of these settlements share common characteristics, including the low quality of housing construction, lack of basic public services and infrastructure networks, a degraded urban environment and their incompatibility with urban standards of adjacent formal residential neighbourhoods⁶.

3. **Women's voice** is generally not well heard or expressed in the conservative South city of Basra. It was challenging to ask them to share their opinion during the mixed business owners FGD, and their responses did not differ from others. To avoid biased opinions or dominating male voices during the sessions, we conducted two women only FGDs.
4. Hard to access senior people occupying senior position and most of the time they delegated the interviews to their deputies or rescheduled many times the date of the interview while the time for data collection was very limited.
5. This study revealed the major role local businesses, especially vocational businesses, play in training and employing young people in Basra. 225 out of the 770 surveyed young people (29%) stated that they have received vocational training. Figure 4 shows the main categories of vocational training providers in Basra. Almost half of the vocational workforce received vocational training through apprenticeship, i.e. on the job training or learning while shadowing a master of the trade. The business owners FGD also alluded to role of apprenticeship as a major provider of vocational training in Basra and Iraq in general. Further examination of apprenticeship providers in Basra is required.

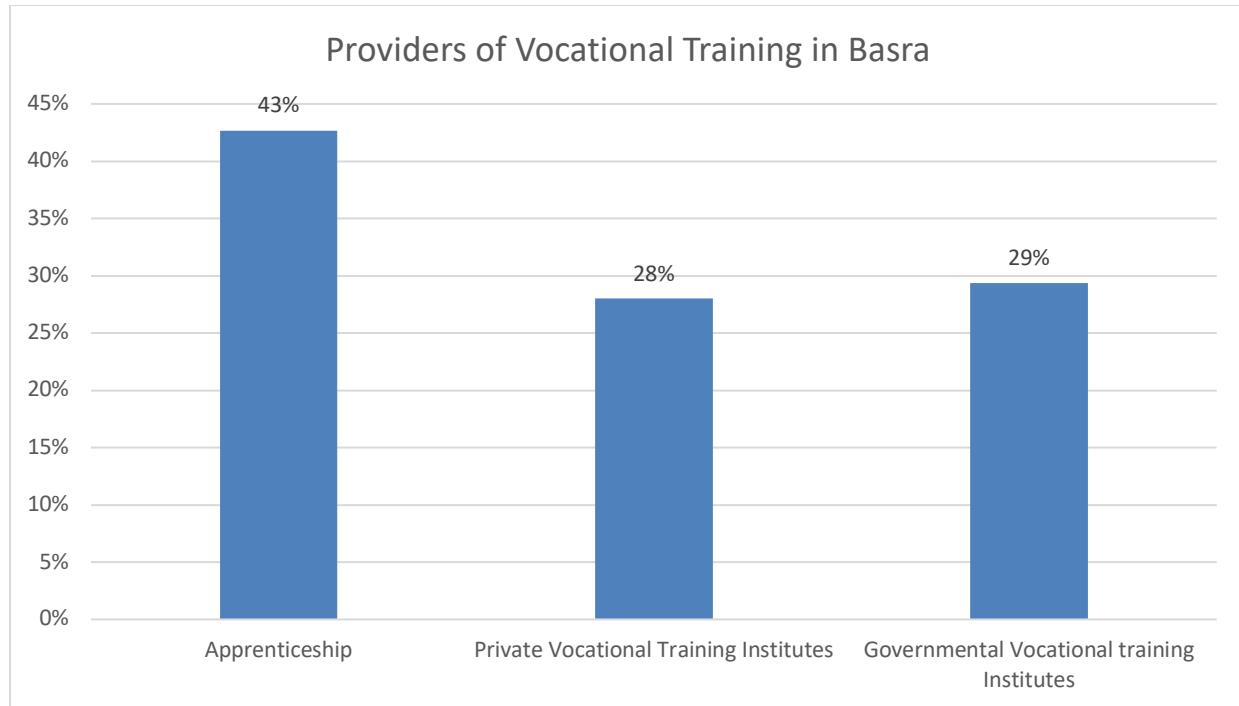


Figure 4 Providers of Vocational Training in Basra

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the market assessment study:

1. Provide English and digital/ IT skills training to improve employability of young graduates in Basra. WFP's EMPACT program will be a great fit in Basra, as there is a high demand for college graduates with computer and English skills.
2. Provide skills training for male and female youth in technical vocational training such as sewing, hairdressing, mobile and electronics repair, and carpentry.
3. Provide soft and employability skills training, including life skills, communication, self-confidence, and critical thinking skills to increase employability and job retention.
4. Provide training and support to employers and business stakeholders on gender-sensitive workplaces and labor codes, along with community sensitization sessions that promote women's rights and the importance of women as income earners and decision-makers in the household.
5. Promote private sector engagement and partnerships with social security institutions and insurance companies to provide social security and health insurance for workers in the private sector, increasing interest in employment in the private sector.
6. Provide training to SMEs to increase their use of best practices for business, including strengthening administrative, financial, and human resources practices to make them more desirable options for employment.

7. Support youth interested in opening their own businesses via partnerships with existing financial institutions such as the cooperative housing institution to provide loans (cash-in-hand or through hawala) with low rates.
8. Develop apprenticeships/internships/on-the-job training programs for youth and adults to gain the necessary skills and experience required in the job market. This will require financial and business training support for businesses that participate and accept trainees, ensuring a safe workplace for training participants.
9. Work with MSMEs, training centers, government, and other stakeholders to advertise jobs and training available through job campaigns, employment fairs and social media. Work with stakeholders to utilize existing professional platforms for identification of candidates and to improve articulation of available jobs to the general public.
10. The creation of industry advisory boards or committees for input into academic programs are a vital resource for adapting curriculum and programs to address industry needs;
11. Development of a comprehensive strategy and framework for creating academic standards and competencies within each academic program;
12. Prioritize funding for initiatives that develop soft skills of university students, such as experiential education programs. Internships, apprenticeships, and other practical hands-on initiatives provide a basis for students to develop skills and gain crucial real-world experience.
13. Expand programs such as university career centers aimed at assisting institutions and individuals to connect to the private sector

KEY FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHICS

AGE AND GENDER

All the participants interviewed in the market assessment were between 18-35 years old. All age categories in that age period were represented in the surveyed sample and gender was somewhat balanced in each category.

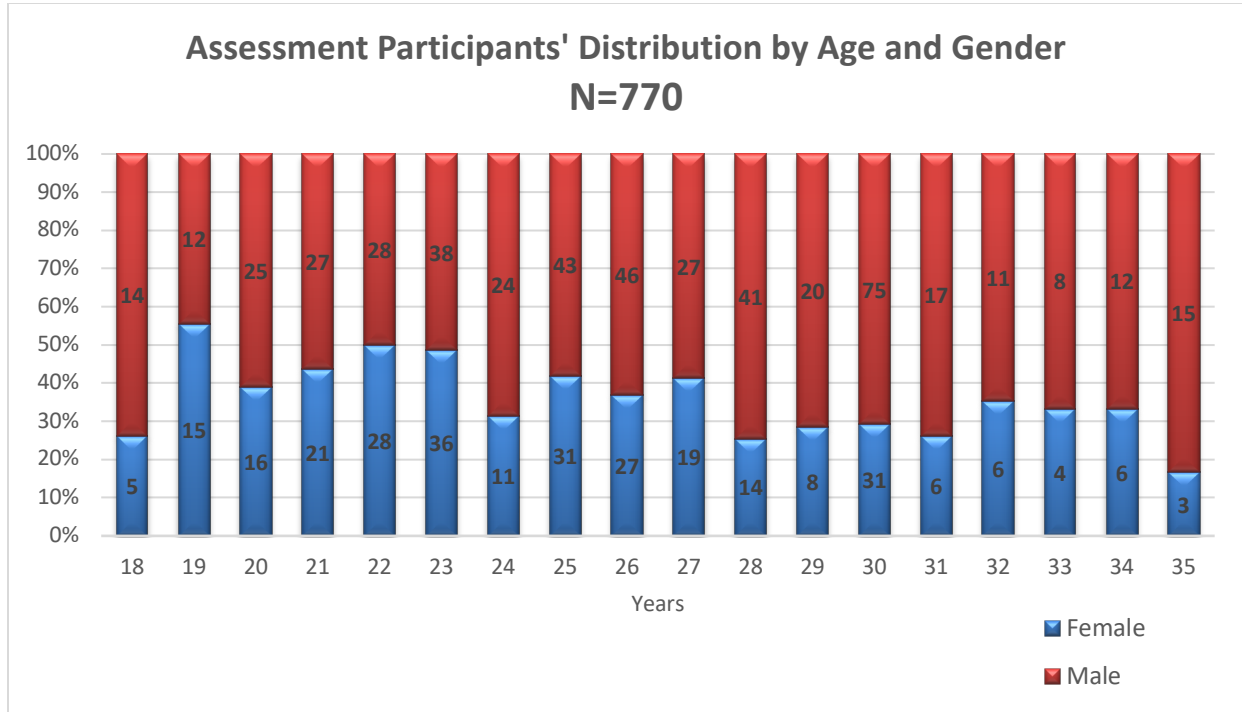


Figure 5- Age and gender distribution

EDUCATION

The graph below describes the educational system and levels in Iraq.

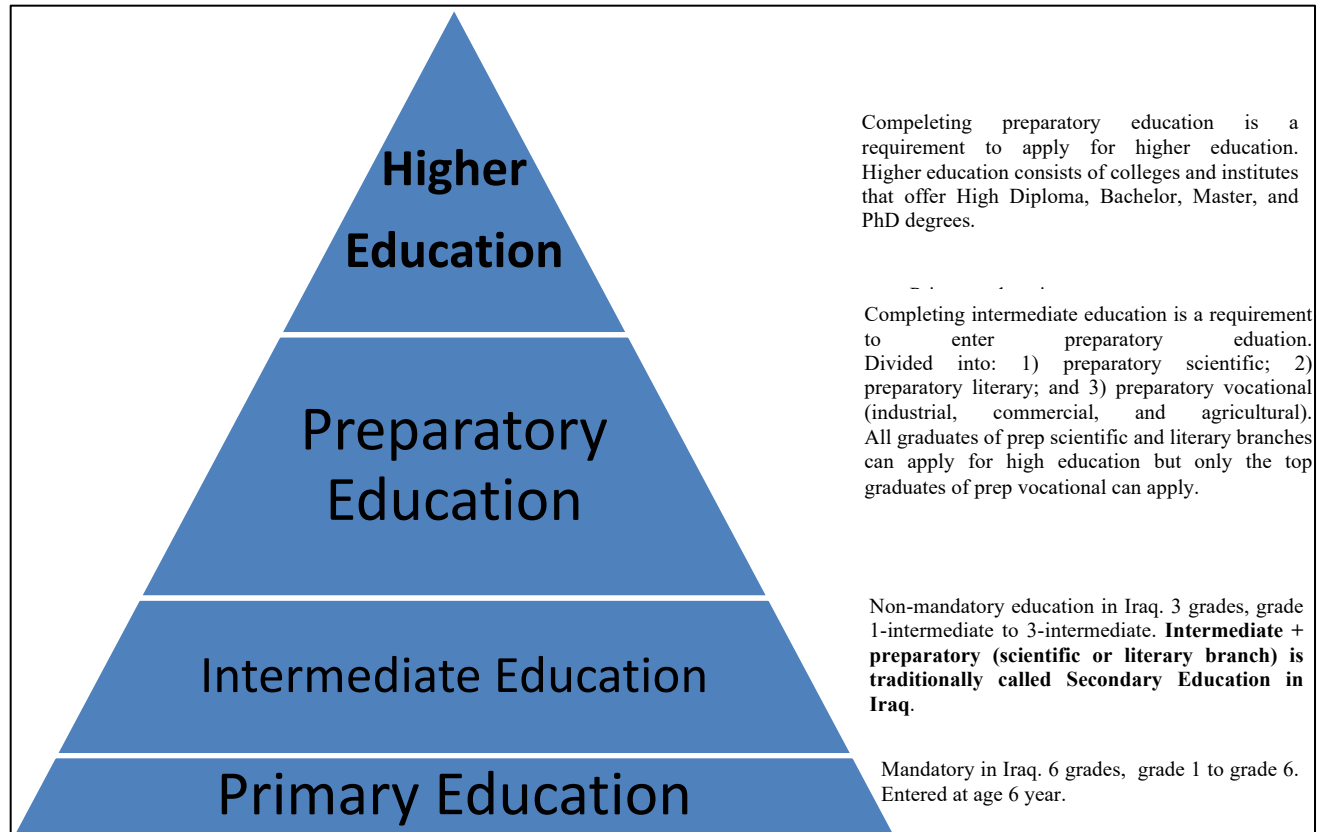


Figure 6 Levels of Educational System in Iraq

For the purpose of this rapid market assessment, the educational level of the survey participants was categorized as follows:

- 1- No formal education
- 2- Primary Education
- 3- Secondary Education (intermediate, prep scientific, or prep literary graduate)
- 4- Technical Vocational Education (prep vocational graduate)
- 5- University Student (higher education student, not yet graduated)
- 6- Bachelor or High Diploma
- 7- Master's or PhD

The following graph depicts the highest attained education level of survey participants.

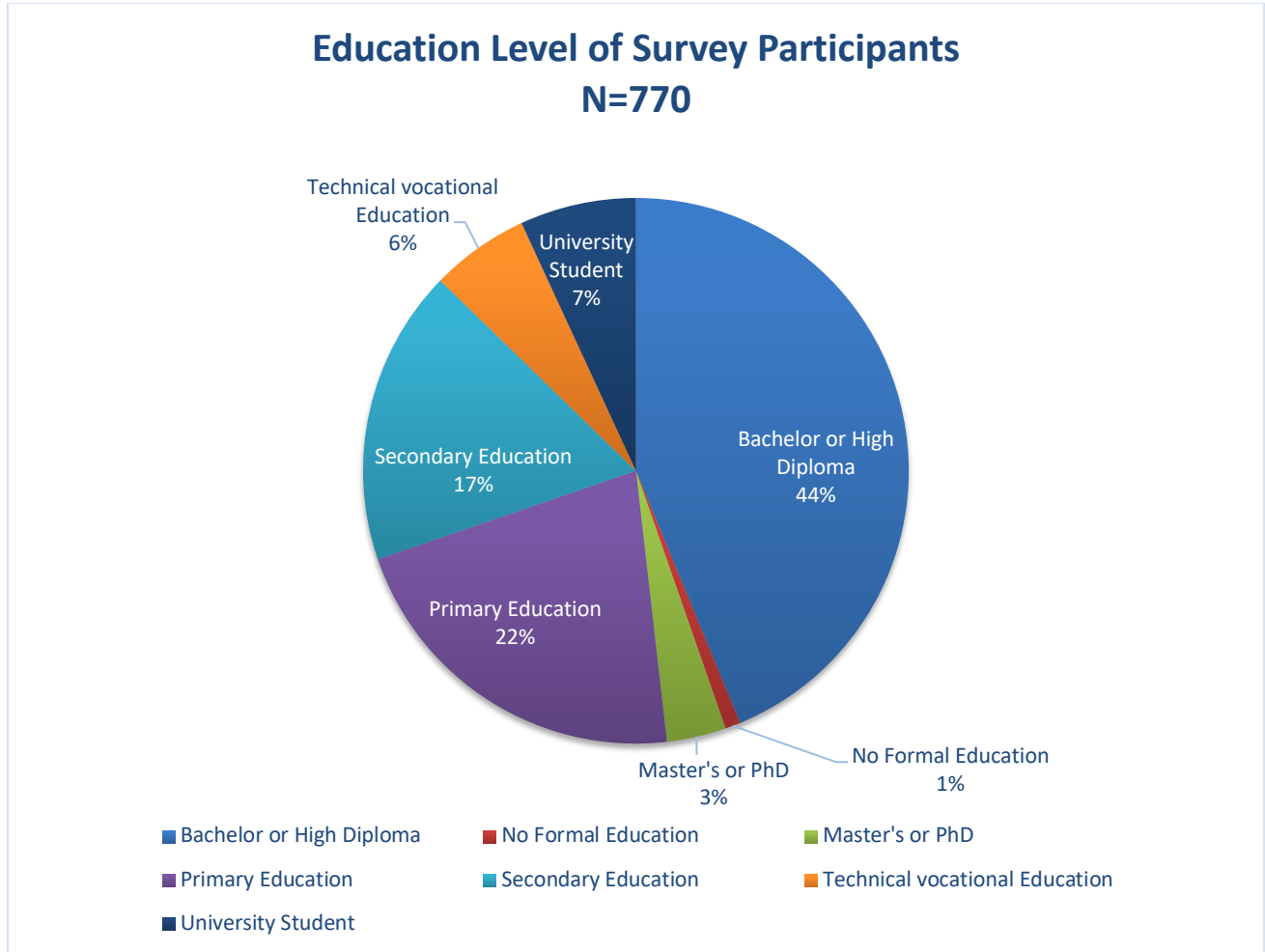


Figure 7 - Education Level of Survey participants

The 1% “No Formal Education” may not be an actual representation of youth who are illiterate or do not have formal education in Basra. Youth who are illiterate or with no formal education are concentrated in subdistricts/ neighborhoods with low socioeconomic status and in informal settlements. The study targeted four low socioeconomic subdistricts but none of the informal settlements.

The highest attained education for almost a quarter of the interviewees was primary education. Many children drop out of school after they finish primary school, mainly for socioeconomic reasons. In Iraq, especially in south-central governorates, girls are less likely to be sent to secondary school than boys. Once the girls reach secondary levels of schooling, they are more likely to drop out early for a range of reasons including early marriage, household responsibilities, and a perceived lack of job opportunities. This is evident from the data which shows that education completion rates for girls fall from 73% at Primary school level to only 35% by the end of Upper Secondary school level. Likewise, female learners are more likely to be out of school than male learners particularly at lower and upper secondary level, with the gap most distinct at

lower secondary level (13% difference between girls and boys). A few causal factors are identified that increase the risk of preventing girls from transitioning from primary to lower secondary schools. According to the Iraqi Household Socio Economic Survey (IHSES), in case of girls', social reasons were cited by the respondents (44.7%) as the reason for dropping out of school and not continuing education in contrast to less than 1 percent in the case of boys. Other significant reasons for girls not continuing or being withdrawn from schools include lack of girls' schools at secondary level (24.7%), negative perceptions of school (6.3%); and cost of attending school and household duties (4.3%).

Although virtually all graduates of intermediate school can obtain vocational education, the percentage of interviewees who attained secondary education diploma was three times higher than those who attained technical and vocational training. In Iraq, the general perception – or misperception – is that the natural educational path for any person leads to college through the two branches of preparatory education, scientific and literal, and that only those who barely graduate intermediate school or are not expected to do well in preparatory school should consider vocational education. This is why the vast majority of intermediate school graduates choose to go to the scientific or literal branches of secondary education and if for whatever reason decide not to apply for higher education after they graduate from preparatory education then they will not consider applying for vocational education.

Statistics⁸ from the center of statics in the Ministry of Planning shows that the number of technical educational institutes in Basra was 314 during 2018-2019, while the number of secondary schools was 8139. So the TVET schools form only 3.8% of the total education institutes. The TVET programs are part of the comprehensive development programs and are an essential pillar of the country's economic construction. The labor market is supplied with qualified technical cadres to advance technological progress and development through technicians with diverse specializations. Unfortunately, vocational education in the province of Basra suffers from many problems and obstacles. TVET schools need a development process by opening new specializations and paying attention to the practical aspect.

According to one TVET school director, there is an overall decrease in the number of newly enrolled students per vocational training course, which is mainly due to the low quality of practical training and teaching methodologies of vocational education. For example, the devices, equipment, machinery, and training materials are not at the required level. These requirements play a major role in developing the quality of skills for students. Also, the number of students in one school is over 300 students, and this rate is very far from the general average in force globally, and this means the small number of schools dedicated to vocational education in the governorate and their inappropriateness to the designs of vocational education schools for professional study.

⁸ <http://www.cosit.gov.iq/ar/2013-02-25-07-39-31>

Therefore, the misconceptions of the community regarding vocational training as well as the weaknesses of the vocational system has led to the lack of students' demand for TVET education over the years.

Noteworthy, 53 out of the 770 surveyed young adults were university students. 11% of them had full time job while 6% of them were self employed or business owners. Majority of the remaining 83% were actively looking for a job or at least open to working. In Iraq it is socially acceptable and common to see a working university student. This is seen more commonly in low income families.

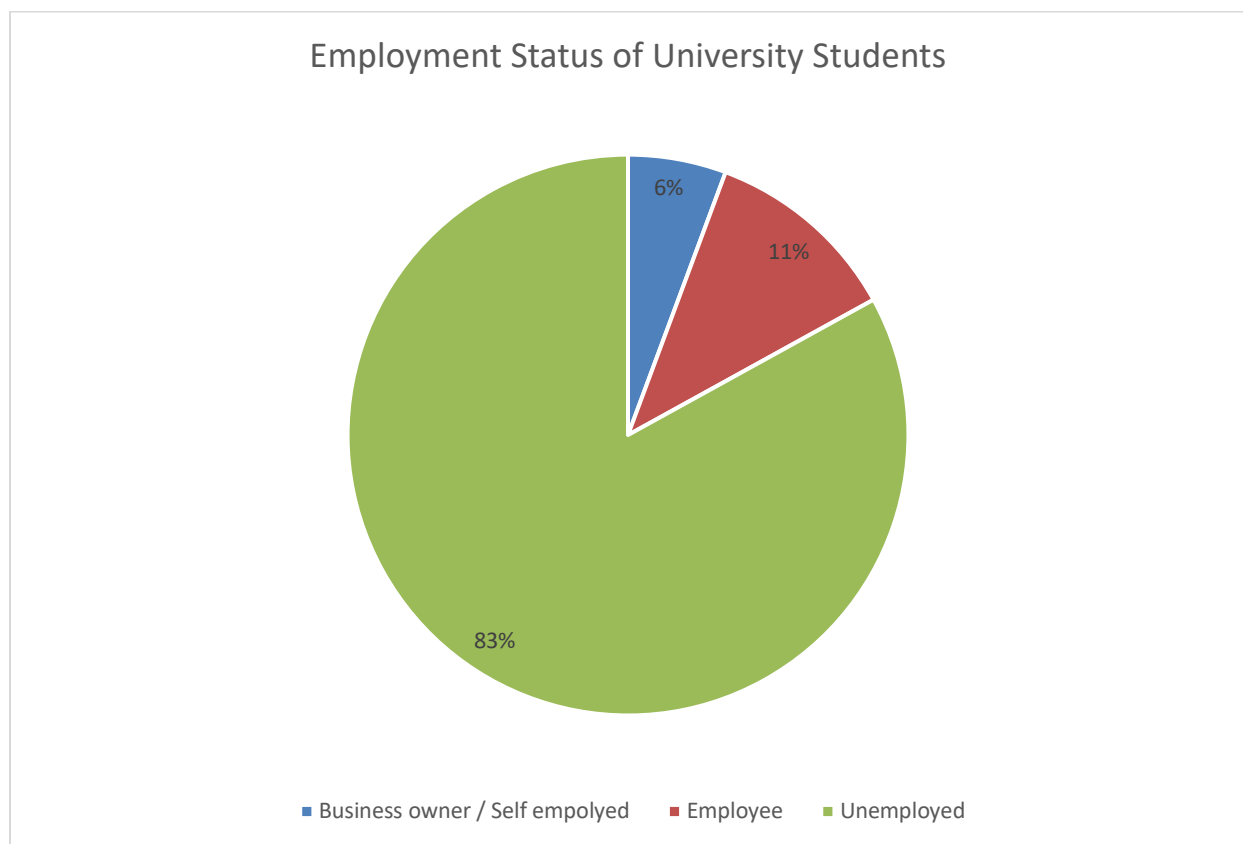


Figure 8 Employment Status of University Students

EMPLOYEMENT

The survey asked about the employment status. 60% of the respondents identified themselves as unemployed and seeking jobs, 28% identified themselves as employed, and the remaining 12% stated that they owned their busnessess or self employed (see table below).

Employment Status	Count	Percentage
Business owner / Self employed	94	12%
Employee	218	28%
Unemployed	458	60%
Grand Total	770	100%

Examples of “business owners/ self employed” businesses are: local grocery shops, convenient stores, men barbershop, women hair salon, blacksmith, car maintenance, pharmacy, furniture store, real estate agency, plumbing, electrician, etc.

The category of “unemployed” is high (60%) because in addition to those who do not have any job it also includes those who are seasonal workers or do not have a fixed earning. In the Iraqi culture there is a category of workers called “كاسب/ Kasib⁹”, which translates literally to Earner in English. The term Kasib (plural Kasabah) was coined legally in Iraq sometime in the 1960s or 1970s to refer to people who do not have a steady jobs and do mostly menial jobs. It is normally in the lower degree of self-employment level such as street vendors, selling newspapers in the street, unskilled workers (doing odd jobs on a day-to-day basis), seasonal farm workers, and similar jobs.

In contrast to Kasib, a relatively higher degree of self-employed is called “أعمال حرة/ A’amal Hurra” which is the Arabic term for Freelance Work. Traditionally, in Iraq, A’amal Hurra is a synonym for low level tradesman, e.g. an owner of a shop that sells goods; however, in recent years and especially for younger generation, freelancer can also mean highly skilled people who sell their work or services per hour or per job.

In general, a Kasib identifies himself/ herself as unemployed while A’amal Hurraa identifies himself/ herself as Business Owner/ Self Employed.

The following figure demonstrates the distribution of employment status by gender.

⁹ Word Reference Language Forums. 2017. <https://bit.ly/2ZR0Qbp>

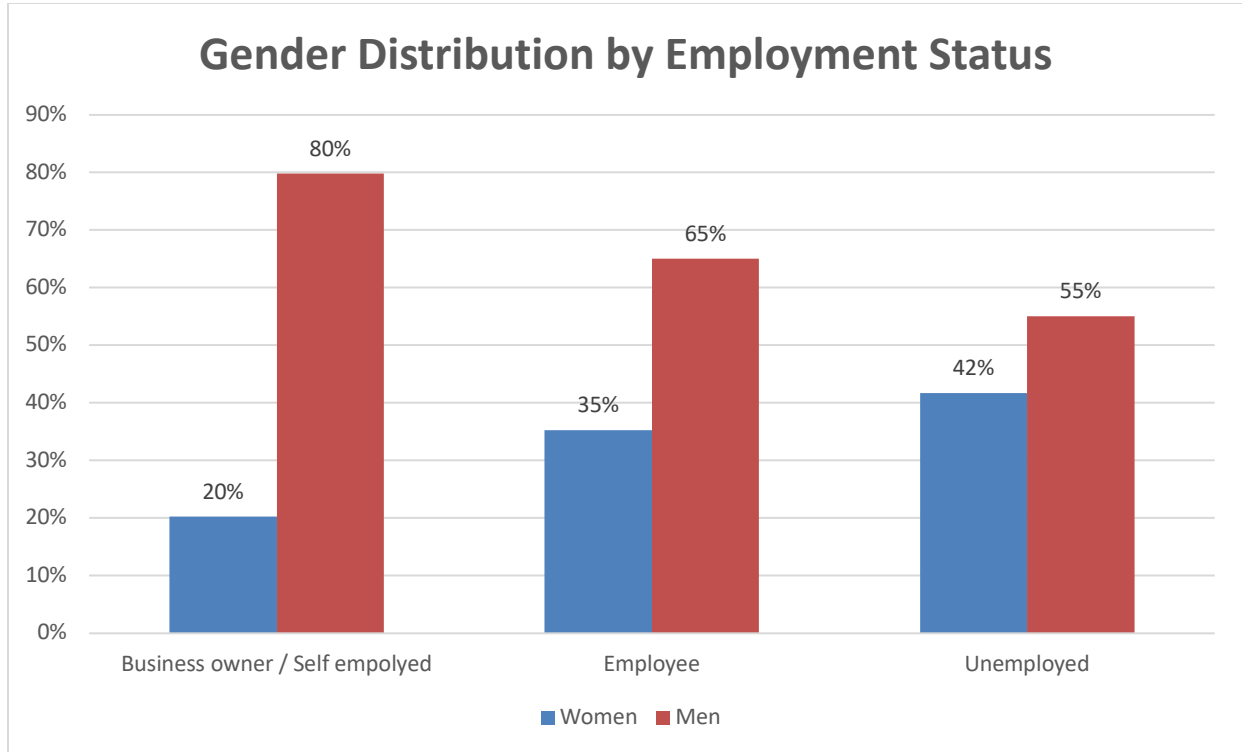


Figure 9 – Gender Distribution by Employment Status



Figure 10 Employment Status by Gender

More men are employed than women, and the unemployment rate is higher for women than men. Of all the surveyed women, 67% were unemployed. Only 20% of business owners/ self employed were women. Most of women business owners/ self employed reported to be morally and financially supported by their families to continue and are working in domains related to hairdressing and beauty lounges.

The following three figures show the educational background of the three employment categories: Business Owner/ Self Employed, Employee, and Unemployed.

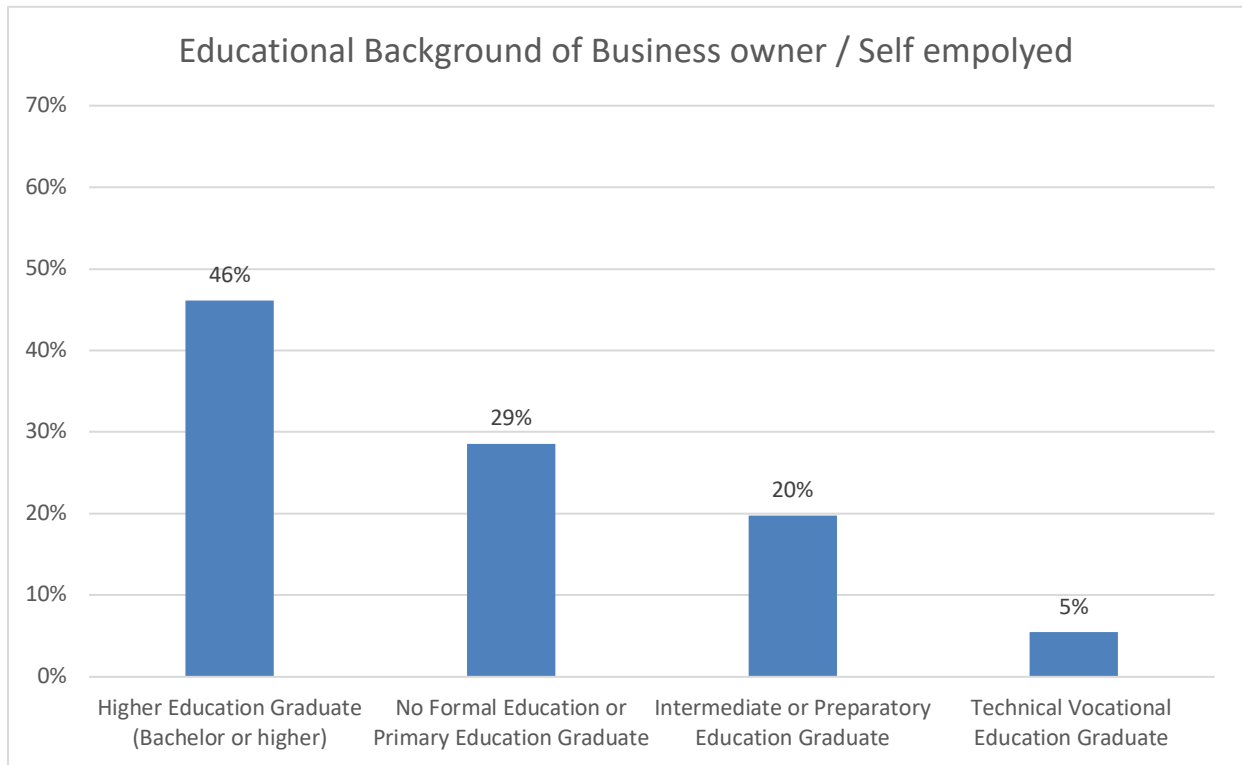


Figure 11 Educational Background of Business owner / Self employed

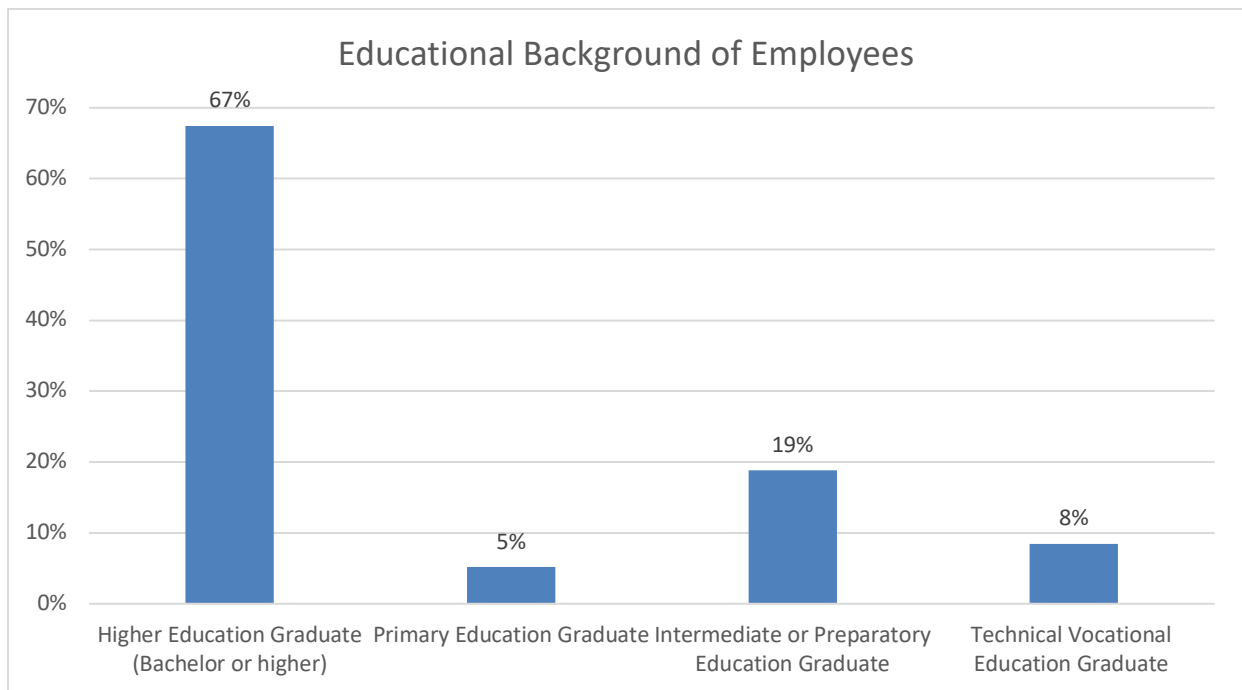


Figure 12 Educational Background of Employees

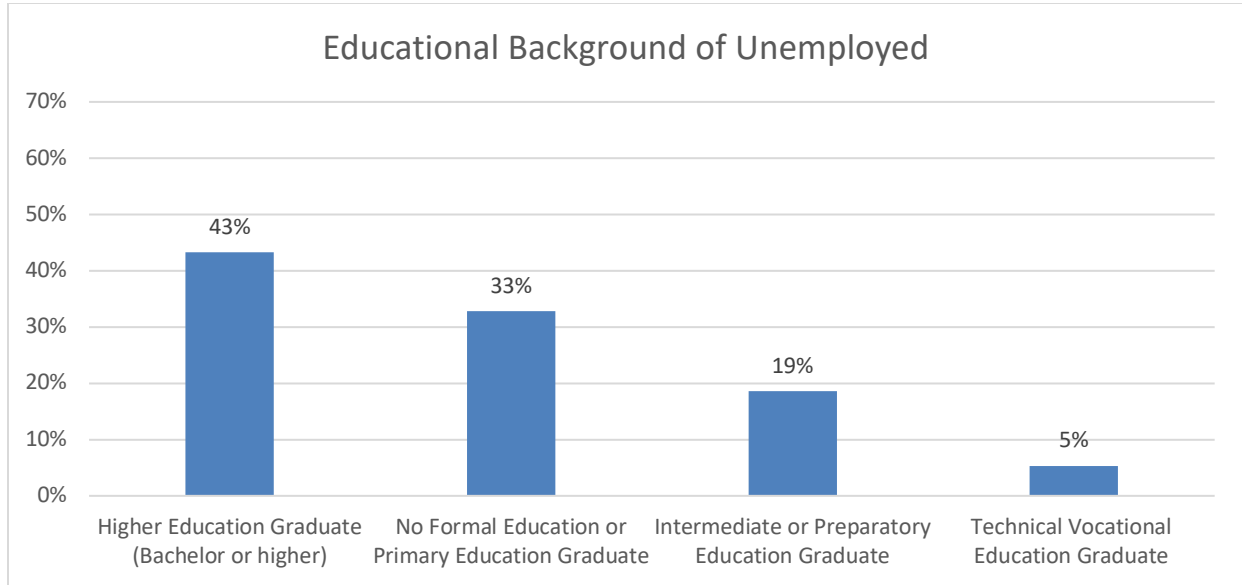


Figure 13 - Educational Background of Unemployed

Higher education graduates represent the largest group in all types of employment, especially in the employee category where college graduates represent more than half of the employees.

The figure below presents another way to view employment status vs. educational background. Both higher education and secondary education graduates have the lowest unemployment rate while those with no formal education or only primary education have the highest unemployment rate.

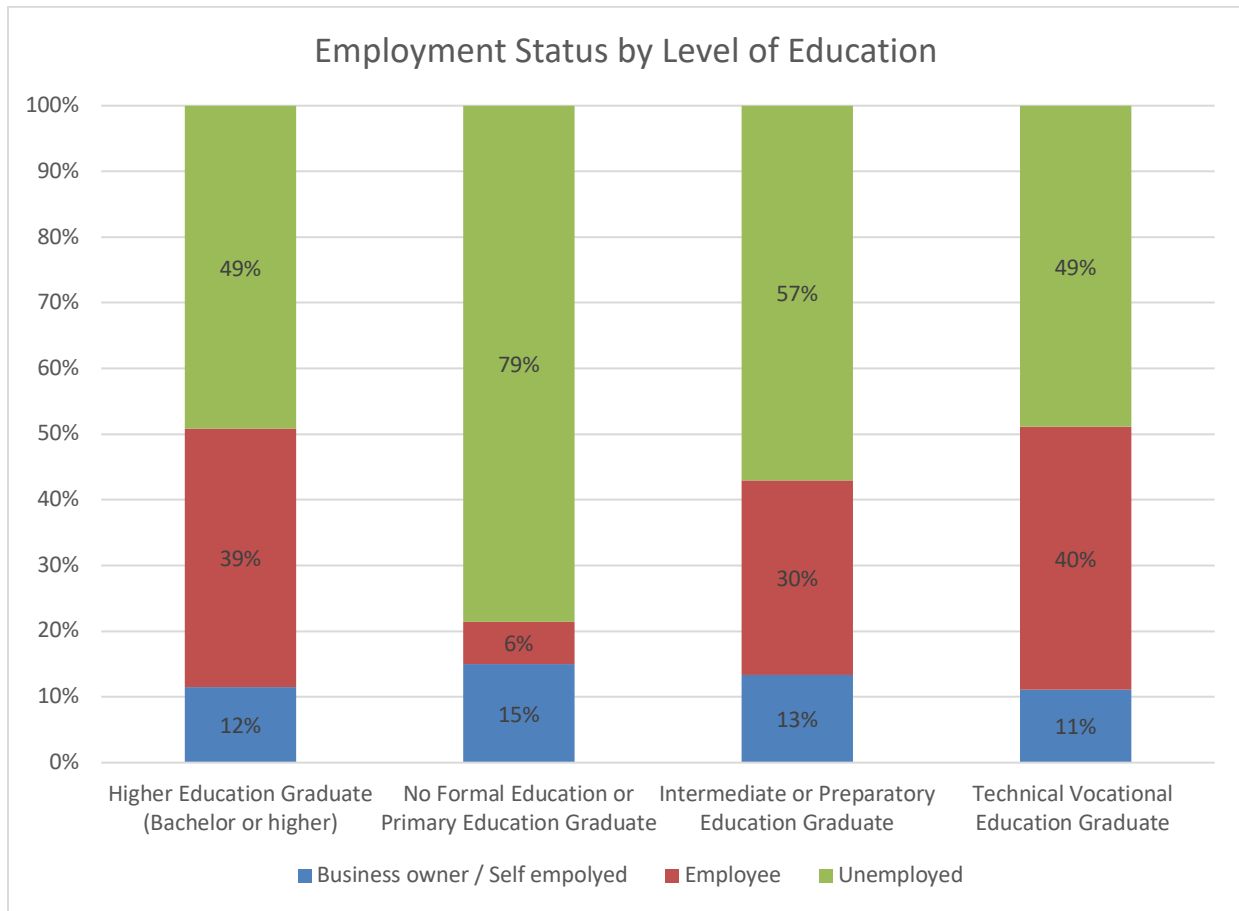


Figure 14 Employment Status by Level of Education

THE CURRENT SKILL LEVELS OF THE YOUTH LIVING IN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES IN BASRA

Most of the interviewees (71%) reported that they did not receive vocational or professional training. The rest received training related to the English language, IT, life skills, technical vocational skills like mobile repair and AC maintenance. In this context, vocational training refers to the applied skills to do the job while professional training refers to the supplemental skills that will increase their chances of getting a job. For most interviewees, professional skills involved English and computer skills, but for others – especially college graduates - it also involved soft business skills such as communication and business management skills.

86% of the interviewees thought that training is very important and can support the young people in finding new or better jobs. Most interviewees know that there are businesses that provide vocational and professional training in Basra and they would refer to them collectively as “governmental and private vocational or educational institutes or centers”. Only a few of those

who have never received vocational training heard about the three DoLSA’s vocational training centers or know what they offer.

However, it is worth noting that the majority of the interviewees reported that they find it difficult to find a job because of a lack of skills, especially English language and IT skills. Upon further questioning, those interviewees stated that their English and IT skills are basic and do not meet the requirements of the jobs they apply to. When asked why they would apply to jobs that are not qualified for, interviewees gave different reasons but most common were: 1) out of desperation; 2) they thought that their English and computer skills were enough for the job; and 3) they did not know English and computer skills were required for the job prior to applying.

The figures below illustrate the findings.

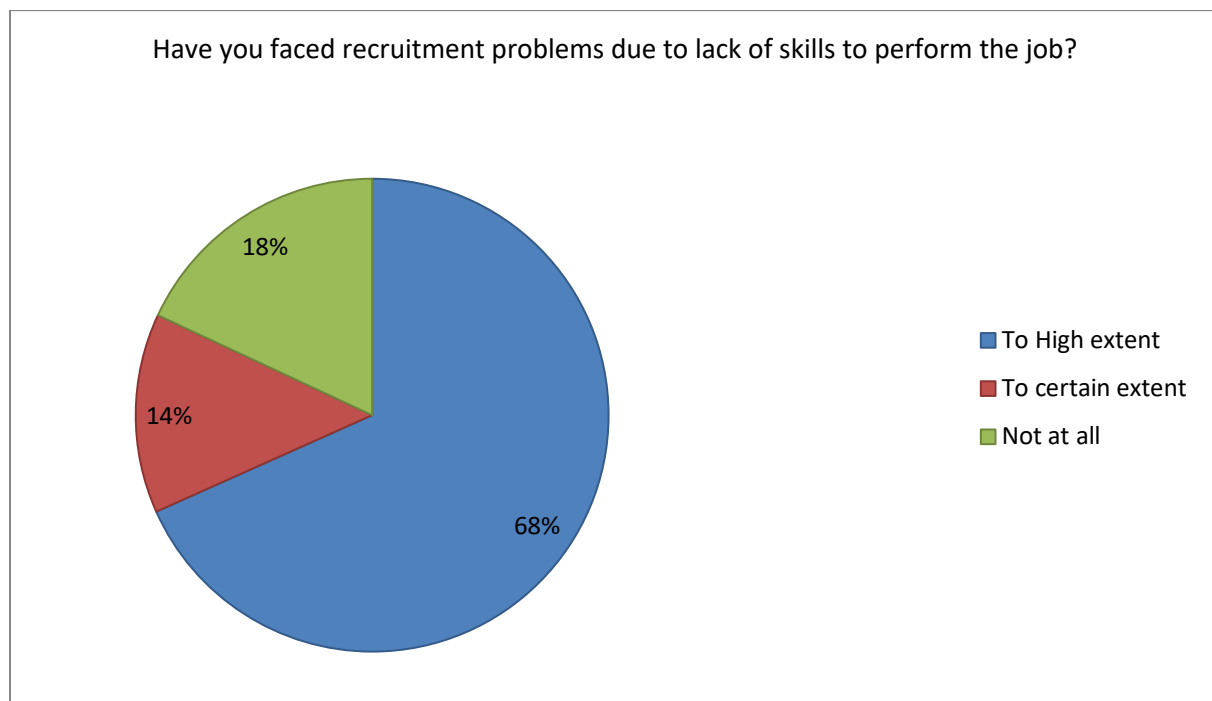


Figure 15 - Recruitment problems faced due to lack of skills

The survey participants were asked to rate a set of work skills of youth in Basra, based on their experience and public perception. The following figure summarizes the results of this assessment.

The following work skills of youth in Basra were scored average to good: Technical skills, appropriate level/ type of education, ability to apply knowledge gained at work, work discipline, decision making/ problem solving, ability to do professional duty, and communication skills. In contrast, the following skills of youth in Basra were scored ‘weak’: “realistic expectations about job opportunities” and “realistic salary expectation”. One possible interpretation for these findings is that the public expects that the youth in Basra have all the required work skills and

knowledge but they are disappointed of the jobs they are offered or end up doing and the salary because they expect more being citizens of Basra, an oil rich city.

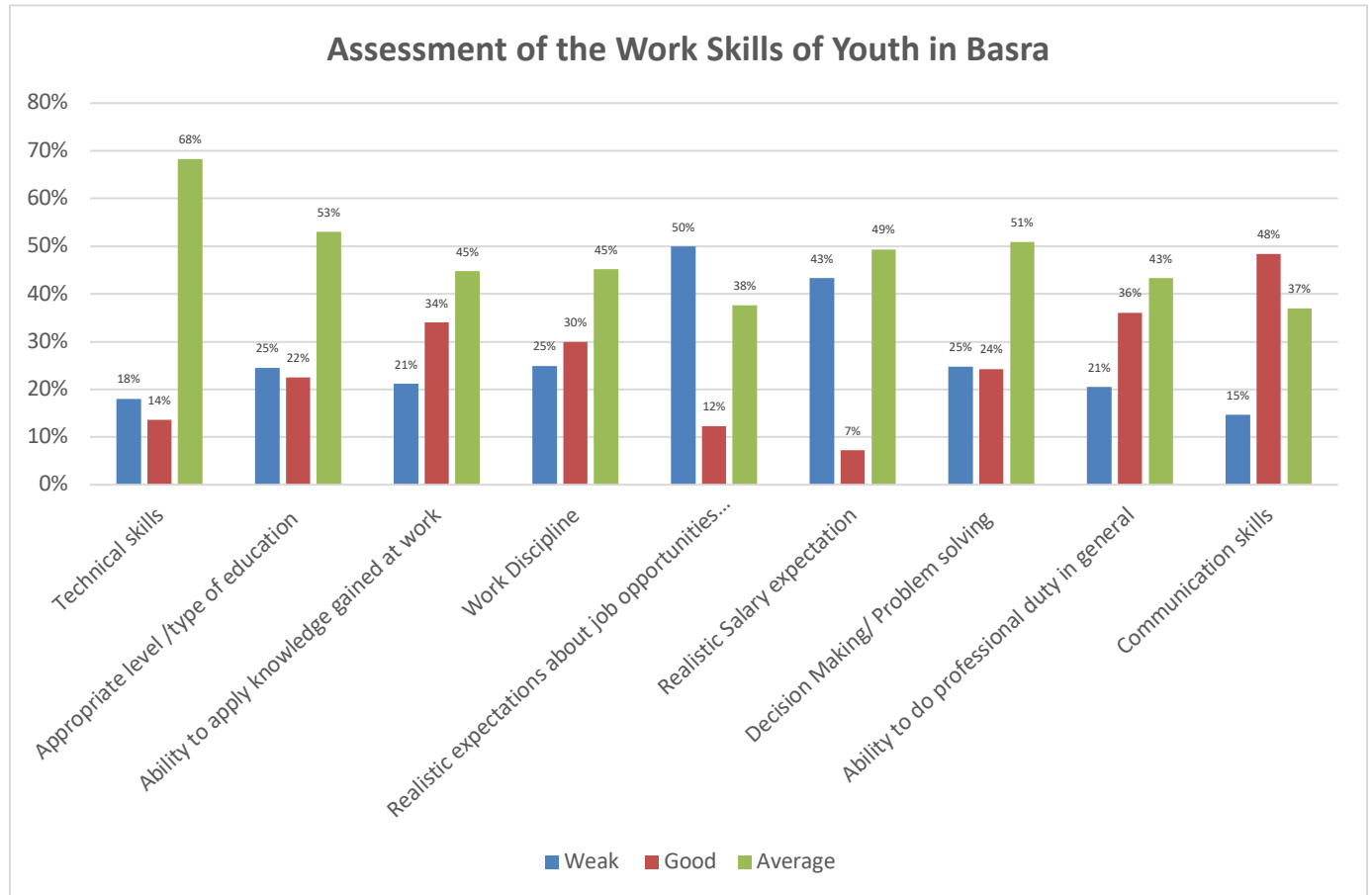


Figure 16- Assessment of the skill level of the youth in Basra for each employment category

The survey participants were also asked to rate whether youth in Basra had the knowledge and skills to work (see the chart below). Only 26% of the surveyed participants thought that majority of young people in Basra have the necessary skills and knowledge to work.

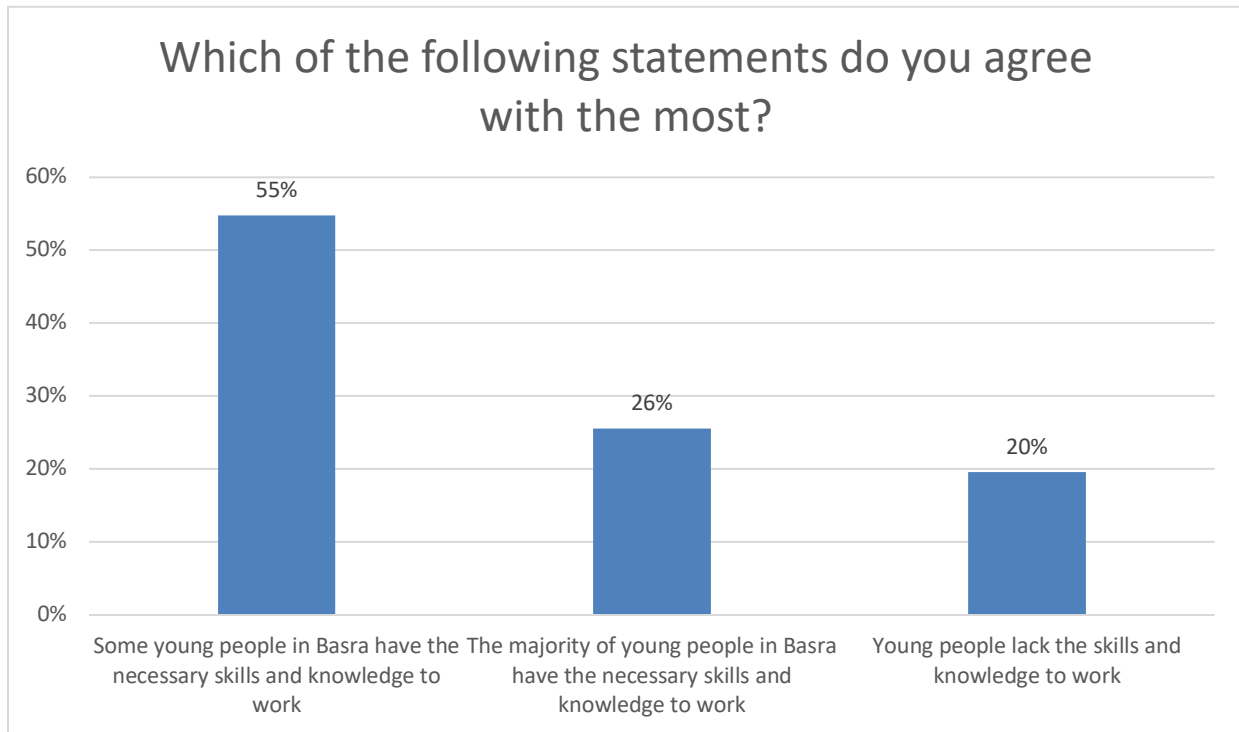


Figure 17- Perception on whether the youth in Basra have the necessary skills and knowledge

SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE “MOST NEEDED” BY COMPANIES VERSUS “MOST LACKING” AMONG RECENT GRADUATES

The skills or knowledge most often lacking are similar to those identified as “most needed” by survey participants. Specifically, the skills most often cited as lacking in recent graduates were English language skills (86%), computer proficiency (76%). Communication skills (51%), technical skills/knowledge (50%), and similarly, a significant majority identified English language skills (66%), followed by Communication (27%), Marketing (27%) as most needed to solve current industry-related problems or to develop companies.

Over 20 skills and knowledge areas were highlighted by interviewees as most needed to solve current industry-related problems or further develop their company. It is also worth noting that interviewees selected two ‘soft skills’ among the top ten skill/knowledge areas: “Problem-solving” and “communication skills.”

“Students need to master English languages and language skills by joining language courses at universities or private institutes” – KII Respondent- hotel director.

Technical Skills came through as the most or second most frequently cited knowledge/skill area in five sectors: Oil and Gas, Manufacturing and repairing ACs, Hairdressing, and sewing.

One point of discussion raised by FGD participants was how universities and colleges in Basra need to modernize their programs and curricula so that they can keep up with the demands of the local - and national - labor market. Representatives of local businesses who participated in the Business owners FGD stated that many times when they have a new job opening they end up recruiting someone from other governorates in Iraq or an expat because they cannot find the right person for the job locally. Apart from the English, IT, and soft skills, private sector employers – especially international companies – recruit foreigners because they have the knowledge or the expertise in a modern field of science or industry.

MAIN BARRIERS FACED BY YOUNG PEOPLE WHEN LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB OPPORTUNITY

Based on the responses of the businessmen and representatives of main economic sectors: The main barriers faced by young people when looking for a new job opportunity are language, computers and IT skills, occupational safety, communication skills especially on how to deal with others, while businesses usually seek young people who have English and IT skills.

One participant of business owners FGD stated: *Young people can develop themselves, but their financial need prevented them, for example, from accessing learning spaces such as language centers and IT training centers.*

Young people can develop themselves, but their financial needs prevented them, for example, from learning the Language when entering school.

Meanwhile, the representatives from the local community stated that unemployment can affect young people psychologically and morally and may lead to suicide and resort to crime and drugs. The table below shows the gaps identified in terms of IT, English, and soft skills.

IT skills

• **Gaps in technology skills are met partly IT/Computer skills**
Although the general conception is that the youth in Basra doesn't have good English and IT skills, the respondent think that the youth in Basra have an intermediate level of IT skills. Meanwhile, while conducting this study, MH find it very difficult to find a database manager in Basra and it is reported the same for the other projects that MH conducted in the past and where a database manager was needed. Only a minority think that the youth in Basra have an advanced level of IT and English language skills.

English skills

• **Gaps in English language skills** were the second most frequently reported skill or knowledge area cited as needed to solve current recruitment related problems or further develop the skills of the youth in Basra to get a better job. Only 18 percent said that the youth in Basra have an advanced level of English proficiency.

• All the FGD discussion and some KIIs with the businessmen confirmed that the English language skills were "most needed" to solve current industry related problems or to further develop their company. This demand for English language skills was especially pronounced in the Oil and Gas and tourism sectors. However, this demand is not currently being adequately met by universities as employers. The data shows that despite there is a high demand for English language skills but combined with low supply.

Soft skills

• **Soft skills and in particular "critical thinking" and "problem-solving"** The soft skill area of problem-solving was also the third most commonly cited skill or knowledge areas as "most needed" to meet the job market needs. Often it was mentioned with communication skills or for customer service jobs. Soft skills and communication skills were approximately mentioned with the same rates with 22 and 20 percent of respondents, respectively, citing them as "most needed." The need for graduates with these soft skills is further supported by responses given to an open-ended question inquiring about "industry-specific hiring or human-resource problems that companies or industries face".

Training Opportunities and Job Seeking

It is worth noting that 55% of the youth in Basra are seeking a job in the public sector. This could be a factor behind their protest and demands for employment, while only 19% seek the private sector. The figures are alarming as many youth protested against the government seeking jobs in the public sector. This is confirmed in this survey. The public sector cannot recruit 55% of the youth in Basra, and therefore, there is a need for a new strategy to attract those youth to the private sector or for entrepreneurship. Only a minority seek to work in non-governmental organizations and CSOs.

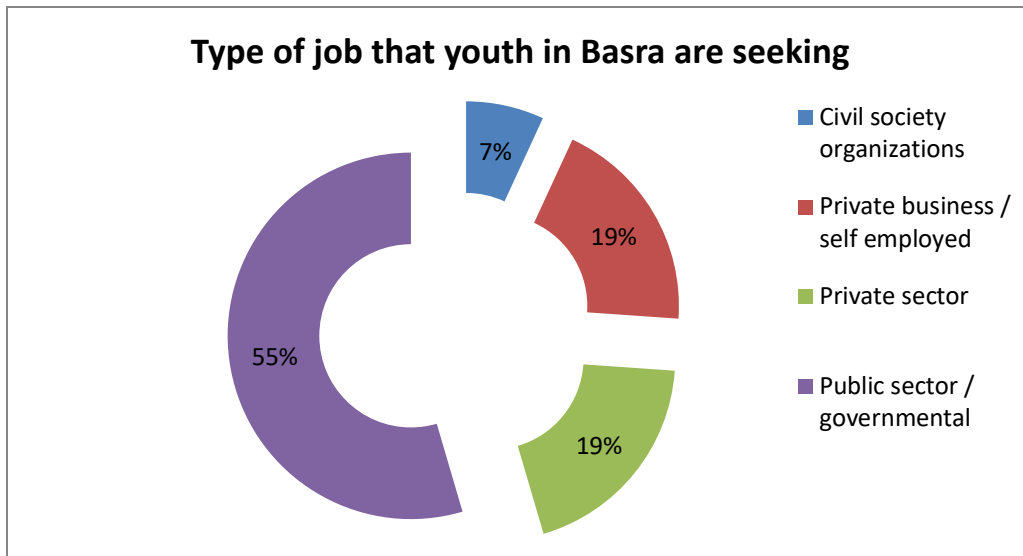


Figure 18- Type of job that youth in Basra are seeking

When asked what kind of job-specific skills training young people need to improve their chances of getting a job in Basra, most interviewees answered: IT, English, and technical skills.

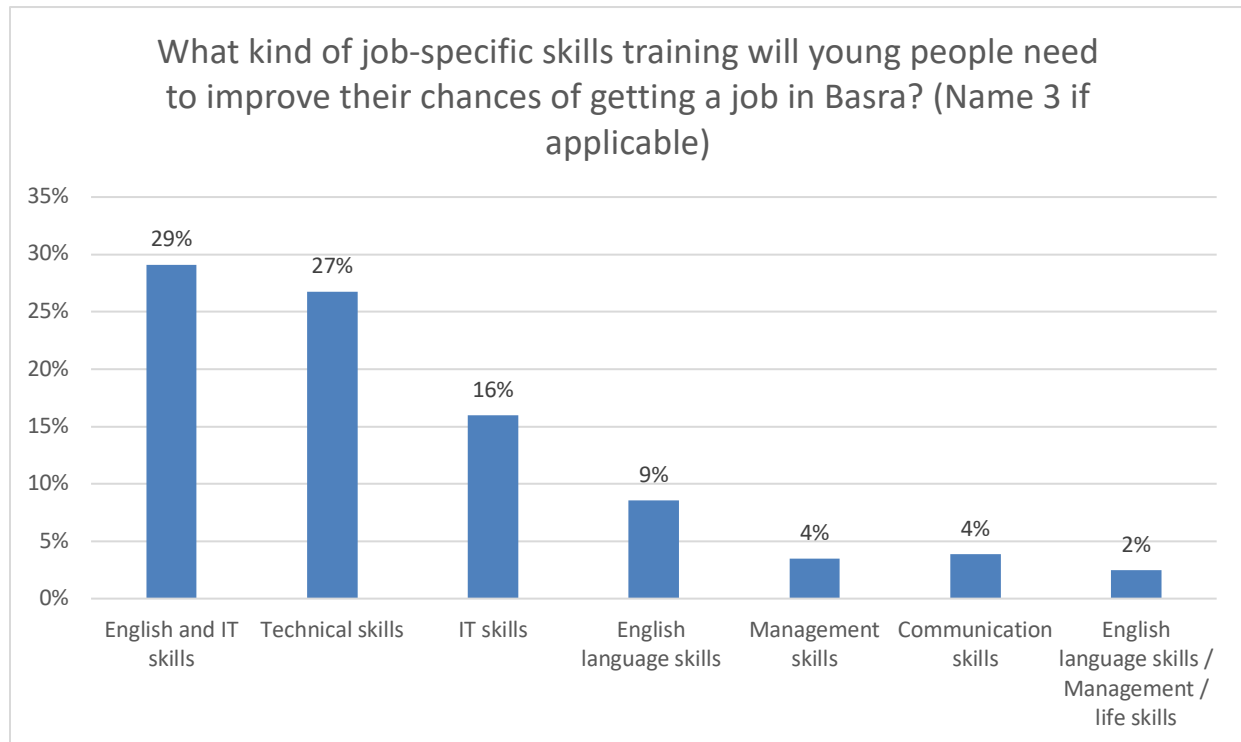


Figure 19 Job-specific Skills Training Young People Need to Improve Their Chances of Getting a Job in Basra

Majority of the interviewees assessed the English and IT skills of youth in Basra as basic to intermediate. Also majority of the interviewees stated that English and IT are two of the most required skills for newly recruited employees.

Different entities offer different business and vocational training in Basra. NGOs, foreign companies, professional associations, and unions offer ad hoc business and/or vocational training, while technical colleges and Department of Labor and Social Affairs (DoLSA) offer technical and vocational training on permanent bases.

There are three vocational training centers affiliated to DoLSA in Basra governorate, in Basra City, Abul Al Khaseeb, and Az Zubayr. , affiliated to MoLSA. They offer courses in barbership, decoration, construction, makeup, etc. Together, these vocational training centers offer a total of 20 vocational training course on regular bases. Even though DoLSA's vocational training courses are free and theoretically offered year round, the interviewees stated than an average Basrwai youth seeking vocational training would not consider DoLSA's vocational training center as the first option because DoLSA's courses are conducted in the morning and that is the time when jobless people are out searching for a job. Also DoLSA's courses are at least 2 months long and that is perceived as too long commitment to undertake without a pay. Some interviewees mentioned that when they reach out to the center to sign up for a course they would be informed that not enough people have signed up for the course and that the center will contact them when enough applicants will apply for the course, but they never call back. Other interviewees stated that sometimes the courses would not have enough training material and tools. Other reasons that make DoLSA's training unfavorable for young men in Basra are: 1) secondary education degree (high school diploma) is a requirement; and 2) the trainee is not allowed to take more than one course or switch courses.

Key Lessons from Skills-building Review

- 1. The findings support the hypothesis that INGOs can help youth through building a wide variety of these foundational work readiness skills over a condensed period.**
- 2. Providing dedicated and intensive Language, IT, soft, and technical skills can be effective in helping youth develop key job-related skills in a short period.**
- 3. However, while intense learning can help jump-start youth Skills development, youth needs more dedicated instruction and coaching to get to a point where they can effectively use their skills in the labor market. Employment service providers, whether governmental or nongovernmental, can serve this purpose. They can provide job seekers with: 1) Career Counseling; 2) Benefits and Work Incentive Advisement Services; 3) Job Search and Placement; 4) Financial Wellness Strategies; and 5) Long-term Employment Supports.**

4. Experiential learning and connections to structured formal services (like linking youth to internship and apprenticeship programs) effectively support youth in building key work readiness skills.

The Market Demand

Majority of youth in Basra think that the market demand does not meet their needs or they have no clue about the subject. This study demonstrated that there is a gap in information about labor market needs. It is recommended that data and news of labor market needs should be delivered to the public, especially youth sector, in an effective and efficient way.

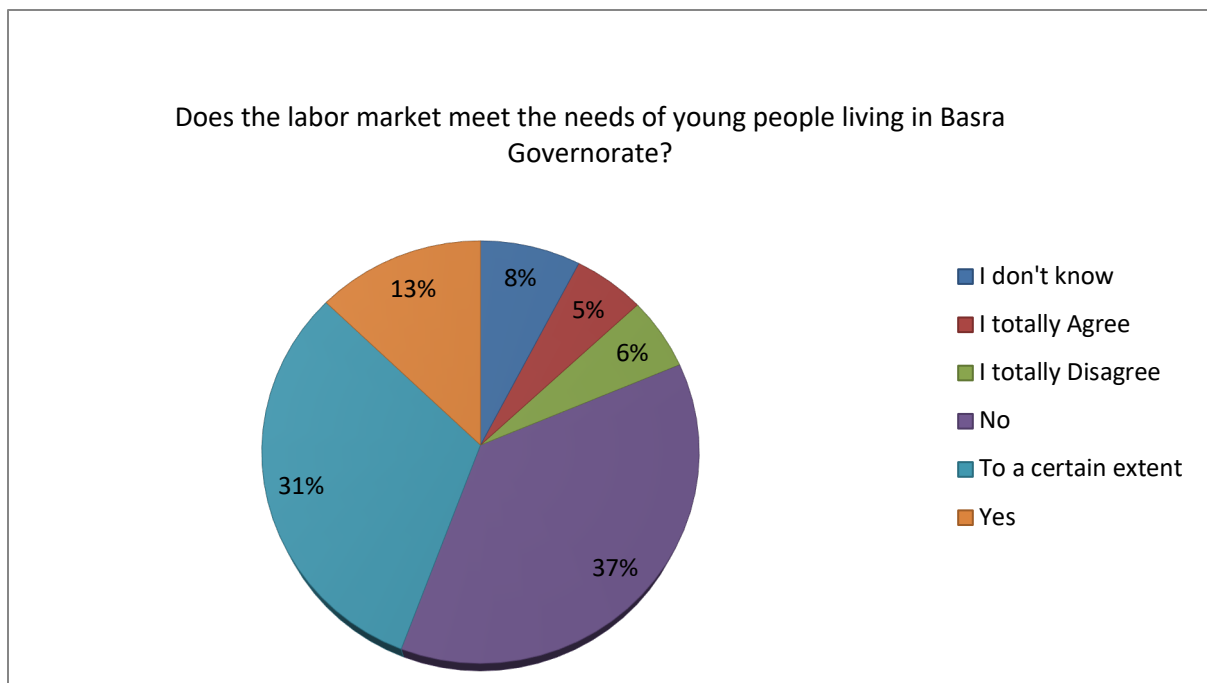


Figure 20- Does the labor market meets the needs of young people living in Basra Governorate

When asked how they hear about new job opportunities, half of the interviewees mentioned that they know about them from their relatives and friends while a third of them said that they know about the job vacancies through advertising over the website for recruiting new employees (see graph 15). Upon further questioning, majority of the interviewees agreed that knowing someone working for the recruiting employer would help them get the job.

Prior to the internet becoming relatively popular in Iraq, recruiting employees was happening mostly through friends and relatives; however, as more local employment and job listing websites

are created and more Iraqis are using the internet, job ads on the internet is becoming a popular way to recruit new employees.

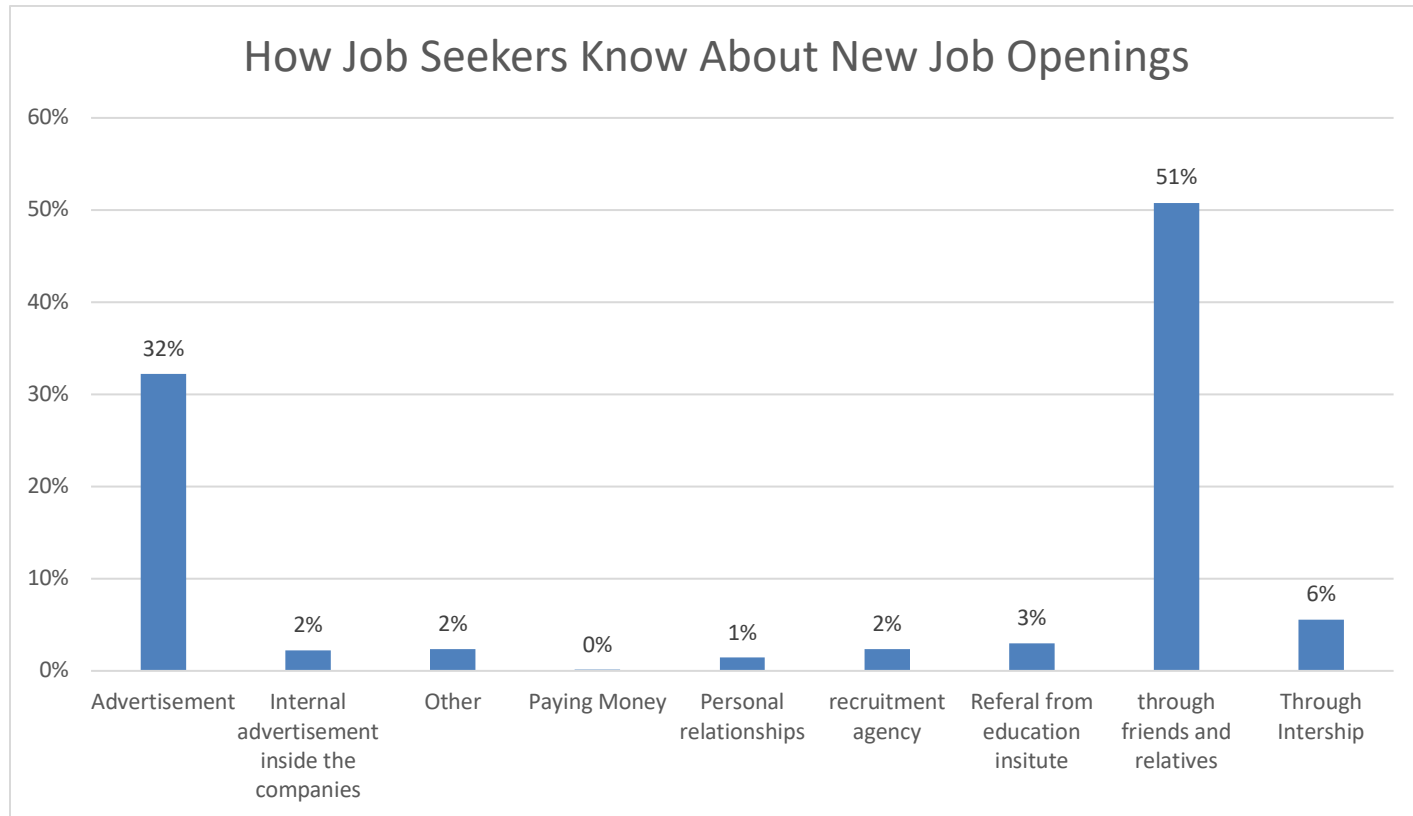


Figure 21- How Job Seekers Know About New Job Openings

Employers in Iraq still prefer – or at least accept – recruiting an outsider who is recommended or known by a current or ex-employee. Lack of security and fear of hiring a stranger is the main reason for that but there are other reasons too. There was a general agreement among interviewed employers that recruiting a new employee through word of mouth, e.g. recommended by a friend or a current employee, is better than public posting, because it is easier and faster. It takes time to create a job ad, post it, and then wait for candidates to submit their applications. A few employers complained that they do not know many employment websites for job listings or they do not know which employment websites the local job seekers would check out.

Recruiting through a word of mouth is usually perceived by unsuccessful applicants as favoritism and described as one form of corruption.

When hiring an employee, the most important requirements and specifications for a potential employee are English, IT, and technical skills. Some of the people who participated in the FGD mentioned that social status is nowadays very important, and employers are asking the candidates about their family name, tribal affiliation, and/or the name of the neighborhood where they live

to complete their reference check before hiring them. For some local employers, inquiring about the social status of the candidate is a good alternative to proper security background check, because they have innate knowledge of the communities and tribes in Basra. For example, a candidate living in the slums or the informal settlements or from a tribe that is not native to Basra is not preferred for hiring.

The market assessment sought to understand the most sought-after traits for employees in the Basra urban area and understand perspectives on hiring women and youth. Most sectors interviewed required workers to have primary, preparatory, or secondary education certificates and to be residing in the same area due to difficulties of transportation. All respondents preferred workers that were experienced in work assigned to them. In addition, the following traits were preferable in workers: social status (to ensure no tribal issues could happen in the future), trustworthiness, politeness, honesty, communication skills, problem-solving, and good ethics.

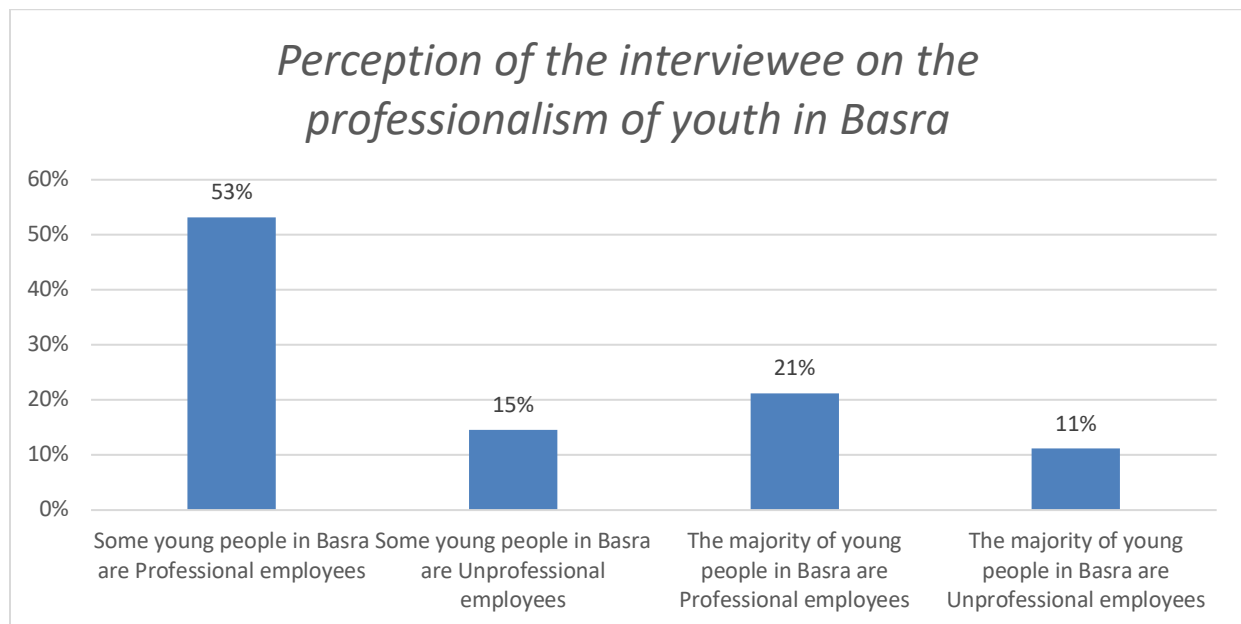


Figure 22 - Perception of the interviewee on the professionalism of youth in Basra

According to the interviewed business owners and employers, the local small and medium-sized enterprises employ majority of labor force in private sector. This assumption is supported by an assessment made by the World Bank Group¹⁰.

¹⁰ IFC: Supports Small and Medium Enterprises in Iraq. Press Release. May, 2016.
<https://pressroom.ifc.org/all/pages/PressDetail.aspx?ID=16612>

The interviews with the key informants revealed more interesting perspectives regarding the local market demand. When asked which business sectors are the major employers in Basra, majority of the local business owners and employers answered: oil sector, trading, contracting, retail, and entertainment. The interviewees highlighted the fact that the industrial sector, especially iron production, can potentially employ a large number of people but it has been on the decline for years now. As one local employer stated, “*the public manufacturing industry has been virtually non-existent since 2003* and unable to recruit more employees while the lack of supportive governmental laws and policies hampers the growth of the private sector manufacturing industry and make it unable to recruit a lot of people”.

When asked which industries are overgrown or highly competitive, the predominant answer was oil industry. As one interviewed economist stated, “Basra’s economy is heavily dependent on the oil industry. The local community and government alike look first at the oil companies to recruit more unemployed people”.

The key informants have different perspectives regarding which industries are underdeveloped or have the potential to grow. Some of them believed that tourism is a growing industry, others suspected that the long awaited for iron and steel factories will be opened in the near future and they will absorb a lot of unemployed technicians and labor workers.

The interviewed officials seemed to have a better perspective regarding what industries have the priority in terms of government support and/or attract local and international investment. They stated that construction, specifically housing, and manufacturing industries are taking the priority in GoI plan for encouraging investment.

FGD participants reported that employment in construction (i.e., carpentry or welding), e-marketing, handicrafts (specifically for women), food processing, and trading were the most promising sectors for employment in Basra, as there is a demand for those jobs or products.

Due to mainly the oil industry and being the only sea port in the country, Basra is considered a cosmopolitan city that has the potential to expand small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in different sectors. Examples of such SMEs are importing and exporting, logistics, security, translation services, general trading, transportation and tourism, accounting, customs clearance and freight services, etc. Those SMEs can absorb more youth into the workforce. Providing technical vocational and livelihood skills was suggested for various sectors, including AC repairing, carpentry, and aluminum, in addition to hairdressing and tailoring for women. Some participants mentioned training in skills with businesses with

good demand as needed (among the businesses experiencing good/average demand and paying above-average salaries), which included trade, sales, and work related to food cooking and processing. However, as many vocational training centers are already located in the vicinity, avoiding training duplication should also be considered.

Gender Equality In Employment

Only 9% of the interview think employers discriminate based on gender, while 15% think that such incidents are rare in Basra. The rest think that they are definitely or sometimes willing to hire women as employees or apprentices. There are Limited gender differences in work readiness skill development.

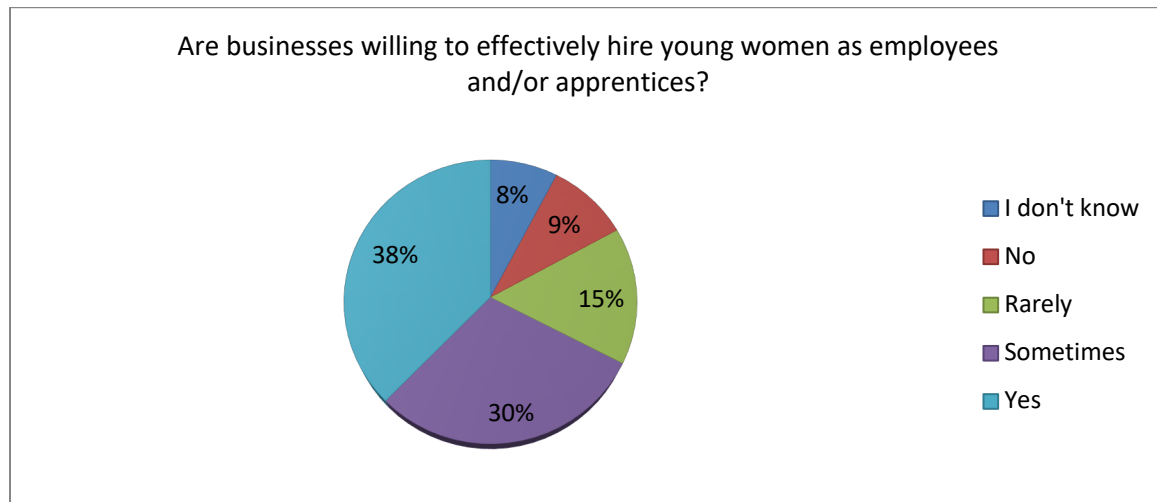


Figure 23- businesses willing to effectively hire young women as employees and/or apprentices

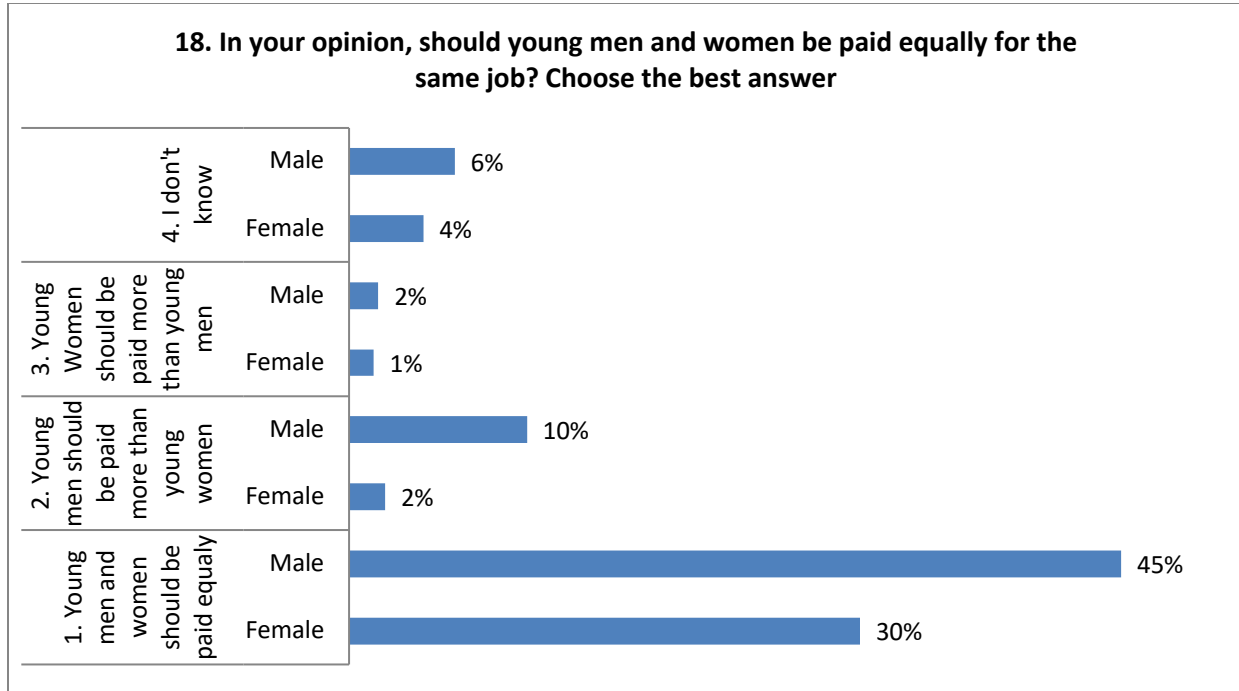


Figure 24 should young men and women be paid equally for the same job

75% of the respondents agree about the equal pay between men and women, 12% thought men should be paid more than women, and only 3% thought that women should be paid more than men. Men and women with high (graduate) education level constituted the majority of those who thought men and women should be paid equally.

Women's Economic Participation

Concerning women's economic participation, a feminist activist and women NGO director explains the situation: *There are still traditional professions forbidden to women in Basra in many fields. The supporting organizations have carried out many activities to educate and support women. However, they need a lot of support and awareness for women, especially in rural areas, districts, and subdistricts due to the pressure of life and the pressure of parents on the one hand and their deprivation of education in addition to the southern societal custom.*

The FGD focused more light on women's participation in the local market in Basra, especially women only FGDs. There was a clear distinction between the two groups of women, women household providers and women aged 18 – 30 year. In general, women household providers tend to be older, but that is not the only distinction. The group discussions demonstrated the following distinctive features of the women household providers compared to other – generally younger - women:

- Women household providers are more energetic and engaging in discussions regarding market and livelihood. They seem to be in solution finding mode. Majority of women household providers are widows or divorced and have children. They are usually morally

and financially supported by their extended family but the financial support is not enough to provide for them and their children; therefore, they are the main providers for themselves and their immediate families. They are usually actively looking for a job and they are more likely to be employed than women who are not head-of-household (see graph below).

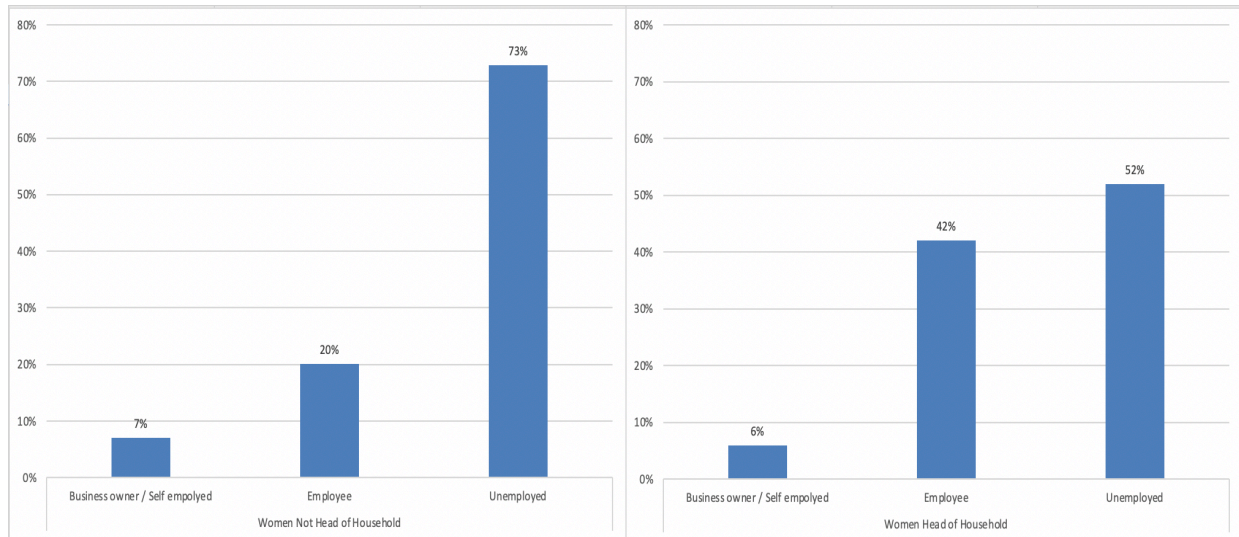


Figure 25 Comparison of Employment Status Between Women Head of Household and Women Not Head of Household

- Women household providers tend to prefer home based jobs, so that they can also care for their children, which will save them some money. If they work outside home then they will have to find someone who will babysit their kids or place them in a kindergarten. Examples of home based jobs are: beauty parlor, ready-made food business, jewelry and handcrafts.
- Compared to women not head of household, when women head of household apply for a job they are more likely to be rejected due to lack of skills to perform the job (see graph below).

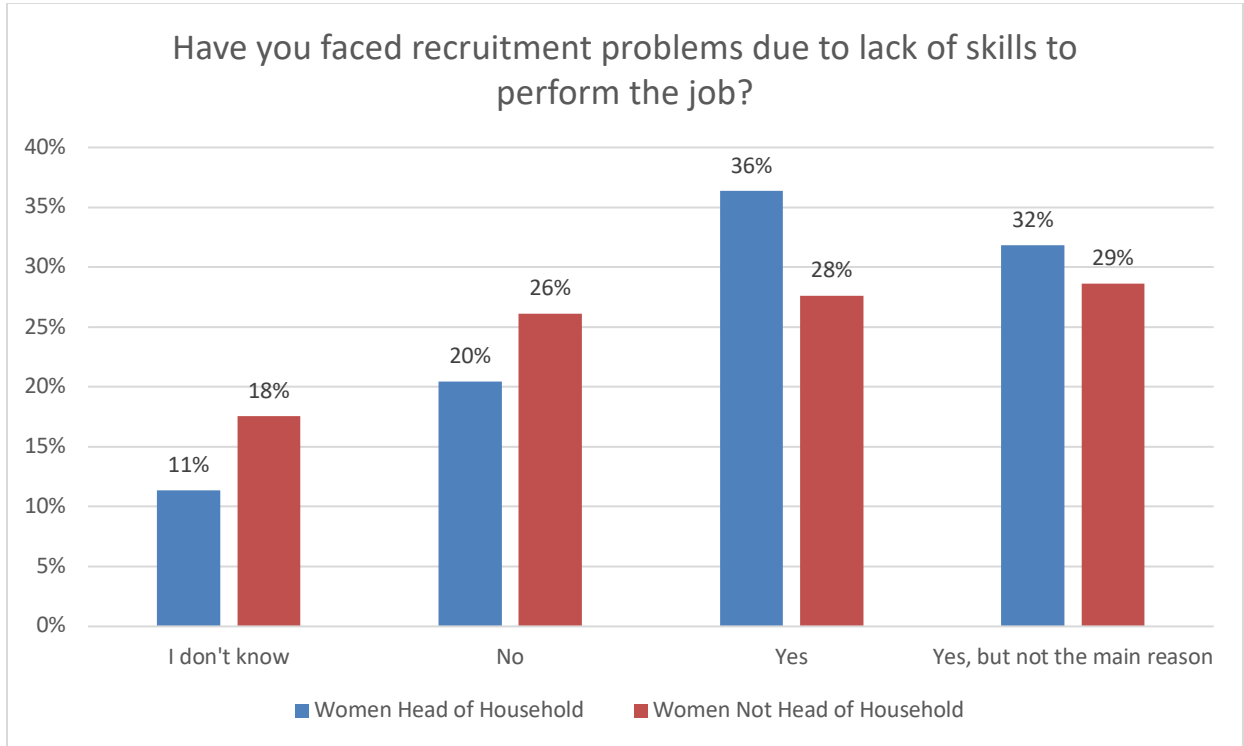


Figure 26 Percentage of Women Faced Recruitment Problems due to Lack of Skills to Perform the Job

- Women household providers have basic computer knowledge and they do not engage in computer or internet based businesses.
- Women household providers are more interested in learning business management and marketing skills than computer and language skills.

In contrast group discussions demonstrated the following about women who are not household providers, aged 18 – 30 years:

- Majority of women who are not household providers prefer jobs in the public sector but they are more perceptive to jobs in the private sector.

The following graph, which depicts the job preferences of surveyed women, shows that not head of household women like to have a job in the private sector, whether self employed or working for others, more than head of household women:

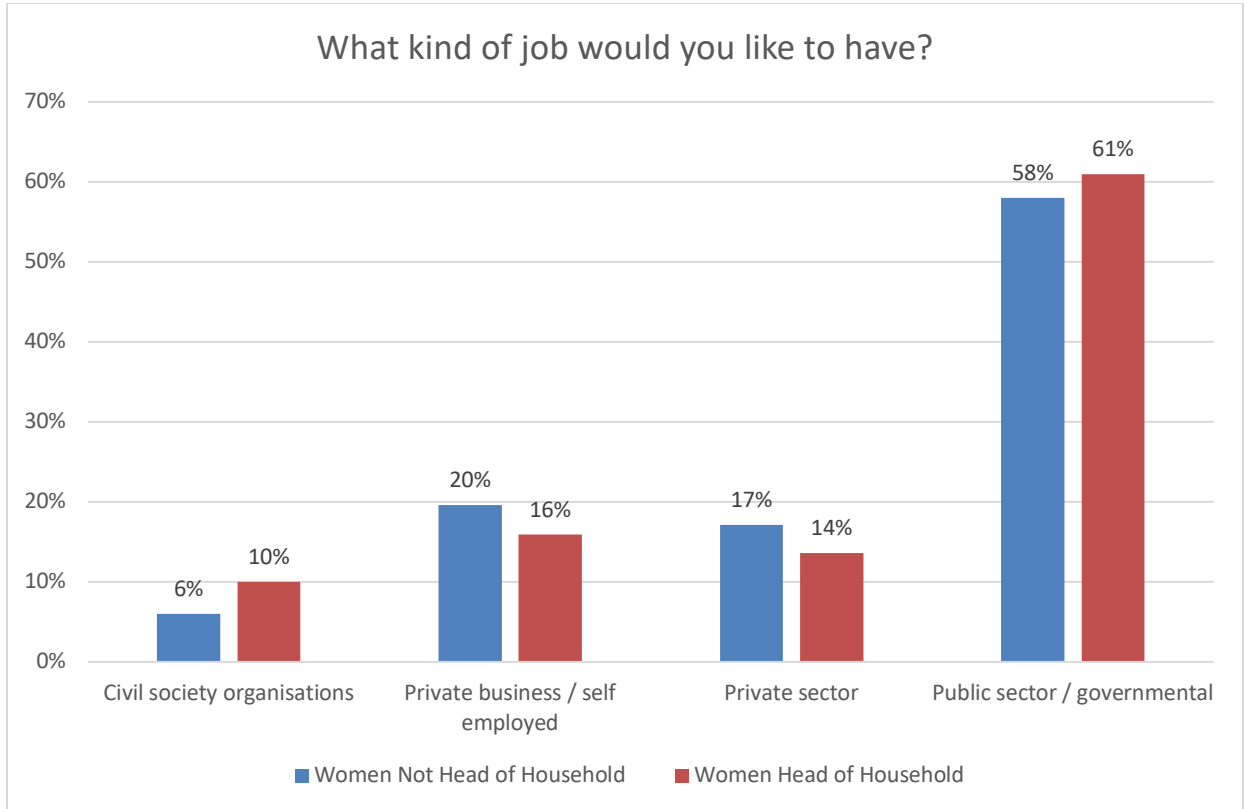


Figure 27 What Kind of Jobs Women Would Like to Have

- Their priority sought after self improvement are computer and language (English) skills.
- Young women are more into technology and more interested in internet based jobs.
- Young women are more interested in volunteering and internships, especially with NGOs. However, they are less interested in having a job in an NGO (see graph above). Their interest in working as a volunteer or an intern in an NGO originates from their desire to learn more and acquire more life or business related skills.
- They are more interested in returning to school, life skills training, and IT and English courses.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion from the data analysis, many graduates are not able to enter the job market. They prefer to get a job in the public sector while it is not very realistic. The majority think that the lack of job opportunities will affect social stability and lead to negative behaviors among the young people in Basra. The below chart illustrates their answers:

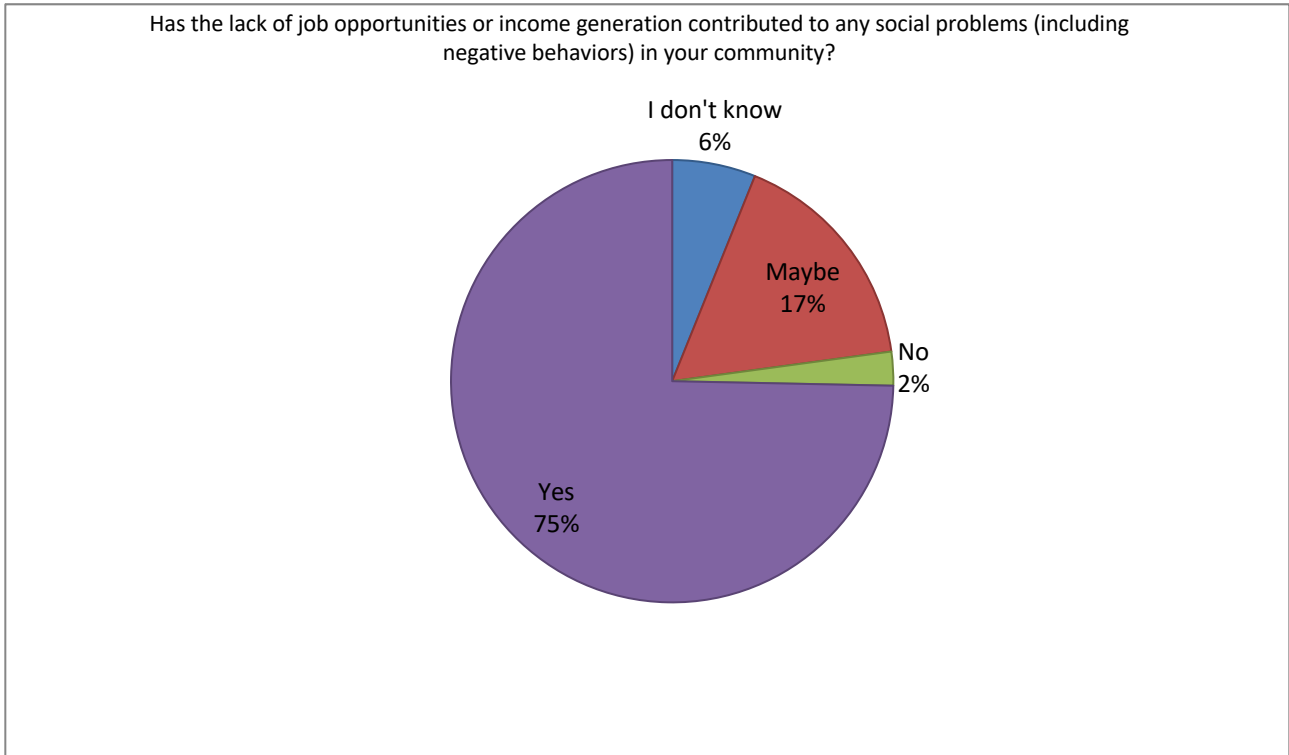


Figure 28 Effect of lack of job opportunities on the social stability

Across each region surveyed, the following key areas were cited as crucial to building the labor market and supporting the private sector workforce in Basra:

- English language skills were cited as “most needed” more than twice as much as any other knowledge or skill area.
- Computer skills are highly valued by employers but are not always adequate in recent graduates.
- Soft skills and, in particular, “critical thinking” and “problem-solving” were often cited as needed but lacking in recent graduates.

English and computer skills are increasingly becoming essential employment skills in Iraq in general but especially in cosmopolitan urban center such as Basra for the following reasons:

- Young people are increasingly attracted to digital businesses, such as online or social media marketing, website and apps design, etc. In addition to having computer skills, conducting or at least exploring a digital business requires English language skills;
- More businesses are automating their work, which involves using computers and other digital technologies. Because the operational language of computer and digital technologies is usually English, businesses look for recruiting employees with good English and computer skills;
- Upscaling business and reaching out to international markets for business associates and/or customers requires English language skills.

- Even young people who work in jobs that do not require high English and computer skills feels that their chances of getting a job, especially at an international company such as oil companies in Basra, will increase if they know English and how to use a computer. These young people usually seek basic English and computer skills, only enough to for example write their CV in English using Word and applying for a job online.

Further Recommendations for WFP programming

- Given the importance of English language skills across all sectors and the few employer English training courses provided to meet demand, it is recommended that basic English language preparedness courses required for all students be assessed and professional development training offered for primary and secondary school English language teachers.
- It is also recommended that the underlying reasons for poor English language skills among recent graduate-s be explored further through follow-up focus group interviews with university professors and students. The course curricula for English language programs and the pedagogical methods used by instructors may need to be reviewed to ensure they meet global standards and apply best practices. English language professors may need retraining or refresher courses in pedagogy.
- IT/Computer skills and digital literacy training should be introduced across all academic departments. Partnerships with employers to co-develop or even co-implement training should also be explored. If partnerships are not feasible, universities or training centers and institutes can conduct a follow-up survey or interviews with employers already providing training to learn what skills, knowledge, and abilities are most needed for IT/Computer skills in their specific work environments.
- Programs and university courses that prepare students for administrative/clerical positions should continue to be supported and strengthened as demand for well-qualified applicants for these positions will likely continue to increase in the near future. However, the few changes in forecasted positions compared to current positions across sectors may also reflect the high level of uncertainty around Iraq's political and economic future. Respondents may have forecasted the same positions as those currently positions in the absence of reliable information.
- It is recommended that more regular mini-surveys of current positions being advertised be conducted to identify trends in the labor market and improve forecasting.

ANNEXES

FGD- Questionnaire

Market Assessment - Focus group discussion questionnaire

Mercy Hands (MH) is undertaking a survey for a project funded by WFP aiming at assessing the main socio-economic conflict drivers and market opportunities amongst youth/adolescents to help identify potential entry points for potential livelihoods interventions. I am speaking to you today as part of study conducted by the World Food Programme and Mercy Hands exploring local community dynamics and the impact that access to livelihood and economic opportunities may have on youth and social tensions in Basra's urban areas to better inform WFP and partners' resilience programming. I would like to speak to you to gain more details on the conditions in your area related to social relations and dynamics and economic opportunities. This FGD is not intended to directly provide in-kind assistance to you but is an opportunity for us to learn from you and listen to you to better inform interventions and policies that improve resilience and economical programming. The FGD should take up to 90 minutes. Thank you for your participation in this survey. Your participation is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to and can stop the interview at any time. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask; if not, may we begin?

General: Main trade sectors and investments in Basra

1. Which trading and industrial sectors are the biggest employers in the city of Basra?
What sectors currently employ the most people in the city?
2. What sectors are oversaturated or face too much competition? Conversely, what sectors are currently underdeveloped and/or have significant potential for growth?
3. What are the priority sectors that the government is encouraging? Into which sectors is private investment flowing (either from local or international investors)? Are these sectors affected by external factors? Could you explain?

Business opportunities/challenges

4. Have you heard about any business around here that is expanding or any new start-ups that might be looking to hire young people? If yes, what are the required skills for these job opportunities?
5. Are there any government policies or other factors that create opportunities for new business growth and might lead to new hiring?
6. What are the main challenges in Basra that the businesses face if they want to expand and hire more people?

Youth employment: opportunities/barriers

7. What are the main barriers faced by young people when looking for a new job opportunity?
8. In your opinion, which types of job opportunities are more open for youth who hold a university TVET degree right now in Basra?

9. Are there any management or professional skills that young people living in Basra need to improve to be hired by a company?
10. What are the most important characteristics or skills that businesses look for in an entry-level candidate?
11. How would you describe the level of English and IT skills for entry-level candidates?
R: Which soft skills are usually missing from young people interviewed or hired?
12. What sort of training do young people in Basra need to be employed or run a business? Did you hear about any formal or informal job or entrepreneurship training hold in the past six months?
13. To which extent do you think that skills training and TVET could support youth in Basra in getting jobs opportunity?

Policy recommendations:

14. What do you think should be done to promote economic development and reduce vulnerabilities in Basra? What role could INGOs play in improving the situation?
15. What kind of government policies or programs, or infrastructural improvements, could strengthen the current businesses in Basra?

SURVEY – Questionnaire

Survey questionnaire – Market Assessment

Note: This form is administered in two ways: to be filled out personally by the Interviewee and submitted to the enumerator or filled out on KoBo by the enumerator on the spot with the Interviewee

Readout loud to the Interviewee:

Mercy Hands (MH) is undertaking a survey for a project funded by WFP aiming at assessing the main socio-economic conflict drivers and market opportunities amongst youth/adolescents to help identify potential entry points for potential livelihoods interventions. We would like to talk with you to take your opinion on the current economic needs and employment opportunities in Basra city. We will not quote you by name in any project report but will only use the information you and many others provide to arrive at some general conclusions.

Do you agree to help us with this survey?

Enumerator Name : _____

Interviewee Name : _____

City/District : _____

Date : _____

Gender : Male / Female

Type of interviewee: Employed, if yes: Position / Industry Sector: _____

Unemployed Employer or business owner (specify) _____

Age of the interviewee:

Head of household: Yes / No

The technical and educational capacities of Youth in Basra

1. Have you ever received any vocational training?
Yes
No
2. **If the previous answer is yes: Which training have you received?** Business Skills
Customer Service Language Skills Literacy (Reading/Writing)
Mathematics/Numeracy Catering/Food Preparation Hospitality/Restaurant Work
Food Hygiene Practices Other _____ Don't Know Refuse to Answer
3. **In your opinion, does vocational training support youth in Basra to find a new job?**
Yes / No
4. **How would you rate the English skills of Youth in Basra**
Basic English Intermediate English Advanced English Not Applicable Don't know
5. **How would you rate the IT or computer skills of Youth in Basra**
Basic skills Intermediate Advanced Not Applicable Don't know
6. **What kind of job-specific skills training would the Youth need to improve their chances of getting a job in Basra? (List 3 if possible.)**
a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
7. **Do the local schools, vocational training centers, NGOs, and entrepreneurship institutes provide Youth with the required knowledge, skills, and tools needed to become successful entrepreneurs or business owners?**
Yes/ No
8. **In your opinion, are these centers or training successful?**
Yes/ No/ I don't know
9. **Would you be willing to participate in a training to improve your soft and technical skills to find a job?**
Yes / No / Maybe

The barriers to enter the job marketplace

10. **Have you faced problems of being recruited because of a lack of skills needed to perform the job?**

Yes / No

11. Does the market job offer meet the needs of Youth living in Basra districts?

Yes / No

12. Are the businesses and companies willing to actively recruit young females as employees, interns, or on-the-job trainees?

Yes No Sometimes rarely I don't know

13. Which of the following statements do you most agree with?

Youth are hardworking Youth are lazy

14. Which of the following statements do you most agree with?

Youth are professional employees Youth are unprofessional employees

15. Which of the following statements do you most agree with?

Youth have skills and knowledge for work Youth lack skills and knowledge needed for work.

16. In your opinion, should young men and young women be paid equally for the same position? (select the best answer)

1. Young men and women should be paid equally
2. Young men should be paid more than young women
3. Young women should be paid more than young men

17. Based on your experience, general perceptions, and personal opinion, please rate the skill levels of Youth for each category.

Good /Average/ Poor

- a. Communication skills
- b. Technical skills
- c. Appropriate level/type of education
- d. Ability to apply knowledge learned in school to work
- e. Commitment and discipline
- f. Realistic expectations about the world of work
- g. Problem-solving/decision-making skills
- h. Overall ability

18. When recruiting your employees, what is the one most important requirement for a potential employee? (Select the 3 MOST IMPORTANT requirements.)

- Marketing skills
- Basic literacy skills
- Financial management skills
- Computer skills
- Technical skills
- English
- Local language

- Personal reference
- Age requirement
- Local residence
- Interpersonal skills
- Other (Specify: _____)

19. How do you normally find new employees? (select the only one that most applies.)

- Advertisements
- Through relatives or friends
- Referrals from education/training institutions
- From employment agencies
- Promotion from within (already employed in the business)
- Through an internship
- Other (Specify: _____)

Consumer's satisfaction with Basra's local market services

20. Kindly assess enterprises in your area (very poor to very good) concerning the following:

- Management (such as business planning, product development, budgeting, pricing, etc.
- Human capital
- Access to finance
- Infrastructure
- Regulations and taxes
- Access to market information

21. During the past six months, the number of businesses in Basra

- increased stayed the same decreased Not applicable I don't know

22. Are you satisfied with the services that the business or companies are providing in Basra (Yes / No)

23. Has lack of employment or income-generating opportunities contributed to any social problems (including negative behaviors) in your community? (Yes /No / Maybe / I don't know)

KII – QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire KIIs– Urban Conflict Analysis + Market Assessment for all interviewees)

Section one- Conflict profile (for all interviewees and focus groups)

1- What comes first to your mind when we talk about conflict in Basra today?

- (R) How would you define it?
- (R) What are the most prevalent manifestations of conflict in Basra city?
- (R) How do you personally perceive or understand tensions/disputes/disagreements? Is it a form of conflict?

2- What type of issues are causing conflict in your communities?

Section Two - Conflict causes (for all interviewees and focus groups)

- 3- To which extent is the lack of economic opportunities and social stability a cause of conflict in Basra?**
R- In what ways does the lack of livelihood opportunities impact social stability, conflict, and tensions in Basra? How does this manifest itself? How does this affect communities or youth? Has this changed in the last few years?
- 4- To which extent the youth in Basra city is affected by poverty, lack of livelihood opportunities? Can they be considered one of the main drivers for social conflict?**
- 5- What factors can contribute to peace and social stability in your district (for interviews: in Basra city)?** *E.g., communication channels between opposing parties, demobilization process, reform programs, civil society commitment to peace, anti-discrimination policies.*
Section Three - Resolving Conflict and main actors (for all interviewees and focus groups)
- 6- Are there conflict mitigation or resolution programs or international assistance programs operating in your community?** What effects do they have on the community and especially on youth?
- 7- What roles does civil society play during the conflicts, especially in supporting the socio-economic situation in Basra?**
- 8- What are your recommendations to improve the economic situation in Basra? What are your recommendations to improve the social stability in Basra?**
Section Four – Gender (for all interviewees)
- 9- How would do you describe the economic participation of women in Basra? How could this be improved?** How does the level of economic participation of women affect them and their families?
- 10- Could the increase in women’s economic participation lead to social stability?**
R- Please could you explain how?
S- What are the main challenges to enhanced women’s participation in the workforce?
- 11- What roles do women play leading up to and during the conflict and the conflict resolution process and direct aftermath?**
Section Five – Market assessment (for all interviewees)
- 12- Are there any government policies or other factors that create opportunities for new business growth and might lead to new hiring?**
- 13- What are the main challenges in Basra that the businesses face if they want to expand and hire new people?**
- 14- To which extent do you think that skills training and TVET could support youth in Basra in getting jobs opportunity?**
- 15- What do you think should be done to promote economic development and reduce vulnerabilities in Basra? What role could INGOs play in improving the situation?**

LIST OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWEES

List of Key Informant Interviewees	Number of Interviewees
Representative of International Oil and Gas Company in Basra	1
Representative of International Organization Operating in Basra	2
High Ranking Security Officer in Basra	1
Investor in Youth and Sports Sector in Basra	1
Hotel Director in Basra	3
College Assistant Dean	1
College Dean	1
Chair of the Chamber of Commerce in Basra	1
Chair of The Union of Business men in Basra	1
Director of Institution of Research	1
Director of Women NGO in Basra	1
Director of Culture and Art Center in Basra	1
Director of Bank Operating in Basra	1
Representative of the Local Government of Basra	1
Director of Tourism Office in Basra	1
Representative of Iraqi Harbors Company	1
Representative of Christian Community in Basra	1
Representative of Mandaism Community in Basra	1
Director of Youth and Sports Office	1
Director of Planning Office	1
Chair of Basri Tribes Council	1
Head of Tribe	1
Total	25