



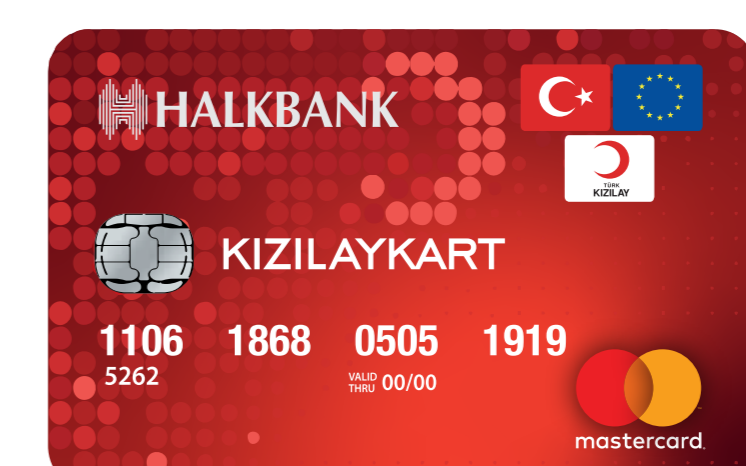
ESSN LIVELIHOODS PATHWAYS STUDY

IFRC-TÜRK KIZILAY JOINT EFFORT

APRIL 2023



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Disclaimer

2023, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Türk Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS)). By providing citations in the sources, this report can be used as a reference for any study. It may not be copied or distributed in any way without the express authorization of the IFRC and Türk Kızılay.

The report is based on the findings of the Primary Data Collection survey, which was undertaken in 2022 by the ESSN Programme with the support of the Türk Kızılay Community Based Migration Programmes (CBMP) as part of the ESSN Livelihoods Pathway study. It serves as an analysis of the significance of sustainable formal employment for refugees residing in Türkiye, alongside a set of recommendations for referral of the target group to enhance their integration into the labor market. The study's findings reflect the indications of ESSN recipients, vocational chambers, and IFRC/Türk Kızılay programme teams in the selected seven provinces based on field level observations at the time, and the reconnaissance may differ after conducting more comprehensive studies in the future.

It is imperative to acknowledge that the landscape in the country has since evolved, marked notably by shifting priorities and needs. The analysis was only finished before the terrible earthquakes that struck Türkiye on February 6, 2023. Therefore, it has necessitated a reassessment of urgencies in the realm of refugee support and integration. The study was conducted during a period when increasing the employability of the ESSN Programme's target group was a primary focus; however, subsequent to the earthquakes, there has been a significant alteration towards addressing immediate humanitarian concerns, with an enhanced emphasis on the mitigation of potential protection risks and prospective protection-related vulnerabilities.

While the content of this report remains pertinent in its focus on enhancing livelihood referral pathways, it is recommended that any actions or decisions taken based on this document be supplemented with up-to-date information and policies that reflect the prevailing post-earthquake conditions and evolving context in Türkiye.

The authors of this document cannot be held responsible for any consequences that may arise from the use of this information in contexts that have significantly evolved since the study was conducted.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

3RP	REGIONAL REFUGEE AND RESILIENCE PLAN
CBMP	COMMUNITY-BASED MIGRATION PROGRAM
CC	COMMUNITY CENTRE
C-ESSN	COMPLEMENTARY EMERGENCY SOCIAL SAFETY NET
CNC	COMPUTER NUMERIC CONTROL
DG ECHO	DIRECTORATE GENERAL EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN AID OPERATIONS
DG NEAR	DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ENLARGEMENT NEGOTIATIONS
EBRD	EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT
EQ	EARTHQUAKE
ESSN	EMERGENCY SOCIAL SAFETY NET
F	FEMALE
FGD	FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION
G20	GROWTH 20 COUNTRIES
GDP	GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCTS
I/NGO	INTERNATIONAL/NATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION
ID	IDENTITY (CARD)
IDI	IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW
IFRC	INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES
ILO	INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION
İMEP	VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM FOR EMPLOYMENT (İSTİHDAM VE MESLEK EDİNDİRME PROJESİ)
İŞKUR	TURKISH EMPLOYMENT AGENCY (İŞ VE İŞÇİ BULMA KURUMU)
IVS	INTERSECTORAL VULNERABILITY STUDY
KİGEP	SUPPORT FOR TRANSITION TO LABOUR MARKET (KAYITLI İSTİHDAMA GEÇİŞ PROJESİ)
KII	KEY INFORMED INTERVIEW
KOSGEB	SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT ADMINISTRATION (KÜÇÜK VE ORTA ÖLÇEKLİ İŞLETMELERİ GELİŞTİRME VE DESTEKLEME İDARESİ BAŞKANLIĞI)
LHH/LH	LIVELIHOODS
LMTSR	LABOUR MARKET TRENDS SUMMARY REPORT
M	MALE
M&E	MONITORING AND EVALUATION
MoFSS	MINISTRY OF FAMILY AND SOCIAL SERVICES
MoU	MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
PDC	PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION
R&O	REFERRAL AND OUTREACH
SASF	SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL SERVICE FOUNDATION
SC	SERVICE CENTRE
SEE	SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
SGK	SOCIAL SECURITY INSTITUTION (SOSYAL GÜVENLİK KURUMU)
SOP	STANDARDS OF PROCEDURES
TKDK	INSTITUTION FOR AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT (TARIM VE KIRSAL KALKINMAYI DESTEKLEME KURUMU)
TOR	TERMS OF REFERENCE
TPM	THIRD PARTY MONITORING
TT	TASK TEAM
UNDP	UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
VC	VOCATIONAL CHAMBER
WB	WORLD BANK

Acknowledgements

Developed by IFRC and Türk Kızılay teams for the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) Programme in Türkiye, this report is the end result of months of dedicated work between September 2022 and April 2023. Led by Louisa Seferis and Cansu Ateş from Türk Kızılay (Former Colleague), the report was completed with the support of time, expertise and contributions of a number of colleagues including former IFRC colleagues who are Gurudatta Shirodkar, Joe Mekhael, İrem Saka, and colleagues still working under the ESSN Programme who are Nisan Geysu Özdemir (Türk Kızılay), Çağrı Zincirlioğlu (Türk Kızılay), Deniz Kaçmaz (IFRC), Amr Mahmoud (IFRC) and colleagues from the CBMP who are Cihan Arsu, Mehmet Altay Sevinç, and Fatma Rana Ceylandağ Karban. We would also like to thank field colleagues from Türk Kızılay ESSN Service Centres and the IFRC Referral and Outreach team for their invaluable assistance during the study's facilitation. Any omissions are unintentional and IFRC would like to extend our apologies and deepest thanks.

The authors bear sole responsibility for this report, and the findings reflected in it should not be ascribed to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Türk Kızılay, the Republic of Türkiye, or DG ECHO.

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Note on context and timeframe:

The ESSN livelihoods pathways study was designed and implemented between January and December 2022, prior to the devastating earthquakes that hit southern Türkiye on 6 February 2023. As such, the findings reflect the situation and perspectives of ESSN recipients, vocational chambers, and Türk Kızılay/IFRC programme teams during the post-pandemic and economic downturn period in Türkiye, but pre acute emergency.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The issue of livelihoods and connecting refugees in Türkiye to more sustainable employment opportunities has been on the agenda of the government and key aid stakeholders for several years.

- The job preference of refugees depends on their prior experience, skill set, financial capability, and passion. Many expressed their preference for jobs that they were already familiar with and had experience in (familiarity bias). This tendency appears to limit their awareness around other suitable and better-off job opportunities in the Turkish market.
- During the data collection for this study ESSN Programme teams from Türk Kızılay remarked that many interviewees were very skilled – they were masters in sectors such as carpentry and furniture production. As such, according to the “Usta” (master) system in Türkiye,¹ they could earn more than the minimum wage when working formally – an opportunity at odds with prevailing perceptions that formal work would cut earnings in half.
- While working preferences like hours, location, and salary levels are important across the profiling and interviews findings, the exact profession seemed to matter less. Many interviewees noted that “if I can make more money, that’s the best job for me” (interviews). Despite seeing vocational training as a way to enhance employability and secure jobs, interviews with individuals who worked informally revealed that they were not keen on pursuing any training because they prioritised earning income and did not perceive such training as a guarantee for employment.
- There are still inconsistent and limited understandings of what formal employment means across stakeholder groups: ESSN recipients, ESSN Programme teams, and even employers.
 - There is not a coherent understanding of what formal employment entails among ESSN recipients, most likely because employers usually handle formal work procedures. Yet, few vocational chamber representatives are familiar with formal employment procedures for foreigners (let alone refugees).
 - There are also misconceptions about insurance, working conditions, salary levels, formal employment in general. These misconceptions often act as barriers to their integration into the formal labour market and influence them to keep ESSN assistance over pursuing formal employment.
 - Misconceptions on both sides (vocational chambers and ESSN recipients) were usually based on rumours and other people’s experiences, which may not be typical or even factual.
- Interviews shed light on some additional specific barriers, such as travel permits, refugees’ short-term planning due to an uncertain future, as well as limited residence permits and difficulty to obtain them. These barriers may be due to a variety of factors, including bureaucratic hurdles and financial requirements, and may be preventing individuals from fully utilising their skills and potential in the Turkish labour market.
- Livelihoods actors recommend that the ESSN focus on connecting people to the “right” type of employers who are already convinced of the benefits of formal employment and who need financial or technical support to complete the work permit process and integrate refugees into their workforces.

1 • See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Turkish Accreditation Agency page, online (accessed 24 Feb 2023).

Employers Recommendation

Vocational chambers consulted gave clear recommendations to livelihoods actors to improve refugee pathways

- Create**
Create more opportunities for exchanges between public institutions and employers
- Emphasise**
Emphasise burden-sharing between aid providers (including the state) and employers
- Streamline**
Streamline processes for formal employment and open new channels
- Showcase**
Showcase and disseminate positive experiences with incentives – but analyse those that don't work
- Delink**
Delink employment and ESN eligibility for the whole family – and make sure everyone knows about it
- Design**
Design incentives with integration in the soci



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2. Emphasise burden-sharing between aid providers (including the state) and employers.
3. Streamline processes for formal employment and open new channels.
4. Showcase and disseminate positive experiences with incentives – but analyse those that don't work.
5. Design incentives with integration in mind: to formalise labour across nationalities in sectors where this is an issue or pairing foreigners with Turkish works to ease language comprehension and integration. Incentives should be proportional to Turkish benefits, and authorities should show “compassion” towards employers who follow the rules but may be unintentionally penalised by slow procedures.
6. Delink employment and ESN eligibility for the whole family – and make sure everyone knows about it.

The profiling revealed a deeply individual and human-based need to consider the person or household's specific situation, needs, and preferences. Surveys and profiling can generate numbers and trends on livelihoods. However, the intersectionality of people's experiences and desires will fundamentally shape their understanding of employment in Türkiye, their preferences and ultimately the success of a livelihood referral. This is why a case management approach is recommended to accompany ESN recipients in the transition away from basic assistance. At the same time, the scale of the programme makes it challenging to take an individualised approach to livelihoods referrals. The combined experience, expertise, and capacity of the Türk Kızılay teams (ESN and CBMP) means it is possible to take a “triage” approach to directing ESN recipients to the right opportunities. Important to note that job transience is common in nearly all sectors across Türkiye, and job movement has increased since the most recent economic downturn. The focus should not be on long-term employment – rather, that people can find the right opportunities and do so in a formalised way. Please see the recommendations and roadmap in this report for more details.

BACKGROUND

The conflict in Syria, ongoing since 2011, has resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives, the displacement of millions within Syria, to neighbouring countries and beyond. Over five million Syrian people are displaced in the Middle East and North Africa, including in Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt.



“Socio-economic integration is both a process and an outcome, which refers to refugees’ degree of participation within local, national, and global markets”

(Betts, 2023)

Türkiye alone currently hosts 4 million refugees and asylum-seekers, including over 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees, and some 370,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers from other nationalities including Somalia, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan – making it the host country with the largest refugee population in the world. Around 98.5 percent of those displaced are living in urban areas.

The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), launched in 2016, is the largest humanitarian aid programme financed by the European Union and its Member States under the Facility for Refugees in Türkiye. Since April 2020, with funding from the European Union (DG ECHO), the IFRC and the Türk Kızılay are partnering to implement phase III of the ESSN. As of July 2021, the programme is assisting over 1.5 million refugees living under temporary and international protection in Türkiye to meet their basic needs via debit card-based monthly cash assistance, complemented by quarterly family size-based top ups.

In line with wider policy and transition strategy the European Commission’s DG NEAR is funding a complementary direct grant project (C-ESSN), implemented by MoFSS and Türk Kızılay, with the objective of providing cash assistance to the most vulnerable refugees. The implementation of C-ESSN started in July 2021, its initial recipients were drawn from the existing ESSN recipient caseload via a criteria-based transition. The transition of recipients from ESSN to sustainable livelihood opportunities is a critical step toward reducing ESSN recipients’ reliance on cash assistance as an income resource. The overall objective is to promote socio-economic empowerment through connecting recipients to opportunities for development of hard and soft skills, such as language and vocational training, which would contribute to job placement, employment, and income-generation.

The global pandemic has negatively affected economies across the world, and Türkiye is no exception. However, the World Bank noted in April 2021 a pronounced return in economic activity in the second half of 2020, “making Türkiye one of the few G20 countries with positive growth in 2020” (TEM7, World Bank). Yet rising inflation and the decreasing value of the Turkish Lira has increased the cost of living, reduced purchasing power, and exacerbated stress on businesses. Moreover, according to ILO economic recovery for women, youth, lower-skilled and informal workers lagged behind (IFRC 2021). The high number of refugees employed in small businesses (Fernandes 2020) means these effects are likely compounded, resulting in even more precarious economic situations for the most vulnerable. It is within this context that the ESSN Programme sought to strengthen connections between people receiving cash assistance and the relevant economic opportunities.

STUDY PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

The overall purpose of this study, which focused on enhancing livelihood referral pathways, was to increase the capacity of the refugees to be employed and analyse employability opportunities among refugee population. This contributed to strengthening the current ESSN livelihood internal referral mechanism, to exploring the ways for establishing external referral mechanisms, and the development of synergies between the IFRC and Türk Kızılay's various programmes. **Please see the Terms of Reference (TOR) and Inception Report for more details, including the frameworks used to guide the study and a more in-depth literature review.**

Study Objectives



The Turkish regulation on work permits for refugees under temporary protection granted Syrian refugees the right to obtain work permits to engage in productive formal employment. Despite the favourable regulatory environment, integrating refugees into the labour market, particularly the formal economy, presents several challenges. In 2022, estimates indicated that approximately 800,000 Syrians worked informally and 45% of Syrians under temporary protection and other international protection applicants and status holders lived below the poverty line.² The economic situation further deteriorated due to Covid-19 pandemic and the devastating earthquakes in early February 2023.

Access to employment is also one of the needs of the Turkish host population. The negative socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 pandemic further contributed to dramatic increases in vulnerability, including loss of employment for the host population. Considering the existing challenges in accessibility to employment, refugee inflow into the labour market would increase the competition for Turkish host population as well. Preventing possible conflict and competition over limited resources, promoting social acceptance of refugees by host communities, and establishing reliable social cooperation between these groups are essential for sustainable livelihood strategies.

2 • 3RP Türkiye Country Chapter 2021-2022

Scope, Methodology, & Limitations

The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods, with an emphasis on complementing existing resources and using qualitative interviews to explore key issues around refugee employment. The study collected and analysed data through primary and secondary sources, including ESSN studies and programme data, in addition to an iterative review of external secondary sources, in particular studies from livelihoods sectoral partners in Türkiye. Primary data collection focused on developing and testing tools that not only corresponded to the study objectives, but also facilitated ESSN and CBMP teams to “test out” data collection frameworks and tools, enabling them to consistently collect and analyse relevant, high-quality data to strengthen referral pathways between the ESSN Programme and LLH/SEE opportunities (both with external actors and internally via Türk Kızılay’s Community Based Migration Programmes and community centre activities) for people receiving ESSN support.

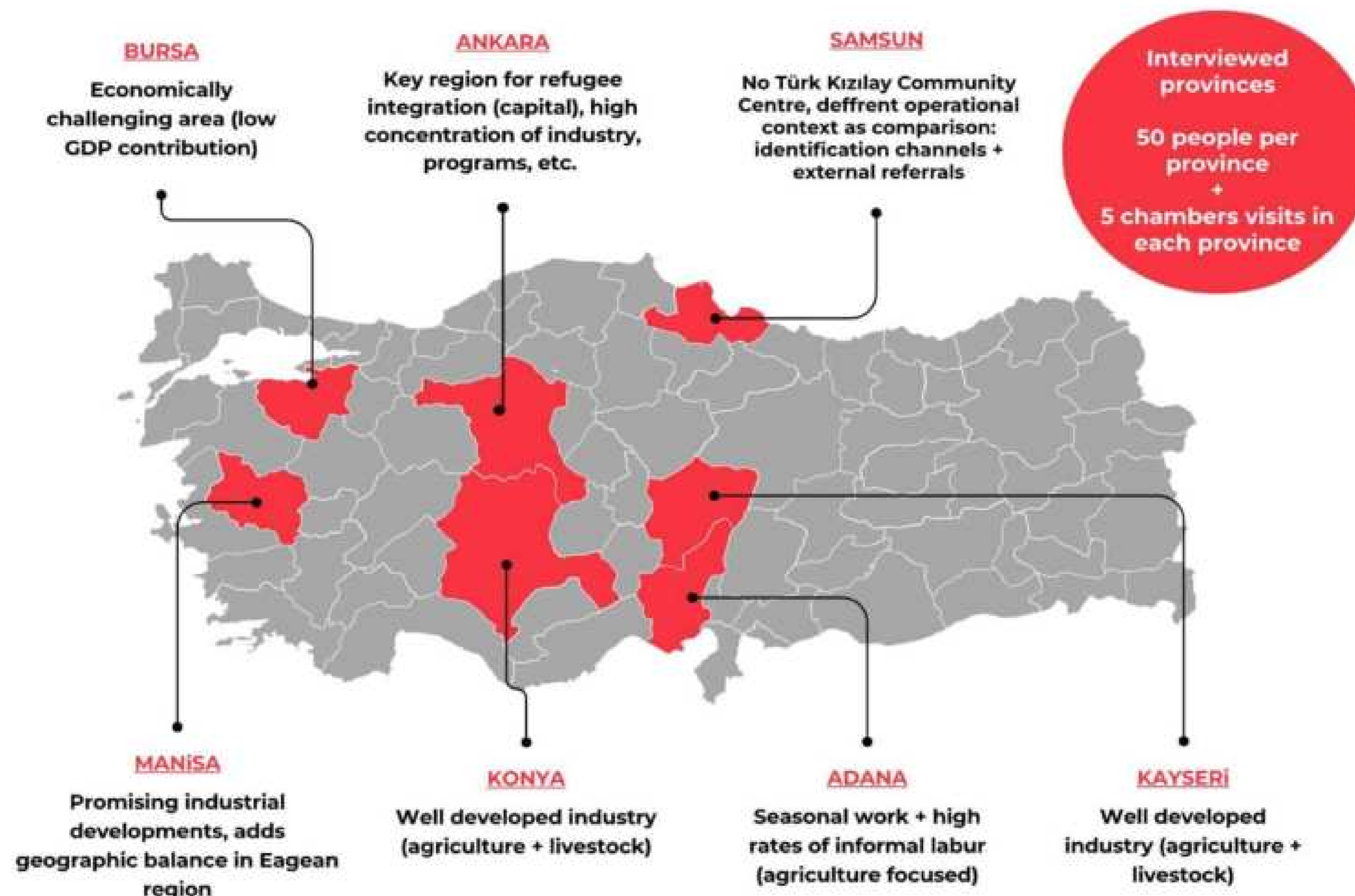
Province and participant selection for primary data collection

The study’s primary data collection using a tiered or phased approach to select the provinces. The first tier produces a ‘short list’ of around 20 provinces of interest for livelihood referrals and programming going forward. The “second tier” narrowed down this particular study’s focus to 7 provinces.

First tier selection (20 provinces)	Second tier selection (7 provinces)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foreigners / SuTPs versus the Turkish population 2. ESSN recipients ages 18-45 3. İŞKUR open jobs 	<p>A balance of factors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provinces with other studies and those less studied 2. Provinces with Türk Kızılay Community Centres and those without (+ lower rate of profiling by CCs) 3. Provinces with “overlooked” locations: social projects around development + other LLH projects - rural vs. urban contexts

In May 2022, the core team determined the following 7 provinces to be included in this study for primary data collection, outlined in the table below:

Key characteristics of the selected provinces



Province		Key characteristics
1	Ankara	Meets 2 tiered criteria; agreed core team Key region for refugee integration (capital), high concentration of industry, progs, etc
2	Samsun	Meets 2 tiered criteria; agreed by core team No Community Centre (CC), different operational context as comparison: identification channels + external referrals are key
3	Bursa	Meets 2 tiered criteria; agreed by core team Economically challenging area (low GDP contribution)
4	Adana	Seasonal work + high rates of informal labour (agriculture focused)
5	Kayseri	Well-developed industry (agriculture + livestock) CC but no Service Centre (SC), profiling #s low, language not a barrier
6	Konya	Well-developed industry (agriculture + livestock) CC but no SC, profiling #s low, language not a barrier, higher rate of social acceptance
7	Manisa	Promising industrial development, adds geographic balance (Ege region). No CC, non-Syrian ESSN recipients (under international prot.)

**TABLE 1 – ESSN LLH Pathways Study:
Primary Data Collection (PDC) Tools**

	Component	Tool (annexed)	Description + Minimum Targets	Participant selection / sampling
1	People Syrians Iraqis Afghans Iranians	1a. Profiling form 1b. IDIs with ESSN recipients	1a. A comprehensive intake form for livelihoods profiling of ESSN recipients 50 per province = 350 1b. Qualitative, in-depth interviews with ESSN recipients seeking job opportunities 5 per province = 35	1a. ESSN recipients were selected at random based on the following criteria: 1. 50 people / province 2. Nationalities present in region 3. Gender split 1b. From the group that participated in the profiling, 35 women and men were selected based on their interest in working formally
2	Markets	2a. In-depth interviews (IDIs) with employers	in-depth interviews with employers working in the key sectors (identified for the relevant provinces) about their experiences with and perceptions on hiring foreigners / refugees 5 per province = 35	2a. Sectors identified per province, based on two established information sources: İŞKUR data at province level and the internal ESSN Labour Market Trends Summary Report (LMTSR) from May 2022. These sources were triangulated with findings from the profiling data collection (August-October 2022) to identify the top sectors per province: 2.a.1. Sectors where women are working (and/or want to work) 2.a.2. Sectors that match the interest and profiles of ESSN recipients willing and able to work, beyond those with the most vacancies.

**TABLE 1 – ESSN LLH Pathways Study:
Primary Data Collection (PDC) Tools**

	Component	Tool (annexed)	Description + Minimum Targets	Participant selection / sampling
3	LLH / SEE programmes + partnerships	3. KII tool	3. Key informant interviews (KIIs) with LH practitioners and province-level policy makers (e.g., municipalities and chambers of commerce) to better understand their priorities and perspectives on integrating refugees into the Turkish labour market	3. The key informants will include national-level actors, as well as key LLH/SEE programmes in the selected provinces. Please see list of key informants

Modifications to component 2 (markets): The ESSN III Livelihoods Pathways Study shifted from conducting in-depth, qualitative interviews with specific employers to interviewing vocational chambers that represent sectors offering opportunities for refugee employment. Because they are elected individuals, speaking with vocational chamber representatives can be an efficient way to capture employers’ perspectives through a limited number of qualitative consultations while avoiding inadvertently interviewing a small group of employers with fringe or peripheral views. Since the inception report was drafted in May 2022, the CBMP teams shared their dashboard on available employment opportunities, which replaced the proposed tool 2b as an information source on key sectors/industries with potential opportunities for refugees. This data also informed the selection of which vocational chambers to approach for interviews.

There were a number of high-quality and technical analyses of refugee engagement in the workforce across Türkiye. Türk Kızılay and IFRC provided recommendations for the crucial secondary sources that informed this study, which were compiled alongside other relevant studies. These sources comprised the literature review of the inception report (March 2022). However, ESSN teams noted two main limitations to many of these external sources. Firstly, the sampling methodologies may not include the relevant caseloads, in this case ESSN recipients (compared to studies’ samples taken from all refugees in a given location, or the ESSN caseload prior to the implementation of the C-ESSN).³ Secondly, many of the in-depth studies’ research took place before the effects of the global Covid-19 pandemic were felt in Türkiye, and the labour market and employment related statistics are likely out of date as unemployment increased and nearly all sectors were negatively affected by the pandemic and ongoing economic situation in Türkiye. Therefore, the qualitative primary data collection (PDC) tools built upon the studies’ best practices and frameworks in order to collect updated and relevant data on connecting people with labour market opportunities. Secondary data sources were integrated into the findings and referenced, as well as listed in the references at the end of this report.

Limitations

The study took place across several regions over the course of one year during a difficult economic period in the country. As such, it is difficult to specify which specific sectors offer employment opportunities or could create new jobs for refugees. The review of labour market potential across 7 provinces did not reveal specific sectors that offer opportunities for refugees to work or that can create new jobs. Rather, the study identified employment opportunity trends across sectors as well as barriers to transitioning to formal employment.

3 • The Complementary ESSN (C-ESSN) is a cash-based assistance project designed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable sub-set of the ESSN caseload who cannot be connected to livelihood opportunities (ESSN Platform, 2021).

Moreover, during the study launch and primary data collection, it became evident that there were two broad categories of ESSN recipients – those working informally that could be potentially transitioned to formal employment (predominantly men), and people with limited work experience (predominantly women). IFRC and other study core team members agreed that the focus of the recommendations should be on transitioning people from informal to formal employment with the understanding that integrating people with limited intention to enter the workforce requires a different, longer-term, and education-oriented approach to livelihoods pathways.

The findings are organised around the premise of connecting people (ESSN recipients) to markets (opportunities for formal employment) and the mechanisms that enable programmes like the ESSN to make these connections – namely, referrals and incentivisation models.

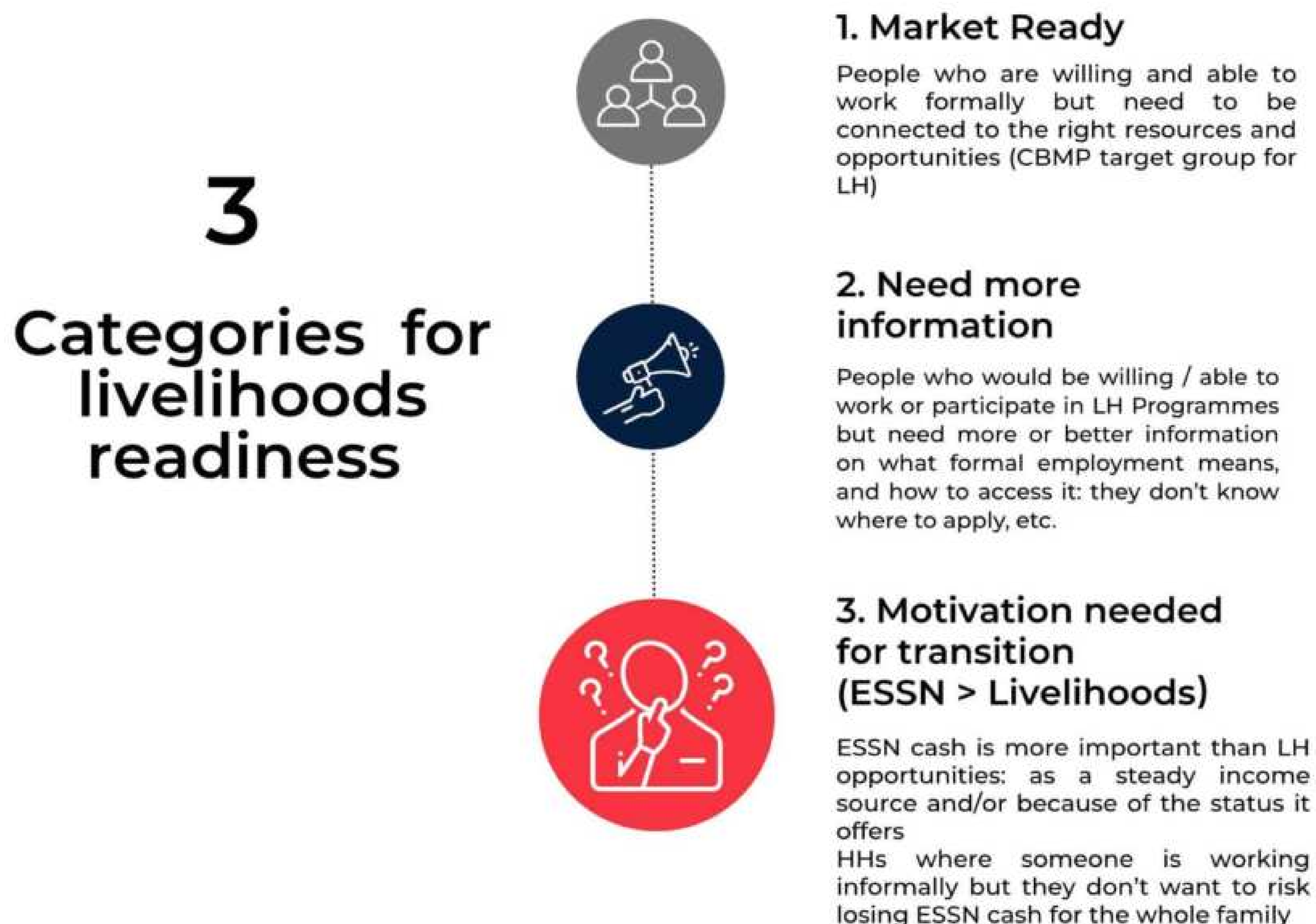
ESSN RECIPIENTS: PROFILES & WORK MOTIVATIONS

Key definitions

Formal employment in Türkiye is defined as a working arrangement that is registered with the registration with the Social Security Institution (SSI) (ILO, [online](#)). For foreigners (including refugees), this includes obtaining a work permit valid only for one employer / company.

Informal employment is considered any agreement to exchange labour for payment that is not registered with the Social Security Institution (SSI), does not require an employment contract, or social security contributions (including insurances and taxes).

According to key informants and a preliminary analysis of the study's profiling primary data collection, ESSN recipients generally fall into three categories when it comes to "livelihoods readiness:"



I Market Ready	II Need more information	III Motivation needed to transition (ESSN > Livelihoods)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are willing and able to work formally but need to be connected to the right resources and opportunities (CBMP target group for LH) <p>A small proportion of ESSN caseload</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who would be willing / able to work or participate in LH Programmes but need more or better information on what formal employment means, and how to access it: they don't know where to apply, etc. <p>A small proportion of ESSN caseload</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESSN cash is more important than LH opportunities: as a steady income source and/or because of the status it offers • HHs where someone is working informally but they don't want to risk losing ESSN cash for the whole family <p>Assumed to be the biggest proportion of ESSN caseload</p>

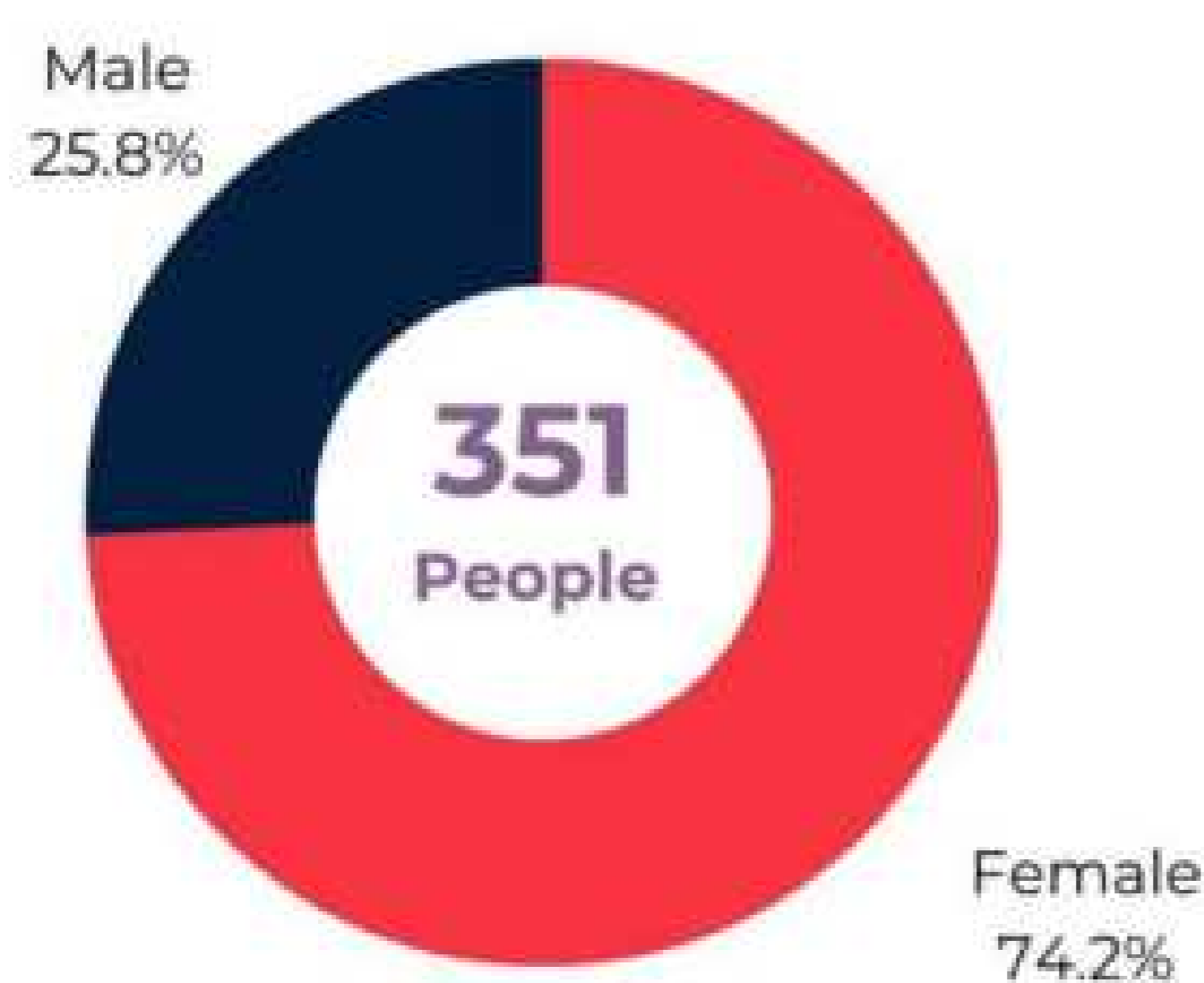
The ESSN cash assistance programme has successfully targeted the most vulnerable refugee and migrant families, including those now receiving C-ESSN support. This effective targeting for basic assistance means that ESSN recipients are among the most challenging candidates for livelihoods referrals – part of the reason they are considered socioeconomically vulnerable is because they are unable and/or unwilling to work. The assumption was that the majority of ESSN recipients fell into the third category of people who will need more comprehensive support, stronger incentives, and a shift in eligibility to transition away from social assistance towards livelihoods. Consultations with ESSN recipients for this study, via the profiling and in-depth interviews, revealed that while many people, especially women, were more willing to work formally than previously assumed, they will need longer-term education and on-the-job experience to be considered “market ready.”

Manual works: (construction, carrier, etc.). The profiling data is therefore not a representative sample of ESSN recipients; the findings are indicative of people’s profiles and preferences.

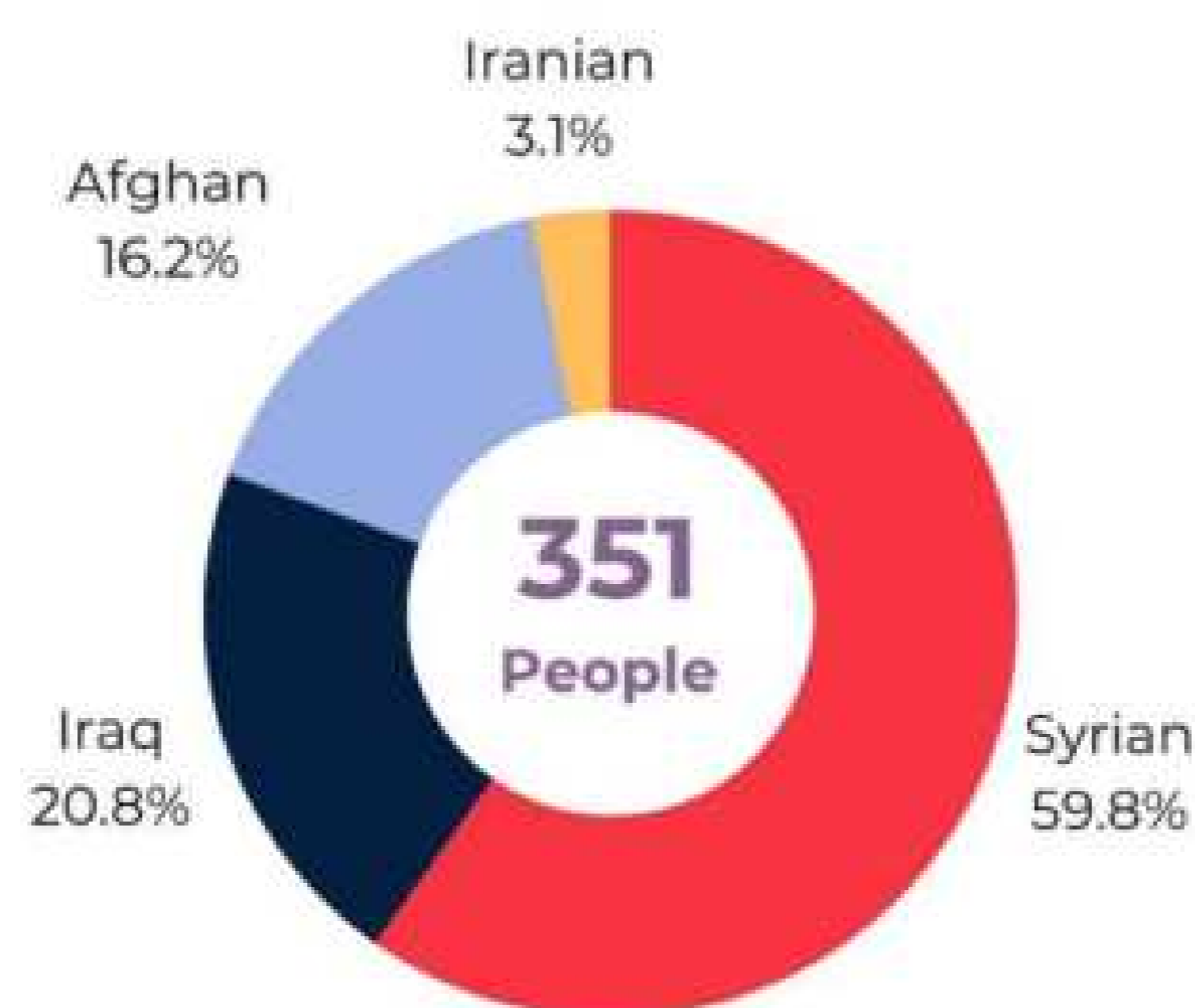
Livelihood study: Profiling

A total of 351 people, 198 women and 153 men, were profiled as part of this livelihoods study in the 7 identified provinces outlined above between August and October 2022. It is important to note that people were selected at random, based on the gender and nationality breakdowns among the ESSN caseload.

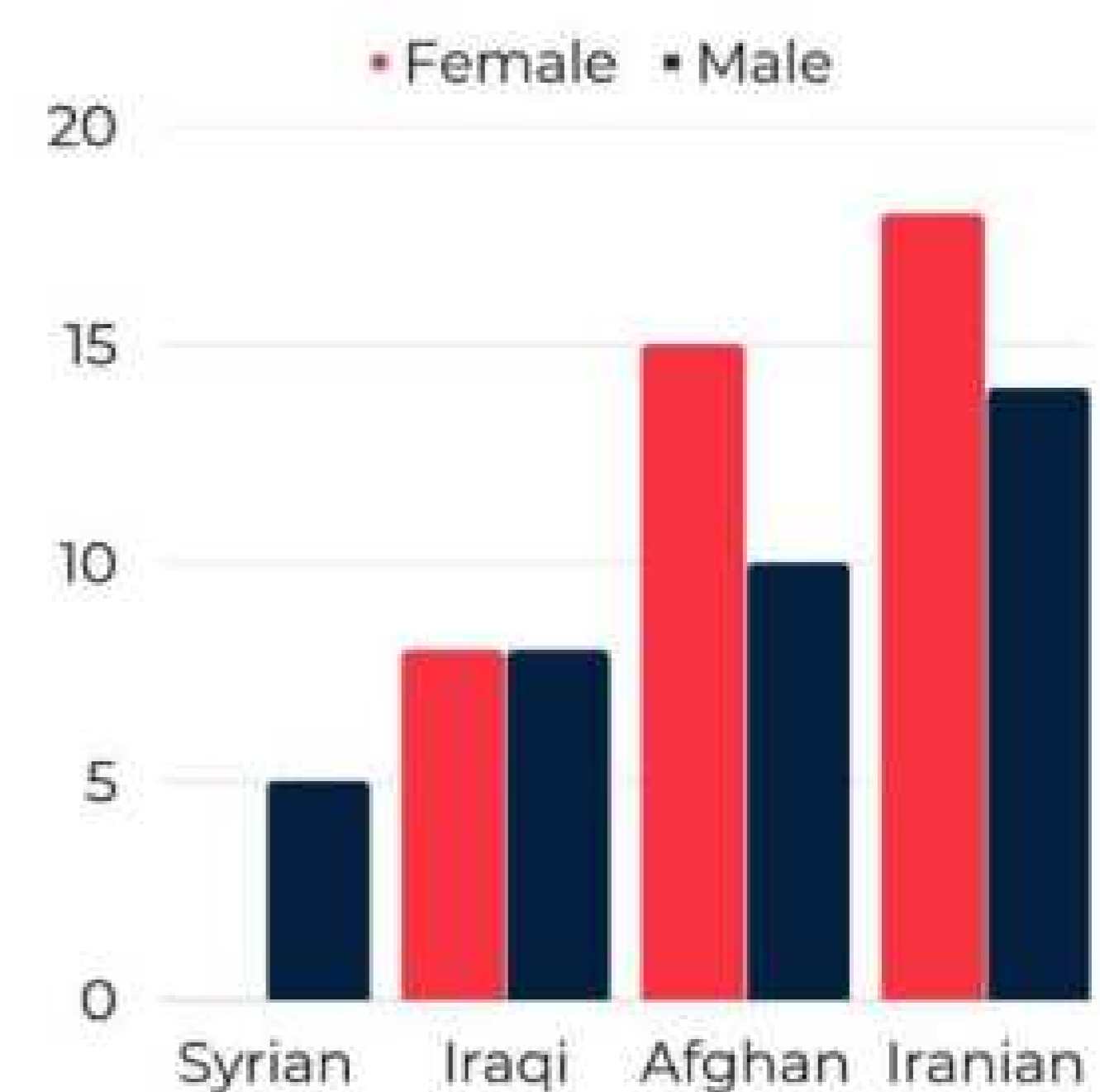
Gender segregation



Nationality segregation



Gender and nationality comparison



The profiling activity conducted with 351 ESSN recipients in 7 provinces which are Adana, Ankara, Bursa, Kayseri, Konya, Manisa and Samsun. Participants are within workable age 18 to 45. Within profiled 351 ESSN recipients, 198 is female and 153 is male. Our sample includes people refugeeed from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and mostly Syria.

57 Afghan (38 F, 18 M), 11 Iranian (10 F, 1 M), 73 Iraqi (42 F, 31 M), 210 Syrian (108 F, 102 M)

*Please look at the table for the distribution of nationalities in selected provinces.

Origin Country / Gender	Female	Male	Total
Afghan	38	18	57 (16,2%)
Iranian	10	1	11 (3,1%)
Iraqi	42	31	73 (20,8%)
Syrian	108	102	210 (59,8%)
Total	198	153	351 (100%)

Between 49 and 51 people were profiled in each of the 7 provinces. (Please note that one Syrian individual was registered in Şanlıurfa, which was outside the geographic scope of the profiling, but was living in Manisa which was included in the sample.)

Out of the 351 profiled individuals, 38.7% (n=136) are employed and 61.3% (n=225) are unemployed. Since the profiling took place between August and October 2022 with the ESSN caseload, employment here refers to informal employment (ESSN eligibility at the time included the requirement that no one in the household was working formally). The provinces with the highest rates of employment were Konya and Bursa, whereas the highest rates of unemployment amongst people profiled were in Ankara, Samsun, Manisa, and Kayseri. Although the number of Iranians profiled was very small (n=11), they reported the highest rates of employment. Most of the individuals profiled reached primary or middle school, while only 14 people out of 351 (4%) had a higher education degree (bachelor's or associate degrees).

Who is unemployed?

Most unemployed people were women (85.6% of the people who reported being unemployed) – 92.9% of the women profiled were unemployed (only 14 were employed). The majority of unemployed women either attended primary school or middle school, with only 16% reporting never having attended school (32 women). Of all the women profiled (n=198), only 50 (25% of women) said they had work experience.

Geographically speaking, the spread of unemployment was relatively even across the provinces. Although the highest rates of unemployment were reported from Ankara (68%), Samsun, Manisa, and Adana, the other provinces were not far off – Konya reported the lowest unemployment, yet 52% of people profiled in that province said they were unemployed.

Who is employed informally?

The majority of the 136 people employed informally were men, with only 31 men (20.3% of men profiled, or 9% of all people profiled) reporting they were unemployed. Between 32% and 48% of respondents registered in each of the 7 provinces reported that they were working informally across a range of jobs, predominantly in manual labour, farming, tailoring, and waste collection (please see table below). Interestingly, 28 people who reported being employed informally said they had no work experience (assuming they meant work experience prior to their current job).



The informal jobs cited by two or more people are outlined across the provinces in Table x below, while Table x provides an overview of the wide range of positions reported by only one person. Conversations with selected ESSN recipients during the in-depth interviews in December 2022 revealed that **manual labour did not necessarily equate unskilled work** – there were masters who identified their work as such because they did manual labour, but they were highly specialised in their industry, such as sub-sectors of construction (tiling, woodwork, painting, etc. – interviews).

Informal work by job position per province

Major informal job positions based on skills and opportunities for ESSN recipients by province

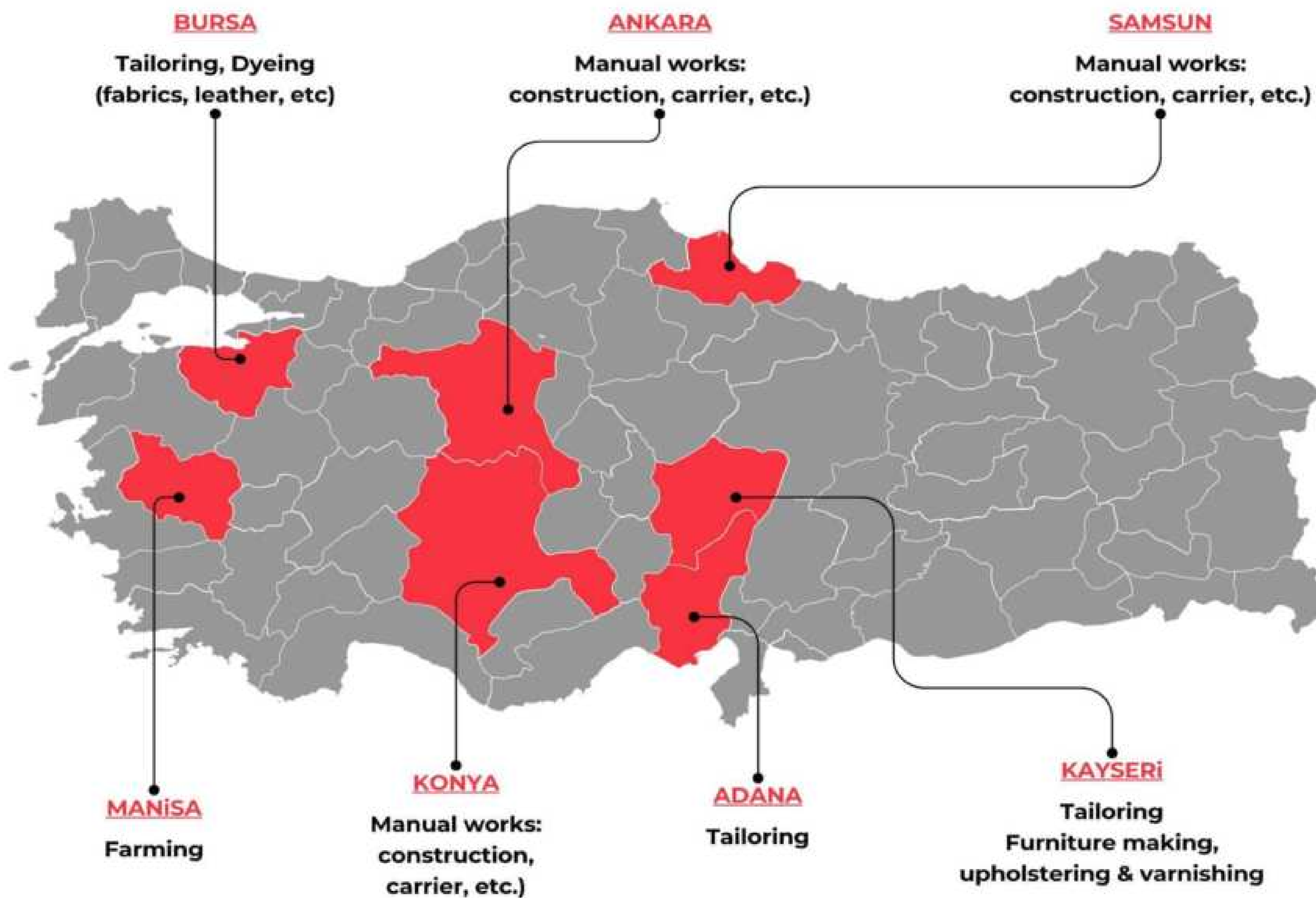


Table 2. Informal work by job position per province for ESSN recipients (profiling, Oct 2022)

Positions	Total number	Adana	Ankara	Bursa	Kayseri	Konya	Manisa	Samsun
Manual labour	41	4	3	3	6	13	4	8
Construction	15							
Carrier / courier	6							
Farming	14	1	1	2	0	2	8	0
Farm labour	11							
Tailoring	13	5	2	6	0	0	0	0
Waste collection	13	2	2	2	3	1	2	1
Furniture making, upholstery & varnishing	7	1	1	0	4	0	0	1

Positions	Total number	Adana	Ankara	Bursa	Kayseri	Konya	Manisa	Samsun
Dyeing (fabrics, leather, etc)	4	0	1	2	0	0	0	1
Salesperson [of which] Seller in a market	4 2	1	0	1	2	0	0	0
Welding	4	0	0	1	1	2	0	0
Electrician	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Plastering	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Smith (machine)	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Sub-total (above)	106	14	10	20	17	19	14	12
Other professions (below)	28	6	6	3	1	5	3	4
Total	134	20	16	23	18	24	17	16

Table 3. Informal work by job position cited by only 1 person per province for ESSN recipients (profiling, Oct 2022)

Province	Positions reported by only 1 person	Province	Positions reported by only 1 person
Adana 6 people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountant (computerized) Baker labourer Hairdresser Janitor Pipefitter Shepherd 	Ankara 6 people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car painter Doorman Leather worker News vendor Warehouse attendant Wood engraver
Konya 5 people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assembly worker Grinder labourer Grocery shop clerk Tire repair Unknown 	Samsun 4 people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Butcher Curtain assembly worker E-publisher Maths teacher
Bursa 3 people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car parts salesperson Retail (self-employed) Sewing machine operator 	Manisa 3 people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barista Grocery boy Warder
Kayseri 1 person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoemaker 		

As the literature review demonstrated (please see the inception report), knowing the Turkish language is seen as a major barrier to finding employment, formal or informal. **In the group of ESSN recipients that were profiled, just over half of the people (54,7%) said they did not know how to speak Turkish, while 45,3% did (159 people).**

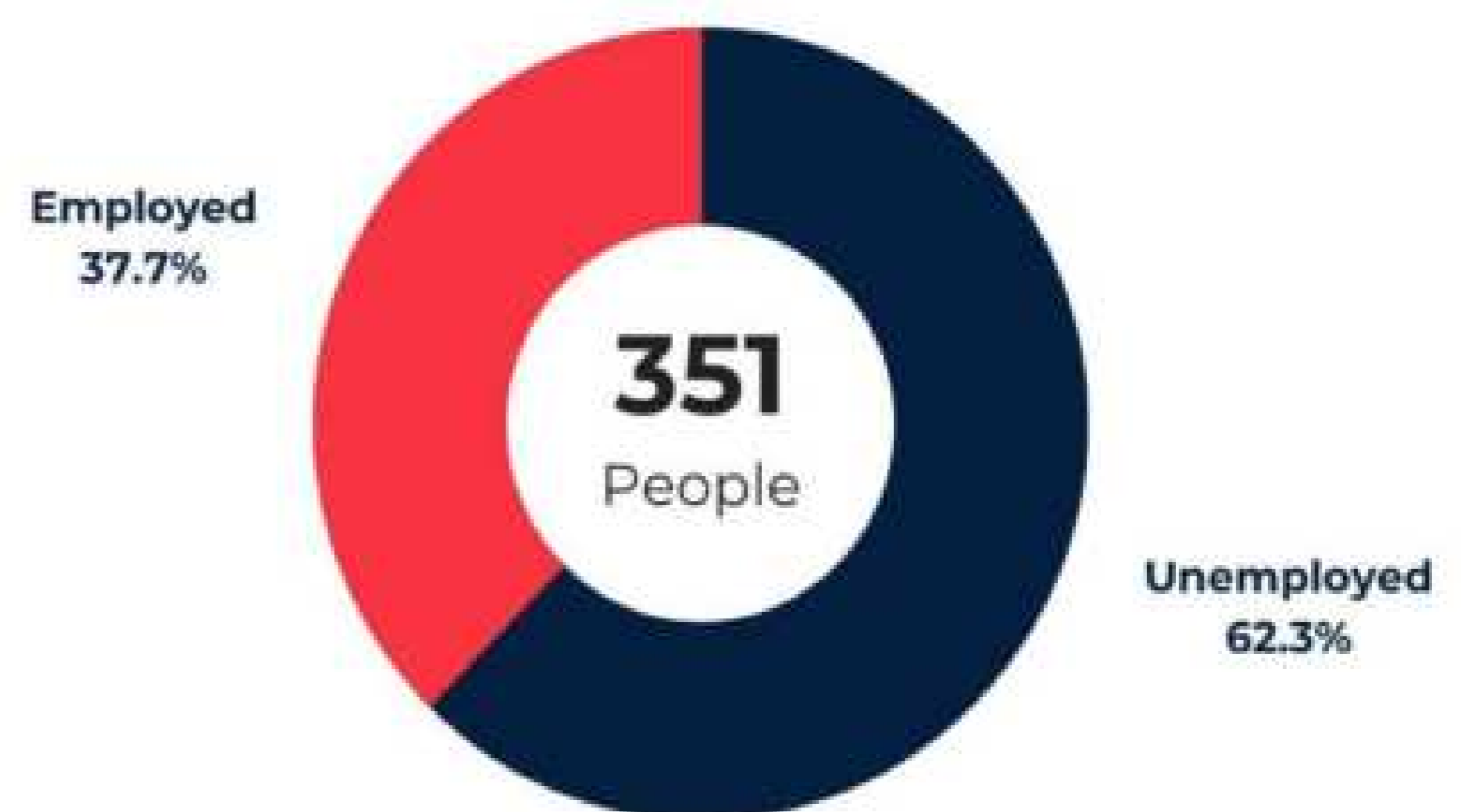
Interestingly, 66,7% of Afghans profiled (n=57) could speak Turkish, as could 63,6% of Iranians (n=11) – compared to 41,9% of Syrians and only 35,6% of Iraqis profiled. Profiling results showed that 61% of people employed spoke Turkish, meaning 39% were still able to find informal employment despite not knowing the language (please see Table 4 below). However, as with all profiling responses, these answers are self-reported and people’s language skills were not tested. These results can therefore be considered how people perceive their own ability to communicate in Turkish.

Livelihood study: Findings

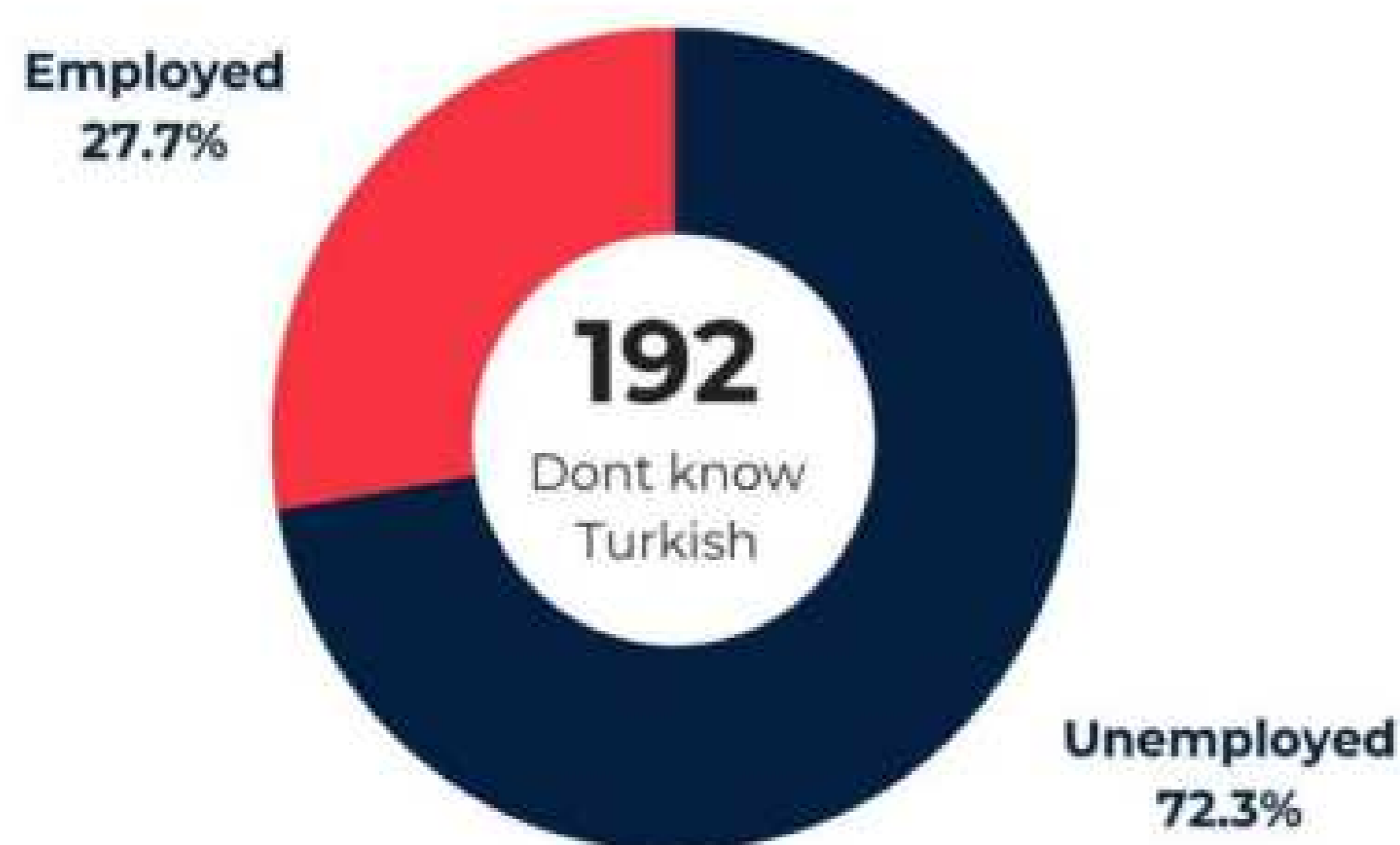
More information about the finding

In the group of ESSN recipients that were profiled, just over half of the people (54,7%) said they did not know how to speak Turkish, while 45,3% did (159 people). Compared to nationalities among the study caseload including Syrians, Afghans, Iranians, and Iraqis, 66.7 per cent of Afghan profiles raised that they could speak Turkish which was the highest ratio among others.

Employed vs Unemployed



Responds who did not know Turkish



Responds who knew Turkish

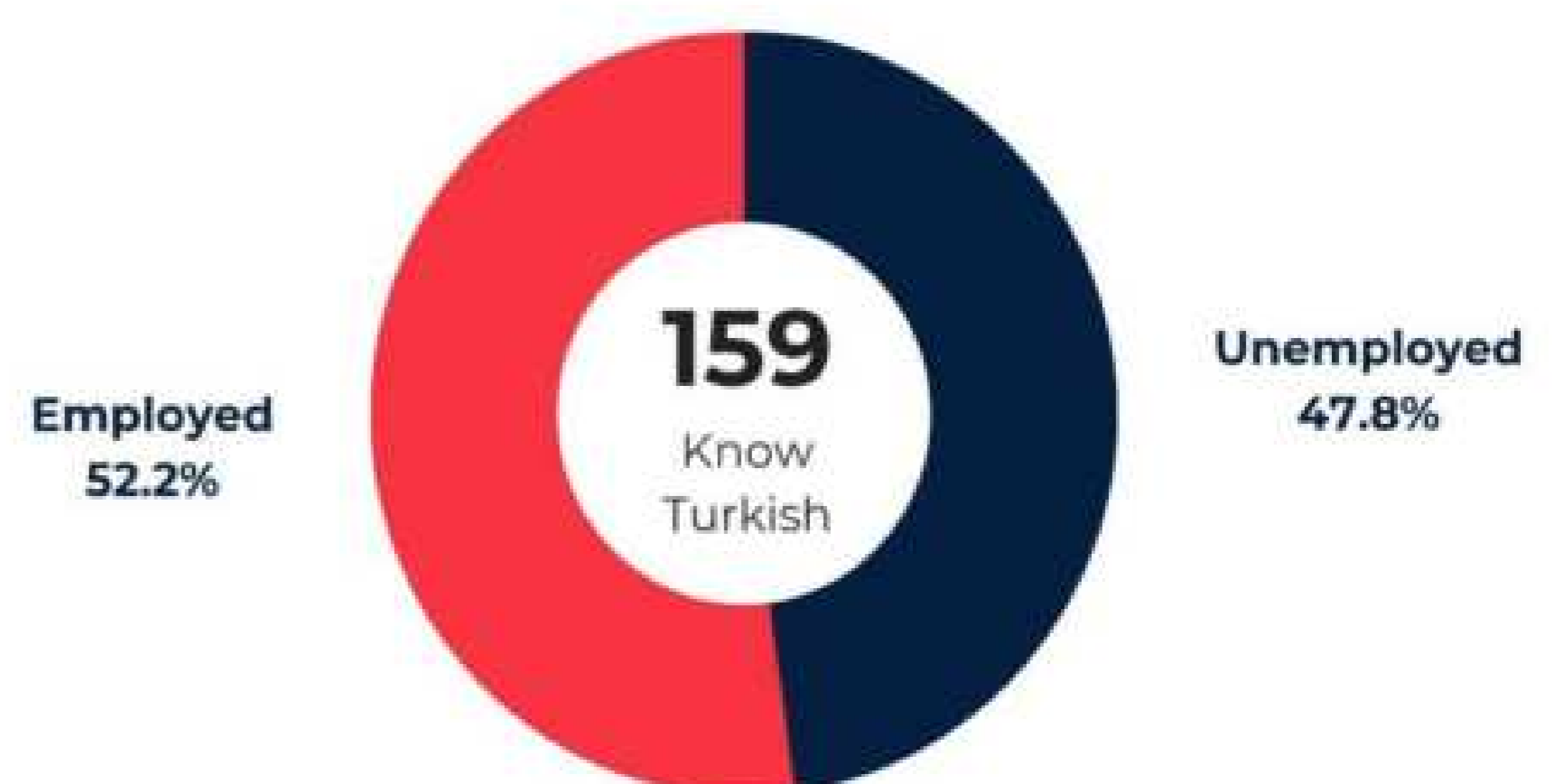


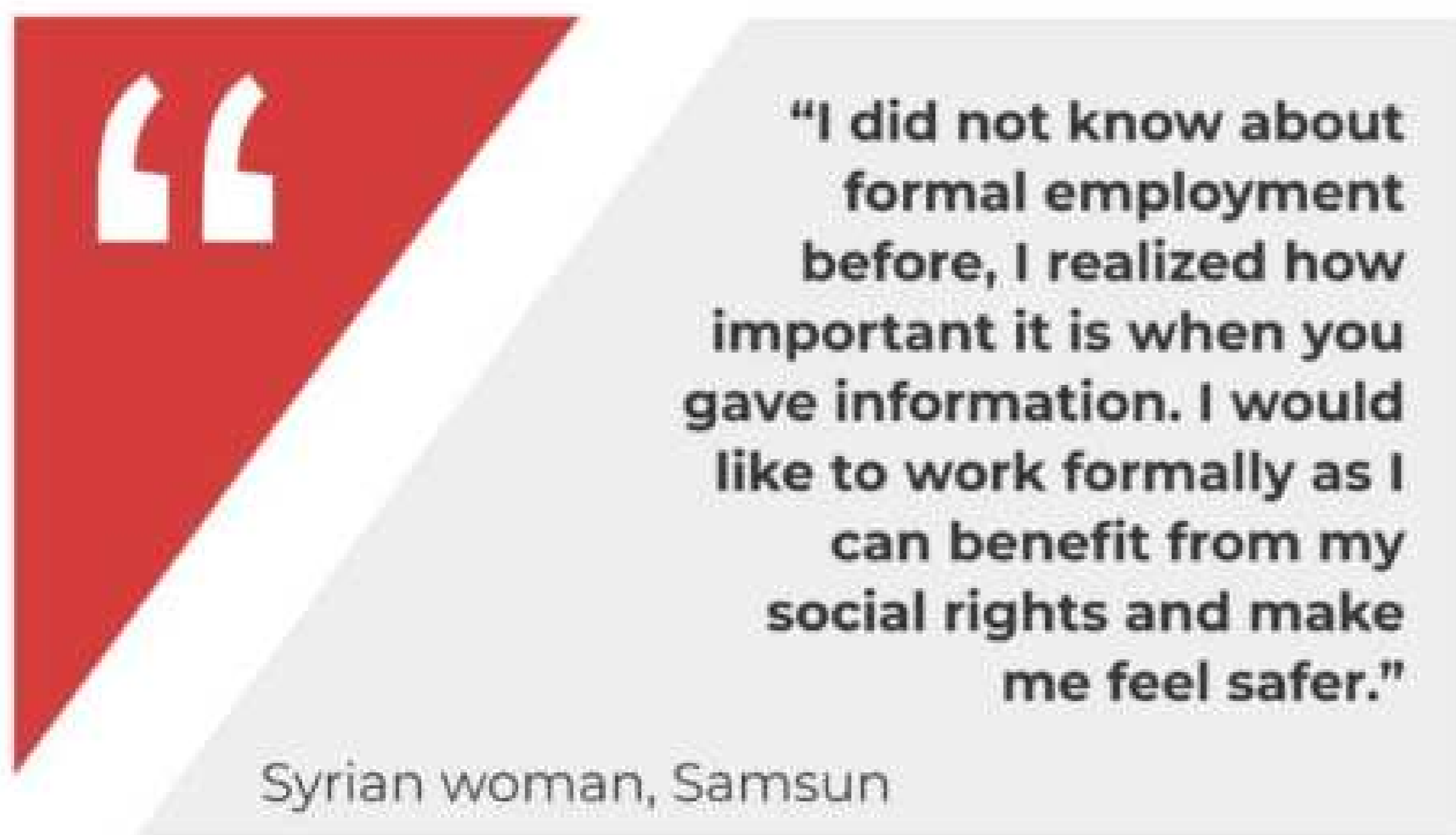
Table 4: Turkish language ability according to reported employment status (profiling, Sept 2022)

Turkish Language Ability* Employment Status					
			Current Employment		Total
			Employed	Unemployed	
Turkish Language Ability	Don't Know	Count	53	139	192
		% within Turkish	27,6%	72,4%	100,0%
	Know	Count	83	72	159
		% within Turkish	52,2%	47,8%	100,0%

Employment Preferences: Formal Vs. Informal Work

Of the 351 ESSN recipients profiled, **182 people (52%) preferred to find formal employment and 100 were women.** However, they were mainly people who were not working at the time they were consulted – those who were working preferred to remain informal for reasons explored below. People who preferred formal employment mentioned access to / reinforcement of social and legal rights (over half of those who responded positively), with another 50% mentioning insurance, better income (higher or more regular), and that formality was more secure. One man in Bursa said he thought he could attract more customers if his business was registered. Several people (women and men) who said they preferred formal employment also mentioned their knowledge of what exactly it entailed was limited and requested more information.

The profiling and subsequent in-depth interviews with selected ESSN recipients also revealed a trend of ambivalence between recognising the benefits of formal employment and concerns about how the system worked in practice. There was a sense that the current work permit scheme for refugees would commit them to a particular employer, which was uncomfortable for many people consulted, especially



“I did not know about formal employment before, I realized how important it is when you gave information. I would like to work formally as I can benefit from my social rights and make me feel safer.”

Syrian woman, Samsun

Of the 101 people who said they preferred to find (or continue doing) informal work, the majority were men. 82% of those who preferred informal work said it was because they did not want to lose ESSN assistance. Others preferred informal work because they were already employed, and they appreciated the working conditions or the relationship with their employer (please see “perceptions of income stability” below for more details).

The in-depth interviews with ESSN recipients who preferred formal employment showed that most of the respondents also prioritised ESSN assistance over formal employment with insurance. The reluctance to lose the ESSN was a major point among the respondents; however, it appears that misinformation about formal employment reinforced their concerns around falling into financial hardship. The majority believed that if they worked formally, they could only earn minimum wage and it would be lower than the total amount of their income from informal jobs and ESSN assistance. Due to this, a significant number of individuals responded to the question, “What do you think should improve in the formal employment process/ how could this process improve?” by stating that they would consider working formally if they could keep their ESSN benefits while working with insurance.

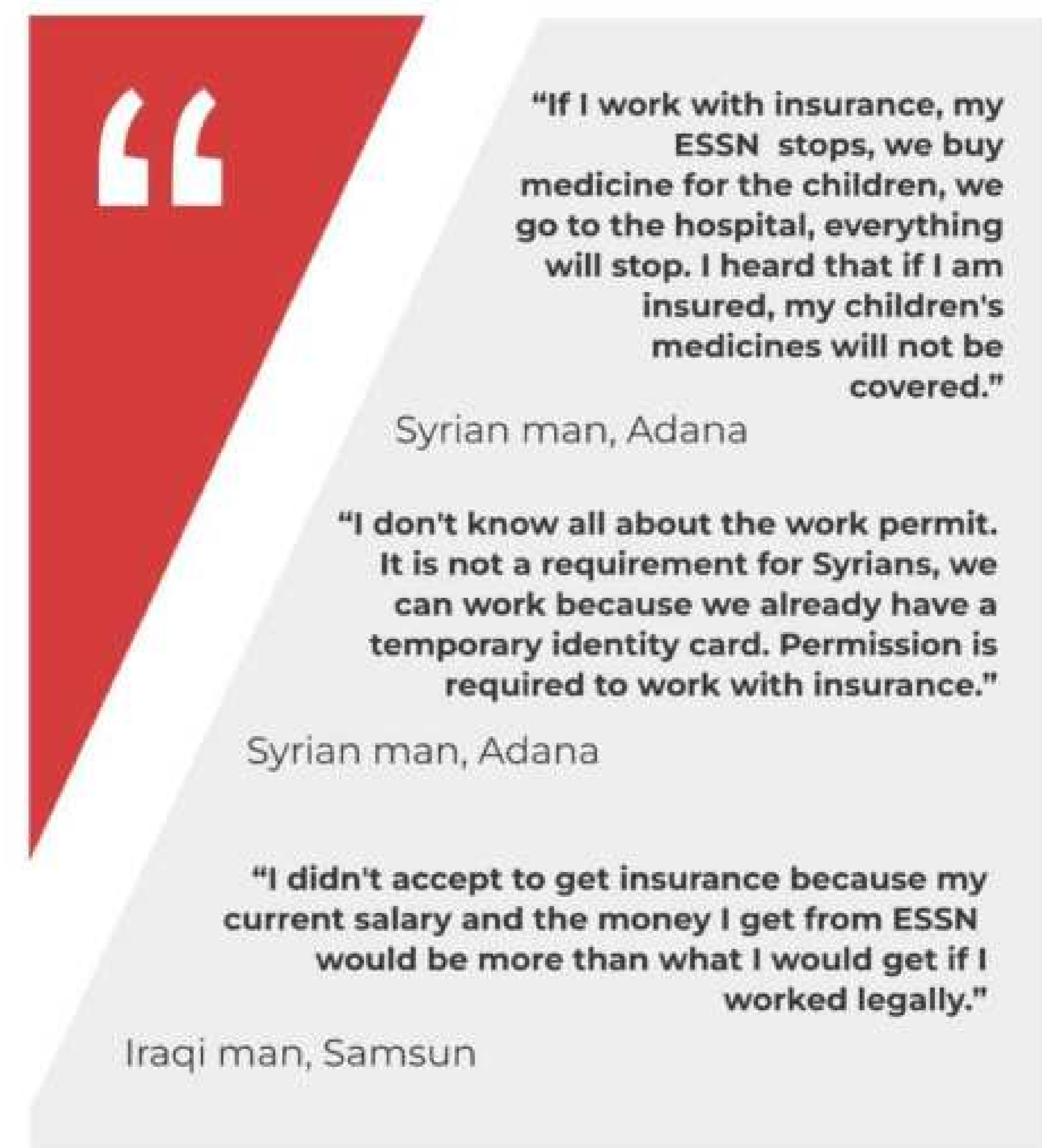
Most people did not fully understand what formal employment included or required even when they were willing to work, particularly with regards to work permits, minimum wage, and benefits / insurance (pensions, healthcare, disability, unemployment, etc.).

Syrian men used to different working conditions. As one man noted, “Formal process is always better. If I have my own job, it is important for my job to be official, but I don't want to work formally while working for someone else, maybe I get bored with my job, maybe I don't like the job, I want to change jobs, if I work formally, I won't be able to do it” (profiling).



“I am worried about this situation, I do not feel safe, but I do not want to work formally in case the ESSN is cut. Even Turkish workers do not have insurance where I work. In this sector this is the way, labours do not have insurance.”

Syrian man, Konya



“If I work with insurance, my ESSN stops, we buy medicine for the children, we go to the hospital, everything will stop. I heard that if I am insured, my children's medicines will not be covered.”

Syrian man, Adana

“I don't know all about the work permit. It is not a requirement for Syrians, we can work because we already have a temporary identity card. Permission is required to work with insurance.”

Syrian man, Adana

“I didn't accept to get insurance because my current salary and the money I get from ESSN would be more than what I would get if I worked legally.”

Iraqi man, Samsun



Some people also did not see the advantages of working formally for “healthy people” who were reluctant to give a portion of their earnings to taxes and insurance when they needed maximum income now; several interviewees thought that formal employment would cut wages in half because “the insurance takes it... why pay when there’s nothing wrong?” (interview) This relates to a common preoccupation with gross versus net salary and the perception that people thought they “deserved” the fully salary and should decide how to spend it. However, it is important to note that perceptions on the issue were fluid. For example, after an in-depth interview with a man who did not fully understand formal employment in Türkiye and preferred to work informally, the interviewer struck up a conversation about the different elements and benefits – after which the man changed his perspective to be more positive about formal employment opportunities.

Although the profiling results can only provide indicative findings for the ESSN caseload, there was no significant distinction between employed and unemployed individuals whether one group preferred informal work – they were roughly equal. Very few people (13 individuals) responded “either,” mainly because they felt any income was better than nothing. But 55 people replied “I don’t know,” likely because they did not understand the question or know the difference between formal and informal employment.

As the education level decreased, the number of people who answered “I don’t know” to the question of whether they preferred formal or informal work went up. Nineteen (19) women did not want to work at all, mainly due to childcare responsibilities.

Perceptions of formal employment gathered through both the profiling and in-depth interviews appeared to be informed by relationships with employers, whether through personal experience or hearsay. Because many people felt employers “hold all the power,” they often did not believe the employment system would work for them. In relation with this, refugees viewed citizenship as a desirable outcome, and formal employment is seen as a means to that end.

They perceived citizenship as a form of insurance, a solution to labour rights issues, and a way to gain access to benefits and legal protection. Some employers who were satisfied with their workers were also interested in obtaining citizenship for their employees. Overall, citizenship appeared to be seen as

“When I am insured, you immediately cut the card without knowing how much salary I get, maybe I get 2,000 or 3,000 TRY as a teacher. I would like you to know this and make an evaluation and then cut it. During the 3-month school vacation, I don't get a salary, but my card still will be cut off. These kinds of arrangements need to be made. ESSN is our security, our financial security, yes, I can be insured, but even if it is a small amount, I would like the card to continue because it is our security.”

Iraqi man, Samsun

“What will happen if I get insurance, I will only lose the ESSN , but I will not be able to regain my rights because I am not a citizen, what will happen even if I retire because I am not a citizen. Insurance will not protect any of my rights. I'll just have my help (ESSN) cut off.

I researched it myself. I am an educated person and have researched my rights and know that there is no law to protect me as a foreigner. Granting citizenship to us will solve the problem.”


Syrian man, Ankara

a potential solution to a variety of problems, and its relationship to formal employment varied between respondents.

Even in cases where men were working in dangerous environments such as factories with high-risk equipment, they did not see the added value of formal employment if they had a good relationship with the employer. They believed they would be taken care of if there was an accident, because the employer cared about their wellbeing but shared their view of not paying insurance – validating a working culture that prioritises maximising income and minimising costs, often with short term planning (Yilmaz, 2019).



There was a strong desire among individuals in Türkiye to become experts in a particular field so that they could eventually start their own businesses. Several participants wanted to start their own business but were unable to do so due to legal and financial constraints. For example, one participant from Adana stated, "I want to open my own business, however, there is a need for Turkish guarantor, and 10,000 TRY. Work permit would provide better conditions, having travel permission takes 15 days and I lose the business opportunity in another province" (interview). Other participants from Manisa and Samsun stated that if they had the money, they would want to open their own business.



"I need a small shop in the industry, I need 1200-1500 tl for rent, I need a set of tools, I need 15 spools of copper. I have everything ready, I know where and what to buy. But I need to buy these things to open this shop and I need money. I know where I have to apply to open a shop. I have to go to the finance, insurance, I have to get the water and electricity turned on. Let's say I go to the insurance, they will ask me for the insurance money."

Iraqi man, Samsun

A few participants mentioned that they were already working with intermediaries or employers, but eventually wanted to work independently. For example, a participant from Ankara stated that they want to establish a bird farm and protect endangered birds through their own business.



"My main goal is to open my own business, so I want to learn Autocad."

Syrian man, Bursa

"When I learn interior decoration, I will do my own business, right now they get a commission because they give me this job through an intermediary, but when I become a master, if costumers call me directly, I will get the fee completely."

Syrian man, Manisa

Another participant from Adana said that they do not want to work for anyone and want to start their own business.

Perceptions of income stability

The profiling questions asked people to reflect on whether they thought their income sources at the time were stable, which offered insights into their perceptions of financial predictability and how this could influence their search for formal employment. Income stability is different than income sufficiency – people can find regular, reliable work but with a few exceptions most participants found the income to be insufficient to

meet all their needs. **Still, several people noted that economic security was secondary to the physical security they felt in Türkiye, and that ESSN assistance could cover rent and some bills, so they felt secure.** A few respondents noted that their families provided financial support from back at home (e.g., Iraq).

The vast majority of ESSN recipients profiled (256 people, 73% of those profiled) did not consider their income source to be reliable or stable. People employed informally said their income was unstable because:

- Living expenses were higher than whatever income they could earn.
- Many people cited working "hand to mouth" through daily work, or seasonal fluctuations in work that were now increasingly difficult to predict, given the pandemic and economic situation in Türkiye. Irregular income was cited as a source of financial stress for many families.
- An unemployed woman commented: "My husband worked in a factory, and they did not make an insurance. His salary constantly changed so he quit. Now he works at another job. We want him to work formally with an insurance, but he cannot find any" (profiling).
- An employed man noted: "I do a job with no future; I have a job that I will never be able to retire. If I work, I am paid daily and if I don't work, I don't earn money. Employers do not accept work permits; they already employ all asylum seekers informally. We feel fear and anxiety under these working conditions because it is not a regular job, neither the hour nor the salary. When I can't find a job to work, since the ESSN assistance is paid regularly, I can at least pay my rent and bills, so I have a roof over my head otherwise my landlord will kick me out" (interview).

This instability drives many personal choices about which informal labour opportunities to pursue and explains why many ESSN recipients place such importance on ESSN assistance to manage financial insecurity. At the same time, analysing the reasons why some people thought their income was stable offers insights into the factors that enable people to feel more financially secure, and to guide ESSN recipients towards opportunities that maximise these factors.

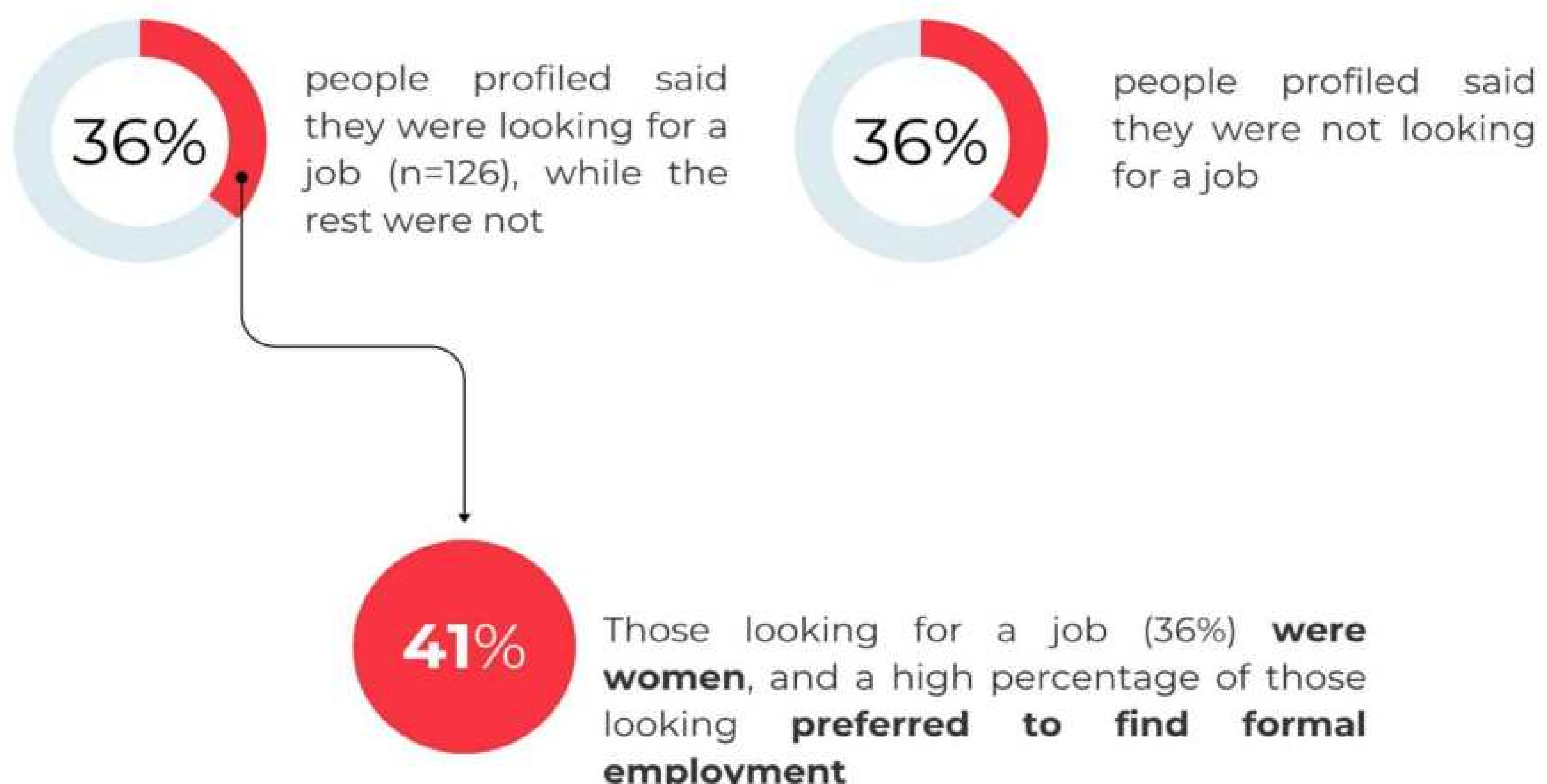
Ninety-five (95) people, 27% of those profiled, reported that their income was stable. Within this group, 40 people were working informally and the rest (55) were women who were unemployed themselves but had someone in their family working informally. They offered a range of reasons for this perceived income stability:

- Some people put financial security in perspective:
 - “We feel safe because our life safety is more important and there is no risk to life safety in Türkiye. Although we do not have a regular income in economic terms, we do not have concerns about living here. It is enough for us get through the day” (profiling).
 - “We did not have life security in Iraq, but we live in Türkiye more peacefully because we do not have a risk for our lives. The irregularity of our income is a second thing to think. Financial concerns are in the second plan” (profiling).
- Others mentioned productivity in their industries (prior to the earthquakes in early February 2023): “The textile sector is busy and there is a space to do business continuously” (profiling).
- Two men mentioned their positive work environments and strong relationships with employers:
 - “I love my job and we feel economically secure because my boss is good.”
 - “There is trust between employer and employee.”

Finally, **several respondents cited income diversification as key to managing income stability.** Income diversification is an important part of refugee livelihood strategies and financial security (please see the literature review of the Inception Report, annexed here). A man noted, **“With ESSN assistance, I can pay my rent and bills, the most important issue for me is that after paying them, the rest is not important, I can work daily jobs to provide, so we feel safe”** (profiling).

Looking for and finding work

Livelihood Study: **Job Finding**



Around 36% of people profiled said they were looking for a job (n=126), while the rest were not.

41% of those looking for a job were women, and a high percentage of those looking preferred to find formal employment. Approximately 69% of unemployed people were not looking for a job (mainly women), while just over half of people working informally (56%) were not looking either. Those who said they were not looking for work listed several reasons why, such as household or childcare responsibilities, the desire to keep ESSN cash assistance, and in very few cases because of a disability (please see “Barriers” below for more details). As one study in late 2021 noted, “ [Syrian refugee] men’s employment peaks quite early (one year) after arrival and remains there, whereas women’s employment is lower to begin with and changes little over time” (Demirci and Kirdar, 2021).

People predominantly found jobs through friends, according to the profiling and interview findings. Interviewees said they often decided the province where to live based on presence of family member or relatives or friends’ suggestions on where there are jobs.



Of the 126 profiled ESSN recipients that were looking for a job, 86,5% said they asked friends, family, or other people to find opportunities, especially in Samsun, Konya, Manisa, and Adana. People said they used these channels because they trusted their friends, and they wanted to know if the employer was trustworthy. This was mainly the case for Syrians in Türkiye, as other nationalities with smaller social networks noted they would also seek jobs in other ways. Around 36,5% of those searching for employment said they reached out to employers to look for jobs, mainly in Samsun, Bursa, and Ankara. Only a few people with high digital literacy used Facebook or job-hunting sites like Kariyer.net; 2 people (1 in Adana, 1 in Bursa) said they checked vacancies, and a lone person in Bursa checked with İŞKUR for opportunities. Most of the individuals interviewed found their jobs through personal connections or recommendations. This included friends, family, neighbours, acquaintances, and social media networks such as WhatsApp groups. Many also mentioned relying on "cavus," a local term for a trusted intermediary who helps connect job seekers with employers for agriculture jobs. Some individuals found work through job postings on websites such as Facebook.



“Syrians use WhatsApp groups [to communicate], but we do not.”

Iraqi man, Ankara

Also, a few individuals found work through chance encounters or by being in the right place at the right time, such as through a recommendation from a Turkish person. On the other hand, there was a common theme of trust being an important factor in accepting a job offer. Individuals often sought recommendations from people they knew to ensure the employer was reputable and that they would be paid. Overall, personal connections and recommendations were the most common ways for these individuals to find employment. Social media networks and online job postings also played a role, but to a lesser extent. Trust and reputation were important factors in accepting job offers.

Employers also posted advertisements in shop windows and informed foreign employees of available positions. One person in Adana with a higher education degree mentioned using Kariyer.net for job finding.

However, while using social media to find work was common practice among Syrian communities, people from other nationalities mentioned that they did not use such platforms for their job seeking activities.

“Those working in the field of technology in Syria do well. Those who make design models for furniture have a better job.”

Syrian man, Ankara

“I was a taxi driver in Syria; this kind of work was one of the most comfortable jobs in the country.”

Syrian man, Ankara

“Since tailoring was my father's and grandfather's profession, we started in Syria, and we had a business there and we were satisfied.”

Syrian man, Bursa

While working preferences like hours, location, and salary levels are important across the profiling and interviews findings, the exact sector and profession seemed to matter less. It appears that the definition of a good job varied depending on people's previous experiences and cultural backgrounds. However, some general trends can be observed. In Syria, tailoring, trading, taxi driver, and technology-related jobs seem to be popular choices. Tailoring was a common profession for many Syrians and was often passed down from generation to generation. The interviewees noted that it was a comfortable job and paid well. Trading was also a popular profession, particularly in Damascus, where clothes and food were the most common products. Technology-related jobs, such as designing furniture models or working in the field of technology, were also mentioned as good jobs in Syria. Tiling and electrical work were cited as good jobs by the Iraqi interviewees. Taxi driving was also mentioned as a comfortable job.

“I would like to be a taxi driver if I had the opportunity here. I would also like to work in automotive repair. I like cars as a hobby; I like engines and cars.”

Syrian man, Bursa

“For us, what we really want is for the business to be continuous and secure, that is, to have a guarantee that the business will continue.”

Syrian man, Konya

What constituted a "good" job in Türkiye included factors such as the level of comfort, working hours, salary, work breaks, good relationships with employers, job security, and availability of investment capital. Additionally, the job preference of the individuals depended on their prior experience, skill set, financial capability, and passion. Many expressed their preference for jobs that they were already familiar with and had experience in, such as tailoring, furniture-making, trade, automotive repair, and plumbing. Some expressed an interest in the technology industry, such as phone repair and auto electrical business.

They also showed an interest in jobs that allowed them to work independently, such as owning a small business or being self-employed. The textile industry was mentioned several times as a good business, as well as trade, ownership of grocery stores, barbershops, and restaurants. However, it was also mentioned that owning a business for Syrians created fear of possible attacks from locals and loss of their investment.

It is noteworthy that some interviewees were reluctant to pursue certain jobs due to health concerns, such as heavy labour jobs or working at factories. Several people mentioned that they suffer from hernias. They also expressed a desire for a guaranteed job continuity and job security.

Women, regardless of their nationality and residing province, displayed a strong inclination towards working from home. The majority of interviewees were single women, and they expressed their desire to work. However, they preferred to work from home for various reasons, sometimes without any specific rationale. It can be concluded that, after coming Türkiye, refugees prioritised jobs that provide good working conditions, decent pay, and job security, and they tended to gravitate towards familiar jobs or independent work.

It appears that both in origin country and Türkiye a good job for these interviewees was one that paid well and was comfortable. Many interviewees noted that “if I can make more money, that’s the best job for me” (interviews). Sustainability was described as “knowing what will happen next;” the concept was not linked to finding a particular job or obtaining a work permit (interviews).

Yet, during the data collection for this study ESN Programme teams from Kizilay remarked that many interviewees were very skilled – they were masters in sectors such as carpentry and furniture production. As such, according to the “Usta” (master) system in Türkiye, they could earn more than the minimum wage when working formally – an opportunity at odds with prevailing perceptions that formal work would cut earnings in half.



“A job that will not tire me out, like working in a call centre, interpretation job at hospitals, also jobs that I can do at home are good jobs for me.”

Iranian woman, Samsun

“I can work from home, but not outside. I have children at home to take care of, and very frequently they get sick in the middle of their lessons, which requires me to pick them up from school. I am single mother, I can only pick them up. My elder son is working. Therefore, I cannot work at a physical workplace.”

Iraqi woman, Samsun

“If I could have a sewing machine in my home, I could have had income. That is a good job for me. I cannot work at the agricultural field. It is a heavy and dirty work. Weather conditions are bad.”

Syrian woman, Adana



“All these jobs are close to each other, if I can make good money then it's a good job for me. I do not have opinion on other works (occupations)”

Syrian man, Ankara



“I would like another better job where I can be treated better, I have no idea about job options. If I were a translator in the sense of having a more comfortable job, I don't want a heavy job because I have a hernia. If I continue in this job, I may need surgery within 1-2 years due to my hernia.”

Syrian man, Kayseri

“I suffer from hernia. Because of this, I am constantly leaving my job. ... It's hard for me to work at physical power demanding jobs. ... For me, not hard (labour intense) work is good work. It is more convenient to work at jobs such as a grocery store.”

Iraqi man, Ankara

LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES: ANALYSIS & VOCATIONAL CHAMBER PERSPECTIVES

The study consulted 35 vocational chamber representatives for key industries in the 7 provinces (5 chambers per province – see methodology for the selection rationale). The idea was to capture the general knowledge and trends in perceptions of larger groups of employers on employing foreigners, rather than interviewing particular businesses. The in-depth interviews with these vocational chamber representatives revealed key perspectives across a range of sectors and locations; these are outlined below, then analysed alongside findings from ESSN recipients who were profiled and/or interviewed. It is important to note that chamber representatives could often not distinguish between ESSN recipients and other foreigners working in their sector unless someone told them about what they received. Even then, it would be difficult for employers to know definitively whether the assistance they received was from the ESSN Programme.



Knowledge of how to employ foreigners, especially refugees, was limited – which was itself an important finding. Most of the represented interviewed did not know much about employing foreigners. This was an important finding because the majority of vocational chambers, regardless of sector or province, did not have information on how to employ foreigners. This meant facilitated exchanges with employers to hire refugees were not reaching a critical mass of sectors enough for people to know basic processes or where to start with the formalisation process. The definition of “informal” was also understood differently by different employers – having the certification (if needed in the sector) versus registering with the tax office versus registering with the vocational chamber. Vocational chambers in Konya mentioned they worked with municipalities to check whether businesses registered with the tax office match their records.

Knowledge of formal employment processes appears to be linked to a company’s human resourcing capacity. For example, a larger textile factory in Samsun did not employ foreigners but knew the most about the processes (incentives available to employer, work permit applications, relationship of workers within the companies, etc.) because they had dedicated internal capacity that allowed them to stay up to date. The representative for the crafts chamber in Kayseri also noted that the “process is generally carried out by accountants,” which makes it easier for larger businesses to complete it (interview). Those who knew more about the process highlighted how long and cumbersome it could be to obtain a work permit for a foreigner.

Market conditions (pre-earthquake) were difficult for everyone, except for some sectors such as meat production / butchering and auto repairs. As the representative for the chamber of carpenters and furniture makers in Kayseri noted, “The current market conditions have put us in trouble just like every other sector. The increasing and changing material. It is now very difficult to find qualified personnel and establish a long-term employee-employer relationship under reliable working conditions” (interview). A few sectors, like butchering (which includes livestock breeding, poultry, fishing, and production of meat-based products) in Bursa have actually grown since the pandemic – and rely almost exclusively on foreign labour. Economic difficulties post-pandemic have only been exacerbated by the earthquake in early February and its devastating aftermath.



So those who come from İŞKUR want a desk job. How will we train a welder master in this way? Today the minimum wage is 5,500 TRY. It is not clear what will happen tomorrow. We need a master welder above the minimum wage. There are also master welders at İŞKUR. He comes to find a job, to apply, but he is not related to his profession.

He wants to make easy money. Now our city is growing. Our country is growing. Everyone is trying to make easy money. It is difficult for people to come to a very good place with these thoughts. So, he will suffer himself. He may think that there is a benefit today, but tomorrow there is no making easy money, it is necessary to labour."

Konya, Welding & Auto Repair Vocational Chamber

There is generalised difficulty in finding qualified employees in many sectors, often because "Turks don't want these types of jobs anymore" (Konya, shoemaking). "These types of jobs" refer to positions considered to be blue collar or tradesman work; vocational chamber representatives often expressed that Turks wanted their children to pursue higher education and obtain white collar jobs in offices. As a vocational chamber representative of restaurateurs in Bursa, noted, "All companies cannot find qualified personnel. The reason is the closure of vocational high schools and families want their children to finish university. A civil engineer cannot do a job. Most of university graduates are unemployed, rents are very high, there is a troubled situation" (interview). The Bursa auto repair vocational chamber echoed this: "Parents want their children to study and become engineers, so the qualified personnel cannot be found, let alone journeymen and apprentices" (interview).

Some sectors also reported a mismatch between the trainings on offer and the skills needed for specific jobs. The vocational chamber of sewing and textiles in Adana noted that vocational training current subsidised does not include teachers with hands-on experience, so graduates are not qualified with the relevant skills (interview). However, alongside the feeling that Turkish parents wanted their children to study and were not interested in pursuing certain jobs, another key reason was the high staff turnover across all sectors involved in the consultations. This is explored further below. Despite seeing vocational training as a way to enhance employability and secure jobs, interviews with individuals who worked informally revealed that they were not keen on pursuing any training because they prioritised earning income and did not perceive such training as a guarantee for employment.

Formality for employees, both Turks and foreigners, depended on the sector and location.

The prevalence of informal work depended on the sector but also followed general trends in the province, according to the interviews with chamber representatives. There were provinces where no one worked informally (Manisa, Kayseri, etc.), places where Turks were employed formally and foreigners informally, and few sectors where everyone, including Turks, worked informally – such as agriculture and hairdressing/barbering. Examples included:

- Manisa: In electronics there were 4 foreign employers (2 Iranian, 1 Syrian, 1 Iraqi) that in turn employed foreign workers. Everyone, including Turks, were working formally, according to the vocational chamber representative.
- Konya: The shoemaking sector found ways to work around formal employment. The vocational chamber noted that "since our shoemaking profession is in the dangerous category of work, no one wants to take risks and especially we have insurance registration of all workers. They are insured, they have formal registration, but there are those who work as apprentices. They are also enrolled in apprenticeship training centres. Some vocational high school students work one day a week, some two days a week as interns, but they are not called as workers. They work under the name of apprentice students" (interview).



"My time is very, very important, I come from school and go to private lessons, so I have a time problem, so even if there is a free course, I may not be able to go."

Iraqi man, Samsun

"I would prefer to attend courses with job guarantees. When there is a job guarantee, I will leave agricultural work and go to the course and get a job."

Syrian man, Manisa

- Kayseri: In carpentry and furniture making, Turks were working formally but foreigners were not. In contrast, the vocational chamber for industry reported that informal employment was common (but not universal) for employees of all nationalities, noting that only 11 of their Syrian members' 120 employees were formally employed. He (the employer) registered 11 people as formal employee in order to become a member of the chamber (all of the employees are Syrians).
- Bursa: The restaurant sector had a mix of formal and informal labour since it included many Syrians who also owned businesses. The chamber representative noted that "large and corporate companies employ formal workers. Some sectors do not understand us and get angry about why they employ Syrians, but they do not see the problem of finding personnel" (interview). The butchering industry in Bursa, according to the chamber representative, was almost entirely run by foreigners – which means "they all work without insurance." Some, especially Afghans, may not be registered at all – so cannot benefit from KOSGEB and TKDK (Agriculture and Rural Development Support Institution).

Predictably, sectors dominated by smaller, family-run businesses like sewing or greengrocers (selling fresh fruits and vegetables), nearly all workers are informal not just foreigners – because paying the income directly was cheaper than paying expenses (Adana, KIIs). Also, vocational chambers, noted that job security in small businesses was nearly impossible to guarantee because of the flux of the market, where small businesses can close rather suddenly.

The prevalence of formal versus informal work, whether at the individual employee level or for business registration, appeared to influence how refugee employment was perceived by the chambers – which in turn could affect refugee integration and wider questions of social cohesion, particularly after the February 2023 earthquake. Social cohesion perceptions are explored below.

Vocational chambers spoke of a vicious cycle of impermanence: job continuity is a concern for employers. There was a general sense that high turnover is now a mainstay of Turkish work culture, partly influenced by the influx of foreigners but also amongst Turkish employees, which was not the case a generation ago. When discussing foreign workers specifically, chambers identified a number of factors that they thought predisposed them to continuing this cycle of impermanence – perceptions that were echoed by ESSN staff involved in livelihood programming and referrals.

Key solution: Secure working environment through commitment between employee and employers.

Many industries commented on the vicious cycle of needing to invest in training because they could not find qualified employees, and many employers' reluctance to commit to this investment when employees would leave soon after receiving their qualifications. Several chambers, especially in Manisa, noted that workers in general changed jobs often, so employers did not get return on the investment in their workforce.

For refugees in particular, employers had the misperception that they were moving around which is why they could not commit to jobs – but in fact people could not leave their province of residency because they had to check into same district every 2 weeks (Türk Kızılay interview). Chambers also said companies frowned upon refugees' focus on wages; this focus made employees believe they would leave for any opportunity offering even slightly more and were less interested in learning new skills or developing longer-term relationships. Despite these challenges, some chambers reflected on the potential of foreign workers, as illustrated in the quotes below.



"[Foreigners] work hard during the time they work. They work a little more disciplined than our Turkish people, but when it comes to their arrival and departure times and their expectations of returning to their countries or their dreams of going to a European country, and these dreams never end. Therefore, they do not want to be too attached to the places where they work because they can leave at any time. In fact, there are very high quality, qualified personnel suitable for the profession."

Konya, Furniture Making Vocational Chamber

"Since foreigners have no commitment through fear or trust, they can leave here and go to the other side. There is no stability. They quit immediately because they want to get two Lira more. We work on demand (customer order). We follow the fashion, we take the wage list and money on the list from the market and get to work, it is a big problem when the employee leaves the job."

Bursa, Shoemaking Vocational Chamber

High turnover and low job continuity in turn influenced how and what employers were willing to prioritise to formalise the foreign workforce. Chambers across sectors and provinces expressed reluctance to invest in work permits that were considered “expensive and confusing” when refugees would not commit to remaining in a job. At the same time, some vocational chambers understood why this impermanence dominated workers’ choices. The chamber representative in Konya noted that “foreigners think for the day. They think about the money they get. For example, foreigners don’t like monthly wages. It is good for them to receive weekly. When you consider the average of the year, they prefer weekly because it costs more per week. Let me get my money. I don’t know what will happen tomorrow. Maybe I’ll leave here. Maybe I will go somewhere else. Maybe I will return to my country” (interview). In Bursa, another chamber said foreigners working in the area feared losing assistance and thought they would be deported if they were fired, so they left the job after being trained (interview).

‘Dilemma between receiving humanitarian assistance and having a formal job.’

Turkish employers believe that humanitarian assistance disincentivises formal employment for refugees, despite not knowing what benefits they receive exactly. In addition to foreigners’ preference for working informally because they were used to the working arrangements, they did not have ties in the area, and they did not want to enter a “binding order” with employers, vocational chamber representatives said many foreign employers wanted to keep their humanitarian assistance. Indeed, the profiling findings outlined in this report corroborated these perceptions. Employers therefore believed social assistance for foreigners prevented a shift to formal work – whether this belief was based on fact or rumour.

Several chambers also thought the assistance held foreigners back from fully contributing to Turkish society. Comments from Samsun and Konya were particularly pronounced on this issue. The chamber for shoemaking in Konya maintained that employers in the sector wanted to provide social security for people who did not have it, but that they “insistently do not want it to be made” (interview). He felt that foreigners “both work and earn money from their workplace and get help from you, which I do not think this help is halal for them. They deceive us, they deceive institutions” (interview). The representative for tailoring in Konya claimed that his sector did not want unregistered workers, and that having social assistance was an “obstacle to registered work” (interview). He believed that foreigners wanted to work illegally without declaring their employment, saying “they tell us not to show insurance. We receive social assistance there. I don’t know what they get there, a thousand liras, two thousand liras. But we [tailors] cannot work informally” (interview). The representative for the vocational chamber for butchering and animal products in Bursa declared: “Animals are registered, people are not. Give the ID card and stop the aid!” A chamber representative in Konya echoed the need for the state to transition refugees away from social assistance more proactively: “I mean, who needs help? Who is not? Who is able to work? If those who are able to work are not working, they should be given a work permit by the state. State should say to these people – you are able to work; thus, you should work (interview). These perspectives have likely changed since the earthquake but point to the negative optics of foreigners working informally while receiving assistance for many Turkish employers.

Vocational chamber representatives underlined potential issues with incentivised employment programmes for foreigners that could put employers at a disadvantage or even increase social tension.

The few chambers who had experience with employment programmes, such as KIGEP or IMEP, generally mentioned positive experiences with the facilitated exchanges between employers, the state, and livelihoods actors. They noted that in some sectors, such as shoemaking or tailoring, they found people through word of mouth by posting their own vacancies. The chamber for restaurateurs in Bursa mentioned that they did not use İŞKUR vacancies very much because they only covered certain positions (interview). Therefore, they appreciated programmes that connected them to qualified employees, including foreigners. Some chambers mentioned, however, that despite positive results, the scale remained small – the chamber of shoemaking in Bursa recounted good outcomes with the IMEP/ İŞKUR project, but they only recruited 60-80 employees (well below the sector gap).

Another factor was the long application process to obtain foreigners’ work permits, which dissuaded employers and refugees alike to follow through with the process. The chamber for crafts in Kayseri underlined that “approval processes [for foreigner work permits] can sometimes take a long time or there may be some systemic problems. It would be better if these glitches were fixed” (interview). Vocational chamber representatives also noted that the process required facilitation, and they were grateful for the support because “it is very difficult for a foreign employer to make this application through the ministry’s system without assistance.

This support is given through the Türk Kızılay, but there is still a situation that prolongs the process and tires people” (Kayseri, Trade - interview). Still, the length and complexity of the process deterred some from completing it, particularly for smaller businesses. The chamber for weaving in Bursa shared that they were planning on obtaining a work permit for a particularly skilled employee, but “then the worker gave up because of the long procedure” (interview).

In other cases, one bad experience could negatively influence employers’ perceptions of hiring foreigners. The chamber of furniture making in Konya gave a concrete example: “In the past months, we have placed two such graduates to work. The employer applied for a work permit and started their [social security insurance] SSI on the day they started. Of course, the work permit comes a little late. It takes some time. Therefore, İŞKUR personnel go to inspect and penalise the workplace. He says that because you don't have a work permit, although I don't remember the exact number, he writes a fine of [around] 70,000 TRY. He also fines two employees 4,500 TRY each” (interview). This incident sparked rumours and misinformation that discouraged some employers from formalising foreign workers.

Finally, a few chambers cautioned that the way certain programmes for foreigners were designed and communicated could increase social tension. The representative for the auto repair chamber in Bursa admitted that “We are a bit sensitive about foreigners. When there are incentives for Syrians, Turkish people react. Members reacted to the apprenticeship training for Syrians. They are constantly reacting why we are not given privileges. You have to be Syrian to benefit from projects like IMEP! Our local people also need such projects” (interview).

COMPARING PERSPECTIVES ON PATHWAYS: ESSN RECIPIENTS & VOCATIONAL CHAMBERS

ESSN recipients and vocational chamber representatives were asked about their knowledge of and perspectives on formal employment for foreigners in Türkiye, particularly refugees. As noted above, both groups had inconsistent and sometimes inaccurate perceptions of what formal employment would include and require, although vocational chambers were more likely to know what formal employment – just not what processes to follow to formalise foreign employees, especially refugees.

There was a prevailing perception that informal labour was “win-win” for many employers and foreign workers, particularly refugees. In Kayseri Province, ESSN recipients and vocational chamber representatives mentioned that craftsmen employers accepted informal employment to avoid costs such as insurance and operate with low labour costs (interviews). The concept of insurance was not attractive to refugees who felt they were paying for something they did not need (profiling). Smaller businesses shared this perception – in Konya, the tailoring chamber representative noted that “employers have insurance problems. It is good if the state supports them from time to time. If he employs a hundred people, it is beneficial for that man. For example, I had one man here. There was no [insurance] benefit to me” (interview). While some ESSN recipients saw the benefits offered by formal employment (and some even wanted to “thank” Türkiye for taking them in and saw formal employment to do this), many healthy people working informally were not used to dedicating a percentage of their gross income to these social benefits. They preferred to receive the full amount and handle emergencies as they arose, whether on their own or with the help of their networks (including supportive employers in some cases). Refugee workers and small business owners preferred to find their own arrangements outside of formal employment based on their shared values of maximising short-term income for employees and outputs for employers.

At the same time, vocational chambers recognised refugees’ role in revitalizing certain sectors. In Konya, the representative for the tailoring chamber noted a “shrinkage” in the industry: “For example, **if there were no Syrians, we would be in trouble today. With the arrival of Afghans and Syrians, we have big tradesmen in the industry. We have about 300 tradesmen, more or less.**” The trade-off between formalising this employment and maintaining the industry’s production meant that employers continued prioritising informal arrangements with refugee workers. This appeared to link back to chamber representatives’ perceptions that Turks were unwilling to engage in more manual labour.



“80% foreigners work in this sector. Our people don't appreciate work. We tried to choose our people, but they are not qualified. The work is hard, noisy, and dusty. There is a shortage of Turkish workers in most sectors. Go to the big textile companies of Bursa, you will not find Turks in there, they have made a camp for their foreign employees, they sleep and work there.”

Bursa, Vocational Chamber for Weaving

Social Cohesion

The question of social cohesion has been central to policy debates and research on refugee employment in Türkiye for nearly a decade and was an important component of this study (Erdoğan, 2019). As in many refugee settings, host populations are often resentful of the perceived special treatment of refugees, which perpetuates the narrative of job-stealing workers who undercut the living wage by working informally. While Türkiye has always integrated foreign workers, especially from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iran, the influx of Syrians starting in 2011 brought the issue to the forefront of national debates. ESSN recipients and vocational chamber representatives were asked to reflect on social cohesion during the interviews.

The absence of open conflict does not mean refugees are well integrated in the workplace.

From refugees' perspectives, as time went on labour market integration posed fewer issues than at the beginning of their time in Türkiye. Earlier in the response Syrians reported high levels and extreme degrees of labour exploitation, as people attempted to find work wherever they could (when work permits were not in effect) and employers could exploit and replace refugee workers with relative impunity (Danish Refugee Council, 2021). Chambers did not report social cohesion issues once foreigners and Turks were working together – although some language barriers persisted – yet in-depth interviews with ESSN recipients revealed that they worked alongside Turks and tolerated each other but did not necessarily interact.

The interviews with working ESSN recipients in Türkiye showed that their experiences with discrimination, wages, and working conditions varied. While some had positive experiences with employers who treated them well and paid them fairly, most experienced exploitation in the workplace, with low wages, discrimination, and racism being their primary concerns. A Syrian man in Adana said, “Yes, there is discrimination. There are differences (with Turkish workers) in wages while working. When a Turkish person requests insurance, they make insurance for him directly. However, they do not make insurance to Syrians. When they see that we are Syrian, they behave differently. I just commute to work and do not have much interaction, but some people treat Syrians badly at work. I go to work at 8 in the morning and return at 7 in the evening” (interview).



“We do not work under human conditions. We do not have a dignified work environment. There is a lot of racism and discrimination. Less work is given to Turkish people at the workplace. Turkish workers are allowed to take leave when they ask, but these rights are not given to us. Turkish workers can take longer or more frequent breaks, but we cannot. Employers are also using us. Not everyone is like this, but these things are happening”

Syrian man, Ankara

There was a common theme of not being able to quit or say no to exploitative jobs due to having children to take care and look after. Syrian workers often did not have the same rights as Turkish workers and worked in poor conditions, including health hazards and lack of protective gear. The report of a Syrian man living in Manisa shed light on the unhealthy working conditions that many workers face. He stated that the only job options available to foreigners in the area were in the olive industry or construction, leaving them with little choice but to take on these often physically demanding jobs. This individual had been carrying olive saddle crates for the same company for four years, starting at the age of 23 when the work was easy. However, he soon experienced back pain and struggled to continue due to the long hours and difficult work. Additionally, he was exposed to chemicals in the olive grove that affected his sense of smell and taste. Despite seeking medical attention, he was unable to find a solution. The long work hours from 8 am to 8 pm, coupled with the inability to use a mask for extended periods, made this already demanding job even harder.

He further mentioned that when inspectors visited the workplaces, employers removes uninsured workers from the workplace to avoid punishment. This highlighted the need for improved inspections and regulations to protect the health and well-being of foreign workers.

“

“Recently, Turkish people’s behaviour has changed against us over time. They were more respectful in the beginning, now they say “go back to your country” even to our faces. Perhaps they are right. we stayed here for a long time. they treated us very well at first. they helped us, but we stayed for a long time, and now they may be right in their behaviour. (He is relating and expressing his understanding) many people had fled to Syria during the Iraq war and became a burden to us, too.

Violence differs from person to person. People who are decent do not show any violence, but those who are rude can resort to violence. My 15-year-old son was attacked by the Turkish people while he was out during the day, they tried to take his phone.”

Syrian man, Ankara

“There is a lot of discrimination and racism. It has increased in the past 4 years. It has increased, especially against children in schools.”

Syrian man, Ankara

‘Mutual respect and trust are necessary for the social cohesion in the society.’

In contrast, certain employees viewed working conditions more positively. They expressed satisfaction with their employers by highlighting the significance of developing relationships based on mutual respect and trust. These employees perceived their working conditions as fair and non-exploitative due to timely and satisfactory payments, good treatment, equal treatment with other Turkish employees, and being taken care of by their employers. Furthermore, some employees who lacked insurance did not voice their complaints as they believed that Turkish workers did not have insurance either, making the terms equal and non-exploitative. Still, interviews revealed that **perceptions of social cohesion were based on personal experiences and rumours shared across social networks.**

“

“I get my advance payment every day when I work overtime. When I have a health problem, my daily wage is not cut off.

I would even like to give an example. My daughter had an accident 3 weeks ago. There are 12 staff here, my boss immediately went to the hospital with me. He waited with me at the hospital for 5 hours. Here, the staff could not continue to work, the work stopped, but my employer came and stayed with me. I've been living here for 8 years, everyone knows me, we get along very well, I wish everyone was like this.”

Syrian man, Ankara

Some ESN recipients working informally reported good relationships with their Turkish bosses and co-workers, while others said they isolated themselves from Turkish society to avoid conflicts, especially those who did not speak Turkish. This points to a trend of avoidance as opposed to cohesion, and the perception that social cohesion is personality-based and driven by individuals; as one interviewee noted, “if the employer is a ‘good person’ they make the effort” to integrate refugee employees (interview). Finally, a Syrian ESN recipient that mentioned workplace harassment, including physical altercations, said these incidents occurred without repercussions – Syrians returned to work there because they could not find other, better opportunities. He noted that harassment was more likely to happen in smaller businesses, family-run or informal, that are not considered “professional places” (interview).

Vocational chamber representatives also reflected on the inconsistent and personality-driven elements that influenced social cohesion in the workplace. While some chambers expressed an openness to hiring foreigners, as “there should be no strict nationality” (Kayseri, carpentry), they also confirmed that tensions persist between Turkish and foreign workers, especially with Syrians because of their sheer numbers. Language appeared to play an important role in perceptions of integration.



“I have been living in Konya for 4 years. It's good for me to live here because people here have a better view of refugees than other provinces”

Syrian man, Konya

The shoemaking chamber in Konya noted that most refugees were from Aleppo, and they already spoke Turkish, “so there is no language difficulty, no adaptation difficulty. Why? Because Konya is really an Ansar, a hospitable place” (interview). ESSN recipients living in Konya also shared the same perspective of Konya’s hospitality. Still, employers recognise the potential backlash of increasing the visibility of foreign workers, especially with regards to wage levels and Turkish unemployment. The shoemaking chamber in Bursa explained, “In a competitive environment, informal workers face backlash from local people. Local people do not like the fact that informal workers open shops and do not pay taxes” (interview).



Collective bargaining: shifting the power imbalance?

Two chambers, both in Konya, reported that Syrian refugees use their power in numbers and the lack of staff to coerce employers into improving working conditions or increasing wages.

“Syrians worked a little cheaper. Of course, until today. But now they don't work for less money either. They have wised up too. They want their rights too. Then, if one of them has something bad, if one of them has a conflict with the employer, they organize the others and they quit work collectively. Twenty people, all twenty of them leave”
(Tailoring)

“Syrians... learned that we are in a difficult situation, that we cannot find intermediate staff. Therefore, they say ‘they pay me this much money, I will leave here.’ You know, since he knows that the master needs him, he misuses this advantage. The master says okay, I'll give you whatever you want. He gives him a raise to stay.”
(Welding & Auto Repair)

Even in sectors with many foreigners working informally, chambers foresaw that “foreigners accepting low wages causes problems later” (Manisa, interview). Indeed, the Turkish GDP per capita has declined since the start of the Syrian conflict, from US\$ 11,200 in 2011 to US\$ 8,600 in 2020 – US\$ 8,200 if Syrians are included (Demirci and Kırdar, 2021; Erdoğan, Kirişçi, and Uysal, 2021).

There was little evidence of outright bias in hiring foreigners, but employers with bad experiences may spread rumours; one bad (or good) story was often enough to form opinions. Some of the same chambers reflecting positively on refugee employment also made the following statements:

- “They [refugees] don't correct their mistakes, take the easy way out, don't do what they are told, become defiant when warned, and especially in delicate tasks, they do a shoddy job so we can't achieve the desired results” (Adana)
- “They [refugees] come to work late, that is, they don't obey the rules, they don't obey the hours, they come every day with an excuse, and they want to leave work a little early and they always have a problem with accommodation, they constantly take leave” (Konya)

Despite the negative perceptions towards refugees, some employers reflected more positively on refugee engagement in the workforce and their contributions, especially in sectors where they bring experience from their home countries. The chamber for hairdressing in Konya noted that “there is something seriously wrong in the way we, as citizens, look at these people. Everyone is doing this, reacting to a Syrian. They react to an Afghan. As long as they are decent and honest, they are also human beings. There should be no discrimination based on language, religion or race, we should only look at them as human beings” (interview). Another chamber saw foreign workers as a positive counterbalance to Turkish society “modernising” and sending girls to study. The shoemaking chamber in Bursa highlighted the professional benefits of refugee integration, noting that “we can see things we haven't done before. They add tools” (interview). Ultimately, trust and personal experience were big factors in both ESSN recipient and chambers’ perspectives on social cohesion and whether they considered workplace integration positive or negative.



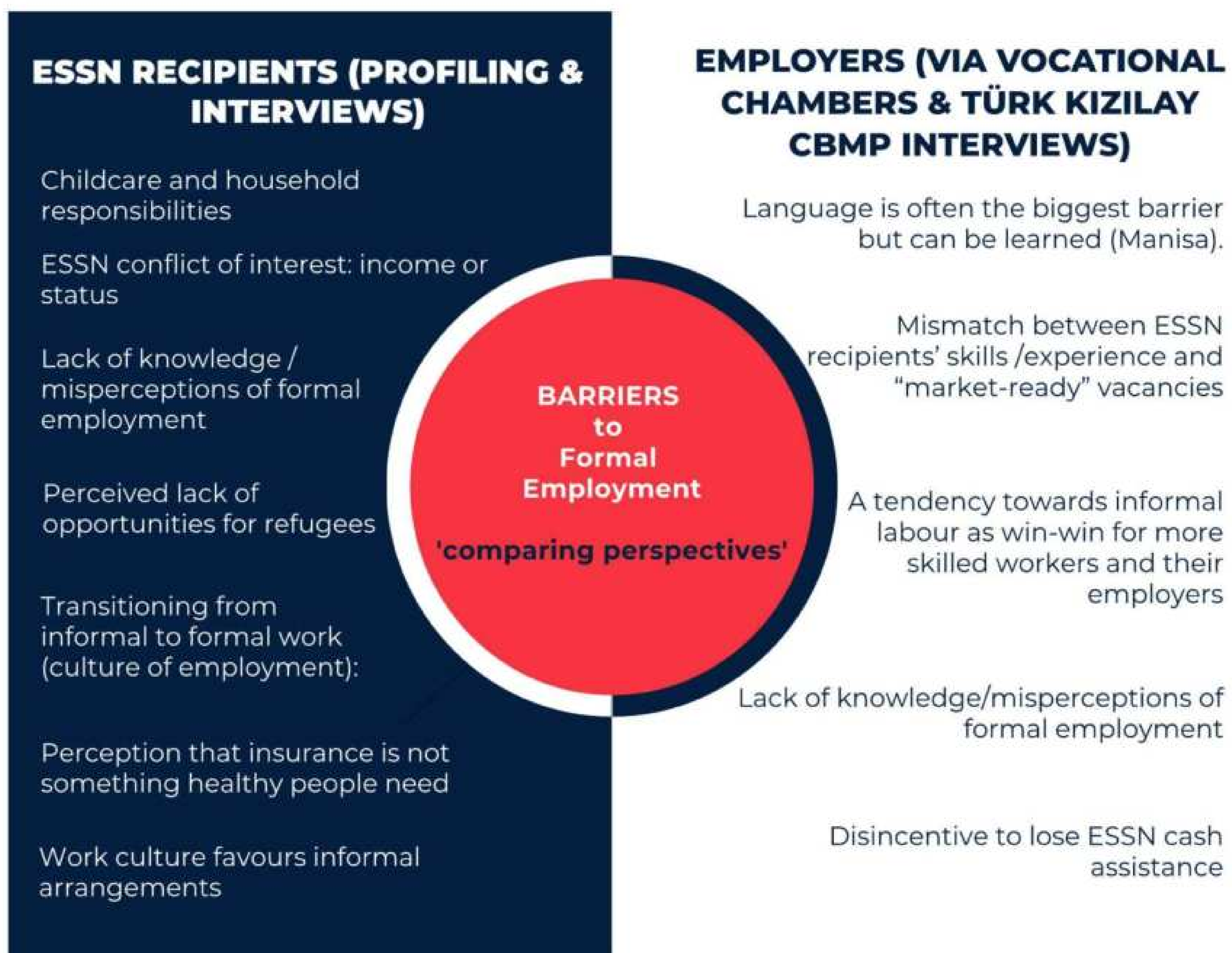
Barriers & Challenges For Refugee Employment Pathways

Livelihood Study: **Barrier to working**



Other barriers to working

- Processes necessary to obtain work permits
- need for Turkish guarantors and substantial financial resources
- Difficulty obtaining a travel permit
- Fear of being sent back to their home country or relocated to another country
- Bureaucratic hurdles and financial requirements



Nearly 61% of the profiled ESSN recipients said they have barriers to working, with the most cited reason being children that need care at home, followed by general "household responsibilities" and 54 people mentioning physical issues. This means that 88% of women said they face barriers in working, compared to only 25,5% of men. Only a handful of people reported that psychosocial factors affected employment motivations: social tensions, desire to return, living with an injury, etc.

Knowledge is a key barrier. Both employers and ESSN recipients alike had misconceptions and inconsistent understandings of what formal employment entailed for foreigners in Türkiye, as well as the processes necessary to obtain work permits. The fact that "temporary permits are linked to specific employers and can initially be issued for one year only" make it difficult for people to understand what rules and processes apply in their case (Skribeland, 2023).

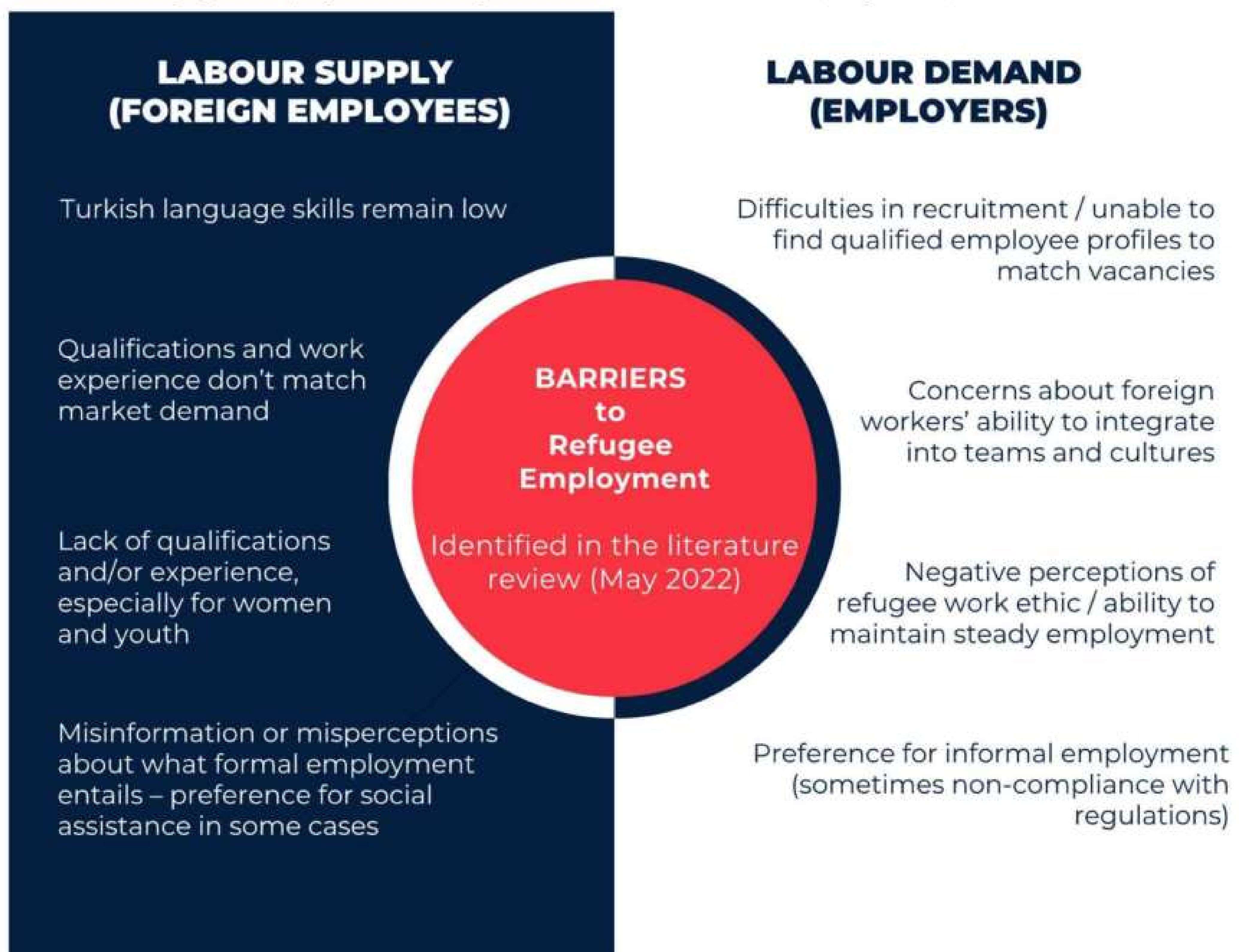
There may have also been misunderstandings on the part of refugees as to what was required to be registered with a vocational chamber. The chamber of hairdressing in Konya noted that their sector did not require people to present a “certificate of mastery,” which many people do not have, but that several foreigners had told the chamber this was why they had not registered (interview).

However, the interviews conducted with ESN recipients shed light on some other aspects of the barriers they have faced. Few of them expressed a desire to travel for work purposes, either to find employment in another province or to open their own businesses. However, they faced several obstacles in obtaining the necessary permits, including long wait times and a need for Turkish guarantors and substantial financial resources. For example, one Syrian man from Adana noted that travel restrictions were preventing him from obtaining a job in another province, as there were no available positions in his current location. Another Syrian man from Adana mentioned that he was having difficulty obtaining a travel permit to sell his goods in Istanbul, and that the wait time for his application was causing him to miss business opportunities. Similarly, a Syrian man from Manisa expressed frustration with the exemption permit system, which he believed was preventing him from traveling to find work in different regions of Türkiye. He noted that despite opportunities to work in other areas, he was unable to obtain the necessary permits to travel and take advantage of these opportunities.

Few of them acknowledged during interviews that they had not originally intended to remain in Türkiye for an extended period. Consequently, they sought short-term employment opportunities. Nevertheless, their prolonged stay in the country was incompatible with their short-term plans and hindered their ability to access higher-quality job opportunities. In addition, some interviewees who were granted international protection noted that their residence permits were often limited to one or two years, and their spouses may not be granted permission to stay with them. As a result, these individuals faced a constant fear of being sent back to their home country or relocated to another country, which restricted their ability to pursue better job opportunities. Moreover, employers may have been hesitant to hire them due to the uncertainty surrounding their legal status. These barriers may be due to a variety of factors, including bureaucratic hurdles and financial requirements, and may have prevented individuals from fully utilizing their skills and potential in the Turkish labour market.

The study’s findings on barriers align with what the literature review revealed to be key factors pre-earthquake, albeit with less emphasis on the work culture mismatch from refugees’ perspectives and responsibilities that prevent women from working that study participants underlined in the consultations.

Table 6. Barriers to refugee employment identified in the literature review (May 2022)



- Work permit constraints
- Case management difficult to scale
- Degree validation / recognition challenges
- Training and programme limitations
- Lower economic absorption capacity due to the COVID-19 global pandemic

Finally, the current humanitarian crisis and economic situation compounded by the most recent disaster is a significant barrier to creating or expanding productive livelihood pathways. Entire cities and sectors are wiped out and reports of increasing population movements between regions and across the border into Syria make it extremely difficult to facilitate transitions to formal employment for refugees in Türkiye.

Opportunities to strengthen livelihood pathways for refugees

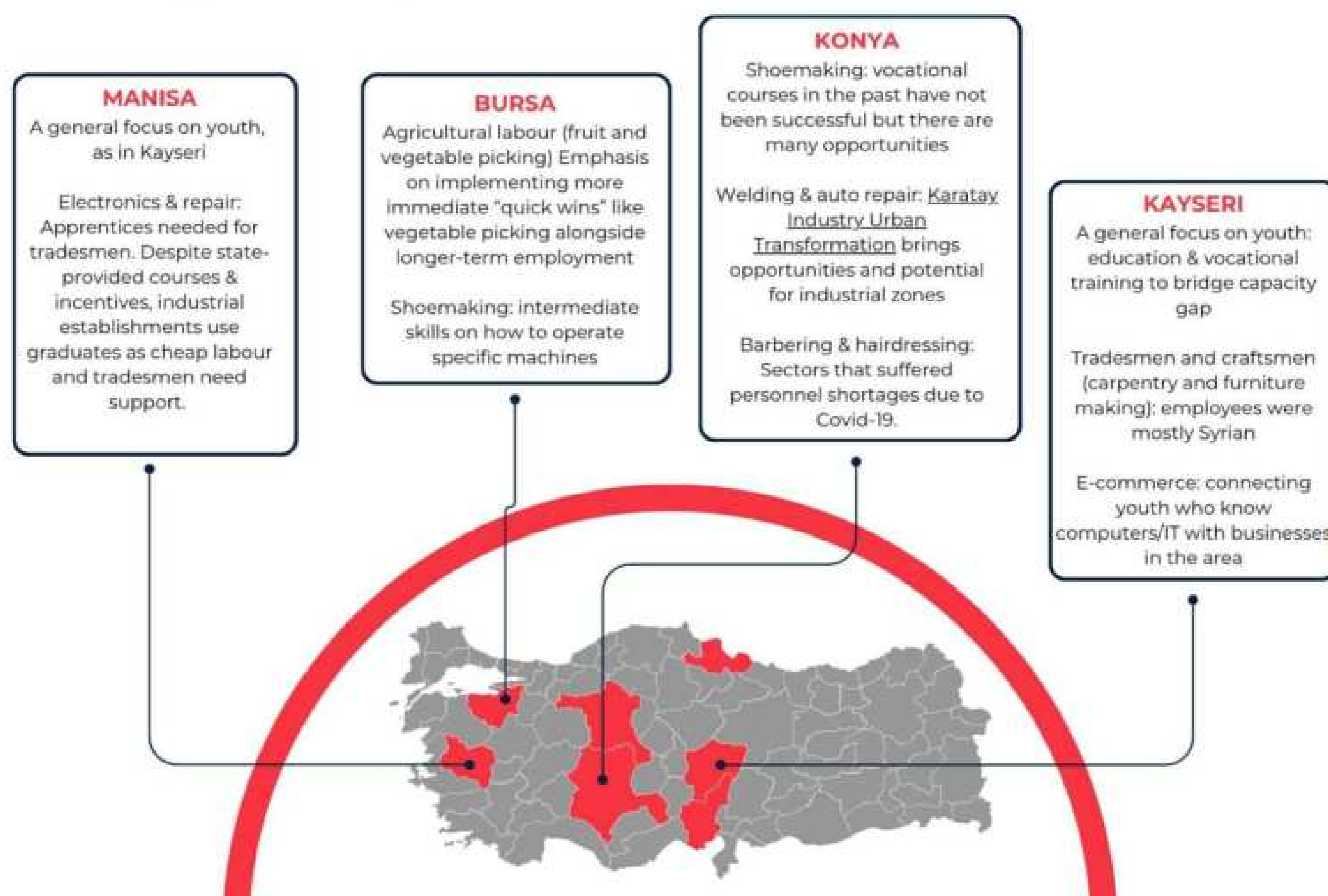
Vocational chambers could be one of several productive channels to connect refugees to training, upskilling, and employment opportunities, provided there are financial incentives. Companies wanted to receive monetary incentives to see clear advantages, such as payment of insurance fees or direct financial incentives to companies to employ foreigners. Chamber representatives in Bursa and Adana noted that they could be a complementary channel to İŞKUR since many industries find their own employees.

Livelihood actors and chamber representatives alike recommended focusing support on sectors that hire more people on a larger scale and where Turks are employed formally, such as furniture, textiles, etc. They saw smaller businesses in less regulated sectors, like greengrocers, as a greater challenge, as explored in the incentivization section below. Chambers also recommended to:

- Implement more **immediate quick wins alongside longer-term employment** support (Bursa)
- **Focus on youth.** As the electronics VC in Manisa suggested, “There should be incentives to train the immigrant youth here. There is no guarantee that the young will stay here in the future, but for the adults it too late to invest, there are still opportunities for young people” (interview). This was echoed by the barbering and hairdressing VC in Kayseri.

Vocational chambers in 4 of the 7 provinces

suggested opportunities for refugees in specific sectors



The sectors and skills desired by profiled ESSN recipients broadly reflect these opportunities.

Key informants noted that in 2022 the referrals of ESSN recipients to the Community Centres has improved in terms of identifying and referring “market ready” individuals. Yet the current SEE programmes cannot ‘absorb’ ESSN recipients – people will need to be accompanied in a different way in order to successfully meet their goals. Key informants that work directly on livelihoods referrals say that “market ready” ESSN recipient profiles more closely resemble non-ESSN recipients in terms of motivation, capacity to work, work experience or particular skillsets, but they have fallen on hard times which is why they are eligible for cash assistance. It is therefore possible to integrate them into existing processes (see box below for a description of the current process).

In contrast, most LH referrals for ESSN recipients are difficult to move past the initial stages of enrolling in a skills course or even following through with a connection to an employer, which is frustrating to all the team members consulted. One key informant described an example of this: “We talked with an employer, the person [ESSN recipient] was a good fit for the interview, they wanted to go, but last minute they changed their mind. They said they didn’t want to insult us by refusing to be referred so they wouldn’t lose opportunities with us in the future. This group [of people] is highly vulnerable, so long-term decision making is scary – shortcuts seem more profitable.”

CBMP livelihoods case management + links to ESSN referrals

When an individual approaches the CBMP team or is referred through ESSN channels, they begin with profiling the individual, which leads to the following process: Profiling → check motivation to work → identify sectors where they want to work → assess profile and what they need to work in that sector.

Based on the person’s profiles and needs, they receive the following support and services:

1. Job search
2. Turkish language course
3. Vocational training in desired and available sector (if available): “employment guaranteed” (KII)
4. Soft skills training: orientation on working culture in Türkiye, CVs, interviewing, labour laws, etc.
5. Job placement
6. Work permit facilitation (fee paid by Türk Kızılay)

Some people approach the centres with what teams call a “zero profile,” meaning “they are not ready in any sense” and must start from step 1 (KII). Other profiles have different starting points – they may speak Turkish or are already working but need soft skills training to ease their integration. The steps above are tailored to the person’s situations and needs, but each step is critical to ensuring a sustainable job placement. It can be difficult to complete all the necessary steps without a clear motivation to find and retain employment.

Referred people who do not want to work or cannot because of other constraints (most commonly childcare or other family obligations) may not even be selected to enter the programme due to CBMP’s performance metrics. This is because **CBMP livelihoods’ success is based on how many people they “guide to employment and who succeed in finding it”** (KII). The target group are “vulnerable people who are seeking jobs to improve their lives” – which implies an inherent and essential motivation as the starting point, and the capacity to participate in courses and job placements that necessitate time and prioritisation for consistent attendance. In contrast, ESSN referrals are based on the number of referrals and not whether a job placement occurs. This means many ESSN referrals will not proceed beyond the profiling step if people are contacted by CBMP, but they are not interested in pursuing job opportunities.

As of the fall of 2022 (October), external referrals broadly took two forms:

1. Referrals to livelihoods programmes, which include a range of technical and transferrable skills (e.g., language or soft skills)
2. Referrals to job placements (via İŞKUR)

Key informants mentioned there were very few external livelihoods referrals for ESN recipients to other LH Programmes– and if they occurred, they were ad-hoc and based on personal initiatives of ESN/CBMP teams or refugees themselves, as they were not tracked systematically or in a streamlined way between provinces. There were also no memorandums of understanding (MoU) in place between Türk Kızılay teams and external livelihood actors to facilitate more systematic external referrals, partly due to data protection laws in place. This also made it difficult to share these opportunities directly with the ESN caseload to spark interest or enrol people in the relevant programmes. Since these consultations, the ESN Programme designed a pilot project in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to improve external referrals (described below).

The consultations revealed four overarching factors that enabled successful referrals of ESN recipients towards livelihoods pathways:

1. Referrals were higher in provinces with Community Centres and a higher capacity to identify the appropriate opportunities and absorb people into existing courses.
 2. Referrals via personal connections work well – when the motivation to work is already present and the contact person within the centre knows of relevant opportunities.
 3. Regular knowledge exchanges between teams is crucial. Field reports contain excellent and relevant information on LH opportunities in different locations; when shared with field teams across departments, this increases their knowledge and ability to make effective referrals (although this currently remains on an ad-hoc basis).
 4. Successful referrals are those where the person’s “wishes are fulfilled” and their needs met through existing referral processes and support programmes.
- Work permit support was seen as successful by IFRC and Türk Kızılay teams: when people are already working but want to apply for a permit and need consultation on the process.
 - Skills training: when individuals have a straightforward need or preference and the solution is available, such as wanting to learn Turkish, referrals are successful.
 - One key informant noted that when they try to follow up the language course with vocational training to refer the person to employers, it is difficult to ensure they complete the steps towards gainful employment if motivation is lacking or the person faces challenges that prevent them from fully participating, such as childcare constraints.

Challenges & barriers to effective referrals

Internal challenges	External barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across key informants and documents summarising the challenges with livelihoods referrals, all sources noted that there are no defined procedures for referring cases. If SOPs exist, many teams are unaware, specifically for selection criteria to identify suitable individuals for the SEE Programme. • KILs feel that field teams don’t have comprehensive information about what livelihood staff do and what types of services or support are available in a given area. • As outlined above, CBMP’s livelihood objectives centre on supporting people to be gainfully employed. As such, those unwilling and unable to work do not pass SEE Programme screening processes – which is the majority of ESN recipients. • The internal referral processes and tools are not fit for purpose, and teams are not comfortable for referrals / their systems are not set up for them beyond people who are “market ready.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IFRC teams note that “refugees do not want to attend the courses since they think their ESN aid would cut because they will work with insurance (SGK). Therefore, this situation prevents refugees to attend livelihood programmes” (KILs). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The well-documented issue of refugees not understanding what formal employment entails in Türkiye continues to be a barrier to refugee employment in Türkiye (see the LH Pathways Study Inception Report). This is a particularly pronounced challenge for ESN recipients due to the financial security and perceived status ESN cash assistance provides. • The main entry point for SEE referrals are the community centres, which attract many women who are not interested or able to pursue LH opportunities. The centre opening hours also mean people who are working informally are less likely to be able to approach Türk Kızılay teams – so they may be unaware of or unable to access LH opportunities or the support services available to them.

Challenges & barriers to effective referrals

Internal challenges	External barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal reviews suggest expanding the scope of SEE referrals to people approaching the centres for other issues such as requesting additional financial assistance or in-kind support. Yet this would be at odds with CBMP processes that seek to identify motivated individuals and do not currently have programmes geared towards those unwilling to seek formal employment.• There seems to be a lack of clarity amongst teams between the number of referrals and the types of referrals: currently a “referral” is a catch-all term to mean that an ESN recipient is directed towards LH teams.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A high referral rate may not equal successful referrals as defined by CBMP (access to formal employment). For example, an ESN document noted a high referral rate in Izmir, which a key informant then described as a challenging province for job placements because ESN recipients there are unsure of whether they intend to stay in the area.• Questions around the average / appropriate time to refer cases and how to follow them up were also raised by key informants.• An IFRC document noted that there is a lack of funding to create new courses geared towards different target groups that may need other types of support than what is currently on offer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many I/NGOs and public institutions do not know which organisations provide livelihood programmes. The lack of MOUs with external LH actors means that teams feel they must start from nothing in identifying opportunities – a process that can vary per centre and individual staff member.• Posting available employment opportunities is very clearly the remit of İŞKUR, and a portal that lists job vacancies could be seen as duplicating the work of İŞKUR.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the focus remains on sharing information about livelihood programmes and includes links to the relevant İŞKUR sites, this could be feasible – but has not been consolidated at interagency level, which makes it difficult for TRC teams to identify an entry point.• The overall economic situation in Türkiye, the region, and globally is not conducive to finding appropriate opportunities for vulnerable foreigners, particularly refugees.

INCENTIVIZATION MODELS & IDEAS

The key informant interviews on referrals were conducted in September and October 2022; since then, the ESN Programme has connected more directly with specialised livelihoods actors in Türkiye, such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), to better connect ESN recipients with livelihoods programmes and incentivization schemes in the area. In early 2023 the ESN and ILO launched a pilot programme to refer 200+ ESN recipients to ILO’s [KIGEP Programme](#) (interview). The programme identified employers who wanted to formalise refugee employees and provided work permit costs, a contribution to the social security premium, and partial coverage of the employee’s salary for 6 months (2,000 TRY per month). As noted by key informants, one of the main challenges to effective referrals was circumnavigating data sharing restrictions – so instead of referring aid recipients, the ESN Programme referred names of employers who wanted to formalise refugees within their workforce.

Programmes like KIGEP showed promising results. An impact assessment in 2020 revealed that since 2017, more than 20.000 employees and 2.000 employers benefitted from the programme; 86% of the employees formalised through KIGEP continued working formally, either with the same employer or another company (ILO, 2020, [online](#)). This is particularly striking considering that over 90% of employees who participated had their first experience with formal employment through the KIGEP Programme (interview). As with employers, it has been difficult for organisations specialised in livelihoods programmes to understand which refugees are ESN recipients, particularly as programme parameters and the creation of the C-ESN have shifted eligibility and caseloads.

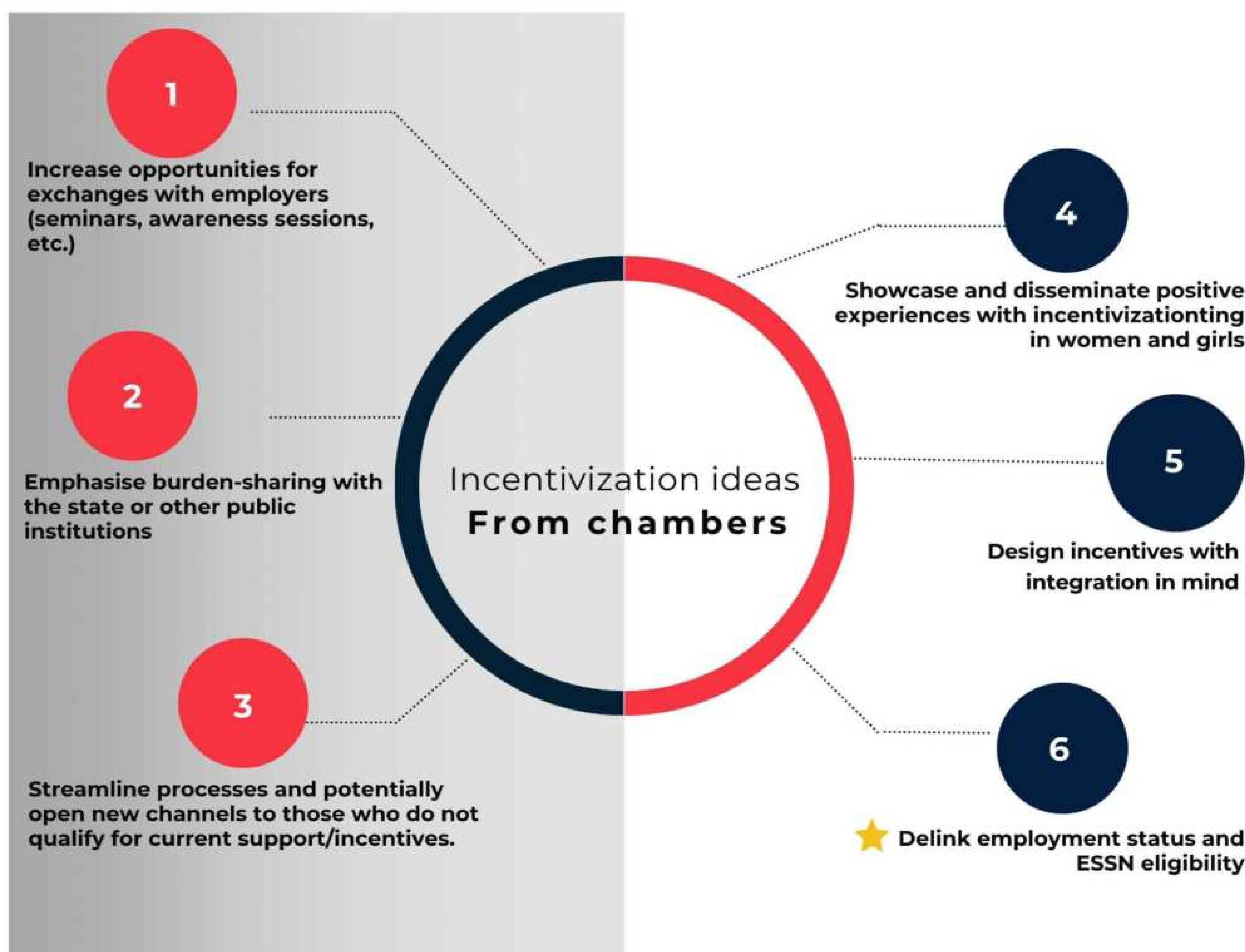
Several factors appeared to influence the programme’s success. An ILO Programme team mentioned that technical support on work permit processes was sometimes more important than financial incentives for employers, given the confusing processes. Türk Kızılay CBMP teams reported similar successes when they facilitated work permits for refugees via the SEE Programmes (interviews). The ILO also noted that most of the companies with whom they collaborate are small to medium enterprises that are well-connected to bigger suppliers, not micro-enterprises or employers that need to be “convinced” of the benefits of formal employment (interview).

This echoed feedback from ESSN recipients working informally, as well as the vocational chambers – the common factor for successful labour market integration was identifying employers established enough to see the benefits of formal employment, but who needed support in formalising the foreigners in their workforce. In Kayseri, the chamber for tradesmen noted that it was worth investing in connecting foreigners to larger companies, potentially with an interim/probation period – he said these companies might be reluctant to hire a “random person, and that they sought “workers with a certain level of adaptation” to the working environment such as following instructions, learning Turkish, etc. (interview).

Vocational chambers also offered lessons learned from formalising previously informal sectors, or recommended incentivizing shifts to new ways of working. For example, in Konya hairdressing was predominantly informal prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The vocational chamber representative noted that “During the pandemic process, [workers] started to be formalized when some inspections started. Because the chambers do not have the authority to inspect, there is no formalization. With the support of the Ministry of Finance and the municipality, people can be formalized through inspections” (interview). In Bursa, the shoemaking chamber mentioned that they faced tensions between formal and informal workers, and sectors like theirs could benefit from incentives to shift to formality, whether awareness-based or financial. The representative referenced mechanisms like tradesman’s bail loans that businesses could use to pay off social insurance debts, which could be available to a wider group of applicants.

Finally, broader questions remain as to the longer-term benefits of formal employment for refugees – **they are expected to contribute to social security insurance but cannot receive a pension and cannot transfer their benefits to another country if they move**, according to the ILO (interview). This can make it difficult to convince refugees who do not know if they will remain in Türkiye that formal employment is worth the level of effort required.

Incentivization Ideas From Vocational Chambers



Companies are ultimately profit-driven entities, and therefore want to understand the financial benefits or incentives available to them if they make what is considered “extra” effort to employ foreigners. Despite differences between sectors in terms of their priorities, their challenges, and the prevalence (or lack) of foreigners working and informal labour, many of the vocational chamber representatives made similar suggestions on how to improve pathways to formal labour for refugees.

- **Increase opportunities for exchanges with employers (seminars, awareness sessions, etc.):** More seminars or events can be done for employers to receive updated information and raise their awareness, which in turn can lead to more harmonised referral pathways.]

- Example of successful seminar from furniture makers in Konya: “In the seminars, we invite representatives from many institutions such as İŞKUR, Kottüm, KOSGEB, MEVKA, Türk Kızılay, Insurance and we talk about how to employ workers and under what conditions they can get these workers. Many workers' insurance is covered by the state. The state pays for six months. Since it offers such opportunities, people are now a little more conscious. They call our chamber to see if there is a staff and apply to İŞKUR. They get support from KOSGEB. They get support like this. They get support from the Red Crescent. They write projects, so now, with the consciousness of our colleagues, they no longer find workers just by telling each other like in the past. They resort to different methods.”

- The shoemaking chamber in Konya added: “We would be much more satisfied if public institutions inform employers on this issue. If the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management, tax office, insurance, etc., if İŞKUR works on these issues, we would be glad if they organize conferences, panels, and informational meetings. Our chamber has a place in the shoemakers' industry. We also have a big conference hall within the vocational high school there. It can hold three hundred people. If you make such presentations and hold such meetings, we will host you. I am speaking for all public institutions, not only to you as the Red Crescent, but for all public institutions.”

- **Emphasise burden-sharing with the state or other public institutions.** The chambers provided interesting framing of the issues to communicate the benefits of formal employment to employers: “When a person is informal, it does not provide any income to our state. Here, I think it is important to provide these opportunities and to change the perspective of the families in order to refer young people to craftsmanship” (Adana, interview).

- Manisa, electronics: “An unregistered employee is a human being after all. If there is a work accident, we commit the biggest crime by employing someone without insurance.”
- Bursa, auto repair: “The incentives of the state are important at this point. It is good to train apprentices from high school and make them journeymen, and one of the reasons that prevent informality is that apprentices receive incentives through İŞKUR.”
- Bursa, weaving: “Some of the assistance should be given to the employer. Not personal aid, but institutional aid, so that the worker is formalised.”

- **Streamline processes and potentially open new channels** to those who do not qualify for current support/ incentives. It was especially important for them to ensure consistency across incentives, so employers perceived programmes as fair. The chamber of industry in Adana suggested providing clear incentives to employers in the form of salary (max 6 months) and insurance, while ensuring this support was standardised across funds. Other examples in Bursa included:

- Bursa, weaving: “SSI is burdensome for everyone. It would be good if the government reduced this, made the procedures a little easier. SSI support, work permit support, these supports are good. No tradesmen who cannot fulfil KOSGEB support conditions can benefit from KOSGEB.”

- Bursa, shoemaking: “We want to see simple aid schemes for employers. ‘Register 5 foreigners and I will support you.’”



- **Showcase and disseminate positive experiences with incentivization.** Programme successes and testimonials from employers who had positive experiences formalising foreign workers should be shared widely to inspire others to formalise, as well as generate new programme ideas. At the same time, it was key to analyse failures and share learning to avoid mistakes in the future.
 - Kayseri, tradesmen: “The Skilled Hands project is the best example of these incentives. In order to encourage the employment of people with certified professional skills, the cost of obtaining a work permit and 10% of the employer’s insurance premiums and gross salaries of the people to be employed will be covered by the project budget for a maximum of 6 months during the project period. Just like in this project, financial incentives and projects that facilitate the formal employment processes of individuals can be increased. Thus, formal employment, which will become a source of motivation for the employer, even if the worker does not want it. If there is a consensus among all employers in this sense, workers will have to choose formal employment in order to participate in the economy.”
 - Manisa, stallholders (market vendors): “Afghan [vendors] registered in the chamber have Bağkur (insurance for self-employment), it means they fulfil their legal obligations.”
 - Kayseri, craftsmen: “UNDP is promoting carpentry and furniture making apprenticeship schools for foreigners in the southeast region, but many families and young people are not aware of these opportunities.”
 - Adana, agriculture: “There are very few people who attend the training programme and even fewer who go on to find employment opportunities in the agricultural sector, so it is important to investigate why.”
- **Design incentives with integration in mind.** Chambers were cognizant of potential tensions related to employment incentives and recommended that livelihood actors consider integration when designing programmes and determining incentivization models. This included leniency for employers attempting to formalise their workforce and may unconsciously violate regulations. It was equally important not to give perception that foreigners were prioritised over Turkish workers.
 - In Adana, the chamber of industry offered two suggestions: “Pair foreigners together if one doesn’t speak Turkish so they can communicate better. Incentives must be proportional to Turkish benefits so as not to cause social tensions.”
 - Bursa, shoemaking: “There are also Turks who employ most of their employees without formalization. There is a weekly system, which creates problems in directing to formal employment. A new monthly system is being introduced. It is obligatory to show the expenses of unregistered employees, it will raise awareness.”
 - Konya, furniture making: “Employers actually do not need support, but they need compassion. The personnel who come to the inspection should approach more consciously, not in terms of punishment, but if they talk to the employers in the sense of conversation and explain what needs to be done. People are no longer like before, no one wants to employ informal workers like this.”
- **Delink employment status and ESN eligibility.** The ESN Programme was in the process of removing the ESN eligibility requirement that no household member could be working prior to the earthquake. Vocational chamber representatives were unaware of this shift yet recommended that the social assistance refugees received should not prevent them from working formally, or it would continue to discourage them from registering. If this programme adaptation goes forward in 2023, it will be critical to provide consistent information and clear communication across multiple channels to the numerous groups concerned so everyone is well informed (refugees, employers, livelihood actors, local public institutions, etc.).

RECOMMENDATIONS & ROADMAP

The current humanitarian crisis and economic situation compounded by the most recent disaster is a significant barrier to creating or expanding productive livelihood pathways. Entire cities and sectors are wiped out and reports of increasing population movements between regions and across the border into Syria make it extremely difficult to facilitate transitions to formal employment for refugees in Türkiye. The roadmap below attempts to mitigate some of these challenges.

Directions For Engagement: ESSN Transition Roadmap

The proposed roadmap below integrates recommendations from the TPM as well as the LH Pathways Study, but also considers the new realities in southern Türkiye post-earthquake. As such, the roadmap emphasises layered or “tiered” approaches to create modular solutions based on people’s priority needs, institutional priorities, and available resources (funding and staffing). As outlined in the LH Task Team post-EQ update and revised roadmap, as well as internal Türk Kızılay assessments in February and March 2023, **temporary employment to aid the recovery and reconstruction efforts will be crucial**. The ESSN Programme could consider leveraging its extensive registration database to allow ESSN Programme participants to “opt in” for a temporary employment scheme that could rapidly refer available workers to short-term employment opportunities (whether Cash for Work or other programmes). In this way, interested ESSN participants could be identified to participate in relevant initiatives, regardless of if/where they move to within Türkiye. Please see Priority 4 for ideas on how to include women who may not be interested in the traditional manual labour associated with recovery efforts.



Recommended priority	What it means	Timeframe / urgency
<p>1. Layered approach to cash assistance to meet basic needs (income supplementation model – see LH Pathways Study Inception Report)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delinking ESSN aid & employment is a priority for nearly all stakeholders consulted through both studies. The scale-up of cash assistance to people affected by the EQ is a key part of the humanitarian response but will also mean a greater scale for transition to self-reliance (LH 3RP Task Team). • It will be crucial to include Turks affected by the earthquake in caseloads (social cohesion), or to ensure they are covered by parallel programmes. • If transfer values cannot be adapted or must align with Turkish social assistance payments, consider varying the length of assistance or aggregating payments (providing lump sums) to meet needs while harmonising with social assistance amounts. • Clear communication with all parties involved to ensure transparency and a consistent understanding of eligibility and entitlements (see also ESSN shock-responsive report). 	<p>Immediate term</p> <p>Consider 6-month transition period</p>
<p>2. A tiered approach to referrals: Strengthening internal capacity & adapting services to specific subsets of the ESSN caseload (See below for further details)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LH Pathways Study deep-dive into referrals offers a more comprehensive overview of the tiered recommendations from October 2022, which could still be relevant in the post-emergency (EQ recovery) phase. They are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Strengthen knowledge + systems: with the aims of improving internal capacity to profile participants, design and manage referrals to SEE opportunities, as well as bolster links to external, specialised LH actors. b. Expand network + knowledge sharing: a plan to diversify entry points to identifying ESSN participants interested in employment, as well as improve communication across LH stakeholder groups (including information sharing across Türk Kızılay/IFRC departments). c. Adapt support + services per recipient group: adjusting the CBMP LH referrals process to better respond to challenges faced by ESSN recipients working informally, to formalise their employment. d. Incentivise motivation away from ESSN assistance (to the extent possible post-EQ): accompanying ESSN recipients in the referrals process to improve skillsets or connect with LH opportunities can incentivise more people to seek work, alongside delinking cash assistance eligibility from employment status. e. Monitor results incrementally to avoid “all or nothing” referral pitfalls: monitoring intermediate actions in the referrals process, e.g., types of information requests, can help ESSN teams follow incremental progress and identify potential bottlenecks in the referral process. 	<p>Post-EQ emergency phase</p> <p>Consider 1–3-year plan to put the approach in place</p>

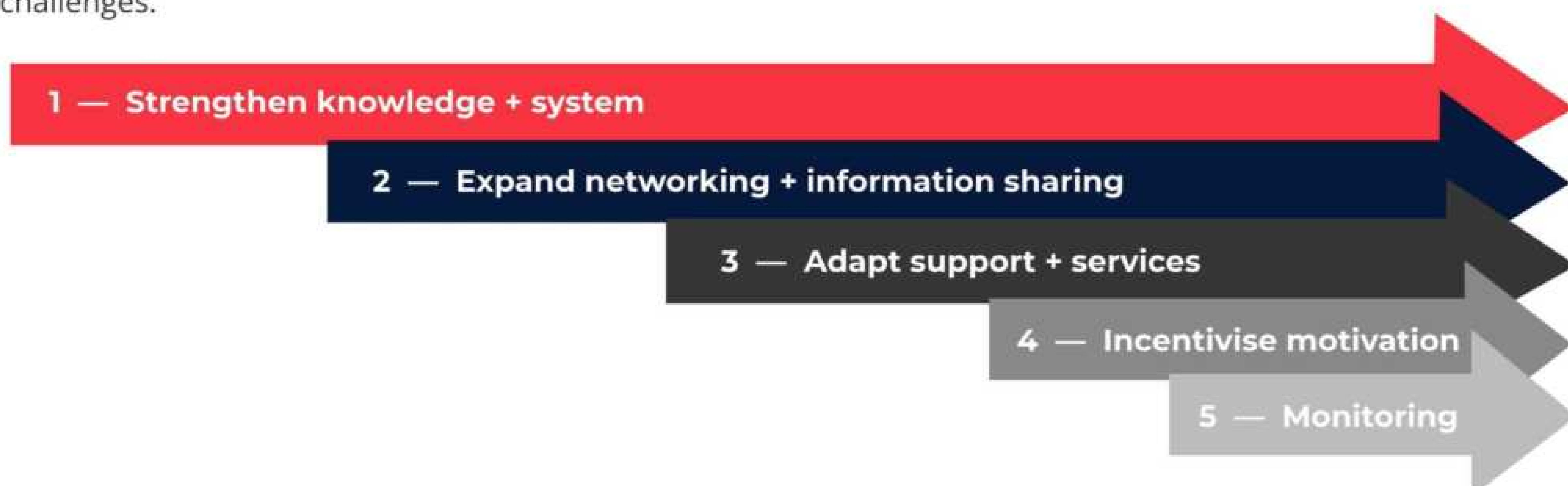
Recommended priority	What it means	Timeframe / urgency
<p>3. Area-based engagement with employers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. EQ relief-based employment b. Partnerships with employers based on coherent / consistent incentivisation models c. Youth “fast track” to key industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite the drastic changes in the context and labour market dynamics in southern Türkiye (well documented in the Türk Kızılay Field Study report from early March 2023), many of the recommendations from field teams and the vocational chambers consulted are still relevant and can be connected to activities aimed at boosting (temporary) employment during the EQ response. A key finding from both studies was the importance of focusing on province-level engagement to avoid a ‘one size fits all’ approach to identifying potential sectors for refugee employment and partnering with employers willing and able to formalise foreign workers. Partnerships via municipalities and/or vocational chambers can be useful entry points. • Recommendations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. EQ relief-based employment: Even prior to the EQ, employers recommended a dual focus on short-term gains as well as longer-term employee development. The current priorities are clearly to support EQ relief and recovery efforts, such as rebuilding accommodation facilities for workers highlighted in the recent Türk Kızılay report. b. Partnerships: Employers and specialised LH actors recommended a focus on medium to larger companies (as opposed to micro/small enterprises with fewer incentives and more barriers to formalising work). Employers also suggested that consistent incentivisation models, such as standard packages, would help disseminate positive experiences and encourage employers to partner with Türk Kızılay and other aid providers. c. Youth are a key demographic for employers with longer-term objectives of creating and sustaining a quality work force. While vocational chambers for electronics, barbering and hairdressing on fast-tracking youth in their sectors, other sectors linked to EQ rehabilitation efforts could also benefit from on-the-job apprenticeships. The ESSN would ideally refer youth to specific sectors in partnership with a specialised LH actor who could provide tailored follow up and support. 	<p>Post-EQ emergency phase</p>
<p>4. Investing in women and girls:</p> <p>development partnerships with a long-term approach to women’s integration in the labour market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many women who participated in the LH Pathways Study profiling were eager to engage in formal employment, but many did not have the relevant experience or ability to leave their household responsibilities. If women’s involvement in the job market continues to be a priority, longer-term planning is required to ensure they can successfully integrate. Pathways focused on women should be connected to Priority 3 (area-based engagement with employers) to find the most appropriate sectors that match working preferences and skills (see profiling) with industries seeking employees, through partnerships with specialised LH actors. In the immediate term, women can be linked to local relief efforts and offered short-term/part-time employment opportunities (including Cash for Work) in community mobilisation, distributions, production of relief items, food services, cleaning, group activities for children, etc. Any initiative should also consider facilitate access to childcare if needed. 	<p>Immediate term (next 6 months): EQ efforts</p> <p>Long term (3-5 years+): development plan</p>

Recommended priority	What it means	Timeframe / urgency
5. Ways of working: a people-centred, Türk Kızılay-led model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TPM findings and the subsequent LH Pathway interviews on referrals offer a wealth of perspectives from ESSN stakeholders on the ways of working under ESSN III, which can inform structures and processes going forward. As the ESSN Programme adapts to the new challenges post-EQ, the transition towards SEE and LH pathways can consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A network or “<u>hub and spoke</u>” approach to managing and referring SEE support: whereby Türk Kızılay LH profiling is the central “hub” interfacing with ESSN recipients, and can call upon specialised “spokes” to provide services/programmes tailored to specific sectors or target groups (see Priorities 2 and 3). The “spokes” could be internal Türk Kızılay departments (such as CBMP) or external providers, as relevant. Referrals, partnerships, and SEE Programme components can adapt based on contextual priorities, but the intake model for programme participants remains constant and ESSN teams can analyse data consistently over time. An area-based approach to community engagement via Türk Kızılay Community or Service Centres. Prioritising investment in capacity strengthening, information exchanges, and programme ownership for frontline teams engaging with affected people on a regular basis will enable those interacting with ESSN recipients, employers, and the wider community to connect people more consistently to SEE opportunities, as well as generate new ideas for pathways. This approach also links to Priority 2 on referrals. 	<p>Post-EQ emergency phase</p> <p>Consider 1–3-year plan to put this in place</p>

Proactive communication is the crucial first step and key thread across all the recommended priorities outlined above. Consistent and repeated communication was also a clear recommendation from the ESSN Shock-Responsive Study with regards to programme adjustments, a recommendation that should carry across all transition activities in these uncertain times. The ESSN Programme should work closely with its communication and advocacy colleagues at Türk Kızılay and IFRC to ensure the information content is coherent, consistent, disseminated across multiple channels and tailored to the relevant audiences as necessary.

Recommendations For ESSN Livelihood Referrals

The following recommendations centre on a tiered approach to livelihoods referrals for ESSN recipients, so it is easier for the ESSN Programme to categorise and track different types of referrals and ensure more systematic follow up, as well as establishing an external referral mechanism directly from the ESSN to other actors. They align with recommendations from the ESSN’s own analysis, and the interagency priorities articulated by the LH Task Team but are structured differently to encourage a sequenced approach to addressing the interrelated challenges.



	Recommendation	What it means + what needs to happen
1	<p>Strengthen knowledge + systems. Streamline LH knowledge + systems, internally and externally.</p> <p>This is the foundation for harmonised and effective referrals</p>	<p>Internally:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>1. Invest in team's abilities to do case management</u> As proposed by ESSN teams, this could include interviewing skills, case management, vocational coaching, etc. This would need to go beyond the ESSN LH focal points so that multiple people per province could perform these functions. <u>2. Disseminate existing SOPs on processes + streamline structures</u> Internal ESSN documents reveal that although the SOPs exist, many teams are unaware of them. A dissemination plan, including workshops/discussions with the relevant teams, can support this – ideally per geographic area so that different teams can come together and see how their roles and responsibilities connect and complement each other. <u>3. Identify a common platform for SEE content</u> Consider leveraging the Community Centre web pages on the CBMP site to share information on SEE courses, LH Programmes, and employment opportunities (including links to İŞKUR). Audiences would be IFRC/Türk Kızılay teams, and refugees / job seekers themselves. Teams could also reach out to LH actors per province to provide programme updates to post on the portal, with a QR code / link to webpage so people can link directly to sites. If this option isn't feasible, a "live document" (Google doc) with a standard format across locations could ease information sharing (which could include field report findings). <u>4. Develop tracking numbers as a referral minimum standard</u> The solution can be as high-tech or low-tech as needed but should overcome data sharing limitations. For example, an ESSN reference tracking # system that assigns a number to each person could get around data sharing concerns, because it can be sent via SMS or on paper and would not necessitate the sharing of personally identifiable information. <p>Externally:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>5. Provide ESSN recipient profiling information to LH actors</u> The LH Task Team can facilitate requests from LH actors on the types of profiles they are seeking for their projects, which the ESSN Programme can provide. The desired profiles can also be shared back with ESSN recipients to encourage them to apply directly (see recommendation #2 below). <u>6. Using the existing mapping initiatives, identify priority partnerships</u> Key informants agree that MOUs could facilitate external referrals at scale, enabling placements to specific programmes. Consider whether province or national level agreements are more relevant, depending on the organisations involved. A KII also suggested "there could be a list of which organisations provide which livelihood programs should be accessible by all I/NGOs and public institutions. Therefore, they can refer people who are interesting with livelihood programs to related organisations according to their skills and interests."

	Recommendation	What it means + what needs to happen
2	<p>Networking + information sharing Expand referral identification channels, with an emphasis on <u>proactive communication</u> on SEE with the ESSN caseload and employers</p>	<p>The strengthened knowledge and systems will provide a strong foundation to reach out to different groups of ESSN recipients with updated and relevant information on services and opportunities available. As a next step, teams can diversify entry points to identifying people for referrals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People approaching community centres • People identified during outreach • Mass communication on LH opportunities to the ESSN caseload • External actors <p>This should be coupled with a “triage” of referrals based on people’s motivation to work and employment profiles, placing them in one of the 3 groups identified above. Proactive communication to “decouple” the idea that employment = losing ESSN assistance is also encouraged. As one team noted, “only excluding the person with social insurance and not cutting the assistance for the whole family, this might encourage people to apply more to the LH projects to ensure their job legal rights by getting better job opportunities” (KII).</p>
3	<p>Adapt support + services Expand service offerings for “Group II” ESSN recipients (those who need more info)</p>	<p>People who fall into Group II can benefit from a case management approach using the general CBMP framework (above), but with an adapted focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider offering life skills first as opposed to later in the process, to orient people towards appropriate opportunities and dispel misinformation they may have about employment in Türkiye • Develop communication content on the facts about formal employment and share across multiple channels: social media, SMS, outreach, information sessions, etc. • Expand or identify partnerships to provide childcare solutions for those who need it, especially women <p>Profiling should provide a better indication of the proportion of ESSN recipients in this group and what capacities they already have, so the support and services can be further adapted to their specific preferences and needs.</p>
4	<p>Incentivise motivation Develop concrete action plan for “Group III” to incentivise the motivation to work</p>	<p>This is most difficult group for LH referrals, as they face a wide range of barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People’s personal motivations to work (behavioural factors and the pull of ESSN assistance) • Programme and policy restrictions (programme eligibility tied to household, policy work permit regulations) • Contextual limitations (economic downturn, social cohesion implications of offering better / new opportunities to foreigners than to Turks) <p>Building on an adapted set of offerings for Group II, the ESSN Programme can provide a more accompanied approach to gaining skills or finding opportunities. Additionally, a “LH Incubator” could generate project ideas for specific groups such as reaching out to people in tented settlements, or promoting women in tech.</p>

	Recommendation	What it means + what needs to happen
5	<p>Monitor Monitor + evaluate a tiered approach to referrals</p>	<p>CBMP LH metrics remain focused on successful employment, and rightly so, but the indicators for success of ESSN LH referrals can be expanded to track the intermediary steps in the referrals process. This could include indicator tracking for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of information requests • Refugee knowledge of LH opportunities • Tracking “clicks” on LH/SEE information hubs (recommendation #1) • Skills courses, especially soft skills • Referrals to LH Programmes via external MoUs • Work permit support <p>Monitoring and evaluating incremental progress towards SEE can not only increase the chances for successful referrals, but also encourage an evidence-based and phased approach to integrating more vulnerable people into the labour market.</p>



What does success look like?

“Successful LH referral process should be followable by the person or organization who creates the referral and communication between departments or organizations should be concrete. The mechanism should be very clear and fully understood, and the LH referred cases should be easy to follow up.” (KII)

The ESSN Programme’s own internal analysis of how to improve SEE referrals focuses on three main areas of improvement, under which there are a number of recommendations:

- Orienting ESSN recipients towards LH opportunities
 - Raise awareness and disseminate information on SEE opportunities in the area, as many people do not know what is available
 - Offer transportation support if opportunities for training or employment are far from where people live
 - Provide care services, mainly related to childcare, to address the primary barriers to women accessing employment
 - Further develop ties with vocational training providers to increase the ability of people without formal education to enter the job market
- Diversifying and strengthening community centre offerings
 - Invest in community centre staff capacity to identify and share relevant LH opportunities in the area
 - Increase course capacities to be able to absorb more people (including hiring interpreters if necessary)
 - Provide entrepreneurial support to people interested in generating income from home-based activities

- Streamlining and strengthening a case management approach to SEE referrals
 - Disseminate SOPs and ensure teams are familiar with the contents
 - Harmonise and improve referral tracking across community centres, including data entry
 - Invest in teams' capacity to assess (profile), analyse, and plan alongside "clients" to tailor SEE opportunities to their needs

The LH Task Team Policy Brief outlines two key recommendations on optimising tools and systems for profiling that relate to how the Community Centres could enhance external referrals:

1. Make better use of available tools to build a common/harmonized system: systematic gender disaggregation, tracking of individuals post job placement, and a joint understanding of successful and unsuccessful approaches. This will also enable a transition capitalizing on past efforts by focusing on individuals who have already acquired relevant language and technical skills
2. Profile refugees to assess their employability and identify matching sectors in the market: Profiling is the prerequisite to any strategy for transition. This entails categorization of the vulnerability and employability levels of the potential target group on the one hand, and an understanding of the demand on the labour market on the other. An updated and harmonized profiling will facilitate both the identification of a suitable target group, of priority areas of interventions, as well as the design of further employability support (vocational, language, entrepreneurial and soft skills)

Conclusion

Perceptions can easily shift depending on the information available, a person's situation, and who asks the question. Longitudinal data on people's attitudes towards and understanding of formal employment can help teams continue to connect preferences and opportunities. Trust is the key concept in livelihoods success: trust between Türk Kızılay and providers, between employers and employees.

Finally, a cultural shift in views on formal employment will take time and exposure to its benefits and are long term issues that development actors grapple with. The enormous setbacks from the earthquakes and their aftermath have likely permanently altered the economic situation in southern Türkiye, where the majority of ESSN recipients reside. Three weeks after the first quake, humanitarian actors reported massive population movements between Türkiye and Syria after the Turkish Government issued a six-month movement pass. There could also be tensions between vulnerable groups depending on who is prioritised for humanitarian aid; assistance to foreigners in Türkiye must therefore be harmonised with support to Turkish citizens or there are risks of social tension (interview).

ANNEXES

1. Livelihoods Pathways Study Terms of Reference (January 2022)
2. Livelihoods Pathways Study Inception Report (May 2022)
3. Livelihoods Pathways Study Primary Data Collection tools (May 2022)
4. Livelihoods Pathways Study Referrals: findings from key informant interviews (October 2022)
5. Preliminary analysis of profiling for Livelihoods Pathways Study (October 2022)

Overview of key informant stakeholders

- UNDP, 3RP Task Team
- ILO, including the KIGEP team
- Türk Kızılay departments: ESSN, CBMP
- IFRC departments: ESSN, SEE

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