ARRIVES

THE NIGERIAN LABOUR MARKET – AN ANALYSIS FOR RETURNING MIGRANTS

A project by

SOCIAL IMPACT

International Trade Centre

IRARA

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RETURN

Co-funded by the European Union

With **230 million** citizens,
Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation and a regional economic powerhouse.

However, despite recent macroeconomic gains – including **3.4% GDP** growth in 2024, the country struggles with high inflation, currency fluctuations, and widespread unemployment an underemployment.

ABOUT THE PAPER

This labour market analysis for Nigerian returnees aims to bridge the gap between their skills and Nigeria's evolving labour demands. Focusing on four sectors, the report compares the profiles of returnees with employer requirements and projected growth in each sector. It also identifies skill gaps by highlighting the key technical and soft skills that employers seek, highlighting where targeted training can have the greatest impact.

The report recommends matching returnees to employer demand, closing skills gaps, trialing new hires with support, making formal jobs appealing, and strengthening policy enablers such as credential recognition and hiring incentives.

ABOUT ARRIVES

This paper examines participants involved in the Assisting the Reintegration of Returnees through Integrated Vocational and Entrepreneurship Support (ARRIVES) project, which supports the sustainable economic reintegration of voluntary returnees into the Nigerian economy. These participants receive tailored and individual support in skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship to promote a dignified return and encourage sustainable livelihoods.

Social Impact gGmbH, the International Return and Reintegration Assistance, and the International Trade Centre (ITC) carry out the project. This partnership provides sustained, locally rooted support for returnees.

The ARRIVES project also publishes reports that examine opportunities, challenges, and support mechanisms in Nigeria's evolving economic sectors and entrepreneurship ecosystem. These evidence-based publications supply stakeholders with relevant information on the selected economic sectors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LAGBUS
LAGBUS RESCUE

ACRONYMS

Unless otherwise specified, all references to dollars ($) are to United States dollars. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

AI	Artificial intelligence
ARRIVES	Assisting the Reintegration of Returnees through Integrated Vocational and Entrepreneurship Support
GDP	Gross domestic product
ICT	Information and communication technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISCO-08	International Standard Classification of Occupations 2008
ITC	International Trade Centre
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics

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Boxes

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Executive summary

With 230 million citizens, Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation and a regional economic powerhouse. However, despite recent macroeconomic gains – including 3.4% gross domestic product growth in 2024 and projections of further improvement – the country struggles with high inflation, currency fluctuations, and widespread unemployment and underemployment, especially among young people.

As of 2023, the labour force participation rate was 76.3%. Yet more than 92% of the employed population was in the informal sector, highlighting the limited availability of formal, secure, and well-paid jobs.

Within this context, the role of migration and return migration has become increasingly relevant. Many Nigerians have sought opportunities abroad due to limited prospects at home. However, growing policy changes in host countries and personal or family considerations are prompting some individuals to return voluntarily.

Education levels and qualifications play a key role in shaping migrants' capacity to successfully return and reintegrate into their countries of origin. Unskilled workers typically return without any recognized qualifications, so their reintegration into the local economy remains challenging. The main barriers include employer bias, limited social networks, lack of access to start-up capital, and skills mismatches.


NEW MOON STORES
BOLC MODEL
AGBOLAHAN
SUZUKI
EVERY

As of 2023, the Nigerian labour force participation rate was ***76.3%****.*

Yet more than ***92%*** *of the employed population was in the informal sector*

In light of this, this study was developed as part of the Assisting the Reintegration of Returnees through Integrated Vocational and Entrepreneurship Support (ARRIVES) project to underpin the intervention strategy with evidence-based insights. It maps the dynamics of labour demand and supply in four priority sectors: agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and services.[1] These sectors were selected due to their strong employment potential, relevance to returnees' skill profiles, and importance in Nigeria's long-term economic development.

The analysis has five key objectives:

- Assess labour market trends and sectoral growth drivers
- Understand employer skill demands across different occupational levels
- Map the educational and professional profiles of returnees
- Identify skill gaps and barriers hindering returnees' access to decent employment
- Provide actionable recommendations for programmatic and policy interventions

Data sources include a detailed desk review of national and international labour statistics, as well as primary data from two custom surveys: one targeting returnees (n=10) participating in the ARRIVES programme, and another targeting employers (n=28) across the four key sectors.

The survey locations – Lagos, Abuja, and Benin – represent economic hubs with varied labour dynamics and reintegration contexts. The authors note that, given the limited sample size, this report is not representative for all returnees in Nigeria or for the labour markets in the selected sectors. It is intended as a practical policy paper that informs the design of relevant programmes.

The findings highlight an urgent need to close the gap between employers' expectations and returnees' skills. Although returnees generally have mid- to high-level educations, personal and structural barriers to wage employment often hinder their transition into the Nigerian labour market. While rising demand for labour supports the willingness of employers to hire returnees, they report difficulty finding suitable workers because experience and skills are the key recruitment criteria.

This report offers a roadmap for aligning training programmes, job placement services, and entrepreneurship support with the actual needs of Nigeria's labour market, particularly in strengthening the link between the potential of returnees and market demand.

[1]The survey did not have a separate category for services, but the responses under 'Other' were grouped under this heading.

CHAPTER 1

Labour market context and sectoral trends

Rapid demographic changes, economic uncertainty, technological transformation, and persistent structural inefficiencies shape Nigeria's labour market. Despite opportunities for growth in sectors such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and services, the country continues to face deep-rooted challenges, including high levels of informal employment, skills mismatches, and inadequate workforce development systems.

Macroeconomic trends

With an estimated population of 233 million (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2025a), Nigeria is Africa's most populous country. The country's economic performance over the past decade has been marked by volatility. From a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of $574.18 billion in 2014, the economy contracted sharply, falling to $187.64 billion in 2024. However, signs of recovery emerged in late 2024, with GDP growing 4.6% year-on-year in the fourth quarter, leading to an annual growth rate of 3.4% (World Bank, 2025a).

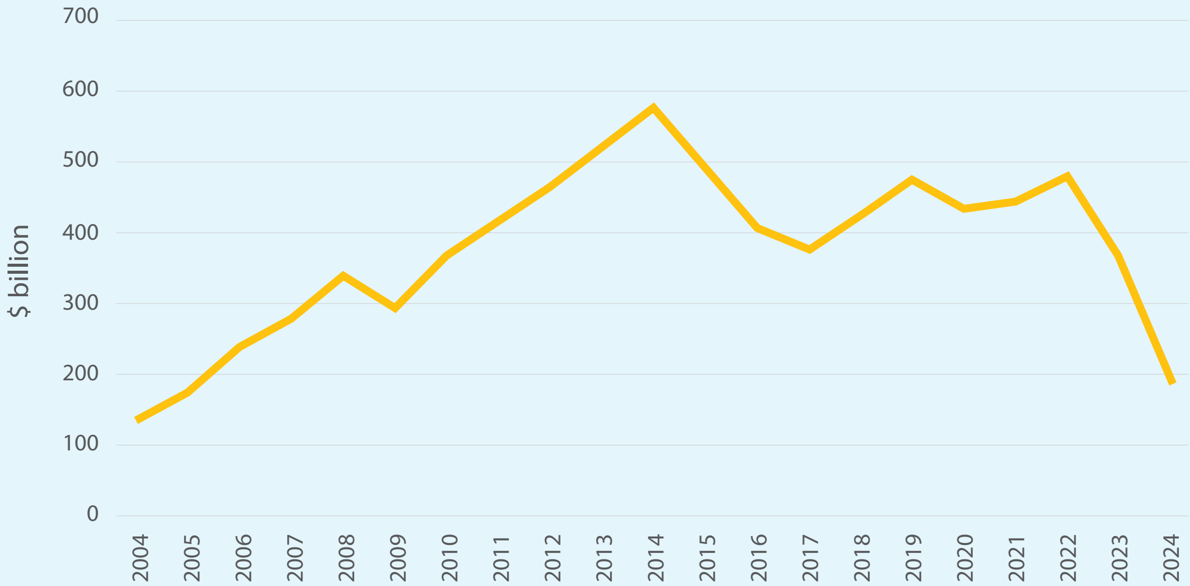
Projections indicate further modest growth in 2025, with GDP expected to reach $188.27 billion (IMF, 2025a).

Production trends also affect the labour market. Economic downturns lead to a decline in hiring and an increase in unemployment, while demand for labour rises in periods of growth.

However, the impact on unemployment rates and wages has been weak and slow in Nigeria. This is mainly due to an economy that depends heavily on oil and capital-intensive industries, as well as a large informal sector that tends to adjust working hours and wages rather than cut staff. Consequently, the relationship between GDP growth and labour market outcomes is positive but weak.
With the projected economic recovery, slow improvements in employment and income are expected.

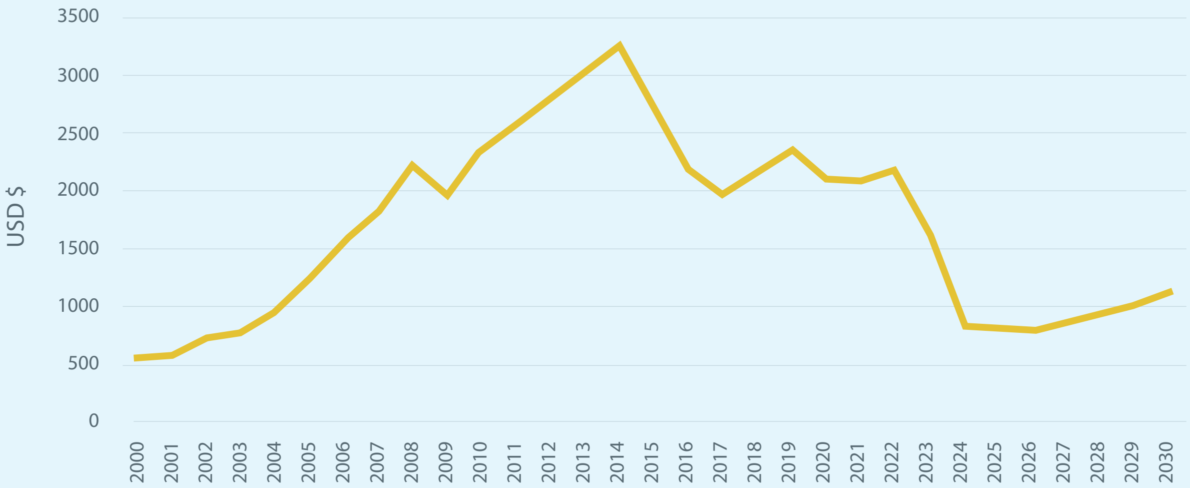
Based on GDP forecasts, improvements in labour conditions in the year ahead will likely be modest unless progress is made towards more labour-friendly policies and activities that enhance productivity.

Figure 1: GDP peaked in 2014 and has declined since 2022



Source: World Bank, 2024a

Figure 2: GDP per capita in 2000–2024 and forecast for 2025–2030



Source: IMF, 2025b

At the same time, inflationary pressures and an 83% depreciation of the naira since mid-2023 have increased the cost of living and raised business input costs, affecting job creation and wage stability (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2024).

Rapid population growth, at an annual rate of 2.6%, further intensifies pressure on the labour market, with nearly 100 million working-age people and almost half under age 30 (Morgan & Beom, 2024). Job creation has not kept pace with this demographic surge, resulting in widespread underemployment and unemployment, especially among young people.

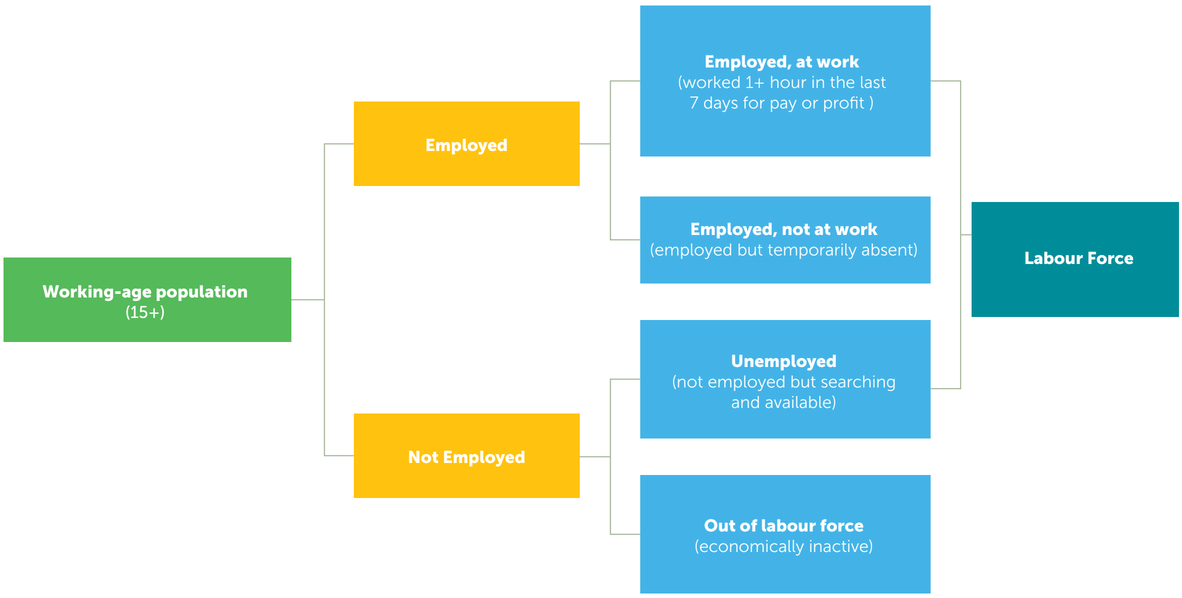
The informal sector remains dominant, employing more than 92% of Nigerians, while formal wage-paying jobs are rare and concentrated among the educated (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2024).

Economic reforms and government interventions, such as those outlined in the National Development Plan (2021–2025), aim to generate 21 million full-time jobs and lift 35 million people out of poverty by 2025 (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2021). However, persistent structural weaknesses, governance challenges, infrastructure deficits, and security concerns limit progress (Morgan & Beom, 2024).

Nigeria's labour force overview

The working-age population (individuals 15 years and above) in Nigeria is divided into those who are employed (either actively working or temporarily absent) and those who are not employed (either unemployed but seeking work or economically inactive), as illustrated in Figure 5. This breakdown underpins our analysis of labour force participation, unemployment rates, and overall labour market dynamics.

Figure 3: Labour force definitions



Source: NBS, 2024

Nigeria's working-age population was about 116.6 million in 2023, or 53.8% of the total population. Of this number, 76.3% participated in the labour force. Although the official unemployment rate in 2023 was reported at 5.4%, this figure underrepresents underemployment and job precarity (NBS, 2023; NBS, 2024).

Youth remain particularly vulnerable. The Youth Not in Education, Employment, or Training[2] rate (youth aged 15–24), fell from 15.6% in 2023 to 12.5% in mid-2024. Targeted employment schemes likely influence this improvement, but nearly one in eight young people is not studying formally or working (NBS, 2023; NBS, 2024).

Employment structure

Around 92.2% of employed Nigerians worked in the informal sector in 2023 (Ayorinde, Eze, Nkeonye, and Akinbodewa, 2024). Informal wage employment exists outside the formal legal and regulatory framework, i.e. workers are usually hired without formal contracts, paid in cash on a daily or weekly basis, and are not covered by pensions, health insurance, or labour protections. This makes workers more vulnerable and limits access to job security or benefits.

Self-employment is widespread, constituting 85% of the labour force (NBS, 2023), while formal wage employment remains limited, particularly for women and youth.

The services sector provides the largest share of employment, followed by the agricultural industry and the industrial sector. Employment rates are higher in rural areas, with 78.9% of the workforce engaged, compared to 69.5% in urban centres. This is mainly due to the

[2] Youth Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) highlights the untapped labour force among young people and can help identify youth's obstacles in finding work, such as lack of education or inadequate training opportunities.

dominance of agricultural and informal work in rural settings (NBS, 2024).

There are important gender disparities in employment. The employment-to-population ratio stands at 74.2% for men and 72.3% for women, while the unemployment rate is 6% for women and 4.7% for men. Women are more likely to be self-employed (87.8%) than men (81.3%), although men dominate formal positions (NBS, 2024).

Youth unemployment is particularly concerning. The highest rates are among Nigerian youth with post-secondary education (9.4%) (Ayorinde, Eze, Nkeonye, & Akinbodewa, 2024). Many young people are engaged in low-skill or informal jobs or unemployed.

Regional variations in unemployment are significant, with urban areas experiencing higher rates (6.8%) than rural areas (3.5%). Certain states, such as Abia, the Federal Capital Territory, and Rivers, report elevated unemployment rates, while Nasarawa and Sokoto have the lowest (Ayorinde, Eze, Nkeonye, & Akinbodewa, 2024).

The economic context is marked by a cost-of-living crisis characterized by high inflation and currency devaluation. Although employment rates are high, many positions are informal, precarious, and low paying, with limited social protection and job security. Recent methodological changes in measuring unemployment have lowered official rates, yet they do not accurately reflect the ongoing challenges in job quality and availability.

*The employment-to-population ratio stands at **74.2%** for men and **72.3%** for women, while the unemployment rate is **6%** for women and **4.7%** for men.*

Table 1: Key employment indicators 2023

Indicator	Value (2023)
Employment-to-population rate	72.2%
Unemployment rate	5.4%
Underemployment rate	11.1%
Informal employment share	92.2%
Labour force participation rate	76.3%
Youth Not in Education, Employment, or Training rate	15.6%

Source: NBS, 2023

Sectoral trends and labour demand

Nigeria's economy has a diversified structure, with several key sectors driving labour demand. In 2023, the services sector emerged as the largest employer, with 48.81% of the workforce engaged in activities such as wholesale trade, hospitality, and food services. This was followed by agriculture, with 34.31% of employed people, and the industrial sector, which accounted for 17.88% of employment (World Bank, 2023).

Given the significant employment opportunities across various skill levels, the selected sectors for analysis in this report are agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and services, all of which attract a considerable number of workers, particularly those with semi- and low qualifications.

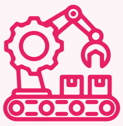
Agriculture

Engages around 34% of the labour force and contributes 20% to GDP (World Bank, 2024b). The sector is expected to perform well in 2025, supported by regional demand, government incentives (e.g. import waivers), and agribusiness innovation.

Construction

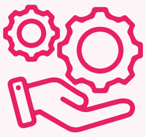
The industry sector, including construction, contributes 29.6% to Nigeria's GDP (World Bank, 2024c).[3] The construction sector is growing 4.4% a year (Research and Markets, 2025), driven by government investments in infrastructure and a rise in private-sector development. However, the sector faces challenges such as rising costs and project delays, which are often linked to skill shortages in technical and engineering roles.

These challenges may hinder project finalization and limit job creation in urban development and housing. Still, the construction sector is poised for continued expansion in the coming years, supported by urbanization and a growing middle class (Research and Markets, 2025; International Trade Administration, 2023).



Manufacturing

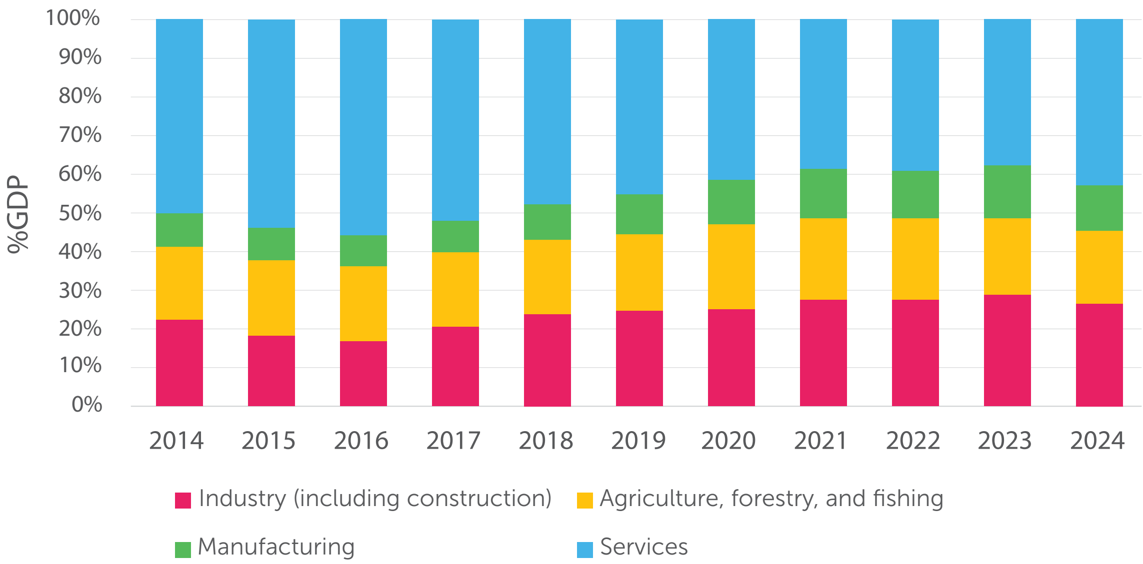
The manufacturing sector contributes 14% to Nigeria's GDP, making it a key driver of economic growth (World Bank, 2024d). While the sector faces challenges such as infrastructure deficits, high production costs, and import dependency that have slowed growth, it also offers major investment opportunities (KPMG, 2023).



Services

Nigeria's services sector is an important contributor to the nation's economy and is growing steadily. The sector grew 4.33% in the first quarter of 2025 and contributed 57.5% to GDP (NBS, 2025). Trade, information and communication, real estate, professional services, and financial and insurance services are the biggest contributors to the sector's output (Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission, 2019).

Figure 4: Services sector contributes biggest share to economy



Source: World Bank, 2025b

Despite the potential employment opportunities listed above, the informal sector's dominance means that most jobs are low-productivity and lack stability or social protection (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2024a). The formal sector, while growing, is not expanding quickly enough to absorb the burgeoning workforce.

Workforce skill gaps and employment projections

Nigeria's labour market faces a significant and widening skills gap, which poses a critical challenge. One of the most pressing issues in the country's labour markets is a mismatch between the skills of people seeking employment and those demanded by

[3]No reliable and recent data on construction are available.

employers.
An estimated 60% of Nigerian graduates lack the skills required for available jobs, highlighting a disconnect between what is taught in schools and the needs of the labour market (Alli, 2025). Youth unemployment rates, which are already high, may worsen in the future, particularly among the 40% of tertiary-educated individuals who struggle to transition into the workforce (Oriji, 2024).

The following four factors shape future employment projections:

- **Digital disruption:** The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies is altering job demand, especially in data-centric roles such as data analysts and cybersecurity professionals. The education system and vocational programmes have not kept up with these changes, resulting in a shortage of candidates with digital, technical, and entrepreneurial skills (Alli, 2025; MyJobMag, 2025).

  Additionally, automation and digital transformation are expected to displace workers in sectors such as banking, telecommunications, and customer service. This trend could further boost unemployment unless there is a concerted effort to retrain and upskill the workforce.

- **The lack of adequate retraining programmes may** leave many workers unprepared for the evolving job market, potentially leading to higher unemployment and social unrest (Adeoya, 2025).

- **The growing trend of skilled professionals emigrating for better opportunities** in the context of regular migration (brain drain) threatens Nigeria's long-term economic competitiveness, notably in fields such as healthcare, information and communication technology (ICT), information technology, engineering, and education (Adeoya, 2025). This exodus could leave critical sectors understaffed and damp employment growth.

  Industries such as manufacturing and financial technology already face delays in scaling operations due to insufficient technical and soft skills, including problem-solving and teamwork. The likelihood of these migrants returning depends on various factors, including their level of qualification, the type of work they do, their marital status, and conditions in their home country.

- **Urban skills shortage:** Jobseekers reportedly lack the basic education and experience needed by employers, reducing the pool of employable candidates despite thousands of vacancies.

Nigeria's persistent skills gaps are likely to reshape employment trends, with both immediate and long-term consequences for economic growth and workforce stability. Sectors including banking and customer service are adopting AI and automation, displacing low-skilled workers. Without reskilling initiatives, it is estimated that 15-20% of current roles could become obsolete by 2030, exacerbating unemployment issues (Kaur, 2025).

Overview of occupational classification

This report adopts the International Standard Classification of Occupations 2008 (ISCO-08) to systematically analyse the employment potential of returnees in Nigeria. This framework, developed by the ILO, organizes jobs into a clearly defined structure based on the nature of tasks and duties. It provides a system for classifying and aggregating occupational information from statistical censuses, surveys, and administrative records (ILO, 2024b).

Occupational classifications

- In ISCO-08, a job is characterized as a set of tasks and duties performed by an individual, either for an employer or in self-employment.
- Occupation, on the other hand, refers to the type of work associated with a job, defined as a collection of jobs that share similar main tasks and responsibilities. A person can be linked to an occupation based on his/her current job, a second job, a future job, or a job he/she held previously.
- Skill is the ability to perform the tasks and duties within a specific job and a general distinction is made between three areas. In ISCO-08, skills are classified along three levels from basic, manual work to complex, supervisory or technical roles:

1. **Low-skilled labour:** Simple, routine physical or manual tasks (e.g. cleaning, digging, lifting, sorting, basic assembly). Primary education and short on-the-job training may be required. Examples of occupations in Nigeria are office cleaners, freight handlers, farm labourers, and kitchen assistants.

2. **Semi-skilled labour:** Operating machinery/equipment, driving vehicles, maintenance, and information handling. Strong literacy/numeracy and interpersonal skills are required. Typically, this requires secondary education plus vocational training or on-the-job experience. Examples of occupations in Nigeria are bus driver, machine operator, accounts clerk, building electrician, and motor vehicle mechanic.

3. **High-skilled labour:** Complex technical/practical tasks requiring extensive factual, technical, and procedural knowledge in a specialized field often involve supervising/coordinating others. Requires tertiary education (1–3 years post-secondary) or equivalent through prolonged work experience. Examples of occupations in Nigeria are civil engineer, quantity surveyor, ICT support technician, medical laboratory technologist, and hotel operations manager.

This report looks at labour demand in selected sectors based on the ISCO-08 classification. Skill levels are determined by the complexity and variety of tasks associated with an occupation.

Table 2: Selected sectors and skill level mapping

Skill level	Agriculture and agribusiness	Manufacturing and energy	Construction
Low-skilled	Farm helper or assistant (9629, 7311, 7412, 6112)	Production helper/ assembler (9319, 7113, 7211, 9629, 7421, 7422)	Construction helper (9319, 8312, but also 7113, 7211, 9629, 7421, 7422)
Semi-skilled	(Assistant) veterinarian (2211)	Junior technician/engineer/ mechanic (7222, 7421, 3512)	Coordinator or assistant (3331, 4110)
High-skilled	Technician (3113) Farm supervisor or manager (1323, 1313)	Senior technician/engineer/ mechanic (7414) Production/site supervisor or manager (3123, 1313, also includes quality control)	Technician/engineer (3512, 7412) Manager/site supervisor (1222, 1323)

Source: International Trade Centre (ITC) compilation

CHAPTER 2

Employers' needs and labour market demands

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This chapter assesses the current and expected occupations and skills needs of employers in Nigeria with a focus on the agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and services sectors. The objective is to understand employers' requirements better and support vulnerable people seeking skilled employment opportunities.

Employer survey

Companies in the selected sectors were identified through the project's consortium partner network in Nigeria and by colleagues working in ITC's Office for Africa. This made it possible to identify and target a sufficiently large pool of companies in the three cities Lagos, Abuja and Benin, to which the survey was sent directly. Through referral, following the idea of snowball sampling, further companies became aware of and participated in the survey.

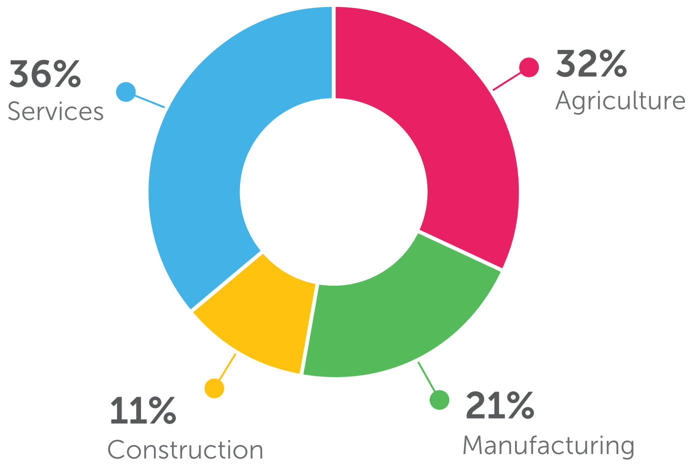
A standard questionnaire was developed for all sectors, but it allowed for sector-specific responses regarding specific occupations and skills. The employer survey was developed in consultation with similar prior studies and with colleagues who conduct similar labour market surveys in the context of migration in comparable countries.

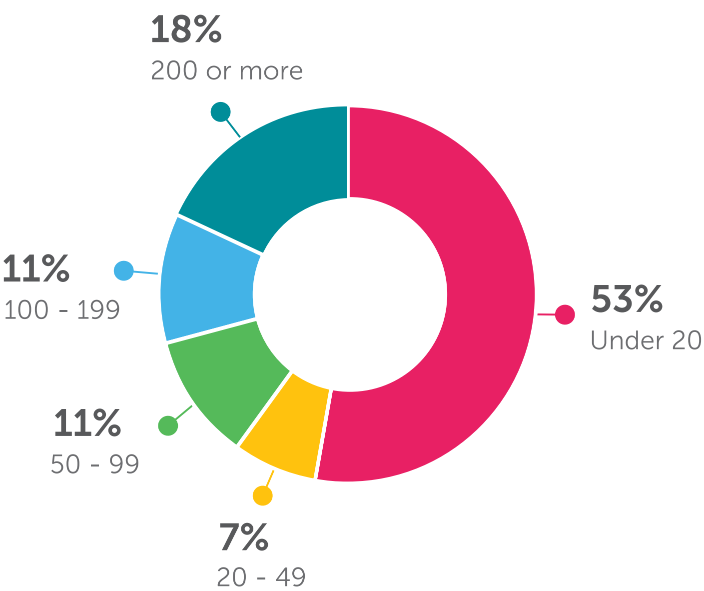
Data for the employer survey were collected from 16–30 June 2025 using ITC's survey tool. For more information, see the Annex.

Employer demographics

Of the 28 responses, 9 employers were from agriculture and food processing, 6 from manufacturing, and 3 from construction. The remaining 10 were from diverse services, including logistics, education, hospitality, telecommunications, real estate, and financial technology. More than half of the companies employ fewer than 20 people and 75% of the businesses reported employing returnees.

Figure 5: Operating sectors and number of employees





Source: ITC survey 2025

When testing for a relation between the sector (agriculture, manufacturing, construction, or services) and employment of returnees (yes or no), no significant association was found between the two variables. This means none of the sectors is more or less likely to hire returnees.

All respondents hold a position of responsibility in the company they work for or own, with professional experience ranging from 1–5 years (39%), 6–10 years (25%), and more than 10 years (36%).

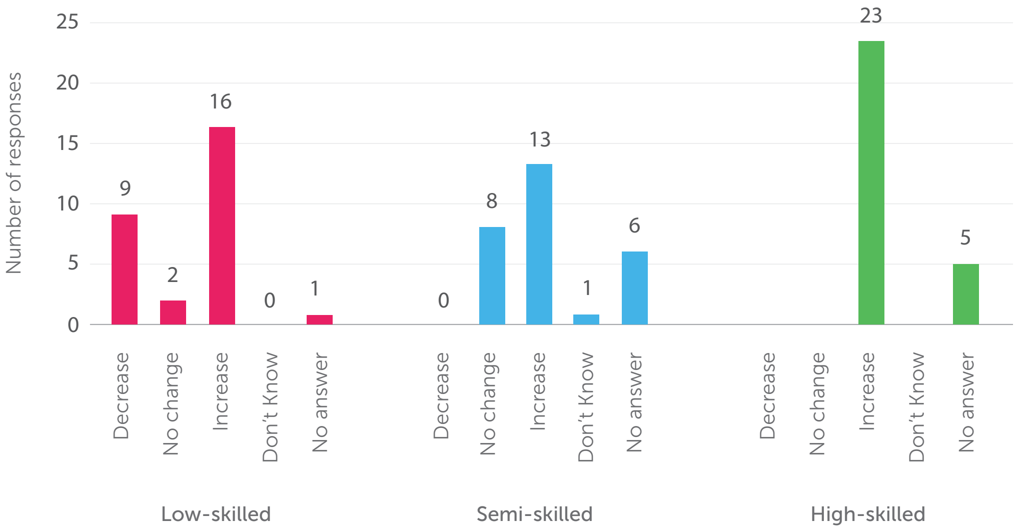
Employer skill requirements and labour demand

Half of the employers primarily hire semi-skilled workers (14 out of 28), with a slightly smaller proportion (13 out of 28) employing highly skilled workers. Low-skilled workers were rarely hired.

Demand is expected to rise across all skill levels, with anticipated increases for low-skilled workers (16 out of 28), semi-skilled workers (13 out of 28), and, especially, highly skilled workers (23 out of 28).

Employers expect demand for semi-skilled workers to remain stable. Some (9 out of 28) anticipate a decline in low-skilled positions, suggesting a trend towards polarization in the labour market.

Figure 6: More high-skilled workers will be needed in coming years

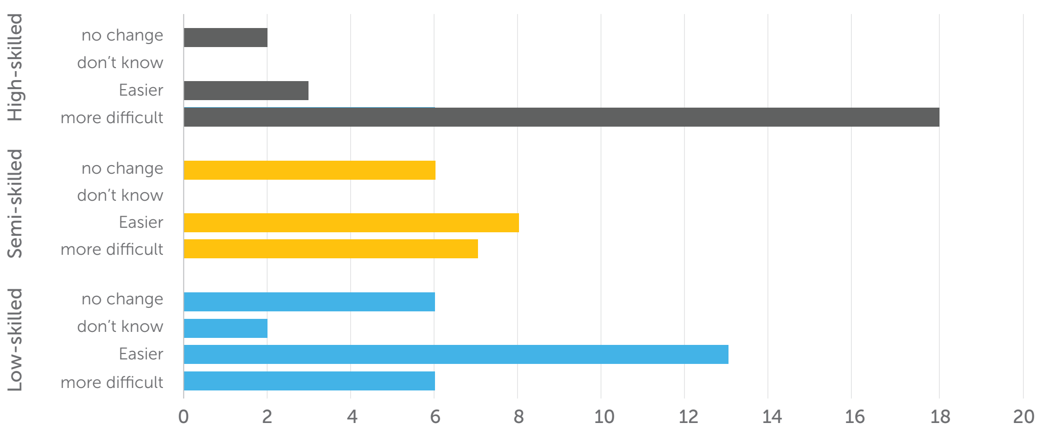


Source: ITC survey 2025

While some employers say applicants meet minimum skill requirements, most report gaps in soft, technical, or leadership skills. Five employers reported important gaps in these areas, four indicated the need for foundational training, and one struggles to find suitably skilled candidates. Demand for low-skilled workers varies, with agriculture facing difficulties in hiring farm helpers and assistants.

Looking ahead, hard-to-fill roles are expected to remain in demand, especially in construction and agriculture, while manufacturing foresees a growing need for low-skilled workers despite current shortages in high-skilled positions. A few employers noted training needs or difficulty in finding skilled workers, particularly for technician, engineering, and supervisory roles.

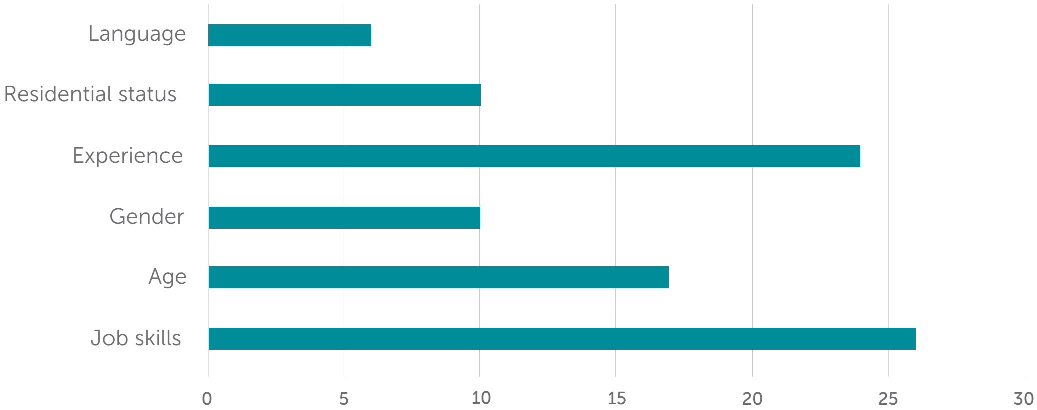
Figure 7: Companies struggle to find high-skilled workers



Source: ITC survey 2025

Most employers recruit directly or via personal recommendations. They also use formal channels such as human resources departments, brokers, or online platforms including LinkedIn. Key hiring criteria include job skills and experience. Factors such as gender or residence status are less relevant, while age may influence hiring decisions.

Figure 8: Experience and job skills are key criteria in recruitment

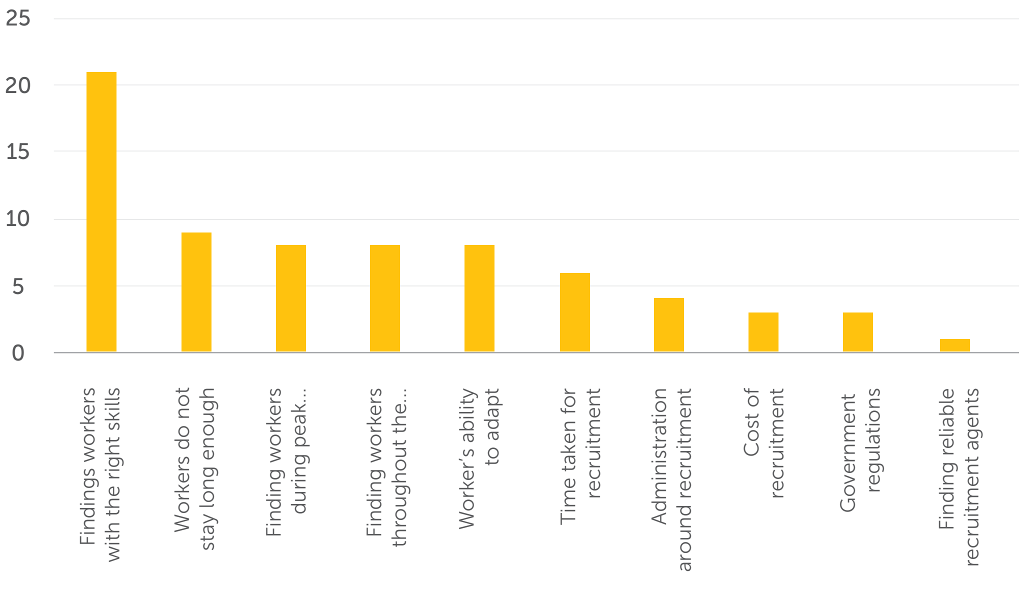


Source: ITC survey 2025

Recruitment challenges, training, and skills development needs

The most frequently cited recruitment challenge is finding candidates with the right qualifications. Employers struggle to find qualified candidates with both hard and soft skills. They also noted retention problems, seasonal labour gaps, and adaptability issues. Administrative barriers and regulations were less commonly reported as obstacles.

Figure 9: Top challenge is finding workers with suitable skills



Training and skill improvement

Employers highlighted the need for both traditional technical skills (e.g. plumbing, food processing) and emerging digital skills (e.g. computer-aided design, social media, AI). Soft skills such as professionalism, communication, and adaptability are also in demand. Business and project management skills are considered valuable for sustainable employment. To address the skills gap, employers suggest that job seekers enhance their qualifications.

Table 3: Employers are looking for a variety of skills

Skill category	Traditional	Emerging
Technical and vocational skills	Hands-on skills such as plumbing, bricklaying, carpenter, veterinary services, food processing	Social media/marketing skills, sales, computer-aided design skills, AI and machine learning
Soft skills and interpersonal skills	Interpersonal relationship skills, resumé writing and application preparedness, humility, professionalism	Transparency, readiness to learn, communication skills, honesty, decision-making skills, ability to stay on the job (stability as a skill), working in a stressful and changing environment, reports and reports writing
Business, management and entrepreneurial skills	Integrity	Project management, entrepreneurial skills

Source: ITC survey 2025

Emerging skills that are modern, tech-oriented, and linked to evolving industry trends become increasingly critical, especially in fast-changing sectors such as ICT, advanced manufacturing, green energy, and digital services.

The survey provides information about which institutions would be suitable for skills development in specific sectors. More than half of employers are aware of continuing education programmes available in their line of business, in addition to on-the-job training. Training institutions were cited as key partners for bridging skill gaps. These include the Nigerian Industrial Training Fund, the Nigeria Export Promotion Council, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria, Federal Institute of Industrial Research Oshodi, and private or donor-supported programmes, especially in agriculture and manufacturing. However, general awareness of available programmes remains low.

Manufacturing:

- Nigerian Industrial Training Fund
- Nigeria Export Promotion Council
- Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria and Bank of Agriculture
- ITC/ILO, Federal Ministry of Agriculture
- Various digital skills programmes such as the German Agency for International

Agriculture:

- International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
- Training in access to finance and market access by various organizations

Other:

- Google digital marketing training
- Vocational training programmes in catering, ICT, and business

Employer perceptions of returnees

Most employers are open to hiring returnees, with 85.7% of them (24 respondents) indicating no reservations about hiring returned migrants. The service sector shows the highest level of openness towards hiring returnees, followed by agriculture and manufacturing. The construction sector, however, appears to be more cautious, likely due to fewer responses.

Employers are willing to hire returnees if they have the necessary skills for the job. Many respondents noted that returning migrants can offer valuable insights and skills that would benefit local businesses.

A few employers said personality traits and emotional readiness are more important than formal qualifications. Some mentioned biases or legal status as concerns, while others said they were willing to support reintegration through mentorship.

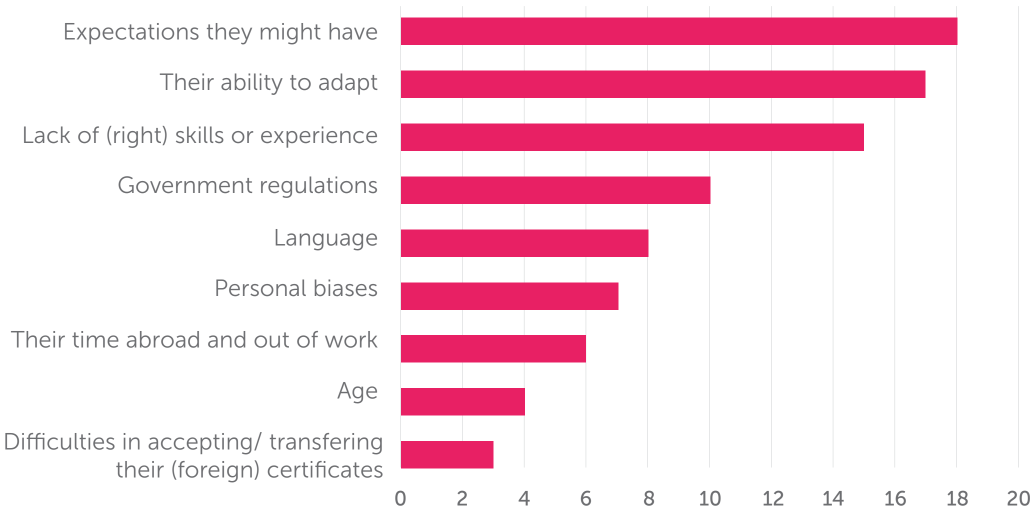
Employers appeared cautious about the expectations returning migrants might have, their ability to adapt, and their possible lack of skills and experience. Other obstacles they mentioned were primarily government regulations and, in some cases, language barriers, personal biases, and returnees' time abroad and out of work.

Personal prejudices are noteworthy, as they are linked to many other issues.

Biases may relate, for example, to a lack of qualification and language skills or to the time spent abroad, suggesting concerns that returnees cannot reintegrate well into Nigerian society. Biases generally occur subconsciously and are difficult to identify and prove, so it is not possible to say what role they play in this context. However, it is important to note that, as the survey also shows, negative biases against returnees do exist.

Lastly, age and difficulty in accepting or transferring certifications obtained abroad appear less important to employers.

Figure 10: Returnees' expectations and adaptability are key hiring concerns



Source: ITC survey 2025

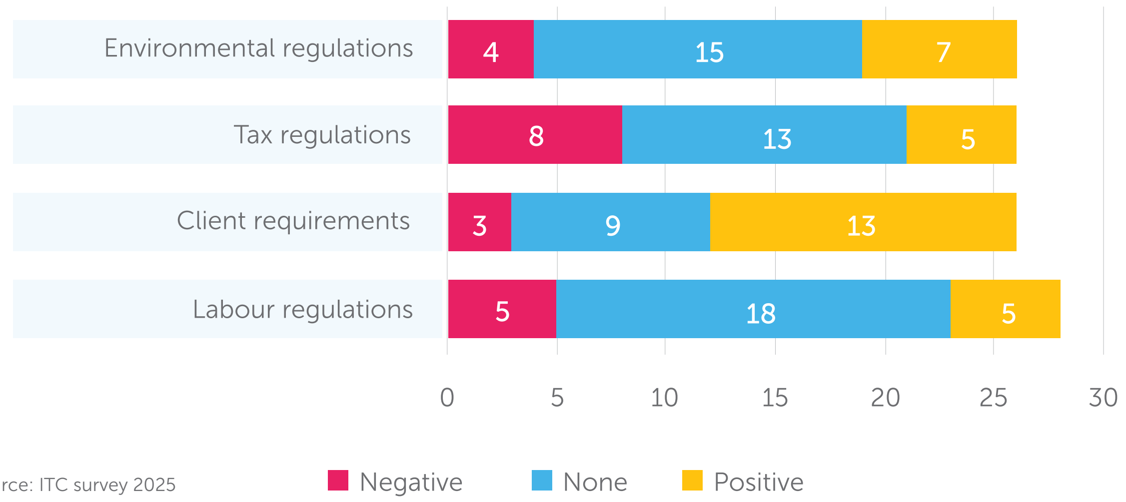
Regulations and institutional framework

The institutional framework in Nigeria does not appear to play a significant role for the employers surveyed. Although a few regulations do have an impact on companies, this is likely to be within the normal range.

Most respondents (60%) said they had received no support from local or governmental agencies in the past 12 months. The remaining six reported receiving support from the Chamber of Commerce, the Federal Ministry of Labour, business associations, state labour agencies, financial institutions, and/or the German Agency for International Cooperation.

In the additional comments section, employers said 'the government should provide loans for SMEs and start-ups' and 'ensure security and safety so that visits to farms in rural areas can be made more easily'. Two respondents emphasized the importance of internships and training and mentoring programmes for returnees that could be set up by government institutions or in cooperation with partners; the German Agency for International Cooperation was mentioned in this context.

Figure 11: Regulations have limited impact on companies



Source: ITC survey 2025

It is important to highlight the work done by ARRIVES when it comes to job placement, which is presented in box 1.

Box 1: IRARA's work and partnership engagement

The International Returns and Reintegration Assistance (IRARA) has been central to the success of the ARRIVES project in Nigeria. By building strong partnerships with employers, training institutions, government agencies, and community organizations, IRARA ensures that returnees gain access to both job opportunities and market-relevant skills.

Despite Nigeria's high unemployment rate, IRARA's employer engagement has facilitated job placements, apprenticeships, and internships in different sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, and services. Returnees benefit from targeted skills training, mentorship, and advocacy that reduce employer bias and bridge critical skills gaps.

IRARA's engagement with the EURP Project, microfinance institutions and other funding support, has opened pathways to entrepreneurship for these participants. This integrated model not only improves individual livelihoods but also contributes to job creation and economic growth.

Through these efforts, IRARA has positioned returnees as valuable contributors to Nigeria's labor market while promoting their dignified and sustainable reintegration.

CHAPTER 3

Returnees' profiles and reintegration challenges

A complementary survey was conducted with returnees and vulnerable individuals across several Nigerian states. The goal was to understand their experiences of reintegration, barriers to employment, and expectations for training and job opportunities.

Returnees survey

The pool of survey participants for the jobseeker survey consists of returning migrants who participated in the ARRIVES project. Although there were discussions about opening the target group to external returnees, it was decided to only survey ARRIVES participants, as this report is intended to help tailor other project activities, including coaching and training.

In total, 10 returnees participated in the survey. Although the questions were structured like a survey, project coaches asked questions in an interview format. In light of limited reading abilities among some returnees, this approach ensured that all questions were understood and could be answered. In addition, the personal connection helped to create a relaxed conversational atmosphere.

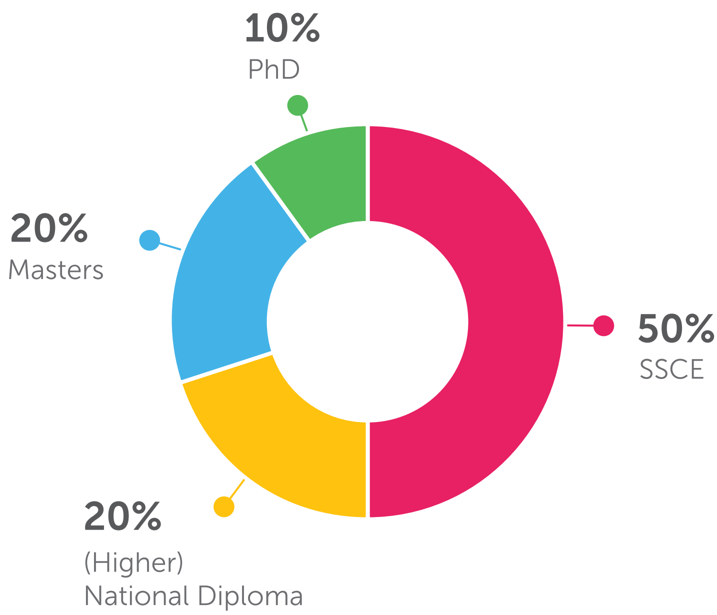
The jobseeker survey was developed in consultation with similar prior studies and project coaches. Data for the returnees' survey were collected from 16–30 June 2025. All survey data capture was done via ITC's survey tool (see Annex for more information).

Returnees' skills profile

Respondents were mainly self-employed males with varied educational backgrounds, from secondary school certificates to advanced degrees. This includes achievements such as the Senior Secondary School Examination, higher national diplomas from polytechnics, and, in some cases, master's degrees or doctorates.

The survey of returnees indicates that most have mid- to high-level educational qualifications. Age is also a notable factor in the demographic profile of the participants: about 80% are over age 30, with 40% over age 40 years. This suggests that they have considerable work–life experience, which could enhance their employability.

Figure 12: A third of surveyed returnees have advanced degrees



Source: ITC survey 2025

Despite their qualifications, many returnees face persistent barriers to stable, meaningful employment or business sustainability. Their experiences highlight critical areas of disconnect between job readiness and market realities, supporting the skill mismatch issues reported by employers.

The pathways through which returnees have acquired and developed their skills are often ambiguous, with limited documentation available, such as certificates or professional references. In terms of self-assessment, only a few respondents were able to articulate their skill levels clearly. Specifically, two rated themselves as low-skilled, two as semi-skilled, and six as high-skilled. Yet, none offered detailed information about how they attained these skills, complicating efforts to validate their self-assessments.

In addition to formal education, many returnees reported gaining vital soft and transferable skills while abroad. These include language proficiency, cross-cultural communication, and expertise in business development and sales. Such competencies are valuable in client-facing roles and entrepreneurial endeavors, positioning returnees to contribute effectively to various sectors.

Willingness to upskill

Surveyed returnees were very eager to receive further training. Preferred areas for upskilling include agriculture and agribusiness, construction and building technologies, ICT (including customer relationship management tools and digital marketing), and business and entrepreneurship development. This proactive mindset can support their reintegration into Nigeria's labour market, provided that suitable training, certification, and funding mechanisms are available.
'While abroad, I acquired several valuable skills. I want to learn advanced business development and digital marketing.'
– Returnee

Employment status and sectoral participation

Among the respondents, only one person had no job or business; the rest are self-employed entrepreneurs. Most of these entrepreneurs set up their firms with assistance from the ARRIVES project when they returned to Nigeria. They are active in agriculture, manufacturing and energy, telecom accessories, haircare, fashion and beauty, food production, and travel and visa services.
One returnee leveraged his or her foreign education in economics, finance, and geoinformatics, along with personal migration experiences, to create a travel agency that helps Nigerians pursue overseas studies and immigration services. This success story underscores the potential for returnees to contribute to specialized service areas upon their return.

Attitudes towards employment vs entrepreneurship

When asked to choose between employment and self-employment, 80% of respondents said they preferred entrepreneurship while the rest were open to both options. Some said self-employment could give them greater control over their lives and allow them to balance work with family and to create something meaningful in their communities.

In many cases, this preference is linked to the reality that securing a regular job is not easy. This shift often arises out of necessity rather than preference. It is important to note that many survey participants had been self-employed, which may have biased their responses based on their current occupations.

Some respondents shared negative experiences with traditional employers, mentioning rigid schedules and a lack of career growth as deterrents to pursuing conventional employment. Those inclined towards both employment and self-employment noted the benefits of multiple income streams and financial stability. Nonetheless, formal employment remained unattractive due to personal preferences, concerns over inflexible work hours, and perceived biases from employers against returnees.

Job search channels

Personal networks are central to returnees' job search strategies, with 75% relying on social connections such as family and friends. Others use social media platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn, while only a few resort to offline channels such as radio, newspapers, or brokers. Several respondents described difficulties they faced in obtaining detailed job information, especially regarding interview processes and specific job requirements.

These gaps emphasize the importance of organized job placement support and centralized labour market information systems.

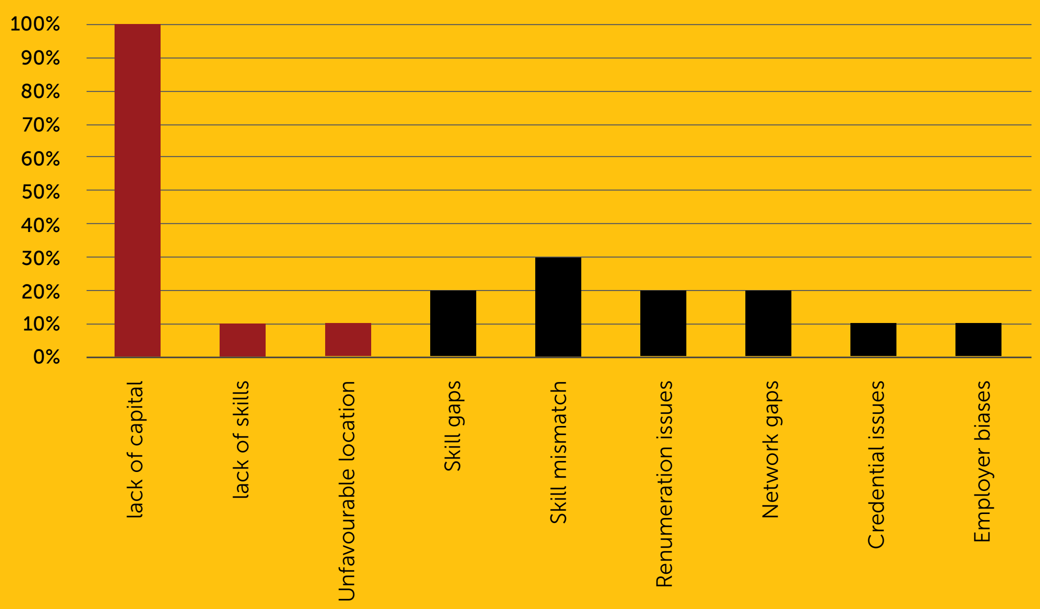
Reintegration challenges

One of the biggest challenges returnees mentioned is financial instability, which makes restarting or continuing business ventures difficult. The main obstacle to starting a business was insufficient capital. A lack of the necessary skills and experience and an unfavorable location with limited market access were also identified as barriers to starting a business.

While three respondents noted that international travel had benefited them – offering greater exposure and valuable business connections – many still face difficulty adjusting to Nigeria's economic realities. These include inflation, high cost of living, poor electricity supply, and limited access to funding.

Rebuilding a professional network also adds to the complexity of reintegration. Although some returnees reported no major personal difficulties, many said settling back in was tough because of these systemic economic constraints.

Figure 13: Lack of capital is top obstacle for entrepreneurs



Source: ITC survey 2025

Skills shortages (lack of required qualifications) and skills mismatches between employee and employer, unmet salary expectations, and network gaps were cited as barriers when looking for a job. Credential issues and employer biases were only mentioned once.

The gap between the skills returnees bring and the evolving demands of the Nigerian labour market is significant. While many returnees may hold advanced technical or managerial qualifications, local employers are increasingly focusing on practical, adaptable, and industry-specific skills, such as digital literacy, problem-solving, and effective communication. The rapid expansion of sectors including renewable energy means that even highly qualified returnees may struggle to align their expertise with industry demands, particularly if their skills are not easily transferable or recognized.

Differences in qualification levels, educational standards, and institutions, along with language barriers, often make it challenging to integrate foreign education into the local system. Employers' biases and skepticism about international experience without a concrete certificate further limit opportunities. For instance, age criteria in recruitment processes often disqualify returnees who may fall outside the preferred age range for many job vacancies due to prolonged stays abroad.

Social reintegration can also be difficult as people often find themselves out of touch with local communities and cultural norms after spending years abroad. Returnees may feel frustrated or have lower self-esteem if their overseas experiences are not recognized or if they encounter extended periods of unemployment. These sociocultural and psychological challenges can foster a sense of alienation, potentially hindering their willingness to engage actively in the workforce.

Faced with challenges in finding formal employment, many returnees choose self-employment or entrepreneurship. Sometimes this is due to necessity rather than preference, as the formal job market has a limited capacity to accommodate low-skilled individuals.

However, access to capital remains a significant obstacle for returnee entrepreneurs. Even if they have viable business ideas and international experience, many struggle to obtain loans or grants due to inadequate collateral, limited local credit histories, or unfamiliarity with the Nigerian financial landscape. Furthermore, bureaucratic challenges and restricted access to business support services make it difficult for returnees to start or expand their firms. The broader economic conditions highlighted above add to these issues.

Despite these obstacles, returnees are highly motivated and ready to contribute to Nigeria's development if they are supported with targeted interventions. They express a strong will to retrain, particularly in growing sectors. Strengthening the connections between training programmes and employers, as well as enhancing information systems, will be crucial for unlocking their potential.

“

Social reintegration can also be difficult as people often find themselves out of touch with local communities and cultural norms after spending years abroad.

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion and recommendations

Returnees represent a valuable, yet underused, source of human capital for Nigeria's transitioning economy. Although their education levels are generally mid- to high-level, they often lack documentation such as references and certificates. Soft skills that returnees gained abroad, from language proficiency and cross-cultural communication to business acumen, are seen as potential assets by employers in Nigeria's labour market. However, many returnees prefer entrepreneurship to employment because of its autonomy, flexibility, and purpose.

Barriers to wage employment include skill mismatch, weak professional networks, adaptation issues, and remuneration concerns. Many returnees struggle to rebuild professional networks, which are crucial for finding employment as job opportunities often arise through personal connections. As digital platforms become central to job searching, some returnees express frustration over the lack of clarity and accessibility in recruitment processes.

Broader structural challenges – such as high informality, financial instability, high inflation, poor infrastructure (especially electricity), and limited access to funding – aggravate these issues and hinder smooth transitions. Reintegration into Nigeria's socioeconomic environment therefore remains challenging.

The employer survey indicates that 75% of the firms already employ returnees. Many report rising demand across skill levels, especially in high-skill, technical and supervisory roles, such as technicians, engineers, production/site supervisors, and farm managers. Filling low-skill roles is easier, except in agriculture, where there is a persistent shortage of farm helpers. Recruitment remains mainly network-driven – through referrals and direct hiring – with limited use of online platforms.

Employers prioritize skills and are generally open to hiring returnees when their capabilities meet job requirements. While employers' awareness of training opportunities is uneven – and low in the construction sector – most returnees are very interested in training across all sectors. The immediate opportunity for returnee-focused support programming lies in making skills recognizable and job-ready, expanding trusted matching channels, and reducing the risks associated with first hires.

Main findings

- **Educational and skills profile:** Returnees are relatively well-educated, according to the survey, but data on how they maintain or update their skills are limited. Employers seek workers across all skill levels but mostly in high-skilled technical and supervisory roles. Additional training could help to bridge this gap.
- **Entrepreneurial drive:** Returnees expressed a strong preference for entrepreneurship due to desires for autonomy, flexibility, and purpose, reinforced by negative past employment experiences and economic necessity.
- **Barriers to employment:** Skill mismatches, employer biases, credential and remuneration issues, and lack of access to professional networks significantly deter returnees from seeking employment. This is reflected in the responses of employers, who highlight not only the importance of qualifications, but also the role of personality traits and emotional readiness. Employers seem open to employing returnees but are cautious about the expectations they may have and their possible lack of skills.
- **Reintegration and structural challenges:** Economic instability, high living costs, poor infrastructure, and the erosion of social and professional networks make reintegration difficult for many returnees. Structural difficulties also create challenges for employers, who are reluctant to hire new staff in an uncertain economic situation.
- **Role of networks and digital tools:** While informal networks and social media are critical for job searches, inadequate access to professional networks puts returnees at a disadvantage in the labour market. This matches the recruitment practices of employers, who mainly find new employees through referrals or direct hiring.

Main recommendations

Based on the identified gaps and challenges, the following table outlines the key recommendations.

Table 4: Recommendations

Match employer demand to returnee supply	
Launch a focused matching pipeline	▪ Focus on placements in high-demand roles: technicians, engineers, production/site supervisors, farm supervisors/managers, and seasonally, farm helpers. ▪ Create a curated pool of assessed returnees to share with partner firms, including short skills profiles that verify tasks, references, and sample work. ▪ Enhance the referral channel by rewarding employer referrals and using alumni networks (such as chambers, associations, and cooperatives); introduce WhatsApp/Telegram for vacancy notifications. ▪ Hold monthly sector-specific skills-to-hire days for employers to interview pre-assessed candidates and conduct practical tests. This can be done in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by International Return and Reintegration Assistance.
Trial for hires	Trial-to-hire: Implement 6–12-week attachments with a stipend/wage share, converting hires based on performance benchmarks. Onboarding bundle: Provide expectation-setting and job training for both sides, including safety and quality standards, along with a workplace buddy or mentor for the first 60–90 days.
Close skills and credential gaps	
Recognition of prior learning and fast-track equivalence	Map foreign qualifications to local standards using competency checklists and practical assessments. Issue micro-credentials linked to job tasks (e.g. electrical technician – motor controls, food safety – Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point basics).
Modular, job-anchored upskilling	Manufacturing: Courses in maintenance fundamentals, quality assurance/quality control, basic computer-aided design/computer numerical control, and shift supervision. Construction: Training in reading drawings, site logistics, health and safety toolbox, and basic building information modeling exposure for supervisors. Agriculture: Focus on farm supervision, post-harvest handling, cold-chain basics, and mechanization operations. Crosscutting skills: Digital productivity tools, soft skills (communication, teamwork, reliability), and writing.

Construction training gap targeted outreach	Actively onboard providers and sites for construction SMEs, offering co-branded short courses with Industrial Training Fund/industry bodies
Make formal employment more attractive to returnees	
Flexible, growth-oriented employment offers	Adopt flexible shifts and transparent pay bands with performance-based progression to address remuneration expectations. Use the Memorandum of Understanding within the ARRIVES framework to establish clear development paths, including mentoring and training vouchers.
Workplace inclusion and psychosocial support	Use bias-aware hiring practices (skills tests, structured interviews) to minimize subjective screening. Provide mentoring and peer support groups for returnees during their first 90 days and direct them to counseling services as needed. Implement gender-responsive measures (safe transport, personal protective equipment for women, childcare support for training days).
Strengthen policy and institutional enablers	
Credential policy and standards	Formalize equivalency pathways for priority occupations with the National Board for Technical Education, publish Recognition of Prior Learning rubrics and accepted evidence (task logs, supervisor attestations).
Incentives for first hires	Offer temporary apprenticeship/wage subsidies for SMEs that hire returnees. This could be done through a partnership with Nigerian governments.

ANNEXES

Annex I

Employer survey questions

Tell us about your organization

1. Name of entity you represent

2. Where are you based in Nigeria?
   Options: Lagos, Abuja, Benin

3. In which sector do you operate?
   Options: Construction, Manufacturing, Agriculture, Other

4. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q3]

5. What is your position in the company?
   Options: Business owner, Business manager, Senior manager, Supervisor, Other

6. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q5]

7. How many years have you been in this position?
   Options: below 1, 1-5, 6-10, above 10

Company and workforce size

8. How many employees work for this company?
   Options: Under 20, 20–49, 50–99, 100–199, 200 or more

9. How many female workers do you currently have in total (approximately)?

10. Does your company employ returned migrants?
    Options: Yes, No

11. Which skill level do most of your workers have?
    Options: Low-skilled, Semi-skilled, High-skilled

Trends and difficulty by skill level

12. In general terms, do you consider that the people applying for employment in your company have the necessary skills to perform their duties?
    Options: Yes, it is only necessary to give them a brief introduction to the business., Yes, although additional training in technical or managerial skills is required., Yes,

although additional soft skills training is required., No, comprehensive training from scratch is required before they take up work., No, I can’t find trained personnel with the necessary skills.

13. For each skill level, would you say your need for workers will decrease or increase over the next few years, or no change?
    Options: Low-skilled, Semi-skilled, High-skilled

14. For each skill level, would you say it is currently more difficult or easier to find workers compared to before or no change?
    Options: More difficult, No change, Easier, Don’t know
    Options: Low-skilled, Semi-skilled, High-skilled

15. Which of the following jobs are more difficult to find suitable workers? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q3]
    Options: Construction Helper, Coordinator or Assistant, Technician/Engineer, Manager/Site Supervisor, Other

16. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q15]

17. Which jobs do you expect will be in higher demand in the future? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q3]
    Options: Construction Helper, Coordinator or Assistant, Technician/Engineer, Manager/Site Supervisor, Other

18. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q17]

19. Which of the following jobs are more difficult to find suitable workers? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q3]
    Options: Production Helper/Assembler, Junior Technician/Engineer/Mechanic, Senior Technician/Engineer/Mechanic, Production/Site Supervisor or Manager, Other

20. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q23]

21. Which jobs do you expect will be in higher demand in the future? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q3]
    Options: Production Helper/Assembler, Junior Technician/Engineer/Mechanic, Senior Technician/Engineer/Mechanic, Production/Site Supervisor or Manager, Other

22. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q21]

23. Which of the following jobs are more difficult to find suitable workers? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q3]
    Options: Farm Helper or Assistant, (Assistant) Veterinarian, Technician, Farm supervisor or Manager, Other

24. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q23]

25. Which jobs do you expect will be in higher demand in the future? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q3]
    Options: Farm Helper or Assistant, (Assistant) Veterinarian, Technician, Farm supervisor or Manager, Other

26. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q25]

27. On average, how would you rate the functional skills of current workers in the following jobs, meaning their ability to do the task required for that job? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q3]
    (3 = exceeds requirements, 2 = meets requirements, 1 = does not meet requirements, 9 = N/A)
    Options: Construction Helper, Coordinator or Assistant, Technician/Engineer, Manager/Site Supervisor, Other

28. On average, how would you rate the functional skills of current workers in the following jobs, meaning their ability to do the task required for that job? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q3]
    (3 = exceeds requirements, 2 = meets requirements, 1 = does not meet requirements, 9 = N/A)
    Options: Production Helper/Assembler, Junior Technician/Engineer/Mechanic, Senior Technician/Engineer/Mechanic, Production/Site Supervisor or Manager, Other

29. On average, how would you rate the functional skills of current workers in the following jobs, meaning their ability to do the task required for that job? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q3]
    (3 = exceeds requirements, 2 = meets requirements, 1 = does not meet requirements, 9 = N/A)
    Options: Farm Helper or Assistant, (Assistant) Veterinarian, Technician, Farm supervisor or Manager, Other

30. For each skill, will needs for that skill decrease or increase over the next few years, or no change? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q3]
    (1 = decrease 2 = no change 3 = increase 4 = don't know)
    Options: Construction Helper, Coordinator or Assistant, Technician/Engineer, Manager/Site supervisor, Other

31. For each skill, will needs for that skill decrease or increase over the next few years, or no change? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q3]
    Options: Production Helper/Assembler, Junior Technician/Engineer/Mechanic, Senior Technician/Engineer/Mechanic, Production/Site Supervisor or Manager, Other

32. For each skill, will needs for that skill decrease or increase over the next few years, or no change? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q3]
(1 = decrease 2 = no change 3 = increase 4 = don't know)
Options: Farm Helper or Assistant, (Assistant) Veterinarian, Technician, Farm supervisor or Manager, Other

33. What skills do job seekers not possess that would be beneficial for them to have?

Recruitment and training

34. From where do you source information about workers you would like to recruit?
Options: In-house human resource department, Individual recruitment agents or broker, Recruitment firms, Referrals from other workers, Workers come directly to us (drop-in), Other

35. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q34]

36. How is recruitment done in your company?
Options: Direct recruitment. Through individual recruitment agents or brokers, Through recruitment firms, Other

37. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q36]

38. When hiring workers, which of the following selection criteria are taken into account?
Options: Job skills, Language, Experience, Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Time taken for recruitment, Residential status, Other

39. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q38]

40. To what extent do the workers you employ match your requirements?
Options: All, Most, Some, None

41. Do you know of training programmes that are available for your business?
Options: Yes. No

42. Can you please name the training programmes and the institutions that offer them. [Answer this question if you have responded to Q41]

43. What are the biggest challenges when recruiting workers?
Options: Finding enough workers throughout the year, Finding enough workers during peak production months, Finding workers with the right skills, Finding reliable recruitment agents, Cost of recruitment, Time taken for recruitment, Workers do not stay long enough, Government regulations, Administration around recruitment, Language issues, Workers' ability to adapt, Other

44. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q43]

Vulnerable groups

45. Can you please rate the following statement, using the indicated scale below: 'I do not employ returned migrants because I do not know their background, so I prefer to work with local staff.'
    1 is 'strongly disagree', 2 is 'disagree', 3 is 'neither agree nor disagree', 4 is 'agree' and 5 is 'strongly agree'

46. Can you please rate the following statement, using the indicated scale below: 'I would be open to employing returned migrants if they have the skills to perform the tasks my business needs.'
    1 is 'strongly disagree', 2 is 'disagree', 3 is 'neither agree nor disagree', 4 is 'agree' and 5 is 'strongly agree'

47. Can you please rate the following statement, using the indicated scale below: 'I have no problems or reservations about hiring returned migrants.' *
    1 is 'strongly disagree', 2 is 'disagree', 3 is 'neither agree nor disagree', 4 is 'agree' and 5 is 'strongly agree'

48. If you were to hire returned migrants, what factors would you consider?

49. Which challenges might arise when hiring returned migrants?
    Options: Lack of (right) skills or experience, Their time abroad and out of work, Age, Language, Their ability to adapt, Expectations they might have, Personal biases, Difficulties in accepting/transferring their (foreign) certificates, Government regulations, Other

50. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q49]

51. How do you assess the value that returned migrants bring compared to locally trained professionals?
    Options: Experience abroad, Adaptability, International network. Language, Other

52. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q51]

Institutional relationship

53. How have the following affected your business in the past 12 months? Negative-None-Positive
    Options: Labour regulations, Client requirements, Tax regulations, Environmental regulations

54. Has your business received support from these agencies in past 12 months?
    Options: Federal Ministry of Labour, State labour agencies, Chamber of Commerce,

Financial institutions, Business associations, Other, None

55. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q54]

End of survey

56. Is there anything else you would like to share?

57. May we contact you for a follow-up?
Options: Yes, No

58. If yes, can you please provide your contact details. [Answer this question if you have responded to Q57]

Annex II

Returnee survey questions

Demographics

1. Respondent name
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Highest education and level of study
5. State/ LGA / Community
6. Mobile number
7. Date of interview
8. Interviewer (coach)

Background and current status

9. What is your current employment status (full-time, part-time, self-employed, unemployed)?
Options: self-employed, unemployed, employed/full-time, employed/part-time

10. How did you start your current business? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q9]

11. How many jobs have you held since returning? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q9]

12. What is your position and your tasks/responsibilities? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q9]

13. Which sector are you working in? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q9]
    Options: Agriculture, Manufacturing, Construction, Other

14. If other, please specify. [Answer this question if you have responded to Q13]

15. Which job-search methods did you consider? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q9]
    Options: Walk-in applications, Referrals (family, friends), Online portals (e.g., LinkedIn, Jobberman), Local agencies or brokers, Social Media groups (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp), Job fairs or community noticeboards, Other

16. If other, please specify. [Answer this question if you have responded to Q15]

17. How long have you been employed/Self-employed? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q9]
    Options: < 1 year, 1 - 2 years, >2 years

18. At what age did you start earning an income? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q9]

19. What is your main activity? (e.g. farming, caregiving) [Answer this question if you have responded to Q9]

20. What is your educational/ skills background? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q9]

21. What is/are the reason(s) for your unemployment? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q9]

22. How long have you been looking for a job now? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q9]
    Options: <3 months, 3–6 months, >6 months

23. How many jobs have you held in the past 3 years and what were the reasons for leaving them? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q9]

24. Which job-search methods would you consider? [Answer this question if you have responded to Q9]
    Options: Walk-in applications, Referrals (family, friends), Online portals (e.g., LinkedIn,
    Jobberman), Local agencies or brokers, Social Media groups (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp),
    Job fairs or community noticeboards, Other

25. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q24]

26. If you were to choose, would you prefer to be an employee or start your own business, and why?
    Options: Employee, Entrepreneur, Open to both

27. Please explain [Answer this question if you have responded to Q26]

28. Which would you consider to be the biggest obstacles to starting a business?
    Options: Lack of capital, Business registration challenges, Limited market access, Lack of necessary skills/experience, Unfavourable location, Other

29. If other, please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q28]

Barriers and opportunities

30. What obstacles do you encounter when looking for a job?
    Options: Skills gap (lack of necessary skills), Skills mismatch (between you and the employer), Credential issues, Network gaps, Language, Cost of certification, Lack of (suitable) jobs, Employer biases, Other

31. If other please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q30]

32. What could help you to get (a better) job and to integrate into the local labour market?
    Options: Training, Networks/connections, Financial support, Improved digital skills, Streamlined recognition of qualifications, Mentorship programmes, Job fairs, Other

33. If other please specify [Answer this question if you have responded to Q32]

Information and networking

34. How do you share your CV with employers?

35. Which online/offline channels do you use most to collect information or connect with others, regarding jobs?

36. Where do you hear about new vacancies?
    Options: Job websites, WhatsApp groups, Local brokers, Radio and/or newspapers, Friends and family, social network, Other

37. If other, please specify: [Answer this question if you have responded to Q36]

38. What information is, from your experience, missing or hard to find?

Skills and training

39. How would you rate your current skills?
    Options: Low-skilled (General labourer, No formal skills, Basic literacy/numeracy), Semi-skilled (Equipment operator or driver, with technical/vocational skills), High-skilled (Technician, supervisor, with university degree)

40. Please describe any skills you acquired while abroad and any additional skills you would like to gain.

41. Would you be willing to invest time in further training – and if so, in which specific areas?

Return (for migrants/returnees)

42. Please describe your return and reintegration journey: why you returned (voluntarily or involuntarily), what types of assistance would have been most helpful, and how you've made a living since coming back (including any business activities).

43. What challenges have you faced during reintegration, and how has the overall experience of migrating and returning impacted your life positively and negatively?

44. Is there anything else you would like to share?

45. May we contact you for a follow-up?
    Options: Yes, No

Annex III

Table 5: Manufacturing

Occupation category	Job title	ISCO-08 code	Skill level
Assembler	Machinery assembler	8281	Semi
Machine operator	CNC machine operator	8183	Semi
Technician	Quality control technician	3139	High
Engineer	Industrial production engineer	2141	High
Manager/supervisor	Production manager	1321	High

Table 6: Agriculture

Occupation category	Job title	ISCO-08 code	Skill level
Field worker	Livestock farm worker	6120	Low
Machinery operator	Tractor operator	8331	Semi
Technician	Agricultural technician	7130	High
Specialist/adviser	Agricultural extension officer	2412*	High
Supervisor	Farm supervisor	3330	Semi
Manager	Livestock farm manager	1212	High

* ISCO-08 code 2412 is used here to represent 'environmental protection professionals', under which many agricultural extension functions are classified at a high-skilled advisory level.

Table 7: Construction

Occupation category	Job title	ISCO-08 Code	Skill level
Field worker	Construction labourer	9313	Low
Machinery operator	Excavator/earthmoving plant operator	8342	Semi
Technician	Civil engineering technician	3112	High
Specialist/adviser	Civil engineer	2142	High
Supervisor	Construction supervisor	3123	Semi
Manager	Construction manager	1323	High

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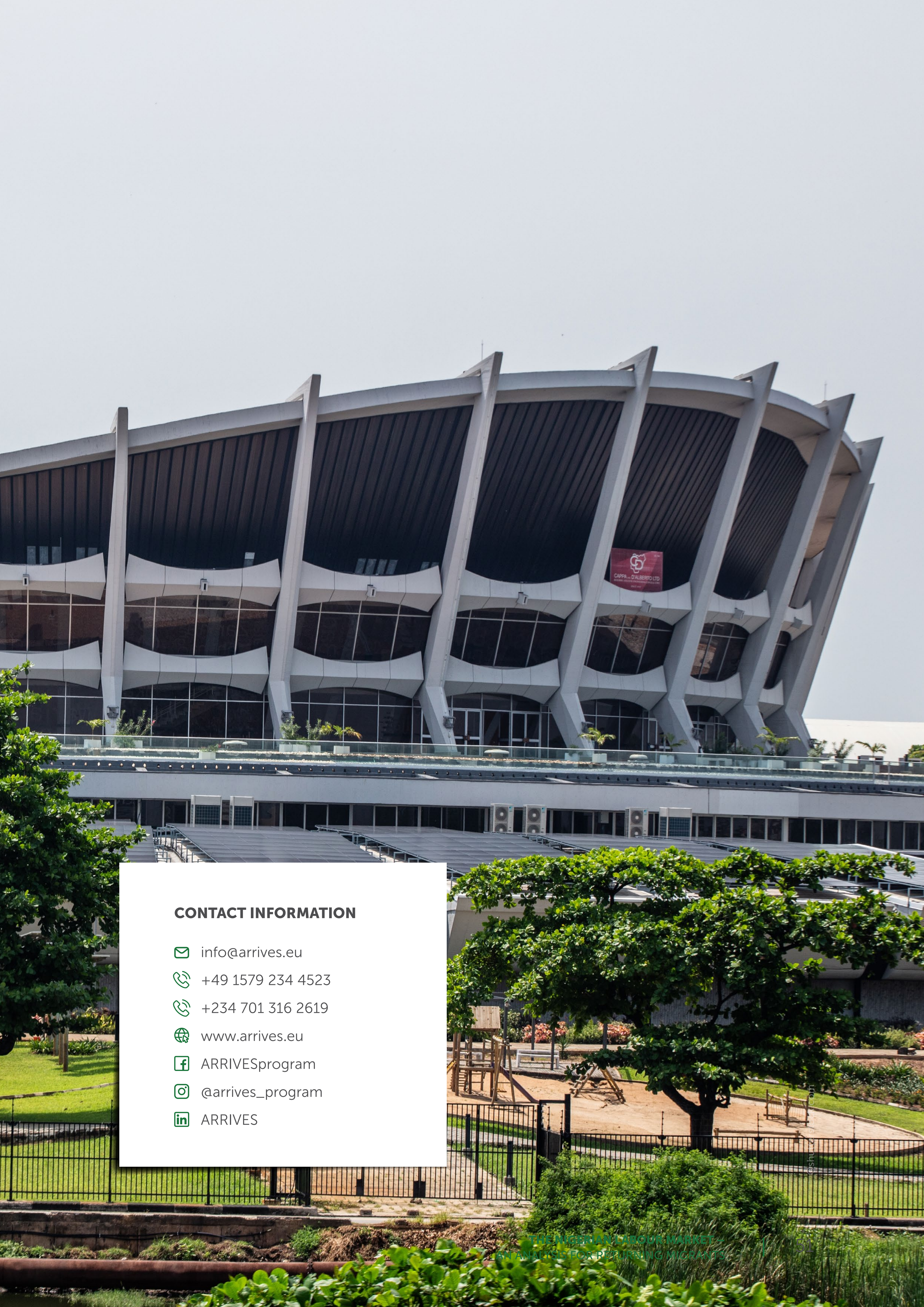

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