

# MAPPING LABOUR SKILLS OF MIGRANTS IN MISRATA

Challenges and Strategies  
for Integration into the Libyan  
Market





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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

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<b>DTM</b>	Displacement Tracking Matrix. The IOM DTM system tracks and monitors displacement and population mobility. It is designed to regularly and systematically capture, process, and disseminate information to provide a better understanding of the movements and evolving needs of displaced populations, whether on site or in route.
<b>EUTF</b>	European Union Emergency Trust Fund
<b>GNA</b>	Government of National Accord (Libya)
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>UNSMIL</b>	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
<b>Migrant</b>	An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally-defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students. For DTM programmatic purposes in Libya, an international migrant is considered any person present in Libya who does not possess Libyan nationality.

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# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“I lived with my parents in Darfur, Sudan. Because of the fighting, they were displaced to another village, but they have now returned. However, I came to Libya 4 years ago and I stay here to work and send them money. My cousin lives in Tripoli and my uncle is also staying in Libya with his family. I live with some other relatives in a collective shelter that is not very clean or healthy. My father is in need of medications and both my mother and sister need money to live. I am the bread winner of my family; thus, I cannot return till I save a large sum of money allowing me to start a project there, like a shop or a bakery.*

*“Now, I work as a waiter in a cafe and I serve customers tea, coffee, juice and desert. I clean the tables and the floor and make sure everything is in its right place. A friend of mine from Sudan found the job for me. He is a friend of the Libyan owner of the cafe. I work in the private sector as it is impossible for me to have a job in public sector because I don’t have a diploma. I work with 3 other employees from Libya: the barista, the accountant, and the cook. There is also another migrant from Nigeria who cleans up the coffee shop and arranges the goods. I have had many jobs; I worked for 6 months in a dry cleaner and left due to a certain issue. I was unemployed for 2 months then I worked as a janitor in a hotel. Eventually, I got this job.”*

Interview conducted in Misrata, Libya in 2019

Nearly six years earlier at the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, then Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon summarized this migrant’s story another way: “Migration,” said Mr. Ban, “is an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety, and a better future.”<sup>(1)</sup> Since 2013, which saw the adoption of the Declaration of the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, scores of migrants have sacrificed and toiled and strove in pursuit of these goals, and at high costs. In 2019 alone, the International Organization for Migration’s Missing Migrants Project recorded 5,364 migrant deaths, of which 1,885—the second largest share—were in the Mediterranean<sup>(2)</sup>.

In addition to being an expression of an aspiration, migration is a complex and non-linear process that ebbs and flows with the economic, political, and social currents in both migrants’ origin and destination countries. How do migrants navigate these currents? To what extent can migrants’ preexisting skills and goals affect these currents as migrants update their preferences based on the tide not only of the Mediterranean, but also of the countries that line it?

The report summarizes the findings of a mixed-method study that aimed to answer these questions among international migrants in the Libyan baladiya of Misrata, which presents what may be considered one model of a Libyan city where migrant labour is integrated into the city in a way that “works”

1 UN Press Release. 4 October 2013. “UN takes action on international migration to address urgent migration challenges and increase benefits for development.” [https://www.un.org/en/ga/68/meetings/migration/pdf/Press%20release\\_closing%20of%20HLD\\_%20Migration%204%20October\\_final.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/ga/68/meetings/migration/pdf/Press%20release_closing%20of%20HLD_%20Migration%204%20October_final.pdf)

2 International Organization for Migration. *Missing Migrants Project*. Graphic 1: “Recorded migrant deaths by region: 2019.” <https://missingmigrants.iom.int>

for both migrants and the host population. Conducted in 2019 by IOM and a research team at Georgetown, the quantitative and qualitative study aims to understand the abilities and skills migrant labourers bring to the labour market; the reasons why they came to Libya to work; their daily lives; the challenges they face in Libya; the strategies they use to get around these challenges; and their employment- and education-related aspirations.

Findings from the quantitative survey generalize to the nearly 56,000 international migrants from 17 nationalities living in the Misrata baladiya as of December 2018, when the sample for the study was drawn. Migrants from Niger (34%) and Egypt (19%) are the two largest groups. The population of the Misrata municipality (344,000) makes it the third largest in Libya, and in 2018, it hosted 11 percent of the country's migrant population. While this share makes it second only to Tripoli (where 21% of migrants reside), proportionally, Misrata has a higher migrant-to-citizen ratio (1:6).

Aside from its migrant-to-citizen ratio, several other factors distinguish Misrata from other cities in Libya. First, Misrata avoided much of the fighting that ensued in the wake of the 2011 fall of Qaddafi's regime, and this relative stability not only accounts for its economic success, but also is why it attracts Libyans from around the country, either to live there or to visit there for shopping or vacation. Second, Misrata's port and the industry-related economic ecosystem it creates drives the need for labour. Third, as the study findings corroborate, migrants in the position to "choose" Misrata do so because the city is considered safer. It also offers many different kinds of employment opportunities including those in construction, the industries associated with the port (import, export, and transportation), manufacturing, agriculture, animal husbandry, and fishing. In their qualitative interviews, some migrants cite their good relations with Libyans and their Libyan employers, including ones who they are currently employed with and ones that they worked for in the past. While other studies of migration in Libya reveal that migrants report not enough

available jobs<sup>(3)</sup>, this study found that migrants more commonly reported that they did not have the skills needed for the available jobs and were eager for training opportunities.

But life for migrants in Misrata is not free from challenges. One issue that migrants report, mirroring findings from other studies, are low salaries and irregular salary payment.<sup>(4)</sup> A second issue is that the cost of living is on the rise, making it harder to save any money or send money home, given the cost of migration and the cost of living. Finally, in the qualitative interviews, migrants often referenced the petty theft/armed robbery they faced both on the streets and in their homes or shelters and travelling to and from their home countries.

Misrata's appeal as an economic hub for migrants cannot overlook the alleged abuses that some migrants may have endured during their journey, including in arbitrary detention. Given the sensitivities and challenges around this subject, no interviews were conducted in detention centers.

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3 IOM, *Living and Working in the Midst of Conflict: The Status of Long-term Migrants in Libya*, 2019, pp 16-17. <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/living-and-working-in-the-midst-of-conflict.pdf>

4 Reach, *Refugees and Migrants Access to Resources, Housing and Healthcare: Key Challenges and Coping Mechanisms-Misrata, Libya*, December 2017. <https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/refugees-and-migrants-access-resources-housing-and-healthcare-key-challenges-and-0>. IOM, "Living and Working in the Midst of Conflict," pp. 18-20.

## II. KEY FINDINGS

The key takeaways in this report are as follows and are detailed in each of the sections below:

# 95%

**Of migrant workers leave their home countries to find better opportunities**

Migrants say they traveled to Libya because of the economic situation in their home countries. While there are migrants who have spent their adult lives traveling back and forth from their home countries, nearly 80% first arrived in Libya in the past four years (2016-2019).



**Migrant workers indicated different legal statuses & experiences since their arrival.**

Only 27% report having a Libyan residency card, and 42% report having a Libyan work permit; 8% responded they had spent time in a detention center since they had arrived in Libya.

# 62%

**Of migrants in Misrata want to stay there**

Nearly 38% suggest that they choose Libya as a transit stop on the way to a different country that is not their country of origin. Despite this sizable share with aspirations to potentially continue to other countries, no one factor seems to motivate migrants in Libya to want to leave. Instead, migrants report that economic factors, like the type of job they have (80%) and the number of available jobs (70%), improved security-related conditions (77%), and their standard of living (72%) provide impetus for them to stay.

# 40%

**Of migrants have immediate or extended family members in Libya**

Migrants rely on and support family as part of their labour migration: over 40% have immediate or extended family members in Libya. Nearly 80% of migrants report sending remittances back to their families in their countries of origin.



**Migrants are interested in new employment or educational prospects.**

They reported that they lacked the necessary skills (33%) to either find a job or find a better job in Libya. A sizeable share (43%) report being interested in pursuing education or vocational or job-related training in Libya, most commonly citing training in foreign language and literacy or numeracy, general computer skills, and customer service. However, the three fields where they believe job-specific skills would be most helpful are construction, retail and sales, and agriculture. These findings suggest migrants know that hard labour such as construction pays the most and is easy to find jobs in; however, having language or computer and customer service skills could get them less physically strenuous jobs in retail and sales. Based on the qualitative responses, it seems that acquiring and improving agricultural skills was one area of particular interest to interviewed migrants.



**Safety is an important consideration for migrants**

Both in terms of everyday experiences as well as their likelihood to stay. Regarding their assessment of their life in Misrata, 81% report feeling very or somewhat safe. However, the qualitative interviews suggest that this safety is conditional and that they and those they know have experienced robberies and physical violence, and that many do not leave work or home spaces after dark. In contrast, 95% report feeling accepted by their local communities, suggesting that migrants are the targets of thieves, rather than being made to feel unsafe by those whom they know and live with. This sense of safety is related to their future plans as well, with 25% saying that personal safety and security are the major factor in what would make them more likely to leave.

**80%**

**Of migrants are literate in their mother tongue**

The largest two mother-tongue languages are Arabic and Hausa. Furthermore, 70% speak at least one additional language, while just under half (46%) can read or write in their second language.

**92%**

**Of migrants have been able to meet their basic needs**

Overall, 92% of migrants have been able to meet their basic needs, although they report on certain behaviors (like walking long distances and reducing the types of food they consume) to lower expenses. More than two thirds (68%) of this group of migrants in Misrata believe that their standard of living in Libya is better than it was in their home countries, while an additional 29% say it is the same.

### III. PURPOSE, METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

To learn more about the lives of migrants to Misrata, Georgetown University's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies (CCAS) partnered with IOM-Libya to conduct a mixed-method study collected data from 995 face-to-face quantitative surveys and 50 qualitative interviews conducted between 21 July 2019 and 31 January 2020 in the *baladiya* (municipality) of Misrata<sup>5</sup>.

The purpose of the mixed method study was to better understand the lives and backgrounds of migrants living in Misrata: the abilities and skills they bring to the labour market; the challenges they face given their status in Libya and strategies they design to get around these challenges; and their employment- and education-related aspirations. To this end, the quantitative survey asked 85 mostly closed-ended questions, though questions on employment in particular followed ILO recommendations and were kept open-ended and then post-coded for inclusion in quantitative analysis. The survey questions spanned five main topic areas: past education; future education intentions; current employment and experience and skills; past employment experience and future intentions; and life in Libya. Quantitative surveys took between 25 and 40 minutes to complete. The study coincided with conflict in Western Libya which erupted on 4 April 2019 and lasted until a ceasefire agreement was signed on 23 October 2020. Although there was no active fighting reported inside Misrata, some of the surrounding areas were affected substantially.

The quantitative sample was stratified by migrants' nationality with disproportionate allocation to the strata to ensure the inclusion of migrants from nationalities that comprised less than 10%

of the migrant population in Misrata. Round 22 (September-October 2018) of IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), a system used to monitor and track the movement of displaced and mobile nationals and foreign nationals in a country, provided estimates for the population of migrants from different nationalities by location in Misrata<sup>6</sup>. Round 22 was the most recent available data and had just been released when the sample was drawn in December 2018. The final sample included migrants from 16 of the 21 nationalities that the DTM reported as living in Misrata and one nationality (Burkina Faso) not included by the DTM. The five nationalities not included in the final sample were Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and Zambia. With the exception of migrants from Kenya, who comprised 1.6% of Misrata's migrant population, these remaining nationalities each comprise less than 0.6%. The survey thus generalizes to the nearly 56,000 international migrants from the included nationalities living in the Misrata *baladiya* as of December 2018. The margin of error is 4.2%. The sample composition by percentage is reported in Table 1.

In addition to the quantitative survey, enumerators conducted open-ended qualitative interviews with 50 of the 995 migrants. The qualitative interviews afforded migrants the opportunity to elaborate on themes related to their lives in their home countries and their decisions to come to Libya; their positive and negative experiences in assimilating

<sup>5</sup> There were 12 quantitative interviews completed in the *baladiya* of Zliten. These have been removed from the analysis to be able to delimit the geographic area to which the findings generalize.

<sup>6</sup> Misrata was one of several Libyan cities selected for the study. Operational considerations and security constraints at the time of fielding precluded the ability of the study to be carried out in Alkufra, Benghazi, Ghat, Sebha, and Tripoli as originally was planned by the study team. For more information, please refer to: International Organization for Migration. 19 December 2018. "Libya- Migrant Report 22 (Sept.-Oct. 2018)." <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/libya-%E2%80%94-migrant-report-22-sep-oct-2018>

and establishing their lives in Libya; and their future aspirations. These qualitative interviews were conducted in Arabic, English, and French.

Enumerators randomly identified respondents in each of the Misrata baladiya's 21 muhallas (subdistricts/neighborhoods) and conducted interviews in Arabic, English, and French. Approximately 36% of interviews were completed in the migrants' first language, while the remaining 64% were conducted in the migrants' second language. The majority of interviews (62%) were conducted at the workplace of the respondents, followed by 30% in a public space (like a café or park), and the remaining 8% in the respondents' home or in the IOM office.

*Table 1: Sample Composition*

Nationality	% of Dec. 2019 DTM Reported Population	% of Sample
Algeria	0.5	1.1
Bangladesh	3.9	5.1
Burkina Faso	NA	0.1
Chad	8.6	8.5
Cote d'Ivoire	0.2	0.9
Egypt	19.0	17.1
Ghana	9.2	8.4
Guinea	0.2	1.2
Mali	4.5	4.4
Morocco	1.9	1.9
Niger	34.2	32.6
Nigeria	3.6	2.9
Pakistan	0.05	1.2
Senegal	0.1	1.0
Sudan	9.3	8.6
Syria	1.0	1.0
Tunisia	3.6	3.8
	100% (N=60,671)	100% (n=995)

The results of the study potentially suggest that the migrants who participated are not the most destitute or perhaps the most vulnerable in Misrata. While the majority (64%) reported not having a Libyan residency card, a proxy for legal status in the country, when the study was conducted, this study did not include migrants held at Karareem detention center in Misrata, which was closed in 2019 <sup>(7)</sup>. Only 8% suggested they had spent time in a detention center since they had arrived in Libya.

But as the key findings suggest and as the following sections will further describe, many migrants present a positive assessment of their lives in Misrata. As no other known representative study of migrants has been done at such local a level, it is difficult to determine whether this is a function of non-response or sampling bias—even among those migrants who were not in detention centers—or a function of something specific to the city of Misrata. For example, migrants who did not have strong enough second-language skills in one of the languages in which the survey was conducted were excluded on account of a technicality. Many also may have refused to participate for fear of revealing any personal or sensitive information about themselves that might put them at increased risk of deportation. Alternatively, migrants' positive reports of life in Misrata might be on account of the city's political and economic trajectories.

7 BBC. 2 August 2019. "Libya to close 'inhuman' migrant detention centres after outcry." <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-49203792>

## IV. POLITICAL & ECONOMIC BACKDROP OF MISRATA

Located east of Tripoli, Misrata (Misurata) is estimated to be the third largest city in Libya with an estimated Libyan population of 360,000 people (2020).<sup>(8)</sup> According to the latest national census in 2006, Misrata had some of the highest education and literacy rates in the country (overall, 93% of Libyan men and 79% of Libyan women could read and write).<sup>(9)</sup>

### Political Situation

Politically, Misrata has a strong sub-national identity, rooted in its first armed resistance against the Italian colonial power (1911–1933) and also asserted during the 2011 Libyan uprising against Qadhafi's regime.<sup>(10)</sup> In 2012, Misrata held free elections for its first municipal council, and elections were held again in 2014. Comparatively to other cities, like Benghazi and Tripoli, Misrata is relatively secure as the city is the home of some of the largest and most powerful armed groups in Libya. Misrata has a strong cohesive social fabric that enabled different factions to compete for power without resorting to violence. Arguably, this could be explained by the importance

of social networks of armed groups' leaders—most of whom are wealthy businessmen representing well-established families from the same area—that have been serving to bridge disagreements that featured Misratan political forces and battalion commanders since 2014.<sup>(11)</sup>

In addition to hosting armed group leaders who leverage social and/or informal networks to mitigate conflict, Misrata has a standing formal institution charged with doing the same. The Council of Wiseman and Elders of Misrata made up of local notables, and civil society activists has played a key role in mediating conflicts between local commanders who, despite their different political affiliations, continue to abide by social ties in order to keep a coherent front in dealing with both Tripoli and Benghazi.<sup>(12)</sup>

In 2014, as hostilities escalated between Misratan armed groups and Hiftar's Libyan National Army, conflict expanded to the south of the country where both used their local proxies and networks. Although Misrata is represented in the Government of National Accords by the powerful businessman Ahmed Omar Maiteeq, there is strong disagreement among Misratans regarding General Hiftar's role in the establishment of a national unity government.<sup>(13)</sup>

Misratans' key political and military actors are willing to back themselves and to close ranks in

8 United Nations Population Fund (2020) estimates 344,201 Libyans to live in Misrata baladiya as of 2019. In addition, at least 16,000 internally displaced persons were identified in Round 32 of DTM IDP data collection.

9 "Libya Workforce Market Survey Report." Voluntas Group, April 2017, p. 5. <https://www.scribd.com/document/489775575/Libya-Workforce-Market-Survey-Report-FINAL-pdf>. "Fifty-four percent of Misratan men have a secondary education, compared to 37% of women. Further, about 8% of the male population has a university degree, compared to only 3.5% of women."

10 Brian McQuin, "History's Warriors: The Emergence of Revolutionary Battalions in Misrata," in Peter Cole and Brian McQuin, *The Libyan Revolution and Its Aftermath* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 229–256.

11 Wolfram Lacher, *Libya's Fragmentation: Structure and Process in Violent Conflict* (London: IB Tauris, 2020).

12 Ibid.

13 Abdulkader Assad, "Misrata elders council urges for expelling UN-proposed government from Tripoli," *The Libya Observer*, May 10, 2017. <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/misrata-elders-council-urges-expelling-un-proposed-government-tripoli>

Jalel Harchaoui, "Tarhuna, mass graves, and Libya's internationalized civil war," *War on The Rocks*, July 30, 2020. <https://warontherocks.com/2020/07/tarhuna-mass-graves-and-libyas-internationalized-civil-war/>

order to leverage power over Tripoli, regardless of the internal competition and disagreements that they sometimes express against each other. In this complex environment, the city witnessed the assassination of Mohamed Eshtewi, mayor of Misrata, in 2017. However, Misrata continues to be hailed as a role-model among the country's cities because the political process through electoral participation are held in viable conditions. On September 3, 2020, Misratans conducted municipal elections that were deemed "peaceful and successful" by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and praised for "defying the many challenges their city and country are facing in these trying times."<sup>(14)</sup> In August 2020, demonstrations against corruption and deteriorating public services took place in both Misrata and Tripoli.<sup>(15)</sup>

### Economy and Labour Markets

As with its political development, the 2011 uprisings marked a new beginning for Misrata's economy. Several parts of the city, especially the city center, were heavily damaged during the war. The damage provided an opportunity for the construction sector to grow in the city. The Qadhafi regime's attack on the city strengthened the links between its residents who formed armed groups to counter the attack. These groups became the most powerful militias in the country. Unlike other cities, however, Misratan militias did not engage in any large-scale clashes within the city, despite disagreements. That is due in part to the general understanding among Misratans of their own business interests. Therefore, the city has remained as arguably the most stable, safe, and secure city in post-2011 Libya.

This sense of stability served the economy in multiple ways. Enterprises found a safe environment in which to conduct business. Domestic and international companies were encouraged to invest inside the city due to the security situation and the Misrata Free Zone (MFZ), which was established by the government in the early 2000s. As the first free-trade economic zone in the country, the MFZ covers an area of more than 3500 hectares, encompassing the seaport. The zone offers a hub for investors and creates hundreds of job opportunities for domestic and foreign labour. Since its establishment, the MFZ has been under constant expansion and development. For example, the exclusive distributor of Toyota, one of the most popular cars in Libya, is located in the MFZ.<sup>(17)</sup>

The creation of the MZF was part and parcel of the easing of state regulations previously imposed on private economic activities toward the end of the 20th-century, when Misratan businessmen started to establish private companies in various sectors. Though limited, the emergence of such private enterprises increased the demand for skilled and unskilled labour; thus, demand for domestic and foreign workers increased. Along with that, the housing sector grew as thousands of Libyans moved into the town. The newly-arrived did not only add to the supply of labour, several of them moved their business to Misrata, creating jobs in the process.

Currently, Misrata is regarded as Libya's business capital, serving as a hub for commodities and materials trade with other cities. Its main economic activities include the steel industry, shipping, food processing, and wholesale and retail trade. Misrata's port "handles 50-60% of Libyan imports"<sup>(18)</sup> The city possesses one

16 "Misurata Free Zone." شركة المنطقة الحرة بمصراتة - الرئيسية. Accessed September 28, 2020. <http://www.freezone.ly/en/>

17 Toyota Libya. Accessed September 29, 2020. <https://toyota.ly/>.

18 Michel Cousins, "For Misratans, politics are divisive but Misrata comes first," *The Arab Weekly*, March 18, 2018. Available at: <https://theArabweekly.com/misratans-politics-are-divisive-misrata-comes-first>

14 "UNSMIL Congratulates People of Misrata on Successful Municipal Elections," *UNSMIL*, September 4, 2020. <https://unsmilunmissions.org/unsmil-congratulates-people-misrata-successful-municipal-elections>

15 "Libya: 2nd day of Misrata protests over corruption, poor services" 24 August 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/8/24/libya-2nd-day-of-misrata-protests-over-corruption-poor-services>

19 Rob Young, "Libya's commercial hubs recovers slowly," *BBC*, January 4, 2012. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-16366285>. "Business in Misrata: The can-do city," *The Economist*, October 3, 2013.

of the country's most developed infrastructures that includes roads, electricity and communication facilities, as well as textile factories, private companies, and trade centers.<sup>(19)</sup> Historically, Misrata was home to at least fifteen state-owned factories and companies employing both nationals and foreign workers; foreign workers were often hired to fill highly-skilled positions.<sup>(20)</sup> The companies included the likes of the Rata Shoe Factory, Al-Naseej Fabric Company, among others. Although most of these companies were later dissolved, they provided employment for thousands of Misratans and contributed to the expansion of the local economy.

Two key state-owned companies that survived are headquartered in Misrata: the Libyan Ports Company and the Libyan Iron and Steel Company (LISCO), which are major sources of income and employment with influence over the city. LISCO remains one of the strategic sources of state revenue outside the oil sector. These infrastructures both bestow Misrata with socio-economic advantage and empower Misratan politicians allied with local militias in the process of bargaining with successive transitional governments in the post-Qadhafi era. The LISCO remains one of the largest employers in Misrata with a labour force of nearly 7000 people.<sup>(21)</sup> LISCO is considered one of the biggest steel companies in North Africa: its value added contribution to Libyan GDP totaled 751.77 million Libyan dinars in 2018 and its revenues reached high enough to allow the company to request a US\$1 billion tender in 2019.<sup>(22)</sup> The company, which continues to expand, employs nationals, and its employees range from highly skilled to low skilled labour, depending on the positions and tasks.

Due to the role of business and industry, the public sector is less dominant in Misrata than it is in other parts of the country.<sup>(23)</sup> Although the larger portion of the labour force is employed by the state, that portion is smaller in Misrata than it is in other cities. Moreover, the challenges that public sector employment have presented recently caused some Misratans to move to the private sector. These challenges include irregular or delayed payment of salaries, failure to adjust salaries to inflation, among other issues. Migrant workers are not commonly employed in the public sector.

Instead, sectors like wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, transportation, and communication are responsible for nearly 40% of employment in the city.<sup>(24)</sup> Thanks to the seaport, Misrata is often seen as the gateway to the south and to central Libya. Many Misratans work as truck drivers who transport goods into inner cities and towns. Along with that comes an extensive network of maintenance and spare-parts shops run by Misratans and spread throughout the city, with a noticeable concentration near the seaport. The shipping and transportation industry serves as a major hub for foreign workers who seek jobs in the shops or workers loading and unloading goods, and who work as mechanics and other technical jobs related to the transportation sector.

Recently, several food processing plants have emerged in the city. These plants employ thousands of workers, many of whom are highly skilled foreign workers to run complex machinery or conduct inspections. Furthermore, small businesses, including grocery stores, often hire foreign workers to carry

20 *A Guide to the Khaleej Sirte Municipality: Twenty Years of Achievements (1969-1989)*. Misrata, Libya: The Popular Committee for Planning in the Khaleej Sirte Municipality, 1989.

21 Nye Longman. *Libyan Iron and Steel: Growing in the Face of Adversity*, n.d. Accessed September 29, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://issuu.com/mininglobal/docs/bro.libyanironandsteel-mg-sept2015>

22 Laessing, Ulf. "Exclusive: Libyan Steel Maker Plans \$1 Billion Tender in July, Output Hike in 2019." Reuters. Thomson Reuters, June 19, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-economy-steel-exclusive/idUSKCN1TK176>.

23 Overall in Libya, the World Bank reported that, "The vast majority of the employed in Libya work in the public sector (84 percent in 2012), which is considered high even by regional standards [...] The rate is even higher for females. Ninety-seven percent of all working women are employed in the public sector compared to 79 percent of working males." Elgazzar, H., Lahga, A. R., Quota, M. B. N., Rother, F. U., & Hargreaves, L. (2015). *Labour market dynamics in Libya: reintegration for recovery* (No. 97478, pp. 1-89). The World Bank. <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/967931468189558835/pdf/97478-PUB-PUBLIC-Box-382159B-9781464805660.pdf>

24 "Libya Workforce Market Survey Report." Voluntas Group, April 2017, p. 96 <https://voluntasgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Libya-Workforce-Market-Survey-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

out physical and miscellaneous labour. Post-2011 Misrata saw a rise of a new industry that continues to grow and expand, that is domestic medical tourism, with a new hospital that opened in 2018.<sup>(25)</sup> Libyans from central and southern Libya travel to Misrata to seek medical care in public or private hospitals and clinics. Medical tourism boosts the local economy as it creates demand for housing and services, especially that tourists often do a lot of shopping to take advantage of the large market existing in Misrata.

### Labour in Misrata

Generally speaking, there is a clear divide between domestic and foreign workers in the labour market. But most establishments would likely have both Libyans and non-Libyans working there. Skilled positions are often occupied by Libyans, given that education in the country is free and a large percentage of Libyans graduate. Even in small-scale enterprises, Libyans tend to serve as cashiers or inspectors, while foreigners do most of the manual labour. However, highly-skilled positions are also often filled by foreign workers who generally possess better education and training.<sup>(26)</sup> A large percentage of foreign workers come to Libya irregularly. However, it seems that legal status depends to some extent on the country of origin. Asian workers, for example, often come to Libya after obtaining a work visa, similar to North Africans. Those working without a clear legal status include many Nigeriens, Malians, Egyptians, Chadians, and Sudanese, and others from sub-Saharan Africa, who have often traveled to Libya by land without the proper documents. Generally, the current Misratan authorities and the Libyan state, realizing the importance of foreign workers to the economy, does not follow a strict policy of deportation.<sup>(27)</sup>

25 "Misrata Medical Centre opens," *Libya Herald*, 7 March 2018, <https://www.libyaherald.com/2018/03/07/misrata-medical-centre-opens/>

26 "Labour Market Dynamics in Libya: Reintegration for Recovery," World Bank Group, 2015. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/22015/9781464805660.pdf?sequence=1>.

27 Tsourapas, Gerasimos. "Labor Migrants as Political Leverage: Migration Interdependence and Coercion in the Mediterranean." *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (April 26, 2018): 383–95

Foreign workers inside the city are often left alone. They are, on some occasions, asked to get a medical certificate to ensure they are healthy.

Misrata falls under the Government of National Accord's authority that adopted the *Joint Communication on the Central Mediterranean route*,<sup>(28)</sup> and the Malta Declaration.<sup>(29)</sup> The two legal frameworks shaped the EU-Libya relationship and put security and migration control at the forefront of their cooperation.<sup>(30)</sup> Since its establishment in 2015, the EU Emergency Trust for Africa (EUTF) allocated €435 million "for actions to support migration related issues in Libya."<sup>(31)</sup> European financial assistance seeks to improve "the living conditions of host communities" and "save the lives of those making dangerous journeys by sea or land."<sup>(32)</sup>

Respect for migrants' human rights continues to be a challenge. The most well-known detention center in Misrata has been closed as of October 2019, and persons held were transferred to centers in nearby parts of the country.<sup>(33)</sup>

28 European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council, Migration on the Central Mediterranean route: Managing flows, saving lives*, Brussels, January 25, 2017. [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20170125\\_migration\\_on\\_the\\_central\\_mediterranean\\_route\\_-\\_managing\\_flows\\_saving\\_lives\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20170125_migration_on_the_central_mediterranean_route_-_managing_flows_saving_lives_en.pdf)

29 European Council, *Malta Declaration by the members of the European Council on the external aspects of migration: addressing the Central Mediterranean route*, February 3, 2017. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/02/03/malta-declaration/>

30 European Agenda on Migration 2015 –four pillars to better manage migration. [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/summary\\_european\\_agenda\\_on\\_migration\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/summary_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf)

31 EU, EU Support on Migration in Libya (June 2020). [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/july\\_2020\\_eutf\\_factsheet\\_libya\\_2.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/july_2020_eutf_factsheet_libya_2.pdf)

32 Ibid. See also Maggie Michael, Lori Hinnant and Renata Brito, "Making misery pay: Libya militias take EU funds for migrants," Associated Press, December 31, 2019. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/european-money-spawns-misery-migrants-libya-67995337>;

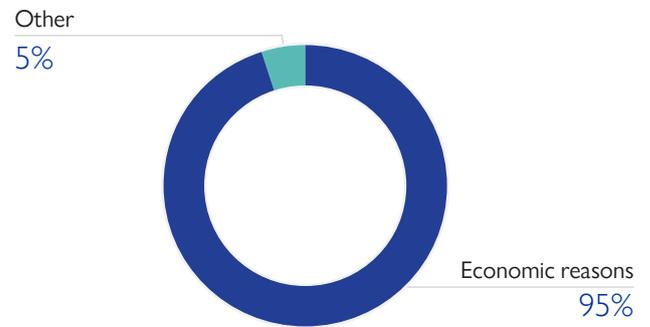
33 "Libya: Detained migrants and refugees face worse conditions after closure of Misrata center," *Doctors Without Borders*, October 18, 2019. <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/news-stories/story/libya-detained-migrants-and-refugees-face-worse-conditions-after>

# V. COMING TO AND LIVING IN MISRATA

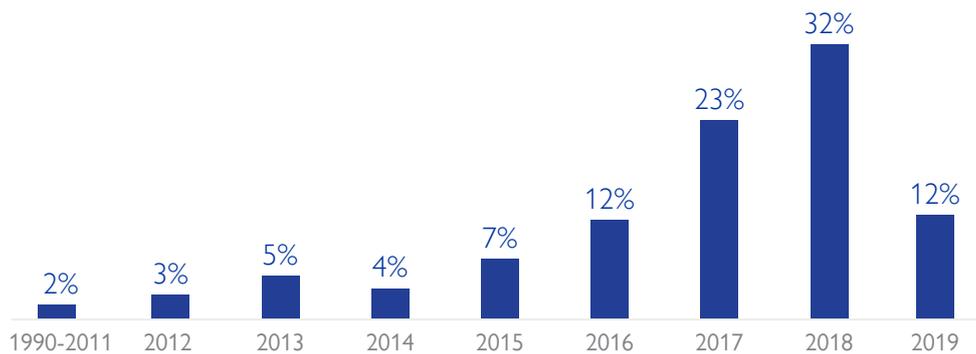
## A SNAPSHOT OF MIGRANT'S LIVES IN THE CITY

Against this backdrop, migrants to Misrata come from as close as neighboring Algeria to as far as Bangladesh, but no matter the distance they travel, their motivation to leave their countries of origin behind is nearly unanimous: 95% say it was because of the economic situation in their home countries. Nearly 80% of migrants first arrived in Libya in the past four years (2016-2019), and nearly 40% have immediate or extended family members in the country.

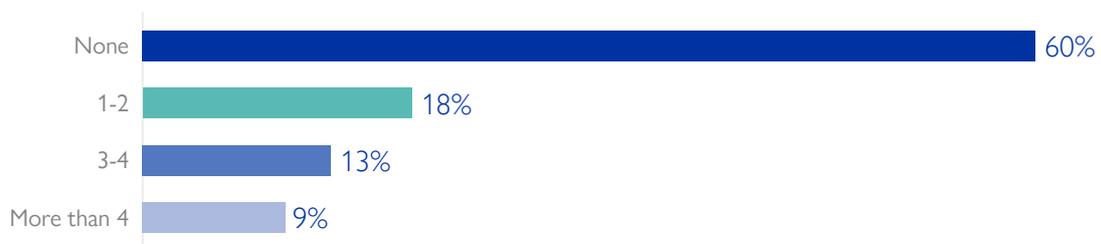
**Figure 1: Reason for Leaving Country of Origin**



**Figure 2: Year Arrived in Libya**



**Figure 3: Number of Family Members in Libya**



Yet all have left families behind. Migrants in Misrata are predominantly male (98%), Muslim (89%), young (51% between 18 and 29), and just over half are or have been married. A plurality (45%) has children, and among them, almost all report having at least one child under the age of 18 years. Commensurately, nearly 80% of migrants report sending remittances back to their families in their countries of origin. However, the devaluation of the Libyan dinar has affected even qualified-skilled migrants' ability to send money home,<sup>(34)</sup> given that regular "money transfers abroad in Libyan dinars have been impossible since mid-2014."<sup>(35)</sup> Migrant workers often use informal ways to send remittances home, although the subject is one that varies due to political and economic conditions and depends on the country of origin of the worker.<sup>(36)</sup>

Figure 4: Migrants Age Groups

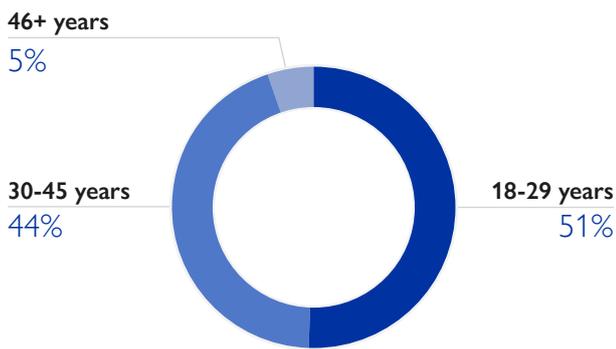


Figure 5: Religion



Figure 6: Marital Status

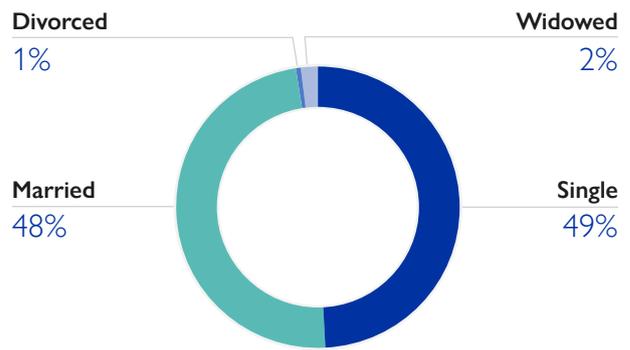


Figure 7: Family with Children

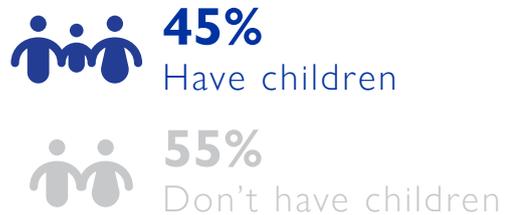


Figure 8a: Number of Children

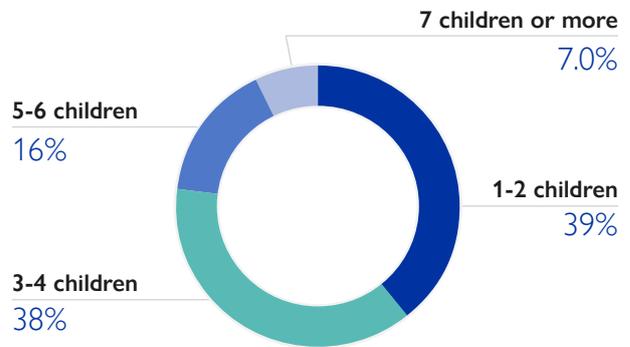
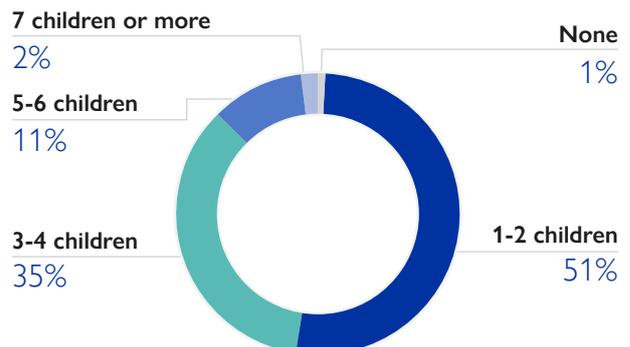


Figure 8b: Children Under 18



34 Ibid.

35 Tom Westcott, "In Libya, hard economic times force migrant workers to look elsewhere," *The New Humanitarian*, February 18, 2019. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2019/02/18/libya-hard-economic-times-force-migrant-workers-look-elsewhere>

36 IOM, "Living and Working in the Midst of Conflict: The Status of Long-term Migrants in Libya" 2019. <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/living-and-working-in-the-midst-of-conflict.pdf>

When asked about whether various factors motivated them to go to Libya rather than a different country, family reasons are second only to employment, making the economy both a push- and pull-factor in migrants' financial decisions: migrants leave their countries of origin so as to be able to support their families--the push factor--and they migrate to places with stronger economics where they believe they can find employment--the pull factor. But these are not the only determinants of migrants' calculations in decisions to move. Though few reported having immediate (6%) or extended (29%) family in Europe, nearly 38% suggest that they choose Libya as a transit stop on the way to a different country.

Despite this sizeable group who have aspirations to continue to other countries, no one factor overwhelming seems to motivate migrants in Libya to want to leave. At most, 25% said that their degree of personal safety and security would make them more

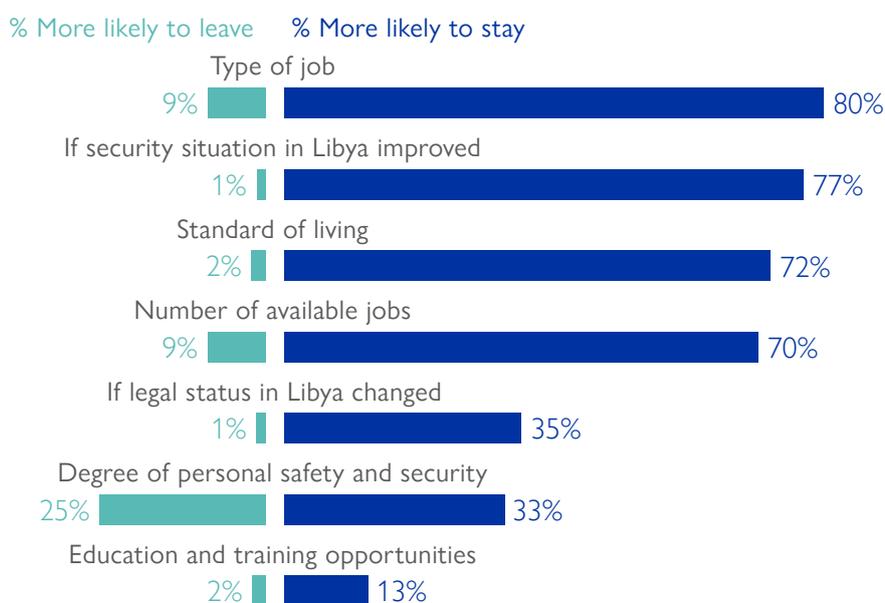
**Table 2: Factors Motivating Migrants to Come to Libya Instead of a Different Country\***

Reason	% saying this factor motivated them to a great or medium extent
Employment	99.5
Family reasons	49.3
Transit to another country	38.2
Education	14.3
Medical treatment	13.7
Trafficked or coerced	2.0
Get refugee status or asylum	2.3

\* The question was phrased as follows: "I will read you a list of factors that may have motivated you to come to Libya instead of a different country. Please tell me if each factor influenced your decision to a great extent, a medium extent, a limited extent, or not at all."

likely to leave. Instead, migrants report that economic factors, like the type of job they have (80%) and the number of available jobs (70%), improved security-related conditions (77%), and their standard of living (72%) provide impetus for them to stay.

**Figure 9: Factors Influencing Migrants Decisions to Stay or Leave Libya**



# 42%

**Of migrant workers reported having work permits**

That a potential change in legal status mostly has no bearing on migrants' decisions to stay or leave (49%) reflects on their sense that the legal status of this group of migrants in Misrata is not closely tied to their ability to work. Among the migrants, 27% report having a Libyan residency card, and 42% report having a Libyan work permit.<sup>(37)</sup>

The majority of migrants have at least a national identification card from their home countries (84%), and just over half (55%) say their passports are in their possession.

This group of migrants' relatively low assignment of importance to legal status might also reflect the fact that even without it, their self-reported assessments of their standards of living in Misrata are positive. That 77% say their standard of living motivates them more to stay in Libya than leave is partially explained by migrants' descriptions of their living conditions. Nearly 94% live in a private setting, like a house or an apartment, and six in 10 (62%) pay the cost of housing themselves, while 34% do not need to pay for housing or shelter. More than 98% report having each indoor plumbing, electricity, hard flooring, and a roof or hard ceiling where they live. Smaller shares, however, reported having an indoor heating source (39%) and safe drinking water (35%). To secure housing, migrants mainly rely on each other (49%), but also on their Libyan host community (25%) as well as themselves (25%).

**Table 3: Migrants Who Have Each of the Following Documents in their Possession in Libya**

Documents	%
Passport	55.4
National ID	84.2
Driver's license (from country of origin)	7.8
Birth certificate	48.5
Libyan residency card	27.2
Libyan work permit	42.4
Libyan driver's license	3.8

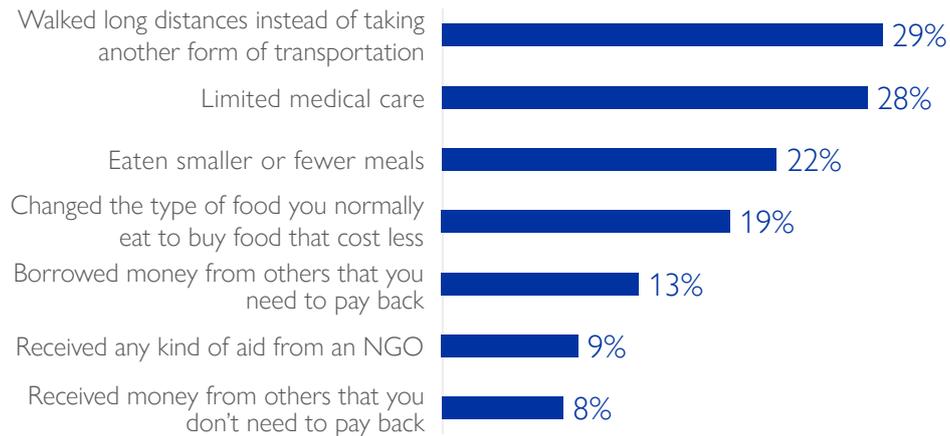
**Table 4: Migrants Who Have Each of the Following in their Places of Residence in Misrata**

	%
Indoor plumbing	99.5
Electricity	99.5
Hard flooring	98.7
Roof or hard ceiling	98.5
Indoor heating source	39.4
Safe drinking water	35.1

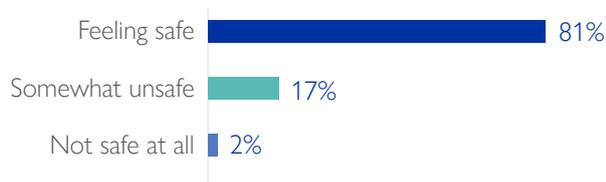
Overall, 92% of migrants have been able to meet their basic needs, and most have done so without relying on supplementary income. Only 13% borrowed money; 9% received humanitarian aid; and only 8% received money from others. Instead, more sizable—but still minority—shares of migrants seem to rely on cost-saving strategies, such as walking in place of using transportation (29%) and limiting medical care (28%). One-fifth or fewer change their food consumption patterns, including the number and size of meals or the type of food. Just under half of all migrants report needing to access healthcare (47%), and of those who needed it, 86% were able to access it. Cost and transportation were the two most commonly cited reasons for lack of access among the remaining 14% who needed healthcare but did not get it.

37 For more on residency permits in Libya, see IOM, *Living and Working in the Midst of Conflict: The Status of Long-term Migrants in Libya*, 2019, pp 10-11. <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/living-and-working-in-the-midst-of-conflict.pdf>

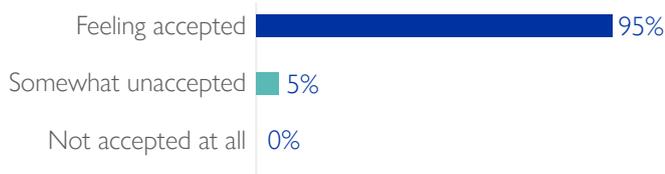
**Figure 10: Cost-Saving Strategies and Supplementary Income to Meet Basic Needs**



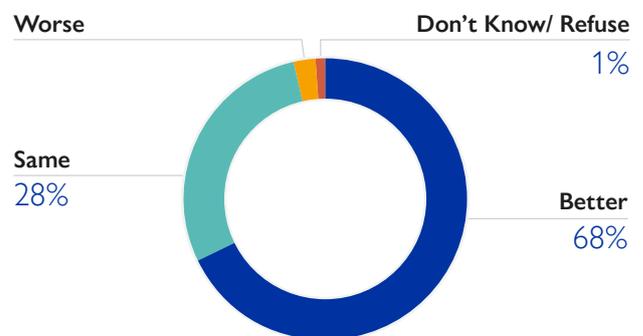
**Figure 11: Feelings of Safety**



**Figure 12: Feelings of Acceptance**



**Figure 13: Standard of Living in Libya Compared to Country of Origin**

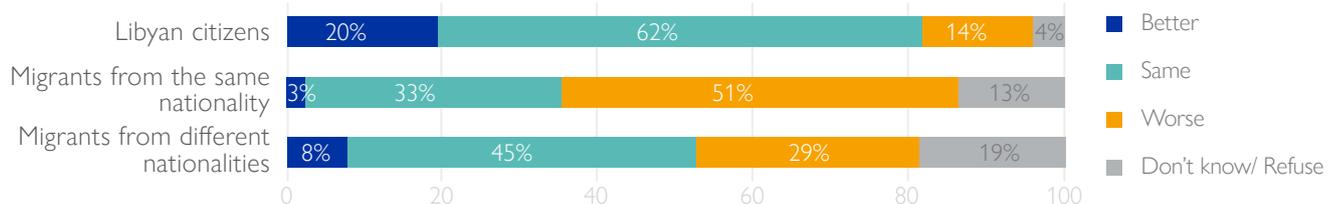


With their basic needs accounted for, 81% of migrants in Misrata report feeling very or somewhat safe, and an even higher share (95%) report feeling accepted by their local communities. Potentially contributing to these feelings is that an equally high share (81%) among this group of migrants suggest that the security forces treat them as well or better than Libya citizens, and a slight majority (53%) believe they are treated better than migrants from other nationalities. This finding echoes other studies that suggest Misrata has been a privileged destination for Sub Saharan African migrants because it is seen not only as the gateway to

Europe, but also offers labour to migrants while being a “safe haven” where gangs of kidnapers are “unheard of in Misrata.”<sup>(38)</sup> In the qualitative interviews, however, migrant workers reported being the targets of armed robberies, both when walking down the street at night and in their homes or shelters.

In sum, more than two thirds (68%) of this group of migrants in Misrata believe that their standard of living in Libya is better than it was in their home countries, while an additional 29% say it is the same. Their work in Libya often involves long hours and manual work.

**Figure 14: Do security forces treat you better than, the same as, or worse than:**



38 Karlos Zurutuza, “Libya’s Misrata offers hope to migrants,” DW, December 1, 2017. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/libyas-misrata-offers-hope-to-migrants/a-37106488>

## VI. EMPLOYMENT OF MIGRANTS IN MISRATA

While the availability of jobs factored heavily in most migrants' decision to come to Libya rather than a different country (70%), an almost equally high share (62%) worked in their country of origin. Of those who did, the greatest number by far worked in agriculture, pastoralism, or fishing (54%), while smaller shares worked in construction or retail.

**Table 5: Migrants' Sector of Work in Country of Origin**

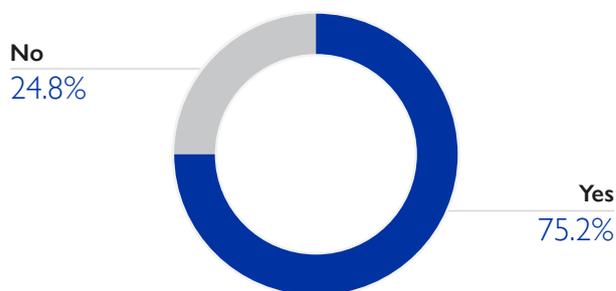
Sector	%
Agriculture, pastoralism, fishing	53.8
Construction	12.4
Retail, sales, manufacturing	11.6
Auto/truck mechanic	4.2
Food or restaurant industry	4.1
Other*	12.8

\* Includes 3% or less of each of the following: accounting, banking, and finance; electricity, plumbing, gas, and water supply; daily labour; education and translation; health; hospitality and tourism; information and communication technology; janitorial and security services; mechanic; sewing and tailoring; transportation; warehouse, port, and shop work; and other.

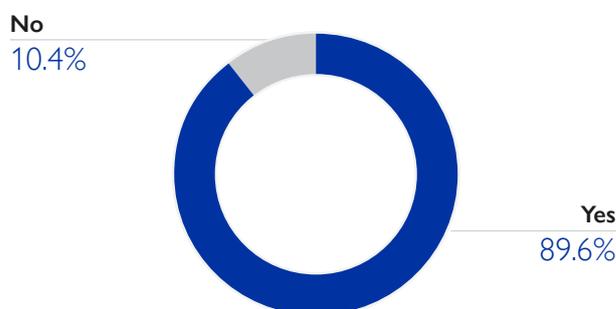
Upon arriving in Misrata, 75% of migrants report working continuously, defined as a break of no more than 14 days between jobs. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority (89%) are employed. Of the 11% who were unemployed, 94% are looking for jobs in construction, janitorial and security services, agriculture, warehouse/port, shop work. The very small minority (6%) who report not looking for work say that it is mainly because they are moving soon (51%) or because they are homemakers (33%).

Those who are employed work long hours. While the vast majority work only one job (87%), most work six (55%) or seven (24%) days a week, and approximately 64% report working between nine and 12 hours per day. The industries in which they work and their job titles (79% are craft, trade, service or sales workers) indicate manual labour for most jobs.

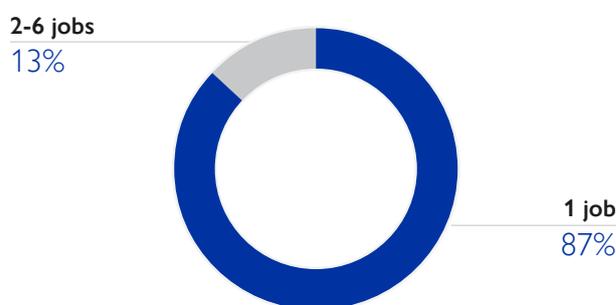
**Figure 15: Worked Continuously Since Arriving in Misrata?**



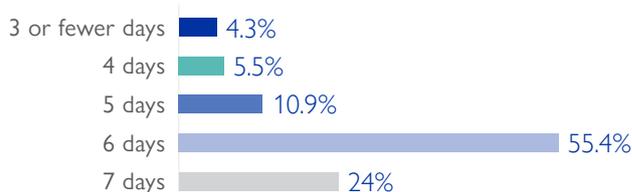
**Figure 16: Employed Last Week?**



**Figure 17: Number of Paid Jobs Last Week**



**Figure 18: Days Worked Last Week**



**Figure 19: Hours Worked Last Week**

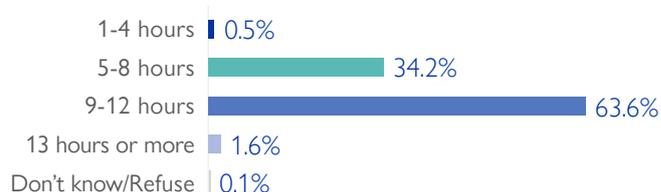
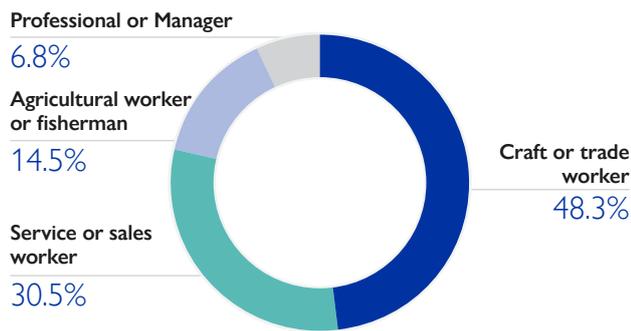
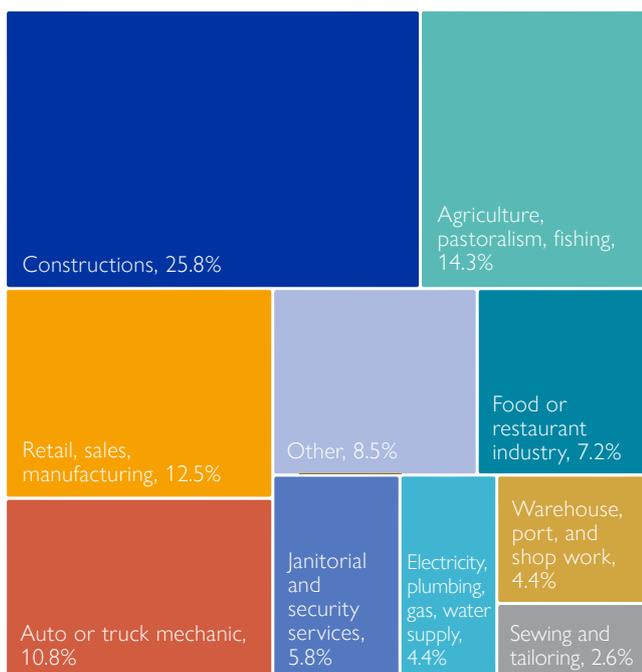


Figure 20: Position title at work



The plurality of migrants has found jobs in construction (25%), which is potentially commensurate with the above reported expansion in Misrata’s economy. Furthermore, and again in parallel with the local economic demands of Misrata as a gateway to south and central Libya, 15% work as auto and truck mechanics or in warehouses and ports. Other groups have found work in retail (13%) including clothing, grocery, office supply, gas stations, and home goods stores. Of the 14% who work in agriculture, many specified picking fruits such as dates and olives, two staple exports of Misrata, or fishing, another commodity both consumed locally and also exported.

Figure 21: Employment Sector in Work Last Week Among those Employed\*



\* Includes 2% or less of each: education and translation; health; hospitality and tourism; information and communication technology; non-auto mechanic; transportation; and other

Two-thirds of migrants asked others to help them find their jobs, and overwhelmingly, those others are other migrants (74%), while the local Libya host community plays a part to a lesser extent (17%). While nearly one-third say they faced no problem doing in finding employment, another third report difficulty on account of lacking necessary skills (33%), followed by less than 10% who say they faced each, language barriers, lack of connections, and legal status.

Figure 22: Method of Finding Employment

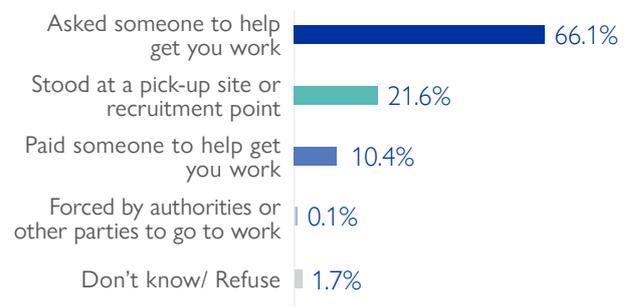


Figure 23: Helped most in finding a job

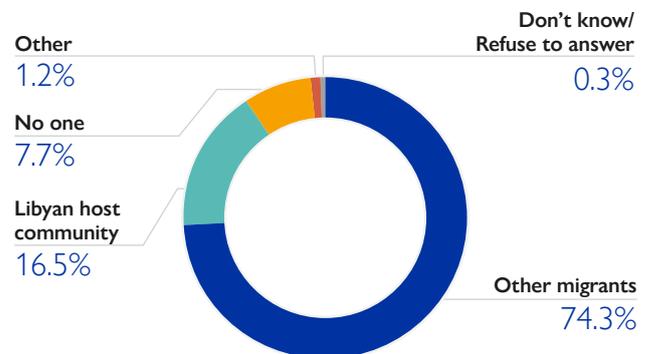


Table 6: Greatest challenge in finding employment

Sector	%
I do not face problems in finding a job	29.2
Don't have necessary skills for available jobs	33.3
Language barrier	6.5
Don't have connections needed for accessing jobs	6.0
Legal status in Libya	5.4
Other	15.3
Don't know/Refuse	4.2

And while there might be challenges in finding work, migrants report overall satisfaction with their jobs. Upwards of 93% of migrants say their salary, regularity of payment, physical work conditions, and treatment by employers or coworkers are good, very good, or excellent. A smaller share—but still the majority (69%)—say they can easily report a problem at work. (It should be noted that 62% of interviews were conducted at migrants’ place of

work.) In light of these assessments, most migrants feel that their employment rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are protected: 84% say they have the right to free choice of employment. While lower than the 94% and 98% respectively saying their work conditions salary are good or better, a still sizeable share say they have the right to just and favorable work conditions (70%) and to equal pay for equal work (62%).

Figure 24: Migrants: Ratings of each of the following at work

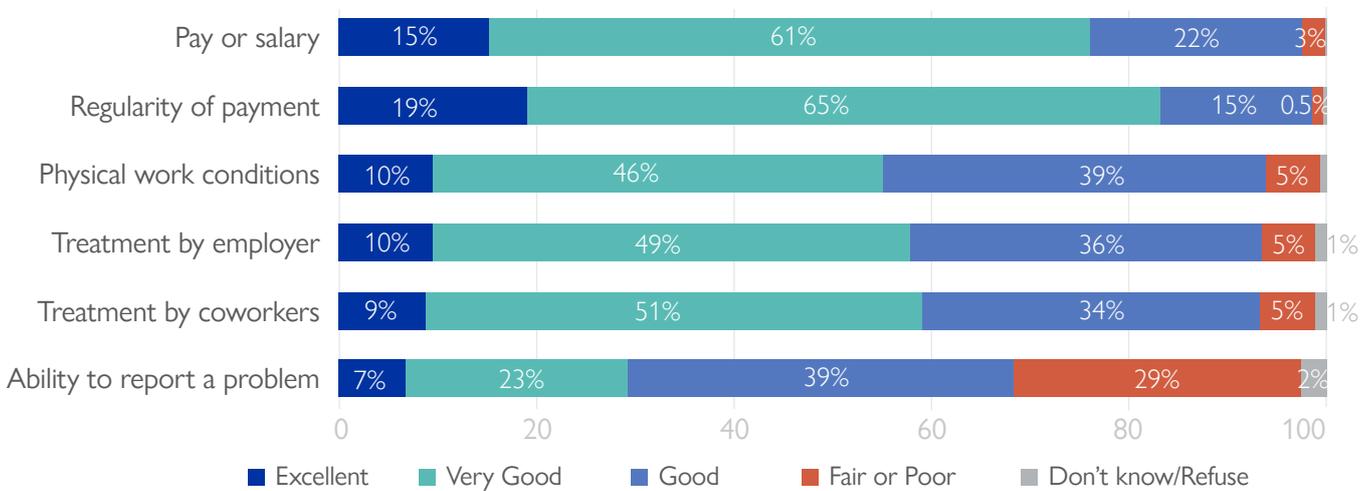
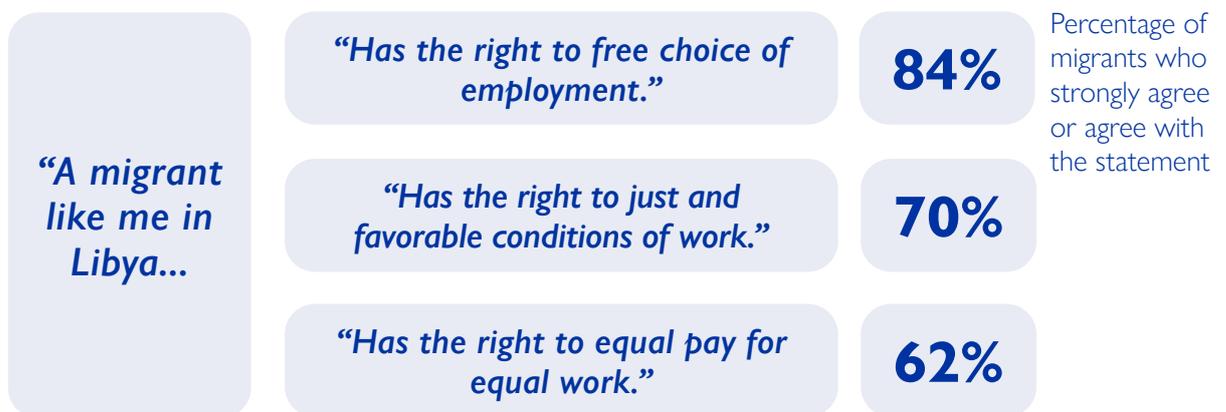


Figure 25: Perception of Employment Rights\*

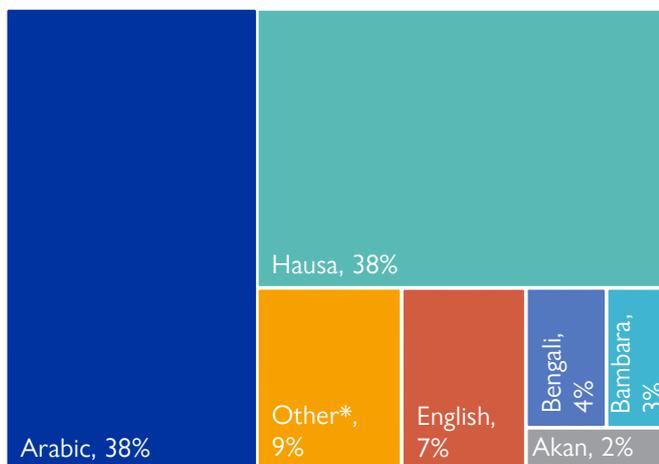


\* These verbatim statements from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were what appeared on the survey.

## VII. EDUCATION, SKILLSETS, & REQUESTED TRAINING OF MIGRANTS IN MISRATA

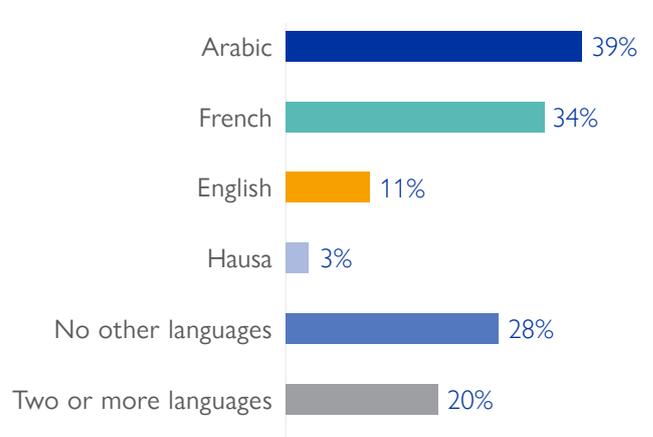
Migrants' education levels and skills contribute to their abilities to find employment in Misrata. Their first languages reflect the predominant nationalities in the city, but regardless of their mother tongue, four out five migrants are literate in that language. Furthermore, 70% speak at least one additional language, most commonly Arabic or French, while just under half (46%) can read or write in their second language.

Figure 26: Mother Tongue



\* Includes less than 1% of each: Afar, Amazigh, Ewe, Fante, French, Fellata/Fulani/Tukulur, Frafra, Ga, Kanemou,Kru, Malionke, Mande, Mandinka/Jahanka, Peuhl/Fouffoulbe, Sara, Songhai Susu, Swahili, Touareg, Wolof, Urdu, and Yoruba.

Figure 27: Other Languages Spoken\*



\* These do not sum to 100% as respondents can speak more than one additional language. Furthermore, there were additional languages listed in this open answer question, but none comprised more than 1%.

Figure 28: Write Letter in Mother Tongue?

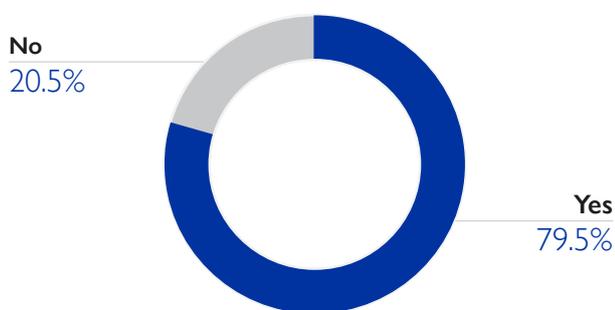


Figure 29: Write Letter in Second Language?





# 10%

of migrants report never having attended school, while most have at least a primary (35%) or secondary (27%) school education.

Among the 19% who have technical, university, or post-graduate level training, most say their degree was in Quranic studies (26%), while the remainder bring a tremendous diversity of higher education specializations with them. Only 37% of those with technical or higher degrees, however, have documents with them to prove their highest levels of education.

Figure 30: Educational Attainment

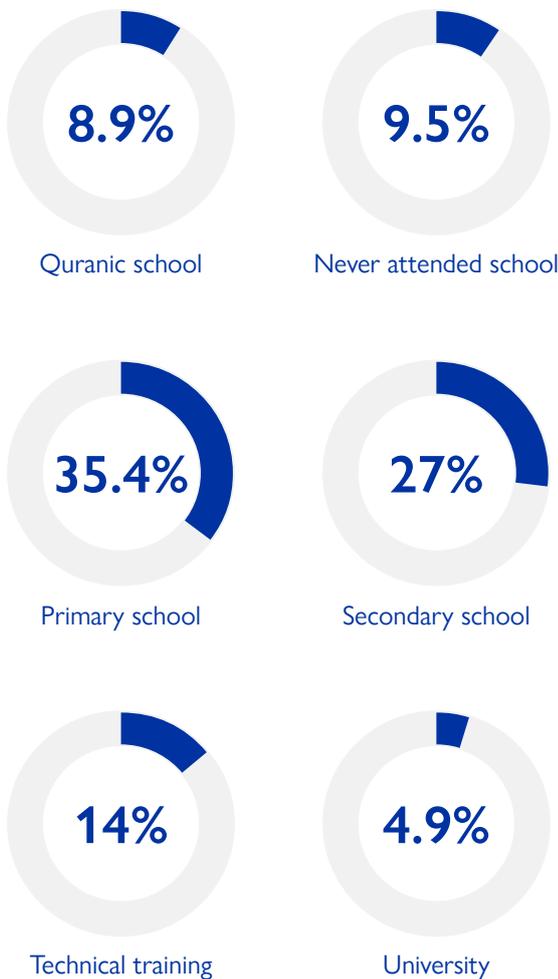
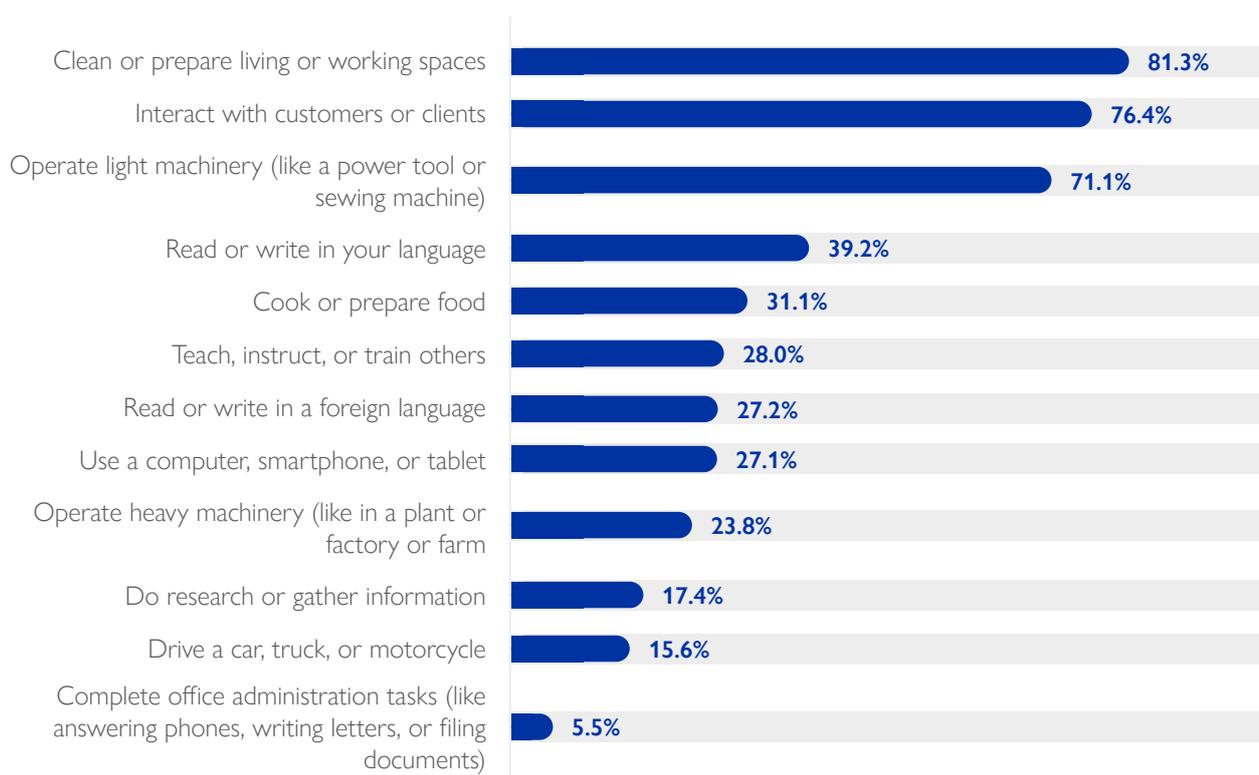


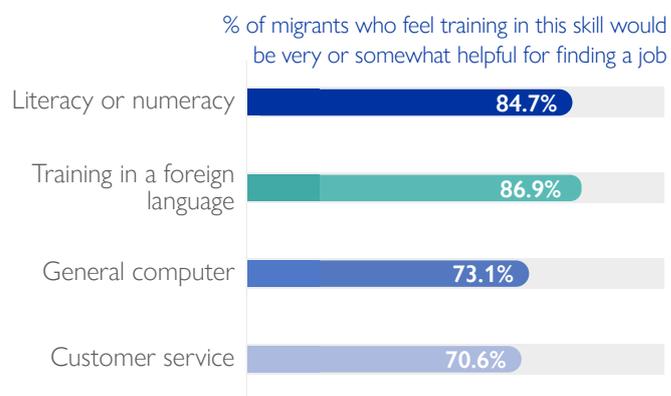
Table 7: Major of those with technical or university degrees

	%
Agriculture	2.9
Arts, architecture, design	1.6
Blacksmith, welding, metalwork	4.3
Building and construction	5.3
Business, economics	8.3
Carpentry	4.0
Computer, technology	2.9
Education, languages	4.8
Electricity, plumbing, gas, water supply	7.1
Engineering	4.2
Food, catering, restaurant industry	1.2
Cosmetology	1.2
Health and science	3.9
Hospitality and tourism	4.2
Mechanics	9.3
Other	3.4
Quranic studies	25.9
Refrigeration and air conditioning	2.1
Sewing, tailoring	0.4
Social sciences, social work, psychology	2.1
Sports	0.9

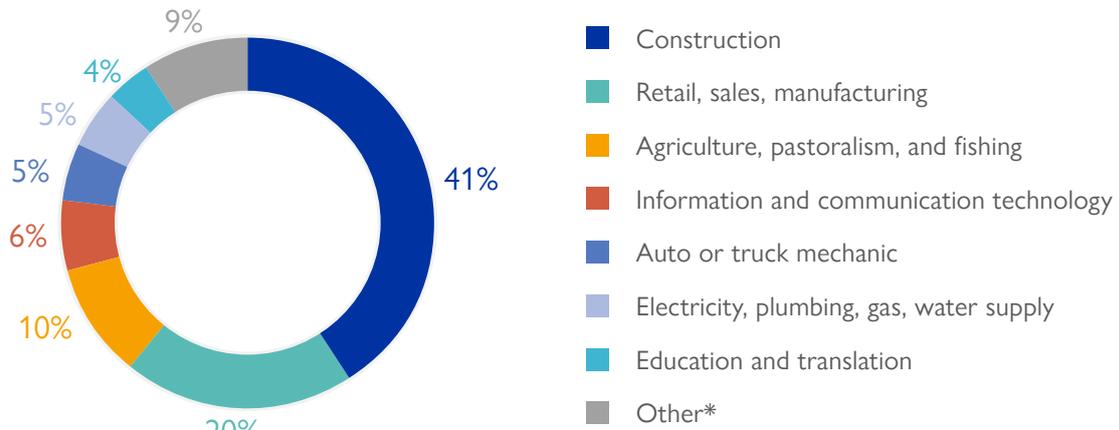
Regardless of higher education attainment, migrants also bring a myriad of skills gleaned from previous work experience. The vast majority have held jobs requiring them to clean or prepare living or workspaces, interact with customers or clients, or operate light machinery. A smaller yet sizeable minority have needed to read or write in their first or second languages; use computers, tablets, or smartphones; or teach or instruct others.

**Figure 31: Migrants: In any job you have ever held, did your work require you to:**

With 33% of migrants reporting that lacking necessary skills was the main impediment to finding a job, an even greater number (43%) report being interested in pursuing education or vocational or job-related training in Libya. Specifically, migrants believe that training in foreign language and literacy or numeracy would be very or somewhat helpful, followed by training in general computer and customer service. When asked to report the three main industries or fields they believe job-specific skills would be most helpful, however, three sectors dominate: construction, retail and sales, and agriculture. As suggested in the qualitative interviews, migrants mention that they would be able to make more money working in the construction sector if they had the necessary skills.

**Figure 32: Skills in Which Migrants Want Training**

**Figure 33: Migrants: In what industry or field do you think training in job-specific skills would be most helpful for finding work in Libya?**



\* Includes 2% or less of each: accounting, banking, and finance; beauty and fashion; food or restaurant industry; health; hospitality and tourism; non-auto mechanic; sewing and tailoring; transportation, warehouse, port, and shop work; and other.

**Table 8: Migrants: If you could choose any ONE sector or field to work in, what would it be?**

	Sector 1 %
Construction	39.9
Retail, sales, manufacturing	16.9
Agriculture, pastoralism, fishing	10.6
Auto/Truck Mechanic	5.1
Electricity, plumbing, gas, water supply	4.4
Warehouse, port, and shop work	4.1
Other*	19

\* Includes 2% or less of beauty and fashion, education and translation, food or restaurant industry, health, hospitality and tourism, IT, janitorial and security services, sewing and tailoring, transportation, and ware/port work.

## VIII. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

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This study reveals the experiences of non-Libyans living and working in Misrata, detailing the types of jobs they worked, their perceptions of working conditions and rights, their living situations, their interests in acquiring new skills, and their relationships to their home countries, among other topics. The quantitative statistics generalize to 56,000 international migrants from 17 nationalities living in Misrata (as of December 2018). Per IOM's DTM statistics, migrants from Niger (34%) and Egypt (19%) are the two largest groups. In addition, 80% of the migrant workers are literate in their mother tongue and 70% speak another language.

Misrata is the third largest city in Libya, and relatively politically stable following the 2011 uprising. This has resulted in both economic opportunities as well as feelings of safety among its inhabitants. Misrata attracts workers because it is more politically stable than other cities in Libya, and with its economically prosperous port, and associated import and export industries and transportation.

This stability and security reveals the critical role that migrant workers play in the local economy. The study showed the variation in the types of jobs that migrants work in, and the flexibility and multiple skills of the migrants, most of whom work 6 days a week, and some of whom work two jobs. They work in jobs that hire them on a weekly or monthly basis, while others go daily to labour pick-up points and work whatever jobs are offered by employers.

The labour backgrounds of the migrants in their home country do not map easily onto the work they do in Libya. Just over 53% of the migrants worked in agriculture, pastoralism, and fishing in their country of origin. When they come to the city of Misrata, however, construction is the largest sector of employment (25%), followed by agriculture, pastoralism, fishing, and then retail, sales, and manufacturing. When asked what sector they would prefer to work in, 40% chose construction, because reportedly it has higher wages

than other sectors. This finding relates to the idea that migrant workers are in Libya to earn money, either to save or to send as remittances to their family. If Misrata's economic situation were to change significantly for the worse, there would be a significant impact on migrants working in the city.

**Recommendation:** Recently carried out macroeconomic analyses by IOM point to an urgent need of diversification in Libyan economy. As this study has reiterated, construction, agriculture and automobile sectors are projected to create more jobs in coming years. In an effort to sustain such growth, IOM recommends supporting the government in developing a decentralized migration governance strategy to harness human capital, including the role of migrant workers in local economy. Development of such strategy to accompany protection schemes to ensure the minimum standards of living and working conditions of migrant workers. Moreover, IOM advocates for the regularization of migrant workers, as a result, would have access to social security and pay taxes.

The study found that the employment rate was relatively high, with 90% employed in the week prior to being interviewed. When asked what is the greatest challenge in finding a job, the most common answer was the lack of necessary skills (33%). Thus, a sizeable share (43%) report being interested in pursuing education or vocational or job-related training in Libya, something that could be coordinated with relevant authorities and local stakeholders to meet their needs as well.

**Recommendation:** In order to reduce skills mismatch in local labour force, IOM recommends establishing targeted training programmes to boost migrants' cognitive skills to increase their employability. The establishment of economic hubs to provide work-related information and

offering tailored training schemes for both Libyan and non-Libyan youth can help to better match supply and demand in local economy.

It is clear that migrants rely on specific networks for both employment and housing. When asked how they got their jobs, two-thirds had asked others to help them find their jobs, with the help being asked of other migrants (74%), and the local Libya host community (17%). Similarly, 49% relied on other migrants to find housing, with 25% relying on Libyans. In terms of housing, the vast majority live in what could be termed permanent structures, with 98% of the migrants reporting that they had indoor plumbing, electricity, hard flooring, and a roof or hard ceiling. Only 35% however, had safe drinking water supplied in their homes. For some, their housing was tied to their employment: 34% reported that they did not need to pay for housing, which from the qualitative responses suggested that they were living in quarters at the place of their employment or their employer provided housing for them

**Recommendation:** Establishment of employment one-stop-shop, where migrant and host community youth can access a range of services (incl. job opportunity, housing, legal advice, health awareness, etc.) at once while also enjoying a space for dialogue as a means of enhancing social cohesion between migrants and local population.

It is clear from the study findings that the stability and security of the city, as well as generally reported fair wages, good living conditions, and feelings of being accepted contribute to migrants expressing positive feelings about living and working in Misrata. While just over a third see Libya as a transit point, two-thirds do not, in part, because they are able to achieve some or all of their goals for migrating through their work in Libya. They also reported feeling safe living in Misrata and that a lack of safety would be a factor in a decision to leave (25%). Thus, it is Misrata's relative safety and economic productivity that allows workers to achieve their goals of migration--living wages for them and their families--a precious thing in this era of precarious labour migration.

## IX. IN THEIR OWN WORDS: FIVE MIGRANT NARRATIVES

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The below excerpts were taken from interviews with five migrant workers in Misrata and tell personal stories of their respective migration journeys and lives in Libya.

The purpose of these narratives is to allow migrants who participated in this study to share their experiences beyond the quantitative data presented above and allow the reader to better understand how each person lives their daily life and their connections to work, home life, family, and their views of their future.

**NIGER:** A migrant worker from Niger (Agadez) in his mid-40s works in construction. He has been traveling back and forth and working on and off in Libya since he was 16, and on his last trip brought his 14-year old son with him who also works. They live in a rough shelter with others from Niger.

### Experiences in Libya

My son and I came to Libya a year and a half ago for work. My wife and daughters are in Agadez, Niger, but I have other relatives working in Libya. I started travelling to Libya when I was 16 years old and I am 45 years old now. I stay for a period of 2 to 3 years then I return to my country.

I am living in a shelter for Nigerien migrants with my 14 years old son. The shelter is composed of 8 bedrooms and 6 to 10 persons sleep in each bedroom. I share the room with my son and 5 other Nigeriens. There are some communal bathrooms but no kitchen. These rooms have a metal roof and the house is located near to the workplaces.

In order to find work, I go to the work recruitment points and wait for employers to come. My work is removing construction debris or cleaning. I go to the recruitment point at 8 am with my son and we finish at sunset. We do not find opportunities every day.

We don't have a specific job, and we mostly work in construction. It is possible to get a job in a shop, a market or any other place, however daily work provides us with more money. Other nationalities represented in the recruitment points are Egyptian, Pakistani, and Nigerian. Friday is my day off, and I go to Friday prayer and to the market with my Nigerien friends.

Before traveling to Libya, I used to work in cleaning for a year. It is an easier job, but it didn't pay me well. Now, my son and I are earning good money and sending it to the family. I am a farmer, but this is not needed in Libya, unlike construction skills. I wish I could acquire some construction skills. It used to be easier, safer and cheaper to live in Libya. It is true that everything we need is available even now, however it is more expensive and I don't feel safe anymore in Libya.

One time, my son went to work with some other Nigeriens, but he didn't come back till the next day. He didn't have a mobile phone, and I couldn't sleep that night. He said that they needed to spend the night at the workplace because they didn't finish everything expected from them in the first day. I bought a mobile phone for him because the situation is unstable in Libya, especially at night and I need to know his location at all times.

Some migrants didn't receive their wages. After they finished their work in Libya, they were threatened at gunpoint and were forced to leave without their money. Others were robbed or have been attacked by gangs in their shelters.

Some Libyans who know that I have a young son help me by offering some second-hand clothes especially in winter and some furniture too. We receive food sometimes, especially in Ramadan.

## Journey to Libya

During my last journey, I was working in Sebha but I returned to Niger because of the difficult security condition there. I stayed in Agadez for 3 months then my friends advised me to go to Misrata so I did. We were many families in a truck travelling from Agadez to Sebha, Al Jufra, Beni Walid and eventually Misrata. I've traveled to Libya since I was a boy. However, the security situation and the spread of road blocks terrifies me, especially that the journey to Libya lasts for 20 days or more. On the last journey, I was with my son and I was very concerned about him.

In Niger, I live with my family, brothers and sisters in Agadez. Most of my brothers work in Libya in different cities and they too return from time to time from Libya to see their children. This is what I am doing too in order to save money and start a business in Niger. I miss my family and each and every place in my country. I am obliged to travel in order to work because there's no work opportunities in Niger. I'm thinking of visiting Niger next summer because now I know the right routes of travelling to and from Niger. However, I will not stay in Niger. It will be a short visit. I left Niger in order to work and earn money. I need to save money to buy a truck for work in Niger. I plan on staying in Libya, but I will keep visiting my family from time to time. I don't think of travelling to Europe.

**BANGLADESH:** This migrant traveled to Libya in 2012 and lives in a large, and rough, shelter. He came initially as a cleaner and now works in stocking and organizing pharmaceuticals.

## Life in Libya

I travelled to Libya in 2012 and have been sending remittances to my parents in Bangladesh since then. I started considering the idea of travelling in 2010 so I began to collect money and my father helped me. In 2012, one of my relatives who is living in Libya advised me to join him. It cost me USD 5,000 to travel to Libya where I signed a contract with a cleaning company to get the residence and work permits. I travelled

to Turkey and from there to Misrata and have been here ever since. My youngest brother went to Saudi Arabia in 2015 to look for a job there.

Here in Misrata I am staying in a collective shelter with other Bangladeshis. We are 300 individuals; each room includes from 4 to 10 persons. The building has two floors and a collective kitchen. This building is overcrowded and has poor ventilation. Bathrooms are in a poor condition too. However, I stay there because it is secure and I have my friends with me.

I work in a pharmaceutical company in organizing medicines. I have gained significant experience in the names of medicines, and I organize them and I help customers. I work in a full-time position in organizing and distributing medicines from 9 am till 8 pm with 1-hour lunch break. I managed to learn both Arabic and English languages in Libya by myself. I work with 4 Libyans, 2 Bangladeshi and 2 Nigeriens. When I first came to Libya, I was working as a janitor in shops then in pharmacies before learning how to organize medicines.

I received help from many Libyans, especially the owner of the first pharmacy I worked in. He taught to speak and write in Arabic and then in learning medicines names. This has allowed me to work in pharmaceutical companies.

I spend my free time at home with my friends or in the coffee shop. We play football on Friday morning and after Friday prayer we would go to the market.

I was robbed in multiple occasions while I was walking alone after dark. One time, I was going to the supermarket with a friend of mine when an armed group attacked us and shot my friend in the leg after he gave them his mobile phone. It was a very difficult situation, and my friend was bleeding and no one was there to help him. After 30 minutes we took him to the hospital.

I have never been detained because I have my residency permit. But I know that many Bangladeshis were victims of theft, abuse and torture by militias or

thieves. We always avoid going out in the dark unless it is necessary. And some Bangladeshis have been attacked in their shelter and lost all their belongings due to that incident, even their passport and legal documents. I heard that thieves stole a total of 8,000 dollars from one shelter.

### Have you wished you acquired a skill that will help you in finding a job in Libya easily?

Yes, I wish I knew the basics of tiling, painting or anything related to construction because it is the main field providing work for migrants. Though it is exhausting, you can still make good money from it and send remittances. That said, my current job offers me a good salary.

### What were you thinking of the day of leaving your country? What were your hopes and fears then?

I was very afraid of the future. I was 17 years old only with no relatives in Misrata. I didn't have much information on the country and lifestyle there and I was going to leave my family, my country and friends. However, I was obliged to travel to make money. I travelled from Dhaka the capital of Bangladesh to Turkey in a long trip by air. Someone dealing with Libyans helped me in finding a job and to get a visa. I heard that the situation in Libya is unstable but Misrata was stable and job opportunities were abundant. I have also heard that wages are better in Libya than in Middle East. I studied until middle school then I was working night shifts in a grocery store for two years without finding a day job. I did not acquire any skills. I left my country because of poverty. I am the oldest son, I had to travel to find a job. I miss my family and friends the most. However, I don't think of returning to Bangladesh, not before 10 or 20 years because the situation is better here. I will stay in Libya but if I got a chance to travel to Europe legally I will.

**CÔTE D'IVOIRE:** This migrant works as a fisherman for a private company.

### Experiences in Libya

I live in a house for fishermen of different nationalities (Tunisians, Egyptians, Moroccan and Algerian). I also have some Ivorians friends with whom I came from Abidjan to Misrata. They are 3 Ivorians along with my cousin. My cousin has a friend who found this job for us even before we came to Libya. We are working for a private company (import and export). We are about 12 fishermen from different nationalities. Only the director is Libyan.

We spend our time fishing; thus, we don't really have free time. If we do, we go shopping for what we need. We spend three to four days in the sea sometimes. One time when I was in the market, I was attacked by two men and thanks to the sellers that I am still alive today.

### Journey to Libya

I was living in peace in my country, but same as the young persons who are obsessed with Europe, its nature and the adventure there. I contacted a Moroccan friend who works in Libya in fishing and we became friends on social media. He told me that he is earning good money in Libya and this would allow him to travel to Europe whenever he wants to. I talked with my cousin, and we planned for the trip and we went from Abidjan to Agadez through Mali by bus. We had to wait in Agadez because there were many persons trying to immigrate and the police were everywhere. We travelled through Mali and Niger because it is safer and easier to get to Libya through this route. We came to Misrata through Sebha, and here I found my Moroccan friend waiting for us to take us to the house where we are staying now. We were thinking of Libya as a transit country because its security situation is unstable.

## Why did you leave your country?

I am single. We are 9 persons in my family: 6 girls and 3 boys. We have all obtained our baccalaureate. One of my sisters is studying medicine and another one is studying nursing. I am the only one who decided to travel. I know that I will miss my country, but I want to live this adventure. I am not thinking of returning now. I want to travel to Europe. It is difficult to get a visa for a person who didn't get a diploma. Procedures are very difficult and cost a fortune. Also, it is not certain to get the visa after that. I will stay in Libya and save enough money to cross the sea. If I decide to return, I will use the same routes because I have no other choice. If I return, I will start a company for import and export and finish my studies.

**ALGERIA:** This migrant works as a translator from Arabic and French and language teacher. He has a Master's degree from a French university.

## Life in Libya

I live in Misrata in a studio composed of two rooms and a bathroom and this place belongs to the center of translation and foreign languages where I have been working for 3 years. I am a French to Arabic (vice versa) translator. Also, I teach French in the evening. I work with several other translators. In total, we are 11 translators (8 Libyans, 1 Algerians, 1 Ghanaian and 1 Tunisian).

I spend my free time in the center chatting with my friends. I rarely go with my friends to coffee shops. On Friday, I play football with my colleagues. My work is a positive experience as I am appreciated by my students, colleagues and everyone else. I have many job opportunities.

The workplace is fully equipped with the best equipment like every workplace in Misrata, whether public or private. Once I was robbed by a boy and I have never got back my belongings. I was never detained.

## Journey to Libya

I decided to travel to Libya in September 2015 when a Libyan colleague (we studied together in France) invited me to work with him in the university as a French teacher. However, the university declined my application due to their tight procedures. Thus, I decided to look for a job and I found it thanks to both my Libyan and Tunisian colleagues. I came from Algiers by air to Mitiga airport and then by a taxi to Misrata. I felt safe throughout the journey. I had previously visited Libya for a short period of time.

I have heard many terrible stories on the desert journey and migrant's exploitation by smugglers. Also, I heard that they are working without receiving their payments especially in the desert cities.

## Life in the country of origin

I have five siblings; we live together with my parents in Algiers. I have obtained my master's degree in France and I came back to Algeria to search for a job. Work conditions were not very favorable, and the salaries were low. However, I acquired experience that helped me in Libya.

I miss my city, friends and family but it is fine as I can travel whenever I want to. I intend to stay in Libya for a period of time to increase my salary and be able to start a project in Algeria. Also, I would like to acquire more experience in translation and training. I wish I could travel to Europe, but I can't risk migrating by sea.

**EGYPT:** A young man working in construction and living with his father.

## Life in Libya

I am staying in a collective shelter. I share a room with my father and 3 other Egyptian migrants. We share a bathroom with 18 other migrants from Tunisia, Egypt and Niger. My father works on a farm. I have recently joined a shop for construction materials. Before that, I used to go to the work recruitment points and wait till an opportunity presents itself. I used to accept any

offer whether it will be paid per day or by negotiation the total sum. During my free time, I rarely go outside except for a nearby café or to visit my Egyptian friends who live in another shelter. But mostly I don't go outside in the evenings. We have been harassed multiple times (as Egyptians) due to political reasons. One time, we were harassed by drunk persons who were obliging us to leave the place only because we are Egyptians. Luckily, the local authority interfered at the right time. I was never detained. I heard from my father that an Egyptian migrant was shot dead at the station and the case was filed against an unknown person. But in general, workplaces are acceptable in general.

### Journey to Libya

The decision to travel to Libya was taken by my father, who was in Libya three years earlier. As there was very little work in Egypt, my father insisted that I join him in Libya and so I decided to go and join him. [There are two ways to travel – by land or by sea]. The land route has cheap travel costs, but it is very dangerous. The second option that I opted for was by boat to Libya. This journey is more expensive and safer. I paid 8,500 Egyptian pounds to come by sea to Libya. I then got on a bus and headed to Tobruk. From Tobruk, via the desert road to Ajdabiya, and then to Misrata. It took four days to reach it at a cost of 500 Libyan dinars. I was scared, especially when we entered the sea.

### Life in the country of origin

In Egypt I studied until high school, but I did not obtain the diploma. I first worked as a street vendor and then moved to a leather clothing store, but the pay was very low. That's why I decided to join my father, because the job opportunities are better than Egypt. What I miss most is my family and life in Alexandria. For the time being, I intend to stay in Libya, especially since the work is good here and my father intends to return due to his health conditions. My father and I are trying to start a project for us in Egypt and I am also trying to save money to cover

the price of a visa to Kuwait and to work there. As for going to Europe, I wish to go to Italy, but the route is reportedly very difficult and is said to be the route of death.

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) tracks and monitors population movements in order to collate, analyze and share information to support the humanitarian community with the needed demographic baselines to coordinate evidence-based interventions.

To consult all DTM Libya reports, datasets, static and interactive maps and dashboards, please visit:

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