

For NGOs and Practitioners - July 2026

Got the digital skills, now what?

Translating Arab refugee women's digital skills for economic inclusion and access to labour markets

Dr Danya Nusseir

Institute for Employment Research (IER),
University of Warwick

About this briefing

Digital skills have become paramount in today's employment market. This is particularly true when it comes to job search and applications. Refugee women, in particular, lag behind in their digital skills, thus limiting their ability to successfully search for and apply for jobs online.

This briefing highlights the gaps in Arab refugee women's digital skills, with a specific focus on the job-specific digital skills required for them to successfully search and apply for jobs online. In addition, it provides practical steps that NGOs and practitioners can take to address these gaps.

The briefing provides cost-effective measures and practical recommendations to support multiple marginalised groups and improve their employability. These recommendations include specific training on online job search and application and raising awareness of job guides and toolkits specifically for refugee women, such as the [“Digital Toolkit for Arab Refugee Women for Online Job Search and Application”](#).

The research

This briefing is based on findings from a doctoral thesis which relied on 57 qualitative interviews with Syrian

Brief Highlights

- Most of the refugee women interviewed have digital skills and use them for personal use but lack the ability to translate these skills into the professional context.
- The majority of the women do not have job-specific digital skills that would enable them to successfully search and apply for jobs online.
- Equipping these women with job-specific digital skills would not only enhance their prospects for employment but also serve as a tool to enable them to overcome cultural, social, and economic barriers to labour market access.
- Additional quantitative research is needed to assess and evaluate these women's digital skills, including the extent of their usage of these skills and to understand their online job search and application strategies.

and Palestinian refugee women in 12 different locations in Jordan, Lebanon, and the UK (Only Syrian refugee women were interviewed in the UK).

Key findings

Finding 1: The majority of Arab refugee women interviewed mostly relied on their mobile phones as their main digital device

Over 68% of the refugee women interviewed, regardless of whether they owned a laptop, mostly used their mobile phones to access the Internet.



Finding 2: The majority of the women did not apply for a job online and thought they were unable to do so by themselves

Figure 1 illustrates whether the Arab refugee women interviewed searched and applied for jobs online. The figure shows that only 50% of the women searched for jobs online, and the majority (61%) had not applied for a job online.

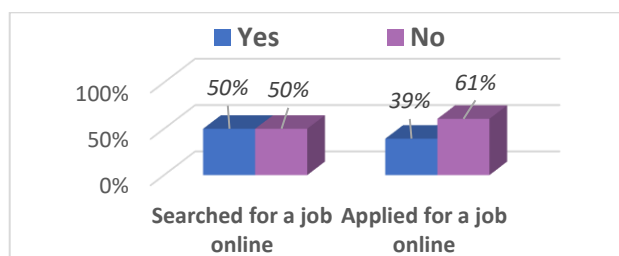


Figure 1: Arab refugee women interviewed searched and applied for jobs online

Furthermore, less than half of the women interviewed said that they were confident that they would be able to search and apply for a job online by themselves, while the majority indicated that they would need some kind of support.

Finding 3: The majority of the women interviewed had digital skills but used them for personal use only and lacked job-specific digital skills

The vast majority of the refugee women interviewed used a wide array of digital skills that are all necessary for a successful online job search and application. The caveat here is that the women mostly used these skills for personal use and lacked the ability to translate these skills to those used in the professional context. In addition, they were unaware of the significance of these skills for successful online job search and application. Examples include creating a visually appealing CV and the ability to create and customise job-centric digital content.

Policy and Practice Recommendations

1) Training on online job search and application:

a. Partner with existing centres that provide digital skills training and agree on a specific quota for refugee women participants: For example, 3-4 refugee women join the ongoing training for free each month. This method would also allow this training to become an ongoing process rather than a one-off training or workshop.

b. Offer quarterly workshops which include one-to-one sessions with an employment consultant: Potentially contract a consultant to provide quarterly workshops at the NGO offices or centres to train these women on online job search and application skills. Part of the workshop could include one-to-one sessions to set up the women's digital profiles and train them on how to leverage these profiles for online job search and application.

Furthermore, to increase engagement and impact of the training, NGOs should:

c. Conduct an impact and evaluation assessment: The assessment should aim to understand and evaluate how useful the training sessions were for the women's online job search and application. This assessment could be in the form of pre- and post-training self-assessment surveys and feedback discussions post-training.

d. Communicate using the channels refugee women use the most: This includes adapting messages according to each specific platform. The interviews revealed that the platforms used were Facebook, including Facebook groups and organisations' Facebook pages, WhatsApp and WhatsApp groups, and Instagram.

2) Raising awareness of well-known recruitment sites, job portals, and online jobseeker guides and toolkits:

Some of these guides and toolkits are specifically tailored to refugee women, such as the toolkit I created, "[Digital Toolkit for Arab Refugee Women for Online Job Search and Application](#)". NGOs and practitioner organisations should raise awareness and direct visitors to the online presence of reliable, well-known, and popular job portals and recruitment sites in their country, as well as regional and global sites that operate in their country. They should make this information accessible via their online presence, both on their website and social media platforms, as well as through their press releases or newsletters sent out to their beneficiaries (if applicable).

Source:

Nusseir, Danya (2024) *The role of digital literacy in integrating marginalised communities: Arab refugee women in Jordan, Lebanon and the UK*. PhD thesis, University of Warwick.

Contact the researcher:

Dr D. Nusseir
Institute for Employment Research (IER),
University of Warwick, danya.nusseir.1@warwick.ac.uk