

**SIFA**  
Skills Initiative  
for Africa

TC  
Technical Cooperation

# RAPID ASSESSMENT OF SKILLING AND RESKILLING NEEDS ARISING FROM THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19



CAMEROON



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The SIFA Programme aims at improving the employment prospects of young Africans by providing technical support to improve the responsiveness and employment orientation of skills development programmes. The SIFA action seeks to create stronger continental dialogue platforms for learning and sharing of best practices and facilitating conditions for mutual recognition of qualifications. SIFA specific objective is to strengthen the capacity of labour market and skills development players to provide evidence-based policy and programme advice on Technical, Vocational and Education and Training (TVET).

This rapid skills assessment was conducted within the framework of the SIFA Programme under the overall direction of Dr. John Musabayana, ILO Director for the Decent Work Team for Eastern and Southern Africa, and for the ILO Country Office for Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, and South Africa, and Dr Ibrahim Mayaki, the Chief Executive Officer of the African Union Development Agency (NEPAD).

SIFA wishes to thank the Mr. Kennedy Tumenta, for lead the research and for developing the draft report. SIFA also wishes to extend special thanks to the various parties, stakeholders, key informants and officials of various government ministries who were consulted and interviewed with the view to establish upskilling and reskilling needs arising from the impact of COVID-19. Thanks also go to all employees and employers who took time to respond to the survey.

Great appreciation goes to the ILO and GIZ staff for their support during the research process and during the preparation of this report.

The technical backstopping team comprising of Terence Hogarth, Gideon Arulmani, Olga Strieska-Illina, Cornelius Gregg, and Bolormaa Tumurchudur-Klok, was instrumental in the successful finalization and production of this report.

### **Naomy Kanyemba Lintini**

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## FOREWORD

The Cameroonian economy was among the hardest hit countries by the Covid-19 pandemic in Central Africa. The scale of economic and social effects of the pandemic was unprecedented, and included massive labour market disruptions, and a reshaping of the world of work and the way people interact. The COVID 19 related contraction in global demand and the effects of measures taken to manage the pandemic at the national level had far-reaching effects on all sectors of the economy.

Cameroon saw much of the labour force not only lose jobs, but also get exposed to severe health, economic and social consequences brought by the pandemic. In some way, the pandemic exposed already existing vulnerabilities and revealed how interdependent the various sectors of the Country's economy are.

Against this background, and in keeping with the need to provide a speedy response to the devastating impact of the pandemic on the labour market, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), through the Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA),

**Dr Ibrahim Mayaki**  
Chief Executive Officer  
African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)

provided technical assistance to conduct a rapid assessment of the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on various sectors of the Cameroonian economy. The objective of the assessment was to identify the skills that will be needed for economic recovery.

This report presents concise findings from the rapid skills assessment and provides practical recommendations, which once applied, can help to limit the career scarring effects of the pandemic on workers. The report also provides skills related actionable recommendations for the economic recovery of companies in the assessed sectors.

The ILO and AUDA-NEPAD remain committed to supporting the Cameroonian government and its partners to mobilise the requisite follow-up actions based on the report's recommendations.

**Dr. Joni Musabayana**  
Director  
Decent Work Team for Eastern and Southern Africa  
International Labour Organization

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## ► ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AfDB	African Development Bank
CEMAC	Central African Economic and Monetary Community
GDP	Gross domestic product
GICAM	Cameroon Employers Union
ICT	Information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IT	Information technology
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
PPE	Personal protective equipment
SIFA	Skills Initiative for Africa
SME	Small and medium enterprise

## ▶ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**General:** The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health and economic crisis which has led to a sharp decline in economic activity, disruption of supply chains, drop in consumer spending, job destruction, decrease in tax revenues, pressure on the delivery of public services such as health, social welfare and education, and higher than normal mortality rates. The pandemic has altered the ways that people work, learn, and live. It has affected every aspect of human existence. Cameroon is no exception to these unfolding developments.

**Economy:** In 2020, the Cameroonian economy was strongly impacted by the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the persistence of security and political crises, and the decline in world oil prices. Among Central African countries, Cameroon was the hardest hit by COVID-19, both from a health and economic perspective.

**GDP growth:** Real gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 2.4% in 2020, compared with a growth of 3.7% in 2019. This 6.1% decline in economic activity is largely explained by the fall in world oil prices. The contraction in global demand inherent in the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of the barrier measures taken in managing the pandemic at the national level have affected all sectors. The activities of the services, manufacturing, and agro-industrial export sectors, particularly trade, have thus experienced a sharp slowdown.

**Labour market:** The effects of COVID-19 have also devastated the labour market in Cameroon. Approximately 64% of respondents in the survey confirmed a weak financial position of companies due to the effects of the pandemic. Cameroon has seen many of its workers not only losing their jobs, but being exposed to severe consequences

of the health, economic, and social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis as well. If this trend continues, the country could be heading for the worst-case employment scenario. Currently, 8 out of 10 jobs in Cameroon are informal with poor working conditions. The Cameroonian economy is extremely informal and is based on a weak skills base.

**Sector performance:** During the period of COVID-19, lockdown measures led to a drop in demand for services and luxury goods in favour of essential products like food. It was also difficult reaching customers due to other COVID-19 measures instituted by the government.

The combined effect of these COVID-19 related factors was a consequent drop in earnings and the laying off of workers since many employers could no longer sustain business continuity with the same number of employees. An updated survey by the Cameroon Employers Union (GICAM) on the impact of COVID-19 on companies, published in July 2020 (GICAM, 2020)<sup>1</sup>, showed that 96.6% of production units were negatively impacted by the pandemic.

GICAM's April edition (GIMAC, 2020)<sup>2</sup> alluded to 92% of these companies, and revealed that among the sectors that are paying a heavy cost are the hotel and leisure industry, food industry, and financial and insurance services, which recorded 88.9%, 80%, and 71.4% of turnover losses, respectively. As a further consequence, growth prospects have been reviewed downwards. In its survey report published in May 2020, the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) indicated that GDP will decline by 3.4 % to 0.6% in 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legicam.cm/index.php/p/economie-covid-19-difficultes-accrues> of 23 July 2020.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.legicam.cm/index.php/p/covid-19-impact-sur-les-entreprises-au-cameroun> of 22 April 2020.



**Forecast:** Subject to the availability of a vaccine at the beginning of 2021 and the gradual decline of COVID-19 infections from the second half of 2021, the Cameroonian economy, buoyed by the recovery of the world economy and international trade, could return to pre-pandemic growth levels as early as 2021. Growth should reach 3.5% in 2021 and 4% in 2022. The external and internal account balances should also improve substantially. Inflation will be 2.3% in both 2021 and 2022, below the 3% standard established by the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC).<sup>3</sup>

**Research methods:** The following research methods and approach were used for this rapid assessment:

- A literature review of international and local literature relating to the reskilling and upskilling needs arising from the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, including peer-reviewed journals, articles, research and conference papers, government policies, and international studies.
- Employee and individual surveys, which were developed by the ILO and standardised to enable cross-country comparisons. The surveys were administered online and via telephone.
  - » The employer survey targeted agriculture, wholesale and retail, and the health sectors in the economy. A total of 82 questionnaires (42 in English and 40 in French) were returned. The individual survey targeted employed and unemployed workers that require training. A total of 274 questionnaires (181 in English and 83 in French) were returned.
- In-depth stakeholder interviews were held with representatives from key private sector organisations in the targeted sectors, state policymakers, the social partners, and civil society organisations.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



## Findings

### Spike in demand

The pandemic has spiked the demand for labour in some sectors, including for personal protective equipment (PPE) manufacturing, digital skills, e-commerce activities, and healthcare services in contact tracing. While the demand for digital skills and e-commerce capabilities are long-term, the PPE market may tend to become oversaturated. The move towards digitalisation and e-commerce predated the COVID-19 pandemic, but was accelerated in 2020 to epic proportions.

**Vulnerable groups:** In terms of employment status, 81% of females surveyed were not in employment but looking for work compared to 53% of males. Both males and females in the 26-35 years age group are most vulnerable.

### Skills needs

The most in-demand skills are communication, agility/flexibility, team working, and job- or occupation-specific core technical skills. Adapting to new equipment or materials is closely aligned to agility/flexibility skills, as are problem-solving skills.

**Areas of improvement:** Digital/information and communications technology (ICT) skills were identified by 48% of employees as areas needing improvement to do their jobs in the crisis. Being able to take a wider range of tasks also features highly (28%), as is occupational health and safety knowledge and awareness in relation to COVID-19 (21%).

### Employee preparedness

Counter-pandemic considerations and measures should be taken into account by companies to ensure the continuity of business activities while the pandemic continues. About 40% of the employees were not at all prepared for the COVID-19 crisis, emphasising the need for strategies to operate effectively during times of crisis.

### Mitigation

There are several measures to mitigate the effect of the pandemic on enterprises. The most popular among employers are increasing remote work (19%), producing a wider range of goods/services (15%), and improvements to information technology (IT) infrastructure (17%).

### Retraining areas

The most popular retraining need is for technical skills (28%), followed by language skills (14%) and digital skills (12%). People skills (11%) and green skills (10%) are also popular areas for retraining.

### Training needed

The most common areas of training needed are occupational health and safety (27%), digital skills (27%), managing a wider range of tasks (15%), working in teams (15%), and delivering goods and services (13%).

### Training methods

Online training (28%) was the most common training method, followed by in-company training (18%), training with external training providers (18%), and advice and solution by fellow staff (18%).



## Findings

### Recovery interventions

Interventions that could be implemented to speed up recovery and reduce losses include hiring part-time workers, enabling remote working where possible, establishing alternative marketing strategies, and investing in growth sectors.

### Recovery skills

Key skills needed for recovery are multitasking, communications, digital literacy, data analytics, and soft skills.

### Industry structure

Technical skills that are transferable across occupations and sectors are important for industry structure, including digital skills; administrative, customer relations and related skills; people management skills; skills for green jobs and environmental sustainability; and language skills. For those restructuring, skills in job redesigning, restructuring new technology, and ongoing training or re-training of workers are needed.<sup>4</sup>

### Innovation

The African report<sup>5</sup> listed three main sectors for innovative investment that are likely to experience more growth during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely telecoms and power, ICT, and healthcare. The development of online selling platforms coupled with social media marketing and home delivery services are derivatives of ICT that have helped firms during this pandemic.



<sup>4</sup> See Tumenta Kennedy et al (2012) for an analysis of the social consequences and spillover effects of knowledge diffusion and technology-sharing of foreign direct investment as well as their contributions to enhancing social responsibility and improving living standards in host countries. These organisations have the immediate technical and financial capacities to provide the needed training in the short run.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.theafricareport.com/27782/coronavirus-in-africa-an-opportunity-for-innovative-investment/.](https://www.theafricareport.com/27782/coronavirus-in-africa-an-opportunity-for-innovative-investment/)



## Recommendations

### Training needs assessment

A training needs assessment should be conducted to identify the skills needs in the economy, especially for PPE manufacturing, ICT and financial technology hubs, and healthcare services.

### Priority skills

There is a need for the following category of skills:

- Employability skills, such as critical thinking, communication (literacy and numeracy), and resilience skills (stress resistance, work-life balance, digital detox, time management, flexibility, and adaptability) are important for all sectors and occupations.
- Technical skills (job- and occupation-specific) should be imparted to vulnerable groups (women and the youth) in the labour market. The unemployed that are unable to return to their previous jobs should be given new job skills that would enable them to seek employment in other industries.
- Soft skills (communication, interpersonal, leadership, management, teamwork) should be prioritised for the employed workforce.
- Digital skills (digital literacy, computing, networking, coding, software development).
- Occupational health and safety (protocols).
- Multiskilling (managing a wider range of tasks).

### Entrepreneurship

As the country is dominated by informal business enterprises, there is a need for entrepreneurship training for informal enterprises, as well as for small enterprises in the formal sector, and unemployed and vulnerable groups (women and youth). Entrepreneurship training should cover teamwork, management, marketing, financial management, customer relations, business planning, and resilience. Leadership skills training should also be given to small and medium enterprise (SME) owners.

### Occupational health and safety

Skills training for occupational health and safety should be implemented to minimise the risks of spreading COVID among teachers, learners, and visitors in the school environment, including through wearing of face masks, social distancing, cleaning facilities, washing hands, and temperature and symptoms checks.

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health and economic crisis which has led to a sharp decline in economic activity, disruption of supply chains, drop in consumer spending, job destruction, decrease in tax revenues, pressure on the delivery of public services such as health, social welfare, and education, and higher than normal mortality rates. The social distancing measures instituted have disrupted business operations leading to revenue shortfalls.

While countries are easing restrictions, the future is unknown and influenced by the movement of the virus, which does not respect borders. Most countries have not been able to control its spread and the delay in developing and distributing a vaccine has compounded a dire situation globally. The pandemic has altered the ways that people work, learn, and live. It has affected every aspect of human existence. Cameroon is no exception to these unfolding developments.

The Cameroonian economy was already under pressure before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated job losses and economic contraction. This has necessitated a comprehensive understanding of current and future skills needs to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 on the labour market and develop effective reskilling and upskilling measures.

As the economy recovers, there will be a demand for labour to re-enter the workforce.

As such, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA) Skills Anticipation Project commissioned a rapid assessment in Cameroon to collect information on skills needs arising from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to identify the reskilling and upskilling needs of the agriculture, wholesale and retail, and health sectors.

The rapid assessment aims to speedily assess the effects of the pandemic on employers, employees, and individuals, determine skills needed in a credible and timely manner, analyse the sectors seriously hit, identify priority areas for action, propose options for addressing these action areas, and mobilise follow-up actions.



## 2. Methodology

The methodological approach consists of the following:



### Literature review

A literature review of international and local literature relating to the reskilling and upskilling needs arising from the effects of the COVID-19 crisis. The review includes peer-reviewed journals, articles, research and conference papers, government policies, and international studies.



### Surveys

Employer and individual surveys were administered online and via telephone to both employers and individuals. The surveys were developed by the ILO and standardised to enable cross-country comparisons.

- The employer survey targeted the agriculture, wholesale and retail, and health sectors. A total of 82 questionnaires (42 in English and 40 in French) were returned.
- The individual surveys targeted employed and unemployed workers that require training. A total of 274 questionnaires (181 in English and 83 in French) were returned.



### Stakeholder consultations

In-depth interviews were held with representatives from key private sector organisations in the targeted sectors, state policymakers, the social partners, and civil society organisations.

## 3. Contextual factors

### 3.1 Macro-economic outlook

**Economy:** In 2020, the Cameroonian economy was strongly impacted by the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the persistence of security and political crises, and the decline in world oil prices. Among Central African countries, Cameroon was the hardest hit by the pandemic, from both a health and economic perspective.

**GDP Growth:** Real gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 2.4% in 2020, compared with a growth of 3.7% in 2019. This 6.1% decline in economic activity is largely explained by the fall in world oil prices. The contraction in global demand inherent in the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of the barrier measures taken in managing the pandemic at the national level have affected all sectors.

The activities of the services, manufacturing, and agro-industrial export sectors, particularly trade, have thus experienced a sharp slowdown. Inflation has been kept below the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) 3% convergence threshold (2.9% in 2020, compared with 2.5% in 2019).

**Monetary regulation:** The Central Bank of Central African States took various measures in 2020 to support the economies of its member states, including lowering the interest rate by 25 basis points, from 3.50% to 3.25%, in March 2020. New foreign exchange regulations that took effect on 1 March 2019 made it possible to increase the country's foreign exchange reserves, which at the end of 2020 could cover 7.5 months of imports, compared with 6.3 months at the end of 2019.

The budget deficit increased from 3.6% of GDP in 2019 to 4.9% GDP in 2020, while the current account deficit rose to 5.2% of GDP in 2020, compared with 3.1% in 2019, mainly because oil exports and remittances declined.<sup>6</sup>

**Forecast:** Subject to the availability of a vaccine at the beginning of 2021 and the gradual decline of COVID infections from the second half of 2021, the Cameroonian economy, buoyed by the recovery of the world economy and international trade, could return to pre-pandemic growth levels as early as 2021. Growth should reach 3.5% in 2021 and 4% in 2022. The external and internal account balances should also improve substantially. Inflation will be 2.3% in both 2021 and 2022, below the 3% standard established by the CEMAC.<sup>7</sup>

**Sector performance:** During the period of COVID-19, lockdown measures led to a drop in demand for services and luxury goods in favour of essential products like food. It was also difficult reaching customers due to other COVID-19 measures instituted by the government. The combined effect of these COVID-19 related factors was a consequent drop in earnings and the laying off of workers since many employers could no longer sustain business continuity with the same number of employees.

An updated survey by the Cameroon Employers Union (GICAM) on the impact of COVID-19 on companies, published in July (GICAM, 2020)<sup>8</sup>, showed that 96.6% of production units were negatively impacted by the pandemic. GIMAC's April edition (GIMAC, 2020)<sup>9</sup> alluded to 92% of these companies, and revealed that among the sectors that are paying a heavy cost are the hotel and leisure, food industries, and financial and insurance services, which recorded 88.9%, 80%, and 71.4% of turnover losses, respectively.

As a further consequence, growth prospects have been reviewed downwards. In its survey report published in May 2020, the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) indicated that GDP will decline by 3.4% to 0.6% in 2021.

<sup>6</sup> African Development Bank (2021) Accessed at <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries-central-africa-cameroon/cameroon-economic-outlook>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.legicam.cm/index.php/p/economie-covid-19-difficultes-accrues> of 23 July 2020.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.legicam.cm/index.php/p/covid-19-impact-sur-les-entreprises-au-cameroun> of 22 April 2020.

### 3.2 Labour market

The effects of COVID-19 have also devastated the labour market in Cameroon. Approximately 64% of respondents in the survey confirmed a weak financial position of companies due to the effects of the pandemic. Cameroon has seen many of its workers not only losing their jobs, but being exposed to severe consequences of the health, economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis as well.

If this trend continues, the country could be heading for the worst-case employment scenario. The ILO estimated that in 2019, the unemployment rate in Cameroon was 3.34%. In its July 2020 report on economic growth prospects in Central Africa, the African Development Bank (AfDB) indicated that 8 out of 10 jobs in Cameroon are informal with poor working conditions.

Furthermore, in its report entitled "Labour Market and Sector Analysis: Baseline for Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Togo and Tunisia" published in May 2020, DNA Economics pointed out that the Cameroonian economy is extremely informal and is based on a weak skills base.

The fate of youth attempting to enter the job market remains bleak. Moreover, the barrier measures imposed by the pandemic have contributed to the emergence of telecommuting and an increase in the demand for contactless activities – however, these activities do not sync with informal employment.



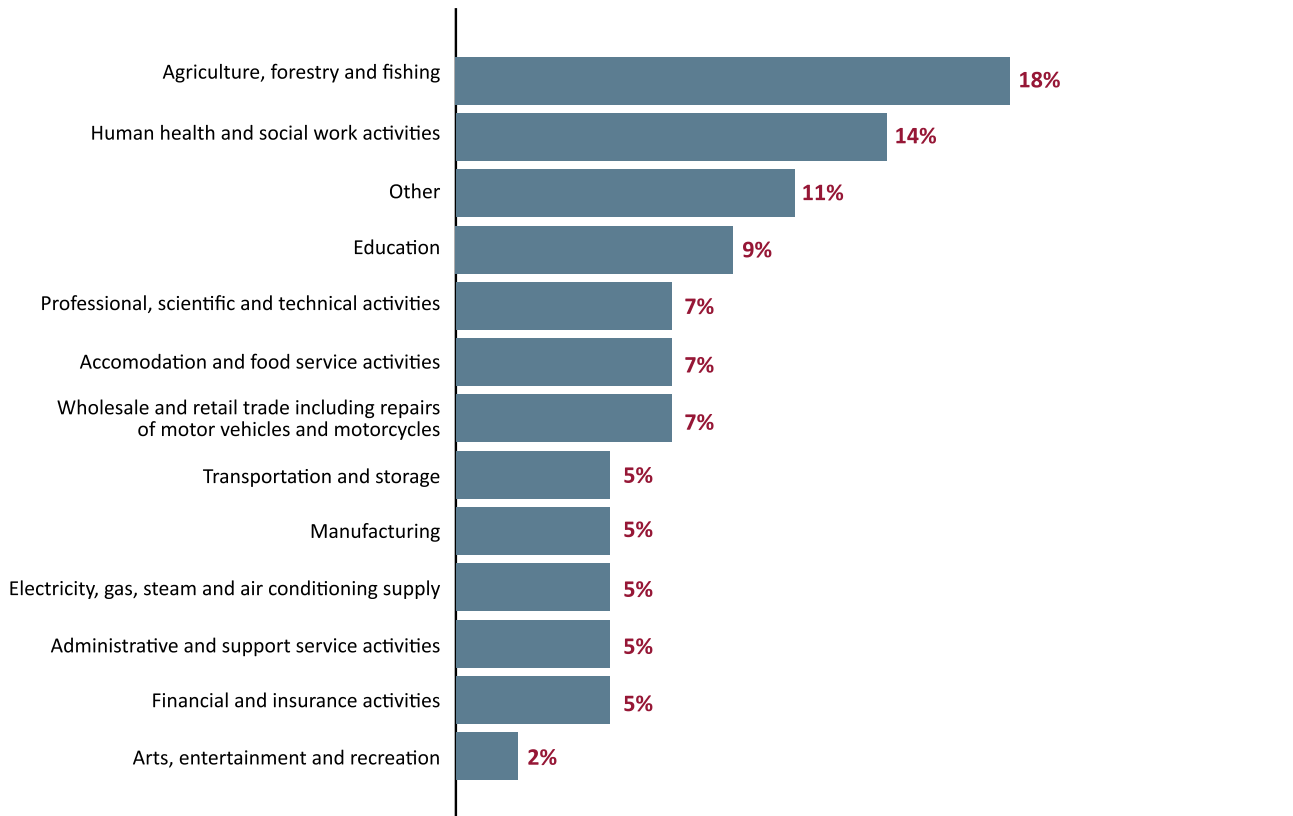


## 4. Outlook for the target sectors and groups of individuals

There is a need to develop countermeasures to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. From a labour market perspective, there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of existing and future skills needs and the implementation of reskilling and upskilling measures. It is against this background that we are assessing the country's situation vis-à-vis job losses, skill/labour shortages, and reskilling needs.<sup>10</sup>

**Business types:** The type of businesses surveyed were:

**Figure 1: Type of business**

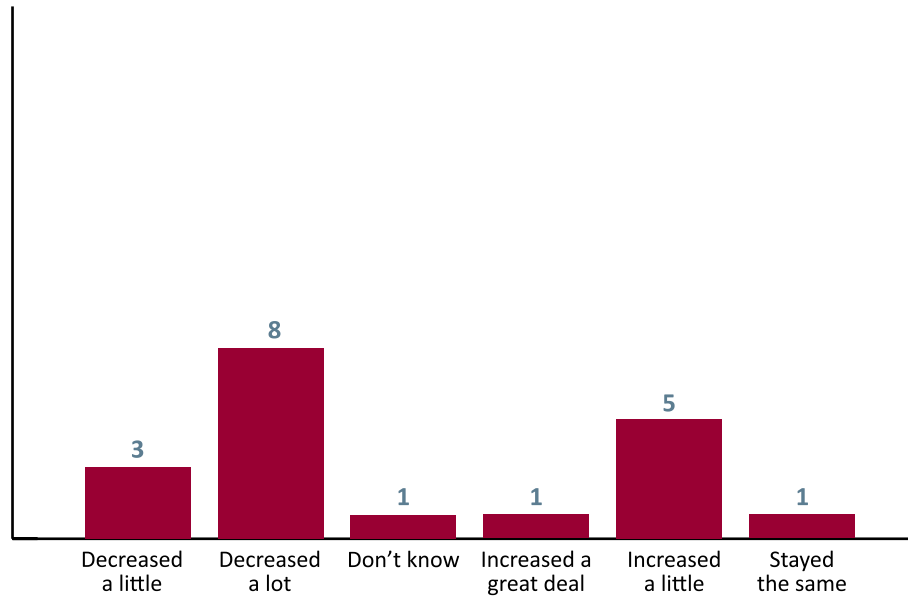


**Source: Employer survey (2020)**

<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, the manufacturing, other services (education, health, financial services, and so on), wholesale and retail trade, and accommodation and food services sub-sectors have proven to be of great interest for their relatively strong economic and , gender-equitable employment prospects, their places in the literature as a strategic priority, relative susceptibility to COVID-19, and prospective economic impact in Cameroon.

**Changes in employment:** Since the start of COVID-19, 58% of employers surveyed stated that they decreased employment, while 32% increased employment.

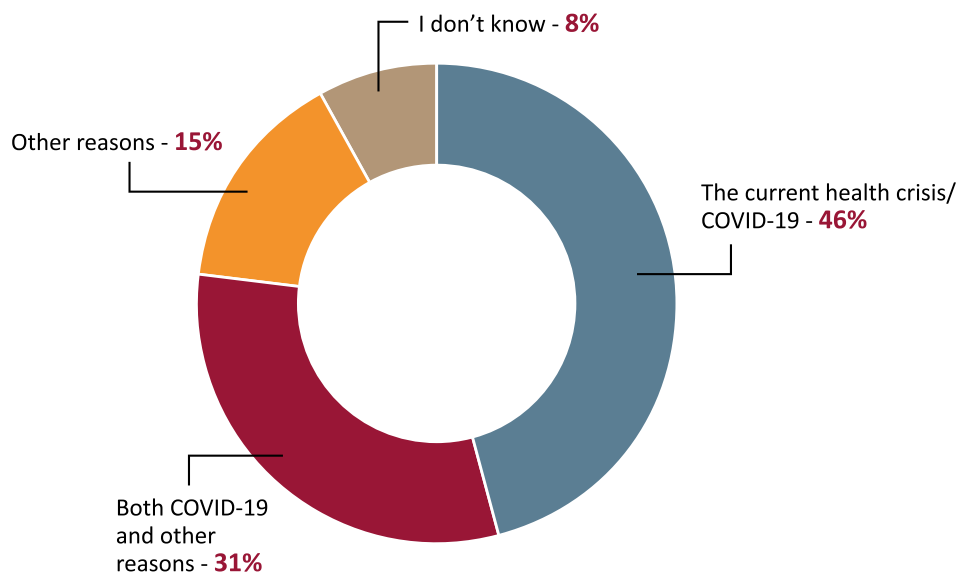
**Figure 2: Changes in employment**



**Source: Employer survey (2020)**

**Reasons for changes in employment:** Approximately 46% of individuals indicated that changes in employment were due to COVID-19. A further 31% mentioned that changes were due to COVID-19 and other reasons, while 15% attributed changes to non-COVID-19 reasons and 8% did not know.

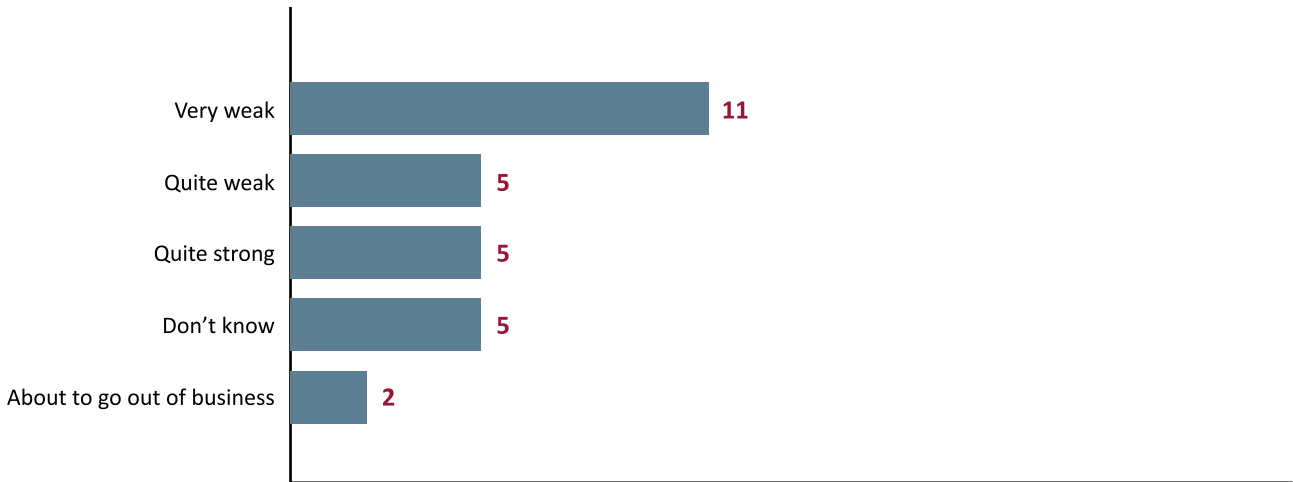
**Figure 3: Reasons for changes in employment**



**Source: Individual survey (2020)**

**Employer financial position:** Generally, the financial position of 18% (n=5) of employers is strong and 64% (n=18) weak, although 46% of employers maintain that their financial position is strong.

**Figure 4: Employer financial position**



Source: Employer survey (2020)

**Employment status:** A greater proportion of the active working population aged 26-35 years. Females tend to be a more vulnerable group in the labour market than their male counterparts, for example, 81% of females surveyed were not in employment but looking for work, compared to 53% of males. Both males and females in the 26-35 years age group are most vulnerable. Just over 4% of individuals are working in family-owned businesses, of which 5% were females and 26% were males.

**Figure 5: Employment status**



Source: Individual survey (2020)

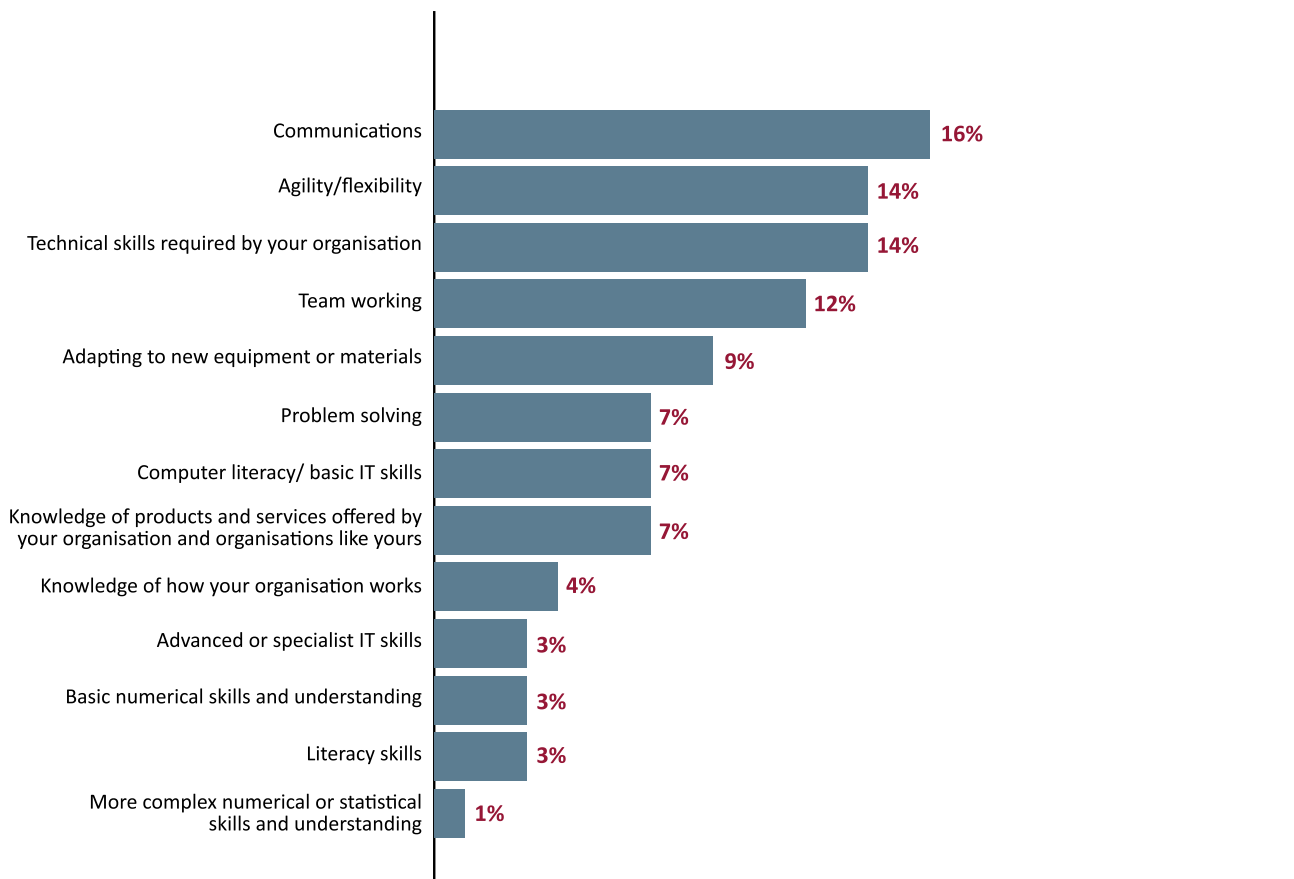
## 5. Sectors with increased skills demand

The pandemic has spiked the demand for labour in some sectors, including for personal protective equipment (PPE) manufacturing, digital skills, e-commerce activities, and healthcare services in contact tracing. While the demand for digital skills and e-commerce capabilities are long-term, the PPE market may tend to become over-saturated. The move towards digitalisation and e-commerce predated the COVID-19 pandemic, but was accelerated in 2020 to epic proportions.

While activities in some sectors may not recover, or will recover more slowly, demand for some goods and services will increase beyond pre-pandemic levels as economies re-start and the pandemic ends. For example, there may be an increase in the demand for services that can be delivered without in-person interaction and for products that limit physical in-person contact. Moving quickly to take advantage of existing and new opportunities is necessary to combat unemployment.

**Skills needs:** The most in-demand skills are communication, agility/flexibility, team working, and job- or occupation-specific core technical skills. Adapting to new equipment or materials is closely aligned to agility/flexibility skills, as are problem-solving skills.

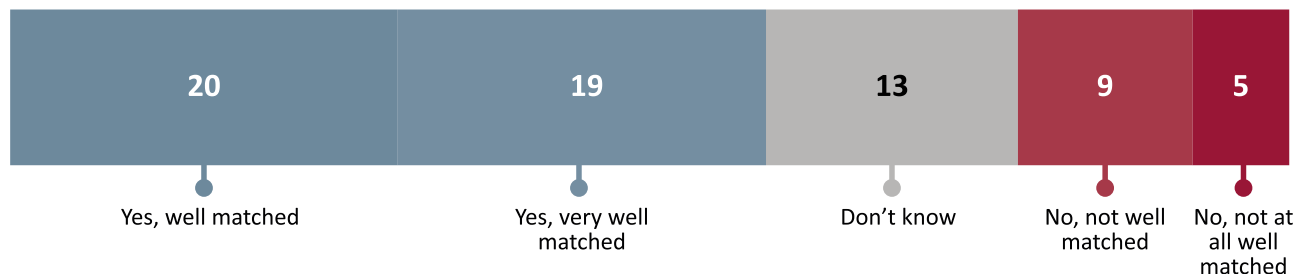
Figure 6: Skills needs



Source: Individual survey (2020)

**Skills matching:** In terms of whether employee skills are matched to changes in the workplace resulting from COVID-19, 59% of employees said that their skills are either well or very well matched. In contrast, 21% felt that their skills are not matched, and 20% do not know.

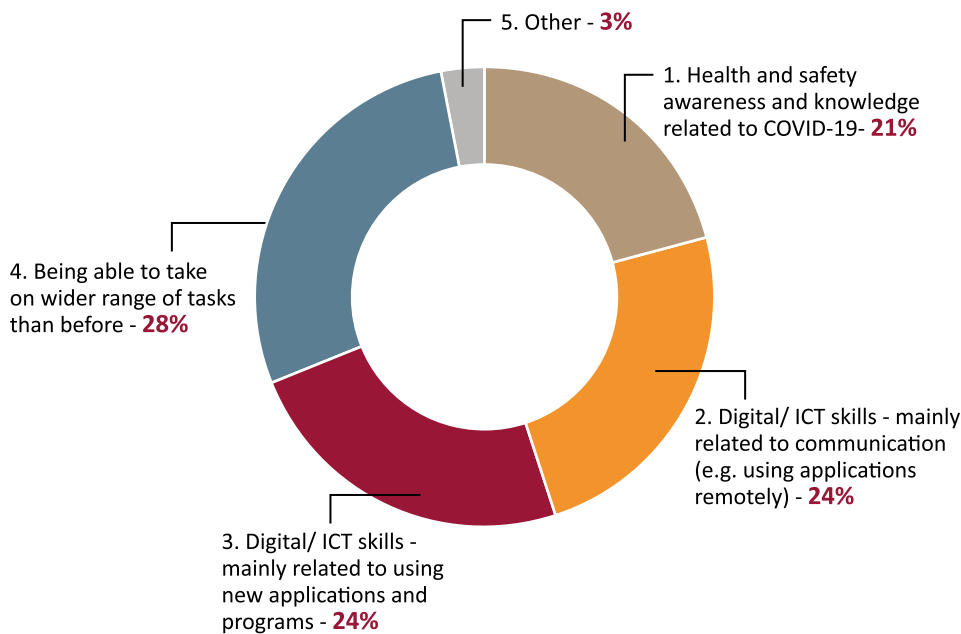
**Figure 7: Skills matching**



**Source: Individual survey (2020)**

**Areas of improvement:** Digital/information and communications technology (ICT) skills were identified by 48% of employees as areas needing improvement to do their jobs in the crisis. Being able to take a wider range of tasks also features highly (28%), as is occupational health and safety knowledge and awareness in relation to COVID-19 (21%).

**Figure 8: Areas of improvement**



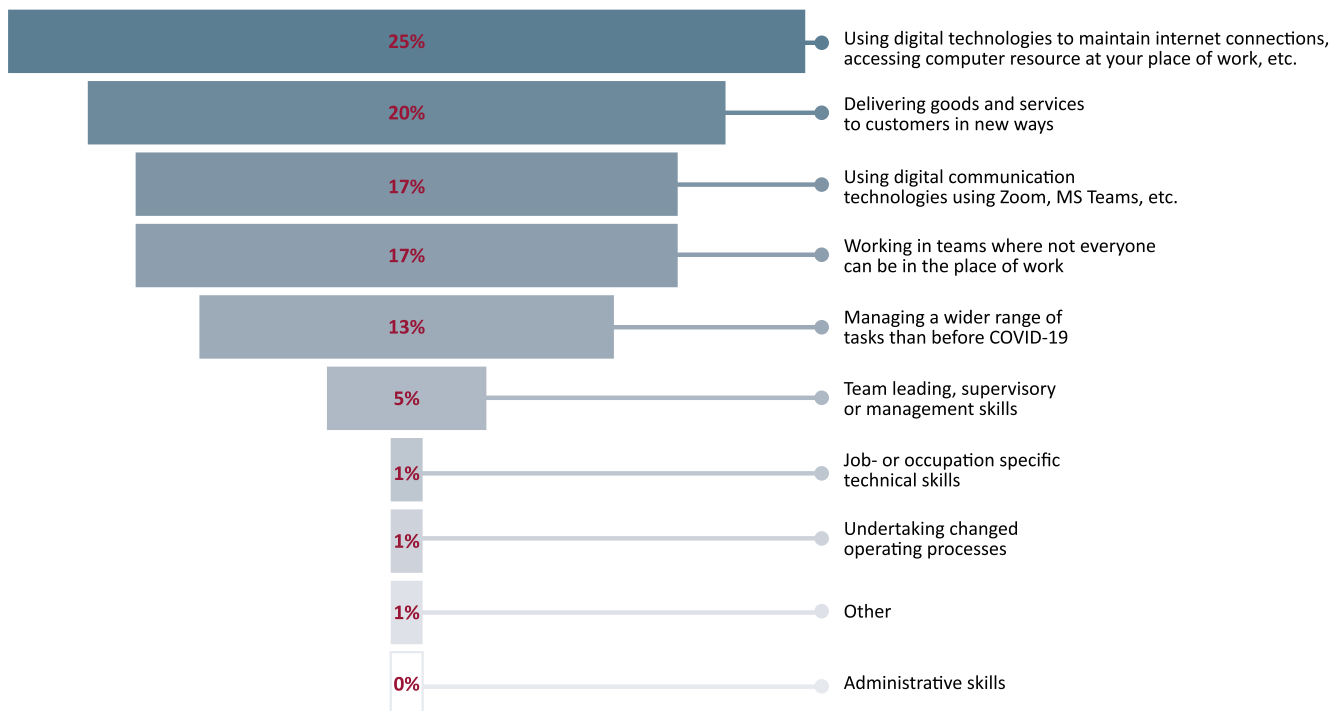
**Source: Individual survey (2020)**

## 6. Individuals needing training and required training

As economies recover, individuals whose employment prospects have been damaged by the pandemic will need training.

**Current training areas:** It is evident from the employer survey that the use of digital technologies is the most common training area. Delivering goods and services is also rated highly as a training area, as are working in teams and managing a wider range of tasks.

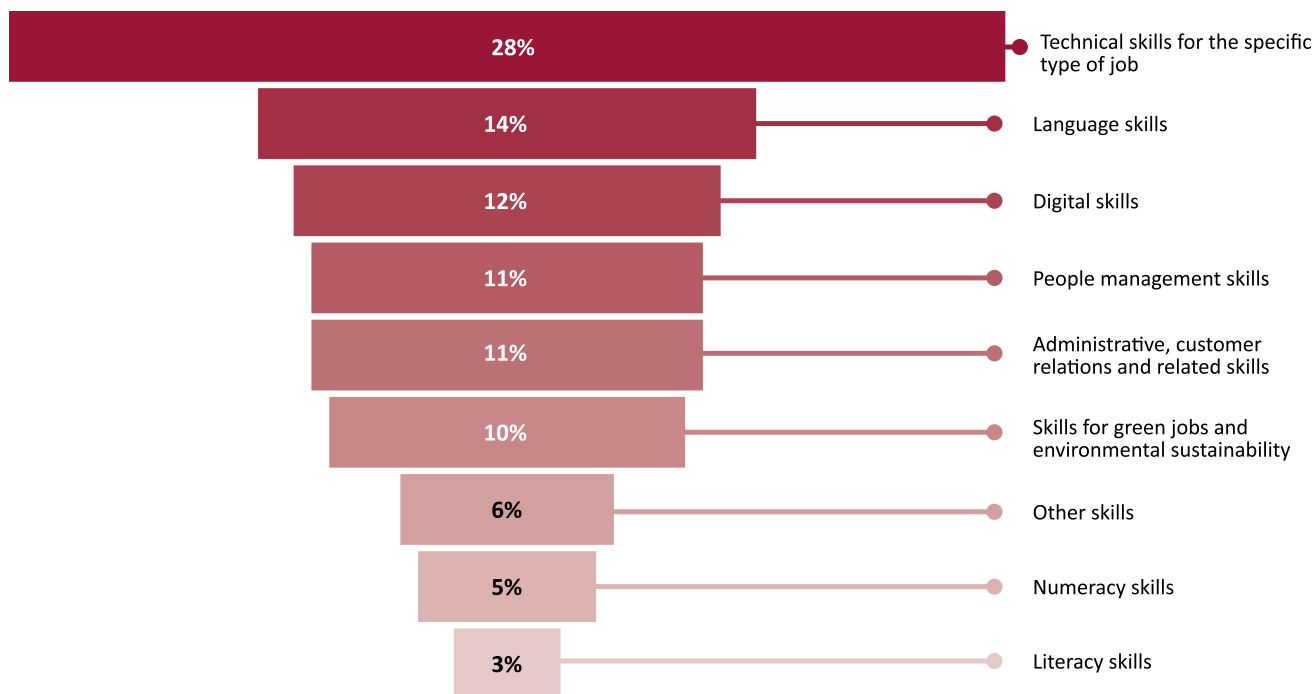
**Figure 9: Current training areas**



Source: Employer survey (2020)

**Retraining areas:** The most popular retraining needs are technical skills (28%), followed by language skills (14%) and digital skills (12%). People skills (11%) and green skills (10%) are also popular areas for retraining.

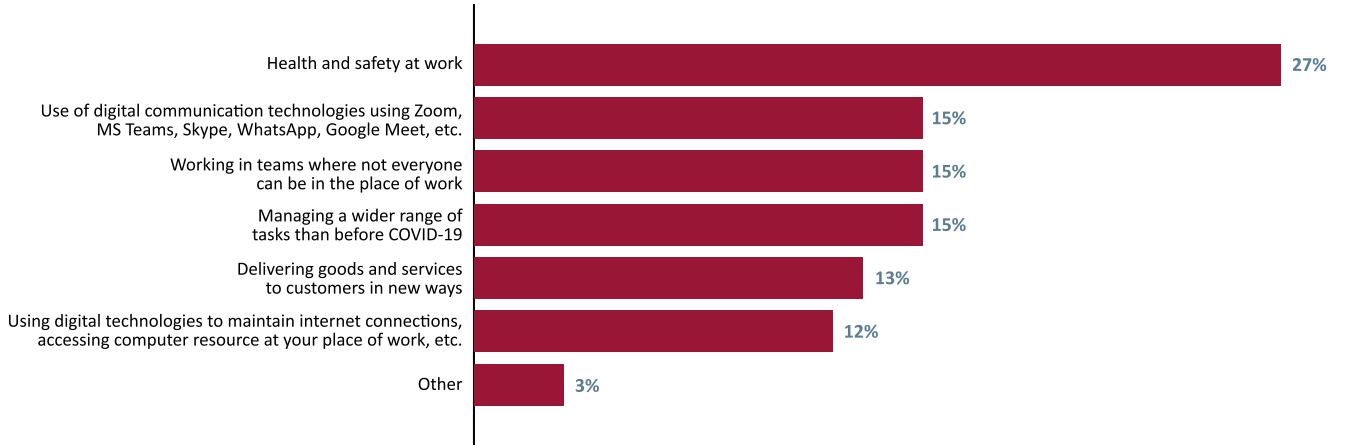
**Figure 10: Retraining areas**



**Source: Employer survey (2020)**

**Training needed:** The most common areas of training needed are occupational health and safety (27%), digital skills (27%), managing a wider range of tasks (15%), working in teams (15%), and delivering goods and services (13%).

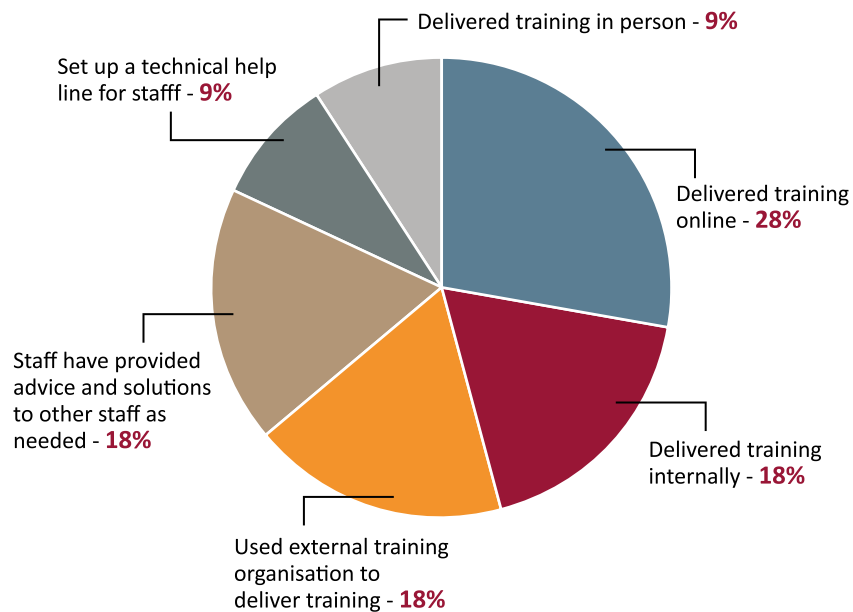
**Figure 11: Training needed**



**Source: Employer survey (2020)**

**Training methods:** Online training (28%) was the most common training method, followed by in-company training (18%), training with external training providers (18%), and advice and solution by fellow staff (18%).

**Figure 12: Training methods**



**Source: Employer survey (2020)**

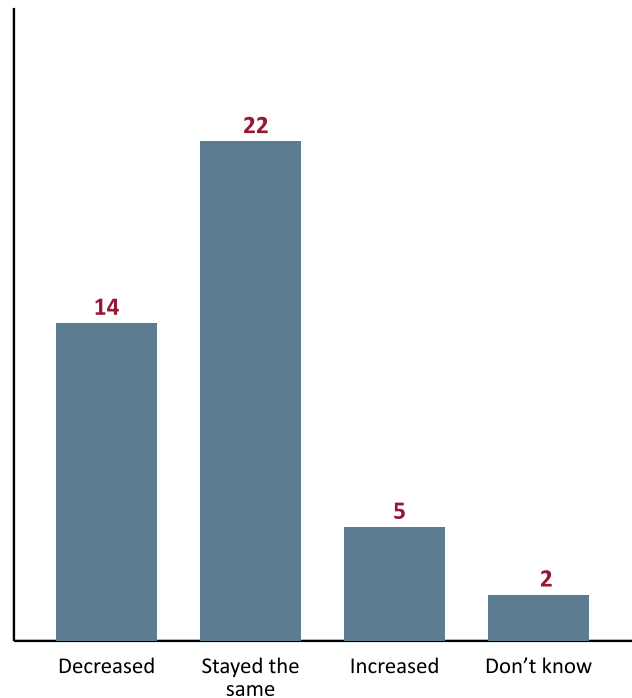


## 7. Future resilience strategies

This section looks at resilience measures to (a) operate effectively while the pandemic continues; (b) take advantage of opportunities emanating from the pandemic; (c) speed up and maximise recovery; and (d) build capabilities and market position for future growth.

Approximately 32% of the employers surveyed experienced a decrease in employment in their establishments since the end of 2019; 46% of this loss in employment was due to the effect of the COVID-19 crisis as shown in Figure 13.

**Figure 13: Employment since 2019**



Source: Employer survey (2020)

### 7.1 Operating effectively while the pandemic continues

**Employee preparedness:** Counter-pandemic considerations and measures should be taken into account by companies to ensure the continuity of business activities while the pandemic continues. About 40% of the employees were not at all prepared for the COVID-19 crisis, emphasising the need for strategies for operating effectively during times of crisis.

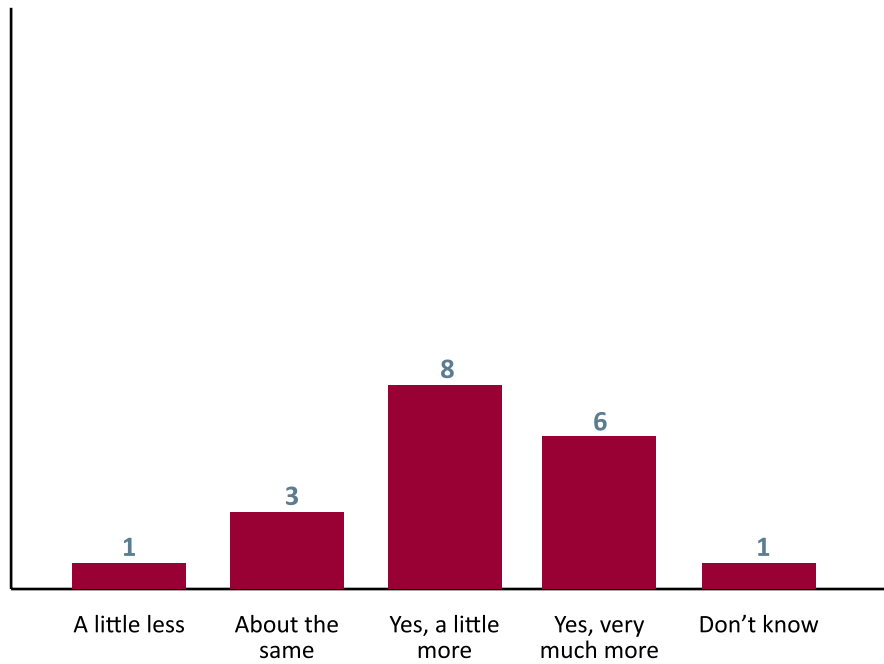
**Figure 14: Employee preparedness for COVID-19 crisis**



Source: Individual survey (2020)

**Communication with ICT tools:** Almost three-quarters (74%) of employees mentioned that they used ICT tools more often in their work since the start of the pandemic.

**Figure 15: Communication with ICT tools**



**Source: Individual survey (2020)**

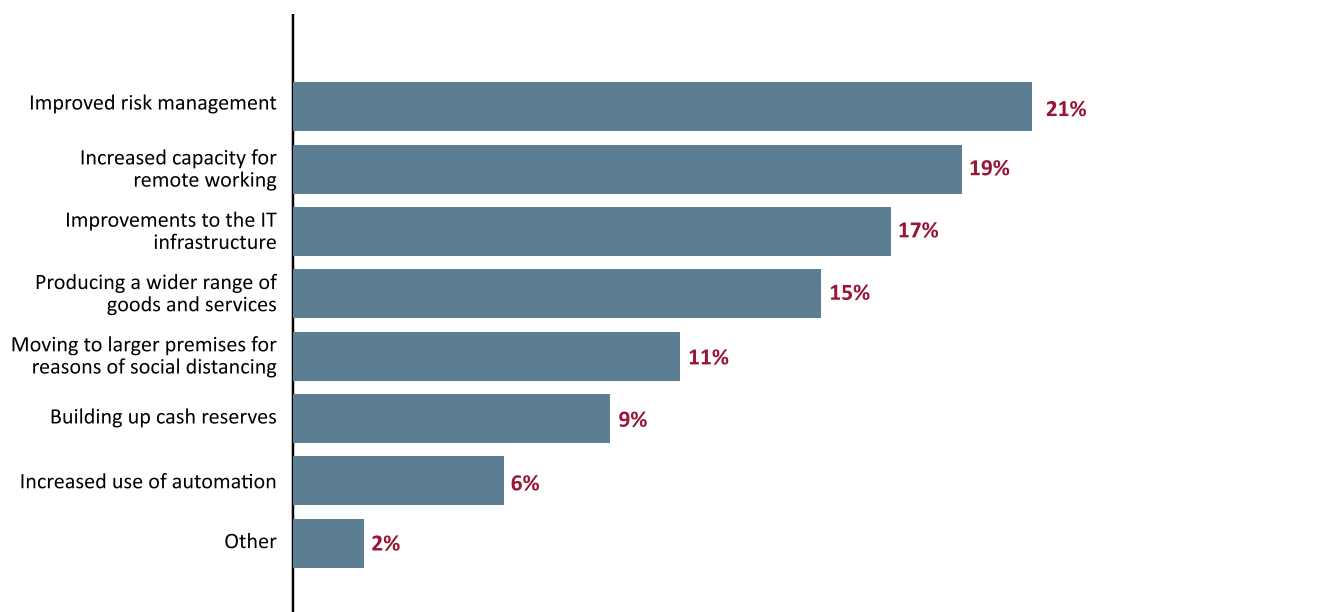


## 7.2 Taking advantage of opportunities during the time of the pandemic

COVID-19 has also presented opportunities for jobs, in both new and existing sectors. These opportunities should be explored by employers and employees alike to ensure continuity during and after the pandemic.

**Employer firms:** There are several measures to mitigate the effect of the pandemic on enterprises. The most popular among employers are increasing remote work (19%), producing a wider range of goods/ services (15%), and improvements to information technology (IT) infrastructure (17%).

**Figure 16: Measures to mitigate the effect of COVID-19**



Source: Employer survey (2020)

The African report<sup>11</sup> listed three main sectors for innovative investment that are likely to experience more growth during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely telecoms and power, ICT, and healthcare. The development of online selling platforms coupled with social media marketing and home delivery services are derivatives of ICT that have helped firms during this pandemic.

**Individuals:** The employed and unemployed need to review personal strategies to get through the pandemic through:

- Job search in sectors boosted by COVID-19, such as ICT, health, and telecoms and power.
- Skills training in ICT and digital skills in areas such as digital marketing, coding, software development, software testing, graphic design, social media, website development, e-commerce, ICT systems, and network engineering.
- Self-employment and entrepreneurship.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.theafricareport.com/27782/coronavirus-in-africa-an-opportunity-for-innovative-investment/>

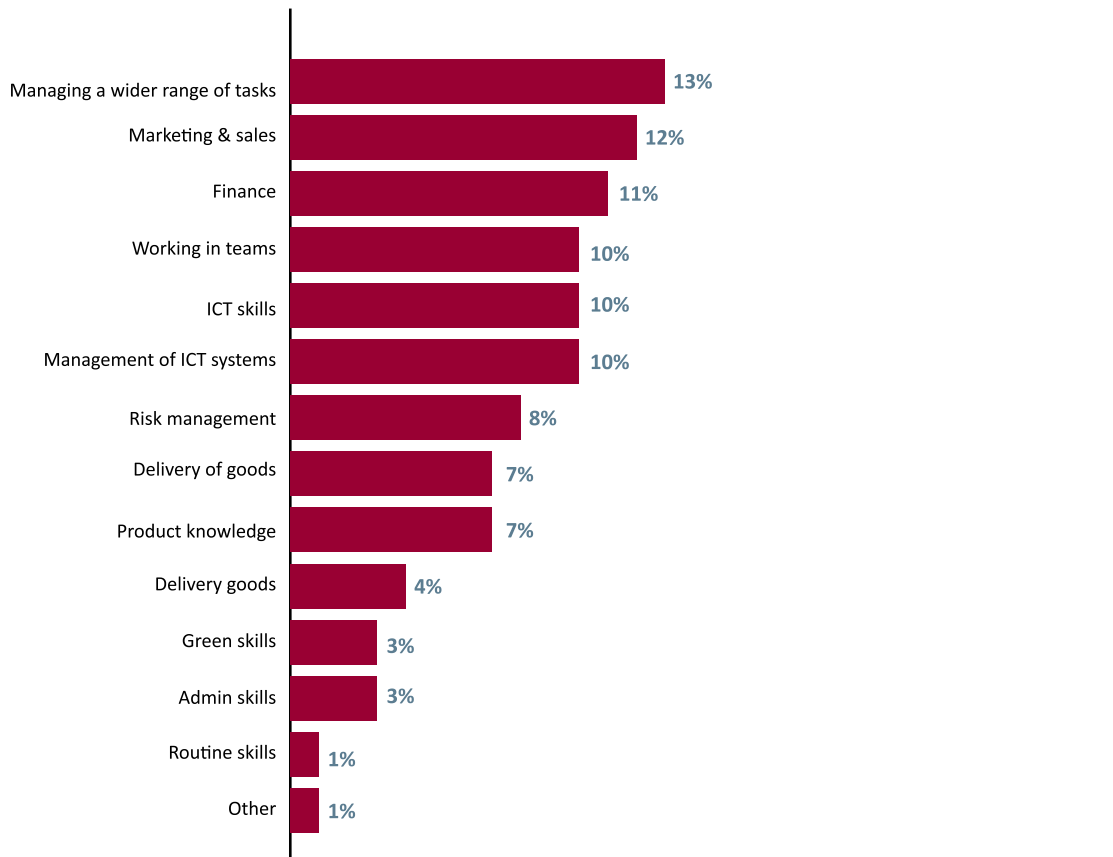
## 8. Speeding up and maximising recovery

It is necessary to speed up the recovery and reduce possible losses in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period.

### 8.1 Increase upskilling and reskilling programmes

**Important workplace skills:** Digital, marketing, sales, and managing a wider range of tasks are important workplace skills.

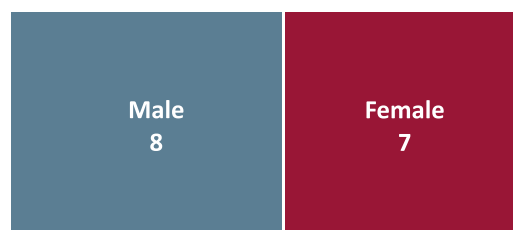
**Figure 17: Important workplace skills**



Source:Employer survey (2020)

**Self-employment:** One strategy to ease the recovery is self-employment. Indeed, 47% of the individuals interviewed confirmed that they have become self-employed as a result of the pandemic.

**Figure 18: Self-employment**

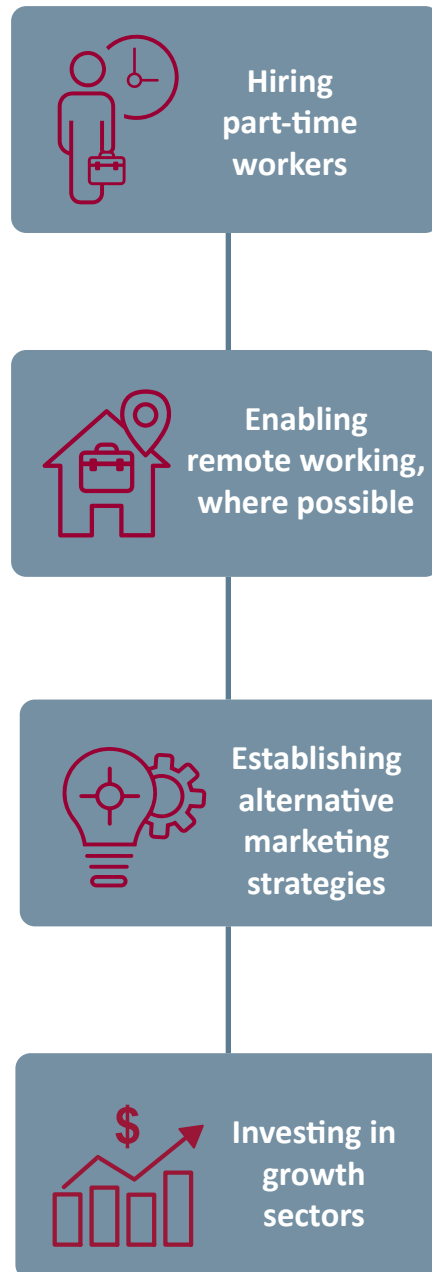


Source: Individual survey (2020)

## 9. Building for the future

### 9.1 Possible interventions

Employers and individuals need to build for the future. Some interventions that could be implemented to speed up recovery include:



## 10. Contributions of skills development

### 10.1 Skills development for the safe operation of firms during the pandemic

#### Digital skills

The pandemic has provided an opportunity to accelerate digital skills. Cameroon's digital economy strategy ensures digital operations training can provide better tools for Cameroonians to bridge the skill gap. The digital learning programmes, both online and offline, will help maintain safe business operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Remote working

Remote working is a vital asset to advance contactless operation. Many employees in Cameroon "learned by doing" during the first phase of the pandemic or received "quick and unstructured" training.

#### Occupational health and safety

Skills development for the safe operation of firms during the pandemic must include an occupational health and safety component with an emphasis on work procedures and prevention of COVID-19 infections. The employer must ensure safe working environments. These skills are vital for establishing clear processes and standard operating procedures in times of crisis.

### 10.2 Skills development for recovery

#### Recovery skills

Key skills needed for recovery are multitasking, communications, digital literacy, data analytics, and soft skills.

### 10.3 Skills development opportunities for changes in industry structure

#### Industry structure

Technical skills that are transferable across occupations and sectors are important for industry structure, including digital skills; administrative, customer relations, and related skills; people management skills; skills for green jobs and environmental sustainability; and language skills.

For those restructuring, skills in job redesigning, restructuring new technology, and ongoing training or re-training of workers are needed.<sup>12</sup>

### 10.4 Skills development for employability of workers adversely affected

- There is a need for employability skills such as critical thinking, communication (literacy and numeracy), and resilience skills (stress resistance, work-life balance, digital detox, time management, flexibility, and adaptability) for all sectors and occupations.
- **Technical skills** (job- and occupation-specific) should be imparted to vulnerable groups (women and the youth) in the labour market. The unemployed that are unable to return to their previous jobs should be given new job skills that would enable them to seek employment in other industries.
- **Soft skills** (communication, interpersonal, leadership, management, teamwork) should be prioritised for the employed workforce.
- **Digital skills** (digital literacy, networking, coding, software development) are also important.

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<sup>12</sup> See Tumenta Kennedy et al (2012) for an analysis on the social consequences and spillover effects of knowledge diffusion and technology-sharing of foreign direct investment, as well as their contributions to enhancing social responsibility and improving living standards in host countries. These organisations have the immediate technical and financial capacities to provide the needed training in the short run.

## 11. Recommendations

COVID-19 was a pandemic that caught the world unaware. Although the health crisis has been minimal in Cameroon, with about 400 active cases towards the end of October 2020, the economic impact of the crisis was harsh, and the distribution and prices of major food products such as rice, fish, and flour were disrupted. Effective response measures are therefore needed to mitigate the economic effects of the crisis.

### 11.1 Training needs assessment

*A training needs assessment should be conducted to identify the skills needs in the economy, especially for PPE manufacturing, ICT and financial technology hubs, and healthcare services.*

### 11.2 Priority skills

*In line with the skills identified in section 10.4 above, there is a need for the following category of skills:*

- *Employability skills, such as critical thinking, communication (literacy and numeracy) and resilience skills (stress resistance, work-life balance, digital detox, time management, flexibility, and adaptability);*
- *Technical skills (job- and occupation-specific), especially for vulnerable groups (women and the youth) in the labour market;*
- *New job skills for the unemployed that are unable to return to their previous jobs to enable them to seek employment in other industries;*
- *Soft skills (communication, interpersonal, leadership, management, and teamwork);*
- *Digital skills (digital literacy, computing, networking, coding, and software development);*
- *Occupational health and safety (protocols);*
- *Multiskilling (managing a wider range of tasks).*

### 11.3 Entrepreneurship

*As the country is dominated by informal business enterprises, there is a need for entrepreneurship training for informal enterprises, as well as for small enterprises in the formal sector and for unemployed and vulnerable groups (women and youth).*

*Entrepreneurship training should cover teamwork, management, marketing, financial management, customer relations, business planning, and resilience. In addition, leadership skills training should be given to small and medium enterprise (SME) owners.*

### 11.4 Occupational health and safety

*Skills training for occupational health and safety should be implemented to minimise the risks of spreading COVID among teachers, learners, and visitors in the school environment, including through wearing of face masks, social distancing, cleaning facilities, washing hands, and temperature checks.*

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