

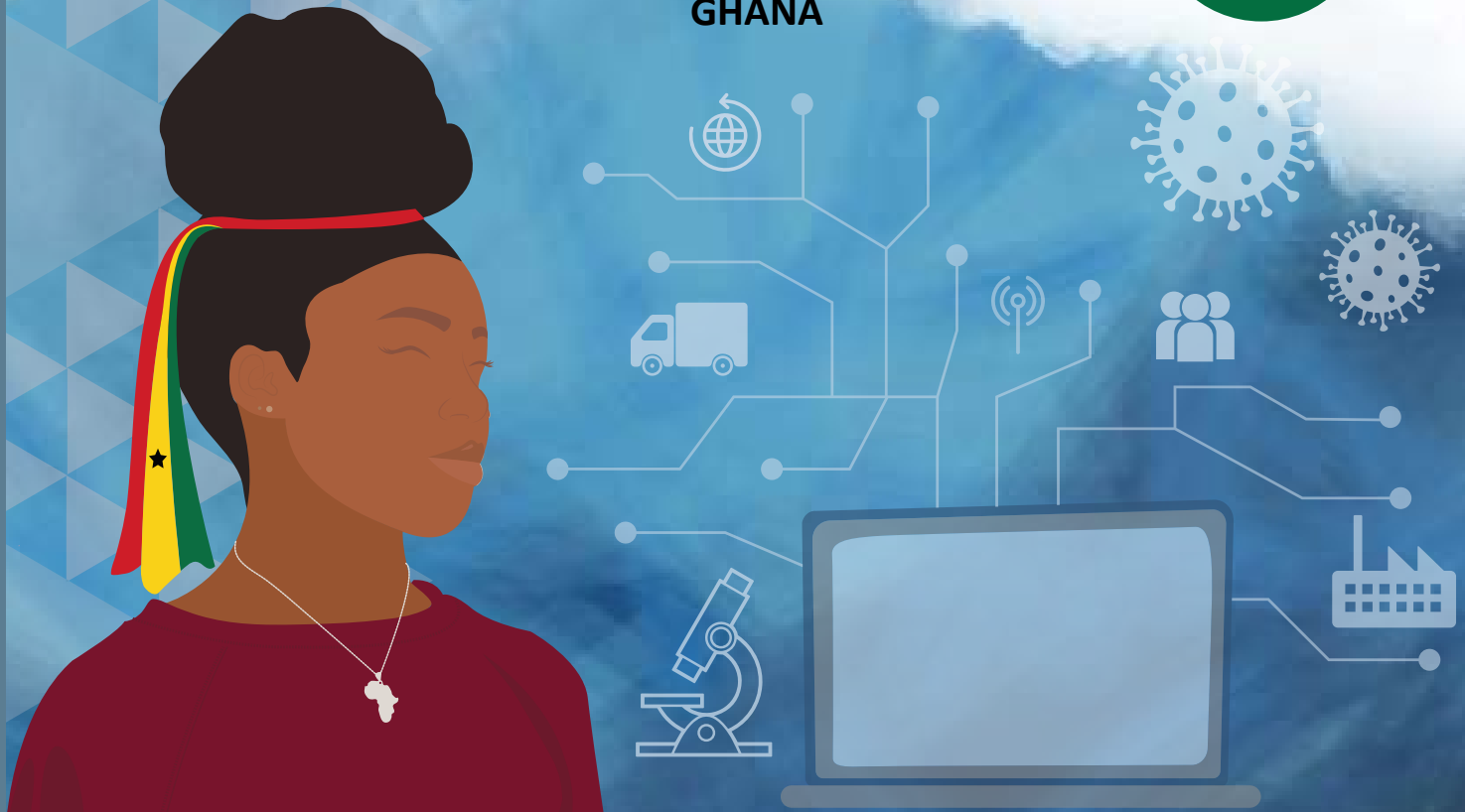
SIFA
Skills Initiative
for Africa

TC
Technical Cooperation

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



GHANA



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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 it 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).

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FOREWORD

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on the Ghanaian economy and society. With disruptions in transport and logistics, travel, import and exports of goods and services, and general economy activity, most businesses either closed completely, or downsized due to the decline in demand for goods and services.

The scale of economic and social effects of the COVID 19 pandemic have been unprecedented and has caused massive labour market disruption for the country. Supply chains were disconnected, productivity dropped, and unemployment figures went up. Daily waged workers such as artisans, domestic workers and labourers were among the most affected. The situation exposed the limitations of the country's social protection system.

Against this background and in response to this challenging situation, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), under the auspices of the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)'s Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA) commissioned a survey to assess reskilling and upskilling needs arising from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market.

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

The survey was a rapid assessment conducted with the financial support of the European Union and the German Government in the Agriculture, Tourism and Hospitality, Construction, Wholesale and Retail, Pharmaceuticals, Education (Private schools) sectors.

This report presents a clear analysis of the findings for the rapid assessment and provides concrete and practical recommendations aimed at limiting the career scarring effects of the pandemic on the labour force through provision of upskilling and reskilling measures. The report also provides actionable skill related recommendations for the economic recovery of the companies in the assessed sectors.

The ILO and AUDA-NEPAD remain committed to supporting the Ghanaian government and its partners to mobilise the requisite follow up action 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

AGI	Association of Ghana Industries
AITI-KACE	Advanced Information Technology Institute - Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence
CAP	Coronavirus Alleviation Programme
GCCI	Ghana Chamber of Commerce and Industry
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GH¢	Ghanaian cedi
ICT	Information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IT	Information Technology
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
NBSSI	National Board for Small Scale Industries
SIFA	Skills Initiative for Africa

▶ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction: Ghana announced its first confirmed case of COVID-19 in March 2020. By September 2020, 44 713 Ghanaians had tested positive for the coronavirus, with 280 deaths countrywide.¹ The Government of Ghana imposed a three-week lockdown in March 2020 in Ghana's two main cities, Accra and Kumasi, amid fears of a spread of the virus. The lockdown led to a four-month closure of sea, land and air borders, schools, churches, and gatherings of more than a hundred persons. The COVID-19 pandemic is taking a toll on the economy and society. Most businesses have closed or downsized due to declining demand for goods and services. Supply chains have been disrupted and productivity has dropped. Unemployment has increased.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has responded by conducting a rapid assessment of reskilling and upskilling needs of Ghana in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The selection of the agriculture, tourism and hospitality, construction, wholesale and retail trade, pharmaceutical, and private school sectors for the rapid assessment was based on the government's preliminary report on the impact of COVID-19 on jobs and industry that was presented by the Minister of Finance to Parliament.

Research methods: The rapid assessment was implemented in three stages comprising of inception activities; enumerator training and data gathering; and data analysis and reporting. Approximately 375 employers and 630 workers responded to the survey. Qualitative interviews were conducted with representatives of employer and trade union bodies.

Agriculture sector: There appear to be no layoffs in the cocoa sector. Supplies were delivered to farmers across the country, and cocoa purchases were paid for. Forward sales and export revenues were also unaffected. Similarly, producers of other tree crops were not significantly affected either. However, there was some disruption in labour supply to farms. Grain production and marketing were not affected as they have a longer shelf life and can be stored.²

Poultry was most adversely affected by the pandemic. Most large poultry farms are situated in the Ashanti and Bono Regions and could not transport meat and eggs to Kumasi and Accra due to lockdown and closure of hotels and restaurants.

Tourism and hospitality sector: Tourism and hospitality is one of the hardest-hit by COVID-19 with adverse consequences for inbound travel, accommodation, domestic tourism, cruises, restaurants and cafes, conventions, festivals, conferences, and other events. The hospitality and tourism sector contributes 3.2% to national employment, estimated to be about 800 000 jobs.³ Over 90% of employment is in hotels, restaurants, pubs, events, tourist destinations, tour operators, airline, and transport operators. Due to the closure of borders, the tourism and hospitality industry fell into a sharp decline in demand for goods and services. Job losses were recorded across the sector value chain. All categories of workers within the sector were affected. A few hotels that survived operated at 10% to 20% capacity, except selected hotels that were used as isolation centres.

¹ Ghana Health Service (2020) COV ID-19 Updates | Ghana. Retrieved 25 July 2020. Accessed at: ghanahealthservice.org.

² Jaiswal, Sweta (April 15, 2020). "Cocoa ETF to Face the Bitter Coronavirus Blow as Demand Wanes," Zacks Investment Research. Accessed at: https://www.zacks.com/stock/news/873162/cocoa-etf-to-face-the-bitter-coronavirusblow-as-demand-wanes?cid=CS-ZC-FT-etf_news_and_commentary-873162

³ Ministry of Finance (2020) Statement to Parliament on economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy of Ghana. Accra: Ministry of Finance.

Construction sector: The construction sector bore the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. Construction workers are involved mainly in informal work, rendering services to households, individuals, and working for contractors. These workers were severely impacted by the lockdown. As they tend to be paid daily, the loss of a daily wage meant a loss of their subsistence incomes. The most affected trades were masons, welders, electricians, steel benders, painters, and carpenters. Food and water vendors (mostly women) at project sites also lost their incomes, while others significantly scaled down their operations.

Wholesale and retail trade sector: Industry players indicated that the wholesale and retail trade sector relies heavily on imports and is a source of employment for many Ghanaians. Wholesalers admitted having reduced inflow of goods due to delays caused by COVID-19, with an estimated reduction in imports of 20% between March and June 2020.

Pharmaceutical sector: Ghana produces 10% of drugs locally. As a result of the pandemic, pharmaceutical companies experienced disruptions due to the closure of borders, and restrictions

in air and sea travel led to medicine shortages. Although companies did not lay off staff, there was an indefinite freeze on recruitment. The increased demand for COVID-19 treatment drugs encouraged importation from China, Europe, and America. Retail pharmaceutical shops adopted social media marketing and courier delivery services to reach clients. This saw substantial investment in motorbikes by pharmacies for free deliveries.

Private school sector: Private schools constitute about 40% of the total number of schools in Ghana. Private schools were forced to close in the build-up to end-of-term examinations, a major period for collecting outstanding school fees. By April 2020, over 100 000 staff had been laid off from the 36 000 private schools in the country.





Findings from individual survey:

The 630 individual survey respondents covered six categories of labour, of which 362 (57%) were employed; 160 (25%) unemployed; 67 (11%) self-employed; 21 (3%) trainees, 18 (3%) individuals working in unpaid family businesses; and 2 (0%) retirees.

Of the 160 unemployed individuals who responded to the survey, about 80% said they did not participate in any training. Furthermore, 67% reported that they did not have the necessary skills to respond to the pandemic, while 28% reported they did. The survey reveals a strong interest in four specific skill types: job-specific technical skills (43%); administration, customer relations, and related skills (16%); people management skills (11%); and digital communication skills (10%).

In terms of duration of unemployment, 50% had been without a job for less than six months, while 35.6% had been unemployed between six months and a year. Approximately 93% were working for an employer before losing their jobs, of which about 73% were laid off either permanently or temporarily, 9% left voluntarily, and 3% were dismissed.



Findings from employer survey:

The employer survey comprised of 375 out of a target of 500 enterprise owners/employers within the six selected sectors (yielding a response rate of 75%). Since the start of the pandemic, 50% of businesses reported job losses compared to 48% which did not.

Job losses by sector were 86% in agriculture; 82% in private schools; 58% in wholesale and retail trade; 39% in construction; and 34% in accommodation and food service activities.

Employers reported 78% of their businesses were operating below capacity during the pandemic. Only 2% operated above capacity during the period under review.

Approximately 61% of the employers indicated that employees were not prepared to deal with changes presented by multitasking at work. The main areas requiring improvement in employee skills are health and safety awareness and knowledge related to COVID-19 (56%); being able to take on a wider range of tasks than before (25%); and digital/information and communications technology (ICT) skills related to communication/using new applications and programmes (17%).

Priority skills: The following priority skills were identified during the COVID-19 pandemic: occupation health and safety; digital communication skills; job-/occupation-specific technical skills; people management and communication skills; and business development.



Recommendations for the agriculture sector

A training programme should be rolled out for managers, mid-level, and elementary level occupations in the poultry value chain on business recovery, supply chain and inventory management, enhanced commercial broiler production, enhanced commercial egg production, health and safety, time management, personal efficiency, multitasking, and digital communication skills, including social media marketing. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture should work through its district agriculture directorates in collaboration with the Ghana National Association of Poultry Farmers.

Short skills training courses should be developed on-site in broiler production and egg production and off-site on business recovery, health and safety, and digital communication.

Short skills training courses should also be developed for poultry farmers and their employees in record keeping, mechanisation, market analysis and business negotiation, problem-solving, monitoring and supervision, innovation, incubation, and machine operation skills. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture should provide the Kwadaso Agriculture Institute, Adidome Farm Institute, Ejura Agric Institute, University of Ghana, University of Development Studies, and the University of Cape Coast with support to deliver training.



Recommendations for the tourism and hospitality sector

Skills training should be offered to employees in multitasking so that, for example, cleaners could work in the kitchen or serve as waiters. The Ghana Tourism Authority in collaboration with the Ghana Tourism Federation should provide training to employers and employees in business recovery, supply chain management, risk management, and multitasking.

Skills training should be provided in digital communication, personal hygiene, health, safety and security, and social media marketing in the short term. Middle- and lower-level employees also require training in interpersonal skills, time management and personal efficiency, record keeping, market research, critical thinking, procurement and negotiation, and quality assurance.

Technical institutes, universities, and other hospitality training institutions such as the Hotel Catering Training Institute, Royal McDick Academy, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), University of Ghana, and the University of Cape Coast should offer customised training programmes.



Recommendations for the construction sector

Skills training should be offered in business recovery, supply chain management, inventory control, digital communication, multitasking, health, safety and security, social media marketing, and risk management for management and mid-level staff in the short term.

Skills training in research and development, strategic management, product development, creative thinking, procurement, purchasing, and supply should be offered to management and mid-level staff in the medium term.

Skills training for lower-level employees should be offered in health and safety and time management in the short term.

Mentoring in measurement, quality service delivery, and production efficiency should be offered to lower-level employees in the medium term. The Road Sector Training School and experts from the Ghana Chamber of Construction Industry should be engaged to develop and deliver training.



Recommendations for the wholesale and retail trade sector

Employers and management level employees require training in business recovery, supply chain management, inventory control, digital communication, and multitasking. Sales and marketing employees require skills upgrading in the use of online marketing platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube.

The Ghana Union of Traders Association should source funding from the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme (CAP) to engage business development experts, including the Banking College, to develop customised short-term training modules and train their members.



Recommendations for the pharmaceutical sector

Government should set up a fund to support leading local pharmaceutical companies to venture into the production of prescription drugs as a way of diversifying the over-reliance on over-the-counter drugs.

Partnerships with major drug manufacturing companies in America and Europe should be forged that lead to the establishment of production facilities for prescription drugs.



Recommendations for the private school sector

Educators and learners in private schools should be trained in the use of virtual teaching and learning systems. The National Inspectorate Board, the regulator of private schools, should collaborate with the Ghana National Association of Private Schools to organise training in the use of digital learning platforms for teachers.

A virtual workshop could also be organised for teachers to learn how to use online learning platforms.

1. Introduction

Ghana announced its first confirmed case of COVID-19 in March 2020. By September 2020, 44 713 Ghanaians had tested positive for the coronavirus, with 280 deaths countrywide.⁴

The Government of Ghana imposed a three-week lockdown in March 2020 in Ghana's two main cities, Accra and Kumasi, amid fears of a spread of the virus. The lockdown led to a four-month closure of sea, land and air borders, schools, churches, and gatherings of more than a hundred persons.

The COVID-19 pandemic is taking a toll on the economy and society. Most businesses have closed or downsized due to declining demand for goods and services. Supply chains have been disrupted and productivity has dropped. Unemployment has increased.

The pandemic also disrupted transport and logistics, migration, import and exports, and business activity, affecting sectors such as agriculture, construction, tourism, trade, and pharmaceuticals. Daily wage workers such as artisans, domestics, and labourers are most vulnerable as they are not catered for in the social protection system. Poverty has increased.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has responded by conducting a rapid assessment of reskilling and upskilling needs of Ghana in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The assessment targeted the agriculture, tourism and hospitality, construction, wholesale and retail trade, pharmaceutical, and private school sectors.



⁴ Ghana Health Service (2020) COVID-19 Updates | Ghana. Retrieved 25 July 2020. Accessed at: ghanahealthservice.org.

2. Methodology

The rapid assessment was implemented in three stages comprising of inception activities; enumerator training and data gathering; and data analysis and reporting.



Inception activities

- Meeting between the ILO and researchers to discuss study, deliverables, and timelines.
- Development of employer and individual survey instruments for target sectors.
- The individual survey was targeted at employed, self-employed, and unemployed workers.
- Development of a qualitative key stakeholder interview schedule.



Enumerator training and data gathering

- Enumerators shared survey links and made follow-ups with respondents.
- Researchers conducted stakeholder interviews with industry players to:
 - » determine the impact of COVID-19 on their sectors.
 - » identify employee skills needs during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.



Data analysis and reporting

- ILO shared the two composite datasets from the survey with researchers.
- Data were cleaned to eliminate all anomalies relating to inconsistent entries and missing data.
- Conducted data analysis.
- Determined findings from survey and interviews
- Developed the report.

- The selection of the six sectors for the rapid assessment was based on the government's preliminary report on the impact of COVID-19 on jobs and industry that was presented by the Minister of Finance to Parliament.
- A total of 375 employers and 630 workers responded to the survey.
- Qualitative interviews were conducted with representatives from the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI), Association of Ghana Industries (AGI), Ghana Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI), organised labour in the informal sector, Peasant Farmers Association, public sector workers unions in health, education and agriculture, and ILO Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA) Skills Anticipation Project officials.

3. Findings from engagement with key stakeholders

This section presents the findings from the key stakeholder interviews.

3.1 Agriculture sector

The impact of COVID-19 on the agriculture sector was varied, but as the poultry industry was most adversely affected by the pandemic, this is the focus of the key stakeholder responses.

Cocoa and tree crops: There appear to be no layoffs in the cocoa sector. Supplies were delivered to farmers across the country, and cocoa purchases were paid for. Forward sales and export revenues were also unaffected. Similarly, producers of other tree crops were not significantly affected either. However, there was some disruption in labour supply to farms. Grain production and marketing were not affected as they have a longer shelf life and can be stored.⁵

Poultry: The poultry industry was most adversely affected by the pandemic. Most large poultry farms are situated in the Ashanti and Bono Regions and could not transport meat and eggs to Kumasi and Accra due to lockdown and closure of hotels and restaurants. Interviews with sector experts revealed that market disruptions during lockdown caused poultry farmers to lose about 200 000 crates of eggs. Most poultry farmers incurred huge losses and laid off farmworkers. In addition, international disruptions occurred in the supply of imported wheat and soya used in feed formulation and the importation of day-old chicks. The import of day-old chicks as cargo attracted higher freight charges and consequently a 21% increase in the price of the chicks. Poultry farmers were unable to take advantage of the reduced importation of poultry.⁶

Outlook amid COVID-19: The easing of restrictions and re-opening of borders gave assurances of supply chain and market recoveries, although it will take at least one year for market deficits to normalise. Companies in the agro-processing and livestock sectors that rely on feed imports from South America, Asia, Europe, and North America will be affected in the future, and the use of local nutritional supplements for feed will be a crucial determinant going forward.

The poultry industry recently received a sales boost of 100 000 crates of eggs from the public school-feeding scheme and the Eid-ul-Adha Islamic festival. The reopening of hotels, event centres, and schools are a significant market opportunity for the sector.

Retrenched poultry workers have turned to other low-skilled jobs to earn a living or depend on their families. Some have resorted to selling face masks, sanitisers, and sachet water on the streets.

Government support: Some farmers, especially poultry farmers, have applied for the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme (CAP) under the auspices of the NBSSI. Additionally, banks have given a grace period for loan repayments.

⁵ Jaiswal, Sweta (April 15, 2020). "Cocoa ETF to Face the Bitter Coronavirus Blow as Demand Wanes," Zacks Investment Research. Accessed at: https://www.zacks.com/stock/news/873162/cocoa-etf-to-face-the-bitter-coronavirusblow-as-demand-wanes?cid=CS-ZC-FT-etf_news_and_commentary-873162.

⁶ <https://trendeconomy.com/data/h2/Ghana/1>.

3.2 Tourism and hospitality sector

The tourism and hospitality sector has been one of the hardest-hit by COVID-19, with adverse consequences for inbound travel, accommodation, domestic tourism, cruises, restaurants and cafes, conventions, festivals, conferences, and other events.

Employment: The sector contributes 3.2% to national employment, estimated to be about 800 000 jobs.⁷ Over 90% of employment is in hotels, restaurants, pubs, events, tourist destinations, tour operators, airline, and transport operators. Due to the closure of borders, the tourism and hospitality industry fell into a sharp decline in demand for goods and services. Job losses were recorded across the sector value chain. All categories of workers within the sector were affected.

A few hotels that survived operated at 10% to 20% capacity, except selected hotels that were used as isolation centres. Most hotels adopted multitasking to augment the decline in staffing. The most severely affected hotel workers were temporary and elementary, which included cleaners, gardeners, waiters, and conference and banqueting attendants, leaving slim management levels and front-line operations staff.

Retrenched staff sought self-employment selling face masks, hand sanitisers, and sachet water on the streets. Others depended on their families for support, hoping to be recalled or land their next job. Some workers, especially those working in three- to five-star hotels, negotiated to receive 50% of their salary while furloughed.

Outlook amid COVID-19: The reopening of Ghana's international airport and the easing of restrictions on public assemblies is a positive development for the tourism and hospitality sector. About six major international airlines have since resumed operations, including KLM, British Airways, Air France, Brussels Air, Emirates, and Ethiopian Airlines. The daily flights have increased the number of visitors to Ghana with a spin-off for hotels, restaurants, and car rentals. With a decline in the number of COVID-19 cases (now less than 500), local restaurants and food chains have regained patronage. Many have adopted mobile deliveries to reduce their holding capacity, which has declined by at least half due to physical distancing.

Government support: NBSSI, the body mandated to manage the CAP, has commenced disbursing soft loans ranging from GH¢ 500 (\$85) to GH¢ 2000 (\$330) to small and micro businesses in the sector, especially eateries.

The stakeholder interviews also revealed that under the World Bank-funded Ghana Tourism Development Project, the government has earmarked USD9 million to support the sector with, of which USD4 million will be allocated for site development, another USD4 million for capacity-building, and USD1 million for business development. Employers are currently being profiled to determine whether they are eligible to access grants. Commercial banks have also agreed to provide lower interest loans to companies in the sector.⁸

⁷ Ministry of Finance (2020) Statement to Parliament on economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy of Ghana.

Accra: Ministry of Finance.

⁸ Ministry of Tourism (2020). Press Release. Ministry of Tourism and Creative Arts and Culture, 2020. June 4th, 2020

3.3 Construction sector

Employment: The construction sector bore the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. Construction workers are involved mainly in informal work, rendering services to households, individuals, and working for contractors. These workers were severely impacted by the lockdown. As they tend to be paid daily, the loss of a daily wage meant a loss of their subsistence incomes. The most affected trades were masons, welders, electricians, steel benders, painters, and carpenters.

Food and water vendors (mostly women) at project sites also lost their incomes, while others significantly scaled down their operations.

Outlook amid COVID-19: Construction is characterised by physical work on site. The sector is therefore dependent on a vaccine and the strict observance of health and safety protocols. The adoption of social distancing, wearing masks, and sanitisation has reduced the pace of work, labour efficiency, and completion rates for projects by about 20%, according to industry experts. The observance of COVID-19 protocols is essential for the sector, as infections are likely to spread if employers do not intensify adherence to health and safety regulations.

Stakeholders stated that job losses in the sector are due to delayed payments to contractors and

non-completion of projects which, in turn, affected payment of wages to workers, sometimes leading to layoffs. The three-week lockdown imposed by the government worsened this situation, as laid-off workers had no opportunity to scout for new jobs.

Government support: According to the key stakeholders, the CAP announced by government is meant for all businesses, including the construction sector. However, employers are not sure whether the amounts on offer (averaging GH¢ 50 000 or US\$8 300 for companies) can do much for contractors since contractors require a considerable capital injection for their projects. As such, Ghanaian contractors are requesting the government formulates and implements policies towards the growth and development of the construction industry and local contractors.

The president has stated that 88 district hospitals earmarked for construction in the next four years will be undertaken by local contractors. While the commitment is welcome, it remains insignificant for addressing key issues related to procurement. The dominance of foreign firms in big contracts, labour formalisation, prompt payment for work, and the high cost of loans remain challenges for the sector.

3.4 Wholesale and retail trade sector

Industry players indicated that the wholesale and retail trade sectors rely heavily on imports and is a source of employment for many Ghanaians. Wholesalers admitted having reduced inflow of goods due to delays caused by COVID-19, with an estimated reduction in imports of 20% between March and June 2020. One of the leading importers of poultry indicated that their quarterly portfolio of 3 000 metric tonnes was reduced to 2 300 metric tonnes due to shipping and logistics disruptions.⁹

They also emphasised that the impact of supply chain deficits was not felt in the population due to the local supply of rice and poultry. Although it appears that job losses were mild, the implications for skills development are significant for marketing and sales strategies and occupational safety and health training.

⁹ Trade for Development. "COVID-19 in Africa –some reflections on trade matters". 9 April 2020". 9 April 2020.; WFP. "Economic and Market Impact analysis of COVID-19 on West and Central Africa". 30 March 2020.

3.5 Pharmaceutical sector

Ghana produces 10% of drugs locally. As a result of the pandemic, pharmaceutical companies experienced disruptions due to the closure of borders, and restrictions in air and sea travel led to medicine shortages. Although companies did not lay off staff, there was an indefinite freeze on recruitment.

3.6 Private school sector

Employment: Private schools, which constitute about 40% of the total number of schools in Ghana, were forced to close in the build-up to end of term examinations, a major period for collecting outstanding school fees. By April 2020, over 100 000 staff had been laid off from the 36 000 private schools in the country. Although elite schools were able to migrate to e-learning platforms, the platforms were unstable and inefficient, and school fees had to be lowered as a result, thus putting pressure on the payroll. Most schools have been paying teachers half their monthly salaries. Even when schools opened for learners to write external examinations, the impact on the revenue of private schools was limited.

Government support: Government announced the disbursement of GH¢ 50 million in September 2020 for private schools as part of the stimulus package. The 3% interest loan is intended to cover staff salaries.

The increased demand for COVID-19 treatment drugs encouraged importation from China, Europe, and America. Retail pharmaceutical shops adopted social media marketing and courier delivery services to reach clients. This saw substantial investment in motorbikes by pharmacies for free deliveries.

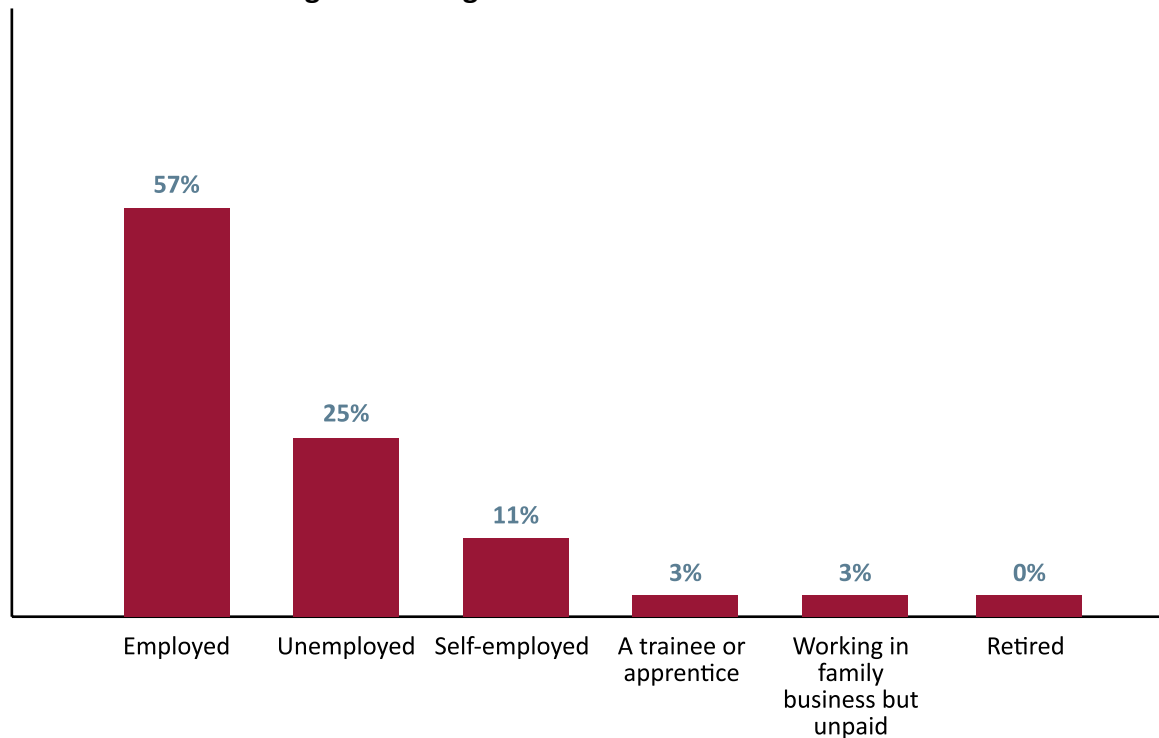
Outlook amid COVID-19: Most schools, especially the mid-level and elite ones, have rolled out online lessons which attract fees. Such innovations are vital to mitigating COVID-19 by generating revenue to finance staff salaries and other recurrent expenditure as schools remain closed to in-person classes until January 2021. The critical skills required to mitigate COVID-19 in the short to medium term are information and communications technology (ICT) skills in using virtual learning technology, while employers and school managers require skills in managing e-learning and monitoring staff output virtually.



4. Findings from individual survey

Coverage: Surveys were administered on the impact of COVID-19 on workers and employers. The survey of individual workers covered six categories of labour as shown in Figure 1. In all, 630 individuals responded, of which 362 (57%) were employed; 160 (25%) unemployed; 67 (11%) self-employed; 21 (3%) trainees, 18 (3%) individuals working in unpaid family businesses; and 2 (0%) retirees. The analysis focused primarily on the unemployed, employed, and self-employed because they formed most of the responses.

Figure 1: Categories of individuals interviewed



Source: Individual survey (2020)

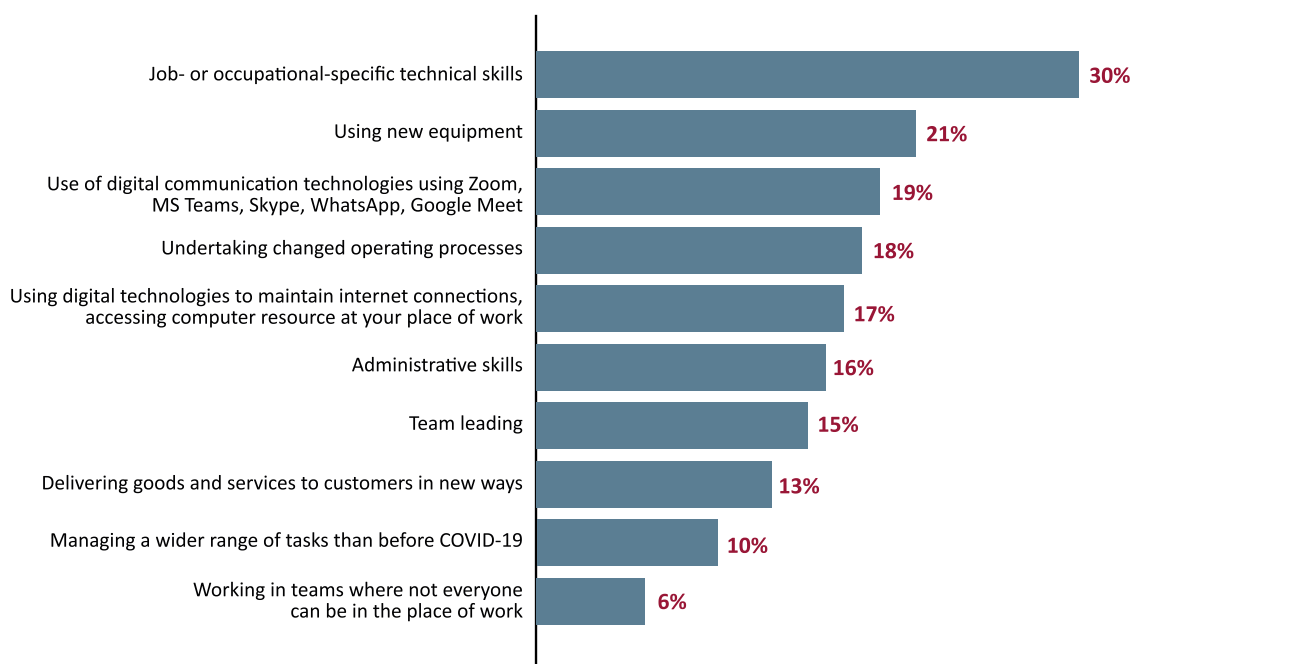
Of the 362 employed individuals, 59% were males and 30% females. The remaining 11% did not provide their gender status. The data revealed that 29% were employed in agriculture; 11% in accommodation and food services; 10% in construction (plus real estate activities); and 9% in education. There was a decrease in wages/salaries for 35%, while 3% received increases. It is significant to note that 53% reported that their wages/salaries were not affected.

Skills and training needs of employees: Employees require various skills to maintain their jobs during and after COVID-19. The most common skills needs were the following:

- Job- or occupational-specific technical skills (30%)
- Use of new equipment (21%)
- Digital communication technologies, especially Zoom (19%)
- Changed operating processes (18%)
- Digital technologies to maintain internet connections (17%)

Over 56% felt they were likely to maintain their work during and after the pandemic.

Figure 2: Skills required by employees

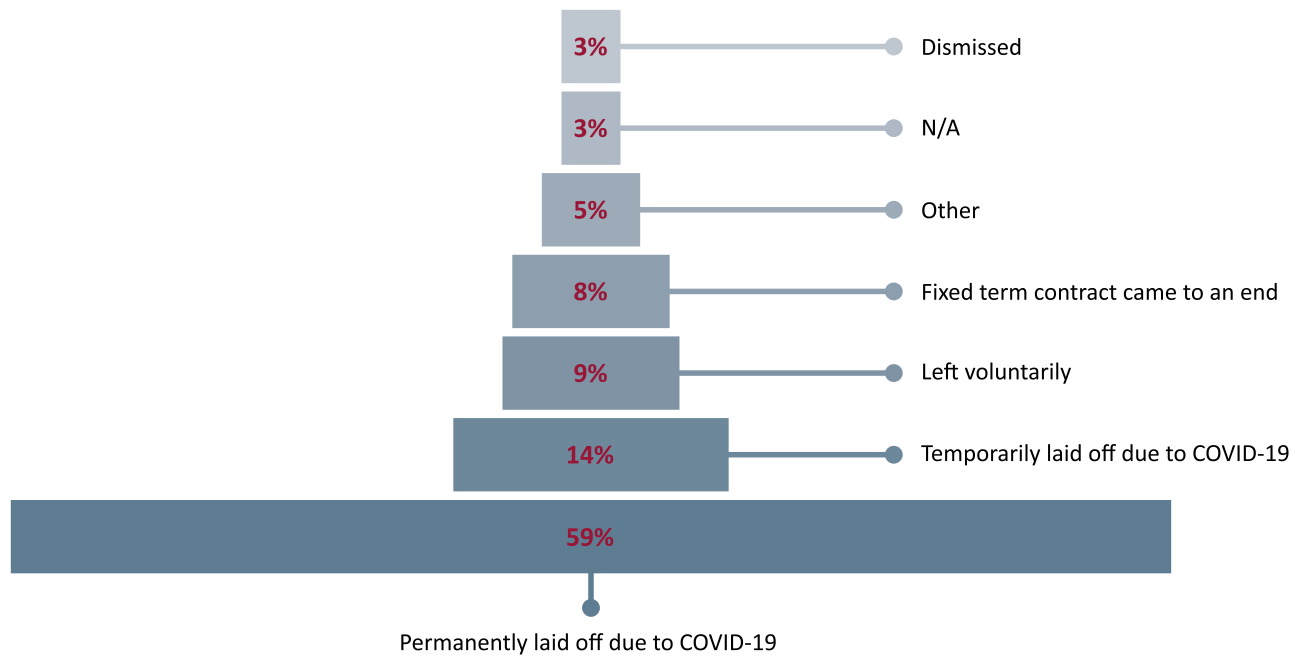


Source: Individual survey (2020)

Job losses: Of the 160 unemployed individuals who responded to the survey, 50% had been without a job for less than six months, while 35.6% had been unemployed between six months and a year. Approximately 93% were working for an employer before losing their jobs, of which about 73% were laid off either permanently or temporarily, 9% left voluntarily, and 3% were dismissed. The layoffs were severe for those with tertiary education. For example, the unemployed with a secondary

education comprised 33%, with degrees 29%, and with diplomas 28%. The age analysis shows that the unemployed in the 26-35 age group was worst affected, with 48% losing their jobs. Individuals in the 36-45 and 21-25 age groups were also affected, with 24% and 21% losing their jobs, respectively. The sector distribution of job losses were accommodation and food service activities (29%), education sector (23%), wholesale and retail trade (12%), agriculture (8%), and construction (8%).

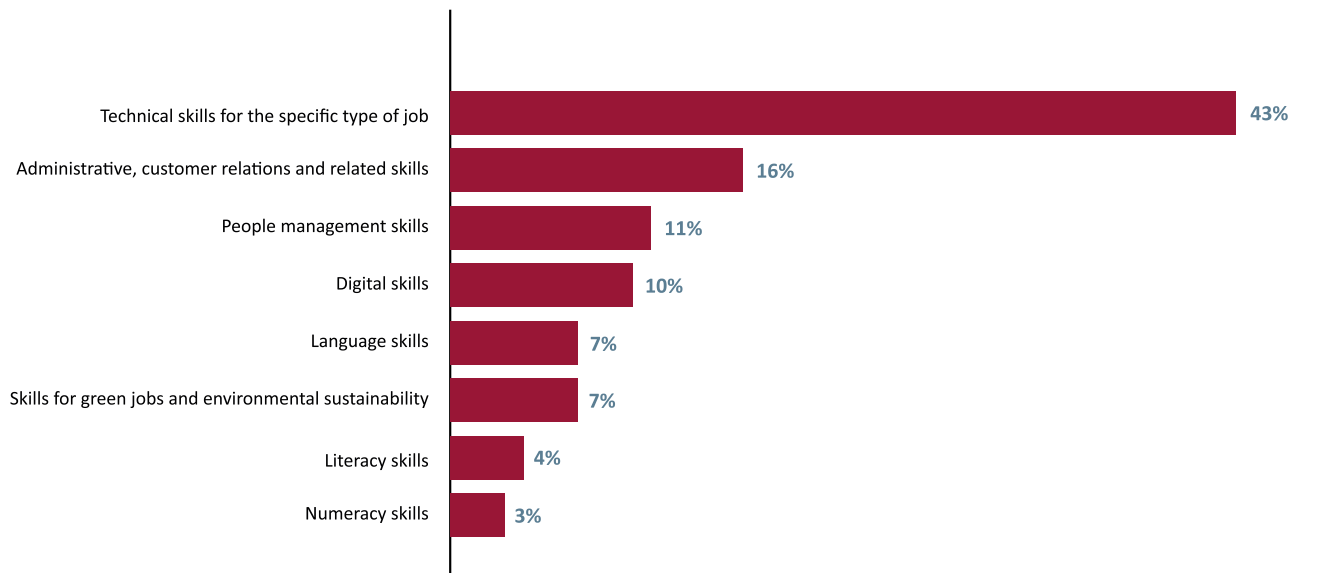
Figure 3: Job losses



Source: Individual survey (2020)

Skills and training needs of the unemployed: About 80% of the unemployed individuals that responded to the survey said they did not participate in any training. Furthermore, 67% of the unemployed reported that they did not have the necessary skills to respond to the pandemic, while 28% reported they did. The survey reveals a strong interest in four specific skill types: job-specific technical skills (43%); administration, customer relations, and related skills (16%); people management skills (11%); and digital communication skills (10%).

Figure 4: Skills required by the unemployed



Source: Individual survey (2020)

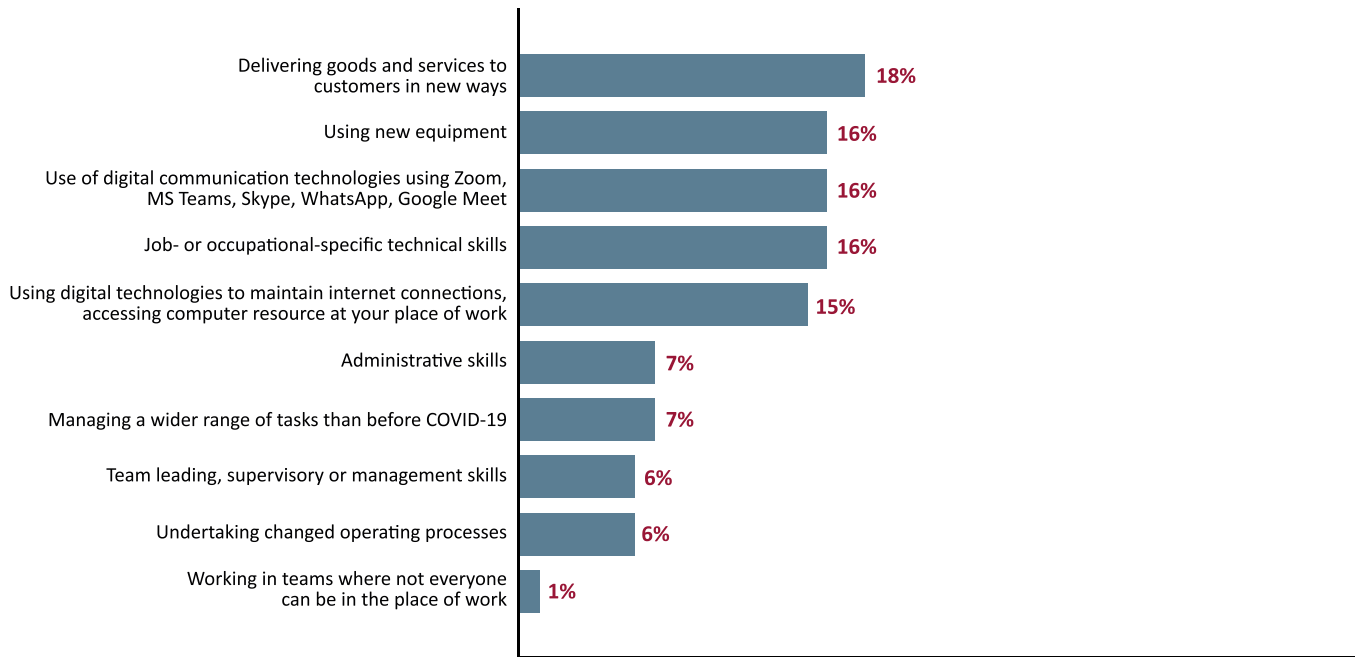
Self-employed skills needs: Only 67 respondents were in the self-employed category, of which more were males (46%) than females (34%), with 19% not indicating their gender. About 27% were educated at the secondary level, while 22% had bachelor’s degrees, 18% had a community college/intermediate diploma/vocational training, and 3% had a post-graduate education. The sector spread was highest for wholesale and retail trading (19%), followed by accommodation and food service activities (16%), agriculture and related activities (16%) and construction (9%).

The pandemic affected hours of work by the self-employed in different ways. About 49% of respondents reported a decline in hours, while 36% maintained their usual working hours.

The remaining 6% worked more hours than they usually did before the pandemic. Similarly, 73% reported a decrease in their incomes, 10% indicated their incomes did not change, and 6% received an increase.

The key skills needs identified for the self-employed delivering goods and services to customers in new ways (18%), job- or occupation-specific technical skills (16%), use of digital communication technologies (16%), using new equipment (16%), and using digital technologies (15%). These findings correspond to key stakeholder opinions that the most required skills are technical skills that directly impact productivity and digital communication skills.

Figure 5: Skills required by the self-employed



Source: Individual survey (2020)



5. Findings from employer survey

The employer survey comprised of 375 out of a target of 500 enterprise owners/employers within the six selected sectors (yielding a response rate of 75%). From the total employers surveyed, 92% were private businesses and 8% were cooperatives, non-governmental, national, or local government organisations. Most of the respondents (86%) were from agriculture (50%), construction (14%), accommodation and food service activities (8%), education (8%), and wholesale and retail trade (6%).

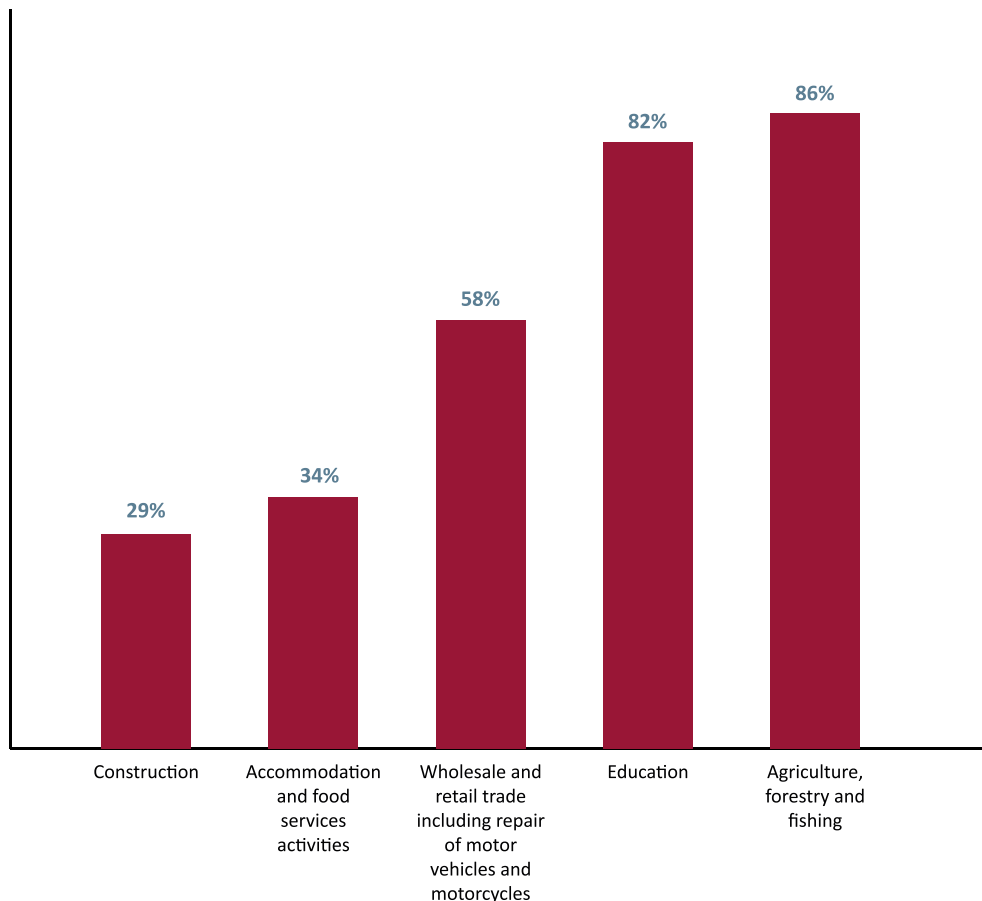
Many of the employers (69%) were engaged by small businesses that employed less than 10 workers, while 18% were engaged by firms that employed 10-24 workers, 9% by firms that

employed 25-99 workers, and 4% by firms that employed 100 or more workers in the three years before the pandemic.

Effect of the pandemic on businesses: Since the start of the pandemic, 50% of businesses reported job losses, compared to 48% which did not. The remainder did not respond to the question.

Job losses by sector were 86% in agriculture, 82% in education (82%), 58% in wholesale and retail trade, 39% in construction, and 34% in accommodation and food service activities.

Figure 6: Job losses by sector



Source: Individual survey (2020)

Employers were optimistic the situation of job cuts and layoffs would soon end. Asked how they intended to fill the vacancies, a little over 50% indicated using staff temporarily laid off, while 25% intimated that they would recruit fully-skilled workers and 19% indicated that they would recruit inexperienced staff that require training before employment. However, they envisaged three main challenges to recruiting competent skilled personnel, namely, the high demand for skilled personnel in the industry (33%); skills may be in high demand in other industries (23%); and skills scarcity due to their specialised nature (20%). A further 5% believed skilled employees would be unwilling to return.

Level of operations: Employers reported 78% of their businesses were operating below capacity during the pandemic. Only 2% operated above capacity during the period under review.

Skills and training needs: Approximately 61% of the employers indicated that employees were not prepared to deal with changes presented by multitasking at work. The main areas requiring improvement in employee skills are health and

safety awareness and knowledge related to COVID-19 (56%), being able to take on a wider range of tasks than before (25%), and digital/ICT skills related to communication/using new applications and programmes (17%).

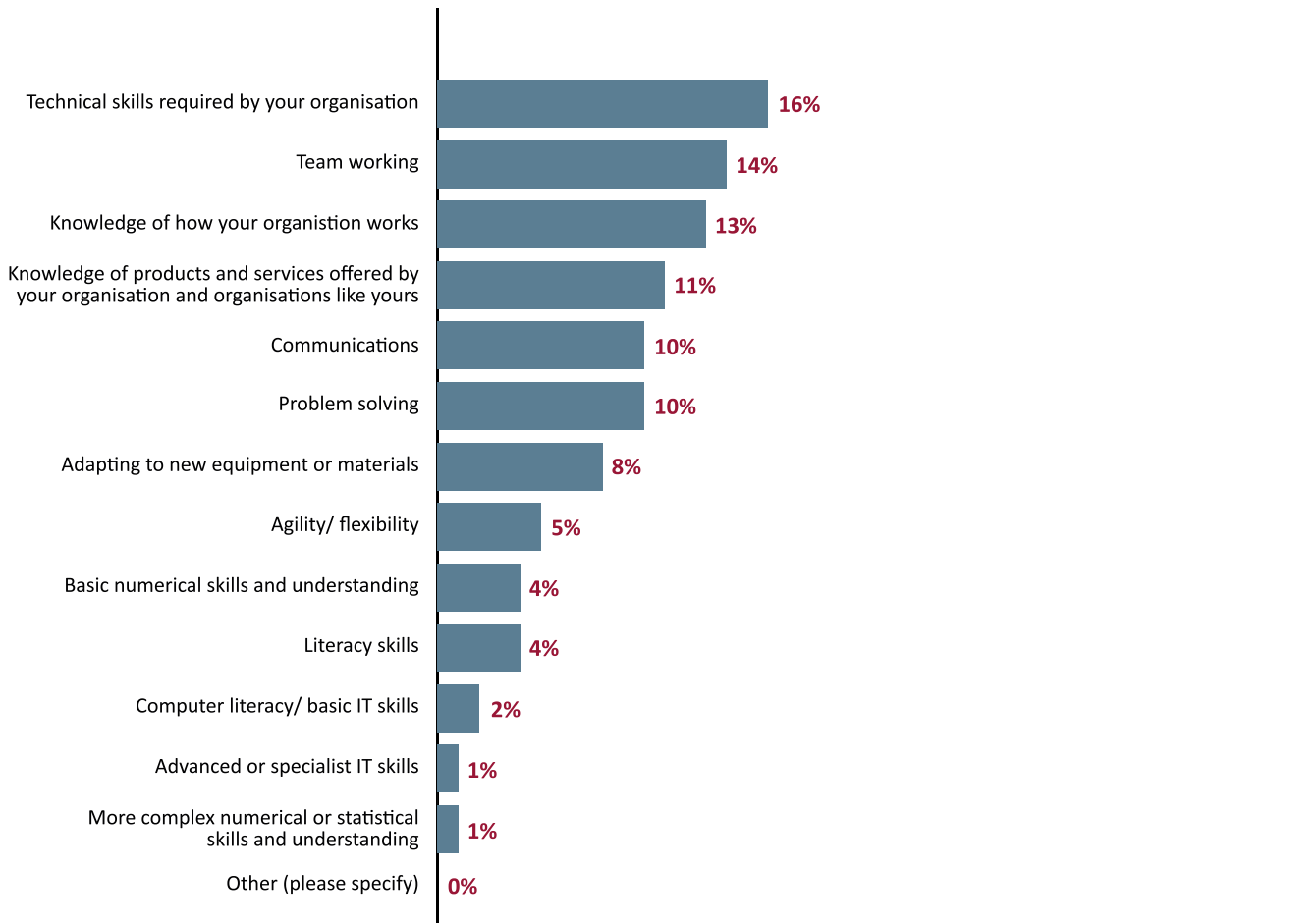
During the pandemic, 41% of employers provided training to their workers, while 54% did not. The remaining 5% did not provide an answer.

The training was mainly on health and safety at work (45%), delivering goods and services to customers in new ways (18%), use of digital communication technologies (13%), and managing a wider range of tasks than before COVID-19 (10%). The reasons given by employers who could not administer training interventions for their employees included lack of training opportunities (31%) and funding (23%). The remaining 30% of employers did not train their staff because they thought it was not necessary.

Employers prioritised technical skills as the most critical (16%), followed by teamwork, (14%) and knowledge of organisational systems (13%). Surprisingly, computer and IT skills account for only 2%.



Figure 7: Skills employers require from employees



Source: Individual survey (2020)

Regarding measures to avert or minimise the shocks of future pandemics on businesses, employers suggested building up cash reserves (30%), improved risk management (21%), producing a wider range of goods and services (17%), and improvements to the information technology (IT) infrastructure (10%) as key priority strategies.

6. Effect of COVID-19 on employment

The effect of the pandemic on employment appears to differ among employers surveyed. About 46% felt COVID-19 had resulted in a decrease in employment, and 45% felt employment has stayed the same since the end of 2019.

Difficulty in filling vacancies: Just over a third (33%) of employers said the vacancies are difficult to fill because the skills are in high demand in their industries, while 23% felt these are skills required by organisations in other industries. A further 20% felt that these specialised skills are in short supply.

COVID-19 opportunities: New opportunities identified included the distribution of goods such as home delivery services (29%), delivery of care services (18%), production of goods which would usually be imported (14%), and delivery of health-related service to hospitals, clinics, and tracking and tracing services (12%).

Required support: Over one-third (34%) of respondents wanted loans to finance their business recovery efforts, while 25% wanted support in paying the wages. Some 12% wanted all loan repayments to be suspended, and 8% needed assistance with rent. Only 7% needed information on COVID-19.

Expected recovery in the labour market: About 27% of employers interviewed felt employment will return to pre-COVID levels in six months, though a similar proportion was of the view that the increase will be below pre-COVID levels. Interestingly, 21% were very positive that employment will increase beyond pre-COVID levels in the period under reference. About 3% of employers think employment will decrease.

Observations on reskilling and upskilling: Multiskilling is identified as a key reskilling and

upskilling measure. For instance, how front desk workers can blend their work with social media marketing, or drivers can also work as marketing assistants.

Employer skills: Respondents identified the need for entrepreneurial skills for employers. For instance, self-employed farmers, artisans, and food chain operators do not have direct contact with the formal economy, thus limiting access to financial support. Business owners need capacity-building on how to formalise their operations, understand the market, and deliver quality service, as well as financial management skills.

Both formal and informal sector employers require skills in allocative and spending efficiency, multitasking, and people management. Such skills are critical according to industry giants, including the multinationals that were least hit by the pandemic. As the chief executive of one of the largest multinational agro-processing firms in Ghana remarked, in pandemic situations where there are business disruptions, employers have no choice but to do two things: borrow and spend efficiently.



7. Priority skills in responding to COVID-19

The fact that the data shows that 54% of employers surveyed did not provide training for employees to deal with new working arrangements, mainly because the training was not available, and secondly because they could not afford training, implies the need for external support in this regard. Assistance from specialised central government institutions, regulatory bodies, non-governmental organisations, private organisations, and other stakeholders is critical.

Occupational health and safety: To curb the spread of COVID-19, there is a need to intensify public education on workplace safety and knowledge related to COVID-19. There is a need to train in the observance of workplace safety protocols, social distancing, wearing of face masks, fumigation, and disinfection.

Digital communication skills: Digital communication skills are a priority during and after the pandemic. Workers require training in digital and ICT skills. The relevant government agencies should be offering short courses on digital and ICT skills for their constituencies. The ICT resource centres of the Ministry of Communication in the various districts could be used. The Advanced Information Technology Institute - Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence (AITI-KACE) could also be contracted to undertake some of the training in collaboration with other private sector institutions.

The Ministry of Communication, Ministry of Education, and the National Council for Tertiary Education should engage with technical and public

universities to roll out short courses for workers and the public. The Ministry of Communications should collaborate with telecommunication companies to prioritise expanding the ICT infrastructure and internet penetration cost-efficiently.

Job- /occupation-specific technical skills: Job-specific skills are a priority. For instance, the Ghana Employers Association in collaboration with the Tourism Department of the University of Cape Coast supported by the Ghana Tourism Authority and Royal McDick Academy should offer work training.

People management and communication skills: People management and communication skills were identified as priority skills. Good people management and communication skills helped many workers to overcome the fear of losing their jobs. They are also necessary for managing workers who are to be laid off, especially when trust is well built with the workforce. The constructions and tourism and hospitality sectors both need to manage a workforce that is not well-educated.

Business development: Business development is also a cross-cutting priority required by all employers. Employers require knowledge in long- and medium-term business recovery strategies. The Private Enterprise Foundation, Ministry of Business Development, and NBSSI should consider developing (new modules) and scaling up existing short courses on business recovery, targeting employers and management-level employees.



8. Recommendations

8.1 Recommendations for the agriculture sector

- *A training programme should be rolled out for managers, mid-level, and elementary level occupations in the poultry value chain on business recovery, supply chain and inventory management, enhanced commercial broiler production, enhanced commercial egg production, health and safety, time management, personal efficiency, multitasking, and digital communication skills, including social media marketing. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture should work through its district agriculture directorates in collaboration with the Ghana National Association of Poultry Farmers.*
- *Short skills training courses should be developed on-site in broiler production and egg production and off-site on business recovery, health and safety, and digital communication.*
- *Short skills training courses should be developed for poultry farmers and their employees in record keeping, mechanisation, market analysis and business negotiation, problem-solving, monitoring and supervision, innovation, incubation, and machine operation skills. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture should provide the Kwadaso Agriculture Institute, Adidome Farm Institute, Ejura Agric Institute, University of Ghana, University of Development Studies, and the University of Cape Coast with support to deliver training.*

8.2 Recommendations for the tourism and hospitality sector

- *Skills training should be offered to employees in multitasking so that, for example, cleaners could work in the kitchen or serve as waiters. The Ghana Tourism Authority in collaboration with the Ghana Tourism Federation should provide training to employers and employees in business recovery, supply chain management, risk management, and multitasking.*
- *Skills training should be provided in digital communication, personal hygiene, health, safety and security, and social media marketing in the short term. Middle and lower-level employees also require training in interpersonal skills, time management and personal efficiency, record keeping, market research, critical thinking, procurement and negotiation, and quality assurance.*
- *Technical Institutes, universities, and other hospitality training institutions such as the Hotel Catering Training Institute, Royal McDick Academy, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), University of Ghana, and the University of Cape Coast should offer customised training programmes.*

8.3 Recommendations for the construction sector

- *Skills training should be offered in business recovery, supply chain management, inventory control, digital communication, multitasking, health, safety and security, social media marketing and risk management for management and mid-level staff in the short term.*
- *Skills training in research and development, strategic management, product development, creative thinking, procurement, purchasing and supply should be offered to management and mid-level staff in the medium term.*
- *Skills training for lower-level employees should be offered in health and safety and time management in the short term.*
- *Mentoring in measurement, quality service delivery, and production efficiency should be offered to lower-level employees in the medium term. The Road Sector Training School and experts from the Ghana Chamber of Construction Industry should be engaged to develop and deliver training.*

8.4 Recommendations for the wholesale and retail trade sector

- *Employers and management level employees require training in business recovery, supply chain management, inventory control, digital communication, and multitasking. Sales and marketing employees require skills upgrading in the use of online marketing platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube.*
- *The Ghana Union of Traders Association should source funding from the CAP to engage business development experts, including the Banking College to develop customised short-term training modules and train their members.*

8.5 Recommendations for the pharmaceutical sector

- *Government should set up a fund to support leading local pharmaceutical companies to venture into the production of prescription drugs as a way of diversifying the over-reliance on over-the-counter drugs.*
- *Partnerships with major drug manufacturing companies in America and Europe should be forged that lead to the establishment of production facilities for prescription drugs.*

8.6 Recommendations for the private schools sector

- *Educators and learners in private schools should be trained in the use of virtual teaching and learning systems.*
- *The National Inspectorate Board, the regulator of private schools, should collaborate with the Ghana National Association of Private Schools to organise training in the use of digital learning platforms for teachers.*
- *A virtual workshop could also be organised for teachers to learn how to use online learning platforms.*

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