NEW FORMS OF WORK AND PLATFORM WORK IN SEMED

Country profile: Libya

CONTENTS

Setting the scene

Main economic indicators

Libya is considered an upper middle-income country, and is one of the world's important oil exporting countries. For years, the Libyan economy has suffered from the conflicts that arose after the Arab Spring in 2011, as well as from the adverse socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and more recently from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and because of the country's dependence on one source of revenue: oil exporting (which make up 90% of all of its national exports). Between 2011 and 2020, Libya's GDP per capita declined by 50%, and in 2022 economic growth remained low and volatile due to conflict-related disruptions in oil production.[1]

The report on Libya's foreign trade shows that the foreign trade sector in Libya witnessed fluctuations during the period 2019-2022. These were due to political conditions, the frequent suspension of oil production and exports, and the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy and on commodity supplies and prices – which had a direct impact on the volume of Libya's trade exchange with other countries. In 2022, this recorded an increase of 19.1% compared with the previous year, due to an increase in oil production and exports.[2] According to the inflation report of the Central Bank of Libya (2023), inflation increased over the last three years, rising from 1.4% in 2020 to 2.8% in 2021 and 4.6% in 2022. An analysis of price trends in various commodity groups during the first quarter of 2023 shows that inflation is on the rise in the price of food, as well as in other categories such as housing, electricity, oil & gas, clothing, transportation and health.[3]

Based on statistics from the World Bank, Libya's annual rate of GDP growth (%) was 31.4% in 2021, after falling as low as -23.9% in 2020 and -11.2% in 2019.[4] Most of the GDP contribution in Libya came from the public service sector, with around USD 16.7 billion of value added. Another major area of economic activity for the country is the extractive industry, with mining and quarrying contributing around USD 4.0 billion to GDP.[5] According to Statista, the annual percentage change in contributions to Libya's GDP between 2021 and 2023, by sector, for industry, services and agriculture respectively, are as follows. In 2021: 115.2%, (-8%), 2%; in 2022: 13.4%, 4%, 2%; and in 2023: 8.7%, 4.5%, 2.5%.[6]

Libya is both a destination and a transit country for migrants due to its expected job opportunities and geographical location.[7] The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) programme for Libya identified a total of 683,813 migrants from over 42 nationalities in the 100 Libyan municipalities during Round 44 of data collection (September–October 2022). The number of migrants in Libya has continued to increase slightly compared with the previous reporting period (679,974 migrants during Round 43, July–August 2022). This is in line with a trend that started at the beginning of 2021. Prior to 2021, the number of migrants in Libya had been declining following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The number of migrants in Libya identified during Round 44 is also higher than the number of migrants for the corresponding period in 2019 (654,081 migrants during Round 28, October–November 2019).[8] Most migrants in Libya are adults (89%), while 11% are children. The

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[1] World Bank (2023a). The World Bank in Libya, available at:
https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/libya/overview
[2] Central Bank of Libya. Report of Libya's foreign trade during the period of (2019-2022) (in Arabic), available at: النشرة الاقتصادية – مصرف ليبيا المركزي (cbl.gov.ly)
[3] Central Bank of Libya, Inflation report 2023 (in Arabic), available at: النشرة الاقتصادية – مصرف ليبيا المركزي (cbl.gov.ly)
[4] World Bank (2023b). GDP growth (annual%) Libya, available at:
https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=LY
[5] Statista (2023a). Contribution value to GDP in Libya 2020 by economic activity, available at:
https://www.statista.com/statistics/1226464/contribution-value-to-gdp-by-economic-activity-in-libya/
[6] Statista (2023b). Annual percentage change in the contribution to GDP in Libya from 2021 to 2023, by sector, available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1245547/annual-percentage-change-in-contribution-to-gdp-by-sector-in-libya/
[7] Bulletin MSNA (2021). Migrants and refugees in Libya, available at: https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/migrants-and-refugees-libya-2021-msna-bulletin-key-findings-november-2021
[8] IOM Libya (2022). Migration report, round 44: September – October 2022.

majority of migrants are from Niger, Egypt, Sudan, Chad and Nigeria. In November 2022, due to a significant increase in migratory pressure on the route, the European Commission presented an EU Action Plan on the Central Mediterranean to address the many challenges along the route. The Action Plan proposes 20 measures designed to reduce irregular and unsafe migration, provide solutions to emerging challenges in the area of search and rescue, and reinforce solidarity balanced against responsibility between the Member States.[9]

The main issues relating to economic growth in Libya include:

- Security issues and political instability: Libya's economic growth remains low due to security issues and political instability (Arab spring 2011, COVID-19, conflicts, etc.). This instability also affects the business and social climate in the country.
- Dependence on oil: Libya's economy primarily depends on the oil sector, which generates substantial revenues from the energy industry.[10] This lack of diversification has affected the country's economic growth, especially during periods of conflict, which disrupt oil production.
- Corruption and bureaucratic issues: according to the 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index, Libya ranked 171st out of 180 countries.[11] This indicates corruption is deeply rooted in the country and is prevalent at all levels of public administration. Furthermore, there are complications resulting from the division of state institutions and burdensome regulations, leading to excessive bureaucracy.[12]
- Inflation: according to data from the inflation report of the Central Bank of Libya (2023), inflation has increased over the last three years. This has been driven by significant rises in food, housing and electricity prices. The official Consumer Price Index (CPI) reached 4% by the end of 2022, while the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) saw a peak increase of 38% in national prices.[13] This level of inflation might discourage investment in Libya and hamper the country's long-term economic growth.
- Migration: Libya is a transit country for migrants and refugees, and according to the European Council, there has been a significant increase in migratory pressure in the area. This situation presents further difficulties for the growth in Libya due to its effect on various aspects of people's lives, especially employment.
- Unemployment and the informal economy, which are discussed further below.

Labour market

According to the World Bank, Libya's total labour force has increased over the last three years, being estimated at 2,159,483 in 2020; at 2,252,161 in 2021; and at 2,318,929 in 2022.[14] Meanwhile, the share of women in the labour force was 35.6% in 2020, 35.8% in 2021, and 36% in 2022.[15] However, Libya's ranking in terms of gender equality indices has regressed, falling from 41st out of 162 countries in 2018 to 61st in 2021.[16] Labour market indicators show a low level of participation in the labour force among Libyan women, amounting to 25.7%, compared with 79% for men.

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[9] European Council (2023). Migration flows on the Central Mediterranean route, available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-migration-policy/central-mediterranean-route/
[10] OPEC (2021). Libya facts and figures, available at: https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/166.htm
[11] Transparency International (2022). Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022
[12] Us Department of State (2023). 2023 Investment Climate Statements: Libya, available at: https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-investment-climate-statements/libya/
[13] World Bank (2023c). Libya's Economy Shows Resilience and Potential for Prosperity Amid Challenges, available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/06/06/libya-s-economy-shows-resilience-and-potential-for-prosperity-amid-challenges
[14] World Bank (2022a). Labour force, total – Libya, available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.IN?locations=LY
[15] World Bank (2022b). Labour force, female (% of total labour force) – Libya, available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=LY
[16] World Food Programme. Libya Annual Country Report (2022). Country Strategic Plan 2019–2023, p 24, available at: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000147971/download/

In 2019, almost 60% of the working population in Libya was employed in the service sector. The industrial sector accounted for around 24% of employed people, while agricultural activities made up roughly 16% of total employment in the country. Although industry is the most important sector in Libya in terms of GDP contribution, it does not employ an extensive workforce.[17]

The public sector is by far the most sought-after employer in Libya, because it combines the advantages of work stability and social security that young employees want. The public sector employs a significant portion of the workforce in Libya. More than 85% of those in work are employed in the public sector.[18] However, state salaries remain very low. In the private sector, young people aspire to work for foreign companies, which are believed to offer better working conditions than domestic enterprises. Entrepreneurship indicators for Libya remain low, despite the expansion of the private sector since the 2011 revolution. According to the population census from 2013, the proportion of workers who are self-employed does not exceed 8%, not least due to a lack of policies encouraging young people to innovate and create their own projects.[19] Since 2016, Libyan authorities have invested in international programmes to support the private sector and entrepreneurship, but unfortunately no data are available concerning this.

The Libyan labour market is characterised by high unemployment,[20] with a rate of 19.6% in 2019. This rose in subsequent years to 20.3% in 2020, followed by 20.6% in 2021, and 20.7% in 2022. Moreover, unemployment is higher among women than men. In 2022, the female and male unemployment rates were estimated at 26.7% and 17.3%, respectively; in 2021 they were estimated at 26.8% and 17.2%.[21] From 2010 onwards, the gender gap in employment has remained significant. In 2019, Libya recorded one of the highest female unemployment rates in Africa.[22]

Undeclared work has been a prevalent issue in Libya. This is to be expected, especially after years of political instability, lack of governance and inadequate labour framework, poor business climate, and high rates of unemployment. According to an interview with an employee from the Ministry of Labour and Rehabilitation, undeclared work even exists within the administration itself. Furthermore, workers in Libya's private sector lack social protection and often face issues relating to the absence of legal contracts. To address these concerns, Libya is currently working on making adjustments aimed at improving conditions in the private sector.

According to the interview with the employee from the Ministry of Labour and Rehabilitation, the main challenges relating to employment in Libya include, but are not limited to:

▪ Skills mismatch: there is a gap between the skills possessed by workforce in the Libya and the requirements of the labour market. This indicates that the education system and vocational training in Libya are not aligned with the needs of the job market. To address this issue, in 2021, the Minister of Labour and Rehabilitation issued a decision to form a committee in order to study and create a plan to align the outcomes of education with the demands of the labour market. Under the terms of this decision, the committee is chaired by the Deputy Minister of Labour and Rehabilitation, and includes representatives from the Ministries of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Technical and Vocational Education, and Education.[23]

▪ Legal framework: Libya lacks a relevant legal framework for employment, as the current one does not address these new forms of employment. However, there is an ongoing project in Libya aimed

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[17] Statista (2023c). Distribution of employment across economic sectors in Libya from 2010 to 2019, available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1198825/employment-distribution-by-economic-sector-in-libya/

[18] World Bank (2023a). The World Bank in Libya, available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/libya/overview

[19] Sacchetti, S., & Ben Brahim, N. (2021). Youth and Mobility in the Maghreb: An Assessment of Youth Aspirations in Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, ICMPD Regional Office for the Mediterranean.

[20] Unfortunately, no data are available concerning 'inactivity'.

[21] World Bank (2022c). Unemployment, total (% of total labour force) (modelled ILO estimate) – Libya, available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=LY

[22] Statista (2023d). Unemployment rate in Libya from 2012 to 2023, by gender, available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1236584/unemployment-rate-in-libya-by-gender/

[23] Libya channel (2021). The Ministry of Labour forms a committee to study a plan for aligning the outcomes of education (in Arabic), available at: وزارة العمل تشكل لجنة لدراسة خطة مواءمة مخرجات التعليم – قناة ليبيا (libyaschannel.com)

at improving labour market regulations, which could contribute to enhancing the employment situation in the country.

- Private sector reforms: employees in Libya's private sector encounter challenges relating to inadequate social protection and the prevalence of informal working arrangements. To tackle these issues, Libya is presently undertaking comprehensive reforms with the goal of improving working conditions in the private sector.
- Business climate: according to the latest World Bank annual ratings, in 2019 Libya ranked 186th out of 190 economies for ease of doing business, the same as in 2018. A lack of investment and business creation hampers job opportunities.[24]

Youth statistics

Libya's rates of those 'not in education, employment or training' (NEETs) are considered high. This is related to the absence of policies, programmes and strategies in general education that directly target this category of youth.[25] Unfortunately, no statistics are available concerning NEETs in the country, either overall or by gender.

The high unemployment rate among youth (15-24 years old) has remained almost unchanged in 2022, at around 51.47%. In 2021, it was 51.36% in 2021, having decreased by 0.9 percentage points since 2020. In general, over the last years, the youth unemployment rate has been subject to fluctuations (the 2021 decrease was preceded by an earlier increase in this rate).[26] This high rate of unemployment among youth, as the main challenge that contributes to the lengthy transitions from school to work for many young people, is due to a low supply of job opportunities compared with the growing share of the young population, as well as the importation of labour, and a poor educational system that does not match the qualifications of graduates with the needs of the national labour market.[27] The available data indicate that a high proportion of youth in employment have no social security coverage, especially in the private sector. It should also be noted that unemployment rates among graduates and young people with advanced qualifications are high.[28]

Another factor contributing to the high unemployment rate among youth in Libya is the weakness of the private sector and its limited capacity to provide jobs and incentives for young people, or to enhance its own attractiveness. Also, in the post-conflict era, the dominance of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), lack of competition, bureaucracy, poor governance, and a lack of access to finance, skills, and quality infrastructure continue to hinder the private sector.[29]

Internet and digitalisation

Statistics show that Libya has made weak investments in digital technologies and innovation systems, that digital illiteracy is widespread, and that IT experts are scarce. In addition, Libya ranks 164th out of 176 countries in terms of average Internet speed. Furthermore, the country ranks 30th out of 220

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[24] Trading Economics (n.d.). Ease of Doing Business in Libya, available at: https://tradingeconomics.com/libya/ease-of-doing-business

[25] Driouchi, A., & Harkat, T. (2017). Youth Inclusion Policies and NEETs' Targeting Requirements in Arab Countries, available at: https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/80622/

[26] Statista (2023e). Libya: Youth unemployment rate from 2002 to 2021, available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/812198/youth-unemployment-rate-in-libya/

[27] Driouchi, A., & Harkat, T. (2017). Youth Inclusion Policies and NEETs' Targeting Requirements in Arab Countries, available at: https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/80622/

[28] Peace building (n.d.). The Libyan youth today: Opportunities and challenges, available at: https://youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-04/8.%20CFR_Libya_UNFPA_0.pdf

[29] Rahman, A., & Di Maio, M. (2020). The Private Sector amid Conflict: The Case of Libya, available at: https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/978-1-4648-1644-4_ch2

countries with reference to the cost of internet access, although it ranks fourth for cheap Internet in Africa.[30]

According to the 'Digital 2023 Libya' report, there were 3.14 million internet users in Libya at the start of 2023. The number of internet users increased by 199,000 (+6.8%) between 2022 and 2023, when the internet penetration rate stood at 45.9%. According to the same source, at the start of 2023, the median mobile internet connection speed via cellular networks was 14.48 Mbit/s, while the median speed of fixed internet connections was 8.86 Mbit/s.[31]

Like other countries in Africa, Libya was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and has been trying to undertake its own digital transformation. E-governance and digitalisation are considered to be the new challenges that need to be addressed for the further development of the country. In this context, Libya has implemented a number of projects in collaboration with Expertise France, including EU4PSL, E-NABLE, and others.

Mobile computing[32] and the use of social media by Libyan citizens and businesses are perhaps the two technology areas that can best act as catalysts for change among local authorities. As the general public extends its use and knowledge of these technologies, so the pressure on local authorities to upgrade their e-services will grow.[33]

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[30] Sawahel, W. (2023). Libya: Digital transformation plan launched, but in need of funding, University World News Africa edition, available at: https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=202303221225647468
[31] Datareportal (2023). Digital 2023 Libya, available at: https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-libya
[32] Mobile computing refers to the set of IT technologies, products, services and operational strategies and procedures that enable end users to access computation, information and related resources and capabilities while mobile. 'Mobile' most commonly refers to access in motion, where the user is not restricted to a given geographical location. (check: https://www.techtarget.com/searchmobilecomputing/definition/nomadic-computing)
[33] Wynn, M.G., Bakeer, A., & Forti, Y. (2021). E-government and digital transformation in Libyan local authorities, *Int. J. Teaching and Case Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2.

Online work on and off digital labour platforms

Freelancers are one of the fastest growing segments of the job market in the Middle East and North Africa, and this trend has been boosted by the COVID-19 pandemic.[34] In a recent survey by Bayt.com, more than 89% of professionals in the Middle East and North Africa region aimed to perform more freelance work in 2023, as demand for their skills increases and businesses seek cost-effective solutions to complete projects within tight deadlines.[35] Based on desk research, analysis of media coverage, public discourse and policy debates in Libya, it is evident that there have been discussions and engagement in projects concerning digitalisation, e-administration, e-government and supporting the private sector, but so far there has been a lack of any specific focus on online work, whether on or off platforms. In order to understand how digital trends and behaviours are evolving in Libya, some freelancers were interviewed for this study about the subject of online work. According to them, online work off digital labour platforms (i.e. outside of platforms) is the most widespread form of online work in Libya.

Prevalence of online work

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, employees around the world have been leaving their jobs at much higher rates than previously, in what has been called 'The Great Resignation'.[36] Based on interviewees' comments, online work has been visible in Libya since 2020, as it has in many countries around the world. However, this mode of work is still not prominent in the media, public discourse and policy debates in Libya. Off-platform work has developed over the past few years within Libya's private sector, among freelancers and young people. Unfortunately, statistics on this type of work in Libya are limited.

According to data provided by the OLI,[37] online platform work activity on the main international platforms was mostly stagnant in Libya between 2017 and 2023 (see Figure 1 below). Two short spikes in activity occurred, at the end of 2019 and in the middle of 2022, but these were followed by sharp drops. Compared with the initial measurement in 2017, worker activity at the time of the last measurement in 2022 only grew by around 100%. This indicates a lack of sustained growth in online platform work in the country. Furthermore, worker activity in Libya accounted to only around 0.02% of the global platform work share, the lowest share in the SEMED region.

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[34] Glover, F. The National News (2023). Majority of Mena professionals aim to do more freelance work in 2023, available at: https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/money/2023/01/24/majority-of-mena-professionals-aim-to-do-more-freelance-work-in-2023/

[35] HRME News (2023). The year 2023 will present big opportunities for freelancers, available at: https://hrme.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/industry/the-year-2023-will-present-big-opportunities-for-freelancers/97297136

[36] Glover, F. The National News (2023). Majority of Mena professionals aim to do more freelance work in 2023, available at: https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/money/2023/01/24/majority-of-mena-professionals-aim-to-do-more-freelance-work-in-2023/

[37] Online Labour Observatory, available at: http://onlinelabourobservatory.org/

Figure 1. Change in engagement of Libyan online platform workers over time relative to June 2017
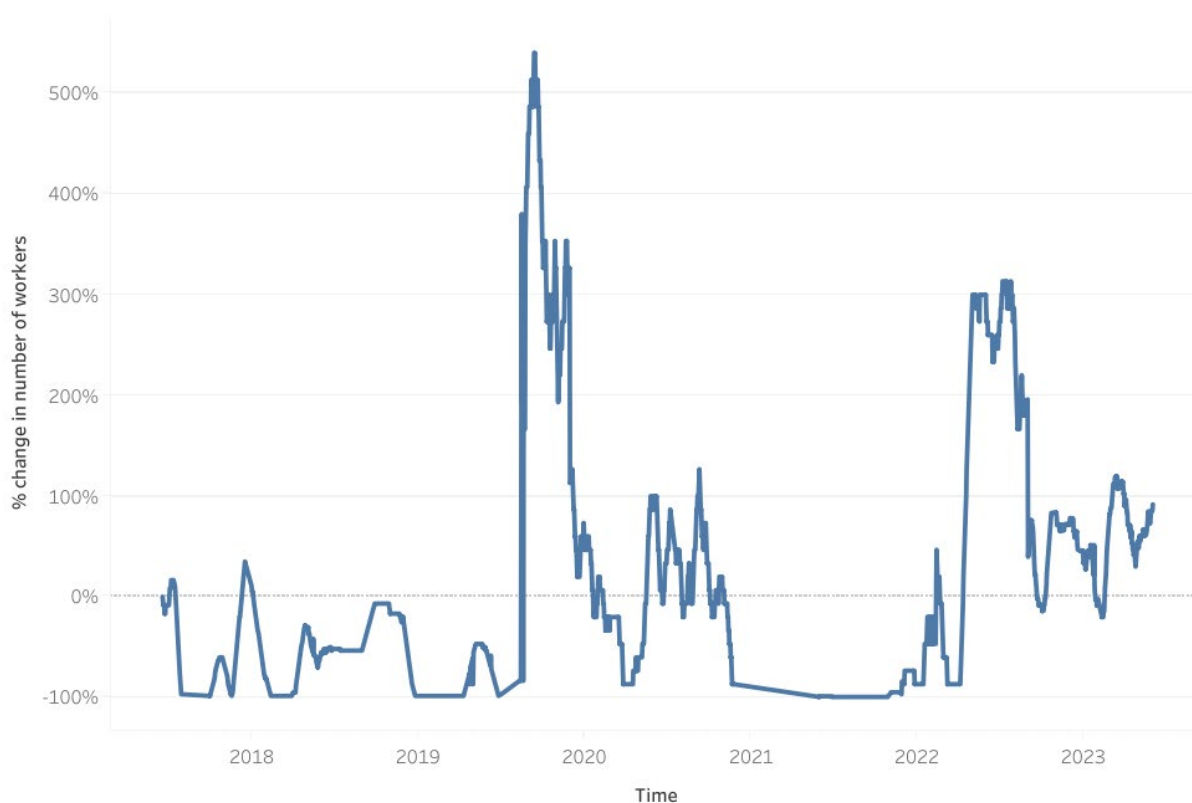
Note: the graph presents the percentage change between the number of active workers in Libya on a specific day, compared with the number of active workers at the start of data collection in 2017, which is used as a reference date. This graph is based on OLI data, which calculated a weighted estimate of currently active workers by periodically sampling workers on four of the largest online platforms once every 24 hours.

Data collected for this study from the platforms Freelancer, PeoplePerHour and Guru suggest a low rate of activity among online platform workers in Libya, and their concentration on one platform. Among the 768 registered online workers in Libya across the three targeted platforms, only 3% of registered workers can be considered active (Figure 2).[39] Moreover, three-quarters of registered workers had profiles on Freelancer, while the remaining shares of 19% and 6% were on Guru and PeoplePerHour, respectively (Figure 3).

[38] Online Labour Observatory, available at: http://onlinelabourobservatory.org/oli-supply/
[39] Active workers are considered to be those who had completed at least one task on the digital platforms.

Figure 2. Proportion of active and inactive online platform workers
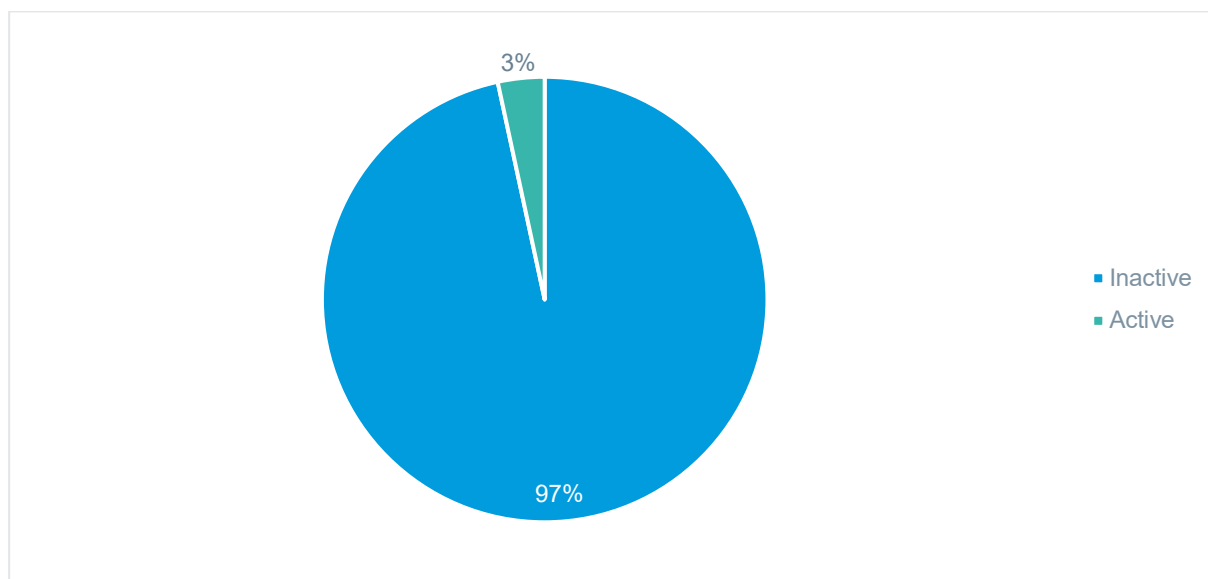
Source: PPMI, based on data from Freelancer, Guru and PeoplePerHour collected in March 2023.

Figure 3. Proportion of online platform workers per platform
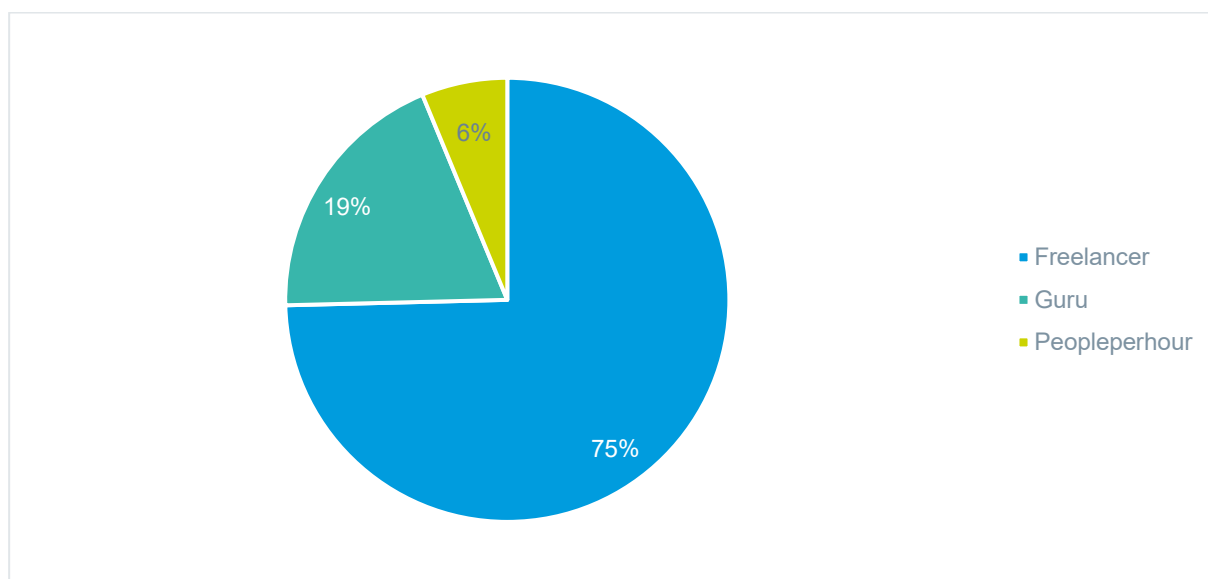
Source: PPMI, based on data from Freelancer, Guru and PeoplePerHour collected in March 2023.

Aside from the online labour platforms analysed, which are the most popular general platforms, Libyan freelancers use many more including Truelancer, Hubstaff Talent, Shoghlonline, Ureed, Mostaqal and Khamsat. When it comes to specialised platforms, the most popular ones are Dribbble.com, TasmeemME and DesignCrowd. The major platforms are presented in further detail below.

▪ **Freelancer**[40] is a platform that connects freelancers and clients from 247 countries, and provides tools to help them match the required skills or projects they are seeking. According to the Freelancer website, 66,712,580 users have used its services, and 22,688,725 pieces of work have been carried out via the platform. Freelancer provides services in more than 1,800 fields (including website design, translation, Python, Photoshop, finance, legal, marketing, e-commerce, programming, writing, etc.). The business model for this platform focuses on three steps: (1) the

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[40] https://www.fr.freelancer.com/

client posts the project he/she needs to be carried out, providing a full description and budget; (2) after reviewing their work, the client chooses freelancers to work on his/her project; (3) once the client has received the completed work and is satisfied with the results, he/she makes payment. If necessary, the Freelancer team can assist the client in finding the right freelancers, and even manage the project for him/her. A total of 617 freelancers[41] in Libya use this platform. The types of work/specific services offered by on this platform by freelancers in Libya include graphic design, data entry, web development, programming, translation and writing, photograph, Photoshop, social media marketing and digital marketing.

- **Truelancer**[42] is an online platform with more than one million freelancers, and 500,000 projects have been carried out via the platform. It offers the following services: IT and programming, graphic design and multimedia, writing content, data entry and admin, finance and accounting, sales and marketing, customer support and service, social, SEO and SEM, mobile applications, music and audio. The business model for Truelancer focuses on four steps: (1) a client posts his/her project, and the platform matches it with relevant freelancers; (2)the client browses and compares the proposals and profiles of freelancers and the reviews they have received, conducts interviews and chooses a candidate; (3) The client then awards his/her project to the chosen freelancer (covered by a 100% money-back guarantee using the platform's Safe Deposit feature); (4) The freelancer then carries out the work, Truelancer then allows the client to use chat, share files and collaborate with freelancer until work is approved, before releasing payment when they are satisfied with the completed project.

  The types of work/specific services that provided by freelancers in Libya on the Truelancer platform include logo design (20 freelancers); graphic design (15 freelancers); content writing (8 freelancers); data entry and Microsoft Excel (6 freelancers); and PHP programming (6 freelancers). Note, however, that many freelancers include more than one skill on their profiles, so these statistics may not accurately represent the true picture.

- **Guru**[43] began its activities in 1998 from offices in Pittsburgh, USA and Noida, India. It provides a platform that allows 800,000 employers and 1,037,677 freelancers to work together in a flexible and secure environment with transparency and trust to profit from economic opportunities. The platform provides services in the following domains: programming and software development (318,514 freelancers); writing and translation (215,498 freelancers); design and art (207,867 freelancers); administrative and secretarial (99,436 freelancers); sales and marketing (75,634 freelancers); engineering and architecture (53,022 freelancers); business and finance (53,014); education and training (8,578); and legal (6,114 freelancers). The platform's business model operates by employers posting job descriptions, including payment offered. Freelancers, meanwhile, post profiles which highlight their skills and services. Employers can search for and invite specific freelancers to submit quotes for their jobs, and freelancers who are interested in jobs can submit bids. Employers review the quotes received, along with freelancers' profiles, portfolios, feedback, and earnings statistics before selecting which freelancer(s) to hire. Employers and freelancers come to an agreement regarding the scope of work, payment terms and timeline.[44]

  A total of 74 freelancers in Libya operate on Guru, offering 90 freelancing services.[45] The types of work/specific services offered by freelancers in Libya on this platform include writing and translation, engineering and architecture, design and art, administrative and secretarial, education and training, legal, and programming and software development.

- **PeoplePerHour**[46]was founded in 2007and is Europe's biggest online freelance marketplace, and the longest-running freelancing service in the UK. It has introduced Hourlies – an online marketplace on which freelancers can advertise their skills and services to potential employers,

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[41] https://www.fr.freelancer.com/freelancers/libya
[42] https://www.truelancer.com/
[43] https://www.guru.com
[44] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru.com#Business_model
[45] https://www.guru.com/d/freelancers/skill/libya/lc/libya/tripoli-district/tripoli/
[46] https://www.peopleperhour.com/about

starting from as little as one hour.[47] Since its launch, PeoplePerHour has amassed a community of more than 2.4 million skilled freelancers, served almost a million businesses in more than 180 countries, and paid out more than GBP 130 million to freelancers. The platform provides services in the fields of technology and programming, writing and translation, design, digital marketing, video, photo and image, business, music and audio, marketing, branding and sale, and social media. The platform's business model allows buyers to describe their project in detail using a quick and easy form. The platform then matches and contacts the best freelancers for the project. In the meantime, freelancers respond with their own tailored proposals. The buyer reviews these proposals and chooses freelancers, and puts down a deposit to begin the project. Once the project has been completed and the client is satisfied with the results, the freelancers are paid through the platform's protected payments system.

A total of 47 freelancers in Libya use this platform. The types of work/specific services provided on this platform by freelancers in that Libya include technology and programming, writing and translation, design, digital marketing, video, photo ad image, transcription, marketing, branding and sales, and social media.

- **Hubstaff Talent[48]** helps individuals and agencies to find remote talents around the globe free of charge. The platform currently hosts the profiles of 152,168 freelancers and 2,569 agencies from 213 countries, as well as 636 jobs. The platform offers services in the following domains: development, marketing and sales, design and multimedia, writing and content, database and IT, admin, and business consulting. Ten freelancers in Libya use this platform. The types of work/specific services offered by freelancers in Libya on this platform include social media marketing, digital marketing, web development, programming, graphic design, and translation.

- **Shoghlonline[49]** is an Arab digital platform created in 2015, which brings freelancers together with business and project owners. Based on the Shoghlonline website, the platform has around 7,000 registered freelancer profiles, and provides services in eight main fields: writing and translation, programming and IT, design and creativity, multimedia, digital marketing, support and administration, e-learning, and consulting.

A total of 16 freelancers in Libya use this platform. The types of work/specific services offered by freelancers in Libya on this platform include social media design & management, content writing, translation, graphic design, photoshop, photograph, and design.

- **Ureed[50]** is an online marketplace that connects employers from around the world with vetted and certified freelance talents across all professional fields. It has more than 5,000 employers working remotely from across 10 countries, and its network of freelancers exceeds 100,000 professionals and spans in 207 countries. The platform provides services in three main categories: (1) popular general skills including content creation, social media marketing, web programming, and so on; (2) popular software engineering skills, such as software localisation, education translation, business translation, and so on; (3) popular design skills such as logo design, label design and typography. The platform's business model focuses on three steps. First, the client posts a new project on the platform and specifies the skills and experience required by the freelancer. The client decides in advance the project's budget, and sets the date and time by which he/she wishes to receive the completed project. The second step is to choose the appropriate freelancer by browsing through the offers submitted by vetted freelancers, and assigning one or more freelancer(s) to implement the project. In the third step, the client reviews the completed work, and payment is made through a secure platform. No freelancers in Libya could be identified as using this platform.

- **Khamsat[51]** is an Arab platform providing an online market for small services. It was launched in 2010 and has since been acquired by the company Hsoub Limited. Freelancers on this platform provide many services including business services, programming and software development,

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[47] https://www.mirror.co.uk/money/jobs/recruitment-site-offers-freelance-jobs-1151665
[48] https://talent.hubstaff.com/
[49] https://shoghlonline.com/
[50] https://ureed.com
[51] https://khamsat.com/

digital marketing, learning online, video conception, design, transcriptions, writing and translation, lifestyle, and other services. The business model for this platform brings together sellers (freelancers who provide services) and buyers (who buy their services), each of whom creates an account in order to buy or sell services. The platform does not allow freelancers to be searched for by country, but as a well-known Arab platform it is likely to be used by freelancers in Libya. This was confirmed by an interview with a freelancer and an article online.[52]

- **Mostaqal**[53] is an Arab intermediation platform founded by the company Hsoub Limited,[54] registered in the UK. It allows project owners and companies to contact the professional freelancers they need to carry out their work, and at the same time offers professional freelancers a place to find projects on which to work. The platform operates on the basis of commission being deducted from the freelancer's fees in return for their use of the platform's services (i.e. it is not paid from the client's budget). This commission comprises 50% of the first USD 500 earned from the same client. If the freelancer works again with the same client, the level of commission charged decreases to 15% for earnings from USD 500.01 to USD 5,000, and decreases further to 7% for earnings over USD 5,000.

  The Mostaqal platform provides services in various domains, including but not limited to programming, text editing, e-marketing, design and advertising, translation, data entry, article writing, online public relations work, web design and websites management, market studies and analyses, decor/ decoration, and others. As an intermediation platform, Mostaqal provides job opportunities for its clients, enterprises and freelancers; some of which could be full-time jobs in fields such as web design and website management, as well as market research and analysis. The platform does not allow freelancers to be searched for by country, but as a well-known Arab platform it is likely that freelancers in Libya work on the platform.

- **Dribbble.com**[55] is an online platform for designers, on which millions of designers and agencies showcase their portfolios, either to find work or to hire designers. Around 60,000 companies have hired designers using the Dribbble platform. Founded in July 2009, Dribbble has grown into a global community. As of January 2020, nearly 10 million 'shots' (snapshots of designers' work), have been shared, making Dribbble one of the most prolific and engaged design communities.[56]The Dribbble platform includes the following services: animation, branding, illustration, mobile, print, product design, typography, and web design. Dribbble's business model includes offering agencies the opportunity to find talents, and allows designers to build their brand and grow their skills by creating a portfolio on the platform. Dribbble does not allow users to search for freelancers by country.

- **TasmeemME**[57] is located in Jordan, and was the first regional Arab platform when it launched in 2009. The platform is dedicated to promoting and empowering Arab creative talents. It offers opportunities for full-time or part-time remote work, in addition to many other self-employment opportunities. In 2014, the website expanded its activities to include learning courses in addition to job offers, and it has launched an online market. TasmeemME currently hosts 270,620 freelancers (designers), and has 6,067 calls for jobs, and 232,545 subscribers to learning courses. The platform provides services in various fields including architecture design, website and logo design, graphic design, photography, animation, translation, drawing arts. TasmeemME's business model focuses on providing clients (individuals and companies) with the opportunity to search a gallery of designers' work, or browse its list of designers. It hosts an online marketplace for job posts, as well as learning courses, and blogs. To facilitate operations between freelancers and clients, the platform provides information on privacy, intellectual property and more.

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[52] Mawthi network (2023). Remote work sites in Libya (your guide to online work in Libya) (in Arabic), available at: https://www.mawdoo310.com/2022/01/Remote-work-in-Libya.html#
[53] https://mostaql.com/
[54] https://www.hsoub.com/?fbclid=IwAR39otvC_Xpkcol3QisFdSHjli2uA6YOWK6P7Nnr9u4ShQKnHNEkT7DU2qs
[55] https://dribbble.com/
[56] https://www.linkedin.com/company/dribbble/?trk=products_seo_search&originalSubdomain=bh
[57] https://www.tasmeemme.com/

Because TasmeemME is an Arab platform, many freelancers in Libya working on it; however, it is difficult to obtain accurate statistics on user numbers, as the website displays multiple accounts for some freelancers. Also, many freelancers do not include their skills/services on their profiles. The types of work/specific services that provided on this platform by freelancers in Libya include Photoshop, programming, writing, fashion design, personnel development, drawing, photograph, graphic design, and publicity content writing.

- **DesignCrowd**[58] is an online creative marketplace that helps start-ups, businesses and entrepreneurs to connect with a global network of designers (currently 1.1 million). It allows clients to outsource or 'crowdsource' any creative project on DesignCrowd – ranging from logo design to website design to T-shirt design – and receive design ideas from over 500,000 designers (freelancers) from around the world. DesignCrowd also operates BrandCrowd (www.brandcrowd.com), a marketplace for premium logo templates and a leading logo-designing tool (www.brandcrowd.com/maker).[59] This platform provides the following services: graphic design services, logo and branding, web design services, print design services, product and merchandise design services, and art and illustration. At the moment there are 255 designers from Libya on this platform. The types of work/ specific services that Libyan freelancers provide on this platform are logo design, T-shirt design, web design, Photoshop, graphic design, flyer design, banner design, PowerPoint design, Facebook design, icon design, etc.

Attractiveness of online work

According to freelancers in Libya, most people tend to learn about job opportunities via social media networks (e.g. Facebook, including groups such as Freelancer Maghreb Countries[60]; and LinkedIn), by word of mouth, through occupational groups (translators, designers, etc.) or through connections such as recommendations from previous clients. In general, freelancers who are working off digital labour platforms are recruited for short- or medium-term projects, depending on the service they are asked to provide.

Based on the interviews carried out for this study, the factors that influence the popularity (or lack thereof) of online work on and off platforms are almost the same as those that motivate online workers. They include the availability of job opportunities; remuneration; getting paid in a foreign currency; acquiring a side job that provides extra money (wages in the Libyan public sector are very low); social reasons, for people with care responsibilities (e.g. mothers who stay at home); learning new skills; flexibility with regard to the time and place of work, and others. According to the freelancers interviewed, many factors restrict access to online freelancing work in Libya, such as the absence of an appropriate legal framework, weak digital skills, a lack of trust in online products, low levels of security for online activities, and poor or unstable wages. In addition, problems exist with regard to e-payments in Libya, especially when it comes to receiving payments from international clients, as an insufficient range of accessible banking services are available. This is why many freelancers use international accounts based outside of Libya.

Based on the above interviews and general information, online freelancing and platform work is mostly a task-based job. This type of work does not generally allow a freelancer to learn new skills, as their focus is primarily on the task in hand. Indeed, online workers may remain in the same job/task with no career prospects or in-work skills development opportunities unless they decide to change task/job. In some cases, they may also need to change platforms, unlike in the traditional job market, more opportunities for learning and career development may be available with the same recruiter. However, freelancing offers an appealing level of compensation compared with traditional jobs in Libya, although concerns exist with regard to working conditions – in particular, social protections and employment benefits such as medical insurance and retirement compensation. According to an interview with a social media representative, online work in Libya can comprise a full-time job in the services sector, such as

[58] https://www.designcrowd.com
[59] https://www.linkedin.com/company/designcrowd/?trk=similar-pages_result-card_full-click&originalSubdomain=fr
[60] Freelancer Maghreb countries: https://www.facebook.com/groups/2956117777984257/

in design and website management, writing and/or editing content/articles, photography and decoration, graphic design, and so on.

Online work occupations and worker profiles

The data collected for this study reveal an uneven distribution of occupations among online platform workers in Libya (see Figure 4 below). Most online platform workers in Libya work in writing and translation and in creative and multimedia, each of which accounts for around one-third of all registered online platform workers. In addition to these, software development, and clerical and data entry, each account for a 14% share of workers, respectively. The remaining workers work in professional services, and sales and marketing support.

Figure 4. Distribution of occupations among online platform workers
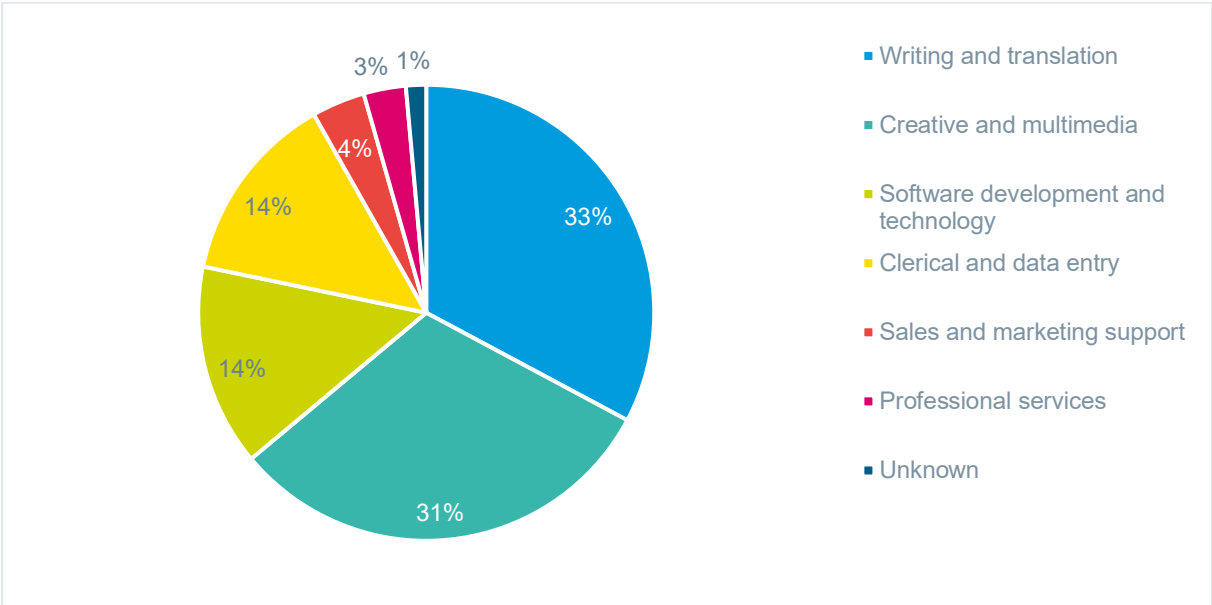
Source: PPMI, based on data from Freelancer, Guru and PeoplePerHour collected in March 2023.

Note: the 'Unknown' category shows worker profiles for which occupation could not be identified.

The majority of online platform workers in Libya are men. Data collected from platforms indicate that men are around five times more likely than women to register on online labour platforms. Men also dominate all the occupations in online platform work. Women are most represented in clerical and data entry and in writing and translation, and least represented in professional services and in software development and technology.

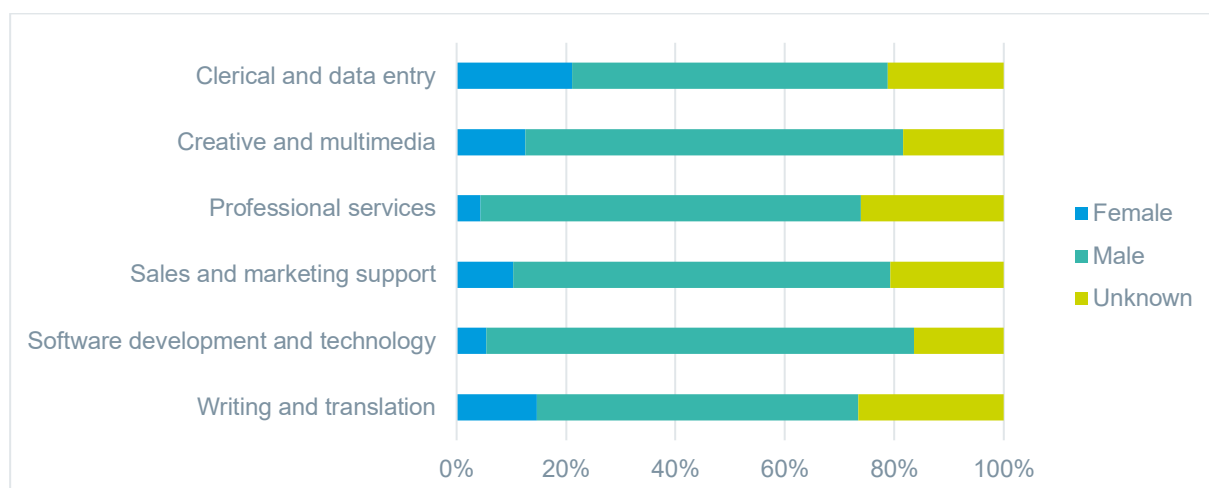*Figure 5. Gender distribution of online platform workers by occupation*

Source: PPMI, based on data from Freelancer, Guru and PeoplePerHour collected in March 2023.

Note: the 'Unknown' category shows worker profiles for which gender could not be identified.

According to the interviews carried out for this study with freelancers in Libya, most of online workers in the country are young men who began doing this type of work before or during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of their activities relate to writing, design and programming services. Some of these individuals are overqualified for the work they carry out online, while others are underqualified. The former include PhD students and graduates working in graphic design, Photoshop and article translation services. Most online workers in Libya regard freelancing as their primary job in the long term, but are willing to develop their skills in order to compete for and gain more important work.
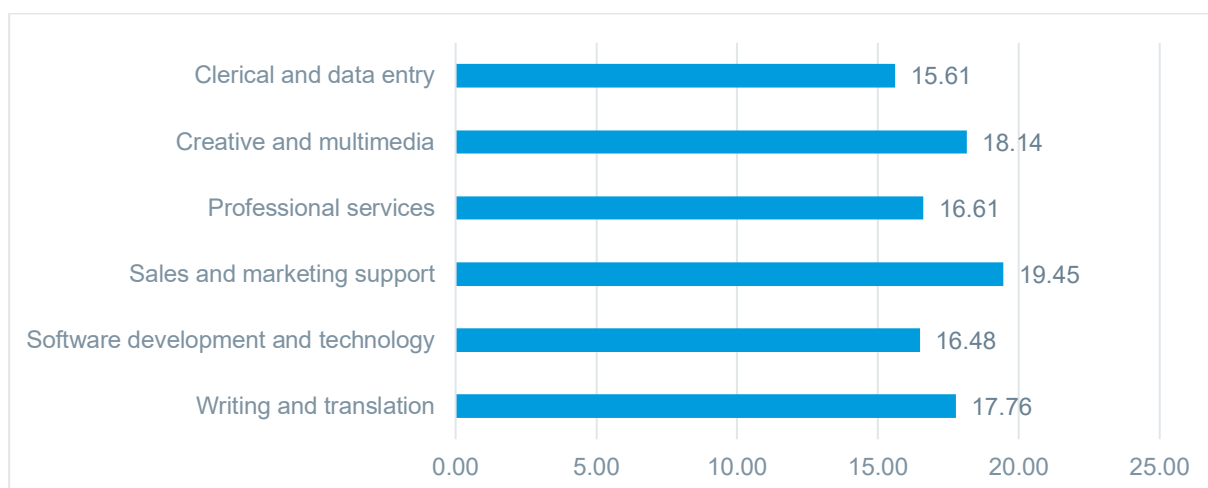
Working conditions

The hourly wages requested by Libyan online platform workers are significantly higher than the national average hourly wage. According to Numbeo,[61] the average net hourly pay in Libya in March 2023 was USD 1.69. This amount is less than one-tenth of the average hourly wage requested on online labour platforms (USD 17.43). It is important to note, however, that these figures are not directly comparable, as the hourly rates requested can differ from what workers ultimately receive, and platform earnings are irregular and may include a substantial amount of unpaid work. Nevertheless, these data indicate that online platform work can present a significant income-generating opportunity for workers in Libya.

Variations exist in the hourly wages of platform workers in Libya between different occupations. The highest hourly wages were demanded in sales and marketing support (USD 19.45) and creative and multimedia (USD 18.14), while the lowest were requested in clerical and data entry, standing at USD 15.61. Notably, there are a gender differences in hourly pay, with women demanding higher wages than men. Libyan women requested an average of USD 18.37 per hour, while men requested USD 17.20.

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[61] Numbeo (2023). Rankings by Country of Average Monthly Net Salary (After Tax) (Salaries And Financing), available at: https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/country_price_rankings?itemId=105

Figure 6. Requested hourly rates of online platform workers by occupation (USD)

Occupation	Rate (USD)
Clerical and data entry	15.61
Creative and multimedia	18.14
Professional services	16.61
Sales and marketing support	19.45
Software development and technology	16.48
Writing and translation	17.76

Source: PPMI, based on data from Freelancer, Guru and PeoplePerHour collected in March 2023.

According to the freelancers in Libya contacted for this study, informality is widespread in online work in the country. Freelancers work without signing a contract with their clients, and are not protected by labour laws or civil law. However, informality is more widespread in online work on digital labour platforms than in freelancing off (outside of) platforms. The recruitment process for the latter tends to have a more formal, legal appearance, with freelancers' official documents being required in order to protect customers and the company benefits. In some cases, deals made in online work off platforms turn into regular contracts.

On-location platform work

There is a lack of data regarding on-location platform work in Libya. Interviews with social media representatives and freelancers show that on-location platforms mostly became visible during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, on-location labour platforms have now achieved some visibility in the public discourse, and there is competition – mostly among delivery services. However, this kind of work still does not feature prominently in the media, public discourse and policy debates.

Prevalence of on-location platform work

Unfortunately, no statistics are available with regard to the prevalence of digital activities and on-location platform work in Libya. While both delivery platforms (e.g. Wagtey, Presto Eat) and ride-hailing platforms (e.g. Turbo, formerly Taxisti) were identified as operating in Libya, the more detailed data on this type of work presented in this study comes solely from a local delivery platform, Presto Eat.

Presto Eat[62] is the most popular on-location platform in Libya. Founded in 2020 by local entrepreneurs Ammar Hmid and Habeb Nino, the platform is based in Tripoli. It has signed a partnership deal with PepsiCo, which will see Presto Eat offering Pepsi's beverages for sale and Pepsi's logo placed on all Presto Eat delivery vehicles. Presto Eat began as a takeaway food ordering platform, with a base of 500 restaurants in Tripoli. Although the platform only operates in Tripoli, Presto Eat claims to have 250,000 registered customers, of which 98,000 are active users of its application. In 2021, the company announced that it had completed 600,000 orders, of which 100,000 orders were groceries. According to our interview with the COO of Presto Eat, the platform currently has the capacity to deliver 1,200 grocery orders per day using a network of 9,000 freelance riders (young people and students). Presto Eat also operates a parcel delivery service called Presto Line.[63]

With regard to its business model, Presto plans to follow the Uber/Uber Eats model and build a ride-hailing service using its existing network of delivery drivers and riders. Incomes in Libya prior to 2011 were considerably higher than they are today, after more than a decade of internal conflict. As a consequence, public transport in Libyan cities is poor, as petrol is cheap and car ownership has historically been high. As of 2023, car ownership remains high, even if many vehicles are in poor condition. Presto Eat has so far raised USD 2.5 million in funding from undisclosed sources. It plans to expand into other major cities in western Libya, which will include Zliten, Misrata, Zawiya and Gharyan. The company points to the high internet and smartphone penetration and lack of supermarket chains in Libya as a key growth opportunity. The Libyan market is dominated by small stores, which often suffer from a limited range of products and shortages, especially while supply chains have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and internal conflict. Although Presto Eat does not refer to it specifically, the severe fragmentation of the grocery retail sector in the country also lends itself very well to the B2B online buying platforms that can be seen in Egypt and Morocco. These disruptive digital platforms connect suppliers with small retailers and provide more secure supply, price transparency, trade credit, inventory management, free/low-cost delivery and some sales analytics.[64] Presto's competitors are Baahy[65] and Dokkan.ly,[66] which also provide shopping and delivery services, but deal with official delivery companies and not freelancers.

Presto Eat operates according to a model whereby couriers are paid a fixed fee per delivery, while administrative staff get regular wages.

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[62] https://web.prestoeat.com/
[63] Trendtype (2022). Libyan Q commerce app Presto Eat partners with PepsiCo, available at: https://trendtype.com/news/libyan-q-commerce-app-presto-eat-partners-with-pepsico/
[64] Trendtype (2022). Libyan Q commerce app Presto Eat partners with PepsiCo, available at: https://trendtype.com/news/libyan-q-commerce-app-presto-eat-partners-with-pepsico/
[65] https://www.facebook.com/baahyofficial
[66] https://www.facebook.com/dokkan.ly

Attractiveness of on-location platform work

The factors that influence the popularity (or lack thereof) of on-location platform work in Libya include the availability of job opportunities, remuneration (even if this is generally low), as well as flexibility with regard to working hours and locations. However, compared with online freelancing, on-location platforms tend to instil greater trust and security among users with regard to the products/services offered, and in some cases, payments are made directly on-site, further enhancing trust.

According to interviews with freelancers, most job opportunities are advertised and communicated via Facebook pages. Otherwise, people can learn about on-location platform work via other internet sources such as freelancing intermediate platforms (e.g. Mostaqal), forums, YouTube channels, Instagram, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), and influencers, or via connections (personal recommendations, word-of-mouth, etc.). Most of the people working via on-location platforms are recruited for a short periods providing delivery services (an average of 3-4 months) or in the long-term as administration staff (regular employees of the platforms).

On-location platform work occupations and worker profiles

On-location platforms in Libya mostly comprise delivery services, with freelance rider jobs being performed exclusively by men (especially students and the young population), while some women are employed in the IT and marketing functions of the platforms. The educational levels of workers vary (secondary/vocational/tertiary), as do their qualifications (formal/non-formal, etc.). Some workers are overqualified for the work they carry out (e.g. PhD and Master's students/graduates), with some workers having to take on these jobs due to financial needs or because they had lost their previous jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic or the unstable situation in Libya. According to the COO of Presto Eat, the skills required by freelancer riders and those employed for other activities are basic literacy and the capability to perform the job effectively.

Some on-location platform workers are unemployed young university graduates. Others are young people who left the school due to the unstable political situation in Libya and found it difficult to find a job because they have no specific skills, especially given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the high rate of unemployment in the country. Also, many of the low-skilled jobs on on-location platforms are dominated by immigrants of various nationalities. Due to the political and socio-economic situation in Libya, the employment opportunities in on-location platform work, especially those requiring low skill levels, may be undertaken in the long term as a primary or a side-job, even if they have no future prospects, because people need income to cover their basic needs.

Unfortunately, no data are available concerning the migrants who work on digital platforms. There appears to be no direct link between migration and platform work in Libya; however, migrants have worked in many undeclared jobs and low-skilled jobs, especially those who are in the country illegally. An interview with the Presto Eat's social media representative confirmed that Presto Eat has, in the past, employed migrants from Arabic countries (as well as from Chad, Niger and other migrants who learn to speak Arabic) as delivery freelancers without contracts. In general, Arabic migrants work in delivery jobs because some knowledge of the language is necessary, while other migrants have been working in other jobs depending on the skills they have. Limited earnings prospects also deter migrants from digital labour platforms and from Libya in general, as 'official money transfers abroad in Libyan dinars have been impossible since mid-2014, and both foreigners and locals have to rely on the informal market, as the official exchange rate has been largely unavailable and irrelevant for years.[67]

Working conditions

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[67] The New Humanitarian (2019). In Libya, hard economic times force migrant workers to look elsewhere, available at: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2019/02/18/libya-hard-economic-times-force-migrant-workers-look-elsewhere

According to interviewees, the platforms do not offer satisfactory remuneration or social protection for workers, unlike traditional jobs where they have felt more secure. Due to this, some plan to quit delivery freelancing within a few months. This is also of other types of work in Libya that use freelance drivers, such us ride hailing (e.g. Turbo, formerly Taxisti),[68] food delivery (e.g. Waqtey).[69]

According to a social media representative, the companies Turbo/Taxisti and Waqtey use freelance drivers because this is more cost-effective than using official company drivers. Turbo/Taxisti gives freelance drivers the opportunity to work using their own cars, with flexibility over work hours. Use of the company's Turbo app is regarded as very easy.

Based on the experience of delivery freelancers, informality is common among on-location platform workers in Libya. There are no contractual arrangements; instead, workers' documents are held by the company after users have subscribed online, where an explanation is given of their duties and rules they must respect. Consequently, if the company is dissatisfied with the delivery driver' conduct, it can terminate the employment. Conversely, if the delivery person is not satisfied with the job, they can quit. Delivery workers enjoy no legal protection, and may be exposed to danger or exploitation.

On-location platform work focuses on economies of scale, which means providing services at a lower price to meet high demand. To meet this demand, they recruit large number of workers in various sectors such as food delivery and shopping (e.g. Presto Eat); ride-hailing (e.g. Turbo/Taxisti); and food delivery (e.g. Waqtey). These employment opportunities are designed for low-skilled workers, and may not always align with the actual skill levels of the freelancers who engage in these jobs.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the high rate of unemployment in Libya, the on-location platform work is growing in the country. This has increased demand for low-skilled jobs is growing too, which may have a negative effect on the skills of freelancers, their development, and on the school-to-work transition. According to freelancers who work in delivery services, the most important skills for freelancers are speed and time management (because clients want their order to be delivered quickly); communication skills (freelancer should know how to talk to clients); and professional skills (digital skills, flexibility, reputation, motivation and discipline).

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[68] https://www.facebook.com/Turbo-Taxisti-340983683193368/?mibextid=ZbWKwL
[69] https://www.facebook.com/Waqtey

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Current regulation, policies and strategic approaches

While these new forms of employment are not yet the subject of widespread public discussion in Libya, they regarded as an employment opportunity by freelancers and young population in the country.

The Libyan government has recently made valuable efforts towards the country's digital transformation (e.g. e-administration, e-governance, etc.), as well as implementing certain measures aimed at private institutions and supporting business. Indeed, the main the main event that shed light on these emerging forms of work and business models among start-ups (e.g. Presto Eat) was the COVID-19 pandemic.

Labour market, employment and skills development

With regard to its existing legislation, labour market and skills development policies and measures, Libya remains a poor business environment, affected by corruption, bad governance and poor public services. This is reflected in its low ranking in the Doing Business 2020 report, where it comes 186th out of 190 countries. Nowadays, with the world bouncing back from the unprecedented health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as current global trends towards a greener recovery and calls from Libya's youth for greater inclusivity, an opportunity exists for Libya to work towards economic diversification. The country is therefore focusing on strategies to ensure an inclusive and resilient post-COVID-19 recovery.[70]

General labour regulations in Libya are governed by:

- Law no. 12/2010 on labour relations[71] which consists of four parts: (1) general and common provisions; (2) provisions governing partnership relationships; (3) provisions governing contractual relationships; and (4) provisions governing statutory relationships in public service;
- Law no. 37/1973 on manpower development and training,[72] which aims to develop the skills of individuals, in order to increase productivity and to benefit from scientific development in the domains of production and services, under the social and economic development plan;
- Commercial law no. 23/2010,[73] which gives anyone at the age of 18 the freedom to perform commercial activity; the law also sets out the types of companies and many other administrative procedures related to commercial activity, but not online work;
- Law no. 9/2010 on investment promotion[74];
- Law no. 8/1988, which regulates economic activities and is complemented by Law no. 9/1992, which regulates citizens' engagement in economic activities such as corporations, partnerships, and joint stock companies, in addition to the ownership of micro public economic activities;[75]
- Ministerial Council Decision No. 563 of 2007,which organises contracting procedures and measures. Article 111 obliges all authorities and contractors to comply with environmental, health and safety measures and standards.[76]

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[70] OECD (2020). EU-OECD project on promoting public-private dialogue in Libya, available at: https://www.oecd.org/mena/competitiveness/promoting-public-private-dialogue-in-libya/
[71] Law no. 12/2010 on labour relations, available at Libya Administrative Procedures Portal: https://ejraat.gov.ly/Laws?page=1&letter=l&l=ar
[72] Law no. 37/1973 on manpower development and training, available at Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance: Law No. (37) of 1973 on workforce development and training - Libya - DCAF Legal Databases (security-legislation.ly)
[73] Commercial law no. 23/2010, available at Libya Administrative Procedures Portal: https://ejraat.gov.ly/Laws?page=1&letter=l&l=ar
[74] Law no. 9/2010 on investment promotion, available at Libya Administrative Procedures Portal: https://ejraat.gov.ly/Laws?page=1&letter=l&l=ar
[75] The SwitchMed initiative. Libya Country Profile (2020). Available at: Country-Profile-Libya.pdf (switchmed.eu)
[76] The SwitchMed initiative. Libya Country Profile (2020). Available at: Country-Profile-Libya.pdf (switchmed.eu)

From 2011 onwards, the minimum wage in Libya stood at LYD 450 (around EUR 90). This represents a significant increase compared with the previous period under the government of Colonel Gaddafi, when it was set at LYD 90 (around EUR 20). In November 2022, Libya adopted a wage unification law,[77] raising the minimum wage to EUR 1,000 (around EUR 190). The aim of this law was to motivate people to work in the private sector, and to minimise pressure on the public sector. The state sector in Libya already employs 2.5 million people, consuming 55–60% of the state budget, which relies solely on the oil trade.[78] According to the interview with a social media representative, the new minimum wage of LYD 1,000 is not universally applied across the whole territory of Libya, but most private sector entities have adopted it.

With regard to employment policies, Libya and Algeria have recently agreed to launch a joint initiative between their respective employment authorities. An agreement has also been reached to relaunch cooperation aimed at helping Libyan workers train and retrain in Algeria.[79]

Entrepreneurship indicators in Libya remain low, despite the expansion of the country's private sector since the 2011 revolution. Indeed, there is a lack of policies encouraging young people to innovate and create their own businesses.[80] To address this, since 2016 Libyan authorities have invested in an international programme involving Expertise France to support the private sector and entrepreneurship (see below). In particular, this programme targets the challenges faced by youth, unemployed university graduates (NEETs; school-to-work transitions; people with low, obsolete or insufficient skills; the economically inactive or unemployed).

With regard to migration measures, IOM Libya works with its partners in the international community to assist in meeting the growing operational challenges of migration, as well as to advance understanding of migration issues, encourage social and economic development through migration, and uphold the well-being of migrants.

In the realm of gender equality, in line with the UNDP's Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021, and in close consultation with government counterparts and development partners, UNDP Libya works to mainstream gender equality and advance women's empowerment with respect to government institutions, economic recovery, service delivery, access to justice and the rule of law, and the national reconciliation process.[81] With regard to platform work, interviews showed that women have access to online platform work, but they do not work in on-location platform jobs such as in the delivery field for social reasons.

In the Labour Rights Index (2022), Libya scores 62, and ranks among those countries with only limited access to decent work.[82] Under the Libyan Constitution of 2011, the state must ensure equal opportunities and work to ensure that every person has a decent quality of life, the right to employment, education, medical care, and social security.[83] However, the existing labour market setting (employment protection legislation, the setting of wages and minimum wage, employment/unemployment benefits, social dialogue) cannot be applied to online workers, due to the absence of any legal framework to organise this kind of work. In addition, according to interviewees, informality is widespread within online business in Libya, which negatively affects working conditions and wage rates for online workers.

The Libyan government has, in collaboration with Expertise France, implemented a range of multi-donor projects in the economic sector in Libya. These projects have contributed to raising awareness about

[77] Alaraby News. Libya (2022). The House of Representatives approves the Unified Salary Law (in Arabic), available at: ليبيا :مجلس النواب يقر قانون الرواتب الموحّد (alaraby.co.uk)

[78] Asharq Al-Awsat (2022). Controversy surrounds the mechanisms for implementing a unified salary law in Libya (in Arabic), available at: جدل حول آليات تنفيذ قانون موحد للأجور في ليبيا (aawsat.com)

[79] Algérie Presse Service (2021). Emploi: Accord pour "réactiver" les accords de coopération signés entre l'Algérie et la Libye, available at: https://www.aps.dz/economie/122672-emploi-accord-pour-reactiver-les-accords-de-cooperation-signes-entre-l-algerie-et-la-libye

[80] Sacchetti, S., & Ben Brahim, N. (2021). Youth and Mobility in the Maghreb: An Assessment of Youth Aspirations in Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, ICMPD Regional Office for the Mediterranean.

[81] United Nations Development Programme (2023). Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, available at: https://www.undp.org/libya/women%E2%80%99s-empowerment-and-gender-equality

[82] Labour Rights Index (2022). Available at: https://labourrightsindex.org/heatmap-2022

[83] Tahir, T., & Ahmad, I. (2022). Decent Work Check, Libya 2022, available at: www.wageindicator.org

entrepreneurship and coding, as well as supporting the private sector, engaging and empowering civil society organisations (CSOs) and women entrepreneurs, and facilitating access to finance. Some of these projects address employment, entrepreneurship and digitalisation. Below, we provide some insights into these projects. [84]

- **SLEIDSE project**:[85] The Support to Libya for Economic Integration, Diversification and Sustainable Employment (SLEIDSE) programme was a four-year technical assistance programme entrusted by the European Union to Expertise France, the French technical cooperation agency, under an indirect management delegation agreement. The SLEIDSE programme began in September 2016, and aimed to promote the development of a dynamic and diversified micro-, small and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) sector in all regions of Libya, capable of creating employment and livelihoods for Libyans, in particular women and youth, through widely accessible and relevant MSME support services. The programme relied on four main components: (1) disseminating a culture of entrepreneurship; (2) improving support services for MSMEs across all of Libya; (3) improving access to finance for MSMEs; and (4) public private dialogue.

- **STREAM project – supporting Libya's innovation ecosystem**: The STREAM project, which was financed by the UK Government (EUR 2 million) and implemented by Expertise France during the period 2018-2020. The project supported the creation of the country's **first integrated incubator, accelerator and Fab Lab in Tripoli,** to encourage the development of start-ups. It aimed to build the capacities of Libyan start-ups and companies by providing a space offering advice, training and the opportunity to create prototypes using equipment at the Fab Lab.

- **Namaa Tamweel Microfinance (MFI) project – facilitating access to financing for Libyan microentrepreneurs**: This project, financed by a grant from the UK Government (EUR 2 million) and implemented by Expertise France during the period 2018-2020, **provided technical assistance to the new microcredit agency Namaa Tamweel**. It is managed by Assaray Trade and Investment Bank, which provide the funds to be allocated to small entrepreneurs. The agency has two branches in Benghazi and Tripoli, and aims to provide over LYD 15 million (EUR 9.2 million) to small entrepreneurs during its first two years of operation.

- **Social Entrepreneurship Initiative project – bootcamps programme for young entrepreneurs**: this one-year project (2019-2020) had a budget of EUR 500,000, financed by UNICEF and the European Union. It aimed to support young Libyan entrepreneurs working in the social and solidarity economy by organising bootcamps (training workshops) throughout the country. This 8- to 12-month training programme aimed to **strengthen the entrepreneurial spirit and creative thinking of young people,** to ensure that they mainly focus on the development of projects with a strong societal impact and/or which economically empower their community.

- **EU4PSL project**:[86] The European Union for Private Sector in Libya (EU4PSL) project was financed by the European Union and implemented by Expertise France. It began in February 2019 for duration of three years, with a budget of EUR 10 million. The objective of this project was to improve the business environment in Libya in order to generate economic growth and employment opportunities, especially among youth and women. To achieve its goal, the EU4PSL project carried out four main areas of intervention: (1) strengthening the capacities of Libyan institutions; (2) supporting the economic empowerment of youth and women; (3) improving access to financing for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups; and (4) supporting education and entrepreneurship.

As a result of its involvement in several technical assistance projects since 2016, including SLEIDSE, Namaa Tamweel, Social Entrepreneurship Initiative, Stream and Raqam-e, Expertise France has gained a detailed understanding of the private sector in Libya. Its team builds on specialised expertise and know-how to fine-tune efficient technical assistance activities.

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[84] https://www.expertisefrance.fr/en/libye
[85] EU Neighbours South (2018). Libyan communication company, SLEIDSE Programme Libya, available at: https://south.euneighbours.eu/opportunity/libyan-communication-company-sleidse-programme-libya/
[86] Expertise France (2019). EU4PSL – Programme d'appui au développement du secteur privé libyen, available at: https://www.expertisefrance.fr/fiche-projet?id=774333

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In terms of outcomes, Expertise France's main achievements are 3,000 entrepreneurs trained; 114 entrepreneur communities; 10 incubators in partner universities; 10 Bootcamps; three business plan contests; one online business school, and the reactivation of the Credit Guarantee Fund.[87] According to the European Union, following the successful completion of EU4PSL (2019-2022) and its predecessor project, SLEISDE (2016-2020), the EU will continue to support private sector and economic development in Libya through the E-NABLE project (2022-2025).[88]

Digitalisation

Recent digitalisation figures for Libya, according to the 'Digital 2023 Libya' report, indicate that there were 3.14 million internet users in Libya at the start of 2023, when the internet penetration rate stood at 45.9%.[89] In the context of the knowledge economy, digitalisation represents one of the major economic and societal challenges that needs to be addressed by the government, businesses and citizens. Digitalisation, and the tools it offers, will strengthen the links between these essential stakeholders in order to assist in the stabilisation of the political and socio-economic situation in Libya.

With regard to policy approaches and measures relating to digitalisation and digital skills, the COVID-19 pandemic has oriented government efforts towards investing in digital transformation and internet infrastructure. Libya has invested in telecommunications infrastructure, but while it has made significant progress in the period between 2018 and 2020, it still lags behind in the field of online services. In particular, this includes the scope and quality of online services; the institutional framework; the national strategy for digitalisation; organisational structures; legislation governing access to information and its confidentiality; open data and many other matters. Indeed, Libya faces challenges relating to the governance and government policies that are constantly changing and conflicting. In the face of this, the Libyan government intends to support government agencies in developing and hosting digital services and applications, developing policies and legislation in relation to technical matters, communication law, electronic government law, electronic transactions law, and evaluating the current state of the business and technology environment.[90]

The projects that have been implemented to support digital transformation in Libya are as follows:

Raqam-e project:[91] this project is funded by France, and implemented by the technical cooperation agency Expertise France. It began in March 2020, with a duration of two years and a budget of EUR 1.1 million. Raqam-e was launched with the aim of:[92]

- Participating in the stabilisation of the country through concrete actions on youth, employment, employability and entrepreneurship;
- Disseminating coding/computer language skills among young people and Libyan women, to enable the creation of applications or new computer programmes and support Libya in its digital transition;
- Supporting and empowering women by encouraging them to explore a wider variety of jobs related to new technologies;
- Promoting the culture of entrepreneurship among young people by discovering new tools and meeting with private sector actors;

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[87] European Union for Private Sector in Libya – leaflet, available at:
https://www.expertisefrance.fr/documents/20182/774350/EU4PSL+Leaflet/03162df0-a192-4b57-b231-3be37c1e2576
[88] European Union (2022a). EU4PSL for private sector development in Libya presents results, available at:
https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/libya/eu4psl-private-sector-development-libya-presents-results_en?s=105
[89] Datareportal (2023). Digital 2023 Libya, available at: https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-libya
[90] National Council for Social and Economic Development of Libya (2023). Available at:
https://nesdb.ly/digitaltransformation/
[91] Raqameyon launch press release (2023). France Continues to Support Digitalization and Job Diversification in Libya, Expertise France Economic programme in Libya.
[92] Expertise France (2020). RAQAM-E: Developing coding schools and training hubs dedicated to young people and women in Libya, available at: https://www.expertisefrance.fr/en/fiche-projet?id=797017

- Bringing citizens closer to local public actors by involving them in joint projects;
- Increasing awareness and providing a lever of influence at the new administrative level of municipalities, by giving them a key and concrete role in the service of their citizens.

The Raqam-e project engaged a large community of technology enthusiasts, and successfully organised many digital bootcamps and hackathons. The establishment of coding academies in four municipalities was one of the major results of the Raqam-e project to spread digital and coding cultures in Libya.

'Raqameyon' project:[93] this new project, funded by France, was a continuation of its predecessor project, 'Raqam-e'. Libya launched 'Raqameyon' on 13 April 2023 to support the digital transformation in Libya by contributing to the diversification of the job market, with a focus on the digital economy. The one-year project aims to support the creation of employment opportunities in the digital sector by disseminating digital skills and supporting the development of local digital capacity-development programmes across Libya. The project is implemented by Expertise France, with a budget of EUR 700,000, in partnership with the General Information Authority, the Ministry of Education, several chambers of commerce, local CSOs, and several public schools from different regions of Libya. The main activities of the project include:

- Building the capacity of selected CSOs and private training companies to provide inclusive basic digital bootcamps for public and private sector employees.
- Supporting the Ministry of Education in implementing digital training in Libyan schools. This will include the design and implementation of a customised digital curriculum.
- Providing digital skills training for tech start-ups, entrepreneurs and SMEs after assessing their needs.
- Training existing digital professionals on in-demand and advanced tech topics such as AI, data science and Power BI.

'E-NABLE project': Libya has also been implementing 'E-NABLE',[94] a new project funded by the European Union, to support the key Libyan economic institutions in introducing digital economic governance tools and improving digital services for businesses. This three-year project (2022–2025) aims to promote an investment-friendly and conducive business environment, strengthening the Libyan private sector and thus contributing to the country's economic growth. The project focuses on three main aspects:[95]

- Strengthening the capacities of the Ministry of Economy and Trade and related institutions in designing public policies that support reforms and the creation of new businesses, and which foster domestic and foreign investment.
- Supporting Libya in its digital transformation by creating a national digital strategy, digitalising the services and tools of public institutions, and increasing the use of digital technologies in Libyan economic institutions.
- Facilitating access to finance by encouraging financial institutions to extend credit and financial solutions to SMEs, and creating a conducive environment for microfinance and fintech in Libya.

With the digital transformation of the public sector in Libya, some online portals have been launched. These include:

- **eJraat Libya Portal**:[96] implemented by the Ministry of Economy and Trade in partnership with the General Authority of Information, and with support from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and Expertise France. eJraat is funded by the European Union through its EU4PSL project in Libya. This portal provides a step-by-step guide providing helpful

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[93] Raqameyon launch press release (2023). France Continues to Support Digitalization and Job Diversification in Libya, Expertise France Economic programme in Libya.
[94] Website of the project 'E-nable' is available at: https://e-nable.ly/
[95] European Union (2022b). EU to support economic governance and digital transformation in Libya, available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/libya/eu-support-economic-governance-and-digital-transformation-libya_en?s=105
[96] Libya information portal, available at: https://ejraat.gov.ly/?l=en

information to people in Libya, as well as to foreign investors regarding all administrative and business procedures.

- **Integration to the Euromed Trade Help Desk portal**: in partnership with the International Trade Centre (ITC), Libya has been integrated into the Euromed Trade Help Desk portal, which facilitates trade and investment in the EU and the Mediterranean region.[97]

- **Wafed portal**:[98] in January 2022, Libya's Ministry of Labour and Rehabilitation launched its official website for bringing foreign labour into the country. The Ministry says this platform provides the only official means for companies in Libya to bring in foreign labour in an effective and efficient manner that saves time and effort. The Ministry also states that the Wafed platform provides legal protection for workers wishing to work in Libya, and that the process will ensure workers have insurance and health certificates. This initiative acknowledges that for any development to take place in Libya, foreign labour is needed, and the government has recognised that it needs to organise and facilitate this process.[99]

In the health sector, institutions and organisations in many countries, including Libya, have implemented valuable efforts and measures in response to the COVID-19 crisis. These include telehealth technology, an alternative modality for direct physician-patient interviews that reduces the risk of COVID-19 transmission.[100]

As discussed above, the efforts that have so far been implemented by the Libyan state with regard to digital transformation have targeted administrative institutions and the population in general. These measures have encouraged the use of the internet and social media not only in relation to remote work by regular employees, but also for freelancers. In addition, they have contributed to increasing the motivation to learn digital skills among young people in particular. However, no data are available concerning NEETs; people with low, obsolete or insufficient skills; economically inactive or unemployed people; migrants and/or refugees.

In 2022, Libya ranked 169th in the E-Government Development Index (EGDI), compared with 162nd in 2020 and 140th in 2018.[101] Analysis of Libya's performance in each of the three dimensions of the EGDI shows that: (1) in the Online Services Index (OSI), which measures the scope and quality of online services, Libya has made some progress compared with 2020, but is still very far from the regional average and world averages; (2) in the Telecommunication Infrastructure Index (TII), while Libya made significant progress in the period 2018-2020, its performance fell in 2022. However, the country has high-speed internet access and a growing number of mobile phone users; (3) the Human Capital Index (HCI) ranks countries according to their ability to harness the economic and professional potential of their citizens. Scores range between 0 and 1, where 1 means that the maximum potential is achieved. Due to investments in education, Libya has achieved a good result in this index, equalling the world average of 0.75.

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[97] European Union (2022). EU4PSL for private sector development in Libya presents results, available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/libya/eu4psl-private-sector-development-libya-presents-results_en?s=105
[98] https://www.wafed.ly
[99] Zaptia, S. (2022). Labour Ministry launches Wafed website for processing foreign labour, available at: https://libyaherald.com/2022/01/labour-ministry-launches-wafed-website-for-processing-foreign-labour/
[100] Elhadi, M., Msherghi, A., Elhadi, A., Ashini, A., Alsoufi, A., Bin Alshiteewi, F., Elmabrouk, A., Alsuyihili, A., Elgherwi, A., Elkhafeefi, F., Abdulrazik, S., & Tarek, A. (2021). Utilization of Telehealth Services in Libya in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Cross-sectional Analysis, *JMIR Med. Inform.,* 2021 Feb; 9(2): e23335.
[101] UN E-Government Knowledge Base (2023). Libya, available at: https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/97-Libya

Policy implications

This report reveals that online and platform work has emerged and developed in Libya, even in the context of the country's unstable political and socio-economic situation. The COVID-19 pandemic, apart from increasing Libya's internet penetration rate, has helped in the orientation of young Libyans towards online freelancing activities such as journalism, translation, digital marketing, programming, social media management, and various web-based tasks. Meanwhile, on-location platforms tend to provide employment in the short term only, as this is seen as low-skilled work offering little opportunity for workers to improve their skills.

Challenges and opportunities of the current situation

Challenges:

- Libya faces big challenges, with government policies that are constantly changing and conflicting, thereby affecting possible efforts with regard to the online work.

- There is lack of funding and spending on government's programme to boost digitalisation, as well as for building the institutional, technical and human capacities of the government and the programme itself. This can have indirect impact on the ecosystem of online work.

- Political instability in Libya, coupled with high rates of unemployment and migration, could affect freelance opportunities, payments and competitiveness. More broadly, it can also disrupt various plans for growth, hinder the development of infrastructure, impede the implementation of skills development strategies and quality education programmes, and deter international cooperation.

- As a side job for most people, online work is generally still not a career choice, due to many barriers such us unstable and poor income levels, the absence of social protection, poor access to the internet in some Libyan cities, and low digital skill levels.

- The absence of a legal framework governing online and on-location platform work and a limited e-payment and banking system.

- Although policymakers have since 2021 been working towards minimising the gap between the education system, vocational training, and the demands of the job market, the alignment of the education system to the needs of the labour market remains problematic.

- Skilled individuals are actively seeking better opportunities for education, training and work abroad. This poses a significant challenge for Libya, as outward migration of talent could undermine the potential impact of skills development strategies and plans within the country.

Opportunities:

- The growing share of the youngest population in Libya indicates that, with proper opportunities for skills development, youth employability and venture creation, strong improvements could be achieved with regard to start-ups and innovation, driving the country's development.

- Since 2021, policymakers in Libya have been actively addressing the gap between the education system and vocational training, and the demands of the job market.[102] By working on a comprehensive skills development plan in collaboration with three key ministries – Labour, Education, and Higher Education – Libya aims to reduce skills mismatches and foster the development of skills that are relevant to the job market. Further accelerating this policy direction could improve the situation of many young people.

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[102] Libya Channel (2021). The Ministry of Labour forms a committee to study a plan for aligning the outcomes of education (in Arabic), available at: وزارة العمل تشكل لجنة لدراسة خطة مواءمة مخرجات التعليم – قناة ليبيا (libyaschannel.com)

- It is noticeable that Libya has not developed policies toward online work itself, but has tended to invest more in digital transformation (e-administration, e-government, e-health, infrastructures, etc.), and being more open to collaboration with and supporting the private sector. This could have a direct impact on the ecosystem of online work and support the emergence of new platforms, creating new jobs.

- Online work could provide a real opportunity, especially among young people, saving them from the unemployment and creating value for them (in terms of both income and learning opportunities).

- On-location platform work represents a good opportunity for migrants, as it can contribute to building their network in order to access the job market.

- With Libya's high unemployment rate being a factor influencing migration, credible and sustainable opportunities to combat outward migration and brain drain could be created by expanding employment online or through digital platforms, whether by nationals or diaspora.

- Libya has an extremely low rate of participation in the labour force among women. Online work could help to change this trend and increase women's activity in the job market.

Gaps in the existing strategic and policy approaches

- Lack of a clear vision and strategy for stability in Libya, as working with multiple internal and external stakeholders diverts efforts, money and time.

- Most of the current legal framework consists of old laws dating back to before the Arab spring of 2011.

- Libyan authorities have focused on supporting the private sector without working on the legal framework and regulations that govern online and on-location platform activities.

- A mismatch exists between companies' needs and skills learning and development in Libya.

Implications/ possible measures for regulation

Despite facing significant challenges, Libya has high potential for economic reconstruction and diversification, backed by considerable financial resources[103] and a large share of youth in the population. To support these strengths and boost skills and human capital development, Libyan policymakers could consider the following:

- Improving ICT infrastructure, enhancing internet access and speed.

- Addressing the security of technology and intelligence.

- Strengthening the legal framework for the banking system to facilitate financial transactions for freelance activities.

- Adopting regulations and policies that can effectively govern online and on-location platform work, because the availability of job opportunities in this field can help the government to tackle Libya's high unemployment rate and empower women in the labour market by offering them flexible work that can be adjusted to suit their responsibilities in the home.

- Online and on-location platform work could potentially help alleviate issues associated with migratory flows and brain drain in Libya by keeping youth and educated people in the country and provide work for incoming migrants.

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[103] World Bank (2023). Libya's Economy Shows Resilience and Potential for Prosperity Amid Challenges, available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/06/06/libya-s-economy-shows-resilience-and-potential-for-prosperity-amid-challenges

- Strengthening the legal framework in regards of social protection for online and on-location platform workers to facilitate more digital activities. This would not only safeguard basic workers' rights, but also help suppress prevalent tax evasion.

- Promoting the new forms of work and creating career development centres to provide career training, guidance and counselling for youth orienting them towards freelancing and online work.

- Include educational and training programmes/courses related to digital skills in universities and vocational centres.

- Create liaison institutions or programmes that facilitate the collaboration of universities and vocational training centres with companies. This can help in understanding the current and future skills requirements in particular digital skills and online activities.

- Support and strengthen the efforts of the committee responsible for minimising the mismatch between companies' needs and academic skills development in Libya by providing quality tools to review the education, training, and rehabilitation system.

- Implementation of policies, infrastructures and programmes related to innovation, start-up, entrepreneurship, and online work.

- Encourage international collaboration to benefit from experiences in youth training, education, skills and human capital development.

Summary

The business landscape in Libyan is still grappling with a weak legal structure, political unpredictability and internal instability owing to the uncertain security conditions since 2011. These factors have a widespread impact on businesses overall, and significantly deter investment prospects in the country. Libya currently ranks among the bottom five countries in the global Ease of Doing Business rankings. Nevertheless, the Libyan government is actively engaged in endeavours to improve this situation. Measures adopted include initiatives in areas such as digital transformation, enhancing internet accessibility and penetration, as well as the adoption of several international donor programmes. These efforts will incentivise – whether intentionally or not – the younger generation to engage with online and on-location platform businesses.

The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the expansion of online work among the younger generation in Libya, especially outside of digital labour platforms. The majority of freelancers are men, often operating under conditions determined by platforms or clients, and lacking legal contracts or social safeguards. The appeal of online work lies in the availability of job, the potential earnings, and the possibility of receiving payments in a foreign currency. However, the absence of a regulatory structure to safeguard online freelancers, along with challenges relating to the banking system and e-payments, constitute significant barriers to entry into the online work industry.

On-location labour platforms have gained prominence in Libya, especially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Competition among these on-location platforms has primarily focused delivery services. However, this type of work is not yet widely discussed in the media, public forums, or policy debates. The majority of workers engaged in on-location platform work are young men, who often operate without formal contracts. It's worth noting that the appeal of on-location platforms is driven by the potential for higher commissions and earnings in comparison to their relatively low skill requirements. Nevertheless, significant drawbacks in persist such work arrangements. The platforms do not provide adequate remuneration or social protection in the long run, unlike traditional employment options, which offer greater job security.

While Libya presently lacks specific regulations relating to these new forms of employment, strategic initiatives have been carried out that involve digital transformation, the enhancement of internet infrastructure, and the implementation of various international donor programmes. These have focused on digitalisation, employment, entrepreneurship, and private sector support, and include SLEIDSE, STREAM, EU4PSL, Raqam-e, Raqameyon, E-NABLE, and others. These programmes aimed to empower youth, facilitate reforms, foster entrepreneurial endeavours, strengthen the private sector, and provide essential technical expertise to drive this new economic vision. Such endeavours will likely play a pivotal role in cultivating an ecosystem conducive to the growth of online and on-location platform work.

The key policy implications for Libya in relation to online and on-location platform work involve building upon the current outcomes of donor programmes in terms of digitalisation, employment, entrepreneurship, and so on. Further attention should be placed on fostering startup initiatives and innovation, in order to cultivate a thriving freelance ecosystem. This can be realised through the implementation of appropriate regulations and infrastructure. Furthermore, enhancing the capabilities of universities, vocational training centres, liaison institutions and committees will help to nurture positive perspectives towards these new forms of work. Such an approach will help to provide guidance, as well as effective tools to assess Libya's education, training and rehabilitation system, along with counselling for individuals participating in online and on-location platform work. These endeavours will contribute significantly to advancing skills development and facilitating freelance activities, ultimately driving job and venture creation, and contributing towards a newly stabilised Libyan economy.

To address the challenges and capitalise on the potential presented by online and on-location platform work, Libyan policymakers could initiate measures and actions that address various aspects. These include paying greater attention to the business ecosystem, enhancing technology infrastructures, and bolstering security and intelligence. Moreover, it is crucial to establish a comprehensive legal framework

dedicated to regulating online and on-location platform work, with the aim of ensuring secure employment prospects and extending social protection measures to freelancers. In addition, emphasis should be placed on fortifying the country's banking system in order to streamline financial transactions, thus effectively promoting and facilitating both digital and on-location activities.

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Website of the platform Truelancer, available at: https://www.truelancer.com/

Website of the platform Mostaql, available at: https://mostaql.com/

Website of the platform Presto Eat, available at: https://web.prestoeat.com/

List of interviewees

Name	Organisation	Title	Date of interview
Mourad Adhabaa	Representative of Ministry of Labour and Rehabilitation https://labour.gov.ly/	Director of the Relations and Communications Office, Consultant	16 April 2023
Anas Shadi	Presto Eat platform, https://prestoeat.com/info/ via LinkedIn and phone	Chief Business Officer at Presto Eat	18 April 2023
Tommy Alhadi	Presto Eat platform, https://prestoeat.com/info/ Via LinkedIn & phone	COO at Presto Eat	18 April 2023
Abdulrahman Benkhalefa	Presto Eat platform, https://prestoeat.com/info/ via LinkedIn	Social media representative at Presto Eat	17 May 2023
Scander Soufi	ILO office for Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania & Tunisia.	Head of many projects related to employment Expert	5 April 2023
Mohammed Bawendi	Online freelancer (interpreter/translator)	via LinkedIn	16 April 2023
Freelancers	Facebook group: freelancer Maghreb countries (Algerie + Tunis + Morocco + Libya + Egypt)	https://www.facebook.com/groups/2956117777984257	15 April 2023