



2017  
THE MIDDLE EAST  
**SKILLS  
REPORT**

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Current Assessments  
Future Perspectives

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# About This Report

Welcome to the latest release of the Bayt.com and YouGov report on the state of skills and the skills gap in Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In this edition, we are introducing you to the latest trends in the demand and supply of skills, how are they going to impact the labor market, and the skills businesses will search for tomorrow. Then, we are going to analyze in more detail the state of the skills gap in the MENA region based on the most recent online survey conducted by Bayt.com and YouGov.

In developing this report, a total of 5,794 interviews with job seekers have been completed, out of which 2,876 were with mid-career or junior candidates and 2,918 with more senior ones. On the employers' side, 435 business representatives in charge of or influencing recruitment decisions have been interviewed. Out of these, 291 were looking to hire for junior roles while 219 were searching for senior candidates. 75 of them were

actually looking to hire for both junior and senior roles and have provided their insights for both career levels.

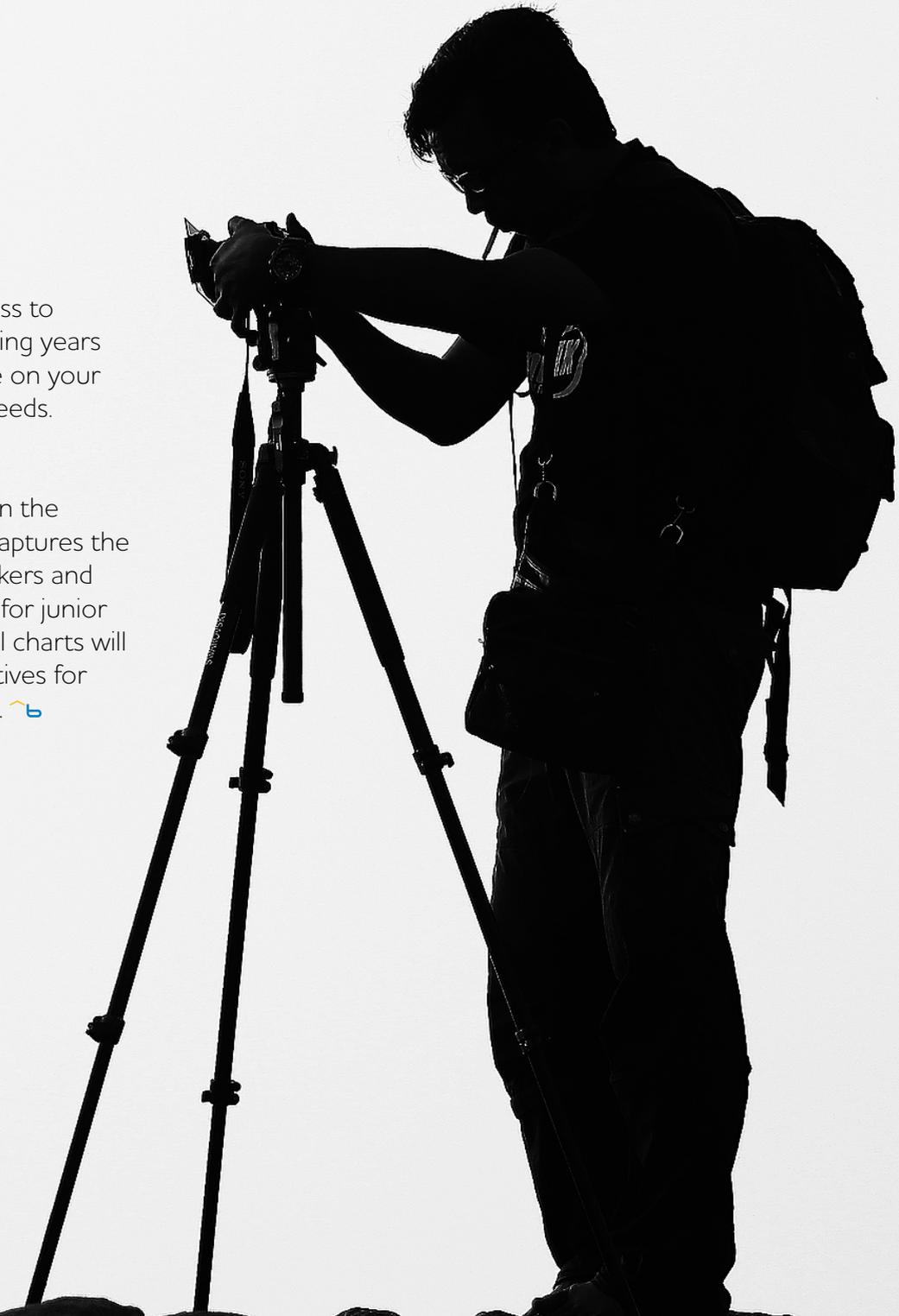
All interviews were conducted online using Bayt.com's database between the 29th of April and the 29th of May, 2017. The detailed composition of the sample can be found in the Appendix.

## **How to benefit from the Skills Report?**

If you are a job seeker or an employee, this report will reveal to you insights and analysis regarding the most critical skills in the job market today and in 10 years. You will be also able to understand the discrepancies employers face when hiring talent and how to go about addressing their needs and preparing for the most critical skills of tomorrow. For managers, employers, recruiters, and HR professionals, the report is an invaluable depiction of the regional skills gap as well as the most demanded skills. You will be able to develop an understanding of the skills gap, its

causes, and its likeliness to change over the coming years as well as its influence on your business and talent needs.

To provide you with a comprehensive view in the market, this reports captures the views of both job seekers and companies recruiting for junior or senior positions. All charts will include both perspectives for comparison purposes. 



# Foreword

from Bayt.com



*“Securing a talent pipeline and devising a talent acquisition strategy that addresses the constant changes in the market is more complex in practice than in theory.”*

One of the biggest challenges that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) endures today is unemployment. The issue is heightened among young people who are graduating to an increasingly competitive job market. Given that we live in one of the most youthful parts of the world, there is no doubt that competition for jobs is a hot topic. But competition is not the only matter of concern.

Every day, there is more pressure on job seekers to prove themselves and their competencies worthy. The age of rapid technology and excessive data generation is quickly giving rise to new skills and qualifications, while deeming others obsolete. Job seekers are tasked to find the right avenues to update their skills, develop new ones, and gear up for the jobs of tomorrow.

Likewise, companies and organizations are facing talent mismatch issues. As our surveys showed repeatedly, many employers face challenges when looking for candidates with adequate skills. Securing a talent pipeline and devising a talent acquisition strategy that addresses the constant changes in the market is more complex in practice than in theory. For instance, just ten years ago, Instagram did not exist. Today, it is a vital marketing and communication tool that many businesses try to master.

The ongoing shift in essential job qualifications calls for a deep investigation of the regional skills gap and for a quick preparation for what is

called the fourth industrial revolution. It is equally vital that we make adequate provisions and investments in education, learning, and career support to ensure a healthy and productive labour market.

Take Bayt.com as an example: an organization that prides itself on being one of the earliest internet businesses in the world that is still profitable today. We attribute our success to the fact that we've always worked tremendously hard to stay ahead in the skills game. We anticipated the online future of recruitment when there were barely 200,000 Internet users in the Arab world. Today, with almost 30 million registered members, companies that use Bayt.com have access to nearly unlimited choice and are able to find candidates with the exact skillset they need. Bayt.com has become the region's apparatus for talent and skills matching and for real-time data and insights.

We are excited to share the Middle East Skills report, developed to aid in the next phases of talent matching and job market growth. We hope you will garner its value. 



**Rabea Ataya**  
Founder and CEO  
Bayt.com

# Market Trends

## Impact on Jobs and Skills



Skills gap has become a buzz expression in recent years. Before going into any kind of analysis or research, it is important to first assess whether it is a real issue affecting everybody in the marketplace – both employees and employers – or just an item on some international think tank’s agenda.

There are a few trends in the market, which have already started impacting our lives and have the potential to have irreversible consequences on the way people live, work and think. Let us name

just a few and try to imagine what these consequences will be on the short and long run.

First, there is the technological acceleration (i.e. an exponential increase in the number of people connected online). More than half of the world population will be online by 2020<sup>1</sup>. By 2030, the share of online population incidence in the GCC will be anywhere from 85 to 95%. Egypt and Levant will be in the world average, at around 50%<sup>1</sup>. By 2020, 54% of the Middle East and Africa

population will have a mobile phone<sup>2</sup>. To add one more prediction, by 2020, the average internet user will generate 29.2 Gigabytes of traffic per month (up from 7.1 Gb in 2015)<sup>3</sup>.

In short, more and more people are moving their lives into the digital space and more and more aspects of our lives are becoming digitized through sensors or what is known as the internet of things (IoT). The IoT enables people to create digital representations of physical objects within the cloud and monitor

and manage everything, from health and homes, to cars and industrial equipment, from miles away. It also allows machine to machine interactions through increased automation not only in manual tasks but also in knowledge generating tasks, without constant human supervision.

In the workplace, the ever-growing number of robots – more recently coupled with machine learning – hold the potential to spawn a new industrial revolution (some are already calling it the 4th industrial revolution). On the short term, it means that the workforce will ‘teach’ robots how to do their current work only to be replaced by the same robots when the machines learned the job. For example, Forrester<sup>4</sup> predicted that 16% of the jobs in the US will disappear due to automation by 2025.

This is, of course, a concerning outlook and employees may fear for their jobs and employment. In this context, universal basic income gets more and more traction as a means to alleviate the effects of job-destroying robots on peoples’ lives. Trials are conducted in countries as different as Finland, Canada, Italy or India<sup>5</sup>. In its essence, universal basic income means that every adult citizen will receive a salary, regardless of wealth, employment income, or if they have a job in the first place.

Imagine a world where drivers have disappeared pretty much the same way that the cabmen – yes, those horse and

carriage handlers – have been replaced by the automobile, which have changed the life of our parents and grandparents forever.

Or imagine a world in which one does not have to go and see the physician. He or she gets sensors wired to the body so that the physician can see from miles away the patient's condition and if any change in the medication is required. The system may be automated to the extent that the physician only ever looks at the patient's records when a robot detects and alerts him. How does this change the skills a physician needs to acquire? Would it still make sense for him to be paid per consultation, get a universal basic salary because robots took part of his job or – rather – earn his salary through a patient subscription system?

The development of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) systems is around the corner and it will impact the way we live and work. Imagine the same physician doing a consultation in virtual reality for an immobilized patient without the need to travel. Fully distributed global teams will have realistic human interactions using VR technology. VR will change the retail experience forever since all shopping can be done from one's couch while still making sure that the shoes will fit your feet perfectly. It will also change the way businesses create prototypes of new products and bring them to the market. Employees working in retail or product testing will have to upgrade their skills consistently.

From a different angle, the sharing economy or collaborative economy has seen the birth of digital labor markets

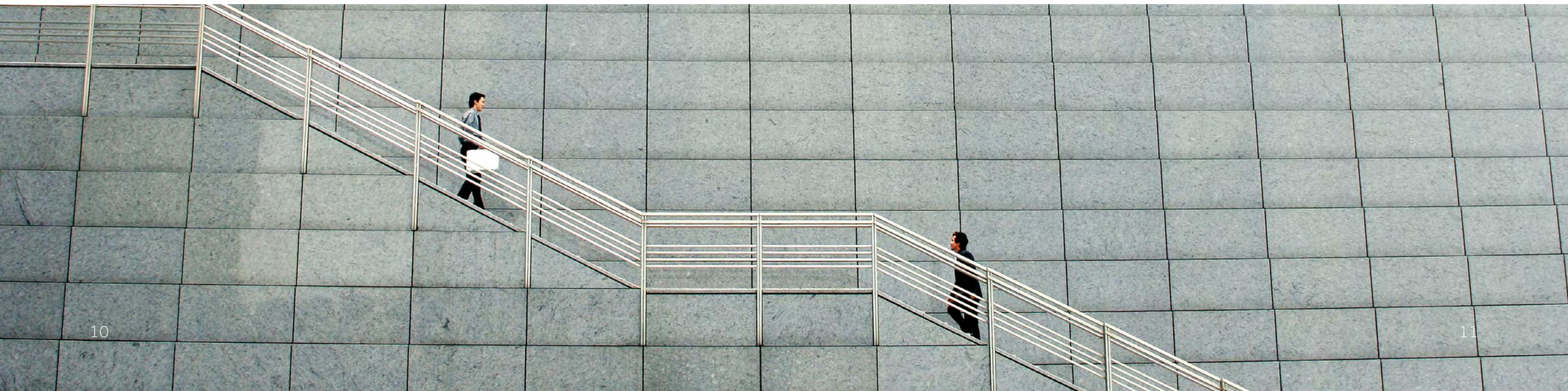
(DLM), which allow either the remote delivery of services (such as Amazon Mechanical Turk, Upwork, Freelancers) or the digital matching and administration of supply and demand while the delivery of services is still physical (such as Uber, Airbnb). Despite their still relatively small size, these online platforms have grown exponentially in recent years. If the same growth pace continues, they will have an immediate impact on traditional and long-forms of employment.

Although the phenomenon is still in its nascent stage, Codagnone, Abadie and Biagi<sup>6</sup> have identified few positive and negative effects of the digital labor markets. On the positive side, the authors name the increase of the pool of employers and workers by removing intermediaries and reducing transaction costs, improving matching and increasing

staff specialization, contributing to increased employment rates and better welfare for the workers.

On the other hand, the potential negative effects are linked to the fact that DLM create 'precarious forms of employment' which may increase social risks and costs. Temporary work – the essence of the digital labor markets – may reduce costs on the employers' side but creates precarity of workers. Moreover, employees are required to become much more versed into developing their entrepreneurship skills, upgrading their digital marketing skills to be able to advertise themselves, and even manage their personal digital reputation using a plethora of social media marketing tools.

One last trend in today's world that we would like to highlight is the peer-to-



*“Employees are required to become much more versed into developing their entrepreneurship skills, upgrading their digital marketing skills to be able to advertise themselves and even manage their personal digital reputation.”*

peer nature of emerging relationships. On one hand, this leads to a change in status: for instance, from a mere consumer of electricity distributed by the local utility supplier, one can become a provider of electricity to his neighbors by upgrading his house with solar panels. These solar panels prove to generate more energy than the user actually needs, therefore offering the opportunity to generate some revenue for the household.

A different aspect but with potentially even stronger impact on reducing any sorts of “central authority” comes from the blockchain technology. Beyond the current hype about bitcoin and other virtual currencies, they all concur to diminish the impact of central governments, commercial banks, and other centrally-controlled systems on peoples’ lives.

It all starts with a shared knowledge of each other’s payments – called a distributed ledger – which basically means that we all know who paid whom,

when, and in what amount. Each new transaction is added to this common knowledge without failure. Note that ‘payment’ can refer to any kind of transaction, not monetary in particular. To specify this further, it is not us who “know” about these transactions, but it is our computers connected to the network where new transactions are decrypted using sophisticated software. If today we trust banks to pay someone for us or get the payments we are due, tomorrow we may not need banks at all. In case we do not wish for the transaction to be seen by others, there are few blockchain-based currencies to ensure anonymity, provided that the government regulations allow.

Just one step further, Ethereum<sup>7</sup> – a different kind of cryptocurrency – has built a blockchain platform for what is called smart contracts. Smart contracts are “self-executing contracts with the terms of the agreement between buyer and seller directly written into

lines of code”<sup>8</sup>. They are essentially “a piece of software that executes its terms automatically and encodes rules agreed upon by all parties”<sup>9</sup>. They are decentralized and transparent. From research and recent tests, jobs in banks, investment and insurance firms as well as their legal advice divisions will be most affected.

Imagine an insurance contract for a car wired with IoT sensors, written as a smart contract. The car sensors monitor the driver’s behavior, alerts him/ her on the need to go to the workshop or renew the policy, adjusts the premium in case of over-speeding or other unruly behavior, etc. There is, of course, a big need for proper underwriting of those smart contracts. But this will happen only once – at the beginning – with a maintenance function. How will this change the kind of work a car insurance employee operates today? It is a tough question, yet it is also very clear that the relevant skill set will change significantly.



In light of just these few trends already at play in the market, the matter of what skills are relevant in tomorrow's market place and how big is the skills gap today gets its full relevance and why everybody should pay attention to it. Understanding the current and likely short-term changes in society and economy enables both job seekers and recruiters to stay relevant in the labor market.



We will start now the analysis of the latest findings of our Bayt-YouGov evaluation on the state of the skills gap in the MENA region. 🇲🇪

1 Cisco, VNI Complete Forecast (2015-2020) accessed at [www.cisco.com/c/en\\_us/solutions/service-provider/vni-complete-forecast/infographic.html](http://www.cisco.com/c/en_us/solutions/service-provider/vni-complete-forecast/infographic.html).

2 <http://blog.euromonitor.com/2015/04/half-the-worlds-population-will-be-online-by-2030.html>.

3 Ibidem.

4 Forrester, "The Future of Jobs, 2025: Working Side By Side With Robots", accessed at <https://www.forrester.com/report/The+Future+Of+Jobs+2025+Working+Side+By+Side+With+Robots/-/E-RES119861>.

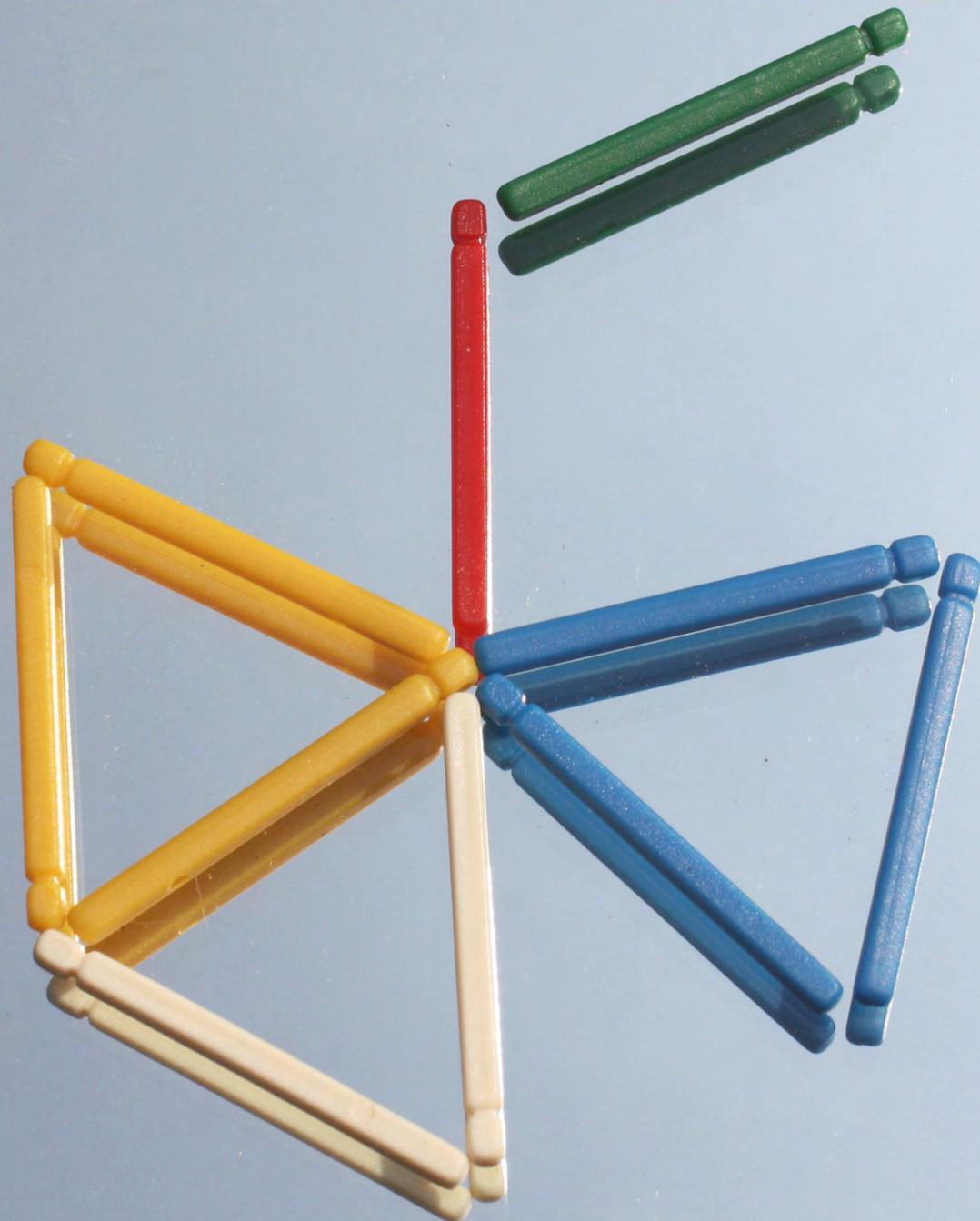
5 <http://time.com/4737956/universal-basic-income/>.

6 Cristiano Codagnone, Fabienne Abadie and Federico Biagi, [2016], The Future of Work in the 'Sharing Economy': Market Efficiency and Equitable Opportunities or Unfair Precarisation?, JCR Science for Policy Report, European Commission, accessed here: <http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC101280/jrc101280.pdf>.

7 <https://www.ethereum.org/>.

8 <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/smart-contracts.asp>.

# Is There a **Skills Gap** in the MENA Region?



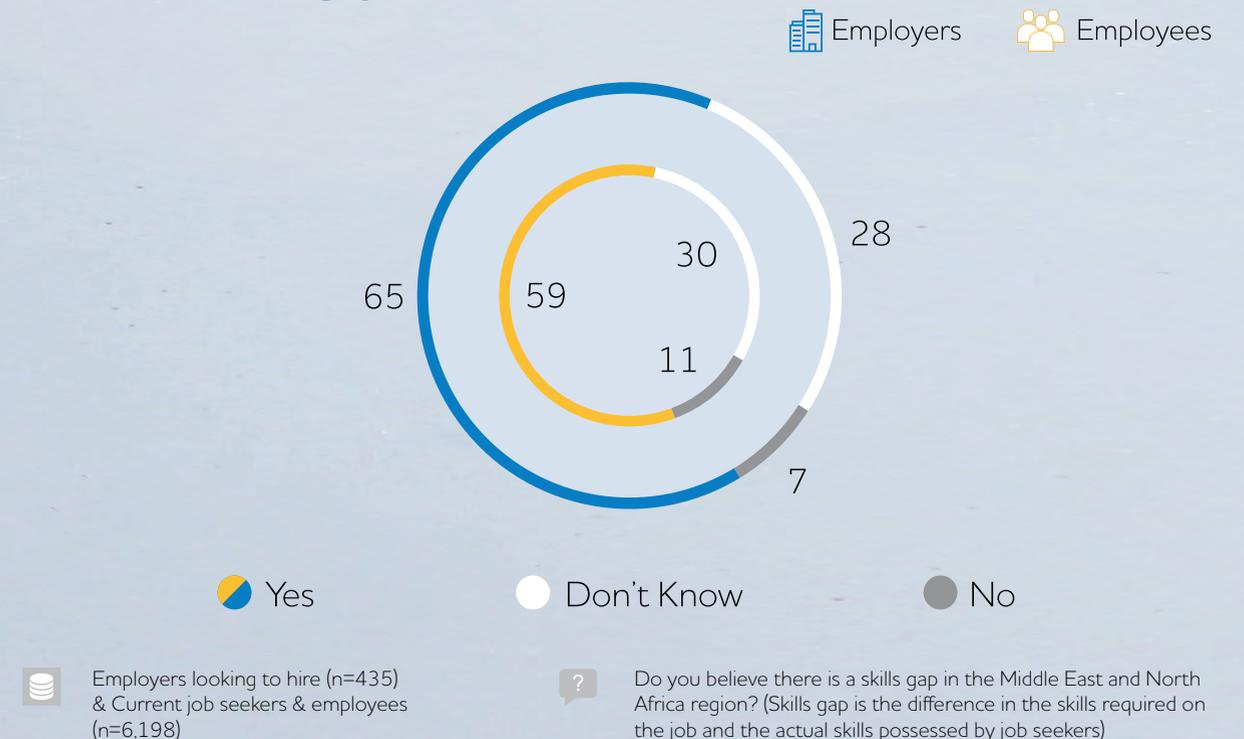
Before exploring the depth and dimensions of the skills gap, let us have a look first at perceptions.

Do employers in the MENA think they are facing a skills gap today? Skills gap is the difference between the skills required on the job and the actual skills that the job seeker (or employee) possesses.

As a matter of fact, 65% of employers believe there is a skills gap, while 7% said there isn't, and 28% did not know.

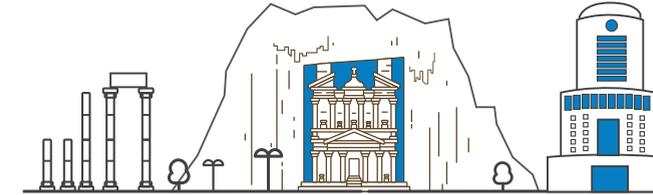
Employers and job seekers are in agreement on the presence of a skills gap in the MENA. The majority of job seekers (59%) think that there is a skills gap, while only 11% think there is not.

Chart 1  
Is there a skills gap?



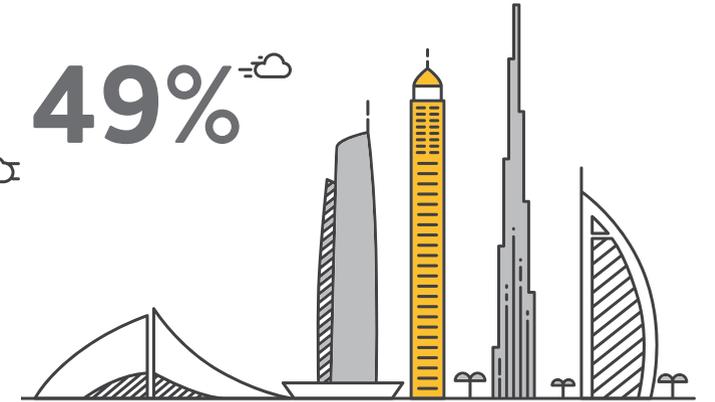
# Professionals Who Believe There Is a Skills Gap in the MENA Region

59%



Jordan

49%



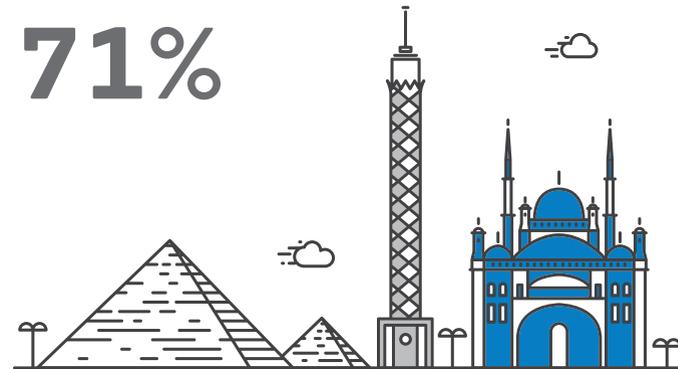
United Arab Emirates

55%



Saudi Arabia

71%



Egypt

54%



Qatar

52%



Oman

55%



Kuwait

71%



Bahrain

63%



Lebanon

57%



Morocco

If both businesses and job seekers agree that there is a skills gap in the market, how does that impact companies' ability to find and hire talent? What makes it difficult for them to find the skills they need?

At first, it looks like lack of skills comes low in the list of reasons for not finding the right personnel. 14% of employers mentioned the lack of technical skills and 10% have indicated the lack of soft skills as the barrier.

Having said that, just above a quarter of them (27%) mentioned lack of relevant work experience. Put in perspective, it becomes apparent that the relevant experience is a different way to express lack of proper skills set. Without relevant work experience, job seekers can only acquire and develop the skills at high demand in the labor market to a minimal level.

Another 22% of employers claim that candidates sometimes "lack interest in developing their skills." These employers are more likely to be big companies (26%), located in North Africa (30%).

## Chart 2 Reasons why companies don't find employees with relevant skills

27% Lack of relevant work experience

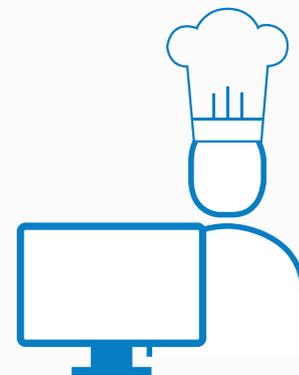
22% Candidates interest in developing their skills

20% Weak recruitment process

14% Lack of technical skills

10% Lack of soft skills

7% Other



Employers looking to hire (n=435)

What do you believe is the main reason for which companies have difficulties in finding job seekers for their job vacancies?

From a job seeker's perspective, the number one reason for not finding jobs fitting their skill set is lack of awareness (33%) of what skills are in high demand. It is surprising to see that the communication gap between employers and job seekers is bigger in the GCC (39%) compared to Levant (29%) and North Africa (25%). In addition, this sentiment varies with age: 38% among those aged 40+, compared to 34% amongst ages 30-39, and 30% amongst those below 30 years old.

Just above a quarter of job seekers (26%) also claim that the educational

system doesn't train students on skills that are relevant in today's market-place. This sentiment is more prevalent in North Africa (31%) and amongst recent graduates (32%).

## Chart 3 Reasons for not finding jobs fitting their skills

33% Job seekers do not know what skills employers are looking for

26% Education institutions do not teach students the skills they need to enter the job market

19% Governments do not offer enough programs for the unemployed to develop their skills

15% Companies do not provide enough training opportunities to employees

8% Other



Current job seekers (n=5,794)

What do you believe is the main reason for which job seekers have difficulties in finding jobs matching their skills?



# Today's Most **Critical Skills**

Which skills are in high demand in today's market? What skills do businesses find the most critical when searching for their future employees in the MENA region?

We have asked both employers and job seekers what skills they think are critical in the current market, by level of experience of the employee, junior or senior. Let us first look at the critical skills for junior or mid-level roles.

### Junior Roles

According to employers, the top three most important skills for mid-career or junior positions are teamwork (%83 of employers said it is very important), time management (%80 said it is very important) and written communication (%76 said it is very important).

Job seekers also agree; %84 of them said that teamwork is a very important skill, %83 said time management is very important, and %79 said written communication is very important.

It is positive to note the fact that employers and junior job seekers agree on the same top most critical skills. From a job seeker's perspective, knowing what employers expect from them and being right about it can only help them focus on developing those particular skills and land a job faster.

On the other hand, junior job seekers tend to rate almost all the other skills as being more important than they really are to businesses looking to hire. Skills being rated more important by job seekers than by employers creates false priorities (i.e. job seekers stress more about them when they are not that critical for employment).

It can be noticed in particular when it comes to entrepreneurship (%62 of job seekers rated it as very important vs. %48 of employers), creative thinking (%74 of job seekers vs. %62 of employers), global mindset (%60 of job seekers vs. %51 of

employers), logical thinking (%67 of job seekers vs. %58 of employers) and people management (%76 of job seekers vs. %67 of employers).

For entrepreneurship, the skill for which the gap between job seekers (%62) and employers (%48) is the biggest, it is surprising indeed to observe the different perspective. Employers would reportedly seek junior employees who follow the existing processes while job seekers believe they need to show initiative, capacity to manage people and produce change through creative thinking. These are extremely good skills but they may be more fit and of higher priority for senior roles.

### Senior Roles

We turn now to assessing which skills are critical for senior roles – as seen by both employers and job seekers. The top three most important skills for senior roles are time management (%89 of job seekers and employers said it is very important), team work (%88 of employers said it is very important and %89 of job seekers said it is very important) and people management (%87 of job seekers and employers said it is important).

There is a large agreement between employers and job seekers regarding the critical skills for this career level. There are, of course, some small differences in their ratings of importance for each skill, but only one is big enough to indicate that it is not due to chance: visual thinking. %75 of employers rated

Chart 4  
Critical Skills for mid-career and junior roles



Employers looking to hire (n=291) & Current job seekers & employees (n=2,876)  
 (To Employers) When searching for candidates for mid-career/ junior positions, how important are each of these skills?  
 (To Jobseekers) How important is each of these skills in improving your chances in finding a job?

it as very important while %69 of job seekers said it is very important. Creating powerful, highly visual presentations is a great way to influence and stand out as a senior resource in the company. Senior job candidates should realize how critical this skill is and allocate time to develop it.

Most critical skills for both junior and senior roles are – in the end – not that different: time management and team work are in the top three lists for both groups. Written communication is more important for junior roles while people management is more important for senior ones. Written communication though is the 4th most important for senior roles as well.

As a closing remark on the list of critical skills, it is surprising to notice the place of emotional intelligence: last on the senior role skills list and fourth to last in the junior role skills set. The findings show that there may be low awareness amongst both employers as well as job seekers of what emotional intelligence is and the critical role emotional intelligence plays in being successful in today's workplace. In fact, numerous studies have also shown that emotional intelligence is a skill someone can learn and practice to become more successful. 

## Chart 5 Critical Skills for senior roles

### Senior Roles

 Employers  Job Seekers



 Employers looking to hire (n=219) & Current job seekers & employees (n=2,918)

 (To Employers) When searching for candidates for senior positions, how important are each of these skills?  
(To Jobseekers) How important is each of these skills in improving your chances in finding a job?

# The Most **Difficult Skills** to Find

In this section, we will explore a little further how difficult it is for companies to find employees with relevant skills, on one hand, and for job seekers to land the job fitting their skills.

Finding good candidates for junior or mid-career positions is very difficult only for about one in three companies (32%). It seems even easier for junior candidates to find a job matching their skills, only a quarter of them have claimed that it was very difficult to find jobs matching their skills level.

However, there is a much bigger gap between what employers and job seekers think when it comes to senior roles. Only about a quarter (24%) of senior job seekers have reported that it is very difficult to find a job matching their skills. On the other side, the majority of businesses (58%) face major challenges in sourcing employees with relevant skills for senior positions.

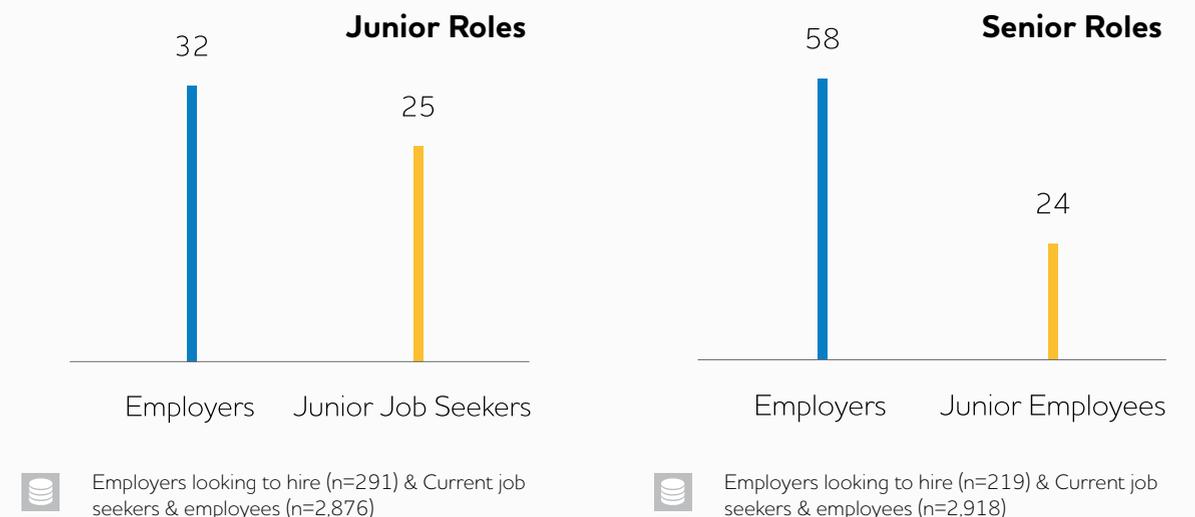
We have seen earlier that there is a skills gap in the MENA region – an evaluation shared by both employers and job seekers. Data also shows that recruiters believe that the number one reason why they do not find employees with relevant skills in the current market is lack of relevant experience.

From a job seeker's perspective, the reason why they do not find positions fitting their skills set is lack of awareness about the skills companies are looking for. This seems, nonetheless, a groundless claim. Data shows that – to a large extent – that recruiters and candidates are in agreement on the top skills required in today's labor market. It is, of course,

less true for junior candidates who tend to overstate the importance of all skills. However, recruiters looking to hire for senior positions and senior candidates are almost perfectly aligned on what skills are critical in today's market. Therefore, it is not a matter of awareness and, despite the fact that companies can probably better communicate these skills, there is already a common knowledge about them in the marketplace.

These critical skills are, according to respondents, team work, time management, written communication (for junior positions) and people management (for senior positions).

Chart 6  
**How difficult it is to find good candidates and jobs**



What if the skills gap does not come from a lack of agreement on what the important skills are but from a mismatch in the assessment of one's skills? What if employees believe they are doing a great job on these critical skills, while recruiters think the contrary?

Let's evaluate this possibility by contrasting 1) the skills that companies have difficulties finding with 2) the skills at which job seekers have rated themselves as doing very good. If the skills for which companies have most difficulty finding match the skills job seekers rate themselves lowest in, it means that job seekers are aware of their weaknesses and the best thing to do is for companies, training entities and job seekers to focus on improving these skills. If, however, there is a mismatch between the skills companies have difficulty to hire for and the job seekers' self-rating on these skills, the conclusion will be that job seekers need to realize that they are overrating themselves and they must take action to improve on these skills, should they want to land the jobs they dream of.

### Junior Roles

When looking to hire for junior positions, 47% of employers surveyed said that they face the most challenges when searching for candidates skilled at creative thinking, 44% of employers said global mindset is very difficult to find and 43% said visual thinking is very difficult to find.

Job seekers seem to tell a similar story by rating themselves lowest on two of these

skills. Only 50% of job seekers claimed to be "very good" at global mindset and 53% claimed to be "very good" at visual thinking.

However, there is a discrepancy in their evaluation of their creative thinking skills against what employers said: 59% of job seekers evaluate themselves as "very good" while 47% of employers say it is "very difficult" to find this skill. It seems clear that candidates overrate themselves on this skill and it may be that 'creative thinking' means different things to businesses and candidates altogether.

The most striking finding is that the biggest mismatch between companies and job seekers occurs for the most critical skills: 87% of job seekers rate themselves as being very good at team work while 38% of companies report having high difficulty recruiting for those skills; 78% of the job seekers rate themselves as very good in time management but 41% of companies still find it difficult to source employees with this skill.

One more note on job seekers' self-evaluations: they rated themselves highest on the same skills they said are the most important: team work (importance rating – 84%; self-performance rating – 87%), time management (83% vs. 78%), and written communication (79% vs. 76%).

Chart 7  
Skills in high demand and self assessment for junior roles





### Senior Roles

When it comes to senior roles, 53% of employers claimed that it is “very difficult” to find candidates who possess creative thinking. 51% of employers said the same about critical thinking, while 49% said that about global mindset.

Similarly to junior roles, candidates rate themselves high on the most critical skills. 93% of them said they are “very good” at team work, 87% said they are “very good” at time management, 87% said they are “very good” at written communication, and 86% said they are “very good” at people management.

However, on time management and team work, the gap between candidates’ evaluation and businesses’ difficulty in finding the right skills is to the extreme. For time management, 87% of candidates rate themselves as very good, while 47% of companies said they have big difficulties in finding good candidates with this skill. Similarly, for team work, 93% of candidates rate themselves as very good, while 45% of recruiters find it very hard to find good employees with this skill.

For both junior and senior job seekers, it seems that candidates felt compelled to say that they perform well on the skills they had identified as being critical. If these are the most important skills, it is very likely that job seekers will say that they are great at exactly those skills. 🇧🇪

Chart 8  
Skills in high demand and self assessment for senior roles



Employers looking to hire (n=219) & Current job seekers & employees (n=2,918)

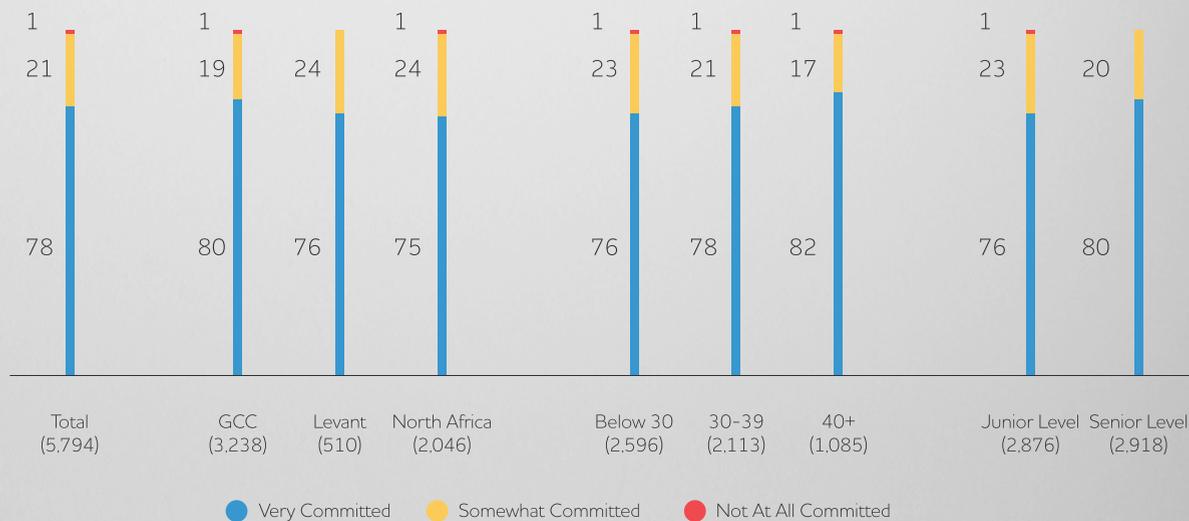
(To Employers) How difficult is it to find each of these skills in candidates for senior positions?  
(To Job Seekers) How would you rate yourself on each of these skills?

# Keeping Skills Up-to-Date

In a fast-paced world, in which five million jobs are expected to be displaced by 2020, according to the World Economic Forum estimations, employees need to constantly look for new ways to develop their skills and stay relevant in the market.

We asked job seekers how committed they are to acquire new skills. It is a positive finding that almost eight in ten (78%) job seekers are committed to acquire and develop new skills. As shown in Chart 8, candidates in the GCC, ages

Chart 9  
Commitment to acquire new skills



Current job seekers (n=5,794) How committed are you to acquiring new skills constantly?

40+ and those looking for senior roles are more committed to developing and acquiring skills.

In order to acquire new skills, job seekers in the MENA read books, obtain information about best practices, and take industry tests or online courses.

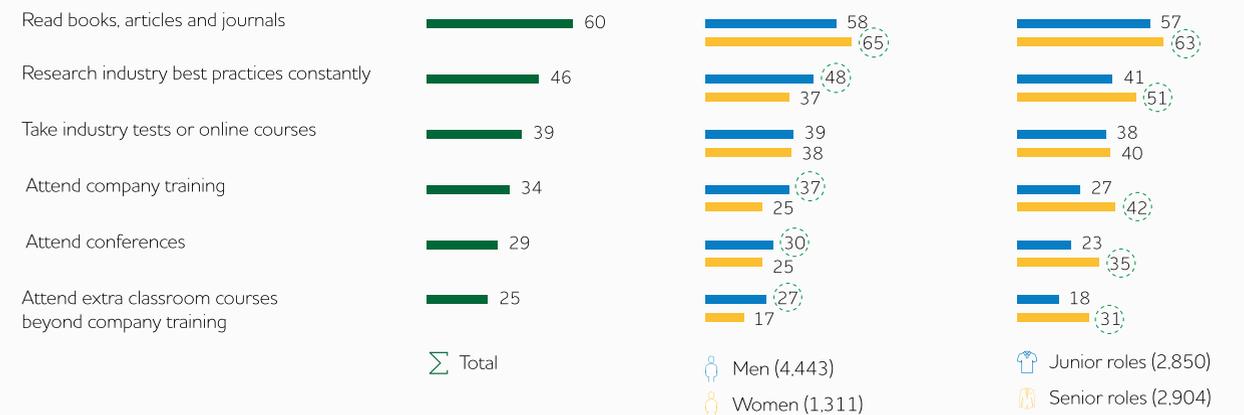
An interesting note: there is a reported gender gap when it comes to keeping on top of the new skills in the market, with men seemingly more active in this area. Men are more likely than women to search for information on industry best practices (48% vs. 37%), attend company trainings (37% vs. 25%),

attend conferences (30% vs. 25%) and attend extra classroom courses beyond company training (27% vs. 17%). However, women are more likely to read books (65% compared to 58% for men) and both genders are equally likely to take industry tests or online courses (39% among men and 38% amongst women).

When looking at differences by career level, we see that senior job seekers are more likely to acquire new skills.

Thus, senior job seekers are more likely to read books on new skills (63% vs. 57%), study industry best practices (51% vs. 41%), attend company trainings (42% vs.

Chart 10  
Keeping up with new skills in the market



Current job seekers committed to acquire new skills (n=5,754) What do you do to keep your skills current? Please select all that apply.

27%), attend conferences (35% vs. 23%) and attend extra classroom courses (31% vs. 18%).

While access to books should not be affected by this, to what extent the policies in today's companies are designed to favor senior job seekers and men when it comes to trainings or access to conferences against juniors and women is another question worth contemplating.

Keeping up with the skills in the market is not only an individual task. Companies should offer access to resources too expensive for employees if taken

individually outside the company. But are they eager to? How are companies supporting employees to keep up with the new skills if at all?

We asked business leaders what their companies do to keep their employees' skills up to date and, as a matter of fact, eight in ten companies support their employees through a variety of initiatives. Mainly, companies organize training sessions (49%) and inform their employees on industry best practices and implement them internally (38%). There is also some interest for activities requiring a higher level of resources such as offering extra classroom courses beyond

### Chart 11 Supporting employees to keep up with the trends in the skills



the company trainings (24%), organizing industry tests for employees (23%) and paying for employees' participation in conferences (23%). There are no significant differences by level of seniority of the employees when it comes to what companies reportedly offer.

Finally, on bridging the skills gap, we asked what do employees and job seekers think should be done.

Employers and job seekers are in agreement that the best way to bridge the skills gap is that companies, schools and governments should work together to predict future skills needs (25% of

employers and 29% of job seekers agree). Slightly less respondents (23% of employers and 25% of job seekers) think that it is up to the companies and educational institutions to work together so that students can receive proper training to develop the skills required in the market.

One in five (19% of employers and 20% of job seekers) believe that companies should offer trainings for employees to keep their skills in line with market trends. On the other hand, 15% of employers said that candidates should take the initiative of updating their skills.

### Chart 12 How to bridge the skills gap?



# Future Skills

We asked employers and job seekers: are technical skills or soft skills going to be more important in the future?

Employers for both career levels – junior and senior positions – agree on the fact that technical and soft skills will be equally important (54% of those hiring for junior roles and 55% of those hiring for senior roles agree). Senior job seekers concur to this expectation, 53% have chosen this option. Junior job seekers make a separate opinion, with 48% thinking that soft and technical skills will be equally important and 43% saying that technical will be more important than soft skills.

For the last part, we are going to look again at today's most critical skills and how the list is going to change in ten-year time from the perspective of the four groups we examined.

We have already seen in the previous section that there is a large agreement amongst employers and job seekers regarding the critical skills today. The analysis of the skills that will gain most

importance in ten years shows similarly a large level of agreement amongst job seekers and employers. The top skills in the future are most likely to be – according to all four groups – creative thinking, time management and computer skills. Below we will analyse the few differences between the groups, in their exact order.

The most critical skills today from the perspective of employers for junior roles are team work, time management and written communication. These same employers think that in 2027, the top three skills to gain in the importance rating are creative thinking (71% of employers think it will be very important), technology and computer skills (70% of employers think it will be very important) and time management (66% of employers think it will be very important).

From the junior job seekers' perspective, in ten years, the skill to become or stay most important will be technology and computer skills (80% of junior job seekers think it will be very important),

followed by creative thinking (77% of junior job seekers think it will be very important) and time management (76% of junior job seekers think it will be very important). This is very much in line with the employers' expectations, the only difference is that employers are rating creative thinking first, followed by computer skills.

If today, the most important skills for employers of senior personnel are time management, team work and people management, two of them are likely to change to creative thinking (73% of employers said it will become much more important) and computer skills (72% of

employers said it will become much more important). Time management remains in top three most critical skills for the future as well (73% of employers said it will become much more important).

Last but not least, senior job seekers are in agreement that the skills to gain or stay important in ten-year time will be computer skills (85% of them said it will become much more important), time management (84% of them said it will become much more important) and creative thinking (83% of them said it will become much more important).

**Chart 13**  
**Are soft or technical skills more important in 10 years?**

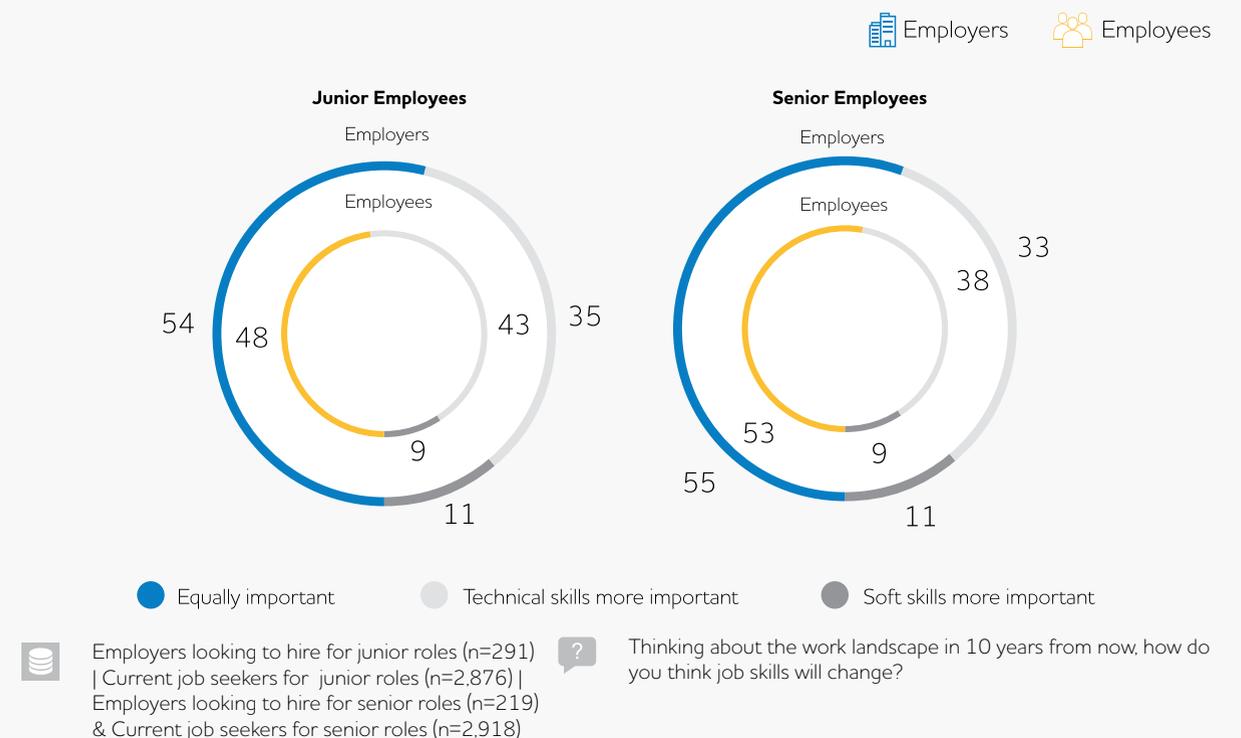
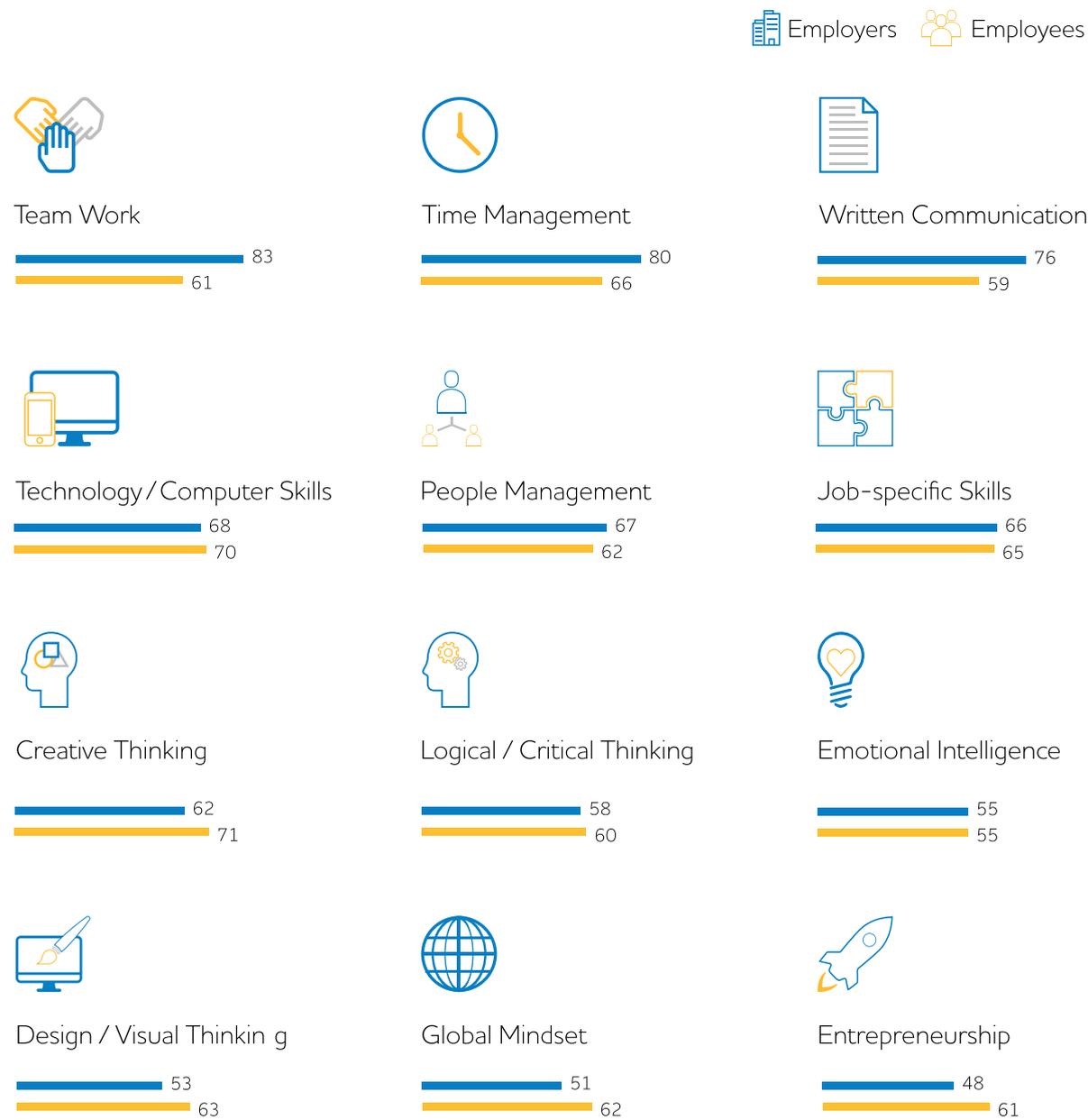


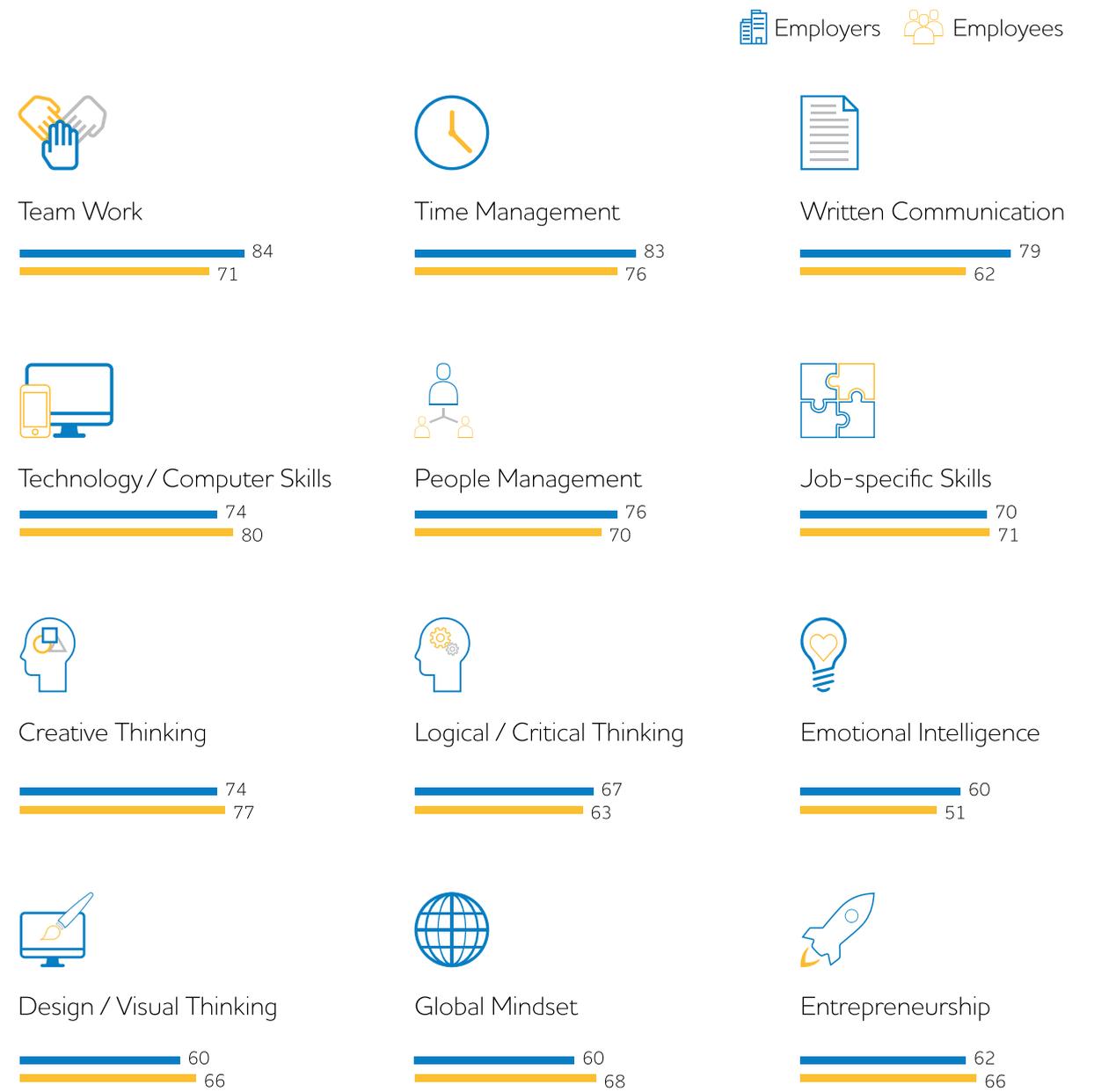
Chart 14  
Employers for junior roles - Critical skills today and in 10 years



Base: Employers looking to hire for junior roles (n=291)

When searching for candidates for mid-career/ junior positions, how important are each of these skills? Please use a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "Not important at all" and 10 means "Very important". | Question: Looking at the following job skills, do you think will be needed more or less in 10 years from now? For each one of them, please use a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "Much less", 5 "About the same" and 10 means "Much more".

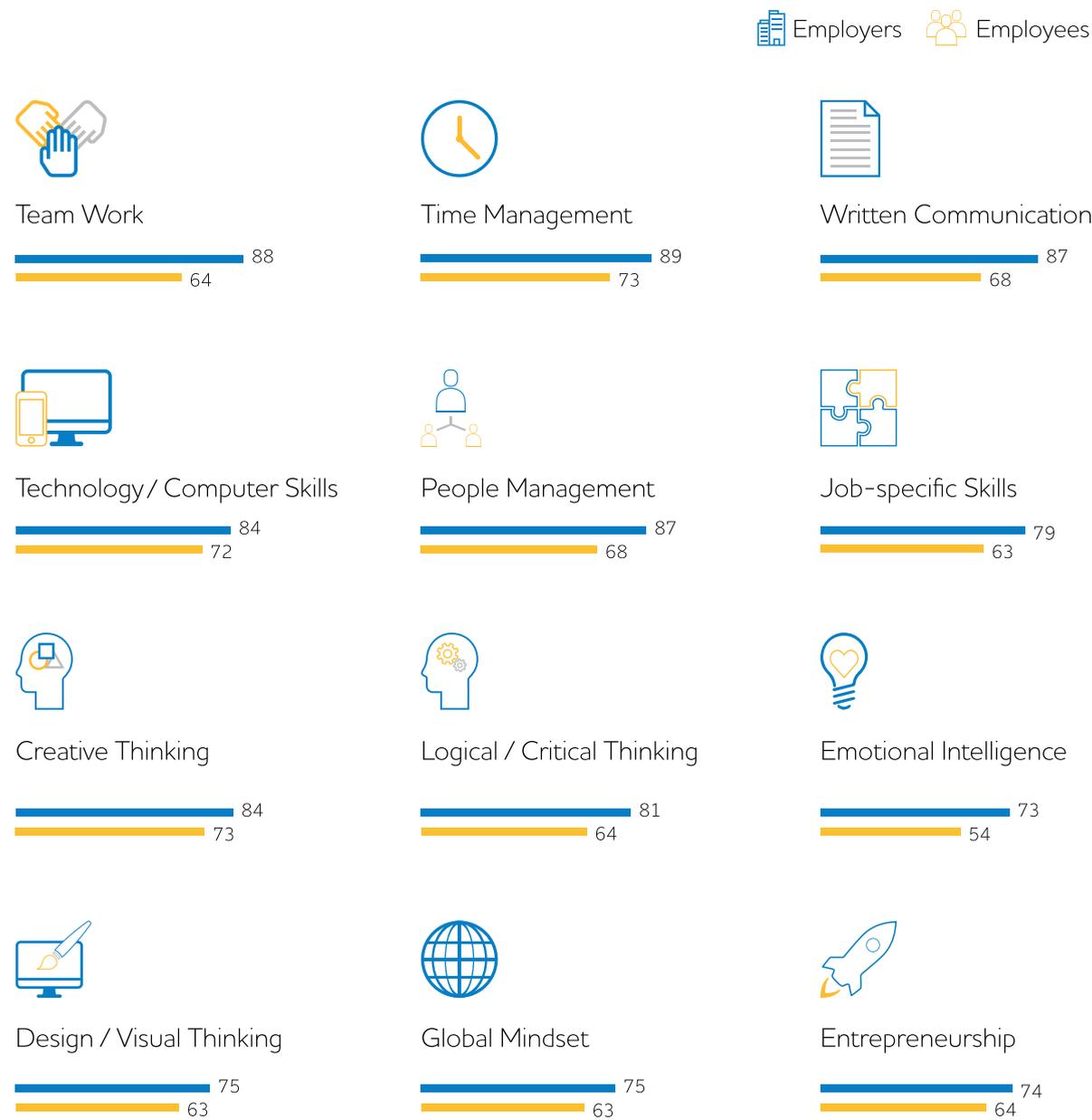
Chart 15  
Junior job seekers - Critical skills today and in 10 years



Current job seekers for junior roles (n=2,876)

When searching for candidates for mid-career/ junior positions, how important are each of these skills? Please use a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "Not important at all" and 10 means "Very important". | Question: Looking at the following job skills, do you think will be needed more or less in 10 years from now? For each one of them, please use a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "Much less", 5 "About the same" and 10 means "Much more".

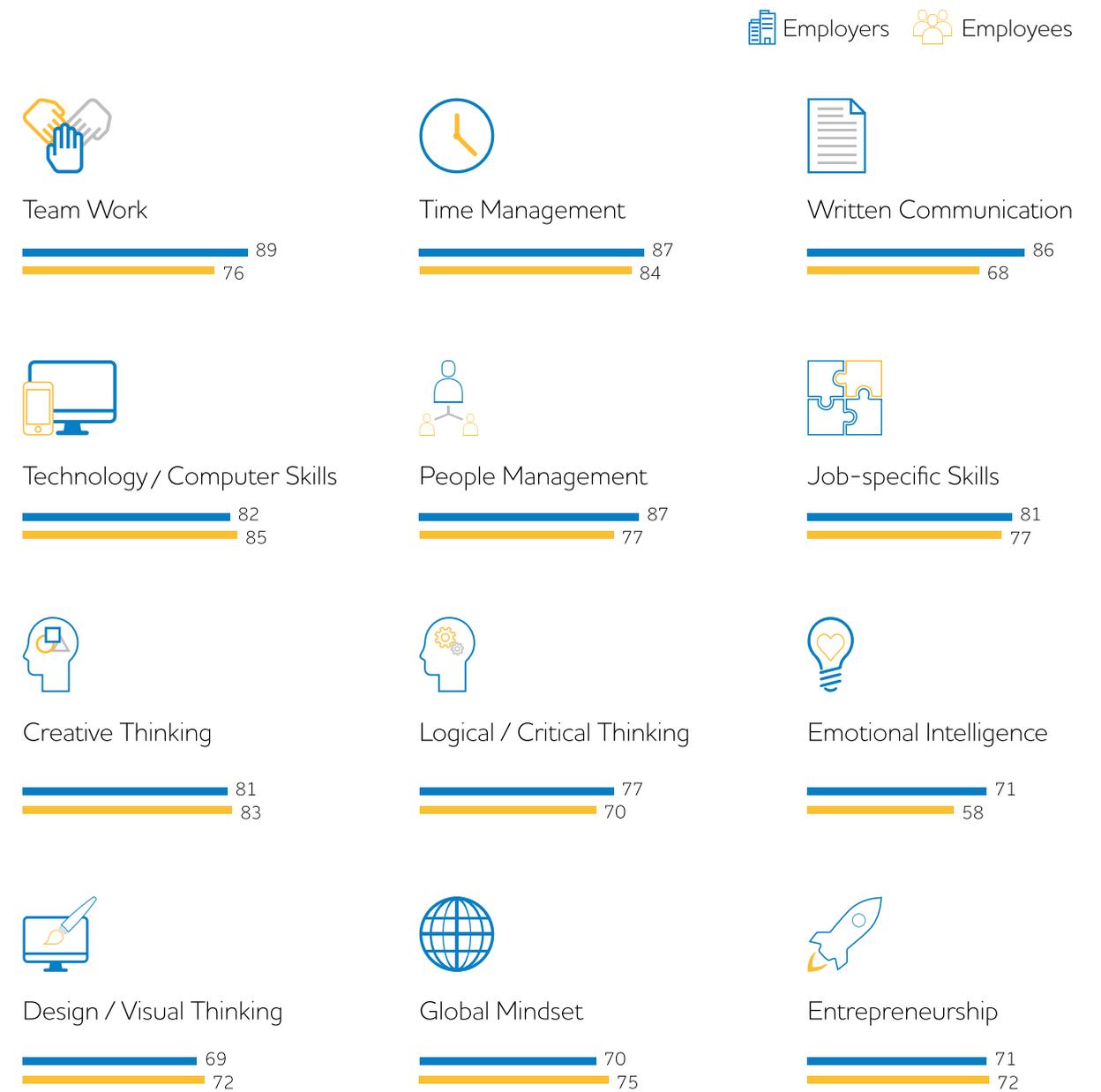
Chart 16  
Employers for senior roles - Critical skills today and in 10 years



Employers looking to hire for senior roles (n=219)

When searching for candidates for mid-career/ junior positions, how important are each of these skills? Please use a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "Not important at all" and 10 means "Very important". | Question: Looking at the following job skills, do you think will be needed more or less in 10 years from now? For each one of them, please use a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "Much less", 5 "About the same" and 10 means "Much more".

Chart 17  
Senior job seekers - Critical skills today and in 10 years



Current job seekers for senior roles (n=2,918)

When searching for candidates for mid-career/ junior positions, how important are each of these skills? Please use a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "Not important at all" and 10 means "Very important". | Question: Looking at the following job skills, do you think will be needed more or less in 10 years from now? For each one of them, please use a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "Much less", 5 "About the same" and 10 means "Much more".

# Concluding **Remarks**

We started this report asking who should care about the skills gap and why. The trends at work in the market together with the views business leaders and job seekers have shared with us proved again that the skills gap is a hot topic and will continue to be for the years to come.

In 2017, we report that recruiters and job seekers in the MENA alike believe that the most critical skills in the market today are team work, time management, people management and communication. They expect this to change though as the skills they said will be more important in 2027 are creative thinking, computer skills and time management.

This resonates well with findings from other studies. The World Economic Forum report on skills critical for 2020 has seen critical thinking and creativity become more important while emotional intelligence, decision making and cognitive flexibility made their entry in top 10 skills.

It is only the future which will show if new skills such as translating data into insights, new media literacy (social media), effective communication channel management, distraction (from social media) management, or virtual collaboration will become the cornerstones of success. 



# Appendix:

## Sample Composition

Composition of the employer sample			
(column percent)	Total n=435	Junior Roles n=291 (67%)	Senior Roles n=219 (50%)
<b>Country</b>			
Algeria		5	5
Bahrain	2	2	2
Egypt	24	24	22
Jordan	6	5	9
Kuwait	5	6	5
Lebanon	5	5	5
Morocco	1	1	0
Oman	1	1	1
Qatar	6	5	8
Saudi Arabia	21	23	21
Syria	0	0	0
Tunisia	0	0	~
UAE	23	22	21
<b>Education</b>			
Elementary School	2	2	0
Secondary School	9	8	9
Vocational College Education	10	9	11
University First Degree	53	50	55
University Higher Degree	16	18	14
Professional Higher Degree	11	13	11
<b>Industry</b>			
Real Estate/Construction/Property Dev.	8	6	10
Engineering/Design	7	6	10
Human Resources	7	7	8
IT/Internet/Ecommerce	7	7	5
Hospitality/Recreation/Entertainment	7	6	6
Advertising/Marketing/Public Relations	6	6	5
Manufacturing	6	6	6
Commerce/Trade/Retail	5	7	3
Banking/Finance	5	4	5
Education/Academia	4	4	4
Healthcare/Medical Services	4	5	2
Oil, Gas and Petrochemicals	4	4	5
Consumer Goods/FMCG	3	3	5
Business Consultancy/ Business Management/Management Consulting	3	4	2
Other	23	24	24

Composition of the job seeker sample			
(column percent)	Total n=5,794	Junior Roles n=2,876 (50%)	Senior Roles n=2,918 (50%)
<b>Country</b>			
Algeria	7	8	5
Bahrain	1	2	1
Egypt	24	22	26
Jordan	6	6	6
Kuwait	3	3	4
Lebanon	2	2	3
Morocco	4	5	2
Oman	2	2	2
Qatar	5	5	5
Saudi Arabia	25	25	25
Syria	1	0	1
Tunisia	1	1	1
UAE	19	19	20
<b>Gender</b>			
Men	77	71	83
Women	23	29	17
<b>Age</b>			
Below 30	45	61	29
30-39	36	30	43
40+	19	9	28
<b>Education</b>			
Elementary School	1	1	1
Secondary School	16	22	10
Vocational College Education	11	13	9
University First Degree	46	42	49
University Higher Degree	11	8	15
Professional Higher Degree	15	14	16
<b>Employment</b>			
Full-time (More than 30 Hours per week)	60	48	71
Part-time (30 Hours or less per week)	5	5	4
Unemployed (With past experience)	21	24	18
Unemployed (Recent graduate)	15	23	7

# Acknowledgements

Producing this report has been a highly challenging and rewarding process as it required the input and expertise of many different parties in order to shed light on one of the most critical topics for today's job market.

We would like to first express thanks to our 8,712 research participants who have provided us with their useful insights and sentiments, which have formulated the findings of this report. We would also like to show gratitude to the Bayt.com and YouGov teams who have carried out the entire research process to bring you the final report in its current shape.

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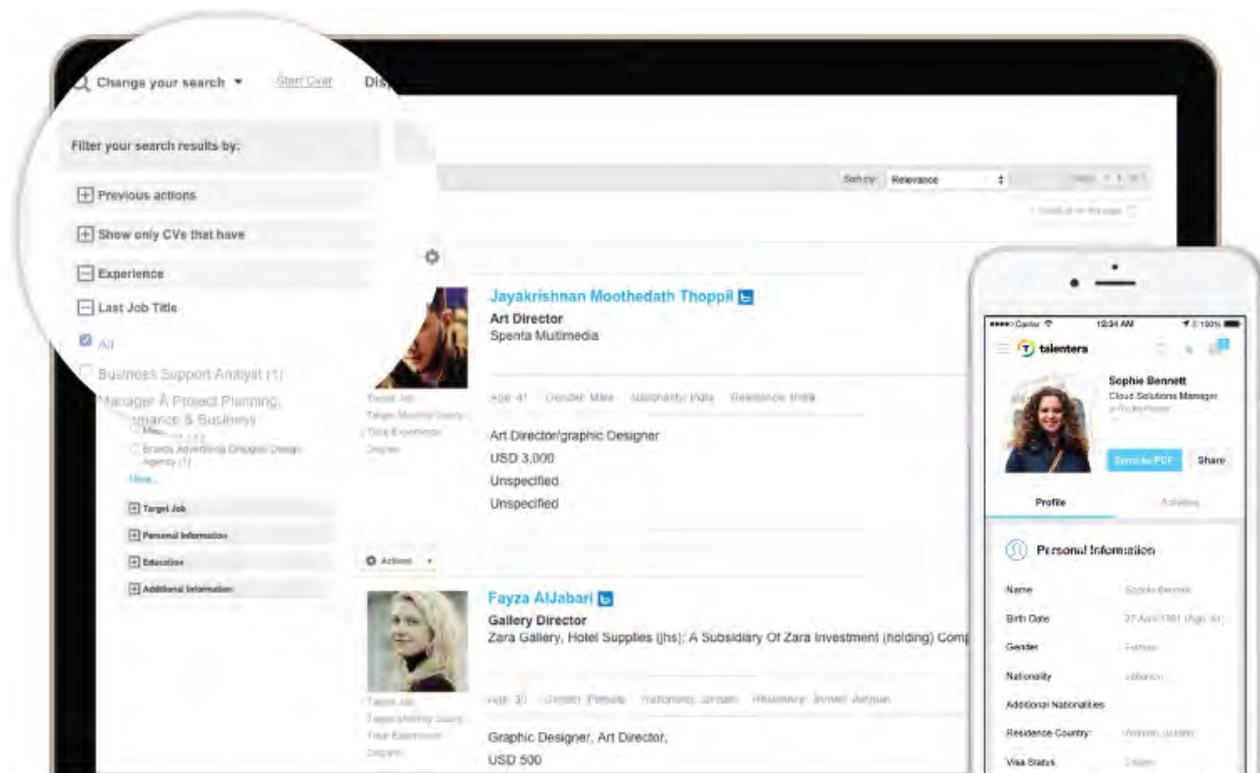
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