

Aspects of refugees' socio-economic integration prospects in insular Greece: Outcomes from the case study in Crete and Mytilene islands

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Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση
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The research

The research project “Detection and classification of perspectives for the inclusion of refugees in the Greek production system. Case study in Crete and Mytilene” is implemented through the Operational Program “Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning” and is co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund) and Greek national funds EDBM34 (IDA 6BNB4653C7-A1B).

The project was implemented by the Centre of Human Rights (KEADIK), Department of Political Science, University of Crete.

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Main focal points

The pillars around which the investigation of the human and social capital of refugees focuses in order to establish empirically based guidelines for their integration into the Greek production system are the following:

- (i) Labor market and economic integration
- (ii) Social integration and language learning
- (iii) Educational integration
- (iv) Health.

Research questions

- Investigation of aspects of refugees' human and social capital, specifically, their educational level and skills
- Examination of refugees' capacity for employment
- Investigation of factors affecting the integration of refugees into the labor market
- Investigation of the stances, opportunities, level of contribution and the reasons for the non-participation of the social partners in integrating refugees into the labor market
- Seeking possible incentives to recruit refugees
- What are the needs of the labor market and to what extent can refugees meet them on the basis of their social capital?
- What are the measures and services that contribute to the preparation of refugees for labor market integration and what are the problems and shortcomings?

Basic theoretical considerations

- The refugee crisis, which reached its apex in 2015 in Greece, has generated the necessity for socio-economic integration of the newcomers.
- There is an extensive debate on the “social integration” term
- As Finotelli & Ponzio (2018) point out, a comprehensive integration approach to tackle the migration issue, could bear a series of positive results in the host country’s GDP but also on public finances, due to the fact that working refugees are a source of raising tax revenues and contributions, especially for a pension system that could be facing significant shortcomings in economic viability terms, such as the Greek

Methodological strategy

The collection of specific quantitative and qualitative data was considered necessary for the design of policy proposals regarding the integration of refugees into the production process.

The research is situated in a methodological strategy based on:

- The principles of quantitative and qualitative research,
- Grounded Theory,
- Three (3) data collection techniques, namely: **quantitative research** on refugees (100 questionnaires in Mytilene translated into Arabic, Farsi and English, for better understanding), **semi-structured interviews** with business executives, stakeholders and social partners (150 questionnaires in Mytilene and Crete) and 40 **narrative interviews** (in Crete) with selected integrated immigrants and refugees.

Multimodal research procedures

- The methodological strategy is based on the combination of quantitative and qualitative research (mixed methods).
- It is based on triangulation, that is, on an approach that favors multimodal research processes (Patton, 2000; Thurmond, 2001) as well as on the combination of different methodologies for studying the same phenomenon (Denzin 1978).

The geographical area selection

- The research process focuses on two distinct selected areas, so as to identify the distinction in the distribution of needs and to integrate the geographical factor into the design of the intervention proposals.
- The geographical areas include the region of Crete, which has not received refugee flows but is a thriving entrepreneurship area and Mytilene (Lesvos) which has received the largest volume of refugees and faces enormous socio-economic problems as far as their management is concerned.
- Pointing out the prospects for the integration of refugees into different socio-economic environments can guide the development of a strategy for their overall integration at national level.

Key findings of the quantitative research on refugees in Mytilene



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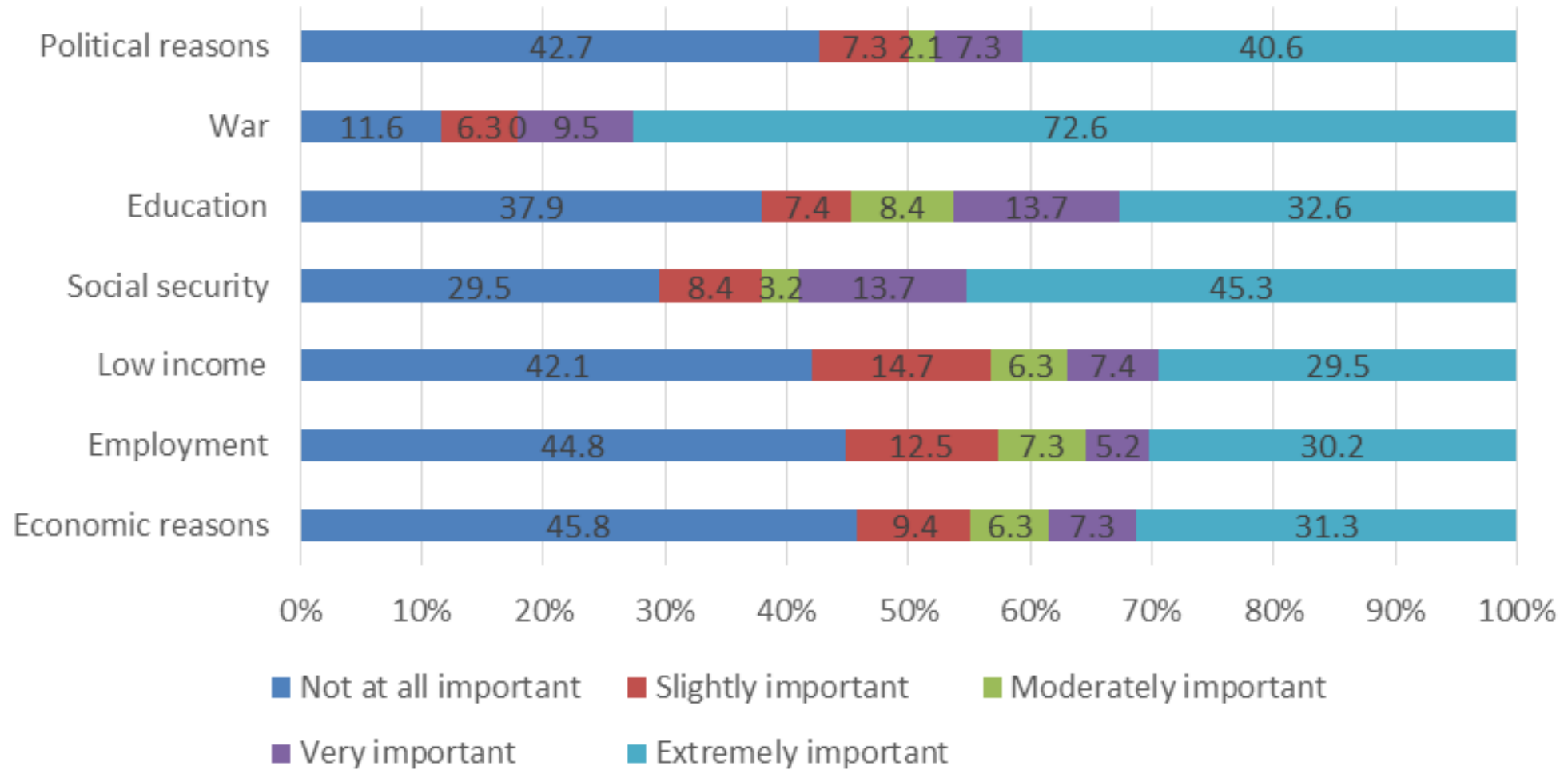
The quantitative research

- Quantitative research sample: 102 refugees through random sampling
- Conduction period: September 30 – October 10, 2018.
- The units of inquiry included in the quantitative research are: (a) personal and demographic data, (b) educational background and skills, (c) employment issues, (d) health issues, and (e) issues relating to refugees' relationship with the host country and the indigenous people.

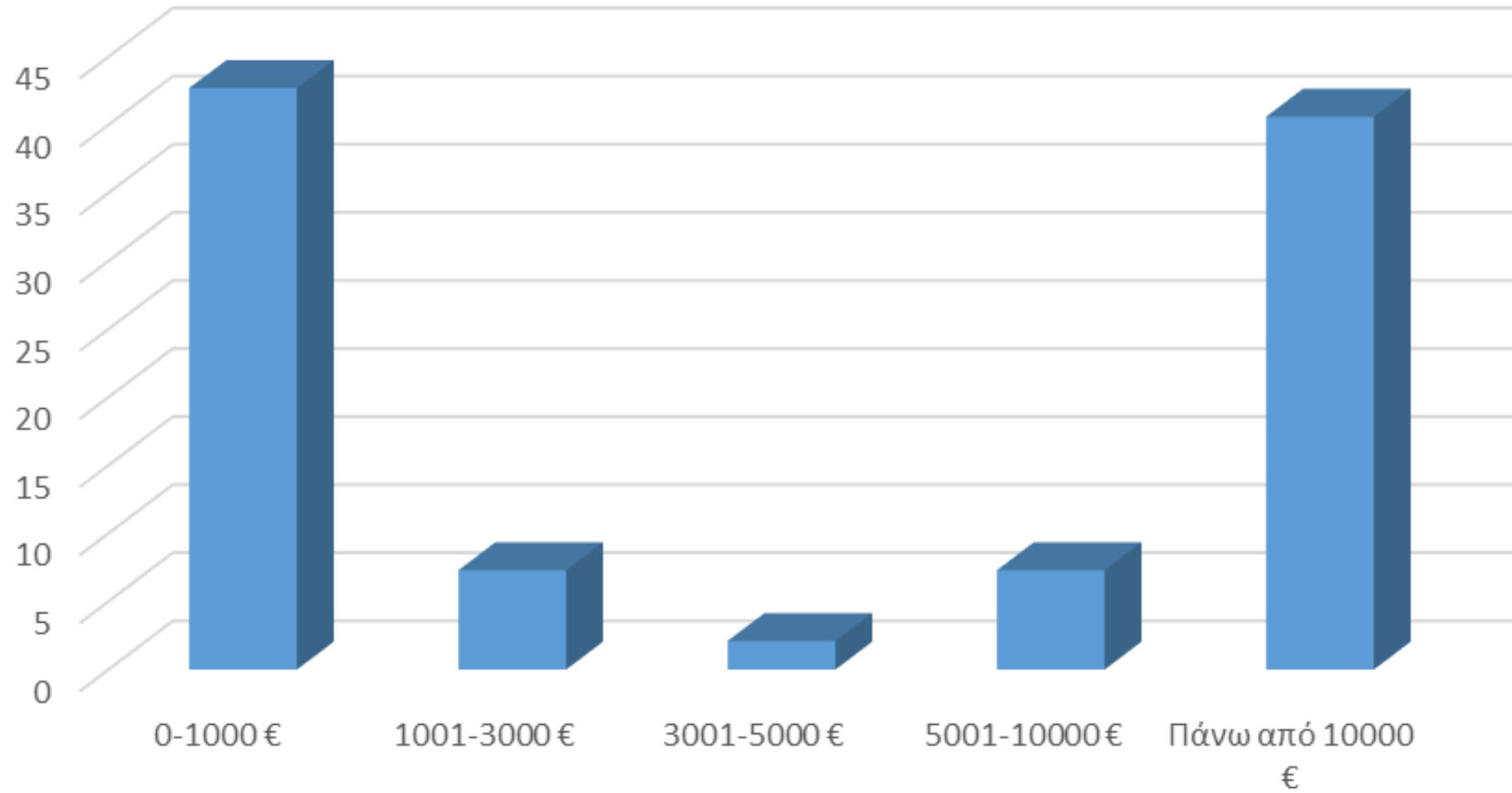
Demographic characteristics of the respondents-refugees

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>With Children</i>		<i>Without Children</i>	
<i>Gender and Children</i>	55.1%	44.9%	51.1%		48.9%	
<i>Age</i>	<i>18-25</i>	<i>26-35</i>	<i>36-45</i>	<i>46-55</i>	<i>56-65</i>	<i>65+</i>
	42.9%	33.0%	12.1%	6.6%	4.4%	1.0%
<i>Family Residence</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Other European Country</i>		<i>Home Country</i>	<i>Country Outside Europe</i>	
	59.0%	8.4%		18.1%	14.5%	
<i>Duration of Residence in Greece</i>	<i>More than 3 years</i>	<i>3 years</i>	<i>2 years</i>	<i>1 year</i>	<i>7-11 months</i>	<i>0-6 months</i>
	2.2%	1.1%	16.3%	43.5%	23.9%	13.0%

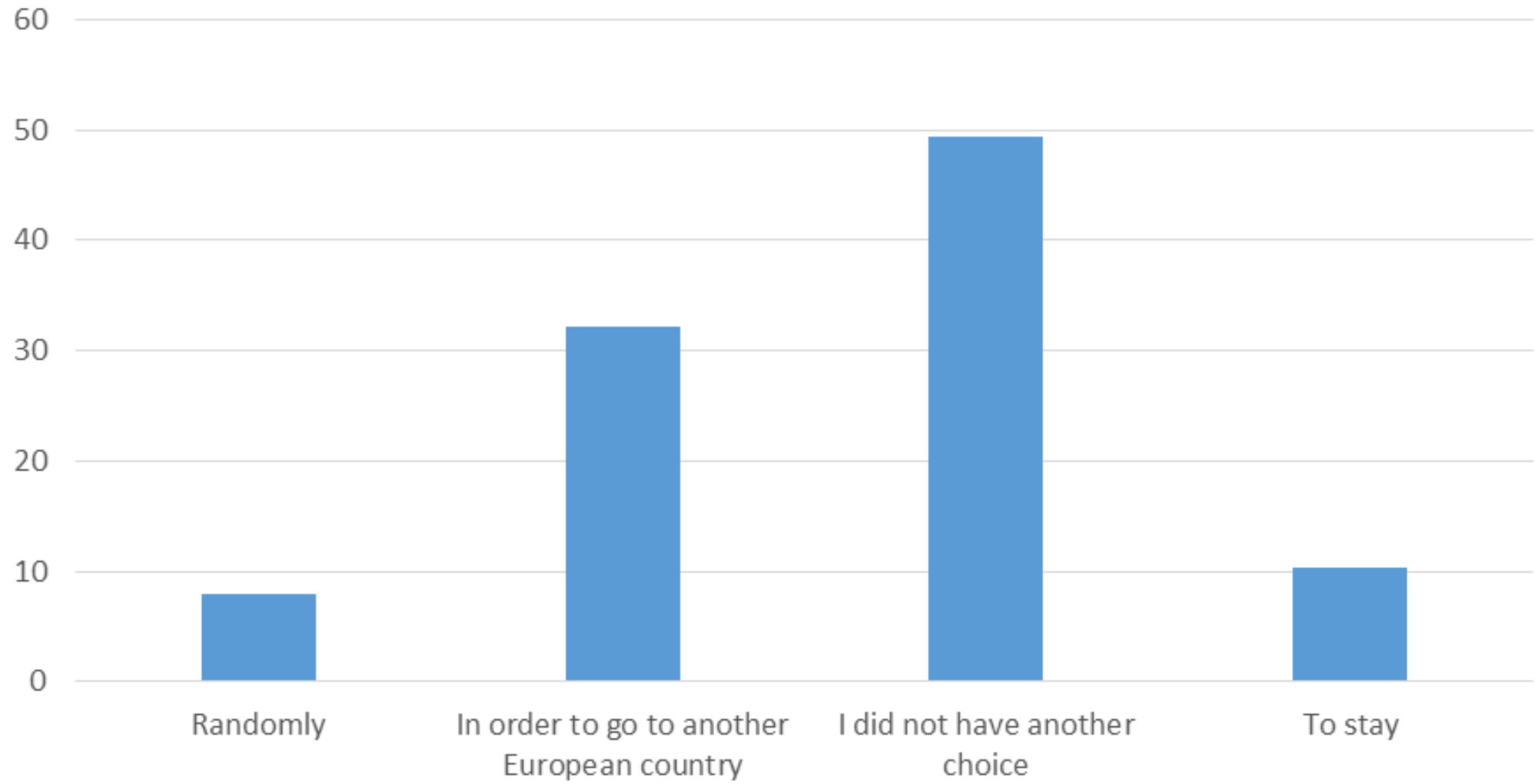
Immigration Causes



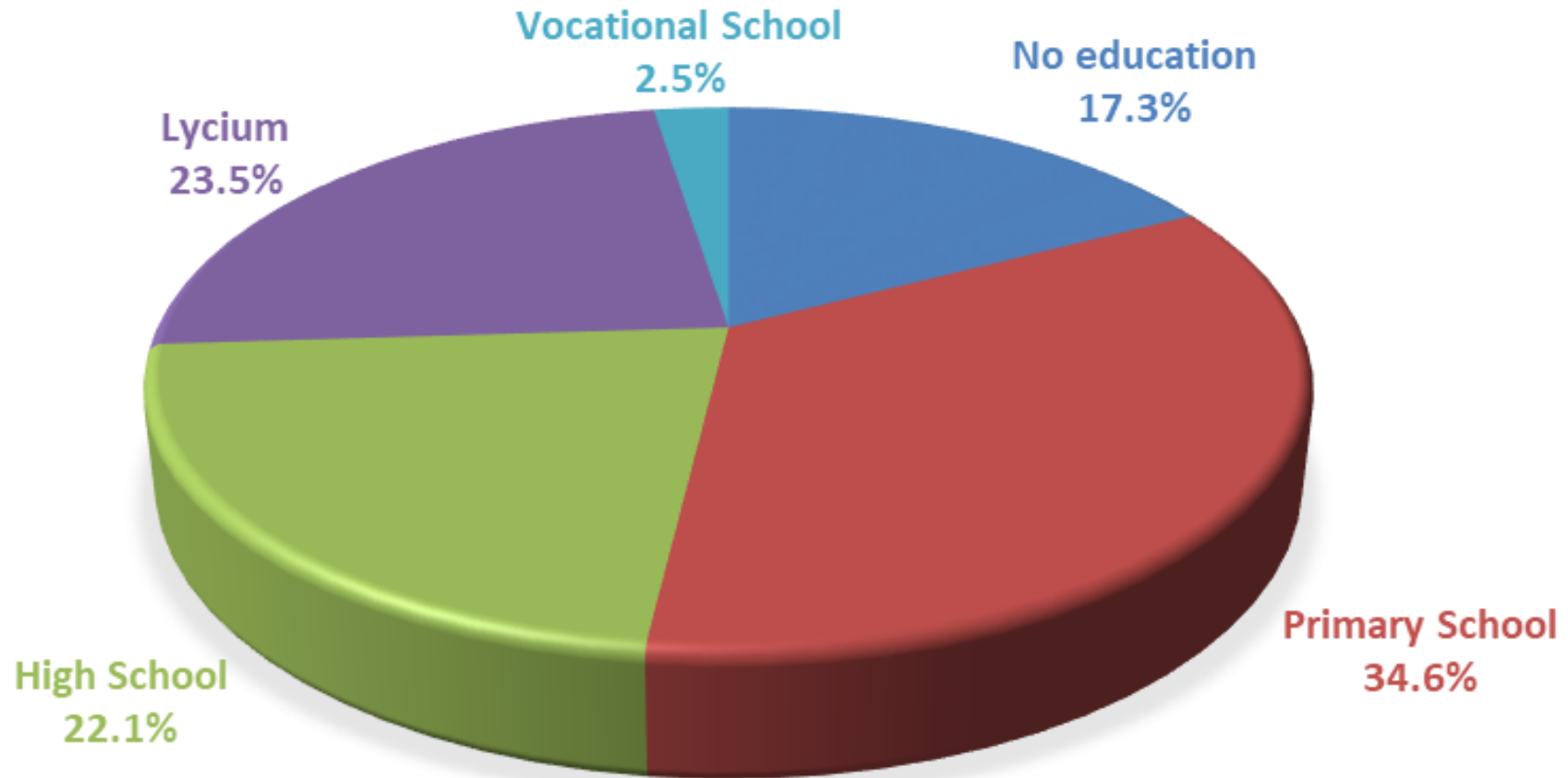
Travelling to Greece costs



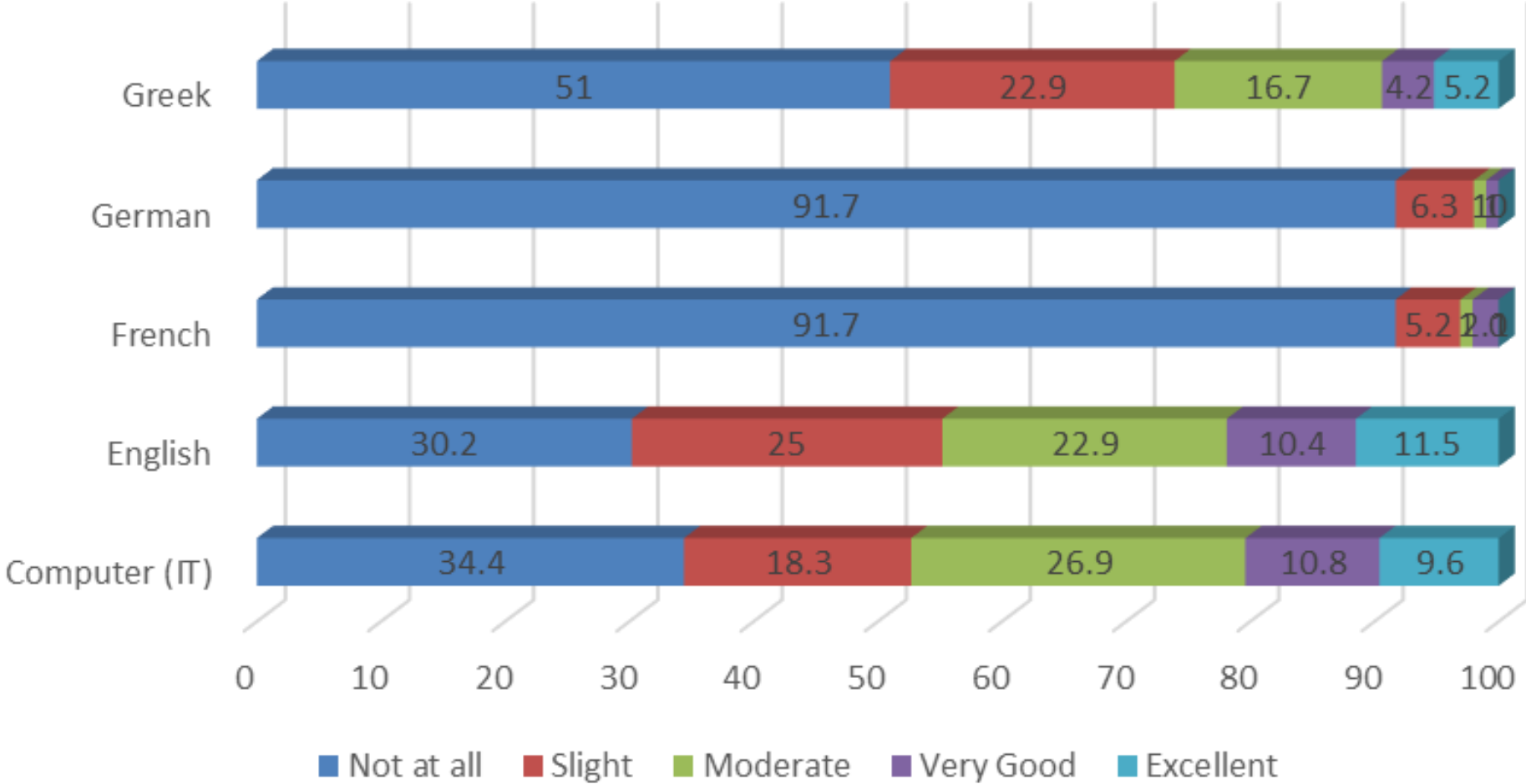
Greece as a destination



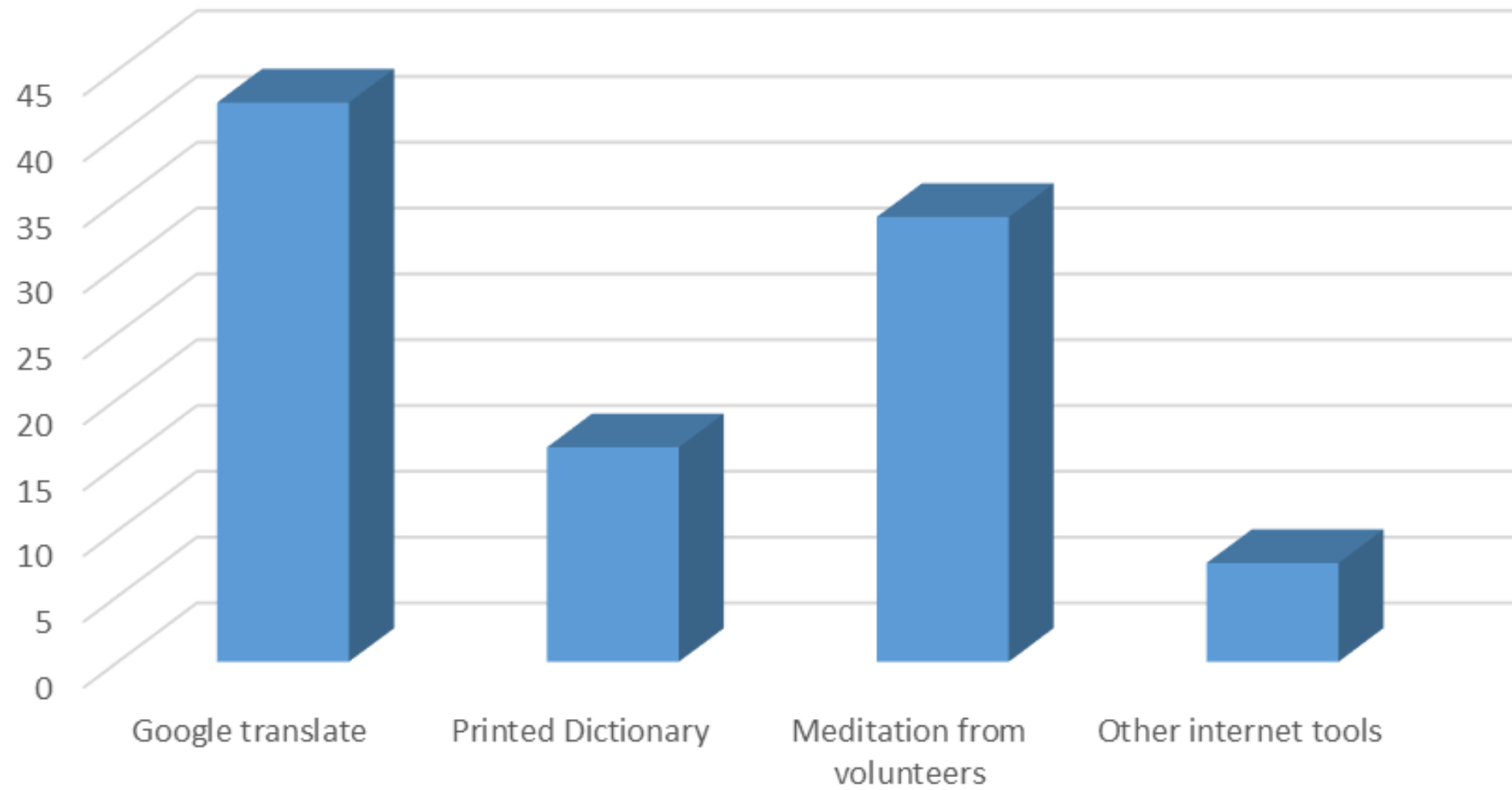
SCHOOL EDUCATION



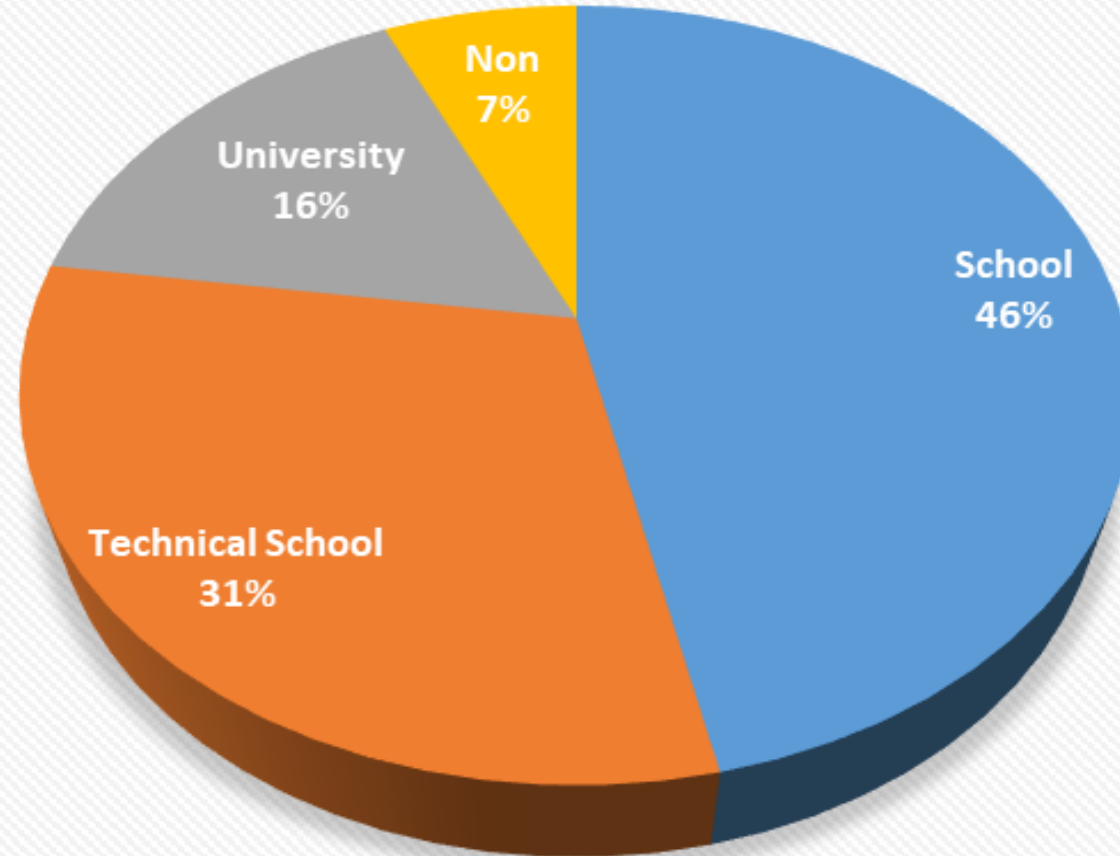
Foreign language and IT skills



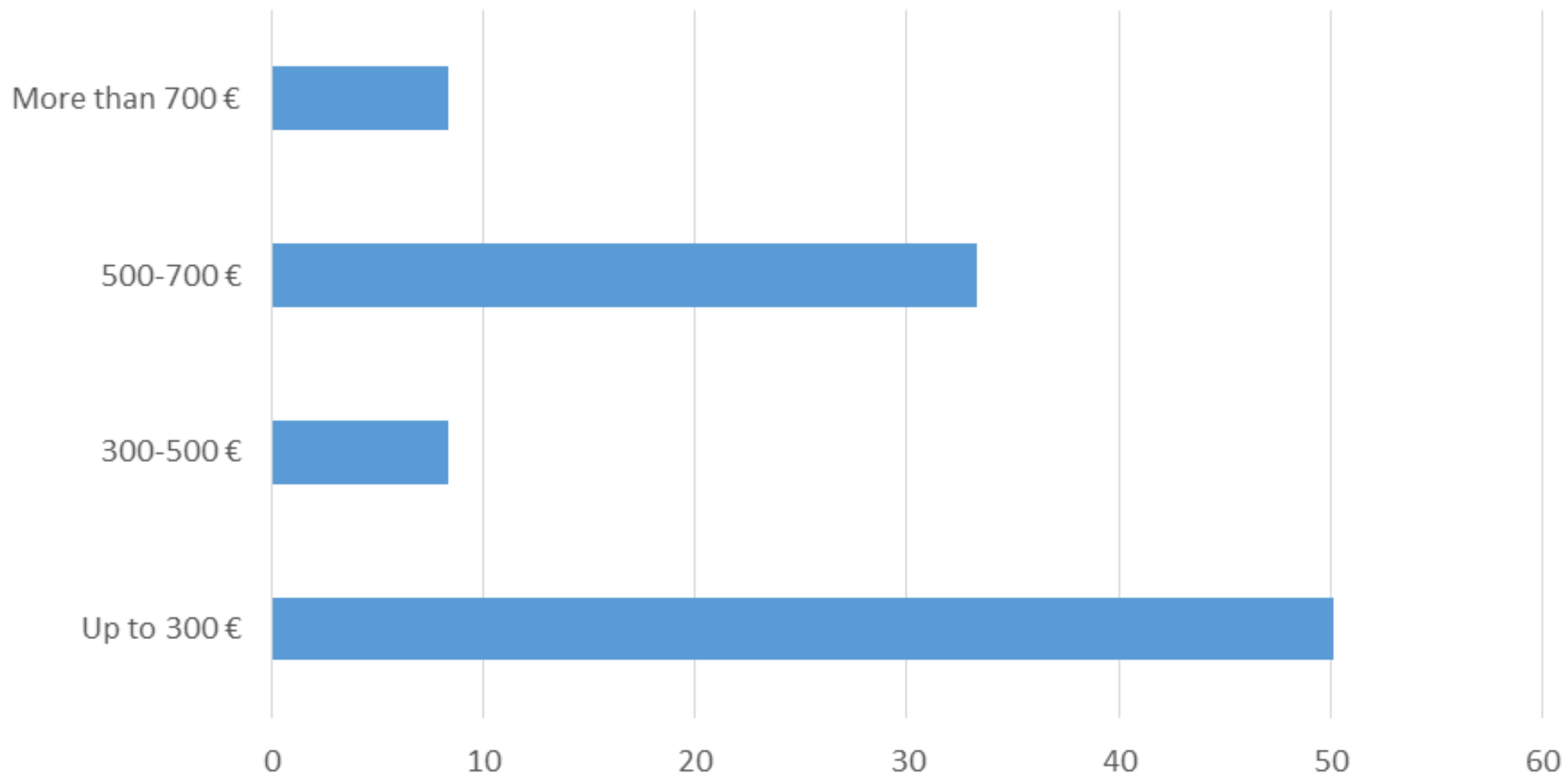
Communication tools



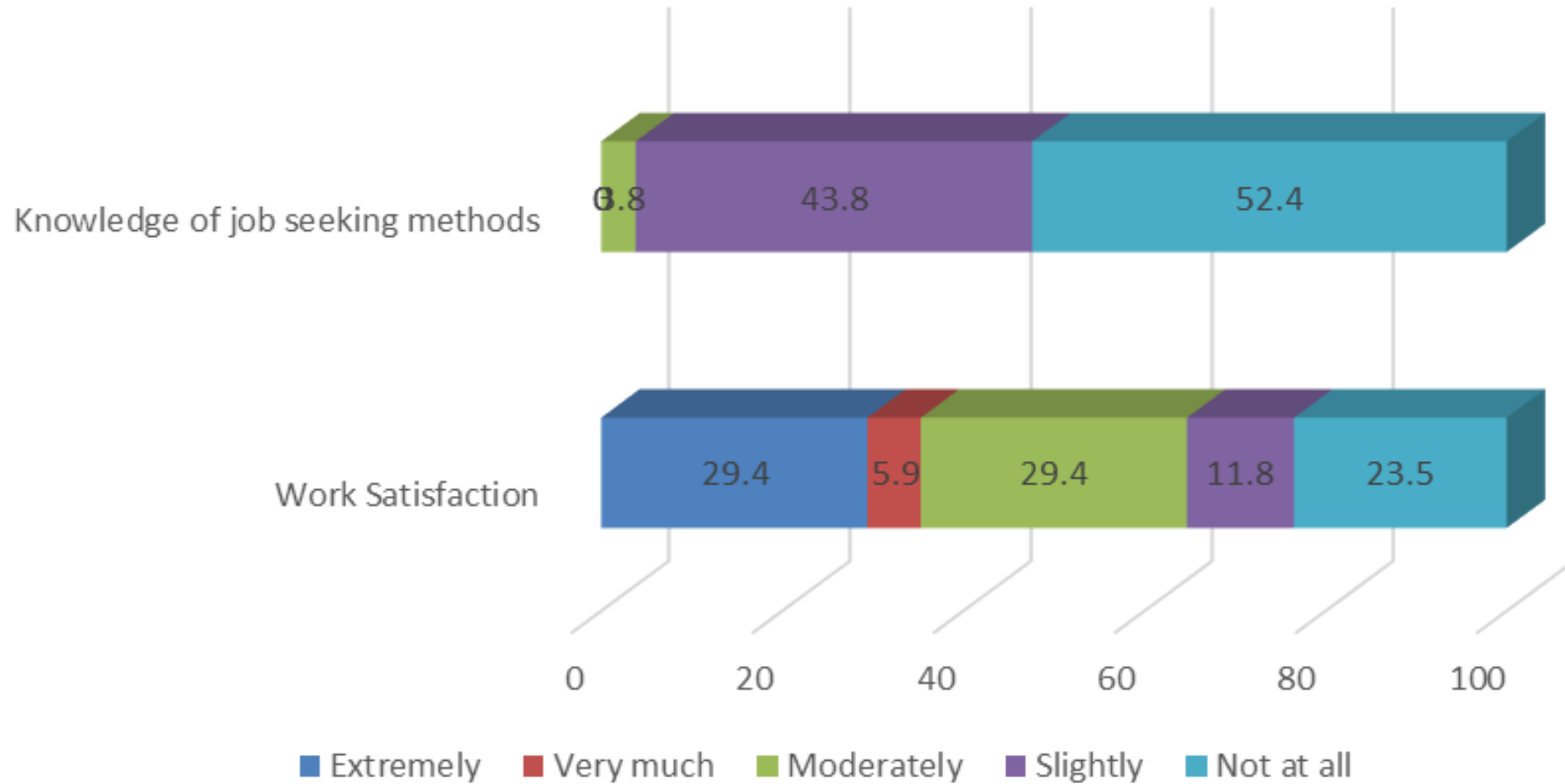
Intention for participation in education



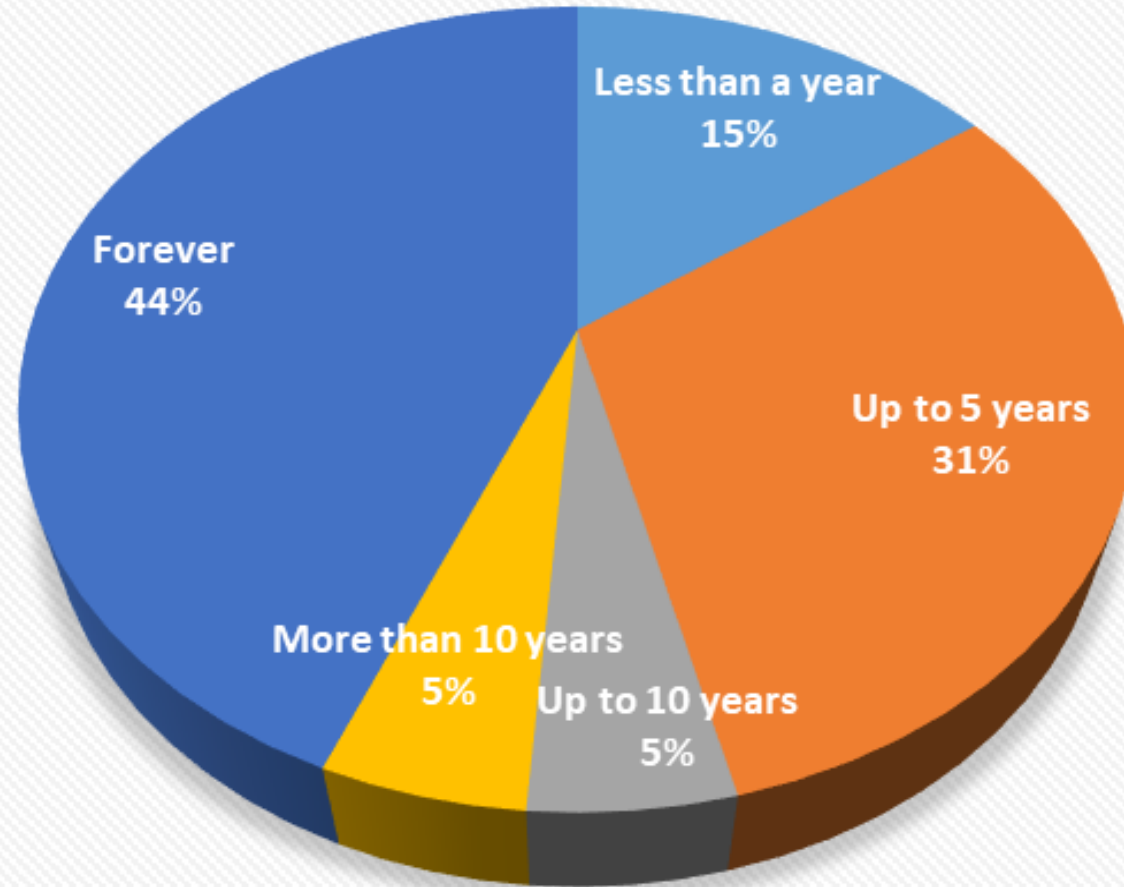
Employment income



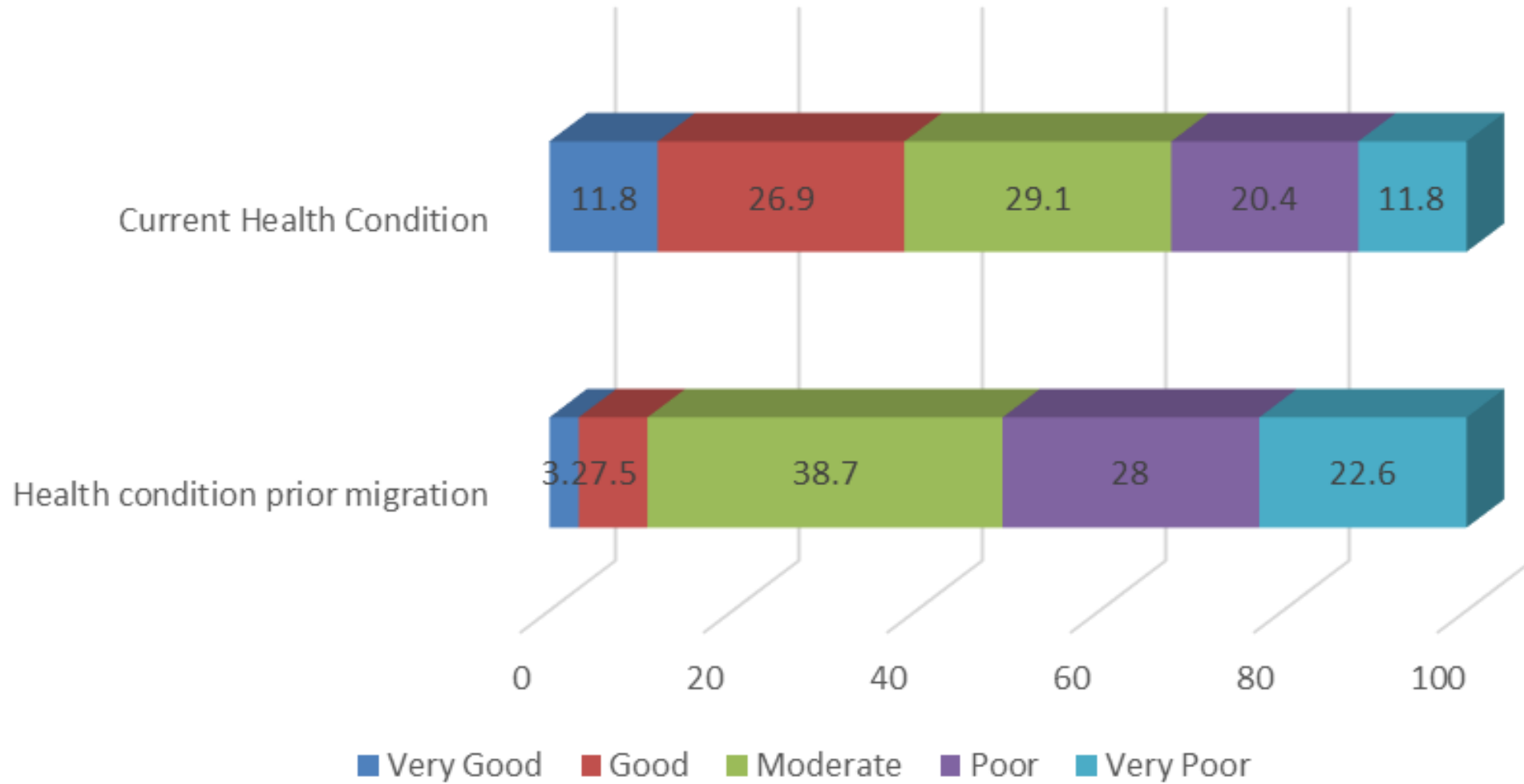
Work satisfaction and knowledge of job seeking methods



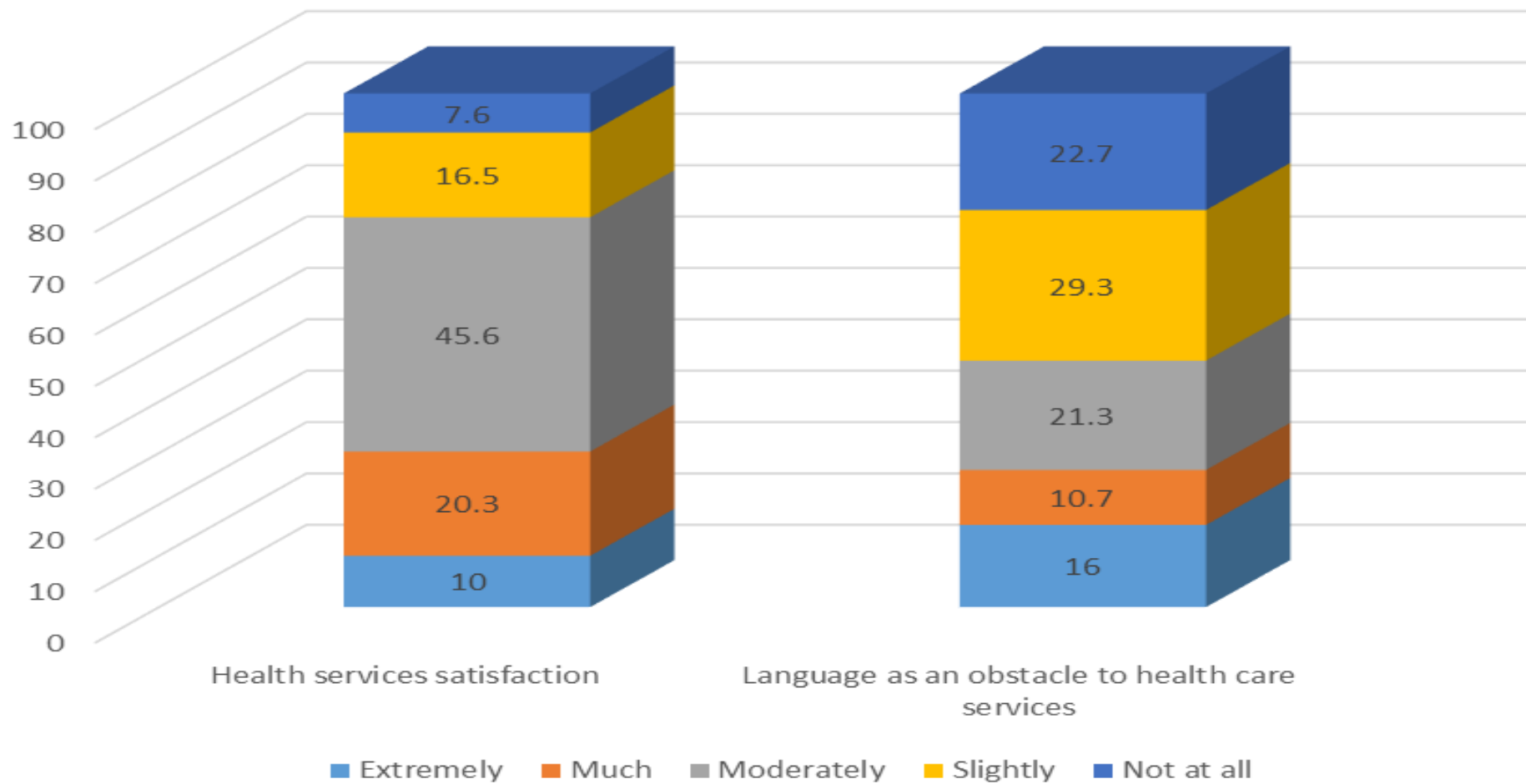
Intention to stay in Greece



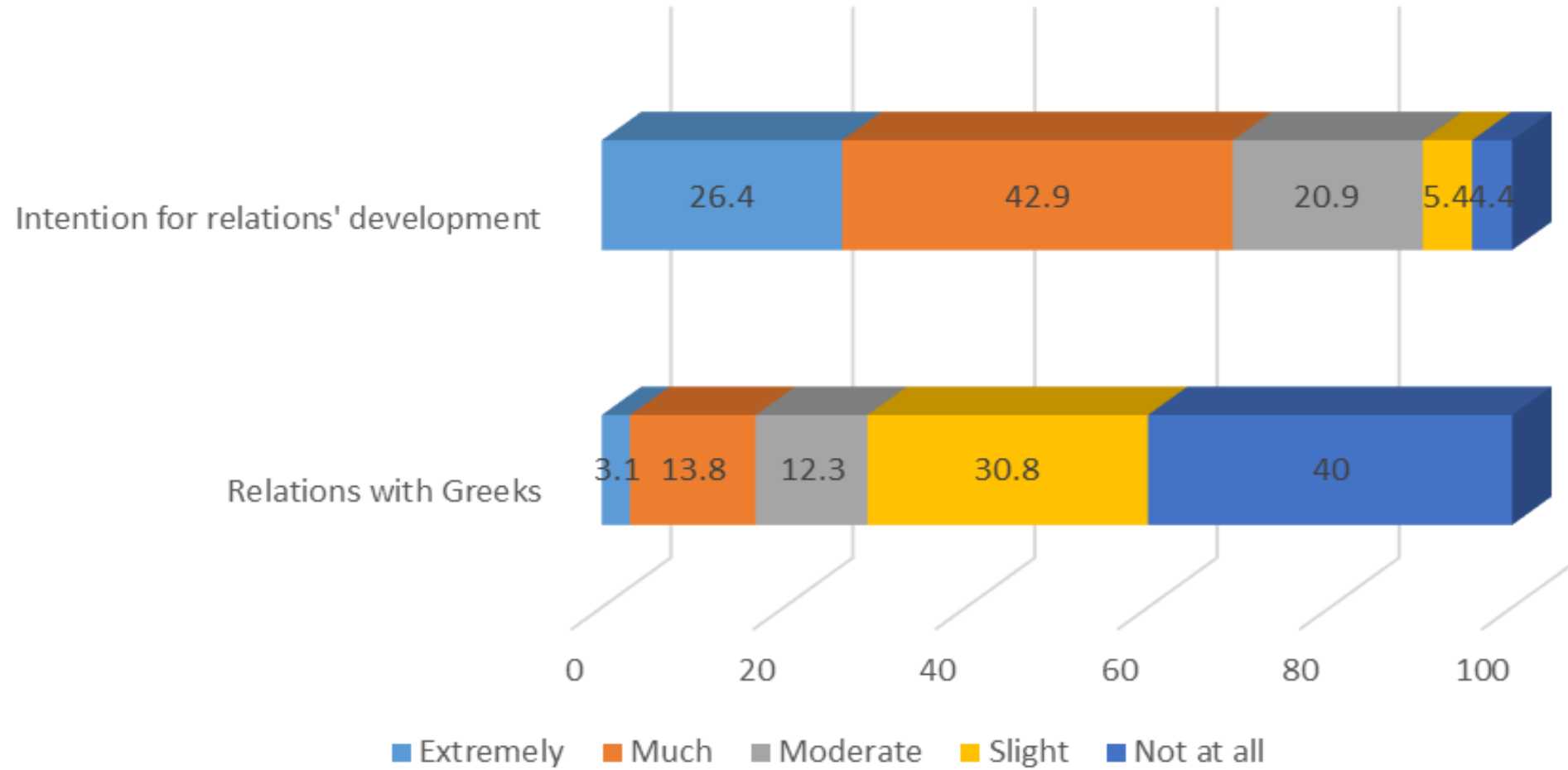
Health condition prior and after migration



Health services satisfaction and the role of language knowledge



Relations with Greeks and intention for their development



Key Findings of Qualitative Research in Mytilene and Crete



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The qualitative research

The qualitative research involved the conduction of 150 semi-structured interviews in Crete and Mytilene with businessmen, ie 75 in each island, and 40 narrative interviews in Crete with immigrants and refugees who have been integrated.

Conduction period: September 30, 2018 – January 30, 2019.

Key findings I

- Diverse opinions on refugees in Mytilene
- More options for joining the labor market in Crete
- Language constitutes a fundamental issue
- Ability to absorb refugees in the agricultural, construction and tourism (low-skilled) sectors.

Key findings II

- Low professional qualification of refugees
- Ideal age for work, education and training
- Low employment rate of refugees/ particularly employed in low-paid, unskilled labor sectors.

Obstacles

- Language,
- Their precarious state of residence,
- Low recognition rates of skills and diplomas acquired in their country of origin,
- Lack of advisory support for labor market integration,
- Long periods of unemployment.

Crete as an example of integration opportunities

- In key sectors of the economy such as tourism, agriculture and construction, particularly in Crete, there are obvious conditions for the economic integration of refugees.
- The example of Crete shows that the influx of refugees is not only linked to difficulties and problems but, on the contrary, it offers visible opportunities for the economy.

Conclusions-Suggestions-Necessities

- Conditions for the integration of refugees into the socio-economic system exist, particularly in specific sectors of the economy but also in specific geographical areas such as Crete.
- Education, training, job seeking support and especially language learning are key issues that are currently insufficiently covered.
- It is necessary to establish permanent regional mechanisms for recording and capturing both the social and human capital of refugees and for identifying their needs in order to enable empirically based policy proposals and the implementation of interventions.

Thank you for your attention!

