

**The Internal Brain Drain: Exploring the
Unintended Consequences of Post-Earthquake
intervention on Haiti's Labor Market**

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Background

- In an international intervention context, raising salaries for local staff will lead to salary boosts in other public sectors and spawn inflation in the countries in question.
- INGOs 'routinely augment the base salaries of local staff with benefits such as housing and education subsidies, frequently bringing their employee's effective wages to a hundred times what they could earn at government-run clinics' (Garrett 2007, p. 29).
- Vicious circle: increase local dependency on foreign aid. USAID's Kent Hill: "a horrendous dilemma" causing "immense pain" in poor countries.

Background

- “The issue is very clear to anyone who has spent time in the developing world. **There is a steady stream of really good people leaving government agencies for jobs with the UN and international NGOs.** That’s not surprising – UN and NGO work pays well and pays consistently. It offers opportunities for moving up, and a sense of making a difference in the world. Work for the government, on the other hand tends to be poorly paid, and not always on a regular basis. In many places it is plagued by bureaucratic incompetence and resistance to change.”
- “I think, however, that most proposed solutions are looking in the wrong direction. **The problem is not that sexy UN jobs are pulling people out of government. The problem is that people are pushed out of government jobs by poor working conditions. It’s not a demand problem – it’s a supply problem.** People who want to leave their government jobs will find a way to do it. If it wasn’t NGOs and the development sector pulling them out, it would be the private sector or international emigration.”

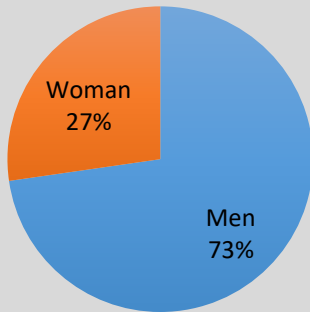
A. Shaikh, “Should We Worry About the Internal Brain Drain”, *UN Dispatch* 11 March 2010.

Pilot Study – Practical Hurdles

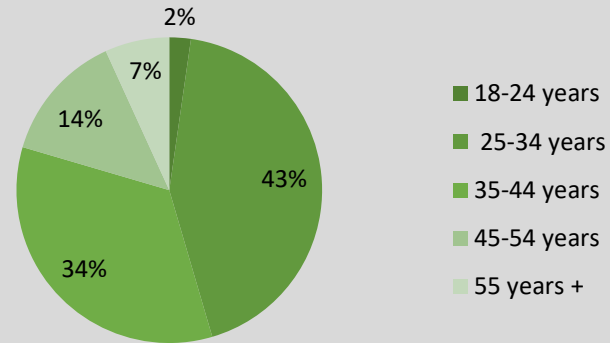
- **Date of the study:** October-November 2014
- **Location:** Port-au-Prince
- **Conducted in partnership with INURED**
- **87 INGOs contacted:** 44 questionnaires from 14 INGOs.
- **Most INGOs tried to avoid researchers. Link with *marronage* and everyday forms of resistance (J. Scott).**
- **Used the Haitian Ministry of Planning dataset:** ‘list of active NGOs in Haiti since 1982’: Difficulty in locating NGOs – most are not registered with Haitian authorities.
- **Local researchers used their own networks, which proved more useful.**
- **Insecurity prevalent in the country; fear of redundancy; lack of understanding of research were all hindering the research project.**

Pilot study - Demographics

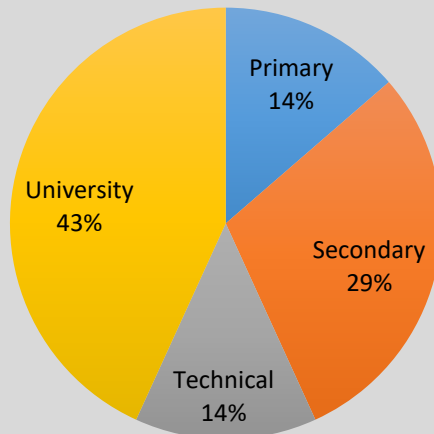
Gender



Age Range



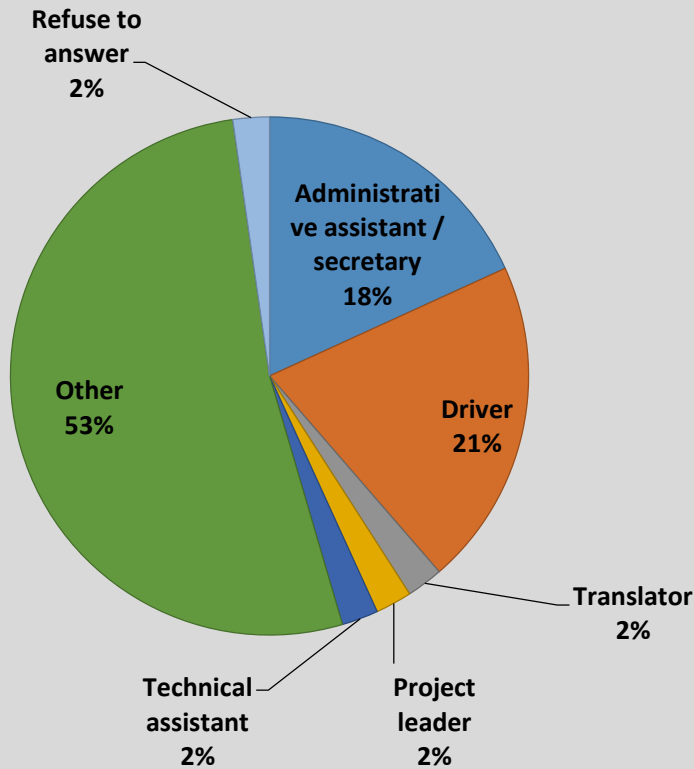
Education



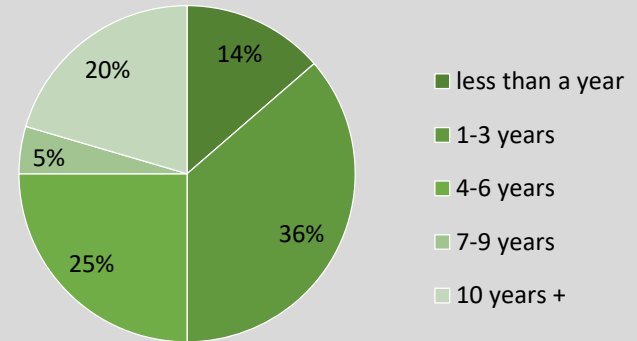
- 27% Female
- Vast majority are 25-34 or 35-44

Pilot study - Demographics

Current position



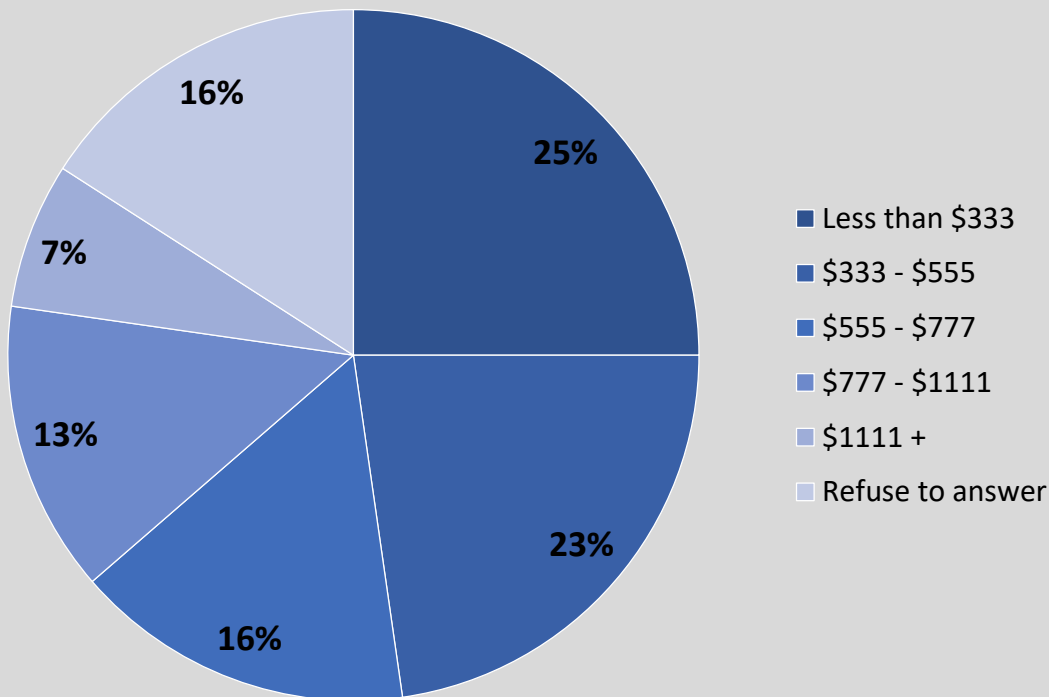
Number of years in current position



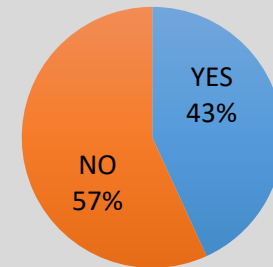
- ❑ Other: 52% (mainly maid and security agent)
- ❑ First job for an INGO?
Yes in 73 % of the time

Salary conditions – Past and Present

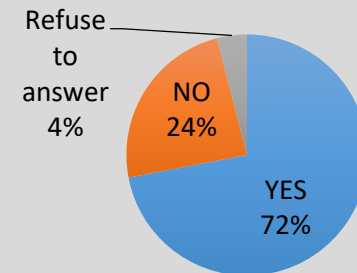
Current Monthly Salary



Is this your first job?

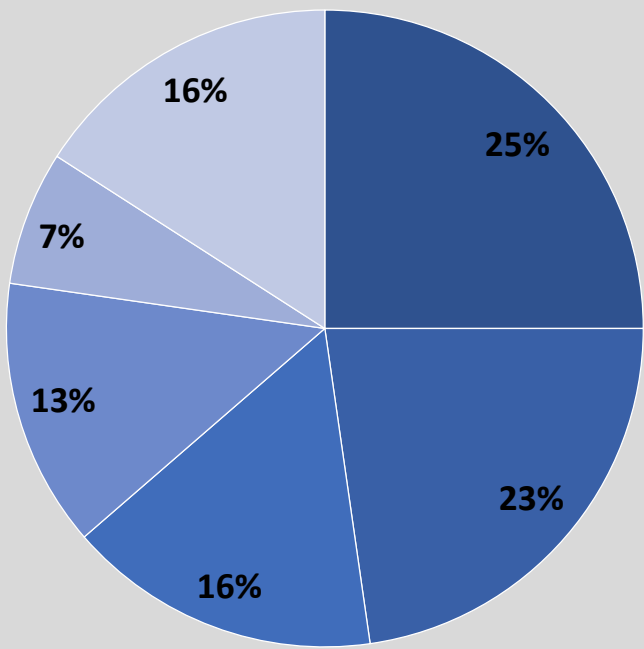


Was your previous job in same sector?

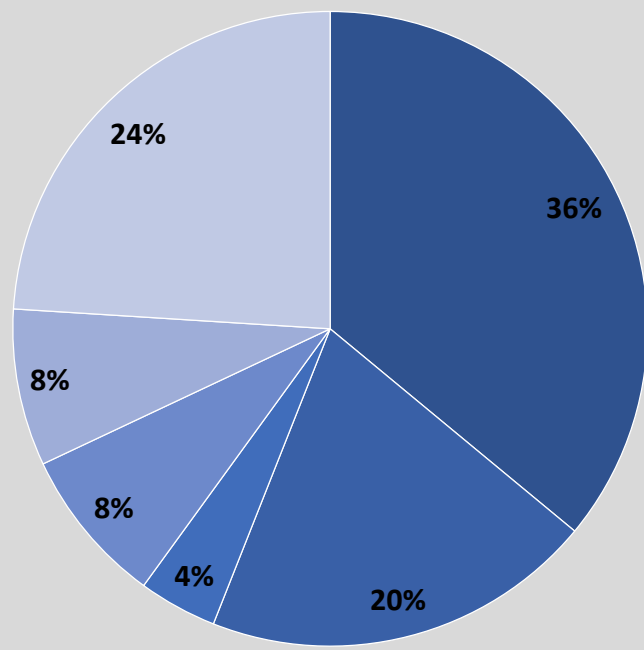


Salary conditions – Past and Present

Current Monthly Salary

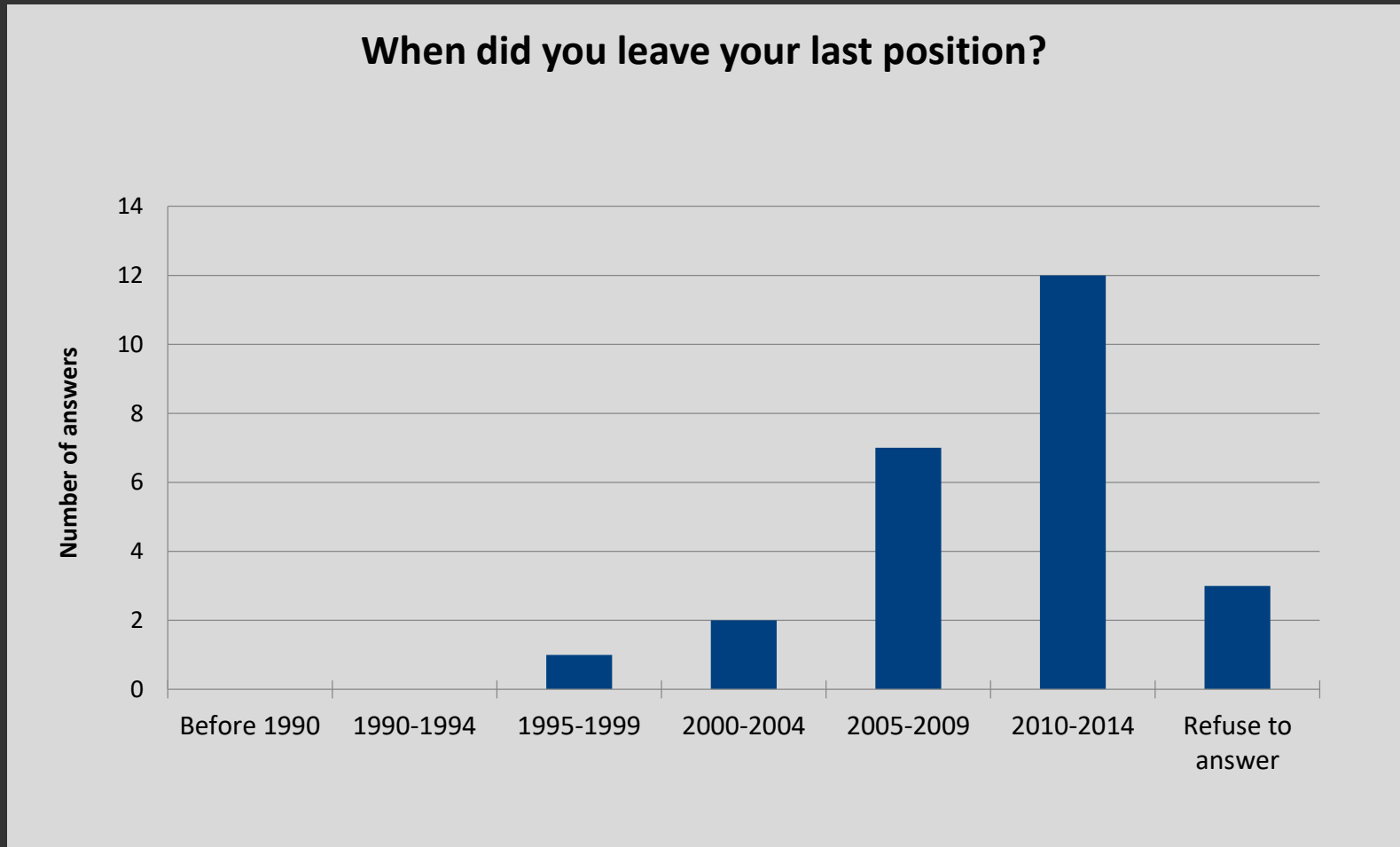


Monthly Salary - previous job

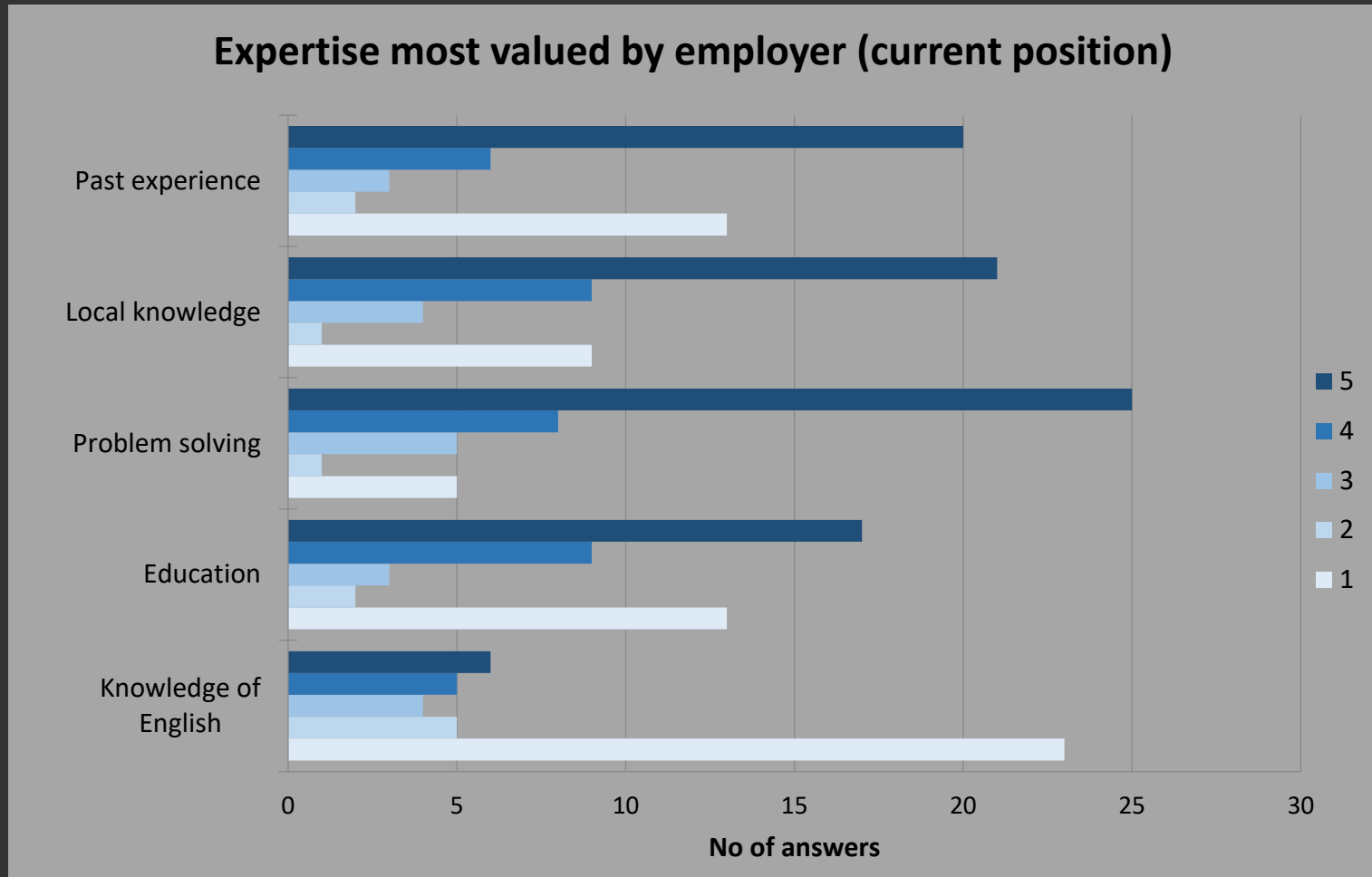


- Less than \$333
- \$333 - \$555
- \$555 - \$777
- \$777 - \$1111
- \$1111 +
- Refuse to answer

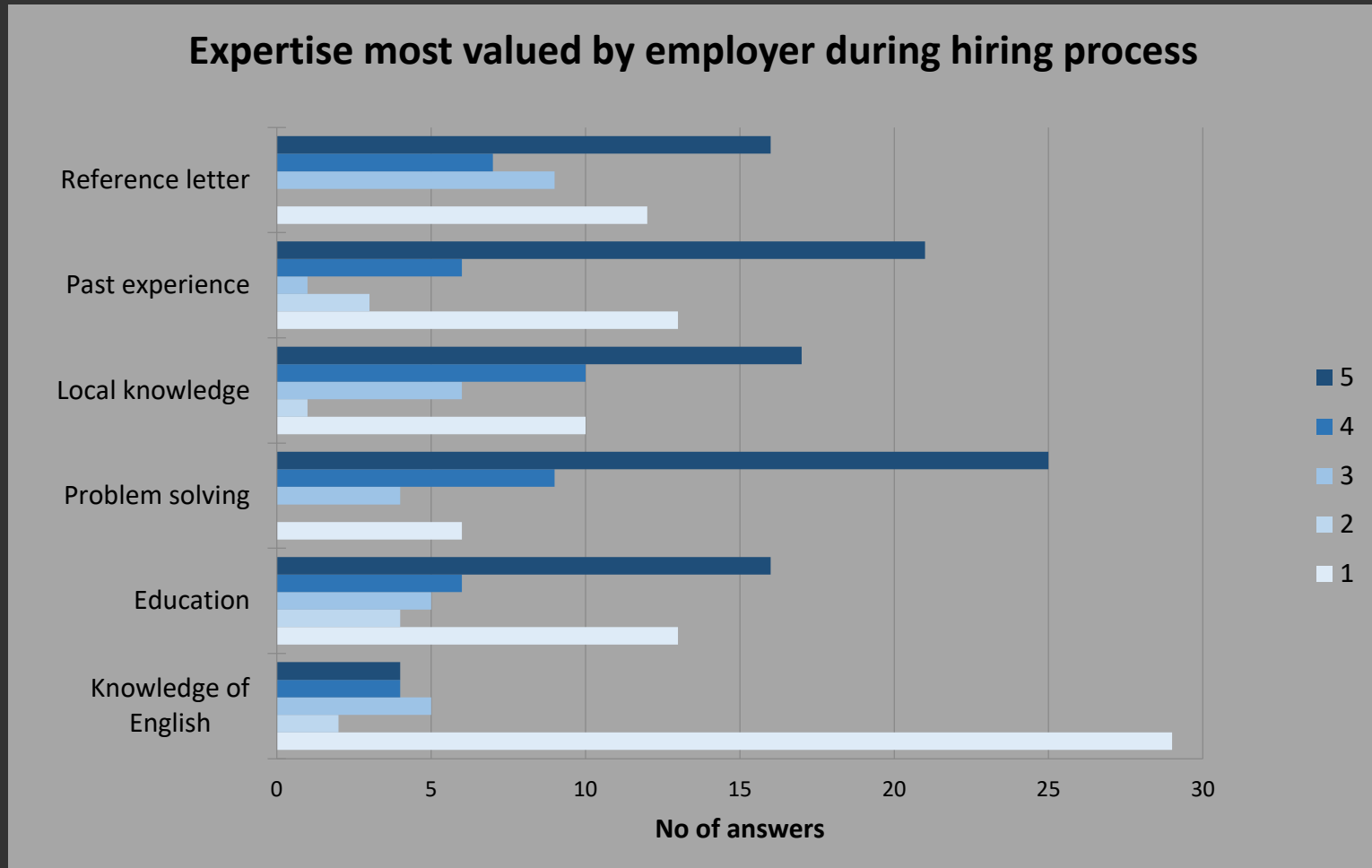
Salary conditions – Past and Present



Consideration of locals in INGOs

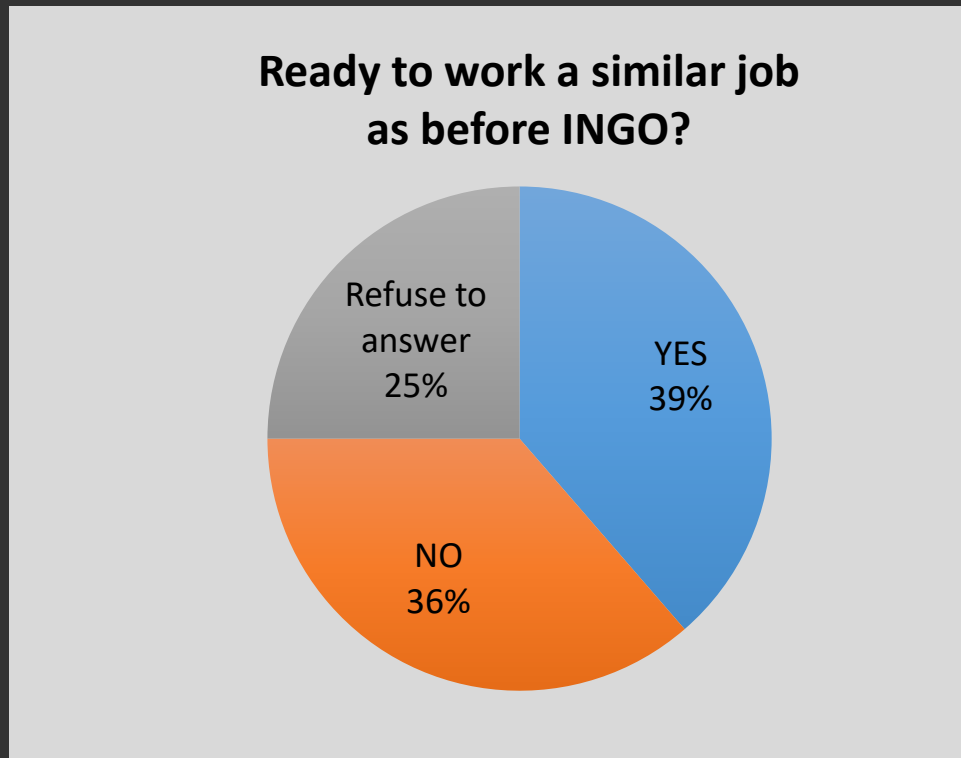


Consideration of locals in INGOs



Future perspectives

- If international aid dried up, would you be ready to occupy a similar position to the one you use to have before working for an INGO?



Future perspectives

□ A few explanations for YES

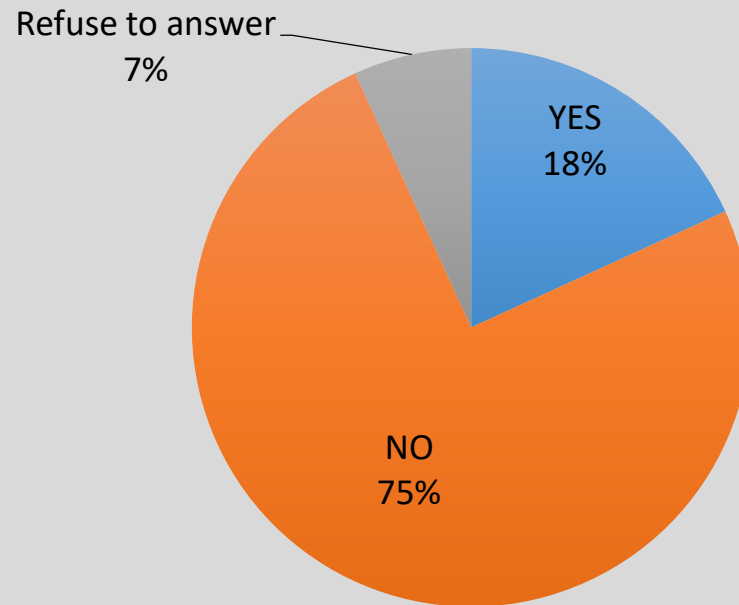
- *I need to work! I can't stay idle.*
- *If it's the only opportunity, I'll do it.*
- *It's through work that you can win your bread.*
- *I was a taxi driver, I could do this again.*

□ A few explanations for NO

- *I wasn't working before...*
- *The conditions should change before I would accept to work again*
- *Not the same salary...*
- *Sexual abuse, difficult working conditions...*

Future perspectives

Would your experience in an INGO encourage you to leave the country?



Future perspectives

□ A few explanations for YES

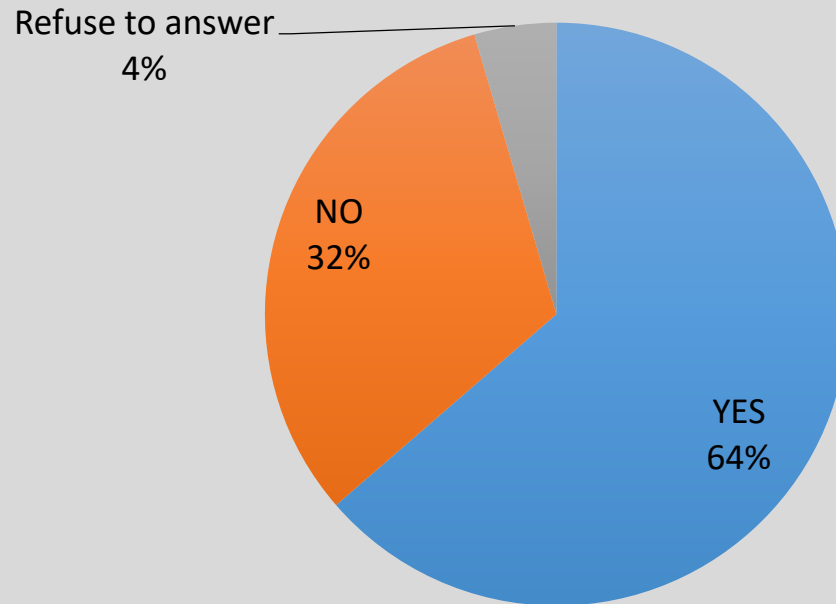
- *I think my salary would be higher*
- *I would like to continue working in the humanitarian world*
- *To broaden my field of experience*

□ A few explanations for NO

- *I like my country / I want to participate in the collective effort*
- *Difficulties are everywhere...*
- *To live as an immigrant is a risk*
- *I have nothing to feel ashamed of*
- *Because of Ebola*
- *I need to finish my studies*

Future perspectives

If someone offered you attractive working conditions, would you be ready to leave Haiti?



Future perspectives

□ A few explanations for YES

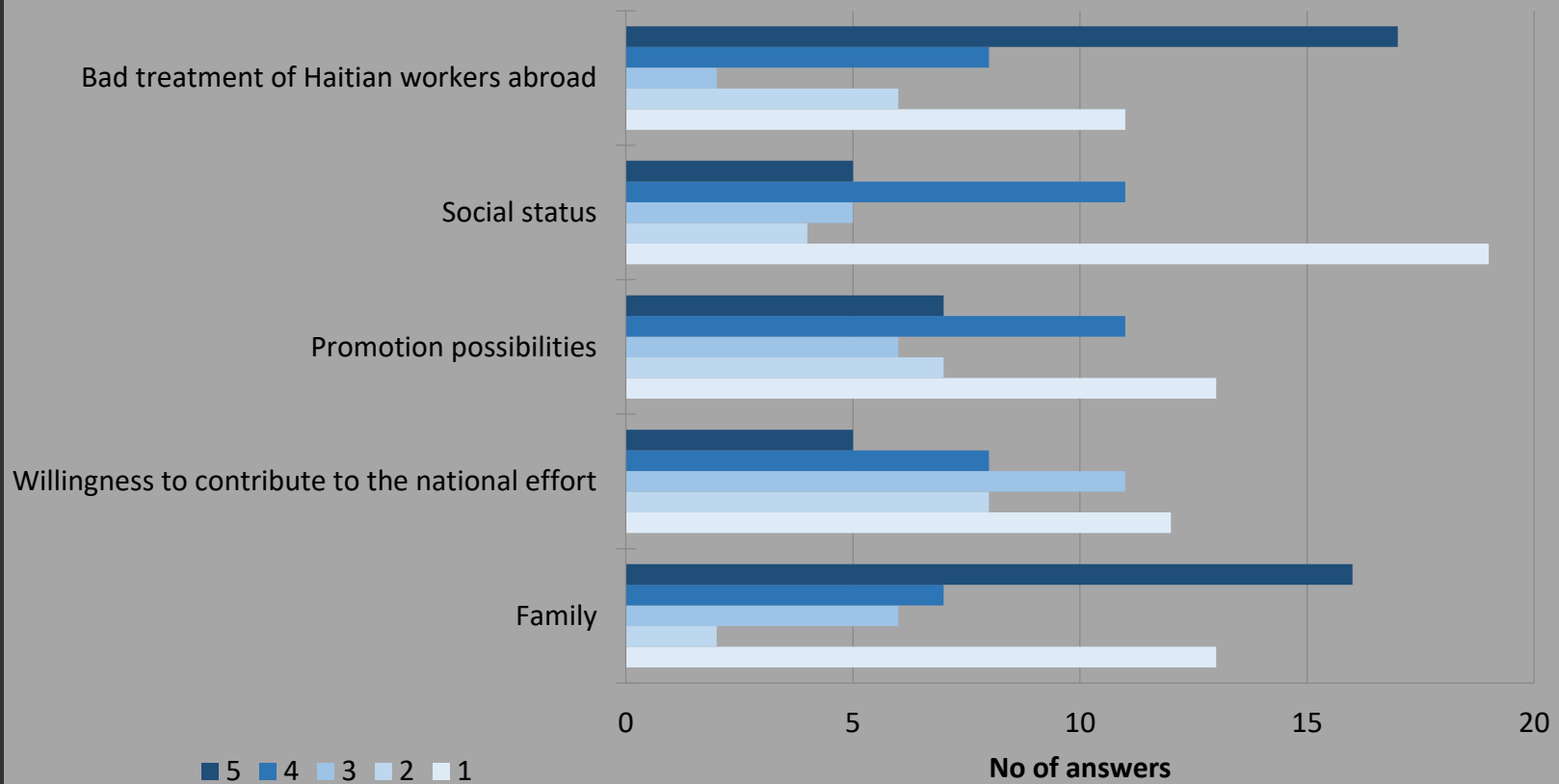
- *To have a better life*
- *Even if I like my country, I am looking for a better salary*
- *To have better conditions and to help my country*
- *If the conditions are right, then I can discover new countries*

□ A few explanations for NO

- *I am used to living here*
- *I have already invested a lot of my time in this work. I know what I have, but I don't know the future...*
- *For me, an interesting position is one that contributes to the development of my country*
- *My family lives here*

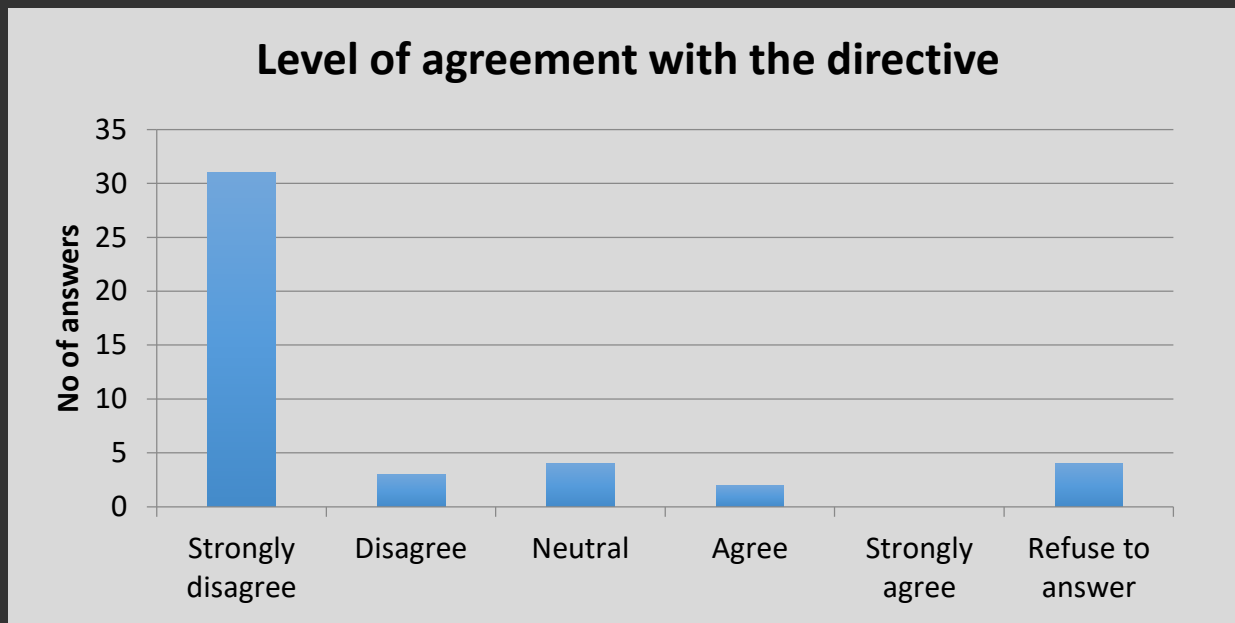
Future perspectives

What would more likely prevent you from leaving Haiti?



Future perspectives

- Consider a directive from the Haitian government asking INGOs not to pay their local staff 50% more than civil servants. Would you agree with this directive if this meant a diminution of salary for local staff?



**70%
disagree**

Future perspectives

□ A few explanations for strongly disagreeing

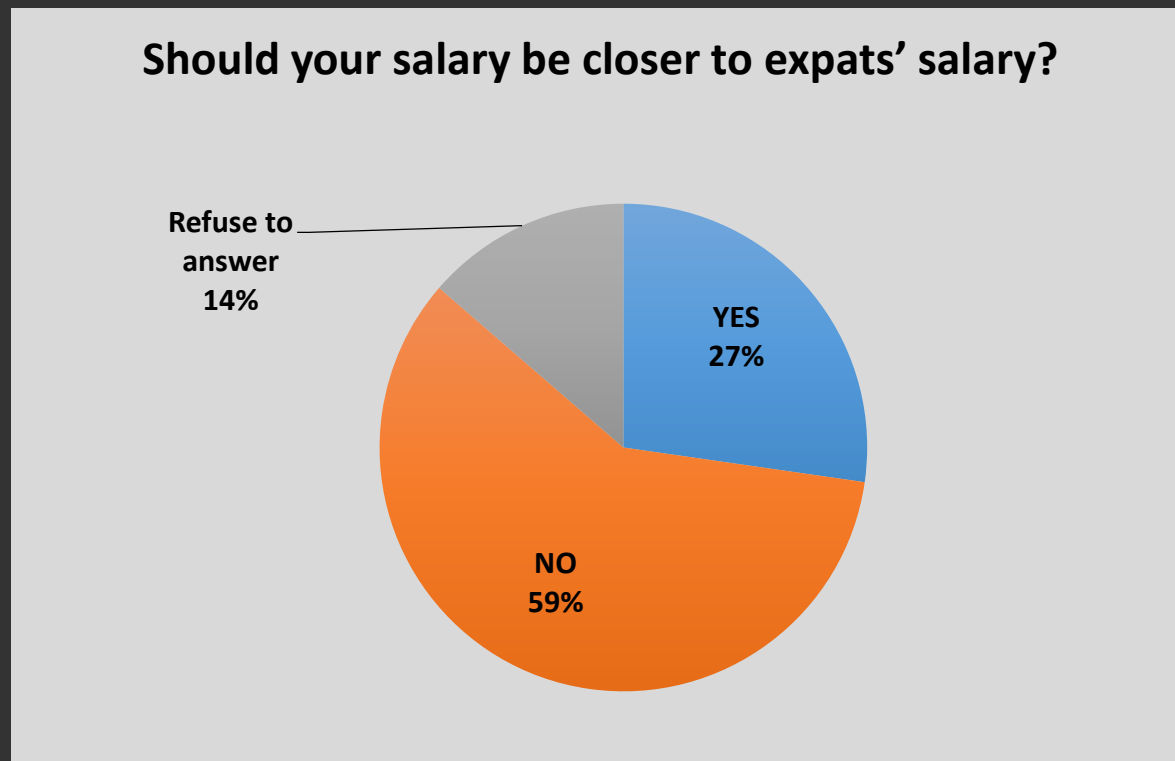
- *Life is expensive in Haiti*
- *If the state can't help me, why stopping someone else from doing it?*
- *I already pay a lot of taxes, and I don't see the state delivering services.*
- *The NGO is ephemeral, and the funding will go back to the country if I don't take advantage of it.*
- *I would be the first to take the street against this decision*

□ A few explanations for agreeing

- *The state decides*
- *It depends, I would resign myself*

International – Local Relations

- To the contrary, do you think that your salary should be closer to the one given to expats?



International – Local Relations

□ A few explanations for YES

- *We offer the same quality of work, with the same capacity / competency*
- *Expats are volunteers; and their volunteering is too highly paid*
- *Because we take the risks*
- *Because they have other advantages...*

□ A few explanations for NO

- *They are foreigners, they need a lot more than us*
- *They are not at home here, and their way of life is different from ours*
- *I know it is impossible, no need to dream here*
- *They are foreigners, it is thank to them that we earn our lives. They are the masters.*
- *They own the NGOs...*

A few (preliminary) conclusions

- We should worry about the internal brain drain
- A lot of fear of leaving the country and attachment to the country at the same time
- Difficult relationship with the state
- A difficult balancing act between two “equilibria”