

EVIDENCE BRIEF

JULY, 2026

SHAPING YOUTH FUTURES

Evidence for Action – Strengthening Skills, Employment Systems and Youth Transitions into Decent Work

1,593 YOUTH

1,821 EMPLOYERS

6 SUB-COUNTIES



In Mombasa County

01 | THE EVIDENCE AT A GLANCE

YOUTH HAVE OPPORTUNITIES – BUT THE CONVERSION SYSTEM IS WEAK

The findings point to a practical shift: from stand-alone training to connected pathways that link verified demand, relevant skills, work experience and sustained income.

CONNECTED PATHWAYS

DEMAND • SKILLS • EXPERIENCE • INCOME

Key Message

Mombasa does not lack young people, enterprise activity or employer interest. The main gap is the set of mechanisms that consistently convert these assets into decent work: verified opportunity information, employer-led training, work-based learning, matching, enterprise support and follow-up.

1,821 Employers surveyed	12,190 Workers represented	1,593 Youth respondents
52 Institutional stakeholders	243 Reported openings	21 F&B practitioners, HR managers & trainers

Five findings that should shape the response

- Emerging employment opportunities are limited, but employer willingness to engage is substantial.
- Youth livelihoods are split across unemployment, self-employment and wage work; one pathway will not fit all.
- Employers consistently prioritise customer care, reliability, communication, problem-solving and digital skills.
- Digital access is widespread, yet sustained incomes online depend on advanced capability, equipment, and clients.
- Outcomes differ sharply by gender, age, education and sub-county, requiring targeted delivery.

The Methodology

- 1. **Mixed-methods, cross-sectional design**
- 2. **Coverage of 6 sub-counties**
- 3. **Employer, youth, stakeholder, openings and sector evidence triangulated**
- 4. **Descriptive, disaggregated and multivariable analysis**

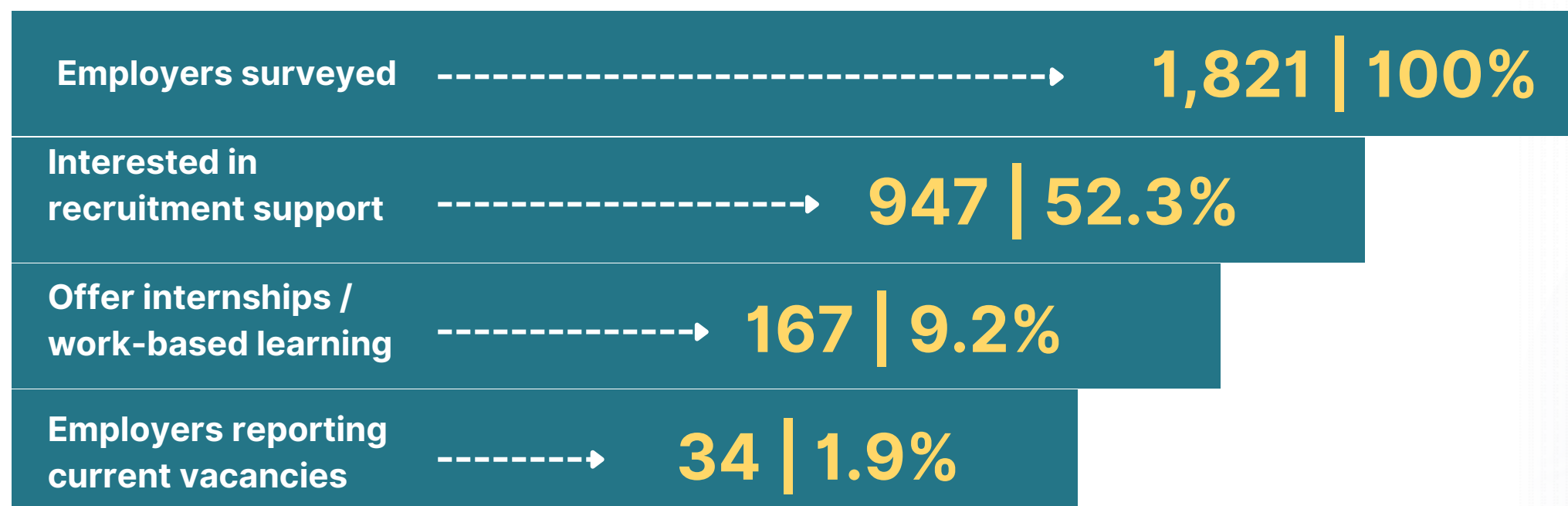
Important caveat:

The findings are strong programme evidence, not official population estimates for all employers or youth in Mombasa.

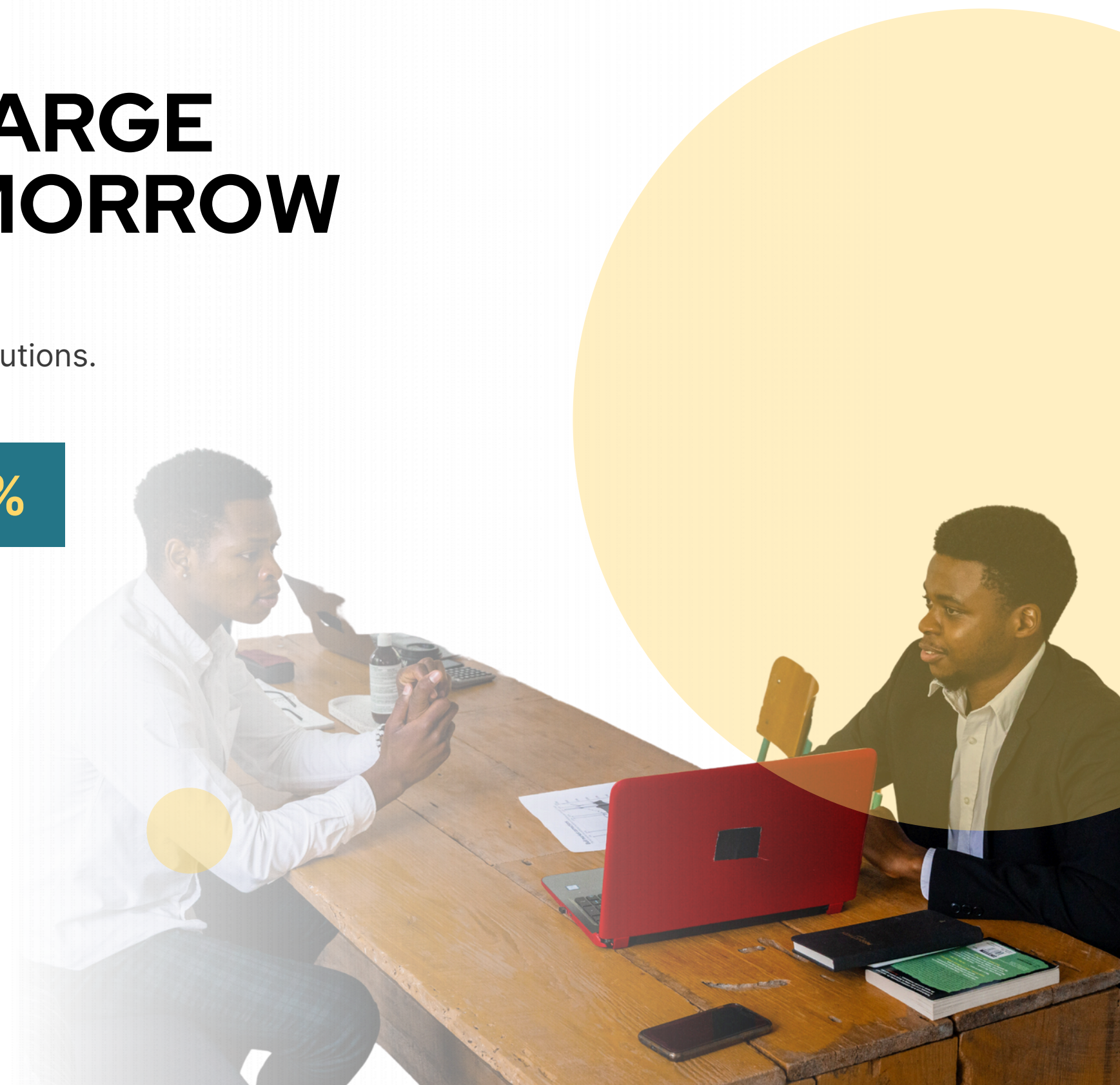
02 | EMPLOYERS AND OPPORTUNITY

FEW VACANCIES TODAY – A LARGE EMPLOYER PIPELINE FOR TOMORROW

The labour market is dominated by micro and small enterprises. Opportunities are fragmented, but many employers are ready to participate in recruitment and skills solutions.



89 current positions were reported by 34 employers at the time of the survey. This is a point-in-time lower-bound signal, not an estimate of annual demand.





85.4%

of surveyed firms are
micro enterprises

5

median workers per
establishment

43 / 89

current positions were in
services

20.1%

Tourism & Hospitality firms
offering internships

What the pattern means

- Micro firms provide scale in numbers, but their individual hiring needs are small and irregular.
- Vacancy and internship rates rise with firm size, although medium and large firm samples are small.
- Education, health, creative industries, and services show useful near-term opportunity signals.

PIPELINE

VERIFY • MATCH • FOLLOW UP

How to respond

- **Assign account managers to segment and follow up interested employers.**
- **Create structured agreements with larger firms for placements and assessments, and test sustainable incentives**
- **Test pooled recruitment, short courses, and rotating placements across micro and small firms.**

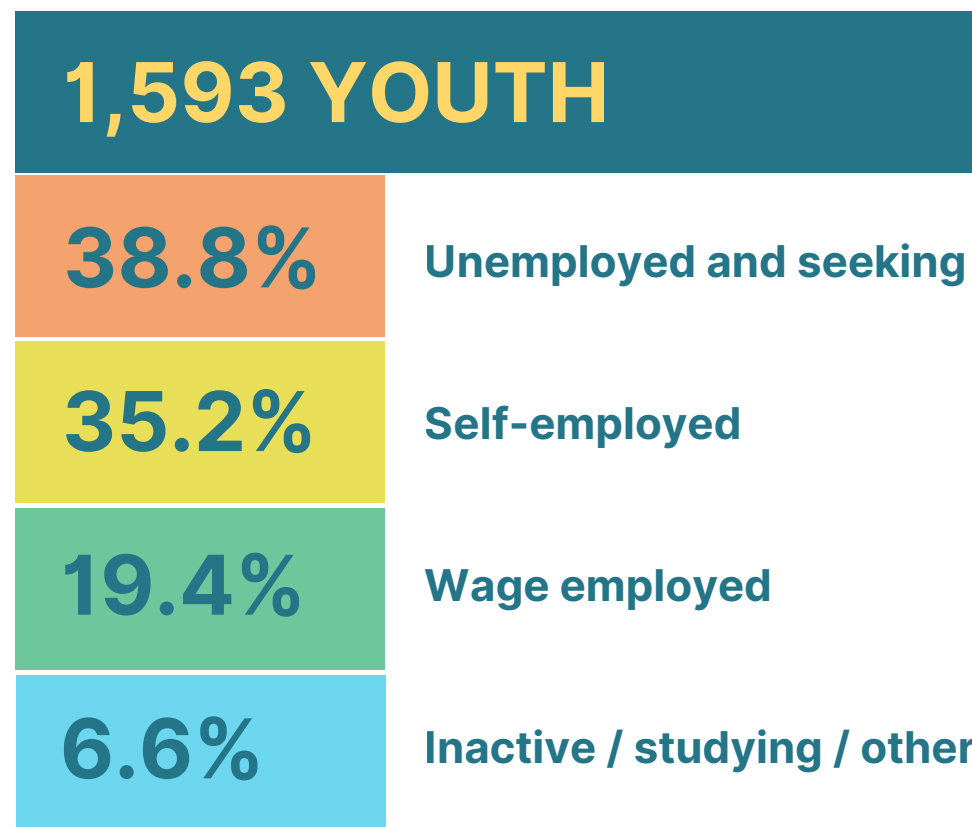
A practical implementation enabler

Treat employer interest as a pipeline to be managed, not as a one-off survey response. Verify needs regularly, define competencies, match candidates, and record hires, retention and employer satisfaction.

03 | YOUTH PATHWAYS AND PLACE

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE NAVIGATING SEVERAL LABOUR MARKETS AT ONCE

High unemployment sits alongside extensive self-employment. The route into work also varies markedly across Mombasa's sub-counties.



THE PROGRAMME IMPLICATION

A placement-only model would miss most young people. Mombasa needs three connected routes: wage employment, viable enterprise, and digital, freelance or gig work.

83

Selected more than one preferred type of work, showing pragmatic rather than fixed aspirations.

Unemployment

Falls from 59.6% among 18–20-year-olds to 22.1% among those aged 30–35.

Gender differences

are visible: female youth have lower wage employment and online earnings, and a higher low-pay rate.

SUB-COUNTY	UNEMPLOYMENT	TRAINING ACCESS	ONLINE EARNING	2019 WORKING-AGE POPULATION (15–64)
CHANGAMWE	36.7%	18.3%	14.0%	89,980
JOMVU	26.8%	77.0%	54.6%	104,387
KISAUNI	53.8%	50.1%	25.6%	187,017
LIKONI	26.6%	90.2%	25.9%	161,424
MVITA	36.6%	56.1%	9.8%	102,788
NYALI	47.2%	35.9%	4.1%	146,476

Source: Mizizi Future of Work, 2026; working-age population from KNBS 2019 KPHC, Volume III. Jomvu is derived from the Mombasa total less the other five sub-counties.

PLACE
TARGET DELIVERY LOCALLY

Place matters

Kisauni records the highest sample unemployment rate (53.8%). Likoni combines very high self-employment (63.6%) with only 4.7% wage employment. Online earning ranges from 54.6% in Jomvu to 4.1% in Nyali. These sample rates are programme evidence, not official population estimates and are not directly comparable with national labour-force averages. Outreach, training locations, transport support and pathway targets should therefore be sub-county specific.

04 | SKILLS EMPLOYERS VALUE

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS ARE NOT OPTIONAL – THEY ARE ESSENTIAL JOB REQUIREMENTS

Across sectors, employers place the greatest weight on how young people serve customers, communicate, organise their work and behave reliably in the workplace.

Skill		20	40	60	80	100	Employer %	Gap (Percentage point)
Customer handling							72.2%	+70.1
Work ethic / reliability							59.7%	+59.7
Time management							48.4%	+48.4
Communication							58.3%	+46.0
Problem-solving							41.7%	+38.9
Teamwork							48.9%	+35.5

Source: Mizizi Future of Work, 2026

A COMMON EMPLOYABILITY CORE FOR EVERY TECHNICAL PROGRAMME

CARE Customer handling	TRUST Work ethic & reliability	VOICE Communication	DIGITAL Practical digital skills
TEAM Teamwork	TIME Time management	SOLVE Problem-solving	READY Job search & workplace rights

Technical training should be designed backwards from verified employer needs and should include employer-observed practice, customer-facing simulations, teamwork, punctuality, workplace rights, job-search skills and a practical assessment of digital basics.

SKILLS GAP

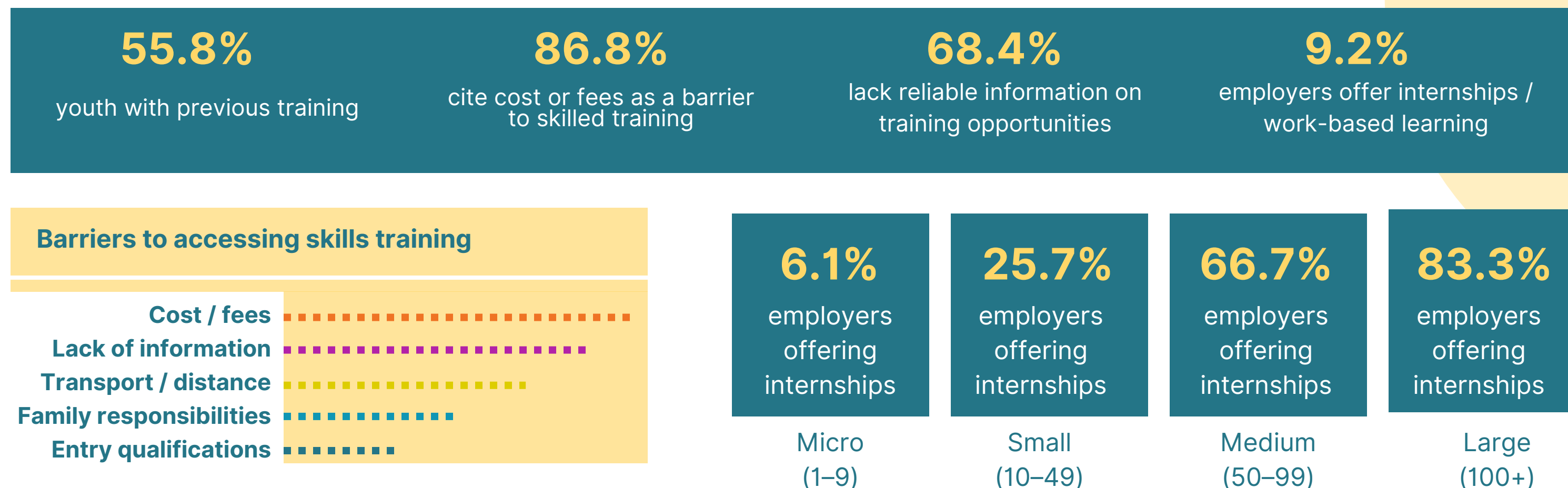
DESIGN FROM DEMAND

What the gaps mean

The skills matrix is a transparent diagnostic proxy, not a competency test. Youth supply is self-reported and keyword-coded. The largest reported gaps are Customer handling, reliability, time management and communication. However, the results should be used to prioritise curriculum design and employer-observed assessment.

ACCESS TO TRAINING IS UNEVEN – AND TRAINING ALONE DOES NOT CREATE A TRANSITION

More than half of youth have accessed skills training, yet cost, information and distance remain major constraints to training access. Only a small share of employers currently offer internships or comparable work experience.





Remove access barriers to training

- Offer targeted scholarships or sponsorships and transport support based on need rather than blanket subsidies.
- Publish a verified training, vacancy, and internship opportunity feed through the Future of Work/Labour Market Observatory.
- Offer flexible schedules and practical support for family responsibilities.

ACCESS

TARGET SUPPORT BY NEED

Make work experience scalable

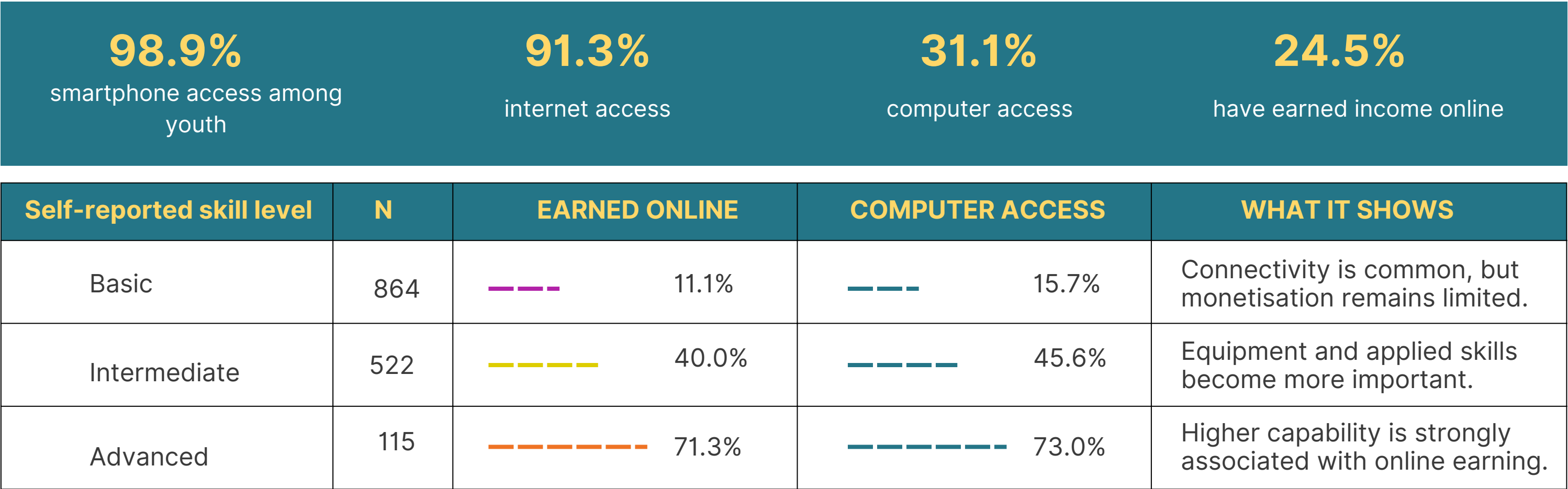
- Use pooled or rotating placements for micro and small firms.
- Provide simple supervision tools, safeguarding standards and employer assessments.
- Link every course to a placement, enterprise service, or digital-income step.

Explain and test the sub-county differences

Training access ranges from 18.3% in Changamwe to 90.2% in Likoni. The variation may reflect provider location, programme exposure, outreach and recruitment, transport, scheduling and respondent selection as well as underlying access. Map providers and travel times, document recruitment channels and monitor repeated cohorts before treating the pattern as a fixed ranking.

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY IS WIDESPREAD; INCOME CONVERSION IS NOT

Smartphone and internet access are widespread. The decisive gaps are advanced capability, computer access, portfolios, client acquisition and repeat business.



Source: Mizizi Future of Work, 2026. Percentages are calculated within each self-reported digital-skill category; the pattern is associative and should not be read as a linear or causal progression.

1

ADVANCED SKILLS

Specialised, applied and assessed

2

EQUIPMENT & WORKSPACE

Reliable computer, software and connectivity

3

PORTFOLIO & CLIENTS

Proof of work, platform onboarding and outreach

4

REPEAT INCOME

Client retention, pricing, quality and referrals

Gender-responsive digital programming is essential: 17.7% of female youth reported online earning compared with 30.8% of male youth. Equipment, safe workspaces, market access and client acquisition should be addressed alongside training, with results tracked separately by gender.

FROM ACCESS TO INCOME

The digital conversion pathway

Digital literacy means being able to use devices and online tools safely and effectively. Digital monetisation is different: it requires marketable applied skills, reliable equipment, proof of work, clients, pricing and repeat business. The category differences show association, not proof that training alone causes progression.

GETTING INTO WORK IS NOT ENOUGH – EARNINGS AND PROGRESSION MATTER

The evidence distinguishes economic activity from decent work and highlights underemployment: some youth are working but remain in low-paid, unstable or limited-hours work without a clear path to progression.

Income and relative low pay by pathway		
Wage employment	KES 22,000	11.0% below KES 10,000
Self-employment	KES 13,000	26.8% below KES 10,000

Outcome	Female	Male
Wage employed	15.8%	22.7%
Earned online	17.7%	30.8%
Relative low pay	25.6%	17.3%

Source: Mizizi Future of Work, 2026. KES 10,000 is a relative low-pay threshold, not a statutory minimum wage.



KES 15,000

median income across the
combined employed sample

33.9%

relative low-pay rate among
employed youth aged 21–24

49.9%

unemployment among
secondary-educated youth

KES 26,825

median positive income
among university
graduates

Who needs priority support

- Younger entrants who lack experience and face the highest unemployment.
- Secondary-educated youth, who form the largest group and face high unemployment and low pay.
- Women, whose wage employment, online earnings, and median income are lower.

DECENT WORK

EARNINGS • PROTECTION • PROGRESSION

What success should mean

- Retention at 3, 6 and 12 months — not placement alone.
- Growth in earnings, customers and repeat online income.
- Written terms, safety, reasonable hours, benefits and progression where applicable.

Decent work is the outcome

Programme dashboards should report who enters work, who stays, what they earn, whether hours are adequate and whether outcomes improve by gender, age, disability and sub-county. This makes underemployment and job quality visible rather than counting placement alone.

08 | WHERE OPPORTUNITY MAY GROW

SERVICES AND HOSPITALITY LEAD THE PLANNING OUTLOOK – BUT THE INDEX IS A GUIDE, NOT A FORECAST

The 2026–2030 outlook combines current employment stock, captured vacancies, internship activity, employer support interest and positive trend signals.

Sector										Index growth
Services										5.4%
Tourism & hospitality										5.3%
Education & training										5.0%
Creative industries										4.6%
Health & social services										4.5%
Trade / retail / wholesale										4.3%
Manufacturing & Processing										4.1%

Source: Mizizi Future of Work, 2026. Values are indicative annual index growth rates, not official forecasts of job counts.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE: A PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION SECTOR

100%	Curriculum–industry alignment
90.5%	Culinary and service specialisation
85.7%	Customer care and workplace behaviour
81.0%	Digital systems, POS and online marketing
81.0%	Practical exposure and work-based learning

The food and beverage evidence points to a competency bundle rather than a single course: industry-aligned curricula, culinary and service practice, customer care, POS and digital marketing, supervised exposure, cost control and food safety. A sector compact among hotels, restaurants, caterers, trainers and county actors could standardise entry competencies, placements, assessment and recruitment feedback.

ADAPT
RECALIBRATE QUARTERLY

Use the outlook adaptively
Services, tourism and hospitality, education, creative industries, health, trade and manufacturing emerge as leading priorities. The ranking should be recalibrated every quarter as verified vacancies, hires, internships and tracer outcomes accumulate.

09 | ACTION AGENDA

BUILD AN OBSERVATORY SYSTEM THAT CONVERTS EVIDENCE INTO OPPORTUNITY

The immediate task is to organize existing employer interest, youth capabilities, and institutional assets around a shared operating model and measurable outcomes.



FIVE PRIORITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Establish a minimum viable Future of Work Observatory with a quarterly employer panel, youth registry, opportunity feed and tracer system.
- Activate and segment employer pipeline with account management, rapid verification and matching.
- Deliver three connected youth pathways: wage employment, viable enterprise and digital or freelance work.
- Embed the employability core and structured work-based learning in sector training, while reducing cost, information and transport barriers.
- Track retention, earnings, online income, employer satisfaction and equity — then scale only what works.

WAGE Verified vacancies Job matching Work-based learning		ENTERPRISE Business upgrading Market access Finance and mentoring		DIGITAL Advanced skills Portfolio and clients Repeat online income	
0–3 months SET UP		4–9 months SET UP		10–18 months SET UP	
Agree governance and data standards Segment employers and verify opportunities		Test employability and sector pathways Start placements and tracer studies		19–36 months INSTITUTIONALISE	
Agree governance and data standards Segment employers and verify opportunities		Test employability and sector pathways Start placements and tracer studies		Grow employer panels and career guidance Formalise TVET–employer compacts	
				Link county and national systems. Scale proven models and evaluate outcomes	

Strategic direction and phased actions.

ACT NOW

GOVERN • VERIFY • MATCH

The decision to take now

Approve a shared county governance arrangement, name institutional custodians, begin employer segmentation and launch a verified opportunity feed. Early visible results will build trust and create the evidence needed for sustainable scale.

THANK YOU

