



Escaping the Refugee Poverty Trap: An Analysis of Syrian Entrepreneurship in Exile

Written for Jusoor

"Of course refugees are a good bet as entrepreneurs. When you've had the building next to you collapse, you don't really care about your first investor rejecting your investment pitch—you keep going."

- Noubar Afeyan, Co-Founder, Aurora Prize

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Disclaimer

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Honor Pledge

On my honor as a student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Haïma Askaré". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Haïma" is written with a small accent over the 'i', and the last name "Askaré" has a small accent over the 'e'. There is a small superscript '1' above the 'A' in "Askaré".

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Definitions

Asylum Seeker: A person who has formally applied for asylum in a host country, “but whose claim is pending. The outcome of a decision can either be recognition of full Geneva refugee status, the offer of some form of temporary humanitarian protection, or a rejection.” (Konle-Seidl, 2018, p. 12)

Displaced Person: A person who has fled their home “either across an international border or within a State [...] in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human made disasters” (IOM, 2019, p. 53)

Refugee: A person who is forced to flee their country because of, “a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.” Refugees are guaranteed international rights such as the right to not be returned to a country where they might be prosecuted. (GCP, 1951, p.14)

Migrant: A person who “moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.” (IOM, 2019, p.130)

Startup: A company or project initiated by an entrepreneur to seek, effectively develop, and validate a scalable business model. (Robehmed, 2013)



Executive Summary

Since the outbreak of the war, Syrians have been forced to flee their homes to neighboring countries and beyond. The lack of adequate documentation, combined with complex regulatory policies, makes employment difficult for refugees to achieve. Starting their own enterprises is a key way to maintain their livelihoods in such an environment. **The lack of access to financial institutions and capital markets are a serious obstacle for Syrian refugee entrepreneurship which is a robust source refugee employment and economic integration in host communities.**

Jusoor aims to tackle this problem by mentoring Syrian refugee entrepreneurs and by providing prize money to promising startups. They do this through their Entrepreneurship Program which consists of: the Bootcamp, Startup Roadshow, and the Jusoor Small Business Program. To help make sure they meet their organization goals, an impact evaluation has been carried out aimed at understanding relevant trends of beneficiaries.

Despite inconsistencies in the data as a result of difficulties in obtaining responses to our survey, valuable insights were gained from each program. The following list of recommendations outline areas of improvement that were identified from the data. (Further details can be found in the *Recommendations* section)

1. **Track and Encourage Attendance**
2. **Improve systems of Prize Money distribution**
3. **Facilitate Networking in Host Countries**
4. **Provide More Country-Specific Training**

Background

Context

The ongoing brutal civil war in Syria has caused the death of over 500,000 Syrians and has resulted in one of the largest mass displacement crises since 1945. Half of Syria's population fled their homes, with more than 6.7 million people having sought refuge abroad, mostly in neighboring countries. Renewed fighting in northern Syria has dashed hopes of an end to the decade long sectarian conflict in the near future.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, most protracted refugee crises² last over 20 years (UNHCR, 2015). With no end in sight to the civil war, Syrian refugees are likely to remain displaced. That means that host countries need to transition away from solely meeting basic humanitarian needs to focusing on economically sustainable methods of supporting refugee livelihood.

Syrian refugees face many challenges when seeking employment in host countries. Alongside language barriers, complex regulatory environments prohibit easy access to local job markets. Skilled Syrian refugees often cannot continue in their specialized fields due to regulations that prevent recognition of their national credentials. Moreover, many other policies introduce barriers for refugee workers. For example, Turkey introduced a regulation in 2016 that requires Syrian refugees to purchase temporary work permits before seeking employment. In response to such stringent regulations, many Syrian refugees in neighboring countries create their own businesses to support themselves. This workaround may prove to be a positive influence for these

Population of Syrian Refugees

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Country	Population
Turkey	3.3 million
Lebanon	1 million
Europe (Germany)	1 million
Jordan	670,000
Iraq (KRI) ¹	253,000
Egypt	133,000

¹ Kurdistan Region in Iraq- a semiautonomous region in Iraq where the vast majority of Syrians within Iraq are resettled. An additional million Iraqi IDP's currently reside there

² A protracted situation is defined by the UNHCR as one in which at least 25,000 refugees have spent 5 or more years in a given asylum country.

entrepreneurs and their surrounding communities. The Al-Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan houses more than 3,000 Syrian-run businesses in a self-sustaining economy (PBS, 2016). Similarly, neighborhoods around Cairo have been revitalized by the presence of Syrians who have opened up restaurants and shops (Ahram, 2013). Syrian refugee entrepreneurs still encounter a variety of obstacles that impede their ability to access financial markets in order to launch promising startups.

The Problem

Recent studies have shown that entrepreneurial activity such as launching startups benefit local economies by creating proportionally more new jobs than large firms (Carree et. Al, 2015)³. The enterprises in the Al-Zaatari camp mentioned previously generate over 13 million USD in monthly revenues, benefiting not only the refugee entrepreneurs themselves, but also local Jordanians they conduct business with (WEF, 2016). While there are many potentials of integration of Syrian refugee startups into local host economies, the obstacles they face limit the benefits host countries can realize.

Launching a successful startup is a difficult undertaking, regardless of nationality and residency. The pioneering nature of startups make them incredibly risky, but many Syrian refugees see this as a more viable option than entering the difficult-to-access job markets. On top of the common challenges faced by startups, Syrian entrepreneurs deal with substantially more difficulties in launching a startup primarily due to their refugee or asylum status. A 2018 study shows that alongside travel restrictions, complex regulatory policies and limited financial services are the leading challenges faced by Syrian startups (Bayam, 2019, p. 24). These issues go hand in hand, because regulatory policies play a large role in access to finance systems and capital markets.

The first source of seed funding for traditional startups are primarily close acquaintances or angel investors. According to the Wamda Research Lab, 45% of startups in the Arab world are funded by friends and family (2018). Syrians are not able

³ An entrepreneur is anyone that organizes a business. For the purposes of their report and my client, Jusoor, the terms "entrepreneur" and "startups" refer to newly started enterprises in host countries and not large-scale *portfolio* entrepreneurs who have moved their industries to host countries.

to rely on these sources since many familial assets and savings were either destroyed or left behind. Moreover, because of geographic seclusion and potential language barriers, refugee led startups are oftentimes not visible to angel investors who might have otherwise invested. After exploring these potential sources, a traditional startup still in need of funds might seek out a loan from a bank, however, this also presents a unique set of challenges for Syrian refugee startups.

85% of Syrian refugees reside in predominantly Islamic countries where the main banking system is Islamic banking (Darusman, Alibasic, Chen, 2016). These banks focus primarily on helping clients purchase tangible goods since speculation is heavily discouraged⁴. This makes it virtually impossible for Syrian startups to obtain loans since they are inherently high-risk. However, the problem of securing loans from banks extends beyond the Islamic world because newly arrived refugees do not have a credit history and are also deemed to be too high-risk for traditional banks. Regardless, before even reaching this step, refugees must first open a bank account which is an incredible challenge.

Opening a bank account is a daunting task for refugee entrepreneurs for a variety of reasons. Even if a Syrian refugee entrepreneur were to have all the proper paperwork to navigate the immensely complex regulatory system regarding banking for refugees, they are still confronted with further issues. First and foremost are the complications that have risen from broad economic sanctions on Syria and its citizens. Many banks, especially in countries neighboring Syria, refuse Syrian clients due fears of violating sanctions and facing penalties. Banks also fear security concerns since they need to ensure that clients do not have suspicious associations. Such background checks are in many cases not possible due to the lack of sufficient mechanisms, so banks find it easier to simply refuse Syrian clients (Bayam, 2019, p.28).

It is very difficult for a new enterprise to succeed without access to banking systems. Having a bank account is a prerequisite for starting and expanding startups. The inability to open a bank account means refugee entrepreneurs cannot obtain essential banking products such as bank cards and checkbooks. This bars entrepreneurs from online markets for their good or service to ensure the viability of their startups, especially in industries utilizing new technologies. Transferring money to partner businesses, even if local, can only be done with cash since bank transfers are

⁴ Under Islamic based finance law, usury, or the charging of interest on loans is forbidden

unavailable which frequently leads to complications in business negotiations. Syrian startups that have no local co-founders are often left without recourse.

Trends in Relevant Countries

Egypt:

At the outbreak of the war, over 15,000 Syrian businesses were relocated to Egypt because it was initially seen as a haven for refugee entrepreneurial activity (Aliqtiadi, 2012). Now these businesses report a lack of access to credit and banking as the key impediment to expanding their enterprises (UNDP, 2017). In 2013, regulations revoked permanent residency status for Syrians who now had to renew their residency twice a year, leading to many complications when starting businesses. Moreover, new legislation requires Syrian citizens that want to open businesses to register as foreign workers, a process which has become increasingly difficult (Primo, 2015).

Turkey:

With almost 1.5 billion USD of Syrian investments in the country, Turkey appears to be a friendly state to refugee entrepreneurship, but recent developments have proven to be challenging for Syrians (Brookings, 2016). The vast majority of Syrians in Turkey are under special temporary protection, under which they are not allowed to purchase any property. Those that have a residency permit are allowed to own property and open businesses in Syria unless a Turkish firm files a complaint. Banking rules in Turkey are stringent in relation to neighboring countries and only 5% of Syrians have a personal bank account (Brookings, 2014). Another problem is the issue of work permits mentioned previously, of which only 38,000 have been issued as of February 2019 (TRC, 2019, p.6). Furthermore, recently rising anti-Syrian resentment has resulted in targeted deportation and arrests for those whose residency cards have expired, which has impacted the employees and founders of many startups, especially in the Istanbul area (Cagaptay, Yuksel, 2019).

Jordan:

According to a report by the World Bank, Jordan is among the top three countries in improving business climates (WBG, 2020). This extends also to refugee startups and businesses. In 2016, Jordan signed the Jordan Compact where in return for billions of dollars in grants, loans and “preferential trade agreements with the EU,” Jordan improved access to education and employment for Syrians residing in the country. This

has resulted in 139,000 work permits being issued as of March 2019 (Building Markets, 2019). Overall, Syrian startups have enjoyed an easing of regulations and improved access to banking and financial services.

Lebanon:

Lebanon has historically been crippled with a protracted economic crisis. Displaced people in Lebanon and in the KRI represent about 15% and 25% of the population respectively. Syrians face many issues that Palestinian refugees in the country have traditionally had, such as the lack of work permits. 92% of Syrian refugees, which make up over 15% of Lebanon's population, work in the informal market due to the lack of employment contracts (UNDP, 2017). Despite a strong desire to engage in entrepreneurial activity, historical migration trends have made the government hesitant to hand out official work permits (Alexandre, Salloum, Alalam, 2019).

Iraq (Kurdistan Region):

The war with the Islamic State (ISIS), the drop in oil prices, and a subsequent budget dispute with the central government in Baghdad have left many banks in the KRI without liquid assets for investment in startups. Destroyed infrastructure in this region has yet to be fully repaired which prevents efficient deliveries of goods to businesses in camps where 45% of Syrians are housed (UNDP, 2017). The semi-sovereignty of the region adds an additional layer of regulatory issues for Syrian refugees. For example, residency cards are issued by the regional Kurdish government but various other permits need to be issued by the central Iraqi government. Furthermore, travel between the KRI and Iraq is heavily restricted which also puts a strain on refugee enterprises wanting to expand.

Syria⁵:

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia estimates the destruction of physical capital in Syria to be over 388 billion USD (ESCWA, 2018). The disruption of transportation and trade networks makes the establishment of supply chains virtually impossible for Syrians operating in the region. Many enterprises that have not relocated outside of the country, were forced to shut down or join the war economy. Banks in the country have been left without financial assets due to the flight of capital as Syrians have fled the country (Fielding-Smith, 2011). Most startups and enterprises

⁵ Although entrepreneurs in Syria are not technically refugees, a substantial number of startups supported by Jusoor have decided work in Syria as shown later in this report. For this reason, it is important to describe the context within which these startups operate.

now operate in Damascus, which has largely avoided physical damage that the civil war has inflicted on the rest of the country.

Europe:

Although Europe boasts healthy infrastructure and capital markets, language barriers alongside high taxes, regulations and competitive markets make for a difficult entrepreneurial environment, especially for refugees. The European Union's *Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan* calls for an exploration of interventions to facilitate refugee entrepreneurship. Germany, where most European-settled Syrian refugees reside, has also introduced the *Enveda* project which targets promising refugee startups and partners them with incubators and support centers (IOM, 2018).

Conclusion

Although specific problems vary from state to state, it is evident that broader systematic issues bar access to capital and banking systems for refugee entrepreneurs. Although the recipient of this report, Jusoor, operates to address a wide variety of issues facing Syrian entrepreneurs, the focus of many organizations currently working in this field is capital market access.

Current Practices to Address the Lack of Capital for Refugee Entrepreneurs

Since the immediate needs of Syrian refugees are of critical concern, most aid organizations do not prioritize entrepreneurship funding. According to a report by the UNHCR, organizational programs to address the problem usually fall under two categories: promoting alternative sources of funding or providing grants, or providing educational programs for entrepreneurs. The recipient of this report, Jusoor, focuses on both of these categories with their Entrepreneurship program aimed at supporting Syrian startups. Given the scant literature on Syrian entrepreneurship, current practices from around the globe are consolidated in this report. Many of the following efforts are applicable to refugee entrepreneurship in a broader sense and thus relevant to this study.

Providing Alternative Sources of Funding

Loans and Microfinance

Some organizations tackle the lack of seed funding for refugee business ventures by providing microloans and capital grants. The Office of Refugee Resettlement in the United States oversees the Microenterprise Development Program (MPD) which provides low-interest loans to businesses started by refugees. In 2015, the MDP provided over 500 loans to businesses that have created 1163 jobs (ORR-MPD, 2016). The residency status of these refugees is different than those of most Syrian refugees in Middle East countries, but the results provide a good framework of how loans can be disbursed to encourage entrepreneurship. It is important to note, however, that countries that host large populations of Syrian refugees oftentimes do not have enough liquid assets to contribute to such loan programs.

Networking with Eager Investors

The Refugee Investment Network acts as a “connective tissue” that connects investors with promising refugee startups that otherwise would not have been visible to such investment opportunities. The Tent Alliance, an alliance founded by Chobani CEO Hamdi Ulukaya, has worked to promote investment in small to medium sized refugee owned businesses across the globe (Tent, 2017). This “networking” and partnership approach is hailed as a cost-effective way to address the funding issues of Syrian refugee startups. This method requires future repayment or an exchange in equity from refugee entrepreneurs, but it does not cost the intermediary organization much to facilitate this partnership.

Grants

Apart from access to loans, some organizations such as Jusoor Syria, disburse money grants to startups that show promising potential. This usually takes the form of a competition in which entrepreneurs pitch their idea to a panel, and the teams that are rated highest by a panel of judges are given a sum of money without a payback requirement (Jusoor, 2018). The International Office of Migration’s Livelihoods Assistance Program follows a similar framework and operates exclusively in Turkey (UNCTAD, 2018). This organization provides “toolkits” that contain small grants and supplies to encourage Syrians to create their own businesses. 80% have successfully started a business with the toolkits consisting of about 300 startups. Money grants allow startups to focus on growth in the initial phases of their ventures instead of focusing on profits to sustain themselves early on. This requires significantly more fundraising on the

part of these organizations compared to providing loans, but is proven to be an ideal way to deal with lack of capital for startups.

Mentorship, Bootcamp, Networking and Incubation Programs

Oftentimes, grant disbursements from organizations are coupled with mentorships, bootcamps, or other forms of training programs to provide support to refugee startups. These programs give entrepreneurs the tools they need to navigate the financial ecosystems of their host communities. Angel Investors, a Canadian organization, aids refugee startups by providing training camps where they learn how to write business plans, prepare investment proposals, and build advisory networks (Angel Investors, 2019). These programs help bridge the gap in access to capital markets by training refugee entrepreneurs to secure seed funding for their ventures on their own.

The Asociación de Desarrollo Económico Local de Morazán focuses their efforts on young entrepreneurs in El Salvador. While their goal is to prevent emigration from the region, their focus on entrepreneurship in developing regions is translatable to Syrian refugee integration into their respective host communities. Since the start of their educational programs and their small capital grants, the region has seen the creation of 21 new small businesses, employing over 100 people (UNCTAD, 2018). The Business Development Centre in Jordan employs much of the same strategies but by specifically targeting Syrian Refugees in Jordan and have effectively led to the employment of 300 Syrians. Mentorship and educational programs such as these help refugee owned startups in formulating a business strategy.

Startup Refugees is an organization operating in Finland that specializes in the networking aspect of mentorship. Their strategy involves expanding on a database of refugees and their professional skills and to connect them to local Finnish citizens with matching qualifications. While this type of program doesn't have the same style of institutionalized learning provided by the previous organizations, it has been successful in the creation of 35 new refugee led businesses (Cord, 2017). A similar program in Germany, Frauen mit Fluchterfahrung, focuses specifically on female refugees and has led to the creation of 19 new female refugee run businesses (JUMMPP, 2017). Encouraging female entrepreneurship is a valuable and equitable way of expanding refugee livelihood in host countries.



Some organizations have improved startup viability by addressing the lack of access to banking institutions. The UNHCR Livelihoods program targets this specific problem for Colombian refugees in Ecuador. Their strategy had involved partnering with banks in Ecuador to ensure access to services for Colombian refugee ventures. This has helped 163 Colombian entrepreneurs open new bank accounts in Ecuador (UNHCR, 2015). These mentorship, education, and partnership programs provide substantial support for startups but there is still a lack of research to definitively determine if initial seed funding is still accessible to these startups.

Synthesis

As shown above, institutional responses to challenges faced by refugee entrepreneurs are scattered. Each program and initiative have their own unique subset of goals relevant to their respective geographies. Specific targets range from reducing emigration to simply encouraging refugee employment. It is important to note, however, that because the beneficiaries of these programs are often transient and lack proper documentation, there is little to no formal evaluation of these programs. This is especially the case in low income countries (where Jusoor mostly operates) in which there is virtually no systematic evidence to identify methods that work. Nevertheless, the synthesis of current/best practices helps clarify the scope of intervention and could point towards certain directions that Jusoor might undertake.

Jusoor's Entrepreneurship Program

About Jusoor:

Jusoor is an NGO of Syrian expatriates helping Syrian youth realize their potential through programs in the fields of education, entrepreneurship, and global community engagement. Jusoor has been working with displaced and refugee Syrians to build their capacity to start and run successful businesses through its Entrepreneurship Bootcamps and Startup training program for over four years, training over 300 entrepreneurs, and giving out over 200,000 USD in prize seed funding (Jusoor Report, 2019). Since 2018, Jusoor has shifted away from offering bootcamps to coordinating with partners to conduct a Startup Roadshow in order to reach a broader range of participants.

Programs Offered

Bootcamp

The Entrepreneurship Bootcamp was launched in 2015 and continued until 2018. Applicants applied as teams to attend the bootcamp where they would receive a week of intensive training before pitching their final projects to a panel of judges. Prize seed money was given out based on the judges rating, with a further people's choice award. Amount of prize money varies from year to year, but generally first place receives \$10,000, second place receives \$17,000, third place receives \$5,000. Most bootcamps were held in Beirut, Lebanon but events also took place in Berlin.

Startup Roadshow (SR)

The Startup Roadshow was launched in 2018 through a partnership with Spark, a Dutch based organization aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship in areas of conflict and displacement. The Startup Roadshow follows a similar structure to the Bootcamp in terms of curriculum. However, instead of providing the program in one city, the judges and trainers travel to 5 cities: Amman, Erbil, Beirut, Gaziantep, and Istanbul. Two teams are selected from each city to attend the final demo day where they compete for prize seed money. First, second, and third places received \$15,000, \$10,000, and

\$7,000 respectively. Further instruction through online sessions were also offered to participants

Jusoor Small Business Program (JSBP)

The Small Business Program is a relatively new initiative launched in 2019 to train and support small to medium enterprises, or S&Es, in Jordan⁶. In partnership with World Vision, a religious humanitarian organization, Jusoor helped launch the Youth RESOLVE project⁷, which aims to increase economic opportunities for Syrian and Jordanian youth in Jordan. This partnership resulted in a unique curriculum, specifically targeting S&Es, but in a format similar to the Startup Roadshow. Mentors and trainers traveled to four cities in Jordan where they provided a week of intensive training followed by a demo day. First, second, and third places received \$15,000, \$7,000, and \$4,000 respectively.

Rundown of Programs		
Bootcamp	Startup Roadshow	Jusoor Small Business Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2015-2018• Hosted in a single city• Applicants from every city are received• Travel and accommodation for participants covered by Jusoor• 90 entrepreneurs were supported through the bootcamp program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2018-2020• Hosted in 5 cities across the middle east• Accommodation is usually the responsibility of participants.• Travel to SR city usually covered• 373 entrepreneurs were supported through the SR program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2019• Hosted in 4 cities throughout Jordan• Travel and accommodation is usually covered by Jusoor and World Vision• 97 entrepreneurs were supported through the JSBP

⁶ Although different from startups S&E's in Jordan face many similar issues. Furthermore, a handful of respondents participated in the JSBP and other Jusoor programming. The Jordan Compact creates a unique opportunity for entrepreneurs in the country that Jusoor aims at broadening.

⁷ This project was largely funded by the European Union

Study

The Jusoor Impact Evaluation Team was set up in late 2019 with the goal of understanding how recipients of Jusoor's programming were performing now. The study was additionally undertaken to assess the impact of Jusoor's Entrepreneurship Program since its launch in 2015. To this end, a survey was conducted in early 2020 to gather and synthesize relevant data. After drafting a list of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)⁸ a corresponding list of survey questions was developed. The survey was initially carried out over email, however due to a smaller than expected response rate, phone calls were made to the remaining attendees on file.

There were 204 respondents to the survey, of which 73 (36%) were currently part of an active startup. Furthermore, a small sample of 30 responses was collected from those who did not attend Jusoor programming. Additionally, I supplemented the survey with incomplete program documents and reports to conduct the following evaluation. Demographic trends are obtained primarily from these reports whereas startup health data is analyzed from the aforementioned survey⁹.

⁸ Appendix C

⁹ A complete description of the methodology used to collect data and create the Startup Health Index can be found in the appendix.

Evaluative Criteria

It is of critical importance to Jusoor that they are effectively carrying out their organizational mandate of supporting and educating Syrian refugee entrepreneurs. The following list of criteria was derived from our list of KPIs which was created with the input of members of the Jusoor Impact Evaluation team.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness is important in Jusoor as they transition into the Startup Roadshow program, which is substantially more expensive. This can be evaluated on several different measures. As it is hard to obtain clear data on startup outcomes years from the program date, proxy measures such as training and number of locations will be used alongside those measures. Measures of effectiveness will be:

- Hours of training provided per participant per program
- Number of beneficiaries per program
- Number of yearly locations for programs
- Startup health (based on Startup Health Index (SHI) ¹⁰)
- Number of team members in each startup (employment outcome)

Cost

Since Jusoor works with many active partners in the region, the cost of programs is a crucial criterion. Costs will be categorized as:

- Total cost of the programs per location
 - Including prize money
 - Excluding prize money
- Share of cost attributed to prize money distributions versus program costs

Cost Effectiveness

As mentioned in the description of *Effectiveness* above, a lack of adequate data makes it necessary to use proxy measures of outcomes. For example, the outcome of

¹⁰ The Startup Health Index, generated for this study, ranges from 0-25 where a higher score indicates a startup that have more components typical of a startup. More details included in Appendix A

startup health of startup still in business is difficult to assess alone because of the lack of a high enough response rate in the surveys. To balance this, training will also be considered an outcome for the purposes of this report. Components of this criteria are:

- Cost per hour of training within a program
 - Accounting for attendance where data is available
 - Assuming full attendance for each program¹¹
 - Secondary analysis excluding prize money
- Cost per beneficiary in attendance
 - Secondary analysis excluding prize money
- Average cost per startup still operating¹²

Equity

Jusoor's equity concerns are to ensure the recipients of Jusoor's support are demographically representative of the larger refugee startup industry. The following factors are looked when accessing equity:

- Gender of participants in Jusoor programs.
 - Gender of the founders and co-founders of still active startups
- Average age of participants (to see differences across programs)
 - Average age of founders and co-founders of still active startups
- Nationality of participants¹³.
 - Nationality of founders and co-founders of still active startups
- Education of participants for each program
 - Education of founders and co-founders for still active startups

¹¹ The lack of attendance data for some programs makes it impossible to adequately compare them with programs that do have data. To present a fuller picture, full attendance will be assumed to show the potential of the programming. Attendance based estimates are included in the appendix

¹² Weighting active startups from earlier programs will be available in a future iteration of this report.

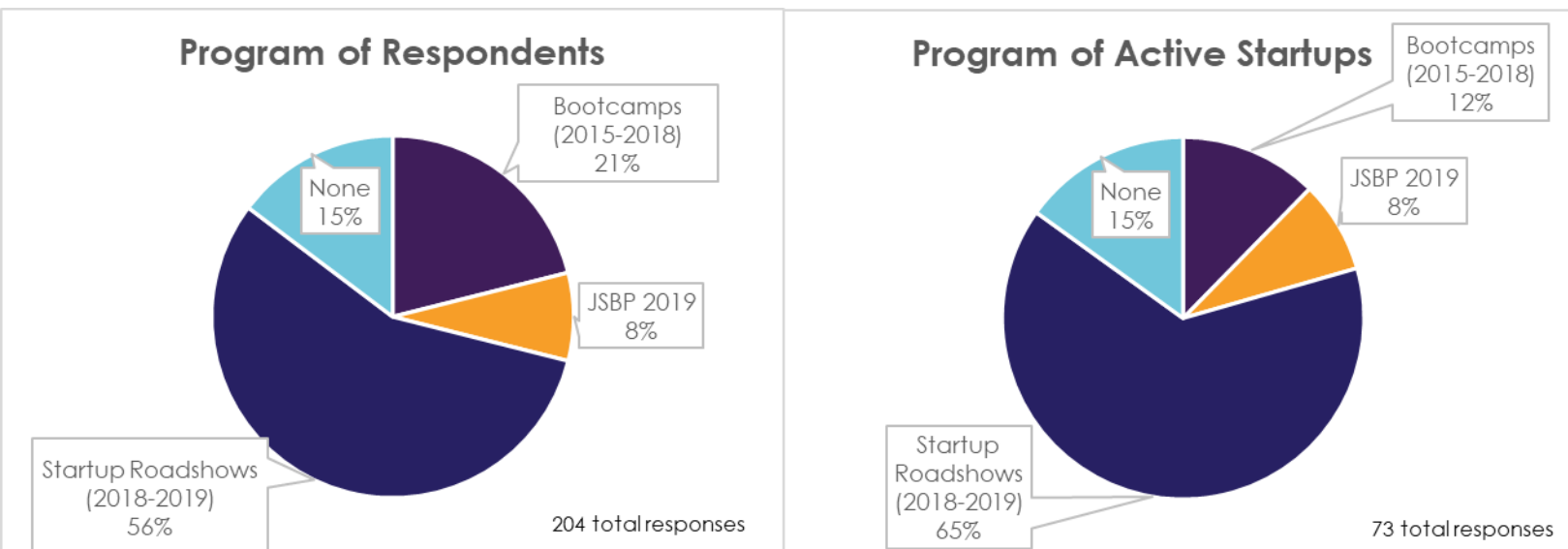
¹³ Presented where data is available

Snapshot of Data

The following figures and summaries provide a broad overview of the dataset that was worked with¹⁴.

Response Rates

The actual number of participants of Jusoor's Programming was derived from follow up program reports coupled with budgetary analysis¹⁵. The estimated number of total participants in all of Jusoor's programs is 560 and the total number of responses from our survey is 204. Of these responses, 30 did not participate in any official programming.

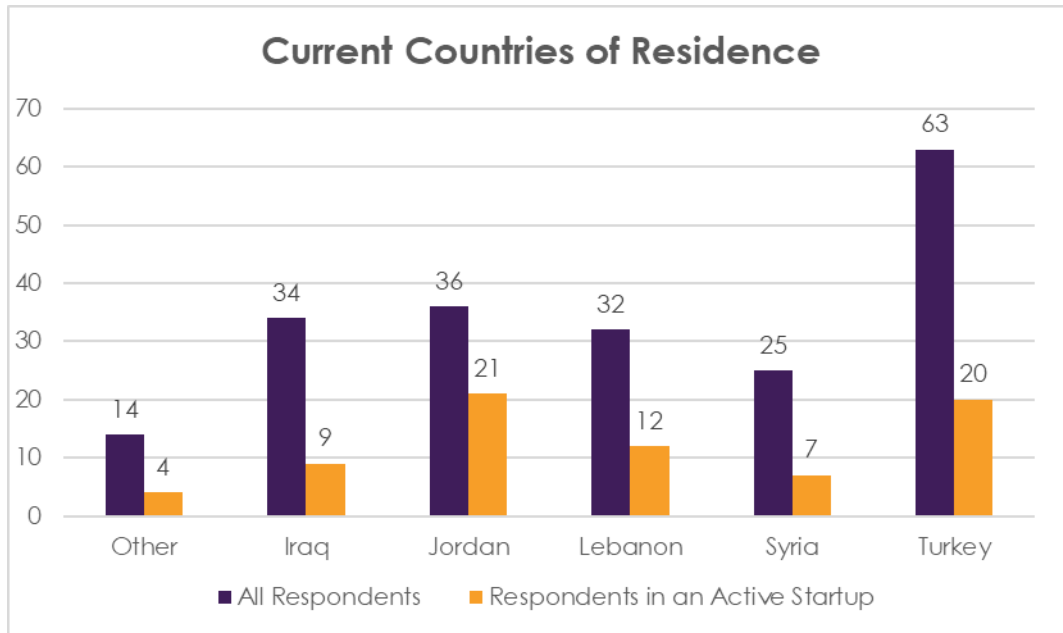


Accounting for those that did not participate in any of Jusoor's program, the survey responses above fall practically in line with actual estimated attendance by program. There were no striking differences in terms of active startups compared to total respondents, although the SR had a higher proportion of still active startups. This could be simply be attributed to the fact that those newer startups have not yet had the chance to either fail and shutdown, or sell to an investor.

¹⁴ More figures and details will be included in the appendix

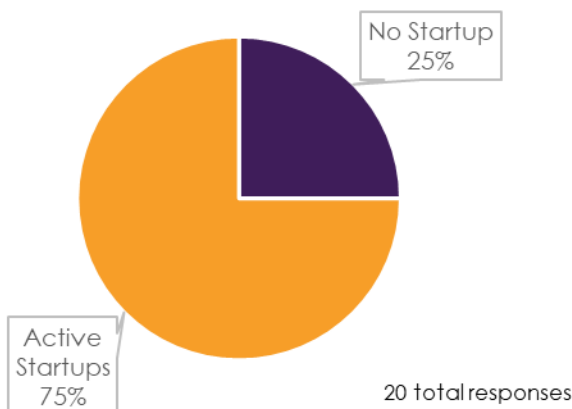
¹⁵ Because of some inconsistencies in the follow-up reports of Jusoor's Bootcamp Program, especially in the earlier years, it was difficult to identify the actual number of attendees. We estimated 100 participants. 5 Bootcamps with approximately 20 attendees each

Country of Residency

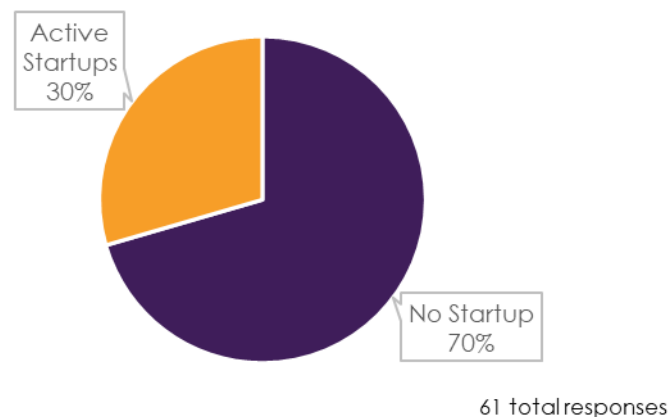


The locations of active startups were more or less representative of where all respondents resided. There were slightly more active startups in Jordan compared to Turkey despite having a lower overall number of responses. This difference was initially thought to be due to the additional JSBP that specifically targeted Jordan and small businesses. To balance this out, we excluded those that participated in the JSBP from the analysis. This removed 16 respondents in Jordan and 2 currently residing in Turkey.

Share of Active Startups in Jordan



Share of Active Startups in Turkey

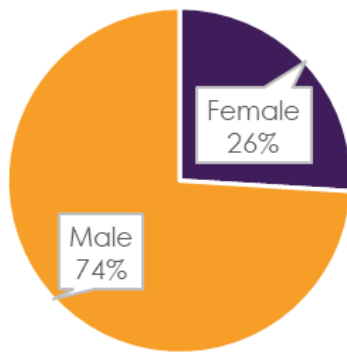


Furthermore, we ran a secondary analysis that also excluded those that did not participate in any programming, and the results were virtually identical. Barring any

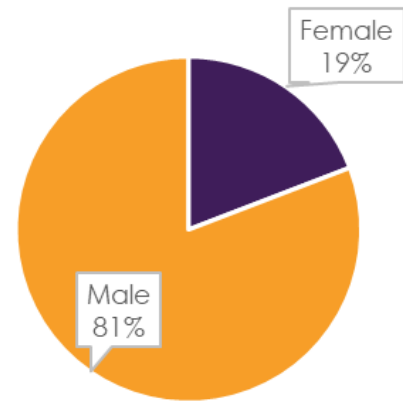
drastic biases in survey response rates based on country, it seems that entrepreneurs in Jordan enjoy relatively fewer obstacles when launching a startup. The fact that the SR ran in two Turkish cities and only in Amman in Jordan, makes it easier to support this hypothesis.

Gender

Gender Makeup of all Respondents

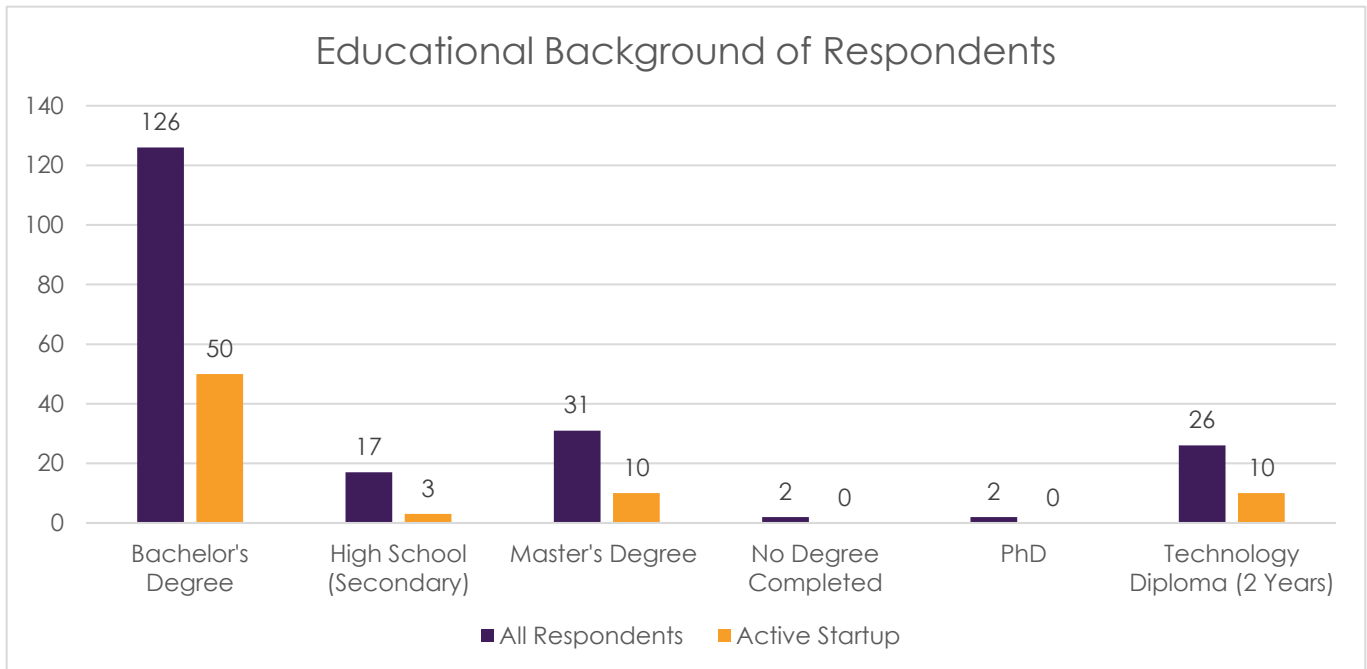


Gender Makeup of Still Active Startups

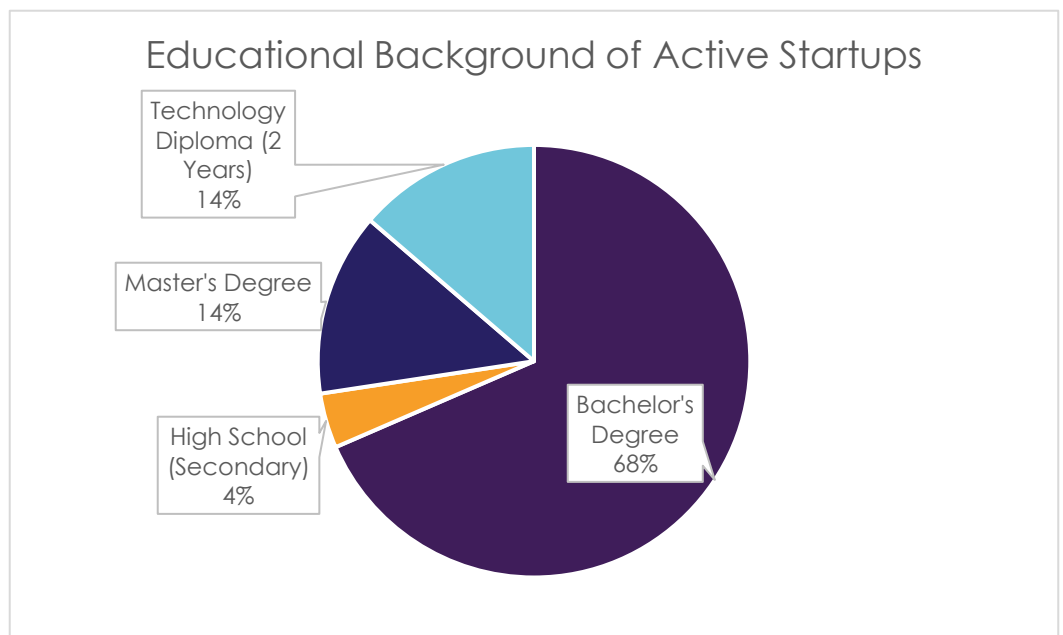


Gender equity is an important performance indicator for Jusoor and it has attempted to address this in its 2019 JSBP. To this end, they set the requirement that 50% of its participants in that program be female. This gave rise to some concerns that this systematic difference would bias the data. However, after excluding JSBP respondents from the dataset, there was no significant difference in outcomes. The two figures above show a higher dropout rate of females running startups compared to total respondents. Cultural issues in respective host countries might contribute to increasing the obstacles faced by females in initiating and running a startup. Females running startups were, on average, half a year older than their male counterparts, possibly indicating higher barriers to entry in starting a business. Nevertheless, female-run startups had virtually similar average startup health score in relation to male-run startups (10.9 points out of 25).

Education



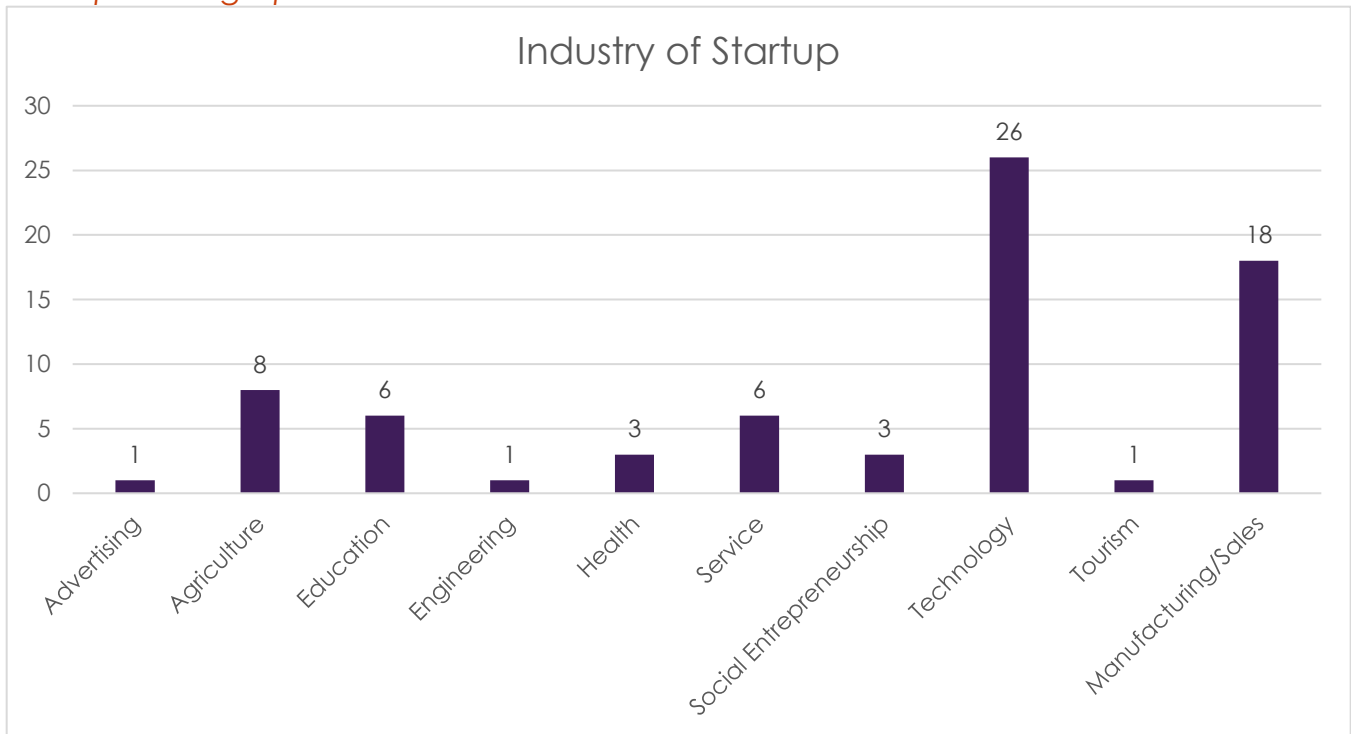
The educational status of respondents to the survey could not be compared to actual numbers, so it is impossible to determine if this sample is representative of all Jusoor participants in regards to education. Nevertheless, the following chart indicates that educational status of those running active startups more or less represent total respondent data. There is some expected trend towards higher degrees as there are no startups run by those having no formal education.



An Evaluation of Syrian Refugee Entrepreneurship

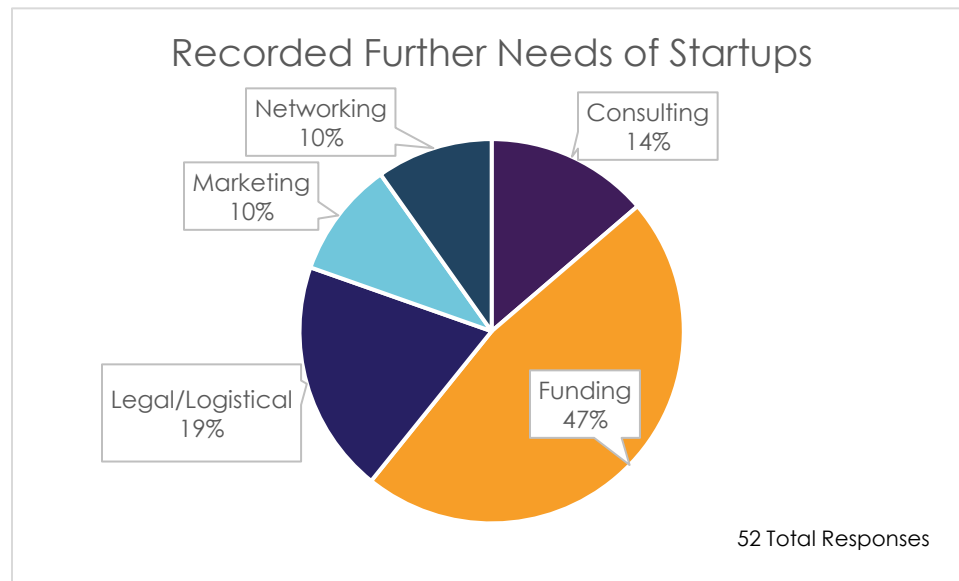


Startup Demographics

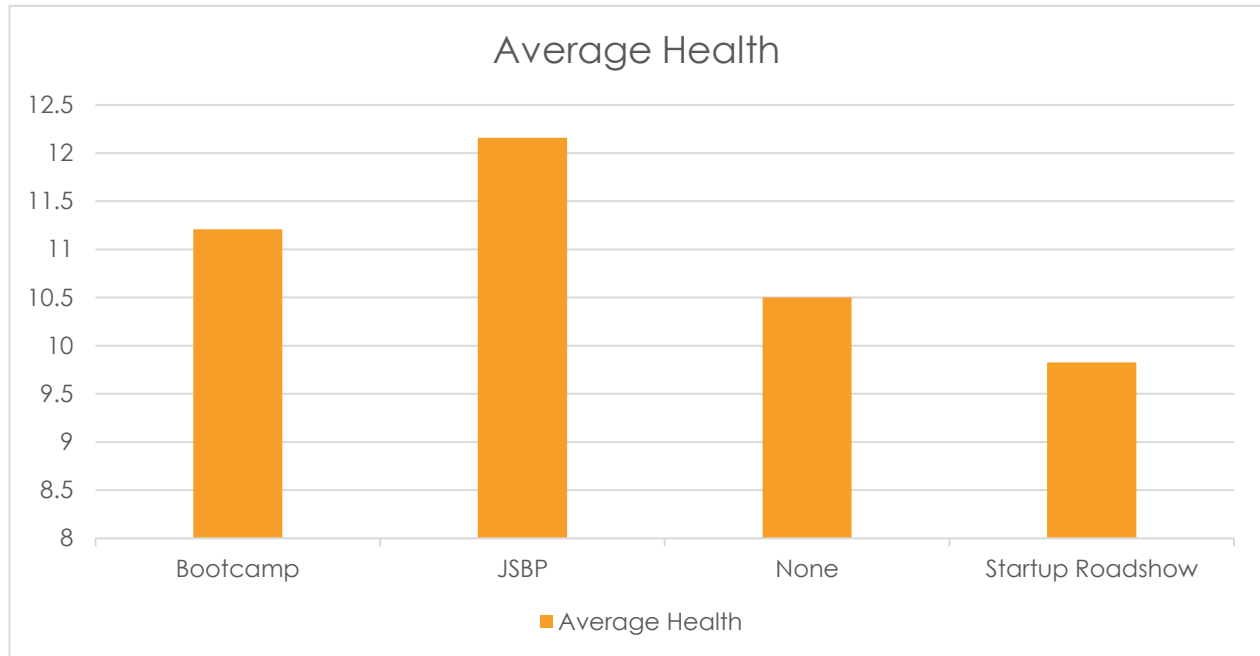


The survey included a question that allowed startups to indicate the secondary industry their startups operate in. The majority of these secondary industries were in the technology sector (predominately for agricultural startups) or in the social entrepreneurship sector (mostly for technology and manufacturing startups).

An optional question was included in the survey that allowed startups to indicate areas in which they require additional support. As expected, the majority of the 52 responses demonstrated a need



for further funding. Consulting and legal/logistical assistance were similar in that it indicated that startup need more help in navigating the regulatory environments of their respective countries.



The health index score of startups did not vary drastically across programs with the average being 11 out of 25. The Startup Roadshow has the lowest health index score, but many of the components of the index represent milestones and therefore do not necessarily indicate that SR startups are not as healthy. However, for those that did not attend any programming, their index scores are relatively lower despite year not being an operating factor. This either indicates that startups that do not attend Jusoor's programs perform worse, or that those worse-performing startups were not accepted into Jusoor's programs. With the limited data, it is impossible to draw a causal inference.

The total number of members in respondent startups (employment) before they received Jusoor support and mentorship was 222. Currently those same startups employ 317 people. While this does show positive growth for these startups, the survey was conducted during the beginning of Covid-19 related lockdowns. A follow up survey is necessary to ascertain the current situation of these startups in light of the novel coronavirus.

Evaluation by Program

Bootcamp Competition

As stated before, reports were incomplete for the earlier years of the program, thus an estimate of 100 participants was derived. The survey generated a sample of 43 (43% response rate). Of the four respondents from the 2015 Bootcamp, none still had an active startup. The following evaluation based on selected criteria was based on averages across surveys for all Bootcamp Competitions.

Effectiveness:

The Bootcamp consisted of about 37 hours of training and took place in 1-2 locations a year. With a total of 100 participants the estimated number of participants per program is 20. Each startup is run by 6 team members on average, including the founders. The average startup health score of the 9 still-active startups is 11.2 out of a maximum of 25.

Cost:

Total Cost 2015-2018 (including prize money): **\$254,062**

Total Cost 2015-2018 (excluding prize money): **\$136,738**

Average Operational Costs per Bootcamp: **\$27,347**

Average Cost per Bootcamp (including prize money): **\$50,812**

Cost-Effectiveness¹⁶:

Average Cost per Participant (including prize money): **\$2,190**

Average Cost per Participant (excluding prize money): **\$1,179**

Average Cost per Hour of Training (including prize money): **\$60.84**

Average Cost per Hour of Training (excluding prize money): **\$32.74**

¹⁶ There was not enough variation in the health index to use in our cost-effectiveness analysis. A breakdown of this complete analysis is included in Appendix D

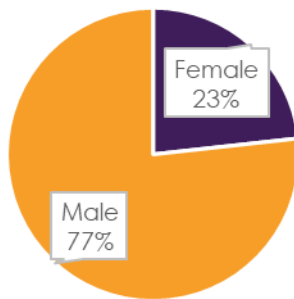
An Evaluation of Syrian Refugee Entrepreneurship



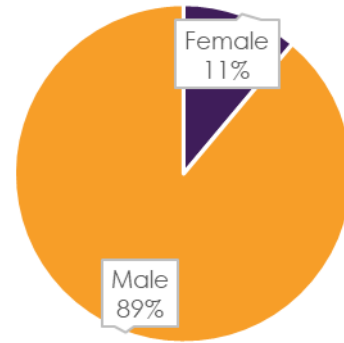
Equity:

Detailed reports were unavailable for the Bootcamp so data from the study serves as an estimate of the demographic makeup of participants and still active startups.

Gender Makeup of 2015-2018 Bootcamps

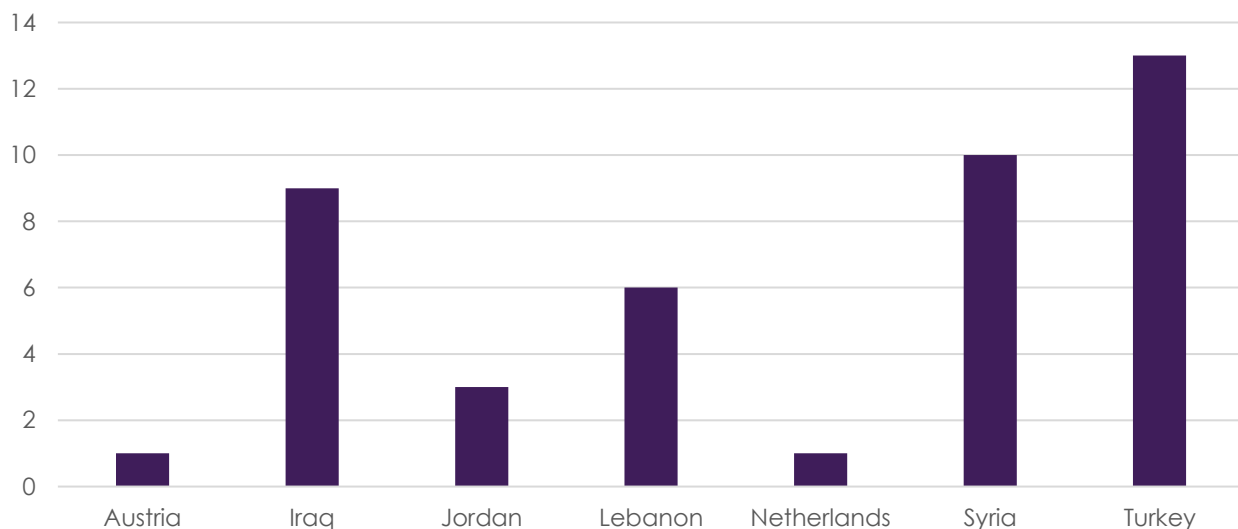


Gender of Still Active Startups



The average age of all participants is currently 28. Notably, participants from the 2018 competition are 2 years older on average despite the program being the most recent. Respondents from the 2015 program, by contrast, are on average, 26 years old. There was no significant deviation in average age for those still part of an active startup. Of the 43 respondents, only 2 were not Syrian citizens.

Current Residency of Bootcamp Participants



Startup Roadshow:

According to reports produced by Jusoor, there were a total of 373 participants in the 2018-2019 Roadshows (235 in 2019 and 138 in 2018). There were 115 respondents to the survey from these programs.

Effectiveness:

The Startup Roadshow follows the similar Jusoor curriculum used in the Bootcamp so that each participant receives 37 hours of training. Five locations made up the Roadshow with each city hosting an event similar to the bootcamp. Average number of team members for startups currently active is about 4. The average startup health, for the 47 still active startups, is 11.01 out of a maximum of 25. The 2019 Roadshow has an average startup health 3 points higher than the 2018 Roadshow. This is surprising since the assumption was that training allowed startups to achieve more milestones but the 2019 data is relatively newer. Drop-out rates could bring the average down by the end of 2020.

Cost:

Total Cost 2018-2019 (including prize money): **\$401,456**

Total Cost 2018-2019 (excluding prize money): **\$310,512**

Average Cost per Roadshow (including prize money): **\$200,728** (For each location: **\$40,145**)

Average Operational Cost per Roadshow (excluding prize money): **\$155,256** (For Each Location: **\$31,051**)

Cost Effectiveness:

Average Cost per Participant (including prize money): **\$1076**

Average Cost per Participant (excluding prize money): **\$832**

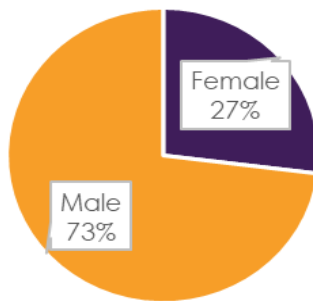
Average Cost per Hour of Training (including prize money): **\$29.90**

Average Cost per Hour of Training (excluding prize money): **\$23.12**

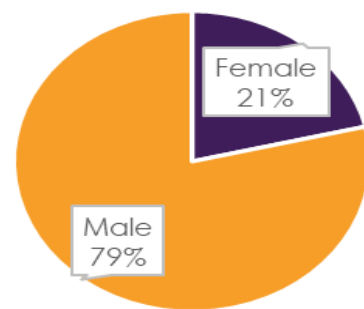
Equity:

The broad demographic data of participants were taken from detailed reports written by Jusoor. Analysis of startups utilized data from the survey. The SR shows signs of more equity than the Bootcamp as the makeup of gender tend to carry over better from participants to still active startups. This is possibly a result of Jusoor actively trying to achieve gender equity.

Gender Distribution of Startup Roadshow 2018-2019



Gender Makeup of Still Active Startups

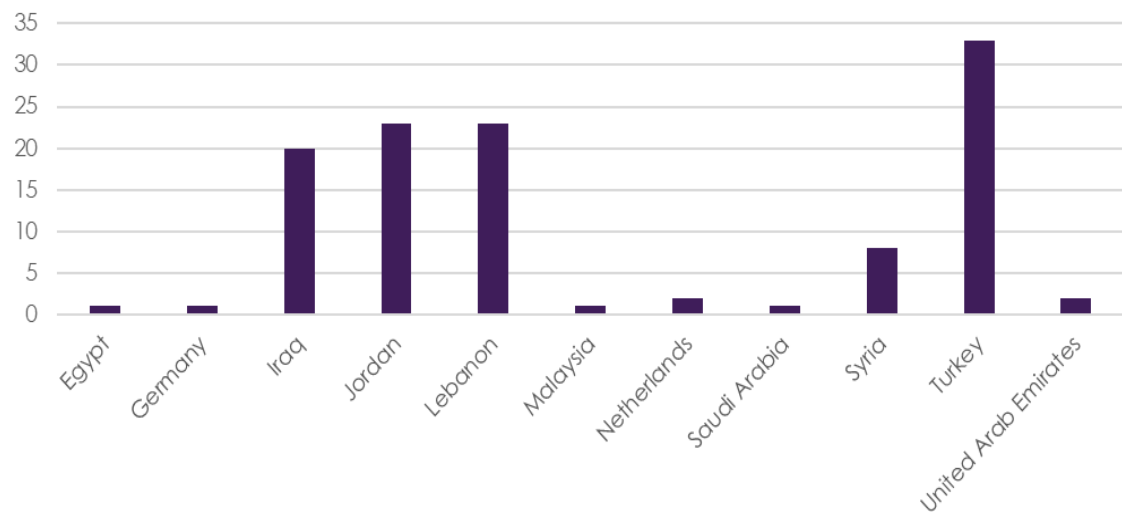


The current average age of all participants is 28: identical to the Bootcamp. For those still part of an active startup, the average age was a year lower.

Notably, the average age of members in active startups that participated in the 2019 program is

about 2 years younger than the 2018 program. Of the 115 respondents a large majority (97) were Syrian followed by 10 Jordanian citizens. The remaining 8 consisted of Iraqi, Turkish, Lebanese and Jordanian Citizens.

Current Residency of SR Participants



Jusoor Small Business Program

The JSBP has, to date, only ran one time in 4 different cities in Jordan. Each city has 3 winners as opposed to the Roadshow where winners were selected across locations. According to reports produced by Jusoor, there were a total of 97 participants. There were 16 respondents to the survey from these programs. The makeup of this program is different from the previous two. The prize money associated with this program is substantially larger due to a partnership with World Vision that has sponsored most of the awards.

Effectiveness

Although the curriculum is different to cater to S&E's, the JSBP also consists of about 37 hours of training per participants. Average number of team members for these S&Es currently active is about 3. The average startup health, for the six still-active startups, is 12.17 out of a maximum of 25. This index is still relevant since the startup components also apply to S&Es.

Cost

Total Cost (including prize money): **\$182,267**

Total Cost (excluding prize money): **\$51,485**

Cost-Effectiveness

Average Cost per Participant (including prize money): **\$1,879**

Average Cost per Participant (excluding prize money): **\$530**

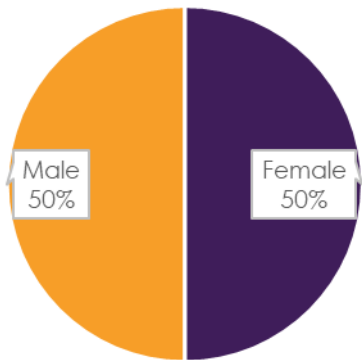
Average Cost per Hour of Training (including prize money): **\$52.20**

Average Cost per Hour of Training (excluding prize money): **\$14.74**

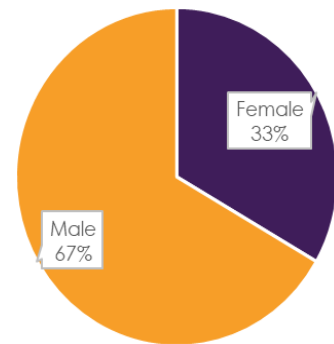
Equity

The broad demographic data of participants were taken from detailed reports written by Jusoor. Analysis of startups utilized data from the survey. Gender equity was a prerequisite of this program so participants were split evenly. The small sample size for active starts does not represent the same distribution.

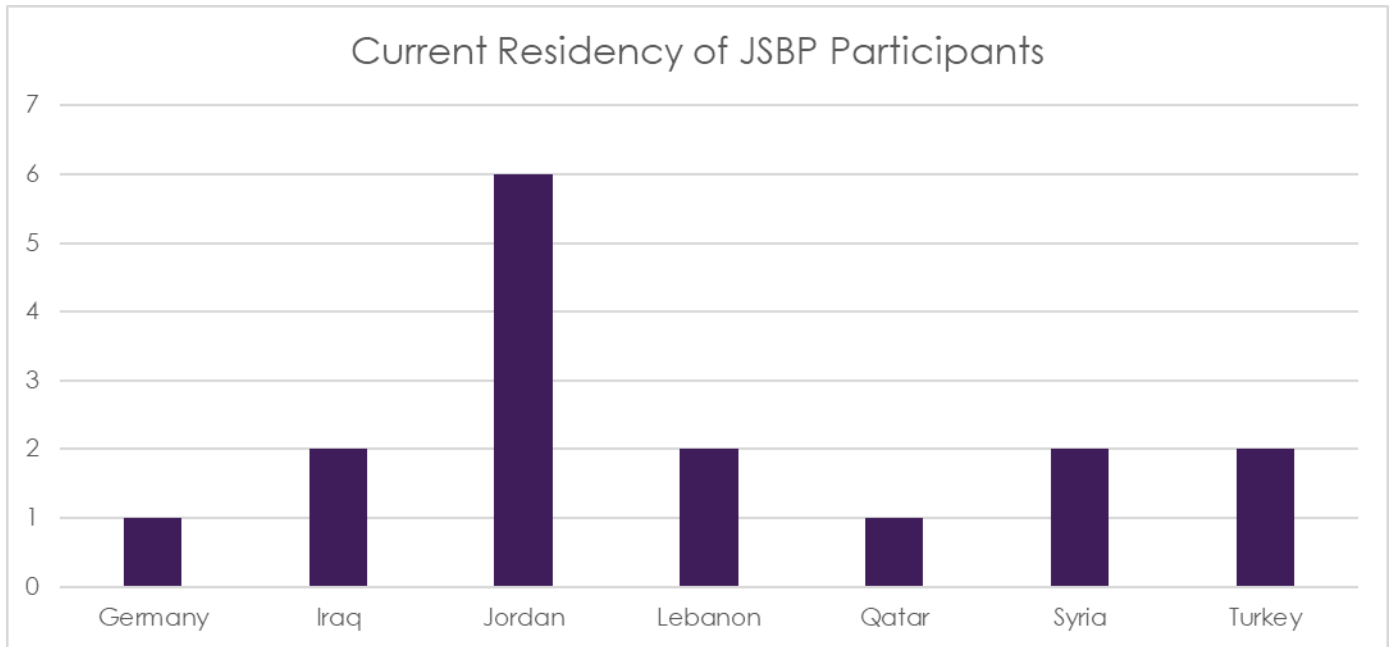
Gender of Participants in JSBP



Gender Makeup of Currently Active Startups



The current average age of all respondents is currently 30: higher than the other programs. However, for those still part of an active startup, the average age is 28, in line with other findings. Although the program was meant to provide for both Jordanian and Syrian Entrepreneurs, the respondents of the survey were predominately Syrian and only four were Jordanian.



Summary

The data was limited depending on the program. Nevertheless, valuable insight exists regarding the status of startups that are still active. The survey was designed in a way to encourage response rates at the cost of more informative data. To this end, the resulting evaluations do not allow us to make any causal inferences, but do let us observe some patterns upon which to base recommendations¹⁷.

¹⁷ The appendix includes figures and tables to capture some more variation across the programs

Recommendations

1. Tracking and Encouraging Attendance

Going forward with the Startup Roadshow in place of the Bootcamp shifts incentives for participants. The Bootcamp invites promising startups to come to a city for a little over a week. This allows attendees to be disconnected from their day to day responsibilities. The Roadshow takes place in cities where attendees are already located, so distractions from the programs might be easier and thus attendance falls. Mentors and trainers continue to educate without as many listeners. Jusoor should consider new ways to encourage participation. Moreover, tracking attendance provides a more accurate account of the benefits actually distributed to participants for future reports.

2. Rethink Distribution of Prize Money

The prize money aspect of the is an essential part of Jusoor's programs. However, the way funds are distributed are different across programs and drastically change how cost-effectiveness of each program is evaluated. For example, the Startup Roadshow selects 2 teams *from each site* to attend a demo day in a different location. The transportation and accommodation of these teams drastically increase the cost of distributing these awards. Elements from the JSBP, such as award distribution on site, could be emulated in the Startup Roadshow to achieve an even lower cost per participant. Jusoor could consider new ways to reduce the cost of prize money distribution and give the savings back in the form of bigger prizes or enhanced training.

3. Networking is Key

Evaluation of the data has shown that startups with a local/national founder tend to be more successful. However, this does not need to be limited to founders only. As shown in the literature review, other organizations have been trying to aid startups by presenting their projects to angel investors. Most of these startups pitch to Jusoor to receive seed funding. In addition to this, Jusoor can reach out to local investors and connect them with entrepreneurs as a part of the SR curriculum. Jusoor could also help in this area by simply providing the tools for refugee entrepreneurs to be able to network with organizations and people who can help them out in this area.

4. Country Specific Courses

The curriculum employed by the SR is broad and applies to entrepreneurs as a whole. This is understandable given that the same mentors and trainers travel from city to city. However, the data has shown that the biggest needs startups have aside from lack of funding is consulting and legal advice. These issues are inherently country specific and cannot be addressed on a broad level. Jusoor could invite local businesses, lawyers, or consultants, to help startups navigate some of the regulatory issues in their specific host countries.

Implementation Considerations

Aside from the recommendations above, Jusoor should continue writing detailed reports to help provide a basis for future impact evaluations. The JSBP and SR 2018, are good examples of effective reporting. Perhaps a standardized template can be used to ensure continuity and to make evaluations such as this easier to conduct.

The region in which Jusoor works in is politically very volatile. As conflicts arise, citizens face a lot of problems in the forms of sanctions, visa restrictions, and infrastructure issues. All of these can impact Jusoor's ability to provide funding and mentorship to Syrian entrepreneurs (as seen in SR 2018). This has recently been made clear by the outbreak of Covid-19

Many respondents to the survey noted drastic changes in their day to day operations since the outbreak of COVID-19. Should the situation remain as uncertain, Jusoor will face issues in carrying out its programming the coming months. Online mentorship has been a component of the Startup Roadshow and may need to be more heavily employed. Should the situation improve soon, and no new conflicts in the region arise, Jusoor should be able to put in place a set of improvements in its SR to benefit refugee entrepreneurs in the region and beyond.

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Appendix A: Methodology

Key Performance Indicators and Survey

Before beginning the to write the survey questions, the Jusoor Impact Evaluation Team together assessed what the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the Jusoor Entrepreneurship Program would be (Appendix C). These were gathered by synthesizing best practices of startup evaluation and adding indicators that are valuable to Jusoor. Two categories of indicators were created, internal indicators which could be assessed on currently available data, and external indicators. Data for the external indicators were gathered from the surveys.

The questions for the survey were created based on the external KPIs that were outlined. Afterwards, a listserv was compiled based on all participant contact information Jusoor had. Since the early years of the Bootcamp Program lacked adequate reporting. All *applicant* emails were added for these programs. This is the reason there are respondents to the survey that did not attend any Jusoor programming. Those that completed the surveys were sent out electronic gift basket of PDFs and articles on the topic of entrepreneurship as an incentive.

Only 58 responses were the surveys sent out by emails. Since this was not a large enough sample size for this study, phone calls were made to those that did not fill out surveys. Surveys were completed with the respondent on the line. The rest of the sample size was achieved through these phone calls.

Startup Health Index

To be able to assess the status of these startups, an index was created to outline the health of startups. This was done by categorizing the components of a startup, such as office, business model, official registration, etc. and assigning numerical values to them. These values were generated by creating an internal survey of Jusoor employees' own values of these components on a scale of 1-5. The averages for each category were taken to generate the index which ranges from 0-25. However, after further analysis, it was discovered that a lot of this components were contingent on each other and often served as milestones, so they did not necessarily indicate health as much as they indicated how far along the startup was. For this reason, the index was not used extensively in the analysis

Appendix B: Accounting for Attendance - SR

Startup Roadshow Hours of Training/Participant Costs by Attendance ¹⁸¹⁹		
	Strict Attendance (Days attended x hours of training per day)	No accounting for Attendance (full attendance)
Startup Roadshow 2018	\$30.22	\$24.57
Startup Roadshow 2019	\$41.17	\$22.28

Startup Roadshow Program Cost Per Person ²⁰		
	Attendance = at least one day of training attended is assumed as full attendance for program	No accounting for Attendance (full attendance)
Startup Roadshow 2018	\$1,191	\$1,096
Startup Roadshow 2019	\$1,516	\$1,064

¹⁸ All dollar amounts were converted into 2018 dollars using CPI data

¹⁹ Values exclude prize money

²⁰ Values include prize money

Appendix C: Key Performance Indicators

Jusoor's Stated Goals for Entrepreneurship Program

Providing for the “potential for growth and impact on job creation, economic and social development, and the development of skills and expertise in new industries.”

Currently Available Data

Startup Data:

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| • Startup Name | • Contact info | • Location |
| • Founders | • Dates | • Biographies |
| • Industry | • Evaluations of Jusoor's programming | • Business Stage |

Jusoor Data

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| • Partnerships | • Financial spending | • Internal evaluations |
| • Program outlines | • Training outcomes | • Cost per person |

Selected KPIs	
Internal KPIs	External KPIs (Jusoor Startups)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost per startup and individual in attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Startup Roadshow VS Bootcamp • Cost per active business (as of today) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Including spillover effects • Amount of outside money/sponsors mobilized for Jusoor ENT¹ • Diversity of Jusoor's programming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Gender ◦ Nationality • Hours of training given/total trained refugees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Accounting for attendance • Jusoor Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Effectiveness of each partnership • Jusoor Budget Analysis (Admin, Events, Grants, training) • Program Growth over time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ # of applicants year to year ◦ Funding amount ◦ # of Locations ◦ Training Quality (i.e. # of topics)¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of businesses launched after Jusoor funding (if in the idea/seed stage) • Founders info/diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Sex ◦ Location ◦ Nationality ◦ Age ◦ Education ◦ Work BG) • Profitability¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ If yes, then → Revenues 1, 2, and 3 years after receiving Jusoor funding/support • Social impact of refugee-led startups¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Yes/No • Total money raised by the startup after participation (outside of Jusoor support)¹ • Startup health¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Startup Stage ◦ Daily Active User growth/#of clients ◦ MVP/BMC/etc ◦ # of employees/size of the team ◦ industry • Beneficiary satisfaction (do startups find Jusoor's help useful?)¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ From 1 to 10 ◦ Any comments?

Appendix D: Cost-Effectiveness of Training

Average of Programs in 2018 Dollars				
	Cost per Participant (with Prize Money)	Cost per Participant (without Prize Money)	Cost/Hr of Training with Prize Money	Cost/Hr of Training without Prize Money
Bootcamp	\$2,190.19	\$1,178.77	\$60.84	\$32.74
Startup Roadshow	\$1,076.29	\$832.47	\$29.90	\$23.12
JSBP	\$1,879.05	\$530.77	\$52.20	\$14.74

Methodology

A lot of the reporting for earlier years of the Bootcamp program were incomplete or missing. The data needed for this analysis, especially for those earlier years, were derived from budgetary analysis and incomplete survey analysis. Through this process, an estimate of the number of attendees for the Bootcamp programs was derived. There was enough data on the Startup Roadshow and the JSBP to get attendance data. Furthermore, the Startup Roadshow recorded attendance by day so that an analysis could be done on cost per hour of training depending on beneficiary attendance.

Costs were broken down by program and then by year. Total costs were also separated into two categories: with and without prize money included. Since prize money is a large aspect of these trainings and competitions and varies greatly from program to program, we thought it would be useful to see the differences in cost-effectiveness with this as a variable. All expenditures were converted from local currency to US dollars based on the month in which the program took place. Afterwards, these amounts were converted into 2018 dollars based on annual CPI data.

To adequately compare across programs, the aggregate costs and cost per participant/training hour were averaged across all years of that program. For

example, the Bootcamps that took place between the years of 2015 and 2018 were averaged in terms of cost and participants²¹.

Metrics Used

Hours of training provided was the only quantitative indicator variable that was readily available. The survey did not generate consistent enough data to measure outcomes using traditional cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA). We decided to use hours of training as our performance outcome. Although this is not an outcome under traditional CEA definitions, we venture to make the assumption that the more training a startup or entrepreneur gets, the more effective they become in addressing the obstacles they regularly face. Moreover, we believed this to be an adequate metric to use because the curriculum taught under the Bootcamp and Startup Roadshow programs are both created by Jusoor and teach virtually the same concepts. The JSBP is a bit different, but it was included in the analysis because even if specific lecture topics are different, entrepreneurs partake in approximately 36 hours of training throughout the program; on par with the Bootcamp and the SR.

²¹ Cost per program each year are still available in the subsections of the corresponding excel file.