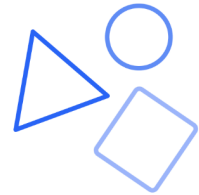




SkillLab

Turning skills into careers



Unlocking Workforce Potential

The Power of User-Validated Skill Data in Ukraine

Simon Schmid and Divabelle Bayuputri

SkillLab

December, 2024

Executive summary

This white paper is the first in a three-part series exploring the critical role of user-validated skill data in addressing labor market challenges and opportunities in Ukraine. SkillLab collected and analyzed 8,500 user profiles, encompassing 645,000 skills and 30,000 experiences, generated in the Supporting the People and Employers of Ukraine project. The analysis uncovers key insights into skills, occupations and career interests. The first white paper focuses on the importance of recognizing skills from all experiences in ensuring that everyone has a pathway to employment.

Ukraine's labor market faces unprecedented challenges amid the ongoing Russian invasion. The country grapples with high unemployment, critical skills shortages, and the mobilization of employees for defense efforts. Simultaneously, the emigration of qualified specialists and regional economic imbalances further complicate the landscape. Despite these hurdles, Ukraine urgently needs to expand its workforce to support national reconstruction efforts.

In this complex environment, understanding the skills landscape becomes paramount for effective workforce development and economic recovery. This white paper examines the vital role of user-validated skill data - information directly provided and confirmed by individuals about their abilities and experiences - in addressing Ukraine's pressing labor market challenges and identifying new opportunities.

During the first 9 months of SkillLab's collaboration with the State Employment Service of Ukraine, SkillLab has collected data from 8,500 skill profiles, encompassing 645,000 skills and 30,000 experiences. Based on this data, we explore how a skills-first approach can help bridge crucial gaps in the workforce and support the country's resilience and growth.

The data and insights presented in this white paper were generated from the **Supporting the People and Employers of Ukraine** (“SPEU”) project. This initiative is being implemented by SkillLab with the support of the Norwegian Refugee Council and the World Bank, in close collaboration with key Ukrainian government entities including the State Employment Service of Ukraine, the Ministry of Economy, and the Ministry of Digital Transformation.

This collaborative effort aims to provide a skill profiling and career guidance solution to connect people in need with jobs and education opportunities. By providing a digital and

option for the provision of employment services, SkillLab has created a data collection mechanism that allows people, employers and education providers to provide user-validated skill data. At the same time, the project enhances people's independence and provides access to remote, accessible services - a critical need in the current Ukrainian context.

SkillLab leveraged the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) taxonomy, a comprehensive skill classification system developed by the European Union. The ESCO taxonomy was translated into Ukrainian through the collaborative efforts of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and the European Training Foundation. This localization of ESCO enabled the project to capture and analyze skill data in a standardized format that is both internationally recognized and tailored to the Ukrainian context.

As Ukraine continues to defend its sovereignty and plan for post-war recovery, the timely application of these insights is crucial. This skills-first approach offers a pathway to not only address immediate labor market challenges but also to build a more resilient, adaptable, and competitive workforce for Ukraine's future. By leveraging user-validated skill data, Ukraine can more effectively mobilize its human capital, driving economic recovery and laying the foundation for sustainable growth in the face of ongoing adversity.

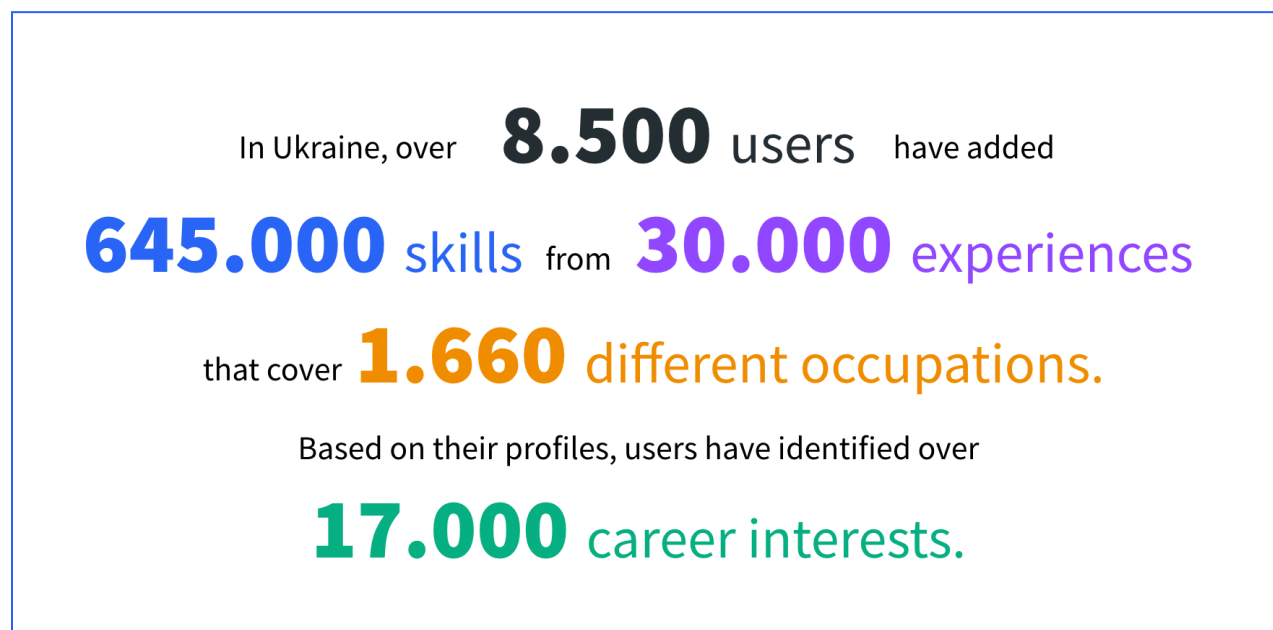


Figure 1 Overview of user-validated skill data¹

¹ All data from SkillLab database

Key Findings and Analysis

Our analysis reveals a rich tapestry of skill acquisition patterns among Ukrainian users, highlighting the importance of learning from both formal and informal experiences. The most commonly added skills fall under categories such as communication, collaboration, creativity, and assisting and caring. Notably, skills like "communicate with customers" have been added over 4,000 times, primarily from job experiences. However, many essential skills are also acquired through life experiences. For instance, skills related to assisting and caring, as well as communication and collaboration often stem from everyday life rather than formal employment.



Figure 2 Top 100 Added Skills

As we delve deeper into the data, we observe significant discrepancies between users' career interests and their actual job experiences. Popular career interests include roles such as domestic cleaner, shop assistant, and positions within the Gastronomy & Hospitality sector. Yet, only a small percentage of users with interests in these fields possess relevant job experience. Specifically, only 38.05% of users interested in Gastronomy & Hospitality have prior experience in that area. This gap presents a unique opportunity for workforce development initiatives to bridge the divide between interest and experience.

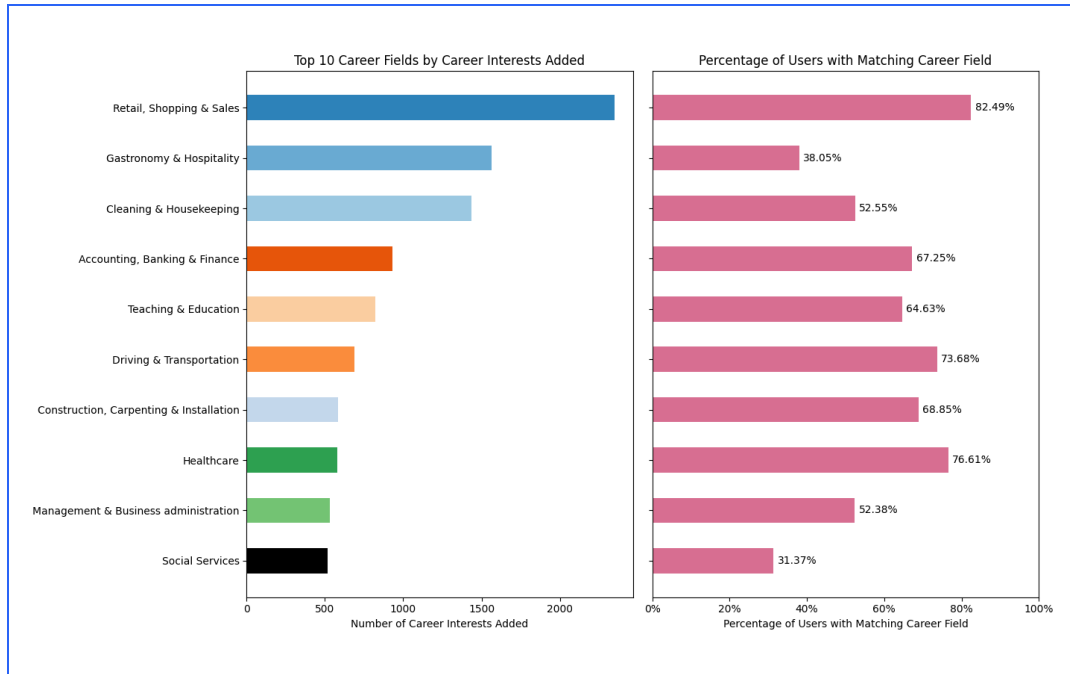


Figure 3 Top 10 Career Fields with Identified Career Interest and Percentage of Users with Experiences in the Career Field

The hidden value of life experiences emerges as a pivotal theme in this analysis. Many users interested in roles like cook or domestic cleaner possess essential skills acquired through life experiences rather than formal job roles. For example, while only 48% of users interested in becoming cooks have relevant job experience in Gastronomy & Hospitality, a significant portion of their essential skills are nonetheless present in their profiles. This suggests that informal learning can effectively prepare individuals for careers that may not align with their previous employment history.

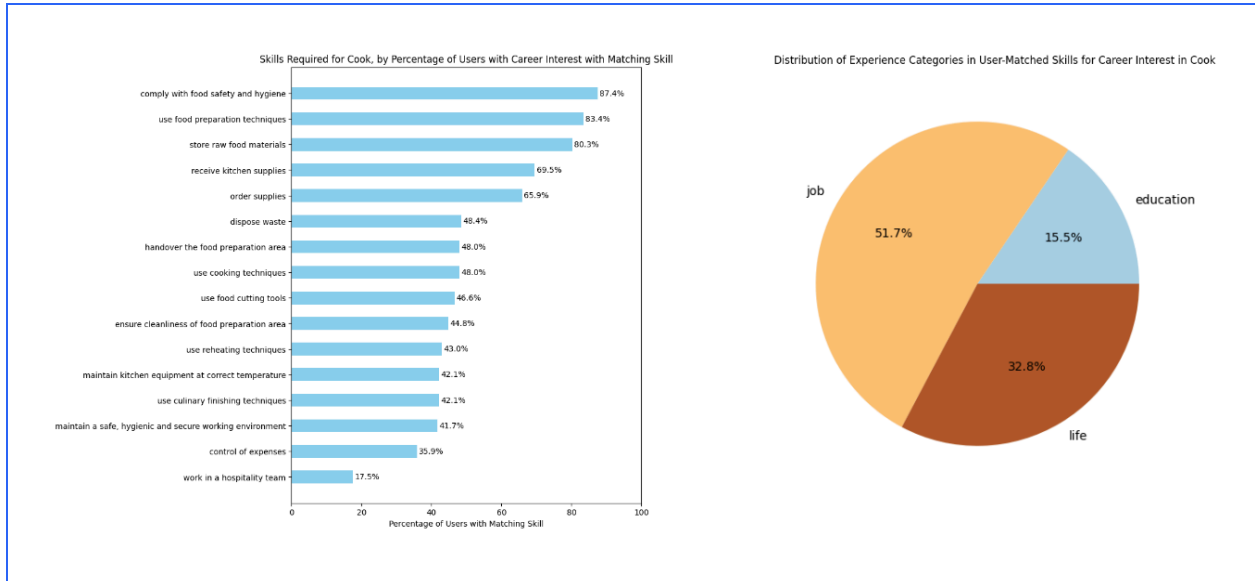


Figure 4 Skill source for Occupation 'Cook'

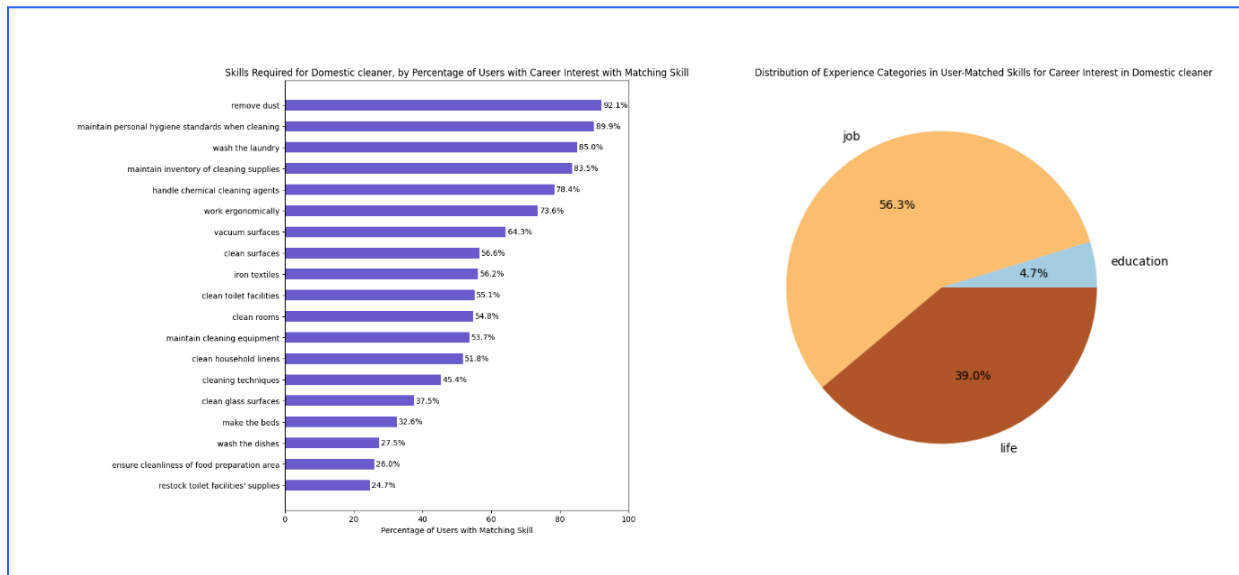


Figure 5 Skill source for Occupation 'Domestic cleaner'

Furthermore, the analysis highlights specific skill gaps that could inform targeted training programs. For instance, while many users express interest in bookkeeping, essential skills required for this profession are predominantly acquired through formal education or job experiences. Identifying these gaps allows for the development of focused training, on-the-job learning or other initiatives that can quickly upskill workers for in-demand positions.

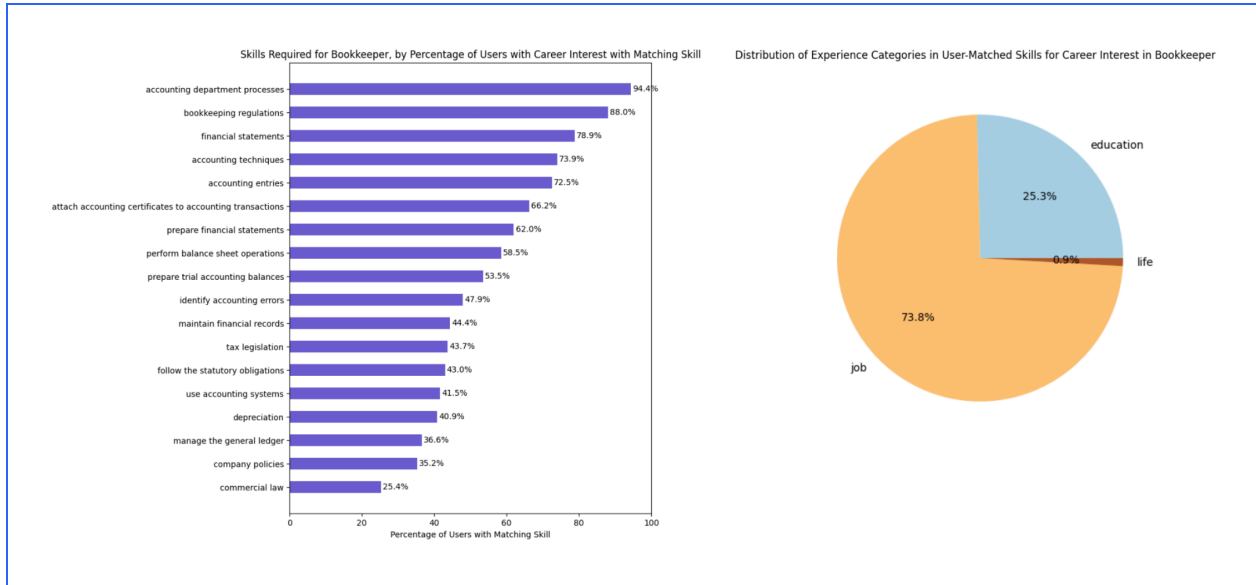


Figure 6 Skill source for Occupation 'Bookkeeper'

In tight labor markets where demand for skilled workers often exceeds supply, recognizing the versatility and transferability of skills becomes increasingly important.

The data indicates that many individuals possess relevant skills from diverse backgrounds that can be applied across various occupations in various sectors. For example, users interested in Social Services often come from fields such as teaching or healthcare, suggesting a wealth of transferable skills that could be harnessed to meet labor market needs.

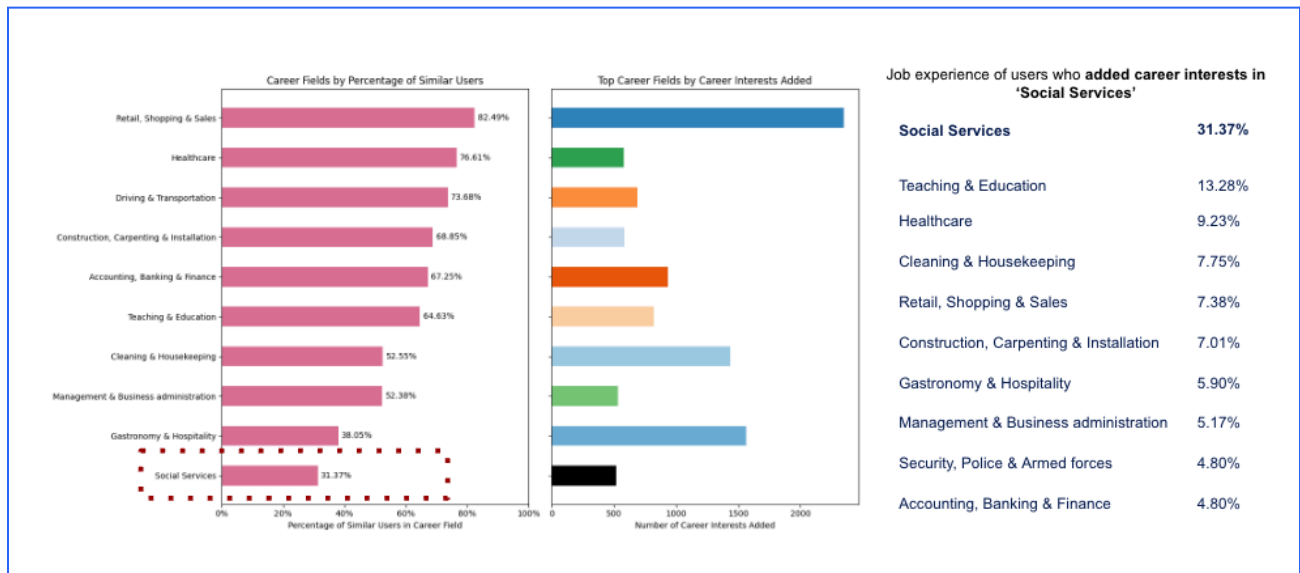


Figure 7 Job experience of users interested in Social Services

Moreover, this focus on skills has the potential to bring more people into the labor force by recognizing non-traditional skill sources. Many individuals who may not have formal job experience but possess relevant life skills can be encouraged to enter the workforce if employers broaden their qualification criteria to recognize these capabilities. This approach not only helps fill immediate labor shortages but also promotes economic resilience by fostering a more adaptable workforce.

As we look towards the future of workforce development in Ukraine, it is clear that user-validated skill data offers valuable insights into the complex landscape of workforce capabilities and career aspirations. By embracing a skills-based approach that recognizes diverse sources of skill acquisition—particularly life experiences—and addresses specific skill gaps through targeted training programs, we can create more inclusive and effective workforce strategies.

This approach not only enhances individual career prospects but also aligns workforce skills with market demands, fostering economic growth and adaptability in the face of changing labor market dynamics. Ultimately, by unlocking the potential inherent in user-validated skill data, we can pave the way for a more resilient and capable workforce ready to meet the challenges of rebuilding Ukraine - driving economic recovery and laying the foundation for sustainable growth in the face of adversity.