



Youth Transitions to Adulthood in Jordan: High Aspirations, Challenging Realities

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Acronyms

COVID-19	2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease
DOS	Department of Statistics (Jordan)
FGD	Focus group discussion
FSU	Final sampling unit
JD	Jordanian Dinars
JLMPS	Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NAF	National Aid Fund
NEET	Not in education, employment, or training
NES	National Employment Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NYS	National Youth Strategy
PSU	Primary sampling unit
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SME	Small and medium enterprise
TSU	Tertiary sampling unit
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UN-WG	UN-Washington Group
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
YPWD	Young People with Disabilities
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary



Report objectives and overview

Jordan's population is relatively young, with **nearly a third of the country's population** aged between 16 and 30 years. Jordan's youth population also grew substantially with the influx of Syrian refugees after 2011, a refugee population that is overwhelmingly young.¹ The success – or struggles – of Jordan's youth during the critical phase of adolescence and young adulthood will shape the future of a generation – and the country.

This report has the following objectives:

- to explore the economic and social aspirations and the experiences of Jordanians and Syrians aged between 16 and 30 in Jordan by analysing a new, nationally representative youth survey that took place in 2020 and 2021 and qualitative focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted in 2019 and 2020.
- to understand youth transitions to adulthood, including progression through the education system, the transition from school to work, readiness for the labour market and skills acquisition, achieving economic independence and its link to family formation, and opportunities to obtain stable employment and decent work.
- to investigate the opportunities and risks associated with youth entrepreneurship, migration aspirations, civic engagement, youth gender norms, and the use of media.
- to generate evidence-based implications for policies and programmes relating to education, training, employment, entrepreneurship, family formation, and the civic and social engagement of young people, while taking into consideration the different experiences of Jordanian and Syrian youth and the different experiences of male and female youth.

¹ Krafft, Razzaz et al., 2019.

Methods

This report relies on **new data** – both quantitative (survey) data and qualitative (focus group discussion) data.

1. The quantitative data were based on a **nationally representative survey** of Jordanians and Syrians in Jordan aged between 16 and 30 years. We refer to this survey as the Survey of Young People in Jordan (SYPJ).² The resulting sample reached 2,854 households and 4,538 young people.
2. The qualitative component of the study consisted of 12 **focus group discussions (FGDs)** held with Jordanians and Syrian refugees aged 16–30 years old. The FGDs were separated by sex and nationality (Jordanian or Syrian), and two focus groups were held specifically with Jordanian young people with disabilities (YPWD).

Summary of findings

Key findings on educational aspirations and achievements

- Jordan's young population is increasingly educated and has corresponding aspirations with regards to employment and adulthood more generally. Jordan made important progress in increasing **educational attainment** over the past 30 years, especially among young women.³ In fact, we show that 60 per cent of young Jordanian women go on to higher education compared to only 40 per cent of their male counterparts. Although young people emphasize the importance of higher education, they do not have a clear sense of the career paths from different specializations. Improving youth understanding of labour market outcomes for different

² This is similar to the Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE) (Roushdy and Sieverding, 2015; Population Council, 2011).

³ Assaad, Krafft and Keo, 2019.

specializations may facilitate school-to-work transitions.⁴

- Almost all Syrians have been able to access basic education after their arrival in Jordan, but the combination of lower educational attainment in Syria prior to arrival and difficult economic conditions in Jordan lead to 30 per cent of young Syrians **dropping out of school** prior to completing the compulsory basic stage. Only 44 per cent of Syrians continue onto the secondary stage and 22 per cent continue on to higher education. Both Jordanian and Syrian youth value education greatly, but Syrian youth also face barriers to educational progression. Key barriers to school progression include poverty, bullying, struggles with academic success, and early marriage.⁵
- Within secondary education, the most common educational track is the arts. Although nearly a fifth of Jordanians pursue the vocational track, only 6 per cent of Syrians who went to secondary schools do so. The vocational track is also less common among Jordanian women than Jordanian men.

Key findings relating to the challenging transition from school to work

- While education has raised youth aspirations for improved livelihoods and economic independence, **the reality of young people's transition to adulthood has generally not met their aspirations.** The jobs that young people aspire to have not been forthcoming, leading to extended and difficult school-to-work transitions and thus delays in their transition to financial independence, marriage, and starting their own families.
- **The transition from school to work** in Jordan takes a long time for young men and occurs only infrequently for young women. Even five years after leaving school, less than three-quarters of young men, whether Jordanian or Syrian, have obtained a job that lasts for longer than six months. Although, by five years after leaving school, 35 per cent of Jordanian women with higher education obtain a job that lasts for longer than six months, the proportion of those at other levels of educational attainment ever obtaining a job never rises above 15 per cent. Overall, young Jordanian women reach a peak employment rate of 17 per cent at the age of 25–30 years. The transition to employment is even rarer among young Syrian women, with a peak employment rate of only 8 per cent among those aged 25–30 years.
- **Transitions to formal employment** – employment that is covered by social insurance – are substantially more challenging. Only Jordanian men with secondary or higher education, and to a lesser extent basic education, have an appreciable probability of getting such work. The probabilities of getting formal employment are much lower for young Jordanian women, even when educated, and almost non-existent for Syrians. Young Jordanians and Syrians recognized the difficulty of obtaining their preferred types of employment. The gap between their employment expectations and their subsequent experiences was a key factor contributing to their view that their transitions to adulthood were far from the ideal transitions they envisioned.
- **COVID-19** has created additional challenges for both schooling and work. Schools were shut down for most of the pandemic in Jordan. While lessons were (theoretically) offered online, youth spent less time on their schooling. Unemployment rates rose in Jordan as hiring froze,⁶ particularly affecting young labour market entrants. Young people also experienced substantial increases in job losses.

⁴ Jensen, 2010.

⁵ Sieverding et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2018.

⁶ Department of Statistics (Jordan), 2021.

Key findings relating to challenges in achieving economic independence and marriage

- The inability to become economically ready for **marriage** has substantially delayed marriage for Jordanian young men and to some extent for Jordanian women who must wait for their prospective spouse to become ready. Ages at marriage were consistently above what was considered the ideal age of marriage for Jordanians, and young people viewed financial independence as unobtainable within the age-ranges at which they would have liked to get married.
- Although Syrian men expressed the same aspirations to be **economically independent** by the time of their marriage, given their challenging economic circumstances, waiting until they were economically ready to marry was not realistic. In fact, only 62 per cent of married Syrian young men were employed compared to 91 per cent of married Jordanian young men.
- While financial independence and the ability to live independently from one's parents was a strongly expressed preference prior to marriage among both young Jordanians and Syrians, among Syrians, between 56 per cent and 73 per cent of couples had to **live with their parents or parents-in-law** at marriage.
- The longstanding practice of **early marriage** has continued for Syrian girls in Jordan, so that 28 per cent of them are married before the age of 18. Although some of the earlier ages at marriage observed for Syrians can be attributed to their lower ideal ages for marriage, few young Syrians considered marriage before the age of 18 ideal. Interventions that address longstanding norms of early marriage and particularly families' concerns about girls' sexual

and reputational safety are critically important.⁷

Key findings relating to training and skills

- A substantial proportion of young people in Jordan engage in some sort of **training** outside the setting of formal education, but it is not always clear how much this training contributes to their labour market readiness. About 28 per cent of young Jordanians and 24 per cent of young Syrians had one or more training experience, and Syrians living in camps were much more likely to engage in training (45 per cent) than Syrians living in host communities (19 per cent). Syrian women, in particular, were likely to participate in multiple trainings, with a quarter of those receiving training engaging in two or more trainings, compared to less than 15 per cent of their Jordanian male counterparts.
- Young people found trainings valuable for their **personal development** and for their efforts to find a job, but not necessarily for leading directly to a job and rarely for starting a business.
- Young people generally report having a series of **hard and soft skills** that are potentially valuable in the job market. Some interesting patterns emerged indicating relatively weak literacy and math skills among young Syrian men. Young Syrians generally reported having lower levels of computer, management, and language skills than their Jordanian counterparts. However, there is no clear correlation between young people's self-reported skills and their employment outcomes.

⁷ Bartels et al., 2018; Sieverding et al., 2020.

Key findings relating to employment and unemployment

- Young people in Jordan face substantial challenges in transitioning to employment, if they are able to do so at all. The share of young men who are **not in education, employment, or training (NEET)** does decline with age, but rates are still quite high at ages 25–30, with 24 per cent of Jordanian men and 35 per cent of Syrian men in this age group still in the NEET category. In contrast, women’s NEET rates increase with age as they leave school, marry, and assume more unpaid care work responsibilities. NEET rates of Jordanian women increase from 47 per cent at ages 18–24 to 80 per cent at ages 25–30, whereas Syrian women’s NEET rates, while also rising with age, remain above 80 per cent throughout. This does not mean that women do not want to work. About 27 per cent of Jordanian young women and 16 per cent of Syrian young women actively participate in the labour market, but the vast majority of them (79 per cent of Jordanian and 82 per cent of Syrian women) are unemployed and seeking work rather than working. Unemployment rates among women aged 18–24, in particular, are around 90 per cent for both Jordanians and Syrians.
- Women’s employment** is severely constrained by the availability of jobs that meet women’s reservation working conditions or reservation prestige. Some of the focus group participants spoke of the difficulty of finding jobs that are considered appropriate for young women in the prevailing “culture of shame.” Focus group respondents expressed positive views about women’s employment in general but thought that women’s employment was subject to specific conditions that were rarely present in the private sector.
- The vast majority (over 80 per cent) of respondents of either sex and nationality said teaching or being a health professional were **ideal occupations** for women, occupations that are primarily found in the public sector. Only 14 per cent of employed Jordanian young women were actually employed in the public sector. Notably, however, those in public sector employment expressed very high levels of satisfaction with it, considerably higher than the levels of satisfaction expressed by those in formal private sector employment, in which another 30 per cent of employed Jordanian women were engaged.
- Public sector jobs are closed to Syrian women, leaving them with few culturally acceptable employment opportunities. Almost 97 per cent of Syrian women who work are employed in **informal wage jobs**, most of which are outside of fixed establishments, the least desirable and most precarious types of employment. In the face of barriers to accessing their preferred, higher-quality jobs in Jordan, engaging in home-based production and sales activities were seen as the most accessible and appropriate forms of economic activity for young Syrian women.
- According to male respondents, the prevailing “**culture of shame**” also constrains men’s employment options, leading them to wait a long time for positions seen as socially acceptable and suited to their educational credentials. A slight majority of employed Jordanian young men (54 per cent) are in some sort of formal employment, either in the public or private sectors. They express strong preferences for jobs in the military, followed by the healthcare sector, or as other professionals, teachers, and managers.

- **Formal jobs** of any kind appear to be almost entirely inaccessible to young Syrian men, 92 per cent of whom when employed are in informal wage employment. Yet given the challenging economic situation for Syrian refugees in Jordan, focus group discussion respondents saw Syrians as much more willing than Jordanians to accept any form of employment, although young Syrian men themselves also noted concerns about exploitation in the precarious jobs in which they were often engaged.

Key findings relating to entrepreneurship

- **Entrepreneurship or self-employment** is not much of an option for the vast majority of youth in Jordan. When asked, the majority of participants in focus group discussions did not know what entrepreneurship was. They considered projects that entail making a product and selling it, and thus generating income for the family, as entrepreneurship, and few young people associated entrepreneurship with notions of innovation and creativity.
- Although **having one's own business** was, in the abstract, considered a positive idea, few young people were actually able to succeed as entrepreneurs. While 48 per cent of young people reported that they wanted to start their own business or project within five years, only 10 per cent reported they had ever had an idea for a business and tried to start one. Among those, half had tried to start a business but never actually started it, 42 per cent started a business which failed, 3 per cent started a business but closed it, and only 5 per cent started a business and had it continue.

Key findings relating to aspirations for international migration

- A substantial proportion of young people, especially young men, saw **international migration** as a way out of their employment predicament in Jordan. Just over a third of young Jordanian men and 43 per cent of young Syrian men expressed an intention to emigrate, with the intention to emigrate rising with educational attainment. Jordanians were particularly interested in emigrating to the Gulf, whereas Syrians were interested in going to Europe and North America. Few Syrians expressed a desire to soon return to Syria, with most saying they did not know when, if ever, conditions would be safe enough for them to return.

Key findings relating to civic engagement

- Young people expressed interest in more meaningful **civic engagement** but often did not see ways to achieve such engagement. In focus group discussions, young people expressed strong positive views about civic engagement and volunteering, saying that it was both a good way to be an engaged citizen and to help others, as well as a way to build one's personality, gain valuable skills, and a wider set of acquaintances.
- Many young people highlighted the **obstacles to meaningful engagement**, including a perceived lack of incentives and appreciation, and a lack of trust in the intentions of the organizations providing charitable and volunteering opportunities. Youth engagement primarily consists of charitable activities. The survey indicated that between 32 and 41 per cent of young Jordanians were engaged in some kind of charity and volunteering, as compared to 18–19 per cent of young Syrians. Young people

were about three times as likely to engage in charity than in any specific type of volunteering. They stressed the importance of youth centres and other local organizations as venues through which they can engage in community activities, interact with others, and develop useful skills.

- Access to **public social spaces** is highly gendered for youth in Jordan, as elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).⁸ Less than half of young Jordanian women and less than a third of their Syrian counterparts reported meeting with other young people in any spaces outside their homes, compared to four fifths of young Jordanian men and three fifths of Syrians. The most commonly mentioned space for women to meet other young people was in friends' and families' homes, suggesting that public spaces remain fairly inaccessible or insecure for young women.
- Young people had clear **political views**, especially around the role of government in providing jobs. They recognized the importance of economic incentives, but they also believe that the government has an important role in promoting equity and opportunity as well as providing jobs. Generally, they were not very interested or knowledgeable about politics, but their knowledge tended to increase with their level of education.

Key findings relating to gender norms, sexual harassment, and women's mobility

- Young people across sex and nationality groups generally expressed attitudes supportive of **gender equality**, at least in theory. While a majority of young people were supportive of women being allowed to work, a substantial

fraction of young Jordanian men and especially young Syrian men were not. Again, a majority supported the idea that a husband must help with household chores, but, in reality, this did not at all align with patterns of actual time spent doing housework by men, which show the highly unequal gender distribution of household chores for young married couples. While young people often supported gender equity in areas such as women's leadership, they also generally agreed that when jobs are scarce, men should have the priority, reflecting a strong adherence to the norms associated with having a male breadwinner.

- Young people were divided in terms of their attitudes towards **sexual harassment**, with nearly half agreeing that women should ignore harassment, that public transport was dangerous due to the risks of harassment, and that women who dressed provocatively deserved harassment.
- Young women, and especially young Syrian women, were restricted in their **mobility**. Almost a third of young Jordanian women and almost two-thirds of young Syrian women could not go alone to the local market. In contrast, men can usually go alone to such places having informed their families or entirely without permission. Young women's mobility is likely to be limited both by the perception and by the reality of harassment. A large proportion of young people, especially men, agreed that it was dangerous for women to walk alone or use public transport because of the risk of harassment.

Key findings relating to news consumption and social media use

- Almost no young people accessed news from traditional, print media, but

⁸ Brady et al., 2007; Sieverding and Elbadawy, 2016.

instead relied on websites and online video media. **Social media** played an important role in connecting and informing young people, who most commonly spent 1 to 3 hours per day on social media. A substantial proportion of young people, especially Jordanians, spent a large part of their day on social media.

- The most commonly mentioned reason individuals use social media across all nationality and gender groups was to keep in touch, followed by relaxing, sharing information, instant messaging, and news. Job finding was an important function of social media for a fifth to two-fifths of young people across groups. Far more men than women reported that meeting new people and interacting with the opposite sex were important purposes of social media.

Key recommendations

- More generous **cash transfers linked to school enrolment** can help students remain in school.⁹ For higher education, support in studying for the *tawjihi*, scholarships, and stipends that allow Syrians to pursue higher education studies are critically important.
- Understanding and addressing **boys' faltering learning and enrolment** is an important area for research and policy.
- Ensuring young people have **clear information on the benefits of different educational choices** can help them achieve their aspirations.¹⁰
- The funders of **training programmes**, especially those focusing on skills and not involving on-the-job training, need to rethink assumptions about the degree to which this training will lead to more and better-quality employment. Apart from customer service skills, young

people's skills match or exceed job requirements, suggesting that skills deficits on the labour supply side are not a key constraint on employment. Moreover, the global,¹¹ MENA,¹² and Jordan¹³ literature on skills training suggests that skills trainings are rarely effective. Apprenticeships¹⁴ and internships¹⁵ may be better models for helping young people to transition into the labour market. Participants in the focus group discussions underscored the challenge of finding a first job without past work experience, and apprenticeships and internships can overcome this important barrier to work.

- **Stimulating labour demand**, particularly in the private sector, is a challenging but critical step to ensure that young people are not permanently disadvantaged in their labour market trajectories in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Since private sector work has a number of disadvantages for women, including longer working hours and less job security, there is a need to **create women-friendly workplaces**, to make available secure but part-time jobs, and to provide transport to help women engage in work outside the home. Improving safety on public transport and in public spaces is an important area for government engagement, along with direct provision of childcare or childcare subsidies.¹⁶
- Syrians in Jordan face a very restricted set of labour market choices compared to their Jordanian counterparts. **Opening up a greater variety of sectors to Syrians** may be necessary to increase their chances of finding decent work.

9 De Hoop, Morey and Seidenfeld, 2019.
10 Jensen, 2010.

11 McKenzie, 2017; Blattman and Ralston, 2015.
12 Bausch et al., 2017.
13 Groh et al., 2012.
14 Krafft, 2018; Monk, Sandefur and Teal, 2008.
15 McKenzie, Assaf and Cusolito, 2016.
16 Krafft and Assaad, 2015; Clark et al., 2019.

- Programmes that attempt to promote **entrepreneurship** among young people should factor in a recognition of the very high failure rates among youth entrepreneurs and thus the risks to which such programmes may be exposing young people.
- Addressing inequitable gender norms, particularly around harassment, which limits young women's mobility and opportunities, is a critical area for future programming and policies. The education system can also be an important site for changing gender norms,¹⁷ which remain persistently inequitable across generations.¹⁸
- Programmes and policies need to create **safe public spaces** for young women to get together, socialize, and create support networks. Although youth centres and Makani centres exist in Jordan, youth-specific spaces like youth centres or Makani centres were seldom reported by young people as spaces where they engaged with their peers. Ensuring all young people have access to such spaces is critically important. The opportunity to spend time in youth spaces that are specifically designated for girls – as are Makani Centres,¹⁹ and as has been tried in youth centres in other contexts²⁰ – along with safe transport (given the limited mobility for young women and especially Syrian women), is critically important.

¹⁷ Dhar, Jain and Jayachandran, 2018; Levy et al., 2020.
¹⁸ El Feki, Heilman and Barker, 2017.

¹⁹ Abu Hamad et al., 2017.
²⁰ Brady et al., 2007.

Chapter 1

Introduction



Key Messages

- Jordan has a young population, with almost a third of the population aged between 16 and 30 years old.
- The Syrian refugee influx which started in 2011 has increased the number of young people in Jordan, as Syrian refugees are disproportionately young.
- Youth is a particularly important and sensitive period of life, shaping trajectories into and throughout adulthood.
- A variety of government bodies, as well as non-governmental and international organizations, are focused on engaging and supporting young people and their economic and civic engagement.
- The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic difficulties present a particular challenge for young people trying to finish school, find jobs, or start their own families.

Demographics of youth

Jordan has a young and growing population. As of 2020, there were an estimated three million people aged between 16 and 30 years old in Jordan.^{21,22} Figure 1 shows the population in Jordan by age group and gender in 2020. With an overall population of 10.6 million in 2020, 28 per cent of the population at the time were aged between 16 and 30 years old.

The youth population in Jordan has been growing steadily for some time and, given fertility trends, will continue to do so.^{23,24}

The influx of Syrian refugees increased the youth population in Jordan (see Box 1 for details specifically of Syrian youth in Jordan). Even before this refugee influx, a high share of the population since the 1950s (24–31 per cent) has been comprised of young people.²⁵ Estimates suggest a similar proportion of young people – 28 per cent of the overall population – has occurred from 2010 through to 2020.²⁶ Young people thus represent a large and important segment of the population and will continue to do so into the future.

21 Department of Statistics (Jordan), 2021.

22 Based on the population of 15–29 year olds in 2019, who would have then been 16–30 years old in 2020; includes all nationalities; data by nationality were not available.

23 Jordan experienced a stall in fertility at around 3.5–3.8 births per Jordanian woman between 2002 and 2010, after which fertility continued to decline (Krafft and Sieverding, 2018; Cetorelli and Leone, 2012). However, fertility rates in Jordan remain well above replacement levels, meaning that the number of young people will continue to increase.

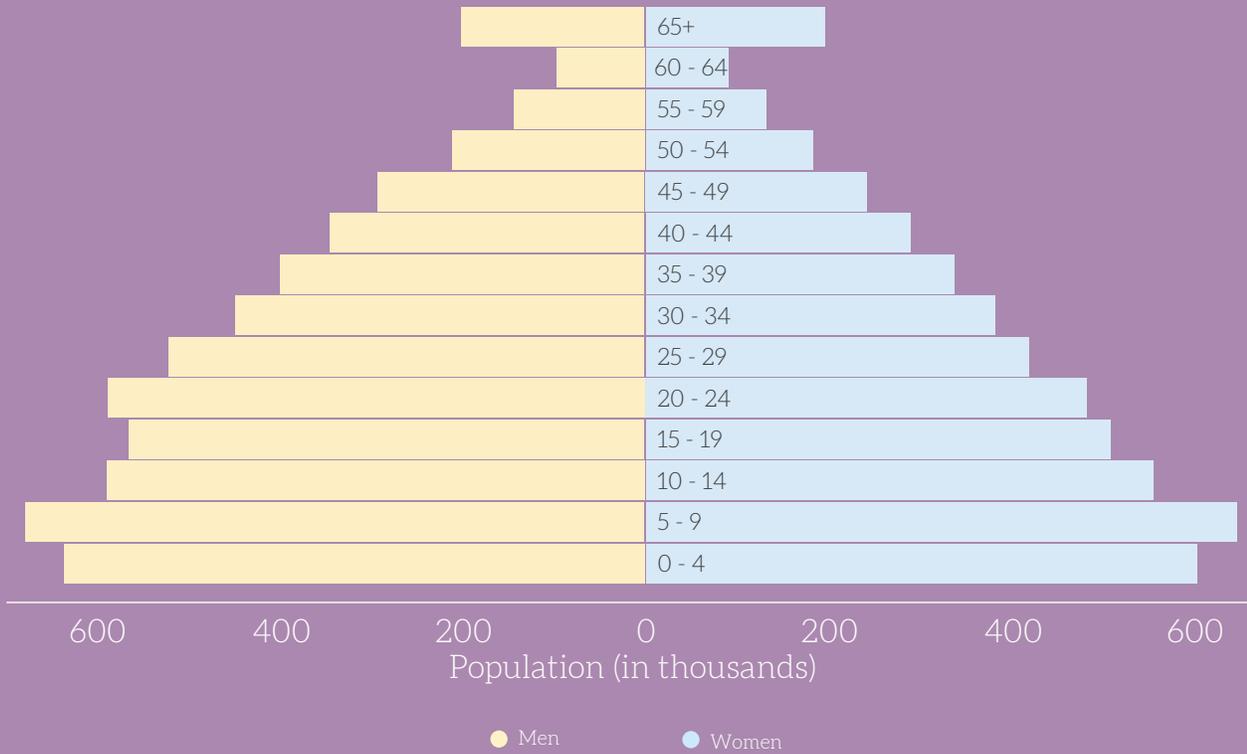
24 Cetorelli and Leone, 2012; Krafft and Sieverding, 2018.

25 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 2019.

26 Ibid.

Figure 1: Population of Jordan (in thousands), by gender and age group

Source: Authors' construction based on Jordan Department of Statistics Population Estimates for 2020.²⁷



²⁷ Department of Statistics (Jordan), 2021.

Box 1: Young Syrian refugees in Jordan

The two largest populations of young people in Jordan consist of Jordanians and Syrians. Estimates based on the Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey (JLMPS) 2016 are that there were at that time 2 million young Jordanians and 338,000 young Syrians (aged 16 to 30). The vast majority of Syrians have arrived as refugees since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011 and have now spent much of their transition to adulthood as displaced persons in Jordan. The education, economic outcomes, civic participation, and health of these young people have therefore been shaped both by their country of origin and their experiences as refugees in Jordan.

Figure 2 shows that 43 per cent of young Syrians in the SYPJ arrived in 2013, and 25 per cent in 2012. Only 23 per cent arrived in 2014 or later. Syrians residing in camps were somewhat more likely to have arrived more recently. These figures are consistent with the overall pattern of arrivals of Syrians to Jordan, which slowed dramatically after border crossings were tightened in the second half of 2013.²⁸

Figure 2: **Year of arrival in Jordan, by residence (per cent), Syrian youth**

Source: Authors' construction based on SYPJ.



Given that the young people surveyed in the SYPJ were aged 16–30 years old at the time of the survey, this means that the majority had been in Jordan approximately since they were aged between 9–23 years old. While those at the older end in this range likely completed their schooling in Syria, many would have been of school age when they arrived in Jordan. Older Syrian youths and those who left school after arriving in Jordan have also been affected by labour market policies towards Syrians.

²⁸ Sieverding and Calderon-Mejia, 2020.

Purpose and methods of the report

Young Jordanians and Syrians face a number of challenges in their transition to adulthood. For instance, young people in Jordan have some of the lowest employment rates in the world.²⁹ This project on youth economic and social engagement was designed to better understand youth experiences, needs, and attitudes. Understanding youth perspectives, aspirations, and realities is critical to designing policies and programmes to support their transition to adulthood. This report presents new data on young people, their aspirations, and experiences, discussing key challenges and potential solutions to help young people achieve their goals.

In order to understand the economic and social engagement of young people, this report relies on new data – both quantitative data (survey) and qualitative data (focus group discussion). The quantitative data were based on a nationally representative survey of Jordanians and Syrians in Jordan aged 16–30. We refer to this survey as the Survey of Young People in Jordan (SYPJ).³⁰ The resulting sample reached 2,854 households and 4,538 youth; see Appendix 2 for further details. The qualitative component of the study consisted of 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) held with Jordanians and Syrian refugees aged 16–30. The FGDs served as an input to the quantitative survey design and aimed to provide a more in-depth view of youth aspirations and perceptions of the transition to adulthood. The FGDs were separated by sex and nationality (Jordanian or Syrian), and two focus groups were held

specifically with Jordanian young people with disabilities (YPWD). See Appendix 3 for further details.

Policies and programmes for youth in Jordan

National Youth Strategy

Jordan's National Youth Strategy (NYS) 2019–2025 guides youth programming in the country, and aims to promote youth employment, engagement, and development.³¹ The NYS is comprised of multiple themes, under which projects are implemented by numerous ministries and other governmental bodies, civil society, and international organizations. The first theme addresses education and technology and aims to develop a learning environment for young people that is supportive and stimulating through the use of information technology. Some of the many projects under this theme include capacity building for teachers and professors, promoting youth centres through e-marketing for trainings such as vocational training, and integrating young people with disabilities (YPWD) into the education process.

Several of the NYS themes deal with civic engagement, including the second theme, which covers programmes related to culture, citizenship, identity, and engagement; the seventh theme related to promoting the notions of good governance and the rule of law; and the eighth theme on the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace among young people. The fourth theme also covers projects related to capacity building in relation to youth initiatives, while the fifth addresses infrastructure and the development of youth centres to provide youth services.

²⁹ Assaad, Krafft and Keo, 2019.

³⁰ This is similar to the Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE) (Roushdy and Sieverding, 2015; Population Council, 2011).

³¹ Ministry of Youth, Jordan, 2019.

Youth economic empowerment is also an important component of the NYS. The third theme covers programmes related to youth economic, social, and political empowerment. These include teaching young people about their duties and rights, supporting youth engagement in civil and political arenas, promoting vocational work, establishing an electronic window for jobs, and promoting small- and medium-enterprise (SME) financing opportunities. The sixth theme covers projects related to advancing the youth work environment to support innovation and entrepreneurship, including a number of activities related to teaching entrepreneurship skills to young people and forming business incubators. Finally, the ninth theme covers programmes related to health awareness among young people.

Education

Jordan expanded access to education early on in the country's development.³² For Jordanians, school entry is near universal.³³ Jordan has the highest average in the MENA region for years of schooling among young people.³⁴ Women now substantially outperform men in terms of educational attainment.³⁵ Women's net enrolment rate at the secondary stage was 78 per cent in 2019/20 as compared to 65 per cent for men.³⁶ Yet globally, Jordanian students have some of the lowest test scores on international assessments.³⁷ The country continues to be stuck in a "credentialist equilibrium," where, since the public sector relies primarily on credentials for hiring and since labour demand from the private sector is weak, there are weak signals of demand for skills. The education system, in response to demands from young people and their families, therefore remains primarily focused on supplying credentials.³⁸

32 Assaad and Saleh, 2018.

33 Sieverding et al., 2018.

34 El-Kogali and Krafft, 2020.

35 Assaad, Krafft and Keo, 2019.

36 Ministry of Education, Jordan, 2020.

37 El-Kogali and Krafft, 2020.

38 Assaad, Krafft and Salehi-Isfahani, 2018.

Box 2: Jordan's education policy response to COVID-19

The novel coronavirus causing the COVID-19 pandemic first appeared in Jordan in early March 2020.³⁹ A nationwide lockdown was implemented on 21 March 2020 which included a ban on non-essential travel, overnight curfews, and the closure of businesses.⁴⁰ Lockdown measures including closures, delivery-only services, and capacity reductions were implemented at various points in 2020 and the first half of 2021 after the initial lockdown, affecting numerous sectors of the economy.⁴¹ By 15 March 2020, schools, kindergartens, and universities were closed as part of the government's efforts to contain the virus and remained so for nearly the entire period until January 2021.⁴² The gradual re-opening of schools to include in-person instruction took place in February 2021.⁴³ However, in March 2021, schools were again closed due to an increase in COVID-19 cases and remained so through June 2021, with learning taking place primarily online.⁴⁴ In-person learning will return in August 2021, with a month of optional catch-up classes.⁴⁵

As in the rest of the world, distance learning became the centre of many students' lives as a result of the pandemic. On 15 April 2020, the Jordanian authorities issued Defence Order No. 7, which provided for the resumption of education by schools and universities through e-learning.⁴⁶ Jordan has since implemented multiple distance-learning approaches. These included TV channels that provided education content, such as broadcasting *tawjihi* lessons, and the use of online education platforms for delivering lessons remotely. WhatsApp was also used in the learning process with students and their parents. In addition, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship worked with private sector providers to develop different e-learning platforms. These include 'Darsak', a platform for Grades K-12 that provides video lessons associated with the curriculum.⁴⁷

³⁹ 3 March 2020.

⁴⁰ United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2020.

⁴¹ 'Jordan: First COVID-19 Case Confirmed March 2 /Update 2', 2020; Hale et al., 2020.

⁴² Ministry of Education, Jordan, 2020.

⁴³ Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, Jordan, 2020.

⁴⁴ Ministry of Education, Jordan 2021.

⁴⁵ Rababah, 14 June 2021.

⁴⁶ United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2020.

⁴⁷ Awamleh, 6 April 2020.

Employment, entrepreneurship, and labour market readiness

In addition to the NYS, Jordan has adopted several national strategies that serve as a framework for youth employment and entrepreneurship. Among these is the National Employment Strategy (NES) (2011–2020).⁴⁸ The NES includes objectives such as reducing unemployment among young people and generating job opportunities, capacity building and training, increasing female participation in the labour market, employing Jordanians through the gradual replacement of foreign workers, decreasing public sector employment, and reducing the wage gap between the public and private sectors. The NES emphasizes social security coverage expansion for SMEs so that young people are encouraged to get jobs in this sector and encourages the further development of vocational education and training as well as the scaling up of programmes related to school-to-work transitions. The NES also addresses the importance of laws and regulations that influence women’s decisions regarding work, such as maternity insurance.⁴⁹ Furthermore, one of the main pillars of Jordan’s National Social Protection Strategy⁵⁰ is “opportunity,” according to which the government ensures that Jordanian families become self-sufficient through a just, private-sector led labour market that provides decent work covered

by social security. The action plan under the strategy includes the operationalization of mechanisms to expand social security coverage for temporary and part-time work, which may have particular importance for young people and women.⁵¹

Youth economic empowerment is an active field in Jordan and there are numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governmental agencies, in addition to international organizations, that implement programmes in this area.⁵² These programmes are wide-ranging. In the advancement of entrepreneurship, they cover the promotion of entrepreneurial skills and the creation of business incubators. Other programmes offer internships and vocational training, or support for small income-generating projects. There are also organizations that work on employment networking to link young people to job opportunities.⁵³ The NES, Jordan’s E-TVET strategy (2014–2020), and the Jordan 2025 strategy all emphasize the importance of making the current Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system more inclusive so that young women are encouraged to enrol. However, initiatives specifically related to young women’s labour market participation or vocational training are limited, and this has been noted as a gap in youth employment programmes in Jordan.⁵⁴

48 Ministry of Labor and Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan, 2012.

49 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Centre, 2018.

50 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 2019.

51 Ibid.

52 United Nations Population Fund, 2015; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Centre, 2018.

53 United Nations Population Fund, 2015; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Centre, 2018.

54 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Centre, 2018.

Box 3: Jordan's economic and labour market policy response to COVID-19

The Jordanian government has taken various measures to address the economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Public sector employees' pay increases were delayed for 2020 and the government allowed companies that were affected by the pandemic to cut salaries by 30 per cent for the months of May and June 2020.⁵⁵ On 8 April 2020, the government issued Defence Order No. 6, which included a variety of measures regarding the payment of salaries. These included that firms in the private sector that were unable to pay employees' wages were permitted to fully stop work and suspend employees' contracts by applying to a joint committee of the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Supply and the Ministry of Labor. The government also required employers to pay employees' wages in full, with incentives, and offered economic support programmes. The Order provided support for Jordanian employees who were not registered with the Social Security Corporation to cover their basic needs. In addition, the Order prohibited employers' coercion of employees to resign. Employers were also prohibited from terminating employees or laying them off.⁵⁶

Other measures implemented by the Government of Jordan to combat the economic effects of the pandemic have included a temporary cash transfer programme to support the unemployed and self-employed.⁵⁷ Order No. 9 of the National Defence Law established programmes for wage workers who were not working, freelancers, daily wage workers, and businesses.⁵⁸ The Ministry of Labor also announced a plan to restore one-year military service to support young people who were unemployed due to the pandemic.⁵⁹ A variety of loan and credit measures have also been extended to support SMEs, particularly in sectors affected by the pandemic.⁶⁰ Finally, social assistance was provided to the general population. As of April 2020, nearly half of the population had been provided with some type of assistance from the government.⁶¹ Existing social protection programmes, as well as emergency measures, played an important role in the provision of assistance in Jordan.⁶²

On 31 March 2021, the government introduced a COVID-19 stimulus package valued at 448 million Jordanian dinars (JD).⁶³ This package included measures that protect current jobs and hire young people in programmes related to the COVID-19 response. It also included measures that enhance social welfare programmes (60 million JD, largely through the extension of the Takaful cash transfer programme). In addition, a fund by the World Bank included cash transfer programmes for the support of vulnerable employees and households, support for the sustainability of businesses and maintaining jobs, and for increasing women's economic opportunities and participation.⁶⁴ Through its National Aid Fund (NAF), the government also introduced a Daily Wage Worker Assistance Programme targeting those working in the informal economy whose livelihoods have been affected by the lockdowns. This programme was able to reach 250,000 new beneficiaries and was distinguished by its speedy response, taking advantage of the existing Takmeely Support Programme of NAF.⁶⁵

⁵⁵ Ben Mimoune, 2020.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ International Monetary Fund, 2021.

⁵⁸ Ben Mimoune, 2020.

⁵⁹ International Monetary Fund, 2021.

⁶⁰ Ben Mimoune, 2020; International Monetary Fund, 2021.

⁶¹ Ben Mimoune, 2020.

⁶² Krafft, Assaad and Marouani, 2021.

⁶³ International Monetary Fund, 2021.

⁶⁴ World Bank, 2021.

⁶⁵ United Nations Children's Fund and Jordan Strategy Forum, 2020.

Civic participation

Youth participation in civil society is critical to influence policies and to achieve sustainable development. Different NGOs in Jordan support youth civic engagement through projects addressing various aspects of civic and political participation. The projects implemented in this area are quite diverse in terms of their themes and approaches.⁶⁶ A number of NGOs implement projects related to supporting youth-led initiatives. Many of these programmes aim to develop youth leadership and other skills that empower young people to be active in their communities and develop initiatives of their own. Other NGOs offer projects related to community service or volunteering opportunities. There are also a number of NGO projects to empower young people to be activists and to become involved in political life and the development sector, and to raise youth awareness concerning human rights issues, encouraging their involvement in political and social issues.⁶⁷

Policies and programmes for young Syrians in Jordan

Jordan adopted a policy of integrating Syrian refugee children into the public school system early in the Syrian crisis. Syrian refugees living in host communities in Jordan have the right to education within the Jordanian public school system; there is a parallel school system for those living in camps. This policy appears to have resulted in generally high rates of school entry among the youngest Syrian children in particular.⁶⁸ However, there are still substantial gaps in enrolment among

Syrian children, with an out-of-school rate of 20 per cent for girls and boys aged 6–11 and 41 per cent for girls and 45 per cent for boys aged 12–15.⁶⁹ Only around 20 per cent of Syrian boys and girls complete secondary school.⁷⁰ Barriers to education among Syrian refugees include poverty, gaps in grade-for-age progression, and a lack of social integration in schools.⁷¹ Historically lower levels of educational attainment in the refugee population when they were still in Syria also influence educational attainment among this population in Jordan.⁷²

The conditions under which Syrian refugees could receive a work permit to be legally employed in Jordan were expanded in 2016 under the Jordan Compact, which established a new programme that aimed to issue 200,000 work permits to Syrian refugees.⁷³ The programme has had limited success, however, even though its requirements have been revised several times. Data from 2016 showed that the majority of Syrians who work do so informally (i.e., without a contract or social insurance),⁷⁴ and only a third of Syrian workers held a work permit as of 2020.⁷⁵ As we show below, new estimates from 2020/2021 confirm the mostly informal nature of employment in Jordan for Syrians.

There are numerous NGOs and international organizations that provide youth programming and services for Syrian refugees across sectors including education, employment, health, and basic needs. Some of these programmes

⁶⁶ United Nations Population Fund, 2015.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Sieverding et al., 2018.

⁶⁹ United Nations Children's Fund and Ministry of Education (Jordan), 2020.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Sieverding et al., 2018.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Salemi, Bowman and Compton, 2018.

⁷⁴ Krafft, Sieverding et al., 2019.

⁷⁵ Slimane et al., 2020.

reach young people under the general umbrella of service provision for Syrian refugees, and some also target vulnerable Jordanians in host communities.⁷⁶ One such programme is Makani ('my space' in Arabic), a multi-faceted child protection programme managed by UNICEF, which supports vulnerable young people in Jordan through centres located across the country.⁷⁷ In partnership with different governmental actors and national and international NGOs, Makani aims to develop existing, child-friendly centres into learning centres where alternative education, psychosocial support, and life-skills training are offered to vulnerable

young Syrian refugees and Jordanians, and to children who are not in any form of education. The training offered in Makani centres includes life-skills training for youth civic engagement and the promotion of employability. Makani also provides services for parents to tackle practices such as child marriage and child labour, and to strengthen social cohesion between refugees and host communities. The Makani centres encourage the community to be involved via committees that aim to increase outreach and reinforce the connection between Makani, the children, and caregivers.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Salemi, Bowman and Compton, 2018.
⁷⁷ United Nations Children's Fund, 2015.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Chapter 2

Transitions to adulthood



Key Messages

- Young people commonly associated adulthood with personal characteristics, such as maturity, rather than completing specific life steps.
- Young people emphasized the interdependency between different aspects of the transition to adulthood. For instance, men need to find employment, ideally in a good job, before they can marry.
- School-to-work transitions are slow and difficult for young people.
- Young Syrian and Jordanian women rarely transition into work.
- Formal jobs, with social protection, are hard to come by for young people, who have high aspirations but face difficult realities in terms of job opportunities.
- Young Jordanians are marrying later than they would like, in part because of difficulties in earlier transitions. Young Syrians are marrying closer to ages they identify as being ideal for getting married, but are not necessarily living independently, and early marriage for girls remains a problem.
- The family of four children remains a strong norm to which young people tend.
- Financial independence is difficult for young people to achieve.

The period of life between the ages 16 and 30 is critical for establishing young people's later-life outcomes in terms of human capital formation (e.g., education and skills), labour market trajectories, starting a family, and ensuring health and wellbeing. This period of life when individuals go from being children to being adults is known as the transition to adulthood. There is no definite collective marker for having reached adulthood. Around the world, culture plays an important role in shaping how young people and their societies view adulthood. Adulthood can be defined in terms of traditional social markers indicating life events, such as finishing education or getting married.⁷⁹ This event-based approach to defining adulthood has been dominant in the global literature on the transition to adulthood,⁸⁰

as well as in the MENA region specifically. In the MENA region, the literature on the transition to adulthood has often focused on "waithood," or the idea that transitions to adulthood – in terms of finishing school, entering the labour market, and starting a family – have often stalled or been delayed because of difficult economic conditions and high youth unemployment.⁸¹

However, adulthood may also be understood in terms of the development of personal characteristics rather than life events. These characteristics may, for example, reflect markers of maturity, such as independent decision-making and taking responsibility for oneself.⁸² Since the concept of adulthood is fluid and subjective, and may vary considerably across contexts, it is important to

79 Nelson and Luster, 2015.

80 Hogan and Astone, 1986; Marini, 1984.

81 Dhillon and Yousef, 2009; Assaad, Binzel and Gadallah, 2010; Amer, 2014; eadam, 2019; Assaad, Krafft and Rolando, 2021.

82 Nelson and Luster, 2015.

explore how young people themselves understand this concept.⁸³ Young people's understanding of adulthood provides an important context for their expectations and aspirations for this stage of life.

This section explores how young people in Jordan understand the meaning of adulthood, and provides an overview of how young people understand and experience different steps that are commonly associated with becoming an adult.

The meaning of adulthood

Young people most commonly associated adulthood with personal characteristics rather than completing specific life steps. In particular, in the focus group discussions, maturity was considered by participants to be the most important marker of becoming an adult. Young people associated a number of different personal characteristics with maturity, including the ability to make decisions for oneself, making good decisions, accepting responsibility for one's actions, and self-reliance.

Key to participants' understanding of maturity was not only the ability to make decisions but to accept and be responsible for the consequences of those decisions, regardless of whether they were right or wrong. The notion of being competent enough to take responsibility for decisions, actions, behaviours, and people (such as family), meant that a person is a mature adult.

"[Adulthood is] for a person to have the full competence to take decisions... I have the full competence to take decisions that I want. Whether they are right or wrong, I am the one

responsible for them. If they are wrong, I will be held accountable, and if they are right, I will go through with them." –Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21–25, FGD 4

The qualitative participants said that a young person's mental development, rather than chronological age, contributes to making good decisions and is therefore an indicator of maturity.

"...but the mental age is a series of experiences a person passes through. If the person has a lot of experiences, then the person is said to have the ability to make decisions. It is impossible for a person who does not have experiences to make decisions..." – Young Jordanian man, aged between 24–26, FGD 9

Another characteristic that was commonly associated with maturity was being self-reliant. The concept of moving from the stage where one depends on one's parents to a stage where one depends solely on oneself to build a future was seen as a key marker of maturity and becoming an adult. In addition to independent decision-making, participants' understanding of self-reliance encompassed independence from parental financial support, or the idea of "establishing oneself."

"To rely on oneself, which means for most of the person's life, they should be depending on themselves and not on anyone else... the person reaches a point in their life where they do not depend on their parents anymore, instead, they rely on themselves for the future." – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 22–30, FGD 8

Although participants saw adulthood as entailing a degree of independence from the natal family, the family was seen as central to providing a foundation for the transition to adulthood. According

⁸³ Ibid.

to participants' views, the family is the basis of society and provides support for a young person in her or his transition to adulthood. The family helps in building the young adult's skills, in shaping her or his personality, and in letting her or him realize their needs and what is required from them at different life stages.

"...if the person does not have a family, how would they become mature? Of course, the school plays a big role; however, the family is responsible for raising [a child] ..., the family is the base where [children] are raised to have strong personalities for society." – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 16–23, FGD 6

For these reasons, many young people said that having a good relationship with the family is the first step towards becoming an adult.

Steps in becoming an adult

Although it was less prominent in young people's understandings of the meaning of adulthood, young people did associate certain life steps or events with becoming an adult. The events on which the FGD participants focused reflected common markers of the transition to adulthood that are often discussed in relation to young people in the MENA region,⁸⁴ including

completing education, entry into the labour force, financial independence, marriage, and parenthood. Participants also noted that different responsibilities and obligations are tied to each life event.

"...when the person was in school, their obligations were limited to studying... then they move to having a job and working, their obligations differ... After that, at marriage, their obligations also differ as they now have a house and a family... and if they do not abide by these obligations, it is a problem..." – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–30, FGD 5

Young people in the SYPJ were asked what were the three most needed steps for becoming an adult, for men and for women. Figure 3 shows their responses by gender and nationality. The most common response was that becoming an adult required having a good relationship with God (76–89 per cent across groups). The second most common response was that adulthood required having a good relationship with one's parents (56–83 per cent). These responses were very consistent with the focus that the FGD participants placed on having a good relationship with one's family as a foundation for later steps in the transition to adulthood.

⁸⁴ Dhillon and Yousef, 2009.

Figure 3: Three most important steps for a woman or a man to become an adult, responses by gender and nationality (per cent)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ.



After having a good relationship with one's family, finishing education was the step that qualitative participants most commonly viewed as the foundation for the transition to adulthood, across genders and nationality. Finishing education was seen as critical because completing specific educational stages, particularly the *tawjihi* and university, can provide young people with the necessary life skills that ease the transition into adult roles. The adult roles for which one is prepared by education were understood by participants to include not only economic roles, but also social roles in one's family and community.

"In our Jordanian society, when one passes the tawjihi, they move to university, and when the person graduates university, they can take trainings that build communication skills, which build [one's] confidence to communicate with people and get to know new people... this can help the person become an adult." – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21–25, FGD 4

Responses in the SYPJ showed more variation by gender in terms of the prioritization of next steps, possibly because respondents were asked to select only three steps. For a woman, finishing education was more important as a step to adulthood in SYPJ (50–68 per cent across groups) than for a man (23–47 per cent across groups). On the other hand, for a man, having a job (27–45 per cent) or a good job (29–33 per cent) was much more important than for women (11–21 per cent for having a job; 5–12 per cent for having a good job). There were only small differences by nationality; Jordanians emphasized finishing education and employment more than Syrians.

Qualitative participants associated having

a successful job with an income that can lead to financial independence as an important marker of adulthood but did not draw such strong distinctions for male versus female youth.

"Maybe the person is an adult in a way that they have achieved a job, work, a salary..." – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 16–23, FGD 6

"If the person had worked, invested effort, made achievements, earned money, worked hard, and got a house, all of these means that a person is mature and an adult." – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 22–30, FGD 8

However, as discussed in the next section, qualitative participants did acknowledge that there is more expectation on young men in Jordanian society to obtain a job than for young women. For young women, thus, while securing a good job may often be a desired step in the transition to adulthood, this is not always achievable in reality.

Getting a house, getting married, and having a family were mentioned less frequently by the FGD participants as markers of adulthood. Most participants viewed these as, ideally, the last steps in the transition to adulthood, after young people have successfully completed their education, entered the labour market, and, particularly for men, achieved financial independence. However, as will be further discussed below, they acknowledged that, in reality, marriage and starting a family come at different points in the transition to adulthood, with key differences by gender and nationality, as well as depending on the preferences of a young person's family and when she or he meets a suitable partner.

SYPJ respondents also placed different

levels of priority on marriage and financial independence for men and women. Getting married was more important in the survey responses (Figure 3) for a woman (25–44 per cent across groups) than a man (9–22 per cent across groups). Having a home (12–21 per cent) and financial security (18–26 per cent) were more important for men and rarely mentioned

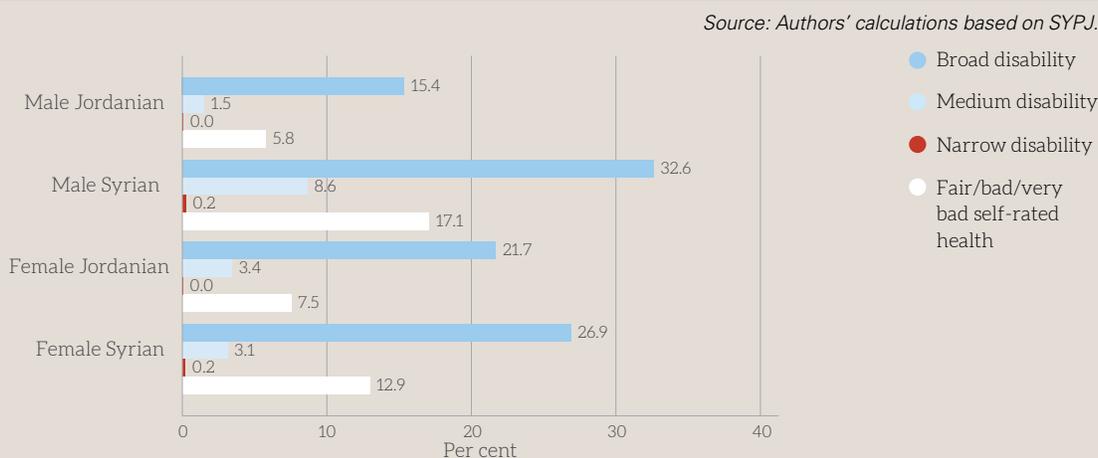
for women. As discussed below, this is related to gender expectations for young people transitioning into marriage. Male and female respondents generally gave quite consistent responses about the steps needed for a man and a woman, suggesting that there are widely held norms about the gendered nature of the transition to adulthood.

Box 4: Disability and the transition to adulthood

Having a disability is a factor that can have a substantial impact on young people’s opportunities during the transition to adulthood. However, the literature on disability and the transition to adulthood in Jordan, and the MENA region more broadly, is very limited, in part due to the challenges of accurately measuring disability in a context where it is stigmatized. SYPJ is one of the first surveys in Jordan to implement the UN-Washington Group (UN-WG) on Disability Statistics (2009)⁸⁵ measure of disability. Rather than asking a single question about whether the respondent is disabled, the UN-WG measure asks respondents about the degree of functional limitation that they experience in the six domains of seeing, hearing, mobility (walking and climbing stairs), cognition, self-care, and communication. This way of measuring disability also follows the World Health Organization’s conceptualization of disability as an interaction between a person’s functional abilities and her or his environment.⁸⁶ For example, when provided with appropriate accommodations, young people with hearing difficulties may not experience these as barriers to their ability to learn in school.

Figure 4 presents the prevalence of disability among Jordanian and Syrian youth in Jordan according to several indicators derived from the UN-WG measure. The “narrow” definition of disability follows common understandings of disability and categorizes as disabled only those who report that they cannot perform tasks in at least one of the six functional domains. By this measure, rates of disability among young people are negligible across gender and nationality. The “medium” measure of disability also includes those who report that they have “a lot of difficulty” performing tasks in one of the functional domains. By this measure, 1.5 per cent of young Jordanian men have a disability, compared to 3.1–3.4 per cent of young Jordanian and Syrian women, and 8.6 per cent of young Syrian men. Following a “broad” definition of disability that includes as disabled persons those who report having at least “some difficulty” performing tasks in one of the six domains, rates of disability are even higher, reaching nearly a third of young Syrian males and around a quarter of young females of both nationalities. Notably, these rates are considerably higher than those found in Egypt, which were 7.2 per cent for the broad definition, and 1.8 per cent for the medium definition those aged between 16–30. Following the narrow definition, the rate was comparable (0.5 per cent).⁸⁷

Figure 4: Self-reported health and disability, by gender and nationality (per cent)



⁸⁵ United Nations–Washington Group on Disability Statistics, 2009.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Authors’ calculations from the Egypt Labor Market Panel Survey, 2018.

The type of functional limitation that young people experience has important implications for the accommodations that are needed to make education, employment, and civic participation more accessible to them. Across gender and nationality groups, 5–8 per cent of young people had difficulty seeing, 4–5 per cent had difficulty with mobility, 0.5–2.5 per cent difficulty with self-care, and 2–4 per cent difficulty with communication (i.e., difficulties with language). The key differences across groups arose in the hearing and cognition domains. Ten per cent of young Syrian men reported having at least some difficulty with hearing, compared to 1 per cent of young Jordanian men and women and 3 per cent of young Syrian women. At these young ages, it is possible that young Syrian men are developing this form of hearing loss due to environmental exposure, including exposure to noise at work. Adequate implementation of noise protection measures is key to reducing the risk of young people developing hearing loss. Accommodations in school for students who experience different forms of disability are also essential in order to prevent these disabilities from contributing to school drop-out.

In the domain of cognition, 8 per cent of young Jordanian men reported at least some difficulty with remembering or concentrating, compared to 12 per cent of young Syrian men, 14 per cent of young Jordanian women and 16 per cent of young Syrian women. Young Syrian men had particularly high rates (7 per cent) of reporting “a lot of difficulty” in this domain. These high rates of functional limitation in terms of memory and concentration have important implications for young people’s ability to perform in school and may be indicative of unmet mental health needs. Further studies are needed to understand in greater detail the difficulties that these young people report in the cognitive domain, and at what point in life they began experiencing these difficulties, in order to design effective interventions to prevent the onset of functional limitations in this domain where possible, and to provide appropriate accommodations for young people in school and the labour market.

Disability is also correlated with overall health and wellbeing. As shown in Figure 4, groups that experience higher rates of disability – and this is particularly true of Syrian respondents – were more likely to report that they have “fair”, “bad” or “very bad” overall health, as opposed to “good” or “very good” health.

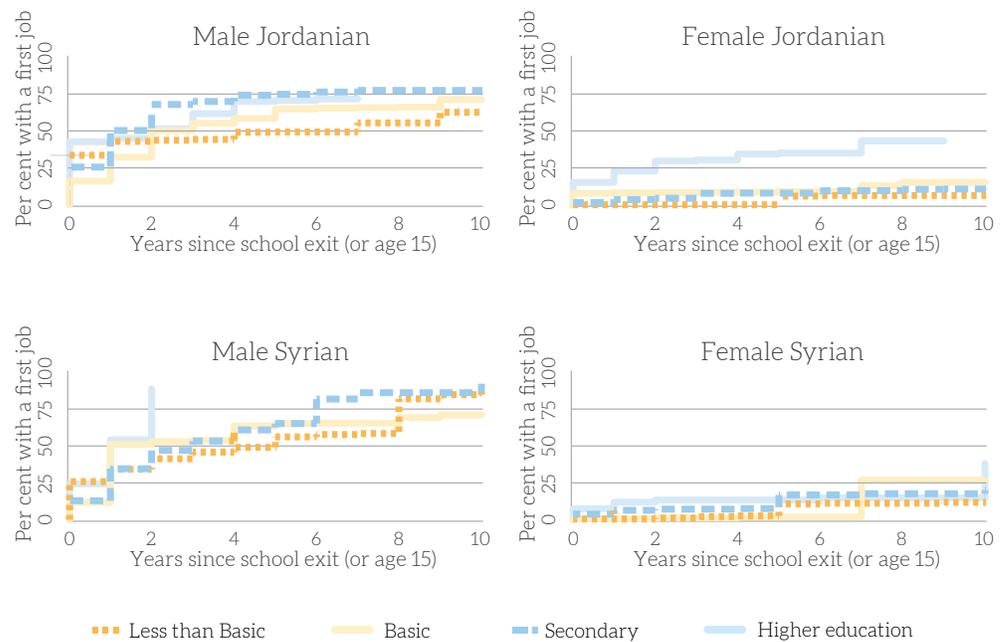
School-to-work transitions

The school-to-work transition is important but challenging for young people in Jordan. Their experiences in transitioning from school to work depend substantially on gender, nationality, and educational attainment, as explored in Figure 5 (see Appendix 1, Table 3 for the corresponding table). Figure 5 examines what percentage of young people have a first job that lasts more than six months, by the number of years since they exited school (or turned 15, if they never went to school or exited school before the age of 15). Only a small fraction of any group starts to work immediately after finishing school

(at most, the figure is 43 per cent for male Jordanians with higher education). Within the few years after school, a rising percentage of men find their first job. However, even five years after leaving school, typically less than three-quarters of young men have worked. Very few female Jordanians ever work (primarily it is only those with higher education who go on to enter the workforce, 15 per cent of whom work right after finishing their education, rising to 35 per cent by five years after leaving school). Likewise, few female Syrians ever work, and there is no clear pattern by which their work can be correlated with educational attainment.

Figure 5: **Percentage of youth with a first job, by years since school exit (or age 15), educational attainment, gender, and nationality**

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ.



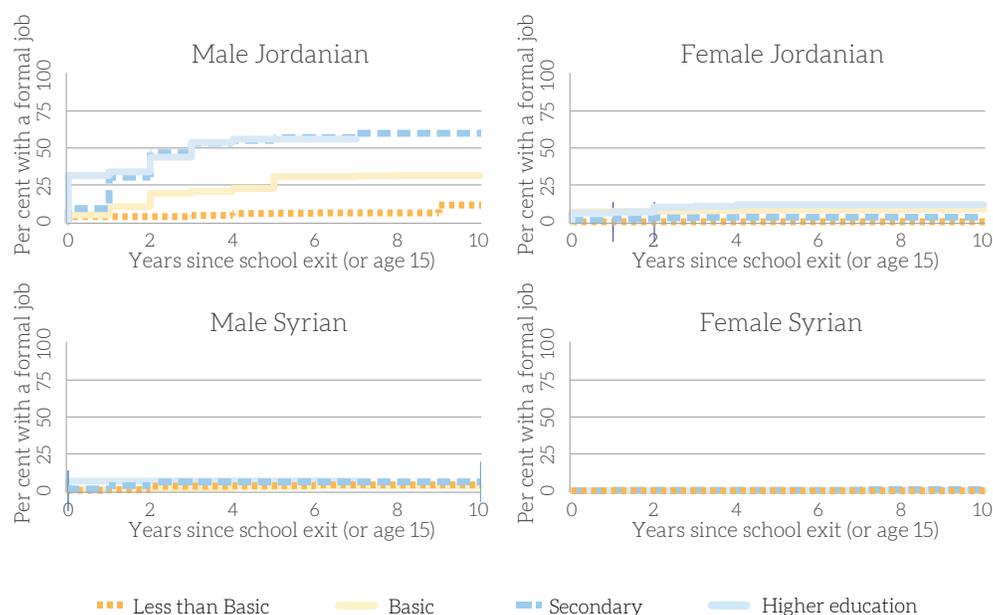
Note: Kaplan-Meier failure estimator. Those working or exiting earlier than the age of 15 are treated as having obtained their first job at the age of 15.

In addition to their difficulties in obtaining employment, the jobs young people obtain are not necessarily formal. Jobs are formal if the worker has social insurance coverage.⁸⁸ Figure 6 examines the percentage of young people who obtained a formal job since exiting school or the age of 15 (see below for a discussion of how young people themselves understand a “good job” in the context of Jordan). Almost no Syrians (2 per cent) and few Jordanian women (6 per cent, primarily those with higher education) obtain

formal jobs (with social insurance), even five years after having left school. Among Jordanian men, formal jobs are contingent on education. Men with less than basic education (6 per cent) and with basic education (31 per cent) are less likely to obtain formal jobs than those with secondary (57 per cent) or higher education (56 per cent), even five years after having left school. However, only slightly more than half of educated male Jordanians have obtained formal jobs five years after having left school.

Figure 6: **Percentage of young people who obtained a formal job, by years since school exit (or the age of 15), education, gender, and nationality**

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ.



Note: Kaplan-Meier failure estimator. A formal job is defined as one with social insurance coverage.

⁸⁸ This definition of formal employment is based on the guidelines concerning a statistical definition of informal employment of the 17th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (International Labour Organization, 2003).

The challenges faced by those trying to obtain a good job in Jordan were well recognized by FGD participants, who said that the reality of the way young people experience the school-to-work transition is very different from their ideals. Ideally, according to Jordanian participants, young people would transition to getting a good job directly after completing education because a good job is a factor that facilitates other steps in the transition to adulthood. In particular, a good job was seen as a guarantee of financial independence, which young people saw as an important attainment before committing to responsibilities related to getting married and having children. For men, this included buying a house in order to establish a family.

“A good job is what secures financial independence, marriage, and owning a house.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 24–26, FGD 9

For young women, although they were not expected to meet the same financial commitments that were expected of young men, a good job was seen as providing for financial independence in the face of future uncertainties.

“Having a good job before marriage is better, a woman can support her husband in the future. For example, if he leaves his work, she can still support the family.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 16–23, FGD 6

However, in reality, respondents unanimously agreed that obtaining a good job is not a realistic expectation immediately after finishing one’s education, even with a university degree. Thus, young Jordanians find themselves looking for any job while waiting for a good job opportunity to become available.

“At first, when you finish your education, there is a period where you will not find a job directly. In the meantime, in the period between graduation and finding the good job you want, you will have any job for sure, for example, you can tutor, or work in a beauty salon, or anything.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 22–30, FGD 8

In the absence of good jobs, respondents said that young people may get any job at various points in the transition to adulthood. In their view, it is not necessary for young people to finish education in order to get any job; such jobs could also be obtained while finishing education, specifically university education, for purposes such as gaining experience that may help them in the labour market later, or contributing to paying their tuition fees.

“There are people who study and at the same time they work, especially those who are in universities. Some do that because of their poor financial situation, and some because of gaining experience.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 22–30, FGD 8

The transition to adulthood, and particularly school-to-work transition, was not expected by young people to be a linear or sequential process whereby they finish school and advance directly into their desired jobs. Young people may finish studying and then seek work, acknowledging that this would often at first involve taking a job they did not regard as good (see below on young people’s understanding of a “good job”), or young people may work while studying. The combination of education and gaining early labour market experience in ‘any’ job helped young people to transition from education to employment with the ultimate goal of obtaining a good and stable job.

Yet the survey results reflect the fact that the wait for a good job may, in reality, be longer than expected, and young people may not find a good job even after completing university. Participants said that many young women meet suitable partners during this time and get married before finding a good job, thus making the transition directly to marriage, although they would have preferred to work first.

“In reality, a woman finds it hard to find a job directly. I think a job is very important for a woman, it helps in self-development and supports her in creating a family... However, sometimes, if there is no good job, what should she do? She chooses the second option if we are talking realistically. There are people who get a good job only after several years, of course it depends on the person and their personality and will. A suitable partner may ask her for marriage, she can, of course, agree on the condition she can have a good job later on.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged 16–23, FGD 6

Similarly, young Syrians saw a quick transition to a good job as the ideal scenario after finishing education, because it leads to having financial independence. Syrian participants said that obtaining a good job is important for young men, in particular, because it helps in securing financial independence, which in turn contributes to buying a house and being able to get married.

“If you get a good job, then you will have everything, you’d have money, you’d buy a house, you’d move out of the parents’ house, you’d get married...” – Young Syrian man, aged between 20–27, FGD 2

“Getting a good job [is important], why is that? Because men are considered the breadwinners in their families, and they are actually responsible for their parents as well...” – Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

Yet both male and female participants agreed that a good job is difficult to obtain in Jordan, especially for Syrian refugees (see below for further discussion of the barriers to employment for refugees). In this context, obtaining any job is a necessity that would at least help in securing the family’s basic needs.

“Anyone would aspire to have [a good job], but in reality, it is impossible.” – Young Syrian man, aged between 20–25, FGD 7

“At first, you’d work in any job; after that, you’d aspire to reach high and get [higher and better] positions” – Young Syrian man, aged between 20–27, FGD 2

Similarly, a few female participants mentioned that the situation of young refugees in Jordan forces Syrians to seek any job to ensure their basic needs are met, while waiting for a good job opportunity to become available.

“Sometimes your situation and circumstances lead you to work in something not suitable for your education.” – Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

On the other hand, some Syrian women respondents said that a woman can have a job if she wants to, but that it is not her responsibility because husbands are usually the breadwinners in the family. In sum, in addition to the employment challenges facing young people in Jordan in general, the legal and situational context of Jordan was seen to play a role in preventing young

Syrians from transitioning into a good job. For young women, societal norms also place less emphasis on employment, so that the transition to marriage overlaps with, or takes precedence over, the transition to the labour market.

Financial and residential independence

Financial independence can be an important part of adulthood and is often seen ideally as a requirement for men in particular to be able to get married. This ideal was reflected in the FGD participants' views of how financial independence fits into the transition to adulthood. Male Jordanian participants viewed financial independence as a necessity to cover life's expenses as an adult. They stated having a good job, and the financial independence a good job brings, is an essential condition to meet before marriage.

"The whole sequence [of steps in the transition to adulthood] is for the purpose of marriage; securing financial independence and achieving every step are for the sake of getting married." -Young Jordanian man, aged between 21-30, FGD 5

The views of female Jordanian participants regarding financial independence were somewhat more diverse. Some, as with the men, stated that financial independence is a marker of reaching adulthood and is ideally achieved after obtaining a good job and before getting married.

"For a person to become mature and complete, I think the most important steps are the following three: having education, getting a good job and financial independence. These three main steps ensure that young people become integrated human beings who can fulfil their roles in society properly... In my opinion, reaching

financial independence... is essential for the person to become integrated and influential [in society]." - Young Jordanian woman, aged between 25-28, FGD 12

Female participants also stressed the importance of financial independence for women in terms of self-independence and self-reliance, as well as for security against life's uncertainties.

"Financial independence means that [a woman] is responsible for herself, independent, provides for herself, and no one controls her. She does whatever she wants to do." - Young Jordanian woman, aged 22-30, FGD 8

On the other hand, other female respondents said that financial independence is fundamentally the responsibility of men in Jordanian society and is therefore not an important step for women to complete in the transition to adulthood.

"In my view, marriage comes before having financial independence since I, as a woman, am not responsible for it, it is not my responsibility to get a house and provide for my partner. He is the one responsible for all of these, he is the one who should be financially independent." - Young Jordanian woman, aged between 22-30, FGD 8

Yet, although they viewed it as an important step in the transition to adulthood, young Jordanians of both sexes who participated in the FGDs saw financial independence as unattainable in reality.

"For a Jordanian employee, you'd need 30 years [to secure financial independence]...How would I ever obtain financial independence with a low income?! I swear I would need 20 something years!" - Young Jordanian woman, aged between 22-30, FGD 8

“There is no man who is financially independent! Financial independence is having money saved and living life without debts, so there is no man who is financially independent here [in Jordan] ...” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21–25, FGD 4

In the face of the difficulty of achieving financial independence in reality, participants said that some young people wait to get a good job and become financially independent before completing other steps in the transition to adulthood, such as getting married. In their view, without having a good job and earning enough money, young people cannot smoothly move on to the next steps in the transition. This stalled transition to adulthood fundamentally reflects the uncertainties of young people about the economic situation and their economic expectations.

Likewise, Syrian participants considered financial independence to be an important step in a young person’s transition to adulthood. They stressed the importance of having a good job to achieve financial independence. Men also linked financial independence with the ability to get married and to own a house.

“Financial independence is having your own money and not taking from your parents.” – Young Syrian man, aged between 20–25, FGD 7

While Syrian participants noted the significance of having financial independence, most asserted that in reality, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve given their current circumstances as refugees in Jordan.

“If we are talking about the situation and the conditions we are living in, here it is a tragedy like we are working and the employer sometimes is not honest with us, they take advantage of us, they would promise us a salary increase but they don’t keep their promises... we have commitments, the house, the rent... so we barely have enough money!” – Young Syrian man, aged between 20–27, FGD 2

“[In reality] people get married and then die without having achieved financial independence!” – Young Syrian man, aged between 24–26, FGD 7

Participants’ views on financial independence for Syrian women – similar to Jordanian women – were more varied. Some noted that financial independence is not expected of women in Syrian society.

“For women, the society does not expect a woman to have financial independence, they think her husband should.” – Young Syrian man, aged between 24–26, FGD 7

However, a few female Syrian participants stressed the importance of financial independence in ensuring a woman is self-reliant in managing her expenses.

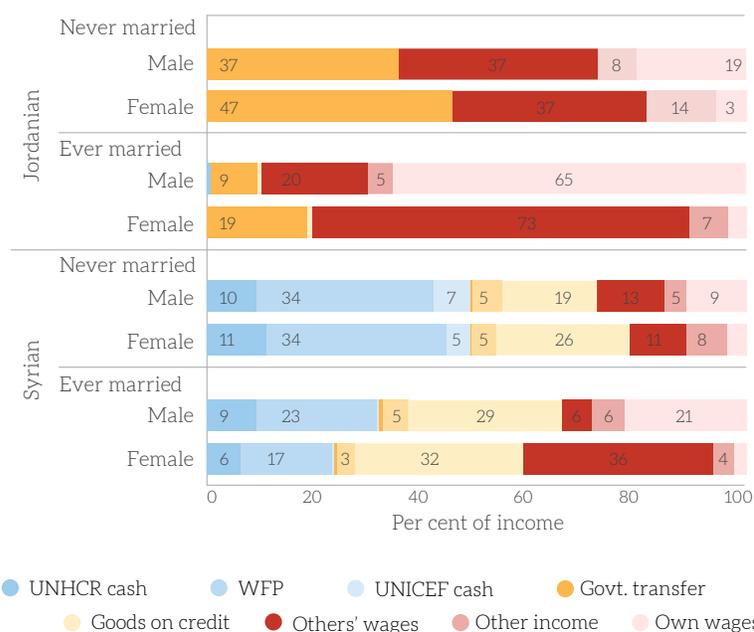
“Financial independence is not needing my parents or husband to provide for me, no, I am now independent because I have a job and it is providing me with an income.” – Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

The complexity of young people’s financial situation in Jordan with respect to the idea of financial independence is seen in Figure 7, which explores the share of household income from different sources, including one’s own wages, others’ wages, and various forms of earned income and transfers, by gender, nationality, and marital status. Young women’s own wages are only a small share of household income, regardless of nationality or marital status. Consistent with the views expressed by young women in the FGDs, this demonstrates that while some young women may view financial independence as a key form of security, in reality, the majority of young women rely on other sources of income, and they are not expected to play the role of breadwinner. The low share of household income that derives from young women’s wages is also related to their low rates of labour force participation (see below).

Among male Jordanians who have never married, and Syrian men of any marital status, a small share (9–21 per cent) of household income comes from their own wages. Syrians’ income comes primarily from UNHCR and especially World Food Programme (WFP) cash transfers, reflecting the very challenging economic situation for Syrian refugees depicted by the qualitative respondents. Among Jordanians who have never married, income is often from government transfers (including their parents’ pensions) and others’ wages. It is only for young married male Jordanians that a substantial portion of household income derives from their own wages (65 per cent). Yet even among this group, 20 per cent of income comes from others’ wages and 15 per cent from elsewhere, indicating that – as the young people themselves perceive – complete financial independence is indeed a rarity.

Figure 7: Household income sources (percentage of income), by gender, nationality, and marital status

Source: Authors’ calculations based on SYPJ.



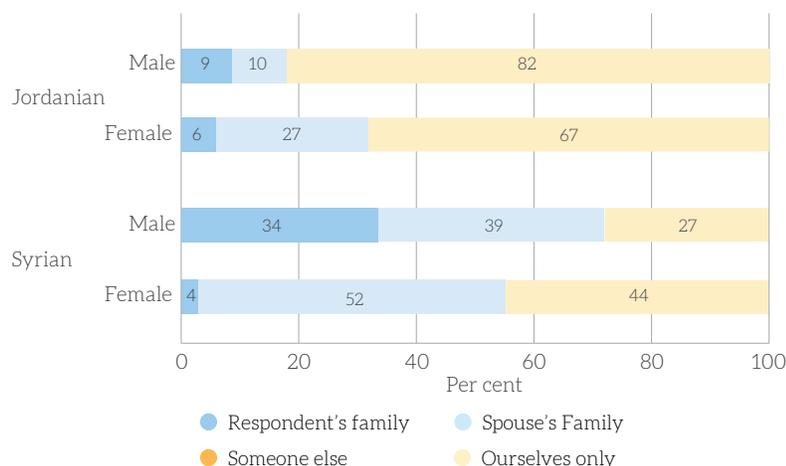
Note: Government transfer includes pensions. Labels less than three per cent suppressed.

Besides being linked to financial independence, marriage often entails the formation of a new, nuclear household, with just the couple themselves and no other family. The majority of Jordanian married couples lived in a nuclear household at marriage (Figure 8). The opposite is true of Syrian married couples. Among young married male Jordanians, 82 per cent report living independently at marriage, compared to 67 per cent of their female counterparts. Married female Jordanians more commonly report living with the spouse's family (27 per cent) than

their male counterparts report living with their own families (9 per cent). Among Syrians, extended family living, more often with the husband's family, is common. Only 27 per cent of married male Syrians report living independently at marriage, compared to 44 per cent for their female counterparts. Before marriage, young people almost never live independently of their families. Only 2–3 per cent of unmarried young people, across gender and nationality, were living in a household that did not include at least one of their parents.

Figure 8: **Living arrangements at marriage, by nationality and gender (percentage), married respondents**

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ.



Jordanian youth who participated in the FGDs saw residential independence as an ideal that, similar to many other steps in the transition to adulthood, was not always achieved in reality. Jordanian respondents stated that buying a house should ideally come directly after achieving financial independence, and some women said that it usually comes with marriage.

“In an ideal situation, marriage may come with getting a house. Couples can buy a house and get married.”
– Young Jordanian woman, aged between 16–23, FGD 6

However, participants viewed buying a house in Jordan as difficult to achieve in reality, especially given that realizing financial independence was seen to be nearly impossible. Thus, they said that young people delay buying a house until a later stage in life, even after getting married.

“There is no man I know who would pause his life waiting to buy a house that he already cannot afford. A lot of Jordanian men marry and then later on get a house.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21–25, FGD 4

“Basically, having a house can be removed [from the sequence] since it is so difficult to obtain one; or it can be delayed till after marriage.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–30, FGD 5

Continuing to reside in the parents’ house was seen as a common practice in light of social and financial constraints. Young people said that, on the one hand, parents do not wish for their children to move out, and on the other, some young people continue to live with their parents because they would be provided for financially.

“Moving out is not a priority; in reality, not all people allow [their children to move out], it is not really a necessity... Even young people prefer [to stay with their families] because of the financial situation.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 24–26, FGD 9

However, a few Jordanian men stated that moving out before marriage, specifically for men, may serve as a crucial factor in preparing the young man to be independent and to be exposed to the different responsibilities, including household chores.

“To be able to get married, we as men should think about living in a separate house. When moving out of the parents’ house, we cannot expect that living with the parents would be the same as living with our partners! It differs, a man should be independent to be able to empathize with the other partner. In our Arab society, we have issues in education [such as] the thought of the woman serving her husband which is spread in our society. I am against this, that’s why I am telling you a man should be independent in a separate house before getting married so that he can adapt to future responsibilities...” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 24–26, FGD 11

Buying a house was similarly seen as an ideal among Syrian participants since it makes it easier for young people to transition to marriage. However, in reality, Syrian participants stated that buying a house is unattainable for young Syrians living in Jordan, given the fact that they are struggling economically on a daily basis.

“When financial independence is achieved, then ideally, having a house follows and then marriage and having

children... In reality, however, there is no financial independence nor having a house..." – Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

Consistent with the patterns seen in the SYPJ, Syrian participants, therefore, said that young Syrian people transition to marriage without obtaining an independent residence.

"Now living in Jordan is expensive for Jordanians, so it is even worse for us Syrians! Even Jordanians cannot [own a house], they rent too, we really barely secure the house rent, so the idea of having our own houses is just ridiculous!" – Young Syrian woman, aged between 23–30, FGD 1

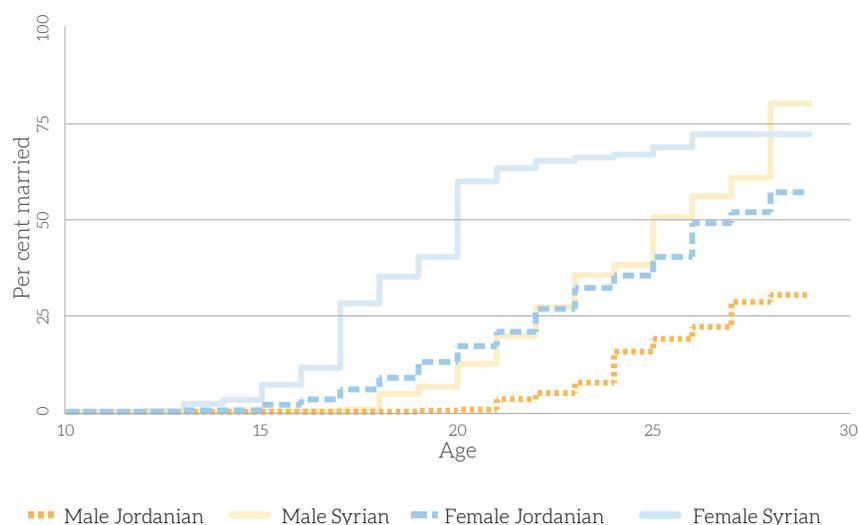
Transitions to marriage and starting a family

Marriage marks a key milestone in the transition to adulthood, but one that can

depend on the success of preceding transitions. Particularly for men, marriage often requires finding a job, ideally a good job, and accumulating financial resources, as noted by the FGD participants. Figure 9 shows the percentage of young people who have ever married, by age, gender, and nationality. Female Syrians marry the earliest, with 7 per cent married by the age of 15, and 28 per cent married by the age of 17 (which we define as early marriage).⁸⁹ Fewer female Jordanians (6 per cent) marry early, and almost no men marry before the age of 18. The median age of marriage (when 50 per cent are married) for female Syrians is age 20, followed by male Syrians, for whom it is age 25, a five-year age gap. Half of female Jordanians marry by the age of 27, but less than half of male Jordanians are married even by age 30 (only 25 per cent marry by the age of 27).

Figure 9: **Percentage of young people ever married, by age, gender, and nationality**

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ.



Note: Kaplan-Meier failure estimator.

⁸⁹ Estimates are consistent with other sources, including Sieverding et al., 2020; Department of Statistics (Jordan) and ICF, 2019.

The ages at which young people marry are not necessarily ideal from the point of view of young people themselves (Figure 10). According to male Jordanians, the median ideal age for a man to marry was 25, although for female Jordanians, 27 was the median ideal age for a man to marry. According to male Jordanians, the median ideal age for a woman to marry was 22, while female Jordanians thought that the ideal age for a woman to marry was 24. Ages at marriage for men and women are thus delayed (per Figure 9) relative to what these young people aspire to.

Among the qualitative participants, views on the ideal age at marriage were quite diverse and were often discussed in relation to the feasibility of completing other steps in the transition to adulthood. Most Jordanian participants said that ideally, Jordanian women would obtain a good job after finishing their education.

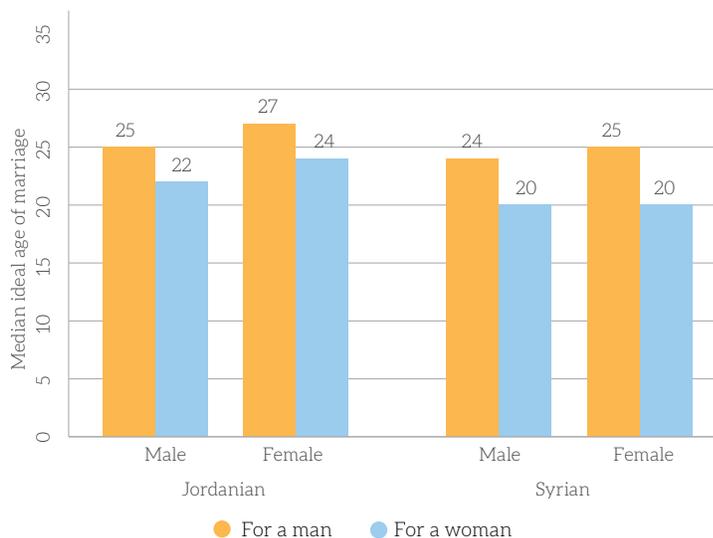
However, since a good job is difficult to find, especially as a new graduate, many women would, in reality, get married after finishing their education without working. They may, in the meantime, continue waiting to find a good job opportunity.

“I would like to place marriage as a step that should come after education [in the sequence] since marriage requires that a woman is in her late 20s and at this age, she would have started working. So, while she is married, she can search for a good job since the latter needs a lot of time to attain, years even, at least 5 to 6 years! So, a woman might get married before having a good job, and during her life as a housewife, she might be presented with a good job opportunity.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 25–28, FGD 12

The view that young women would, in reality, get married after finishing their

Figure 10: Median ideal age of marriage, by gender and nationality

Source: Authors’ calculations based on SYPJ.



education was due in part to societal pressures and norms for women not to postpone marriage. Most female Jordanian participants considered an age range between 22–30 years old to be ideal for marriage.

“The average age for marriage in my community is approximately 25 or 26. However, personally, I think the ideal age for marriage is between 28 and 30. This period is important since the woman would be mature and knowledgeable about the institution of marriage and family. She would also be experienced in life especially if she has worked in different jobs. Moreover, I think that a woman nowadays needs to be financially independent and have a source of income, despite the man’s responsibility of being the breadwinner. Women sometimes are forced to leave their jobs to get married, and this is a huge mistake.”
– Young Jordanian woman, aged between 25–28, FGD 12

However, a few Jordanian women said that people would call a woman a spinster if she marries later than the expected age in their community.

“...people will talk behind her back that she is old and she married late, that she may have children with disabilities. Or she will be called a spinster.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21–25, FGD 4

Female Jordanian participants also said that Jordanian parents value marriage and think that it is a step that should be completed directly after finishing education, before getting a good job.

“The idea in our community is that when you finish education, if a suitable person has come for

marriage, you should get married.” – Young Jordanian woman, age 22–30, FGD 8

Jordanian FGD participants said that for men, marriage and family formation should ideally come as the final steps in the transition to adulthood after a man has secured his future. They said that marriage is a responsibility, especially for men, and should not be a hindrance to achieving other steps.

“After finishing education and getting any job, I would want to achieve financial independence through getting a good job, so I should not be involved in anything that might be an obstacle in my path to achieving financial independence, specifically marriage... Marriage is not something easy, to be honest. So, I would put marriage and having children as the last steps in the sequence, especially that a person should be mature to get married and have children. Another thing is that it might be unfair for my wife, as my wife is not obliged to suffer because of me, because of the things I did not achieve yet, like finding a good job. For marriage to happen, a person should pass through all the steps before, so that when the person enters the marriage stage, everything is secured without worrying about anything.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–34, FGD 11

However, in reality, participants said that marriage may come after obtaining any job. Most young men in the FGDs considered an age range from 25 to 30 to be the ideal age of marriage for men; waiting to obtain a good job was not necessarily compatible with this desired age at marriage.

“If you wait to have a good job, achieve financial independence, or buy your own house, you would never get married. By then, you would reach the age of 40 or 50!” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 24–26, FGD 9

Interestingly, a few male participants said that marriage can be a factor that motivates a man to work harder, find a good job, and ultimately secure financial independence.

“Marriage could be a step that helps you to become financially independent, a motive... For example, I got married without having a job... I did not have a job in the sense that I did not have a steady income. I did not get married just for the sake of being married, and I was not a careless person. On the contrary, I got married and it was what motivated me to accept a job that I was refusing before, so marriage helped me become financially independent. With marriage, I felt that I have to work, I have to secure a fixed income.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–34, FGD 11

Reality and aspirations were more closely aligned for Syrians’ ages at marriage (Figure 9 and Figure 10). The median *ideal* age for a man to marry was 24 according to male Syrians, and 25 according to female Syrians (the same as the actual median), and likewise the median *ideal* age for a woman to marry was 20 according to male and female Syrians (the same as the actual median). However, fewer Syrians considered early marriage (marriage before the age of 18) to be ideal, compared with the reality of a 28 per cent rate of early marriage.

Although the median ideal and actual ages at marriage for young Syrians are closely aligned, respondents in the FGDs

emphasized that Syrians’ aspirations with regards to marriage were often not met in terms of where marriage falls in the sequencing of the transition to adulthood. In an ideal situation, some Syrian women said that marriage and having children should take place as last steps in the sequence. Other women said that marriage and having children should specifically come after having a good job, as this would secure financial independence. However, in reality, they said that marriage and having children occur early on in the sequence. In the view of some women participants, circumstances force women to marry before they accomplish other steps such as finishing education or obtaining a good job.

“Marriage should occur after getting a good job. Marriage and financial independence come hand in hand. Marriage means that the two partners [support] each other, and when financial independence is achieved, ideally, buying a house is possible, and then after that, having children follows. This is an ideal situation; however, in reality, achieving financial independence and owning a house are impossible, and people usually have children after marriage directly.” – Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

Because steps in the transition related to employment are often not achieved, Syrian women participants said that the transition to adulthood for them in reality usually consists of finishing education, marriage, and having children.

The early occurrence of marriage in the transition to adulthood was attributed by female Syrian respondents to societal norms and family preferences.

"In most [of our] societies, they prefer to marry the girl early on and make her stay at home. It is the society we live in, the nature of our life." – Young Syrian woman, aged between 23–30, FGD 1

At the same time, respondents stressed that marrying early varies by their Syrian region of origin, along with the traditions of each family. Even though some parents prefer that their daughters finish their education before getting married, participants said that many parents prioritize marriage and prefer that women get married at ages ranging from 16 to 20. A few women said that some parents consider that after the age of 25, the woman is no longer suitable for marriage and would become a spinster.

"... there are other parents who prefer she finishes her education first since it is a basic thing. Then marriage may follow, and if she gets a job, then the marriage can follow the job." – Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

"Family members, they are the ones who make the girl get married early." – Young Syrian woman, aged between 23–30, FGD 1

Male Syrian participants had similar views to the female participants. They stated that marriage and having children should ideally occur as the last steps in a man's transition to adulthood, especially since men are the breadwinners in the family, so they must secure financial independence before marrying and having children.

"In our society, the man is responsible for everything, all expenses, be it related to the wedding, or household..." – Young Syrian man, aged between 20–27, FGD 2

However, in reality, Syrian men stressed that marriage for men occurs before securing financial independence and before owning a house, as these steps are almost impossible to achieve for Syrians as refugees in Jordan.

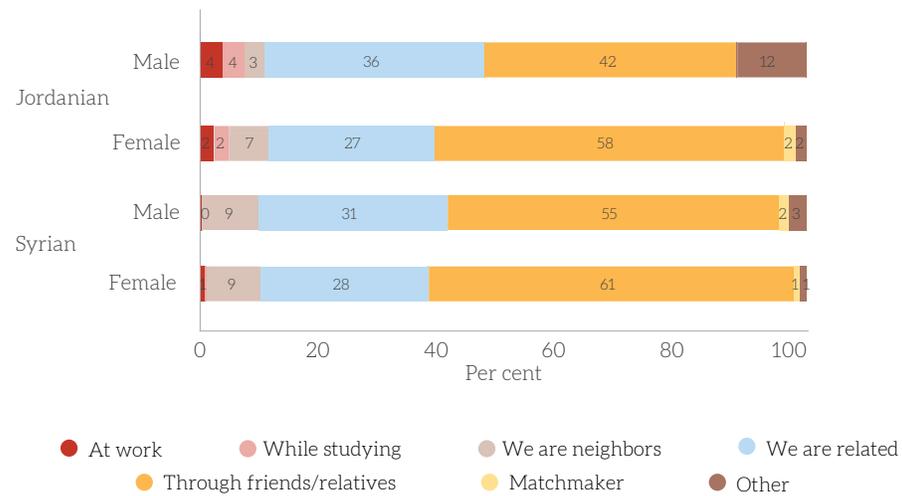
"[In reality], marriage and having children occur at first, before becoming financially independent, which is [unattainable]." – Young Syrian man aged between 20–25, FGD 7

One factor influencing the timing of marriage may be the time at which young people meet a suitable spouse. Young people in Jordan find their husbands and wives primarily through family and social networks. The majority of married survey respondents (42 to 61 per cent across groups) met their spouses through friends, relatives, or acquaintances (Figure 11). Often, young people met because they were related to their spouse (27 to 36 per cent across groups). Indeed, in an additional question specifically on being related to one's spouse by blood or marriage before getting married, 41 per cent of male Jordanians, 43 per cent of male Syrians, 35 per cent of female Jordanians, and 31 per cent of female Syrians reported being related to their spouse.⁹⁰ Spouses were also sometimes neighbours (3 to 9 per cent across groups). It was rare to meet a spouse while studying (at most, 4 per cent for male Jordanians) or at work (at most, 4 per cent, again for male Jordanians).

⁹⁰ The differences between men and women in this response are likely due to earlier marriages being more likely to be marriage between relatives and the age of marriage being higher among men.

Figure 11: How young married people met their spouse, by gender and nationality (percentage)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ.

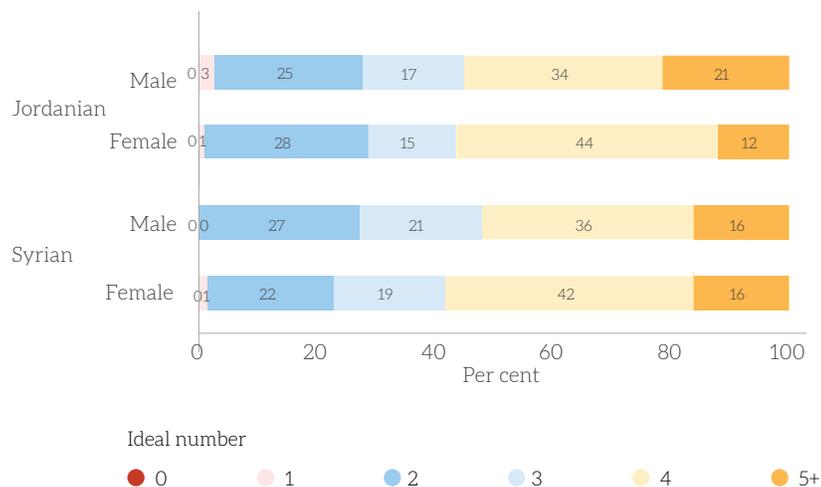


Marriage and childbearing are closely connected in Jordan. Participants in the FGDs said that having children is a responsibility, and it should ideally occur as the last step in the sequence when young people are mature as individuals and have established themselves.

"Since I am an adult, I should carefully plan future steps. If I am to have children now, and I am a woman who is not educated, nor experienced in life, how would I raise them?!"
 – Young Jordanian woman, aged 16–23, FGD 6

However, given the difficulty of obtaining a good job and establishing financial and residential independence, FGD participants said that children come directly after marriage.

Large families remain the norm in Jordan (Figure 12). Young people's most common ideal number of children was four (34 to 44 per cent across groups). A family with two children was the second most common ideal (22 to 28 per cent across groups). Very few young people wanted only one child; this was even less common than reported preferences for families of 5+ children (12 to 21 per cent across groups). Men (both Syrian and Jordanian) expressed preferences for more male children and fewer female children (not shown). Women slightly preferred more female children, but by a smaller margin than men preferred male children.

Figure 12: **Ideal number of children, by respondent gender and nationality (percentage)***Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ.*

Ideals and reality in the transition to adulthood

Overall, a major theme of the focus group discussions was the gap between young people's ideals and aspirations with regard to the transition to adulthood and the realities they faced when making this transition. The frustrations that both young Jordanians and Syrians felt in terms of lack of opportunities were particularly sharp when it came to employment and the subsequent steps of financial independence and marriage that it

facilitates. These feelings of frustration are consistent with the picture of slow transitions to the labour market – and particularly to formal jobs – seen in the SYPJ data. In the subsequent chapters, this report delves into further detail on young people's education and preparation for the labour market, their economic participation, and civic engagement. Throughout, it addresses both young people's aspirations and expectations with regards to these aspects of the transition to adulthood and the outcomes that they experience.

Chapter 3

Education and readiness for the labour market



Key Messages

- Young people consider finishing education foundational to the transition to adulthood and subsequent steps such as work and marriage.
- Young Jordanians aspire to – and often achieve – tertiary education. Higher education is considered important for both personal development and obtaining the desired public sector employment.
- Jordanian women have higher educational attainment than men.
- Young Syrians in Jordan have lower levels of educational attainment than their Jordanian peers. Although they nearly universally enter school, young Syrians start dropping out during the later years of basic education, and struggle to continue to secondary education or university.
- Except for the higher education stage, young female Syrians have higher enrolment rates than their male Syrian counterparts.
- Although young Jordanians consider technical, vocational, education and training as potentially relevant to the labour market, the majority also consider it the option for those with low grades.
- Young people with disabilities have legal protections designed to ensure educational accommodations, but in reality, they face barriers in progressing through education and especially in accessing tracks outside the humanities.

Today, young people in Jordan, especially young women, are substantially more educated than their parent's generation, but face increasing challenges in capitalizing on this education to get good jobs and improved livelihoods. A Jordanian born around 1990 has more than three times the chances of achieving higher education than their parent born around 1965.⁹¹ These gains have been particularly pronounced for women. A young man born around 1990 is expected to have, on average, about 1.5 more years of education than his father, born 25 or 30 years earlier.

⁹¹ Assaad, Krafft and Keo, 2019.

By comparison, a young woman born around the same time is expected to have more than four years more education than her mother, born a generation earlier, and almost one year more than a man born the same year as her.⁹²

Young Syrian refugees in Jordan had fewer educational opportunities in Syria prior to their arrival in Jordan, and face greater challenges in the Jordanian education system. This leads many to end their education sooner.⁹³ These accelerated

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Sieverding et al., 2018.

transitions out of school have negative implications for Syrians' human capital formation and opportunities to access better-quality jobs.

The role of education in the transition to adulthood

Both young Jordanians and Syrians who participated in the focus group discussions widely viewed finishing education as a crucial step in a young person's transition to adulthood. Education was seen as establishing the foundation for later steps in the transition, and as a key life-accomplishment that affected young people's opportunities.

"Finishing education is a prerequisite. When you get your education and diploma, a job will then be available, the house, marriage, having children... it is very important." - Young Jordanian woman, aged between 22-30, FGD 8

"To be able to get a job I have to be educated... jobs require that you finish your education, it is an essential condition..." - Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21-25, FGD 4

Jordanian young people generally had expectations of high educational attainment, which was viewed as essential for the transition to employment. Jordanian respondents said that at least *tawjihi* should be completed before seeking a job. However, many participants mentioned that specifically university education is essential, and that the higher a young person's educational attainment, the higher the chances of finding better economic opportunities and transitioning to a good job.

"There are people who have achieved

higher levels of education, this is what decides what kind of job you will have, any job or a good job... when you have ambitions and you reach a higher education level, this will lead you to a good job." -Young Jordanian woman, aged between 22-30, FGD 8

The majority of respondents also emphasized the importance of education to Jordanian parents, primarily because of education's importance for the transition to a good job.

"Parents think that finishing education is essential and a prerequisite to all other steps, it is one of the most important steps to them." - Young Jordanian woman, aged 22-30, FGD 8

Similar to their Jordanian counterparts, finishing education was seen by the majority of Syrian respondents as an essential step in the transition to adulthood, and key to young people's transition to employment.

"Finishing education [is very important] since it is a prerequisite condition to all other steps such as getting a job." - Young Syrian woman, aged between 23-30, FGD 1

"Education is a weapon to use wherever circumstances take me. If someone does not have a diploma, they cannot guarantee a better life. Whatever happens in life, and at any age, if someone has education, this can benefit them [greatly]." - Young Syrian woman, aged between 25-30, FGD 3

Syrian respondents also said that Syrian parents value education, although each family might have a different mindset.

"When I look at my children, I know that finishing education [is important]."

While marriage, it should come at the end... My parents think that a woman should complete her education. It depends on the family." – Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

Exceptions to the general prioritization of education among Syrian families were mentioned by some respondents. For example, one mentioned that Syrian parents usually support their daughters more in education whereas sons are responsible for their own financial support in their studies.

"Sometimes, parents do not support men in their education as they do for women, so a man is forced to work to secure university tuition fees, and after that, he can get a good job." – Young Syrian woman, aged between 23-30, FGD 1

A few female Syrian participants also said that some young women may be discouraged from finishing their education due to societal expectations, and particularly if they do not do well in school. This might limit future employment opportunities and lead them to transition to marriage.

"Society discourages a woman: if you have failed in your studies, you need to get married." – Young Syrian woman, aged 23–30, FGD 1

At the same time, Syrian participants noted that their refugee status comes with different challenges that impede their efforts to attain an education and transition to a good job. Their challenging financial situation pushes them to seek any job, instead of completing their education, for the sake of earning a living. Respondents said that most Syrian youth therefore must prioritize earning a living over finishing education.

"He would get any job and not a good one, since he did not complete his education, he would have to work anything just so that he gets the money... and provide for his family." – Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

This was particularly true at the post-secondary level, because universities require tuition fees in Jordan.

Educational attainment and progression

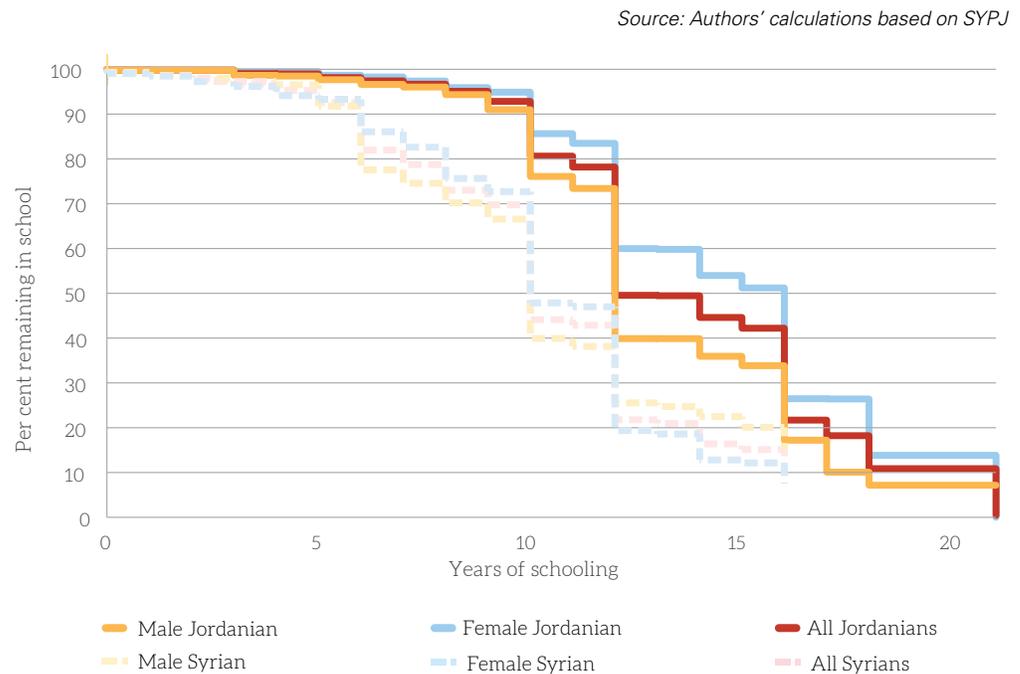
Past research has established important differences in educational enrolment by nationality and gender in Jordan.⁹⁴ Figure 13 shows, for youth aged 16–30 at the time of the survey, persistence in education at each grade (year of schooling) by gender and nationality.⁹⁵ School entry (into Grade 1 of Basic Education) is essentially universal for Jordanian youth, and near universal for Syrian youth in Jordan as well.⁹⁶ Education experiences begin to diverge for young Jordanians and Syrians during the basic schooling stage. While most Jordanians remain in school through to the end of the Basic Education stage (Grade 10), Syrians drop out in notably higher proportions through the last four years of basic education, so that only 70 per cent of Syrians complete the basic stage (10 years of schooling), compared to 93 per cent of Jordanians. Male Syrians have slightly higher dropout rates within basic schooling than their female counterparts. Research suggests male Syrian dropout is due in part to their higher opportunity cost of time and their

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Number of years of completed education in each stage of schooling is top-coded to the number expected for the stage (Primary=6, Preparatory=10 (to be comparable to Basic across systems), Basic=10, Secondary=12, Post-secondary=14, Bachelor's=16, Post-graduate diploma=17, Master's=18, PhD= 21).

⁹⁶ Other studies have likewise found that 96 per cent of Syrian children enter school (United Nations Children's Fund and Ministry of Education (Jordan), 2020).

Figure 13: **Percentage of young people remaining in schooling, by year of completed schooling, gender, and nationality**



need to pursue livelihood opportunities.⁹⁷ This is particularly true in camps, where only 55 per cent of male Syrians complete basic education compared to 71 per cent of female Syrians. Male Jordanians are likewise slightly more likely to drop out during basic education than female Jordanians.

Progressing through secondary school is indicated by the percentage who remain in school after Grade 10 through Grades 11 and 12. Only 44 per cent of Syrians (with similar rates in and out of camps) pursue secondary education, compared to 81 per cent of Jordanians, again with a gap in favour of women in both cases. While half of young Jordanians pursue post-secondary education (more than 12 years of schooling), only 22 per cent of Syrians were able to do so. Although Syrians' access to

higher education is lower than Jordanians, it does appear to have improved somewhat since 2016,⁹⁸ which may be related to international efforts to support Syrians' access to higher education in Jordan.

The gender gap in pursuing higher education is large for Jordanians and in favour of young women (60 per cent of women and 40 per cent of men continue to higher education). These results are consistent with the high priority placed on education, including tertiary education, by young women who participated in the FGDs. These young women stated that university was important not only to improve their prospects on the job market, but also because education was seen as important for marriage and raising children, as well as overall personal development.

⁹⁷ Sieverding et al., 2018.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

“A woman’s dream and ambition is to graduate from university, to get a job...” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21–25, FGD 4

“For a woman to get her education at a later stage in her life is difficult and not really recommended as she is the one who will be teaching her children.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21–25, FGD 4

“In my opinion, education comes at first. Indeed, education is important. At least, a person should have a B.S. degree. I see a lot of people who have not finished their education, their life experience is not that [great], they do not know how to manage. For example, a married woman who has not finished her education does not know how to manage.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 25–28, FGD 12

The gender gap in pursuing higher education is the reverse for Syrians (19 per cent for women and 26 per cent for men), although women in camps are more likely to pursue higher education than men. Jordanian women’s advantage in educational attainment continues through post-graduate education (more than 16 years of schooling) among Jordanians, but with a somewhat smaller gap than in the post-secondary stage. Few Syrians (none in the survey sample) pursue post-graduate education. Although Syrian women, in particular, also emphasized the importance of education in the FGDs, there are many more barriers facing young Syrians than their Jordanian counterparts in reaching tertiary education and accessing university in Jordan.

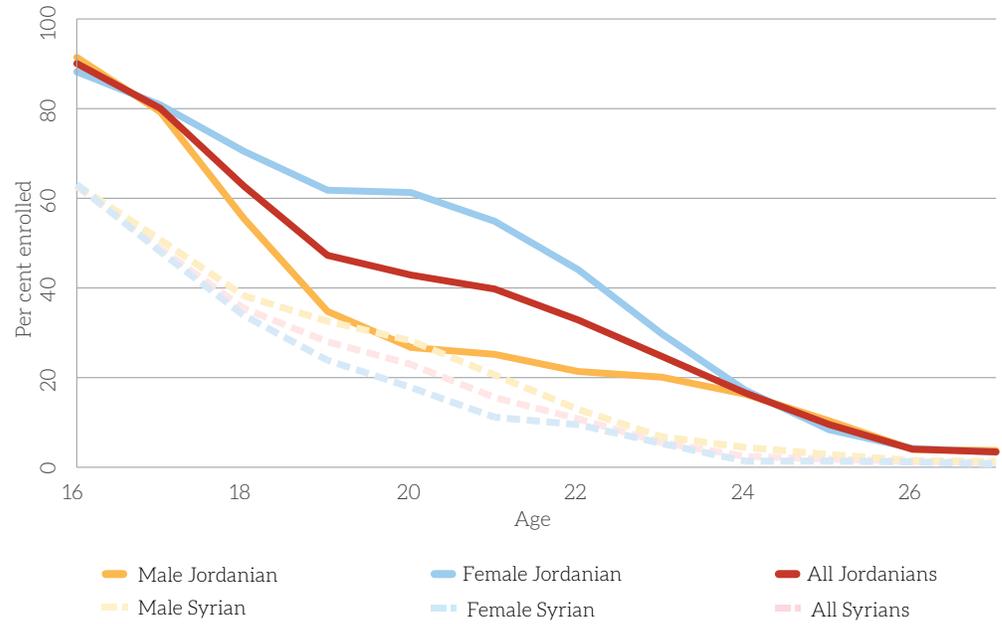
Patterns of enrolment rates (Figure 14) reflect similar differences, by gender and nationality, as rates of attainment. Enrolment rates at age 16 are nearly 90 per cent among Jordanians compared to only 60 per cent among Syrians. Enrolment rates fall substantially at ages 17 and 18 (secondary) but are comparable at ages 16 and 17 across young men and women. Starting at age 18 (higher education), the enrolment rate for Jordanian women is substantially higher than for their male counterparts. Among Syrians, the pattern by gender is reversed, with male Syrians having higher enrolment rates than females through to the age 21. Disaggregating the data for Syrians by camp versus non-camp residence shows no clear differences in enrolment between the two populations.

When students have interruptions in their schooling or have to repeat a grade, they may fall behind their expected grade-for-age.⁹⁹ Among Jordanians who are still in school, 93 per cent are in the right grade for their age, as compared to only 88 per cent of Syrians, with male Syrians being the least likely to be in the right grade for their age. Syrians in camps appear to be particularly disadvantaged according to this measure, with only 70 per cent in the right grade for their age compared to 92 per cent among those residing outside camps.

⁹⁹ We define being at the right grade-for-age based on a progression of starting Grade 1 at age 6 (and being maximum age 7 in Grade 1) and adding one year of age for each grade thereafter.

Figure 14: **Enrolment rate by age, gender, and nationality (percentage), ages 16-27**

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



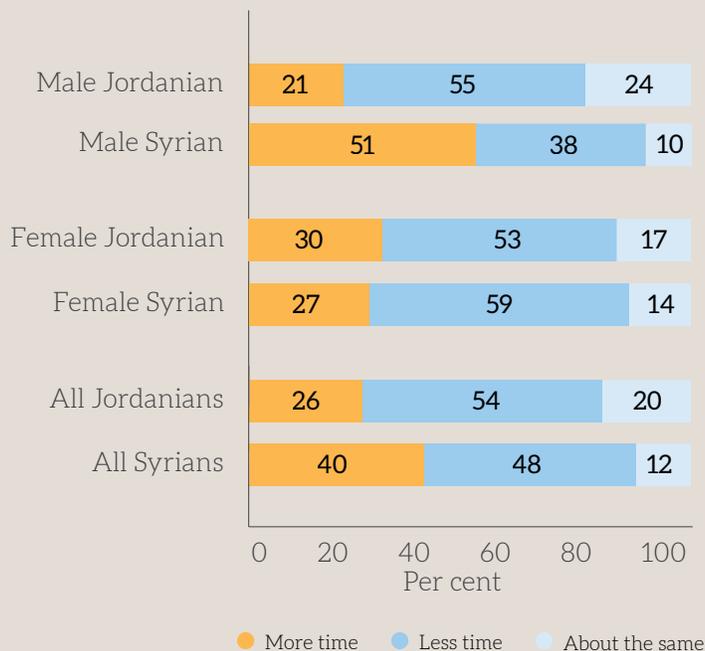
Note: Running-mean smoothed.

Box 5: Education during the COVID-19 pandemic

What happened to students when schools closed during the COVID-19 pandemic? As discussed in Box 2, online as well as TV lesson modalities were made available. Young people reported that their lessons were primarily online (78 per cent) or on TV or radio (9 per cent), but some reported doing no lessons (11 per cent). Additionally, students' ability to access and learn from these modalities varied. Figure 15 explores the time spent on schoolwork during the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to pre-pandemic times, for those in school in 2020 when closures first occurred. More than half of Jordanians and about half of Syrians said they spent less time on education, underscoring the learning loss that may have occurred during the COVID-19 closures. There was a higher proportion of female students among Jordanians who spent more time on their studies (30 per cent versus 21 per cent for male Jordanians). Surprisingly, however, this gender pattern is reversed among Syrians. Male Syrians may have had fewer opportunities to work and therefore spent more time on schoolwork.

Figure 15: **Time spent on schoolwork during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to usual for those in school in 2020, by gender and nationality (percentage)**

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



Tracking within secondary education

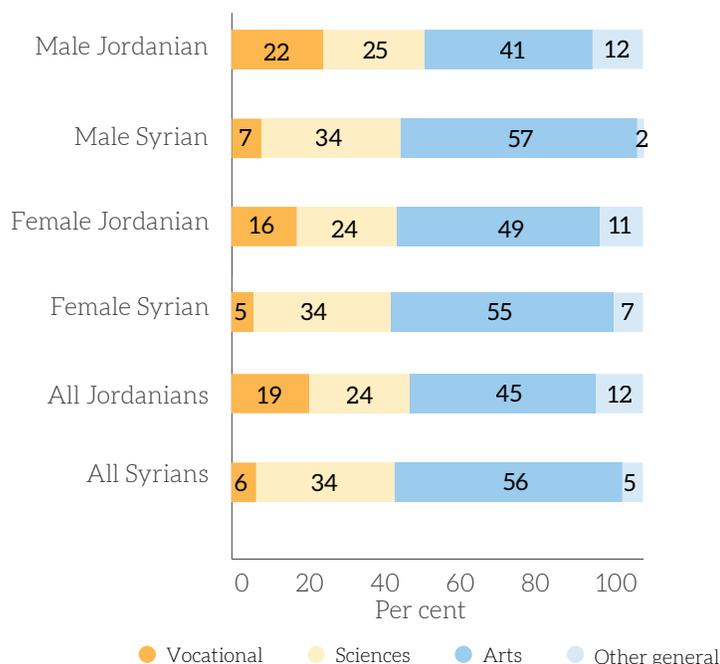
Tracking within secondary school is an important dimension of labour market readiness and often determines the ability to pursue higher education. The secondary school system in Jordan tracks students into academic (general) and vocational tracks. The general track is further subdivided into science, arts, and other tracks. The general track typically allows graduates to go on to higher education so long as they pass their *tawjihi* exams. The vocational track is generally considered a terminal pathway leading directly to the labour market.

As shown in Figure 16, the most common track for secondary students is the arts track. Nearly a fifth of Jordanians, but only 6 per cent of Syrians who went to secondary school, pursued the vocational track. There are few differences by gender in either nationality group, except for a slightly higher proportion of Jordanian women pursuing the arts track and a lower proportion pursuing the vocational track compared to their male counterparts.

Young Jordanians were asked their views on technical and vocational education (TVET) (Figure 17). Young Jordanians generally believed that TVET is not suitable for women (71 per cent), with men expressing higher rates of agreement with this statement than women. The

Figure 16: Tracks within secondary education among those who went to secondary, by gender and nationality (percentage)

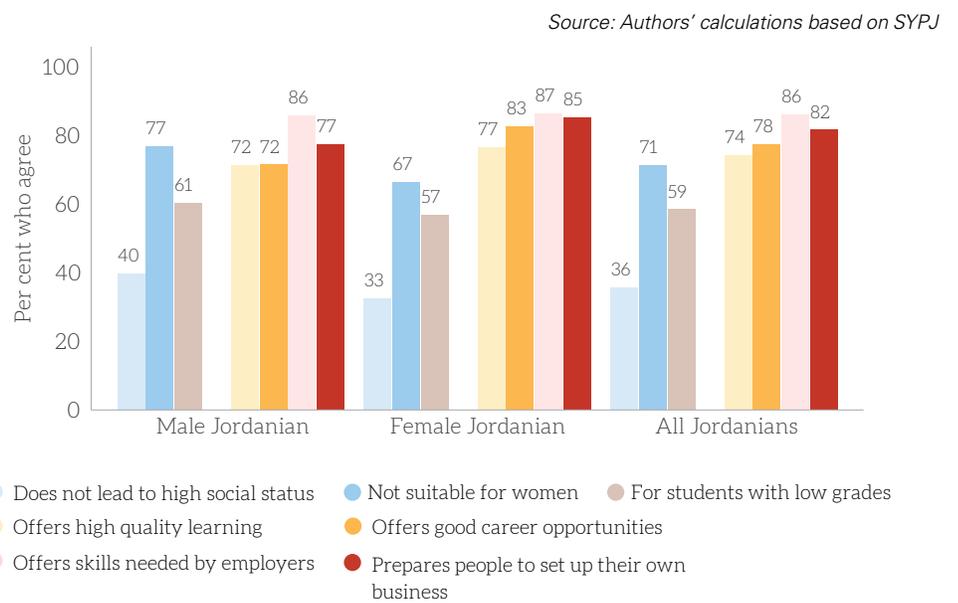
Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



majority also believed that TVET was for students with low grades (59 per cent), and a third (36 per cent) noted that TVET does not lead to high social status. A strong majority of both genders thought

that TVET offered high-quality learning, good career opportunities, skills needed by employers, and prepares people to set up their own business (74–86 per cent across all groups).

Figure 17: **Attitudes of young Jordanians towards TVET, by gender (percentage who agree with statements)**



Note: Bars in shades of blue and brown represent negative statements, and bars in shades of orange and red represent positive statements.

Box 6: Academic tracking and accessible education for Young People with Disabilities (YPWD)

Jordan's Law No. 20 of 2017 bans any educational institution from the exclusion of persons with disabilities (PWD). The responsibilities of the Ministry of Education (in association with the Higher Council for the Rights of Disabled Persons) under this law include: (i) integrating the educational needs of PWD into public policies and programmes; (ii) providing accessibility solutions in public educational institutions and making sure that private establishments provide the same solutions; and (iii) reviewing curricula and incorporating awareness regarding the rights of PWD. This law also provides financial support for PWD to enrol in higher education by capping the enrolment fees for PWD at public universities at 25 per cent of the normal cost.¹⁰⁰

Despite these legal measures, in the FGDs, young Jordanian men and women with disabilities emphasized that education opportunities for YPWD are, in reality, limited to the humanities field.

"With respect to university specialties, [you will find that all YPWD] are either teachers, or have studied history, or studied the Arabic language." – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–34, FGD 11

"[Most specialties chosen] are all humanities, whether it is in the department of literature, languages, education, Islamic law, or law... We usually study specialties in the humanities field." – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 25–28, FGD 12

Participants stressed that this tracking of YPWD is not only the result of preferences, as many YPWD prefer to study sciences. Yet, although studying sciences is permissible for YPWD by law, young people said that it is not an accessible field for them in reality, due to the lack of appropriate accommodations in schools, which prevents them from pursuing this track.

"I am permitted to study sciences, but in reality, no one does that since nothing in this field is accessible for us. If they have made labs accessible for someone who is blind for example, similar to what they do in the U.S., then we would follow the sciences track. However, they have not made the curriculum accessible, so we always choose the humanities track." – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 25–28, FGD 12

"I actually wanted to pursue the sciences track; however, the infamous sentence [that we always hear]: 'you cannot study this field (sciences)' prevented me from studying sound engineering in Jordan, so I was forced to go abroad where it is permissible to study any speciality you want and have the qualifications for." – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–34, FGD 11

Other than the limited specialties, male Jordanian participants with disabilities said that YPWD face other barriers while pursuing their education, such as the lack of accessible study materials. The participants, most of whom were visually impaired, said that this barrier was the result of the non-enforcement of university policies that oblige universities to provide comprehensive support for students with disabilities. Such barriers result in students resorting to other methods to obtain their materials, such as waiting for the assistance of volunteers and recording the study sessions. Such methods, from their perspectives, are frustrating and bothersome and bring about feelings of injustice.

¹⁰⁰ Thompson, 2020.

“There is a huge issue in our academic education. At my university, there is this law which obliges universities to provide study books which should at least be accessible by the blind student so that they can benefit from, either through Braille or by being a soft copy which can be downloaded on the laptop or the phone. This reflects a basic right for us and does not even exist!” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–34, FGD 11

“Sometimes we are forced to record the sessions privately, most of our university Doctors do not allow session recordings, they tell us that they would put this as a case against us and punish us. So, we are forced to do that and I know this is wrong but we are obliged and in need [of the session recordings].” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–34, FGD 11

Other barriers mentioned by a few participants were that YPWD themselves do not seek assistance in their studies and that almost all support for YPWD at universities comes from international organizations while it should be coming from the government. In addition, another barrier was the discrimination faced by YPWD when applying to higher education.

“I am a person who has suffered [from discrimination]. To give you an example, I applied to an exam because I wanted to study abroad for my PhD, same as other people. A lot of obstacles were put and they asked me to complete nine exams and I have done so and the grades’ gap between me and other applicants was a total of 23 points, imagine!! Despite this, they told me that the guidelines say that you should be ‘healthy’ and since you are blind, you are not considered ‘healthy’ or you are ‘unfit in terms of health’! This is where we resorted to ‘vitamin W’ or ‘the wasta’ [i.e., the use of personal connections to obtain benefits]. Notice how degrading is the term ‘unfit in terms of health’. It is not that it is illegal but it is insulting and demeaning and abusive. I mean, I accept if you call me ‘a person with disabilities’, but I do not accept if you consider me ‘unfit in terms of health’...” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–34, FGD 11

In sum, substantial barriers to YPWD’s participation in higher education persist, and gaps between policy and practice persist in terms of the rights to pursue accessible education. These barriers, among which are the presence of gaps in the implementation of education policies and the lack of accessibility of materials and tools, prevent YPWD from achieving their educational aspirations.

Attitudes toward higher education

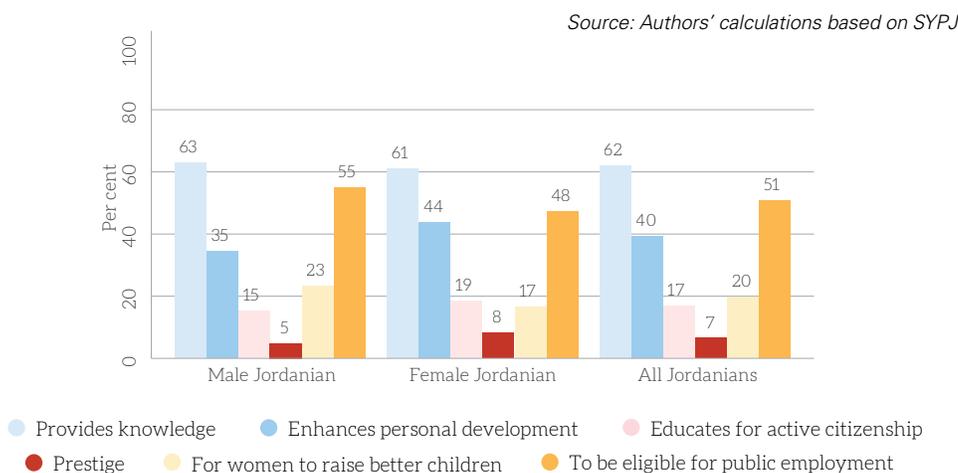
In general, young Jordanians agreed that all qualified students should have the right to go to university (87 per cent). They also generally believed that public university education is better than private university education (78 per cent). Women were more likely to agree with both these statements. With regard to the purposes of higher education, the most frequently mentioned purpose was that it “provides knowledge” (62 per cent), followed by that it provides “eligibility for public employment” (51 per cent) and “enhances personal development” (40 per cent) (Figure 18). Very few agreed that the purpose is to educate people for active citizenship (17 per cent) or to enhance one’s prestige (7 per cent). More men (23 per cent) than women (17 per cent)

agreed that one of the purposes of higher education was to prepare women to raise better children.

Among those young people who pursue a university education, the choice of specialization can have a considerable impact on later career prospects. Young people who participated in the FGDs emphasized the importance of the *tawjihi* exam, as a young person’s results in that exam influence their opportunities to enter preferred university specializations, particularly fields viewed as high-status such as engineering and medicine.

“[The benefit of passing the tawjihi] is getting a self-sufficient job... and when entering university... depending on the tawjihi average... this average would affect your choice regarding university specialization.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–30, FGD 5

Figure 18: The most important purposes of higher education according to young Jordanians, by gender (percentage)



Note: Young people were asked for the two most important purposes

"If the person does not achieve the tawjihi average required for the speciality they want, then they will not be able to study for such a speciality. For example, if the person does not get an average of 80 and above, then they would not be able to complete their education!" – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–34, FGD 11

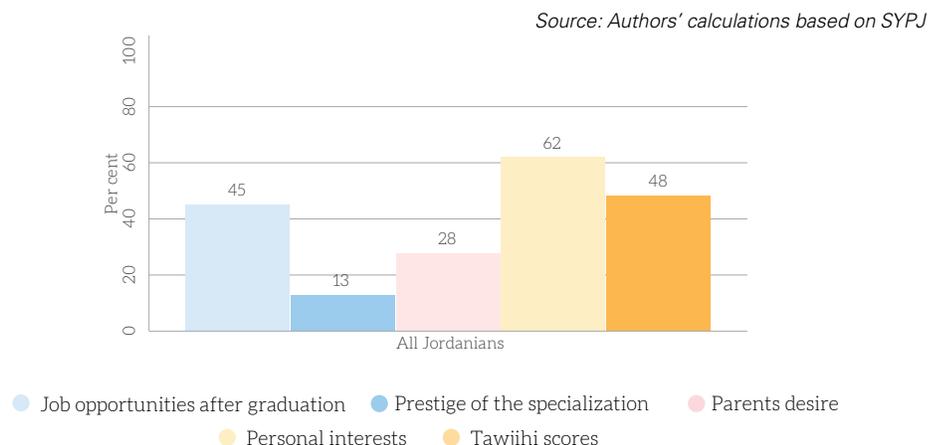
"...when the young person pursues a certain specialization, they choose it not because they are passionate about such a domain, but because of their parents. Take nursing, for example. [Their parents] would tell them: 'choose nursing', 'I want you to go for nursing school', or 'I want [you to choose this major] because I want to find you a job quickly instead of sitting...'. Then the young person would be distracted: 'Do I go to nursing school, or do I go for law school?!' They would like to be a lawyer but the parents, since they have looked and researched [the majors, found out that] nursing is better." – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 22–30, FGD 8

Results from the survey, as shown in Figure 19, demonstrated that nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) of young people stressed the importance of personal interest in selecting a university speciality, followed by *tawjihi* scores (48 per cent), and the jobs opportunities that certain specializations make possible (45 per cent). Parents' desires also played an important role for some young people (28 per cent), as did, albeit less frequently, the prestige of the specialization (13 per cent).

FGD participants said that parents sometimes impose their own preferences for university specializations on to their children, pushing them to study certain fields that they have no interest in.

Another challenge that FGD participants mentioned in terms of choosing a university specialization was that, while young people may prioritize job opportunities as a criterion for making this choice, they often have limited knowledge of what fields are most in-demand in the labour market.

Figure 19: **The most important factors to Jordanian students' decisions to pursue a particular specialization in university, according to young Jordanians (percentage)**



Note: Young people were asked for the two most important factors

“There is also not enough information about the labour market, you only get to know more about it when you finish your secondary education and you start applying for university. Even after you pass the tawjihi, you have little information. What they do is that they give you a card so that you go online to choose your university major, and they tell you this [major] is similar to that... and there is no guarantee that you will get accepted [in the major you are aiming for].” - Young Jordanian man, aged 21-30, FGD 5

“In our 10th year of school, our academic or vocational pathway is decided, and according to this choice, our university speciality is decided. Sometimes they give us trainings on the labour market, and there is this website which tells you what specialities are available and which are not. This might help us but still, in my opinion, there needs to be more awareness regarding the labour market and the challenges we might face. This awareness should also take the form of practical knowledge and not the form of only theoretical trainings at school.” - Young Jordanian woman, aged between 25-28, FGD 12

As a result, young people end up choosing their university majors without having extensive knowledge about them, and without clear information about their subsequent employment prospects.

Chapter 4

Economic participation



Key Messages

- Youth in Jordan have high unemployment rates (45 per cent) and low employment rates (26 per cent). A large percentage of young people are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) (39 per cent).
- Women have particularly high unemployment rates (79 per cent for young Jordanian women and 82 per cent for young Syrian women).
- Young Jordanians have clear views on what constitutes a good job. They preferred the public sector due to its job security and better working conditions. For women, teaching jobs were preferred and for men, employment in the military. Yet only a small percentage of young people were able to obtain such jobs.
- While Syrians aspired to decent work, they noted such work was rarely available to them. Almost all Syrians worked informally.
- A quarter of young people engaged in trainings outside the regular school system, with trainings primarily benefiting personal development and less frequently leading directly to employment or entrepreneurship.
- Young people self-report having strong soft skills, as well as basic job skills like literacy and fitness, but varying degrees of more advanced job skills such as computing or foreign languages. Men and women had similar skill levels overall, but Syrians less frequently reported having key job skills than Jordanians.
- Employment rates were not related to young people's skill levels. Young people often worked in jobs that required less education than they had attained.
- Among those youth who tried to start a business or project, half never actually started it, 42 per cent started a business that failed, 3 per cent started a business but closed it, and only 5 per cent started a business and had it continue.
- Young people expressed strong intentions to migrate for work or education, with Jordanians interested in migration to the Gulf, and Syrians to Europe. Syrians did not expect that it would be safe to return to Syria any time soon.

While young people in Jordan have great expectations for the completion of their education and high aspirations to transform this education into “good” jobs, the reality of the jobs that await them is often disappointing. This can lead to lengthy periods of anxious waiting for the right job opportunity to materialize. Syrians’ aspirations are further constrained by the limited opportunities they face in the Jordanian labour market, leading to low levels of employment and low-quality, precarious jobs when they are able to get more stable employment.

Labour force participation, employment, and unemployment

Jordan has historically had low rates of participation in the labour force, with notably low employment rates and high unemployment rates, particularly for women and young people.¹⁰¹ In this section, we explore employment rates,¹⁰² unemployment rates (as a share of the labour force),¹⁰³ labour force participation rates,¹⁰⁴ and the percentage of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET). A detailed table (Table 1) is also provided in Appendix 1 for reference.

Figure 20 shows employment and unemployment rates by gender, nationality, and age group. Overall, only a quarter of young people (26 per cent) are employed (Table 1). Only 46 per cent of young Jordanian men, 32 per cent of young Syrian men, 7 per cent of young Jordanian women, and 6 per cent of young

Syrian women are employed. Employment rises substantially with age, particularly for men. For instance, the employment rate for male Jordanians rises from 12 per cent at ages 16–17 years old to 46 per cent at ages 18–24, and to 70 per cent at the ages of 25–30 years old. Yet, this means that at the ages of 25–30, almost a third of Jordanian men are still not employed. For women, employment is higher at the ages of 25–30 than at the ages 18–24, but still reaches a high of only 17 per cent for Jordanian women and only 8 per cent for Syrian women.

At earlier ages, many young people are still in school and outside the labour force. Those young people in the labour force are often unemployed, particularly at younger ages. Overall, the unemployment rate is 45 per cent for young people. For young Jordanian men the unemployment rate is 30 per cent, rising to 44 per cent among young Syrian men, 79 per cent for young Jordanian women, and 82 per cent for young Syrian women. As a point of comparison, in the fourth quarter of 2020, the unemployment rate for Jordan overall was 25 per cent,¹⁰⁵ 23 per cent for men and 33 per cent for women.¹⁰⁶ Although young people and women typically have higher unemployment rates than average, the pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges. For example, in 2019 (before the pandemic), Jordanians aged between 20–24 had a 39 per cent unemployment rate overall (now 45 per cent), and Jordanian women aged 20–24 had a 60 per cent unemployment rate (now 88 per cent).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Assaad, Krafft and Keo, 2019.

¹⁰² Whether the young people were engaged in market work (work for pay or profit) in the past three months.

¹⁰³ We use the standard measure of unemployment, which requires wanting to work, being ready to start within two weeks, and searching within the past four weeks. Unemployment using the broader definition (not requiring search, so including discouraged unemployment) would be even higher.

¹⁰⁴ Individuals are considered to be in the labour force if they are employed or unemployed, following the preceding definitions.

¹⁰⁵ Department of Statistics (Jordan), 2021.

¹⁰⁶ Our results are consistent with official statistics which found the highest unemployment rates nationally were for ages 15–19 (62 per cent) and 20–24 (48 per cent) in the fourth quarter of 2020. We find an unemployment rate of 54 per cent for 16–19 year-olds and 46 per cent for 20–24 year-olds.

¹⁰⁷ Department of Statistics (Jordan), 2019.

Figure 20: **Employment (percentage of the population) and unemployment rate (percentage of the labour force), by gender and age group**

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

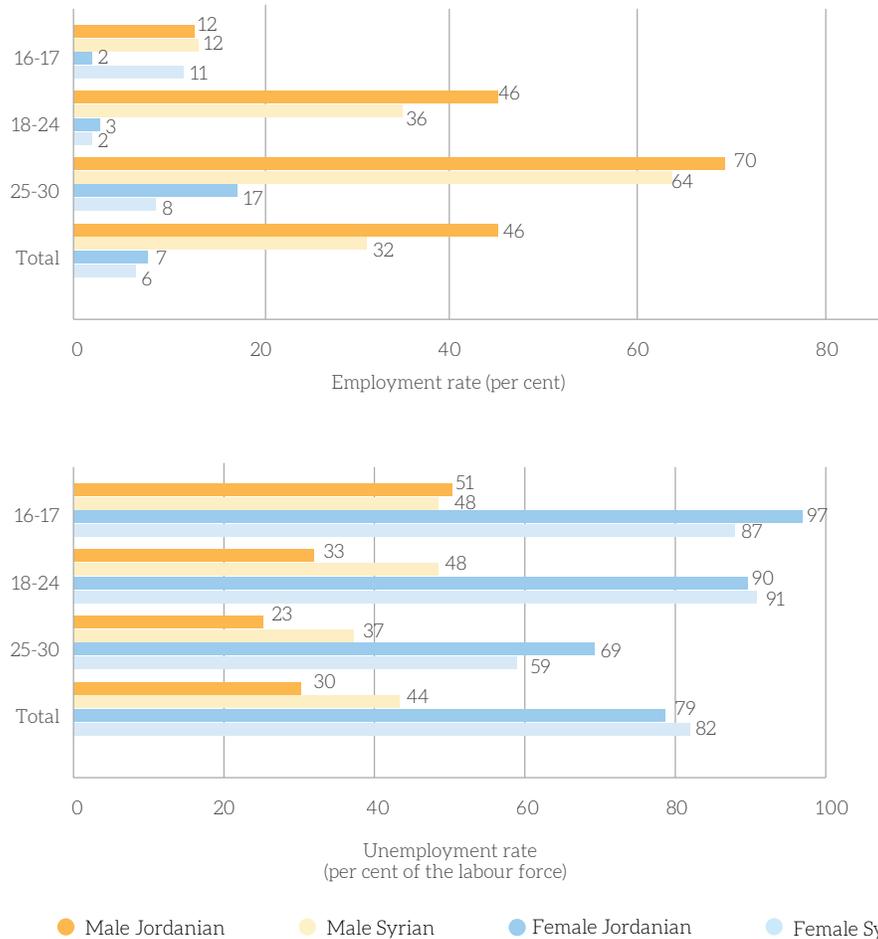
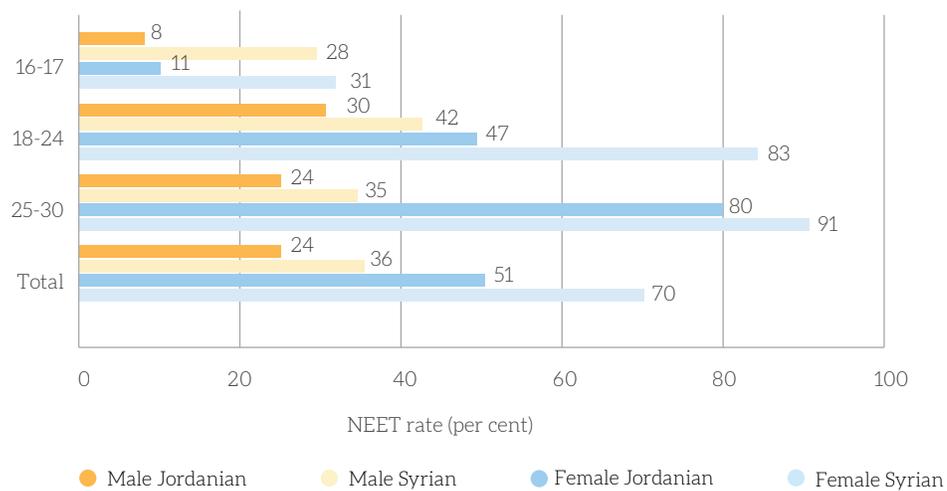


Figure 21 explores the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Fewer young people aged 16–17 are NEET, but the share rises to 30 per cent for young Jordanian men, 42 per cent for young Syrian men, 47 per cent for young Jordanian women, and 83 per cent for young Syrian women at the ages 18–24. While NEET rates drop slightly for men aged 25–30 compared to those aged 18–

24, to 24 per cent for young Jordanian men and 35 per cent for young Syrian men, they rise for young women. While 80 per cent of Jordanian women aged 25–30 are NEET, 91 per cent of Syrian women aged 25–30 are NEET. As discussed further below, the higher percentage amongst the older range of young women who are NEET is related in part to marriage and care work responsibilities among this group.

Figure 21: **Not in employment, education, or training (NEET) rate (percentage), by gender and age group***Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ*

Box 7: Job separation during the COVID-19 pandemic

How has the pandemic affected the job separation rate? This box examines those who were employed six months prior to the survey and their employment status at the time of the survey, defining separation as leaving one's job and not being re-employed (in the same or a different job) by the time of the survey. To compare with separation rates in "normal times," we use the Jordan Labor Market Survey (JLMPS) of 2016 to look at separation rates in the six months prior to that survey for young people aged 16–30.

On average, young Jordanians were more than twice as likely to experience job separation in 2020 compared to 2016, with Jordanian women experiencing separation rates at more than three times their 2016 rate.

Syrians, as a group, being in more precarious types of employment, experienced more than double the separation rate experienced by Jordanians. Male Syrians had separation rates in 2020/21 that were nearly 9 times higher than their 2016 rates. Female Syrians had extremely high separation rates in 2020/21, with nearly 75 per cent of those employed experiencing separation from their jobs. Unfortunately, we are unable to compare to 2016 since the number of young Syrian women who were employed according to the JLMPS was too small.

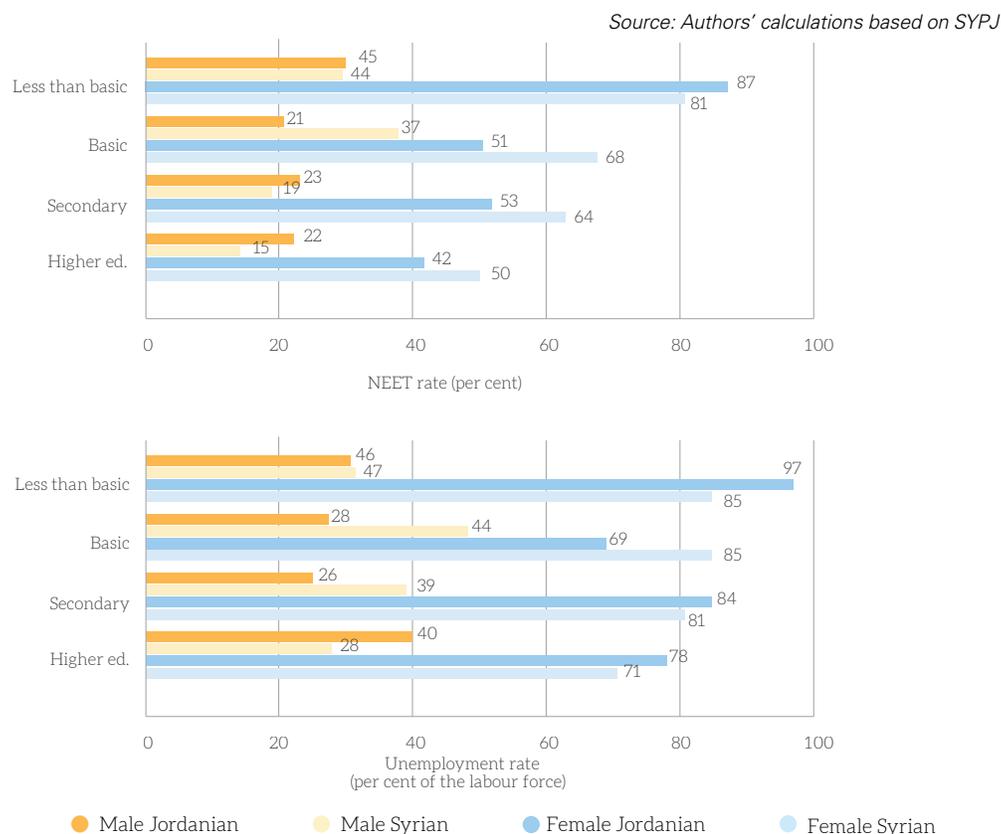
Figure 22: **Percentage who left their job in the 6 months prior to the survey and did not start another job among those who were employed 6 months prior to the survey, by gender and nationality (years 2016 and 2020/21)**



Unemployment has typically been higher among more educated individuals. However, this pattern may have been altered by the pandemic, which particularly affected informal and less educated workers.¹⁰⁸ Figure 23 presents NEET and unemployment rates by education. Unemployment rates generally decline with education for women (97 per cent for Jordanian women with less than basic education versus 78 per cent for those with higher education). Syrian men also have lower unemployment rates with more education (47 per cent for those with less than basic education versus 28 per cent for those with higher education).

For Jordanian men, the graph of the relationship between unemployment and educational attainment is more U-shaped; the unemployment rate for those with less than basic education is 46 per cent, compared to 28 per cent for those with basic education, 26 per cent for those with secondary education, and 40 per cent for those with higher education. NEET rates are highest for those with less than basic education. For Jordanian men, NEET rates are between 21–23 per cent for basic, secondary, and higher education graduates but for Syrian men with these education levels, NEET rates range from 42 per

Figure 23: **Not in employment, education, or training (NEET) (percentage of the population) and unemployment rate (percentage of the labour force), by gender and education level**



108 Krafft, Assaad and Marouani, 2021.

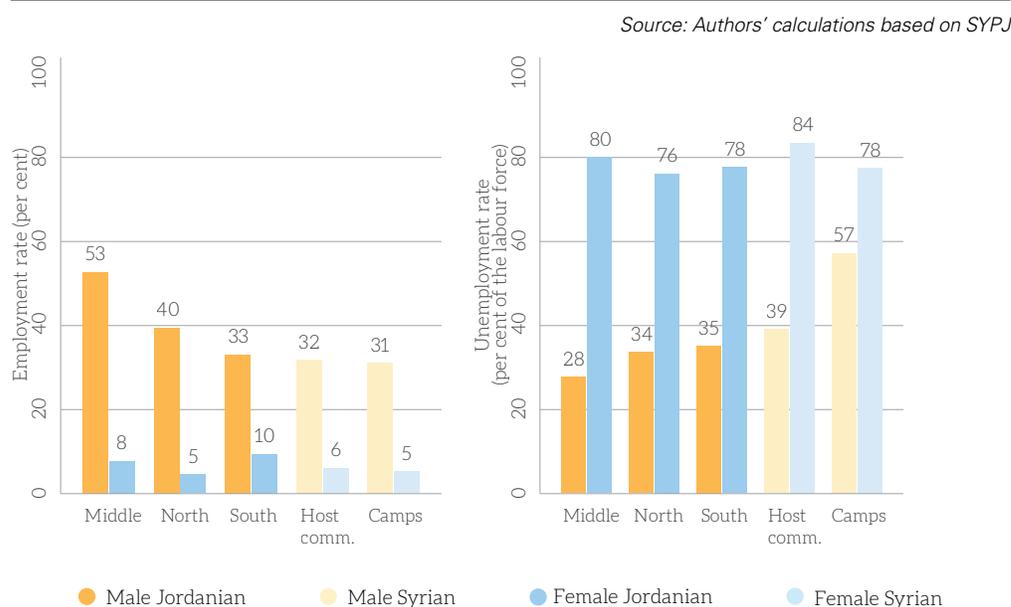
cent (higher education) to 53 per cent (secondary education). For both Syrian and Jordanian women, NEET rates drop with education, from 87 per cent to 42 per cent across less than basic to higher education for Jordanian women, and from 81 per cent to 50 per cent for Syrian women.

There are important differences in employment rates and unemployment by region or location of residence. Figure 24 explores regional differences in labour market outcomes for Jordanians, and compares camp and non-camp locations for Syrians. Women have similar unemployment rates (76 to 84 per cent) regardless of nationality or context. Jordanian women are more likely to be employed in the South (10 per cent) than the Middle (8 per cent) or North (5 per cent). For Jordanian men, employment is highest in the Middle

(53 per cent) and unemployment lowest (28 per cent), with the South having the lowest employment rate (33 per cent) and the highest unemployment (35 per cent). Jordanian men in urban areas also had higher employment rates (49 per cent versus 31 per cent in rural areas) and lower unemployment rates (30 per cent in urban areas versus 35 per cent in rural areas) (not shown). Syrian men have similar employment rates in host communities and camps (31 to 32 per cent) but higher unemployment rates in camps (57 per cent) than in host communities (39 per cent).

For men, employment is a pre-requisite for marriage, particularly for Jordanians, but for women, marriage and concomitant increases in care work decrease employment outside the home.¹⁰⁹

Figure 24: **Employment rate (percentage of the population) and unemployment rate (percentage of the labour force), by gender and region/location of residence**



¹⁰⁹ Krafft and Assaad, 2020; Economic Research Forum and United Nations Women, 2020; Assaad, Krafft and Selwaness, 2017.

Figure 25 shows employment and unemployment rates by marital status, gender, and nationality. For Jordanian men, 91 per cent of married men are employed, and the unemployment rate is only 6 per cent. Employment rates are much lower (62 per cent) for young married Syrian men, pointing to a lesser ability to be breadwinners for their families, an essential role for married men in this context. More worryingly, the unemployment rate for this group is very high (41 per cent), just under those of their unmarried counterparts (46 per cent). Jordanian and Syrian women's employment is lower if married, only 6 per cent for young married Jordanian

women and 2 per cent for young married Syrian women.

Higher-skilled young people are not necessarily more likely to be employed, as shown by Figure 26. For instance, among male Jordanians, 50 per cent without maths skills are employed, compared with 44 per cent of those who self-report having maths skills. Unemployment rates are similar (30 per cent) regardless of self-reported maths skills. The main exception appears to be that employment rates are higher among male Jordanians with self-reported computer skills than those without them (49 versus 36 per cent).

Figure 25: **Employment rate (percentage of the population) and unemployment rate (percentage of the labour force), by gender and marital status**

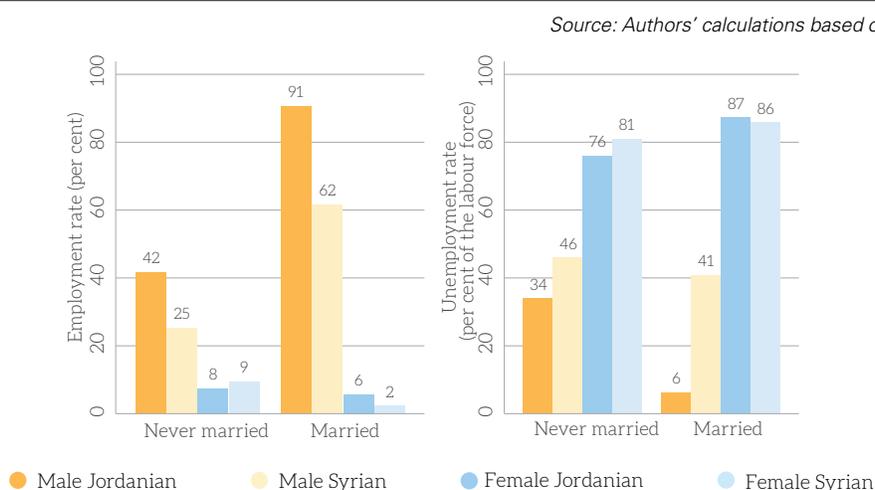


Figure 26: Employment rate (percentage of the population) and unemployment rate (percentage of the labour force), by skill level

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



Note: Skills are self-reported. Hardworking indicates a response of "Almost always" or "Most of the time" to the question "Do you work very hard?"

Time use

With such a large percentage of young people not engaged in employment, education, or training, how do young people spend their time? The answer depends substantially on marital status (Figure 27) and employment status (Figure 28). The figures show time use in hours per day (averaged across days and individuals). For instance, married Jordanian women spend four hours per day on domestic chores, and married Syrian women spend five hours per day on domestic chores. This is similar to the number of hours that married Jordanian and Syrian men spend in employment (five hours and six hours per day, respectively). Married men spend an hour or less on domestic chores. Women's domestic responsibilities make employment difficult because, as has also been shown for Jordanian women overall, they perform a working week of unpaid care labour.¹¹⁰

Young women who work also average fewer hours per day than their male counterparts. Working women averaged three hours per day spent on employment for Jordanians and two for Syrians, compared to six hours per day for working Jordanian men and nine hours per day for working Syrian men. Young people who are not employed spend more time on sleep, social activities, mass media, hobbies, and personal care.

Ideal occupations and acceptable jobs

Young Jordanians and, to a lesser degree, young Syrians had specific views on the characteristics of a “good” job. This was a particularly important theme in the focus group discussions given that employment was a major factor in young

people's distinctions between what they saw as ideal and attainable transitions to adulthood. Young people's views on ideal jobs also differed considerably by nationality and gender, reflecting gender norms regarding employment as well as the barriers facing refugees in obtaining decent employment in Jordan.

Young Jordanians who participated in the FGDs preferred jobs in the public sector for both sexes. Young people consider a job in the public sector as comfortable, safe, having flexible hours, and providing a good income.

“The preferred jobs are those in the public sector... a job where you can secure your future, ...to secure a good and safe income, a job that is secure and fixed, unlike the private sector which may at any time lay off an employee.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–30, FGD 5

Within the general preference for the public sector, certain professions were seen by young people as preferable for women versus men. As shown in Figure 29, the majority of young people (across gender and nationality 51–61 per cent) responded that the ideal job for a woman is as a teaching professional. This was explained by the qualitative respondents in terms of teaching being a profession that is socially accepted and has short working hours, so that women can come home early to their families. In addition, a teaching position does not involve a lot of mobility, which was seen as preferred for women in Jordanian society. A few respondents also noted that teaching is typically a gender-segregated profession, which they viewed as more appropriate for women.

“A teacher [is a good job for women] since her working hours are fixed, she

¹¹⁰ Al-Hawarin et al., 2020.

Figure 27: Time use of young people, by gender, nationality, and marital status (average number of hours per day)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

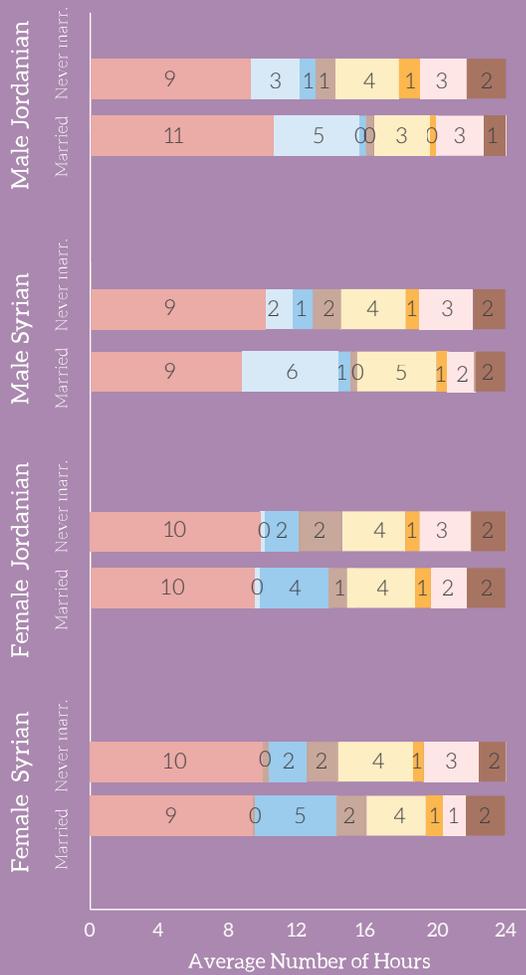
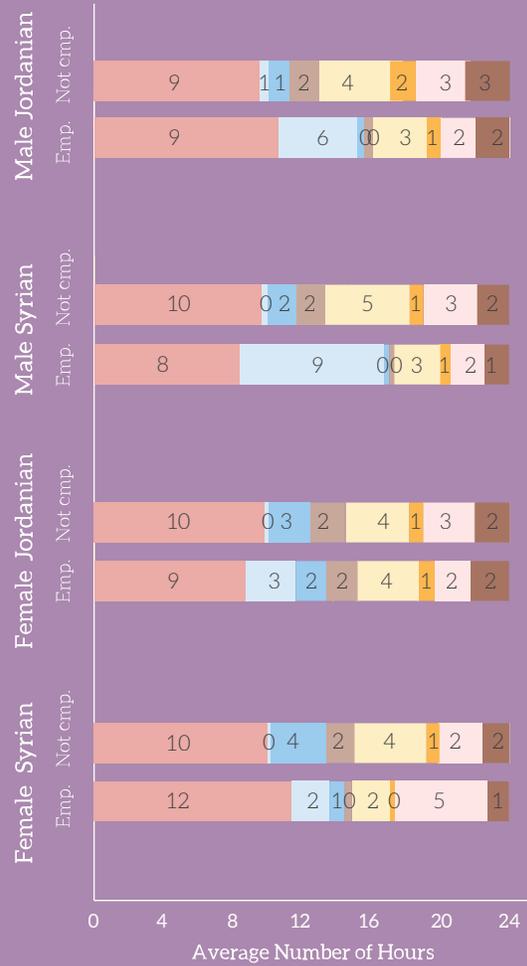


Figure 28: Time use of young people, by gender, nationality, and employment status (average number of hours per day)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



- Sleep
- Domestic chores
- Social activities
- Mass media
- Employment
- Education
- Hobbies
- Personal care

goes out in the morning at 8 the same time her children would be going to school, and she would come back early. This is better for her since she would be coming home early and not late, and her job would not require a lot of mobility, so a teacher is the best job for her.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 16–23, FGD 6

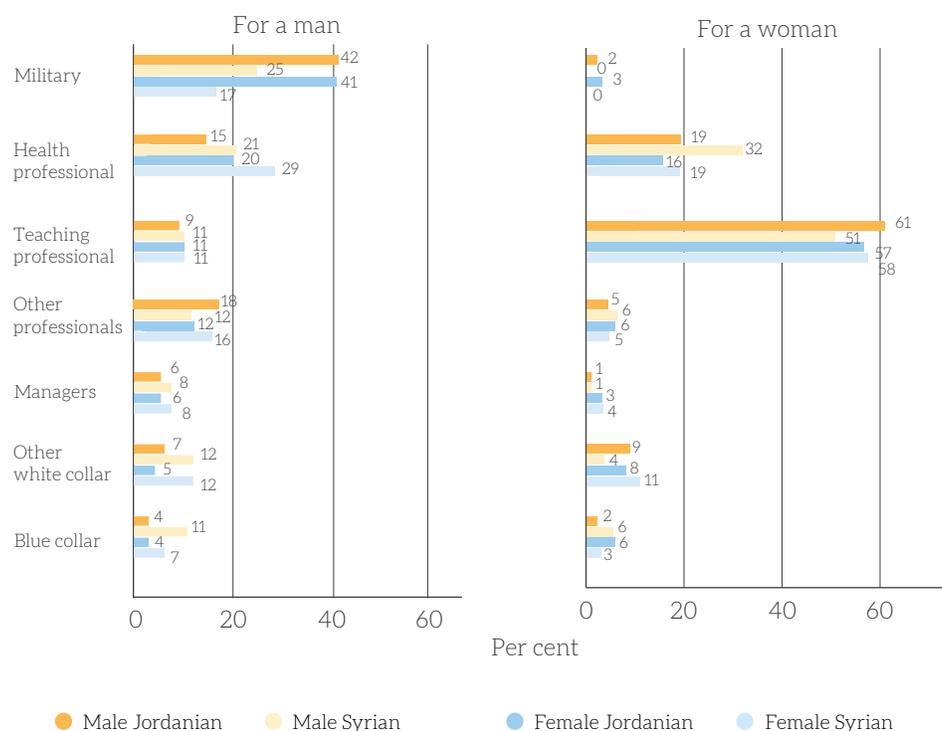
“In my opinion, [a good job for women] would be in either the education or the health sector. In our society, we need female nurses and doctors. Some men would tell you that they do not like their wives going to a male doctor... it is more comfortable for her and [acceptable in] society [for her to be seen by a female doctor].” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 24–26, FGD 9

The second most common response for the ideal occupation for a woman was a health professional (16–32 per cent across all groups). Qualitative respondents explained this in terms of there being a need for female doctors and nurses to tend to female patients as this is preferred in the society.

Although there were some responses that mentioned other professional, managerial, and white-collar roles, no more than 6 per cent of any group thought that a blue-collar occupation was ideal for women, and there

Figure 29: **Ideal occupation for a man and for a woman (percentage), by respondent nationality and gender**

Source: Authors’ calculations based on SYPJ



was strong agreement among women and men on the ideal jobs for women.

In terms of the ideal job for men, the military was the most common response among Jordanians (42 per cent for Jordanian men and 41 per cent for Jordanian women), followed by a variety of other professional occupations. Qualitative respondents emphasized that the military is the preferred career route because of the many benefits it involves.

“A job in the military (army) can benefit you and your children, in terms of health insurance and education.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 18–19, FGD 10

In both young men’s and women’s views, the advantages of the military included high salaries, which increase as a person moves higher in rank, particularly if she or he has completed education. In addition, a job in the military offers educational scholarships to the family that were seen as better than those provided by the education and health sectors. Other benefits mentioned by participants include health insurance and housing.

“[A job in the army] provides health insurance in case you got sick. Your children in the future will also have the chance to study [via scholarships] ...” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21–25, FGD 4

Only 4 per cent of Jordanian men or women thought that a blue-collar occupation was ideal for a man, and only 7–11 per cent of Syrian men or women thought a blue-collar occupation was ideal for a man. In the qualitative discussions, however, young Syrians also reflected on the ideal job for Syrian refugees in the context of Jordan. Both men and women respondents

mentioned that a good job is ideally a job in one’s field of study and suited to their educational qualifications. Some also added that a good job is one which comes with a good salary that can ultimately lead to financial stability, or that comes with benefits such as health insurance.

“[A good job] is a job which can lead to financial stability... a job which matches the education and efforts put in, and one which can secure financial needs.” – Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

“[A good job] is a job in one’s specialization, for example, a doctor should work in healthcare.” – Young Syrian man, aged between 20–25, FGD 7

With regards to good jobs for Syrian women in Jordan, Syrian respondents of both sexes mentioned home-based work, tailoring, and tutoring. Respondents added that jobs that entail coming home late were deemed inappropriate and unacceptable for Syrian women in the context of Jordan.

“She can work at home in tailoring or food preparation, she can promote her work on Facebook, for example...” – Young Syrian woman, aged between 23–30, FGD 1

While in the abstract, professions such as teachers and healthcare professionals were preferred for women by young Syrians, in the reality of Jordan where such professions were largely closed to them, home-based economic activities were seen as preferred for women.

Young people’s preferences for certain types of employment are reflected in the positions unemployed young people would be willing to accept. The results show that women are generally more selective in

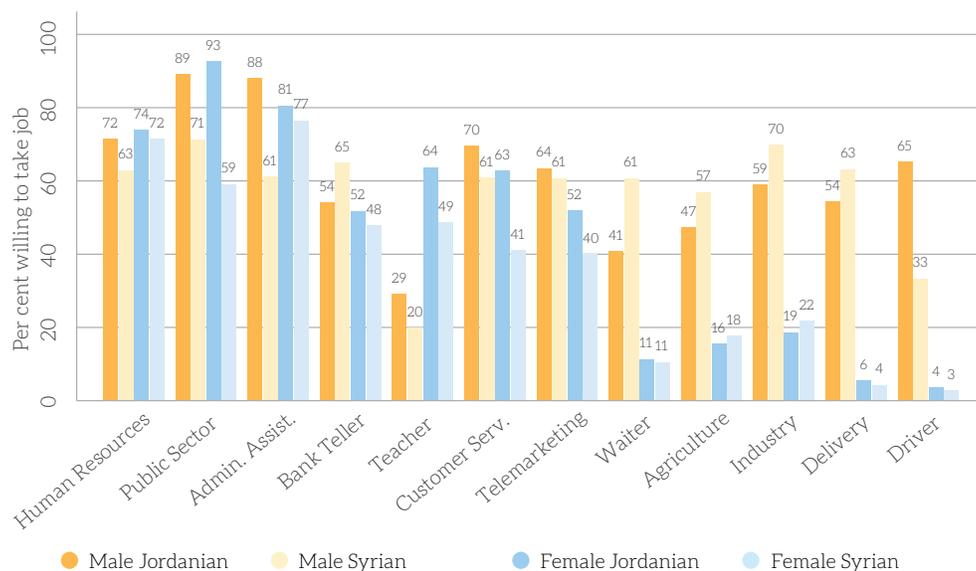
terms of the types of jobs they would be willing to accept. For instance, while 71 per cent of unemployed female Jordanians would accept a job in the public sector, only 19 per cent would accept a job in industry, only 11 per cent would accept a job as a waiter, and only 4 per cent would accept a job as a driver. Less than half of male Jordanians are willing to accept jobs as teachers, waiters, and agricultural workers; only 59 per cent would work in industry, and 54 per cent in delivery work. Unemployed Syrian men are more accepting of jobs as waiters (61 per cent), agricultural workers (57 per cent), and jobs in industry (70 per cent), or as delivery workers (63 per cent).

Gender and employment conditions

Unemployed young women are subject to more restrictions (self-imposed or otherwise) in terms of the types of employment they would be willing to consider due to a variety of gender-based barriers to economic activity. Young Jordanian women who participated in the focus group discussions were very positive about the idea of women working in general. They thought that women have the right to work and should be encouraged to do so, and that it is the woman's decision whether or not to work, not her parents' or anyone else's. Employment was seen to contribute

Figure 30: **Acceptable jobs (percentage) for unemployed youth, by nationality and gender**

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



to women's self-development and independence. In addition, an employed woman can help her husband financially, or be able to rely on herself in case she is divorced.

"A job offers the woman an identity and independence. It is not wrong to be independent from your husband. An employed woman can also support her husband." - Young Jordanian woman, aged between 16-23, FGD 6

"There are many things which might face a woman in her life, she might not get married, she may get a divorce, [in which case] she would be responsible for her children alone, so it is important for her to have a job." - Young Jordanian woman, aged 16-23, FGD 6

Although not a very common opinion, a few respondents in the FGDs mentioned that Jordanian men prefer to marry a *muwazafa* (an employed woman in the public sector) because she can contribute to household finances.

"Young Jordanian men nowadays prefer to marry a muwazafa, they'd tell you that marrying an employed woman would help them out... so they search for an educated and employed woman..." - Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21-25, FGD 4

However, while young people supported women's right to work in general, in reality they thought that women's employment was subject to specific conditions that were not always present in jobs, particularly jobs in the private sector. These are sometimes referred to in the literature as "reservation working conditions"¹¹¹ or as "reservation prestige."¹¹² Qualitative respondents thought that the main advantage of a woman working in the private sector was gaining experience, which supports a young person's career by assisting in securing future work opportunities, especially since experience is required for most public and private sector jobs.

"The woman has found a job [in the private sector] directly after graduation which would provide her with an income and experience... it is better than staying at home." - Young Jordanian man, aged between 21-30, FGD 5

However, many respondents also mentioned disadvantages related to women working in the private sector. These included jobs being less stable, a high workload compared to the salary provided, mental stress, low pay, and long working hours which interfere with women's caregiving responsibilities. Many thought that these working conditions would deter women from working in the private sector.

111 Dougherty, 2014; Gauri, Rahman and Sen, 2019.

112 Groh et al., 2014.

“There are some private companies who have long working hours which discourage women from applying since they cannot stay out late.”

- Young Jordanian woman, aged between 22–30, FGD 8

Some Jordanian men also mentioned that it is not socially acceptable for women to have certain jobs such as being taxi drivers or jobs that require physical strength. In addition, a few young people noted that, unlike men, women cannot travel to other regions to work, as parents would not allow this. Finally, some respondents discussed Jordan’s culture of shame around women taking up certain types of work, which in their view prevents young women from pursuing the jobs they want and like.

“[She should choose] a teacher... and if she was not able to get this job, she should not stay home. She has her diploma, she should go and look for another job. She should ignore what other people think and say in society, since whatever a woman does, people will always [badmouth her].” - Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21–25, FGD 4

The perspectives of young Syrians on women’s work demonstrated some similarities and some contrasts with the views of Jordanians. As with Jordanians, young Syrians in the FGDs expressed views on acceptable work for Syrian women, and especially married women, that were shaped by gender roles and the standard view of women as homemakers. Yet Syrian respondents’ views on women’s work were also shaped by constraints related to the social and legal environment in Jordan.

Syrian respondents in the FGDs expressed concerns about Syrian women working in Jordan due to the potential for exposure

to mixing with the opposite sex, as well as harassment, particularly in the context of working a foreign country.

“A woman in a gender-mixed job would be exposed to different issues at work... I think it would cause her harm. If a young woman works at a store, for example, her brother would always need to accompany her, but he has work to go to, he cannot stay by her side all day. There might be other young men who would bother her...” - Young Syrian man, aged between 20–27, FGD 2

Syrian women respondents also said that families prefer that their daughters work in a “respectable” job, such as teaching and engineering, especially if their daughters have finished their education.

“In our Arab society, a woman cannot work in any job, her parents do not like that their daughter is working in any job especially if she has finished her education. They would want a respectable place, respectable colleagues, and a good income. Of course, there are jobs that parents do not approve of, those that require a woman to stay out late...” - Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

Yet, Syrian participants noted the impossibility of finding such jobs in Jordan, even for those who passed the *tawjihi* and finished university, because of the law prohibiting Syrians from holding certain types of employment. They said that Syrians are further prevented from pursuing jobs seen as more “respectable” and prestigious because they cannot afford the expensive fees of universities.

“I took the tawjihi exam this year, and I got first place, but I was not given the options [of medicine or a prestigious domain], because Syrians are not allowed to become doctors, and education in Jordan is expensive so my parents will not be able to [pay for the fees].” – Young Syrian woman, aged between 23–30, FGD 1

Good jobs for Syrian women in Jordan were therefore seen to be quite limited, which, as mentioned above, led many Syrian respondents to suggest home-based economic activities as a good alternative for Syrian women in Jordan.

Types of work and job satisfaction

Young people have a strong preference for public sector jobs because of their stability, better working conditions, and associated benefits. However, private sector jobs also differ in the extent to which they offer such advantages. We classify jobs in the private sector based on their employment status (wage and salaried versus non-wage, which includes self-employment and unpaid family work), their formality (whether they are covered by social insurance or not), and their location within or outside of fixed establishments. Jobs outside of fixed establishments (such as jobs on construction sites, on the street, in fields, or in private homes) are overwhelmingly informal and often precarious.

As shown in Figure 31, employed young Jordanian men are fairly evenly distributed across the different types of employment, with between one fifth and one quarter of them in each type, except for non-wage work where the percentage is only 5 per cent. Compared to their male counterparts, employed young Jordanian

women have a somewhat lower chance to be in the most desired category – the public sector – and in the least desirable category – informal wage employment outside establishments – which generally does not meet their reservation working conditions. They are therefore more likely to be employed in the intermediate categories of formal and informal wage employment inside fixed establishments. A higher fraction of them (11 per cent versus 5 per cent) are in non-wage employment, mostly self-employed. Employed Syrian youth have almost no access to formal employment in Jordan, whether public or private. More than 90 per cent of them are employed informally as wage workers in the private sector, with more than half of them working outside fixed establishments. Employed Syrian women are even more likely than their male counterparts to be working for wages outside fixed establishments (68 per cent vs 50 per cent); a type of employment that is typically rejected as an option by Jordanian women because of its high degree of exposure and precariousness.¹¹³

Consistent with the perception of participants in the qualitative research that public sector jobs were preferable, the highest levels of overall job satisfaction among those working young people surveyed were expressed for public sector employment (Figure 32). Job security, work environment, and a good match to qualifications were aspects of public sector employment with which young people were most satisfied. Only commuting times garner lower levels of satisfaction among public sector employees than those in other types of employment. The next highest overall satisfaction levels were for private formal wage employment

¹¹³ See Assaad and Salemi, 2019; and Assaad, AlSharawy and Salemi, 2019, for more discussion of how women in Jordan and Egypt avoid this kind of employment in normal circumstances.

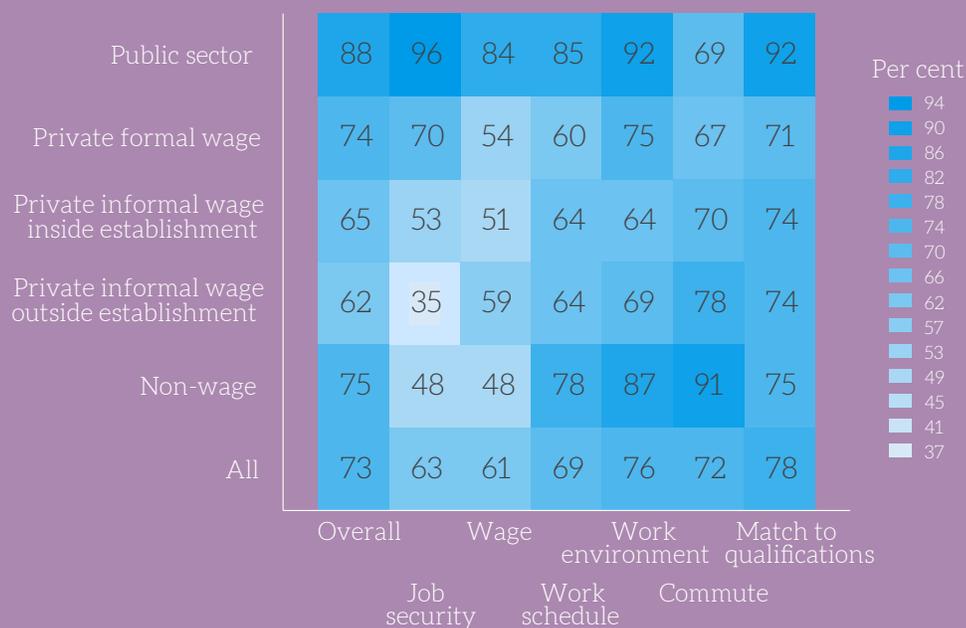
Figure 31: Type of employment for employed youth, by gender and nationality (percentage)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



Figure 32: Job satisfaction by type of employment (percentage satisfied)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



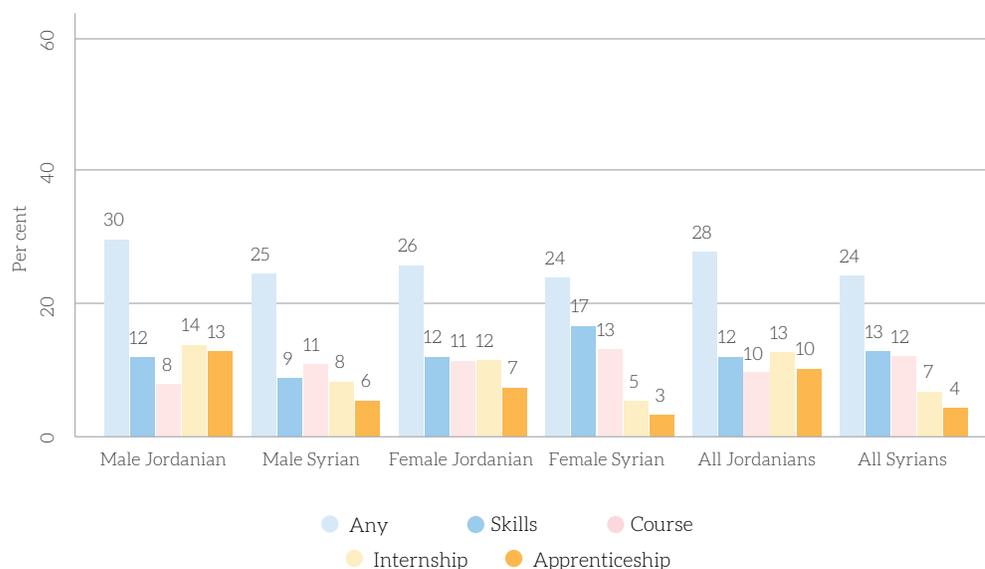
and non-wage employment, but for very different reasons. Private formal wage work had relatively high satisfaction with job security and work environment and relatively low satisfaction with work schedules and a match to qualifications. Conversely, non-wage employment showed relatively high satisfaction levels with work schedules, work environment, a match to qualifications, and, of course, commuting times, and relatively low satisfaction levels with regard to job security and pay. There were lower overall satisfaction levels for informal wage employment both inside, but especially outside, fixed establishments (lowest overall satisfaction).

Training experiences

In addition to their formal educational experiences, young people in Jordan may seek training outside the regular school system. A quarter of the young people surveyed had engaged in some type of training (job, skills, or life-skills training; a course (in person or online, not in regular school); an internship; or an apprenticeship). Jordanians were slightly more likely (28 per cent) to have attended trainings than Syrians (24 per cent). This general pattern, however, varied somewhat by the type of training involved. Both nationalities had similar chances to attend skills training and Syrians were even slightly more likely to enrol in training

Figure 33: **Percentage of young people who received training and training of specific types, by gender and nationality**

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



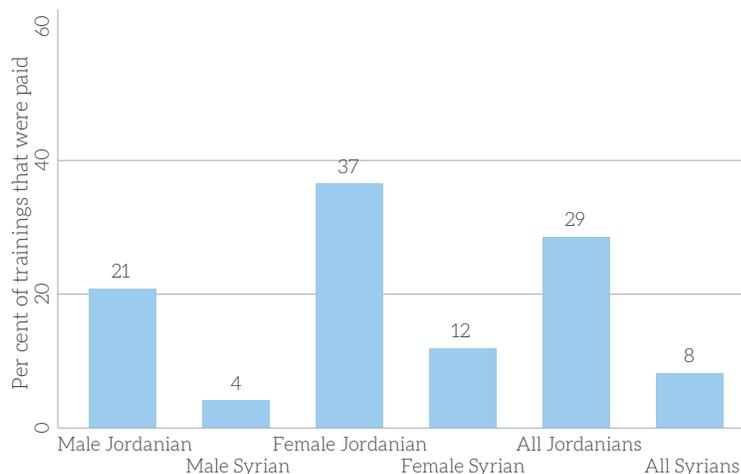
courses (12 per cent). Jordanians were more likely to engage in trainings directly related to a job, such as internships (13 per cent) and apprenticeships (10 per cent), compared to Syrians (7 per cent internship and 4 per cent apprenticeship). There were only small gender gaps in training; 30 per cent of male Jordanians had engaged in training and 26 per cent of female Jordanians, along with 25 per cent of Syrian men and 24 per cent of Syrian women. Women were more likely to engage in training courses but less likely to engage in internships or apprenticeships than their male counterparts. Moreover, Syrians in camps were much more likely to attend trainings (45 per cent) compared to Syrians living outside camps (19 per cent), which may be related to the availability and provision of trainings by NGOs in the camps.

Young people who attended training often attended more than one training. Syrians and Jordanian women who attended training averaged 1.4 trainings, compared to 1.2 for Jordanian men. More than a quarter of Syrian women who attended trainings attended two or more trainings, compared to fewer than 14 per cent of Jordanian men. The low cost of training and its availability through NGOs and international organizations may be playing a role for those engaging in multiple trainings. Overall, only 26 per cent of trainings that young people attended required them to pay. Jordanians' trainings were more likely to be paid (29 per cent) than Syrians (8 per cent) (Figure 34).

Women attended more paid trainings compared to their male counterparts (for example, 37 per cent of female Jordanians' trainings were paid compared to 21 per cent of male Jordanians' trainings). Courses were much more likely to require fees (48 per cent) than apprenticeships (27 per cent), internships (17 per cent) or skills trainings (14 per cent). The costs involved in paid training varied. Courses were the least expensive (average of 259 JD), followed by specifically job or skills trainings (314 JD), internships (350 JD) and lastly apprenticeships (500 JD).

Training for young people in Jordan is provided by a wide variety of providers, from educational institutions to private firms to government agencies and NGOs (Figure 35). Training providers vary according to the type of training they offer. For instance, 43 per cent of apprenticeships were government-provided and 31 per cent of apprenticeships were provided by educational institutions. Internships were often provided by employers (24 per cent) or private individuals (24 per cent). Educational institutions offered a large share of courses (18 per cent) as well as private individuals (15 per cent), the government (15 per cent), and NGOs (16 per cent). Job or skills trainings were frequently provided by private individuals (30 per cent) or employers (12 per cent), as well as by government (16 per cent) and NGOs (14 per cent). The wide variety of different providers engaged in training provision is notable.

Figure 34: Percentage of trainings that were paid, by gender and nationality



Respondents to the survey were asked about whether they thought each training was useful according to several different measures, such as personal life, job search, leading to a job directly, performance on the job, and helping to start a business. As shown in Figure 36, young people said that trainings were most helpful for improving their personal life. Except for courses, the majority also reported that trainings were helpful for job search, and job performance. However, fewer reported that trainings led to a job directly (lowest for courses at 14 per cent) and only a small fraction reported that trainings were helpful for starting a business. Skills training and internships were the most helpful to participants in improving their personal life, leading directly to a job, and helping with their job performance.

Skills

Young Jordanians and Syrians report that they have strong soft skills. Figure 37 shows self-reported soft skills by gender and nationality. There are few differences across groups, primarily young men having slightly weaker self-reported soft skills. For most skills, more than three-quarters of young people report they themselves have these skills. Social skills, including thinking of others (69–72 per cent across all groups) and extroversion (51–58 per cent across all groups), are slightly less frequently self-reported than other skills.

Young people have a variety of potentially valuable job skills. Figure 38 explores self-reported job skills, by gender and nationality. Notably, young Syrian men report the weakest literacy (71 per cent) and maths skills (50 per cent), along with low levels of computing, language,

Figure 35: Training providers (percentage of trainings), by type of training

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

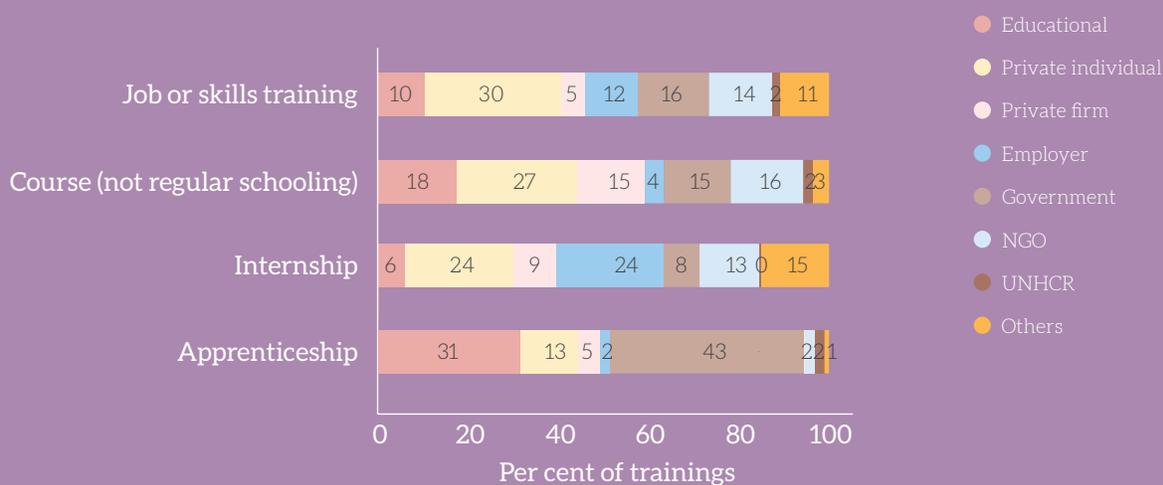


Figure 36: Perceptions of the usefulness of training by type of training (percentage of trainings)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

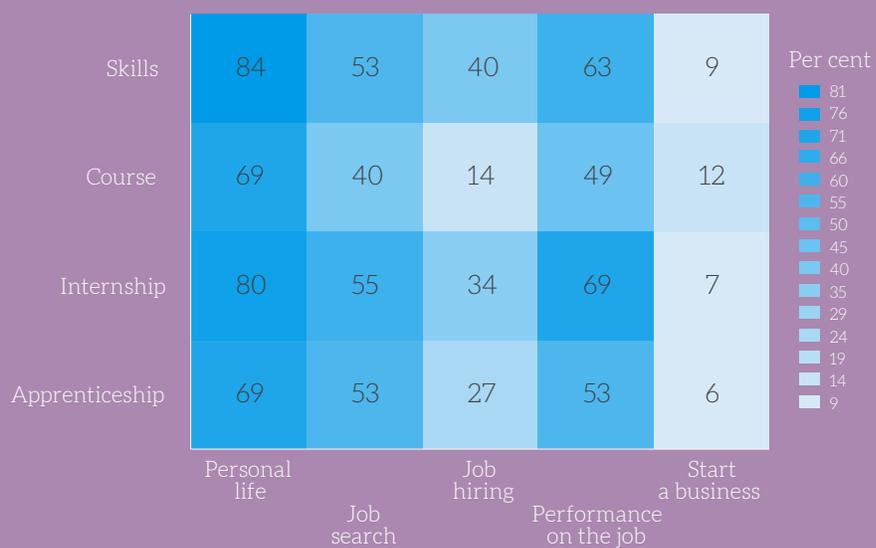
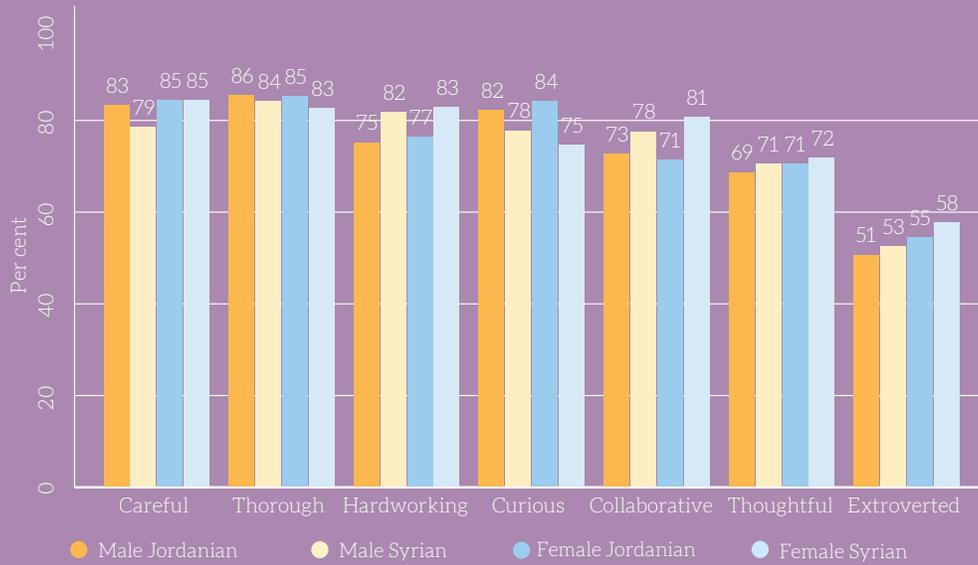


Figure 37: Self-reported soft skills, by gender and nationality (percentage)

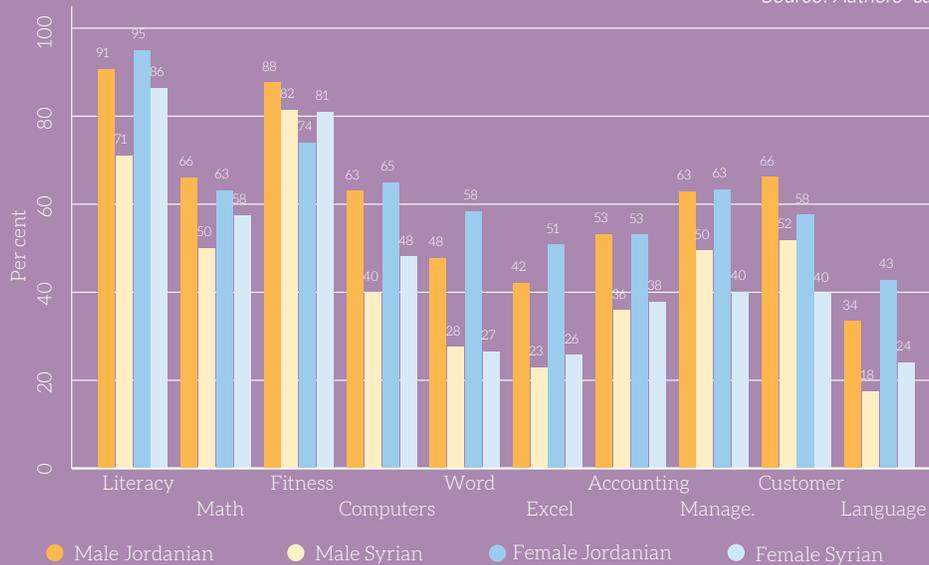
Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



Note: Responses of “Almost always” or “Most of the time” were recorded as having a skill; “Some of the time” or “Almost never” were recorded as not having a skill. “Careful” is short for “When doing a task, are you very careful?”; “Thorough” is short for “Do you finish whatever you begin?”; “Hardworking” is short for “Do you work very hard?”; “Curious” is short for “Are you very interested in learning new things?”; “Collaborative” is short for “Do you ask for help when you don’t understand something?”; “Thoughtful” is short for “Do you think about how the things you do will affect others?”; “Extroverted” is short for “Do you like to share your thoughts and opinions with other people, even if you don’t know them very well?”

Figure 38: Self-reported job skills, by gender and nationality (percentage)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



Note: Young people were recorded as having skills if they reported strong or very strong skills, as compared to weak, very weak, or not at all.

and other skills. Basic skills such as literacy and fitness are more commonly reported than specific skills such as general computer skills, Microsoft Word or Excel skills (or equivalent), or accounting and language skills. Management and customer service skills occupy a middling position (40 to 66 per cent across all groups). In the next section, we explore and compare these skills to young people's job requirements.

The match between skills, education, and employment

One area where young people, particularly those working in the private sector, were only sometimes satisfied with their employment was the match between work and their qualifications. FGD respondents also emphasized the importance – and difficulty – of finding jobs that matched their qualifications. Respondents noted that, in reality, well-educated, unemployed young people are taking up jobs that do not match their education, such as working as taxi drivers, because of the difficulty in finding good jobs that match their education and qualifications.

“If you get into an Uber, five or six times, you will only find one of them [drivers] who has not completed their B.S., the rest would be an engineer, one who has finished their PhD, an accountant... I once called an Uber, and the driver, who was 29 years old, had finished his masters in accounting, and until now has not found a good job.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 18–19, FGD 10

Focusing on the self-reported educational requirements of jobs relative to actual levels of educational attainment of young people, jobs often require less education than young people filling these roles have attained (Figure 39). For instance, 60 per cent of employed young men and 44 per cent of employed young women with a

basic education are working in a job that requires less than a basic education. Among employed secondary graduates, 35 per cent of young men are working in jobs that require less than a basic education and 16 per cent in jobs that require only a basic education, compared to 46 per cent who are working in a job that requires secondary education. Employed female higher education graduates tend to have a better match between their educational credentials and the jobs they work in because, unlike their male counterparts, they can opt out of jobs with a poor match. Among them, 73 per cent work in jobs that match their credential compared to only 54 per cent of men.

Young people also often have a higher level of skills than their jobs require. Figure 40 compares the percentage of young people with various skills to the percentage of youth jobs that require various skills. The figures must be interpreted with some care, since both are self-reported. For instance, while 91 per cent of young people are literate, only 72 per cent are in jobs that require literacy. Likewise, while 61 per cent of young people report having general computer skills, only 33 per cent of the jobs young people have require such skills. There are smaller differences for maths, management, and language skills. The same percentage of young people, 81 per cent, have physical fitness skills as have jobs requiring physical fitness. Only in terms of customer service skills do fewer young people have the skills (60 per cent) than report that their jobs require such skills.

Barriers to obtaining “good” jobs

Although young Jordanians preferred employment in the public sector due to the many benefits it provides, they outlined numerous challenges that affect their actual employment decisions and economic opportunities. Young men in

Figure 39: Education requirements for the jobs of employed young people, by education level and gender (percentage)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

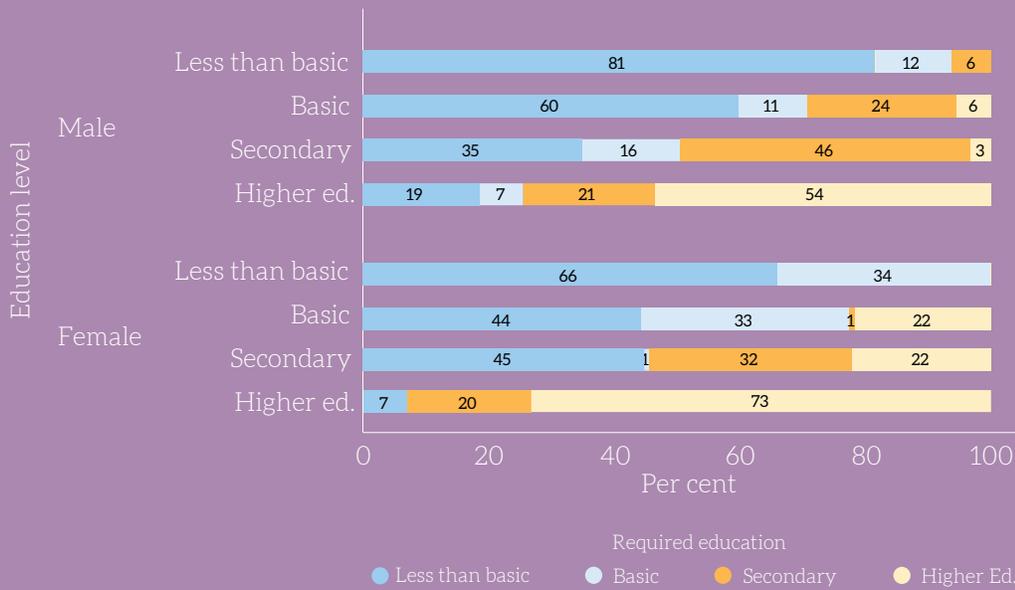
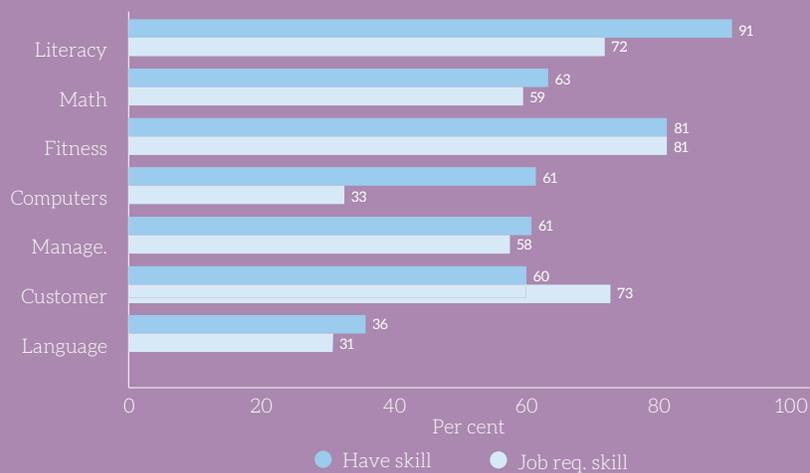


Figure 40: Percentage of young people with skills, and percentage of youth jobs requiring such skills

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



particular noted that the economy in Jordan is negatively influenced by different factors that, in their view, affect youth employment. These factors included the influx of Syrian refugees, which was seen as putting an additional burden on the economy,¹¹⁴ competition from migrant workers,¹¹⁵ lack of governmental support for developing specific sectors such as tourism, and a lack of investment in business development.

“Take investment for example, there are no investments anymore, there is nothing Jordanians can benefit from... there is no selling and buying, no businesses, so there are no jobs available anymore. If there were investments, jobs would exist...” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 18–19, FGD 10

“Jordan’s economic situation is not that good from the start, and then a million refugees come to your country and take your services which were for us. [You can say] that competition has increased for the same positions and services.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 24–26, FGD 9

Competition for jobs was seen to be particularly problematic in the three domains seen as “top” fields: medicine, law, and engineering – which respondents said were not in demand in the labour market, given the large number of graduates.

“It depends on the fields of study and specializations, there are the ones which are saturated and those that are needed and in demand... so employment also depends on the specialization chosen.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 18–19, FGD 10

A few participants also mentioned that a job in the private sector requires experience, which new graduates usually do not have.

“My sister has just finished her university studies in translation, we applied to [jobs in] the private sector. [However], what does the private sector need nowadays in Jordan? Experience!” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21–25, FGD 4

Jordanian participants also mentioned what they referred to as Jordan’s culture of shame, where young people do not accept certain, typically low-skill jobs because they are not seen as respectable or prestigious enough in the eyes of society.

“I know someone who has completed their PhD, but they were not able to find the good job that they want, and they will not work any job such as a taxi driver... they refused to think about such jobs... they prefer to stay at home unemployed than to have such jobs.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 16–23, FGD 6

“The Syrian refugees do not mind working in any job to survive, while we Jordanians do not think this way, we want this job and not that one, we want to get a good income, we expect this job and this income... this should change, [the new generation] should be taught to work in anything, to take advantage of every chance, [but] this does not happen.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 18–19, FGD 10

FGD participants also noted that ‘wasta’, or the use of personal connections to obtain benefits, is a mechanism deeply rooted in Jordanian society and that is often used to obtain employment in different sectors. In their view, when a person has a ‘wasta’, she or he can be employed easily, even without the necessary education or qualifications.

¹¹⁴ Research indicates that the Syrian refugee influx did not, in fact, negatively affect labour market outcomes in Jordan (Fallah, Krafft, and Wahba, 2019).

¹¹⁵ Nearly half of the job growth between 2010 and 2016 went to non-Jordanians (Assaad and Salemi, 2019).

“The main factor is the ‘wasta’, if you do not have ‘wasta’ you won’t get hired.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 22–30, FGD 8

“If a person is well-educated and has experience and everything is compared to someone who has a ‘wasta’ and does not have the education and qualifications, the latter has the advantage to be hired.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 18–19, FGD 10

Other challenges to youth employment mentioned by a few FGD participants included gender bias in certain jobs, fewer job opportunities in rural areas compared to urban ones, and transportation issues especially for those residing in rural areas.

For young Syrians, their status as refugees in Jordan was the main barrier to obtaining preferred types of employment. Despite considering a job in one’s field of study to be of importance, most Syrian respondents said that, in general, Syrian men in Jordan are forced to work in any job, even if they are educated, due to their difficult financial circumstances.

“Here [in Jordan], it is very rare for a Syrian to have the job they want. A Syrian young adult is now forced to have any job just to be able to survive. You may find him working as a construction worker, as a taxi driver, as a waiter... it is not guaranteed they find a good job even if they have finished their education.” – Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

Syrian FGD participants felt discriminated against in Jordan with regard to finding good jobs, despite many of them being as qualified as their Jordanian counterparts for what were seen as more prestigious jobs.

“There are no jobs for Syrians, you are banned from having prestigious jobs, it is banned for Syrians... I even know that people who study pharmacy or engineering, they sign a paper that prevents them from owning a pharmacy or being employed in it, and you are also not allowed to work in engineering, so they actually take their diplomas and literally frame it on the wall.” – Young Syrian woman, aged between 23–30, FGD1

Syrian men also asserted that the lack of work permits is a huge issue for Syrian refugees in Jordan. They explained that only through work permits can a Syrian person have a job or be self-employed, emphasizing that many of them have the education and the skills for different jobs.

“If I had a work permit, I could have other choices and work in something else.” – Young Syrian man, aged between 20–25, FGD 7

“For example, I have a business idea, but you are not permitted to [develop] it here in Jordan. If I were in Syria, I would open more than one business, but here because you are Syrian, [you cannot].” – Young Syrian man, aged between 20–27, FGD 2

A number of Syrian participants also noted issues with exploitation by employers, given their vulnerable situation.

“The situation we are in is a tragedy really, for example, our employers are not really honest, they take advantage of us, they promise us with a salary increase and they do not fulfil such promises...” – Young Syrian man, aged between 20–27, FGD 2

Box 8: Disability and employment

Young people with disabilities (YPWD) who participated in the focus group discussions emphasized that societal perceptions – and often misconceptions – of YPWD affected their chances of transitioning successfully to adulthood, and particularly of obtaining employment. Young Jordanian men and women with disabilities said that YPWD are stigmatized; the community often views them as individuals who are weak and cannot be active and productive in their society.

In part due to these widespread biases, participants said that employment opportunities for YPWD in Jordan are limited. Jordan has a regulatory framework that protects the rights of persons with disabilities in the labour market. Law No. 31 on the Rights of Disabled Persons (2007), Article 4/3, allocates quotas, minimum numbers of persons with disabilities who should be employed (depending on firm size), to ensure that people with disabilities are not excluded from the labour force. However, there are no sanctions for non-compliance with the law.¹¹⁶ Jordan also recently passed Law No. 20 of 2017, which states that any person with a disability should not be excluded from work, training, or from the process of career advancement.¹¹⁷

Nevertheless, YPWD mentioned numerous barriers to their participation in economic activity. The fields that are open to YPWD were seen to be limited. When asked about job opportunities available for YPWD, participants mentioned three jobs that are common: being a teacher in the public or private sectors and/or being a tutor, being a preacher at a mosque, and being a lawyer. Jordanian men and women participants stated that the limited university specialties available for YPWD push them to transition to jobs that they do not necessarily prefer (see Box 6 on the education of YPWD).

Both men and women participants also said that YPWD face discrimination from employers who are often unwilling to hire YPWD, lack the necessary awareness of the needs of YPWD employees, and often hold stereotypical images regarding the capabilities of YPWD. This results in YPWD struggling to obtain jobs even if they possess the necessary qualifications.

“Now forget about the law situation since in all Arab countries the law is not implemented... The idea is that employers themselves are refusing to hire individuals with disabilities, for example, if a person who has reduced vision asks to work for a carpenter, the latter would look him up and down, already doubting the abilities of the person, believing that they would not know how to do things so they would immediately refuse to hire them. Another example is of a girl asking to work in tailoring, there are actually girls who have a vision disability but still have minimal vision to work in tailoring but they do not accept. They do not believe in the capabilities of people with disabilities... They [employers] can let her try and have her chance at tailoring, she might be successful... They [employers] can help in providing her with an income instead of being a girl with disabilities and without an income, so she’d have double the burden and misfortune.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged 25–28, FGD 12

A number of participants also noted that there is limited awareness of and adherence to measures to make workplaces more accessible for persons with disabilities.

“The most important barrier would be stereotypes employers have [of YPWD]. We do have a law but is it implemented? This all goes back to stereotypes people have of YPWD. This is in addition to the lack of accessibility of the work environment and even the ignorance that people have concerning the low

¹¹⁶Thompson, 2020.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

cost of accessibility...” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 25–28, FGD 12

Female YPWD were seen to face a double burden of gender- and disability-related factors that further excluded them from employment. Participants also identified other barriers to the transition to employment of young women with disabilities, including the lack of safe and accessible transportation, parents’ feelings of fear for their daughters with disabilities, the lack of inclusive and accessible work environments, and the lack of societal awareness and acceptance of YPWD.

“Even transportation, like it is not only required to make the work environment accessible, but to also make transportation accessible too. Now we have a bus in Jordan that is accessible for YPWD that the government provided so you only have to pay a nominal sum to use it... but that does not mean that pavements are accessible!” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 25–28, FGD 12

“The young woman with disabilities faces a double burden of discrimination. Her work options become limited because people place her in a certain category... that you have a disability, which means you are weak and can only work in an office... this can be one of the barriers. Another barrier might be her parents worrying about her...” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 25–28, FGD 12

For this reason, some female participants said that their parents would also prefer that they work from home, so some saw self-employment as a good form of economic activity for YPWD. However, the notion of YPWD becoming entrepreneurs and developing their own businesses was also seen to be challenging. The development of entrepreneurship in Jordan was seen to have excluded the needs of YPWD. Participants said that YPWD are discouraged from taking the first step towards setting up their own businesses due to the different barriers existing in the Jordanian society.

“To be honest, the concept of entrepreneurship has always existed in Jordan but only gained popularity and became active in the last two to three years. There is a platform called ‘Zinc’, the biggest platform for entrepreneurship in Jordan. Let’s say someone who is blind applies and [wants to be part of it], you will find that these people have no idea how to communicate with [people with disabilities] and have no idea what the needs of the [person with disabilities] are.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–34, FGD 11

“In general, there is difficulty in a person developing their own business, and it is even more challenging for YPWD because of the lack of business incubators who would support entrepreneurs who have disabilities.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 25–28, FGD 12

In sum, available employment opportunities for YPWD in Jordan do not match their economic aspirations. Despite the existence of policy measures to support economic integration of persons with disabilities, YPWD reported that in reality they face numerous barriers to successfully transitioning to a good job, including social perceptions and discrimination, a lack of accessible work environments and transportation, and the limited number of fields that are open to them as persons with disabilities.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship captures the idea of taking and bearing risks, having management skills, and taking advantage of opportunities. It can also mean starting new business activities and being self-employed.¹¹⁸ Entrepreneurship has been promoted by numerous international development agencies, as well as national initiatives in the MENA region, as a potential solution to the widespread problem of high youth unemployment rates and sluggish job creation rates in the private sector.¹¹⁹

However, the FGDs indicated that young people themselves often did not share this understanding of what entrepreneurship is.¹²⁰ For participants, entrepreneurship was understood in two contrasting ways: in terms of innovation, or, more commonly, in terms of small/home-based projects. When asked, the majority of participants did not know what entrepreneurship was. Similarly, in the survey, only 55 per cent of young people responded that they knew what entrepreneurship is. The next most common response after “don’t know” was starting or trying to start a project (26 per cent) followed by being your own boss (17 per cent), and creating new products and services (7 per cent). Just 4 per cent of young people responded that entrepreneurship was contributing to the country’s economy.

FGD participants considered projects that entail making a product and selling it, and thus generating income for the family, as entrepreneurship. Participants viewed

such projects positively because they do not require a lot of financial investment to be successful. Making and selling home-made food products, soaps, creams, and other beauty products, sewing and embroidery, clothes and other products were examples given, mostly by women participants, of the types of home-based projects they saw as entrepreneurship.

“I know a woman who at first started something very simple. She used to make home-made desserts or cook a meal according to what people ask from her. She became popular, had her business card, and started having more people helping her. She [eventually] had a project where she found an external room in a big house just for deliveries.” – Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

Some Jordanian women spoke about the important role of women’s committees, which encourage and train other women to make their own products at home and to sell them. Similarly, some Syrian women spoke of organizations that provide resources and tools so that women refugees can make products and sell them.

“See what happened here for us, as Syrians, [is] that there were organizations who call on women of a certain age and give them the basic tools, be it sewing machines or what they call as production kitchens, give them the basic tools, gas, things like that. So, they would provide the basic infrastructure for the project and would let the women continue... so it became known that this woman, those women have these things; that’s why we felt that it [entrepreneurship] has spread a little; while in Syria, no we did not have such a thing.” – Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

These responses suggest that the

118 Alam, 2019.

119 Krafft and Rizk, 2021.

120 Young people’s understanding of the term “entrepreneurship” is also likely to be affected by the translation of this term in Arabic. Most participants did not understand the more direct translation, “ريادة الأعمال”. When facilitators then used the more commonly understood term “مشروع”, which translates as a “project”, respondents were more likely to bring up ideas of home-based production projects.

prevailing model of promoting women's economic activity through micro-finance or other project-based activities has influenced how young people, and particularly women, understand the idea of entrepreneurship.

Only a few participants said that having innovative ideas to create something new for the benefit and development of the community was an aspect of entrepreneurship.

"Entrepreneurship is when you invent something new or add on to an existing product, basically [creating] something new." – Young Syrian woman, aged between 23–30, FGD 1

"[Entrepreneurship] develops the mind and [it's] creating new ideas that develop the community." – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 16–23, FGD 6

Very few of these participants gave examples of what they understood to be entrepreneurial projects, and examples given involved mainly mobile applications such as Uber and Careem. There were also a few examples given of young Jordanians who had started entrepreneurial projects.

However, FGD participants were not generally optimistic about the opportunities for this kind of entrepreneurship in Jordan. They talked about barriers to entrepreneurship including a lack of finance, high taxes on buying and selling, and a lack of government support for young persons' ambitions and inventions which results in young people going abroad to places where they can be fully supported. Another barrier specific to refugees was the lack of work permits for Syrians living in Jordan. The most common barrier

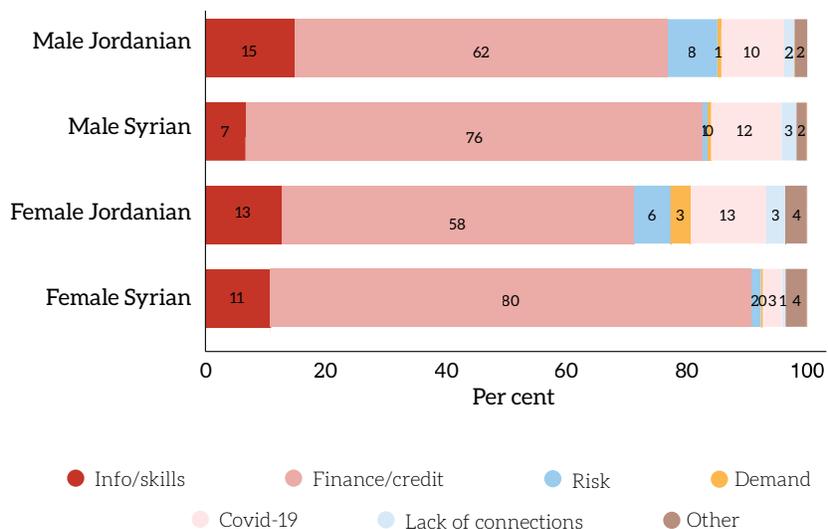
to entrepreneurship for Jordanian and Syrian survey respondents was also finance/credit (Figure 41). The survey asked what was the biggest problem or challenge individuals would face in starting a hypothetical business. For Jordanians, 62 per cent of men and 58 per cent of women identified finance/credit as a barrier to entrepreneurship. For Syrians, 76 per cent of men and 80 per cent of women identified finance/credit as a barrier. Information or skills (7–15 per cent) and COVID-19 (3–13 per cent) were also common barriers, as well as, among Jordanians, concerns about risk (8 per cent for men, and 6 per cent for women).

Thus, while young people were generally positive about the idea of entrepreneurship, their ideas about what it entails may not match with the requirements of setting up an enterprise, and they perceived many barriers to becoming entrepreneurs in reality. This perception that entrepreneurship is challenging was corroborated by the experiences of young people who had considered or actually tried to start a business. Overall, 48 per cent of young people reported that they wanted to start their own business or project within five years. While 10 per cent of young people reported they had ever had an idea for a business and tried to start it, among them 51 per cent tried to start but never actually started, 42 per cent started and had their business fail, 3 per cent started their business but closed it, and only 5 per cent started a business and had it continue.

The high failure-rate of businesses underscores why young people do not see entrepreneurship as a viable solution to unemployment and require higher returns to take on entrepreneurial risks. Among

Figure 41: **Barriers to entrepreneurship, by gender and nationality (percentage)**

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



unemployed youth, while the average minimum acceptable wage in the public sector was 299 JD per month, and in the private sector 332 JD per month, the average minimum acceptable wage to be an entrepreneur was 575 JD per month. As a point of comparison, the minimum wage in Jordan as of 1 January 2021, was 260 JD per month.¹²¹

Young people were asked what type of business they would want to undertake if they did start a business (Figure 42). Women were particularly interested in education and public service businesses (17 per cent among Jordanian women). Jordanian men and Syrians were particularly likely to suggest wholesale and retail businesses (21 to 30 per cent). Men were more interested in accommodation

and food services businesses (16 per cent for Jordanians, and 19 per cent for Syrians). There was some interest in manual labour businesses (11 to 20 per cent across all groups).

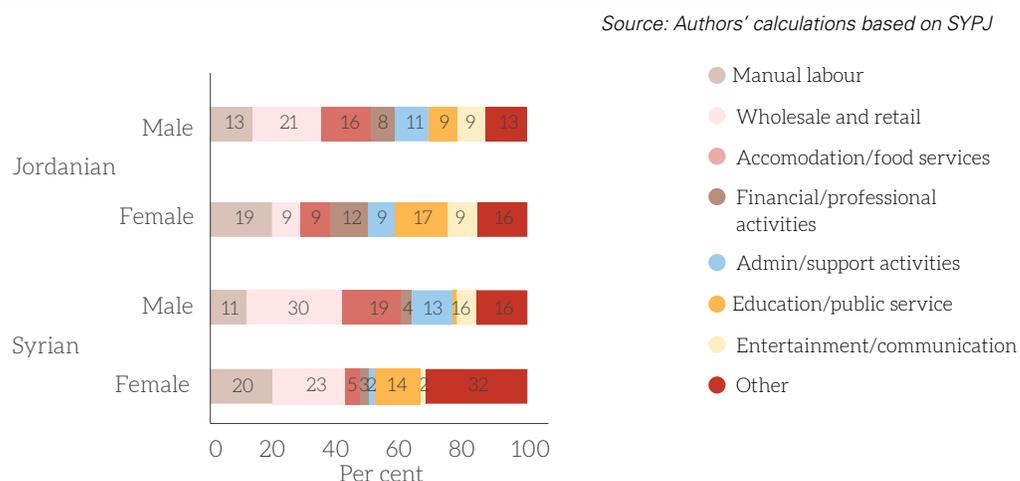
Migration

In light of the challenging economic conditions for young people in Jordan, young Jordanian men considered migration to be an important step in the transition to adulthood for some young men. In their view, migration is common among young Jordanians and something to aspire to.

“Among our ambitions is that a good degree would add to our qualifications to go abroad. This step should be among the steps [in the transition to adulthood].” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–30, FGD 5

¹²¹ ‘Minimum Wage to Go up to JD260 at Onset of 2021’, Jordan Times, 25 February 2020.

Figure 42: **If starting a business, what would be the chosen industry, by gender and nationality (percentage)**



“Honestly, if going abroad and migrating is an option, I’d do it right now.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–34, FGD 11

The aspiration to migrate is common among young people in Jordan. Survey respondents were asked if they planned to travel to another country to work, live or study within the next five years (Figure 43). Notably, Syrian men were the most likely to state that they plan to migrate within the next five years. Both Jordanian men (35 per cent) and Syrian men (43 per cent) were also more likely to say they intended to migrate compared to their female counterparts (22 per cent of Jordanian and 26 per cent of Syrian women). The aspiration to migrate also depended substantially on education. For instance, while 25 per cent of Jordanian men with less than a basic education intended to migrate, 51 per cent of Jordanian men with a higher education intended to migrate.

Syrians were particularly likely to be

interested in emigrating to the European Union (especially Germany) and North America (United States or Canada) (Figure 44). Jordanians were most often interested in migration within the Middle East, especially to the Gulf (United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia were top destinations).

Participants who wanted to migrate were also asked why they would like to migrate (Figure 45). The most common reason given by young people that wanted to migrate was related to work. For example, 71 per cent of Jordanian men who wanted to migrate said their primary reason was work. Syrian men also often noted a desire to improve their standard of living (25 per cent). For women, the second most common reason was related to education (30 per cent for Jordanian women, and 38 per cent for Syrian women).

Qualitative research participants’ discussions of migration also made clear that young people aspire to migrate to

finish education or seek better economic opportunities. Migration aspirations among young men in particular were driven by “push” factors, resulting from their frustration with the current situation in the country.

“For me, going abroad is either for education or to get a job. In my opinion, if the person comes from a developed country which has quality education and good jobs, then the person won’t need to go abroad. But in a country with poor education and

no jobs, then the person would need to study abroad after completing their B.S. for their Masters or their PhD degrees, or for employment.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–34, FGD 11

“The idea of traveling abroad did not come about in a vacuum, that we randomly want to go abroad, no it occurred as a result of pressure, that here we don’t have jobs even if you have a university degree...” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–30, FGD 5

Figure 43: **Percentage of young people aspiring to migrate within the next five years, by gender and nationality**

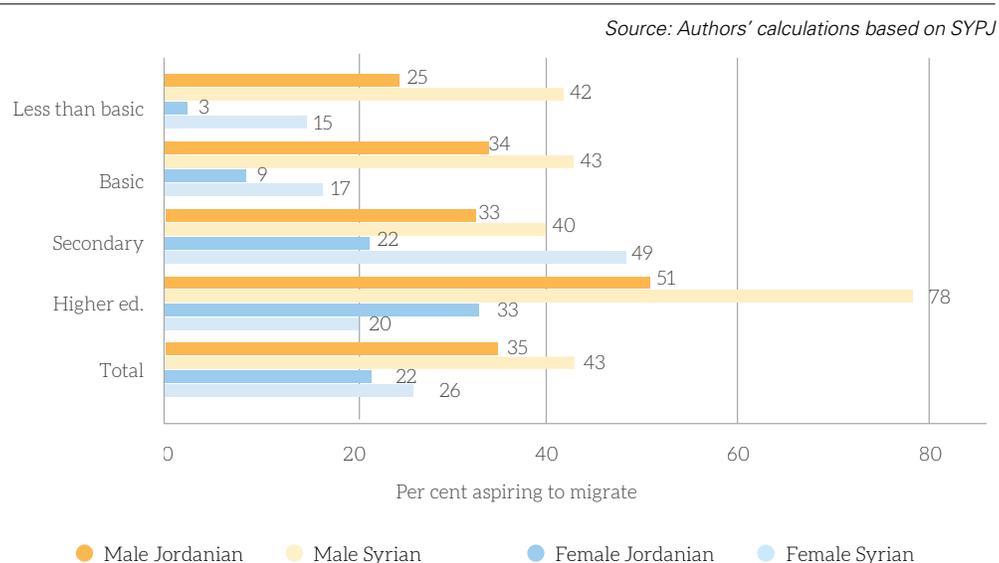


Figure 44: Countries to which aspiring young migrants would like to migrate (percentage)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

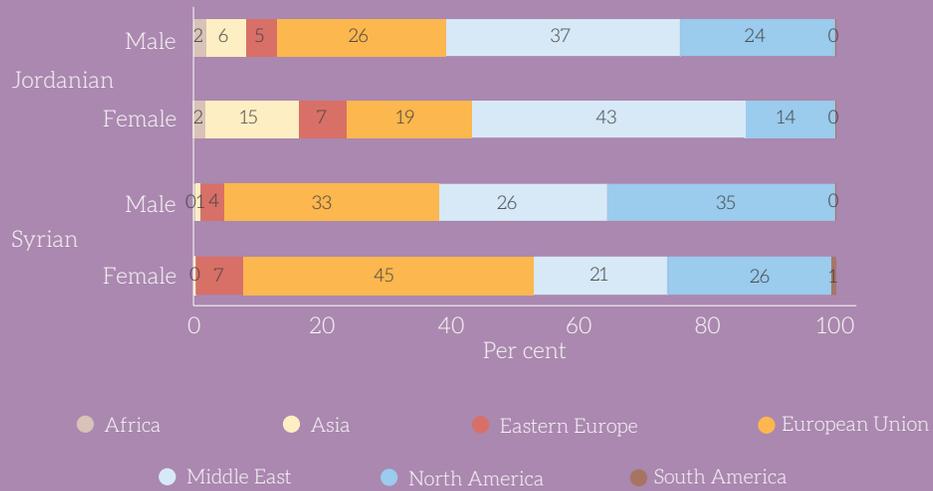
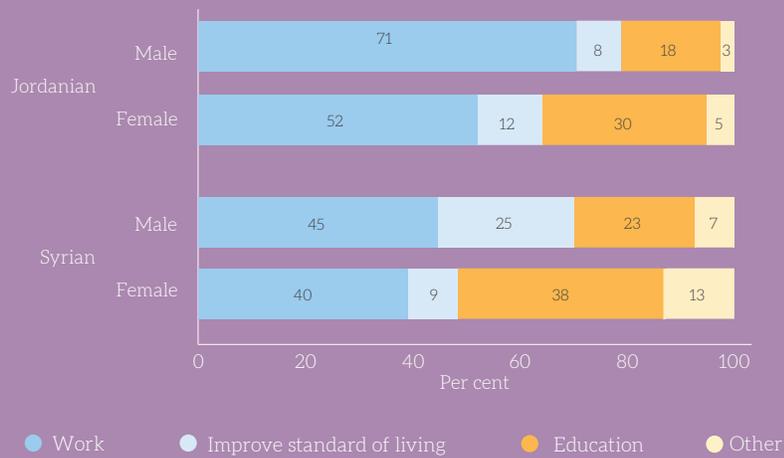


Figure 45: The reasons why young people would like to migrate (percentage), by gender and nationality

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

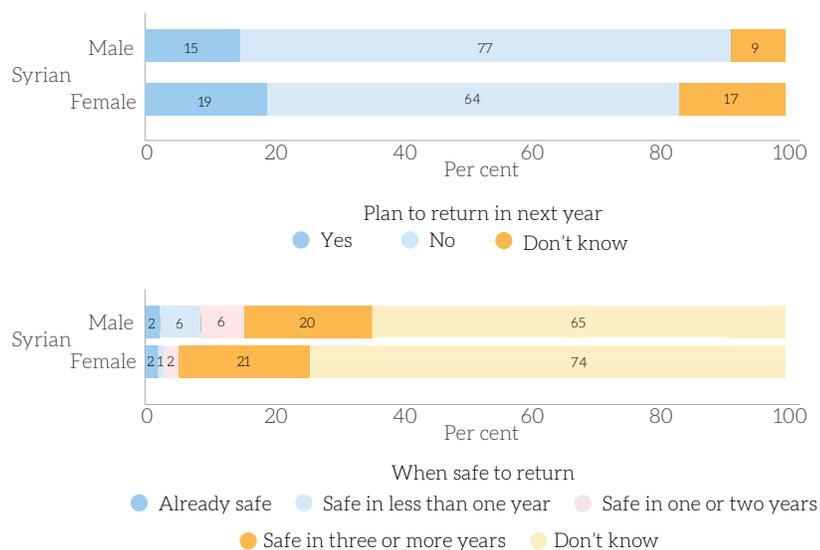


Syrians have been displaced in Jordan for a number of years, and only a minority expect to return to Syria any time soon. When asked whether they intend to return to Syria in the next year, only 15 per cent of men and 19 per cent of women said yes (Figure 46). The intention to remain outside of Syria is driven by safety concerns; only two per cent of Syrians thought it was safe to return now. Some men thought it would

be safe to return within two years (12 per cent) but more commonly respondents reported three or more years as the expected timeline for a safe return (20–21 per cent) or, most often, that they didn't know (65 per cent of men, and 74 per cent of women).

Figure 46: **When Syrians think it will be safe to return to Syria (percentage) and plans to return (percentage)**

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



Chapter 5

Civic engagement and social attitudes



Key messages

- Young people were interested in civic engagement, but the primary ways they engaged were with charitable giving or local volunteering with existing organizations, not civic engagement through youth-led or national initiatives.
- Less than half of young Jordanian women and less than a third of young Syrian women reported meeting with other young people in social spaces, compared to three in five young Syrian men and four in five young Jordanian men.
- Young people had clear political values, especially around the role of government in providing jobs, but were not very interested in or knowledgeable about politics.
- While young people often supported gender equity in areas such as women's leadership, they also generally agreed that when jobs are scarce, men should have the priority, reflecting strong male-breadwinner norms.
- Young women, and especially young Syrian women, were restricted in their mobility. Almost a third of young Jordanian women and almost two-thirds of young Syrian women could not go alone to the local market.
- Young people were divided in terms of their attitudes towards sexual harassment, with nearly half agreeing that women should ignore harassment, that public transport was dangerous due to harassment risks, and that women who dressed provocatively deserved harassment.
- Almost no young people accessed news from traditional, print media, but instead relied on websites and online video media.
- Social media played an important role in connecting and informing young people, who most commonly spent 1–3 hours per day on social media.

Young people's understanding of community engagement and volunteering

Community engagement is an approach that aims to strengthen the capacities of people so that they are able to identify and assess the different problems existing in their own communities. It entails listening to communities and letting them have a voice and a role in dealing with the matters affecting them. In terms of youth programming, community engagement entails interventions that

enable young people to identify and assess problems affecting their societies, and accordingly, find solutions that address these problems. Community engagement should involve young people in decision-making, implementation, and policy.¹²² Volunteerism is considered an essential channel for civic engagement.¹²³ It can be defined as activities performed freely and voluntarily, "for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor."¹²⁴ Through this

¹²² United Nations Children's Fund, 2020.

¹²³ United Nations Volunteers, 2016.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

channel, people can be directly engaged in their communities and civil society.¹²⁵

Young people who participated in the FGDs said that to be engaged in the community is to be an active citizen who leaves their mark behind and positively affects others around them. Several participants said that community engagement was equivalent to volunteering, which is an act where time, effort, and services are invested without expecting anything in return.

“Community engagement means implementing volunteer work, for example, you see children throwing garbage and you go and raise their awareness through anything or through a play or through something they feel they are actually participating in.” – Young Syrian man, aged between 20–27, FGD 2

“Volunteering is when you give up time for others without expecting any material gain.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 24–26, FGD 9

According to participants, young people volunteer as part of community engagement efforts to raise awareness on different topics targeted to different audiences, and which can be achieved through various activities. Participants’ understanding of community engagement thus focused more on the idea of helping others or raising awareness, rather than a model of active citizen engagement in identifying and addressing problems facing the community.

Participants said that through volunteering, both the young person and the community gain. In terms of individual benefits, participants mentioned strengthening

one’s personality and gaining experience, particularly for young people who were unemployed. Because of the social aspects of volunteering, the young person’s personality becomes stronger, they gain the necessary skills and a wider circle of acquaintances, and can share experiences with others.

“[Through volunteering,] one’s circle of acquaintances becomes wider, and their self-confidence is developed.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 16–23, FGD 6

“Volunteering refines one’s personality, makes you gain new qualities, and can teach you many new things.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 24–26, FGD 9

For young people who are unemployed, several participants also noted that volunteering contributes to self-development and allows young people to gain experience while they do not have a paid job or anything to do.

“I am in support of anyone, be it a man or a woman, having any work even if it was anything, even if they worked as a volunteer, as this allows them to gain experiences.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21–25, FGD 4

In a few cases, young people also mentioned experiencing a religious benefit from volunteering, in terms of being engaged in the community and helping other people for the sake of God and to be charitable.

“In the end, it [the act of volunteering] is rewarding and yields divine rewards and ‘thawab’.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 24–26, FGD 9

¹²⁵ Jones, 2006.

Finally, participants said that volunteering provides benefits at the community level.

“Through volunteering, public interest is preferred over personal interest.”

– Young Jordanian woman, aged between 16–23, FGD 6

“You volunteer with the aim of benefiting the community.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 16–23, FGD 6

Ways young people are engaged in their communities

When asked if community engagement and volunteering are common among young people, FGD participants agreed that they are since there is awareness about these types of activities. They said that young people are engaged in their communities through youth committees, as well as through centres where they attend workshops, lectures, and participate in various activities such as painting school walls. In fact, young people said that the most common form of volunteer work is painting and cleaning.

“Once, there was some writings on a school wall, so my siblings and I, we went and painted and drew nice pictures, so we fixed it. Then we planted some trees, so we fixed the view to become a nice one. You feel proud of yourself, and at the same time, you are presenting something for the community and for the people.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 16–23, FGD 6

The participants also added that some university students who are not working give workshops and lectures for young people or tutor students who are preparing for the *tawjih*.

“...here we have this youth centre, they used to sometimes clean places like mosques. Then they’d go and paint and provide help, for example, university students who are not bound to work may give a workshop or a lecture where they’d teach something...” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21–25, FGD 4

In several FGDs, participants also spoke of young people engaging in activities organized by charitable organizations such as “bazaars,” where they support the organization by buying products and the money is then donated for a cause.

“Here, every once in a while, some organizations organize bazaars where things are put up for sale. For example, you do not go for the sole purpose of buying, you go for helping, for example, you buy something symbolic and you pay money as a donation for an organization, for children, or for people with disabilities, so you are actually helping them.” – Young Syrian woman, aged between 25–30, FGD 3

Preparing and implementing events, including national events, and events for children or the elderly, were also common forms of volunteer work mentioned by young people.

“There are volunteers in the centre, who, through entertainment programmes, entertain children through various activities such as taking them on trips...” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 22–30, FGD 8

In sum, participants’ understanding of how they engage in their communities primarily reflected volunteering activities implemented at the individual and community levels, often through youth

centres or other local organizations. In this sense, participants' focus on organized volunteering activities was similar to findings from a report by UNESCO-Amman, which found that the existence of spaces for young people, such as youth centres, can act as settings for young people to interact with others, learn and develop skills, and implement different activities. This paves the way for successful community engagement.¹²⁶

However, there was no mention in the FGDs of processes or mechanisms whereby issues in the community could be identified and assessed by young people, nor there was any discussion of existing youth-led interventions in their communities. Young people also

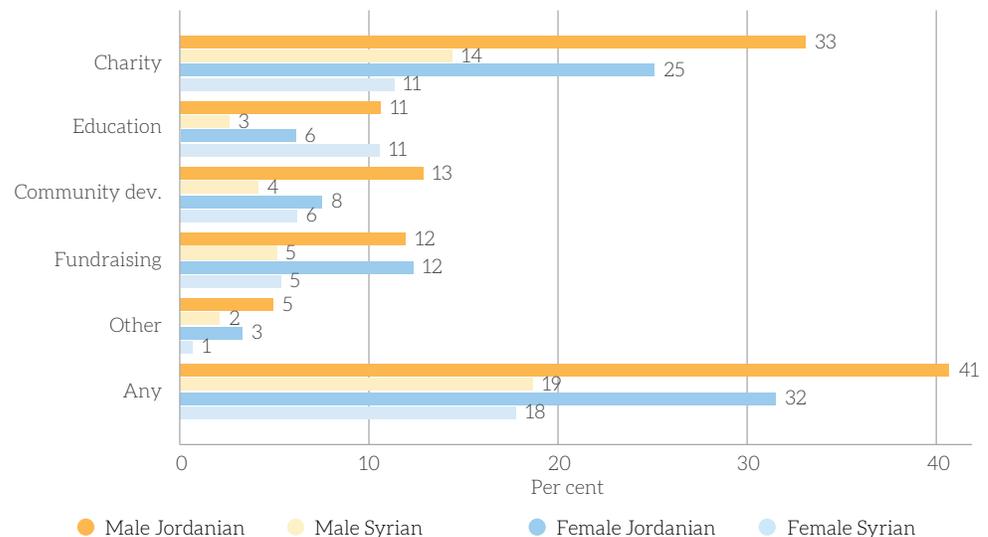
made no mention of any programmes implemented at the national level. In this sense, participants' understanding of community engagement did not line up with the activist approaches identified in the literature, and were more associated with short-term charitable or volunteering activities sponsored by local organizations.

The survey results confirmed this picture of youth community engagement. Young people were asked if they engaged in a variety of charitable or community volunteering activities (Figure 47). The most common activities Jordanians engaged in were charity (33 per cent for male Jordanians, 25 per cent for female Jordanians) and fundraising (12 per cent). Some young people also engaged in education, community development, or other activities.

¹²⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Amman, 2017.

Figure 47: Charity and volunteering (percentage), by gender and nationality

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



Barriers to youth community engagement

Barriers to community engagement identified by young people in the FGDs focused mainly on the lack of incentives and the nature of available volunteering opportunities. The main issue participants mentioned that discouraged them from being more involved in the community was the lack of incentives and appreciation. Despite mentioning the benefits of volunteering in terms of personal development, participants said that the fact that young people do not receive appreciation or get anything material in return discourages them from volunteering, especially considering the amount of effort and work invested.

“Any volunteer opportunity that provides nothing in return discourages [youth] from participating.” – Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21–25, FGD 4

“There is nothing gained in return, okay? What would the young man feel, he would feel that he is tired, for example, and there is no one who appreciated his effort, there was no one who came and said: thank you. That’s why young people do not volunteer anymore, they’d say: no one is appreciating me, no one is appreciating my effort, so why would I go, instead, I would stay at home.” – Young Syrian man, aged between 20–27, FGD 2

Participants mentioned the lack of financial incentives in particular. Whereas a few participants expected some money in exchange for their participation in volunteer activities (although this is contrary to the definition of volunteering), others mentioned that there are few organizations that can provide the financial

support needed to carry out different events and activities.

Young men, in particular, seemed to be more sceptical in their views on volunteering, both because of the lack of incentives and because of the nature of available volunteer opportunities. Their views on volunteering suggested that young people’s voices are not heard by respective authorities and that there is no support provided for creative and new ideas that reflect current issues in the community. Participants noted that existing volunteer opportunities do not actually reflect the true meaning of volunteering. Instead, they saw the volunteer activities that were commonly available as not meaningful, and sometimes organized for the purpose of publicity rather than true benefit.

“Yes, they benefit, but mostly, volunteering in our community is, for example, cleaning streets in the summer, so there are no volunteering ideas that we can benefit from for real, and [that] at the same time benefit other people. Most of these opportunities are celebrations, so organizations would urge us to work just so that they can photograph. They give us the “for the sake of our country” excuse and they always stay in their offices, and at the end, they come just to be photographed with us looking untidy from work. This is the kind of volunteering we have here, we do not have real volunteering, it is just volunteering that exists in name only.” – Young Jordanian man, aged between 21–30, FGD 5

This view of organized volunteering opportunities suggested that the organizations involved were mainly interested in showing off their achievements, even if such achievements

do not have a large and positive impact on the community. This pessimistic view was compounded by young people not really knowing if their efforts were invested in significant issues, rather than being activity for activity's sake. This prevailing model of organized volunteerism available to young people may therefore pose a challenge for encouraging young people to become more actively engaged in their communities through activities that they see as meaningful and which they have a stronger role in developing. These findings are in line with those of a report on youth volunteerism in Jordan,¹²⁷ which found that institutional and policy frameworks for volunteering are limited, posing several challenges for young people. The report cited barriers such as a lack of appreciation of young people's efforts and a lack of financial and other incentives.

A number of other barriers to volunteering were mentioned in some of the FGDs, including employment, which prevented young people from volunteering due to time commitments.

"What prevents me, for example, is that I work, or I have certain circumstances, or if I work I can't go and volunteer, because if I want to volunteer, I need to leave my work."
-Young Syrian man, aged between 20-27, FGD 2

Some young people also said that those with jobs are unlikely to feel that there is any need to volunteer and engage in the community.

"There are some people who say: I have my job and I have everything available to me, so why would I go to the youth committees? There are some people who have an inclination

to youth committees because they say they love volunteering, and they are usually not bound to anything, no work, they have nothing to worry about." - Young Jordanian woman, aged between 22-30, FGD 8

In addition, some participants pointed out the lack of transportation, including transportation costs, and the long distance to volunteer activities as a barrier.

"I think that there are a lot of people who volunteer; however, the young person would also need transportation fees if the place is far for example."
- Young Jordanian woman, aged between 21-25, FGD

Other barriers to volunteering that were mentioned by a few participants included a lack of initiatives in their communities, and the view that government support for volunteering existed in words only and was not really backed up by actions.

Social spaces

In the survey, young people were asked whether they met with other young people in a variety of contexts as a measure of access to social and public spaces. Less than half of young Jordanian women (46 per cent) and less than a third (30 per cent) of young Syrian women reported meeting with other young people in any of the spaces, but rates were 61 per cent for young Syrian men and 80 per cent for young Jordanian men. Young men were particularly likely to congregate in public spaces, while young women primarily socialized in the homes of friends or families. Young Jordanian men also often met in coffee shops (43 per cent), but this was less common for young Jordanian women (18 per cent) or Syrians (17 per cent for men, and 6 per cent for women).

¹²⁷ Al-Dajani, 2016.

For men, the mosque also played an important role in socialization (26 per cent for Jordanian men, and 15 per cent for Syrian men) and sports were also regarded as having an important social role. School was frequently mentioned as a site for socialization for a proportion of young people, but of course much more commonly mentioned for those who were still attending school. Notably, youth-specific spaces like youth centres or Makani centres were mentioned relatively infrequently.

Political values and knowledge

Young people were asked what were their views on the role of government in society and their political values (Figure 49). The most commonly agreed upon political statement was, “It is the responsibility of the government to provide jobs” (65 per cent of male Jordanians and 69 per cent of female Jordanians agreed). However, a smaller fraction believed that government ownership of businesses should be increased (35 to 41 per cent). In terms of attitudes towards inequality and redistribution, while the majority agreed that “We need large income differences as economic incentives,” slightly less than half of each group agreed with the statement, “The government should not use taxation to redistribute income.” Thus, while young people recognize the importance of economic incentives, they also believe the government has an important role in promoting equity and opportunity. A minority of young people (20–38 per cent across all groups) believed the “The laws of our country should mostly be based on the sharia.”

Although young people have clear political values, they are not necessarily interested in or knowledgeable about politics (Figure 50). Young Jordanians were asked whether they were interested in politics and also to name the governor of their governorate where they live, as well as to name the prime minister. Political knowledge increased with education. For instance, 90 per cent of young Jordanian women and 95 per cent of young Jordanian men with higher education could name the prime minister. However, only a small fraction (at most 21 per cent of men with higher education) could name the governor of their governorate. Young people also reported low rates of interest in politics, from 5 to 12 per cent across groups.

Gender norms

The survey asked young people a variety of questions about their attitudes about gender roles and key gendered behaviours, such as mobility. Figure 51 demonstrates some of the attitudes that support gender equity, but also some of the challenges and nuances that preclude gender equity. Table 2 in Appendix 1 further explores additional attitudes. Across groups, a majority of individuals supported women being allowed to work, although a substantial percentage of young Jordanian men and especially young Syrian men were not supportive of women’s work. Young people were generally supportive of a husband helping with household chores, although, as shown in Figure 27, this theoretical support has not translated into gender equity in care work. Young people were also supportive of women obtaining leadership positions in society – women again, more so than men. However, young people also agreed that when jobs are

Figure 48: Social spaces identified by young people, by gender and nationality (percentage)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

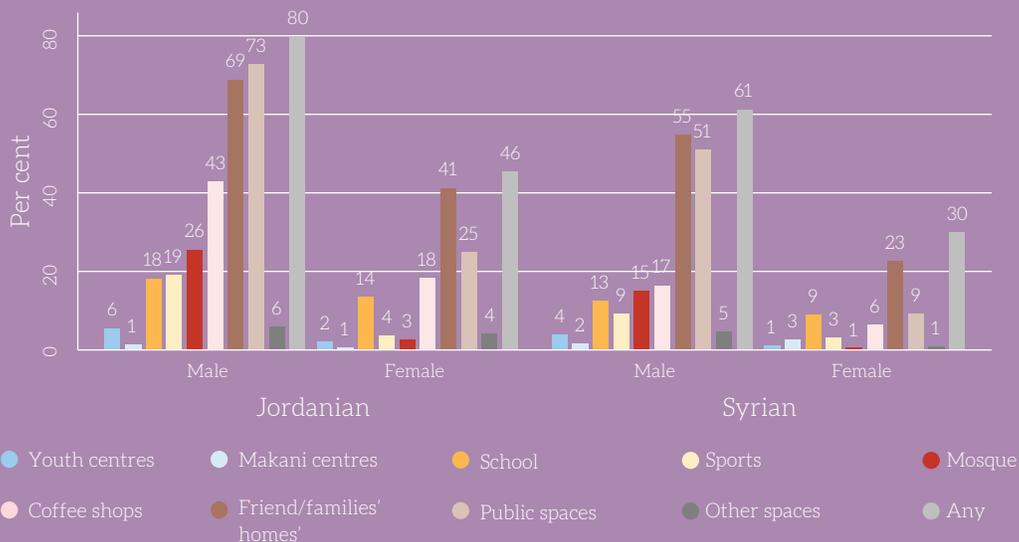


Figure 49: Percentage of individuals who agree with statements about the role of government, by gender and nationality

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

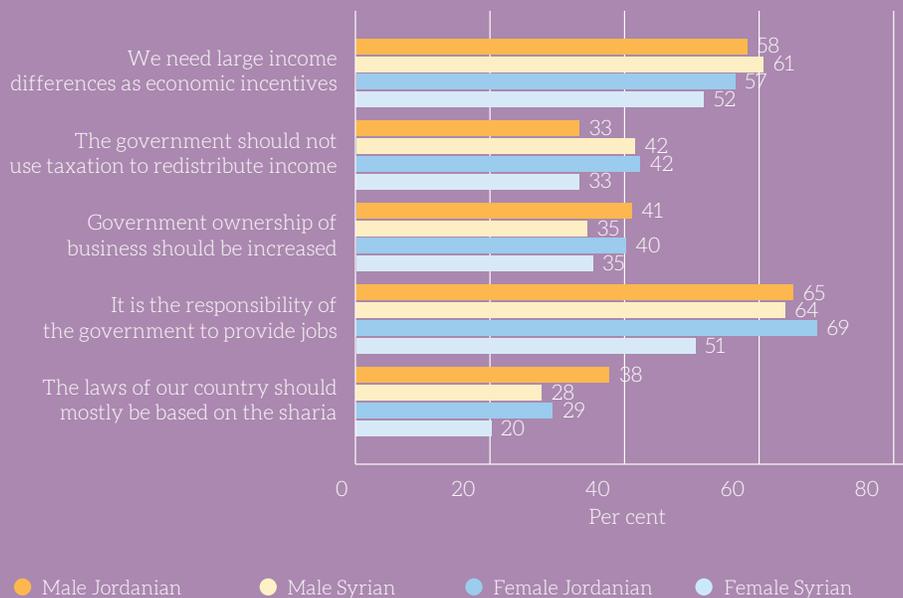


Figure 50: Political knowledge and interest, by gender and education level (percentage)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

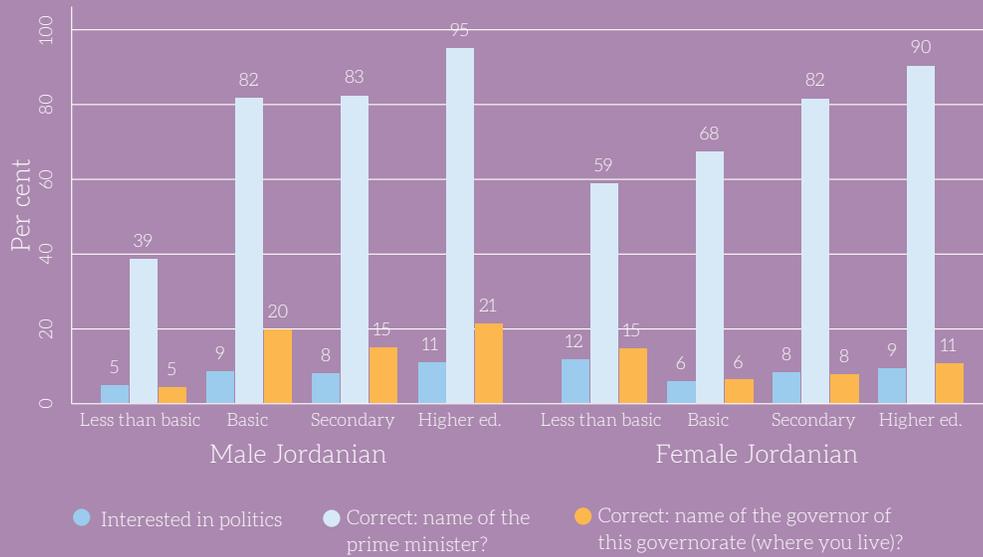
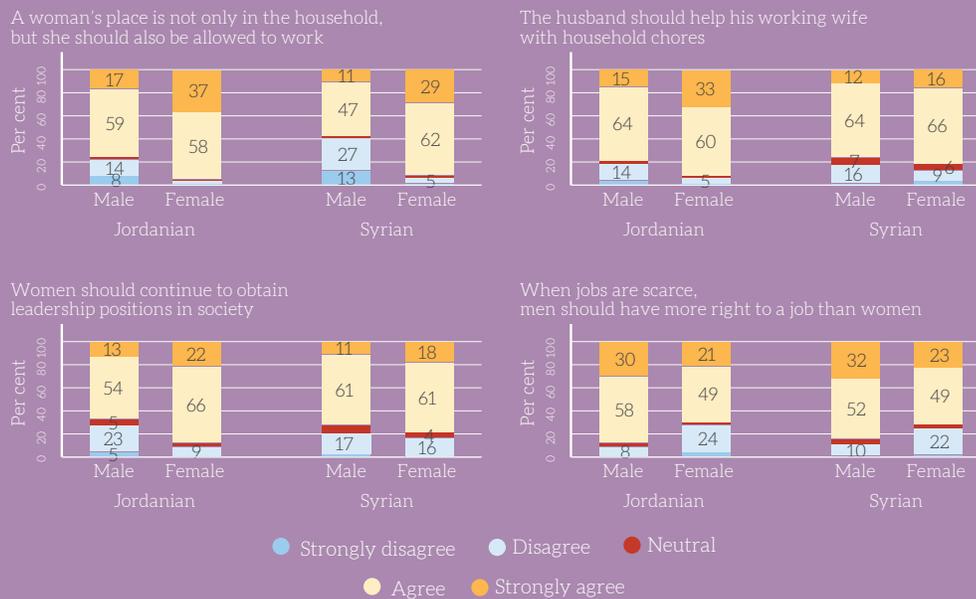


Figure 51: Attitudes about gender roles, by gender and nationality (percentage)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

Note: labels less than five suppressed.



scarce, men should have more right to a job than women. Thus, as with ideal jobs for women (Figure 29), women are not only limited to certain occupations and working conditions but also their employment is contingent on a strong demand for labour.

Young women, especially young Syrian women, are limited in their mobility (Figure 52). For instance, while 3 per cent of young Jordanian men and 4 per cent of young Syrian men cannot go alone to the market, 30 per cent of young female Jordanians and 62 per cent of young female Syrians cannot go alone. Only 3 per cent of young female Jordanians and 1 per cent of young female Syrians can go alone to the local market – or out with friends – without permission. There are slightly lower rates of not being allowed to go out alone to go out with friends, 18 per cent for young female Jordanians and 45 per cent for young female Syrians. Men are primarily allowed to go to places entirely without permission or after having informed their family.

Women's mobility may be limited by both the perception and reality of harassment (Figure 53). Almost half of young people, and more so among men, agreed that it was dangerous for women to walk alone because of harassment. Around a third of young people, again more so among men, agreed that it was dangerous for women to take public transport because of the dangers of harassment. Similar percentages agreed as disagreed that, if harassed, women should ignore the harassment, and there was less of a clear gender pattern in responses on that question. A majority also agreed that women deserve to be harassed if they dressed provocatively.

Media and social media

Where do young people get their news about the world? Figure 54 explores media use in the seven days prior to survey, by gender and nationality. Very few young people (less than 5 per cent) rely on print media. More commonly, young people rely on online news sites (61–63 per cent for Jordanians, and 35–44 per cent for Syrians), but even more frequently they rely on YouTube or other video news coverage (66–78 per cent for Jordanians, and 45–46 per cent for Syrians).

Social media plays an important role in the lives of young people. Most commonly, young people indicated that they use social media for 1–3 hours a day (Figure 55). Notably, Syrian women are more likely to indicate that they do not use social media (30 per cent) compared to Syrian men (27 per cent), Jordanian women (15 per cent), and Jordanian men (5 per cent). A substantial proportion of young people, especially Jordanians, spent large fractions of their day on social media. For instance, 24 per cent of young male Jordanians spent 4–7 hours on social media and 16 per cent spent 8 hours or more. Facebook and WhatsApp/group chat were the most common forms of social media, although Instagram and Snapchat were also popular. Fewer young people used Twitter than other social media platforms.

The most commonly indicated reason for individuals to use social media across all nationality and gender groups (78–88 per cent) is keeping in touch with friends and family (Figure 56). Relaxing, sharing information, instant messaging, and news were also commonly mentioned reasons. Job finding was an important use of social media for 19 to 39 per cent of young

Figure 52: **Freedom to go to various destinations, by gender and nationality (percentage)**

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

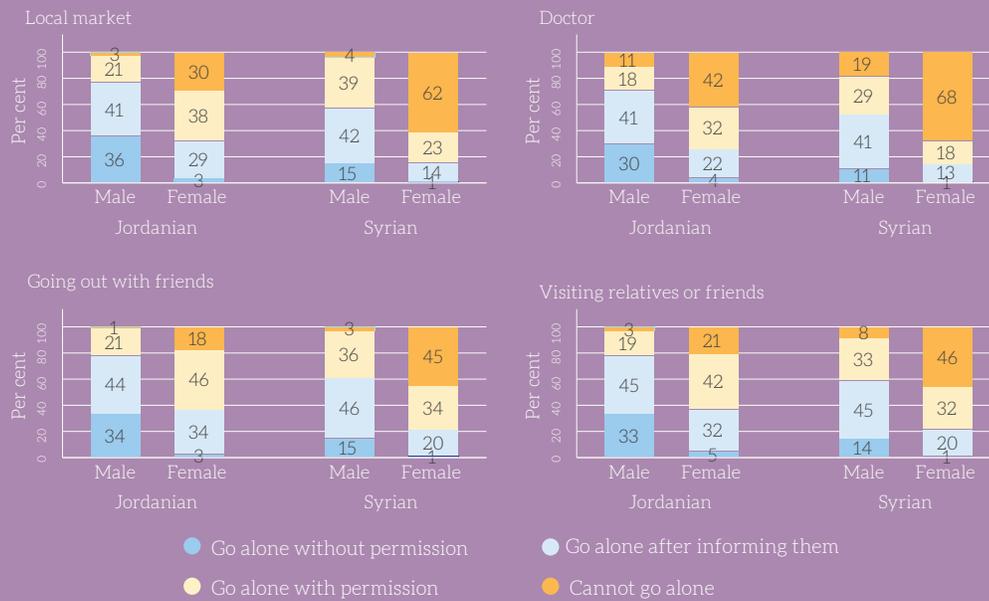


Figure 53: **Attitudes towards harassment, by gender and nationality (percentage)**

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



Figure 54: Types of media used in the past seven days (percentage), by gender and nationality

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

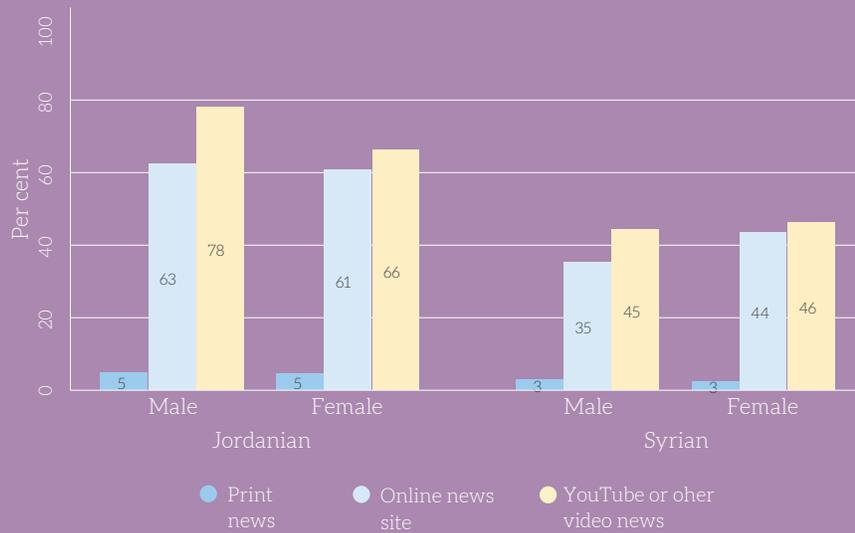


Figure 55: Time spent on social media, by gender and nationality (percentage)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

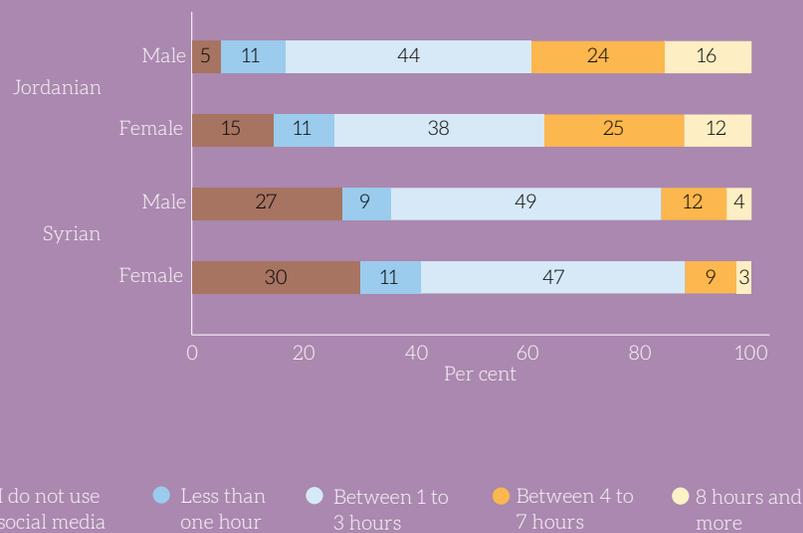


Figure 56: What social media is used for, by gender and nationality (percentage)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

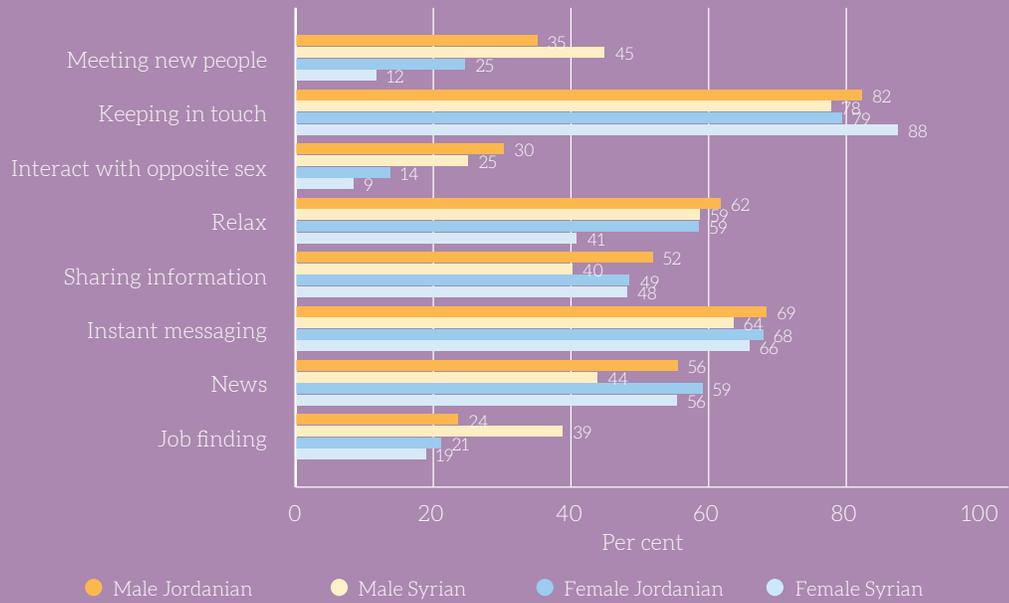
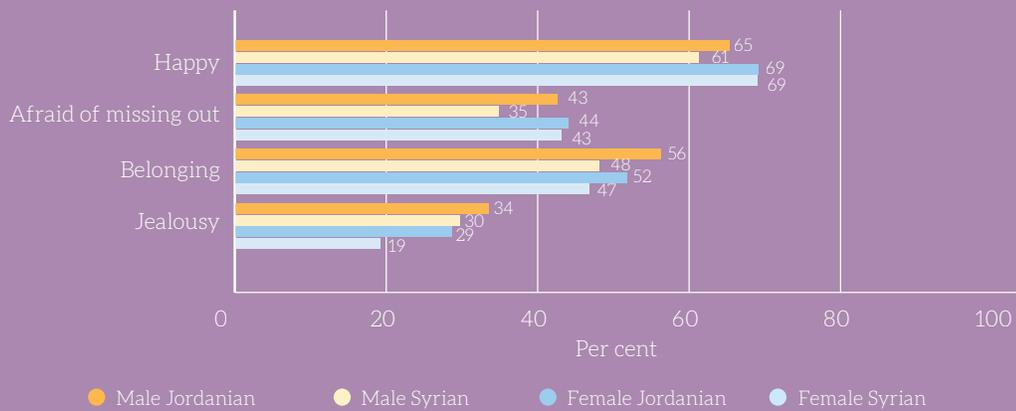


Figure 57: Feelings individuals experienced when using social media, by nationality and gender (percentage)

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ



people across groups. Far more men than women reported that meeting new people and interacting with the opposite sex were important purposes of social media.

The most common feeling Jordanians and Syrians experience while using social media is happiness (Figure 57). The second most common feeling individuals experience while using social media is

a sense of belonging (47–56 per cent across groups). Notably, the two negative feelings were the least commonly experienced emotion. Between 35–44 per cent of young people across groups experienced a fear of missing out on social media, and between 19–34 per cent experienced jealousy as a result of their use of social media.

Chapter 6

Conclusions



Young people in Jordan have high aspirations for their adult lives but face an increasingly difficult set of circumstances with limited opportunities to achieve their goals. This report provided a comprehensive overview of the lives and attitudes of young Jordanians and Syrians in Jordan. While young Jordanians and Syrians express similar aspirations and face some common challenges, their education, employment, and marriage trajectories are generally quite different.

Education

While the vast majority of young Jordanians complete the basic education stage, 30 per cent of young Syrians in Jordan drop out before completing their basic education. While 81 per cent of young Jordanians enter the secondary education stage, only 44 per cent of young Syrians do so. This early dropping out from schooling further constrains the already limited labour market opportunities faced by young Syrians in Jordan, with substantial proportions of young Syrians, young men in particular, saying that they have trouble with literacy and maths, let alone with computing skills. These discrepancies suggest that further efforts are needed to help retain Syrians in school. Key barriers to school progression include poverty, bullying, struggles to keep up academically, (for girls) early marriage, and (especially for young men) pressures to economically support their families.¹²⁸ More generous cash transfers linked to school attendance can help students remain in school.¹²⁹ For higher education, support in studying for the *tawjihi*, scholarships and stipends that allow Syrians to pursue higher education studies are critically important.

¹²⁸ Sieverding et al., 2018.

¹²⁹ De Hoop, Morey and Seidenfeld, 2019.

Besides major differences by nationality, educational attainment in Jordan is also highly gendered. Current generations of young women generally go further in education than men, with the difference being particularly pronounced among Jordanians. While 60 per cent of young Jordanian women pursue some form of higher education, only 40 per cent of their male counterparts do so. The “reverse gender gap” in education in Jordan and throughout the MENA region is likely to be linked to women’s lower opportunity cost of schooling given their limited labour market opportunities, but, the fact that this gap opens up so early indicates that this trend has other roots as well. Even as early as Grade 2, boys have fallen behind girls in their learning in Jordan.¹³⁰ Understanding and addressing boys’ faltering learning and enrolment is an important area for research and policy.

Young people expressed a strong preference for completing higher education in order to access their preferred, public sector employment. They also expressed limited awareness of the labour market opportunities offered by different specializations. Ensuring that young people have clear information on the benefits associated with different educational choices can help them to achieve their aspirations.¹³¹

Training

Young people in Jordan appear to have ample access to training opportunities, with a quarter of them having engaged in one or more training experience. The relevance of this training to employability, however, appears limited. When asked about how the training helped them,

¹³⁰ El-Kogali and Krafft, 2020.

¹³¹ Jensen, 2010.

young people were more likely to mention personal development rather than refer to job searches and hiring or starting a business. Only young Jordanian men appear to engage substantially in on-the-job training experiences, such as apprenticeships or internships. Syrian women, especially those in camps, not only have the highest rates of participation in training, but also the highest rates of multiple training experiences, even though they have the poorest job prospects of any group.

Young people seem to enjoy these training experiences, and they provide an important opportunity for socialization and personal development (especially for women, whose opportunities to use public spaces are very constrained). However, the funders of training programmes, especially those not involving on-the-job training, need to rethink assumptions about the degree to which this training will lead to more and better-quality employment. Aside from in customer service roles, youth skills match or exceed job requirements, suggesting that skills deficits on the labour supply side are not a key constraint on employment. Moreover, the global,¹³² MENA,¹³³ and Jordan¹³⁴ literature on skills trainings suggests that they are rarely effective. Apprenticeships¹³⁵ and internships¹³⁶ may be better models for helping young people transition into the labour market. Participants in the FGDs underscored the challenge of finding a first job without past work experience, and apprenticeships and internships can overcome this important barrier to work.

¹³² McKenzie, 2017; Blattman and Ralston, 2015.

¹³³ Bausch et al., 2017.

¹³⁴ Groh et al., 2012.

¹³⁵ Krafft, 2018; Monk, Sandefur and Teal, 2008.

¹³⁶ McKenzie, Assaf and Cusolito, 2016.

Employment

Young people in Jordan have a relatively low participation rate in the labour force (43 per cent) and nearly half of those who are in the labour force (45 per cent) are actually unemployed rather than employed. The resulting employment rates (26 per cent) are some of the lowest in the world. Long transitions from school to work for Jordanian men often reflect a tendency to wait for decent work – jobs that meet certain minimum conditions of formality and stability – but also reflect the difficulties in finding any work with limited work experience and in a struggling economy and labour market. The COVID-19 pandemic has led not only to layoffs and job separations for young people, but has also substantially reduced hiring, which will particularly disadvantage those young people who recently entered the labour market or will soon do so.

Syrians in Jordan face a very restricted set of labour market choices compared to their Jordanian counterparts. Being restricted by law to certain sectors and occupations, their employment prospects are almost entirely in informal employment.¹³⁷ While young Syrian men take as long or longer than their Jordanian counterparts to transition to employment, the jobs they end up with are of a much lower quality. These dramatic discrepancies in labour market opportunities for young Syrians in Jordan call for further efforts to expand the jobs and sectors to which Syrians can have access. The Jordan Compact has increased the number of work permits available to Syrians,¹³⁸ but further efforts need to be made to help young Syrians connect to potentially available jobs, and to expand

¹³⁷ Razzaz, 2017.

¹³⁸ European Commission, 2016.

the range of jobs that are open to them.

Despite their superior educational attainment, Jordanian women are rarely able to reap the labour market returns to their education. While employment rates among young Jordanian women do increase with education, they peak at a mere 11 per cent for women with higher education. Men, as the eventual breadwinners of their families, must eventually transition into employment even if such employment does not meet their aspirations. In contrast, Jordanian women will generally refrain from accepting work that does not meet their minimum reservation working conditions (and those of their families).¹³⁹ When they do engage in employment, they will often leave it when they get married, especially if it is in the private sector, given the substantial unpaid care work responsibilities associated with their roles as wives and mothers.¹⁴⁰

Among Syrians, women are almost entirely shut out of the labour market. Among the very few who do work (6 per cent), the vast majority are in informal wage work, mostly outside fixed establishments – a very exposed, precarious kind of work that most women in the MENA region would rather avoid. Young women of both nationalities appear to want to work, especially before marriage, as indicated by their presence in the labour force and consequent very high rates of unemployment (79–82 per cent). However, finding the kind of work that meets their reservation working conditions is clearly an elusive goal.

There is therefore a need for programmes that work with employers to create women-friendly workplaces. This would include instituting strict sanctions against sexual harassment and creating a workplace environment that is both secure and perceived as secure by women and their families. It could also involve flexible hours and shorter workdays or the provision of transportation to limit exposure to unsafe public transport. Improving safety on public transport and in public spaces is an important area for government engagement, along with direct provision of childcare or childcare subsidies.¹⁴¹ Current efforts to expand Kindergarten in Jordan are a promising step,¹⁴² but limited nursery care for younger children¹⁴³ and difficulties reconciling school and work schedules remain key obstacles that may limit the employment effects of such interventions.¹⁴⁴

Although young people in Jordan express fairly positive views, in the abstract, about gender equality, they continue to subscribe to fairly traditional norms about the gendered division of labour in Jordanian society, whether concerning women's right to jobs when jobs are scarce, or concerning the question of what are appropriate jobs for women. Furthermore, they may agree theoretically with the idea that a man should help his wife with domestic chores, but their actual practice does not align with this idea.

Changing gender norms is a difficult process.¹⁴⁵ Gender awareness training, directed especially toward men, may help change these norms, but one should be realistic that such changes may be slow

¹³⁹ Groh et al., 2014.

¹⁴⁰ Al-Hawarin et al., 2020; Assaad, Krafft and Selwaness, 2017.

¹⁴¹ Krafft and Assaad, 2015; Clark et al., 2019.

¹⁴² Ministry of Education, Jordan, 2018.

¹⁴³ Ghawi et al., 2018.

¹⁴⁴ Krafft and Lassassi, 2020.

¹⁴⁵ United Nations Development Programme, 2020; Harper et al., 2020.

and hard to come by. The MENA region is notable for the persistence of inequitable gender norms; boys have gender norms similar to those of men a generation older.¹⁴⁶ Schools can provide an opportunity to create changes in gender norms for the next generation.¹⁴⁷

Entrepreneurship

Jordan, like many countries in the MENA region, has a large body of entrepreneurship promotion programmes.¹⁴⁸ Programmes are often designed to reduce youth unemployment by promoting young entrepreneurship. The global literature suggests such programmes do not lead to business start-ups or increases in income.¹⁴⁹ A re-assessment is needed of the programmes that encourage young people to pursue entrepreneurship as a path toward economic independence. Although nearly half of young people in Jordan reported that they wanted to start a business within five years, only 10 per cent said they ever had an idea for a business and tried to start one. Of those, 51 per cent never started their business, 45 per cent started a business which either failed or closed for another reason, and only 5 per cent (of the 10 per cent) managed to continue with their business. There is a danger therefore that programmes that prepare young people for entrepreneurship may thus be exposing young people to a great deal of risk, with little prospect for success.

Family formation

Young Jordanians have strong aspirations towards independent living at marriage, and will generally delay marriage until men are economically ready. Syrians, on the other hand, tend to transition to marriage earlier, sometimes even before they are employed, but this often comes at the cost of not being able to live independently. Given the dominant male breadwinner/female homemaker model, Jordanian women do not have to achieve financial independence to be married, but must often delay marriage as they wait for their preferred marriage partner to become economically ready. As a result, the median age at marriage of Jordanian women has risen to 27, with a substantial proportion of them (40 per cent) still unmarried by age of 30.¹⁵⁰

Most Syrian women, on the other hand, transition to marriage at much earlier ages. Nearly 30 per cent marry before the age of 18, and 50 per cent marry by the age of 20. As the focus group participants discussed, and as other research confirms, this represents a continuation of early marriage traditions, originating back in Syria, more than a new development in displacement.¹⁵¹ Programmes and policies to reduce early marriage must thus engage with these long-standing traditions as well as newer drivers of early marriage such as poverty and real and perceived risks in a context of displacement.¹⁵²

146 El Feki, Heilman and Barker, 2017.

147 Levy et al., 2020; Dhar, Jain, and Jayachandran, 2018.

148 Abu Jaber, Kwauk and Robinson, 2016; Krafft and Rizk, 2021; International Labour Organization and International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2013.

149 Cho and Honorati, 2014.

150 The median age at marriage for Jordanian women in 2016 was 22, demonstrating that the median age for women has risen quite substantially; see Sieverding, Berri and Abdulrahim, 2019.

151 Sieverding et al., 2020.

152 Bartels et al., 2018; Sieverding et al., 2020.

Civic and social engagement

Young people often engaged in charitable giving as well as some volunteering. Yet they faced limited opportunities for substantive, youth-led, or national civic engagement. Creating avenues for young people to genuinely lead civic activities and national initiatives that are youth-focused is an important area for programming and policy. Engaging young people in the political process is also important; while young people articulated clear political values around the role of government, equity, and redistribution, they had limited knowledge or interest in politics.

Making available civic and social spaces for young women is particularly important. Young women in Jordan, whether Jordanian or Syrian, were limited to private spaces like their own homes or those of their families or friends to meet their peers. One type of intervention that could clearly address gender inequities are programmes that create safe public spaces for young women to get together, socialize, and create support networks. Although youth centres and Makani centres exist in Jordan, youth-specific spaces like these were mentioned fairly infrequently by young people as spaces where they could engage with their peers. Ensuring all young people, particularly girls

and young women, have access to such spaces is critically important. Time in youth spaces that is specifically designated for girls – as provided in Makani Centres,¹⁵³ and as has been tried in youth centres in other contexts¹⁵⁴ – along with safe transport is critically important (given the limited mobility of young women and especially of young Syrian women).

The importance of investing in youth

Jordan's large youth population will drive Jordan's social and economic future. Young people have high aspirations but are facing an increasingly challenging reality. Economic and social programmes and policies need to prioritize the needs of young people and support them in achieving their aspirations. Reducing inequities – particularly the large gaps between men and women in the ability to participate in the economy and society – is critical to supporting young people. Syrians in particular face more limited opportunities in their transitions to adulthood. Opening up additional opportunities for school and work for the most disadvantaged young people is critical to preventing a lost generation.

¹⁵³ Abu Hamad et al., 2017.
¹⁵⁴ Brady et al., 2007.

Chapter 7

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Chapter 8

Appendix



Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Labour force participation, employment, unemployment and NEET rates (percentage) by characteristics, gender, and nationality

	Male Jordanian	Male Syrian	Male Total	Female Jordanian	Female Syrian	Female Total	Total Jordanian	Total Syrian	Total Overall
Labour force participation rate (percentage of the population)									
Youth age groups									
16–17	22.4	20.2	21.9	3.8	13.0	5.9	14.3	16.9	14.9
18–24	63.0	58.3	62.5	22.4	17.1	21.7	43.8	36.2	42.9
25–30	86.4	93.5	87.0	47.7	16.0	44.0	67.0	47.1	65.0
Education level									
Less than basic	74.3	59.6	68.7	4.6	7.9	6.2	49.5	36.2	43.9
Basic	60.5	47.4	58.4	18.4	19.5	18.6	44.0	33.4	42.0
Secondary	59.9	34.3	58.5	20.4	19.1	20.3	42.7	24.7	41.2
Higher ed.	58.9	59.6	59.0	42.4	18.2	41.8	47.9	33.5	47.6
Region									
Middle	68.9		68.9	29.7		29.7	49.8		49.8
North	55.1		55.1	19.0		19.0	38.5		38.5
South	47.2		47.2	32.3		32.3	40.4		40.4
Host comm.		47.1	47.1		15.1	15.1		29.6	29.6
Camps		59.8	59.8		18.9	18.9		42.6	42.6
Ever married									
Never married	58.2	41.4	56.3	26.4	22.6	26.0	44.7	33.6	43.5
Married	96.1	90.9	94.9	27.9	7.6	23.1	46.6	29.3	42.6
Total	61.5	50.2	60.1	26.8	15.7	25.2	45.0	32.2	43.3
Employment rate (percentage of the population)									
Youth age groups									
16–17	11.6	11.8	11.6	1.8	11.5	3.9	7.3	11.6	8.2
18–24	46.1	36.1	45.0	3.4	2.1	3.2	25.9	17.9	24.9
25–30	70.3	63.9	69.7	17.0	8.3	15.9	43.5	30.6	42.2
Education level									
Less than basic	48.0	36.5	43.6	0.2	2.5	1.3	31.0	21.1	26.9
Basic	48.5	30.7	45.6	9.3	11.2	9.7	33.1	20.9	30.8
Secondary	45.9	22.4	44.6	3.8	3.9	3.8	27.5	10.8	26.2

	Male Jordanian	Male Syrian	Male Total	Female Jordanian	Female Syrian	Female Total	Total Jordanian	Total Syrian	Total Overall
Higher ed.	38.1	42.8	38.2	11.2	7.3	11.1	20.2	20.4	20.3
Region									
Middle	52.8		52.8	7.9		7.9	30.9		30.9
North	39.6		39.6	4.7		4.7	23.6		23.6
South	33.2		33.2	9.5		9.5	22.4		22.4
Host comm.		32.0	32.0		6.2	6.2		18.0	18.0
Camps		31.2	31.2		5.4	5.4		20.3	20.3
Ever married									
Never married	41.7	25.4	39.8	7.5	9.4	7.7	27.2	18.7	26.2
Married	90.7	61.6	84.2	5.8	2.3	5.0	29.1	17.8	26.4
Total	45.9	31.8	44.2	7.1	6.1	7.0	27.5	18.4	26.3
Unemployment rate (percentage of the labour force)									
Youth age groups									
16–17	50.6	47.8	50.0	96.7	87.5	95.2	54.7	50.8	54.0
18–24	32.8	47.9	34.3	89.6	91.3	89.8	46.8	58.8	48.0
25–30	23.0	36.5	24.2	69.3	59.2	68.9	39.5	40.9	39.6
Education level									
Less than basic	45.8	47.3	46.3	96.7	85.4	90.4	47.5	50.5	48.6
Basic	27.9	43.7	30.0	68.6	85.3	71.0	34.6	51.4	36.8
Secondary	25.6	38.7	26.0	83.7	80.8	83.4	37.7	59.4	38.8
Higher ed.	39.7	28.2	39.4	78.0	70.5	77.9	62.7	42.5	62.4
Region									
Middle	27.9		27.9	80.2		80.2	43.1		43.1
North	33.7		33.7	76.3		76.3	43.7		43.7
South	35.3		35.3	77.8		77.8	50.9		50.9
Host comm.		39.2	39.2		83.6	83.6		49.0	49.0
Camps		57.4	57.4		77.7	77.7		61.2	61.2
Ever married									
Never married	34.0	46.0	34.9	75.9	80.9	76.3	44.5	53.9	45.3
Married	6.3	40.8	13.9	87.3	85.8	87.2	42.4	48.8	43.4
Total	30.3	44.3	31.7	79.0	82.2	79.2	44.2	52.3	44.9
Not in education, employment, or training (NEET) rate (percentage of the population)									
Youth age groups									
16–17	8.5	28.2	12.7	11.5	31.3	15.9	9.8	29.6	14.1
18–24	30.1	42.2	31.3	46.9	82.7	51.6	38.0	63.9	41.1

	Male Jordanian	Male Syrian	Male Total	Female Jordanian	Female Syrian	Female Total	Total Jordanian	Total Syrian	Total Overall
25–30	24.3	35.3	25.2	79.9	90.6	81.2	52.2	68.4	53.8
Education level									
Less than basic	44.6	44.2	44.5	87.4	80.9	84.2	59.8	60.8	60.2
Basic	21.2	37.1	23.8	50.9	68.4	55.0	32.8	52.8	36.7
Secondary	23.4	19.0	23.2	53.0	64.4	54.2	36.3	47.5	37.2
Higher ed.	22.1	14.9	21.9	42.4	50.3	42.6	35.5	37.2	35.6
Region									
Middle	21.6		21.6	52.5		52.5	36.6		36.6
North	32.2		32.2	54.1		54.1	42.2		42.2
South	17.3		17.3	35.9		35.9	25.8		25.8
Host comm.		32.2	32.2		72.0	72.0		53.9	53.9
Camps		47.4	47.4		61.2	61.2		53.2	53.2
Ever married									
Never married	26.0	35.4	27.0	37.2	47.5	38.3	30.7	40.4	31.8
Married	8.3	38.2	15.0	91.2	96.6	92.4	68.4	81.4	71.5
Total	24.5	35.9	25.9	50.8	70.3	53.6	37.0	53.8	39.2

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

Table 2: Attitudes about gender roles, by gender and nationality (percentage)

	Male Jordanian	Male Syrian	Female Jordanian	Female Syrian
A woman's place is not only in the household, but she should also be allowed to work.				
Strongly disagree	8	13	1	1
Disagree	14	27	3	5
Neutral	2	2	1	3
Agree	59	47	58	62
Strongly agree	17	11	37	29
The husband should help his working wife with household chores.				
Strongly disagree	4	1	1	4
Disagree	14	16	5	9
Neutral	3	7	2	6
Agree	64	64	60	66
Strongly agree	15	12	33	16
A woman who works outside the home cannot be a good mother.				
Strongly disagree	14	13	25	19
Disagree	62	64	65	64
Neutral	7	5	2	4
Agree	12	17	6	11
Strongly agree	5	1	2	1
A woman's work interferes with her ability to keep a good relationship with her husband.				
Strongly disagree	9	4	14	9
Disagree	51	45	60	61
Neutral	7	14	5	6
Agree	26	34	18	23
Strongly agree	6	3	2	1
Women should continue to obtain leadership positions in society.				
Strongly disagree	5	3	1	
Disagree	23	17	9	16
Neutral	5	8	3	4
Agree	54	61	66	61
Strongly agree	13	11	22	18

	Male Jordanian	Male Syrian	Female Jordanian	Female Syrian
Boys and girls should be treated equally.				
Strongly disagree	1			
Disagree	7	3	4	1
Neutral	1	1	1	
Agree	56	68	56	56
Strongly agree	35	28	40	42
When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women.				
Strongly disagree	1	1	4	2
Disagree	8	10	24	22
Neutral	3	5	2	4
Agree	58	52	49	49
Strongly agree	30	32	21	23

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

Table 3: Percentage of young people with a first job, by years since school exit (or age 15), educational attainment, gender, and nationality

Years since school exit or age 15	Less than basic	Basic	Secondary	Higher education
Male Jordanian	Per cent of youth with a first job			
0	34	16	26	43
1	43	32	50	45
2	44	50	68	51
3	44	55	70	62
4	49	58	74	70
5	49	65	75	71
6	49	66	76	72
7	55	66	78	72
8	55	66	78	
9	63	71	78	
10	63	71	78	
Male Syrian				
0	26	12	13	24
1	34	51	35	54
2	41	53	47	89
3	46	54	53	
4	49	63	61	
5	56	65	65	
6	58	65	82	
7	58	65	86	
8	82	69	86	
9	85	71	86	
10	87	71	92	
Female Jordanian				
0	0	8	1	15
1	0	8	4	23
2	0	8	4	30
3	0	8	8	30
4	0	9	8	34
5	6	9	8	35
6	6	9	10	35
7	6	13	10	43
8	6	15	10	43
9	6	15	11	43
10	6	15	11	

Years since school exit or age 15	Less than basic	Basic	Secondary	Higher education
Female Syrian				
0	1	1	4	7
1	1	1	6	12
2	1	1	7	13
3	2	1	7	13
4	3	2	8	13
5	11	2	17	13
6	11	2	17	15
7	11	27	18	15
8	11	27	18	15
9	12	27	18	15
10	12	27	20	38

Source: Authors' calculations based on SYPJ

Note: Kaplan-Meier failure estimator. Those working or exiting earlier than the age of 15 are treated as having obtained their first job at age 15. Blank cells denote samples insufficient to form an estimate.

Appendix 2: Survey fieldwork, sampling, and weighting

Overview

The survey collected cross-sectional data on a nationally representative sample of individuals (young people) falling within the age range of 16–30 years. The sample included only Jordanian and Syrian young people (no young people of other nationalities). We undertook a random, stratified, multi-stage cluster sample that ultimately sampled households and includes all young people in the households within the 16–30 years age range. In-person data collection occurred for the sample not in refugee camps from 5 August 2020 to 14 October 2020. Due to COVID-19 safety considerations, data collection took place over the phone for residents of refugee camps from 10 February 2021 to 12 March 2021. The final sample consisted of 2,854 households and 4,538 young people completed individual questionnaires (1,757 young Syrians and 2,781 young Jordanians). Weights were generated to account for the sampling strategy, household non-response, and individual non-response. This appendix details the survey fieldwork, sampling, and weighting.

Fieldwork

Mindset, a research firm based in Amman, Jordan, undertook the quantitative survey data collection. The survey underwent ethical approvals at the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board and review and permitting with the Jordanian Department of Statistics. The questionnaire was programmed into SurveyCTO, which was used for data collection on tablets.

The survey included both a household and an individual (youth) questionnaire. Households randomly selected with eligible individuals (Syrians and Jordanians aged 16–30) were visited and attempts were made to interview all eligible individuals within the selected households. The household was contacted only once for an initial visit, but up to three visits were undertaken to attempt to reach the young person her or himself, with the interview administered to a proxy on the third visit if the young person remained unavailable. The household questionnaire could be answered by anyone, preferably the most knowledgeable member in the household. The youth questionnaire was designed to be answered by the young person her or himself; a proxy respondent was only taken on the third attempt. The sample targeted 4,000 young people in randomly selected households. A total of 2,500 young Jordanians and 1,500 young Syrians were targeted.

Training of the enumerators took place on 19–23 July 2020. A pilot of the survey was implemented by the enumerators on 26–27 July, with 95 household and 71 individual (youth) questionnaires successfully completed. In-person data collection (outside of refugee camps) began on 5 August 2020 and continued until 27 September 2020.¹⁵⁵ A total of 2,368 household questionnaires (581 Syrian-headed households and 1,787 Jordanian-headed households) were successfully completed in-person. A total of 3,720 individual (youth) questionnaires (to 939 young Syrians and 2,781 young Jordanians) were successfully completed in-person. See the weighting section, below, for information on response rates.

Due to COVID-19 safety concerns, in-person data collection in official refugee camps was not feasible. In collaboration with UNICEF, UNHCR, the Mindset team, and the research team, a random sample of households with eligible young

¹⁵⁵ A few additional individuals were then followed up on 11 October 2020, and on 13 October 2020.

people in refugee camps was developed and contacted by phone. A refresher training was held for the enumerators on 8–9 February 2021. Phone-based surveys of the refugee camp sample took place from 10 February 2021 to 12 March 2021. A total of 486 household questionnaires and 818 individual questionnaires were completed for Syrian households and young people in the three official refugee camps. See the weighting section, below, for information on response rates.

Throughout data collection and thereafter, a number of quality control measures were undertaken. Supervisors accompanied 20 per cent of enumerator visits, audio auditing took place to confirm interview quality, location auditing took place to ensure the correct location, and back-checks occurred for 20 per cent of interviews. Additionally, when problems were identified in data review and cleaning in the office, additional call-backs were used to check and correct the data as needed.

Sampling

Sample frame: non-camps

The sample frame for the survey, as implemented outside of official refugee camps, was Jordan's most recent census, the Population and Housing Census of 2015. A stratified multi-stage cluster design was used, with clusters (neighbourhoods, hayy) sampled according to the principle of probability proportional to size. The neighbourhoods (hayy) were the Primary Sampling Units (PSUs). 167 PSUs were drawn, with replacement.¹⁵⁶ The sample was stratified by share of Syrian households in each neighbourhood (hayy/PSU) and by region or governorate and urban/rural/camp location, as follows:

- High share Syrian: region (3 strata: North, Middle, South)
- Low share Syrian: governorate*urban/rural (24 strata).

for a total of 27 non-camp strata. The high share Syrian strata were over-sampled to ensure a sufficient sample size of young Syrians.

The research team received hayy level, nationality-specific numbers of households based on the Population and Housing Census of 2015 from the Department of Statistics (DoS). There were 1,475 unique hayy. These were identified as urban/rural/camps at the locality level (956 localities) based on files provided by the DoS. The high share Syrian was identified as the 90th percentile of share Syrian on the hayy level (21.6 per cent or more of households in the hayy were Syrian). To ensure an adequate sample size of Syrians, 58 PSUs were drawn from low Syrian strata and 109 from high Syrian non-camp strata. Within a division of high non-camps/low non-camps, hayy were selected probability proportional to size, ensuring a minimum of at least one PSU per stratum. Since some large (and Syrian dense) hayy were drawn multiple times, these 167 PSUs represent 100 distinct locations (hayy).

The research team provided Mindset the sample of hayys (neighbourhoods, primary sampling units or PSUs). Mindset worked with DoS to randomly select blocks as secondary sampling units (SSUs) within the sampled hayys and obtain maps for those blocks (when a hayy is drawn multiple times, different random blocks were used). Blocks were also drawn with replacement. Within the blocks, Mindset picked random structures as tertiary sampling units (TSUs), then a random dwelling unit (household) within the structure as the final sampling unit (FSU). Data were collected including

¹⁵⁶ With replacement means that the same hayy can be selected more than once, leading to less than 167 distinct locations. Originally 200 PSUs were drawn, including camps PSUs, but camp sampling switched to random phone numbers and the cluster became the camp when fieldwork had to switch to phone interviewing. Of the 167 non-camp PSUs drawn, all but one were implemented as planned. One of the drawn PSUs was found to consist of transient housing during fieldwork and was replaced with a different PSU from the same stratum.

recording the number of structures, dwelling units and (if possible) the number of occupied dwelling units. This allows for weighting to account for the sampling strategy, as discussed below.

Sample size within PSUs: non-camps

From the 2015 Census, we estimated the share of households in each PSU that were Syrian or Jordanian. From the Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey (JLMPS) 2016,¹⁵⁷ we estimated that 64.8 per cent of Jordanian households were eligible (had at least one individual aged 16–30) and 71.9 per cent of Syrian households were eligible (nationally, on average). There were, on average, nationally, 1.95 eligible young people per eligible Jordanian household and 1.69 eligible youth per eligible Syrian household. Based on these numbers, we estimated that a sample of 1,979 Jordanian households would yield approximately 2,500 eligible young Jordanians and a sample of 1,236 Syrian households would yield a sample of approximately 1,500 eligible young Syrians and we planned the sample accordingly.

Extra structures/households (20 per cent extra) were prepared to ensure enough households could be contacted. Structures (TSUs) were randomly sampled. If multiple blocks (SSUs) were needed within a hayy (PSU), the blocks order was also randomized. Within PSUs the research team provided PSU-specific nationality quotas, based on 2015 Census nationality specific population shares. Mindset surveyed Jordanian and Syrian households in the PSU until they hit quota for one nationality, then continued to survey for only the other nationality. Surveys often find fewer Syrians than official numbers indicate, so quotas were necessary.¹⁵⁸ If Syrians consistently could not be found in a location, the Syrian sample size was made up from the extra listing elsewhere.

Sampling: Camps

The camps sample was undertaken in all three official refugee camps for Syrians in Jordan:

- Azraq camp
- Emirati-Jordanian camp
- Zaatari camp

When fieldwork for the camps had to be undertaken by phone rather than in person, instead of using a cluster sample, the sample was stratified by camp, randomly sampling among eligible households in each camp. Under a data sharing agreement with UNICEF, UNHCR provided a random sample (including phone numbers) for households with eligible young people (aged 16–30) in camps. In Zaatari camp, a quota of 406 households and 496 individual young people was set.¹⁵⁹ In Azraq camp, a quota of 140 households and 170 individual young people was set. In the Emirati-Jordanian camp a quota of 35 households and 43 individual young people was set. A sample approximately 2.5 times the household quotas was prepared for each camp to have backups in case of non-response. The camps sample thus represents only Syrian refugees in camps who have access to phones, but rates of phone ownership are high. For example, a 2017–2018 survey showed 44 per cent of households in camps had a normal mobile and 77 per cent had a smart mobile.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Krafft and Assaad, 2021.

¹⁵⁸ Krafft, Razzaz et al., 2019.

¹⁵⁹ Quotas were based on the original sampling process that had assumed a cluster sample within camps as well.

¹⁶⁰ Tiltnes, Zhang and Pedersen, 2019.

Weights

Household weights – non-camps sample

Due to the sampling of buildings, and then dwelling units within buildings, weights may vary within each PSU denoted p . We also calculate weights separately for each nationality (Syrian or Jordanian), denoted n . The starting point for the weight for each household, h , of $m_{h,p,n}$ is $u_{h,p,n}$ where u_h denotes the number of dwelling units in that household's building (occupied units, if the information was available). In many cases (58 per cent) u_h was one if the residence was a free-standing/separate building or the only residential unit in a building. We sum this weight over households one through $H_{p,n}$ (all the completed sample households within the PSU of a specific nationality) and normalize this weight within each PSU as follows:

$$m_{h,p,n} = \frac{u_{h,p,n}}{(\sum_1^H u_{h,p,n})/H_{p,n}} \quad (1)$$

We account for non-response at the PSU and nationality level with a weight, $w_{h,p,n}$ based on the number of quota households, $q_{p,n}$ compared to the summed normalized weight of successfully completed households, $m_{h,p,n}$:

$$w_{h,p,n} = m_{h,p,n} * \frac{q_{p,n}}{H_{p,n}} \quad (2)$$

This weight accounts for both sampling within buildings and cluster non-response. In cases where there was no non- or over-response (the full quota was sampled exactly) and all units were in single unit buildings, this weight would be one.

Since the non-camp sample was stratified by governorate and urban/rural (low Syrian) or region (high Syrian), we then account for the strata, s , in creating ex-post weights. We sum the unit- and response-corrected weights across PSUs (one to P_s) within a strata s and nationality n , as in:

$$h_{n,s} = \sum_1^{P_s} w_{h,p,n} \quad (3)$$

We then draw on the 2015 Population Census data for the nationality-specific number of households in that strata, $c_{n,s}$ ¹⁶¹ and use that to create a weight that also accounts for the share of households in each PSU that are eligible (i.e., include youth), e_p , based on our estimate of eligible households in the PSU from responses in fielding.¹⁶²

$$W_{h,p,n,s} = w_{h,p,n} * \frac{c_{n,s}}{h_{n,s}} * e_p \quad (4)$$

Household weights – camps sample

The household weights for the camps sample are more straightforward. Within each of the three official refugee camps (denote camps as areas, $a = 1, 2, 3$ for the three camps), each household had the same probability of being sampled.

¹⁶¹ There were some cases in the low-Syrian strata where no Syrian households were sampled. We accounted for this in the weights.

¹⁶² Since we only capture nationality for eligible households, this eligibility share is not nationality-specific.

Taking the 2015 Population Census Syrian household population in each camp as c_a and the sampled number of households in each camp as h_a , we adjust this by the mean share of households eligible among Syrian households in the non-camp data, \bar{e} . The household weights in the camps, $w_{h,a}$ are then:

$$w_{h,a} = \frac{c_a}{h_a} * \bar{e} \quad (5)$$

This weighting assumes that those who responded can represent those who did not, within the same camp. It also does not account for any differences in the share of the population that is eligible across camps and non-camps (since our entire sample was supposed to be eligible, we have no data on eligibility within camps).

Household weights – combined

We combine the non-camps and camps weights and normalize this weight to be a household weight, denoted w_h . Since our weights are normalized, they are not biased by population growth nationally since the fielding of the 2015 Population Census. However, they do not account for differences in population growth in different locations or by nationality.

Individual (youth) weights

Individual (youth) weights were constructed identically for the non-camps and camps samples. The starting point for individual weights was the household weight for an individual's household. This was then adjusted to account for individual non-response. We use a logit model for the outcome of individual non-response, predicting the probability of non-response for individual i , $p_{i,x}$ based on covariates x . We then calculate a response adjustment factor $r_{i,x}$:

$$r_{i,x} = \frac{1}{1-p_{i,x}} \quad (6)$$

Which weights up those whose characteristics are related to being more likely to not respond who did respond, to represent those who did not. The response adjustment factor multiplies the household weight to generate an individual weight:

$$w_{i,h} = w_h * w_{i,x} \quad (7)$$

The covariates included in the logit model are:

- Gender
- Nationality
- Age (single years)
- Marital status
- Household income decile
- Household size (categorically)

- Household is mixed-sex, all male, or all female
- Mother in the household
- Father in the household
- Spouse lives with the family
- Strata

All the other covariates are fully interacted with gender and nationality as well.

Final sample and weights

Table 4 describes the resulting sample, by strata, including the number of households completed, the individual (youth) response rate in completed households, the number of youth and household questionnaires completed, and the mean (normalized) individual weight. A particularly important statistic is that 64.2 per cent of individual youth questionnaires were successfully completed.

Table 4: **PSUs, households, youth, individual response rates (among eligible) and weights by strata**

Strata	PSUs	Number of households completed	Individual (youth) response rate	Individual questionnaires completed	Mean individual weight
Amman rural low Syr.	2	45	56.6	64	1.9
Amman urban low Syr.	21	263	64.3	398	4.3
Balqa rural low Syr.	1	10	63.2	12	3.1
Balqa urban low Syr.	2	29	80.0	48	10.0
Zarqa rural low Syr.	1	24	69.4	34	1.6
Zarqa urban low Syr.	8	112	67.2	162	4.6
Madaba rural low Syr.	1	21	50.9	28	1.4
Madaba urban low Syr.	1	23	51.8	29	3.7
Irbid rural low Syr.	1	22	66.1	39	4.8
Irbid urban low Syr.	4	65	71.4	105	7.1
Mafraq rural low Syr.	1	17	84.6	33	4.4
Mafraq urban low Syr.	1	15	84.2	32	4.8
Jarash rural low Syr.	3	51	56.2	68	0.7
Jarash urban low Syr.	1	15	50.0	23	4.7
Ajloun rural low Syr.	1	16	87.5	28	1.2
Ajloun urban low Syr.	1	20	62.2	28	3.0

Strata	PSUs	Number of households completed	Individual (youth) response rate	Individual questionnaires completed	Mean individual weight
Karak rural low Syr.	1	16	77.5	31	5.7
Karak urban low Syr.	1	19	62.5	30	6.0
Tafileh rural low Syr.	1	17	50.9	27	1.2
Tafileh urban low Syr.	1	20	48.0	24	5.3
Ma'an rural low Syr.	1	12	69.4	25	2.5
Ma'an urban low Syr.	1	14	53.7	22	3.2
Aqaba rural low Syr.	1	21	45.5	25	1.4
Aqaba urban low Syr.	1	19	53.2	25	2.8
Camps	3	486	56.6	818	0.2
Middle non-camp high Syr.	35	456	66.6	723	0.3
North non-camp high Syr.	73	1,009	68.4	1,635	0.4
South high Syr.	1	17	50.0	22	0.4
Total	170	2,854	64.2	4,538	1.4

Source: Authors' creation based on SYPJ

Note: Camps PSUs are one camp=one PSU

Appendix 3: Qualitative methods

The qualitative component of this mixed methods study aimed to explore young people’s understandings of adulthood. Twelve focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with young Jordanians and young Syrian refugees aged 16–30. The FGDs addressed young people’s aspirations, expectations, and perceived opportunities and barriers regarding different forms of economic, civic, and community participation. In addition to informing the development of the quantitative survey, the qualitative data was analysed thematically to add more detail to the discussion of youth socioeconomic participation in Jordan.

Site selection, recruitment, and consent

Three study sites representing different regions of Jordan were chosen to capture how young people’s perceptions of, and experiences with, the transition to adulthood might be shaped by local labour markets and social norms. The first study site was Amman, the capital city. The second study site was Irbid, a governorate located in the North of the country and where there is a high concentration of Syrian refugees. Both rural and urban communities in Irbid were selected for the study. The third study site was Ma’an, a governorate in the South of the country, where the FGDs were conducted in a rural area. The in-person FGDs in all three study sites were held in August 2019.

The two FGDs with YPWD were held with young people living in different governorates in Jordan. The FGDs with YPWD were held online in September 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic that began in the spring of 2020 and due to the associated mobility restrictions implemented in Jordan.

The FGDs were separated by gender and by nationality in order to ensure that young people felt more comfortable discussing experiences and/or structural barriers that are specific to gender, nationality, or disability status. For young Jordanians, the FGDs were conducted in the three study sites, whereas for Syrian participants, the FGDs were only conducted in Amman and Irbid. Table 5 shows the distribution of the FGDs.

Table 5: **Distribution of FGDs by location, nationality, gender, and age of participants**

FGD	Location	Nationality	Gender	Age
FGD1	Amman	Syrian	Female	23–30
FGD2	Amman	Syrian	Male	20–27
FGD3	Irbid	Syrian	Female	25–30
FGD4	Irbid	Jordanian	Female	21–25
FGD5	Irbid	Jordanian	Male	21–30
FGD6	Irbid	Jordanian	Female	16–23
FGD7	Irbid	Syrian	Male	20–25
FGD8	Ma’an	Jordanian	Female	22–30
FGD9	Ma’an	Jordanian	Male	24–26

FGD	Location	Nationality	Gender	Age
FGD10	Amman	Jordanian	Male	18–19
FGD 11 YPWD	Online	Jordanian	Male	21–34 ¹⁶³
FGD 12 YPWD	Online	Jordanian	Female	25–28

Source: Authors' construction based on FGDs

Inclusion criteria for the qualitative study were that respondents be young Jordanians or young Syrian refugees aged 16–30 and residing in Jordan. For the two FGDs with YPWD, additional inclusion criteria were that they be aged at least 18 and have a visual impairment, be deaf or hard-of-hearing, or have a physical or intellectual disability.¹⁶⁴ In the first FGD with YPWD with young women, three participants had a visual impairment and one had a physical disability (uses a wheelchair). In the second FGD with YPWD with young men, all participants had a visual impairment.

For the in-person FGDs, the research team travelled to the study sites to recruit participants and set a time for the FGDs. The team liaised with public Youth Centres run by the Ministry of Youth, who were asked to obtain the approval of their beneficiaries or members who fit the study eligibility criteria to be contacted by the research team. From those young people who agreed to be contacted, the research team purposively selected a sub-sample based on gender, age, and nationality. The team then called the selected young person using the recruitment script and screened them for eligibility and introduced them to the study. Those who were eligible and interested were asked whether they would like to proceed to the consent process to learn more about the study and (if consenting) participate in one of the FGDs. FGDs were then held at the Youth Centre. For those who were interested in participating in the study, verbal informed consent was obtained prior to beginning of the FGD. Young people aged 16–17 were asked to have a parent or guardian accompany them to the Youth Centre to sign a written parental consent form prior to the discussion starting. Participants received a small transportation stipend.

For the FGDs with YPWD, snowball sampling was employed to identify respondents, given the relatively low prevalence of disability among this age group. A UNICEF youth volunteer with a visual disability agreed to help identify other interested individuals who have a disability and were eligible. The seed participant was asked to obtain his peers' permission to pass their contact information to the interview team. When that permission was granted, interviewers collected the contact information and called the referred potential participants using the recruitment script. The recruitment script was followed for phone introductions to the study.

The consent process was also adapted for YPWD. For young people with visual impairment, verbal consent was obtained through reading the consent orally on the phone or after sending the consent form, in the form of a Word document, via email to the participants so that they could familiarize themselves with the information. In the latter case, consent was then obtained via a phone call. For young people with physical disabilities, the consent process was not modified as the participant with the physical disability had no difficulty in providing her consent. After obtaining the participants' consent, official copies of the verbal consent forms (in Arabic), signed by the facilitators, were sent to the participants via email.

Ethical approval for the qualitative study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the American

¹⁶³ An exception was made for one participant in one FGD (with young men with disabilities) who was aged 34. The research team was short on participants and the seed participant was not able to secure additional YPWD participants. Moreover, the participant was interested to be part of the FGD, was very knowledgeable about the topic, and added valuable information to the FGD.

¹⁶⁴ Inclusion criteria also required that participants with intellectual disabilities were able to understand the consent form and were able to communicate their consent. Consent for participants with intellectual disabilities requires that their mental condition does not prevent them from understanding the research consent process, prevent them from taking decisions regarding participating or not, or prevent them from communicating their consent (the criteria for young people with intellectual disabilities follow the recommendations in Van Staden and Krüger, 2003).

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Focus group discussion guide

The focus groups started with a discussion about the meaning of adulthood, specifically the way young people perceived a good or successful life and their understanding of the term “adulthood.” The main component of the FGD then consisted of a card-sorting exercise. Participants in each FGD were presented with cards that represented steps in the transition to adulthood, including good relationships with family, completing education, finding any job, finding a good job, financial independence, moving out of the parents’ house, marriage, buying a house, and having children. Participants then were asked to order these steps in terms of the sequence in which they should be completed for young people of their gender and nationality. Participants were also allowed to add or remove any step as they saw fit, and to identify the most important step in their opinion. The discussion also included questions about the age by which the step should be completed, consequences of not completing the steps in order, the effect of disability on the order (for YPWD), how young people thought their parents would order the steps, and how the order might change for young people of the other gender. In many FGDs, participants spontaneously entered into a discussion of how the cards would be ordered in reality versus their ideals. In these cases, the cards were ordered twice to reflect these two different sequences.

Then, participants were asked indirectly through vignettes (short scenarios) about factors that might affect young people’s decisions with regards to finding employment and seeking an ideal job. All FGDs included one vignette about a young woman and one about a young man in order to capture how gender and social norms might influence young people’s decisions. In addition, disability and potential barriers to finding a job were also explored specifically for YPWD. Separate vignettes were also used for the young Syrian refugees, to better capture their situation with respect to seeking education and employment in Jordan.

Finally, participants were asked more general questions about the barriers facing young people in Jordan in terms of obtaining employment. The remaining questions tackled time use, particularly for young people who were not employed, and youth perceptions of entrepreneurship, community engagement, and volunteering.

The interview guide was semi-structured and offered flexibility for the moderator to follow the group’s thoughts and opinions, and for participants to be engaged in the discussion. The focus group discussion guide was written in colloquial Arabic and piloted through one FGD with young men in Amman, after which the guide was revised. Most focus groups lasted between one hour and one hour and a half.

Characteristics of the qualitative respondents

There were differences in the characteristics of participants by gender and nationality. Jordanian participants were generally younger and more educated than Syrian refugee participants. Most of the Jordanian participants had attended university and a number were still studying. Among the Jordanian participants who were not students, most of the men were working, whereas the women were predominantly unemployed or not wanting to work. Very few of the Jordanian participants were married.

Syrian men who participated in the FGDs were mostly aged 18–26, with widely varying education levels. Most were unemployed and only a few were married; it is important to note that unemployed men may have been more available to participate in FGDs than those who were working. The Syrian women were all between age 23–30, and, in contrast to

the other groups, most were married and did not want to work.

Table 6: Characteristics of participants in the in-person FGDs

		Jordanian		Syrian	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
Age*	16–17	0	2	0	0
	18–22	6	8	6	0
	23–26	11	12	8	9
	27–30	1	2	1	12
Highest education level attended	Basic	0	1	6	9
	Secondary	1	6	3	6
	Vocational	2	2	1	0
	University	15	15	5	6
	Post-graduate	0	1	0	0
Currently attending education**	Yes	5	9	3	3
	No	13	36	12	18
Employment status	Employed	8	1	4	1
	Self-employed	1	1	0	2
	Unemployed, looking for a job	3	11	9	2
	Does not want to work	0	7	0	14
	Other (including student)	6	5	2	2
Marital Status	Married	0	2	4	16
	Divorced	0	1	0	0
	Never married	18	22	11	5
N		18	25	15	21

Source: Authors' construction based on FGDs

Note: *Age was missing for one Jordanian woman.

**Two respondents were still attending secondary school, whereas the remainder who were in education were attending university.

All YPWD participants were highly educated, having finished or currently attending university or post-university studies. The number of men participants who were employed was higher than that of women participants, most of whom were unemployed and looking for a job. Only one participant was married.

Table 3: Characteristics of participants in the FGDs with YPWD (FGDs 11 and 12)

		Jordanian	
		Men	Women
Age	21–23	4	0
	25–28	0	4
	34	1	0
Highest education level attended	University	4	1
	Post-graduate	1	3
Currently attending education*	Yes	3	2
	No	2	2
Employment status	Employed	2	1
	Self-employed	1	0
	Unemployed, looking for a job	1	3
	Does not want to work**	1	0
Marital Status	Married	1	0
	Never married	4	4
Type of disability	Visual impairment (Blind)	5	3
	Physical	0	1
N		5	4

Source: Authors' construction based on FGDs

Note: *The two female respondents were still attending post-graduate education, whereas the remainder (three male respondents) who were in education were attending university.

**Student

Qualitative analysis

The FGDs were transcribed verbatim in their original language (Syrian or Jordanian dialect of Arabic) by the research team. The transcripts were then coded in Dedoose following an open-coding approach, in which the codes were derived from the data. To develop the codebook, the research team separately coded a small subset of focus group discussions. Then, the team revised the codes together to identify common codes across the focus group discussions and categorize them into a code hierarchy. After that, the team coded the rest of the transcripts in Dedoose, with additional codes added as needed based on the data. Themes within each sub-topic covered in the FGD were identified based on the codes. For the analysis of the card-sorting exercise, pictures of the card sequences that were taken during the FGDs were also used. In the thematic analysis, particular attention was paid to differences by gender, nationality, and disability status.



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