

ILO Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan – Fact Sheet



International
Labour
Organization

The Refugee Crisis

The Syrian refugee crisis embodies one of the largest and most protracted humanitarian emergencies of modern times. Since 2011, the bulk of refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria have found refuge among host communities in neighbouring states.

In addition to the humanitarian crisis, the influx of refugees has also resulted in various spillover effects such as stalled economic activity, loss of income, lower access to public services and deteriorating social cohesion among both refugees and host community residents.



Refugee crisis in Jordan

By May 2015, the number of registered Syrian refugees in Jordan had exceeded 627,000.¹ While around 15 percent of refugees currently live in designated camps in Jordan, the rest have found shelter in cities and rural areas across the kingdom. Amman and the northern governorates of Irbid and Mafrq alone host more than 76 percent of the total number of Syrian refugees in Jordan.² It is estimated that the Syrian refugee population is equal to about 10 percent of Jordan's population of 6.5 million, putting heavy pressure on the country's infrastructure and resources, including the country's already fragile labour market.

The Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan is challenging an already fragile employment situation

According to a recent UN study, one in six refugees currently in urban or rural areas outside the main refugee camps lives in extreme poverty, with less than \$40 per person per month to make ends meet.³ As the conflict approaches its fifth year, a number of studies⁴ have revealed significant impacts on the Jordanian labour market from the refugee influx. These include adverse effects on wage levels, working conditions, child labour, and increased informality in the labour market.



¹ <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>

² Estimates based on UNHCR statistics of Syrian refugees in Jordan (<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>) and DoS Population Statistics for 2011 (http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/)

³ UNHCR report: Living in the Shadows: http://unhcr.org/jordan2014urbanreport/#_ga=1.17463673.1579341193.1421234375

⁴ These include the preliminary study of impacts on the labour market conducted by ILO (ILO 2014), the joint needs assessment review of the impact of the Syrian crisis on Jordan conducted by the Government of Jordan in collaboration with UNDP and HCSP in November 2013 (UNDP/HCSP 2013), and the still unpublished ILO/FAFO/DOS assessment "Implications of the Influx of Syrian Refugees on the Jordanian Labour Market".

The ILO response in Jordan

While the bulk of the international community's response to the on-going Syria crisis has overwhelmingly focused on the humanitarian aspects, the ILO's strategy is development-focused in its support to refugees and host communities in order to preserve social and economic stability at the national level.

As part of the wider United Nations response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan, the ILO initiated a series of pilot projects, working closely with local stakeholders in the two most affected governorates, namely Mafrq and Irbid. The main aim of these pilot projects was to support enhanced access to employment opportunities and livelihoods in host communities.



The ILO response focuses on the following objectives, which contributes to the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) for the Syria crisis:

- Contribute to **building the resilience** of host communities by enhancing access to employment opportunities and livelihoods;
- **Strengthen institutional capacity** and coordination to combat unacceptable forms of work, with a focus on combating child labour; and
- Support **policy development** to ensure an employment-rich national response embedded in the principles of decent work.

The ILO has been working on four sets of interventions:

- a. Value chain development for tomato and olive sectors;
- b. Capacity building for public-private sector dialogue on more business-friendly environment;
- c. Capacity building for employment services; and
- d. Support to business start-up and expansion.

Some of the ILO's most recent activities include:

- Working with farmers in Mafrq and Irbid to boost production and quality;
- Basic business training tailored to women in the Zaatari refugee camp in collaboration with UN Women;
- Training for members of employment agencies and school career counselors in host communities;
- Working with local partners in Irbid and Mafrq to support them in the formulation of their socio-economic development plans;
- Improving agricultural roads and water catchment cisterns to help create employment and enhance local infrastructure as part of pilot employment intensive investment programmes;
- Training labour inspectors to address child labour among Syrian Refugees.

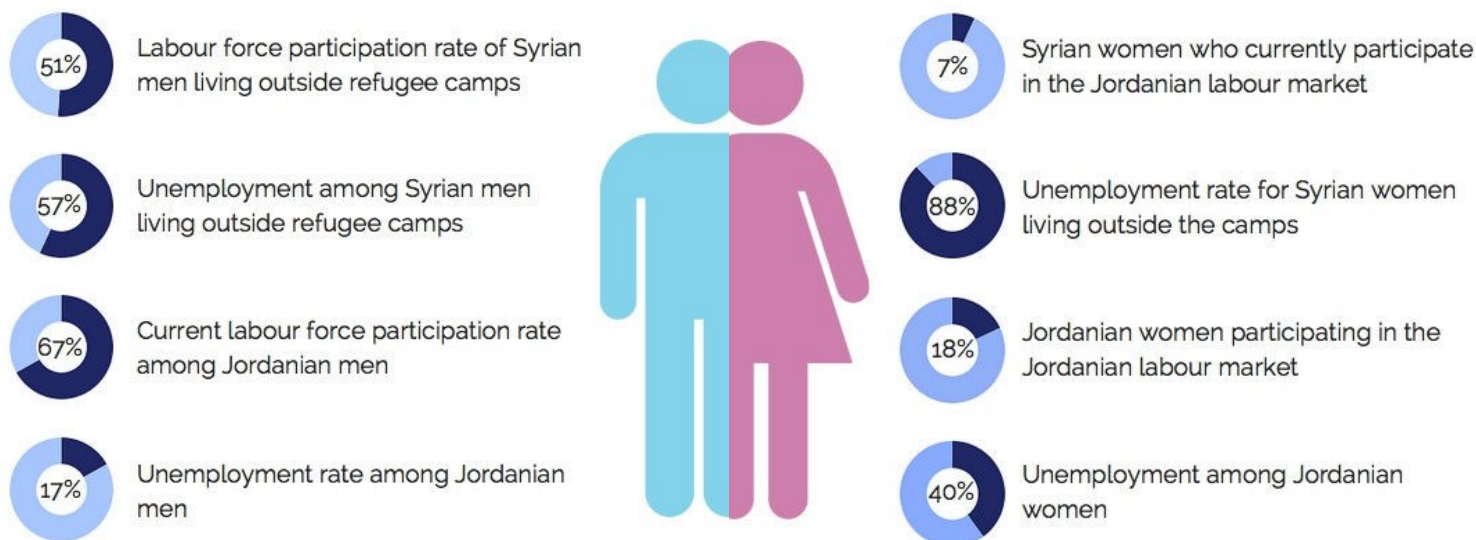
The ILO supports the Jordanian government in developing an employment-rich national response to the Syrian refugee crisis.



Implications of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on the Jordanian Labour Market

In 2014, the ILO and the Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies, in collaboration with the Jordanian Department of Statistics (DOS), conducted a survey on the effects of the Syrian refugee crisis on Jordan's labour market. Around 4,000 refugee and host community households in Amman, Irbid and Mafraq were interviewed.

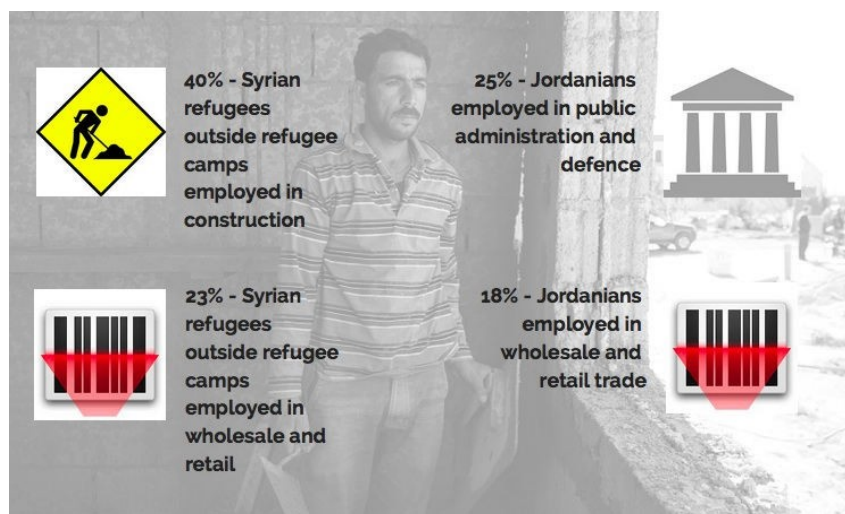
Key Findings:



Causes of unemployment:

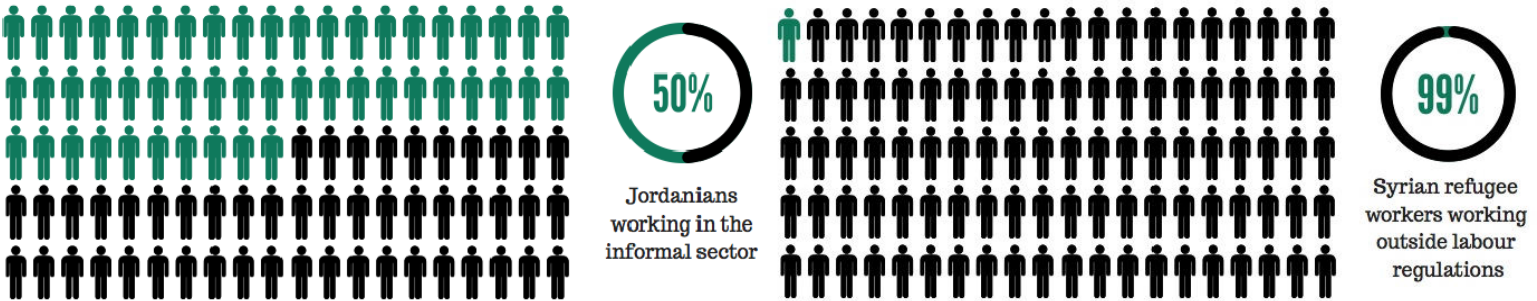
- 58%: Host community residents who cite lack of employment opportunities as the main cause of unemployment
- 17%: Host community residents who cite competition over jobs as the main cause of unemployment
- 65%: Unemployed Syrian men who cite lack of work permits as the main cause of unemployment
- 25%: Unemployed Syrian men who cite lack of employment opportunities as the main cause of unemployment
- 73%: Unemployed Syrian refugee women who cite the lack of employment opportunities as the main cause of unemployment inside refugee camps
- 25%: Unemployed Syrian refugee men who cite lack of work permits as the main cause of unemployment inside refugee camps

Sectors:



A main outcome of the study is that Syrians are willing to accept lower wages and harsher working conditions than Jordanians. The impact of this is not just the crowding out of Jordanians but also an increased informalization of the Jordanian labour market. Although informally employed Jordanian workers face many of the same challenges as informally employed Syrian workers, findings show that Syrian workers are generally being paid less and working longer hours under poorer contracts than Jordanians in the same sector.

A likely explanation of this situation is that Syrian refugees are willing to work for lower wages than Jordanians and are, according to both Jordanians and Syrians surveyed, willing to accept jobs that Jordanians would not accept. Deteriorating labour standards are putting more strain on the Jordanian authorities aiming to enforce existing labour laws, such as compliance with the minimum wage, and improve compliance with labour standards for all workers.



Youth Employment and Child Labour:

Young Syrian refugee men appear to begin working somewhat earlier than young Jordanian men, with 60-70 per cent of young Syrian men in the labour force from around the age of 19. Much of this difference may be explained by the fact that a larger number of Jordanian boys are still in school at this age. Economic activities carried out by children are more prevalent among children living outside camps than among Jordanian children.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.6%: Jordanian boys aged 9 to 15 who are economically active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <1%: Child employment among Jordanian boys aged 9 to 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8%: Syrian boys aged 9 to 15 who are economically active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3%: Child employment among Syrian boys aged 9 to 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17%: Jordanian boys aged 15 to 18 who are economically active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8%: Child employment among Jordanian boys aged 15 to 18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 37%: Syrian boys aged 15 to 18 who are economically active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14%: Child employment among Syrian boys aged 15 to 18

Key Policy Recommendations:

- Address and formalize the informal economy and reduce informal employment;
- Encourage private sector to employ Syrian refugees in sectors where migrant workers are permitted to work;
- Clarify realistic scenarios for the development of the Jordanian labour market;
- Maximize the short-term employment potential of the aid economy and coordinate measures between international community and the Government of Jordan;
- Improve linkages with the National Employment Strategy; and
- Promote school enrolment among Syrian children.

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