

KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT – JORDAN 2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2022, Jordan launched an Economic Modernisation Vision.

The vision's two main pillars focus on unleashing Jordan's economic potential to achieve comprehensive sustainable growth and improving the quality and standard of living for all Jordanians by enhancing various services such as education, healthcare, transport and infrastructure.

As part of the implementation of this vision, the education and training sector will be highly affected. Indeed, the Ministry of Labour will be abolished while its main responsibilities will be shared between the Ministry of Industry (the Minister for Industry is already heading both Ministries), the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Education. The Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission will be merged with the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions, while the Vocational Training Corporation will be relabelled as an academy and operate under the Ministry of Education.

Jordan's economy achieved a relatively strong rebound, registering 2.2% growth in 2021, following a contraction of 1.6% in 2020. However, and despite the recovery, employment creation remains weak and unemployment high, particularly among university degree holders and women. The main factors behind this phenomenon include the very low activity rate among women, the mismatch between education/technical and vocational education and training and labour market needs, the weak ability of the Jordan economy to offer sufficient employment opportunities for new labour market entrants, together with relatively low pay and inappropriate working conditions.

Jordan is performing quite well in education, with a relatively high rate of expected years of schooling (11.4 in 2020) and a gross enrolment ratio in primary education of about 80%. The country is dedicating around 3% of its Gross Domestic Product to education. However, the system is still facing major challenges in providing education for all children residing in Jordan, particularly Syrian refugees.

Technical and vocational education and training remain unattractive despite the various reforms engaged by Jordan to make it a viable choice for young people and the better job opportunities it offers to graduates of VET schools compared to university graduates.

1. KEY POLITICAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Political developments

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy in which the King holds broad executive powers, while the powers of the Prime Minister are limited. The King appoints the Prime Minister, who heads the Cabinet, also appointed by the King. The King may dismiss the Prime Minister and Cabinet and dissolve Parliament, at his discretion. Jordan has a bicameral National Assembly consisting of a 65-seat upper house (the Senate), appointed by the King, and a 130-seat lower house (the House of Representatives). The lower house is elected for a 4-year term or until Parliament is dissolved. Some 15 seats are reserved for women.

This January, a new set of constitutional amendments passed through the Jordanian upper and lower houses. Among the changes is the formation of a new governmental body, the National Security Council. It is comprised of the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Interior Minister, the heads of the King's security apparatus and others appointed by the king. It holds wide-ranging powers.

As per the new constitution, King Abdullah can bypass the Council of Ministers in the appointment of powerful political offices, such as the Chief Justice or Grand Mufti.

In the amendments, 'women' has been added to the constitution's second chapter: 'Rights and duties of Jordanian men and Jordanian women'. This symbolic gesture is not legally binding.

The new constitutional reforms call for more participation of young people and women, but still lack the tools to achieve this.

Demographics

The population is estimated to be 11.2 million inhabitants (as of October 2022, Department of Statistics). Jordan's population is remarkably young – in 2021, around one-third (30.5%) of the total population was under the age of 15. People of working age (15-64) accounted for 63%, while only 4% were older than 64.

Approximately 42% of the population reside in the capital, Amman, and more than three quarters live in the three largest cities (Amman, Zarqa and Irbid)¹.

Migration traditionally plays a crucial role in the Jordanian economy.

Three significant waves have characterised recent migration history in Jordan: i) emigration flows of Jordanian technicians and university graduates seeking more rewarding wages in the Gulf countries in the 1960s; ii) flows of migrant workers, mainly from Egypt and South Asian countries in the 1970s; and iii) recurrent immigration waves resulting from socio-political turmoil and conflicts in the region, including inflows of Palestinians (1948 and 1967), Iraqis (2003) and Syrians (since 2011), as the most populous groups.

Despite the scarcity of data about migration, it is estimated that, in 2020, the number of immigrants amounted to 3 457 691, less than half a million of whom can be considered economic migrants. The inflow of Syrian refugees since 2014 has confirmed this pattern, with refugees consistently representing 87% of total immigrants over the past 10 years².

Migrant remittances accounted for a substantial 11.2% of GDP in 2020, although they have halved as a percentage of GDP since the early 2000s (21.5% in 2000 and 19.0% in 2005). Although migrant

¹ DOS Estimated Population of the Kingdom by Governorate and Sex, at End-year 2021.

² UN DESA International Migrant Stock 2019, World Bank (World Development Indicators)

remittance outflows had increased in the early 2000s, they fell back to a modest level of 11.3% of GDP in 2021, in line with the high proportion of refugees (World Bank)³.

Key economic developments

Jordan is classified by the World Bank as an 'upper middle-income country'. It has the fifth-largest economy in the Middle East and North Africa, behind Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Israel, according to the 2022 Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom.

Jordan's economy achieved a relatively strong rebound, registering 2.2% growth in 2021, following a contraction of 1.6% in 2020. According to the preliminary quarterly estimations of the Department of Statistics, growth reached 2.9% during the second quarter of 2022 compared with the same quarter of 2021.

The main contributors to growth in 2021 were the service sector (1.1%), followed by the industrial sector (0.7%). These two sectors are the largest economic sectors in Jordan, accounting for respectively 61.2% and 24.2% of GDP in 2021. While all sectors of the economy reached or exceeded their pre-pandemic levels, many sub-sectors did not recover fully: the restaurants & hotels sub-sector still has a 6% gap to fill compared to its pre-pandemic level.

However, this recent economic recovery has not led to strong job creation. According to the department of statistics, unemployment remained relatively high during the second quarter of 2022, at 22.6%.

In June 2022, the Jordanian Government launched an Economic Modernisation Vision. The vision will be implemented in three phases over 10 years and includes 366 initiatives in various sectors, as part of eight national economic growth drivers that focus on unleashing Jordan's full potential to achieve comprehensive sustainable growth and generate job opportunities, according to a Royal Court statement.

The vision highlights innovation and entrepreneurship as key to achieving development and bolstering efficiency and productivity and stresses the importance of stepping up cooperation with Jordan's development partners in a more effective manner to direct their expertise and resources towards promising fields.

The vision's two main pillars focus on unleashing Jordan's economic potential to achieve comprehensive sustainable growth and improving the quality and standard of living for all Jordanians, by enhancing various services such as education, healthcare, transport and infrastructure.

Key social issues

According to UNICEF, there are 3.16 million children in Jordan - one in five are multidimensionally poor⁴. Poverty rates vary by governorate, from 11% in Amman to 27% in Ma'an, while its incidence tends to be higher in rural areas.

Marginalised Jordanian minorities are more likely to experience poverty and gaps in services. Moreover, 86% of registered Syrian refugees live below Jordan's poverty line. The situation of refugee children in Jordan remains precarious, as household savings become depleted and employment remains challenging. Many refugee families rely on international assistance to meet their needs.

The Jordanian Constitution guarantees the right to basic social and health services for Jordanian citizens and maintains relatively high expenditures on social sectors. However, there is no social protection law, with the country relying instead on programmes embedded into other plans. These programmes range from subsidies to a cash transfer scheme, tax exemptions and social services. The National Aid Fund, established in 1986, runs many programmes with the aim of securing protection and care for families in need, by raising their standard of living. The fund provides monthly and

³ [Personal remittances, received \(% of GDP\) - Jordan | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#)

⁴ [Social protection | UNICEF Jordan](#)

emergency financial aid and supports the development of the skills and capabilities of its target population for easier access to the labour market.

Jordan's latest census counted 1.3 million Syrians. Out of Jordan's 672 952 registered refugees, 19.5% live in camps and the remaining are mostly in Jordan's urban areas, concentrated in Amman, Irbid, and Al Mafraq (12%).

Around 80% of Jordan's Syrian refugees live below the poverty line, and 60% of families are in extreme poverty. These numbers have increased due to the pandemic as it has impacted sectors employing a great number of refugees, such as tourism, construction, trade, and customer services.

The vast majority of refugees borrow money to buy pay for food or rent. According to UNHCR figures, 85% of Syrian refugee families and 93% of refugees of other nationalities were in debt during the first quarter of 2022—an increase from 79% and 89%, respectively, in the third quarter of 2021.

Schooling has also been challenging. In 2020, there were 145 000 Syrian refugees in Jordanian schools, most of them attending double-shift schools. Refugees are also often faced with complex medical challenges, including physical injuries and psychological trauma, which are all exacerbated by poor working, housing, and sanitary conditions.

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Trends and challenges

Education strategy and legal framework for education

The National Strategy for Human Resources Development 2016-2025, adopted in 2016, sets up the overall strategic framework for human resource development in the country. It covers all levels and types of education and training. It also defines, inter alia, the objective of providing all children with equitable access to high-quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

The Education Strategic Plan 2018-2022, adopted in 2018, is the key policy document for the entire education sector, comprising six domains: (1) Early Childhood Education and Development; (2) Access and Equity; (3) System Strengthening; (4) Quality; (5) Human Resources; and (6) Vocational education, including a comprehensive set of key performance indicators. The national education system in Jordan can be regarded as well-developed.

Access, participation and early school leaving

The education system in Jordan is performing quite well. The country achieved a relatively high rate of expected years of schooling of 11.4 in 2020, while the gross enrolment ratio reached 81% in primary education and 63% in secondary education.

The total number of pupils enrolled in the education system (from kindergarten to university) exceeded 4 million in 2021, representing approximately 40% of the population.

Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP has remained stable over the past years, at around 3% (3.2 in 2021), while public expenditure on education as a percentage of total public expenditure declined from 12.4% in 2020 to 9.7% in 2021, although it had remained relatively stable at around 11% to 12% from 2014 to 2018⁵.

However, the system still faces significant challenges in providing education for all children. In 2021, there were 284 578 children out of school, which is 20 000 more than in 2019.

Refugee children from Syria, Iraq, Palestine and other countries are facing particular challenges in getting access to education. According to Plan International (a development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls), about 40% of Syrian refugee children in Jordan are out of formal education. The barriers to education start at an early age, with most Syrian children aged between 0 and 5 having no access to early childhood development services.

In terms of access and equity, the situation for Jordanian boys and girls is significantly better than that for Syrians and others. In addition, the number of students enrolled in primary and secondary education exceeded 1.5 million over the last 3 years, which has resulted in overcrowding in some schools and increased the number of schools operating on double shifts. In addition, the number of rented schools has increased. These schools are not equipped by the Ministry of Education and usually they lack essential educational facilities such as libraries, science labs and computer labs, and consequently do not provide the same academic quality as permanent schools. Nearly all children complete primary school, but dropping out of school during lower secondary (grades 7-10) remains a problem. The incidence of Syrian children dropping out before completing grade 6 is considerably higher than for Jordanian children and children of other nationalities. A UNICEF report on out-of-school shows that certain individual, household and community-related factors are associated with a higher risk of dropout before completion of basic education (grades 1-10). Based on a sample, the

⁵ Unesco Institute for Statistics

study found that the dropout rate before completing grade 6 was 2.4% in 2020 (14.1% for Syrians), while it reached 9.4% for children in grades 7-10 (22.5% for Syrians).

PISA results

Jordan participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment for 2018. Students in Jordan scored lower than the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average in reading, mathematics and science. Compared to the OECD average, a smaller proportion of students in Jordan performed at the highest levels of proficiency (Level 5 or 6) in at least one subject; at the same time, a smaller proportion of students achieved a minimum level of proficiency (Level 2 or higher) in at least one subject.

In Jordan, 59% of students attained at least Level 2 proficiency in reading. At a minimum, these students can identify the main idea in a text of moderate length, find information based on explicit, though sometimes complex criteria, and can reflect on the purpose and form of texts when explicitly directed to do so.

Some 41% of students attained Level 2 or higher in mathematics. At a minimum, these students can interpret and recognise, without direct instructions, how a (simple) situation can be represented mathematically (e.g. comparing the total distance across two alternative routes, or converting prices into a different currency).

Some 60% of students attained Level 2 or higher in science. At a minimum, these students can provide possible explanations in familiar contexts or draw conclusions based on simple investigations.

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

In 2020, 35.4% of young people aged 15-24 were not in employment, education, or training (30.6% for men and 41.1% for women). The situation has slightly improved since 2017, but this has benefited men more than women.

2.2 Initial VET and adult learning

Strategic and legal framework for initial VET and adult learning

The Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission was established in 2019 to improve governance across the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector. The objective was to have an umbrella organisation overseeing the TVET sector in Jordan, headed by the Minister of Labour, with the participation of the Ministry of Education, the Minister for Higher Education, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Labour, the president of the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education institutions, a representative of the Crown Prince Foundation, representatives from the private sector and representatives from the tourism, industrial, commercial, construction, communications and health sectors.

The private sector is strongly represented on the Commission. However, there are no representatives from the trade unions.

The Commission is responsible for approving the sector's strategies, policies and plans. The Commission's mandate also covers law proposals in the TVET sector, the approval of occupational standards and coordination with other education, economic, social and human resources councils. It is also responsible for accrediting and supervising TVET providers, developing programme standards, registering qualifications in the National Qualification Framework (NQF), identifying teachers and trainer selection standards, classifying them and developing their skills and abilities, institutionalising public-private partnerships in TVET and licensing TVET providers.

The Commission has designed an Action Plan 2020-2024 built around 12 pillars that mirror the 5 pillars of the TVET sector strategy and the strategic priorities of the national strategy. The Commission is responsible for providing a comprehensive picture of the performance of the TVET sector. The

Commission collects, analyses and disseminates data and information at the level of governance, financing, service providers, partners (national and international), beneficiaries and target groups. For that purpose, it uses a monitoring and evaluation system composed of 22 indicators that mirror those of the Torino Process. All TVET providers report back to the Commission on their performance with regard to these indicators.

VET governance and financing arrangements

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Jordan is delivered by a variety of public and private providers.

The Ministry of Education provides vocational education to students in grades 11 and 12 in one of four specialised courses: industrial, agricultural, hospitality and home economics. Based on the results of their exams, graduates can enter the labour market or pursue their education at community colleges or universities for vocational or general education.

The vocational training corporation, a semi-autonomous agency established and operating under the Ministry of Labour, owns and operates a network of 35 vocational training centres. Its primary purpose is to provide workforce training for different occupational levels.

42 public and private community colleges offer technical education leading to a diploma.

As a semi-public body, the National Employment and Training Company provides a 1-year vocational training programme. Initially, it focused on the construction sector, but then expanded to other sectors, sometimes competing with private training providers. Many other private training providers offer various programmes.

While the TVSDC has been established to bring some coherence and ensure coordination between the different players, there is little evidence that it succeeded in doing so.

The Ministry of Education has developed a Vocational Education Reform Strategic Plan to reform technical and vocational education and training. The plan is designed to be implemented over 5 years, from 2022 to 2026, and aims to improve the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the national technical and vocational education and training system in Jordan. The plan, which is currently being implemented with the support of donors, has not been discussed with the Commission.

In contrast, community colleges do not report to the Commission, but rather to Al Balqa Applied university and obtain accreditation for their programmes from the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions, which uses different tools and methodologies in accrediting programmes than those used by the Commission.

For the time being, the Commission is ensuring its coordination role over a limited part of the vocational training system in Jordan: Vocational Training Corporation, National Employment and Training company, and private providers.

The primary source of TVET financing is public finance through the Ministry of Finance. Each institution that provides technical or/and vocational programmes deals directly with the Ministry of Finance. Despite this, no central body allocates the funds based on needs or decides on the priority of specific projects. Moreover, the budget decisions are not based on the performance of programmes or organisations, but rather on a historical basis.

Public TVET providers rely on international funding such as European Union grants and international donor programmes to invest in new equipment, innovation and the transformation of the sector, and on government funding to cover operational costs. Therefore, support from the donor community is crucial, and the coordination, unification and streamlining of donors' efforts to prevent work duplication are highly necessary.

Qualifications, validation and recognition

Jordan's National Qualifications Framework was adopted via a by-law in January 2019. It is a 10-level learning outcomes-based, comprehensive framework spanning qualifications from general education, technical and vocational education and training and higher education. The level descriptors are defined by three domains: knowledge and understanding, skills and competencies. The framework intends to facilitate permeability among the different sub-sectors of the country's education and training sector, promote the use and raise the quality of learning outcomes in qualifications, and contribute to the overall quality of and attract more students to vocational education and training pathways.

The Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission (TVSDC) will be merged with the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Centre (CAQA), while the Vocational Training Corporation will be relabelled as an academy and operate under the Ministry of Education.

Both the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions and the Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission are mandated by law to implement the framework. The former has already formed steering and technical committees for developing policies, criteria, and instructions required for applying the framework. It has established a directorate and general policies, strategic plan and media plan for applying the framework. Moreover, instructions and criteria have already been developed and issued for education and training providers and qualification-awarding institutions listed in the framework.

No publicly accessible register of all national, quality-assured qualifications is available yet.

Recognition of prior learning is one of the means to obtain qualifications. The by-law on the framework defined prior learning as the learning acquired through awarding institutions or through formal or non-formal learning methods; it is not necessarily evaluated or tested. It defined the recognition of prior learning as the process of identifying, evaluating, and recognising prior learning as a qualification upon which individuals can continue their education. In Jordan, the term 'Recognition of Prior Learning' is used for 'Validation of non-formal and informal learning'.

Criteria and instructions with procedures and measures for applying recognition of non-formal and informal learning have not been issued yet. Therefore, the recognition of prior learning (RPL) linked to the national qualifications framework in Jordan remains to be implemented.

Quality and quality assurance

The national strategy for human resource development (NSHRD) has accurately described the quality assurance system in Jordan as follows: 'Quality assurance of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Jordan is highly fragmented, with separate quality assurance processes and bodies in each of the three ministries involved with (TVET) provision'. Each institution has its own mechanisms for data collection, monitoring and evaluation.

The Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions and the Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission oversee the quality assurance system for the provision of technical and vocational training in the country.

Some efforts are being made by the two bodies to harmonise their accreditation systems. At the provider level, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) have separate quality control procedures, while community colleges follow the procedures of the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions (AQACHEI). In general, the procedures focus on internal quality control, looking at competence within establishments in terms of inputs, processes and outputs. There is little external quality control or evaluation of the effectiveness of institutions' outputs. Institutions and trainers are not held accountable for training outcomes. Funds are transferred to public institutions based on previous budgets, regardless of performance.

In general, teachers and trainers lack practical experience and appropriate pedagogical skills. To address a shortage of qualified trainers, the vocational training corporation is recruiting trainers with

practical experience but without pedagogical qualifications. Regarding technical education in community colleges, technical theory teachers are required to have at least a B.Sc. under the accreditation criteria of the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions. In contrast, workshop trainers are required to have an intermediate college diploma. In terms of professional development, providers use different approaches. The vocational training corporation approach seems to be more comprehensive and structured because all newly appointed trainers have to attend a 4-week training programme. There is a rigorous process in terms of needs analysis, programme design and implementation in place. As for the performance evaluation of trainers and teachers, the school principal evaluates the Ministry of Education's teachers in accordance with the regulations of the Civil Service Bureau, while external supervisors provide feedback on technical performance. A good evaluation is a prerequisite for promotion. An annual evaluation of vocational training corporation trainers is carried out based on ongoing assessments in accordance with Civil Service Bureau regulations. External coordinators evaluate technical aspects of trainer performance based on criteria that include trainee dropout, success and employment rates.

Work-based learning arrangements

Work-based training in Jordan is regulated by the Labour Law No 8 of 1996 and its amendments. The law sets out requirements for conducting workplace training in companies, such as the adequateness of the workplace conditions for training, the qualification of the in-company trainer and the existence of a contract signed between the employer and the trainee. Currently, almost all Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) programmes use a work-based training methodology in cooperation with firms of various sizes and in different economic sectors. Work-based training is used by the National Employment and Training Company to implement its training programmes. In addition, it is used in implementing training and employment projects/initiatives supported and financed by the Ministry of Labour and chambers of industry and commerce.

Vocational education students attending schools under the Ministry of Education are required to practise their specialisation for 24 days, either at their workplace or in their school's workshop, during the summer holidays (Rawashdeh/ UNESCO, 2019). At the technical level, a limited number of colleges have been implementing work-based learning schemes.

With the support of ENABEL (the development agency of Belgium's federal government) a framework for the development of work-based learning has been designed and widely discussed with the main stakeholders. A by-law is currently being drafted to set out the conditions for schools and companies to organise this type of training.

The implementation of this framework may benefit from EU support.

Digital education and skills

An analysis based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment 2018, conducted on a nationally representative sample of 15-year-old students, gives an idea of students' preparedness for digital learning in Jordan. The analysis looked at three dimensions: 1. Access to digital devices and the internet; 2. Use of online resources; and 3. School and teacher preparedness.

The key findings were that over 16% of students in Jordan lack internet access, one-third do not have a computer that can be used for schoolwork and 43% of 15-year-old students in Jordan attend schools with an effective online learning support platform. At teacher level, 35% lack the necessary technical and pedagogical skills to use digital resources in their instruction, while 44% of schools have professional resources for teachers to learn how to use digital devices.

Education and training statistics

In 2014, the Ministry of Education in Jordan selected OpenEMIS as the EMIS (Educational Information Management System) platform. It captures a large set of information from the central, field directorate and school levels. This includes schools, students, staff, attendance, performance and infrastructures.

It has a reporting module which generates up to 50 different reports at the central and field directorate levels.

The EMIS in Jordan is managed by the Queen Rania Center for Education and Information Technology & the Educational Planning & Research Department.

EMIS is fully integrated with relevant public-sector databases, including the Civil Status and Passports Department Database and the Examinations Data Management Information System.

The development and maintenance of EMIS in Jordan still relies on external funding. The current budget allocated for OpenEMIS by the Ministry of Education does not cover all expenditures related to maintenance, infrastructure and licensing.

3. LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT

3.1 Trends and challenges

Labour market characteristics

According to World Bank data, Jordan's labour force stood at 2 658 877 in 2021. Women accounted for 17.5% of the labour force in 2021, in sharp decline compared to 2017 (20.9%). The employment rate has declined over the past years, reaching 25.8% in 2021, compared with 27.8 % in 2019 and 34.5% in 2010. The female employment rate remains very low, and it has even deteriorated, reaching 9.7% in 2021, while the male employment rate remains quite high at 41.9%.

The gender gap is very pronounced in Jordan and involves a substantial wage differential (Alshyab, et al. 2018). Accordingly, the Global Gender Gap Index 2022 of the World Economic Forum ranks Jordan in 125th place (138 in 2022) out of 153 countries for economic participation and opportunity, which is an indicator combining gender differences in economic participation and wage levels (World Economic Forum, 2022). The Jordanian population is characterised by relatively high educational levels.

The most recent Employment and Unemployment Survey of the DoS (Q2 2022), shows an unemployment rate of 26.2% among university degree holders (Unemployed individuals who hold a bachelor's degree or higher divided by labour force for the same educational level), which is comparatively high in relation to the other academic levels. The results also show that 53.5% of the total unemployed population have secondary school qualifications or higher, while 46.2% have less than secondary school qualifications.

An important feature of the Jordanian labour market is the importance of migrant workers, representing around 8% of the total population. According to the Ministry of Labour's annual report for 2021, the total number of foreign workers who obtained a work permit reached 333 283, an increase compared to 2020 (281 833). More than 50% of foreign workers are Egyptians. Industry and agriculture absorb more than half of the migrant worker population.

The share of VET students in upper-secondary education (ISCED level 3) has been stable over the last year at around 10.5%, suggesting that the VET stream remains unattractive.

Attitudes towards vocational education are highly negative in Jordan, with a bias towards higher education, irrespective of market demand. Vocational education is associated with low educational achievement, while career counselling and guidance are insufficient. The Jordanian education system is reinforcing such a dynamic by channelling low-achievers into vocational streams. In this context, it should also be mentioned that Jordan lacks a long-standing tradition with regard to apprenticeship schemes in general; instead, the traditional – and still prevalent – method of learning crafts or distinct trades is work-based learning in informal settings (UNESCO, 2018). Due to the prestige of public-sector jobs and the corresponding benefit packages, the public sector represents the employer of first choice for the majority of Jordanian young people.

As in many countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region, there is a deep-seated belief of entitlement and the expectation that the government has to provide employment opportunities. However, necessary cutbacks over the past decades have led to a decreasing number of available civil service positions.

Labour market challenges in Jordan include:

- A persistently high unemployment rate, particularly among young people in the 15-24 age group (39.2%) and specifically among women (58.6%) compared to men (38.4%). Unemployment also affects illiterate or low-skilled men (20.3%) and women with high education degrees (31.1%) (DOS 2018).
- A very low activity rate among women (14%) in 2021, probably one of the lowest in the world.

- Weak involvement of labour market institutions and employers in the different levels and stages of technical and vocational education and training in Jordan, including national governance, funding, curriculum design, training implementation and evaluation.
- Immigrant workers, particularly Egyptian and Syrian refugee workers in the labour market. Acceptance of immigrant workers, particularly at semi-skilled and skilled occupational levels in specific sectors (construction, agriculture and services) to work for lower pay led to a situation where employers preferred hiring them instead of Jordanian workers.
- The mismatch between the education and training outcomes and labour market needs. This was stated clearly in the national strategy for human resources development (2016-2025): 'there are some fundamental mismatches between the skills required for 21st-century employment and the outputs from the current TVET system'.
- The weak ability of Jordan's economy to offer enough employment opportunities for new labour market entrants. As of 2018, the number of new jobs created, according to the Department of Statistics stood at around 38 906 while the number of graduates from Jordan universities (2017/2018) in various educational studies was around 56 466 (MOHESR, 2017/18).
- Relatively low pay and inappropriate working conditions. The International Labour Organisation's youth transition study found that young men rejected job offers in the majority of cases on the grounds of low pay (58%), while inappropriate workplace conditions (28%), followed by low pay (26%), were the main reasons given by young women (ILO, 2014).

Labour market and employment statistics

The Department of Statistics remains the primary provider of data on Jordan's labour market and employment.

The Department of Statistics exercises its functions and responsibilities under Law No 24 of 1950 and its amendments. The law had determined the functions of the Department in collecting, coordinating, analysing, and publishing statistical data in various demographic, social, and economic fields, as well as conducting public censuses in the areas of population, housing, agriculture, industry and others.

No other entities, whether governmental or non-governmental can collect or publish statistical information without the prior approval of the Director General of the department.

Another important player is the National Centre for Human Resources Development, which has been carrying out a series of sectoral studies in recent years in order to analyse the skills needs of sectors and the training provision. In addition, the centre publishes an annual bulletin of human resource indicators that covers a variety of indicators in the fields of demography, education and the labour market.

A third source of information on the labour market is the National Employment Platform (Sajjil), which provides an online platform to match jobseekers with employers' needs. Jordanian companies can register their available vacancies directly online together with the required qualification, work experience, age and gender, as well as the salaries on offer and any additional incentives.

There is no evidence that training providers have made use the results of the above-mentioned resources to inform improvements in their policies and programmes. At an institutional level, some providers, such as the Vocational Training Corporation and to a lesser extent the Ministry of Education, conduct tracer studies that include feedback from employers and graduates on the skills needed. However, there is no evidence that the results are used to inform policymakers in this case either. Finally, with the support of some international organisations, several sector skills councils are being established. These bodies are consultative councils that represent employers, employees and the government and they are tasked with the identification of skills and training needs in different sectors. Despite the existence of all these bodies producing information on the labour market, Jordan still lacks a comprehensive system to identify and anticipate labour market needs linked with education in general and the TVET system in particular.

3.2 Employment policy and institutional setting

Strategy and legal framework in the employment policy field

For the last decade, the national employment strategy was the main policy document in the area of employment. The strategy covered the period 2011-2020, but has not been updated or replaced by a new strategy. It was aimed at 'improving the living standards of Jordanians, through increased employment, wages and benefits, and productivity improvements'. The goal on the supply side as identified by the strategy is 'to graduate a skilled and motivated labour force, equipped with the employable skills and technical know-how demanded by the labour market'. Among the policies identified for achieving the goal is 'enhancing the quality of educational and vocational training outcomes'. Even though the strategy is outdated, it is still referenced on the Ministry of Labour's website.

Initiatives to boost employment

Various initiatives were developed over the last decade and implemented in Jordan to boost employment.

The first is the 'Satellite factories initiative/project', which was launched in 2008 by the Ministry of Labour as part of its efforts to reduce unemployment, particularly among women in rural areas. It is aimed at encouraging companies/investors to establish sub/new factories in the targeted areas to provide employment opportunities, mainly for women (Rawashdeh/ UNESCO, 2019). Until 2018, there were 24 satellite factories established and operating among the various governorates of Jordan, with 5 866 employees, of which 2 200 were women. In 2020, the total number of workers in these factories was around 2 434, according to the 2020 Ministry of Labour annual report. Five new factories were established during 2020, all in the clothing industry.

The Khedmat Watan programme is another initiative to boost employment. It was launched in 2019 and targets young people aged 18-27, with the aim to provide them with training opportunities in the construction, industrial and tourism sectors. The programme is aimed at training 20 000 young Jordanians, to enhance their employability and incentivise vocational careers and self-employment. The first intake enrolled approximately 2 500 men and women, while the second intake is aimed at training and employing 6 000 young people. The plan is to expand the target age group to individuals aged 18-30 years. This programme was stopped in 2020, and there is no available evidence that it has been evaluated.

A new National Employment Programme was launched in March 2022 and designed as a pillar to support the private sector. The programme is supported by USD 117 million in funding from the World Bank. The programme aims to stimulate the private sector to provide job opportunities for Jordanians in all sectors and all governorates of the Kingdom. It is anticipated that 60 000 decent jobs will be created through this programme. For each worker hired, the programme offers a wage subsidy of JOD 130 (half of the minimum wage), plus a social security contribution and transportation allowance for a period of 6 months.

JORDAN: STATISTICAL ANNEX

This Annex includes annual data from 2010, 2015, 2019, 2020 and 2021 or the last available year.

	Indicator	2010	2015	2019	2020	2021	
1	Total Population (in thousands) ⁽¹⁾	7 261.5	9 266.6	10 101.7	10 203.1	10 269.0	
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15-24 and denominator age 15-64, %) ^{(1) c}	33.0	32.1	31.0	30.7	30.5	
3	GDP growth rate (%)	2.3	2.5	2.0	-1.6	2.2	
4	Gross value added by sector (%)	Agriculture	3.6	4.4	4.9	5.2	5.2
		Industry	26.3	25.2	24.5	23.9	24.2
		Services	59.1	60.1	60.9	61.6	61.2
5	Public expenditure on education (as % of GDP)	3.1	3.5	3.0	M.D.	M.D.	
6	Public expenditure on education (as % of total public expenditure)	8.1	11.3	9.9	M.D.	M.D.	
7	Adult Literacy (%) ^c	92.6	M.D.	98.2 ⁽²⁾	M.D.	M.D.	
8	Educational attainment of total population (aged 15+) (%)	Low ⁽⁵⁾	60.0	60.8	59.1	58.5	58.1
		Medium ⁽⁶⁾	26.0	24.0	22.4	22.9	23.2
		High ⁽⁷⁾	14.0	15.1	18.7	18.6	18.6
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) (%) ⁽³⁾	Total	M.D.	M.D.	51.3 ⁽⁴⁾	M.D.	M.D.
		Male	M.D.	M.D.	56.5 ⁽⁴⁾	M.D.	M.D.
		Female	M.D.	M.D.	45.7 ⁽⁴⁾	M.D.	M.D.
10	Net enrolment rates in secondary education (ISCED level 2-3) (%)	M.D.	M.D.	64.6	66.5	71.1	
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)	12.4	M.D.	10.7	10.5	10.5	
12	Low achievement in reading, mathematics and science – PISA (%)	Reading	48.0 ⁽⁸⁾	46.3	41.2 ⁽⁹⁾	N.A.	N.A.
		Mathematics	65.3 ⁽⁸⁾	67.5	59.3 ⁽⁹⁾	N.A.	N.A.
		Science	45.6 ⁽⁸⁾	49.8	40.4 ⁽⁹⁾	N.A.	N.A.
13	Activity rate (aged 15+) (%)	Total	39.5	36.7	34.3	34.0	34.0
		Male	63.5	60.0	54.0	53.6	54.0
		Female	14.7	13.3	14.0	14.2	14.0
14	Inactivity rate (aged 15+) (%)	Total	60.5	63.3	65.7	66.0	66.0

	Indicator		2010	2015	2019	2020	2021
		Male	36.5	40.0	46.0	46.4	46.0
		Female	85.3	86.7	86.0	85.8	86.0
15	Employment rate (aged 15+) (%)	Total	34.5	31.9	27.8	26.1	25.8
		Male	56.9	53.4	44.8	42.2	41.9
		Female	11.5	10.3	10.2	9.8	9.7
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)	Low ⁽⁵⁾	28.9	27.4	24.1	22.3	21.9
		Medium ⁽⁶⁾	32.7	28.2	22.0	20.2	19.5
		High ⁽⁷⁾	62.1	55.8	46.5	45.6	45.9
17	Employment by sector (%)	Agriculture	2.0	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.9
		Industry	18.7	17.8	16.4	17.2	17.6
		Services	79.2	80.6	81.9	81.2	80.5
18	Incidence of self-employment (%)		16.3	12.4	15.2	14.4	14.0
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%)		9.8	8.3	11.0	10.2	9.7
20	Unemployment rate (aged 15+) (%)	Total	12.5	13.0	19.1	23.2	24.1
		Male	10.4	11.0	17.1	21.2	22.4
		Female	21.7	22.5	27.0	30.7	30.8
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)	Low ⁽⁵⁾	11.4	11.1	17.4	22.6	22.8
		Medium ⁽⁶⁾	10.6	10.3	13.1	17.8	18.4
		High ⁽⁷⁾	16.1	18.6	24.5	26.7	28.5
22	Unemployment rate (aged 15-24) (%)	Total	28.1	30.8	40.6	46.0	49.3
		Male	23.8	26.7	36.5	41.6	45.4
		Female	46.8	53.3	59.0	65.9	67.6
23	Proportion of people aged 15–24 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)	Total	M.D.	M.D.	36.0	35.4	M.D.
		Male	M.D.	M.D.	29.3	30.6	M.D.
		Female	M.D.	M.D.	43.8	41.1	M.D.
24	Participation in training/lifelong learning (% aged 25-64)	Total	M.D.	M.D.	1.0 ⁽⁴⁾	M.D.	M.D.
		Male	M.D.	M.D.	1.2 ⁽⁴⁾	M.D.	M.D.
		Female	M.D.	M.D.	0.7 ⁽⁴⁾	M.D.	M.D.
25	Human Development Index		0.737	0.73	0.729	M.D.	M.D.

Last update: 04/10/2022

Sources:

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7: The World Bank, World Development Indicators database

Indicators 7, 10, 11: UNESCO, Institute for Statistics

Indicators 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24: ETF calculation on DOS data (LFS online database)

Indicator 12 - OECD PISA 2018 Results (Volume I) Annex B1

Indicator 23 - LFS – Employment and Unemployment Survey

Indicator 25 – UNDP

Notes:

⁽¹⁾ Estimation.

⁽²⁾ applies to 2018.

⁽³⁾ There is no specialised (specific) question about enrolling in the last 4 weeks with teaching or training. There is only a question about the status of enrolment of the individual currently; this question has been used to calculate the indicator.

⁽⁴⁾ applies to 2017.

⁽⁵⁾ Low – Lower than secondary + Illiterate (Low includes vocational apprenticeship without Secondary Education Certificate).

⁽⁶⁾ Medium - Secondary + Intermediate diploma (includes VET).

⁽⁷⁾ High - Bachelor and above.

⁽⁸⁾ applies to 2009.

⁽⁹⁾ applies to 2018.

Legend:

C= ETF calculations

N.A. = Not Applicable

M.D. = Missing Data

KEY DONOR PROJECTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Many donors are active in TVET and employment. A mapping of donors' interventions carried out in 2016 found that there were 38 employment and skills development projects under way in Jordan, with funding of EUR 335 million contributed by a dozen agencies. Many of these programmes are still under implementation or have been extended.

In 2022, the TVSDC created a platform and invited all donors and international organisations to feed in their programmes. After more than 6 months since its launch, it seems that many programmes are still missing.

The EU is funding a programme of EUR 65 million entitled 'Support to Quality of Education and Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET)' to support the implementation of Jordan's Strategic Plan on Education. This programme aims to support quality and access to education, and improved governance and management; the goal is also to continue to strengthen the education system databases, provide technical assistance to the Ministry and enhance safe learning environments, targeting the most vulnerable populations. The funding is provided by means of budget support with a technical assistance component.

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit – GIZ (German Agency for International Cooperation) remains one of the major bilateral cooperation agencies providing support to employment policies in Jordan. Two programmes are worth mentioning: 'Improving Jordan's employment policy to future-proof its labour market' (2020-2024) was commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development to provide advice to the MoL on the development of a future-oriented employment policy, to facilitate dialogue between those involved on employment policy in general and in particular on future work practices, and to support the scaling-up of successful approaches for promoting sustainable employment. 'Employment Promotion' (2016-2022), is implemented by the GIZ to build capacity and strengthen structures for employment promotion among key stakeholders at local, regional and national level. It supports the expansion of labour market policy measures such as job-matching services for both public and private providers and offers assistance for self-employment.

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