

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN INITIATIVE

JORDAN

COUNTRY REPORT ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

POLICY BRIEF



This policy brief summarizes the key findings and recommendations from the Jordan Country Report on Out-of-School Children (UNICEF, 2020). It builds on the shared commitment of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and UNICEF to address school exclusion and ensure equitable and quality education for all.

Methodology

The study identifies the profiles of out-of-school children in Jordan and those at risk of dropping out. It uses the analytical framework of the Global Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI).

The analysis is based primarily on **the MOE's EMIS data from 2011/12 to 2017/18, and projections of the 2015 population census from the Department of Statistics (DOS)**. This study identifies **children at risk of dropping out as those who are at least two years older than the recommended age** to start the grade they are attending.

The analysis also draws on the 2017/18 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) for school attendance, and the 2016 Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey (JLMPS) to calculate school dropout and returns from education. As the JLMPS datasets allow for disaggregation by sex, age, nationality, residential area, wealth quintile, household income, and parents' education, it was used to identify and estimate factors that predict school dropout.

Key Indicators

The study finds that a total of 112,016 children in Jordan are not attending basic education (Grades 1 to 10); of which **54,761 children are of primary-school age (6–11 years) and 57,255 children are of lower–**

secondary school age (12–15 years). The national out-of-school rate for primary-school aged children has not increased since 2014, a notable achievement given Jordan has welcomed over 660,000 Syrian refugees since 2011.

	Girls		Boys		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Out-of-school children						
Primary school age 6–11	27,711	4.8%	27,050	4.5%	54,761	4.7%
Lower secondary age 12–15	25,715	8.1%	31,540	9.6%	57,255	8.9%
Total out of school (6–15)	53,426	6.0%	58,590	6.3%	112,016	6.2%
Children at-risk of dropping out						
Primary school age 6–11	10,370	1.8%	12,273	2.1%	22,643	1.9%
Lower secondary age 12–15	8,237	2.6%	9,767	3.0%	18,004	2.8%
Total at risk (6–15)	18,607	2.1%	22,040	2.4%	40,647	2.2%

Source: own calculations based on EMIS and DOS databases for basic education ages.

Numbers and rates of out-of-school and at-risk children by sex and age cohort are as follows:

Out-of-school rates are higher for children of non-Jordanian nationality. **More than 39,800 Jordanians, 50,600 Syrians and 21,500 children of other nationalities are estimated to be out of school.**

Nationally, **out-of-school rates are higher for boys than for girls, with the exception of Jordanians in the 6–11 age group** where girls have a higher out-of-school rate than boys.

	Out of school (%)			Number of out of school		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Syrian (Grades 1–6, age 6–11)	19.6%	19.8%	19.7%	11,692	12,440	24,132
Syrian (Grades 7–10, age 12–15)	40.9%	45.3%	43.2%	12,280	14,230	26,510
Syrian (Grades 1–10, age 6–15)	30.5%	32.5%	31.4%	23,972	26,670	50,642
Jordanian (Grades 1–6, age 6–11)	2.3%	1.6%	1.9%	10,984	7,948	18,932
Jordanian (Grades 7–10, age 12–15)	3.6%	4.1%	3.8%	9,562	11,344	20,906
Jordanian (Grades 1–10, age 6–15)	2.9%	2.8%	2.9%	20,546	19,292	39,838
Other nationalities (Grades 1–6, age 6–11)	16.0%	18.9%	17.5%	5,035	6,662	11,697
Other nationalities (Grades 7–10, age 12–15)	21.8%	30.1%	26.2%	3,873	5,966	9,839
Other nationalities (Grades 1–10, age 6–15)	18.9%	24.5%	21.9%	8,908	12,628	21,536
Total	6.0%	6.3%	6.2%	53,426	58,590	112,016

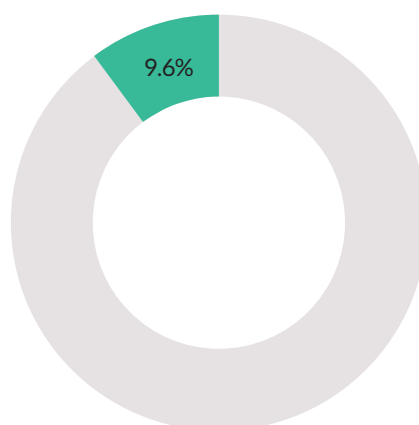
Source: own calculation based on EMIS 2017/18 and DOS population data.

The number of children at risk of dropping out is 40,647, which is significantly lower in both absolute and relative terms compared to the last OOSCI report. Overall, 22,643 children are over-age in primary school, and 18,004 in lower secondary school.

Nationality	Children of primary school age (6–11) who are at risk of dropping out of school.				Children of lower secondary school age (12–15) who are at risk of dropping out of school.			
	Boys	Girls	Total	GPI ratio	Boys	Girls	Total	GPI ratio
Jordanian	0.99%	0.77%	0.88%	1.286	2.93%	2.53%	2.73%	1.160
Syrian	11.27%	10.83%	11.09%	1.041	4.25%	4.38%	4.31%	0.970
Other nationalities	0.78%	0.61%	0.70%	1.279	1.34%	0.85%	1.11%	1.574
Total	2.06%	1.81%	1.94%	1.138	2.96%	2.61%	2.79%	1.135

Source: own calculation based on EMIS 2017/18 and DOS population data. GPI=boys%/girls%.

School dropout before the completion of basic education (Grade 10) is costly for both the individual and society. The study finds that **workers who did not complete basic education earn 13 per cent less** compared to those who completed basic education. Jordan loses approximately JOD 2.74 billion in present value of lifetime earnings due to school dropout before Grade 10. The estimated economic loss due to school dropout before Grade 10 is equivalent to **9.6 per cent of 2017 GDP** (i.e., JOD 28.5 billion).



■ Estimated economic loss due to school dropout ■ 2017 GDP of Jordan

Barriers to education

The fact that some children are not going to school is the result of various supply and demand-side barriers. The report identifies key barriers to overcome in order to ensure access to inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Supply-side barriers to continuity of school attendance include the following:

Supply-side barrier

Infrastructure and Quality of Education:

Overcrowding in classrooms in urban areas is a major barrier to children's schooling. The educational infrastructure is under mounting pressure due to the large increase in the numbers of students, making further investments in both physical and human resources necessary. Relatively low compensation for teachers is frequently reported as a factor adversely affecting the quality of education, in addition to the limited training and professional development support for all teachers and school leaders. Most lessons in schools are teacher-led and textbook-oriented.

There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning to support quality education. Limited assessment data to measure quality education represents a problem, as evidence is needed to identify areas for improvement that could help students to become more successful in their learning, particularly those at risk of dropping out. For pre-primary education, while there is an ambitious goal to universalize KG2, this has not been accompanied by realistic planning or an adequate budget allocation to ensure the supply of KG2 services across the country. There aren't enough classrooms available to accommodate all KG2-age children (age five) in Jordan.

Violence in Schools:

Though corporal punishment is outlawed in Jordan, students still report having encountered both physical and verbal abuse at school. This may lead to school dropout. Further professional development of educators, effective accountability and referral mechanisms, and

awareness-raising to address social and teachers' attitudes towards corporal punishment – for example, through the intensification of the Ma'An (Together) programme at scale – may help reduce the prevalence of violence in and around schools.

Accessibility and inclusive education:

While disability does not appear to be a predictor of dropping out (perhaps due to insufficient data and analysis), it is likely that many children with a disability never enter education at all. According to the national Inclusive Education Strategy (2020), dropping out of school is an inevitable consequence of not providing programmes that meet the needs of children with disabilities at schools. The importance of including children with a disability or special needs is well recognized in Jordan. The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2018–2022 contains a specific component on inclusive education and for those with disabilities.

There is little reliable data available on the needs and challenges of children with disabilities in the school system. Children with disabilities still face considerable challenges in the public education system in Jordan. To date, 150 public schools in Jordan, including in the camps, are equipped to support the learning of children with disabilities. The vast majority are directly supported by UNICEF and NGOs rather than through the government budget. In order to ensure accessibility and inclusivity of children with disabilities in education, to the government will need to allocate significant resources to support the implementation of the national 10-year Strategy on Inclusive Education (2018–2022).

Demand-side barriers to continuity of school attendance include the following:

The perceived value of education and low returns from education:

The relationship between school attainment and potential earnings has implications for households' decisions to invest in education. The expectation of low returns from schooling is likely to reduce the time individuals spend in school. Low returns are due either to the quality of education or the characteristics of the labour market. For Syrian refugees, the lack of return is compounded by legal barriers to labour market entry.

Economic barriers:

Children from poor households are particularly at risk of dropping out of school before completing basic education (Grades 1–10). Even though basic education is free-of-charge (no tuition fees) for Jordanians and Syrian refugees, sending children to school requires families to spend money on school supplies and other expenses. Indirect costs, such as transportation, represent the biggest expenditure items for families with school-aged children. Social protection, including cash transfers or school-feeding programmes, can play an important role in ensuring equitable access to education for all. It is important to expand and improve the effectiveness of social assistance programmes and to develop mechanisms to maximize coverage for the most vulnerable, in parallel with improving targeting criteria.

Gendered negative coping strategies and social norms:

Combined with concerns over the perceived safety of girls on their way to school (due to the risk of harassment), as well as societal preference to invest in boys' education, several gendered effects are noticeable in terms of coping strategies employed by households when faced with financial restraints, such as child labour and early marriage.

- **Child Labour:** Child labour is a result of the economic barriers discussed above, since

schooling comes with opportunity costs and foregone earnings. Children in families at the bottom of the income distribution may have to work instead of going to school to complement their household's income. Child labour is more prevalent among boys than girls. As our analysis on reasons for dropping out indicates, 7.5 per cent of Jordanian boys, 6.5 per cent of Syrian boys and 22.1 per cent of boys of other nationalities indicate that engagement in the labour market is their reason for dropping out of school. Many aspects of the issue need to be addressed, including economic barriers, availability of programmes to engage child labourers, and the overall low expectation of returns from education.

- **Early Marriage:** The key drivers of early marriages in Jordan are: (1) custom and tradition; (2) poverty; (3) broken homes / family disintegration; (4) lack of knowledge; and (5) sutra¹. Syrian refugee girls are particularly vulnerable to child marriage; in 2018, 1 in 3 of newly registered marriages of Syrians in Jordan involved a child under the age of 18, which suggests that Syrian families are increasingly relying on child marriage as a coping mechanism. The prevalence of child marriage declines as wealth increases; child marriage is believed to alleviate the economic burden on families but is also intended to provide financial stability and security.

Girl's education is a strong preventative factor against child marriage, if attitudes (particularly parental attitudes) are addressed. The transition from primary to secondary school and the completion of secondary school are very important for reducing child marriages. Social norms underlying child marriage need to be addressed through interventions, as legislation and policies alone will not be enough.

¹ Sutra combines financial stability and security, along with protection of girls' reputations (UNICEF, 2019).

Towards Pre-Primary Education for All

Pre-primary education is a national priority as recognized in the statement **included under Component 1 of the National Education Strategic Plan (2018–2022)** that **KG2 would progressively be made universal**. This is an important step, because pre-primary education is a crucial investment in children's cognitive and social development. It improves school readiness and reduces the developmental gap that children from disadvantaged backgrounds experience.

There is still considerable progress to be made before pre-primary school access and attendance is universal in Jordan. Only one in three five-year-old children (38 per cent) attend pre-primary or primary school, whilst 62 per cent remain out of school². **There are large disparities in pre-primary enrolment between regions and governorates;** in Central Jordan, the pre-primary adjusted net attendance rate (ANAR) is 31 per cent, compared to 64 per cent in the Southern region.

Pre-primary **attendance rates (children aged five-years-old) are highest for Jordanian girls (42 per cent) and lowest for Syrian girls (12 per cent)**. While more Jordanian girls than Jordanian boys attend pre-primary or primary education, the percentage of five-year-old boys attending pre-primary or primary education is higher among Syrians and other nationalities.

Gender parity in access to education varies across the country: in eight of the twelve governorates, five-year-old girls are more likely to be in pre-primary school than boys. It is also important to note that pre-school teaching in Jordan remains a profession reserved for women; steps need to be taken towards achieving gender parity amongst teachers as well, as there is currently a lack of male nurturing models for young children, which is detrimental to the development both of girls and boys.

Pre-primary attendance is at a rate of only 22 per cent in the poorest quintile. Low access to pre-primary education among poorer children is particularly worrying because pre-primary education is known to reduce development gaps for disadvantaged children. As shown by the profiles of children who are most at risk of exclusion from schools, children from households with low levels of human capital (parents with school attainment not surpassing basic education) and children at risk of dropping out of school at later stages of education (children with absent parents, children in large households) need particular attention and support with regards to access to pre-primary education.

2. According to the MOE, for the year 2018/19 the GER for KG2 is 62.2 per cent and the NER 61.4 per cent, while the 38 per cent finding in the report is based on DHS data from 2017/18.

It is recommended that the Government of Jordan, with the support of partners, implements the following actions to improve access to pre-primary education:



Planning and financing:

- Develop a detailed, participatory, and realistic plan to progressively achieve universal pre-school education and (once supply is available) make at least one year of quality pre-school mandatory, in line with SDGs and ESP. Both public and private sectors need to be included in the plan, given the high share of pre-schools operated by private organizations in the country.
- Allocate government resources to create pre-school infrastructure (recent needs assessment estimated that 24 million JOD is needed for full absorption of incoming KG students), to ensure availability of services through increasing the number of available classrooms for KG2 to progressively increase enrolment to rates to 100 per cent.
- Create a legal and administrative environment in which private organizations can more easily attain pre-school licenses and explore different financing models for KG2, such as Public Private Partnerships (PPP)



Ensure access for the most vulnerable:

- In the progressive roll-out of pre-primary education, certain groups of vulnerable children should be given priority, namely: children living in governorates with a pre-primary net attendance rate below the national average (Madaba, Zarqa, Balqa and Amman); children from households with low levels of human capital (parents with school attainment not surpassing basic education) or financial capital (poor households); children at risk of dropping out of school at later stages of education.
- Make public pre-schools free-of-charge and support vulnerable families financially to help meet indirect costs such as for transportation and materials. This could be achieved through social assistance programmes, such as vouchers or cash transfers like Hajati-KG2. Invest in the provision of transportation and other free services to facilitate enrolment and retention.
- Ensure accessibility for children with disabilities, through additional investment in adequate physical infrastructure, assistive technology and resources, trained teachers and assistant teachers, provision of transportation to children with disabilities, drafting guidelines that forego the discretion of teachers on the admittance of children, and investing in awareness campaigns to address the value of education for children with disabilities.



Ensure quality of education:

- Develop new policies on teacher professional development and the accreditation of teachers – the use of professional standards to ensure greater accountability for teachers and schools needs to be systematically introduced and embedded to ensure educational reform.
- Change policy to allow and encourage males to teach pre-primary education, as it is currently a female-dominated field with a lack of male nurturing role models.
- Address violence in schools through implementing anti-violence programmes at scale.

Increase Equitable Access to Quality Basic Education (Grades 1–10)

Jordan has made remarkable progress in ensuring access to education for children of primary and lower secondary school age, including for refugees. A combined total of 112,016 children of primary and lower secondary school age are out-of-school, an increase from 2011/12. However, the total population of children aged 6–15 years increased by approximately 29 per cent between 2011/12 and 2017/18, partly attributable to the increase in the number of Syrian refugees.

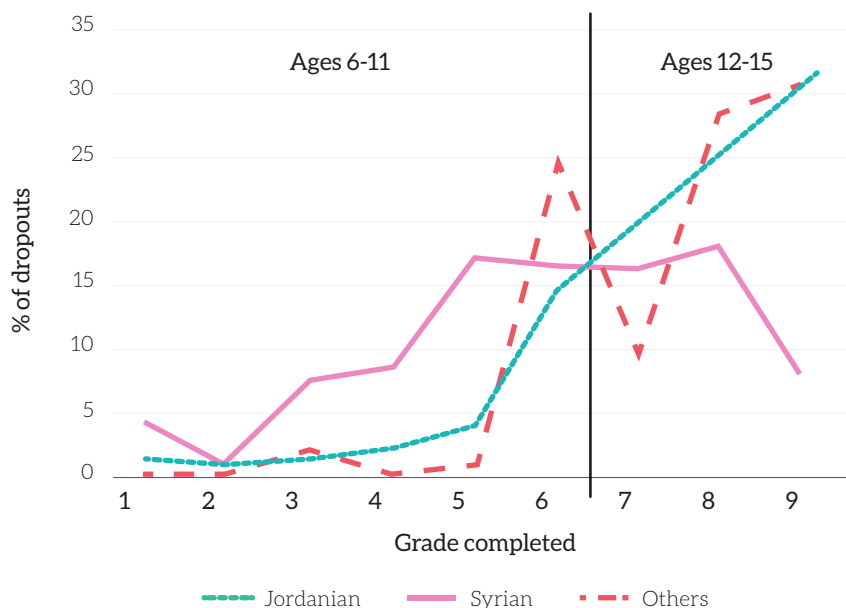
The highest numbers of children out of school are registered in Amman, Mafraq, Zarqa and Irbid governorates. **In Mafraq, 19 per cent of primary school aged children and 24 per cent of lower secondary school aged children are not in school.**

Children that are out-of-school may have dropped out or may have never entered school at all. In Jordan, the share of children aged 6–17 that has never been in school is an estimated 1.6 per cent. For children aged 9–15, this is true of less than one per cent. **The share is highest for six-year olds, but not having entered school at this age does not imply that they never will in the future.** Overall, boys account for 55 per cent of the children that never entered school. **The percentage of children that never entered school is highest for Syrian children, with 3.9 per cent versus 1.3 per cent for Jordanian children. Still, Jordanians account for 71**

per cent of all children that never entered school. Most of them live in the governorate of Amman (39 per cent). The likelihood of never going to school is highest (3 per cent) for children belonging to the poorest wealth quintile. The poorest wealth quintile also accounts for 40 per cent of all children that never entered school.

Dropping out of school is not a single event but rather a process driven by interconnected risk factors and barriers. The analysis found that children from **poor households, children with disabilities, boys, and children of mothers without formal education** are at a higher risk of leaving school early. Children belonging to the poorest 20 per cent are about 10 per cent more likely to drop out of school than similar children from the richest 20 per cent. Over 29 per cent of boys aged 12–15, whose mother did not complete school, were not attending education in 2018 – a stark contrast to the same age group’s national average of 8.9 per cent.

While **children are unlikely to drop out during the first six years of school**, there is a peak in dropout rates after completion of Grade 6, and most dropouts leave school just before completing the last grade. Given that there is no exit exam at the end of basic education, it is unclear why there is a spike in dropout rates after Grade 9.



Source: own calculations based on JLMPS 2016.

The **incidence of Syrian children dropping out before completing Grade 6 is considerably higher** than for Jordanian children and children of other nationalities. Less than 4 per cent of Jordanian dropouts have left school before finishing Grade 6 compared to 17 per cent of Syrian children. Syrian children are in a particularly vulnerable situation because their education has been disrupted by war.

For Jordanian children, **constraints related to household income and human capital** are key demand-side barriers to education. Child labour is a result of financial constraints. For households in difficult economic circumstances, keeping children in school means foregoing the potential income they could be earning if they were working instead. Plenty of international evidence shows that **social protection programmes can counterbalance these opportunity costs and increase**

children's school attendance. Combined with interventions to improve the quality of education, this can lead to improved learning outcomes for vulnerable children. Syrian and non-Jordanian children **may face barriers to enrolment in Jordan due to a lack of documentation.** Whilst basic education is free-of-charge for Syrian children, this is not the case for other nationalities.

Finally, **children with disabilities still face considerable challenges in the public education system in Jordan.** According to estimated data from the school year 2018/19, up to 79 per cent of children with disabilities may be out of school. However, as the National Education Strategy points out, there is little reliable data available about the needs and challenges of children with disabilities in the school system. The Strategy notes that the strategic priority area of inclusive education

should be supported by solid administrative and survey data, with the aim of developing a concrete roadmap, accessible infrastructure, prepared teachers and a public that is aware of children's right to inclusive education.

Certain individual, household and community-related factors are associated with a higher risk of dropout before completing basic education (Grades 1–10).

Predictors of school dropout include: being a boy; Syrian nationality; an absent mother; parents with low educational attainment; large household size; being poor; and living in an urban area. Living in communities operating double-shift schools reduces the risk that non-Jordanian children drop out of school.

For boys and girls, the risk factors differ to some extent, or are of different magnitude.

Girls, whose parents are absent (or of whom just the mother is absent); who are of Syrian

nationality; or are already married, have the highest risk of dropping out. Yet, for boys, just being a boy comes with a 7 per cent risk of dropping out compared to girls. While additional risk factors are similar to those affecting girls, being a Syrian boy comes with a dropout risk of 20 per cent. Further combinations of risk factors show that children at particularly high risk of dropping out before completing basic education are boys in poor households, living in urban areas; girls in poor households, especially if already married; and Syrian boys living in urban areas.

Primary and lower-secondary education in Jordan is compulsory until the completion of Grade 10, but dropping out of school remains a challenge with long-term negative implications for individuals and society. There are various policy and programmatic actions that would increase equitable access to quality basic education:



Policy:

- Ensure fee-free access to basic education for all children, irrespective of nationality (fee-free education).
- Increase the government budget for catch-up and drop-out programmes to provide education to those children that are already out of school and simplify pathways for children to reintegrate into formal education.
- Reconsider the policy of not allowing children more than three years above the correct age for grade to enrol in formal education, and develop alternative and age-appropriate means of inclusion.
- Enable all children to access formal education, irrespective of nationality, by increasing the flexibility of administrative practices for school enrolment.



Ensure access to education for the most vulnerable:

Design interventions and support targeted outreach for children particularly vulnerable to exclusion:

- Children aged 6–11; residing in Mafraq, Irbid, Zarqa, and Amman;
- Children above the age of 12: particularly boys in Irbid and Azraq and girls in Balqa, Madaba, Irbid, Mafraq, Karak and Tafileh.
- Children of Syrian and non-Jordanian nationalities (particularly boys), and Jordanian adolescents in urban areas.
- Children who never entered school (or are late to enrol)
- Children (and particularly boys) whose mother never completed basic education or whose mother does not live in the same household.
- Children in larger households and those who fare worse economically.
- Children with school performance below expectations.

Extend social protection measures that reduce the direct costs and opportunity costs of attending education, such as cash transfers, school meal programmes, and school busing, and ensure that children with higher risks of exclusion are reached by these interventions.

Resource and implement the 10-year Strategy for Inclusive Education to enable children with disabilities to achieve the full enjoyment of education and access to all programs, services and facilities.

To support children facing child labour as a barrier to education:

- Increase availability of psycho-social services, enhance linkages between education and improved employment opportunities (TVET), extend social protection programmes and engage communities.
- Strengthen inter-sectoral referral and case management pathways, and the identification and monitoring of vulnerable school-aged children, with the participation of the MOE and schools.
- Targeted re-enrolment of children in formal or NFE programmes.

Married girls or those at risk of early marriages:

- Support completion of basic education, especially as girls reach lower secondary school (from age 12) and transition to higher grades.
- Invest in specialized psycho-social support systems, comprehensive case management, and childcare for girls with children so they can complete their education.
- Provide life skills and empowerment programmes to adolescent girls.
- Train educators and students to ensure a safe and supportive school environment (in person and online) for all students, including for at risk adolescent girls.

**Ensure quality of education:**

- Invest in providing teachers with pre- and in-service training
- Invest in strong administrative records that allow for the detection of grade repetition, tracking, and assessing children. Potential areas on which to focus these efforts are: ensuring that all schools are linked into the EMIS; reducing the burden on teachers or data-entry clerks and incentivize timely and accurate data entry; creating awareness of the relevance of these data among school principals by reporting back about the school's performance; setting benchmarks and allowing easy access to comparable data; and establishing a system of periodic data analysis and learning at both the school-level and the Ministry-Level.
- Review how raw assessment data is collected accurately and transparently at all levels of the school system and how the data is used for policy decisions and interventions to adequately support students.
- Support school leaders to develop a better understanding of the importance of measuring learning outcomes; using and analyzing the data to improve the quality of education and to identify children who require support in order to remain engaged and learning.
- Develop School Principal Leadership Standards and revise the School Directorate Development Plan with a focus on learning and using assessment outcomes for planning; there needs to be a coordinated effort by the MOE and partners to ensure that data-driven planning and instructional leadership becomes the norm in schools, in addition to strengthening middle management in schools.
- Provide additional/remedial support to children at risk of dropping out due to disengagement or bad performance, and particularly for Jordanian children who tend, for these reasons, to leave during the last years of education, paying attention to adolescent boys in urban areas.
- Build the capacity of school counsellors and teachers to improve the psycho-social well-being of students.
- Continue to tackle violence in schools through supporting the Ma'An programme that aims to address, at scale, societal and teacher's attitudes to corporal punishment.
- Develop new policies on teacher professional development and the accreditation of teachers – the use of professional standards to ensure greater accountability for teachers and schools all need to be systematically introduced and embedded to ensure educational reform.
- Explore new and innovative ways to encourage males into the teaching profession.

Increase Returns from Education in Jordan

Education is an investment in human capital, generating long-lasting returns for individuals and society. These returns are most clearly shown in the labour market. An **additional year of education translates to a 4 per cent increase in earnings** for the average Jordanian worker. But labour market inefficiencies reduce the extent to which education translates to higher individual earnings.

The returns from education differ considerably for Jordanians and Syrians. While for a Jordanian worker, the wages are expected to increase by almost 4 per cent with each additional year of schooling, the corresponding figure **for Syrians**

in Jordan is not statistically significant, which means that for the Syrian population, there is no direct association between earnings and education. This is likely due **to labour market policies that restrict the sectors Syrians are allowed to work in.**

Overall, **labour force participation in Jordan is low**, particularly among women: only 10 per cent of the female and 57 per cent of the male labour force has been employed in 2016. Low labour force participation has far-reaching implications for education as an investment, as those who are **not economically active forego (monetary) returns**, for themselves and for society as a whole.

Level of education attained by worker						
Level of education required for job	Illiterate	Reading & writing certificate	Basic	Secondary	Post-Secondary	Higher education
No formal education	96.1%	87.4%	64.7%	53.6%	33.6%	12.2%
Primary	2.4%	8.9%	10.3%	3.0%	0.2%	0.4%
Secondary	1.4%	3.6%	24.6%	36.6%	15.7%	7.2%
Higher education	0%	0.1%	0.4%	6.9%	50.6%	80.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

A further inefficiency in the labour market is the **mismatch between skills required and the skills attained by workers**. There is a tendency for workers to be employed in a job that requires a lower level of education than that which they have attained. For example, more than half of those who completed secondary school work are in positions that require no formal education. Among those with a tertiary degree (Bachelor's or higher), every

fifth person has a job that requires a secondary certificate at most, and every eighth person works in a position with no formal education requirements. This signals a lack of quality jobs and poor skill-matching in the labour market, whereby (potential) workers struggle to find employment that matches their qualifications. Such a pattern can limit the earning premium of schooling.

To address and combat these issues, a combination of education and labour market policies are needed:



Improve access to labour market and address structural inequalities:

- Advocate for inclusive labour market policies, particularly for non-Jordanians, through the expansion of work permits and encouraging formal market employment through the expansion of social security and health insurance programmes.
- Advocate for gender-transformative policies, including support for improving the working conditions of women (such as provision of childcare, transportation, and of maternity leaves) and equal pay.
- Support licensing of home-based businesses, simplifying registration procedures for small businesses, and reducing the costs of doing business in Jordan.
- Engage with the private sector to encourage entrepreneurship, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises, and promote entrepreneurship by reducing costs, bureaucracy, business disruption, and legal gaps.
- Harmonize working conditions between the public and private sectors.



Address low expected returns from education:

- Empower the Skills Commission to support provision of quality TVET programmes and linkages to post TVET job opportunities.
- Ensure alignment between education and labour-market demands, by performing regular in-depth analysis of demand and supply in the labour market and sector skill analysis (in cooperation with the private sector), the results of which should inform strategic decisions about vocational training and active labour market policies.
- Enhance vocational education curriculum in formal schools and develop new teaching to include a proactive approach to supporting students in gaining access to, and experience of, the labour market while still in school, making use of local partnerships with businesses, commerce, and vocational centres.
- Incorporate “employability skills” into the curriculum from early grades, in addition to internships or volunteer work for girls and boys, including in traditionally male-dominated sectors.
- Implement programmes for students to familiarize them with a variety of education and career options, including vocational training.

Policy Brief

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Jordan



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