

Women and Employment in Jordan

UN Women/REACH Summary of Assessment Findings
October 2016 (full publication forthcoming)

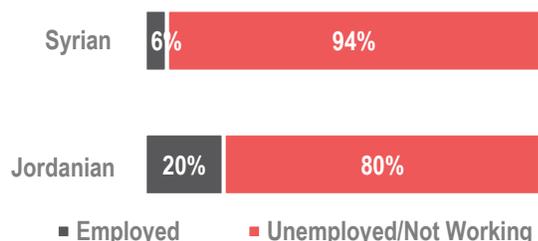
In February 2016, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, along with a number of international donors, launched the “Jordan Compact” as part of the international community’s response to the ongoing Syria crisis. Central to this political commitment is supporting the resilience and welfare of both Syrian refugees and Jordanian hosts; promising legal access to livelihoods for Syrian refugees; and expanding employment opportunities for both Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities.

Aiming to inform the emerging livelihoods discourse in Jordan, this research assessed both Jordanian and Syrian refugee women’s attitudes toward employment; their current employment status and aspirations; as well as the barriers they might face in accessing paid work.

Women’s employment status

The overwhelming majority of women residing in Jordan are currently not in employment; with significantly more unemployed Syrian refugee women than Jordanian women.

Current employment status of women in Jordan



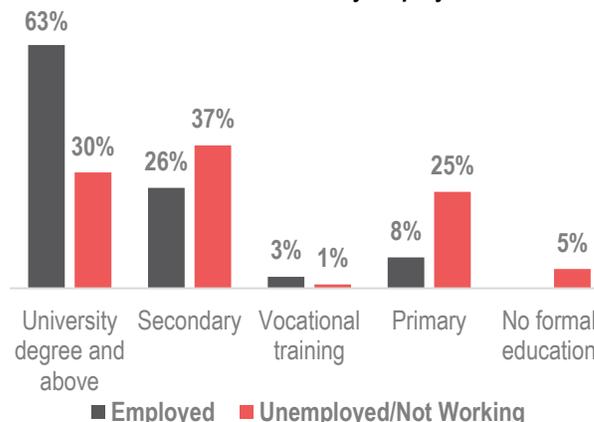
17% of Syrian refugee women interviewed stated that they had worked previously in Syria. This suggests a significant drop in the rate of Syrian women’s employment pre and post displacement, likely resulting from their displacement and the challenging regulatory framework in Jordan.

Employment and education

Women who are employed are generally better educated than those who do not work. However, a majority of women not in employment have completed secondary education or higher, suggesting that low levels of

education do not sufficiently explain women’s unemployment or economic inactivity.

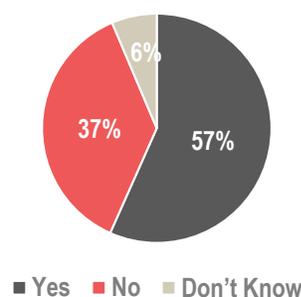
Women’s education level by employment status



Obstacles to women’s employment

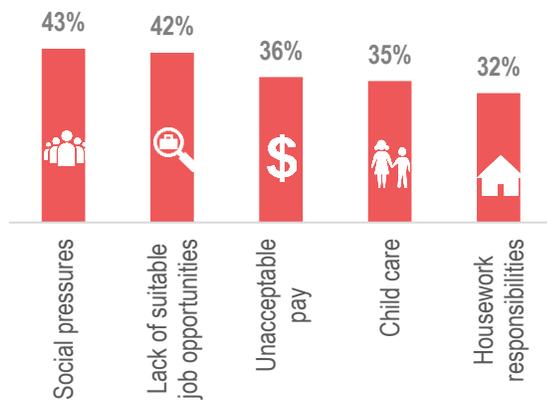
The majority of unemployed women, both Syrian and Jordanian, would like to work if they had the opportunity to do so. However, most women are currently not actively looking for work, suggesting a gap between aspiration – the wish to work – and reality, the ability to access employment.

Percentage of women not working who want to work



This finding is corroborated by the fact that a large majority of women (76%) believe that there are obstacles to women’s employment. Women primarily reported societal and structural obstacles, including cultural and religious pressures and the lack of suitable job opportunities that meet women’s qualifications.

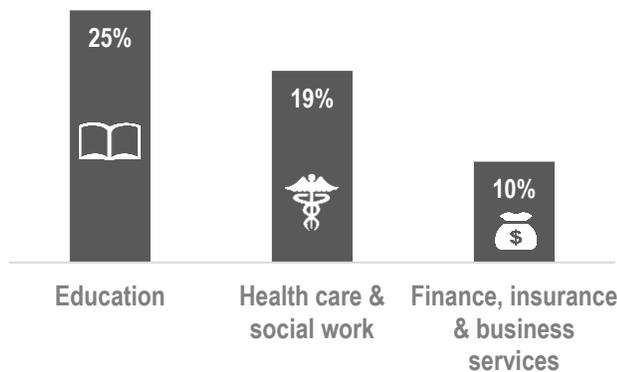
Primary reported obstacles to women's employment



Employment sectors

In line with their high level of education, **women are likely to work in skill-intensive employment sectors**, mainly in education, health care and social work. These sectors furthermore **tend to be traditionally female employment sectors**. In contrast to this overall picture, the majority of **Syrian refugee women works in areas of low skilled labour** – such as hospitality, agriculture, and manufacturing sectors. This is likely a reflection of the different opportunities currently open to Syrian refugees but may also be a result of generally lower levels of qualification.

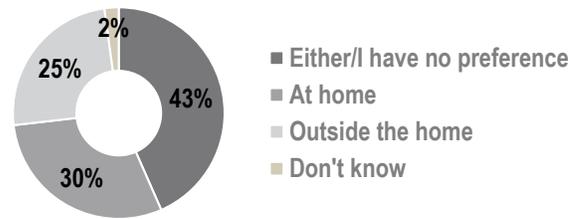
Top three most frequently cited employment sectors for women



Working Preferences

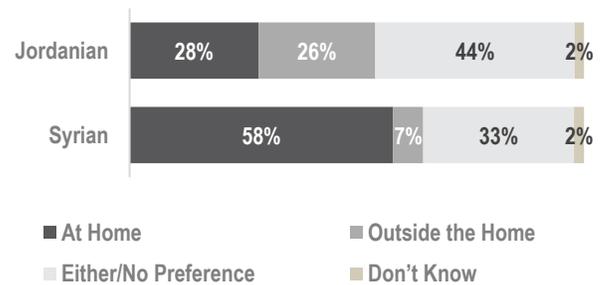
Overall, there is no clear evidence for a preference for home-based work amongst women in Jordan. Only a minority of all surveyed women voiced a preference for home-based work. This supports the assumption that rather than a cultural preference of women, home-based work might be a pragmatic solution in reaction to various factors impeding women's access to employment.

Preference for home-based work vs. work outside



However, **Jordanian and Syrian refugee women's perceptions of home-based work differ significantly**. A majority of Syrian refugee women reported they would opt for home-based work were they given the choice, compared to a minority of Jordanian women.

Preference for home-based work, by nationality



This preference among Syrian refugee women is likely an adaptation to a thus far restrictive livelihoods environment, as well as to the limitation of resources available within Syrian refugee households, including for child care support or transportation.

Syrian women: work permits

An overwhelming majority of Syrian women reported to either not possess or to not have applied for a work permit. Women either lack information or think it is not worth their time to apply for a work permit, although it is a requirement to legally work in the country.

Syrian women's work permit status

