Ministry of Labour and Social Security Corporation Satisfactory Survey

April 2023

INTRODUCTION

In February 2016, during the London Donor Conference, Jordan took an unprecedented step among Syrian refugee host countries and pledged to provide formal employment opportunities to Syrian refugees in return for concessionary rates on international loans, trade deals with the European Union, and investments from the international community to support the Jordanian economy.

Under this decision, the Ministry of Labour (MoL)waived fees and some of the documentation requirements to enhance access for Syrian refugees to formal employment opportunities in professions open to non-Jordanian workers. Additionally, humanitarian and development actors in Jordan started implementing livelihoods projects as the focus shifted to resilience of Syrian refugees.

Under Jordanian law, employers of non-Jordanian workers are legally required to obtain a work permit for their workers from the local Labour Directorate of the MoL and the applicable regulations and instructions issued by Ministry of Labour. Syrians could obtain different types of work permits, those are: (i) tied to specific employer, (ii) Flexible Work Permits (FWP), (iii) the Cash For Work (CFW)[1] and (iv) specialized work permits. Flexible Work Permits, being issued through the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU), are designed for Syrian refugees to move freely among different employers. Since 2019, obtention of a work permit automatically triggers social security coverage, so, refugees who obtain any type of work permits are being asked to register under the umbrella of Social Security Corporation (SSC), enabling higher protection in case of injuries in the working place as well as additional benefits.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) supported the MoL and the SCC, conducted a joint satisfaction survey to gather feedback from individuals across different demographics and locations in Jordan regarding their experience with the work permit issuance system and the social security system. The joint survey was conducted with the aim of improving these services and to provide more tailored support to refugees.

The survey, carried out online, received a total of 21,520 self-submissions over the period of 6 to 21 March 2023. This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the survey results to guide further steps in improving work permits issuance system. The survey aimed to better understand the demographics of the people employed in the formal sector, including gender, age, and location of residency, as well as their level of satisfaction with the work permit and social security systems. The report provides a detailed analysis of the survey results, including the top sectors for work permit issuance, the reasons for not renewing expired work permits, and the satisfaction levels with the work permit issuance system. The data analysis provides valuable insights to improve services that can inform policy and programmatic changes that promote inclusive growth, refugee awareness, and support the economic wellbeing of individuals and communities in Jordan.

As a self-reported survey carried out online, the results do suffer from a bias in the profile of the respondent (more educated, more technology aware etc.) and overall representativeness of the sample of answers collected. These shortcomings are acknowledged. Yet, results are believed to be informative

[1] CFW is a cash-based short-term employment that won't last for more than 6 months.

enough to provide a close to reality picture of the situation and provide guidance for improvements in the future.

METHODOLOGY

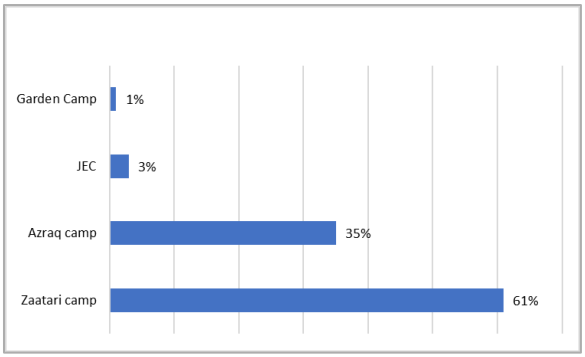
The questionnaire was designed in partnership with key stakeholders to capture experiences with work permits and social security contributions. It targeted Syrian refugee individuals who are 18+ years old. The questionnaire was an online link, sent via SMS (314,348) and shared through social media (UNHCR page and WhatsApp groups). Responses were anonymous (no reference were made to UNHCR registration ID) in light of the sensitivity of the topic among refugees. The questionnaire was shared widely with Syrian refugees from all locations, living both in and out of camps.

As per the data collection methodology, there is a high likelihood that refugees with higher level of literacy responded to the survey, leading to a non-representative sample of the population. Data collection also required refugees with access to internet connection and excluded those without phones, thus creating an additional bias in the data representativeness. Limitations are also acknowledged in terms of data quality with no means for respondents to ask for clarifications and with the impossibility to verify data reported. Nevertheless, the collected data provide essential information to further enhance understanding of the refugee labor force point of view. The questionnaire is available in Annex 1.

SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS AND LOCATIONS

Total respondent sample size to the survey reached 21.520 (4,148 female, 12,525 males, and 4,847 did not report their gender). The age group that has the highest representation was 31-45 years old (46% of the sample), followed by 18-30 years old (32%). The location of residency of the respondents was divided into three categories: urban, rural, and camp-based. Urban areas had the highest response rate with 62%, followed by rural areas with 28%, and camp-based areas with 10%, roughly mirroring the actual spread of the population across the country.

The results provide additional details on locations where respondents reside. The highest percentage of respondents from urban and rural areas lives in Jordan capital, 24% in Amman, followed by 12% in Mafraq, 10% in Zarqa, 4% in Balqa, 3% in Madaba, 2% each of Karak, Jerash and Ma'an, 1% for Ajloun and 0.3% for Al Tafilah. Aqaba accounted for only (18) submissions 0.08% of the total. For camp-based respondents, the highest percentage of submissions comes from Zaatari Camp (61%), followed by Azraq Camp (35%), Jordanian Emirate Camp (3%), and the Garden Camp/Alramtha, with only 1% of the submissions.

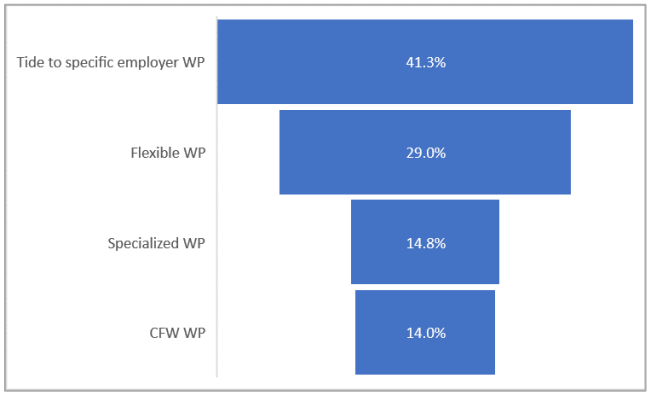


Graph1: camp-based respondents

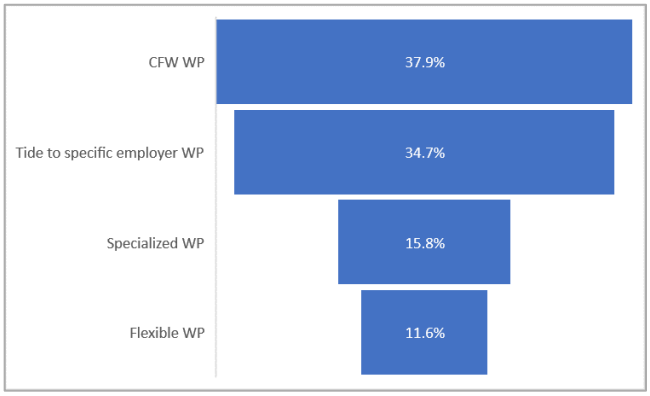
ACCESS TO FORMAL EMPLOYMENT

Only a third of refugees (and very few women) report to have worked in the past two years, highlighting difficulties in accessing sustainable employment for a wide majority, particularly in the formal sector with only half who had a work permit. 23,8% refugees (4,030) reported having worked in the last two years, out of those 4,030, 45.3% only reported being working at the survey time. 47.2% of the 4,030 respondents, who had worked in the past two years had a work permit at some point, 1,782 males and 94 females.

The types of work permit and sector appears to significantly vary between male and female workers. For male respondents who worked in the past two years (3,665 in total), 41.3% said they had a work permit which was tied to a specific employer, 29.0% had a flexible work permit, 14.0% had a cash for work, work permit and 14.8% had a specialized work permit. The main sectors of work, regardless the work permit type, were: 22.5% in constructions, 15.4% in agriculture, 15.3% in hospitality, 9.0% in manufacturing and 12.6% in other sectors (multiple choices were allowed0. For women respondents who worked in the past two years (287 refugees), 37.9% indicated they had a cash for work permits, 34.7% work permit tied to a specific employer, 15.8% had a specialized work permit and 11.6% had flexible work permit. The main sectors for female employment were: 28.2% in agriculture, 11.8% in activities of international organizations and bodies (INGO's), 8.2% in education, 7.1% in construction, 7.1% in manufacturing and 16.5% in other sectors (multiple choices was allowed).



Graph 2: Work permits obtained by male respondents



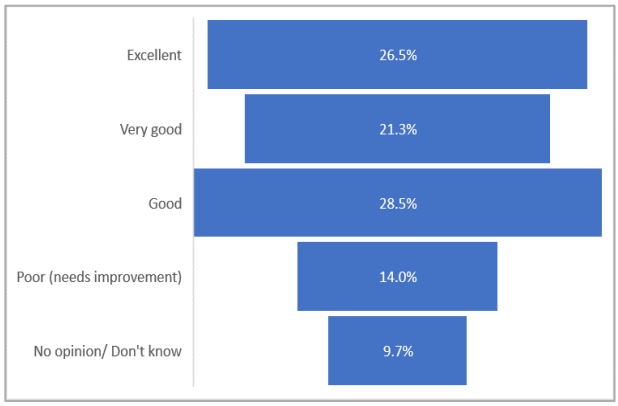
Graph 3: Work permits obtained by female respondents

Work permit issuance seems to follow a downward trend, that points partially towards high costs of social security contribution and seasonal nature of employment that will merit to be investigated further**.** The last work permits obtained for about half of the respondents concerned (46.6%) dated back from 1 to 2 years ago (and therefore not valid anymore), 26.9% were issued in the last 6 months and 26.5% was during 6 months to 1 year ago from the survey date. In fact, only 45.3% of work permits were valid at the time of the survey, pointing potentially to an issue of non-renewal. If the work permit wasn't valid at the time of survey (968 refugees), the reasons reported were as follows: 47.1% can't afford social security monthly subscriptions, 21.4% are working for only a few weeks/months per year, 7.7% don't

want to contribute to social security, 4.7% don't need a work permit, 4.1% don't know how to apply for a work permit, 3.8% don't work in open sectors, 3.0% said the reason is lack of clarity on work permits issuance mechanism, 1.6% are not interested and 6.7% mentioned other reasons.

SATISFACTION OF PROCESSES

The overall satisfaction of Syrian workers with the work permit process is positive, regardless of gender or location of residence. Graph 4 illustrates the overall satisfaction level with the work permits issuance system of those who had a work permit during the past 2 years, with only a minority being unsatisfied.

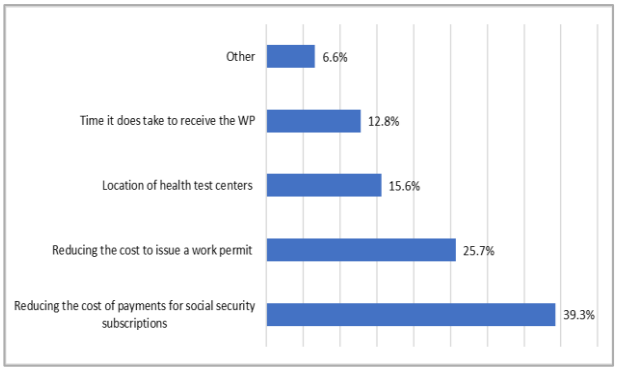


Graph 4: overall satisfaction level with WP system

The reasons for rating the work permit system as very good or excellent: the no-cost of the permit (34.3%) (only the paperwork fees are due), the rapidity of the process (13.4%), the clarity of instructions (8.8%), while 43.6% mentioned all these reasons jointly (multi choices was allowed).

The reasons for rating work permit system as only good or poor, on the other hand, were: the existence of fines (35.4%), delayed issuance (22.3%) and the lack of clarity of instructions (19.1%), while 23.2% mentioned all these reasons jointly for stated medium to dissatisfaction (multi choices was allowed).

Reducing costs (issuance, monthly social security contributions) and accessibility of the process could, in views of refugees, constitute major improvements. Indeed, Syrian refugees gave suggestions to enhance the work permit issuance system: 39.3% mentioned reducing the cost of payments for social security subscriptions (for FWP currently it cost 17.94 JOD per monthly basis), 25.7% mentioned reducing the cost to issue a work permit (for FWP currently it cost 60 JOD yearly for all sectors of flexible work permits, except for agriculture, where it costs 50 yearly), 15.6% mentioned more accessible location of health test centers, 12.8% pointed towards reducing the time it does take to receive the work permit. 6.6% of respondents proposed other suggestions e.g., open additional sectors, remove fines, reduce social security payments as well as simplifying the social security withdrawal actions.



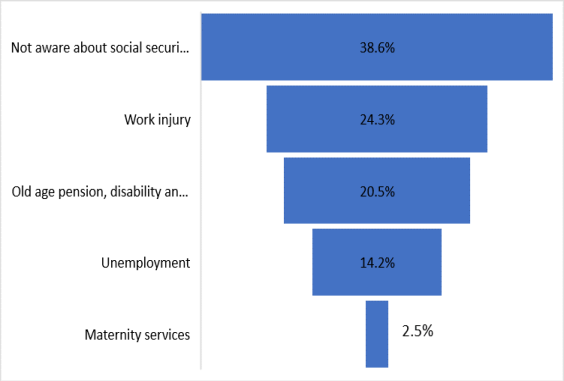
Graph 5: suggestions to enhance the WP issuance system

WILLINGNESS TO FORMALIZE EMPLOYMENT

There is an opportunity for increased formalization of labor for working Syrian refugees, as a large majority of those who do not have work permits show interest in regularizing their situation. Among those who worked in the past two years but never had a work permit (1,966 refugees), 83% (totally) agree that they would like to have a work permit issued. Only 8% don't seem to be interested and mentioned that: they can't afford social security monthly subscriptions (39%) or they don't want to contribute to social security (4%), they are only working a few weeks/months per year (21%) and hence the yearly process isn't appropriate, they don't know how to apply for a work permit (10%), they don't work in open sectors (9%), they don't need it (5%), they lack of clarity on work permits issuance mechanism (5%), they are simply not interested (2%) or have other reasons (5%). There is no significant difference observed across gender nor location of residence.

AWARENESS ON SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

Knowledge of the benefits of social security contributory scheme remains largely insufficient, despite an important fraction contributing, and needs to be addressed to increase take up. Over a third of the working refugee population in the sample (38.6%) isn't aware of any of the social security services available, 24.3% only are aware about work injury, 20.5% about the old age pension, disability and death benefits, 14.2% about unemployment, and only 2.5% are aware of the maternity services (multiple choices was allowed). 91.8% of refugees with valid work permits are currently contributing to SSC. For the minority of those not currently contributing to the social security system, 60.3% responded stated they aren't willing to, the reason being that benefits aren't clear (45.7%), 34.8% reported to not work during the time of the survey, 10.9% mentioned social security contributions are too costly for them and 6.5% said their employer refuses to register them in the social security system, with 2.2% stating other reasons (multiple choices was allowed). There is no significant difference observed across gender nor location of residence.



Graph 6: Refugees awareness of social security services

Two third of refugees contributing to SSC (69%) have never been exposed to injury due to work related accident, or accidents during, or traveling to and from work potentially explaining the lack of value they put on the benefits associated with perceived high monthly contributions.

For those who have valid work permits and are contributing to the social security system, 67.5% have never been benefited from Social Security System in Jordan.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Across the board work remains low, and for the Syrian labour force working, a large part remains informal, but there is a willingness to formalize existing jobs among workers and should be capitalized on.
- Gender plays a role: women have much less access to work permits than men, underlying less participation in the workforce as well as less formalization
- Social security contributions, perceived as a high cost with limited understanding of benefits, seems to be an impediment to formalization of work, and renewal. Awareness raising and reflection on adequate plans could trigger positive results.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: The Questionnaire – English

MoL satisfaction survey

Syrian refugees work permits issuance

UNHCR, the Ministry of Labor, and the Social Security Corporation are conducting a joint assessment to better understand your experience with the services relating to work permits issuing and the social security subscriptions, and in order to improve these services for you. Please let us know of your experience by filling in the questionnaire in the following link:

All provided information will be treated with confidentiality and will not be shared with any third party.

Gender

- Male
- Female

Age group

- 18-30 years old
- 31 – 45 years old
- 46 - 59 years old
- 60+

Location of residency

- Rural
- Urban
- Camp based

If Urban/rural

- Governorates list

If camp based

- Zaatari camp
- Azraq camp
- Emirate camp

- Garden camp

Did you work in the past 2 years

- Yes
- No

If yes, are you currently working?

- Yes
- No

If yes, have you issued a work permit in the past 2 years?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what type of work permits (allow multiple choices)

- CFW
- Flexible work permit
- Tide to specific employer work permit
- Specialized work permit

When was the last work permit issued

- In the last 6months
- 6 months to one year ago
- one year to two year ago
- More than that two year ago

Your last (current/or last one issued) work permit enabled you to work in which sectors(allow multiple choices)?

- Agriculture, forestry, and fishing
- Mining and quarrying
- Manufacturing
- Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning
- Water supply, sewage, waste management activities
- Construction
- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles
- Transportation and storage
- Hospitality and food service activities
- Information and communication
- Financial and insurance activities

- Real estate activities
- Professional, scientific and technical activities
- Administrative and support service activities
- Public administration and defence; compulsory social
- Education
- Human health and social work activities
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Other service activities
- Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services-producing activities of households for own use.
- Activities of international organizations and bodies

Is the WP you issued is currently valid

- Yes
- No.

If no, why you did not renew it

- Not interest
- Don't know how to apply
- Lack of clarity on work permits issuance mechanism
- I don't need it
- Can't afford the social security monthly subscriptions
- I don't want to contribute to social security
- I only work a few weeks/months per year
- I don't work in an open sector
- Other, specify

What is your overall satisfaction level with the work permits issuance system (length, costs, usefulness etc.)

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Poor (needs improvement)
- No opinion? don't know

If the service evaluation was excellent or very good, what did you like about the system of issuing work permits for Syrians? multiple options

- Clarity of instructions
- Speed up the work
- The permit is free (only the paperwork fees)
- All of the above

If the service evaluation is good or poor, what are the reasons for dissatisfaction of the work permit service? multiple options

- Lack of clarity of instructions
- Delayed issuance of the permit
- Existence of fines
- All of the above

If something could be change on the WP issuance system, then it should be:

- Time it does take to receive the WP
- Cost of payments for WP (once a year)
- Cost of payments for social security subscriptions (on monthly basis)
- Location of health test centres
- Other please specify

If you don't have a work permit, would you like to issue a work permit

- Totally agree
- Agree
- I don't agree
- Don't want to answer

If no, Reasons for not being willing to request for work permit (allow multiple choices)

- Not interest
- Don't know how to apply
- Lack of clarity on work permits issuance mechanism
- I don't need it
- Can't afford the social security monthly subscriptions
- I don't want to contribute to social security
- I only work a few weeks/months per year
- I don't work in an open sector
- Other: specify

Filter: If there is valid work permit Social Security Questions

Do you know about any of the following benefits of the Social Security System (allow for multiple choice):

1- old age, disability and death
2- work injury,
3- unemployment,
4- maternity

5- none of the above

Are you currently contributing to Social Security System?

- Yes
- No.

If no, are you willing to contribute to Social Security System?

- Yes
- No.

If no, why

- social security contributions are too costly for me
- Benefits from contribution to the social security is not clear for me
- The employer don't want to register me in the social security system
- I don't have work
- Other – please specify

Have ever been exposed to injury due to work related accident, or accidents during going or returning back from your work?

- Yes
- No.

Have ever been benefited from Social Security System in Jordan?

- Yes
- No.

If there are other reasons for not issuing a work permit or contribute to social security system , we hope you mention them:

Thank you and appreciate your cooperation

وزارة العمل

المؤسسة العامة للضمان الاجتماعي
Social Security Corporation

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