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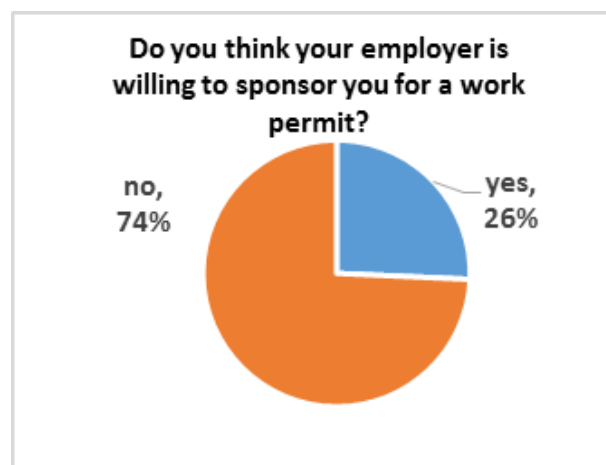
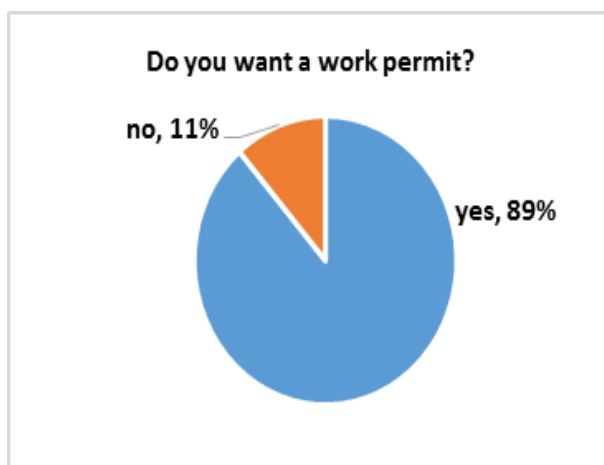


UNHCR
The UN
Refugee Agency

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Increased awareness of employer sponsorship is key to formalization of Syrian workers in Jordan.

A recent survey of Syrians working in Jordan found that the majority want work permits, but say that their employers are currently unable or unwilling to sponsor them. Among Syrians currently working without work permits, 89 percent said that they want a work permit. However, only 26 percent believe their employers would sponsor them.

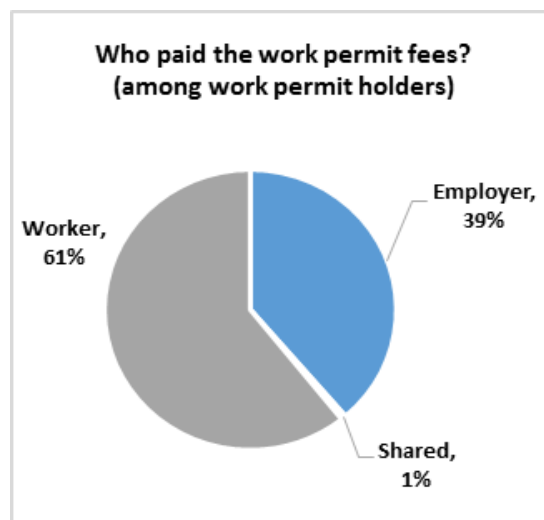


Further research is needed to understand the reasons behind employer reluctance to sponsor Syrian workers for work permits. Qualitative assessments point to several issues that constrain businesses from formalizing their Syrian employees: businesses themselves are unregistered, employers are unable to commit to stable employment for the worker, the time and effort required to obtain a work permit, and that the quota system prevents registration of additional non-Jordanian workers.

A large number of Syrians are currently working in Jordan, but accurate information on their employment status is not available. The last rigorous survey of Syrian labour force participation is based on fieldwork from 2014. That survey found that about 20 per cent of Syrian men in Jordan were employed. Since then, the rates are likely to have increased. Recent estimates vary widely, with some indicating that there are currently 85,000 Syrians working and others indicating that there are more than 330,000. Whatever the number, it is clear that a large portion of Syrian employment is in the informal sector.

According to the survey, a small minority (11 per cent) of working Syrians would not want a work permit, even if their employers were willing to sponsor them. Among this group, the main reason is that they do not want to be tied to a single employer. This finding is consistent with previous studies in which Syrian workers report that they are vulnerable to exploitation by work permit sponsors, as a result of the power imbalance associated with the sponsorship system. In several cases, workers say that their employers refused to give the required permission to allow them to change job after their contracts were completed.

Among those surveyed, the majority work on a short term basis. Nearly a third are day labourers. 37 per cent hold work permits, most of them through agriculture cooperatives. Of those who hold work permits, the majority paid the work permit fees themselves.



The survey, based on a random sample of Syrians registered with UNHCR, reached 548 Syrians currently working in Jordan. The survey was implemented by UNHCR staff and volunteers in late July and early August. The Periodic Analysis of Syrian workers is part of an ongoing effort, jointly conducted by the ILO, UNHCR and the World Bank, and aims at better understanding the dynamics, reasons and perceptions that challenge the formalization of work. This effort will also include surveys of employers as well as workers and will be repeated periodically in order to track changes over time.

Further reading:

[Worker permits and employment of Syrian refugees in Jordan: Towards formalizing the work of Syrian refugees \(ILO 2017\)](#)

[A challenging market becomes more challenging: Jordanian workers, migrant workers and refugees in the Jordanian labour market \(ILO 2017\)](#)

[Forcibly Displaced: Toward a development approach supporting refugees, the internally displaced and their hosts \(WB 2016\)](#)

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