# Youth Well-being Policy Review of Jordan

OECD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

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**OECD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

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# *Foreword*

Today's world youth population aged 10-24 is 1.8 billion strong, the largest cohort ever to be transitioning into adulthood. More than 85% live in developing countries. In many places, they represent 30% of the population – and the numbers keep growing. Many developing countries have the potential to realise a demographic dividend, if the right social and economic policies and investments are in place. As such, youth is increasingly taking centre stage in policy debates as a driver of development. Targeting young people, however, requires addressing challenges on multiple fronts, from decent employment and quality education to youth-friendly health services and active citizenship.

Timely interventions directed at young people are likely to yield a greater return for sustainable development than attempts to fix their problems later in life. Gaps in initial education and skills, for example, are forcing too many young people to leave education at an early age, unprepared for work and life. Today, one out of four children in the world drops out of primary education. Surprisingly, no progress has been made in this area over the last decade. Youth joblessness and vulnerable employment are widespread; young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. Adolescent reproductive and sexual health needs are poorly addressed, while new health risks have emerged. Moreover, not all youth have equal opportunities for mobility, and too many remain excluded from decision making processes that affect their lives.

The opportunity to close the youth well-being gap is nonetheless real. Measuring and analysing the problems of disadvantaged youth is a prerequisite for developing evidence-based policies. Sharing good practices and exchanging information on what works and does not play a crucial role in youth policy making in both developing and developed countries. Policies that intervene at critical stages can significantly reduce the risks of youth becoming further disadvantaged. For example, facilitating the transition into the world of work through labour market counselling and comprehensive on-the-job training is helping the economic inclusion of youth. Evidence also suggests that cultural and creative activities, violence prevention programmes and juvenile justice services can support active citizenship among youth.

The Youth Inclusion project, co-financed by the European Union and implemented by the Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), analyses these aspects in nine developing and emerging economies (Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Jordan, Malawi, Moldova, Peru, Togo and Viet Nam) through Youth Well-being Policy Reviews. The reviews are intended to support governments by providing evidence and concrete advice on how to assess youth challenges from a multi-dimensional perspective and how to involve youth in national development processes. The reviews shed light on the determinants of youth vulnerabilities and what constitute successful transitions in each of the countries. Tapping into the evidence to design better policies is one of the best ways to minimise challenges and maximise potential, turning

the youth bulge into a youth dividend. The Youth Inclusion project is part of the work of the Development Centre on inclusive societies and aims to support countries in finding innovative solutions to social challenges and to build more cohesive societies.

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Ian Brand-Weiner, Policy Analyst at the OECD Development Centre, led the country implementation of the project. The *Youth Well-being Policy Review of Jordan* was drafted by Ian Brand-Weiner, Adrien Lorenceau, Mathilde Tarif and Hyun Seung Lee of the OECD Development Centre, drawing on background papers by Ralitza Dimova from the University of Manchester (technical and vocational education and training and the labour market), and Aida Essaid and Noora El Wer from the Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (IRCKHF) (paths to active citizenship). The review also drew from a background paper by Kamel Nabulsi, Rana Taher, Mohammed Yassein Salman, Mahmoud Nabulsi and Maha Al Sa'ad from Tammey for Human Development (policies and institutional framework). This background paper was commissioned in partnership with the Networks of Mediterranean youth countries project Jordan (NET-MED youth), which is an EU funded project and implemented by UNESCO. The collaboration was established in 2016 to fulfil the OECD and UNESCO's common objective on studying youth policy environment in Jordan. Jonathan Broekhuizen and Manas Pathak provided research assistance. Thanks go also to Nejma Bouchama and Léa Fuiret (OECD Development Centre) for providing a box on the Social Institutions and Gender Index.

The review was produced under the overall guidance of Ji-Yeun Rim, Co-ordinator of the Youth Inclusion project, Alexandre Kolev, Head of the Social Cohesion Unit, and Mario Pezzini, Director of the OECD Development Centre and Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Development, OECD.

Consultations with national and international experts at different phases of the project helped shape the report. Two policy dialogues were organised in October 2015 and April 2017 to determine the scope of the research and discuss the mid-term findings, respectively. The final report benefited from technical comments from Ji-Yeun Rim, Pablo Suárez Robles and Naoko Ueda (OECD Development Centre), Miriam Allam and Moritz Ader (OECD Public Governance Directorate), Heba Al Nasser and Tobias Lechtenfeld (World Bank), Dareen Abu Lail (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), Diana Jreisat (United Nations Development Programme), Suad Nabhan (United Nations Population Fund), May Abuhamdia (British Council), Lara Hussien Tameme (Ministry of Labor of Jordan), Jacob Arts (Delegation of the European Union).

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# *Abbreviations and acronyms*

| | |
|---|---|
| AJYC | All Jordan Youth Commission |
| CBO | Community-Based Organisation |
| CDC | Community Development Centre |
| CNPHR | Comprehensive National Plan for Human Rights |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| ESCS | Economic, Social and Cultural Status |
| E-TVET | Employment, Technical and Vocational Training |
| FGDs | Focus Group Discussions |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GSEC | General Secondary Education Certificate |
| HPC | Higher Population Council |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| JOHUD | Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development |
| KAFD | King Abdullah II Fund for Development |
| LMC | Lower Income Country |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MENA | Middle East and North Africa |
| MoC | Ministry of Culture |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| MoF | Ministry of Finance |
| MoH | Ministry of Health |
| MoHESR | Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research |
| MoL | Ministry of Labour |
| MoPIC | Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation |
| MoPPA | Ministry of Parliamentary and Political Affairs |
| MoSD | Ministry of Social Development |
| MoY | Ministry of Youth |
| NEET | Not in Education, Employment or Training |
| NES | National Employment Strategy |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NSHRD | National Strategy for Human Resource Development |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PISA | Programme for International Student Assessment |
| PMO | Prime Minister's Office |
| PPP | Purchasing Power Parity |
| QRTA | Queen Rania Teachers' Academy |
| SMEs | Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises |
| SRH | Sexual and Reproductive Health |
| SWOT | Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats |
| TEVET | Technical and Vocational education and training |

| | |
|---|---|
| UN | United Nations |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UNFPA | United Nations Fund for Population Activities |
| VTC | Vocational Training Corporation |

# *Executive summary*

With 35.8% of the population below age 15, and youth (aged 12-30) accounting for more than one-third of the population, Jordan is a youthful country and will remain so in the years to come. Young Jordanians face multiple and interconnected challenges which require a comprehensive approach to youth challenges. The *Youth Well-Being Policy Review of Jordan* aims to support the government in assessing the situation of the country's youth and to provide policy recommendations. Chapter 1 provides an in-depth analysis of the situation of Jordanian youth in the areas of health, education, employment and civic participation. Chapter 2 describes key youth policies and programmes in Jordan, and discusses the challenges of the current institutional framework for youth policy making and implementation. Chapter 3 assesses youth labour market outcomes and the potential of technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Chapter 4 explores paths and skills formation for active youth citizenship in Jordan.

Young people in Jordan enjoy high access to education, but the quality of education faces challenges. The high access to education is reflected in the high attainment rate: 60.5% of 25-29-year-olds have a secondary or higher degree. However, the quality of education is a particular concern. Jordanian students' results in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have declined or stagnated.

Many young Jordanians have limited access to quality employment. Prolonged periods out of education and employment, and difficult transitions from education to work, can put youth at risk of skills deterioration and disillusionment, thereby further increasing exclusion from quality jobs. Young Jordanians who do work, are often in informal jobs not matching their qualification and receive poor wages.

Young Jordanians are relatively satisfied with their lives, compared to peers in lower-middle income countries. The prevalence of negative feelings is below the OECD averages. Young people's priorities reflect traditional values. All young Jordanians consider family and religion very important in life, fewer place importance on friends and leisure time. Indeed, for Jordanian youth, a sense of support was one of the major contributing factors to subjective well-being.

Despite recent progress, Jordan lacks a comprehensive framework to regulate and co-ordinate youth legislation, policies and interventions across different sectors. Although the responsibility of youth affairs falls under the mandate of the Ministry of Youth (MoY), different ministries and government entities develop and supervise policies affecting young people from a sectoral perspective. These are complemented by the work of a myriad of royal NGOs, NGOs and international actors. However, the actors are fragmented, making co-ordination within and across sectors challenging. The implementation and co-ordination of youth policies is limited by frequent institutional changes, little financial and human resources and little monitoring and evaluation.

TVET graduates show positive labour market outcomes, but the room for improvement is still large. Labour force participation of TVET graduates is above average and the

percentage of unemployed and disillusioned TVET graduates is considerably below average. TVET has also a positive impact on labour allocation and wages, particularly in the private sector, which employs two-thirds of young labour market entrants. Yet, few firms offer formal training, despite the potential benefits for firm efficiency. The private sector is hardly involved in instruction and designing the TVET system, resulting in curricula that do not match the labour market requirements. On the other hand, the Jordanian TVET system needs to overcome co-ordination and financing challenges to become an attractive alternative for young Jordanians.

While youth recognise the importance of political participation, they show little interest in politics. Most consider civic duties and responsibilities key components of active citizenship, but few highlight the importance of political rights. In fact, only a minority of Jordanian youth has comprehensive knowledge of the political landscape and how to influence policies and decisions. The institutional framework for youth engagement involves many diverse institutions but lacks coherence and falls short of that aim. Certain forms of youth participation are underdeveloped, such as direct involvement in designing and elaborating activities and access to engagement information and tools. Social institutions play a significant role in shaping and delimiting young people's skills acquisition and attitudes for active citizenship. The family is instrumental in developing young people's attitudes and values and providing opportunities to engage in active citizenship. Parents' level of cultural awareness drives the amount of support or restraint young people receive. The education system fosters active youth citizenship to a minor extent, notably due to outdated curricula and pedagogy and lack of opportunities for youth-led engagement.

## Recommendations

- Mainstream youth in all sectoral ministries.
- Create a cross-sector co-ordination mechanism and pass a national youth strategy.
- Support the staff capacity and institutional strength of the Ministry of Youth.
- Increase the budget for youth programmes and apply results-based management.
- Create an information system on youth, and monitor and evaluate youth policies.

### *Align technical and vocational education and training with the demands of youth and firms*

- Provide early guidance for educational or workplace transition.
- Make TVET an attractive choice for young people.
- Make entrepreneurship a possible path for TVET graduates.
- Simplify the governance among different branches of the TVET system.
- Involve the private sector in designing and implementing TVET programmes.
- Create a skills assessment and anticipation system.
- Monitor the TVET system.

### *Facilitate active citizenship and involve youth in policy making processes*

- Improve communication with young people.
- Develop public consultations to integrate youth perspectives in policies.
- Strengthen the education system in the provision of skills for active citizenship.
- Make volunteering and civic engagement more attractive to youth.
- Improve co-ordination among youth engagement stakeholders.

# *Assessment and recommendations*

## Youth well-being and the main challenges

**Young people in Jordan enjoy high access to education, but the quality of education faces challenges.** While enrolment rates in primary, secondary and tertiary education are above the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) average, a recent decline is a worrying trend. The net secondary enrolment rate decreased from 84.2% in 2004 to 81.4% in 2014; whereas, the gross tertiary enrolment rate increased from 38.9% in 2005 to 44.9% in 2015. The high access to education is reflected in the high attainment rate: 60.5% of 25-29-year-olds have a secondary or higher degree. However, the quality of education is a particular concern. Jordanian students' results in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have declined or stagnated. In the 2015 PISA, Jordan ranked 66 out of 72 countries in mathematics, and the difference between Jordan's mathematics points and the average for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries corresponded to 3.6 years of schooling. An additional factor is the high rate of unauthorised (regular) student absenteeism – 43.4% miss at least one day – which partially contributes to low performance. The recent opening up of Jordanian schools to unregistered Syrian refugees could further strain to the quality of education if not managed well.

**Many young Jordanians have limited access to quality employment.** In 2015, 28.7% of Jordanian youth were not in education, employment or training (NEET). In Jordan, being NEET is a phenomenon predominantly among urban, less educated and female youth. The NEET rate of young women was triple that of young men (43.8% vs. 14.5%). The higher rate is partly explained by the very low female labour force participation due to traditions and domestic care tasks, but also prevailing labour condition, including harassment, safety concerns and cost of commute, and the social stigmatization of many professions into male jobs, thereby excluding women. Prolonged periods out of education and employment, and difficult transitions from education to work, can put youth at risk of skills deterioration and disillusionment, thereby further increasing exclusion from quality jobs. Young Jordanians who do work, often in informal jobs not matching their qualification, receive poor wages: in 2015, 37.5% of young workers were informal and 59.4% received below-average wages.

**Overall, young people's health has improved in recent years, but healthy lifestyles still need to be fostered.** The morality rate per 100 000 young people declined from 91 in 2005 to 71 in 2015. The leading cause of death among young people is road injuries. Comprehensive knowledge about sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is still limited, particularly among girls, due to inadequate access to youth-friendly services. Deterioration in healthy lifestyles, such as smoking and eating habits, threatens Jordanian adolescents and youth.

**In an environment of mistrust of public institutions, family and friends play important roles in young people's lives.** The vast majority of young Jordanians (88.2%)

confirmed having relatives or friends they can count on for help. The importance of the family is reflected in a high level of trust in the family (92%) confirming that Jordan's social, economic and political life is closely linked to tribal structures. At the same time, very few young Jordanians trust people of another religion (3.2%) or nationality (2.9%), posing a potential risk to social cohesion. While most trust the security forces (89.6% trust the armed forces; 85.5% trust the police), the lack of trust in parliament (22.7%) and political parties (11.7%) and the low civic engagement (2.3% of youth are members of associations or organisations) have the potential to undermine the democratic system in the long run. Despite the low number of youth in formal civil society organisations (CSOs), the high share of youth volunteering, donating money or helping strangers (62.7%) is a positive sign for social cohesion.

**Young Jordanians are relatively satisfied with their lives, compared to peers in lower-middle income countries.** Even if average satisfaction can be improved, it is high in a regional comparison and above that in lower-middle income countries (LMCs). The prevalence of negative feelings is below the LMC and OECD averages, and only Lebanon is lower. Young people's priorities reflect traditional values. All young Jordanians consider family and religion very important in life (95.8% and 93.5%, respectively). Fewer place importance on friends (50.8%) and leisure time (33.6%). Indeed, for Jordanian youth, a sense of support was one of the major contributing factors to subjective well-being.

## Youth policies and institutional framework

**Recent shifts in Jordan's youth policies and institutional system lack the support of a national youth strategy.** With the accession of King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein in 1999, young people's role as major agents of economic and social development has grown in political discourse. This growing importance brought a paradigm shift, placing increasing emphasis on youth development, education and empowerment, rather than on sports and leisure activities. In 2005, the government launched the first National Youth Strategy (2005-2009) aimed at developing policies for young peoples' health, employment, education and civic engagement. Since its completion, however, no comprehensive youth policy or strategy has been approved due to institutional instability, shifting priorities, financial constraints and lacking political ownership. The development of the National Youth Strategy (2018-2025) has been underway for a prolonged period but remains at an early stage. While various strategies have made youth one of their priority groups over the last years, these cannot replace a national youth strategy and do not place youth at the centre of their agendas.

**Over the last years, Jordan has made efforts to improve the education system in line with its ambition of transforming into a knowledge-based economy.** The National Strategy for Human Resource Development (2016-2025) established a set of wide-ranging reforms and action plans for all sectors related to education. In partnership with non-governmental and private actors, the Ministry of Education (MoE) developed various programmes to adapt the curriculum, enhance non-formal education opportunities, strengthen career guidance and counselling, improve the school environment, and reinforce teachers' skills. In addition, the MoE and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) made sustained efforts to improve access to education for all, including to higher education. Yet, despite these efforts, unequal access to vocational and higher education persists, the school curriculum focuses on memorising and remains outdated, and access to career guidance is still limited. There is also a lack of second-

chance programmes and incentives to continue secondary education; too many young people in Jordan reach only basic education. Further co-ordination and co-operation among all stakeholders, and further strengthening budgetary resources, are thus crucial for the education sector to adjust to labour market demand and address youth needs and ambitions.

**Given the strained situation in the labour market, youth employment has become a top priority for the government**. In response to high unemployment rates and to improve the labour market situation, the government initiated diverse strategies that target young people indirectly and directly, such as the National Employment Strategy (2011-2020) (NES) or Jordan 2025: A National Vision and Strategy (2015-2025). All strategies stress the importance of enhancing entrepreneurial spirit among youth, supporting youth businesses through services and funds, developing vocational education, creating linkages between educational institutions and the private sector, and promoting female labour force participation. However, apart from some entrepreneurship and vocational training initiatives, many aspects of the strategies remain at a declaratory stage. Young students and labour market entrants receive insufficient career guidance and counselling, and have little access to information on the labour market.

**Although the government strives to provide young people with better access to health facilities and services, this area of youth well-being has a secondary role in the policy agenda.** Although the National Strategy for Health Sector in Jordan (2015-2019) and the National Reproductive Health Strategy (2014-2018 recognise youth as key actors in the development process, they do not recognise youth as a distinct group with specific health needs (High Health Council, 2015). Young people benefit from the general health service provision; the government does not offer youth-friendly health services, except for school health services, which mainly focus on periodical medical examinations, referrals and awareness-raising campaigns. International actors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and non-profit organisations fill this gap by implementing health promotion and awareness-raising programmes throughout the country. Regarding SRH, few interventions have been set up for young people, and SRH education is still a sensitive topic in Jordan. Given the high number of traffic accidents (32.5% of young men's deaths are due to traffic accidents), the number of road safety campaigns is insufficient.

**Youth civic engagement plays an important role in political discourse, but government actions lag.** Despite King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein's continuous support of youth engagement in public and political life, there is no institutionalised strategy addressing youth civic participation in Jordan, which creates a gap in youth-focused civic participation policies. The civic education curriculum remains limited in scope and disconnected from actual civic engagement. Government initiatives to foster youth participation are also limited, prompting NGOs and international actors to step in and implement programmes that enable youth to engage in their communities through volunteerism, life skills training, grants, technical support and information tools.

**Currently, Jordan lacks a comprehensive framework to regulate and co-ordinate youth legislation, policies and interventions across different sectors.** Although the responsibility of youth affairs theoretically falls under the mandate of the Ministry of Youth (MoY), the number of topics affecting youth can hardly be address by one ministry. Thus, different ministries and government entities develop and supervise policies affecting young people from a sectoral perspective and are complemented by the work of a myriad of royal NGOs, NGOs and international actors. Non-governmental

actors, especially royal NGOs, are very important service providers in sectors and areas where the government is less active. At the same time, non-governmental actors stepping in and filling the gaps can slow government assuming its responsibility or even crowd it out. To avoid this and to implement successful youth policies, it is essential that government institutions, royal NGOs, NGOs and international actors work closely together. However, the actors are fragmented, making co-ordination within and across sectors challenging. Other obstacles to designing, implementing and co-ordinating efficient youth policies are the limited communication channels and platforms, competition in budget allocation, the limited commitment of public institutions to implement the King's vision and the lack of an articulated national vision, policy goals and strategy for youth, which should be in line with already existing strategies. Since its recent creation, the MoY has not developed the convening power to lead the implementation of a comprehensive National Youth Strategy that would go beyond social services for youth; and struggles to gather all stakeholders involved in youth affairs and function as a co-ordinating force.

**Although elevating the government entity responsible for youth to a ministry is an opportunity for youth development, the MoY continues to face important challenges**. Prior to the creation of the MoY in 2016, the government repeatedly altered the form and leadership of the institution responsible for youth (now, the MoY), bringing uncertainty regarding its mandate and role, which in turn contributed to fragmented priorities and disrupted policy implementation. Other significant obstacles to the delivery of quality programmes are the limited strategic planning and foresight. Another challenge is the lack of skilled human resources and training opportunities for MoY staff. The implementation and co-ordination of youth policies is further limited by inefficient monitoring and archiving systems for ensuring institutional memory.

## Improving youth labour market outcomes with technical and vocational education and training

**Young people's labour market outcome in Jordan is rather limited.** Since the slowing down of economic growth in the 1980s (annual average of 5.1% since 1993), employment creation in Jordan could not keep pace with the growth of the labour force, resulting in a high unemployment rate (annual average of 13.8% since 1993). A feature of this labour supply surplus that Jordan shares with other countries of the region is high youth unemployment (annual average of 30.9% since 1993). Youth unemployment is twice the national unemployment rate and was never below 25% in the last 25 years. In recent years, job growth was strongest in the low- and medium-skilled sectors, which helped to absorb some young people. However, these jobs are not popular among young people and their families and push some highly educated youth to opt for voluntary unemployment rather than settle for jobs that do not correspond to their aspirations.

**The government and other stakeholders see technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as a solution to the labour market's limited ability to absorb youth.** Inspired by the positive experience of some OECD member countries, many of Jordan's national strategies mention the importance of vocational education to better prepare young people for the labour market, and it is seen as an alternative to the oversupply of university degrees. TVET is prominently represented in two of the ten measures of the NES, which aims at improving the supply of skills and employability. While the TVET system has potential to improve youth's labour market outcomes, in its current state, it contributes little.

**TVET graduates show positive labour market outcomes, but the room for improvement is still large.** Only one in ten young labour market entrants have TVET degrees (secondary vocational education or a post-secondary vocational degree). The majority of labour market entrants have only a basic education diploma or university degree, making the education distribution of young labour market entrants in Jordan bimodal. Comparing the labour market results of TVET graduates with the average paints an encouraging picture. Labour force participation of TVET graduates is above the rate of university graduates and slightly above that of youth with only basic education. The percentage of unemployed and disillusioned TVET graduates is considerably below that of university graduates and the national average. Nevertheless, in both areas, there is room for improvement, as TVET graduates' labour force participation is still quite low and unemployment is very high. Matching desired sector with actual sector of employment is slightly better for TVET graduates than for average youth. However, the mismatch between desired and actual occupation does not differ from the average. While qualification matching of TVET graduates is considerably higher than for average youth (65.9% vs. 47.2%), more university graduates (85.3%) have qualifications matching their occupations. Yet, in the latter case, the high unemployment and low labour force participation obscures potentially higher overqualification.

**TVET has a positive impact on labour allocation and returns to skills.** While university graduates earn the highest wages on average, TVET graduates fare better compared to young labour market entrants with basic education. Econometric analyses show that holding a TVET degree compared to a basic education degree increases the likelihood of being in wage employment and reduces the likelihood of being inactive. The greater importance of work experience for being wage employed implicitly emphasises the need to increase practical experience during TVET studies. On the other hand, TVET degrees do not significantly affect the likelihood of becoming an entrepreneur, which is an objective of various national strategies. Furthermore, higher education increases wages in both public and private sectors. TVET, and the work experience that comes with it, increases wages particularly in the private sector, which employs two-thirds of young labour market entrants.

**Despite the potential benefits for firm efficiency, few firms offer formal training.** Econometric analyses indicate that offering formal training can improve firms' efficiency, as does, to a lesser extent, the number of young employees. By contrast, employing many university graduates can reduce firms' efficiency, potentially due to their reluctance to work in the private sector (most prefer the public sector). Although offering formal training could benefit firms' efficiency, only 3.4% of firms in Jordan do so, a value five times lower than the MENA average. Although the share of Jordanian firms offering formal training is negligible, the percentage of manufacturing workers offered formal training is on par with the MENA average (37.8% and 39.4%, respectively). Thus, the few firms offering formal training train a large number of manufacturing workers.

**The Jordanian TVET system needs to overcome numerous challenges to become an attractive alternative for young Jordanians.** Despite the evident advantages for young labour market entrants and firms, few young people follow the TVET path – partially due to a limited offer – and even fewer firms train young people. TVET's lack of appeal owes partially to its strong fragmentation and weak governance. The three branches of TVET (vocational training, vocational education and technical education) have their own institutional frameworks that act independently and with little co-ordination. The myriad of institutions and providers further complicates roll-out of the system. Additionally, disposable financial resources are limited and mostly spent on salaries, limiting

investment in innovation, equipment and materials. Moreover, TVET curricula do not match the labour market requirements and the private sector is hardly involved in TVET design and instruction.

**TVET studies and professions are not the preferred choice among youth.** Primary reasons for the low number of TVET graduates are few study places in TVET centres, long distances to the centres and low demand by young people and their families, stemming in part from historical disdain for these professions and from the limitations to professional and educational progression that come with TVET degrees. Important advances in Jordan's education system resulted in substantial intergenerational educational mobility but, compared to their parents, young people improving their education level preferred university degrees over TVET degrees. While this trend does not necessarily confirm the social stigma associated with TVET, it confirms it is a less attractive option for young people. Indeed, regression analyses do not find household social status has a significant impact on opting for a TVET degree. However, economic status does significantly affect education choices: being poor slightly increases the likelihood of opting for secondary vocational education, suggesting that these youth opt for a TVET degree because university is unaffordable rather than out of interest.

## Paths to active citizenship

**In a context of regional insecurity and harsh economic conditions, Jordan cannot risk the potential disengagement and marginalisation of young people, who represent around a third of the population.** Consequently, Jordan has made youth a priority, and policy makers realise the importance of fostering youth engagement in the political process, enabling their greater contribution to society and developing their sense of citizenship. Understanding the civic and political attitudes, skills, capabilities and behaviours conducive to youth participation is therefore crucial to elaborate adequate policy responses. Jordan should closely examine the process of acquiring skills for active citizenship, particularly how social institutions, such as education providers, youth organisations, family and communities, contribute to or impair this objective.

**The political history of Jordan has partly shaped the understanding of active citizenship and the modalities of engagement of young Jordanians.** The evolution of political participation and citizenship in Jordan, in light of the founding event of recent history, sets the stage for understanding paths to active citizenship for Jordanian youth. In particular, events following the genesis of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan shaped the concept of identity and citizenship in the country. Major movements pushing for political and democratic reform have been documented and are believed to have shaped the state since its creation. The restoration of democracy, design of political institutions and repercussions of the Arab Spring illustrate the strength of active citizen participation and of youth engagement in Jordanian society, which now confronts the Syrian conflict and its consequences to Jordan's social and economic institutions.

**To enhance youth engagement, Jordan should ensure its young people benefit from the right set of skills, competencies and enabling environments.** According to the Council of Europe (2013), active citizenship is about "having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity, and where necessary, the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society". The competencies required for youth engagement can be grouped into political literacy, attitudes and values, and knowledge and critical thinking. Given the

lack of quantitative data, analysis of young Jordanians' skills for active citizenship relies mainly on focus group discussions.

**Political literacy is low among young Jordanians, although they are well aware of the interaction between tribal conformism, politics and democracy.** While they recognise the importance of political participation in active citizenship, they show little interest in politics. Most consider civic duties and responsibilities key components of active citizenship, but few highlight the importance of political rights. In fact, only a minority of Jordanian youth has comprehensive knowledge of the political landscape, how to participate in political decision making or the mechanisms to influence policies and decisions. The relatively low engagement in political activities reflects the fact that democratic participation through elections and activism is bound by ethnicity and tribal conformism. In this respect, young Jordanians are aware of the ongoing dynamics in politics. As a result of limited involvement, youth encounter few opportunities to gain political knowledge. Yet, youth participation rates in the 2016 general elections demonstrate renewed interest.

**In line with Jordan's investment in nation building, youth highlighted the importance of a sense of national belonging.** Youth considered a strong sense of membership in Jordan as the homeland, and solidarity and identification with others as fellow citizens, prerequisites for active citizenship and its most important markers. This growing sensibility is partly due to government efforts to build a unified national identity, which however belie the ongoing importance of tribal and religious identities on the ground.

**National identity should be complemented by both responsibility and leadership and interpersonal solidarity and acceptance.** Passive patriotism is insufficient to generate active citizenship. Young citizens should demonstrate responsibility, pride and leadership. Apathy and lack of a proactive attitude and curiosity undermine youth's contribution to society. Moreover, respect, solidarity and acceptance of others are necessary attitudes to ensure all youth may live together and identify with a common community.

**Yet, Jordanian youth lack the knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes to participate as active citizens, partly due to the low quality of education.** Results from both the Programme for International Student Assessment (15-year-olds) and the Trends in International Maths and Science Study (9-10-year-olds) revealed low proficiency levels among Jordanian students. A large share does not master even basic science, reading and mathematics skills, which not only undermines their ability to make informed decisions and think critically but limits their opportunities on the labour market. Alternatively, the autonomy of employment is seen to cultivate capacities key to economic contribution, an important dimension of active citizenship to youth. However, the unequal acquisition of competencies, by various means, is likely to prevent the most disadvantaged youth from engaging in civic and political activities. Moreover, the low number of top performers on student assessments reduces the likelihood great young leaders will emerge to pave the way for youth participation in Jordan.

**Social institutions play a significant role in shaping and delimiting young people's skills acquisition and attitudes for active citizenship.** While youth gain cognitive and technical skills mainly through formal institutions, informal institutions are an important means of transmitting knowledge, attitudes and values. Education and training institutions teach both relevant skills through the general curricula and a set of behavioural and interpersonal competencies. However, participation in various youth organisation

activities appears to be the most common opportunity for youth to build active citizenship skills and experience. Last, family and community institutions play central roles in defining values largely based on traditions.

**The education system fosters active youth citizenship to a minor extent, notably due to outdated curricula and pedagogy and lack of opportunities for youth-led engagement.** While the main skills provider, formal education lacks in quality and relevance. Civic education focuses on morality and virtue and dismisses political dimensions and practical avenues of engagement. Teaching practices leave little space for students to engage actively in discussion, and the education system does not systematically support youth-led activities. That is, many opportunities to make schools strategic platforms for civic tutelage and youth empowerment are untapped. On the other hand, universities are considered a key platform for youth to join networks, mobilise and participate in various community initiatives.

**Youth organisations are central to supporting active citizenship and disseminating the relevant skills.** In Jordan, various youth organisations foster different skills, values and degrees of youth empowerment. Large, well-organised youth organisations constitute the most frequent approach and source of skills accumulation, mostly providing training relevant to employment, a major concern of youth. These organisations are often criticised for crowding out more authentic avenues of civic engagement and skills building, such as community voluntarism or charity work through local organisations. All youth organisations are challenged to mitigate top-down approaches and support youth-led activities to empower youth. Young women and rural youth face important constraints to participation in youth organisations.

**Family and community strongly affect the level and form of active youth citizenship in Jordan.** The family is instrumental in developing young people's attitudes and values and providing opportunities to engage in active citizenship. Parents' level of cultural awareness drives the amount of support or restraint young people receive. Yet, communities are often the point of entry for civic engagement, as community involvement is traditionally championed. Family control and cultural norms remain particularly restrictive to female participation in society, while family, community and ethnic solidarity still limit youth participation in political activities in particular.

**The institutional framework for youth engagement involves many diverse institutions but lacks coherence and falls short of that aim.** Jordan has various laws, policies and youth engagement modalities and benefits from an array of organisations aimed at improving youth well-being and ability. Yet, activity at national and local levels and across ministries and organisations lacks co-ordination, as indicated by the ongoing need to develop a National Youth Empowerment Strategy (2017-2025). Moreover, certain forms of youth participation are underdeveloped, such as direct involvement in designing and elaborating activities, participation in the political process, and access to engagement information and tools.

## Recommendations

**Mainstream youth in all sectoral ministries.** Often policy makers in sectoral ministries lack knowledge of the challenges faced by young people and are unaware of unintended effects of policies on youth. Limited consideration of youth's challenges and needs when designing policies affects subsequent implementation and the achievement of intended results. Therefore, it is important to generate awareness, mainstream youth in the sectoral

ministries and consult with the MoY when designing policies. The holistic and positive youth developmental approaches advocated by King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein aim at mainstreaming youth in the sectoral ministries.

**Create a cross-sector co-ordination mechanism and pass a national youth strategy.** Passing a national youth strategy will give government and policy makers a mid- and long-term vision for policies directly and indirectly targeting youth. The national youth strategy's design should be supported by all sectoral ministries and royal NGOs, consulted on by youth organisations and coherent with other national strategies. The national debate accompanying its approval will help youth gain prominence on the policy agenda and recognition as an important resource for national development. It will also contribute to achieving Jordan 2025. The scope of national youth strategy cannot be limited to the mandate of the MoY, if youth and the multiplicity of challenges are to be firmly anchored in the national policy agenda. The strategy can only succeed if it is supported by a broad coalition of ministries and if it does not duplicate or compete with already existing sectoral strategies, but brings them together and reinforce the line ministries' commitment. Successfully implementing the strategy will require a co-ordination mechanism to prevent it becoming a mere list of sectoral policies. At the same time, having a national youth strategy will facilitate policy co-ordination, as a strategy can contribute to having a clear attribution of roles and competences. A good co-ordination mechanism should involve all relevant sectoral ministries, the representatives of youth, civil society and educational institutions, and employers. Furthermore it is important to mainstream a youth perspective in the sectoral ministries to facilitate co-ordination and foster commitment.

**Support the staff capacity and institutional strength of the MoY.** Over the last decades, large changes in the structure and rank of the state body responsible for youth resulted in institutional instability. It is important that the new MoY maintains a stable institutional structure in order to develop a long-term perspective and provide planning security, including for related stakeholders. It needs to have a specific mission and vision and clearly defined relations with other public institutions. Having a national youth strategy could assist. The MoY should invest in continuous staff training to ensure it is at the forefront of youth policies. This is especially important as the employees appointed by the Civil Service Bureau do not always bring the qualifications and capacity needed.

**Increase the budget and transparency of MoY youth programmes and implement results-based management.** To increase the coverage of activities focused on youth and introduce new programmes demanded by young people, the MoY needs to introduce a results-based management structure, improve its financial management, increase efficiency and focus less on sports programmes. At the same time, the Ministry of Finance should allocate more funds to the MoY. The youth sector can also benefit from better co-ordination among different United Nations and international co-operation agencies, which play an important role in financing youth policies and programmes. A thorough mapping and analysis of agencies' funding priorities is an important basis for better co-ordination. Moreover, sectoral ministries usually do not have budget lines for youth, which makes it difficult to assess total public expenditure on youth. More transparent reporting on expenditure flows can help detect synergies and savings.

**Create an information system on youth, and monitor and evaluate youth policies.** Developing, planning and implementing youth policies and programmes need sound and comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data about young people lives and situation, disaggregated by sex, age, income, geographic area, education level and other factors. To

obtain this data, the MoY and Department of Statistics (DoS) could co-create a permanent youth observatory that mainstreams youth (disaggregation by age) in existing national surveys, conducts studies and provides information to policy makers. This will help increase the understanding of youth needs among policy makers, who are at times unfamiliar with the challenges young people face. This information system is also crucial to the regular monitoring and evaluation, a key to successful policies, which should be carried out for all youth programmes and interventions.

### *Align technical and vocational education and training with the demands of youth and firms*

**Provide early guidance to young people for their educational or workplace transition.** The transition from basic education either to higher education or to the workplace can be a complex period in young people's lives, and decisions might not be based on accurate information. It is therefore important to create an information system and guidance services. In OECD member countries, good examples of career guidance begin during the first cycle of secondary education. Employers are actively involved, and students attend brief work placements to try out different professions. In this regard, it is important to invest in the professional development of school career advisers and train them to use labour market data. Career fairs are another way to provide guidance. The government should also create an information platform, providing information on education paths (secondary and post-secondary courses) and professional career options. Peru's *Ponte en Carrera* (Get into a career) is a good example. Through this online platform, students can inform themselves about careers in demand in each region, average salaries and corresponding education paths. In Jordan's case, information should be complemented by the annual number of graduates qualifying for the professions in question to inform students of potential oversupply and undersupply of professionals and better match demand and supply.

**Make TVET an attractive choice for young people.** Few young people opt for TVET degrees due to its poor image. Image campaigns co-ordinated with the private sector should tackle the perception that TVET degrees represent a failure to obtain a university degree. The campaigns should paint a positive picture, depicting attractive work opportunities in growing sectors. That TVET degrees do not allow further progression in the educational system limits their appeal for ambitious young people. Improving educational mobility through a transparent and flexible qualification accreditation system whereby education progression does not stop with TVET can improve its image. Reducing the share of university graduates in favour of TVET degrees will be difficult. Given the social pressure, young people with access to university education, especially those from households with fathers with higher education, will not forego this education path. Thus, it is more expedient to motivate young people who would not study beyond basic education to pursue a TVET degree. This can be done by targeted campaigns showing the benefits of TVET degrees compared to basic education and by facilitating access to TVET.

**Make entrepreneurship a possible path for TVET graduates.** While Jordan 2025 emphasises the need to promote youth entrepreneurship, few young people start their own businesses. Global evidence indicates that the majority of young entrepreneurs are confined to subsistence activities, and most lack basic business skills and competencies, hampering their businesses' performance. To prevent as much among Jordanian youth entrepreneurs, it is crucial to integrate entrepreneurship education in TVET programmes, providing technical, non-cognitive and life skills, as well as entrepreneurial acumen.

Factors in addition to appropriate education play a role in the success of youth entrepreneurs, such as simple administrative procedures for business registration and taxation, and embedding in a local and/or global value chain.

**Simplify the governance within and among different branches of the TVET system.** The division of TVET into three branches and the numerous entities involved complicate governance, duplicating structures and generating overlap. Councils governing the TVET branches need to develop structures to monitor their branches and improve intrasectoral co-ordination. The envisioned Higher Council for Human Resource Development should not become another layer of administration but an efficient body improving intersectoral co-ordination, defining clear roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, harmonising the different branches and aligning education, labour, economic and trade policies. The council should also review whether splitting the TVET system into three branches is conducive to national development goals or whether an integrated system could deliver better results. A simplification of the governance system could equally contribute to enlarging the capacity offering more places for students.

**Involve the private sector in designing and implementing TVET programmes.** The private sector is not consulted in designing TVET programmes, and their participation in implementation is restricted to providing work experience to students they are assigned. The private sector needs to be involved in design to ensure the programmes respond to labour market needs. Furthermore, incentives for firms, such as tax incentives, can help increase the number of firms offering formal training.

**Create a skills assessment and anticipation system.** Jordan lacks a functioning labour market information system that would help guide the TVET system and match programmes and instruction with labour market demands and employment opportunities. Such a system can inform policy makers in adjusting the education system to better prepare students for the labour market. Additionally, visibility into oversupply or undersupply of skills can help regulate education institutions' capacity and justify introducing quotas. A good skills assessment and anticipation system, such as the Swedish, collects timely and robust information on current and future skill needs relying on multiple sources and includes social partners, such as employers and labour unions.

**Monitor the TVET system.** The TVET system can benefit from an institutionalised and systematic monitoring system that would follow-up on employment rates of graduates and pinpoint areas offering efficiency gains. It would equally help introduce an output- rather than input-driven mentality in quality assurance.

### *Facilitate active citizenship and involve youth in policy making processes*

**Improve communication with young people.** Few ministries communicate directly to young people. Consequently, young people are not always aware of the programmes and initiatives available to them, and the government may appear distant and unsupportive of their transition into adulthood. At the same time, limited exchange among young people, ministries and service providers can negatively affect policy design and service delivery. Hence, the state needs to communicate more with young people. Official consultations with youth organisations are an important tool to improve policy design and implementation and increase trust in institutions. Social media campaigns can inform young people about available programmes and initiatives. Additionally, MoY youth centres and youth hostels could add to their current offerings a one-stop information system. In co-operation with sectoral ministries, youth centres could inform young people about opportunities and provide guidance. Complementing the youth centres activities

with a one stop information system could equally help to increase the centres' popularity which are currently underused.

**Develop public consultation mechanisms to integrate youth perspectives in policy formulation, design and implementation.** Youth's involvement at different levels of policy and activity conception and implementation is limited in Jordan and mainly concerns charity and community-led initiatives. Ongoing work on the National Youth Strategy 2017-2025 (NYS) provides an opportunity to develop a general framework for integrating youth perspectives into policy planning, making and programming at different levels of governance. Official consultations with youth organisations are important to improve policy design and implementation and increase trust in institutions. The government can build on the Municipal Youth Council pilot and existing frameworks for citizen participation to scale up such initiatives. The government should also encourage youth organisations and CSOs to implement concrete consultation mechanisms, such as youth boards.

**Strengthen the role of the education system in the provision of skills for active citizenship.** While schools clearly occupy a strategic place for fostering active citizenship, many opportunities are untapped or inefficient. Civic education curricula should be updated to cover practical aspects of youth participation in society and politics. To maximise empowerment opportunities, teaching practices should evolve to include more student participation, projects and direct engagement. The education system should also provide support and incentives for schools to back up student initiatives, for example through school-based remedial classes conducted by volunteers or free access to school premises for youth associations. Last, schools should recognise student representatives in primary and secondary education, and the government should encourage student unions.

**Make volunteering and civic engagement more attractive to youth.** The education system is not strong at training citizens interested in civic engagement and participation. One way to address the weakness is allowing young people to participate in independent initiatives operating alongside schools. Another is promoting volunteer work and offering incentives for the registration of volunteer activities, including giving greater official recognition to volunteer work and creating a single certification system that could eventually confer extra points in university applications. Recognising volunteer work as work experience could make it more attractive to the large unemployed and inactive youth population. Engagement in civic activities can have positive impacts in communities, prevent skills deterioration and provide additional soft skills for the job search.

**Improve vertical and horizontal co-ordination among youth engagement stakeholders.** Jordan has multiple such actors operating at different levels. To avoid incoherence and duplication of structures and activities, establish clear communication channels and co-ordination procedures among stakeholders, and provide state and non-state institutions appropriate incentives for collaboration. Collaboration between ministries and royal NGOs should also be improved.

# *Introduction*

**Since the turn of the century, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has managed to reduce extreme poverty and inequality, despite the impacts of tensions in neighbouring countries.** Thanks to structural and political reforms, the level of extreme poverty, defined as less than USD 3.2 purchasing power parity (PPP) per day, dropped from 12.9% in 1997 to 2.1% in 2010, while 14.4% remain below the national poverty line and inequality remains stable, with a Gini coefficient of 33.7. Jordan's economic growth has been sluggish due to adverse regional developments and the global financial crisis. Annual gross domestic product growth declined for the third consecutive year to 2% in 2016, putting Jordan in the LMC category. The crises in Syria and Iraq affected trade, investment, and tourism and remittances, both important income sources. Moreover, Jordan received an unprecedented influx of refugees. In 2016, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East registered 2.9 million refugees and asylum-seekers in Jordan, representing one-third of the population. The large number of refugees and immigrants strongly affects the country's economy, social fabric and limited water reserves; however, analysing this impact goes beyond the scope of this review. The strain contributes to limited advancements in the youth labour market situation, quality of education and youth engagement in public policy formulation.

**The Arabic word for youth, shabab (شباب), stems from the word shabba, meaning 'the beginning of', 'burst into flames', 'grow quickly' and 'become active'.** Shabab captures youth's transition from adolescence into adulthood, a time of great change during which young people experience rapid physical and emotional development. This period involves several stages, with specific opportunities and challenges: attending school, becoming sexually active, accessing paid work, making independent decisions and becoming accountable for the consequences, forming close relationships outside the family circle, and exercising citizenship. These transitions might be longer or shorter, depending on the prevailing social and legal norms and the cultural and economic context. That said, specifying an age group is often needed to monitor youth development and well-being outcomes. The United Nations (UN) defines a young person as aged 15-24, and the League of Arab States define youth as ages 15-35. Jordan has no overarching law or legal framework defining youth. The first National Youth Strategy (2005-2009) defined a young person as aged 12-30. This review defines youth, based on data availability, as a young person aged 15-29, unless specified otherwise. The review uses "youth" and "young people" interchangeably.

**Today, Jordan can benefit from the so-called demographic dividend, or window of demographic opportunity, where the working-age population is greater than the dependent population**. In 2016, 60.4% of the population was working age (15-64), 35.8% was 14 or under, and 3.8% was over 65. If used wisely, this demographic dividend can address outstanding challenges and increase productivity and sustainable growth. With one-third of the population aged 12-30 (35.3% in 2015, according to the DoS),

youth should be a transversal theme in Jordan's public policies, preparing the country to take advantage of the demographic dividend. The Higher Population Council estimates that demographic transition will reach its peak in the 2030s, and the window of demographic opportunities will remain open beyond 2050.

**Youth inclusion and well-being should be an important pillar of national development, as they are the present and future of Jordan**. The successful inclusion of young people must take into account the heterogeneity of their backgrounds, needs, experiences and life aspirations, as well as the different socio-economic contexts that may affect their inclusion and well-being. Efforts to improve youth well-being should not be limited to work and cognitive skills but extend to social skills, health, engagement and political participation, so that young people can fulfil their life goals and become productive members of society. While extreme poverty has declined, deceleration of economic growth and strong population growth can disadvantage a large proportion of vulnerable young people. It is therefore necessary to focus on youth for three reasons: the importance of this stage for personal development, the large share of youth in the population, and the diversity of young people, who can belong to different groups with different needs at different times.

**Topics of review were determined during the OECD Development Centre's mission in Jordan in October 2015.** Meetings with ministry representatives, youth representatives, international agencies and NGOs contributed to selecting the foci. Chapter 1 discusses youth well-being in Jordan, giving special attention to key dimensions that enable decision making and successful transition into adulthood. Well-being cannot be isolated from the policies and institutions that influence and shape it; Chapter 2 presents the main policies targeting youth, and analyses the institutional landscape and the body responsible for youth, the MoY. Chapter 3 assesses youth labour market outcomes and the potential of technical and vocational education and training. Chapter 4 explores paths and skills formation for active youth citizenship in Jordan.

# Chapter 1. Youth well-being and the major challenges

**Over the last two decades, Jordan has made considerable socio-economic progress.** To guarantee the sustainability of these advances and take advantage of demographics that can benefit the country, it is essential youth be included in national development, not only as a matter of rights but of benefits for the state and society. When the state invests in education and creates job opportunities, young people contribute more future income and productivity. This chapter analyses the well-being of young Jordanians and the basic conditions that must be met for them to become agents of change and sources of innovation.

**Increasingly, well-being is understood as a multi-dimensional phenomenon that goes beyond poverty.** Globally, policy makers recognise that the ultimate goal of human development is well-being and its long-term sustainability (Boarini, Kolev and McGregor, 2014). Consequently, public policies, regardless of the issue they address, should contribute to and promote the well-being of their citizens. This report considers the well-being of young people according to both objective and subjective measures. In addition, it focuses on inequalities among youth groups. The dimensions of well-being represent the basic conditions that must be satisfied to empower youth and facilitate a smooth transition into adulthood (OECD, 2017). These dimensions are education, employment, health, and civic participation and empowerment, as well as elements associated with life satisfaction.

## 1.1. Education and skills

**With education comes a set of opportunities and competences.** Education is the key to empowerment and an important dimension of well-being influencing the economic, social and health outcomes of young people. Jordan 2025: A National Vision and Strategy (2015-2025) describes education as "one of Jordan's national assets" and emphasises the salient link between the education system and the economy whereby the education outcomes, knowledge, skills and attainment levels of youth are vital to social cohesion and a competitive economy (MoPIC, 2015). At present, Jordanian youth are attaining higher levels of education than their parents, indicating new opportunities to improve their well-being. Although enrolment rates are high and policy makers are focused on expanding access to education, improving education quality and outcomes continues to be a challenge. This section offers an overview of education participation rates, attainment rates and the learning achievement of youth in Jordan.

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The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

**Jordan's national education system is divided into four stages: pre-primary, basic, secondary and tertiary.** Basic education (grades 1-10) is compulsory, free and has an official entry age of 6. Secondary education (grades 11-12) comprises two major streams: i) comprehensive secondary education (academic and vocational), which grants access to tertiary education; and ii) applied secondary education at vocational centres and through apprenticeship schemes. Tertiary education is provided by public and private universities (BA, MA and PhD programmes) and community colleges (two-year intermediate-level programmes).

**Although young people in Jordan enjoy high access to education, enrolment at the primary (grades 1-6) and secondary (grades 7-12) levels has declined, raising concerns about youth's access to education.**[1] Primary net enrolment dropped from 95.2% in 2003 to 89.2% in 2013 (Table 1.1), as opposed to the increase from 88.8% to 94.2% in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Similarly, secondary net enrolment declined from 84.2% in 2003 to 81.4% in 2014. While this is above the MENA average, MENA, on average, is catching up, with secondary net enrolment increasing from 64.2% in 2003 to 69.2% in 2013. By contrast, Jordan's gross tertiary enrolment increased from 38.9% in 2005 to 44.9% in 2015. While young men were slightly more likely to be enrolled (89.3%) than young women (89%) at the primary level, the enrolment rate of young women in both secondary and tertiary education exceeded that of men. Disadvantaged youth, persons with disabilities and young people living in remote areas still face obstacles in accessing higher education (Barcucci and Mryyan, 2014).

**Table 1.1. Enrolment rates in Jordan by level of education**
(in percent)

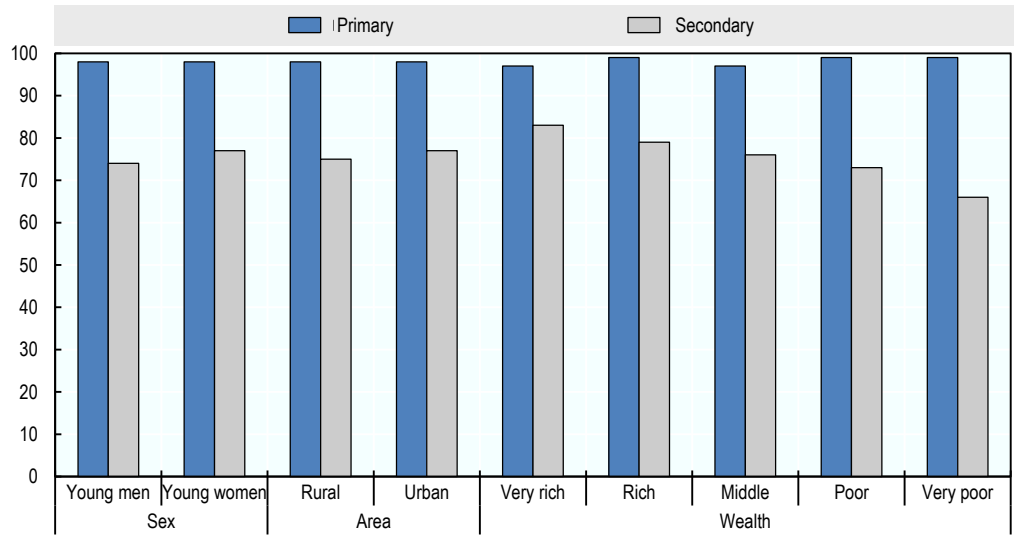
| | | Jordan | | | MENA | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Year | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female |
| Net enrolment rate, primary | 2013 | 89.2 | 89.3 | 89 | 88.8 | 96 | 92.4 |
| | 2003 | 95.2 | … | .. | 94.2 | 91.6 | 85.8 |
| Net enrolment rate, secondary | 2014 | 81.4 | 79.3 | 83.6 | 69.2 | 73.6 | 69.3 |
| | 2004 | 84.2 | 82.9 | 85.5 | 64.4 | 68 | 62.2 |
| Gross enrolment rate, tertiary | 2015 | 44.9 | 42.5 | 47.3 | … | 23.8 | .. |
| | 2005 | 38.9 | 37.3 | 40.6 | 23.2 | 24 | .. |

*Note*: .. = missing value.
*Source*: World Bank (2017).

**Student absenteeism is quite high and the attendance rate is below the enrolment rate.** Attendance at the primary level was nearly universal, unlike secondary (Figure 1.1). In 2012, the secondary attendance rate of young women (77%) was higher than that of young men (74%), higher in urban areas (77%) compared to rural areas (75%), and higher as income level increased. That the attendance rate is lower than the enrolment rate in Jordan can be explained by the high rate of student absenteeism: 43.4% of students reported having skipped at least one day of school without authorisation in the previous two weeks compared to the average for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries of 14.5% (OECD, 2013). Such sporadic attendance can result in underperformance and increase the chances of dropout.

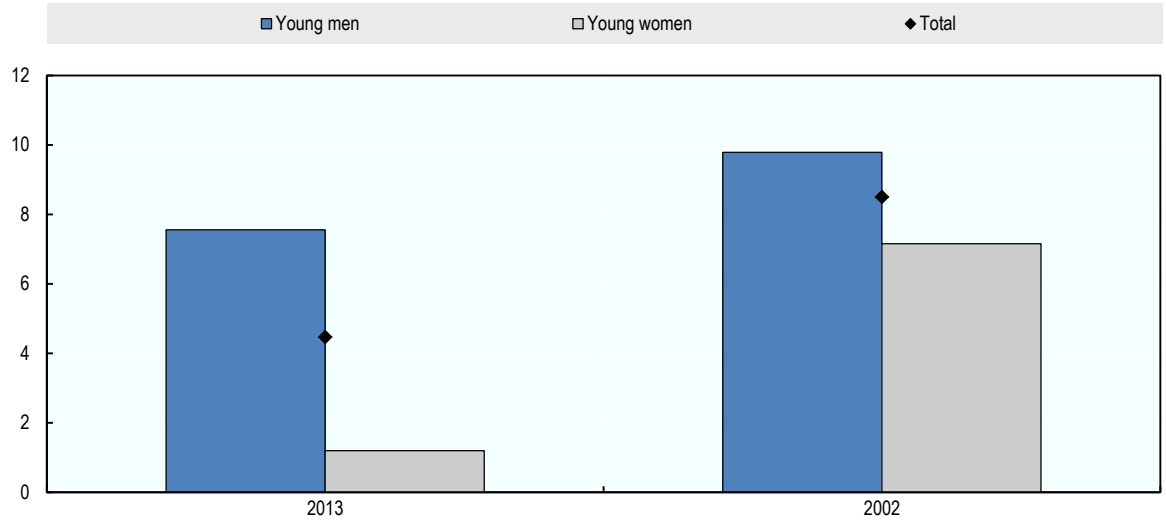
**Dropout rates remain low and have been decreasing over the past decade**. The dropout rates in lower secondary education have decreased significantly, from 8.5% in 2002 to 4.5% in 2013 (Figure 1.2). There is a clear gender biased in dropouts: school dropout is lower among adolescent women than men. Dropout rates decreased particularly for adolescent women, from 7.2% in 2002 to 1.2% in 2013. The sharp reduction can be partially attributed to the region's policy focus on closing the gender gap in education (World Bank, 2013). Underachievement, lack of interest in school, and family and economic factors are among the main reasons for school dropout. Young men's main reasons for school dropout are mostly economic and lack of interest, while young women mostly mention family or social reasons (World Bank, 2013). Expanding alternative pathways, such as the Non-Formal Education Program for youth who have been out of school and are illegible to returns to formal education, is a way to attend to this category of youth.

**Figure 1.1. Attendance rates for primary and secondary education in Jordan, 2012**
(in percent)




*Source*: Department of Statistics/Jordan and ICF International (2013), Jordan Population and Family Health Survey 2012, https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR282/FR282.pdf.

**Figure 1.2. Lower secondary education dropout rates in Jordan by gender, 2002 and 2013**
(in percent)




*Source*: UNESCO (2017).

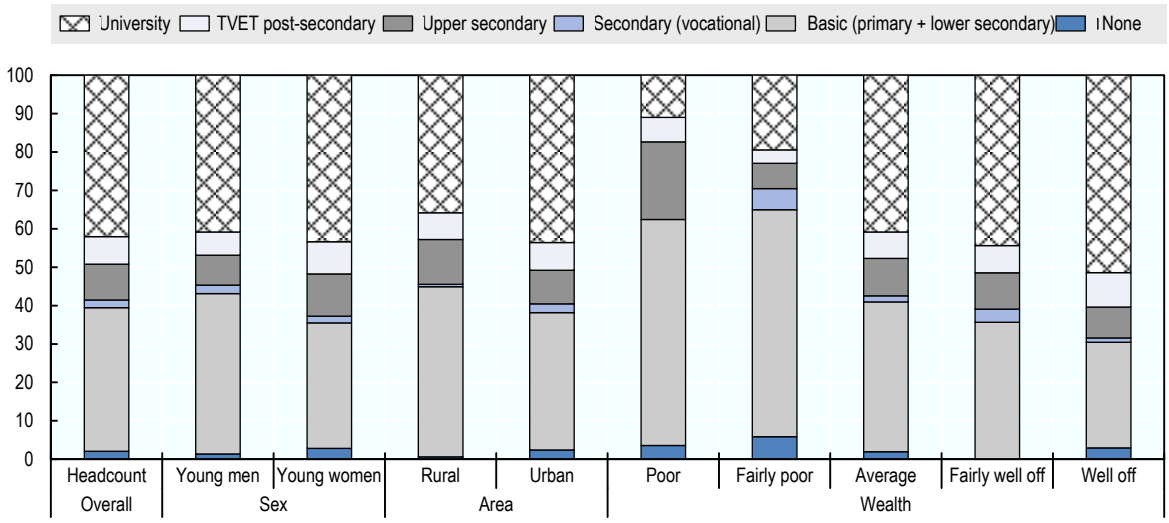
### *1.1.1. Educational attainment and achievement*

**Overall, the educational attainment level is high in Jordan**. In 2015, almost half of Jordanian youth aged 25-29 held a tertiary diploma, above the OECD average (42.1% for ages 25-34) (OECD, 2016a). At the same time, the levels of educational attainment exhibit a bimodal distribution: 39.2% achieved basic education or lower, and 49.5% finished tertiary education. There are few young people with a secondary diploma as the highest degree, despite secondary education being free (Figure 1.3). Young women aged 25-29 achieved a slightly higher level of education than men. Educational attainment strongly depends on income level. Young people from fairly well-off families are more likely to have tertiary education than those from fairly poor families.

**The quality of the education remains a significant cause for concern**. Jordan's results in the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) were significantly below the OECD average. In 2015, Jordan ranked 63 out of 72 countries in reading, and the point difference between Jordan and the OECD average corresponded to 2.8 years of schooling. In mathematics, Jordan ranked 66 out of 72, and the point difference between Jordan and the OECD average corresponded to 3.6 years of schooling. In science, Jordan ranked 63 out of 72, and the point difference between Jordan and the OECD average corresponded to 2.8 years of schooling (OECD, 2016a).[2] Overall, young women, urban youth and youth from private schools achieved higher scores than their respective peers (OECD, 2016a). Compared to previous assessments (2006, 2009 and 2012), there were no significant improvements but rather a drop in Jordan's average scores (Figure 1.4A). Furthermore, half or more Jordanian 15-year-olds do not acquire basic level proficiency in science, reading and mathematics – twice the OECD average. The PISA scale ranks student proficiency across 6 levels (Figure 1.4B). Students who perform at level 2 have the basic skills to integrate fully into social and professional life; students who perform below level 2 often face significant disadvantages in their transition to higher education and the labour force. The proportion of students whose score is below the level 2 threshold indicates how educational systems struggle to provide students with a minimum

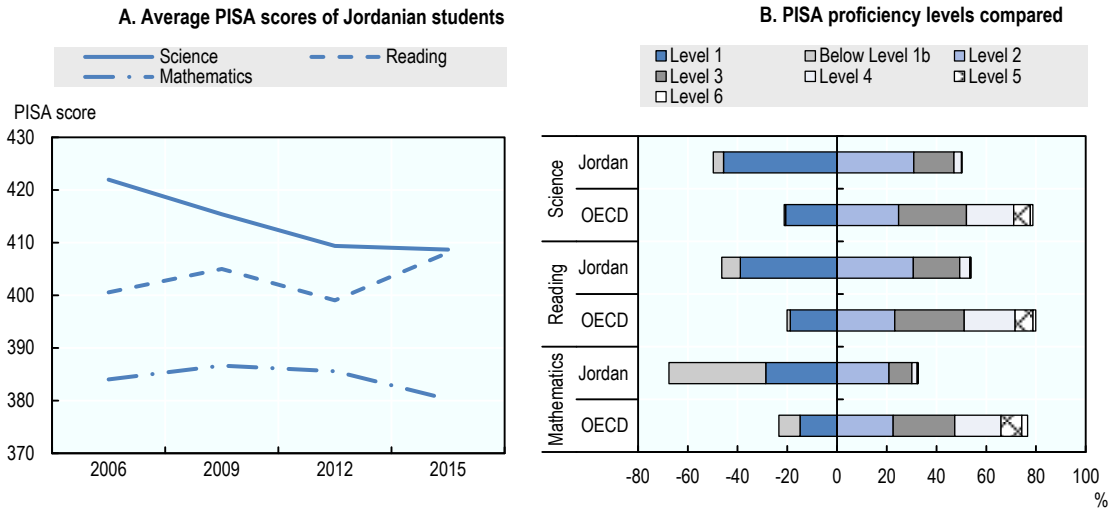
level of proficiency (OECD, 2014). Low performance among students can represent a decline in student learning outcomes. This can be an indication that students are not fully absorbing the curriculum and that instruction is inadequate to prepare students to utilise critical thinking skills. The lack of relevance of education to meet workforce needs, outdated curricula, poorly trained teachers and inadequate school facilities are among the main barriers to education quality in Jordan (Rabie et al., 2017).

**Figure 1.3. Highest level of education attained by Jordanian youth aged 25-29, 2015**
(in percent)




*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

**Figure 1.4. Jordanian student result in the PISA, 2015**




*Source*: OECD (2016a).

## 1.2. Employment

**Employment is a dimension of well-being of high importance to Jordanian youth.** In 2016, 13.6% of youth aged 15-24 worldwide were unemployed. In Jordan, youth unemployment was more than twice as high (34%), slightly higher than the MENA average (29.7%) (ILOSTAT, 2016). Unemployment rates are high due to an increasing labour force, combined with insufficient job creation, a substantial influx of foreign workers, unstable investments in the country and skills mismatch in the labour market (Jordan Strategy Forum, 2016; Identity Center, 2015). A main challenge faced by the government is to transform the labour market in response to a growing youth population, addressing issues such as the share of youth not in education, employment or training (NEET), informal youth employment, qualification mismatch and the low quality of jobs. Failure to address youth employment can deter economic growth and have a significant impact on national development.

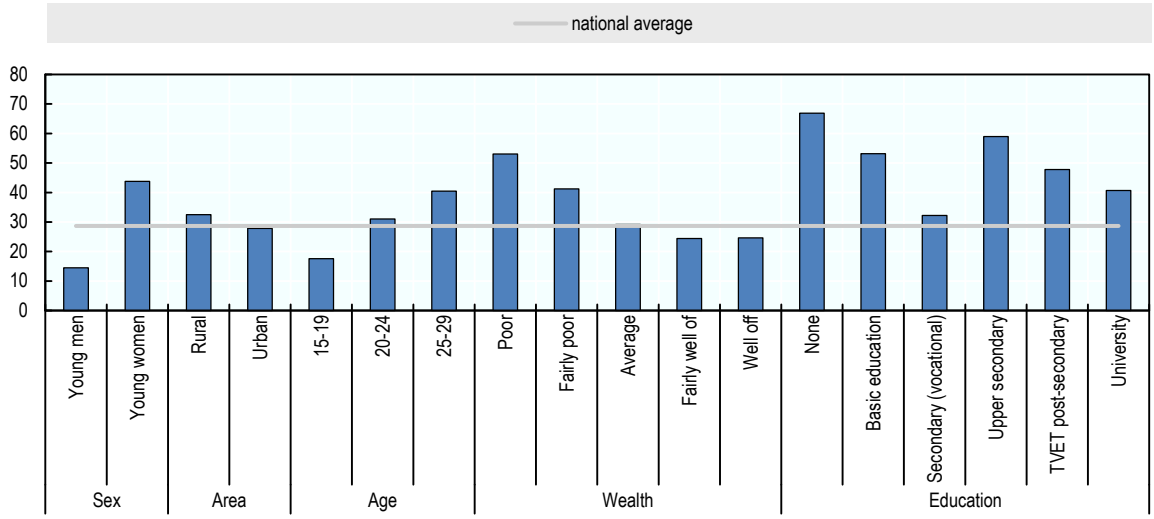
**Close to one-third of young people in Jordan are NEET.** In 2015, Jordan's youth NEET rate was 28.7%, with 19.3% inactive non-students and 10.7% unemployed non-students (Figure 1.5). Unemployed non-students are without work but ready to work and therefore considered part of the labour force. Inactive non-students are not looking for work for reasons of disillusionment, family responsibilities, and sickness or disability, among others. In Jordan, being NEET occurs predominantly among youth who are from urban areas, older, less educated and female. Young women were more likely to be NEET than young men: in 2015, the NEET rate of young women was triple that of men (43.8% vs. 14.5%). More young NEET men were unemployed than inactive non-students, while young NEET women were predominantly inactive non-students (Table 1.2). The high share of NEET young women who are inactive can be explained primarily by their role as family caretakers, thus outside the labour force (Ferrant, Pesando and Nowacka, 2014). The labour force participation of young women aged 15-24 remains low at 20% compared to 82% of young men (DoS, 2016). Furthermore, young women face restrictions to entering employment or certain sectors for traditional reasons (UNDP, 2012). Overall, the NEET rate remained stable between 2012 and 2015 at 29% and 28.7%, respectively. Persistently high youth NEET rates and the increasing difficulty of transitioning from education to work can put youth at risk of skills deterioration, underemployment and disillusionment (ILO, 2016a).

**Table 1.2. Distribution of NEET youth in Jordan by composition, aged 15-29, 2015**
(in percent)

| | NEET rate | of which: | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Inactive non-students | Unemployed non-students |
| Total | 28.7 | 19.3 | 9.4 |
| Male | 14.5 | 5 | 9.5 |
| Female | 43.8 | 34.5 | 9.3 |

*Source*: ILO (2016a), *World Employment and Social Outlook 2016: Trends for Youth*, www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/2016/WCMS_513739/lang--en/index.htm.

**Figure 1.5. Youth NEET rates in Jordan, 2015**
(in percent)




*Source:* Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

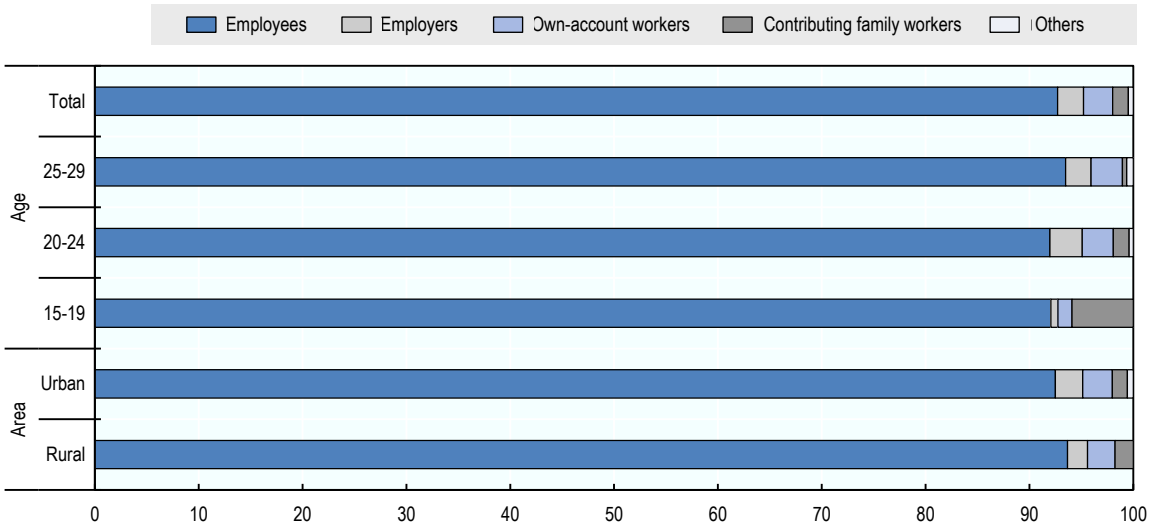
### *1.2.1. Quality of employment*

**The quality of employment is strongly related to the well-being of Jordan's youth**. Indicators such as youth informality, poor wages and qualification mismatch reflect the challenges of youth who hold jobs but in conditions that are not optimal for either the individual or the economy as a whole. The vast majority of employed Jordanian youth (92.7%) are wage workers (Figure 1.6). A fraction (2.5%) are employers, the lowest level of youth entrepreneurship among the Arab countries (Dimova, Elder and Stephan, 2016). In 2015, only 4.3% of young people were own-account workers or contributing family workers, which employments are often considered vulnerable and occur more among young men than women (4.7% vs. 2.8%) (Figure 1.7).

**Informal employment affected 37.5% of Jordanian youth in 2015 and a higher share of young men (40.4%) than women (24.7%).** There was a higher degree of informality in rural areas (39.5%) and among youth aged 15-19 (64.9%) (Figure 1.7). Holding an informal job deprives young people of numerous advantages, such as social security contributions, paid annual or sick leave, a pension and, typically, training and capacity building. Moreover, the majority of youth earned less than the average wage, and the jobs they took up were associated with excessive working hours.

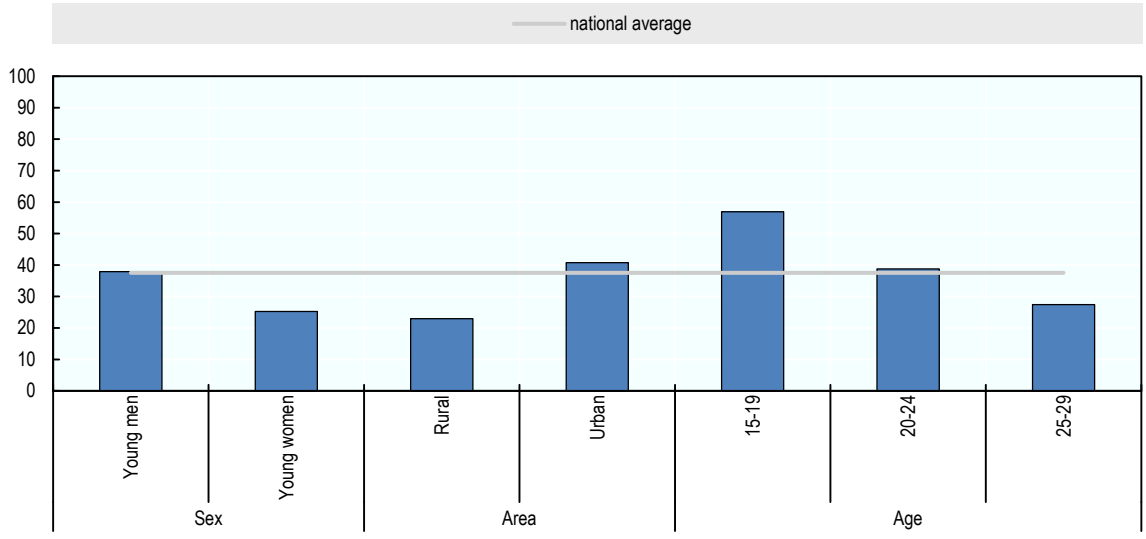
**Most employed youth are paid below the average youth wage.** In 2015, the figure was six in ten (59.4%). Young women were more likely to be paid less than young men (64.1% vs. 58.4%) because wages for women are less than men in absolute terms. Youth aged 15-19 and youth with lower levels of education were also more likely to be poorly paid. However, the severity of poor wages is not extreme; only 29.8% earned less than 60% of the average youth wage.

**Figure 1.6. Distribution of workers in Jordan by employment status, 2015**
(in percent)



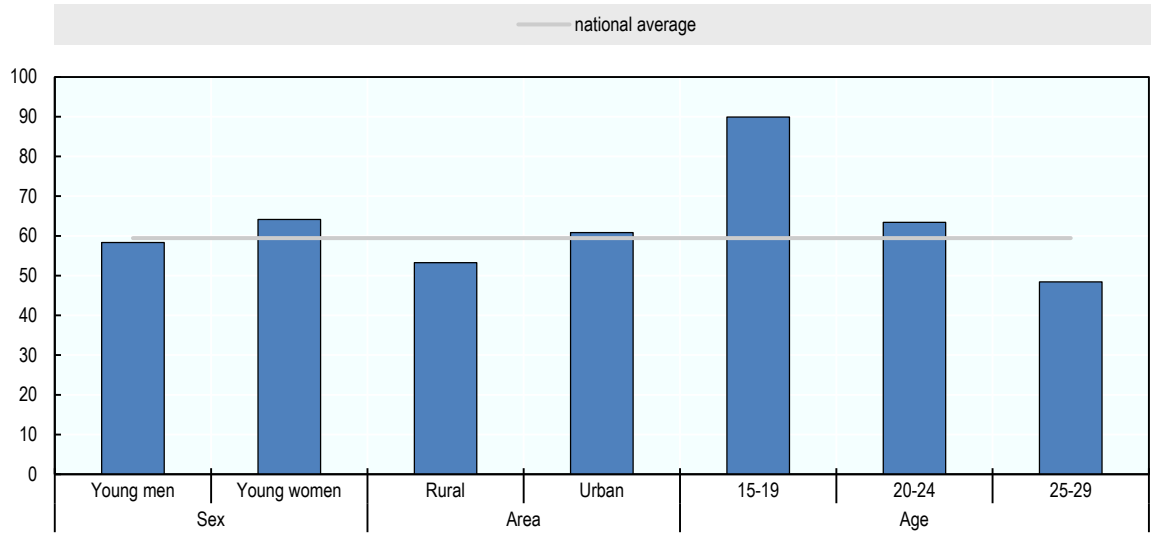

*Source:* Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

**Figure 1.7. Youth informality in Jordan, 2015**
(in percent)




*Source:* Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

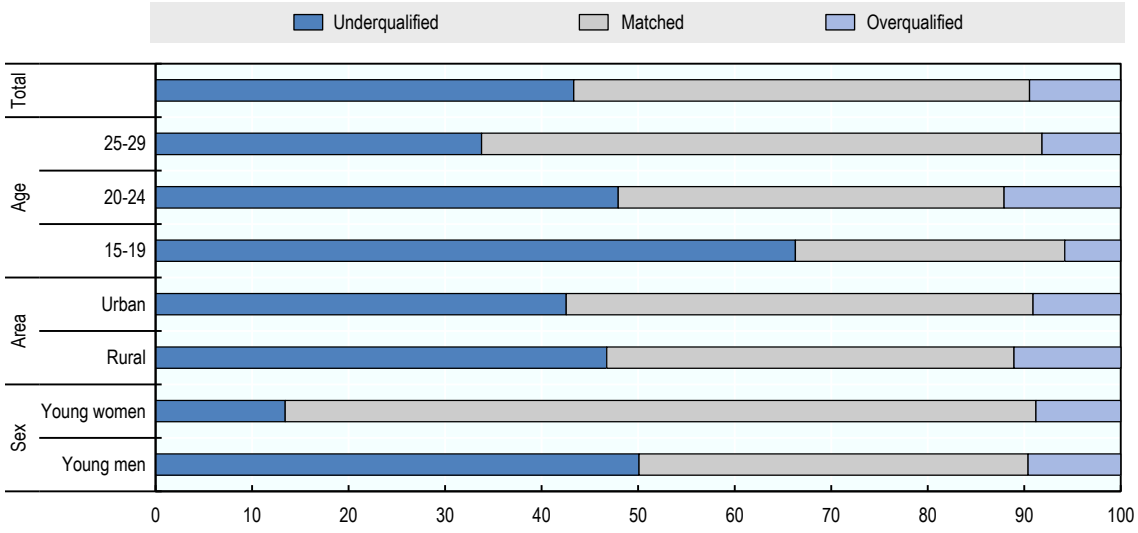
**Figure 1.8. Distribution of youth paid below average youth wage in Jordan, 2015**
(in percent)




*Source:* Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

**In 2015, half (52.8%) of employed youth did not have qualifications matching their occupation.** Skills mismatch measures whether young people have the level of education (ISCE category) corresponding to their occupation (International Standard Classification of Occupations category). A consequence of skills mismatch is failure to reach the productive potential of the individual and the company. Most mismatched young workers are underqualified (43.3%), while 9.5% of total employed youth are overqualified (Figure 1.9). The level of skills mismatch of young men is much higher than that of women, partly due to women's higher level of education and lower labour force participation. Notably, the level of underqualification decreases and matching increases with level of education.

**Figure 1.9. Skills mismatch of young workers in Jordan, 2015**
(in percent)




*Note*: The normative approach is used. For the definition, please see OECD (2017).
*Source:* Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

## 1.3. Health

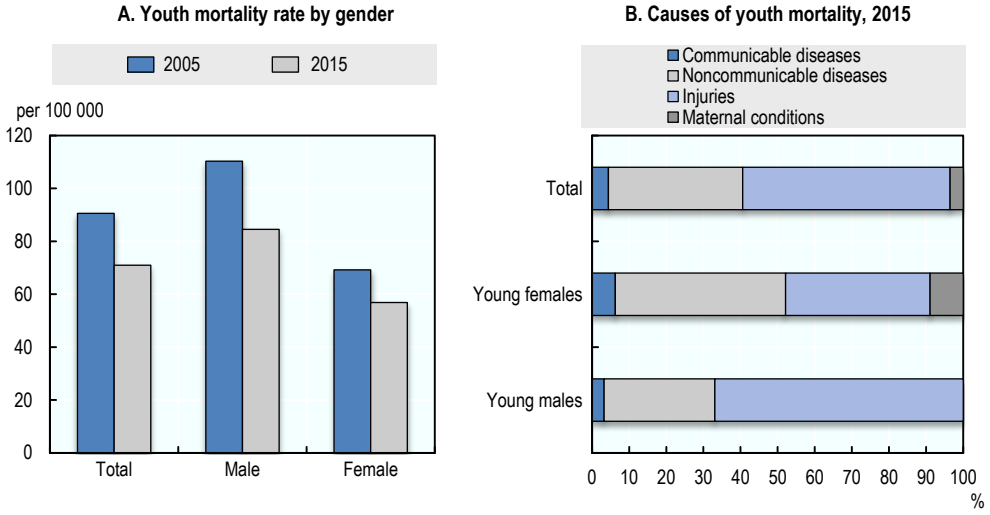
**Health is an important dimension of well-being for Jordanian youth as it sets the stage for well-being later in life.** Overall, the health status of young people in Jordan has improved in recent years. Nevertheless, challenges persist. Comprehensive knowledge about sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is still limited, in particular among girls, due to inadequate access to youth-friendly services. Young people between sexual initiation and marriage remain vulnerable to high-risk behaviours, including substance abuse. The rate of smoking among youth has significantly increased over the last years, and the increasing prevalence of obesity threatens the health of Jordanian adolescents and youth.

**The mortality rate of young people in Jordan has declined in the last ten years.** The rate per 100 000 youth declined from 91 in 2005 to 71 in 2015. The decrease was greater among young men, from 110 in 2005 to 85 in 2015 vs. 69 in 2005 to 57 in 2015 for young women (Figure 1.10A). Youth deaths are mainly caused by injuries, non-communicable and communicable diseases and maternal conditions (Figure 1.10A). The number one cause of death was injuries. Road injuries caused more than half of youth deaths and were especially high for young men (32.1%), followed by interpersonal violence (9.3%). The main cause of death for young women was also road injuries but to a lesser extent (21.5%), followed by maternal conditions (8.9%).

**Despite significant improvements, prevailing gender disparities undermine the health prospects of young women**. The wide prevalence of child marriage (before age 18) closely correlates with high adolescent fertility. In Jordan, the legal age of marriage is 18, but a Shari'a judge can authorise marriage for adolescents as young as 15 (UNICEF, 2014). In recent years, the rate of young women aged 15-17 who were married remained quite stable (13.2% in 2013) (UNICEF, 2014). Once married, young women face social pressure to have children. Resulting pregnancy at an early age can lead to complications during pregnancy and childbirth, such as increased risk of stillbirth and new-born deaths, and mental health impacts. Marriage at a young age can also affect mental health in connection with early and forced sexual activity, premature childbirth and childcare responsibilities (Save the Children, 2014). The adolescent fertility rate fell from 30.1 per 1 000 women aged 15-19 in 2005 to 22.7 in 2015 (Figure 1.11), which is low in the MENA region (38.4) and comparable to the OECD average (21.7).

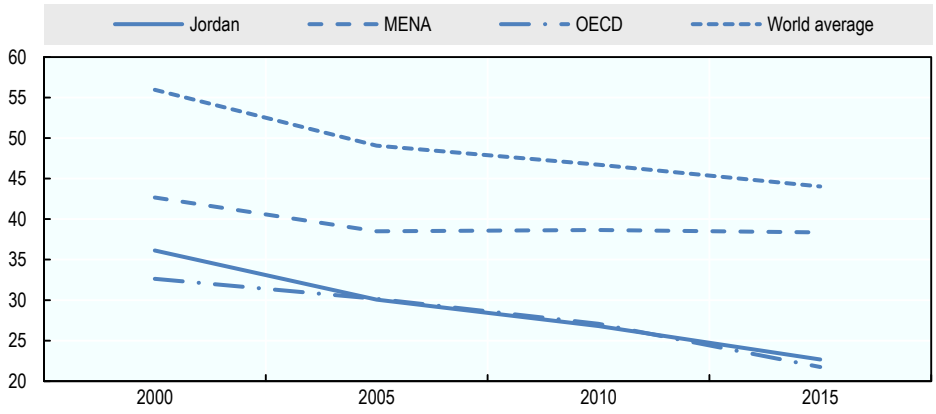
**Many young Jordanians have insufficient knowledge about SRH and limited access to adequate services**. While nearly all young women aged 15-24 (98.8%) who have ever been married have heard of AIDS, comprehensive knowledge about AIDS transmission or prevention is low (9.3% for young women aged 20-24 and 5.6% for young women aged 15-19) (DoS and ICF, 2013). This is because information on reproductive processes is not imparted until marriage, and families avoid discussing physical maturation to protect young people from engaging in inappropriate behaviours (Almasarweh, 2003). Jordan like MENA has a very low HIV rate (The Synergy Project, 2004) as young Jordanians live under strict parental supervision and a culture where sexual intercourse outside marriage is unacceptable (Almasarweh, 2003). Lack of reliable information hampers effective analysis of HIV infection trends. Many young people also encounter problems using reproductive health services, such as unpleasant facilities, unprofessional conduct and ill-informed professionals (Khalaf, Moghli and Froelicher, 2010). The availability, accessibility and quality of services varied across urban and rural areas and particularly between private and public centres.

**Figure 1.10. Youth mortality rates and causes in Jordan**




*Source*: WHO (2015).

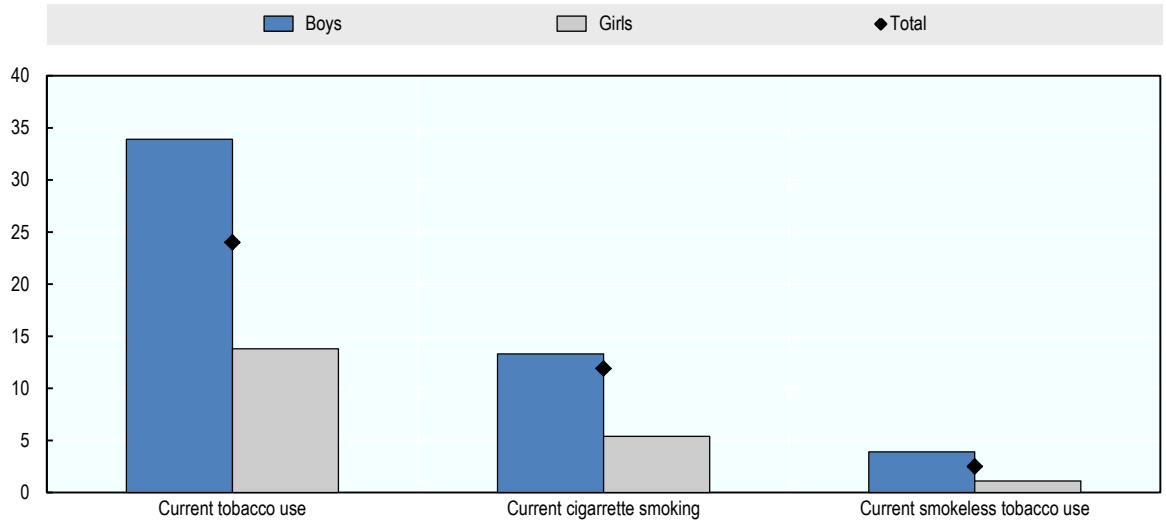
**Figure 1.11. Adolescent fertility rates**
(births per 1 000 women aged 15-19)




*Source*: World Bank (2017).

**The increasing prevalence of smoking by Jordanian youth is a particular concern**. In 2014, 24% of young people aged 13-15 smoked tobacco: 33.9% of young men and 13.8% of young women (Figure 1.12). Cigarette smoking is influenced largely by peer pressure and family influence (McKelvey et al., 2015). Water pipe use is also on the rise, particularly among young women due to its lesser social taboo (McKelvey et al., 2015). Light smoking was highly associated with income level: 23.9% of young women from very rich households compared to 9.7% of those from very poor households. However, the difference was less for heavy smoking (3.2% vs. 2.9%). Urban young women were twice as likely to smoke as rural women (15.7% vs. 7.1%).

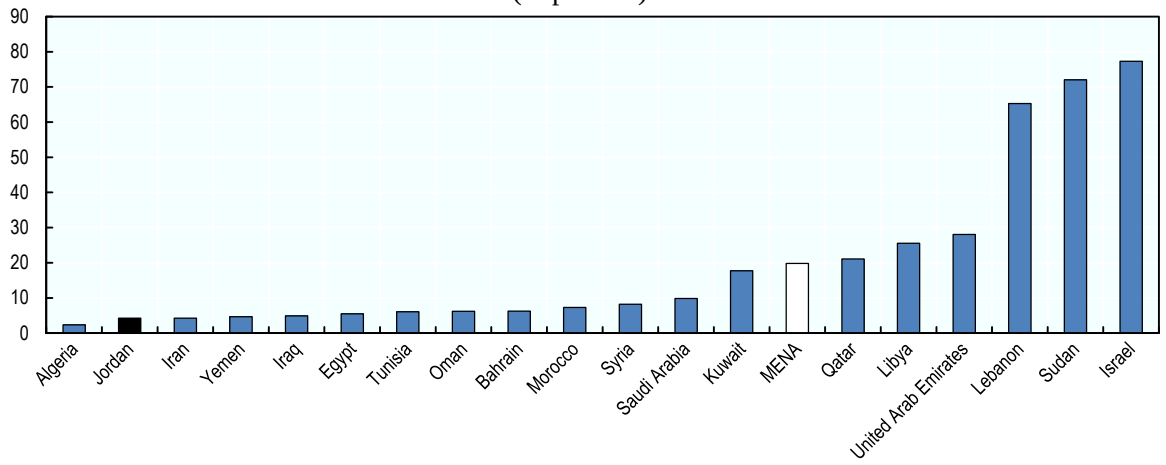
**Figure 1.12. Smoking prevalence among Jordanian youth aged 13-15**
(in percent)




*Source*: WHO (2017a).

**Jordan has one of the lowest adolescent alcohol consumption rates in the region**. In 2010, 4.3% of adolescents confirmed having consumed at least one alcoholic beverage in the past 12 months compared to the MENA average of 19.8% (Figure 1.13). Although alcohol is available throughout the country, many Jordanians do not drink for cultural and religious reasons.

**Figure 1.13. Adolescent alcohol use in MENA, 2010**
(in percent)




*Source*: WHO (2017b).

**Overweight and obesity rates are high among Jordanian youth.** According to the World Health Organization standard, 11.8% of adolescents aged 15-18 in Jordan were overweight and an additional 10.6% were obese (WHO, 2017b). More young women were overweight than men (14.7% vs. 9%), while more young men were obese than women (12.5% vs. 8.6%). A contributing factor may be urbanisation, which has transformed traditional diets into diets high in calories and fat and low in vegetables and

fibre. Sedentary lifestyles and social environments associated with high stress levels lead to higher overweight and obesity rates among young women (Hamaideh, Al-Khateeb and Al-Rawashdeh, 2010). Moreover, obesity puts women at a higher risk of maternal mortality and morbidity due to complications during pregnancy, labour and delivery.

## 1.4. Other factors: Active citizenship and subjective well-being

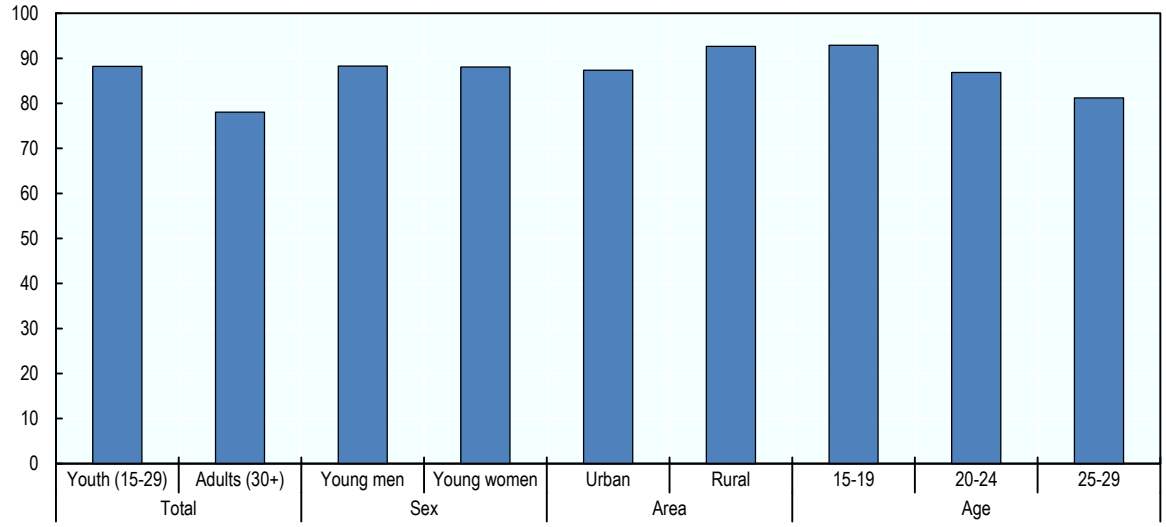
### *1.4.1. Civic engagement*

**Feeling part of society largely depends on perceptions and other "soft" indicators.** Subjective well-being, civic participation, social capital and a sense of security are important for young people to fully live their lives and contribute to the development of the country. A struggling education system, limited policy engagement, high unemployment, rapid population growth, regional instability, limited natural resources – particularly water – can negatively affect youth well-being (USAID, 2016). Public policies should focus not only on objective indicators of well-being but on subjective indicators as well. A deeper analysis of the different dimensions of youth well-being is beyond the scope of that aim.

**Social capital and youth civic engagement are prerequisites for the evolution of inclusive legal, institutional and policy frameworks.** Opportunities for youth to contribute to and influence policy decisions can help legitimise the process and policies, and provide the means for youth to hold the government accountable (OECD, 2017). Civic engagement is not limited to political activity, such as voting and joining political parties, but includes volunteerism and involvement in local organisations. Volunteerism provides a viable, sustainable means for youth to pursue their aspirations and learn more about themselves, their assets and their communities.

**Social capital is an important factor for youth well-being and a successful transition into adult life.** The definition of social capital varies by context but generally refers to the productive value of social connections and conveys the idea that human relations and norms of behaviour are of instrumental value in improving various aspects of people's lives (Scrivens and Smith, 2013). Social capital can be interpreted as personal relationships, social network support at the individual level or civic engagement and trust in co-operative norms at the collective level (Scrivens and Smith, 2013). Oftentimes, networks facilitate young people's access to relevant, appropriate information that enables them to navigate their opportunities. Networks support positive transitions and function as personal safety nets. The vast majority of young Jordanians (88.2%) affirm having relatives or friends they can count on for help. This differs little by gender or area of residence (Figure 1.14). The family unit is central in Jordanians' lives and is strongly linked to the extended family, tribe and society. Youth are dependent on their families for support, including financial, and are in turn expected to conform to their families' values, attitudes and practices (International Business Publications, 2013). The importance of the family is reflected in the high level of trust in family (92%) (Table 1.3). However, relatively low trust in neighbours (34.6%) and acquaintances (33.9%), and extremely low trust in people of another religion (3.2%) or nationality (2.9%), pose potential risks to social cohesion.

**Figure 1.14. Support networks in Jordan, 2015**
(in percent)




*Source*: Gallup (2015), *Gallup World Poll* (database), analytics.gallup.com/213704/world-poll.aspx.

**Table 1.3. Trust levels in Jordan by type of relationship, 2013**
(in percent)

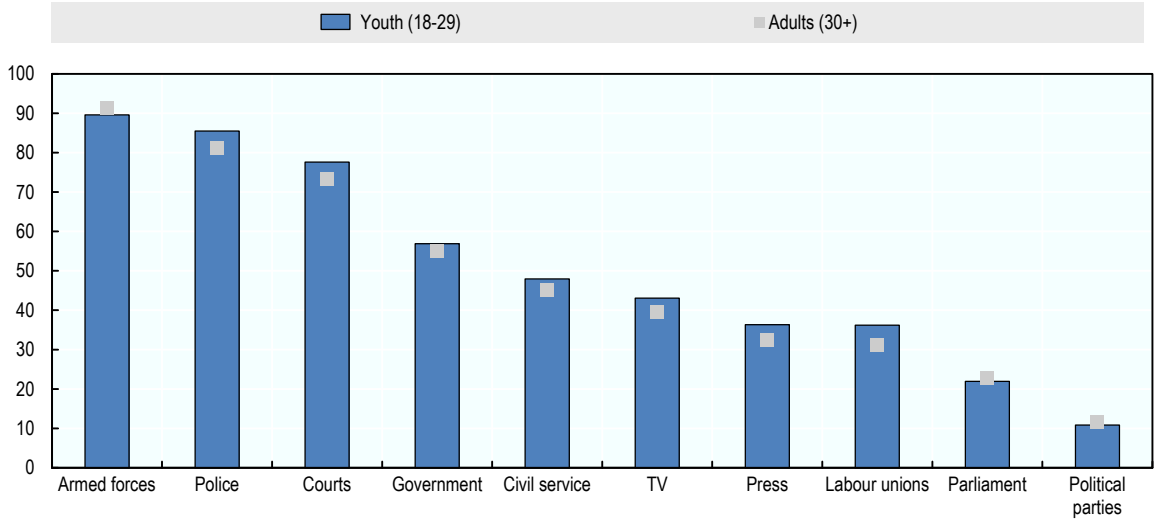
| | | Family | Neighbourhood | People you know personally | People you meet for the first time | People of another religion | People of another nationality |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | Youth (18-29) | 92.0 | 34.6 | 33.9 | 2.3 | 3.2 | 2.9 |
| | Adults (30+) | 90.3 | 35.6 | 33.2 | 2.9 | 4.5 | 4.5 |
| Sex | Young men | 92.3 | 40.0 | 36.7 | 3.5 | 5.2 | 5.1 |
| | Young women | 89.2 | 30.7 | 30.2 | 2.0 | 3.1 | 3.0 |
| Age | 18-24 | 90.6 | 36.2 | 36.5 | 2.6 | 4.4 | 3.9 |
| | 25-29 | 94.8 | 31.3 | 28.7 | 1.7 | 0.9 | 0.9 |

*Note*: Percentage expresses headcount of those who responded "trust completely"; other answers are "trust somewhat", "do not trust very much" and "do not trust at all".
*Source*: *World Values Survey (2014), "World Values Survey 2010-2014", World Values Survey (database), http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp*.

**Trust is not only important for individual well-being but for the future of Jordan's democracy and society in general.** Democratic institutions depend on the trust that citizens place in them, making trust and distrust of institutions important indicators to monitor. In 2013, there was a high degree of distrust among youth aged 18-29, particularly of political parties and parliament (10.8% and 21.9%, respectively) (Figure 1.15). Dissatisfaction with the performance and achievements of elected representatives and parties is a driver of this worryingly low level of trust (The International Republican Institute, 2011), which has the potential to undermine the democratic system in the long run. This was particularly the case for the Arab Spring; high youth unemployment was recognised as a key catalyst in the upheavals. Jordan is at a risk of similar upheavals if elected authorities do not take sufficient measures to address and build the population's trust. By contrast, the armed forces and the police are highly

trusted (89.6% and 85.51%, respectively), largely due to the role and services of the army, which became a source of national allegiance and identity in the instability since the annexation of the West Bank in 1950 (American University of Beirut, 2014).

**Figure 1.15. Public trust in institutions in Jordan, 2013**
(in percent)




*Note*: Percentage expresses headcount of those who responded "trust a great deal" or "trust quite a lot".
*Source:* World Values Survey (2014), "World Values Survey 2010-2014", World Values Survey (database), http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp.

**Formal civic engagement among youth in Jordan is low**. Only a very small percentage of youth are members of formal civic groups: 2.7% of a charitable society and 2.3% of a youth, cultural or sports organisation (Table 1.4). However, the overall participation of Jordanians in civil society organisations (CSOs) is low in general. Formal volunteerism is hindered by limited institutional frameworks, bureaucratic laws of CSOs and the weak capacity of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the government in volunteer management (Al-Dajani, 2016). Youth highlighted lack of time, of material or financial incentives, of encouragement in education, and of appreciation of volunteering as key barriers to their participation. While only a minority of youth are part of an organisation or association, in 2015, 62.7% of young people aged 15-29 had volunteered, donated money to a charity or helped a stranger (Gallup, 2015). Al-Dajani (2016) highlighted the paradox of such non-formal volunteerism being largely embedded in Jordan's cultural and social values and norms. In daily life, individual Jordanians give mutual aid and support. Top motivations for volunteering were to improve the lives of others and to serve people, while others listed self-growth-related motives, such as acquiring new skills, increasing confidence, enriching their knowledge of current affairs, fulfilling a mission, networking, enhancing their employability and building their resume.

**Table 1.4. Civic group membership among youth in Jordan, 2013**
(in percent)

| Civic affiliation | Youth 15-29 | All ages |
|---|---|---|
| Member of a charitable society | 2.7 | 4.1 |
| Member of a youth, culture or sports organisation | 2.3 | 1.7 |
| Member of a local development association | 0 | 0 |
| Member of a political party | .. | 0.3 |

*Note:* .. = missing value or not available.
*Source*: Arab Barometer (2013), "Jordan Country Data R3", *Arabbarometer Data Analysis: Country Selection* (database), www.arabbarometer.org/content/online-data-analysis.

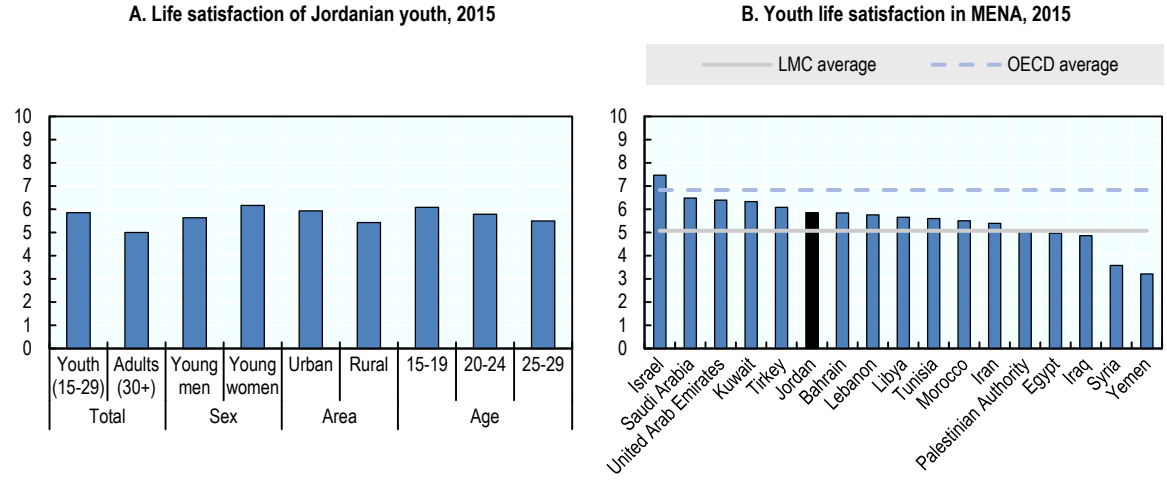
### *1.4.2. Subjective well-being*

**Jordanian youth are generally satisfied with their lives.** A positive life evaluation, also known as subjective well-being, is an important dimension. The way youth evaluate their quality of life can have a direct impact on developmental outcomes. Low life satisfaction correlates with higher risk of psychological and social problems, while greater satisfaction results in positive behaviours and outcomes (Proctor, Linley and Maltby, 2009). This is a particularly important component for youth during that critical life stage. However, study of youth life satisfaction has been neglected, only receiving attention recently. For Jordanian youth, a sense of familial support and social support are major contributing factors to subjective well-being (Yazdani. Jibril and Kielhofner, 2008). Jordanian young people aged 15-29 rated their life satisfaction at 5.9, slightly above the average for adults aged 30 and above (Figure 1.16A). The average life satisfaction of young women and urban youth was slightly higher than those of male and rural peers. Young Jordanians' satisfaction levels are at the top end for the region. On average, Jordanian youth are more satisfied with their lives than youth in lower-middle income countries (LMCs), but less than youth in OECD member countries (Figure 1.16B).

**The share of Jordanian youth with negative feelings is comparatively low.** In 2015, 42.7% of Jordanian youth reported having experienced worry, sadness, stress or anger in the past 24 hours. On average, more young women and rural youth experience negative feelings than male or rural youth (Figure 1.17A). Although fewer young Jordanians experience negative feelings than their regional peers (Figure 1.17B), the rate should not be underestimated, and youth's mental health should be put on the policy agenda.

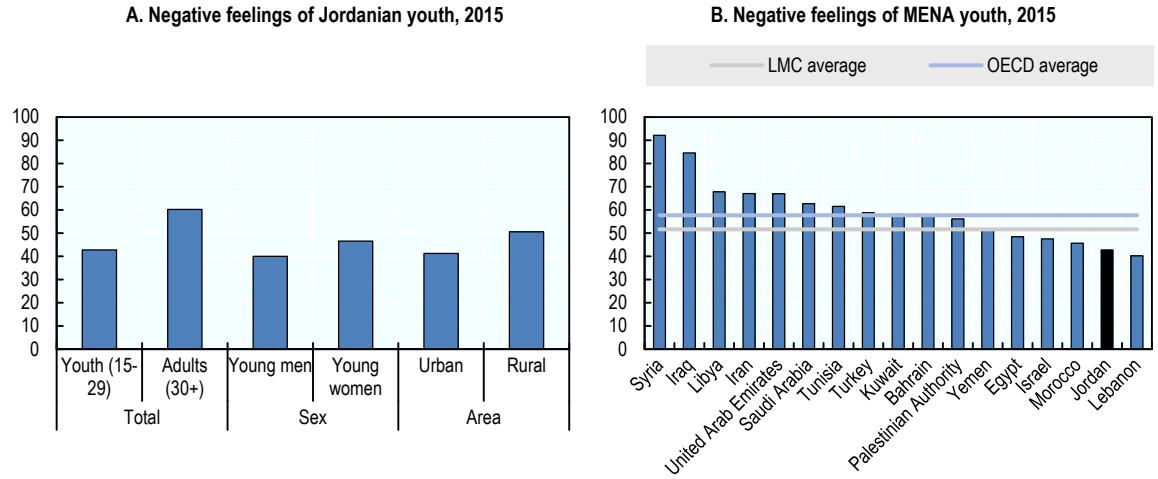
**Factors affecting the well-being of Jordanian youth reflect expectations rooted in a traditional society.** Jordanian youth rated as most important in life family (95.8%), religion (93.5%) and work (69.2%) (Figure 1.18). However, poor economic prospects and inadequate income prevent their smooth transition into work, marriage and family (Brown et al., 2014), the greatest barrier being low employment. This last affects the experiences, frustrations and aspirations of youth and serves as a major impediment to taking interest in active citizenship and endorsing its values. The low number of youth who considered politics an important aspect of their lives (14.6%) was in line with their general lack of interest and trust in political parties or politicians (IRCKHF, 2017). To enable a positive transition into adulthood and help youth achieve their full potential, multi-dimensional interventions addressing the challenges youth face are needed.

**Figure 1.16. Life satisfaction of Jordanian youth, 2015**
(average score)



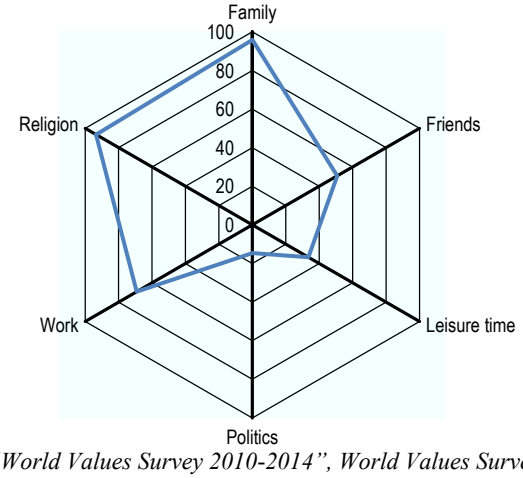

*Note*: The LMC average is based on Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia, Cambodia, Cameroon, Congo, Rep., Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Mauritania, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Palestinian Authority, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Vietnam, Yemen and Zambia.
*Source*: Gallup (2015), *Gallup World Poll* (database), analytics.gallup.com/213704/world-poll.aspx.

**Figure 1.17. Youth negative feelings, 2015**
(in percent)




*Note*: Having negative feelings is defined as experiencing worry, sadness, stress or anger in the 24 hours prior the survey.
*Source*: Gallup (2015), *Gallup World Poll* (database), analytics.gallup.com/213704/world-poll.aspx.

**Figure 1.18. What youth find important in life, Jordanian youth aged 18-29, 2013**
(in percent)




*Source: World Values Survey (2014), "World Values Survey 2010-2014", World Values Survey (database), http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp.*

## *Notes*

[1] Available data does not allow measurement of the net enrolment rate for basic (grades 1 10) and secondary (grades 11 12) education, only for the UNESCO definition of primary (grades 1 6) and secondary (grades 7 12) education.

[2] In PISA, 30 points correspond to 1 year of schooling.

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# Chapter 2. Youth policies and institutional framework

**Worldwide, governments are demonstrating growing political will to develop comprehensive policies to better responds to the needs and aspirations of young people.** Nearly two-thirds of all countries have a national youth strategy. National youth policies, however, are often insufficiently integrated into national development plans or sectoral policies and remain poorly funded. In addition, lack of horizontal and vertical co-ordination among different sectors and levels of government can distort youth policy outcomes and generate inefficiencies, such as overlapping or counteracting policies. Improving youth well-being thus requires assessing the broader youth environment and determining how policies may enable or hamper youth development, and how youth can in turn participate in these policy processes (OECD, 2017). Mapping youth policies and programmes is critical to improving youth policy design, implementation and co-ordination. This chapter first reviews key youth policies and interventions. It then identifies the main institutional actors and assesses co-ordination among the different actors involved in youth policies. Last, it examines the capacities of the Ministry of Youth (MoY) and determines its strengths and weaknesses.

## 2.1. Strategies and general policies

**Jordan 2025: A National Vision and Strategy (2015-2025) supplies the frame for government actions**. It outlines a comprehensive and long-term national strategy and identifies a set of social and economic goals to better respond to the social and economic challenges Jordan currently faces. This vision and other policies and initiatives are based on recent discussion papers published by King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, which urge the government to address numerous social and economic issues, including better responding to youth needs and aspirations (King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014, 2016, 2017). Jordan 2025 comprises more than 400 policies and procedures that should be implemented through a participatory approach in the next decade (MoPIC, 2015). The strategy's main principles include promoting the rule of law, providing equal opportunities for all, enhancing participatory policy making, achieving fiscal sustainability, boosting growth and strengthening institutions. Jordan 2025 gives a prominent role to youth and addresses youth issues in all policy sectors, including health, education, employment, entrepreneurship and civic and political participation. The other major strategy influenced by King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein's discussion papers and directives is the National Strategy for Human Resource Development (2016-2025) (NSHRD), which provides a new vision of education as a comprehensive human resources development system that aims to enhance the skills, qualifications, capabilities and behaviours of citizens in order to achieve Jordan's social and economic ambitions (King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, 2017, MoHESR, 2015).

**In 2010, the Ministry of Labor (MoL) and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC) issued the National Employment Strategy (2011-2020) (NES) aimed at creating quality jobs.** Based on a comprehensive diagnosis

of the labour market, the NES sets three specific goals: i) absorbing the unemployed; ii) ensuring better skills matching and boosting SME growth; and iii) increasing productivity and restructuring the economy (MoL and MoPIC,2012). Although youth are not at the centre of the NES, many aspects of the strategy address youth directly or indirectly. The strategy includes supply-side, demand-side and institutional elements. On the demand side, the strategy underlines the importance of enabling the private sector to move up the value chain, increase its productivity, expand its ability to export products and services, and create more and better jobs. On the supply side, the objective is to create a skilled and motivated labour force to meet labour market demand. Institutional objectives include enhancing the government's capacities in policy planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, as well as improving social protection and establishing a health insurance system for all.

**The Poverty Reduction Strategy (2013-2020) aims to reduce inequalities and alleviate poverty, and it recognises the needs of youth.** Based on a comprehensive review of the previous Poverty Alleviation Strategy and the revision of its priorities and initiatives, the strategy identifies five strategic sectors: i) social welfare and gender; ii) employment and entrepreneurship; iii) health and education services; iv) agriculture, environment and rural development; and v) transport and housing for all. Youth are one of several target groups of the strategy, especially regarding the education and employment sectors.

**Despite the inclusion of youth in different national strategies, there is currently no national youth strategy.** Jordan lacks an articulated vision for its youth policies. The first National Youth Strategy (initially 2005-2009 and extended to 2011) aimed at gathering data on youth and developing policies for young peoples' health, employment, education and civic engagement. The strategy stressed that addressing youth aspirations was not only the responsibility of the government body responsible for youth but of all government institutions, with the support of both the private and civil society sectors. An evaluation was commissioned but is not publicly available. In 2013, the government body responsible for youth (then, the Higher Council for Youth) launched a process with NGOs and international donors to develop a follow-up to the National Youth Strategy (2005-2011). Yet, this process remained inconclusive due to institutional instability and shifting priorities induced by the crises in neighbouring countries, resulting in Jordan having no national youth strategy since 2012. Moreover, efforts have been mostly promoted by donors and international organisations with unclear political ownership; such as a recent draft led by UN agencies, which was not endorsed by the MoY. Currently, the MoY is developing the National Youth Strategy (2018-2025) with the support of steering and technical committees with representatives of different ministries, universities and NGOs. The MoY plans to survey youth and hold public consultations to feed the strategy. The formulation of the strategy has been underway for a prolonged period but remains at an early stage.

## 2.2. Sectoral policies

**The state seeks to realise decisions through substantive policy instruments (laws, plans, programmes, etc.) (Howlett, 2011).** Each sector designs and implements substantive policy instruments affecting youth. Most policies include young people as part of their general target population, but some target youth in particular. This section presents the main state programmes, services and actions favouring youth in the four sectors prioritised in this report: education, employment, health and citizenship (see the

annex on the European Union-OECD Youth Inclusion project website for a complete overview of all major youth policies and programmes in Jordan).

### *2.2.1. Education policies*

**Numerous state actors shape Jordan's education policies**. The Ministry of Education (MoE) supervises public and private schools, while the Council of Education develops curricula and contents. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) are responsible for implementing the higher education policies, while the Higher Education Council formulates policies and supervises universities and community colleges. The Higher Education Accreditation Commission monitors the compliance of higher education institutions with regulations and quality standards. These government structures are supported by other institutions and organisations, such as the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC), the National Center for Human Resources Development, the Jordan Education Initiative, the Madrasati Initiative and other royal NGOs. In 2017, the expenditure of all these actors amounted to 1 043 million JOD (See Box 2.1).

**Over the last years, Jordan has continued its efforts to improve the education system**. The National Strategy for Higher Education (2014-2018) outlines nine reform areas: governance of higher education institutions, admission policies, funding, quality assurance, academic programmes, scientific research, university environment, human resources, and technical education. Likewise, Jordan 2025 emphasises education as a major national asset and its importance to the economy. The NSHRD establishes a set of wide-ranging reforms and action plans for all sectors related to education. The strategy's objective is to create an "integrated, comprehensive, strategic and well-defined system for human resources development" in Jordan (Petra News, 2015). This system comprises all educational institutions, from early childhood education to vocational education and training, as well as higher education. It aims to provide a range of different pathways and opportunities to students, enabling them to continue learning and developing their skills according to their capacities and interests. The NSHRD does not bring substantial change to the education system's structure but proposes a wide range of reforms to make existing structures more efficient. The main priorities are i) ensuring equal access to education for all students; ii) empowering educational institutions to take responsibility for their performance through delegated responsibilities and decentralised decision making; and iii) incorporating innovative and creative educational approaches through the use of technologies.

**Improving access to education for all is a key priority for the government.** The NSHRD underlines the importance of ensuring fair and equal education opportunities for all citizens regardless of their background, gender, disability or individual needs. In this context, the strategy proposes a set of reforms to renovate existing schools and adequately train teachers to ensure students with disabilities and special needs have access to quality education. Additionally, the NSHRD recognises the unequal access to education across the country. Following the NSHRD's recommendations, the MoE is planning to increase the number of mobile schools and establish new schools in the coming years to meet the growing demand in certain areas. The government also committed to establishing more kindergartens in peripheral and poor areas (MoHESR, 2015).

**NGO initiatives help reduce school dropout by vulnerable Jordanian youth.** The NSHRD highlights the lack of comprehensive enforcement laws regarding access to education, the absence of an accurate data-tracking system to prevent dropout by vulnerable youth, and the limited number of second-chance opportunities for out-of-

school youth (MoHESR, 2015). In this context, interventions have been initiated to prevent children with learning difficulties from dropping out. For instance, the NGO Madrasiti has developed remedial centres in public schools where underperforming students in grades 1-7 can get additional support from trained teachers. Similarly, the Queen Rania Teachers' Academy (QRTA) developed the Early Grade Reading and Math Project to improve reading and mathematics skills in grades 1-3 and train 14 000 teachers in these subjects.

**Following the NSHRD, the MoE is working on integrating non-formal education in its strategic plan.** The MoE plans to increase the capacity and recognition of non-formal education. One objective is to offer second chances to out-of-school youth. In 2003, the NGO Questscope, in partnership with the MoE, launched a 24-month second-chance programme based on a specific participatory learning method that encourages positive relationships between learners and educators. The programme is the only one fully accredited by the MoE under the General Equivalency Diploma. Thus, the certificate of completion allows graduates to join technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions or to take the grade 9 test and begin home-schooling at the grade 10 level. From 2003 to 2016, more than 13 000 young people enrolled in non-formal education programmes (Questscope in HRD, 2016).

**School curricula have to be reformed to equip students with the necessary skills to succeed at work and in their personal lives.** Although the General Framework for Curricula and Assessment was recently reformed, the current curriculum continues to place too much weight on memorisation and traditional teaching methods (MoHESR, 2015). The NSHRD proposes reforms to modernise curricula, for instance through the creation of a Curriculum Assessment Body, which would develop rigorous learning standards and adapt the curriculum to the needs of a modern economy. The NSHRD also insists on the necessity of modernising the general secondary examination (*tawjihi* examination) and developing new assessments to better measure student progress and performance.

**In line with the NSHRD, the MoE recently developed programmes to expand and adapt youth skills.** For instance, the National Financial and Social Education Programme, established in partnership with the NGO INJAZ, seeks to integrate the subject of financial culture into the grade 7-12 curricula with the aim of improving students' capacity to make coherent financial decisions in their daily lives and in the future. The project is supported by the Central Bank of Jordan and other financial institutions. In another vein, the government strives to offer extracurricular activities in sports, music, debate, film making or photography to develop students' curiosity and openness.

**Over the last years, sustained efforts have been made to offer career guidance and counselling.** These services support students in selecting post-secondary paths matching their abilities and aspirations. These services remain insufficient at lower education levels (Elabed and Elmeri, 2016). The NSHRD stresses the importance of providing secondary students with career guidance and counselling on different education opportunities and the employment outcomes of chosen paths. In higher education, the centres of the King Abdullah II Fund for Development (KAFD) in 27 universities aim to support students in understanding labour requirements and equip them with the necessary skills to increase their employability. The KAFD also created the ForUs Portal, which harmonises the efforts of public, private and civil society organisations (CSOs) in areas of career guidance, capacity building, volunteerism, job viewing and entrepreneurship.

**Furthermore, the NSHRD focuses on offering appropriate and positive learning environments with up-to-date infrastructure and sufficient resources.** Providing a supportive leaning environment to boost innovation and excellence is one of the government's top priorities. For instance, the United States Agency for International Development supports the MoE's plans to build, expand and refurbish schools in underserved areas to respond to increasing enrolment. The Madrasati's programme focuses on renovating existing schools to make them more stimulating, appealing and safe for students. Madrasati currently works in 500 schools across Jordan and has 140 partners from the public, private and civil society sectors. The Jordan Education Initiative aims at developing technologically-savvy schools by providing electronic learning resources and information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, and integrating ICT tools into education. At another level, the QRTA developed Model Community Schools that provide students with reading clubs, literacy training and community-parent-school coalitions that strengthen relations between the school and the local community.

**Last, reforming the education system also involves improving teachers' skills and qualifications.** The NSHRD strategy highlights the low qualifications of new teachers due to the poor standards adopted in the teacher selection process at the Civil Service Bureau (HRD, 2016). As a result, the strategy proposes to reform teacher selection by reviewing admission criteria and to strengthen the Initial Teacher Education Programme to provide trainees with a solid post-graduate professional diploma. The one-year coaching programme, supervised by the QRTA, aims to ensure teachers have the basic skills and confidence to manage a classroom. The QRTA also trains teachers in diverse specialisations, including environmental education, and co-ordinates various community practice networks across Jordan. Additionally, the QRTA organises International Baccalaureate Workshops twice a year to ensure continuous professional development for teachers and school staff. The NSHRD proposes similar initiatives, stressing the importance of establishing a continuous professional development system for teachers. Programmes such as Madrasati's Proud to be a Teacher and the Queen Rania Foundation Award honouring distinguished public school teachers reinforce professional self-esteem.

**Educational grants and loans are limited to university education.** Currently, youth aged 18 or above can apply to the MoHESR's Student Support Fund for a university fee grant or loan. The system is due to be reformed with the creation of a new financial institution, the Student Aid Agency, to ensure all qualified students receive needed financial support. Both the NSHRD and Jordan 2025 also prescribe a set of reforms restructuring admission exceptions and eliminating unfair privileges to ensure equal access to higher education on fair and merit-based conditions. Currently, parallel university admissions admit young people with low *tawjihi* examination scores upon payment of additional fees. This system contradicts the Jordanian Constitution principles of equity and equal opportunity. The NSHRD aims gradually to phase out parallel admissions but stalled in 2017 (Ibáñez Prieto, 2017).

### Box 2.1. Public education expenditure in Jordan

**Education spending per student and as a share of government spending dropped in recent years.** While absolute public spending on education increased by JOD 207.3 million (Jordanian dinar, approximately USD 292.2 million) in the last six years, education spending as a share of the government budget decreased by 2.8 percentage points between 2014 and 2017 (Table 2.1). Meanwhile, the number of students has significantly increased, from 1.7 million in 2011 to 2 million in 2017, with most of the increase occurring after 2014. The education expenditure per student therefore dropped from JOD 585.1 (USD 825) in 2014 to JOD 516.5 (USD 728) in 2017.

**Table 2.1. Public education expenditure in Jordan, 2011, 2014 and 2017**

| | 2011* | 2014* | 2017** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Public spending on education (in JOD) | 836.5 million | 1 047 million | 1 043 million |
| Public spending on education (% of total gov. budget) | 12.7 | 12.9 | 9.9 |
| Total students | 1.7 million | 1.8 million | 2.0 million |
| Public spending on education per student (in JOD) | 500.9 | 585.1 | 516.5 |

*Sources*: *MoF and USAID (2015), *Public Expenditure Perspective 2015*, http://www.dai.com/assets/images/news/PEP-Pages.pdf; **Generated from General Budget Department (2017).

**Public education spending is split among numerous entities.** The MoE takes the lion's share of the allocation (83.8%), followed by the MoHESR (11.8%) (Table 2.2). Only 7.7% of the MoE's current expenditure is dedicated to rent, building maintenance and direct input to teaching (92.3% of the budget is reserved for staff costs). This share is three times lower than the average for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries (23%). Universities have difficulties in meeting their operational costs, increasing the reliance on funding from private sources, including students' fees, which affects quality and equity.

**Table 2.2. Estimated public education expenditure by entity, 2017** (in million JOD)

| | Expenditure | Share of education spending (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Total | 1 043.9 | 100.0 |
| MoE | 874.3 | 83.8 |
| MoHESR | 123.5 | 11.8 |
| VVTC | 13.2 | 1.3 |
| Higher Education Accreditation Commission | 3.7 | 0.4 |
| Scientific Research Fund | 6.9 | 0.7 |
| MoPIC Basic Education Program | 3.3 | 0.3 |
| Armed Forces Department of Education | 19.0 | 1.8 |

*Sources*: General Budget Department (2017).

*Sources*: MoHESR (2016), *Admission Regulations for Students in Public Universities*; OECD (2016), *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2016-en.

### *2.2.2. Employment policies*

**The numerous agencies dealing with (youth) employment reflect the topic's importance to government and society.** Approximately 45 local, national and international agencies deal with youth employment issues in Jordan (ETF, 2014). The institutional landscape is composed of public institutions, such as the MoL, the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), the Economic and Social Council, the Employment, Technical and Vocational Training (E-TVET) Council and Fund, the VTC, the Civil Service Bureau and the Social Security Corporation, along with numerous civil society and royal NGOs, the largest being the KAFD.

**The NES seeks to increase the quantity and quality of employment in Jordan**. As stipulated in the strategy, through short-, medium- and long-term interventions, the MoE aims to i) reduce unemployed; ii) ensure better skills matching and boost small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) growth; and iii) increase productivity and restructure the economy. In the short term, the NES proposes a set of laws on Foreign Labour Regulation regulating foreign workers' jobs and gradually replacing foreign workers by nationals without compromising marketplace competitiveness and while continuing to promote brain circulation and foreign investment, in addition to curtailing public sector employment and aligning wage structure between public sector and private sector. In the medium term, the NES stresses expanding social security coverage to SMEs to encourage young people to take up jobs in this sector. The NES also presses the government to take long-term measures, such as promoting technical and vocational education and training and on-the-job training, and scaling up school-to-work transition programmes, to equip youth with relevant skills and to reduce the unemployment periods of young graduates.

**Jordan 2025 stresses the importance of enhancing entrepreneurial spirit among students.** Linkages between the private sector and education institutions have to be improved by introducing courses on innovation. Various secondary school initiatives promote entrepreneurial capacities and enhance employability skills. INJAZ initiated a comprehensive programme promoting entrepreneurial skills and providing youth with job search and soft skills. Similar initiatives have been conducted by the NGO Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD) and the Business Development Centre through customised capacity-building programmes. The KAFD, in partnership with the non-profit organisation Lothan Youth Achievement Center, provides English language courses and soft skills training to young trainees to develop their professional and personal aspirations.

**Jordan also foresees the creation of business incubators to enhance young people's capacity to start businesses.** A programme was recently launched in partnership with the World Bank to improve access to funds for SMEs, although it targets adults and does not offer particular support to young people. The KAFD's Productive Youth project connects youth with small business development funding opportunities. Another KAFD project, the Youth Empowerment Window, provides financial, technical and logistical support to turn young people's innovative ideas into start-ups. The Development Employment Fund provides financial support to small enterprises and promotes entrepreneurial culture in universities. Other organisations, such as the Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation and the UNDP, provide business support services and financing.

**Promoting greater female participation in the labour market is another top government priority.** The NES, E-TVET Strategy (2014-2020) and Jordan 2025 all stress increasing the inclusiveness of the current TVET system to encourage young women to enrol. In 2011, the NES highlighted the importance of promoting female labour

force participation by reviewing laws and regulations that affect women's decisions to work, such as the availability of part-time employment, social protection and maternity insurance. Yet, despite these recommendations, few concrete initiatives have been implemented to increase young women's participation in vocational training or the labour market.

### *2.2.3. Health policies*

**Over the last decades, Jordan's health sector has made significant progress.** Although a number of health risks persist, the government strives to provide young people with better access to health facilities and services, regardless of their location, sex or social background. Although health is not a constitutional right, a set of articles in the amended Public Health Law 47 /2008 ensure the well-being of all Jordanians and ascribe primary responsibility for providing health care to all citizens to the state.

**The Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Royal Medical Services are the two main public institutions in charge of providing health services to Jordanians.** Alongside these two institutions, the public sector also includes university hospitals (University of Jordan Hospital, King Abdullah University Hospital), as well as the Centre for Diabetes, Endocrinology and Genetics. Other private, non-governmental and international actors, such as private clinics, charity association clinics, international NGOs and United Nations (UN) agencies, provide health services throughout the country. Pursuant to Law 9/1999, the High Health Council is responsible for identifying health sector priorities, developing health policies and strategies, and co-ordinating the work of all health institutions. Other public institutions, such as the Higher Population Council, which promotes sexual and reproductive health (SRH), are also in charge of developing health policies.

**Providing universal health coverage is a top priority for Jordan.** Free health services are available for all children under 6, regardless of their parents' insurance status. Youth under 18 are covered as long as they are enrolled in education and one of their parents has a public health insurance (Health Act 83/2004). Currently, the MoH is evaluating insuring children and adolescents aged 6-18 not currently covered by the system. After 18 years, health insurance for men depends on their education or employment status: the civil health insurance covers male university students up to age 25 only upon presentation of registration. By contrast, young women continue to be covered by their parents' insurance until marriage.

**Although Jordan 2025 mentions the need to establish youth-friendly health care centres and provide young people with SRH and mental health services, few measures have been implemented.** The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child highlights the lack of financial and human resources dedicated to youth health policies in Jordan, especially regarding mental and SRH services. Although the MoH has recently taken some action to improve youth-friendly health service, little information is available. Numerous challenges remain to enhancing the responsiveness of the health system to youth needs, including lack of a co-ordinated and centralised youth health strategy. Neither the National Strategy for Health Sector in Jordan (2015-2019) nor the National Reproductive Health Strategy (2013-2017) address young people's health issues directly. Although these strategies recognise youth as key actors in the development process, there is no clear definition of youth as a distinct group with specific health needs. Similarly, these strategies lack specific indicators and segregated data on youth to monitor and assess the impact of health interventions on young Jordanians. Health services are provided to all citizens with no specific services for youth, except for school health

services that mainly focus on periodical medical examination, referrals and awareness sessions.

**The National Strategy for Health Sector in Jordan (2015-2019) highlights priorities to improve the quality and efficiency of health services**. The strategy aims at implementing various programmes. Some directly or indirectly target young people, including the National Strategy for the Prevention of Diabetes and Non-communicable Diseases, the promotion of healthy lifestyles among children and youth, the reduction of road traffic injuries, and the promotion of mental health programmes at primary and secondary schools.

**Schools are the main location for youth health interventions, provided by the School Health Directorate of the MoH**. The MoH provides periodic and comprehensive screening services to primary and secondary school students (general, dental and psychological), as well as vaccinations in accordance with the national vaccination programme. In addition, the MoH promotes healthy lifestyle and behaviours among school students. INJAZ developed a health awareness promotion programme for students (7-11 years old) with support from USAID (JCAP Project) and in cooperation with MoE.

**The government strives to expand health education beyond educational institutions to reach more young people**. The MoH established youth committees aimed at 17-30-year-olds that organise sports and awareness activities promoting healthy behaviours within local communities. Similarly, the MoY conducts annual interactive camps for youth aged 15-24 to encourage healthy lifestyles and raise awareness about reproductive health issues. Additionally, the youth-led Y-Peer Network uses social media, theatre and interactive workshops to reach youth aged 18-30 and raise awareness about healthy behaviours, reproductive health and gender-based violence.

**Responding to growing tobacco use among youth, the government implemented tobacco and substance abuse awareness interventions in recent years to educate on the risks of smoking and drugs and to provide support to quit.** For instance, the MoH runs an annual campaign to raise youth awareness about tobacco risks and different ways to stop smoking. Some cessation clinics funded by the MoH also offer free services to help young smokers quit. Other interventions focus on preventing substance abuse through workshops and seminars involving stakeholders such as the All Jordan Youth Commission (AJYC), the Anti-Narcotics Police Department, the MoE, the Royal Health Awareness Society and many Jordanian Universities.

**The number of SRH interventions is limited.** The National Reproductive Health/Family Planning Strategy (2013-2017) does not define youth as a population segment with specific needs and focuses on three general priorities: developing SRH policies, providing equitable and high-quality reproductive health information and services, and promoting positive change in reproductive health beliefs and behaviours in communities. The MoH currently pilots adolescents care services, yet youth-friendly health centres do not exist systematically. Although adolescents can access youth-friendly health services through women and child health centres, there is little evidence of the youth-friendly nature of such services. The availability and suitability of SRH services for young people are controversial; SRH providers often display judgmental attitudes towards single or unmarried young people, sometimes refusing to provide them with counselling and medical services or requesting the presence of the mother to examine a single young woman, while young males tend to avoid maternal child health centers considering them a space for women (Khalaf et al, 2010). Young people thus visit reproductive health centres reluctantly.

**SRH education does not target adolescents**. Awareness-raising programmes start addressing reproductive health only after age 18 due to cultural constraints. In Jordan, sexual intercourse is acceptable only in the context of marriage. Such cultural norms explain the difficulty of implementing SRH education and services. The Higher Population Council (HPC) co-operates with universities to include SRH education into mandatory university courses. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child strongly encouraged the government to adopt a comprehensive SRH policy for adolescents and ensure that SRH education becomes part of the mandatory curriculum, giving special attention to preventing early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2014).

### *2.2.4. Civic participation policies*

**Although several national documents mention (youth) civic participation, there is no distinct policy to foster it and active youth citizenship in Jordan.** The National Strategy for Women (2013-2017) aims to empower women socially, politically and economically and gives young women a prominent role, especially regarding access to higher education and vocational schools (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 2013). The strategy emphasises the need to increase female representation in parliament, judiciary institutions, leadership and executive positions, private industrial and trade companies, and CSOs. The National Population Strategy (2000-2020) also emphasises increased female representation in and contribution to policy and decision making but does not mention young people explicitly. Jordan 2025 proposes several interventions to institutionalise public consultation mechanisms, such as using social media and e-governance tools, rewarding civic contributions with national honours programmes, adding a civics component to school curriculum to teach rights and responsibilities, and creating a National Coordinating Volunteer Council to increase citizen involvement in volunteerism. More recently, the Comprehensive National Plan for Human Rights (CNPHR) (2016-2025) reaffirmed citizens' civil and political rights with a special emphasis on marginalised groups, such as women, people with disabilities, and children, but it does not explicitly refer to young people. The CNPHR called for reinforcing citizens' awareness about their rights and the different mechanisms that exist to protect them, and insisted on the importance of building citizen and CSO capacities to allow them to engage truly in decision making processes. Several aspects of these strategies reflect King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein's vision of citizen engagement in policy making processes and democratic practices in Jordan. The King has stressed that democracy is not only about voting but is an on-going process led by every citizen that consists in holding elected officials accountable to their commitments and in remaining engaged in the discussions and debates on issues facing the country (King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, 2012). King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein called upon Jordanians to pressure representatives who do not fulfil their commitments through local community groups, town hall meetings or social media.

**Government youth and sports centres foster cultural and leisure activities.** Most of these public interventions are conducted by the MoY, in accordance with its mandate. The MoY supervises a number of youth centres, sports complexes, youth camps and community-based services giving young people aged 12-30 the opportunity to engage in various leisure, cultural, sports and learning activities (Noaman, 2007). The MoY's youth centres generally provide diverse cultural and educational activities, aiming to stimulate and raise awareness among youth about diverse topics, most relating to education and political participation (Adas, 2001). For instance, in 2016, youth centres organised

various sessions on the importance of participating in elections. Situated in the governorates of Amman, Madaba, Zarqa, Irbid and Aqaba, youth cities include a wide range of sports and recreational facilities, such as swimming pools, playgrounds, parks, halls and theatres, as well as host training and the official games of sports federations. The MoY also supervises youth camps, which generally take place twice a year in the winter and summer. Youth camp programmes vary depending on the government's priorities but aim to raise participants' awareness about diverse issues, such as political participation, the media and countering extremism. Youth camps also generally include diverse interactive activities, such as workshops, field visits, lectures and volunteering.

**NGOs lead most interventions aimed at enabling youth community engagement.** Numerous small youth NGOs are active in organising volunteer activities in local communities, raising awareness among citizens and promoting their active participation (Al-Dajani, 2016, Katarzyna, 2007). On a larger scale, the KAFD offers dialogue and volunteerism clubs to provide young people with the necessary skills to engage in civic and political life. Additionally, the AJYC – a royal initiative implemented by the KAFD – provides young people with training in dialogue skills and scientific research courses to shed light on key national challenges and encourage solutions to address them. Likewise, the JOHUD created various community development centres, including the Princess Basma Youth Centre, which provides young people with support and resources to express their needs and aspirations and to shape their future by thinking creatively and critically about themselves and their role in society.

**Several initiatives strive to enhance authorities' accountability and provide access to information that enables young people to engage further in public and political life**. Under the Open Government Partnership, the MoPIC developed a central information portal, Inform, which makes policy and strategy documents available to all Jordan citizens to inform public discussion. Such ICT tools have the potential to enable youth to obtain information, express their views and get involved in public debate. Similarly, the KAFD's Jordanian Media Credibility Monitor consists in an information platform to hold Jordanian media outlets accountable and examine the credibility of broadcast and published content. The AJYC created the Voice of Jordanian Youth, a debating platform facilitating young Jordanians engagement in local, Arab and international issues. The AJYC's Messengers of Moderation Via Social Media project equips youth with the skills and knowledge necessary for a moderate and fact-based intellectual dialogue on social networks.

## 2.3. Institutional framework for youth

**Topics of interest to young people are as diverse as society itself.** Thus, there can hardly be only one ministry in charge of responding to their needs. The state addresses youth needs in a number of ministries that define and influence institutional youth frameworks. This section presents the institutional landscape and analyses the functioning of the governing body for youth issues: the MoY.

### *2.3.1. Institutions for youth policies*

**Successful youth policies require close collaboration among various government agencies, NGOs and international organisations.** The different government agencies develop policies directly or indirectly affecting youth as part of their ministerial programmes. Their sectoral approach makes it necessary to count on the collaboration of the different actors involved. The institutional landscape also entails NGOs, Royal NGOs

international organisations, which provide technical support to different government entities and, in many cases, co-finance actions directed at youth (UNFPA, 2015). The wide variety of stakeholders working on youth issues in Jordan reflects the interest in improving youth well-being (Table 2.3). However, public-private co-operation on youth issues remains weak.

**The central executive and legislative institutions set the basis for youth policies.** The Lower House of Representatives endorses proposed laws, including legislation related to youth. The Parliamentary Committee for Youth and Sport reviews laws related to youth and sports unions, centres and clubs, as well as legislating youth development, however, it is considered rather weak and suffering from limited accountability mechanisms. On the executive side, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is at the apex of all government agencies and translates royal directives into overarching national agendas and strategies, therefore endorsing all sectoral policies including those concerning youth. For instance, the PMO is currently heading the National Youth Strategy steering committee.

**The Ministry of Finance (MoF), the MoPIC and the MoSD shape the financial, strategic and civil societal aspects of the framework for youth policies.** The MoF co-ordinates budget formulation in all government agencies and enforces good financial management and accountability. As a central government institution, the MoPIC plays a key role in supporting youth-related policies, contributing to designing, implementing and evaluating economic and social policies, while being in charge of fostering international co-operation to support development efforts. Its mandate also consists in promoting CSOs active participation in policy making processes, for instance by organising public consultations on national development plans. Furthermore, the Charitable Associations Record, under the MoSD, oversees over 3 000 charitable associations among which are youth organisations, including 1 000 registered under other ministries, such as the MoH or the Ministry of Culture (MoC). The institution is in charge of registering associations and approving their establishment, following up on their work and financial situation, supporting their projects through services and funds, and approving their dissolution based on reports provided by the MoSD.

**Different ministries are in charge of developing and supervising policies affecting young people.** There is currently no comprehensive framework to regulate and implement youth policies across all sectors but rather a combination of legislation and ministries that supervise and implement youth programmes and interventions. These include the MoE, the MoHESR, the MoL, the MoH, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Innovation, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs and the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. These ministries assume different roles regarding youth affairs, such as developing and designing youth policies, funding and assessing youth interventions, supervising youth organisations and providing youth-related services. Policy makers in different sectors are increasingly attentive to youth issues in policy documents and national strategies. Developing a horizontal and vertical youth governance structure remains a priority in Jordan, but the absence of harmonisation among different government institutions hampers designing and co-ordinating youth policies leading to fragmentation and duplications.

## Table 2.3. Key Jordanian institutions and their roles

| Institution | Roles | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Policy drafting | Laws and legislation drafting | Registration and regulation | Services provision | Co-ordination | Data and studies | Supervision | M&E | Funding | Infrastructure support |
| Department of Statistics | | | | | | • | | | | |
| E-TVET Fund | • | | | | • | • | | | • | |
| Higher Education Council | • | • | • | | | | • | | | |
| High Health Council | • | | | | • | • | | • | | |
| Higher Population Council | • | | | | • | • | | | | |
| International co-operation (Canada, European Union, Germany, Finland, Kuwait, Japan, Spain, United States) | | | | • | | • | | | • | • |
| Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation | | | | | | | | | • | |
| Ministry of Agriculture | | | | | | | | | • | |
| Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs | | | | • | | | • | | • | • |
| Ministry of Education | | | | • | | | | | | • |
| Ministry of Finance | • | | | | | | | | • | |
| Ministry of Finance | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ministry of Health | | • | | • | | • | • | | • | • |
| Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research | | | | • | • | • | | • | | |
| Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply | • | | • | | | | | | • | |
| Ministry of Interior | | | | | | | • | • | • | |
| Ministry of Labor | | • | • | • | | | • | • | • | |
| Ministry of Municipal Affairs | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation | • | | | | • | | | | | |
| Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs | | • | • | | • | | • | • | | |
| Ministry of Public Sector Development | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ministry of Public Works and Housing | | | | | | | | | | • |
| Ministry of Social Development | • | • | • | • | | | | • | | • |
| Ministry of Youth | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| National Center for Human Resources Development | | | | | | • | | | | |
| NGOs, CSOs, Non-profit organisations | | | | • | | | | | | |
| Royal NGOs (KAFD, Queen Rania Foundation, JOHUD, AJYC) | | | | • | | • | | | • | • |
| Parliament | | • | | | | | | | | |
| Social and Economic Council | | | | | | • | | | | |
| Student Aid Fund | | | | | | | | | • | |
| UN agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP) | | | | • | | • | | | • | • |
| Vocational Training Corporation | | • | • | • | | | | | | |

*Notes*: UNFPA = United Nations Population Fund; UNHCR = United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; UNICEF = United Nations Children's Fund; WFP = World Food Programme.
*Source*: Own elaboration based on FGDs, interviews and literature review.

**The MoY does not have the power to function as an inter-ministerial co-operation mechanism.** The MoY is the ministry principally focused on youth. However, there is no law giving it exclusive responsibility to design, develop, implement and assess youth-related policies across all sectors. Though, the MoY participates in different boards that gather government and non-governmental actors To overcome this lack of institutional leadership, a law has recently been submitted to the House of Representatives to give the MoY primary responsibility for managing youth affairs in Jordan.

**Co-ordination is a challenge not only across but within sectors.** Within each sector, ministries co-operate with a myriad of other government and non-governmental agencies, which may complicate attribution of responsibilities. The NSHRD highlights, for instance, that the different ministries involved in developing human resources (the MoE, MoHESR, MoL and MoSD) do not co-ordinate sufficiently to evaluate the potential impact of their respective policies on other sectors or to agree on a national strategy, budgets and executive plans. The NSHRD thus, to drive implementation forward, ensure coordination and accountability, proposes the creation of three new structures involving government, civil society and private representatives: the NSHRD Reform Board, the NSHRD Results and Effectiveness Unit and the Executive NSHRD Working Group Committee. Although not yet operational, these new structures would improve co-ordination among all agencies involved in human resources development.

**In addition to government agencies and ministries, a diversity of non-profit organisations provide services and implement various interventions for young people in Jordan.** Royal NGOs play a major role in complementing government programmes for youth in Jordan. These include the KAFD and the Queen Rania Foundation, which have established various education projects and raising-awareness activities for young people. Officially, royal NGOs are not directly linked to the government. Established by royal decrees and often headed by a member of the royal family, they have separate institutions and distinct budgets. National NGOs also provide young people with services and organise diverse youth activities across the country. They are registered under different ministries according to the type of activities and the laws governing the sector in which they operate. In addition, religious and charitable organisations provide support to Jordan's most vulnerable youth groups. They are generally community based and active at the local level, and most run local youth centres and organise extracurricular activities (Katarzyna, 2007).

**International organisations and bilateral development agencies are important influencers and financing partners for youth policies.** UN agencies, the World Bank, bilateral development agencies and branches of international NGOs are active in all sectors of youth policies, especially in the employment and civic participation sectors. UN agencies and bilateral development agencies (from Canada, the European Union, Germany, Finland, Japan, Spain and the United States) influence interventions targeted at youth by funding a number of national NGOs and providing financial support to government programmes. The great degree of this financial support for youth programmes may compromise their sustainability, being conditional on the persistence of international donors and their agendas.

**In the absence of permanent communication and co-ordination platforms, stakeholders involved in youth policies resort to informal communication and punctual memorandums of agreement.** Communication platforms often consist in time-bound committees set up to develop and implement specific interventions, but such efforts are limited in time and scope. The multiplicity of actors and differing priorities

complicate information sharing. As a result, information, data and analyses are rarely communicated to relevant decision makers across sectors. Co-operation mechanisms between public institutions and NGOs are fragmented and based on punctual memorandums of agreement. For instance, NGO interventions in public schools have to be conducted in co-operation with the MoE based on a co-operation agreement. Similarly, the KAFD maintains a solid dialogue with Jordanian universities to ensure the outreach of its interventions, demonstrating a certain dialogue between public and non-government institutions.

**Although laws and regulations require all government agencies to submit financial reports to the MoF and executive reports to the PMO, there are few dedicated evaluations of youth policies.** There is no national monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system on youth policies, nor do the financial or executive reports entail specific youth indicators. Technical and financial reports generated by government and non-governmental agencies focus on quantitative data and do not necessarily reflect the quality of work achieved, particularly when looking at binding financial relations based on strategic objectives. Furthermore, resources allocated by the government to M&E are insufficient, and stakeholders often lack interest and skills in this field. To tackle these challenges, the MoE recently set up an Education Quality and Accountability Unit that enforces accountability and improves evaluation processes, which formerly focused on infrastructure more than the quality of teaching and learning. The NSHRD recommends similar units for the MoHESR, MoL and MoSD.

**Lack of co-operation among stakeholders is reflected in insufficient monitoring and evaluating of youth policies.** Most progress reports are based on bilateral agreements, and access is generally limited to the concerned parties, preventing other actors from benefiting from the information. Monitoring and evaluation of (youth) policies are hampered by the absence of an archiving system that would ensure institutional memory and the availability of reports. Last, although CSOs must report annually to the Charitable Associations Record, these reports are hardly accessible, and their purpose is unclear. The main publicly available programme reports are usually published by international donors on line.

### *2.3.2. Organisational analysis of the Ministry of Youth*

**The government entity responsible for youth development and policies has experienced numerous transformations over the last decades.** In the 1960s, King Hussein Bin Talal put youth on the policy agenda by establishing the Hussein Work and Construction Camps and the Al Hussein Youth City. These followed the then prevailing policy focus on young people's physical fitness and volunteerism, providing spaces for young people to practice sports and undertake leisure activities. The first government body, the Youth Welfare Foundation created in 1986, was in charge of providing services to young people through youth centres. In the 1970s, the Youth Welfare Foundation was subordinated to the Ministry of Culture and Youth, to be transformed into the independent Ministry of Youth and Sports in 1984. In 2001, this ministry was dissolved and transformed into the Higher Council for Youth. In 2001, it was complemented by its financial arm, the National Youth and Sports Fund, which was supposed to fund youth movements and programmes and the development of youth infrastructure throughout the country. This transformation reflected King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein stance on youth policies as being important for the political agenda and not limited to a ministry but approached as a transversal topic. His vision was to change the perception of young people from beneficiaries to partners in the development process, and he called for

government action to address youth issues, including poverty, unemployment and lack of civic participation.

**The global financial crisis of 2007-08 affected Jordan's public finances, leading to successive reductions in the budget dedicated to youth policies and triggering institutional uncertainty.** The government's 2011 reform and restructuring of the public sector subordinated the Higher Council for Youth and the National Youth and Sports Fund to the MoC. However, that year, a royal decree announced the re-establishment of the Higher Council of Youth, which was simultaneously transformed into a Ministry of Youth and Sports. Only six months later, the MoY was transformed again into a Higher Council. In a context of financial constraints and multiple actors, the Higher Council struggled to address growing youth issues, such as violence, drugs and extremism, and failed to co-ordinate its action with other stakeholders, drawing criticisms. Thus, in 2016, a royal decree replaced the Higher Council of Youth by a MoY again. These successive reversals reflect the instability of the youth institutional framework in Jordan.

**The newly created MoY's role is to foster youth development and promote youth participation in national development processes.** The transformation into a ministry reflects reflecting King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein's continued support to youth development and policies. The new MoY is responsible for developing youth programmes that foster youth skills and capabilities, proposing laws and legislation that encourage youth participation in political, social and cultural life, and mobilising funds and grants to support youth initiatives and movements. It also develops communication channels between the government and young people, reaching out to and mobilising youth throughout the country and encouraging media to cover youth. Additionally, it co-ordinates efforts among all government agencies. Next to these policy making and co-ordination responsibilities, the MoY is also in charge of developing, maintaining and supervising the infrastructure of youth centres, clubs, hostels and sports facilities operating under the ministry (Box 2.2).

**The MoY consists of a number of divisions and entities.** A Committee of the Ministry of Youth, formed by a Ministerial decree, is chaired by the Secretary General and the Director of the National Youth and Sports Fund as deputy, and is in charge of planning, co-ordinating and following up on the ministry's activities and programmes. The committee is also responsible for studying regulations and instructions related to youth affairs, managing the budget and developing recruitment plans. The Higher Council for Youth acts as an advisory body under the MoY, consisting of representatives from government institutions and civil society. The council contributes significantly to developing strategic decision making processes and plans within the MoY. The Minister also oversees several entities, such as the Board of Directors of the National Youth and Sports Fund and the Youth Leadership Development Center and the Youth Cities Council. The Secretary-General supervises the logistics directorate, the financial and administrative affairs directorate and the engineering directorate including three other directorates responsible for communication with counterparts and youth clubs.

**Box 2.2. Infrastructure in the governorates of Jordan's Ministry of Youth**

**Jordan developed a wide network of infrastructure that allows the MoY to reach out to a large number of young people.** The MoY operates, manages, funds and supervises 190 youth centres (106 for young men and 84 for young women), 5 youth campsites, 9 youth hostels and 5 sports cities across the country. Youth centres generally provide diverse cultural and educational activities to young people, while youth camps include diverse activities and aim to raise participants' awareness about various political and social issues. However, the MoY allocates most funding to sports activities. As the flagships of the government youth policy, youth cities include a wide range of sports and recreational facilities, and host training and the official games of sports federations.

**Additionally, the MoY oversees the work of the Youth Leadership Development Center.** Its mission is to build the capacity of youth stakeholders (including government officials) and young people in project planning and implementation, leadership, policies and civic engagement. Although the centre is administratively and financially independent of the MoY, it is managed by a committee headed by the MoY.

**The MoY also oversees the Jordanian Association for Boy Scouts and Girls Guides, an independent entity operating since 1987 and chaired by Princess Basma bint Talal.** This association is in charge of promoting the objectives of the Scout Movement and organising conferences and gatherings of scouts in Jordan.

**The availability of youth services and facilities such as camps and centres varies across governorates.** Despite the wide scope of youth infrastructure throughout the country, the MoY has difficulty reaching all youth equally, given the budget, planning and co-ordination restrictions of the ministry and governorate authorities. Many of the centres are underused and focus on teenagers, ignoring young adults. Young people also have unequal access to information about youth activities and infrastructure depending on their location and social background. The MoY should intensify its communication efforts to reach youth across the country and provide equal opportunities to participate in activities. To this end, the MoY could conduct an assessment of youth facilities across the country and generate a national map of all youth services, both to develop an effective marketing strategy and to find and fill gaps in the provision of youth services.

**Overall, approximately 1 540 staff work for the MoY.** This high number includes local staff in the youth centres and cities, specialised cadres, administrative, financial and technical staff, engineers, and scholars. MoY employees are appointed by the Civil Service Bureau and are not selected on their university degrees or specialisations matching the vacancies. As a result, MoY employees have no specialisation in youth work, and 58% had only secondary education (MoE, 2015). There are training courses in control programming, financial accounting or management, but very few staff have been trained on topics related to youth development. Similarly, at the local level, youth centre

employees generally do not have any qualification related to youth work. In a recent study, many expressed dissatisfaction with working conditions, salaries, lack of adequate training, heavy bureaucratic procedures and long delays for ministerial approvals (Nabulsi, 2016). Furthermore, there is no evidence of standard operating procedures for working with young people.

### *Budget of the Ministry of Youth*

**The MoF co-ordinates budget formulation and allocates funds to youth policies in the different sectors.** Government agencies prepare their budgets based on the MoF's annual budget policy framework paper, budget circulars and guidelines. While the MoF allocates funds to the ministries and agencies according to government priorities and the previous year's budget, there is currently no platform for government agencies and ministries to discuss financial decisions jointly. This enables highly influential officials with strong social networks to shape financial decisions and secure budgets according to their sectors of interest, which may create the impression decisions are arbitrary. In effect, some institutions tend to be neglected in budget allocation. Moreover, aside from the MoY's budget, there is little information on government funds dedicated to youth. The lack of clear youth-related indicators and an overarching youth strategy across all agencies, make it impossible to present the total government spending on youth.

**The MoY's budget represents only 0.2% of total government spending.** In 2017, the MoY budget was JOD 23.5 million (approximately USD 33.1 million), of which 37.9% is spent on administrative and support services, 31.4% on sports programmes and only 30.7% (JOD 7.2 million) on youth development programmes (Table 2.4). Although the institutional changes prevent direct assessment of the MoY's budget over time, the institution's budget decreased due to the difficult economic context of the late 2000s, particularly the funds allocated to programme implementation. Most of the youth development programme budget is dedicated to the development of the new National Youth Strategy (JOD 2 million, or 8.5% of the MoY's budget) and the infrastructure and maintenance of the youth centres, camps, hostels and facilities (JOD 1.8 million, or 7.6% of the MoY's budget).

**Table 2.4. Jordan's Ministry of Youth budget allocations, 2017**
(in million JOD)

| | Total | Current expenditure | Capital expenditure | Percentage of MOY budget |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MoY budget | 23.5 | x | x | x |
| Budget allotments | | | | |
| Administrative and support services | 8.9 | 8.6 | 0.3 | 37.9 |
| Youth development programmes | 7.2 | 3.3 | 3.9 | 30.7 |
| Sports programmes | 7.4 | 1.5 | 5.9 | 31.4 |

*Note*: x = not applicable.
*Source*: General Budget Department (2017)..

### *Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Ministry of Youth*

**This section assesses the institutional capacities of the MoY as the government entity contributing to youth development.** The analysis replicates the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats (SWOT analysis) of the MOY and its predecessor, the Higher Council for Youth (Table 2.5). The analysis is based on semi-structured interviews and workshops conducted between December 2016 and May 2017 with current and former

officials of the MoY, officials of sectoral ministries and other relevant stakeholders. The strengths and weaknesses presented correspond to the internal environment of the MoY. The opportunities and threats that correspond to the external environment are factors that can stimulate processes in favour or against the MoY.

**The strengths the MoY should capitalise on are the newly gained ministerial status, partnerships with different stakeholders and the nationwide infrastructure.** Granting ministerial status to the government body responsible for youth facilitates co-ordination with other government actors and helps place youth on the political agenda. The MoY maintains several memoranda of understanding and co-operation protocols with clubs, NGOs, private sector representatives, government institutions and international organisations. These include financial partnerships to fund youth policies and programmes. The MoY maintains a board of directors with representatives from government and civil society. This board can contribute to mainstreaming youth in sectoral policies, offer a multi-sectoral view within the MoY and become a platform for the voice of youth NGOs within the government.

**Insufficient financial resources, weak co-ordination and lack of monitoring and evaluation weaken the MoY's effectiveness.** In both the former Higher Council for Youth and the current MoY, planning and co-ordination was quite centralised, weakening the capacity of concerned departments. Additionally, stakeholder and board meetings were uncoordinated and lacked minutes, which affected adequate follow-up and co-ordination among the multiple stakeholders in general. The monitoring of activities and annual reporting is rather inconsistent, limiting the possibility of formulating evidence-based policies. Financial allocations from the MoF have been decreasing, and administrative spending is too high in comparison to spending on youth programmes. Moreover, there are no clear rules, regulations or standards for funding youth initiatives. The limited financial resources increase the importance of external contributions from donors, UN agencies and others, which have differing priorities, evidencing the need for clear and transparent co-ordination. Limited funding also affects the training of staff, which is appointed by the Civil Service Bureau and who seldom has the needed qualifications.

**The royal support for youth and the evolving discourse towards broader youth participation are opportunities to strengthen youth policies and the MoY.** Royal speeches continuously emphasise the importance of developing the youth sector and the multi-stakeholder efforts by the government, private sector and CSOs. Historically, this support manifested in financial support for youth policies, including infrastructure investment in youth centres. Over the last years, the official discourse on youth has evolved from a focus on leisure activities and a passive role for youth as recipients of services and programmes to a more active role and ensuring youth participation, especially in youth centres, as well as permitting registration of youth organisations and enhancing their contribution to the development of their communities. Furthermore, the ongoing formulation of a national youth strategy can create a debate on youth's role in national development and encourage cross-sectoral policies.

**The major threats to the MoY are institutional instability and a potential shift in the approach to youth policies from fear of radicalisation.** The numerous institutional changes affect strategy formulation, action plan execution, programme implementation and institutional memory; it also contributes to fragmented priorities and hinders policy continuity. The instability also affects stakeholder co-ordination and the relationship with youth CSOs, which lack a permanent focal point within the government. The

radicalisation and hate speech observed in some neighbouring countries risks a negative media portrayal of youth as problem makers, which can in turn influence a policy shift away from a positive, opportunity-granting approach to youth to a security approach.

**Table 2.5. SWOT analysis of Jordan's MoY**

| | Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|---|
| Internal environment | _ Ministerial status<br>_ Wide network of youth facilities and infrastructure<br>_ Multiple partnerships and co-operation programmes<br>_ Stakeholder representation within the MoY structure | _ Lack of a comprehensive national youth strategy<br>_ Inadequate financial allocations<br>_ Insufficient training of staff<br>_ Centralised decision making<br>_ Inconsistent monitoring and reporting<br>_ Insufficient co-ordination |
| | Opportunities | Threats |
| External environment | _ Continuous royal support<br>_ Evolving discourse on youth<br>_ National and sectoral strategies targeting youth directly or indirectly<br>_ Formulation of the National Youth Strategy | _ Institutional instability<br>_ Stigmatising views on youth (extremism)<br>_ Government financial constraints |

*Source*: Own elaboration based interviews with MoY staff and other stakeholders.

## Annex 2.A1. Participants of round table discussions

This report benefited from a series of round table discussions conducted between February and April 2017.

**Table 2.A1.1. Round table discussion on civic engagement**

| Name | Organisation |
|---|---|
| Badea Qubalit | Higher Population Council |
| Anoud Al-Khatib | All Jordan Youth |
| Qusai Al Zouibi | Ministry of Politics and Parliamentary Affairs |
| Raafat Hujoj | Ministry of Social Development |
| Hana Ahmad | Higher Council for Affairs of Persons with Disabilities |
| Ali Al Kawalda | Ministry of Politics and Parliamentary Affairs |

**Table 2.A1.2. Round table discussion on employment**

| Name | Organisation |
|---|---|
| Hana Ahmad | Higher Council for Affairs of Persons with Disabilities |
| Deema Arabyat | The Jordanian National Commission of Women |
| Nadeen Megbil | Ministry of Youth |
| Suhal Mobida | |
| Belal | Ministry of Social Development |
| Amin Shammout | Jordan Enterprise Development Cooperation |
| Hadeel Abu Soufeh | Higher Council for Affairs of Persons with Disabilities |
| Ahmad Shoqran | Consultant- National Youth Strategy/Employment |
| Ebtisam Mahasneh | Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research |
| Ghada Abu Batnou | Employment, Technical and Vocational Training Fund (E-TVET ) |
| Mohammad Al Shorman | Employment, Technical and Vocational Training Fund (E-TVET ) |

**Table 2.A1.3. Round table discussion on education**

| Name | Organisation |
|---|---|
| Abdullah Ababneh | National Center for Human Resources Development |
| Abdullah Rababaeh | Ministry of Education |
| Basem Odaibat | Ministry of Education |
| Hatem Suhemat | Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs |
| May Ishaq | UNESCO |
| Itaf Al Hadid | Higher Population Council |
| Hadeel Abu Soufeh | Higher Council for Affairs of Persons with Disabilities |
| Hana Ahmad | Higher Council for Affairs of Persons with Disabilities |
| Ali Bederi | Vocational Training Center |
| Jameel Matalaka | Madrasti |
| Sherin Shaheen | Madrasti |
| Wissam Zeidan | Queen Rania Teachers Academy |
| Ebtisam Mahasneh | Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research |
| Kholoud Khalahlah | Economic Social Council |

**Table 2.A1.4. Round table discussion on health**

| Name | Institution |
|---|---|
| Yasmeen Tabbaa | UNFPA |
| Areej Othman | Consultant/ |
| Muien Abshaer | High Health Council |
| Rawan Hazin | HCAC |
| Maha Al-Ghazoo | Higher Population Council |
| Dr. Basheer | Ministry of Health |
| Haneen Odeh | Royal Health Awareness Society |
| Ibtehal Kasabeh | |
| Hana Mobaydeen | Higher Council for Affairs of Persons with Disabilities |
| Fatima Al Abbas | WHO |

**Table 2.A1.5. Oral history workshop: Understanding the youth development context in Jordan**

| Name | Position |
|---|---|
| Dr. Mahmoud Sarhan | Retired/MOY – last title: Deputy Secretary General |
| Dr. Rashad Al Zubi | Retired/MOY – last title: Deputy Secretary General/Technical and Strategic Affairs and Director of Al Hussein Sports City |
| Mohammad Al Smadi | Retired/MOY – last title: Director/ Youth Leadership Development Centre |
| Hanan Al Nua'imat | Retired/MOY – last title: Director – Madaba Governorate Youth Directorate |
| Nidal Tawalbeh | Retired/MOY – last title: Director of Internal Audit |
| Youth Al Saa'd | Retired/MOY – last title: Deputy Director - National Youth and Sport Fund |
| HE Ma'moun Nour El-Deen | Former President (1st President) – Higher Council for Youth |

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# Chapter 3. Improving youth labour market outcomes with technical and vocational education and training

**Young Jordanians' labour market outcomes are alarming.** The country's youth unemployment rate is approximately twice the global average (Barcucci and Mryyan, 2014; Dimova and Stephan, 2016). Even more striking, approximately one-third of unemployed young people are university graduates (Dimova, Elder and Stephan, 2016), explained by a mismatch between skills supplied and skills demanded in the market (Dimova and Stephan, 2016, Dimova, Elder and Stephan, 2016). Furthermore, many young people are in vulnerable, informal and low-paid employment (Chapter 1). Jordan's National Employment Strategy (2011-2020) (NES) and Jordan 2025: A National Vision and Strategy (2015-2025) place great importance on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as a potential policy measure to ameliorate the youth labour market.

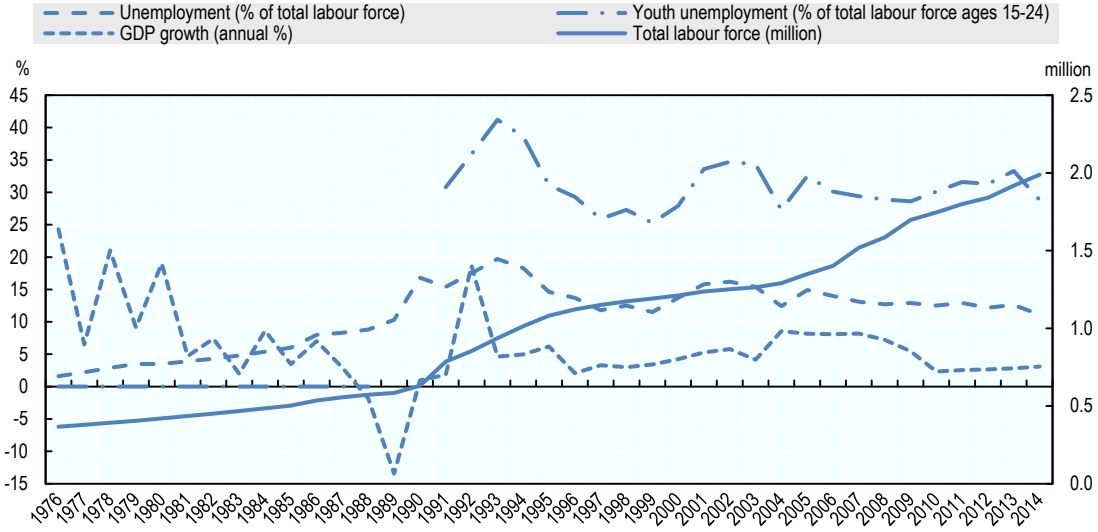
**This chapter provides a diagnostic of the labour market situation for young people in Jordan and whether TVET graduates perform better.** The first section presents the general dynamics in the labour market; the second section assesses the influence of TVET on youth employability and wages, as well as firms' efficiency; the third section presents the major challenges of the TVET system and some characteristics of TVET students.

## 3.1. Structure of Jordan's economy

**Employment generation has not kept pace with the growth of the labour force.** Economic growth spiked in the 1970s and has slowed down since the 1980s, which, in addition to population growth, had important implications for labour market dynamics. Structural developments in Jordan's economy largely mirror developments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (Assaad, 2014). The region's boom in the 1960s-70s allowed a spike in government expenditure, resulting in a bloated public sector. In 2015, 38.6% of the employed population worked in the public sector, above the average for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries of 21.3% (DoS, 2016; OECD, 2015). Since the 1980s, the economy and the public sector have experienced a slowdown; while gross domestic product (GDP) growth is still high and above the OECD average, it is below 1970s rates. At the same time, the labour force nearly quintupled in forty years (from 367 000 in 1976 to 2 million in 2014) (Figure 3.1). This strong growth was favoured by high total fertility rates (7.4 in the 1950s and 3.6 in the early 2000s [Kronfol, 2011]), four waves of immigration (1948, 1967, 1991 and 2003) and return migration from Gulf countries at the end of the oil boom. In the mid-1980s, these demand and supply conditions resulted in a sharp spike in unemployment, which has remained at 12% to 14% ever since. Additionally, there is a large economically inactive population. The labour force participation in Jordan is one of the lowest in the world (40.1% in 2017) and below the MENA average (51.9%) (ILO, 2017). With the current low employment growth, an increase in labour force participation would inevitably lead to a higher unemployment rate.

**A peculiar feature of this overall excess labour supply is the bulge of the youth population.** More than 60% of job seekers in Jordan are under age 25 (IFAD, 2011). Youth unemployment is twice as high as total unemployment and double the global average (Brown et al., 2014; Dimova and Stephan, 2016). High unemployment among educated youth is characteristic in the MENA region. In 2013, approximately 35% of young labour force participants with university degrees in Jordan were unemployed (Dimova and Stephan, 2016).

**Figure 3.1. GDP, unemployment and labour force growth in Jordan**



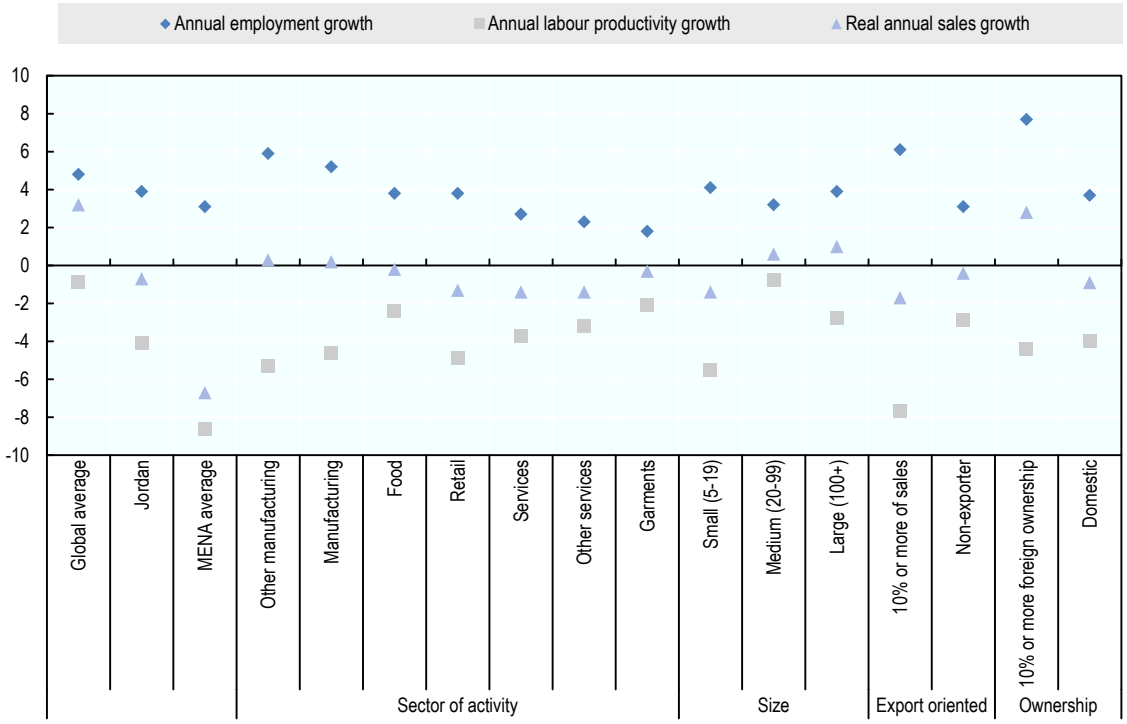

*Source*: 1976-1991 data: UNDP/MoPIC (2012). 1992-2014 data: World Bank (2017).

**The demand for high-skilled workers is lower than the number of graduates.** One explanation is the decline of the public sector as a main employer of individuals with university degrees, while the private sector has not emerged as an equally powerful employer (Taghdisi-Rad, 2012; Dimova and Stephan, 2016). Unlike in the past, the public sector cannot absorb the large number of university graduates. In 2011-12, 47 thousand young people in Jordan obtained a bachelor's degree, whereas the government created around 18 thousand net jobs over the same period (DoS, 2012). Although the private sector is gradually taking over from the public sector as the main engine of employment growth, available jobs are predominantly medium to low skill and low pay, e.g. in construction and the garment industry (Brown et al., 2014).

**Labour demand is relatively high for medium to low skills.** In 2015, the employment growth in the private formal sector was above the MENA average (3.9% in Jordan vs. 3.1% in MENA) (Figure 3.2). Relative employment growth was especially strong in the manufacturing sector, with small enterprises and enterprises with international exposure (be it exporting enterprises or those with foreign ownership). Absolute employment growth was strongest in tourism and hospitality, construction, retail trade, and textiles and clothing (World Bank, 2012). Consequently, most jobs are created in the medium- to low-skill sector. These jobs are less desirable to young Jordanians, especially the highly educated, and are consequently filled by foreign workers, who represent between 22% and 26% of the employed population (ETF, 2014a). Employment growth in sectors desired by educated young Jordanians (financial services, information and communications technology [ICT], mining and other industries) was below average

(World Bank, 2012). While employment grew in 2015, the health of Jordan's enterprises is questionable; annual sales growth was negative, as was labour productivity growth (Figure 3.2). This last can be partially explained by the low level of technological upgrading among enterprises (Dimova, 2016).

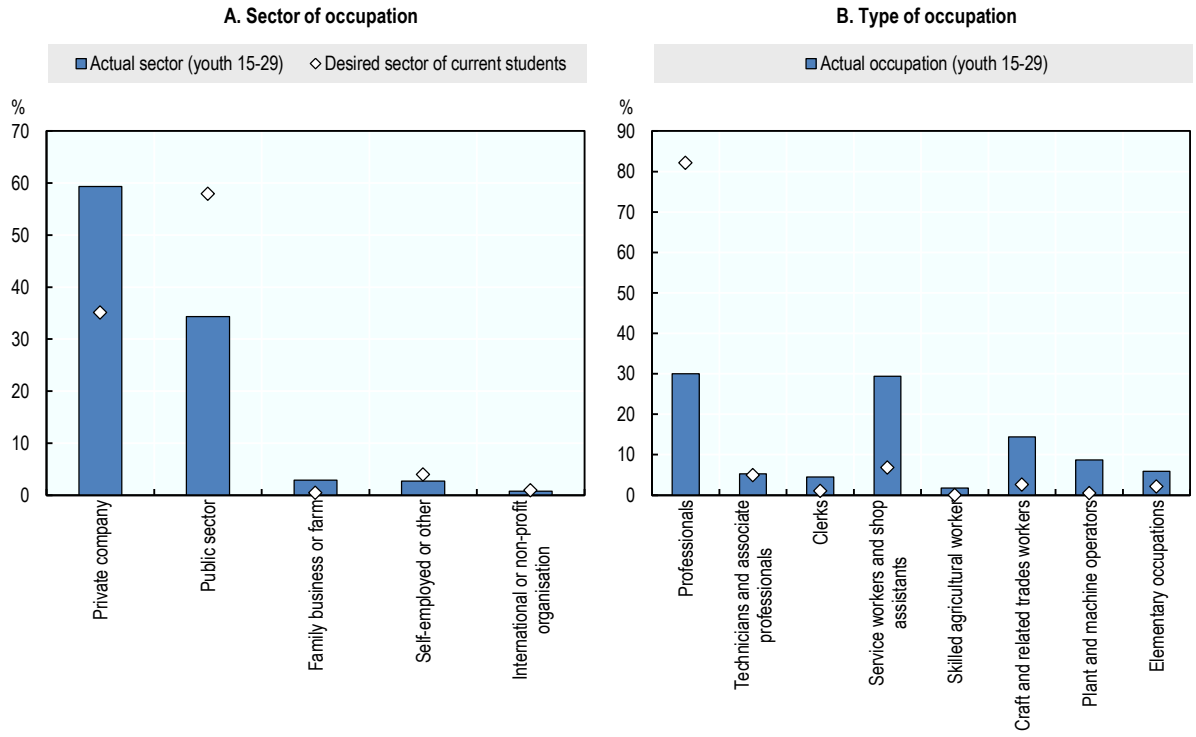
**Figure 3.2. Enterprise performance indicators in Jordan, 2013**
(in percent)




*Source*: World Bank (2013a).

**Youth employment aspirations and the reality are in disaccord.** Like the total working-age population, most students (57.9%) aspire to work in the public sector or government; however, only 34.3% of working youth are employed in the public sector (Figure 3.3A). The opposite trend is true for the private sector; only 35.1% of students aspire to work in a private company, while 59.3% do. For many, the public sector remains an attractive prospect due to its historical importance and combination of characteristics valued by young workers, such as formality, stability, social security and high wages (Brown et al., 2014). Some of these expectations are, however, misperceptions. While public sector wages for unskilled workers are 20% to 30% higher than in the private sector, university graduates are paid approximately 20% less than in the private sector (Jordan Strategy Forum, 2016). Nevertheless, this preference might also influence young people's choice of education and experiences (OECD, 2017a). The mismatch between aspirational occupation and the reality of the labour market is similar. The vast majority of Jordanian students (82.1%) wish to work as professionals; in reality, only 30% do (Figure 3.3B). Service workers and shop assistants represent the second largest occupational group (29.4%), although only 6.8% of students aspire to those occupations.

**Figure 3.3. Job aspirations and reality for Jordanian youth aged 15-29, 2015**
(in percent)




*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

**The government assigns an important role to entrepreneurship in reducing unemployment.** The NES seeks to expand access to credit for micro enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and Jordan 2025 stresses the importance of building entrepreneurial spirit among youth. However, less than 13% of Jordanian workers are self-employed or employers (DoS, 2016). Among young people, this rate is even lower: 2.5% are employers and 2.8% are own-account workers (Figure 1.6). The overwhelming majority of young entrepreneurs (67.8% of young employers and 71.1% of own-account workers) have only basic education, and only 4% of TVET graduates are entrepreneurs (ILO, 2015). This educational distribution suggests that young people opt for entrepreneurship out of necessity, not conviction (OECD, 2017b). Most challenges for entrepreneurs relate to funding (difficult access to credit, high capital costs, inflexible credit conditions), but they also include high administrative burden, difficult business registration procedures and high taxes (World Bank, 2012). Jordan's low rankings in the 2016 Ease of Doing Business indicator (118 out of 190), Starting a Business (106 out of 190) and getting credit (185 out of 185) evidence the challenges entrepreneurs face (World Bank, 2017a).

**In response to the changing labour market structure and high youth unemployment, the government is fostering TVET.** The NES seeks to i) reduce unemployed; ii) ensure better skills matching and boost SME growth; and iii) increase productivity and restructure the economy. TVET is included in two of the strategy's ten measures. The up-scaling of school-to-work transition programmes and the reform of the TVET system will contribute to better skills matching and employability in the medium term. The TVET

reform aims to align better the supply and demand for skills through a unified framework in which concrete specialisations and certificates clearly signal underlying professional skill sets.

## 3.2. Technical and vocational education and training and labour market outcomes

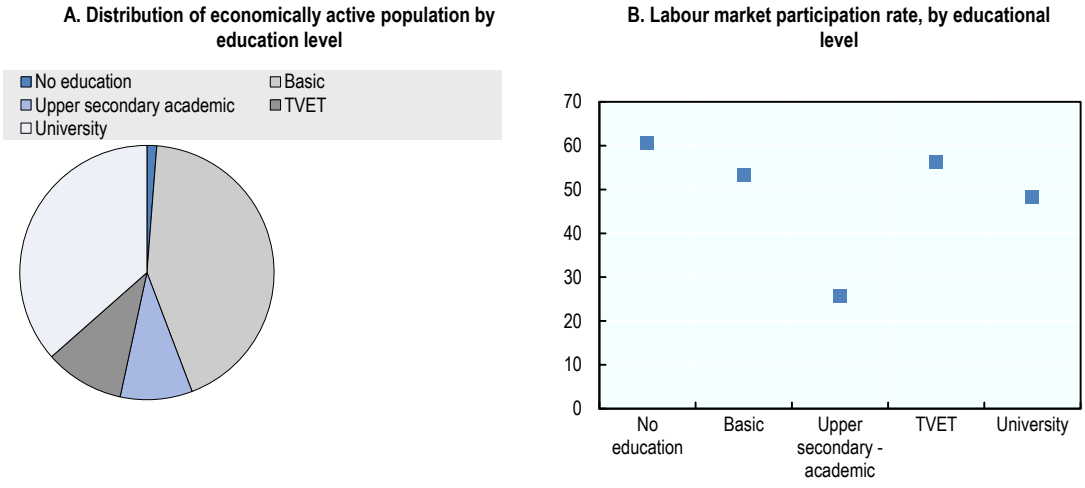
**High youth unemployment and the mismatch between employment expectations and reality reveal a rather stagnant youth labour market.** This section assesses whether the current TVET degree offers young Jordanians better labour market chances.

### *3.2.1. Labour market outcomes of technical and vocational education and training graduates*

**The education distribution of young people in Jordan's labour market is bimodal** (Figure 3.4A). Most young entrants either have not progressed beyond basic education (43%) or have a university degree (36.5%). Only 10.1% of economically active young people have secondary vocational training or a post-secondary vocational degree as the highest level of education. Jordan has a very low labour force participation rate in general (40.1% of the total population aged 15 and above in 2016) – below the MENA average (49.2% in 2016) and the world average (62.8% in 2016). Women's labour force participation rate is especially low (14.4% in Jordan, 21.6% in MENA, 49.5% worldwide) (World Bank, 2017b). The labour force participation of young people aged 15-29 is slightly above the national average (46.7%) but varies greatly by level of education (Figure 3.4B). More young people with a TVET degree are economically active (56.3%) than those with a university degree (48.3%). More than half of university graduates are not available to work, and employment is high among those who are.

**Figure 3.4. Labour force participation of Jordanian youth aged 15-29 by level of education, 2015**

(in percent)

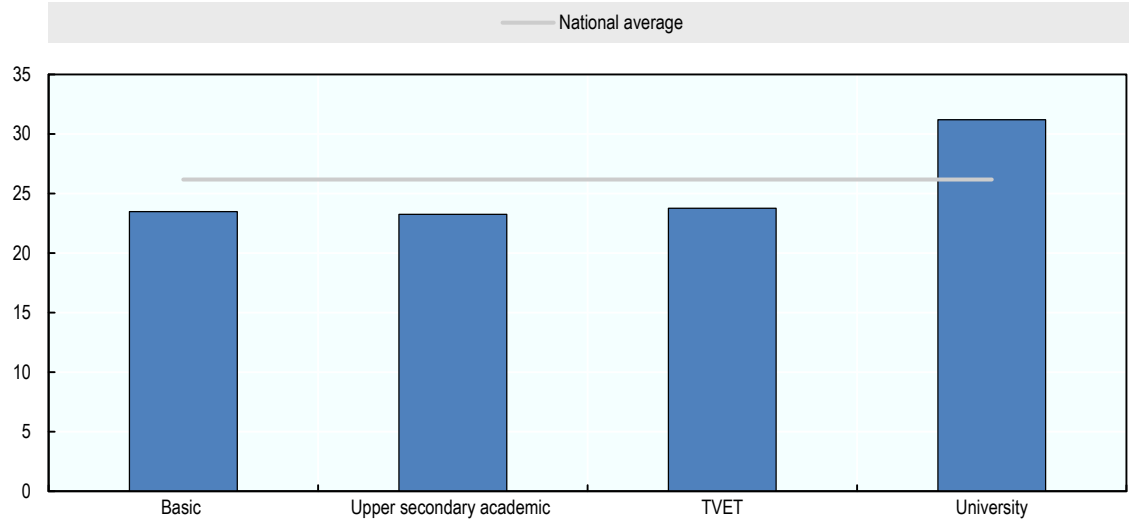



*Note*: For simplicity, secondary vocational degrees and post-secondary vocational degrees were grouped as TVET degrees.
*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

**The unemployment rate among TVET graduates is below the national average.** In 2015, one-quarter of the economically active young people in Jordan (26.2%) were

unemployed or not actively seeking employment due to disillusionment (Figure 3.5). The figure is especially high for university graduates (31.2%), who represent 43.5% of all unemployed and disillusioned youth in Jordan (ILO, 2015). The rate of unemployed or disillusioned TVET graduates (23.7%) was below that for university graduates but not substantially different from other degrees. The higher unemployment rate among university graduates can be explained by the mismatch between the supply and the labour market demand; the number of university graduates is high compared to available jobs. University graduates in Jordan tend to have a prolonged transition into the labour market, as they prefer (and can afford) to be unemployed until a desired job becomes available than take a low-skill occupation associated with social stigma. In 2015, more than half of young people (58.3%) looked for employment for over a year. The average length of transition ranges from 22.1 months for young men to 40.5 months for young women (ILO, 2016b; Barcucci and Mryyan, 2014).

**Figure 3.5. Unemployed and disillusioned Jordanian youth aged 15-29, 2015**
(in percent)



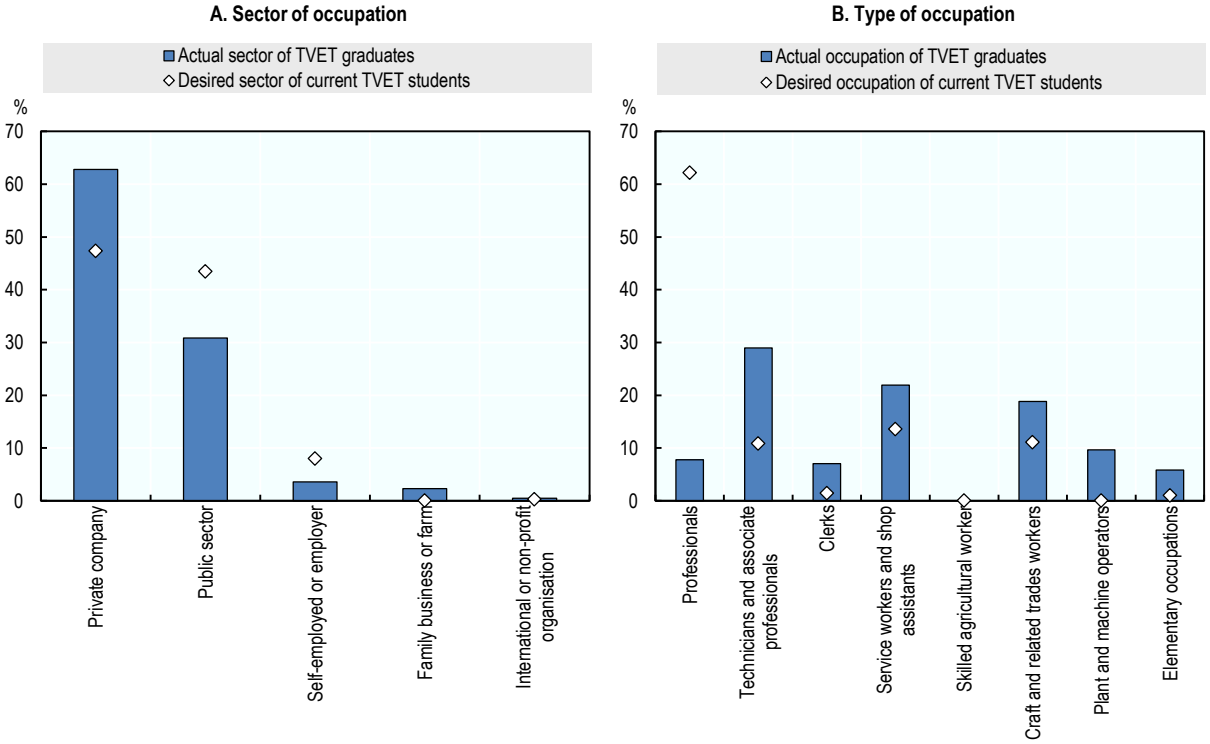

*Notes*: Disillusioned youth are those who would like to work but i) have not sought work because they did not know how or where; ii) believe themselves unable to find work with their skills; iii) looked but did not find work; iv) believed themselves too young to work; and v) reported no jobs available in their area. For simplicity, secondary vocational degrees and post-secondary vocational degrees were grouped as TVET degrees.
*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

**As with the general youth population, TVET graduates' employment aspirations and reality do not match.** The share of TVET students aspiring to work for a private company or the private sector are comparable (47.3% vs. 43.4%) (Figure 3.6A), unlike the general youth preference for working in the public sector (Figure 3.3A). Interestingly, the share of TVET students aspiring to entrepreneurship (self-employment or employer) is higher (8%) than the share of TVET graduates working as such (3.6%). This might confirm the above-mentioned difficulties in setting up businesses and is at odds with the strategic labour dynamism role ascribed to self-employment in the NES and in TVET debate. TVET students' sector of occupation aspirations match the reality of TVET graduates better than is the case for the general youth population, while their occupational aspirations and reality have the same degree of mismatch as found in the general youth

population. Only 10.8% of TVET students wish to work as technicians or associate professionals, but 29% do (Figure 3.6B).

**Figure 3.6. Job aspirations and reality for Jordanian TVET graduates aged 15-29, 2015**

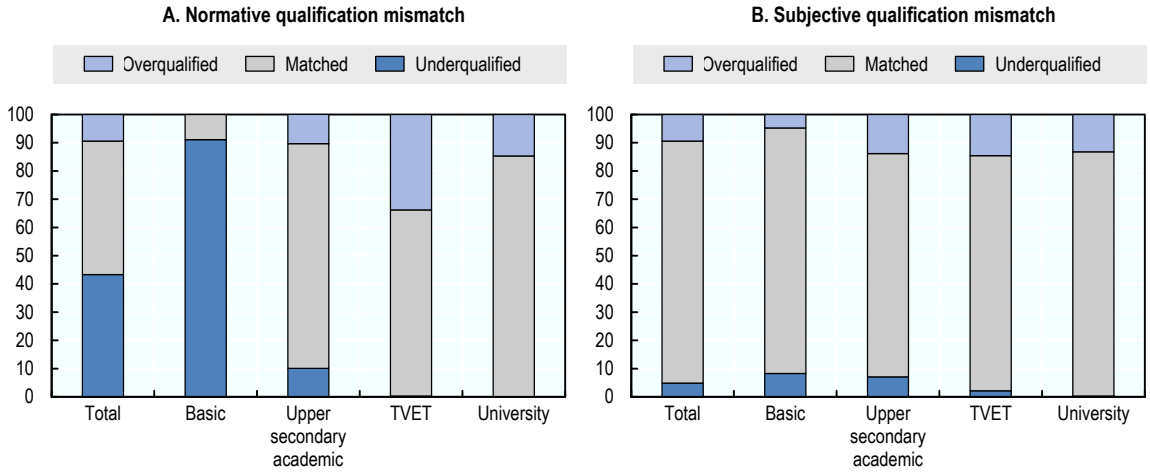
(in percent)




*Note*: For simplicity, secondary vocational degrees and post-secondary vocational degrees were grouped as TVET degrees.
*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

**Qualification mismatch is high among young people in Jordan.** In 2015, only 47.2% of young workers had the level of education corresponding to their occupation, followed by 43.3% who are underqualified for their jobs (Figure 3.7A). Holding only a basic education diploma (lower secondary) does not satisfy the requirements of the labour market, as shown by the high level of young people with basic education who are underqualified (91.1%). Young workers with advanced education (secondary or post-secondary) possess the qualifications required by their occupations. Qualification matching is especially high among university graduates (85.3% vs. 65.9% of TVET graduates). However, the lower labour force participation rate and higher unemployment rate of university graduates compared to TVET graduates obscures overqualification to some extent: many university graduates stay would unemployed or inactive rather than accept a job below their qualification or not corresponding to their aspirations (Barcucci and Mryyan, 2014). Interestingly, most young workers (85.7%) believe they have the education, training and qualifications required for their jobs (Figure 3.7B). The contrast between the normative and subjective qualification mismatch is especially sharp for young workers with basic education; only 8.9% have the qualification required by their jobs, but 86.9% believe they do.

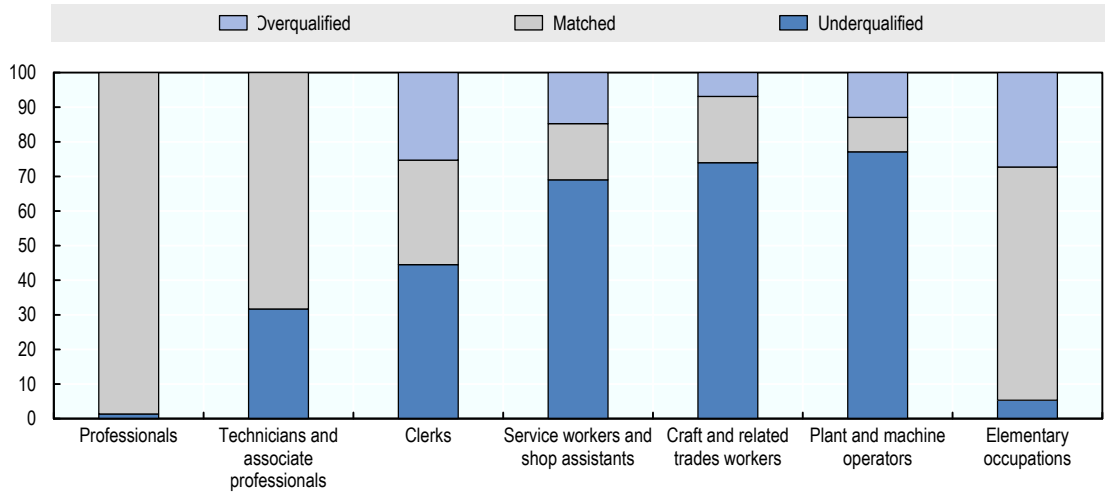
**Figure 3.7. Qualification mismatch of Jordanian youth aged 15-29 by level of education, 2015**
(in percent)




*Note*: For simplicity, secondary vocational degrees and post-secondary vocational degrees were grouped as TVET degrees.
*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

**The occupational category employing the most TVET graduates shows a high level of qualification matching.** The most common occupational category among TVET graduates is technicians and associate professionals (29%); in fact, TVET graduates represent the majority of technicians and associate professionals (57.8%) (ILO, 2015). In 2015, 68.3% of technicians and associate professionals had the qualification required for their jobs. This is only surpassed by the occupational category of professionals (98.6%), who are university graduates in 94.8% of cases (Figure 3.8).

**Figure 3.8. Qualification mismatch of Jordanian youth aged 15-29 by type of occupation, 2015**
(in percent)




*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

### *Technical and vocational education and training graduates have higher returns to skills*

**This section provides a more rigorous analysis of the link between observed skills – namely, types of education and practical experience – and labour market outcomes.** While the preceding section provided a snapshot of the labour market outcomes of available skills, this section explores the link between skills and labour allocation, and the returns to these skills in the wage employment sector.

**Using a multinomial logit regression, Table 3.1 presents the determinants of labour allocation, based on the 2015 School-to-Work Transition Survey.** The regression analysis focuses on young labour market entrants who completed their education. The model's depend variables are wage employment, self-employment (identified in the NES as a major potential job creator), unemployment and being out of the labour force. The explanatory variables are individual characteristics, level of education and work experience (see Annex Table 3.A1.1 for the full model). As current on-the-job training is endogenous, experience is defined as having any practical work experience prior to the current job.

**Table 3.1. Impact of education and experience on labour allocation in Jordan**
(Marginal effects from a multinomial logit estimation)

| | Wage employed | Self-employed | Unemployed | Inactive |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| University | 0.158*** | -0.041** | 0.137*** | -0.253*** |
| | (-6.33) | (-2.68) | (-6.62) | (-16.30) |
| Post-secondary vocational | 0.132*** | -0.024 | 0.083* | -0.191*** |
| | (-3.49) | (-1.19) | (-2.51) | (-7.08) |
| Secondary vocational | 0.116* | 0.018 | 0.01 | -0.144** |
| | (-2.10) | (-1.11) | (-0.18) | (-2.68) |
| Secondary general | 0.037 | -0.013 | 0.005 | -0.03 |
| | (-1.12) | (-0.87) | (-0.17) | (-1.20) |
| Work experience | 0.238*** | 0.043*** | 0.04 | -0.321*** |
| | (-6.10) | (-4.73) | (-1.11) | (-6.00) |
| Number of observations | 2 365 | | | |
| Pseudo R2 | 0.2693 | | | |
| | LRchi2(30) = 1472.06, Prob > chi2 = 0.000 | | | |

*Notes*: ***, ** and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% levels, respectively. The figures in parentheses are standard errors. The results satisfy the independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA) condition.
*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

**TVET degrees have a positive impact on labour allocation.** The combined impact of secondary and post-secondary vocational degrees and work experience on labour allocation makes a strong case for strengthening TVET. They significantly increase the likelihood of being a wage worker and decrease the likelihood of being economically inactive (Table 3.1). However, TVET degrees do not significantly affect the likelihood of being self-employed, a proxy for entrepreneurship, emphasising the need to enhance motivation to opt for entrepreneurial activities. Furthermore, the impact of work experience on wage employment and inactivity is stronger than the impact of holding a TVET degree (0.24 vs. 0.13/0.12 and -0.32 vs. -0.19/-0.14, respectively). This suggests the need to increase practical experience during TVET studies, which requires greater involvement by employers. Generally speaking, higher education (university, vocational secondary and post-secondary) significantly reduces inactivity compared to basic education, while holding a general secondary education degree does not influence the

likelihood of being inactive. At the same time, having an advanced degree (mostly university) enhances the likelihood of being unemployed (0.14), confirming the oversupply of these degrees and graduates' strategy of waiting for suitable jobs.

**Returns to skills are estimated based on a stylised Mincer equation.** The regression analysis focuses on young labour market entrants who completed their education. The stylised Mincer equation explains income as a function of education and experience; in this case the dependent variable is wages and the explanatory variables are individual characteristics, level of education and work experience (Table 3.2; see Annex Table 3.A1.2 for the full model). Since income variable is only available for young people in wage employment, the regression is confronted with a selection problem such that results using the Least Squares approach would be biased. The returns to skills are therefore based on the stylised Heckman (1979) selection correction approach whereby selectivity correction accounts for the possibility that individuals for whom wages are available are a non-random sample.[1]

**TVET degrees have higher returns to skills in the growing private sector.** Returns to both university and post-secondary vocational training are positive and significant in both the public and private sectors compared to basic or no education. This increase in wages justifies the risks of pursuing higher levels of education (namely, the higher chance of long unemployment spells while waiting for a suitable opening). At the same time, secondary general education only pays off in the government sector, while secondary vocational training only pays off in the private sector. While practical experience does not have a significant impact on wages in the public sector, it has a strong positive impact on wages in the private sector. The significant effect of work experience and TVET degrees on wages in the private sector – the post-secondary vocational being even stronger than the university degree – highlights the importance of a strong, high-quality TVET system in an era of a declining public sector and a thriving private sector.

**Table 3.2. Impact of education on wages in Jordan**
(Heckman selection estimation model)

| | Public sector | Private sector |
|---|---|---|
| University | 0.265*** | 0.338*** |
| | (0.0622) | (0.0717) |
| Post-secondary vocational | 0.184* | 0.430*** |
| | (0.0948) | (0.11) |
| Secondary vocational | -0.00485 | 0.297** |
| | (0.16) | (0.141) |
| Secondary general | 0.142* | 0.1 |
| | (0.0769) | (0.104) |
| Work experience | 0.0288 | 0.213*** |
| | (0.071) | (0.0755) |
| | LR test of indep. Eqn (rho = 0): chi2(1) = 52.41; Prob > chi2 = 0.000 | LR test of indep. Eqn (rho = 0): chi2(1) = 146.76; Prob > chi2 = 0.000 |
| Observations | 3 727 | 3 727 |

*Notes*: ***, ** and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% level, respectively. The figures in parentheses are standard errors.
*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

### *3.2.2. Employers and youth on-the-job training*

**Most enterprises are of medium size, with average 48 employees.** Two in five enterprises are in the service sector (retail and other services), one in three is a manufacturing enterprise, one in seven is in the food processing industry, and one in ten is in the garment industry (World Bank, 2013a).

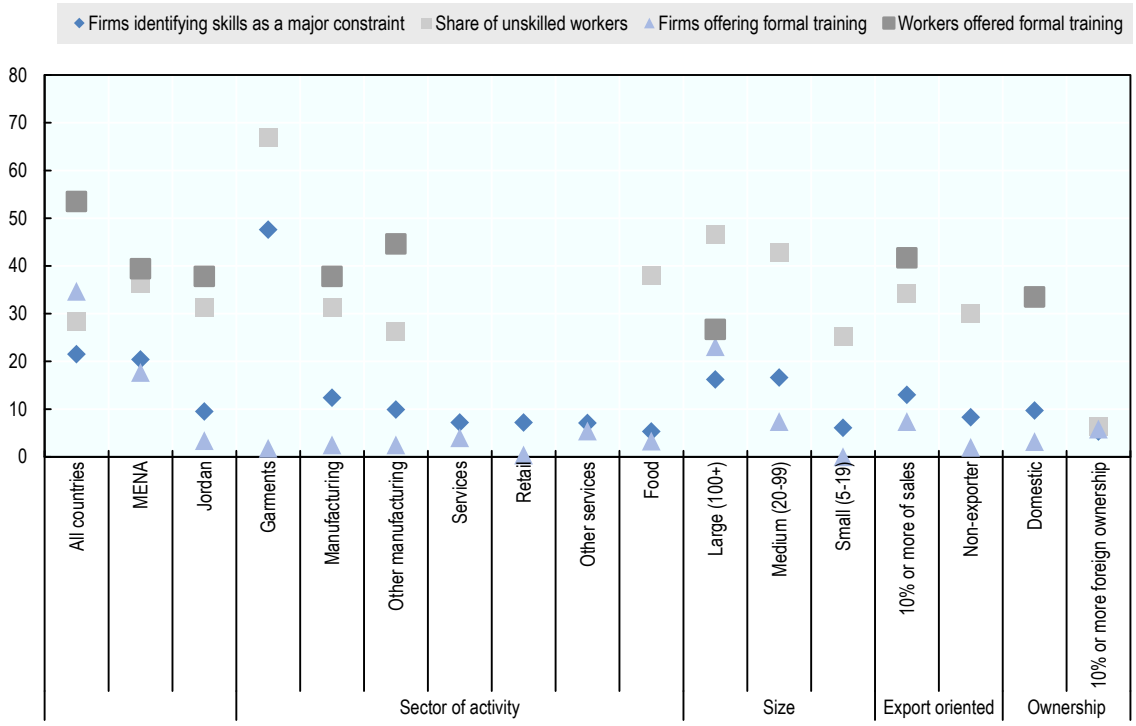
**Few firms identify skills as a major constraint.** The percentage of firms identifying skills as a major constraint (9.5%) is below the MENA average (20.4%) and the global average (21.5%) (Figure 3.9). This low figure, and the fact that one-third of production workers (31.4%) are unskilled and close to one-half of young Jordanian workers (43.3%) have a lower qualification than requested by their professions (Figure 3.7) confirms that most firms operate in the low- and medium-skilled sectors (World Bank, 2012a). The garments sector, for example, mostly relies on unskilled workers. Its share of unskilled workers among all production workers (67%) is twice the national average. Close to one-half of enterprises in the garments sector (47.6%) identify skills as a major concern. The garments sector's difficulty in finding skilled workers supports the notion that it is a less attractive sector among young Jordanians who prefer more prestigious professions (ETF, 2014a). The number of medium, large and export-oriented firms identifying skills as a major concern is above the national average.

**The percentage of Jordanian firms offering formal training is negligible.** While the proportion of workers trained is on par with the MENA average (although significantly below the global average), the percentage of firms offering such training is minuscule (3.4% of firms in Jordan vs. 17.7% in the MENA region) (Figure 3.9). This is consistent with reports highlighting the virtual absence of interaction between TVET training and the private sector in Jordan (Figure 3.9). The service sector leads the ranking of firms offering formal training, but the proportion of such firms is still small (4%). Instead, hardly any enterprises in the garments sector offer formal training (1.8%), despite half of them identifying skills as a major constraint. The percentage of firms identifying skills as a major constraint exceeds in every sector the percentage firms offering formal training. As to be expected, more large firms (23.1%) offer formal training than do medium firms (7.4%), but even the large firms offer less training than the global average (34.7%).

**Offering formal on-the-job training can improve firms' efficiency.** A stochastic frontier analysis (Kumbhakar, Ghosh and McGuckin, 1991; Battese and Coelli, 1995; Bhaumik and Dimova, 2013) assesses how firm's characteristics (including the quality of the labour force) affect firms' efficiency. Neo-classical production theory assumes that either all production activities are at the frontier – defined as the maximum possible output technically attainable with the given inputs (output-oriented measure) – or that the observed output can be produced using less inputs (input-oriented measure) of the feasible production set. The present empirical model explains firms' efficiency through the availability of formal on-the-job training programmes and the number of i) permanent employees with university degrees; ii) permanent employees with secondary education (including vocational training); iii) young skilled workers; and iv) young unskilled workers. Unfortunately, the results are only indicative and need to be taken with caution, as the small sample size makes generalisations difficult. The regression analysis suggests that offering formal on-the-job training has a significant positive effect on efficiency; among all explanatory variables, it has the strongest effect. The more workers with secondary education (including vocational training) the firm employs, the more efficient is it. The number of both skilled and unskilled young workers slightly improves firm efficiency; as the level of skills seems not to matter for efficiency, it could be that it is the

young age of the worker affecting efficiency. Only the number of employees with university degree reduces efficiency. A possible explanation is that university graduates work in the private sector as a measure of last resort.

**Figure 3.9. Workforce skills gap and formal training offered in Jordan**
(in percent)




*Note*: The share of unskilled worker and workers offered formal training are measured as a share of all production workers.
*Source*: Own calculations based on World Bank (2013).

## 3.3. Challenges of the technical and vocational education and training system

**Vocational training is valued by the market, even though on-the-job training provides higher benefits.** As seen, it enhances the chances of young people obtaining jobs and increases the returns to education in the private sector comparatively. Additionally, vocational education and offering formal on-the-job training are potentially more relevant to firms' efficiency than university education.

**The TVET system is divided into three branches: vocational training, vocational education and technical education.** After completing the compulsory basic education, young graduates can opt for vocational training if they do not wish to enter the labour market or enrol in the academic stream of comprehensive secondary education. The vocational training is provided by the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC), offering students theoretical training in the VTC's institutes and practical experiences through apprenticeships. Vocational training is mostly chosen by students who performed poorly in basic education. Alternatively, high-performing basic education graduates can enrol in the vocational stream of comprehensive secondary education. This secondary vocational

education is offered in one of the Ministry of Education's (MoE) 190 comprehensive upper secondary schools. It is the most demanded branch, attracting approximately two in five TVET students, and allows graduates to continue to the technical education branch. The technical education branch is managed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) in community colleges, granting a diploma after a two-year programme that allows students to proceed to university.

**A key constraint of the TVET system is its fragmented and weak governance (ILO, 2012; UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre, 2012).** Jordan developed a separate bureaucratic and accreditation system for the three branches. Vocational training is governed by the Employment and TVET Council, vocational education is governed by the Education Council, and technical education is governed by the Higher Education Council. Currently, there is no overarching body with the authority and attributes to co-ordinate effectively all the actors involved, and the councils co-operate little to improve the relevance, quality and efficiency of TVET (ETF, 2015). The fragmentation affects all levels of the TVET system, manifest in the lack of co-ordination among involved government entities, the insufficient involvement of social partners and the private sector, and a large number of uncoordinated training providers. Training providers consist of a range of public and private providers, including community colleges (under the aegis of Al-Balqa Applied University, supported by the MoHESR), secondary vocational education schools (under the MoE), VTC institutes, private training providers and public-private partnerships.

**TVET financing is insecure.** Although the TVET system has several financing sources (foreign loans, donors, the Employment, Technical and Vocational Training Fund, income generated by the school activities), it depends heavily on government financial contributions (UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre, 2012). Given the government's general financial constraints and the discretional allocation of funds by the MoF (see Chapter Chapter 2prospects for development are limited. Despite the official discourse highlighting the importance of TVET, the funding is stagnant in relative terms. In 2017, the VTC represented 1.3% (JOD 13.2 million) of government expenditure on education (General Budget, 2017), unchanged in recent years (e.g. from 1.4% in 2011) (World Bank, 2013b). In 2011, 2.8% of government education spending was assigned to the MoE's secondary vocational education (ETF, 2014b). As in most government entities, spending on salaries represents the lion's share of the budget for TVET, leaving little room for investment in equipment, materials and infrastructure (ETF, 2015, 2014a). Furthermore, basing budget allocation on previous spending patterns reduces incentives to lower costs or improve outcomes (ETF, 2015).

**TVET graduates are insufficiently prepared for the labour market, partially due to limited private sector involvement.** Civil service rules and regulations obstruct hiring qualified teachers and trainers, especially in public TVET schools (ILO, 2012). Next to this limitation, poor equipment and infrastructure weaken teaching and educational guidance. Another important reason for poor teaching quality is the weak link between the system and the private sector (ILO, 2012). Generally, private sector involvement is limited to exposing assigned (not selected) TVET students to work experience; the private sector is not involved in designing TVET programmes (ETF, 2015). This weak link impedes provision of vocational training aligned with market demands. Consequently, employers note the studies' lack of focus and report deficits in labour market entrants' cognitive skills, including language, teamwork and problem solving (Brown et al., 2014). Employers in Jordan thus face an oversupply of academic degrees in

a narrow range of specialisations and low-quality educational degrees (including TVET) that poorly signal skills present (Brown et al., 2014).

**TVET studies and professions are not popular among youth.** Although most new private sector jobs appear best suited to employees with vocational training, vocational education represents only a modest share of the educational degrees in Jordan (9.2%) (Figure 1.3). A primary reason for the low number of TVET graduates is low demand by young people and their families (Ali-Ahmad, 2014). In 2015, the overwhelming majority of enrolled students (89.1%) aspired to obtain a university degree. Only 5.4% hoped to obtain a TVET degree. This rate is higher for enrolled students whose fathers have low levels of education (Table 3.3). The low demand can be partially explained by the promise of upward financial mobility associated with higher degrees. High demand for skilled labour in the Gulf states during the 1970s encouraged parents and students to aspire to academic career paths instead of vocational training. Vocational training had a stigma as a path for young people who failed in an academic path (Ali-Ahmad, 2014). Students who perform well in basic education are expected socially, and often pressured by their families, to undertake the General Secondary Education Certificate (GSEC) examination (*tawjihi* examination) from a comprehensive secondary education school and enrol in a "prestigious" academic field (these being particularly limited for young women) (Brown et al., 2014). As a result, the number of graduates in education, humanities and non-technical and professional degrees exceeds market demand (ILO, 2012). This appears to be a typical Arab phenomenon, where 68% of university students specialise in education, humanities and social sciences compared to 56% in Latin America and 54% in East Asia (ILO, 2012). Additionally, the Jordanian education system allows for little mobility, another reason TVET is unpopular; young people opting for vocational training are barred from entering university, and young people following the vocational stream of comprehensive secondary education obtain the certification to enter university only after completing technical education (ETF, 2015).

**Table 3.3. Educational aspirations of Jordanian students**
(in percent)

| | Education aspirations of enrolled students | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Basic | Upper secondary general | TVET | University |
| Total | 1.0 | 4.5 | 5.4 | 89.1 |
| Father's education | | | | |
| No education | 3.8 | 9.6 | 17.0 | 69.6 |
| Basic | 1.6 | 7.3 | 8.4 | 82.6 |
| Upper secondary general | 0.9 | 5.1 | 2.7 | 91.3 |
| TVET | 0.5 | 1.1 | 4.3 | 94.1 |
| University | 0.1 | 0.7 | 1.4 | 97.9 |

*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

### *Characteristics of young people choosing a technical and vocational education and training degree*

**TVET degrees are less attractive than university degrees for young people with educational mobility.** Young people in Jordan attain higher levels of education than their parents; more than half of young people in Jordan have the same or higher level as their fathers (Table 3.4). The share of young people with the same level is lowest for those

whose fathers have a TVET degree, except for young people whose father have no education and whose high upward mobility showcases improvement in Jordan's education system. Furthermore, more young people who experienced upward educational mobility opted for a university than a TVET degree. These figures do not necessarily confirm the social stigma associated with TVET but do invite policy makers to target young people whose fathers have low education levels and to make TVET degrees more attractive to young people experiencing upward educational mobility.

**Table 3.4. Intergenerational educational mobility in Jordan**
(in percent)

| | | Child's education | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No education | Basic | Upper secondary general | TVET | University |
| Father's education | No education | 6.5 | 62.5 | 10.5 | 8.9 | 11.7 |
| | Basic | 1.3 | 63.7 | 8.1 | 8.5 | 18.4 |
| | Upper secondary general | 0.7 | 38.2 | 14.9 | 6.9 | 39.4 |
| | TVET | 0 | 39.6 | 6.6 | 10.7 | 43.1 |
| | University | 0 | 19.5 | 9.1 | 7.5 | 63.9 |

*Notes*: Light blue shading indicates no educational mobility. Blue shading indicates upward educational mobility. Grey shading indicates downward educational mobility. Due to insufficient observations, all TVET branches are grouped as one.
*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

**However, parents' level of occupational status does not significantly influence choosing a TVET degree.** As to be expected, there is a positive association between higher levels of wealth and having university education (Table 3.5; see Annex Table 3.A1.3 for the detailed regression). At the same time, being poor is positively associated with completing secondary vocational training. This is true only for secondary vocational training. While there is no association between wealth and having post-secondary vocational degrees, poverty has no significant association with post-secondary education, which requires a monetary investment. Socio-economic status, captured by the occupational skill levels of fathers, has analogical impact on education acquisition. Children of high-skilled fathers are more likely to have university degrees. At the same time, there is no association between socio-economic status and vocational training. Hence, while vocational training appears to be less desirable and largely undertaken by relatively poorer individuals, it is interesting to note that monetary issues dominate (at least in a statistically significant sense) over stigma or socio-economic status in choosing that type of training.

**Table 3.5. Determinants of education choices in Jordan**
(Marginal effects from a multinomial logit estimation)

| | Secondary vocational | Post-secondary vocational | University |
|---|---|---|---|
| Well off | 0 | 0.014 | 0.079*** |
| | (-0.01) | (1.13) | (4.33) |
| Fairly well off | -0.008 | 0.019 | 0.066** |
| | (-0.44) | (1.45) | (3.27) |
| Fairly poor | 0.017 | -0.035 | -0.049 |
| | -0.77 | (-1.40) | (-1.46) |
| poor | 0.092** | -0.013 | -0.08 |
| | -2.85 | (-0.31) | (-1.11) |
| Father has a high-skill occupation | -0.002 | -0.002 | 0.184*** |
| | (-0.12) | (-0.16) | -8.84 |
| Father has a medium-skill occupation | -0.004 | -0.008 | 0.070*** |
| | (-0.28) | (-0.73) | -3.9 |
| Number of observations | 2 259 | | |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.169 | | |
| | LR chi2(75) = 927.23; Prob > chi2 = 0.000 | | |

*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

## Annex 3.A1. The impact of education on labour allocation and wages and the determinants of education choices in Jordan: output of regression analyses

**Table 3.A1.1. Impact of education and experience on labour allocation in Jordan**
(Marginal effects from a multinomial logit estimation)

| | Salaried | Self-employed | Unemployed | Out of the labour force |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 0.021*** | 0.003* | -0.016*** | -0.008*** |
| | (8.17) | (2.42) | (-6.40) | (-4.00) |
| Work experience | 0.238*** | 0.043*** | 0.04 | -0.321*** |
| | (6.1) | (4.73) | (1.11) | (-6.00) |
| Female | -0.380*** | -0.038** | 0.005 | 0.413*** |
| | (-24.76) | (-3.10) | (0.42) | (57.11) |
| Secondary vocational | 0.116* | 0.018 | 0.01 | -0.144** |
| | (2.1) | (1.11) | (0.18) | (-2.68) |
| Secondary general | 0.037 | -0.013 | 0.005 | -0.03 |
| | (1.12) | (-0.87) | (0.17) | (-1.20) |
| Post-secondary vocational | 0.132*** | -0.024 | 0.083* | -0.191*** |
| | (3.49) | (-1.19) | (2.51) | (-7.08) |
| University | 0.158*** | -0.041** | 0.137*** | -0.253*** |
| | (6.33) | (-2.68) | (6.62) | (-16.30) |
| Urban | 0.012 | 0.008 | -0.054*** | 0.034* |
| | (0.62) | (0.97) | (-3.29) | (2.32) |
| Father has a high-skill occupation | 0.037 | -0.015 | 0.007 | -0.029 |
| | (1.46) | (-1.12) | (0.32) | (-1.45) |
| Mother has a high-skill occupation | -0.036 | 0.007 | 0.022 | 0.007 |
| | (-1.03) | (0.42) | (0.72) | (0.25) |
| Number of observations | 2 365 | | | |
| Pseudo R2 | 0.2693 | | | |
| LRchi2(30) = '1472.06,' Prob > chi2 = 0.000 | | | | |

*Notes*: ***, ** and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% level, respectively. The figures in parentheses are standard errors. The results satisfy the IIA condition.
*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

**Table 3.A1.2. Impact of education on wages in Jordan**
(Heckman selection estimation model)

| | Public sector | | Private sector | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Wages | Selection | Wages | Selection |
| Age | 0.0638*** | 0.112*** | 0.0651*** | 0.0611*** |
| | (0.00764) | (0.00880) | (0.00748) | (0.00805) |
| Work experience | 0.0288 | 0.0495 | 0.213*** | 0.398*** |
| | (0.0710) | (0.102) | (0.0755) | (0.0894) |
| Female | -0.527*** | -1.049*** | -0.655*** | -0.867*** |
| | (0.0699) | (0.0731) | (0.0683) | (0.0660) |
| Secondary vocational | -0.00485 | -0.0814 | 0.297** | 0.576*** |
| | (0.160) | (0.215) | (0.141) | (0.172) |
| Secondary general | 0.142* | 0.318*** | 0.100 | 0.130 |
| | (0.0769) | (0.113) | (0.104) | (0.120) |
| Post-secondary vocational | 0.184* | 0.392*** | 0.430*** | 0.478*** |
| | (0.0948) | (0.135) | (0.110) | (0.129) |
| University | 0.265*** | 0.510*** | 0.338*** | 0.463*** |
| | (0.0622) | (0.0840) | (0.0717) | (0.0824) |
| Urban | -0.164*** | -0.379*** | 0.463*** | 0.520*** |
| | (0.0460) | (0.0625) | (0.0665) | (0.0695) |
| Father has a high-skill occupation | | -0.159** | | -0.0874* |
| | | (0.0715) | | (0.0508) |
| Mother has a high-skill occupation | | -0.0647 | | -0.206*** |
| | | (0.0940) | | (0.0741) |
| Constant | -1.009*** | -3.230*** | -2.116*** | -2.725*** |
| | (0.206) | (0.202) | (0.207) | (0.188) |
| | LR test of indep. Eqn (rho = 0): chi2(1) = 52.41; Prob > chi2 = 0.000 | | LR test of indep. Eqn (rho = 0): chi2(1) = 146.76; Prob > chi2 = 0.000 | |
| Observations | 3 727 | | 3 727 | |
| Standard errors in parentheses | | | | |
| *** p < 0.1 | | | | |

*Notes*: ***, ** and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% level, respectively. The figures in parentheses are standard errors.
*Source*: Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

**Table 3.A1.3. Determinants of education choices in Jordan**
(Marginal effects from a multinomial logit estimation)

| | Less than primary | Primary | Secondary general | Secondary vocational | Post-secondary vocational | University |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Well off | -0.01 | -0.075** | -0.008 | 0 | 0.014 | 0.079*** |
| | (-1.09) | (-3.14) | (-0.75) | (-0.01) | (1.13) | (4.33) |
| Fairly well off | -0.012 | -0.077** | 0.011 | -0.008 | 0.019 | 0.066** |
| | (-1.10) | (-2.92) | (1.17) | (-0.44) | (1.45) | (3.27) |
| Fairly poor | 0.009 | 0.04 | 0.018 | 0.017 | -0.035 | -0.049 |
| | (1.33) | (1.17) | -1.81 | -0.77 | (-1.40) | (-1.46) |
| Poor | 0.020* | -0.037 | 0.019 | 0.092** | -0.013 | -0.08 |
| | -2.05 | (-0.54) | -0.96 | -2.85 | (-0.31) | (-1.11) |
| Urban | 0.008 | 0.006 | 0.014 | -0.034** | 0.006 | -0.001 |
| | -1.26 | -0.31 | -1.66 | (-2.65) | -0.5 | (-0.03) |
| Age | 0 | -0.040*** | 0.001 | 0.006*** | 0.004** | 0.029*** |
| | -0.05 | (-17.21) | -0.66 | -3.49 | -2.88 | -12.79 |
| Female | -0.003 | -0.191*** | -0.028** | -0.01 | 0.033** | 0.199*** |
| | (-0.54) | (-9.28) | (-3.06) | (-0.74) | -2.93 | -12.35 |
| Work experience | -0.208 | 0.065 | -0.009 | -0.011 | 0.049 | 0.114 |
| | (-0.01) | -0.01 | (-0.01) | (-0.01) | -0.06 | -0.06 |
| Father has a high-skill occupation | -0.022 | -0.159*** | 0.001 | -0.002 | -0.002 | 0.184*** |
| | (-1.51) | (-5.39) | -0.15 | (-0.12) | (-0.16) | -8.84 |
| Father has a medium-skill occupation | -0.009 | -0.037 | -0.011 | -0.004 | -0.008 | 0.070*** |
| | (-1.69) | (-1.83) | (-1.49) | (-0.28) | (-0.73) | -3.9 |
| Mother has a high-skill occupation | -0.198 | -0.067 | 0.011 | 0.037 | 0.032 | 0.184 |
| | (-0.01) | (-0.00) | -0.01 | -0.02 | -0.03 | -0.07 |
| Mother has a medium-skill occupation | -0.191 | 0.444 | 0.039 | 0.181 | -0.89 | 0.418 |
| | (-0.00) | -0.01 | -0.01 | -0.02 | (-0.01) | -0.01 |
| Life goal: social contribution | -0.204 | 0.13 | 0.021 | 0.06 | -0.004 | -0.002 |
| | (-0.01) | -0.01 | -0.02 | -0.02 | (-0.00) | (-0.00) |
| Life goal: wealth | -0.002 | 0.161*** | 0.009 | 0.002 | -0.032 | -0.139*** |
| | (-0.24) | -6.08 | -1.01 | -0.11 | (-1.84) | (-5.80) |
| Life goal: family life | -0.004 | 0.243*** | 0.008 | 0.021 | -0.028* | -0.241*** |
| | (-0.63) | -11.36 | -0.96 | -1.45 | (-2.48) | (-14.30) |
| Number of observations | 2 259 | | | | | |
| Pseudo Rsq | 0.1698 | | | | | |
| LR chi2(75) = '927.23;' Prob > chi2 = 0.000 | | | | | | |

*Notes:* ***, ** and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% level, respectively. The figures in parentheses are standard errors.
*Source:* Own calculations based on School-to-Work Transition Surveys 2015, ILO.

# *Note*

[1] Since, in the first stage of our analysis, we are interested in exploring the role of different individual characteristics, such as education and training, on where a young person ends up in the job market (namely, employed, unemployed, not working/disillusioned or self-employed), an appropriate econometric model to account for the non-random selection of individuals would have combined the wage equations with the multinomial logit of inter-sectoral allocation of labour. One such model has been developed by Bourguignon, Fournier and Gourgand (2007). In the first stage of the analysis, one estimates a multinomial logit model of the allocation of labour into different sectors and then uses the information derived from this model in the estimation of wage equations. Intuitively, using this model allows us to determine whether returns to, say, university education in the salaried sector are biased because workers who would have performed better in, say, self-employment are misallocated to salaried employment (the simpler Heckman model corrects successfully for non-random selection of individuals in the salaried sector but does not tell us whether this non-randomness comes from misallocation across salaried employment and self-employment or across salaried employment and unemployment). However, when we attempted estimating this model, none of the so-called selection coefficients (coefficients determining the direction of non-random bias due to misallocation of labour across different sectors) turned out to be significant. Thus, the Heckman model is the preferred estimation technique in our case.

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# Chapter 4. Paths to active citizenship

**Representative a growing share of world citizenship, the youth have the opportunity to affect social change around the world.** Yet, youth are often stereotyped as disengaged and disinterested in participating in politics and the democratic process (Camino and Zeldin, 2002). "Youth bulges" have been linked with social and political changes around the world, particularly in the Middle East (Goldstone, 2002; Urdal, 2011), and have had an impact on constructive civic activity. To address youth's potential disengagement and marginalisation, policy makers are realising the importance of fostering their participation in the political process, enabling their contribution to society and developing their sense of citizenship. Understanding young people's civic and political attitudes, capabilities and behaviours has thus become an area of research interest worldwide.

**This chapter discusses paths to active citizenship for young Jordanians.** A prerequisite is to understand the evolution of political participation and citizenship in Jordan in light of recent foundational events. One objective is to document young Jordanians' perceptions of the attitudes, competencies and capabilities they need to engage more actively in society and to what extent they possess these skills. Another is to examine how different social institutions affect active participation and the opportunities and challenges young people encounter. The chapter analyses the process of acquiring the relevant emotional and life skills needed to become an active citizen in the various environments in which young people participate, such as educational institutions, family and community and youth organisations. This allows for an assessment of the overall institutional framework for youth engagement in Jordan and for policy recommendations to improve its coverage and efficiency. The analysis relies mainly on interviews with key stakeholders in youth participation, as well as focus group discussions (FGDs) with young men and women, from different regions, interested in contributing to society (Box 4.1).

## 4.1. Historical youth engagement and citizenship

**Youth citizenship and modalities of engagement stem from the history of politics, nation building and civic participation in Jordan.** A brief overview of the historical and socio-political literature outlines influential recent events and contextual dimensions, and establishes the political practices, attitudes and processes that go beyond the standard, widely idealised models of citizenship and participation promulgated in youth development discourse worldwide. In particular, events following the construction of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan shaped the concept of identity and citizenship in the country. Major movements pushing for political and democratic reform have been documented and are thought to have shaped the state since its creation (Tell, 2013). The restoration of democracy, the design of political institutions and the repercussions of the Arab Spring signal the strength of active civic participation in Jordan. They also influence

youth engagement in a society now confronting the Syrian conflict and its consequences for Jordan's social and economic institutions.

### *4.1.1. Jordan's turbulent creation*

**The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's turbulent creation, particularly in terms of changing the population's composition, was a strong determinant of identity and citizenship in the country.** After the Treaty of London recognised Jordanian independence, the purported annexation of the West Bank in 1950 resulted in a major shift in population size and composition. Within two years, the integration of the Palestinian population doubled population size, shifting cultural, political and economic equilibria in Jordan and sparking debate over national and civic identity. Although the integrated population is Jordanian by law, its Palestinian origin remains a decisive component of its identity. This context, together with waves of Palestinian immigration in the 1960s, clearly contributed to the importance of the concept of citizenship and of building a unified Jordanian nation. King Abdullah I described this unity as a "nationalist and factual reality", proven by interlinked kinship and shared feelings of pain and hope (Massad, 2001).

**Political activism and civic engagement were constrained by the imposition of martial law.** After the political opposition won a majority in parliament in the spring of 1957, martial law was imposed to counter the regional threats and turbulence in the aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Parliament was dismantled, all political parties were banned and all political activism was criminalised (El-Said and Harrigan, 2008; Tell, 2013).[1] An expansion of the army followed, increasing fivefold in 1967 and doubling in the 1970-71 Black September conflict. As much may have contributed to the public distrust and fear of political engagement that persists, to some extent, today.

**Paradoxically, the role of the army became an important vector of national allegiance and identity.** The army and its role as key employer transformed Jordanian villages, bringing social services, work opportunities and a new sense of cohesion – a key factor believed to have enabled Jordan to overcome the aftermath of the 1967 Six-Day War (American University of Beirut, 2014). The 1970-71 armed political conflict between the Jordanian regime and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation was described as "a major campaign of Jordanisation" that "went into full swing" and eventually predominated previous endorsement of Palestinian and progressive pan-Arab nationalism (Massad, 2001). Although based on the repression of political views, these events might have strengthened the sense of nationhood among Jordanian youth. This sense of nationhood might have been a solid basis on which a more inclusive sense of belonging developed.

### *4.1.2. Political liberalisation and democratic life*

**Rapid political liberalisation followed the *Habbet Nisan* ('April uprising') events, creating an opportunity for Jordanians to mobilise politically.** In April 1989, riots to contest price hikes for fuel and other subsidised commodities erupted in the south. Demand in the 'April uprising' for greater freedom and representation grew across the country. A rapid process of political liberalisation occurred in the aftermath of the event, leading to the lifting of martial law and ban on political parties and activism. The one-person/one-vote rule was introduced in 1993 and has remained in every election law since. As a result, Jordan engaged in the political space, political parties emerged and activism in general spread across the population.

**The development of identity-based politics limited the benefits of the liberalisation process.** In addition to the one-man/one-vote rule, election laws specified the distribution of parliamentary seats throughout the country, giving disproportionate representation to rural areas. Doing so has been said (notably, by its opponents) to have turned general elections into the expression of the tribal identity of the population, diverting from a more objective civic practice based on judgement of proposed policies (El Shamayleh, 2013). Indeed, it appears that voters were more inclined to vote for their family, community or tribe members over representatives from political parties, hindering the development of a political life focusing on debates and discussions of political ideas and public policies rather than on identities (National Dialogue Committee, 2011). Thus, in offering everyone the possibility of engaging in politics, liberalisation of the process also favoured the expression of people's identities, potentially limiting its attractiveness for young people. However, the highly anticipated 2016 general elections, which took place in accordance with the amended law, were expected to rectify some of the deficiencies of the democratic process of the two preceding decades. Voting was encouraged on the basis of polity and programme, not tribal and regional affiliations, to pave the way for the development of political life and political parties. Yet, the specificity of the political dynamics in Jordan, regarding the importance of identity, remains extremely pregnant among the youth.

### *4.1.3. Vitality of youth engagement*

**Since the accession of HM King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein in 1999, democracy and participation have been at the heart of debate on nationwide reform and modernisation.** Over the past decade and a half, the government has continuously expressed youth's centrality in driving the development and reform of the country's economy, education system and political life. Jordan's overarching strategies since 2006 have recognised this role. In 2015, Jordan 2025: A National Vision and Strategy (2015-2025) was developed, presenting an overall vision and path for Jordan's reform process based on i) promoting the rule of law and equal opportunities for Jordanians; ii) increasing participatory policy making; iii) achieving fiscal sustainability; and iv) strengthening institutions (MoPIC, 2015). In the period following the Arab Spring, King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein's discussion papers to facilitate national dialogue around reform and democratic transformation and to encourage citizens to participate in decision making also indicated the importance of youth (King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, 2017). The initiative was important in orienting the discussion on youth participation. In particular, the discussion paper "Towards democratic empowerment and active citizenship" highlights active citizenship as a prerequisite to democracy and defines it as a right (to participate and express opinions freely), a duty (to create a better collective future) and a responsibility (King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, 2013).

**The Arab Spring awakened a sense of political and civic awareness among Jordanian youth and influenced their greater participation.** Two years preceding the Arab Spring, Jordan witnessed a surge in labour protests and other forms of activism. Such movements accelerated in January 2011 as Jordanians organised protests against unemployment, inflation and corruption and demanded civic liberties and electoral and systematic reforms. During this period of increased popular mobilisation, *Hirak* (movement) emerged as a movement for civil resistance and demand for reform (Amis, 2016). This period brought renewed interest in the debate on identity and participation. A spike in initiatives and organisations working in youth development, political

empowerment and cultural production, for instance, may indicate a spike in young people's civic engagement and participation (UNFPA, 2015).

**Although peace in Jordan favours youth engagement, instability and security threats in the region might impede the process.** Jordan has succeeded in maintaining security and stability in a region troubled by many armed conflicts in the last decades. The war in Syria poses major threats to the national security and has profound political, economic and social implications for Jordan. On the one hand, a high risk of terrorism demands great efforts be made to guarantee the security of Jordanians. On the other, Jordan has welcomed many Syrian refugees, who now account for almost one-fifth of the total population (DoS, 2016). While Syrian refugees face many challenges entering Jordan's labour market, young Jordanians' transition into employment is made particularly difficult by the large supply of skilled Syrian workers. Led by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), the government has developed a series of biennial plans, including the Jordan Response Plan, as a comprehensive response to mitigate the impacts of the crisis on the country and respond to the humanitarian needs of Syrian refugees. However, the emergency of the security situation in Jordan can lead to the government delaying policies favouring youth participation and empowerment and can induce young people to postpone their requests for the greater national good.

**High youth engagement in Jordan's 2016 general election reflects a widespread appetite for autonomy and participation in decision making and democracy.** Young Jordanians showed enthusiasm to participate and achieve change during the election. A high proportion (37.9%) of voters younger than 25 years voted in 2016 compare to the national average (36.1%), although the lower proportion of voter turnout (30.9%) was amongst voters aged 25 to 30 years and the highest (41.5%) among those aged 51 to 60 years (IEC, 2017). In addition, the Independent Elections Commission reported voters younger than 25 were the largest single group of voters, representing close to 25% of voters in 2016 (IEC, 2017). Young Jordanians appear to be ready to play a significant role in society and make the required efforts to do so. The next sections examine the skills necessary to foster different types of youth engagement and how social institutions foster or frustrate them.

## 4.2. Youth skills for active citizenship

**From the perspective of reaping the benefits of the "demographic dividend", youth represents a strategic opportunity for Jordan and promoting youth has become a priority.** With more than 70% of the population below 30, Jordan is a youthful nation (DoS, 2016). The country is on the verge of a demographic dividend: the entry of young people into the labour market combined with a reduction in fertility, resulting in a low dependency rate. Jordan hopes youth will drive its economic and social development and seeks to harness the potential benefits of the youth bulge's transition into adulthood. The country's vision for development and the associated strategies thus place promotion of youth as a top development priority. Indeed, for the past fifteen years, Jordan has identified key development priorities to make the most of its youthful population, including reforming the education and training system to build a skilled and educated workforce, building a national economy able to absorb the country's youth (particularly women) and providing quality health and recreation services (Higher Population Council, 2009).

### Box 4.1. Youth skills for active citizenship: methodology and approach

**The study of the skills youth require to be active citizens relies on various sources and methodological approaches**. These include a literature review, focus group discussions (FGDs) with young men and women in northern, central and southern regions, and ten in-depth interviews with key representatives identified for work relevant to the topic of active citizenship. Importantly, the qualitative analysis occurred in the month preceding Jordan's 18th general election such that the participants, especially youth, were particularly aware of the election process and responsive to questions relating to active citizenship.

**Literature review**

An extensive literature review was conducted to inform both the design of the data collection tools and the background section of this chapter. The research covered relevant resources from academia, grey reports, and data collected and presented by the Department of Statistics, Independent Elections Commission and research units in the non-profit sector.

**Focus group discussions**

Six FGDs were held in August 2016. They were separately conducted with male and female youth aged 15-24 at grassroots, community-based organisations (CBOs). All participants were recruited through the CBOs at which the discussions were held. In many cases, participants were CBO volunteers and programmes participants (Table 4.1). The approach was deemed appropriate for the following reasons:

- The selected CBOs were safe spaces trusted by their local communities. This is especially important as some FGD participants were children under age 18. It also eased recruitment and guaranteed good turnout.
- Many of the participants had previous involvement in projects run by the CBO and sometimes in projects related to active citizenship. This ensured the young people possessed enough knowledge to understand the subject and stimulated relevant and engaging discussions, although most participants had only minimal experience, especially those under 18.

**Table 4.1. Characteristics of FGDs held for this study**

| Governorate | CBO | Sex | No. of participants | Age | Previous participation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Karak | Doha Center for Special Education (DCSE) | Female | 12 | 18-31 | Four had participated in a project to empower women running for parliament; eight had no previous participation. |
| Karak | DCSE | Male | 9 | 17-20 | Three had taken part in a community cleaning/painting activity; six had no previous participation. |
| Irbid | Princess Basma CDC | Female | 11 | 15-24 | Five had participated in CDC activities (women empowerment project and tutoring, through Makani); four had volunteered to tutor classmates and acquaintances; two, both 15, had no previous participation. |
| Irbid | Princess Basma CDC | Male | 12 | 15-22 | Four had participated in CDC activities through Makani and the Computer Club House; one had run the marathon; five had no previous volunteer participation. |
| Amman | Injaz | Female | 10 | 15-23 | Four had participated with Injaz and in volunteer activities; one had participated in a voluntary charity campaign; five had no previous participation. |
| Amman | Injaz | Male | 9 | 16-20 | Two had participated in Injaz programmes; two had volunteered; six had no previous participation. |

**Key representative interviews**

Ten in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives involved in different capacities in active civic participation by Jordanian youth. Selected subjects represented institutions or movements relevant to active citizenship. Unfortunately, the research team was unable to secure interviews with representatives from the Ministry of Youth (MoY) and the Ministry of Parliamentary and Political Affairs (MoPPA). Semi-structured interview guides were developed for the hour-long interviews.

**Yet, to gain from the demographic dividend, Jordan must improve youth's socio-economic outcomes and ensure an enabling environment for its contribution to society.** As highlighted in Chapter 1, young people continue to face challenges in multiple dimensions of well-being that affect their active and meaningful participation. For example, youth have access to education, but its quality is inadequate, resulting in difficulty transitioning to quality employment. This in turn limits their ability to gain autonomy, key to participation in public life. Meaningful participation can only happen when youth are given opportunities, benefits and support in an enabling environment. Realising the right to participation and inclusion in the democratic process empowers young people, which is necessary for their contribution to society.

**The situation of Jordanian youth highlights the importance of a set of skills, competencies and capabilities for active citizenship.** Active citizenship is about "having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity, and where necessary, the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society" (Council of Europe, 2013). The set of skills necessary to engage in society can be grouped into three areas: political literacy; attitudes and values; and the level of knowledge and degree of critical thinking. The following identification of youth-specific skills for active citizenship relies mainly on FGDs with young Jordanians and interviews with key representatives of youth participation in Jordan (Box 4.1).

### *4.2.1. Political literacy*

**Political literacy is a crucial component of active youth citizenship, as it encompasses the knowledge and abilities that enable young people to participate in elections and influence policies.** Political literacy includes a basic understanding of the concepts of democracy, citizen rights and duties, basic laws, and democratic institutions, the role of political parties and interest groups, etc. There were concerns about the low political literacy of Jordanian youth. The main reasons for low interest and participation included the importance of tribal identity and conformism in politics, limited knowledge of political processes and functioning, and lack of opportunities to engage in political activity.

**Most young Jordanians consider duties and responsibilities key to active citizenship, but few emphasise the importance of political rights.** FGD participants generally agreed that active citizenship constitutes a social contract between the state and the people. Political participation is thus an important component of active participation, and participants acknowledged the importance of political literacy. However, the understanding of active citizenship largely concerned citizens' responsibilities towards

the well-being of others and the state. In reference to their rights as citizens, participants mostly mentioned state services, such as education, health care, safety and security. Only a minority underscored the importance of civic and political rights, such as the right to employment, mobility, free speech and participation in political life. As much speaks to a certain lack of political literacy among Jordanian youth.

**A minority of Jordanian youth have comprehensive knowledge of the political landscape or of participation in political decision making.** Aside from youth enrolled in tertiary education or those who were part of Arab Spring events, FGD participants and key representatives agreed young Jordanians generally have limited knowledge of political processes. One Arab Spring activist defined citizenship "as the rights and responsibilities of every citizen in the country" and highlighted that "his role in performing his responsibilities is no less important than his role in claiming his rights." This definition includes the paths and mechanisms for influencing policies, decisions and laws affecting young Jordanians' lives. A key representative mentioned the centrality to active citizenship of recognising political rights, as it implies accepting that "a Jordanian is a citizen and not a state subject".

**The relatively low engagement of youth in political activities signals low political literacy and limited opportunities to accumulate political knowledge.** Opportunities to participate in politics are limited in Jordan, particularly for youth with less than tertiary education. In 2011 and 2013, only 6.2% and 5.2% of surveyed Jordanian youth aged 15-29 attended a meeting to discuss a political subject, signed a petition or participated in protests, marches or sit-ins (Arab Barometer, 2013). These figures were significantly lower than in Egypt (12.4% and 15.6%) and Tunisia (14.4% and 23.5%) but, notably, close to the average for all surveyed Jordanians (Arab Barometer, 2013). In addition, 7.6% of youth reported belonging to a family-based or tribal association, while 2.7% were involved with charitable societies and 2.3% with youth, cultural and sports organisations (Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2. Political action and civic group membership of Jordanian youth**
(in percent)

| Political involvement | | Youth aged 15-29 | All ages |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Political action** | Attended a meeting to discuss a political subject or sign a petition | 6.2 | 6.6 |
| | Participated in a protest, march or sit-in | 5.2 | 4.1 |
| **Membership in civic groups** | Member of a family or tribal association | 7.6 | 7.7 |
| | Member of a professional association or trade union | 3.8 | 4.1 |
| | Member of a charitable society | 2.7 | 4.1 |
| | Member of a youth, cultural or sports organisation | 2.3 | 1.7 |
| | Member of a local development association | 0 | 0 |
| | Member of a political party | n.a. | 0.3 |

*Notes:* The results are based on the interview of 1795 people and 653 young persons aged between 15 and 29. The notation "n.a." stands for not available.
*Source*: Based on Arab Barometer (2013), Round III, Jordan Country Data, *Arab barometer Data Analysis: Country Selection* (database), www.arabbarometer.org/content/online-data-analysis.

**Political engagement through voting became simpler in the last elections.** Elections Law 6/2016 modified voter registration from a voluntary system to automatic registration of all citizens, making all citizens over 18 eligible to vote and mobilising many young voters who would not have registered otherwise to participate in the September 2016 general election. Total eligible voters almost doubled, from 2.2 million in 2013 to 4.1 million in 2016. Moreover, the Interpretation Bureau of Laws determined that any voter over 17 as of 90 days prior to election day was also eligible, extending the franchise to approximately 200 000 additional first-time voters (IEC, 2016; IFES, 2016).

**Young Jordanians are aware of the political issues raised by ethnic identity, notably in terms of its impact on active citizenship.** Democracy is understood among youth as participation in decision making, not only through elections but through the expression of individual views on issues relevant to public life. In all FGDs, participants defined democracy in relation to tribalism, indicating young Jordanians derive knowledge of the subject in relation to their everyday realities. They recognise that democratic participation through elections and political action is clearly bound by the ethnic and tribal dynamics driving people's behaviours. They therefore noted these constraints contradicted their vision of active citizenship, demonstrating their knowledge of the processes, practices and functioning of Jordan's political system.

### *4.2.2. Attitudes and values*

**Jordanian youth recognise attitudes and values are crucial components of active citizenship.** Values can be defined as the "principles and fundamental convictions which act as general guidelines to behaviour; enduring beliefs about what is worthwhile; and ideals for which one strive" (Halstead and Taylor, 2000). Attitudes are reflections of values, learned or acquired. It is important to examine the values and attitudes young Jordanian hold, how they contribute to active citizenship and which they may lack.

**There was wide agreement among key representatives and FGD participants that a strong sense of membership and belonging is a prerequisite for active citizenship.** FGDs revealed that active citizenship implied identifying with Jordan as the homeland – feeling an affiliation or membership with the nation as an overarching identity. Awareness of belonging to the national community was deemed necessary for fostering active citizenship. While it was clear from both FGD participants and key representatives that the concept of identity extends beyond national identity and that young Jordanians experience multiple identities, in terms of active citizenship, the pre-eminent importance of a sense of belonging to Jordan was widely shared.

**The growing importance of national belonging among Jordanian youth owes partly to government efforts to build a unified political community.** Jordanian policy makers have been active in shaping the Jordanian identity since the establishment of the nation-state. As mentioned, strong and explicit efforts were made during the democratisation process to move Jordanians' sense of identity from one based on ethnicity and genealogy – that is, based on descent or ancestry – to one based on a civic and territorial sensibility – that is, based on membership in the nation as a political community. The coexistence of both modes of identification was evident in the FGDs and the interviews. Regarding the extent to which sensibilities were shifting in reality, participants' mixed responses shed light on the complexity of the processes involved in the formation of an overarching common identity and on its multi-dimensional nature.

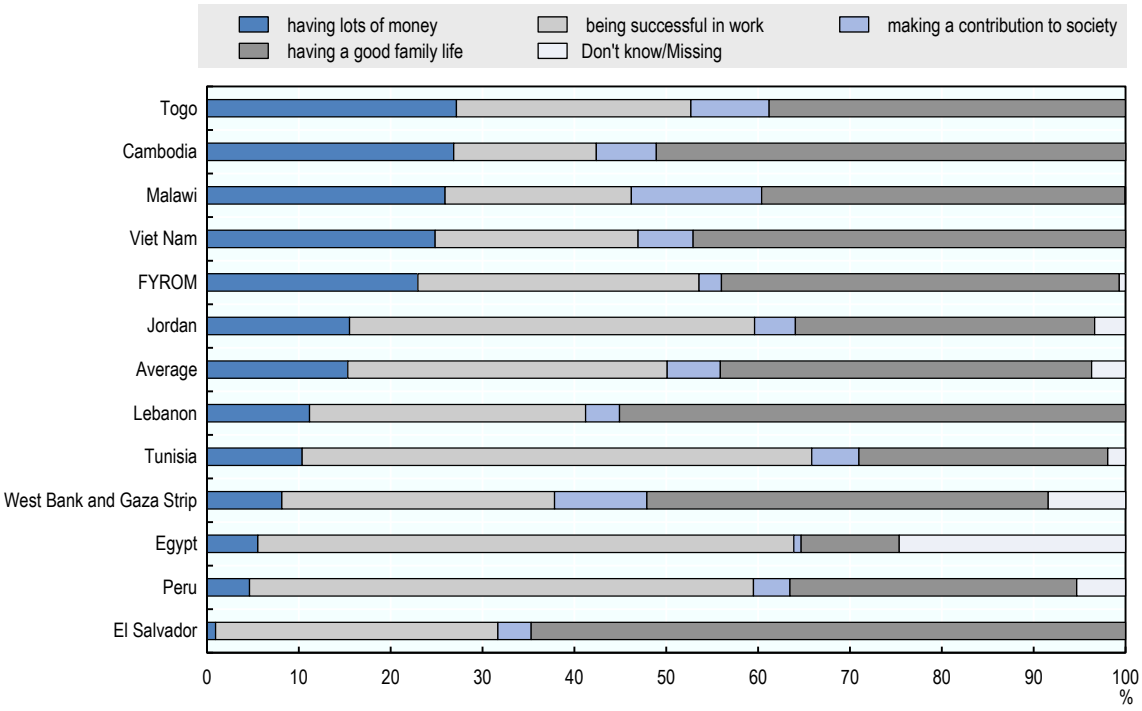
**The state's investment in nation building acknowledges the importance of tribal and religious identities on the ground.** Participating representatives of national institutional programmes were confident in the extent of civic identity among young Jordanians. However, for other representatives, civic identity was believed not to be widespread, although they acknowledged the role of the state in shaping it. More precisely, they believed that the sense of belonging to the Jordanian nation is a shared value but one that not manifest in people's actions, which still mostly follow ethnic lines and purposes. Some pointed out that most disadvantaged groups – communities less able to favour their members – might be more likely to join the citizenship movement, identify injustices and engage in civic action.

**Membership and identification are insufficient for active citizenship; young people identify responsibility and leadership as necessary.** FGDs revealed that, while a prerequisite, a sense of membership did not guarantee active citizenship. Participants indicated that responsibility, leadership and pride in contributing to society are necessary; while mere passive identification with the nation was deemed insufficient. Feeling part of a distinct community brought together by a sense of social responsibility and purpose was also considered a crucial feature of active citizenship, as was the importance of commitment, leadership and influencing the actions and thoughts of others through role modelling.

**However, a proactive attitude towards society is not widely shared among Jordanian youth.** While it is difficult to document the distribution of values across the youth population, some participants described young Jordanians as apathetic, lacking interest and curiosity, and not ready to make the efforts required to contribute to society. "We are a nation that is, first, ignorant in law and, second, lazy. We want everything provided to us ready to consume". This sense is corroborated by the life goals young people selected (Figure 4.1). Only 4.4% of young Jordanians selected contribution to society as their life goal – a low count compared to other countries – while 15.5% aspired to wealth and 44.1% aspired to success at work.

**Respect, solidarity and acceptance of others are crucial attitudes for a sense of belonging to a unified nation.** A direct consequence of perceiving active citizenship as feeling part of a wider community is that young individuals possess the skills and competencies to live together. These include being respectful, tolerant, displaying solidarity with others and being open to diverse opinions. While information on these attitudes among young Jordanians is not available, the extent to which Jordanian society is inclusive and welcomes people from different backgrounds and origins can be approximated by 15-year-olds' sense of belonging at school in the 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2017). Overall, 15-year-old Jordanians felt welcomed at school compared to the average for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries, but some population groups did not (Figure 4.2.). Interestingly, girls' sense of belonging was higher than that of boys, suggesting they do not feel discriminated against.

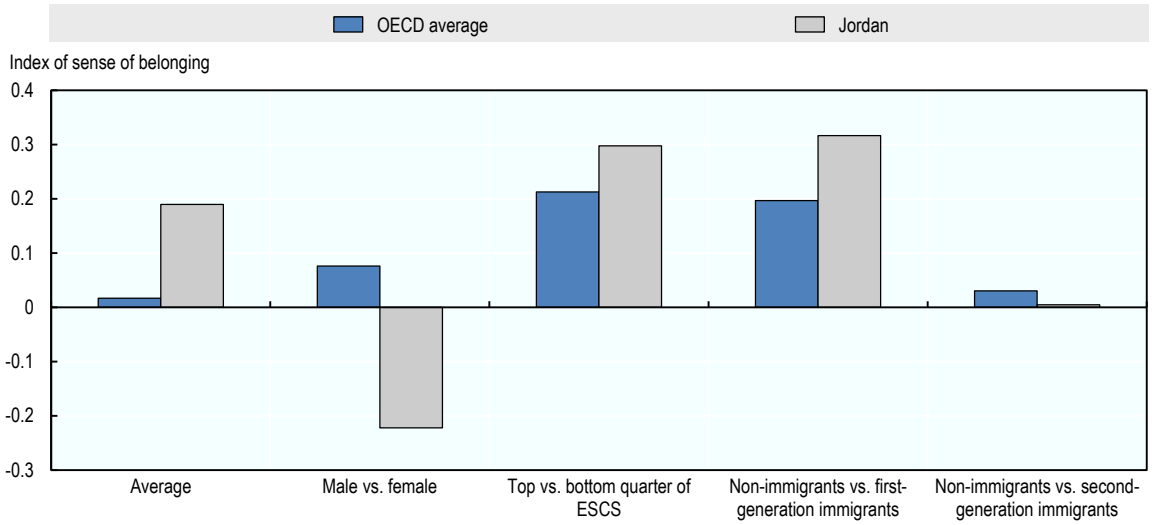
**Figure 4.1. Youth life goals**
(in percent)




*Note*: FYROM = Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
*Source*: Own calculations based on ILO (2015), School-to-Work Transition Surveys, www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/work-for-youth/WCMS_191853/lang--en/index.htm.

**A sense of belonging at school varies with background and origin.** Students from high socio-economic backgrounds (top quarter of the index of economic, social and cultural status [ESCS]) were much more likely to feel they belonged compared to disadvantaged students (bottom quarter of the ESCS), and the difference was greater than that in OECD member countries, on average. More revealing of the values of respect and tolerance in Jordanian society, first-generation immigrants' sense of belonging was particularly low compared to non-immigrants, suggesting those values were not widespread among youth. In particular, the share of first-generation immigrants who felt like outsiders at school, did not make friends easily or did not feel like they belonged at school was 10 percentage points higher than for non-immigrants (Figure 4.2). The difference was two times lower in OECD countries, on average. On a positive note, however, it seemed Jordan has been particularly efficient in integrating immigrant populations, since there were no differences in the sense of belonging at school between second-generation immigrants and non-immigrants (Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2. Difference in 15-year-olds' sense of belonging at school by population group, 2015**




*Note:* When one category of individual (e.g. male) is compared to another category (e.g. female) the figure represents the difference in the index value for the first category and the second (value of the index for male minus the value for female).
*Source*: OECD (2017), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*, PISA http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en

### *4.2.3. Knowledge and critical thinking*

**The adequate knowledge and critical thinking to make informed and responsible decisions were considered vital enabling factors for active citizenship.** FGDs and key representatives highlighted the importance of mastering a specific set of skills to engage efficiently in active citizenship. Different skills were identified for different purposes and dimensions. Some skills were perceived as directly relevant for civic engagement and participation in community-based organisations: ability to collect and treat information; communication and behavioural skills; and ability to manage and organise projects in order to lead civic actions. Other skills facilitate youth integration into the labour market and, as such, contribute to young people's autonomy. These include the cognitive and technical skills relevant to the needs of the labour market, along with some competencies mentioned above.

**While group discussions revealed young people's ability to acquire knowledge and exercise critical thinking, the relatively low quality of Jordan's education system was evoked as a factor undermining skills acquisition.** Discussion group interactions revealed a good level of knowledge and understanding of the political and social context, as well as clear abilities to communicate, analyse, interpret information and take positions. However, participants were not representative of the overall youth population in Jordan; they are likely more adept in these dimensions. Yet, even participants complained they lacked the basic skills to participate in civic life. They often mentioned the declining quality of Jordan's education system, which constrains active citizenship, and the urgent need for education reform.

**A large share of young people do not acquire even basic skills at school, and very few students perform extremely well.** The relatively low quality of education in Jordan was backed by several reports and international student assessments at different levels. As described in Chapter 1, 15-year-old Jordanian students' performance in the 2015 PISA was among the lowest of 72 countries (OECD, 2016a). More worryingly, more than 20% did not possess the basic level of skills (i.e. performed below level 2) in science, reading and mathematics. The PISA also showed students' performance in science had declined, from 422 in 2006 to 408 in 2015, corresponding to around six months of schooling and corroborating FGD and key representative observations. The 2015 Trends in International Maths and Science Study on children aged 9-10 indicated similar conclusions. At the same time, less than 0.5% of 15-year-old students were top performers in the PISA (level 5 and above) in science, reading and mathematics. This may reduce the likelihood of great young leaders emerging and paving the way for youth participation. These results explain FGD participants' contention that Jordan's formal education system cannot provide the knowledge and skills necessary for youth to thrive in the 21st century.

**Gaining autonomy, notably through access to employment, is perceived as essential to engaging in society.** Autonomy was often mentioned as a *sine qua non* condition for active citizenship, reflecting the perceived rigidity of Jordanian society for young people. Since stable employment was perceived to be a major step towards autonomy, acquiring skills relevant to the labour market was considered essential to active citizenship. Key representatives stressed the acquisition of cognitive and technical skills in line with labour market needs to achieve economic independence, along with critical thinking skills to achieve intellectual autonomy. In this regard, the main concern among youth was that such know-how was not provided at school; it was up to them to find opportunities to learn.

## 4.3. Acquiring skills for active youth citizenship

**Social institutions play a significant role in shaping young people's acquisition of skills for active citizenship.** While youth mainly acquire cognitive and technical skills through formal institutions, informal institutions are also important in transmitting knowledge, attitudes and values. Education and training institutions teach not only relevant skills through the curricula but behavioural and interpersonal competencies to live in society. However, participation in various youth organisation activities appears to be the most important opportunity for youth to build skills and gain experience for active citizenship. Last, family and community institutions are also central in defining youth values, based largely on traditions. The following examines in detail the opportunities and challenges young Jordanians face in acquiring competencies and know-how through these social institutions.

### *4.3.1. Education and training institutions*

**The education system could play a much more instrumental role in fostering active citizenship among youth.** Although formal education remains the main provider of cognitive and technical skills, it has difficulty ensuring adequate quality. Its contribution to active citizenship through young people's smooth transition into the labour market could improve. The education system also aims to foster civic and democratic competencies through curriculum covering civics health, sustainable development, media and, to a lesser extent, human rights and gender equality. Yet, FGD participants mainly viewed courses as means to a grade. They considered the approach to civic education

outdated, with limited room for student engagement. Moreover, the education system appears unsupportive of student initiative, tending instead to strict control of youth initiatives.

**The quality and relevance of primary and secondary education face challenges.** As mentioned, primary and secondary education fail to provide all young people with the minimum skills and skill levels required to thrive in society and the labour market. In light of youth's desire for autonomy, the supply of technical and vocational training and education, entrepreneurship training, and internship opportunities also appear insufficient, although the situation might improve with their development in the National Employment Strategy (2011-2020). FGD participants and key representatives pointed to the lack of relevance of the curricula and teaching practices as main obstacles to youth empowerment and civic virtue.

**Civic education in schools is outdated and fails to engage and empower young people.** Civic education is taught once a week in grades 5 and 10, with the aim of building citizenship, civic spirit and the sense of national belonging among students (Kubow and Kreishan, 2014). Yet, civics textbooks focus mainly on morality, virtue and individuality. They tend to dismiss the political aspects of citizenship and reduce the notion of being a good citizen to simply keeping the country clean and obeying the law (Alazzi, 2012; Kubow and Kreishan, 2014). Youth deemed the curriculum outdated and unengaging and highlighted that, outside these classes, schools provide little opportunity for concrete youth engagement, do not encourage a culture of active citizenship and do little to nurture civic virtue among students. In addition, civic education is not linked with practical, real-world civic engagement activities, such as volunteering or student parliaments. As part of its human rights education programme, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East developed an efficient model of school parliaments to teach students about the meaning of citizenship and their duties and rights. There is little evidence of student participation in public school parliaments in Jordan. Serious curricular and pedagogical reforms are needed for the education system to fulfil its role in building a culture of democracy and active citizenship.

**The education system misses many opportunities to foster civic engagement and youth empowerment.** Although there are school activities to improve self-esteem and life skills, youth indicated that some activities are proscribed or prohibited, such as using the school premises for meetings for example. Participants reported that activities proposed in school usually involved community service or school initiatives. They acknowledged that these opportunities provided very valuable experiences but underscored they are scarce and mainly arise from the motivation, openness and will of local stakeholders, notably teachers and headmasters. Yet, initiatives supported by official authorities gave participants a sense of importance, accomplishment and belonging to a wider community. Overall, civic education and school initiatives follow a top-down approach and leave very little space for youth-led activities. Many FGD participants shared personal experiences of the school administration stopping student-planned activities, reflecting a culture of tight institutional control rather than openness and support. In this respect, the strategic position schools occupy in active youth citizenship is very much untapped. Opening education to young people's initiatives, both literally by providing space for their activities and figuratively through incentives and support, is an avenue to promote active youth citizenship.

**Although political activities are restricted, universities are key platforms for youth to mobilise and participate in various community projects and initiatives**. Students in

the FGDs described how simply attending university offers ample opportunities to learn, understand and get involved in and educated about civic matters and citizenship engagement. The degree of autonomy associated with attending university, combined with opportunities to meet and network with students from diverse backgrounds, contribute to this estimation of university settings. Moreover, university students can elect student union representatives to champion their rights and interests. Under the Jordan Universities Law (Law No. (20) of 2009), each university must organise the formation and the functioning of student unions. University councils must allocate two seats to students, one to a student and one to a recent graduate. However, there is no nationwide student union in Jordan, which undoubtedly hinders youth's capacity to voice their concerns at the national level. Various activities and opportunities for involvement are available on campus, including student unions, national and donor-funded projects, and student-led university and community activities. Indeed, a 15-year-old female student from Amman expressed enthusiasm to start attending university, where she could become part of a larger, more active network of like-minded individuals and have more access to opportunities at non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Universities' contribution to active citizenship is twofold. First, universities provide a strong sense of empowerment, as many activities are student led. Second, despite political activism being controlled and even forbidden, universities constitute the main space for youth political activism and, as such, the main path towards inclusion of youth in decision making processes.

### *4.3.2. Engagement in youth associations*

**Youth organisations lead in developing active citizenship and encouraging youth to learn relevant skills.** FGD participants (see Box 4.2 for a description of CBOs involved in the study) and key representatives highlighted that most of the time, the feeling of contributing to active citizenship is provoked by the participation to events, training, activities organised by civic society organisations (CSOs). In CSOs, including youth organisations, young people learn through personal interactions in a creative context. Studies show such experiences are effective in developing interpersonal, conflict resolution, leadership, management, planning, teamwork and problem-solving skills. Various youth organisations exist in Jordan, fostering different skills, conveying different values and allowing for different degrees of youth empowerment. Types of activities are limited and the sustainability of certain associations is an issue, which both have consequences to the nature of active citizenship in Jordan.

**Large, well-organised youth organisations are the most common route to active citizenship and source of skills accumulation.** The United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)' mapping of CSOs shows youth participation concentrated in donor-funded programmes or relatively large initiatives executed through local or national bodies (UNFPA, 2015). These mostly consist in well-organised youth institutions that typically provide one- or two-week life skills training workshops to build young people's inter-personal skills (communication and interaction with others), cognitive skills (critical thinking and problem-solving) and personal skills (self-awareness, emotional management, personal agency and healthy lifestyles). Employability skills workshops train young people in workplace culture and behaviours for success in the workplace, in conjunction with computer and English language training, for example.

### Box 4.2. Community-based organisations involved in this study

**Most key representatives and FGD participants were volunteers and programme participants in the following Jordanian CBOs.** All participants were recruited and designated by the CBOs where the FGDs were held.

**1. Doha Center for Special Education/Al-Karak Governorate**

Founded in 2015, the centre provides services and guidance to individuals with intellectual disabilities and special needs and their families. The centre is one of the few active CBOs in Karak, providing a number of volunteer opportunities for young people interested in working with disabled and special needs children. The centre recruited FGD participants from among its employees and volunteers. As a result, they had the least exposure to youth programmes and activities.

**2. Princess Basma Community Development Center**

Based in Idoon in the outskirts of Irbid City, the Princess Basma Community Development Center (CDC) is part of a network of community development centres under one of Jordan's largest NGOs, the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD). The CDC is one of the most active organisations in Irbid. Elected women and youth committees plan and execute initiatives and youth employment services. The CDC implements several donor-funded projects in a variety of topics over the year, including on youth development, civic empowerment, skill building, agriculture and the environment, among others. The CDC recruited participants from its pool of beneficiaries. Approximately 80% of female participants and 50% of male participants had participated in programmes provided by the CDC in areas such as the elections, recycling and tutoring.

**3. Injaz**

Founded in 1999, Injaz is a Jordanian NGO for the economic empowerment of students through the development of leadership, entrepreneurial and other soft skills, in addition to business and economic literacy. Most participants were from the network of volunteers who have participated in one of Injaz's programmes at schools and universities.

**The success of these organisations lies in providing training relevant to the employability of youth, one of youth major concerns.** The most frequent motivation for participation put forward in FGDs was benefiting from training that can improve the chances of gaining a quality job. Young Jordanians perceived improving their skills as engaging in active citizenship, as it improves their chances of contributing economically to society and achieving autonomy, an important dimension of active citizenship for youth. One participant stated that being an active citizen is about "working, producing for the country, and [doing] whatever benefits to the country".

**At the same time, these organisations are criticised for crowding out intrinsic civic engagement, such as voluntary involvement in community or charity work.** Other, typically smaller, community-centred CSOs engage a smaller share of youth in voluntary community work. FGD participants and key representatives suggested that motivation for participation in these institutions was more authentic, demonstrating a stronger intrinsic value of community cohesiveness and self-sacrifice. In this respect, community-based

organisations contrast with youth organisations that provide training opportunities, where participation can also be driven by self-interest. Key representatives disputed that some youth organisation activities constituted active citizenship at all, criticising the organisations as elitist, without impact and a form of tokenism to attract donor funds. They criticised some NGOs for lacking a strategic dimension and focusing on receiving funds over developing civil society, promoting justice or achieving social change where they work.

**An additional challenge for youth organisations is to limit top-down approaches in youth empowerment.** Several capacity-building and engagement opportunities exist in Jordan for young people, but key representatives highlighted that little support was provided for young people to conduct their own projects and initiatives; while some opportunities provide young people with an official umbrella that facilitates access to decision makers, there is little opportunity for youth to discover pathways to decision making. Youth's role is often as participants in externally designed activities and rarely as administrative actors in change. This is true across youth organisations, from well-organised institutions with specific agendas to associations run by community leaders. These opportunities can be efficient in building volunteer networks and increasing youth access to employment, but their capacity to really empower young people is limited.

**Youth in urban areas more often engage in youth organisations, while youth in rural areas do more charity work.** FGD participants and key representatives described differences in engagement between young people in urban and rural areas. Urban youth were believed to participate in NGO programmes simply due to the higher availability of such opportunities. On the other hand, FGD participants and most key representatives believed rural youth were more involved at the grassroots level, including in political activism and independent community initiatives. Rural youth in FGDs saw the scarcity of opportunities in their areas as limiting their future prospects. Yet, in parallel, youth centres ran by the Ministry of Youth throughout the country are underused and focus on teenagers, ignoring young adults.

**The quality of female civic participation is considered high, but young women face more constraints**. There was wide agreement among both FGDs and key representatives that women were more enthusiastic about civic participation and made use of accessible opportunities, despite greater mobility constraints. Family and societal restrictions on female mobility allow women less time to engage publicly. In addition, reduced ability to travel distances (due to housebound responsibilities and traditions) and strict monitoring of women's interactions were noted barriers to female participation rates and time out of the house to accomplish civic initiatives and activities. These conclusions are supported by the low performance of Jordan in the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) which reveals the importance of discriminatory social norms not only in terms of restricted civil liberties but also in terms of access to resources and assets which hinders their capacity to participate independently to the society (Box 4.3). This was heightened for rural female youth, due to the relative scarcity of institutional opportunities trusted by parents and the limited geography of their communities.

### Box 4.3. Women face some restriction in everyday life

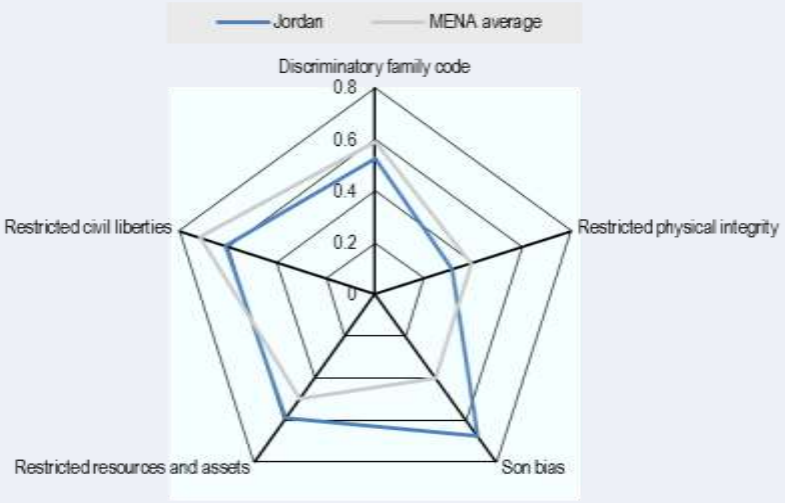
The **Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)** measures gender-based discrimination in social norms, practices, formal and informal laws across 160 countries. According to the SIGI 2014 results, although the country has made important strides with regards to gender equality, the level of gender discrimination is still high. The country shows high to very high levels of discrimination in all sub-indices except restricted physical integrity (Figure 4.3). Recent improvements include, for example, the repealing of article 308 of Jordanian Penal Code in August 2017, which allowed rapists to avoid prosecution if they married their victim. Yet, women are not equal to men before the law in terms of household headship, parental authority, freedom of movement, divorce, inheritance, employment and citizenship.

**The strong influence of discriminatory social norms adds to the perpetuation of discrimination against women.** While women have the same legal rights as men to own land and enter into financial contracts, in practice, female-owned land plots are often small. Oftentimes women come to own land through inheritance, and women's inheritance entitlements are half those of men. This hinders their capacity to provide adequate collateral to secure loans. Women's economic empowerment opportunities are further limited by restrictions on their civil rights. Married women must have the consent of their husbands in order to work (explicitly or implicitly, for example in the case that she was working prior to getting married), although they may stipulate this as a condition in their marriage contract. Women and men do not share the same rights with regards applying for a passport, and women are required to seek the consent of their guardian in order to be able to travel outside the country. Moreover, it is considered socially unacceptable for women to enter certain public spaces without male accompaniment.

**The SIGI covers five dimensions, spanning major socio-economic areas that affect the life course of a girl and woman.** It includes the following sub-indices:

- The **discriminatory family** code sub-index captures social institutions that limit women's decision-making power and undervalues their status in the household and the family;
- The **restricted physical integrity** sub-index covers social institutions that limit women's and girls' control over their bodies and increase their vulnerability to a range of forms of violence;
- The **son preference** sub-index assesses intra-household bias towards sons and devaluation of daughters;
- The **restricted resources** and assets sub-index measures discrimination in women's rights that have negative impacts on women's opportunities for economic empowerment;
- **The restricted civil liberties** sub-index compiles discriminatory laws and practices restricting women's access to, participation and voice in the public and social spheres.

**Figure 4.3. Jordan's performance in the SIGI sub-indices**




*Note*: Higher SIGI values indicate higher inequality: the SIGI ranges from 0 for very low discrimination to 1 for very high discrimination. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) average includes Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen.

*Source*: OECD (2014), Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) Country Profiles, available at: www.genderindex.org/countries.

### *4.3.3. Family, community and challenges to engagement in political activism*

**Informal institutions such as family, community, peers, religious institutions and traditions strongly affect the level and form of active citizenship among Jordanian youth.** Jordanian society can be described as a "tight" culture (Gelfand et al., 2011), a term used in anthropology to describe cultures which are tightly-knit, place greater importance on the well-being of the group over that of the individual, strongly observe social norms and have low tolerance for behaviours deemed to deviate from norms. In Jordan, the family unit is strongly connected to the extended family, community, tribe and religious institutions. Tribes remain an important player and a source of identity and cohesiveness for a large share of the population (Massad, 2001). As one FGD participant described, "parents have the biggest role in encouraging young people to participate, and the tribe has a role in feedback and constructive criticism". Parents, particularly fathers, exert strong control over what young people can and cannot do but also play a central role in conveying and maintaining traditions, which constitute a major source of civic education. Family and peers play a particularly important role regarding youth political participation, which is often seen as antagonist to tribe or community membership.

**The family unit is instrumental in shaping young Jordanian attitudes and values and can provide opportunities to attain autonomy.** There was consensus among FGD participants that family background and context are decisive in framing young people's opportunities to engage in active citizenship. Parents' level of cultural awareness and sensitivity towards societal issues "dictate" whether or not families plant the seed for active citizenship and encourage young people to participate in the wider community. Unsurprisingly, young people raised in more educated, less traditional families are more

likely to benefit from an environment conducive to and supportive of such involvement, which in turn helps them acquire self-confidence, entrepreneurial spirit, communication skills and awareness. By contrast, in some traditional families, children have very little autonomy, and parents "only care about traditional things – the girl to get married, the young man to find a job and get married". The prevalence of such perspectives sheds light on the importance to young people of autonomy and employment. These become, in some instances, the principal drivers of participation in society free of family supervision.

**Communities often constitute the point of entry for civic engagement.** FGD participants mentioned that links with communities and tribes generate an advantageous circle of acquaintances. Paradoxically, while young people may be prevented from participating in activities outside the community, it seems that they are able to seize opportunities within their family network and gain knowledge from it. Moreover, young people stressed that, to some extent, compliance with family mores can be an asset, as traditional families tend to support investment in community work and behaviour and values, such as solidarity with others, that play into active citizenship thereafter.

**Family control and traditional cultural norms are particularly restrictive of female youth participation in society.** Jordanian society and culture observe, control and curtail women's conduct, mobility and interactions more strictly than men's. Female participants indicated that families impose the greatest restrictions on their ability to engage in active citizenship, and that the restrictions stem from adherence to societal norms and culture. Some young women are prohibited from working or participating in mixed-gender activities. This seriously hinders their participation in most civic activities and prevents them from acquiring associated knowledge and experience. Male participants also acknowledged the added impediment young women face.

**Family, community and loyalty to ethnic groups can be particularly detrimental to political participation by young people.** Participants revealed that families and communities tended to denigrate political participation, effectively diminishing youth interest and trust in elections. Indeed, the promotion of tribal and geographical subnational identities (i.e. tribalism) steer expressions of citizenship away from association with the nation and the notion of a homeland. Instead, it links political processes with more narrow, self-centred tribal interests. A participant described the pressures at play. "If one were an active citizen, even if his father decided to run for elections and he saw someone was a better candidate, he is supposed to vote for the better candidate. But this does not happen because we are a tribal nation who wants to vote for his brother or cousin or father". Participants also mentioned being advised against political participation due to the likelihood of upsetting their communities. Young people described widespread apathy among their peers, an inclination to avoid political engagement and a certain level of societal suppression or an understanding their families would rather they stay away from politics.

**Difficulty understanding the multiplicity of political parties also undermines greater participation.** The MoPPA lists 45 registered political parties in Jordan. There was wide agreement in FGDs that, for youth, political parties had no influence, no visibility and, in some cases, were confusing and poorly understood in terms of their role and purpose. As of the last general elections, political parties' representation in the new Lower House is about 17%, while independent deputies – including businessmen, professionals and tribal figures – make up the bulk of the legislature (Al Sharif, 2016). Parties' low representation and low level of public engagement reflect their limited influence in Jordan's political environment.

## 4.4. Institutional framework for youth participation

**Youth engagement in Jordan relies on an extensive institutional framework, but there is room to improve co-ordination mechanisms and the relevance of interventions.** A close examination on how youth engagement and citizenship has been incorporated and practiced in the existing policies and strategies is an important step in better understanding youth civic participation in Jordan. With more than 70% of the population under 30, the challenges related to youth cannot be ignored and are well acknowledge by both policy makers and civil society. Indeed, Jordan has a variety of laws, policies and engagement modalities, and it benefits from an array of organisations aimed at improving youth well-being and abilities. These organisations encourage youth participation at different levels and by different modalities. Yet, the different activities at national and local levels and across ministries and organisations lack co-ordination, as indicated by the ongoing need to develop the National Youth Empowerment Strategy (2017-2025). Moreover, certain forms of youth participation are underrepresented, such as direct involvement in the design and elaboration of activities, participation in the political process and the provision of information and tools to facilitate youth engagement.

### *4.4.1. Institutional initiatives favouring youth participation*

**A body of laws delimit youth's ability to engage in active citizenship.** At Jordan's age of majority (18), young people are entitled to the diverse civic and political rights that constitute their transition into full-fledged citizens. These include the right to marry, vote, join and found political parties, establish NGOs, get loans and grants, and join the armed forces (Table 4.3). The laws are particularly relevant in delimiting young people's participation in the electoral process. The right to vote is granted to citizens aged 17 years as of 90 days prior to election day and citizens become eligible to run for parliamentary elections at 30 (Election Law, 2016). Since the enactment of the Election Law in 2016, voter registration is no longer voluntary; age is now automatically a sufficient condition to be eligible to vote. The age limit is lower in local elections, and young people can run for municipal and governorate elections from age 25 (Municipalities Law, 2015). Other dimensions of youth participation are regulated by law, including the right to work (from age 16), to be represented by a union (depending on the profession), and to organise public gatherings and hold peaceful assemblies (no age requirement), provided they inform the administrative governor 48 hours in advance (Amended Public Gathering Law, 2011). Last, the newly created MoY has a mandate to register youth organisations related to sports, social and cultural activities and is entitled by law to enhance democratic practices among youth.

**Table 4.3. List of laws relating to youth civic engagement and active citizenship**

| Law | Influence on youth civic engagement and active citizenship |
|---|---|
| Elections Law: Law 6/2016 | The right to vote is granted to citizens aged 17 years as of 90 days prior to election day and citizens become eligible to run for parliamentary elections at 30. |
| Political Parties Law: Law 39/2015 | Right to join political parties as founding members at age 18. |
| Municipalities Law: Law 41/2015 | Right to vote in municipal councils elections at age 18 (article 39/A). Right to run for local municipal councils at age 25 (article 40/A). |
| Labour Law: Law 8/ 1996 | Right to work at age 16 (article 73). Labourers in any profession have the right to form a union or a syndicate to represent and defend their rights (article 97), but article 98 grants total authority to the Minister of Labour to define which professions can form unions and which cannot. Workers' strikes are permitted under certain conditions (article 134). |
| NGOs Law: Law 51/2008, and amendments in Law 22/2009 | Right to be a founding member of a society or NGO at age 18. |
| Access to Information Law: Law 47/2007 | No minimum age requirement in law. All Jordanians should be treated the same, but the practice might pose limitations. |
| Public Gatherings Law: Law 7/2004 and amendments in Law 5/2011 | No minimum age requirement in law. All Jordanians have the right to organise public gatherings and hold peaceful assemblies under the condition of informing the administrative governor 48 hours in advance of the gathering or assembly. However, there is ambiguity about the governor's authority to obstruct any such gatherings and assemblies. |
| Higher Council of Youth Law: Law 13/2005 | Despite the council no longer existing, this law applies under the new MoY. The law acknowledges the registration of 'youth clubs' under the Higher Council of Youth for the purpose of conducting sports, social and cultural activities. It entitles the council (now, the MoY) to contribute to enhancing democratic practices and volunteerism among youth and to develop adolescent and youth development policies. |

*Source*: IEC (2017), Independent Election Commission website (https://iec.jo/en); MoL (1996), Labour Code (http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/45676/84920/F-1672011876/JOR45676%20Eng.pdf); Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2017), Official Gazette (http://www.pm.gov.jo/newspaper)

**Jordan has a large but heterogeneous body of CSOs facilitating youth engagement, but most are small stakeholders, and few are dedicated exclusively to youth.** In Jordan, CSOs must comprise minimum 7 persons on a volunteer basis, without seeking or sharing profit. As many as 4 771 CSOs are registered in Jordan, more than three-quarters of which are charitable, cultural or community-based (Table 4.4). Typically, these types of CSOs operate at the local level, have restricted financial and human resources and therefore offer a limited number and diversity of activities. Consequently, they are also likely to have relatively small youth membership and may not be the main stakeholder for youth engagement, despite their number. Available information is insufficient to assess their relative importance precisely. In addition, only 7% of organisations target youth exclusively (e.g. youth and sports clubs), while non-profit companies account for 10% and political organisations and parties account for 2.4% (Table 4.4). In parallel, a variety of institutions serve specific segments. These include women committees; environment, health, agriculture and religious groups; and associations of employees and employers.

**Table 4.4. CSOs in Jordan**

| Organisation category | Registry institution (governing legislation) | Number | Share (in percent) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Charitable | Ministry of Social Affairs (NGOs Law) | 2 533 | 53.1 |
| Cultural | Ministry of Culture (NGOs Law) | 566 | 11.9 |
| Family-based and tribal | Ministry of Interior (NGOs Law) | 546 | 11.5 |
| Non-profit | Ministry of Industry and Trade (Companies Instructions) | 449 | 9.4 |
| Youth and sports | Ministry of Youth (Youth Clubs Instructions) | 331 | 6.9 |
| Political | Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs (NGOs Law) | 90 | 1.9 |
| Environmental | Ministry of Environment (NGOs Law) | 60 | 1.3 |
| Employment | Ministry of Labor (Labor Law) | 48 | 1.0 |
| Health | Ministry of Health (NGOs Law) | 38 | 0.8 |
| Political party | Ministry of Interior (Political Parties Law) | 25 | 0.5 |
| Labour union | Ministry of Labor (Labor Law) | 17 | 0.4 |
| Chamber of commerce | (Commerce Chambers Law) | 16 | 0.3 |
| Professional | (Individual laws) | 15 | 0.3 |
| Business and industrial | Ministry of Industry and Trade | 11 | 0.2 |
| Religious (Islamic) | Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs (NGOs Law) | 7 | 0.2 |
| Agricultural | Ministry of Agriculture (NGOs Law) | 7 | 0.2 |
| Information and communications technology | Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (NGOs Law) | 4 | 0.1 |

*Source*: Al Jreibia, M. (2013), The Civil Society and the Jordanian State, The International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law, http://www.icnl.org/programs/mena/afan/Docs/Mohammed%20Al%20Jreibia.pdf

**The Jordanian institutional framework is also characterised by the presence of large and influential stakeholders, in particular royal NGOs.** Royal NGOs occupy a central position in the landscape of youth-serving organisations in Jordan. They are established by royal decree and often operate in parallel to the government, without official ties. They are independent institutions with separate budgets; nevertheless, they benefit from specific administrative and legal dispositions and from strong relationships with the government. These are the largest institutions engaged with youth in the country and include the King Hussein Foundation, the Jordan River Foundation, the King Abdullah II Fund for Development and the JOHUD. International organisations, either international NGOs (such as Save the Children, CARE International, AIESEC and the Near East Foundation) or Jordanian branches of international and regional institutions (such as

United Nations agencies), constitute the other major stakeholders supporting youth participation.

**The most common activity of youth organisations is delivering basic services to youth.** Classifying youth organisations according to the activities they perform or propose is useful in identifying the overall supply of opportunities and assessing to what extent it matches the demand of young people. In Jordan, most youth organisations offer services such as non-formal education programmes and training to improve soft and life skills (UNFPA, 2015). Education and employment being major challenges for Jordan, youth organisations offer a wide array of programmes, including support for teaching personnel to enhance the quality of education (Jordan Education Initiative under the Queen Rania Initiatives); specific training for leadership, communication and self-confidence; vocational training; and second-chance education and literacy classes for dropouts and students with difficulties. Most activities (50%) aim to develop life skills. Health services are also important, particularly for women to whom many reproductive health services are targeted, although the most frequent health-related activity is promotion of healthy lifestyles (UNFPA, 2015). The other two major activities are community organisation (mainly volunteerism, waste removal, charity and cultural events) and lobbying and advocacy (awareness-raising activities relating to human rights, the environment and empowering action on various issues).

**Over the last years, many public institutions have integrated youth participation issues into their agendas.** Under the Higher Council of Youth Law (2005), the now MoY was made responsible for enhancing youth democratic practices and volunteerism and for developing adolescent and youth development policies (Higher Council of Youth Law, 2005). The MoY is currently the main institution in charge of fostering youth civic participation by developing policies to ensure youth civic, political, social and cultural participation. The MoY is responsible for developing communication channels between the government and young people, co-ordinating efforts among different stakeholders involved in youth movements, and regulating and supporting youth-led initiatives. The MoPPA is in charge of ensuring citizen participation in political life in general and for promoting dialogue among political parties, CSOs and the government. The Ministry of Social Affairs regulates NGOs and volunteerism organisations – including youth organisations – and provides social services to vulnerable groups. The MoPIC also deals with youth issues, as it is tasked with improving and assessing development policies, enhancing the role of CSOs in local communities and fostering international co-operation to support development efforts.

### *4.4.2. Co-ordination challenges and policy gaps*

**The heterogeneity and multiplicity of actors engaged with youth at different levels generate important co-ordination challenges among state and non-state stakeholders.** Many stakeholders are involved in delivering services, programmes and activities to young people. They are heterogeneous in both approach and level of operation. Royal and national NGOs and international organisations work at a national level, while smaller organisations often operate at the governorate level, and various CSOs and informal youth associations function only on a very local scale. While it is crucial to maintain the independence and autonomy of youth organisations, the absence of consultation, dialogue and co-ordination mechanisms generate inefficiencies in the allocation of resources and a lack of coherence, which ultimately decrease opportunities for youth to engage in active citizenship (OECD, 2016b). Local organisations in particular could benefit from improved dissemination of information about available supports from national stakeholders. Enhancing the prerogatives and capacities of governorates could prove an efficient way to relay this information at the local level.

**Effective collaboration among national-level stakeholders is not yet assured.** Ministries have developed agendas for youth participation without ensuring a common vision or proper collaboration. Moreover, ministries are responsible for different aspects of youth engagement, but their prerogatives are not always well defined and often overlap. The situation is made even more complex as grassroots level organisations (including CSOs) are registered in different ministries, depending on status or type of activities offered (Table 4.4). Last, the dominance of independent royal NGOs in youth-related policies may incentivise government stakeholders to pull out of this policy area. It is therefore important to promote collaboration across ministries and royal institutions and agree on a clear youth strategy and division of responsibilities (OECD, 2016b).

**Overall, too few initiatives guarantee youth's direct involvement in the conception, design and implementation of civic activities, thereby limiting youth empowerment.** Although Jordan benefits from a diversity of stakeholders, as discussed, most programmes take a top-down approach whereby young people are principally receivers of training, awards or advice. Young people have limited opportunities to create sustainable projects, consult in initiative design or collaborate on implementation. This holds across all types of actors and activities. For example, civic education in schools does not engage the students, and no official representative structure exists to foster youth engagement in policy making. However, important initiatives aim to address these shortcomings. The independent network Youth Organisations Coalition was recently established by 60 national youth organisations, with the support of UNESCO Jordan. The objective is to foster co-operation among youth organisations, co-ordinate their activities, create joint initiatives and act as an advisory group for the MoY. Another noteworthy initiative is the Municipal Youth Council, a pilot project being implemented in Irbid governorate by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs that engages youth in the management and implementation of local development projects.

**The ongoing reforms and initiatives should substantially improve the governance of youth policies in Jordan.** The transformation of the Higher Council for Youth into the MoY in 2016 is an important step towards identifying a structure responsible for co-ordinating youth policy and service delivery across the whole of government. To fulfil this mandate effectively, capacities need to be built in the areas of strategic planning, policy formulation and horizontal communication and co-ordination across different ministries and departments (OECD, 2016b). Moreover, formulation of the National Youth Empowerment Strategy (2017-2025), with the support of the royal court and in co-ordination with the general development strategy (Jordan 2025), will provide a comprehensive framework to address youth participation issues and should significantly improve policy coherence. One important condition for its success is to ensure youth involvement throughout the strategy's elaboration.

## *Note*

[1] The only exception to the ban of political parties in 1957 was the Muslim Brotherhood, recognised as a major charity organisation ten years prior to the ban. Six years later, in 1963, the Brotherhood licensed the Islamic Centre Charity Society, which provided welfare, health and education services to Jordanians for several decades through community organisations, schools and health care facilities.

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# Youth Well-being Policy Review of Jordan

In Jordan, young persons aged 12-30 currently account for a third of the country's population. This is the highest youth population ever for Jordan, providing the country with a unique socio-economic development opportunity. Youth represents an asset for the nation's prosperity which can only be tapped if young people have access to quality education, healthcare, decent employment and active social and political lives. However, Jordanian youth face challenges on multiple fronts. The *Youth Well-being Policy Review of Jordan*, published within the Youth Inclusion Project implemented by the OECD Development Centre and co-financed by the European Union, takes a multisectoral approach to look in depth at the situation of young people with regard to education, health, employment and civic participation and provides policy recommendations to narrow youth well-being gaps. Thematic chapters look at the potential of technical and vocational education and training in improving youth's labour market outcomes. The second thematic chapter explores paths and skills formation for active youth citizenship in Jordan.

Consult the full report on line at:
**www.oecd.org/dev/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/youth-country-studies.htm**

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