

Jordan

Jordan is a lower-middle income country with a population of over 11 million inhabitants (World Bank, n.d.). It faces several interrelated development challenges, including resource scarcity and low institutional capacity across all sectors. Regional political instability and conflicts in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Yemen, and Israel-Palestine have given way to substantial refugee flows towards Jordan, adding pressure to public services.

Refugee context

As of 2022, Jordan hosts over 3.7 million refugees, including over 660,000 registered Syrians. However, many Syrian refugees are not registered or counted in official data sources. Estimations indicate that the total Syrian population in Jordan stands at 1.3 million, and that an estimated 640,000 are unregistered (UNICEF, 2022).

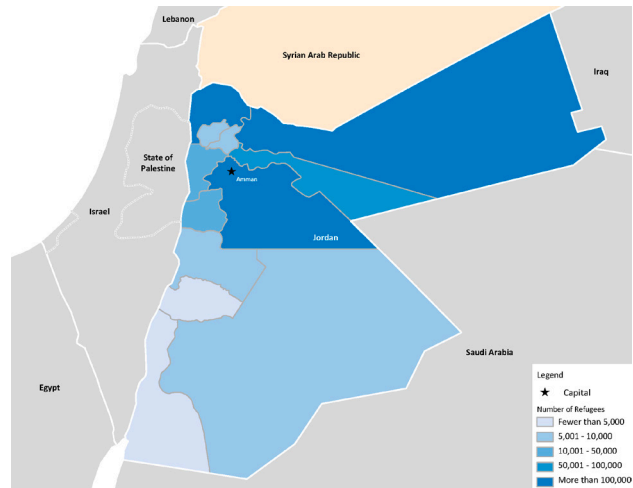
Country of origin	Registered refugees	Asylum-seekers	Unregistered refugees	Subtotals
Syrian Arab Republic	660,892	-	~640,000	~1,300,000
Iraq	30,835	31,297	-	62,132
State of Palestine	2,365,090	-	-	2,365,090
Others	6,034	13,880	-	19,914
Total	3,062,851	45,177	~640,000	~3,700,000

Source: Registered refugees include refugees under UNHCR's mandate and under UNRWA's mandate (for Palestinians). Population figures for registered refugees and asylum-seekers as of end-2022, available at [UNHCR, n.d.a.](#). Number of unregistered refugees based on estimation in [UNICEF, 2022](#).

Syrian refugees began arriving in Jordan in 2011 following the start of the Syrian crisis (UNHCR, 2023c). The February 2023 Türkiye-Syria earthquake in Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic further exacerbated the humanitarian situation in the region (ibid.). Syrian refugees are primarily located in the Amman, Mafraq, Irbid, and Zarqa Governorates. As of 2023, approximately 20% of registered Syrian refugees live in camps, while others are spread across urban, peri-urban, and rural areas (UNHCR, 2023a).

In addition to Syrians, Jordan hosts over 2.3 million registered Palestinian refugees, who fall under the mandate of UNRWA and are excluded from this paper's scope. Many Palestinians have been granted full citizenship in Jordan, though others remain undocumented (UNRWA, n.d.).

Figure 1: Location of Syrian refugees in Jordan



Sources: Population data from UNHCR, 2023a, based on data accessed in January 2023.

Key education indicators

HDI ranking (2021)	102 of 191
Gross enrolment ratio – Pre-primary (2021)	26.6%
Gross enrolment ratio – Primary (2021)	79.9%
Gross enrolment ratio – Secondary (2021)	72.0%
Gross enrolment ratio – Tertiary (2021)	34.1%
Expected years of schooling	11.1
Learning adjusted years of schooling	7.7

Learning outcomes (compared to OECD averages):

Average score on reading, 15-year-olds (2018)	419 (487)
Average score on mathematics, 15-year-olds (2018)	400 (489)
Average score on science, 15-year-olds (2018)	429 (489)

Sources: HDI ranking from [UNDP, 2021](#); gross enrolment ratios from [UIS, n.d.](#); years of schooling from [World Bank, 2020](#); learning outcomes from the PISA 2018, [OECD, 2018](#).

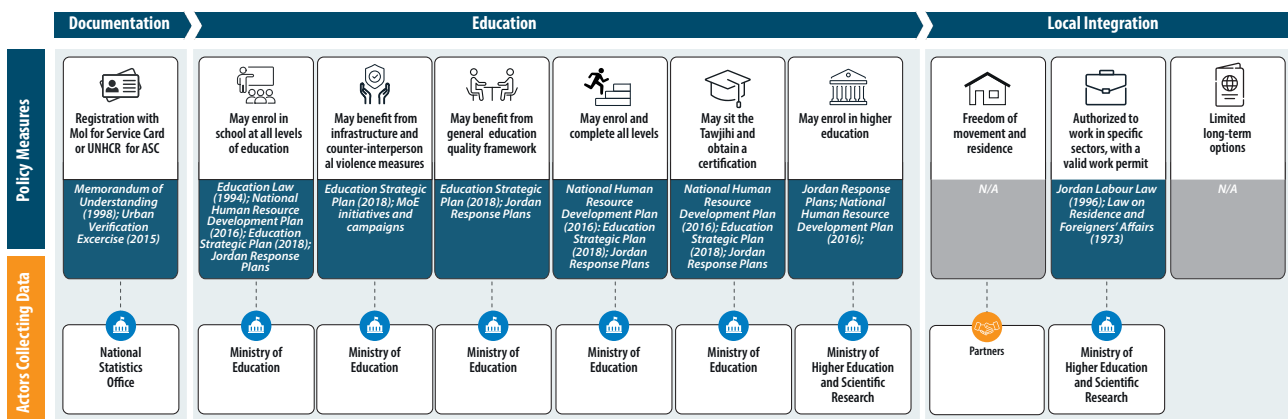
Inclusion of refugees in the national education system

Normative framework

Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol, nor has it enacted a refugee law. A **Memorandum of Understanding** signed in 1998 allows UNHCR to operate in the country and defines the rights of refugees in Jordan. The Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD), operating under the Ministry of Interior (MoI), is the domestic body responsible for managing Syrian refugee flows. In 2014, the Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis (JRPSC) was established by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC) to ensure a coordinated response between the government, donors, and UN agencies. The JRPSC issues national strategies to guide the refugee response across sectors, including education (MoPIC, 2020). In 2016, the **National Human Resource Development Plan** (NHRDP) (2016–2025) included a goal to increase access to education for refugees as an important measure for national development.

Overview: Policy pathway for refugee education

While legal frameworks for refugees are limited, Jordan has adopted policies ensuring access to education for Syrian refugees, with some data available to monitor policy implementation. However, significant policy and data gaps remain, particularly for unregistered refugees.



Documentation

According to the 1998 MoU, refugees who register with UNHCR may be issued proof of registration, granting them legal status and an Asylum-Seeker Certificate (ASC), valid for one year on a renewable basis (UNHCR, n.d.c). Since 2014, Syrian refugees must also register with the MoI to obtain biometric Service Cards granting access to social services, including health care and education (NRC, 2016; UNHCR, n.d.b.). In 2015, an Urban Verification Exercise (UVE) was launched, allowing many refugees to receive MoI cards. However, issuance is contingent on presenting proof of residence, a health certificate, and an ID or birth certificate, which bars many Syrians from accessing the procedure (ibid.). MoI cards are valid for a period determined by the government (currently until December 2023) (Jordan Times, 2023).



Censuses conducted by the National Statistics Office collect population data by nationality, but not by protection status, noting that censuses are held on an irregular basis. UNHCR collects and disseminates data on refugees' location by province, disaggregated by nationality, gender, and age, allowing for an approximation of school-aged children. However, data are limited to registered refugees, estimated to represent half of the total Syrian population. There is therefore a substantial data gap, specifically for unregistered refugee children.

Estimated number of registered Syrian refugee children in Jordan (2023): **342,973**

Proportion of Syrian refugee children (% of registered Syrian population) (2023): **46.3%**

Sources: Data on Syrian refugee children from **UNHCR, 2023b**.

Education and training

Access to early childhood, primary and secondary education

The Ministry of Education (MoE)'s [Education Strategic Plan \(ESP\) 2018-2025](#) and the NHRDP aim to expand access to education for refugees at all levels. Refugee education provision is also included in the [Jordan Response Plan \(JRP\) 2020-2022](#). To absorb additional learners, the MoE has relied on a double-shift system, originally implemented in 1960 to accommodate Palestinian learners, with many Syrian students attending afternoon shifts (WBZ, 2017). In 2017, a former requirement to present an Mol card to enrol was waived, and circulars were disseminated to school principals to reaffirm that children should be enrolled regardless of status (Younes and Morrice, 2019). However, the requirement was reintroduced in 2019 (HRW, 2020). In 2021/2022, UNHCR noted that the MoE had waived the requirement for the first term of the academic year.



Jordan's national EMIS collects enrolment data at all levels disaggregated by nationality, including for Syrians. Although not made publicly available, enrolment data collected through OpenEMIS have been included in education sector and refugee response plans, as well as in updates published by the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG). The latest data reported in 2019 included enrolment of Syrian refugees by level in comparison to the total school-age population, along with breakdowns by type of school (double-shift/morning-shift/camp schools). However, in rare cases, students without a Mol card are not registered in OpenEMIS (Younes and Morrice, 2019), and are therefore not included in enrolment data or estimated school-age populations.

Percentage and number of Syrians enrolled in ECD (2019): **23% (4,591 of 19,951)**

Percentage and number of Syrians enrolled in basic education (2019): **68% (124,910 of 184,861)**

Number enrolled in double-shift/morning-shift/camp schools: **62,527/31,645/30,738**

Percentage and number of Syrians enrolled in secondary education (2019): **25% (6,936 of 27,315)**

Number enrolled in double-shift/morning-shift/camp schools: **568/5,122/1,246**

Sources: MoE, 2018; ESWG, 2019; MoPIC, 2020; Younes and Morrice, 2019.

Safe learning environment

The ESP, JRP, and HNRDP include specific goals to foster a safe learning environment for refugees and host community learners. Specifically, the ESP outlines several initiatives to prevent school violence, including the Ma'an ('Together for a Safe Environment') campaign and an anti-bullying programme (MoE, 2018). In 2017, the Nashatati ('My Activities') after-school programme was launched by the MoE, aiming to build life skills, promote social cohesion, and provide psychosocial support to students (Younes and Morrice, 2019). The ESP also sets targets for the construction of additional safe infrastructure and WASH facilities (MoE, 2018).



While the data landscape on school safety is limited, some MoE and partner initiatives have collected data on infrastructure safety and school violence. In 2015, the MoE and UNICEF conducted a nationwide report on school security measures and WASH facilities. Likewise, in 2015, the ESWG conducted a survey on barriers to education for 330 groups of children, including Syrians, including barriers related to safety.

Percentage of schools with sub-standard latrines nationally (2015): **35% of schools surveyed**

Groups citing bullying from other students as attendance deterrent (2015): **28 of 65 groups surveyed**

Groups citing discrimination as attendance deterrent (2015): **24 of 65 groups surveyed**

Proportion of Syrian households reporting school teasing (vs. Jordanian) (2018): **25% (vs. 20%)**

Sources: MoE, 2015; REACH and UNICEF, 2015; UNICEF, 2018.

Quality learning conditions

The JRP, ESP, and NHRDP provide a framework for the provision of quality education to all students, including refugees. The ESP includes targets for the improvement of the quality of assessments, school curriculum, ICT, and community participation in schools. It also highlights the need for specific training of teachers to deliver education to refugee students, including training to provide psychosocial support (MoE, 2018). However, only Jordanians may be employed as teachers; legal restrictions impede Syrian refugee teachers from exercising their profession (Ministry of Labour, 2020).



Since 2015, the Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Initiative (RAMP), run by MoE and funded by USAID and FCDO, reports data on reading and mathematics skills in Grades 2 and 3, with learning outcomes disaggregated by nationality. Data are published in MoE reports (key findings for 2021 available below). With regards to learning conditions, Jordan's OpenEMIS provides data on teacher numbers, pupil-to-teacher ratios, and national school and classroom numbers, including by location, although data on these fields for refugees are not accurate. Some information on training provided to school staff on delivering quality education has been made available in JRPs, including the number of school counselling staff trained on delivering psychosocial activities (MoPIC, 2017).

Percentage of correct answers in reading, G2 (Syrians in/out of camps, vs. general): **10.3% / 22.1% (vs. 26.5%)**

Percentage of correct answers in math, G2 (Syrians in/out of camps, vs. general): **34% / 42.5% (vs. 42.5%)**

Number of school counselling staff trained on psychosocial activities (2016): **521**

Source: Learning outcomes from [MoE, 2021](#); number of trained staff from [MoPIC, 2017](#).

Access to transitions

Refugees may transition through all levels of education. While the education system in Jordan has no end-of-cycle exams at the primary or lower secondary levels, promotion between Grades 1 to 11 is dependent on academic performance and attendance. Students who are absent for 39 or more days per academic year must repeat the grade the following year (UNICEF, 2018). A UNICEF-led programme (Makani) aims to prevent absenteeism through SMS alerts and home visits for students at risk of exceeding the limit, based on attendance data provided through the OpenEMIS portal (ibid.).



Individual-level data on enrolment by grade level and attendance are available based on OpenEMIS registration. This information is shared with relevant stakeholders, including UNICEF for the implementation of programming to prevent drop-out as noted above (UNICEF, 2018). OpenEMIS data are not made publicly available. In the absence of publicly available MoE data, a 2019 household survey conducted by the Department of Statistics and ICF included data on completion rates for Syrian students, published in the JRP 2020-2022.

Grade 7-10 completion rate for Syrians (vs. Jordanians) (2019): **41.2% (vs. 91.5%)**

Source: [MoPIC, 2020](#).

Certification of learning

All students in Jordan sit the Tawjihi (General Secondary Education Certificate) exam at the end of upper secondary in both general and vocational tracks. Completion of the exam is mandatory to receive certification. Refugees may sit for the Tawjihi on the same basis as nationals upon paying registration fees. Due to historically low success rates, since 2017, all students '[are] allowed to receive the minimum passing rate of 40 per cent' and are eligible to apply for tertiary education regardless of their score (MoE, 2018, p. 32).



The MoE collects data on Tawjihi registration and pass rates, although datasets are not made publicly available. Some data have been published through MoE and press reports, as well as the MoPIC JRPs. However, publication is not systematic and data are fragmented, particularly on refugee scores. UNHCR also collects and disseminates, although not systematically, some data on the number of refugee students registered for the Tawjihi and the number of refugees who receive assistance paying registration fees.

Number of Syrians who sat the Tawjihi in 2015: **1,605 of 2,761 eligible students**

Number and percentage of Syrians who passed the Tawjihi in 2015: **536 (33.4%)**

Number of Syrians who passed the Tawjihi in 2020 (number receiving 95% or higher): **1,670 (154)**

Source: 2015 registration data and pass rates from [MoPIC, 2016](#); 2020 results from [UN, 2020](#).

Access to technical, vocational and tertiary education

Refugees may apply for admission to higher education upon presenting a valid Service Card, although they are required to pay international student tuition rates (UNHCR, 2021). To address this obstacle, some universities have offered reduced fees for refugees (UN, 2020). Various scholarships are available to remove financial barriers for refugees, including the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) scholarship and the EDU-Syria scholarship programme (EU, n.d.).



The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHE) publishes enrolment figures in higher education in its Annual Statistical Reports, disaggregated by nationality. MoPIC may also publish data on tertiary education in JRPs. However, these data are not systematically published. Education Dashboards produced by UNHCR include enrolment figures in higher education, as well as data on DAFI scholarship recipients, disaggregated by nationality.

Number of Syrians enrolled at undergraduate level (public/private universities) (2020): **1,663/5,262**

Number of Syrians enrolled at postgraduate level (public/private universities) (2020): **180/150**

Percentage of Syrians receiving university scholarships upon Grade 12 completion (2019): **22%**

Recipients of the DAFI scholarship (of which Syrians) (2021): **311 (297)**

Sources: Number of Syrians enrolled from [MoHE, 2020](#); percentage receiving scholarships from [MoPIC, 2020](#); DAFI scholarship data from [UNHCR, 2021](#).

Local integration

Since the Global Compact on Refugees in 2016 and subsequent Ministerial authorization, Syrian refugees have the right to work in designated sectors, although employment is largely limited to low-skilled occupations including construction, agriculture, and manufacturing (Ministry of Labour, 2020). Syrian refugees may obtain a work permit after presenting a valid Service Card, undergoing a medical exam, and receiving a work contract. Refugees with a work permit are protected under the labour law and have the right to a minimum wage and social security (UNHCR, n.d.d.) However, many Syrians do not hold a work permit and are employed in the informal sector. Pathways to citizenship are limited for Syrian refugees (Robbin and Qiblawi, 2023).



The Department of Statistics (DoS) publishes employment data disaggregated by sector, gender, and nationality, including Syrians, but provides no disaggregation by protection status. Partners, such as the ILO and UNHCR, support data collection and dissemination through household surveys.

Proportion of employed Syrians holding a valid work permit, pre-Covid (2020): **23%**

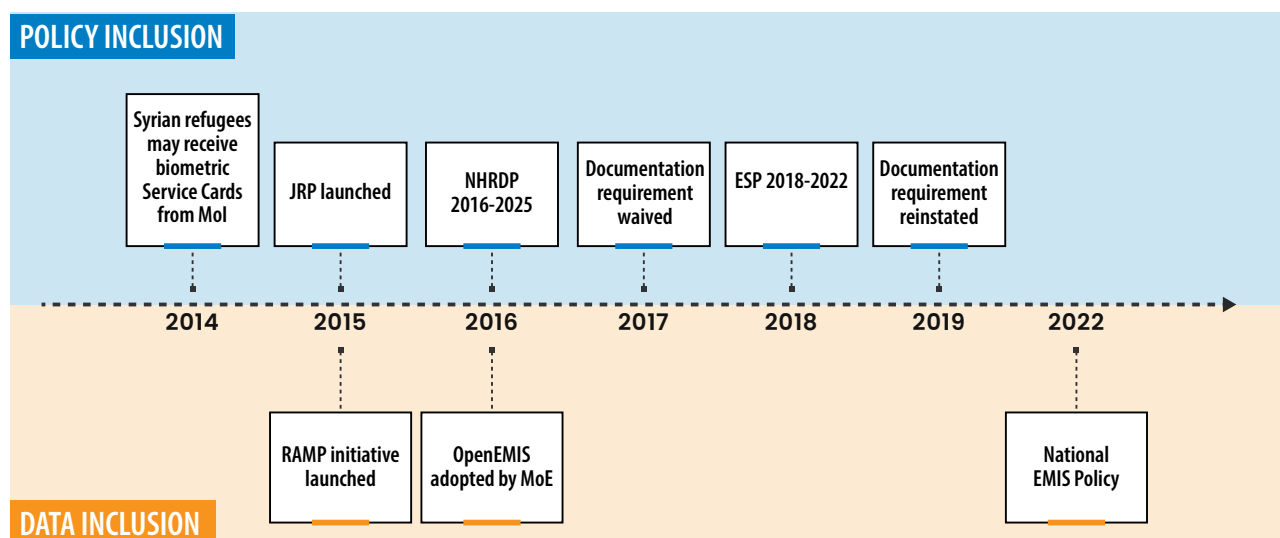
Average pre-Covid monthly wage of Syrians vs. Jordanians (2020): **JOD ~190 vs. ~370**

Average pre-Covid monthly wage of Syrians with/without a valid work permit (2020): **JOD ~225 vs. ~175**

Sources: National employment data available at [DoS, 2020](#); 2020 data on work permits above from [ILO, 2021](#).

Trajectory of inclusion of refugees in policy and data

Although a non-signatory to international refugee law, Jordan has followed a positive trajectory for the inclusion of refugees, both in education policy and in data systems since the onset of the Syrian crisis in 2011. A number of factors have enabled and constrained efforts towards inclusion.



Enabling factors

✓ **Political will has been instrumental in fostering an inclusive policy landscape for education.** Jordan has enacted several comprehensive and coordinated policies favouring inclusion in the national education system, including the JRP, ESP, and NHRDP. Inclusive policies have further paved the way towards broader inclusion in data landscapes, including in the new national EMIS policy. However, gaps remain, particularly in ensuring equal access to higher education and employment.

✓ **Collaboration with and funding from the international community** have provided Jordan with guidelines and support in responding to the influx of Syrian refugees. Funding provided by donors through the Jordan Compact has been instrumental in enabling Jordan to provide education to Syrian refugees, although there is a need for financing levels to be sustained. The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) acts as a strong coordination platform between Member States, UNHCR, and donors, both in terms of policy responses and data dissemination.

Constraining factors

✗ **A major barrier to the tracking of refugee learners is their lack of documentation.** An estimated 660,000 Syrians are undocumented in Jordan. From a data perspective, undocumented refugees are not captured in national data systems, including in EMIS. EMIS data should be further disaggregated to include disaggregation by protection status to allow for evidence-based policy formulation.

✗ **Insufficient capacity at the local and central levels hinders data collection, quality assurance, and analysis processes.** Schools, field directorates, and central departments are understaffed, and few staff members are trained on EMIS data collection and analysis processes (UNESCO & IDP Norway, 2022). Data collection processes may be somewhat inefficient as schools often collect data (at least partly) manually, which may lead to mistakes and delays. Key informants also reported barriers in data access, with lengthy request processes.

Recommendations

To the government:

- Formulate long-term policies to provide better learning conditions and outcomes for refugees, including by integrating Syrians in classes alongside Jordanian peers.
- Establish more systematic and regular population censuses to capture accurate data on total numbers of Syrian refugees living in Jordan to ensure informed decision-making.
- Ensure all Syrian refugees are reflected in OpenEMIS and provide disaggregation by documentation type to allow for monitoring of educational progression for all refugees.

To the international community:

- Direct funding and capacity-building towards systematic data collection and regular dissemination efforts.
 - Systematize collaboration with the Government of Jordan to reinforce the publication of EMIS data online.
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