

Are people moving to urban areas in Jordan because of climate change?

Jordan has experienced waves of migration in its recent history, particularly refugees and asylum seekers from Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Yemen, or Sudan, but also labour migrants from Egypt and South/South-East Asia, making it the largest recipient of migrants in the Middle East. These waves of external migrants are likely much different from the future patterns of migration that may result from climate change. As one of the most water-scarce countries in the world, Jordan is likely to experience prolonged periods of drought, pushing individuals from rural to urban areas and increasing the stress for water demand in the northern region, where 90% of the population is situated. Whether Jordan is already experiencing an intra-national migration shift due to the pressure of climate change and how it may respond to this shift deserves further investigation.

Policy challenge

Jordan's economic growth is driven primarily by services, manufacturing and, in small part, agriculture (only 5%). The country's arid conditions make farming activities challenging, and the rural population stands at just 8% of the total. Jordan also faces unique risks from climate change, including drought, storms, extreme heat, and flash flooding. In the last forty years, Jordan has experienced major flood events - impacting over 10,000 people, and droughts - impacting over 100,000 people. For those who do remain in rural areas, infrastructure, and the small amount of arable land in the Jordan Valley can be destroyed during a drought or the flash flood that often follows.

In addition to climate events, water scarcity is increasingly important, and may already contribute to individuals choosing to migrate to cities. Over 70% of current water resources are used for high-value crops, such as fruit and livestock. But, with the growing frequency and intensity of droughts, the small portion of those in agriculture will likely need more water or choose to leave the agriculture sector. This can augment local demand for water, electricity, housing, and other services in cities as well as interact with the challenges from the international migration flows into the country.

The country is not yet adapted to the risks that climate change is imposing on both rural and urban populations. While the country has dealt extensively with international migrants and refugees, the question of intra-country migration still remains unexplored. Jordan is heavily dependent on international aid and remittance, and improvements in the country's readiness for climate change are greatly needed.

Data

- [Jordan's Population Census \(2015\)](#) provided by the Department of Statistics. It contains migrant in-flows and out-flows, although the data is not reported regularly.
- [Jordan's OpenData Portal](#) containing datasets, irregularly updated, on demographics and populations (including foreign born individuals and other demographics).
- Some data may be accessible in tandem with the IGC's country team, to access and translate other data.

Stakeholders

- [Greater Amman Municipality](#) with specific members who work on housing, local development
- Housing and Urban Development Corporation
- Ministry of Public Works and Housing
- Ministry of Environment

For further information or to discuss project generation, please contact the IGC Jordan team at jordan@theigc.org

