

Jordan's employment and unemployment

Key insights from labour market panel survey

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Jordan's employment and unemployment key insights from labour market panel survey 2025*

Mohammad Al-Masaeid[†]

Abstract

Jordan continues to struggle with some of the world's highest unemployment rates and lowest labour force participation. Despite investments in education and economic reforms, its labour market consistently underperforms globally. Evidence from Jordan and other countries confirms that labour-market underperformance is driven by multiple factors rather than a single cause, requiring a multi-pronged policy response. Achieving the first goal of the economic modernisation vision, which targets integrating over one million young Jordanians into the workforce by 2033, requires innovative ways of thinking about the challenges and new policy approaches, including strategies to address both unemployed and employed individuals, their characteristics, and employment mobility, grounded in evidence. Using the latest available data in Jordan, the labour market panel survey (JLMPS) 2025, this study analyses the characteristics of the employed and unemployed to identify the specific interventions needed to support these national objectives at the micro level.

Summary

Jordan has some of the highest unemployment rates and the lowest labour force participation rates globally. This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the Jordanian labour market using the Jordan labour market panel survey (JLMPS) 2025 to look at labour market conditions, the characteristics of unemployed and employed individuals.

Section 1 describes the dataset used in this study, which is the Jordan labour market panel survey (JLMPS). The survey is implemented by the Department of Statistics, Jordan, in collaboration with the Economic Research Forum. It represents the only longitudinal labour market dataset available for Jordan. This study uses the most recent wave (2025), which includes 42,050 individuals. The survey provides detailed information on demographic characteristics, education, labour market participation, employment conditions, and earnings. All estimates apply sampling weights to ensure that the results are nationally representative of the Jordanian population.

Section 2 uses data from the 2025 wave of the Jordan Labour market panel survey (JLMPS). Labour force participation remains low at 37%, with a large gender gap (59% for men compared with 15% for women), and the employment-to-population ratio is 30%. Broader unemployment measures, which capture individuals not actively seeking work, reach 23%, reflecting hidden unemployment. Using the standard market (ILO) definition with search requirements, unemployment is 21%, with substantially higher unemployment among women

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is 36% than men is 17%. In addition, the measure for those who have worked before but are currently inactive is 18%. Average daily working hours are 8.9, with men working 9.2 hours and women 7.5 hours. Monthly wages average 456 JD and show clear sectoral segmentation: government employees earn 521 JD compared with 423 JD in the private sector. Labour force participation and unemployment patterns are also highly segmented by nationality in Jordan, with Jordanians accounting for most of the population and the majority of unemployment. The unemployment rate is 21%, with Jordanians alone accounting for 20%. In comparison, the presence of other nationalities increases the overall rate by only 1%.

Section 3 shows how labour force participation and unemployment vary across the life cycle. The results highlight strong life-cycle patterns, persistent gender gaps, and significant difficulties in the school-to-work transition, particularly for young graduates. Labour force participation is very low among youth aged 15–19 and rises steadily to peak during prime working ages (25–44) before declining among older workers. Male participation exceeds female participation across all age groups. Participation among Jordanians follows a similar life-cycle pattern, increasing during early adulthood, peaking in mid-career, and then declining. However, female participation remains consistently low across all age groups. Unemployment among Jordanians is heavily concentrated among youth, especially those aged 20–29. The rate declines after age 30, indicating improved labour market stability with age and experience.

The Jordanian labour market exhibits a sharp divergence between education levels and graduation cohorts, where high historical participation among university graduates (over 70%) contrasts with a steep drop to 36% for the 2025 class, a trend likely reflecting lifecycle job-search lags rather than market collapse. While university graduates show a promising narrowing of the gender gap at the entry level, secondary and vocational graduates face more concerning structural barriers. The narrowing gap is driven by declining male engagement rather than female gains, with participation for both genders plummeting in recent years. This instability is compounded by severe long-term unemployment, with 27% of the jobless having been stagnant for over five years, signalling deep structural constraints and a high risk of permanent scarring and labour-market detachment for a significant portion of the workforce.

Section 4 shows how workers in Jordan are distributed across economic sectors, occupations, and activities, highlighting the overall structure of employment. Most workers are employed in the private sector at 63%, while the public sector accounts for a substantial share at 37%, highlighting the continued importance of government jobs in providing stable employment. Compared with other countries, Jordan exhibits a relatively high reliance on public-sector employment. In terms of occupations, employment is concentrated in professional and service/sales roles at 26% each, followed by craft and related trades, with smaller shares in technical, clerical, and elementary occupations, and very limited representation in managerial positions. Across economic activities, employment is heavily concentrated in the services sector at 78%, particularly in public administration, retail, and education, while the industrial sector accounts for 22%, mainly in manufacturing, construction, and agriculture. This distribution highlights the dominance of services and the relatively limited but potentially complementary role of industry in supporting broader employment growth.

Section 5 shows regional differences in labour force participation and unemployment across Jordan's governorates, highlighting geographic disparities in labour market outcomes. Labour force participation varies across governorates, with the highest rates in Madaba, Balqa, and Karak and the lowest in Zarqa and Ajloun. Male participation is consistently much higher than female participation across all regions. At the same time, employment remains geographically concentrated in Amman, Irbid, and Zarqa. Unemployment rates remain above 20% in several governorates, with the highest rates in Aqaba and Mafraq. Gender gaps persist across regions, with female unemployment higher than male unemployment, particularly in northern and southern governorates.

Finally, Section 6 highlights the relationship between educational attainment and labour market outcomes in Jordan, emphasising how higher education increases workforce participation and partially narrows gender gaps while unemployment remains gendered across all education levels. Labour force participation rises with education, from 28% for those with no basic education to 57% for university graduates. Male participation is consistently higher, but higher education dramatically increases female participation, particularly among university and postgraduate holders. Unemployment decreases with higher education among men but remains high among women at all levels, exceeding 30% except among postgraduates. This suggests that female unemployment drives much of the overall labour-market inactivity, particularly among university-educated females.

1. Jordan Labour market panel survey (JLMPS) data

The analysis uses the 2025 wave of the Jordan Labour market panel survey (JLMPS), a nationally representative longitudinal survey implemented by the Jordanian Department of Statistics in collaboration with the Economic Research Forum. The JLMPS is designed to provide detailed information on demographic characteristics, education, labour force participation, employment conditions, earnings, and job characteristics. The 2025 wave follows earlier waves conducted in 2010 and 2016, maintaining the same core design and objectives. The 2025 sample includes 42,050 individuals, allowing us to analyse employment and unemployment at the national level.

The advantage of the JLMPS is its longitudinal and retrospective design. In addition to re-interviewing some individuals from previous waves, the survey includes new households to maintain national representativeness over time. Furthermore, the retrospective employment history questions collect detailed information on previous jobs, including start and end dates, sector, and employment status. These data allow us to reconstruct workers' transitions between jobs and sectors through the 2025 wave.

The JLMPS 2025 is designed to be nationally representative of the Jordan population. However, because the survey uses a stratified sampling design in which some individuals have a higher probability of selection than others, simple unweighted averages would not accurately reflect the population. For this reason, all estimates apply individual sampling weights. These weights ensure that each respondent represents the correct number of people in the population, adjusting for unequal selection probabilities and non-response. In practice, when estimating the

unemployment rate, using survey weights ensures that the reported averages reflect population-level unemployment rates rather than just the characteristics of the sampled individuals.³

2. Labour market overview

Most of the countries use standard labour market indicators, such as employment-to-population ratio, labour force participation rate, and unemployment rate, to assess labour market conditions and evaluate their economic performance. In this study, the World Bank's definitions, based on the International Labor Organisation (ILO) standards, are adopted to ensure consistency and international comparability. According to the ILO definition, the employment-to-population ratio measures the proportion of the working-age population 15+ that is employed,⁴ while the labour force participation rate represents the share of the working-age population that is economically active, either employed or unemployed but actively seeking work (age +15 to 64), whereas the unemployment rate refers to the share of the labour force that is without work but is available for and actively seeking work.

Therefore, the Jordanian labour market is characterised by persistently structurally low labour force participation and employment-to-population ratios, and by high unemployment, placing it among the underperforming labour markets in the region and global (see Figures 1–3). This performance persists despite relatively high levels of educational attainment, with approximately 38% of the population having completed secondary education or higher.⁵ However, employment creation has not kept pace with population growth, estimated at around 1.9% in 2024, increasing the population from approximately 11.52 million to 11.73 million,⁶ nor with economic growth, as real GDP growth reached about 2.5% in 2024.⁷ Although around 96,420 net jobs were created among persons aged 15 and above during 2024,⁸ this level of new job remains insufficient to absorb new labour market entrants. As a result, structural imbalances stay, leading to prolonged joblessness and limited labour absorption capacity within the Jordanian economy.

Fig. 1 and 2 shows that Jordan low labour force participation and employment intensity relative to both regional and global scales. In 2024, Jordan's labour force participation rate stood at 41%, compared with 50% in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries and 67% globally, leaving Jordan below its peers. A similar example is observed for the employment-to-population ratio, in 2024 at 32%, nearly half the global average 58% and lower than in Egypt 40%, Türkiye 49%, and Tunisia 38%. Jordan's outcomes reflect deep structural constraints, including low female labour force participation (15% see Table 1), low labour absorption

³ See Krafft, C., & Assaad, R. (2021). Introducing the Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey 2016. *IZA Journal of Development and Migration*, 12(1), 1–42. <https://doi.org/10.2478/izajodm-2021-0008> for more information on the design and methodology of the JLMPS, although their article focuses on the earlier waves, the 2025 wave follows the same conceptual framework, sampling strategy, and questionnaire structure.

⁴ We restricted the employment-to-population ratio to be calculated based on the age (15–64) in the JLMPS.

⁵ Source JLMPS 2025

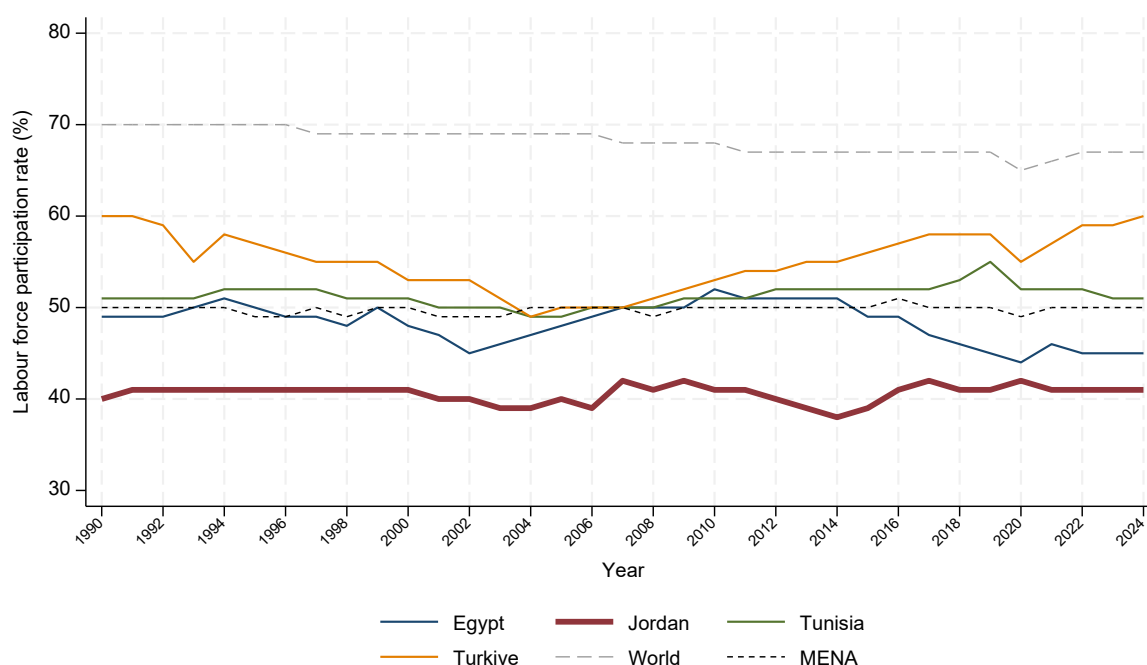
⁶ Source Jordan DOS https://jorinfo.dos.gov.jo/Databank/pxweb/en/Demographi_Statistics/-/Table5.px/table/tableViewLayout2/

⁷ Source worldbank <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=JO>

⁸ Source Jordan DOS http://www.dos.gov.jo/owa-user/owa/jobs_yearly.show_tables1_jobs_yearly?lang=E&year1=2024&t_no=1

capacity, despite the private sector accounting for more than 75% of total job creation,⁹ a skills mismatch between education and labour demand, alongside labour supply distortions linked to preferences for public sector employment and job security. These structural features distinguish Jordan's labour market from those in the regions and contribute to the low employment elasticity of growth. Addressing these challenges requires policies that stimulate private sector labour demand by removing constraints on firms' ability to expand their operations and create new businesses. This includes improving the business environment, easing regulatory and financing barriers, and strengthening coordination between employers and education system to ensure that workers get the skills demanded by the labour market, thereby improving the match between capital and labour. At the same time, reducing barriers to female employment and expanding access to supportive services remain essential for raising overall labour force participation. Without such reforms, labour force participation is likely to remain low.

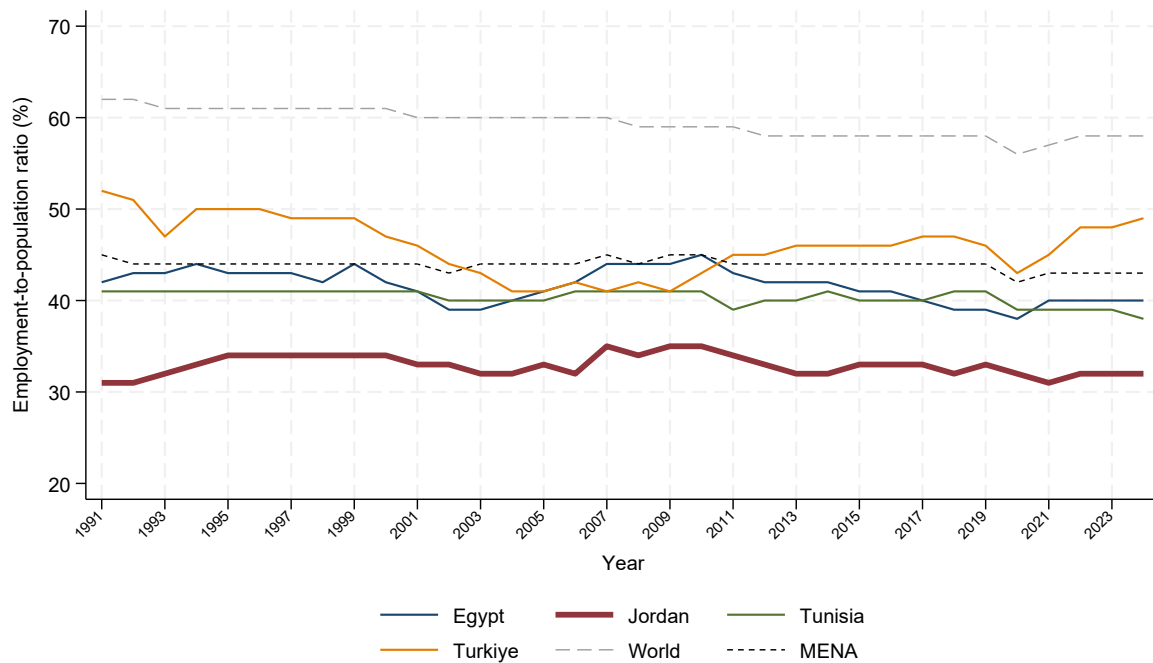
Fig 1. Labour force participation rate Jordan and other region



Source: Authors' visualisation based on World Bank (2026). ILO modelled estimates.

⁹ Source Jordan DOS http://www.dos.gov.jo/owa-user/owa/jobs_yearly.show_tables1_jobs_yearly?lang=E&year1=2024&t_no=11

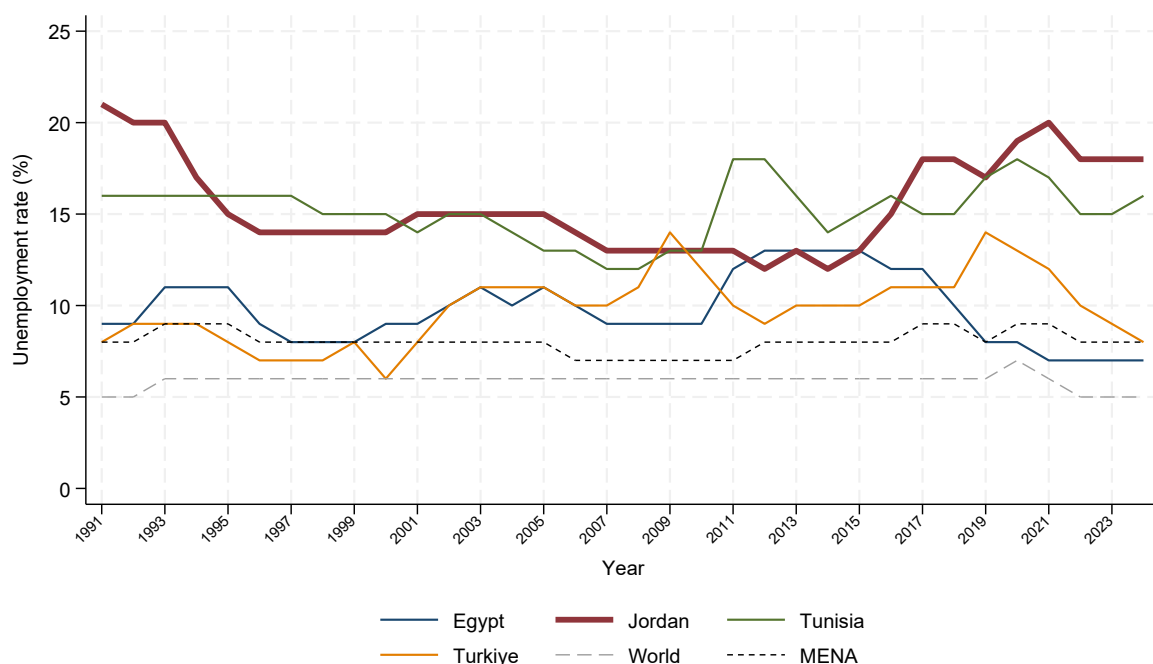
Fig 2. *Employment-to-Population ratio Jordan and other region*



Source: Authors' visualisation based on World Bank (2026). ILO modelled estimates.

According to the World Bank, as shown in Fig. 3, Jordan's unemployment rate has remained high over the past decade, consistently exceeding that of comparable countries and global levels. Since the early 1990s, unemployment in Jordan has fluctuated between 12% and 21%, rising sharply after 2016 and remaining at around 18% in 2024. Compared to Egypt, Türkiye, and Tunisia have remained lower over the same period, while the global average and MENA country have stayed below 9% in most years. Even during periods of regional or global economic stress, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Jordan's unemployment increased more sharply and declined slowly than in other economies. This gap highlights the structural of unemployment in Jordan, reflecting limited labour absorption capacity and weak job creation relative to labour supply growth.

Fig 3. Unemployment rate Jordan and other region



Source: Authors' visualisation based on World Bank (2026). ILO modelled estimates.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics from the Jordan Labour market panel survey (JLMPS) 2025 and highlights the depth of labour market challenges facing the Jordanian economy. Labour force participation remains low at 37%, with obvious gender differences: participation reaches 59% among men but only 15% among women. Consistent with this pattern, the employment-to-population ratio is 30%, compared with 49% for men and only 10% for women. These levels are substantially below global averages and lower and low- and middle-income countries, highlighting Jordan's position as one of the underperforming labour markets internationally.

Under the narrow market definition requiring an active job search, including individuals out of the labour force as well, the unemployment rate is approximately 9%. When broader labour force participation is considered, including individuals not actively seeking work then excluding those out of the labour force, the unemployment rate rises to 23%, highlighting the extent of hidden unemployment and labour market disconnection. Using the standard market definition aligns with International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards, as it excludes those out of the labour force and considers only those actively seeking work and available for work. Unemployment is 21%. In addition, the JLMPS measure "unemployment rate worked before, excluded if out of labour force or employed (market definition)" reports a rate of 18% overall (20% for men, 15% for women), capturing the share of individuals who have experienced unemployment while previously employed.

Wage patterns in Jordan further illustrate the segmentation and structural challenges in the labour market. Individuals report median monthly earnings of 456 JD, with men earning slightly more than women (460 JD vs 439 JD). The economic sector plays a critical role in shaping wages: public sector workers earn higher median monthly wages, 521 JD (522 JD for

men and 519 JD for women), while private sector workers earn a median of 423 JD (428 JD for men and 395 JD for women). The wage premium in public sector, combined with greater job stability and comprehensive social security coverage, creates strong incentives for workers to queue for public-sector positions, even though the bulk of job creation occurs in the private sector. This dynamic reinforces labour market segmentation, while limited private-sector absorption capacity suppresses wage growth and constrains employment opportunities. As a result, labour supply to the private sector remains restricted, contributing to unemployment and underemployment, particularly among youth and females, and perpetuating structural inefficiencies in the labour market. Lastly, average daily hours of market work are 8.9 for men, who work longer hours than women (9.2 vs 7.5).

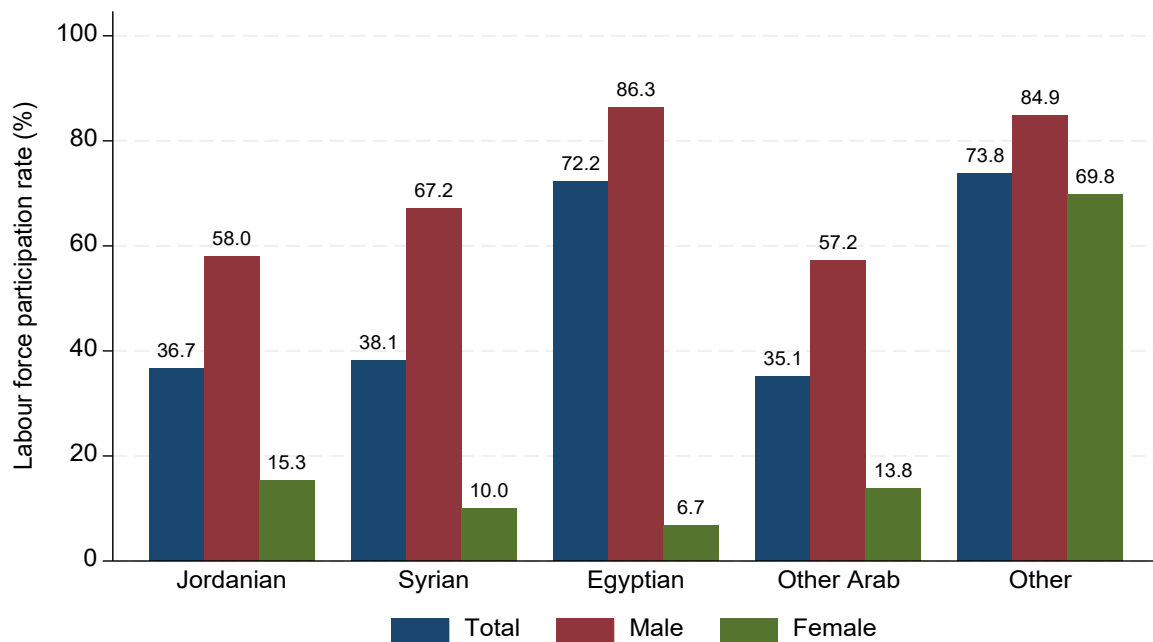
Table 1. Descriptive statistics from Jordan labour market panel survey (JLMPS) 2025

	Total	Male	Female
Labour force participation rate (LFPR)	37%	59%	15%
Employment-to-population ratio (EPR)	30%	49%	10%
Unemployment rate (market definition search required) includes out of labour force	9%	11%	6%
Unemployment rate (broad market definition include not seeking work)	23%	19%	39%
Unemployment rate (market definition search required)*	21%	17%	36%
Unemployment rate worked before, missing if OLF or employed (market definition)	18%	20%	15%
No. of Hours/Day (Ref. 1 Week) Market Work	8.9	9.2	7.5
Log monthly wages	6.12	6.13	6.08
Monthly wages	456 JD	460 JD	439 JD
Monthly wages (gov)	521 JD	522 JD	519 JD
Monthly wages (private)	423 JD	428 JD	395 JD

Note: *We depend on unemployment, measured using the market definition with an active search requirement. In the JLMPS 2025 sample, there are 2,164 unemployed individuals, compared to 7,213 employed individuals. Labour force participation rates are measured as the total proportion of the population aged 15–64 participating in the labour force (modelled ILO estimate), and the employment-to-population ratio refers to the share of individuals aged 15–64 who are currently employed.

Fig. 4 presents labour force participation rate (LFPR) by nationality. Jordanians account for most of the population, 91%, with 36% of LFPR, with gender gap between men 58% and women 15%. Syrian workers represent around 6% of the population, with slightly higher participation 38% but similarly low female participation 10%. Non-Jordanian groups exhibit higher LFPRs, exceeding 70% among Egyptian and other nationalities, driven almost entirely by male participation, while female participation in these groups remains negligible. These patterns highlight the strong segmentation of Jordan's labour market by nationality and gender, with non-Jordanian employment largely concentrated in male-dominated occupations.

Fig 4. LFPR by nationality

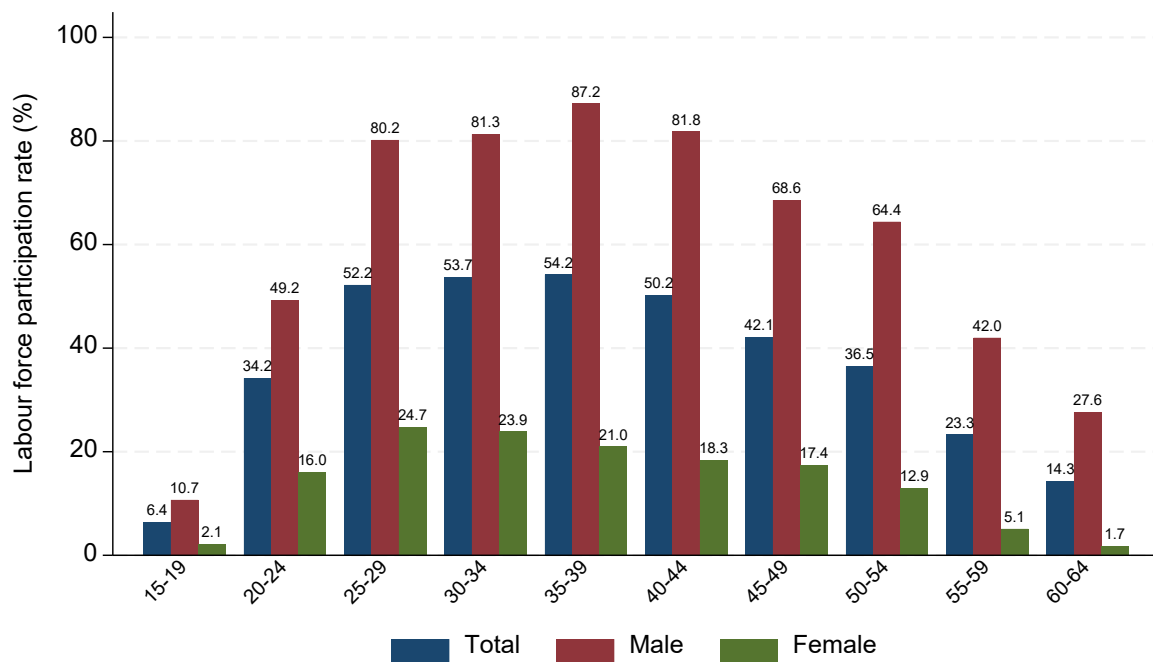


Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPS.

3. Employment and unemployment over the life cycle

Fig. 5 shows that LFPR differs across age groups. Participation is lowest among youth aged 15–19 6% and peaks in the 25–44 age group above 50% before gradually declining among older workers. Male participation exceeds female across all age groups, with the gaps observed in all working ages. These patterns reflect typical life-cycle labour supply, with engagement rising during early adulthood, peaking in mid-career, and tapering as workers approach retirement.

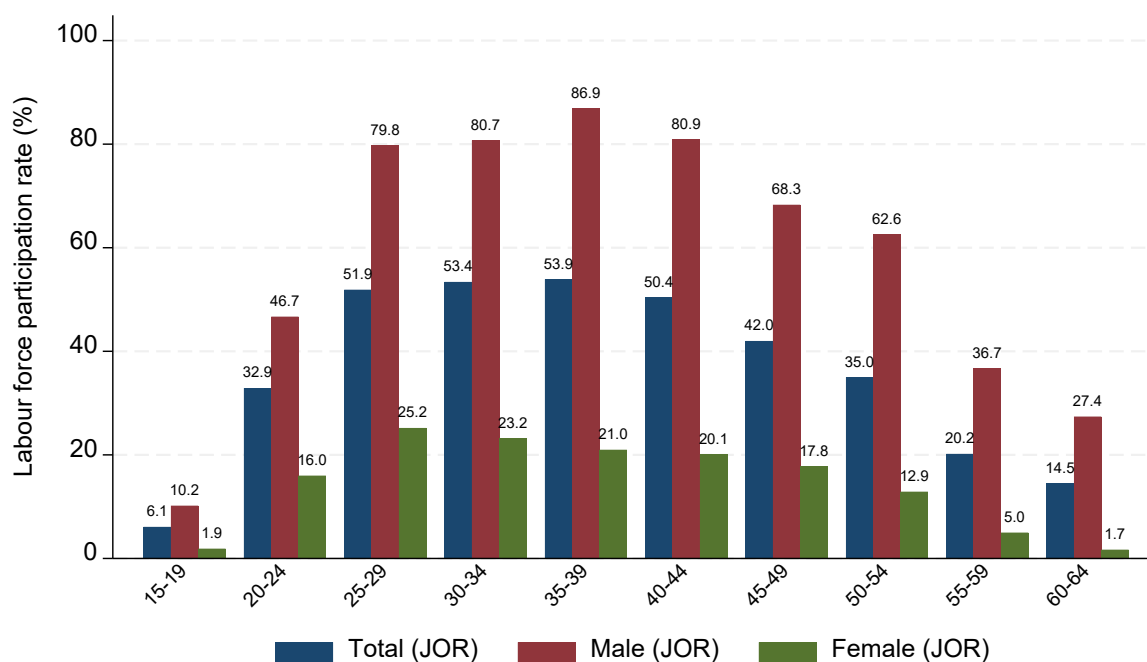
Fig 5. LFPR by age group among all nationality



Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPS.

Fig. 6 presents LFPR across age groups among Jordanians, revealing important structural patterns. Participation among youth aged 15–19 is very low at 6%, largely due to continued education. However, although participation increases among young adults aged 20–24 at 33% and 25–29 at 52%, the transition into the labour market remains incomplete, particularly for women. Male participation rises sharply during prime working ages, exceeding 80% between ages 25 and 44, while female participation remains low, fluctuating between 20% and 25% during this age. Participation peaks around ages 35–39 at 54% overall and gradually declines thereafter, with a sharper decline after age 50. The relatively early withdrawal from the labour force, particularly among women, may reflect structural barriers, such as limited flexible employment opportunities, care responsibilities, and weak incentives to remain in the labour market. Given that a large share of the population is concentrated in younger age groups, these patterns highlight the importance of policies that improve school-to-work transitions, expand job creation, and reduce barriers to female participation.

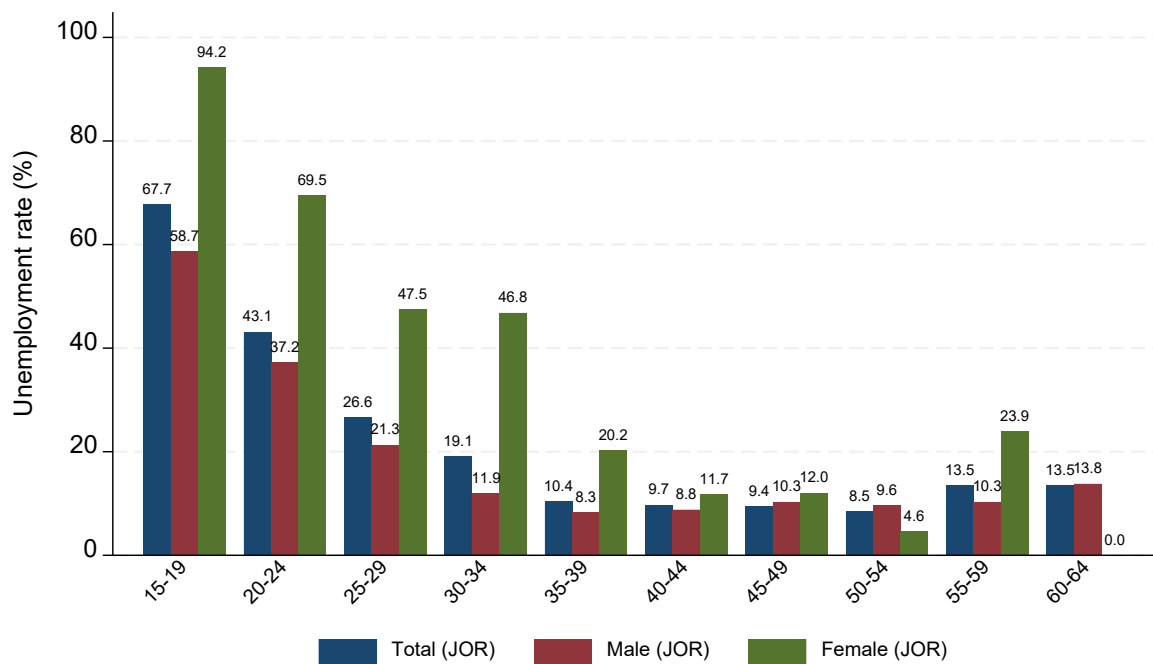
Fig 6. LFPR by age group among Jordanian



Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPS.

Fig. 7 shows the variation in unemployment across age groups among Jordanians. Unemployment is measured using the ILO definition, which classifies individuals as unemployed if they are not working but are actively seeking and available for work. Under this definition, youth unemployment often appears particularly high because many young Jordanians are transitioning from education into the labour market. Consistent with this pattern, unemployment is highest among youth aged 15–19, reaching 67%. However, they represent only a small share of the labour force (around 2%). High unemployment persists among young adults aged 20–24 at 43% and 25–29 at 26%, indicating challenges in the school-to-work transition. Female unemployment remains considerably higher than male unemployment at these early working ages. As age increases, unemployment declines. Among individuals aged 30–34, the rate falls to 19% and continues to decrease to around 10% among those aged 35–39. For workers aged 40–49, unemployment stabilises at relatively low levels between 9% and 10%. At older ages 50–59, unemployment rises slightly again, particularly among women, before declining to low levels among individuals aged 60–64. Overall, unemployment in Jordan is largely concentrated among young people, reflecting the difficult transition from education to employment and limited job creation for new graduates.

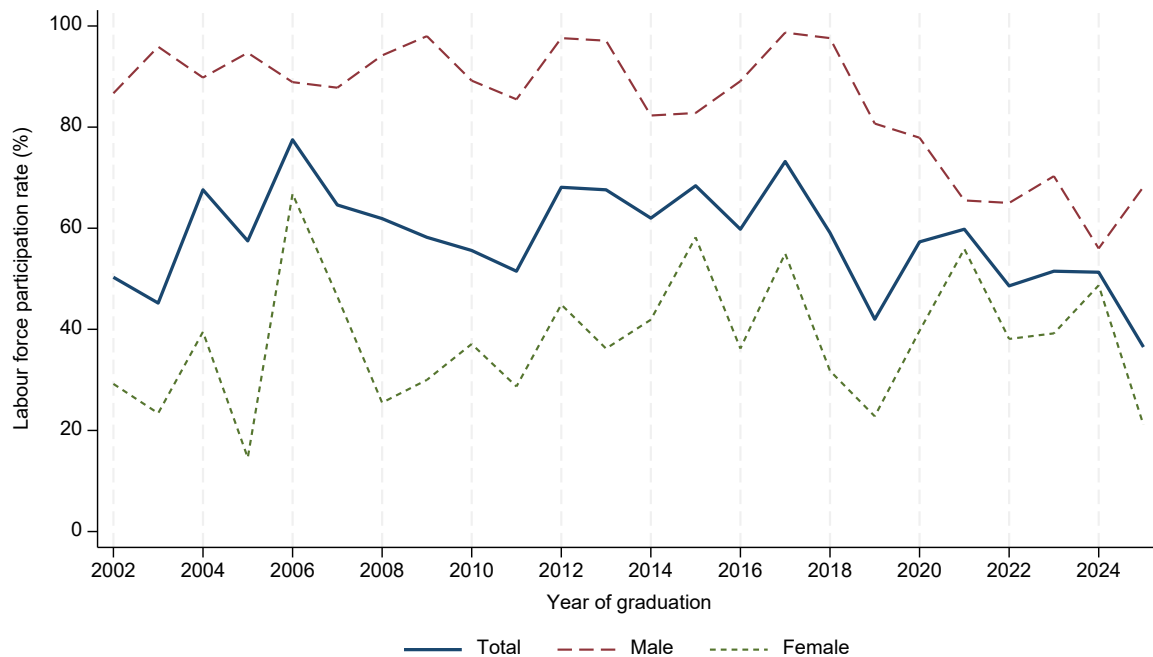
Fig 7. Unemployment by age group among Jordanian



Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPS using ILO definition.

Fig. 8 illustrates the labour force participation rate (LFPR) of university graduates categorised by their year of graduation. While total participation reached historical peaks of 77% for the 2006 cohort and 73% for the 2017 cohort, a distinct downward trend is visible in the most recent cohorts, with participation dropping to 36% for the class of 2025. Rather than reflecting a decline in market conditions, this trend likely captures a lifecycle trajectory. Graduates from earlier cohorts (e.g., 2002–2010) have had decades to integrate into the labour market, achieving more stable participation rates. In contrast, the lower rates observed in the 2024 and 2025 cohorts may reflect the standard job-search lag and initial friction encountered by new entrants. Interestingly, the gender gap appears to compress in these newer cohorts. While older cohorts often maintained a 60-percentage-point gap, more recent years, such as 2021 and 2024, show a narrowing of this margin, suggesting that while recent graduates experience lower overall participation as they begin their careers, the gender gap in entry-level market engagement is becoming less intense than in previous generations.

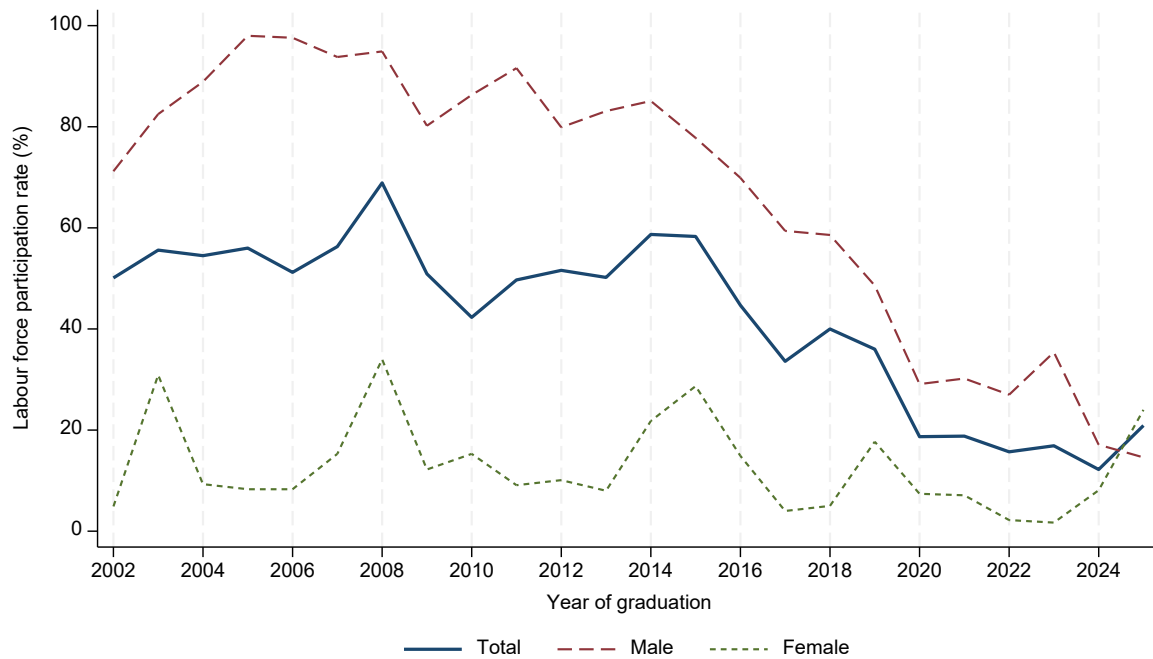
Fig 8. LFPR by graduated year from university/college



Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPS.

Fig. 9 presents the current LFPR of individuals by their year of secondary or vocational completion, excluding those who subsequently obtained tertiary degrees. The results reveal cohort variation and a persistent gender gap across most graduation years. For earlier cohorts (1999–2008), current participation rates remain relatively high, frequently exceeding 50%. This is driven primarily by sustained labour market attachment among males in these groups, whose participation often exceeds 85% and reaches 98% for the 2005 cohort. In contrast, female participation in these same cohorts remains low and volatile, often below 15%, highlighting the long-term structural barriers facing women with secondary-level education. A marked divergence in outcomes is evident among more recent graduation cohorts. Individuals who completed their education from 2017 onwards exhibit lower current participation, with the 2017 cohort showing a rate of 33%. This trend reaches its lowest point among those graduating between 2020 and 2024, where current participation ranges between 12% and 20%. Notably, male participation is also substantially lower in these recent cohorts, falling below 30% in some cases, which likely reflects again the lifecycle challenges of school-to-work transitions and potentially weakening demand for non-university degree holders. While the gender gap appears narrower for these recent graduates, this compression results from lower male engagement rather than improved outcomes for women. These suggest that recent secondary graduates face greater hurdles in establishing labour-market attachment than their more established counterparts from earlier decades.

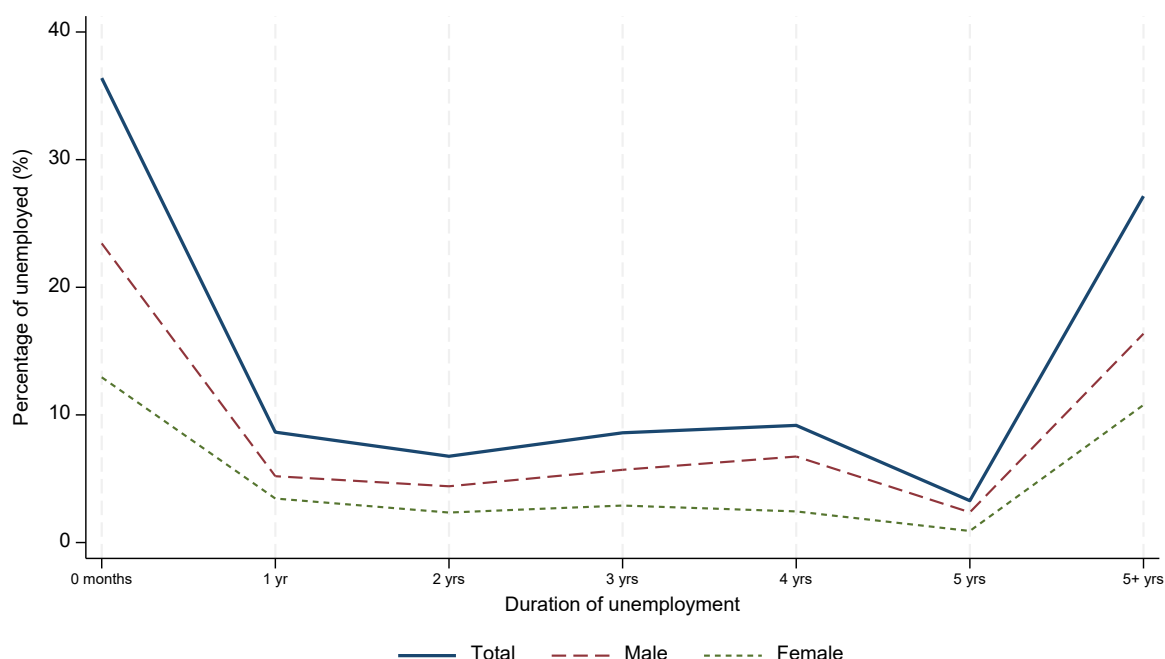
Fig 9. LFPR by graduated year from secondary/vocational education after excluding individuals who completed university/college degree



Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPS.

The distribution of unemployment duration, shown in Fig. 10, indicates that while a plurality of individuals experiences short-term transitions, a substantial portion face long-term unemployment. Approximately 36.4% of the unemployed are newly entering the search (0 months), with a higher concentration among males at 23% than among females at 13%. Unemployment between 1 to 5 years accounts for roughly 36.5% of the sample, distributed across categories of 1 year at 8.6%, 2 years at 6.8%, 3 years at 8.6%, 4 years at 9.2%, and 5 years at 3.3%. While 27% of unemployed has been without work for 5 years or more, with males at 16.4% representing a larger share than females at 10.8%. Suggest that unemployment in the Jordanian labour market is not merely a short-term friction but is characterised by deep structural constraints. When considered alongside high unemployment among recent graduates, this duration evidence points to a significant risk of permanent labour-market detachment and scarring effects, particularly given that over a quarter of the unemployed have been stagnant for over half a decade.

Fig 10. Distribution of unemployment duration



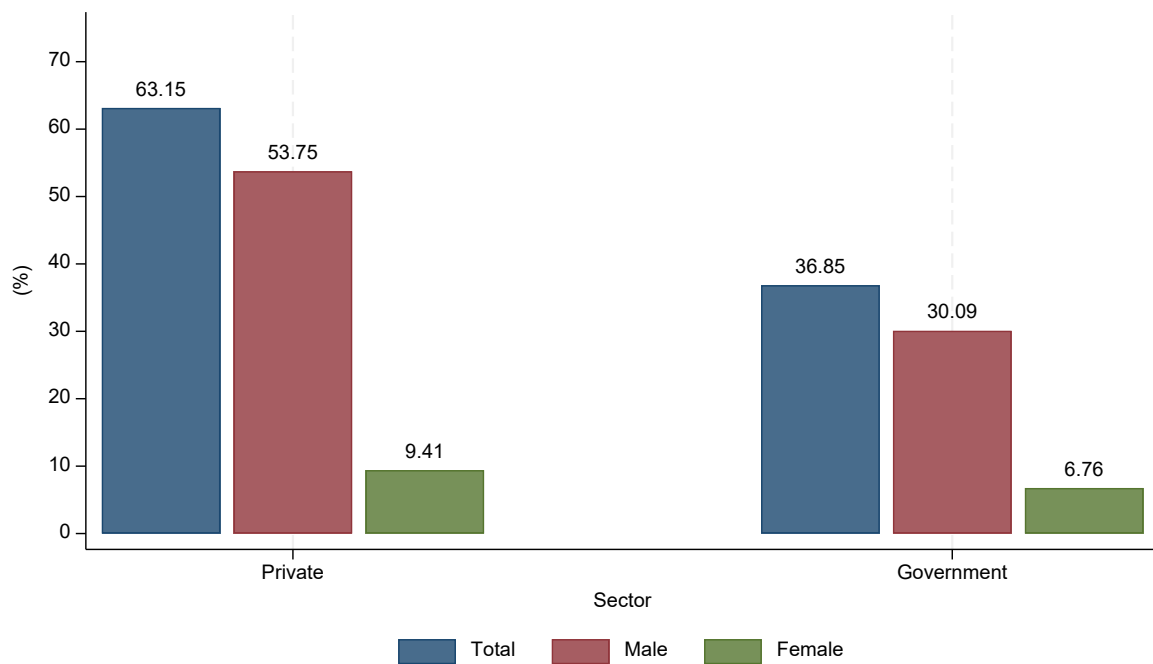
Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPS.

4. Allocation workers across economic sector, occupation and economic activity

Fig. 11 shows that private-sector employment accounts for about 63% of total jobs in Jordan, while the public sector accounts for approximately 37%. Although the private sector remains the main employer, the public sector's share is large. In a comparative perspective, cross-country data from the International Labor Organisation (ILO) indicate that Jordan has a relatively high level of public-sector employment compared with several other countries. For example, the public sector accounts for about 22% of total employment in Jordan according to recent ILO estimates, compared with around 16% in Egypt, 16% in Oman, 12% in Sudan, and only 8% in Morocco. Even in Kuwait, where the state traditionally plays a large role in employment, the public sector represents about 23% of jobs.¹⁰ These comparisons suggest that Jordan relies more on public employment than many comparable economies, highlighting the role of government jobs in providing stable employment opportunities and shaping labour-market outcomes (ILO, 2026).

¹⁰ Cross-country public and private sector employment shares are drawn from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) ILOSTAT database: Employment by sex and public/private sector. The most recent data are used for each country: Jordan (2023), Egypt (2024), and Costa Rica, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, and Sudan (2022).

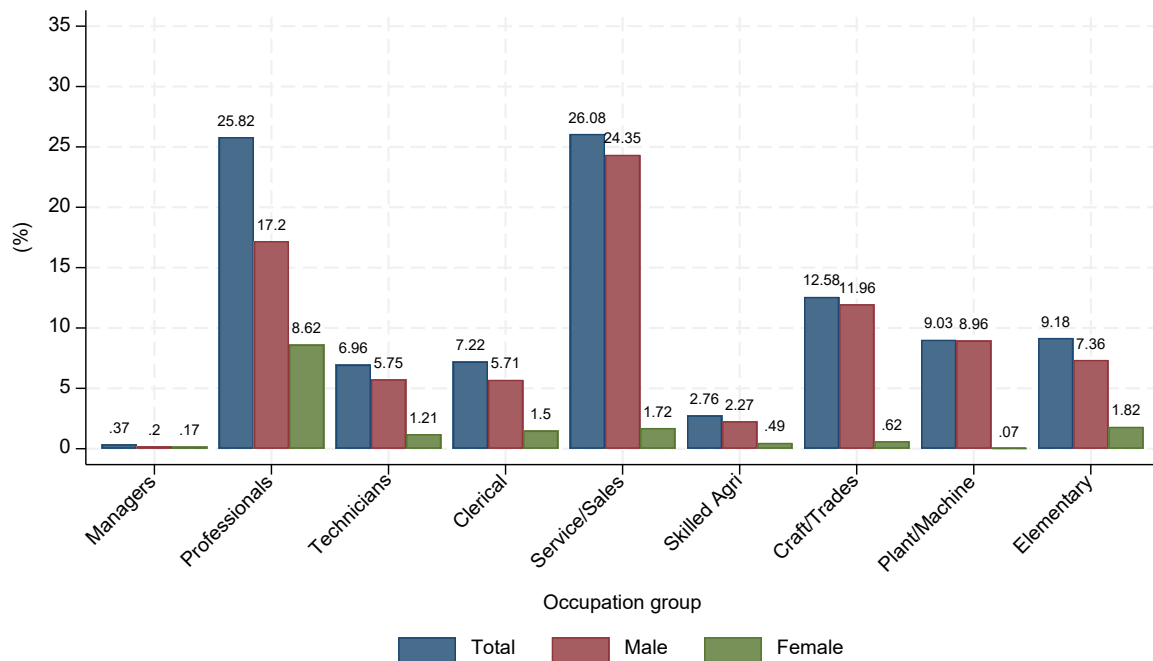
Fig 11. Percentage of workers by their economic sector



Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPS.

Fig. 12 shows the proportion of workers by occupation. Professionals and service/sales workers each account for the largest share at 26%, followed by craft and related trades at 12%, and plant and machine operators and elementary occupations at 9% each. Technicians, associate professionals, and clerical support workers each represent 7%, while skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers make up 3%. Managers are the smallest group at 1%. The distribution indicates that formal, higher-skilled occupations dominate employment, whereas low-skilled in the education level positions are less prevalent.

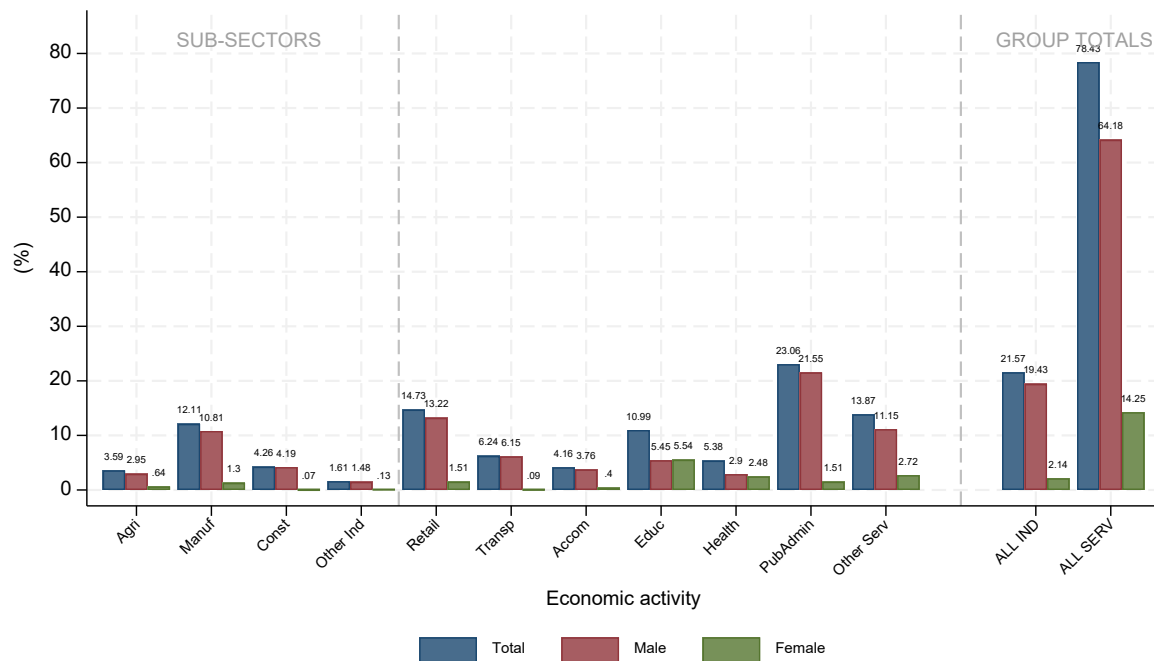
Fig 12. Percentage of workers by their occupation



Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPs.

Fig. 13 shows that workers are predominantly in the services sector, 78% of total workers, while industry at 22%. Within services, the largest sub-sectors include public administration and defence 23%, retail 15%, education 11%, health and social work 5%, transportation and storage 6%, accommodation and food service 4%, and other services 14%. The industrial sector includes manufacturing 12%, agriculture 4%, construction 4%, and other industries 2%. The employment is heavily concentrated within the government/public administration subsector. While the industrial sector currently accounts for a smaller share of employment, industry growth is likely to generate additional demand for service jobs as well. Expansion in manufacturing, construction, or other industrial activities typically stimulates related service employment, such as retail, transportation, accommodation, and administrative support, because industrial growth increases the need for goods handling, logistics, and worker services. Therefore, industrial development and service-sector employment are closely linked, with gains in one sector often supporting expansion in the other.

Fig 13. Percentage of workers by their economic activity

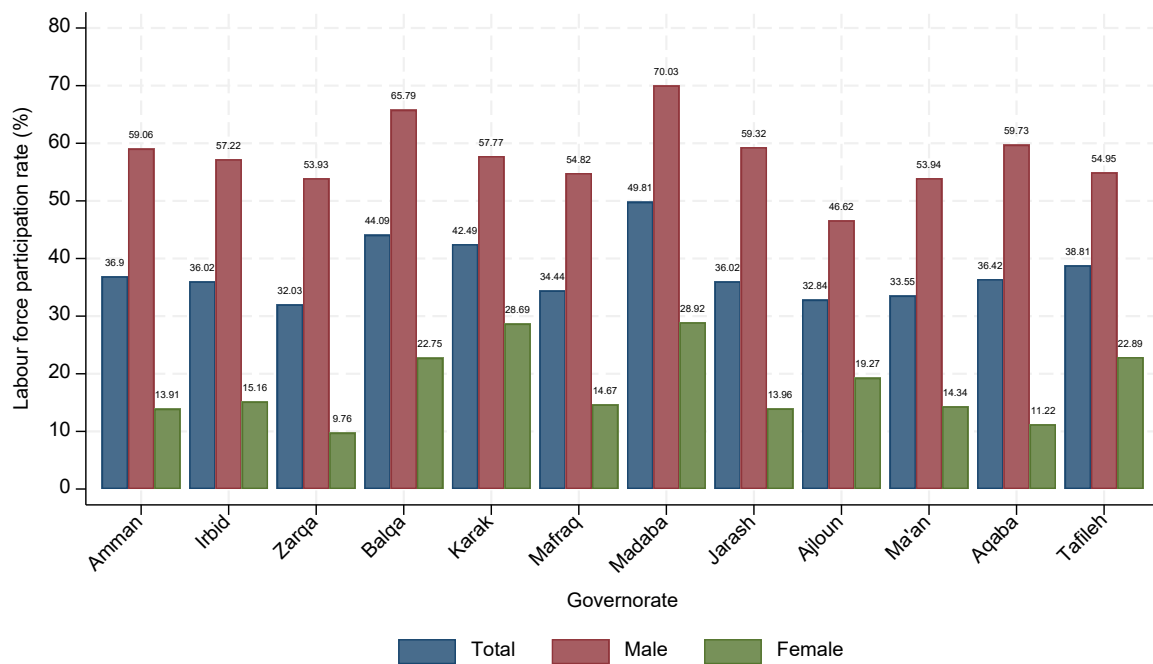


Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPS.

5. Employment and unemployment across location

Fig. 14 shows LFPR across governorates among Jordanian. Madaba records the highest LFPR 51%, followed by Balqa 45% and Karak 43%, while participation is lowest in Zarqa and Ajloun 31%. In Amman, LFPR stands at 38%. Across all governorates, male participation exceeds female participation. Male LFPR ranges from 44% in Ajloun to 71% in Madaba, whereas female participation remains low, ranging from 10% in Zarqa to 30% in Madaba. Employment is geographically concentrated, with Amman accounting for 41% of the labour force, followed by Irbid 18% and Zarqa 14%.

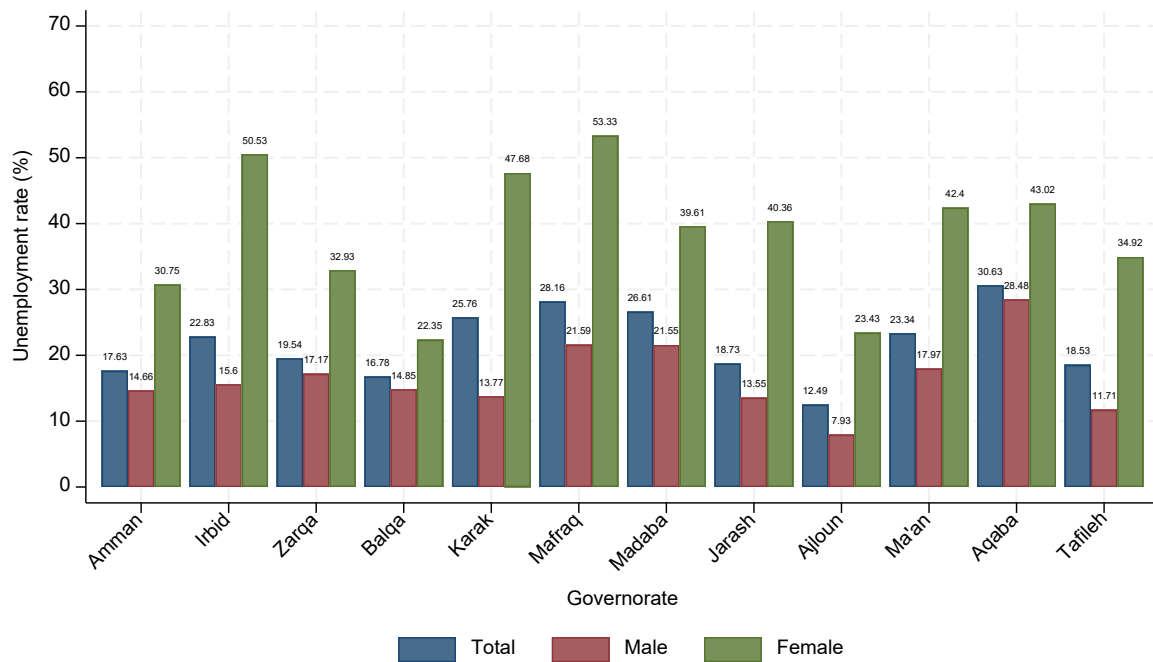
Fig 14. LFPR by governorate among Jordanian



Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPS.

Fig. 15 shows that unemployment among Jordanian nationals across governorates. Similar unemployment levels are observed across most governorates, except in Mafrq. Where the unemployment declines from 37% to 28% when the sample is restricted to Jordanian nationals. Despite this reduction, Mafrq continues to record the highest female unemployment at 53%, alongside a male unemployment 22%. This suggests that the presence of Syrian refugees partly influences the elevated unemployment observed in earlier figure. Although refugee camps and related economic activities may generate some employment opportunities for the local population, the scale of the refugee presence in Mafrq is larger than in other governorates hosting refugees, which may limit the local labour market's capacity to absorb this influx. When focusing only on Jordanian, unemployment rates remain above 20% in several governorates, including Irbid 23%, Karak 25%, Madaba 27%, and Mafrq 28%, with the highest rate in Aqaba 30%. These findings indicate a geographic gap in unemployment among Jordanians, alongside gender gaps that remain higher in northern and southern governorates.

Fig 15. Unemployment rate by governorate among Jordanian

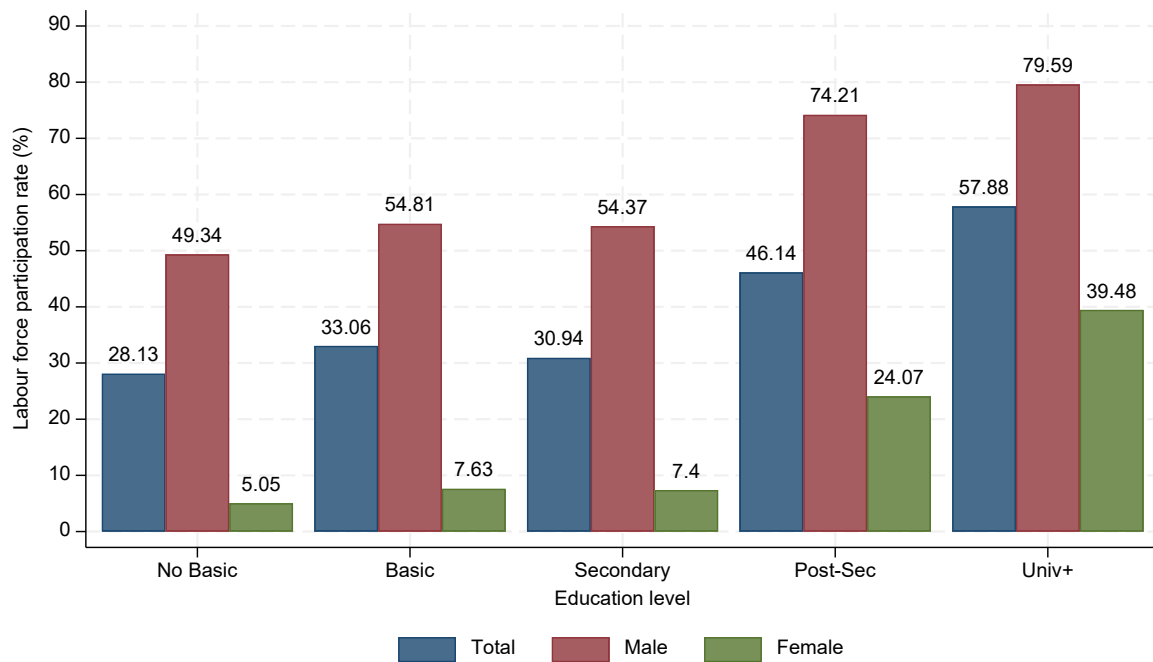


Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPS.

6. Employment and unemployment across education

Fig. 16 demonstrates a clear positive correlation between educational attainment and workforce engagement, with the LFPR rising from 28% for no basic education individuals to 57% for university graduates. While male participation remains consistently higher across most levels, reaching a peak of 81% at the university level, the most dramatic shifts occur among women: female participation jumps from a negligible 5% to 37% among university degree holders and 67% among post-graduates. This suggests that higher education is a driver of closing the gender gap, as advanced qualifications increase women's likelihood of be in the labour market compared to those with basic or no basic schooling.

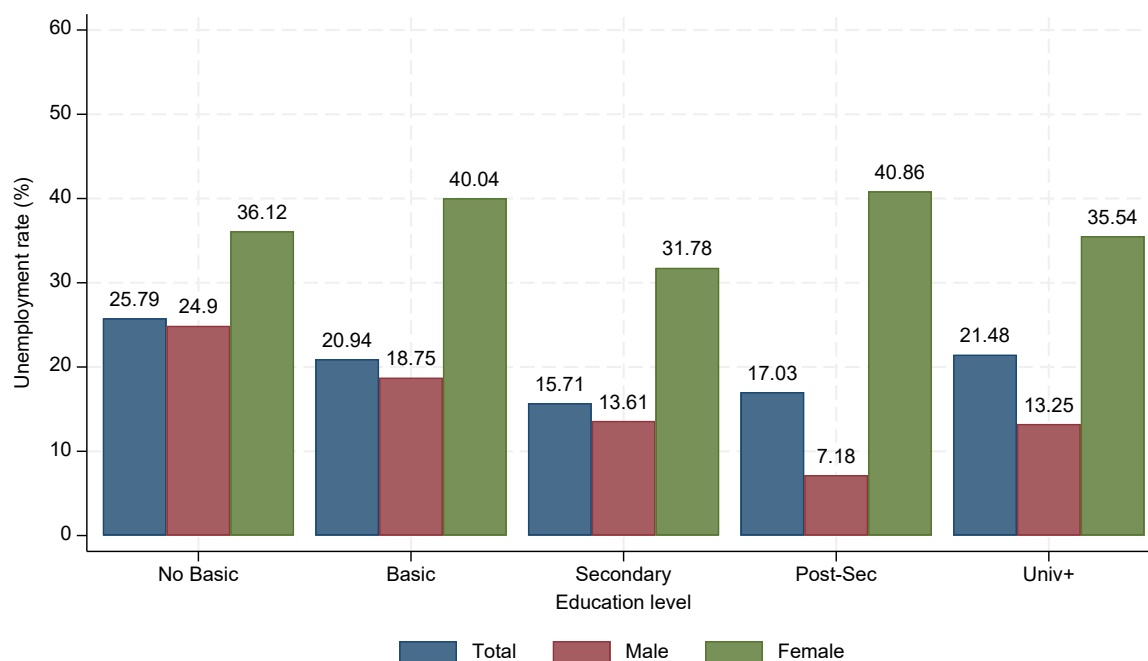
Fig 16. LFPR by education level



Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPS.

Fig. 17 presents unemployment by education level. Among no basic education persons, the unemployment is 26% (male 25%; female 36%). Individuals with basic education experience a 21% unemployment (male 19%; female 40%). In secondary education, unemployment is 16% (male 14%; female 32%). Among post-secondary educated individuals, unemployment is 17% (male 7%; female 41%). University level has an unemployment of 22% (male 13%; female 37%). Postgraduate individuals have an unemployment of 18% (male 10%; female 25%). Across all education levels, female unemployment consistently exceeds 30%, except at the postgraduate level. In comparison, male unemployment ranges from 7% to 20%, reaching 25% only among those without basic education. Highlight that the higher unemployment in Jordan appears to be driven primarily by women actively seeking work and remains evident, especially among those with a university degree. Labour force shares indicate that most individuals are concentrated in no basic, basic, secondary, and university education groups, while postgraduate education represents only a tiny proportion.

Fig 17. Unemployment rate by education level



Source: Authors' visualisation based on 2025 JLMPS.

7. Conclusion

This study provides an overview of the Jordanian labour market using the 2025 wave of the Jordan labour market panel survey (JLMPS). The findings highlight that the labour market is characterised by persistent structural challenges, including low labour force participation at 37%, limited employment creation, and high unemployment rates 21%, particularly among youth and women. Despite relatively high levels of educational attainment, the economy has not generated sufficient jobs to absorb the growing labour supply, resulting in prolonged joblessness and weak labour market integration.

The structural segmentation of the Jordanian labour market is primarily defined by gender and education rather than by broad national differences or age-based variation. While total participation across all nationalities remains low, shifting only marginally from 36.5% for Jordanians to 37% when including all residents, the real divergence is found in the extreme gender gap and educational outcomes. Female labour force participation remains exceptionally low and volatile across all demographics, even among university graduates who face a 60-percentage-point gap compared to their male counterparts in earlier cohorts.

The analysis highlights several structural features of the Jordanian labour market. Labour force participation follows a typical life-cycle pattern, peaking during prime working ages, while unemployment is heavily concentrated among youth, particularly during the transition from education to employment. Evidence on unemployment duration shows that a substantial share of individuals experiences long-term joblessness, indicating that unemployment is not only cyclical but also structural, with risks of labour market detachment. In terms of employment structure, the economy is dominated by the service sector, which accounts for nearly three-quarters of total employment, while the industrial sector accounts for roughly one-quarter.

Although the private sector accounts for the majority of employment at 63%, the public sector maintains a large share at 37% and offers higher wages and greater job security, creating incentives for queuing for public-sector jobs and limiting private-sector engagement. At the same time, the narrow industrial base constrains job creation. However, further industrial development could generate spillover effects in services. These challenges are reinforced by geographic disparities in participation and unemployment across governorates, as well as persistent gender gaps. While higher education significantly increases labour force participation, particularly among women, it does not guarantee employment, as unemployment remains high among graduates, reflecting a mismatch between supply and demand in the labour market.

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Appendix

A.1. Employment mobility between sector (movers and stayers)

To better understand labour market dynamics, we move beyond static participation and unemployment indicators and examine sectoral transitions. Using the retrospective employment history module in JLMPS 2025, we classify workers as movers or stayers across employment sectors. This allows us to see the degree of labour market mobility and structural segmentation.

Table 2 describes labour market dynamics and mobility patterns. Most individuals are one-job workers, meaning they report only a single job in their employment history. Specifically, 70% remain in their first recorded job, reflecting low overall job mobility, with women particularly concentrated in this category. Here, first job refers to the first job captured in the survey, regardless of promotions or internal advancement within the same organisation. Men account for most job transitions, while female mobility is limited across all transition

categories. 30% are movers those who change jobs compared with 70% stayers. Sectoral employment shares: 59% in the private sector and 41% in the public sector, although men dominate both public and private employment. Among movers and stayers, this differs from Fig 16. The proportion of all workers by economic sector where 63% private and 37% public.

Among job movers, sector mobility is high: 61% move across sectors rather than remaining within the same sector, suggesting that job changes are often associated with structural adjustment rather than simple job replacement. When workers are classified by mobility type, sector mobility accounts for 23%, while multi job stayers within the same sector represent 7%, reinforcing that mobility mainly occurs between private and public.

Employment sector trajectories indicate that most workers begin their careers in either public or private sector, with limited mobility between them. Among job movers, transitions within the private sector are more common, accounting for 15% of moves, while other movements directions are relatively low.

Over half of job movers experience unemployment exceeding six months, highlighting labour market instability following job change. Job exits are largely voluntary, with retirement accounting for a smaller share, while dismissals and contract non-renewals are relatively rare. Moreover, more than half of movers lack social security coverage, and nearly one-third hold temporary or seasonal positions, show up precarious employment conditions that may undermine income security and social protection.

To sum up, the labour market in Jordan shows low job mobility, with most individuals remaining in their first job. While sector mobility occurs among job movers, transitions between public and private sector are limited, particularly from public to private, reflecting structural constraints in the labour market. Extended unemployment exceeding six months, experienced by over half of movers, highlight labour market vulnerabilities. Limited social security coverage and the prevalence of temporary or seasonal contracts further exacerbate job insecurity. These patterns suggest the need for policies that facilitate smoother sector transitions, expand access to stable employment, and strengthen social protection to enhance workforce resilience in private sector.

Table 2. Workers track transition across jobs and sector

Job transitions	Total	Male	Female
1st	70%	59%	11%
2nd	18%	15%	3%
3rd	8%	7%	1%
Others (4th–7th job)	4%	4%	0%
Sector among job (movers & stayer)			
Public	41%	35%	6%
Private	59%	49%	10%
Sector mobility among job movers			
No	39%	32%	7%
Yes	61%	54%	6%
Mobility workers			
One-job stayer	70%	59%	11%
Multi-job stayer (same sector)	7%	6%	1%

Sector mobility	23%	20%	3%
Employment sector trajectories			
1st job Public	33%	29%	4%
1st job Private	39%	32%	7%
Public → Public	4%	3%	1%
Private → Private	15%	12%	3%
Public → Private	6%	5%	1%
Private → Public	3%	3%	-
Have an unemployment period for longer than 6 months after you left this job/this job ended? For job movers			
No	44%	36%	8%
Yes	56%	50%	6%
Why did you leave this job?			
Retirement	22%	20%	2%
To care for family member	-	-	-
For marriage	-	-	-
For health reasons or due to disability	5%	5%	-
Terminated by the employer	6%	6%	-
Contract ended and not renewed by the e	8%	6%	2%
Quit voluntarily/resigned	47%	39%	8%
Suspension of the project or shutdown	5%	4%	1%
Other	6%	5%	1%
Did you have social security in job (movers)			
No	54%	46%	8%
Yes	46%	39%	7%
What was the degree of stability in your job (movers)			
Permanent	63%	53%	10%
Temporary (short-term)	29%	24%	5%
Intermittent/ casual	1%	1%	-
Seasonal	7%	7%	-
What was the economic sector (movers)			
Government	33%	29%	4%
Private	67%	56%	11%

Note: Sample size = 11,067, population size = 2,742,860

Table 3 point out how workers are distributed across economic sectors depending on their employment trajectory. Public jobs are heavily concentrated in public administration and defence, with 76% of first-time public workers working in this sector and 50% of public-to-public movers remaining there, highlighting the sector stickiness of public jobs. Education also accounts for a notable share of public jobs, particularly for movers (38% in public to public), reflecting stable career paths in civil service-related sectors. In contrast, private sector jobs are more diversified, with first-job private workers distributed across manufacturing (20%), retail (22%), construction (13%), and other services (24%). Sector transitions within the private sector, such as private to private, indicate moderate mobility, particularly in retail and transportation, while movement from public to private or private to public remains limited. This suggests structural barriers to switching between sectors, especially from public to private jobs. For policy, these patterns imply that initiatives aimed at facilitating inter-sector mobility,

particularly for public sector workers, could improve labour market flexibility and reduce blocks in the allocation of private sector talent.

Table 3. Allocation workers across economic activity sectors

Economic activity	1st job Public	1st job Private	Public→ Public	Private→ Private	Public→ Private	Private→ Public
<i>Industry</i>						
Manufacturing	1%	20%	-	20%	8%	1%
Construction	-	13%	-	11%	10%	-
<i>Services</i>						
Retail	-	22%	1%	21%	24%	2%
Transportation and storage	2%	9%	4%	12%	21%	3%
Education	14%	6%	38%	9%	13%	18%
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	76%	2%	50%	2%	3%	71%
Human health and social work activities	4%	4%	7%	4%	3%	2%
Other services	3%	24%	-	21%	18%	3%

Table 4 presents the distribution of workers across occupations by job trajectory and sector. In public job, service and sales roles dominate first jobs 53%, followed by professionals 22% and clerical support workers 9%, reflecting the concentration of public-sector entry positions in administrative and service-oriented roles. Professional occupations gain prominence among movers within the public, 46% of public-to-public transitions in professional roles, indicating upward mobility and career progression within the public sector. In the private sector, first-job workers are more dispersed: service and sales workers 21%, professionals 19%, craft and trades 22%, and manufacturing-related occupations such as plant operators 9% and elementary roles 10%. Sector transitions show unique patterns: private-to-private movers remain in service, craft, and professional occupations, while moves from public to private involve a higher share of plant operators 21% and service workers 28%, reflecting sector reallocation toward more technical and commercial roles. Conversely, private to public moves often concentrate in professional and service occupations, consistent with public sector hiring preferences. These patterns suggest that occupational mobility is closely linked to sector pathways. Public sector jobs offer structured career progression in professional and administrative roles, while private sector mobility is more diverse but may be constrained by sector specific skills and occupational requirements.

Table 4. Allocation workers across occupation

Occupation	1st job Public	1st job Private	Public→ Public	Private→ Private	Public→ Private	Private→ Public
Managers	1%	-	3%	2%	1%	-
Professionals	22%	19%	46%	22%	16%	24%
Technicians and associate professionals	3%	4%	6%	6%	3%	5%
Clerical support workers	9%	8%	6%	10%	6%	8%
Service and sales workers	53%	21%	22%	22%	28%	30%

Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	-	7%	-	2%	8%	-
Craft and related trades workers	3%	22%	4%	15%	10%	2%
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	4%	9%	7%	13%	21%	13%
Elementary occupations	5%	10%	7%	8%	7%	18%

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