Policy Brief

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A 15-year-old Jordanian girl dreams of becoming a dentist © Marcel Saleh/GAGE 2025

Adolescent education and learning in Jordan: key findings from GAGE endline research

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Introduction

In line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, quality education, and SDG 8, decent work and economic growth, the Jordanian government is committed to reforming its educational system to capitalise on its youth bulge and produce a skilled workforce capable of transforming the labour market and accelerating growth and development. Its Education Strategic Plan 2018–2025 aims to increase enrolment (especially for boys, Syrian refugees and children with disabilities), improve educational quality, and strengthen and scale up technical and vocational education and training (TVET) (Ministry of Education, 2022). Relatedly, its Economic Modernisation Vision (launched in 2022) aims to strengthen and extend the economic sectors deemed critical to Jordan's future (e.g. industry, information and communication technology (ICT), tourism, etc.) (Government of Jordan, 2022). However, the Covid-19 pandemic, which saw schools closed for more than 300 days and the economy contract (by 2.9% in 2020), slowed both the implementation and the impact of these plans (UNESCO and Ministry of Education, 2023; World Bank, 2025a). In 2023, 65% of young people completed secondary school; and in 2024, 18% of those looking for work (including 42% of youth, aged 15–24) were unable to find it (UNESCO, 2025; World Bank, 2025b). The 2024 Sustainable Development Report concludes that Jordan is off target for delivering on its education and economic goals (Sachs et al., 2024).

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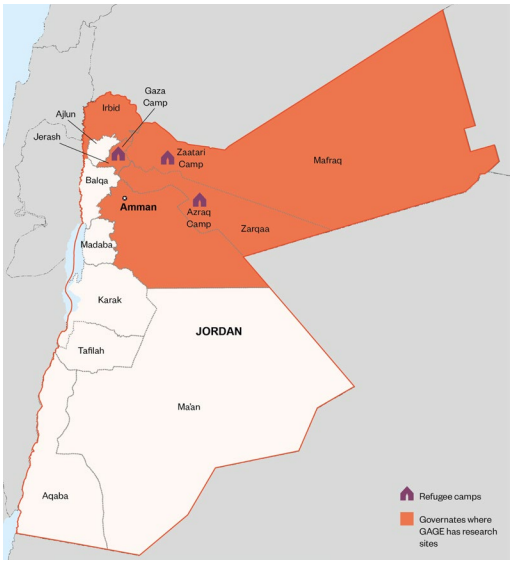
This policy brief summarises key findings on educational and occupational aspirations, access to education and vocational training, learning outcomes and learning quality, drawing on mixed-methods data (2024-2025) by the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) research programme. The brief teases out key differences based on gender, age and nationality, and discusses policy and programming implications. It aims to contribute to the evidence base that the Government of Jordan and its development partners need to design or refine plans and interventions to meet national and international development goals.

Figure 1: GAGE research in Jordan



Methodology

Designed to build on baseline (2018–2019) and midline (2022–2023) research, surveys were undertaken in the second half of 2024 with nearly 3,000 Syrian, Jordanian and Palestinian adolescents and young adults living in Jordan either in host communities, formal camps or informal tented settlements in five governorates: Amman, Irbid, Jerash, Mafraq and Zarqa. The younger adolescent cohort were (on average) aged 17 years at endline, and the young adult cohort were (on average) aged 22 years at endline[1]. Researchers conducted individual and group interviews with a sub-sample of nearly 206 of these young people. Data was also collected from caregivers and key informants. The quantitative data was analysed using STATA, while the qualitative interviews were conducted in Arabic, transcribed and translated into English, and then coded thematically using MAXQDA. For further information on methods, see Presler-Marshall et al., 2025.


A 10th grade student © Marcel Saleh/GAGE 2025

1 GAGE conducted longitudinal research with two adolescent cohorts. The younger cohort were aged 10–12 years at baseline in 2018–19, while the older cohort were aged 15–17 years. By endline in 2024–25, the younger cohort were aged 16–19 years, and the older cohort were aged 20–24 years. We refer to the young cohort in this brief as adolescents and the older cohort as young adults. When we refer to both cohorts together, we refer to them as 'young people'.

Key findings

Educational and occupational aspirations

The endline survey revealed that 87% of young people (16–24 years) aspire to complete secondary school, with adolescents (17–19 years) showing higher aspirations than young adults (20–24 years) (90% versus 83%). Syrians living in host communities and Jordanians (both 91%) were most likely to aspire to secondary education, while those in informal tented settlements (76%) were least likely to. Gender differences were significant among Jordanians and Palestinians (who, in the GAGE sample, are predominantly without citizenship identification and living in Jerash refugee camp), favouring females. For example, for adolescents, the gender gap was 17 percentage points for Jordanians (88% versus 71%) and 24 percentage points for Palestinians (85% versus 60%).

University aspirations were similarly high, with 73% wanting to complete university. Adolescents (76%) were more likely to aspire to this than young adults (71%), and among adolescents, girls were more likely to aspire to this than boys (79% versus 72%). Syrians living in host communities (78%) and Jordanians (80%) had the highest university aspirations, while Syrians in informal tented settlements had the lowest (61%).

Despite these high aspirations, only 33% believed that they were extremely likely to achieve their educational goals. Jordanians (49%) were most optimistic, compared with Palestinians (37%) and Syrians (29%). Financial barriers were cited by 59% of respondents, with young adult men (22–24 years) most likely to report financial constraints (69%).

Just under half (46%) of young people (16–24 years) aspired to skilled or professional work, with adolescent girls (55%) showing the highest aspirations. Syrians (45%), restricted to working in three occupational sectors, had lower professional aspirations than Jordanians (52%) and Palestinians (51%).

Migration was viewed as a necessary step, with 44% believing they must migrate to achieve occupational aspirations. Young males were more likely than young females to see migration as necessary (53% versus 36%). Palestinians (26%) and Jordanians (28%) were less likely than Syrians (49%) (and especially those living in formal camps – 58%) to consider migration as essential to achieving their work aspirations.

During qualitative interviews, young people almost uniformly valued education for themselves and their children. A 16-year-old Palestinian girl emphasised this, saying, '*In bold red letters: your studies are the most important thing*!' A 21-year-old Syrian young mother expressed similar hopes for her children, saying, *'I want them to continue until they reach the university… The girl and the boy.'*

Despite their esteem for education, young people were acutely aware of the barriers that prevent them from achieving their dreams. At endline, they fell into four categories: those young people who were still aiming high; those with less lofty but actionable goals; those who had replaced aspiration with desperation; and those who no longer had aspirations. Those who still aim high – disproportionately enrolled adolescents living in host communities – maintain high educational aspirations and seek professional work. An 18-year-old Jordanian young woman reported, *'I love science-related fields… With biology, I can become a teacher, work in labs, or train in hospitals*.' A 17-year-old Syrian girl from a host community reported, '*I would like to become a doctor… I would like* [to specialise in] *anaesthesia*.' Professional aspirations were more common among young females, as such work is seen as relatively more acceptable for women. Those with actionable goals of pursuing practical skills were primarily in one of three categories: males who know they must become the family breadwinner, Palestinians facing legal restrictions, and those from ethnic minorities. A 17-year-old Palestinian adolescent boy taking vocational classes stated, *'I'll want to work in a job related to my Refrigeration and Air Conditioning certificate*.' For young females, practical aspirations typically centred on cosmetology, a gender-segregated profession that can be done from home. The third group of young people – almost entirely males and disproportionately Syrians, Bani Murra and Turkmen[2] – have replaced their aspirations with desperation for any paid work. A 16-year-old Syrian boy living in Zaatari camp captured this sentiment: '*When I reach the legal age, I will work… Work, find me a job*.' Those who no longer have aspirations – primarily refugees and married young women – have abandoned hopes due to disappointments. A 14-year-old Syrian boy living in Zaatari camp explained why he had stopped dreaming: '*I don't want to set a dream for myself and regret it in the future*.' An 18-year-old Palestinian young woman, dominated by her mother-in-law, simply agreed: '*I'm good without a job*.'

Poverty was a primary constraint limiting young people's aspirations, particularly for Syrians. A 16-year-old Syrian girl living in Zaatari camp explained, '*It does not matter what I want. There are no scholarships, no opportunities to study, and universities in Jordan are expensive*.' Unemployment rates also shape aspirations. A 16-year-old Syrian boy living in Zaatari camp explained: '*Many students get a university degree, but they do not benefit from it and cannot get a job. Many of my friends got a university degree, but they sit at home… I want to work as a blacksmith*.' Legal restrictions

2 Young people from the Bani Mura and Turkmen ethnic minority communities are often disadvantaged due to social stigma and in the case of Turkmen, linguistic differences. See Devonald et al., (2021).

also strongly limit refugee options. A Palestinian key informant said: '*There are 73 prohibited occupations for Gaza residents… They can study, but they won't find jobs*.' Gender norms were reported to further constrain young females' possibilities. An 18-year-old Syrian young woman from an informal tented settlement described her dream of becoming a cartoon voice-over actor as impossible: '*It's like saying, "Devil's dream in heaven"… Because I'm an Arab girl*.'

Many young people, especially Syrian young males (16–24 years) living in formal camps, viewed migration as necessary to achieve their goals. A 16-year-old boy living in Zaatari camp stated, '*We all think the same way – if we have the opportunity to immigrate, we will immigrate*.' Most prioritised the act of migrating itself over any specific destination.

Access to education

At endline, 51% of adolescents (females and males) remained enrolled in school, with girls significantly more likely to be enrolled than boys (58% versus 47%), primarily in secondary school (75%) and basic education (19%). Jordanians had the highest enrolment rates (72%), followed by Palestinians (60%) and Syrians (46%). Among Syrians, those living in host communities (57%) had better access than those in formal camps (47%) and informal tented settlements (19%). Only 13% of young adults (20–24 years old) were enrolled in formal education, primarily at the university level (74%).

Educational access deteriorated significantly by grade level. Whereas 89% of adolescents (males and females) had attended 6th grade, only 64% of those aged 17 or over had reached 10th grade, and just 52% of those aged 18 and over had attended 11th grade. Adolescent boys aged 16–19 years were significantly disadvantaged compared with adolescent girls; the gender gap was 3 percentage points in 6th grade but had widened to 12 percentage points by 11th grade. Syrian adolescents (14%) were far more likely to leave school prior to 6th grade than their Palestinian (3%) and Jordanian (4%) peers, and Jordanian adolescents (83%) were far more likely than their Palestinian (65%) and Syrian (44%) peers to attend secondary school.

Young adults aged 19–24 years had even lower completion rates: 79% had attended 6th grade, 52% had attended 10th grade, and 39% had reached 12th grade. Approximately three-quarters of Jordanians (78%) and Palestinians (75%) attended 10th grade, compared with less than half (44%) of Syrians. Syrian young adult men were most disadvantaged, with only 43% having attended 10th grade.

Qualitative findings reveal that girls have better educational access starting in early adolescence, driven by gender norms that position males as breadwinners. Economic pressures force boys – particularly those from the poorest refugee and other vulnerable households in Jordan – to work instead of attend school. An 18-year-old Turkmen young man explained: '*We don't go to school. We go to work. Everyone is like this*.' A Syrian key informant noted: '*Most of the dropouts are because their fathers want them to work*.'

For adolescent boys aged 16–19 years, education is also hindered by disengaged male teachers who rely on corporal punishment and neglect their teaching responsibilities. A 16-year-old Syrian boy living in Zaatari camp described how, '*Teachers do not care if the student has understood the lesson or not*.' Meanwhile, a 15-year-old Syrian boy described systematic beatings:

> *The teacher beats the student who does not do his homework. The teacher also beats the student if he is a minute or two late for school in the morning… And if he asks his classmate for a pencil or eraser, the teacher beats him with a hose.*

The weak linkages between education and employment also discourage refugee boys, as a Syrian father living in Azraq camp noted: '*The point is that having the Tawjihi certificate* [General Secondary Education Certificate examination] *does not help any more than being able to read… so, the boy says*, "*Why should I torture myself to get the certificate*?"' A Palestinian key informant similarly shared that, '*When a young man gets his degree, he becomes depressed because he does not have job opportunities*.'

Although girls generally have better access to education, gender norms can still limit access for some (see Box 1), particularly those from refugee, Bani Murra and Turkmen households. A Syrian mother living in an informal tented settlement explained: '*We are afraid if the girl goes 2 metres outside the house, so we prefer that the boy completes his studies, and we make the girl leave school to stay close to us*.' Child marriage also limits access, as a 19-year-old Palestinian young woman reported, '*Many of my friends left school to get married… Some girls got married when they were in 10th grade*.' Several young women noted that although restrictive gender norms can and do drive girls to drop out of school, they can also do the opposite. A 22-year-old Syrian young woman living in Azraq camp stated: '*The biggest reason for taking high school is that I don't want to get married*.' Another 18-year-old Syrian young woman from a host community emphasised the protective role of education: '*The only weapon that a girl can have is her certificate… A girl's future is her education*.'

Box 1: Marriage limits young people's aspirations and access to education

The endline survey found that marriage below 18 years old significantly reduces educational aspirations and enrolment for males and females, but with particularly severe effects on females. Ever-married adolescent girls and young adult women had dramatically lower aspirations than their never-married peers: they were 20 percentage points less likely to aspire to complete secondary school (75% versus 95%) and 30 percentage points less likely to aspire to university (55% versus 85%). Similarly, ever-married young men were 12 percentage points less likely to aspire to secondary school (74% versus 85%) and 16 percentage points less likely to aspire to university (60% versus 76%). The enrolment gaps were also stark, with only 6% of ever-married adolescent girls enrolled compared with 65% of never-married girls. For young adults (aged 22–24 years), the figures were 4% and 31% respectively. Educational attainment reflected these patterns, with ever-married young people (16–24 years) completing between 2.3 and 3.2 fewer grades than their never-married counterparts.

Qualitative interview data confirmed that marriage typically ends formal education for adolescent girls and young adult women, with husbands and in-laws serving as primary barriers. A 17-year-old Syrian girl living in Azraq camp explained her sister's situation: *'She wanted to go back to education after she got married, but her husband did not allow her.'* Cultural expectations compound these restrictions. One young Syrian man (aged 22–24 years) noted that husbands refuse to let their wife leave home because '*If you are letting your wife out, this means that you are showing her off.*' As soon as a married girl or young woman starts having children, time constraints become an additional barrier to schooling, with a 19-year-old Bani Murra young mother stating, '*I have responsibility for my children.*' Although marriage constrains young men's education less directly, they typically leave school before marriage for economic reasons, and cannot imagine returning, given their newly assumed adult responsibilities.

In addition to gender norms, cost severely limits access to secondary and post-secondary education because poor-quality education often requires expensive private tutors. A 20-year-old Jordanian young man stated, '*Tawjihi… depends on… having a high financial capacity.*' This is because, as a 20-year-old Syrian young woman living in a host community explained, '*Most students rely on private tutors who come to the house.*' These lessons cost hundreds of dinars per semester. University access is particularly challenging for Syrians, who faced double tuition fees until 2024. A 17-year-old Syrian girl living in a host community described the competition over scholarships: '*You have to be among the top 10 to get a scholarship, otherwise there is no chance… It will never happen.*'

Access to training

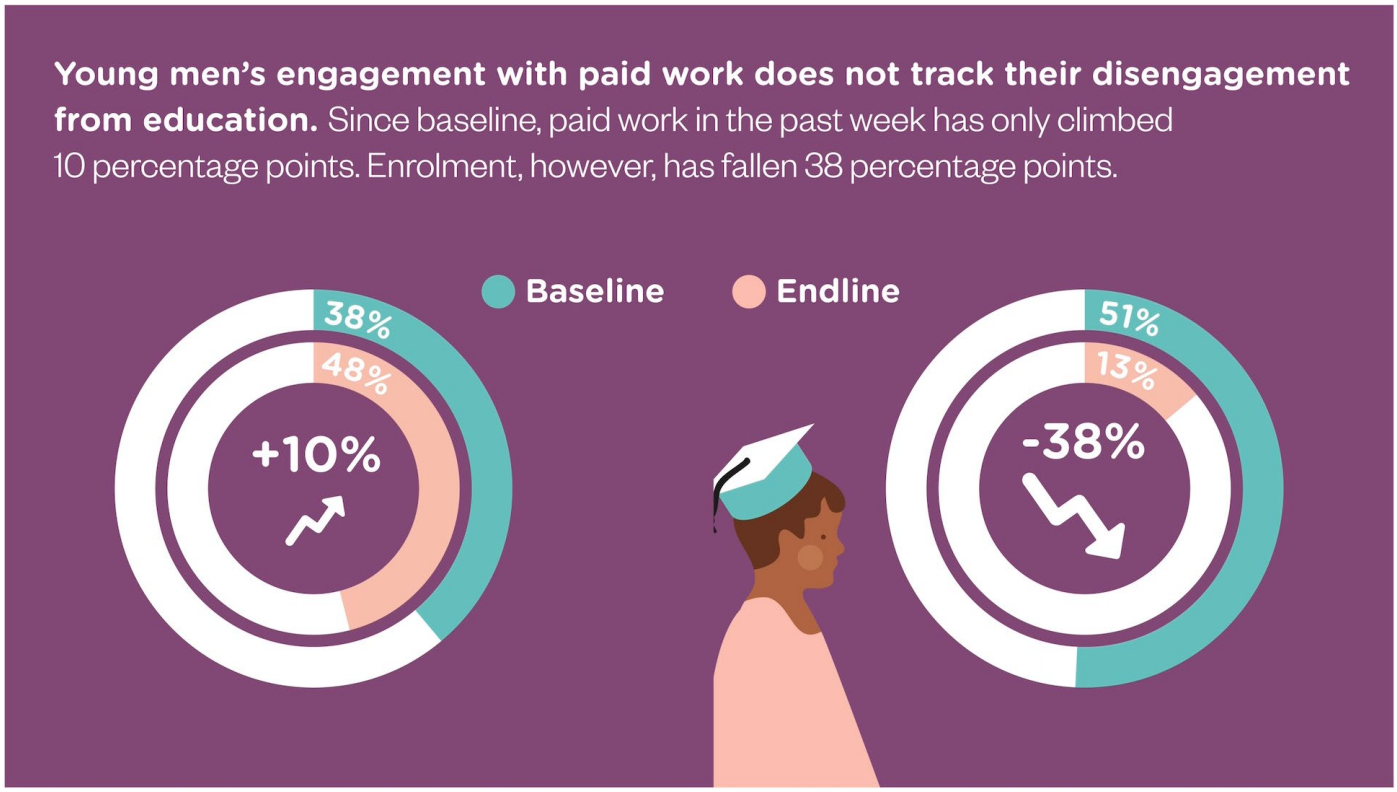
Just over a third (36%) of young people (aged 16–24 years) had ever taken up work-related skills training, with young adult respondents more likely to have done so than adolescents (43% versus 31%). Syrians living in formal camps had the highest participation rate (63%) while those living in informal tented settlements had the lowest rate (13%). The most common courses were computing (49%), English (31%), and barbering/cosmetology (25%). However, just 43% of respondents believed they had learnt the skills adequately. Meanwhile, 86% of young people would like future training opportunities.

Vocational education in Jordan remains broadly undervalued and stigmatised, except among Palestinian boys who '*find that academic teaching is useless*' due to restrictions on the type of work they can legally do. A key informant explained, '*The academic track is culturally more favoured, due to societal habits and traditions that push towards academic rather than vocational education.*' Vocational training is seen as for less capable students. As a 22-year-old Syrian young man living in Zaatari camp noted:

> *Vocational education in general is directed to the student when, let's say, his level does not qualify him to be a scientific or literary student.*

Although Jordan is expanding technical and vocational education credentialing, especially through the introduction of the BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) course track in secondary schools, access to its vocational programmes remains uneven, excluding many refugees. An 18-year-old Syrian young man living in Zaatari camp noted: '*We don't have this vocational choice. Only academic.*' Palestinians living in camps lack the necessary infrastructure – '*There are no workshops. I expect that everyone was forced into the academic specialisation*' – while those in host communities face distance and cost barriers. Most of the training programmes provided by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) do not lead to stable employment. A Palestinian key informant observed: '*They* [participants] *complete the training but remain unemployed.*'

Overall, key informants emphasised that providers need better private sector connections, with one stating that, '*We need to train them [youth], help them find job opportunities, and connect them with the private sector. The private sector is willing to hire skilled and trained youth.*'



Learning outcomes and educational quality

Nearly all adolescents in Jordan attend gender-segregated schools, with girls taught by female teachers and boys by male teachers. Due to significant gender disparities in educational quality and outcomes, survey findings based on the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) tests [3] are presented by gender.

Young females (mean age of 19.4 years) significantly outperformed their male counterparts (mean age of 19.2 years) in literacy and numeracy assessments. Three-quarters (75%) of adolescent girls and young adult women could read at the 2nd grade level, compared with just under two-thirds (61%) of adolescent boys and young adult males – representing a substantial 14 percentage point gender gap favouring females. Among young females (16–24 years), Syrians living in host communities (83%) and Palestinians (81%) had the highest literacy rates, whereas Syrian young females in informal tented settlements performed markedly worse, at 38%. For young men (22–24 years), Syrians in host communities achieved the highest literacy rate (74%), surpassing Jordanians (66%); however, Syrians in informal tented settlements (39%) showed a low level of performance that gives cause for concern. Numeracy skills followed similar trends, with 62% of young females able to perform subtraction with borrowing (2nd grade level) compared to 57% of young males. Syrians in host communities, and Jordanians, both performed better (70% and 72% respectively, for females, and 65% and 59% respectively, for males) than Syrians living in camps and informal tented settlements.

The gender gap, which favours females, is most severe among Palestinians, reaching 36 percentage points for literacy and 27 percentage points for numeracy. Notably, Syrians in informal tented settlements were the only group among whom the typical female advantage in literacy nearly disappeared; both genders performed poorly due to limited educational access.

Young people performed far better on practical skills based on the ASER Beyond Basics modules than their basic literacy and numeracy scores would suggest. Interestingly, gender performance patterns were reversed, with young males (16–24 years) outperforming young females on most applied modules, including daily tasks (62% versus 53%), common calculations (72% versus 61%), map reading/general knowledge (84% versus 80%), and financial calculations (50% versus 43%), where all questions were answered correctly. Young females maintained their advantage only in advanced reading (75% versus 70%). There were

3 The ASER tests were initially designed to capture basic literacy and numeracy (https://img.asercentre.org/docs/ASER%202022%20report%20pdfs/All%20India%20documents/About%20the%20survey/ASER_2022_AssessmentTasks.pdf).

Box 2: Learning outcomes are lower for students with disabilities

The endline survey revealed that young people with disabilities have significantly lower learning outcomes than their peers without disabilities. They are 9–10 percentage points less likely to be able to read at the 2nd grade level (61% versus 70%) and to be able to do subtraction with borrowing (51% versus 61%). The disability gap was particularly pronounced for females, showing an 11 percentage point difference in reading and a 15 percentage point difference for math, compared with smaller gaps for males (7 points reading, 4 points math).

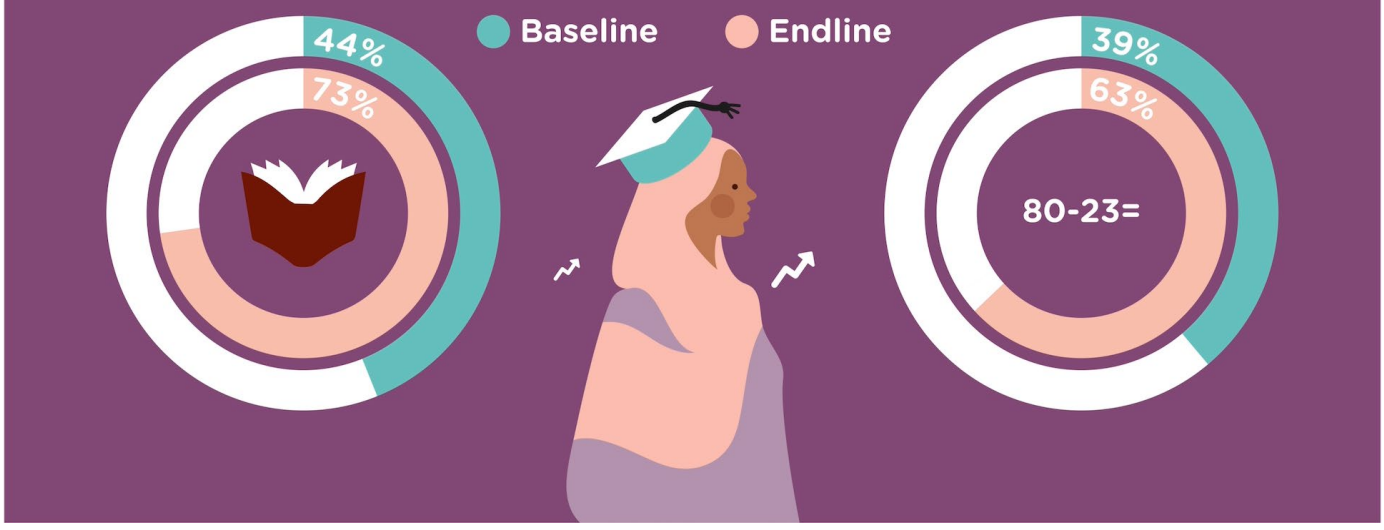
The qualitative findings showed the systematic barriers that prevent students with disabilities from receiving adequate support. Parents describe overcrowded classrooms where teachers lack time for individualised attention, with one Palestinian mother explaining (of her son), '*He needs a teacher who will give him extra care. That's impossible to apply since there were 40 students… This caused his academic performance to lower… That affected his reading and writing skills.*' Students also face inadequate accommodations, as a 17-year-old Jordanian girl with a hearing impairment noted: '*No one uses sign language… The students talked, the teachers talked, and I never understood anything.*' Some respondents reported outright hostility from educators, with one Jordanian mother describing her frustration thus, '*Honestly, the teacher frustrated me… She called me on the phone, she said B* [the daughter]*… doesn't understand me. I don't know who allowed her to be integrated.*' Despite these challenges, enrolment rates for students with disability remain similar to those of their non-disabled peers, due to parents' persistence, though physical barriers persist. As one Syrian student observed, '*Go to any school, you will not find any school that is prepared and adapted for people with disability.*'

significant differences based on nationality and location, with Jordanians and Palestinians generally scoring the highest among young females, and Syrians living in host communities and Jordanians generally scoring the highest among young males. Syrians in informal tented settlements (males and females) consistently scored the lowest.

Of the young people who sat the Tawjihi exam, just over half (55%) achieved a passing score, with young females (59%) outperforming young males (50%), consistent with their superior performance on ASER educational tests. The vast majority of young adults (22–24 years) (89%) had passed the exam, while 29% of adolescents had done so, likely reflecting opportunities to retake the exam if they did not pass initially.

For young people with disabilities, the challenges in terms of learning outcomes were multi-layered and intersecting (see Box 2).

Young people's learning outcomes are improving over time, albeit from a low base. Between baseline and endline, the proportion able to read at the second grade level climbed 29 percentage points. The proportion able to do subtraction with borrowing rose 24 percentage points.



Qualitative interviews revealed widespread concerns about Jordan's educational quality, with particularly poor conditions in boys' schools, in afternoon shifts for Syrian students in host communities, and in formal camps. A 21-year-old Syrian young man living in a host community stated that few teachers at boys' schools are committed to their students: '*You do not feel the teacher works hard and explains from his heart*.' Many caregivers reported children not learning to read until early adolescence, with some relying on UNICEF-supported Makani centres for basic literacy. A Syrian mother living in Zaatari camp described the school's response to her concerns: '*My children in grade 5 don't know how to read letters or write… I've gone to school multiple times, and they say, "You are 80% responsible at home. We're only 20% responsible*." The child has to understand the lessons at home.'

The main issues identified around quality of education were severe overcrowding (40–50 students per class), which prevents individual attention and creates a chaotic learning environment, and teacher disengagement due to low pay and lack of social respect, as well as lack of supportive educational infrastructure. As a key informant at Azraq camp noted, '*In each class, there are 40 students… It's like teaching each student for 1 minute*.' Teachers, especially male teachers and those working with Syrian students, were frequently described as disengaged, with some spending minimal time actually teaching. Key informants from the education sector reported that reduced donor funding and NGO support since the pandemic has further affected educational quality, with many organisations that previously provided supplementary teaching having now ceased operations.

Young people and caregivers broadly agreed that the quality of education declined significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic and is yet to fully recover. A Syrian mother living in an informal tented settlement observed that grade inflation became even more common during online education: '*Now, a student will pass whether they study or not*.' Students also became less engaged, with one noting that in a typical classroom of 30 students, 20 do not care and only 10 pay attention. Limited engagement in formal education was also linked to pressures for boys, especially to undertake child labour, resulting in widespread absenteeism, with some students admitting they '*pretend to their parents they are coming to school*' while skipping classes.

These challenges, notwithstanding, from a macro standpoint it is also important to recognise that the Government of Jordan and its development partners have made significant strides in supporting young people affected by forced displacement to realise their rights to education – see Box 3.

A 21-year-old Palestinian with a physical disability studies religious law at university © Marcel Saleh/GAGE 2025

Box 3: Jordan's educational gains should not be overlooked

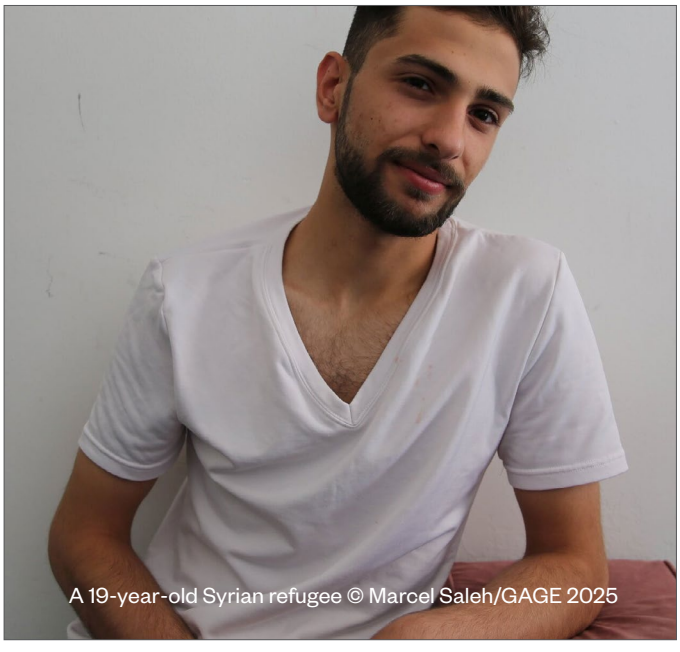
Over the last decade, Jordan's education system has faced a series of complex challenges. These include the need to provide education to hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugee children, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns, and a volatile international aid environment. These challenges notwithstanding, GAGE's longitudinal findings reveal a number of positive educational achievements.

Young people's foundational literacy and numeracy skills have improved significantly since baseline. In our sample, the proportion of girls and young women able to read at a second-grade level has increased from less than half to more than three-quarters. Of boys and young men, the proportion able to do the same grew from a little over a third to almost two-thirds. Numeracy gains were nearly as large. The proportion of young females able to subtract climbed from two fifths to nearly two thirds. The proportion of young males able to do the same rose from one third to three fifths.

Young people's ASER Beyond Basics scores also tell a positive story, in that they demonstrate that young people—and especially young males—are able to practically apply what they have learned at school to daily life situations. This is not the case in other contexts, where deficits in foundational skills are reflected in weaker Beyond Basics scores (see ASER, 2024).

Critically, given commitments by the international community and the Government of Jordan to ensuring that the Syrian crisis would not result in a 'Lost Generation' of learners (see Global Compact on Refugees, 2025), GAGE longitudinal findings indicate that the learning outcomes of Syrian students living in host communities are equal to or better than those of their Jordanian and Palestinian peers. This is a notable achievement that does not appear to have been replicated in many other countries hosting large populations of Syrian refugees (e.g. over half of Syrian refugee children are out of formal education in neighbouring Lebanon [EU, 2025]).

Broader concerns about teaching standards and engagement notwithstanding, some young people spoke very highly of some teachers. A 21-year-old Bani Mura young man recalled feeling cared for: '*There was an assistant in the school... He knew my circumstances. I used to arrive at school all wet from rain, because we couldn't afford transportation... The assistant used to let me in to warm up next to the heater in his room first before entering school... He never let me enter school alone.*' Girls and young women were especially laudatory of their teachers and often singled them out as important sources of psychosocial support. A 16-year-old Syrian adolescent girl from a host community explained, '*My teacher changed my psychological status. Usually, when she knows that I am tired or something like this, she talks to me.*' Others focused on the support teachers provided in managing exam-related stress. A 20-year-old Palestinian young woman noted: '*The teachers provided me with psychological support... They always told us not to be afraid of the Tawjihi exam, and that it would be a wonderful experience and we were able to succeed. We felt comfortable when the teacher told us that, which motivated us to study more in order to get high marks'.*



A 19-year-old Syrian refugee © Marcel Saleh/GAGE 2025

There was an assistant in the school... He knew my circumstances. I used to arrive at school all wet from rain, because we couldn't afford transportation... The assistant used to let me in to warm up next to the heater in his room first before entering school... He never let me enter school alone.

(A 21-year-old Bani Mura young man)

Conclusions and policy implications

Although GAGE's longitudinal findings reveal a number of positive educational achievements (see Box 3), endline research primarily speaks to young people's limited access to quality education. These limits are shaped by young people's gender, age, nationality and, for Syrians, whether they live in host communities, formal refugee camps or informal tented settlements.

Based on our research, we suggest the following policy and programmatic actions to improve support for young people's education and economic empowerment in Jordan:

To improve access to education

- Strengthen parents' buy-in by working with NGOs, including UNICEF-funded Makani centres, to scale up parenting education courses that raise awareness about the importance of education and directly tackle the gender norms that reduce boys' (e.g. child labour) and girls' (e.g. honour and norms that promote marriage under 18 years) access to education. Such efforts should include intentional outreach to fathers as well as mothers, and pay particular attention to ITS, Bani Mura and Turkmen communities, whose children are especially vulnerable to poor learning outcomes.
- Strengthen adolescents and youth buy-in by working with NGOs, including UNICEF-funded Makani centres, to scale up empowerment programming that supports their aspirations, self-confidence and voice, and addresses the gender norms that result in school dropout for boys and girls.
- Scale up efforts to enrol married girls and young women, working to re-engage young brides and also to address the concerns of their marital families.
- Invest in traditional and digital media campaigns for parents and adolescents – especially boys (including in the Turkmen language), and using recognised role models – to raise awareness about the importance of education to young people's futures. These too should directly address the gender norms that contribute to school-leaving.
- Support transitions to secondary school by investing in cash transfers for education for secondary students.
- Reduce girls' dropout rates by addressing threats to their honour, including by scaling up policing around girls' schools, providing them with stipends for school transport, and working with young males to reduce sexual harassment.

A 21-year-old Jordanian woman in teaching college is giving a student a private lesson © Marcel Saleh/GAGE 2025

- Improve retention by investing in curated online support sites aligned with the curriculum and exams, and by eliminating exam fees or providing vouchers for students from low-income households.
- Work with donors to continue lowering the costs of post-secondary education.

To improve access to education

- Invest in efforts to improve teacher–pupil ratios, teacher contact hours and teacher quality in schools run by the government and, for Palestinians, in schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The government's recent decision to have boys taught by women, for whom teaching is a socially prestigious career pathway, through to the end of 6th grade, will help with this.
- Build more schools and hire more teachers, so that classroom headcounts drop and students can have full-day instruction.
- Invest in teacher training, especially for male teachers, including on child-friendly pedagogies that make learning fun, as well as effective approaches to classroom control, and non-violent discipline strategies.
- Invest in measures to improve learning outcomes for adolescents with disabilities.
- Develop and monitor accountability systems that let students and parents (anonymously) report teachers who are violent or failing to teach, and principals who fail to act on such reports.
- Pair stringent enforcement of policies on teacher absenteeism, violent discipline and bullying with incentives for teachers and schools that are identified by students and parents as applying best practices.
- Work with NGOs, including UNICEF-funded Makani centres, to scale up free tutorial support through to the end of secondary education.

To expand young people's opportunities for decent work

- Provide adolescents (starting in early adolescence) with educational and career counselling services that help them optimise their educational trajectories within the resources and opportunities available to them.
- Continue and speed up the rollout of BTEC programming, including in schools attended by refugees.
- Continue and expand skills-training programmes (especially in host communities and for young people in ITS) that provide a stipend for participation (and transportation for girls and young women) and improve linkages between these programmes and local employers so that graduation is more likely to result in work opportunities.
- Encourage secondary and post-secondary schools and training institutes to host regular job fairs, bringing in local employers, so that young people are aware of what jobs are available in the community.
- Provide adolescents and young adults with entrepreneurship courses that are linked to low-interest loans to enable them to set up their own small businesses.
- Use mass media and social media campaigns, as well as programming that targets parents and marital families, to leverage girls' relatively better access to education and encourage young women's employment outside the home.
- Continue and step up international efforts to support private sector growth in the Jordanian labour market, informed by lessons learnt from the implementation of the Jordan Compact.
- Remove all fees for work permits and eliminate (or reduce) legal restrictions on the types of work that refugees can do – for stateless Palestinians, Syrians, and other legally recognised refugees.

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