

GENDER & ADOLESCENCE: GLOBAL EVIDENCE

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Young people's education in Jordan

GAGE endline findings

Elizabeth Presler-Marshall, Sara Luckenbill, Nicola Jones, Sarah Alheiwidi, Sarah Baird, Stella Leung, Wafa Al Amaireh, Taghreed Alabbadi and Qasem Shareef

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Introduction

In line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG), quality education, 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 and its Economic Modernisation Vision (launched in 2022) aim 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; Government of Jordan, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic, which saw schools closed for more than 300 days and the economy contract (by 2.9% in 2020), slowed both implementation and impact of these plans (UNESCO and Ministry of Education, 2023; World Bank, 2025a). In 2023, only 65% of young people completed secondary school (UNESCO, 2025; World Bank, 2025b), and the 2024 Sustainable Development Report concludes that Jordan is off target for delivering on its education goals (Sachs et al., 2024).

This report draws on mixed-methods data collected in 2024 and 2025 by the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) research programme. It aims to contribute to the evidence base that the Government of Jordan and its development partners need to meet national and international goals. Designed to build on baseline (2018–2019) and midline (2022–2023) research, surveys were undertaken with nearly 3,000 Syrian, Jordanian and Palestinian adolescents and young adults living in Jordan. Individual and group interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of approximately 750 of these young people. Data was also collected from caregivers and key informants. The report begins with an overview of the Jordanian context, focusing on the contours of the population and the educational system. We then describe the GAGE conceptual framework and methodology. We present our findings – focusing on differences by gender, age, location, and marital and disability status – on young people's educational and occupational aspirations, access to quality education, and learning outcomes. We conclude by discussing the key actions needed to accelerate progress and ensure that all young people living in Jordan have access to the educational services they need to become empowered, productive members of Jordanian society.

Jordan context

Population

Jordan's population, estimated to be 11.7 million (up from only 6.9 million in 2010), is very young (Department of Statistics, 2024). One-fifth (20%) of residents are adolescents aged 10–19, and nearly a third (29%) are young people aged 10–24 (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2025).

Approximately one-tenth of Jordan's residents (1.3 million people) are Syrian (Department of Statistics, 2016; Parker-Magyar, n.d.). Of those, 611,000 were registered as refugees with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as of December 2024 (UNHCR, 2025a). Nearly 80% of Syrians live in Jordanian host communities; most of the remainder live in formal refugee camps run by UNHCR (Zaatari and Azraq), although 15,000 are estimated to live in informal tented settlements scattered throughout the countryside (ibid.). Since the fall of the Assad regime in Syria, in December 2024, Syrian refugees have begun returning home. As of August 2025, over 133,000 have left Jordan for Syria (UNHCR, 2025d).

There are also nearly 2.4 million Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) living in Jordan as of 2024 (UNRWA, 2025). Of these, approximately three-quarters have Jordanian citizenship, have full access to government services and employment, and live in Jordanian communities (Amnesty International, 2019). The remainder, some 630,000 people, who either entered the country in the 1960s or later or are descended from those who did, lack citizenship and its attendant rights. They are concentrated in one of 10 official camps run by UNRWA, one of which is Jerash camp (Amnesty International, 2019; UNRWA, 2025).

Education and training

Basic education in Jordan is free and compulsory for children aged 6–15 years and consists of 10 years of schooling. Upon completion, young people may choose to enter vocational education or progress to secondary school for two years of further study. Historically, enrolment in vocational education has been low (approximately 10%) because it has been seen as only for less competent students (Ministry of Education, 2022; Ministry of Education and UNESCO, 2023). Beginning in 2023, however, the Ministry of Education began integrating Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC)



A 15-year-old Syrian girl attended 8th grade, but her brother decided she should drop out, Jordan © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2025

qualifications[1] into the vocational curriculum to improve rigour and better align training with labour market needs (Suri, 2024). After graduating from secondary school, young adults may choose between TVET (which is offered by community colleges, usually lasts two years, and is less prestigious than university) or, if they pass the General Secondary Education Certificate examination (the Tawjihi), they can apply to a university (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021). Jordanian and Syrian students are educated in government schools, which were scaled up a decade ago (in response to the Syrian crisis) by adding a second shift for Syrian children (in the afternoon, an hour shorter than the morning shift). Palestinians living in camps are almost exclusively educated in UNRWA-run schools (nearly all of which are double-shift due to overcrowding) up until grade 10. At secondary level, students of all nationalities study together in government schools. Covid-19 pandemic-related school closures in Jordan were among the longest in the world. Although the government provided online education to students who had internet-connected devices, schools were closed for a total of 323 days (UNESCO and Ministry of Education, 2023).

With the caveat that different metrics sometimes produce irreconcilable figures (Tzannatos, 2024), access to education in Jordan varies by level, gender and nationality. UNESCO (2025) reports that in 2023, 97% of girls and 96% of boys completed primary school (grade 6), 90% of girls and 87% of boys completed lower-secondary school (grade 9), and 75% of girls and 57% of boys completed upper secondary school (grade 12). Girls' better access is partly because of boys undertaking child labour and partly because boys are educated after 3rd grade in boys-only schools, which tend to be less engaging and more violent, driving many boys to drop out (Ripley, 2017; Jones et al., 2019; Presler-Marshall et al., 2023, 2024). Although the gap is slowly closing, perhaps especially for boys, Syrian children are less likely to be enrolled than Jordanian children (Winton, 2025). In 2021, of 16-year-olds, 95% of Jordanians but only 70% of Syrians were still enrolled in school (ibid.) This gap is due to Syrian boys' much higher rates of child labour, and gender norms that prioritise girls' honour and marriageability (Jones et al., 2019; Presler- Marshall et al., 2023, 2024, 2025). Recent enrolment figures for Palestinians who lack citizenship are not available, but in 2011 Palestinian young people living in camps were more likely to leave school before age 15 than their counterparts living in host communities (Tiltnes and Zhang, 2013). UNICEF (2021) reports that in Jerash camp, 47% of young people aged 15–24 were not enrolled in any form of learning programme.

Higher education in Jordan is a relatively new phenomenon; the first public university was not established

1 BTEC is a British curriculum meant for students aged 16–18 and seen as equivalent to the UK's A-level for those who want to acquire job skills alongside academic skills. See: https://www.bbc.com/news/education-49279219

until 1962 and the first private university did not open until 1989 (Fincham, 2020). Despite high unemployment rates for graduates, university education remains highly valued because it is seen as a precursor for employment in the public sector and in better-off Gulf states (Razzaz, 2017). UNESCO (2025) reports that in 2023, 33% of young people living in Jordan enrolled in tertiary education, with young women (40%) far more likely to do so than young men (27%). Syrians are much less likely to access higher education than Jordanians. The Association of Arab Universities reports that in 2018–2019, only 6,700 Syrian students were enrolled in Jordanian universities (Arab News, 2019); Levkowitz (2022) notes that this is roughly 3% of the age cohort, down from 20% in Syria. Barriers to access include cost (despite a fee reduction of 20% at select universities), and also lack of citizenship, which precludes enrolment in many fields of study. Recent data on non-citizen Palestinians' access to post-secondary education is again not available; however, it is most likely lower than national averages because non-citizens are required to pay significantly higher tuition fees (Tiltnes and Zhang, 2013). [2]

Educational quality in Jordan is very low by international standards. Indeed, the World Bank (2023) estimates that learning levels are so low that young people are developing only half (55%) of their potential human capital. On the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test, which is administered to 15-year-olds, students in Jordan were less likely to score as proficient than their peers in other middle- and high-income countries on all three subjects tested (OECD, 2023). Indeed, only 17% of students scored as proficient in maths and only 20% scored as proficient in reading (ibid.). Gender gaps are uniformly in girls' favour (ibid.). Learning outcomes vary by nationality. Parker-Magyar (n.d.) reports that whereas Syrians make up 7% of the students who sit the school-leaving exam (Tawjihi), they make up fewer than 3% of those who pass. Furthermore, while a study found that students in UNRWA-run schools in Jordan outperform those in government schools – by nearly a year's worth of learning (Abdul-Hamid et al., 2014) – GAGE's midline research found that of Palestinian boys in the sample (nearly all of whom live in Gaza camp and who were a mean age of 15), only 37% could read at the 2nd grade level, and only 39% could subtract (Presler-Marshall et al., 2023).



A 17-year-old Palestinian girl in tawjihi © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2025

2 According to UNRWA data on the technical and vocational training centres that it operates, 18% of the 1159 students were Palestinians without citizenship (authors' correspondence with UNRWA).

Conceptual framework

Informed by the emerging evidence base on adolescent well-being and development, GAGE's conceptual framework takes a holistic approach that pays careful attention to the interconnectedness of what we call the '3 Cs' – capabilities, change strategies and contexts – in order to understand what works to support adolescents' development and empowerment, both now and in the future (see Figure 1). This framing draws on the three components of Pawson and Tilley's (1997) approach to evaluation, which highlights the importance of outcomes, causal mechanisms and contexts, though we tailor it to the specific challenges of understanding what works in improving adolescents' capabilities.

The first building block of our conceptual framework is capability outcomes. Championed originally by Amartya Sen (1985, 2004) and nuanced by Martha Nussbaum (2011) and Naila Kabeer (2003) to better capture complex gender dynamics at intra-household and societal levels, the capabilities approach has evolved as a broad normative framework exploring the kinds of assets (economic, human, political, emotional and social) that expand the capacity of individuals to achieve valued ways of 'doing and being'. At its core is a sense of competence and purposive agency: it goes beyond a focus on a fixed bundle of external assets, instead emphasising investment in an individual's skills, knowledge and voice. Importantly, the approach can encompass relevant investments in children and young people with diverse trajectories, including the most marginalised and 'hardest to reach' such as those with disabilities or those who were married as children. Although the GAGE framework covers six core capabilities, this report focuses on education and learning. It includes young people's educational and occupational aspirations, access to quality education, and learning outcomes.

The second building block of our conceptual framework is context dependency. Our '3 Cs' framework situates young people socio-ecologically. It recognises that not only do girls and boys at different stages of the life course have different needs and constraints, but also that these are highly dependent on their context at the family/household, community, state and global levels.

The third and final building block of our conceptual framework – change strategies – acknowledges that young people's contextual realities will not only shape the pathways through which they develop their capabilities but also determine the change strategies open to them to improve their outcomes. Our socio-ecological approach emphasises that to nurture transformative change in girls' and boys' capabilities and broader well-being, potential change strategies must simultaneously invest in integrated intervention approaches at different levels, weaving together policies and programming that support young people, their families and their communities while also working to effect change at the systems level. As noted earlier, this report concludes with our reflections on what type of package of interventions could better support young people's access to quality education and training.



A 21-year-old Jordanian student returned to studying after taking a sabbatical © Marcel Saleh/GAGE 2025

Figure 1: GAGE conceptual framework



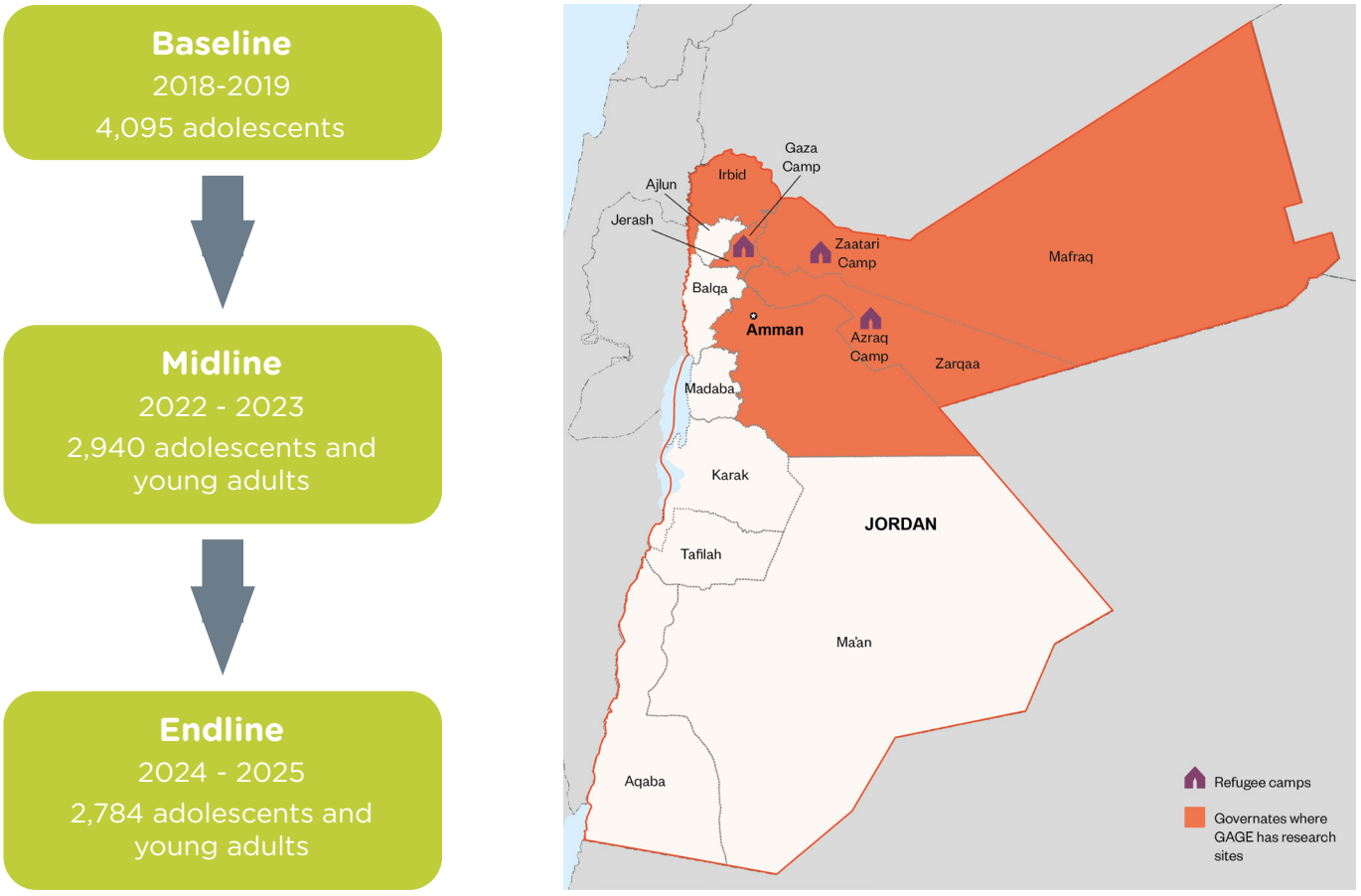
Sample and methods

This report draws on mixed-methods data collected in Jordan in 2024 and 2025, following up on two earlier rounds of research – at baseline (2018–2019) and midline (2022–2023)(see Figure 2). At baseline, the quantitative sample included adolescents from marginalised households across two cohorts (aged 10–12 years and 15–17 years, averaging 11.3 and 16.1 years respectively), with purposeful oversampling of adolescents with disabilities and those who were married prior to age 18 – recognised as particularly vulnerable groups. The baseline sample consisted of 4,095 adolescents in five governorates: Amman, Irbid, Jerash, Mafraq and Zarqa (see Figure 2). At midline, the GAGE sample included 2,940 young people (a 71% follow-up rate), with the two cohorts then averaging 15.0 years old and 20.0 years old.

The GAGE Jordan endline sample involved 2914 total participants. This included 2,784 young people from the original baseline sample (a 68% follow-up rate since baseline and 80% follow-up since midline, see Box 1), and 130 new participants who were not included in the baseline sample. These are: (1) 96 new young people who belong to either the Bani Murra or Turkmen ethnic minority groups[3] and (2) 34 new young people previously included only in qualitative research.[4]

This report focuses on the 2,838 participants who were living in Jordan at the time of the endline survey and surveyed after the pilot (see Table 1). This omits the 43 young people surveyed as part of the pilot and the 33 young people who had moved internationally at endline but completed an abbreviated survey over the phone. Of these

Figure 2: Timeline of GAGE research in Jordan, with the distribution of the original baseline sample



3 Turkmen and Bani Murra young people typically have Jordanian citizenship. Because the new Bani Murra and Turkmen participants were identified through a different sampling strategy and have fundamentally different lived experiences, they are presented separately and not included where overall averages are presented. There were 23 individuals in the original baseline sample who self-identifying as ethnic minorities at endline, the majority of whom were classified as Jordanian at baseline.

4 These 34 individuals were included in the quantitative baseline sampling frame but were unable to be surveyed at baseline due to a variety of reasons, namely difficulties locating and scheduling interviews with the household within the baseline study period. They were intended to be surveyed at midline but due to an error were not.

Table 1: Quantitative sample

	Nationality				Sub-sample of Bani Murra and Turkmen	Sub-sample of those with disability	Sub-sample of those married <18	Total
	Syrian	Jordanian	Palestinian	Other				
Females	1043	263	150	9	46	149	307	1515
Males	978	162	123	14	50	135	3	1323
Younger cohort	1119	252	174	14	27	173	93	1626
Older cohort	902	170	99	9	69	111	217	1212
Total	2021	425	273	23	96	284	310	2838

2,838 participants, nearly three-quarters (72%) are Syrian refugees (2,021), just over half of whom (51%) have lived in host communities consistently since baseline (1,031). Approximately 26% of Syrian respondents (522) have lived in refugee camps (Zaatari or Azraq) run by UNHCR since baseline, and 14% (293) have lived in informal tented settlements (ITS) at any point since baseline.[5] A minority of Syrian refugees (170, or 8%) have moved between host communities and camps in the time between the baseline and endline surveys. The remainder of the endline sample are Jordanians (425), Palestinians (273), and a small group of individuals (23) that identified as another nationality (denoted 'other', these include Iraqi and Egyptian respondents). Almost all Palestinians in the GAGE sample live in Jerash camp, which is located in Jerash governorate and is informally known as Gaza camp because most of its residents are ex-Gazans who were displaced during the 1967 Arab–Israeli war and who lack Jordanian citizenship and its attendant benefits. Due to the sample size, the 'other' nationality group is not included in comparisons by nationality, but is included in all other demographic group disaggregation, such as gender and age cohort.

Box 1: Attrition over time

Minimising attrition, or loss-to-follow up, is a key challenge for longitudinal studies where the goal is to understand changes over time. This challenge is acutely felt with the GAGE Jordan sample because many participants are migratory, including refugees leaving Jordan to return to their country of origin (especially Syrians returning to Syria after the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024), those living in Informal Tented Settlements (ITS) moving for seasonal agricultural work, young adult males leaving their communities to seek out paid work, and newly married females leaving their natal household to move into their husband's household. Further, the mandatory secondary school exam and Ramadan fell within the endline survey timeframe, creating logistical challenges with scheduling interviews. Difficulties extending the permits needed to enter the UNHCR refugee camps created additional logistical challenges at endline.

Several mitigation strategies were implemented at endline to minimise attrition:

- Offered in-person participants incentives for their time (monetary for those in host communities, ITS, or Jerash camp and snacks for Syrians in refugee camps due to UNHCR gift restrictions).
- Offered virtual phone interviews, including outside of the typical working hours, to reach young males engaged in paid work, as well as Syrians in camps.
- Created an intensive tracking protocol that utilised the qualitative team for intensive tracking to capitalise on their rapport with participants.

With these mitigation strategies in place, 68% of the original baseline sample from 2018-2019 and 80% of those surveyed at midline in 2022-2023 were re-surveyed at endline. This attrition is in-line with another longitudinal research study on Syrian refugees conducted in a similar timeframe (2019-2024), where they retained 63% of their sample, highlighting the challenges with tracking migratory samples (Alrababah et al., 2025).

5 In the seven years between baseline and endline, a minority of young people moved location. This was most common among Syrians (18%). The bulk of movement was between UNHCR-run camps and Jordanian host communities. Because of this movement, young people are classified as 'always camp' dwellers if they were living in a UNHCR-run camp at baseline, midline, and endline. They are classified as movers if they moved from a camp to a host community, or from a host community to a camp, in the years between baseline and endline. They are classified as 'ITS' if they were living in an informal tented settlement at either baseline, midline or endline.

Just over half (53%) of the endline sample are female. Although the baseline sample was approximately equally split between the two age cohorts (53% younger [10-12 at the time] and 47% older [15-17 at the time]), the older cohort were more likely than younger cohort to be lost to follow-up between baseline and endline (62% follow-up for the older cohort versus 73% follow-up for the younger cohort, $p<0.01$). Because of this, the younger cohort is over-represented in the endline sample. Older cohort males were especially likely to be lost to follow-up (57% follow-up), and as such are the most under-represented at endline. At endline, on average, younger cohort adolescents were aged 17.2 years, and are referred to in this paper as adolescent girls and adolescent boys; the older cohort had transitioned to young adulthood (average age of 22.1) and are referred to as young adult women and young adult men. Where both cohorts are discussed simultaneously, they are referred to as young people. Where adolescent boys and young men are discussed together, they are called young males; where adolescent girls and young women are discussed together, they are called young females.

Because GAGE's sample includes the most marginalised adolescents and young adults, about a sixth of young people in our quantitative sample have any functional disability[6] (479). Among those, 284 report having functional difficulties even if they have an assistive device (such as glasses, hearing aids, or a mobility device). Our sample also includes adolescent girls and young adult women who were married prior to age 18. Of the 527 ever-married females, 307 married prior to 18.

The majority of the 206 young people in the qualitative sample were selected from the larger quantitative sample deliberately oversampling the most disadvantaged individuals in order to capture the voices of those at risk of being 'left behind' (see Table 2). The qualitative sample also included 84 caregivers (almost all parents) and 24 key informants (government officials, community and religious leaders, and service providers).

Quantitative survey data was collected in face-to-face interviews[7] by enumerators who were trained to communicate with marginalised populations. With the exception of never-married adolescent boys, enumerators were typically the same sex as the respondent: all female respondents were interviewed by female enumerators and the majority of young men/ever-married males were interviewed by male enumerators. Surveys were broad (see Luckenbill et al., 2025) and included modules reflecting the GAGE conceptual framework. Analysis of the quantitative data focused on a set of outcomes related to education and learning (data tables are available on request). Statistical analysis was conducted using Stata 18.0. Importantly, where we present endline survey findings, we include the 2,838 young people (2,708 from the original baseline sample who were not part of the pilot or moved internationally and 130 new participants, detailed above) who completed the endline survey. Where we present change over time, however, we restrict our sample and include only the 2,289 young people who completed baseline, midline and endline surveys.[8] These are referred to as the panel sample. For change over time for any given outcome, we also restrict to the sample who have answered that question at all rounds to ensure a consistent sample across all survey rounds.

Qualitative tools, also employed by researchers carefully trained to communicate sensitively with marginalised populations, consisted of interactive activities such as timelines, body mappings and vignettes, which were used in individual and group interviews (see Jones et al., 2025). Preliminary data analysis took place during daily and site-wide debriefings. Interviews were transcribed and translated by native speakers and then coded thematically using the qualitative software analysis package MAXQDA.

The GAGE research design and tools were approved by ethics committees at the Overseas Development Institute and George Washington University. For research participants in refugee camps, permission was granted from the UNHCR National Protection Working Group. For research participants in host communities, approval was granted by Jordan's Ministry of Interior, the Department of Statistics and the Ministry of Education. Consent (written or verbal as appropriate) was obtained from caregivers and married adolescents; written or verbal assent was obtained for all unmarried adolescents under the age of 18. There was also a robust protocol for referral to services, tailored to the different realities of the diverse research sites.

6 Determined by using the Washington Group on Disability Statistics Questionnaire, which was filled out by caregivers at baseline: www.washingtongroup-disability.com/question-sets/wg-short-set-on-functioning-wg-ss/

7 A small number of surveys (81) were completed over the phone, because respondents were unable to be interviewed in person.

8 There are exceptions to this rule, because some questions were not asked at baseline or were asked of only adolescents over the age of 15. These exceptions are carefully noted in the text.

Table 2: Qualitative sample

		Syrian	Jordanian	Palestinian	Bani Murra/ Turkmen	Mixed nationality	Sub-sample of those with disability	Sub-sample married < age 18	Total
Individual interviews with young people	Girls	46	8	8	5		26	41	67
	Young women	36	8	6	1				51
	Boys	29	2	4	7		27	3	42
	Young men	26	8	7	5				46
Total		137	26	25	18		53	44	206
Group interviews with young people	Females	21	5	9	4	4			43 groups (306 people
	Males	18	5	6	2	5			36 groups (244 people)
Total		313	62	65	42	9			
									756 young people
Individual interviews with caregivers	Mothers	36	5	6	0				47
	Fathers	19	6	5	0				30
Total		55	11	11	0				77
Group interviews with caregivers	Mothers	3	1	3	1				8 groups (59 people)
	Fathers	5	1	2	1				9 groups (59 people)
Total		8	2	5	2				17 groups (118 people)
									195 care-givers
Key informants		24	6	25	8				**63 key informants**



A 16-year-old Jordanian girl in school © Marcel Saleh/GAGE 2025

Findings

Our findings are organised in line with the GAGE conceptual framework (see page 4). We focus on young people's educational and occupational aspirations, access to education, and educational quality and learning outcomes. In each case, we first present endline survey findings, using the full endline sample, highlighting differences between groups where they are significant. Differences are significant at the 5% significance level unless otherwise indicated with an asterisk (*) to signify a significant difference at the 10% significance level, and when we use the word significant we are referring to statistical significance. For some outcomes, we also present change over time, restricting the quantitative sample to only those young people who completed all three surveys at baseline, midline and endline.9 In each section, we present qualitative findings after the survey findings.

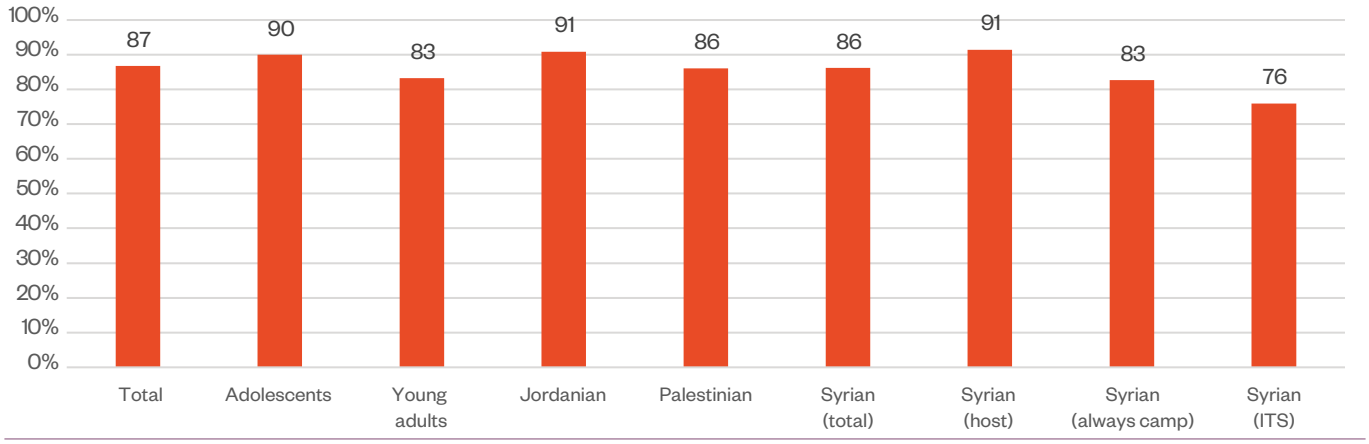
Educational and occupational aspirations

The endline survey found that a large majority of young people (87%) – even young adults who had been out of school for years – would like to complete secondary school (see Figure 3). That said, adolescents, who were more likely to still be enrolled, were significantly more likely to aspire to a secondary education than young adults (90% versus 83%). Nationality and location differences were also significant, but must be interpreted together. Syrians living in host communities and Jordanians (both 91%) were the most likely to aspire to secondary school. Syrians living in formal camps (83%) and informal tented settlements (76%) were the least likely to do so. In aggregate, gender differences were not significant. This is perhaps because the sample is primarily Syrian, because Syrian girls and young women are likely to have been married (see forthcoming health report), and because married girls and young women are far less likely to aspire to secondary school than their never-married peers (see Box 2). Gender differences were significant among Jordanians and Palestinians, and favoured females. For adolescents, the gender gap was 17 percentage points for Jordanians (88% versus 71%) and 24 percentage points for Palestinians (85% versus 60%). Among young adults, Palestinian young women were much more likely to aspire to secondary school than their male peers (88% versus 64%).

For adolescents (though not young adults), aspirations for secondary school have climbed since baseline, but have been stable since midline. In aggregate, the proportion who aspire to complete secondary school climbed from 80% at baseline, to 90% at both midline and endline. Syrian adolescents living in host communities and informal tented settlements, and Palestinians, saw the greatest increase in aspirations over time. Young adults' aspirations for secondary school are unchanged since baseline.

The endline survey found that most young people (73%) would also like to complete university (see Figure 8). Cohort differences were significant, with adolescents (who by virtue of their age were more likely to be enrolled) more likely to aspire to tertiary education than young adults (76% versus 71%, not shown). Among adolescents,

Figure 3: Proportion of young people who aspire to complete secondary school (by cohort and nationality/location)

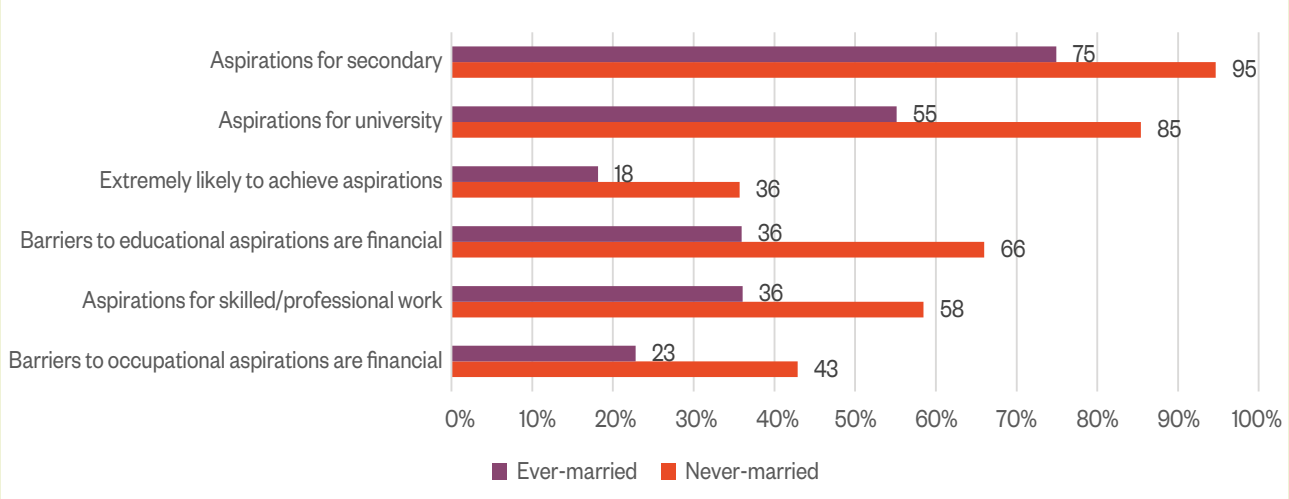


9 As noted in the Methods section, there are exceptions to this rule, but they are carefully noted in the text.

Box 2: Marriage limits young people's aspirations and access to education

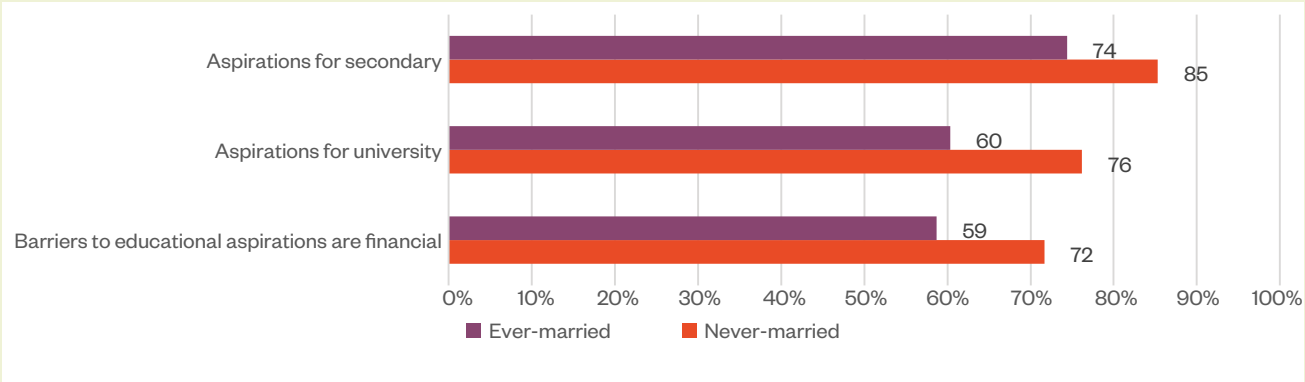
The endline survey found that adolescent girls and young adult women who have ever been married have significantly lower educational aspirations than their peers who have never married: they were 20 percentage points less likely to aspire to complete secondary school (75% versus 95%) and 30 percentage points less likely to aspire to complete university (55% versus 85%) (see Figure 4). They were also less likely to believe that it is extremely likely that they will achieve their aspirations (18% versus 36%). Given that they face more social barriers (e.g. permission from their husband, and childcare duties), they were also less likely to believe that finances are a barrier to achieving their educational aspirations (36% versus 66%). Young females who have been married were also less likely than their never-married peers to aspire to skilled or professional work (36% versus 58%) and to report that finances are a barrier to their occupational aspirations (23% versus 43%).

Figure 4: Girls' and young women's aspirations (by marital status)



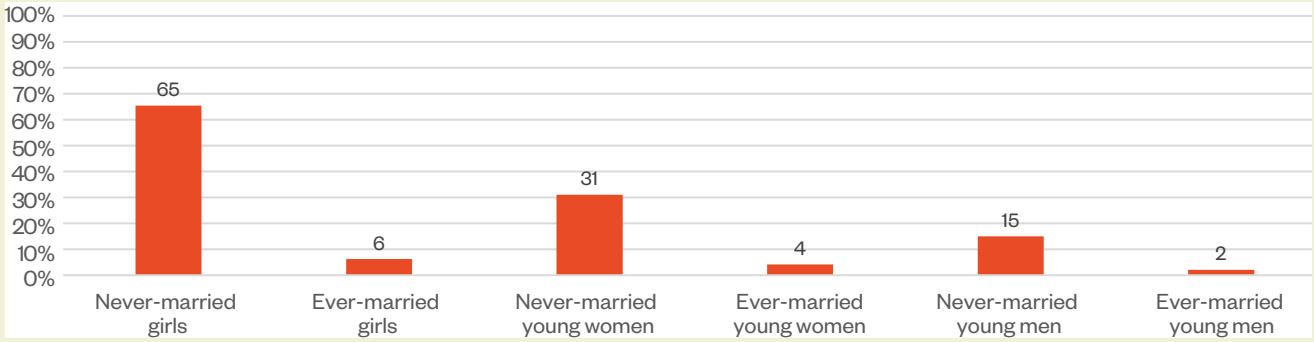
The endline survey also found that young men who have been married have significantly lower educational aspirations than their peers who have never married: they were 12 percentage points less likely to aspire to secondary school (74% versus 85%) and 16 percentage points less likely to aspire to university (60% versus 76%) (Figure 5). Young men who have been married were significantly less likely than their never-married peers to report that barriers to their educational aspirations are financial – because as husbands and fathers, they face social barriers (e.g. less time) as well.

Figure 5: Young men's educational aspirations (by marital status)



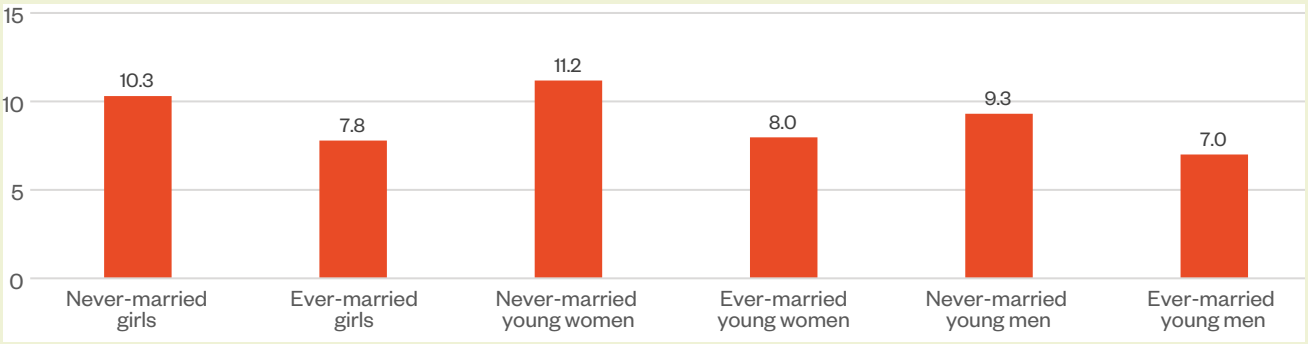
The endline survey also found that ever-married young people were significantly less likely to be enrolled in formal education than their never-married peers. This was especially the case for young females, given their overall greater odds of enrolment. Of adolescent girls, 65% of those who had never married, but only 6% of those who had ever married, were enrolled in school (see Figure 6). Of young women, figures were 31% and 4% respectively. The gap for young men was smaller, but still significant, with 2% of ever-married respondents and 15% of never-married respondents enrolled at the time of the endline survey.

Figure 6: Proportion of young people enrolled in formal education (by gender and marital status)



Compared to their never-married peers, ever-married young people had also attended significantly fewer years of education. For adolescent girls, the gap was 2.5 grades (7.8 versus 10.3); for young men, the gap was 2.3 grades (7.0 versus 9.3)(see Figure 7). The gap was even larger for young women (3.2 grades).

Figure 7: Highest grade attended (by gender and marital status)

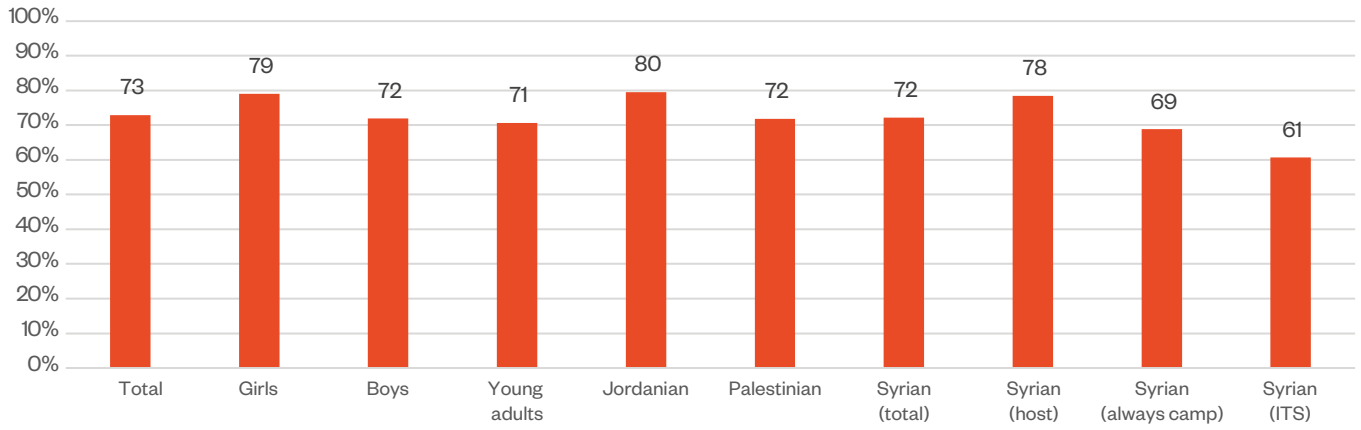


During qualitative interviews, and in line with survey findings, most respondents reported that marriage marks the end of formal education for girls and young women. A 21-year-old Jordanian young woman recalled, '*I made it to the first year of high school, but then I got married and left school.*' For most young brides, the primary barrier to education is their husband (and his parents). A 17-year-old Syrian girl from Azraq camp stated of her sister, '*She wanted to go back to education after she got married, but her husband did not allow her.*' A Syrian girl the same age, living in an informal tented settlement, echoed this: '*Their husbands don't want them to continue studying… They say she's married, so why would she continue her studies?*' A 21-year-old Syrian young man from Azraq explained that young husbands refuse to allow their wives to leave home – even to go to school – because '*if you are letting your wife out this means that you are showing her off*' (see forthcoming PSSVA report). A minority of young brides noted that in addition to lacking permission to attend school, they also lack the time. This was most often true once they had begun having children, which usually happens as soon as possible after marriage. A 19-year-old Bani Murra mother of two reported that she would never consider returning to school because '*I have responsibility for my children.*'

Respondents also reported that it is rare for a husband to allow his wife to work, because doing so would not only risk exposing her to other men, but also imply that the husband is not providing for his family adequately. A 24-year-old Syrian young woman from Zaatari camp stated that she very much wanted to work, and had first suggested that she get a job in a cosmetics store and then suggested that she start her own small business at home, but had been rebuffed for both: '*My husband didn't agree.*' Indeed, a 21-year-old Jordanian young woman reported that her husband refuses to allow her to have a job, because he considers it shameful, saying, '*I want to help my husband… Half of my husband's salary goes to loans and things like that… But he says no* [to her working].'

Marriage does not constrain young men's access to education in the same way that it does for young brides. During qualitative interviews, young husbands reported that they left school years prior to marriage, usually to begin helping their parents with household expenses. When asked if they would like to return to school, however, they agreed that such a thought is unimaginable now that they have assumed adult roles. A 22-year-old Syrian father from an informal tented settlement explained, '*The age has passed, unfortunately. I got married and I have a family and I need to work.*'

Figure 8: Proportions of young people who aspire to university (by cohort and nationality/location)



gender differences were significant, with girls more likely to aspire to university than boys (79% versus 72%). Among young adults, gender differences were not significant, likely because marriage is associated with young women having lower aspirations (see Box 2). Nationality and location differences were significant and echo patterning in aspirations for secondary school. Syrians in host communities (78%) and Jordanians (80%) were the most likely to aspire to university; Syrians living in informal tented settlements (61%) were least likely to.

Adolescents' aspirations for university climbed between baseline and midline, but were then stable between midline and endline. In aggregate, adolescents' aspirations for university climbed from 69% at baseline, to 74% at midline and were then stable at endline (76%). Young adults' aspirations for university were unchanged over time.

Although young people's educational aspirations were very high, most young people understood at endline that they are not especially likely to achieve their aspirations. Only 33% reported that they were extremely likely to achieve their educational aspirations (see Figure 9). Cohort and gender differences were significant. Adolescents (37%) and young adult men (35%) were more likely to believe that they were extremely likely to achieve their educational aspirations than young adult women (22%), most of whom (as already noted) were already married and had not only lower aspirations but a more realistic understanding of their likelihood of achieving their dreams. Nationality differences were also significant, with better-resourced Jordanians (49%) much more likely to believe they will achieve their aspirations than Palestinians (37%) and Syrians (29%). Syrians living in informal tented settlements (23%) were especially unlikely to believe they will achieve their educational aspirations (not shown).

Most young people (59%) reported on the endline survey that the cost of education makes it difficult for them to achieve their educational aspirations (see Figure 10). Cohort and gender differences were significant, when interpreted together. Young adult men (69%), who

Figure 9: Proportion of young people who believe they are extremely likely to achieve their aspirations (by cohort, gender, and nationality)

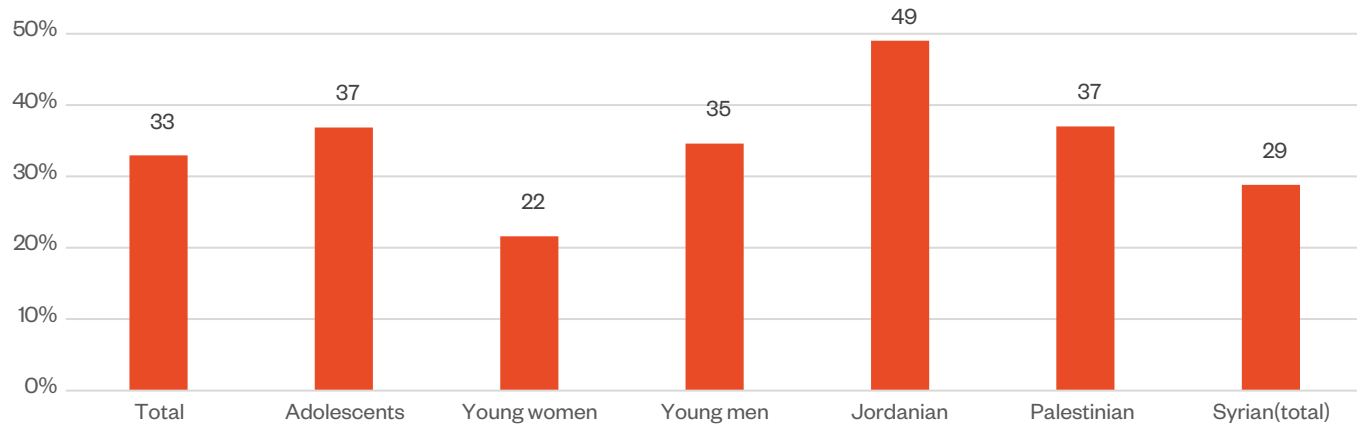
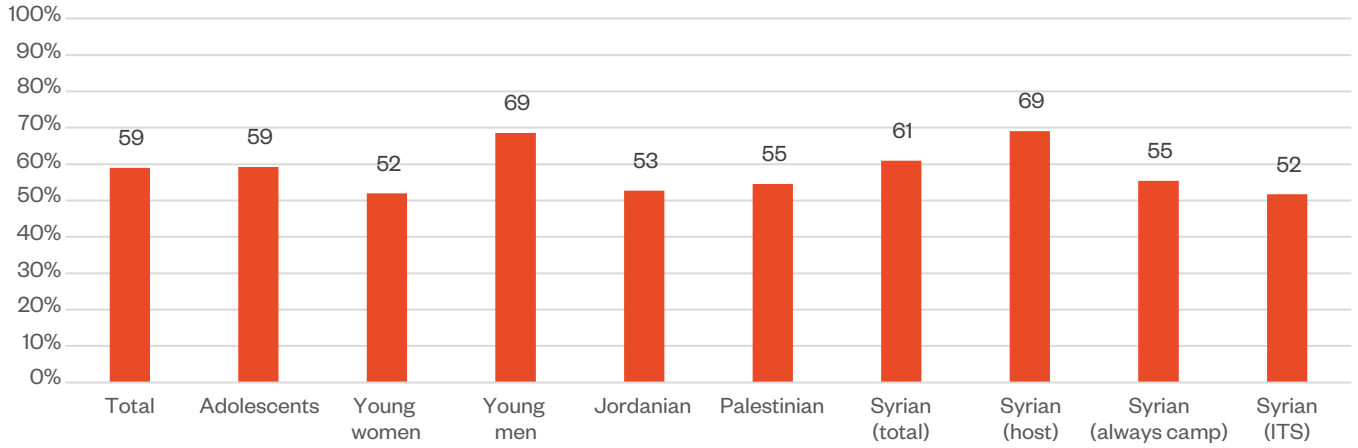


Figure 10: Barrier to aspirations is the cost of education (by cohort, gender and nationality/location)



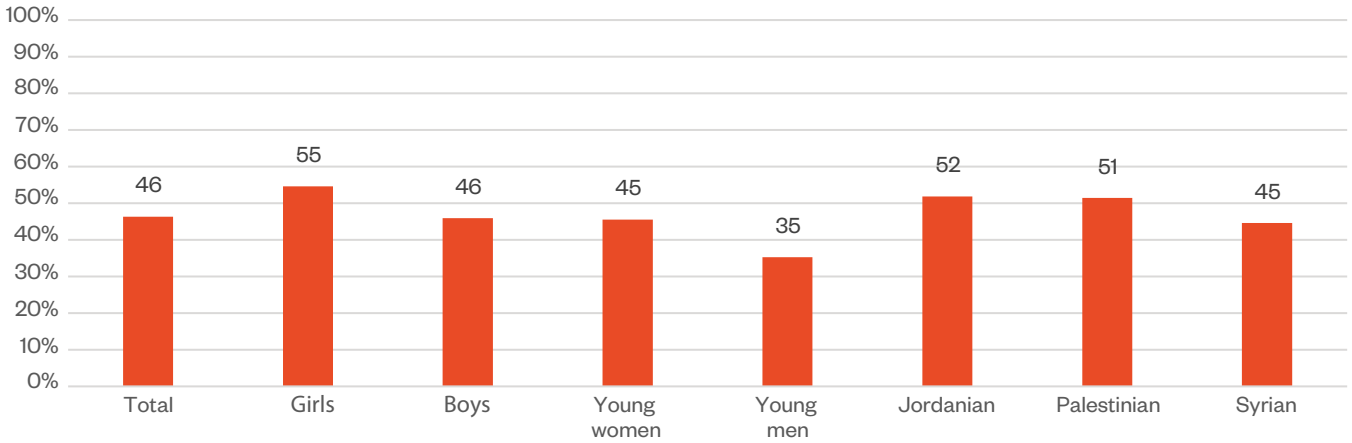
were not only university age but were almost all working to support their families, were more likely to report that finances are a barrier than adolescents (59%) and young adult women (52%). Nationality and, for Syrians, location differences were also significant. Syrians living in host communities (69%), who had the highest aspirations but limited income, were far more likely to report financial barriers than Palestinians (55%), Syrians in formal camps (55%), Syrians living in informal tented settlements (52%), and Jordanians (53%).

Young people's occupational aspirations were generally lower than their educational aspirations. In aggregate, just under half (46%) of young people aspired to skilled or professional work (see Figure 11). Cohort and gender differences were again significant. Adolescent girls (55%) and young women (45%), who are not expected to be breadwinners and whose access to paid work is heavily dependent on the type of work they pursue, were more likely to aspire to skilled or professional work than adolescent boys (46%) or young men (35%) respectively. Nationality differences were also significant. Syrians (45%), who are restricted to only three occupational sectors (agriculture, construction, and sanitation), were less likely to aspire to skilled or professional work than Jordanians (52%) and Palestinians (51%).

During qualitative interviews, young people almost uniformly reported that they value education, for themselves (and, among those who are married, for their children). When asked what message she would send to her younger self, if such a thing were possible, a 16-year-old Palestinian girl replied, '*In bold red letters: your studies are the most important thing!*' When asked what she wants for her preschool-aged children, a 21-year-old Syrian mother similarly reported, '*I want them to continue until they reach the university… The girl and the boy.*'

In line with survey findings, despite their esteem for education, and the types of work that it makes possible, many young people were acutely aware of the barriers that stand between them and their dreams. Indeed, at endline, young people could broadly be sorted into four categories:

Figure 11: Proportion of young people who aspire to skilled or professional work (by cohort, gender and nationality)



those who are still aiming high; those who have less lofty but actionable goals; those who have replaced aspiration with desperation; and those who no longer have aspirations.

The first group of young people – disproportionately enrolled adolescents living in host communities – have high educational aspirations and wish to have professional work. 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.*' An 18-year-old Jordanian young woman similarly stated, '*I love science-related fields… With biology, I can become a teacher, work in labs, or train in hospitals.*' Although young females were more likely to report high aspirations – in part because they were more likely to still be enrolled and in part because professional work is seen as relatively more 'acceptable' for females (see below) – some young males also reported high aspirations. A 20-year-old Syrian young man from Zaatari camp stated, '*I want to be a civil engineer… I like working with a team, engineering designs, and I enjoy subjects like math and physics.*'

Other young people – disproportionately males (because they know they must become breadwinners within the confines of the Jordanian labour market), Palestinians (because they have endured generations of legal restrictions on their work and have effectively no opportunities to be resettled by UNHCR or claim asylum in other countries) and ethnic minorities (who are especially likely to be out of school) – professed practical aspirations. A 22-year-old Jordanian young man, when asked what he would like to do, replied: '*I would like to get a diploma in warehouse management.*' A 17-year-old Palestinian boy, taking vocational classes, similarly stated, '*I'll want to work in a job related to my Refrigeration and Air Conditioning certificate.*' Girls and young women also sometimes reported practical occupational aspirations. In nearly all cases, these were related to cosmetology, which is a gender-segregated profession that can be done from home. A 16-year-old Syrian girl from a host community stated, '*I would like to open a salon at home. I am not interested in opening a salon outside.*'

A third group of young people – almost entirely males and disproportionately Syrians and ethnic minorities – reported that their only aspiration is for work. A 16-year-old Syrian boy from Zaatari camp, when asked what he wants to do in the future, replied that there are so few options open to him that he does not care what he does, as long as he is paid: '*When I reach the legal age, I will work… Work, find me a job.*' An 18-year-old Bani Murra young man reported the same, '*I want to work… to get a salary that covers rent, food, and drinks.*' Some girls and young women also reported that they would be interested in any paid work. Unlike young males, whose preferences are shaped by the fact that they must help support their families, these young females usually reported that they want work – and an income – as internal proof of some independence. A 21-year-old Syrian young woman, whose father has prohibited her from working, stated: '*I would love to work, I would love to have my own salary.*'

A final group of young people – disproportionately refugees and married young women (see Box 2) – reported that they no longer bother to aspire to anything. A 14-year-old Syrian boy from Zaatari camp explained that setting goals and seeing them dashed is simply too painful: '*I don't want to set a dream for myself and regret it in the future.*' An 18-year-old Palestinian young woman, whose mother-in-law answered nearly every question put to the young woman before she could answer herself, (and who ruled out the idea of paid work), eventually agreed, '*I'm good without a job.*'

Respondents reported that as with access to education and decent work (see also report on economic empowerment), educational and occupations aspirations are limited by myriad factors, including poverty, the shape of the Jordanian labour market, legal restrictions on refugees' work, and social restrictions on young females' work. Many respondents, disproportionally Syrians, highlighted the role that poverty plays in limiting aspirations. A 16-year-old Syrian girl from Zaatari camp, when asked why she does not want to attend university, replied, '*It does not matter what I want. There are no scholarships, no opportunities to study, and universities in Jordan are expensive.*'

Other respondents, disproportionately male, spoke of how unemployment rates shape aspirations. A 16-year-old Syrian boy from Zaatari camp explained that his aspirations have shifted as he has grown up: '*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.*'

Young refugees, Syrians and Palestinians alike, spoke often of how their aspirations are limited by Jordanian law. A Palestinian key informant explained that there are no routes through which a stateless Palestinian can become a professional in Jordan, commenting that: '*There are 73 prohibited occupations for Gaza residents… They can study, but they won't find jobs.*' Respondents agreed that girls and women face the added disadvantage of restrictive

gender norms, which effectively exclude them from most forms of work. An 18-year-old Syrian young woman from an informal tented settlement, who stated that her dream job is doing cartoon voice-overs, added that she knows this will never happen: '*It's like saying, "Devil's dream in heaven"... Because I'm an Arab girl.*'

Access to academic and vocational education

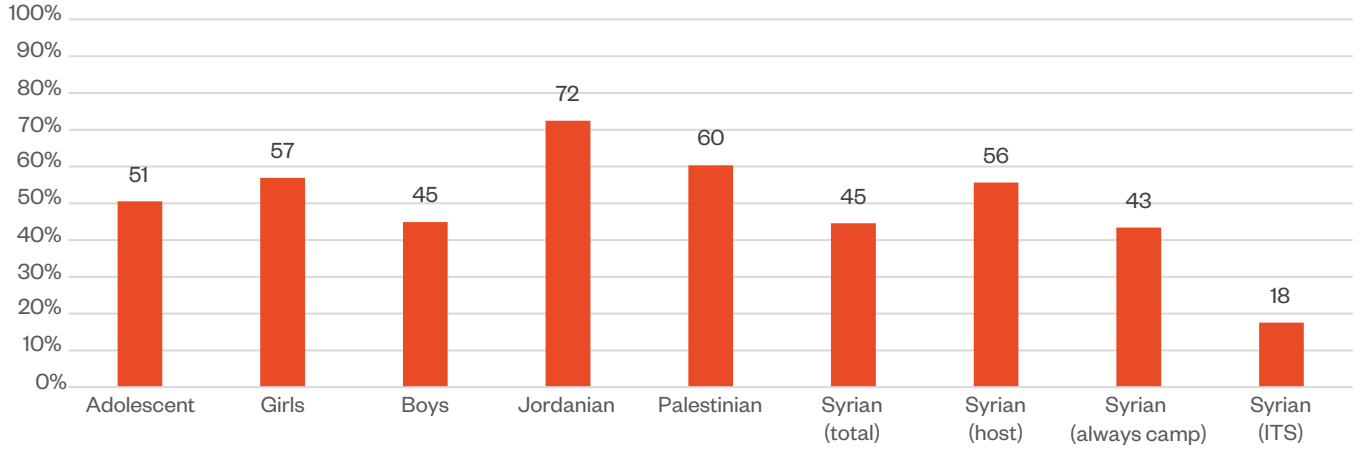
Access to education is heavily shaped by age for two reasons. First, only adolescents have access to (ostensibly) free education; post-secondary education entails tuition fees. Second, many of the Syrian young adults in the sample have never attended school in Jordan, because in the years immediately after displacement, Jordanian schools were not yet able to accommodate the influx of new students. Detailed survey findings on enrolment are presented accordingly, by age cohort.

Of adolescents, just over half (51%) were still enrolled at endline (see Figure 12). Of those, 75% were enrolled in secondary school (grades 11 and 12, including technical and vocational training at this level), 19% were enrolled in basic education (grades 1-10), and 6% were at university.[10] Gender differences in enrolment were significant, with girls (58%) – despite restrictions on their mobility and the threat of child marriage (see forthcoming PSSVA and violence report) – far more likely to be enrolled than boys (47%), who tend to be pulled out of school by child labour and pushed out of school by teacher indifference and violence (see below). Nationality differences were also significant, with Jordanians (72%) more likely to be enrolled than Palestinians (60%) who were in turn much more likely to be enrolled than Syrians (46%). For Syrians, location differences were significant, with those in host communities (57%) more likely to be enrolled than those in formal camps (47%) and informal tented settlements (19%). The gender gap varies by nationality and location. It is twice as large among Syrians living in host communities than it is among Jordanians (14 percentage points versus 7 percentage points) (not shown). It is larger still in formal camps (19 percentage points in girls' favour). There is no gender gap in enrolment for Palestinian adolescents or for Syrian adolescents living in informal tented settlements. Of enrolled adolescents, 19% missed more than a week of school in the past year. Boys (24%) were significantly more likely to have been absent for more than a week than girls (15%). Nationality and location differences were not significant.

Given the seven years between baseline and midline (which included pandemic-related school closures), it is important to understand not only if adolescents are still enrolled, but also how many grades of schooling they (have) completed. Of adolescents, 89% were attending/had attended 6th grade at endline (see Figure 13). Of those aged at least 15, however, only 79% were attending/had attended 8th grade. Attendance rates for 10th grade were even lower. Of adolescents aged at least 17, only 64% were attending/had attended the last year of basic education. By 11th grade (the first year of secondary school), only 52% of adolescents aged 18 and above were attending/had attended.

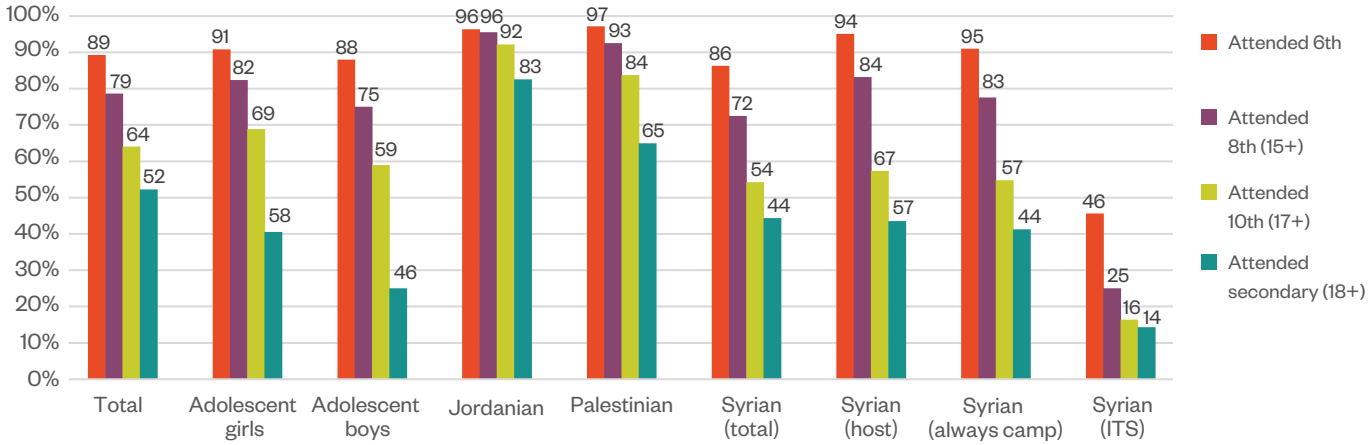
In line with established patterning, adolescent boys were significantly disadvantaged compared to adolescent girls, despite schools being poorly equipped to help girls manage menstruation (see Box 3). The gender gap was 3 percentage points in 6th grade but had widened to 12

Figure 12: Proportion of adolescents enrolled in formal education (by gender and nationality/location)



10 Note this includes diploma, higher diploma, bachelor studies but no one in our sample was in master studies.

Figure 13: Proportion of adolescents who had attended/were attending a given grade (by gender and nationality/location)



Box 3: Menstrual health management at school

Of girls and young women who were enrolled in school during the most recent semester, most (82%) reported on the endline survey that schools have facilities that students can use to manage their periods. Of those, however, only 51%, however, reported that those facilities were generally clean enough to use without discomfort.

During qualitative interviews, although girls and young women reported that teachers are generally supportive of students whose periods unexpectedly start at school (sometimes providing them with pads from their own personal supply and other times offering them hot drinks to calm cramps), most young females agreed that managing their periods at school is difficult and unpleasant. Toilet stalls, they reported, regularly lack doors (and have no locks) and trash bins, and often stink. A 16-year-old Palestinian girl stated, '*The bathrooms here are a bit clean and a bit not... Water is available 24 hours. But there is a bad smell in the bathrooms.*' A 22-year-old young woman from Azraq camp recalled that toilets were frequently backed up, because with no bins available, '*Girls threw their pads in the toilets.*' Young females also noted that because they find it embarrassing to ask a teacher for a pad, it would be better if supplies were freely available in all bathrooms.

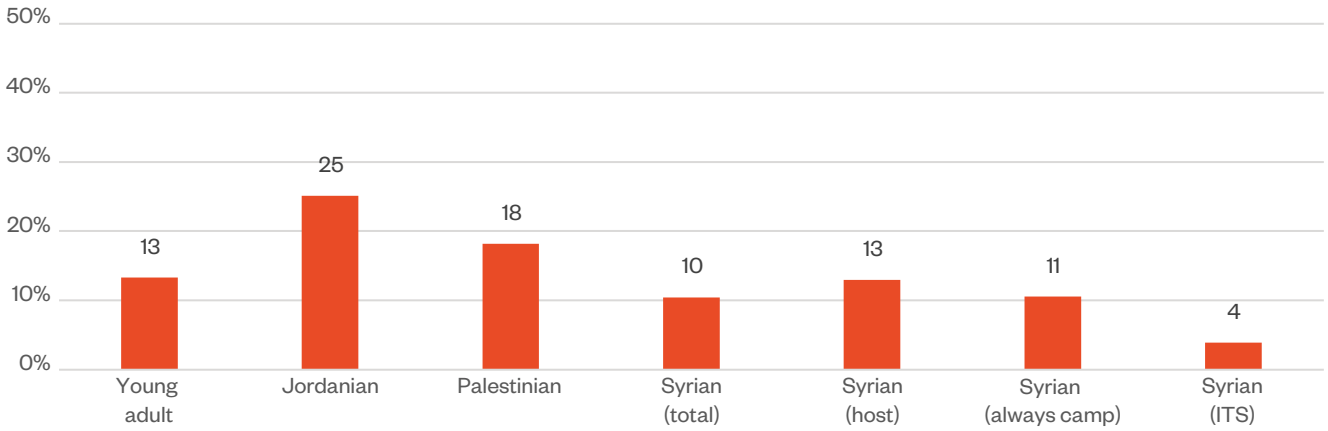
percentage points by 11th grade. Nationality differences were also significant: Syrian adolescents (14%) were far more likely to leave school prior to 6th grade than their Palestinian (3%) and Jordanian (4%) peers, and Jordanian adolescents (83%) were far more likely than their Palestinian (65%) and Syrian (44%) peers to attend secondary school.

Syrians' access to education is heavily shaped by where they live: those in host communities stay in school for longer than their peers in formal camps and informal tented settlements. For example, although 6th grade and 8th grade attendance was similar in host communities and formal camps, 67% of adolescents in host communities made it to the last year of basic education, compared to only 57% of their peers in formal camps (and just 16% of their peers in informal tented settlements). Gender and nationality/location interact to leave Syrian adolescent boys with the least access to education. Only 50% of Syrian adolescent boys aged 17 and up had attended 10th grade, with a significant gap between those in host communities (61%) and formal camps (48%) and those in informal tented settlements (18%)(not shown).

At endline, only 13% of young adults were enrolled in formal education (see Figure 14). Of those, 74% were enrolled in university, 9% were enrolled in community college, 8% were enrolled in secondary school (grades 11 and 12), and 8% were enrolled in basic education[11] (grades 1-10). Nationality and, for Syrians, location differences were significant. Jordanians (25%) were far more likely to be enrolled than Palestinians (18%) and Syrians (10%). Syrians in host communities (13%) and formal camps (11%) were more likely to be enrolled than their peers in informal tented settlements (4%). In aggregate, gender differences in enrolment were not significant for young adults, in part

11 The Ministry of Education runs an intensive catch-up programme to help former dropouts cover up to three years of education in a single calendar year, so that they can return to school alongside their peers.

Figure 14: Proportion of young adults enrolled in formal education (by nationality/location)

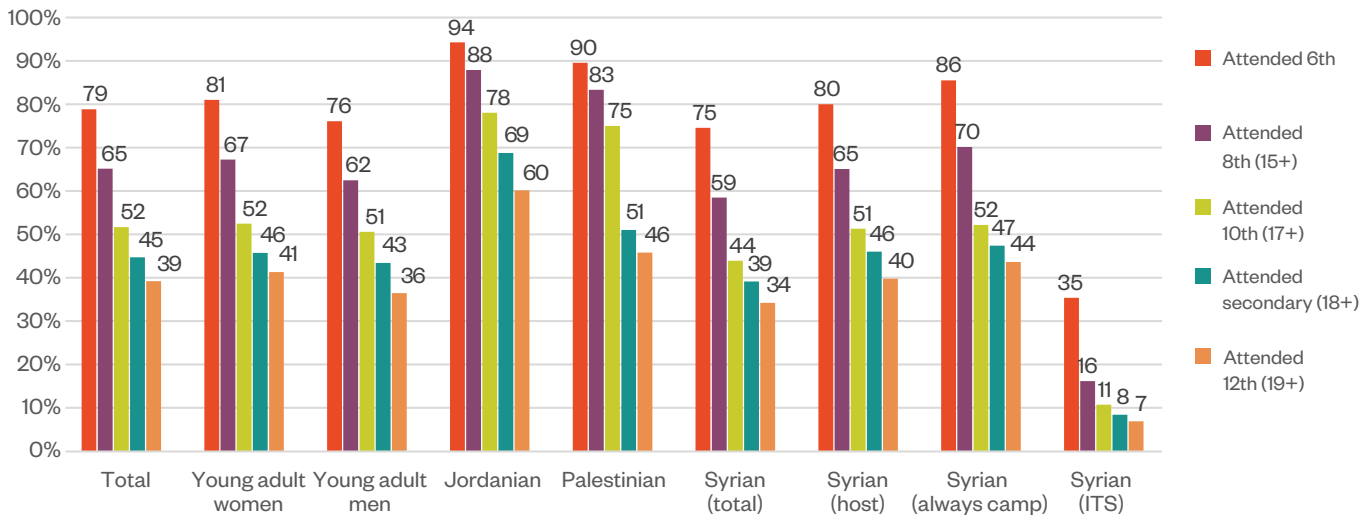


because so many young women were selected into the baseline sample because they had already been married and marriage limits enrolment. That said, the gender gap in enrolment in formal camps was significant and in young women's favour (16% versus 5%).

For young adults, their access to education was (on average) truncated years earlier than it was for adolescents. Only 79% had attended 6th grade, only 65% had attended 8th grade, only 52% had attended 10th grade (the last year of basic education), only 45% had attended 11th grade, and only 39% had attended 12th grade (see Figure 15). Although gender gaps in current enrolment were not significant, gender gaps in highest grade attended sometimes were. Young adult women were significantly more likely than young adult men to have attended 6th, 8th and 12th grades. Nationality differences were also significant, with Jordanians and Palestinians likely to have attended more grades of education than Syrians. For example, approximately three-quarters of Jordanians (78%) and Palestinians (75%) attended 10th grade, compared to only 44% of Syrians. For Syrians, location differences were significant, with those living in informal tented settlements disadvantaged compared to those in host communities and formal camps; just over a third (35%) of young adults in informal tented settlements had completed 6th grade. As was the case with adolescents, gender and nationality interact to leave Syrian young adult men with the least access to education. For example, only 43% had attended 10th grade, with a significant gap between those in host communities (51%) and formal camps (40%) and those in informal tented settlements (12%) (not shown).

Qualitative findings are in line with survey results, and highlight that starting in early adolescence – and then amplifying in middle adolescence – girls have better access to education than boys. Gender norms that

Figure 15: Proportion of young adults who had attended/were attending a given grade (by gender and nationality/location)



position males as breadwinners, even when those males are children, is the primary reason for this, especially for boys from the poorest refugee households and from ethnic minorities (see also the economic empowerment repot). An 18-year-old Turkmen young man stated that all boys in his community leave school to work during adolescence, saying, '*We don't go to school. We go to work. Everyone is like this.*' A Syrian key informant noted that this is common among Syrian boys as well: '*Most of the dropouts are because their fathers want them to work.*' An 18-year-old young man from Azraq camp agreed that work is the reason why most Syrian boys leave school, but noted that it is not that fathers want boys to work, but that households need boys' income: '*Most of my friends left school for this reason. They left to work in the camp because the UN aid they get each month isn't enough.*' Indeed, a 16-year-old Syrian boy from Zaatari camp noted that some households are so poor that boys are not even permitted to finish primary school: '*I had friends when I was in the 4th and 5th grade, but they left school and went to work.*'

Boys' access to education is also limited by the way that gender norms shape their classroom experiences. Specifically, because many male teachers feel themselves undervalued and are disengaged (see below) – but rely on corporal punishment to discipline disengaged, under-performing and unruly students – boys often choose to drop out. A 16-year-old Syrian boy from Zaatari camp noted that, '*Teachers do not care if the student has understood the lesson or not.*' A girl the same age and from the same location agreed that her brothers' education was far worse than her own and added, '*Boys quit because they see no benefit… There's no education.*' Boys and young men regularly reported that while teachers are often late to school and spend class time playing on their phones rather than teaching, students are beaten for the same behaviour. A 15-year-old Syrian boy from a host community explained:

> *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. The teacher also beats the student if he talks to his classmate. And if he asks his classmate for a pencil or eraser, the teacher beats him with a hose.*

It was not uncommon for young males to report that constant violence had pushed them out of school. A 15-year-old Turkmen boy who dropped out after 4th grade explained, '*My teacher was worse than the devil… I left the school.*'

Young males' access to education in Jordan, especially at secondary and post-secondary levels, is further limited by the fact that the link between education and employment is increasingly tenuous. Jordanian respondents emphasised that even those with a university education cannot find work. A key informant explained, '*There is a lack of job opportunities for educated young men.*' Refugee respondents, on the other hand, emphasised legal restrictions on the types of work they are allowed to do, and how these mean there is little point in investing in education. A Syrian father from Azraq camp stated that for Syrians, there is effectively no difference between basic literacy and passing the Tawjihi: '*The point is that having the Tawjihi certificate 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 shared that view, saying, '*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 than boys, gender norms also limit access for some young females, particularly those from refugee households and ethnic minorities. Some caregivers pull their daughters out of school in early or middle adolescence to prevent sexual harassment and protect girls' honour and that of their family (see forthcoming violence report). A Syrian mother from an informal tented settlement explained:

> *We are afraid if the girl goes two 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.'* A Bani Murra father similarly noted, *'I took my daughter from school when she was 12… because I saw phenomena that were not safe for our daughters… Girls have phones, and young men are watching them at the school door.*

Although it has become less common in recent years, other girls leave school (most often in the last year of basic education or during secondary school) due to child marriage. 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.*' Gender norms and poverty interact to limit access to education for other young females. In some cases, this is because teachers and other students shame girls whose parents cannot afford the required school uniforms. A Palestinian key informant explained:

> *Female students no longer want to go to school because of the school's requirements for stationery and school uniforms, which parents cannot provide, and teachers embarrass female students who do not wear the school uniform.*

In other cases, especially for Syrian families living in informal tented settlements, this is because they cannot afford the transportation required for girls to get to school. A Syrian mother from an informal tented settlement reported, '*They need buses to take them and bring them back, and we don't have the possibility*.'

Several young females noted that although restrictive gender norms can and do drive girls to drop out of school, they can also do the opposite – and for some girls encourage them to stay in school. In some cases, this is related to marriage. A 22-year-old Syrian young woman from Azraq camp reported that she had completed secondary school in order to avoid child marriage: '*The biggest reason for taking high school is that I don't want to get married*.' An 18-year-old Syrian young woman from a host community agreed that staying in education can protect against child marriage, but added that it also protects young wives in marriage, as educated girls are given more respect: '*The only weapon that a girl can have is her certificate… A girl's future is her education*.' Other respondents reported that restrictions on women's employment (see below) keep girls in school, as the jobs open to those who are educated are seen as more acceptable by caregivers and other family members. A 17-year-old girl from Zaatari camp stated, '*If a girl doesn't have a diploma, she can't work. A diploma gives us a chance to work*.' A Palestinian key informant agreed: '*Only if she finishes university, she can work*.'

Respondents agreed that young people's access to secondary school is not only limited by gender norms, and the way those increasingly shape girls' and boys' lives during adolescence, but also by the reality that secondary school is expensive. Given quality deficits (see below), doing well on exams requires that students have access to private tutors. A 20-year-old Jordanian young man stated, '*Tawjihi… depends on… having a high financial capacity*.' This is because, explained a 20-year-old Syrian young woman from a host community, '*Most students rely on private tutors who come to the house*.' With these lessons costing hundreds of dinars a semester – far more than many households can spare – many 10th grade graduates (especially refugees) do not transition into secondary school, and many others drop out over the course of 11th and 12th grades. A 17-year-old Syrian boy from Azraq camp reported, '*Eleventh grade, enrolment decreased, in Tawjihi it decreased a lot!*'

Post-secondary enrolment is even more sensitive to cost than secondary enrolment, because it entails fees for tuition and transport. Although Jordanians' university fees are subsidised by the government and students receive a small stipend for the duration of their studies, and Palestinians have some access to scholarships from the Palestinian Affairs Ministry and UNRWA (for Naour University), Syrians have extremely limited access to scholarships and until 2024 were required to pay tuition fees double that of Jordanian citizens. Access to scholarships is especially limited in host communities, where fewer NGOs provide assistance. A 17-year-old Syrian girl from a host community explained that only the top students stand a chance: '*You have to be among the top 10 to get a scholarship, otherwise there is no chance… It will never happen*.' As a result, even though Syrian young people have increasingly high aspirations, and are increasingly likely to pass the Tawjihi, most have no access to post-secondary education. A 21-year-old Syrian young man from a host community stated, '*It is out of my capability to pay the fees of the university*.'

Respondents reported that the Covid-19 pandemic, and the transfer to online education for those with internet-connected devices, seriously impacted young people's access to education. Despite the best efforts of UNICEF Jordan, which distributed thousands of tablets (complete with airtime) and provided students with online tutorials hosted out of Makani centres, some students were not able to access online education. A mother from Azraq camp recalled of her son, who did not complete 8th grade, '*We couldn't afford phones like other families*.' Other students were able to access the Ministry of Education's learning platform, but found the quality of education so poor (see below) that they dropped out instead. This was particularly common for refugee boys, given greater pressures on them to contribute to household income. An 18-year-old Syrian young man from Zaatari camp explained, '*They thought studying was pointless anyway… During Covid-19… All my friends started working*.'

During qualitative interviews, two main themes emerged about young people's access to vocational education. First, in line with existent evidence, and with the exception of Palestinian boys – who have long preferred vocational education, as they are legally prohibited from

professional work and '*find that academic teaching is useless*' (Palestinian mother) – such training remains broadly undervalued. A key informant stated, '*The academic track is culturally more favoured, due to societal habits and traditions that push towards academic rather than vocational education.*' A 22-year-old Syrian young man from Zaatari camp explained that this is because it is seen as for less capable students, '*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.*'

Second, although the Jordanian government is rolling out BTEC credentialling to alleviate this concern and address youth unemployment, roll-out has been uneven and has excluded many refugees. A key informant stated, '*There is a huge clear effort from the Ministry of Education to direct our youth towards vocational education... as a part of the updated economic plan.*' However, an 18-year-old Syrian young man from Zaatari camp noted that Syrians living in camps do not have access to this education: '*We don't have this vocational choice. Only academic.*' It also appears that BTEC courses are not yet available to Palestinian students living and studying in Jerash camp or many Syrians living in host communities. A Palestinian key informant stated that this is because the hands-on workshops required for BTEC courses are not available inside the camp: '*There are no workshops. I expect that everyone was forced into the academic specialisation.*' An 18-year-old Syrian young man from a host community agreed that schools offering BTEC are still uncommon, and added that while he would have loved to pursue this path, '*the school was too far and required transportation costs*'.

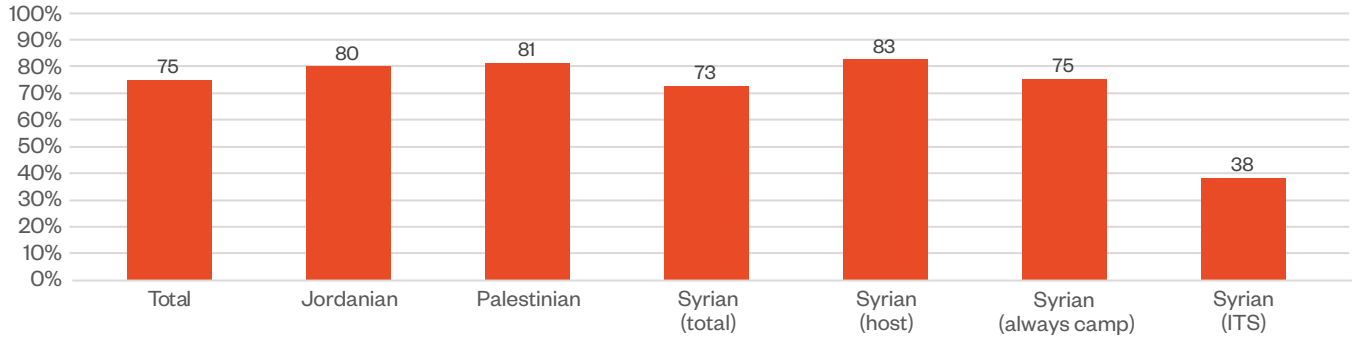
Learning outcomes and educational quality

In Jordan, nearly all adolescents attend gender-segregated schools, with girls taught by women and boys taught by men. Educational quality and learning outcomes tend to be highly disparate, for reasons discussed in detail below. Because of this, survey findings, which are based on the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) tests,[12] are presented by gender.

Of young females, who were a mean of 19.4 years old at endline, just over three-quarters (75%) could read a short story written at the 2nd grade level (see Figure 16). Nationality differences were significant, but only when interpreted in tandem with location differences for Syrians. Palestinians (81%), Syrians living in host communities (83%) and Jordanians (80%) were more likely to be able to read at the 2nd grade level than Syrians living in formal camps (75%) and those living in informal tented settlements (38%).

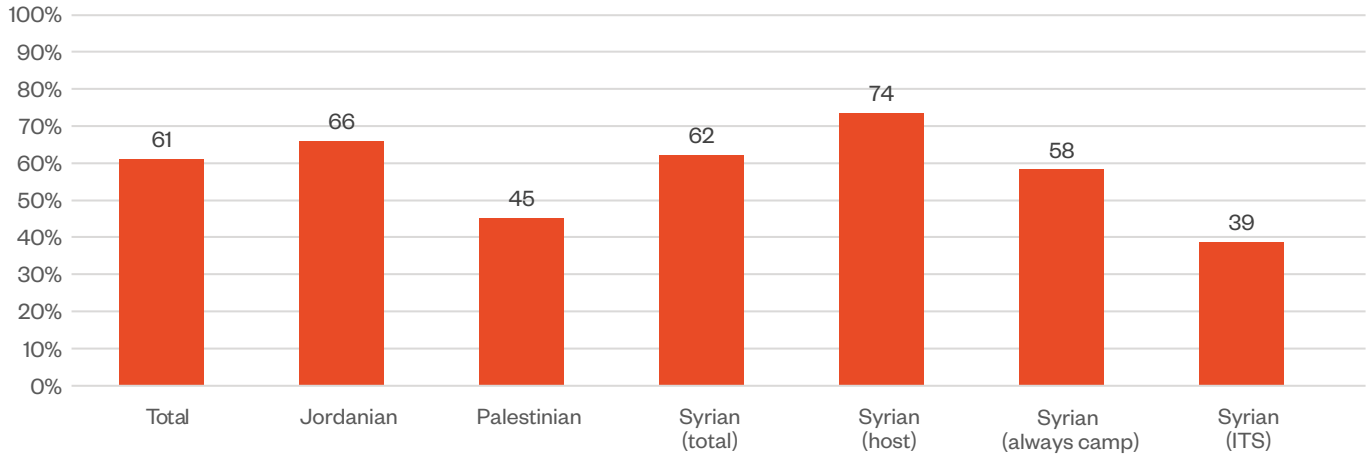
Of young males, who were a mean of 19.2 years old at endline, just under two-thirds (61%) could read a short story written at the 2nd grade level (Figure 17). As with young females, nationality differences were significant, but only when interpreted in tandem with location differences for Syrians. Speaking to their commitment to education, Syrians living in host communities (74%) were more likely to be able to read at the 2nd grade level than Jordanians (66%), Syrians living in formal camps (58%), Palestinians (45%) and Syrians living in informal tented settlements (39%). It is worth noting that although the gender gap in literacy (in young females' favour) is large for all groups other than Syrians living in informal tented settlements, it is largest for Palestinians (36 percentage points).

Figure 16: Proportion of young females able to read at the 2nd grade level (by cohort and nationality/location)



12 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). ASER Beyond Basics includes additional modules that include time telling, measurements, ability to read instructions, and map reading, among other things (https://doc.ukdataservice.ac.uk/doc/9371/mrdoc/pdf/9371_gage_jordan_round_2_aser_tool_english.pdfHYPERLINK "https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=9371#!/documentation"https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=9371#!/documentation)

Figure 17: Proportion of young males able to read at the 2nd grade level (by cohort and nationality/location)



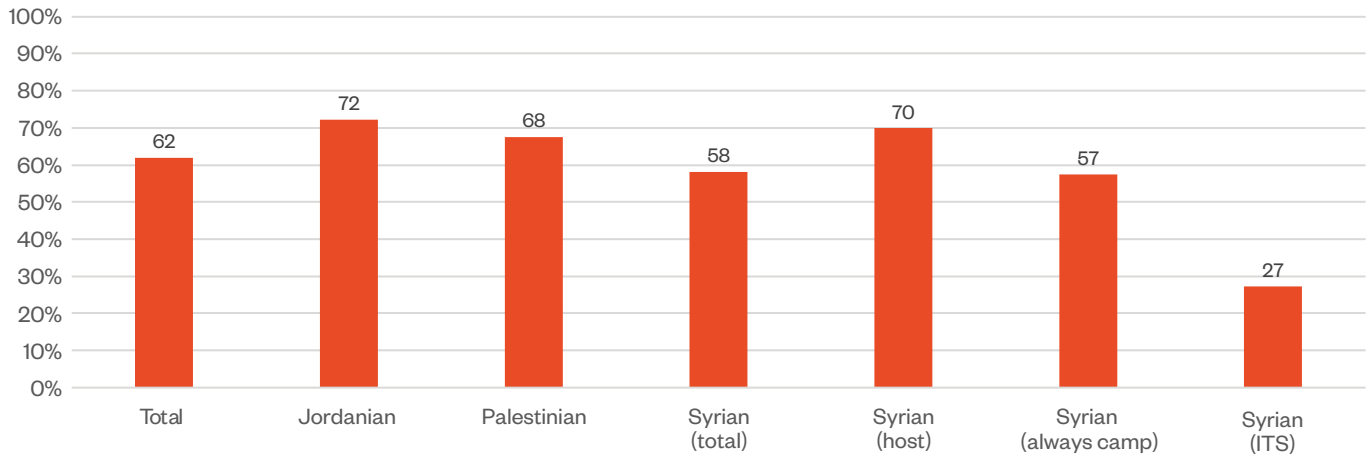
Just over two-thirds (62%) of young females were able to do subtraction with borrowing (also a second grade competency) at endline (see Figure 18). Nationality differences were again significant only when interpreted in tandem with location differences. Syrians living in host communities (70%), Palestinians (68%) and Jordanians (72%) – who had access to education for longer – were more likely to be able to subtract than Syrians living in formal camps (57%) and those living in informal tented settlements (27%).

At endline, only 57% of young males were able to do subtraction with borrowing (see Figure 19). Nationality differences were significant when interpreted alongside location differences. Syrians living in host communities (65%) were more likely to be able to subtract than all other groups, including Jordanians (59%), Syrians in formal camps (57%), Palestinians (40%) and Syrians in informal tented settlements (43%). As was the case with literacy, the gender gap was largest for Palestinians (27 percentage points).

Young people's literacy and numeracy are improving over time. Among the panel sample, the proportion of young females (49% to 79%) and young males (37% to 65%) able to read at the 2nd grade level has climbed 28-30 percentage points since baseline. The proportion of young people able to subtract has climbed nearly as much, from 43% to 64% for young females and from 35% to 60% for young males.

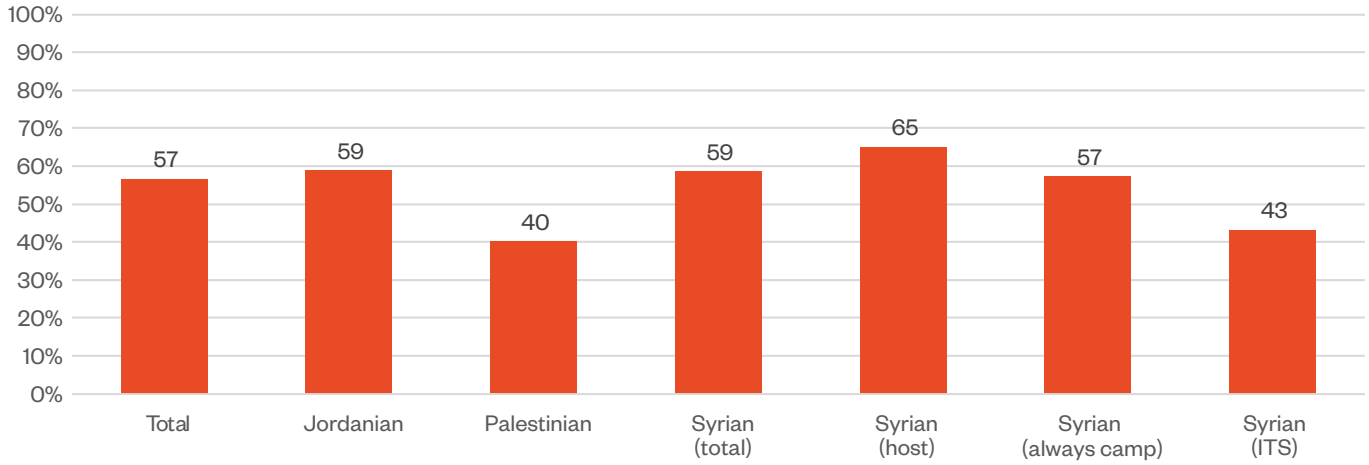
On the ASER Beyond Basics[13] modules, and perhaps speaking to the value of more applied education, young people performed far better than their literacy and numeracy scores would suggest. Interestingly, young females significantly underperformed young males on all modules except for advanced reading, on which they scored significantly better than their male peers. Of adolescent girls and young women, 53% got all questions

Figure 18: Proportion of young females able to do subtraction with borrowing (by cohort and nationality/location)



13 See: https://doc.ukdataservice.ac.uk/doc/9371/mrdoc/pdf/9371_gage_jordan_round_2_aser_tool_english.pdf

Figure 19: Proportion of young males able to do subtraction with borrowing (by cohort and nationality/location)cohort, gender and nationality/location)



about daily tasks correct; 61% got all questions involving common calculations correct; 80% got all questions about map reading and general knowledge correct; 75% got all questions aimed at advanced reading correct; and 43% got all questions involving financial calculations correct (see Figure 20). Many nationality and location differences were significant, with Jordanians and Palestinians generally scoring the highest and Syrians living in informal tented settlements generally scoring the lowest.

Of adolescent boys and young men, 62% got all questions about daily tasks correct; 72% got all questions involving common calculations correct; 84% got all questions about map reading and general knowledge correct; 70% got all questions aimed at advanced reading correct; and 50% got all questions involving financial calculations correct (see Figure 21). Many nationality and location differences were significant, with Syrians living in host communities and Jordanians generally scoring the highest and Syrians living in informal tented settlements generally scoring the lowest.

Of the young people who sat the Tawjihi exam, just over half (55%) achieved a passing score (see Figure 22). Gender and cohort differences were significant, but nationality differences were not. Consistent with young females outperforming their male peers on the ASER educational tests, young females (59%) were more likely to pass the exam than young males (50%). Likely speaking to young adults having had an opportunity to retake the exam if they did not pass the first time, the vast majority of young adults (89%) had passed the exam while only 29% of adolescents had done so.

During qualitative interviews, most respondents reported that the quality of education in Jordan is poor. Education in some settings was reported to be particularly

Figure 20: Proportion of young females answering all questions correctly in a given ASER module (by nationality/location)friend (by cohort)

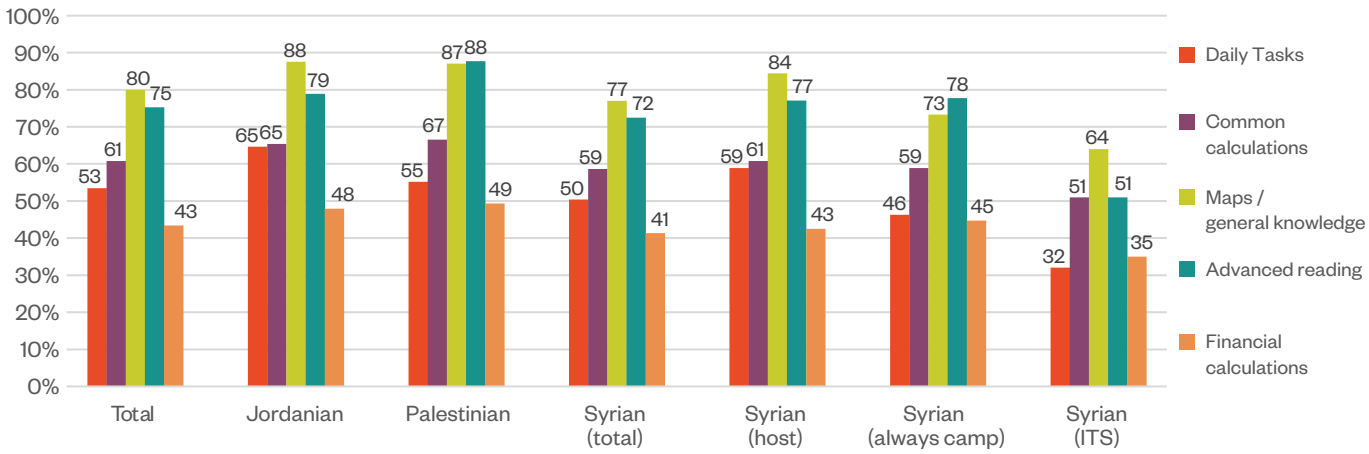


Figure 21: Proportion of young males answering all questions correct in a given ASER module (by nationality/location)

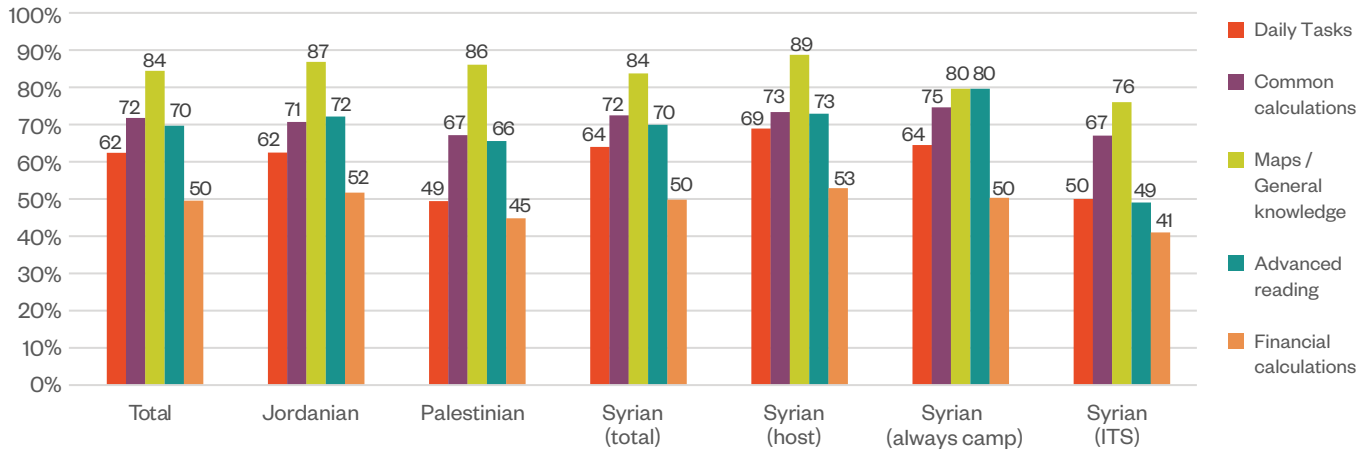
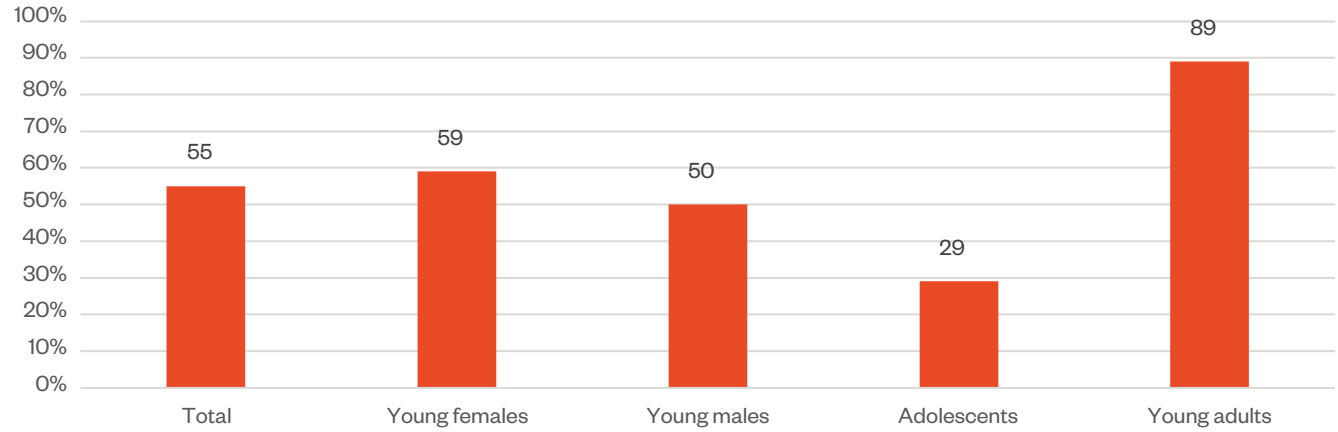


Figure 22: Proportion of young people who passed the Tawjihi, of test-takers (by gender and cohort)



poor – namely boys' schools, the afternoon shift dedicated to Syrian students in host communities, and formal camps. It was not uncommon for caregivers to report that their children had not learned to read until early adolescence, and quite a few young people reported that they had only learned to do so in UNICEF-supported Makani centres (see Box 4). A Syrian mother from Zaatari camp reported that she was told by her children's school that she is ultimately responsible for ensuring that her children learn:

> *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.*

A Syrian mother from an informal tented settlement echoed this view, saying, '*There is no education, no standards. No one is satisfied with the education.*'

Many respondents reported that learning outcomes are limited by overcrowding, which keeps teachers from providing individual students, and especially those with disabilities (see Box 5), with adequate support, and also leads to chaotic classrooms that inhibit learning. A 21-year-old Palestinian young man stated, '*The number of students in one class is now 50, and this affects the student's academic achievement.*' A key informant from Azraq camp echoed this, saying, '*In each class, there are 40 students… It's like teaching each student for 1 minute.*' A Syrian mother from Zaatari camp noted that overcrowded classrooms in boys' schools are especially problematic: '*Teachers can't manage the students. We enter many times to ask about the boys. "Be quiet!" "Sit down!" "That one's jumping over there!" He can't manage them because the numbers are very large.*' Several key informants reported that whereas overcrowding used to be driven by too few classrooms, now it is primarily the result of low pay, especially in formal camps and for teachers doing the afternoon shift. One stated, '*There is a shortage of teachers teaching in school in the Syrian schools. They didn't get paid enough.*'

Other respondents reported that the primary issue with quality of education is that teachers, especially male teachers and those who teach Syrian students, are

Box 4: Makani centres support learning

UNICEF-supported Makani ('My Space') (ماكاني) centres, which reach more than 100,000 children and adolescents each year, provide vulnerable young people and their families with an age-appropriate integrated package of services throughout the Kingdom of Jordan. Very young children (3–5 years) are offered courses to help prepare them for starting school. For school-aged children (6–13 years), centres offer learning support classes and community-based child protection support. For those in early adolescence (10–13 years), the programme provides courses in transferable life skills such as communication, critical thinking and negotiation. In mid-adolescence (14 years plus), the courses on offer are expanded to include financial and computer skills, and leadership opportunities. Makani centres also provide parenting education courses and make referrals to other services (including formal education) as needed. At endline, relatively few of the young people in the GAGE sample reported that they were attending a Makani centre. This was primarily because they had aged out – or, more accurately, because they felt they had aged out. That said, it was common for adolescents and young adults to recall previous engagement with Makani programming in glowing terms.

Adolescents and young adults were extremely laudatory of Makani centres' support for education. Some – disproportionately out-of-school Syrians living in informal tented settlements and ethnic minorities – reported that Makani centres had equipped them with foundational skills. A 19-year-old Bani Murra young woman who dropped out after 7th grade because she saw no point in wasting her time in school, recalled, '*Makani really helped me read and write… When I left school, I didn't know how to read or write… It changed my life. Reading and writing change a person's life. When you don't have your identity, you feel like you are not living at all. It became a weapon*.' Others reported that Makani facilitators had helped them master classroom skills, by patiently re-teaching the content that schoolteachers had failed to convey. A 15-year-old Syrian girl from Zaatari camp stated, '*They keep explaining until you understand*.' A 20-year-old Palestinian young woman explained that not only do Makani facilitators pay more attention to students than schoolteachers, but they pay more (rather than less) attention to the students who are struggling the most: '*When the teacher knew that I am weak* [in a particular subject]*, she paid more attention*.'

unengaged from their work. A Palestinian key informant stated, '*For the boys' schools, there's not much attention from the teachers*.' A mother from Zaatari camp echoed this view, saying, '*I feel that teachers at my son's school are honestly not very focused on delivering the information*.' Some young people reported that teachers lecture, but do not care if students understand. An 18-year-old young man from Azraq camp stated, '*He was teaching without explaining… He was writing on the board without explaining anything to us*.' Other young people, sometimes girls, reported that some teachers do not even make a pretence of teaching. A 17-year-old Syrian girl from an informal tented settlement recalled, '*She would teach us for 10 minutes and then spend the rest of the time on her phone, not paying attention to us*.' Several adults noted that teachers' attention would be improved if teachers (especially male teachers) were better paid and more respected by the community. A Palestinian father stated, '*These days, the teacher has no value… He is not paid enough and society does not value him….. and thus this is reflected in his performance*.'

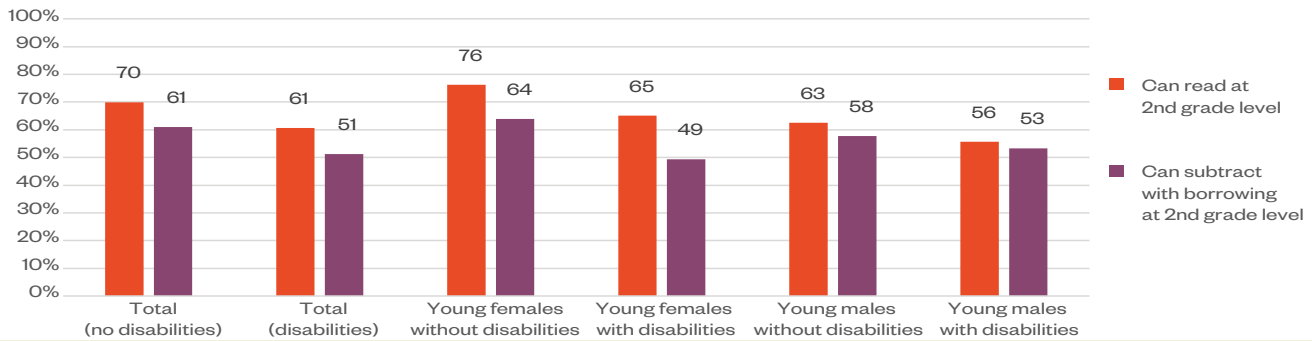
Some respondents noted that poor learning outcomes are not exclusively due to poor-quality education. Several boys and young men reported that child labour had interfered with learning, because they had missed days and weeks of school and did not have time for homework and exam preparation. An 18-year-old young man from Azraq camp explained that he had failed 8th grade three times: '*I failed two years. My father wanted me to work with him on the farms, and I failed, and the third year I also failed*.' Other young people, usually but not always boys and young men, admitted that they chose to ditch school in favour of recreational time with friends. An 18-year-old young man from Zaatari camp reported of his classmates, '*More than half the students are absent… They pretend to their parents they are coming to school*.' A 15-year-old Palestinian girl similarly stated, '*We girls talk to each other and agree that we need to skip* [classes].'

Young people and caregivers broadly agreed that the quality of education declined significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic (when education was delivered online), and is yet to recover. A 19-year-old Jordanian young man stated, '*Corona*[virus] *changed the general system of education… It was not that effective*.' A Syrian mother from an informal tented settlement stated that while it has always been common in Jordan for teachers to pass students regardless of their actual learning, this became even more common during online education: '*Now, a*

Box 5: Learning outcomes are lower for students with disabilities

The endline survey found 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%) (see Figure 23). Capturing young males' broader disadvantage compared to young females, the disability gap is larger for females (11 percentage points for reading and 15 percentage points for maths) than it is for young males (7 percentage points for reading and 4 percentage points for maths).

Figure 23: Learning outcomes, by disability status (by gender)



During qualitative interviews, respondents reported that young people with disabilities all too often do not receive the individualised learning support they need to thrive. In most cases, they noted that this is due to benign neglect. Some respondents highlighted the role of overcrowding – teachers just do not have the time to focus on individual students, even those with special needs. A Palestinian mother stated of her son, who has multiple disabilities, '*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.*' Other respondents noted that teachers and schools are not equipped to deliver the adapted education (including in sign language) that some students require. A 17-year-old Jordanian girl with a hearing impairment explained, '*No one uses sign language… The students talked, the teachers talked, and I never understood anything.*'

A minority of respondents reported that teachers are actively dismissive, or even hostile, to the learning needs of students with disabilities. A Palestinian mother whose son went blind in early adolescence stated that he had dropped out because teachers refused to accommodate his needs: '*They don't want him to just listen… The school asked him to write, and he can't do that. We sent them reports… The boy doesn't see, the boy only hears and memorises.*' A Jordanian mother, whose daughter has a severe hearing impairment, reported that one of her daughter's teachers had even questioned the child's right to an inclusive education, saying, '*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.*'

Most respondents agreed that young people with disabilities are regularly passed through to the next grade regardless of whether they have mastered content. A Palestinian mother whose daughter has a hearing impairment stated, '*When she reached the 5th grade she had barely understood about 1st and 2nd grade.*' A Jordanian mother similarly stated of her son, who has a vision impairment, '*For the subjects he couldn't pass, they would automatically move him forward.*'

Although the survey did not find that young people with disabilities were less likely to be enrolled than their peers without disabilities, qualitative research suggests this is primarily due to the heroic efforts of parents and young people themselves. Young people with mobility impairments (and their caregivers) spoke often of poorly adapted school buildings and how these necessitate difficult trade-offs. A 21-year-old Syrian young man with a mobility impairment, who enrolled in 6th grade at the age of 15 after finally finding a school that could accommodate his needs, stated, '*Go to any school, you will not find any school that is prepared and adapted for people with disability.*' A Jordanian mother, whose son has a mobility impairment, noted that while the school built a ramp to allow him to access the building, they were unable to adapt other facilities: '*The school was good, they treated him well but the school environment wasn't good for him… He never used the bathroom or the wash basin, because their bathrooms aren't suitable for him.*'

student will pass whether they study or not.' A 19-year-old young man from Zaatari camp reported of his 12th grade English teacher, '*He would just spend the whole lesson talking about his personal life and stories… and during exams, he'd just sit there and say, "You're all passing."*' A 20-year-old young man from the same location noted that it is not just teachers' expectations that changed during Covid, but students' interest and behaviour: '*Imagine a classroom with 30 students, 20 of them don't care, and only 10 are actually paying attention. So the teacher just looks at them and thinks, "What should I even teach?"*'

Key informants added that in some ways the quality of education has further declined in recent years because donor and NGO funding and attention have been redirected now that the pandemic is over. One key informant stated:

> *The quality of education has become worse… The support that used to exist for education was greater in the past… Another thing is that there were many supporting organisations… used to provide good teaching, but it stopped. And the other one used to offer English, Arabic and math, but it stopped.*

Nevertheless, as highlighted in Box 6 from a macro standpoint there has been considerable progress in realising young people's right to education.

Box 6: 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 refuges (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*'.

Conclusions and implications

GAGE endline research found that young people living in Jordan have 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.

Young people's educational aspirations are high and for adolescents (though not young adults) have climbed since baseline, as access to education has improved. Although they understand that they are not especially likely to achieve their aspirations – primarily due to poverty – nearly all young people would like to complete secondary school, and most would like to attend university. As professional work is seen as more appropriate for females, girls have higher educational aspirations than boys. On the other hand, because most are already married, and because young brides effectively have no access to education (because their marital family will not allow it), young women have lower educational aspirations than young men. After generations of exclusion from professional occupations, Palestinians tend to have lower educational aspirations than their Jordanian and Syrian peers (especially Syrians in host communities). Young people's occupational aspirations are generally much lower than their educational aspirations. This is because Jordan's labour market is not growing in tandem with its population, because refugees' access to the labour market is restricted by law, and because Jordan has one of the world's lowest rates of female labour force participation.

Young people's access to academic education has plummeted over time. This is because young adults have aged out of free schooling, young males have tired of being hit by their teachers and have been pulled into the labour market, and young females have either married or are required to stay cloistered at home to protect their 'honour' and marriageability. Of adolescents, only half were still enrolled at endline; girls were advantaged over boys, and Jordanians were advantaged over Palestinians and Syrians (especially those Syrians living in formal camps and informal tented settlements). Of young adults, only an eighth – disproportionally Jordanians who can afford university without a scholarship (which have effectively been eliminated due to funding shortfalls) – were still enrolled. Not only are most young people in the GAGE sample out of school, but many – again, disproportionately Syrians from formal camps and informal tented settlements – left school very early. For example, fewer than half of those living in informal tented settlements had attended 6th grade. Access to vocational education also remains limited. Although the Jordanian government is modernising and scaling up vocational education, to reduce youth unemployment, young people report that few schools offer the new BTEC coursework. It is almost completely unavailable to Syrians (who are largely prohibited from working in the sectors associated with that coursework) and Palestinians living in formal camps.

Endline research found that learning outcomes in Jordan are extremely poor, especially for young people with disabilities, few of whom report educational institutions making any accommodations for their learning needs. Young people's literacy and numeracy scores have improved over time, and most can understand and manipulate the information required for daily life (e.g. reading directions and counting money). However, a large minority (average age 19 years) cannot successfully complete reading and maths tasks meant for children in early primary school. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that learning deficits are the result of overcrowding (especially in formal camps) and disengaged teachers (especially in boys' schools), and that the quality of education (which plummeted during the pandemic, when it was delivered online) is yet to recover. They also agreed that UNICEF-supported Makani centres, which provide tutorial support across a range of subjects, improve both learning outcomes and children and young people's educational aspirations.

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

To address the household poverty that shapes access to education

- Improve access to social protection, prioritising households with young persons with disabilities and ensuring that the added costs often associated with disability (e.g. for assistive devices or transport) do no limit access to education.
- 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.
- Use mass and social media campaigns to support the idea that women's work outside the home is not

shameful, and is in fact 'modern' and can reduce household poverty.

To improve access to academic and vocational 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 (including for young people with disabilities) and directly tackle the gender norms that reduce boys' (e.g. child labour) and girls' (e.g. honour and marriageability) access to education. Such efforts should include intentional outreach to fathers as well as mothers.
- Strengthen young people's buy-in by working with NGOs, including UNICEF-funded Makani centres, to scale up empowerment programming that supports young people's (including those with disabilities) 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 attract young brides and also to address the concerns of their marital families.
- Invest in 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 include directly addressing 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.
- 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 learning outcomes

- Invest in efforts to improve teacher–pupil ratios, teacher contact hours and teacher quality in both governmental and UNRWA schools.
- 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 men, 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 – this should include prioritising teacher training in inclusive pedagogical skills, ensuring that classrooms are equipped with adapted learning materials and supplies, and using civic-education classes to raise awareness about disability rights and promote peer solidarity to tackle the stigma that surrounds disability.
- 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 the end of secondary education at least until schools can provide full-day instruction.

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Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) is a decade-long (2016-2026) longitudinal research programme generating evidence on what works to transform the lives of adolescent girls in the Global South. Visit www.gage.odi.org for more information.

GENDER & ADOLESCENCE: GLOBAL EVIDENCE

GAGE Programme Office
ODI Global
4 Millbank
London SW1P 3JA
United Kingdom
Email: gage@odi.org
Web: www.gage.odi.org

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