

Lost Childhood: **The Reality of Children Engaged in Waste Scavenging**



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Save the Children



for every child

STOP



CHILD LABOUR
School is the best place to work

Hivos
people unlimited

ACRONYMS

CL	Child Labor
CSS	Children in Street Situations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GOJ	Government of Jordan
ITS	Informal Tent Settlements
JD	Jordanian Dinars
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
MoL	Ministry of Labor
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCFA	National Council for Family Affairs
PSD	Public Security Directorate
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PWG	Protection Working Group
SCJ	Save the Children Jordan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Save the Children Jordan conducted a comprehensive mixed-methods study on child labor in the waste scavenging sector. This study assesses the multifaceted experiences of child laborers and their caregivers in areas in East Amman and Rusaifeh, focusing on demographics, family dynamics, financial situations, housing, and education. It identifies the root causes and drivers of child labor, including socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional factors, and evaluates the impact of social norms on these practices. The research also examines the working conditions, hazards, and risks faced by children engaged in waste scavenging. Additionally, the study explores existing programs and their effectiveness, also considering the geographical and supply-chain dynamics contributing to child labor. By conducting detailed case studies through in-depth interviews, the study provides evidence-based recommendations directed to policymakers for developing targeted interventions to combat child labor and improve the well-being of affected children.

The quantitative face-to-face interviews were conducted with child laborers and their caregivers from the same households. The child laborer sample was split between Rusaifeh, Zarqa 51.6%, and East Amman 48.4%, mostly involving laborers who are male 87.3% and Jordanian 81.7%. The majority were aged 12-14 years 49.2%, and all were single. Caregivers were primarily female 90.9%, mostly mothers 86.8%, and predominantly Jordanian 86%. They were mainly aged 38-48 years 33.1% and married 85.1%.

The analysis of family dynamics reveals that most households are larger than average, with an average size of 6.8 members. Nearly half of the household members are minors under 18, with three being the most common number of children, accounting for half of the household's size. The demographics skew younger, with only 21.5% of households having elderly members, primarily grandmothers 72%. Reports of child marriage are rare, with only 5.8% of caregivers acknowledging that a child was married before 18. One in three caregivers 27.5% had been married before the age of 18, whereas 70% married at 18 or older. Additionally, 86.8% of caregivers reported that they had no children with physical disabilities, with field observations noting only 2.4% of children with disabilities.

Most parents and legal guardians in the interviewed families were unemployed, with many not actively seeking work, mainly due to community gender roles discouraging women from working. For those who did earn an income, it was generally low, averaging around 150 JD per month. This financial instability led to food insecurity, debt, and an inability to cover household expenses, adversely affecting the family's quality of life. Although 37% of caregivers relied on their children's income, this did not fully cover household expenses. Children often held more stable jobs than their parents and contributed significantly to the household finances. Gender roles appear to be shifting, with women and children increasingly becoming primary providers, while men contribute less frequently. Many families required aid, but not all are receiving it, with some families relying on loans to cover medical and other expenses.

The housing situations of the interviewed families are an indicator of stability, with the majority residing in apartments 55.4% or independent homes 29.8%, with few experiencing frequent relocations. Most families rent their homes 59.3%, while 40.7% own their accommodations. The majority of children live with both parents 76%, with 19% living with their mothers, highlighting strong familial living arrangements. Very few of the children interviewed live with other relatives. Most families do not house orphans 88.4%, but those who do typically care for immediate or close family members. Additionally, 94.1% of families reported no seasonal relocations, contributing to a stable home life despite economic hardships.

The education situation among the interviewed families shows an almost equal split between children engaged in child labor—enrolled in formal schooling—and those who are not. Financial challenges are the primary reason for non-enrollment, with many children pressured to work to support their families. Most caregivers reported ending their education at the primary school level, often dropping out by the 5th grade.

A slightly higher percentage of Jordanian children 57.3% are enrolled in public schools compared to Syrian children 42.1%. Among those attending, the majority attend school five days a week.

Qualitative findings reveal that financial constraints force many families to prioritize income over education, leading to school dropout. Bullying and difficulties in keeping up with the curriculum are also significant factors in student dropout. Transportation costs and the distance to schools further exacerbate the problem, especially for girls, who are often discouraged from continuing their education due to societal norms.

A significant majority of children 77% reported making the decision to work on their own, motivated by the need to support their families financially. Meanwhile, 15.9% indicated that their caregivers encouraged them to work to help cover household expenses, and 4% were influenced by friends. Both children and caregivers cited severe financial hardship as the main reason for child labor, with children often working to ensure that their families can meet basic needs, such as purchasing food.

Regarding job acquisition, most children 59.5% found their jobs independently, while 20.6% received help from their parents. Additionally, some found work through family members, neighbors, or friends 15.1%. There are notable differences based on nationality: Jordanian children were more likely to find work on their own 62.1% in comparison to Syrian children 47.4%, who were more often assisted by their parents 42.1% of Syrians compared to 15.5% of Jordanians).

In terms of the nature of the work, the majority of working children are engaged in waste scavenging, involving tasks such as collecting trash, sorting recyclable materials, and carrying heavy loads. In examining the types of scraps collected by children, it was found that the majority focus on metals, such

as iron, aluminum, and copper 48.2%, followed by plastics 33.9%. Most children sell these materials to scrap shops, with some having specific, though varied, locations for conducting such transactions, while others rely on informal pickups. Interviews revealed that children have developed adaptive strategies, such as sorting materials at home or directly at collection points, to maximize their earnings.

Many of these children began working at a very young age, some as early as six years old. The work is reported to be physically exhausting and monotonous, yet some children prefer it over other forms of labor such as street vending, valuing the perceived dignity and better financial returns associated with waste scavenging.

Work dynamics reveal that 62.6% of children work independently, while 25.2% work alongside their families and 7.3% work with friends. Families often employ strategic approaches to maximize collections, such as working in different areas.

Regarding wages, the study reveals that 64.3% of children earn 5 JD or less daily from working in waste scavenging. There is a notable discrepancy in control over earnings, with many children claiming to manage their money independently, while a significant number of parents report taking their children's earnings for household expenses. Furthermore, some children are exploited by their parents, who make them work without providing any pocket money or basic rewards for their labor. There are also reported instances of exploitation by scrap shops, which sometimes offer low prices or cheat with scales.

Children typically work all 7 days per week 24.6%, with some working from 4 to 6 days per week 17.5%. Daily working time generally ranges between 2-6 hours, although this can vary based on factors such as scavenging success and target goals. Fridays are particularly busy due to increased trash disposal. Most children 73% take occasional breaks of 15-30 minutes, though the decision to take breaks is often self-determined and based on their need to maximize earnings.

Despite initial denials of picking up bad habits, deeper investigation reveals troubling behavioral changes among child laborers. Issues such as smoking and disrespectful behavior are evident, with concerns about drug use prevalent in the community. Most parents 64.5% report that their children have not adopted negative habits such as smoking, drinking, or drug use. However, 20.7% of children have started smoking, and a small yet significant percentage 1.7% are involved in drug use.

Overall, while some aspects of waste scavenging may seem manageable, the risks and negative impact on children's health, behavior, and safety are profound and concerning. Children frequently fall ill due to scavenging through waste and consuming expired food. Female children face risks of sexual harassment. Physical injuries are common, including cuts and burns, and children also report accidents at dumpsites involving heavy objects and machinery. The physical strain of carrying heavy loads results in considerable pain, and children are also at risk of violence from peers and theft of valuable items collected. Attacks from stray dogs add further danger to their work environment.

Exhaustion and physical pain are significant concerns, with 77% of children reporting fatigue from their work. Caregivers share these worries, noting the physical pain their children endure, particularly from carrying heavy loads. Accidents and injuries are prevalent, with 60.3% of children reporting injuries and 31.6% requiring medical treatment. Incidents requiring treatment include physical violence, dog bites, cuts, burns, and incidents of sexual harassment, all contributing to the overall trauma experienced by these children.

Children also face various forms of abuse while working. Verbal abuse is reported by 36.5%, physical abuse by 25.4%, and emotional abuse by 20.6%, primarily from individuals in their working environment. Neglect, though less common 4.8%, is attributed mainly to employers.

The majority of children 75.4% report that they willingly participate in waste scavenging work, though 24.6% do not. Qualitative insights reveal that those who work unwillingly often find the labor challenging and view it as a necessary hardship to support their families. Some children expressed a desire for better job opportunities for themselves and their own future children. Parents largely disapprove of their children working, with 86% expressing such unhappiness, and only 9.1% finding it acceptable. Most parents 91.7% perceive the work as dangerous, noting deep concerns about their children's safety; however, they often find no other means to fund family necessities.

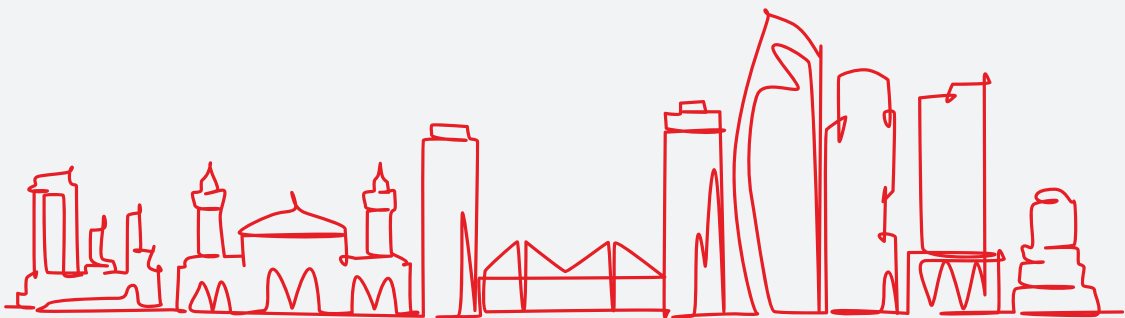
There is a notable lack of awareness about child labor laws among both children and caregivers. Over half of the children 54.8% are unaware of the legal working age, while 28.6% mistakenly believe that this legal age is 18 years. Similarly, a significant majority of caregivers 71.9% are unaware of these laws, and those who are aware often only know about the prohibition of child labor under 18.

The study highlights that both children and caregivers share aspirations for financial stability and better opportunities. Children aspire to financial security, improved work conditions, and educational opportunities. Caregivers also dream of providing better futures for their children, expressing desires for stable income, housing, and educational resources. These caregivers emphasize the need for adequate basic necessities and financial support in order to alleviate economic pressures and prevent reliance on child labor.

A substantial majority of children 73.8% have not participated in any organized activities. Of those who have, the most common types of activities include "games," as reported by both children and their caregivers. Caregivers indicated that children typically engage in these activities once or twice a week, for a duration of one to two hours each time. The organizations mentioned include Charitable and Development Associations, Youth Clubs, Makani centers, and other centers from international organizations.

A strong majority of children 86.5% are eager to engage in future activities, displaying enthusiasm for such opportunities. Their interests span a range of areas, including educational enrichment, art, sports, volunteering, and the learning of new languages.

Caregivers identified several critical areas for supporting their children, including enhanced access to quality education, private tutoring, and skill development. They also emphasized the need for financial assistance to cover educational expenses and basic necessities. Psychological support, recreational activities, and safety measures were also noted as important for children's well-being. Ensuring access to healthcare services and addressing fundamental needs such as food and clothing were recognized as essential for supporting the children's overall development and security.



SECTION 1

DESK REVIEW



Illustrative image – child is an actor

SECTION 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The term “child labor” is commonly defined as “work that deprives children of their childhood, potential, and dignity,” posing a threat to their physical and mental development. According to the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) by the ILO, the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) are egregious violations of child rights and a blatant breach to human dignity. Such labor is typically inappropriate for the children’s age, detrimental to their physical, psychological, and social well-being, and deprives them of attending school, forces them to leave school prematurely, or requires them to balance long hours of heavy work with education ¹.

Child labor is primarily defined by the child’s age, the type of work, the number of hours involved, and the work conditions and environment. The minimum age for employment is crucial in safeguarding children from all forms of labor and exploitation. This minimum age also considers the positive aspects of adolescents contributing to society in ways that do not hinder their development, health, and education. Work performed by children below the minimum age for employment is considered child labor. The ILO Convention No. 138 sets the minimum age at 15 years, with a minimum age of 13 years for light work that does not interfere with education and involves limited hours and light activities. In special circumstances, in which a country’s economy and educational facilities are underdeveloped, the minimum age is set at 14 years, and 12 years for light work ².

International standards prohibit all forms of hazardous work for children under the age of 18. However, not all work done by children qualifies as child labor that must be eliminated. Work by children or adolescents above the minimum employment age—if it does not harm their health, development, or education—is considered beneficial. This includes assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during holidays, as these activities contribute to personal development and family welfare, as well as preparing adolescents for adulthood ³.

¹ ILO: What is Child Labor: <https://www.ilo.org/international-programme-elimination-child-labour-ipecc/what-child-labour>

² UNICEF: Legal Minimum Age for Admission to Employment: <https://www.unicef.org/lac/media/2751/file/PDF20%Minimum20%age20%for20%admission20%to20%employment.pdf>

³ ILO: What is Child Labor: <https://www.ilo.org/international-programme-elimination-child-labour-ipecc/what-child-labour>

Economic hardship affects millions of families worldwide, often at the expense of children’s safety. As of early 2020, around 160 million children were engaged in child labor, with 9 million more at risk due to COVID-19, amounting to nearly 1 in 10 children globally. Almost half of these children perform hazardous work that endangers their health and development. Children may be driven into work for various reasons, which often include financial challenges, such as poverty, the illness of a caregiver, or the job loss of a primary earner. The consequences are severe, including physical and mental harm, death, slavery, exploitation, and deprivation of education and healthcare, all of which clearly infringe on children’s fundamental rights ⁴.

Regardless of its cause, child labor exacerbates social inequality and discrimination, limiting access to education and causing harm to a child’s physical, mental, and social growth.

1.1.1 CHILD LABOR IN JORDAN

According to the last National Child Labor Survey conducted by the Department of Statistics (DOS) in 2016, which surveyed 20,000 families across Jordan’s 12 governorates and the Zaatari camp, child labor rates in Jordan had doubled compared to pre-Syrian refugee crisis figures ⁵. The study revealed that 75,982 children aged 5-17 were working, with 28% of them being under the age of 14 ⁶. This marked a significant increase from 2007, when child labor was estimated at 29,225 children. The survey found that 60% of these children worked in hazardous environments—classified

as dangerous—affecting 44,917 children. Most child laborers were employed in agriculture and retail trade, with approximately 80% being Jordanian and about 15% Syrian. Boys constituted nearly 90% of those involved in child labor.

Without a recent post-COVID-19 national child labor survey, it is difficult to accurately estimate the current number of child laborers in Jordan as of 2024. However, the ILO has reported that the influx of refugees from Syria to Jordan has exacerbated the situation of child labor in terms of both magnitude and complexity. Moreover, experts have noted a significant increase in the number of school dropouts following the pandemic, leading to a rise in child labor in Jordan ⁷.

SECTION 1.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR IN JORDAN

Jordan has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. Jordan was among the first countries to ratify international conventions protecting children from economic exploitation, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two protocols, as well as the ILO’s Minimum Age Convention No. 138 and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182. National legislation in Jordan aimed at combating child labor aligns fully with these international standards ⁸.

Table 1: Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor-Jordan

1	ILO C. 138 Minimum Age
2	ALO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labour
3	UN CRC
4	UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict
5	UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography
6	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons

⁴ UNICEF: Child labor: <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-labour>
⁵ Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Jordan has seen a significant influx of Syrian refugees. This has placed considerable strain on Jordan’s 6 resources and economy, leading to increased poverty and unemployment rates among both the local population and the refugees.
⁶ Child Labor Survey: 2016: https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root_Storage/AR/EB_Info_Page/2016المسح_الوطني_لعمل_الاطفال.pdf
⁷ Jordan Times: May 2023: <https://jordantimes.com/news/local/experts-‘hopeful’-over-updates-national-child-labour-strategy>
⁸ Ministry of Labor: https://mol.gov.jo/EN/Pages/Child_Labor

1.2.1 LAWS AND REGULATIONS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor. In 2022, the Jordanian parliament adopted the Child Rights Law, which is designed to ensure the protection and promotion of children's rights in various aspects of their lives, including their right to identity, education, health, and protection from abuse and exploitation and right to participation. One of the key provisions of the Child's Rights Law is the prohibition of child labor in hazardous conditions and the regulation of permissible work, as well as special protections for vulnerable children. The Child's Rights Law also provides for the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing children's rights, as well as penalties for violations of children's rights and measures to hold violators accountable.

Jordanian labor law strictly prohibits employing children under the age of sixteen. To employ a juvenile who is

sixteen years old in Jordan, certain conditions must be met. First, the juveniles must provide certified copies of their birth certificates to prove their age. Additionally, they must obtain certificates of health fitness from the Ministry of Health, ensuring that they are physically capable of performing the required work. Written consent from the juvenile's guardian is also mandatory before he or she can start working. Furthermore, the work assigned to juveniles must not be hazardous, exhaustive, or harmful to their health, as specified by the Minister of Labor. The law forbids employing a child for more than six hours per day, mandates a minimum one-hour rest after four consecutive hours of work, and bans children from working on religious, weekly, and official holidays, as well as between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m.⁹. Importantly, the juvenile must be paid at least the minimum wage set by the labor laws. If labor inspectors find that these requirements have been fulfilled, no action will be taken against the employer regarding the employment of juveniles¹⁰.

Table 2: Laws and Regulations on Child Labor¹²

Standard	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work (16 years)	Article 73 of Labor Code (27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work (18 years)	Article 74 of the Labor Code; Article 2 of the Ministerial Order of 2011 (27,28)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities prohibited for Children	Article 2 of the Ministerial Order of 2011 (28)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Article 3(a) and 3(b) of the Law on the Prevention of Human Trafficking (29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Articles 3(a) and 8–11 of the Law on the Prevention of Human Trafficking (29)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Articles 298, 299, 306, 310, 311, 315, and 319 of the Penal Code; Articles 3(a) and 3(b) of the Law on the Prevention of Human Trafficking (29,30)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Article 8 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (31)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment (16 years)	Article 5(b) of the Military Service act; Article 13(b) of the Officer's Service Act (32,33)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Article 3(a) of the National Service Act (34)
Child Rights Act of 2022 ¹³	Article No. (17) of 2022
Compulsory Education Age (16 years)	Articles 7(a.2) and 10(b) of the Education Act (35)
Free Public Education	Article 10(a) of the Education Act; Article 20 of the Constitution (35,36)
Agricultural Workers Regulation	Article 6, adopted in 2021.

⁹ Jordanian Labor Law: Articles 74, 73, and 75.

¹⁰ MoL: Conditions for employing a juvenile of sixteen years old: https://mol.gov.jo/EN/Pages/Child_Labor

¹¹ Child labor and forced labor report: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/jordan>

¹² Child Rights Act: 0-فانون_حقوق_الطفل_0-.pdf

Employing children under the age of eighteen in hazardous work is prohibited in Jordan. The MoL has issued a decree specifying a comprehensive list of hazardous work across all sectors. This includes tasks that pose physical, psychosocial, moral, chemical, biological, and ergonomic hazards ¹³.

Article 33 of the Juvenile Law of 2014 pertains to the treatment and legal procedures concerning juveniles who are in conflict with the law. The specific details of Article 33 focus on the protection and rehabilitative measures for juvenile offenders, emphasizing their treatment in a manner that promotes their reintegration into society. The law includes provisions that address the issue of child labor, ensuring that children are protected from exploitation and harmful working conditions, providing a comprehensive framework for the protection and rehabilitation of child laborers ¹⁴.

Furthermore, the government has established institutional mechanisms to enforce child labor laws and regulations. These include the Ministry of Labor's Central Inspection Directorate, the Public Security Directorate (PSD), the criminal investigation unit, and the Joint Anti-Trafficking Unit of the Ministry of Labor and the PSD.

1.2.2 COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government also established a key mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor. This is accomplished through the following:

The National Committee/Task Force on Child Labor

The role of the committee is to formulate new policies, amend legislation as necessary, and oversee the implementation of child labor policies. Led by the MoL, members include three other ministries, plus international and civil society organizations. In 2022, the National Committee on Child Labor helped draft the National Strategy for the Reduction of Child Labor (2022–2030), which was approved along with an implementation plan, by the cabinet in June ¹⁵ 2022 .

National Committee to Combat Trafficking (NCCT)

Coordinates government efforts to combat human trafficking. Chaired by the Ministry of Justice, other members include representatives from 10 state agencies, including the Counter Trafficking Unit (CTU) which works alongside the PSD and MoL, and is in charge of human trafficking investigations.

Protection Working Group (PWG)

Established in 2014 with 55 partners, this group supports a comprehensive and coordinated protection approach through its protection strategy. This strategy focuses on ensuring access to fundamental rights, expanding community outreach and protection mechanisms, reducing the risks and consequences of gender-based violence strengthening child protection interventions, and exploring resettlement options for those with special needs. In 2021, the PWG prioritized interventions to support the Jordanian government and refugee-hosting communities, aiming to mitigate socio-economic pressures from the refugee influx. The group also works on mainstreaming protection into the broader refugee response, advocating for the legal and physical safety of refugees, and coordinating with the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) through the PWG Task Force (PWGTF) established in ¹⁶ 2020.

1.2.3 GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

Policies related to child labor have also been established, including the following:

- The National Strategy for the Reduction of Child Labor (2020-2023) ¹⁷ outlines the roles and responsibilities of key government agencies, including the Ministries of Education, Labor, and Social Development, as well as NGOs and other stakeholders involved in addressing child labor. This strategy was approved in 2022, and the NCFA is responsible for monitoring and reporting the progress of the strategy and its work plan.

¹³ Child Labour Occupational Safety and Health Guide in Arabic: https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root_Storage/AR/EB_Info_Page/دليل_السلامة_والصحة_المهنية_لعمل_الاطفال.pdf

¹⁴ GoJ: https://psd.gov.jo/media/aahj1iar/1-3.pdf?TSPD_101_R08463=0bc795ab2000a6921d2aedd6ddb35512f4e2091cb92ca77c0bff03d9a95751ba1c8dc71625ab085c52c2cf14300064ef4728fd88887e9fc5bcd109aad38cbcff4b050b76659ab732160a20c781ab52c6ce68e5bd6b204126fd4707e0eebd

¹⁵ Jordan Times: <https://jordantimes.com/news/local/experts-'hopeful'-over-updates-national-child-labour-strategy>

¹⁶ UNHCR: Working group description: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/working-group/50>

¹⁷ National Strategy: https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root_Storage/AR/EB_Info_Page/الاستراتيجية_الوطنية.pdf

- The National Framework to Combat Child Labor (NCFL) and Manual on Applied Measures (adopted in 2011) was Jordan's first national initiative aimed at protecting working children. It served as a reference document outlining the foundation for addressing child labor cases and specifies the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, mainly the MoL, MoE, and MoSD. The framework promoted an integrated and comprehensive approach to support working children and their families, aiming to prevent children from engaging in labor and to reintegrate them into the education system ¹⁸.
- Updated NCFL and Manual on Applied Measures (2020). The NCFA updated the National Framework for the Reduction of Child Labor and the Manual on Applied Measures. The update was conducted to adapt the framework to changes in the national legislation concerning child labor, specifically the amendments made to the Juvenile Law in 2014 and to the 2018 draft strategy for children in street situations ¹⁹.
- The Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis (2018–2022) integrated a refugee-focused humanitarian response with a strategic plan to enhance the resilience of local communities. The plan prioritized economic strengthening, education, and social protection ²⁰.
- The Juvenile Protection Regulation (2024). Ten years after the 2014 Juvenile law was adopted, in May 2024, the Council of Ministers approved the Juvenile Protection System for 2024. This system aims to safeguard and care for working minors by regulating the MoSD's role and its interactions with institutions concerned with these minors. It also coordinates efforts among stakeholders, establishes appropriate procedures for handling working minors, and formulates case management plans. Additionally, it identifies cases of working juveniles and determines the necessary protection measures ²¹.

In 2020, to encourage reporting child labor, the government developed a website and mobile application for the public to report child labor cases. These reports are logged into the National Child Labor Database. Two platforms are available for reporting child labor grievances: the "Hemayeh" platform at <https://hemayeh.jo/>, and the Ministry of Labor's website at <https://childlabor.mol.gov.jo/>.

¹⁸ National Framework for Combating Child Labor: "The National Framework for Combating Child Labour in Arabic," https://mol.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root_Storage/AR/EB_Info_Page/_البطار_الوطني_لمكافحة_عمل_الاطفال.pdf

¹⁹ Jordan Times: Framework under revision: <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/national-framework-against-child-labour-under-revision>

²⁰ GoJ: Funding Status for Jordan Response Plan 2022: <http://www.jrp.gov.jo>

²¹ GoJ: May 2024-: <https://www.pm.gov.jo/AR/NewsDetails/aneews#890:~:text=الحدث%20حالة%20لدائرة%20نظام%20مجلس%20أقر%20كما>

SECTION 1.3 CHILD LABOR IN THE WASTE SCAVENGING SECTOR

Globally, 64 million people work in waste management, with predictions for a 70% increase by 2030, which would represent an additional 45 million people ²². An estimated 18 million children aged 5-17 years' work in the industrial sector, which includes the informal waste sector, potentially exposing them to toxic waste and putting them at risk of major and lasting health implications. Some 73 million children worldwide engage in hazardous labor, with unknown numbers in the informal waste scavenging sector ²³.

Studies indicate that approximately 1% of the urban population in developing countries, amounting to about 15 million people, depend on waste-picking for their livelihoods. Informal workers in the solid waste management sector typically engage in the collection, sorting, and sale of valuable waste materials such as metals and plastics. It is estimated that these informal actors recover around 20% of waste in developing countries globally. Although the economic contributions of these activities are not reflected in formal economic data, they play a significant role in countries like Jordan. The recyclable waste collected by informal workers is reintegrated into the local economy through reprocessing and reuse, thereby contributing to the overall economic landscape ²⁴.

The waste management sector in Jordan comprises both formal and informal workers. It is estimated that around 6,400 individuals are employed in the formal sector, including waste collectors and street sweepers working for municipalities. Additionally, there are approximately 6,000 to 7,000 informal workers engaged in solid waste management activities across the country, with about 4% of these informal workers being refugees ²⁵.

Four out of the eight final disposal sites selected for a study conducted by OXFAM in 2021 were found to permit informal sector activities on-site. In some instances, this occurs through formal agreements between landfill management and private contractors who hire informal workers to recover high-value materials from the waste. However, in most sites across Jordan, these activities occur through uncontracted and uncontrolled scavenging by individuals. In both scenarios, informal workers face significant economic, social, and health risks. Those employed under private contracts at disposal sites often lack registration for social security and healthcare benefits, leading to employment instability and financial insecurity for their families.

Informal solid waste management workers often face significantly unhygienic and dangerous conditions while collecting recyclable materials, frequently lacking necessary personal protective equipment (PPE). Scavenging through waste materials puts these workers at high risk of injury and disease, especially due to the potential presence of hazardous and medical waste among municipal waste products. Handling such materials not only endangers the workers but also poses significant risks to their families. Child labor is also observed in informal sector activities in Jordan, particularly in scavenging for recyclable materials, as reported through various studies and news reports on the subject. Operators of final disposal sites in Jordan, typically the Joint Services Councils, are responsible for ensuring that all site workers, both formal and informal, use proper PPE. However, respondents in an OXFAM study reported a lack of compliance and monitoring in this regard.

The growing industrialization and high population growth rate due to recent forced migration in Jordan has led to rapid increase in solid waste generation in the country which has, in turn, put increasing pressure on the waste

²² UNICEF: https://www.unicef.org/media/129446/file/Children_and_E-waste_Key_Messages_2022.pdf

²³ World Health Organization: (2021): Children and digital dumpsites <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/-9789240024557/341730/10665eng.pdf?sequence=1>

²⁴ OXFAM: Not in my backyard: July 2021: <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/621201/10546/rr-not-in-my-backyard-waste-jordan-070721-en.pdf?sessionid=814849D3DD8C870A6A603A55F6101BBE?sequence=1>

²⁵ Ibid

management infrastructure ²⁶. The current Solid Waste Management services within the local municipalities are no longer operating at the same standard as they were prior to the massive influx of refugees, and the daily generation rate of MSW has dramatically increased. Around 2.7 million tons of waste is generated in Jordan each year (estimated to increase to over 6 million tons annually by 2040), and most of this is diverted to unsanitary landfills and dumpsites. Approximately 50% of the waste generated in Jordan is organic waste, mainly composed of food waste generated by households, while 22-33% of waste is composed of recyclable materials such as paper and cardboard, metals and plastic ²⁷. It is estimated that only 7% of the total mixed waste generated is recycled in Jordan, mostly through the informal activities described above.

The vast majority of this waste is deposited in dumpsites across Jordan. Improper solid waste disposal leads to public health risks, adverse environmental issues, and socio-economic problems. Apart from two sanitary landfills, these disposal dump sites are characterized as unsanitary and uncontrolled and pose serious risks to the environment and public health. There are 18 official and 2 unofficial final disposal sites in Jordan; all but two (Al Ghabawi and Al Ekaider) are unsanitary and pose high risks to communities. The Government of Jordan intends to keep approximately eight of these sites in operation and close the 12 others ²⁸. In August 2023, the government announced the closure of 10 dumpsites and landfills in southern governorates ²⁹.

Table 3: Dumpsites and Landfills in Jordan

Region & Number of Landfills and Dumpsites	Dumpsites & Landfills in Jordan ³⁰	
Northern Region	Al Ekaider	(Sanitary Landfill)
	Al Husainniyat Al Badiyah Al Shamaliyah Al Aghwar Al Shamaliyah	(Controlled Dumpsite)
	Al Safawi	(Unofficial Dumpsite)
Southern Region	Al Aqaba Al Qwerah Ma'an Ayl Al Lajoun Al Soummar Al Barakah Jourf Al Darweash Al Mohamadeah Villag e	(Controlled Dumpsite)
	Al Ja'afar	(Unofficial Dumpsite)
Central Region	Al Ghabawi Al Azraq ³¹	(Sanitary Landfill)
	Madaba Al Rusaifeh	(Controlled Dumpsite)

²⁶ EcoMena: March 2022: Solid Waste Management in Jordan (<https://www.ecomena.org/swm-jordan/>)

²⁷ OXFAM: Not in my backyard: July 2021 [https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/not-in-my-backyard-the-impact-of-waste-disposal-sites-on-communities-in-jordan621201/-](https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/not-in-my-backyard-the-impact-of-waste-disposal-sites-on-communities-in-jordan621201/)

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ <https://alghad.com/Section1357276-مكبات-نفايات-في-محافظات-الجنوب-10-لإغلاق-توجه-إلى-إغلاق-10-مكبات-نفايات-في-محافظات-الجنوب>

³⁰ Jordan GBC/ FEC: Your Guide to Waste Management in Jordan: https://mena.fes.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf-files/publications/Your_Guide_to_Waste_Management_in_Jordan.pdf

³¹ Mamlaka press release on dumpsters: <https://www.almamlakatv.com/news/7164-وضع-حدر-الأساس-لبدء-إنشاء-مكب-نفايات-الأزرق-الصحي-بكلفة-137-مليون-دينار>

SECTION 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SECTION 2.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The “Work: No Child’s Business” (WNCB) alliance aims to prevent child labor (CL) and ensure that children and youth have access to quality education and decent work in six countries with high CL prevalence: Côte d’Ivoire, India, Jordan, Mali, Uganda, and Vietnam. In Jordan, child labor remains a significant concern, affecting children’s well-being, education, and overall development. The exploitation of children’s labor is observed in various sectors of the economy, with notable occurrences in waste scavenging. Children from marginalized backgrounds are involved in various aspects of waste scavenging, including waste collection, sorting, and processing. The dynamics of child labor in this sector require examination of supply chains, service providers, and the role of NGOs.

Save the Children Jordan commissioned Analyze Research to conduct a mixed methods study on child labor working in waste scavenging in Jordan. The study provides a comprehensive understanding of the reality of children engaged in waste scavenging in East Amman and Rusaifeh, highlights unique challenges faced by children involved, identifies gaps, and provides evidence-based recommendations for mitigating child labor and well-being in Jordan.

This study aims to provide understanding of the following:

- An examination of children’s nationality, educational status, exposure to violence and child abuse, and their overall well-being.
- An identification of the root causes and drivers of child labor in the waste scavenging sector, considering socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional factors, and analyzing the impact of social norms on child labor practices.
- An examination of the working conditions, hazards, and risks faced by children engaged in waste

scavenging, including their ages, geographical locations, wages, health status, and the types of waste they handle.

- An analysis of the impact of child labor on the physical and psychological well-being, education, and overall development of children in the context of waste scavenging.
- An identification of existing policies, programs, and interventions related to child labor in the waste-scavenging sector and an assessment of their effectiveness in addressing children’s problems and protecting their rights.
- An investigation of the geographical locations of landfills, the size and types of dumpsites, and the supply chain dynamics in the waste-scavenging sector that may contribute to child labor.
- An exploration of the role of service providers, NGOs, and other stakeholders in the waste-scavenging sector and their involvement in addressing child labor issues.
- Conducting case studies that provide in-depth insights into specific instances of children engaged in waste scavenging, examining the unique challenges and vulnerabilities faced by affected children.
- The provision of evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders to develop targeted interventions and policies to combat children’s engagement in waste scavenging, addressing issues related to nationality, education, sexual abuse, social norms, and supply chain dynamics, among others.

SECTION 2.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The study adopted a mixed methods approach whereby data was collected and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research methodologies included interviews with Syrian and Jordanian male and female child laborers as well as their caregivers. The data collection for the study covered two areas: East Amman and Rusaifeh.

2.2.1 QUANTITATIVE SAMPLE SEGMENTATION

Face-to-face quantitative interviews were conducted with child laborers and their caregivers living in 14 targeted communities in Jordan (in East Amman and Rusaifeh). Caregivers were sampled from within the same households as the children. The research team collaborated with SCJ—as well as six community-based organizations in the targeted areas—to identify the survey participants. The data collection took place during May 12-26, 2024.

Table 4: Sample Design and Segmentation

	Waste Scavenging		TOTAL
	Caregivers	Children	
East Amman	63	59	122
Al Rusaifeh	65	69	134
TOTAL	128	128	256

The study included the following areas:

- **Rusaifeh:** Rusaifeh, Abu Sayyah, Hay Ramzi, and Hay Maasoum.
- **East Amman:** Hashmi Shamali, Al Mahatta, Jawa, Al Teebah, Al Alkoumiyah, Khraybet Al Souq, Yadodeh, Wihdat, Al Mareekh, and Rajm Al Shami.

2.2.2 QUANTITATIVE SURVEY SAMPLE

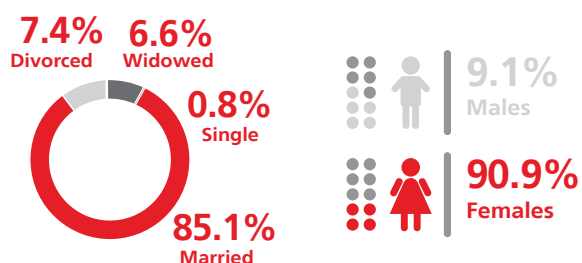
The survey was carried out with male and female child laborers in the targeted locations in Rusaifeh and East Amman areas. The sample exclusively involved children engaged in child labor, as well as their caregivers. The total sample size of 256 included 128 caregivers and 128 children. The characteristics of the surveyed population are presented below.

SURVEY SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Fig. 1 Survey Sample Description, Caregivers/Children



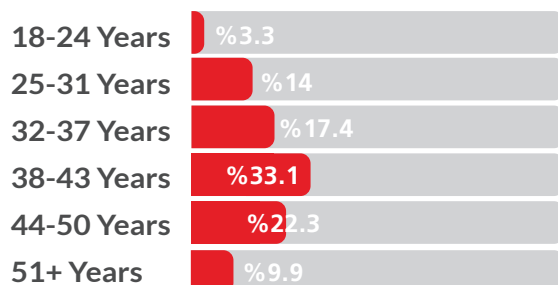
Completed Survey Responses - Caregivers



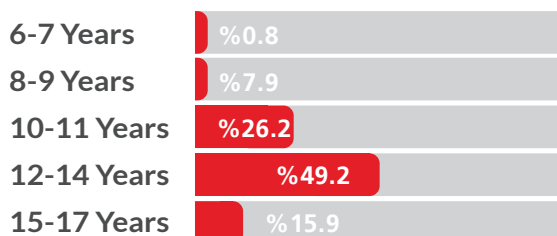
Completed Survey Responses - Children



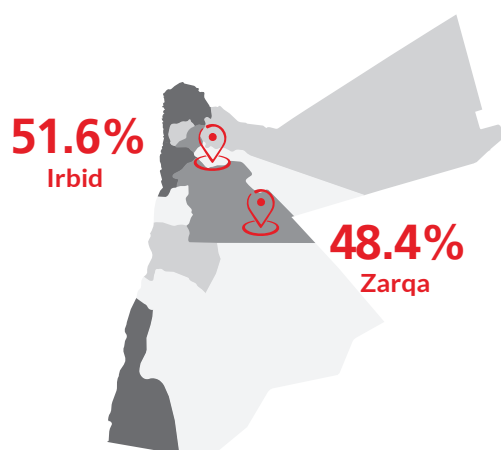
Age Distribution - Caregivers



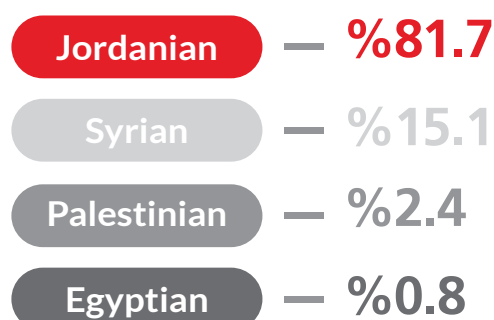
Age Distribution - Children



Geographic Distribution



Nationalities



2.2.3 QUALITATIVE SAMPLE SEGMENTATION

The study team incorporated qualitative data collection via key informant interviews with a range of stakeholders. A total of 35 qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted between February 26, 2024 and May 18, 2024. In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 male and female child laborers, 10 caregivers, 7 community-based organizations, 4 international Non-Governmental Organizations, 3 government institutions (the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development, and the Ministry of Labor), and the National Council for Family Affairs. The KII discussion guide questions were designed to create an open-ended discussion to provide in-depth insights on some of the quantitative findings, as well as to provide contextual information about child labor in Jordan.

Table 5: List of Key Informant In-depth Interviews

	No. of Interviews
Child Laborers—Waste scavenging	10
Caregivers—Waste scavenging	10
Community-Based Organizations	7
INGOs: UNICEF, OXFAM, Plan International, Helvetas	4
Government: MoE, MoSD, MoL	3
Official: National Council for Family Affairs	1
TOTAL	35

As is common for qualitative research, the findings from this study do not necessarily represent the views of all child laborers, caregivers or stakeholders. Quotes cited in this report were translated from Arabic and have been minimally edited to ensure clarity. As much as possible, the English translations preserve the original syntax, word choice, and grammar.

SECTION 2.3 RESEARCH ETHICS, DATA PROCESSING, AND QUALITY CONTROL

Save the Children Jordan and the research team are committed to maintaining the reliability, credibility, and integrity of all information. Significant effort was dedicated to providing insights with high integrity and honesty. Particular attention was given to the ethical concerns of working with children and their caregivers. Interviewers, the research team, and partners were mindful of issues that could cause distress to the children who participated in the study. Moreover, the training of the research team included child protection, child safeguarding, gender sensitivity, and research ethics. The data collection tools were designed to minimize discomfort, and all participants (both children and caregivers) were given the right to refuse to answer any question, or to end the interview at any time. Referral mechanisms for child protection were in place for those requiring referrals or follow-up through SCJ. Furthermore, relevant ethical protocols from SCJ were followed, and the research scope and inception report were approved by SCJ. Principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent were applied, with caregivers providing consent for children's participation. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Quality assurance processes outline below were adopted throughout the course of the study:

Quality Assurance: Quality assurance procedures were strictly followed by the team, specifically during the design phase, data collection and analysis, and the employing of interviewers with adequate experience. Quality assurance practices covered all survey stages (team selection, data collection, and data transcription and cleaning). Analyzeize values commitment to integrity, translated into quality control and research ethics for the common cause and public good.

Code of Research Practices: Valuing work ethics, the research team compiled all data using the ICC/ESOMAR International Code of Marketing & Social Research Practices. The study respects the essential ethical guidelines concerning conducting research with the targeted population categories, ensuring that risks of potential harm to participants resulting from the data collection process were minimized and were outweighed by the potential benefits of the outcomes of the study. The research ethics mandate safeguarding of privacy, the right of refusal by potential respondents to engage, and the right of respondents to refuse to answer certain questions. The research team was trained to observe and commit to professional conduct and congenial behavior and did not engage in any dialogue outside the scope of the research objectives.

Data Management Policy: Respondent records are kept in an encrypted computerized database to preserve their confidentiality and privacy. For all data collected, the identifiers were removed and replaced by pseudonym. Those handling the data subsequently do so using pseudonyms. Transcriptions of the participants' interviews were sorted on encrypted and secure computers, regularly backed up on computers and external hard drives, and only analyzed within the Analyzeize web/server environment. The research team followed data protection policies in data storage and back-ups. The raw data was transcribed and translated into non-raw data for the purposes of analysis. In accordance with Analyzeize Research Data Management Policy, raw data will be securely stored and then destroyed three years from collection (unless otherwise requested in writing by the SCJ).

SECTION 3

UNDERSTANDING CHILD LABORERS



SECTION 3.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

The quantitative face-to-face interviews included child laborers and their caregivers; the caregivers were sampled from within the same households as the children, subject to the willingness and availability of each caregiver to participate in the study.

Children Examining the demographic breakdown of the sample of child laborers, the sample was split almost in half with a slightly higher percentage located in Rusaifeh, Zarqa 51.6%, followed by East Amman 48.4%. Most of the interviewed child laborers were male 87.3%, with the highest representation among Jordanian children 81.7% in comparison to Syrian children 15.1%. In terms of age, the majority fell within the following ranges: 12-14 years 49.2% followed by 10-11 years 26.2%. All children reported being single 100%, with minimal representation of children with disabilities 2.4%.

Caregivers The majority of caregivers interviewed were female 90.9%, with a significant portion also identified as the mothers of the children interviewed 86.8%. Fathers

accounted for 6.6%, while 6.6% reported being a relative of the child. The caregivers were predominantly of Jordanian nationality 86%, followed by Syrian 13.2%. In terms of age distribution, most caregivers fell within the 38-48 age range 33.1%, followed by the 44-50 age range 22.3%. The majority of caregivers reported being married 85.1%.

SECTION 3.2 FAMILY DYNAMICS

The analysis of family dynamics reveals that the majority of households are larger than the average-sized household in Jordan, with an average family size of 6.8 members. Most families reported that nearly half of their household members are minors under the age of 18, with three being the most common number of children under 18 per household, representing about half of the average household size. The household demographics are skewed towards younger members, with only a small minority reporting elderly members. Reports of child marriage are almost nonexistent, and there is minimal representation of children with disabilities. Looking at the family dynamics, the breakdown was as follows.

Table 6: Number of Family Members - Caregivers

Family Members	Percentage	Count
Members 7	23	19%
Members 6	22	18.2%
Members 5	19	15.7%
Members 8	18	14.9%
Members 4	12	9.9%
Members 9	10	8.3%
Members 10	7	5.8%
Members 10+	6	5%
Members 3	3	2.5%
Members 2	1	0.8%
Total	121	100%

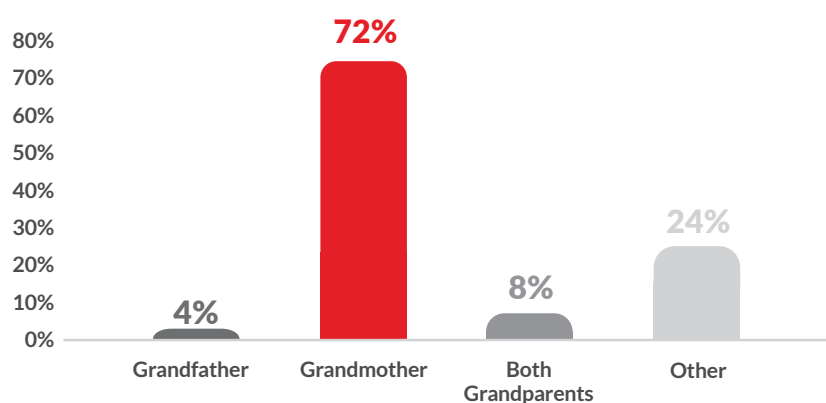
Examining the number of children under 18 living in the household, the highest percentage was reported among those who indicated they have 3 children under the age of 18 26.4%, followed by those who reported having 2 children under 18 19%. The rest of the breakdown is listed in the table below.

Table 7: Children living at home under the age of 18 - Caregivers

No. of children	Count	Percentage
Children 3	32	26.4%
Children 2	23	19%
Children 4	21	17.4%
Children 6+	20	16.5%
Children 5	16	13.2%
Child 1	9	7.4%
Total	121	100%

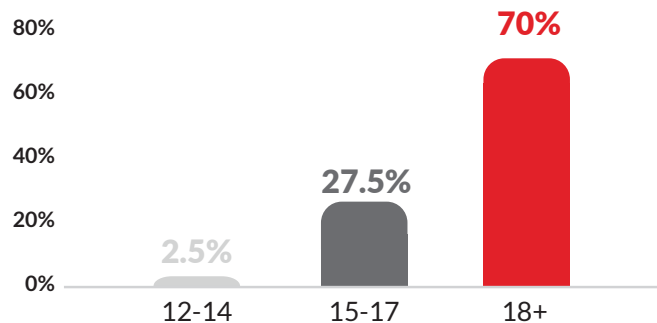
Regarding the elderly, the majority reported not having any elderly persons in the household 78.5%, while 21.7% reported that they did. Among those with elderly members, the majority indicated that the elderly person was the grandmother 72%.

Graph 1: Who is the elderly person? – Caregivers



Examining the age at which caregivers got married, the majority reported getting married at a reasonable age, with 70% marrying at 18 years or older, followed by 27.5% who married between the ages of 15 and 17.

Graph 1: How old were you when you were married? – Caregivers



Regarding the children of caregivers, when asked about early marriage, the majority reported that none of their children had been married at a young age 94.2%, while 5.8% reported that they had a child who was married before turning 18.

A significant majority of caregivers 86.8% reported not having children with physical disabilities, while 13.2% indicated having at least one child with a physical disability. During the data collected from the children’s survey, field administrators—who were asked to observe physical disabilities—reported only 2.4% of children as having them.

SECTION 3.3 FINANCIAL SITUATION

Examining the financial situation of the interviewed families reveals that most parents and legal guardians are unemployed. A significant portion of these individuals are not actively seeking work, influenced by gender roles within their communities, which do not expect women to work. Among those who do earn an income, earnings are generally low, averaging around 150 JD per month. This financial instability, coupled with unemployment and low income, leads to food insecurity, with many families reporting difficulties in affording food. Consequently, they often resort to borrowing money, leading to debt and an inability to cover household expenses, which adversely affects their overall quality of life. These findings were echoed by various caregivers throughout the in-depth interviews.

”

We took some loans because my son was run over by a car; it was a hit and run, and we didn’t have insurance to cover his treatment. So, we needed to take some loans to cover his surgeries.

Female Caregiver, East Amman

I have two loans; one I need to pay 88 JD monthly and the other 50 JD. When my son got divorced, his ex-wife’s father asked for a payment for her “Mu’akhar”³² which was 1,500 JD, and the rest we are paying in installments.

Female Caregiver, Rusaifeh

Honestly, I borrow money to buy food for the household.

Male Caregiver, Rusaifeh

“

³² The payment is a form of compensation or consolatory gift that a husband gives to his wife upon divorce. This is separate from the “Mahr,” which is paid upon marriage and is intended to provide some financial support to the divorced wife. The amount to be paid is agreed upon during the signing of the marriage contract.

Many families require aid, but not all are receiving it. Those who do often report receiving support from the NAF or their working children. A significant percentage of caregivers depend on their children's income, although this income does not cover all household expenses. Males are typically seen as the primary breadwinners, with most indicating that only one child is working to support the family. Children confirmed this, with the majority contributing to household finances, though not as the primary breadwinners. Notably, the employment of these children tends to be more stable compared to that of their parents, with some holding permanent positions that offer a more consistent income. This discrepancy highlights a difference in perception between caregivers and children regarding the latter's role in the family's financial support.

”

I get 150 JD from the MoSD, and 20 JD as support from a local charitable organization. I'm not sure how much my son makes monthly because he works weekly. But they all contribute to the household income.

Female Caregiver, Rusaifeh

Some days we make money, other days we don't, but I would say around 300-350 JD monthly.

Male Caregiver, Rusaifeh

Me and my father are the ones who earn the income for our household. I don't know how much we make, but I know I bring in 2.5-3 dinars daily.

Male 16 YO, Jordanian, East Amman

“

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

The IDI's with children and caregivers engaged in waste scavenging work highlight several significant trends regarding gender roles and labor distribution. The findings point to a shifting landscape in which women and children increasingly assume the roles of primary providers, while men contribute less frequently and less significantly to household income. Furthermore, the study reveals that some children play a crucial role in contributing to household income. In one particular situation, one

10-year-old Jordanian female from East Amman stated “My brother is younger than me, so he can't work with me...and my mother is sick in the hospital most of the time. So, I go to collect waste from the waste bins and sell it to bring home one to two dinars daily.” Another 11-year-old Jordanian male residing in East Amman also indicated that he was the sole provider for his household, earning 2-3 dinars daily.

”

My wife is employed. She earns the income, and I get some additional income by collecting waste material and selling it.

Male Caregiver, Jordanian- Hay Ramzi- Rusaifeh

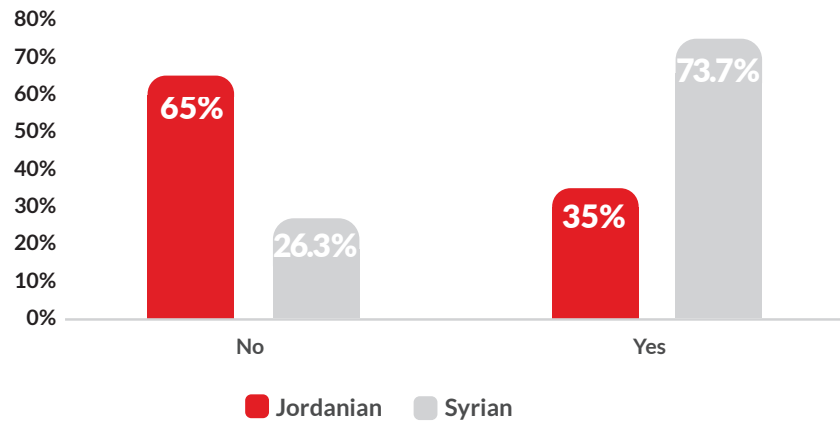
My husband makes 150 JD, he does daily labor, and gets whatever God has written for him. My son collects some recyclable waste every week and he sells it to help.

Female Caregiver, Rusaifeh

“

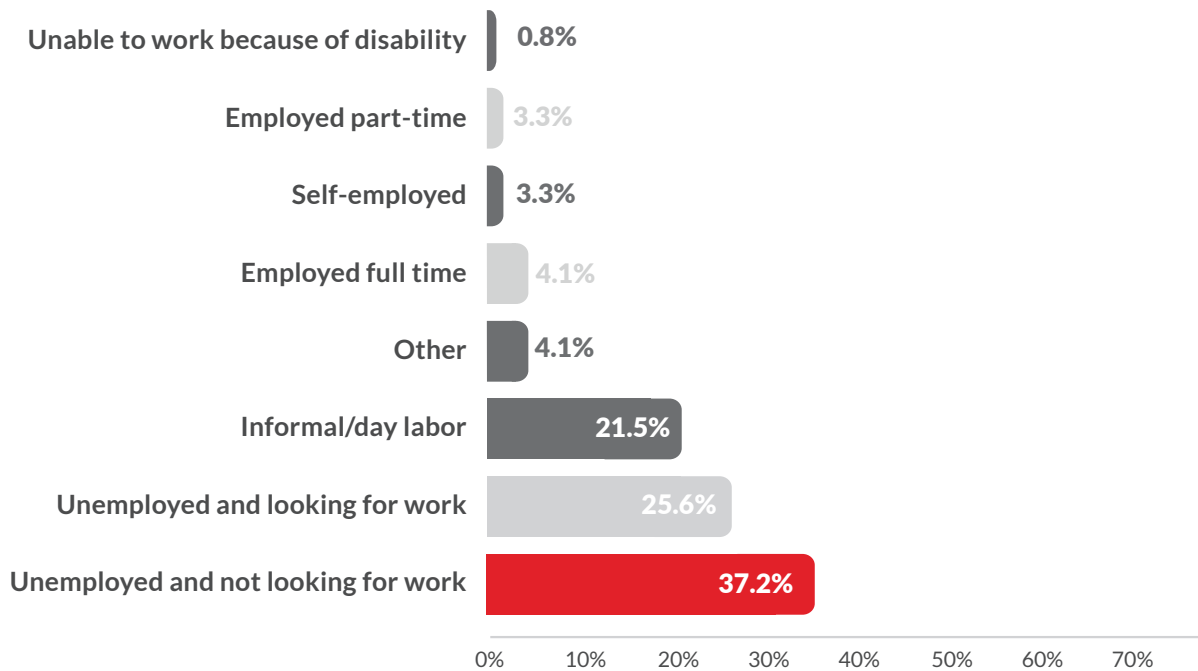
A slightly higher percentage of children interviewed 58.7% reported that their parents or legal guardians did not work in comparison to those who did 41.3%. When the data was disaggregated by nationality, it was found that a higher percentage of Jordanian children 65% reported that their parents were unemployed compared to Syrian children 26.3%.

Graph 3: Do your parents/ legal guardians work? Children by nationality.



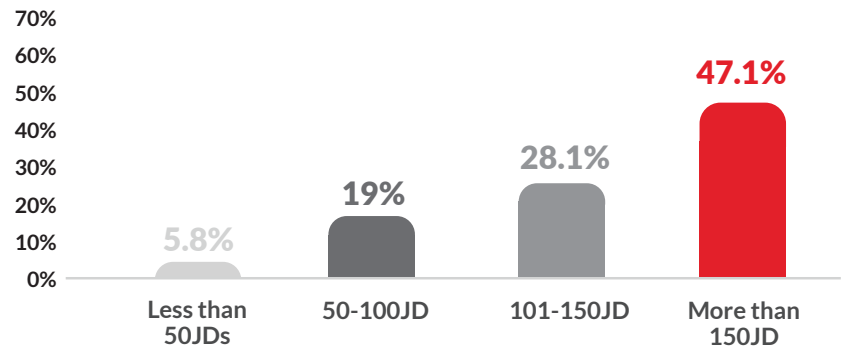
This is supported by caregivers’ responses, which indicate a significant employment challenge within the community. A majority 66.9% reported being currently unemployed, while only 33.1% stated they are employed. Delving deeper into the nature of their work status, a considerable portion of caregivers 37.2% are unemployed and are not seeking job opportunities. This is followed by 25.6% who are unemployed but actively seeking employment.

Graph 4: What is your current employment situation? - Caregivers



Regarding their monthly income, the majority of caregivers 47.1% reported earning 150 JD per month, followed by 28.1% who reported earning between 101-150 JD per month.

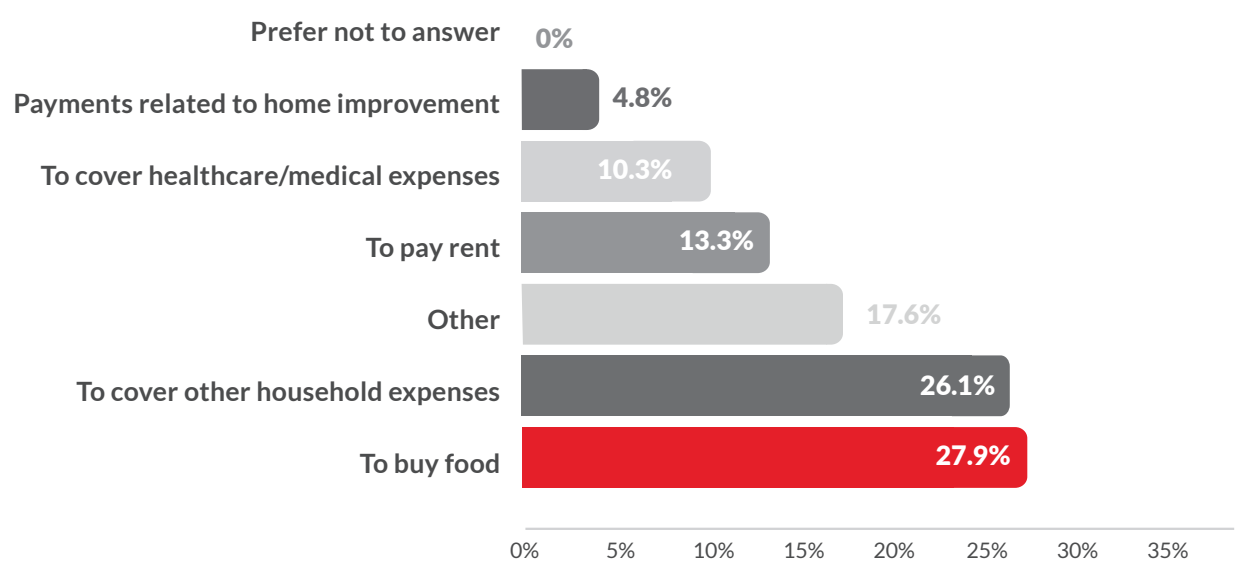
Graph 5: What is your family’s average household income per month? – Caregivers



Regarding their security, the majority of interviewed caregivers reported experiencing times during the previous week in which they did not have enough food or money to buy food, with 91.7% indicating this issue while only 8.3% did not. Their vulnerability was further highlighted when asked about debt, with 88.4% of caregivers stating that their households owed debts and only 10.7% reporting no debts. Most caregivers reported debt amounts up to 1,000 JD or more.

When asked to specify the reasons for incurring this debt, the most common response was to buy food 27.9%, followed closely by covering other household expenses 26.1%.

Graph 6: What was your reason for borrowing money? - Caregivers

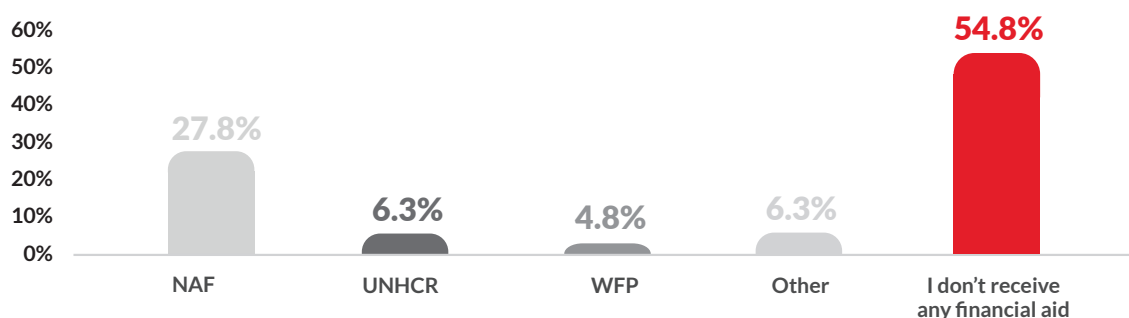


When grouping and analyzing the other mentioned areas, the reasons for incurring debt included legal and financial issues, living expenses, educational purposes, building and housing, and business and trade. Some repondents also noted personal reasons including purchasing items, marriage, and relocation.

3.3.1 FINANCIAL AID AND SUPPORT

When caregivers were asked about receiving financial support from the NAF, UNHCR, WFP, or any other organization, the most commonly-selected response was that they did not receive any financial aid 54.8%. The next most common source of support was the NAF, with 27.8% of caregivers reporting assistance from this organization.

Graph 7: Do you receive any financial support? – Caregivers

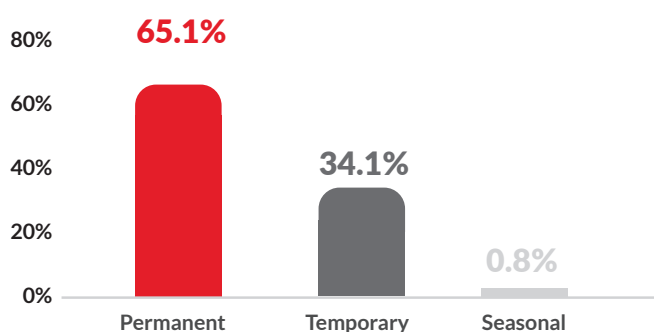


3.3.2 CHILDREN SUPPORTING FAMILY INCOME

The majority of children interviewed come from families in which parents and/or legal guardians are unemployed. When asked about their own roles within the family, a significant 81.7% reported that they help or contribute to household expenses, while 18.3% indicated they are the primary supporters of their family and household expenses.

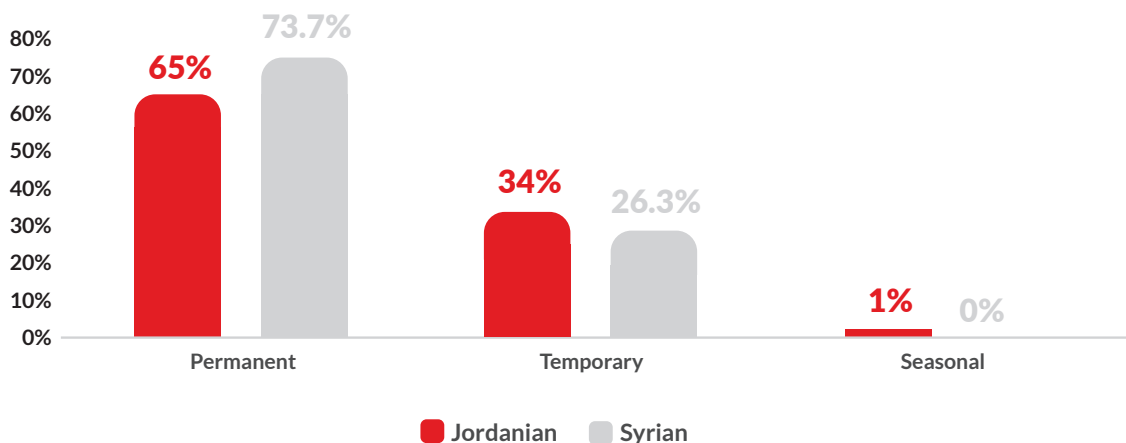
Additionally, an overwhelming 96.8% of these children reported that they are currently working, with only 3.2% stating that they are not. Most of these working children 65.1% have permanent jobs, while 34.1% reported doing temporary (daily) work.

Graph 8: Is your job permanent, temporary or seasonal? - Children



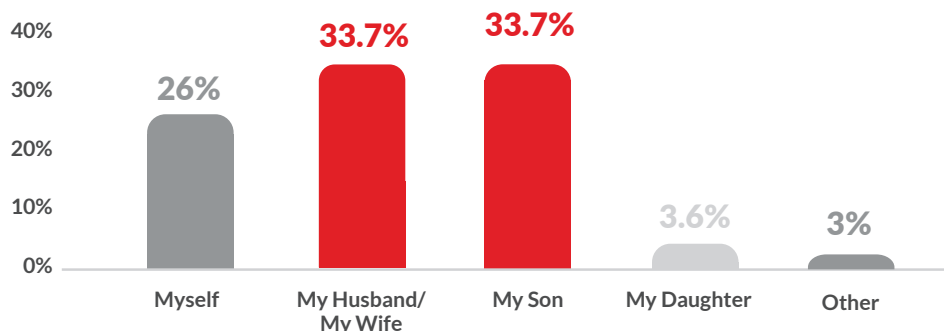
When data was disaggregated by nationality, it was found that a slightly higher percentage of Jordanian children reported having temporary jobs 34% in comparison with Syrian children 26.3%. Conversely, a slightly higher percentage of Syrian children reported having permanent jobs 73.7% in comparison with Jordanian children 65%.

Graph 9: Is your job permanent, temporary, or seasonal? - By nationality



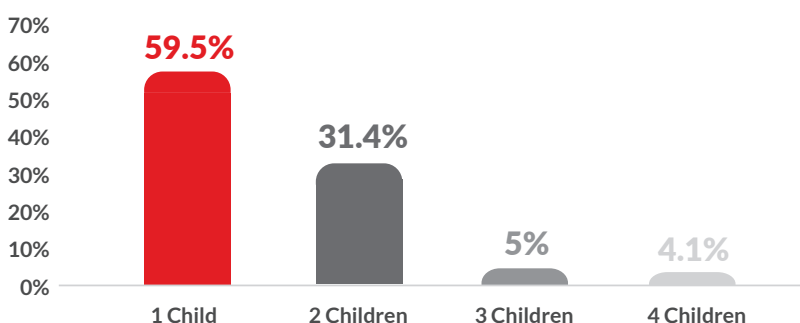
When caregivers were asked about the primary breadwinners in their households, the responses were predominantly split between «my husband/wife» and «my son,» both at 33.7%. The findings reveal that caregivers rely significantly on their sons 33.7% more so than their daughters 3.6%.

Graph 10: Who is the primary breadwinner? - Caregivers



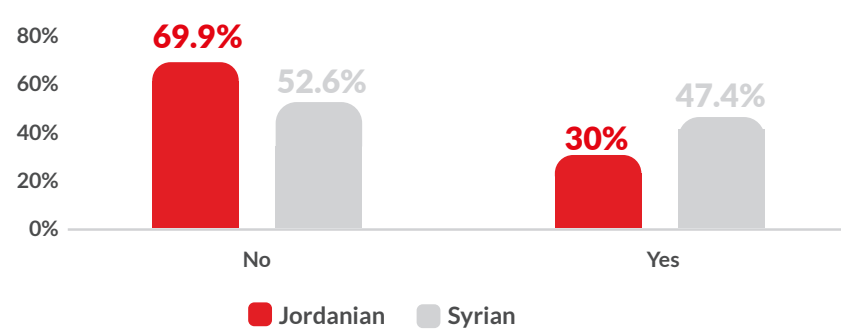
Furthermore, when caregivers were specifically asked about the number of their children currently engaged in waste scavenging, the highest percentage indicated that one child was working 59.5%, followed by those who mentioned two children working 31.4%. Caregivers reported that they had no other children working in any other sectors.

Graph 11: How many children do you have who are currently working? – Caregivers



When asked if any of the children's siblings under 18 years old were working, the majority 66.7% reported that they did not have working siblings, while 33.3% confirmed that they did. Among those with working siblings, 74.4% indicated that their siblings worked with them in scavenging waste, whereas 25.6% reported that they did not. Disaggregating this data by nationality, it was found that a higher percentage of Syrian children 47.4% reported having siblings under the age of 18 who work, compared to 30.1% of Jordanian children who reported the same. This highlights a significant disparity in child labor prevalence between Syrian and Jordanian families.

Graph 12: Do you have any brothers or sisters who are under 18 years of age and who are working?
– By nationality

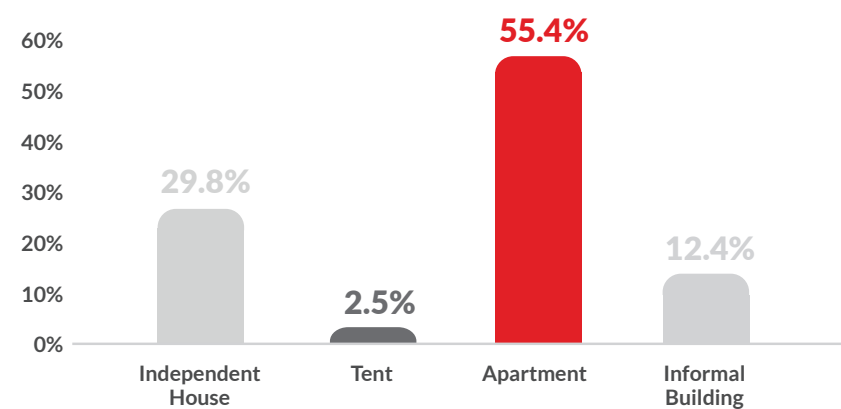


SECTION 3.4 HOUSING SITUATION

The housing situations of the interviewed families indicate stability, with the majority residing in apartments or independent homes, and very few experiencing instability or frequent relocations. Most parents house their children with them or with other family members, showcasing strong familial living arrangements despite housing challenges. Unlike the agricultural sector, which requires seasonal movement, work in waste scavenging does not necessitate frequent relocations. This relative stability in housing and employment allows families to maintain consistent living environments, contributing to higher home stability despite economic hardships.

Examining the housing situation and dynamics, the majority of respondents reported living in an apartment 55.4%, followed by those living in an independent house 29.8%. Regarding the nature of their accommodations, a significant majority 59.3% indicated that they rent their homes, while 40.7% reported owning their accommodations.

Graph 13: What type of home do you live in? – Caregivers



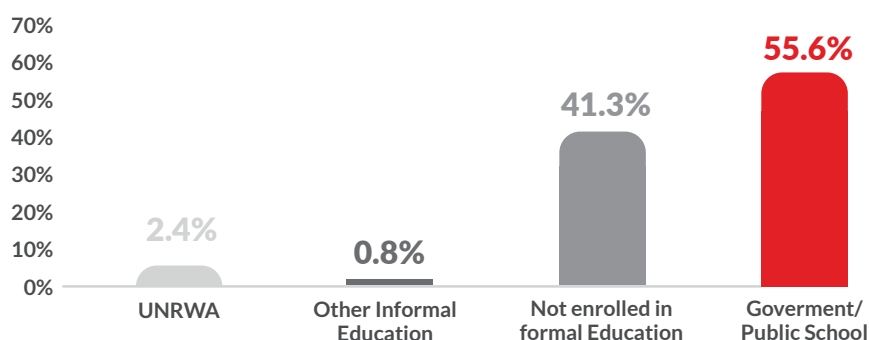
The housing dynamics for their children reveal that the majority of parents 76% reported their children live with both parents. Another 19% indicated their children live with their mothers, while smaller percentages noted their children live with relatives—the father or other family members—each with equal lower percentages. When asked about housing orphans, most parents 88.4% reported that they do not, while 11.6% reported that they do, with most of these orphans being immediate or close family members. Regarding relocating, the vast majority of parents 94.1% reported that they do not move seasonally, while a very small minority 5.9% indicated that they do.

SECTION 3.5 EDUCATION

The observed education situation among the interviewed families reveals an unusual trend in which children engaged in child labor are almost equally split between those enrolled in formal public schooling and those not enrolled at all. This trend is corroborated by both children and their caregivers, who attribute non-enrollment primarily to financial challenges necessitating children to work. Caregivers themselves commonly reported ending their education at the primary school level. Reasons cited for children's non-enrollment or dropout often include attending school up to the primary grades, with many dropping out by the 5th grade.

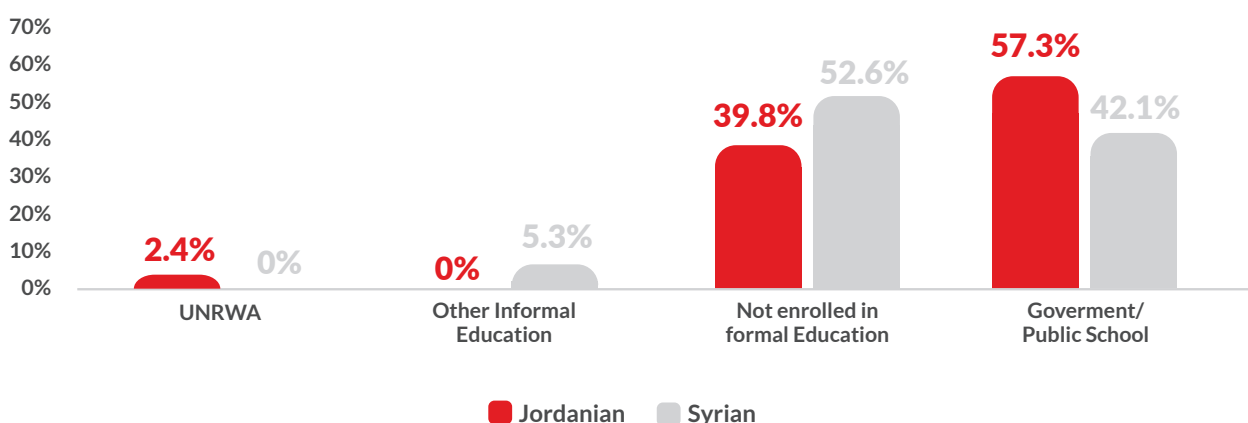
Examining the education levels and enrollment of children, the results showed a nearly even split: 55.6% reported being enrolled in government/public schools, while 41.3% indicated not being enrolled in formal education.

Graph 14: School enrollment - Children



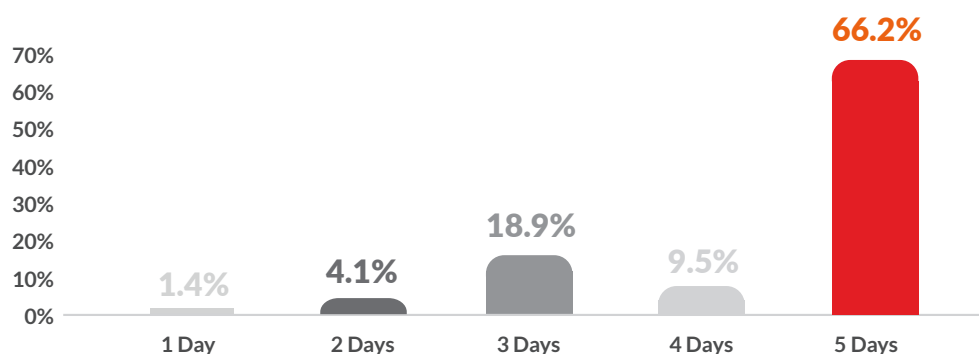
When the data was disaggregated by nationality, it was found that a slightly higher percentage of Jordanian children reported enrolling in government/public schools 57.3% compared to Syrian children 42.1%. In contrast, a higher percentage of Syrian children reported that they are currently not enrolled in formal education 52.6%, in comparison to Jordanian children 39.8%.

Graph 15: School enrollment - by nationality



Out of the 55.6% who reported attending public school, the majority 66.2% stated that they attended school 5 days a week. The distribution of the remaining hours and their frequencies of attendance is illustrated below.

Graph 16: How many days per week do you attend school? - Children



Those who reported dropping out of school listed the following reasons:

Table 8: Reasons for dropping out of school- Children

Reasons	Count	Percentage
Because I need to work to earn an income to help my family.	28	44.4%
Other	10	15.9%
Because the school refuses to accept me.	7	11.1%
Because my family cannot afford school expenses.	5	7.9%
Because they do not treat me well at the school in our area.	4	6.3%
Because I am not interested.	4	6.3%
Because the school is far from our home / There is difficulty with transportation to school.	3	4.8%
I don't know.	2	3.2%
Total	63	100%

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

During the IDIs the majority of caregivers and children confirmed that they do not attend school. Some children spoke of never having been to school. It is also noteworthy that the IDIs reveal that the vast majority of children interviewed (regardless of the level of their education) are completely illiterate. The IDIs confirm and shed further light on reasons for not attending school, with financial constraints emerging as the primary reason cited by both parents and children for dropping out of school. This includes the need for families being supported financially or the inability to afford associated expenses. The IDIs reveal the following reasons (identified from both children and caregivers) why most child laborers are not attending schools:

Financial challenges and the need to support household expenses put many families in the agonizing position of prioritizing income over education. As one Jordanian female caregiver from East Amman put it, «The situation is very difficult; I had to pull them out of school in grade 5. After the Covid-19 pandemic our expenses went up significantly, and we really don't have any money, so our situation doesn't allow them to go to school. I bring the work home and they all help me with the work from our home.» The most vulnerable households interviewed naturally prioritize their livelihood, sacrificing their children's education to secure the minimum income needed for survival. Additionally, some caregivers complain about being unable to cover school-related expenses—including transportation—while children more often stressed being unable to attend school without daily pocket money, which they can only earn through work.

”

I used to work in the dumpsite; my father guards it, so I used to help him...I swear to God I help my father a lot. We are 10 siblings, and I am the eldest, so I need to help my father. He always used to tell me to leave work and go home, but I would be patient and would stay, even though honestly working in the dumpsite is so difficult; he would warn me from the big trucks dumping material...but I used to pick enough waste to fill a big bag to sell it for 2 JD.

Male 16 YO, Jordanian, Rusaifeh

I don't go to school because we don't have money. So, I need to waste pick to get some money.

Female, 10 YO, Jordanian, East Amman

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Several children reported facing bullying at school. A 14-year-old boy from East Amman stated, “The students were bigger than me, and I couldn't stand up to them...I stopped going to school since that day.” Similarly, an 11-year-old boy from Rusaifeh shared, “The other students used to mock me and laugh at me.”

Caregivers also recounted incidents of bullying that led to their children's refusal to return to school. One father from Rusaifeh described his son's experience: “My son, who was in 9th grade, said they would bully him because his speech was a bit heavy. He asked to drop out. When I refused, he said he would run out of school. He was very determined not to return. I told him to at least continue until the 10th grade, then he could go into vocational training or the army, but it was useless. A few weeks later, he complained about the bullying and has not gone to school since.”

Additionally, some caregivers mentioned that their children faced bullying from teachers and school principals, which eventually led to them dropping out. A 14-year-old girl from Rusaifeh stated, “The school principal would constantly call me into disciplinary sessions and give me warning letters. She would accuse me of going out with boys. I don't know why she kept blaming me for this, maybe because my friends weren't the best-mannered girls... in the end, I dropped out. I regret it, though. I wish I hadn't.”

”

We had problems with the teachers and the management of the school. One teacher was picking on my daughter, she wanted her out of the school by any means...it even got to a point where we went to the police station after she found a mobile phone on my daughter. I went to school and had a fight with the teacher, and she began picking on her even more.

Male Caregiver, Jordanian, Rusaifeh

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A few children faced difficulty keeping up with the curriculum at school, as one reported, “I don't like school, I didn't understand anything they said when I went to school, not in Arabic and not in English, nothing at all. They would explain things to me, but I still wouldn't understand, and when they would give us exams, I wouldn't know how to answer anything...that's why I dropped out, I genuinely do not understand things related to school.”

Caregivers also cited the distance of schools from their residences as a significant barrier. With no nearby schools, financially-burdened parents often cannot afford the transportation costs to send their children to and from school.

”

I can't send them to school because the schools are located a little far from our home. If something happens to him, how is he going to know how to handle it? He's too young. Plus, the school has much older boys, and that's not very comforting to know as a mother.

Female Caregiver, Jordanian, East Amman

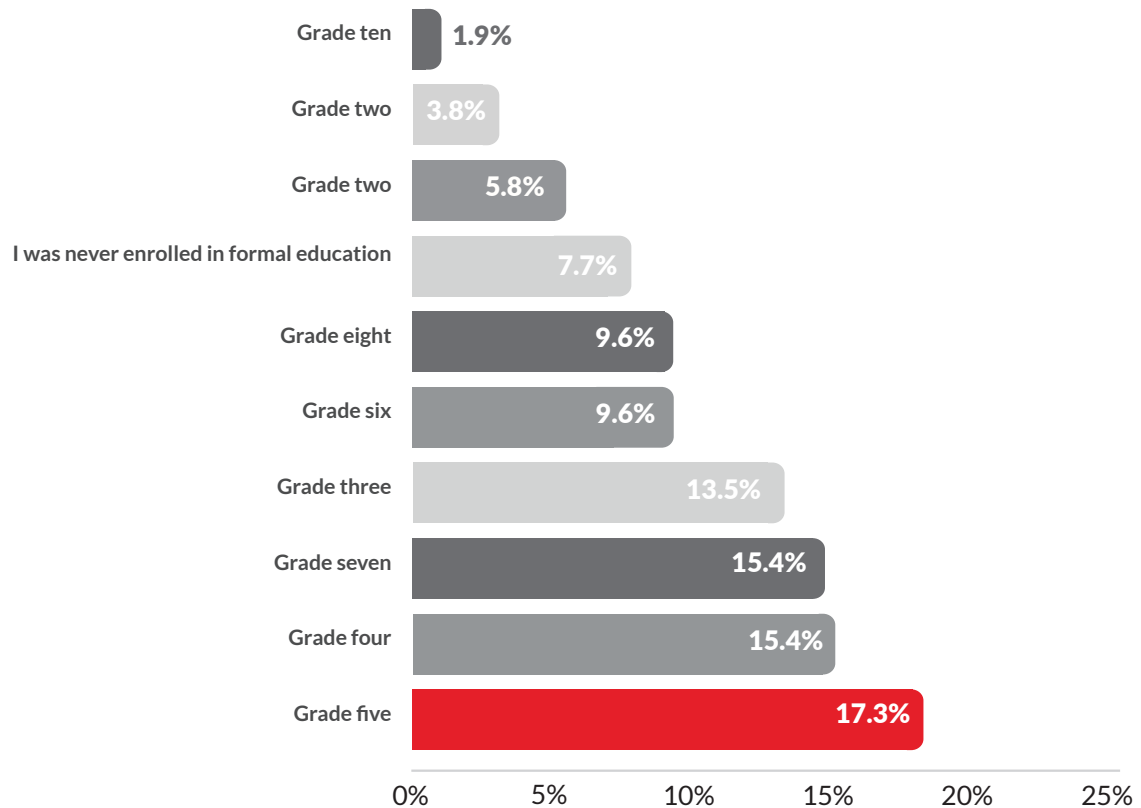
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One caregiver highlighted societal norms that discourage girls from continuing their educational pursuits, especially once they are engaged to be married. He expressed a lack of appreciation for education, citing it as too much hassle due to the complexities of school registration. He stated, «I made my wife stop going to school when I married her. She studied up until the 9th grade, but she can read. The tradition is that when you marry a girl, she stops going to

school. Sending the kids to school requires connections (wasta), and you need to keep going to school. So, no need. She can teach them how to read. I'm sure an educated woman who graduates from school will have her life changed, but my wife didn't get anything out of it. Perhaps my son will get a better opportunity than I had, especially as he is earning an income, and his mother can teach him how to read.» This perspective underscores the cultural and practical barriers to education in some communities. The view that this caregiver expressed reflects traditional beliefs that prioritize immediate family roles over long-term educational benefits for girls.

Further probing of school children revealed that the most frequently-reported grade that children attended before dropping out was fifth grade 17.3%, closely followed by grades seven and four—equally selected—and rated at 15.4%. The rest listed the following grades in which they enrolled before dropping out:

Graph 17: Until what grade did you go to school before quitting? – Children



Caregivers' perspectives on their children's enrollment in formal education closely mirrored those of the children, with responses nearly evenly split: 51.2% of parents reported that their children are attending school, while 48.8% indicated that they are not. The primary reasons for non-attendance were financial, such as the necessity for children to contribute to the family income and the high costs associated with education. Other cited reasons included health issues, bullying, frequent relocation, and learning challenges.

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Table 9: Why is he/she/they not going to a formal school? - Caregivers

Reasons	Count	Percentage
Because they need to work to provide income for our family.	29	35.4%
Other	18	22%
Because our family cannot afford the expenses of education.	15	18.3%
Because my child was not doing well at school.	7	8.5%
Because the school is far from our house, and I do not have transportation to the school / there are difficulties in transportation to the school.	5	6.1%
Because they do not treat my children well at the school in our area.	3	3.7%
Because the school refuses to enroll them.	3	3.7%
Out of fear for girls from the road and the risks they may face.	1	1.7%
Prevailing customs and traditions that discourage girls from completing their education.	1	1.7%
Total	82	100%

Regarding caregivers and their educational backgrounds, the majority reported completing only primary school at 66.1%.

Table 10: Caregiver school completion – Caregivers

Education Background	Count	Percentage
Primary school	80	66.1%
Tawjihi – High School	22	18.2%
Secondary school	11	9.1%
Illiterate	5	4.1%
Bachelor's degree	1	0.8%
Vocational	1	0.8%
Diploma	1	0.8%
Total	127	100%

SECTION 4

THE REALITY OF CHILD LABOR

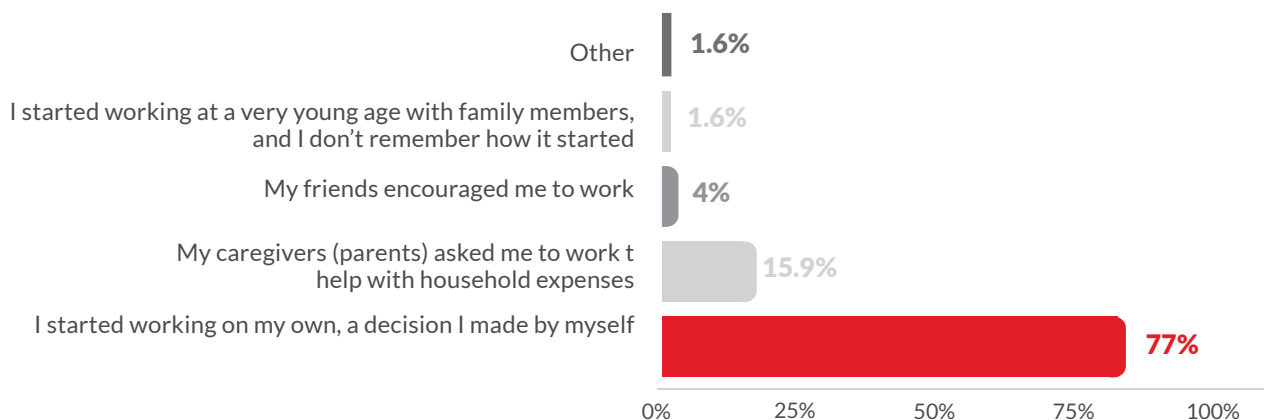


SECTION 4.1 RECRUITMENT INTO THE WORKFORCE

4.1.1 DRIVERS OF CHILD LABOR

Children overwhelmingly reported that their decision to work was based on their own choice, with 77% stating that they made the decision independently; interestingly, 15.9% reported that their caregiver/parent asked them to work in order to help with household expenses, while 4% reported that their friends encouraged them to start working.

Graph 18: Which of the following applies to you concerning how you started working ?



Qualitative Findings:

The IDI responses from child laborers and their caregivers provide a clear picture of the financial hardships that often drive children toward collecting recyclable materials to resell. For caregivers, the primary reasons for sending their children to work include the urgent need for additional income to meet basic needs, such as food.

From the children's perspective, their motivations align closely with their caregivers' concerns. Many children work to support their families financially. For instance, a 10-year-old female from the East Amman – Rujm Ashami expressed her motive for helping her parents by saying, "I started going to collect material from waste to resell it because my parents are sitting at home without work and my brothers are younger. So I started to go alone." Another 14-year-old female from East Amman stated, "My parents never asked me to work; I decided to go out to work on my own."

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God forbid we resort to stealing...we need money; where else do we get it from? I had to start working to help support my family.

Male, 14 YO, Jordanian, East Amman

I decided to help support my father because our situation was very dire at home. We are 10 persons living in our house, and I'm the eldest one amongst my siblings. So I decided to go out and to support my father.

Male, 16 YO, Jordanian, Rusaifeh

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The findings also reveal that children work to gain personal spending money as well, a necessity driven by their caregivers' inability to provide allowances. These statistics underscore the pervasive financial challenges faced by these families, challenges that affect even the simplest of a child's needs. Unemployed parents or those with unstable, low-paying jobs are significant factors that compel children to work. The children's labor—often seen as a necessity rather than a choice—is crucial for their families' survival, reflecting the dire economic circumstances that leave little room for alternatives.

”

My grandson wanted to continue studying at school; he's in the 7th grade. But his father struggles financially, and he wants to work to help his father. What work can he do? He collects waste and dry bread. We store them in the house, and once a week, he goes to sell it.

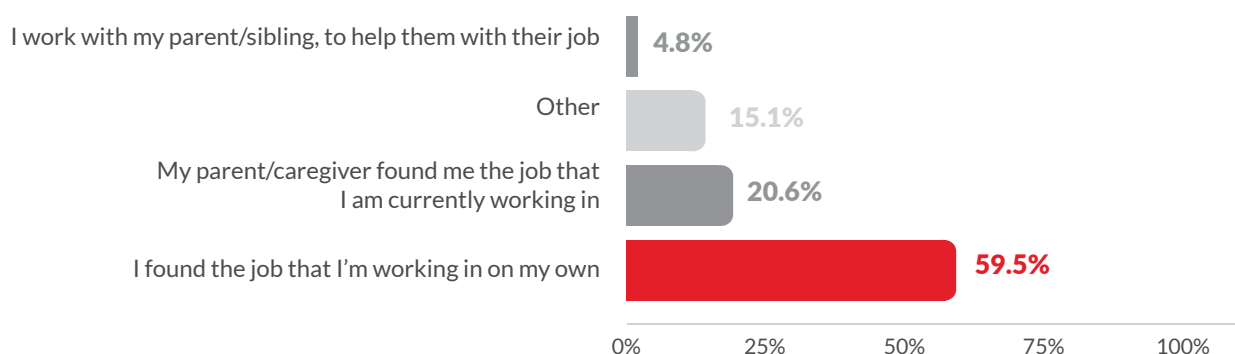
Female, Caregiver, Rusaifeh

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4.1.2 FINDING WORK

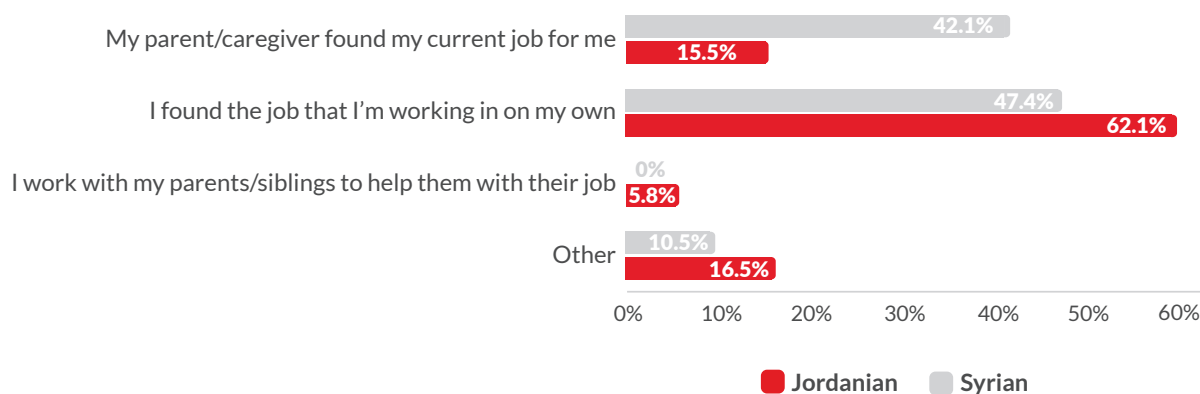
The majority 59.5% reported securing their current job independently, followed by 20.6% who mentioned that their parents facilitated their employment. Another 15.1% cited other means, such as finding work through family members, neighbors, friends, or acquaintances.

Graph 19: How did you obtain your current job ? – Children



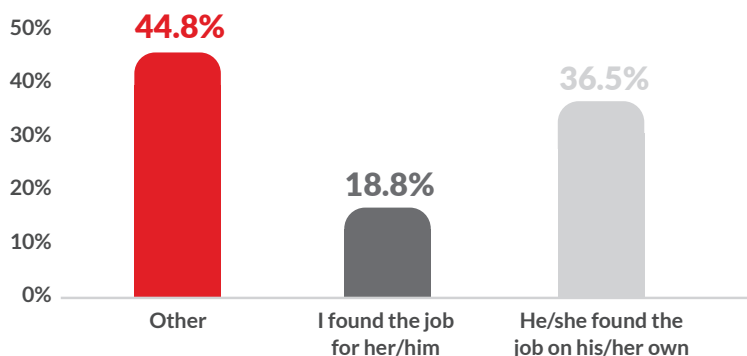
When data was disaggregated by nationality, a higher percentage of Jordanian children reported finding the job they are currently working at on their own 62.1% compared to Syrian children 47.4%. Conversely, more Syrian children reported that their parents or legal guardians found their jobs for them 42.1% in comparison to Jordanians 15.5%.

Graph 20: Which of the following applies to you concerning how you started working? – By nationality



Parents' perspectives on how their children found employment varied compared to their children's responses: 36.5% mentioned that their children independently secured their jobs, while 18.8% stated they facilitated the job-finding process. A significant portion 44.8% cited other methods, with the most common responses being through neighbors, cousins, other children on the street, or friends.

Graph 21: How did your child find his current job? – Caregivers



When parents were further asked if their children actually work with them, the majority reported that they did not 79.3%, compared to the minority who reported such an arrangement 20.7%.

Qualitative Findings:

The IDI findings corroborate the quantitative data, revealing that most children report that they decided to start working on their own. Those who found jobs independently typically did so through friends, neighbors, or cousins. The study reveals that in certain underprivileged areas, it is common for children to participate in waste picking, a practice widely shared in these communities. Growing up in such environments, children easily join this process, as they see their neighbors, friends, and cousins involved in the same work. As a female caregiver from East Amman's Rujm Ashami area explained, "Where we live is called Hay Al Sab'awiyeh; all the children in the neighborhood collect waste. This is what the Sab'awiyeh family members do—they are born into waste-picking families. My brother used to take the children with him when they were very young, so they have been doing it since they were a few years old."

”

Ghada's entire family work in this sector...her brother collects wood...and her entire family and parents work in waste picking; sorting and selling is their family business. Her brother is very clever, he developed himself in this sector, as he has gained a lot of experience since he began working in it since he was very young boy. He began establishing contacts with factories that produce tissue paper and has agreements with them. They give him all the toilet paper rolls that are defective and rejected as part of their quality control. He collects it regularly and cuts it up and sells it.

Female Caregiver, East Amman.

“

Another female caregiver from Rusaifeh shared a similar experience: "Honestly, one of my daughters has been going through financial difficulties, and her children collect waste. My son asked me if he could join them. He told me that he wanted to help support his father financially, and I told him it was up to him if he wanted to do so. That's how he started."

A 16-year-old male recounted his experience, recalling that as a young child, he would go to the dumpsites out of boredom, often tagging along with his cousins. He stated, “I used to sometimes go with my father, who works as a night guard at a company near one of the dumpsites my cousins visited. When my father’s shift ended in the morning, I would head over to the dumpsite to hang out with my cousins. It was fun; you don’t interact with anyone else, just my cousins and the neighbors. Eventually, I realized that my father needed financial support, and being the eldest of my siblings, I decided to work at the dumpsite with my cousins to help with our household expenses. We are ten members in our household, and as the eldest, I needed to support him.”



I used to see my aunt’s son collecting waste and decided to follow in his footsteps and start selling waste in order to spend on my parents.

Male 11YO, Jordanian, East Amman



The IDIs also reveal that most children began working in waste scavenging at a very young age. Some could not recall how old they were when they started; others stated that they were as young as six years old when they began working.

Regarding employment sectors, the majority 78.9% have exclusively worked in this sector over the past two years, indicating limited occupational diversity. Caregivers confirmed the trend when asked if any of their other children worked in different sectors, with the majority 95% reporting that waste scavenging was also the primary area of work for their other children.

Table 11: Have you worked in any other sector during the past two years in addition to the sector you currently work in? - Children

Sector	Count	Percentage
I have not worked in any other sector.	101	78.9%
Other	16	12.5%
Salesperson in a shop.	7	5.5%
Street vendor	2	1.6%
Painting	1	0.8%
Cleaner	1	0.8%
Total	130	100%

Qualitative Findings:

The IDIs also reveal that some children from certain areas in East Amman also work in agriculture. They are involved in tasks such as harvesting in greenhouses. They specifically mentioned the picking of strawberries, peppers, and herbs—as well as sorting—which includes tying herbs into bunches and packaging strawberries. Some children also work with their caregivers from home. A 14-year-old from East Amman shared, "We work on removing the pits and seeds from hot peppers. The farmer or the shawish delivers large sacks of chili peppers to our home, and he pays us half a dinar for each sack to be pitted, which takes around 3-4 hours to complete."

”

I worked as an electrician once for one day, but I didn't really like it, and they pay you 5 dinars weekly, so I told the employer I didn't want his money...I also sold chewing gum at traffic lights.

Male, 11 YO, Rusaifeh

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My children work in waste picking and collecting cardboard (which their uncle sells)...we remove the labels off the cardboard and cut it up into pieces before we sell it... also the children work with me at home with hose pipes; they assemble the hose pipes used for Sheeshah/Hookah.

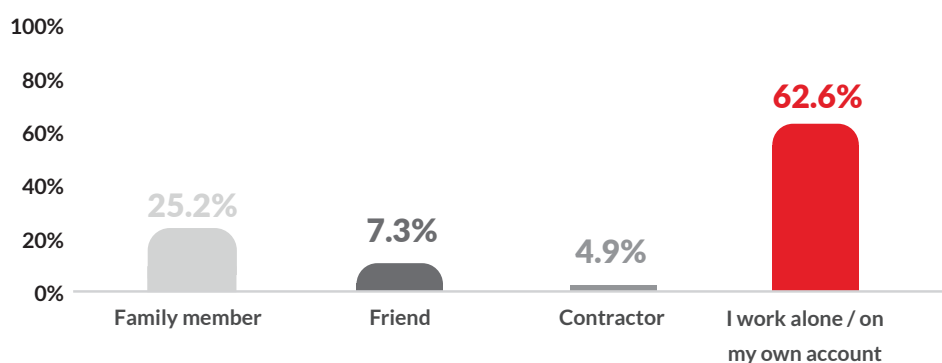
Female, Caregiver, East Amman

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4.1.3 WHO DO CHILDREN WORK WITH/FOR?

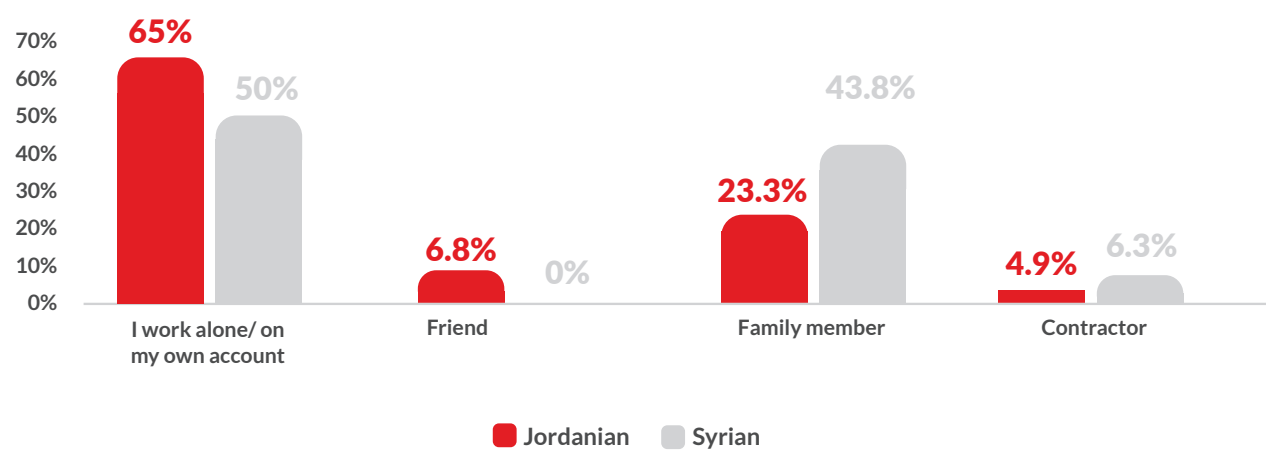
In addition, 62.6% of the children surveyed reported working independently in waste scavenging. A smaller percentage, 25.2%, indicated working for or alongside their families; another 7.3% said that they work with their friends. In addition, 4.9% of children stated that they work with a contractor.

Graph 22: Who do you work for/with? - Children



When data was disaggregated by nationality, it was found that a higher percentage of Jordanian children 65% reported working for their own account compared to Syrian children 50%. Conversely, a higher percentage of Syrian children 43.8% reported working for a family member in comparison with Jordanian children 23.3%.

Graph 23: Who do you work for/with? – By nationality



Qualitative Findings:

The IDI responses further corroborate these findings, offering deeper insight into the children’s experiences. Many children who work independently report that they entered this informal employment by collecting waste and recyclables from dumpsites or scavenging bins on the streets, often accompanied by cousins or friends. For instance, a 10-year-old girl from East Amman shared, «I used to go out on the streets to collect waste with my friend, but her father banned her from going out anymore, so now I go out on my own.» The children’s initial companionship in such activities underscores a communal aspect to their work, one which clearly provides a sense of security and support. However, the transition to working alone—as seen in the girl’s account—reveals an increased sense of vulnerability and isolation.

“
I used to go with my cousins, but they currently have jobs, so I go to the dumpsite on my own; I collect 12- sacks full and leave.
Male, 16 YO, East Amman

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For some children, when going out to pick waste with family members, they strategically work in different areas to increase their chances of finding more materials; this technique covers a larger number of dumpsters. This approach maximizes their collections and—consequently—the value of what they sell.

“
My brother and I are the only ones who work in our home. But I work in one area, and he works in another, so that we can collect more and the value of what we sell becomes better.
11-year-old boy from Rusaifeh explained

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This strategy underscores the economic pressures these families face, compelling even young children to optimize their labor for better financial returns. The study also reveals that certain areas are monopolized by certain families and tribes who have self-claimed the right to initially pick out what they want before others are allowed to go to the waste bins to pick through what remains. Other areas are not claimed by any family, and therefore—according to the children—they compete for who gets first pick.

”

Sometimes while we're scavenging through a waste bin to pick out what we want, we encounter others doing the same. So, we compete with them for who gets to each waste bin first.

14-year-old male from East Amman

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In some cases, the study reveals that waste picking is a family business, with all members participating in the process. In East Amman's Rujm Ashami, the research team encountered a tribe that has been working in waste scavenging for decades. Through several IDIs with multiple children and caregivers, it was uncovered that the entire family is involved in the process. The youngest members begin early morning runs at 5:00 a.m., touring specific areas and sorting through both household and commercial trash.

”

My daughter used to come out with me when she was younger, but now she's a young lady, I don't take her with me; she stays at home. The boys only come out with me to support me; I don't allow them to go out alone.

Male, Caregiver, Rusaifeh

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According to the children, waste picking so early in the morning allows them to be the first to scavenge through the garbage bins and take what is most valuable before others get a chance. They have developed expertise and a detailed understanding of what is valuable for resale, meticulously selecting items and leaving behind what is less valuable. The children bring the collected items to the backyards of their homes, where the trash is sorted by the women. This process continues for days, and the collected items are sold in bulk.

In such families, waste picking is a collective effort; all members contribute, whether by collecting waste, sorting, or selling. This family-centric approach highlights the way that waste picking strategies have become deeply ingrained in their family lives, showing how economic necessity drives a coordinated and strategic effort to maximize returns. It also underscores the significant role children play within these family businesses, often sacrificing education and personal development to support the household's financial needs.

”

The children collect the waste, and the women sort it out. Five of us meet up early morning every day, and we go out waste picking together, and when we're done, we leave together to drop off what we collected in the backyard of our home, where the women begin sorting plastic from cardboard to metal...etc.

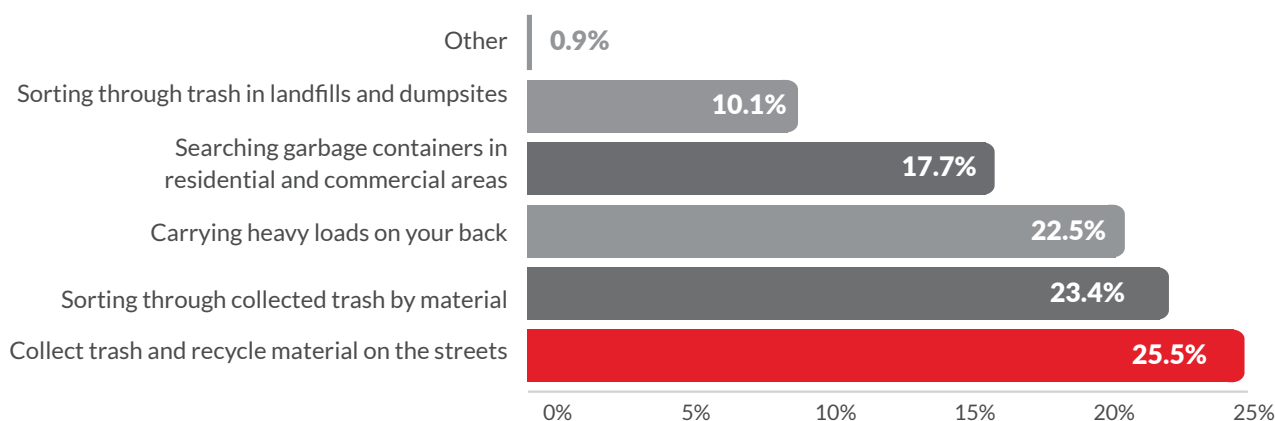
Male, 14 YO, East Amman

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SECTION 4.2 NATURE OF WORK

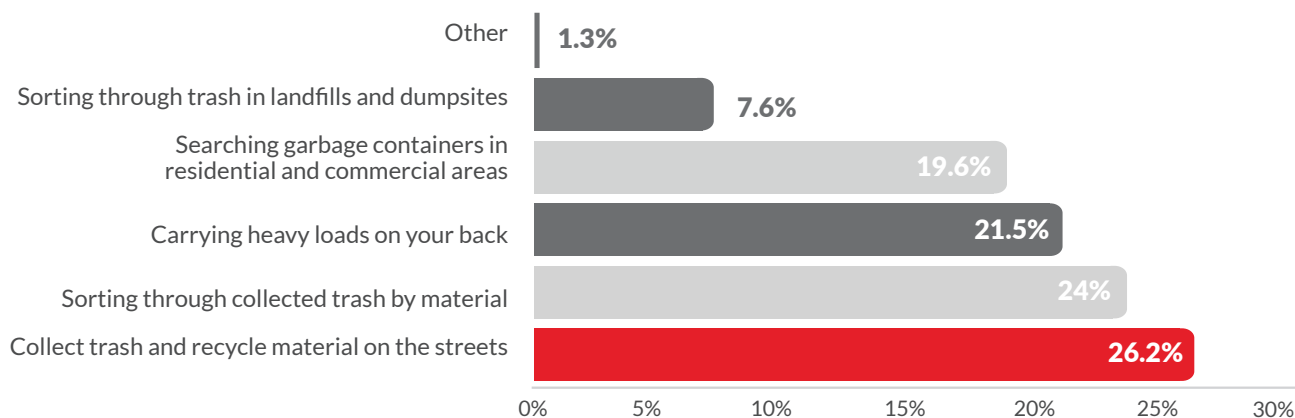
When asked about their activities in scavenging waste, children most frequently reported «Collecting trash and recyclable materials on the streets» 25.5%. This was closely followed by «Sorting collected trash by material» 23.4% and «Carrying heavy loads on their backs» 22.5%.

Graph 24: Which of the following activities do you do? - Children



Parents were also asked about the specific techniques their children pursue while scavenging waste. The most frequently selected response—consistent with the children's reports—was «collect trash and recyclable material on the streets» at 26.2%.

Graph 25: What activities does your child engage in? - Caregivers



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Whenever I find dry bread, I collect it and we dry it on the rooftop of our house... my son collects waste from around the house, and sometimes he goes further out.

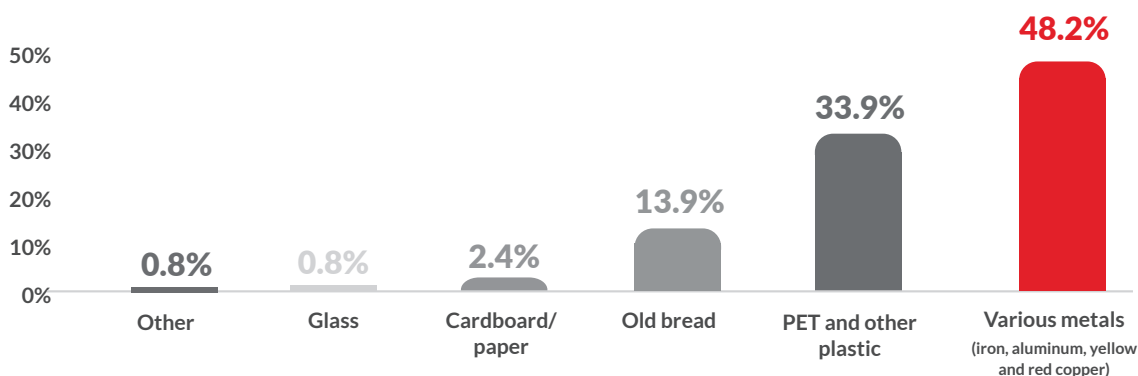
Female Caregiver, Rusaifeh

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4.2.1 TYPE OF SCRAPS COLLECTED

When children were asked to specify the type of scraps they collect, the most frequently-selected responses were various metals, such as iron, aluminum, and yellow and red copper 48.2%. This was followed by Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) and other plastic materials 33.9%. The rest of the items were less frequently selected.

Graph 26: What type of scrap do you collect ?



Regarding the scrap materials collected by the children, the vast majority 83.7% reported selling these materials to scrap shops. When asked to specify the names of these places, the responses were varied and frequently included the names listed in the table below. The remaining children either did not know the names of the locations or mentioned that a vehicle meets them to collect the materials.

Qualitative Findings: The IDIs provide valuable insight into the work behaviors of scavenging waste. An 11-year-old child from East Amman explained how he and his colleagues pick waste from bins, stating, «I start scavenging through the waste in the bin while standing outside. Sometimes the bins are high, and sometimes they are lower, making them more comfortable for me to pick through. When the bins are taller, I grab them and tilt them toward me, resting them on my legs, and that way I'm able to pick through the waste more comfortably.»

During the interviews, children discussed the types of scrap they collect, with tin cans being the most commonly mentioned. Many children also reported collecting various metals such as oil tins and metal wires, with several stating that «copper is the most profitable,» making it the primary

target for waste pickers. Other collected items include plastic. Interestingly, some children reported avoiding cardboard, paper, and glass, a trend also confirmed in the quantitative findings. These children explained that cardboard is difficult to collect and carry; additionally, some individuals specialize in its collection and resale. These specialists often have pickup trucks and agreements with factories and businesses to collect their discarded cardboard and paper, making the pursuit of such waste less profitable for casual waste pickers.

This detailed account highlights the children's adaptive strategies and their deep understanding of the value hierarchy in recyclable materials. Their knowledge of which materials are most profitable—and the challenges associated with others—underscores their practical expertise in navigating waste scavenging to maximize their earnings.

”

Metal rods are the most expensive thing; each sack will bring 1.5 dinars. Metal tins are sold for 10 piasters each. But cardboard doesn't bring much, and it's usually collected by the people who have Diana trucks and go around collecting cardboard. But the price of cardboard has gone down significantly, even though it used to be sold for good prices in the past. Currently it's plastic, metal, and copper that bring the most.

Male, 16 YO, Rusaifeh

Aluminum and copper bring the most money. I don't collect cardboard.

Male 11 YO, Rusaifeh

Metal is sold one kilo for 1525- piasters... pots and pans will depend on whether they are metal or aluminum, could be 7585- piasters. What brings the most money is copper, it's around 11.10- dinars for around 23- KGs...but copper is very rare to find...you find copper if the electricity company dumps their waste.

Male, 14 YO, East Amman

I only collect plastic, metal, and paper sometimes. But I don't collect glass.

Female, 10 YO, Jordanian, East Amman

“

Regarding the sorting of collected trash by material, most children indicated that this task is typically accomplished either at home, or on site at the waste-purchasing locations. Some children also sort the trash on the streets.

A 16-year-old shared his preference for sorting at home, explaining, «I would rather take the material collected to sort at home; however, I don't have a bicycle to help carry the material back home. Therefore, I opt to go directly to the buyers of recycled material.» The study reveals that children working in waste scavenging understand that sorting materials at home and selling them in larger quantities yields higher profits. This insight underscores the practical strategies employed by these children to maximize their earnings despite logistical challenges. Their preference for home sorting, when feasible, highlights their awareness of the economic benefits of organizing and selling recyclables in bulk.

”

We sort in a green area next to our house...we sort plastic from tin cans to metal...and then put them in separate sacks.

Male 14 YO, East Amman

Sometimes we sort on the streets, and sometimes at the buyer's shop.

Male, 11 YO, Rusaifeh

Sometimes I used to take a little bit of materials home, but it was no longer feasible for me to do so... The distance to home was so far...I needed at least 15 minutes to walk to the house because I do not have a bicycle, but I'm saving up to get one because having one will make things easier for me while I'm working. Currently, once I'm done, I just pass by the owner of the recycling shop and sell him what I found.

Male, 16 YO, Rusaifeh

“

The IDIs reveal that children generally perceive waste scavenging to be physically exhausting and monotonous. The most challenging tasks include scavenging, waste picking, and carrying the collected materials to sell or to sort. An 11-year-old boy expressed, «It's difficult work, but waste picking is better than street vending, even though waste picking is far more dangerous. When I sell at the traffic lights, it leaves me with an ugly feeling when they give me money. But the money I earn from selling what we collect feels fine.»

This account highlights the physical and emotional toll of waste scavenging work on children. Despite the inherent dangers and laborious nature of waste picking, some children prefer it over other forms of labor such as street vending, perhaps due to a sense of dignity associated with earning money through scavenging waste.

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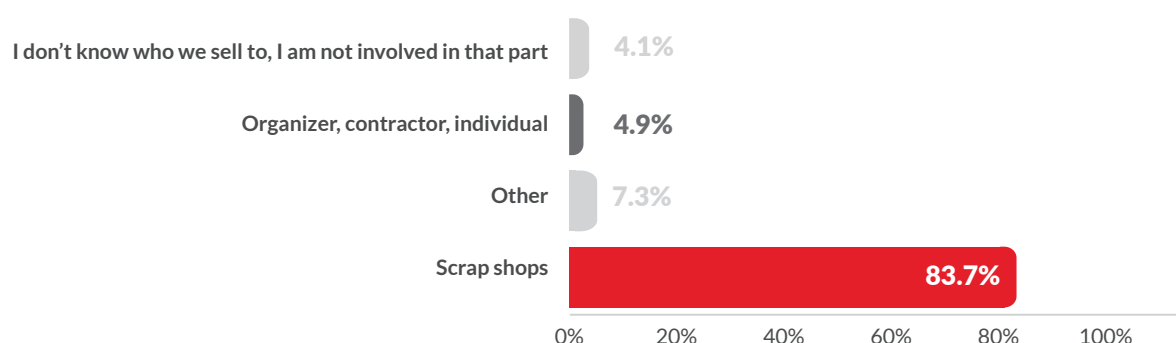
I got used to waste picking; it doesn't give me physical pain, but it really is exhausting.

Male 11 YO, Jordanian East Amma

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4.2.2 DUMPSITES, AREAS, AND SUPPLY CHAIN

Graph 27: Who do you sell the materials to? - Children



Among the children who reported not knowing to whom they sell the scrap—and not being involved in that part of the process 4.8%—when they were asked to specify who they gave the material to, the majority of these children 66.7% indicated that they hand the materials over to either their mother or father.

Regarding familiarity with landfills and dumpsites, the majority of children 72.4% reported not knowing their locations, while only 27.6% indicating such a familiarity. Among those who were had such knowledge, the following areas were mentioned:

Table 12: Do you know the locations of landfills/dumpsites? - Children

Location	Count
Don't know	2
Salbut	2
Rusaifeh	2
Abu Sayyah	4
Zarqa	6
Others	14

As for transporting the goods, the children mentioned that they use various methods to transport the materials they collect, with the most common being carrying the items on their bodies, as detailed in the table below.

Table 13: How do you transport the goods to the scrap shop/buyer? - Children

Transportation	Count
Walking	5
Using a Car/Vehicle	15
Other	15
Using a Cart	26
Carrying on Back/Shoulder	30

Qualitative Findings:

The qualitative insights from the interviews shed light on the process of selling collected recyclable materials. Most children and caregivers report that they sell their materials to scrap shops, referred to as the vegetable market/shop. While the children know the locations of these shops near their residences or collection areas, they are often unaware of the shop names or owners.

A 10-year-old girl from East Amman shared her experience: «I sell to a scrap shop. He has a large room and buys what you collect. It's in the Rujm area, but I don't know the owner or the shop's name. I just bring my collected items, ask him to weigh them, and he gives me the payment.»

Some respondents mentioned selling to buyers who pass by in cars, purchasing items directly from their homes. A female caregiver from East Amman stated, «The car comes to my house; they take what we have collected, and pay me.» Additionally, some caregivers noted that children who work at dumpsites collect and sort waste there, selling it to the dumpsite managers. A male caregiver from Rusaifeh explained, «You can make 7-8 dinars daily. The dumpsite manager might offer you this money in return for collecting material all day. Once you're done, you hand over your items and take your money.»

Children and caregivers, especially those with extensive experience in waste scavenging or part of a more structured family setup, stated that scrap shops often try to exploit them by offering the lowest possible prices, or by cheating them with the scale. The youngest children or those working individually are either unaware of this exploitation or lack the means to counter it, often accepting whatever the nearest scrap shop offers. These shops then sort and sell the collected items to larger scrap shops for higher prices.

”

When I was younger, the scrap shop owner would cheat me. I didn't know how the scale worked...he would weigh and tell me 'here's one dinar.' I later found out that what I was selling was worth much more.

Male 16 YO, Rusaifeh

“

Families that work as a unit have developed meticulous systems for collecting waste. Children gather the scrap, women sort it, and the most valuable items are identified and separated. This knowledge is passed to the children, who are instructed to not waste time on items with lower or no resale value. The sorted items are placed into large sacks, and groups of children take them to various scrap shops to get the best prices. A 14-year-old boy from East Amman explained, «We go to more than one scrap shop and get offers. Depending on the price, we decide who to sell to. If one offers 75 piasters per kilo, we will visit another shop and choose the highest price. We walk distances between shops, carrying the items. If we don't get a fair price, we bring the items back home. Sometimes cars that buy scrap pass by, and we might get a price from them as well. If it's good, we sell.»

”

I used to sell at Abu Ahmad, but one time he cheated me. He has a small scale that he would turn off, and then turn it on again with a button...he would press on a few buttons and only pay me 250 piasters. All the children say that he is a cheater, and cheats us with the scale.

Male 11 YO, Rusaifeh

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A female caregiver confirmed this strategy: «We don't sell daily. The boys take the collected items to multiple scrap shops. If they don't get a good price, they bring the items back home. Why sell a kilo of metal for 5 piasters after working all day to collect it?» A 16-year-old from Rusaifeh added that children who work alongside their fathers collect scrap, and that their fathers handle the selling.

Those experienced in scavenging waste are aware that scrap shops purchase, sort, and then sell the materials to larger shops. Neighborhood scrap shops buy a variety of materials—including metal, paper, and plastic—but sell them to specialized larger shops.

4.2.3 ON WAGES

Regarding compensation, when asked to report on their daily earnings, the study reveals that the majority of children 64.3% earn 5 JD or less daily.

”

The scrap shop owner in our village buys from the locals. He loads the materials onto his truck and sells them outside the village. He has cheated me before, so I sometimes sell outside the village for better prices. But without a car, I often have to sell locally for less profit.

A 16-year-old from Rusaifeh explained

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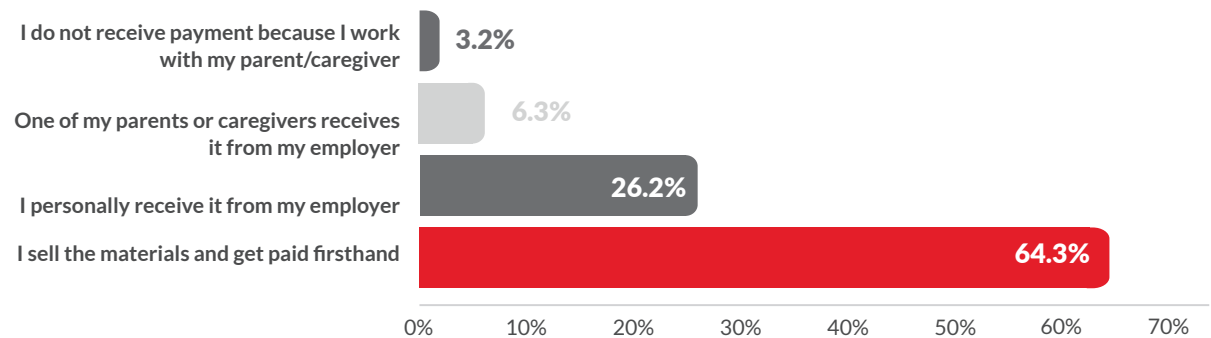
He noted that those who have cars prefer selling outside the village to guarantee higher earnings. The findings also reveal that scrap shop owners inform children about high-demand materials, promising better payments for specific items.

Table 14: On average how much do you earn per day? - Children

Daily Amount	Count	Percentage
3 JD	19	15.1%
2 JD	18	14.3%
5 JD	18	14.3%
4 JD	14	11.1%
Other	12	9.5%
1 JD	12	9.5%
10 JD	9	7.1%
6 JD	7	5.6%
7 JD	7	5.6%
8 JD	6	4.8%
I don't know	3	2.4%
9 JD	1	0.8%
TOTAL	126	100%

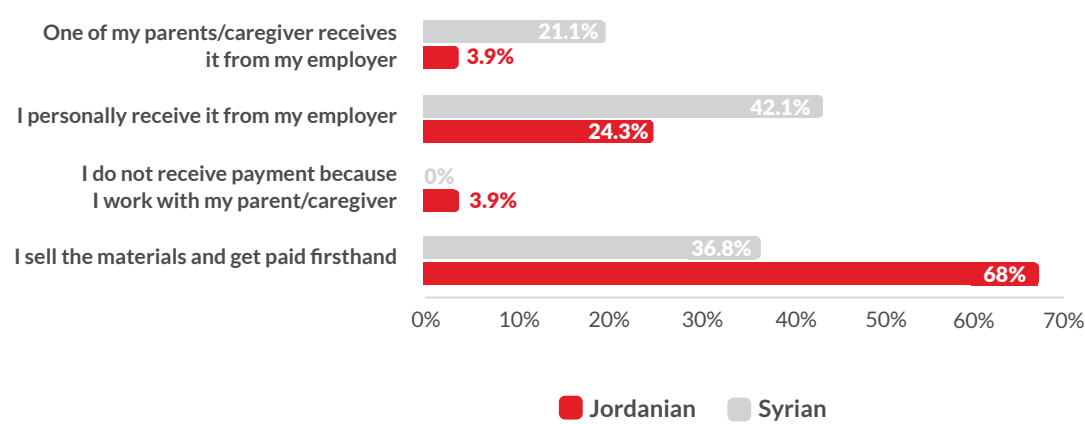
Further investigation into the recipients of children's daily income revealed that the majority of children, 64.3%, sell the materials themselves and receive immediate payment, bypassing intermediaries. In contrast, 26.2% of children reported being paid directly by their supervisors. This indicates that a significant portion of working children have direct control over their earnings, while a smaller group relies on supervisors for their wages.

Graph 28: Who receives your daily income? - Children



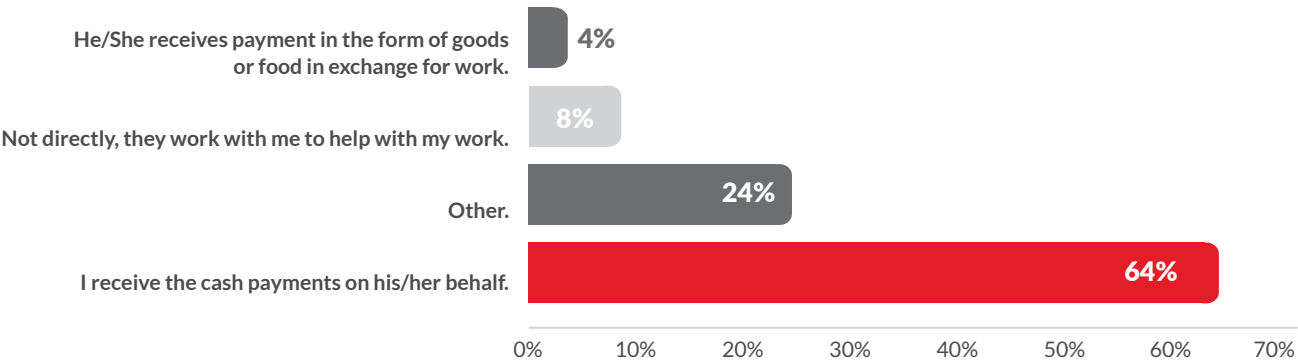
When payment receipt was disaggregated by nationality, it was found that a higher percentage of Syrian children 21.1% reported that one of their parents or legal guardians received the payment from their supervisors, compared to 3.9% of Jordanian children. Conversely, a higher percentage of Jordanian children 68% reported that they directly sell the materials and get paid firsthand, compared to Syrian children 36.8%. This indicates a significant difference in the payment dynamics between Syrian and Jordanian working children, potentially reflecting varying degrees of financial control and autonomy within their families.

Graph 29: Who receives your daily income? By nationality



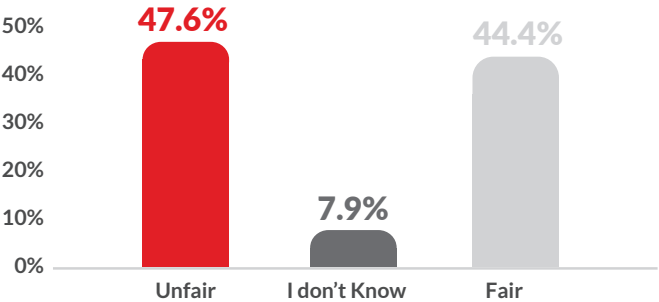
There is a notable contradiction between children's and parents' reports regarding the distribution of children's daily income. While 64.3% of children stated that they sell materials themselves and receive immediate payment, 64% of parents reported that they actually take their children's earnings. Only 4% of parents stated that their children manage their own money. This discrepancy highlights a significant gap in perceptions and reporting between children and their caregivers, suggesting possible differences in awareness or control over financial matters.

Graph 30: Does your child receive payment for his/her work? - Caregivers



When asked about the adequacy of the payment amount, the majority reported that the payment was unfair 47.6%, while 44.4% stated that the payment was fair.

Graph 31: Do you feel that the income you receive is fair? - Children



Qualitative Findings:

During the IDIs, it was revealed that children hand over their wages to their caregivers to contribute to household expenses. Some children mentioned keeping a small amount for pocket money while giving the bulk to their caregivers, who use it to buy food for the household. Several children reported that they usually stop to purchase bread or food on their way back home, as one 11-year-old male from Rusaifeh explained, “Before I leave in the morning, I ask my mother what she needs, and I stop to buy bread or breakfast for the family, as well as the items she needs from the market.” Some caregivers also confirm receiving money from their children, which they use to spend on them, as one mother from East Amman explained: “I take the money and save it so that I can buy them a new outfit to wear, or to give them money during Eid.” Others stated that they sell the items their children collect and receive the payments directly.

”

I buy bread on my way back home, because God is witness, we don't have any... and I end up going home with 1.52.5- JD.

Male, 16YO, Rusaifeh

“

”

I used the money to buy bread and leave with nothing. If I earn half a dinar, I buy bread for 250 piasters and Siniora [processed beef] for 250 piasters to take home. I don't get to buy candy or sweets for me...it's barely enough to buy bread and food for the family.

Female 10 YO, East Amman

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”

If five of us go out to work together, we sell the items [and] we split the profits equally... then we each give our mother what we earned. I keep a little bit for me to pass by the supermarket to buy snacks and food for myself.

Male 14 YO, East Amman

“

The study also reveals exploitation by parents, and the lack of financial autonomy experienced by some working children. Despite their contributions and work to support their parents, some children are often denied basic rewards or allowances by their parents. Several examples were shared about women who make their children work to support the household without giving them any pocket money in return for their labor. One female caregiver in East Amman noted such a situation, saying, «This lady makes her daughters work to support her at home. She does not give her children any pocket money. Sometimes I tell her, ‘I dare you to give your daughters one dinar to spend as they please,’ especially after making them work all day. But she never gives them any money. She should at least tip them for their work. When she really wants to spoil them, she will buy them farrouj (grilled chicken).»

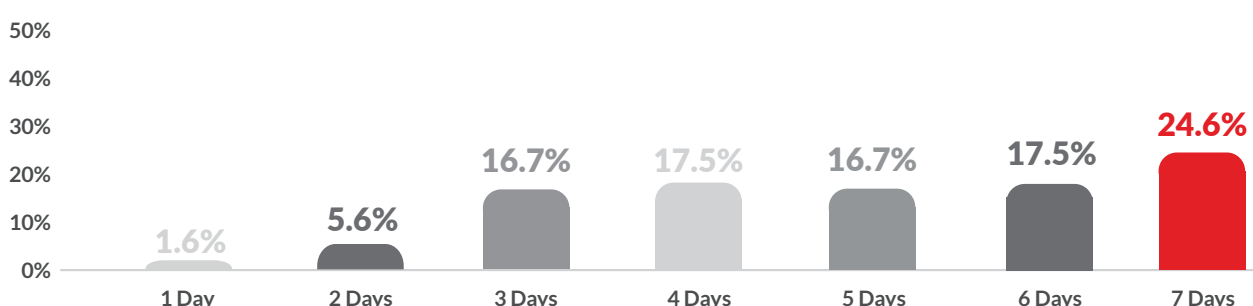
SECTION 4.3 EXAMINING THE WORKING CONDITIONS, HAZARDS AND RISKS

The findings highlight the fact that children engaged in scavenging waste face diverse working conditions, presenting both positive aspects and areas of concern. A notable majority receive payment and take regular breaks, yet they frequently confront hazards such as encounters with wild animals and physical discomfort. This shortfall in safety measures contributes to increased risks and a higher incidence of accidents during tasks.

4.3.1 WORKING HOURS AND BREAKS

With regard to working hours, children most frequently reported working all 7 days a week 24.6%, followed by those who reported working 4 or 6 days per week 17.5%.

Graph 32: How many days per week do you work? - Children



Children most frequently reported working between 6-2 hours per day, which closely aligns with caregivers' reports indicating that children typically work 3-1 hours per day. While children mentioned a greater variation in their working hours, both children and caregivers tended to indicate that the working hours were not excessive.

Table 15: How many hours a day do you spend working? - Children

No. of hours	Count	Percentage
14 hours	1	0.8%
16 hours	1	0.8%
11 hours	2	1.6%
12 hours	2	1.6%
10 hours	3	2.4%
13 hours	3	2.4%
8 hours	6	4.8%
9 hours	6	4.8%
7 hours	8	6.3%
5 hours	15	11.9%
6 hours	15	11.9%
3 hours	23	18.3%
4 hours	19	15.1%
Total	126	100%

Qualitative Findings:

Qualitative Findings: During the IDIs, some children reported that their daily working hours depend on meeting specific targets, with the key variable being daily luck with scavenging certain items

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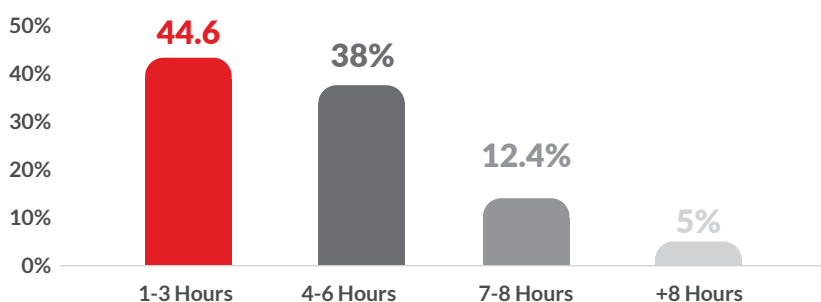
We start as soon as we wake up, around 6 a.m. When we feel that we have collected a decent amount of scrap, we leave. But on some days, if it's too hot, we might leave earlier than usual.

14-year-old male from East Amman explained

“

Regarding work during weekends, the majority reported that they work on weekends, especially on Fridays, as the quantity of trash thrown out on Fridays tends to be more than the trash thrown out during the week. As one 10-year-old female from East Amman stated, “I always work around 5 hours on Fridays because people throw so much out on Friday.”

Graph 33: How many hours per day does your child work? - Caregivers



Taking breaks during working hours was a common practice among the majority of children 73%, with only a small percentage 27% indicating that they did not take breaks. Most children reported taking breaks averaging between 15 to 30 minutes.

Qualitative Findings:

The IDIs also reveal that since most children work independently rather than for an employer with regular working hours, their decision to take breaks is self-determined. This choice largely depends on how much they need to work to maximize their earnings.

”

I don't take any rest days. I work from 9 a.m. until 5 or 6 p.m., just before the ‘Shaikh’—the scrap shop—closes for the day, so I can make it in time to sell what I collected. While I'm working, I take 5–10-minute breaks every few hours.

11-year-old boy from Rusaifeh explained

“

4.3.2 NEGATIVE IMPACT OF CHILD LABOR

Qualitative Findings:

The IDIs provide a comprehensive view of the personal impact that scavenging waste has on child laborers, highlighting both immediate and long-term behavioral changes. While many caregivers and children initially denied picking up bad habits due to their work, a deeper examination reveals several concerning trends. For instance, one male caregiver noted that his child works with him and therefore «did not pick up any negative habits. He is perfectly fine...he won't speak to anyone unless he's spoken to.» Other caregivers similarly report that their children have not picked up any bad habits due to their work, but express concerns that they wouldn't be surprised if these issues arise in the future. This initial denial by caregivers and children might mask underlying issues that could come to the surface over time. The nature of the work, the environment, and the people with whom they interact could influence their behavior and habits.

Smoking Habits:

A significant number of children have taken up smoking. While children tend to avoid confessing to smoking, they report that other children who pick waste do so, as one 14-year-old male from East Amman stated, "Very young boys who pick waste with us all smoke." Both children and caregivers reported this, although it is unclear whether this habit is caused by the work environment or from peer influence within their communities.



Some children learn how to smoke on the streets...I have seen very young children smoking.

Female Caregiver, East Amman

My grandson tells me that some young boys offer him cigarettes, which he refuses. He assures me he doesn't smoke. I always warn him and tell him to be careful, not to take a pill or a cigarette from anyone. I also always tell him to stay out of others' business and just work alone.

Female Caregiver, Rusaifeh



Behavioral Changes:

There is a noticeable shift in how children treat their parents once they begin to pick waste. Many caregivers reported a noticeable increase in disrespect and assertiveness from their children. One mother recounted, "The way he speaks has entirely changed; he is more disrespectful." Another mother also stated, "When a 12-year-old child is out of school roaming the streets alone all day, they will naturally face a million and one problems on the streets, and they will pick up bad habits which will negatively change their behavior."

Drug Use:

During the IDIs, caregivers reported widespread drug use in their communities. One female caregiver expressed concern about her children potentially starting to smoke or use drugs in the future, given the pervasive nature of drugs in the work environment. She said, «Until today I haven't noticed that they smoke or have taken drugs, but I'm certain that they will try in the coming days.» Another caregiver from East Amman highlighted the extent of the issue, stating, «Children take Captagon and drink alcohol. They also engage in sniffing... it's everywhere. They take Captagon to handle the pain and pressure of working under the sun. I certainly worry about my children. But what can we do? The entire environment we live in is wrong. Do you expect good people to come out of such a bad environment? Impossible.»

In summary, while many child laborers claim to have not picked up bad habits from working in waste scavenging, the IDIs reveal a darker reality. The physical and social environment of working on the streets—along with that of the children's communities—exposes children to smoking, alcohol use, and drug use; perhaps all of this contributes to increased disrespectful behavior towards parents.

4.3.3 DANGERS, RISKS AND INJURIES

Qualitative Findings:

The IDI's with both children and caregivers reveal several dangers and challenges that face children. These insights underscore the multifaceted risks and harsh conditions faced by children engaged in scavenging waste.

Health Risks:

Children frequently catch illnesses and diseases from scavenging through rubbish bins. Expired food products found in dumpsites are sometimes consumed, leading to food poisoning.

”

We don't take home the expired cream or processed meat...but if the expiry was only two weeks ago, we do. Once I found Maggi chicken stock cubes and took them home, and asked my mother to check if it was good. She ended up cooking it, and we ate it.

As one child from Rusaifeh reported

“

Sexual Harassment:

This is a significant concern, particularly for female children.

”

My 12 years old daughter was sexually harassed by a -17year old boy

Female Caregiver, East Amman

“

Physical Injuries:

Children are prone to injuries from using knives to cut cardboard or from heavy and hazardous materials in dumpsites. As one female caregiver in East Amman noted, «Children can get cuts while using knives to cut up cardboard.» One 16-year-old explained how children scavenge through waste in dumpsites using self-made tools. «If you don't have one of metal holders used to hold a paint roller, we grab a long metal stick and fold it in a way so that it resembles a hook, and you use that to dig through the

rubble. If we find a can of processed meat, we use a knife to open the can, discard its contents, and just collect the can to sell.” He carries on, explaining: «Working in dumpsites can be extremely dangerous, especially when large trucks are offloading trash, and children and adults rush to be the first to scavenge through the piles. This is the biggest danger, as these trucks are massive, and when they dump the trash there's a lot of white dust that comes out...some days I would go home covered in white dust. But the biggest danger is when you see a metal rod and rush to grab it. The stones and debris are big and can fall on you.» Additionally, the machinery used in dumpsites to crush dumped items can be very dangerous for young children, who may not be visible to the operators.

Physical Strain:

Carrying heavy loads of collected trash in sacks on their backs results in significant physical pain. Some children report injuries from tilting heavy rubbish bins in order to reach the bottom.

Lack of Proper Equipment:

Many children do not have access to carts to transport collected items, exacerbating their physical strain.

”

We don't have a cart to put the collected items on. We looked for one to buy, but they are very expensive, and we couldn't afford it.

A 14-year-old male from East Amman mentioned

“

Violence and Theft:

Children often face physical violence from other children engaged in waste picking, sometimes leading to theft of valuable items.

”

I once found a big cable, it could have been valued at 5 dinars...one of the older boys stole it from me. I never told my father because I was afraid [that] he would ban me from going back to the dumpsite.

A 16-year-old child recounted

“

Another child shared that older children gang up on younger ones, physically abusing them to scare them away from the dumpsites. «I was hit maybe four times...he would beat me up and tell me to leave the dumpsite...they wanted to get access to all the trash. If five dumps are made in one day, the children fight over who will be the first to scavenge through the trash. The other day I was hit by one of them who stole from me.»

”

When you have a bag of items you've collected that is valued at 5 or 10 dinars, and they snatch it from you, there's nothing you can do about it, because they are all older than me, and I wouldn't be able to stand up against them.

Male 14 YO, East Amman

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Electrical Hazards:

Children working with electrical wires and cables risk electrocution.

”

When they are picking electrical wires, there is a possibility for them to be electrocuted from a wire.

A female caregiver from East Amman stated

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Stray Dogs:

Children often face the danger of being attacked by stray dogs.

”

The children used to sleep in the dumpsites, but they stopped doing so since the number of stray dogs has increased. They're afraid of being attacked by them.

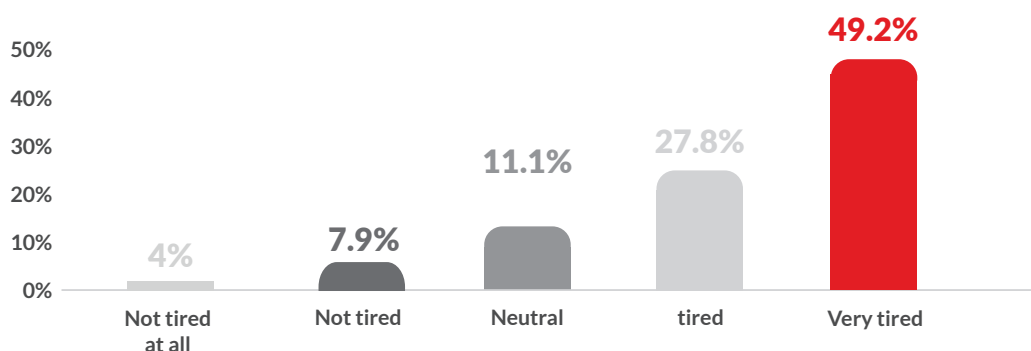
One 16-year-old male from Rusaifeh mentioned

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EXHAUSTION AND PHYSICAL PAIN

In examining the impact of work on children, a significant majority 77% reported feeling tired and exhausted from their work, indicating the strenuous nature of their responsibilities. Conversely, a smaller percentage 11.9% reported not experiencing feelings of fatigue, suggesting varying levels of physical and emotional strain among child laborers.

Graph 34: Do you feel tired and exhausted from work? – Children



Qualitative Findings:

Caregivers echoed these concerns during the IDIs, with many mothers expressing worry about their children's exhaustion and the physical pain they endure. They also voiced complaints about the dirt and the filthy condition of their children after hours of scavenging through waste bins. The most common complaint from the children themselves is back pain, resulting from carrying the heavy loads they collect.

“ I get so tired...when I go home, my back hurts me so much...sometimes I get a stomachache, but my mother does not buy me medicine or anything; I spend on myself.

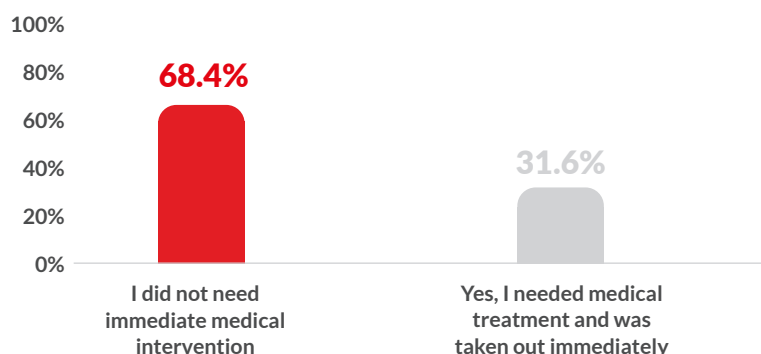
Female 10 YO, East Amman

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ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES

Accidents endured during waste scavenging revealed a significant incidence of injuries among child laborers. The majority 60.3% reported sustaining injuries on the job, while 39.7% reported no injuries. This highlights a substantial number of occupational hazards and safety issues within their work environments. Among those who reported injuries, a further probe into their severity showed that 68.4% stated their injuries did not require immediate medical attention. However, 31.6% indicated they needed medical treatment and were immediately removed from work.

Graph 35: Did these injuries require immediate medical attention? – Children



From the caregivers' perspective, responses mirrored those of their children regarding injuries. A significant majority, 67.8%, stated that their children had not encountered any injuries, while 32.2% confirmed that injuries had occurred. When questioning parents who reported that their children had experienced injuries and risks, the following categories were identified: incidents involving vehicles, accidents related to tools, inappropriate interactions with people on the street, extreme heat, stray dogs, exhaustion, encounters with insects and snakes, and illnesses related to natural causes, such as coughing.

Qualitative Findings:

The IDIs provide valuable insights into the types of dangers children have sustained while working in waste picking.

The findings highlight the various risks and challenges faced by these children:

Physical violence:

An 11-year-old child from Rusaifeh recounted, «I was slapped by an old man yesterday who threatened me not to go near the garbage bin again because I found a copper wire in it.» Other children reported being beaten up by their peers.

”

I was picking metal wires once, and a boy pulled one from my hand and it cut my hand open. My mother took me to the hospital, and I got three stitches.

A 10-year-old female from East Amman recalled

“

Dog Bites:

One child reported being bitten by a dog and had to visit a medical center for injections.

Injuries:

One child reported that a heavy object fell on his head, requiring stitches.

”

I was cut once, and—look at this—it's a burn I got while melting plastic...I couldn't treat it instantly, and it got infected and eventually closed up, leaving this scar.

A 16-year-old male from Rusaifeh shared

“

”

Once when I was scavenging using a knife, I found a copper wire and wanted to cut it, but it cut my hand open. Another time I was collecting wires and was bending them to carry them easily, and [they] cut my hand open. A man saw me, made me throw away what I had collected, gave me 5 dinars, and took me to the emergency room, where I got four stitches.

11-year-old from Rusaifeh recounted

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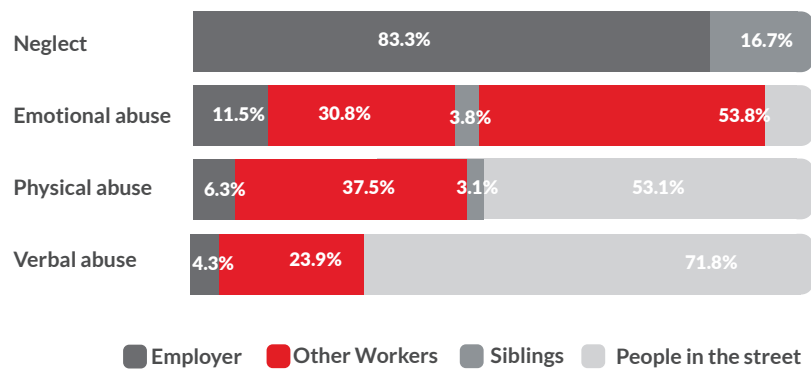
Street Fights:

Several children reported encountering street fights. A 14-year-old from East Amman stated that his cousin was imprisoned in a juvenile detention center for nine months. «We got into a fight with a kid who was picking waste but was not from our area. He took some of the things I had collected, so we had a physical fight. He reported us to the police. But he had no right to take what we had collected; this is theft. Anyhow, they attacked him and stole what he had collected, and my cousin broke his arm...he was sent to a juvenile detention center for nine months.»

4.3.4 NEGLECT AND ABUSE

In evaluating the experiences of children during their working hours, significant findings emerged regarding forms of abuse. When asked about encountering verbal abuse, 36.5% reported experiencing it, primarily from people in the street 71.7%. Physical abuse was reported by a smaller percentage 25.4%, with the majority stating it came from people in the street as well 51.3%. Children also reported emotional abuse 20.6%, predominantly from people in the street 53.8%. Neglect had the lowest incidence at 4.8%, mostly attributed to employers 83.3%. These findings highlight troubling dynamics within the work environment, where children may face different types of mistreatment, predominantly from those around the environment of their work activities. The breakdown of these forms of abuse is illustrated in the graph below:

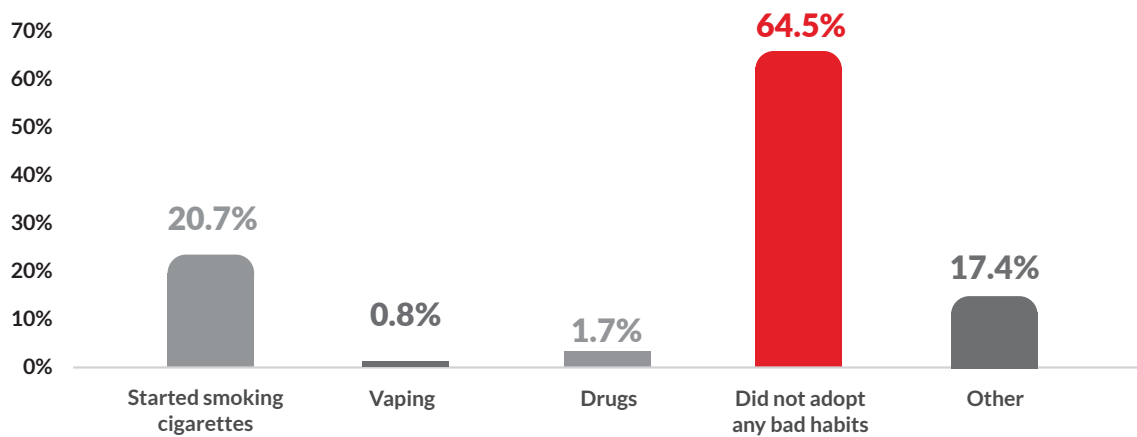
Graph 36: If yes, who committed this behavior – Children



4.3.5 NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF CHILD LABOR

When parents were questioned about the effects of such labor on their children—specifically whether they had adopted habits such as smoking, drinking, or drug use due to interactions with other children or adults while working—the findings revealed that more than half 64.5% reported that their children had not picked up any such habits. A lower percentage, 20.7%, mentioned their children had started smoking, while an even smaller percentage, 1.7%, reported that their children had picked up drug use.

Graph 37: Has your child picked up any habits such as smoking, drinking, or drug use as a result of interacting with other children or adults at work? - Caregivers

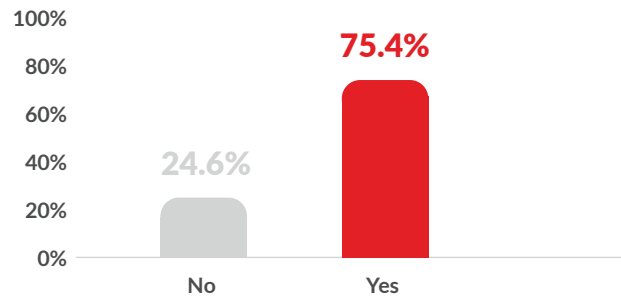


SECTION 4.4 SENTIMENT RELATED TO WORKING

4.4.1 CHILDREN'S VIEWS

Regarding the willingness of children to work in scavenging waste, the majority 75.4% reported that they work of their own free will. In contrast, 24.6% stated that they do not willingly work in the field.

Graph 38: Are you working out of your free will? - Children



Qualitative Findings:

The IDIs reveal that children who do not work in waste picking of their own free will often dislike this field of work. One child recounted that getting himself out of the house to collect waste is a struggle, but it is something that he feels he must do to help support his parents. Others express that they would not want their own children to work in this sector, aspiring for them to have better jobs.

”

I hate working in waste picking; I fight myself every day to get myself out of the house, but I do it because I have to help my parents.

Male 11 YO, Rusaifeh

In the future when I have a son, I will not allow him to scavenge through waste bins...I want him to work in a company, and spend on himself...I want him to study and graduate from school, and hopefully he will be better than me.

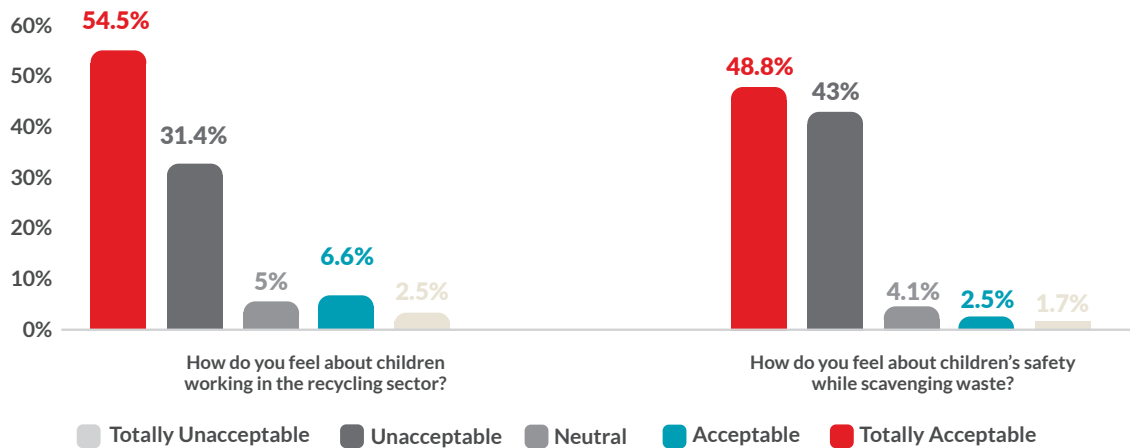
Male, 14 YO, East Amman

“

4.4.2 PARENTS VIEWS

Parents overwhelmingly expressed dissatisfaction concerning their children's work, with 86% indicating they are generally unhappy about it, while only 9.1% found it acceptable. This widespread discontent reflects a strong awareness of the associated risks and dangers. Specifically, when asked about their perception of their child's safety while scavenging waste, a significant majority 91.7% viewed it as dangerous. This highlighted a deep-seated concern among parents regarding the safety and well-being of their children in such occupations.

Graph 39: How do you feel about children working in scavenging waste? - Caregivers



Working in waste picking is unacceptable. But because of the need and necessity they have to... it's not pleasant to see a young boy going into a waste bin and picking out trash from it...but there is no other choice for us.

Male Caregiver, Rusaifeh

It is dangerous for children; they should be studying...but we need the money...and if this is how they will earn a living, then I find it acceptable for the children to work in this field. On days they don't collect waste, we don't have any money to buy food, so we don't eat.

Female Caregiver, East Amman

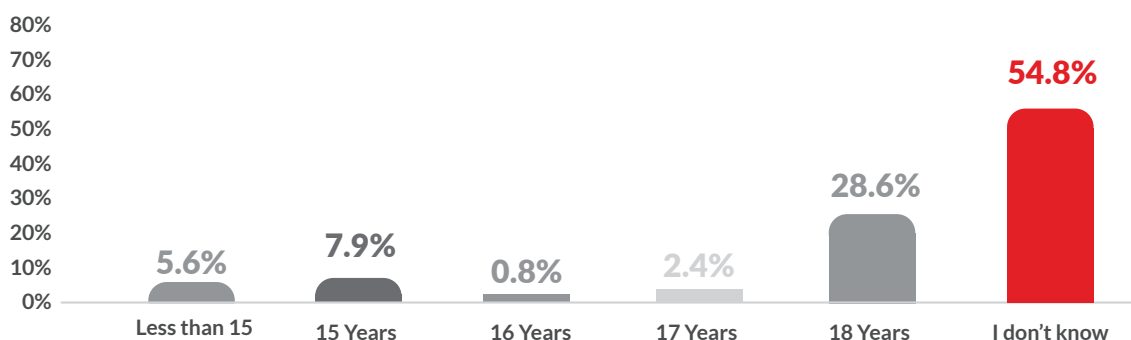
It is unacceptable for children to work in waste picking, but our situation forces us to let the kids work in scavenging waste...we need food, and one should never feel ashamed from working...I always warn my son not to wander off too far from the house, because the world is a scary place, and he could face a lot of danger.

Female Caregiver, Rusaifeh

SECTION 4.5 AWARENESS OF CHILD LABOR LAWS

When evaluating children's awareness of child labor laws, the survey aimed to determine their knowledge of the legal working age in Jordan. Results showed a significant lack of awareness among respondents, with 54.8% indicating they did not know the legal age. In contrast, 28.6% incorrectly believed the legal working age was 18 years old. This highlights a critical gap in understanding among children regarding the legal protections and regulations pertaining to child labor in Jordan.

Graph 40: What is the legal age to work in Jordan? – Children



Caregivers also demonstrated a significant lack of awareness regarding child labor laws, with 71.9% indicating no knowledge of these laws, while a minority—only 28.1%—reported having some awareness of the laws. Further investigation into their familiarity with specific laws revealed that those who claimed awareness had knowledge largely limited to the prohibition of child labor under 18 years old.

”

The legal age for children to work in Jordan is 12-13 years.

Male, 11 YO, Rusaifeh

“

Qualitative Findings:

The IDI findings highlight a significant issue in which both caregivers and children lack awareness of legal protections intended to shield children from exploitative work settings. This widespread ignorance not only reveals a gap in knowledge, but also signifies potential risks for children involved in labor. Without understanding these protections, children may be subjected to unsafe conditions

and exploitation, as caregivers may not either recognize or have the ability to enforce the legal safeguards meant to protect them.

Caregivers' limited understanding of these legal protections may inadvertently lead them to place children in environments in which their rights and safety are compromised. Without knowledge of laws prohibiting child labor, caregivers might unintentionally expose children to hazardous tasks or conditions unsuitable for their age and development. This situation is further compounded by children themselves being unaware of their rights, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and potentially preventing them from seeking help or reporting abuses.

”

I know that it is prohibited for children to work. But regardless of this knowledge, our dire financial situation imposes that we make our children work.

Female Caregiver, East Amman

“

SECTION 4.6 NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS

Qualitative Findings:

This study delves into the dreams and aspirations of child laborers and their caregivers, shedding light on their collective desires and concerns. It is crucial to acknowledge that the insights derived from these findings reflect the perceptions and views of the children and caregivers who took part in the study. It is recognized that individual concerns may vary significantly among children and caregivers in similar circumstances. However, the dreams and aspirations articulated by the participants provide valuable insights into their collective desires and concerns, primarily revolving around the overarching theme of financial security. They articulate their aspirations through the prism of employment, emphasizing the yearning for financial resources that will help them meet the needs of their families and indulge in life's experiences.

4.6.1 NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF CHILDREN

Qualitative Findings:

The research findings highlight three primary areas of aspirations shared by child laborers: financial stability, better work opportunities, and school attendance. The predominant theme revolves around the children's yearning for financial security, linking their aspirations to maintaining a decent standard of living. Some dream of having a job in a company.

”

I would love to be an average employee in any company, so that I can earn an income and use my money to open a kiosk for my father or a small business. Ideally, I would love to work in distribution and sales.

child from Rusaifeh

“

When asked about hypothetical wishes to be granted by a magic wand, some children express desires for material possessions. These dreams encompass acquiring items such as new clothing, a car, or a house. The desire to own new clothes reveals how little they have and how little they need. Notably, a 14-year-old male from East Amman mentioned he would wish for a truck, explaining, «I would want a Diana truck so that we can then go around [to] the factories and collect more recyclable material,» which would help him and his family gain higher earnings. Another child expressed a simple yet poignant wish to go to the beach, indicating a desire to enjoy life's pleasures. These aspirations reflect the children's hope for a better future, free from the burdens of their current circumstances. Their dreams, though modest, underscore the significant impact that financial stability could have on their lives.

4.6.2 NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF CAREGIVERS

Qualitative Findings:

Caregivers also expressed their dreams and aspirations for their children, with the majority wishing for a house, a car, a small business, or a steady income. Some caregivers dream of being able to provide a better future for their children.

”

I dream of having a four-bedroom house for me and my mother, with a kitchen and a bathroom and a small garden for the children to play in.

Female Caregiver, East Amman

“

In exploring the support needs from caregivers' perspectives, caregivers emphasized several key themes that underscored the essential requirements for children engaged in various activities. Caregivers stressed the importance of providing their children with basic needs such as adequate food and clothing to ensure the well-being of children under their care. They also highlighted the significance of educational opportunities and vocational training centers, which play pivotal roles in equipping children with essential skills for their future.

Financial support was noted as integral to relieving economic pressures on families, enabling them to prioritize their children's education and overall development without resorting to child labor.

EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES

SECTION 5

PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOR RELATED TO EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES



SECTION 4.5 AWARENESS OF CHILD LABOR LAWS

When evaluating children's awareness of child labor laws, the survey aimed to determine their knowledge of the legal working age in Jordan. Results showed a significant lack of awareness among respondents, with 54.8% indicating they did not know the legal age. In contrast, 28.6% incorrectly believed the legal working age was 18 years old. This highlights a critical gap in understanding among children regarding the legal protections and regulations pertaining to child labor in Jordan.

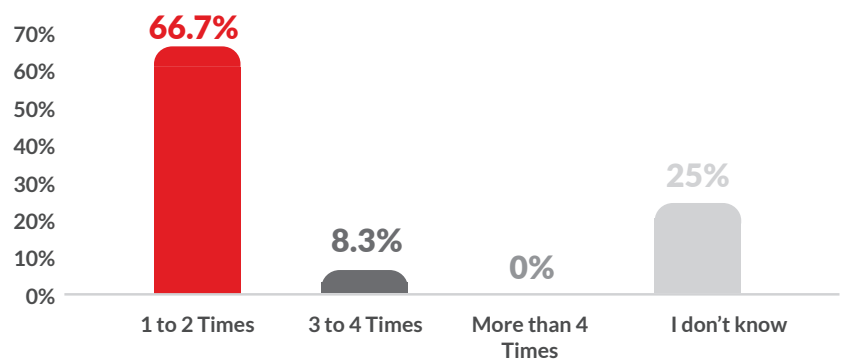
Table 16: What kind of activities do you participate in? - Children

Activity	Count	Percentage
Playing games	22	53.7%
Physical education	5	12.2%
Studying languages	4	9.8%
Engaging in community dialogues	4	9.8%
Other	4	9.8%
Studying sciences	1	2.4%
Studying math	1	2.4%
Total	41	100%

When caregivers were asked if their children ever participate in any activities with an organization, the majority reported that their children do not, mirroring the children’s responses, with 90.1% indicating no participation. Only a small minority, 9.9%, reported that their children did participate in such activities. When asked to name the organizations providing these activities, the responses were categorized into Charitable and Development Associations, Youth Clubs, and Makani events.

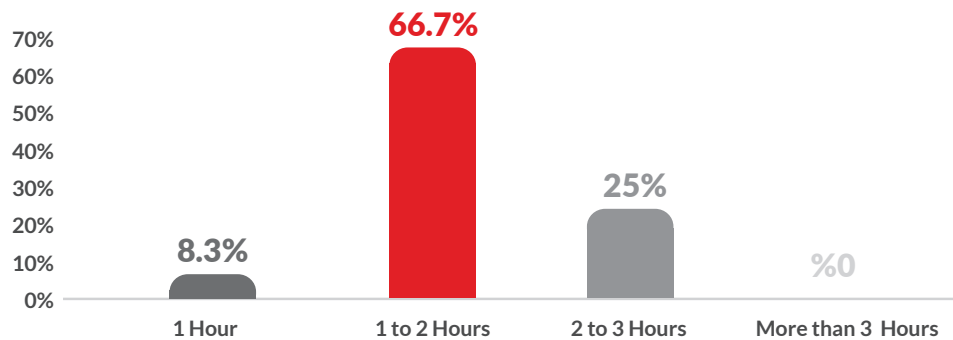
Furthermore, understanding the patterns of attendance for the minority of children who do participate in activities run by these organizations—according to their caregivers—the most frequently-reported frequency was 1-2 times a week, with 66.7% of respondents indicating this level of attendance.

Graph 41: How many times per week does your child attend these activities? – Caregivers



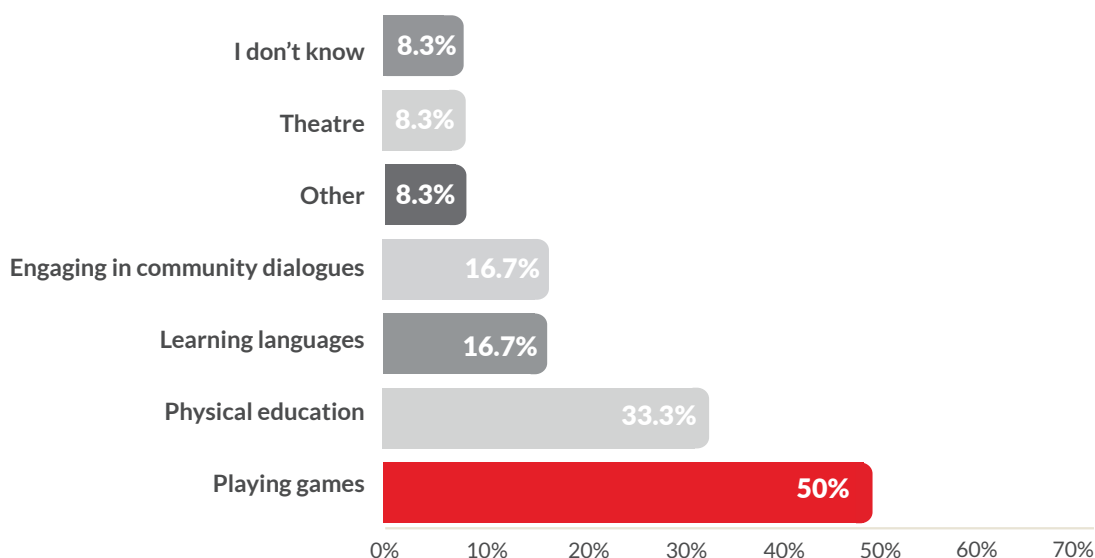
Parents reported that the most frequently-selected duration for these activities was one to two hours, with 66.7% indicating this as the typical time their children spend in these activities.

Graph 42: How many hours does your child spend there each time? – Caregivers



Regarding those who did engage in organized activities, when asked about the types of these activities, the majority of parents reported that their children were enrolled in activities that allowed them to play games, with 50% indicating this and confirming what the children had previously reported.

Graph 43: What kind of activities does your child participate in? – Caregivers



SECTION 5.2 WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE

Upon assessing their willingness to engage in organized activities in the future, a significant majority of children—comprising 86.5%—expressed a keen enthusiasm for further involvement, while only 13.5% indicated disinterest. When prompted to specify areas of interest, participants predominantly expressed the desire to engage in diverse activities. These included opportunities for learning and education, enhancing artistic skills such as drawing, sewing, and embroidery, participating in sports and physical activities, volunteering and helping others, and learning new languages.

”

I would not be interested in joining activities because I need to collect scrap to earn an income.

Male 11 YO, Rusaifeh

“

During the IDIs, a 10-year-old female from East Amman stated that she would be interested in fun activities,

especially if they involved play time. In her words “I love to play, but I don’t have money to pay for the rides. When I go to the park, I ask people to give me money so that I can play on the rides...each ride is for 1.5 dinars.”

When caregivers were asked about the support their children need, several key areas emerged as essential. Educational and learning needs were prominently highlighted, with a strong emphasis on access to quality education, private tutoring, and skill development. Financial support was also crucial, encompassing assistance for educational expenses as well as the basic needs that would alleviate the family’s economic burden. Psychological support, including mental health services and emotional counseling, was recognized as vital for children’s overall well-being. Recreational activities were seen as important for promoting physical health and social development. Basic necessities such as food and clothing emerged as fundamental, ensuring children’s health and proper development. Safety and security—both physical and environmental—were significant concerns, alongside access to healthcare services for general and specific medical needs.

SECTION 6

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Demographics:

The family dynamics of children engaged in waste scavenging in East Amman and Rusaifeh reveal significant trends and challenges that contribute to the prevalence of child labor. Most families are large, averaging 6.8 members, primarily consisting of minor children under 18. The data indicates that early marriage among the children surveyed is relatively rare, with only 5.8% of caregivers reporting a child married before the age of 18 in their households. Additionally, 13.2% of caregivers reported having at least one child with a physical disability.

2. Educational Impact:

The educational situation among the interviewed families reveals a concerning trend: 55.6% of children engaged in labor report being enrolled in formal public schooling, while 41.3% are not enrolled. Jordanian children have a slightly higher enrollment rate 57.3% compared to Syrian children 42.1%. Among those attending school, 66.2% attend regularly. Financial challenges, necessitating children to work, are the primary reason for non-enrollment. The findings highlight additional barriers to education: bullying and violence in the school environment; difficulties understanding the curriculum; and logistical issues such as the distance to schools and the associated transportation costs of such travel. Cultural norms also play a role, especially for girls, where education is often deprioritized once they are engaged to be married. The majority of caregivers 66.1% reported only having completed primary school, reflecting a broader trend of limited educational attainment in these communities. Overall, financial hardships and socio-economic pressures force families to prioritize immediate income over long-term educational opportunities. This perpetuates a cycle of poverty and limits future prospects for the children involved in labor.

Recommendation:

Addressing these educational barriers will require targeted interventions in order to alleviate financial burdens and provide consistent, accessible educational opportunities for all children:

- Increase efforts to ensure that working children have access to quality education. Address barriers to school enrollment and attendance.
- Support initiatives that provide educational materials and incentives for continued schooling.
- Encourage and facilitate greater participation in extracurricular and developmental activities for children. Support programs that offer educational, artistic, and recreational opportunities, addressing barriers to participation and ensuring accessibility.

3. Economic and Social Drivers of Child Labor:

The financial situation of the interviewed caregivers and children engaged in waste scavenging reveals a stark reality of unemployment and low income, leading to significant economic hardship. The data shows that a higher percentage of Jordanian children 65% reported that their parents are unemployed compared to Syrian children 26.3%. The majority of caregivers work in informal, low-paying jobs, averaging around 150 JD per month. This insufficient income leads to significant food insecurity, debt, and an inability to afford healthcare, severely affecting the family's quality of life. While some families receive aid from NAF, or depend on their working children's income, this support is often inadequate to cover all household expenses. Notably, 91.7% of caregivers report having had insufficient food or money to buy food within the past seven days, and 88.4% stating that their households are in debt, often up to 1,000 JD or more. The findings highlight a shifting dynamic in which women and children are increasingly becoming the primary providers, while the men are contributing less significantly to household income.

Children's contributions to household finances are substantial; 81.7% of children interviewed are contributing to family expenses, and 18% are primary providers for their families. The economic pressures faced by these families underscore the need for targeted interventions to address unemployment among caregivers, reduce dependency on child labor, and provide better economic opportunities and support for vulnerable families.

Most children 77% indicate that they chose to work independently to support their families, with only a small percentage being asked by parents or influenced by friends. The study reveals a common practice of waste picking, starting from a very young age.

Additionally, the data shows that most children secured their jobs independently, often through informal networks such as friends or neighbors. A higher percentage of Jordanian children found work on their own compared to Syrian children, who more often had help from their parents. In conclusion, pervasive financial difficulties and a lack of stable employment for caregivers are the primary drivers of child labor in the surveyed communities.

Recommendation:

The children's labor is clearly indispensable for their families' survival, highlighting the urgent need for interventions that address these economic challenges and provide sustainable alternatives to child labor.

- **Economic Support and Livelihood Programs:** Develop and expand social protection programs and economic support initiatives for families, especially those in informal employment, in order to reduce the economic pressures that drive child labor.
- **Implement targeted financial assistance and vocational training programs** for caregivers in order to improve household income stability.

4. Working Risks and Exploitations:

The nature of waste scavenging involves physically demanding and often hazardous activities. Children primarily engage in collecting trash and recyclable materials on the streets, sorting these materials, and carrying heavy loads. Metals—particularly copper—are the most sought-after materials due to their profitability, while plastic and other recyclables are also commonly collected. The qualitative insights emphasize the challenging conditions children face, including the monotony of the work and the physical exhaustion endured.

The dangers and risks faced by child laborers are extensive and severe. Health hazards from scavenging include illnesses from handling contaminated materials and food poisoning from consuming expired food products. Physical injuries are also common, usually sustained from using tools, handling heavy and hazardous materials, or accidents involving large trucks and machinery at dumpsites. The lack of proper equipment used by children exacerbates these risks, forcing children to carry heavy loads and increasing the likelihood of physical strain and injury. A majority of child laborers report feeling exhausted and experiencing significant physical pain, particularly back pain from carrying heavy sacks.

Children who engage in waste scavenging are exposed to environments that foster negative behavioral changes and habits. The IDIs reveal that many children begin smoking, exhibit disrespectful behavior towards their parents, and face increased risk of drug use. These behavioral shifts are influenced by the children's work conditions as well as the social interactions within their communities. The prevalence of smoking and drug use among child laborers underscores the detrimental social environment to which they are subjected daily.

Many children navigate complex value hierarchies in recyclable materials to maximize earnings, often opting to sort materials at home, when possible, to increase profits. The supply chain involves selling collected materials primarily to local scrap shops, with children often unaware of the broader market dynamics. Families sometimes employ strategic approaches to get better prices, selling to multiple scrap shops, or waiting for favorable offers. Despite these efforts, exploitation by scrap shop owners remains a significant issue, particularly for younger and less-experienced workers.

The majority of children earn 5 JD or less daily, with most selling materials directly and receiving immediate payment. This direct financial control contrasts with the smaller percentage of children who are paid by supervisors or have their earnings received by parents. Nationality influences payment dynamics, with Jordanian children more likely to manage their earnings directly compared to Syrian children.

Recommendation:

The findings from this study reveal that the physical, social, and emotional toll of the children's work is considerable, underscoring the critical need for targeted interventions to combat their exploitation and enhance their working conditions. One of the primary concerns is that many children engaged in waste scavenging operate independently, often without a formal employer. They may work alone, alongside family members, or on behalf of other individuals. This lack of formal employment arrangements makes it challenging to monitor and regulate their working conditions effectively. Consequently, there is a significant risk of exploitation, as these children are frequently vulnerable to harsh treatment and unfair compensation practices. To address these issues, several measures are necessary:

- There is a pressing need for more detailed research concerning children's work in dump sites, which may prove to be challenging, as access to dumpsites can be difficult to organize.
- Further mapping of families engaged in collective waste scavenging work is essential to better understand the dynamics and conditions faced by children in these settings. This detailed investigation will help identify the most effective strategies for raising awareness about the importance of child protection and education, as well as ways to enhance child protection measures implemented within these families.
- There is a pressing need for detailed research and mapping of scrap shop owners who purchase recyclable materials. This effort would help identify the pathways through which child laborers are involved in waste scavenging. By understanding the connections between waste pickers and scrap shop owners, it would become possible to trace and address exploitative practices.
- Scrap shop owners play a crucial role in the supply chain, including determining the prices paid for collected materials. Their pricing decisions have a significant impact on the income of waste pickers, often leading to the exploitation of the youngest and most vulnerable workers. Establishing regulations to ensure fair pricing and transparent transactions is essential to protecting child laborers from financial exploitation.
- Implementing and enforcing legal protections for child laborers is vital. This includes ensuring that child labor laws are enforced as well as providing mechanisms for reporting and addressing violations. Efforts should focus on improving oversight and support systems for child laborers.
- Increasing awareness among scrap shop owners, families, and the community about the rights of child laborers and the risks associated with child labor is crucial.
- Providing support services for child laborers—including access to education, healthcare, and psychological support—is essential for their overall well-being. These services can help mitigate the negative impact of their work and support their transition out of hazardous labor conditions.

5. Lack of Awareness and Participation in Activities:

The survey and its qualitative findings underscore a critical gap in awareness regarding child labor laws among both children and caregivers. The significant lack of knowledge about the legal working age in Jordan, with 54.8% of children and 71.9% of caregivers unaware of these regulations, highlights a major shortfall in understanding the protections designed to safeguard young workers. Children's misconceptions about the legal working age, with a notable percentage believing it to be 18 years old, coupled with caregivers' limited awareness—primarily restricted to the basic prohibition of employing children under 18—reveal a troubling ignorance of the broader legal framework intended to protect children from exploitation and hazardous conditions. The qualitative data further illuminates the risks associated with this lack of awareness. Both children and caregivers are frequently unaware of the full spectrum of legal protections, leaving children vulnerable to unsafe work environments and exploitation. Caregivers' unawareness of the specific laws may inadvertently lead them to place their children in harmful situations, while children's lack of knowledge about their rights prevents them from seeking help or reporting abuses.

Recommendation:

Addressing the gap in awareness is crucial for ensuring that children are protected from exploitation and harmful working conditions. Efforts must be made to educate both children and caregivers about child labor laws and their rights in order to create a safer and more supportive environment for young workers. Engaging local organizations, CBOs and community leaders, and stakeholders in efforts to enhance public awareness and understanding of these legal protections will help safeguard children and promote their overall well-being.

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