

50%

of Palestinian workers earn  
500,000 LBP or less a month

# PALESTINIAN EMPLOYMENT IN LEBANON

## FACTS AND CHALLENGES

LABOUR FORCE SURVEY AMONG  
**PALESTINIAN REFUGEES** LIVING  
IN CAMPS AND GATHERINGS  
IN LEBANON

## SUMMARY REPORT



Project Funded  
by the European Union



International  
Labour  
Organization



PEACEBUILDING FUND  
Lebanon

# **Palestinian Employment in Lebanon Facts and Challenges**

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**2012**

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International Labour  
Organization



Committee for the Employment  
of Palestinian Refugees



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The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the ILO or the CEP or any of the concerned partners.

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## HIGHLIGHTS AND FINDINGS

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Between 260,000 and 280,000 Palestinian refugees reside in 12 camps and 42 gatherings all around Lebanon (Chaaban et al., 2010). The great majority live under harsh living conditions with high poverty rates, inadequate infrastructure and housing conditions, and limited access to quality services and social protection, in addition to being subject to discriminatory laws and regulations.

The development conditions of Palestinian refugees are very much linked to their employment status. The lack of access to fair job opportunities and decent work is exacerbating the vicious cycle of impoverishment and precarious conditions that Palestinians endure. The employment conditions of Palestinian refugees reflect the discrimination and abuse they are subject to at the workplace. Most are unprotected, with limited labour rights due to legal restrictions, malpractice or bias.

This report profiles the employment conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. It is divided into three sections: demography, education and labour force participation. The labour force participation section constitutes the bulk of the report. It captures the different aspects of the labour force, including employment, unemployment, characteristics of the employed and the unemployed, income, working conditions, and protection and benefits, in addition to any other features that are pertinent to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

The following are the main highlights and findings of the report:

- The Palestinian labour force, in general, shares similar characteristics with the Lebanese in terms of activity rate, sector, employment status, occupation and industry. The general profile of the labour force has not changed significantly over time. Comparison with previous studies reveals little change in the employment status and working conditions of Palestinian refugees.
- The Palestinian workforce is poorly educated, young and lacking in skills. Most are engaged in low-status jobs concentrated in commerce and construction. A large proportion work on a daily, weekly, or productivity basis and are engaged in private employment.
- Participation of women in the labour force is very limited. The few women who are working are better educated than men and enjoy more decent working conditions and benefits, but are paid less than their male counterparts. The majority of working women are found in the education and health sectors. Many are engaged with civil society or international organizations and work as professionals, technicians or service and sales workers.
- Unemployment among Palestinian refugees is relatively low – similar to the Lebanese – but much lower than for other neighbouring countries. As expected, unemployment is high among youths, women and those with higher education.
- Higher education is correlated with better working status and more decent jobs. Those with better education are better paid, less overworked, enjoy more benefits and have enhanced protection.
- Indicators of working conditions reflect the vulnerable and insecure working status of Palestinian refugees. Very few work with a written contract, and a negligible share

receive health coverage or paid holiday and sick leave. Few are entitled to a pension or end-of-service indemnity.

- Palestinian refugees are overworked and poorly paid. The average monthly income of Palestinian workers is below the minimum wage and represents 80% of the average monthly income of the Lebanese (based on the figures of 2007). A gender difference in income is also apparent, as women earn 82% of men's income. Half of the workers receive less than 500,000 Lebanese pounds (LBP) a month.
- Low payment is coupled with long working hours. A Palestinian works 47 hours a week on average. Those who work in commerce, construction and hotels and restaurants work the most.
- The profile of Palestinian refugees in the different regions is more or less similar; however, the population in Beqaa – although very small – seems to enjoy relatively better conditions. On average, Beqaa refugees have greater educational attainment and the workforce is involved in more secure occupations and decent employment. The Palestinian workers in Tripoli and Tyre, on the other hand, are more disadvantaged.
- Work permits are not perceived as necessary and are not required by most of occupations performed by Palestinian refugees; only 2% of refugees have acquired a work permit. Half of the Palestinian refugees are employed by another Palestinian and one quarter work inside the camps only. Despite the high hopes built around the August 2010 legal amendments towards improving the conditions of Palestinian refugees, no impact has so far been perceived from those amendments on their working status.

The profile outlined above of the Palestinian workforce in Lebanon is a reflection of the inherently discriminatory laws and practices that have hindered Palestinians from legally joining the Lebanese labour market. Such conditions have not only led to the vulnerability and exposure to exploitation of Palestinian workers, but have also left the potential positive contributions of Palestinians unutilized. Making salient progress towards improved working conditions and fair treatment for the Palestinian workers in Lebanon calls for advancing a number of decisions and actions, including the following:

- Remove the legal and administrative obstacles that stand in the way of Palestinians receiving fair and legal working opportunities, including removal of the reciprocity injunction and the free work permit, and explore viable measures that could facilitate entrance of Palestinians to occupations regulated by law.
- Implement consistent and innovative advocacy campaigns calling for the right to work and to social protection of Palestinian refugees, and create awareness on the benefits for the Lebanese economy of Palestinian employment, dispelling any fears associating Palestinian employment with naturalization or “*tawteen*”.
- Conduct constructive dialogue with all concerned stakeholders, including the Lebanese Government, political groups, labour and professional syndicates, Lebanese and Palestinian civil society organizations, and international agencies, on the right to work and to social protection.

# DEMOGRAPHY

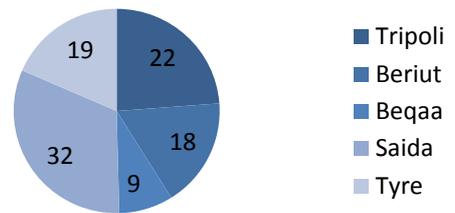
## A young population

The distribution of Palestinian households within Lebanon shows a population concentration mainly in Saida and Tripoli, which together house over half of the Palestinian refugees in the country, with a smaller share in Beqaa.

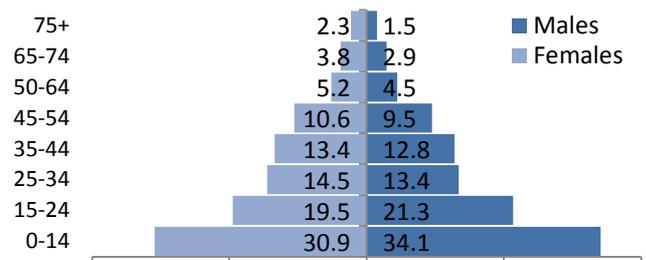
As would be expected, most of the population is young, with around a third being aged 15 years and below. However, this share has decreased in the past ten years. For example, it dropped 4 points from 37% in 1999 (Fafo, 2003). The Palestinian population is younger than the Lebanese; 53% are below 24 years, compared to 44% for the Lebanese population.

The age dependency ratio<sup>1</sup> is 61% for Palestinians compared to 52% for the Lebanese.<sup>2</sup> The rate varies by location; the highest recorded is in Tripoli (68%), and the lowest is in Tyre (54%).

Distribution of Palestinian households by location (%)



Age pyramid

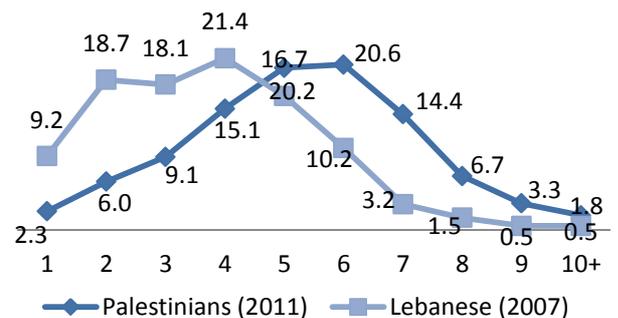


## Relatively small households

The average household size is estimated at 5.4 persons,<sup>3</sup> with little variation between locations. Household size has remained steady over the years, recording 5.3 in 1999 (Fafo, 2003). Palestinian households are larger than average Lebanese households (4.2), though similar to average Lebanese households in peripheral areas of the country (CAS, 2007).

In contrast to Lebanese households, the percentage of Palestinians households having one or two members is small, while there is a much bigger share of larger households.

Distribution of Palestinian and Lebanese households by number of persons in household (%)



<sup>1</sup> The age dependency ratio is calculated as follows: the dependent population (typically those aged below 15 years and above 65 years) divided by the productive population (typically those aged 15–64 years) x 100.

<sup>2</sup> Data from CAS, 2007. The comparison with the Lebanese population had to rely on the 2007 data pending the completion and dissemination of results of the National Survey of Household Living Conditions for 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Chaaban et al. (2010) give an estimate of household size of 4.5 persons.

### Around one fifth of households headed by female

The results of the survey on marital status show that 53% of Palestinians aged 15 and above are married, and 40% are single; a profile that is very similar to the Lebanese.

In addition, data on family structure show that for every 1,000 heads of households there are 763 spouses and 2,481 children.

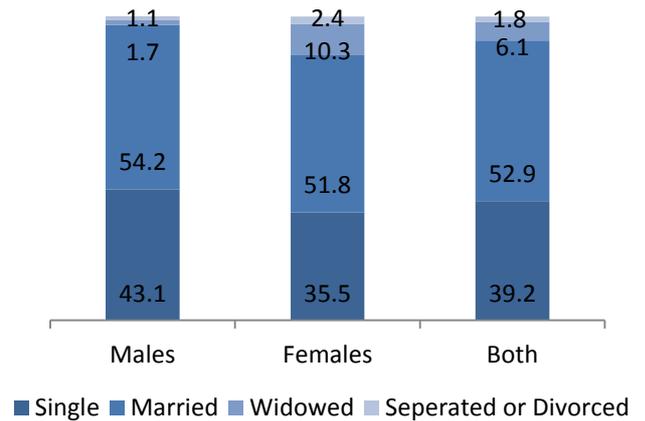
It is worth noting that 82% of households are headed by males and 18% by females; Beqaa has a high rate of female-headed households at 24%. The Lebanese, in comparison, have a lower rate of female-headed households, at 14% (CAS, 2004).

### A refugee population that is born in Lebanon

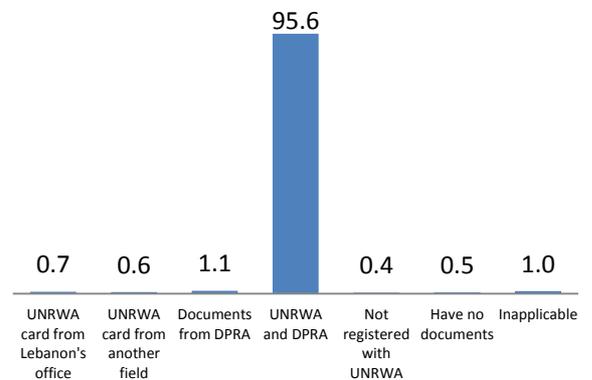
Around 90% of the Palestinian refugee population are born in Lebanon; the other 10% are largely the older population born in Palestine who sought refuge in Lebanon after the *nakba*.<sup>4</sup>

It is unarguably a refugee population; the distribution according to documentation of status and passport type reveals that 95% possess a Lebanese-Palestinian passport – what is commonly known as *wathika*. Similarly, 96% also have the card of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the documents attesting registration at the General Directorate of Political and Refugee Affairs (DPRA) within the Ministry of Interior. Only 0.5% do not possess any documents confirming refugee status.

Distribution of individuals (15+) by sex and marital status (%)



Distribution of population by type of status documentation (%)



<sup>4</sup> The *nakba* is the Arabic name for the Palestinian exodus of 1948.

# EDUCATION

## Illiteracy, an age-related phenomenon

The current survey results estimate illiteracy at 8%, with some disparity between males (5%) and females (11%). Illiteracy is highly correlated with older age and is accordingly more prevalent among the older population, particularly the female elderly. It goes up to 80% among females above 65 years. The illiteracy rate among Lebanese is 9% and has similar characteristics (CAS, 2007).

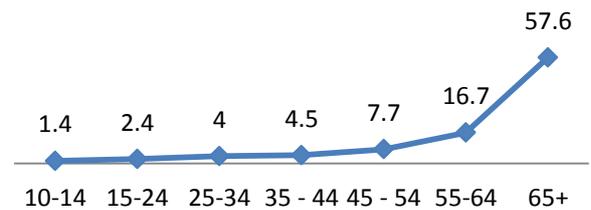
Significant spatial discrepancies exist in illiteracy rates when compared to the national average. The highest illiteracy rates for both males and females are recorded in Tyre, reaching 13%, in comparison to a much lower rate in Tripoli at around 5%.

## Despite some improvements, level of educational attainment is still low

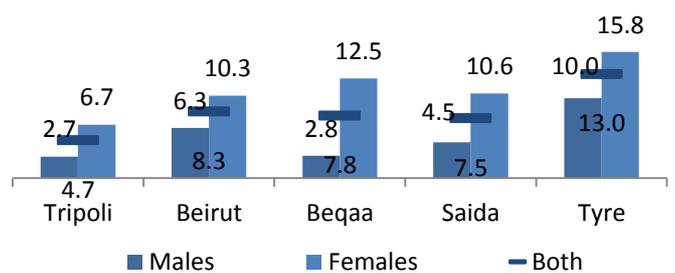
More than half of the Palestinian population has primary education or less. Despite the gloomy picture, the educational attainment of Palestinian refugees has witnessed some drastic improvements in the past ten years. The share of population that completed secondary education has increased from 6% in 1999 to around 12%. Yet, there has been little change in the rate of those with higher education, which remains constant at around 5–6% (Fafo, 2003).

The limited access to and adequate quality of educational services provided for Palestinian refugees, coupled with high poverty rates, place them at a level of educational attainment below the Lebanese. The percentage of those who have completed primary education or can read and write<sup>5</sup> is clearly higher among Palestinians; in contrast, the share of those with university education is higher among the Lebanese.

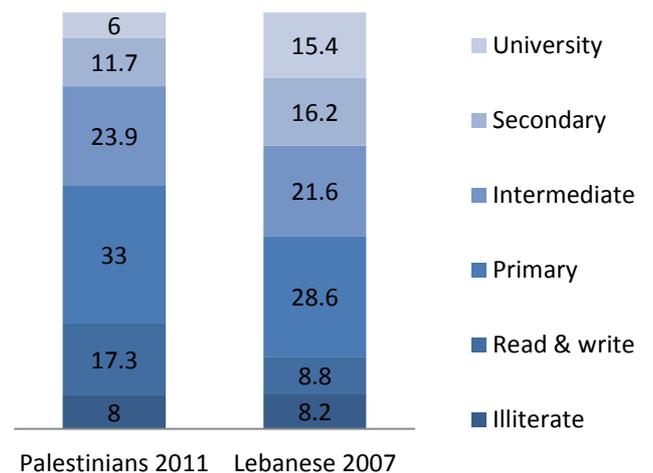
Illiteracy rate by age



Illiteracy rate by sex and location



Distribution of Palestinian and Lebanese population by attained educational level (%)<sup>6</sup>



<sup>5</sup> The category “read and write” refers to those who can read and write and did not attain any educational level.

<sup>6</sup> Since the results revealed a small share of those enrolled in vocational education, vocational cycles were merged with their corresponding general education cycles.

## Educational attainment by sex and location

Females enjoy higher educational attainment than males. Similar to the Lebanese, this greater educational attainment for females is not reflected in better participation in the labour force.

Geographically, the level of educational attainment is similar across locations. Beqaa has the highest educational levels; it records the lowest percentage in the “can read and write” group and the highest percentage of the university educated.

## Enrolment rates start high, but decrease drastically with age

The enrolment rate for the age group 5–9 for both males and females is around 98%, very close to the Lebanese rate. However, it starts to decrease with older age, with a widening discrepancy between males and females. The gap in enrolment rates widens significantly between the Lebanese and the Palestinians at the age group 15–19, recording 75% and 46% respectively. A relatively high enrolment rate in preschool at around 85% is recorded for the age group 0–4.

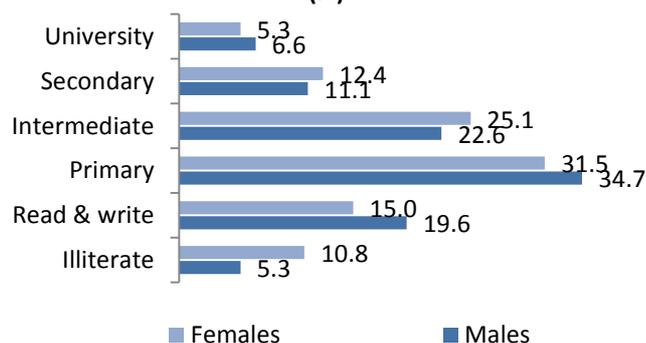
Enrolment rates do not differ greatly by location, ranging from 57% in Saida to 62% in Tripoli.

## UNRWA is the main provider of schooling

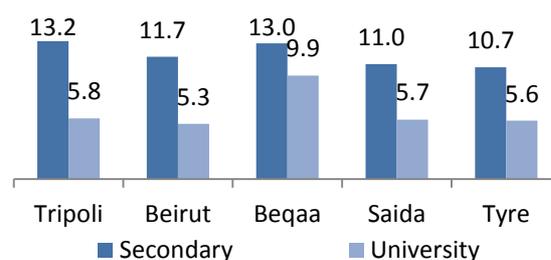
Most school students among the Palestinian refugees receive their education at UNRWA schools. The proportion educated by UNRWA at the secondary level has dramatically increased since 1999, from 43% to 82%. The main reason is the increase in the number of UNRWA secondary schools in recent years, which has had the positive consequence of an improvement in secondary attainment from 6% in 1999 to 12% currently. On the other hand, more students are attending private schools for primary education, rising from 3% to 7% (Fafo, 2003).

In terms of higher education, the majority are currently seeking education in private institutions, compared to around half of the students attending private universities in the past. This change is attributed to the mushrooming of private universities in the country and the competitiveness in accessing the Lebanese university for scientific majors.

Distribution of males and females by educational attainment (%)



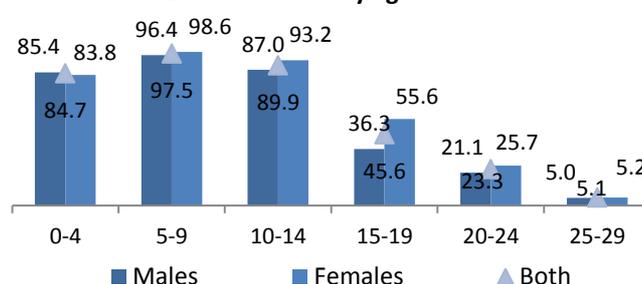
Percentage of those who completed secondary and university education from total population



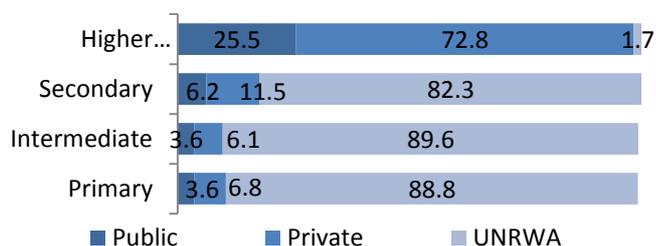
Gross and net enrolment rates by educational level and sex

|  | Males | Females | Both |
|--|-------|---------|------|
| <b>Primary</b> gross enrolment rate      | 108   | 105     | 106  |
| Primary net enrolment rate               | 93    | 96      | 95   |
| <b>Intermediate</b> gross enrolment rate | 58    | 75      | 66   |
| Intermediate net enrolment rate          | 55    | 68      | 61   |
| <b>Secondary</b> gross enrolment rate    | 23    | 39      | 31   |
| Secondary net enrolment rate             | 16    | 27      | 22   |

Enrolment rate by age and sex



Distribution of currently enrolled students by type of educational institution and education level



# LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

## Palestinian labour force (economic activity)<sup>7</sup>

### ILO classification system for the economically active population and the labour force

|   |  |                      |   |  |
|---|--|----------------------|---|--|
| Working age population (15 years and above) <b>67%</b>          |  |                      |   | Population below working age (15 years and below) <b>33%</b> |
| Economically active population (In the labour force) <b>42%</b> |  |                      |   |  |
| Employed <b>92%</b>   |  | Unemployed <b>8%</b> | Inactive population (outside the labour force) <b>58%</b> |  |
| Part time (34 hours a week or less) <b>22%</b>                  | Full time (35 hours a week or more) <b>78%</b> |                      |   |  |

### Very low economic participation of women

The economic activity rate<sup>8</sup> was recorded at 42% for the Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon, nearly the same as for the Lebanese population. More than half of the population is practically inactive. Palestinian female participation in the labour force is low at 15%, compared to 21% for Lebanese women. The economic activity rate of Palestinians has changed little over the past ten years, with a one point drop in the participation of women.<sup>9</sup>

### Economic activity rate for Palestinians and Lebanese

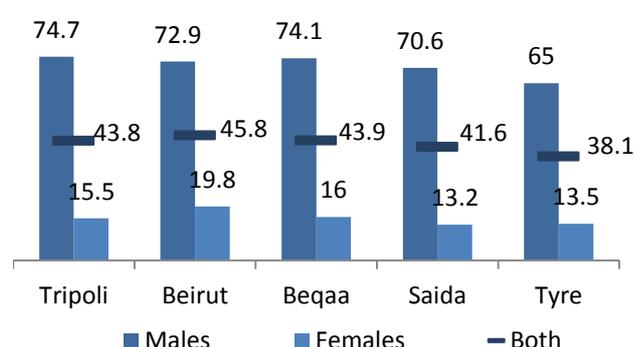
|                | Palestinians (2011) | Palestinians (1999) | Lebanese (2007) |
|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Both</b>    | 42                  | 42                  | 43              |
| <b>Males</b>   | 71                  | 69                  | 67              |
| <b>Females</b> | 15                  | 16                  | 21              |

### Economic activity rate is similar across locations

The economic activity rate is similar across different locations in Lebanon; Tyre records the lowest rate of 38%, while Beirut is the highest at 46%.

The discrepancy in female participation in the labour force across locations is more acute for the Lebanese; the Beirut and Mount Lebanon governorates enjoy a 30% female participation in the labour force, compared to around 12% in the peripheral governorates of the north and Beqaa (CAS, 2007); for the Palestinians, however, female participation is more constant across locations.

### Economic activity rate by location and sex



<sup>7</sup> All figures related to the labour force have been calculated for the population 15 years and above.

<sup>8</sup> The economic activity rate (or labour force participation) is calculated as follows: total labour force (whether employed or unemployed) aged 15 years and above divided by total population aged 15 years and above x 100. Economic activity is calculated based on any activity performed during one week before the date of the interview.

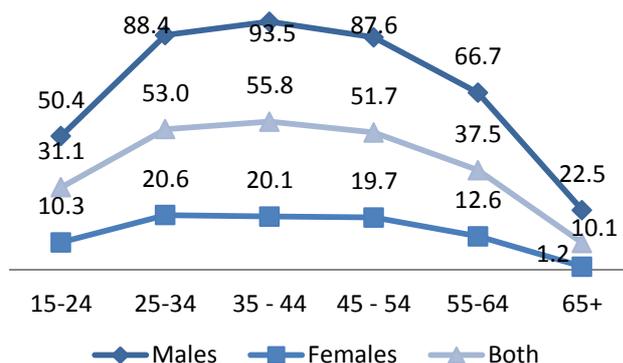
<sup>9</sup> According to the qualitative study on the employability of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon done by Fafo (2006), the Palestinian labour force participation is slightly lower: 37% for Palestinians, with 63% for men and 13% for women.

### Economic activity rate falls drastically after the age of 54

Economic activity rate is highest at the age of 35–44 and drops drastically at the age of 54 for both men and women. The disparity in economic activity between males and females remains high across all age groups. Among the elderly, economic activity rate is 10%, the majority of whom are men, with only 1% of women still active after 65.

As would be expected, of the total active population, over half is between the ages of 25 and 44 for both sexes. Those who are 24 and below number 22% and those above 55 years represent only 8%.

Economic activity rate by age and sex

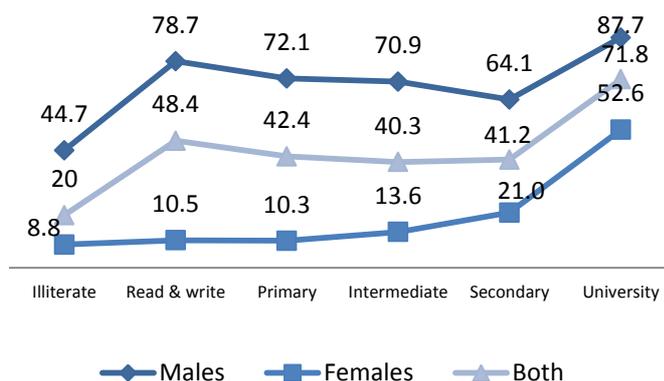


### Education enhances labour force participation

Activity rate increases with higher educational attainment. This is also partially attributable to the fact that the majority of the illiterate sample are elderly. Almost 53% of women and 88% of men who have attained university education or more are active. The rate is only 10% for women who can read and write (though lack education) or with primary education only.

There is little difference in labour force participation between those who have completed vocational education and university studies.

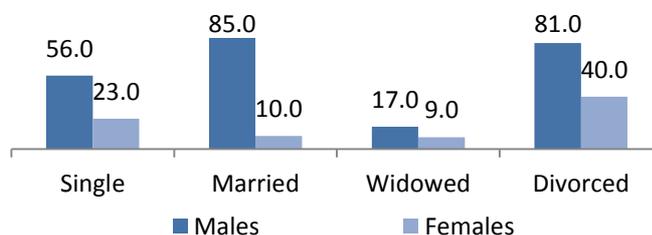
Economic activity rate by education and sex



### Low participation among married women

The doubled burden of work and family obligations is reflected in low participation of married females. Economic activity is lowest among the widowed, who are probably of older age and have withdrawn from the labour market. Divorced women are the most active, possibly due to the financial responsibility they have to assume after divorce.

Economic activity rate by marital status and sex



## Inactive population

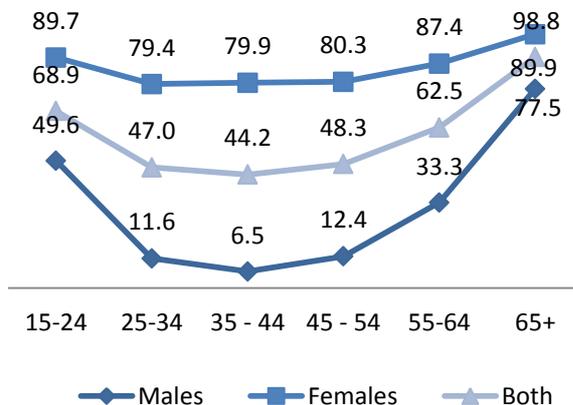
### Majority are women, students or elderly

The inactive Palestinian population is estimated at 58%;<sup>10</sup> the majority are women and students. The main reasons for inactivity are pursuit of education (36%) and poor health (30%) for males, and housework (51%) for women. A small fraction (3%) of women are inactive due to the objections of family members.

Inactivity according to age group and sex starts high for men in the age group 15–24, as the majority are still studying; it decreases for the age group 25–34 and rises again after 55. For women, there are slight differences in levels of inactivity across younger and older age groups.

Inactivity by location is relatively consistent with the exception of Tyre, where there is a comparatively higher inactivity rate (62%), especially for men (35%).

Inactive population by age and sex



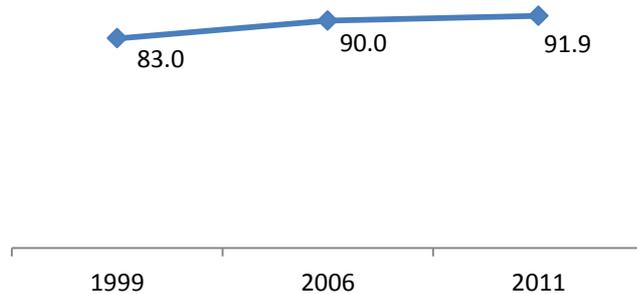
## Employment and characteristics of Palestinian workers

### Rise in employment rate of Palestinians with a decrease of employed women

The overall employment rate<sup>11</sup> among Palestinian refugees is 92% (93% for men and 85% for women), rising slightly from 83% in 1999 and 90% in 2006 (Tiltne, 2005; Fafo, 2006). The percentage of employed women out of the total employed has gone down to 17% from 21% in 1999 (Fafo, 2003).

There is little difference by location in the share of employed females in the total employed. The highest rate is recorded in Beirut at 20%, and the lowest in Saida at 16%.

Overall employment rate in different years



<sup>10</sup> Chaaban et al. (2010) use the term “joblessness”, defined as those of working age who are inactive but not studying, pregnant or ill. According to the survey, joblessness is estimated at 56%. The rate for joblessness is often mistakenly used as the unemployment rate.

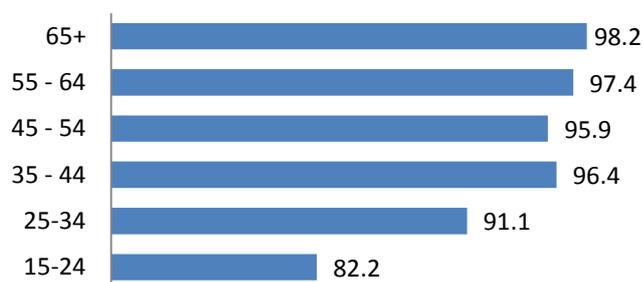
<sup>11</sup> The employed (or the actual labour force) is defined as those who are within the labour force (economically active) that have actually carried out any work in the past week for one hour or more, whether paid or unpaid.

### Employment rate increases with age and decreases with educational level

Overall employment rate varies across different age groups, with the highest in the age group 65 and above and the lowest for those 15–24 years, as most are probably still engaged in education.

In terms of education, employment rates decrease with better education. Highest rates are among those who are illiterate (95%) and lowest among holders of university degrees (85%).

Employment rate by age

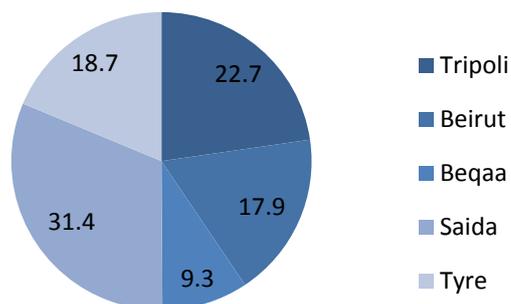


### Geographical distribution of workers corresponds with distribution of population

Saida hosts one third of the working Palestinians (31%); Beirut, Tripoli and Tyre have lower rates, ranging between 19% and 23%.

Illiterate workers are mainly concentrated in Tyre (37%). Contrary to expectations, 70% of workers with university education and higher work in Saida, Tripoli and Tyre, with a smaller proportion in Beirut.

Distribution of the employed by location (%)



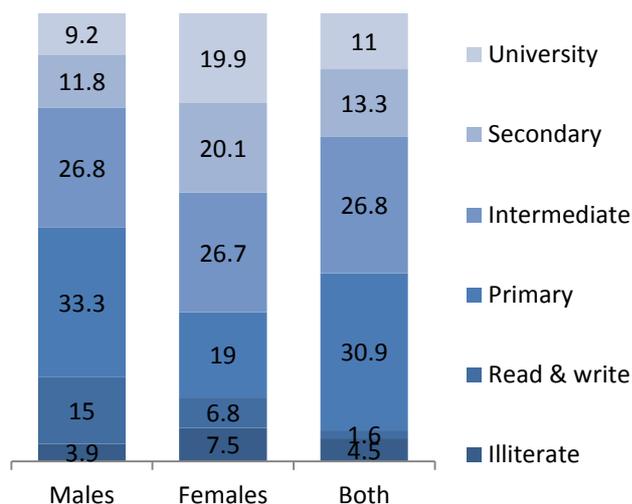
### A young and poorly educated workforce

The distribution of the employed according to age reveals that 52% are aged 25–44 years.

More than 60% of the workers have primary education or less. The proportion of employed women with university education is double that of men. Lebanese workers are better educated than Palestinian workers, with 24% having a university degree compared to only 11% of Palestinians.

Looking at the employed according to their distribution by education in each location, Beqaa has the highest share of university-educated workers and the lowest share of workers who are illiterate or can read and write.

Distribution of the employed by education and sex (%)



## One out of three has insecure employment status

The employment status of Palestinian refugees reveals their vulnerable conditions, particularly when compared to the Lebanese. More than one third of the employed work weekly, daily or based on productivity, whereas this category represents only 10% among the Lebanese.

Similar to the Lebanese, Palestinian women are mostly working as monthly paid labourers (around 70%), while men are divided between monthly (34%) and weekly, daily or based on productivity (35%). A small proportion of women are employers (3%), compared to 10% of men.

Of total workers in each location, Beqaa has a share higher than the average of monthly paid workers for both men (51%) and women (77%). Tyre, on the other hand, has a significant proportion of employers/partners for both males and females (13% and 7% respectively).

As expected, education improves employment status. Around 74% of the university-educated are monthly paid workers, with an even higher rate for females; while 47% of those who can read and write are paid on a daily, weekly or based on productivity basis.

Level of education does not affect employment of females as much as it does for males. Among females, the largest category is monthly paid employee, for all educational levels.

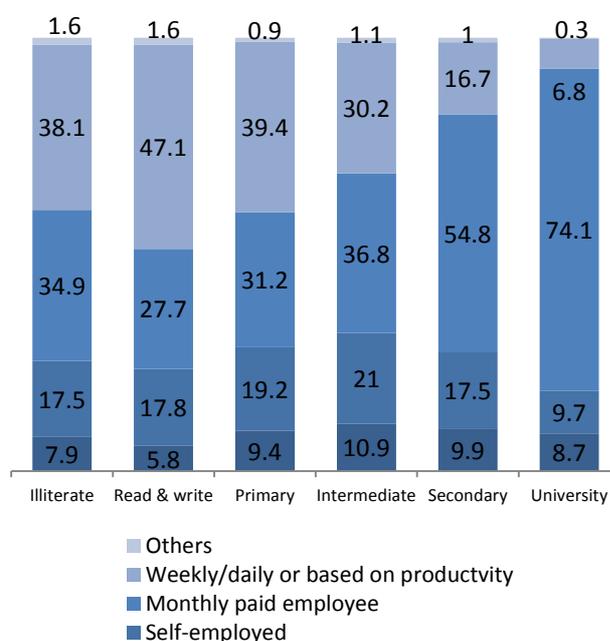
## Private sector dominates

The private sector takes most workers, a situation that has changed little over time from 80% recorded in 1999 (Fafo, 2003) to 86% at present; the difference comes from reduced employment in civil society organizations, international organizations and private households over the years. Approximately 20% of females work in civil society organizations and UNRWA, versus 6% of males; this is attributed to the women-friendly environment this sector provides and the focus of civil society activity on education and health, areas that tend to attract women, particularly those with better education.

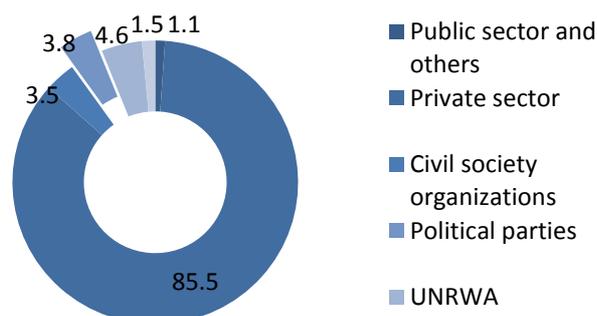
Distribution of the employed Palestinian and Lebanese by employment status (%)



Distribution of the employed by employment status and education (%)



Distribution of the employed by sector (%)



## Commerce and construction employ most Palestinian workers

As a result of the employment restrictions imposed on the Palestinian refugees and the nature of the Lebanese market, the majority of workers are involved in construction and commerce, continuing the previous trend.

Employment according to industry hides considerable gender segregation. Women are overrepresented in education and health and the “other” category,<sup>12</sup> while construction and commerce are male dominated.

Very few Palestinian refugees (2%) work in the hotel and restaurant industry, despite the fact that it is a booming sector in Lebanon.

Distribution of workers according to industry and location is consistent across locations; only Tyre has a relatively higher share of workers in agriculture (17%) compared to around 2% or less in other locations. It is worth noting that the percentage of Palestinians working in agriculture has dropped from 11% in 1999 to 4%.

Better-educated workers are mainly employed in the “other”, education and health sectors; the picture changes for commerce and construction, which generally involves those who have no or low education.

## Predominance of low-skilled jobs

With regard to occupation type, men work mostly in precarious and low-status jobs such as crafts, service and sales. The few women who are working have better-status jobs such as senior officers, professionals and technicians, as these require a relatively higher educational level.

As expected, higher education is correlated with higher-status occupations; 76% of those with university education work as officers, professionals and technicians, while 36% of illiterate persons and 21% of those who can read and write work in elementary occupations. It is worth noting that 4% of the university educated are engaged in elementary occupations.

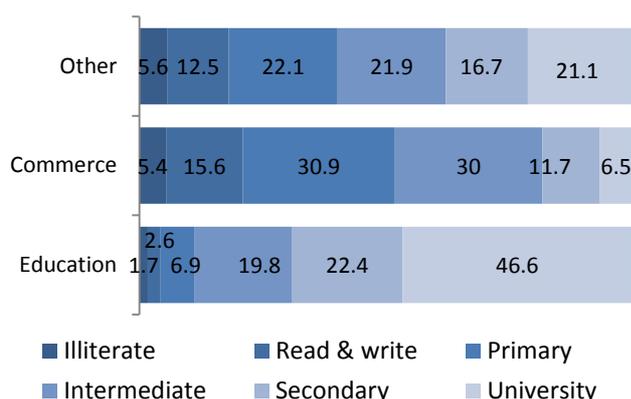
Some variations exist in the type of occupations that are more prevalent in each location. For example, the proportion of people working as officers, professionals or technicians is high in Beqaa. In other professions, such as craft and elementary occupations, the rates are similar across locations.

Around 2% of those employed have a second job and 10% of working males and 3% of females are seeking additional work.

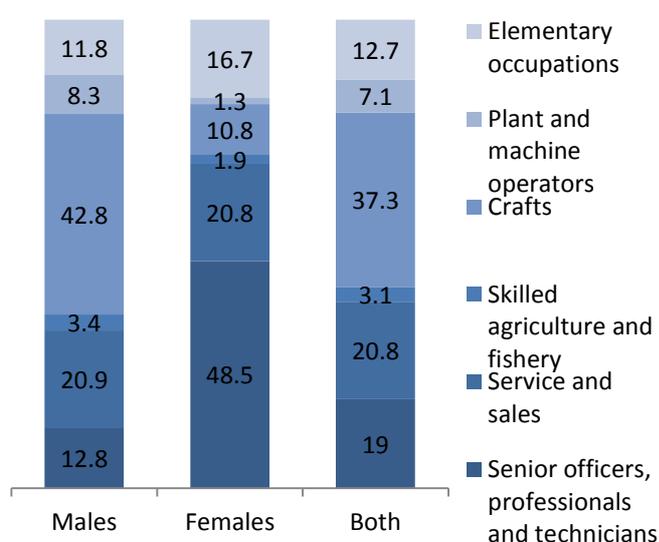
Distribution of the employed by industry and sex (%)

|                              | Males | Females | Both |
|------------------------------|-------|---------|------|
| <b>Agriculture</b>           | 4.5   | 2.3     | 4.1  |
| <b>Manufacturing</b>         | 11.6  | 13.3    | 11.9 |
| <b>Construction</b>          | 28.6  | 1.5     | 24.0 |
| <b>Commerce</b>              | 27.3  | 19.3    | 25.9 |
| <b>Hotel and restaurants</b> | 2.4   | 0.6     | 2.1  |
| <b>Transport and Storage</b> | 5.6   | 1.2     | 4.9  |
| <b>Education</b>             | 1.6   | 16.4    | 4.2  |
| <b>Health</b>                | 2.9   | 17.0    | 5.3  |
| <b>Other</b>                 | 15.5  | 28.3    | 17.7 |
| <b>Total</b>                 | 100   | 100     | 100  |

Distribution of the employed by education in selected industries (%)



Distribution of the employed by occupation and sex (%)



<sup>12</sup> The category “other” includes the following activities: Finance and Insurance, electricity, gas and water, other services such as hairdressing, laundry, civil society, international organizations, trade unions, professional associations and political parties.

# Unemployment and characteristics of the unemployed

## A decline in the unemployment rate

The unemployment rate among the Palestinian refugees was estimated at 8%,<sup>13</sup> according to survey results. It is slightly higher than the rate for Lebanese workers (6%) in 2009 (CAS, 2011) and much lower than for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (21%).<sup>14</sup>

Unemployment rates have been fluctuating in recent years, with a rise to 17% in 1999 followed by a decrease to 10% in 2006. The rate of female unemployment has been particularly high and subject to fluctuation (Fafo, 2003, 2006).

## Unemployment hits women, youths and those with higher education

The unemployment rate for females (14%) is almost double that for males (7%); Youths (15–24 years) and those with higher education are the groups suffering most in finding a job. Unemployment decreases with age; it goes down to 3% for males and zero for females aged 55 and above. Higher education means higher unemployment rate for both sexes; the rate among the university educated is three times that of illiterates.

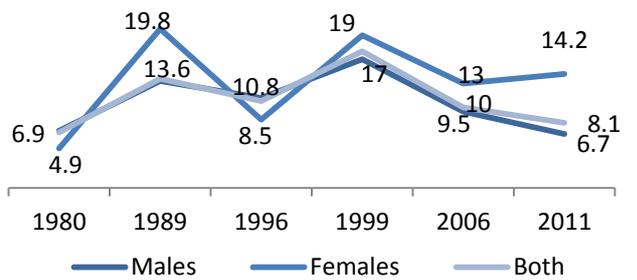
Geographically, unemployment is higher than the average in both Beirut and Tripoli (11%), particularly for females; it goes down to 6% in Beqaa, 9% in Saida and as low as 2% in Tyre.

## A different perspective on unemployment

As it could be argued that the unemployment rate is underestimated given the restricted criteria for defining unemployment, a less restricted rate was calculated.

When calculating the rate to include those who searched in the past six months, it goes up to around 11%. Likewise, adding those not searching because they have lost hope and given up looking for a job or believe that no work is available, the unemployment rate again increases, by one point to become about 9%.

Historical trend of unemployment rate of Palestinians



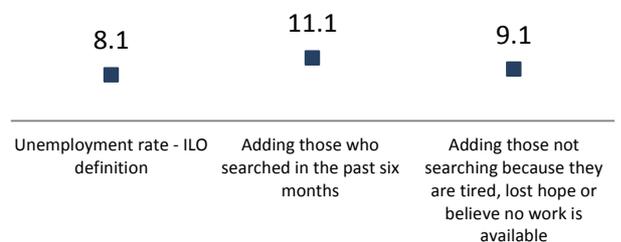
Unemployment rate by age and sex

|              | Males      | Females     | Both       |
|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| 15-24        | 15.1       | 31.5        | 17.7       |
| 25-34        | 7.5        | 14.4        | 8.9        |
| 35-44        | 2.4        | 9.0         | 3.6        |
| 45-44        | 2.9        | 8.9         | 4.1        |
| 55-64        | 3.2        | 0           | 2.6        |
| 65+          | 1.9        | 0           | 1.8        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>6.7</b> | <b>14.2</b> | <b>8.1</b> |

Unemployment rate by education and sex

|                | Males | Females | Both |
|----------------|-------|---------|------|
| Illiterate     | 3.2   | 10.0    | 5.3  |
| Read and Write | 4.6   | 15.4    | 5.7  |
| Primary        | 6.6   | 14.7    | 7.6  |
| Intermediate   | 6.2   | 11.0    | 7.0  |
| Secondary      | 7.4   | 12.6    | 8.8  |
| University     | 12.0  | 20.0    | 14.6 |

Unemployment rate based on different definitions



<sup>13</sup> Unemployment was calculated based on the ILO definition, whereby a person has to meet the following three conditions: not working for the past week, actively seeking a job in the previous four weeks and currently available for work.

<sup>14</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics website <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/>.

## One out of two unemployed is younger than 24 years

Looking at the profile of the unemployed Palestinians, figures reveal that around half (49%) are below 24 years and another one third (28%) are between 25 and 34, a global trend that is well reflected among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Similar to the employed, the majority of the unemployed are distributed among the three big cities of Beirut (25%), Saida (34%) and Tripoli (30%).

In terms of education, the biggest proportion of the unemployed are those who finished primary to secondary education for both males and females. Of total unemployed females, more than one third are holders of university degrees.

The characteristics of the Palestinian unemployed have changed little over time and are very similar to those of the Lebanese unemployed. The latest data available on the unemployed Lebanese show a similar pattern.

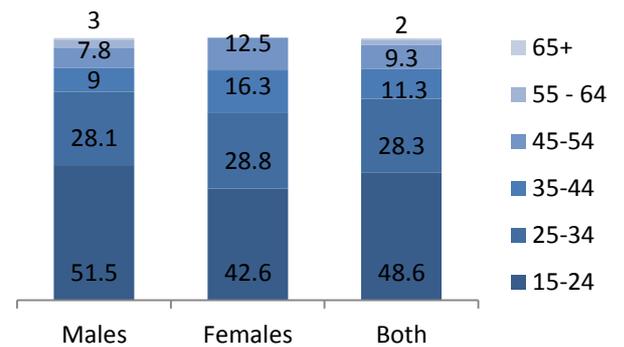
## Means for job finding are still traditional

The majority of Palestinian refugees resort to traditional means for finding a job. The first means adopted is via acquaintances, friends and relatives (71%), followed by applying directly to the employer (63%) and asking at workplaces (13%); searching through employment service centres or advertisements in the media was negligibly utilized.

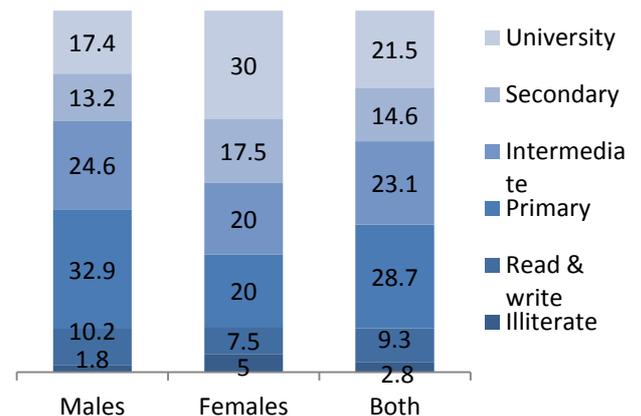
The average waiting time for finding a job was estimated at 6 months; women (6.5 months) take more time than men (6 months), which is comparable to the Lebanese. The average waiting time increases with age and education, possibly because older and more educated people become more demanding and have more uncompromising job requirements.

Surprisingly, the waiting time varies drastically across locations. It rises to around 9 months in Beqaa, but goes down to 1.5 months in Tyre.

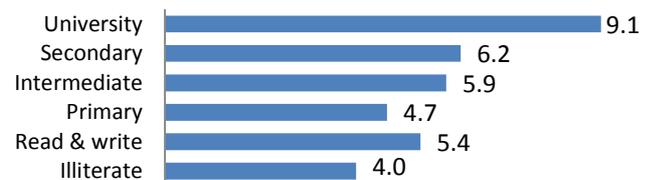
Distribution of the unemployed by age and sex (%)



Distribution of the unemployed by education and sex (%)



Average waiting time (months) to find a job by education (%)



by location (%)



## Income

### Average income below minimum wage

According to the question on income,<sup>15</sup> a Palestinian worker earns on average a net income of 537,000 Lebanese pounds (LBP) per month, an amount that is considerably below the minimum wage of 675,000 LBP. Unfairness is aggravated when the average income of Palestinians is compared to that of the Lebanese. According to 2007 figures, the average income of a Lebanese worker amounted to around 680,000 LBP, despite one effective wage amendment and increased inflation witnessed in the past four years (CAS, 2007).

The discrepancy in wages between males and females is high among the Palestinian refugees; women earn almost 80% of men's income, with an average of 100,000 LBP difference between male and female wages.

The majority of workers are very poorly paid, with half of the Palestinian workers getting less than 500,000 LBP a month. Only a very small fraction (around 3%) earn 1,500,000 LBP or above. The picture among the Lebanese is slightly less gloomy, with 50% receiving an income of less than 600,000 LBP per month, but more than 7% have an income of 1,500,000 LBP and above, bearing in mind that income figures for the Lebanese date back to 2007 (CAS, 2007).

Income insecurity is apparent among Palestinian workers; around 55% get their income on a daily, weekly or irregular basis, versus 42% who are paid monthly.

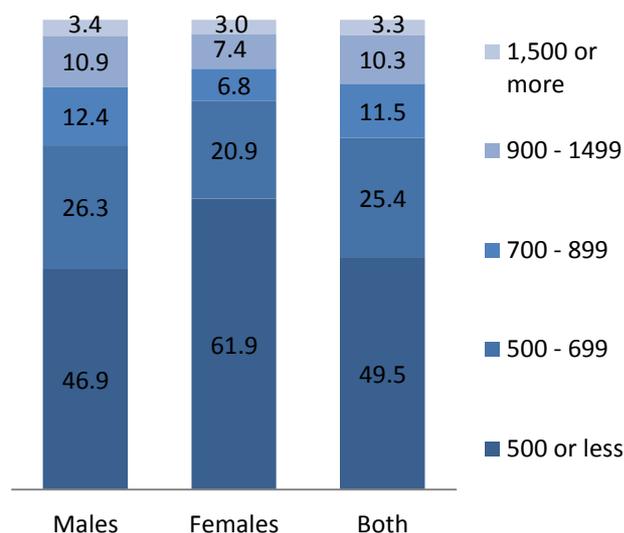
### Agriculture is least paid

Average income is equally low across the different types of professions. It is dramatically low for workers in agriculture, at 365,000 LBP a month, an amount slightly higher than the poverty line, which is estimated at around 275,000 LBP per person per month (Chaaban et al., 2010). Professionals and technicians – who probably work in health, education and commerce – are the highest wage earners. The same type of discrepancy in wages across professions is observed among Lebanese workers.

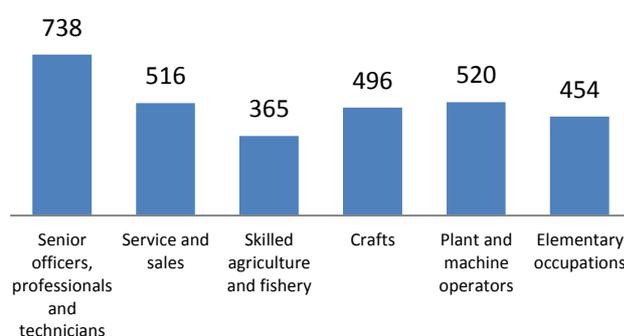
Average and median income of Palestinian and Lebanese workers (thousand LBP)

|                | Palestinians (2011) |        | Lebanese (2007) |        |
|----------------|---------------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
|                | Average             | Median | Average         | Median |
| <b>Males</b>   | 554                 | 500    | 687             | 600    |
| <b>Females</b> | 457                 | 400    | 661             | 550    |
| <b>Both</b>    | 537                 | 500    | 679             | 560    |

Distribution of workers by income bracket (%) (thousand LBP)



Average income of workers by occupation (thousand LBP)



<sup>15</sup> The surveyed population was asked what was the amount of income (or net value profit) for the last month for their main job in Lebanese pounds. If a person receives income on a daily, weekly or irregular basis, an estimate was calculated for one month. The response rate was considered high on this question; it reached 99%.

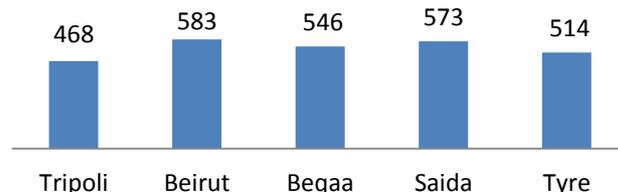
## Higher education yields better income

Average income is comparable in the different locations; Tripoli records the lowest income mean at 468,000 LBP a month, compared to Beirut with 583,000 LBP a month. The difference in income between the Lebanese and Palestinians is high in Beirut and Mount Lebanon but narrows in the peripheral areas.

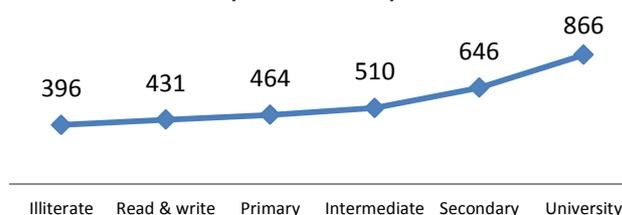
Youths and elderly people earn the least; average monthly income from work is 394,000 LBP at the age of 15–24 and reaches its peak (635,000 LBP) at the age of 45–54, going down again to 489,000 LBP for those above 65.

Better education is generally associated with higher income. The average income of illiterate people is a little below 400,000 LBP, and increases with higher levels of education to reach 866,000 LBP for those with university or graduate degrees. None of the illiterate people earn more than 1,000,000 LBP, while a small share of university educated earn less than 500,000.

Average income of workers by location (thousand LBP)



Average income of workers by education (thousand LBP)



## Working conditions

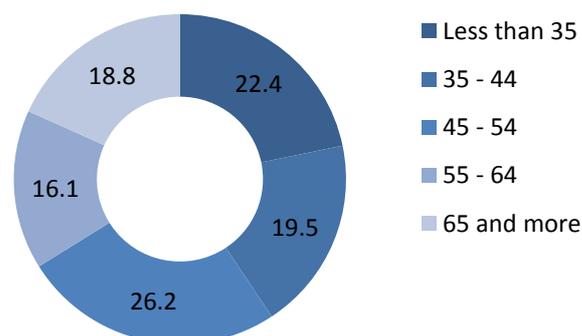
### A sizeable share work for long hours

On average a Palestinian worker works 47 hours a week, with around 3 hours increase from 44 hours a week according to the estimates of 1999 (Fafo, 2003). Professionally, men work 49 hours a week, 7 hours more than women. Around one fifth work for more than 65 hours weekly.

Not much difference has been recorded in working hours between the different age and education groups. The only salient finding is that those with university degrees work approximately an hour less a week than the other groups.

As a measure of underemployment, it should be noted that around 12% of those working less than 35 hours weekly are seeking an additional job (15% of males and 5% of females).

Distribution of workers by actual working hours per week (%)



## Workers in hotels and restaurants work the most

There is some variance, however, in the working hours in the different locations. Workers in Tyre spend the least time at work with around 40 hours a week, compared to workers in Beirut with 51 hours a week on average. The geographical difference in working hours is partially attributed to the different occupations and industries practised in each location.

The results also show that those working in education, followed by agriculture, work significantly less than workers in hotels and restaurants or commerce.

## Deficient health coverage

A very small fraction of those employed benefit from health care coverage – only 5%, a rate that is ten times higher for their Lebanese counterparts (53% are covered) (CAS, 2007). This deficiency in providing an adequate level of protection has not improved in the past decade, despite some recent legal amendments, and may in fact have deteriorated. Studies in 1999 estimated that only 7% of Palestinian workers had health care coverage (Fafo, 2003). Currently, the very few who are covered are mainly provided with health insurance on their employers' account.

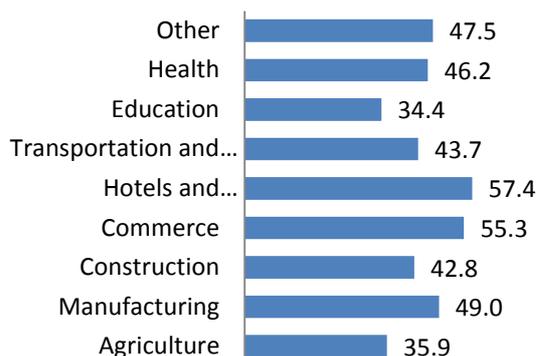
The percentage of covered female workers (10%) is double that of males (4%). Geographically, the percentage of those covered in Beirut and Beqaa is relatively higher, reaching 8% and 9% respectively, but drops to 3% and 4% in Tyre and Saida.

Most of those covered are the educated workforce. Of the total covered, half are university educated, whereas only 2% are illiterate people and 3% can read and write. The majority (84%) are between 25 and 54 years. Among the elderly (above 65 years), only 2% benefit from health insurance.

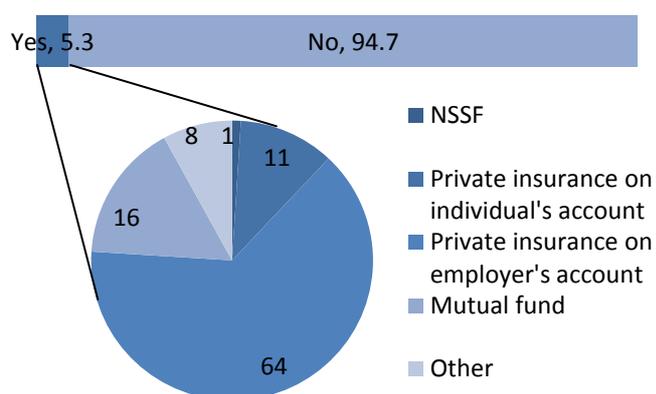
## Deprivation of minimum labour rights

Palestinian workers are generally deprived of minimum labour rights, leaving them in a status of vulnerability and poor protection. A small share of workers receive paid sick leave (26%), and an even smaller share get paid leave (17%). Very few workers (3%) are entitled to old age pension or indemnity benefits.

## Average actual working hours per week by industry



## Distribution of workers by availability of health coverage and source of coverage (%)



## Percentage of salaried workers receiving certain work benefits



## A written contract improves benefits

Around 50–60% of workers with written contracts are entitled to paid leave and sick leave.

Females however are better protected, possibly as a result of the more formal sectors in which they are engaged, including civil society and international organizations involved in education and health.

Beqaa and Beirut host the highest percentages of workers with benefits, compared to the other locations.

## One fifth work with a written contract

Strikingly, most (80%) Palestinian refugees work based on oral agreement; less than 20% are working with a written contract. Such conditions leave the majority of workers unprotected and vulnerable to abuse, without means of claiming rights or entitlements in instances of conflict with the employer.

The percentage of female workers with a written contract is double that for males. Working with a written contract is more prevalent in the education, health and “other” sectors, with around half of workers in those industries enjoying the guarantees of a written contract, compared to rates of 3% to 10% in manufacturing, agriculture, construction and commerce.

## Limited duration of contract

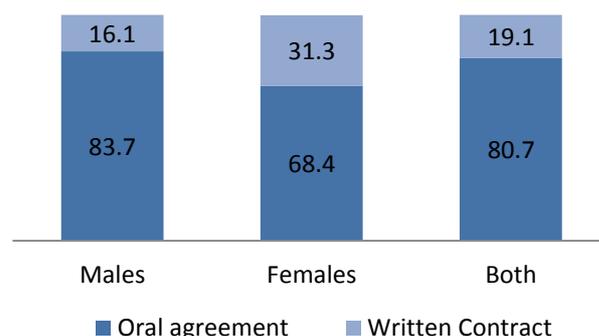
A good share of workers (38%) work on a daily basis and another 6% by short-term agreements of between one and six months. Tripoli records the worst conditions in this respect, with 74% of its workers employed on a daily basis, compared to Beqaa with just 8%. The main reason for limited contract duration is the daily or seasonal nature of activities prevalent in Tripoli.

The presence of a written contract is correlated with a prolonged work status; 88% of those with a written contract work for 12 months or more.

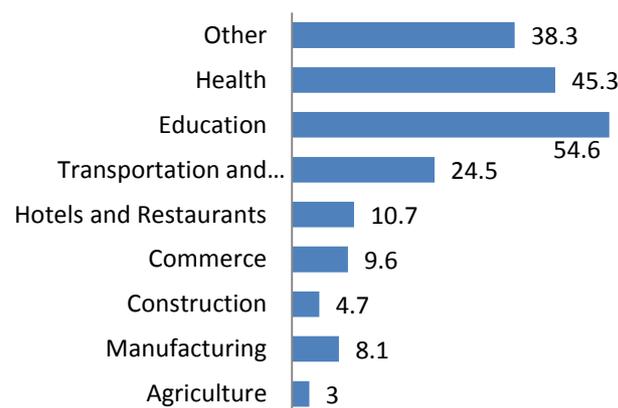
## Work permit, practically not required

Less than 2% of workers acquired a work permit. The majority of those without did not obtain a permit either because no benefit was perceived from having a permit or the employer was unable to cover the cost or to register.

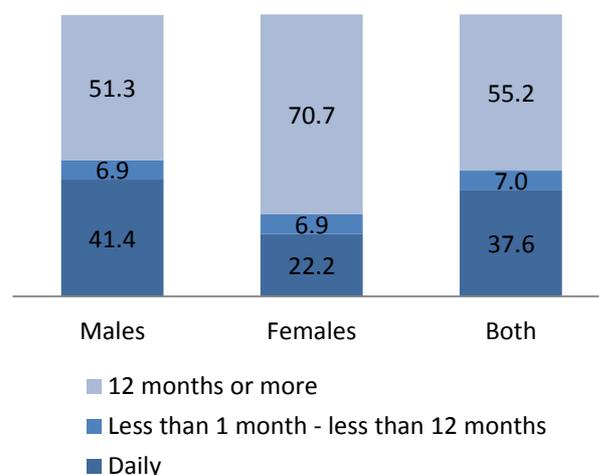
Distribution of workers by type of contract and sex (%)



Percentage of workers with a written contract by industry



Distribution of workers by duration of contract agreement and sex (%)

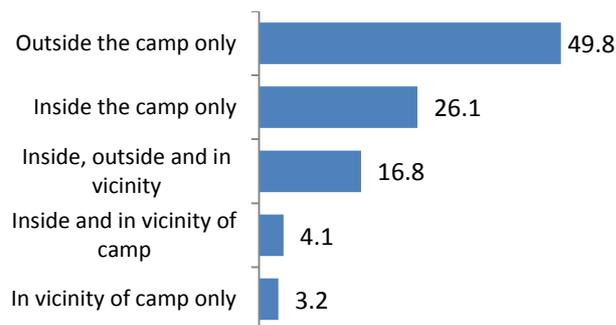


### Labour mobility outside the camps differs according to location

One quarter of Palestinian workers do not leave their camps for work, while half work outside the camps. The remaining workers are mostly active in and around the camps.

Looking at the figures geographically, Tripoli has a reversed distribution whereby 43% of labourers work inside the camp and 27% outside. Beirut, Saida and Tyre have rates higher than the average for activity outside the camp, reaching 61% in Beirut.

Distribution of workers by work site (%)

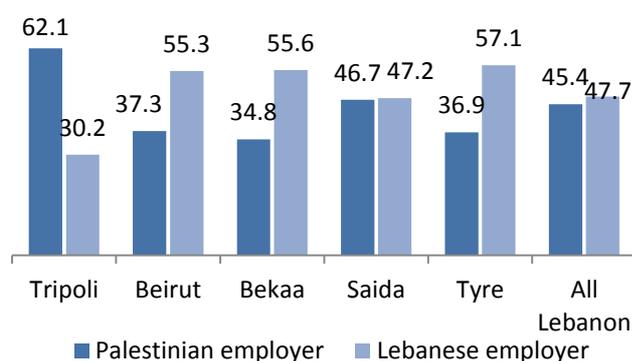


### Employment of Palestinians is often by other Palestinians

When it comes to nationality of employer, Palestinian refugees are equally employed by Lebanese and Palestinians, with the figures varying by location. Tripoli has the highest percentage (62%) of workers who are employed by a Palestinian. No significant differences were noted between males and females.

Finally, 6% of Palestinian refugees work for employers of other different nationalities.

Percentage of workers in each location by nationality of employer

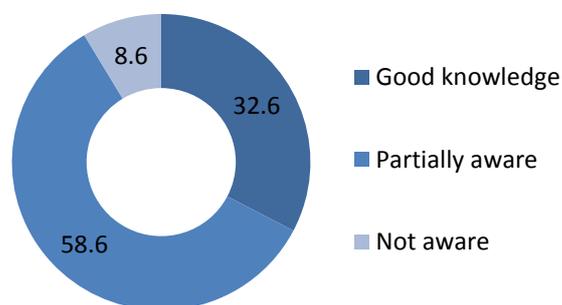


### Partial knowledge of the 2010 legal amendments, with no effect on employment status

The survey results demonstrate that most workers are aware at least partially of the legal amendments issued in August 2010,<sup>16</sup> with only 9% not aware of those changes.

Yet, practically, the amendments do not seem to have had a significant impact. In the survey sample, no workers had had their employment status affected, possibly as the implementation decrees for the new legislation have not been issued or enforced yet.

Distribution of workers by awareness of 2010 legal amendments (%)



<sup>16</sup> On 17 August 2010, the Lebanese Parliament approved legal amendments granting certain rights to Palestinian refugees registered and residing in Lebanon, including working in sectors open to foreigners, the issuance free of charge of work permits, and the provision of end-of-service benefits through the Lebanese National Social Security Fund. However, this legislation continued to bar Palestinian refugees from practicing over 30 syndicated professions.

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

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The labour force survey was implemented in all Palestinian camps and gatherings in Lebanon during the period September 2011 to March 2012. The main objective of the survey was to fill the information gap and update available data about the labour and employment conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. More specifically, it aimed to:

- enhance the quality of discussion relevant to the Palestinian's right to work and to social protection based on objective and scientific facts and figures;
- provide decision-makers and concerned stakeholders with reliable information on Palestinian employment and support evidence-based policy-making towards improved working conditions for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon;
- empower advocacy efforts with needed information and figures for more convincing messages and improved dialogue on the Palestinian refugees' right to work and social security.

The survey was implemented under an ILO project titled "Improving access to employment and social protection of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon" in partnership with the Committee for the Employment of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon and funded by the European Union Delegation. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics took charge of the field survey, including piloting, sampling, training of surveyors, data collection and data processing (coding, entry, editing, etc.). The Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies provided technical support and quality control on the different phases of the survey. Data collection was completed by the end of 2011 and preliminary survey results were produced and discussed with a group of experts and researchers in April 2012.

The target population of the survey consisted of all Palestinian refugees who are living in refugee camps and some localities that have a majority of Palestinians in Lebanon. The sampling frame relied on the total enumeration (census) that was implemented by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in 2010 of all the Palestinians living in the refugee camps and gatherings in Lebanon. The survey was based on a sampling frame that consisted of 1,430 clusters (a "cluster" being defined as a geographical area containing around 20 buildings and housing units on average). The clusters were the primary sampling units in the sampling design. The total sample size was approximately 2,600 households comprising 7,212 individuals (of 15 years or more). Each household therefore contained on average 2.8 individuals of 15 years or more. Of the total sample, the response rate reached 94%.

The implementation of the survey was synchronized with the implementation of the National Survey of Household Living Conditions for Lebanon currently executed by the Central Administration of Statistics covering all Lebanon. The labour force survey adopted the employment module utilized by the Central Administration of Statistics for their household survey to ensure – for the first time – accurate comparability of employment conditions between the Palestinians and Lebanese.

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