

Rapid Assessment of Garment Workers in Jordan

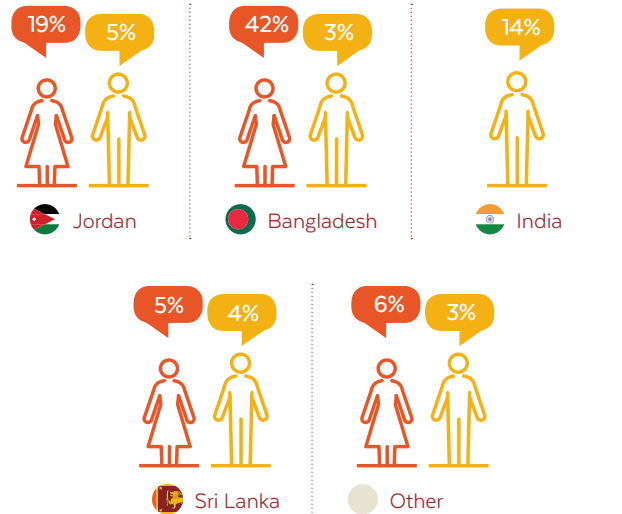
Covid-19, Mental Health and Worker Voice

The Jordanian garment sector employs roughly 65,000 workers, the majority of whom are women and migrants from South-Asia. Covid-19 has had a major impact on these workers over the last year, and worker mental health, already an area of concern, has suffered as a result. From April to June, union organizers surveyed workers remotely to learn about their concerns, experiences with Covid-19, and gather preliminary information on their mental health needs.

Garment sector snapshot

Demographics

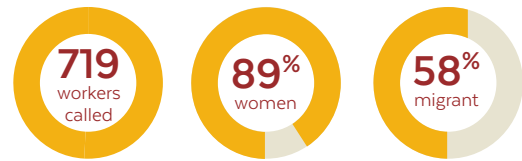
Nationality and Gender Breakdown of workforce



91 garment factories participating in Better Work Jordan



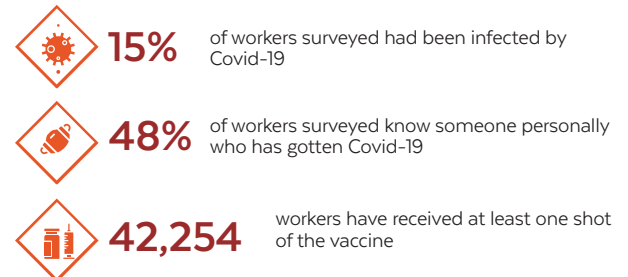
Survey sample



Covid-19 and Garment Workers

Covid-19 has had a significant human and economic impact on the garment sector in Jordan. The sector contracted by 15% in 2020, six factories closed permanently, and the sector downsized by roughly 7,000 workers. To-date, nearly 7,000 positive Covid-19 cases have been reported among workers in the garment sector. The situation is looking more positive in 2021 with widespread availability of vaccines, fewer active cases (26 as of June) and orders coming back to the country.

In Numbers



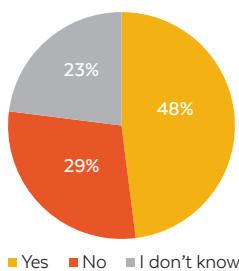
Of the workers who have not signed up or received the vaccine, the primary reasons were that they were scared, do not think they need it, or do not know how to take it. Many factories helped workers to register and receive the vaccine, some even bringing the Ministry of Health directly to the factory. Some factories did not provide support however, and workers were not given support to navigate the app, appointment schedules or transportation.

Worker Organizing and the Union

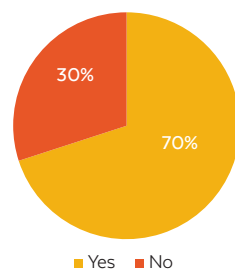
Workers in Jordan are represented at the sectoral level by a single union, the General Trade Union of Workers in Textiles, Garment, and Clothing Industries. The union has operated in the garment sector for over 50 years, and has negotiated a series of four sectoral-wide collective bargaining agreements with employer representatives. Among worker's surveyed by union organizers, a minority of workers were aware of their own union membership status, but most workers were aware of the union representatives in their factory, who are part of the Union Labour Committee (ULC) and have approached the union when they have a concern.

Many workers are not aware of their own union membership status, but they are more likely to know who their representatives to the union are

Are you a member of the union?



Do you know who your representatives to the union are?



26% of workers reached out to the union with a concern in the past

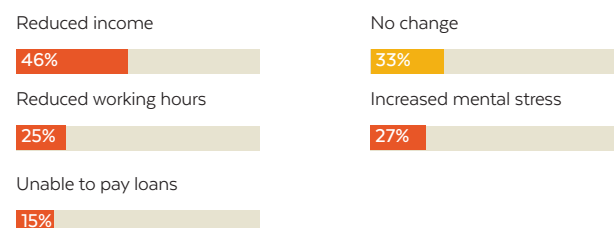
63% of workers want follow up on their concerns

- **Pay is a key area of concern.** Workers want follow up from the union because their pay is too low, late, or inaccurate.
- **Safety** issues in the workplace and access to vaccines are also an area of concern
- Some workers also want support from the union for issues such as **verbal abuse and sexual harassment.**

Effect on everyday life

Almost half of surveyed workers reported reduced income from Covid-19 but only a quarter reported reduced working hours. Roughly 1 in 3 workers said that Covid-19 has not affected their everyday life.

How has Covid-19 affected your everyday life?



Mental Health and Worker Well-being

Over the last several years, the issue of worker mental health has become a prominent issue in the sector. According to survey data gathered in July 2020 from 1,500 workers, **33 per cent of workers in the sector probably have depression or anxiety**. These needs are not currently supported given the lack of focused resources in Jordan on the topic. However, the 2019 CBA seeks to tackle the topic of mental health and instructs employers to provide referrals to mental health specialists upon request and training to workers on the topic of mental health. This year, BWJ launched a project focused on **supporting worker mental health through engagement with workers and relevant stakeholders**.

Distress



Distress is the negative stress response that results from being overwhelmed by demands, losses, or perceived threats. Workers in Jordan have a high level of distress. We used the Distress Questionnaire 5, a validated set of questions to capture distress levels and the potential extent of mental health issues in the sector.

52%

of surveyed workers screened for possible mental health issues

30%

of surveyed workers likely have mental health issues and should be seen by a specialist

Jordanian workers have the highest level of distress. People who were unable to pay their loans because of Covid-19 or said that they or their family members experienced greater mental stress had worse distress scores.

Distress measurements in the last 30 days

Anxiety or fear interfered with my ability to do the things I needed to do at work or at home



I had trouble staying focused on tasks



I found social settings upsetting



I felt hopeless



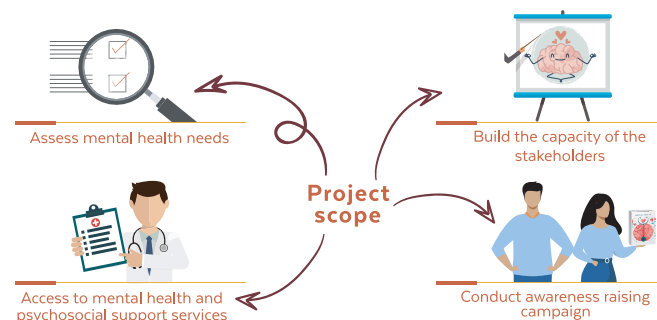
My worries overwhelmed me



■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Sometimes ■ Often ■ Always

Mental health project

In January 2021, Better Work Jordan launched the two-year mental health project to improve worker mental health by increasing resilience, awareness of mental health issues, and access to MHPSS services.



Key Terms



● Mental health:

State of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

● Mental well-being:

Is about thoughts and feelings and how to cope with the ups and downs of everyday life. It's not the same thing as mental health, although the two can influence each other.

● Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS):

Includes any support that people receive to protect or promote their mental health and psychosocial wellbeing.

● Resilience:

The ability to withstand adversity and bounce back from difficult life events.

Worker resilience needs to be supported

Over half of workers surveyed are categorized as having low resiliency, meaning that they have trouble recovering from difficult events. We used the Brief Resilience Scale, a set of six questions that are combined to form a composite score. Of 338 workers who responded to the questions on resilience, 185 were categorized as having low resilience, 151 as normal, and two had high resilience. Jordanian workers have higher resilience than migrant workers on average.

Mental health provisions in the CBA

In December 2019, representatives from employers and workers signed the fourth Collective Bargaining Agreement for the garment sector, which will go through 2022. This agreement includes specific actions that employers must take to support worker mental health.

“**Employers shall: Care for the psychological health of their workers through referring them to specialized psychological healthcare centres in Jordan...Provide training programs and specialized courses on psychological healthcare, its importance and methods of care.**”

Collective Agreement dated 21 November 2019

Data presented is from publicly available sources and through Better Work interaction with workers and managers as of 17 July 2021 and subject to change. Factory managers reported data on Covid-19 cases in the garment sector and vaccinations numbers in June 2021. A team of four union organizers called workers in the sector from April to June as part of a joint data gathering effort from Better Work Jordan and the union. Definitions of concepts related to mental health are from the American Psychological Association.