



Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization (JITC)

Volume 10, Issue 1, Spring 2020

pISSN: 2075-0943, eISSN: 2520-0313

Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc>

Issue DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.101>

Homepage: <https://journals.umt.edu.pk/index.php/JITC>

Journal QR Code:



Article:

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Published:

Spring 2020

Article DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.101.01>

QR Code:



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To cite this article:

Alsoudi, Abdelmahdi. "The socio-economic impact of Syrian refugees on labor in Jordan: Case study on local communities in *Mafraq* governorate." *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 10, no. 1 (2020): 01–23.

[Crossref](https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.101.01)

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Publisher Information:

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The Socio-Economic Impact of Syrian Refugees on Labor in Jordan: A Case Study on Local Communities in *Mafraq* Governorate

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Abstract

Jordan is heavily affected by the influx of over 1.4 million Syrians among them 655,000 registered refugees. Today, the country has been struggling to provide housing, water, education, healthcare and jobs to its increased population and this huge number of Syrian refugees. When Syrians first arrived to Jordan they received assistance and sympathy from the host communities but once it became clear that they are here to stay and started to compete with local population for food, housing, jobs and services things started to change. Host communities in *Mafraq* and elsewhere in the country became weary of refugees, as the two groups have to compete over such scarce socio-economic resources and would rather see Syrians go back to their country. The study recommends more international aid to Jordan to enable the government to provide food, jobs and services to its population and refugees. The government should provide economic aid for the local population in *Mafraq* to help them cope with the refugees' crisis.

Keywords: Jordan, *Mafraq*, Syrian refugees, crisis, socio-economic, impact.

Introduction

The Syria crisis has displaced about 4.81 million Syrians into the neighboring countries mainly Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and more than 6.1 million displaced internally within Syria. Jordan hosts about 1.4 million Syrians among them 646,700 registered refugees.¹ There are 134,900 refugees in *Mafraq* which constitute around 50% of the total population of *Mafraq*, with nearly half living in communities outside the refugee camps and form (10.48%) of the total number of registered Syrian refugees in Jordan. The majority of all Syrians in Jordan and other host countries are living in urban and rural areas across the country rather than in official refugee camps.² However, despite host countries and international organizations' financial aid, refugees face extremely high rates of poverty as (93%) of Syrians in Jordan; (70%) in Lebanon, (65%) in Egypt, and (37%) in Iraq are living

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¹UNHCR, "Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2015," Accessed in 2017. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7.pdf>

²International Labor Organization (ILO). 2016, "Local Economic Development Strategy for *Mafraq* Governorate 2016-2018," International Labor Organization – Beirut. Accessed in 2017. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@arabstates/@robeirut/documents/publication/wcms_456506.pdf.

below the poverty line. Moreover, the unemployment rates among Syrian refugees are far higher than their counterparts in these countries.³

The estimated 1.4 million Syrians in Jordan have undoubtedly increased competition for access to public utilities, schooling, health services, infrastructure and jobs. The main socio-economic impacts can be summarized as follows: increasing costs of various sectors such as education, health, shelter, water, energy and housing; increasing pressure on public finances; and threatening the sustainability of quality service provision in the most affected governorates. According to a statement made by the Minister of Planning “the direct and indirect impact of hosting Syrian refugees since 2011 has cost Jordan \$7.9 billion.”⁴ Weak economic growth, lack of public finances, export disruption and uncertain future have long been major challenges to Jordan and other hosting countries and threatening their development plans, security and stability.⁵

The Syrian crisis has impacted both public infrastructure and private infrastructure in Jordan, with the government facing significant difficulties to maintain the quality of services and infrastructure. Today there are many local, regional and international agencies working on the refugees’ issue either providing aid or appealing directly for funding and part of the broader platform of policy, advocacy and delivery efforts. Partners include government authorities in host countries, United Nations agencies, non-government organizations, donor governments, the private sector, charities and foundations.⁶ In 2017, United Nations and NGO partners are appealing for USD 4.63 billion to support national plans. Of this, USD 2.73 billion (59%) is to address protection and assistance needs within the refugee Component and USD 1.9 billion (41%) is in support of the Resilience Component.⁷ Moreover, the large numbers of refugees are classified as extremely vulnerable, largely comprised of women and children below 5 years of age; two-thirds of them are living below the monthly poverty line of (68) Jordanian dinars (\$97) per person,

³Nicole Ostrand, “The Syrian Refugee Crisis: A Comparison of Responses by Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States,” *Journal of Migration and Human Security* 3 (2015): 255-279; Jordan Response Platform (JRP), “Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2016-2018,” Accessed in 2017. Available at: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/JRP16_18_Document-final+draft.pdf.

⁴Ministry of Planning and UN. 2015, “Jordan Response Plan for The Syrian Crisis,” Accessed in 2017. Available at: <https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Syria/Jordan%20Response%20Plan.pdf>.

⁵Ibid., “Ministry of Planning and UN 2015.”

⁶Luigi Achilli, “Syrian Refugees in Jordan: A Reality Check, Migration Policy Centre, EUI,” 2015. Accessed in 2017. Available at: http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/34904/MPC_2015-02_PB.pdf.

⁷Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), “Key Strategic Directions 2017-2018 in Response to the Syrian Crises: Regional Strategic Overview,” 2016, Accessed in 2017. Available at: <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/the-3rp/>.

and one in six refugee households lives on less than \$40 per person.⁸ The fulfillment of the needs of Syrian refugees came at the expenses of the local population as it significantly impacted the finances of the Governorate and increased the spending of the limited community resources to provide for refugees. This situation has led to complain and unrest among local population, directed at the refugees and their own government. Indeed, the marginalized local populations have begun to mobilize around their grievances and aired them through social media as their frustration grows.⁹

1.1. *Mafraq* Governorate

Mafraq governorate is situated in the north-eastern part of the Kingdom and it borders Iraq (east and north), Syria (north) and Saudi Arabia (south and east). It has an area of 26,552 km² making up (29.6%) of the total area of the country. According to the Local Economic Development Strategy for *Mafraq* Governorate (ILO 2016 – 2018) the Governorate is characterized by its relatively small population compared with the other governorates. According to the Statistics Department, the population totaled about 300,300 with the end of 2013, or about (5%) of the country's population.¹⁰ About (56.3%) of the governorate's population ranges in age between 15 and 64, and about (40.9%) are below the age of 15. As for the females, they constitute about (48.2%) of the governorate's population.¹¹

The Governorate has always maintained a strategic position as it is situated at the crossroads of international routes linking up the Kingdom of Jordan to the Republic of Iraq via the *Karama* entry point, located at a distance of 285 km from the governorate's center. It also has features the Jaber border crossings into the Arab Republic of Syria, located 20 km from the governorate's center. The poverty rate of the Governorate, at (19.2%) exceeds the general poverty level in the Kingdom, which stands at (14.4%). The Governorate's inflation rate of 5.45% exceeded the general inflation rate in the country of 4.77% it significantly increased as a result of the Syrian crisis to become 8.92% at the end of 2013. The average family size is 5.9, while the average annual household income in the Governorate is 7276.3 JD compared with the Kingdom's average of 8824 JD.¹² The average annual household expenditure level in the Governorate is 7674.7 JD, which is lower than the general average of the Kingdom of 9626 JD.¹³ The main aim of this study is to examine

⁸United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Living in the Shadows, Jordan Home Visits Report 2014," Accessed in 2017. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>.

⁹Beatrix Immenkamp, "Syrian Crisis: Impact on Jordan," *European Parliamentary Research Service: Briefing*. February 2017.

¹⁰General Statistics Department, Population Census, Amman, Jordan, 2016. Accessed in 2017. Available at: <http://web.dos.gov.jo>

¹¹Ibid., "International Labor Organization (ILO)," 2016.

¹²Ibid., "International Labor Organization (ILO)," 2016.

¹³Ibid., "Ministry of planning & UN," 2015.

the socio-economic impact of the Syrians on the governorate. The table below outlines the main indicators reflecting the population reality of the governorate, compared with the general levels of the Kingdom.

Table 1. Syrian Refugees distribution in greater *Mafraq* Governorate municipalities

Municipality	population	Syrian refugees	% of population
Greater <i>Mafraq</i>	180000	90000	50%
Manshieh	12000	2500	21%
Rahab	22000	5000	23%
Balama	40000	7500	19%
Total	254000	105000	41.3

Source: Statistical Department 2016

2. Methodology

The study tries to examine the impact of Syrian refugees on the socio-economic aspects of the local population living in *Mafraq* Governorate. It utilized a social survey method applied on a sample representing 254000 of local population in addition to 105,000 Syrian refugees living in the *Mafraq* governorate out of 30000 of the total population and 134000 of the total refugees in the governorate. A closed questionnaire was used to collect information from the sample subjects related to achieving the study’s objectives. The two groups found themselves living together and sharing the same job market, schools, health services, water, power and other public infrastructure. The scarce resources in the governorate created an atmosphere of cooperation, competition and tension between the two groups.

2.1. The Study Sample

The study used a random sample consisted of 420 families and was distributed geographically all over the greater *Mafraq* municipalities representing all local population living in that area. Table (2) shows the general distribution of the sample on the main administrative divisions in *Mafraq*, with Al *Mafraq* District accounting for 67.6% of the sample followed by Balama (14.8%); Rehab District (10.9%) and Manshieh (6.7%) and consequently the sample generally representing the study population as shown the table below.

Table 2. Distribution of sample informants according to areas in *Mafraq* Governorate

Municipality	number	%
Greater <i>Mafraq</i>	284	67.6
Balama	62	14.8
Rahab	46	10.9
Manshieh	28	6.7
Total	240	100

2.2. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from the fact that it tackles a serious crisis resulted from the influx of huge numbers of Syrian refugees into the *Mafraq* governorate. It is at least for my knowledge there is no previous studies have so far conducted about the socio-economic impacts of Syrians refugees on *Mafraq* Governorate. It seeks to bring insight into the impact of Syrian refugees on *Mafraq* governorate from first-hand field study, rather than just from secondary sources. The study further helps in the providing first hand data about the nature of relationship and interaction between the two communities. Eventually, it aims at understanding such relationship and more importantly propose the best way of future plans and strategies that serves both communities and thus helping them integrating and living in peace side by side. This is particularly important given the prolonged nature of the Syrian refugees' crisis in Jordan which requires a sort of local and international efforts to deal with this crisis and its consequences on both sides for the coming years. Hopefully, this study will pave the way for more work on the Syrian refugee issue in other governorates and open up the way for more field studies that try to come up with a practical solutions to the this complicated issue.

2.3. Study Questions

The Syrians' refugees' influx put considerable pressures on the governorate of *Mafraq*'s infrastructure and public facilities such as education, housing, health care, security and the labor market. Therefore, the study tries to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the local population in *Mafraq* Governorate?
- ii. What is nature of social relations and interaction between local populations and Syrians in *Mafraq* governorate?
- iii. What are the social and economic impacts of Syrians on *Mafraq* Governorate especially on the labor market, education, health services and hosing?
- iv. What is the government's policy toward Syrians and locals' position from this policy?

2.4. The Study's Goals are as Follows

- Learn about the demographic, social, cultural and economic characteristics of population and Syrian refugees in *Mafraq* Governorate.
- Examine the nature of social relationships and interaction between Jordanians and Syrians in *Mafraq* governorate.
- Assessing the impact of Syrians on the labor market, education, health services and hosing in *Mafraq* Governorate.
- Understanding government's policy toward Syrians and local population reaction to it.

2.5. Study Period

The collection of firsthand quantitative and qualitative data took two months (February-March 2017) through the application of the study's tool on a sample population from the local community in *Mafraq* Governorate.

3. Literature Review

One of the main aspects of the Syrian refugee crisis is the large costs of hosting 1.4 million refugees in Jordan. This huge influx of Syrian refugees into Jordan has undoubtedly increased competition for access to public utilities, schooling, health services, infrastructure and jobs. It increased the costs of various sectors education, health, shelter, water, energy and housing and infrastructure. According to a statement made by the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation the direct and indirect cost of hosting Syrian refugees since 2011 was about \$7.9 billion.¹⁴ A number of earlier studies made an attempt to monetize the costs associated with Syrian refugee crisis. One study prepared by the Economic & Social Council in late 2012 found that the estimated total cost of the Syrian refugee crisis in 2011 and 2012 amounts to JD590.2 million.¹⁵ According to government statements, Jordan received foreign assistance worth \$854 million in 2014, making up (37%) of the total financial demands estimated at \$2.3 billion in the JRP 2014 but until the third quarter of 2015, only 5.5% has been financed by donors, equivalent to around \$165 million.¹⁶ This has led to heavy pressures on the education system, such as (a) overcrowding in public schools especially in high population density areas, (b) introduction of double shifts for teachers which is reducing the time available in both shifts and places stress on teachers, and (c) the recruitment of new teaching staff which puts an additional burden on public finances. All of these factors are pushing down the overall quality of education and teaching in the Kingdom. According to the Ministry of education public spending on education has increased by JD 200 million since the beginning of the crisis in 2011.¹⁷

The large influx of refugees has negatively affected the labor market with increased competition for jobs and downward pressure on wages. Syrian refugees are predominately in competition for jobs with other migrant workers and much less so with host communities. For example, in Jordan, a study conducted by ILO, FAFO Research

¹⁴Svein Stave, Solveig Hillesund, "Impact of Syrian Refugees on Jordanian Labor Market," *International Labor Organization (ILO) and FAFO. 2015. Fafo-report 2015:16 / ISBN 978-82-324-0198-7 / ISSN 0801-6143.*

¹⁵Khalid Wazani, "Socioeconomic Impact of Syrian Refugee Crisis on Jordanian Host Communities," *The Economic and Social Council in Jordan*, 2012, Published in Arabic.

¹⁶Ibid., Ministry of Planning and UN," 2015.

¹⁷Jordan Ministry of Education, "Annual Report," 2016, Accessed in 2017. Available at: <https://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Publications/AnnualReports/2016MOEAnnualReport-WEB.pdf>.

Foundation and the Jordanian Department of Statistics, found that instances of Syrian refugees ‘crowding out’ Jordanians from work in most sectors were modest.¹⁸ This is due in a large part to the fact that the vast majority of Syrian refugees who find work do so in the large informal economies characteristic of the region’s host countries. One ILO study has argued that an increase in Jordanian unemployment from 14.5 per cent to 22.1 per cent between 2011 and 2014 demonstrates that Jordanians have been pushed out of jobs taken by Syrians. However, high unemployment, in particular youth unemployment, has been a growing issue in Jordan for years prior to the influx of Syrian refugees and has been caused by a number of factors including the global financial crisis and a mismatch of skills and labor market needs and the closure on borders with Iraq and Syria. In Jordan between 2010 and 2013, unemployment increased in the formal sector while Syrian refugees have predominately found work and sometimes replaced local workers in the private sector.¹⁹

The most pressing challenge arising from the Syrian refugee crisis is the competition on new jobs being created every year, which is by itself underperforming even before the arrival of the Syrian refugees. This is despite the fact that according to Jordanian laws, Syrian refugees are prohibited from working in the country. Therefore, most of the Syrian refugee laborers in urban environments are currently working illegally, without having a valid work permit.²⁰ This trend indicates that a large share of Jordanians is being discouraged from looking for jobs. Discouraged workers actually decrease the labor force participation rate and indeed the labor force participation rate for Jordanians fell consistently from (39.5%) in 2010 to (36.4%) in 2014. The discouraged workers raised the Jordanian unemployment rate in 2014 from (11.9%) to (16.2%).²¹ A recent ILO report on the impact of Syrian refugees on Jordanian labor market found that more than 40% of employed Syrians outside camps in Amman, Irbid, and *Mafraq* work in the construction sector, (23%) work in the wholesale and retail trade & repair sector, (12%) in manufacturing, and (8%) in the accommodation and food.²²

It is important in this analysis to describe the social aspects of Syrian refugee workers, as compared with their Jordanian counterparts. One important aspect is that the majority of

¹⁸Ibid., “International Labor Organization (ILO) & FAFO,” 2015.

¹⁹Ibid., “International Labor Organization (ILO) & FAFO,” 2015.

²⁰United Nations Development Program (UNDP), “Municipal Needs Assessment Report Mitigating the Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Jordanian Vulnerable Host Communities,” 2014, Accessed in 2017. Available at: <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/jordan/docs/Poverty/needs%20assessment%20report.pdf>; Rapid Participatory Community Assessment, “Syrian Refugees in Urban Jordan: Baseline Assessment of Community Identified Vulnerability among Syrian Refugees Living in Irbid, Amman, *Mafraq*, and Zarqa,” *Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, Inc. (Care) Jordan*. April 2013.

²¹Salem Ajluni and Mary Kawar, “The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on the Labour Market in Jordan: A Preliminary Analysis,” *The International Labor Organization (ILO)*, 2014.

²²Ibid., “International Labor Organization,” 2016.

Syrian refugees in Jordan came from rural areas in Syria, and has a considerably lower education level compared to Jordanians. Around (60%) of Syrians above the age of 15 have never completed basic schooling, and only about (15%) of refugees have completed secondary education, compared to (42%) of Jordanians above the age of 15. This also helps explain why school enrollment rates for Syrian children are very low compared to their Jordanian counterpart.²³ In spite of the economic and social challenges imposed by the hosting of a large number of Syrian refugees in Jordan, there have been some positive advantages stemming from the refugee crisis, which have been often overlooked by analysis and studies done on this issue.²⁴ A comprehensive study done on the impact of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian economy, estimated that public revenues accrued by the presence of Syrians in Jordan have risen from around JD209 million in 2012 to JD780 million in 2013. The study also estimates that the total public revenues accrued from the hosting of refugees would cumulatively reach around JD2 billion.²⁵

A study prepared by the University of Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) in April 2013 shows that (71%) of the study's population and (43%) of the opinion leaders would refuse entry to any new waves of Syrian refugees to Jordan. In June 2013, the rate increased to (73.5%) of the study population and (55%) of opinion leaders wanting to refuse entry to new Syrian refugee waves to Jordan. Of these, (87%) said it would be better to keep the Syrians in refugee camps and not allow them to move into the local communities, while (92%) of the study population claimed the existence of Syrians in Jordan had compromised job opportunities for Jordanians.²⁶

4. Field Data Analysis

4.1. Age and Marital Status of Informants

The field data in Table (3) breaks down the study population by age groups and marital status. The highest is the age group 25-29 years (24.8%), followed by the age group 30-40 (21.6%), followed by the age group 18-24 (21.2%) followed by the age group 40-50 (18.4%), the majority of whom are in the labor market. finally the age groups over 50 years of age formed only (14%). As for marital status the highest is the married (47.2%), followed by the singles (44.3%), then the divorced and widows forming only (8%). This concentrates

²³Ibid., "International Labor Organization (ILO) and FAFO," 2015.

²⁴Arif Husain, Jean-Martin Bauer and Susanna Sandstrom, "Economic Impact Study: Direct and Indirect Impact of the WFP Food Voucher Programme in Jordan," *World Food Program (WFP)*, 2014, Accessed in 2017. Available at: <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp264168.pdf>.

²⁵Khalid, Wazani, "The Socio-Economic Implications of Syrian Refugees on Jordan: A Cost-Benefit Framework," *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, 2014.

²⁶Center for Strategic Studies, "Coping With the Crisis: A Review of the Response to Syrian Refugees in Jordan," Accessed in 2017. Available at: <http://www.jcss.org/Photos/635520970736179906.pdf>.

the majority of the study population in the largest two categories: age groups 25-40 (46%) and the single and married, (91%) which can imply a stronger manpower asset among the study population and a high percentage of youthful populations among the local workers.

Table 3. Breakdown of sample informants by age groups and marital status

Age group	number	%	Marital status	Number	%
18-24	89	21.2	single	186	44.3
25-29	104	24.8	married	198	47.2
30-40	91	21.6	divorced	20	4.7
40-50	77	18.4	widow	16	3.8
50-60	33	7.8	Total	420	100
Over 65	26	6.2			
Total	420	100			

4.2. Occupational Status and Monthly Income

Jordan is a resource-poor country with limited arable areas. The economy is dominated by financial services, tourism, transportation, manufacturing and remittances from Jordanian's working abroad. In 2017, following prolonged border closures with Syria and Iraq, a sharp fall in foreign investment, reduced remittances, and a drop in tourism, unemployment stands at almost 15 %, with joblessness among Jordanian youth reported to be approaching 40 %. The public sector is the largest employer in the kingdom; government positions accounted for around (39%) of all employment in 2013. The refugee presence also weighs heavily on public finances. For 2016, public debt is likely to reach 26 billion dollars forming around (95.1%) of gross domestic product (GDP) compared to (60.2 %) of GDP in 2008.²⁷ The United Nations estimate the cost of hosting over half a million Syrian refugees in Jordan at US\$5.3 billion for the period 2013-2014, the cost being divided into US\$2.1 billion and a projected US\$3.2 billion for 2013 and 2014, respectively;²⁰ For more details, see.²⁸

The field data in Table (4) breaks down the study population by occupation. The highest number of workers is in the service sector (25.3%), followed by those working in construction sector (21.4%) followed by those working in the commercial sector (19.5%), followed by those working in the industrial sector (13.8%) while the rest are working in agriculture (5.7%) and finally (14.3%) unemployed. Regarding the monthly income the field data in table (4) shows that the highest number of the sample are in the monthly income 180-300 (29.5%) followed by those with monthly income 301-400 (22.4%) followed by those with monthly income 401-500 (19.3%) followed by those with monthly

²⁷Ibid., Beatrix Immenkamp, "Syrian Crisis: Impact on Jordan," 2017.

²⁸Ministry of Planning and United Nations Development Program (UNDP), "Needs Assessment Review of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Jordan," 2013, Accessed in 2017. Available at: <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbas/doc/SyriaResponse/Jordan%20Needs%20Assessment%20-%20November%202013.pdf>

income 0-180 (13.9%) while the rest are those of the monthly income over 501 (15%). Obviously accepting incomes less than JD300 is unsatisfactory for average family in *Mafraq* sizing 5.9 persons. Indeed, accepting such low income jobs is a big challenge for any Jordanian family. The field data in Table (4) also shows only (25%) of Jordanians are working in services sector which reflects an increase in the Syrian laborer who works in this sector. Many Syrian workers are usually employed in restaurants, commercial stores and handicraft shops and one main effect of this phenomenon is the deprivation of large numbers of Jordanians to get a job in this important sector. The effects of Syrians entering the labor market have also been negative as some local workers in *Mafraq* have lost their jobs to Syrians. More important, Jordanians workers can't compete with Syrians who are willing to accept lower wages, because of their situation and the cash and other financial assistance they receive from local, international aid organizations.

Table 4. Breakdown of sample informants by occupational status and monthly income

Occupational Status	Number	%	Monthly Income	Number	%
Services	106	25.3	0-180	58	13.9
Construction	90	21.4	180-300	124	29.5
Commercial	82	19.5	301-400	94	22.4
Industrial	58	13.8	401-500	81	19.3
Agriculture	24	5.7	501-600	52	12.3
unemployed	60	14.3	601++	11	2.6
Total	420	100	Total	420	100

4.3. Level of Education

The field data in Table (5) breaks down the study population by level of education. The highest numbers have basic secondary education (50.8%) followed by secondary education (17.2%), followed by college graduates (11.4%) followed by illiterates (9.8%) and finally bachelors at (8.1%) and post graduates at (3.3%). The data shows a decrease in the educational level among the study population, which can reflect, in turn, on the type of economic activities the informants pursue. Learning about the economic characteristics of local population in *Mafraq* is significant because they naturally reflect the needs of Jordanians and their abilities to compete with this huge Syrians influx.

Table 5. Breakdown of sample informants by educational level

Educational level	number	%
Illiterate	41	9.8
Basic education	211	50.2
Secondary	72	17.2
College	48	11.4
Bachelors	34	8.1
Postgraduate	14	3.3
Total	420	100

5. Results Discussions

5.1. Type and strength of Social Relations with Syrians

Social relations are very important in building up the social capital in any given society. Such relationships are governed by a number of social values and norms, such as mutual respect, trust and cooperation. The study examined the different types of relationship between Jordanians and Syrians and the strength of these relationships in *Mafraq* Governorate. It tried to get answers to the following questions: What Type of relationship that developed between Jordanians and Syrians? And what was the Strength of such relationships between the two sides in *Mafraq* Governorate?

Field data in Table (6) shows type and strength of relationships between Local populations and Syrians in *Mafraq* governorate. The highest numbers said they have Syrians friends (25.1%); have Syrian neighbors (21.4%); have Syrians as workmates (16.0); have rented houses for Syrians (13.4%); have intermarriages with Syrians (7.5%) and finally (16.9%) said they do not have any relationships with Syrians. Regarding the strength of their relationship with Syrian field data in table (11) shows the highest numbers of informants (28.5%) said they have very strong relationship with Syrians, (17.3%), said they have strong relationship (20.7%), said they have moderate relationship (12.8%), said they have weak relationship (4.1%) said they have a very weak and finally (16.6%) said they do not have relationships with Syrians.

These results shows about 70% of local population have strong relationship with Syrians implying a positive social interaction and integration between the two sides. The field data shows that more than half of the local population has good relations with Syrians and such good relationships allow for several forms of social and cultural interaction. They also indicate a high degree of interaction with Syrians in *Mafraq*.

Table 6. Type and strength of relationships between local populations with Syrians

Type of relationship			Strength of Social Relations		
Type	number	%	strength	Number	%
Friends	105	25.1	Very strong	120	28.5
Neighbors	90	21.4	strong	72	17.3
Workmates	67	16.0	moderate	87	20.7
House Rental	56	13.4	weak	54	12.8
Intermarriages	31	7.5	Very weak	17	4.1
None	71	16.9	None	70	16.6
Total	420	100	Total	240	100

5.2. Locals' interaction with Syrians and Visits

Exchanging visits for example, takes up an important role in Jordanian society, which cherishes visits as a source of strengthening mutual relations, exchanging views, giving help, showing solidarity and paving the way for more participation in different social activities. So far, there are no reports of major incidents or conflict between

Syrians and their host communities in *Mafraq* or elsewhere in Jordan. When the informants were asked about the quality of their relationship with Syrians field data in Table (7) shows that (23%) characterized their relationship with Syrians as excellent; (22.1%); very good; (20.5%); good; (20.5 %); weak (17.8%) and finally bad (16.3%). Regarding Jordanian exchange visits with Syrians data in table (12) shows that (24.8%) have regular visits with Syrians, (20.8); they sometimes exchange visits; (19.5%); they occasionally exchange visits; (19%) they rarely exchange visits; and finally (15.9%) they do not exchange visits with Syrians. In fact, there is nothing in the above detailed relations that would guarantee intimacy of relations between Jordanians and Syrians. Evidence collected from the field shows that around one third of informants said they have weak or bad relationships with Syrians and that around (35%) said they rarely or not exchange visits with Syrians. Indeed many Jordanians criticize or blame Syrians as the reason for their precarious conditions.

Table 7. Locals’ Interaction with Syrians

How do you characterize Your relationships with Syrians			Do you exchange visits with Syrians?		
Indicators	number	%	Indicators	Number	%
Excellent	98	23.3	Regularly	104	24.8
Very good	93	22.1	Some times	88	20.8
Good	86	20.5	Occasionally	82	19.5
Weak	75	17.8	Rarely	80	19.0
none	68	16.3	None	67	15.9
total	420	100	total	420	100

5.3. Local’s Preference for Syrians Workers

Field data in Table (8) shows that (48.8%) prefer Syrians labor over other nationalities including Jordanians (19.7%); they make their preference on the basis of quality regardless of the nationality of workers (12.5%) prefer Egyptians workers (10.4%); prefer Asians and finally only (8.6%); prefer Jordanian workers. Table (12) describes the reasons for local population to prefer Syrian workers over other nationalities available in *Mafraq’s* labor market (24.3%) said they prefer Syrians because they accept lower wages (20.4%), they are skilled workers (16.9%); they are motivated to finish the job (15.1%); they are more efficient (12.9%); sympathy with their appalling conditions (10.4%) because they are easy to manage. It is worth noting here that accepting lower wages by Syrians workers have been increasingly making local employers prefer Syrians to national workers. Also, this trend has practically lowered the standard wages in the labor market to the extent some employers started either lowering the wages of their current employees or replacing some of them with Syrians. Another important advantage of Syrians compared to Jordanians is that many Jordanians are reluctant to accept the sort of jobs that Syrians do. Therefore it is safe to say that the struggle for work is weak between Jordanian Syrian job seekers in *Mafraq* and elsewhere in the Kingdom.

Table 8. If you have some work to be done, which worker would you choose and why?

Workers' nationalities	N0	%	Rank	Indicator	N0	%	Rank
Syrians	205	48.8	1	Accept Lower wages	102	24.3	1
Efficiency	83	19.7	2	Skilled workers	86	20.4	2
Egyptians	52	12.5	3	Motivated to finish a job	71	16.9	3
Asians	44	10.4	4	more efficient	63	15.1	4
Jordanians	36	8.6	5	Sympathy	54	12.9	5
Total	420	100		Easy to manage	44	10.4	6
				Total	420	100	

6. Syrians Impact on *Mafraq* Governorate

6.1. Impact on the Labor Market

The governorate of *Mafraq* has long been a major point of trade between Jordan Iraq and Syria. The crisis in Syria weighed heavily on the governorate, the bulk of its commercial activities was dependent on cross-border trade. That trade came to a halt as a result of the conflict in Syrian and the closure of border between the two countries. Against this background, Jordanian workers started to face tough competition from Syrians for jobs. According to official sources, no less than 30,000 Syrian refugees are employed in many occupations; nearly half of them work in *Mafraq*. The main impacts of the Syrian refugee on workforce can be summarized as follows:

7. Jordanians cannot compete with Syrian workers as the later are inclined to accept lower wages, easy to manage, more skilled and more motivated to finish the job than Jordanians.
8. Syrians can adapt to less wages either because of the financial aid they receive from UNHCR or because of the simple need to work.
9. The socio-economic and trade in *Mafraq* was severely affected as a result of the conflict in Iraq and Syria and the closure of the border between Jordan and those two countries.
10. Competition for work, housing and other services between Jordanians and Syrians created social tension between the two communities.

Field data in Table (9) shows the local views regarding the impact of Syrians on the labor market in *Mafraq*. The highest numbers said that they Syrians have Created tough competition with Jordanian workers (36%) as they accept lower wages and receive UNHCR financial aid, followed by those who said they replaced and drove many Jordanians out their jobs (24.3%) followed by those who said they accept lower wages (16.4%) followed by those who said they lowered labor wages in the labor market for Jordanians (12.6%) followed by those who said they created tension with Jordanians (10.7%).

Table 9. Local's views on the Syrians' impact on the labor market

Indicator	number	%
Created tough & unfair competition	151	36.0
Replaced many Jordanians workers	102	24.3
Accepting lower wages	69	16.4
lowered labor wages	53	12.6
Created tension with Jordanians	45	10.7
Total	240	100

6.2. Impact on Education

Field data shows that about twenty six of thirty six Municipalities in *Mafraq* governorate suffer from educational problems resulted from huge influx of Syrian refugees. The UNHCR reports that 83,232 Syrian children registered at public schools in Jordan up until the end of 2014. Several schools run evening shifts to provide schooling for these children. However, despite all attempts to encourage Syrian children to go to school the UNHCR reported 60% of Syrian children are not registered at school. In the final analysis, the impact of Syrian refugees on education in the *Mafraq* is a key issue for the Governorate. The following problems are identified²⁹:

- Many schools need maintenance and expansion to meet the increasing numbers of Syrian students;
- Local schools are already struggling to accommodate Jordanian students and the advent of huge number of Syrians students caused schools to be over crowded with typical classrooms in *Mafraq* hold around 50 students.
- Many schools in *Mafraq* are running two shifts, thus reducing the class time from 45 to 35 minutes, at the expense of quality.
- Lack of finance to pay teachers and staffs overtime dues as the government depends on international donors' aid to pay for such extra expenses.
- Syrian students have different culture and their level of educational is lower than their Jordanians peers in addition to the differences between their curricula at home and in Jordan.
- Overcrowding in public schools and that introduction of double shifts periods requires maintenance and puts additional burden on public finances

Field data in Table (10) shows the local views regarding the impact of Syrians on education in *Mafraq* governorate. The highest numbers said that the presence of Syrians

²⁹Jordan Economy Independent Watch, "The Socio-Economic Impact of Syrian Refugees on Jordan, Turning Challenges Into Opportunities," *Identity Center*. 2015.

have lowered the quality of education (37.1%) that it caused crowded classes and decreased the class period to 35 minutes (20.9%), and that many schools are running two shifts and need maintenance (14.5%); that there is Lack of money to pay teachers for working overtime (11.4%); that it raised the cost of education especially to pay management, teachers and staff for working for working overtime (10%) and finally that Syrian students have different habits from Jordanians and such differences may cause some conflicts between the two sides (7.8%).

Table 10. Local’s views of the Syrians’ impact on education

Indicator	number	%
Lowering the quality of education	150	35.7
Class Rooms overcrowded and Reducing classes to 35minutes	86	20.4
Many schools running two shifts and need maintenance	61	14.5
Lack of money to pay teachers for overtime work	48	11.4
Raising the cost of education for paying teachers, staffs overtime	42	10
Syrian students’ have Different habits from Jordanians	33	7.8
Total	420	100

6.3. Impact on Housing

The United Nations estimate the cost of hosting over half a million Syrian refugees in Jordan at US\$5.3 billion for the period 2013-2014, the cost being divided into US\$2.1 billion and a projected US\$3.2 billion for 2013 and 2014, respectively (*UNDP. 2014*). The soaring of housing rental and real estate prices pose fundamental challenge to the host communities for Syrian refugees, with the following problems identified.³⁰

- Jordanians are struggling to compete with Syrians for housing, taking into account the fact that the Syrians are entitled to a financial housing subsidy from the UNHCR and other local and international charitable organizations.
- Out of necessity it is natural to see several Syrian families live together and share the cost of housing, so that they share the burden of high rent and water and electricity bills;
- Real estate prices and houses rental soared by up to 100%, making access to housing extremely difficult for newly married couples and lower income citizens.

Field data in Table (11) shows local views regarding the impact of Syrians on housing services in *Mafrq* governorate. The highest numbers said that the presence of Syrians has caused shortages of housing (26.2%); that it caused rise in houses rental (22.8%) that caused higher real estate prices (19.5 %) that (17.4%) said access to housing became very

³⁰Ministry of Planning and UN 2013.

difficult to Jordanians, and (14.1%) said several families living together has led to the increase of social problems.

Table 11. Local's views regarding refugees' impact on housing

Indicator	number	%
shortages of housing	110	26.2
Houses' rent soared	96	22.8
Real estate prices soared	82	19.5
Access to housing became very difficult to Jordanians	73	17.4
several Syrian families live together	59	14.1
increasing social problems		
Total	420	100

6.4. Impact on Health Services

Nineteen out of thirty-six Municipalities in *Mafraq* suffer from this Issue. The government has spent around US\$35 million on medical care for the Syrian refugees during 2013, with only US\$5 million provided in direct foreign aid during that period. The influx of such large number of refugees put huge pressure on medical centers and hospitals in *Mafraq*. The numbers of complex surgeries performed on a daily relate to war injuries sustained in Syria and number of patients visiting medical centers has increased dramatically in the governorate. The governments increased its total annual health expenditure by US\$135 million in 2013 and that it needs an additional US\$180 million to expand and upgrade 10 existing medical facilities in the northern governorates to cope with the massive demands on the health care system there. The refugee issue has had a direct impact on the quality of medical services in the *Mafraq* and other northern governorates, with the following problems identified:³¹

- Medical centers in the *Mafraq* especially in remote areas, suffer a shortage of personnel, equipment and facilities
- Many medical centers suffer from shortages of doctors, nurses and staff to meet the increased number of patients.
- Drug shortages have worsened, particularly those used to treat elderly patients with conditions such as heart disease and diabetes;
- The waiting times increased and so did the times between follow-up visits for the Jordanian patients, particularly in remote areas.
- There are almost no ambulances in the area. Though the Civil Defense Department (CDD) offers its vehicles for transporting patients, the scattered nature of the villages necessitates the availability of additional ambulances;
- Lack of medical services may be a key contributor to tensions in those communities

³¹Ministry of Planning & UN 2013.

Field data in Table (12) shows local views regarding the impact of Syrians on health services in *Mafraq* governorate. The highest numbers said that the presence of Syrians have caused shortages of doctors, nurses & staffs (27.4%); that it caused short of drugs (23.3), crowded clinics and spread new diseases (21.2 %); increased waiting time (15.5%) and finally shortages of facilities and equipment (12.6%).

Table 12. Local’s views regarding Syrians’ impact on health services

Indicator	Number	%
Shortages of doctors, nurses & staffs	115	27.4
Drug shortages	98	23.3
Crowded clinics brought new diseases	89	21.2
Increased waiting time	65	15.5
Shortages of facilities & equipment	53	12.6
Total	420	100

7. Government Policy toward Syrians and Locals’ Position

Government Policy towards Syrian refugees was in the beginning to allow them to enter the country and settle in their desired cities and towns in the country according to travel treaties between the two countries. But when their numbers increased dramatically the Government changed its policy and called upon the UN and other Arab governments and other humanitarians’ organization to establish special refugees’ camps near the Syrian Borders, and to help Jordan to finance and bare some of the economic cost of absorbing thousands of Syrian refugees and to provide aid to build extra schools, clinics, housing, and employ more teachers, doctors and nurses. Indeed, as mentioned above Jordan received billions of dollars in contribution to help Jordan provides for refugees.

Table 13. Local’s reasons position and reasons for agreeing with government policy toward Syrians

Do you agree with government’s policy towards Syrians	number	%
Strongly agree	231	55.0
Somewhat agree	90	21.4
Neither agree nor disagree	45	10.7
Somewhat disagree	41	9.8
Strongly disagree	13	3.1
Total	420	100
Reasons	number	%
Reducing security risks	114	27.1
Reducing houses’ rental prices	75	17.9
Reducing burden on public services	66	15.7
Reducing employment rates	69	16.4
Guaranteeing their return to their country	52	12.3
Improving economic conditions	44	10.4
Total	420	100

It should be noted here that complaints, frictions and negative attitudes towards Syrian refugees has resulted from the fact that the huge amount of economic aid which was offered, by international organizations to Syrian refugees, to cover their health, housing rent, and food expenses, did not benefit poor local population and consequently put them in a disadvantage position in comparison to refugees who supposed to host them. In other words, most of international aid amounting to billions of dollars was spent on refugees creating an abnormal situation meaning refugees are in a better condition than their local host.

The Study tried to explore Jordanians' views regarding their agreement with government's policy to confine Syrians to refugees' camps, consequently separating them from the local population in *Mafraq* Governorate. Data in Table (13) shows a rising trend of local's agreement with government's policy towards Syrians as (55%) expressed their strong agreement with government's policy of confining Syrians to camps, so they could live separately from the local community in *Mafraq* governorate, (21.4.6%) said they somewhat agree with such policy (10.7%) neither agree nor disagree (9.8%) Somewhat disagree while only (3.1%) said they strongly disagree with such policy. Data also, reveals several reasons behind agreeing local's agreement with government's policy to the establishment of refugees' camps for Syrians separating them from the local community. Data shows that (27.1%) said this would reduce security risks (17.9%); would lower the rising real estate and rental prices (16.4%); would guarantee their return to their country (12.3%); would reduce unemployment rates (10.4%), would improve economic conditions of the local communities. Data shed light explain some of the causes of local population negative attitudes towards Syrian refugees. This trend came as a result of several factors. Syrian refugees had an impact on unemployment rates, standards of living and costs of everyday life. They are also blamed for the rising of apartment rental prices, as landlords prefer to let their apartments to Syrians for double the usual rent prices affordable by local population.

8. General Findings and Concluding Remarks

On the first question: What are the demographic, social and economic characteristics of local population in *Mafraq* Governorate? The study used 240 informants to collect field data about the socio-economic conditions of local population. They were selected randomly from five different municipalities in *Mafraq* governorate; the majority of them are in the labor market. 47% of them are married against 44% singles and half of them (50% attained basic education. Around 85% of them are working in the services, construction and other economic sectors while around 15% are unemployed. Around 61 % of them receive monthly income between 180-500 JDs.

On the second question: What is the nature of social relations and interaction between local populations and Syrians in *Mafraq*? The arrival of huge numbers of Syrians to *Mafraq* Governorate increased social relations and interaction between them and the host communities in the governorate. The majority of local population described their

relationship with Syrians as very strong, good or moderate (65%) while the rest said they have weak, very weak or no relationship at all (25%). Also the majority of informants (84%) said they have relationships with Syrians as friends, neighbors, work, or intermarriages while 16% said they do not have any relationships. Regarding Locals' interaction and visits with Syrians the majority of informants said they maintain excellent, very good or good relations with Syrians (65%) against (35%) said they have weak or no relationships at all, while (64%) of informants said they exchange visit with Syrians regularly, some time or in occasions against (36%) said they rarely or do not exchange visits with Syrians at all. The reaction of Jordanians toward Syrians is driven by religious and cultural bonds and the majority show solidarity and sympathy with the Syrians in their plight and offered them assistance and different moral and material support.

Regarding locals' preference to workers (49%) of informants said they prefer Syrians workers to other nationalities including Jordanians while (19%) said this depends on the efficiency of the worker regardless of their nationalities, (12% and (10%) they prefer Egyptians and Asians while only 8% prefer Jordanian workers. As the pre-season behind their choices and preferences (76%) said because they accept less wages, skilled workers, motivated to finish their jobs and more efficient while only (24%) said because they sympathize with them or because they are easy to manage.

On the third question: What impact do the Syrian workers have on the labor market, education, housing and health services in *Mafrq* Governorate?

Impact on Labor market: The study has found that the Syrians have negative impact on labor market, education housing and health services and other sectors. Regarding the impact on the labor market the majority of informant (76%) said they created tough and unfair competition, replaced many Jordanians' workers and accepted lower wages while (24%) said they lowered labor wages and consequently created social tension with Jordanians' laborers. Indeed the high supply of Syrian workers in the various labor sectors has resulted in a downgrade of wages on the basis of supply-demand rule, especially because Syrians workers accept to work for lower wages, given the hard conditions they are living. This issue has led employers to prefer Syrian workers to Jordanians, as the formers would be easier to manage, not to mention the exploitive trends of employers who can find in cheap Syrians labor an opportunity to replace current Jordanian workers. It is worth noting that the conflict between Jordanian and Syrian job seekers in *Mafrq* is weak because the majority of Syrians accept jobs that Jordan workers usually do not accept to do.

Impact on Education: Regarding the impact on education they majority of informants (70) said their presence has led to lowering the level of education, created crowded class and many schools have to run double shifts while (30%) said their presence caused considerable raise education's cost, shortage of money to pay teachers and staff for working overtime and that Syrians' student have different habits from their Jordanians peers. Regarding the impact on housing the majority (86%) said Syrians have negative

impact as their presence has led to shortage of housing, soaring houses' rent and real states prices and consequently access to housing became difficult for Jordanians while (14%) said it has forced several families live together and causing some social problems.

Impact on Housing: Regarding the impact on housing they majority of informants (86%) said their presence has led to housing shortages, soaring houses' rent and real states prices and n access to housing became extremely difficult for Jordanians while (14%) said their presence forced many families to live together with the consequences of causing social problems.

Impact on Health services: Local population in *Mafraq* believe that the large influx of Syrians into the governorate has negative impact as (27%) of informants said it caused shortages of **doctors** (23%) drag shortages (21%) crowded clinics (15%) increased waiting time and finally (12%) said it caused Shortages of facilities & equipment.

On the Fourth Question: What is local population's position regarding government's policy towards Syrians in *Mafraq* especially confining them to camps? When local populations were asked about their agreement with government policy towards Syrians especially stopping their entry to the country and confine them to refugees' camps, data in table (14) shows that (76%) said they strongly agree or somewhat agree with such policy (10.7%) Neither agree nor disagree (13%) they said somewhat or strongly disagree with this policy. Regarding the reasons behind their support for government's policy (77%) said to reduce security risk, houses rental, unemployment rate and burden on public services while (12%) said to guarantee their return to their country and (10%) said to improve the economic conditions of the local population in *Mafraq*.

9. Conclusion

During the last 6 years Jordan has received 1.4 million Syrians among them 655000 registered refugees scattered all over the country. The majority of Syrians has settled in the northern governorates especially in Irbid and *Mafraq*. Syrians in *Mafraq* form around (50%) of the total population of *Mafraq* governorate and consequently formed a serious burden on the economic, labor market, education, housing, health services and infrastructure. This huge number of Syrians influx has undoubtedly exacerbated the preexisting economic hardships and labor market and education challenges facing local population in *Mafraq* including high unemployment, soaring housing rental and real estates' prices and caused enormous pressure on health services, water, power and infrastructure in the governorate. However, there is a positive side for Syrian refugees' as they stimulated host economies in *Mafraq* and other governorates as a result of the humanitarian aid alongside Syrian investment in the country. However, looking forward, it can be expected that most Syrian refugees will remain in the Jordan for many years to come, due to the absence of any political solution in Syria.

The most significant cost of hosting such large numbers of Syrians is associated with increased pressures on labor market, education, health services, in addition to the pressures

placed on infrastructure and public services which require significant investments to be upgraded. However, in order to convert these challenges into opportunities the government needs to formulate a comprehensive plan and build a practical strategy aiming at integrating the Syrians into Jordanian society. Such integration plan must seek to achieve mutual benefits and reduce tensions between the two sides offering hopes for a future solution to this crisis. In parallel, a comprehensive economic development plan must be created to serve both local population and Syrians in the Jordan in general and in *Mafrqa* governorate in particular aiming at creating jobs, and easing pressures on education, health services and other infrastructure services, such as roads, water, and electricity. It is also important to create a sort of social harmony that is viable and sustainable in the long run.

The Syrian crisis is by no means a temporary phenomenon, nor can its burdens be easily solved by government alone or tolerated by the local communities, unless and until an appropriate international funding is provided to Jordan to enable the government to achieve the required socio-economic development and hence help realizing Jordan's national interests and reducing the huge burdens placed on public services and infrastructure resulted from the presence of this huge number of Syrians in the country. Finally, Jordan must work today on devising a clear action plan integrate refugees into local communities and create job for both Jordanians and Syrians to avoid any future tension or conflict between the two sides. However, addressing tensions should be considered as part of a wider agenda of addressing structural vulnerabilities in host communities and strengthening social cohesion and resilience in those communities through a gradual increase of the capacity of national, regional and local governments to deliver key services to both sides.

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