

Increasing Knowledge-Intensive Employment Opportunities for Jordanians in the Garment Sector



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1 Executive Summary

Jordan's garment sector is one of the country's largest employers and a key contributor to national exports. The industry's expansion is expected to play a central role in achieving the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's Economic Modernization Vision (EMV). Despite this momentum, the sector is still exploring how it can deliver meaningful employment gains for Jordanians in knowledge-intensive roles. These positions are primarily occupied by non-Jordanians, with Jordanians occupying only 25% of the local workforce¹, despite high levels of unemployment among the country's university-educated citizens.

This report examines the barriers that limit Jordanian participation in such roles and identifies potential strategies to increase participation by drawing upon extensive background research and qualitative fieldwork. The latter included interviews with 117 individuals who provided perspectives from key industry actors, factories, universities, and the government. The findings point to five main barriers:

1. **Social norms:** Strong social and gender norms continue to shape career decisions, particularly among youth and women, and can contribute to low interest in the garment sector work.
2. **Perceptions about wages and benefits:** Some Jordanians, particularly those without direct exposure to the garment industry, perceive job packages as unattractive. While knowledge-intensive roles offer competitive wages, limited awareness surrounding the benefits of working in the sector contributes to a perception that it lacks viable or attractive career pathways.
3. **Structural gaps in graduate-to-employment pipelines:** Gaps in higher education curriculum leave graduates without the technical and soft skills needed to excel in factory-based knowledge-intensive roles.
4. **Employer preferences:** Many employers report a preference for hiring non-Jordanians due to their ability to work longer contracts, perceived higher levels of productivity and stronger commitment to work, as well as the industry-specific skills that they bring with them from past experience abroad.
5. **The role of government:** While the government has introduced policies aimed at increasing Jordanian participation in the garment sector, there is a need for clearer coordination among regulatory bodies and more effective implementation to align incentives and support inclusive workforce development.

Based on these findings, this report concludes with offering a set of five recommendations to improve Jordanian participation in knowledge-intensive roles within the sector. These five are in collaboration with one another to address the key findings identified:

¹ U.S. Department of Labor, [Better Work - Jordan](#), accessed April 24, 2025.

1. **Pilot a Public-Private Partnership:** Design and implement a sustainable public–private partnership model for the garment sector that addresses the skills gap in knowledge-intensive roles. This model should facilitate targeted modular training and expand access to employment opportunities for Jordanian talent. Its objective is to position the garment sector for economic growth and as a source of high-quality, long-term employment.
2. **Rebrand the Garment Sector:** Shift public perception and increase Jordanian participation by highlighting the sector’s alignment with global trends, such as sustainability and innovation, and its connections to prestigious international brands. This will be achieved through digital presence to increase sector visibility and showcasing knowledge-intensive roles as dynamic and respected, with career-building opportunities.
3. **Build University-to-Sector Talent Pipelines:** Strengthen institutional linkages between universities and garment employers to create clearer employment paths. This includes integrating employer engagement into university curricula, offering internships, and enhancing career services’ understanding of industry opportunities. Outreach efforts should also improve industry visibility on campuses and help academic advisors guide students toward relevant garment sector careers.
4. **Unlock Career Growth from Within:** Encourage factories to invest in the professional development of Jordanian staff by creating structured internal training and mentorship programs. Support career progression through formalized pathways from entry-level to middle management positions, and incentivize the promotion of local talent. Sharing successful case studies of internal advancement may further demonstrate that long-term career growth is achievable in the sector.
5. **Evaluate Regulatory Impact:** Conduct a comprehensive impact evaluation of existing labor localization and employment regulations to assess their effectiveness and alignment with what the sector needs. This includes identifying opportunities to streamline enforcement, reduce administrative barriers for local hiring, and improve the policy environment for recruitment and retention practices.

List of Abbreviations

BWJ – Better Work Jordan

EMV - Economic Modernization Vision

FTA – Free Trade Agreement

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GTL – Garment, Textile, and Leather

HR – Human Resources

IT – Information Technology

JGATE – Jordan Garments, Accessories & Textiles Exporter’s Association

JCI – Jordan Chamber of Industry

JOD – Jordanian Dinar

JTGCU – General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment & Clothing Industries

MoL – Ministry of Labour

NES – National Employment Strategy

NSSC – National Sector Skills Council

QIZ – Qualified Industrial Zone

R&D – Research and Development

TVSDC – Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission

INTRODUCTION

2 Introduction

Jordan's garment, textile, and leather (GTL) industry plays an important role in Jordan's economy and has established itself as an export powerhouse. The GLT industry comprises the manufacturing of garments, textile and leather products, the largest of which is garment manufacturing.² The Jordanian garment sector has accelerated its growth since the mid-1990s when garments manufactured in Jordan were first granted preferential duty free access to the United States (US), first under the terms of the Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) agreement and more recently under the US-Jordan Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which was approved in 2001.³ Before the QIZ, Jordan's garment industry lacked both local manufacturing experience and a domestic textile supply base.⁴ This makes Jordan's apparel sector relatively new compared to other countries with more established industries. China began its massive industry growth after economic liberalization in 1978, becoming the world's largest apparel exporter by the 1990s.⁵ India's large-scale factories date back to the 19th century.⁶ Bangladesh's ready-made garment exports began in the 1970s and expanded rapidly from the 1980s.⁷ Meanwhile, Vietnam's textile and garment industry dates back to its French colonial era, with the key turning point for the industry arriving in 2001, when the Bilateral Trade Agreement (USBTA) came into effect and led to an unprecedented export boom.⁸

Driven by favorable trade agreements and a supportive policy environment, Jordan is positioned as an attractive destination for foreign investors seeking access to the US market. In Jordan, the reduced tariffs, combined with a range of tax breaks and other incentives for investors led to a significant inflow of investment from abroad,⁹ encouraging many transnational companies headquartered in East Asia to set up garment factories in Jordan.¹⁰ According to The Jordanian Investment Board, the foreign ownership share of capital in the apparel industry is 67.1%,¹¹ making Jordan's garment industry unique compared to other global garment players where major capital is locally owned as shown in Figure 1.

² Better Work Jordan, [National Economic Contribution of Jordan's Garment, Textile and Leather Industry](#) (June 2023), 1.

³ International Labour Organization, [Employment of Jordanians in the Garment Industry: Challenges and Prospects](#) (August 2012), 9.

⁴ Better Work Jordan, [The Jordanian Garment Industry and Better Work](#) (November 2019), 2.

⁵ Miao Zhang, Xin Xin Kong, and Santha Chenayah Ramu, [The transformation of the Clothing Industry in China, Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia](#) (February 2015), 17.

⁶ Synerg, [From Ancient Threads to GLocal Garment Hubs: Unraveling the History of the Indian Apparel Industry](#) (July 26, 2023).

⁷ Savya Atrey, ["Bangladesh's Textile Industry: The History and Current Labour Culture"](#), *Nickeled & Dimed*, October 10, 2023.

⁸ Kenta Goto, "Viet Nam's Textile and Garment Industry in the Global Value Chain (2023)" Viet Nam 2045: Development Issues and Challenges, 339 & 340.

⁹ Better Work Jordan, [The Jordanian Garment Industry and Better Work](#) (November 2019), 9.

¹⁰ Katharina Grüneisl, Taher Labadi, [Hanging by a Thread—The Red Sea Blockade and Jordan's Fragile Garment Industry](#), accessed April 21, 2025.

¹¹ Drusilla Brown, Alan Deardorff, [The Apparel Industry and the Jordanian Economy](#) (November 2011), 15.

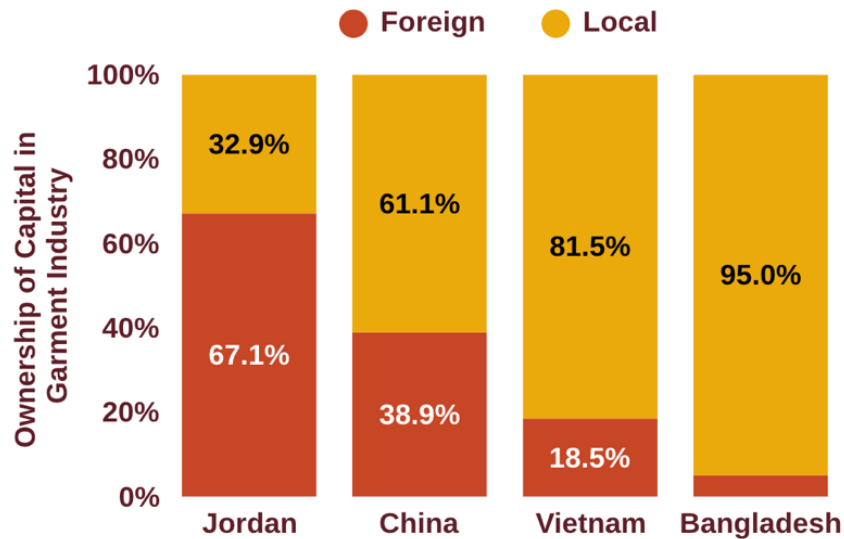


Figure 1. Foreign Ownership of Capital in Garment Industry in Leading Global Garment Countries¹²

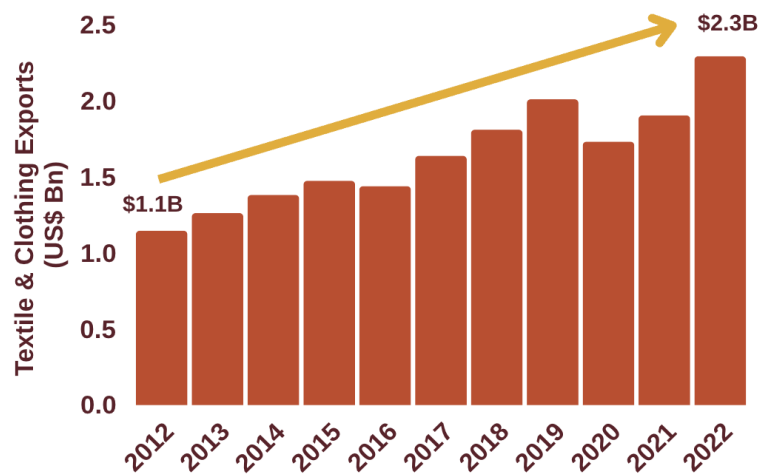


Figure 2. Jordan's Textile and Clothing Exports (2012-2022)¹³

¹² Miao Zhang, Xin Xin Kong, Santha Chenayah Ramu, [The Transformation of the Clothing Industry in China](#) (February 2015), 8;

International Development System, [Report on Vietnam Textile and Garment Industry](#), 17;

International Development System, [Report on Bangladesh Textile and Garment Industry](#), 17.

¹³ World Bank-World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS), [Jordan Textiles and Clothing Exports by Country](#), 2022, accessed April 22, 2025.

Over the last decade, GLT industry exports have more than doubled, surging from around \$1.1 billion in 2012 to over \$2.2 billion in 2022 (Figure 2),¹⁴ representing approximately one-fifth of the country's total exports.¹⁵ This growth rate significantly outpaces the overall increase in Jordan's exports, which saw a 70% expansion during the same period.¹⁶ The industry's contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) ranges between 2% and 3% annually and has been showing a positive trend.¹⁷ Acknowledging the sector's strategic importance, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan designated the GTL industry as a priority sector in its 2022 Economic Modernization Vision (EMV).¹⁸ The EMV anticipates that this sector has the potential to increase its exports by three to four times over the next decade and create over 149,000 new jobs for Jordanians.¹⁹

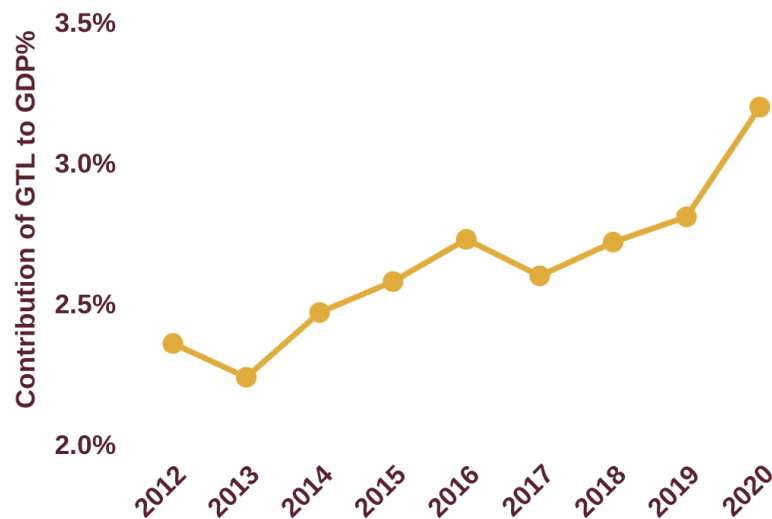


Figure 3. GTL's Contribution to Jordan's GDP (2010-2020)²⁰

Jordan's garment exports are driven by 85 large, primarily foreign-owned factories that employ the majority of the sector's workforce.²¹ This comprises around 77,800 workers, of whom three-quarters are migrants and women are overrepresented.²² These factories account for

¹⁴ Better Work Jordan, [National Economic Contribution of Jordan's Garment, Textile and Leather Industry](#) (June 2023), 1.

¹⁵ World Bank - World Integrated Trade Solution, [Jordan Trade Profile 2022](#), accessed March 1, 2025.

¹⁶ Better Work Jordan, [National Economic Contribution of Jordan's Garment, Textile and Leather Industry](#) (June 2023), 1.

¹⁷ OECD, [Input-Output Tables](#), (2023), accessed February 20, 2025.

¹⁸ Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, [Economic Modernisation Vision](#), 12.

¹⁹ Ibid, 49.

²⁰ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), [Input-Output Tables](#), accessed April 22, 2025.

²¹ United Nations Industrial Development Organization, [Upgrading The Jordanian Garments & Fashion Value Chain to Boost Job Creation for Youth and Women](#) (2020), 5.

²² International Labour Organization, [Jordan's garment, textile and leather industry continues to grow](#) (September 13, 2023).

approximately 95% of Jordan's garment exports, with the US being the primary export partner.²³ Following a government project to enhance local employment in rural areas, some of these factories recently established 16 satellite factories with smaller production lines.²⁴

Employment opportunities in the sector are typically split between production roles and knowledge-intensive roles. Prior research has largely focused on the former, particularly in relation to migration, gender and labor rights.²⁵ In contrast, knowledge-intensive roles - comprising 15% of Jordan's garment sector workforce—remain underexplored, despite their critical role in driving future industrial growth and productivity.²⁶ Estimates suggest that Jordan currently has between 5,000-7,000 positions in this job category.²⁷

Knowledge-intensive roles definition

“A category of occupations that require specialized expertise, typically obtained through a university or technical degree combined with relevant industry experience.”

Knowledge-intensive jobs span Human Resources (HR), Information Technology (IT), finance, production planning, industrial engineering related positions, and middle management positions.²⁸ Such positions usually require a university or technical degree in combination with relevant industry experience; they also garner significantly higher wages than production workers in the same sector.²⁹

Thus far, the garment sector's economic expansion has not translated into substantial job creation or higher employment opportunities for Jordanians, which was underscored as a key challenge for the sector under the EMV.³⁰ The sector's future success is especially vital given Jordan's persistent double-digit unemployment rates (Figure 4) and an alarming 46% youth unemployment rate.³¹ Roughly half of the unemployed hold a university degree, indicating the unemployment of a highly-educated workforce.³² Another key issue continues to be low labour force participation rates, especially among women, which is one of the lowest in the world at 14% (Figure 5).³³

²³ United Nations Industrial Development Organization, [*Upgrading The Jordanian Garments & Fashion Value Chain to Boost Job Creation for Youth and Women*](#) (2020), 5.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Better Work Jordan, [*Gender Strategy: 2021 Progress Report and Update*](#) (November 2021).

²⁶ Better Work Jordan, [*Business Case Analysis and Recommendations for Successful Hiring and Retention of Jordanians in Middle Management Positions Within the Garment Industry*](#) (December 2023) 7.

²⁷ Ibid.

Bureau of International Labor Affairs, [*Better Work - Jordan*](#) (2019), accessed February 21, 2025.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, [*Economic Modernisation Vision*](#) (2022), 49.

³¹ World Bank, [*The World Bank in Jordan*](#), accessed April 21, 2025.

³² Department of Statistics Jordan, [*Unemployed Persons Age 15+ Years by Sex, Educational Level & Nationality \(Percentage Distribution\) - 2024*](#), accessed April 21, 2025.

³³ Ibid.

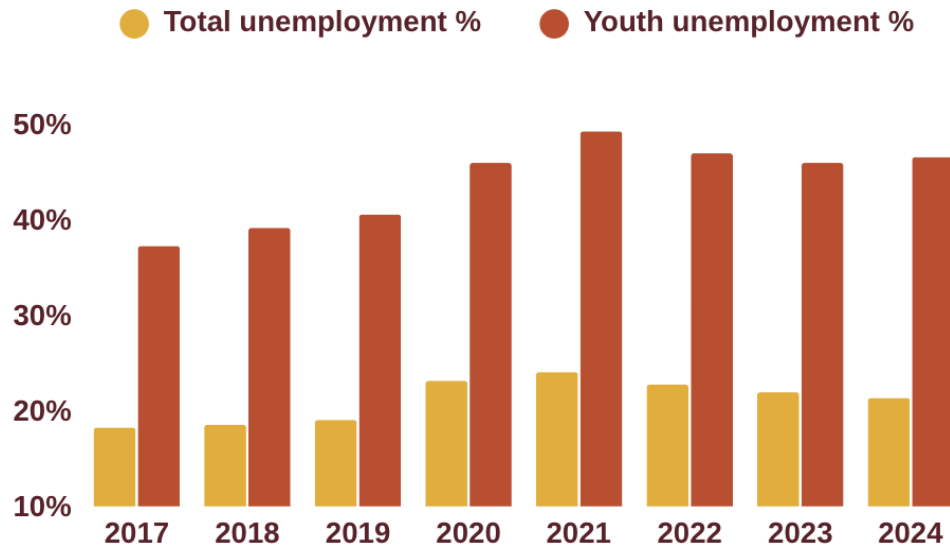


Figure 4. Unemployment Rate of Jordanians (2017-2024)³⁴

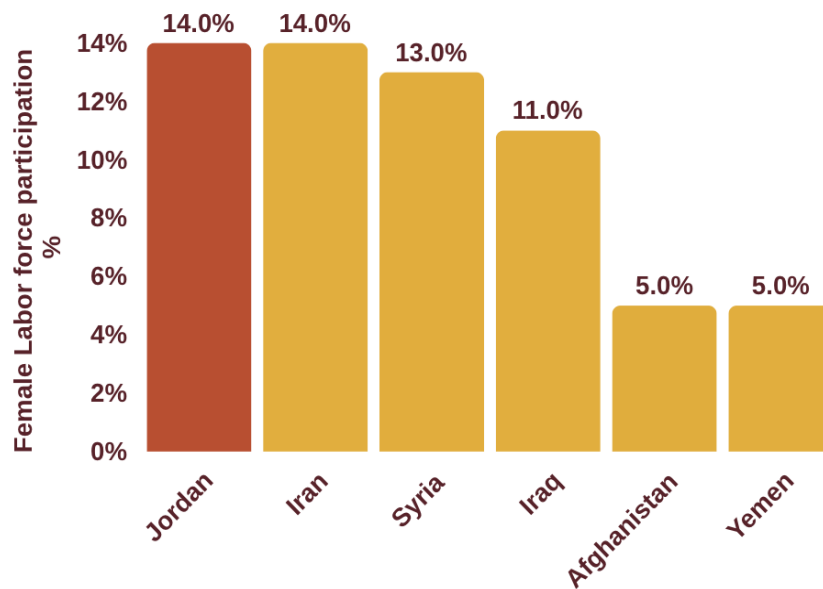


Figure 5. Countries with lowest Female Labor force participation (2023)³⁵

To increase Jordanian employment, the government has implemented sector-specific quota systems that limit the hiring of non-Jordanians. In the garment sector, the cap for non-Jordanian workers is set at 30%.³⁶ In addition, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan maintains a list of closed

³⁴ Department of Statistics Jordan, [Employment Data \(EMPALL\), Jordan Statistical Database](#), accessed April 22, 2025.

³⁵ World Bank – Gender Portal, [Labor Force Participation rate, total \(% of total population ages 15-64\)](#), accessed April 22, 2025.

³⁶ Better Work Jordan. [Annual Report 2023: An Industry and Compliance Review](#). Geneva: International Labour Organization & International Finance Corporation, 2023.

occupations that are reserved exclusively for Jordanian nationals.³⁷ The Ministry of Labor updates and publicizes these restrictions from time to time as part of broader labor market organization efforts.³⁸ However, these measures primarily target the general workforce and are not specifically designed to address knowledge-intensive positions.

Jordan's garment industry represents a unique dichotomy; a thriving sector comprising around 20% of the country's total export of goods and a site of massive expansion, yet it fails to incorporate Jordanians in this growth journey with a limited local workforce, in a country struggling with high unemployment rates.³⁹ Since 2011, integrating Jordanians into the garment industry has become a priority for the Jordanian government as it seeks to unlock growth and maximize opportunities for local people. Given this context, understanding why qualified Jordanians are failing to enter knowledge-intensive positions in the garment industry represents an opportunity to enhance Jordan's economic prosperity and raise the quality of life of Jordanians for years to come.

2.1 Purpose of the study

This report seeks to understand the persistent underrepresentation of Jordanians in knowledge-intensive roles within Jordan's garment sector, despite the sector's increased demand for skilled labor over time. Although the garment industry is widely acknowledged as a major national employer and key contributor to Jordan's GDP, most knowledge-intensive roles—such as supervisors, engineers, and production planners—are occupied by non-Jordanians.⁴⁰

In light of Jordan's high unemployment rates and the government's emphasis on creating quality jobs for Jordanians through the EMV, this project aims to identify the barriers that are preventing Jordanians from participating more fully in knowledge-intensive roles. This analysis is based on a comprehensive literature review, as well as extensive fieldwork. This report then further explores the incentives and structural changes that may be required to enhance local participation in middle-management and knowledge-intensive positions. Finally, it develops detailed recommendations tailored to addressing these challenges, including implementation plans geared toward relevant stakeholders. Its findings and recommendations are intended to support the work of industry actors, educational institutions, and government entities in developing effective strategies to attract, prepare, and retain Jordanians in higher-value roles across the garment sector.

³⁷ Ministry of Labour of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, *Decision No. (58/2020) on the Professions Restricted to Jordanian Workers* (2020).

³⁸ Maram Khayed, "[Labour Ministry Shuts Doors to 28 Professions for Foreign Labourers.](#)" *The Jordan Times*, February 5, 2020.

³⁹ U.S. Department of Labor, "[Better Work - Jordan.](#)", *Bureau of International Labor Affairs*, accessed April 24, 2025.

⁴⁰ Better Work Jordan, [Business Case Analysis and Recommendations for Successful Hiring and Retention of Jordanians in Middle Management Positions Within the Garment Industry](#) (December 2023), 7.

2.2 *Research questions*

To achieve the aims of this research, the study was guided by three central questions:

- What are the main barriers preventing Jordanians from reaching knowledge-intensive roles in the garment sector?
- What incentives are needed to attract Jordanians to these roles?
- What regulatory and other factors are necessary to create an appealing career path in this sector for recent graduates?

METHODOLOGY

3 Methodology

This study combines secondary data analysis with primary data collection conducted through fieldwork in Amman, Jerash, Madaba, and surrounding areas. It employs qualitative methods, including structured interviews and focus group discussions, to examine the barriers and incentives needed to increase Jordanian participation in knowledge-intensive roles within the garment sector.

3.1 Secondary research

To inform the design and context of the primary data collection, this study began with a thorough review of secondary sources related to Jordan's garment sector, labor market, and its broader sociocultural dynamics. The goal was to better understand the sector's economic contribution in terms of GDP, employment, and trade, as well as key features and trends of the Jordanian labor force and education system, including levels of educational attainment, gender disparities in employment, and the distribution of employment across sectors. This review also helped identify existing knowledge gaps, examine relevant policies, and build a solid understanding of the structural and institutional factors that shape Jordanian participation in knowledge-intensive roles.

Sources reviewed included government official statistics and publications (e.g., Department of Statistics, Ministry of Labor reports), industry assessments by international organizations and think tanks (e.g., Better Work Jordan, International Labour Organization (ILO), The World Bank), news articles, and academic literature. The Economic Modernization Vision 2023–2033 and related strategic frameworks were also analyzed to understand the national development agenda and its implications for employment in the garment industry.

Based on this preliminary literature review and desk analysis, we identified key stakeholders and mapped out the types of information to be gathered from their respective areas of expertise and/or lived experiences (see Figure 6).

KEY ISSUES	KEY STAKEHOLDERS					
	Students	Training/ education providers	Current K-I Workers (Jordanian & Non-Jordanian)	Government Agencies	Employers/ Industry	Better Work Peers
	Perception of the sector	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Perception of Jordanian workers		✓		✓	
	Skills gap/training needs	✓	✓		✓	
	Government regulations and programs			✓	✓	✓
	Cross country comparison				✓	✓
	Social and cultural norms	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Policy Recommendations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 6. Stakeholder Mapping by Key Issues

3.2 Primary research

Fieldwork was conducted from March 16 to 20, 2025, in the Jordanian cities of Amman, Jerash, Madaba, and nearby areas. The primary data collection involved semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a range of stakeholders in the garment sector, as well as focus groups with students and knowledge-intensive garment sector workers. The goal was to understand perceptions, barriers, and incentives related to Jordanian participation in knowledge-intensive roles. In total, 39 interviews were conducted across 9 stakeholder categories. This amounted to engagement with approximately 117 interviewees, as outlined in Figure 7.

Stakeholder group	Number of interviews	Number of interviewees
Factory management	6	10
Jordanian workers	8	54
Non-Jordanian workers	7	10
University faculty	6	7
Students	4	15
Worker support organization	1	1
Government entities (TVSDC, MoL)	2	6
Private sector representatives (JGATE, JCI)	2	3
Better Work Country Offices	3	6
Total interviews	39	112

Figure 7. Number of Interviews by Stakeholder Group

Due to time and location constraints, several interviews were held online after the fieldwork period. These included discussions with Better Work offices in Vietnam, Egypt, and Bangladesh, as well as with students and faculty who could not be reached during the in-person visits.

All interviews were conducted in English. In some cases, factory staff acted as translators, especially during conversations with workers. Before each interview, interview guides (see sample, Appendix 1) were prepared that included relevant background information, the objective of the interview, and key questions tailored to each stakeholder group, which were reviewed by our client. All interviews were recorded with the informed consent of participants.

3.3 *Limitations*

Some minor challenges emerged during the data collection process that are important to acknowledge. The timing of the fieldwork coincided with Ramadan, which required some adjustments to scheduling and added constraints on participants' availability. A few interviews, such as those planned with vocational school students, were cancelled due to various logistical and contextual factors. Language differences also required some flexibility, while interviews were conducted in English, factory staff occasionally assisted with translation, which may have influenced how some responses were conveyed. Lastly, in a few interviews, the presence of supervisors or senior staff may have shaped how participants chose to respond, potentially limiting the openness of the discussion in those particular cases.

Some interviews with students and workers were conducted in informal focus groups. In one case, a factory organized a large group session in an auditorium. While this enabled us to reach many participants at once, the formal setting made it more difficult to ask in-depth or personal questions. This approach was primarily due to limited time in the field and the fact that the interviews were organized by the factories, which often grouped participants together for convenience.

Given these constraints, one should interpret participant responses with caution. To ensure the robustness of the following findings, insights have been triangulated across stakeholder groups and sources to avoid taking individual claims at face value without supporting evidence or identifying patterns across interviews.

KEY FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

4 Key findings and analysis

This section presents the core findings of the study, based on interviews, focus groups and secondary research. It outlines main factors that shape Jordanian participation in knowledge-intensive roles in the garment industry, including social norms, perceptions of job benefits, structural gaps in education to employment pathways, and employer hiring practices. The analysis also examines regulatory influences and draws insights from peer garment exporting countries. Together, these key findings provide a comprehensive understanding of what the barriers are to local workforce integration and identify where there are opportunities for sector growth, which are reflected in the recommendations that follow.

4.1 Barriers to Jordanian participation in knowledge-intensive roles in the garment sector

The underrepresentation of Jordanians in the garment industry stems from a complex interplay of familial expectations, gender norms, societal perceptions of prestige, and the industry's complex socially-constructed image. Despite the sector's critical role in the national economy and its consistent demand for labor, it remains unattractive to many Jordanians, particularly youth. Deep-seated social norms, gender-based constraints, and widespread views that associate garment work with low status and physical hardship continue to discourage domestic engagement. At the same time, tangible deterrents such as low wages, unclear benefit structures, limited career advancement, and a weak alignment between university training and sector needs further undermine the industry's appeal. These challenges are compounded by employer preferences for migrant workers, often driven by assumptions about their reliability, availability, and industry-specific experience. Addressing this participation gap requires more than expanding job opportunities; it calls for a coordinated effort to reshape public perceptions, challenge entrenched social narratives, reform incentive structures, and strengthen institutional linkages between education, employment, and regulation.

4.1.1 Social norms

Socio-cultural and perceptual barriers limit Jordanian participation in the garment industry, despite its economic significance and high labor demand. While jobs are available, deep-rooted social norms, family influence, and sector stigmas deter Jordanians—especially youth and women—from engaging in this work. These dynamics produce a workforce heavily reliant on migrant labor, while simultaneously obscuring pathways for local talent development in middle-management and technical roles. Understanding these barriers is key to designing interventions that reshape the sector's reputation and build a more inclusive domestic labor market that is attractive in the image of local Jordanians.

4.1.1.1. Familial influence on career choices

In Jordanian society, family remains the most central social structure,⁴¹ often playing a powerful role in influencing job preferences and steering youth toward what are perceived as socially appropriate careers.⁴² Families are often top priority and work choices revolve around serving families responsibilities first and foremost.

According to a study conducted by RAND, young Jordanians did not feel free in their career choices to pursue fields valued by the market, but instead felt pressure to choose professions such as medicine, law, and engineering, that society and parents valued more than other professions.⁴³ Similar sentiments were reinforced by a faculty member in an interview, stating, “the parents are the first barriers. They don’t think it’s an open niche in Jordan. They advise them not to go to this sector, you can’t find jobs.”⁴⁴ An industrial engineer, who previously worked in the pharmaceutical industry, shifted to the automotive industry to work in sales for a local car dealership, because his father worked there.⁴⁵ These findings reflect the crucial role families play in influencing career choices of young graduates.

The prioritization of family responsibilities often influences employment patterns and retention rates, leading to employers being less inclined to hire Jordanians. In one focus group, a Jordanian middle manager at a factory stated, “Family comes first in Jordan here; migrants are focused on work.”⁴⁶ This perception reinforces employer preferences for Non-Jordanian workers, who are often seen as more flexible and readily available for demanding or long working hours while Jordanians have fixed work-life boundaries.

The reliance on family as a buffer from immediate economic pressure further reduces the incentive for Jordanians to enter stigmatized or demanding sectors, like garment manufacturing. The majority of unemployed Jordanians are highly educated, often university or high school graduates (Figure 8) and perceive available jobs as beneath their qualifications and social expectations.⁴⁷ Yet, this mismatch has not led to social unrest or widespread economic strain because most unemployed Jordanians live in extended family structures, where at least one member earns enough to support the others.⁴⁸ This cushion delays the urgency to accept less desirable jobs and reinforces selective job-seeking behaviors.

⁴¹ Meghan Flaherty, [*Meghan Flaherty on The Importance of Family in Jordanian Culture*](#), (March 24, 2010).

⁴² Batool Ghaith, “[Parental pressure a major hurdle for many Jordanian students to pursue major](#)”, *The Jordan Times*, (August 23, 2021).

⁴³ Ryan Andrew Brown, Louay Constant, Peter Glick, Audra K. Grant, [*Youth in Jordan - Transitions from Education to Employment*](#) (June 30, 2014), 18.

⁴⁴ Authors’ interview with faculty of American University of Madaba, Amman, March 2025.

⁴⁵ Authors’ interview with industrial engineer working in Automotive Industry, Amman, March 2025.

⁴⁶ Authors’ interview with Satellite Factory 6 Quality Manager, Amman, March 2025.

⁴⁷ Fahed Fanek, “[Extended families tolerate unemployment](#)”, *The Jordan Times*, (Jan 22, 2018).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

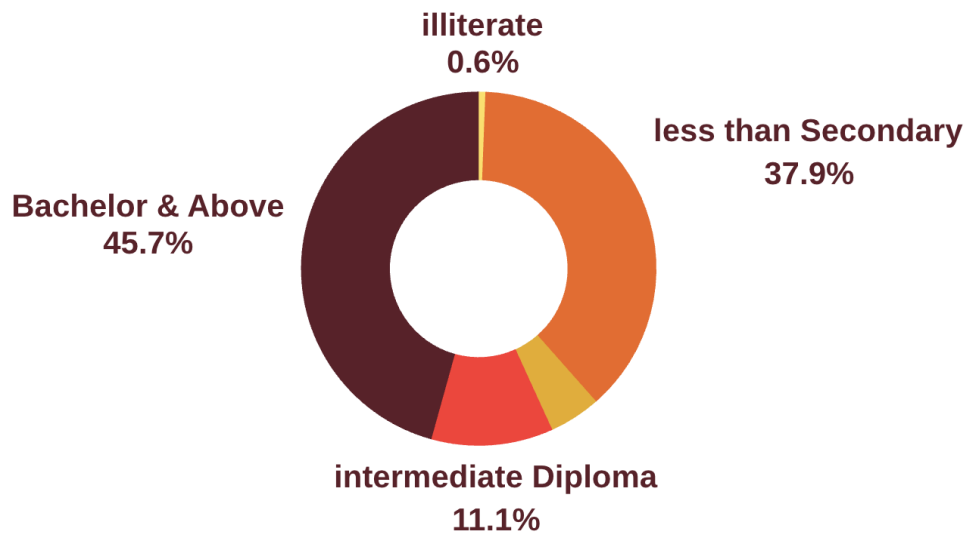


Figure 8. Education Level of Unemployed Jordanians (2024)⁴⁹

As a result, family influence acts as both a cultural filter and economic safety net, narrowing the scope of acceptable employment for many Jordanians. While this structure provides social protection, it simultaneously reduces the incentive to participate in sectors like garment manufacturing, even in knowledge-intensive roles, contributing to the persistent gap between job availability and domestic workforce participation.

4.1.1.2. Gender norms and cultural constraints

Gender roles remain a powerful determinant of labor force participation in Jordan. While there is growing public support for women's employment, actual labor market behavior continues to reflect conservative norms. In Jordan, women constitute a significant portion of university graduates, making up 61% of the total number of university graduates.⁵⁰ However, despite high levels of education, female labor force participation in Jordan remains the lowest in the world at just 14%,⁵¹ and female unemployment stands at a staggering 34.7%.⁵² What is even more surprising is that 80% of unemployed females hold a bachelor's degree or above.⁵³ Many women remain outside the formal workforce due to cultural expectations, restrictive norms, and limited

⁴⁹ Department of Statistics Jordan, [Employment Data \(EMPALL\)](#), accessed April 22, 2025.

⁵⁰ The Jordan Times, "[Illiteracy rate among Jordanian women is decreasing — DoS](#)", *The Jordan Times*, (March 10, 2024).

⁵¹ World Bank, [Gender Data Portal Jordan](#), accessed April 13, 2025.

⁵² Department of Statistics Jordan, [The unemployment rate at 21.4% during the first quarter of 2024](#), accessed April 13, 2025.

⁵³ Department of Statistics Jordan, [Unemployed Persons Age 15+ Years by Sex, Educational Level & Nationality \(Percentage Distribution\) - 2024](#), accessed April 21, 2025.

availability of socially acceptable jobs.⁵⁴ To close the gap between opportunity and participation, both structural and perceptual barriers must be addressed.

A UNICEF study on youth employment found that women in Jordan prefer jobs with "high reservation working conditions," such as safe environments, short commutes, minimal mobility, and socially acceptable responsibilities. Industrial jobs, including those in the garment sector, often do not meet these criteria due to longer hours, low flexibility, and mixed-gender environments. Teaching was noted as the ideal job for women, as it offers fixed working hours and aligns with children's school schedules, allowing women to return home to care for them.⁵⁵

Interviews with young women reinforced these findings. Indeed, because the general perception of the garment sector is that it is industrial and does not have desirable working conditions for women, even knowledge-intensive roles - which might actually meet those conditions - are not considered. One student, whose father owned a plastics factory, described how her family discouraged her from working in garment production because "it's hectic, chaotic and risky. It's too much effort."⁵⁶ Another female student noted that "the work in the garment industry is often perceived as donkey work, because of how repetitive the tasks are."⁵⁷ These accounts reveal that even if factories support female employment in knowledge-intensive roles, the perceived appropriateness of working in a factory—and concerns over mobility, safety, and social judgment—limit female participation.

The large-scale exposés of human trafficking and sexual harassment in the garment sector in 2006 contributed to the negative perception of the industry and has played a role in discouraging women from working in factories.⁵⁸ Families express concerns that factories are inappropriate places for women, and traveling long distances, they fear, could impede on the expectations of women in traditional family structures as mothers and caregivers.⁵⁹ The Jordanian government in collaboration with manufacturers to encourage the creation of satellite factories and simultaneously, address the concerns of Jordanian women by providing local workplaces to increase their participation. However, this model is yet to alter the widespread negative perception of the garment industry as a whole.

Knowledge-intensive roles in the garment sector provide a promising avenue to boost female participation, especially among university graduates. Satellite factories provide a successful case of increasing female labor participation, especially in rural, remote communities. According to the Better Work Jordan study, the majority of workers at satellite factories are women, and among supervisors, 68% are women as well.⁶⁰ This signals that women are willing to enter the workforce, given it is socially acceptable and does not hinder their family life.

Workplace benefits also play a crucial role in enabling this women's workforce participation. During an interview with JGATE, they emphasized the importance of transportation and

⁵⁴ Anna Chang, *The Challenges of Balancing Careers and Family Life Facing College Women in Jordan* (2011), 6.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Authors' focus group with fashion students at American University of Madaba, Amman, March 2025.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Better Work Jordan, *Advancing Jordan's satellite garment factories* (April 2019), 4.

⁵⁹ Better Work Jordan, *The Jordanian Garment Industry and Better Work* (November 2019), 45.

⁶⁰ Better Work Jordan, *Advancing Jordan's satellite garment factories* (April 2019), 6.

childcare facilities to support women's employment.⁶¹ A recent survey by the Center for International Development at Harvard University echoed this sentiment when they found that Jordanian women ranked work and family balance as their biggest challenge to general labor market participation. In response to the question, "Do you prefer [that] women work paid jobs, care for their families and homes, or do both?", 31% of female respondents and 42% of male respondents selected caring for their family and homes. These expectations on women in the family and home were reflected consistently in responses to other questions by respondents.⁶²

Shifting perceptions of the garment sector—highlighting ongoing efforts to make it more inclusive for women and to expand knowledge-intensive roles comparable to those in other respected professions—is essential to unlocking women's economic potential and driving industry growth.

4.1.1.3. Career prestige and perceptions of the sector

Perceptions of career prestige in Jordan play a defining role in employment decisions and contribute to a persistent mismatch between labor market supply and demand. Young people consistently prioritize public sector employment, driven by its perceived job security, stable working conditions, and access to pensions and healthcare. Although only 26% of Jordanian youth are employed in the public sector, a recent study found that 88% of those workers report job satisfaction, compared to 75% in non-wage work and just 62% in informal private employment. The appeal of public sector employment lies less in wages than in its alignment with social status and long-term security.⁶³

These preferences have clear implications for private sector recruitment, particularly in industries such as garments that are widely perceived as low-status. A growing body of evidence highlights the role of voluntary unemployment in shaping labor market outcomes.⁶⁴ Evidence from a randomized controlled trial in Jordan revealed that even when young job seekers were matched with suitable private sector roles, many declined interviews or left their jobs shortly after being hired.⁶⁵ This pattern suggests that labor force participation is constrained not only by job availability but also by strong preferences for non-wage attributes such as prestige, stability, and favorable working conditions, which are more commonly associated with public employment.⁶⁶

Although the garment sector plays a major role in Jordan's export economy, it remains an

⁶¹ Authors' interview with Jordan Garments, Accessories & Textiles Exporter's Association (JGATE), Amman, March 2025.

⁶² Semiray Kasoolu, Ricardo Hausmann, Tim O'Brien, and Miguel Angel Santos, [*Female Labor in Jordan: A Systematic Approach to the Exclusion Puzzle*](#), Center for International Development at Harvard University, no. 365 (2019), 19.

⁶³ UNICEF, [*Policy Brief - Barriers to Economic Participation for Young People in Jordan: A Gendered Analysis*](#) (November 2021), 11.

⁶⁴ The Economic Times, [*What Is Voluntary Unemployment? Definition of Voluntary Unemployment. Voluntary Unemployment Meaning*](#), (April 20, 2025).

⁶⁵ Matthew Groh et al., [*Testing the Importance of Search Frictions and Matching through a Randomized Experiment in Jordan*](#), IZA Journal of Labor Economics 4, no. 1 (April 24, 2015), 7.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

unattractive option for many university graduates.⁶⁷ Roles in the industry are often viewed as physically demanding, low-skilled, or appropriate only for migrant workers. This perception is particularly strong in QIZs, where long hours and low wages have historically deterred Jordanians from seeking employment.⁶⁸ This perception persists despite the presence of knowledge-intensive opportunities in human resources (HR), supply chain, planning, quality control, and compliance. One student noted, “The garment sector is not seen as prestigious”⁶⁹ while another added, “Finding work within the industry is difficult – working in garment and textiles is not that helpful.”⁷⁰ In another interview a member of The Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI) noted, “If I have an engineering degree, why would I work in the garment sector? Plastic sector? I will wait until I have an office job. It’s the mentality.”⁷¹ These comments reflect a widespread belief that employment in the garment sector is neither socially desirable nor professionally rewarding and that academic achievement should lead to administrative or white-collar roles, not industrial employment, even when those roles are technical in nature.

Despite these perceptions, attitudes toward private sector employment are beginning to shift. “One thing in Jordan—so many things have changed,” explained a factory manager. “Five years ago, no one wanted to work in the private sector because it was seen as insecure. Now, people understand the private sector is beneficial.”⁷² This gradual shift in mindset signals an opportunity to challenge long-standing social norms, reshape perceptions of the garment industry, and position it as a viable and respected pathway for Jordanian talent.

4.1.2 Perception of unattractive job packages

While workers in the garment sector generally seem to feel satisfied with their job packages, those without experience in the industry may be unaware of the relatively appealing salaries and benefits offered or assume they would be unappealing altogether.⁷³ A report by the ILO found that middle management employees in the garment sector felt motivated to continue in their roles due to the salary structure and benefits.⁷⁴ Generally, middle managers found that their salaries aligned with their experience and qualifications, enhancing the role's appeal given the necessary training and education.⁷⁵ Additionally, benefits such as free health insurance, childcare facilities, and specifically transportation, help ease challenges for employees, like having to commute long distances to satellite factories outside of urban centers.⁷⁶ However, this section reveals that many Jordanians without direct ties to the sector are unaware of the competitiveness of these salaries and benefits. This contrast underscores a key disconnect: those without a connection to the industry often lack awareness of its advantages, making it less likely for them to see it as a

⁶⁷ Better Work Jordan, [National Economic Contribution of Jordan's Garment, Textile and Leather Industry](#) (June 2023), 2.

⁶⁸ Clean Clothes Campaign, [Systematic Abuse and Discrimination](#), accessed April 21, 2025.

⁶⁹ Authors' interview with an engineering student, Online, March 2025.

⁷⁰ Authors' focus group with fashion and accessory students at Applied Science University, Online, March 2025.

⁷¹ Authors' interview with Members of The Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI), Amman, March 2025.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Better Work Jordan, [Business Case Analysis and Recommendations for Successful Hiring and Retention of Jordanians in Middle Management Positions Within the Garment Industry](#) (December 2023), 3.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 15.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 15.

desirable career opportunity. Addressing this gap is essential to positioning the garment sector as a viable and respectable career path for Jordanians.

4.1.2.1 *Misconceptions regarding salary packages*

Figure 9 provides a general overview of the average monthly salaries associated with various roles in Jordan's garment industry, categorized by experience and educational requirements. During an interview with a Jordanian manager at a factory, they mentioned that the pay for these positions remains relatively similar across factories.⁷⁷ To achieve salaries higher than the sector-based minimum wage, workers need at least a diploma or bachelor's degree to reach knowledge-intensive roles.

Role Type	Average Monthly Salary (JOD)	Education & Experience Requirements	Notes
Production floor			
Floor Worker	220	No experience and degree required	Sector-specific minimum wage
Knowledge-Intensive Roles			
Officer	625	Bachelor's degree, 0-2 year years of experience, Diploma degree, +2 years of experience	Entry-level / Junior role
Senior Officer	855	Bachelor's degree, 2-4 years of experience, Diploma degree, +2 years of experience	Junior role
Supervisor	1205	Bachelor's degree, 4-6 years of experience Diploma degree, +2 years of experience	Junior role
Section Head	1660	Bachelor's degree, 6-8 years of experience; Diploma degree, +2 years of experience	Middle Management
Manager	2275	Bachelor's degree, 8-10 years of experience Diploma degree, +2 years of experience	Middle Management
Director	3175	Bachelor's degree, 10-12 years of experience Diploma degree, +2 years of experience	Senior Management

Figure 9. Median Salaries by Role Across Career Pathways in the Garment Sector⁷⁸

The market rate for entry-level, knowledge-intensive roles across all sectors in Jordan stands at a median salary of 815 JOD, as shown below in Figure 10.

⁷⁷ Authors' interview with Satellite Factory 1 middle manager, Amman, March 2025.

⁷⁸ International Labour Organization. *Career Paths and Salary Ranges for the Middle Management in the Garment Industry* [Internal Document], (February 2021).

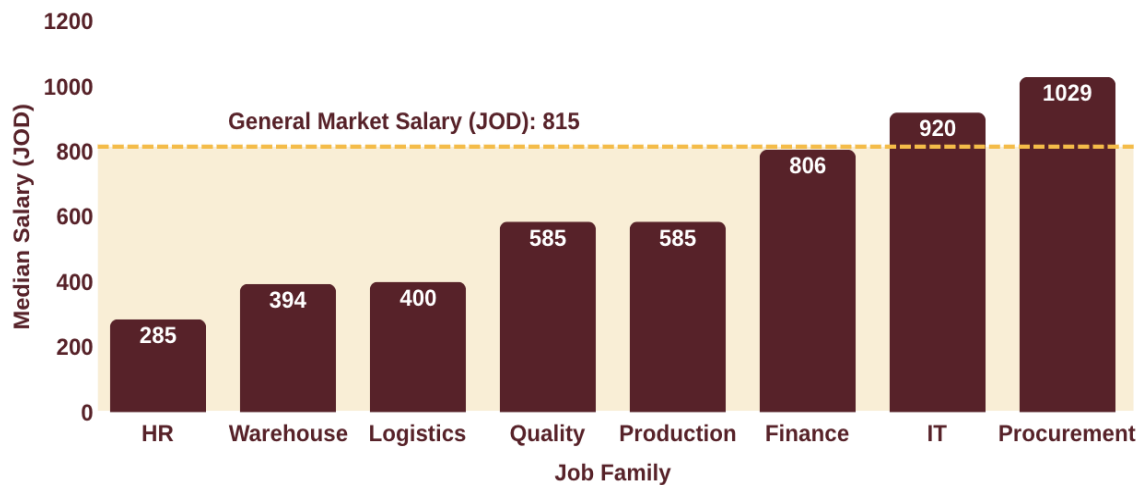


Figure 10. Median Salaries for Entry-Level Knowledge Intensive Roles⁷⁹

Compared to this benchmark, most entry-level positions within the garment industry provide competitive salaries as compared with other sectors. In particular, roles in finance, IT, and procurement not only meet or exceed this median, they also surpass the estimated living wage of 361 JOD in urban areas.⁸⁰ However, compensation fails to keep pace with both market standards and increasing responsibilities in more senior roles. There is also a significant variation in entry-level knowledge intensive salaries based on the type of role. Notably, HR roles report a median of 285 JOD, falling short of the median market salary and living wage threshold. Regardless of these deviations, many entry-level, knowledge-intensive roles within the garment industry provide competitive salaries given that they fall close to the general market trends.

Jordan's garment industry, however, struggles to meet the salary expectations of many job seekers because of widespread misperceptions and social biases that undermine the reality of the competitive salaries. Across all four focus group interviews with current students and graduates, individuals without experience in the sector continued to criticize the industry's overall wages.⁸¹ These individuals held a prevailing belief that working in factories came with low wages—an outlook that clashes with the desire for good salaries. For example, a graduate who now works as an industrial engineer for the food industry noted that better wages influenced how she considered her post graduate opportunities. She found that the garment industry wages were “not that good,” a sentiment also echoed across the four focus groups.⁸² This highlights a disconnect between the reality of wages in the garment industry that meet general market trends and the salary expectations of Jordanians. Then, the question remains: why are Jordanians not seeking these opportunities given the low national unemployment rate?

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Anker Research Institute, [Anker Living Wage Reference Value 2022](#) (2023).

⁸¹ Authors' interview with University Students and Graduates, Amman, March 2025.

⁸² Authors' interview with University Students and Graduates, Amman, March 2025.

There are at least two possible explanations why Jordanians without experience in the garment sector falsely assume knowledge-intensive salaries are low:

1. **Jordanians may conflate the entry-level wages in the knowledge-intensive roles with the production floor minimum wage:** One graduate cited the low minimum wage in reference to why she believed Jordanians perceived the sector as negative.⁸³ Indeed, the minimum wage in the garment sector is lower than the national minimum of 260 JOD (or, 245 JOD for non-Jordanians).⁸⁴ However, she later acknowledged that the sector does offer good salaries for those with more experience.⁸⁵ Her initial focus on the minimum wage for entry-level positions highlights how the low starting salary for production floor workers contributes to the widespread misperception that the industry offers unattractive compensation for entry-level knowledge-intensive workers. It is important to note that only production workers receive the sector-specific minimum wage, highlighting that there is miscommunication on knowledge-intensive workers' wages to the general public.
2. **Jordanians felt that remote factory locations necessitate more competitive pay:** Many Jordanians stressed the need for more competitive compensation, citing the fact that the location of factories is distant from other jobs in the public and private sectors.⁸⁶ One industrial engineer, in particular, noted that because the garment industry is in an "industrial area and away from the cities" they needed "some compensation and flexibility to work in the industry."⁸⁷ While factories do offer transportation benefits, as mentioned previously, this support may not be widely known or viewed as sufficient by potential workers as they could simply choose a job closer to urban centers with the same or better salary.

These insights suggest the issue in attracting knowledge-intensive workers to the sector is not with the actual salaries, but with misperceptions about them. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness about the competitive salaries that already exist and change the negative perception of garment industry work. Misunderstandings about compensation persist, in part, because the competitiveness of the sector's wage struggles against a pervasive narrative that working in the garment industry is not good. While many focus group participants prioritized salary in their job choices, prestige often followed closely behind—and for some, it was the most important factor.⁸⁸ This indicates that the industry's image problem could override the appeal of market-aligned wages. When these negative perceptions go unchallenged, individuals are unlikely to reconsider or question their assumptions. To effectively draw more Jordanians into knowledge-intensive roles, the sector must both clarify its compensation practices *and* address the broader stigma around garment work. It cannot simply focus on one without the other.

⁸³ Authors' interview with a graduate in industrial engineering, Amman, March 2025.

⁸⁴ Better Work Jordan, [Working Hours and Wages in the Jordanian Garment Sector](#) (October 2022).

⁸⁵ Authors' interview with a graduate in industrial engineering, Amman, March 2025.

⁸⁶ Authors' interview with University Students and Graduates, Amman, March 2025.

⁸⁷ Authors' interview with a graduate in industrial engineering, Amman, March 2025.

⁸⁸ Authors' interview with University Students and Graduates, Amman, March 2025.

4.1.2.2 *Limited understanding and connection to benefits*

Given the widespread assumption that the garment industry offers low salaries, one might expect that the personal and professional benefits of working in the industry would help offset this perception and help attract workers. While interviews with factory managers and supervisors revealed a range of attractive benefits, JCI shared that they struggled marketing the sector to Jordanians, leading to their limited understanding of the benefits available in the sector.⁸⁹ As the leading industry representative, JCI noted that they are currently “working on marketing the sector [...] because Jordanians are not aware of the opportunities.”⁹⁰ Further supporting this statement, students and recent graduates did not mention any benefits to working in the industry beyond gaining general professional experience.⁹¹ This disconnect not only weakens the appeal of garment work but also contributes to the broader misperception that the industry lacks competitiveness and care for worker well-being.

Interviews with JGATE and various factories emphasized several structural benefits that should attract people to work in the industry:

- **Transportation:** Garment factory employers must provide free, safe, two-way transportation for all workers if their homes or designated gathering points are more than one kilometer from the factory.⁹² This benefit supports workers headed to factories located in industrial zones or rural areas with limited public transport options. If a company does not provide transportation, these factories must pay a transportation allowance of 25 JOD per month.⁹³
- **Childcare facilities:** Many factories also noted that they provide nurseries, breastfeeding stations, and other facilities required for workers with children on the job. The presence of these childcare facilities is similarly mentioned across other reports.⁹⁴

Managers also emphasized how the factories had several other professional and personal benefits that should attract and retain knowledge-intensive workers in their roles:

- **Mental welfare programs:** Several of the factories noted programs they initiated to prioritize their worker’s well-being and mental health. One factory shared they focus on recognition programs like Employee of the Month or celebrate birthdays to acknowledge

⁸⁹ Authors’ interview with Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI), Amman, March 2025.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Authors’ interview with University Students and Graduates, Amman, March 2025.

⁹² The Jordan Times, “[Minimum wage in textile sector raised to JD230 under new Labour contract](#)”, *The Jordan Times*, January 16, 2025.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Better Work Jordan, [Business Case Analysis and Recommendations for Successful Hiring and Retention of Jordanians in Middle Management Positions Within the Garment Industry](#) (December 2023), 3.

and appreciate employees' hard work.⁹⁵ Some factories noted that they provide mental health programs, suggesting a proactive approach to employee well-being.⁹⁶ Another factory noted that they have feedback mechanisms, allowing workers to voice their opinions and contribute to improvements, helping to foster a more responsive workplace.⁹⁷

- **Women's inclusion programs:** One non-Jordanian factory middle manager and JGATE shared that factories implemented initiatives like harassment prevention training and women's inclusion programs to demonstrate a commitment to creating a more equitable workforce.⁹⁸
- **Career development opportunities:** One factory described its part-work, part-study initiative, which allows motivated and dedicated production floor workers to pursue higher education without any reduction in pay. Through this program, workers can earn a degree while continuing to work, eventually qualifying for supervisory roles.⁹⁹
- **Cross-cultural connections:** Given the diverse nationalities represented in factories, Jordanian knowledge-intensive workers expressed their satisfaction with the opportunity to engage with different cultural backgrounds. One middle manager shared how they had learned Chinese as part of interactions with many non-Jordanian workers on the production floor.¹⁰⁰ Some also learned Hindi, Bengali, and sign language from contacting various nationalities in their work.¹⁰¹ To further support this interaction, factories also initiated events to support cultural integration between Jordanian and non-Jordanian workers.¹⁰²
- **Managerial support:** Jordanian middle managers cited that they received valuable guidance from top management, with investments in their capacity building, fostering a sense of growth.¹⁰³ This is similarly reflected in one factory, where a current Jordanian middle manager noted that they 'felt they could develop their career there' due to the supportive training structure provided at the start of their employment.¹⁰⁴ A past report by Better Work Jordan supports this idea highlighting how the supportive environment led to

⁹⁵ Authors' interview with Jordan Garments, Accessories & Textiles Exporter's Association (JGATE), Amman, March 2025.

⁹⁶ Authors' interview with Main Factory 4 non-Jordanian middle manager; Authors' interview with Main Factory 3 Jordanian supervisor, Amman, March 2025.

⁹⁷ Authors' interview with Main Factory 3 Jordanian supervisor, Amman, March 2025.

⁹⁸ Authors' interview with Main Factory 4 middle manager, Amman, March 2025; Authors' interview with Jordan Garments, Accessories & Textiles Exporter's Association (JGATE), Amman, March 2025.

⁹⁹ Authors' interview with Main Factory 1 Jordanian middle manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁰⁰ Authors' interview with Main Factory 3 middle manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁰¹ Authors' interview with Main Factory 5 middle manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Authors' interview with Main Factory 1 middle manager, Amman, March 2025; Authors' interview with Main Factory 5 middle manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁰⁴ Authors' interview with Main Factory 5 middle manager, Amman, March 2025.

80% of middle managers promoted from within, demonstrating an emphasis in cultivating internal talent.¹⁰⁵

- **Good place to build experience:** Two Jordanian middle managers reflected positively on their role because they thought it was a good experience and they “learned something new everyday.”¹⁰⁶ Interviews with current students and recent graduates reflected this sentiment as they said it would be a good opportunity to build their careers.¹⁰⁷

Despite the existing benefits in the garment sector, many Jordanians noted several important incentives still missing. Without these, they expressed a preference for employment in other industries. Key concerns included:

- **Creation of a more inclusive work environment:** According to the Ministry of Labour, Jordanians generally “prefer employment in other sectors such as public service or banking, which offer more inclusive working environments.”¹⁰⁸
- **Better benefits in the public sector:** One Jordanian manager emphasized how there are certain valuable benefits that are unique to the public sector: “Here in Jordan, working in the government is very different. You can get free and discounted universities for your children if their child gets a high mark, health insurance, a big pension, and more holidays.”¹⁰⁹
- **Geographical Challenges:** While transportation to the factories is helpful and necessary, one current Jordanian middle manager noted that one of her friends wanted to come work in the factory, but her parents refused because it is too far from her house.¹¹⁰ Another student echoed a similar sentiment as they noted that most of the factories are too “far away from large cities.”¹¹¹ These findings highlight that despite the benefit of transportation, people may be less inclined to work somewhere with a location that is too far from home.

Valuable garment sector benefits are not officially communicated through government bodies or universities, which has led to limited knowledge of their existence.¹¹² Across factory interviews, managers noted that they did not know about these benefits until they began working in the garment industry. Indeed, even those working within the sector do not seem fully educated about the full scope of benefits. For example, one factory Jordanian supervisor shared an example of an employee who, unaware of the support available through the factory, independently pursued

¹⁰⁵ Better Work Jordan, [*Business Case Analysis and Recommendations for Successful Hiring and Retention of Jordanians in Middle Management Positions Within the Garment Industry*](#) (December 2023), 14.

¹⁰⁶ Authors’ interview with Main Factory 1 middle managers, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁰⁷ Authors’ interview with University Students and Graduates, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁰⁸ Authors’ interview with the Ministry of Labour, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁰⁹ Authors’ interview with Satellite Factory 1 middle manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹¹⁰ Authors’ interview with Main Factory 1 middle manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹¹¹ Authors’ interview with recent graduates in engineering, Amman, March 2025.

¹¹² Authors’ interview with Factory 3 supervisor, Amman, March 2025; Authors’ interview with American University of Madaba Staff, Amman, March 2025.

higher education while working at the factory when a factory program would have paid for it.¹¹³ She paid for her transportation and managed her expenses entirely on her own.

When potential employees are unaware of the support offered within the garment industry, they may assume they will need to shoulder these challenges alone—such as covering transportation costs or arranging childcare. Compounded by the perception of low salaries, prospective employees may see the garment industry as offering unattractive job packages. As one recent graduate put it, “If the industry isn’t attractive, people with stronger qualifications and degrees won’t want to work there.”¹¹⁴ Increasing the awareness of the actual salaries and benefits of the garment sector for knowledge-intensive work could greatly improve the industry's overall appeal.

4.1.3 Structural gaps in graduate employment pipelines

Jordan’s predominantly young population and rapidly expanding higher education sector presents both an opportunity and a challenge for meeting the labor demands of the country’s garment industry. With over 56% of the population aged under 25¹¹⁵ and university enrollment having tripled in the last two decades, Jordan now boasts one of the fastest-growing education sectors in the Middle East.¹¹⁶ Despite this growth, high youth unemployment rates persist and young Jordanians remain underrepresented in knowledge-intensive roles within key industries, regardless of their academic credentials.¹¹⁷ In other words, there is a mismatch between Jordan’s higher education system and the country’s labor market needs. At present, structural gaps are continuing to limit university graduates’ entry into the garment sector, particularly in relation to skills development, minimal employer engagement on campuses, and a lack of awareness among students about career possibilities in the industry. Tackling these issues is crucial to making the sector a more visible and compelling option for Jordan’s young workforce.

4.1.3.1 A sector-specific skills deficit in graduate training

A consistent theme across interviews with factory managers and university students was that the current university curriculums fail to equip students with the skills necessary to succeed in knowledge-intensive roles within the garment sector. Previous studies examining skills shortages in the industry have highlighted this skills deficit, determining that 60% of skill gaps are related to technical knowledge, including use of modern equipment and adherence to quality standards, while 33% relate to soft skills like teamwork, leadership, and IT literacy.¹¹⁸ Notably, knowledge-intensive work in the garment sector requires a “bigger picture of operations” from procurement to sales and an understanding of the “production process” no matter what kind of

¹¹³ Authors’ interview with Main Factory 7 supervisor, Amman, March 2025.

¹¹⁴ Authors’ interview with recent graduates in engineering, Amman, March 2025.

¹¹⁵ Ahmad Abu-El-Haija and Reem Alkhader, [Jordan Overview of the Higher Education System](#) (March 2016), 4.

¹¹⁶ International Trade Administration, [Jordan Country Commercial Guide](#) (January 17, 2024).

¹¹⁷ Statista, [Jordan: Youth unemployment rate from 2004 to 2023](#) (November 4, 2024).

¹¹⁸ International Labour Organization, [Skills for Trade and Economic Diversification \(STED\) in the Garment & Leather Manufacturing Sector in Jordan](#) (2020), 2.

role they are working in.¹¹⁹ This skills gap means that entry-level knowledge-intensive positions require a high upfront investment from employers to properly orient graduates to the specific demands of the sector. It also contributes to an industry dynamic that makes Jordanian graduates less desirable employees than non-Jordanians who migrate to the country with sector-specific expertise.¹²⁰ Skill gaps mentioned consistently across interviews with factory staff included:

1. **Industry-specific knowledge:** A General Manager at a garment factory noted: "Jordanians have zero experience when they come from universities. They have knowledge but they don't know how to apply it to this field."¹²¹ This sentiment was echoed by an HR Manager at a satellite factory, who explained they "still hire non-locals because Jordanians don't have the skills or knowledge yet, as the apparel sector is relatively new in Jordan."¹²²
2. **Technical and professional skills:** Several managers emphasized the importance of computer literacy, English language proficiency, and specialized knowledge about garments and fabrics. An HR Manager highlighted the essential nature of these technical skills: "Computer skills and English are must-haves, at least the basics."¹²³
3. **Soft skills:** The Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission (TVSDC) representative indicated that "all employers prioritize soft skills. The main qualities that make candidates employable are effective communication, problem-solving abilities, and computer proficiency."¹²⁴

University students also expressed awareness of this skills deficit. One young engineer working at a satellite factory described their university education as "very theoretical, not hands-on," which initially meant they were afraid to "develop and monitor a project" at a professional level.¹²⁵ This view was also reinforced by managerial staff at factories who had involvement in hiring processes, sharing that Jordanian entry-level employees "have knowledge but they do not know how to apply it to this field."¹²⁶ This disconnect between education received and employment expectations points to deeper structural challenges in Jordan's higher education system, particularly when preparing students for emerging sectors like the garment industry. As one university faculty member put it: "Many people teach themselves or do short vocational courses because of the lack of specialisation in our education system."¹²⁷ Thus, in the absence of dedicated sector-oriented programs, students must seek informal pathways to build relevant skills. Case Box 1 provides an example from Bangladesh of a successful management training

¹¹⁹ Authors' interview with Factory 5 Jordanian HR manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹²⁰ International Labour Organization, [*Skills for Trade and Economic Diversification \(STED\) in the Garment & Leather Manufacturing Sector in Jordan*](#) (2020), 1.

¹²¹ Authors' interview with Main Factory 3 general manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹²² Authors' interview with Satellite Factory 1 HR manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Authors' interview with TVSDC, Amman, March 2025.

¹²⁵ Authors' interview with Satellite Factory 2 engineer, Amman, March 2025.

¹²⁶ Authors' interview with Main Factory 3 general manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹²⁷ Authors' interview with American University of Madaba Faculty Member, Amman, March 2025.

program, sitting outside of the university system, established to enhance job-readiness and skills development for knowledge-intensive roles in the garment sector.

Case Box 1: Bangladesh Garment Management Training Institute

Bangladesh Garment Management Training Institute (BGMTI, also known as BGMI) is a specialized training institute created to develop skilled professionals for Bangladesh's ready-made garments (RMG) industry. Founded in 2011, BGMTI was created to solve several problems facing the Bangladeshi garment sector in the 2000s: a shortage of skilled mid-level professionals (e.g. merchandisers, designers, quality controllers) and the new demands of global buyers for better quality, compliance, and efficiency.¹²⁸ After the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) quotas were lifted, Bangladeshi manufacturers faced intense competition from countries like China, Vietnam, and Turkey on price and quality fronts.¹²⁹

Programs

All BGMTI courses are career-oriented and “job-ready” programs. The curriculum is developed in consultation with industry requirements and updated regularly. Courses typically require at least a Bachelor's degree for admission and run during evenings or weekends to allow those already employed or freshly graduated to attend. These programs are designed to equip participants with specific skills for careers in areas like merchandising, fashion design, quality control, industrial engineering, and compliance. BGMTI provides both short-term *Certificate Courses* (typically 3-4 months, often part-time) and longer *Diploma Courses* (up to 1 year) to serve both newcomers and experienced professionals seeking advancement.¹³⁰

Knowledge-Intensive Role/Skill Area	BGMTI Programs
Apparel Merchandising & Supply Chain	Certificate in Apparel Merchandising (4 months); Diploma in Apparel Merchandising (1 year)
Fashion Design & Product Development	Certificate in Fashion Design; Diploma in Fashion Design & Development
Quality Control & Compliance	Certificate in Garments Production & Quality & Quality Control Management; Social Compliance Audit workshops
Industrial Engineering & Production Planning	Certificate in IE (Industrial Engineering), Planning, Lean Management & GSD (General Sewing Data)
CAD Pattern Making & Technical Design	Certificate in CAD – Pattern & Marker Making; Apparel Fit Technology course; CLO-3D Virtual Sampling course
HR & Compliance Management	Certificate in HR, Admin & Social Compliance

Graduate placement

According to BGMTI, “almost all BGMI students manage to find work in the garment industry even before publication of their final results” upon completing their courses.¹³¹ This strong track record is a

¹²⁸ BGMI, [About Us](#), accessed April 18, 2025.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ BGMI, [All Courses](#), accessed April 18, 2025.

¹³¹ BGMI, [About Us](#), accessed April 18, 2025.

result of the institute's close ties with employers, which have helped establish its reputation as a reliable source of skilled entry-level managers and specialists. In addition to technical training, BGMTI offers ongoing career support, including job-related advice and lifetime guidance, to help graduates navigate their careers beyond the classroom.

4.1.3.2 Limited sector visibility and brand recognition on campuses

The interview process revealed that university staff¹³² and students had limited knowledge of some of the key players in Jordan's garment industry and thus, their role as a prospective employer was not clear to potential graduate-employees.¹³³ Some of the main factories in Jordan, producing apparel for internationally recognized brands, hold corporate identities that are well-known regionally but have limited presence on university campuses. If key industry players' names are not known amongst those under the age of 25, the sector's ability to attract entry-level Jordanian talent to knowledge-intensive positions is significantly hindered. This highlights the important role Jordan's universities play in bridging the gap between the garment industry and graduates, helping to establish a more visible employment pipeline from higher education to the sector.

Despite being a crucial industry in the context of the Jordanian economy, interviews with both students and faculty members underscored a shortfall in the attractiveness of garment sector employers among graduates. One student highlighted this disconnect, stating, "I don't know any brand names in the garment industry, while for the automotive industry [...] I work for Mercedes."¹³⁴ This direct comparison to how brand names are recognized across different sectors demonstrates that Jordanian graduates who are qualified to take on knowledge-intensive roles place value on the salience of a brand name when deciding where to take up their first jobs out of university. A faculty member who participated in the interview process further confirmed this, emphasizing the importance of brand familiarity in shaping student preferences, "the name of a company makes a difference for the students."¹³⁵ He illustrated this with a hypothetical comparison: "If you were given two options, Matouk University or Sony – which would you pick?"¹³⁶ This analogy underlines how students often equate a well-known brand with higher value or prestige, regardless of the actual job.

The lack of engagement opportunities compounds the aforementioned issue, with the student also noting "I have never come across garment factories at career fairs."¹³⁷ The absence of industry-specific employers at recruitment or career events on university campuses further limits exposure and potential interest in entry-level knowledge-intensive positions. A faculty member at a different university also articulated this education-to-sector misalignment, observing that "there is not good communication between academia and the garment sector."¹³⁸ That said, there

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Authors' interview with engineering graduate, Amman, March 2025.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Authors' interview with Al Balqa Applied University Faculty Member, Amman, March 2025.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Authors' interview with engineering graduate, Amman, March 2025.

¹³⁸ Authors' interview with Al Balqa Applied University Faculty Member, Amman, March 2025.

is a major opportunity to build on the will of university faculty staff to raise the profile of the garment sector amongst graduates. One professor acknowledged “We need to advertise more and let people be aware of what’s going on. We need to convince a new generation to go into this sector.”¹³⁹ This example demonstrates how there is growing recognition amongst educators of the sectors’ importance in the context of Jordan’s labor market, and that an orientation needs to happen that connects on-campus careers staff to employment opportunities in the industry.

When conducting a focus group discussion with recent graduates and current employers at one factory that had successfully delivered a graduate scheme programme attracting 53 university-graduate Jordanian employees, students identified that receiving emails from their university about open job vacancies was one of the main ways in which they were prompted to make an application for a role in the garment sector.¹⁴⁰ Social media, particularly Facebook, was another avenue that they mentioned for finding knowledge-intensive positions in Jordan’s garment industry.¹⁴¹ Ultimately, there is an opportunity gap that can be bridged in terms of raising the profile of some of the biggest garment sector employers on university campuses. Growing brand recognition would create more visible entry points to the sector for graduates.

4.1.3.3 Misconceptions about the range of potential job roles

There are over 4,233 Jordanians, 2,133 from universities and 2,100 from vocational training centers, graduating annually with qualifications relevant to the garment sector, but an unclear transition to employment is restricting entry points into the industry.¹⁴² A theme identified during fieldwork was that the pool of knowledge-intensive job roles in the garment sector is much larger than perceived, meaning that a broader range of universities could feed the industry with qualified graduates. While speaking to HR staff at a garment factory who had implemented their own graduate programs to attract talent from Jordanian universities, they confirmed “we’re not looking for specific degrees, we’re open” because it “was too hard” to attract students when having strict education requirements.¹⁴³ Instead, they provided graduate employees with an “apparel education” through on-the-job training.¹⁴⁴ This presents opportunities in two directions: academic curricula could respond to the need for applied skills and on-the-job training and careers staff could begin to integrate a wider range of subject areas into any efforts to draw graduate students to the garment industry.

As explored in Section 4.1, a factor contributing to graduates feeling deterred from working in the sector is its association with labor-intensive work and “mass production”, which often overshadows the broad range of knowledge-intensive positions the sector offers.¹⁴⁵ Based on a number of interviews with HR professionals and industry experts, Figure 11 was developed to outline an expanded range of knowledge-intensive roles available in the garment sector while

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Authors’ focus group with Graduate Scheme Employees at Factory 5, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² International Labour Organization, [*Skills for Trade and Economic Diversification \(STED\) in the Garment & Leather Manufacturing Sector in Jordan*](#) (2020), 2.

¹⁴³ Authors’ interview with Factory 5 HR manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Authors’ focus group with current design students at American University of Madaba, Amman, March 2025.

linking them to degree-level qualifications and expected skill sets. It builds on research done by ILO mapping career paths for middle management roles in the sector and adds emerging high potential areas that were uncovered during fieldwork and by internal analysis which are highlighted in yellow.¹⁴⁶ This is provided to underscore the variety of employment opportunities available to Jordan's qualified graduates in hope that these students can be funnelled into the sector to meet demand.

¹⁴⁶ International Labor Organization, *Career Paths and Salary Ranges for the Middle Management in the Garment Industry* [Internal Document] (February 2021).

Figure 11. Degree-to Professional Role Mapping in Jordan's Garment Industry¹⁴⁷

Department	Bachelor's Degree	Potential Job Roles	Functional Skills required
Accounting & Finance	Accounting, Finance & Banking Business Administration & chartered accountant qualification	- Accountant - Tax & Reporting Analyst - Finance & Budgeting Analyst	- Billing and invoicing - Taxation - Financial Analysis - Accounting
Compliance & Legal Services	Law, Accounting, Finance & Banking, Business Administration & any other relevant degree	- Legal & Compliance Lead - External Affairs Lead	- Legal Compliance - Staff development - Developing policies & procedures
Customs & Exports	Business Administration, Logistics, International Trade, & any other relevant degree	- Trade Compliance Manager - Export Pricing Analyst - Shipping & Logistics Officer	- Customs regulations & documentation - International trade compliance - Shipment coordination
Engineering	Industrial Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering	- Computer-Aided Design/Manufacturing Engineer - Lean Implementation Engineer - Process Engineer (Work-Study Department) - Waste Management Engineer	- Work-study - Technical troubleshooting - Process optimization - Data analysis & industrial engineering - Cross-functional collaboration
Environmental Management	Supply Chain Management, Industrial Engineering, Corporate Law, Business Administration, & any other relevant degree	- ESG reporting Lead - Sustainability Lead	- ESG and relevant compliance - Waste Management - Circular economy implementation
Human Resources (HR)	HR, Law, Accounting, Finance & Banking, Business Administration & any other relevant degree	- Recruitment lead - Training & development lead - Campus recruitment Analyst - HR Data Analyst - Employer Relationship Manager	- Legislation, policies, and standards - HR information systems - Database management - Multicultural people management - Language skills
Information Technology (IT)	IT, Computer Science, Information Systems & any other relevant degree	- Business Analyst - IT support staff	- Business analysis - App development, support & maintenance - Software testing & acceptance

¹⁴⁷ International Labor Organization. *Career Paths and Salary Ranges for the Middle Management in the Garment Industry* (February 2021; Columbia University Graduate Consultants, *Capstone Analysis*, March-April 2025).

Logistics	Logistics, Accounting & Finance, Supply Chain Management, Business Administration & any other relevant degree	• Logistics lead • Operations Lead • Custom & Excise lead	• Logistics, shipping & clearance • Distribution/ transportation operations • Communications/language skills
Marketing	Communication, English, Business Administration & any other relevant degree	• Digital Marketing Specialist • Business Development Manager • Customer Relationship Manager	• Social media management • Visual content creation • Client engagement & management • Presentation and public speaking
Procurement	Accounting, Finance and Banking, Business Administration, Supply Chain Management & any other relevant degree	• Material procurement lead • Demand planning analyst	• Distribution/ transportation operations • Market knowledge • Supplier relationships • Procurement & shipping • Language skills
Quality Control & Management (QCM)	QCM, Business Administration, Industrial Engineering, Supply Chain Management & any other relevant degree	• Quality Assurance Manager • Safety Lead	• General safety rules • Data collection & analysis • Health & safety education
Research & Development	Supply Chain Management, Business Administration, Industrial Engineering, or any other relevant degree	• R&D lead • Market Researcher • Product Manager • Innovation Analyst	• Lean production techniques • Product development • Innovation • Industry knowledge
Sales & Customer Development	Business Administration, Marketing, Fashion Merchandising, Communication, English, or any other relevant degree	• Client Relationship Manager • Delivery Management Lead • Relationship Manager	• Buyer communication • Costing & pricing analysis • Visual presentation • Production & delivery monitoring
Warehousing	Logistics, Accounting, Finance & Banking, Business Administration, Supply Chain Management & any other relevant degree	• Inventory Management Analyst • Warehouse Manager	• Distribution/ transportation operations • Inventory Management • Language Skills • Business acumen & stakeholder management

Figure 11 underscores the breadth of professional opportunities available to Jordan's university graduates across a range of academic disciplines and skills. By highlighting the sector's demand for graduates with diverse qualifications, the matrix highlights the true scale of knowledge-intensive employment possibilities and seeks to expand current perceptions of the garment industry that are often limited to production roles. Correcting these misconceptions is crucial to establishing stronger employment pipelines between universities and the garment sector, at large. If academic advisors, career services, and students are made more aware of the sector's evolving demands, then more targeted career guidance could follow. Moreover, increasing visibility of such roles—through on-campus engagement, alumni links, and industry-university partnerships—can help reshape the image of the garment sector from one of low-skilled labor to one that is future-facing and highly skilled.

The main obstacles facing young Jordanians in accessing these roles include a mismatch between their academic training and workplace expectations, low sector visibility on campuses, and narrow perceptions of career trajectories. Incentives to attract them must enhance university-to-industry linkages through raising the profile of industry-specific employers as well as re-shaping the curriculum to support them to acquire the necessary applied skills that the garment sector requires.

4.1.4 Lack of incentives to hire, promote and retain Jordanians over non-Jordanians

Several conditions are driving a set of complex workforce dynamics between Jordanian and non-Jordanian workers in the garment industry, particularly in knowledge-intensive and middle management positions. Factors favoring non-Jordanians for these roles include perceived lower commitment levels of Jordanians versus non-Jordanians; skill and experience gaps that justify the higher costs of hiring non-Jordanians; contract duration disparities; and productivity patterns influenced by socio-cultural contexts. While these dynamics create persistent barriers for local workforce advancement, they also highlight opportunities for targeted interventions to build domestic capacity in Jordan's relatively young garment sector.

4.1.4.1 Perception of Jordanians by employers

A persistent theme across interviews was the perception that Jordanian workers have a lower level of commitment than non-Jordanians, which affects expected productivity levels and therefore creates a disincentive for hiring Jordanians in knowledge-intensive roles. This perception is shared by both Jordanians and non-Jordanians. A Jordanian worker from the Safety and Environment department at one factory stated that "the culture is that Jordanians don't like to work hard,"¹⁴⁸ while a non-Jordanian worker from another factory noted that "Jordanians are usually more relaxed."¹⁴⁹ These characterizations within factories reflect a common perception about visibly distinct work styles between Jordanians and non-Jordanians, which in turn can impact employer expectations during hiring and retention decisions.

¹⁴⁸ Authors' interview with Main Factory 1 Safety & Environment worker, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

A Better Work Jordan report highlighted that managerial preferences for non-Jordanian workers stem from multiple factors. One Sri Lankan manager cited in the report explained that companies were "compelled to have more foreign workers" due to limited availability of Jordanian workers, their low interest in garment industry jobs, and existing skills gaps.¹⁵⁰ Managers often reported that non-Jordanians demonstrated better work discipline and motivation while requiring less training.¹⁵¹

For a non-Jordanian Cutting Manager, who brought prior experience and knowledge of the garment industry from his home country and who participates in selection processes, "Jordanians are really sensitive, some people don't understand what is being taught and do it their own way."¹⁵² This perspective also highlights potential cultural differences and communication challenges that affect workplace dynamics and can influence hiring and growth opportunities offered to individuals based on their nationality.

According to the president of the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment & Clothing Industries (JTGCU), Jordanians can demonstrate higher levels of commitment and take on more responsibilities when offered higher wages or more competitive benefits.¹⁵³ However, as discussed below, salaries are determined based on skills and experience rather than nationality, and in knowledge-intensive positions, non-Jordanians often bring more sector experience.

4.1.4.2 Correlation between labor costs and experience

Another theme that emerged from interviews was that non-Jordanian workers often come with significant prior experience in the garment industry, making them more attractive candidates for knowledge-intensive positions despite potentially higher costs. As one factory accountant explained: "At the middle management level, salaries are the same regardless of nationality, but migrants normally have more experience, which is why they typically receive higher salaries."¹⁵⁴ This highlights that while middle management positions are open to everyone, non-Jordanians often have better qualifications due to their sector-specific experience.

In a focus group, Jordanian middle managers at one factory confirmed that experience is the primary factor for advancement to these roles, with no connection to nationality. As they stated: "Compensation is the same, it's based on skills and experience, not nationality."¹⁵⁵ Salaries do not differ between Jordanians and non-Jordanians for the same hierarchical level, but there are additional costs when hiring non-Jordanians that make their employment more expensive in practice. A non-Jordanian middle manager at a satellite factory explained: "When companies hire expatriates, it is more expensive, because we have to pay for visas, accommodation, food."¹⁵⁶ This view was echoed in an interview with the Garment & Leather National Sector Skills Council (G&L NSSC), which stated that "Hiring locally is better – packages are more expensive

¹⁵⁰ Better Work Jordan, *The Jordanian Garment Industry and Better Work* (November 2019), 16.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Authors' interview with Satellite Factory 6 cutting manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁵³ Authors' interview with the President of JTGCU, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁵⁴ Authors' interview with Main Factory 1 accountant, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁵⁵ Authors' focus group with Main Factory 4 Jordanians in middle management positions, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁵⁶ Author's interview with Satellite Factory 1 middle manager, Amman, March 2025.

with foreign workers."¹⁵⁷

According to the unified contract for migrant garment workers in Jordan, established through a sector-wide Collective Bargaining Agreement signed in 2013, employers must cover all recruitment and travel expenses, including round-trip airfare between the worker's home country and Jordan.¹⁵⁸ Companies are required to provide adequate meals, free transportation, shared accommodation that meets Jordanian standards, work and residency permits, and comprehensive medical services. In the event of a worker's death, employers must also cover repatriation costs. This standardized contract creates a comprehensive framework of employer obligations that applies across various employment tiers in the industry, encompassing both production floor workers and those in knowledge-intensive roles and middle management positions.¹⁵⁹ This shows that there is a potential economic incentive for factories to hire locally, but they nonetheless continue to hire more expensive expatriates. Increased local hiring is only possible if it becomes easier to find local talent that meets the criteria and experience required for the positions.

The garment industry in Jordan appears to value prior experience significantly, perhaps due to the specialized nature of the work and the pressure to maintain productivity and quality standards in a competitive global market. This creates a challenging cycle: non-Jordanians are hired because they have more experience, while Jordanians struggle to gain the necessary experience to become competitive candidates. The additional costs employers are willing to bear for non-Jordanian workers further underscores the premium placed on experience and specialist skills in the industry.

4.1.4.3 Transfer of industry-specific skills

A contributing factor toward the preference for non-Jordanian workers in knowledge-intensive roles within Jordan's garment industry stems primarily from these individuals arriving with ready-made skill sets developed in countries where garment manufacturing is well-established, as revealed in multiple factory interviews. The competitive advantage they bring spans technical expertise, industry knowledge, and workplace competencies that Jordanian candidates typically need time to develop. As the President of JTGCU explained: "This industry wasn't established in Jordan before... when non-Jordanians arrived, they brought their expertise and shared their knowledge, which has transformed the sector over time."¹⁶⁰

As explored in Section 4.1.3.1, interviews with management across various garment factories consistently identified three primary skill gaps among Jordanian workers: industry-specific knowledge, with workers lacking practical application experience in the relatively new garment sector; technical and professional skills, including computer literacy, English proficiency, and specialized knowledge of garments and fabrics; and soft skills such as effective communication and problem-solving abilities. Non-Jordanian workers, particularly those from countries with established garment industries such as India and China, arrive with a combination of these

¹⁵⁷ Authors' interview with G&L NSSC, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁵⁸ Better Work Jordan, [Unified Employment Agreement for Expatriate Workers in the Textile, Garment and Clothing Industry](#), accessed April 18, 2025.

¹⁵⁹ Authors' interview with the President of JTGCU, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁶⁰ Authors' interview with the President of JTGCU, Amman, March 2025.

necessary skills. A non-Jordanian Cutting Manager at a satellite factory explained: "Non-Jordanians typically bring experience from their home countries when they move here; they come with a diverse skill set."¹⁶¹

In China, for example, garment industry workers receive comprehensive training through structured corporate programs. The Tongkun Group, a leading textile company in China, offers four key training initiatives: skills improvement programs with certification opportunities, higher academic education with subsidies and incentives, specialized training for specific employee groups (including women workers), and internal trainer development. Similarly, Shenzhou International Group established the Shenzhou School of Management, providing all workers opportunities to pursue advanced degrees and short-term courses. These programs help employees develop valuable industry-specific knowledge, technical proficiency, and professional capabilities.¹⁶²

India follows a similar approach. In 2017, the government launched the Scheme for Capacity Building in the Textile Sector, known as SAMARTH, which provides demand-driven, placement-linked training across the textile value chain.¹⁶³ Additionally, the Textile Sector Skill Council (TSC), a non-profit organization operating under the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) set up by the Ministry of Finance, works closely with employers to ensure training aligns with industry needs, focusing on competencies such as machine operation, quality control, and workplace safety.¹⁶⁴ These efforts are complemented by technical and university education specifically targeting the garment industry. The Technological Institute of Textile & Sciences (TIT&S) in Bhiwani, Haryana, offers engineering and postgraduate programs in textile technology.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the Government College of Engineering & Textile Technology in Serampore, West Bengal, provides undergraduate and postgraduate courses in textile technology, apparel production management, and information technology. The college's curriculum is designed to produce technically proficient graduates equipped to meet the industry's evolving demands.¹⁶⁶

In Jordan, as revealed across interviews, factory managers consistently emphasized that hiring decisions are based on qualifications rather than nationality. While this may be true, it is clear that knowledge-intensive positions require experience primarily gained in countries with established garment industries. As one non-Jordanian Middle Manager at a satellite factory explained, "the primary reason for bringing in expatriates is the current skill gap among local workers. Jordanians are developing these competencies through knowledge transfer from us."¹⁶⁷

Industry stakeholders suggested that addressing this gap requires targeted educational interventions. Jordan's National Sector Skills Council in the Garment & Leather Industry (NSSCG) pointed to a "gap between academic curriculum and industry requirements" and noted

¹⁶¹ Authors' interview with Satellite Factory 1 cutting manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁶² International Labour Organization, *Responsible business conduct in China textile industry*, (January 2023), 7-8.

¹⁶³ Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, *Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector*, accessed April 22, 2025.

¹⁶⁴ Textile Sector Skill Council, *Skill Development Schemes*, accessed April 22, 2025.

¹⁶⁵ The Technological Institute of Textile & Sciences, *About Us*, accessed April 22, 2025.

¹⁶⁶ Government College of Engineering and Textile Technology, *Home Page*, accessed April 22, 2025.

¹⁶⁷ Authors' interview with Satellite Factory 1 middle manager, Amman, March 2025.

that "practical experience within factories would provide Jordanians with better understanding of the sector."¹⁶⁸ This indicates that combining appropriate education with on-the-job training could help increase Jordanian representation in middle management positions over time.

Employers must also revise internal practices to open more visible pathways for Jordanian advancement. As a representative from the JCI observed, "The mentality of the head of the group also needs to be changed. They need to learn to give opportunities to Jordanians."¹⁶⁹ Without parallel shifts in employer attitudes and labor market signaling, garment sector roles—even when aligned with graduate skill sets—will continue to be bypassed in favor of more preferable alternatives.

Case Box 2. Graduate Outreach and Training Program¹⁷⁰

Factory 5 launched a targeted three-month in-factory training program to attract and train Jordanian university graduates to increase Jordanian participation in the garment sector. Selected candidates participated in a hybrid classroom and factory-floor learning, covering general apparel and textile-specific modules, taught by industry professionals. The program integrates practical, technical training, and strong outreach to graduates to create a clear path from graduation to employment.

Inclusive Recruitment Strategy

The program was inclusive of all academic disciplines, with the goal of identifying individuals eager to build careers in the ready-made garment industry. The factory leveraged multiple recruitment channels including university partnerships and outreach through social media. The application process was simple: students submitted a basic form and were selected through interviews and entrance exams.

To support participation, the factory offered several incentives to selected candidates such as transportation, meals, certification upon completion, and employment after completing the program.

Hybrid Training Program

Selected candidates participated in a three-month hybrid training program that included both classroom instruction and factory-floor experience. The practical component took place directly in the production facilities, offering trainees firsthand insight into operational workflows. Participants also attended coursework in a separate building covering general apparel knowledge and textile-specific modules. Training was delivered by industry professionals, including professors from abroad. Performance was continuously monitored through exams and feedback.

Career Advancement and Job Placement

Upon completion of the program, over half of the trainees were successfully hired. Their strong understanding of company protocols and production processes allowed for faster onboarding and career progression. Many employees have since advanced into supervisory and managerial positions. Graduates now work across departments such as production planning, shipment, CSR, and training.

¹⁶⁸ Authors' interview with NSSCG, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁶⁹ Authors' interview with The Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI) representative, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁷⁰ Authors' interview with Main Factory 5 finance manager, Amman, March 2025.

4.1.4.4 Contract duration disparities by nationality

A significant structural factor affecting workforce composition in Jordan's garment industry is the notable difference in contract duration between Jordanian and non-Jordanian employees. These differences create distinct incentive structures that influence both employment patterns and factory hiring preferences.

Non-Jordanian workers typically receive longer-term contracts, generally ranging from two to three years, as per interviews with various factories. This extended duration is largely due to the relocation involved — factories offer these terms to make international recruitment viable and provide stability for workers who have relocated to Jordan. As explained by a Jordanian Logistics and Customs Manager at a major apparel factory: "The contracts with expats typically run for at least 2 years, while Jordanians have more flexible arrangements without time commitments, making it easier for them to leave."¹⁷¹ This contractual difference has direct implications for factories' hiring decisions, particularly for knowledge-intensive positions that require substantial training. The same employee elaborated: "Jordanians gain experience and can quickly move to other factories, which makes hiring expatriates more advantageous from the factory's perspective."¹⁷²

The contrast in employment patterns is further explained by differences in how workers approach employment in the sector. Non-Jordanian workers, having relocated specifically for these positions, tend to view their roles as longer-term career commitments, while Jordanian employees often consider these roles as transitional. A non-Jordanian worker at a garment factory observed: "Many Jordanians work for a short period before moving to better positions in other sectors."¹⁷³ This perception was confirmed by Jordanians themselves. During a focus group with Jordanian middle managers, one participant acknowledged they "initially didn't see this job as permanent, but then grew to love it," suggesting that longer-term Jordanian employees often began with short-term expectations.¹⁷⁴

As explored in detail in Section 4.1.1.1, family considerations also play a significant role in these divergent employment patterns. A non-Jordanian Quality Manager at a satellite factory noted: "Expatriates typically work continuously for 2-3 years, while many Jordanians leave sooner due to family obligations. Some foreign workers have stayed for up to 10 years. Retention rates are lower among Jordanians, with many departing when they get engaged or have children."¹⁷⁵

These contractual differences and the resulting employment patterns demonstrate that factories have greater incentive to invest in training non-Jordanian workers. Due to factors such as their longer expected tenure, there is more of a preference to hire experienced non-Jordanians for knowledge-intensive positions. Deviating from this common practice would require addressing both the contractual structures and the cultural perceptions of employment in the garment industry.

¹⁷¹ Authors' interview with Main Factory 1 Logistics & Customs manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Authors' interview with Main Factory 4 knowledge-intensive worker, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁷⁴ Authors' focus group with Main Factory 4 middle managers, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁷⁵ Authors' interview with Satellite Factory 6 quality manager, Amman, March 2025.

4.1.4.5 *Productivity differences: culture and context*

A recurring theme across interviews was the perception of productivity differences between Jordanian and non-Jordanian workers, including middle management and technical positions. These productivity variations appear to stem primarily from contextual factors that affect work patterns.

Several managers highlighted that non-Jordanian workers often demonstrate higher productivity levels, attributed largely to their different personal circumstances and priorities. As a non-Jordanian Cutting Manager at a satellite factory explained: "We see different work patterns between Jordanians and non-Jordanians, with generally lower productivity among local workers."¹⁷⁶ When asked to elaborate on the reasons, he cited "inconsistent attendance and higher absenteeism" among Jordanian staff.¹⁷⁷ During a focus group at a satellite factory, Jordanian employees observed: "Migrant workers tend to be more fully dedicated, probably because they're away from their families. Local workers are often distracted by external responsibilities."¹⁷⁸

Family and social obligations emerged as the key factor in these productivity differences. The same Cutting Manager noted that "Jordanian workers often need to handle personal matters and family responsibilities."¹⁷⁹ This sentiment was echoed in discussions about absenteeism at a satellite factory where the majority of employees are Jordanian. Their HR Manager reported: "Our absenteeism rate sometimes reaches 51% largely due to family commitments."¹⁸⁰ The CEO of the JGATE summarized this perspective: "Jordanians typically don't match the commitment level of expatriate workers. In the garment industry, consistency is crucial—every minute affects production, and employers naturally seek reliable staff."¹⁸¹

Non-Jordanian workers, by contrast, are described as having fewer distractions from work. As the Cutting Manager observed, they "come here specifically to work and understand their income depends on it" and experience "significantly less absenteeism."¹⁸² This difference in circumstances may also translate to greater availability for extended hours, as noted by a Jordanian Logistics and Customs employee: "Companies generally prefer to hire expatriates because they're willing to work more hours for the same salary."¹⁸³

These observations suggest that productivity differences are largely about different life circumstances and priorities rather than capabilities. Non-Jordanian workers, having relocated specifically for employment, often have fewer local social and family obligations competing for their time and attention. This allows them to dedicate more consistent hours to work and may make them more attractive candidates for positions where consistent attendance and availability for extended hours are valued. This dynamic creates another factor favoring non-Jordanian workers for middle management positions, particularly in an industry where production

¹⁷⁶ Authors' interview with Satellite Factory 1 cutting manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Authors' focus group with Satellite Factory 2 middle managers, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁷⁹ Authors' interview with Satellite Factory 1 cutting manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁸⁰ Authors' interview with Satellite Factory 2 HR manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁸¹ Authors' interview with the CEO of JGATE, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁸² Authors' interview with Satellite Factory 1 cutting manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁸³ Authors' interview with Main Factory 1 Logistics & Customs employee, Amman, March 2025.

deadlines and consistency are essential to business operations.

This analysis reveals an interplay of factors that contribute to the lack of incentives for hiring, promoting, and retaining Jordanians in the garment industry. These factors are socially-constructed through perceptions and later, structurally cemented through knock-on hiring practices. The perceived differences in commitment levels and productivity between Jordanian and non-Jordanian workers are largely shaped by socio-cultural contexts and family obligations. Additionally, the experience and skill gaps stem from the relatively recent development of Jordan's garment sector compared to established manufacturing countries, creating a situation where non-Jordanians often bring ready-made expertise despite their higher overall employment costs. Contract duration disparities further reinforce these patterns, as factories find greater return on investment when training non-Jordanian workers who typically remain in positions longer. These interconnected dynamics create a complex challenge that currently limits the advancement of Jordanians in knowledge-intensive and middle management positions, despite the theoretical economic advantages of developing local talent.

4.2 Role of government

Jordan's EMV was developed in hope of unleashing Jordan's potential to achieve sustainable, comprehensive growth that doubles job opportunities, expands the middle class, and improves living conditions to ensure a better quality of life for citizens.¹⁸⁴ In the broadest sense, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has put in place extensive measures to expand Jordanian employment opportunities in the private sector of the economy, including the National Employment Strategy (NES) (2011-2020) and the National Social Protection Strategy (2019-2025), the latter of which calls for policies that incentivize employers to hire Jordanians.¹⁸⁵ The government has also taken a number of steps over the years to increase Jordanian employment in the garment sector, implementing specific garment-sector regulations, such as quotas, to guide hiring practices in favor of the local workforce.

As discussed in Section 4.1.4, in reality several forces seem to counter government strategies to boost Jordanian representation in the garment industry. Ultimately, in many cases, the cost of supporting migrant labor does not outweigh the productivity and profits non-Jordanian workers generate for the factories that hire them. This is what interviews implied, however, solid conclusions cannot be drawn while quantitative data on the impact of existing government measures on the industry as a whole is limited. Gathering such insights in the future could be critical in understanding how regulatory measures are changing the sector overtime.

That said, it is important to acknowledge that there is a careful balance to be struck in the Jordanian context where regulations are struggling to shift historical workforce dynamics, especially when recent US tariff measures, set at 20% for Jordanian exports, create uncertainty for the sector's future.¹⁸⁶ Excessive regulations could decrease motivations for foreign investment so governmental measures must balance enhancing regulations and remaining competitive to

¹⁸⁴ Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, [Economic Modernisation Vision](#), 8.

¹⁸⁵ Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, [National Social Protection Strategy 2019 - 2025](#) (2019).

¹⁸⁶ Jordan Exports, 2025. [JORDAN EXPORTS \(JE\) INFORMATION](#) (April 2025)

safeguard the future of the industry.

4.2.1 Measures to support Jordanian workforce participation

National laws and ministerial regulations, including those pre-dating the National Social Protection Strategy, explicitly limit the employment of non-Jordanians for select positions (called “closed occupations”) across all sectors, unless no qualified local candidates are available.¹⁸⁷ Some employers have adapted their strategies to support more non-Jordanians. For example, the ILO reports that some employers still place non-Jordanians in job titles that fall under officially open categories, even when their day-to-day duties correspond to occupations reserved for Jordanians.¹⁸⁸ Concerned about their limited focus on Jordanians, the government also imposed costs on the hiring of non-Jordanians to steer employers’ attention onto local talent. For example, employing non-Jordanians increases costs for employers because a work permit—valid for up to one year and subject to annual renewal—is required. Each permit or renewal costs employers 175 JD per non-Jordanian worker per year.¹⁸⁹

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has focused on incentives, rather than regulations, to increase Jordanian employment in the garment sector, including through outreach and a subsidy program for satellite factories.¹⁹⁰ As shared by MoL, it provides guidance to both workers and residents in areas where factories are located, showcasing success stories, and partnering with organizations on issues such as women’s empowerment.¹⁹¹ In addition, the MoL organizes employment fairs on an ad hoc basis, in which the garment sector is featured.¹⁹² Such events are held at predetermined public locations such as municipal buildings, chambers of industry, or other government facilities.¹⁹³ Furthermore, a subsidy program is in place for satellite factories, in which the government provides one year of operational support by subsidizing 50% of Jordanian workers’ wages, a 25 JD transportation subsidy, and 25 JD toward social security contributions, which encourages employers to hire more Jordanians.¹⁹⁴

4.2.2 Unintended consequences and responses from industry

Despite efforts to increase Jordanian employment, some aspects of Jordan’s regulatory framework may, perhaps unintentionally, continue to incentivize employers to hire non-Jordanian workers. For example, under the *Kafala* (Sponsorship) System, migrant workers are tied to their

¹⁸⁷ Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, *Jordan Labour Code, Law No. 8 of 1996* (March 2, 1996).

¹⁸⁸ International Labour Organization, *A Challenging Market Becomes More Challenging: Jordanian Workers, Migrant Workers and Refugees in the Jordanian Labour Market* (2017), 11.

¹⁸⁹ Better Work Jordan, *Guide to Jordanian Labour Law for the Garment Industry* (2019), 29.

¹⁹⁰ Authors’ interview with the Ministry of Labour, Online, April 21, 2025.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Authors’ interview with the Ministry of Labour, Online, April 21, 2025.

employers through their work permits, restricting their mobility as they cannot legally change employers or employment sectors without approval from both their current employer and the MoL.¹⁹⁵ Thus, employers have an incentive to hire non-Jordanians, whom they know must continue working for them and have little chance to leave for different employment opportunities.

On the other hand, across the interviews that were conducted, it became clear that some Jordanian workers in garment factories feel that stricter regulations are necessary. A Jordanian executive manager in Factory 7 expressed the need for stricter regulations in order to increase Jordanian employment.¹⁹⁶ She noted how “[Jordan has] a really big underemployment rate [...] High-skilled workers should have a quota and audits.”¹⁹⁷ Another worker commented that the quota system needs to be “fixed” to push for increased Jordanian participation.¹⁹⁸ From these responses, it can be concluded that there are benefits to the examination of current regulations and incentives in order to assess how to create more opportunities for Jordanians.

4.3 Learnings From Peer Countries

To better understand the institutional and workforce challenges currently faced by Jordan’s garment industry and potential approaches to address these, peer countries with comparable export-oriented textile sectors can provide helpful insights. In Egypt, Vietnam, and Bangladesh, the garment sector forms a core component of national industrial strategies, employing millions and driving export earnings.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ International Labour Organization, [Industrial relations in the ready-made garment sector in Jordan](#) (2022), 25-26.

¹⁹⁶ Authors’ interview with Main Factory 7 executive manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Authors’ interview with Main Factory 4 production manager, Amman, March 2025.

¹⁹⁹ Vietnam Investment Review, [Vietnam’s Textile Sector Brings in \\$37 Billion in FDI](#) (May 13, 2024), accessed February 16, 2025; ZAWYA, [Egypt’s Garment Sector Achieves 25% Growth in 2M 2024](#) (2024), accessed February 9, 2025; World Bank, [Bangladesh Development Update: Trade Reform—An Urgent Agenda](#) (April 2023), 26.

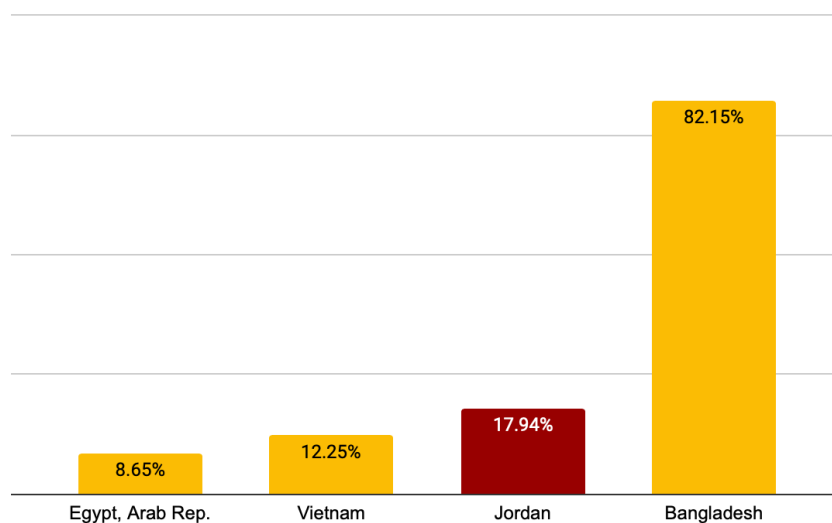


Figure 12. GTL Share of Total Exports (2022)²⁰⁰

Each country has faced obstacles in attracting, retaining, and upskilling local talent, especially in supervisory and knowledge-intensive roles. The analysis identifies three priority areas for Jordan based on cross-country practices and stakeholder interviews: workforce retention, gender-inclusive career development, and alignment between education and industry needs.

4.3.1 Workforce retention and turnover

High turnover has emerged as a persistent challenge across the Egyptian and Vietnamese garment industries. In Vietnam, turnover in garment factories was recorded at 36% in 2020, with factory owners citing significant costs associated with recruitment, training, and lost productivity.²⁰¹ Similarly, factories in Egypt reported absenteeism rates as high as 37%, with turnover attributed to low pay, limited promotion prospects, and competition from informal or seasonal jobs.²⁰² A Better Work Egypt representative explained, “low wages and hard working conditions are pushing workers toward informal or seasonal work in construction.”²⁰³

Interviewees across both countries linked high turnover and workforce instability to low wages, limited career progression, and the availability of better-paying opportunities in other sectors. In response, factories have introduced improvements such as more robust onboarding and targeted training aimed at building internal career pathways. In Vietnam, the Gender Equality and Returns (GEAR) Program demonstrates how structured training can strengthen workforce commitment

²⁰⁰ World Bank, [Jordan | Textiles and Clothing | Export Product Share \(%\): Compare with Egypt and Vietnam](#), accessed April 24, 2025; Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, [Export Performance](#), accessed April 24, 2025.

²⁰¹ Linh Lan Huynh, [Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment on Employee Turnover Intention: A Case Study of Textile and Garment Industry in Vietnam](#). Business and Economics Journal 13, no. 1 (2022), 1.

²⁰² International Labour Organization, [Egypt Youth Employment \(EYE\): Jobs and Private Sector Development in Rural Egypt 'RAWABET' – Ready Made Garments in Egypt: Market Systems Analysis](#) (2022), 51.

²⁰³ Authors' interview with Better Work Egypt, Online, March 2025.

and reduce attrition, particularly among women and mid-level staff.²⁰⁴

These insights are particularly relevant for Jordan, as discussed in Section 4.1.4.5, where employers often cite absenteeism and low productivity as barriers to hiring Jordanians in knowledge-intensive roles. Yet, international evidence makes clear that workforce instability is not inevitable. When workers are offered visible promotion ladders, competitive compensation, and opportunities for upskilling, retention improves. To build a sustainable pipeline of Jordanian talent, the sector must invest not only in hiring, but in the retention tools—structured advancement programs, mentoring, and performance-linked training—that make long-term careers in the garment industry viable and desirable.

4.3.2 Gender-inclusive career development

Efforts to increase women’s representation in supervisory roles have gained momentum in Vietnam and Bangladesh through dedicated programs like GEAR. In Vietnam, the Gender Equality and Returns (GEAR) Program has shown how structured training can help build commitment and reduce attrition, especially among women and mid-level staff. Across ten garment factories in Vietnam, lines supervised by GEAR trainees saw an average efficiency increase from 74% to 83%, and 22 out of 30 women who completed the program were promoted to higher-level positions.²⁰⁵ Participating factories reported measurable improvements in productivity and problem-solving. In Bangladesh, a 5% increase in factory efficiency was attributed to trained female supervisors, who were described as relatively calm and effective in listening to and instructing operators.²⁰⁶

In Egypt, although legal protections such as maternity leave exist, structural barriers persist. Interviewees pointed to a lack of childcare services and cultural expectations around women’s domestic roles. According to a representative from Better Work Egypt, “Cultural expectations often limit women’s participation in the workforce after marriage or childbirth.”²⁰⁷ However, interviewees confirmed that deep-rooted gender norms continue to limit promotion opportunities, particularly in small and mid-sized enterprises.

While Jordan has not explicitly prioritized gender inclusion in the garment sector, doing so could significantly expand the pool of qualified local workers. Women represent the majority of university graduates in Jordan, yet their labor force participation remains among the lowest globally—just 14% as of 2024.²⁰⁸ Many highly educated women remain unemployed, especially in conservative regions where public sector jobs are preferred but scarce. Increasing women’s participation in technical and managerial garment roles would not only help address labor shortages, but also support national employment goals.

²⁰⁴ Authors’ interview with Better Work Vietnam, Online, March 2025.

²⁰⁵ World Bank, [Gearing Up More Women Leaders in the Garment Sector in Vietnam](#) (July 28, 2021), accessed April 16, 2025;.

²⁰⁶ Better Work, [GEAR: Gender Equality and Returns – Improving Business Outcomes by Advancing Women in the Garment Industry](#) (September 2021), 4.

²⁰⁷ Authors’ interview with Better Work Egypt, Online, March 2025.

²⁰⁸ World Bank, [Jordan Economic Monitor, Spring 2024: A New Dawn for Labor Market Participation?](#) (May 2024), 3.

These global examples suggest that Jordan could adapt cost-effective interventions—such as peer coaching, shift flexibility, and transport support—to improve female retention. Simultaneously, showcasing the career progression of Jordanian women already working in departments like planning, HR, and compliance may help normalize and elevate the visibility of knowledge-intensive garment roles, particularly among university graduates.

4.3.3 Alignment between education and industry needs

A recurring challenge across Egypt, Vietnam, and Bangladesh is the persistent mismatch between education systems and the skill sets required for knowledge-intensive roles in the garment sector. In Vietnam, 87.9% of garment workers have less than three months of formal training, and employers consistently report that vocational graduates lack practical competencies in areas critical to supervisory and technical roles—such as production planning, quality assurance, compliance documentation, and machinery handling.²⁰⁹ To address this, Vietnam has embedded training inside factories and developed targeted upskilling programs like GEAR, which has helped build middle-management capacity among women.

In Egypt, the government has focused on modernizing training infrastructure through Traintex, which delivers modular courses in pattern-making, export compliance, and quality control—prioritizing alignment with global industry standards.²¹⁰ Meanwhile, Bangladesh has taken a factory-embedded approach, recruiting university graduates into R&D, compliance, and supervisory roles while also building internal management trainee pipelines. As described in an interview with a Better Work Bangladesh program officer, “Factories are actively attracting expats to fill management and R&D gaps until local staff are upskilled.”²¹¹

These cases point to the importance of creating credible, factory-aligned pathways into knowledge-intensive roles, roles that are typically underfilled by Jordanians despite strong academic qualifications. For Jordan, the takeaway is clear: building a localized supervisory and technical talent pipeline will require more than expanding vocational programs. It will require designing factory-driven competency frameworks, delivering short-course training co-developed with employers, and providing visible promotion opportunities tied to real-time labor market needs. Jordan can also consider a phased approach that leverages external expertise to support knowledge transfer while local talent is being developed. Without such measures, the gap between available jobs and Jordanian participation in mid- and high-skilled garment roles will persist.

²⁰⁹ Thi Van Anh Tran, Tran Minh Tuan, and Nguyen Xuan Tung, "[Human Resource Development in Vietnam's Textile and Garment Industry in the Context of Digital Transformation](#)," *Business, Management and Economics* (2023), 7.

²¹⁰ Paul Cochrane, "[Factory of Tomorrow: Egypt Aims to Replace Far East as Cheap Clothing King](#)," *Middle East Eye*, November 9, 2023.

²¹¹ Authors' interview with Better Work Bangladesh, Online, March 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Recommendations

Building on the findings presented throughout this report, this section presents a set of actionable recommendations aimed at increasing Jordanian participation in knowledge-intensive roles within the garment sector. They are structured to address the key barriers identified – ranging from skills development and employer incentives to public perception and regulatory frameworks. Each recommendation is designed to support the efforts of various stakeholders to develop a more inclusive and skilled workforce in the garment industry.

5.1 Pilot a public-private partnership

To develop a public-private partnership model for Jordan's garment sector that addresses the skills gap in knowledge-intensive roles by providing targeted training and diverse employment opportunities across the job categories outlined in Figure 11. This initiative is tailored for Jordanians with degree-level qualifications who are either entering the sector for the first time or seeking to retrain, but who currently lack specific knowledge of the garment industry.

Goal: To position the garment sector as a driver of economic growth and quality job creation by harnessing existing infrastructure.

Specific Recommendations:

- 2) Leverage and Empower the National Sector Skills Council in the Garment & Leather Industry (NSSCG):** Use the existing body to coordinate training design, employer engagement, and sector-wide implementation, ensuring alignment with labor market needs.
- 3) Advocate for the Establishment of a Collective Training Fund Mechanism:** Encourage contributions from key stakeholders to support the financing of training delivery.
- 4) Design Modular and Adaptive Training Pathways:** Develop flexible, modular training pathways focused on high-demand, knowledge-intensive roles (e.g., compliance officers, quality assurance, logistics, supply chain coordinators), co-designed with employers to ensure relevance and alignment with job openings.
- 5) Pursue Voluntary Employment Linkages and Commitments:** Secure hiring commitments from participating companies to absorb a defined share of program graduates, ensuring a clear pathway from training to employment.
- 6) Launch Outreach to Attract Diverse Talent:** Run targeted outreach to raise awareness among qualified Jordanians about the opportunity to transition into the garment sector, reducing stigma and promoting the value of knowledge-intensive roles.

Stakeholder Roles:

- 1) NSSCG:** Will have a coordinating role in establishing buy-in from industry and relevant stakeholders. It will advocate for the funding mechanism, support curriculum design,

pursue employer-trainee work commitments and perform outreach to qualified Jordanians.

- 2) **Industry:** Will need to participate in the design of the partnership to ensure the skills align directly to their needs. They will also decide if they want to pledge employment linkages and commitments in the context of the programme.
- 3) **ILO/BWJ:** Have the potential to highlight the economic weight of the sector, the driving up of standards over time and articulate the current job gap in knowledge-intensive positions for Jordanians.²¹²
- 4) **Jordanian Ministry of Labor:** The Ministry already plays a profile-raising role through factory-based focal points, job fairs, and partnerships with other organizations to improve visibility and working conditions. These existing efforts can be leveraged to support outreach strategies across the garment sector.²¹³

Implementation:

1) Stakeholder Management:

- a) **Kick-off Meetings:** Organize initial meetings with key stakeholders to align on objectives and roles and ensure ongoing communication and accountability.

2) Private Sector Funding Pledge & Hiring Commitment:

- a) **Pledges from Companies:** Secure commitment from participating companies to contribute to the funding pool and provide job opportunities for successful candidates, which will significantly increase the appeal of the program for potential participants.

3) Training Development and Certification:

- a) **Occupational Standards and Curriculum:** Design a curriculum that meets the needs of the knowledge-intensive segment of the sector. Specifically targeting the technical and soft skills deficit mentioned in Section 5.1.
- b) **Certification:** Work with recognized institutions (e.g., universities or certification bodies) to provide valid training certifications upon completion.

Resources Required: Government branding and support, evidence-based logic using existing ILO research and the development of diverse funding models sourced from key stakeholders.

Challenges:

1. Fostering multi-stakeholder alignment
2. Securing sufficient funding
3. Ensuring long-term sustainability of the model

²¹² International Labour Organization, [*Advancing Decent Work in Jordan's Agriculture Sector: A compliance model*](#), accessed . The ILO compliance model for the agriculture sector was a great example of how multiple stakeholders acted to enhance a key segment of the Jordanian economy.

²¹³ Authors' interview with the Ministry of Labour, Online, April 21, 2025.

Case Box 3. AgriJordan

AgriJordan, a pioneering agricultural enterprise in Jordan, is shifting the nation's farming landscape through sustainable practices and advanced technologies.²¹⁴ Recognizing Jordan's limited water resources, AgriJordan has implemented innovative water management strategies that reduce water usage by 80–90% per kilogram of produce compared to traditional methods; this efficiency has led to 90–95% of their produce meeting export standards. With successful operations across three farms in the Jordan Valley and Northern Highlands, AgriJordan sets new benchmarks for agricultural productivity but also contributes to local employment and economic development. By aligning with the American Chamber of Commerce in Jordan, AgriJordan exemplifies how sustainable agricultural practices can drive economic growth and position Jordan as a leader in environmentally conscious farming in the region.

5.2 Rebrand Jordan's Garment Sector as a Future-Facing Industry through a National Social Media Campaign Centered on Local Success Stories

Rebrand the garment sector as a high-potential domain for professional growth to address prevailing stigma that associates factory work with low-skill, low-prestige labor. Positioning the sector as an engine of national growth, innovation, and sustainability aligns with broader economic narratives such as the Economic Modernization Vision (EMV) and cultural values that emphasize education, responsibility, and upward mobility.

Goal: To shift public perceptions and increase Jordanian participation, particularly among educated youth in the garment sector by repositioning it as a viable, respected, and future-oriented career path.

Specific Recommendations:

- 1) **Positioning the sector as sustainable, technologically advanced, and globally connected:** Aligning the sector with global industrial trends particularly in sustainability, digital transformation and export integration to raise perceived value among educated youth and their families
- 2) **Coordinated digital presence to increase sector visibility:** Create a centralized digital presence to systematically shift how the garment sector is perceived by Jordanian job seekers
- 3) **Government and institutional signaling to build legitimacy:** Using public endorsement to shape sector reputation and signal jobs to be legitimate and respected career paths
- 4) **Storytelling based on Jordanian professional role models:** Humanizing the sector through real life narratives and highlighting Jordanians in knowledge-intensive roles to demonstrate possibility of career advancement

²¹⁴ The American Chamber of Commerce in Jordan, [AgriJordan](#), accessed .

Stakeholders: Ministry of Labor, Jordan Chamber of Industry, Industry, Universities, Vocational Centers, Selected Consulting Firm

Implementation:

1) Develop Sector-Wide Identity and Messaging Toolkit:

a) Define sector brand identity

- i) Re-brand sector identity as “Future In Fabric”
- ii) Align messaging with national narratives: education, upward mobility, sustainability, innovation

b) Create and distribute visual & messaging toolkit

- i) Design logos, slogans and visuals
- ii) Prepare messaging guidelines and distribute materials to factories, training centers, and institutional partners

2) Launch Coordinated Digital Activation:

a) Establish centralized digital presence

- i) Create unified social media accounts, such as @ThreadsOfChangeJO

b) Produce Content

- i) Create a schedule for weekly content release which should include:
 - (1) “Success Spotlights” of Jordanians in professional roles
 - (2) “Day In My Job” reels from factory staff in planning or logistics
 - (3) Short-form videos highlighting sustainability initiatives
 - (4) Behind-the-scenes content showcasing technology and compliance systems
- ii) Recruit university interns
 - (1) Partner with universities to engage communication/media students as interns to help with social media campaign
 - (2) Include a downloadable or visual guide that outlines key knowledge-intensive roles (e.g., Production Planner, Compliance Officer, HR Analyst, Industrial Engineer), detailing required qualifications, typical career paths, and key responsibilities.
 - (3) Launch and manage content
 - (a) Prioritize Arabic-first, authentic and smartphone friendly content
 - (b) Schedule weekly posts across Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok

3) Leverage Government and Institutional Support:

- a) Organize factory visits by ministers with media coverage
- b) Integrate garment success stories into national employment narratives
- c) Use official ministry and local outreach channels to boost visibility

4) Run Storytelling Campaigns:

- a) Highlight diverse Jordanian professionals in technical and leadership roles
- b) Produce video interviews, written stories and day-in-the-life reels
- c) Ensure regional diversity to connect with broader audiences
- d) Each story should include a short timeline or data point (e.g., “Completed training in 2021, promoted to supervisor in 2023”) to provide credibility and avoid anecdotal framing. Include stories from **satellite factories** to reflect rural mobility constraints and opportunities

5) Promote Sector Modernization and Global Linkages:

- a) Emphasize international certifications, global brands and tech advancements
- b) Embed sustainability and digital transformation themes in all outreach
- c) Launch a sector blog to showcase innovation and career pathways

6) Monitor and Adjust:

- a) Track social media outreach and engagement by monitoring platform-specific metrics such as follower growth, post reach, shares, comments, and click-through rates across platforms.
- b) Collect feedback to review messaging and strategy
- c) Maintain coordination across different stakeholders involved

Resources Required: Government branding and coordination; funding to support social media strategy, Coordinated effort amongst all stakeholders

Potential Challenges:

- 1) Securing resources for content development
- 2) Limited organizational capacity to implement and sustain the program
- 3) Maintaining momentum after initial campaign launch
- 4) Potential budget limitations
- 5) Delayed government engagement
- 6) Fragmented coordination among stakeholders

5.3 Build University-to-Sector Talent Pipelines Through Employer Campus Engagement and Management Trainee Programs

Build on successful models to create a long-term university-to-industry talent pipeline that increases Jordanian participation in knowledge-intensive garment sector roles by aligning academic programs with private sector needs and promoting strong career pathway

Goal: Attract top talent to the industry by creating linkages between universities and the garment sector to improve sector knowledge and visibility. Improve the perception of prestige for this industry through on-campus presence and competitive trainee programs with attractive packages.

Specific Recommendations:

- 1) **Management Training Programs:** Develop specialized internship and management training programs that focus on leadership and operational skills within the garment sector.
- 2) **Career Fairs and Factory Exposure:** Increase touch points with industry professionals by organizing collaborative, sector-specific career fairs. Complement these efforts with factory visits and factory open-day events to provide students with firsthand exposure to real-world operations, workplace culture, and potential career paths in the garment sector.
- 3) **Co-Design of Industry-Relevant Curricula:** Collaboration between universities and private sector companies to design courses and certifications that address key areas such as textile waste management, production planning, procurement and multicultural HR management.
- 4) **Applied Research and Innovation Programs:** Establish capstone projects, sector-wide research competitions, and innovation challenges that address real-world problems in the garment industry.
- 5) **Guest Lectures/Adjunct Faculty:** Invite industry professionals to deliver guest lectures or serve as adjunct faculty to provide real-world insights and expertise
- 6) **Mandatory Factory Based Practicum:** Require university students particularly those in technical and business programs to complete hands-on graduation training at factories. This structured, supervised experience would be a formal part of their academic curriculum and graduation requirements.

Stakeholders:

- 1) **Universities:** Design the programs and plan the activities above
- 2) **Industry:** Play a key role in partnering with universities to create these programs
- 3) **Students:** They will be a key target market and participants of all of the above programs that create a link between industry and universities. Students who complete internships at factories can be selected to become Student Ambassadors and can represent factories at career fairs and share their testimonials online.
- 4) **JCI or another industry association:** Need for a driving force or central ownership of the program

Implementation:

- 1) **Stakeholder Engagement:**
 - a) Organize initial kick-off meetings with key stakeholders to align on objectives and roles and ensure ongoing communication and collaboration, along with funding alignment.
 - b) Hold roundtables between universities and garment sector leaders to co-design academic-industry partnerships.
 - c) Form an academic advisory group with representation from all major stakeholders.
- 2) **Course and Curriculum Development:**

- a) Curriculum Design: Partnership between academic institutions and industry experts to develop courses and certifications tailored to the needs of the garment sector.
 - b) Guest Lectures: Universities, and student ambassadors to identify interesting lecture topics, and industry players to collaborate in identifying potential guest lecturers
 - c) Adjunct Faculty: Advisory group to identify necessary qualifications and desired specialized courses; industry to identify professionals qualified to play adjunct roles.
- 3) Industry partnerships:**
- a) Explore partnerships with academic institutions to revive or adapt previous models such as the “Faculty to Factory” initiative.
 - b) Encourage MOUs between universities and factories to create formal internship pathways, curriculum alignment, and guest lectures.

Resources Required:

- 1) Collaboration with universities and industry experts
- 2) Funding for whole project execution
- 3) Staff to coordinate and deliver training programs
- 4) Marketing and outreach efforts to attract students

Potential challenges:

- 1) Ensuring alignment between academic curricula and industry needs
- 2) Securing commitment from universities and industry professionals
- 3) Sustaining collaboration and engagement over time
- 4) Securing funding from public and private sources
- 5) Establishing effective sector leadership and coordination

Case Box 5. Faculty for Factory Program

Established in 2003 by the University of Jordan, the Faculty for Factory (FFF) program is a national initiative aimed at strengthening applied scientific research cooperation between universities and the industrial sector.²¹⁵ The program facilitates short-term placements of faculty members in industrial companies, which enables them to apply academic expertise to real-world challenges and bring about innovation within the industry.

In practice, faculty members conduct site visits, perform diagnostic assessments of factory operations, and develop tailored solutions in areas such as production processes, quality control, and management systems. Each engagement typically spans a few months, during which the faculty member works closely with the company to implement improvements. The

²¹⁵ Yousef Al Abdallat and Tarek A. Tutunji, "Faculty for Factory Program: A University-Industry Link in Jordan," in *Proceedings of the 9th France-Japan and 7th Europe-Asia Congress on Mechatronics*, November 2012, pp. 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1109/MECATRONICS.2012.6451056>

project cost is shared between the two parties: the participating factory contributes 20% of the total cost, while the remaining 80% is covered by the support organization or donor. This cost-sharing structure makes the program accessible to small and medium-sized enterprises while encouraging active industry participation.²¹⁶

Successes

The FFF program has helped build strong links between universities and industry in Jordan. It gives faculty members hands-on experience in factories, which improves their teaching and allows them to update their curricula with real-world examples.²¹⁷ For factories, especially small and medium-sized ones, the program offers affordable expert advice that helps improve product quality and efficiency. The cost-sharing model, where companies pay only 20%, makes it accessible to more firms.²¹⁸ Many companies have reported high satisfaction and are open to joining again. The program is also recognized by national bodies for its role in improving industrial productivity.²¹⁹

Limitations

Despite its successes, its informal structure and dependence on individual initiative rather than institutionalized agreements made long-term sustainability and expansion difficult²²⁰. While some firms were enthusiastic, others were reluctant to allocate time or resources for faculty visits. One key challenge is the mismatch in priorities and timelines. Industries tend to focus on quick, measurable outcomes, while universities operate on longer research and academic cycles²²¹. Moreover, student involvement was minimal, which meant the program missed an opportunity to directly expose students to industrial environments and enhance their employability²²².

²¹⁶ University of Jordan, *Work Mechanism – Faculty for Factory Program*, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://sites.ju.edu.jo/ar/fff/Pages/EnWorkMechanism.aspx>.

²¹⁷ Rawabdeh, I. A. (2006). *Role of Faculty-For-Factory Program in Developing the University-Industrial Relationship*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309398112_Role_of_Faculty-For-Factory_Program_in_Developing_The_University-Industrial_Relationship

²¹⁸ University of Jordan. *Scientific Achievements and Community Services – Faculty for Factory Program*. <https://pharmacy.ju.edu.jo/Pages/ResearchAndDevelopment.aspx>.

²¹⁹ Rawabdeh, I. A. (2006). *Role of Faculty-For-Factory Program in Developing the University-Industrial Relationship*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309398112_Role_of_Faculty-For-Factory_Program_in_Developing_The_University-Industrial_Relationship

²²⁰ Reham Al-Hanakta. *The Case for Increased Collaboration Between Academia and Industry in the Food Sector in Jordan*. West Asia-North Africa Institute, December 2022. Retrieved from <https://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/The%20Case%20for%20Increased%20Collaboration%20Between%20Academia%20and%20Industry%20in%20the%20Food%20Sector%20in%20Jordan%20-%20Reham%20AlHanakta.pdf>.

²²¹ Rawabdeh, I. A. (2006). *Role of Faculty-For-Factory Program in Developing the University-Industrial Relationship*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309398112_Role_of_Faculty-For-Factory_Program_in_Developing_The_University-Industrial_Relationship

²²² Ibid.

Case Box 6. Pakistan's Local Textile Giants Adopting Multinational Hiring Programs

Multinational companies like **Unilever**, **Nestle**, and **P&G** have set high standards in recruitment strategies through their management trainee and internship programs. Unilever's **Future Leaders Programme (UFLP)** is a flagship initiative that spans 1.5 years, providing trainees with highly competitive salaries and benefits, faster career progression, leadership exposure and mentorship, and global stints. Unilever has always had a strong presence at University Career fairs and is a pioneer in campus placement across Pakistan, where they conduct on campus recruitment drives to hire graduating batches. Inspired by these multinational strategies, local Pakistani textile companies like **Khaadi** and **Gul Ahmed** have adopted similar approaches to attract top talent.

1. Khaadi's Programs

Summer Learning Program: An 8-week program where interns from top universities are placed in various functions at the Head Office and factories. Interns work on tailored objectives and participate in weekly learning sessions. Top performers receive return offers.

Design Your Waves Program: Targeted at fashion and textile students, this program involves walk-in interviews at universities, offering students a chance to unleash their creativity and grow with Khaadi.

2. Gul Ahmed's Programs

Chartered Accountants Trainee Program: In collaboration with Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan, Gul Ahmed has introduced a CA articleship program for the first time. This program employs CA students for a 3 year period, where they receive a stipend and rigorous training in their field of work.

Future Leaders Program: Designed to attract graduates from business and engineering institutes, offering fast-paced career growth and competitive salary packages.

3. Importance of These Programs

These initiatives have significantly changed the image of the textile industry in Pakistan. By adopting competitive recruitment strategies, local companies are now able to attract top talent from leading universities. This shift not only enhances the quality of the workforce but also promotes a culture of innovation and leadership within the industry.

5.4 Champion Internal Career Mobility: Unlocking Industry Potential through Structured Advancement Pathways

Bridge the skills gap by upskilling experienced workers through structured, in-factory learning and formal education pathways to qualify them for knowledge-intensive roles.

Goal: To create an internal pipeline of knowledge-intensive workers by addressing skill gaps through training and development opportunities

Specific recommendations:

- 1) **Structured Internal Development Programs:** Create comprehensive employee development frameworks that each factory can customize according to their specific needs and resources:
 - a) Establish Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for employees showing potential or interest in advancement
 - b) Apply a practical learning framework where employees gain skills through:
 - i) Hands-on experience in their current and adjacent roles
 - ii) Mentorship from designated coaches/senior staff
 - iii) Access to formal training resources
 - c) Leverage existing company training materials and supplement with external resources
 - d) Understand where workers skills need additional training
 - e) Create clear qualification criteria and pathways for advancement to technical and supervisory roles
- 2) **Work-Study Advancement Program:** Encourage the adoption of a work-study program that allows factory workers to pursue part-time university education while remaining employed. Upon graduation, workers would become eligible for promotion to technical or managerial roles:²²³
 - a) For example, workers under this program receive promotion within satellite factories or move to main factories for broader roles
- 3) **Cross-location professional development exchanges:** Implement structured rotation programs across multiple factory locations in Jordan for knowledge-intensive positions, enabling skill diversification and expertise sharing.

Stakeholders:

- 1) **Factories:** They will be responsible for implementing all three programs, providing resources with government support

²²³ Factory 7 is currently implementing a work-study model.

- 2) **“Motivated” workers:** Target students and workers with relevant academic backgrounds and/or motivation and knowledge of the industry who would be interested in receiving training and upskilling opportunities to fill existing gaps in the garment sector
- 3) **TVSDC:** Bringing in a pipeline of vocational workers to fill roles that do not need a bachelor’s degree education and create a pipeline

Implementation:

- 1) **Stakeholder Engagement:**
 - a) **Steering Committee:** Create a multi-stakeholder committee with representatives from factories, educational institutions, and worker advocacy groups to guide program development and implementation
- 2) **Satellite Training and Advancement Program Development**
 - a) **Work-Study Framework:** Establish clear guidelines for time allocation between work and study (2-3 days per week at university) with factory mentors assigned to each participant
 - b) **Advancement Pathways:** Create formal, documented career advancement plans that detail specific positions available to graduates upon program completion
- 3) **Cross-Location Professional Development**
 - a) **Rotation Framework:** Design structured rotation programs within the same factory specifying duration, eligible positions, and learning objectives for each rotation
 - b) **Accommodation Support:** Establish housing allowances or arrangements for workers participating in rotations at distant factory locations
- 4) **Program Piloting and Refinement**
 - a) **KPI Development:** Establish key performance indicators for measuring program success (completion rates, promotion rates, retention)
 - b) **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement regular participant surveys and stakeholder interviews to gather qualitative feedback
 - c) **Success Documentation:** Create case studies of successful participants to guide program refinement and support recruitment

Resources required:

- 1) Financial backing by factories
- 2) Managerial support from factories
- 3) Worker buy-in

Potential challenges:

- 1) Public and private sector buy-in
- 2) Cultural stigma about Jordanian workers

Case Box 7. Structured Training and International Exposure²²⁴

Factory 2 has established a comprehensive approach to workforce development to increase Jordanian participation in technical and supervisory roles. The strategy combines on-the-job learning, formal training, academic partnerships, and international exchange.

Structured Employee Development Program

The core of Factory 2's training model is a multi-level employee development program based on the 70-20-10 framework: 70% of learning comes from direct experience on the job, 20% from mentoring by managers, and 10% from formal instruction, including online courses and in-person training. Each employee has a two-year Individual Development Plan (IDP) that outlines specific learning goals and career progression steps.

The program includes technical upskilling delivered through in-house sessions led by university professors or through partnerships with external training institutions. Leadership and communication training are also integrated, using curated online content and internal coaching to strengthen soft skills needed for supervisory roles. Those who reach the highest level may also become internal trainers, contributing to workforce development from within.

Academic and Industry Partnerships

Factory 2 collaborates with local universities through internship and dual-study programs. These initiatives provide students with practical industry experience and support a pipeline of skilled talent entering the sector.

International Employee Exchange Program

The factory runs a 3 to 6-month international exchange program with its operations in other countries. Jordanian staff are sent to gain experience in production and industrial engineering, while international employees contribute other expertise, such as embellishment and production in the Jordan facility.

5.5 Conduct an Impact Evaluation of Existing Regulations and Governmental Incentives to give Impetus for any Future Regulatory Change

Improve data quality and monitoring and evaluation of existing regulations and government-sponsored incentive measures, such as career fairs and subsidies in satellite factories, that have already been taken to increase Jordanian employment in order to tailor future incentives to knowledge-based market needs.

Goal: To generate evidence-based insights that strengthen the design and effectiveness of future government incentives and regulatory reforms aimed at increasing Jordanian employment in the garment sector.

²²⁴ Author's interview with Satellite Factory 2 HR Manager, Amman, March 2025.

Stakeholders: Through multi-stakeholder engagement, including the engagement of factories, governmental actors, consultants, researchers, and industry representatives, data should be gathered on the impact of current regulations and government-sponsored incentives regarding the garment sector, with a particular focus on areas in increasing Jordanian representation in knowledge-intensive roles.

Resources Required:

- 1) Funding
- 2) Public-private sector buy-in

Potential Challenges:

- 1) Incomplete or inconsistent data
- 2) Reluctance from the private sector
- 3) Difficulty in defining and measuring key variables and outcomes

Conclusion

Jordan's garment sector stands at a critical intersection of opportunity and challenge. As a major contributor to national exports and a key component of the country's Economic Modernization Vision, the industry holds great promise for creating employment opportunities for Jordanians. Yet, despite a growing population of educated youth and an increasing demand for skilled labor, Jordanian participation in knowledge-intensive roles within the garment industry remains limited.

This report highlights a variety of barriers – spanning cultural norms, perceptions of salaries and job-related benefits, misaligned education to employment pipelines, limited industry visibility and employer preferences in regard to Jordanian workers entering the sector. While these barriers are not insurmountable, they do require coordinated efforts to address the root of these challenges. Social expectations around career prestige, gender norms, and family obligations continue to shape employment decisions, whereas a lack of collaboration between higher education institutions and the industry itself narrow pathways for Jordanian graduate students.

At the same time, examples from peer countries, particularly Bangladesh, Egypt and Vietnam, demonstrate that investment in workforce development and stronger linkages between the universities and industry can lead to the localization of knowledge-intensive employment and shift the reliance on foreign labor. The insights gathered from this study highlight how important it is to focus on rethinking recruitment and retention strategies across the sector as well as efforts to build more sustainable talent pipelines. Crucially, this moment also offers an opportunity to recast the image of the garment industry and the roles within it as innovative, future-oriented, with roles that are connected to prestigious global brands and aligned with international trends such as sustainability, digitalization and ethical production.

The trajectory of Jordan's garment industry offers a timely opportunity to reconsider how economic growth can be more aligned with national workforce development. As mentioned, meaningful progress will depend on how multi stakeholder collaboration between private, public and academic institutions is harnessed. As Jordan looks to achieve its long term goals of increasing exports and quality employment opportunities, ensuring that high growth sectors, like the garment industry, investing in local talent is imperative to shaping a more robust and sustainable economic future.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Sample Interview Guide for Factories

Interviewee:

Organization/Factory:

Date:

Interviewers:

Interview Objectives

- Evaluate skill gaps and HR strategies for developing local talent
- Explore regulatory and education reforms that could improve local workforce integration.
- Understand compensation, benefits, and incentives for knowledge-intensive roles.
- Identify the key challenges and strategies for attracting and retaining Jordanian workers in middle management and professional roles.

Background on Interviewee and their organization

Interview Opening – Recording & Consent

- Is it acceptable for us to record this interview for accuracy?
- How would you prefer to be quoted (e.g., by name, by role, or anonymously)?
- Would you like to review any direct quotes before we include them in our report?

Defining Knowledge-Intensive Roles

Before we begin, we'd like to confirm our definition of knowledge-intensive roles in the garment sector. For this research, we define these roles as:

Jobs requiring specialized expertise, typically obtained through a university or technical degree, combined with relevant industry experience. These roles are characterized by higher wages and exist across:

- Human Resources (HR), Information Technology (IT), Finance, Production Planning, Industrial Engineering
- Supervisory & Middle Management (e.g., line supervisors, department heads)
- Entry-Level Professional Roles (e.g., officers, administrative staff, compliance roles)

Would you agree with this definition? If not, how would you modify it?

Section 1: Workforce Composition & Recruitment / Career Pathways & Internal HR Processes

1. How many knowledge-intensive roles exist in your factory, and what percentage are held by Jordanians?

2. What is the most common nationality for middle managers? Why?
3. Do the skill sets of Jordanians/non-Jordanians entering these roles differ?
4. Are there particular skill sets/experiences/working styles/etc that make Jordanians or non-Jordanians (including workers from any particular country) able to be more/less effective in these roles?
5. What is the most common career path for a Jordanian worker moving into a knowledge-intensive role?
7. What is the most common career path for non-Jordanian workers moving into a knowledge-intensive role?
8. Do you provide training programs to develop employees into knowledge-intensive roles? If no, why not?
9. Are Jordanians more or less likely to receive promotions into/be hired into supervisory roles compared to migrant workers? why?
10. Does the company feel that there is a gap in people applying for knowledge-intensive roles?
11. Does the company carry out outreach programs or hiring programs in universities or otherwise to attract Jordanians to knowledge-intensive roles?
12. Do you have difficulty attracting Jordanian workers to knowledge-intensive roles? How do you communicate available opportunities?

Section 2: Education & Skills Development

13. What skills or qualifications do you expect from candidates in knowledge-intensive roles?
14. Are workers from other countries receiving specialized training in their home countries that make them particularly well-qualified for these roles?
15. Are there specific universities or training programs abroad that provide degrees or certifications in garment factory management, industrial engineering, or other relevant fields? If so, how do these compare to local education and training options?
16. What types of programs could Jordanian universities offer to better prepare students for these careers?

Section 3: Female Workforce Participation

17. What percentage of your knowledge-intensive roles are held by women?
18. *(If less than 50%)* - What are the biggest barriers to women advancing into middle management?
19. *(If more than 50%)* - What skills do you think the women working here have that help them in advancing into middle management?
20. Do you provide any special benefits or policies for women in these roles?

Section 4: Regulatory & Policy Environment

21. Do you think there are government policies that encourage or discourage factories to hire more Jordanian professionals in knowledge-intensive roles?

(If yes:) Have these policies been effective? Why or why not?

(If not:) Do you think there should be policies in place? Why or why not?
22. Is there action the government could take that would increase the likelihood that you would hire more local workers into these roles?

Section 5: Compensation & Benefits *(if willing to answer)*

23. What is the average salary range for:
 - i. Entry-level knowledge-intensive roles (e.g., officers, staff)?
 - ii. Supervisory & middle management roles?
24. How do salaries in these roles compare to other industries (e.g., banking, IT, manufacturing)?
(Higher / Same / Lower? Why?)
25. What benefits do workers in these roles receive?

Section 6: Closing & Follow-Up

- Is there anything else you think is important for us to know that we didn't ask?
- Is it okay if we follow up with you if we have any clarifying questions later?
- Thank you so much for your time and insights, we truly appreciate your expertise!

