

Labour Market Profile 2020



Lebanon

Danish Trade Union
Development Agency

Mondiaal FNV

Mondiaal **FNV**



ULLANDSSEKRETARIATET – DTDA
DANISH TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

PREFACE

Since 2017, Mondiaal FNV and the Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA) have worked together to ensure coordination and exchange of experience and information between their offices e.g. on social dialogue and labour relations. This collaboration includes harmonisation of planning and coordination of technical assistance, as well as support and development of joint Theories of Change (ToCs).

One aspect is to benefit from joint tools and programme processes, e.g. monitoring practice and designing new project interventions. It includes an application of Labour Market Profiles (LMPs), which are based on a context analysis of the labour market in partner countries or potential partner countries. In practice, Mondiaal FNV and DTDA agreed to produce LMPs on several potential countries, which includes the Ethiopia Labour Market Profile.

Labour Market Profiles (LMPs) provide a comprehensive overview of the labour market situation in the DTDA's individual countries of engagement. LMPs aim at portraying a snapshot of the structures, developments and challenges in the labour market. Structurally, LMPs are divided into 11 thematic sections describing trade unions, employers' organisations, government, tripartite fora and institutions, national labour legislation, violations of trade union rights, wages and working conditions, workforce status, education, social protection, and economic performance.

LMPs report on several key indicators within the framework of the Decent Work Agenda (DWA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They especially address particular aspects of labour market development such as the evolution of trade union membership, social dialogue and bi-/tripartite mechanisms, policy development and legal reforms, and the status of ILO conventions and labour standards, among others.

The main sources of data and information for LMPs in general are:

- Specific types of data and information relating to key indicators are collected by data collection tools. The gathering and validation of central data and information for the development of the LMP was made through a national consultancy process in Ethiopia. It consists of both primary/secondary data/information and interviews of stakeholders.
- National statistical institutions and international databanks are used as sources for the collection of general data and information. Other critical sources used are: ILOSTAT and NATLEX, World Bank Open Data, ITUC Survey of violations of Trade Union Rights, the U.S. Department of State and other labour-related global indexes.
- Academic and media sources (e.g. LabourStart, national news, etc.) are used in the general research on labour market issues.

The DTDA's Analytical Unit prepared this Labour Market Profile through research in Copenhagen in close collaboration with Mondiaal FNV. Specific data was gathered by a local consultant in Lebanon, Mr. Mr. Ghassan Slaiby, who conducted research and interviewed key stakeholders according to the Template for Collection of Data and Information for Development of Labour Market Profile.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMAR

Lebanon is struggling with security risks besides increasing political tensions with spill-over from the Syrian civil war during the 2010s and an economic downturn. It exhausted the public finances and burden of high debt. These circumstances required the government to implement an austerity budget with painful fiscal adjustments in 2019. It led to widespread national protests. Lebanon is further affected hard by a standstill of economic activities under coronavirus impact in 2020.

Although central labour tripartite structures are established, they are often ineffective or blocked for political reasons. The government has initiated to reactivating these functions in 2019. However, the fragile social stability and unwieldy cooperation in labour-employment relations have stymied the social dialogue environment.

Labour Law reforms stalled during the 2010s with only a few legislation approvals. A tripartite committee was established in 2019 to revise the labour bill. Among others, this legislation has several flaws concerning international standards regarding the right to organise, the right to collective bargaining, and the right to strike. In practice, workers experience systematic violations of rights, including widespread anti-union discrimination. The application of the Kafala system (i.e. sponsorship system) ties about 250,000 migrant domestic workers' legal residency to their employer – often in deplorable working conditions – rather than secured by an employment visa.

The minimum wage system has been criticised for being out of date. Formal wages and general labour regulations are shadowed by the fact that close to one out of two (44%) worker is in informality – often in micro-enterprises. This situation keeps many workers in loopholes of labour and business regulations due to lack of awareness or incentives.

Lebanon has not yet ratified the fundamental Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (C87). In the aftermath of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) more than half (54%) of 50, trade union federations are confessional - belonging to one political party and constituting members from solely one religious' orientation. Political disputes have resulted in a fragmentation of the trade union movement. Public sector employees are legally prohibited from unionism. Instead, these latter employees join leagues that act like unions.

Reliable updated data of trade union membership and trade union density are not available.

There are deep, culturally rooted gender gaps in key labour market indicators. Only minor structural changes in economy and employment structures were estimated during the last two decades. As an impact of the shaky economy, the labour productivity dropped but slightly rebounded in recent years and is now hovering above the world average. The service sector continues to dominate formal and informal employment (66%), followed by industry (22%) and agriculture (12%). Several aspects are acutely challenging the labour market. First, the overwhelming number of refugees (approximately 1.5 million), mostly formed by Syrians, sharpens competition on the labour market. The high influx of refugees has increased both informality and child labour. Second, the economy creates insufficient formal jobs, which has raised unemployment to 25%, and even up to 37% for those under 25 years who often face education mismatch.

In decades, lack of job opportunities in the country prompted a brain drain to occur. The Lebanese diaspora became a central backbone of the country's national economy. However, personal remittances contribution to GDP has decreased by 12 percentage points during the last decade, reaching 13% of GDP in 2017. Stricter immigration restrictions converted a massive in-migration flow to an out-migration during the 2010s.

Lebanon has demonstrated high education enrolment rates on all levels. Private education institutions have dominated the education sector. The school enrolment rates, including vocational training, were affected negatively by the economic downturn. Social instability has furthermore complicated the integration of refugees in the Lebanese education system.

The social protection system in Lebanon represents several social assistance and insurance programmes. Nevertheless, it operates in a fragmented manner, and its range of benefits is limited. The relatively low coverage of social insurance schemes mirrors in the pervasive informality in the labour market, e.g. just 52% of the population is covered by health protection. Refugees are not covered under the Lebanon social protection system. Instead, they receive humanitarian assistance from the United Nations' agencies, which has progressively declined and forced refugee households to find income elsewhere.

The table below represents key indicators that follow the Decent Work Agenda. The selected key indicators are concentrated on areas where the trade union movement has a central role in the labour market.

On page iv, the second table presents an overview of the Sustainability Development Goals indicators' current value and targets for labour market issues.

Status of key labour market indicators in the framework of the Decent Work Agenda (DWA) in Lebanon

Creating decent jobs	
Policy reforms addressing creation of decent employment	Yes. National Employment Office (NEO) is financing skills development by providing some assistance to civil society associations, which are doing vocational training. The ministry of social affairs is furthermore in charge of a project concerning poverty eradication. An assessment has started to develop a broader project for social protection.
ILO standard setting on improvement of status of workers from the informal economy	No. Most informal workers are migrants working in the agricultural sector under both low productive and poor working conditions.
Guaranteeing rights at work	
Growth in trade union members (%)	N/a
Violations of trade union rights	Ranking 4 out of 5 (5+ is the worst) *
Labour legislation is improved according to ILO standards	No. Last relevant legislation was in 2014 (modification of articles 28, and 29 of Labour Law).
Trade union organisations with minimum 30% women representation in decision-making bodies	No. Even though women membership ratio often is equal to the women working in the specific sector ratio, their representation in executive boards is much lower.
Extending social protection	
Health social protection coverage as % of total population in partner countries	52 % (2007)
Workers from the informal economy have access to national social security schemes	N/a
Promoting social dialogue	
Trade union density of total employment (%)	N/a
Trade union density of employees (%)	N/a
Cooperation in labour-employer relations	Ranking 106 out of 141 (1 is best) **
Number of Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs)	N/a
Workers' coverage of Collective Bargaining Agreements to employees	N/a
Bi-/tri- partite agreements concluded	N/a

* This is interpreted as systematic violations of rights. Countries with a rating of 4 are interpreted as the government and/or companies are engaged in serious efforts to crush the collective voice of workers putting fundamental rights under threat (Source: ITUC, Global Rights Index).

** This indicator is based on data from the Global Competitiveness Index that represents employers' opinion from surveys (Source: World Economic Forum).

Source: DTDA Analytical Unit and Slaiby, Ghassan, Template for collective of Data and Information for Development of Labour Market Profile (DTDA), 2019

Status of key Sustainable Development Goals in labour market related issues in Lebanon

Indicators	Value	Year	SDG Targets
1.1.1: Working poverty rate (percentage of employed living below US\$1.90 PPP)	0.1 %	2019	By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than US\$1.25 a day.
1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems (health coverage)	52 %*	2007	Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.
5.5.2: Female share of employment in managerial positions	4 %	2013	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
8.2.1: Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita	-0.3 %	2018	Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors.
8.3.1: Proportion of informal employment	44 %	2015	Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.
8.3.1: Men	-	N.a.	
8.3.1: Women	-	-	
8.5.1: Average hourly earnings of women and men employees	-	-	By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
8.5.2: Unemployment rate (Total)	6.2 %	2019	
8.5.2: Unemployment rate (Total, 15-24 years)	18 %	2019	
8.5.2: Men, 15+	5.0 %	2019	
8.5.2: Men, 15-24 years	16 %	2019	
8.5.2: Women, 15+	9.9 %	2019	
8.5.2: Women, 15-24 years	21 %	2019	
8.6.1: Proportion of youth (15-24 years) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	22 %	2007	By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.
8.6.1: Men			
8.6.1: Women			
8.7.1: Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour (Total)	-	-	Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.
8.7.1: Girls	-	-	
8.7.1: Boys	-	-	
8.8.1: Frequency rates of fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries	-	-	Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.
8.8.2: Level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining)	-	-	
9.2.2: Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment	12 %	2011	Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries.
10.4.1: Labour income share as a percent of GDP	36 %	2011	Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.

* Legal health coverage, % of population

Note: The sign "-" indicates no data

Source: United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, Knowledge Platform and ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM)

COUNTRY MAP



Source: [Driving Directions and Maps, Lebanon Google Map](#)

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TRADE UNION

Unionism has been present during the last century in Lebanon. During the 1950s and 1960s, the labour movement became increasingly mobilised, and in the 1970s, numerous massive strikes took place demanding improved work conditions. Over the past two decades, complicated organisational structures and burdensome cooperation in labour-employer relations have challenged the trade union movement's evolution. In recent years, the movement has shown signs of revival, though.¹

Trade unions in Lebanon are not allowed to engage in politics. In practice, the trade union movement is interrelated into social and political affiliations, e.g. political parties intervene in the elections within trade unions. Both the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and the sectarian political system by law in the Taif agreement – the National Reconciliation Accord to provide the basis for ending the civil war and returning to political normalcy – in the post-war era, have challenged a unified trade union movement structure. As a result, trade unions are fragmented with different organisations competing for international recognition.²

Other aspects also challenge the Lebanese trade union movement's environment. First, the informal economy is widespread and dominated by micro- and small enterprises. In practice, unionism is basically absent in the informal economy. Second, a high degree of migrant labourers is present, and they have the right to join trade unions, but not the right to vote or become elected.

Updated reliable statistics of union membership, in general, do not exist in Lebanon. This is due to lack of official control of membership, politicisation and power struggles between ethnic-religious groups. Based on the limitations of data availability, 226 unions were within the service and trade sector, 117 were within manufacturing and construction, while 77 were within agriculture and fishery in 2008.³

Sectors with a high proportion of women workers have a similarly relatively high ratio of women's trade union enrolment compared to men. According to a study, six out of eight unions in these sectors is formed by 40% women and more, all the way up to 75%.⁴ However, women (and men) affiliation does not necessarily express their actual participation, as the affiliation is more likely a routine procedure inside the work enterprises than a free voluntary decision of women. Women representation in executive boards is much lower than the rate of their membership – in some unions, women representation is

absent, such as in the union of teachers that has 79% of women members. In practice, a reason for low women representation includes the monopoly of men in the executive boards in political parties and the absence of quota. There exists among some Lebanese, the perception of women as unwilling to nominate themselves as candidates, because of reluctance towards public responsibility. Some argue that this is due to experience solely in domestic tasks and pressure from family and husband.⁵

General Confederation of the Lebanese Workers (GCLW)

GCLW (in French: *Confédération Générale des Travailleurs du Liban*) is the only union confederation in Lebanon consisting of most of Lebanon's trade unions and federations. GCLW plays an integral part in negotiating wages and working conditions. Formed in 1958, GCLW membership expanded in 1970. The confederation is affiliated to the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU). The organisational structure of the GCLW consists of three entities: the Board of Representatives, the Executive Board, and the Executive Bureau.

Before the Lebanese Civil War, GCLW consisted of 16 federations. During the turmoil, five additional federations were created. After the war since 1990, the number grew with an additional 29 federations, forming a total of 50 federations today. Overall, 13 out of the 50 federations are regional.⁶ The structure of the federations in the confederation includes general, sectorial, and geographic federations: out of the 50 federations, almost half of them (23) are sectorial. The remaining federations are either general, geographical or public autonomous (see also Table 1). Based on limited data, available only from 2001, employees that were members of trade unions under GCLW constituted 7.6% of the total workforce in Lebanon. The confederation is criticised for insufficient mechanisms to regulate the relationship among these organisational structures.

Table 1: Distribution of Federations in GCLW according to their type

Types of federations	Number	Share, %
Sectorial federations	23	46 %
Federations of Public Autonomous Institutions	2	4.0 %
General federations	14	28 %
Geographical federations	11	22 %
Total	50	100 %

Source: DTDA, LMP Data Collection Template, Lebanon

More than half (27) of all federations in GCLW are confessional, as they belong to one political party and have members from one religious confession (i.e. in close relation to religious values).⁷ Before 1975, there were five confessional federations. No new confessional federations were established during the civil war period. The vast majority of confessional federations (22 federations) were established in the post-war period. This upsurge of confessional federations is in the aftermath of the Taif agreement, which brought to power sectarian political parties.

GCLW does not collect contributions from its affiliated organisations, but relies exclusively on funding from the government and solidarity funds from different sources.⁸

At GCLW's formation, the structure of the confederation lacked democratic representatives and transparency. There have been two attempts to change the confederation's structure in 1970 and 1993, both without success. Today, two delegates from each federation form the executive board. It results in a disproportional representation of federations according to their size. On the other hand, GCLW is forming a women committee, which is preparing a strategic planning exercise with the objective of increasing women's participation. Campaigns aiming to promote women's participation in the unions are rare, though.

GCWL has participated in a project promoting social dialogue and has attempted to amend a decree on union organisation to make it more adequate to the requirements of the international Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise (C87) (see more in Social dialogue and National Labour Legislation sections). In addition, GCWL has decided to develop a strategic plan with the purpose of increasing its capacity to defend workers' rights.

Labour movement outside GCLW

Workers engaged in the agricultural sector and family enterprises are prohibited from joining or creating unions. Workers in the public sector are likewise legally prohibited from GCLW. Instead, they unionise under leagues acting like trade unions, despite legal provisions that hamper their actions. A league is established in each of the primary, complementary and secondary level in public schools. Public school teachers unite in the League of Public Primary School Teachers and the League of Public School Secondary Teachers. Civil servants unite in the League of Public Administration Employees. These leagues have led to important actions particularly in the past years in the frame of the Union Coordination

Committee (UCC) ensuring new salary ranges and pay grades (see more in section: Working Conditions). During the 2010s, UCC called for wage adjustment, the right to organise for public sector employees and collective bargaining. The strength of UCC partially resides in its size, representing more than 200,000 workers across the country, which equals around 16% of employees.⁹

Decision-making in UCC is considered democratic and independent. Elections in the secondary teachers' league are consistent and take place every second year within the electoral deadlines. The consistent elections give the league legitimacy and representation that allows it to resist political interventions. UCC is criticised for lacking a holistic, long-term vision, and focusing too narrowly on specific demands that do not concern the majority of the population.¹⁰

In Lebanon, there exist syndicates for different professions such as physicians, engineers, architects, lawyers, dentists, pharmacists and nurses. These syndicates function as 'orders' and differentiate from unions as affiliation is obligatory to be able to practice a profession, and members are not only wage earners. These syndicates are characterised by the fact that most of their demands are linked to their specific profession. These syndicates cooperate with GCWL - particularly dealing national economic and political issues. The Trade Union of Employees of the Central Bank and the Trade Union of Private School Teachers are the two largest trade unions not enrolled in any of GCLW federations. The National Federation of Unions (FENASOL) has officially resigned from GCLW.¹¹ FENASOL has become the first union in the Middle East to join the My Fair Home campaign aiming to promote attitude and behaviour change among employers of domestic workers to support better employment relationships.¹²

EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATIONS

Based on estimations from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), around 9.3% of the total employment in Lebanon consisted of employers in 2019. This rate is significantly higher than the Middle East average of 3.5% (see also Figure 3 in section Workforce).

The Global Competitiveness Index provides a view on a wide range of aspects, including labour market efficiency. The latter index is based upon surveys among Lebanese employers and other statistical data. Lebanon was ranked low in 2019: 100 out of 141 countries (1 is the best). Out of the 12 labour market indicators, the best

score was the redundancy costs (21). Worst ranked are active labour policies (123), pay and productivity (105) and the ratio of wage and salaried female workers to male workers (103). It is worthwhile mentioning that cooperation in labour-employer relations also scored relatively poor (106). See more in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Employers' view of the labour market efficiency in Lebanon, 2019

Labour market indicators	Rank *
Labour market efficiency	100
Redundancy costs (weeks of salary)	21
Hiring and firing practice	67
Cooperation in labour-employer relations	106
Flexibility of wage determination	78
Active labour policies	123
Workers' rights	65
Ease of hiring foreign labour	94
Internal labour mobility	41
Reliance on professional management	109
Pay and productivity	67
Ratio of wage and salaried female workers to male workers	106
Labour tax rate	105

* Rank from 1 to 140 (1 is best).

Source: [The Global Competitiveness Report, 2019, 8th pillar: Labour market efficiency](#)

Association of Lebanese Industrialists (ALI)

ALI was established in 1942 and is the leading national association of manufacturing companies operating in Lebanon. Since its foundation, ALI had grown from 70 registered company members to 804 in 2019.¹³ The organisation is divided into 17 so-called assemblies and 14 so-called syndicates.

The association deals with both social and economic issues concerning business and advocates for policies that promote balanced industrial development in Lebanon. The association seeks to create and maintain an environment, which is favourable for industrial investment, job creation, economic growth, and development.

ALI represents the Lebanese industry in national councils and committees due to the association's ability to interpret and mediate the needs and recommendations of the industrial community in dealing with public institutions. ALI participates in policy-making processes regarding economic and social policy, labour legislation, industrial relations, social security, health care, taxation, policies for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), education, research and technology and the environmental questions.

The association collaborates with international organisations such as ILO, UNDP and the World Bank. In the Arab region, ALI cooperates with, among others, the Arab Labour Organization, the Arab Federation for Food Industries, the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization, the Islamic Bank for Development and the Regional Arab Programme for Labour Administration.

The General Assembly is the association's highest authority, composed of 24 persons for a four-year term. They meet annually for ordinary sessions. The assembly can be convened for an extraordinary session at any time upon request by board members or a specified number of its members.

ALIs activities seek to modernise and globalise the Lebanese economy, especially encouraging an internationalisation of Lebanese SMEs. Meanwhile, the association encourages Lebanese residents to consume local products, raise customs and taxes on imported products that are produced locally and buy Lebanese products.

In 2017, ALI signed a Lebanon Water Project (WELI) Programme aiming to improve water conservation in the marble and granite industry in Lebanon.

GOVERNMENT

The Lebanese political system shares power between representations of Christians and Muslims.¹⁴ Historically, Christian politicians have oriented towards France, while Muslims have oriented towards Saudi Arabia.¹⁵ Generally, during French rule (1923–1946), Christians in Lebanon have enjoyed disproportional amounts of power. With the Taif agreement from 1989, Lebanon has oriented more towards the Arab world. Christians have since then held less power, corresponding more equally to their representation in the population.¹⁶

Religious balance is a sensitive political issue in the country. The latest national population census was from 1932.¹⁷ Thus, there is an absence of accurate data on the relative percentages of the population of the major religions and groups. This situation complicates the political power balance built upon confessionalism, i.e. representatives of sectarian communities are proportionately balanced in public offices. High-level posts in public service jobs (government and legislation) should be distributed evenly between Christians and Muslims based on political agreements. Since an exact and recent demographic profile for Lebanon is not

available, it has made the political power balance become a critical issue. Lebanon's confessional system has arguable proven vulnerable to external influence, which has bred and exacerbated local conflict and violence.¹⁸ The current neighbouring Syrian conflict has furthermore challenged existing political divisions; and under such tensions, gender equality has been constrained (see sub-sections Gender and Migration).

The Ministry of Labour is responsible for setting national standards and settling disputes regarding employment, which governs the labour market, regulates labour relations and enforces labour law.¹⁹ The ministry affiliates with the Ministry of National Economy. It represents Lebanon in ILO and Arab Labour Organisation (ALO). The Ministry also monitors and supervises the main tripartite institutions (see section Central Tripartite Structures).

The Department of Labour Inspection, Prevention and Safety (DLIPS) under the Labour Relations Authority of the Ministry of Labour is responsible for labour inspections. They control the implementation of laws, the protection of workers, compliance with international labour conventions ratified and investigate disputes.²⁰ The regional inspection activities are not under the supervision or control of a central authority of labour inspection (see more in sub-section Vocational Training).

The ministry is argued to be understaffed, lack motivation, to have a limited budget and low technical capacity.²¹ Information concerning trade unions is scarce partly due to the fact that the Ministry of Labour holds back details on trade unions and federations, and does not publish official statistics about numbers, members and geographical distribution of Lebanese unions.²² The ministry also lacks computerisation, making access to information more difficult.

The Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) is a public administration office within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. CAS collects, processes, produces and disseminates social and economic statistics at a national level to inform decision-makers with evidence-based information. Labour market data in Lebanon is incomplete, outdated and in some cases, contradictory.²³ The most recent labour market survey is from 2009, published in 2011.²⁴ In 2018, CAS launched its first Labour Force and Households' Living Conditions Survey with a sample of 40,000 households.²⁵ Results from the survey are not yet available to the public.

In the late 1990s, Lebanon adopted gender mainstreaming in the collection and analysis of the gender statistics. Nevertheless, most ministries and public agencies continue to overlook gender dimensions of their work.²⁶

CENTRAL TRIPARTITE STRUCTURES

Tripartism is a collaboration based on contracts of employer/business, labour, and state affiliations within the economy. Each actor is a social partner to create an economic policy through cooperation, consultation, negotiation, and compromise. In practice, ALI and CGTL work as equal social partners in tripartite settings. Research suggest that the consecutive governments that came to power after the Taif agreement did not make significant efforts to organise social dialogue on the labour market in Lebanon. Central tripartite institutions in Lebanon are summarised below:²⁷

National Employment Office (NEO)

NEO is a financially and administratively independent agency under the authority of the Ministry of Labour and consists of representatives of employers, workers, the education sector, and academia. The NEOs mandate is to design and implement national employment strategies and policies. This directive includes research trends and issues, providing employment services, improving the organisation of the labour market and the quality of the labour force.

Due to limited financial and institutional capacity, NEO is limited to running an electronic labour intermediation platform, conducting occasional studies and subsidising vocational training programmes implemented by NGOs. The office is working irregularly and ineffectively, due to the absence of representatives from the different labour market actors. In 2018, the office did not execute any meeting.

According to tripartite workshops, NEO's priorities are the formation of a new tripartite board, training of new staff, to increase its budget, develop an employment policy and create sections in the different districts.²⁸

Index Committee

Index Committee's mandate is to study the increase of prices and its causes, prepare the inflation index and review the wage policy. Index Committee was created by a decree in 1981, and is usually supposed to deal with the determination of the minimum wage. There is no specific legislation for the minimum wage setting, but it is

dealt with in chapter four in the Labour Law, stipulating that the minimum wage should be settled in a tripartite body based on the needs of the workers and their family (see also sections Working Conditions and National Labour Legislation).²⁹

The status of the committee is that it has not executed meetings since 2015. Based on results from tripartite workshops, priorities for the committee in compliance with the current minister of labour, implementation of a study to develop a wage policy and to set the index for 2018.

National Social Security Fund (NSSF)

NSSF provides employees with insurance coverage for sickness, maternity care, pension and work-related accidents and diseases. The mandate of the tripartite board is to set the administration budget, decide internal and staff regulations and the creation of a regional agency – all according to national social security policies (see section Social Protection). The current minister of labour is planning to modernise NSSF.

The tripartite board should have been renewed, but the process was blocked for years due to diverging political preferences. Generally, NSSF is functioning, but irregularly and ineffectively. Priorities for the board is to form a new board, collect dues from the state and employers, modernise the administrative work by computerisation and agree on pension law.

Labour Courts

The settlement of labour disputes is determined by law, which stipulates the possibility of mediation and arbitration. At mediations, the concerned parties choose the Ministry of Labour or other parties. At arbitration, for collective disputes, it is a commission of arbitration; in the case of individual disputes, labour courts constitute the functioning body. Between mediation and arbitration, strikes can be organised. However, enterprises under the control of the state and providing public services within electricity, water and health are excluded from mediation and arbitration.

Labour courts are established in five geographical districts to settle personnel disputes, especially about the minimum wage, work accidents and dismissal of workers. Trade unions have criticised the courts for being understaffed compared to the number of cases to be dealt with. In addition, instead of investigations being carried out by an independent party, the Ministry of Labour itself is doing the necessary investigations on the cases. The members of the courts - a judge and representatives of workers and employers – are, by

some, criticised for being elected according to political and confessional criteria rather than according to their experience and knowledge on the issues.

Arbitration Committee is mandated to judge collective disputes on the demand of the two parties or right after the mediation in the public and autonomous institutions. The committee is located at the Ministry of Labour. Currently, the committee has been halted since the beginning of 2018, due to the absence of the judge who holds the position as president of the committee. This tripartite body used to arrange several meetings, but recently no meetings have been held.

Other bi/tripartite organs³⁰

- The National Organisation for Employment
- The National Corporation for Vocational training
- Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture
- Collective Labour Committees
- The National Corporation for the disabled Labour Welfare
- The National Committee for Combating Child Labour

In 2017, the Ministry of Labour launched a project to promote social dialogue.³¹ One of the project's outcomes is the development of a National Strategy for Social Dialogue in Lebanon that covers ECOSOC, NEO, NSSF and the ministry.³² Involvement of the minister of labour, ALL and GCWL in the project is considered to have been efficient.

Social dialogue

The social dialogue covers several aspects: industrial relations, freedom of association and the right to organise, collective bargaining, consultation, examination of grievances, and settlement of industrial disputes. In Lebanon, Decree 15352 from 1964 deals with labour disputes, collective bargaining, mediation and arbitration. However, after the Lebanese civil war, there has been weak and even absent dialogue between the different labour market actors.

Religious affiliation plays an important role, and encounters between the groups have become increasingly difficult.³³ Many groups blame 'the others' for their hardships, which constrains social dialogue.

Industrial disputes have more often taken the forms of strikes, which occasionally have led to agreements. Most labour protests in the last decade have been in the public

sector (within administration and education). These labour protests have mainly been organised by workers' leagues, as trade unions are not allowed in the public sector; in the private sector workers are less organised. In 2018, 151 actions (strikes, sit-ins and demonstrations) occurred. It suggests an upsurge in the number of strike actions in recent years, as only 73 actions were registered in 2016. In January 2019, labour unions, including GCTL, held a strike concerning living conditions and the political gridlock evident in Lebanon at the end of 2018, as the country was without a government for eight months.³⁴ Also in May 2019, GCLW went on strike and protested across the country as the government planned to cut wages and benefits in what the Prime Minister says may be the most austere budget in Lebanon's history (see more in the section: Economic Performance).³⁵

In November 2019, motorists were protesting against a strike by owners of petrol stations who demanded an increase in gasoline prices.³⁶ In January 2020, the Syndicate of Gas Station Owners and Fuel Distributors gave the government 72 hours to find a solution for the issue of petrol, or the price would be raised.³⁷ In February 2020, the petrol crisis has not yet been resolved.

Bi-partite social dialogue between workers and employers at the national level is handled at the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and at informal meetings. The only bi-partite social dialogue at the sectoral level is in the banking sector and the petroleum sector, involving the federation of unions in the banks and the federation of petrol.

A fragile trade union movement, general negative attitude towards social dialogue among employers and a weak culture of dialogue at all levels are hindering social dialogue in Lebanon. On the other hand, economic downturn, frustrations on the insufficient job creation and the impact of the Syrian refugees on the socio-economic situation in general, have pushed a movement on social dialogue to solve the challenges.

The impact of social dialogue can be measured by the quantity and quality of Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs). The Ministry of Labour has no official updated data available of this issue. Only sporadic information on workers covered by CBAs is accessible through trade unions themselves. For example, the Federation of Bank registered a sectoral agreement, which is intended to be renewed in 2019, covering 23,000 employees (see more in Appendix Table 19).

Additional CBAs can be found on an enterprise-level at the Port of Beirut Company, at the American University Hospital, and Pepsi Cola Company, at Estylin and Oxygen Company. CBAs are yet to be developed in other sectors. Furthermore, a lack of long-term stability in Lebanon complicates the construction of CBAs that usually are supposed to last for at least two years. Especially the determination of workers benefits and the limitation of strikes as a tool have been difficult to negotiate.³⁸

ECOSOC was anticipated to be established in 1995, but was postponed to 1999.³⁹ The general assembly's mandate expired in 2002. The government did not appoint a new assembly until 2018, when the council was regenerated through a new board, and began organising and implementing activities. ECOSOC is under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour.

ECOSOC consists of representatives from employers, trade unions, liberal professions, and NGOs i.e. creates a space for dialogue between the main actors of the civil society. Some of the council's main task is to ensure participation and coordination in the state's economic and social policy. The state budget and the financial and monetary laws are outside ECOSOC's mandate. It is important to note that ECOSOC is bipartite because the state is not officially represented in its bodies.

ECOSOC held several regular meetings in 2018, and the board is meeting different committees. According to tripartite workshops, current priorities for ECOSOC are to develop a strategic plan and to take initiatives according to the government policies.

In October 2019, a large number of protesters across the nation had taken to the streets to protest against the ruling elite in the most massive demonstrations since 2005 counting up to one million people.⁴⁰ Protesters are frustrated about the official corruption, confessional political system, economic mismanagement and austerity measures. Higher taxes on fuel, tobacco and WhatsApp were the tipping point for the protesters demanding the government to resign. In late October, Lebanon's Prime Minister resigned and reversed plans to tax WhatsApp calls. The Prime Minister has before announced his resignation in 2017 without realising it.⁴¹ The demonstrators are protesting as one homogeneous group under the national flag across sectarian groups against the sectarian political system.⁴² In addition, the overwhelming number of refugees has triggered some rivalry with the new-found solidarity among the Lebanese (see more in the sub-section Migration).

In the end of January 2020, protesters continue to call for an end to sectarian politics, corruption and economic crisis.⁴³ In the same time, the country has named a new prime minister and cabinet – backed by the parliament.⁴⁴ The new government is led by a non-partisan, has the highest-ever ratio of women ministers and is a third smaller than the previous. To many in Lebanon, expectations for the new government are low. The new prime minister is being received negatively by the Gulf States, and was visited by Iran's parliament speaker as the first senior foreign official to visit the newly inserted government.⁴⁵ Foreign donors have announced that they are willing to help Lebanon, but only if the country is enacting reforms.

NATIONAL LABOUR LEGISLATION

The rule of law in Lebanon is characterised by inconsistency and disparity between law and practise. A total of 127 national labour, social security and human rights-related regulations were recorded per November 2019.⁴⁶ It is worthwhile to mention that no new/amended labour-related legislation were approved in recent years; the latest was a modification of maternity leave to 10 weeks in 2014. Central policies' reforms have mainly been the poverty eradication strategy and skills development in vocational training.

Critics argue that the Lebanese authorities have failed to comply with the country's Right to Access to Information Law.⁴⁷ The law obligates government bodies, public institutions performing publicly to publish key legal, organisational and financial documents. Other critique include lack of progress on anti-corruption legislation, largely due to the political limbo the country currently is situated in after mass protests forced the government to resign.⁴⁸

Constitution

The constitution of Lebanon was adopted in 1926 and most recently amended in 1989. It forms the basic structures of the rule of law. The constitution does not deal directly with labour; however, article 13 secures freedom of assembly.⁴⁹ In the constitution's introduction, it is written how Lebanon is committed to international laws and international declaration of human rights, which includes the right to work and to form unions freely.

The constitution attempts to maintain equality between Christians and Muslims. For instance, by sparing half of the seats in parliament for Muslims and the other half for Christians. Lebanon is a parliamentary republic based on the 1943 National Pact, which apportions governmental

authority among a Maronite president, a Shia speaker of the Chamber of Deputies (parliament), and a Sunni prime minister.

Labour Law

The Labour Law was passed in 1946 and is the main legislation dealing with labour issues in both the private and public sector. Since its adoption, some of its articles have been amended over the years, and latest in 2010. The law sets weekly working hours at 48 hours, with a maximum of eight working hours per day.⁵⁰ Weekly rest must be no less than 36 consecutive hours, except within the agricultural sector, which is one of the few sectors migrants are allowed to work in.⁵¹ The law also includes chapters on employment contract, work leave, wage, dismissing from work, organisation of work, labour courts, trade unions and actions.

Though the law guarantees the right for private-sector workers to form and join trade unions, bargain collectively and strike, a number of restrictions on these rights are taking place in Lebanon.⁵² The Ministry of Labour is responsible for approving the creation of unions and controlling the conduct of all trade union elections. Trade unions are furthermore not allowed to engage in politics.⁵³

Trade unions have the right to strike only after providing notice in advance, including the expected number of participants, as well as receiving approval from the Ministry of Interior. At least 60% of workers at enterprise level must agree on the aims in order to bargain collectively. In terms of organising a strike, at least three organisers must be identified by name and the location of the strike has to be declared. In addition, 5% of a trade union's members must take responsibility for maintaining order during the strike. Two-thirds of union members at a general assembly must ratify Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs). See more details on the list of Lebanon's Labour Law and decree number 7992 from 1952 central clauses to organising trade unions in Appendix Table 20.

The labour law excludes public-sector workers, domestic workers and agricultural workers the right to strike or to join and establish unions.⁵⁴ These restrictions are inconsistent with the international Convention 87 regarding freedom of association and collective bargaining.⁵⁵ As previously mentioned, public-sector employees have nevertheless succeeded in creating the Union of Coordination Committees (UCC), which along with private school teachers, have demanded better pay and working conditions (revisit the section: Trade Union).

Generally, legislative decree number 122 from 1959 deals with working conditions for civil servants including nominations, salaries, obligations, promotion, leaves, transport, the delegation of power, sanctions and end of services.

The two latest modification of the Labour Law have regarded gender: prohibition of discrimination against women in terms of wages, recruitment, type of work, promotion and vocational training in 2000 and increase of maternity leave from seven weeks to 10 weeks in 2014 – ILO Convention 183 calls for 14 weeks of leave for mothers of infants. However, the Labour Law continues to discriminate against women in some of its articles, especially those dealing with the rights of married workers, giving husbands advantages to spouses in terms of allocation on behalf of their partners and children. Women are prohibited from certain jobs, such as operating machinery. Women have fewer rights than men when it comes to tax deductions and for married women in the advent of bankruptcy (see more in section Gender).⁵⁶

Jordan and Bahrain are the only Middle Eastern countries to explicitly include domestic work in their labour laws. Lebanon and Oman constitute the only two countries in the Middle East not having any laws in place at all for domestic workers (though laws against forced labour exist in Lebanon, including domestic workers).⁵⁷

In 2012, the minister of labour submitted a draft law to the parliament, where both trade unions and employers' organisations were included. The changes concerned everything from part-time work, vocational training, work of adolescents, women's work at night, maternity leave, nurseries at work, leaves for marriage and death, years of work, dismissal of workers in general and of trade unionists in particular, union sectors, unions formation, the role of the minister of labour, CBAs, and mediation and strikes. Trade unions and employers' organisations had some diverging motifs of the reform: organised workers wanted to develop workers' rights, while employers wanted a more flexible in terms of hiring and firing conditions. This draft labour law was not finalised and approved. The new minister of labour formed a tripartite committee with the mission to renew the Labour law in 2019.⁵⁸

Observations on labour legislation

The implementation of the Labour Law is subject to political interventions and corruption is present in the public institutions.⁵⁹ The International Trade Union

Confederation (ITUC) has registered observations of poor compliance with the labour market legislations within international standards on the right to organise, the right to collective bargaining, and the right to strike; among others:⁶⁰

- Barriers to the establishment of organizations, i.e. prior authorisation or approval by authorities required for the establishment of a union.
- Restrictions on the right to elect representatives and self-administer in full freedom.
- Restrictions on the right to freely organise activities and formulate programmes.
- Administrative authorities' power to unilaterally dissolve, suspend or de-register trade union organisations.
- Government employees cannot set up and belong to trade unions or federations.
- Some categories of agricultural workers, day workers and temporary workers are not covered by the country's Labour Code.
- A minimum of 60% of workers must agree before a union can engage in collective bargaining.
- The right to strike is limited by the obligation to establish the number of participants in advance.
- Excessive sanctions for damages caused by strike actions.

The applied Kafala system keeps migrant domestic workers under restrictive immigration rules, placing them at risk of exploitation and abuse. The Kafala system excludes all migrant domestic workers from the Labour Law, meaning that they are excluded from trade union organisations. Paradoxically, the Lebanese Labour Law allows migrants to join but not lead unions. In the Kafala system, a legal residency of domestic workers is tied to their employers, rather than secured by an employment visa, i.e. if the employment relationship ends, the worker loses her/his migration status. The worker cannot change their employer without permission from the employer.⁶¹ Often this result in the employer coerce the worker to accept exploitative working conditions, or otherwise become an illegal immigrant, opening doors to fines, imprisonment and deportation. Abuses include slave-like conditions such as withholding of wages, being locked into the homes where they work, physical violence, sexual assault and confiscation of passports. It is often women from Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Eritrea, and the Philippines, who form the almost 250,000 registered migrant domestic workers according to official statistics from 2017.⁶² Unregistered migrant domestic workers are estimated to reach at least a hundred thousand.

Ratified ILO Conventions

Regarding Lebanon's ratification of international labour standards, 51 ILO Conventions are ratified; of these, 42 are in force, seven Conventions have been denounced, and one instrument abrogated.⁶³ See more details in Appendix Table 21.

First, the eight Fundamental Conventions are the most important conventions that cover four fundamental principles and rights at work. Lebanon has ratified three of them, except Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (C087).

Second, ILO has titled four Governance Conventions that are important to build national institutions and capacities that serve to promote employment, i.e. these conventions encourage a well-regulated and well-functioning labour market. The country has ratified two out of four of these Governance Conventions, leaving out Labour Inspection Convention (C129) and Tripartite Consultation Convention (C144), so far.

Thirdly, ILO has furthermore 183 Technical Conventions, out of which 83 conventions are "Up-To-Date" and actively promoted, i.e. an Up-To-Date Convention is one that is ready for ratification by the Member States and one that has been examined by the ILO Governing Body and deemed to be still relevant.⁶⁴ Lebanon has to this date ratified 42 of the Technical Conventions out of which 19 are Up-To-Date.

The latest ratified Conventions were Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) from March 2018 and Chemicals Convention (C170) from April 2006.

The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) noted that only one report had been received of the eight requested (seven reports are still due for this country on fundamental, governance and technical Conventions, most of which should have included information in reply to the Committee's comments). Recalling that the International Training Centre of the ILO provided technical assistance on these issues in 2018, the Committee hoped that the Government will submit all its reports following its constitutional obligation and that they will respond to the Committee's comments. The report received through the government was elaborated upon General Confederation of Lebanese Workers (CGTL) transmitted the Survey on Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) in 2018.⁶⁵

Trade Agreements

For the past decade, the Government's economic strategy focused on comparative advantage as a leading business centre in the region. Structural reform was launched to particularly reinforce the productive sectors, promote sustainable economic growth and integrate Lebanon further into the global economy. According to the government, trade liberalisation also entails modernising trade legislation, minimising restrictions and simplifying procedures.

Lebanon has an open trade system. Efforts towards trade liberalisation have focused on the European Union (EU), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Arab world. Lebanon has signed so far 54 bilateral Agreements for the Promotion and Protection of Investments with 50 countries to provide foreign investors with a legal framework whereby the most favorable setting is established. In 2019, the Lebanese government called for the revision of free trade agreements signed between Lebanon and other countries aimed at protecting the industry sector in the country. Some of the main agreements are outlined below.

In 2002, Lebanon signed an Association Agreement with EU, with effect in 2006.⁶⁶ As a result, Lebanese industrial and most agricultural products have free access to the EU market.

In 2007, a free trade agreement entered into effect between Lebanon and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) – Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.⁶⁷ Almost all customs duties on trade in industrial goods and fish have been eliminated between EFTA and Lebanon.

The Arab League has a long history for trying to develop trade and economic cooperation among its member states, with initiatives taken in the 1950s and 1960s.⁶⁸ Lebanon has been a cofounder of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) in 1997 within the Social and Economic Council of the Arab League.⁶⁹ Today, GAFTA consists of 17 members from the MENA region. The organisation seeks to establish an Arab common market. In 2005, an agreement on full trade liberation of goods between the member states was made. Free Trade Agreement was also signed with the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC).

Negotiations of accession to the WTO have been ongoing, but the progress has stalled due to political stalemate and inability of the government to implement the necessary legislation the WTO requires, which

includes an improved draft of the intellectual property law.⁷⁰

The U.S. Government has neither a bilateral investment treaty (BIT) with Lebanon nor an agreement on the avoidance of double taxation. Nevertheless, in 2006, the two countries signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) and Lebanon is an eligible country in the generalized system of preference (GSP) with the United States. The TIFA never came into force, though.⁷¹ It was a result of weak streamlined procedures for business entry, operation, and exit and are plagued by excessive regulation. Moreover, Lebanon adheres to the Arab League boycott of Israel. Enforcement is selective, as many goods on the boycott list are available in the Lebanese market. The Arab League's Central Boycott Office maintains a blacklist of U.S. firms that are believed to contribute to Israel's military or economic development.⁷²

An FTA was signed with Turkey in 2010, but is pending ratification by Lebanon. Negotiations are ongoing with China and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR). The MoET also indicated that Lebanon would be joining the Agadir Agreement (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia).⁷³

TRADE UNION RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The Global Rights Index is ranking Lebanon as 4 out of 5 (5+ is worst) in 2019. Workers in countries with rating 4 have reported systematic violations. The government and companies are engaged in serious efforts to crush the collective voice of workers putting fundamental rights under threat.⁷⁴

Among others, ITUC recorded poor working conditions for migrant domestic workers in Lebanon: these workers often suffer from physical and psychological abuse in the hands of their employers. It is estimated that out of the 250,000, mostly women, migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, two dies per week. Many of these deaths are suicide or escape attempts in which women choose to jump off buildings rather than continue working in abusive and exploitative situations.⁷⁵ From 2016 to 2018, Lebanese authorities deported at least 21 domestic workers with children.⁷⁶

According to a 2016 ILO study, 23% of employers always or sometimes locked domestic workers inside their home. Due to stigma, the actual rate probably is higher.⁷⁷ Traditionally, criticism of the Kafala system has come from NGOs, but recently FENASOL has begun to

organise domestic workers.⁷⁸ Very little is being done at the political level on the migrant domestic worker's issues, and public dialogue about it is minimal. In 2019, there has been demonstrations to abolish the Kafala system, and in the same year the Minister of Labour said that he would prioritise modernising the labour law, including forming a committee of the most active NGOs working on the issue and set up a 24/7 hotline for migrant workers to report abuse.⁷⁹

Besides discrimination against migrant domestic workers, also women, persons with disabilities, LGBTI (i.e. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual and Intersexed) and HIV-positive persons experience discrimination in employment and occupation.⁸⁰

Many workers have observed numerous violations of labour law prescriptions from the side of the employer. The Ministry of Labour, which is supposed to control the implementation of the law, is not efficient, because of lack of personnel and corruption.⁸¹

Undocumented evidence shows widespread-antiunion discrimination, and this has not received significant media coverage.⁸² The most severe abuses have occurred in the sectors of banking, private schools, retail businesses, daily and occasional workers, and the civil service. Some employers fired workers in the process of forming a union before the union could be formally established. ILO has besides reported that private schools have fired approximately 500 teachers to pressure their unions to back off their demands of higher pay.

Forced or compulsory child labour is a problem in Lebanon as there is no legislative provision that provides criminal penalties for the exaction of forced labour (see more in section Child Labour).

ILO's Committee of Freedom of Association has no active Freedom of Association cases, one follow-up case, and nine closed cases with Lebanon (Table 3).

Table 3: Freedom of Association cases in Lebanon, 2018

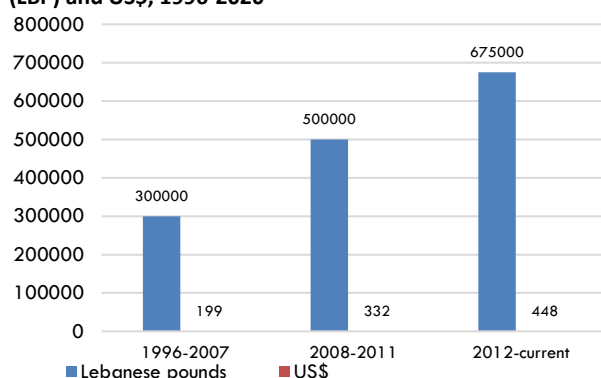
ILO Complaints Procedure	
Active	0
Follow-up	1
Closed	9

Source: [ILO, NORMLEX, International Labour Standards country profile, Lebanon](#)

WORKING CONDITIONS

The government sets the nominal minimum wage in both the public and private sector after consultation with employers and workers. It was last raised in 2012 by 35% raised to LBP 675,000 (US\$448) per month. The country has the fifth-highest minimum wage out of the ten Arab countries. If the nominal minimum wage is adjusted in inflation per year from 2008 to 2011, the real hike was down to 15%. Also taking into consideration the aggregate GDP per capita growth of 16% in the same period, the adjusted minimum wage is further down to minus 1%.

Figure 1: Minimum wage trend in Lebanon, Lebanese pound (LBP) and US\$, 1996-2020



Source: Countryeconomic.com and Minimum-wage.org

The minimum wage system is criticised for being outdated, as it has not been adapted for several years. Discussions about adjusting the wage scale began in 2012, but lack of transparency led to confrontations between the government and trade unions. Many people can barely live with the minimum wage.⁸³

There is no official minimum wage for domestic workers. Official contracts stipulated wages ranging from LBP 225,000 (US\$149) to LBP 450,000 (US\$300) per month for domestic workers, depending on the nationality of the worker. Many domestic workers, often migrants, suffer under fragile working conditions. Refugees' household income for some refugees is lower than US\$420 per month, which includes humanitarian assistance received by households in cash or e-card.⁸⁴

Negotiations of the general wage scales are done officially in the public sector or the private sector through collective agreements. The average wage was estimated at US\$2,614 per month in 2020. Table 4 below gives an overview of monthly salary and minimum wages in housing, transport and other benefits in Lebanon in 2020. Salaries vary drastically between different sectors (see Sectoral Employment).

Table 4: Status of Monthly Salary and Minimum Wages in Lebanon

	Lebanese Pound Current	US\$ Current
Average salary (2020)	3,940,000	2,614
Maximum salary (2020)	17,400,000	11,542
Median salary (2020)	3,700,000	2,454
Nominal minimum wage (2012-current)	675,000	448
Real minimum wage growth	-1% *	

* The nominal minimum wage rise in 2012 deducted by inflation and economic growth in the period from 2008 to 2011.

Sources: Salaryexplorer.com

The government employed 90 officials as inspectors and assistant inspectors, as well as administrators and technicians, who handle labour inspections. These labour inspectors in 2018 covered one inspector per 23,300 workers (or one per 17,700 employees). The ILO is concerned if the relation exceeds one inspector per 10,000 workers in industrial market economies (or one inspector per 20,000 workers in transition economies).⁸⁵

As mentioned, working conditions for foreign migrant domestic workers are often unsafe. Lack of work contracts and/ or the absence of social security coverage also worsens working conditions in Lebanon (see more in sections: Informal Economy and Social Protection).

The law permits a 12-hour day under certain conditions, including a stipulation that overtime pay is 50% higher than pay for normal hours. There are no limits on compulsory overtime. On average, workers in the industrial sector worked 35 hours per week, while workers in other sectors on average worked 32 hours per week. More details of the working conditions in Lebanon are available in Table 5.

Table 5: Status of Working Conditions in Lebanon

Fixed-term contracts prohibited for permanent tasks	No
Maximum length of a single fixed-term contract (months)	No limit
Standard workday	8 hours
Premium for night work (% of hourly pay)	0 %
Premium for work overtime work (% of hourly pay)	50 %
Paid annual leave (average for working days with 1, 5 and 10 years of tenure, in working days)	15
Minimum length of maternity leave	70
Receive 100% wages on maternity leave	Yes
Five fully paid days of sick leave a year	Yes
Unemployment protection after one year of employment	No

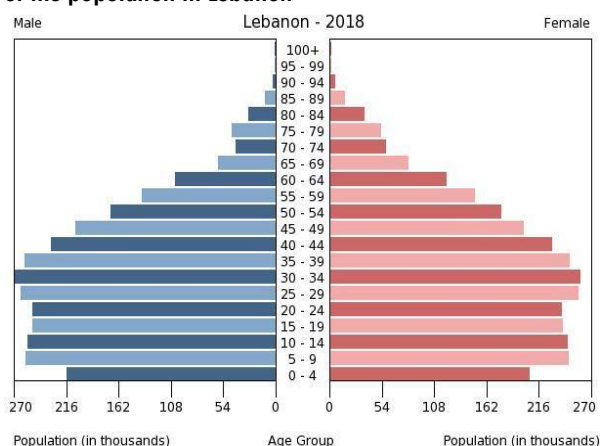
Source: World Bank, Doing Business, Labor Market Regulation and World Bank, Women: Business and the Law, Lebanon

WORKFORCE

Demographic information is scarce, and the exact demographic composition is unknown. However, based on estimations, the total population was 6.1 million in July 2019. Lebanon has the highest life expectancy and the lowest fertility rate among countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), bringing about the highest current and expected dependency ratio (i.e. an age-population ratio of those typically not in the labour force – the dependent part ages 0 to 14 and 65+ – that put pressure on the productive population).

The fertility rate is relatively low, with 1.7 children per woman.⁸⁶ The fertility rate has been decreasing, and the natural population growth has fallen to below 1% per year. Estimations suggest that two-thirds of the population growth since 2000 has been from immigrants (see sub-section: Migration). Figure 2 below illustrates the population pyramid, and almost half of the population (50%) is aged 25-54 years. The country experienced a declining population growth in the 1980s. Stated differently, a large part of the Lebanese population is in the workable age, and the proportion of youth is relatively low. With population growth and immigration combined, the workforce is estimated to have doubled over the period from 1990 to 2010.⁸⁷

Figure 2: Population pyramid based on the Age-Sex structure of the population in Lebanon



Source: [CIA, The World Factbook, Lebanon](#)

Total employment was estimated at 2.1 million in 2019. The employment-to-population ratio was estimated at 44% with a staggering gender gap of 47 percentage points. These data do not diverge much from the regional average, though; the employment-to-population ratio for women in Lebanon is six percentage points higher than the Arab States average. For Lebanese women youth, the value is eight percentage points higher. See more in Table 6 and the sub-sections: Gender and Youth.

Table 6: Estimations of employment-to-population ratio in Lebanon and the Arab States, Age and Sex distribution, 2020

Sex	Age	Lebanon	Arab States
Total	Total 15+	44 %	47 %
	Youth 15-24	24 %	21 %
Men	Total 15+	68 %	73 %
	Youth 15-24	35 %	36 %
Women	Total 15+	21 %	15 %
	Youth 15-24	14 %	4.7 %

Source: [ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market \(KILM\)](#)

Figure 3 below is based on estimations and projections of the status of employment in the country from 2000-2020. It illustrates how the share of employers among total employment in Lebanon during the 2000s grew from 6% to 9%. This has happened during a drop among own-account workers from 28% to 23%. However, during the 2010s, so far, changes were stalled. This rate of employers is hovering above the Arab regional average share of 3.5%. Employees (i.e. workers who get a basic remuneration) have formed 63% of the total employment in the last two decades.⁸⁸ This segment is 18 percentage points lower than the Arab regional average (81%) and nine percentage points higher the World average at 54%. A small share of the employment in Lebanon (4%) is among contributing family workers (i.e. self-employment in an establishment operated by a related person). Own-account workers and contributing family workers are gathered under the statistic concept of ‘vulnerable employment’ and represent 28% of the total employment. This latter group of workers confront inadequate earnings, low productivity and difficult conditions of work that undermine workers’ fundamental rights.⁸⁹

Figure 3: Estimations and projections of status of employment in Lebanon, %, 2000-2020

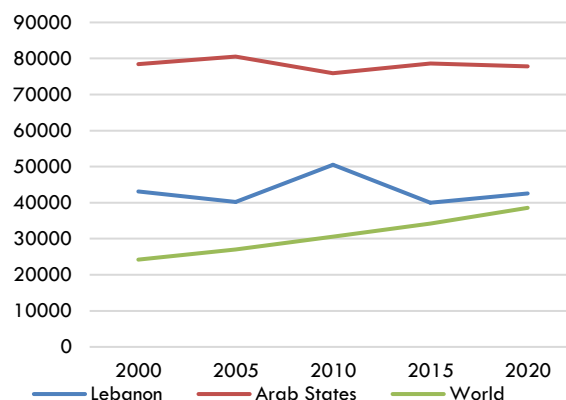


Source: [ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market \(KILM\)](#)

In 2014, micro-enterprises (<10 workers) constituted the largest proportion (73%) of Micro-, Small-, and Medium Enterprises (M/SMEs) in Lebanon. Small-enterprises (<50 workers) contribute 20%, medium-enterprises (<100 workers) of 3.5% and large-enterprises of 3.5%.⁹⁰ Stated differently, enterprises employing less than 50 workers constitute 93% of the total. These micro- and small-enterprises are the backbone of the Lebanese economy as they provide job opportunities for an estimated 51% of employees in the private sector. Women founders of start-ups in Beirut amount to 18%. Many of these micro-enterprises are informal and characterised by low productivity, poor working conditions and high vulnerability to shocks. The prevalence of informal one-person enterprises is prevalent not just in Lebanon, but in many countries in the region. Most workers in M/SMEs work six days per week. Some of their main challenges the M/SMEs are insufficient access to finance, access to markets increased production costs and uncertain output quality, often with skill gaps since their education is not relevant to their current occupation, and lack of supporting an innovative environment. Not to mention, the Doing Business regulations are scoring low (see more in Appendix Table 22).

The linkage between the status of employment, access to formal jobs and qualification match is mirrored in labour productivity. Figure 4 below shows the evolution of labour productivity. In Lebanon, labour productivity is well below the regional average but stays slightly above than the World average. From 2005-2010, productivity increased. It decreased from 2010-2015 and is projected in 2020 to be on the 2015 labour productivity level. This negative growth in worker productivity from 2010-2015 was an impact of the Syrian crisis triggering into an economic downturn in Lebanese, which already faced high unemployment rates coincided with a prevalence of low-quality jobs in an unregulated and poorly governed labour market.⁹¹

Figure 4: Estimations and projects of the labour productivity trend, 2000-2020



Note: Labour productivity is defined as output per worker (GDP constant 2011 international \$ in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP))

Source: [ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market \(KILM\)](#)

Unemployment

The unemployment rate (those neither in formal nor informal employment) has been stable in Lebanon during the last decade, and it is mainly a problem for women and generally for youth. Based on the definition of 'strict' unemployment – including only persons that altogether, lack employment and can shadow problems of underutilisation and underemployment⁹² – estimations of the unemployment rate in Lebanon was 6.3% in 2020, which is slightly lower than the regional average of 8.0%. Women have a higher unemployment rate (9.8%) than men (5.1%); this gender gap is lower than the Arab region on 11 percentage points. Youth unemployment rate on 18% in Lebanon reflects a central problem in the labour market (see sub-section Youth). Lebanon also does slightly better in this indicator than the Arab regional average, both in terms of the relatively lower unemployment rate (five percentage points) and a smaller gender gap: the gender gap in Lebanon is six percentage points, while 22 percentage points in the region (see more details in Table 7). Based on a 'broader' estimation of the unemployment rate in Lebanon, it was registered of 25%, with unemployment among those under 25 at 37%. And, unemployment rates are highest among the economically poor.

Generally, this situation of unemployment is challenging to reach the Sustainable Development Goal in terms of unemployment (see more on the SDG table, Indicator 8.5.2, in Page iv).

Table 7: Estimations of unemployment and underutilisation in Lebanon and Arab States, 2020

Type		Lebanon	Arab States
Unemployment	Total	6.3 %	8.0 %
	Men	5.1 %	6.1 %
	Women	9.8 %	19 %
Youth (15-24) Unemployment	Total	18 %	23 %
	Men	16 %	20 %
	Women	21 %	42 %
Youth (15-24) underutilisation* (2014)	Total	26 %	-
	Men	19 %	-
	Women	33 %	-

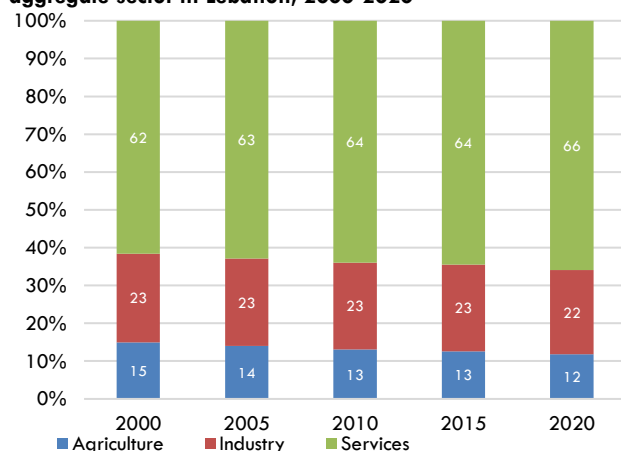
* Underutilisation constitutes of: i) insufficient of the volume of work (time-related underemployment), ii) low remuneration (low earnings), and iii) incompatibility of education and occupation (skills mismatch).

Source: [ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market \(KILM\)](#)

In Lebanon, the underutilisation is around 26%, with a gender gap on 13 percentage points: every third young woman is underutilised, while every fifth young man is underutilised in Lebanon.⁹³ There is a limited social safety net coverage making being unemployed harsher in Lebanon (see more in the section: Social Protection).

Sectoral Employment

There were just changes in the margin on the employment structure by aggregate sector during the last two decades. Based on estimations, the service sector is the largest, employing two-third of the employment. This sector has grown slightly with four percentage points since 2000 on behalf of the agricultural sector, which has shrunken three percentage points since 2000. As depicted in Figure 5, the industrial and agricultural sectors in Lebanon are small compared to the service sector.

Figure 5: Estimations and projections of employment by aggregate sector in Lebanon, 2000-2020

Source: [ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market \(KILM\)](#)

Based on estimation from ILO, the total employment in Lebanon was 2.1 million in 2019. Public administration, education and health sector has the highest share of employment (26%, 556,000 workers) followed by wholesale/retail and restaurant and hotels sector (21%, 449,000 workers). Construction sector's share (12%, 245,000 workers) and manufacturing sector (9.5%, 200,000) are closely in line with the Arab States average, 14% and 8.3%, respectively. Women cover just 24% of the total employment, and they are mainly in 'other sources' (51%), and public administration, education and health sector (42%) and agriculture (31%). See more details in Table 8.

Table 8: Distribution of employment population per sector in Lebanon, 2019

Sector	Total employment	Employment share per sector	Women share per sector
Agriculture	250,676	12 %	31 %
Mining & quarrying	6,702	0.3 %	6.6 %
Manufacturing	199,472	9.5 %	22 %
Utilities	17,151	0.8 %	10 %
Construction	244,638	12 %	1.5 %
Wholesale, restaurants & hotels	448,919	21 %	10 %
Transport, storage & communication	137,460	6.5 %	6 %
Finance, real estate & business services	131,381	6.3 %	23 %
Public administration, education and health	555,970	26 %	42 %
Other sources*	106,312	5.1 %	51 %
Total	2,098,681	100 %	24 %

* Other sources: arts, entertainment and recreation, other service activities, activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services producing activities of households for own use, and activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies.

Source: [ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market \(KILM\)](#)

The employment in the manufacturing sector has slowly decreased during the last two decades, from 11% in 2000 to a projected 9.4% in 2020 and stayed slightly higher than the Arab States average at 8.3%. The construction sector grew by just 0.7 percentage point in the same period. Viewed in another aspect, Lebanon is slightly stalled on its way towards industrialisation to reach the SDG goal in 2030 (see SDG table, 9.2.2. target, page iv).

A way to measure the strength of the interaction between the economy and the labour market is the employment per sub-sector relative to the Gross Domestic Product

(GDP). These values are diverging between sub-sectors in Lebanon. For example, the broad sector “Services, Financial intermediation & Insurance” has the highest share of employment with a GDP share of 42%, which equals a GDP per worker per year of US\$27,493. This value is high compared to the other sectors. Workers in the construction sector generate the least GDP per worker (US\$11,346), workers in the transport & telecom sector the most (US\$32,823). More details are available in Table 9 below.

Table 9: GDP share by sector and per worker in Lebanon

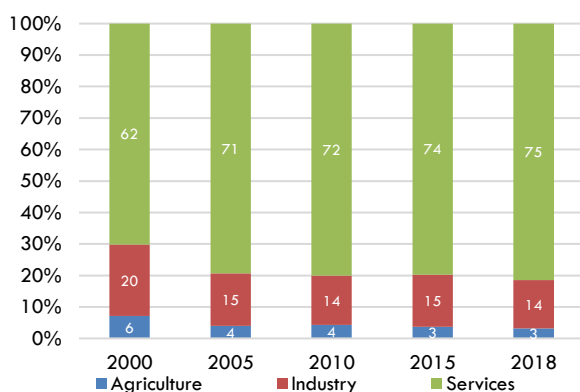
Sector	GDP share by sector, %, 2017	GDP share by sector per worker per year, US\$ *
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing	6 %	25,529
Manufacturing	11 %	23,401
Construction	4 %	11,346
Services, Financial intermediation & Insurance	42 %	27,493
Trade	28 %	26,474
Transport and telecom	9 %	32,823
Total	100 %	24,511

* Calculated by the total GDP (current US\$, Year: 2017) share per sector (% , Year 2009) divided in number of workers (number, Year 2017) per sector (Year: 2009).

Source: [Central Administration of Statistics \(CAS\)](#), [Central Administration of Statistics \(CAS\)](#) and own calculations on GDP share per worker based on data from [ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market \(KILM\)](#)

The GDP share per aggregate sector has experienced a constant growth since 2005. Figure 6 below illustrates that the agricultural sector stood at 3% in 2018. The industry sector stood at 14% and the service sector of 75%. The status quo of these aggregate GDP share figures is supporting the stalled evolution of the employment share per sector.

Figure 6: Aggregate sector share in Lebanon, % of GDP, 2000-2018



Source: [World Bank, World Development Indicators](#)

Informal Economy

The informal economy is widespread in Lebanon in both employment and economy. First of all, the informal economy contributes to 36% of GDP. Second, informal employment covers around 44% of the total employment, especially among youth (60%) (see also sub-section Youth).⁹⁴ Informal employment ranges from subsistence farmers to high-level self-employed professionals.⁹⁵ In addition, the vulnerable employment rate is similarly high at 28% in 2019 and it stayed on a status quo during the last decade. It is important to realise that the informally employed often are self-employed, and the majority of these are low-skilled and usually involved in low-productivity activities. This situation is interrelated to high coverage of micro- and small-enterprises (93% of total enterprises) and relatively low labour productivity. It furthermore explains why a fifth of the informal wage employees lack access to social insurance.⁹⁶

Table 10: Employment in the informal economy in Lebanon

Informal employment (2015)	44 %
Informal employment, youth (2014)	60 %
Vulnerable employment * (2019)	28 %
Change in vulnerable employment, 2010-2019	-0.1 p.p.
Informal economy share of GDP (2011)	36 %

* Aggregate own-account workers and contribution family workers

Source: [ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market \(KILM\)](#), [ILO, School-to-Work Transition Survey](#) and [European Training Foundation](#)

Informal units are typically run at a low level of organisation, with little or no division between labour and capital as factors of production, and operate on a small scale. Informal labour relations are often based on casual employment, kinship or personal and social ties, rather than contractual arrangements with formal guarantees. Besides, informality is characterised by the absence of final accounts and is mostly unregistered entities without permanent addresses. Not to mention, corruption is rife in Lebanon, which encourages people to stay in the informal economy to avoid bribery practices in the formal sector. The impact of political turmoil – such as the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), Syrian civil war, confrontations with Israel, and sectarianism – has nurtured informality.⁹⁷ The paradox of informal employment is that on the one hand, it facilitates economic downfall especially in times of unrest and turmoil, and on the other hand, it assumes that informal employment assists Lebanon to reconstruct its economy after such tough periods.

It is also important to realise that the high presence of informality is bounded in cumbersome Doing Business regulations (see more in the section: Economic Performance).

The issue of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon is another component that increases informal employment in Lebanon as they work and contribute to the informal economy (see subsection Migration).⁹⁸ The recent massive and unorganised influx of Syrian refugees has further sharpened the competition and expanded the informal economy as illegal Syrian businesses offer cheap labour, which avoid labour regulations and taxes.⁹⁹

In the agricultural sector, 92% of workers were operating in the informal economy. Migrant workers, especially Syrian refugees, carry out most of the informal work in this sector. In the industry sector, around 39% were informal workers. In the retail sector, informal employees make up 60% of the workforce.¹⁰⁰

The large informal economy in Lebanon challenges the country to reach the Sustainable Development Goal’s target on reducing the proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment (see also the SDG Table, Indicator 8.3.1, in Page iv).

Migration

Migration has a long history in Lebanon and is an important part of the economy. The concept migration can be divided in three aspects: i) internal migration (i.e. rural-rural, rural-urban (urbanisation), and urban-rural), ii) in- & out-migration, and iii) refugees.

The long civil war (1975-1990) in Lebanon resulted in the considerable compulsory and voluntary displacement of Lebanese. Rural-to-urban (internal) migration has been a strong factor within the country, as villagers moved to cities, generally along the coastline - especially Beirut hosting alone 20% of the total population.¹⁰¹ Today, Lebanon is one of the most urbanised countries in the world, with 87% of the population living in urban areas.¹⁰²

There are more Lebanese living outside Lebanon (8-14 million) than within the country (6.2 million).¹⁰³ An estimate suggests that in Brazil alone there are seven million Brazilians with Lebanese roots. In 2014, an estimated 885,000 Lebanese migrants (i.e., first-generation, born in Lebanon) resided abroad.¹⁰⁴ Lack of employment, an unstable climate, and prevailing low-standard working conditions discourage many young

Lebanese to join the national labour market or instead cross the borders to look for other job opportunities. As many as 37% of the Lebanese youth express their willingness to emigrate permanently (see sub-section: Youth).¹⁰⁵ With a large Lebanese diaspora, personal remittances received has been a backbone of the economy that peaked at 25% of GDP in 2008 but fell since then down to 13% in 2017; staying much higher than the regional average (2.6%). See Table 11.

Table 11: Migration Facts in Lebanon

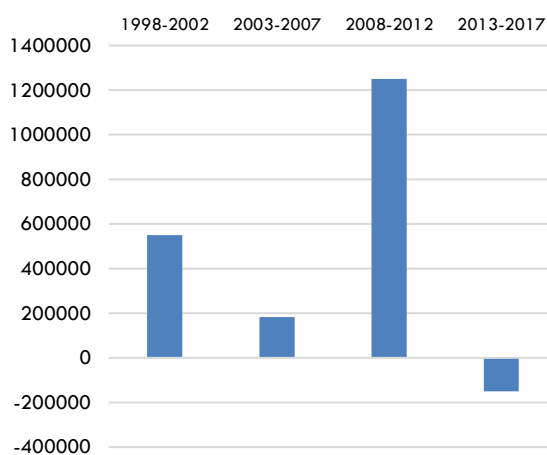
Net number in migration (2013-2017)	Lebanon	- 150,000 *
Personal remittances received, % of GDP (2013-2017, average)	Lebanon	13 %
	Arab States	2.6 %

* Net migration is the net total of migrants during a period of five years; the total number of immigrants less the annual number of emigrants, including both citizens and non-citizens.

Source: [World Bank, World Development Indicators](#) and [KNOEMA](#)

The net migration flow has changed during the last two decades. During the 2000s, more entered than left the country, especially in the period from 2008 to 2012 (see Figure 7). During the 2010s, the net migration flow reverted to a positive value, i.e. more left than entered into the country. One reason is due to Lebanon’s recent tougher immigration restrictions. The border between Lebanon and Syria have largely been unrestricted, but since 2015, restrictions have been imposed (see more ahead).

Figure 7: Net number of migration in Lebanon, 1998-2017



Source: [World Bank, World Development Indicators](#)

Migrant workers have their own legislation; decree 17561 from 1964, which deals with the conditions of work and registration of migrant workers. Each year the minister of labour draws a list of profession migrant in which workers in Lebanon are not allowed to perform. In

2018, the list counted 70 professions.¹⁰⁶ In general, Syrians who have fled to Lebanon are met without a clearly defined and consistent policy, legal or administrative framework.¹⁰⁷ The result has been an absence of a right-based refugee policy.

Accounting for more than 30% of the total population, Lebanon has the highest concentration per capita of refugees in the world. The country hosts large groups of Palestinian, Iraqi and Syrian refugees. According to estimations, one in every four persons in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee (around 1.5 million Syrians have taken refuge in Lebanon since the conflict erupted in March 2011).¹⁰⁸ Since 2015, residence renewal procedures for registered refugees have changed, and various financial and bureaucratic obstacles have been introduced, making the procedure difficult. Consequently, most refugees will gradually lose their legal status in Lebanon. Lebanon has even banned the construction of formal camps for Syrian refugees, forcing them to live in low standard shelters. Nevertheless, the government has not enforced the deportation of Syrian refugees to date.¹⁰⁹

Syrian refugee households are increasingly dependent on external livelihood sources like food vouchers, loans and credits. Around 71% of this group live below the poverty line, and 43% of Syrian refugees reported incidents of harassment from the Lebanese authorities or civilians. The government formed in 2014 a Crisis Cell to deal with the Syrian crisis issuing a paper setting three priorities: i) reduce the number of refugees, ii) provide more security, and iii) reduce the economic burden for Lebanon. The third priority includes preventing Syrians from working unlawfully. Despite official restrictions, many refugees work informally and are by some Lebanese perceived as competitors for jobs (revisit sub-section Informal Economy).

Lebanon promotes that European countries should support efforts to return refugees to Syria and funding its reconstruction. Potential European donors have hesitated at unlocking cash for reconstruction until it is safe for refugees to return to Syria. Meanwhile, Lebanon has committed to the international community to continue to accommodate Syrian refugees, coupled with a call for additional international funding and donor commitment.¹¹⁰

The Palestine-Israel conflict has resulted in approximately 100,000 Palestinians who fled during 1948-1967 to neighbouring Lebanon as refugees. Lebanon also hosts a large amount of Iraqi refugees, estimated together with the Palestinian refugees to

represent almost 300,000.¹¹¹ Palestinian refugees cannot return to Palestine and are banned from many professions including in medicine, law, engineering, taxi driving and barbers - leaving most Palestinian refugees in low-paid jobs in agriculture, cleaning, and construction work – the jobs most Lebanese workers avoid.¹¹² In these sectors, many refugees, now especially Syrians, work. Palestinian refugees are also banned from owning property, but receive through the United Nations' agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) assistance in education and healthcare.

It is worthwhile to mention that legislation among migrant workers gives Palestinians the advantages of licenses to work free of charge and benefit from the indemnities of the end of services at the NSSF (see more in the section: Social Protection). Migrant workers, including Palestinians, are still prohibited from working in certain sectors.

In 2010, Palestinians in Lebanon were exempted from paying for work permits, but Palestinian business owners are still required to register and pay 25% of the standard fee. In practice, many Palestinians in Lebanon work in small and medium enterprises where they do not have any work contract – which is necessary to get a work permit.¹¹³ In July 2019, the government launched a campaign among companies to crack down on businesses employing foreign workers without a permit. It has triggered protests in the streets organised by the refugee movement. Subsequently, the government has withdrawn the campaign and states that Lebanese labour law protects Palestinian workers. Critics argue that this is far from the truth.

Lebanon has not signed the 1951 Geneva Convention related to the status of refugees, and the Lebanese government stresses it is neither a country of asylum, a final destination for refugees, nor a country of resettlement.¹¹⁴ Consequently, the Syrian refugees are officially denounced as 'displaced', 'persons registered as refugees by UNHCR' or 'de facto refugees'. Already before the Syrian crisis, Lebanon was the most densely populated country in the region.¹¹⁵ The fact that Lebanon rejects international refugee laws and refuse to view the large influx of Syrians in Lebanon as refugees, strips off rights of this group and complicates the work of the UNHCR and other related organisations.

Parts of the Lebanese population perceive refugees as a burden for the country's economy and at times as scapegoats for the economic downturn, occasionally reinforced by politicians and media.¹¹⁶ The large influx

of refugees has challenged, some even argue exacerbated, the country's fragile sectarian balance.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, some fear that refugees may become the new existential rival with the newfound solidarity among the Lebanese population expressed in the society's uprising demonstrations (revisit the sub-section: Social dialogue).¹¹⁸

In 2016, Domestic Workers' Union (DWU) was formed under FENASOL under Lebanese Labour Law as the first of its kind in the region to fight for migrant domestic workers' rights as the first of its kind in the region.¹¹⁹

Child Labour

The national survey data on child labour is unavailable in Lebanon, but the Ministry of Labour estimated that 180,000 children were working in Lebanon in 2013.¹²⁰ The influx of refugees has certainly exacerbated this problem. Between 2009 and 2016, the number of Lebanese children engaged in working is estimated to have grown three times, 50% increase when it comes to the amount of Syrian child labourers. Recently, the proportion of Syrian child refugees working in Lebanon has risen to 7% in 2018 from 4% 2016, and is expected to increase further.¹²¹ Around 67% of street working children work up to 10 hours per day. On average, child labourers work 8.5 hours per day, six days a week.¹²²

In light of the Syrian crisis, more than half of the Syrian refugees are below 18, with more than 70% of these not attending schools.¹²³ Based on a survey from 2019 on child labour in agriculture in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon, 75% of the children engaged in labour, worked in the field of agriculture and in occupations that are considered hazardous, dangerous, and unfit for their age. Only 18% of the working children were enrolled in some form of learning, and around 51% of the children who were not engaged in learning reported 'work' as the main barrier for accessing education.¹²⁴ In some cases, refugee children are primary breadwinners for their family, in cases where men are unable to work due to fear of arresting because of lack of residency in Lebanon.¹²⁵ Furthermore, there is a direct correlation between school dropout rates and increase in child labour in Lebanon (see more in the section: Education).

In Lebanon's urban centres, Street Based Children (SBC) are present, and a majority (73%) are from Syria. Among these SBCs, the type of work is most prevalent in begging (43%) and street vending (37%). Over two-thirds of SBC are male. Four main driving factors that cause children to live or work on the streets of Lebanon

are social exclusion, vulnerability of households, the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon, as well as organized crime and exploitation of children. The majority of SBC are either illiterate and/or have never attended school. On average, SBC earn less than US\$12 per day.¹²⁶ In addition, working on the streets include refugees from Palestinian and Iraqi communities. This has to do with the fact that in many schools, the language is either French or English, but refugee children most often do not speak these languages.

Generally, most children are engaged in petty trade and employed in the informal economy – often under harsh and insecure working conditions. Forced labour in agriculture and sexual exploitation occur.¹²⁷ Media has claimed that ISIS and Al Nusra recruit boys and girls in Lebanon, including in Palestinian refugee camps, to participate in their wars in Syria and Iraq or conduct terrorism inside Lebanon targeting Hizbollah, which is supporting the Syrian regime and is involved in fighting Islamist militias in Syria.¹²⁸

Lebanon has ratified the central international conventions concerning child labour. In 2017, Lebanon made moderate advancements in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. The ministry released a Practitioners' Guide on child labour in agriculture to raise awareness and signed an agreement with the Farmers' Union to prevent foreign children under the age of 16 from working in agriculture, mainly targeting Syrian children.¹²⁹ In 2016-2017, the government helped to enrol more than 18,000 children in schools, including non-Lebanese children. Due to lack of resources, the Ministry of Labour has been unable to cover schools with equipment, personnel, transport costs, and conduct inspections. Programmes targeting child labour remains insufficient to address the extent of the problem fully.¹³⁰

Gender

There is no specific legislation on gender or discrimination issues in Lebanon. Article seven in the Lebanese constitution confirms the equality between Lebanese but does not particularly mention the balance between men and women.¹³¹ Some legitimate reservations deny Lebanese women the same rights as men in instances of marriage, divorce, and family matters.¹³²

The Global Gender Gap Index 2018 – measuring gaps rather than gender equality and women's empowerment – ranked Lebanon as number 140 out of 149 countries (1 represents the smallest gender gap).¹³³ Thus, the country has one of the world's lowest rankings on gender.

In educational attainment, Lebanon scores least poorly (110), and when it comes to political empowerment, Lebanon is the third least equal country in the world measured on gender (147). Overall, from a regional perspective, all countries score poorly with Lebanon in the middle. The other international Gender Inequality Index – measuring health, empowerment and economic status – ranked Lebanon with ‘high-medium human development’ as number 85 out of 151 countries (1 is best).¹³⁴ Factors that keep this ranking among the highest are few seats (3.1%) for women in parliament and low participation rate in the labour force (23%).

Overall, gender inequality is culturally rooted. For example, parents allegedly, in general, give boys entitlement over their sisters from early childhood providing boys with a feeling of authority over women and makes them expect women to accept their superiority. Critics observe a patriarchal system that often places women at home rather than in the workforce, negatively affecting the confidence of women when it comes to becoming financially independent.

Table 12 below gives an overview of gender gaps in the Lebanese main labour market indicators. The largest difference is with 47 percentage points in the rate of employment measured for each gender.

Table 12: Estimation on workforce key indicators gender gaps in Lebanon, 2020

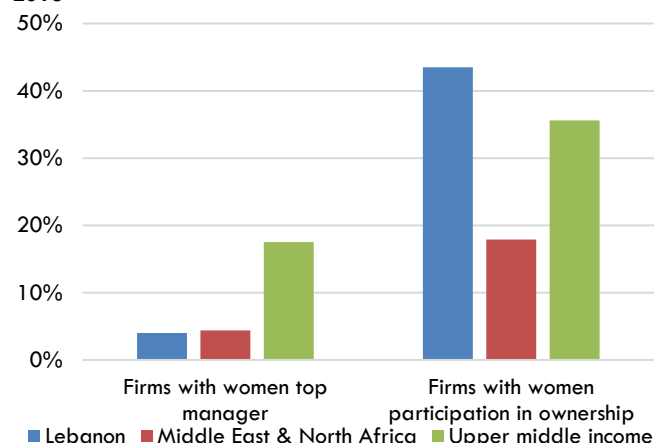
	Men	Women	Gender gap, percentage point (p.p.)
Employment	68 %	21 %	47 p.p.
Unemployment	5.1 %	9.9 %	- 4.8 p.p.
Employees	58 %	84 %	27 p.p.
Vulnerable employment *	31 %	5.9 %	25 p.p.

* Aggregate own-account workers and contributing family workers.

Source: [ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market \(KILM\)](#)

Another indicator of women’s role in the economy is their relation to firms. Figure 8 below reveals that Lebanese women’s participation in firm ownership is quite high in comparison to the Middle East & North African (MENA) average, and even higher than the upper-middle-income countries. However, the culturally rooted gender inequality keeps women in very low firms’ top management rate at 4%, which is similar in MENA.

Figure 8: Women in firms’ top management and ownership, 2013



Source: [World Bank, Enterprise Survey, Lebanon 2013 Country Profile](#)

Youth

High levels of unemployment and informal employment constitute a problem for youth in Lebanon. Approximately 16% of Lebanon’s total population is young aged 15-24 (revisit Figure 2). One in six young person (15-24) in Lebanon, estimated 520,000, is viewed as vulnerable, including 305,000 economically poor Lebanese, 164,000 Syrians and 51,000 Palestinians.¹³⁵

The youth underutilisation rate in Lebanon was at 26% in 2014. The youth (15-24) is with 18% unemployment rate 12 percentage points more unemployed than those above 25 years (revisit Table 7). Correspondingly, the youth is with an employment-to-population rate at 25%, 25 percentage points lower in comparison to employed above 25 years (50%) (revisit Table 6).

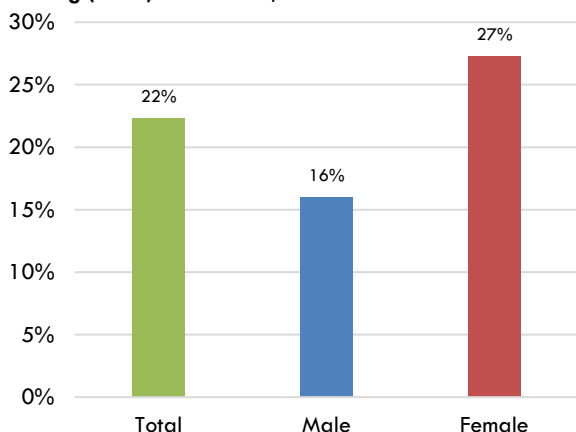
Most young people work in the service sector, especially within wholesale and retail trade (26%), public administration (11%) and education (10%).¹³⁶ Around 60% of the youth employed work in the informal sector. Other data show that around 37% of Lebanese youth expressed their willingness to emigrate permanently, which is among the highest in the Arab world.¹³⁷ Since out-migrants often are highly educated workers and in-migrants often are low-skilled workers, the workforce’s structure has reshaped and considered as a loss of Lebanon’s youth skillset.¹³⁸

A statistical measurement on the Lebanese youth not in education, employment or training (the NEET rate) indicates untapped potential who could contribute to national development through work. The NEET group is neither improving their future employability through

investment in skills nor gaining experience through employment. Thus, this group is particularly at risk, regarding both the labour market and social exclusion. A high NEET rate and a low youth unemployment rate may indicate significant discouragement of young people. The Lebanese youth experiences a relatively low NEET rate on 22%, which is seven percentage points lower than the Arab regional average on 29 (for the MENA region, the NEET rate is 28%) (Figure 9). Also measured in NEET rates, there is a gender gap in Lebanon on 11 percentage points in favour of men. The relatively higher NEET rate for young women suggests their engagement in household chores and limited participation in labour markets for women.¹³⁹

Since the Sustainable Development Goal target by 2020 to substantially reduce the proportion of youth NEET, cultural and gender challenges suggests testing Lebanon’s capacity to reach this aim (see SDG Table, Indicator 8.6.1, on Page iv).

Figure 9: Share of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) in Lebanon, 2007



Note: The share of the NEET rate as a percentage of the total youth population.

Source: [ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market \(KILM\)](#)

EDUCATION

Lebanon has a robust education system with one of the highest literacy rates in the Arab region. However, it has been negatively affected in the aftermath of the socio-economic downturn during the 2010s.

Education is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in French, Arabic or English. Based on the latest available data, the government expenditure on education formed 2.5% of GDP in 2013, and it has been significantly lower than the Arab region’s average at 4.2%. One issue is that the education system is characterised by a large proportion of private

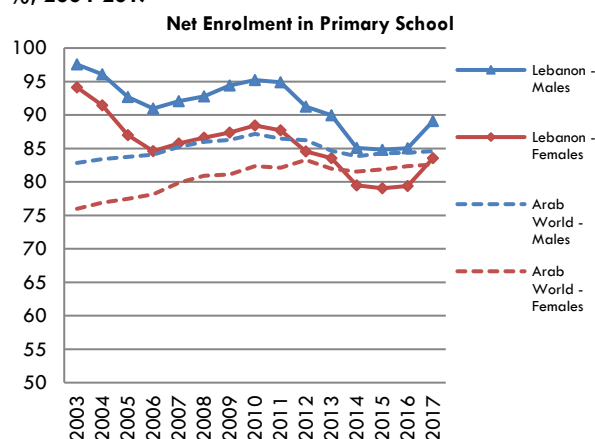
institutions, many with religious affiliations, alongside public schools.¹⁴⁰ The quality in private schools is higher than in public schools; with increasing gaps between economically advantaged youth and poorer peers who cannot afford private education.¹⁴¹ Among Lebanese students, the majority (75%) of students are enrolled in private schools. While Syrian students rely on public schools, Palestinians are mainly in the United Nations’ Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools, which seem to perform better than public schools. However, the USA decision to cut funding to UNRWA squeezes the Palestinian refugees.¹⁴²

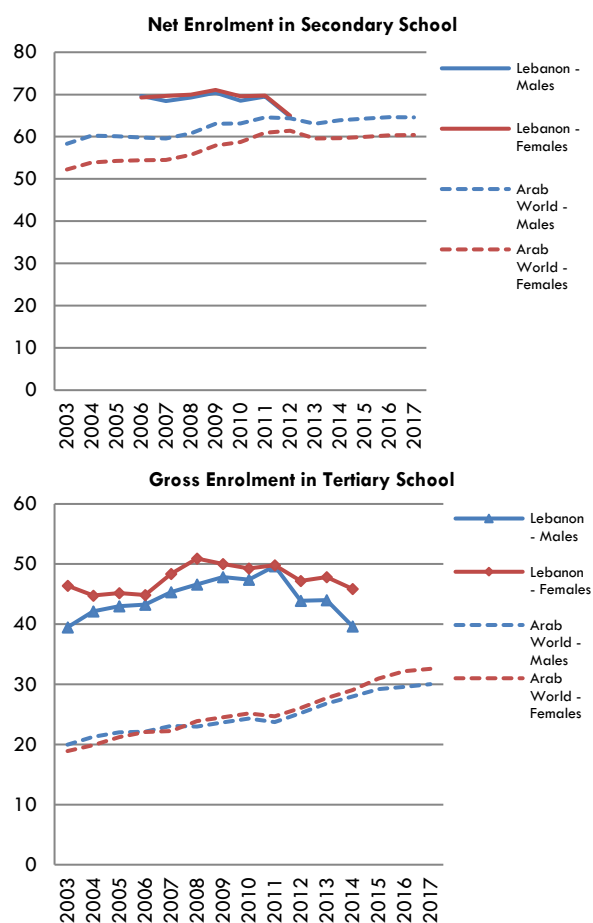
Eight years of primary school is compulsory. Yet only 89% of males and 84% of females in the official age group were enrolled in a primary school in 2017. After all, these numbers are higher than the regional average. The enrolment rate has declined, especially it plummeted during the 2010s, but rebounded 2017. Female enrolment has since 2003 stayed approximately five percentage points lower than for males (see Figure 10). Arabic is the primary language of instruction at the elementary level, and by law, math, physics, and chemistry are taught in either English or French.¹⁴³

The latest available data on net enrolment in secondary schools in Lebanon are from 2012 and represent 65% for each gender and on a declining tendency moving towards the Arab World average (Figure 10).

Gross enrolment in tertiary education level continues to be high at 40% for males and 46% for females in 2014 (Figure 10). Despite a gradual decrease from 2011 to 2014 and a steady increase in the region, Lebanon continues to hover above the regional average with 12 percentage points for males and 17 percentage points for females

Figure 10: Enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education, Males and females, Lebanon and Arab World, %, 2004-2017





Note: Net enrolment is the ratio of children of official school age, who are enrolled in school to the population of the corresponding official school age. Gross enrolment is the ratio of total enrolment, regardless of age, to the population of the corresponding official school age. Gross enrolment can therefore be higher than 100%, but with tertiary or university education, the age of the pupils is more diverse.

Source: [World Bank, Education Statistics](#)

Some critics argue that Lebanon, as a small state with a history of conflict and sectarianism, has struggled with and often resisted integrating refugee groups into society and particular into the education system.¹⁴⁴ Enrolment in primary school for Palestinian refugees is not far off nationals, but when it comes to secondary education, these students are much worse off with a dropout rate of 18%.¹⁴⁵ Only half of the secondary school-age Palestinian refugees are enrolled in schools or vocational training centres. For Syrian refugees, the conditions are even worse, with an overall dropout rate of 70% in 2012.

Graduates holding a high level of education struggle to compete in a saturated labour market, as Lebanon’s education system produces considerable more educated job seekers than the labour market demands.¹⁴⁶ It is echoed in the high youth unemployment rate that prompts frustration among educated young Lebanese, coupled

with a troublesome region resulting in a high influx of refugees.

Vocational Training

Vocational education and training are one of the backbones of sustainable economic development. Where more skilled workers are available, companies can be more competitive. Vocational training prepares students for manual trade or more technical and scientific trades.

Table 13 provides an overview of vocational training in Lebanon and the Arab World region. Out of almost 65,000 students in 2017, 39% are women, which is similar to the regional gender distribution. Vocational training represents 16% of all students in secondary schools. The enrolment rate in vocational training dropped by 17% from 2011 to 2012, and it only sluggishly reverted to a slowly growing trend that still stays 4.2% below the peaking rate in 2011.

Table 13: Status of Vocational Training in Lebanon and the Arab World, 2017

Pupils in vocational training	Lebanon	64,892
Vocational pupils (% women)	Lebanon	39 %
	Arab World	38 %
Share of all students in secondary education enrolled in vocational programmes	Lebanon	16 %
	Arab World	10 %

Source: [World Bank, Education Statistics](#)

Nearly 75% of all vocational and technical education is administered privately in Lebanon, concentrated in the areas of North Lebanon and the Bekaa.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, the number of public technical and vocational education and training (TVET) providers has more than doubled from 60 to 162 in the period from 2001 to 2018. However, the increased supply has occurred without reviews of demographic and economic issues as well as insufficient quality assurance mechanisms.¹⁴⁸

The General Education Inspectorate of the Central Inspection at the Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education is understaffed with only five inspectors for 162 schools. Inspectors conduct about one visit per school per year.¹⁴⁹ Each TVET school provides annual self-assessment reports to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, but the reports are insufficient and leave out questions of relevance to the labour market.¹⁵⁰ Two supervisors are overseeing all private TVET providers.

In general, monitoring and evaluation of TVETs have been weak, providing employers with little assurance when it comes to the quality of education.¹⁵¹ As previously mentioned, there has been a growing mismatch between the education supply and labour market demand, which has fuelled the youth unemployment rate. Companies have often complained about the lack of 'soft' skills among TVET graduates such as critical thinking, problem-solving and other personal and interpersonal skills.¹⁵² Instead of perceiving TVET as an alternative way to productive and decent work, many young Lebanese associate TVET with academic failure and poor-quality provision.¹⁵³

In 2018, the government launched a national strategic framework to upgrade its TVET system.¹⁵⁴ The vision is to improve competencies and qualifications and contribute to the empowerment of individuals in their future careers in the TVET sector.¹⁵⁵

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social protection is at an emerging stage in Lebanon. In a broad sense, social protection is concerned with preventing, managing and overcoming situations that adversely affect people's wellbeing. The sector consists of policies and programs targeting labour market interventions, social insurance and assistance for parents of new-borns, those injured at work, surviving relatives to dead breadwinners, retired, unemployed, disabled and sick persons.

The Lebanese social protection system operates by a wide range of social assistance and insurance programmes. Instead of being universal, the schemes and programmes are more ad-hoc and initiated in response to conditions, and based on risks faced in different stages of the lifecycle.¹⁵⁶ This system lacks a clear national policy or strategy on social protection, which is reflected in its fragmentation and a limited range of benefits, often poorly targeted.¹⁵⁷ For example, social security aims at providing insurance rather than redistributing toward the most vulnerable groups.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, informal workers are excluded from any social insurance. Not to mention, awareness about rights and information about government-implemented social protection programmes is low among poor households; in particular among women from poor households.

Table 14 shows that Lebanon's public social security expenditure is 2.1% of GDP, which is below the Arab average. This indicator was on a significant upsurge in 2015 while it stood below 1% from 2010 to 2014.

Furthermore, the social contribution paid on a compulsory or voluntary basis by employers, employees and self- and non-employed persons is 1.3% of revenue, in contrast to middle-income countries average of 17%. Generating funding through social contributions is by its nature associated with the extension of contributory social security. Theoretically, higher social contributions are associated with higher labour costs. Thus, it suggests that the stumpy social contribution in Lebanon is due to lower labour costs. Widespread informality in the labour market in the country makes this measurement difficult to conclude, though. On the other hand, the tax structure has a weak presence of social contributions, and the social protection system relies heavily on non-contributory financing.

Table 14: Status of public spending and coverage on social protection schemes in Lebanon and Arab World

Indicator	Measure	Lebanon	Arab World
Social contribution (2017)	% of revenue	1.3 %	17 % *
Public social security expenditure (2015)	% of GDP	2.1 %	2.5 %
Trends in government expenditure in social protection	Change, 2010-2015	1.1 p.p. **	N/a

* Upper middle-income countries. ** Percentage point (p.p.).

Source: [ILO, World social protection report](#) & [World Bank, World Development Indicators](#)

Social protection is only available for wage earners in the private sector, government employees and self-employed. Employment injury protection depends on the employer's liability provisions. Table 15 below summarises social protection provisions and coverage in Lebanon. The relatively low coverage on all indicators is shadowed by the widespread informal economy. For example, just one out of three (31%) have legal coverage of old age; other estimations suggest more than 80% of the Lebanese over 65 are not covered by any pension or health insurance. Based on the limitations of data availability, 67% of the workforce did not contribute to any social protection scheme in 2011.¹⁵⁹ One out of two (48%) employees is covered by employment injury protection. As more countries move from employer liability as the basis for employment injury protection to a mechanism based on social insurance, levels of protection for workers are likely to improve. But, it is only if new laws are effectively enforced since weak enforcement of legislation along with widespread informality in the country are challenging a significant increase in this latter indicator's coverage (see more ahead).

Table 15: Status of social protection floors/systems in Lebanon

Indicators	Value
Estimate of legal coverage for old age as a percentage of the working-age population (total)	31 %
Estimate of legal coverage for old age as a percentage of the working-age population (women)	19 %
Legal health coverage, % of population (2007)	52 %
Persons covered by employment injury protection, legal coverage (2013)	48 %

Source: [World Bank, Doing Business](#) and [ILO, World social protection report](#)

The social security law was enacted in 1963. A legislative decree promulgated in 1983 treats work accidents, health and safety. The decree deals with indemnities, health treatment, declarations of work accidents and investigations, competence, procedure and sanctions.¹⁶⁰

The two central institutions, the (Emergency) National Poverty Targeting Programme (ENPTP) and the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), deliver social protection measures that can support poor households in Lebanon. The refugee population is not covered under the social protection system in Lebanon, but the United Nations agencies serve as social protection providers through the provision of humanitarian assistance.

First, ENPTP is a combination of social assistance and social service provision to extremely poor Lebanese households in the form of partial medical bill payments, school fee waivers, free books, and food assistance. Based on the limitations of data availability, as of June 2015, around 161,000 Lebanese households had applied to benefit from the programme; social inspectors made 128,000 field visits; 71,000 students were provided with an education subsidy; during 2013–2014, 19,000 patients received a health subsidy; and the poorest 12% of Lebanese were registered as beneficiaries for the ENPTP.¹⁶¹ No provision of social assistance supports people to cope with risks associated with stages of the lifecycle or that link to skill enhancement that can help with better jobs (concerning incomes and working conditions).

Second, NSSF is under the authority of the Ministry of Labour and manages the social insurance system in Lebanon by providing health insurance, end-of-service indemnity and family allowances to formal workers in the private sector, public sector earners and students of the Lebanese University.¹⁶² A tripartite board manages NSSF, and a director-general administrates the programme through district offices.¹⁶³ Members of NSSF

are required to contribute 8.5% of their salary to the scheme.¹⁶⁴ Public employers contribute 6% of their wage, which is directed to the retired population.¹⁶⁵

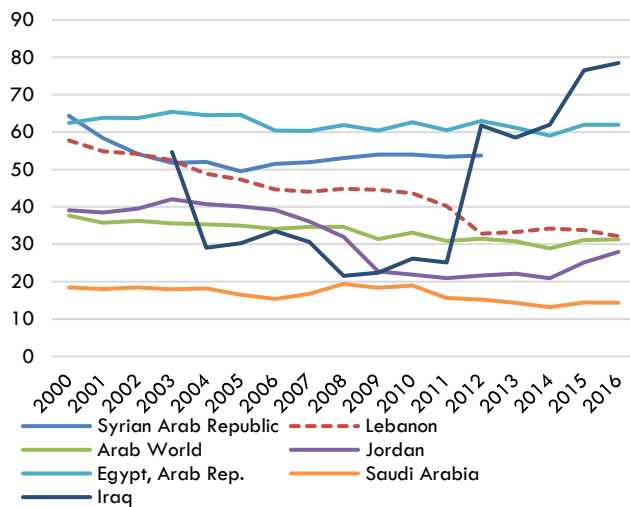
Weak implementation of labour laws affects that NSSF contribution by employers is not consistent. This fund has been criticised for having high administration costs and low productivity, which is related to weak administration, an outdated regulation system and deficit in three of its branches.¹⁶⁶ Even though the NSSF tripartite Board needs to be renewed, political issues are blocking the process.¹⁶⁷ It is worthwhile to mention that Palestinian refugees receive partial access to the benefits of NSSF.¹⁶⁸

Around half of the workforce, including informal workers and self-employed, are covered by NSSF (Table 15).¹⁶⁹ In the private sector, 28% of the workforce is covered by a retirement scheme: a monthly payment based on the worker's final salary and seniority.¹⁷⁰ Civil servants and those working in the military are covered by their separate pension plans and health insurances.¹⁷¹ Expenditure to civil servant pensions forms 1.2% of GDP and is generous. Likewise, the military pensions, accounts for 2% of GDP.

Those working abroad are excluded pension. In general, migrant workers in Lebanon are not covered by social insurance or health insurance, and they represent low-cost labour for employers and unfair competition for Lebanese workers, also known as social dumping.¹⁷² Overall, insufficient coverage of social protection challenges the country's SDG target to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all as well as by 2030 to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable (see also SDG Table, Indicator 1.3.1, in Page iv).

Current health expenditure has been stable and relatively high at 7.9% of GDP on average in the period from 2010 to 2016, which is 3.5 percentage points higher than the Arab World average at 4.4% of GDP). However, current health expenditure per capita fell by 7% in the period from 2011 to 2016, which was an impact of the regional turmoil. Still, Lebanon's current health expenditure per capita is hovering far above the region average, US\$712 vs. US\$281 in 2016, respectively. Figure 11 below shows that although out-of-pocket health expenditures have been on a declining trend, it is still the largest share of private household expenditures at around 34%. The trend has since 2000 decreased in Lebanon, levelling out in the period from 2012 to 2016, approaching the regional level.

Figure 11: Out-of-pocket expenditure (% of current health expenditure), %, 2000-2016



Note: Out of pocket expenditure is any direct outlay by households, including gratuities and in-kind payments, to health practitioners and suppliers of pharmaceuticals, therapeutic appliances, and other goods and services whose primary intent is to contribute to the restoration or enhancement of the health status of individuals or population groups. It is a part of private health expenditure.

Source: [World Bank, World Development Indicators](#)

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

The economic system is based on free-market with minimal taxation, and the private sector has been privileged to dominate vital public services such as education.¹⁷³ The fast-growing economy in Lebanon during the 2000s reverted into a deep downturn in the 2010s. This situation was an impact of security risks along with destabilizing spill over from the neighbouring Syrian civil war. The annual GDP growth per capita has stayed below 0% since 2011 (see more in Figure 12 below). This situation caught the country in a “slow growth trap”, an inability to reduce poverty and to generate inclusive growth due to insufficient formal job creation.¹⁷⁴

In the beginning of 2020, Lebanon’s economy and industry suffered under global coronavirus impact. The corona epidemic outbreak put Lebanon’s vulnerable populations at especially high risk. Many workers, such as self-employed and informal workers, are especially hard hit of the standstill of economic activity and not covered by social protection. Overcrowded conditions and poor sanitation in refugee camps and settlements make them very vulnerable for the disease. The risk extends to Lebanon’s poor. The World Bank warned that around half of Lebanon’s population could fall below the poverty line if economic conditions worsen.¹⁷⁵ IMF expected that the Lebanon economy would shrink by 12 percent during 2020.

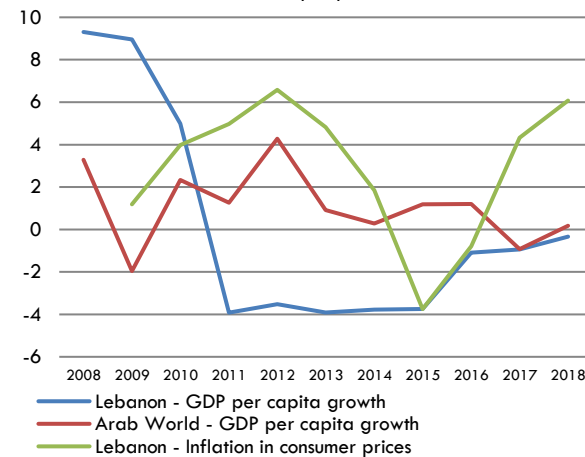
Lebanon is an upper-middle-income country with a GDP per capita of US\$8,270; ranking 91 out of 228 countries (1 is highest).¹⁷⁶ Lebanon’s economic GDP growth is projected to be at 1.2% in 2019 (see more in Table 16).¹⁷⁷

Table 16: Key economic data in Lebanon

GDP (2018)	US\$ 56.6 billion
GDP per capita (current US\$) (2018)	US\$ 8,270
GDP real Growth (av., 2014-2018)	- 2.0 %
Inflation in consumer prices (av., 2014-2018)	1.5 %
Tax revenue (% of GDP, av., 2014-2018)	14 %

Source: [World Bank, World Development Indicators](#)

Figure 12: GDP per capita growth and inflation rate, Lebanon and the Arab world, %, 2008-2018



Source: [World Bank, World Development Indicators](#)

During the last decade, the annual inflation in consumer prices peaked in 2012 by 7%. It plunged to a negative value close to 4% in 2015 but rebounded and reached 6% in 2018 (Figure 12 above). Among many Lebanese, the inflation’s rise has created a hope that the economy is growing again, but, the insufficient job creation in the formal sector and marred high youth unemployment rate keeps many frustrated and discouraged. The inflation was estimated at 3.1% in 2019.

The conflict in Syria has cut off one of Lebanon’s major markets. Among others, exports of goods and services fell from 37% of GDP in 2011 to 23% in 2018. The World Bank estimates that the massive influx of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has incurred losses up to US\$13 billion, fuelling hostility in parts of the Lebanese population towards Syrians, led by a foreign minister who has called for an immediate return of refugees to Syria.¹⁷⁸

The Lebanon civil war damaged the economic infrastructure and derailed its position as a Middle Eastern banking hub.¹⁷⁹ Rebuilding cost has set the government with colossal debt: Lebanon's debt-to-GDP ratio is the third-highest in the world, mostly held internally by Lebanese banks - public debt burden equivalent to about 150% of GDP. As interest payments consume almost half of all government revenues, public finances are crippling.¹⁸⁰

Financial instability and high debt have forced the government to roll out an austerity budget. In July 2019, a reformed 2019 state budget was put on the table. The government proposed cutting the deficit to 7.6% of GDP from 11.5% in 2018, but parliament's budget committee argued to cut further down to 6.6%. The government's plan introduced proposals to cut in spending and increase in revenue, particularly a higher tax on interest. The measures have sparked opposition among some groups, including army veterans.¹⁸¹ In September 2019, the government declared an economic emergency and initiated to work on a plan to accelerate public finance reforms.

Inequality measured in the distribution of family income is presented in the Gini index. The last measurement in Lebanon is from 2011. Here the value was 32 (i.e. Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies inequality).¹⁸² Comparing this value with other countries value, the country ranks as 128 out of 158 countries (158 is the most equal country).¹⁸³ However, other data on income tax figures, suggest that the richest 1% of Lebanon's population claimed 25% of the total national income in the period from 2005 to 2014.¹⁸⁴ In the aftermath of the Syrian conflict, the inequality in Lebanon has arguably worsened poverty incidence among Lebanese citizens as well as widen income inequality.¹⁸⁵ As previously demonstrated, when it comes to equality between genders, Lebanon is one of the most unequal countries.

Few efforts have been made at the national level to assess poverty in the country. Some estimations suggest extreme poverty has since the Lebanon civil war stayed at around 7.5%-10%, while 28% of the population is considered poor using the upper-poverty line.¹⁸⁶ Despite economic hardship, poverty incidence has broadly stayed unchanged among people in employment since 2000. Based on estimations, very few in employment are considered as working poor in Lebanon, and close to all are in middle-class (those earning US\$5.5 or more) (see more on Table 17). It is worthwhile to mention that the segment of employment by economic class excludes the

inactive economic population, which is around 57% of the population (aged 15+).

Table 17: Estimation and projection of employment by economic class in Lebanon, 2000-2020

Year	Extremely poor (<US\$1.90)	Moderately poor (>=US\$1.90 & <US\$3.20)	Near poor (>=US\$3.20 & <US\$5.5)	Middle class (>=US\$5.5)
2000	0.3 %	0.3 %	1.3 %	98 %
2010	0.1 %	0.1 %	0.9 %	99 %
2020	0.1 %	0.1 %	0.8 %	99 %

Note: Data in this table exclude the economically inactive population that cover around 57% of the population (aged 15+). Data in this table is measured at PPP.

Sources: [ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market \(KILM\)](#)

Gross fixed capital formation signals how much of the new value-added in the economy is invested rather than consumed. When the indicator's value increases, it points towards that economic activities are in progress, which could support the economic development and job creation. Data shows that the gross fixed capital formation in Lebanon fell steadily from 26% of GDP in 2011 to 17% in 2018 and ended three percentage points lower than the Arab World region average.¹⁸⁷

Lebanon has traditionally been open to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The net inflow of FDI reflects investment to acquire a lasting management interest in an enterprise, operating in an economy, other than that of the investor. In Lebanon, during the 2000s, FDI was very high at 11% on average. It fell to 6.3 on average in the period from 2010 to 2018. In these two periods, it remained much higher than the Arab region averages, 2.9% and 1.6%, respectively. A relatively high level of FDI demonstrates a continued high level of international economic interests in Lebanon, despite the economic downturn during the 2010s. Investments primarily have been directed to the telecommunications sector, building infrastructure, tourism, and construction.¹⁸⁸ High public debt remains one of the main obstacle to FDI in Lebanon, which downgrade its sovereign debt rating and the risk of bankruptcy will affect investor confidence, together with 'red tape', corruption, arbitrary licensing decisions, complex customs procedures, archaic legislation, and inadequate property rights protection, among others.¹⁸⁹ On the other hand, the large diaspora guarantees recurrent financial flows through personal remittances to the country, thereby injecting liquidity into the national economy. For example, at least 70% of foreign investment flows came in form of real estate acquisitions and of these Lebanese diaspora's acquisitions of real estate equals 50% of total acquisitions.¹⁹⁰

Another aspect that confronts economic development is that it is not easy doing business in Lebanon. The country is ranked relatively low on the global Doing Business Index as 143 out of 190 countries (1 is best) in 2020. Compared to 2019, Lebanon is ranking one position lower in 2020. Lebanon is below the Middle East & North African average and is below neighbouring countries such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt. Out of ten Doing Business indicators, trading across borders (153), resolving insolvency (151), and dealing with construction permits (164) have the lowest rankings. It is registering property (110), protecting minority investors (114) and paying taxes (116) have the highest rankings (see more in Appendix Table 22). It is worthwhile to mention that this index provides a snapshot of the cost of complying with formal regulations for companies that are not small enough to loophole the law or large sufficient to curve it, argued in media.¹⁹¹ The difficulties of doing business in Lebanon is a co-factor of keeping 44% of the workforce in the informal economy (revisit Informal Economy).

Industrial zones and Special Economic Zones

In 2005, the Ministry of Industry was granted the right to establish industrial zones. Since then, 131 industrial zones were registered in 2016. In recent years, several new industrial zones have been approved. In addition to industrial parks, Special Economic Zones (SEZs) were also initiated in the second part of the 2000s.

SEZs have the potential to diversify the Lebanese economy by increasing investment and competitiveness in the industrial sector, including transport, transit, and logistics. SEZs include a very generous set of fiscal incentives along with labour regulatory incentives. Both local and international investors can benefit from 100% exemption on corporate profit tax if no less than 50% of the workforce is Lebanese and the value of fixed assets or capital is greater than US\$300,000.¹⁹² Other benefits are 100% foreign ownership and customs exemptions, and social security contributions for employees is almost unheard within the SEZ environment.¹⁹³

SEZs are usually outside the national government's jurisdiction and instead placed under the authority of directors or committees that are appointed to run them. This position makes governmental overseeing difficult.¹⁹⁴ However, the law states that workers in Lebanese SEZs shall receive health benefit plans that at least are comparable to those provided by the National Social Security Fund.

In 2008, the government passed a law for the establishment of the Tripoli Special Economic Zone (TSEZ) adjacent to the Port of Tripoli. It was endorsed in 2009, and it is still under construction.¹⁹⁵ The zone was assigned to a special body operating under the prime minister and known as the General Assembly of the Tripoli Economic Zone.¹⁹⁶ The TSEZ has certain exceptions to requirements to follow the national labour legislation. In particular, the minimum wage can by law be superseded in the SEZ by contractual arrangements between workers and employers. Also, all social security provisions can be exempted.¹⁹⁷ In 2016, the Lebanese authority requested the World Bank to review and update the original feasibility study conducted in 2011 taking into account the latest economic developments in the region, not least the impact of the Syrian crisis.¹⁹⁸ Among other things, the review concludes that TSEZ should generate 8,600 jobs for residents of the lagging North region and some temporary employment opportunities for Syrian refugees.

Tripoli lies just 35 km from the Syrian border, and the TSEZ is also marketed as a future logistics hub for the reconstruction of Syria's devastated cities.¹⁹⁹ China, one of the few countries with the cash and diplomatic power to drive the rebuilding of Syria, has shown interest in TSEZ, but not invested yet due to regional uncertainties. While western Embassies have closed their embassies in Syria, China continues to have an embassy in Damascus, employing more than 80 personnel.

The quality of Lebanon's infrastructure is among the poorest regionally and globally – ranking 130 out of 137 countries.²⁰⁰ This fact complicates construction and decreases the potential for TSEZ. A railway between Tripoli in Lebanon and Homs in Syria has been planned, but not yet materialised.

In 2019, the parliament's joint committee agreed on establishing SEZs in coastal Batroun and Tyre, bringing the total (yet to be functional) SEZs up to three. These areas have traditionally been under the influence of Lebanon's main political parties with both Christians, Shiites and Sunnis. Politicians argue that sectarian considerations have not played a part in the decision-making process. The plan for the new SEZ is to focus on technology, information and tourism. Both local and foreign investors will be given tax breaks and minimised red tape.²⁰¹

APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL DATA

Table 18: Trade union federations in Lebanon, 2019

Members of the Confederation of Workers in Lebanon (GCWL)	
1. Federation of Tobacco Agriculture	27. Federation of Restaurant, Food and Fun
2. Federation of Beirut Mohafaza (District)	28. Federation of Nabatiye (District in the south)
3. Lebanese Federation	29. Federation of Health
4. Federation of new Technologies	30. Federation of Petrol
5. Federation of Commerce	31. Federation in Solidarity
6. Federation of North Lebanon	32. Federation of Mont Lebanon
7. Federation of Professions	33. Federation of Metal, Iron, Mechanic and Plastic Production
8. Federation of Taxis and Transport	34. Federation of Paper Industry
9. Federation of Unions in Solidarity	35. Federation of Jabal Amel (District)
10. Federation of Insurance	36. Federation of Taxi Drivers (3)
11. Federation of the North	37. Federation of Air Transport
12. Federation of the North (2)	38. Federation of Chemicals
13. Federation of Banks	39. Federation of Typograph and Information
14. National Federation	40. Federation of Baalbek and Hermel (District)
15. Federation of United Unions	41. Federation of Free Unions
16. Federation of Public Services	42. Federation of Bekaa
17. Federation of Taxi Drivers (2)	43. Federation of Sectorial Federations
18. Federation of Maritime Transport	44. Federation of Workers and Health Unions in Bekaa
19. Federation of the North (3)	45. Federation of South (2)
20. Federation of Municipalities	46. Federation of Luminance
21. Federation of Unions Gathering	47. Federation of Cooperatives and Vegetables
22. Federation of Renaissance	48. Federation of Loyalty
23. Federation of Metal and Mechanical	49. Federation of Loyalty for Transport and Communications
24. Federation of South Lebanon	50. Federation of Construction and Wood
25. Federation of Public and Autonomous Institutions	
26. Federation of Public and Autonomous Institutions (2)	

Source: GCWL archives

Table 19: List of Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) and CBA coverage in Lebanon

Federation (affiliated to GCWL)	Status in CBA (2018)	Number of workers covered by effective CBAs
Federation of Banks	Sectoral agreement, supposed to be renewed in 2019	23,000
Federation of petrol and gas	One local and one sectorial agreement. To be renewed in 2020	285
Federation of health	One local agreement, to be renewed in 2019	4,000
Federation of Public institutions	One local agreement	190

Source: LMP Data Collection Template

Table 20: List of Lebanon's Labour Law and decree number 7992 from 1952 central clauses to organizing trade unions

The right to each professional categories to form a trade union.
Exclusion from politics.
The limits between professions to be decided by virtue of a decision made by the minister of labour (has not been issued yet).
The union is only established after the authorisation of the minister of labour.
Every worker is free to be a member or not in a union.
Foreign members are entitled to join a union but are not entitled to elect and be elected.
The government can dissolve the union if it breaches its obligations and acts outside the scope of its specialization.
The unions could be unified under the name of Federations are subject to the terms and conditions imposed to establish unions.
The union sets its bylaw according to terms stipulated by the decree.
A delegate appointed by the department of unions in the Ministry of Labour supervises the election process.
The election is not final if not endorsed by the ministry of labour and finally.
Work inspectors may check the union's registers when presenting the final audit or in case of a complaint from a member of the union board.

Source: Slaiby, Ghassan, Template for collective of Data and Information for Development of Labour Market Profile (DTDA), 2019

Table 21: Lebanon's Ratified ILO Conventions

Subject and/or right	Convention	Ratification date
Fundamental Conventions		
Freedom of association and collective bargaining	C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948	Not Ratified
	C098 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949	1977
Elimination of all forms of forced labour	C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930	1977
	C105 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957	1977
Effective abolition of child labour	C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973	2003
	C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999	2001
Elimination of discrimination in employment	C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951	1977
	C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958	1977
Governance Conventions		
Labour inspection	C081 - Labour Inspection Convention, 1947	1962
	C129 - Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969	Not ratified
Employment policy	C122 - Employment Policy Convention, 1964	1977
Tripartism	C144 - Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976	Not ratified
Up-to-date Conventions		
Elimination of child labour and protection of children and young persons	C077 – Medical Examination of Young Persons (Industry) Convention, 1946	1977
	C078 – Medical Examination of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations) Convention, 1946	1977
Labour administration	C150 – Labour Administration Convention, 1978	2005
Employment policy and promotion	C159 – Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983	2000
Vocational guidance and training	C142 – Human Resources Development Convention, 1975	2000
Wages	C095 – Protection of Wages Convention, 1949	1977
	C131 – Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970	1977
Working time	C014 – Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921	1962
	C106 – Weekly Rest (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1957	1977
Occupational safety and health	C115 – Radiation Protection Convention, 1960	1977
	C120 – Hygiene (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1964	1977
	C139 – Occupational Cancer Convention, 1974	2000
	C148 – Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977	2005
	C170 – Chemicals Convention, 1990	2006
	C174 – Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993	2005
Seafarers	MLC, 2006 – Maritime Labour Convention	2018
Dockworkers	C152 – Occupational Safety and Health (Dock Work) Convention, 1979	2004
Specific categories of workers	C172 – Working Conditions (Hotels and Restaurants) Convention, 1991	2000

Note: Fundamental Conventions are the eight most important ILO conventions that cover four fundamental principles and rights at work. Equivalent to basic human rights at work. Governance Conventions are four conventions that the ILO has designated as important to building national institutions and capacities that serve to promote employment. In other words, conventions that promotes a well-regulated and well-functioning labour market. In addition, there are 71 conventions, which ILO considers "up-to-date" and actively promotes.

Source: [ILO, NORMLEX, Lebanon, ILO, List of instruments by subject and status](#)

Table 22: Status of Ease of Doing Business in Lebanon, 2019-2020

Topics	2019	2020	Changes
Overall	142	143	-1
Starting a Business	146	151	-5
Dealing with Construction Permits	170	164	+6
Getting Electricity	124	127	-3
Registering Property	105	110	-5
Getting Credit	124	132	-8
Protecting Minority Investors	140	114	+26
Paying Taxes	113	116	-3
Trading Across Borders	150	153	-3
Enforcing Contracts	135	131	+4
Resolving Insolvency	151	151	0

Note: Doing Business 2019-2020 indicators are ranking from 1 (top) to 190 (bottom) among other countries. The rankings tell much about the business environment, but do not measure all aspects of the business surroundings that matter to firms and investors that affect the competitiveness of the economy. Still, a high ranking does mean that the government has created a regulatory environment conducive to operating a business.

Source: [World Bank & IFC, Ease of Doing Business 2020 in Lebanon](#)

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