



BetterWork

Better Work Jordan: Worker, Supervisor and Manager Survey Results

POLICY
BRIEF

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Introduction

Over the last three years, the garment sector in Jordan has been through several external shocks. The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent measures to control the spread of the virus first led to a large drop-off in orders in 2020, to then a substantial increase in orders in 2021 that has stretched the workforce thin. However, despite the significant changes in external conditions in the last two years, survey results covering workplace concerns, mental well-being and perception of stakeholders have been remarkably consistent on average. Yet significant differences exist between groups of workers in the sector – particularly between the experiences of Jordanians and migrant workers.

This brief presents key findings and updated results from surveys of workers, supervisors, and managers in the Jordanian garment sector that Better Work Jordan conducted in July and August 2021. The brief covers two main areas: worker concerns in the garment sector and perception of various stakeholders towards one another. In particular, the brief covers responses that have changed over time and responses from newly added questions, which give additional insights into worker experiences in the sector.¹ Finally, the brief includes a focused area on results from the newly introduced supervisors' survey.

Background

Better Work Jordan, a joint programme of the International Labour Organization and the International Finance Corporation, works with stakeholders in the Jordanian garment industry to improve working and living conditions for workers while boosting the competitiveness of the sector. In order to achieve sustainable results, Better Work Jordan works with three key stakeholders, referred to as the tripartite partners:

1. *Government*, particularly from the Ministry of Labour;
2. *Employers*, including factory management and sectoral representative bodies like the Jordanian Garment, Accessories & Textiles Exporters' Association (J-GATE) and the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI) and;
3. *Workers*, including individual workers and the worker representative body in the garment sector, the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing Industries (simply referred to as the union).

In addition to the main tripartite partners, international buyers play an important role in the sector because they are ultimately responsible for sourcing decisions. There are also several Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) which bolster the Jordanian garment sector, including importantly the US-Jordan FTA. The EU also has a preferential agreement with Jordan with the primary goal of supporting Syrian employment.

¹ Responses from previous survey rounds are summarized in a series of policy briefs, which can be found on Better Work Jordan's website. The first policy brief summarizes the data gathered in June 2019 and focuses on stress in the workplace, see "[Better Work Jordan: Worker Voice Survey Results](#)", November 2019. The second policy brief summarizes the data gathered in December 2019 and focuses on third-party audits, see "[Better Work Jordan: Worker and Manager Survey Results](#)", June 2020. The third policy brief summarizes the data gathered in July 2020 and focuses on mental well-being, see "[Better Work Jordan: Worker and Manager Survey Results](#)", November 2020.

Covid-19 Context

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant human and financial toll on the Jordanian garment sector, but the worst immediate effects of the pandemic seem to have faded. While the sector still faces significant challenges, orders so far in 2021 have rebounded to their 2019 levels. The garment sector contracted by 15 per cent in 2020, but rebounded in the first half of 2021. Exports from January to June of 2021 are slightly higher than the same period in 2019.

However, the garment sector is achieving these numbers with a substantially reduced workforce and fewer individual owners as factories have acquired others. The sector shrank in the last year and a half and now employs substantially fewer workers than in 2019. This came from factories shutting down (to-date, nine factories have shut down since the start of the pandemic), workers choosing to leave the sector, and contracts expiring that were not renewed. Measures taken by the Government of Jordan to control the economic fallout of the pandemic made it very difficult for private companies to fire workers. Therefore, while most workers in the garment sector remained employed throughout the crisis, they faced issues in different ways. The impact on migrant workers and Jordanian workers was very different:

- *Migrant workers.* The impact of the pandemic has changed over time for migrant workers. In 2020, the main impact was reduced mobility and reduced working hours. This reduction in working hours led to a substantial reduction in take-home pay as migrant workers typically work overtime. In 2021, orders rebounded but the workforce did not: as a result, Better Work

Jordan has observed very long working hours among migrant workers in the last few months. While these are legal under the laws governing overtime, BWJ and stakeholders are looking into the effect of these long working hours on workers.²

- *Jordanian workers.* During much of the pandemic response, Jordanian workers were told to stay at home. This was particularly the case in the major industrial zones where there was a fear that Jordanian workers would bring Covid-19 into the closed-off factories. Under the government program Istitama, Jordanian workers received a reduced salary from the Social Security Corporation, not from their factory, which in some cases discouraged job turnout, increased absenteeism and led to tensions between Jordanian workers and management.

The reported direct health effects of the pandemic on workers have been minimal. According to data gathered by Better Work Jordan in September 2021, nearly 7,000 workers in the sector were infected with Covid-19. The vast majority of these cases had a full recovery, partially due to the younger age profile of workers in the sector. There have been very few recent cases of Covid-19. Factories adopted specific procedures to minimize the spread of Covid-19 as specified by Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) set by the Ministry of Labour in the early stages of the pandemic. Finally, the Government of Jordan has provided vaccines to all people living in Jordan, regardless of nationality and many factories have assisted their workers in receiving Covid-19 vaccinations. As of September, an estimated 59,000 workers in the sector have received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine.

² The normal workweek in Jordan is 48 hours, with eight hours a day. The Friday of each week is a weekly holiday unless the nature of the work requires otherwise. Under Jordanian labour law, companies can require overtime in certain cases if the workers receive additional wages as stipulated by law. There is no legal limit to voluntary overtime.

Methodology

Better Work Jordan conducts surveys of workers and managers in the garment sector to learn about their needs and concerns. In 2019, Better Work Jordan launched a large-scale representative survey of workers in the garment industry and has repeated the survey (with some variation in questions over time) to a new, random sample of workers three times since. Table 1 shows the date and sample size of this survey over time, along with the samples from manager and supervisor surveys, which were conducted concurrently. The latest survey covers a representative sample of roughly 2 per cent of the workers in the garment industry. Over the course of six weeks, 1,458 workers from 63 different factories were surveyed. As in previous iterations, one manager from each factory was surveyed. BWJ introduced a supervisors' survey this year and surveyed 364 supervisors.

Table 1. Survey sample size over time for workers, managers and supervisors

TIME FRAME	NO. OF WORKERS	NO. OF MANAGERS	NO. OF SUPERVISORS
June 2019	1731	NA	NA
Dec 2019	1667	73	NA
July 2020	1757	72	NA
July 2021	1458	62	364

The survey sample was stratified to reflect the gender and nationality composition of each factory. All migrant workers filled out the survey outside of the factory on their day off in locations such as the Workers' Centre, union offices, and dormitories. Jordanian workers were surveyed on-site during the workweek. The survey was self-administered through personal cell phones or tablets, with translations into Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Sinhalese and Nepalese. Workers could listen to a pre-recorded transcript of the survey text for assistance, as needed. Roughly

three quarters of workers in the garment industry are women, while 70 per cent of workers are migrants, primarily from Bangladesh.

Findings

Key findings are grouped into the following areas:

- Worker concerns and actions taken;
- Worker perspectives on resources;
- Trust between workers and managers;
- Worker engagement with the union and
- Worker engagement with the government.

There is a final focus area on the key results from the supervisors' survey.

Worker concerns

Workers were asked about the concerns that they and their co-workers had on a wide range of issues, including with pay, working hours and verbal abuse (see Figure 1a). If they responded that they had a concern, they were then asked what actions, if any, they took in response to these concerns (see Figure 1b).

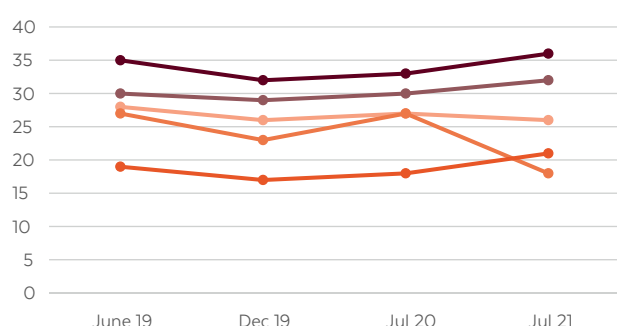
- *Verbal abuse:* Verbal abuse is the most common concern cited by workers and was at the highest level since 2019, with 36 per cent of workers stating concern. Verbal abuse concerns are mostly driven by Jordanian workers – in July 2021, 62 per cent of Jordanian workers said they were concerned with verbal abuse.
- *Pay concerns:* Workers have many different concerns about their pay, with 32 per cent of workers citing some type of pay concern. The most common concern mentioned, especially among Jordanians, is not having enough money to meet their needs. Other concerns that increased slightly in 2021 were incorrect or confusing pay calculations.

- *Working time concerns:* Working time concerns have remained stable over time, with the majority of workers indicating that they have “no significant concerns” with their working time. However, in 2021 we saw a slight increase in the percentage of workers saying that the amount of time they work limits their ability to pursue personal or family obligations. The survey does not ask about concerns over lack of available overtime, but this was nonetheless an issue in the sector in 2020.
- *Safety concerns:* Concerns with workplace safety (such as dangerous equipment or the potential for accident or injury) seem to have dropped in 2021, but these results are heavily influenced by the changing responses of Sri Lankan workers. In 2019 and 2020, an average of 85 per cent of Sri Lankan workers said they were concerned

about dangerous equipment, accidents, or the potential for injury in the factory. In 2021, this number dropped precipitously to 10 per cent of Sri Lankan workers. One explanation for this is that the composition of workers from Sri Lanka has changed over the last year because there has been no new recruitment of Sri Lankan workers, and safety concerns tend to be highest in the first six months on the job and fade over time.

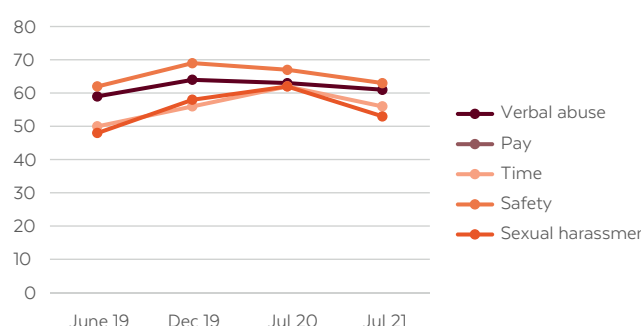
- *Sexual harassment:* Sexual harassment concerns are reported at the highest level since 2019, with 21 per cent of workers saying they or their co-workers have concerns with sexual harassment. Jordanian workers are the most likely to report concerns with sexual harassment. In 2021, concerns with sexual harassment increased among workers from Jordan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Figure 1a: Percent of workers with concerns, by topic.



If the worker stated that they had a concern in a specific area, they were then asked if they spoke to anybody or took any actions in regards to this concern. The “actions” range from small to dramatic – starting from speaking with co-workers or supervisors about a topic, all the way to threatening to quit or going on strike. Overall, the majority of workers who have concerns state that they then took an action in response to those concerns. For most issues, the percent of workers saying that they took an action peaked in 2020 and fell slightly in 2021. One interpretation of these responses is that taking an action is a proxy for how strongly workers feel

Figure 1b: Percent of workers with concerns who took an action, by topic



about their concerns.

In terms of specific actions taken, workers are most likely to talk to their co-workers when they have concerns about pay or workplace safety, but are more likely to go to supervisors or managers when they have concerns with verbal abuse or sexual harassment. In addition, the percentage of workers increased who say they take concerns with safety or sexual harassment to the bipartite committee at roughly 15 per cent of workers with each these concerns.

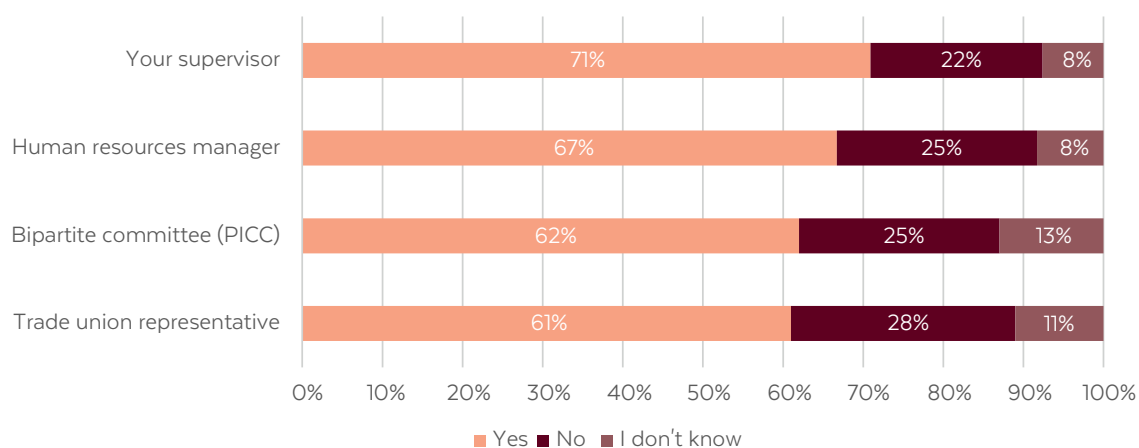
Worker Perspectives on Resources

There are several different resources available to workers to address issues in the workplace. Workers tend to be most familiar and comfortable with internal resources in the factory, particularly supervisors and human resources officers. However, it is important that other options are available to workers, both within the factory (such as bipartite committees or Union Labour Committees) and externally, such as the union, the ministry of labour, or legal resources. The worker survey touches on many different aspects of resources and grievance mechanisms from several different angles.

Overall workers say they are satisfied with grievance mechanisms – 80 per cent of workers indicate they are satisfied. While this overall percentage has been consistent over time, there was a shift in 2021 to more workers saying they are “very satisfied”. However,

when they are asked about specific mechanisms the results tend to be slightly less positive though the majority of workers still report feeling comfortable to approach various stakeholders (*see Figure 2*). Workers are most comfortable going to their supervisors when they encounter problems in the workplace, followed by HR managers, bipartite committee members, and Trade Union representatives. Overall, there is lower awareness of bipartite committee members or trade union representatives. The percentage of workers who are comfortable going to the bipartite committee or to TU representatives varies by nationality. For example, Indian workers are significantly less likely than workers from all other nationalities to feel comfortable approaching the bipartite committee. This result is striking because bipartite committees in Jordan are specifically structured to reflect the nationality composition of the workforce.

Figure 2: If you were having a problem at work, for example with your pay, working time, work safety, or treatment at work, would you feel comfortable going to the following for help?



In addition to their role as a grievance mechanism, bipartite committees also try to resolve conflicts between managers and workers. Workers indicate that they think these committees would be effective at resolving issues between managers and workers, but only if they have knowledge of the committees. There is a lack of knowledge among workers about the bipartite committee, particularly among

Jordanians—28 per cent of Jordanians are unaware of the committee, compared to 16 per cent of migrants. However, if people are aware of the committee they are likely to have a favourable impression of it. When asked how effective they thought the committee would be in resolving conflicts between managers and workers, 41 per cent of workers indicated very effective and 25 per cent indicated effective.

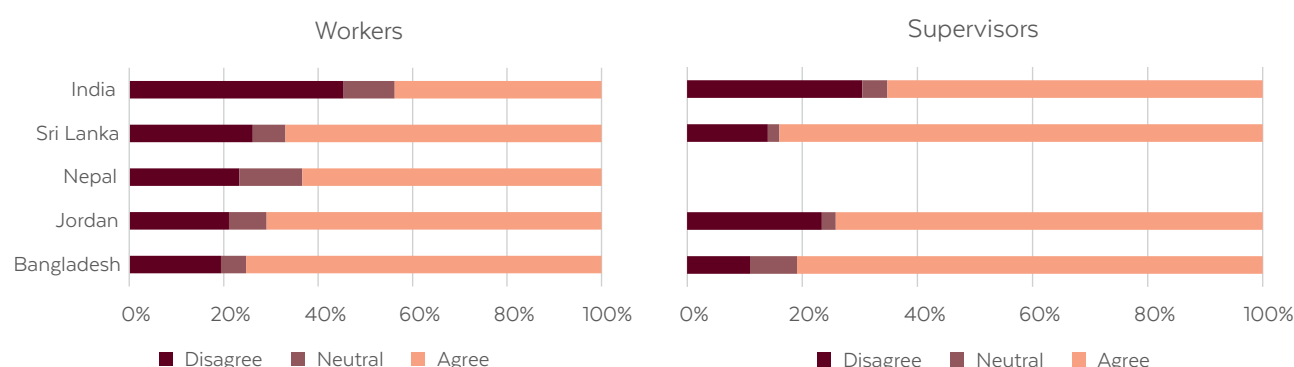
Trust between workers and managers

Workplace trust is important for increased satisfaction with work and productivity in the workplace. Workers, supervisors and managers were all asked if they think there is mutual trust between workers and managers in the workplace. As power in the workplace increases, respondents are more likely to say that they think that there is mutual trust. Nearly all managers surveyed (96 per cent) indicate that they believe there is mutual trust in their workplace, compared to 76 per cent of supervisors

and 69 per cent of workers.

There are also significant variations in responses by nationality, with similar patterns holding for both workers and supervisors (see *Figure 3*). Indian workers and Indian supervisors are the least likely to think there is mutual trust in the factory, whereas Bangladeshi workers and supervisors are on the opposite end with the most positive opinions on trust. Even within nationality, there is not much variation by gender. Average responses for workers have not changed significantly in the last three years of the survey.

Figure 3: Do you think there is mutual trust between workers and managers in your factory?

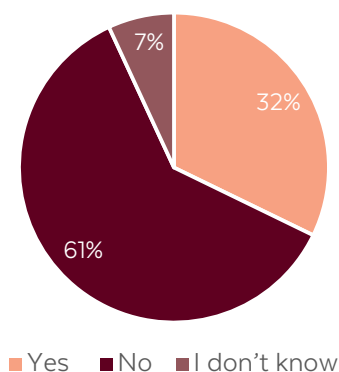
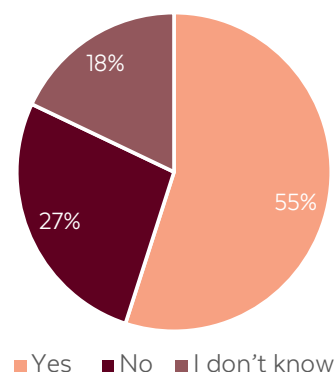


Worker engagement with the union

The General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing Industries represents all workers in the Jordanian garment sector. The union is responsible for negotiating the sectoral Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) on behalf of workers with representatives from the employers' association. Workers who wish to do so can join the union by paying 0.5 JD per month (\$0.71). Per union records, there are 18,500 members in the union (roughly 25% of the workforce). However, per BWJ numbers gathered from factory management, there are 58,000 members in the union (roughly 80% of the workforce). Regardless of membership status, the union represents all workers in the garment sector and provides services to all workers such as

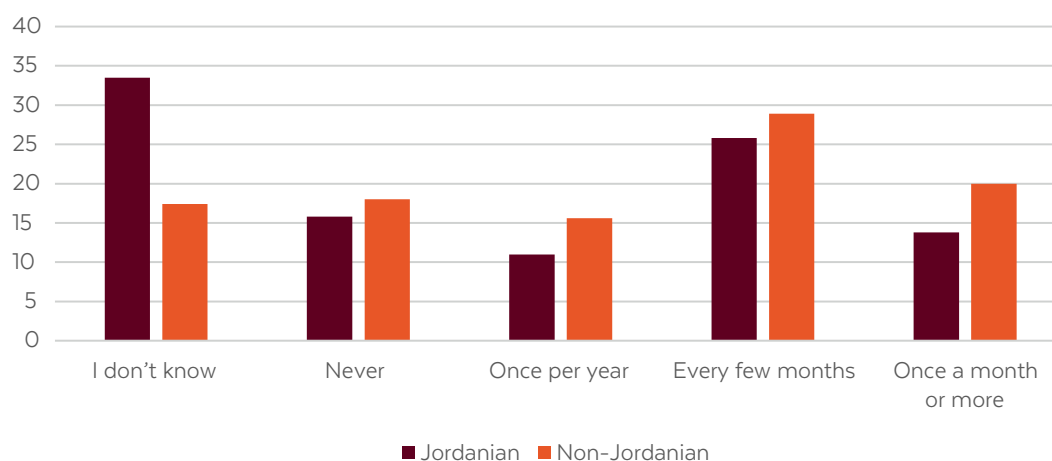
helping to resolve collective or joint disputes and providing trainings.

A third of surveyed workers indicate that they are members of the union, which is close to the membership numbers from the union (see *Figure 4a*). Jordanian workers are the least likely to indicate that they are union members – 16 per cent of Jordanians say they are in the union, compared to 40 per cent of migrant workers. However, there is a lack of awareness among workers about their own union membership status. The number of workers indicating that they are members of the union is substantially lower than the percentage of workers who say they pay union dues – 55 per cent of workers indicate that a half JD is deducted from their salary every month for union dues (see *Figure 4b*).

Figure 4a: Are you a member of the union?**Figure 4b: Do you pay union dues?**

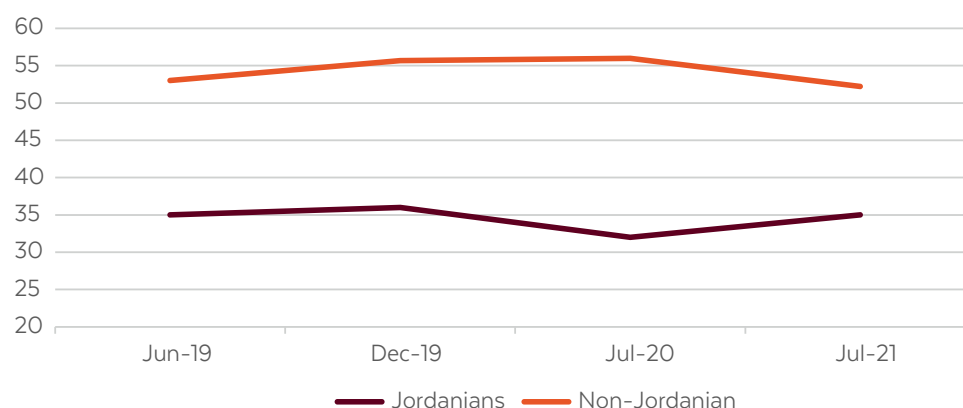
Workers are also asked how often they have seen representatives of the union in their factories (see Figure 5). The union has substantial visibility among migrant workers, with nearly half of migrant workers saying that they see representatives from the union in their factory every few months or more. However, there is a stark difference in the visibility among Jordanian workers – half of Jordanian workers say

they do not know if the union has been in their factory or say that they have never seen a union representative. These findings overlap with the union membership data, where Jordanians are significantly less likely than migrant workers to be members of the union. The responses on the visibility of union representatives in the factory have not changed significantly in the last two years.

Figure 5: How often have you seen representatives from the Trade Union in your factory?

Worker and employer representatives in the garment sector negotiate a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) that applies to all workers in the sector. The latest CBA was finalized in 2019 and includes several provisions that go beyond the labour law for the garment sector. In the last few years, the union, with the support of Better Work Jordan, has made a concerted effort to train workers on the CBA so that workers are aware of their rights under the

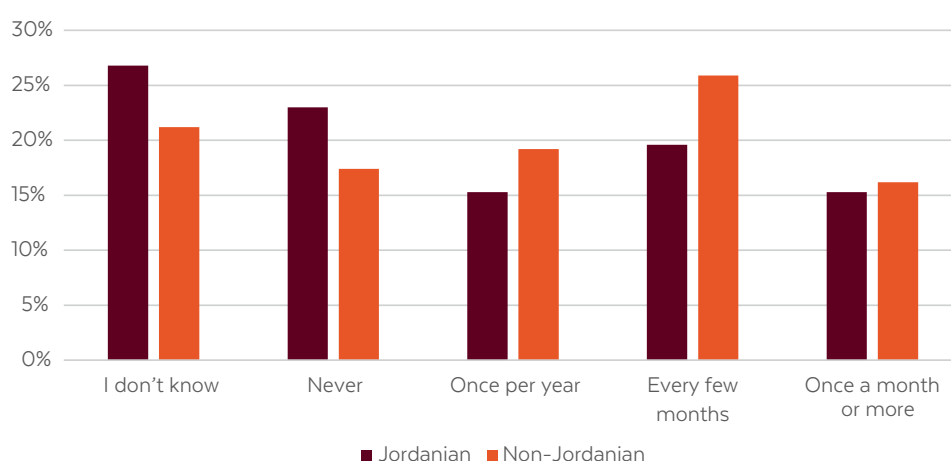
CBA. Despite these efforts, there remains a lack of knowledge in the sector about the contents of the CBA, with 43 per cent of workers saying that they are not aware of the CBA (see Figure 6). In addition, there is a gap in knowledge of the CBA, with 35 per cent of Jordanian workers aware of the contents of the CBA, compared to 52 per cent of migrant workers. Both of these numbers have remained stable over time.

Figure 6: Percentage of workers who are aware of CBA contents, by migration status

Engagement with the government

Most workers have limited direct engagement with labour inspectors from the Ministry of Labour as inspectors mostly work with management and observe the situation in the factories with limited worker interaction. The majority of workers say

they have either never seen a government labour inspector in their factory or that they are not sure (see Figure 7). Notably, the gap between migrant workers and Jordanians is less pronounced than with union representatives – Jordanian workers are only slightly less likely to have seen the a Ministry of Labour representative in the factory than migrant workers.

Figure 7: How often have you noticed a Ministry of Labour representative visiting your factory?

However, labour inspectors with the Ministry of Labour do play an important role in enforcing the labour law, which the majority of workers indicate they have knowledge of (59 per cent). Jordanian workers are more likely to have knowledge of the labour law than migrant workers. Women, regardless of migration status, are also more likely to cite knowledge of the labour law. There has been no

significant changes in worker knowledge of the labour law over the last three years.

The Ministry of Labour is currently working on plans to gather and address grievances directly from workers through the Hemaya app, which will be piloted in the garment sector in the coming months.

In focus: Supervisors' Survey

Supervisors in the Jordanian garment industry face many of the same pressures as workers, and have broadly similar responses to those of workers. While the answers from supervisors are slightly more positive than those of workers, the frequency of negative responses from supervisors is concerning. These results highlight the importance of including supervisor needs and concerns in interventions intended to improve working conditions in the sector.

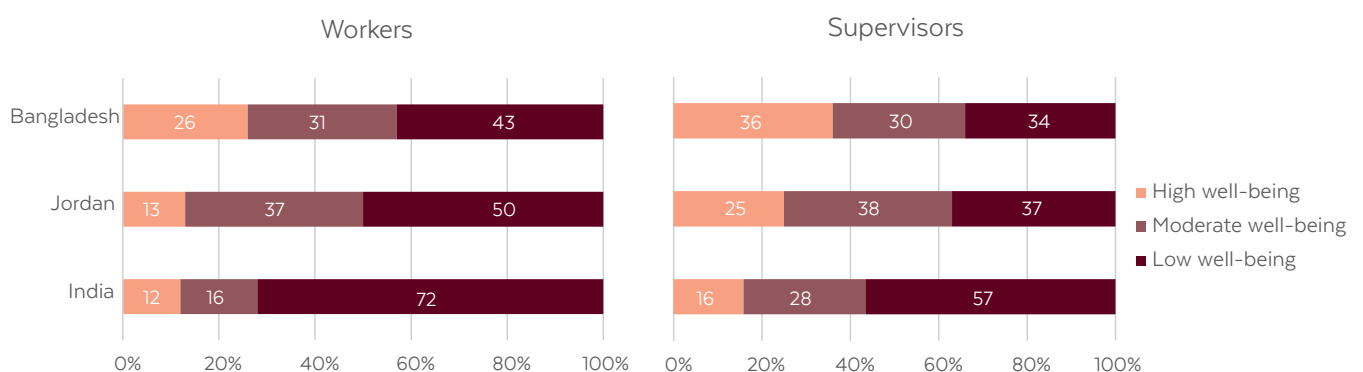
In many ways, supervisors are similar to workers in their profile and in their concerns. Around half of supervisors are women, and around 70 per cent are migrant workers. Supervisors face many pressures in the factory, and do not have much leverage to address them.

- **Stress.** Thirty-eight per cent of supervisors say that the stress associated with their job is unacceptable. This is lower than the percentage

of workers (56 per cent) but still high. Supervisor stress is important because it can lead to verbal abuse and lost productivity. In fact, half of managers report that the stress level of supervisors is a major challenge for their business.

- **Promotion and job mobility.** Half of supervisors had worked as a sewing operator previously, and the majority of these worked in the same factory. In addition, 77 per cent of supervisors indicated that they received training in the last year.
- **Well-being:** Supervisors had slightly higher well-being levels than workers, but overall scored close to workers on the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS) a set of seven questions to determine well-being levels (see Figure 8). Forty per-cent of supervisors are classified as low well-being, while 50 per cent of workers have low well-being. In addition, the nationality pattern are similar between workers and supervisors. For example, Indians have the lowest levels of well-being regardless of worker or supervisor position.

Figure 8: Worker and Supervisor well-being levels by nationality



Next Steps

This brief provides a snapshot of the data gathered through worker, supervisor and manager surveys. This information is important for stakeholders to see and track how workers perceive them, and provides important information to employers about specific worker concerns and who workers turn to in order to address these concerns. The recurring survey is one tool BWJ uses to monitor working conditions in the garment sector and is especially important for tracking sustainability. The data from these surveys feeds into the monitoring and evaluation of the Better Work Jordan programme and into the programming developed by Better Work Jordan.

Several upcoming reports will expand on the information provided here and take it in new directions. For example, Better Work Jordan is planning to look deeper at the issue of working hours and pay in the sector, and will partner with academic institutions to look deeper at the topic of violence and harassment in the workplace. In addition, the information from these surveys is an input to mapping the grievance mechanisms available to workers in the garment sector.

These worker and manager surveys are an ongoing project spearheaded by the Better Work Global research team and carried out in conjunction with Better Work Jordan and a local research partner. The next round of data collection will occur in June 2022.





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