

Adolescent boys and youth in Lebanon

A review of the evidence

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Acronyms

CAS	Central Administration of Statistics
OEP	Committee for the Employment of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
GSHS	Global school-based student health survey
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LPDC	Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee
MEHE	Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
GSHS	Global school-based student health survey
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
STI	Sexually transmitted illness
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Executive summary

This evidence review summarises what is known about adolescent boys' and youth well-being in Lebanon, with a focus on similarities and differences among host and refugee communities. The review draws on published and grey literature and is organised according to the GAGE conceptual framework which looks at six key capability domains: i) education and learning, ii) bodily integrity and freedom from violence, iii) health and nutrition, iv) psychosocial well-being, v) voice and agency and vi) economic empowerment..

1 Education and learning

Adolescent boys from different communities in Lebanon face different challenges in accessing education. Lebanese boys and Palestinian refugee boys in Lebanon enjoy the same access to education at primary school level, but become increasingly disadvantaged at secondary level and beyond. Palestinian refugee boys from Syria are disadvantaged at all schooling levels, unlike Syrian refugee boys in Lebanon, who share the same level of access to education as their female peers. However, Syrian children and young Syrian girls and boys in Lebanon have the lowest rate of access to education of all communities. Although school enrolment is generally high at primary level across the different communities, rates tend to drop steadily after primary level, with boys being more disadvantaged. The dropout rate tends to be higher among boys in Lebanon, largely due to poverty and child labour, as boys assume the family 'breadwinner' role expected of them according to prevailing gender norms. Low school achievement and school-based violence are also major factors contributing to adolescent boys' dropout rates. Children with disabilities are also marginalised in terms of access to education in Lebanon, especially adolescent Syrian boys with a disability, who remain completely excluded.

2 Bodily integrity and freedom from violence

Adolescent boys and youth in Lebanon, who are between the ages of 10–19 and 15–24 respectively, live in an environment saturated with violence, and they are

most likely to perpetrate and experience different types of violence – especially adolescent boys. Sociopolitical instability and polarisation along with ongoing conflicts among different communities in the country have strongly affected children and adolescents, resulting in violence in the streets as well as in schools and universities. Although there are few rigorous studies addressing the level and impact of different forms of violence among and against children and youth in Lebanon (either at home, at school or in the wider community, or by gender, region or different host and refugee communities, many studies have highlighted the violence facing children and youth, especially boys, including being engaged in armed conflicts.

3 Health and nutrition

Adolescents and youth in Lebanon face multiple health risks. Pollution and shortage of clean/potable water are major public health issues in the country. However, the impact of these issues on the mental and physical health of adolescents and youth have not been addressed. Tobacco smoking is also a major problem, which affects adolescent boys in particular across all refugee and host communities. Alcohol use is high among Lebanese boys, who start consuming it at an early age. Drug use and abuse is prevalent among Palestinian youth, mainly affecting adolescent and young boys. The deteriorating socioeconomic situation in Lebanon is affecting all communities, with many adolescents and youth in food-insecure households, but this is more likely among refugee communities and among Palestinian refugees from Syria living in Lebanon.

4 Psychosocial well-being

Studies on the psychosocial well-being of different groups of adolescents and youth in Lebanon are lacking. The existing literature only sporadically addresses this area in young people's lives. The general political and socioeconomic situation in Lebanon, as well as continuous conflicts, have negatively affected the psychosocial well-being of adolescent boys and youth from different communities and resulted in high psychological distress

and poor social support. Refugee boys in particular have a deteriorating psychosocial state owing to their worsening situation in Lebanon and their lack of rights, opportunities and security. Adolescents from different communities have poor support from peer networks although, for example, more Lebanese boys report having this support than girls. Palestinian adolescent boys face increasing tensions with their families and communities, which is compounded by negative experiences in wider society. In general, social cohesion is poor, either within the Lebanese community or among the different refugee and host communities.

5 Voice and agency

The hierarchal-patriarchal nature of different communities in Lebanon has a major impact on the ability of adolescents and youth to make choices and participate in decision-making, including in their family and community, or at party and state levels. Life choices (around education and marriage, for example) for adolescent boys and girls, as well as youth, are a family matter. School-based clubs and sports activities are only available in private schools, and only the three largest private universities in Lebanon have civic and sports activities. There are many scouts in Lebanon, some of which belong to the political parties' youth wings. All political parties in Lebanon have youth wings and are active in the main universities in Lebanon and offer a range of activities. Lebanese youth have recently started forming and leading their own independent groups and organisations. However, refugee boys and youth (Palestinian and Syrian) do not have avenues for civic and political participation in Lebanon.

6 Economic empowerment

Gender roles for boys – whether from the Lebanese, Palestinian or Syrian communities – reflect deep-seated cultural norms that males should assume the family breadwinner role, and hence secure work and income. As already noted, boys from all communities are more likely than their female peers to leave school and assume adult responsibilities, which means starting work at an earlier age. Nonetheless, youth, and especially adolescents, are most affected by the worsening socioeconomic situation in Lebanon and high unemployment rates, which have severely restricted the opportunities open to them. The Syrian conflict and displacement of people has strained the Lebanese economy and services that were already struggling. With an already limited job market, and due to the fact that most Syrian refugees are living in neglected/deprived areas of Lebanon, there are heightened tensions between Syrian and Lebanese youth who compete over jobs, especially those that are low skilled. Palestinian youth – who are also engaged in low-skilled and low-paid jobs and prohibited from working in syndicated professions – have also been profoundly impacted by heightened competition caused by the influx of low-skilled labour due to the Syrian conflict. All refugees in Lebanon are considered 'foreigners'; they are only permitted to work in three sectors (agriculture, construction, and environment) and must acquire work permits to do so. Palestinian refugees are partially exempted: they are allowed to work in some administrative and commercial professions, but although they do not have to acquire work permits, government restrictions on refugees have imposed additional challenges to their livelihoods).

Introduction

Gender has been increasingly recognised as a determining element in shaping different experiences and opportunities for boys and girls alike. Young people's experiences and identities are shaped by the intersection of gender, special needs, class, legal status, religious, ethnic and racial background, and sociocultural norms. A growing body of work has addressed the importance of these intersections for their intrinsic impact on individuals' experiences, opportunities, and capabilities (see, for example, Santos and Toomey, 2018; Salih et al., 2016; Colombo and Rebughini, 2016; Krumer-Nevo and Komem, 2015; Anthias, 2013; Cho et al., 2013; Hankivsky, 2012; Akom et al., 2008; Nussbaum, 2004; Sen, 2000).

This literature review addresses the situation of boys and youth in Lebanon, focusing on the six capability domains set out in the conceptual framework of the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) research programme:¹ (1) education and learning; (2) bodily integrity and freedom from violence; (3) health, nutrition, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH); (4) psychosocial well-being; (5) voice and agency; and (6) economic empowerment. The framework builds on the multilayered and multidimensional intersections across these capability domains at the individual, family, communal and structural levels to holistically assess adolescents' opportunities and challenges for context-specific pathways of change (GAGE consortium, 2019).

This paper draws on available published and grey literature on each of these capability domains for adolescent boys from different communities in Lebanon, including Lebanese citizens as well as Syrian and Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon. This complements an earlier GAGE publication on the situation of girls in Lebanon (Presler-Marshall et al., 2017). However, the literature review on boys has highlighted significant constraints in the availability and reliability of data. Specific information on adolescents in Lebanon is scant; data is often outdated and either not disaggregated by gender or focuses on girls. Moreover, different sources often provide

conflicting statistics on the different capability domains. Working within these constraints, we aim to present the overall situation of adolescent boys and youth in Lebanon across the six capability domains.

Lebanese context

Lebanon's recent history is characterised by instability, conflict, and sectarian and ethnic cleavages that resulted in civil war from 1975 to 1990. The war ended with the peace settlement known as the Taif Accord, which instigated a power-sharing system with equal representations of Muslims and Christians. Since then, Lebanon has struggled with continuous internal sociopolitical conflicts, wars with Israel, and a deteriorating economy (Bahout, 2014; Traboulsi, 2012; Yassin, 2012). Lebanon also has a long history of displacement induced by the continuous sociopolitical unrest and armed conflicts. It is estimated that more than two-thirds of the Lebanese population have been exposed to armed conflict or war, with 38% having been forcibly displaced as a result (Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), 2015).

Lebanon's protracted instability is not only due to internal conflicts but also regional economic and political instabilities and conflicts. Recently, the unstable socioeconomic situation has been exacerbated by the Syrian conflict and the massive influx of refugees (Mehanna and Haykal, 2016; Mourad and Piron, 2016). The political deadlocks in the country and the rampant corruption and mismanagement by the ruling political class, coupled with an economic meltdown, has resulted in nationwide anti-government protests that started in October 2019 (Parreira, 2019). The situation has particular impacts for young people in Lebanon, who comprise a relatively high proportion of the national population (see below). Most of the vulnerable children and adolescents live in the country's most deprived and neglected areas (urban and rural). While there are no reliable recent statistics on poverty rates in Lebanon, up to 30% of the population were estimated to be living in poverty and around 10% in extreme poverty

¹ For more details on GAGE's conceptual framework, see GAGE consortium (2019).

prior to the Syrian conflict (Government of Lebanon and United Nations, 2019). However, considering the worsening economic situation, current poverty levels are likely to be much higher. In 2019, the World Bank projected that the economic crisis would push half of Lebanon's population into poverty (World Bank, 2019) and the Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs recently estimated that up to 75% of people would be living in poverty as a result of the economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic (Qiblawi, 2020).

Lebanese society is young, with a high percentage of youth compared to the global average (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016) – 44% of Lebanon's 6 million people (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019) are under the age of 24. Adolescents aged 10–14 comprise 9.4% of the population, while youth aged 15–24 constitute 19.5% (International Labour Organization (ILO) and Committee for the Employment of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon (CEP), 2012), with more than half of youth being males (CAS and UNICEF, 2009). Around 2% of the total population are estimated to be living with a disability (Yaacoub and Badre, 2012a), but this figure is not disaggregated by age and gender. Youth in Lebanon face mounting challenges, including poverty, security and sociopolitical instability, scarce work opportunities (especially for skilled youth), incompatibility between education and labour market needs, a high cost of living but low wages; more broadly, challenges include corruption, nepotism and favouritism, and weak political opportunities and representation (Chaaban, 2009; Dibeh et al., 2016). These challenges have been driving youth to emigrate in search of work opportunities, with most migrants being young men under the age of 25 (CAS and UNICEF, 2009). Furthermore, around one-third of Lebanese youth aspire to emigrate (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016) with young boys from disadvantaged backgrounds more likely to (Dibeh et al., 2016).

Lebanese society is diverse and constructed around customs and norms that intersect with gender, class, family and kin, patron networks, religious identity, and place of origin (Joseph, 1993). Although society enjoys a relatively liberal lifestyle, it is still principally a patriarchal and relatively conservative society.

Lebanon has a long history of hosting refugee populations (see Traboulsi, 2012). Following the large influx of Syrian refugees since 2011 (around 1.5 million),

it currently hosts the highest number of refugee per capita population in the world. It has also hosted more than 200,000 Palestinian refugees since 1948, and more than 17,000 refugees from Iraq, Sudan and other countries (UNHCR, 2020). Nonetheless, Lebanon has not ratified the 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, nor does it recognise 'refugee status' or uphold refugees' rights (Chaaban, 2016).

Palestinian refugees

Palestinian refugees have been living in Lebanon for more than 70 years, but due to political-sectarian balances in the country, Lebanese authorities have strongly rejected their naturalisation. Under Lebanese law, Palestinian refugees are considered 'foreigners' who do not enjoy any special legal status, leaving them deprived of basic civil, political and economic rights and dependent on international assistance (largely from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees from the Near East (UNRWA)) for services and needs. Around half a million Palestinian refugees in Lebanon² are registered with UNRWA, though it is estimated that as a result of mass emigration of refugee populations, only around 260,000–280,000 are currently residing in Lebanon. These include 35,000 refugees that the Lebanese government estimates are non-registered and who mostly took refuge in Lebanon after 1948. Most Palestinians in Lebanon live in the 12 Palestinian refugee camps (63.4%), with the largest concentration in Ein el-Hilweh camp in Saida city, in the south (Chaaban et al., 2016).

Over half (53%) of the Palestinian population in Lebanon is under the age of 24 (ILO and CEP, 2012), with 5% of these youth living with a disability (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019). Children under 14 years constitute around a quarter (26.2%) of the Palestinian refugee population, while adolescents aged 15–19 constitute 10.9% (there are more boys than girls in both age groups). Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face some of the worst socioeconomic conditions in the region (Chaaban et al., 2016). The Palestinian population is marked by multi-generational poverty, and the worsening socioeconomic situation in Lebanon has had particularly severe impacts for these people – the latest estimate is that two-thirds of Palestinian refugees are living in poverty (Government of

² There are two categories of Palestinians in Lebanon: those who have been living there since the 1948 Palestine war, and Palestinian refugees who fled Syria after the Syrian conflict and are now living in Lebanon.

Lebanon and UN, 2019; Chaaban et al., 2016). Adolescents are most affected: 74.5% live in poverty and 5% in extreme poverty. Young boys are more likely to be living in poverty than their female peers; and poverty rates are higher among refugees living inside the camps than those living among host communities.

Syrian refugees

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, Lebanon has hosted successive waves of Syrian refugees, around 1.5 million in total (including unregistered refugees) (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019). Of the 919,578 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR since 2011, 53% are under 18; around 3.8% of them have a disability, while 4.4% of youth aged 18–24 are estimated to have a disability. In Lebanon, Syrian refugees over 15 are considered 'displaced persons' (El-Ghali et al., 2019) and so required to obtain temporary residency permits, which continues to be one of the major hardships facing refugees (UNHCR et al., 2019). In 2019, only 22% of registered Syrian refugees had legal residency permits, most of them middle-aged men, with very low rates among women and youth. For older adolescents aged 15–19, only 14% of boys hold legal residency papers and 13% of girls (UNHCR et al., 2019). The lack of regularised status has profound consequences on all aspects of refugees' lives, ranging from risk of arrest, detention and exploitation to restricted movement and limited access to education, housing and other services (UNHCR et al., 2019; Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019). Syrian refugees are becoming more economically vulnerable, with 73% living in poverty. The deteriorating economic situation of refugee households is affecting their ability to meet basic expenditures on education and health, pushing families to resort to negative coping strategies – including pulling children out of school, sending boys to work and driving girls into early marriage.

Palestinian refugees in Syria now living in Lebanon

In addition to Syrian refugees, around 40,739 Palestinian refugees who had been in Syria have taken refuge in Lebanon since the outbreak of the Syrian conflict, and have registered with UNRWA, though the numbers have been steadily decreasing recently. Most live in the 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon (again, mostly in Ein el-Hilweh camp). More than half of this population are young: 56.2% are under 25; 35.5% are under 14 (37.3% boys, 34.1% girls); and 10.1% are older adolescents, aged 15–19 (18.3% boys, 19.1% girls). Of male Palestinian refugees who were in Syria but now residing in Lebanon, more than 25% are single and live alone. Under Lebanese law, they are treated as 'foreigners', and although their entry procedures were eased at the beginning of the conflict, more restrictions have been imposed on their entry since mid-2013 (Chaaban et al., 2016). As with Syrian refugees, these Palestinian refugees are required to obtain legal residency status in Lebanon. However, most do not have legal stay permits due to the complex and costly process of acquiring the necessary documents. This has a profound impact on their freedom of movement and subjects them to further marginalisation within Lebanese society. They cannot (for example) leave their area of residence, which restricts their access to education and jobs (particularly for those living in camps) (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018). This population has been among the hardest hit by increasing poverty in Lebanon: 89% are living in poverty and 9% in extreme poverty, with most of them youth (aged 15–24). Adolescents aged 15–19 have the highest poverty rates across all age groups, with 94.5% living in poverty and 14% in extreme poverty – again, poverty levels are higher among adolescent boys (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018; Chaaban et al., 2016).

1 Education and learning

Adolescent boys from different communities in Lebanon face different challenges in accessing education. Lebanese boys and Palestinian refugee boys in Lebanon enjoy the same access to education at primary school level, but become increasingly disadvantaged at secondary level and beyond. Palestinian refugee boys are disadvantaged at all schooling levels, unlike Syrian refugee boys in Lebanon, who share the same level of access to education as their female peers. However, Syrian children and young Syrian girls and boys in Lebanon have the lowest rate of access to education of all communities. Although school enrolment is generally high at primary level across the different communities, rates tend to drop at complementary and secondary levels (see Box 1), with boys being disadvantaged at both levels. The dropout rate tends to be higher among boys in Lebanon, largely due to poverty and child labour, as boys assume the family 'breadwinner' role expected of them according to prevailing gender norms. Low school achievement and school-based violence are also major factors contributing

to adolescent boys' dropout rates. Children with disabilities are also marginalised in terms of access to education in Lebanon, especially adolescent Syrian boys with disability, who remain completely excluded.

Lebanon scores high in education inequality in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, ranking as the third worst country in terms of inequality in opportunity for education (Chaaban and el Houry, 2016). These inequalities are manifested in large differences in school achievement among children and youth in Lebanon (Dibeh et al., 2017). The quality of education differs vastly between private and public schools, as well as between the different regions and among the different communities. This is mainly related to the fragmented nature of Lebanese society, and to the high level of privatisation of education alongside poor government involvement in the provision of comprehensive education across the country.

The education system (see Box 1) mainly relies on private institutions that are marked by their religious affiliations and exorbitant costs. Some private schools are

Box 1: The education system in Lebanon

Formal education in Lebanon is compulsory for children aged 6–15. There are two parallel systems: 'general education' and 'technical and vocational education and training' (TVET). The general education system comprises:

1. Early education, including nursery and kindergarden (KG) for children aged 3–5 years.
2. Primary level covering grades 1–6 for children aged 6–12 years.
3. Complementary level covering grade 7–9 for children aged 13–15 years.
4. Secondary school covering grades 10–12 for children aged 16–18 years.

At the end of the complementary level, students must pass national exams and obtain the 'Brevet Government Certificate' in order to enrol in secondary school. Similarly, at the end of secondary school, student must pass national exams and obtain the 'Baccalauréat Government Certificate' to enrol in tertiary education (El-Ghali et al., 2019; Chabban et al., 2016).

Students can opt to join the TVET track after completing the primary level in general education. The TVET system comprises:

1. Brevet Professionnel (BP), which involves 3 years' study at complementary level.
2. Baccalauréat Technique (BT), which involves 3 years' study at secondary level.
3. Technicien Supérieur (TS), which involves 2 years' study at post-secondary level.
4. Licence Technique (LT), which involves 1 year's study for the technical licence.

At the end of each level, students must pass national exams to be able to enrol at higher TVET levels. A dual system that combines both general and TVET education also exists, which opens different TVET tracks for students. Students who pass the BT national exams can proceed to university education or higher technical education. Although accredited TVET education is open to all students in Lebanon, enrolment rates are low due to perceptions of poor education quality and low career prospects, in addition to the negative cultural perceptions of it being a sign of academic failure (Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), 2018)

subsidised by the government, and offer reduced tuition fees. Although fees are prohibitive for many Lebanese households, it is mostly Lebanese students that are enrolled in private schools, with only around 9% of students from other nationalities (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016). Lebanese students generally enjoy parental support for their education as Lebanese parents normally invest in and value education, for girls and boys (UNICEF, 2017). However, these typically tend to be from more privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. Parents of children in private schools are more likely to be engaged in their children's education and participate in school conferences and meetings compared to parents of children in public schools, who rarely do (Hamadeh and Marquis, 2017).

Lebanese students

Lebanese students' primary school enrolment rate is high (97%, with a slightly higher rate for girls) and close to the global average; however, it drops drastically at secondary level. There is almost gender parity in enrolment rates at primary level, but boys become more disadvantaged at higher levels as the enrolment rates progressively fall for both genders. On average, 97% of students successfully transition to complementary level, with a marginally lower average for boys (Yaacoub and Badre, 2012b). Although the transition rate to complementary level is high, the dropout rate at this level stands at 17.3%, and completion rates fall significantly compared to primary level, especially among boys. The completion rate at complementary level stands at 65.4% (62% for boys, compared to 68.6% for girls). The enrolment rate at secondary level drops to 75% for both genders, with a slightly higher rate for girls than boys (75.3% and 74.8% respectively). The repetition rate at secondary level is high, especially among adolescent boys (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016). Moreover, adolescent boys are more likely than girls to skip classes without permission (20.9% compared to 13.2%), and the rate tends to increase with age for both sexes (World Health Organization (WHO), 2017). Boys are also more likely to drop out of school as they tend to assume adult responsibilities around work and earning income for the family from an early age (UNICEF, 2017). There is a dearth of studies on the educational situation of children with disabilities, though it is estimated that around 1% of children with disabilities are enrolled in public schools (Combaz, 2018). Very few schools in Lebanon cater for students with special needs (CAS and

UNICEF, 2009), who lack access to both formal and non-formal education. This is especially true for those from poor families due to the higher (discriminatory) fees that public and private schools require to enrol children with disabilities. Most children and youth with disabilities in Lebanon are institutionalised and remain uneducated, especially outside the capital city (Beirut), mainly due to the lack of quality education options for these children in the absence of an inclusive and integrated educational and school environment (Combaz, 2018).

Boys are not only less likely to attend school and successfully transition to higher school levels, they also fare worse than their female peers in reading proficiency; nonetheless, they surpass girls in mathematics and sciences. In the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test that measures learning achievements of 15-year-olds, Lebanon scored 353 points in reading literacy compared to the international average of 487 – 58 points lower than the MENA average (OECD, 2019a). Girls scored an average of 28 points higher than boys in reading, which means they are performing one year ahead compared to their male peers. There is also high variance in reading performance between the socioeconomically advantaged and disadvantaged students with an average of 103 points (OECD, 2019b). In mathematics and sciences, Lebanese students scored 393 and 384 points respectively, compared to the international average of 489 for both subjects, with boys scoring marginally higher than girls in both subjects (ibid.).

Boys are also disadvantaged at the tertiary education level, where the enrolment rate is 47.9%, but higher for girls (49.8%) than boys (45.8%). The overall low enrolment rates in tertiary education are mainly due to its privatised nature, with only one public university (with different branches but of limited capacity) and extremely high tuition fees at private universities. The public university hosts only about a third of all university students (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016). Even though TVET education is often viewed negatively and is characterised by low-quality education and equipment, it absorbs around 26% of the Lebanese student population (MEHE, 2018; Dibeh et al., 2016), which is slightly below the MENA level (around 30%). The share of TVET as opposed to higher education in Lebanon is still limited: 10.9% at secondary education level and 5.4% at post-secondary level, compared to 30% at higher education level (UNICEF, 2016).

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon

Palestinian children and youth face many challenges to their education. They are required to study the Lebanese curriculum to obtain educational certificates recognised by the Lebanese government (Chaaban et al., 2016). Nonetheless, unregistered refugees or those who do not have identity documents (ID) are forbidden from sitting the national exams (unless they have secured the Council of Ministers' approval, granted on a case-by-case basis). This leaves many refugee children deprived of formal education beyond grade 8, as students are required to sit the Brevet official exam at the end of grade 9 (El-Ghali et al., 2019). Palestinian refugee children also face restricted access to public schools, prohibitive fees that limit their access to private schools, and are subject to quotas based on their 'foreigner' status in vocational training schools, leaving UNRWA schools and its one accredited vocational school (Siblin Training Centre) the only options for most (Chaaban et al., 2016). However, UNRWA schools typically have poor infrastructure, large class sizes, lack of recreational spaces, and high dropout rates (Al-Hroub, 2015). Moreover, since the 1990s there has been an increased radicalisation within Palestinian communities, leading to gender-segregated schools in the camps (Kortam and Dot-Pouillard, 2017).

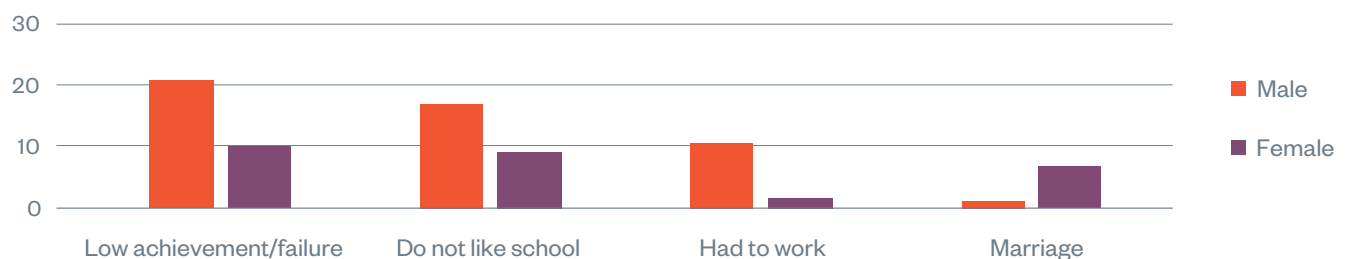
As with Lebanese students, enrolment rates for girls and boys are almost equal at primary level but boys become more disadvantaged at higher educational levels – mainly because girls are less vulnerable to the economic pressures on boys to find work and earn income for the family (ILO and CEP, 2012). Among Palestine refugees in Lebanon, school enrolment is particularly high at primary level – at 97.2% (2015), with no significant gender disparity. Enrolment rates drop at complementary level to 84.2%, with a higher rate for girls (89.4%) than boys (78.6%). Enrolment rates drop further at secondary level, to 61.2% (though this is a rise from 51.1% in 2010), with boys being

more disadvantaged (58.1%) compared to girls (65.2%) (Chaaban et al., 2016).

One of the main challenges facing Palestinian boys at school is low achievement (affecting 20.8% of compared to 10% of girls), which contributes to boys' lower enrolment and retention rates. The dropout rate among school students averages around 6%, with a higher percentage among boys (almost double that of girls). The dropout rate peaks at complementary level, where two-thirds of dropouts leave school before obtaining the Brevet certificate. Moreover, 14.8% of students aged 6–18 years enrolled at UNRWA schools are not attending school, with one-third of older adolescents (15–18 years) enrolled but not attending (Chaaban et al., 2016).

As well as underachievement, other factors contribute to Palestinian students' high dropout and low enrolment and retention levels. Poverty is by far the main reason, as Palestinian children (especially boys) leave school to find paid work to support their families, often as a result of family pressure. Prevalence of corporal punishment at UNRWA schools is also a major factor pushing boys out of school, as they are most affected by school-based violence. Other factors related to the school environment include lack of recreational activities and spaces, overcrowding in classes, lack of school and parental support, poor parental engagement in children's education, and poor relationships between parents and teachers. Moreover, schools in camps lack security, as they are located in zones that witness frequent armed clashes. Such conditions, coupled with the lack of basic rights and opportunities, generate a negative perception among Palestinian youth of education as unable to provide a pathway to job prospects and opportunities. These perceptions are particularly high among young boys (Chaaban et al., 2016; Al-Hroub, 2015; Wehbe, 2018; Kortam and Dot-Pouillard, 2017).

Figure 1: Reasons for Palestinian refugee children in Lebanon not enrolling in school (by gender)



Source: Chaaban et al., 2016.

Although at complementary level, Palestinian students scored 51 points lower than their Lebanese peers in the PISA test (OECD, 2019a), on average, UNRWA students have a higher achievement rate than their peers at Lebanese public schools (UNICEF, 2017). Among Palestinian refugee children living with a disability, 62% are enrolled in UNRWA schools and 8.9% are enrolled in special education; that leaves 28.9% not enrolled in any type of education (Chaaban et al., 2016).

University enrolment rates for Palestinian refugees are low, mainly due to the distance from universities, restrictions on mobility, and cost of fees and materials (Chaaban et al., 2016). It is estimated that only 6% of Palestinians in Lebanon hold university degrees (Chaaban and el Houry, 2016). Overall, less than one-third of Palestinian secondary school graduates are enrolled in a university (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018). Low enrolment at university level can also be explained by the limited scholarships offered to Palestinian refugees, with only 3.5% of UNRWA students receiving scholarships annually for higher education. Although Palestinian refugees have access to the Lebanese public university and are treated as Lebanese in terms of fees, they are subject to quotas that serve to limit access. This partly explains the greater enrolment rate in private universities (37.9% compared to 15.9% at the public university) (Chaaban et al., 2016). In contrast to school enrolment, Palestinian boys have an advantage over their female peers in tertiary education, as more Palestinian males hold a university degree than females (6.6% and 5.3% respectively) (ILO and CEP, 2012). As for vocational education, only 4% of Palestinian youth are enrolled in public and private vocational schools, with a third of them attending UNRWA's Sibling Training Centre. However, students at the centre are not allowed to sit for official TVET exams and only receive a proof of completion from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (El-Ghali et al., 2019).

Palestinian refugees from Syria now living in Lebanon

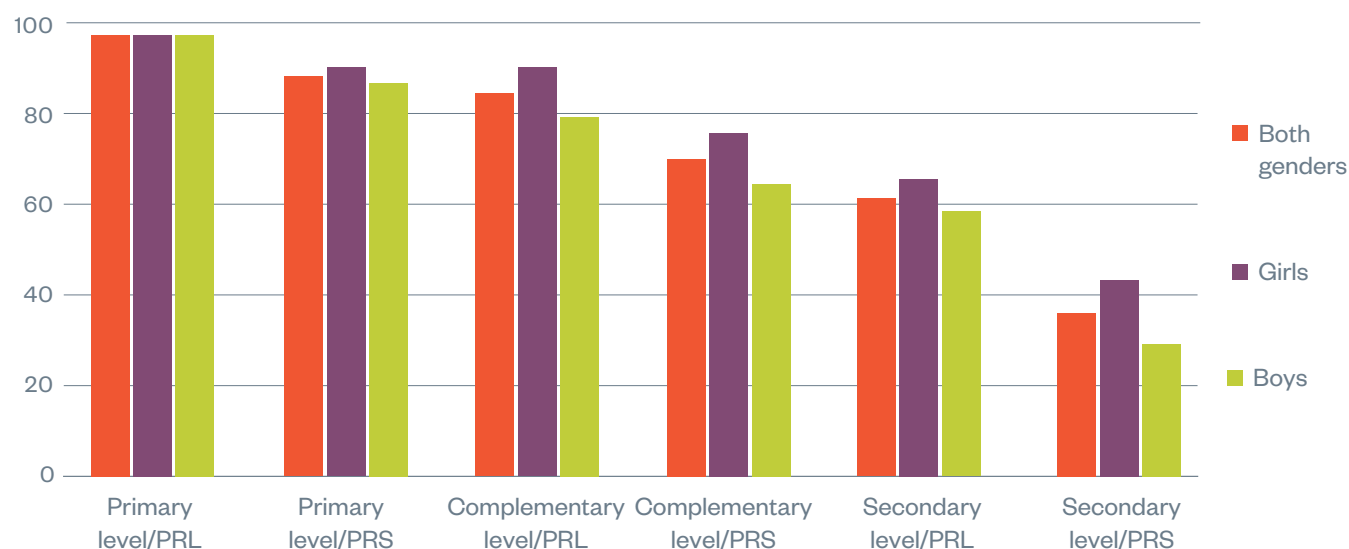
Palestinian refugees from Syria who fled to Lebanon are even more disadvantaged than their Palestinian peers who were already in Lebanon, with significantly lower enrolment rates: among those aged 6–18, only 57.6% are enrolled in schools, 34.1% of them are dropouts and 8.3% have never been enrolled in school (see Figure 2 for comparisons between PRL and PRS school enrollment rates). Most of these children are enrolled in UNRWA schools, with

a minority attending Lebanese public schools. Some of the UNRWA schools run double shifts at primary and complementary levels to accommodate these students. Among these refugees, boys are more disadvantaged than girls at all educational levels: enrolment is 88.3% at primary level (89.6% for girls compared to 87% for boys). The enrolment rate drops to 69.6% at complementary level, again with higher rates for girls than boys (75.2% versus 64.3%). At secondary level, overall enrolment is 35.8%, with noticeably lower rates among boys (28.4%) than girls (42.9%). Girls are also more likely to successfully complete school and hold Baccalaureate degrees than boys (9.5% compared to 6.1%). Dropout rates for adolescent boys are also higher than that of their female peers. For younger adolescents aged 13–15, the dropout rate for boys stands at 11.3% compared to 7% for girls, increasing to 21.8% and 13.9% respectively for older adolescents (aged 16–18). Similar to Palestinian refugee students, the dropout rate for this group peaks at complementary level, as two-thirds of dropouts leave school before obtaining the Brevet certificate – mainly due to their irregular status in Lebanon and inability to sit the official exams. Around 59% of older adolescents (aged 15–18) are also not attending school, with a higher percentage for boys. The enrolment rates for Palestinian refugees from Syria living inside the camps in Lebanon are significantly higher than for those living outside the camps (Chaaban et al., 2016).

Although UNRWA students do not pay tuition fees, costs of transport and school materials remain one of the biggest factors preventing them accessing education. Palestinian refugees from Syria also face harsher socioeconomic conditions compared to those who were already in Lebanon and are subject to restrictions on their movement due to their legal status. This explains the lower enrolment rates for students living outside the camps. Other reasons cited for not enrolling in school included the inability to register, having to work, underachievement, not liking the school, disability or illness, early marriage, and insecurity. Similar to Palestinian refugee children who were already in Lebanon, low achievement and having to work are the main factors keeping Palestinian refugee boys from Syria out of school (Chaaban et al., 2016). Other major factors that contribute to high dropout rates among this group, especially adolescent boys, include high levels of violence and bullying at schools (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019).

As for Palestinian refugee children and adolescents from Syria living with disability in Lebanon, they are

Figure 2: School enrolment rates for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Palestinian refugees from Syria now in Lebanon, by education level and gender



Source: Chaaban et al., 2016.

disadvantaged in terms of access to schools: around 59.1% are enrolled in UNRWA schools, 2.5% attend private schools, and 6.2% attend schools for special needs, leaving 32.2% excluded from any type of education. Moreover, they are twice as likely to attend vocational training, short vocational training courses, or informal education than their non-disabled peers.

Vocational training seems to be a vital alternative for older adolescents among this population group, as 28% of those aged 16–18 are enrolled in vocational education or short vocational training courses compared to 17.5% of Palestinian refugee adolescents who were already in Lebanon (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018). University enrolment rates for youth among this group are lower compared to Palestinian refugees: only 9.6% of those aged 19–24 attend the Lebanese public university and 15.3% attend private universities. The main reason for these low enrolment rates is inability to afford tuition fees (Chaaban et al., 2016).

Syrian refugees

At the beginning of the Syrian conflict, Syrian children were studying in public schools during morning shifts alongside their Lebanese peers. With the large-scale influx as the conflict intensified, the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) launched afternoon shifts in public schools to accommodate these higher numbers of Syrian refugee children (Yassin, 2019). These

afternoon shifts now absorb most of the Syrian students (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016) and are only accessible to them. Syrian students are offered the Lebanese curriculum, and counselors are provided at these shifts (UNICEF, 2017). The Ministry has waived fees for primary and complementary levels at public schools and provided free textbooks for all students, including Syrian refugees. However, the quality of teaching and the infrastructure of public schools are poor; there is a lack of resources and schools lack connections with local labour markets. Poor educational quality and conditions have been exacerbated by the increased number of Syrian students (El-Ghali et al., 2019). There are several non-formal programmes launched by MEHE to complement formal education for Syrian refugee children, targeting children and youth aged 3–20 years. Despite these formal and non-formal education pathways open to Syrian refugee children, substantial numbers – 48% of primary and complementary school-aged children and 84% of secondary school-aged children – remain without education (UNICEF, 2017).

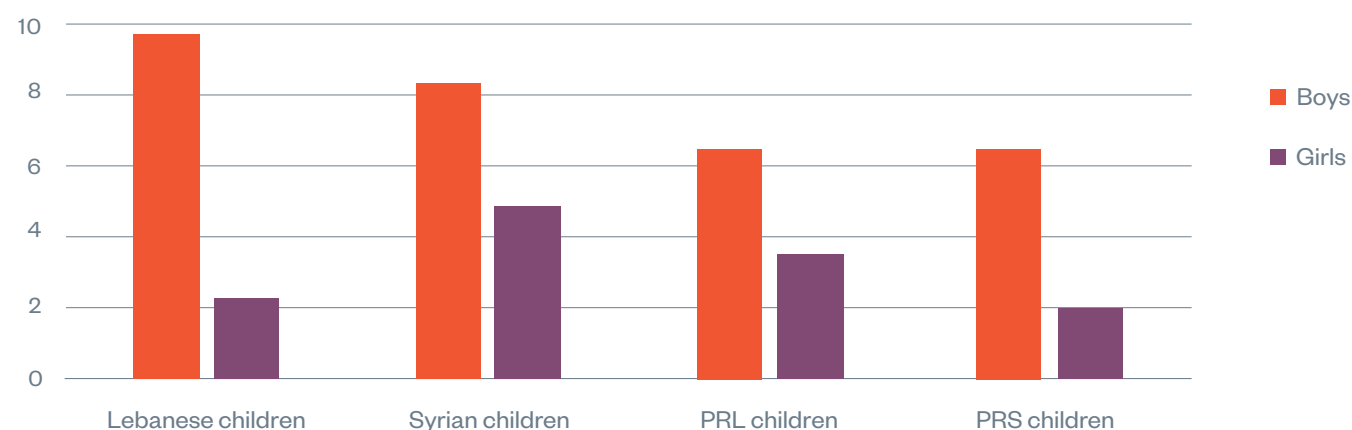
In 2019, the enrolment rate for Syrian refugee children aged 6–14 at primary and complementary levels was 69% (children without a disability) and 44% (children with a disability), with considerably lower rates at complementary level compared to primary level for both groups. The enrolment rate at secondary level falls drastically to 22% for both genders (UNHCR et al., 2019; UNHCR, 2018). Syrian adolescent refugees with a disability are the most marginalised when it comes to education, with older boys

with a disability (aged 15–17) completely excluded from education – a 0% enrolment rate – compared to 14% for their female counterparts (Combaz, 2018). More than half of the students at primary and complementary levels are two or more years older than the standard age for that level. Overall, only 19% of Syrian refugee adolescents aged 15–18 are enrolled in formal education, falling drastically to 4% for those aged 19–24.

There is no gender disparity in formal education enrolment rates among Syrian refugee children (UNHCR et al., 2019). Enrolment rates among children in camps are higher than for children living in host communities. The dropout rate for Syrian refugee children is estimated at 70% (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016) and around 23% of Syrian refugee children are engaged in economic activities during school hours. Dropout rates among this group are highest at complementary level. In fact, many children drop out of school before obtaining the Brevet certificate. This is because, on the one hand, the exams can be challenging for many Syrian children, with high fail rates (UNICEF, 2017) and on the other hand, many students lack ID and legal residency permits needed to sit the exams (El-Ghali et al., 2019). Syrian boys and young males are more likely than their female peers to drop out of school due to having to find work (UNHCR et al., 2019), with some boys dropping out as young as 12 (UNICEF, 2017). Furthermore, it is estimated that 66% of Syrian youth aged 15–24 (59% of adolescents and 71% of youth) are either not enrolled in any formal or non-formal education or training, or are not working; the rate is higher among girls than boys (UNHCR et al., 2019).

The major barriers to enrolment in school for Syrian refugee children and adolescents include work, marriage, and other cost-related barriers, including transport and school materials (UNHCR et al., 2019) (see Figure 4 and 5). Other factors that contribute to low school enrolment and high dropout rates include cultural reasons (e.g. considering adolescents as too old to be in school, or that education is no longer needed once a child can read and write), schools preventing enrolment, lack of space in schools, lack of nearby schools, or difficulties pertaining to the curriculum and foreign language of instruction (while the Syrian curriculum is in Arabic, Lebanon’s is in English and French). School-based violence (including bullying), peer violence, and teacher violence (verbal and physical) towards children were also reported as main drivers for dropping out of school, especially for boys. This adds to parents’ poor perceptions of educational value and the likelihood of it generating any work opportunities or prospects. Furthermore, due to the greater restrictions on movement that may face Syrian adults (particularly men), Syrian children and youth in Lebanon are increasingly assuming the role of family breadwinner (UNICEF, 2017; MEHE, 2016; UNDP, 2016). Indeed, child labour remains the biggest cause of dropout and poor enrolment rates, pushing nearly 32% of 6–14-year-old children and 80% of 15–17-year-old adolescents out of school (see Figure 3). This is particularly the case for boys who remain most vulnerable to family pressures to find work: 8.4% of Syrian boys (aged 5–17) are involved in child labour compared to 4.9% of girls (Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon, 2018).

Figure 3: Children aged 5-17 involved in child labour, by gender



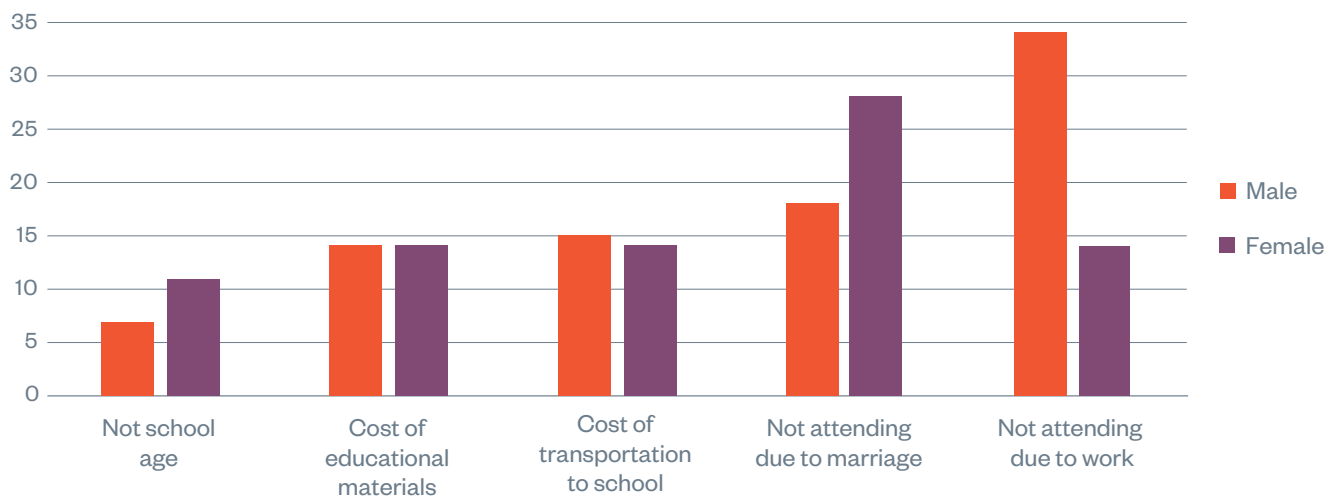
Source: Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon, 2018.

Figure 4: Main reasons for Syrian youth not being enrolled in school, by age



Source: UNHCR et al., 2019.

Figure 5: Main reason for Syrian youth aged 15-24 not being enrolled in formal education, by gender



Source: UNHCR et al., 2019.

Tertiary education for Syrians is not supported in Lebanon (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016): only 2.9% of Syrian youth are enrolled in a university (and most of them in private universities) compared to 20% enrolment rate in Syria prior to the conflict. Syrian students are treated as international students in the Lebanese public university and although residency papers are waived for school enrolment, they must provide a valid residency permit for admission to the public university. Other challenges to

accessing university include the high tuition fees (which are unaffordable for most, given the lack of funding allocated to education of Syrian refugees beyond primary level), the language of instruction (either French or English), and other academic difficulties. The enrolment rate for Syrian youth (aged 15–24) in vocational education is very low, around 1.6%, and students must provide valid residency permits for admission to both public and private TVET institutions (El-Ghali et al., 2019).

2 Bodily integrity and freedom from violence

Boys and youth in Lebanon live in an environment saturated with violence, and they are the ones most likely to perpetrate and to experience different types of violence – especially adolescent boys. Sociopolitical instability and polarisation along with ongoing conflicts among the different communities in Lebanon have strongly affected children and adolescents, resulting in violence in the streets as well as in schools and universities. Although there are few rigorous studies on the level and impact of different forms of violence among and against children and youth (either at home, at school or in the wider community or across gender, regions or different communities), many studies have highlighted the violence facing children and youth, especially boys, including being engaged in armed conflicts.

Violence against children at home is correlated with socioeconomic vulnerability and legal status. It is the most prevalent type of violence against children in Lebanon and has been increasing due to the worsening socioeconomic situation. The highest rates of violence against children are reported among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, followed by Palestinian refugees from Syria, Syrian refugees and Lebanese communities respectively. Children with disabilities are more likely to experience violence at home in all communities (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019). Lebanese children and adolescents with disabilities face violence and bullying at home from their caregivers, and outside the home, from individuals in their community or in state/non-state institutions. The situation is exacerbated for refugee children and adolescents with disabilities who live in dire socioeconomic circumstances. Furthermore, children and adolescents with disabilities across the different refugee and host communities are at greater risk of sexual exploitation and abuse; although the risk is higher for girls, boys with disabilities (and especially those with mental and intellectual disability) are at greater risk than their non-disabled peers. Children and youth with disabilities lack access to social protection and social care services (Combaz, 2018). Although violence in the home is considered the most prevalent form of violence against children in Lebanon, there is a lack of studies and surveys that reflect the magnitude of this issue across different

communities, especially for Lebanese and Palestinian children and youth.

Particular vulnerabilities of Lebanese youth

Violence and bullying ensuing from social tensions among the different Lebanese communities is widespread in schools (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019). There are reports, for example, of some students changing schools – moving from a school where the majority of students belonged to a different community – due to bullying and ostracism (Child Soldiers International (CSI), 2007). Adolescent boys are much more likely to be engaged in physical violence in schools than their female peers. Around 55.2% of boys report being engaged in physical fights compared to 24% of girls. Such violence is more widespread among younger adolescents than older adolescents, for both genders (WHO, 2017). Weapon-carrying is also highly prevalent among adolescent boys in schools, influenced by the broader culture and the continuous violent conflicts in the country, heightening aggression and violent behaviour (Sibai et al., 2009). However, there is a dearth of studies on the use of weapons by Lebanese adolescent boys and youth, both in schools and elsewhere.

Lebanese adolescent boys, especially those in private schools, are more likely to feel unsafe at school compared to girls and to their male peers in public schools. In private and public schools, boys are also more likely than their female peers to feel unsafe at the school entrances and exits, as well as school parking lots, due to the potential for involvement in violent fights. Peer-to-peer violence in school is mainly perpetrated by boys; they report that many physical fights are to defend a female friend at school, indicating the gender role of protecting and caretaking for females that boys assume at an early age (Mansour and Karam, 2012). Adolescent boys are also more likely to experience bullying at school than their female peers (21% versus 12.9%). However, bullying is more widespread among younger boys and decreases with age, in contrast to the situation for girls, for whom bullying increases with

age (WHO, 2017). In addition to peer violence, adolescents are subject to widespread verbal and physical violence perpetrated by adults at school including teachers, supervisors and coordinators (Bahou and Zakharia, 2019; Bahou, 2015; Mansour and Karam, 2012). Around 25% of students report being subject to physical violence at school, mostly inside school and perpetrated by adults. Physical violence at school includes, for example, being spit on, hit with a closed fist or objects, slapped, kicked, pushed, shaken, choked, tied up with a rope, or having hands or fingers crushed, burning or cutting purposefully, locked in a small room or outside in heat or cold, and prevented from going to the bathroom (Mansour and Karam, 2012).

Besides school-based violence, adolescent boys and girls in both private and public schools report feeling unsafe travelling to and from school due to being exposed to verbal, physical and sexual harassment and violence, even though students in private schools travel by bus or with a member of their family, unlike their peers in public schools, who mainly walk (though a smaller proportion use buses) (Mansour and Karam, 2012). Most Lebanese adolescents in schools report not being subject to sexual harassment and violence at school; however, among those who do, adolescent boys were more likely than girls to report being subject to sexual abuse (Mansour

and Karam, 2012). A study conducted following the 2006 Israeli–Lebanese war in Lebanon revealed that around 16% of children aged 8–17 had been subject to sexual abuse; higher rates were reported by boys, and more than half (54%) of those who had experienced sexual abuse (of both genders) reported that it had happened after the war (Usta et al., 2008). In fact, it is estimated that around a fifth of boys aged 13–15 in Lebanon are subject to sexual abuse (including verbal and physical) inside and outside schools (Chynoweth, 2017). Nonetheless, these figures are considered to underestimate the actual prevalence of child sexual abuse in Lebanon due to the absence of nationwide studies and to lack of reporting that stems from the culture of taboo and stigma attached to sexuality in Lebanon (Wetheridge and Usta, 2012). In general, there is a lack of data on the level of violence in schools as well as outside schools, including verbal, physical and sexual violence, by gender and across the different regions and communities in the country. While some studies highlight violence in schools, its prevalence, drivers, and impacts across different groups of adolescents and youth is understudied, particularly for sexual violence.

As well as being more vulnerable to physical violence and bullying than girls, boys in Lebanon are also much more vulnerable to being engaged in armed groups. To



Adolescent boy in Lebanon © Adam Patterson/Panos/DFID

date, Lebanon has not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The involvement of children in armed conflicts can be traced back to the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990), and it continues today, especially in the Palestinian refugee camps, where it has been reported that children and adolescent boys have been used in armed clashes, especially in the notorious conflicts in Ein el-Hilweh camp (UNICEF, 2017). Some Lebanese political parties are suspected of recruiting young boys into armed groups; however, there is a dearth of data on the extent of the problem due to the extreme secrecy around youth wings in these parties (CSI, 2007).

The involvement of boys in armed groups is spurred by a mélange of determinants including being pressured or directly recruited by a family or community member, the dire economic situation that pushes boys into these forces to earn money, the status and protection that such recruitment can offer the boys and their families, and the boys' identification with their community, which generates a feeling of moral commitment to protect it (UNICEF, 2017).

Particular vulnerabilities of Palestinian youth

There are also more intertwined structural and social factors that determine Palestinian youth enrolment with Palestinian armed groups. These include: the lack of civil, political and economic rights and opportunities; the high school drop-out and unemployment rates; isolation, especially within the camps; the discrimination experienced in Lebanon; and negative experiences with Lebanese authorities (Kortam and Dot-Pouillard, 2017).

Palestinian boys are particularly vulnerable to violent environments and behaviours. Palestinian adolescents and youth in general are subject to high levels of abuse and violence at home, in schools and on the streets, which often results in physiological and psychological problems (Kortam, 2018). The Palestinian refugee camps are generally poor environments deemed unsafe for youth, marked by degenerating infrastructure, lack of access to roads and lack of recreational spaces. Violence and the use of weapons is widespread among Palestinian youth in camps, as is substance abuse, specifically among young males. Radicalisation is on the rise among Palestinian refugee youth (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018). Moreover, in Ein el-Hilweh and other camps, the streets are segmented into zones controlled by different armed groups, which

limits boys' movement to their own militarised zone of residence, particularly if they are recruited by these groups. Leaving their zones would subject boys to extreme violence and the risk of being killed (Kortam and Dot-Pouillard, 2017).

Under such conditions, there is a pervasive sense of hopelessness among Palestinian youth, which is manifested in negative behaviour (UNICEF, 2010) that extends to schools. UNRWA schools lack playground spaces and recreational activities, so Palestinian children are forced to play on the streets. The prevalence of violence and armed conflict on the streets of the refugee camps has negative repercussions on children and adolescents: boys in particular replicate such violence with their peers and even with their school teachers. Fights at schools are violent, sometimes involving the use of weapons and ending with injuries (Kortam, 2018).

Palestinian youth are not only vulnerable to violence within their own community, they are also vulnerable to being targeted by the Lebanese authorities and community. Moreover, Palestinian youth are not immune to the sectarian instabilities in the country, and there have been reports of Palestinian boys being attacked by young boys in Lebanese gangs of the Shia community in Beirut suburbs based on their Sunni sect (Kortam and Dot-Pouillard, 2017). In addition to these threats facing Palestinian youth, the Lebanese authorities represent another major threat, especially for boys, because of their legal and social status in Lebanon. Around a quarter of Palestinian young refugee males living in camps in Lebanon (including those who fled Syria) rarely or never leave the camps, and the rate is higher for females. Freedom of movement among Palestinian refugees from Syria is more restricted than Palestinian refugees who were already in Lebanon, as they mostly lack legal residency papers. This further restricts freedom of movement outside their areas of residence, especially for those living in camps, due to fears of being arrested, detained and deported. Camp checkpoints limit the movement of Palestinian refugee youth, especially males, and this combines with overall feelings of insecurity. More than one-third of Palestinian youth feel unsafe outside their area of residence, with considerably higher rates among males and among those who fled Syria (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018; Chaaban et al., 2016).

Domestic violence against children is also particularly high within Palestinian communities. Around 17% of Palestinian youth reported experiencing violence in the

home, including psychological and physical violence. Most of these incidents are extremely violent, with over 7% resulting in a disability and boys being the main victims (UNICEF, 2010). Violence against children and youth at home is mainly driven by arguments, children's failure in school, disobedience, and staying out late (Kortam and Dot-Pouillard, 2017).

The increased tensions among Palestinian adolescent boys and youth and their families, their community and wider society, in addition to lack of economic, civic and political rights and opportunities in Lebanon, are contributing to heightened resentment towards Lebanese institutions and Palestinian factions and their Popular Committee. Migration has become the main way out for young Palestinian boys and men. In fact, emigration is increasing among Palestinian youth, subjecting them to additional threats throughout the process and along the migration routes they follow. Alarming, adolescent boys and young men are increasingly resorting to migrant-smuggling networks to emigrate, especially since the beginning of the Syrian conflict (Kortam and Dot-Pouillard, 2017).

With regard to sexual violence, sexual exploitation and harassment are taboo in the Palestinian community and are not addressed or reported. As such, there is virtually no data on the level of sexual violence among Palestinian children and youth, whether boys or girls (Kortam and Dot-Pouillard, 2017).

Particular vulnerabilities of Syrian youth

Similar to their Lebanese and Palestinian peers, Syrian adolescent boys experience high levels of bullying and physical violence (Hassan et al., 2015). In general, Syrian children face high levels of discrimination and violence in Lebanese public schools (UNDP, 2016), with adolescent boys more likely than their female peers to face bullying, harassment and violence, either from teachers or male peers (Ghazarian et al., 2019). It is estimated that half of Syrian children aged 1–14 have experienced physical violence and more than two-thirds have experienced psychological violence at school, at home, or in the community (UNHCR et al., 2019). In fact, more than half of Syrian youth report feeling unsafe in Lebanon, because of curfews enforced by the municipalities, political parties that restrict youths' movements, and the harassment

and violence they face from the Lebanese community (Chahine et al., 2014). Syrian refugees face increasing discrimination in Lebanon and violent attacks, in addition to stricter curfew measures. These are mainly driven by perceptions among host communities of the economic competition that Syrians represent, especially in the deprived areas of Akkar and Beqaa (Saab et al., 2017).

Syrian refugee boys also face greater restrictions on their movement due to the heightened threat of being harassed by authorities, arrested and detained, especially at checkpoints sited on all main roads. Because of this, boys tend to avoid public spaces – especially those with large groups because of their high vulnerability to violence arising from hostility from host communities. These conditions have resulted in a reversal of gender roles for male youth, who do not feel safe in public spaces unless accompanied by women, when they are perceived as less of a threat by Lebanese society. Such changes have affected young males' psychosocial well-being as well as their ability to sustain relationships and access work opportunities (Brun, 2017).

Violence against Syrian children and adolescents in the home is also prevalent. Two-thirds of Syrian families report using violent discipline methods with their children. Around 67% of children aged 5–14 and 54% of adolescents aged 15–18 have experienced violent discipline, with higher rates among boys (65% versus 63% for girls, for children under 18 years) (UNHCR et al., 2019). Moreover, around half of Syrian refugee youth are dissatisfied with their living conditions. On average, they have to sleep with three other people in the same room, and 22% sleep with a non-related adult of the opposite sex, which was reported as a source of distress for many (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016). There is limited research on sexual violence among Syrian adolescent refugee boys due to the many barriers related to sociocultural taboos, fears of stigmatisation and retaliation that prevent boys, and girls, from disclosing such incidents. However, it is estimated that close to a fifth of Syrian and Palestinian refugee boys from Syria have been subject to some form of sexual harassment or abuse, whether in their immediate community or online (Chynoweth, 2017). Moreover, it has been reported that Syrian adolescent boys and youth, particularly unaccompanied ones, are increasingly involved in sex work and are subject to forced prostitution as well as organ trafficking (Brun, 2017).

3 Health and nutrition

Adolescents and youth in Lebanon face multiple health risks. Pollution and shortage of clean water are major public health issues in the country, but their impacts on the mental and physical health of adolescents and youth have not been addressed. Tobacco smoking is another major public health problem, which affects adolescent boys in particular across all refugee and host communities. Alcohol use is high among Lebanese boys, who start using it at an early age. Drug use and abuse is prevalent among Palestinian youth, mainly affecting adolescents. The deteriorating socioeconomic situation in Lebanon is affecting all communities, with many adolescents and youth (particularly refugees) living in food-insecure households.

Public health issues in Lebanon

Pollution – both indoor and outdoor – remains one of the major public health risks in Lebanon. Indoor air is of poor quality due to high rates of tobacco smoking, inefficient heating methods, and the poor quality of building and maintenance materials. Outdoor air pollution levels are high, especially in urban areas of the country, due to car emissions (in the absence of public transportation) and local private power generators (due to electricity shortages), which run on diesel (Salameh et al., 2012). Poor indoor and outdoor air quality is considered toxicant and carcinogenic, and is correlated with increasing respiratory morbidity and mortality. Air pollution has been linked to diseases such as asthma, cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease, lung and skin cancer, and mental health problems (Salamé et al., 2014; Salameh et al., 2003; El-Zein et al., 2007; Daher et al., 2010; El Zein, 2012; Salameh et al., 2015). Moreover, although Lebanon enjoys relatively sufficient natural water sources, the water supply is inadequate and unevenly distributed geographically, and is unclean. Many people resort to pumping water from wells or buying water from private providers. Water shortages and pollution are associated with different health risks including diarrhoea, hepatitis A, and typhoid and paratyphoid (El-Fadel et al., 2003). Such an environment thwarts an active and healthy life for children and youth and directly affects their health.

However, there is a dearth of studies on the impact of pollution on the mental and physical well-being of children and adolescents' in Lebanon from different communities and regions.

Lebanese adolescents and youth

The worsening socioeconomic situation in Lebanon has resulted in increased levels of food insecurity and poorer diets. Around half of Lebanese families report worries about being on the verge of food insecurity, with 31% unable to eat healthy and nutritious diets. Food insecurity is estimated at around 10% among Lebanese households (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019). This has severely affected the health of adolescents, with around 5% of children and adolescents under 19 years estimated to be severely underweight and around 33% obese (UNICEF, 2019). The Global school-based student health survey (GSHS) shows that adolescent boys aged 13–17 are almost twice as likely as their female peers to be within the obesity range (7.6% versus 4.4%). Nonetheless, adolescent boys are more active than girls and are more likely to do frequent sports activities (18.6% compared to 8.7%), though levels of physical activity fall with age for both genders. Moreover, boys are more likely than girls to attend physical education classes (27% compared to 17.7%), with such activities also dropping off with age for both genders (WHO, 2017). Most adolescents tend to spend their time doing sedentary activities like playing video games, watching TV, surfing the internet, going to cafes, and attending churches or mosques, with males more likely to do outdoor activities than females (Roberts and Kovacheva, 2017; Obermeyer et al., 2015). Sports activities are also limited in schools, with only private schools offering extracurricular activities that include sports. In rural areas, students at public and private schools do more sedentary activities compared to private school students in urban areas, who mainly play sports (basketball and football) for leisure (Hamadeh and Marquis, 2017).

As with refugees in Lebanon, tobacco smoking is one of the major health risks facing Lebanese adolescents

and youth. Lebanon has one of the highest tobacco consumption rates in the world, and it is estimated that more than half of the population smoke tobacco. The smoking of water pipes is endemic and poses a major public health issue (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016; Kerbage and Haddad, 2014) especially among adolescents and youth, who smoke regularly. This is mainly due to cultural attitudes around water pipes, which are considered more acceptable than cigarettes for boys and for girls, especially in communities where alcohol and/or drug use are taboo. It has been found that one-quarter of adolescents who smoke a water pipe often do so with an adult family member (Kerbage and Haddad, 2014; Bejjani et al., 2012). Adolescent boys face more health-related risks than their female peers. The GSHS revealed that the prevalence of tobacco smoking is higher among adolescent boys (40.9%) than girls (32.9%) aged 13–17, with levels increasing with age for both genders. More than half of older adolescent boys smoke tobacco products (WHO, 2017).

By and large, substance use and abuse have been increasing among Lebanese adolescents and youth, and has even been reported among children as young as 9. Aside from tobacco, the most common substances used by adolescents are alcohol and cannabis (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019; Ministry of Public Health, 2015; 2016). The GSHS reveals substantial alcohol consumption among adolescents aged 13–17, with significantly higher rates for boys (23.8%) than girls (14.7%), though the rate increases with age for both genders. Similarly, boys are significantly more likely to use cannabis (3.6% versus 0.9% for girls) (WHO, 2017) (see Table 1). Around 16% of Lebanese adolescents aged over 16 partake in harmful alcohol consumption (Obermeyer et al., 2015). However, alcohol use has been found to vary among different communities, with significantly higher consumption among Christian youth, followed by the Druz, and the lowest rates among Muslim youth, due mainly to religious prohibitions. Nonetheless, the level of alcohol dependency among youth

has been almost equal across these groups (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016). However, there is a dearth of research on the prevalence of hard drug use and abuse among young people in Lebanon (UNDP, 2016).

While healthcare centres in Lebanon are praised for providing a multitude of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) programmes, they do not cater to the specific needs of adolescents and youth, who generally avoid seeking healthcare services due to fears around privacy or being judged, especially if they suffer from sexually transmitted illnesses (STIs) or substance abuse (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016; WHO, 2018). Moreover, protection and SRH services are readily available for women and girls in Lebanon, but men and boys remain excluded. Similarly, SRH services targeting refugee boys and men are lacking in Lebanon (Brun, 2017). As for children and youth with disabilities, they lack access to healthcare and rehabilitation services, especially those from poorer households. Adolescent boys with disabilities lack SRH knowledge (Combaz, 2018).

There are currently no data on HIV prevalence among children and adolescents in Lebanon (UNICEF, 2019). Some estimates suggest that prevalence of diseases such as HIV, malaria and tuberculosis is negligible among Lebanese youth, though young people comprise a third of those estimated to have contracted these illnesses, with prevalence said to be rising in recent years. Most older adolescents and youth in Lebanon have a high level of knowledge about how to prevent transmission of HIV and of reproductive health and contraception methods, but poor knowledge of other STIs (WHO, 2018).

Palestinian refugee adolescents and young people

Refugee adolescents, especially boys, are even more prone to health risks than their Lebanese peers. Food insecurity and severe food insecurity are increasing among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, with 62.2% of households

Table 1: Substance use among Lebanon adolescents (aged 13–17)

	Adolescents aged 13–15 years			Adolescents aged 16–17 years		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
Alcohol	17.50%	20.60%	14.70%	21.50%	29.70%	14.80%
Drug	1.80%	3%	0.70%	2.80%	4.70%	1.20%
Tobacco	31.50%	35.30%	27.90%	45.90%	51.50%	41.30%

Source: WHO, 2017.



Syrian refugees in Lebanon © UN Photo/Mark Garten

reported to be food insecure in 2015: almost a third (27%) of children under the age of 14 are living in severely food-insecure households, and another 15% in moderately food-insecure households. These children have a poor-quality diet and nutritional status. Palestinian refugees from Syria are even more vulnerable than those who were already in Lebanon, with 97% of households reported to be food insecure, of which 31.3% are moderately food insecure and 63.2% severely food insecure (Chaaban et al., 2016).

Over three-quarters (77.1%) of Palestinian adolescents report not having nutritious food due to financial constraints, especially boys, who are more likely to be underweight (6% compared to 3.5% of girls) (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016).

All Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in poor housing conditions, and almost half of refugee households experience overcrowded living conditions. The arrival of Syrian refugees and Palestinian refugees who were in Syria has exacerbated living conditions, especially in the camps, where most houses were built as temporary shelters that have been decaying due to lack of maintenance (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018; Chaaban et al., 2016). Poor housing and living conditions have negative health impacts among youth, restricting their ability to carry out daily activities and normal social life (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018). Some

19.5% of younger Palestinian refugee adolescents aged 10–14 and 16.6% of youth aged 15–24 suffer from a chronic illness, with pulmonary disease being the most prevalent chronic illness among young people under 18. Additionally, 7.3% of younger adolescents live with a functional disability compared to 6.2% for youth aged 15–24. There is a strong correlation between illness, disability and school attendance, as the highest prevalence of illness and disability was found in children and youth who have never attended school (Chaaban et al., 2016).

Among Palestinian refugee youth from Syria, 16% suffer a chronic illness and 5% live with a functional disability (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018). Among this population group, 18.4% of younger adolescents aged 10–14 and 16.1% of youth aged 15–24 suffer from a chronic illness, with pulmonary disease again the most prevalent among children under 18. As for disability, 5.3% of younger adolescents live with a functional disability compared to 4.9% of youth (Chaaban et al., 2016). Refugee children and youth with disabilities are excluded from healthcare services and rely on the fragmented and weak provisions of local and international aid organisations (Combaz, 2018). Moreover, among this population group, almost two-thirds suffer from acute illness, which is attributed to insufficient access to water, and poor sanitation and hygiene (Chaaban et al.,

2016). Furthermore, due to the restricted public spaces available to Palestinian youth, adolescents live a sedentary lifestyle, with only 17.3% of Palestinian refugees from both population groups playing sports regularly (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016).

Alarming, drug abuse is widespread among Palestinian refugee youth in the camps, and there are few efforts to halt this epidemic (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018). The Palestinian camps suffer from protracted economic and political instability, which often deteriorates into armed conflicts between different armed groups. This situation has fostered the rise of drug trafficking within the camps and the prevalence of drug use and abuse – notably among young males (Kerbage and Haddad, 2014; Ministry of Public Health et al., 2016). The problem is increasing, both inside the camps and extending to educational institutions, especially among young male students, although out-of-school and unemployed boys are most vulnerable to drug addiction. Palestinian youth lack access to rehabilitation centres, and drug users are treated as criminals by the Lebanese authorities (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018; Kortam and Dot-Pouillard, 2017).

Tobacco smoking is also widespread among Palestinian refugee adolescents, with water pipes the most common method. As Table 2 shows, around 33.7% of adolescents aged 13–15 smoke a water pipe, with higher rates among boys (39.2%) compared to girls (29%). Similarly, 10.6% of adolescents smoke cigarettes, with higher rates again among boys (16.6%) compared to girls (5.5%). Use of

Table 2: Tobacco consumption among Palestinian adolescents (aged 13–15), by type and gender

	Total	Males	Females
Water pipe	33.7%	39.2%	29.0%
Cigarette	10.6%	16.6%	5.5%

Source: Khader et al., 2009.

water pipes and cigarettes is reported to be higher among adolescents living inside the camps than those living in host communities (Khader et al., 2009).

Syrian refugee adolescents and young people

Syrian refugee youth also face major health risks. In 2019, 63% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon were marginally food insecure and 1% severely food insecure, with those living in non-residential buildings being the most food insecure (UNHCR et al., 2019). More than two-thirds of Syrian refugee youth report poor levels of personal care and hygiene and poor food quality (Chahine et al., 2014; Ministry of Public Health et al., 2016).

Over half of Syrian refugee households live in shelters that are below humanitarian standards, overcrowded, and dangerous. Most live in residential buildings, while 20% live in informal settlements and 11% in non-residential buildings (UNHCR et al., 2019). Shelter conditions for Syrian refugees in Lebanon have been declining due to the country's worsening socioeconomic situation and dwindling international support due to funding cuts. Evictions are also increasing, with more Syrians moving out of residential buildings and an increase in the numbers residing in informal settlements (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019).

There is limited data on the prevalence of substance use among Syrian refugee youth; it is estimated that drug use among male Syrian youth stands at 4% and alcohol consumption at 13% (Ministry of Public Health et al., 2016). Alcohol consumption among Syrian adolescents is mainly limited to boys (aged 12–15) and is estimated at around 7.4%, which is low compared to the global average, mainly due to Islamic prohibition of alcohol (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016). Both water pipe and cigarette smoking are prevalent among young Syrian males: 51% smoke tobacco, and the rate is steadily increasing (ibid).

4 Psychosocial well-being

Lebanese adolescents and youth

Lebanon lacks public spaces in general and there are limited spaces or areas available for youth to freely congregate outside their houses in urban or rural areas (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016). However, Lebanese boys are advantaged over their female peers in terms of having more options for organised activities, including sports and scouts (UNICEF, 2017). Peer network support is weak among Lebanese adolescents, though boys have stronger peer network support than girls, as they are more likely to report having close friends (4.9% versus 3.4% of girls). However, adolescent boys are less likely than girls to feel that their parents understand and support them (46.3% versus 48.1% of girls). While younger adolescent boys are less likely to feel that their parents always understand their problems and worries than their female peers (50.9% versus 45.7%), as adolescents grow older, boys seem to have a stronger relationship with their parents than older girls, whose relationships with parents regress (47.5% versus 43.4%) (WHO, 2017). Lebanese youth in general score low on individualism and have a low identification level with peers: their highest level of identification is with the family, followed by the nation and sect. Almost a third of youth are prejudiced towards other sects (Harb, 2010), indicating the low level of social cohesion among different Lebanese communities, which is reflected in the attitudes of young people.

Mental health problems are widespread among Lebanese adolescents. It is estimated that more than 26% suffer from a psychiatric disorder, with only a very small percentage seeking professional help (around 6%). Almost all mental health services in Lebanon are provided by the private sector, rendering them inaccessible to most of the population (Ministry of Public Health et al., 2016). Furthermore, Lebanese youth have high levels of anxiety, with around half suffering from anxiety and 12% suffering from chronic depression (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019). Such high levels of psychiatric disorders – along with substance abuse disorders – are driven by the ensuing conflicts in Lebanon and the ongoing economic, social

and political instability (UNDP, 2016). In fact, Lebanese youth express great concern about the security situation in Lebanon and unstable social relations (Harb, 2010). Moreover, increased competition with Syrian refugees is resulting in increased levels of psychological distress among socioeconomically vulnerable young males who already have limited economic opportunities and live in dire conditions (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019). Interestingly, the GSHS reveals that adolescent boys are less likely to suffer from depression and suicide ideation than their female peers. Both suicide ideation and suicide attempts are more acute among adolescent girls (15.2% compared to 13% among boys, and 10.3% compared to 9.2% among boys respectively). However, the level of depression, suicide ideation and attempts increases with age for boys, but not girls (for whom both decrease with age) (WHO, 2017).

Lebanese children and youth with disabilities are generally isolated from their peers and from society as a whole, experiencing stigma due to negative social and cultural attitudes towards persons with disabilities. They are also subject to hostility and violence – especially those with mental or intellectual disabilities. This is especially true for boys with disabilities, who also lack peer network support (more so than their female peers) and live in complete isolation. There are no opportunities for activities outside the house for these children and youth (Combaz, 2018; CAS and UNICEF, 2009).

Palestinian adolescents and youth

There is no comprehensive data on the psychosocial well-being of Palestinian adolescents and young people, nor on boys in particular; however, their quality of life is generally much poorer than that of their Lebanese peers. By and large, Palestinian youth suffer from poor life satisfaction and pervasive feelings of hopelessness resulting in psychological distress, mainly driven by their marginalisation either within the fragmented Palestinian community or in wider Lebanese society (Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC), 2019). Negative

experiences with the Lebanese authorities (especially the police and the army) as well as from wider Lebanese society also resulted in feelings of humiliation among these youth. The increased economic competition with Syrian refugees (including Palestinian refugees who were in Syria) in the labour market has further amplified tensions between refugee and host Lebanese communities (Kortam and Dot-Pouillard, 2017). More than a quarter of young Palestinian refugees in Lebanon report feeling emotionally unwell and nearly half report feeling depressed (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018). Among the Palestinian refugees from Syria, around 85% suffer from poor mental health, with no significant gender differences (Chaaban et al., 2016). Although some support services do exist for women and girls, men and boys remain largely excluded from such services (El Chammay et al., 2013). Palestinian youth generally suffer from poor relationships and conflicts within their families. The increasing pressures from the family, stemming from steep generational gaps as well as the increasing tensions among youth themselves, are mostly driven by social unrest within their community (LPDC, 2019). Palestinian youth lack privacy either at home or away from home, due to overcrowdedness and lack of accessible public spaces (UNICEF, 2010). As already noted, Palestinian youth lack access to collective and organised activities, leaving the streets the only option as a place to gather, which puts them at risk of violence (Kortam and Dot-Pouillard, 2017). A third of Palestinian boys spend their free time at home, though they are privileged in comparison with girls, 80% of whom spend their free time at home. This reflects gender norms and stronger cultural restrictions on girls' mobility. Most adolescent boys spend some of their free time in internet cafes, playing online video games. While some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provide spaces for leisure in the camps, only 5% of children spend their free time there (UNICEF, 2010). Other children and adolescents get involved in Islamic activities or attend Qur'anic classes at their local mosque (Kortam and Dot-Pouillard, 2017).

Syrian adolescents and youth

As with Palestinian adolescents and youth, the psychosocial well-being of Syrian boys has not been sufficiently addressed. It has been noted that most Syrian youth report feeling depressed or afraid, with more than a quarter reporting having suicidal ideation, though the percentage for boys is lower than for girls (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016). The increased level of psychological distress among Syrian adolescents and youth is due to their dire economic situation and the resulting increase in domestic violence, isolation, and lack of movement, compounded by the psychological, physical and sexual violence they face in their own communities and in wider Lebanese society. Boys who work, in particular, have a deep feeling of humiliation and high levels of psychological distress stemming from the exploitation they experience, working in poor conditions with low pay; they also face harassment and discrimination within wider society resulting from the mounting tensions between refugee and host communities (Hassan et al., 2015). The year 2019 witnessed an increase in restrictive measures against Syrian refugees in Lebanon, including the imposition of curfews by local authorities (municipalities), which has increased levels of psychological distress (UNHCR et al., 2019), particularly among adolescent boys and youth (Brun, 2017). More than two-thirds of Syrian youth have poor peer network support and limited opportunities for socialisation and outdoor activities. Most do not have Lebanese friends; for those who do, these are commonly just superficial friendships. However, Syrian adolescent boys and youth are more likely to have Lebanese friends than their female peers. Due to negative attitudes on the part of the Lebanese community and security measures imposed on Syrian refugees, Syrian youth tend to avoid socialising with members of the host community, indicating a low level of social cohesion between the two (Chahine et al., 2014).

5 Voice and agency

The hierarchal-patriarchal construction of different communities in Lebanon has a great impact on the ability of adolescents and youth to make choices and participate in decision-making at different levels of society, including family, community, party or state. Life choices for adolescents and youth – for example, around education and marriage – are a family matter, especially where young girls are concerned (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016). School-based clubs and sports activities are only available in private schools, and only top universities offer civic and sports activities. There are many scouts in Lebanon, some of which belong to the political parties' youth wings. Lebanese youth have recently started forming and leading their own independent specialised groups and organisations. However, Palestinian and Syrian youth have no avenues for civic and political participation.

There is a dearth of studies on the voice and agency capabilities of adolescents and youth in the different communities in Lebanon, whether Lebanese citizens or Syrian or Palestinian refugees.

Lebanese adolescents and youth

Youth in Lebanon identify strongly with their family (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016). In Lebanese society, the family is first and foremost, above the community, sect, party or nation. The family is the main access point to services and work opportunities in Lebanon, where nepotism and favoritism are structured around family networks with the political parties and 'zu'amā' (political leaders). The centrality of the family in the sociopolitical and economic life renders it the center of Lebanese identity, which constitutes the cornerstone of individuals' positions in society (Joseph, 2011). While national identity surpasses religious affiliation among youth, young people do exhibit a strong bias towards their own sect, with a moderate acceptance of people of other sects (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016).

Lebanese culture is based on a vertical generational-patriarchal hierarchy, and although protection and nurturing are accentuated in parenting approaches, the generational

gap in terms of values and adherence to traditions often results in curbing the dialogue between adolescents/youth and their parents. More than a third of youth consider their relationship dynamics with their family as unhealthy. Adults typically use authoritative communication styles with youth, manifested in giving orders and instructions and shaming and threatening if they do not abide with orders and social norms. Parental control is pervasive in Lebanese culture, and this does not stop as adolescents transition into adulthood. Youth have little margin for agency or participation in decision-making at all levels of society, including the family, local community and nationally (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016)

Adolescents in Lebanon are not allowed to be members of civic and political associations; the minimum age of association membership is 20 years, and the voting age is 21 (UNDP, 2016). Adolescents are also excluded from decision-making at party or civic levels (Rabah and Katrib, 2018). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) founded a National Youth Parliament project for secondary school students, housed in the Lebanese Ministry of Education; however, it was deemed ineffective and was short-lived – similar to many NGO-led youth parliaments (Harb, 2016a). The National Youth Parliament in Lebanon has not been inclusive, as it excluded vulnerable adolescents (those living in poverty, adolescents with disabilities, and refugee adolescents, among others) (Combaz, 2018).

Nonetheless, scouting activities are widespread among youth in Lebanon, with more than 35 scouting organisations promoting volunteer opportunities, particularly for young males. Such opportunities, however, are more common among tertiary students and graduates (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016). Male youth are also more likely than females to be members of civic groups (23% compared to 18%) (UNDP, 2016). Youth participation in civic activities in Lebanon takes different forms. The top three private universities, for example, have civic and sports clubs for students and programmes that promote civic engagement (Joudi and Chehimi, 2017). However, the clubs at universities are mainly controlled by students affiliated with political parties, who seek to mobilise and recruit other students. All

major political parties have youth wings (though these are not generally led by youth) offering sports, scouts, leisure and cultural activities. In addition to these, political elites run their own youth organisations. Many youth-oriented civic organisations in the country are also affiliated with sectarian political parties. Nonetheless, in recent years, independent youth-led organisations and collectives have begun to be formed outside the sectarian political realm (Harb, 2016b). It is worth noting that Lebanese youth have good access to the internet, with almost half using it daily, and usage rates higher among males (Harb, 2010).

Adolescent refugees and youth

Palestinian refugee youth in Lebanon do not have the right to form associations, which limits their ability to participate in civic society (UNICEF, 2010). They are also excluded from participation and leadership opportunities in Palestinian institutions, which are monopolised by older generations. Palestinian youth generally lack autonomy, including financial autonomy and decision-making opportunities, as life decisions are generally made in a hierarchal way by older male 'breadwinners' in the family.

There is a widening gap between youth and their families and older generations in general, largely due to the different socio-political environments each has been exposed to (Kortam and Dot-Pouillard, 2017).

Palestinian children and youth do not have any opportunity to express their concerns and seek support. However, internet accessibility is providing them with an alternative platform to express themselves and communicate with others (UNICEF, 2010). As for Syrian youth, their participation in social and civic life in Lebanon is negligible (Chahine et al., 2014).

Adolescent and youth with disabilities

Persons with disability in Lebanon lack access to services and resources, are generally marginalised and discriminated against at all levels, and are completely excluded from public and political life. Children and youth with disabilities face higher levels of marginalisation and exclusion, inside their homes and in the wider community, particularly those who live in poverty and refugee children and youth (Combaz, 2018).



6 Economic empowerment

Cultural gender roles for boys – whether from the Lebanese, Palestinian or Syrian communities – arise from deep-seated norms that males should assume the breadwinner role in the family, and hence secure work and income. As already noted, boys from all communities in Lebanon are more likely than their female peers to leave school and assume adult responsibilities, and start working at an earlier age. Nonetheless, youth, and especially adolescents, are most affected by the worsening socioeconomic situation in Lebanon and high unemployment rates, and have increasingly limited opportunities available to them. The Syrian conflict has strained the Lebanese economy and services that were already struggling prior to the conflict. With an already limited market, and due to the fact that most Syrian refugees live in areas of Lebanon that were already neglected and deprived, tensions between Syrian and Lebanese youth competing over low-skilled jobs have increased.

Palestinian youth, who are also mainly in low-skilled jobs and prohibited from working in syndicated professions, have also been profoundly impacted by heightened competition caused by the influx of low-skilled labour following the Syrian conflict. As already noted, refugees in Lebanon are considered ‘foreigners’ and must acquire a work permit to work legally. Syrian refugees and Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon are only allowed to work in

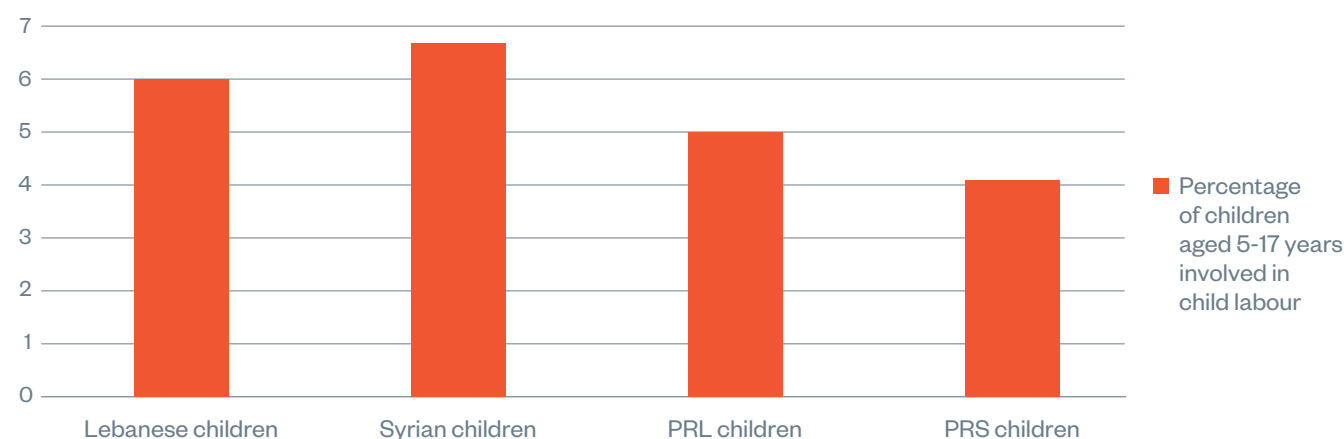
three sectors: agriculture, construction and environment. Palestinian refugees are also allowed to work in some administrative and commercial professions. Although Palestinian refugees were exempted from acquiring and paying for work permits, the government’s increased restrictions on refugees in recent years have imposed additional challenges to their livelihoods.

In Lebanon, the minimum age of work is 14 while the minimum age for hazardous work is 18. Child labour has been increasing in Lebanon following the Syrian crisis and amid the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, but it is under-reported. Children are engaged in some of the worst forms of child labour as well as forced labour in Lebanon. The Lebanese state has not adequately enforced laws and regulations on child labour, while forced labour is still not covered under national laws and regulations (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), 2018) (see Figure 6 for estimates on working children in Lebanon).

Lebanese adolescents and youth

Lebanon’s unemployment rate nationally is high (25%) but the youth unemployment rate is even higher, at 37% (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019). Youth (those under the age of 35) constitute the majority of the unemployed

Figure 6: Percentage of children aged 5-17 from different communities involved in child labour



Source: Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon, 2018.

population in Lebanon, with young women most affected. Adolescents are most affected by unemployment among all age groups (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016). Although there are no recent statistics disaggregated by age and gender, in 2009 the Lebanese government estimated the national unemployment rate at 6%, with the highest rate among those under 30 years. The unemployment rate for adolescents aged 15–19 was 17% (boys) and 30% (girls); the rate for young people aged 20–24 was 13% (males) and 21% (females) (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011).

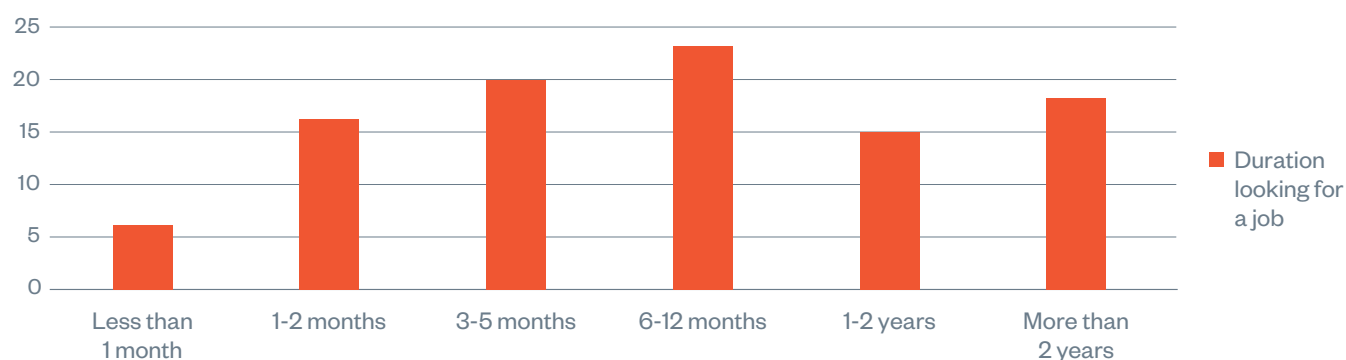
In 2009, the economically active proportion of the population above 15 years was estimated at 48%, with the lowest participation recorded for adolescents (aged 15–19), with some 18% being active. Boys are almost four times more economically active than girls (28% versus 7%). Economic activity tends to increase with age and peaks at the age of 30, especially for men. Economic activity of youth aged 20–24 was 63% for men compared to 35% for women. Generally, it takes up to one year for a third of

unemployed youth to find a job in Lebanon (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011).

In Lebanon, prevailing practices of nepotism and sectarianism play a major role in securing employment. Moreover, 85% of the companies in Lebanon are owned by families, leaving youth one of two options: to either seek nepotism to access the public sector and large corporations, or work with the family business. This leaves those who lack access to such networks totally lacking work opportunities (Chaaban and el Khoury, 2016). The Lebanese labour market is also characterised by a large informal sector, which absorbs around half of the working population (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019).

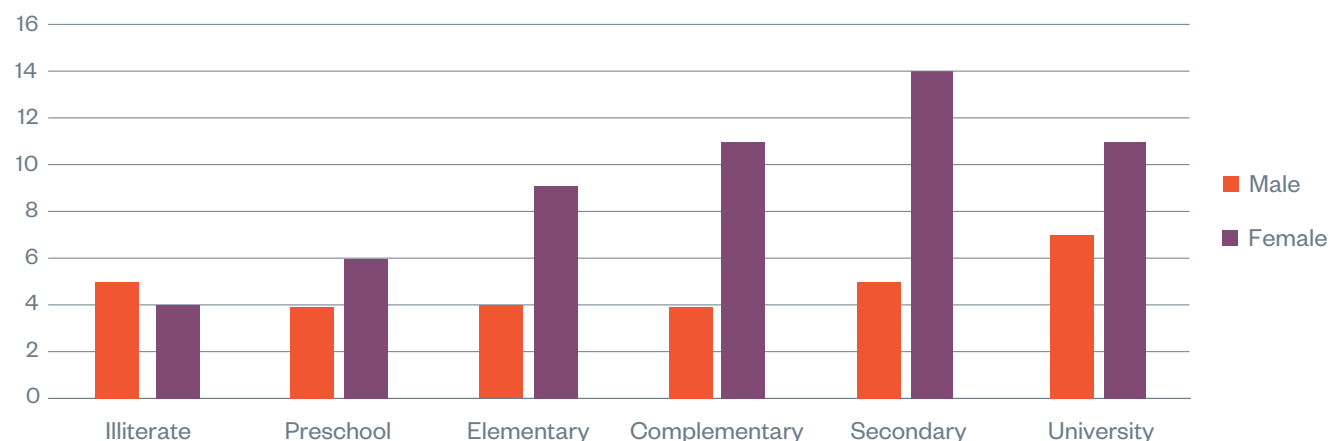
University graduates are the most disadvantaged in accessing job opportunities in Lebanon (See Figure 8). The many challenges facing educated youth in the Lebanese market act as drivers for emigration. These challenges include lack of specialised work opportunities, incompatibility between the large numbers of educated

Figure 7: Duration of looking for a job (2009 estimates)



Source: Yaacoub and Badre, 2011.

Figure 8: Unemployment rate for Lebanese population, by gender and level of education



Source: Yaacoub and Badre, 2011.

youth and low demand in the market, nepotism and favoritism in accessing job opportunities, market informality and lack of contracts and social security, and low wages alongside high living costs. These challenges, as well as the aspirations of educated youth for career advancement and greater exposure to international markets, explain the high youth emigration rate – it is estimated that around half of all educated youth in Lebanon emigrate each year, with rates especially high among educated males (Chaaban, 2009; El-Baba, 2015; Nahas, 2011).

Palestinian refugee adolescents and youth in Lebanon

Palestinians are even more disadvantaged compared to their Lebanese peers. Palestinian refugees are prohibited from working in 36 professions in Lebanon that are reserved for Lebanese nationals, and to secure a job in any of the allowed professions they must obtain a work permit. In 2010, a decree was issued to allow Palestinians to obtain work permits free of charge. However, most Palestinian workers in elementary occupations and low-skilled jobs do not have a work permit or contract (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018; Chaaban et al., 2016). In July 2019, the Ministry of Labour decided to apply the law on obtaining work permits to all foreigners working in Lebanon, which resulted in a crackdown on illegal foreign workers, including Palestinians, and the businesses employing them. This led to protests among the Palestinian community who considered this decision to disadvantage them even more in the labour market (BADIL, 2019). In fact, Palestinians are highly marginalised and lack access to decent work opportunities in Lebanon, which push them into the informal market with no choice but to work under exploitative conditions. Moreover, the situation has pushed refugees to send their children, especially boys, into child labour so that families can meet their basic needs (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019).

Furthermore, unemployment is increasing among this population group, reaching 23.2% (2015) for all age groups and both genders, though unemployment rates are higher for women. Youth aged 15–24 have the highest rate of unemployment, at 36.4%. This increase in unemployment rates is a direct result of the competition with Syrian refugees and the Palestinian refugees from Syria over low-skilled jobs in the limited Lebanese market. The high unemployment rates and limited job opportunities also drives emigration among Palestinian refugee youth,

especially unmarried males (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018; Chaaban et al., 2016). Palestinian youth have the lowest economic activity among all age groups (around 38.5%) with significantly higher rates among males compared to females (Chaaban et al., 2016) (See Figure 9).

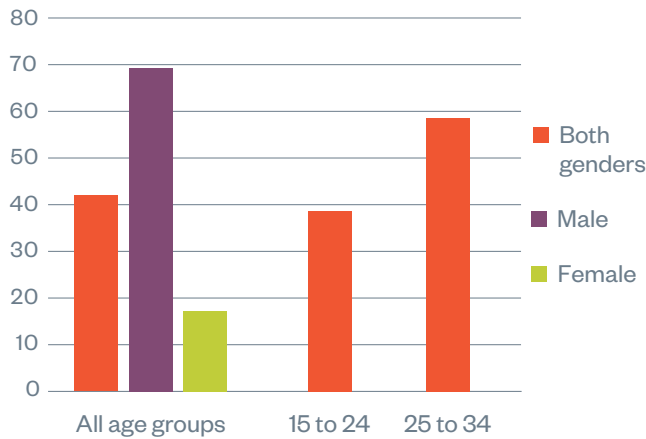
Palestinian refugee adolescents and youth from Syria

This population group are even more disadvantaged than their Palestinian peers who were already in Lebanon. They face more restrictive employment measures and strong competition in a limited market with few decent work opportunities, in contrast to the situation they faced in Syria prior to the conflict, where they enjoyed almost full employment rights. According to Lebanese law, they are also considered foreigners and must apply for a work permit to work legally in Lebanon, but unlike Palestinian refugees, they are not exempted from the work permit fees and face greater restrictions on the professions open to them. These legal and mobility restrictions affect their access to the labour market and subject them to even more exploitative work conditions. As most do not hold legal documents, they are often bound to their area of residence, especially those living in camps, which in turn restricts their access to the labour market. Those who are working are generally in low-paid jobs with dire working conditions. The unemployment rate for all age groups and both genders among Palestinian refugees from Syria is more than double that of Palestinian refugees who were already in Lebanon – at 52.5% – with significantly higher rates among women. Unemployment affects youth in this population group (aged 15–24) the most, with a rate of 57% compared to 23.2% for other Palestinian refugees (UNICEF and UNRWA, 2018; Chaaban et al., 2016) (See Figure 10).

Syrian refugee adolescents and youth

As already noted, Syrians in Lebanon are only allowed to work in three professions, the agriculture, construction and environment sectors (MEHE, 2018). Only 38% of working age Syrian refugees are economically active, with much higher participation rates for males (66%) compared to females (11%). These rates could drop further due to the increasingly restrictive measures introduced by the government in 2019, which may further depress livelihoods (the measures included restrictions on Syrians' ability

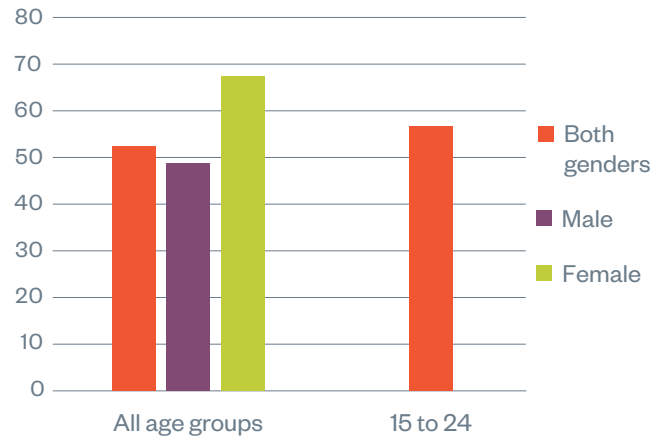
Figure 9: Economic activity among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, by age and gender



Source: Chaaban et al., 2016.

to work or have their own businesses). The enforced restrictions were accompanied by protests against Syrian labour in Lebanon (UNHCR et al., 2019). These restrictions, in addition to the challenging economic situation in Lebanon, have forced Syrian refugees to resort to informal labour under exploitative conditions (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019). Adolescent boys and youth are becoming the family breadwinners because women face cultural limitations on mobility outside the home without male guardians, and men try to avoid commuting for work to avoid problems with the Lebanese authorities (El Chammay et al., 2013). It is estimated that 4.4% of Syrian

Figure 10: Unemployment rate among Palestinian refugees from Syria, by age and gender

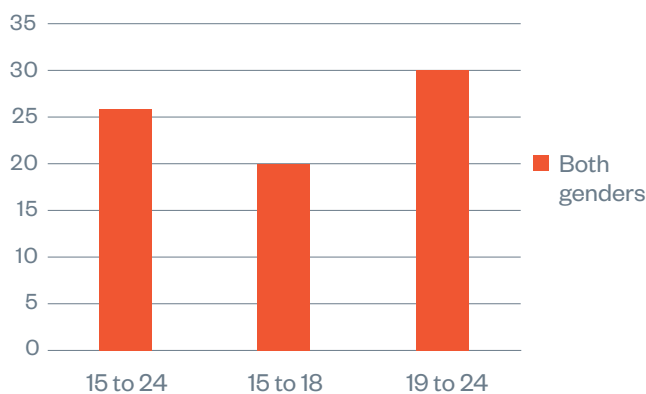


Source: Chaaban et al., 2016.

refugee boys aged 5–17 are involved in economic activities compared to 0.6% of girls (UNHCR et al., 2019), and around 4% of Syrian households push their children, especially adolescents, into work (UNICEF, 2017).

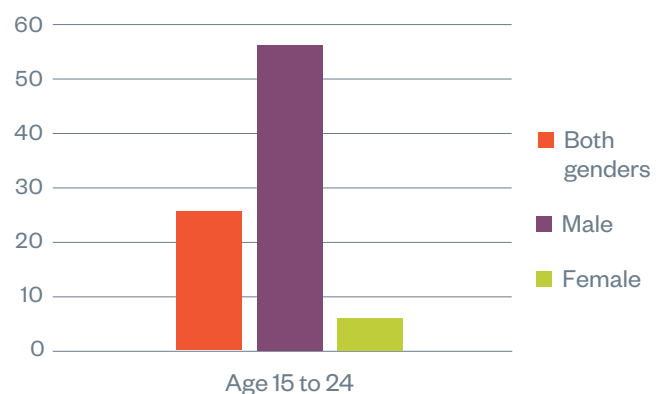
Around 20% of Syrian adolescents aged 15–18 are economically active compared to 30% of those aged 19–24. There is a grave gender disparity among economically active youth aged 15–24: 56% of males are economically active compared to only 6% of females (See Figure 11 and 12). Most youth work in agriculture, followed by construction and the service sector (UNHCR et al., 2019).

Figure 11: Economic activity among Syrian refugee youth, by age group



Source: UNHCR et al., 2019.

Figure 12: Economic activity among Syrian refugee youth (aged 15–24), by gender



Source: UNHCR et al., 2019.

Conclusions

We know relatively little about the situation of adolescent boys and youth from different refugee and host communities across Lebanon, in relation to the six capability domains explored by GAGE. Data is either lacking or outdated, and the fragmented data that does exist is not generally disaggregated by gender or age. Adolescents are often conflated with 'youth', while the 'youth' category itself varies across different studies, covering males aged 15–35. This makes it hard to assess the specific opportunities and challenges facing adolescents in particular, as well as those relevant to young people.

From the existing evidence, we know that although Lebanese boys and girls enjoy the same level of access to education at primary level, boys are disadvantaged at higher school levels, and this is especially true for Lebanese and Palestinian refugee adolescents.

Many health risks threaten young people in Lebanon, ranging from food insecurity to high levels of substance consumption, especially tobacco smoking, which particularly affects boys. Adolescent boys and young men in Lebanon lack access to support services such as psychosocial support, protection, and SRH services, which appear to be more available (though still limited) to girls.

Adolescent boys are often pushed into child labour in dire conditions as a result of the worsening socioeconomic situation in the country, assuming the role of adult breadwinner before their time; this is especially the case among Syrian refugee youth given their very limited job

opportunities. Adolescents and youth generally lack work opportunities in Lebanon, which is pushing many Lebanese and Palestinian boys and youth to emigrate. Some refugee boys are resorting to smuggling migration networks; however, we know few details other than that this phenomenon is increasing.

Violence is widespread in Lebanon across different communities, and boys are the main victims as well as the main perpetrators of peer-to-peer violence. The unstable socio-political environment in Lebanon and continuous conflicts have resulted in replication of violence and tensions within and across communities, with boys being most affected by violence at home, at school, and in the local community.

The instability and lack of opportunities and engagement in Lebanon has resulted in a poor psychosocial well-being among adolescents and youth from different refugee and host communities. This domain in particular seems to be overlooked by interventions and there are few comprehensive studies that reflect the realities of young people's well-being in Lebanon. They have little opportunity to participate in civic and public life, with few avenues open to them. Inclusion in decision-making is also weak, with decisions around key life choices for adolescents and youth being a family (adult) matter, such that adolescents and youth remain excluded from participating in decision-making at all levels.

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