

# 4 Youth participation and representation in public life in Jordan

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This chapter discusses how the government of Jordan can strengthen youth participation and representation in public life. Youth trust in public institutions and representation in policy making remain limited in Jordan, with the risk of young people disassociating from public and political life. Governance arrangements, laws, policies and institutions can be leveraged to promote a stronger relationship between youth and public institutions. Based on an assessment of the current situation, ongoing reform initiatives and good practices from MENA and OECD countries, this chapter provides policy recommendations to empower youth in Jordan's public life.

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## A strong relationship between youth and public institutions

In Jordan, less than 5 in 10 young people trust their government. Indeed, only 43% of people aged 18-29 expressed confidence in their national government in 2018-2019, although this exceeds the average of 32% of young people surveyed in the Arab Barometer across MENA economies.<sup>1</sup> The representation of young people in state institutions also remains limited with a large representation gap of 42 percentage points between the share of members of the House of Representatives under the age of 40 (15%) in 2020<sup>2</sup> and the share of people aged 20-39 in the voting-age population in 2019 (57%).<sup>3</sup> This compares to an average representation gap of 12 percentage points in lower houses of parliament across OECD countries in 2020 (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). At the same time, young people demonstrate agency in the public sphere, participating in the public debate through non-institutionalised channels and contributing to community life through volunteering activities.

The discourse about youth in public life in Jordan has been dominated traditionally by conceptions of young people as a potential risk to stability and security (Milton-Edwards, 2018<sup>[2]</sup>). However, this discourse fails to acknowledge young people's positive contributions to their communities and their stake in decisions that affect their future, overshadowing the structural challenges that lie at the heart of the relationship between youth and public institutions. In fact, the effectiveness of government policies widely rests on compliance and the sustainability of structural reforms requires long policy timeframes (OECD, 2013<sup>[3]</sup>). When citizens trust state's institutions, they tend to comply voluntarily with rules to a greater extent and they are more likely to accept short-term sacrifices in exchange of long-term, less tangible benefits (Murphy, 2004<sup>[4]</sup>). This is significant for young people, who will bear most of the long-term consequences of today's decisions. Promoting trust and strengthening the relationship between youth and public institutions is hence crucial to ensure the readiness and resilience of societies to future shocks.

The positive role that young people's participation can have is recognised in the National Youth Strategy (NYS) of Jordan for 2019-2025, which includes strategic objectives on the empowerment of youth in the political, social and economic field, along with the promotion of youth engagement, effective citizenship and leadership. Promoting youth participation and representation in decision-making is particularly important in the face of cultural norms and perceptions that perpetuate a view of young people as lacking experience, skills and interest to be involved in public life.

This chapter:

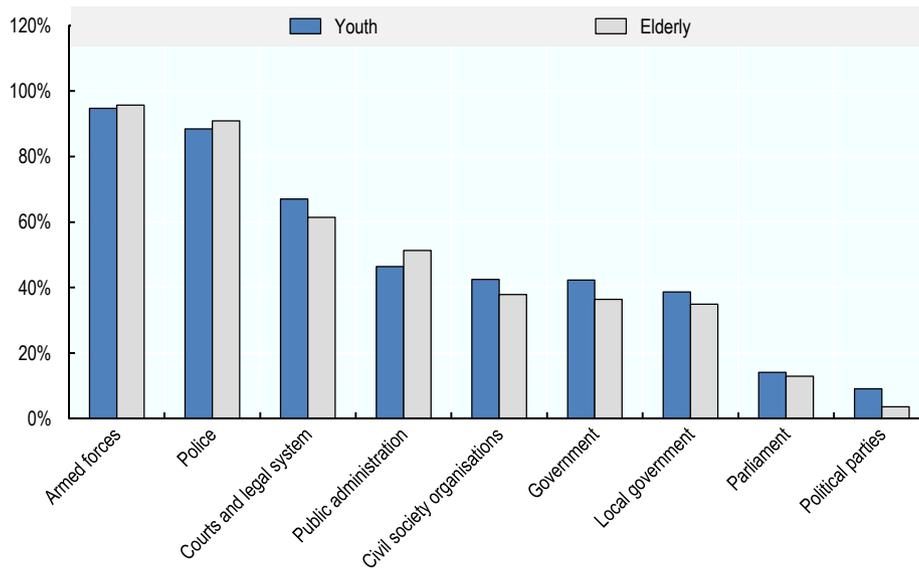
1. analyses data and trends in youth participation, representation and engagement in the decision-making process;
2. discusses governance challenges that hinder youth relationship with public institutions and how Jordan can address them; and
3. highlights the role of youth work and youth volunteering in promoting resilient societies and how Jordan can strengthen these fields through specific programmes and resources.

## Youth express higher trust in government than other age cohorts but less than in the past

Youth trust in the Jordanian government exceeds the trust expressed by other age groups. Indeed, while 43% of people aged 15-29 surveyed in the Arab Barometer Wave V in 2018-2019 expressed trust in their government, only 36% of people aged 30-49 and 37% of people aged 50+ did so. At the same time, youth trust in government has severely deteriorated since 2007, when it stood at 60%.<sup>4</sup> Similar trends have also been experienced across OECD countries, where inequalities in income and opportunities, unemployment and job insecurity, lack of economic growth, perceived corruption and global challenges have undermined youth confidence in public institutions (OECD, 2017<sup>[5]</sup>; OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>).

Among the various public institutions, young people in Jordan largely trust the armed forces, the police and the justice system, whereas they express much more limited trust in the public administration and political institutions such as government, parliament and political parties (Figure 4.1). These differences reflect long-term trends and perceptions of the representativeness and effectiveness of different public institutions in Jordan (Kayyali, 2020<sup>[6]</sup>).

**Figure 4.1. Youth trust the armed forces and the police more than political institutions in Jordan**



Note: "Youth" are defined here as people aged 15-29 for the question on trust in government and as people aged 18-29 for the questions on trust in all other public institutions; "elderly" are defined here as people aged 50+.

Source: Arab Barometer Wave V.

Trust in public institutions is a multifaceted concept driven by a variety of factors. OECD analysis (OECD, 2017<sup>[5]</sup>) suggests that governments can promote public trust by delivering services and policies that are high in quality, responsive to citizens' demands, reliable and guided by principles of integrity, openness and fairness. For instance, 48% of people aged 18-29 in Jordan surveyed in the Arab Barometer Wave V in 2018-2019 identify democracy with a government ensuring job opportunities for all. In turn, only 20% of youth in Jordan are satisfied with the government's performance in creating job opportunities, which might hence drive dissatisfaction with public institutions more generally. Furthermore, the perceived level of corruption in the political system also has a significant, negative impact on citizen's trust in public institutions (Rothstein, 2011<sup>[7]</sup>). In fact, 90% of young people in Jordan think corruption is present at a large or medium extent in their country.<sup>5</sup> Jordan ranked 60<sup>th</sup> among 180 countries, and 6<sup>th</sup> among 18 countries in the MENA region in the 2020 Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International.<sup>6</sup>

Chapter 2 has explored the role that National Youth Strategies (NYS) play in supporting young people transition to an autonomous life. Jordan's NYS 2019-2025 also features commitments to reinforce the relationship between youth and public institutions. For instance, it outlines projects and related key performance indicators to promote citizenship education, engagement without discrimination, youth civil and political engagement, volunteering and youth work, among others. Similar areas are also covered in the National Youth Strategies of most OECD countries: the National Youth Strategy of Slovenia (2013-2022) includes objectives and measurable indicators on youth participation in elections as voters and candidates as well as their representation in institutions both at the local and national level. OECD (2020<sup>[11]</sup>) finds a tendency between the quality of a National Youth Strategy and greater interest of young cohorts in politics across OECD countries. Although the relationship is statistically imprecise, it highlights that

investments into the quality of National Youth Strategies and opportunities for youth to participate in public life can be mutually reinforcing.

## Promoting an enabling environment for youth participation

Youth engagement and representation do not take place in a vacuum but rely on an enabling environment. Promoting an enabling environment – in terms of legal, policy, institutional, and practical conditions necessary for non-governmental actors to access information, express themselves, associate, organise, and participate in public life – is an important condition for youth to meaningfully participate in public life. Research has also shown that promoting civic freedoms can lead to better societal outcomes, for instance in terms of economic growth and human development (Hogg and Hoodess, 2018<sup>[8]</sup>).

Jordan was the first country in the MENA region to enact the right to information in 2007, it was the first Arab country to join the Open Government Partnership in 2012, and it has embarked on important decentralisation reforms since 2015, pioneering new initiatives to improve transparency, accountability and participation at the national and local levels. At the same time, important challenges persist in the promotion of an enabling environment for youth participation. OECD analysis shows that significant variations still exist among OECD countries as well when it comes to political rights and civil liberties (OECD, 2018<sup>[9]</sup>).

In order to engage them as active stakeholders, young people need to have access to information (ATI) and public data to understand and participate in policy-making as well as access to participation opportunities. A recent comparative report published by the OECD finds that Jordan's legal framework on the right to information presents limits due to its vagueness (OECD, 2019<sup>[10]</sup>). Furthermore, access to information requires governments to have the capacities to respond to ATI requests and pro-actively publish relevant data and information.

Access to information and citizens engagement can also be strengthened through efforts on ensuring open data, which must be pertinent, precise, communicated well and in a timely manner, easy to understand, accessible and easy to use. At the same time, data protection and privacy regulations should be upheld and complemented by an ethical handling of data. The OECD Good Practice Principles for Data Ethics in the Public Sector (2021<sup>[11]</sup>) can support public officials in the implementation of data ethics in digital government such that public integrity and trust are upheld.

An enabling environment also requires that all people are able to freely express themselves in public, without harassment or retribution, to come together in peaceful protest, and to form or join in associations, groups, movements and civil society organisations. According to 2018-2019 survey data from the Arab Barometer, 44% of youth in Jordan report that freedom of expression is not guaranteed, while 53% stress that their freedom to protest peacefully is not guaranteed.<sup>7</sup> Long administrative approval processes to organise events, vetting processes in the selection of topics, and lack of resources can also represent important barriers according to the interviews conducted by OECD.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, interviews conducted by OECD with youth-led civil society organisations suggest that young people interested in establishing clubs or youth bodies can face tight licensing requirements. Among others, the ministry of youth could consider lowering the minimum age and easing the licensing procedures needed to establish clubs and youth bodies. As further explored in the rest of the chapter, developing opportunities, structures and innovative formats for youth engagement, especially targeting under-represented and marginalised youth, can also be instrumental in creating an enabling environment for youth participation in public life.

Media and digital rights and freedoms are also particularly relevant for young people, as they tend to use digital tools to inform and express themselves, communicate, and associate more regularly than older age cohorts do. Such rights and freedoms are also fundamentally based on the freedom of the press more widely. Data from the Arab Barometer 2018-2019 shows that on average 61% of people aged 18-30 spent 5 or more hours per day on social media across MENA economies, compared to 34% among those aged

30+. Social media are also the primary source of information for 63% of youth in Jordan, compared to 37% of older people, thereby increasing their likelihood of being exposed to misinformation. According to a recent study, for instance, social media accounted for 88% of misinformation related to the COVID-19 pandemic between January and March 2020 (Brennen, 2020<sub>[12]</sub>). However, the COVID-19 crisis has also revealed vulnerabilities in terms of young people's access to online tools. For instance, more than one in five 15-year olds from socio-economically disadvantaged schools does not have access to a computer for schoolwork across OECD countries (OECD, 2020<sub>[13]</sub>). In Jordan, only 37% of adults have access to a working computer or tablet at home (Silver et al., 2019<sub>[14]</sub>). Policies and programmes to ensure more inclusive access to electronic devices, civic digital capability, and connectivity among young users and to protect an enabling environment for youth participation online are critical to overcoming the digital divide and countering misinformation.

Government efforts to combat mis- and dis-information, especially on social media, require whole-of-government approaches, setting clear mandates, promoting coordination across stakeholders, and ensuring sufficient human and financial capacities (Matasick, Alfonsi and Bellantoni, 2020<sub>[15]</sub>). For instance, in 2018, the Government of Jordan launched the electronic platform "Haggak Tira" ("You have the right to know") to combat misinformation.<sup>9</sup> The platform, managed by a specialised team in the Ministry of State for Media Affairs under the Prime Minister Office, monitors and verifies information to provide transparent, accurate and quick information to combat fake news. To fully leverage the potential of this platform, however, the government of Jordan could equip the platform with a clearer classification of the risks posed by a particular piece of misinformation as well as with the necessary human, financial and technical capacities to ensure rapid responses (OECD, 2021 forthcoming<sub>[16]</sub>). The government of Jordan has also taken action to promote media and information literacy targeting young people through its National Executive Plan on Media and Information Literacy (2020-2023). Strategies, guides, and practical toolkits for countering dis- and misinformation could further strengthen these efforts. At the same time, measures to counter misinformation, hate speech and libel online should be clearly and transparently defined, so as to avoid abuses of discretionary power that might endanger online participation. A debate on balancing these different elements emerged, for instance, during the legislative process of the 2019 Cybersecurity Law of Jordan (Araz, 2020<sub>[17]</sub>).

Numerous countries have established a children or youth ombudsperson to further institutionalise the protection of the rights of children and young people. While competencies and powers vary widely across countries, 19 OECD countries have created a specific ombudsperson for youth or children at the regional or national/federal level to protect and promote the rights of children and youth, and hold governments accountable. Moreover, 11 OECD countries have created an office dedicated to children or youth within the national ombudsperson office, or included youth affairs as part of its mandate (OECD, 2018<sub>[9]</sub>). In Jordan, the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission was established in 2016 to combat and prevent financial and administrative corruption. Through a memorandum of understanding, the Commission and the Ministry of Youth conduct activities to raise awareness about corruption among young people. The Commission could be further strengthened in terms of mandate, powers and financial and human capacities when it comes to the protection and promotion of an enabling environment for youth participation.

## Developing new formats for youth non-institutionalised participation

As of November 2019, only 36% of respondents in Jordan believed that ordinary people can influence decision-making (IRI, 2020<sub>[18]</sub>). Furthermore, among these, 52% believed protest is the best channel to influence decisions, compared to 23% of them pointing to voting in elections. Available data suggests that young people are more likely to take part in peaceful public demonstrations than older people in Jordan.<sup>10</sup> The preference of young people for non-institutionalised channels over institutionalised channels to

exercise civic engagement and participate in political life has also been recognised as a trend across OECD countries (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>).

Young people can have numerous reasons to prefer non-institutionalised channels, including notably a lack of confidence in the impact of their participation in institutionalised channels such as elections, lower transaction costs and issue-specific mobilisation (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). Youth participation in non-institutionalised channels also demonstrates their interest and determination in tackling public issues. At the same time, non-institutionalised channels show limitations with concerns around issues of transparency, accountability and unequal access across society (such as by education level, gender, and socio-economic background).

In the last decade, governments at all levels have been increasingly adopting innovative deliberative processes, such as Citizens' Assemblies, Juries and Panels that bring together groups of randomly selected participants and facilitate deliberation to complement the decision-making process of public institutions (OECD, 2020<sup>[19]</sup>). These mechanisms allow involving citizens more directly in the resolution of issues of major interest from local issues to global ones, such as climate change.

In Jordan, the National Renaissance Plan 2019-2020 recognises the important role of youth in the successful implementation of decentralisation and it seeks to systematically integrate youth in participatory processes for citizens to identify priorities for public services and development objectives at the local level (OECD, 2020<sup>[20]</sup>). In the Jordanian municipality of Deir Alla, for instance, the decision of where to build a school was prepared in collaboration with a voluntary committee, which featured representatives from the local community (OECD, 2017<sup>[21]</sup>). However, efforts to ensure the participation of young people in such bottom-up processes remains limited and these processes remain largely at the local level and are not institutionalised in Jordan (OECD, 2020<sup>[20]</sup>). In France, for instance, the Citizen Convention for Climate brought together 150 citizens, including 14% aged 16-24, in 2019-2020 to discuss actionable measures to tackle climate change.<sup>11</sup> The discussions led to the elaboration of 149 proposals to the President of the French Republic, some of which have informed or fed into the new law tackling climate change passed in May 2021.

Representative deliberative mechanisms provide innovative formats that governments can adopt and adapt to enhance youth participation in decision-making, in coherence and complementarity with the other institutionalised channels. At the same time, the increasing use of these channels by young people demonstrates the need to strengthen institutionalised channels in parallel.

## Encouraging young people to go to the ballot box

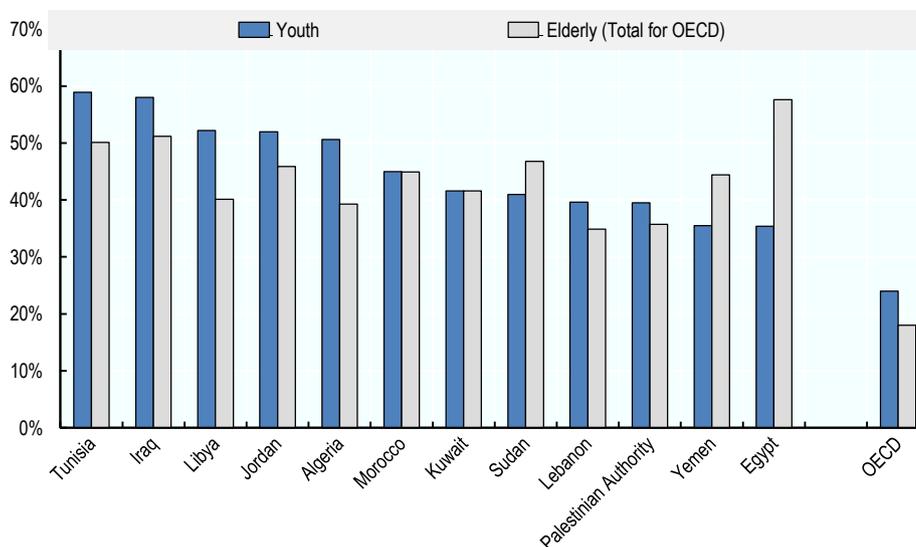
Voters under 30 years of age represented 38% of the people who participated in the 2020 parliamentary elections in Jordan (Rased, 2020<sup>[22]</sup>): in 2016, 35% of those who voted were below the age of 30 (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2016<sup>[23]</sup>). However, the 2020 parliamentary elections also recorded the lowest turnout in more than a decade, with only 29.9% of eligible voters casting their ballot, down from 36% in 2016 (Ma'ayeh and Sweis, 2021<sup>[24]</sup>). While the share of young people in the citizens that voted may have increased, this might also be due to a contraction of elder citizens' participation, notably due to the sanitary conditions linked to holding elections during the COVID-19 pandemic.

When looking back at the pre-COVID 2016 parliamentary election, survey data from the Arab Barometer Wave V shows that young people participated less than older fellow citizens did. Indeed, 41% of surveyed people aged 18-29 reported having voted in the 2016 parliamentary election, while 55% of people aged above 30 did so.<sup>12</sup> While young people in Jordan reported the third highest participation in elections in the MENA region after Iraq (53%) and Lebanon (42%),<sup>13</sup> their participation rate remains below the average 68% youth's reported turnout across OECD countries among those aged 15-24 for which data exists (OECD, 2020<sup>[25]</sup>).

Youth participation in elections is affected by a variety of factors, including interest in politics: in fact, with the fourth highest rate across MENA, 52% of young people in Jordan surveyed in the Arab Barometer V reported they are not interested in politics at all, compared to 46% of people in Jordan aged 50+. This compares to an average 24% of young people not interested at all in politics across OECD countries (Figure 4.2). Participation in elections can also be hampered by a lack of confidence in the impact of voting in changing the country's policies and direction and, in some cases, due to fears of negative consequences of becoming engaged in political activities. Electoral disengagement may also be a form of protest in itself. Furthermore, in Jordan, nearly 40% of youth surveyed in a study prior to the 2020 elections reported their tribal affiliation influences their voting behaviour (Ma'ayeh and Sweis, 2021<sup>[24]</sup>). From a governance perspective, voter registration rules, voting age requirements and civic education are some of the elements that can influence the likeliness of young people to vote.

**Figure 4.2. A majority of youth in Jordan is not interested in politics at all, comparison across the MENA region**

Percentage of respondents reporting they are not interested at all in politics, by age, 2018-2019.



Note: "Youth" is defined here as people aged 19-29 for MENA region and as people aged 15-29 for OECD average. They grey bars refer to people aged 50+ for MENA region and to the total population for OECD average.

Source: Arab Barometer Wave V and OECD (2019), *Society at a Glance 2019: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD Publishing.

Voter registration requirements can represent a considerable challenge especially for first-time voters who are more likely to be changing residency at a time of transition. Governments can take various steps in order to facilitate youth's registration, for instance through automatic registration. Jordan has undertaken steps to facilitate voter's registration. The 2010 electoral law, for instance, initially included fees for registering to vote, which were later removed (National Democratic Institute, 2015<sup>[26]</sup>). With the 2012 electoral law, citizens needed to present their national identity card and a voter card to vote at the polling station: people were required to register in person to receive the voter card (National Democratic Institute, 2015<sup>[26]</sup>). Since 2016, the Independent Election Commission became responsible for managing the voter registration, automatically drawing from the civil registry, which is updated by the Civil Status and Passports Department under the Ministry of Interior. Furthermore, national identification card became the unique document for voting: these changes led to the inclusion of some 82% more voters compared to the 2013 election (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2016<sup>[23]</sup>).

Governments should ensure that young citizens have accessible information at hand on how to register and vote, for instance through information and registration campaigns in schools, universities and other places where young people socialise. Social media can also be leveraged, for example by prominently displaying reliable information and links to governmental websites to all users of voting age.

Voting age requirements can also represent a barrier to the political socialisation of young people. As further explored in Chapter 5, the minimum age required to vote in Jordan is 18 years, although citizens can be added to the voter list already at 17 years 90 days. OECD countries with a voting age below 18 years point to the political socialisation effects by family members and positive impact of school-based voter education programmes for youth aged 16-17 years old to encourage young people to vote. For instance, Austria adopted a general voting age of 16 years in 2007 (OECD, 2020<sub>[11]</sub>).

### ***Civic and citizenship education can help promote participation***

Civic and citizenship education<sup>14</sup> in schools and through extra-curricular activities can be critical enablers of young people's participation in elections as well as more widely in democratic processes and engagement platforms. The 2017 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Integrity (OECD, 2017<sub>[27]</sub>) acknowledges the importance of "carrying out, where appropriate, campaigns to promote civic education on public integrity, among individuals and particularly in schools". This resonates with findings from a recent OECD report "Education for Integrity: Teaching on anticorruption, values and the rule of law" (OECD, 2018<sub>[28]</sub>) that educating children and youth in the field of integrity and anti-corruption will likely have a positive impact on future civic behaviour.

Civic and citizenship education support youth in understanding and exercising their rights, embrace democratic values, gain awareness of civic and political issues, and acquire the skills to communicate, think critically and engage in decision making (Manning and Edwards, 2014<sub>[29]</sub>). Civic and citizenship education should not be merely a theoretical exercise and limited to discussions in classrooms. The participation of students in school governance (e.g. student councils), community service and in extra-curricular activities provide spaces to apply theoretical knowledge in practice. Support structures, such as training schemes and funding programmes, are crucial to create an environment in which civic and citizenship education can flourish.

In Jordan, civic education is taught once a week as part of the educational curriculum to Grades 5-10 students, aiming to develop good citizenship among students and to strengthen the sense of loyalty and belonging to their country and to the Arabic and Islamic nation (UNESCO, 2017<sub>[30]</sub>). The effectiveness of such curricula is however also dependent on the levels of training of teachers in this field, the framing of "good citizenship" and the extent to which textbook-based civic education is linked with more practical and skills-focused aspects.

Civic and citizenship education can also be promoted effectively outside of schools. For instance, the Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi conducts mock elections simultaneously with national and EU elections in order to introduce to voting those who are too young to take part in the elections.<sup>15</sup> In parallel to the 2019 Finnish parliamentary elections, more than 600 schools and 60,000 students took part in such mock elections. Similar initiatives also take place in Jordan with the support of international organisations and donors. For instance, in 2017, the OECD organised mock elections in Madaba involving 23 young candidates and 2,251 young voters ahead of local elections, in cooperation with the RASED Programme of Al Hayat Center for Civil Society Development, the French Embassy and the Independent Election Commission (IEC).<sup>16</sup> More recently, the European Union, in collaboration with the IEC and the Spanish Agency for International Development, organised mock elections with 600 young people from Amman ahead of the 2020 parliamentary elections.<sup>17</sup>

In Jordan, the National Youth Strategy for 2019-25 targets to increase the number of youth workshops on democracy and citizenship to 36 workshops per year by 2025, primarily through its local youth centres.

The role of the youth centres is further explored in Chapter 3. Numerous non-governmental organisations and international donors also conduct initiatives and trainings focusing on strengthening citizenship skills such as critical thinking, public speaking, and debating in Jordan, such as the “Ana Usharek” programme (Box 4.1). While these programmes provide valuable support to young people in Jordan, the number of non-governmental initiatives in this field also points to an important gap in the formal education system to be addressed.

#### Box 4.1. Learning and practicing democratic governance

##### “Ana Usharek” (“I Participate”)

Since 2013, the Programme organised by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) supports young people apply democratic methods and engage in community action. It targets university students in dialogue and debates to learn among youth as well as with politicians about democratic practices and principles, political and electoral systems, local and national governance, human rights, positive communication, citizenship, and gender. Participants of the programme also competed in national debates about current political events in Jordan some of which were broadcasted on national television.

As of May 2021, the programme cooperates with 23 universities throughout Jordan. In the face of the COVID-19 crisis, the programme conducted a social media campaign to encourage students to continue to attend. In less than a week, 1,362 students had joined online sessions across 17 universities.

In 2015, in collaboration with Queen Rania Foundation schools initiative and the Ministry of Education, the Ana Usharek Schools programme was initiated to incorporate the themes addressed in the programme into a civic education programme for middle and high school students, with curricula and manuals to help teachers design and deliver classes. As of June 2021, over 10,500 students from 350 schools have participated in these classes.

Source: [https://www.ndi.org/Youth\\_Political\\_Participation\\_Jordan](https://www.ndi.org/Youth_Political_Participation_Jordan); <https://www.ndi.org/our-stories/midst-covid19-ana-usharek-program-goes-virtual>; <https://www.youthpower.org/innovations/ana-usharek-i-participate-civic-engagement>.

## Youth remain under-represented in Jordanian public institutions

Promoting a fair representation of young people in public institutions, including the public administration, parliament and cabinet, is critical to ensure that public decisions take into account different perspectives; that policy solutions benefit from a range of experiences and skills; and that policy outcomes are sustainable and responsive to all citizens (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). For instance, OECD quantitative analysis shows that there is a mild tendency between having a higher share of young parliamentarians and young people expressing more interest in politics, although the relationship is statistically imprecise (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>).

### ***Youth and the public administration***

The public sector has traditionally been one of the largest employers in Jordan: in 2018, the public sector employed 30% of the labour force.<sup>18</sup> More specifically, as of 2018, government employees across public institutions, ministries and authorities represented 23% of the labour force in Jordan.<sup>19</sup> Relatively higher wages, social protection entitlements and lack of opportunities in the private sector have for long made the public sector a favoured choice for young people entering the labour market, especially young women (ILO, 2012<sup>[31]</sup>). Reportedly, the country’s Civil Service Bureau, which handles applications for government

jobs, has an employment waiting list that for many positions now exceeds 10 years (Luck, 2019<sup>[32]</sup>). According to data from the Civil Service Bureau, 392,951 people applied for government employment in 2020, 62% of which were women. Furthermore, 66% of applicants were aged 20-24 and 26% of them were aged 25-29. In 2020, 8031 people were appointed in the civil service following applications in 2019. While age-disaggregated data for new appointees is not available, for instance, 18% of the employees of Jordan's Ministry of Youth were aged 18-34 as of 2018, compared to 26% on average across entities in charge of youth affairs in OECD countries in 2019 (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). Chapter 3 discusses in further detail the human capacities of Jordan's Ministry of Youth.

Jordan's National Employment Strategy 2011-2020<sup>20</sup> identified curtailing public sector employment as one of its priorities. While efforts should be made for the public administration not be identified as the only viable option for young people seeking employment, ensuring a fair representation of youth in the civil service remains instrumental. Indeed, while public administrations with a limited number of young employees do not necessarily fare worse than others in delivering on youth's needs, the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability (2019<sup>[33]</sup>) highlights that governments should build an inclusive and safe public service that reflects the diversity of society, which also includes age-diversity. Furthermore, attracting young people into the public administration can bring new and diverse skill-sets needed for modern public service capability, as well as conduct to better policy outcomes as far as diversity in decision-making can help generate innovative ideas.

Jordan's government can re-imagine recruitment strategies and selection tools to modernise its selection process. Internship schemes can be helpful in offering young people the chance to gain skills and exposure to public institutions: Jordan's public institutions do not run internship schemes, while for instance 62% of OECD entities in charge of youth affairs do so (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). More flexible contractual modalities and dedicated programmes such as graduate programmes can help develop government's workforce by attracting, developing and retaining highly qualified young talent through training, mentoring, job rotation and accelerated promotion tracks. Such programmes, such as the United Kingdom's Civil Service Fast Stream (Box 4.2), exist in 42% of OECD countries (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). Furthermore, as older officials approach retirement, Jordan could mitigate the risk of losing institutional knowledge and experience by developing structured, regular and extensive opportunities for inter-generational learning between older and younger civil servants. For instance, internal secondments, job rotations, networking opportunities, and mentorship programmes can be designed as to promote inter-generational learning in the public administration.

#### Box 4.2. Developing young talent in the civil service

##### United Kingdom: Civil Service Fast Stream

The UK Fast Stream is the Civil Service's flagship leadership development programme, recruiting and developing young talent through fast-track training and promotion. Graduates are centrally recruited through a variety of assessments including online tests, work based scenarios, video interviews, group exercises, and panel interviews. There are 15 different schemes on the Fast Stream, each offering a career path toward a government profession, from generalist ones to professions focused on digital and data, finance, economics, science and more. The Fast Stream schemes, lasting between 2 and 4 years, expose the recruited young people to placements in different departments and authorities, a variety of roles, as well as dedicated networking, learning and development opportunities. Upon successful completion of the scheme, participants to the Fast Stream are integrated in the Civil Service.

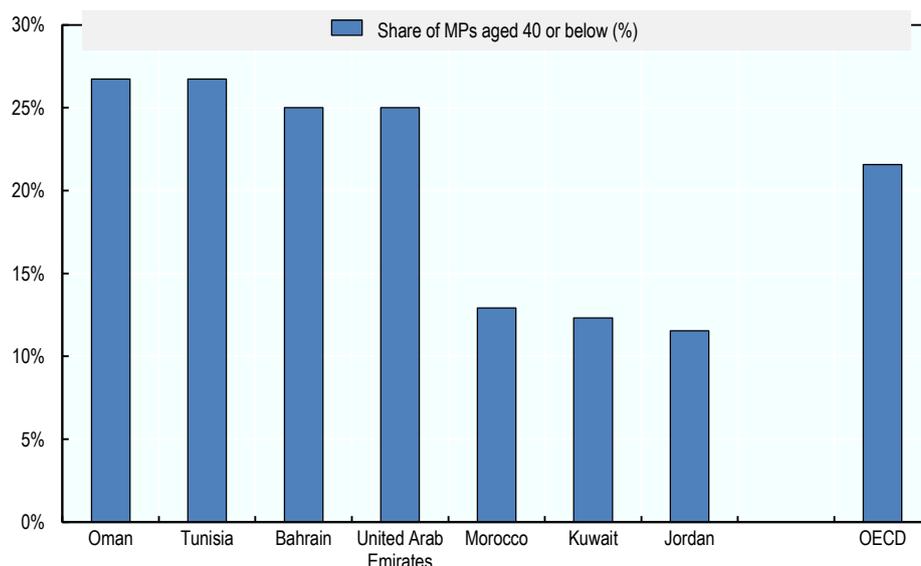
Source: <https://www.faststream.gov.uk/>.

### Youth representation in parliament and cabinet remains limited

According to data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), only 12% of the members of Jordan's House of Representatives are under 40 years of age as of May 2021, the lowest share among MENA countries for which data is available and below the OECD average of 22% (Figure 4.3). Furthermore, this compares to the fact that people aged 20-39 in Jordan made up 57% of the voting-age population as of 2019.<sup>21</sup> The resulting representation gap of 42 percentage points stands out as particularly large when compared to the average representation gap of 12 percentage points in lower houses of parliament across OECD countries in 2020 (OECD, 2020<sub>[11]</sub>). Age-representation gaps are often more pronounced in countries' leaderships: in fact, according to data from the Hayat Center, the average age of Jordan's cabinet members was 59 years as of September 2020 (Hayat Center-Rased, 2020<sub>[34]</sub>). Similarly, the average age of cabinet members varied between 45 and 62 years across OECD countries, with an average of 53 years as of February 2018 (OECD, 2018<sub>[9]</sub>).

**Figure 4.3. Youth in Jordan remains under-represented in parliament, comparison across MENA region**

Share of members of parliaments (MPs) in lower chambers and unicameral parliaments aged 40 or below, 2021



Note: "OECD" refers to the average across 33 OECD countries for which data was available as of 2020.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Parline database on national parliaments* (<https://data.ipu.org>) and (OECD, 2020<sub>[11]</sub>).

While representative institutions do not necessarily need to mirror the composition of the population, OECD analysis finds a mild tendency between having a higher share of parliamentarians under the age of 40 and young people expressing more interest in politics (as well as feeling more politically empowered), although the relationship is statistically imprecise (OECD, 2020<sub>[11]</sub>). Furthermore, large representation gaps are a warning sign about norms, rules and regulations that may hamper youth's access to public institutions and limit their aspirations in the first place. For instance, in the 2017 elections for majors and for governorate and local council seats, only 6% of the 6,623 candidates were under the age of 30 and only 14% were under the age of 40 (Milton-Edwards, 2018<sub>[21]</sub>).

Traditional stereotypes of young people as lacking the necessary experience, financial and legal obstacles, as well as minimum age requirements (Chapter 5) can represent major obstacles for youth who would like to run as candidates in elections. Differently from Jordan, across OECD countries that have a National

Youth Strategy, 38% of them included specific objectives on strengthening youth representation in state institutions (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>).

Running a campaign can require investing considerable financial resources and undergoing complex legal procedures. In Jordan, all candidates are required to pay a JOD 500 registration fee (around USD 705) and each list must pay a refundable deposit of JOD 2,000 (around USD 2,820) (Milton-Edwards, 2018<sup>[2]</sup>). The dominance of personal connections (“wasta”) can also represent a barrier to young people’s participation in politics given a young persons’ presumed limited social capital. In other countries, political parties and their youth wings can offer avenues to reduce such financial and social capital barriers: yet, their role remains limited in Jordan. In the 2020 parliamentary elections, 41 political parties ran for elections, with 389 candidates (i.e. 23% of the total number of the contestants); yet, only 12 party members won a seat in parliament, i.e. 9% of the total number of members of parliament (Ma’ayeh and Sweis, 2021<sup>[24]</sup>; Kao and Karmel, 2020<sup>[35]</sup>). According to data from the Arab Barometer Wave V, in 2018, only 9% of youth surveyed expressed trust in political parties in Jordan and less than 1% of them are members of a political party (Kathrin, 2018<sup>[36]</sup>). Some efforts have been made in this area: for instance, in collaboration with the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, Jordan’s Ministry of Youth launched the Jordan School of Politics (JSoP) in 2019. JSoP is a training programme that aims to encourage youth participation in public life through building trust and democratic values and develop skills and knowledge for young politicians.

As discussed in further detail in Chapter 5, young people need to be at least 30 years old to run as candidates for the national parliament and at least 25 for run in local elections. These thresholds compare to an average age requirement of 20.1 years for lower houses of parliament and unicameral systems across OECD countries and 24.7 for upper houses (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). In 2011, the Royal Constitutional Review Committee issued a recommendation to reduce the candidacy age to 25. Similarly, the EU Election Observation Mission to the 216 elections (2016<sup>[23]</sup>) recommended to decrease the eligibility age for membership of the Chamber of Deputies to align with existing thresholds for municipal councils. In fact, Stockemer and Sundström (2018<sup>[37]</sup>) find that for every year candidate age requirements are lowered, the share of young deputies aged 40 and lower increases by more than 1 percentage point.

In Jordan, gender and minority quotas reserve 15 of the 130 parliamentary seats to women and other 15 to minority communities (Christians: 9, Circassians: 3, Chechens: 3). In the 2020 elections, no female candidate won a parliamentary seat beyond the 15 seats reserved to them. A few countries in the MENA region have also adopted youth quotas, including Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia (IPU, 2018<sup>[38]</sup>), whose experiences might be interesting for consideration for Jordan as well.

## Including youth in the policy cycle

An inclusive policy cycle is crucial to ensure that policy outcomes deliver on the diverse needs of citizens and benefit from their diverse experiences. As recognised in the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017<sup>[39]</sup>), stakeholder<sup>22</sup> participation in the policy cycle increases government’s accountability, broadens citizen’s empowerment and influence on decisions, builds civic capacity and improves the evidence for policy-making, among others. For instance, OECD analysis shows that youth organisations that were involved in the policy cycle to a greater extent, also reported higher satisfaction with government’s performance across public service areas such as transportation, health, housing and employment among others (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). Ensuring transparency and communication, setting commitments, and taking initiatives for informing, consulting and engaging young people and their organisations are crucial steps to include young people in the policy cycle.

### ***Ensuring youth-targeted communication***

Transparency is about ensuring that citizens and other stakeholders can observe, understand and monitor the activities of the government, at the national as well as subnational level. Ensuring access to information and open data are particularly relevant to young people.

Beyond ensuring transparency, an enabling environment for young people to participate in the policy cycle requires effective and youth-targeted communication. For instance, Jordan's National Youth Strategy 2019-25 highlights communication with young people as one of the most important priorities in building and developing the strategy. Most young people in Jordan are growing up as “digital natives” and demonstrate strong awareness and skills in mastering new digital technologies. While this development comes with its challenges (such as the spread of fake news), digitalisation offers new opportunities for young people to participate and engage in public life.

As recognised in the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017<sup>[39]</sup>), governments should promote innovative ways to promote stakeholder participation by leveraging digital government tools. Jordan's Ministry of Youth has undertaken significant efforts to open up new information and communication channels through its Twitter, Facebook and Instagram profiles since 2016 as well as through weekly newsletters. As of May 2021, the Facebook and Twitter account, which are updated with information about the activities of the Ministry on a daily basis, count more than 141,000 friends and 28,000 followers respectively. Since 2016, the Ministry of Youth also has its own Youtube channel, although it is visited less frequently. The Ministry's website is available in both English and Arabic and provides general information about the ministry, youth cities and sport facilities as well as youth clubs. It features a platform for young people to submit their ideas and initiatives. Moreover, important conferences in the field of innovation in Jordan include the Arab Artificial Intelligence Summit, held in October 2019, and the Innovation Forum, organised with the Minister of Youth in February 2020.

Building on these steps, future efforts could focus on moving gradually from a one-way dissemination of information to a two-way, more regular consultation of youth with the support of digital tools. A range of traditional and digital forms of communication such as online platforms and social media can be leveraged depending on the particular communications objective. Such efforts require policy makers to tailor their messages and delivery modes to the intended audience, on the basis of research into the motivations, fears and barriers faced by young people. The OECD Communication Guide on Engaging Young People in Open Government (OECD, 2018<sup>[40]</sup>) also highlights the importance of communicating as early as possible, presenting clear and detailed reasons, scope of interaction and expected outcomes. Furthermore, governments can help equip young people with the capacities to engage safely in communication. For instance, within Jordan's National Youth Strategy 2019-25, the Ministry of Youth and other ministries will implement awareness programmes to promote positive uses of social media and “immunise” young people against the dangers of hate speech.

### ***Setting commitments to promote youth participation***

Commitments on youth participation in National Youth Strategies and sectoral plans can create stronger mandates, earmark resources and establish monitoring mechanisms across ministerial portfolios and levels of government.

National Youth Strategies most commonly feature objectives and commitments on youth participation in the policy cycle: for instance, this is the case for 75% of OECD countries that have a NYS in place (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). Similarly, Jordan's NYS 2019-25 includes commitments and outlines projects to empower youth in the political, social and economic field, strengthen their engagement in the policy cycle, and promote effective citizenship and leadership.

Sectoral strategies can also be used to set commitments and priorities in this field. For instance, Jordan's Renaissance Plan 2019-20 features commitments to integrate youth in public life and decision making; to

develop their democratic culture, citizenship and pluralism; and to review legislation related to increasing the political participation of youth, among others. Similarly, the decentralisation process, which started in Jordan with the adoption of the Decentralisation Law and the Municipality Law in late 2015, has given new impetus to strengthening youth participation at the local level, bringing local authorities closer to citizens and raising hopes of encouraging youth-driven, bottom-up initiatives, greater transparency and accountability. At the same time, OECD analysis highlights a number of barriers limiting the potential impact of decentralisation on citizens' participation, such as the lack of clear roles and responsibilities across levels of government and the lack of resources (OECD, 2017<sup>[21]</sup>).

As the first Arab country to join the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2012, Jordan has pioneered new initiatives to improve youth participation in the broader framework of advancing more open, transparent, participatory and inclusive policy making. For instance, OGP's Jordan End-of-Term Report for 2016-2018<sup>23</sup> identifies that Commitment 5 on conducting training programmes with target groups including youth and on conducting the first-ever governorate council elections had a major, positive impact on allowing strengthening civic participation and opening the government. The Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs was responsible for the trainings and workshops. The 4<sup>th</sup> OGP National Action Plan of Jordan 2018-20,<sup>24</sup> launched in October 2018, for the first time refers specifically to youth institutions, which shall be included in the national dialogue on reforms (Commitment 3). Including youth-specific commitments in these action plans can be an effective way of promoting youth participation in the policy cycle not only within the Ministry of Youth, but also across ministries and government entities, given their cross-sectorial scope. However, the open government agenda still remains a largely untapped resource in Jordan from a youth perspective. The elaboration of future plans could involve youth already in the design phase to ensure that their concerns inform the elaboration of objectives and commitments.

### ***Engaging young people and their organisations***

Engaging youth in the policy cycle goes beyond informing and consulting them. As highlighted by the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017<sup>[39]</sup>), engaging citizens requires giving them the opportunity as well as the necessary resources (e.g. information, data and digital tools) to collaborate during all phases of the policy and service cycles, from design and implementation, to monitoring and evaluation.

Chapter 2 highlights how young people were consulted in the formulation of Jordan's National Youth Strategy 2019-25 through surveys and focus groups: yet, the consultations largely took place in the review phase when core commitments had already been identified. Furthermore, youth participation should not be limited to the policies and services delivered by the Ministry of Youth. For instance, in Norway, the Ministry of Culture consulted children and young people between the age of 3 and 19 in the formulation of a white paper on art, culture, and digital artistic and cultural expression in 2019.<sup>25</sup>

Public authorities can take targeted steps to ensure the participation of young people in broader citizens' participation channels such as public hearings, consultations, surveys, town hall meetings, and participation to strategic planning. Engaging young people in deciding how public resources are allocated, for instance through participatory budgeting programmes (Box 4.3), can ensure that their interests are addressed in public expenditure and increase their interest and ownership in an exercise otherwise perceived as technical, while also increasing transparency and accountability (OECD, 2020<sup>[11]</sup>). Such programmes can be particularly useful when young people are involved in the whole process of designing, selecting and implementing the budgeted projects. In Jordan, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs has implemented participatory budgeting programmes in a pilot with three municipalities, with reportedly satisfying results (OECD, 2017<sup>[21]</sup>). Experiments with participatory budgeting schemes at the subnational level could be replicated and expanded, for instance by establishing formal mechanisms through which young people and their organisations (as well as citizens and CSOs generally) can participate in the budget process.

### Box 4.3. Participatory budgeting can help bring young people in

#### Sweden: Helsingborg's "Vision Fund"

Since 2014, the Swedish city of Helsingborg runs a "Vision Fund" to finance citizens' initiatives that will help the city reach its 2025 Vision. Many of these projects are led by young people, although youth are not directly involved in the project selection. The Fund is equipped with approximately USD 120,000 (SEK 1,000,000) per year and each project can receive funding up to approximately USD 12,000 (SEK 100,000) as well as support in the form of coaching and trainings.

#### Tunisia: La Marsa's public lighting

Article 137 of the new Tunisian constitution stipulates that local communities, within the framework of the approved budget, have the freedom of allocating their resources according to the rules of good governance. La Marsa, a coastal community of 110,000 residents, was the first municipality in Tunisia to institute a participatory budgeting programme, with a focus on public lighting.

A series of public meetings were held in each of the five districts within the municipality to explain participatory budgeting, provide an overview of the city budget, and present technical information on lighting services delivery. Participants then divided into small groups to discuss possible projects and priorities, which were then presented to the rest of the participants. All participants were invited to vote by secret ballot on all the proposed projects. The projects and priorities were then presented and voted by districts' delegates in municipal assemblies: as a result, lighting was increased in high crime areas and near schools, as well as in places frequented by women and children. The district delegates were also involved during the implementation stage and maintained communication with their local communities on progress.

Source: <https://helsingborg.se/kommun-och-politik/helsingborg-2035/visionsfonden/>; (OECD, 2020<sub>[41]</sub>).

Efforts to engage young people in the policy cycle require adequate financial and human resources, open information, good co-ordination and appropriate incentives for public officials to close the feedback loop. Special attention should also be paid to engaging marginalised youth, for instance holding consultations in different geographical areas away from the capital or reimbursing expenses. Digital tools can also be leveraged to reduce transaction costs for participants, although digital divides across socio-economic groups should be taken into account.

Youth-led organisations and youth representative bodies can play a crucial role in creating bridges between public authorities and young people for instance through initiatives and programmes on youth participation (Box 4.4). National youth councils (exist in 78% of OECD countries) and local youth councils (exist in 88% of OECD countries) also provide important fora for youth participation: for instance, in countries such as Finland and Norway, the establishment of local youth councils is mandatory at the municipal level (OECD, 2020<sub>[11]</sub>). Furthermore, a majority of OECD countries (53%) have also established youth advisory councils affiliated to specific ministries or to the centre of government. In Denmark, for instance, the Ministry of Environment and Food has established a Youth Climate Council to advise the Ministry on climate policy. While in Jordan youth councils or youth advisory councils do not exist at the national or local level, the Ministry of Youth has made efforts to establish a "Youth Shadow Government" and a "Youth Shadow Parliament." Such programmes should be equipped with the necessary resources, inclusive membership and clear mandates to ensure they meaningfully engage youth in the policy cycle.

#### Box 4.4. Structured dialogue between youth and municipalities

##### Jordan: I dare for sustainable development

I dare for sustainable development, a youth-led civil society organisation, led a pilot project in the municipality of Ein-Albasha to institutionalise a structured dialogue between youth and municipalities in 2014. Based on a four-month testing phase, a one-year project was conducted with six municipalities in Great Tafileh, Qadissyeh, Great Ajloun, Kufranjeh, Great Salt and Shouneh with young people aged 18-30 years.

The project aimed at establishing a model for structured dialogue between youth and municipalities. Initiated during the elaboration of the decentralisation law, the project participants deplored a significant lack of knowledge among young people and local authorities as to the future opportunities for young people to engage.

The project resulted in a capacity-building programme, organised jointly for youth and local authorities, to strengthen knowledge, skills and attitudes in areas that were considered crucial to establish a structured dialogue. The programme included modules on the concept of identity and active citizenship, decentralisation and municipality laws, mapping of community/municipality resources and the identification of possible solutions, action plans and a long-term strategy for the municipality.

According to I dare, the project resulted in the establishment of two youth units in the municipalities of Ajloun and Kufranjeh with a dedicated budget. Main challenges were experienced in elaborating tailored programmes for the young people running the units.

Source: <https://www.i-dare.org/>

In partnership with governments, youth representative bodies with clear mandates, independence, access to decision-making, adequate capacities and an inclusive membership can promote innovative and youth-responsive policy solutions and foster active, democratic citizenship among young people.

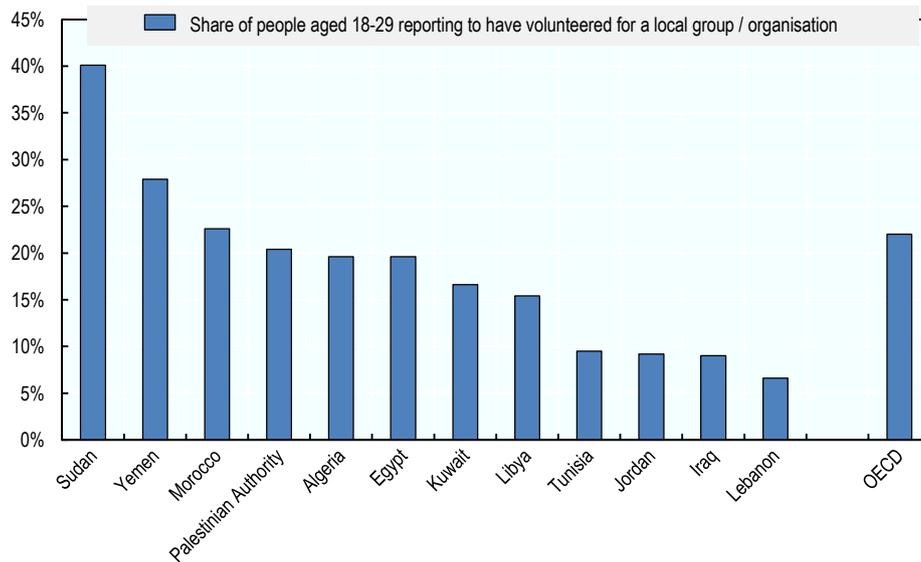
#### Young volunteers: builders of resilience

In the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, youth organisations, youth workers and young volunteers have stepped in, supporting the most vulnerable people and promoting societal resilience (OECD, 2020<sup>[42]</sup>). In Jordan, for instance, the government provided opportunities for young people to support efforts to limit the spread of the virus by volunteering in the health field and in community awareness and guidance.<sup>26</sup> Chapter 3 further explores the role of Jordan's youth centres in empowering young people and promoting resilient societies and it assesses the challenges and opportunities they face.

Volunteering is a powerful tool for combatting social exclusion, promoting youth's development, consolidating their trust and co-operation, cultivating their civic sense and building societal resilience (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). Yet, (formal) youth volunteering in Jordan remains limited compared to other MENA economies and OECD countries (Figure 4.4). For instance, in Jordan, 11% of people aged 18-29 surveyed by the Arab Barometer in 2018-2019 reported having volunteered for a local group or organisation, compared to 22% of people aged 15-29 reporting having done so across 24 OECD countries in 2019.

### Figure 4.4. Youth official volunteering in Jordan remains limited, comparison across MENA region

Share of people aged 18-29 reporting to have volunteered for a local group / organisation, 2018



Note: "OECD" refers to the average across 24 OECD countries for which data was available as of 2019.

Source: Arab Barometer Wave V and (OECD, 2020<sub>[1]</sub>).

Youth volunteering can be hampered by a number of factors including lack of opportunities, resources and awareness and limited co-ordination across stakeholders. Difficulties related to logistics or personal costs can also represent a barrier for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. These challenges remain common also among OECD countries (OECD, 2020<sub>[1]</sub>).

Several countries, including Jordan, include strategic objectives on youth volunteering within their National Youth Strategy, which can be useful to clarify responsibilities, create monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and ensure dedicated financial resources. In Jordan, one of the guiding elements of the National Youth Strategy 2019-2025 is the encouragement and promotion of voluntary work. Among others, Jordan's NYS commits the Ministry of Youth, in collaboration with other relevant ministries, foundations and international organisations, to run 24 volunteer initiatives per year for local community service and the school environment, as well as to establish and activate a Bank of Volunteers in Jordan. While a number of volunteering opportunities are provided in Jordan by foundations, CBOs and CSOs, government-led, well-financed, national youth volunteering programmes can be effective in promoting youth volunteering (Box 4.5). In fact, OECD analysis finds a positive and precise relationship between having a national programme for youth volunteering and young people volunteering more compared to the total population (OECD, 2020<sub>[1]</sub>).

### Box 4.5. Promoting youth volunteering

#### Jordan: Al Hussein Youth Camps and the Jordanian Youth Commission

Al Hussein Camps, established in 1961 under the initiative of His Majesty the late King Hussein, seek to provide young people with opportunities to develop their talent through overnight camps including activities on sport, adventure, Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, robotics and social cohesion.

The Jordanian Youth Commission, launched in 2006 by His Majesty King Abdullah II and implemented by the King Abdullah II Fund for Development, aims to strengthen youth's capacities to participate in public life and enhance voluntary work. In particular, through the "We Volunteer for Jordan" programme, the Commission has been implementing more than 133 local volunteering activities with the participation of 6,778 young people from across Jordan's governorates.

#### France: Civic Service in Solidarity of the Elderly (Service Civique Solidarité Seniors)

In March 2021, the French government expanded the existing civic service programme to promote solidarity between young people and the elderly through volunteering work. Since 2010, more than 500,000 people aged 16-25 and people with disabilities aged 16-30 participated to the Civic Service volunteering programme. The new addition focused on the elderly will allow the creation of 10,000 further opportunities for young people to volunteer their time in support of around 300,000 elderly over 3 years. Volunteers receive an allowance of around EUR 473 net per month provided by the State.

Source: <https://www.kafd.jo/en/Projects.aspx>; <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/al-hussein-youth-camp-kicks-agaba-myriad-activities>; [https://www.service-civique.gouv.fr/uploads/content/files/2\\_dossier\\_de\\_presse\\_sc2s\\_vf.pdf](https://www.service-civique.gouv.fr/uploads/content/files/2_dossier_de_presse_sc2s_vf.pdf)

Effective co-ordination across stakeholders of the volunteering sector is essential for an effective implementation of national youth volunteering programmes and initiatives. In Jordan, a Higher Committee for Volunteer Work has been established in 2021 by a decision of the Prime Ministry.<sup>27</sup> The Committee is chaired by Jordan's Minister of Youth and it includes the Executive Director of the Crown Prince Foundation and the Secretary Generals of the ministries of labour, culture, social development, youth, the Director of Civil Defence, the Executive Director of the King Abdullah Fund, and pioneers in the volunteer sector. The Higher Committee aims to institutionalise, organise and frame voluntary work in Jordan, ensuring a safe enabling environment in partnership between public and private stakeholders and promoting volunteering especially among young people. Equipping the Higher Committee with the necessary political support, resources, mandate and tools could be instrumental in promoting youth volunteering by creating a coherent and enabling environment and by delivering well-resourced volunteering programmes.

## Recommendations

This chapter has analysed the current state of the relationship between young people and public institutions in Jordan across a variety of dimensions, it has assessed government's efforts in promoting youth participation and representation in public life and it has presented innovative practices. While important efforts and advancements have been made to rebuild youth trust in government and strengthen their relationship with public institutions, the government of Jordan could consider:

1. **Protecting and promoting an enabling environment for youth participation** both offline and online as well as for youth-led organisations, reducing the minimum age and easing the licensing procedures needed to establish youth-led organisations.
2. **Exploring the co-creation of innovative mechanisms of stakeholder engagement** targeting young people, in coherence and complementarity with the other institutionalised channels.
3. **Strengthening civic and citizenship curricula** in schools and out-of-school programmes to reinforce youth's association with democratic processes.
4. **Providing dedicated programmes to help talented youth join and thrive in the public sector workforce** and promote inter-generational learning between older and younger employees.
5. **Adopting a government-wide policy on youth engagement in policy and strengthening in-person and digital means**, considering options such as enhanced participatory budgeting programmes and the establishment of youth councils at national and local level as well as youth advisory councils affiliated to specific ministries.
6. **Leveraging the open government agenda to promote youth participation in public life**, including by associating the Ministry of Youth and youth stakeholders more closely with the design and implementation of national action plans for the Open Government Partnership.
7. **Promoting national youth volunteering programmes** and providing political support, resources, mandate and tools to the Higher Committee for Volunteer Work to ensure a coherent and enabling environment for youth volunteering.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Arab Barometer Wave V.

<sup>2</sup> (Kao and Karmel, 2020<sub>[35]</sub>)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.populationpyramid.net/jordan/2019/>

<sup>4</sup> Arab Barometer Wave I.

<sup>5</sup> Arab Barometer Wave V.

<sup>6</sup> A country's score indicates the perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). The Transparency International Index score for Jordan in 2020 was 49.

<sup>7</sup> Arab Barometer Wave V.

<sup>8</sup> Interviews and fact-finding missions conducted by the OECD between 2017 and 2020 in Jordan.

<sup>9</sup> <https://haggak.jo/website/>.

<sup>10</sup> Data from the Arab Barometer Wave V for 2018-2019 shows that 10% of respondents aged 18-29 reported that they had taken part in peaceful protests in the previous 3 years, compared to 5% of respondents aged 30+ in Jordan.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.conventioncitoyennepourleclimat.fr/>

<sup>12</sup> Arab Barometer Wave V.

<sup>13</sup> Arab Barometer Wave V.

<sup>14</sup> Civic education focuses on people's knowledge and understanding of formal institutions and the processes of civic life (such as voting in elections), while citizenship education focuses on knowledge and understanding of opportunities for participation and engagement in both civics and civil society. OECD (2011), *How's Life?: Measuring Well-being*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264121164-en>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.nuorisovaalit.fi/>.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/Jordan-mock-elections.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/jordan-independent-election-commission-and-partners-hold-mock-elections-eu>.

<sup>18</sup> OECD calculations based on data from Jordan's Department of Statistics.

<sup>19</sup> OECD calculations based on data from Jordan's Department of Statistics.

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/youthpol/en/equest.fileutils.dochandle?p\\_uploaded\\_file\\_id=171](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/youthpol/en/equest.fileutils.dochandle?p_uploaded_file_id=171)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.populationpyramid.net/jordan/2019/>.

<sup>22</sup> The Recommendation defines “stakeholders” as “any interested and/or affected party, including: individuals, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, religious and political affiliations; and institutions and organisations, whether governmental or non-governmental, from civil society, academia, the media or the private sector.”

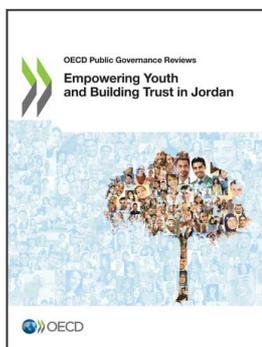
<sup>23</sup> [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Jordan\\_End-of-Term\\_Report\\_2016-2018\\_EN.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Jordan_End-of-Term_Report_2016-2018_EN.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Jordan\\_Action-Plan\\_2018-2020.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Jordan_Action-Plan_2018-2020.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> OECD Youth Governance Surveys; <https://www.kulturtanken.no/busk>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.mosd.gov.om/index.php/ar/?Itemid=1249&lang=ar-AA>.

<sup>27</sup> <https://alghad.com>.



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