



A Life Suspended:

The State of Syrian Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon

February 2016

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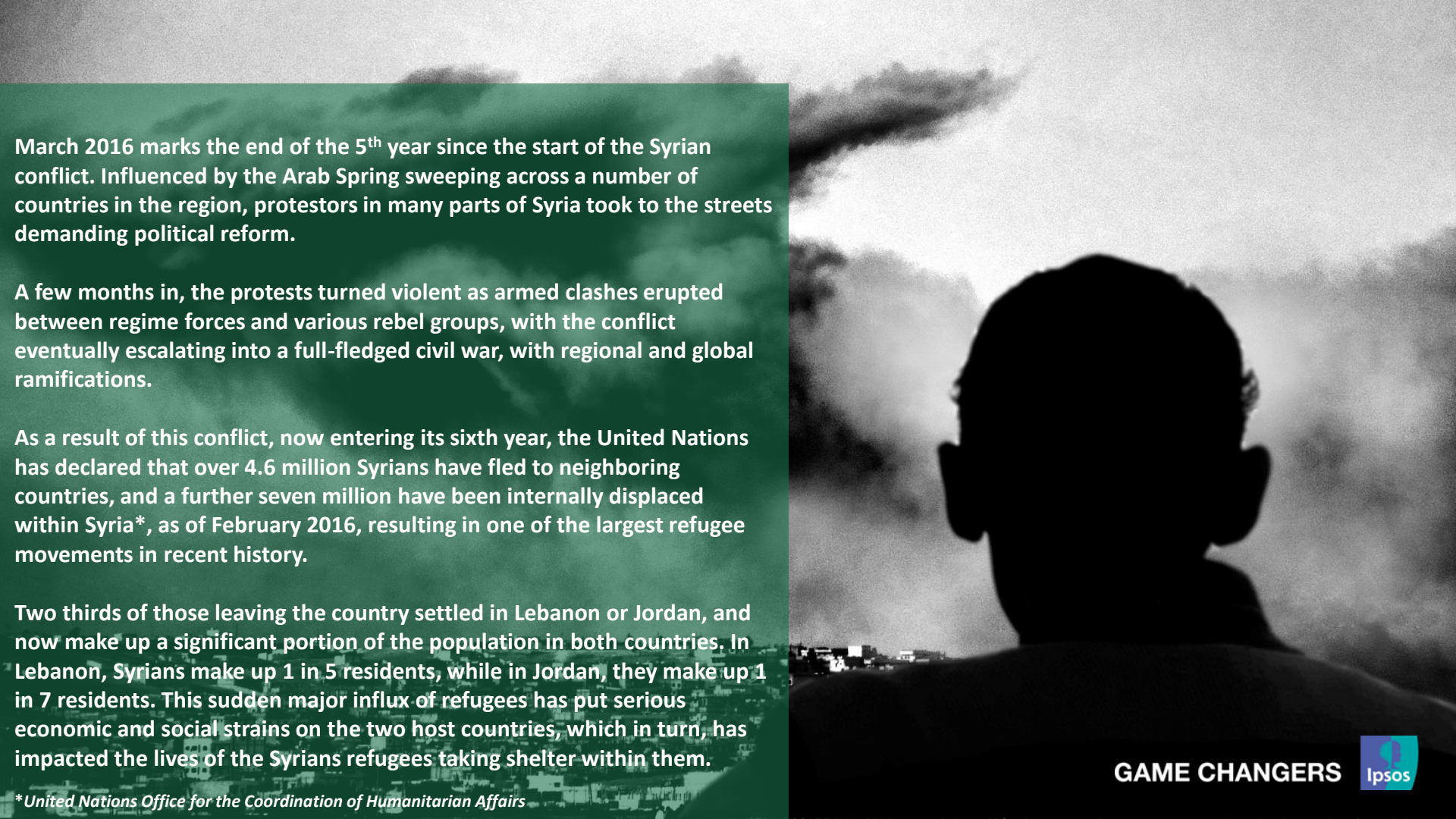


Introduction



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March 2016 marks the end of the 5th year since the start of the Syrian conflict. Influenced by the Arab Spring sweeping across a number of countries in the region, protestors in many parts of Syria took to the streets demanding political reform.

A few months in, the protests turned violent as armed clashes erupted between regime forces and various rebel groups, with the conflict eventually escalating into a full-fledged civil war, with regional and global ramifications.

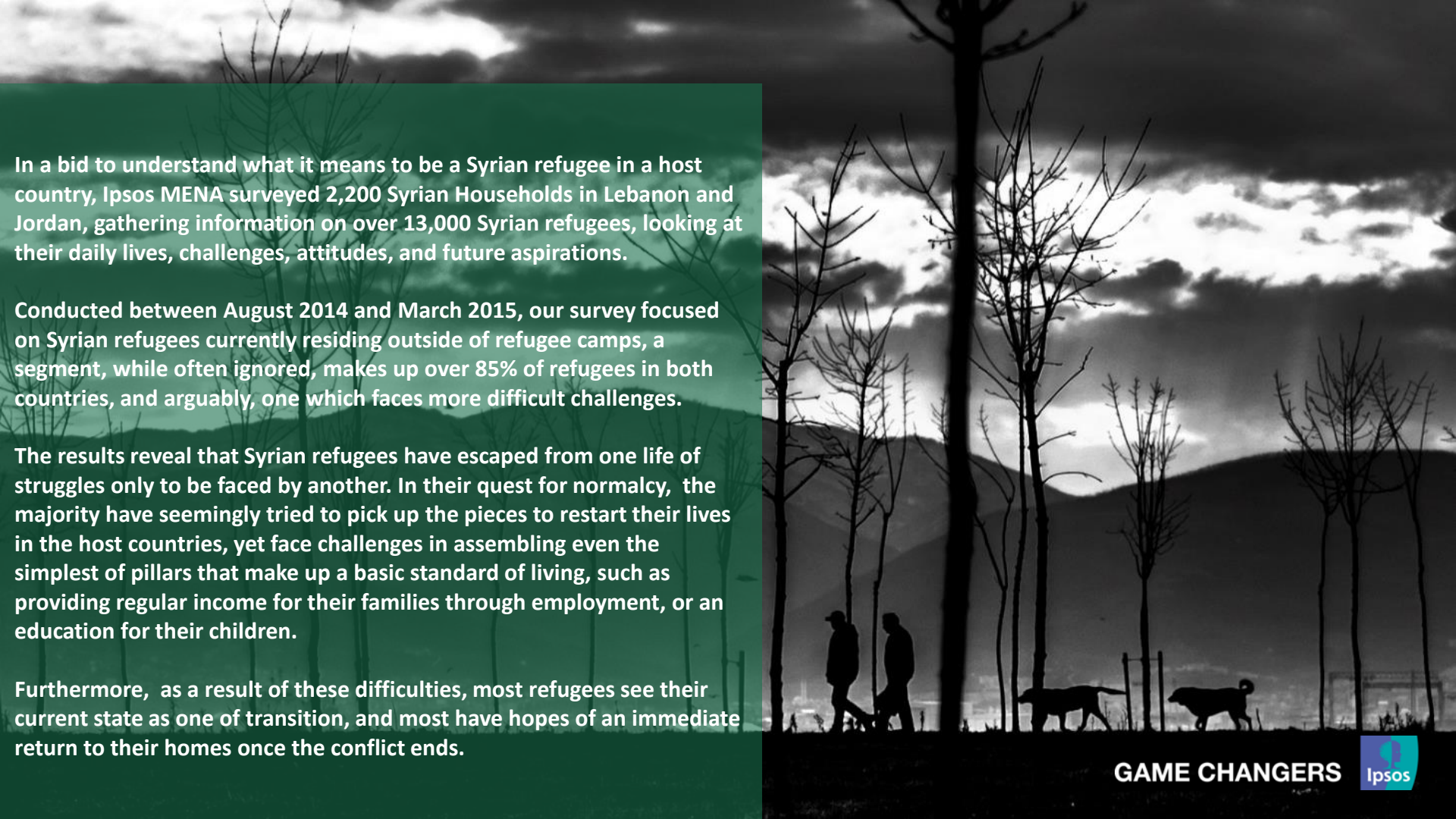
As a result of this conflict, now entering its sixth year, the United Nations has declared that over 4.6 million Syrians have fled to neighboring countries, and a further seven million have been internally displaced within Syria*, as of February 2016, resulting in one of the largest refugee movements in recent history.

Two thirds of those leaving the country settled in Lebanon or Jordan, and now make up a significant portion of the population in both countries. In Lebanon, Syrians make up 1 in 5 residents, while in Jordan, they make up 1 in 7 residents. This sudden major influx of refugees has put serious economic and social strains on the two host countries, which in turn, has impacted the lives of the Syrians refugees taking shelter within them.

**United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*

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In a bid to understand what it means to be a Syrian refugee in a host country, Ipsos MENA surveyed 2,200 Syrian Households in Lebanon and Jordan, gathering information on over 13,000 Syrian refugees, looking at their daily lives, challenges, attitudes, and future aspirations.

Conducted between August 2014 and March 2015, our survey focused on Syrian refugees currently residing outside of refugee camps, a segment, while often ignored, makes up over 85% of refugees in both countries, and arguably, one which faces more difficult challenges.

The results reveal that Syrian refugees have escaped from one life of struggles only to be faced by another. In their quest for normalcy, the majority have seemingly tried to pick up the pieces to restart their lives in the host countries, yet face challenges in assembling even the simplest of pillars that make up a basic standard of living, such as providing regular income for their families through employment, or an education for their children.

Furthermore, as a result of these difficulties, most refugees see their current state as one of transition, and most have hopes of an immediate return to their homes once the conflict ends.



A Life of Struggles

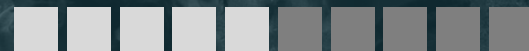
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Refugees at Home

For many Syrian families fleeing the conflict to neighboring countries, their refugee status actually started at home. 1 in 2 families were initially displaced within Syria, with many moving within their own region of residence to escape the worsening situation in their areas. For some, the struggle was even more difficult; 23% of families had moved to entirely different regions prior to leaving the country altogether, out of which 79% did so on two or more occasions.

Making the journey outside of Syria, refugees had the option of traveling to four countries; Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq. In the case of Syrians in Jordan and Lebanon, 53% had come through the border closest to their region of residence, yet interestingly, the rest travelled from further away, even though closer exit routes were possible. 3 in 10 families were residing in regions that are closer to the Turkish and Iraqi borders, but opted to make the dangerous trek across Syria towards their current host countries.



49%

Displaced Within
Syria Before Seeking
Refuge in Jordan &
Lebanon



47%
Moved To Jordan &
Lebanon Although
Closer Borders
Were Possible

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A Reliance on Aid

Having fled the dangers at home, Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon are now faced with a different set of challenges in their host countries, the most testing of which are financial.

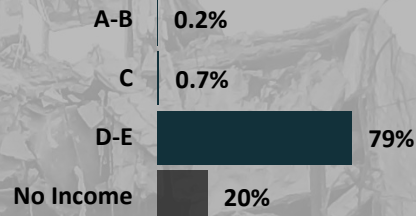
In fact, over 40% of Syrian households in Jordan, and around 20% in Lebanon, have no source of income. With an average household size of 5.7 individuals, most Syrian families find themselves in the lower socio-economic classes when compared to the local populations of host countries, where average household sizes are considerably smaller.

As a consequence, it comes as no surprise that reliance on aid is extremely high, without which, it is difficult to see how Syrian refugees could survive. 9 in 10 Syrian households receive some form of aid, mostly financial, 68% of which is spent on food.

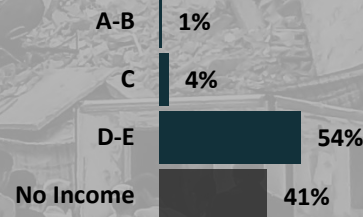
Considering that 94% of Syrian households outside refugee camps live in rented spaces, 75% of the average household's monthly expenditure is spent on food and rent.

30%
Of Syrian
Households Have
No Income

Socio-Economic Class of Syrians in Lebanon



Socio-Economic Class of Syrians in Jordan



85% Of Syrian Households
Rely on Aid

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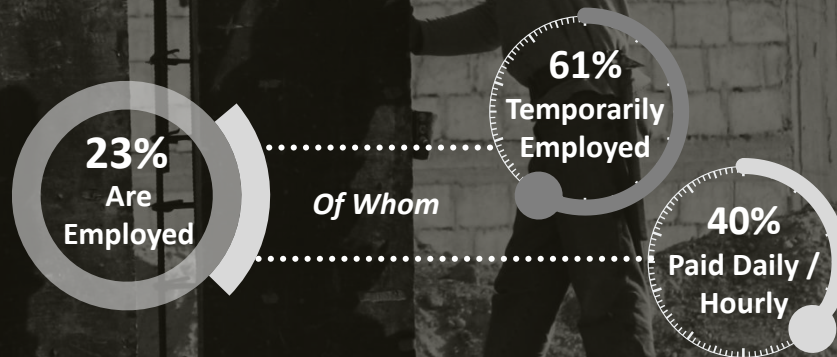
Employment Uncertainty

Contributing to their financial troubles is the difficulty most Syrians of working age face in finding stable employment opportunities.

On average, only 23% of Syrians aged 18 years and above currently work, and while Housewives and Students make up around 40%, those looking for jobs but cannot find any make up a massive 35% of all Syrian adults, or 420,000 people.

Even for the fortunate minority that is employed, working circumstances are often unstable. Over 60% work in low-paying, temporary jobs, typically employed for a specific time period until the job is complete, mostly in construction jobs or as unskilled labor.

The uncertainty surrounding this temporary employment nature, for many, translates into a daily struggle to find work, with as many as 4 in 10 Syrian employees getting paid for jobs done on a daily or hourly basis, with no guarantees of finding work the next day.



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A Generation Lost

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The Luxury of Education

79%
Consider
Education a
Priority

Population Breakdown

Adults Above 19 YO	45%
Schooling Age 6-18 YO	35%
Children Below 5 YO	19%

Of Whom

50%
Do Not Go to
School

In addition to the daily financial struggles confronting most, the Syrian conflict threatens to have longer-term negative implications on a whole generation of Syrians. With 54% of Syrians in Jordan and Lebanon below the age of 18, children are particularly vulnerable.

These effects are none more evident than when looking at the state of education of these children. Children of schooling age (6 to 18 years) make up a sizable 35% of all Syrian refugees in both countries, yet a staggering 50% do not currently attend school.

For most, this is not a choice. In fact, close to 79% of Syrians do believe that education is a priority that must be attained, but to many, this is a luxury they cannot afford, leaving over 400,000 Syrian children unable to pursue an education.

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Social Disintegration



Life as a refugee is also taking its toll socially, and while most refugees are trying to build new lives in their host countries, overcoming obstacles standing in their way is difficult.

77% of Syrians have expressed being extremely frustrated with having to start over in a new country, leaving established lives behind, and while 8 in 10 would describe themselves as sociable individuals who would like to meet new people, their difficult financial situation means that only 1 in 10 Syrians does any sort of leisure activities.

Even these activities, when done, are strictly confined to free activities, with the overwhelming majority stating that their only form of leisure is visiting nearby parks and other public venues.

77%
Are Very
Frustrated with
Starting Over in a
New Country

Only **13%**
Partake in Leisurely
Activities

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A Brighter Tomorrow

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Close to Home

With numerous challenges preventing them from leading normal lives in host countries, Syrian refugees remain ever so connected to events unfolding in Syria.

84% of Syrians follow news about developments in Syria on a daily basis, with 90% considering TV as their primary source of information. Furthermore, 7 in 10 rely heavily on their network of family and friends for news and updates.

Feeling they belong to the wider community of Syrian diaspora, 53% also regularly follow news on the state of refugees in the countries they found refuge in, as well as in other countries. This strong sense of community is such that over half prefer to interact mainly with other Syrian refugees as opposed to the local population, driven mainly by their inability to integrate.

With many refugees still having family back home, 43% also regularly call relatives and friends in Syria, expressing taking comfort in hearing from those who never left the country, reiterating their need to stay close to home.



The Dream of Return

With adversity comes appreciation, and Syrians now see the world in a new light, and priorities are set with their children and their future in mind. As such, 87% feel that finding stability and consistency in their lives is something they strive strongly to achieve.

However, made evident by their present situation, this life currently seems unattainable in their host countries, driving many to seek refuge elsewhere, mostly in Europe. Yet the majority of refugees in Jordan and Lebanon still dream of a return to their homes, with 9 in 10 stating that they would move back to Syria within 6 months of the conflict coming to an end.

Furthermore, despite the fact that their calls for change had stripped them of their homes, families and stability, 8 in 10 still state that freedom of thought, action and expression continues to be an important objective, while 84% expressed a strong belief in equality amongst all individuals, regardless of race, gender, or religion.

87%

Strive to Achieve
Stability &
Consistency in
Their Lives

85%

Would Move
Back Within 6
Months of the
Conflict Ending

83%

Still Believe in
Freedom of
Thought, Action,
& Expression

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A black and white photograph of a woman in profile, looking out of a window. She has her hand resting on her chin in a contemplative pose. The window is covered with a textured, possibly frosted or dirty, glass. The lighting is dramatic, with the woman's face partially in shadow.

Final Thoughts

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When calamity struck home, Syrians sought refuge in neighboring countries in order to persist with the lives they once lead. Five years on, those taking refuge in Jordan and Lebanon are still struggling to do so, with seemingly no light at the end of the tunnel.

Limited employment opportunities and extremely low wages in the host countries have left the majority of refugees relying on aid for daily survival, a situation that has stripped them from some of life's most basic tenets. Crucially, the lack of access to education for almost half of Syrian children of school age possibly poses the largest risk to refugees, one that could be felt for many years to come.

Yet in the face of this great misfortune, the majority of Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon have remained steadfast in their views towards freedom and equality, demonstrating their resilience. Having said that, their need to resume normal, more stable lives is equally important, and with the majority harboring hopes of returning home once the conflict comes to an end, the dream of return is seen as their only route of progressing forward from a life, currently suspended.

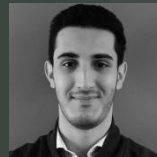


This report has been produced by the Ipsos MENA team.

For more information, please contact:



Mohammed Minawi
Senior Director – Ipsos MENA
mohammed.minawi@ipsos.com



Saad Masri
Research Executive – Ipsos Jordan
saad.masri@ipsos.com

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