

The situation of the Palestinian Labor Market in 2021

The Covid-19 pandemic caused a decrease of labor market participation and loss of jobs in 2020, as well as significant absenteeism rates from work due to the measures taken to contain the spread of the virus, particularly among women.

The year 2021 was characterized by an overall easing of these measures, including a sharp decrease of the length of lockdown periods. However the year 2021 did not witness any improvement compared to 2020 concerning unemployment rates.

According to [PCBS](#), unemployment rates among labor force participants (15 years and over) stayed at 26%. The unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip remained extremely high, reaching 47% compared to 16% in the West Bank. Women's labor market participation rate increased from 16% in 2020 to 17% in 2021, indicating lower reengagement than men. Less than 2 women out of 10 participate in the labor force, compared to 7 men out of 10. Youth graduates aged (19-29 years), who hold an associated diploma certificate and above were among the categories most affected by unemployment; unemployment rates among this category reached 53% in 2021 (66% for young women compared to 39% for young men). **When it comes to basic labor rights, an increase of violations of rights was noticed compared to 2020.** 52% of workers working in the private sector do not have written work contracts, 32% obtained retirement/end-of-service indemnities during 2021 compared to 33% in 2020, while the percentage of women not obtaining a paid maternity leave increased from 40% to 49%. The percentage of wage workers employed in the private sector, who were paid less than the minimum wage of 1450 NIS, reached 29% (7% in the West Bank & 81% in the Gaza Strip). An increase in the number of workers working in local markets was noted (from 830 thousand workers in 2020 to 889 thousand workers in 2021). In addition, the number of Palestinian workers working in the Israeli labor market reached 145 thousand workers in 2021, 63% of them working in the construction sector.

A Statistical Report on the Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic on Economic / Business Establishments during (5/3/2021 – 31/5/2021) issued by PCBS, the Ministry of National Economy and the World Bank in 2022 indicated that the effects of the pandemic on establishments was less severe, although it continued to affect their operations and employees. The decrease in the closure days led to an increase in the percentage of establishments that hired employees to 4% in 2021 compared with 2% in 2020. In addition, it led to a decrease in the percentage of fired employees from 14% in 2020 to 9% in 2021 during the survey period. Other coping mechanisms included: reducing the salaries and wages of their employees (4% of establishments), giving employees unpaid leave or paid leave (3% & 2% of establishments respectively). 8% of the establishments responded that they suspended employees from work due to infection or contact with a person infected with Covid-19.

DWRC develops organizing skills of unionists

With the participation of 16 newly elected union representatives from NGOs, kindergarten, garment, construction, and administrative work sectors, DWRC implemented a training course aiming at strengthening organizing skills, leadership, and mechanisms to defend workers' rights from February 3 to 5, 2022.

The training course focused on the right to organize, roles of administrative committee members of trade unions, internal regulations, strengthening democracy, decision making, independent trade union action, and good governance.



Participants were trained on how to fulfill their mandates and defend the rights of union members.

Court issues a decision to cancel the dismissal of three unionists working at Al-Quds University and the administration appeals

After the engagement of *the Federation of Unions of Palestinian Universities Professors & Employees* in a series of protest actions since April 2021 against the dismissal of three unionists by Al-Quds University, on the background of a labor dispute between the union and the university's administration, a court decision was issued on February 2022, to cancel the dismissal of these unionists and requiring the university's administration to provide a compensation of 5,000 JD to each worker. On 21/02/2022, the legal unit at Al-Quds University, issued a press release stating that they will appeal this decision.

Rising consumer price index requires close monitoring in 2022 to pre-empt devastating effects on poor households & the working class

Prices have been on the rise globally, reflecting negatively on producer and consumer prices. In Palestine, according to PCBS consumer price index, the overall consumer price index increased by 1.24% in 2021 compared to 2020. Since the beginning of 2022, a further increase has been noted. Consumer prices increased in January and February 2022 by 1.29% (by 0.68% in January 2022 compared to December 2021 and by 0.61% in February 2022 compared to January 2022).

In 2022, essential goods were most affected by price increases, such as fresh vegetables and eggs in January, and prices of vegetables, chicken and liquid fuels in February. Many categories of the population in Palestine are extremely vulnerable to rising prices, considering high unemployment and poverty rates, low average salaries in the Palestinian private sector, as well as current partial payment of governmental employees' salaries, and disbursement of only one minimum installment of allocations to poor households instead of four in 2021, due to the acute fiscal crisis faced by the Palestinian government.

UNION CONFERENCES & ELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Kindergarten & Day-Care Workers' Union in Bethlehem held its general conference on February 26th, 2022, with the participation of 28 women members. During the conference, members elected their representatives, discussed the tasks of the board, and approved the amendment of two articles of the internal statute of the union.

Several member unions of the New Unions Federation organized periodical conferences ahead of the federation's upcoming congress; thus, the *general conference of the Garment and Textile Workers' Union* was held on 17/02/2022, with the participation of 24 delegates (22 women & 2 men). In addition, *the Construction Workers' Union & the Union of Workers in the Food and Agriculture Industries* held their conferences on 19 & 26/02/2022. Delegates elected their representatives, discussed their internal statute, and their financial regulations.



DWRC hosts NCOSH workshop in Gaza

On January 3rd, 2022, DWRC hosted a workshop of the National Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NCOSH) in Gaza. During the workshop, NCOSH members confirmed their role in developing the occupational safety & health system in the Gaza Strip, and agreed to continue working on the three axes identified by the committee: preparing a guide for the committee, elaborating a strategic plan for the committee, and developing a concept for activating technical committees in governorates and their role.