



2018

Summary

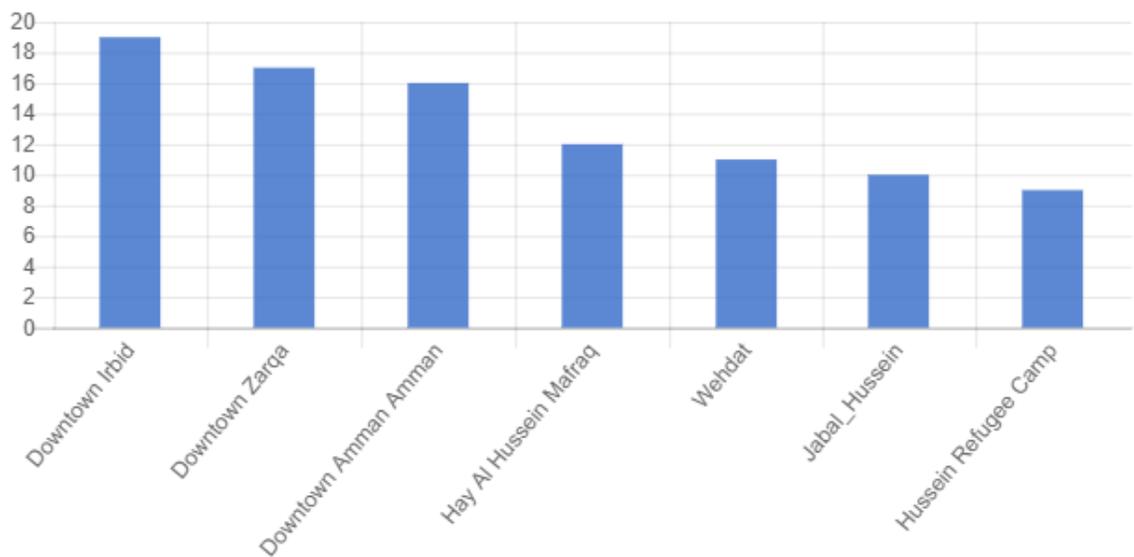
There are around half-a-million people aged 60 and older in Jordan, representing roughly 5.4 per cent of the population. Jordan's total population is approximately 9.5 million. Amman is home to the largest number of older Jordanians, who make up 6.2% of the governorate's population. These older men and women face specific challenges in their everyday lives that impact their access to basic services and their ability to support themselves and families. One of the challenge that is often faced by this proportion of the population is the prevalence of impairments and disabilities. The Government of Jordan Department of Statistics reports that 62.6% of older Jordanians suffer from a visual impairment, 45.6% have a hearing impairment, and 71.7% report a mobility impairment (2016). A 2014 study, *Hidden Victims of the Syrian Crisis*, carried out by HelpAge International and Handicap International found that 54% of older refugees in Jordan and Lebanon have a chronic health condition and that 65% of older refugees are suffering from psychological distress. The study found that nearly 70% of older people presented at least one type of impairment and they were nearly twice as likely as children to have an intellectual impairment. Such impairments and disabilities can only create more barriers for the older people of Jordan and not only affect their daily lives, but also their participation in society. Moreover, the projected population of older people in Jordan is expected to gradually increase to 8.6% in 2030 and to 15.8% by 2050.ⁱ Unfortunately, due to a general lack of adequate data, Jordan has not properly prepared for this age group and the growing population. As a result of understanding the demographic transitions that will take place, the government has begun planning for advancement of health care for older men and women, supportive physical environment and social care to older citizens, and including the contribution of older citizens in the development process. In response to the Jordanian constitution and its laws on protection of older citizens a "National Strategy for Senior Citizens 2018-2022 (Towards a Society for All Ages)" was developed.

The general lack of data on older people directly correlates with the lack of adequate services provided and adapted for older people creates severe barriers for them to access basic needs for their livelihoods and basic services. Additionally, being able to shop for food is an important part of staying well and independent as one ages. Therefore, HelpAge has decided that it was necessary to conduct a market

assessment in order to gather and analyze relevant information about the barriers faced by older people when shopping in the markets. This will allow us to take effective measures when the time comes to provide services or to further share with relevant parties in order to help them overcome these daily challenges.

Methodology

In order to understand and assess the difficulties faced by older people utilizing local markets, and working within the markets, a quantitative and qualitative analysis was completed in the form of a survey where 100 people from local communities were asked questions focused on the accessibility to markets, sufficiency of funds, types of goods purchased and other general issues while visiting a local marketplace. The study was focused in 4 major governorates of Jordan: Amman, Zarqa, Irbid, and Mafraq. The survey was carried out in these specific governorates due to time constraint and size of the market. Therefore, Within these governorates, the major markets (as outlined in the graph below) were visited by HelpAge International.



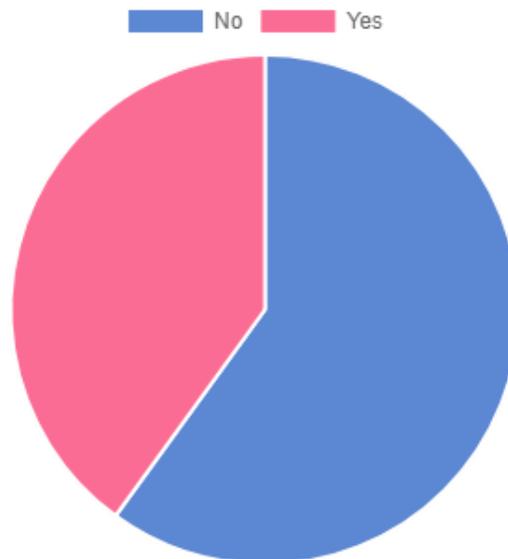
Furthermore, it is important to note, that as this is a rapid market assessment, data collection was completed within 10 days. This assessment’s main purpose was to gain a broader understanding of the

general market and its accessibility to older men and women. As a result, we found that 100 surveys were sufficient for this. The survey targeted men and women aged 60 and above and was conducted by HelpAge staff and an HelpAge volunteer, aged 68, who is a retired shopkeeper. Informed consent was obtained from all participating individuals after providing a description of the general aim and design of the study and assuring them of the confidentiality of the collected data.

Data Analysis

In Jordan, it is common to find more men at the markets than woman. This can be explained by a cultural norm in which it is seen as mostly men's duty to do household shopping. Thus, the majority of respondents were men (80%). One of the main concerns of older people regarding markets is how they will reach them, since 2/3 of them often go to the markets unaccompanied. However, we did discover that although issues with mobility were prevalent amongst respondents, 30% declared that they reached local markets by foot while stating that the streets were not pedestrian friendly. Getting to a market by bus is the second preferred means of transport. Public transportation was deemed inconvenient by respondents due to overcrowding and unfixed schedule but there was no other choice.

It is also interesting to note that although it is hard to reach the markets, 2/3 of the people interviewed said that they found the markets themselves to be accessible and lacked suggestions to make it more accessible. Through staff observations, we established that the markets contained all basic essentials from clothing, all food items, and household items making it easy to access all essentials in one location. The challenge however, is carrying all the items. The markets are narrow streets and often times overcrowded, there are no shopping carts available and the respondents affirmed this. 60% said that they have no one to help them carry their purchases.



Local markets are not usually accessed by wealthy people (who choose to do shopping at malls.) This was reinforced, by that fact that majority of people interviewed (85%) claimed to have insufficient funds to cover their needs. Thus, the majority of products they purchased, were to fulfill their basic needs. Price is a major factor for them to consider when choosing where to shop, followed by the location (nearest to them) of the marketplace. Aspects like loyalty to the shop owner or the quality of purchased products are important to very few people (8-10%) and does not impact their decision of where to go shopping.

The market assessment wasn't limited exclusively to people who visit the markets for shopping purposes only. The assessment also targeted another sample group which was made up of the older men and women who work in the market. This was done with an objective of discovering and understanding the environment in which they operate their businesses in and what keeps them from retiring.

It was discovered that in fact 2/3 of shopkeepers stated that they are the owners of the business and on average had spent 31 years of their lives working at the market. Almost all of them claimed to be the sole employees. Consequently, they have no one to take over for them at the store and can only rely on themselves for support. Also, 80% of shopkeepers said that they manage the finances themselves or sometimes are helped by their sons.

When asked about plan for retirement, the most common saying was " **I will retire when I die.**" The majority stated that they simply needed the funds to support themselves and their family, followed

by a few respondents claiming that they continued to work in order to avoid wasting time sitting at home. There was follow-up conversation in regards to retirement, the storekeepers did not have any form of pension or safety net to fall upon for retirement. None were enrolled in health insurance and the cost of living was repeatedly deliberated as the reason why they are unable to retire. 100% of those interviewed claimed to have no plans for retirement at the moment which reaffirms the need for older people to have livelihood opportunities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Considering the findings and analyses above, the most prevalent perception is that the markets in Jordan are not easily accessible for older men and women and that a lot of gaps have been identified throughout this rapid market assessment. Some of our recommendations are the following:

1) *Accessible & affordable transportation system should be established.*

An adequate transportation system must be implemented throughout Jordan in order to facilitate the access of older people to the markets. A good solution to this could be the rapid bus project funded by Amman municipality and The French development agency which entails high-capacity buses that can carry more than 120 passengers and will run on a three-minute frequency during peak hours on segregated lanes along Amman's busiest corridors – this if adapted to older people in accessibility and prices could a great solution to help older people accessing the markets. Prices for this service must be taken into consideration as well as accessibility for those using special devices.

Roads in the market must be paved to make it easier to walk on and access for someone on a wheelchair or utilizing an assistive device.

2) *Affordable retirement pension should be accessible to those in the private sector*

Even though, in 2012 Jordan established a National Aid Fund that technically provides monthly financial assistance to older persons living in poverty and older persons who are heads of families many older people still remain ineligible for this. Pensions has been an issue in Jordan, and our research has only reinforced this. Pensions should in fact not only be provided to ex- government workers, but also to the rest of the senior citizens– this change would be a big step forward for

Jordan. Additionally, the National Aid Fund should review its policies and make more applicable to all.

3) *Senior discounts should be available in stores and reinforced through private sector working groups*

In many countries at the age where one retires and at which pensions, social security or medical benefits for the elderly become available it is likely that they will be also eligible for “senior discounts”. In Jordan discounts for people over the age of 60 is necessary and should also be implemented, it will serve as a public service and a morale boost for older men and women. Especially, given the fact that most of the respondents are the main providers for their families and many do not have enough funds to cover their basic needs. This would also encourage older men and women to continue doing basic things such as shopping and not relying on their younger children or grandchildren to do it for them.

4) *A volunteer program should be implemented*

Grocery shopping can be physically demanding for older citizens, with just a little bit of help from someone designated as a grocery shopping helper, this task could become a lot easier for them. A volunteer system should be put in place where younger people in their spare time volunteer to help older people at the market. This would encourage an intergenerational atmosphere and would make the market experience for older people easier. It would not just include carrying items but also assistance in reading the labels and answering questions about the products. It gives a unique experience in the country, helps generate jobs, and creates an overall welcome and service-based atmosphere.

¹ (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.helpage.org/global-agewatch/population-ageing-data/country-ageing-data/?country=Jordan>