



مركز الميزان لحقوق الإنسان
AL MEZAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Fact Sheet

The Pandemic's Impact on Daily-wage Laborers in the Gaza Strip



September 2020

Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic has amplified the pre-existing socioeconomic crises in the Gaza Strip, and undermined the livelihoods of a significant portion of the working population, particularly the daily-wage laborers.

On 24 August 2020, the local authorities in Gaza imposed a mandatory lockdown to curb the spread of the virus after the first confirmed cases were detected outside the quarantine facilities. The lockdown and ensuing curfew confined breadwinners to their houses, which further compromised their means of subsistence and triggered even more economic turmoil.

This fact sheet sheds light on the pandemic's impact on daily-wage laborers in Gaza, and presents a number of recommendations that could enhance their resilience in the face of these unprecedented circumstances.

Facts and figures

- By the end of 2019, the number of people in employment in the Gaza Strip stood at 261 thousand, of whom 115 thousand in the private sector and are thus classified as “wage employees”.¹
- The average daily real wage in Gaza's private sector in 2019 was about 43 shekels.²
- About 80 percent of wage employees in Gaza's private sector earned less than the minimum wage (of 1,450 shekels per month), with a median of only 660 shekels.³
- The Ministry of Labor defines daily-wage laborers as individuals who are paid for their services on a daily basis. Whether hired or self-employed, they do not earn an income for days without work.⁴
- In April 2020, the Ministry of Labor in Gaza conducted an online registration of daily-wage laborers who had been affected by the pandemic, and accordingly registered 158,611 individuals who identify as such (18.48 percent of them women) after excluding entries that did not fit the set criteria.⁵

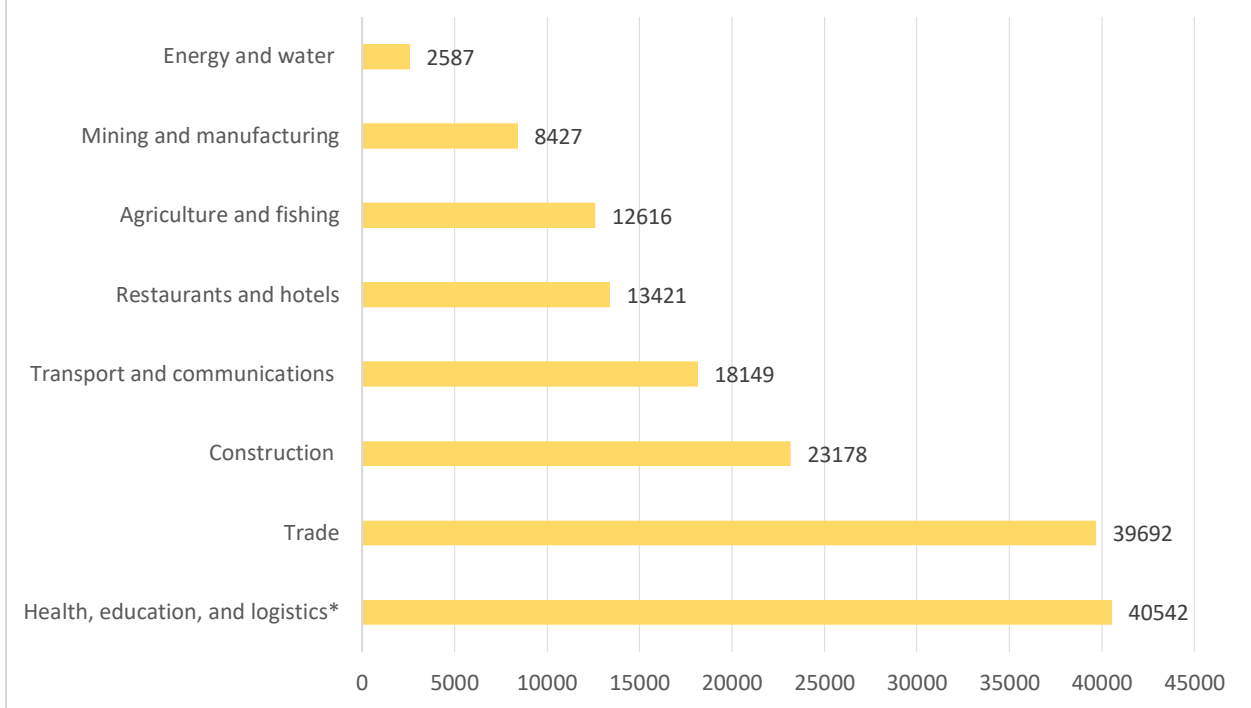
¹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, press release on the current status of the Palestinian labor force in 2019, published on 1 May 2020: <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=3730>

² Ibid

³ Ibid

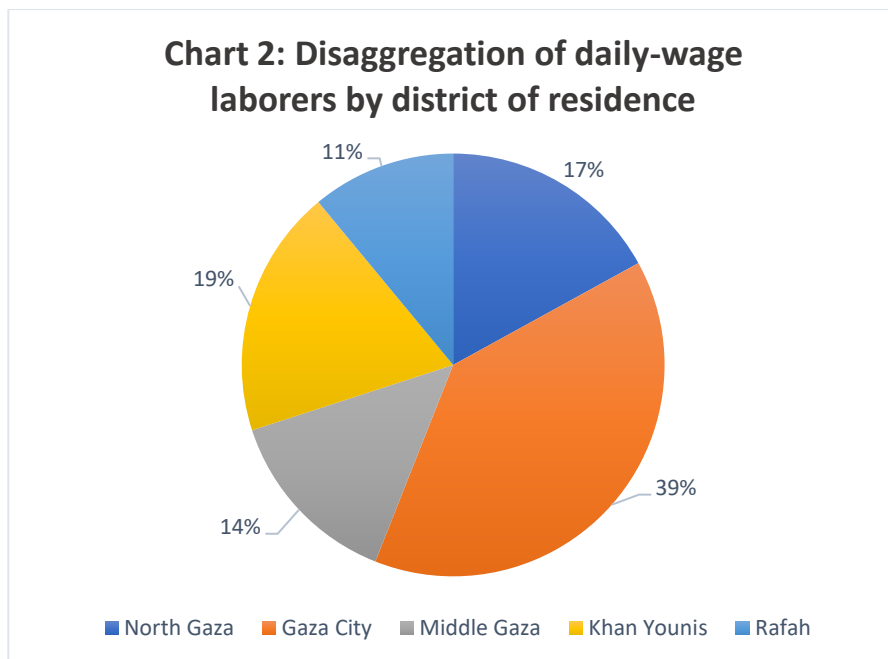
⁴ Phone interview with, Maher Abu Rayya, official at the Ministry of Labor, interviewed by Hussain Hammad on 18 and 24 September 2020.

Chart 1: Disaggregation of daily-wage laborers by sector



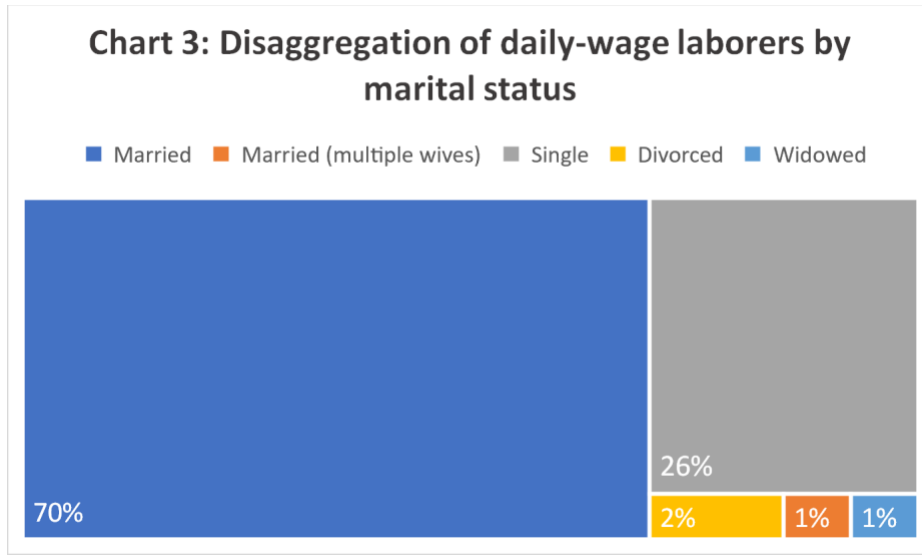
Source: Ministry of Labor⁶

Chart 2: Disaggregation of daily-wage laborers by district of residence



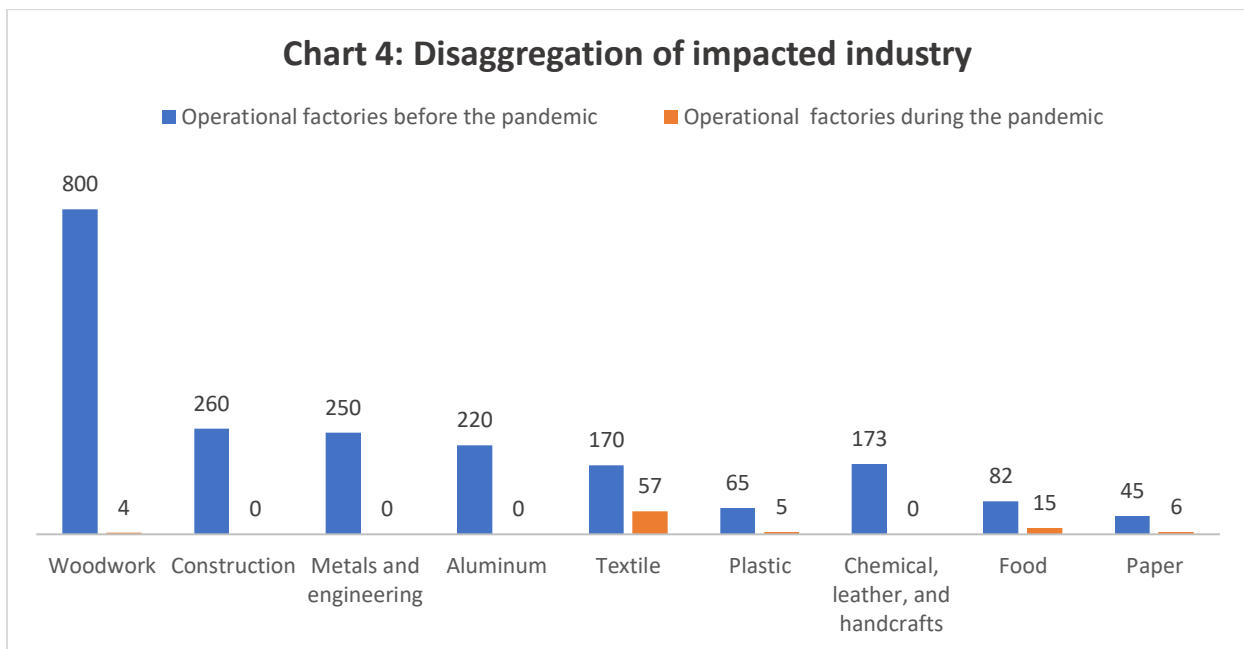
Source: Ministry of Labor

⁶ *Logistics sector includes printing houses, advertising companies, financial auditors, insurance companies, currency exchange, and real estate.



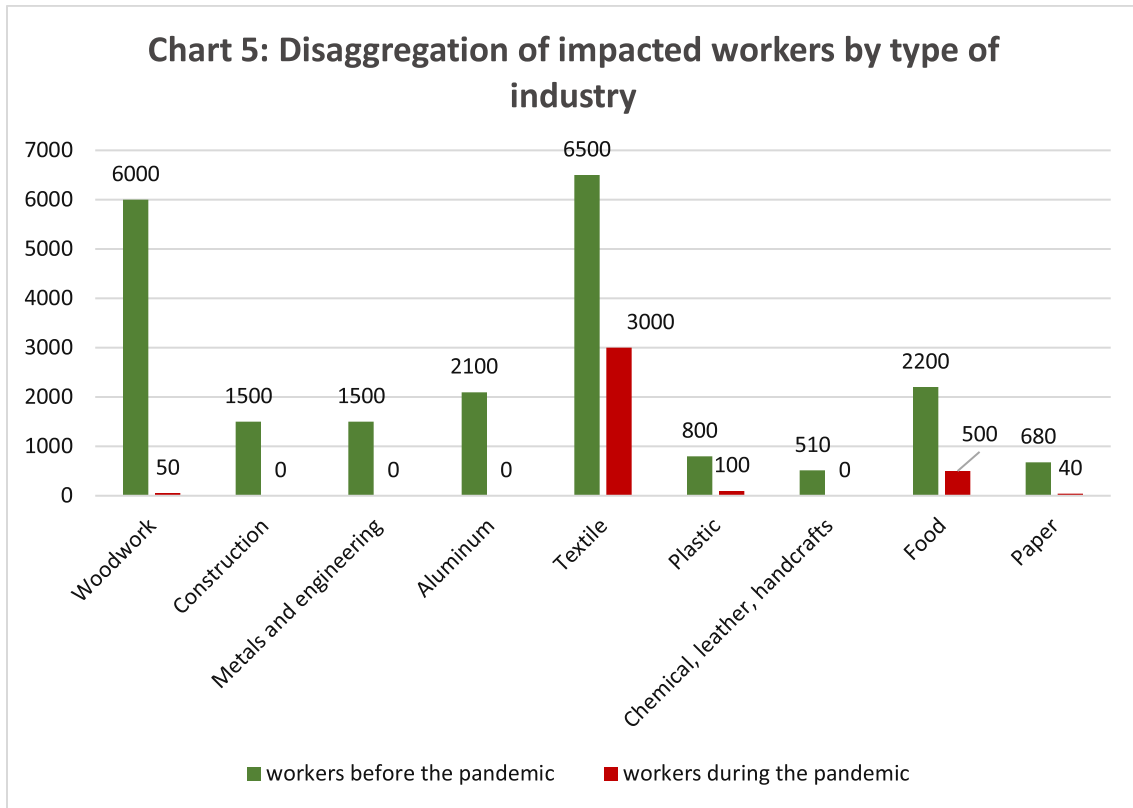
Source: Ministry of Labor

The pandemic-induced economic crisis has hit manufacturing industries in Gaza disproportionately. Only 87 factories remain operational compared to 2,065 prior to the pandemic. Accordingly, the number of their workers dropped from 21,790 to 3,690 workers, leaving 18,100 individuals jobless.⁷



Source: The Palestinian Federation of Industries

⁷ The Palestinian Federation of Industries, unpublished information, shared with Al Mezan on 10 September 2020.



Source: The Palestinian Federation of Industries

Recommendations

International support and swift governmental interventions are urgently needed to offset the pandemic's dire impact on the economy and alleviate the population's suffering.⁸ In conclusion, Al Mezan put forth a number of recommendations and calls for action to the international community and Palestinian duty-bearers:

To the international community:

- 1- The international community must honor its moral and legal obligations by intervening swiftly and effectively to lift the Israeli closure and blockade, and to pressure Israeli authorities to lift restrictions on trade and allow the movement of goods and people.
- 2- The international community must partake in creating an environment for sustainable development in the Gaza Strip through funding sustainable projects and encouraging long-term investments.

To Palestinian duty-bearers:

- 3- The authorities must mobilize support and allocate emergency resources to aid daily-wage laborers and their families, enhance social protection programs, and create a national fund to support them indiscriminately.
- 4- The authorities must support small and medium-sized enterprises through tax-exemptions and access to soft loans.

⁸ Al Mezan gathered and published a number of first-hand testimonies from daily-wage laborers in Gaza during lockdown, available at <https://almezancenter.blogspot.com/search/label/Gaza%3A%20Life%20Under%20Lockdown>