



DRUG TRAFFICKING AND USE: A NATIONAL ISSUE IN JORDAN DEMANDING URGENT ATTENTION

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Drugs have recently emerged at the top of Jordan's most urgent social and security concerns. Findings from a nationally representative survey, conducted by NAMA Strategic Intelligence Solutions in the winter of 2025, reveals a society highly aware of the scale of the problem – deeply concerned about its implications for public safety, economic stability, and social cohesion.

Widespread acknowledgement of drug prevalence in Jordan

NAMA's survey, which was conducted over a nationally representative sample of 4,806 respondents – interviewed face to face, highlights that the vast majority of Jordanians (93.1%) believe drug addiction is either "very" or "somewhat" prevalent in their communities. The near-unanimous acknowledgement underscores the extent to which the issue has permeated public consciousness. It is not seen as isolated or limited to specific segments of society but rather as a visible, widespread threat.

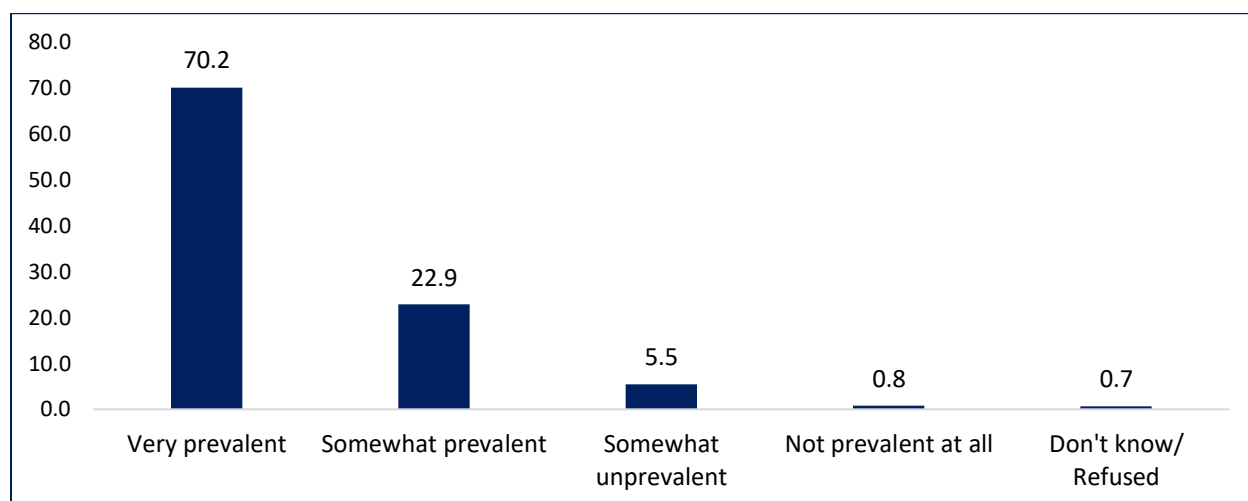


Figure 1: To what extent do you think that "drug addiction" is prevalent in Jordan?

This perception is mirrored in how Jordanians rank the importance of drug-related issues relative to other national challenges. When asked to identify the most important social issue facing the country, 60.0% of respondents selected illegal drugs, far surpassing other concerns such as scamming (10.7%), community violence (8.4%), and domestic or family violence (5.6%).

Even in the context of regional and international issues, drug trafficking and crime topped the list, with 43.9% of Jordanians naming it the most significant external threat – ranking ahead of the Israeli-Hamas conflict (21.7%) and the displacement of Palestinians (20.3%). This highlights a profound and growing anxiety not only about drug use itself, but about the systemic factors enabling its spread and the consequences it poses for Jordan's security and social fabric.

When looking at the data in terms of geographic location, the analysis shows that most Jordanians residing in Irbid believe that drugs are prevalent in their governorate. Indeed, with 90.7% of those living in Irbid, it was rather an expected finding given its proximity to the northern border. Mafrq was not far behind, as 89.2% of those living in Mafrq indicated that drugs are prevalent in the governorate.

Put together, 90.4% of Jordanians residing in either Irbid or Mafrq see drug trafficking and use as prevalent. Looking at the south of Jordan, the analysis shows that 90.5% of Jordanians living in Karak and 90.1% of those residing in Aqaba believe drug addiction and trafficking are prevalent.

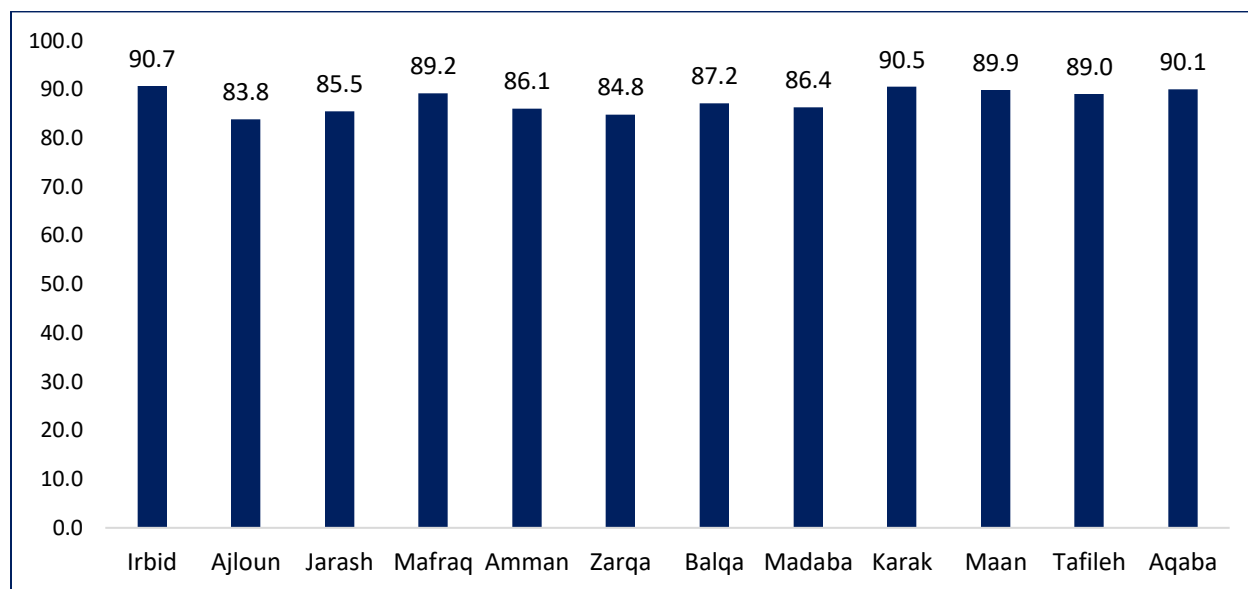


Figure 2: To what extent do you think that "drug addiction" is prevalent in Jordan? [Mean scores; higher means more prevalent. Analyzed by Jordan's 12 governorates]

Interestingly, the center region exhibited the lowest prevalence rate, per the survey findings. In fact, while 90% of Jordanians residing in the south as well as 89.5% of those living in the north indicated that drug use and trafficking are prevalent, the percent drops to 85.9% among Jordanians in the center, albeit remains a high percent.

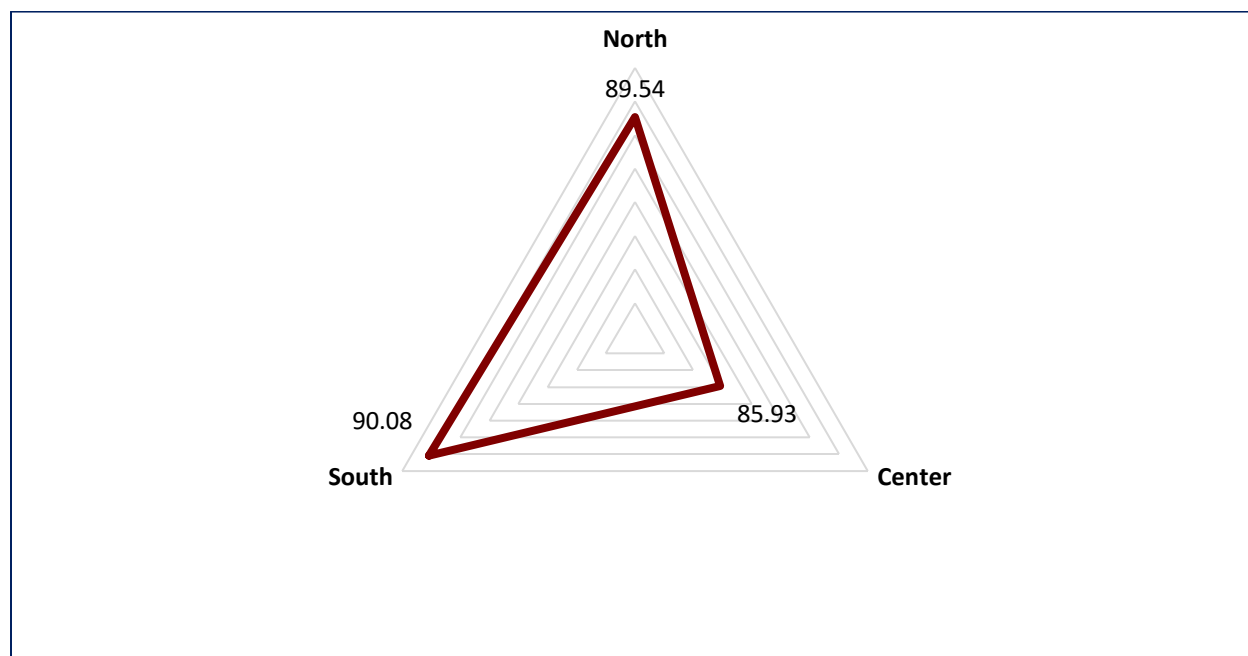


Figure 3: To what extent do you think that "drug addiction" is prevalent in Jordan? [Mean scores; higher means more prevalent. Analyzed by regions]

Understanding the drivers: Why do Jordanians think drug use is on the rise?

When it comes to identifying the root causes behind the spread of drug addiction, Jordanians point to economic and financial hardship. Slightly under half of Jordanians (48.3%) cited economy-related hurdles as the most important reason. More specifically, 30% of Jordanians believe unemployment and lack of job opportunities are the primary driver behind the recent spike in drug use in Jordan, followed by 18.3% who specified poverty, terrible economic conditions, and price hikes.

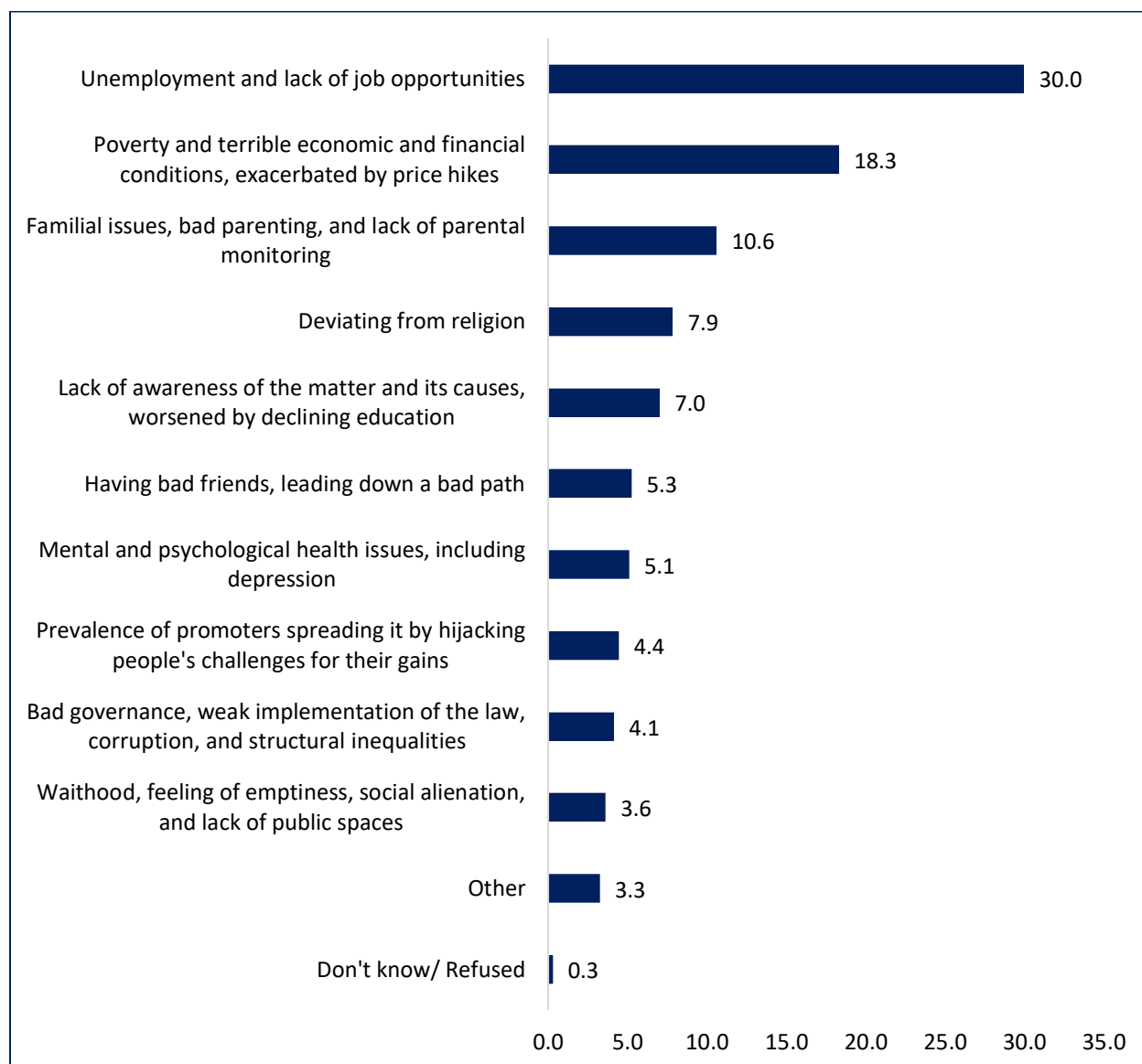


Figure 4: In your opinion, what is the most important reason for the spread of drug addiction in Jordan?

Moreover, around 20% of Jordanians emphasized drivers associated with the general awareness of society. This is because roughly 8% argued that deviating away from religion is the culprit while 7% emphasized lack of awareness of the matter, exacerbated by the declining quality of the education system in the country, as 5.3% highlighted the impact of peer pressure.

Another 19.3% centered their reasonings around mental health and the various aspects that may impact it. Essentially, 10.6% of Jordanians argued that familial issues and lack of parental monitoring can be identified as the main reason while 5.1% referred to mental and psychological health issues, and 3.6% emphasized waithood, feeling of emptiness, social alienation, and lack of accessible, affordable public spaces, particularly for youth.

In other words, alienation at home and by society along with financial struggles, coupled with lack of awareness, declining quality of education, and existing mental health struggles draw a dangerous pathway towards drug use – per approximately 75% of Jordanians. NAMA’s survey finds that addiction may not solely be a moral or behavioral failure; instead, it is a product of complex, structural vulnerabilities.

The Syrian border and the geopolitical dimension of drug trafficking

Jordanians draw a clear connection between regional instability and the rise in drug trafficking and use. In recent years, Jordan’s northern border has become increasingly vulnerable to the smuggling of illicit drugs, including Captagon, from Syria into Jordan and beyond.

In December 2024, Bashar al-Assad was ousted and replaced by an interim administration in Syria, now led by Ahmed al-Sharaa. NAMA’s survey finds that among Jordanians who view this change positively, 12.6% believe it would contribute to countering the issue of drug trafficking. On the other hand, 25.7% of those who viewed the change negatively feared that Jordan’s borders would become even less secure, enabling a further influx of smuggled drugs.

It is important to point that the percent of Jordanians who do view the change in Syria’s regime positively far outweigh those who view it negatively; however, it is equally important to note that concerns over increased influx of illicit drugs topped the list of concerns among the pessimists.

Nonetheless, a sense of optimism remains. When asked about the extent to which the regime change in Syria would positively affect efforts to combat drug smuggling into Jordan, 91.9% of Jordanians viewed the change as positive – a strong signal that border control and regional drug flows remain top-of-mind.

What does the data tell us

What emerges from the data is a clear and urgent call for action. Jordanians are not only aware of the challenge, but they also understand its root causes, its consequences, and the necessity for a coordinated national and regional response. Drug addiction is not merely a public health issue, it is an epidemic with economic, social, and security implications. Addressing it will require more than border enforcement or policing. As vital as security efforts are to countering the issue, effective solutions must also tackle the underlying economic deprivation that fuels addiction, the educational gaps that enable its persistence, and the social and mental health drivers that exacerbate its prevalence. Addressing the supply is integral, but so is exploring, dissecting, and offsetting the demand.