

Learning about Play in Jordan and Lebanon: A Needs Assessment for the Humanitarian Play Project

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Goals of the needs assessments

- Learn more about families' access to materials and media that support play
- Understand the role of play in children's lives
- Assess caregiver's understanding of the value of play
- Examine barriers to play



Data collection

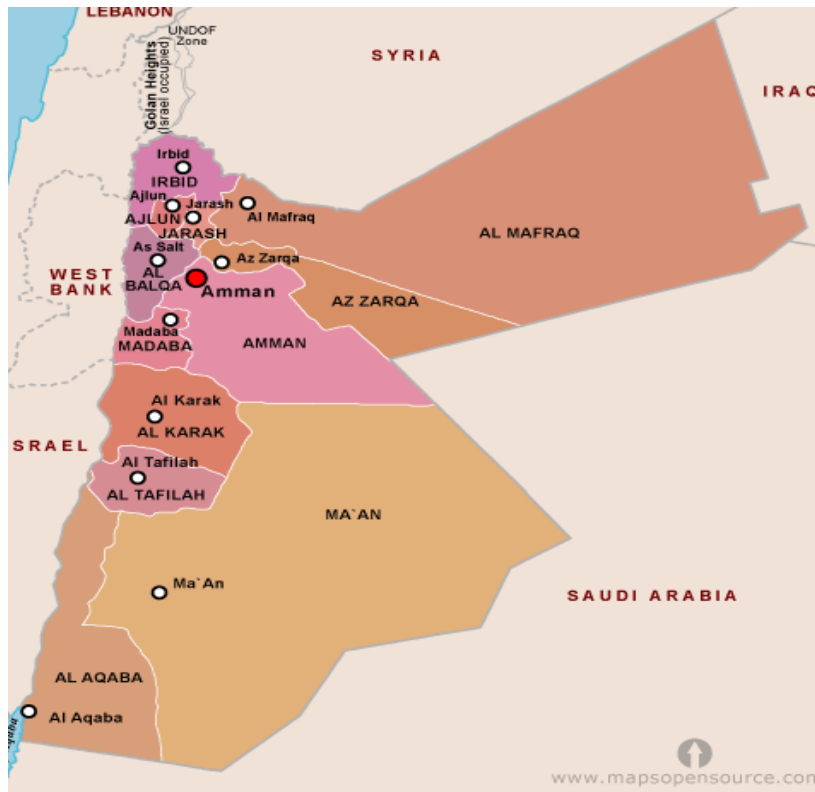


- **Instruments:** Demographic questionnaire and caregiver interview protocol
- Hired **Jordan Pioneers** to manage the research process
- **Jordan:** 100 caregivers of children 3-6 years old living in Amman, Zarqa, Jarash, Irbid, Jerash, Ajloun, Karak, and Aqaba
 - 70 displaced Syrian caregivers
 - 30 Jordanian caregivers
- **Lebanon:** 100 caregivers of children 3-6 years old living in Beqaa, Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and Akkar.
 - 70 displaced Syrian caregivers
 - 30 Lebanese caregivers



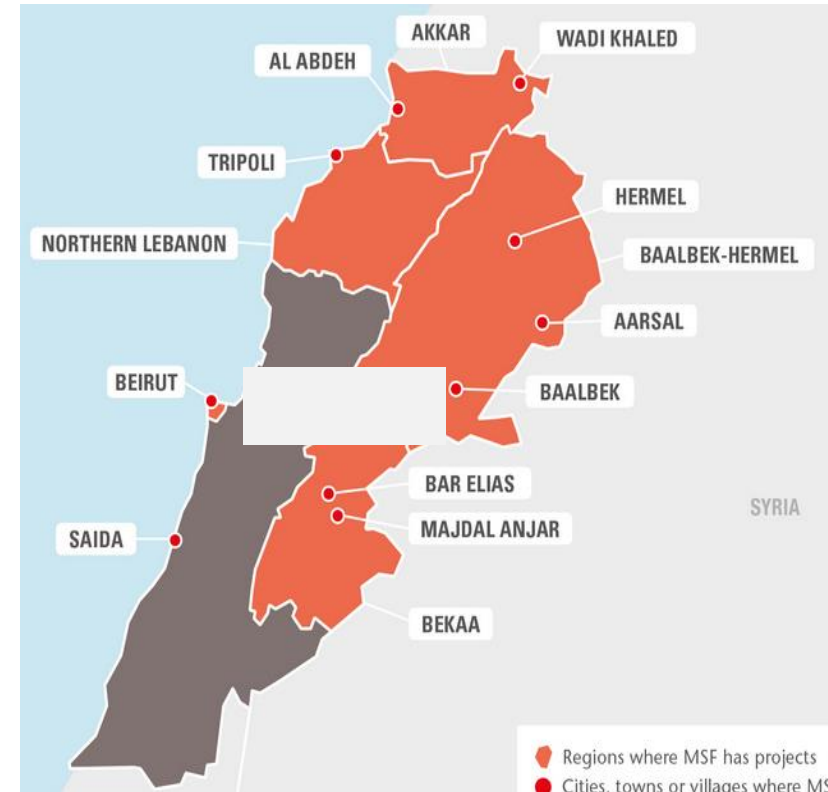
Study Sites

Jordan (n=100)



Amman & Zarqa	42%
Irbid, Jarash, & Ajloun	30%
Karak & Aqaba	28%

Lebanon (n=100)



Akkar	30%
Beirut & Mount Lebanon	30%
Beqaa	40%

Sample Characteristics*



- The majority of respondents were married women between 30-39 years old.
- Educational background varied with respondents in Jordan having more advanced educational backgrounds.
 - 55% of respondents in Jordan had at least a secondary certificate.
 - 51% of respondents in Lebanon had a primary education while 21% had no formal education.
- Displaced respondents represented 70% of the total. Of the displaced in the sample, the majority had been displaced 6 or more years.
- While the sample of the selected child ages 3-6 years was even among girls and boys, the sample skewed to children ages 4-6 years.
- In Jordan, 48% of girls and 42% of boys were enrolled in school. In Lebanon, 71% of girls and 69% of boys were enrolled in school.
 - When the Lebanon sample was split by immigration status, displaced children's enrollment dropped to
- Children in Lebanon were more likely to be enrolled in school, though when split by host and displaced communities, the enrollment rate for displaced children was half that of the host community.
 - Of the sample, displaced Syrian boys in Lebanon were the least likely to be enrolled in school.

Key Findings



- Children's **favorite play activities** are often **outdoor activities** and **games on phones/tablets**.
 - There is **significant gendering of play preferences** and what is considered a 'girls' game' relative to a 'boys' game.
 - **Watching TV** is considered a play activity.
- The **introduction of technology is a major shift** in play since caregivers were children. Because of this, caregivers feel play of today is more individualized, isolating, and less social than when they were children.
- Children most frequently **play with siblings**, followed by **female adult caregivers**.
- Children **most commonly play inside everyday**.
 - Other frequent play activities include **dancing, singing, arts and crafts, blocks, and using household materials as play objects**.
 - **Pretend play** has **varying levels** of engagement.
- Caregivers have **generally positive perceptions of the value of play** in children's development, but their **confidence as play partners is limited**.
- **Barriers to play** include limitations on **time, stress, knowledge** on how to play, and **cultural norms**.
- When ranking different programs that could improve life for families who live nearby, **better education programs** is a clear priority for families and communities.
- When **ranking priorities for children's development**, there is variation though caregivers agree on **positive health and well-being** as a clear priority.

What We Learned about Play in Jordan & Lebanon

What Makes Children Happy



Caregivers in Jordan and Lebanon explained that their children feel happy when:

- Receiving gifts or buying toys or new clothes
- Receiving affection from parents
- Playing with siblings, parents, friends, and neighbors
- Outside (playing at the park, going on picnics)
- Visiting grandparents or other relatives
- Eating sweets, ice cream, chocolate, and chips
- Drawing coloring, dancing, and singing
- Playing mobile games or watching children's programs on mobile or television

Children's Favorite Games and Play Activities



From caregivers' responses, children's favorite games and activities are highly gendered:

- **General play activities:** hide and seek, running, tag, playing in sand and soil, and games on mobile phones/iPads.
- **Girls like** to do “girlish” activities like playing with dolls like *Barbie*, dressing up, makeup, and play with pots and pans.
- **Boys like** to play ‘boys’ games’ like cars, guns, wrestling, and football.
 - A Syrian mother mentioned that her son likes to play “girlish’ games” like playing with his sister dolls which she finds inappropriate.

For caregivers, play does not look significantly different from when they were children:

- Play primarily took place **outside**. Games included hide and seek, tag, running and racing, ball games, badminton, jump rope, swings, slides, and circle games.
- **Indoor play** included board games; cards, coloring, drawing, and they enjoyed watching television.
 - **Girls** enjoyed playing with dolls, often made out of cloth and stick. They also played house, pots and pans, and picked flowers from the field.
 - **Boys** played football, cars, marbles, and made houses from mud and rocks. They also made cars from boxes and strings.
- Many caregivers explained that **they did not play as children** because their parents did not allow it, they had to work from an early age, or had to take care of younger siblings.

Remembering Caregiver-Child Play for Parents



38% of participants in Lebanon and 60% of participants in Jordan mentioned that one or both their parents played with them. Play included a variety of activities:

- Group activities inside and outside (tug of war, hide and seek, ring a ring o' roses, tag)
- Board games (Monopoly, Ludo, Snakes & Ladders)
- Cards
- Telling stories, traditional fairytales, and jokes
- Watching TV
- Picnics
- Hide and seek
- Football, volleyball, badminton
- Kite flying

Reasons caregivers' parents didn't play included time limitations, household responsibilities, older parents, war, too many children, parent working in another country. Other reasons were cultural like play as frivolous or unacceptable for fathers to play with their children.

Changes in Play



While activities children of now like to play are similar to activities their parents enjoyed, technology has changed the play landscape according to caregivers. Almost all participants agreed that children's play has changed due to technology:

- Many mentioned games on tablets and mobile phones, electronic cars, PlayStation, fancy dolls, and robots.
- Caregivers feel like play using mobile devices focuses more on individuality, eliminates creativity, isolates child, does not require physical movement, and promotes children's indoor play.
- Others said that play activities have not changed for them because they cannot afford it.
- Some caregivers noted that the streets now are not safe like the old days, so they prefer to keep their children at home and let them play with the available technology.

Caregiver perceptions around generational changes in play	
Play in the past	Present play
• Technology free	• Mobile phones and tablets
• Social Group play with neighbors	• Individualized No social interaction with others
• Simple	• Complicated
• Outdoor	• Indoor
• Requires fitness and body movement	• No physical movement

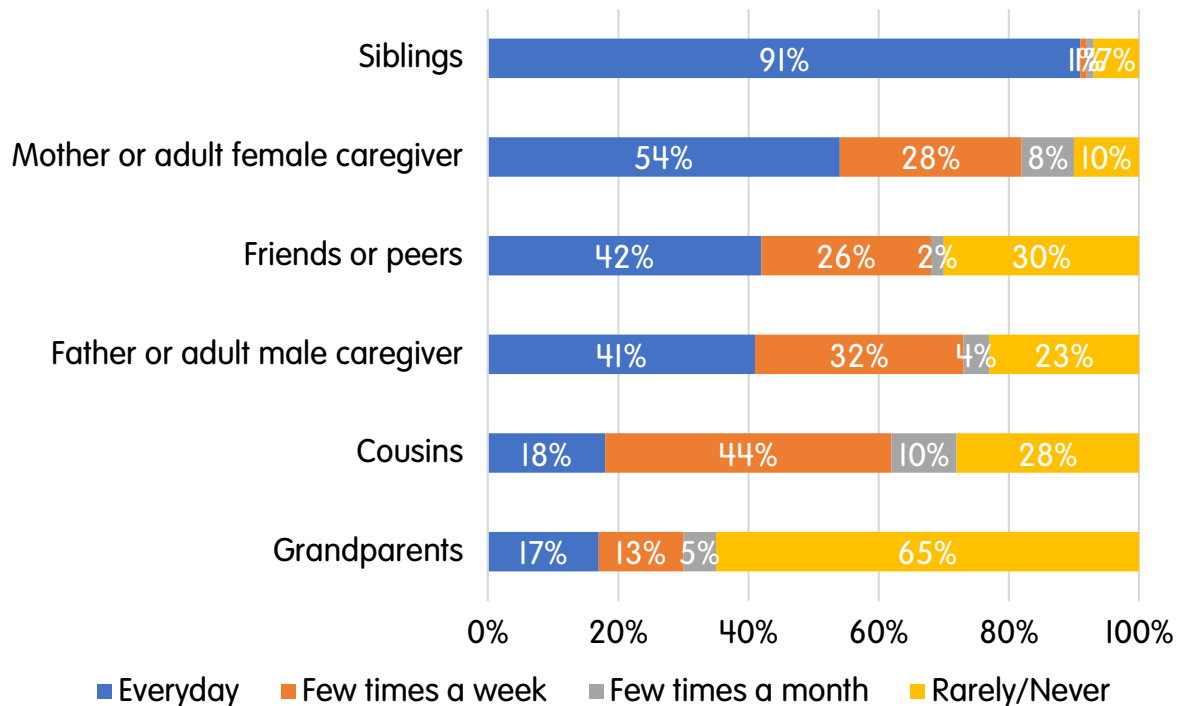
Children's Play Mates in Jordan & Lebanon



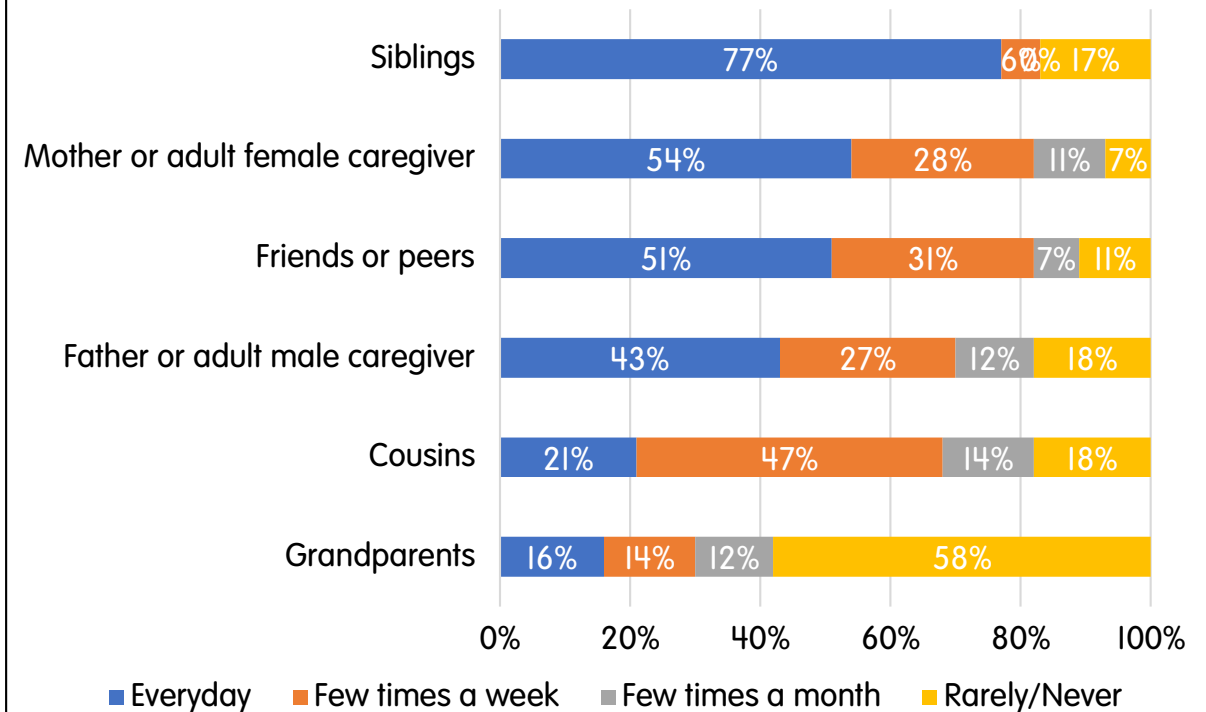
Across both Jordan and Lebanon, children most frequently play with siblings, followed by female adult caregivers. Fathers and other adult male caregivers are more infrequent play partners though time spent in play with them mirrors play with friends and peers.

Of note, 23% of children in Jordan and 18% of children in Lebanon rarely/never play with their father or adult male caregiver.

Children's play mates in Jordan



Children's play mates in Lebanon



Types of Play in Jordan and Lebanon



Children in both Lebanon and Jordan **most commonly play inside everyday**.

Children in Lebanon are much more likely to **play outside** every day: 69% play outside at least a few times a week while only 29% of children in Jordan do that same.

Other activities that commonly take place at least a few times a week include:

- **Dancing**
- **Singing**
- **Using household materials as play objects**
- **Arts and crafts**
- **Build with blocks or other objects**
- **Read/look at a picture book** (*Jordan only*)
 - Only 31% of children in Lebanon read/look at a picture book at least a few times a week while 48% rarely/never do this.

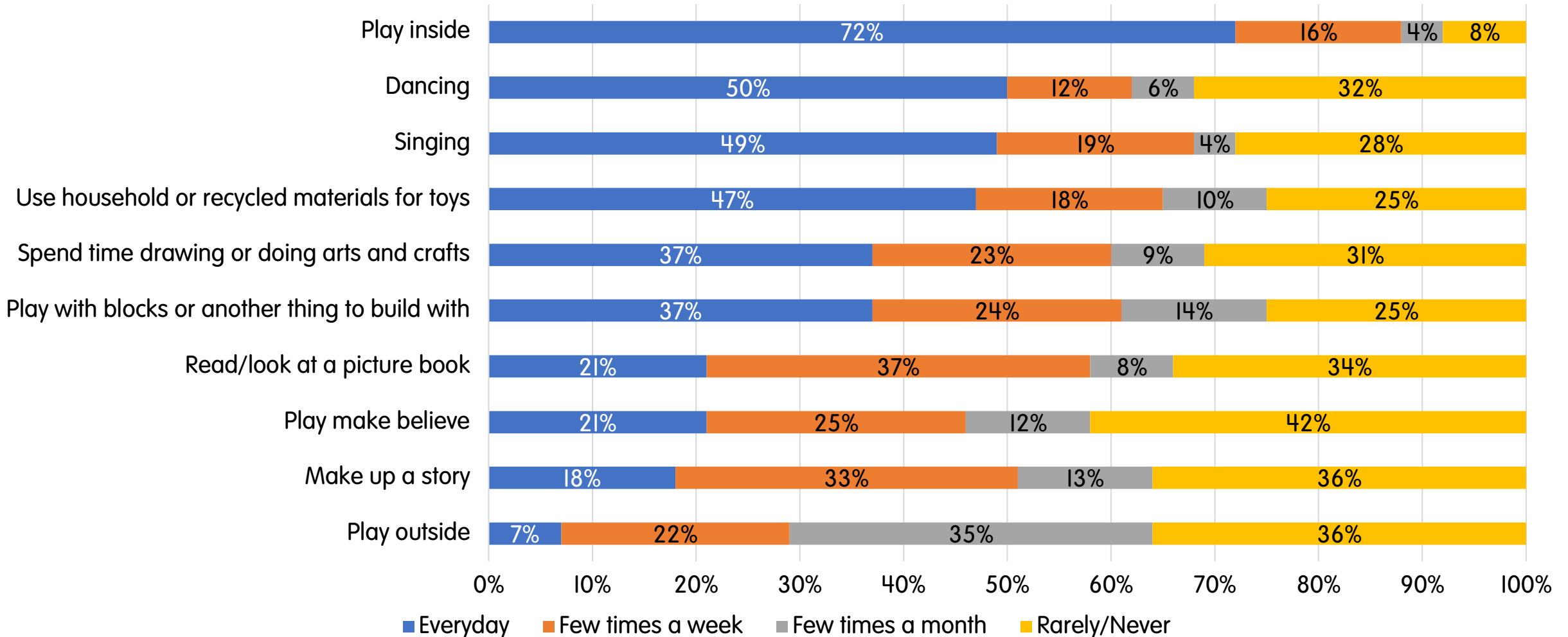
Pretend play has varying levels of engagement:

- **Make up a story:** While 51% of children in Jordan do this at least a few times a week, only 35% of children in Lebanon make up a story at least a few times a week while 42% rarely/never do this.
- **Play make believe:** 42% of children in Jordan and 30% of children in Lebanon rarely/never play make believe.

Types of Play in Jordan



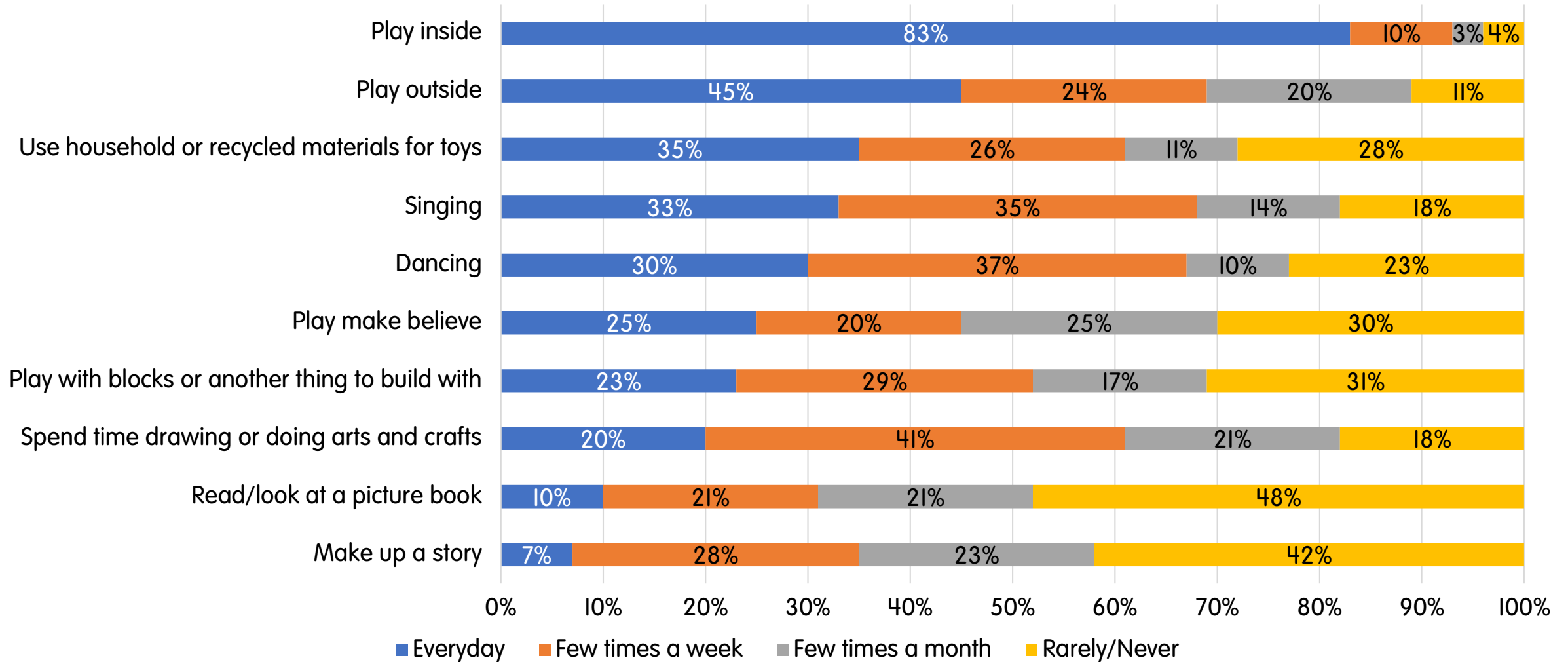
Types of play in Jordan



Types of Play in Lebanon



Types of play in Lebanon



Motivating Factors for Playing with Children



For caregivers across both countries, the main reason they play with their children is because they love them and want them to be happy.

Other reasons include:

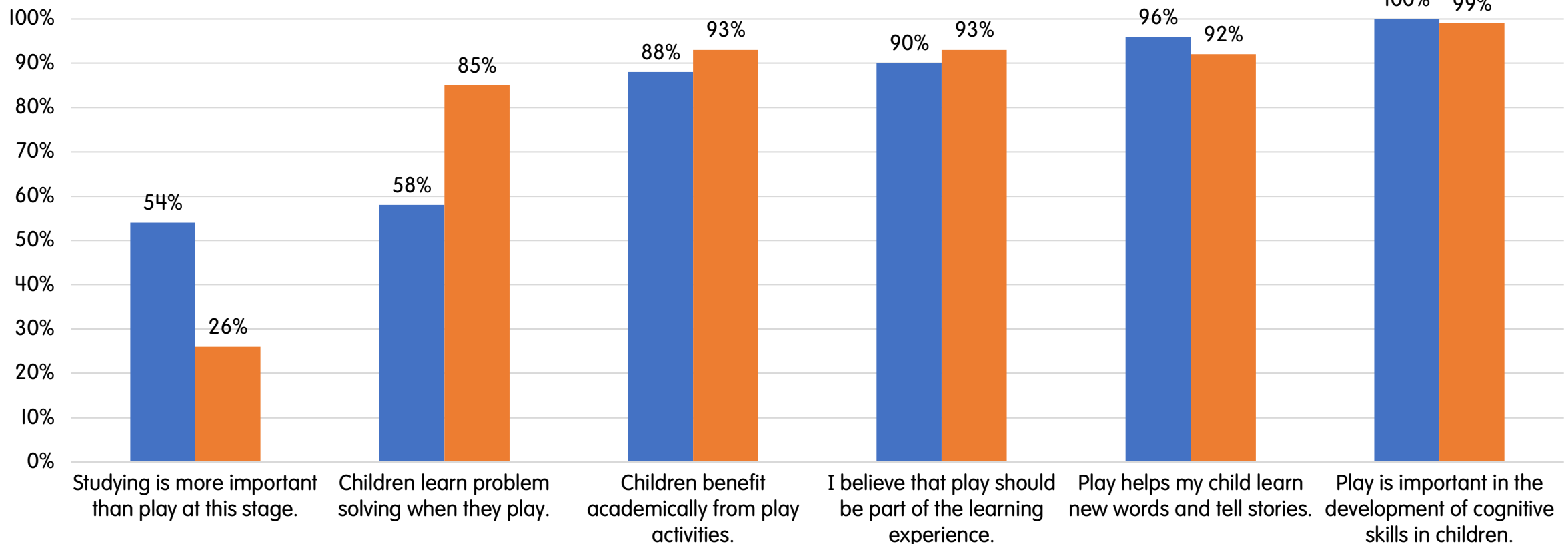
- Spend quality time with their children
- Strengthen bond between caregiver and child
- Keep them from being bored
- Feel bad/guilty for only child
- Guilt for being away at work
- Teach them skills and strengthen personalities
- Keep children busy or stop them from annoying older siblings
- Fear of them playing outside (*Jordan*)
- Avoid repeating mistakes of their parents

Caregivers' Perceptions of Value of Play for Cognitive Development



Caregivers have a generally positive perception of the value of play for children's cognitive development in both Jordan and Lebanon. The link between play and academic work is tenuous, however, as many parents do not believe that studying is more important than play.

Caregiver perceptions of play for cognitive development*



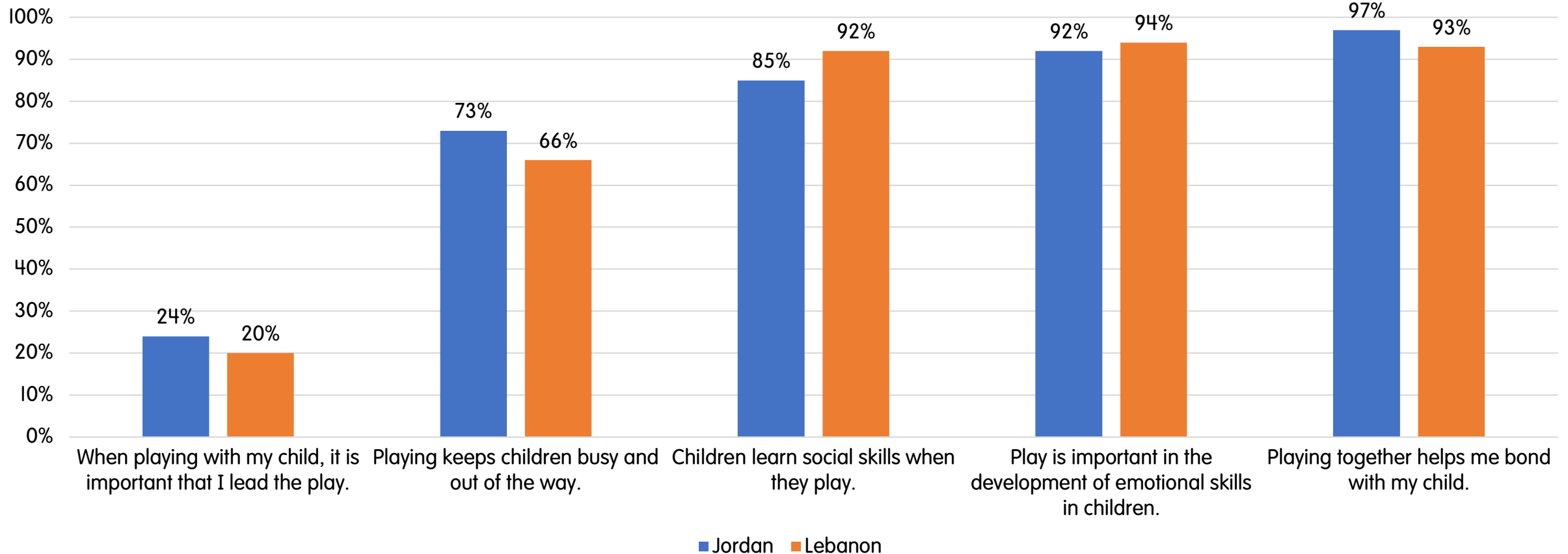
*combined strongly agree/agree scores

Caregivers' Perceptions of Value of Play for Socio-Emotional Development



Caregivers agree that play is important for emotional development, caregiver-child bonding, and social skills development, but caregivers do not see value in their role as play partners as play is valuable in its use to keep children occupied.

Caregiver perceptions of play for socio-emotional development*



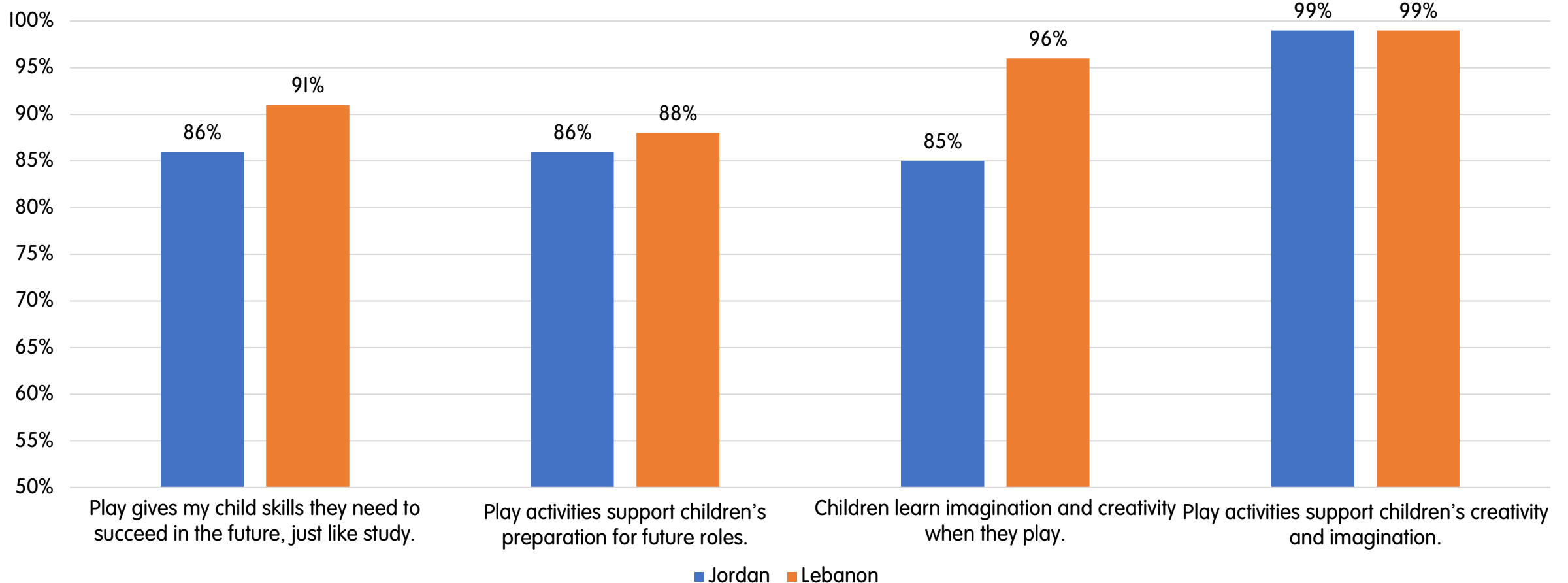
*combined strongly agree/agree scores

Caregivers' Perceptions of Value of Play for Creative Thinking and Preparation for Future Roles



Caregivers agree that play is important for developing children's imagination and creative thinking skills, as well as its role in preparing children for the future.

Caregiver perceptions of play for creative thinking and preparation for future roles*



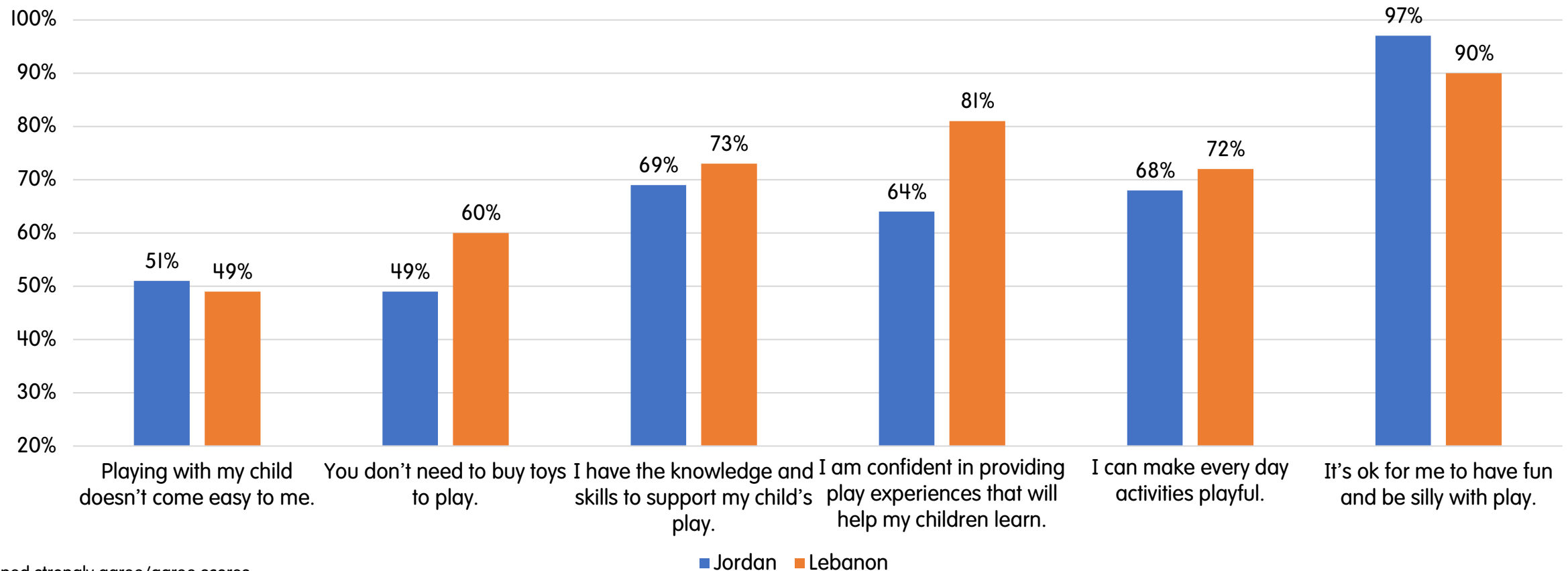
*combined strongly agree/agree scores

Caregivers' Confidence as Play Partners



Caregivers are comfortable being silly with their children but their confidence around other measures varies. Of note, is that approximately half of parents agree that playing with their children does not come easy.

Caregivers' confidence as play partners*



Caregivers provided insight on the following barriers to play:

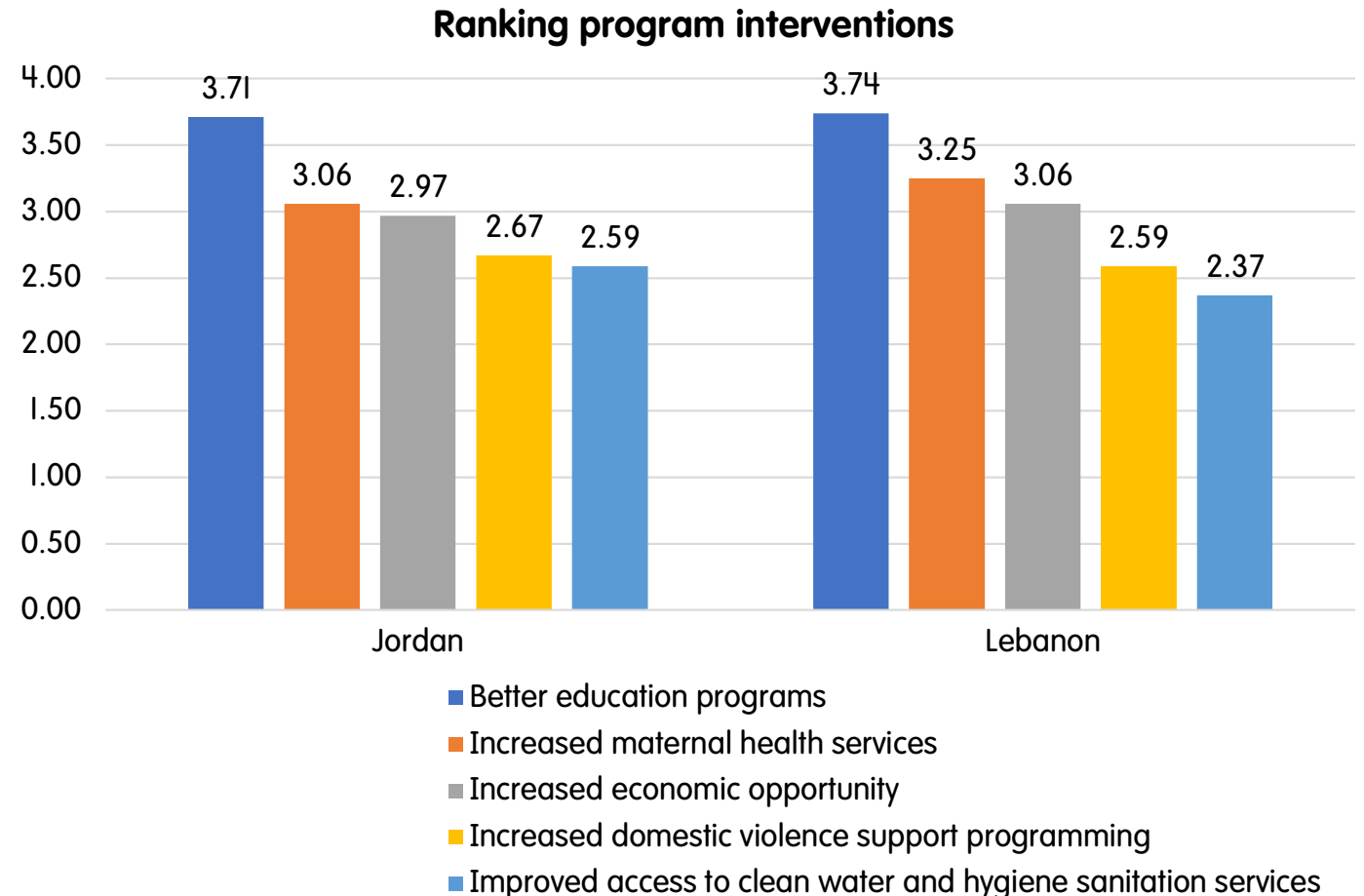
- **Financial issues:** Limited income to meet basic needs.
- **Time constraints:** Limited available time due to working outside the home or high load of house chores and responsibilities.
- **Emotional and psychological stress:** Difficult living conditions and family problems
- **Physical stress:** Fatigue and limited energy to play with children.
- **Lack of patience to tolerate children:** Caregivers' irritation and edginess and inability to handle children.
- **Physical availability:** Working out of the house/abroad, divorce, death, or loss in the war.
- **Limited knowledge on how to play with children**
- **Play culture/ self-esteem:** Cultural disconnect around playing with children. Parents were not raised to play with children and they feel it is socially unacceptable, especially for the older generation of fathers who wanted to preserve the image of the father being the boss of the household.

Ranking Interventions



Caregivers were asked to rank various programs that could improve life for families who live nearby. Based on mean scores, rankings were as follows. As the graph shows, better education programs is a clear priority for families and communities, particularly those in Jordan, following by increased maternal health services and economic opportunity.

1. Better education programs
2. Increased maternal health services
3. Increased economic opportunity
4. Increased domestic violence programming
5. Improved access to clean water and hygiene sanitation services



More on Ranking Interventions



Caregivers shared a variety of reasons for selecting the better education programs and improved maternal health services as the two most important programs for their communities:

Better education programs	Improved maternal health services
Education is the foundation of society.	Mothers' health is an important element in the society.
Prepare for a better future/help them to find a job in the future.	Women lack knowledge on how to care for personal health and wellbeing and need health awareness sessions, guidance, and support.
Improve curricula/current schooling systems are weak and children are not motivated to learn.	Mothers and child are the most vulnerable members in the society.
Help integration into society	Practices on raising healthy children.

Ranking Priorities for Children's Development



Caregivers were asked to rank various priorities in order of what is most important for children's healthy development. Based on mean scores, the countries varied in their priorities for children's development:

Priority	Jordan	Lebanon
1	Positive health & well-being	Academic success
2	Healthy relationship with family	Positive health & well-being
3	Joy and happiness	Healthy relationship with family
4	Ability to cope with difficult situations	Ability to cope with difficult situations
5	Academic success	Joy and happiness
6	Social skills	Social skills

Whereas caregivers in Jordan focused on physical and mental well-being for children, caregivers in Lebanon prioritized academic success followed by physical health and well-being.

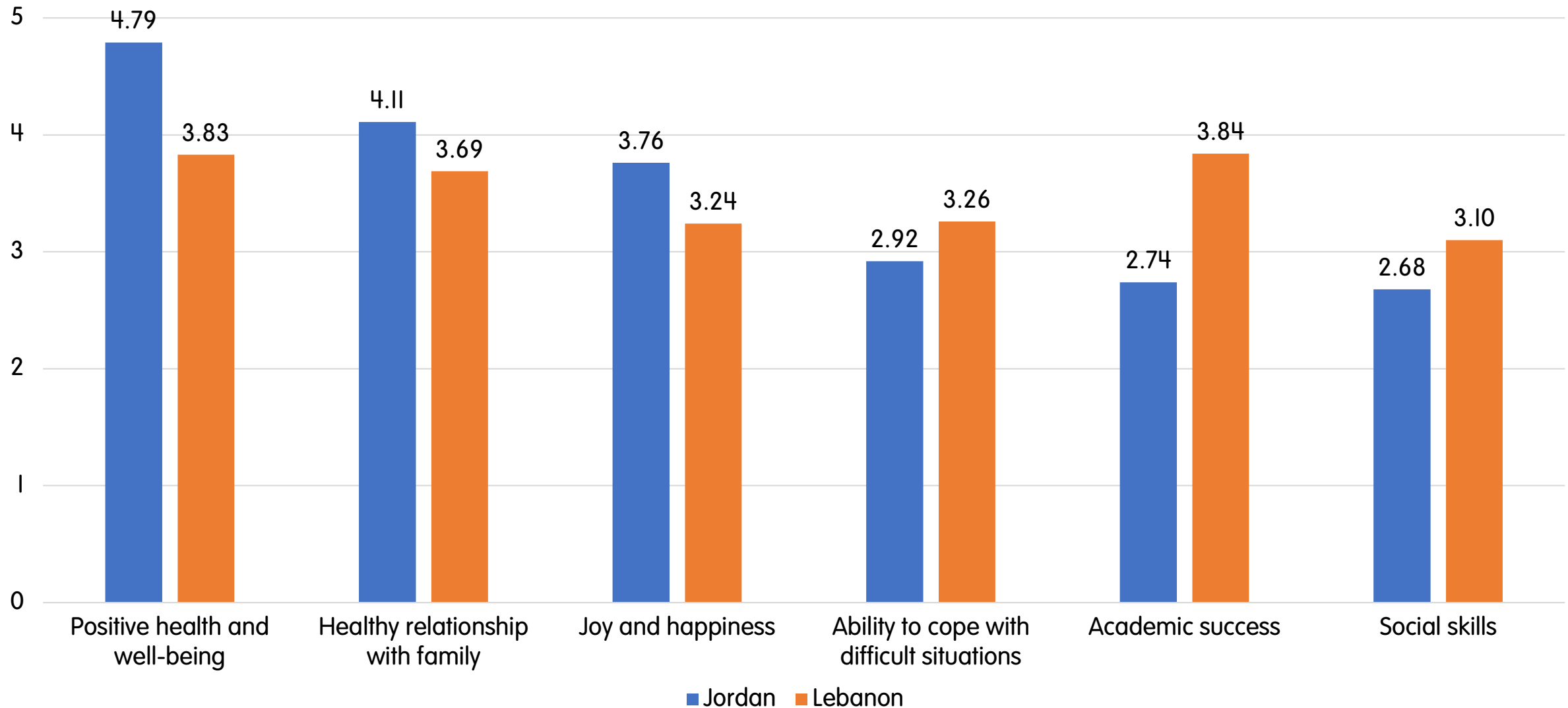
That said, based on mean scores, positive health and well-being was only 0.01 below academic success in Lebanon, making it clear that caregivers place high priority on children's positive health and general well-being.

Caregivers in Jordan placed academic success low in the ranking, just a place above social skills (which finished last in both countries).

Ranking Priorities for Children's Development



Ranking priorities for children's development



A few recommendations

Focus on behavior change since caregivers understand the importance of play



Previous SW play interventions have focused on supporting caregivers' understanding of the value of play, but parents in these communities already have a solid understanding of its role in child development.

For a caregiver-focused play intervention, focusing on behavior change at home would help parents see how they can support their children's development through play:

- Support their integration of learning through play into every day activities.
- Support their understanding of the role of adults in guided play for young children.
- Consider the use of textless storybooks as an entry point for caregiver-child play to support caregiver confidence. Given the role of storytelling in play of the past and the limited time spent currently reading/being read to among families, and what we know from previous interventions, this is an activity with strong potential in this context.
 - This will likely also provide a needed springboard for pretend play as we've seen in India, Mexico, and South Africa.

Support caregiver health and wellbeing as part of play intervention



Fatigue, stress, and limited attention to personal health and wellbeing (especially for mothers) was a clear pattern that emerged from this study. Given that caregivers in both countries also prioritized children's health and well-being in children's overall development, there is a clear need for more support around these areas:

To address that, a play space/intervention that supports guided play between caregivers and children could also provide:

- Information on the link between parental health and well-being and children's health and well-being
- Guidance and support to caregivers around personal health and well-being as part of play space programming
- Provide childcare during the sessions focused on caregiver health and wellbeing

Address the gendered norms around play

While play activities are clearly gendered, so is who plays with children in the family:

- Support the notion that play activities that can be enjoyed by all children because of their link to various developmental outcomes.
- Support fathers and other male caregivers' increased engagement in learning through play with young children. Focus messaging around the long-term development potential for children with increased parental engagement.
- Provide spaces for fathers and adult male caregivers to engage directly with young children through play.

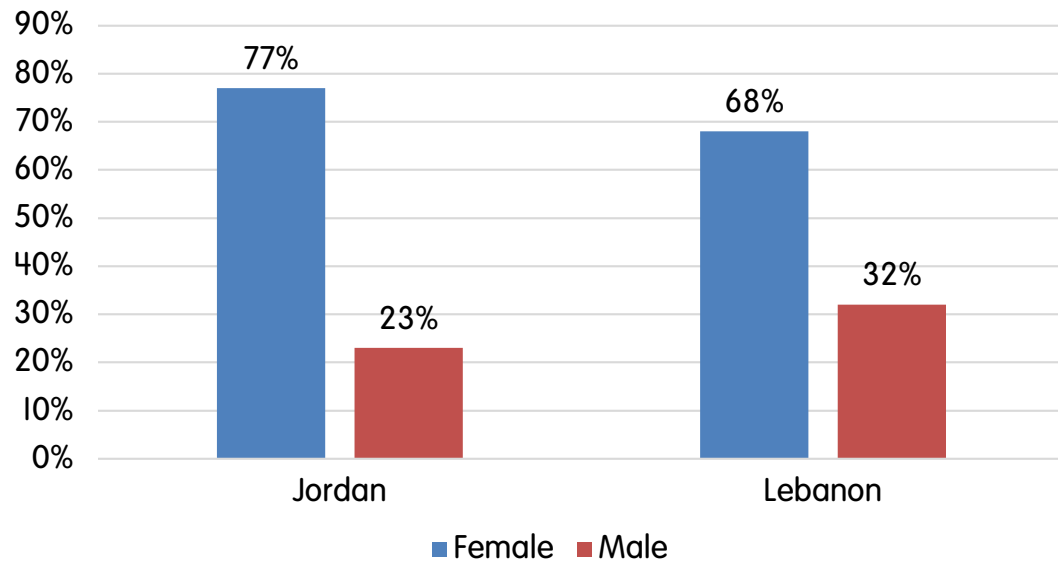
Appendix: Respondent Demographics

Demographics of Caregivers: Gender and Age



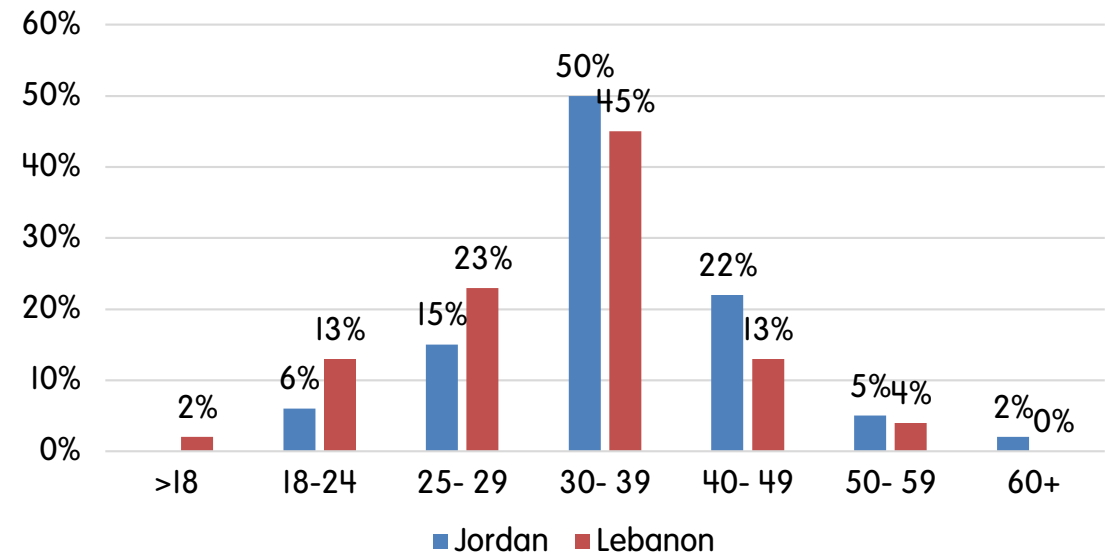
The majority of respondents from both countries were women.

Gender of Respondents



There was a normal distribution of respondent age with the majority falling between 30-39 years.

Age of Respondents

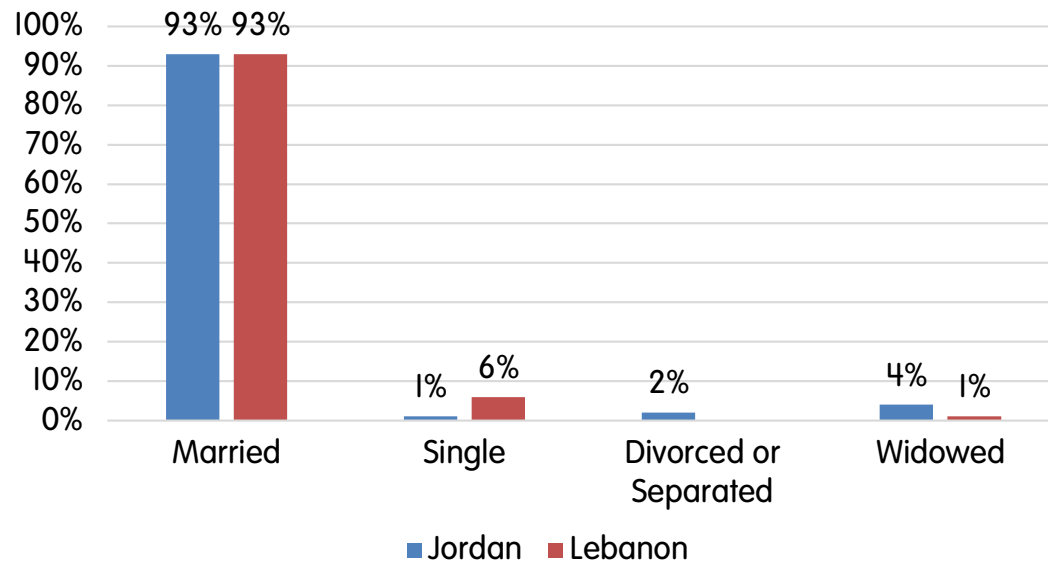


Demographics of Caregivers: Relationship Status & Education



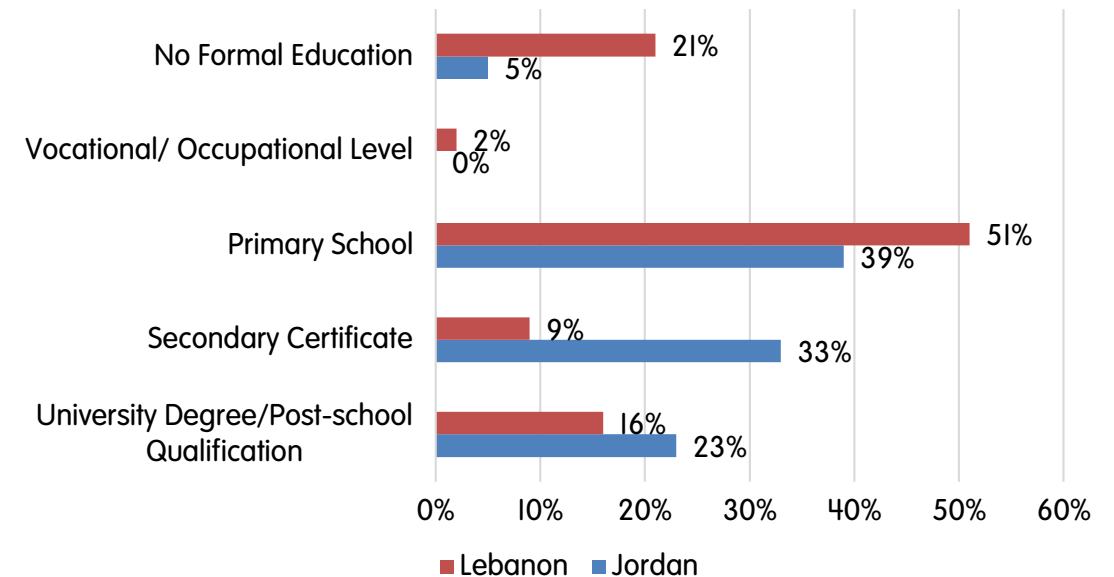
The overwhelming majority of caregivers were married.

Respondent Relationship Status



Half of respondents in Lebanon had a primary education while educational experience varied more in Jordan. 55% of respondents in Jordan had at least a secondary certificate.

Respondent Highest Level of Education

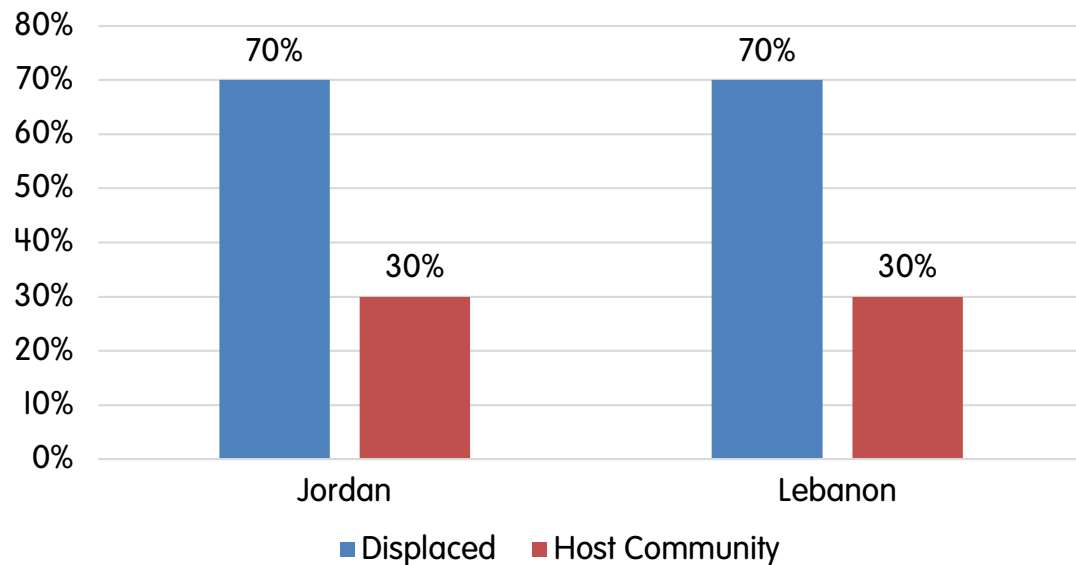


Demographics of Caregivers: National Status and Length of Displacement



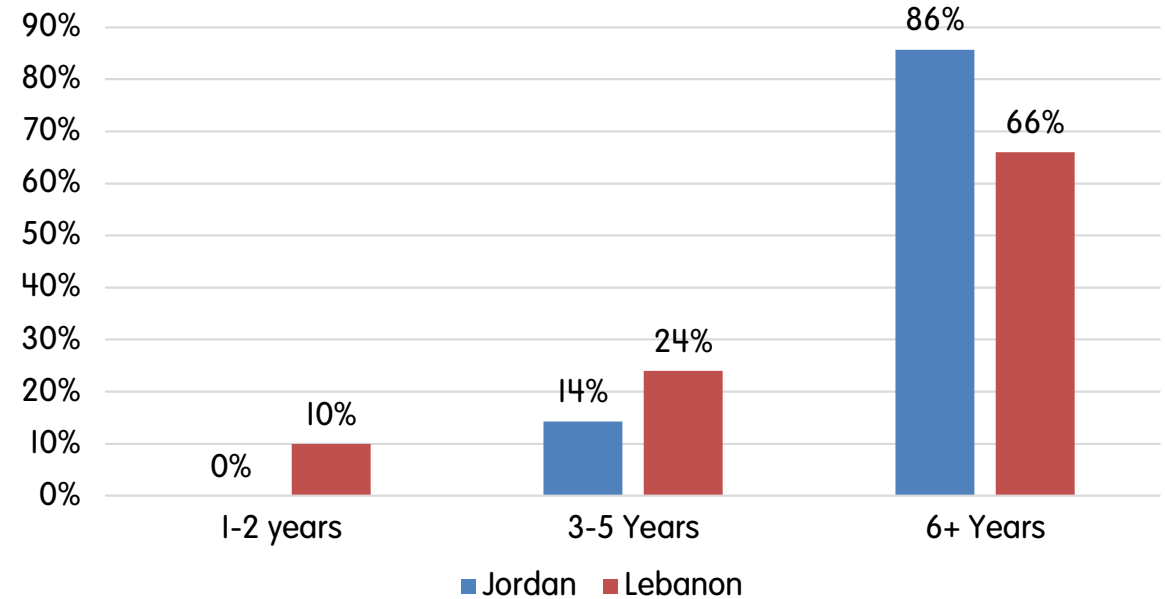
70% of respondents in each country were displaced Syrians.

National Status of Respondents



Of the displaced in the sample, the majority had been displaced 6 or more years.

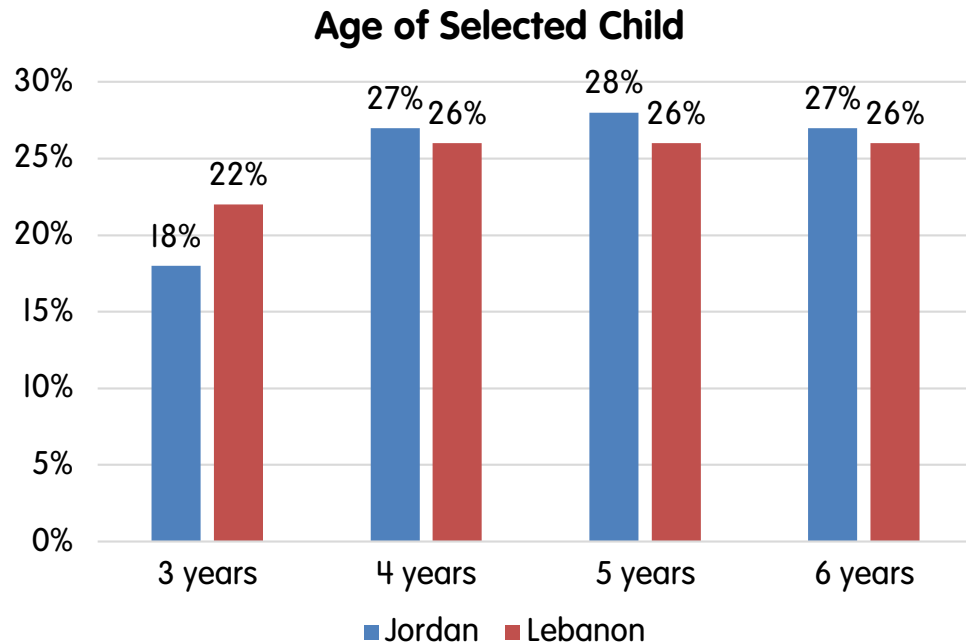
Respondent Length of Displacement



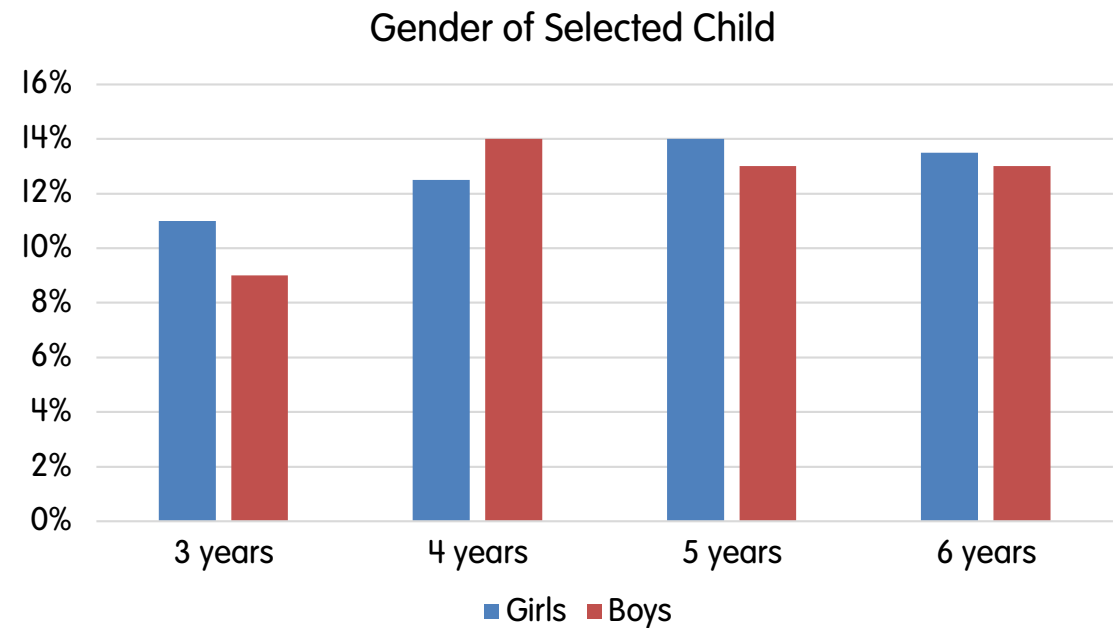
Demographics of Caregivers: Selected Child Age and Gender



The age of selected children skewed slightly older.



Gender of selected children was evenly distributed.



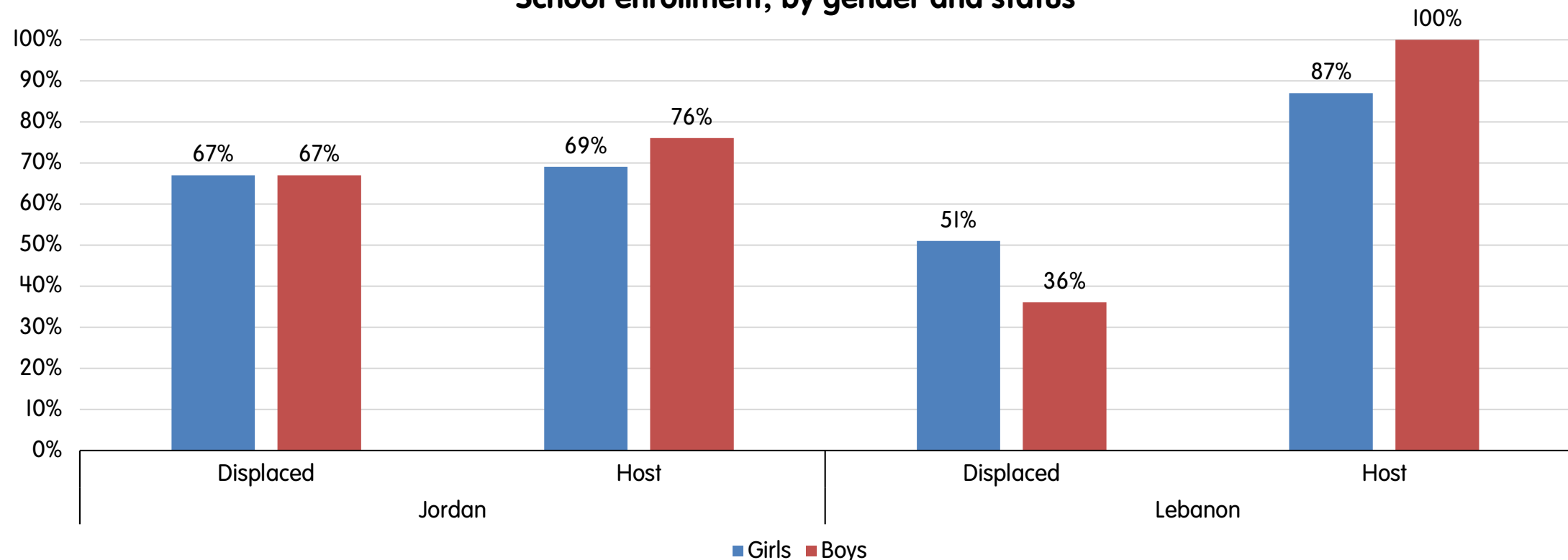
School Enrollment



In Jordan, 48% of girls and 42% of boys were enrolled in school. In Lebanon, 71% of girls and 69% of boys were enrolled in school.

Enrollment was generally similar in Jordan while Lebanon showed much greater variation between displaced and host and between girls and boys.

School enrollment, by gender and status



To help prepare young children, caregivers believe school should focus on the following:

- Reading, writing, and learning new languages
- Communication and interpersonal skills
- Values like honesty, love, and compassion
- Social skills (mutual respect and understanding, cooperation)
- Good habits and manners
- Religious manners
- Self expression and confidence
- Persistence
- Problem solving
- Self protection
- Hygiene practices