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3.1.1. Employment

In early 2026, crisis outcomes in Eastern Sudan and Khartoum were expected to persist due to reduced access to income-earning opportunities for both IDPs and the host community, resulting from conflict and displacement, widespread destruction of infrastructure, below-average stocks, and high food prices.[652](#)

Sudan's labour market has contracted sharply since April 2023, with unemployment rates skyrocketing,[653](#) the economy collapsing, resources diverted to the conflict and an expanded informal sector replacing formal employment and resulting in the war economy taking over a previously struggling economy.[654](#)

The Sudan Welfare Monitoring Survey, conducted in 2025 among 4 241 households in Blue Nile, White Nile, Kassala, and Red Sea states indicated that employment levels among Sudanese increased between 2024 and 2025, particularly among men and those with a secondary or high school education. Persistent gender disparities continued to limit workforce participation among both Sudanese and refugee women.[655](#)

Refugees in Sudan, mostly originating from South Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia, largely worked in the informal sector outside camps – primarily in agriculture and small-scale trade. [656](#)

Employment among refugees saw a slight decline between 2024 and 2025 due to barriers to employment outside refugee camps. Refugees with higher education were an exception, as they have experienced an increase in employment.[657](#) The legal framework defined by the 2014 Asylum Regulation Act did not provide clarity on the procedures to obtain work permits. This, coupled with movement restrictions and security concerns, limited job opportunities. Additionally, regional disparities in law enforcement and administrative capacity constrained refugees' access to formal work.[658](#)

Agricultural labour opportunities — normally a key income source during the harvest —remained scarce due to insecurity, leaving millions of households without viable livelihoods and increasingly dependent on extreme coping strategies, including begging for food.[659](#)

Public wage erosion and payment disruptions persisted in the country: the Ministry of Finance approved retroactive salary increases in the 2026 budget to begin in March 2026, but these had not been implemented by April 2026, deepening social pressure and reducing confidence in state payments.[660](#)

The World Bank indicated a rise in unemployment in the country from 2022 to 2024, resulting from 'widespread business closures, economic uncertainty, and a sharp decline in stable job opportunities due to the severe impact of the conflict on the labour market'. Unemployment

rates went from 32 % in 2022 to 46 % in 2023 and 47 % in 2024⁶⁶¹ with 4.6 million jobs lost since the beginning of the conflict.⁶⁶² The 2026 World Economic Outlook by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicated an unemployment rate of 60.1% for 2025.⁶⁶³ More than half of the refugees interviewed by the Sudan Welfare Monitoring Survey conducted in 2025 reported that they had not worked between May and July 2025, a slight increase compared to 12 months earlier. The share of refugees relying on food aid increased from 42 % to 45 %.⁶⁶⁴

According to economist Dr Abdel Halim Timan, as reported by Dabanga, the war has increased youth unemployment, due to the widespread disruption to education, particularly in western Sudan. This has deepened inequality and driven some young people towards recruitment by armed groups, increasing the risk of prolonged conflict.⁶⁶⁵

Increased prevalence of child labour is a concerning trend, particularly among households struggling with food security, in refugee communities, and among Sudanese families with lower education levels.⁶⁶⁶ Sudanese boys frequently engage in informal work, such as agriculture, herding, restaurant jobs, and street vending.⁶⁶⁷

Khartoum has been Sudan's primary industrial, commercial, and manufacturing hub, hosting two thirds of the country's manufacturing establishments. However, most of the large businesses in Khartoum including factories (wheat mills, food, beverages, pharmaceuticals, car assembly, etcetera), warehouses, car dealers, all the main and small popular markets, shopping malls, electronic shops, and the gold market were looted or destroyed, with some burned to the ground, or forced to shut down.⁶⁶⁸ Before the start of the current conflict, the national unemployment rate in the country stood at 8.4 %, with Khartoum and Central Darfur experiencing respectively 1.5 and 10 times higher unemployment rates than the national average.⁶⁶⁹ Since the beginning of the conflict, more than 60 % of the capital's residents have reportedly lost their jobs and life savings. A former civil servant who returned to Khartoum in January 2026, reported having been forced into marginal labour during his displacement and finding no work available in a city where business has ceased.⁶⁷⁰ In Khartoum state, ERRs members have worked unpaid for over two years, many facing burnout, livelihood pressures, and mental health strain.⁶⁷¹ For additional information on ERRs see sections [2.1.2. Resistance committees](#), [2.4.2. Situation of aid workers](#) and [3.1.4. Housing and general living conditions](#).

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