



JORDAN

MENA Gender Equality Profile

Status of Girls and Women in the
Middle East and North Africa

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1. BACKGROUND

Demographics	Value	Year
Total population (000)	6,316	2009
Total adolescent (10-19) population (000)	1,368	2009
Total under-18 population (000)	2,592	2009
Total under-5 population (000)	765	2009
Population annual growth rate (%)	3.3	2000-2009
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	3.0	2009
Under-five mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	25	2009
Life expectancy at birth (years), male	72	2009
Life expectancy at birth (years), female	75	2009
Singulate mean age at marriage, male	29*	2004
Singulate mean age at marriage, female	25*	2004
Economic indicators		
GNI per capita (current US\$)	4,390	2010
% share of income held by lowest 20 %	7	2006
% share of income held by highest 20 %	45	2006
Sources: UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 2011. Life expectancy and economic indicators from The World Bank, Data Catalog, http://data.worldbank.org/ , [accessed in September 2011] Marriage data from UNPD, World Marriage Data 2008, www.un.org/esa/population/ *data pertain to nationals of Jordan and include registered Palestinian refugees		

Gender Gap Index 2010		
Rankings of MENA countries with available data	Score	Rank
United Arab Emirates	0.6397	103
Kuwait	0.6318	105
Tunisia	0.6266	107
Bahrain	0.6217	110
Lebanon	0.6084	116
Qatar	0.6059	117
Algeria	0.6052	119
Jordan	0.6048	120
Oman	0.5950	122
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	0.5933	123
Syrian Arab Republic	0.5926	124
Egypt	0.5899	125
Morocco	0.5767	127
Saudi Arabia	0.5713	129
Yemen	0.4603	134
Source: World Economic Forum, The Global Gender Gap Report 2010 (rankings of in total 134 countries)		

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Legal system. Jordanian laws are based on the French civil code and Islamic law (Shari'a) and have also been influenced by tribal traditions. Both civil and religious courts are part of the judicial system. The Shari'a courts have jurisdiction over matters related to marriage, divorce and inheritance (i.e. the personal status law – or family law). For religious minorities, the communities' own religious standards are applied in matters related to personal status. This means there is no unified personal status law in Jordan. In civil courts, a woman's testimony is equal to that of a man, while in Shari'a courts the testimony of two women is equal to that of one man.¹

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Jordan ratified the CEDAW in 1992 and maintains reservations to article 9 (2) (equal rights with regard to nationality of children)², to article 16 paragraph 1 (c) (same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution), (d) (same rights and responsibilities as parents) and (g) (same personal rights, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation). Jordan maintains its reservations to article 16 (1) (c) and (d) because these are not compatible with Shari'a provisions. According to Jordan's combined third and fourth CEDAW report: "Under Jordanian law, marriage is not based on equality of rights and duties for husband and wife, but on reciprocity, i.e. rights for the wife with corresponding duties for the husband, and rights for the husband with corresponding duties for the wife. It follows that the concept of equality between spouses cannot be made to fit into the existing legal system."³ The CEDAW Committee has indicated that: "...reservations to article 16, whether lodged for national, traditional, religious or cultural reasons, are incompatible with the Convention and therefore impermissible..."⁴

¹ Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

² See United Nations Treaty Collection (<http://treaties.un.org>) for declarations and reservations made by State Parties

³ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Third and Fourth periodic report of Jordan, CEDAW/C/JOR/3-4, 2006. See also Fifth periodic report of Jordan, CEDAW/C/JOR/5, 2010.

⁴ Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Session, A/53/38/Rev.1, 1998, p.49

Convention on the Rights of the Child. Jordan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991 but maintains reservations to articles 14, 20 and 21 which grant the child the right to freedom of choice of religion and which concern the question of adoption, as these provisions conflict with Islamic law. Freedom of religion is guaranteed under Jordan's constitution; however, a child's religion cannot be changed. Islamic law does not allow adoption; instead a system of foster care is used (the Islamic institution of "kafalah").⁵

Nationality rights. According to the law, Jordanian women cannot pass their citizenship to non-Jordanian spouses and their children. However, all children of Jordanian fathers will be Jordanian nationals and a Jordanian man can transfer his citizenship to a foreign spouse.⁶

Divorce rights. Different rules apply for men and women with respect to divorce. A woman who files for divorce has to provide a valid reason for seeking divorce, while a man does not. The reformed temporary Personal Status Law of 2010 broadens the reasons for which women can file for divorce and both the husband and the wife can file for a judicial divorce on the grounds of "discord and strife". There is also a possibility for a woman to divorce her husband without the burden of evidence but she will then lose any right to financial support.⁷

Guardianship and custody rights. The father is the legal guardian of his children and is responsible for their support. In the event of divorce, the mother can be granted custody, but the father still remains the legal guardian.⁸

Inheritance rights. Jordanian women have the right to inheritance according to Islamic law. Generally, women's and men's shares will not be equal (the female heir will receive a smaller share). However, under certain circumstances women may receive larger shares.⁹ The Islamic inheritance law applies also to non-Muslims.¹⁰

Freedom of movement. In 2009 the Government of Jordan withdrew the reservation to CEDAW Article 15 (4), which grants men and women the same rights relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile. The withdrawn reservation reads: "...a woman's residence and domicile are with her husband."¹¹ The reformed 2003 (interim) passport law now allows women to obtain a passport without the permission of a husband or male guardian.¹²

Protection from child marriage. The minimum age of marriage in Jordan is 18 for both girls and boys; however, in "...special situations requiring legal capacity for marriage to be recognized in the case of a woman who is under 18 years of age..." exceptions can be made if the girl is over 15 years old.¹³ Child marriages still occur in Jordan: 10 per cent of young women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18, according to the findings of the Jordan Population and Family Health Survey 2007 (DHS 2007). Among young women living in households in the poorest wealth quintile 17 per cent were married before the age of 18. The corresponding percentage for young women living in households in the richest wealth quintile is 9 per cent. Polygyny is legal in Jordan following Islamic law. According to DHS 2007 findings, 5 per cent of married women (aged 15-49) were at the time of the survey in a polygynous marriage.

Protection from gender-based violence. The CEDAW Committee raised concerns in its concluding comments to Jordan's combined third and fourth periodic reports related to reduced penalties for "honour" crimes, as well as to punishment for rape. The Committee urged Jordan to review laws that allow rapists to escape punishment by marrying the victim. According to the response provided by Jordan in its fifth CEDAW report, it is now standard

⁵ Committee on the Rights of the Child, Consideration of Reports submitted by states parties under article 44 of the convention CRC/C/JOR/3, 2006

⁶ Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

⁷ Information provided by UNICEF Jordan, and in UNHCR, "International Women's Day Newsletter" issue 2, March 2011 (http://itbeginswithme.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/jordan_unhcr-newsletter-electronic-version.pdf)

⁸ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Fifth periodic report of Jordan, CEDAW/C/JOR/5, 2010

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

¹¹ See United Nations Treaty Collection (<http://treaties.un.org>) for declarations and reservations made by State Parties

¹² Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

¹³ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Fifth periodic report of Jordan, CEDAW/C/JOR/5, 2010, and The Jordan Times, New Personal Status Law Strengthens Jordanian Families – Hilayel (news article, <http://www.jordantimes.com/index.php?news=30445>, 28 September 2010)

practice to treat “honour killings” the same way as other violent crimes, and alleging that a crime was committed for reasons of honour should not offer leniency. The NGO Freedom House also notes in its Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 report that stricter sentences are now issued for honour killings and a new specialized tribunal was set up by the Ministry of Justice in 2009 to hear such cases. The Jordanian Penal Code still allows the possibility of a perpetrator of rape escaping punishment by marrying the victim under certain circumstances according to Jordan’s 2010 CEDAW report. Spousal rape is not illegal in Jordan.¹⁴

The findings of the 2007 DHS survey reveal a high level of acceptance of violence against women. Specifically, the survey collected data on the attitudes towards domestic violence among ever-married women 15-49 years old. Some 90 per cent of respondents agreed with at least one specified reason¹⁵ justifying a husband to beat his wife. Among (ever-married) adolescent girls, 91 per cent agreed with a least one reason.

3. INSTITUTIONS AND MECHANISMS

Governmental response. The Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) was established by the Jordanian Government in 1992. Its mission is “...to support mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas and to narrow the gap between formal acknowledgement of women’s rights as detailed by legislation and actual societal attitudes towards women...”¹⁶ The framework for the work of the JNCW is the National Strategy for Women. The JNCW was responsible for developing the fifth periodic report on the implementation of the CEDAW in 2010 in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Strategies and services responding to gender-based violence. In order to achieve the objectives of the National Strategy for Women, JNCW has established a network called Sham’a (“candle”) which aims to combat violence against women by coordinating the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organisations. In 2009, the JNCW established a Women’s Complaints Office to receive complaints of discrimination and violence against women in private and public life and to raise awareness of these issues and provide legal aid, among other services. This work is carried out in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organisations under various memoranda of understanding. There are several NGOs that provide services to women who are victims of violence. An effort to establish a national register on violence against women is also underway.¹⁷ In 2007, the Ministry of Social Development created the “Family Reconciliation Centre” for victims of domestic violence. In addition to this government-run women’s shelter, a few smaller shelters are run by NGOs around the country.¹⁸

4. WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political representation. Women in Jordan received the right to vote and stand for election in 1974.¹⁹ In order to increase women’s political participation, Jordan has issued quota legislation through an amendment to the Electoral Law. In 2003, quota provision reserved 6 seats for women in the national parliament. For the 2010 election the number of seats reserved for women was raised from 6 to 12. Following the 2010 election, 13 seats (out of 120) in parliament (Majlis Al-Nuwaab) are occupied by women (that is 11 per cent of the seats, 12 through the quota regulation and one by competitive election).²⁰ A quota system has also been introduced at the municipal level. Following an initiative by women’s organisations, including the JNCW and the Jordanian National Forum for Women, the Jordanian government introduced a ²⁰ per cent quota for women for the July 2007 municipal elections.²¹

14 U.S. Department of State, 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (report, online version <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/>) [accessed in May 2011]

15 The specified reasons were: if she burns the food, if she argues with him, if she insults the husband, if she disobeys the husband, if she goes out without telling him, if she neglects the children or if she has relations with another man.

16 JNCW mission statement: http://www.women.jo/en/about.php?cat_id=10&type=0, [accessed in April 2011]

17 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Fifth periodic report of Jordan, CEDAW/C/JOR/5, 2010

18 Freedom House, Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

19 UNDP, Human Development Report 2007/2008

20 The Quota Project, www.quotaproject.org [accessed in April 2010]

21 Freedom House, Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

Representation in the legal system. There are around 40 female judges out of 600 judges in the court system of Jordan. Currently there are no female judges in the Shari'a courts.²² In 2010, a female judge was appointed as Amman attorney general for the first time. The post is considered to be a top prosecutor's post.

Civil society. Jordanian NGOs are able to openly advocate for women's rights and women's NGOs are involved in awareness raising projects and programmes in almost all fields. In 2007, a group of Jordanian women's rights NGOs submitted a shadow report to the CEDAW committee for the first time, which was coordinated by the Karama Network of Jordan.²³ The Jordanian government has held dialogues with the women's rights movement over the past five years to discuss the amendment of various laws that discriminate against women.²⁴

5. EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Education. Jordan has achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education and the literacy rate is 99 per cent for both female and male youth. The primary school net enrolment ratio is 90 per cent for girls and 89 per cent for boys. In secondary school, the net enrolment ratio for girls is 83 per cent, compared to 80 per cent for boys (primary and secondary enrolment data refer to 2008). Gross enrolment data in tertiary education show a slightly higher enrolment ratio for women (43 per cent compared to 39 per cent for men).²⁵

Access to financial credit. Jordanian women have access to bank loans and other forms of financial credit. There are several small loan and microfinance programmes that specifically encourage women's economic participation.²⁶

Participation in the labour market. Despite a female youth literacy rate of 99 per cent and a high enrolment ratio in secondary school, young Jordanian women's economic participation is low. The labour force participation rate (that is, the proportion of the working-age population that actively engages in the labour market either by working or looking for work) among young women aged 15-24 is only 9 per cent, while the corresponding percentage for young men is 41 per cent. For women aged 15 years and above, the labour force participation rate is 23 per cent, while for men it is 74 per cent. Globally, women's labour force participation rate is 52 per cent.²⁷ The youth unemployment rate for young women age 15-24 is 46 per cent, which is double the unemployment rate of young men of the same age group. There are several regulations that have an ambiguous impact on women's status in the labour market. Women are normally prohibited from working during the night, between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m. (except in instances specified by the Minister of Labour), and some jobs may also be prohibited for them.²⁸

6. REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Maternal health. Jordan is categorized as "making progress" towards improving maternal health (MDG5), according to analyses of the reduction of the Maternal Mortality Ratio conducted by the Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group (MMEIG). Maternal mortality is estimated at 59 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.²⁹ Antenatal care coverage (at least once) is high in Jordan (99 per cent), and so is the coverage in skilled attendance at delivery (also 99 per cent), which is one of the most critical interventions for safe motherhood.

Early childbearing. According to DHS 2007, 4 per cent of young women aged 20-24 had their first birth before they reached the age of 18. In Jordan, the adolescent birth rate is 32 births per 1,000 adolescent girls aged 15-19.

²² Ibid.

²³ See Karama Network of Jordan, 2007, Shadow NGO Report to CEDAW Committee Jordan: Evaluation of National Policy, Measures and Actual Facts on Violence Against Women (available on http://www.iwraw-ap.org/resources/shadow_reports.htm)

²⁴ Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

²⁵ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) online database [accessed in May 2011], data refer to 2008

²⁶ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Fifth periodic report of Jordan, CEDAW/C/JOR/5, 2010

²⁷ United Nations, DESA, The World's Women 2010, p. 76

²⁸ European Training Foundation, Women and Work in Jordan. Case study of tourism and ICT sectors, 2009, p. 9-10

²⁹ WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and The World Bank, 2010, Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990-2008 (Countries with MMR ≥ 100 in 1990 are categorized as "on track" if there has been 5.5% decline or more annually, "making progress" if MMR has declined between 2% and 5.5%, making "insufficient progress" if MMR has declined less than 2% annually, and having "no progress" if there has been an annual increase in MMR. Countries with MMR < 100 in 1990 are not categorized)

7. KEY INDICATORS ON THE SITUATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH	YEAR	TOTAL	URBAN	RURAL	POOREST 20%	RICHEST 20%	SOURCE
Contraceptive prevalence (%)	2009	59	60	53	54	65	Interim DHS 2009
Antenatal care coverage at least once by skilled personnel (%)	2007	99	99	98	97	100	UNICEF global database/ DHS 2007
Skilled attendant at birth (doctor, nurse or midwife) (%)	2007	99	99	99	98	100	UNICEF global database/ DHS 2007
Adolescent birth rate (number of births per 1,000 girls aged 15–19)	2007	32					UNFPA, UNPD, MDG database http://unstats.un.org [accessed in September2011]
Maternal Mortality Ratio (adjusted) (maternal deaths per 100,000 live births)	2008	59					WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank, Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group (MMEIG) / UNICEF global database
Lifetime risk of maternal death, 1 in	2008	510					

EDUCATION	YEAR	MALE %	FEMALE %	GENDER PARITY INDEX (F/M)	SOURCE
Net enrolment ratio primary school (%)	2008	89	90	1.02	UIS online database, http://stats.uis.unesco.org [accessed in August 2011]
Net enrolment ratio secondary school (%)	2008	80	83	1.04	UIS online database, http://stats.uis.unesco.org [accessed in August 2011], UIS estimates
Youth (15-24) literacy rate (%)	2007	99	99		UIS online database, http://stats.uis.unesco.org [accessed in May 2011]
	YEAR	TOTAL			SOURCE
Share of females among teaching staff (%) in primary education		-			
Share of females among teaching staff (%) in secondary education		-			

CHILD PROTECTION	YEAR	TOTAL	URBAN	RURAL	POOREST 20%	RICHEST 20%	SOURCE
% of women aged 20-24 who were married/ in union before the age of 18	2007	10	10	7	17	9	UNICEF global database/ DHS 2007
Female genital mutilation/cutting among women 15-49 (%)		-	-	-	-	-	
	YEAR	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE			SOURCE
% of children aged 5-14 engaged in child labour		-	-	-			

ATTITUDES TOWARDS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	YEAR	% WHO AGREE WITH AT LEAST ONE SPECIFIED REASON	SOURCE
Women (15-49) who think that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances (%)	2007	90	UNICEF global database/ DHS 2007
Adolescent girls (15-19) who think that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances (%)	2007	91	DHS 2007

HIV/AIDS	YEAR	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE		SOURCE
HIV prevalence among young people (15-24)		-	-	-		
% of young people (15-24) who have comprehensive knowledge of HIV	2007	-	-	13		DHS 2007

USE OF ICT	YEAR	TOTAL		SOURCE
% of young women (15-24) who used a computer during the last 12 months		-		
% of young women (15-24) who used the internet during the last 12 months		-		

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	YEAR	TOTAL		SOURCE
Number of women in parliament (single/ lower house)	2011	13		IPU, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm (data updated as of 31 March 2011) [accessed in April 2011]
% women in parliament	2011	11		
Legislated quotas for women for single/ lower house (yes/no)	*	Yes		The Quota Project, www.quotaproject.org [accessed in April 2011*]
Quota type	*	Reserved seats		
Number of women in ministerial positions	2010	2		DAW/DESA, IPU, Women in Politics: 2010 (reflecting appointments up to 1 January 2010)
% women in ministerial positions	2010	7		

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION	YEAR	TOTAL		SOURCE
Labour force participation rate (%), male 15+	2009	74		ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM), 6th Edition http://kilm.ilo.org Table 1a (ILO estimates), [accessed in April 2011]
Labour force participation rate (%), female 15+	2009	23		
Labour force participation rate (%), male 15-24	2009	41		
Labour force participation rate (%), female 15-24	2009	9		
Total unemployment rate (%), male 15+	2009	10		ILO, KILM, 6th Edition, Table 8a, [accessed in April 2011]
Total unemployment rate (%), female 15+	2009	24		
Youth (15-24) unemployment rate (%), male	2009	23		ILO, KILM, 6th Edition, Table 9, [accessed in April 2011]
Youth (15-24) unemployment rate (%), female	2009	46		

MATERNITY LEAVE	YEAR		SOURCE
Maternity leave duration	2004-2009	10 weeks	United Nations Statistics Division, http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products,Table 5g , [accessed in April 2011]. Data compiled between 2004-2009.
% of wages paid in covered period	2004-2009	100	
Provider of benefit	2004-2009	Employer	

Notes:

DHS=Demographic and Health Survey

The UNICEF global databases are available on www.childinfo.org

For indicator definitions and further information on data sources please see "Guide to MENA Gender Profiles"

n/a = not applicable

8. RATIFICATION OF TREATIES

TREATY	YEAR OF SIGNATURE	YEAR OF RATIFICATION, ACCESSION (A), SUCCESSION (S)	RESERVATIONS
Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1953)		1992 (a)	
Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1962)		1992 (a)	
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)	1972	1975	
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)	1972	1975	
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)	1980	1992	Articles 9 (2), 16 (1) (c), (d), (g)
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1999)			
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)	1990	1991	Articles 14, 20, 21
Amendment to article 43 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1995)	n/a	2002 Acceptance	
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000)	2000	2007	
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000)	2000	2006	
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)	2007	2008	

n/a = not applicable

Source: United Nations Treaty Collection, <http://treaties.un.org> [accessed in April 2011]

