

GENDER IN JORDAN FROM A STATISTICAL PERSPECTIVE: ANALYTICAL STUDY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2024

This study, "Gender in Jordan from a Statistical Perspective", was developed using the latest data from the Department of Statistics and administrative records from ministries and partner institutions. Its purpose is to underscore facts and figures on women in Jordanian society, highlight existing gaps and shortcomings, and propose ways to address them in order to ensure equal opportunities, promote equity between men and women, and advance political, economic, and social empowerment. The study reached the following key findings:

GENDER DEMOGRAPHICS

The study found that children under the age of fifteen constitute a high proportion of Jordan's population. This will have long-term implications for population growth, increased labor supply of both men and women, and rising demographic and economic dependency ratios—particularly among females. Addressing these challenges requires the creation of adequate employment opportunities, increasing female economic participation, and the integration of manpower into development plans and policies based on justice, equity, and ensuring equal opportunities, to achieve sustainable development.

FINDINGS ON SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF JORDANIAN WOMEN

- Jordan has made significant progress in reducing illiteracy through explicit policies and targeted programs, including non-formal adult literacy initiatives, compulsory education, and measures to reduce school dropout. The illiteracy rate declined from 11.0% in 2000 to 5.8% in 2023. At the same time, awareness of the importance of female education has increased enrolment across all levels, from early childhood education (kindergarten) to postgraduate studies.
- Jordanian women show a preference for the teaching profession over other fields, partly due to societal perceptions that view teaching as a safe and stable career for women and their families.
- Women's enrollment in Jordanian universities exceeds that of men, as many male students drop out of the education system after primary or post-secondary levels to join the labor market at an earlier age. In contrast, female students tend to continue through successive stages of education, viewing it as a pathway to decent employment opportunities and improved living standards.
- Some shifting in societal attitudes toward vocational education have led to a marginal increase in female participation, particularly in disciplines such as Home Economics. Female enrollment in vocational education rose from 39.7% in the 2017–2018 academic year to 46.5% in 2022–2023. Within Home Economics track, females accounted for 92.4% of total enrollment in the academic year 2022–2023.

- The average age at first marriage has risen for both males and females. Among women, it increased from 26.3 years in 2017 to 27.6 years in 2023, while for men it rose from 30.7 years to 32.6 years over the same period. This trend can be attributed to economic challenges, including rising marriage costs, as well as the growing preference among women to pursue higher education and enter the labor market to build for their future and improve their living conditions.
- Results show a decline in Jordan's fertility rate, with the total fertility rate dropping from 5.6 children per woman in 1990 to 2.6 in 2023. This decline is linked to higher levels of female education, shifts in cultural norms regarding large families, delayed age at first marriage, and the wider use of contraception methods—an important indicator of reproductive behavior. In addition, rising living costs have led families to prefer having fewer children to afford better standards of education, health, and overall living conditions.
- Women in Jordan show a preference for modern methods of family planning and contraception, given the low effectiveness of traditional methods and their higher risk of unplanned pregnancies. This trend aligns with the Ministry of Health's policies and programs on family planning.

TRENDS IN ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

- Jordanian women remain consistently underrepresented in the labor market, which hinders the sustained reinforcement of the complementary roles of women and men in driving development and reform.
- Economic empowerment indicators for Jordanian women remain low. Strengthening their status requires the implementation and monitoring of additional programs and policies to secure their rights and expand their equitable participation in the economy alongside men.
- Further in-depth research is needed to identify the factors, reasons, and challenges hindering the economic empowerment of Jordanian women and to propose effective solutions.

SOCIAL PROTECTION, POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF JORDANIAN WOMEN, AND STRENGTHENING THEIR LEADERSHIP ROLE WITHIN EXISTING LAWS AND PRACTICES

- The share of women aged 15–49 who are currently or previously married and have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence declined from 22.0% in 2012 to 14.7% in 2023.
- In 2022, the twenty-ninth Senate included nine Jordanian women out of 65 members of the senate, representing a participation rate of 13.8%.
- The 2024 House of Representatives elections recorded the highest level of women's political participation in Jordan. Nine women won seats competitively through party lists, while 18 secured seats allocated under the women's quota—half of them representing political parties. This marked a significant improvement compared to the nineteenth House in 2020, when no woman won through competition and only 15 seats were secured via the quota.



- Female participation in the ministerial service declined to 15.6%, with five women serving out of a total of 32 ministers, reflecting a gender gap of 68.8%.
- The share of women in the diplomatic corps rose from 17.2% in 2008 to 25.6% in 2023, representing a 49.0% increase.
- The proportion of female ambassadors rose from 7.3% in 2010 to 15.4% in 2023, reducing the gender gap to 69.2%.
- Female participation in political parties rose from 27.8% in 2008 to 44.5% in 2024—an increase of 60.0%—while male participation declined from 72.2% to 55.5% over the same period.
- Mafrq governorate recorded the highest share of Jordanian women in political parties at 50.4%, compared to 49.6% for men. In contrast, Tafila governorate had the lowest female participation at 31.2% versus 68.8% for men. Among youth aged 18–35, Ajloun governorate registered the highest female participation in political parties at 54.2%, followed by Mafrq at 52.4%. Male participation was highest in Ma’an at 66.1%, followed by Tafila (63.6%) and Aqaba (63.3%).
- Female representation in municipal councils increased from 27.4% in 2008 to 28.5% in 2022, a rise of 2.5%. Over the same period, male representation declined from 72.6% to 71.5%. Consequently, the gender gap narrowed from 45.2% to 43.0%.
- The share of women in managerial positions declined from 63.3% in 2017 to 52.3% in 2023. A study on women in the civil service sector (2023) further showed that female participation in government leadership and executive roles remains low, at 16.0% across 97 government departments.
- Women’s participation in the judicial system rose from 6.2% in 2008 to 29.5% in 2023, marking a fivefold increase over 15 years and narrowing the gender gap to 41.0%. However, no woman has ever served on the Constitutional Court since its establishment, nor in Sharia or ecclesiastical courts.

