

Policy Brief on
The Gender Gap in Jordan
WCP-The University of
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This "policy brief " paper aims to shed light at the gender gap in Jordan and the role of international trade to enhance women's participation in the Jordanian labor market.

Female empowerment has always been a topic of high priority for several stakeholders. In fact, unequal pay is a stubborn and universal problem as women are paid less than men, with the gender pay gap estimated at 23% globally.

In Jordan, the gender pay gap in the public and private sectors vary. The International Labor Organization (ILO) said in a 2021 report that in the private sector, the median wage for males is 7% higher than the median wage for females. In the public sector, however, the median wage for females is 13% higher than the median wage for males.

The World Bank estimated in 2020 the wage gap for women and men working similar jobs with similar education and experience in Jordan's private sector at about 17%. (Meanwhile it is at 18% in Iraq and 22% in Lebanon), while women constitute 15% of the labor force (15% also

in Iraq and 26% In Lebanon). The Bank estimated that Jordanian women were responsible for 0.5 points out of the 1.5 % GDP growth ratio during the period 2000- 2017.

The Jordanian labor law addresses and acknowledges pay equality, with stipulated penalties for violations, but enforcing the law is a challenge which implies that inspection should be enhanced and workers' complaints should be addressed effectively by the Ministry of Labor or by a specialized body in addition to courts.

In 2011, Jordan created the National Committee for Pay Equity (NCPE) with support from the ILO. Jointly led by the MoL and the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), the NCPE is mandated to promote policies and practices aimed at tackling the gender pay gap in the country. The committee groups 22 members representing the government, workers, the civil society, employers, the legislature, and the media.

As member of the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC), Jordan has endorsed mechanisms for digital payment of wages to protect the rights of private school teachers, but the market needs to expand wage protection through electronic payment systems to cover all workers.

Jordan's international trade ratio to GDP was 57% in 2020 which reflects the importance of increasing women's participation in exports and imports activities which is responsible for 1/3 of our GDP growth.

The Gender Gap Report published by the World Economic Forum ranks Jordan 138 in the world out of 149 countries, which implies that Jordan has the 10th worst gender gap out of all the countries.

The advent of the Coronavirus pandemic in addition to the repercussions of the Russian-Ukrainian war has had marked impacts on the Jordanian economy, as unemployment rate has risen at an unprecedented pace to reach about 23%, and the gender gap widen as the women's economic participation turn to be among the most important challenges to achieving gender equality. It is obvious that the ability of the economy to create sufficient employment opportunities relative to the number of new entrants to the market is still limited and below what is required. It is also very contradicting that women's high level of education has not been positively reflected in their entry to the labor market.

Nevertheless, this paper suggests the following recommendations that can help in narrowing the gender gap in Jordan:

- Encouraging small and medium – sized enterprises (SMEs) as a vivid field of women's employment. SMEs are labor – intensive investments which constitute 98% of all businesses in Jordan and need to be paid a special attention as they are facing severe problems in financing and finding financial resources and the lack of skilled labors and access to new markets. A national fund for SMEs support is highly

- recommended at this stage, in addition to an extensive strategy to find solutions for the problems they are facing.
- As part of their social responsibility, private sector institutions shall allocate some funding for interventions that may resolve / mitigate the social stigma against working females where it exists.
 - Companies in the private sector should be encouraged to introduce an efficient telecommuting system to create an opportunity for skilled females to work from home. These companies must look into increasing their childcare services such as nurseries in order to reduce the childcare costs on working women and to encourage unemployed women to seek jobs. The government must also look into providing childcare services at reasonable prices for its employees.
 - Civil Service Regulation should be amended to introduce equal allowances scale for women and men.
 - The government must revise and amend all laws and regulations that discriminate against women or put hindrances against their right to work in accordance with the international agreements and protocols signed by Jordan . A special attention in this regard should be paid to the following laws :-
 - 1) Nationality law No.6 , issued in 1954.
 - 2) Personal Rights Law No . 15 , issued in 2019.
 - 3) Relevances law No . 30 , issued in 1952.

4) Passports law No . 2 , issued in 1969.

5) Residence and Foreigner's Affairs law No 24 , issued in 1973.

6) Punishments law No . 16 , issued in 1960.

- Given the high desire for education among Jordanian females , the government must collaborate with NGOs , donor agencies and training centers to come up with capacity building program that increase the chance of employment for females whom are actively seeking a job.
- The government should encourage females at universities and vocational training centers to opt the fields which have higher demand in the labor market.
- The government must look into the possible solutions to enhance the quality of public transport services, which has always been one of the main barriers to female participation in the labor force.
- The staff of the Ministry of Labor in collaboration with other concerned official inspectors must concentrate firmly on all institutions and firms who are not complying with the laws and regulations concerning the minimum wage limits, safety measures and other related issues to ensure the proper application of legislations.
- The digitalization of the economy is essential to narrow the gender gap. It ensures that women receive at least the legal minimum wage levels. On the other hand, the tokenization of assets will facilitate transactions and enable women to promote their rights.

- Therefore, the government has to work extensively on this aspect.
- The government must issue a legislation to regulate flexible working hours system which serve both women and men. Also, it is highly recommended that future economic planning should emphasize on the appropriate ways and means to narrow the gender gap.
 - Intensifying the effective role of media in changing the current situation and improving the participation of women in the labor market through emphasizing on the importance of equality, and the need for active women participation in the political life, as well as the other aspects that this paper elaborated.
 - Jordan must fully utilize the Trade & Gender 360° Strategy is the WTO's capacity-building programme on trade and gender for government officials and women entrepreneurs. Also Jordan can ask for WTO BRIDGE training programme which aims to bridge the knowledge gap for women entrepreneurs regarding trade rules. Furthermore, the government must look into possible amendments to the mutual and multilateral trade agreements which were signed with other countries to take into consideration the gender gap aspects that this paper tackled. These amendments are aimed at improving the capacity and conditions for women as workers, businesswomen and entrepreneurs to access and fully benefit from the opportunities created by trade and investment.