



Chapter 6

Work

Women are more likely to be in vulnerable jobs. There are more contributing family workers than men, and more men employers than women. Women's highest labour force participation rate is the lowest rate recorded for men.

Women tend to be employed in lower wage jobs, resulting in gender inequalities in pay despite numerous changes in women's economic behaviour and educational attainment.

Moreover, there are more young women than young men who are potentially disengaged and at risk of disaffection with society, suffering from long-term unemployment and risking forced early marriage.



Work

We know now that without gender equality and a full role for women in society in the economy, in governance, we will not be able to achieve the world we hoped for. - Phunzik Mlambo - Ngcuka / Executive Director, UN Women 2018

The ability and capacity to engage in decent work, earn an income and contribute to the economy through paid as well as unpaid and volunteer work is the foundation for reducing inequalities and achieving sustainable development. The labour markets across the region range from the predominantly agricultural Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen, to the oil-exporting countries like Qatar and Saudi Arabia, to the more diverse economy of Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia.

A. Enabling environment

There are six International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions that Arab States can ratify that would indicate commitment to implementing gender-sensitive work legislation. Only two conventions have been ratified

by almost all the Arab countries: namely Convention 100 on equal remuneration and Convention 111 on discrimination. The majority of Arab States have not ratified four out of six ILO Conventions on workers with family responsibilities (No. 156), part-time work (No. 175), home work (No. 177) and maternity protection (No. 183).

The technical conventions, which have been ratified by relatively few countries globally, have also not been adopted widely in the region. Yemen is the only Arab State to adopt the convention on workers with family responsibilities (No. 156) and Morocco is one of 34 countries to have ratified the convention on maternity protection offering 14 weeks of maternity leave [Table 9](#).

The ILO Convention No. 183 requires countries to pay a minimum of 14 weeks of maternity leave at a rate of at least two thirds

Morocco offers **14 weeks of maternity leave** and is one of **34 countries** globally to have ratified the ILO convention on maternity protection



of previous earnings payable by social insurance or public funds.¹ While only Morocco has ratified the convention, most Arab States do provide paid or unpaid maternity leave to women in employment. The maternity leave ranges from a maximum of 27 weeks of leave in Kuwait to a just 4.3 weeks in Tunisia [Figure 87](#).

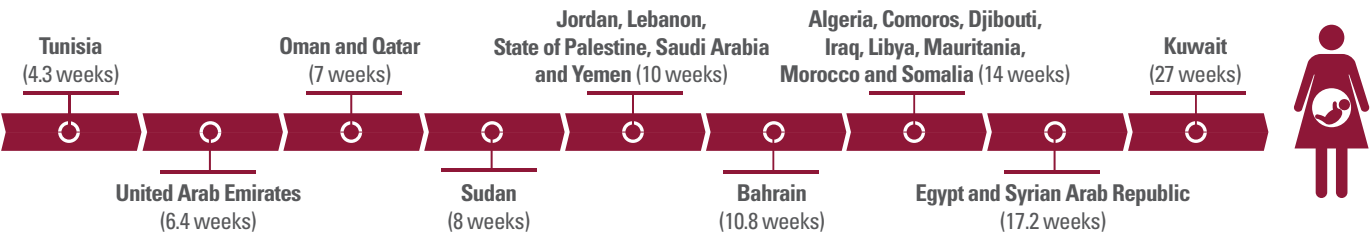
Table 9. Ratification of gender-related ILO Conventions by Arab States (as at August 2018)

Country	ILO Conventions					
	No. 100 on equal remuneration (1951)	No. 111 on discrimination (employment and occupation) (1958)	No. 156 on workers with family responsibilities (1981)	No. 175 on part-time work (1994)	No. 177 on home work (1996)	No. 183 on maternity protection (2000)
Algeria	19 Oct 1962	12 Jun 1969	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Bahrain	Not ratified	26 Sep 2000	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Comoros	23 Oct 1978	17 Mar 2004	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Djibouti	03 Aug 1978	28 Feb 2005	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Egypt	26 July 1960	10 May 1960	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Iraq	28 Aug 1963	15 Jun 1959	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Jordan	22 Sep 1966	04 Jul 1963	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Kuwait	Not ratified	01 Dec 1966	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Lebanon	01 Jun 1977	01 Jun 1977	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Libya	20 Jun 1962	13 Jun 1961	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Mauritania	03 Dec 2001	08 Nov 1963	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Morocco	11 May 1979	27 Mar 1963	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	13 Apr 2011
Oman	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Qatar	Not ratified	18 Aug 1976	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Saudi Arabia	15 Jun 1978	15 Jun 1978	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Somalia	Not ratified	08 Dec 1961	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Sudan	22 Oct 1970	22 Oct 1970	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Syrian Arab Republic	07 Jun 1957	10 May 1960	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Tunisia	11 Oct 1968	14 Sep 1959	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
United Arab Emirates	24 Feb 1997	28 Jun 2001	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified
Yemen	29 Jul 1976	22 Aug 1969	13 Mar 1989	Not ratified	Not ratified	Not ratified

Source: ILO, NORMLEX Information System on International Labour Standards (2018). Available at <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:1:0::NO::>

Note: The State of Palestine – non-member observer state

Figure 87. Duration of paid maternity leave in the Arab States



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), *World Social Protection Report 2017-19: Universal Social Protection to Achieve to Sustainable Development Goals* (Geneva, 2017).

B. Labour force participation

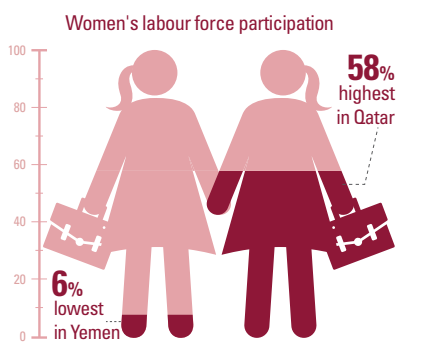
Major gender gaps in labour force participation

Women make enormous contributions to economies whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or through unpaid domestic or care work at home. Gender discrimination means women often end up in insecure, low-wage jobs and constitute a small minority of those in senior positions.²

The highest levels of female labour force participation in the Arab States

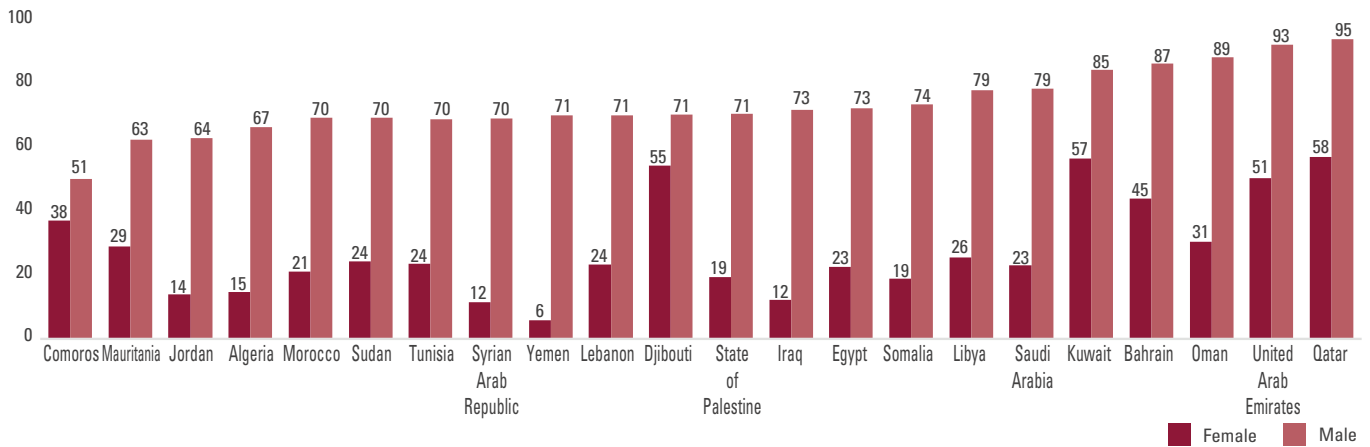
were found in Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates where women constitute more than 25 per cent of the labour force. However, national rates in the countries of the GCC, were inflated by the large number of foreign labourers in those countries.

The labour force comprises all those people who are either in paid work or seeking paid work (unemployed). In all countries of the region there was a significant gender gap between male and female participation in the labour force. Participation rates were highest for both women and



men in Qatar, which had almost 58 per cent of women and 95 per cent of working age men participating in the labour force. The lowest rates were found in Yemen for women at 6 per cent and Comoros for men at 51 per cent **Figure 88.**

Figure 88. Labour force participation rate for persons aged 15 years and older, 2019 (percentage)



Source: ILOStat database, “modelled estimates, November 2018” (last updated on 11 July 2019).

C. Working poor

The working poor are those working people whose income fall below a given poverty line due to low-income jobs. In many countries, females constitute the majority of those who work and still remain in poverty. According to ILO database 2019, the Arab average of working poor was higher (7.9%) than the World average (7.1%).

The countries among Arab States with the highest levels of employed female population living below international poverty line were Comoros (17%), Yemen (11%), the Sudan (7%) and Mauritania (4%). In Jordan, Tunisia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Yemen and the Sudan, however, there were more males than females living below international poverty line **Figure 89**.

D. Employment by education

Knowledge and skills are acquired, in general, through formal education and training. People who have only received early childhood education and primary education are considered to be low-qualified. Low levels of qualifications do not provide the knowledge, skills and competencies needed for major occupations. People with lower levels of qualifications are often working in basic and uncomplicated occupations and are mainly females.

ILO estimates for 2019 show that employment among females with less than basic education was higher than males in Algeria,

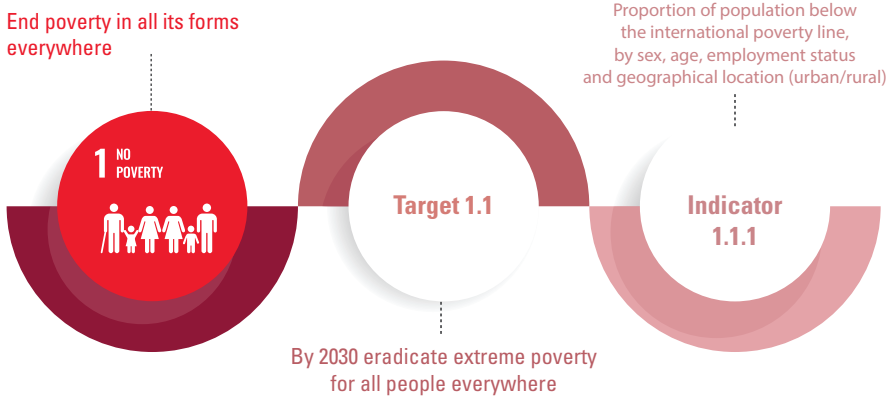
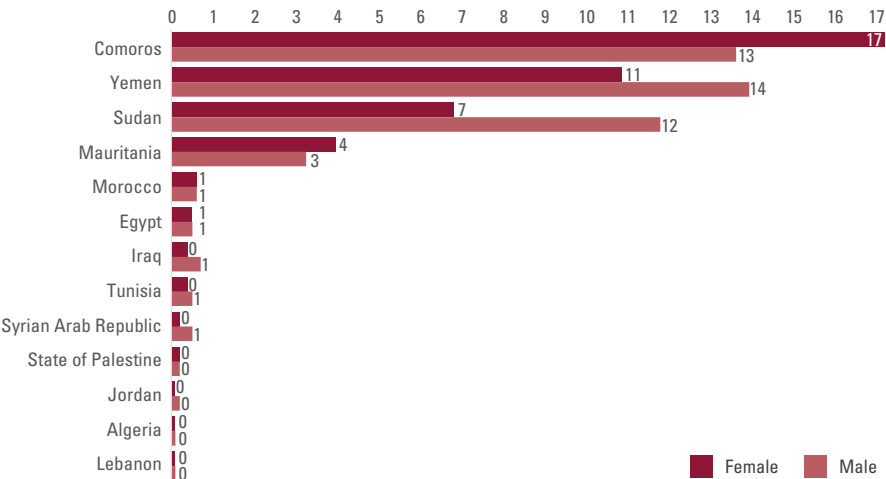


Figure 89. Proportion of employed population aged 15 years and older living below international poverty line, latest available data (percentage)



Source: UNSD, "SDG indicators", Global SDG Indicators database.

Comoros, Mauritania, Morocco, the State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Morocco had the highest reverse gender gap, in favour of females, at 31 percentage points (females 56% and males 25%).

Education is increasingly becoming a necessity for getting better access to the labour market and better jobs. Male employment

with basic education was higher than that of females in Algeria and the State of Palestine. Both countries recorded the highest gender gap, (in favour of males), at 32 percentage points. The lowest gender gap was in Egypt at 2 percentage points (females 13% and males 15%).

In intermediate education, the highest gender gap in employment rate of population was in Saudi

Arabia at 13 percentage points (females 22% and males 35%), followed by Qatar, Yemen and the Sudan at 10, 8 and 7 percentage points, respectively. It is interesting to note that there was no gender

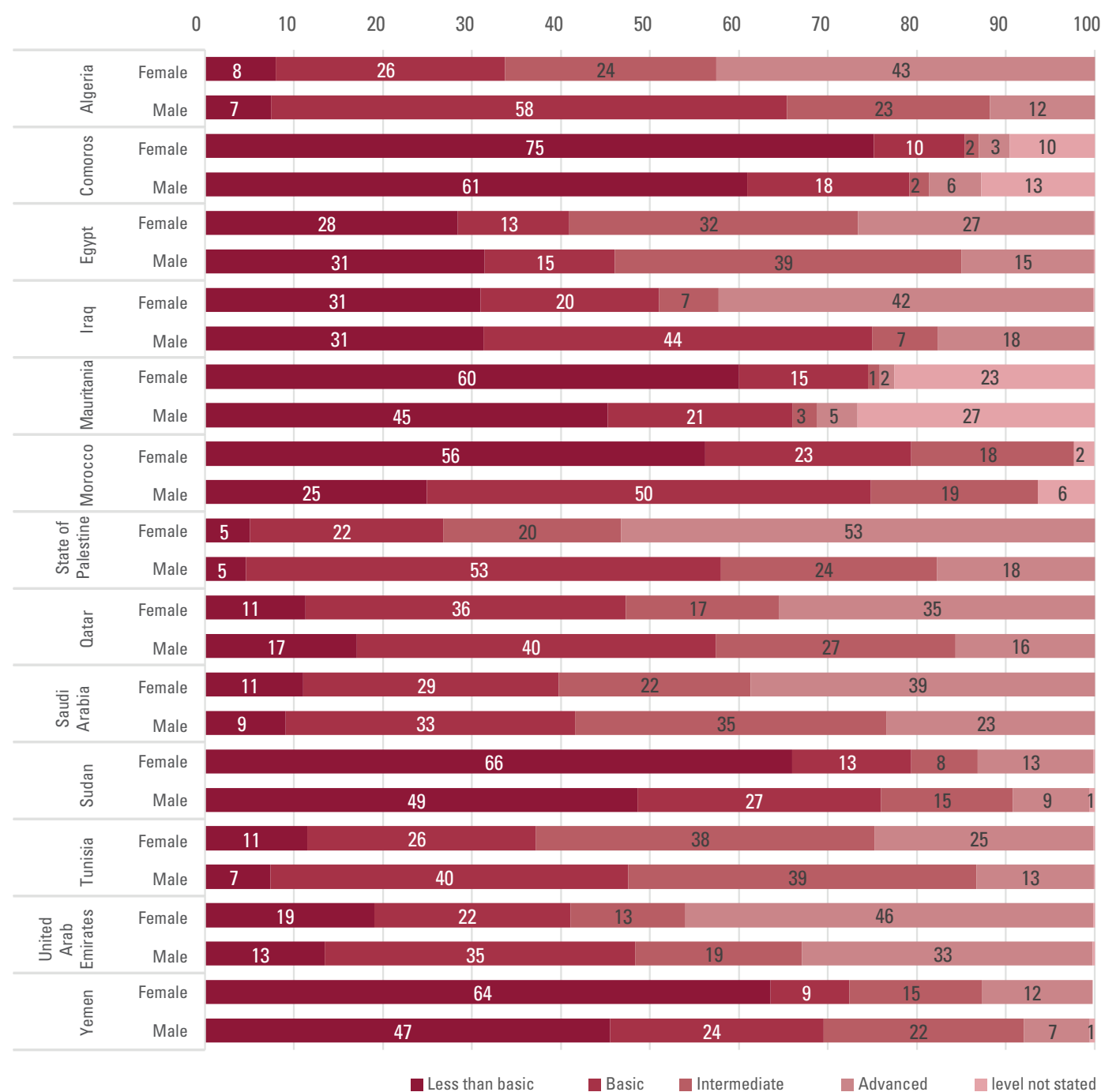
gap of employed persons with intermediate education in Morocco.

In all the countries with available data, there were more employed women with advanced level of

education than men, with the exception of Comoros. The State of Palestine had the highest reverse gender gap at 35 percentage points (females 53% and males 18%)

Figure 90.

Figure 90. Proportion of employed population aged 15 years and older by educational level, latest available data (percentage)



Source: ILOStat database (last updated on 26 August 2019).

E. Women and men work in different sectors

The structure of the economy varies across the region and, as a result, affects employment of both women and men. The industrial sector is a major employer in the Gulf except in the United Arab Emirates where the service sector provides most jobs. In all countries, men were more likely to be working in the industrial sector than women, who tend to

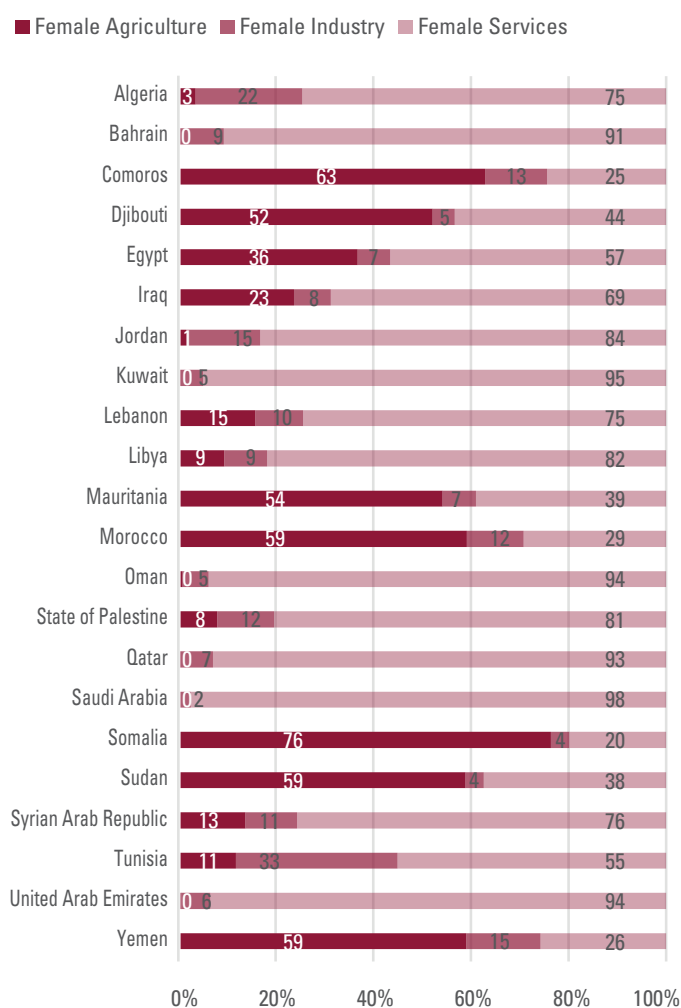
be employed in the services sector **Figures 91 and 92.**

Where agriculture was the primary means of livelihood, such as in Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen, women's share of non-agricultural employment was small. Where non-agricultural wage work plays a greater role in the economy, women's share was higher.

Women who live in countries with a large agriculture sector tend to

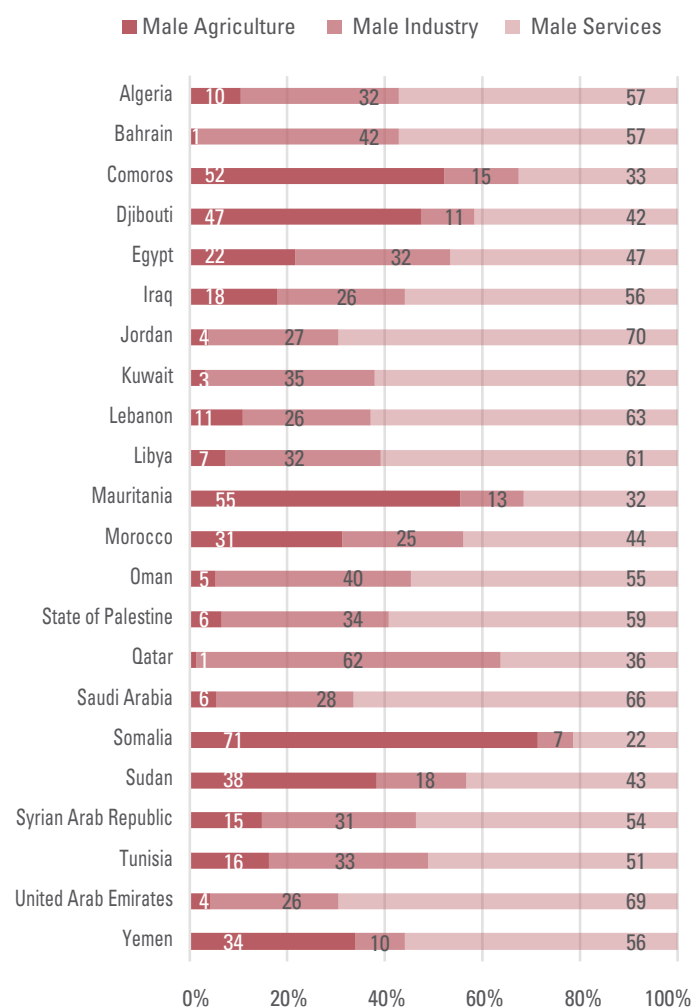
work mainly in that sector. Women's employment in the agriculture sector in Comoros was 63 per cent compared to 13 per cent in industry and 25 per cent in service. Similarly, in Morocco women's employment in agriculture sector was 59 per cent, while in industry was 12 per cent and services was 29 percent. Some Arab States such as Algeria, Jordan and Tunisia, have been more successful in getting women into non-agricultural occupations.

Figure 91. Proportion of female employment by sector, 2019



Source: ILOStat database, "modelled estimates, November 2018" (last updated on 11 July 2019).

Figure 92. Proportion of male employment by sector, 2019



Source: ILOStat database, "modelled estimates, November 2018" (last updated on 11 July 2019).

F. Women and men get paid differently

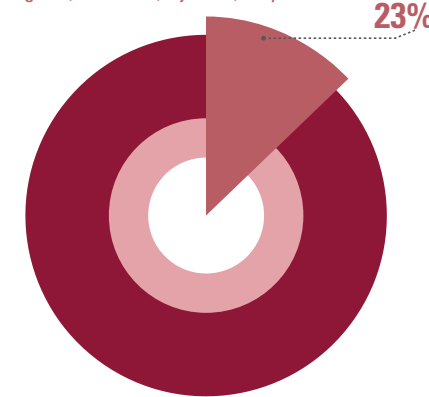
Despite numerous changes in women’s economic behaviours and educational attainment levels, gender inequalities in pay persist.³ At least 50 per cent of the world’s women are in paid wage and salary employment; an increase from 40 per cent in the 1990s. Women, however earn from 10 to 30 per cent less than men for the same work.⁴

The gender pay gap reveals the different realities that women and men face in their professional lives. Women in general earn on average less than men. In the European Union, women earn an average 16 per cent less per hour than men. The biggest gap in earnings is among couples with children, showing that the financial cost of having a family falls heavily on women’s shoulders.

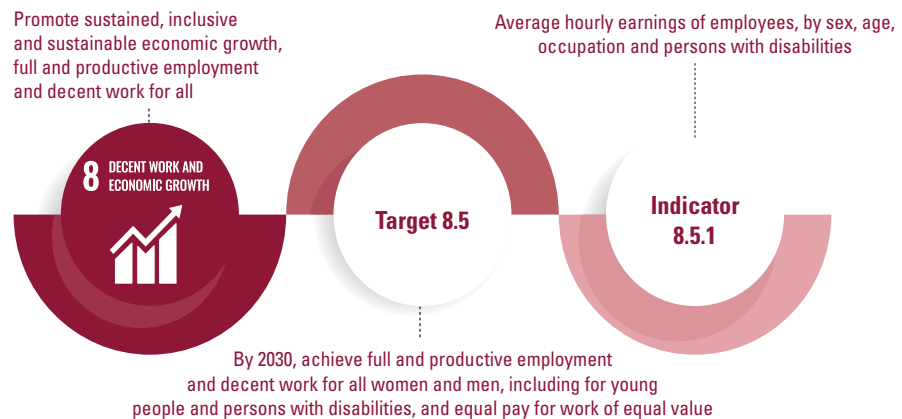
The gender pay gap, meaning the average earnings per month per employee and expressed as the ratio of female wages to male wages, is the result of pay discrimination, occupational segregation and bias against working women. The

Figure 93. Countries with law mandates equal pay, 2018

Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Libya and Morocco



Source: World Bank, “Law mandates equal pay, 2018”, World Bank Data.



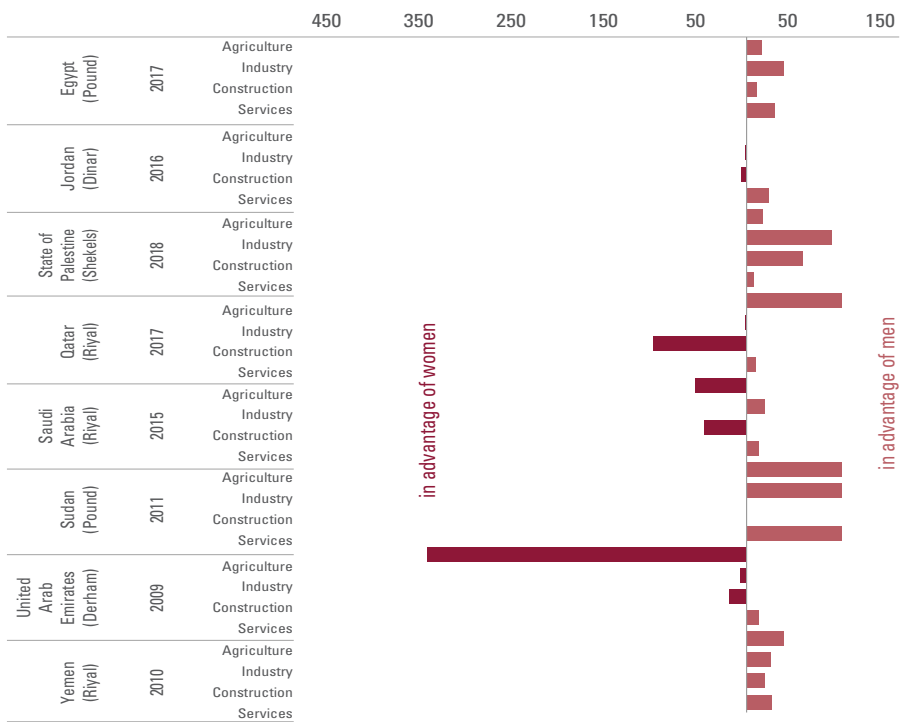
gender pay gap occurs across almost all occupations and industries. Male-dominated occupations such as industry and construction tend to have higher wages than occupations made up mostly of female workers, such as agriculture.

In 2018, five out of 22 Arab States with law that mandates equal remuneration for females and males for work of equal value.

These countries are Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Libya and Morocco **Figure 93.**

The latest data show that in almost all the Arab countries there were significant gaps favouring men in all the sector. Only the United Arab Emirates showed a high pay gap in favour of women in the agriculture sector **Figure 94.**

Figure 94. Gender pay gap by sectors in selected countries, latest year (local currency)

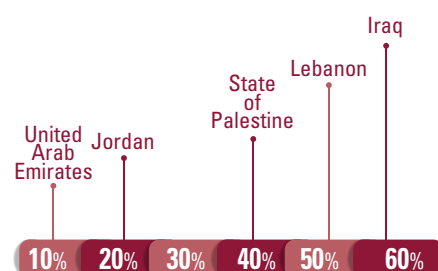


Source: Data collected and calculated by ESCWA from ILO, LABORSTA.

G. Legal frameworks in employment

Countries' legal framework that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality in employment and economic benefits is assessed through an achievement score that ranges between a low of 0 to a high of 100. Available data show that Iraq score was 60, the highest percentage of achievement among Arab States, followed by Lebanon (50), the State of Palestine (40) and Jordan (20). The United Arab Emirates had the lowest score of achievement at 10 **Figure 95**.

Figure 95. Legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality in employment and economic benefits, 2018

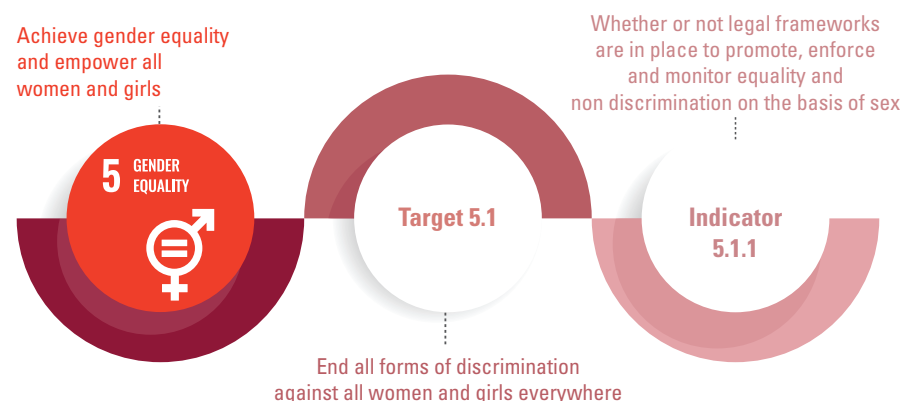


Source: UNSD, "SDG indicators", Global SDG Indicators database.

H. Vulnerable employment

Women more likely to be in vulnerable jobs

Every type of paid work is characterized by the type of employment and the conditions of that work. Some jobs are more



secure than others. Employees typically have salaried positions with access to benefits such as sick leave, annual leave and some even have pension schemes. More vulnerable forms of paid work are own-account workers (self-employed) who work alone in small-scale operations where income can be intermittent and exposed on external factors, such as impacts of weather on farming or seasonal fluctuations in tourism. Contributing family workers – those who work in a family business or farm without pay – are also vulnerable as they earn no income and typically lack benefits as an individual in their own right. Employers, on the other hand – those who employ one or more people on an ongoing basis – are more secure when their business is established enough to take on employees. The ability to act as the main decision-maker in as business is an indication of power.

Globally, the share of employee positions is the same for men and women, however, men are twice as likely to be employers, and women are more often contributing family workers than men **Figure 96**.

In the **Arab States** for every **5 women** contributing family workers, there are only **2 men**



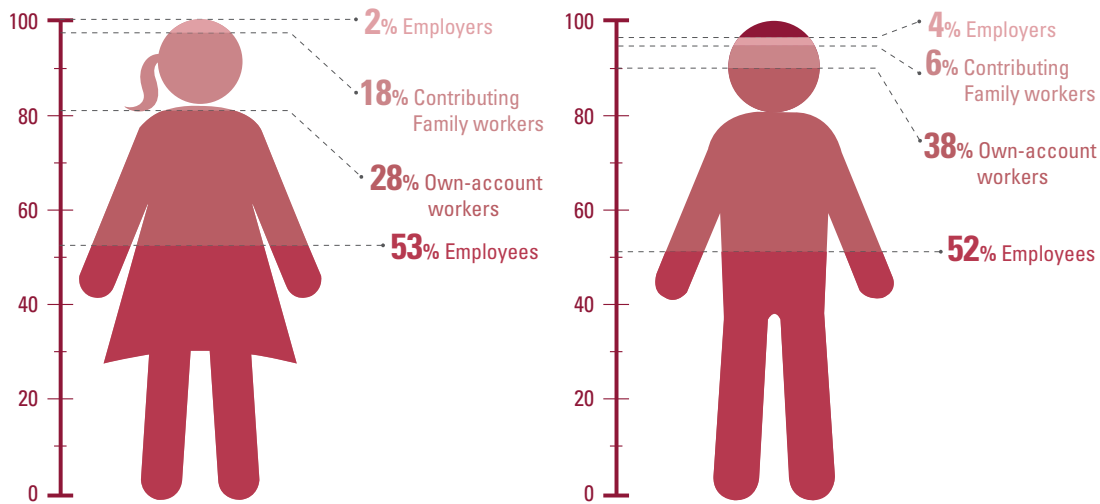
For every **4 men** employers, there is only **1 woman** employer



In the Arab States, the status in employment can be highly gendered. Arab women were more likely to be contributing family workers (5%), and men were more likely to be own-account workers (14%), resulting in a similar level of vulnerable employment for all **Figure 97**. In countries such as Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco and Yemen, men occupied the vast share of employer and employee positions, and women were more represented in vulnerable work as own-account workers and contributing family workers.

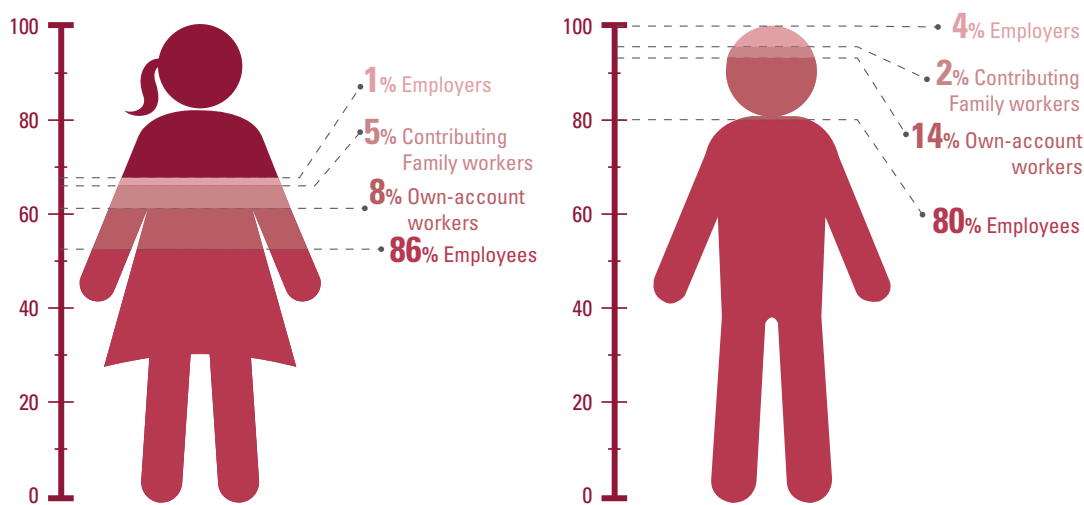
In the world for every **1 male employer** there is a **female employer**, but in the Arab States for every **4 male employers** there is only **1 female employer**

Figure 96. Status in employment, World 2019



Source: ILOStat database, “modelled estimates, November 2018” (last updated on 11 July 2019).

Figure 97. Status in employment, Arab States 2019



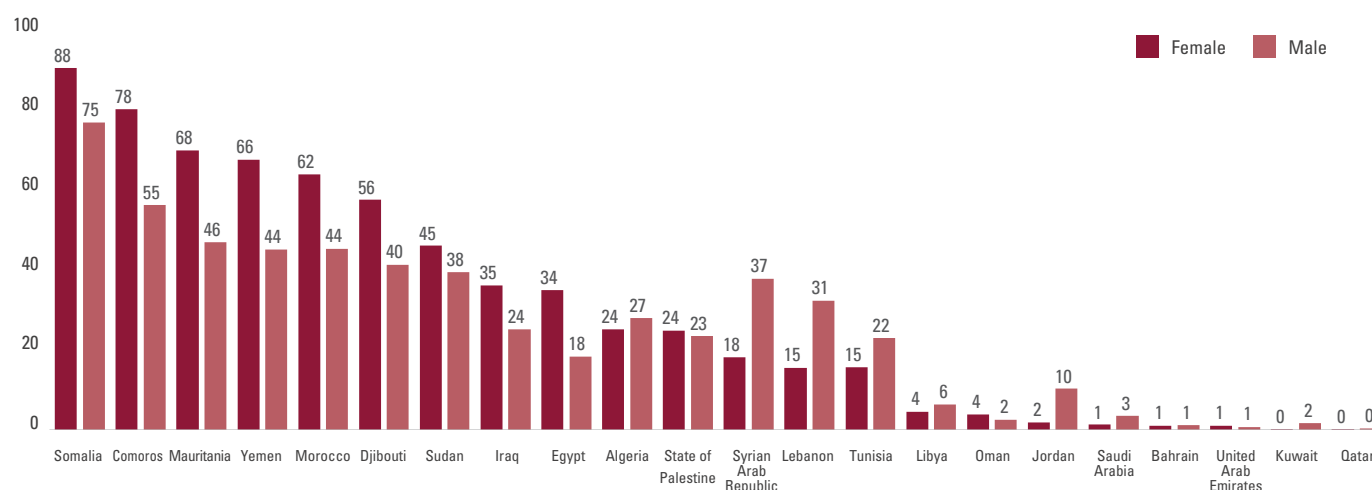
Source: ILOStat database, “modelled estimates, November 2018” (last updated on 11 July 2019).

Vulnerable employment was highest in Somalia: 88 per cent of employed women were in vulnerable jobs compared to 75 per cent of men. In countries where vulnerable jobs were

a significant proportion of employment, women were more likely to occupy those positions, leaving the reliable salaries and employer positions for men. As overall vulnerable

employment declines, in countries like Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia, it is men who are more likely to be in less secure jobs **Figure 98**.

Figure 98. Vulnerable employment rate, 2019 (percentage)



Source: ILOStat database, “modelled estimates, November 2018” (last updated on 11 July 2019).

I. Time spent on paid and unpaid work

Rural women in Iraq work over 3 hours more per day than men

There are many forms of work, including unpaid work done in and around the home such as housework, caring for children and other household members, and maintaining the house and yard. Time use Surveys (TUS) measure the time spent on all activities conducted throughout the day and night, allowing analysts to identify how much time is spent on unpaid house and care work and how this differs between men and women.

In the Arab States region, eight countries have implemented a TUS: Algeria (2012); Egypt (2015); Iraq (2007 and 2012); Morocco (1997 and 2011); Oman (2007); Qatar (2012); the State of Palestine (1999 and 2012); and Tunisia (2005).

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



Target 5.4

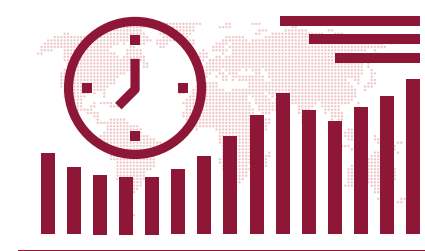
Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location

Indicator 5.4.1

Latest data on time use show a great variation of time spent on unpaid chores and care work between Arab countries and a big difference in the time spent on paid versus unpaid work. 2012 survey data showed that Moroccan women, for example, work slightly more minutes per day than men (381 versus 368 minutes per day). However, for women, most time is spent on unpaid work (300 minutes) than on paid work (81 minutes) and for men the opposite is true (54

minutes unpaid work compared to 325 minutes of paid work). Moroccan women spent 21 per cent of their time



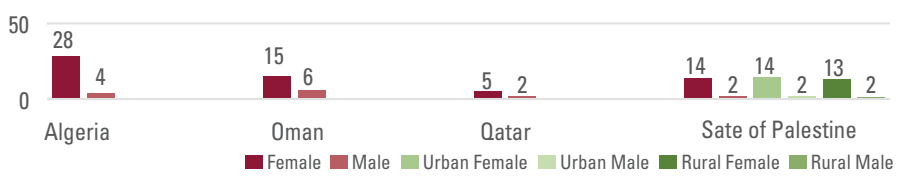
Only **8 countries** in the region have conducted a **Time Use Survey**

on unpaid chores and care work, while men only 3 per cent of their time on similar tasks.

Although women spent little time on chores in Qatar, it was still higher than time spent by men in most of the Arab States. In Algeria, women aged 15-24, spent more than a quarter of their time on chores. Among Arab countries Omani men spent the most amount of time on unpaid chores at 6 per cent for age group 15-24 and 8 per cent for age 15 and older. Similarly, the male population age 15 and older in urban Oman spent 7 per cent of their time on unpaid chores, and in rural Oman they spend 8 per cent **Figures 99 and 100.**

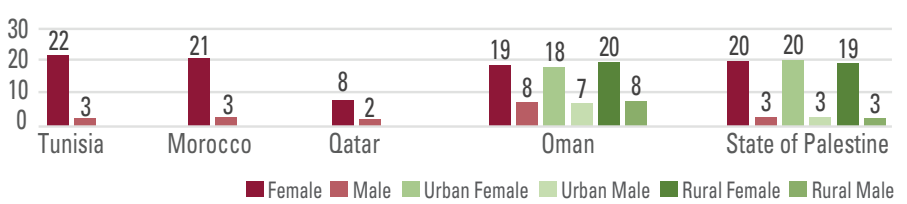
Women in Iraq spent more time in unpaid work than men. Women spent a total of 7 hours a day on unpaid work in urban and rural areas while men in urban and rural areas spent

Figure 99. Average number of hours spent on unpaid domestic and care work of youth population (15-24 years) by location, latest available data



Source: UNSD, “SDG indicators”, Global SDG Indicators database.

Figure 100. Average number of hours spent on unpaid domestic and care work of adult population (15+ years) by location, latest available data

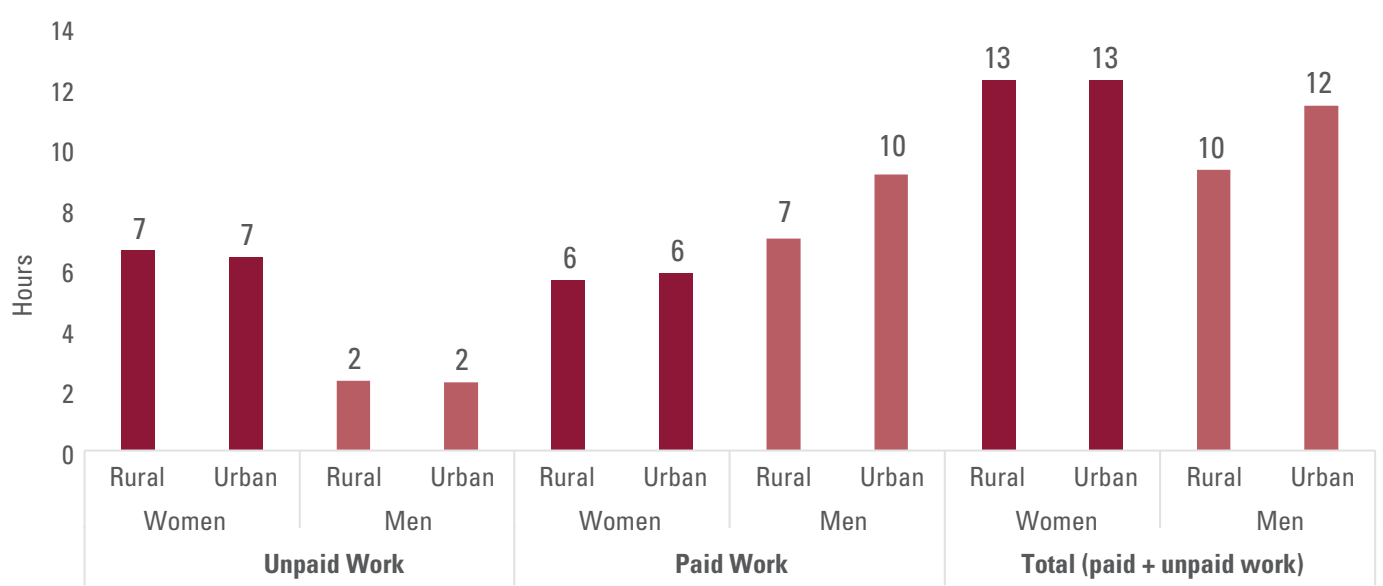


Source: UNSD, “SDG indicators”, Global SDG Indicators database.

2 hours a day. Women also spent 6 hours a day on paid work in urban and rural areas. Men, however, spent more hours in paid work than unpaid in comparison to women: 10 hours a

day on paid work in urban areas and 7 hours a day in rural areas. In sum, nearly 60 per cent of males’ work was paid, while almost 60 per cent of females’ work was unpaid **Figure 101.**

Figure 101. Average number of hours spent on total work (paid and unpaid) of population aged 10 years and older, Iraq 2007



Source: Iraq Time Use Survey 2007.

J. Adult unemployment

Unemployment is highest for women

The adult unemployment rate is the share of the labour force, between the ages 15-64, that is unemployed and actively seeking work. Unemployment rates do not reflect the “discouraged workers” in a country, meaning those that are of legal employment age but are no longer actively seeking employment after long-term unemployment. If it were possible to take into account the number of discouraged workers, the percentage of the unemployed would likely be much higher in the Arab World.

In all Arab countries where data were available, unemployment was higher for women than it was for men. Arab adult unemployment rate (8%) was higher than the World average (5%).⁵ The

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all



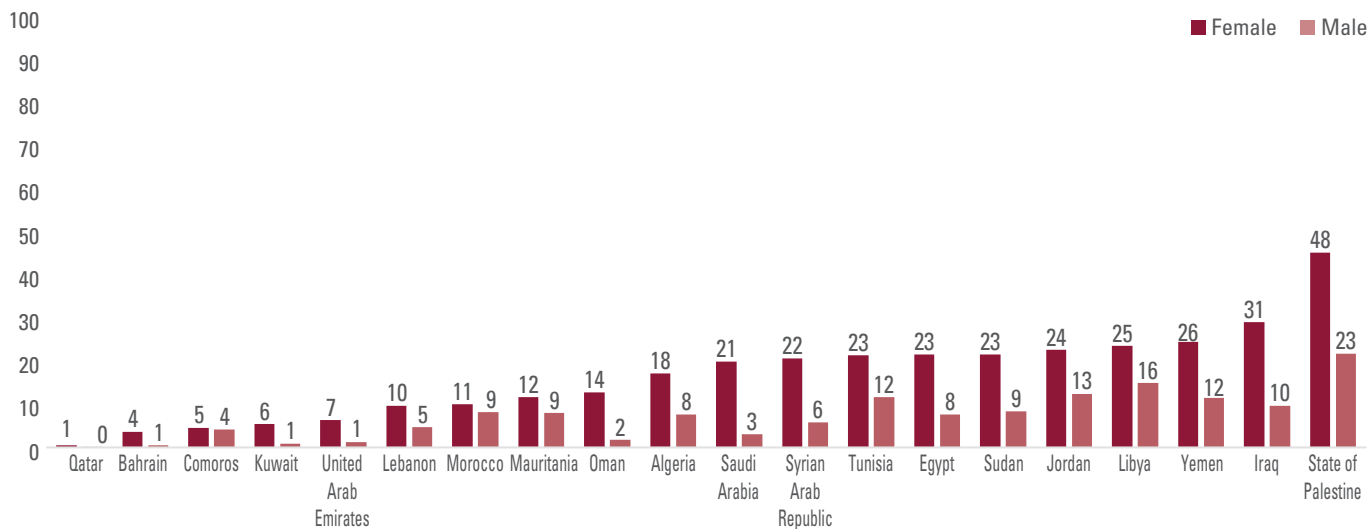
unemployment rate was highest in the State of Palestine where nearly half of the female labour force was unemployed (48%) versus around one fifth of the male labour force (23%). Rates were also extremely high for women and men in Iraq (31% and 10%, respectively) and in Yemen (26% and 12%, respectively). Unemployment was almost non-existent for women and men in Qatar **Figure 102**.

K. Youth unemployment

Youth unemployment is highest for young women

Youth unemployment rate is the share of the labour force, aged 15-24 years, that is unemployed and actively seeking work. Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is a major concern for many Arab States and is thought to be a factor behind the uprising of the Arab spring.

Figure 102. Unemployment rate of population aged 15-64 years, latest year (percentage)



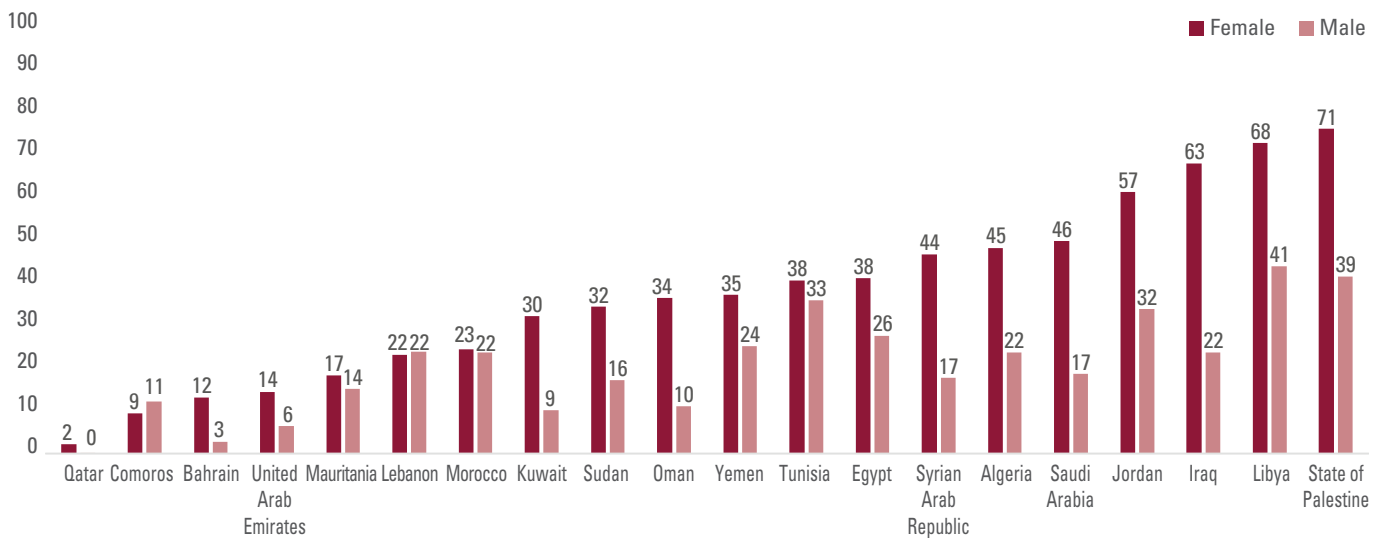
Source: UNSD, “SDG indicators”, Global SDG Indicators database.

Limited employment opportunities, poor investment and a tightly controlled private sector result in too few jobs for young people, regardless of their education level. Young females have a higher unemployment rate than young males, and with already low participation in the labour market, it is clear that gender norms play a

role in female’s ability to engage in employment work.⁶ The Arab youth unemployment rate (23%) was higher than the World average (14%).⁷ For almost all the countries with available data, female youth unemployment was always higher than male. More than two thirds of the

female labour force were unemployed in the State of Palestine (71%) and Libya (68%) in comparison to that of males’ in the State of Palestine (39%) and Libya (41%). Qatar, on the other hand, had the highest rates of employment for both females and males, where unemployment was almost zero **Figure 103**.

Figure 103. Youth unemployment rate, latest year (percentage)



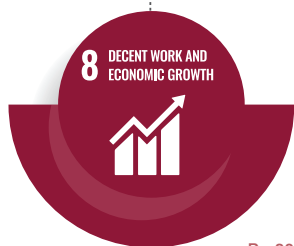
Source: UNSD, “SDG indicators”, Global SDG Indicators database.

L. Disengaged youth

The proportion of young people (aged 15-24) not in employment, education, or training – known as the NEET rate – is an important development measure and one of the SDG indicators under Goal 8 on decent work (SDG indicator 8.6.1). As a measure of potentially disengaged youth, it provides an indication of risk of disaffection with society, long-term unemployment and forced early marriage.

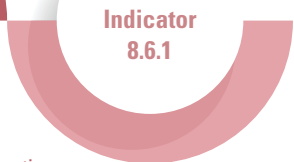
The NEET rate was highest among young women in Yemen, where 70

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all



By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training

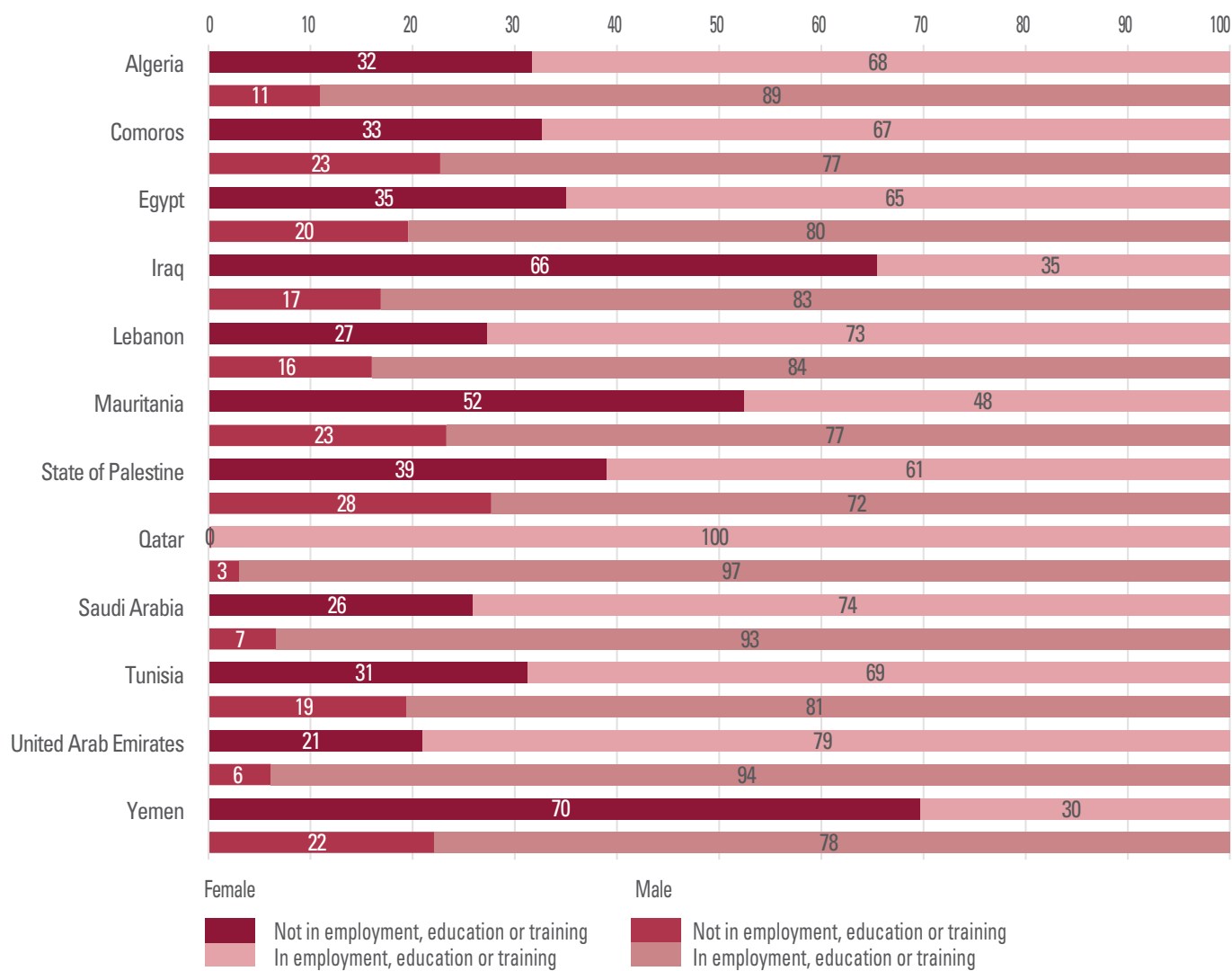
Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training



per cent were not participating in education, training or employment. By comparison, this was the situation for only 22 per cent of young men in Yemen. The gap

was biggest in Iraq, where 66 per cent of young women were not in employment, education or training, compared to 17 per cent of young men **Figure 104**.

Figure 104. NEET rate for youth aged 15-24 years, latest available data (percentage)

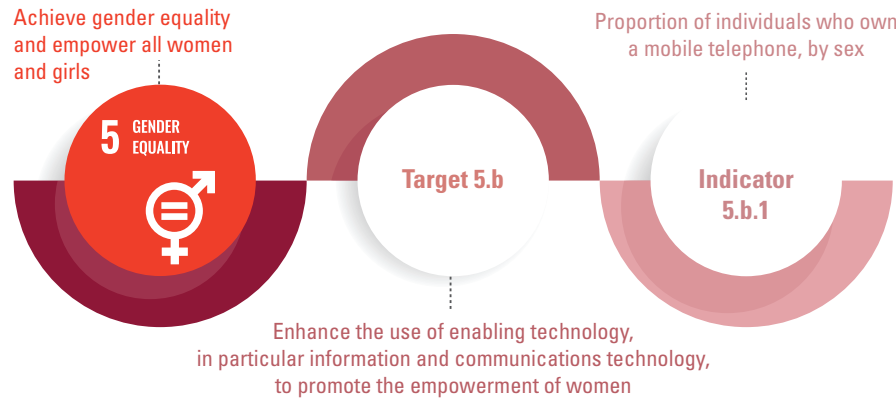


Source: UNSD, “SDG indicators”, Global SDG Indicators database.

M. Mobile ownership

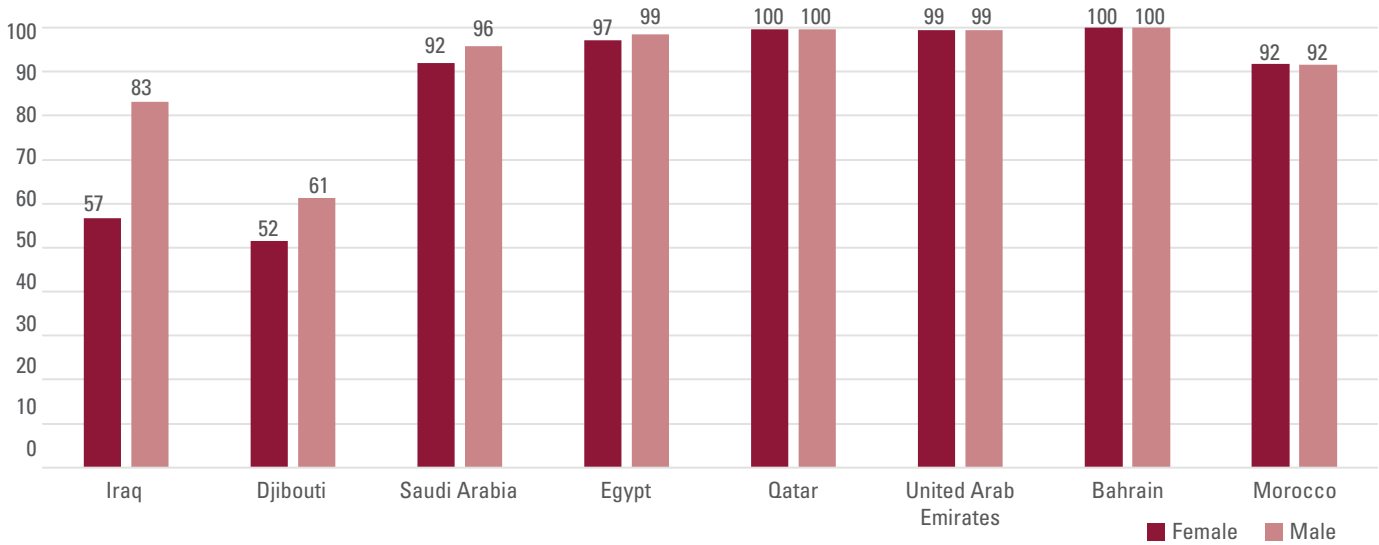
Iraq and Djibouti have the highest gender gap in mobile ownership

There are 1.7 billion females in low- and middle-income countries that do not own mobile phones. In most of the Arab States the proportion of individuals who own a mobile



telephone, for both sexes, as per the latest available data, was over 90 per cent, except in Iraq and Djibouti. In both countries, there was a gender gap. In Iraq, the gender gap was 26 percentage points (females 57% and males 83%) and in Djibouti, it was 9 percentage points (females 52% and males 61%) **Figure 105.**

Figure 105. Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, latest available data (percentage)



Source: UNSD, “SDG indicators”, Global SDG Indicators database.