

QATAR

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)	1,409	2009
Total adolescent (10-19) population (000)	155	2009
Total under-18 population (000)	272	2009
Total under-5 population (000)	83	2009
Population annual growth rate (%)	10.3	2000-2009
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	2.4	2009
Under-five mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	11	2009
Life expectancy at birth (years), male	75	2009
Life expectancy at birth (years), female	77	2009
Singulate mean age at marriage, male	28	2004
Singulate mean age at marriage, female	26	2004
Economic indicators		
GNI per capita (current US\$)	-	
% share of income held by lowest 20 %	4	2007
% share of income held by highest 20 %	52	2007
<p>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 August 2011] Marriage data from UNPD, World Marriage Data 2008, www.un.org/esa/population/</p>		

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
<p>Source: World Economic Forum, The Global Gender Gap Report 2010 (rankings of in total 134 countries)</p>		

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Legal system. According to the constitution, Islamic law (Shari'a) is the main source of legislation in Qatar.¹ In 2006 Qatar introduced a codified family law. The Shari'a courts were abolished in 2003 but Shari'a principles are still applied in matters related to personal status (such as marriage, divorce and child custody). Before a court, in family law matters, a woman's testimony or worth as a witness is not always equal to that of a man. In some cases a woman's testimony is worth half a man's and in some cases a female witness is not accepted at all. A large proportion of Qatar's population is made up of predominantly male foreign guest workers.² Only about 225,000 people in Qatar are citizens. Non-citizens do not have the same rights as citizens with regard, for example, to free health care, education and other services, employment opportunities and property ownership.³

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Qatar acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2009 and maintains reservations against the following articles of the convention: 2 (a) (gender equality in domestic laws and policies), 9 (2) (equality with regard to nationality), 15 (1) (equality before the law) and 15 (4) (freedom of movement and of residence and domicile), 16 (1) (a), (c) and (f) (equality in marriage and family life), as well as 29 (1) (an article related to the administration of the convention; i.e. arbitration in the event of a dispute).⁴ Several of these articles are considered to be at the core of the purpose of the convention. The CEDAW Committee indicated in 1998 that: "... reservations to article 16, whether lodged for national, traditional, religious or cultural reasons, are incompatible with the Convention and therefore impermissible..." and that article 2 is central to the purpose and objective of the convention.⁵ Qatar has not yet submitted an initial report to the CEDAW Committee.

¹ Hauser Global Law School Program, New York University School of Law, GlobalLex, Foreign Law Research, (electronic publication, www.nyulawglobal.org/Globalex) [accessed in August 2011]

² Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

³ U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2011 (report, online version <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/>) [accessed in August 2011]

⁴ See United Nations Treaty Collection (<http://treaties.un.org>) for declarations and reservations made by State Parties

⁵ 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. Qatar ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1995 with a general reservation on any provisions that are inconsistent with Islamic law. In 2009 Qatar partially withdrew this general reservation and stated that the reservation would continue to apply to articles 2 (non-discrimination) and 14 (freedom of thought and religion). Qatar acceded to the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2001 with a general reservation regarding any provisions that conflict with Shari'a. This reservation was withdrawn in 2008. Qatar is party to the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict since 2002, to which it has not made any reservation.

Nationality rights. Qatari women married to non-Qatari spouses cannot pass their Qatari citizenship to their children or to their spouse. Qatari fathers on the other hand have the right to pass their citizenship to their children as well as to a foreign spouse after five years of marriage. There is a possibility for foreigners residing in Qatar to apply for citizenship, but only after 25 years of residency in the country.⁶

Divorce rights. A man can divorce his wife for any reason, while women can file for divorce only for certain specified reasons. A woman can also seek divorce without the burden of evidence, in which case she has to give up any financial rights and return her dowry. A rapid separation based on the latter type of divorce is only possible if the husband concedes to the divorce. If he does not agree, it is mandatory that the couple attempt to reconcile. If the reconciliation does not work out, a court may order the divorce.⁷

Guardianship and custody rights. The father is the legal guardian of the children. Upon divorcing, women may be granted custody of their sons up to the age of 13 and their daughters until they turn 15.⁸ A mother who has been granted custody has the right to child support.⁹

Inheritance rights. According to Islamic principles, women have the right to inherit, but will generally inherit half the share of their male counterparts.¹⁰

Freedom of movement. A 2007 law gives Qatari women the right to obtain a passport and travel abroad without the permission of their male guardian. Qatari women still require the permission of their male guardian to obtain a driver's licence. This requirement does not apply to foreign women residing in Qatar.¹¹

Protection from child marriage. According to the Family Act, the minimum age of marriage is 18 for boys and 16 for girls. A court may allow a marriage below the minimum age, but it requires the consent of the legal guardian as well as the consent of the two persons to be married.¹² Polygyny is legal in Qatar.¹³

Protection from gender-based violence. There is no specific law against domestic violence, but the family law of 2006 states that a woman has the right to be free from physical and mental harm at the hands of her husband.¹⁴ Although rape is a crime, the law does not address the issue of marital rape. The legal system allows lenient sentences to men who commit "crimes of honour" against women.¹⁵

3. INSTITUTIONS AND MECHANISMS

Governmental response. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs (SCFA) is the governmental body responsible for protecting and supporting family affairs, including women's affairs. The SCFA pushed for a codified family

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

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Committee on the Rights of the Child, Consideration of Report Submitted by States Parties under Article 44 of the Convention, Second periodic report of Qatar, CRC/C/QAT/2, 2008

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

11 Ibid.

12 Committee on the Rights of the Child, Consideration of Report Submitted by States Parties under Article 44 of the Convention, Second periodic report of Qatar, CRC/C/QAT/2, 2008

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

14 Ibid.

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

law, which became reality in 2006. The quasigovernmental organisation Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Women and Children (Qatar Foundation) is another entity aiming to promote and protect women's rights. The two organisations have made efforts to educate women on their legal rights and to offer social and legal services to women.¹⁶

Strategies and services responding to gender-based violence. According to the Freedom House report *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010* the government has acknowledged that domestic violence is an issue. The SCFA has conducted studies to understand the role and extent of domestic violence in the country, and has openly discussed the matter. In 2007 the SCFA established a shelter for abused women and children under the supervision of the Qatar Foundation. The shelter provides accommodation, financial assistance, legal aid and psychological counselling. A hotline has also been established where women and children can report abuse. Although Qatar has taken steps to regulate work conditions for foreign domestic workers (who are often female), this group is vulnerable to abuse.¹⁷

4. WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political representation. The new constitution that was approved in 2003 grants women the right to vote. But women have participated in politics even before this date when they were allowed to vote and stand for election in the first elections for the Central Municipal Council held in 1999. The Central Municipal Council has no policy-making power, instead it advises the minister of municipal affairs on issues such as trash collection, street repair and other public works. According to the new constitution the intention is to convert the Consultative Council (a national body to which members are appointed) into a body with elected members. This new council would be a legislative body, although the emir's approval would be required for new laws to be enacted. The elections for this council have been postponed, and to date no national legislative elections have been held. There is currently one woman on the Central Municipal Council (out of 29 seats). It should be noted that 75 per cent of Qatari citizens were not allowed to vote in the most recent election to the Central Municipal Council (in 2007), as this right is limited to those families who were in Qatar before 1930.¹⁸

Representation in the legal system. There is only one female judge in Qatar, on the Court of First Instance.¹⁹ The number of female lawyers has increased since 2000 when a woman was, for the first time, granted a licence to practice law. Female students now outnumber male students at the Qatar University's college of law.²⁰

Civil society. Freedom of assembly and association is restricted in Qatar. According to the 2010 Freedom House report, independent women's rights NGOs do not exist. Therefore, the influence of civil society on policy and legal issues related to women's rights is limited.

5. EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Education. The youth literacy rate for both young women and young men is 98 per cent. The net enrolment ratios of girls and boys in primary school are roughly equal (93 and 94 per cent, respectively). More girls than boys enrol in secondary school: girls' net enrolment ratio is 96 per cent while boys' is only 65 per cent.

Access to financial credit. According to the 2010 Freedom House report, Qatari women have the right to enter into business and economic contracts and activities without the permission of their male guardian.

¹⁶ Freedom House, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010* (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

¹⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2011*, and Freedom House, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010*

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2011* (report, online version <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/>) [accessed in August 2011]

²⁰ Freedom House, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010* (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

Participation in the labour market. In Qatar, 50 per cent of women aged 15 and above actively engage in the labour market either by working or looking for work. This rate is close to the global labour force participation rate of women, which is 52 per cent. Male labour market participation is 93 per cent.²¹ Among young women between 15-24 years old the labour force participation rate is 34 per cent, compared to 73 per cent among young men. According to the 2010 Freedom House report, working Qatari women tend to be highly educated and are usually employed in the public sector in fields such as health care, education and clerical professions. Like many public spaces in Qatar, public workplaces are often sex segregated. The unemployment rate in Qatar is low overall, although it is substantially higher among female youth than among male youth: 7 per cent of young women and 1 per cent of young men are unemployed.

6. REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Maternal health. The most recent available data from 1998 show high coverage of skilled attendance at delivery (99 per cent), which is one of the most critical interventions for safe motherhood. The 2008 Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group (MMEIG) estimates maternal mortality in Qatar at 8 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.²²

Early childbearing. In Qatar, the adolescent birth rate is 15 births per 1,000 adolescent girls aged 15–19.

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 (%)	1998	43*	-	-	-	-	UNFPA, UNPD, MDG database http://unstats.un.org [accessed in August 2011] *data pertain to nationals of the country
Antenatal care coverage at least once by skilled personnel (%)		-	-	-	-	-	UNICEF global database/ Family Health Survey 1998 (GFHS)
Skilled attendant at birth (doctor, nurse or midwife) (%)	1998	99	-	-	-	-	UNFPA, UNPD, MDG database http://unstats.un.org [accessed in August 2011]
Adolescent birth rate (number of births per 1,000 girls aged 15–19)	2008	15					WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank, Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group (MMEIG) / UNICEF global database
Maternal Mortality Ratio (adjusted) (maternal deaths per 100,000 live births)	2008	8					
Lifetime risk of maternal death, 1 in:	2008	4400					

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

22 See WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and The World Bank, 2010, Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990-2008. The report categorizes countries' progress towards MDG5. (Countries with MMR \geq 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) Since Qatar had an MMR which was < 100 in 1990 it is not categorized.

EDUCATION	YEAR	MALE %	FEMALE %	GENDER PARITY INDEX (F/M)	SOURCE
Net enrolment ratio primary school (%)	2009	94	93	0.99	UIS, online database, http://stats.uis.unesco.org [accessed in August 2011]
Net enrolment ratio secondary school (%)	2009	65	96	1.47	UIS, online database, http://stats.uis.unesco.org [accessed in August 2011]
Youth (15-24) literacy rate (%)	2009	98	98		UIS, online database, http://stats.uis.unesco.org [accessed in August 2011]
	YEAR	TOTAL			SOURCE
Share of females among teaching staff (%) in primary education	2008	85			UNESCO, Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011
Share of females among teaching staff (%) in secondary education	2008	56			UNESCO, Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011

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		-	-	-	-	-	
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 (%)		-	
Adolescent girls (15-19) who think that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances (%)		-	

HIV/AIDS	YEAR	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE		SOURCE
HIV prevalence among young people (15-24)	2009	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1		UNICEF global database/ UNAIDS
% of young people (15-24) who have comprehensive knowledge of HIV		-	-	-		

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	0		IPU, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm (data updated as of 30 June 2011) [accessed in August 2011]
% women in parliament	2011	0		
Legislated quotas for women for single/ lower house (yes/no)	*	No		Qatar is not listed in The Quota Project database on www.quotaproject.org [accessed in August 2011*] which lists all countries with legislated quotas
Quota type		n/a		
Number of women in ministerial positions	2010	0		DAW/DESA, IPU, Women in Politics: 2010 (reflecting appointments up to 1 January 2010)
% women in ministerial positions	2010	0		

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION	YEAR	TOTAL		SOURCE
Labour force participation rate (%), male 15+	2009	93		ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM), 6th Edition http://kilm.ilo.org Table 1a (ILO estimates), [accessed in August 2011]
Labour force participation rate (%), female 15+	2009	50		
Labour force participation rate (%), male 15-24	2009	73		
Labour force participation rate (%), female 15-24	2009	34		
Total unemployment rate (%), male 15+	2007	0		ILO, KILM, 6th Edition, Table 8a, [accessed in August 2011]
Total unemployment rate (%), female 15+	2007	3		
Youth (15-24) unemployment rate (%), male	2007	1		ILO, KILM, 6th Edition, Table 9, [accessed in August 2011]
Youth (15-24) unemployment rate (%), female	2007	7		

MATERNITY LEAVE	YEAR		SOURCE
Maternity leave duration	2004-2009	50 days	United Nations Statistics Division, http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/tab5g.htm#tech , Table 5g, [accessed in August 2011]. Data compiled between 2004-2009.
% of wages paid in covered period	2004-2009	100	
Provider of benefit	2004-2009	Employer	

Notes:

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)			
Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1962)			
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)			
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)			
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)		2009 (a)	Reservations to: articles 2 (a), 9 (2), 15 (1), (4), 16 (1) (a) (c) (f), 29 (1) Declarations to: articles 1, 5 (a)
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1999)			
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)	1992	1995	Articles 2, 14
Amendment to article 43 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1995)	n/a	1999 Acceptance	
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000)		2002 (a)	
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000)		2001 (a)	
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]

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