



**ALGERIA**  
**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)	34,895	2009
Total adolescent (10-19) population (000)	6,698	2009
Total under-18 population (000)	11,667	2009
Total under-5 population (000)	3,383	2009
Population annual growth rate (%)	1.7	2000-2009
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	2.3	2009
Under-five mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	32	2009
Life expectancy at birth (years), male	71	2009
Life expectancy at birth (years), female	74	2009
Singulate mean age at marriage, male	33	2002
Singulate mean age at marriage, female	30	2002
<b>Economic indicators</b>		
GNI per capita (current US\$)	4,420	2009
% share of income held by lowest 20 %	7	1995
% share of income held by highest 20 %	42	1995
<b>Sources:</b> UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 2011. Life expectancy and economic indicators from The World Bank, Data Catalog, <a href="http://data.worldbank.org/">http://data.worldbank.org/</a> , [accessed in July 2011] Marriage data from UNPD, World Marriage Data 2008, <a href="http://www.un.org/esa/population/">www.un.org/esa/population/</a>		

<b>Gender Gap Index 2010</b>		
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
<b>Algeria</b>	<b>0.6052</b>	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
<b>Source:</b> World Economic Forum, The Global Gender Gap Report 2010 (rankings of in total 134 countries)		

## 2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

**Legal system.** The Algerian laws are based on French law and Islamic law (Shari'a). Despite the progress made in reforming discriminatory laws, the family code in particular still contains provisions that give women and men unequal rights. A woman is not always considered a full person before the court. In criminal cases the testimony of two women are equal to the testimony of one male witness.<sup>1</sup>

**Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.** Algeria acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1996 and maintains reservations to several articles: 2 (policy measures), 15 (4) (freedom to choose residence and domicile), 16 (equality in marriage and family life) and 29 (related to the administration of the convention; arbitration in the event of a dispute). Several of these articles contain provisions that are central to the purpose of the convention and 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." and that article 2 is central to the purpose and objective of the convention.<sup>2</sup> Following the amendment of the nationality code in 2005, the government of Algeria withdrew its reservation to article 9 (2) (equal rights with regard to nationality) in 2009.<sup>3</sup>

**Convention on the Rights of the Child.** Algeria ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1993 and maintains interpretative declarations to the following articles: 13 (freedom of expression), 14 (1) (2) (freedom of thought and religion), 16 (right to privacy), and 17 (access to information, mass media).

<sup>1</sup> Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org))

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Session, A/53/38/Rev.1, 1998, p.49

<sup>3</sup> See United Nations Treaty Collection (<http://treaties.un.org>) for declarations and reservations made by State Parties

**Nationality rights.** Following a 2005 amendment to the nationality code, women married to non-Algerian men can now pass on their Algerian citizenship to their children. If the couple is living in Algeria, it is also possible for a foreign-born man married to an Algerian woman to acquire citizenship.<sup>4</sup>

**Divorce rights.** An Algerian woman can file for divorce on a number of specified grounds, while an Algerian man can seek divorce without providing an explanation. A woman can also seek divorce without the burden of evidence, but she will then have to pay the husband a monetary compensation. Only divorced women who have custody of children have the right to alimony. Women who do not have custody of their children or do not have any children do not have the right to alimony upon a divorce.<sup>5</sup>

**Guardianship and custody rights.** According to Algeria's combined third and fourth periodic CEDAW report (2010), progress has been made with respect to women's guardianship rights. The amended family code (2005) grants the mother the authority to act as the guardian of their children in the father's place under certain circumstances if for example the father is absent. In the case of divorce, the mother has the right to guardianship over her children if she has custody of them.<sup>6</sup> A mother may be granted custody of her sons until they reach the age of 10 and of her daughters until they reach the age of marriage.<sup>7</sup>

**Inheritance rights.** The inheritance law is governed by Shari'a. Women have the right to inherit but will generally receive half of their brother's share.<sup>8</sup> In some instances the share may be lower or higher than that of the male relative. Given the risk of inequality, fathers protect their daughters by donations. This is a new social practice, especially in wealthy circles.<sup>9</sup>

**Freedom of movement.** Algerian women can travel freely and can obtain a passport and travel abroad. For married women the permission of their husband is not required.<sup>10</sup>

**Protection from child marriage.** The 2005 amendment to the family code sets the minimum age for marriage to 19 for both young women and young men. Mutual consent is required for a marriage contract according to the amended law.<sup>11</sup> Proxy marriages (when a prospective spouse is represented by another person at the marriage ceremony) are now prohibited. Proxy marriages facilitated forced marriages and were previously common in rural areas. Polygyny remains legal in Algeria.<sup>12</sup> According to the 2006 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2 per cent of young women age 20-24 were married before the age of 18.

**Protection from gender-based violence.** Rape is not specifically defined in the Arabic version of the penal code but is referred to as "an attack on the honour" (in the French version of the code the word "rape" is used) and a rapist can avoid punishment by marrying his victim. The law excuses the killing or assault of a spouse who is discovered in the act of adultery (this applies to both women and men). The law does not specifically criminalize domestic violence and marital rape.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. INSTITUTIONS AND MECHANISMS

**Governmental response.** The Ministry for the Family and the Status of Women is the main government organisation responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of women in Algeria. Following Algeria's accession to the CEDAW in 1996 the National Women's Council was established as an advisory body to the government.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org))

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Third and Fourth periodic report of Algeria, CEDAW/C/DZA/3-4, 2010

<sup>7</sup> Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org))

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Information provided by the Algeria UNICEF Country Office.

<sup>10</sup> Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org))

<sup>11</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Third and Fourth periodic report of Algeria, CEDAW/C/DZA/3-4, 2010

<sup>12</sup> Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org))

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Responses [by Algeria] to the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of the second periodic report, CEDAW/PSWG/2005/II/CRP.2, 2004

**Strategies and services responding to gender-based violence.** A multi-sectoral national strategy to combat gender-based violence has been developed for the period 2007-2011. The strategy aims to put in place systems and resources for dealing with gender-based violence at all stages in women's lives, including specific actions to protect girl children and adolescent girls. Other approaches of the strategy include sensitization efforts of society and institutions and the establishment of coalitions to combat gender-based violence. The strategy was developed with the support of UNICEF and UNFPA. In terms of services, there are two national centres for battered women and girls and three shelters, as well as a telephone hotline, which was introduced in 2007, according to Algeria's combined third and fourth periodic CEDAW report (2010).

## 4. WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

**Political representation.** Women in Algeria gained the right to vote and stand for election in 1962, a woman was appointed to parliament for the first time that same year.<sup>15</sup> Women currently occupy 30 of the 389 seats (8 per cent of the seats) in the lower house of parliament (the National People's Assembly). There are no legislated quotas in Algeria to increase women's political representation in the lower house or the upper house of parliament. Political parties, including the National Liberation Front and Movement of Society for Peace, have however adopted voluntary quotas that aim to ensure a minimum number of female candidates at provincial level.<sup>16</sup> In 2011 the parliament is discussing a law proposed by the President of the Republic on the introduction of a quota of 30% of women in the electoral lists. The proposed law has raised debate and is still under discussion.<sup>17</sup>

**Representation in the legal system.** A relatively high number of women are active in the legal field. According to the Freedom House report "Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010" 37 per cent of prosecutors and judges are female.

**Civil society.** Associations, political parties and unions require authorisation from the Ministry of Interior to exist. Most of the legally established women's rights organisations are relatively small and fragmented according to the 2010 Freedom House report.

## 5. EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

**Education.** Girls' and boys' net enrolment ratios in primary school are roughly equal (93 and 95 per cent respectively). According to estimates referring to the year 2004, the secondary school net enrolment ratio for girls is 68 per cent and for boys 65 per cent. The literacy rate is somewhat higher among male youth than among female youth (94 per cent compared to 89 per cent for young women). In tertiary education, the gross enrolment ratio is higher for women than for men (36 per cent compared to 25 per cent for men)<sup>18</sup>,

**Access to financial credit.** Algerian women have access to bank loans and other forms of financial credit. There are microcredit programmes and these are available to women as well as men.<sup>19</sup>

**Participation in the labour market.** Although they can be found working in all sectors of the labour market, most employed women work in the areas of health care, education and in the legal field.<sup>20</sup> Despite the fact that women are found working in most fields, women's 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) is still much lower than men's. Among women age 15 and above the labour force participation rate is 37 per cent compared to 80 per cent among men. Globally, women's labour force participation rate is 52 per cent.<sup>21</sup> 30 per cent of young women age 15-24 and 63 per cent of young men participate in the labour market.

<sup>15</sup> UNDP, Human Development Report 2007/2008

<sup>16</sup> The Quota Project, [www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org) [accessed in July 2011]

<sup>17</sup> Information provided by the Algeria UNICEF Country Office.

<sup>18</sup> UIS, online database, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org> [accessed in July 2011], data refer to 2009

<sup>19</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Third and Fourth periodic report of Algeria, CEDAW/C/DZA/3-4, 2010

<sup>20</sup> Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org))

<sup>21</sup> United Nations, DESA, The World's Women 2010, p. 76

## 6. REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

**Maternal health.** Algeria 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). The 2008 MMEIG MMR estimate for Algeria is 120 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.<sup>22</sup> Antenatal care coverage is 89 per cent and the coverage in skilled attendance at delivery is 95 per cent, which is one of the most critical interventions for safe motherhood.

**Early childbearing.** In Algeria, the Adolescent Birth Rate is 4 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 (%)	2006	61	63	60	56	65	MICS3 2006
Antenatal care coverage at least once by skilled personnel (%)	2006	89	94	85	76	98	UNICEF global database / MICS3 2006
Skilled attendant at birth (doctor, nurse or midwife) (%)	2006	95	98	92	88	98	UNICEF global database / MICS3 2006
Adolescent birth rate (number of births per 1,000 girls aged 15–19)	2006	4					UNFPA, UNPD, MDG database <a href="http://unstats.un.org">http://unstats.un.org</a> [accessed in July 2011]
Maternal Mortality Ratio (adjusted) (maternal deaths per 100,000 live births)	120	2008					WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank, Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group (MMEIG) / UNICEF global database
Lifetime risk of maternal death, 1 in:	340	2008					

<sup>22</sup> WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and The World Bank, 2010, Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990-2008 (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)

EDUCATION	YEAR	MALE %	FEMALE %	GENDER PARITY INDEX (F/M)	SOURCE
Net enrolment ratio primary school (%)	2009	95	93	0.98	UIS, online database, <a href="http://stats.uis.unesco.org">http://stats.uis.unesco.org</a> [accessed in July 2011]
Net enrolment ratio secondary school (%)	2004	65	68	1.06	UIS, online database, <a href="http://stats.uis.unesco.org">http://stats.uis.unesco.org</a> [accessed in July 2011], UIS estimates
Youth (15-24) literacy rate (%)	2006	94	89		UIS, online database, <a href="http://stats.uis.unesco.org">http://stats.uis.unesco.org</a> [accessed in July 2011]
	YEAR	TOTAL			SOURCE
Share of females among teaching staff (%) in primary education	2008	53			UNESCO, Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011
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	2006	2	2	2	-	-	UNICEF global database / MICS3 2006
Female genital mutilation/cutting among women 15-49 (%)		-	-	-	-	-	
	YEAR	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE			SOURCE
% of children aged 5-14 engaged in child labour	2006	5	6	4			UNICEF global database / MICS3 2006

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 (%)	2006	68	UNICEF global database / MICS3 2006
Adolescent girls (15-19) who think that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances (%)	2006	66	SOWC 2011 / MICS3 2006

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	2006	-	-	13		UNICEF global database / MICS3 2006

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	30		IPU, <a href="http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm">http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm</a> (data updated as of 30 June 2011) [accessed in July 2011]
% women in parliament	2011	8		
Legislated quotas for women for single/ lower house (yes/no)	*	No		The Quota Project, <a href="http://www.quotaproject.org">www.quotaproject.org</a> [accessed in July 2011*]
Quota type		n/a		
Number of women in ministerial positions	2010	1		DAW/DESA, IPU, Women in Politics: 2010 (reflecting appointments up to 1 January 2010)
% women in ministerial positions	2010	4		

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION	YEAR	TOTAL		SOURCE
Labour force participation rate (%), male 15+	2009	80		ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM), 6th Edition <a href="http://kilm.ilo.org">http://kilm.ilo.org</a> Table 1a (ILO estimates), [accessed in July 2011]
Labour force participation rate (%), female 15+	2009	37		
Labour force participation rate (%), male 15-24	2009	63		
Labour force participation rate (%), female 15-24	2009	30		
Total unemployment rate (%), male 15+	2008	11		ILO, KILM, 6th Edition, Table 8a, [accessed in July 2011]
Total unemployment rate (%), female 15+	2008	10		
Youth (15-24) unemployment rate (%), male	2004	43		ILO, KILM, 6th Edition, Table 9, [accessed in 2011]
Youth (15-24) unemployment rate (%), female	2004	46		

MATERNITY LEAVE	YEAR		SOURCE
Maternity leave duration	2004-2009	14 weeks	United Nations Statistics Division, <a href="http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/tab5g.htm#tech">http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/tab5g.htm#tech</a> , Table 5g, [accessed in July 2011]. Data compiled between 2004-2009.
% of wages paid in covered period	2004-2009	100	
Provider of benefit	2004-2009	Social security	

**Notes:**

The UNICEF global databases are available on [www.childinfo.org](http://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)		2004 (a)	
Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1962)			
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)	1968	1989	Interpretative declarations to: articles 1, 8, 13 (3) (4), 14
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)	1968	1989	Interpretative declarations to: articles 1, 22, 23
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)		1996 (a)	Articles 2, 15 (4), 16, 29
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	1993	Interpretative declarations to: articles 13, 14 (1) (2), 16, 17
Amendment to article 43 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1995)	n/a	1998 Acceptance	
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000)		2009 (a)	
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000)		2006 (a)	
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)	2007	2009	

n/a = not applicable

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



