



LEBANON

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)	4,224	2009
Total adolescent (10-19) population (000)	788	2009
Total under-18 population (000)	1,303	2009
Total under-5 population (000)	322	2009
Population annual growth rate (%)	1.4	2000-2009
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	1.8	2009
Under-five mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	12	2009
Life expectancy at birth (years), male	70	2009
Life expectancy at birth (years), female	74	2009
Singulate mean age at marriage, male	31	2004
Singulate mean age at marriage, female	27	2004
Economic indicators		
GNI per capita (current US\$)	9,020	2010
% share of income held by lowest 20 %	-	
% share of income held by highest 20 %	-	
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/		

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

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Legal system. The Lebanese legal system is primarily based on the French and Egyptian legal systems.¹ The different religious communities in Lebanon have their own personal status laws (which govern legal procedures that pertain to matters such as marriage, divorce and inheritance). For Muslims, the Shari'a courts hear personal status cases. The courts are separated into Sunni and Shiite hearings. For the different Christian denominations in the Lebanese society the ecclesiastical courts have jurisdiction over personal status issues. In Lebanon there are 18 legally recognized religious groups. The largest groups are the Sunni Muslims, the Shiite Muslims and the Maronite Christians.²

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Lebanon acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1997 and maintains reservations to several articles: 9 (2) (equal rights with regard to nationality) 16 (1) (c) (d) (f) (g) (equal rights in marriage and family life) and 29 (1) (related to the administration of the convention; arbitration in the event of a dispute).³ 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..."⁴

Convention on the Rights of the Child. Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991 without reservations. Lebanon has also ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (in 2004) and has signed (in 2002) but not ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Lebanon has not made any reservations to the optional protocols.

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

⁴ Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Session, A/53/38/Rev.1, 1998, p.49

Nationality rights. According to the law, Lebanese women married to foreign spouses cannot pass their Lebanese nationality to their children or to their spouse while all children of Lebanese fathers will be considered Lebanese and Lebanese men have the right to pass their citizenship to a non-Lebanese spouse. A Lebanese woman can pass her nationality to her child only in cases when the father is unknown. The children resulting from a marriage between a Lebanese woman and a foreign man will be considered residents rather than citizens, and will not have the same rights. For example, they will not have equal access to education. A draft new law has been considered, but not yet approved, which gives women equal rights with men to pass on their nationality, with the exception that a Lebanese woman would not be able to pass on her nationality to her spouse if he is a Palestinian refugee. The Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are considered resident foreigners and lack citizenship rights.⁵ Due to this fact, the status of Palestinian refugee women and men in Lebanese society differs significantly from that of Lebanese nationals. For example, Palestinian refugees are denied access to public social services, have limited access to public health and educational facilities and are not allowed to work in several professions.⁶

Divorce rights. The rules for divorce are different depending on which religious group a woman or man belongs to. The process for a Muslim man to divorce his wife is relatively simple. For a Muslim woman it is more difficult to initiate divorce. For example, a Sunni woman can seek divorce from her husband for a number of specified reasons. Another option, available to both Sunni and Shiite women, is for a woman to return her dowry and forfeit any financial maintenance in exchange for divorce. For Catholics, as another example, divorce is not allowed, however there is a number of legitimate reasons under which the marriage can be annulled.⁷

Guardianship and custody rights. It is only among the Armenian Orthodox that mothers and fathers share parental authority. Among all other denominations, the father has parental authority as the legal guardian of the child. Upon a divorce the mother may be granted custody, but, in the case of most religions, this will only be until the child reaches a certain age.⁸

Inheritance rights. According to the 1959 Civil Law of Inheritance, which applies to non-Muslims in Lebanese society, women and men enjoy equal rights with regard to inheritance. Islamic law establishes inheritance rights for Muslim women and men and the rules differ slightly for Sunnis and Shiites. However, in general, a woman's share of the inheritance will be half of that of a man.⁹

Freedom of movement. No laws restrict the freedom of movement of Lebanese women. Lebanese women have been allowed to obtain a passport and travel abroad without their husband's consent since 1974.¹⁰

Protection from child marriage. There is no common minimum age of marriage that applies to all young Lebanese women and men as the personal status laws of the different religious denominations define the minimum age. In Lebanon's third periodic CEDAW report (2006) the marriage ages of girls and boys for 10 different religious groups are listed. All of these religious groups allow girls under the age of 18 to marry. Among Sunni and Shiite Muslims, marriages of girls as young as 9 years old can be licenced given that approval is granted, although it is no longer customary that such young girls marry. Among the Jewish denomination, girls as young as 12.5 years old may marry, and among the Syrian Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox a girl may be as young as 14 years old when she marries. For boys of most religious groups the marriageable age is 18, although marriages of younger boys can be approved by most of the groups.¹¹

Protection from gender-based violence. Rape is a crime with a minimum punishment of five years in prison. There are no specific laws against domestic violence and spousal rape. Draft legislation banning domestic violence was considered by the cabinet in 2009, backed by women's rights NGOs, but has been stopped in parliament by certain political parties that are blocking the adoption process.¹² Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, the majority of

⁵ Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

⁶ UNRWA website, www.unrwa.org [accessed in August 2011]

⁷ Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org), and information provided by UNICEF Lebanon on women's right to obtain a passport without their husband's consent

¹¹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Third periodic report of Lebanon, CEDAW/C/LBN/3, 2006

¹² Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

whom are women, are “legally invisible”; according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) which makes them acutely vulnerable to domestic servitude.¹³ “Honour killings” do occur in Lebanon but the penal code was amended in July 2011 withdrawing the article that offered lenient sentences in cases where a man kills his wife or another female relative caught in the act of “illegal sexual intercourse”¹⁴

3. INSTITUTIONS AND MECHANISMS

Governmental response. The main bodies responsible for promoting, protecting and monitoring women’s rights are: the National Commission for Lebanese Women, the Department of Women’s Affairs in the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children and the Social and Economic Council. The CEDAW Committee of the National Commission for Lebanese Women prepared the third periodic CEDAW report in 2006. Within the Ministry of Social Affairs there is also a Non-Governmental Organisation Support Unit responsible for capacity building and networking among civil society organisations.¹⁵

Strategies and services responding to gender-based violence. The Ministry of Social Affairs cooperates with a number of NGOs on combating gender-based violence and providing support to victims. Several NGOs have established telephone hotlines, run shelters and offer free legal advice to women who are victims of domestic violence. NGOs have also carried out awareness-raising campaigns and have tried to influence the government to pass a law that specifically bans domestic violence.¹⁶

4. WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political representation. Women gained the right to vote and stand for election in 1952. The first time a woman was appointed to parliament was in 1991.¹⁷ Currently women occupy 4 out of the 128 seats in the lower house of parliament (3 per cent of the seats).¹⁸ There are no women in ministerial positions in the new government formed in 2011.

Representation in the legal system. According to the Freedom House report Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010, 38 per cent of the judges in the civil, commercial, and criminal courts are women. The first women graduated from law school in the 1930s and in the 1960s women started serving as judges. Despite this progress, women are not allowed to serve as judges in religious courts.¹⁹

Civil society. Lebanon has an active women’s rights movement that has been instrumental in pushing for the amendment of discriminatory laws. The movement, however, has been affected by conflicts and wars over the years. The 1975–1990 civil war had affected the movement as well, as activists mainly focussed on social and relief services. It was after the civil war that women’s rights groups began to concentrate their efforts on the reform of discriminatory laws. Progress on women’s rights since the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah has been limited. The Lebanese Women’s Council, the National Focal Point for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Lebanese Women’s Network are important alliances of NGOs.²⁰ Another NGO is Kafa (enough) Violence & Exploitation, which submitted a shadow report to the CEDAW Committee’s 40th session in 2008 with regard to Lebanon’s third periodic report, highlighting the situation of migrant domestic workers and women in the sex industry. A supplemental report on Palestinian Refugee Women was also submitted to the CEDAW Committee for its 40th session and the Committee for the Follow-Up on Women’s Issues has submitted a shadow report to each periodic report to date.

¹³ OHCHR, Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon are legally invisible - UN human rights expert on contemporary forms of slavery, (online article, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=11499&LangID=E>)

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, Lebanon: Law Reform Targets “Honor” Crimes (news article, 11 August 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/08/11/lebanon-law-reform-targets-honor-crimes>)

¹⁵ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Third periodic report of Lebanon, CEDAW/C/LBN/3, 2006

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

¹⁷ UNDP, Human Development Report 2007/2008

¹⁸ Inter-Parliamentary Union, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (data updated as of 30 June 2011) [accessed in August 2011]

¹⁹ Freedom House, Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 (report, online version, www.freedomhouse.org)

²⁰ Ibid.

5. EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Education. The net enrolment ratios of girls and boys in primary school are roughly equal (89 and 91 per cent, respectively). The secondary school net enrolment ratio for girls is 79 per cent, compared to 71 per cent for boys. The youth literacy rate is 99 and 98 per cent for girls and boys, respectively. Gross enrolment data in tertiary education also show a higher enrolment ratio for women: 57 per cent compared to 48 per cent for men.²¹

Access to financial credit. Lebanese women have access to bank loans and other forms of financial credit, without discrimination. There are micro-lending programmes, of which some specifically target women.²²

Participation in the labour market. Lebanese women's economic participation is low, despite a high literacy rate and school net enrolment ratios that are equal to or higher than boys'. The 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) among young women aged 15-24 is 18 per cent, while the corresponding percentage for young men is 42 per cent. For women aged 15 years and above, the labour force participation rate is 22 per cent (compared to 72 per cent for men). Globally, the labour force participation rate of women is 52 per cent.²³ The youth unemployment rate in Lebanon is the same for young women and young men according to data from 2007 (22 per cent).

6. REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Maternal health. The most recent available data show high coverage of important interventions for safe motherhood: antenatal care coverage (at least once) is 96 per cent (estimates from 2004) and skilled attendance at birth is 98 per cent (estimates from 1994-1996). The 2008 Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group (MMEIG) estimates that maternal mortality in Lebanon is 26 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.²⁴

Early childbearing. In Lebanon, the adolescent birth rate is 18 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 (%)	2004	58	-	-	-	-	UNFPA, UNPD, MDG database http://unstats.un.org [accessed in August 2011]
Antenatal care coverage at least once by skilled personnel (%)	2004	96	-	-	-	-	UNICEF global database/ PAPFAM 2004
Skilled attendant at birth (doctor, nurse or midwife) (%)	1994-1996	98	-	-	-	-	UNICEF global database/ PAPCHILD 1996
Adolescent birth rate (number of births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19)	2001	18					UNFPA, UNPD, MDG database http://unstats.un.org [accessed in August 2011]
Maternal Mortality Ratio (adjusted) (maternal deaths per 100,000 live births)	2008	26					WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank, Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group (MMEIG) / UNICEF global database
Lifetime risk of maternal death, 1 in:	2008	2000					WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank, Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group (MMEIG) / UNICEF global database

21 UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) online database [accessed in August 2011], data refer to 2009

22 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Third periodic report of Lebanon, CEDAW/C/LBN/3, 2006 and CEDAW, Initial report of Lebanon, CEDAW/C/LBN/1, 2004

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

24 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 ≥ 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 Lebanon 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	91	89	0.98	UIS, online database, http://stats.uis.unesco.org [accessed in August 2011]
Net enrolment ratio secondary school (%)	2009	71	79	1.11	UIS, online database, http://stats.uis.unesco.org [accessed in August 2011]
Youth (15-24) literacy rate (%)	2007	98	99		UIS, online database, http://stats.uis.unesco.org [accessed in August 2011]
	YEAR	TOTAL			SOURCE
Share of females among teaching staff (%) in primary education	2009	86			UNESCO, Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011
Share of females among teaching staff (%) in secondary education	2009	55			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	2000	11	-	-	-	-	UNICEF global database/ MICS2 2000
Female genital mutilation/cutting among women 15-49 (%)		-	-	-	-	-	
	YEAR	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE			SOURCE
% of children aged 5-14 engaged in child labour	2000	7	8	6			UNICEF global database/ MICS2 2000

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		-	-	-		UNICEF global database

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	4		IPU, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm (data updated as of 30 June 2011) [accessed in August 2011]
% women in parliament	2011	3		
Legislated quotas for women for single/ lower house (yes/no)	*	No		The Quota Project, www.quotaproject.org [accessed in August 2011*]
Quota type		n/a		
Number of women in ministerial positions	2011	0		Information provided by UNICEF Lebanon reflecting the new government as of July 2011
% women in ministerial positions	2011	0		

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION	YEAR	TOTAL		SOURCE
Labour force participation rate (%), male 15+	2009	72		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	22		
Labour force participation rate (%), male 15-24	2009	42		
Labour force participation rate (%), female 15-24	2009	18		
Total unemployment rate (%), male 15+	2007	9		ILO, KILM, 6th Edition, Table 8a, [accessed in August 2011]
Total unemployment rate (%), female 15+	2007	10		
Youth (15-24) unemployment rate (%), male	2007	22		ILO, KILM, 6th Edition, Table 9, [accessed in August 2011]
Youth (15-24) unemployment rate (%), female	2007	22		

MATERNITY LEAVE	YEAR		SOURCE
Maternity leave duration	2004-2009	7 weeks	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)	1954	1956	
Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1962)			
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)		1972 (a)	
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)		1972 (a)	
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)		1997 (a)	Articles 9 (2), 16 (1) (c) (d) (f) (g), 29 (1)
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	1991	
Amendment to article 43 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1995)	n/a	2000 Acceptance	
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000)	2002		
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000)	2001	2004	
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)	2007		

n/a = not applicable

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

