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Womens
الاقتصاد النسوي



**PERCEPTIONS AND LIVED EXPERIENCES
IN JORDANIAN COMMUNITIES:
WOMEN AND THE WORLD OF WORK
RESEARCH ASSESSMENT**

December 2021



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
METHODOLOGY	6
GENDERED PERCEPTIONS ON WOMEN AND THE WORLD OF WORK	7
PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE IN WOMEN'S ROLE	8
PERSISTENCE OF GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION & GENDERED ATTITUDES TOWARDS WORK	9
CIRCUMSCRIBED DECISION-MAKING ABOUT WORK	13
HARASSMENT AS A SIGNIFICANT BARRIER TO THE WORLD OF WORK	16
PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHANGE IN THE PHENOMENON OF HARASSMENT	17
WOMEN FEEL UNSAFE OUTSIDE FAMILIAR SPACES	19
REPORTED CAUSES AND REASONS FOR HARASSMENT	21
REPORTED SOLUTIONS AND MEASURES TO PREVENT HARASSMENT	24
CONCLUSIONS	28
ANNEX 1: FOCUS GROUP DATA	30
ANNEX 2: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS	31

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report ranked Jordan as among the most gender unequal countries in the world, placing it at 131 out of 156 countries included in the evaluation.¹ The country's modest ranking is attributable to wide gender gaps in access to economic opportunity and in political participation and leadership. These sharply contrast with Jordan's performance in educational attainment and health; categories in which the country has achieved near parity. In fact, in today's Jordan, extant gender imbalances in education tend to weigh in the favor of women, whereby 54% of students in tertiary education are female.² The sharp imbalance between educational attainment and labor force participation is not new. Rather, it has been a consistent feature of Jordan's socio-economic constitution, first noted in 2005 and referred to by the World Bank as Jordan's "gender paradox" – a term used to describe the puzzling failure of women's educational attainment to deliver higher returns to women across several economic indicators, including access to jobs and financial resources and longevity in the workforce.

Indeed, today, the rate of women's participation in Jordan's formal labor

market is among the lowest in the world at 14%³; of these, nearly 33% were unemployed by the end of 2020 following an overall 5.7% jump in unemployment as a result of the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴ The low rate of women's economic participation has held true even in periods of high economic growth. For example, Jordan's GDP growth between 2000 and 2009 averaged 6.5%, the rate of women's economic participation during these years was only modestly better, increasing from 12.7% in 2000 to 15.5% in 2009.⁵

The absence of women from the labour force is typically described as an economic problem that impacts Jordan's overall economic prosperity. For example, economists have argued that Jordan could increase its GDP by 20 percent if the labor force achieved gender parity.⁶ By extension, the performance of economic enterprises and activity that constitute the formal economy can be presumed to be undermined by a lack of gender diversity. Meanwhile, the phenomenon is attributed to the confluence of structural barriers, practical barriers and socio-cultural norms, beliefs and practices that constrain and oppress Jordanian women.

1 [The Global Gender Gap Report 2021: Insight Report](#). World Bank (March 2021) pp 235–236.

2 See: [QRF Fact Sheet: Gender and Education in Jordan](#). Queen Rania Foundation (May 2018).

3 By contrast, 54% of Jordanian males participate in the workforce. See: [Department of Statistics 2020 Workforce and Employment Data](#).

4 Ibid.

5 See: [Female Labour Force Participation Rate \(Modeled ILO Estimate\) – Jordan](#)

6 Tzannatos, Zafirios. "The economic argument for working women." Venture Magazine. 24 December 2017.

Consequently, there is an accelerating mobilization in Jordan to resolve this economic problem, especially in terms of eroding structural and practical barriers. Since 2017, Women as Partners in Progress (WPP), a coalition of women leaders in Jordan led by JoWomenomics's partner organization World of Letters, has worked to improve women's role in the labor force and advocate for removal of laws and provisions that are barriers to women's engagement. Through partnership with the Ministry of Labour, WPP has prepared recommendations and advocated for amendments to the Labour Law regarding Articles 69, which lists restrictions on professions and working hours for women, and Article 39 that deals with harassment in the workplace.¹ Building on work by women's organizations, in 2020, the government of Jordan endorsed a five-year National Strategy for Women in Jordan with four strategic objectives, including the achievement of women's enjoyment of economic rights, including economic participation, in a society free of gender-based discrimination.² In parallel, it adopted a government-wide gender mainstreaming policy to institutionalize and formalize the government's efforts to reduce systemic bias in service delivery to citizens.³ The policy also embeds gender-responsive budgeting as an instrument to achieve fair and equitable governance, spending priorities and resource distribution. Civil society coalitions have emerged

to demand solutions to practical barriers, such as inadequate public transportation, a lack of safe and affordable child care services and working hours and conditions that do not permit women a work-life balance. The donor community also increasingly requires reforms that facilitate women's workforce participation and advance the human rights of women and girls in Jordan.

These changes and developments are necessary and welcome, because they do and will continue to open pathways to economic participation for those women who seek it. However, JoWomenomics, as a feminist organization, finds that insufficient emphasis and attention is devoted to understanding how socio-cultural norms and beliefs will ultimately affect the outcomes of these efforts.

To better understand socio-cultural norms and beliefs around women's economic participation in Jordan, JoWomenomics sought to understand: What are women's own preferences around work? Do they want to enter into the world of work? Who makes decisions about whether a woman works? What are the barriers to work? These questions were the subject of months of qualitative and quantitative research by JoWomenomics, engaging women and men in Jordanian communities throughout the country.

1 Hussein, Rana. "[Jordanian women unite to formulate Labour Law recommendations.](#)" The Jordan Times. 12 February 2020.

2 See: [The National Strategy for Women in Jordan: 2020-2025.](#)

3 See: [Sectoral Policy for Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: 2020-2022.](#)

JoWomenomics organized a series of focus group discussions with women throughout the country to hear directly from them their perceptions of work, barriers to work, economic prosperity. We performed a qualitative analysis of these conversations to draw out and analyze key themes in detail. At the same time, JoWomenomics employed a representative survey of men and women in Jordan. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many points of view are informed by

understanding of gender roles. But we also extracted key findings about women's perceptions of safety and security, offering some unexpected perspectives.

The purpose of this paper is to explore these points of view and give a foundation for intentional thinking about social norms change in the interest of women's economic participation. Our findings are presented below.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on feminist research methodologies, whereby the lived experience of women and women's perspectives are taken into account. It seeks to elevate and understand the voice of the women participants and to better understand gendered relations between men and women. To do so, the study relies on mixed-methods research, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods.

In August 2021, JoWomenomics conducted a survey to understand obstacles facing women in Jordan, perspectives on women's ability to make decisions about their life and work, and issues they and their families face around safety and security. The survey was a representative sample of 1141 adults (over 19 years old) in Jordan, including 569 males and 572 females. Approximately 75% percent

of respondents had a high school education or less; 25% had attained a level of higher education (associate or bachelor's degree). We analyzed the dataset in whole as well as considered gender segregated data.

JoWomenomics also employed qualitative methods to gain insights into the lived realities of women and men in communities across Jordan. We conducted 14 focus groups in seven governorates from January through August 2021 totaling 168 individuals, including 135 females and 33 males. Our access to conduct focus groups is a result of our long-standing relationships with communities and community-based organizations. See Annex I for more details.

The focus groups were semi-structured and took place in person.

A representative of JoWomenomics posed a question for discussion and participants shared their perspectives. See Annex 2 for focus groups questions. All focus groups were conducted in Arabic, recorded, transcribed, and

translated into English for qualitative data analysis. JoWomenomics open-coded the English translations using the tool Dedoose, considering participants' meanings in context.

GENDERED PERCEPTIONS ON WOMEN AND THE WORLD OF WORK

At the policy level, discussions of women and work – and specifically, how to entice Jordanian women into the workforce – typically center on creating the right incentive structure. For example, in March 2020, the World Bank cited research indicating that almost all (95%) women and men are in favor of women working in Jordan and two-thirds of non-working Jordanian women want to work – if the conditions for working are right. The right conditions are reported to be an enabling environment which includes affordable, accessible and quality child care, flexibility with working hours, policies that protect against sexual harassment in the private sector work-place, among other incentives.¹ Accessible, reliable and affordable transportation has also been identified as a critical enabler. The importance of these factors in making participation in the labor market both possible and sustainable for some women is difficult

to contest. However, female employment rates in Jordan differ greatly along the dimension of educational attainment.² The Harvard Growth Lab has noted that for women who have completed high school or less, labor market exclusion is predominantly a phenomenon of extremely low labor force participation. Within this segment, the growth lab identified that cultural beliefs were a key cause of women's low labor force participation.³ Likewise, the World Bank study that shows high rates of approval for women working (95%), shows that both men and women are much less supportive of women working given certain conditions; for married woman the rate lowers to 72%, 54% if the woman must leave children with relatives; 38% support if she would work in a mixed gender workplace, and only 26% think it is okay for women to work if she must return after 5pm. This calls into question whether or not views favorable towards

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/02/19/how-legal-reforms-in-jordan-can-combat-sexual-harassment> March 2020

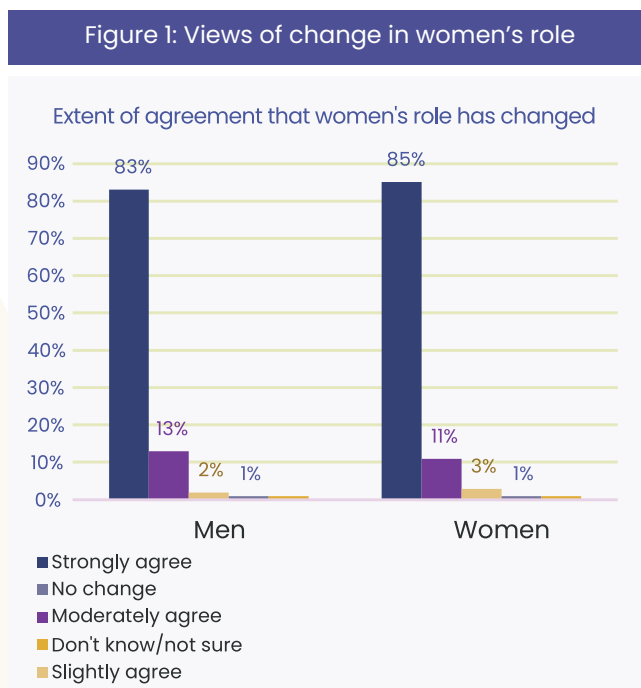
² Kasoolu, Semiray, Ricardo Hausmann, Tim O'Brien, and Miguel Angel Santos. "Female Labor in Jordan: A Systematic Approach to the Exclusion Puzzle -- CID Faculty Working Paper No. 365," Harvard Growth Lab (October 2019).

³ Ibid.

women working can be parlayed into women’s actual labor force participation for women at the lower end of the

PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE IN WOMEN’S ROLE

Overall, Jordanians perceive that the role of women in Jordanian society has changed greatly from their role in past generations. Survey respondents said that the change in women’s role has come about through several factors, including women’s participation in the work force, political participation, participation in the household economy, civil society, family decision-making, leadership and sports and community clubs. This view was shared in nearly equal measure by women and men.



In particular, Jordanian communities believe that the role of women working outside the home is greater than it used to be. Just over 92% of survey

educational spectrum, even if the enabling environment in the private sector is made more attractive.

respondents moderately or strongly agreed that women now do work outside of the home than women of previous generations, with women expressing slightly more agreement (95%) than men (90%). More than 90% of respondents agreed that women’s role in the workforce and their subsequent contributions to household economy and children’s education are also perceived to have substantially enhanced women’s role within society.

However, in spite of expressing the belief that the role of women has changed considerably compared to past generations, and that men and women increasingly share responsibility for providing for the family, JoWomenomic’s research found that Jordanian communities do not find women’s absence from the workforce especially problematic. When asked to identify the dominant challenges facing women, a lack of job opportunities for women was identified as the second most prominent obstacle facing women. While this would seem to indicate a strong demand for work for women, the proportion of respondents who felt the lack of job opportunities to be problematic was modest. Only **11% of all survey**

respondents identified **a lack of job opportunities** for women as a challenge, with hardly any distinction in points of view between men (10%) and women (11%). Moreover, fully 60% of female survey respondents said they were both unemployed and not looking for work. Together, these data points indicate a disconnect between the urgency given by policy makers to increasing women’s workforce participation and the extent to which Jordanians at the community level find women’s exclusion from the labor force to be problematic.

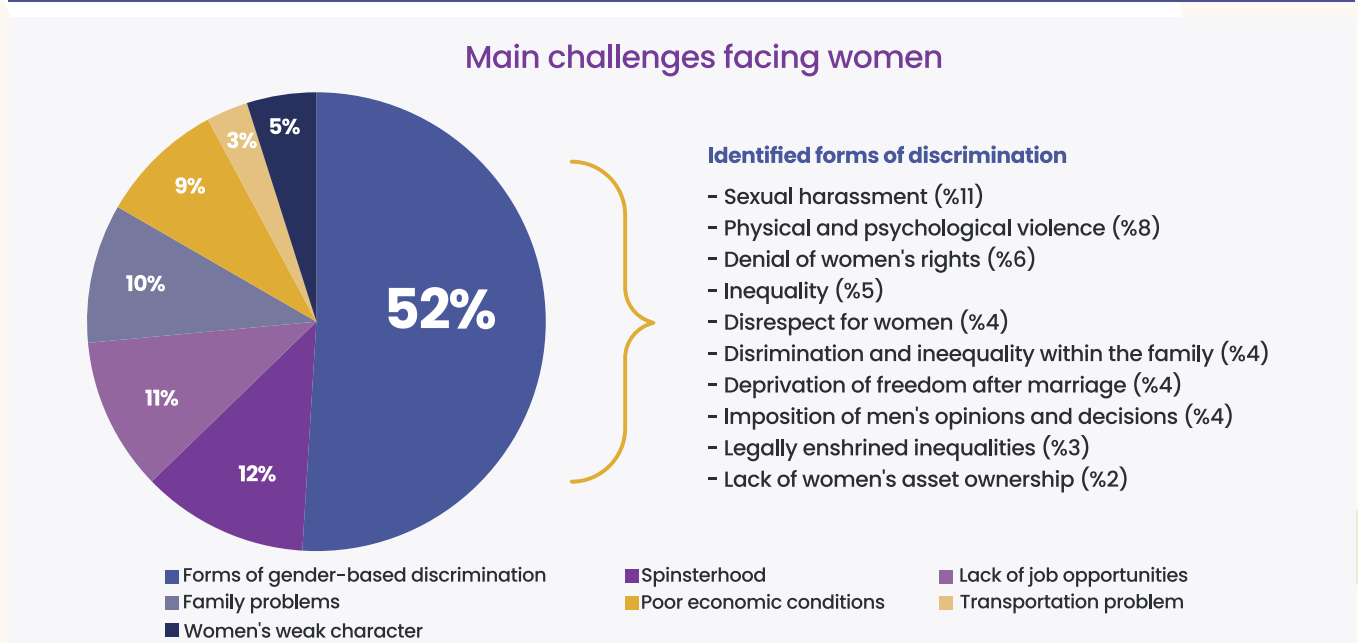
The **phenomenon of spinsterhood** was identified as the top challenge facing women, with 12% of respondents identifying this as problematic for women. These two challenges may be viewed as related, due to the fact that personal status law requires men to provide financial maintenance to women; the loss of such maintenance may make unemployment and a lack of job opportunities more problematic for women who are widowed or divorced; a category that constituted 15% of all female survey respondents.

PERSISTENCE OF GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION & GENDERED ATTITUDES TOWARDS WORK

Although respondents felt that women’s role had changed considerably, they nevertheless identified multiple forms of gender-based discrimination as challenges facing women; women and men held these views nearly proportionately. Taken cumulatively, **the data indicates that gender-based**

discrimination is the main challenge facing women. Nevertheless, even while respondents recognized gender-based discrimination as problematic, JoWomenomics found strong adherence to discriminatory gender norms, beliefs and practices among both men and women throughout our research.

Figure 2: Dominant challenges faced by women in Jordan

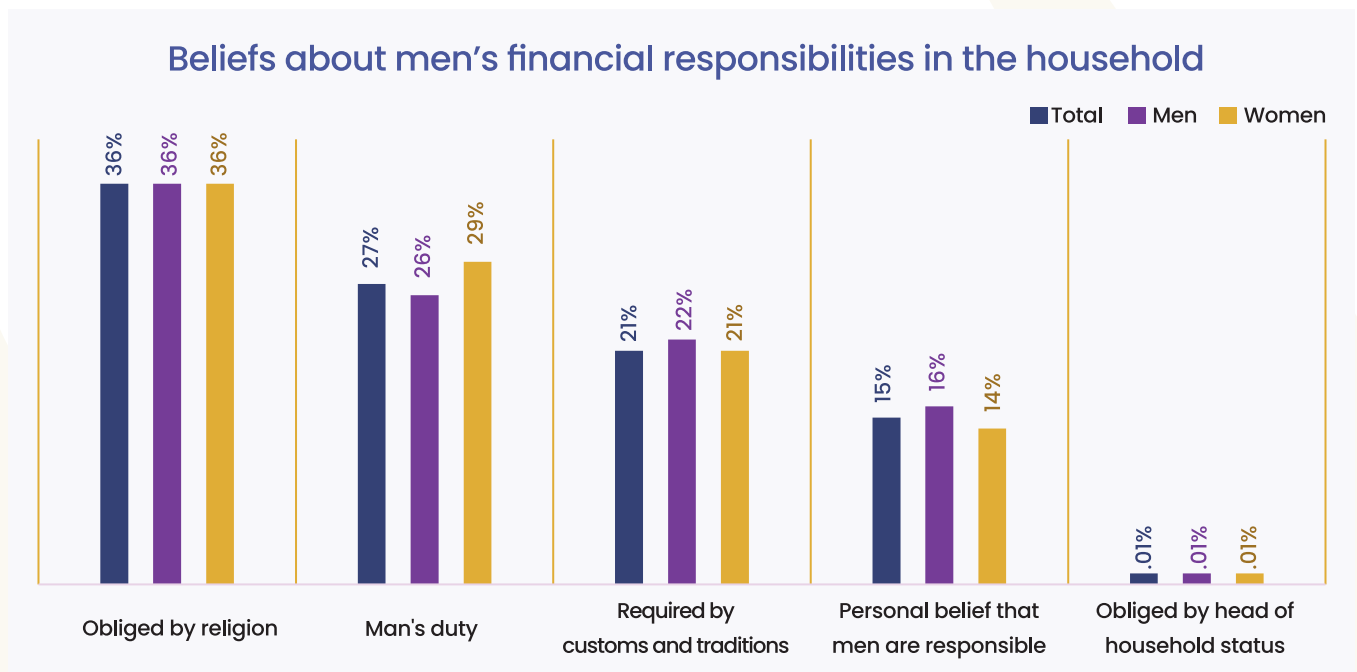


Our analysis revealed a significant narrative gap, whereby the survey found that while there is general support for the idea of women working, this support may apply to other women in other families but does not necessarily apply in practice in a given household. Rather, the **belief that men should assume all financial responsibilities** of the household – presumably through work – is **prevalent** among both women and men. Nearly **80% of survey** respondents said men should

A woman is dependent on the head of the family for her security.
Female, Kafrain

assume all financial responsibility for the household. However, significantly more men hold this view than women: 86% of men expressed the belief that men are fully responsible for household responsibilities, compared to 73% of women. The belief that men should bear all household financial responsibilities is deeply engrained, with roots in religion and custom (and now enshrined in law). Men and women were nearly unanimously in agreement on the reasons for this belief:

Figure 3: Beliefs about men’s household financial responsibilities



The **expectation that women should be breadwinners** is far more modest, with **60%** of respondents expressing **moderate or strong agreement** that women should be considered in law

as a breadwinner on par with men; agreement on this point, once again, is stronger among women (64%) than men (56%).

Both quantitative and qualitative findings show that – other than women who are not divorced or widowed – **women's work is instrumentalized** to relieve men of their exclusive financial burden or as a response to household financial distress.

Women's work that is not in response to these triggers is almost regarded as an extracurricular activity to household

duties, even when women's earnings are contributing to the household economy. Although 13% of survey respondents were working women, and do contribute their income to the household economy, many focus group participants expressed the view that work was akin to a voluntary pursuit that women ultimately could opt out of, since providing for the household is the role of men.



A woman's economic contribution to household welfare is considered secondary to that of a man's – even though more than half of respondents felt that **if a woman works, she is obliged to contribute to family expenditures.**

This point of view is more common among women (62%) than men (52%).

A modest portion of respondents believe work elevates a woman's role in the household, but **views about the impact of working women on household well-being are mixed and opinions do not seem to be strong.**

This may be due to the fact that women are not considered to be responsible for the household. Given they are not considered the breadwinner, it is possible that there are few expectations that women's economic activity would or should produce any particular effect on the household, beyond the purpose for which their work is instrumentalized.

Men and women were in agreement that women's work relieves financial burdens on men and that it contributes to the enhancement of women's role in the household, although on both counts, women were slightly

more likely than men to express these positive points of view. Nearly 30% of women and 28% of men said women's work relieves the financial burden on men; 22% of women and 20% of men said that

women's work enhances women's role in the family. However, women's work is not perceived to greatly contribute to household stability. Only 13% of women agreed that women's work positively influences

household stability, compared to 7% who said the influence was negative. The ratio was less and narrower among men. Slightly more men than not feel that women's work has a positive effect on household stability: 10% said women's work positively affects household stability, while

nearly 9% said it had a negative effect. However, men were more likely to say that women's work leads to negligence towards children: 14% of men feel that women's work leads to the neglect of children compared to 11% of women who also shared this view. A small percentage said that women's work emasculates men in front of society; men were more

than twice as likely (5%) than women (2%) to hold this view.

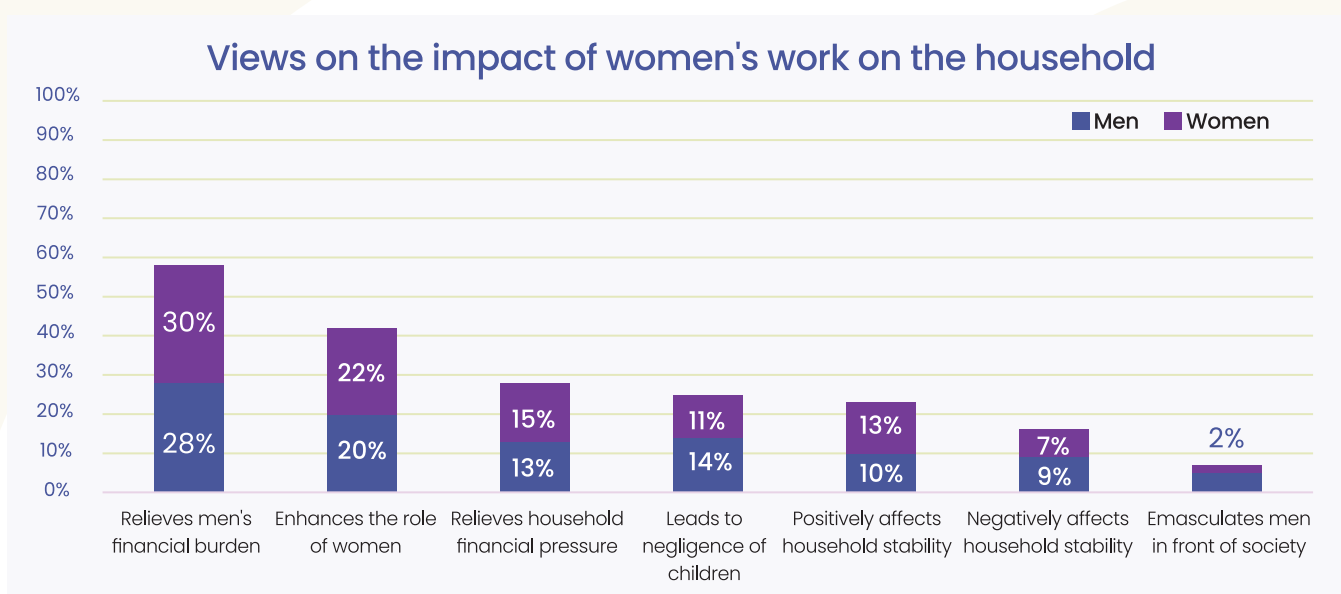
A woman has the right to work... and she has the right to take care of the family. She has the right to make her own money and use it however she wants.

Female, Kafraïn

I refuse that my wife works. Although my mother used to work as a teacher, I do not want that. In my house, the woman stays with her children. I support women working, but in my house no. [Because my mother worked] I was basically homeless, shifting among families. Why would I want to make my children homeless as I was?

Male, Husseiniyeh.

Figure 4: View on the impact of women's work on the household



CIRCUMSCRIBED DECISION-MAKING ABOUT WORK

A **large majority** of women and men reported that **women are able**

to freely make decisions

about their ability to work

outside the home; **66%**

expressed moderate or

strong agreement that

women are able to do so,

although women are more

inclined to strongly agree

(27%) decision-making

authority about this than

are men (20%). However,

when tested further, it

is clear that **decision-**

making power is in fact

constrained by gendered beliefs and

norms among both men and women

about the types of jobs women can assume, the location of the work and

working hours.

I was driving back from Amman to Shouneh, which I often do since I regularly commute to Amman given the nature of my work. On airport road, I stopped at a gas station to fill gas. I was shocked to see women working there. My friend told me, to ease my shock, 'Women don't work anywhere, nor do they work in gas stations. It's only this gas station that allows them to do such kind of work.'

Male, Southern Shouneh

Quantitative and qualitative

research showed that

both men and women

believe that some jobs are

inappropriate for women.

This was often attributed to

the nature of the work. For

example, work involving

a high degree of physical

labor, work that was

considered menial or work

that was considered too

public facing were often described as

inappropriate for women.

I have been working for almost 12 or 13 years. Whenever I go to an interview, they ask me: (How does society perceive your work) and (is it ok you are working, especially that you are in Ajloun) – don't forget that. If we speak of Amman, maybe Amman is more open than we are. Maybe if I lived in Amman I would have a different answer. But here, it was shameful for me to work.

Female, Kafraïn

My husband is the one who encouraged me [to work] in the beginning, but also he had his conditions. It depends on the type of work. He will not let me work in all types of jobs

Female, Kafranja

For example, if she works as a nurse she will have a night shift and there are men that won't allow this.

Female, Kafranja

Not all type of work is allowed. There are things (jobs) she is not allowed to work in.

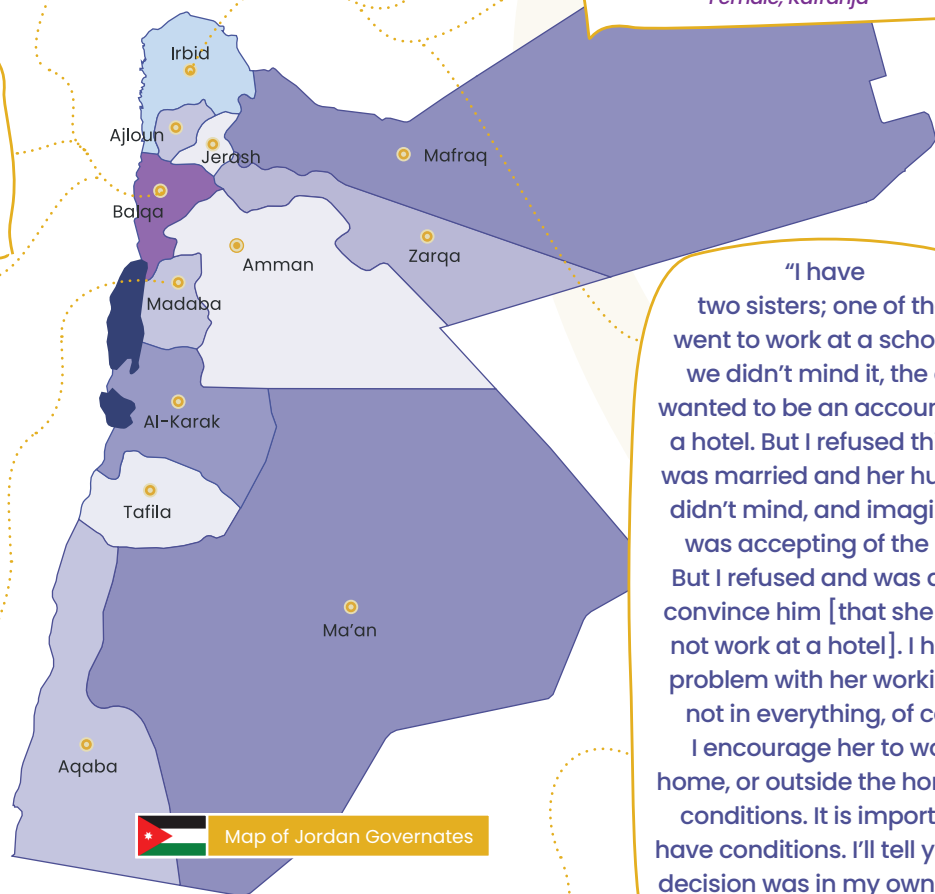
Female, Kafraïn

There are jobs where it is better if women do not work in them.

Female, Kafraïn

In our area (remote rural) you have to travel a long distance to get a good job opportunity, which is not ideal. Because of our nature as women and some traditions and values, we are forbidden to assume these jobs. Another big obstacle is that the transportation is not available during late hours, and if we want to work in the private sector in Amman we will have to stay late

Female, Madaba



Map of Jordan Governates

"I have two sisters; one of them went to work at a school and we didn't mind it, the other wanted to be an accountant at a hotel. But I refused this. She was married and her husband didn't mind, and imagine, he was accepting of the idea. But I refused and was able to convince him [that she should not work at a hotel]. I have no problem with her working, but not in everything, of course. I encourage her to work at home, or outside the home with conditions. It is important to have conditions. I'll tell you, if the decision was in my own hands, I would tell her not to work.

Male, Kafranja

As a software engineer, and I loved my specialty a lot. I applied to a job in a telecommunication company and when I entered to submit my application all the staff started laughing at me. They told me that this section was only for males and how will you work with them? They refused my application. I want to understand, why do they want to decide on my behalf?

Female, Al Qourah

Gendered beliefs about what is appropriate work for women operate as both internal and external constraints: a woman may not seek particular job because either she or her family/society believe it is inappropriate for her.

By the same measure these gendered beliefs in the work environment can emerge as discriminatory behaviors that, for example, exclude women in the hiring process.

Work that exceeded regular public sector hours and/or required a great deal of travel was seen to interfere with women's household duties. When such jobs required working or traveling to and from work at night after dark, they were also considered to be dangerous as women were regarded to be at higher

There are things [women] are not allowed to work in. I had the opportunity to work in a hotel for 500 JDs, but my dad didn't allow me because the hotel sells alcohol. There are traditions and manners that prohibit certain jobs for men and women. He was scared that that would influence me...He told me if you receive JD1,000 and your job is unethical, and haram you won't benefit at all from it. He said, He said stay home and I will give you what you need for your expenses, just don't go work. So I tell you, as a community, In Ajloun, we are proud that our villages still preserve our culture, heritage and values, and manners... There are things for both men and women that are not allowed.

Male, Kafranja

Some families do not like their daughter to work in factories; there is some sort of stigma for factory workers due long working hours and the environment of these factories.

Female, Madaba

Factories have difficult work conditions. In the teaching profession, at least, you return home at two o'clock. But the working hours of factories start from eight in the morning until six in the evening.

Female, Husseinayah

There are conditions (for women to work) the nature of work (for men), the location, the number of hours, and the length of absence from the house etc. So, for example, if she leaves the house at 7 or 8 a.m. and comes back at 7 or 8 p.m., what do I want with her, this woman? Her salary? No, I don't want that. Let her sit at home, it's better for her. Yes, my long working hours and absence are normal. That is the nature of work. Let her bear it, so what? She has to. Doesn't she want money for her expenses?

Male, Kafranja

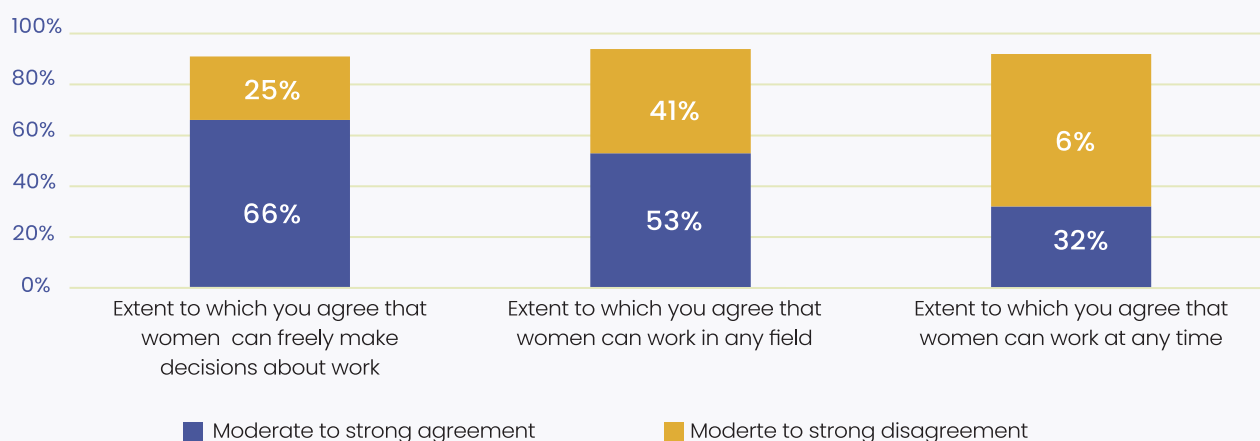
risk of harassment. In our qualitative research, the issue of long working hours and travel were frequently associated with factory work.

Qualitative research also revealed that **males of the family** – husbands, fathers, brothers and sons – **continue to exercise decision-making power** about whether, where and when women should work. Moreover, while there is a strong belief that women freely take decisions about work, the personal status law in fact requires married women to have the consent of their husbands to work. If a woman's right to work is not enshrined in the marriage contract, a woman who does work without her husband's consent can her right to financial maintenance.

The chart below compares the extent to which survey respondents believe that women are able to freely take decisions about work and the extent to which they believe that a woman has a right to work in all fields and at all times. The latter two factors in fact operate as constraints on the first.

Figure 5: Decision-making and constraints on decision-making about work

Decision-making and constraints on decision-making



HARASSMENT AS A SIGNIFICANT BARRIER TO THE WORLD OF WORK

Our research indicated that harassment is one of the key barriers to women's participation in economic activity in Jordan. However, data about this form of gender-based violence in Jordan is limited. The first study of harassment was conducted only fairly recently, in 2017, by the Jordan National Commission for Women. This cross-sectional study captured important quantitative findings about harassment, such as that:

- More than 3 out of every 4 women in Jordan experienced one or more forms of harassment
- More than half (53%) reported being harassed by male strangers in public places
- Nearly 30% said they experienced harassment from male colleagues in workplaces and schools

One reason for the otherwise limited data set is that the subject itself has

historically been considered taboo. The growing acknowledgement that women's absence from the labour force has real, tangible economic consequences for the country in recent years is now forcing a discussion about the true practical and strategic barriers to women's engagement in economic activity beyond the realm of her immediate home and neighborhood.

As JoWomenomics sought to understand barriers to women in the economy, we

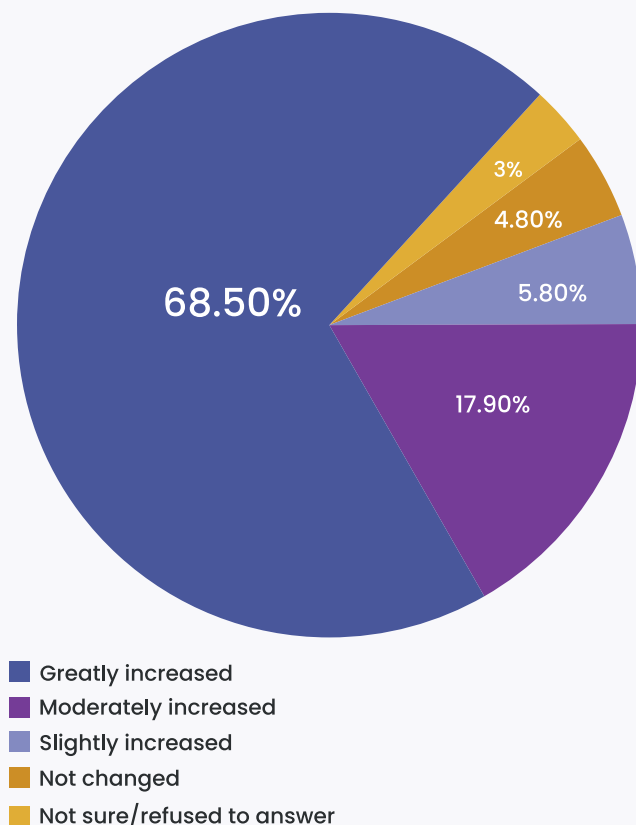
noticed an emerging discussion of harassment and we decided to probe more deeply Jordanians' perceptions of this phenomenon. Our objective was to understand how Jordanian communities perceive and experience this phenomenon: How much does it happen? Where does it happen? When does it happen? How are women impacted by it? And how can harassment be addressed so as to minimize its occurrence and impact?

PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHANGE IN THE PHENOMENON OF HARASSMENT

Our research indicated that the occurrence of harassment is perceived to have greatly increased as a phenomenon over previous years. A full **92% of survey respondents** said that **harassment** of women has **increased**. The majority of these – 69% of all respondents – said that harassment of women has “greatly increased”, while about 18 percent asserted that it has moderately increased and nearly an additional six percent thought it had slightly increased. Only about five percent of respondents thought it hadn't changed.

Figure 6: Perceptions in the change of the occurrence of harassment of women

Sexual harassment as a phenomenon has...



Likewise, **harassment** of women is perceived by both men and women to be **more severe than in the past**. The overwhelming majority of respondents – nearly 95%– thought that women today experience harassment to a great extent compared to women of past generations, with 64% saying that harassment of women had greatly increased. On the whole, **women and men shared the view that harassment is more**

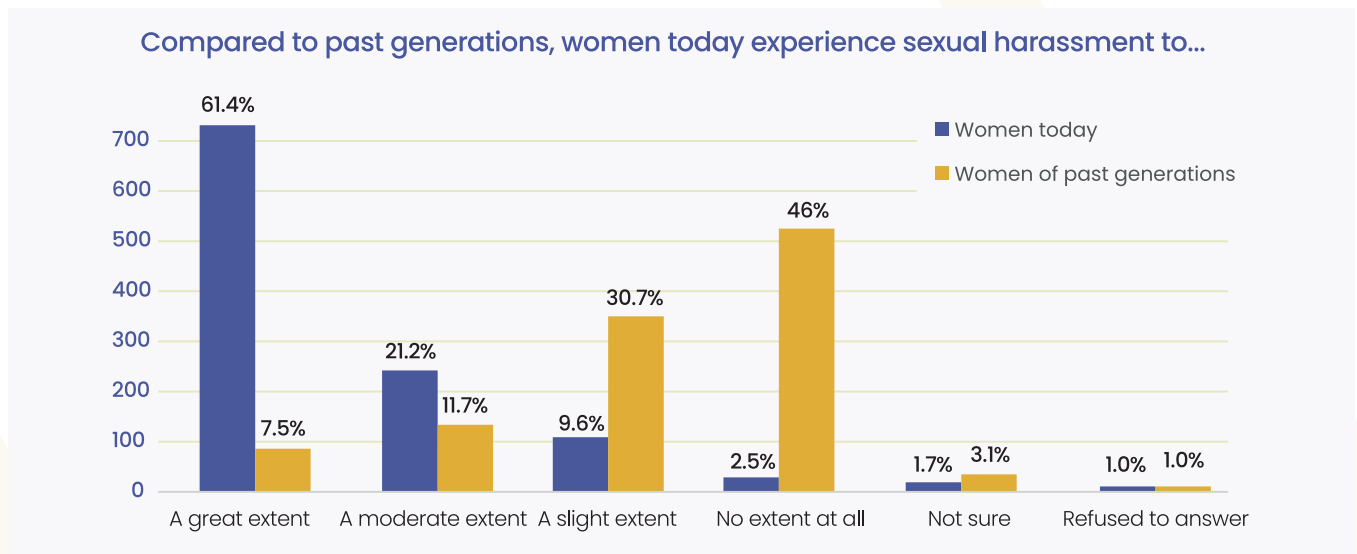
Women today are harassed more and harmed more. She is harmed at work. She is harmed in the street. And more than before and more than just within the family despite having institutions trying to limit this'

Female, Jerash

problematic today than in the past. However, women were slightly more likely to say harassment had increased by a great extent (70%) compared to men (67%) while men were more likely to say that the phenomenon was unchanged or had only slightly increased (12%) compared to women (9%).

The majority of respondents thought that women of past generations did not experience much harassment.

Figure 7: Women's experience with harassment today compared to in the past



Our qualitative research found that women in Jordanian communities believe that not only has the phenomenon of harassment increased compared to that experienced by previous generations, but today it is...



More prevalent...

Harassment is **everywhere...**



More egregious...

Harassment existed in the past. But not as much and it was not done with such **boldness...**



AND, More vulgar...

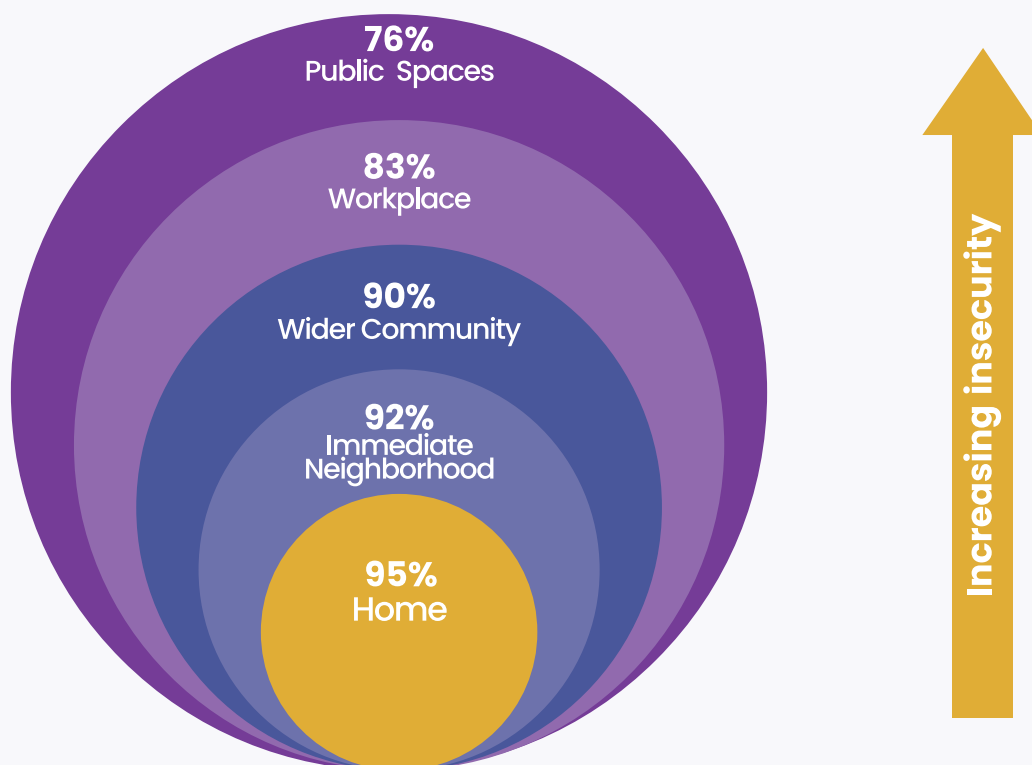
Once there were four or five young men; I was old enough to be their mother... The **language** they used, I wished a hole would open and swallow me up...

WOMEN FEEL UNSAFE OUTSIDE FAMILIAR SPACES

Our research found that harassment is perceived and experienced not just as an annoyance and an indignity, but as a threat to women's safety and security. Specifically, harassment is perceived to diminish a woman's safety and security the further away she moves from familiar environments. The public space, in particular, is perceived to be a less safe environment for women. Slightly more than 45% of survey respondents identified the public space as the primary arena in which harassment occurs, followed by the working environment (17%), school (13%) and government offices and civil society organizations (10% respectively).

The relational chart below reflects the proportion of respondents who agreed moderately or strongly that women were safe in each of the mentioned environments, demonstrating increasing insecurity beyond familiar places. While the workplace was perceived to be substantially safer than the public space, 83% of respondents nevertheless also agreed to a slight to large extent that workplace harassment hinders women's labor market participation. Men were slightly more inclined (3.5%) to regard harassment as a barrier to women's labor market participation.

Figure 8: Perceptions in the change of the occurrence of harassment of women



Harassment on public transportation



I have a very supportive family that believes women should work and establish their independence. I accepted a job in Amman because of the scarcity of jobs in Ajloun. This meant that I needed to leave home as early as 5:30 am and use multiple transportation modes.

My father would drop me at a location where there are private car owners that work in car pooling. The car owners are trusted members of Ajloun society, and we all felt safe using these private cars as a transportation mode. The cars would drop us at the bus station in downtown Amman. I would then take a bus to reach

to my job in south Amman. Winters are often a problem because it gets dark early. One day I left work to go to downtown Amman. On the bus, a man (in his forties) sat next to me. The bus was crowded so I felt that he was sitting very close to me, his arm was almost in my lap. He started getting closer.

I was relieved to reach to the location where all private cars going to Ajloun congregate. I got out of the bus, the man started following me, I began running and he increased his pace. Then, as soon as I reached the private car, I began to shout and asked the drivers to help me. The harasser ran away. Unfortunately, this story didn't resonate well with my parents; I am still working but they are very protective now.

Female, Ajloun

Harassment in the street



Everybody in town knows my story. I work with a group of other women in a cooperative in our area to help alleviate poverty. The location is close to our homes, so we often walk to work. Usually, we make sure we are not alone and that we move in twos or threes.

In winter, it gets dark early. One day, my friend and I were leaving work at 5:00pm. While we were walking home, a car stopped with two young boys inside and they tried to kidnap us. We fought

really hard and were able to run away from them. There was an investigation and it turned out that these were boys from a nearby village. We are always worried about harassment in our area.

Female, Ajloun

Harassment causes **women and girls** to be **fearful about their physical safety**. Moreover, they worry about the safety of their families, as well as for their income and economic security and their reputations; these worries often prevent them from reporting harassment. Women are fearful about:

Personal Safety

Society guarantees safety for men. When we walk in the street we count to 100 (being careful). A girl is afraid of young men and being harassed. But a man is not afraid of these things.

Al Qourah

Family Safety

The real threat is if I am walking the street with my brother and someone verbally harasses me, he will hurt him and may cause a bigger problem.

Ajloun

Reputation

If someone reports an incident to the police, usually the guys are let off easily with no consequences, but girls' reputation is ruined, therefore girls tend to avoid escalation.

Kafrainah

Jobs and Income

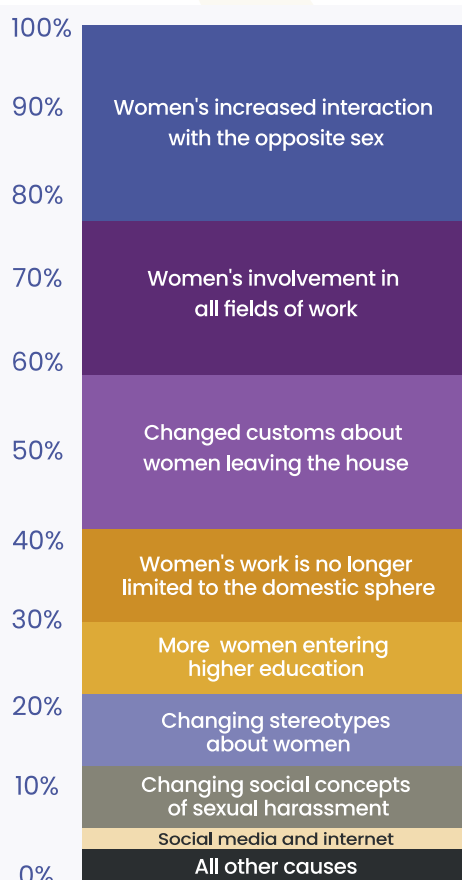
An employee... in Al-Hussainiya did not want to report her manager who harassed her. She did not want to lose her job or bring shame to her family. Harassment occurs more in the private sector because girls are afraid to lose their jobs.

Ma'an Qasbah

REPORTED CAUSES AND REASONS FOR HARASSMENT

As noted above, Jordanian communities overwhelmingly agree that the role of women in society has greatly changed compared to the role of women in past generations. More than 96% expressed moderate to strong agreement with the sentiment that women's role had changed considerably. These changes are largely attributed to women's participation in economic, social and political life, with the largest share (17.2%) identifying women's economic participation as being the most prominent change, followed by women's political and social participation through elections (14.5%), civil society (12.1%) and sports and community clubs (10.3%). The data to the right reflects responses to a question about the **causes of the increase in harassment**. It is clear that, both directly and indirectly, Jordanian communities associate this growing problem with women's growing presence in more public spheres through their participation in different domains of public life where men and women mix. This **view is shared nearly**

Figure 9: Identified causes of harassment



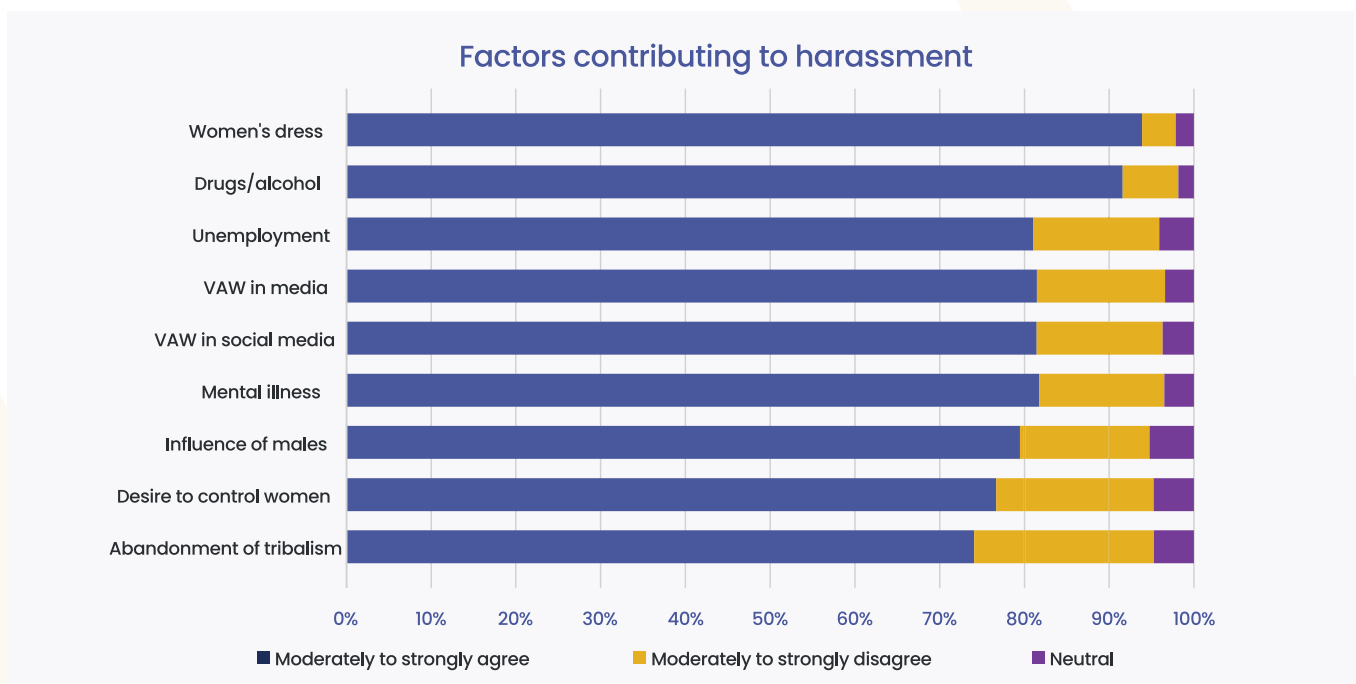
equally by men and women across all categories of causes, with differences of opinion limited to two percent or less.

Moreover, while the increased interaction of men and women is perceived to have created an environment that increases the opportunities for harassment to occur, Jordanian communities cited several **reasons for the occurrence** of harassment, the most prominent of which was women’s dress (92%), followed by drug and alcohol usage (89%), idleness due to unemployment (79%), the promulgation of images of violence against women (VAW) in media

and social media (79% respectively), mental illness (77%) and social influence perpetuated by the actions and the discourse of males in one’s social circles (76%).

When asked to cite any other reasons that would explain harassment, **1.5% of all respondents** attributed the phenomenon to a **failure to observe religion**. While this is a small percentage, dereliction in the observance of religion was the single most significant factor cited in the “other” category, with all other factors cited less than one percent of the time.

Figure 10: Factors contributing to harassment.



There are important gendered distinctions in these views. Women and men both identified women’s dress and the use of drugs and alcohol as the top two contributing factors to harassment. However, while 93% of women and 92%

of men agreed that women’s dress could contribute to harassment, there was greater disparity in their view towards drug use: 92% of women agreed that drug and alcohol use was a contributing factor, only 87% of men said this was so.

Women were also much more likely to identify the control impulse as a factor than were men, although for both men and women the control impulse is among the last of contributing factors, along with the abandonment of tribalism. Segregating and ranking the contributing factors seems to indicate that women

tend to attribute harassment to the circumstances, characteristics and habits of individuals, while men seem more inclined to attribute it to factors in the social environment, especially the normalization of violence against women in the media and social media:

Figure 11: Factors contributing to harassment, according to women and men

Women		Men	
Contributing factor	%	Contributing factor	%
1. Women's dress	93%	1. Women's dress	92%
2. Drug and alcohol use	92%	2. Drug and alcohol use	87%
3. Mental illness	80%	3. VAW in the media	81%
4. Unemployment	79%	4. VAW in social media	80%
5. Influence of other males	78%	5. Unemployment	80%
6. VAW in social media	78%	6. Mental illness	75%
7. VAW in media	77%	7. Influence of other males	74%
8. Desire to control women	76%	8. Abandonment of tribalism	74%
9. Abandonment of tribalism	70%	9. Desire to control women	67%

Women also are predominantly viewed as **culpable for harassment** in almost **all circumstances**:



REPORTED SOLUTIONS AND MEASURES TO PREVENT HARASSMENT

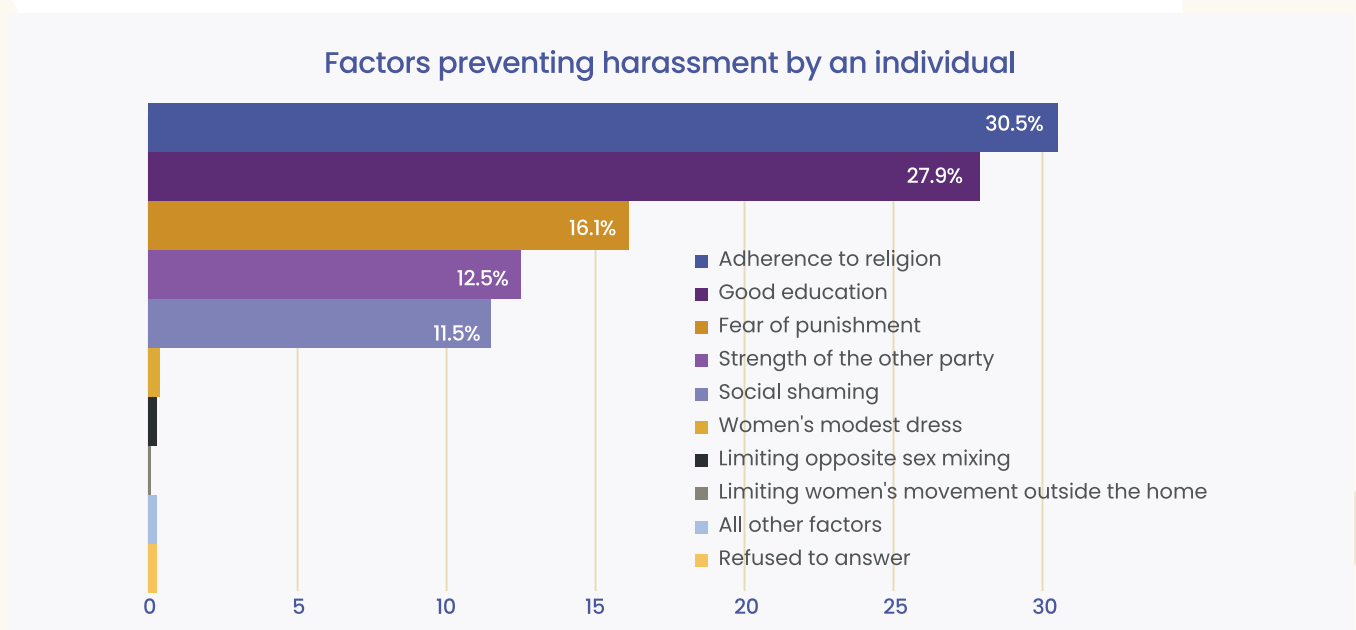
The attitudes and beliefs of survey respondents reflect an engrained culture of **harmful masculinity that both normalizes harassment and blames women for the behavior of men**. This is not a phenomenon unique to Jordan; rather, harmful masculinity and the behaviors that manifest as a result are common globally. However, the solutions proposed seem to reflect **a tacit understanding** that the **blame for the harassment of women lays with the perpetrators**. Moreover, Jordanian communities expect the government to take a prominent role in addressing the problem through the enactment of legislation and enforcement of penalties.

JoWomenomic's research found a **large narrative gap between the stated causes and reasons for harassment and the proposed preventative measures and solutions to harassment**.

For example, although survey respondents attributed the increase in harassment to the mixing of the sexes as women increasingly participate in public life, less than 1% of survey respondents felt that limiting mixing of the sexes or limiting women's movement would address the problem. Likewise, although women's dress was considered a top factor in provoking harassment, women dressing more modestly was not viewed as a deterrent to harassment.

The chart below indicates that Jordanian communities believe that would-be perpetrators of **harassment** could be **best discouraged** through better **adherence to religion** and good **education**, followed by a fear of **punishment** and **social shaming**. All other factors, including women dressing more modestly, were not considered to disincentivize harassment to any significant extent.

Figure 12: Factors preventing harassment by an individual



This would seem to validate the perspectives and experiences of women documented through qualitative research.

Although an overwhelming majority (92%) of survey respondents said that a woman’s dress is a key reason for harassment, for example, women **victims of harassment** say there is **no correlation between manner of dress and experience of harassment**, and even the most **conservative dress is no protection** against harassment.

Moreover, when asked to identify the potential solutions to harassment,

I am very religious, and I wear a khimar. When I get on the bus or any public transportation, men harass me. They say inappropriate things and try to touch me. The community has a bad idea about us (women who wear the khimar). They think that harassing us is easier and more acceptable because we wear the khimar to cover ourselves. In their opinion, the reputation of women who wear khimar is not good (ممشاها مش كويس), meaning that she has a bad reputation, and her lifestyle is not respectable.

Female, South Shouneh

I can’t walk anywhere in Jerash, especially Souq Jerash. I never go there without hearing a word. I know how to dress appropriately and even when I am extra covered, I still get harassed verbally.

Female, Jerash

very few survey respondents identified solutions related to curbing some of the factors identified to be contributing to harassment. For example, although 92% of respondents said women’s immodest dress was a cause of harassment, less than 1% of respondents expressed the view that women dressing more modestly would correct the problem of harassment. Similarly, while a large majority of respondents (89%) identified drug and alcohol use as a factor that contributes to harassment, virtually none identified fighting drug and alcohol use as a solution that would alleviate the problem of harassment.

Figure 13: A comparison of stated reasons for harassment vs potential solutions to harassment

Reason		Potential Solution	
Women’s dress	92%	.2%	Women dressing modestly
Drugs / alcohol abuse	89%	0%	Fighting drug abuse
Unemployment	79%	.1%	Job creation
Mental illness	77%	0%	Treating mental illness
Abandonment of tribalism	72%	0%	Activating the clan role

Rather, as shown in Figure 14 below, Jordanian communities identified corrective measures and solutions to harassment as a phenomenon rooted in three main domains: law, religion and social norms change. With regards to the

“Also, in the work environment, when someone Knows their rights and responsibilities, then they will feel safe”

Female, Ajloun

phenomenon of harassment in the public space, in particular, 12% also said that the installation of surveillance cameras in public spaces, including public transport, would be a useful method of monitoring and regulating behavior.

Figure 14: A comparison of stated reasons for harassment vs potential solutions to harassment

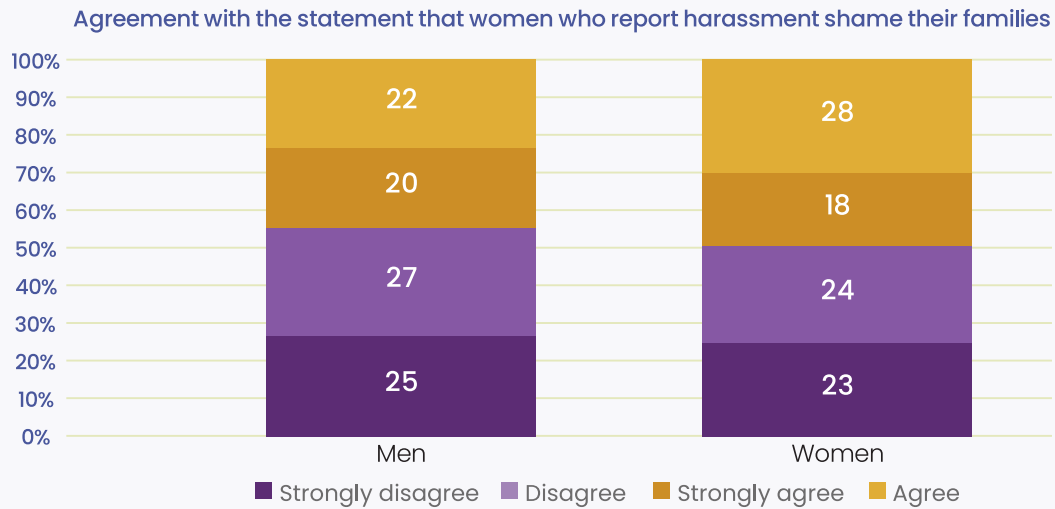
Category	Measures and solutions to reduce the harassment of women	% of respondents
Law	Enactment of laws and regulations	24%
	Severe penalties for harassment	26%
Religion	Explicit religious prohibition on harassment	29%
	Using religious discourse to discourage harassment	19%
Social norms change	Raising awareness in society	23%
	Educating men about the harm to women and society caused by harassment	19%
	Awareness raising through the media about the harm to victims	19%
	Changing social and cultural stereotypes of women	14%
	Amending the school curriculum to appropriately raise awareness	13%

The emphasis on the role of the rule of law suggests that if harassment is going to be addressed, women will need to report instances of harassment so that the law can be enforced on perpetrators.

However, as noted above, women fear reporting for a number of reasons, including anxiety about a potential loss of income, concern about their reputations

and fear that reporting harassment might lead to violence between individuals and/or families. Our research found that while a rather large number of respondents agreed that women who report harassment bring shame to their families – a sentiment that was more widely held than women by men – a greater proportion expressed disagreement with this notion.

Figure 15: Views on the relationship between reporting harassment and family reputation



Protection of women and girls should be provided by the government. police should be present in public areas, so when they witness any acts of harassment they take action.
Female, Ain Jannah

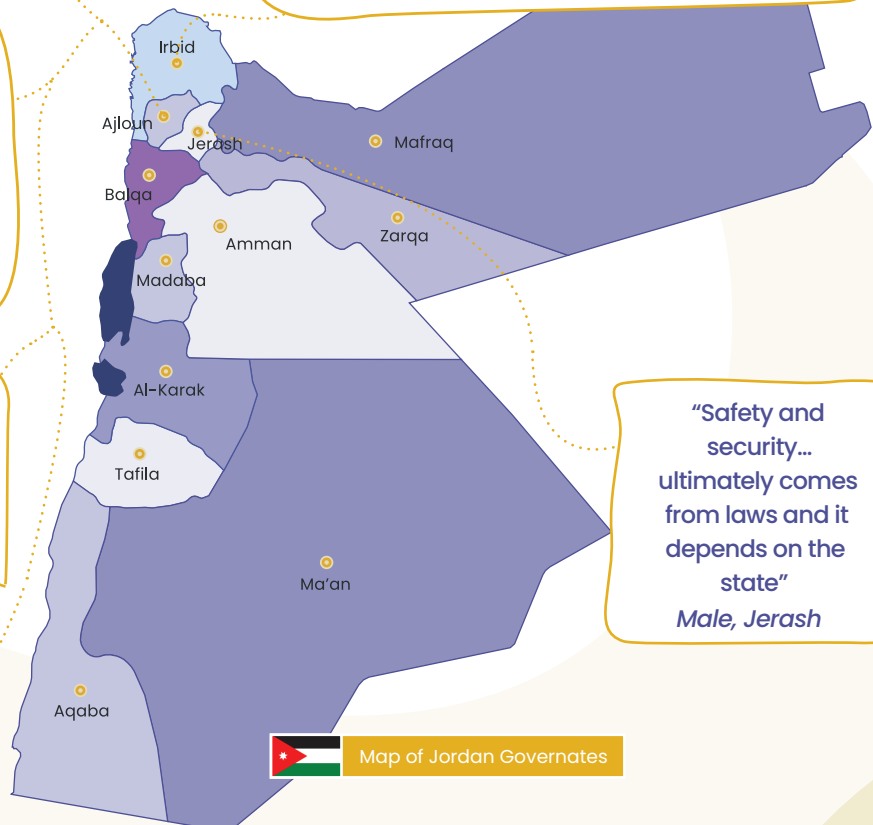
[The government] has a role deterring harassment through punishment and providing security in the area and in the face of harassers. I feel safe when security personnel are on the road. When I go to Amman and come back late at night, I feel safe because I feel that the road is safe
Male, Kafraïn

Society responds to penalties. [To protect women and girls from harassment] there should be a financial penalty. Just like wearing the mask [to protect against COVID-19], no one committed to it fully until there were fines.
Female, Ain Jannah

"Safety comes from feeling safe in one's work environment, using transportation, and with preventative laws and regulations"
Male, Ajloun

"Laws and regulations provide some safety but there are exceptions and favoritism so that not everybody is included... is receiving basic human rights for all"
Male, Ajloun

"Safety and security... ultimately comes from laws and it depends on the state"
Male, Jerash



CONCLUSIONS

- Survey respondents expressed the view that men are primary responsible breadwinners and that women's work and economic contribution to household well-being is subordinate to that of men. In parallel, respondents did not express particularly favorable views about the impact working women have on household well-being. It is possible that in the surveyed demographic, these factors alone may be dampening demand for women's economic participation among both sexes and moderating the demand for women to be legally recognized as equally responsible for household well-being, entitled to the legal rights associated with this role.
- To the extent that woman want to join the labor force, women's work is regarded as an extracurricular endeavor to the household role that can be opted out of or it is regarded as a necessary but not necessarily desirable measure to fill an economic gap in the household. Moreover, while there is a strong belief that women freely decide about their economic participation, in practice, their decision-making about work is constrained by gendered norms and practices, which are both internalized by women and imposed on them. Their participation is often conditional, with conditions imposed by women themselves, their communities and male family members who have ultimate decision-making authority both legally and as a matter of cultural practice.
- These findings call into question the extent to which the reform of the enabling environment can attract women to the workplace and illuminate the need for initiatives that support positive gender norms transformation within the Jordanian context at the household and community level.
- While Jordanian communities believe that responsibility for providing for the household predominantly falls on men, there is also agreement that this is not always practical or desirable and

that roles of men and women are changing, necessitating women's movement in the world.

- Therefore, the cultivation of norms that valorize the safety of women in the public space is as essential – if not more so – as the cultivation of safe workspaces both through legal reforms and attitude change. This is because women must traverse the public space to reach the workplace. Beyond the gender norms that constrain women's decision-making around work, gender-based violence in the form of harassment is the first barrier to women's economic activity outside of the home, due to the fact that women must traverse the public space to access employment – whether formal or informal – outside the home.
- Women are in fact unsafe in the public space. Their families also perceive them to be at risk moving through it, to and from the workplace. The threat to women's safety, security and dignity in the public space is perceived to increase at night/after dark; lived experiences validate this perception. Therefore, longer

working hours are perceived to be not only incompatible with women's household care-giving role, they are also perceived to put women at higher risk of danger.

- A discrepancy exists between Jordanian communities' views of the causes of and the solutions to address harassment. Jordanian communities identified law, religion and social norms change as the main tools to curb harassment, indicating that gender-based violence in the form of harassment is viewed as a public concern; not simply a private matter that women and their families must resolve on their own.
- The absence of a strong state response to harassment relegates the solution to the private sphere. This is multiplying women's insecurity while reinforcing harmful gender norms. In particular, government inaction reinforces women's dependence on men for both physical and economic security while compelling the exercise of male guardianship over women to keep them safe from the predations of other males.

ANNEX 1: FOCUS GROUP DATA

List of Focus Groups		
Governorate	Community	Date
Ajloun	Kufranjah	31 January 2021
	Ain Janna	25 February 2021
	Ajloun	1 April 2021
Zarqa	Zarqa	1 April 2021
Balqa	Rawda	21 April 2021
	Kafrain	21 April 2021
	South Shouneh	5 July 2021
	Salt	25 August 2021
Madaba	Madaba	21 April 2021
Jerash	Jerash	27 April 2021
Irbid	North Shouneh	5 July 2021
	Al Kourah	2 August 2021
Ma'an	Al Hussainiyeh	4 August 2021
	Ma'an	5 August 2021

ANNEX 2: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do women want to enter into the world of work?
- 2) Who makes the decision around whether a woman works?
- 3) How has this changed over time?
- 4) Do you think women can work in any job? Can she work any days and hours?
- 5) What are the dangers for women in going to work?
- 6) What is guardianship?
- 7) Does guardianship protect women?
- 8) Do women face harassment when she goes out of the home?
- 9) How can we limit harassment?



End of Research