



Women's Agency & Economic Mobility in MENA: Examining Patterns & Implications

February 13, 2020

About Arab Barometer:

SCOPE

- The Arab Barometer is a nonpartisan research network based at Princeton University that works with universities and research institutions in the region.
- We have been conducting high quality and reliable public opinion surveys in the Middle East and North Africa since 2006.
- Through 2019, the Arab Barometer has conducted 50 national surveys over five waves including more than 70,000 interviews in 15 Arab countries.
- Arab Barometer survey data and reports are publicly available for download and free of charge at www.arabbarometer.org.

DATA QUALITY

- Extensive training of interviewers and fieldwork team
- Increased oversight by an independent third party using standard practices suggested by the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)
- Almost exclusively Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) allowing near real-time monitoring
- Specially developed software flags any suspicious interviews automatically
- Extensive examination of the data during and after fieldwork to ensure high quality

Online Data Analysis Tool

🏠 ONLINE DATA ANALYSIS (AB Wave 4)

AB1

AB2

AB3

AB4



How would you evaluate the current economic situation in your country?

Remove

Change

Filter by Country

Add filter

Options

Select countries

Show NA

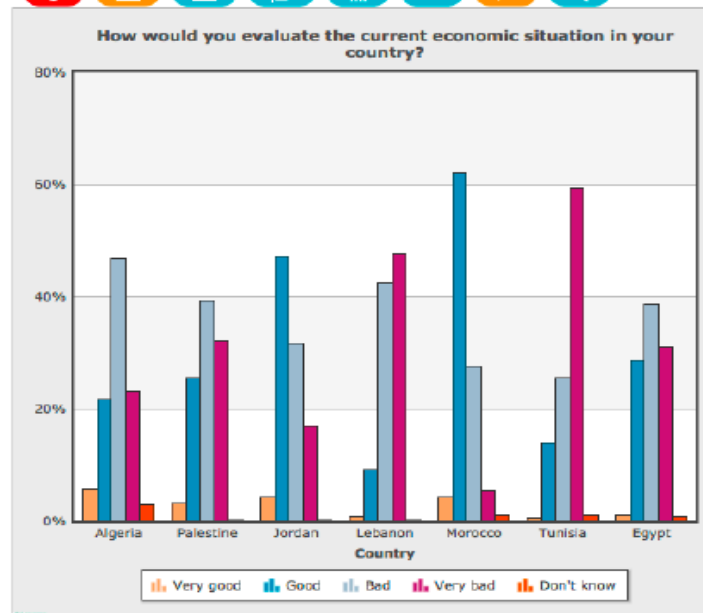
Time series

Maps



Category	Total	Country				
		Algeria	Palestine	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco
Very good	2.7%	5.6%	3.1%	4.2%	0.7%	4.1%
Good	29.6%	21.7%	25.5%	47.0%	9.1%	62.0%
Bad	36.0%	46.6%	39.3%	31.7%	42.4%	27.6%
Very bad	30.9%	23.1%	32.0%	16.9%	47.6%	5.3%
Don't know	0.8%	2.9%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.9%
(N)	9,000 (100%)	1,200 (100%)	1,199 (100%)	1,500 (100%)	1,500 (100%)	1,200 (100%)

AB Wave 4 (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia)
Correlation $r = -0.03$



About AB5 survey:

SCOPE

- For the fifth and latest wave of surveys, the Arab Barometer interviewed over 25,000 people in 12 countries. This is the largest in-depth survey ever carried out in the region.
- The survey took place between September 2018 and June 2019.
- All country surveys are based on nationally representative probability sample of the population aged 18 and above. Each country surveyed includes approx. 2,400 respondents, on average. The error margin of our surveys is ± 3 percent.

NOTES

- The 45 minute, largely tablet-based interviews were conducted in private and face-to-face with individuals randomly selected to fairly represent their communities.
- The survey is of citizens across most of the Arab world. Exceptions include countries where full and fair access to the survey was not possible or the safety of interviewers could not be guaranteed.
- Full details on all methodology are available on the Arab Barometer website.
<https://www.arabbarometer.org/survey-data/methodology/>



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Key Findings

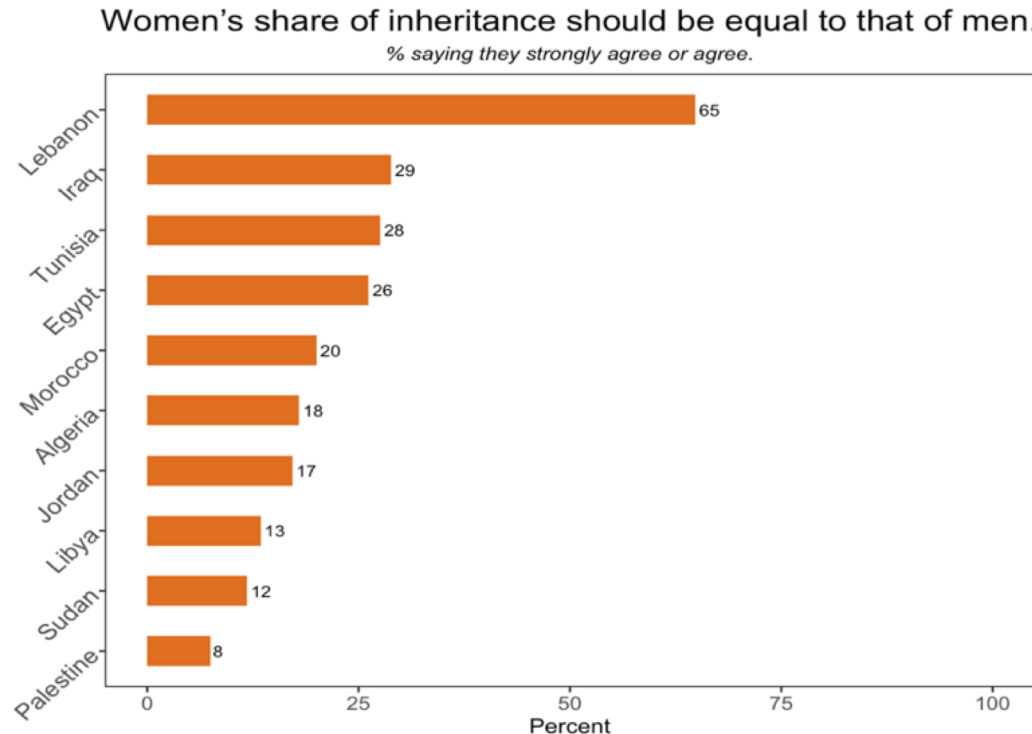
- Opinions regarding women's rights and their roles in society are progressing unevenly in MENA.
- While citizens of Arab countries are more approving of women's right to education, work and holding political office, there is far from universal agreement that women should have equal rights in all areas.
- Moreover, there is little agreement that women should have equal roles in public or private life, with majorities saying that women are less able to take on roles of leadership or make decisions compared with men.
- Higher education is not an only important tool to improve women's economic conditions in the Arab world, but also to empower women in their social and family lives.

Views on Women's Agency in MENA

Are women in MENA able to make effective choices and decisions for themselves and their societies?

Share of Inheritance

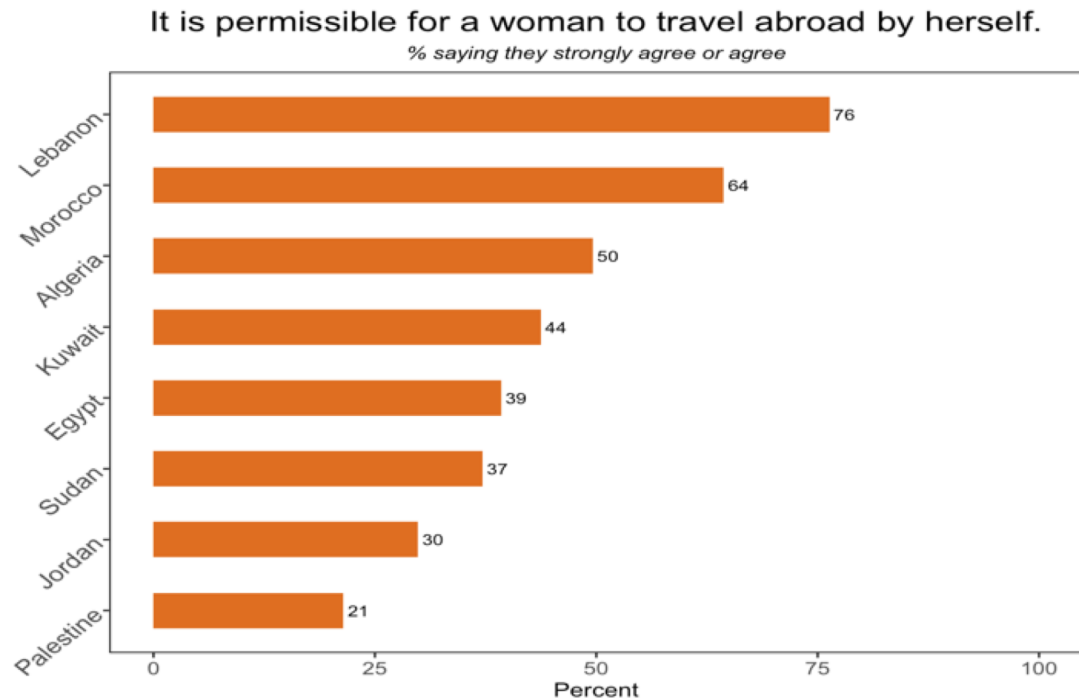
In all but one country surveyed, a majority do not believe that women's share of inheritance should be equal to that of men.



Notes: Weighted Estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer, Wave 5

Travel Independently

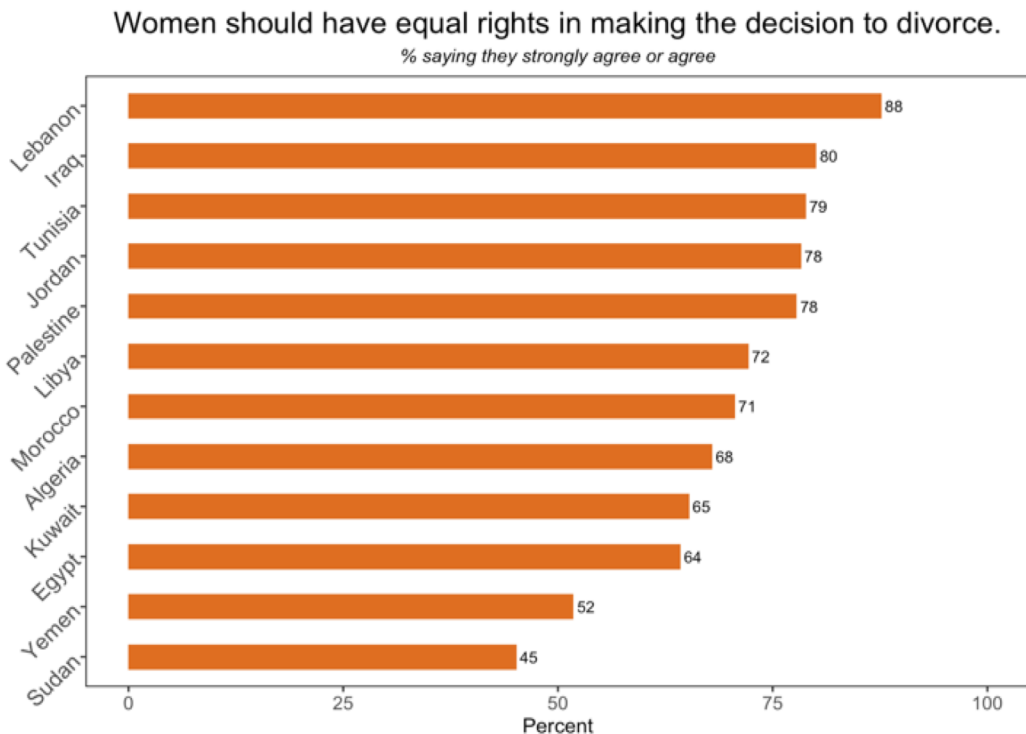
In a majority of countries surveyed, a minority say it is permissible for a woman to travel abroad by herself.



Notes: Weighted Estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer, Wave 5

Divorce

In all but one country, a majority support an equal right to divorce for women, including more than two-thirds in most countries.

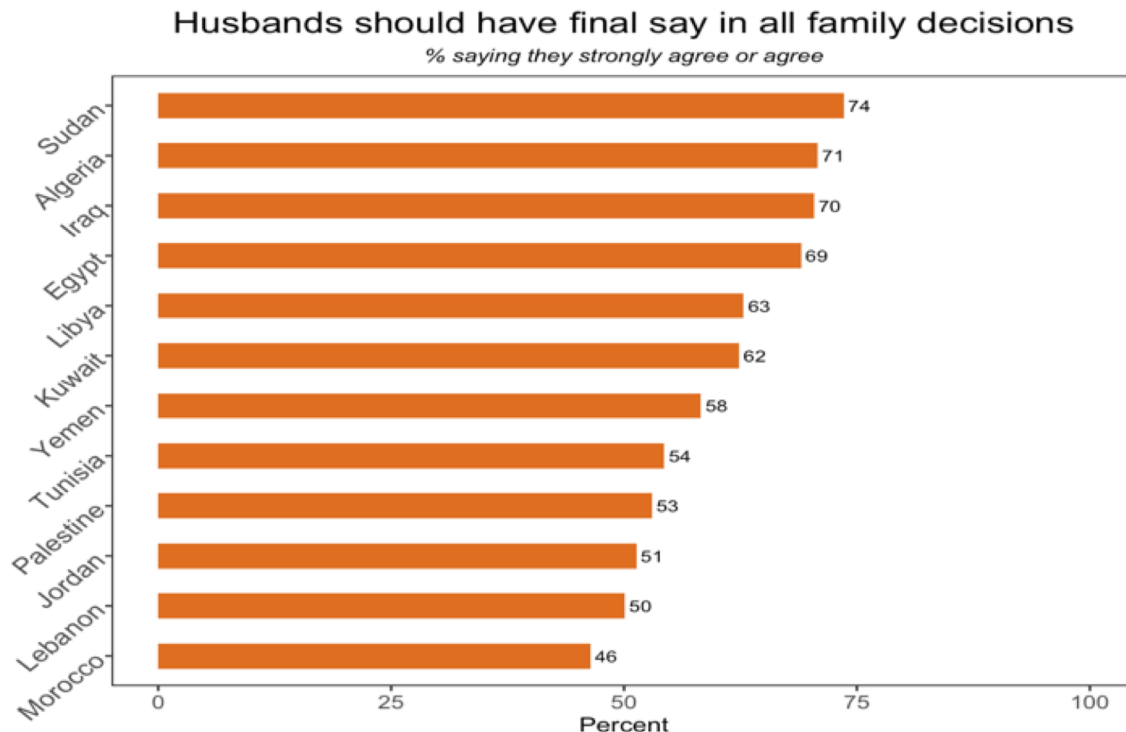


Notes: Weighted Estimates.

Source: Arab Barometer, Wave 5

Head of Household

In all but one country, half or more citizens say husbands, rather than wives, should always have the final say on family decisions.

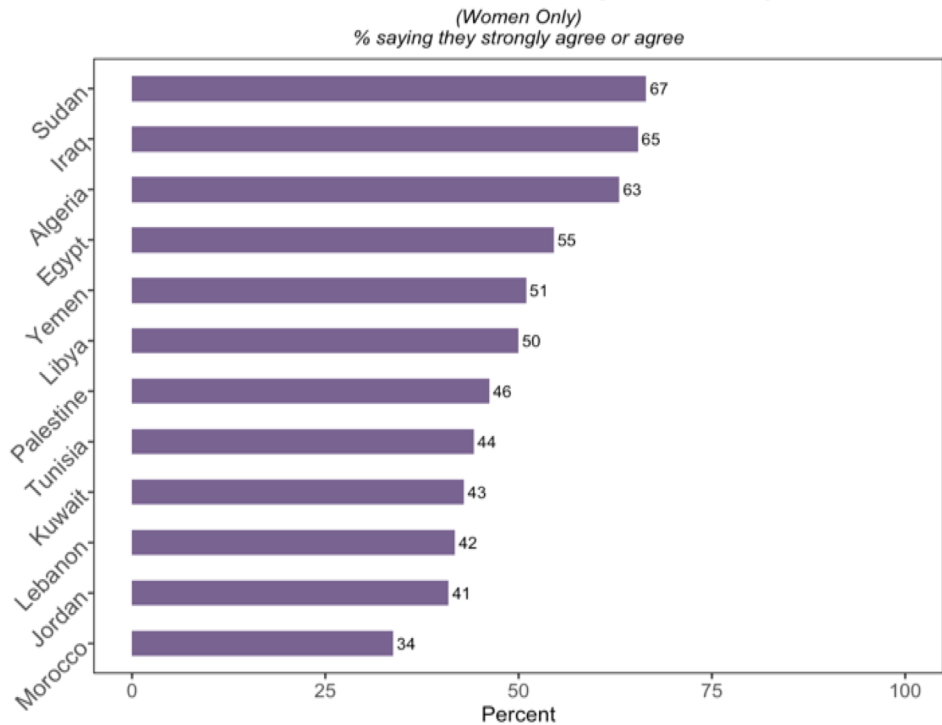


Notes: Weighted Estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer, Wave 5

Many Women Agree Their Husbands Should Have The Final Say

In 6 of 12 countries surveyed, more than half of the women believe that a husband should be the ultimate decision maker.

Husbands should have the final say in all family decisions

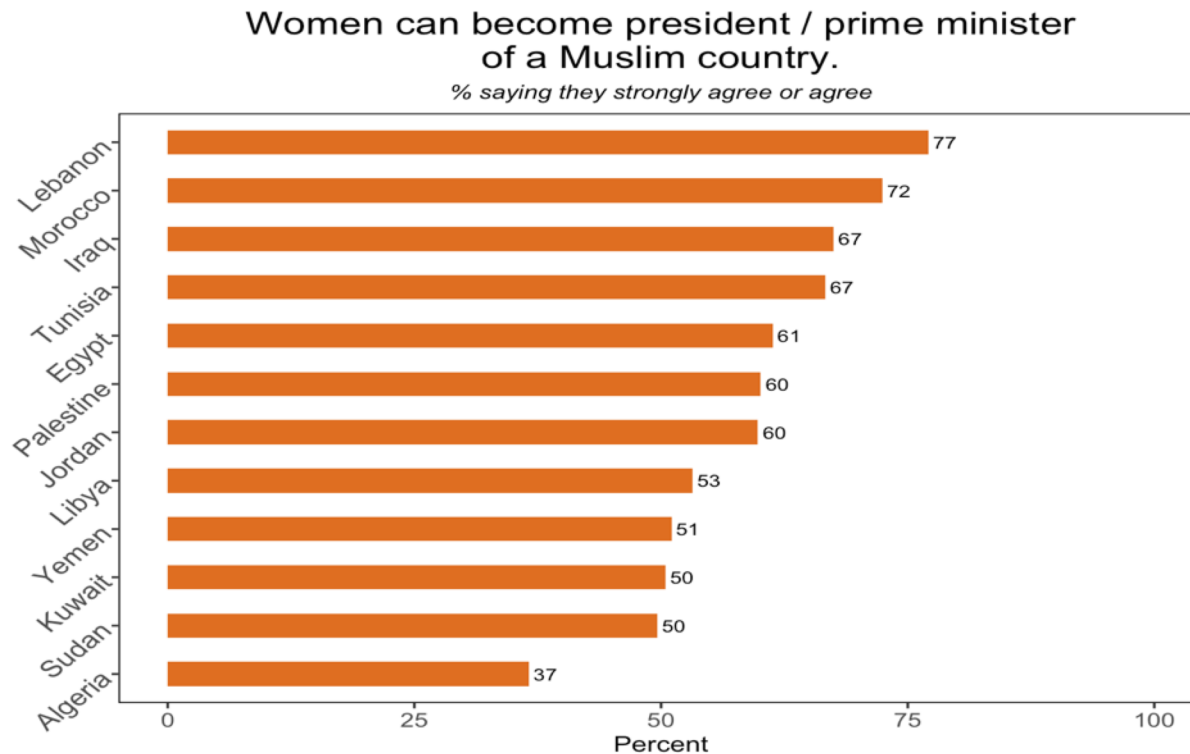


Notes: Weighted Estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer, Wave 5

“Husbands should have final say in all decisions concerning the family.”			
	% Men who agree	% Women who agree	Difference
Kuwait	83	43	+40
Egypt	83	55	+28
Libya	76	50	+26
Morocco	59	34	+25
Tunisia	65	44	+21
Jordan	61	41	+20
Lebanon	58	42	+16
Algeria	78	63	+15
Yemen	66	51	+15
Palestine	60	46	+14
Sudan	80	67	+13
Iraq	75	65	+10
Arab Barometer, Wave 5			

Women in MENA As Political Leaders

The majority of citizens across the region are amenable to seeing a female head of state.



Notes: Weighted Estimates.

Source: Arab Barometer, Wave 5

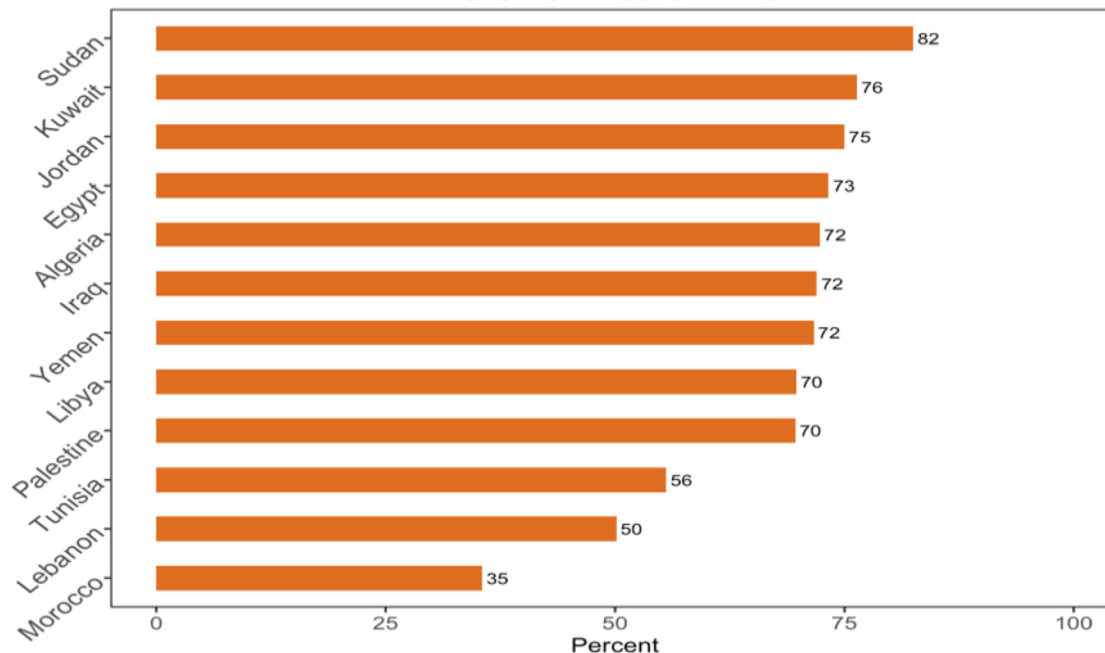
*For those who identify as Muslims only

Citizens' bias in the recognition of women's political decision-making competence

The majority of citizens across MENA still consider men as more capable political leaders compared to women.

In general, men are better at political leadership than women.

% saying they strongly agree or agree



Notes: Weighted Estimates.

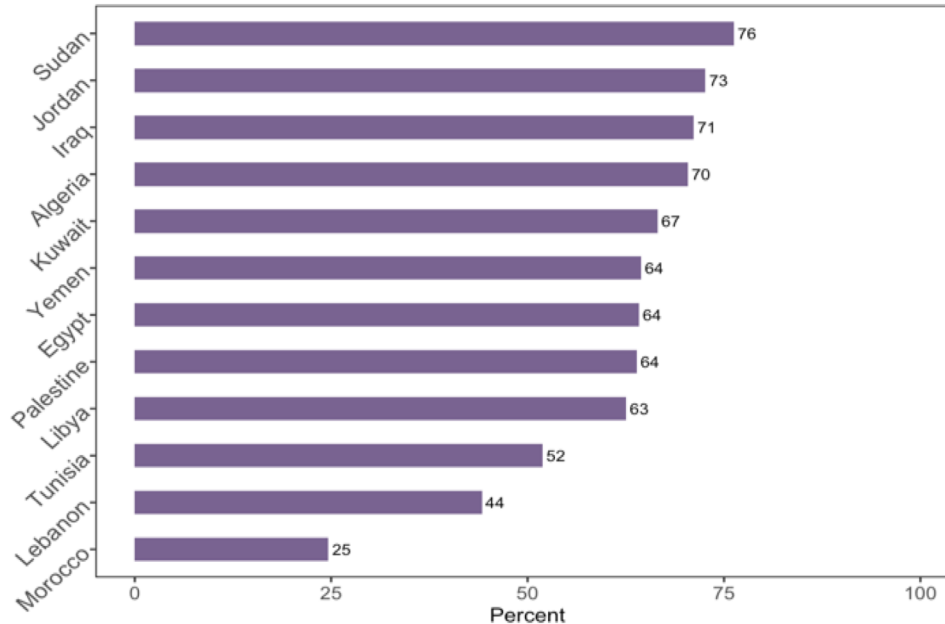
Source: Arab Barometer, Wave 5

Gender Bias : Women in MENA as Political Leaders

In 10 of 12 countries more than half of women believe that men are better at political leadership than women.

In general, men are better at political leadership than women

(Women only)
% saying they strongly agree or agree



Notes: Weighted Estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer, Wave 5

"In general, men are better at political leadership than women."			
	% Men who agree	% Women who agree	Difference
Egypt	84	62	+22
Morocco	46	25	+21
Sudan	90	75	+15
Kuwait	83	70	+13
Yemen	79	66	+13
Lebanon	56	44	+12
Libya	77	65	+12
Palestine	74	64	+10
Jordan	78	71	+7
Tunisia	59	52	+7
Algeria	75	70	+5
Iraq	73	71	+2
Arab Barometer, Wave 5			

Positive Attitudes Towards Some Women's Rights

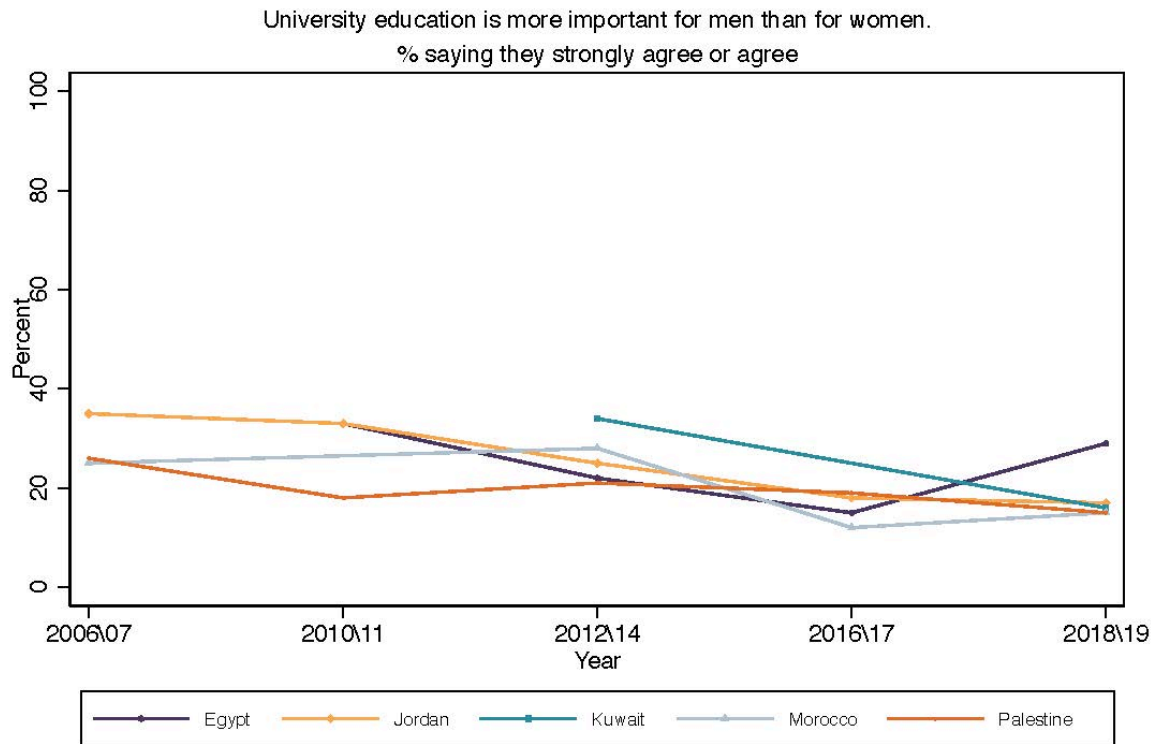
The picture is not all bad news.

Positive Attitudes Towards Some Women's Rights

- While the norms and some laws still do not permit women in Arab countries to decide for themselves in several regards, the picture is not all bad news.
- A majority of citizens across MENA support women's equal right to education and to work.

Right to Education

There has been change over time in relation to girls and women's right to education in MENA. Relatively few say that university education is more important for a man than a woman.



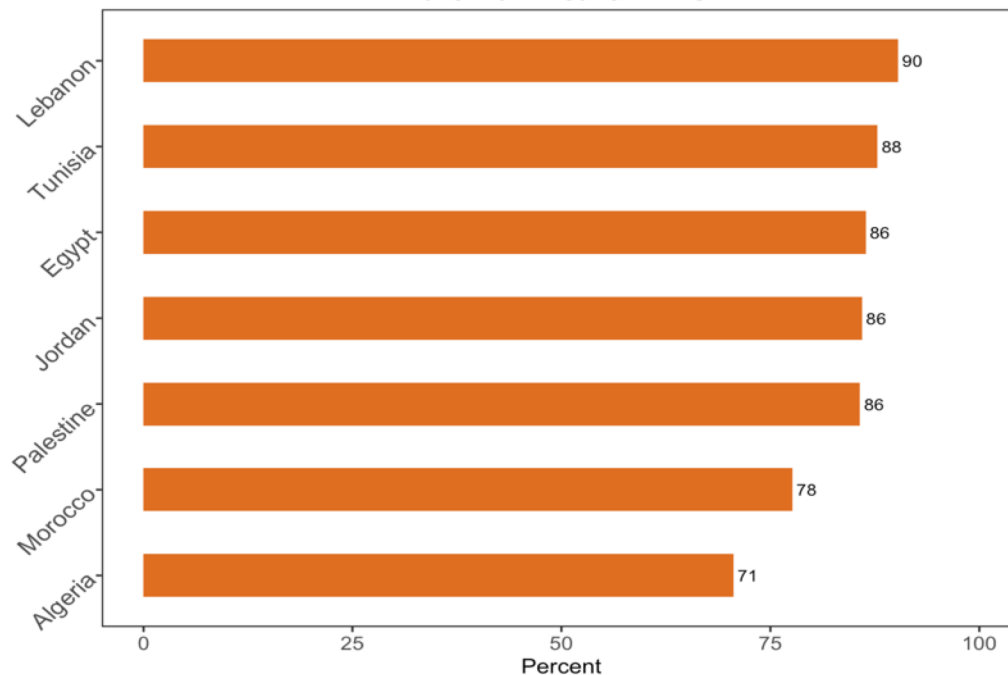
Notes: Weighted Estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer.

Right to Work

Additionally, in most countries, a majority affirm that a woman can work outside the home if she wants.

A married woman can work outside the home if she chooses.

% saying they strongly agree or agree.



Notes: Weighted Estimates.

Source: Arab Barometer, Wave 4

The Ripple Effect: Higher Education for Women across MENA

Breaking the cycle of
economic hardship and gender inequality

Higher Education For Women Can Help Break The Cycle of Hardship and gender inequality

- Across MENA, women with a university degree have better chances of securing a job, make a difference for their families' economic security and are more likely to have more independence in household- decision making.

Higher Education Linked To Higher Employability

A higher percentage of college-educated women across MENA reported that they are employed compared with those who have a secondary degree or no education.

Women in MENA: Employment Status* by Education**			
	% women with university degree & employed	% women with secondary degree or below & employed	Difference
Kuwait	85	40	+45
Libya	60	18	+42
Egypt	55	16	+39
Morocco	48	10	+38
Iraq	41	5	+36
Lebanon	57	22	+35
Algeria	42	15	+27
Yemen	31	4	+27
Jordan	30	4	+26
Tunisia	39	14	+25
Palestine	25	6	+19
Sudan	33	16	+17
Arab Barometer, Wave V	48	12	+36
* Includes those who said employed, self-employed, and retired			
** Includes those with a technical/professional degree, 4-year university degree, and Master's or higher			

Improved Economic Conditions For The Household

Households that include women who are employed are less likely to face economic hardship in comparison with households where women are unemployed.

Net household income covers expenses and either are able to save or cover expenses without notable difficulties			
	% employed women who agree	% unemployed women who agree	Difference
Morocco	70	41	+29
Iraq	67	46	+21
Egypt	44	26	+18
Yemen	35	17	+18
Jordan	37	20	+17
Palestine	60	44	+16
Algeria	58	42	+16
Tunisia	43	28	+15
Lebanon	52	38	+14
Sudan	54	41	+13
Libya	48	37	+11
Kuwait	68	72	-4
Arab Barometer, Wave 5			+15
* Includes those who said employed, self-employed, and retired			
**Includes those who said housewives, and unemployed or looking for a job			

Household Decision-Making Shift

Women's employment in MENA plays a significant role in women's attitudes at home.

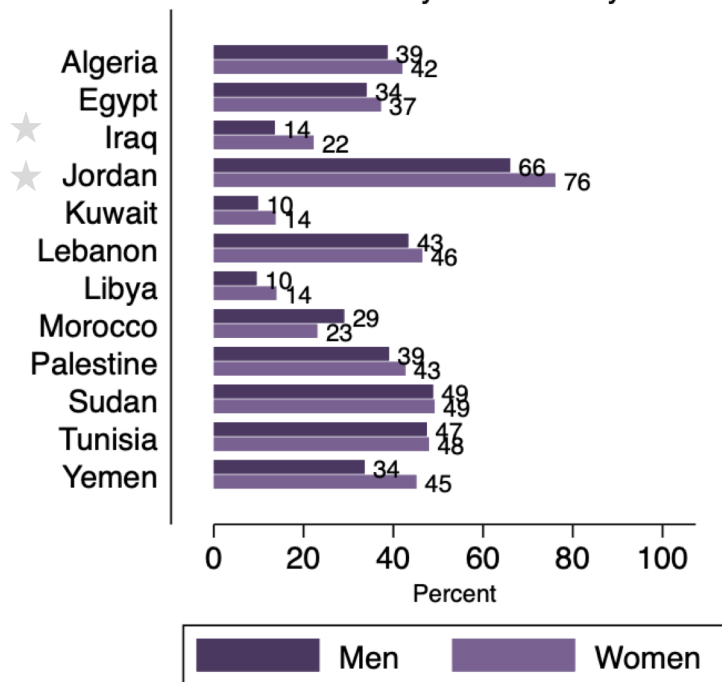
"Husbands should have final say in all decisions concerning the family."			
	% employed women who agree	% unemployed women who agree	Difference
Morocco	11	42	-31
Egypt	41	61	-20
Iraq	50	70	-20
Jordan	24	44	-20
Tunisia	29	48	-19
Lebanon	33	47	-14
Algeria	54	67	-13
Kuwait	41	52	-11
Libya	47	50	-3
Yemen	54	54	0
Sudan	68	67	1
Palestine	50	46	4
Arab Barometer, Wave 5			-12
* Includes those who said employed, self-employed, and retired			
** Includes those who said housewives, and unemployed or looking for a job			

Women's Appraisals of the Economy and Government Performance

Evaluation of the Economy by Gender

What is the most important challenge facing your country?

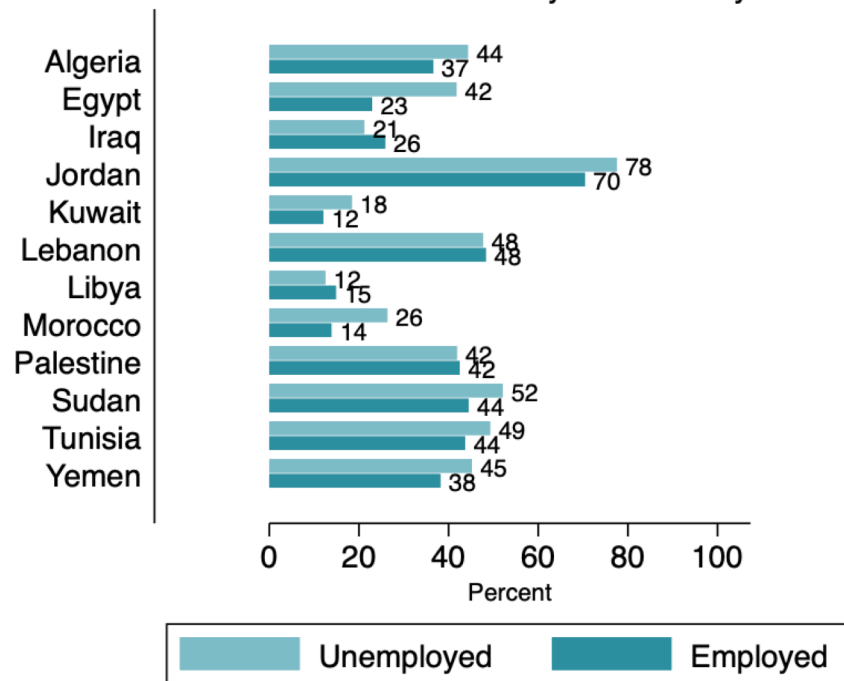
% who say the economy



Notes: Weighted estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer V.

What is the most important challenge facing your country?

% of women who say the economy

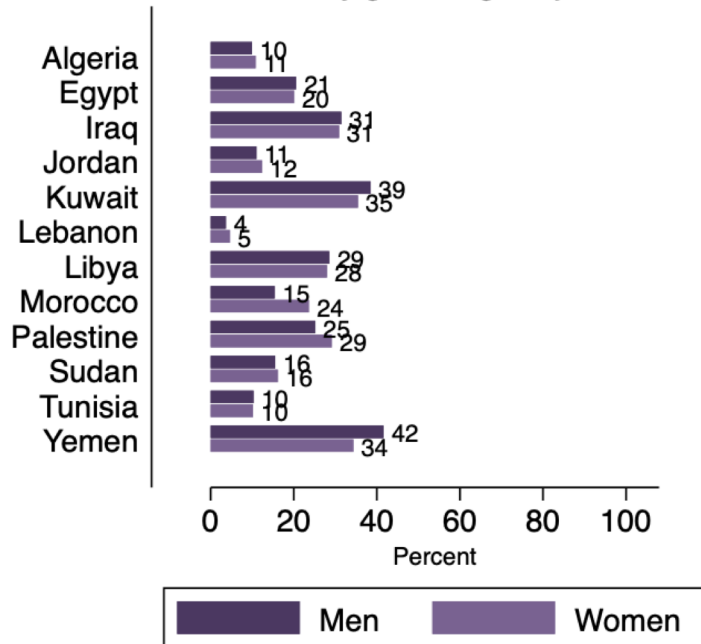


Notes: Weighted estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Government Performance: Inflation & Job Creation

Government performance: limiting inflation

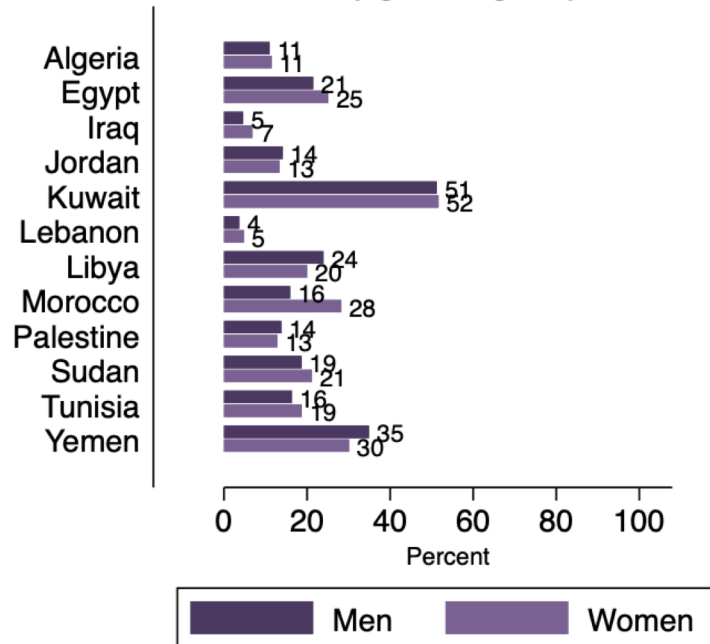
% saying government is doing
a very good or good job



Notes: Weighted estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Government performance: creating employment opportunities

% saying government is doing
a very good or good job



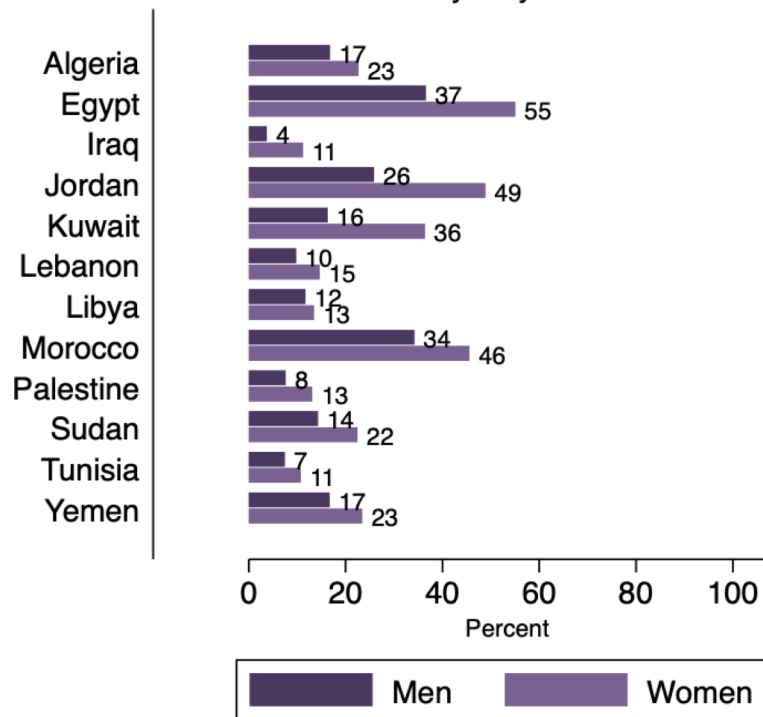
Notes: Weighted estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Women & Economic Activities: Entry vs. Access

Economic Activities: Entry vs. Access

How difficult is it to get a business permit?

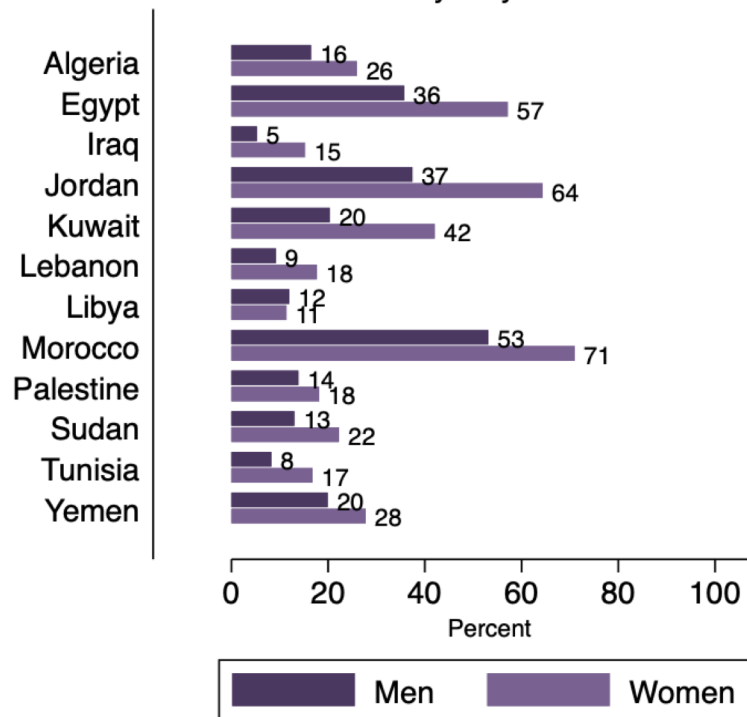
% who say they never tried



Notes: Weighted estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer V.

How difficult is it to register a business?

% who say they never tried

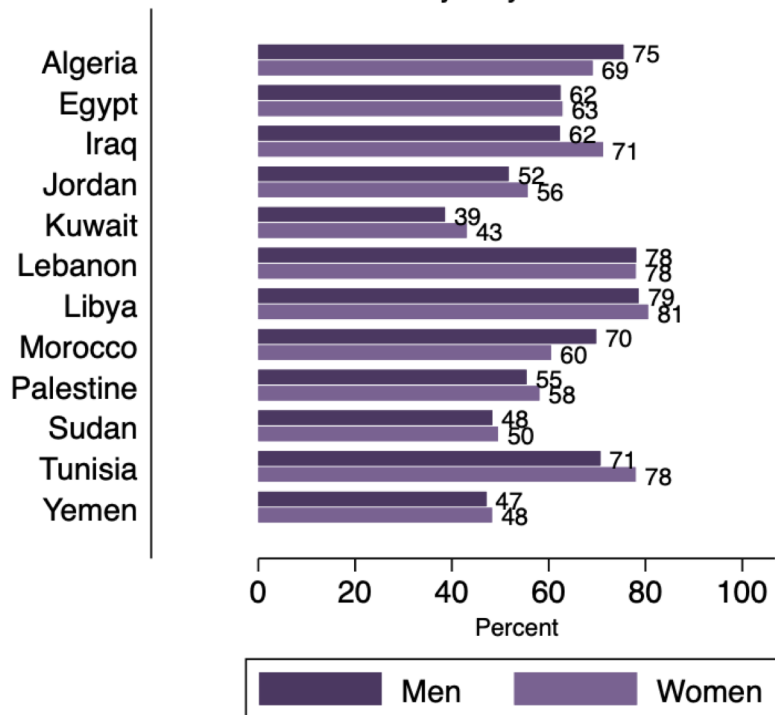


Notes: Weighted estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Economic Activities: Entry vs. Access

Have you had difficulties getting a building permit?

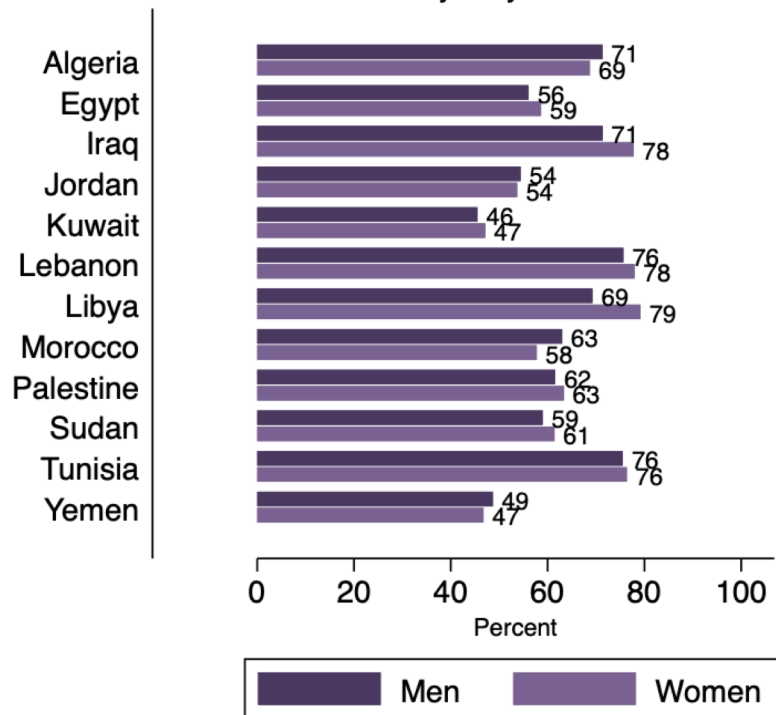
% who say they had difficulties



Notes: Weighted estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Have you had difficulties registering a business?

% who say they had difficulties



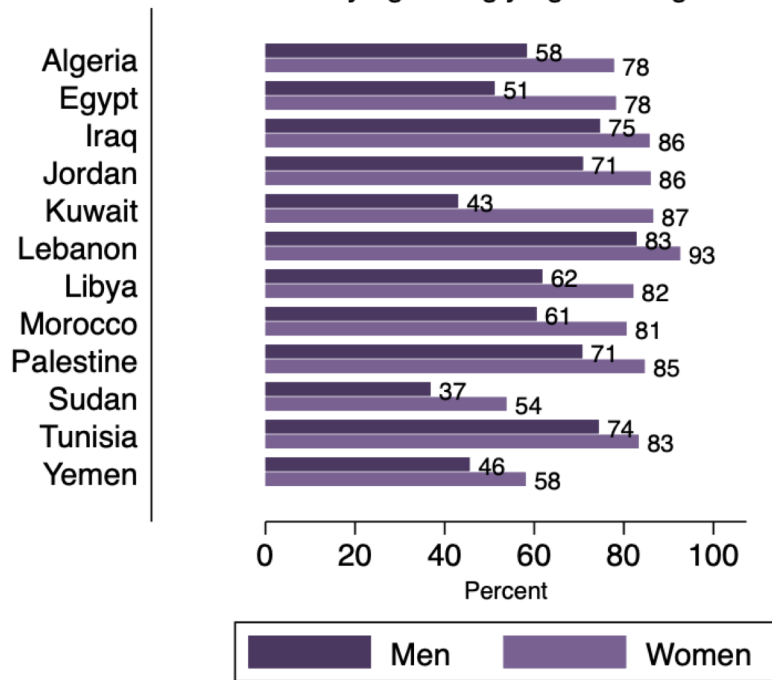
Notes: Weighted estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Women's Views on Women's Agency

Women's Rights to Divorce & Inheritance by Gender

Women and men should have equal rights in making the decision to divorce.

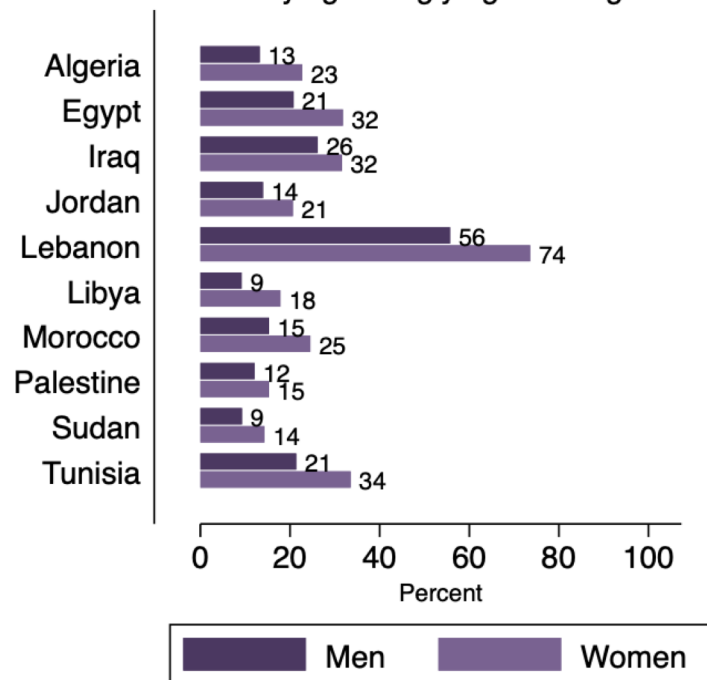
% saying strongly agree or agree



Notes: Weighted estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Women's share of the inheritance should be equal to that of men.

% saying strongly agree or agree

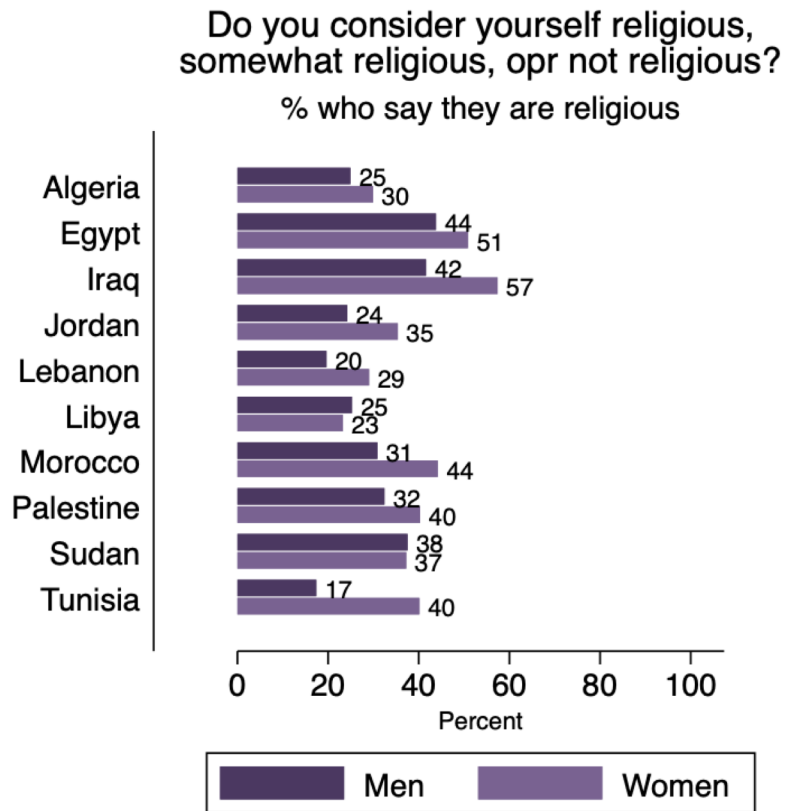


Notes: Weighted estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Personal Status Laws

- Personal status laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, child custody based on religious laws (shari'a, family law)
- Vary from country to country, disparities between men and women persist
- Divorce:
 - **Initiation:** Often men who can initiate, get divorced by repudiation, no need to resort to court
 - **Type:** Divorce (*talaq*) vs. Separation vs. *Khul'*
 - **Cost:** Repayment and/or forfeiture of *mahr* (dowry) , forfeit child support (*nafaqa*), child custody
- Inheritance
 - Women receive less than men. Daughters receive half the share of sons.

Self-Reported Religiosity



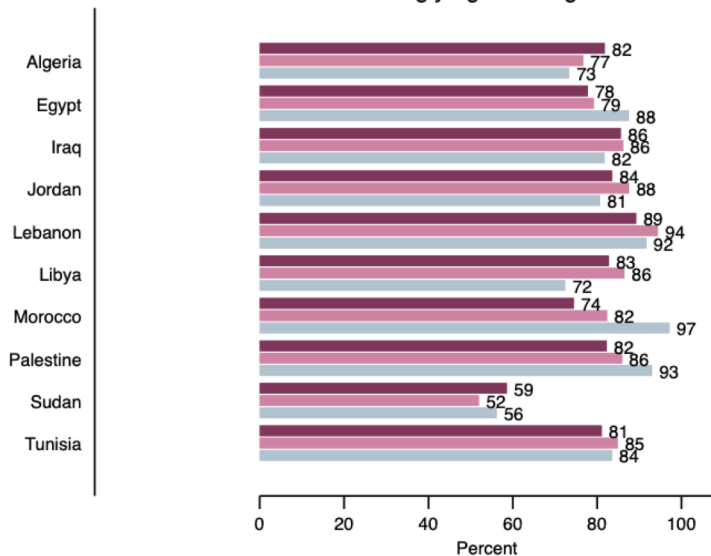
Notes: Weighted estimates.

Source: Arab Barometer V.

Religiosity & Rights: Divorce

Women's and men should have equal rights in making the decision to divorce.

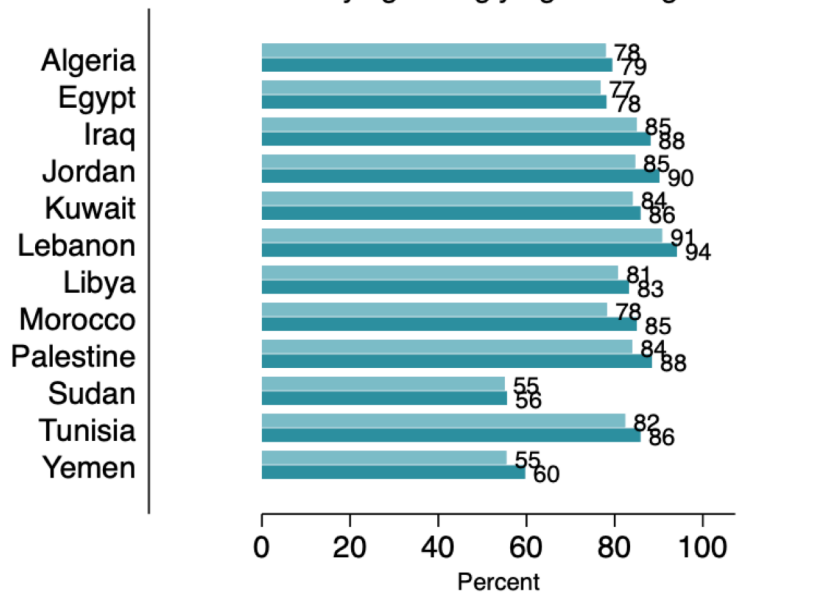
% of women saying strongly agree or agree



Notes:
Weighted estimates.
Excludes Yemen and Kuwait.
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Women and men should have equal rights in making the decision to divorce.

% saying strongly agree or agree

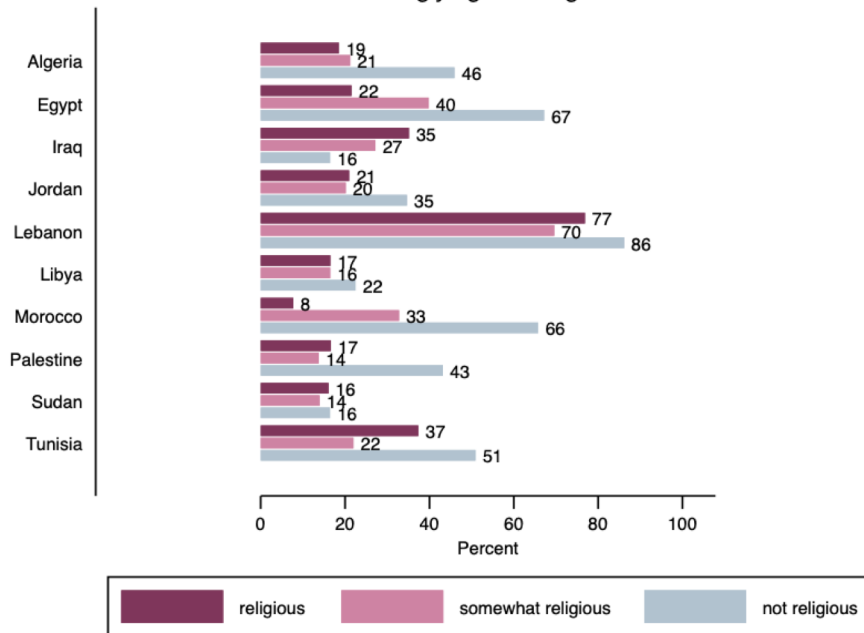


Notes: Weighted estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Religiosity & Rights: Inheritance

Women's share of the inheritance should be equal to that of men.

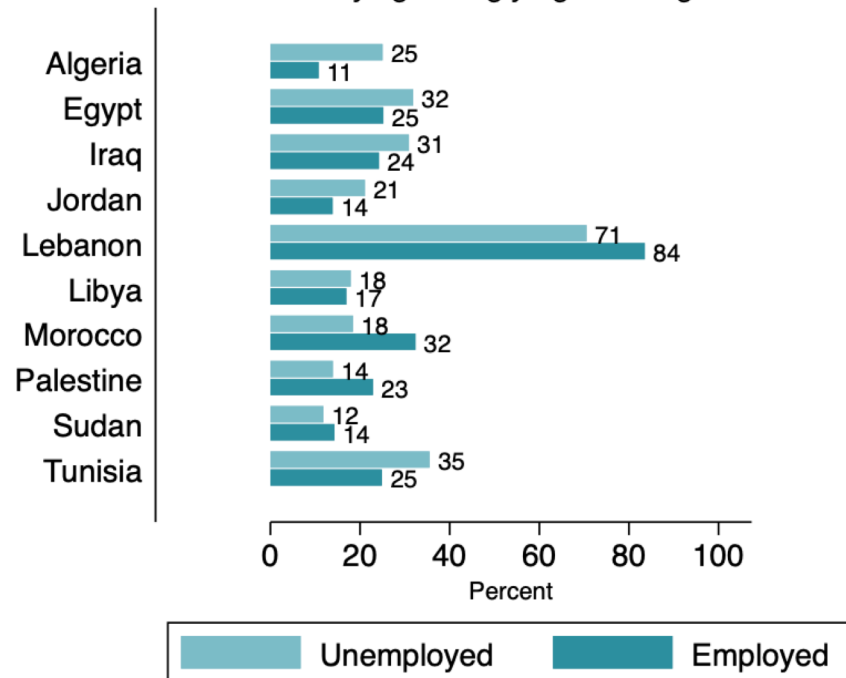
% of women saying strongly agree or agree



Notes:
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Notes: Weighted estimates.
Source: Arab Barometer V.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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