

## **The Economic Participation of Young Women in the Jordanian Labor Market, Facts & Challenges**

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Jordan has made significant progress in extending universal access to education. The youth literacy gender gap has closed and the ratio of women to men in primary, secondary, and tertiary education are 0.96, 1.1, and 1.1, respectively. Women are getting married later (Singulate Mean Age at First Marriage – SMAM - reached 25.8 years in 2011 compared to 24.7 years in 1994) and have fewer children (Total Fertility Rate decreased from 5.6 to 3.8 births per woman between 1990 and 2009). However, in Jordan the support provided to increasing women's access to health and education appears to have helped women to fulfill their maternal and reproductive roles more than to encourage them to enter the formal labor market. The women's labor force participation in 2011 was 15 percent, while it did not exceed 10 percent for young women (15-24 years of age). It is worthy to note that the rate is 64 percent for men and 39 percent for young men. This means women's potential is not fully utilized. Furthermore, women's unemployment rate is almost two times higher than unemployment rate for men; women unemployment rate for year 2011 was 21 percent compared to 11 percent for men. Likewise, the unemployment rate for young women was 47%, while it was 26.3% for young men of the same age group. As a result, the policy challenge for Jordan is to foster job creation for its young population while increasing the economic participation of women. The value added of this paper is that it addresses both labor demand and supply issues related to young female participation in the labor force which responds to the need of improving young women's skills and their access to employment opportunities in order to achieve successful transformation of human and natural resources into sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

**Key Words:** Labor force participation rate of young males and females, Unemployment rate among young males and females, Maternal and reproductive roles of women, Labor demand and supply issues related to young males and females participation in the labor force.