

## **Engendering Population Censuses\***

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan  
The Department of Statistics (Dos)



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*“Census is the Image of the Present and the Future”.*

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# ENGENDERING POPULATION CENSUS THE JORDANIAN EXPERIENCE

## 1. Background

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is located to the east of the Mediterranean Sea. The country has an area of 89,342 square kilometers bordered by Syria to the north, Iraq to the east, Saudi Arabia to the east and south, and Palestine to the west. Jordan has an extremely large variety of topography - ranging from lowland plains to mountains.

For administrative purposes, the country is divided into twelve governorates, each headed by a governor. All administrative divisions come under the direct authority of the Ministry of Interior.



## 2. Population Censuses at the Department of Statistics

The first housing census in the Kingdom was conducted in 1952. The main objective of that census was limiting all building and housing units and their basic characteristics. In addition to that, a quick population enumeration only was carried out and the total population was 586.2 thousands. The second Population and Housing Units Census was implemented on November 1961 and covered both banks of the Kingdom. Scientific methodologies in conducting censuses in line with UN recommendations were employed in this census compared to the first round. Detailed data on population such as demographic and socio-economic characteristics were collected. Moreover, detailed data on buildings, housing units and associated services were also collected. The total population of the eastern bank of the Kingdom was 900.8 thousand. The third Population and Housing Units Census was conducted on November 1979. It only covered the eastern bank of the Kingdom because the occupation of the west bank prevented conducting the census in both banks. The total population of the eastern bank of the Kingdom was 2133 thousands.

The Department of Statistics has carried out the fourth census on October 10, 1994 where the population and housing censuses were merged together. Data on buildings and housing units were collected. Total population was 4139.5 thousands.

The fifth Population and Housing Units Census was carried out in 2004. The reference period of the Census was defined to be the night of Friday / Saturday dated 1/2 of October 2004. According to the results of this census the total population was 5.1 millions, with a coverage rate of 95.9%.

It was noted that the general Population and Housing Units Census of 2004 was the largest statistical operation carried out in the country, where huge financial and human resources were mobilized for collecting miscellaneous data in order to fulfill various administrative, statistical and executive purposes (annex 1 includes all the population census stages).

The 2004 population census data of Jordan have been utilized to develop a set of benchmark data for different purposes. It has provided detailed data on all population of the Kingdom, their demographic and socio-economic characteristics at the lowest administrative geographical level. Sex disaggregated data on several topics included in the census have been helpful to address the current gender issues. It has provided detailed information on special groups like women, children, the aged and the disabled groups of the country. These data have been extensively used by several interest groups for advocacy as well as for planning and monitoring purposes.

The 2004 population census provided the necessary data for evaluating the population status in the Kingdom during the period separating the two censuses, in addition to monitoring the demographic and socio-economic variations occurred within the population during that period for all administrative regions from the locality level up to the governorate level.

It provides the possibility of limiting the size, distribution and characteristics of non-Jordanians in the Kingdom including the expatriate labour force at a high level of accuracy instead of depending upon estimations and expectations, in addition to identifying the size of Jordanians abroad where certain specifications apply to them. It provides data on available housing units, their utilities, characteristics and living-conditions related situation. It also provides the essential basic data for formulating a clear housing policy.

Census data offered a comprehensive and updated frame for the buildings, housing units households and enterprises according to various localities and administrative divisions. This frame is fundamental in the process of designing and drawing of samples for carrying out various future surveys.

A data base for each household was established to link available maps through the geographic information system (GIS). These data could be linked to other available

services information such as schools, health centers, roads, universities, civil defense centers, police stations etc.

### **3. Procedures at the Department of Statistics (DoS) to Mainstream Gender Perspective in the Population Census**

Women comprise half of our society, they are supposed to completely contribute to the development process and to benefit from its advantages as well. Based on that, there is a need to detect the different types of predominant gender gaps, and to identify how much they affect the society's development course in order to take the actions required for women's empowerment and equality, not only in terms of burdens and responsibilities, but also in sharing resources and benefits.

Jordan is considered as one of the forerunner countries in exerting efforts to improve the situation of the Jordanian woman in all social, economic and political spheres as a fundamental component in comprehensive development. For this purpose, Jordan has established institutional mechanisms and strategies to ensure mainstreaming the woman into the development process which has led to tangible achievements in various fields. As a result, women's issues have taken a qualitative leap and progress including decision making posts in the political, economic, social, cultural, health, educational and labor fields.

The Department of Statistics (DoS) has identified the need for further development in gender analysis. It therefore ensured that the various definitions and classifications of data on educational attainment, economic activity status, occupation, position in the family and household, etc. were appropriately used in the census. The same data for both men and women were provided for all appropriate topics.

#### **3.1 Preparatory Stages of the Census**

Preparatory activities are of two broad types: those related to census content and those related to census operations. DoS implemented the following steps in the preparatory stages of the census to help minimize gender-based biases.

Issues of *census content*, including information on sex of each person was recorded on the questionnaire of the census together with age to be cross classified with other characteristics of the population. It was fundamental that information on sex was as complete and accurate as possible. As a result, DoS was able to provide sex disaggregated data on several topics included in the census which were helpful in addressing the current gender issues. Furthermore, in order to satisfy one basic condition for gender statistics, stated in the Principles and Recommendations for

Population and Housing Censuses draft edited by UNSD in 2006 – stating that all statistics on individuals should be presented by sex, sex should be considered the overriding variable in all tables, irrespective of the medium of storage or dissemination- disaggregation by gender was provided in all publications, databases and computer printouts of census tables on individuals.

Another important issue related to census content was to overcome sex-based stereotypes caused by social and cultural factors as they can result in gender-based biases in data collection, analysis, and presentation so as to develop a census that both minimizes the influence of the stereotypes that respondents and enumerators may hold. The most common assumption which create sex-based stereotype is the fact that no woman can be the head of any household and only men can. Another good example is the idea that women are simply homemakers and therefore not part of the economically active population.

The census administration exerted efforts to minimize these common sex-based stereotypes and the conclusions drawn from these data by providing clear instructions, definitions and classifications used by enumerators, in terms of who is to be treated as the head of the household and who is the economically active person in order to avoid the complications of enumerator or respondent preconceptions on the subject (definition of the head of the household and the economically active person used in the census is illustrated in the annex).

With regard to *census operations*, particular attention was given to the selection, training and supervision of the field staff. To that end, DoS focused its efforts in involving both men and women in the field work as interviewers and supervisors. Furthermore, both men and women were represented in the census administration which includes the Director General of Statistics/ National Director of the Census, the Executive Director of the Census and his assistants for technical affairs, field operations and administration. The woman in charge of the labor force survey division at the DOS was appointed as the technical assistant for the executive director of the census.

A *Publicity campaign* was essential to enhance awareness among public and data users about the census benefits and eliminate their worries about the data provided (compiled?). This publicity campaign also aimed at assuring the public that data are secured, in addition to explaining the reasons of selecting the topics to be covered by the census. Urging the public to provide accurate information was also one of the campaign's objectives.

The census administration, with the help of several governmental and private institutions, participated in the publicity campaign, developed a census logo and slogan.

A simple but effective slogan was developed to be used in all national and local advertising campaigns and in all types of media, booklets, posters and brochures of the census. The slogan used by the DoS was “*Census is the Image of the Present and the Future*”.

A *logo* was designed in the initial stages of the publicity campaign to serve as a tool for better recognition of the census. The census administration ensured the identification of all target audiences, both men and women as well as boys and girls were represented in the logo. As a result, strongest influence on the success of the population and housing censuses and on the quality of data produced would be obtained.



In its efforts to select appropriate implementation methods to effectively reach different groups, inform them about the census, and foster a more positive attitude toward the census, posters were designed and distributed in parallel throughout all the census stages. Pictures included in the posters identify citizens from the following groups:

- Population by age groups (children of school age and teenagers, youth under 30 years, middle-aged persons, elderly people).
- Social groups by employment type (school children, students, employed and unemployed population).
- Professional groups (workers, businessmen, housewives).
- Inhabitants in rural areas.
- Disabled persons.



## **3.2 Data Dissemination Stage**

### **The Analytical Gender Paper**

A separate analytical paper based on the 2004 census was prepared in gender perspective. “Population Census Results in Gender Perspective, 2004” published four chapters with selected gender tables along with their analysis at the national level. The paper encompasses demographic and socio-economic characteristics by gender at the national level. This paper has to a large extent fulfilled the existing gender data gaps in the country. Topics included in the paper are: gender and socio-economic well being, gender and household headship, gender specific indicators on education, ownership of houses, economic activity of women and men, marriage and gender concerns on reproductive status of women, health insurance, special needs characteristics and gender concerns on migration statistics.

Examining quality level of the 2004 census data was done by comparing the results from the previous census (1994) and using that information to monitor the demographic and socio-economic variations occurred with women and men during the period separating the two censuses.

## **4. Gender Biases in the Population Census**

Because of the size and complexity of census operations, it is likely that errors of one kind or another may arise at any stage of the census. DoS devoted tremendous efforts to avoid or minimize errors, through launching publicity campaign that play an important role in promoting census awareness along with appropriate training, supervisory checks and quality assurance approaches. However, some errors are unavoidable. Gender-based stereotypes are examples of these errors which lead to serious biases in census data and the conclusions drawn from these data.

### **4.1 The Preparatory Stages of the Census**

*Consultation* on a range of subject areas is an important step in the preparations for the census and should be instigated early in the planning cycle. DoS and the census administration were aware of this important prerequisite as a way of obtaining a greater participation in the census enumeration and conducting a census as responsive as possible to the needs of users, and can also serve to foster a wider support for census plans and activities. For this purpose, committees were formed for achieving an appropriate balance of quality dimensions based on knowledge, experience,

reviews and feedback from all target groups of the population. The concerned committee members were represented from the following bodies:

- Central government departments and ministries
- Local government authorities
- Different mass media institutions such as the Jordan Broadcasting and Television corporation, Jordan News agency (Petra)
- Academics from different public and private universities

Despite the fact that the census administration was alert to perform consultation with the user community to justify the inclusion of particular census topics such as subjects related to gender issues, *no consultations nor representation of women's groups* and women's machineries such as the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), the Jordanian Women's Union, the National Council for Family Affairs were found in any of the committees formed. As a result, a valuable opportunity for consulting women's machineries concerned with gender equity and analyzing their needs for the purpose of addressing both content and operational issues of the census to decide which practicable questions could be included in the census questionnaire that can be devised to collect data related to gender statistical product and which cannot adequately be met by other means from other sources, was lost.

## **4.2 The Analytical Stages of the Census**

In order to ensure high level of quality assurance, the census administration implemented important *Quality control techniques* such as internal consistency checks to capture gross and net errors that might occur at any stage of the census. Another important tool used to evaluate the results of the census was *comparing the data of the census with other data sources* including previous censuses and current household surveys.

When DoS compared its census data related to the economic characteristics and the economically active population with the data generated from the Employment and Unemployment survey, general problems concerning quality of census data arise due to the large discrepancies in the Economic activity rates and Unemployment rates among Jordanian populations (for both sexes, especially among women) derived from census data compared to survey data. The discrepancies are illustrated in the following table:

**Table.1 Refined Economic Activity Rate and Unemployment Rate for Jordanians  
Population by Sex and Source of Data**

Source of Data	Economic Activity Rate			Unemployment Rate		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Population Census, 2004	68.6	<b>19.0</b>	44.0	19.2	<b>47.3</b>	25.2
Employment & Unemployment survey,2004 (one round)	63.7	<b>10.4</b>	37.4	11.8	<b>16.5</b>	12.5
Employment & Unemployment survey,2005 (four rounds)	64.4	<b>11.7</b>	38.3	12.8	<b>25.9</b>	14.8

From the table above, one can notice that the refined activity rates as well as the unemployment rates among Jordanian population for both sexes resulted from the Employment and Unemployment Survey were lower than those derived from the population census. The obvious variances were in favor of women (*the census unemployment rate for women were almost two to three times more than those resulted from the Employment and Unemployment surveys*).

When presenting census results in metadata as well as in the textual analysis, DoS highlighted these differences and explained the reasons which lead to them as following:

All the previous population censuses in Jordan have shown that the economic activity rates were higher than those appeared in regular labor force surveys carried out by the Department of Statistics as an official sources for statistics on the economically active population when reported at national level or for broad regional groupings. This phenomenon (higher economic activity rates in the censuses than in the Employment and Unemployment Surveys) is not limited to Jordan only, but it is a well known universal phenomenon in the international studies.

It is known also that in these studies, the data from the Employment and Unemployment Surveys give more accurate results on the economic activity rates due to the following reasons:

- The data on the economic characteristics of individuals in the population census were collected by a large number of temporary personnel deputized from the Ministry of Education who were trained to collect data related to the population in general as well as the economic characteristics of individuals, and not data relating to employment and unemployment in a defined and specialized manner.

- Even though, enumerators were instructed thoroughly on the questionnaires specifically designed to ask about the possible economic activity of every woman and man in the household above the minimum age specified for measuring economically active population (15 years and above), overestimations reporting economic activity rates in the census occur due to duplications and erroneous inclusions. An important reason for getting such results was the absence of using probes and activity lists which are proved to be useful in clarifying the concept of economic activity to the enumerators and minimize important sources of error such as the misclassified activities especially among women who reported as homemakers particularly if they are married. The census administration excluded using probes and activity lists due to the fact that they may lengthen the interview and increase the cost of the census.
- The influence of Gender-based stereotypes from enumerators as well as respondents have contributed to the overestimation of the economically active population. For example, the common idea that women are generally engaged in home-making duties or cultural perceptions relating to sex roles resulted in a serious omission with respect to measuring Jordanian women's economic activity status. Another important example was the gardening and poultry-raising done by many rural women, especially those inhabiting the Refit Valley of Jordan and villages around it, was not perceived as work. Such women may not be reported as economically active even though those activities may be the main source of income to the family.
- In spite of the fact that, training of enumerators highlighted sources of sex biases related to underestimation of women's participation in economic activities as incomplete coverage of unpaid economic activities, in particular those working as contributing family members, lead to the fact that, both respondents and enumerators failed to take account of women's multiple activities. As a result their participation in economic activities was to some extent overlooked and overestimates in the rates of economically active population registered.
- The media campaign accompanying the population census will raise the ceiling of expectations of citizens concerning reaping the benefits from the census in creating job opportunities, which will lead to increasing the ratio of job seekers particularly among women.

Another issue was to identify the sex of the head when the members of the household are unable to do so. This issue, which applies particularly to women, stems from the cultural stereotype that states that no woman can be the head of any household that also contains an adult male. Such stereotypes affected the way questions have been designed and asked in censuses, as well as the respondents reply to the questions. In this regard, Headship of the household rates by sex resulting from the census showed little discrepancies comparing to the same data generated from the Employment and Unemployment surveys. Figures in table 2 confirm these findings.

**Table.2 Headship Rates by Sex of the Head of the Households  
and the Source of Data**

Source of Data	Sex of the Head of the Household	
	Men	Women
Population Census, 2004	89.5	10.5
Employment & Unemployment survey, 2003	87.5	12.5
Employment & Unemployment survey, 2005	88.5	11.5

### **4.3 The Dissemination Stage**

#### **Drawbacks of the Analytical Gender Paper**

The analytical paper provided comprehensive and socio-economic characteristics by gender at the Kingdom's level. Certain data at governorate level and the other administrative regions were not analyzed nor published.

Furthermore, when presenting census results, no information on the distribution of non-Jordanians by gender such as reason for residence, occupation, industry, educational qualification with specialization and marital status were found within the analytical paper.

Statistical information is useful only if it has been disseminated in an accurate and accessible way. Although large amounts of information on women and men were presented in tables with a simple and clear interpretation of the data that were enriched with written analyses for showing different kinds of statistics and to facilitate comparisons between women and men therefore increasing the awareness of gender differentials, no production of graphs and charts were presented which could make the information more user-friendly and generally attractive.