

The gender-based differences in wages, the Jordanian case

By

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Abstract

The gender pay gap reflects inequalities that affect mainly women, notably horizontal and vertical segregation of the Jordanian labor market, traditions and stereotypes that influence the choice of education, professions and career paths. A simple indicator is used in this paper to examine trends in gender pay gap - the percentage difference between the average hourly or monthly earnings of women and men employees. In addition, this paper will deal with the famous belief which states that: the most important step in closing the wage gap is to give up the notion that, to be paid fairly, a woman must “make it in a man’s world.”

The gender-based differences in wages are still a major structural problem in the Jordanian labor market. Data show obvious discrepancies during the period 2000–2010 between the average monthly wages of men and women. In 2010, the average monthly wage was JD.403 for men and JD.359 for women, indicating that women earn JD.44 less than men. This represents 12.3% of the wages earned by women. In other words, Jordanian women earn 89% of the earnings of men.

The data also indicate that the unequal treatment in terms of wages is more evident in the private sector than in the public sector. Statistics indicate that the gender wage gap stands at 17% in the private sector, but only at 11% in the public sector. It is noteworthy that, taking into consideration the average number of working hours for men and women, the gender wage gap for 2010 shrank to 6% in the public sector and 8% in the private sector.

On the other hand, findings indicate a wage gap between employed men and women in all professions. Consequently, when assessing the wage gap in Jordan by profession, it must be taken into consideration that employed women tend to be more skilled than employed men. For example, women in the “legislators, senior officials and managers” category earn 23% less than men’s wages, even though more than half the employed women in Jordan fall in this category. Data also indicate that the wage gap between employed women and men favors employed women in the “elementary occupations”, where an employed woman earns 16% more than an employed man.

In addition to the above, a working woman with secondary education or an intermediary diploma earns 85.8% of the average monthly wage of a man holding the same educational qualifications. A working woman holding a bachelor’s or higher university degree receives around 63.1% of the average monthly wage earned by a man in the same category.

Moreover, the wage gap by economic activity is lowest in the education sector with 21.1%. This gap represents a major challenge due to the high proportion of women working in the field of

education. By contrast, figures show that the gender-based wage gap peaks in the manufacturing sector at 40.3% despite the fact that the proportion of female workers in this sector is 16% of all working women.