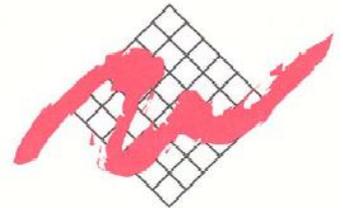


The Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa (SWMENA) Project

Focus on Lebanon | Economic & Educational Status
Topic Brief

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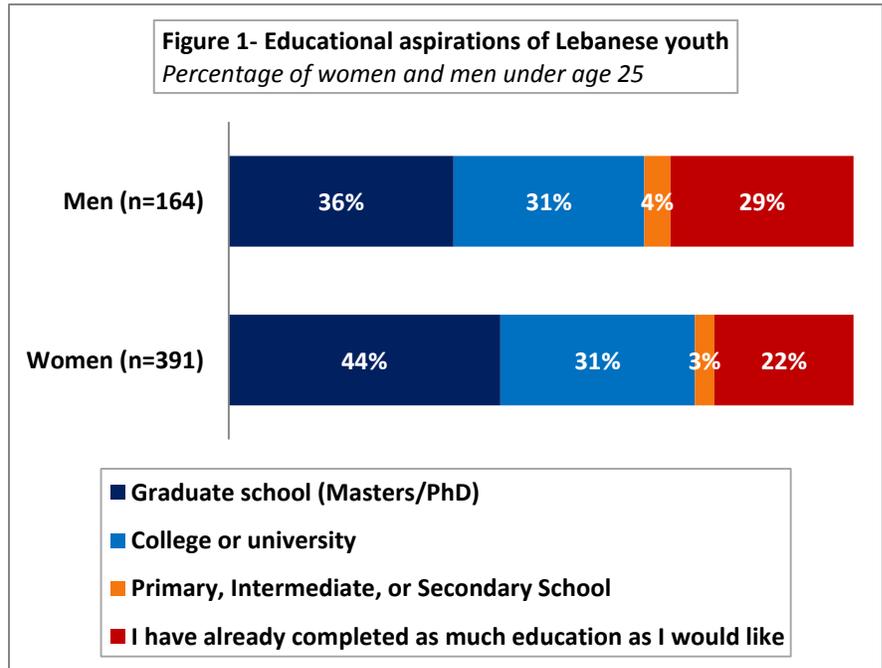
ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN LEBANON

This topic brief presents key findings on women and men’s economic and educational status based on data from the SWMENA survey in Lebanon. It includes an analysis of women’s economic status, focusing on employment and benefit trends and monthly income. The section on education status identifies demographic information and responses regarding educational aspirations and top fields of study.

Education

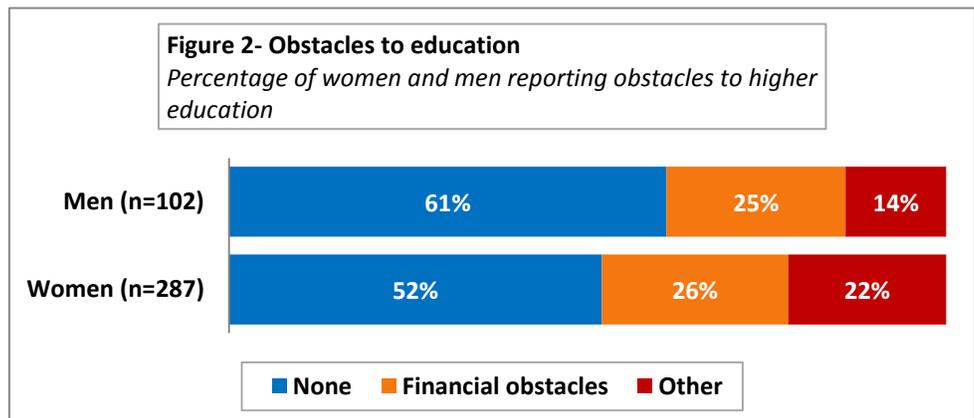
Of 2,750 respondents, 650 were under 25 years of age: 465 women and 185 men.

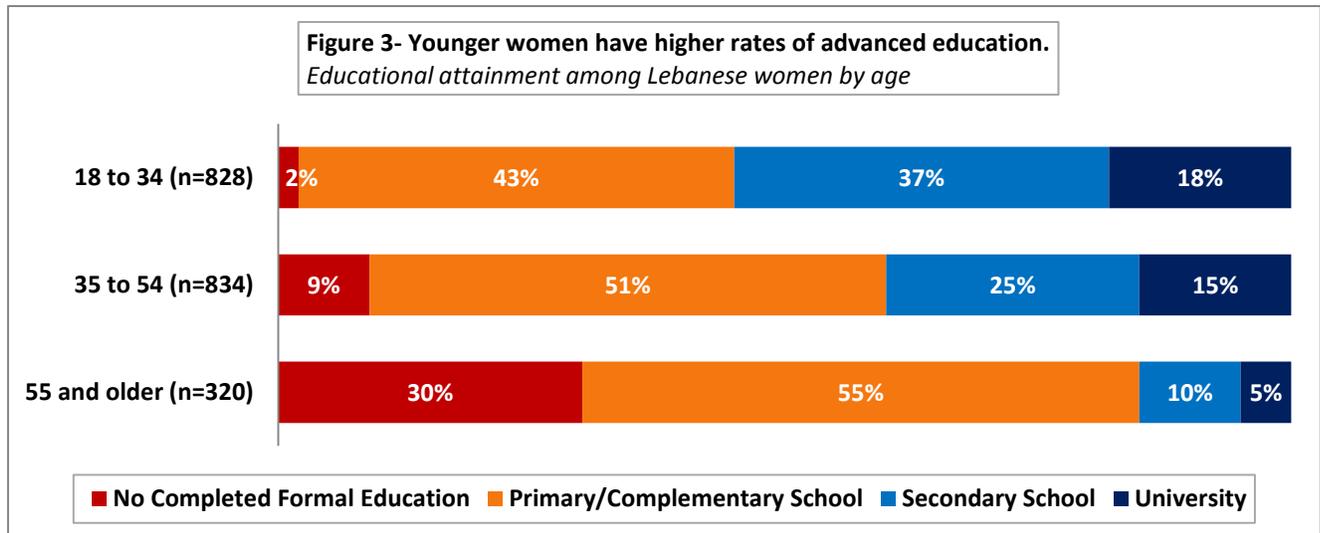
- Large majorities of both women and men hope to attend college.
- The differences between the educational aspirations of women and men under 25 are not statistically significant.
- Among those satisfied with their current level of education (n=135), about one third had completed primary school, three in ten had completed Intermediate school, and one quarter had completed secondary school. Most of the remainder had completed a university degree (Figure 1).



Women are significantly more likely than men to perceive obstacles to higher education (Figure 2).

- Most of the women and men in the survey reported no obstacles to meeting their educational aspirations. However, financial reasons were the barriers that were most commonly cited, by both Lebanese women and men. Fewer women and men cited family norms or obligations as obstacles; nevertheless, women were more likely than men to give norms or obligations as reasons they might not fulfill their educational aspirations.





- Four in ten women between the ages of 35 and 55 have completed secondary school education, and among women 56 and older, only 15% have done so (Figure 3).
- Despite the clear trend toward increasing educational attainment, a full 45% of young adult Lebanese women have less than a secondary school education. Business administration is the top field of study for 15% of the women and 20% of the men 25 or younger.
- Of the top 3 fields of study among young Lebanese women, two are traditionally male-dominated fields: business administration and the hard sciences, followed by art and design. Business administration is by far the most popular potential field of study among both women and men.
- Though young women are interested in breaking into traditionally male fields of study, career plans seem slower to change. The most common career plans among women under 25 who plan to work are teaching, retail employment, and cosmetology, while young men are most likely to strive for careers in engineering (Table 1). However, young women reported interest in virtually all career fields, from medicine and education to skilled labor and the armed forces, signaling the need for a wide variety of resources and opportunities to assist them in meeting their career goals.

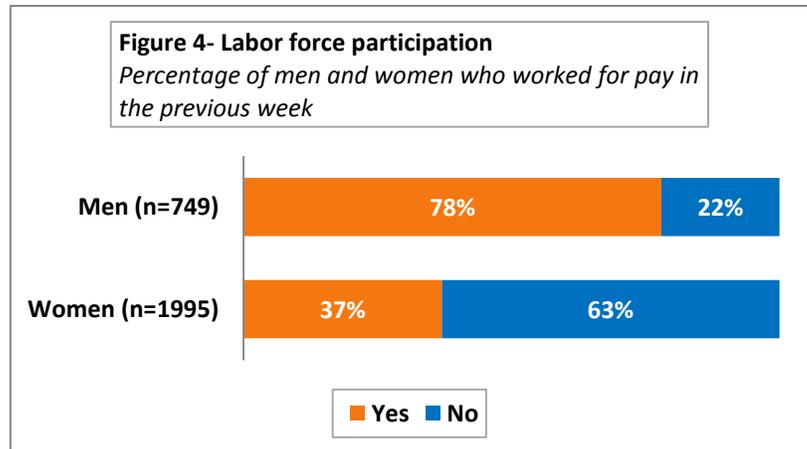
Table 1- Top fields of study for women under 25 (n=292)

Business Administration (15%)
Hard Sciences (11%)
Art and Design (10%)

Employment

A large majority of young Lebanese women are either already working or intend to pursue a career in the future. Twenty-seven percent of women under 25 are currently working and 60% plan to work in the future. Meanwhile, only 13% have no intention of pursuing a career.

Nevertheless, although a majority of young women say they intend to work, a minority of Lebanese women currently do so (37%).



- More than twice as many men as women report having worked for pay in the previous week (Figure 4).
- Labor force participation among women decreases with age: 44% of women 18 to 35 work and this number drops to 38% for the 36 to 55 age group. This may reflect women leaving the labor force once they marry or have children.
- By far the most common reason for women not working for pay is their duties as housewives, followed distantly by those who are full-time students. Among men, 26% cite a lack of available work (the most common response), while only 8% of women give this response (Table 2).
- An overwhelming majority of working women and men in Lebanon work only one job. Only 4% of working women and 8% of working men had more than one job in the previous week.

Table 2- Top 3 reasons for not working, women and men

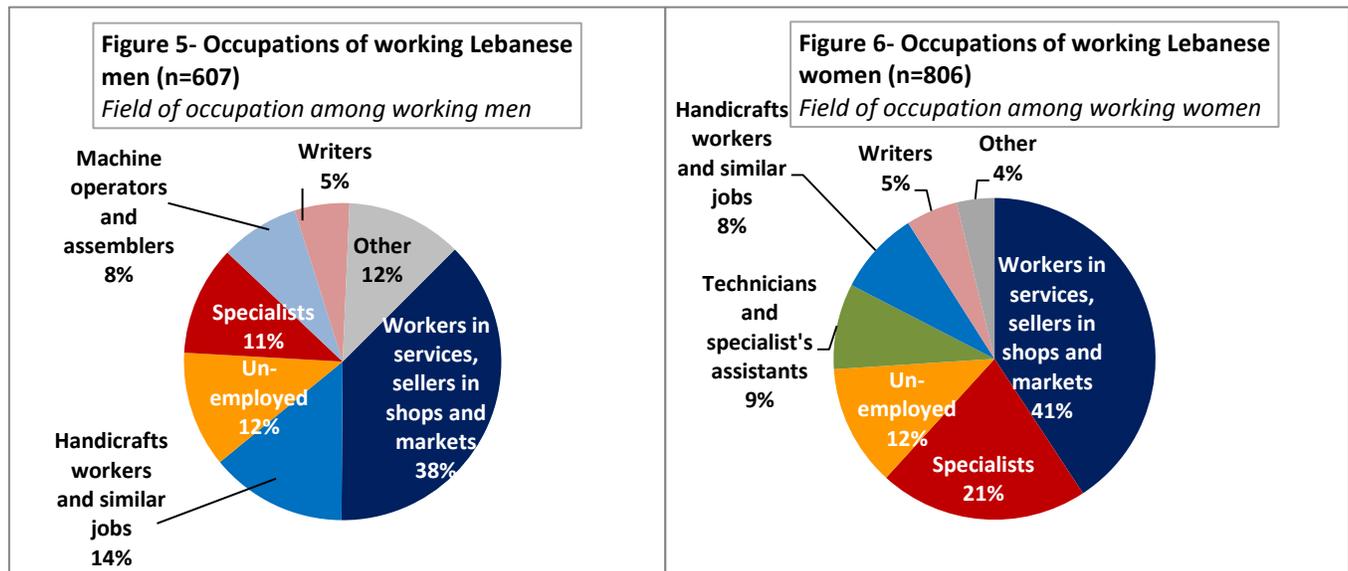
Women (n=1,233)	Men (n=153)
Housewife (58%)	No work available (26%)
Student (9%)	Student (25%)
No work available (8%)	Retired (17%)

Table 3- What is the primary activity at your place of work?

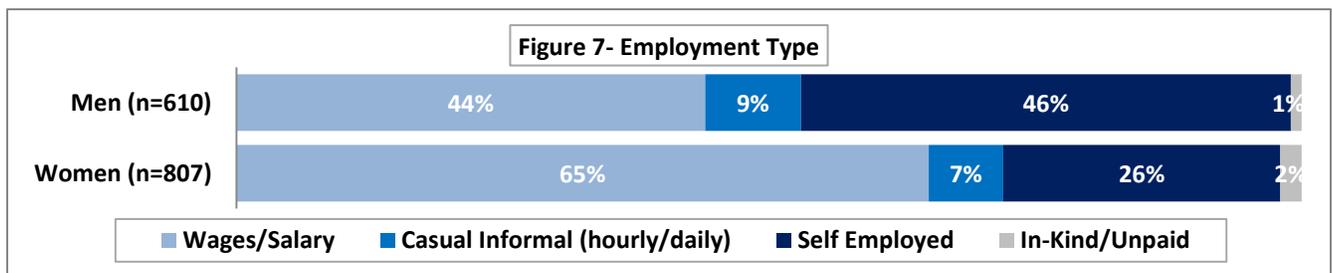
Women (n=806)	Men (n=607)
Trade-selling (43%)	Trade-selling (34%)
Services (20%)	Services (28%)
Education (16%)	Manufacturing/Processing (8%)
Health (6%)	Domestic services/catering (5%)
Manufacturing/Processing (5%)	Transport (5%)

Pluralities of both women and men work in the trade-selling industry, followed in both cases by service-sector occupations. Here the two populations diverge: women are more likely to work in the education or health fields while men are more likely to work in manufacturing or processing (Table 3).

- Across sects, women work in the same fields: trade-selling, services, and education.
- Overall, the occupational categories for women and men are similar (Figures 5 & 6).
- Four in ten working women are employed in the service sector or are sellers in shops and markets. In general, men work in similar fields as women, though there are exceptions.
- Men are less likely than women to be specialists and more likely to be handicrafts workers or similar employees.
- Eight percent of men work as machine operators and assemblers. Almost no women work in this occupation.



Women around the world are more likely than their male counterparts to work part-time in order to balance household and family duties. Lebanon is no exception, but after taking into account men’s much greater likelihood of working, among men and women who are employed, the differences between men’s and women’s employment patterns are surprisingly small. While women are twice as likely as men to report being employed part time (12% vs. 6%), more than three quarters of working women and eight in ten working men do so on a full-time basis. Ten percent of women and 11% of men work during their “free time”, while only 2% among either group works seasonally. Though women and men work in similar occupations and similar hours, there are important differences in how women are compensated for their work (Figure 7).



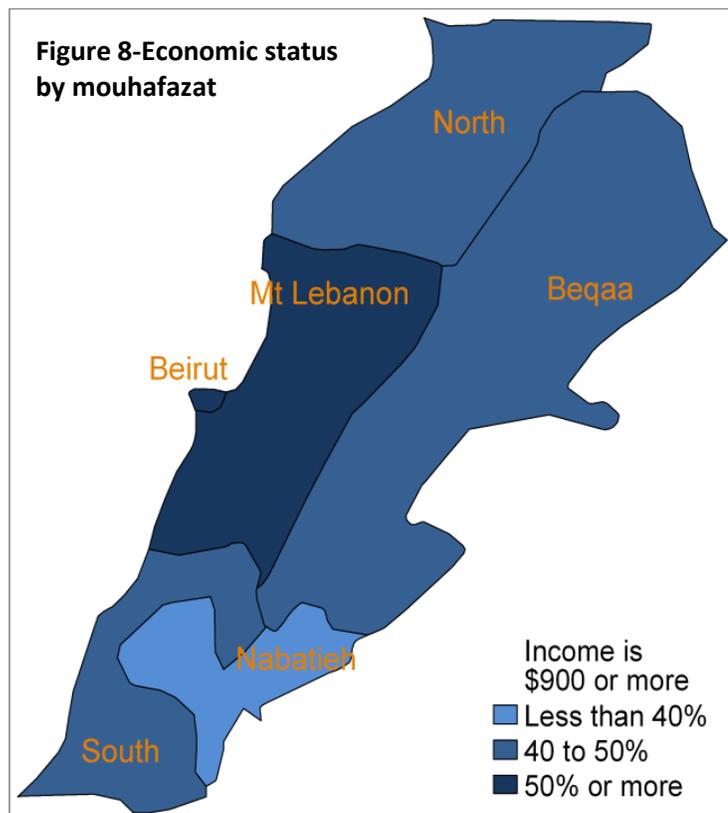
- Nearly two thirds of working women work for wages or a salary, compared to 44% of men. Similar numbers work informally, on an hourly basis (Figure 7).
- Forty-six percent of men are self-employed, compared to only 26% of women. Thus, men are likelier to own their own businesses while women are most likely to be employees.
- Shia Muslims are somewhat more likely than Sunni Muslims or Christians to work in the public sector, though a large majority of working members of all sects work in the private sector.
- There are no significant differences in the sectors in which women and men work. Among all workers, 86% work in the private sector, 9% work in the public sector, and the remainder work for government owned corporations or for families.

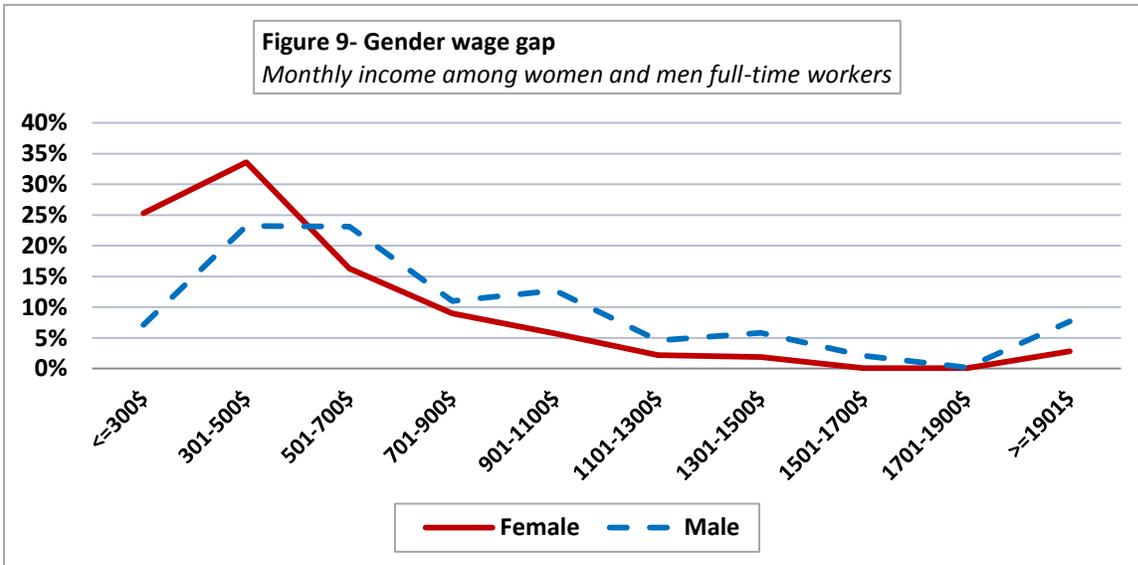
Economic Status

In Lebanon, 26% of working women earn less than \$300 monthly and 61% earn less than \$500 monthly.

There are distinct regional differences in earnings and labor force participation by governorates (*mouhafazat*).

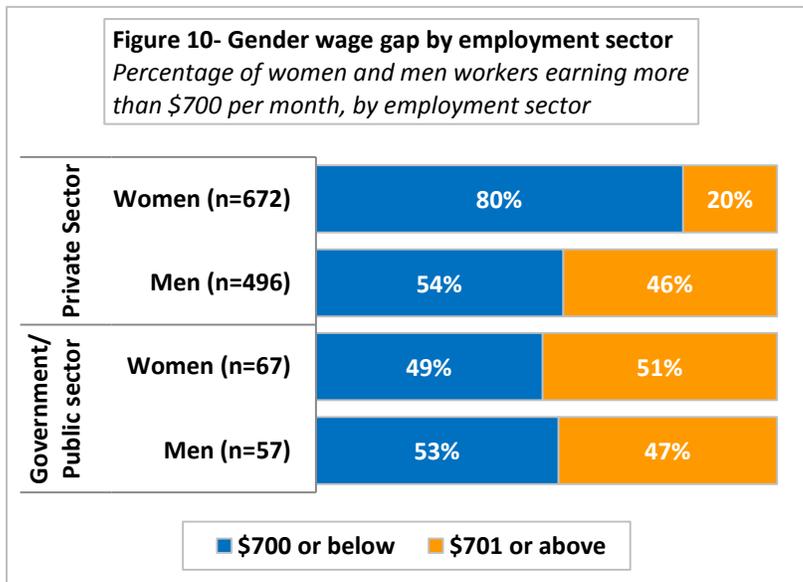
- Twenty percent or more of Lebanese households in governorates other than Beirut and Mt. Lebanon earn less than \$500 monthly.
- By governorate, 50% or more of Lebanese households in Beirut and Mt. Lebanon earn more than \$900 monthly. Households in Nabatieh are less likely than anywhere else to earn such wages (Figure 8).
- More than 40% of women residing in Beirut, the North and Beqaa work for pay. However, less than 25% of women living in the South work for pay.





Even when comparing only full-time workers, there is a significant wage gap between male and female workers in Lebanon (Figure 9).

- Three times as many men as women earn more than \$1101 per month and three times as many women as men earn less than \$300 each month.
- Of working women, 61% earn less than \$500 per month, while half that number of working men earns such low wages. Forty-five percent of men earn over \$700 per month, compared to just 22% of women.
- Women and men working in the public sector earn similar wages, but women working in the private sector earn substantially less than their male counterparts. This is no small problem, as 86% of all workers are employed in the private sector (Figure 10).
- In the public sector, women are actually slightly more likely than men to earn over \$700 per month (51% versus men’s 47%). This contrasts starkly with the private sector, where 46% of male employees earn over \$700 a month, in comparison to 20% of women.



Not surprisingly, younger women are also more likely to earn lower wages than their older counterparts. As wages often increase with experience, those who have been in the labor force longer can typically expect to earn higher wages.

- Among working Lebanese women ages 18 through 25, two in three earn \$500 or less monthly. Among those 36 to 55, a slight majority earns over \$500 per month (Figure 11).
- Education increases earning power: among working women with a university degree, 49% earn more than \$700 per month. Among those who have completed secondary school, only 21% earn that much. Among those with a complementary school education or less, more than three quarters earn \$500 per month or less.

