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Firma (signature) :EMAN HASSANEIN

Acknowledgment

“If you have a family, you have everything (Papa, Mum, Mohamed, Aya, Hamza)”

I am deeply grateful to my family and friends for their support throughout this journey. My heartfelt thanks to all of you for being there for me through thick and thin.

To my beloved grandmother, who loved me beyond measure, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for always believing in me. Though I lost you, your love and guidance continue to inspire me today and always. Thank you for your prayers and blessings that have helped me reach the end of this journey.

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Summary

Women's labor-force participation increases the economic value not only to their families but also to society. Although participation rates have increased in many countries, it remains the lowest in developing nations (Winkler, 2022). There are several factors driving women to participate in the labor force. On the other hand, there are some obstacles that hinder their full participation which include discrimination, societal norms, a lack of supporting regulations, and cultural barriers. These obstacles must be addressed to establish an enabling environment that fosters and supports women's labor-force participation (IMF, 2016).

The objective of the thesis is to study the inequalities between women and men in the labor force and how it affects women's participation in Africa compared to Europe. Moreover, how increasing women's participation in the labor force contributes to the economy.

Chapter One briefly introduces women's labor force participation and the different factors driving women to participate in the labor market. The rest of chapter one discusses different forms of inequality and discrimination in the labor market.

The first part of chapter two presents a brief introduction to the participation trends for women and men in the labor market worldwide. The second part of the chapter investigates the status of women's participation in the Middle East & North Africa, starting with an introduction to women's labor force participation and moving to the obstacles facing women in the labor market, including restrictive and discriminatory norms and practices, unpaid care work, difficulties balancing work and domestic demands, and gender pay discrimination. To provide a comparative analysis of the situation, the chapter also considers women's participation in the European labor force. Followed by chapter three discusses the impact of increasing women's labor force participation on the economies and the benefits of decreasing inequalities between women and men in the labor market for Europe, the Middle East & North Africa.

In order to shed light on the issue, we gathered the data by releasing a survey on social media (LinkedIn). Our objective was to collect data surrounding the inequalities experienced by women in the workforce, with a particular focus on addressing two key research questions: (1) Which kind of inequalities women faced in the labor market? (2) How it affects women's participation in the labor force? By answering these research questions, this survey will contribute to understanding the impact of this phenomenon on women's decisions to participate in the labor market in the Middle East & North Africa, and Europe.

Convenience sampling was selected as the ideal approach for collecting information from our target population due to its quick and efficient nature. Our goal was to reach out to a diverse group of people across the Middle East & North Africa, and Europe, which made online accessibility the appropriate way to carry out the study. Given the absence of a public list of participants, efficiency, and expediency were key factors in choosing convenience sampling as the most suitable technique for our research. The results are limited to the individuals who were surveyed and cannot be extended to the entire population as a probabilistic sample.

The total number of responses from the Middle East & North Africa, and Europe is 511 responses. The results presented that 88.6% of women who participated in the survey from the Middle East & North Africa face inequalities in the labor force. In comparison to Europe, 57.89 % of women responded that they faced inequalities in participating in the labor force. We examine the reasons for this high inequality between women and men in the Middle East & North African labor force compared to Europe. We found that inequalities between women and men affect women's participation in the labor force. Consequently, it's crucial to close the women's employment gap because it will increase women's opportunities to get a job by giving them equal opportunities to work and grow in their professions. Furthermore, women will contribute significantly to increasing productivity and growth.

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1. Introduction and literature review

“Discrimination in the labor force is vital economic issue. For the global economy to reach its potential, we must establish conditions that allow all women to fulfill their potential.”

Former IMF Economic Counsellor

Maurice Obstfeld, March 23, 2017.

Woman's labor force participation is a driver for the development. As more women enter the labor force, economies have the potential to expand faster because women bring additional abilities and skills to the workplace. However, women also remain affected by poverty, discrimination, and exploitation. So, investing in women's labor force participation sets a direct path toward gender equality and poverty elimination (Ostry & Alvarez, 2018). Consequently, the main objective of increasing the rates of woman's participation is that it benefits women directly and society indirectly (Hsieh, 2019).

The participation rates differ between countries, owing to social and economic factors such as traditional views of gender roles and lack of government support. To understand this differentiation, it is critical to consider the variation in non-economic elements, such as cultural values and governmental policies among nations. This evaluation will give valuable insight into which activities governments should take to boost women's labor-force participation (Winkler, 2022). However, there are some attempts to enhance women's participation. For instance, Governments attempted to stimulate labor force participation through active labor markets policies such as wage subsidy programs, training, and education to strengthen job search skills (Pignatti, 2020).

The participation rates of women and men in the labor force can be observed in figure 1. It illustrates that men still dominate higher levels of participation, exceeding that of women by 20% in 2018. Despite this gap, women's contribution to the workforce showed a participation rate of 60% among those aged 15 to 64 in 2018, while men showed an 80% participation rate.

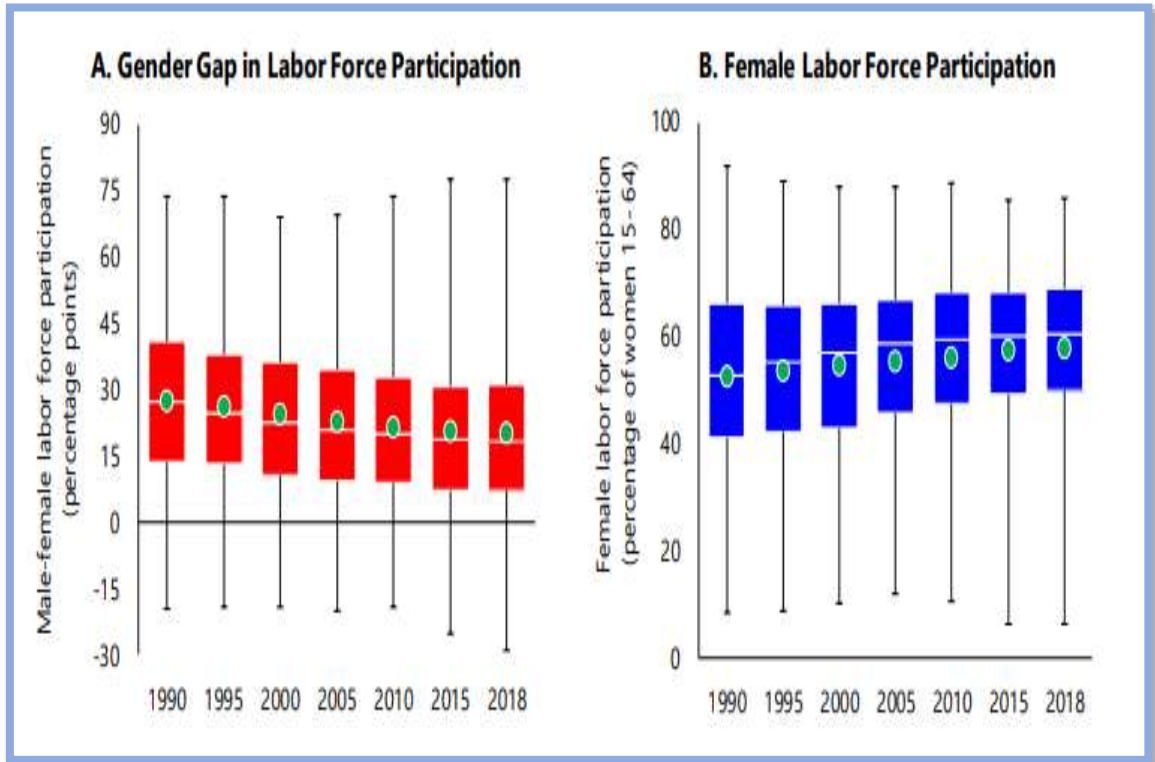


Figure 1: Men and Women labor force participation between (1990-2018)

Sources: World Bank, World Development Indicators (2018)

Gender discrimination has been a concerning issue in the labor force for decades, affecting millions of women globally. Despite huge progress toward women's empowerment and gender equality, many women still face unequal treatment and opportunities as men in the workplace. This discrimination in the labor market is a serious issue, particularly in developing nations where women face additional barriers owing to cultural and societal conventions. It can also contribute to a lower GDP since women's work will go under-assessed or unpaid, which in turn can impact their financial stability and mental health, and further spill over into the community (Kocinska & Puziak, 2018).

Discrimination in the labor market can take many forms, including unequal pay, lack of opportunities for advancement, and being passed for job opportunities. It can also involve harassment or other forms of mistreatment on the job. For example, one study found that, on average, women in Europe earn 16% less than men, a gender pay gap that has persisted for decades (European Commission, 2019). Another study found that women are less likely to be promoted to managerial positions, even when controlling for factors such as education and experience (Erdem & Özkara, 2019).

Furthermore, the gender pay gap not only perpetuates inequality but can also discourage women from participating in the labor force or limit their valuable talent and expertise is lost. This can ultimately lead to decreased efficiency within the workforce. Additionally, the lack of representation and advancement opportunities for women can lead to a loss of diverse perspectives and ideas, further reducing progress and innovation. World Bank (2019) reports that reducing the gender pay gap is not only a matter of social justice but is also essential for sustainable economic growth in the long-term.

Research by the International Monetary Fund highlights how the problem of gender inequality is imposing a high cost on the global economy. International Monetary Fund research on the economic impact of gender inequalities assumed that there are differences in access to education, healthcare, finance, legal and educational rights. These reasons include caring for children or family members and other productive activities outside the labor market, limiting women's employment opportunities (Kochhar, 2017).

Overall, it is important to address discrimination against women in the labor force to promote economic growth and development. Efforts to promote gender equality, such as equal pay for equal work and increased representation of women in leadership positions, can help to create a more inclusive and productive workforce.

1.1. Woman's participation in the labor force

Women represent half of the world's adults; therefore, their labor-force involvement is critical to achieving gender equality, sustainable economic growth, and household welfare. Unfortunately, in practically every country, women's labor force participation is much lower than men's (International Labour Organization, 2019).

The rates of participation in the labor market in 2021 showed about 46.6% of women participated in the labor force in the world. Figure 2 illustrates the overall pattern in women's labor force participation over regions. Participation in the labor market is high in regions such as Europe, Central Asia, and East Asia, with rates of 50.333% and 49.04%, respectively. On the other hand, in the Middle East & North Africa, the rate of women that participated in the labor force is the lowest among the other regions at 18.61% (World Bank, 2021).

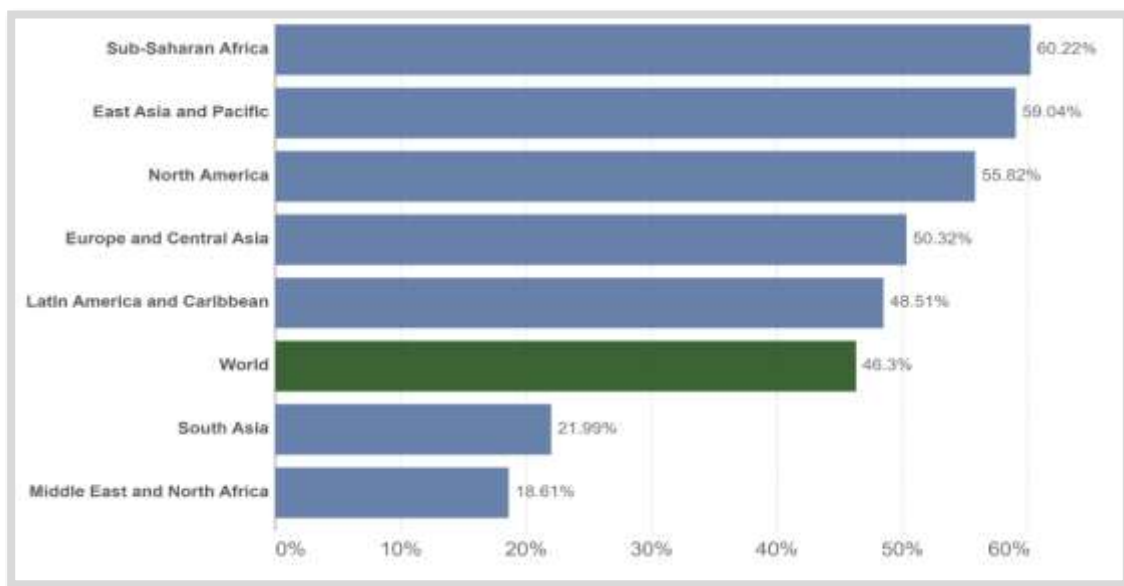


Figure 2: Women labor force participation by region (%), 2021

Source: World Bank 2021

Moreover, trends of women's labor force participation not only differ by region, but they also vary substantially across time within each region. As presented in Figure 3, in the Arab States & Northern Africa women's participation rates across time are low in Eastern Asia and Southern Asia, it has decreased noticeably since 1990. Meanwhile, women's labor force participation experienced robust growth over the same period in Europe. In the Middle East & North Africa, less than 30% of women participate in the labor force. However, participation rates have increased from 1990 to 2019 (Winkler, 2022).

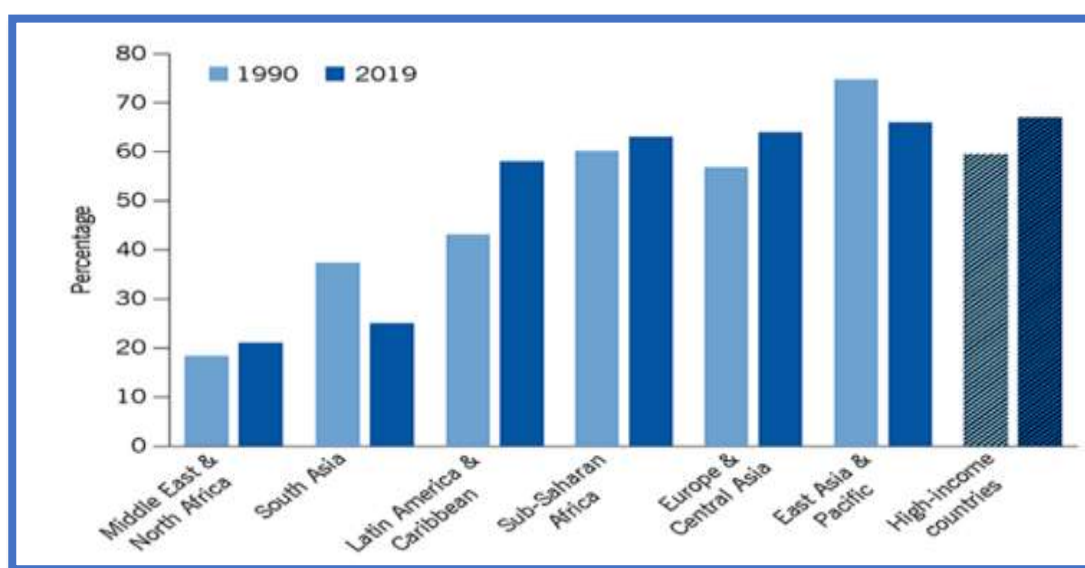


Figure 3: Women labor force participation rate ,1990-2019

Source: ILO Statistical Database 2020

Working from home has become a viable solution for women looking to balance personal and professional responsibilities. However, only one out of every ten women would instead work on-site. The pandemic has opened up opportunities for flexible work arrangements, and women view remote and hybrid work options as crucial factors when considering employment (Andrew, 2020). However, while flexible work may encourage gender equality, it can also limit women's access to high-status jobs. It is worth noting that family-friendly policies such as part-time work can help boost women's participation in the workforce, but this can come at a cost: women may miss out on opportunities for career development and lower their earning potential, as such policies are more often used by women than men, resulting in a reduction of women's job experience compared to that of their men peers (Blundell, 2020).

Moreover, women with disabilities have benefited significantly from the change toward remote and hybrid work. Working from home can help women with disabilities be healthier and more productive since having more control over their work environment makes it simpler to manage mobility challenges, muscle pain, and mental health disorders. In addition, when women with impairments can work remotely, they feel more appreciated and encouraged (McKinsey, 2022).

1.2. Main factors driving woman's labor market participation.

1.2.1. Family and household situation

Women are often responsible for caring for their children and other family members, which can present a significant barrier to their participation in the labor market (OECD, 2018). This is particularly challenging for women with young children, as the cost and accessibility of childcare can greatly impact their ability to work outside the home. The decision to have children can significantly shape a woman's employment opportunities, with the presence of children under the age of three having the largest negative impact on the likelihood of securing gainful employment (Heyne, 2017). In fact, research has shown that the provision of informal care can significantly reduce women's involvement in the labor force, highlighting the difficult trade-offs between caring for children and fulfilling paid employment (Kalsen, 2021).

According to several studies, a woman's marital status can be a significant factor in her labor market participation. However, there is a lack of consensus in the literature, and recent research suggests that being married does not necessarily decrease the likelihood of employment (Cipollone et al., 2014). Additionally, the economic situation of the couple plays a crucial role. For example, if the husband is unemployed, the woman may need to enter the labor market to supplement the loss of income. In most European countries, the husband's employment status has a significant impact on a woman's decision to enter the labor market, and those with unemployed partners are more likely to seek employment (Andrew & sevilla, 2020).

1.2.2. Social and cultural elements

The International Labour Organization (ILO) conducted a study that widespread social and cultural norms constraining women's workforce involvement. This includes beliefs prioritizing women's primary roles in the home and the notion that childcare and domestic duties are exclusively a woman's responsibility (ILO, 2018). Across various cultures, gender roles may dictate that women should remain in their homes and provide care for their families rather than engage in paid work. Such societal expectations significantly limit women's labor market participation opportunities and restrict their prospects for economic independence (Jayach, 2021).

It is widely known that social norms and culture impact how we perceive the world and our role. The gender roles are "naturally" distributed, with a woman better suited to household and child-rearing responsibilities and men working outside the home. Woman labor force participation is defined as a rational choice between joining the labor market and being a full-time housewife based on the advantages and disadvantages of the two choices (Collins, 2021). Sometimes social norms are a barrier to woman's labor force participation in developing countries. Internationally, about one in two adult women works, compared to three out of every four men. For instance, cultural and religious norms may discourage women from attending school in some countries. This can result in women needing more skills and qualifications to access specific jobs. Additionally, many workplaces have been known to display gender bias,

making it difficult for women to be hired, promoted, or compensated fairly (Carli & Linda, 2020).

Moreover, laws restricting women's ability to work or limiting their access to certain types of employment can effectively discourage women from participating in the labor force. Such restrictive measures can include public harassment and violence against women, as well as limitations on their social connections and freedom of movement. In addition, managing household finances can also play a significant role in discouraging women from pursuing employment outside of the home (Stefanie, 2017).

On the other hand, Women's personal preferences are an essential driver of labor market participation within the constraints set by prevailing social norms and socioeconomic factors. For example, some women may prefer to stay at home due to a lack of jobs that are "socially acceptable" for women because their role within the household may be perceived as more valuable (economically and socially) (ILO, 2017).

As figure 4 shows, a woman's decision whether to participate or not in the labor market involves a complex set of fundamental drivers in conjunction with life-cycle circumstances, which can be broadly classified as (i) personal preferences, (ii) socio-economic constraints, and (iii) gender role conformity. These three fundamental drivers are determined by the prevailing social norms in the society that a woman inhabit (ILO, 2017)

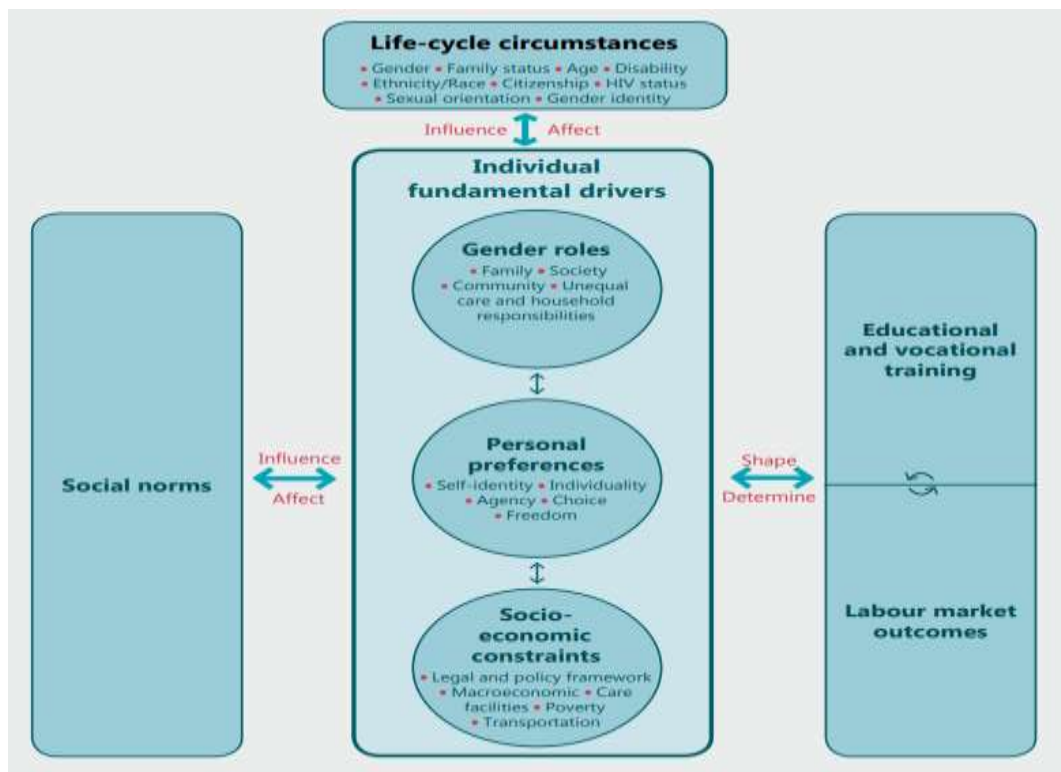


Figure 4: Factors driving the gender gap in the labor market

Source: ILO World Employment Social Outlook 2017

1.2.3. Tax policies and labor market policies

Tax policies and the income tax structure in several countries create a secondary earner penalty reducing the labor market return for the wife, usually the secondary earner so that woman will give up on labor market participation. Women can be encouraged to enter the work field through the tax system. Several countries offer tax credits, and deductions to working women, which can decrease their tax burden and make employment more financially rewarding. For example, give child tax credits, which provide financial aid to working women with dependent children. Moreover, tax laws help working women to continue in the workforce rather than leave to care for their children full-time (Klasen, 2019).

Labor market policies are also crucial for women to participate in the labor force. For example, labor market policies aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for women in the labor market, such as anti-discrimination laws, and policies aimed at promoting a woman to higher positions, such as company board quotas (requirements to which

women have a specific percentage of board members). They should positively influence the decision of a woman to participate in the labor market (OECD, 2021).

1.2.4. Work-time flexibility

Part-time employment is frequently viewed as facilitating women's integration into the labor market by allowing them to balance market jobs with family duties and combining the job with family responsibilities, decreasing work-life conflict. Also, it is often associated with lower pay, fewer job quality, and fewer career opportunities. As a result, married women with family obligations are more likely to work part-time because it correlates with better satisfaction and work-life balance (Berghammer & Riederer, 2018).

Many women face time inequities due to the unequal distribution of care duties, which limits their capacity to engage in the labor market and work in the positions they choose. Furthermore, unequal household duty limits women's job possibilities to occupational arrangements that provide time flexibility and care obligations management (Azcona, 2020). Given women's disproportionate care burden, women may place a high value on flexible work hours, maternity leave, or childcare help when entering the labor field. However, in the lack of maternity leave, institutional and informal childcare, and flexible work arrangements (temporal flexibility or part-time work), women are forced to rely on the informal economy or self-employment to manage work and household duties (Chung & Lippe, 2020).

1.3. Discrimination in the labor market

Gender discrimination in the labor market refers to the unfair treatment of individuals based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability. This can take many forms, such as denial of employment opportunities, and unequal pay for the same work being passed over for promotions due to discrimination. Discrimination can significantly negatively impact the career prospects and economic well-being of individuals (OECD, 2019).

1.3.1. Discrimination in wages

Discrimination in wages between men and women workers with similar skills and occupations is more significant in formal employment than informal employment. On the other hand, discrimination in paid work refers to the unfair treatment of individuals based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability, in terms of their employment and pay. This can include being denied employment opportunities or promotions due to discrimination, as well as being paid less than similarly qualified workers who are not members of a protected class (Aumayr & Christine, 2021).

Discrimination in paid work can have significant negative impacts on the career prospects and economic well-being of individuals who experience it, and it can also contribute to broader social and economic inequality. It is important for employers to ensure that their hiring and promotion practices do not discriminate against any group of people and that their workplace is inclusive and welcoming to all (Adams, 2020).

There are some factors contribute to increase the gender pay gap (Blau & Kahn, 2017):

- Discrimination and bias in employment and salary choices, both conscious and unconscious.
- Women and men labor in distinct industries and jobs, with female dominated industries and jobs paying less.
- Inadequate workplace flexibility to accommodate caring and other commitments, particularly in senior positions.
- Women's disproportionate share of unpaid caring and domestic work.

1.3.2. Women are more responsible for household duties.

Unpaid care and home labor have recently received much attention, especially concerning COVID-19. According to recently revealed United Nations surveys and publications, while both genders' unpaid domestic workloads grew, women globally held more of the home duties and care obligations during the epidemic (UN Women, 2020).

Based on the recent surveys (Charmes,2019), women conduct nearly three-quarters (76.4%) of unpaid household care work globally, while men perform 23.6%. Women in wealthier countries provide 65% of unpaid care, whereas women in underdeveloped

countries provide 80.2% of unpaid care. No country appears to achieve gender equity in home unpaid care allocation (UN Women, 2019).

Concerning the gender care divide, COVID-19 shutdowns exacerbated the burden of unpaid care for women, deteriorating working conditions, particularly for working mothers with small children. Furthermore, rising demand for care employment due to school lockdowns, daycare, and eldercare facilities has pushed women to forego paid work. School and childcare closures were a causal driver of the reduction of paid work hours for parents because these closures forced parents, especially women, to take on additional unpaid care work in countries as diverse as Italy and Spain (Farré & Boca, 2020).

In many countries, women's work hours were decreased borne disproportionately by employees. These mothers had to choose between working and caring for their children at home. While women's work hours declined across the board, nations with well-designed care leave regimes and employment retention programs were frequently better able to prevent further declines in women's work (Alon, 2021). According to the European Parliament (2021) study, this would most certainly have a negative long-term impact on the nature of women's labor market losses.

2. Trends in the labor market

2.1. Introduction

The global labor market shows significant differences in participation, owing primarily to developing economies. In 2017 and 2018, women's workforce participation stood at 49.4%, which is 26.7 % lower than men's participation rate. This gender gap in workforce participation has remained constant since 2017 and is attributable to a long-term decline in both men's and women's participation rates, as shown in table1 below. Specifically, between 1997 and 2017, the overall participation rate decreased from 65.7% to 62.9%, with men experiencing a greater decline than women, thereby reducing the gap between women and men. However, in the last decade, both men's and women's participation rates have remained relatively stable. The largest gender gap in workforce participation is observed among women in emerging nations, with a difference of 30.6 % (ILO, 2017).

Looking to participation gaps were to worsen and remain unchanged in most regions. In Northern Africa, there is a significant difference in the participation rates of men and women in the workforce, with women behind at 51.2 %, which is lower than the Arab States' gender gap of 55.2 %. In 2017, the labor force participation rate for women in the region was limited at 22.9%. However, there has been progress in reducing the gender gap in labor force participation rates in Northern Africa, and this improvement has continued up to 2021 (ILO, 2017).

On the other hand, the difference in labor force participation rates between men and women in Northern, Southern, and Western Europe has decreased by 8.3 %, with a gap of 12.5 % in 2017. This change is mainly due to a reduction in male participation rates, while there has been an increase in the rates for women, which reached 51.3% in 2017 (ILO, 2017).

Country/region	1997-2017	2017		2018			2018-21	
	Gap	♂	♀	Gap	♂	♀	Gap	
World		76.1	49.4	26.7	76.0	49.3	26.7	➡
Developing countries		82.6	70.3	12.3	82.6	70.3	12.3	➡
Emerging countries		77.5	46.9	30.6	77.4	46.7	30.7	⬆️
Developed countries		68.0	51.9	16.1	67.9	51.8	16.1	⬇️
Northern Africa		74.1	22.9	51.2	74.1	22.9	51.2	⬇️
Sub-Saharan Africa		76.3	64.6	11.7	76.4	64.7	11.7	➡
Latin America and the Caribbean		78.3	52.7	25.6	78.3	52.7	25.6	⬇️
Northern America		68.3	56.2	12.1	68.1	56.1	12.0	➡
Arab States		76.4	21.2	55.2	76.3	21.3	55.0	⬇️
Eastern Asia		76.8	61.3	15.5	76.6	60.9	15.7	⬆️
South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific		81.2	58.8	22.4	81.1	58.8	22.3	➡
Southern Asia		79.4	28.6	50.8	79.5	28.7	50.8	⬇️
Northern, Southern and Western Europe		63.8	51.3	12.5	63.6	51.2	12.4	⬇️
Eastern Europe		68.1	53.0	15.1	67.9	52.9	15.0	⬇️
Central and Western Asia		73.5	44.1	29.4	73.5	44.1	29.4	➡

Table 1: Labour force participation rate by sex and gender gap (%), 1997-2021

Source: ILO's Trends Econometric Models 2017

2.2. Middle East & North Africa

2.2.1. Women's labor force participation

Women labor force participation in the Middle East & North Africa area was low for various reasons. For example, cultural and social norms such as traditional gender roles and expectations in many Middle East & North African nations focus more on women's duties as caregivers and homemakers. In addition, support services like childcare are limited, making it difficult for women to manage work and family commitments. As a result, it might discourage their participation in the labor field (ILO, 2021).

As presented in Figure 5, the participation rate for women between 15-64 in the Middle East & North Africa is the lowest globally, estimated at 21.3 % in 2019, less than half of the participation rate globally. The rate for young women ages 15 to 24 stands at 11.3 % compared to the global rate of 32.7 % for the same year. Egypt is not an exception; it has been experiencing a sharp decline in youth and total women participation rates. The women participation rate for those aged 15–24 stood at 11.9 % in 2019.

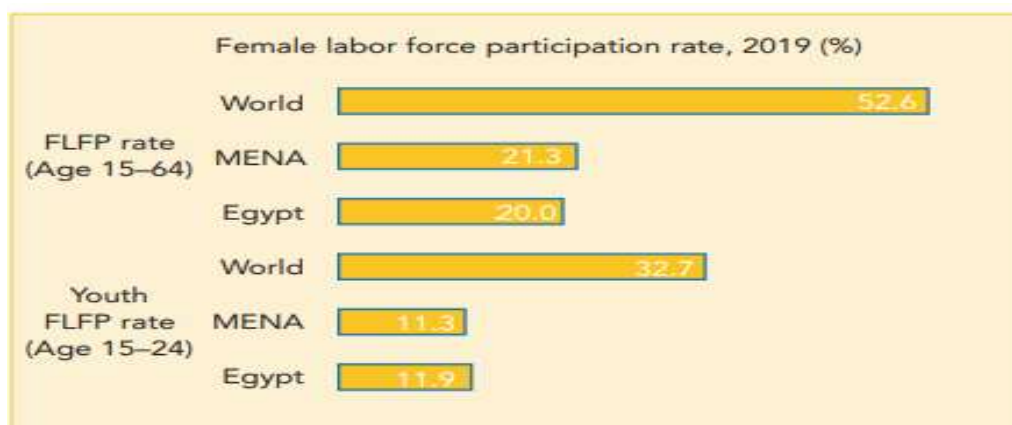


Figure 5: Middle East & North Africa women labor force participation rate, 2019

Source: World Bank data 2019

In the Middle East & North Africa, women have a higher unemployment rate. As illustrated in Figure 6, unemployment is a regional challenge for both men and women in the Middle East & North Africa region, the ratio of women unemployment has increased by 0.5% since 2000, while the ratio of men unemployment has decreased by 3% since 2000 and remains relatively unchanged globally (ILO, 2019).

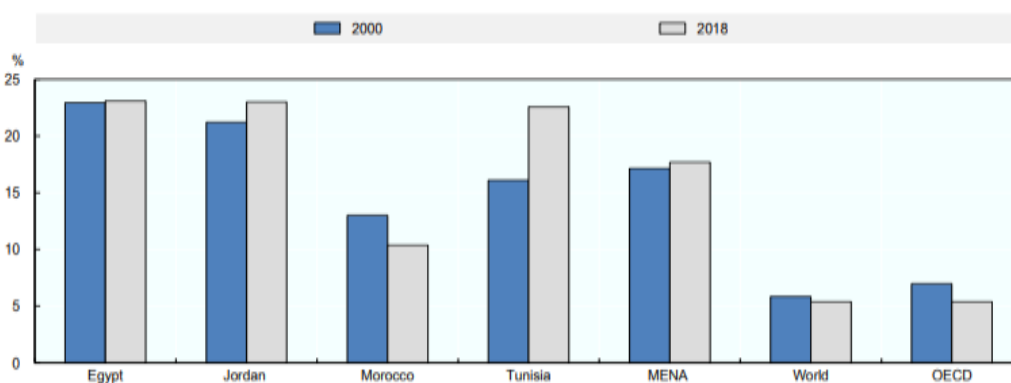


Figure 6: Women unemployment rates are on the increase regionally
Unemployment rates for women older than 15 years, 2000 and 2018

Source: ILO 2019

The Middle East & North Africa region, being the second youngest in the world, is facing significant challenges in providing quality job opportunities for its young workforce, particularly young women. It is crucial to enhance the performance of the youth in the labor market to ensure the well-being of the younger generation, boost the economy's productivity, and reinforce social cohesion. However, labor market prospects have continued to worsen in the region (ILO, 2019).

The employment gap is frequently caused due to meager woman participation in private sector work; Figure 7 demonstrates that woman's economic shares in these countries are low, varying from 7% in Yemen to 30% in Lebanon. In several nations, the government sector employs much more women than men. Women in the geographical area continue to face significant structural inequalities in labor force participation, which are rooted in social contracts and non-inclusive management policies and strategies (ILO & ESCWA, 2021).

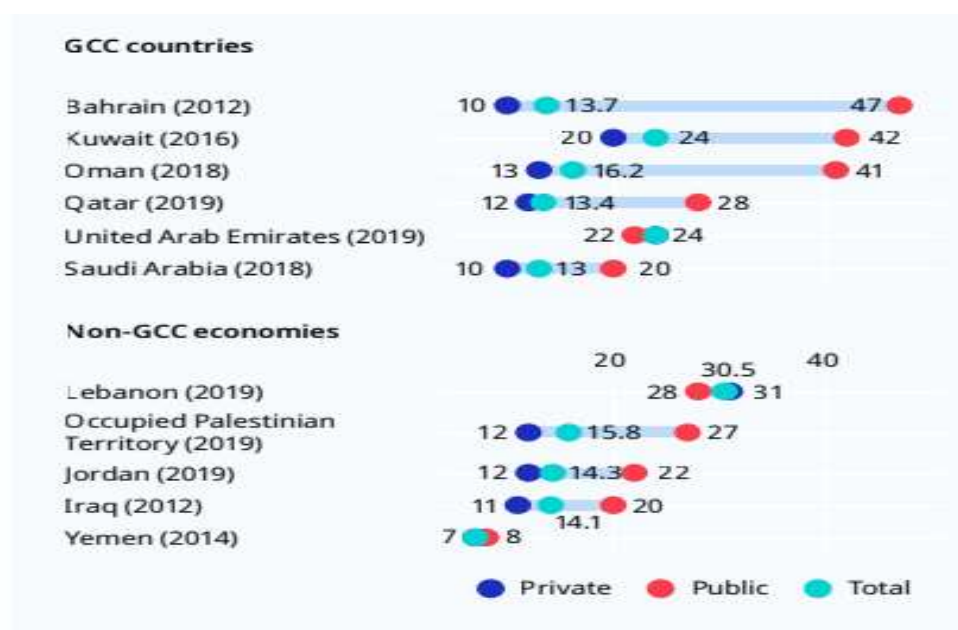


Figure 7: Women share of employment by institutional sector in the Arab States region.

Source: ILO STAT 2020

Women's participation rate in the labor force in the private sector in the Middle East & North Africa region was 27.5% in 2020. Compared to the public sector, the participation rate was higher, at 41.9% (ILO, 2021). However, private sector employment is not deemed welcoming to women due to extended working hours, poor job quality, and working conditions (Assaad, Krafft, & Selwaness 2022; Economic

Research Forum & UN Women 2020). So, it is more challenging to balance unpaid care labor and employment in the private sector.

As a result, women tend to seek positions in the public sector due to their shorter work hours, safer and more socially acceptable working conditions, and additional benefits such as social security, maternity leave, and other care arrangements (Ranji & Long, 2021). Moreover, the structure of public sector employment and its accompanying benefits allow women to balance their care responsibilities with their participation in the labor force. This is particularly important in the Middle East & North Africa, where women's role in unpaid care work in their homes is a crucial requirement that continues regardless of their employment status (Assaad, Krafft & Selwaness, 2022). So, there is a notable concentration of employed women in public sector positions in Egypt (43%), Jordan (49%), and, to a lesser extent, Tunisia (30%). Conversely, women working in unpaid positions are more prevalent in Morocco and Sudan, which have stronger agricultural sectors (Krafft & Assaad, 2020).

2.2.2. Examining gender inequality in the Middle East & North Africa labor force

Despite some progress in recent years, women in the Middle East & North Africa region continue to face significant challenges when it comes to accessing equal opportunities and realizing their full potential in the workforce. Discrimination against women is a long-standing pattern in the Middle East & North Africa. Before the covid pandemic, gender inequalities in labor force participation and employment were significant. This discrimination can take many forms, such as wage inequalities, income inequalities, social norms, household work, limited access to certain types of jobs, and workplace harassment. Moreover, facing various barriers to their participation in the labor force, including cultural attitudes towards gender roles, lack of childcare options, and legal and institutional barriers (Krafft & Marouani, 2021).

2.2.2.1. Income inequalities

The women labor-force participation rate is lower due to many women being housewives and therefore unpaid. Gender inequalities in various occupations have led to an increase in private-sector job prospects for women, but this is often inversely proportional to public-sector downsizing. Despite these factors, women continue to earn less than their male counterparts, exacerbating economic disparities. Although there has been an increase in the number of women entering different professions, Arab women face wage inequality due to being denied high-wage positions and being forced to work in low-skill, low-wage jobs (Abdou D. et al., 2019).

2.2.2.2. Gender pays discrimination.

Although women have demonstrated themselves in various occupations, gender stereotyping against women is still prevalent in Arab society. Arab women suffer from the wage gap, despite the increase in women in some jobs. Women in the private sector in the Middle East & North Africa, like women globally, are paid less than men on average. It is estimated that men employees earn 16% more than women employees for each hour worked globally (ILO, 2019). The raw gender pay gap across OECD member nations is proximately 14% (OECD, 2018). Individual characteristics, such as education, skill, and experience, can partially explain differences in the remuneration of men and women. the gap may be due to nonlinearity in hours worked and shorter hours worked by women, which results in a disproportionate reduction in earnings (Goldin, 2014).

The ILO study sheds light on the area by bringing together data from Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia (ILO, 2019). After considering four variables education, age, working-time status, and public and private sector employment. The gender pay disparity in Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia ranges between 13% and 28%, as shown in Figure 8. Gender pay inequalities are more significant in all three nations when referring to monthly salaries rather than hourly wages men work longer hours than women, who are more likely to work part-time. In Jordan, the pay gap between men and women is more significant in the private sector, where men earn 7% more than women, compared to the public sector, women earn 13% more than men. In Tunisia, the gender pay gap is also greater in the public sector, where women earn 20% more than men, compared to the private sector, men earn 15% more than women. This is attributed to

the fact that women are more likely to work in the public sector, especially if they are well-educated (ILO, 2019).



Figure 8: Women earn less than men on gender pay gaps by country and income group

Source: ILO (2019), Global Wage Report 2018/2019

2.2.2.3. Addressing gender inequalities in unpaid care work

Before the pandemic, the Middle East & North Africa had the highest woman-to-men ratio of time spent on unpaid care labor of any world. The issues of integrating care work and working outside the house drove many Middle East & North African women to abandon their jobs after marriage. Consequently, women's labor force participation rates in the Middle East & North African labor markets have been low (Krafft, 2021). Due to COVID-19, women and girls experienced an increased burden of unpaid care work. With the closure of education and care facilities, parents had to dedicate more time to childcare, elderly and sick care, and household chores. This resulted more workload for women and girls in terms of unpaid care work (UN women, 2020).

Middle East & North Africa have the world's highest gender imbalance in unpaid care and domestic work. Women in Middle East & North Africa spend 4.7 times more time than men on unpaid care tasks. In addition, women spend 3.2 times as much time as men's doing unpaid care work internationally (4.1 times more in Asia and the Pacific, 3.4 times more in Africa) (ILO, 2018).

Table 2 illustrates the pandemic care work and employment patterns by country. The ratio of women's unpaid care labor to men's unpaid care work in the Middle East & North Africa area reaches a maximum of 19:1 in Jordan (Economic Research Forum & UN Women, 2020), with women completing an average of 19 hours per week of unpaid care work. Egypt comes second, with a 12:1 inequality between men and women in unpaid care work (Economic Research Forum & UN Women, 2020). In Morocco, women work seven times as many hours as men doing unpaid care jobs (Charmes, 2019). In Tunisia, women spend six times as much time as men doing unpaid care duties (Charmes, 2019; Economic Research Forum & UN Women, 2020).

	Ratio of women's time spent in care work/men's	Women's employment rate in 2019	% of women's employment in public sector	% of women's employment in non-wagework
Egypt	12:1	12%	43%	32%
Jordan	19:1	10%	49%	3%
Morocco	7:1	19%	9%	36%
Sudan	N/A	In 2014: 26%	12%	73%
Tunisia	6:1	19%	30%	20%

Table 2: The pandemic care work and employment patterns by country

Source: Economic Research Forum and UN Women 2020

Women's time spent on unpaid care labor is strongly related to the presence of children. According to recent research from Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia, the presence of children under the age of three is related to the highest and most significant increases in unpaid care, followed by the presence of children aged 3-5 years. Conversely, unpaid care work did not increase much with the existence of school-age children (aged 6-17), owing in part to their consistent attendance at school. As a result, there is a significant correlation between school closures, interruptions caused by COVID-19, and changes in women's time spent on unpaid care duties throughout the pandemic (Economic Research Forum and UN Women, 2020).

In the Middle East & North Africa women spend significantly more time than men on unpaid care and household duties, leaving less time for paid work. As a result, women bear the majority of the responsibility of unpaid care in every country worldwide. Despite the average time per day that women in the Middle East & North Africa spend the same amount of time per day on unpaid care and household labor as women in other areas (4.9 hours in Middle East & North Africa versus 4.7 hours worldwide), the regional gender gap is significant and is the second highest worldwide. This means that women undertake most unpaid care work, as presented in Figure 9 (Charmes, 2019).

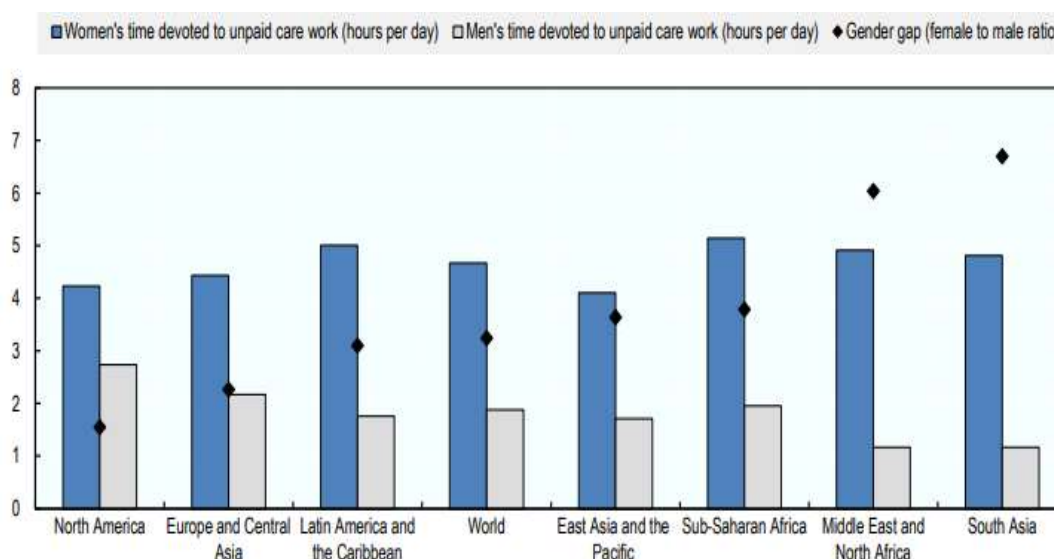


Figure 9: Time spent on unpaid care work and gender gaps (2019)

Source: OECD (2019)

Arranging childcare can be complicated, as external childcare services are costly, and income may not be enough to pay those expenditures. Households with conventional gender roles may also determine working hours, availability for work-related travel, and other factors. The inability to pay for daycare is a significant limitation (Unicef Egypt, 2019). It also restricts women's employment possibilities and employment. Employers may be reluctant to hire women employees because they believe family duties will make them less productive and more difficult to keep (Bertrand & Duflo, 2017). In Egypt, for example, 60% of employers said they prefer to recruit males. Labor demand is also often low, exacerbating women's difficulties in finding work (Assaad & Krafft, 2022).

2.2.2.4. The impact of social norms on women's inclusion in the labor market

Women's labor force participation in the Middle East & North Africa region is largely driven by cultural and social norms. Traditional gender roles and restricted social norms impose additional restrictions on women's labor-force participation decisions. These values are frequently anti-equality in the workplace (Verick, 2018).

A 'traditional' gender ideology encourages a strict gender division of tasks. Women devote themselves to household and childcare, whereas men devote themselves to work outside the home, in the labor market (Lomazzi et al., 2018). Hence, most unpaid care labor is performed solely due to the restrictions imposed by cultural norms, and a lack of alternative public services (Alonso et al., 2019).

Looking first at the socio difficulties, women's illiteracy rates are substantially higher than men's due to uneven access to education and information. These difficulties result from customs and biases that foster discrimination against women and allow fundamental rights, such as access to healthcare and education, to be disregarded. Furthermore, legislation in Arab nations discriminates against women in various ways, and their access to justice is severely constrained (Salman, 2019). Men were more educated and literate than their wives thus, there were lower educational enrolment rates for girls in studying. Early marriage may be the reason why women drop out of school, forcing them to work in low-paying sectors. This situation maintains generations of women at the same level of education. Educating future mothers improves not only individual employment opportunities but also health, cognitive skills, grades, educational attainment, and future employment opportunities for children according to Malta et al. (2021).

In some cases, concerns about sexual harassment and abuse while commuting or at work are a barrier to women's employment in situations where such harassment is common. The differences across societies in how common public harassment is seemed partly due to differences in the social acceptability of such behavior. That is, women are personally faced with sexual harassment and assault. At the same time, ensuring safety may mean restricting relationships with men that a woman herself may not deem dangerous or uncomfortable but unacceptable to women's families or the community (El Feki et al., 2017).

2.3. In Europe

2.3.1. Women's labor force participation

Before COVID-19, Although women's labor force participation rate has improved dramatically in recent years, inequities can be observed in labor force participation in Europe. Based on the European Institute for Gender Equality, Inequalities are the outcome of biased attitudes and practices and unequal allocation of care tasks in the family (Profeta, 2021). Figure 10 illustrates that employment rates for individuals aged 20-64 differed between men and women workers in European countries. The average employment rate for women was 68.2%, while the corresponding rate for men was 80%. However, there were variations across countries, with Italy and Greece having rates slightly above 50% for women and Sweden closer to 80% (Eurostat, 2019).

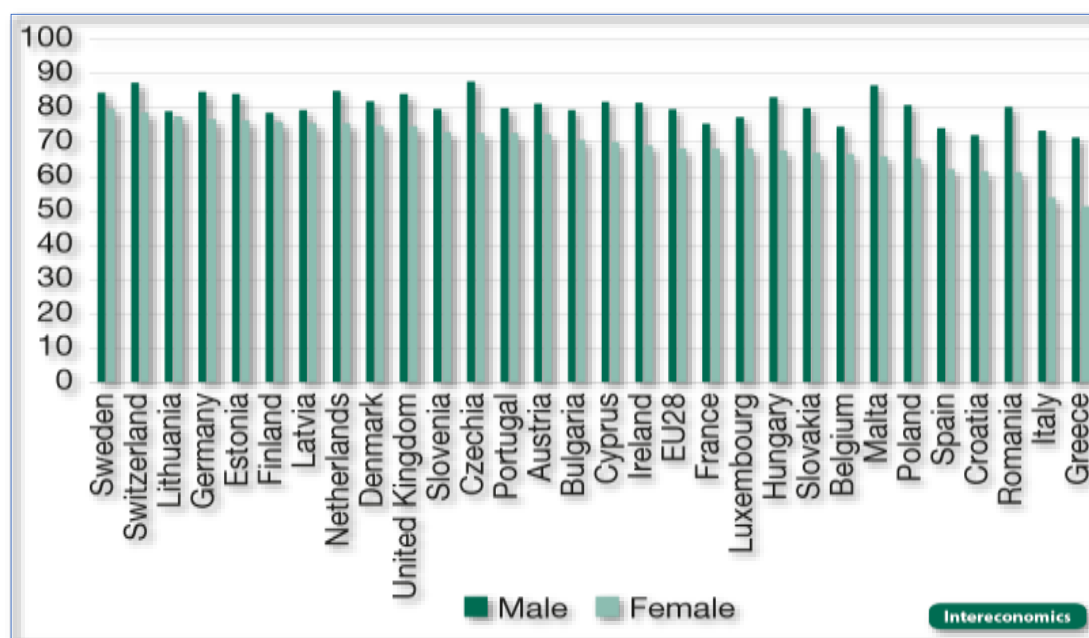


Figure 10: Labor force participation rates for women and men aged 20 - 64 in European countries before COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: Eurostat 2019

In 2021, women in approximately half of EU countries faced higher unemployment rates than men. This trend has also persisted across the EU as a whole, with the gender unemployment gap widening from 0.3% in 2009 to 0.7%. Currently, the unemployment rate stands at 6.7% for men and 7.4% for women. While the situation varies from country to country, Greece has the highest gender unemployment gap in the EU, with unemployed women representing 8.9% compared to 11.4% for men, resulting in a 7.5%

gender gap. Spain and Italy follow closely, with a 3.6% and 1.9% higher unemployment rate for women compared to men respectively. In contrast, Poland, Ireland, France, Austria, and Denmark all have an unemployment gender gap of 0.2% or less in 2021. On the other hand, the unemployment rate for men was higher than that for women in 12 EU countries, with Latvia having the widest gap at 1.9% (Eurostat, 2021).

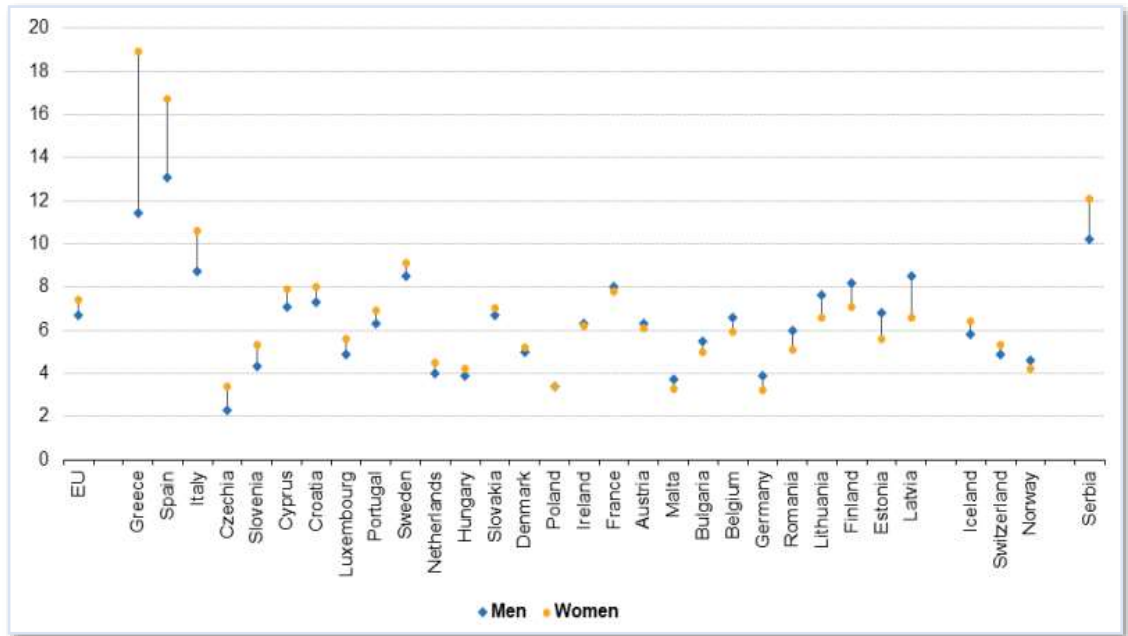


Figure 11: Unemployment rate by gender

Source: Eurostat 2021

The structure of the EU labor market improved significantly between 2009 and 2021. Figure 12 shows the labor force rate trend by sex and age group. The employment rate varies significantly from one category to another. The employment rate for young women aged 15-24 was 30.3%, while young men had an employment rate of 35.0%, as of 2021. Moreover, 85.7% of men in the age range of 25-54 were employed compared to a lower rate of 75.1% for women in the same age group. The employment rate for men aged 55-64 was 67.0%, while it was 54.3% for women in the same age bracket, indicating that the gender employment gap grows wider as people age (Eurostat, 2021).

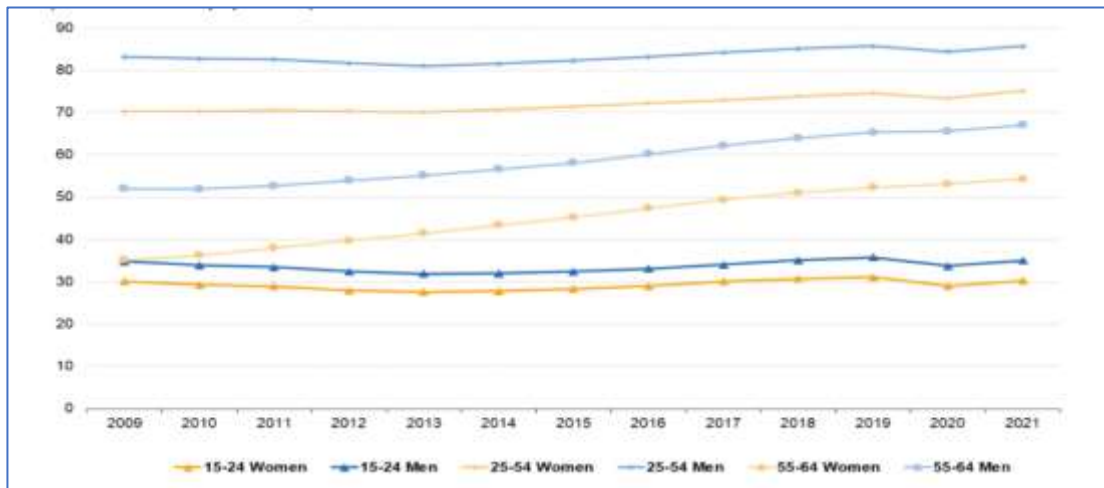


Figure 12: Employment rate trend by age group and sex, Europe, 2009-2021

Source: Eurostat 2021

2.3.2. Unpaid work

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, women's engagement in unpaid care work in Europe was high. In comparison, around 91% of women with children spend at least an hour each day on housework, compared to 30% of men with children. Housework takes about 2.3 hours each day for working women. Gender gaps in household involvement are greatest among couples with children, accounting for 61%. Figure 15 demonstrates, inequalities in unpaid care tasks among women and men (Eurofound, 2016).

The parental role model plays a significant role in reinforcing gender roles when it comes to household chores, ensuring that they are perpetuated from one generation to the next (Giménez-Nadal et al., 2019). However, despite the 18-24 age group having the smallest disparity between men and women in household participation at 20%, only 19% of young men devote an hour a day to cooking and housework, compared to 39% of young women, as depicted in Table 3.

	Women	Men	Gender gap (p.p.)
Family			
Couple with children	91	30	61
Lone parents	86	60	26
Age			
18 to 24	39	19	20
25 to 49	81	31	50
50 to 64	83	33	50
Education			
Low	81	30	51
Medium	78	31	47
High	74	35	39
Country of birth			
Native born	78	32	46
Foreign born	82	31	51
Disability			
With disabilities	78	40	38
Without disabilities	78	30	48
Overall			
Population, 18+ years	78	32	46

Table 3: Women & men participation in the housework in Europe

Source: Euro found 2016

During COVID-19 quarantines, there has been a significant increase in unpaid care responsibilities for women. As a result, women have experienced a deterioration in their employment and housing situations, especially for working parents with young children. With school lockdowns, babysitting, and elderly care facilities closed, women have had to bear the brunt of increased demands for care work, causing many to leave paid jobs. According to European Parliament analysis, it could have a long-term detrimental impact on vulnerable women's welfare support rights and future income. Moreover, some additional measures linked to work records and connections have disproportionately affected women, who are more likely to quit their jobs to take on informal care responsibilities. The isolation brought on by lockdowns has further expanded gender differences in poverty risks (European Parliament, 2019).

For instance, women in families that have children spent more than double that many hours on providing care (5.3 daily hours) compared to those in couples lacking children (2.4 daily hours) (Craig & Churchill 2021). While considering free care, a job in an effective should also be considered, because women in seasonal jobs or with no signed agreement spend twice as much time each day involved in informal care than women with long-term jobs.

Consequently, many women turn to part-time work as a way of balancing paid employment with their childcare duties. Often, they transition from full-time to part-time employment as a technique to promote a better work-family life balance (Gregory & Connolly, 2008). This approach, however, typically results in reduced incomes since part-time work is mostly restricted to low-wage sectors (Horne, 2017). Studies indicate that many women employed in low-paying part-time jobs possess the necessary skills and have previously held higher-level and better-paying positions, opting to leave those roles to restructure their work lives around the added responsibility of unpaid caregiving (Gregory & Connolly, 2008).

According to the data presented in Figure 14, in the year 2019, 32% of women in the European Union were working part-time, which is a significantly higher proportion compared to only 10% of men who worked part-time. There is considerable variation in this trend across different countries, with the highest percentage of women working part-time observed in the Netherlands at 76%, and the lowest percentage in Bulgaria at 2%.

Eurostat's (2019) data reveals that nearly 29% of women who work part-time in Europe do so because of unpaid care responsibilities, whereas only 6% of men cited the same reason. The over-representation of women in part-time jobs has a detrimental effect on the gender pay gap, as part-time work can lead to lower wages and reduced pensions compared to full-time employment. Additionally, part-time workers often receive lower hourly compensation than their full-time counterparts.

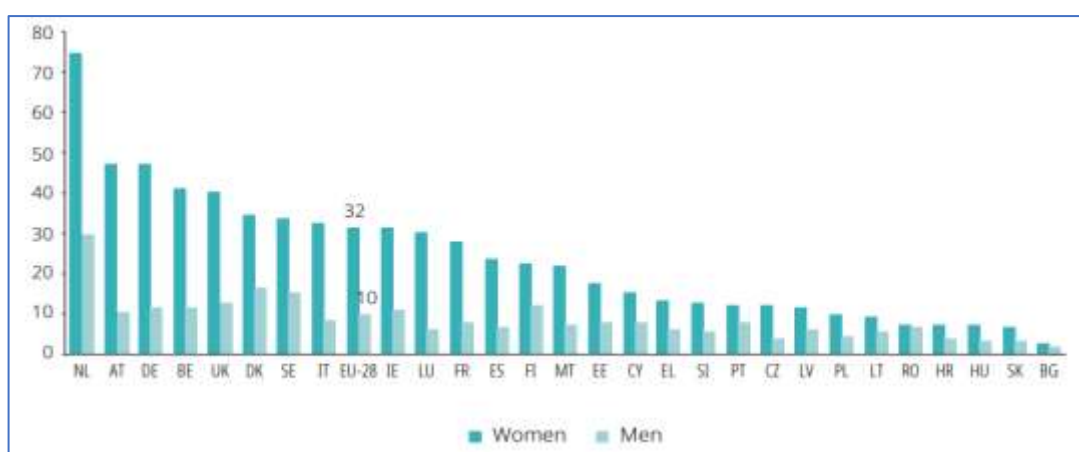


Figure 13: Part-time employment of men and woman as a percentage of total employment per country (% , 15+, EU-2019)

Source: Eurostat, 2019

2.3.2.1. Addressing gender inequalities in unpaid care work in Europe

Gender inequalities in unpaid care work are prevalent across Europe, with women continuing to bear the majority of the burden even if they work outside the home. About 92% of European women frequently provide care at home, compared to 68% of men who engage in unpaid care work with similar regularity. Furthermore, 81% of women and 48% of men offer care regularly. This pattern persists among employed men and women, with nearly all women (94%) participating in informal care multiple times per week, while only 70% of male employees do the same (Caroline, 2020).

Before COVID-19, 37.5% of Europe women cared for children, seniors, or disabled people daily, versus 24.7% of men. This time difference equates to an extra 30 hours of unpaid weekly labor for women. Moreover, caring obligations keep 7.7 million women out of the labor force. The consequences of this imbalance can be seen in men's employment rates of 78%, exceeding the Europe 2020 objective of 75%, whereas women's participation rates hit just 66.5% (Ray & Pana, 2021).

There is a negative correlation between the amount of time devoted to unpaid care work and women labor force participation. When there is greater inequality in the distribution of care responsibilities between women and men, it results in higher gender gaps in labor force participation. In other words, when women shoulder a disproportionate amount of caregiving duties, it limits their ability to participate fully in the labor force. Consequently, reducing gender inequality in caregiving responsibilities could positively impact female labor force participation rates (Samman, 2016).

Figure 14 illustrates that an equal sharing of unpaid care work between men and women is associated with higher levels of women's labor force participation. The correlation between women's labor force participation and closing the gender gap in unpaid care work is vital (ILO, 2017).

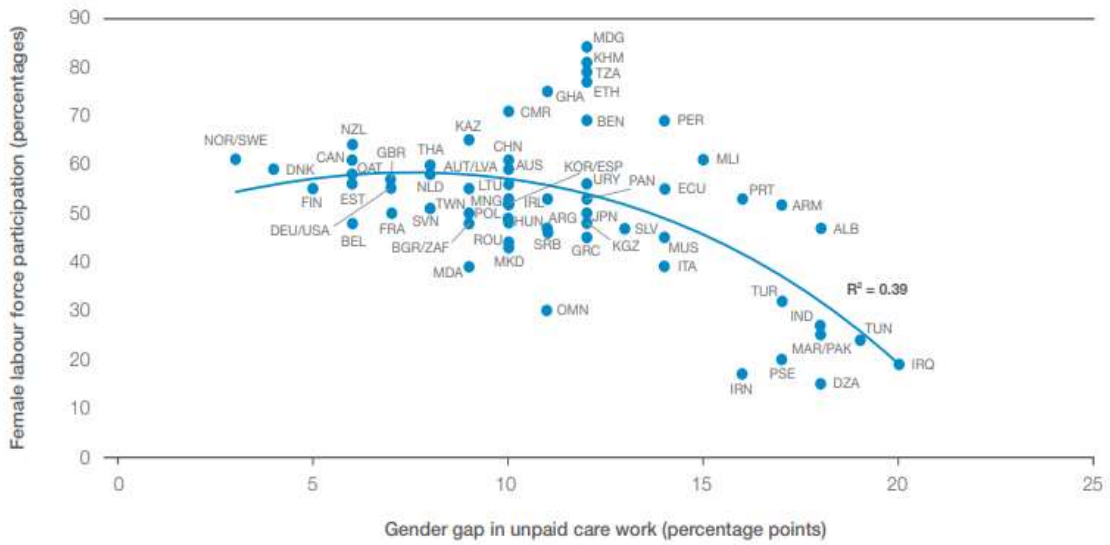


Figure 14: Relationship between women’s labor force participation and the gender gap in unpaid care work

Source: Source: ILO 2017

2.3.3. Gender discrimination in paid work

Eurostat's data (2021) reveals that a significantly larger number of women reported feeling discriminated against on the basis of their gender as compared to men, with 1.62 million women and only 0.15 million men reporting such discrimination. Additionally, the number of women (0.11 million) reporting discrimination based on their disability was found to be higher than that of men (0.09 million) who reported the same experience.

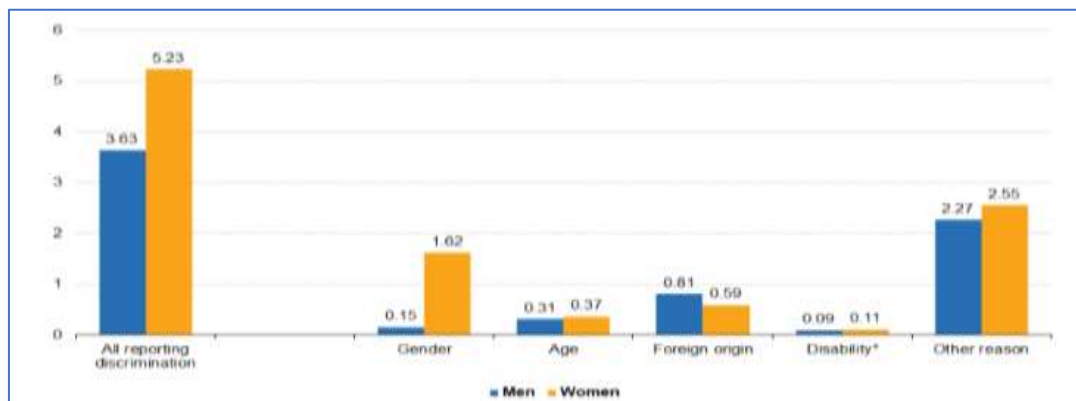


Figure 15: Employed people reporting feeling of being discriminated against at work by sex and main reason, Europe, 2021

Source: Eurostat

Regarding the causes of discrimination, the situation for women differs per country. The majority of countries had gender discrimination as the primary or secondary reason that employed women reported experiencing discrimination, as shown by the dark blue bars in the graph. In 2021, the total proportion of employed women reporting discrimination at work was 6.1% in Europe. Luxembourg 17.2%, France 11.2%, and Portugal 10.6% had the highest percentages, as shown in figure 16, containing all causes for discrimination. In Norway, 13.3% of employed women reported feeling discriminated against at work, whereas 9.3% of women in Switzerland reported feeling this way. Hungary and Romania were the only countries with percentages below 1% (Eurostat, 2021).

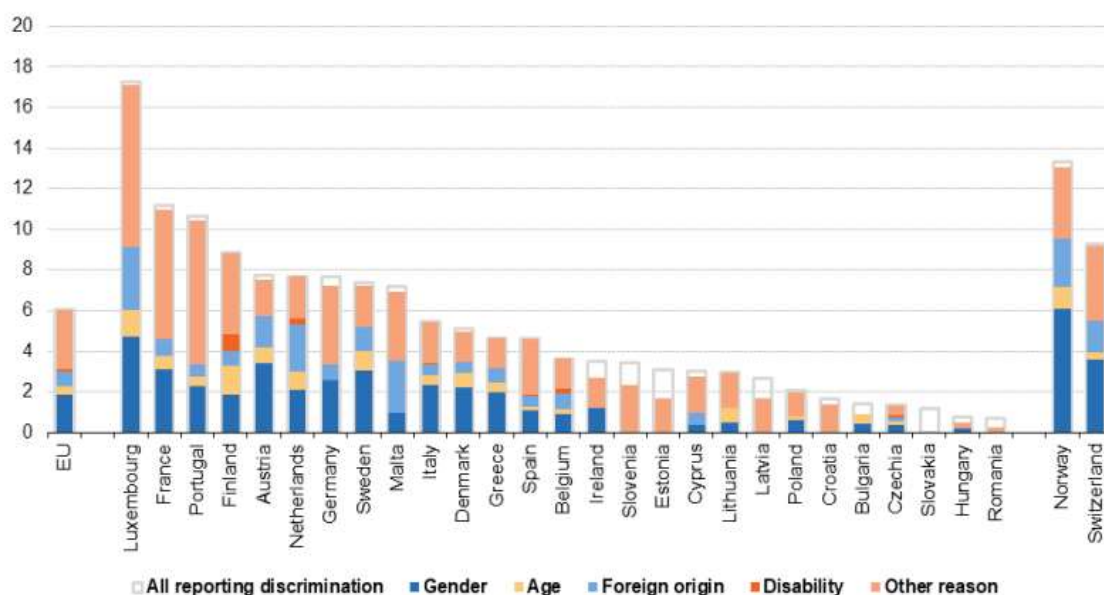


Figure 16: Employed women report feeling discriminated at work by gender, 2021

Source: Eurostat, 2021

2.3.4. Gender pays discrimination in Europe

Gender pays discrimination can be evaluated using a variety of factors, depending on the definition of pay and the available disaggregation by personal and household aspects and job type. Women are disproportionately represented in low-wage sectors. This reflects the fact that the conventional division of labor in the home has been moved to the labor market. Care work is stereotyped as a "women's job," and the burden of unpaid care falls on women's shoulders. Because of this societal expectation, women are more likely to work in traditionally feminine occupations

such as childcare, elder care, teaching, and nursing. These positions pay much less than those sectors dominated by men so the allocation of household duties has a direct impact on the characteristics underlying gender wage inequalities (EIGE, 2019).

According to Eurostat (2021), the gender pay gap is significant. Its amount is an average of 16% in the EU, particularly in countries with a higher woman employment rate (Kleven, 2017). The gender pay gap in the EU was 16% in 2017, with women's average gross hourly wages 16% lower than men's (Eurostat, 2020). Gender inequalities in overall wages is more significant because women have lower employment rates and work fewer hours than males (EIGE, 2019).

The difference in the gender pay gap in overall earnings among regions reflects gender inequalities in hourly salaries, hours worked, and employment rates. In countries where the gender pay gap and total earnings are low (e.g., Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland), the gender pay gap in hourly pay is the major driver of gender earnings inequalities. Furthermore, these nations have high percentages of full-time work among women, even though women are primarily segregated into lower-paying industries and sectors (Rubery, 2016).

As shown in Figure 17, In 2021, women's gross hourly earnings in the European Union (EU) were, on average, 12.7% lower than men's, while in the euro area, the gap was 13.6%. The gender pay gap varied significantly across EU member states, with a range of 20.7 %. The gap was the smallest in Luxembourg, where women earned just 0.2% less than men, while it was the largest in Estonia, where women's earnings were 20.5% lower than men.

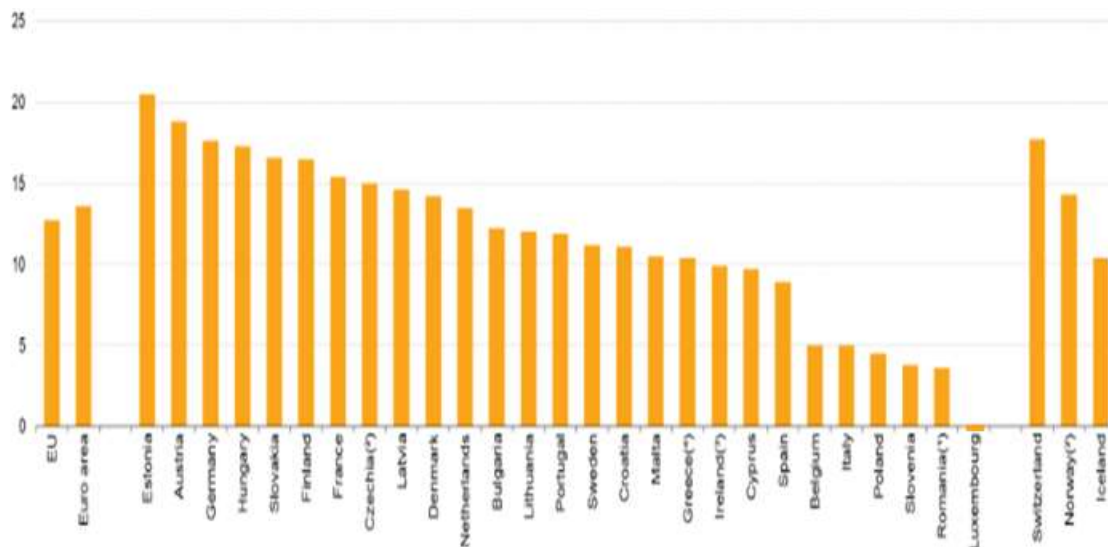


Figure 17: The unadjusted gender pays inequality

Source: Eurostat 2020

The gender pay gap can also be analyzed in terms of part-time versus full-time work. Many women in Europe choose to work part-time instead of full-time once they become mothers, in order to balance work and family life (Gregory & Connolly, 2008). However, this decision often results in lower earnings because part-time jobs are typically found in low-paying industries and professions (Manning & Petrongolo, 2005).

According to Figure 18, pay discrimination for part-time workers ranged from -5.1% in Italy, which is surprisingly low compared to 22.0% in Spain in 2021. This difference may be due to selection bias, particularly when the employment rate for women is lower than that of men. Women who work part-time may have higher levels of education and skills compared to men. The gender pay gap for full-time workers varies significantly across European Union member states, with a range of ranging from -0.7 % in Italy to 17.7 % in Latvia (Eurostat, 2021).

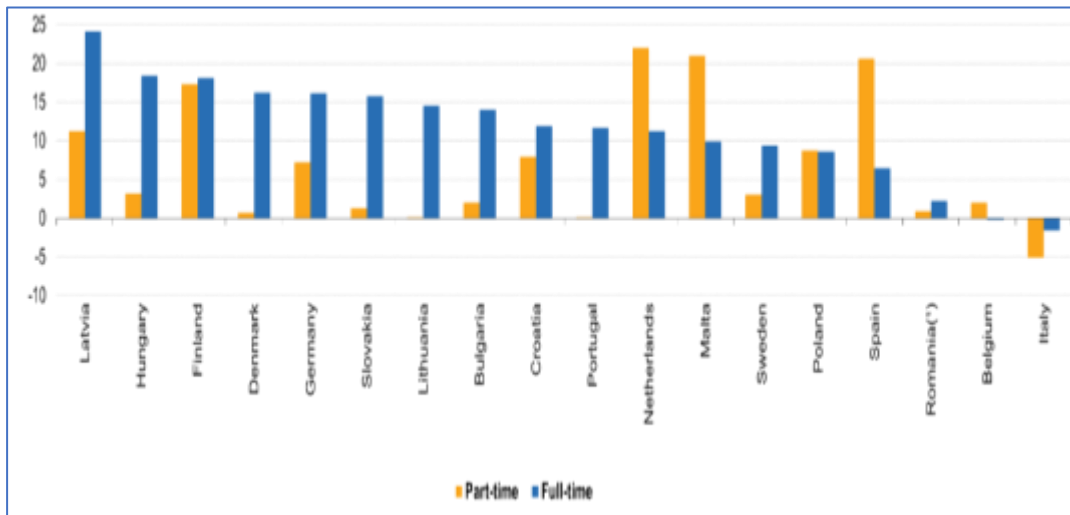


Figure 18: The gender pay gap by working time

Source: Eurostat 2021

3. Gender equality in the labor market: A key driver of economic growth

Matthew et al. (2020) and Kennedy et al. (2017) conducted research highlighting the detrimental impact of gender discrimination on economic growth. The existing economic and social framework reinforces systemic gender inequalities and social barriers, restricting employment opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds and thwarting long-term economic progress. Moreover, the gender gap in the labor force shrinks the potential human capital, thus reducing economic activity and the scope of growth. These findings emphasize that the relationship between gender inequality and economic development is interdependent and reciprocal (Klasen, 2018).

Promoting women's full and effective participation in the workforce and ensuring decent work opportunities for all individuals is essential to foster inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Implementing policies that eliminate labor market inequalities for everyone creates opportunities for women to develop their skills and participate more actively in the economy (Gillard, 2022). When given a chance, women tend to prioritize investments in education and healthcare for their families, which helps to build human capital and drive future growth. Encouraging women's full participation in the economy can lead to diverse and stable economies, reduced income inequality, and mitigation of demographic shifts (Kochhar, 2017).

Recent economic literature indicates a growing interest in the role of women in the labor force in economic growth. According to Amaina (2019), rising women's labor force participation rates are attributed to increased education and diversification of economic activity. In addition, as the size of the economy grows, women will have easier access to the labor market, increasing women's engagement in productive activities. Therefore, it is necessary to increase women's participation in economic activities for a variety of reasons, including improving their social and economic position, which leads to an increase in the overall economic efficiency of nations (Lopez & Schonard, 2022).

Narrowing participation gaps between women and men are likely to achieve significant economic gains, with four pathways leading to higher gains (IMF, 2018):

- **Gender equality in the workplace:** Women bring new abilities to the workplace. This may be due to social norms and their influence on upbringing, social interactions, and differences in risk preference and responsiveness to incentives, among other things. Consequently, there is an economic gain from

diversity, bringing women into the labor market.

- **Greater productivity:** Reducing gender inequalities in the labor market can lead to increased productivity, as women are able to fully utilize their skills and abilities.
- **Improved living standards:** Reducing gender inequalities in the labor market can lead to improved living standards for women, as they can access better-paying jobs and achieve financial independence. This, in turn, can lead to improved living standards for their families and communities.
- **Higher tax revenues:** As more women enter the labor market, governments can benefit from higher tax revenues.

The global rise in women's participation in the labor force can be attributed primarily to changes in developed economies and developing markets. As presented in Figure 19, advanced economies had the highest rate of women's labor force participation was 70% in 2018, showing a 12 % increase over the last two decades. However, rates in low-income countries remained the same at around 63%, and developing markets experienced an average rise of 5% but remained significantly lower than the low-income countries. The rise in women's labor force participation can be attributed to various factors like labor market policies, economic restructuring, advances in education levels, and changes in social norms (Klasen, 2019).

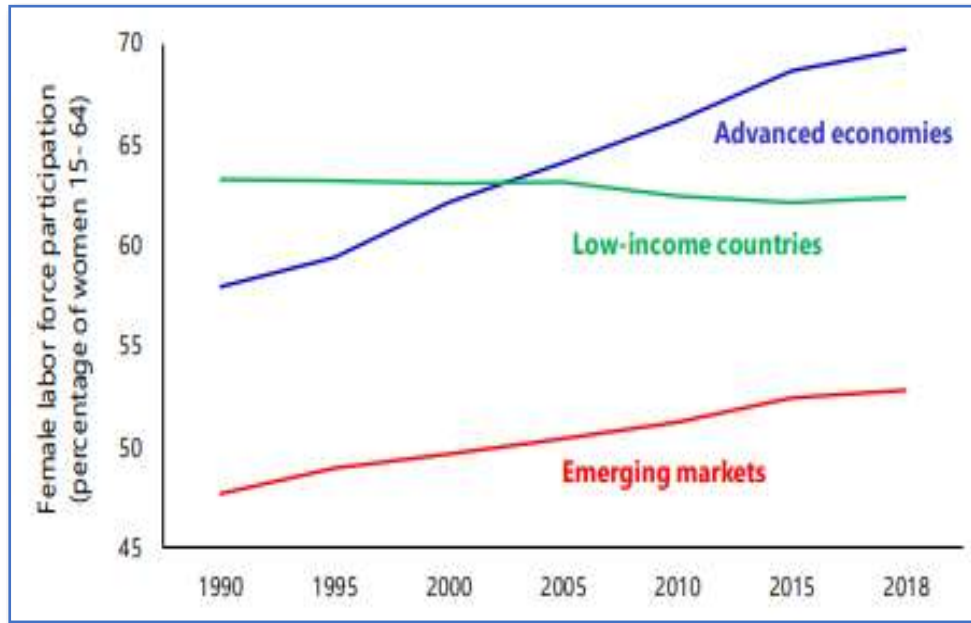


Figure 19: Rates of women labor force participation by income group

Source: World bank, 2018

3.1. The economic advantages of reducing discrimination in the European labor market

Despite progress in recent years, gender inequalities persist in Europe's labor market, leading to lower employment rates for women. To unlock the full potential of the workforce and achieve greater economic growth, it is crucial to increase women's labor-force participation and reduce the gender wage gap. As noted by Christiansen (2016), achieving these goals would bring significant benefits to Europe's economy. In addition, increasing the participation of women in the labor force brings greater diversity that can enhance new ideas for management and production (Ostry, 2018). However, more work needs to be done to eliminate the barriers and biases that prevent women from fully participating in the labor market and receiving fair compensation for their work.

To increase the EU's employment rate women should have equal opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education. This would increase Europe employment by 0.5 to 0.8 % by 2030 and 2.1 to 3.5 % points by 2050. If significant gender equality improvements are made, the Europe employment rate will exceed 80% by 2050. More women joining the labor force and studying in skill-shortage professions with excellent future employment prospects, such as science,

technology, engineering, and mathematics, are more likely to find jobs and contribute meaningfully to the economy as shown in figure 20.

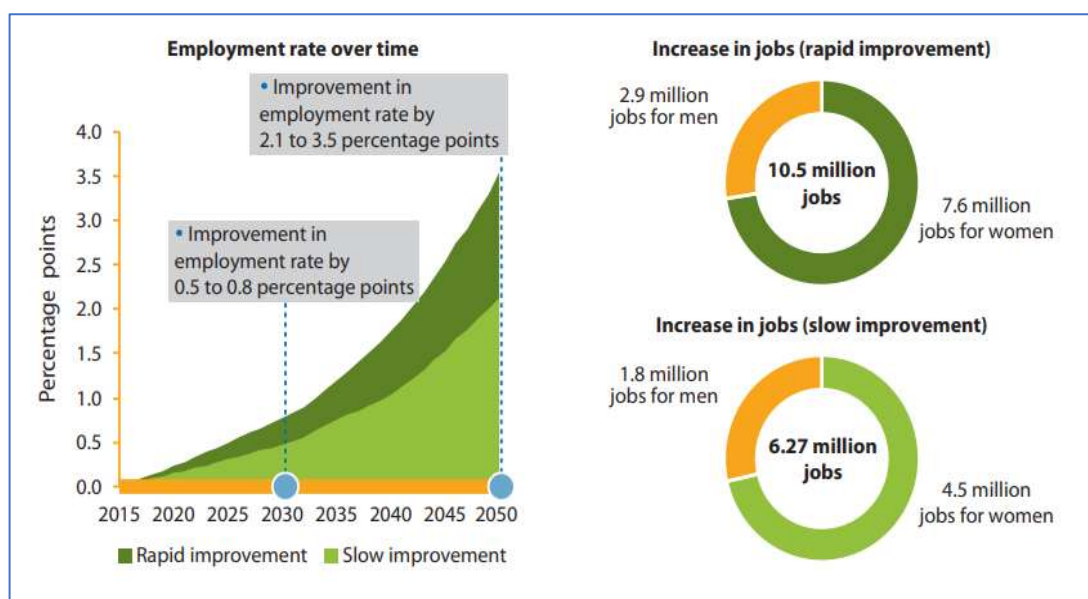


Figure 20: The effect of improved gender equality on GDP per capita

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality 2017

On the other hand, raising women's wages is critical as it will improve poverty rates among women and close the gender gap in old-age benefits (EIGE, 2016). Furthermore, a reduction in the wage gap can also boost women's confidence, allowing them to take on additional responsibilities at work and advance to leadership positions (Ausin, 2021). To summarize, increasing woman's labor-force participation and guaranteeing wage equality is critical for achieving a workforce participation rate of at least 75% and boosting inclusive, innovative, and sustained development.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) also analyzed the broader socioeconomic implications of closing gender inequalities in the labor force because of implementing gender equality policies on Europe's macroeconomic performance. The report focuses on three possible future improvements to gender equality (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2016):

- More women are graduating from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs.
- More women actively participating in the labor market.
- And reducing the gender pay inequalities in the labor market.

Figure 21 below shows that improving gender equality in the labor force will raise Europe's GDP per capita by 6.1 to 9.6% by 2050. The gain would be seen as early as 2030 when GDP per capita increases by 2% due to greater equality for women. This growth is primarily due to increased women's employment and advancement into more productive Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics occupations. If Europe increases gender equality measures in sectors such as Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education, labor market activity, and wages, society will be able to profit from women's full economic potential (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017).

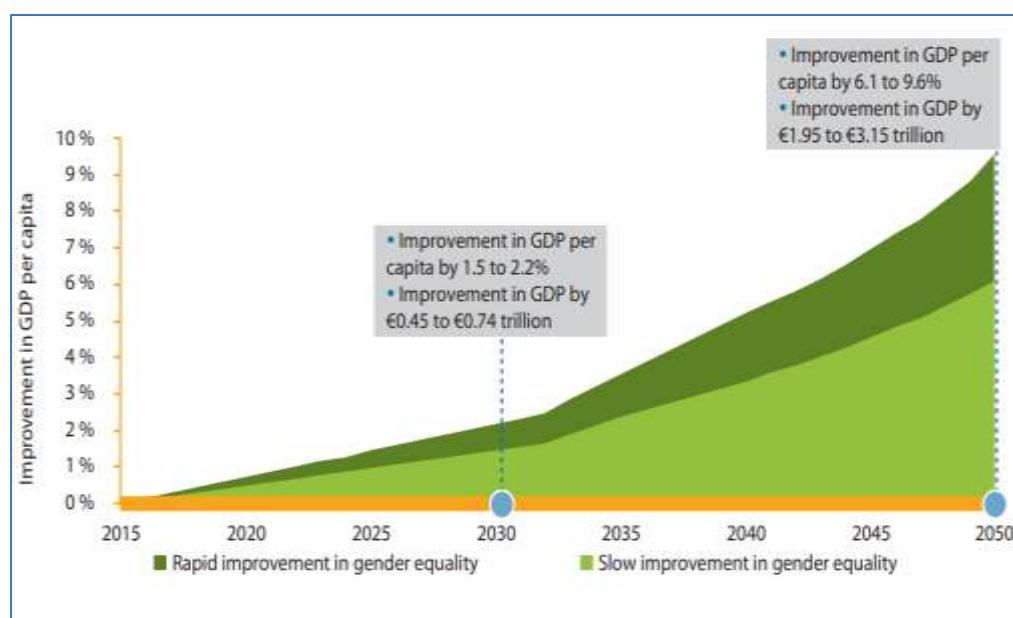


Figure 21: Effect of improved gender equality in the labor force on GDP per capita

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality 2017

The effects of increased gender equality on GDP differ greatly across European countries and are heavily influenced by the level of progress in achieving gender parity. However, the overall outlook is largely positive. Countries that prioritize gender equality are likely to reap the largest benefits in terms of GDP growth.

Figure 22 displays the impact of gender equality in the European labor market across three distinct groups. The group highlighted in green indicates a high impact on gender equality measures, while the yellow group suggests a moderate impact. Finally, the

grey group reflects minimal gains achieved from efforts toward gender equality. These findings have been presented by the European Institute for Gender Equality in 2017.

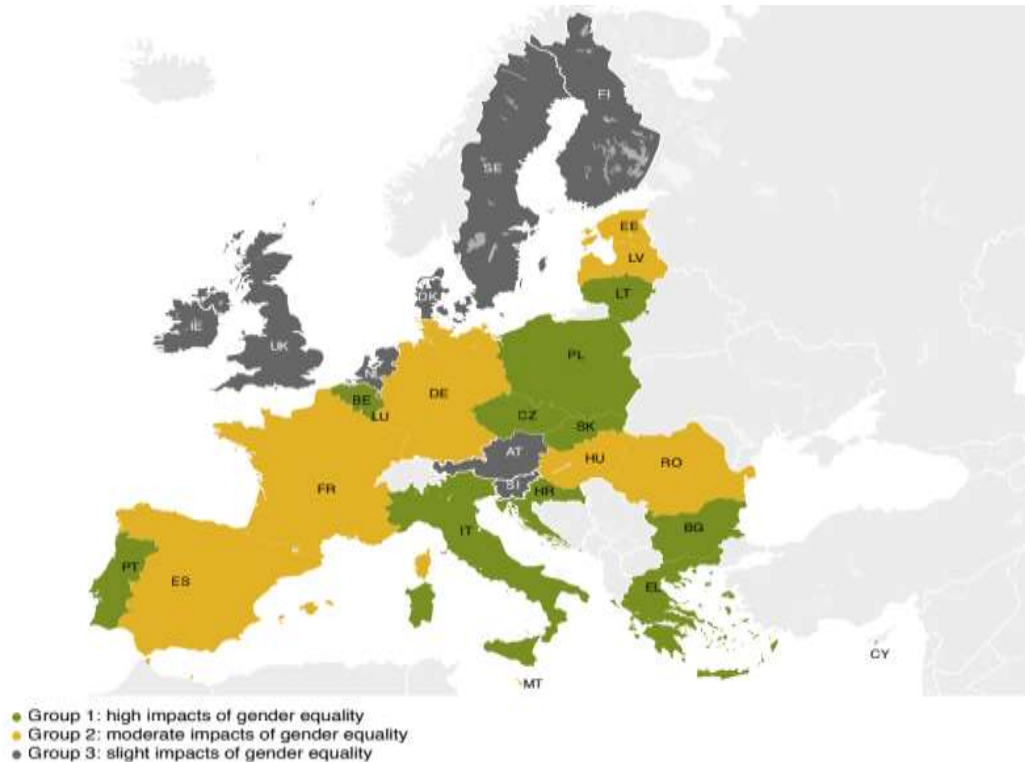


Figure 22: The impact of increasing gender equality in the labor force in Europe

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality 2017

3.2. The economic advantages of reducing discrimination in the labor force of the Middle East & North Africa

The gender employment gap, or the inequality in employment rates between men and women, can potentially have enormous economic consequences in the Middle East & North Africa. According to International Labor Organization (ILO) research, women are critical to the growth of the Middle East & North Africa. Closing the gender gap will boost regional output and put the Middle East & North Africa on a more sustainable, inclusive, and long-term economic path. To close the variety of gender inequalities that continue to expand, it is necessary to change societal norms and culture, enforce equal opportunity laws and regulations, and implement re-skilling interventions for women and girls by focusing on science and technology (IOL,2018).

Here are some of the possible benefits of closing the gender employment gap in the Middle East & North Africa area (ILO, 2016):

- **Improved living standards:** Women who can work and earn an income are more likely to have higher living standards and a stronger feeling of financial independence, which will reduce the poverty rate. This is confirmed by data from the International Labor Organization, which discovered that women's labor-force involvement is positively associated with more significant living standards.
- **More gender equality:** Closing the women's employment gap can contribute to increasing women's opportunities to get a job by giving women equal opportunities to work and grow in their professions. According to World Economic Forum data, nations with greater gender equality in the workplace tend to have better levels of overall gender equality (WEF, 2021).
- **More diverse workplaces:** By closing the gender employment gap, companies can benefit from a more diverse range of talents and ideas in the workplace. This can help drive innovation and improve overall business performance.

According to the OECD (2019), discriminatory laws, societal norms, and practices cause an 8 % loss in worldwide investment, a 16 % decline in woman's average years of schooling, and a 12 % decrease in labor force participation, resulting in a 7.5 % loss in global revenue. Furthermore, the OECD concludes that, while progress has been achieved in eliminating discriminatory societal norms and implementing legal changes. Although women have proven themselves in many fields of work, gender discrimination against women is prevalent in Arab society. Numerous well-paid jobs are inaccessible for women and assigned to men because of society's mindset and unfair treatment in the hiring process. Arabs women's lack of employment opportunities reduces their abilities, ideas, and innovation. Empowering young women will help them to gain more skills and to increase diversity in the labor market, thereby enhancing economic growth. If women were allowed to engage more in the workforce and receive training on the latest technologies, this would strengthen productivity, accelerate the path to development and growth, and reduce unemployment. The

International Labour Organization (ILO) has estimated that decreasing the gender gap by 25 percent will boost global GDP by \$5.8 trillion by 2025 (ILO, 2019).

Decreasing discrimination in labor force participation will have different economic impacts by country. For example, countries with the most significant participation rates in the labor market (Egypt, followed by Jordan) will have a high percentage of their gross domestic product. Compared to Saudi Arabia, the UAE would see its national economic output grow by nearly 40% and 20%, respectively, as presented in Figure 23.

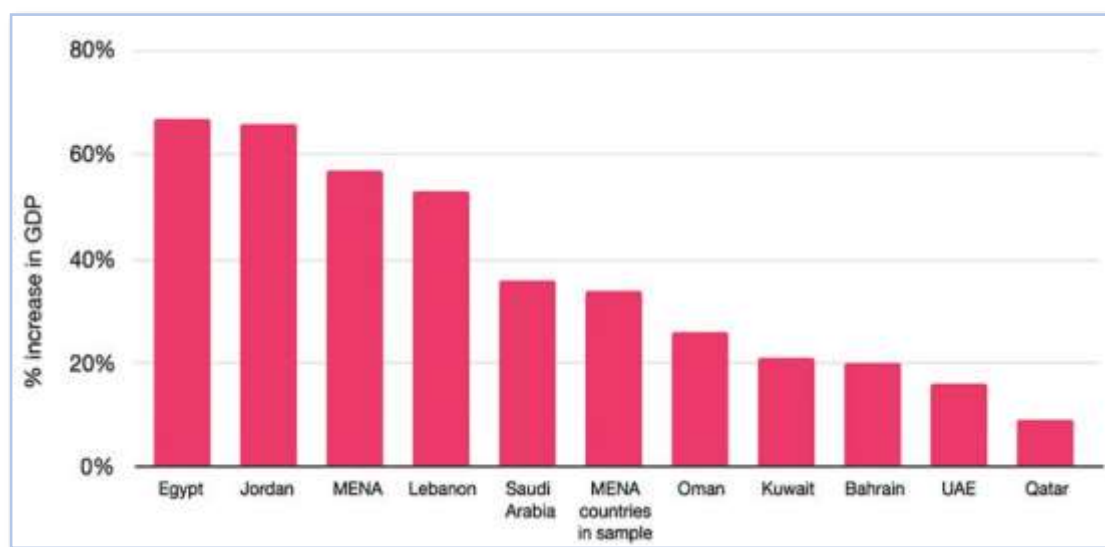


Figure 23: Projected increase in Middle East & North Africa GDP with equal men and women employment rate

Source: World Bank Data 2022

Women in the Middle East & North Africa face specific economic challenges every day because of a lack of awareness of their economic rights, the burden of poverty on women, high unemployment rates, a high percentage of participation in low-wage jobs, both part-time and informal, occupational segregation and cultural barriers, and labor market discrimination. Countries should raise public awareness of women's economic participation and empowerment by guaranteeing that impoverished women's needs are met. Applying this principle will give every girl and woman the chance and rights they deserve to pursue whatever line of labor they want without discrimination (OECD, 2020). Equality measures that can reduce discrimination include providing childcare and other forms of care, changing parental leave pay and conditions, legal provisions

and policies regarding equal pay and working conditions, promoting and supporting part-time and flexible work arrangements, removing gender inequalities across sectors and occupations, and promoting women to senior positions (Kochhar, 2017).

Examples of policies to foster women participation in the la (ILO, 2017):

- Encouraging flexible work options and reintegration measures are crucial in increasing women's participation in the workforce. This can help to prevent women from leaving their jobs due to child-rearing and leave limitations. However, it's important to address societal attitudes and norms to promote male involvement in flexible work arrangements.
- Promoting women's entrepreneurship: There is a lower rate of new start-ups by women entrepreneurs compared to men, and their businesses often have lower productivity and profitability. To address this issue, policies should aim to remove any obstacles that hinder women from starting and growing their businesses. Such policies may include creating legal frameworks that promote female business development, offering training and skills development programs for entrepreneurship.
- Supporting women's participation, and leadership in decision-making: there should be goals and targets set for women's representation and leadership across all areas of government, employers, worker groups, and firms. This can be supported through measures such as leadership training, financial incentives, and fast-tracked career advancement.

In the next chapter, we will explore and analyze the women's participation rates in the labor force, as well as the inequalities between women and men in the Middle East & North Africa, and Europe. We will conduct a survey to collect data on the perceptions of women's participation levels in the labor force and the extent of gender inequalities in these regions. This research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the challenges facing women in the workforce and how to achieve gender parity in the workplace.

4. Methodology

The research design of this thesis is exploratory and analytical. Exploratory research aims to explore the phenomenon of gender inequalities in the labor force in Europe, the Middle East & North Africa, specifically looking at how gender inequalities in the labor market affect women's participation in the labor force. Finally, analytical research aims to analyze the data collected on which kind of jobs women prefer and what are the reasons for their preferences, which factors drive them to participate in the labor force, and which kind of inequalities women face in the labor force in order to make a comparison of the women's participation in the labor force in both regions.

In order to shed light on the phenomena, the data collected by a public opinion E-survey because it allows for collecting large amounts of data in a relatively short time. The platform chosen to host the survey is LinkedIn (the reason to choose LinkedIn is that there are a lot of people searching for a job or having a job). The objective is to know how these phenomena significantly impact women's participation in the labor force.

Data has been gathered from two distinct regions: the Middle East & North Africa and Europe. Europe, known for its high ratio of women participating in the labor force, has been contrasted with the Middle East & North Africa, which is characterized by the lowest rate of women participating in the workforce.

Convenience sampling was used as a straightforward method of gathering data from our desired target population. Our aim is to connect with individuals from the Middle East & North Africa, and Europe, who are part of an online community. Since it is an online community, there is no available list of individuals to use as a sampling frame.

The participants were provided with detailed information regarding the purpose of the study. In addition, they were explicitly informed that their participation was voluntary and that all their responses would be kept strictly confidential. Moreover, to safeguard the anonymity of participants, no identifiable personal information was recorded in the saved data set.

The survey consisted of nineteen questions, including both closed and optional short-answer questions to provide participants with an opportunity to provide additional

feedback. It was estimated to take between four to eight minutes to complete. The survey was published from January 19th to 28th January 2023. The graph below presents the total responses from both regions 42.5 % of people were from Europe, and Middle East & North Africa is 57.5 %.

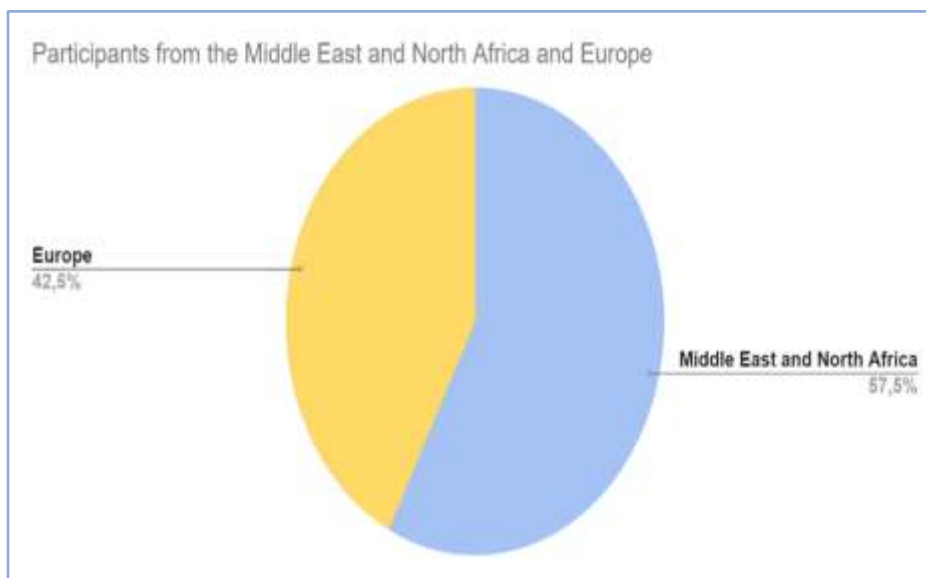


Figure 24: Participants from Europe and Middle East & North Africa

After collecting the data, the analysis phase used mainly spreadsheets. The following section presents the results of the survey along with the discussion.

4.1. Discussion and results

The figure below shows, the total number of women who responded was 340 women who responded to the survey 207 women from the Middle East & North Africa and 133 from Europe. In addition, the survey received responses also for men 87 from the Middle East & North Africa and 84 from Europe.

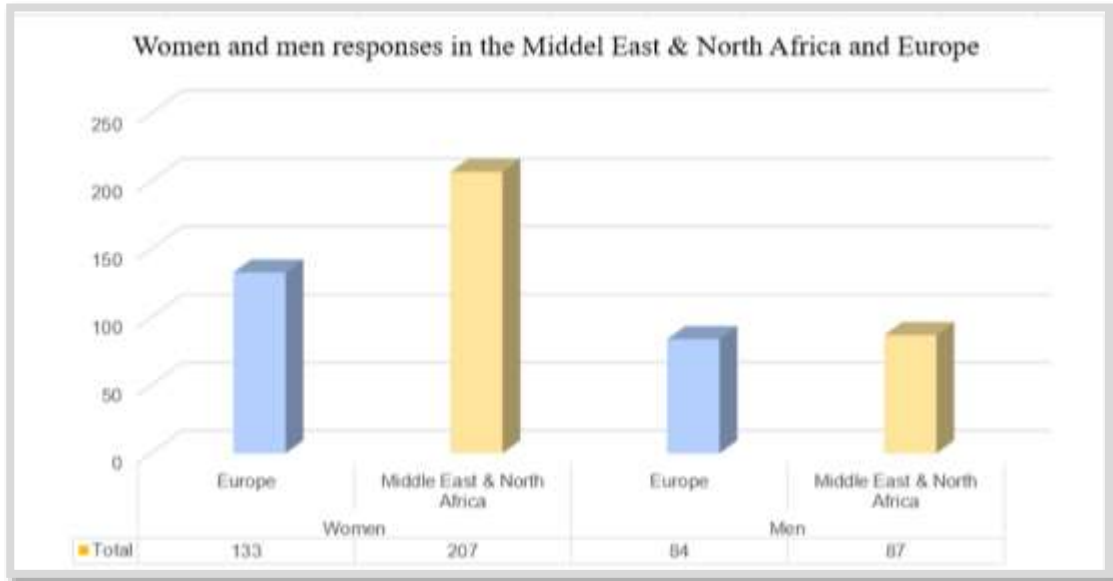


Figure 25: Women & men responses in the Middle East & North Africa and Europe

According to the figure provided, participants were asked whether they had a job or not, in order to determine the number of women who were employed. In Europe, approximately 65.4% of women respondents reported having a job, while 20.3% had a job previously, and 14.3% did not work. In comparison, for women in the Middle East & North Africa, approximately 37% reported having a job, 40% had worked before, and 23% were not working. These results indicate that the percentage of women who are employed in Europe is higher than in the Middle East & North Africa.

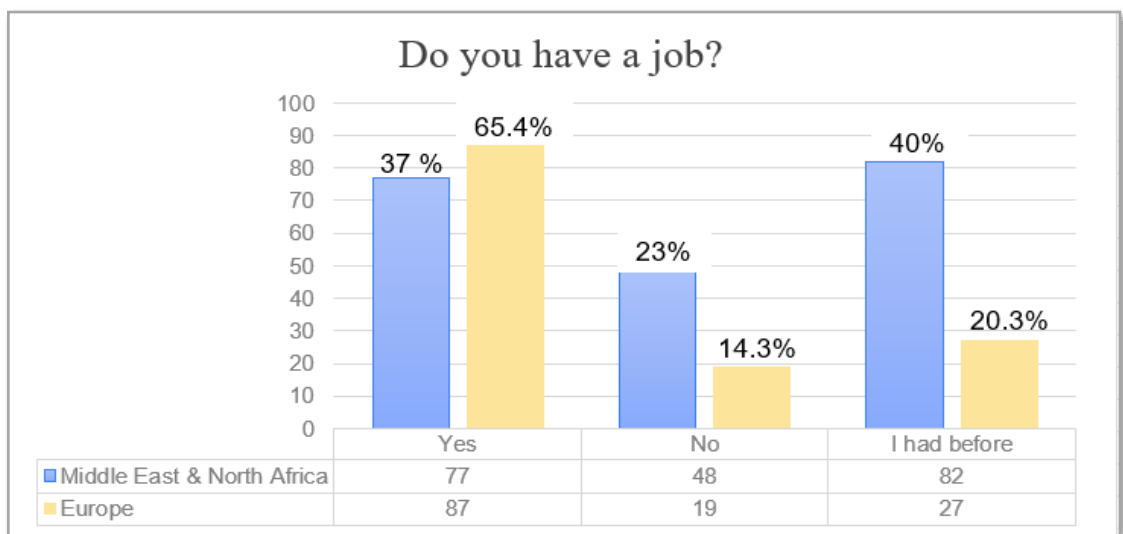


Figure 26: Women's have a job in Europe and Middle East & North Africa

The following analysis explores several key factors that influence women's decision to participate in the Middle East & North Africa and Europe labor force as discussed in chapter one.

- **Earn money:** One factor that can impact women's decision to join the labor force is the level of wages offered. The study results indicate that in the Middle East & North Africa, approximately 92% of women reported participating in the labor force due to the desire to earn money. In comparison, in Europe, only about 85.7% of women participated for the same reason. These findings suggest that the wage level may play a more significant role in driving women's participation in the labor force in the Middle East & North Africa than in Europe.
- **Work time flexibility:** The study also examined the impact of work time flexibility on women's participation in the labor force, as it can help them balance their personal and professional lives. The results indicate that in the Middle East & North Africa, approximately 66.11% of women reported participating in the labor force due to work time flexibility, while in Europe, about 52.6% of women participated for the same reason. These findings suggest that work time flexibility may be a more significant driver of women's participation in the labor force in the Middle East & North Africa compared to Europe.
- **Social and cultural elements:** It plays a critical role in shaping women's decisions to participate in the labor force, which can pose a significant obstacle for women in the Middle East & North Africa. The study results indicate a substantial difference between the two regions, with approximately 68% of women in the Middle East & North Africa reporting being affected by social and cultural factors that limit their participation in the labor force, compared to only 21% in Europe. These findings highlight the importance of addressing cultural and societal barriers to promote greater gender equality and increase women's participation in the workforce.

- Family and household situation:** It can impact women's participation in the labor force, particularly in developing nations where women are often expected to assume primary caregiving responsibilities. Chapter two discusses how social and cultural norms often dictate that women are primarily responsible for household and caregiving duties. This expectation can make it challenging for women to participate in the workforce. The study results presented below show that in the Middle East and North Africa, nearly 71% of women consider their family and household situation before deciding whether to participate in the labor market. This percentage is much higher than the European result. These findings highlight the urgency of implementing policies and programs that support women in balancing their work and family responsibilities. Such initiatives could include affordable childcare options and flexible work arrangements. By providing support to women, these policies and programs can help foster a more inclusive and diverse workforce. Ultimately, this benefits not only women but also society as a whole.

Factors driving women to participate in the labor force				
	Middle East & North Africa	% Of the total women's participation	Europe	% Of the total women's participation
Earn money	192	(92%)	114	(85.7%)
Worktime flexibility	141	(68.11%)	70	(52.6%)
Social and cultural elements	141	(68%)	28	(21%)
Family and household situation	147	(71%)	57	(42.8%)

Table 4: Factors driving women to participate in the labor force.

To gain insight into women's preferred type of work, we inquired about their inclination towards full-time or part-time employment. The findings indicated that women have diverse reasons for choosing part-time work. For instance, some may opt for it to

balance their responsibilities as caregivers for children or elderly members of their family. Others appreciate the flexibility of part-time work, which allows them to pursue other passions or engagements. Additionally, some women require assistance to secure full-time work that aligns with their skills or interests.

To ensure that there were no differences in preferences, we differentiated between employed and unemployed women. The results in Figure 27 indicate that, both in Europe and the Middle East & North Africa, women exhibit a preference for part-time work.

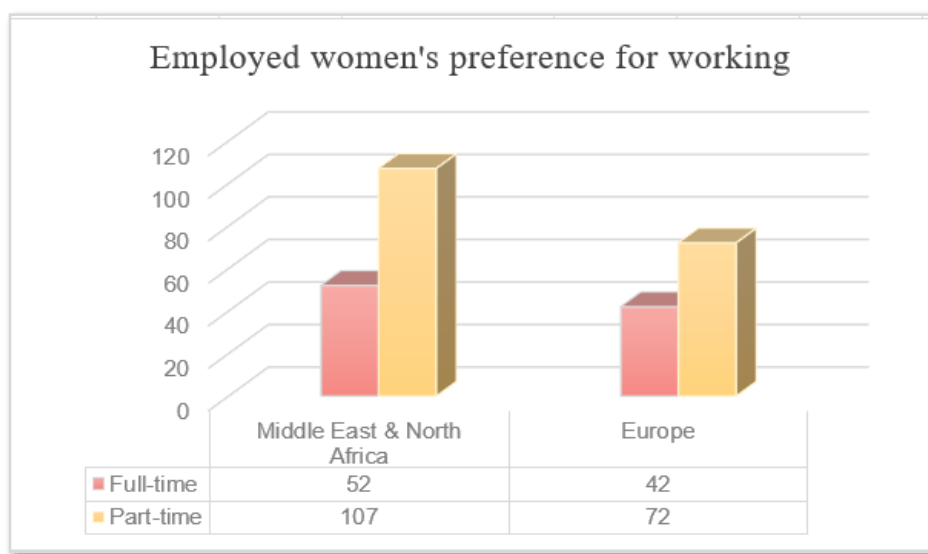


Figure 27: Women's preferences for working part time & full time.

Additionally, our findings reveal that both employed and unemployed women express a preference for part-time work. This reinforces the point previously highlighted in the second chapter, emphasizing that women in both regions opt for part-time work due to various factors.

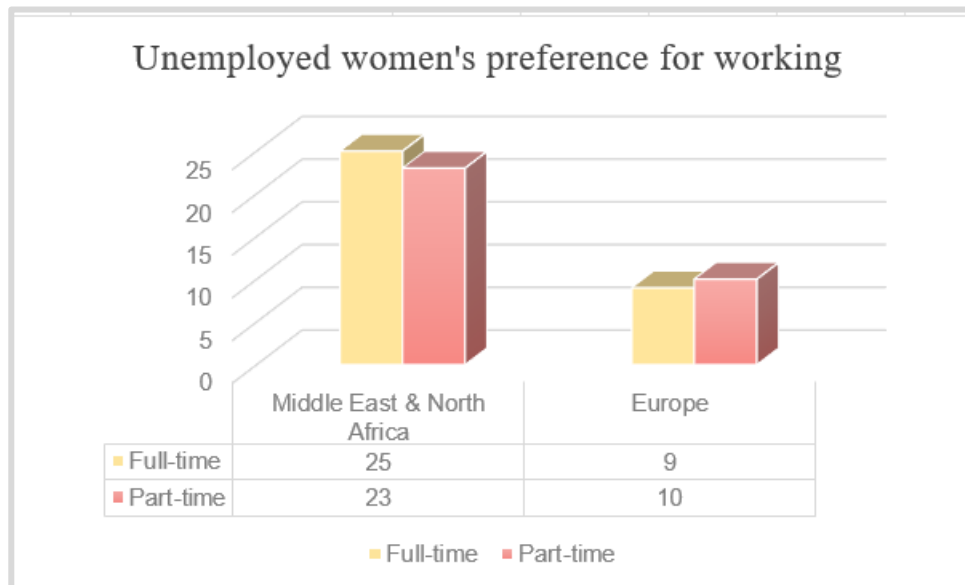


Figure 28: Unemployed women preferences for working.

It is crucial to comprehend the factors influencing women's choice to work part-time. In order to gain insight into these factors, our survey includes an open-ended question that allows participants to provide their reasoning for preferring part-time work. Our data indicate that the reasons for selecting part-time work are diverse across Europe and the Middle East & North Africa for employed and unemployed women. Women in these regions tend to favor part-time work due to its flexible time arrangements, and the ability to balance their personal and professional lives. In addition, some women preferred part-time work to pursue their studies, while others needed help securing full-time employment. Finally, women with disabilities prefer part-time work, which may be more manageable given their limitations. These findings highlight the importance of considering the factors that drive women's employment decisions, particularly about part-time work (Figure, 29).

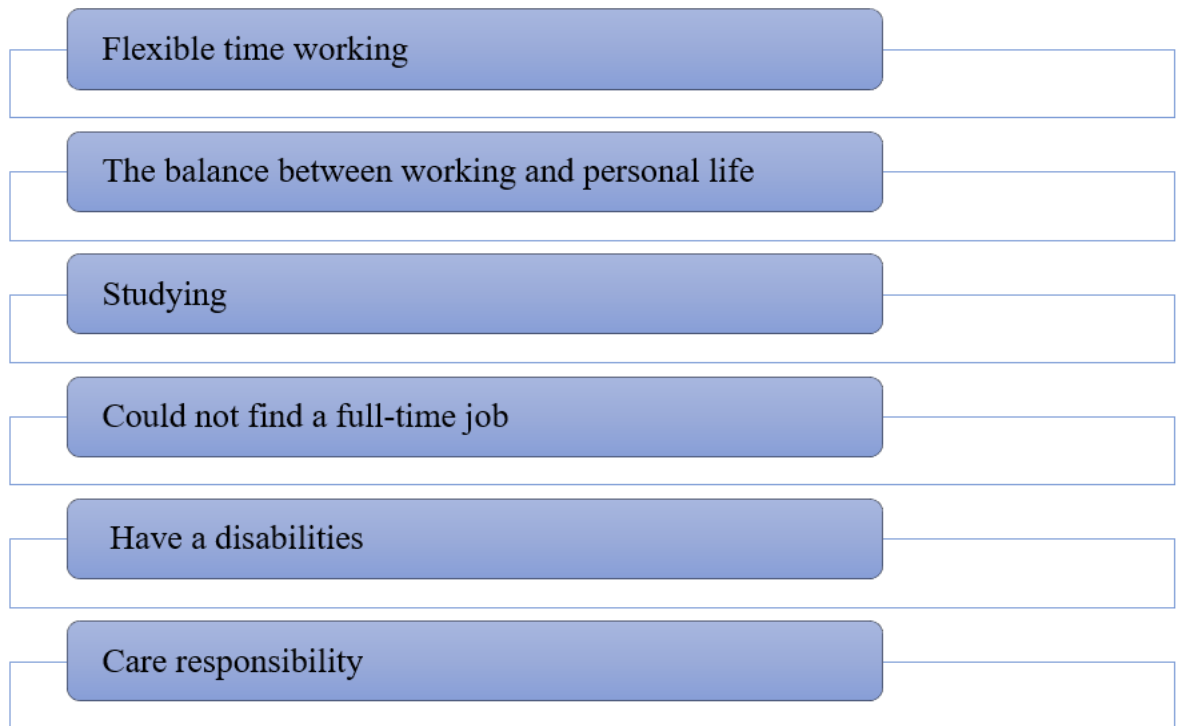


Figure 29: Women’s reasons for preferring part-time job more than full time.

In chapter two, it was noted that women in the Middle East & North Africa tend to gravitate towards the public sector for employment. This preference is attributed to the shorter working hours, safer and more publicly accepted work environments, and various benefits such as social security, maternity breaks, and other care arrangements. It is worth noting that more than half of the surveyed women also preferred working in the public sector, as illustrated in the graph below.

By make a comparison between Europe and the Middle East & North Africa we found that employed women in the Middle East & North Africa prefer to work in the public sector, however, the trend is the opposite, with women in Europe they typically prefer to work in the private sector. As shown in the figure below, 31 of surveyed women from Europe preferred private-sector employment over the public sector. In contrast, 115 of the women who respond to the survey from the Middle East & North Africa prefer to work in the public sector.

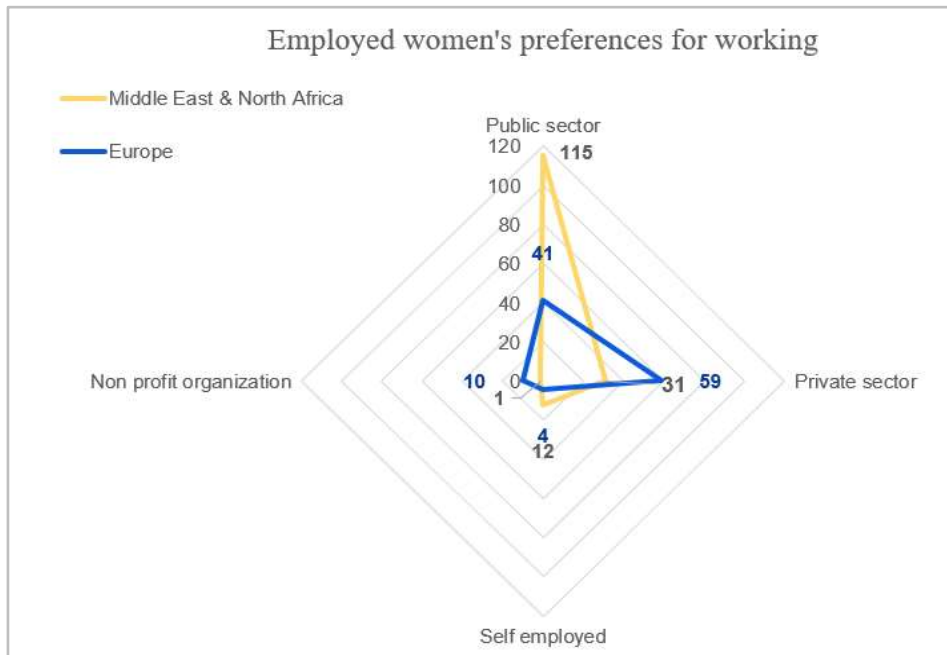


Figure 30: Employed women’s preferences for working in different sectors.

The same result found for unemployed women in the Middle East & North Africa, women tend to have a higher preference for working in the public sector, while in Europe, women prefer the private sector. It is important to note that these preferences may vary from country to country and within different demographic groups. This result illustrates that employed and unemployed women in the Middle East & North Africa prefer to work in the public sector compared with Europe women who prefer to work in the private sector (Figure, 31).

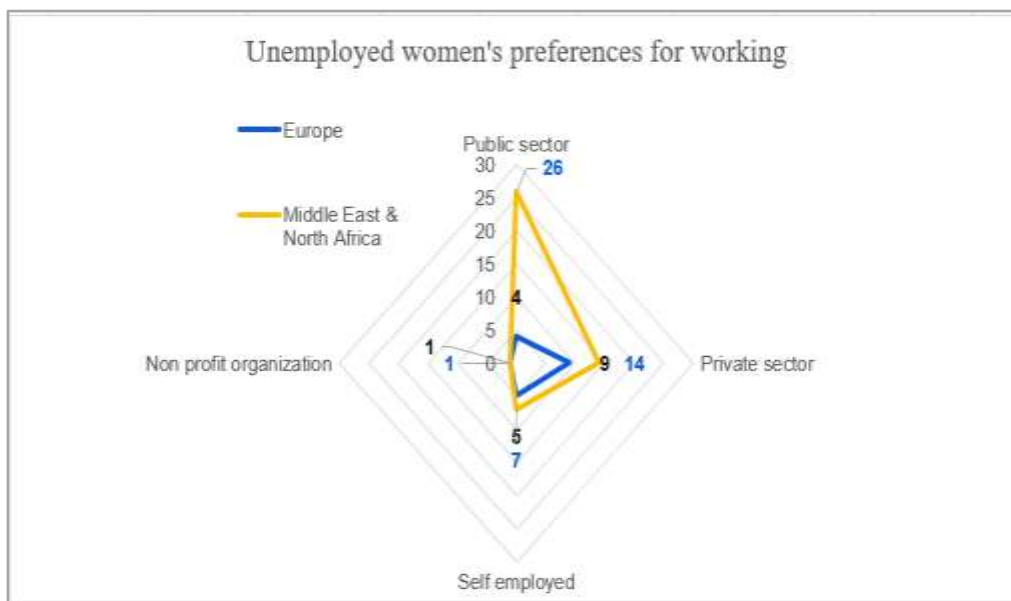


Figure 31: Unemployed women’s preferences for working.

In many Middle Eastern nations, cultural norms and gender roles dictate that women should take on caretaking responsibilities within the home rather than seeking employment outside of it. As a result, women may find it more socially acceptable to pursue careers in the public sector since such roles are seen as an extension of their domestic duties as discussed in the literature review. This is evidenced by the responses provided by Middle Eastern women, which revealed that many respondents cited social norms and expectations as motivating factors for working in the public sector.

Furthermore, the public sector often offers more stability and better resources for employees than the private sector in some Middle Eastern nations, which may also contribute to women's preference for working in this field. Such as promotions, vacations time and better salaries, no extra time in the public sector so they can balance between working and their personal life.

In summary, the cultural context and employment landscape of many Middle Eastern nations contribute to women's propensity to pursue careers in the public sector. Factors such as the stability and resources offered by the public sector, may make it a more attractive option for women seeking long-term employment opportunities.

To support this result, Figure 32 shows the reasons provided by women who participated in the survey from the Middle East & North Africa. It highlighted why women in the Middle East & North Africa prefer to work in the public sector rather than private sector.

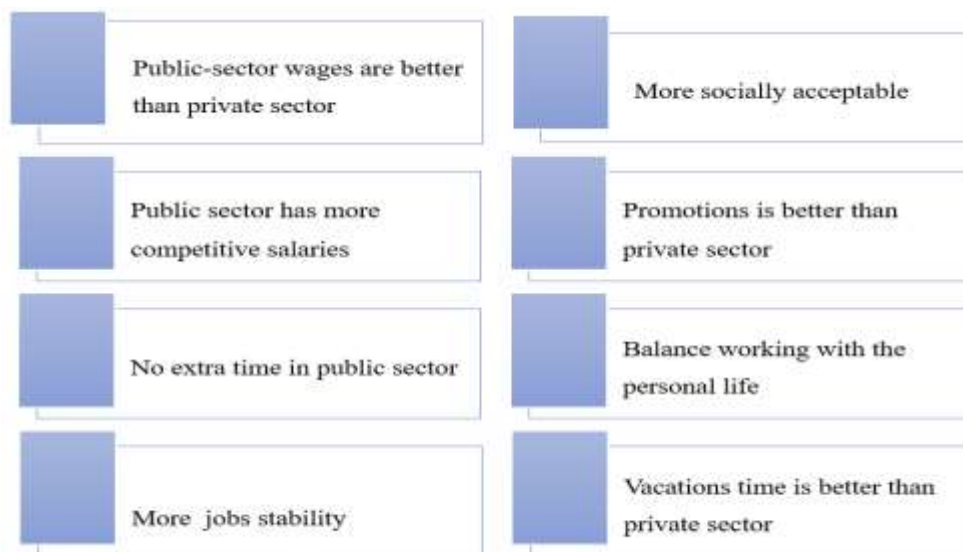


Figure 32: Reasons of women's preferences to work in the public sector in the Middle East & North Africa

In Europe, the reasons for women's preferences are different for working in the private sector. Women said they prefer to work in the private sector for several reasons. One of the fundamental reasons in the figure below is that there are many offers for jobs in the private sector. Moreover, they can find a job quickly in the private sector rather than the public sector in addition to the working time flexibility.

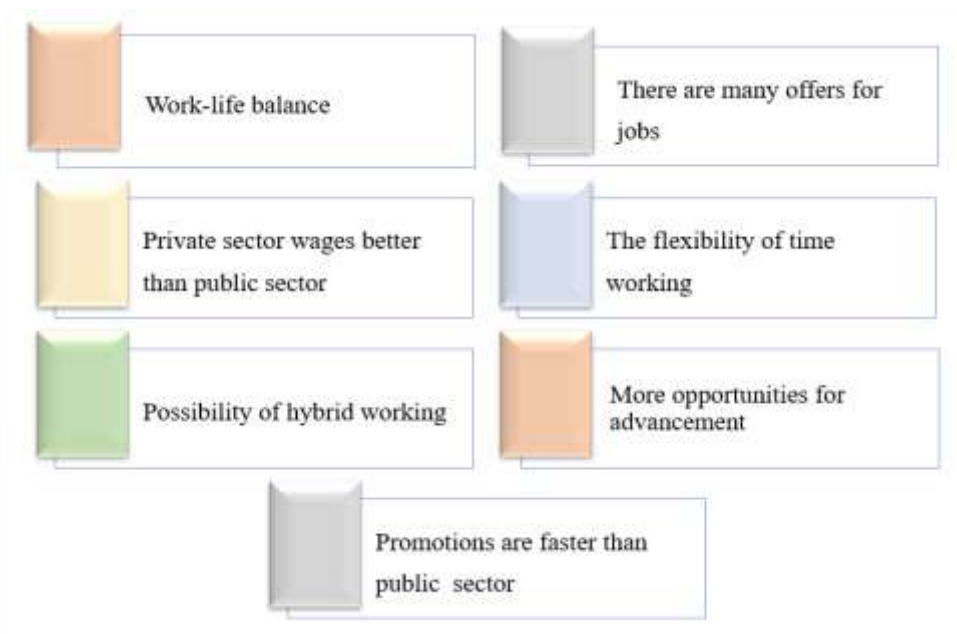


Figure 33: Reasons for women's preferences to work in the private sector in Europe.

As discussed in the research, care work is a critical factor affecting women's decision to participate in the labor force. Women's time spent on unpaid care labor is strongly related to the presence of children. We asked the women if the presence of the children affected their decision to participate in the labor force. It is apparent in the results presented in the graph below that 60.9% of the participants said yes in Europe compared with the Middle East & North Africa 80.6 %. The results prove that the presence of children highly affects women's decision to participate in the labor force (Figure 34).

Suppose you have a child/children. Will it affect on your decision to participate in the labor market?

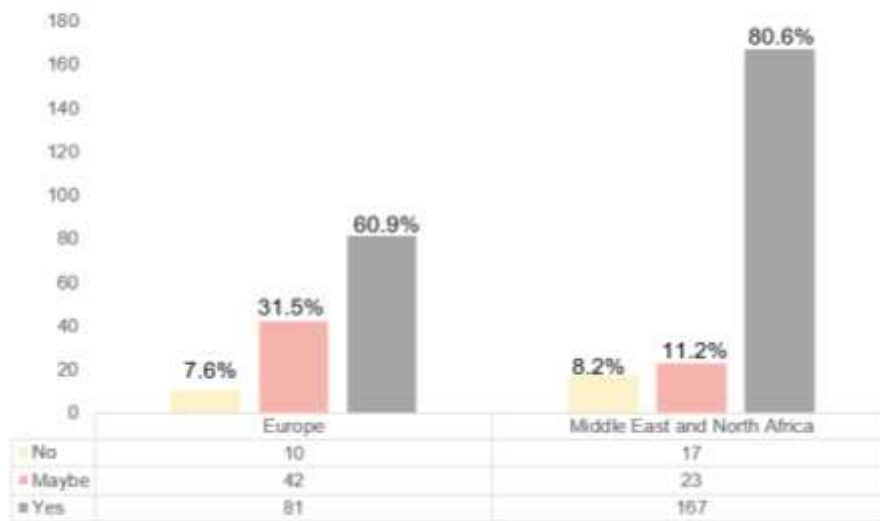


Figure 34: The effect of the presence of children in women's decision to participate in the labor force

In the Middle East & North Africa, gender inequalities and discriminatory practices continue to pose significant obstacles to gender equality in the workplace. Our study sought to examine this issue in the context of the hiring process. Figure 35 shows the results of our survey show that a significant proportion of respondents (61.56%) believed that women were not afforded the same opportunities as men when it came to seeking employment in this area. This indicates that gender discrimination continues to be a prevalent issue in job markets throughout the Middle East & North Africa.

In contrast, our study also looked at responses from individuals in Europe, where there was a higher perception of gender equality in the hiring process. Specifically, 69.5% of respondents in this region felt that opportunities for men and women to be hired for jobs were equal. This suggests that although there are still challenges to overcome, the issue of gender inequality in the workplace is less pervasive in Europe than in the Middle East & North Africa.

Overall, our findings highlight the need for continued efforts to promote gender equality in hiring processes worldwide, particularly in regions where discrimination remains prevalent. It is essential to work towards a future where all individuals, regardless of gender, have an equal chance at securing employment and advancing in their careers.

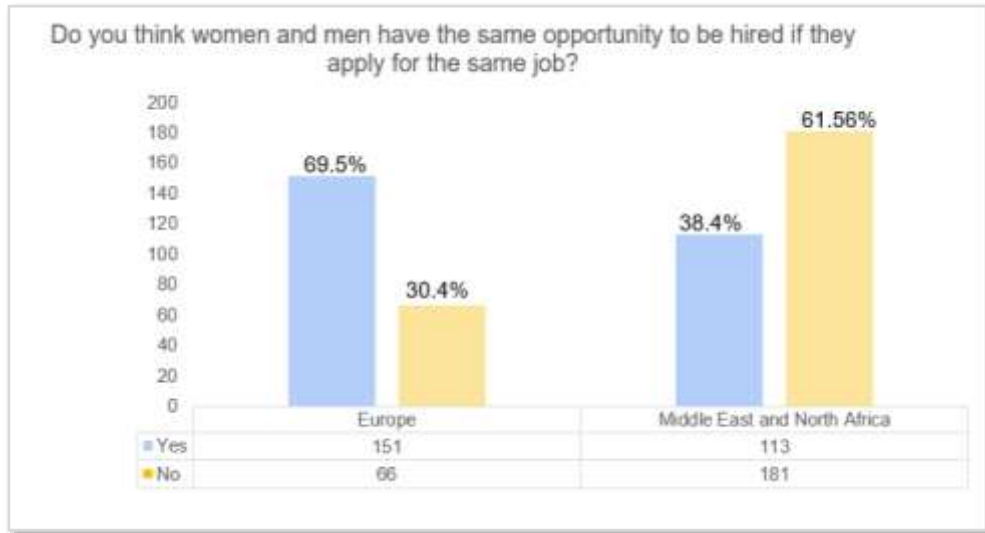


Figure 35: Equal employment opportunities for both genders: A comparative analysis

The thesis's focus is to explore gender discrimination in the labor force across two different regions. To gather relevant data, the participants were asked whether they had experienced any form of inequality in their workplace. The findings reveal that 88.6% of women who participated in the survey reported facing discrimination in the Middle East & North African labor force. On the other hand, in Europe, more than 50% of women respondents stated that they did not encounter discrimination in their labor force, as illustrated in figure 36.

It is important to note that these results provide valuable insights into the prevalent gender disparities in the labor force across these two regions. Moreover, the study sheds light on the severity of this issue in the Middle East & North Africa, indicating a pressing need for measures to address gender discrimination in the workforce. In contrast, Europe seems to have made progress in ensuring gender equality in the labor force, but further efforts are still required to abolish all forms of gender bias completely.

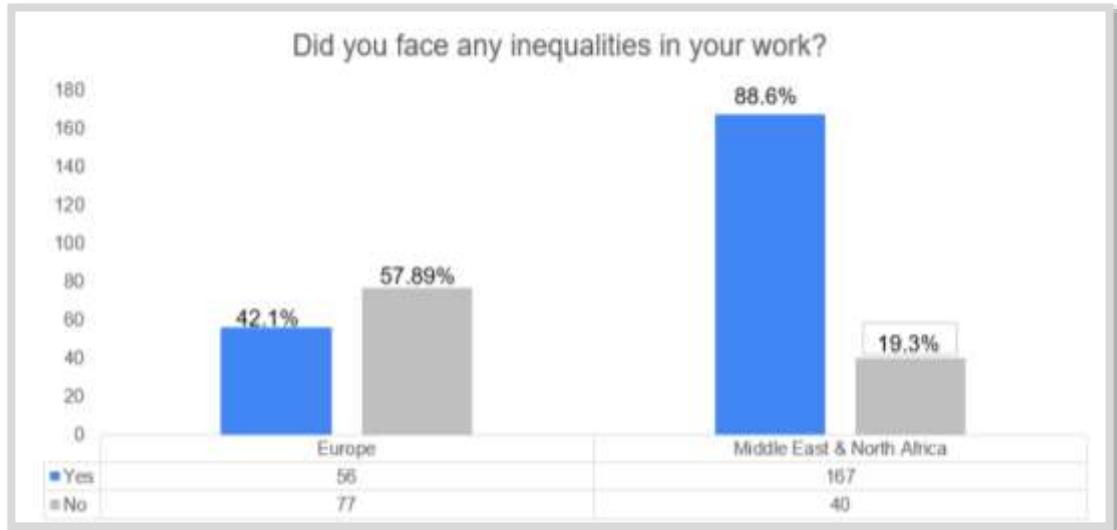


Figure 36: Women’s face inequalities in the labor force

To investigate the gender-based inequalities women face in different regions, we analyzed participants' experiences with discriminatory practices. Our research showed that women encounter various forms of discrimination, such as unequal pay, lack of promotions, biased hiring, and a disproportionate burden of domestic work. These forms of discrimination were more prevalent in the Middle East & North Africa than in Europe. It could be attributed to social and cultural norms that place greater responsibility on women's shoulders for unpaid care work. In sum, our research underscores the ongoing need to address and mitigate discriminatory practices in the Middle East & North Africa to support greater gender equality in the workplace.

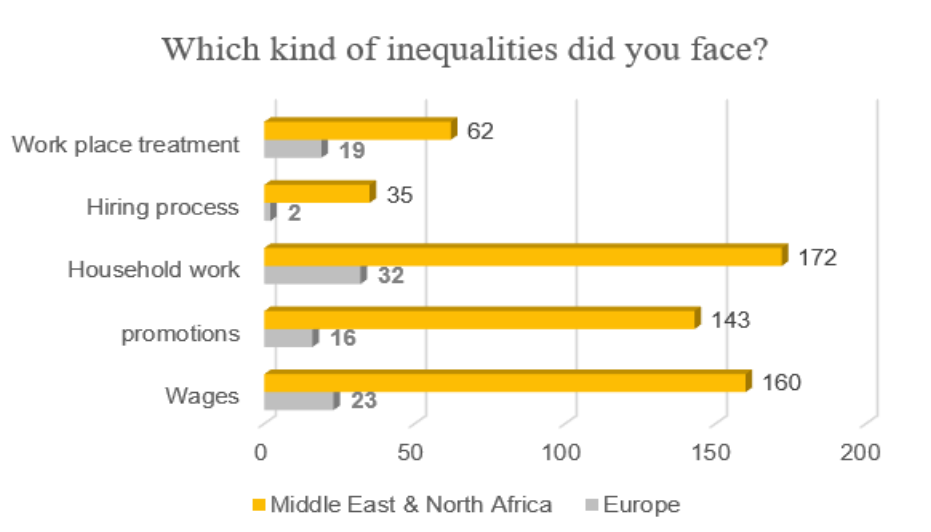


Figure 37: Different type of inequalities that women faced in the labor force.

As shown in the literature review, household work significantly impacts women's decision to participate in the labor force in the Middle East & North Africa and in Europe. Traditional gender roles and restricted social norms impose additional restrictions on women's labor-force participation decisions by giving women the responsibility to do the household work. It can affect women's participation in the labor force in several ways. Women who bear a disproportionate burden of household work may need more time for paid work.

We asked Both women and men Who afford more household work, and we got 198 responses to this question from Europe and 287 answers from the Middle East & North Africa. As presented in Figure 38, women take more responsibility for household work in both regions. Consequently, it affects women's decision to participate in the labor force.

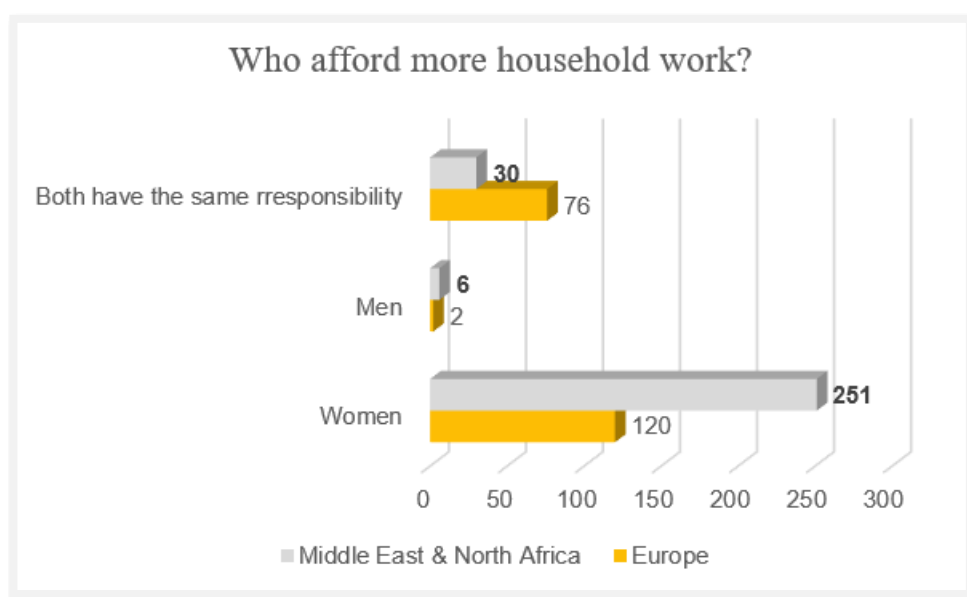


Figure 38: Women and men participation in the household work in Europe

As presented above, women take most household responsibilities in the Middle East & North Africa. So, it is essential to know why women take more responsibility than men in household work. Because it has a significant consequence on women's participation in the labor force in the Middle East & North Africa. As presented below, the results varied between social and culture elements means that traditional gender roles and restricted social norms impose additional restrictions on women's labor-force participation decisions.

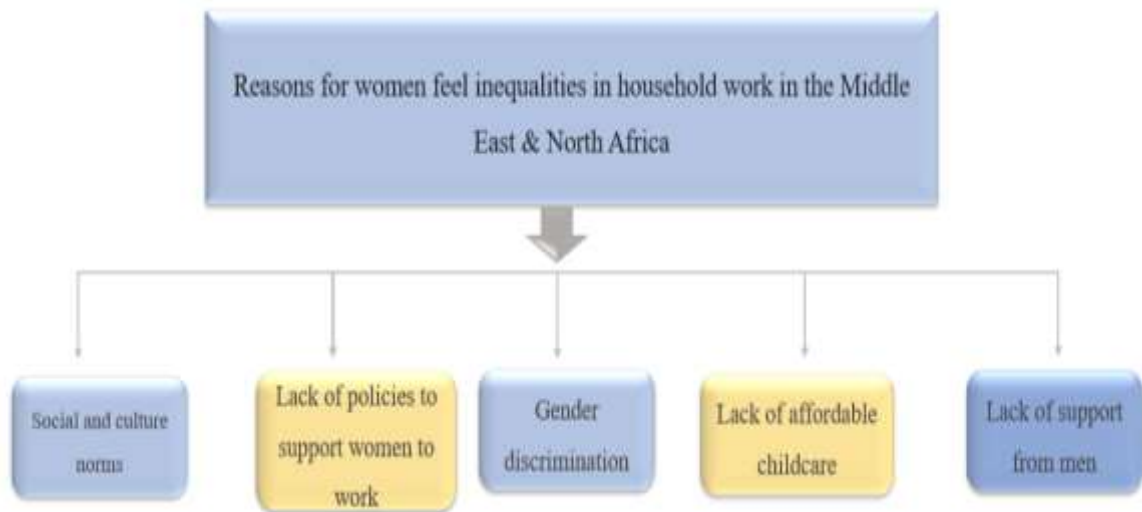


Figure 39: Reasons for women feel inequalities in the household work Middle East & North Africa.

The survey investigated the impact of labor force inequalities on women's decision to continue their participation in their respective workplaces. The findings exhibit a stark contrast between the responses of women from the Middle East & North Africa in comparison to those from Europe. It was observed that a staggering 89.47% of women from the Middle East & North Africa who participated in the survey would quit their jobs if they were faced with inequalities. In comparison, only 46.6% of women from Europe stated the same.

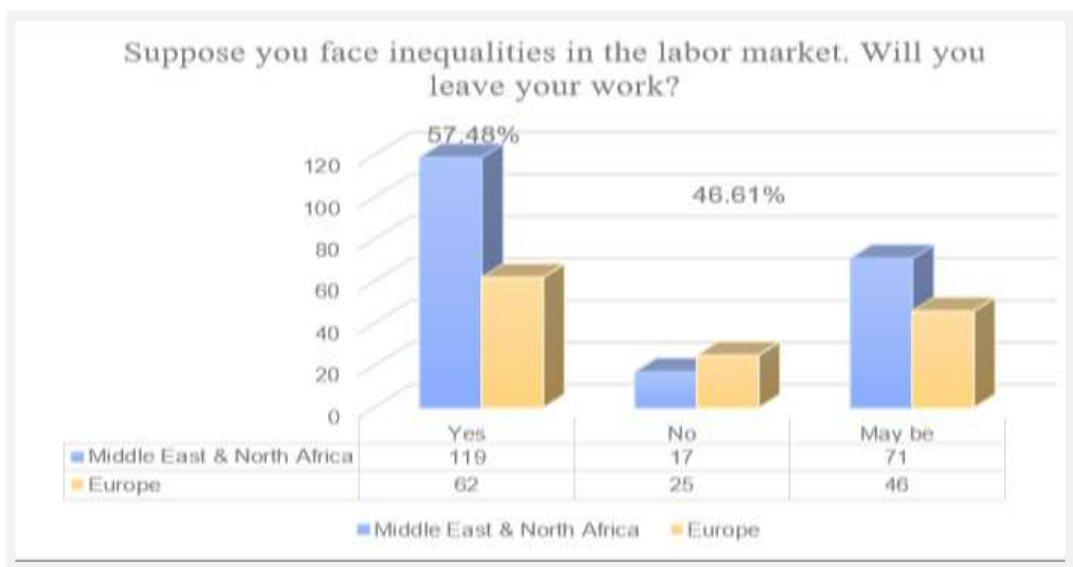


Figure 40: The effect of the inequalities on women participation in the labor force.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the presence of gender inequalities in the labor force significantly influences and reduces women's willingness to continue their work. There is a dire need for policies and practices to tackle inequalities and promote equal opportunities for women, irrespective of their nationality or ethnicity, to enable a fair and inclusive work environment. It is important to note that the aforementioned conclusions are based solely on the responses gathered from the interviewed women. While their experiences and perspectives offer valuable insights into the issue of gender inequalities in the labor force, it cannot be assumed that their views are representative of the entire women's workforce. Moreover, the impact of gender inequalities may vary among individuals depending on their circumstances.

Conclusion

Women continue to be underrepresented in the labor force compared to men because of various types of inequality in the labor market. Even though more women enter the labor force, the burden of private and care duties, or unpaid labor, remains mainly on their shoulders. Women's increased working hours do not always result in a more equitable distribution of home and caregiving responsibilities between men and women. So, when the amount of time spent on unpaid labor (day-to-day, domestic responsibilities) is included, women work more.

The thesis investigated how inequalities between women and men in the labor force significantly impact women's participation in the labor force as well as, the effect of gender inequalities on the economies. The first part of the thesis focuses on the factors that determine women's labor force participation. The study shows that family and household situations, work time flexibility, and social and cultural elements drive women to participate in the labor force. On the other hand, social and cultural values, and objective constraints, such as limits on women's movement, limit them from working or exploring opportunities outside their homes.

Based on the analysis of different types of inequalities' role on women's participation in the labor force, it can be concluded that inequalities are one of the main barriers that face women participating in the labor force in developing and developed countries. Women's labor-force involvement is a growth driver. As more women join the work market, economies have the potential to develop more quickly as labor inputs expand.

Secondly, the thesis investigates the trends in the labor force and discuss the different type of inequalities that women face in the middle east and Europe. Finally, the last part of this thesis investigates how increasing women's participation in economic activities is considered necessary for a variety of reasons, including improving their social and economic position, which leads to an increase in the overall economic efficiency of nations; closing the gender gap in human capital, which leads to higher productivity of women in the labor force and increasing the sectoral share of women employed in various sectors.

The results show that women face different types of inequalities in the labor force in the Middle East & North Africa, including wage discrimination, care work, income inequalities, social norms, and the hiring process. For example, the results show that 61.56% of women participants from the Middle East & North Africa have different opportunities to be hired for the same positions as men. On the other hand, in Europe, 69.5% of women who participated

in the survey agreed that they have the same opportunity to be hired if they apply for the same position as men.

Last but not least, gender inequality in labor force participation is a severe economic concern and an urgent moral and social one. The global economy will suffer if women do not achieve their full economic potential. Educational attainment, economic growth cyclical impacts, and urbanization are some of the most critical positive drivers of women's labor force participation. In addition to these challenges, societal norms governing women's roles in the public domain continue to impact outcomes negatively.

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Appendix

Survey questionnaire

1-Gender

- Female
- Male

2-How old are you?

- 20-30
- 31-45
- 45-More

3-Where are you from?

- Europe
- Middle East&North Africa

4-Do you have a job?

- Yes
- No
- I had before

5-If you aren't employed, what is the reason?

- Have to take care of family.
- Bad economy
- Disability
- Still in school
- Other

6- Which factors drive you to participate in the labor force?

- Earn money
- Prove yourself
- Family and household situation
- Social and culture elements
- Work-time flexibility

7-Which type of work do you prefer?

- Full time
- Part time

8-If you have a part-time job, what is the reason?

- Could not find a full time job
- Do not have enough time because of the household work
- Studying
- Other

9-Which sector do you prefer to work in if you have a choice?

- Public sector
- Private sector
- Self-employed
- Non profit organization.

10-According to your answer for the previous question, what is your reason for your preference?

11- Did your employer provide any of the following benefits at your job?

- Health insurance
- Childcare assistance
- Commuter benefits
- Commissions
- Non of the above

12-According to the previous question, Are these benefits affect on your decision to stay at the job?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

13-Suppose you have a child/children. Will it affect on your decision to participate in the labor market?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

14-Do you think women and men have the same opportunity to be hired if they apply for the same job?

- Yes
- No

15-Did you face any inequalities in your work?

- Yes
- No

16-If your answer to the previous question was yes, which kind of inequalities did you face?

- Inequality in household work
- Inequality in wages
- Inequality in promotions
- Unequal workplace treatment
- Other

17-In your opinion, who afford more household work?

- Women
- Men
- Both have equal responsibility.

18- From your point of view, what is the reason for the previous question?

19-Suppose you face inequalities in the labor market. Will you leave your work?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

