



THE CARE ECONOMY IN JORDAN:

TOWARDS RECOGNIZING, REDUCING AND REDISTRIBUTING UNPAID CARE WORK

In a nutshell:

- Women in Jordan, and particularly married women, bear nearly all of the responsibility for unpaid care work, including both direct care for children and the elderly and indirect care for the household.
- Women's time in unpaid care work does not vary by their employment status, such that employed women continue to work a full "double shift" of housework after their paid workday.
- The responsibility for unpaid care is therefore a strong disincentive for women to participate in the labour market, particularly after marriage, contributing to Jordan's very low female labour force participation rate.
- The paid care sector is a substantial component of the Jordanian economy, constituting over a quarter of public sector employment and a small but growing share of private sector employment.
- The expansion of employment in the paid care sector is of particular importance to women, for whom it represents nearly 60 per cent of total employment.
- The care economy has substantial potential for growth and could absorb some of the new labour-market entrants, particularly if investments in the sector are made in combination with efforts to encourage young people to be trained in and to enter care professions.

Key questions:

- How do marital status, paid employment and household composition affect women's time in unpaid care work?
- What are the characteristics of the paid care sector in Jordan and its growth patterns over time?
- What are policy directions to support the care economy and measures to strengthen the implementation and evaluation of recent policy reforms?

Care is fundamental to our societies and economies. While families are a key site for giving and receiving care, the implications of who provides care and who receives it extend beyond the family sphere. Care is a public good, meaning that its benefits extend beyond those to whom it is directly provided. Care for young children is a critical investment in the health, education and productivity of future generations while care for the elderly helps ensure dignity, longer-lasting health and well-being for those who have contributed to their families and societies. Care for the temporarily or permanently ill and disabled is likewise a way that societies ensure greater health and economic security for all.

Yet although care is a public good, the current responsibility for providing it falls overwhelmingly on families. Within families, this responsibility falls predominantly on women and girls. Care is an important dimension of family life and providing it is often a rewarding experience that family members want to and should perform. However, families should also be supported by services and public policies that give them options in terms of who provides care and how much is provided inside versus outside the household in times of need. The provision of such services and the implementation of public policies that could alleviate or redistribute some of the care burden for women and families remain underdeveloped in many countries.

In fact, the very organization of care work is a driver of gender inequality on a global scale. It is estimated that 16.4 billion hours are spent on unpaid care work each day, time that if valued at national hourly minimum wage levels would amount to USD 11 trillion. Three-quarters of this unremunerated time is spent by women and girls. When this amount of time is devoted to essential, yet unpaid tasks for the

production and reproduction of families, it props up global economies on a massive scale. But this unpaid labour comes with other costs. The time that women and girls spend on unpaid care can come at the expense of their education, participation in paid employment outside the home, and time for leisure and self-care. The unequal distribution of unpaid care work thus restricts women's and girls' educational and economic opportunities relative to men and boys. Time poverty – when individuals do not have enough time for rest or leisure due to paid or unpaid work – can also negatively impact women and girls' health and well-being.

Improve recognition and measurement through a national time-use survey

Recognizing the extent and value of unpaid care must receive more attention from policymakers. To date, Jordan has never conducted a dedicated time-use survey. Implementing such a survey, as part of a national effort to highlight the importance of the unpaid and paid care economies and support the policy initiatives discussed below with further data, should be a key priority. The presence of such data would also enable the necessary monitoring and evaluation to ensure that care policies are effective.

Monitor and evaluate reforms to parental leave policies

Existing evidence indicates that unpaid care work is mostly shouldered by women, particularly married women, irrespective of their labour market status. Whereas women spent 18.8 hours on unpaid care work per week on average in 2016, men spent only 1.1 hours per week (Figure 1). Unlike men, marriage appears to be a strong determinant of

time spent in care work among women. In 2016, married women spent 26.7 hours per week on unpaid care work while unmarried women spent only 7.3 hours. On the other hand, men's time in care work remains minimal, regardless of their marital status.

The responsibility for unpaid care is therefore a strong disincentive for women to participate in the labour market, particularly after marriage, contributing to Jordan's very low and decreasing FLFP rate. Despite the considerable efforts in care-related policy domains in recent years, the FLFP has decreased recently to as low as 14.2 per cent in 2019, placing Jordan 182nd out of 185 countries in terms of women's participation in the labour force (World Bank 2019). High opportunity costs resulting from unpaid care affect women's ability, particularly that of married women, to balance their time between labour market and domestic work.

It is unclear whether existing policies, particularly maternity leave and employer-provided childcare, have had the intended effects in terms of reducing employers' disincentives to hire women and increasing female labour force participation. A rigorous evaluation of recent policy reforms in this area is needed in order to understand their impacts on both labour supply (women's choices about the labour market) and demand (employer's hiring preferences and practices). This is crucial to determine whether further amendments are needed, and also to provide evidence for other countries in the region that may consider moving to a social-insurance-based maternity leave financing scheme. The recent adoption of a paternity leave policy is also a very positive development and places Jordan among the pioneering countries in the region.

Similarly, enforcement and monitoring need to be improved to ensure that new maternity and paternity leave laws are being properly implemented. Although Jordan has laws protecting women's rights at work, labour inspection capabilities are insufficient and merit attention. The Government and the Social Security Corporation need to enhance such capabilities by recruiting more labour inspectors and investing in on-the-job training. In addition, some of the existing laws continue to reinforce the male-breadwinner model. For example, the labour law and its associated regulations impose restrictions on women's nighttime work, and civil service regulations allow women to have a monthly family allowance only if their spouse is either not working or deceased. Ensuring gender equality in these other labour provisions will complement the important steps taken with regard to paid leaves.

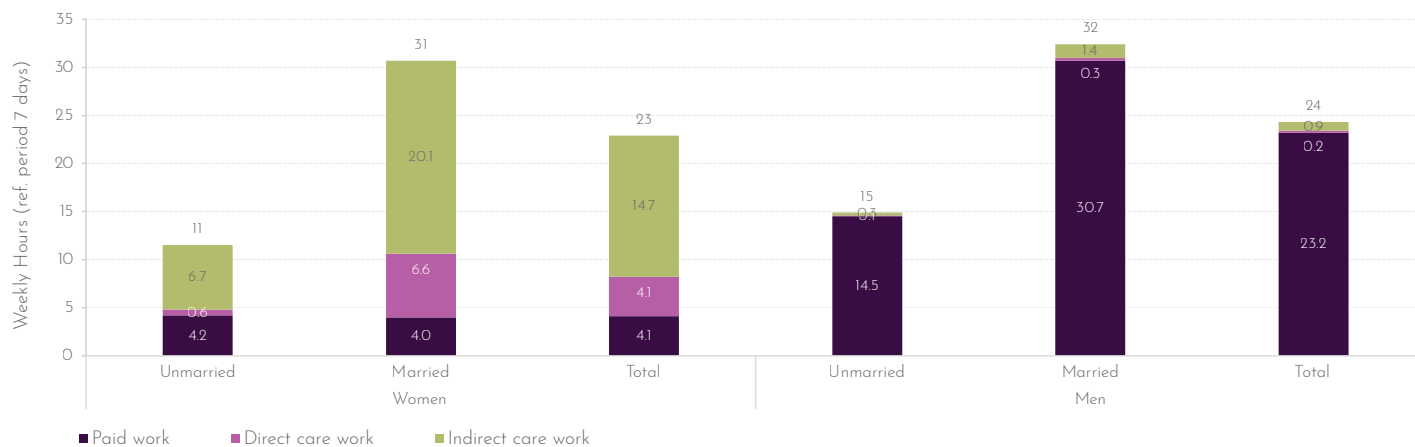
Implement supporting programmes to address social norms

Social norms and practices in Jordan contribute to lower female labour force participation, and to strong imbalances in the division of unpaid care work. The Government needs to undertake serious efforts to gradually change adherence to gender-stereotyped roles by reviewing educational curricula and social development programmes and policies.

Continue to expand early childhood care and education

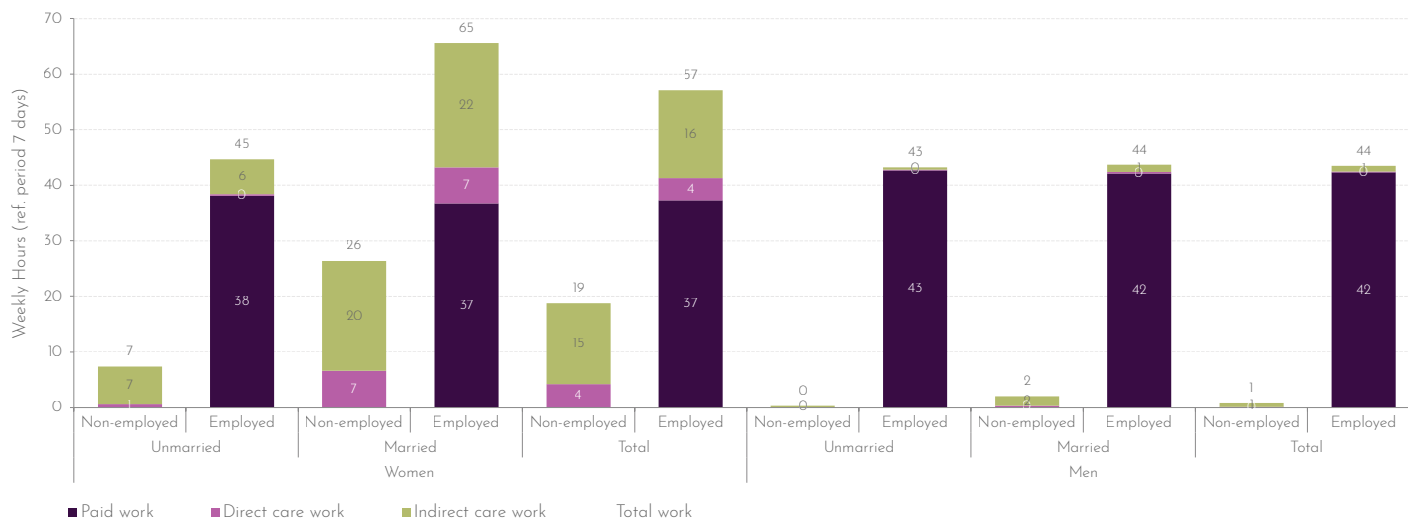
Evidence confirms that the presence of children in the home has a substantial effect on women's time in unpaid care work.

FIGURE 1. WEEKLY HOURS OF UNPAID (DIRECT AND INDIRECT) WORK AMONG JORDANIANS AGED 15-64, 2016



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2016.

FIGURE 2. WEEKLY HOURS OF PAID AND UNPAID WORK, BY MARITAL AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND BY SEX, JORDANIANS AGED 15-64, 2016



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2016.

The largest and most consistent effect on women's time spent in care work results from having a child under the age of 3 in the household, which increased married women's time in unpaid care work by 5.2 hours per week. The impact of having a child aged 3–5 or 6–17 on women's time use was not statistically significant, holding other factors constant, whether for married or unmarried women.

The expansion of good quality ECCE services has the potential to generate multiple benefits, including improved early childhood development outcomes, redistribution of some of women's unpaid time spent on childcare, and increased employment opportunities for women, given their predominance as providers in this sector. Correspondingly, the recent policy decision to make Kindergarten (KG) mandatory for children aged 5 should be evaluated for its impact not only on children's outcomes, but also on women's time in unpaid care and their labour force participation rates. Efforts are also needed to increase the participation of younger children in ECCE, as enrolment rates in pre-school/nursery are much lower than those in KG. In 2015–2016, There was a gross enrolment rate in KG2 of 79.5 per cent for Jordanian children aged 5–6, with boys slightly more likely to be enrolled than girls, at 80.6 versus 78.3 per cent, respectively (Ministry of Education 2018). However, the 2012 Jordan Population and Family Health Survey found that 35 per cent of children aged 4–5 were enrolled in an ECCE programme, and only 10 per cent of children aged 3 (DoS and ICF International 2012). Encouraging ECCE enrolment requires a combined approach to improve the supply, quality and affordability of nurseries, while also testing innovative ways to encourage households to use these services.

The recent policy to require employers to establish nurseries for their employees' children is a positive development, particularly because of its formulation based on the number of children of all workers and not just female workers, which reduces disincentives for employers to hire women. Enforcement and monitoring of the policy are nevertheless required to determine how employers are reacting and their degree of compliance. Furthermore, workplace-based nurseries established by private sector firms constitute only 4 per cent of all nurseries in Jordan (Ghawi & others 2017). Even with an increase in FLFP, these workplace-based nurseries will only be available to a relatively small number of women, given their low labour force participation rates. Expansion of workplace-based nurseries is therefore unlikely to be sufficient to increase ECCE enrolment rates at a national level. Moreover, the structure of ECCE is important, as evidence shows that short pre-primary school days may conflict with mothers' working schedules (Krafft & Lassassi, forthcoming).

Expand elder care

Investment in elder-care services is particularly important given Jordan's aging population. Considering the increase in disability and chronic illness among the elderly and the increase in women's unpaid care work associated with having a disabled or chronically ill household member, the ageing of the population is expected to result in a further rise in unpaid care responsibilities. At the same time, the study found that having an elderly member (aged 65+) in the household actually reduces married women's time spent on unpaid care work by an average of 5.4 hours

per week, holding other factors, such as illness and disability, constant. This suggests that co-resident grandparents not suffering from illness or disability help with childcare and housework, a form of support that is being lost with the increasing nuclearization of households in Jordan. Conversely, the presence of an elderly household member increased the time that unmarried women spent on unpaid care work by two hours per week. However, the presence of a chronically ill or disabled household member did increase the average time spent on care work for married and unmarried women alike, by 4.1 hours and 1.4 hours per week, respectively. This finding is particularly important as the burden of chronic, non-communicable diseases in Jordan is high and likely to increase.

As in most countries of the region, elder-care services are underdeveloped in Jordan. To meet the diverse needs of a growing elderly population, investment in both residential and non-residential services is needed. These investments should also focus on the quality of elder-care services, which is closely linked to the quality of jobs in this care sector. Social-care workers, which include elder-care workers as well as some ECCE workers, are the most vulnerable private sector care workers, with lower levels of education and job formality than workers in other care sectors.

Invest in the paid care economy as a potential source of job creation

The paid care sector is important for the Jordanian economy, constituting over a quarter of public sector employment and a small but growing share of private sector employment (10 per cent in 2015–2018). Employment in care sectors, particularly for women, grew faster than in other sectors of the economy between 2005–2017. This

growth, particularly in the private sector, reflects the increased demand for care services, and, in particular, for education services. Policy measures to expand care services may further stimulate this employment growth. The expansion of employment in the paid care sector is of particular importance to women, for whom it represents nearly 60 per cent of total employment. This level of overrepresentation is striking, given the very low FLFP rate among women in Jordan in general and in the private sector in particular.

The quality of jobs in the paid care sector is also of particular importance to women given their overrepresentation in the sector. Care work, especially in the education sector, may be attractive to women because of its relatively high levels of formality and its shorter working hours compared to work in other sectors. However, there is a substantial wage gap in care sectors, and women are more likely than men to earn below the minimum wage, particularly in education. This pattern may reflect an overall devaluation of paid care work – particularly in highly feminized subsectors that are often low-paid because of their association with women’s unpaid care work. Ensuring fair wages in care sectors, including the domestic work sector, is therefore an important priority.

Conclusions

More public investment in education, health and social-care services is required in Jordan, particularly given the recent experience with COVID-19. Greater and more equitable investments in the care economy are needed to serve populations in distant governorates, and to lessen the unpaid care burdens largely shouldered by women. The extent and value of unpaid care must be measured, ideally through a dedicated time-use survey. Meanwhile, reforms to parental leave

policies should be monitored and evaluated, while programmes to address underlying social norms can be introduced. These changes, coupled with increasing efforts to expand ECCE quality and coverage and develop elder-care services, can be important catalysts to strengthen Jordan's care economy, as well as to increase employment opportunities for women.

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About the research

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