

# Gender Differences In Labour Market: A Case Study Of The Palestinian Economy

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to present and highlight the gender differences in the Palestinian labour force. Three broad aspects of the labour market are analyzed for the purpose. These aspects are, 1) the available employment opportunities, measured by the major indicator of labour market, the labour force participation rate. 2) working conditions, that refers to the terms and conditions for employees from the employer, the overall work environment. These are ranging from working hours to bonuses and remunerations. Besides pay, other aspects such as trainings, skills, health, and safety conditions are part of the work environment. Mental demands at workplace are another important feature. 3) and the wage discrimination i.e., there is pay gap between women and men.

Our analysis found low labour force participation rate for women across the countries, and particularly in the occupied Palestinian territory. Numerals factors such as cultural, religious and job requirements have restricted women's participation. Housekeeping is a major such factor, and agriculture is the major source, which predominantly provides employment to women. These have push women to this and others low levels pay jobs. Which created a pay gap, where women are paid less than men. However, women in Palestine are at par with males in terms of mean years of schooling. Thus, the results also show that, these differences are unexplained by qualification and education, in both formal and informal sectors. In all three aspects, discrimination based on gender is prevalent in the Palestinian labour force.

Apart from housekeeping, religious beliefs and cultural norms, many other factors have caused such gaps. One of such factors is the never-ending Israeli-Palestine

conflict. This has triggered and produced many other issues, like political instability, weak economy, and so less production and fewer opportunities. The Palestinian is still dependent on the Israeli economy especially for employment sources.

**Keywords:** Gender Differences, Participation Rate, Job Security, Work Conditions

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Women and the Palestinian Labour Force.**

Among the pressing global challenges, gender gaps are on the forefront. Worldwide the probability of participation in the work force is much lesser than men, and even if they intended to participate, they have lower chances of accessing and finding to better work opportunities. This situation is more persistent in Arab world specifically the occupied Palestinian territory.

Since the third Arab Israeli War, Palestine has witnessed many challenges such as Palestinian Intifadas, establishment of the Palestinian Authority, and restrictions on labour movements etc., which have affected the labour market. This Palestinian oppression and political instability created substantial challenges for the labour force e.g., high unemployment rate, and stagnant economic growth. However, the challenges faced by women in the Palestinian labour force are more severe than male.

Women employment opportunities are one of the main challenges for women, limiting their participation and forcing them to work in specific jobs according to the structured market segregations (Shabana and Saleh, 2008). The differences in work conditions like the lack of health, lack of safety conditions and job security forced their participation in the informal sector. These differences lead to other critical discrimination in wages and salaries. Such wage gap mentioned is an outcome differences between men and women according to their gender, despite equal qualifications and education. As per the ILO modelled estimation 2020, the annual women labour participation rate for age 15 and above is 45 percent globally, while 18 percent in the Palestine. Similarly, the unemployment rate for female is around 6 percent globally and 41 percent in the Palestine. Also, the potential labour force rate for women globally is 5 percent and 21 percent in the Palestine.

This paper will present and analyse three broad aspects of gender differences in the Palestinian labour force: employment opportunities; work conditions in safety and secured job; and wage gap as an outcome.

### **Problem statement**

Many international forums such as the World Bank and the ILO; and other national level academia and think tanks have highlighted the importance of women involvement in economic activities. Moreover, developed and developing economies both are facing gender differences especially in labour force (Lamanna and Klasen, 2009). Palestinian policymakers have also been working on minimizing these gaps and their effects on economic performance. However, policymakers have not reached a unified consensus on the nature of this relationship between gender differences and economic development. This study is analysing these gender differences by using three aspects: employment opportunities, work conditions and wage gaps.

### **Scope of the study**

The study's importance is that it addresses a vital issue in the Palestinian labour market, the gender differences, as one of the obstacles confronting by Palestinian women in terms of labour market and their effects on economic performance.

The study considered a descriptive study that addressed this issue at the Palestinian and Arab levels, which has the significant effect of attracting officials' attention to respond appropriately, develop policies, and amend the necessary legislation to ensure gender equity. Doing so will create a more equal and productive labour force as an essential component for a productive economy.

This study will focus on the period (2000-2020); it will explore, investigate, and analyse the trends in the Palestinian labour force by gender, economic activities, main occupations, educational levels, and wage gaps between men and women.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **International context and theoretical foundation**

When examining the women's experiences within the labour market, some theoretical approaches attempted to explain and analyses the gender differences in the labour market and study female participation characteristics and conditions. One of the most important of these theories is the classical school theory, which based on the theory of

human capital and the discrimination theory as an expansion of the classical approach. Also, the gender perspective will be used to explain the differences in the labour force.

### **The classic school**

The modern classical theory attempts to explain the gender differences by analyzing women's stereotypical image in the labour market as having an inefficient economic power and a low labour value compared with men. Thus, male employment is favored over female employment in the labour market. In this perspective, the differences between supply and demand for men and women employment, skills, experiences, and individual preferences reinforce the gender gap in the labour market.

The human capital theory, which is based on the modern classical school thoughts, is one of the first economic theories that show the relationship of gender differences with the skills and expertise required in the labour market. Becker (1957) is one of the most important contributors to human capital theory development, focusing on the importance of the expected return of education and training and individuals' willingness to invest in it. According to this theory, individuals acquire the skills required in the labour market through training and education (Becker, 1957). Consequently, women receive lower returns than men because they don't have sufficient opportunities for training and education, leading to the division of labour based on sex and the concentration of women's employment in jobs that require fewer skills, training, and education, resulting in a lack of practical experience for women. Some employers see the cost of working for women as a more significant financial burden because of their inability to work without permits such as maternity leave or inability to work overtime (Meulders and others, 2010; Anker, 1997). This theory attempts to explain women's employment's low status by relying on purely economic indicators of profit and loss without looking into certain situations.

Becker explained that the gender differences in the labour market may some individuals' desire individuals to pay a higher wage or based on the preference or acceptance of one group over another (Becker, 1971). The employer discrimination theory confirms discrimination regardless of the skill, education, and productivity associated with the worker if they belong to a less valuable group in comparison with others. Becker confirms that the decline of the desire to latent based on specific characteristics such as race, gender, or ethnicity shows that people's preferences embody the gender gap in the labour market despite the education, skills, or experiences possessed by individuals. The other model of this theory related to the worker shows that workers prefer to work with certain groups in return for refusing to deal with other categories. The discrimination against consumers emphasizes

customers' unwillingness to services provided by women, forcing the employer to reduce products' prices, causing material loss. Thus, the employer reduces the wage of women working in those establishments (Arrow, 1971; Moro, 2003; Becker, 1971).

### **Gender perspective**

Women are concentrated in specific occupations and at low employment levels within specific traditional tasks and poor working conditions such as low wages compared to men. Still, the wage gap is the most prominent global gap that forms part of women's exploitation and oppression due to the play's central role in the employment process (Moser, 1993).

The feminist research emphasizes the importance of addressing the sex division of domestic work for women, as a contribution to the analysis of oppression and exploitation of women in the capitalist system. Also, that cannot be analyzed without reference to the importance of the reproductive role played by women within the home, as this role constitutes the most necessary and supposed need for the continued dominance of the capitalist system through the reproduction of labor, which forms the basis of its existence and continuity (Young,1992; Barrett,1980). (Young,1992) relies on three main themes to analyze the issue of the sex division of labor: the role of the family, the State, the capitalist system, and how it relates to the problem of sex division of labor, and the study of family forms is essential as one of the most important contexts for analysing and interpreting the division of sexual work, and the importance of this informing the ideological construction of female and male within the family, which is the primary and first centre of the oppression of young women (Young, 1992), as for the role of the State, it regulates unique relations within contemporary capitalism and fragmented labor forces that include both men and women, enacts laws and legislation governing the labor market, affirms women's right to equal pay, and abolishes all discriminatory procedures that start with employment procedures and continue with the presence of women within the working environment. The capitalist system also persecutes women and exploits them within the labor force clearly and systematically within the labor market.

Some explanations require women to carry out-reproduce work labour force since their income covers the costs associated with women's tasks only. These costs for unmarried women include the costs of education, carrying out the domestic tasks required of them, and care tasks. Still, in married women, the costs include reproductive tasks, specifically pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, and other household tasks. The State may cover some of the costs (Charlesworth, 2010; Hultin & SzulKin, 1999; Barrett,1980).

Marxist feminism formed a special current demanding wage for domestic work and focused on analysing women's work within the capitalist system as the cause of women's oppression. Socialist theorists provided theoretical and practical conceptions about demanding wages in exchange for domestic work under the socialist society that linked women's emancipation to the development of society. Socialists show that patriarchy and the capitalist system jointly oppress women (Menon, 2000; Wharton, 2000)

Marxist feminism considers that the reason for women's oppression is not linked to their biological nature, but rather confirms that the nature of women has been socially formed, and the differences between individuals in society are the result of some social practices and conditions that have defined the characteristics of the classes of society through their association with the concept of the value of production in the capitalist system, and that The value of production led to the creation of differences between classes of society, and increased the subordination of women due to their exclusion from the world of production, and the concept of class became more socially significant than biological differences between the sexes (Menon Warton, 2000, 2005).

Gender differences in the labor market have been extensively studied in recent decades (Blau and Kahn 2007, Olivetti and Petronage 2008 Ngai and Petronoglo 2017). Such empirical studies investigated not only the existence but also a persistence of differences in labor market. That result women disadvantage compared to their male colleagues. These are (i) employment rates are generally lower among women than men, (ii) unemployment rates generally proved higher for females than males, while (iii) females tend to show less income than males. Broadly these gender differences in labour market could be classified into two different groups. In one, the research conducted to analyse gender differences at national level (within the countries), which has recently been identified by NGAI and Petronoglo (2017) or Blau and Kahn (2017). In the other one, there are several periodic studies to understand international gender differences, that is, the investigation focused on the causes of the existence of differences in labor market in all countries (Kunze 2017a, Olivetti and Patronage 2008; Blau and Kahn, 2007). However, both groups show light on the possible causes of the existence of these differences, especially the primary gender payment gap (GPG).

## **DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

The study will utilize the descriptive analytical approach in presenting the relevant data by men and women in the Palestinian labour market. The data collected from secondary sources like the Palestinian central of statistics and other previous studies focused on women's conditions and the gender differences between men and women.

These will consist of published material such as scholarly journal articles, books, magazines, and newspapers.

As stated earlier, the current study considers three broad aspects to investigate the gender differences in the Palestinian labour force. These aspects are 1) employment opportunities, which is measured by labour force participation rate 2) work conditions will be measured by qualitative characteristics such as job securing, social protection, health, and safety conditions 3) and the gender wage gap, it is considered an outcome of gender differences in the labour market.

Numerous studies have used descriptive methodological approach to study and highlight employment opportunities across gender through labor force participation within the labor force market. These studies include Kühn, Horne and Yoon (2017); Al-Botmeh (2013); and Michael and Fallah (2019). Similarly, for gender wage gap, the same approach is used. Although many scholarly works have done regression and other econometric methodologies to studies and measure the extent of wage gap. However, in the current study we are interested to highlight the gaps between males and females therefore, same descriptive analysis has been carried out. Based on these studies, variables, which are deemed helpful and supportive are considered, see table 1 for the variables and their descriptions. The International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) give the descriptions as illustrated and defined.

However, for exploring the gender differences in the work conditions, the current study has used qualitative analysis as done by Al-Botmeh (2013).

**Table 2.1:** List of variables and descriptions

Variable	Description
Labor force	Employed/unemployed persons of age 15 years and above.
Labor force participation rate	this indicator shows how much individuals of age 15 years and above are either employed or unemployed
Employed	15 and above years individuals who worked at least one hour in the reference period. If not worked but were absent from own business, or were unpaid family members etc.
Unemployed	individuals of age 15 years and above who were able to work but not worked in the reference period.

Percentage of Individuals outside the labor force	it is the percentage of age 15 and above individuals who were unemployed during the reference period
Wage	net cash wage which is paid to the wage employees.
Wage employee	individual who are paid in the form of salary, remuneration etc. for working with private or public employer
Average daily wage for paid employee	this is net wage cash paid to wage employees for time worked along with remuneration.
Economic activity	the main work of the enterprise which contributes the value added in a large proportion.
Years of schooling	individuals who are graduated or attending formal educational years currently.

**Source:** PCBS and ILO

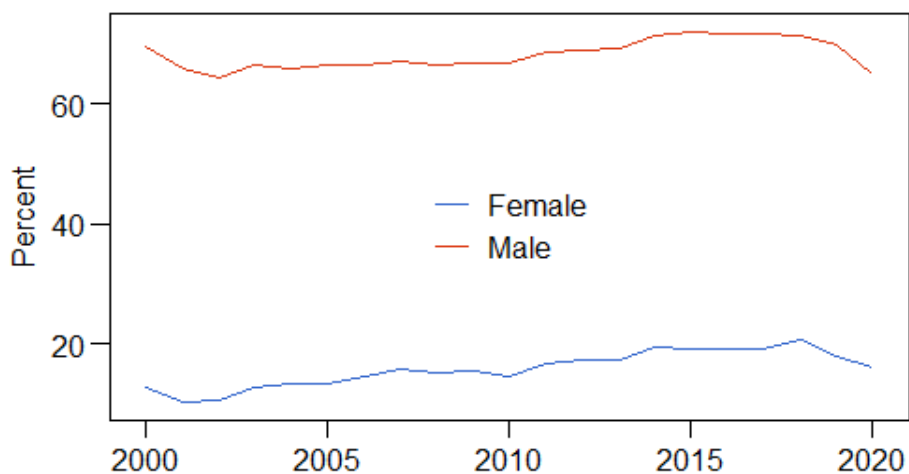
It will be measured by the numerical and statistical value of the wage gap between man and women in the Palestinian economy based on the PCBS. Annual data from 2000 to 2020 have been collected from various final reports of labour force surveys published by PCBS.

## **EMPIRICAL RESULTS**



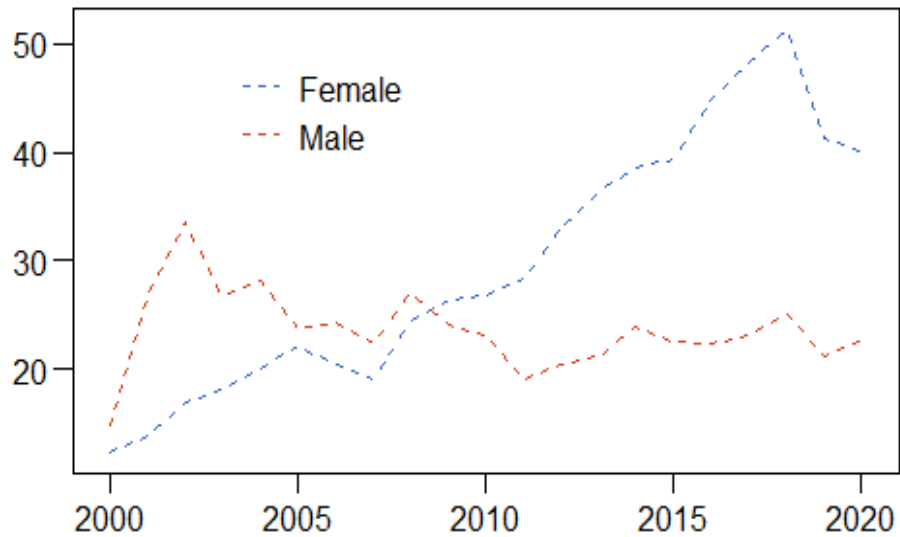
The availability of decent and diverse employment opportunities assure development and portray the good health of an economy. Unfortunately, majority of the countries especially, developing economies are lag in such opportunities. They have limited private sector, lack of entrepreneurship, nepotism in jobs, corruption, and political instability. Apart from such situations, there is considerable differences between men and women when it comes to employability, especially in the Arab States and specifically in the occupied Palestinian territory. As a measure of employment opportunities, current study has analysed the trends of labor force participation over the last two decades. When women participated in the labor force, it affects them economically, socially as well as psychologically. And so, this way women can improve their conditions, do birth plans, and defend their rights etc. Figure 1 indicates a clear picture of the persistent high difference between men and women. In 2000, women's participation was 12.9 percent compared to 69.5 percent for men. There seems be no better result even after two decades, as it almost still the same. In 2020 women's participation 16.1 percent while that for men was 65.1 percent.

**Figure 4.1:** Labor Force Participation Rate of Individuals Aged 15 Years and Above



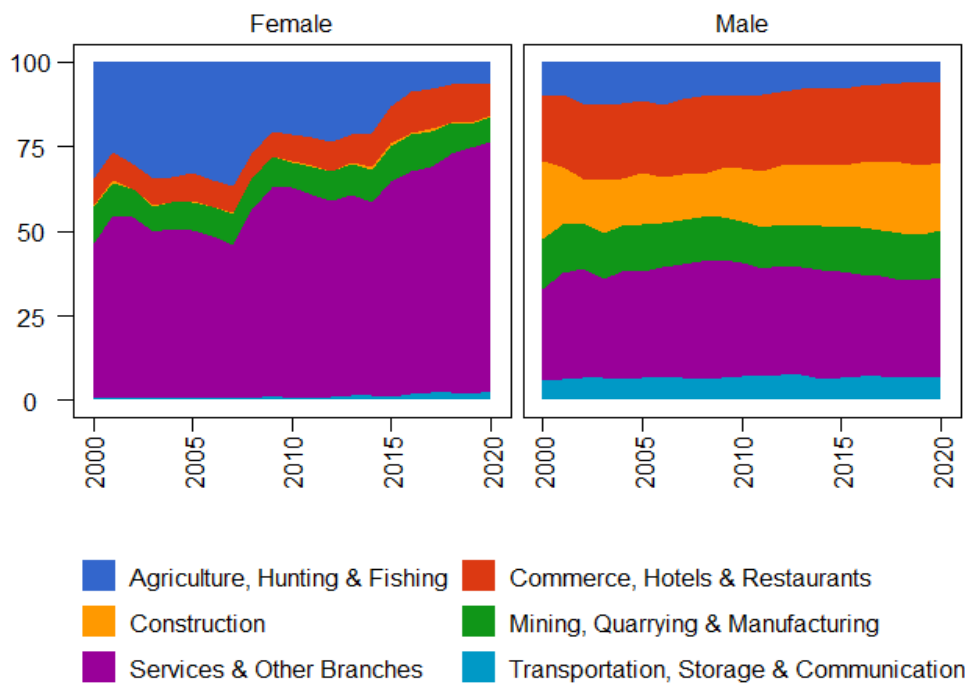
**Source:** Palestinian Labour Force Survey (by PCBS) 2000-2020 - Annual Reports

**Figure 4.2:** Unemployment rate among labor force participants of individuals aged 15 years and above in Palestine by sex



**Source:** Palestinian Labour Force Survey (by PCBS) 2000-2020 - Annual Reports

**Figure 4.3:** Percentage Distribution of Employed Individuals Aged 15 Years and Above from Palestine by Sex and Economic Activity



**Source:** Palestinian Labour Force Survey (by PCBS) 2000-2020 - Annual Reports

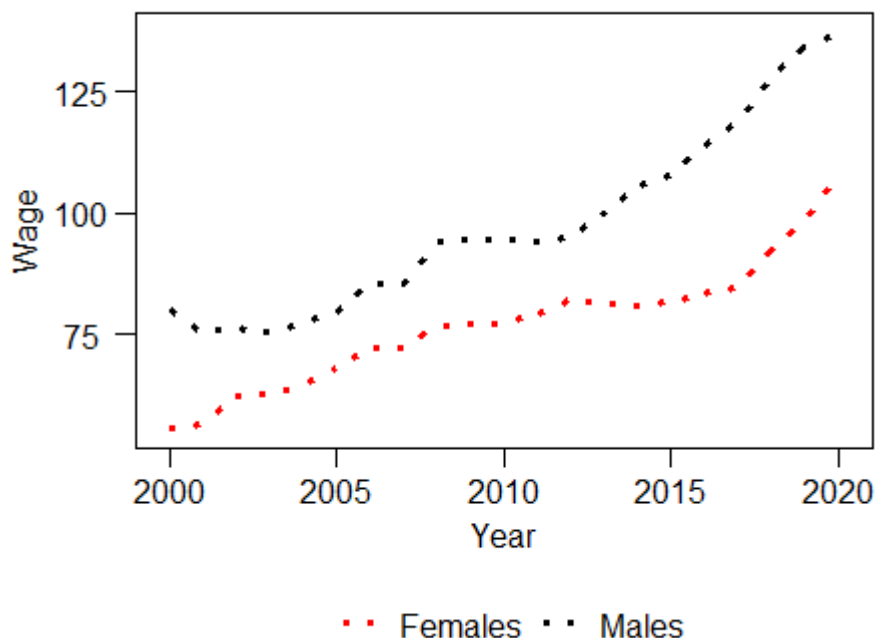
As per the LF survey, educated women with more than 13 years schooling, participation rate was around 70 percent, and 5 percent among those with lesser schooling. Female wage employee was around 78 percent, and 72 percent for male in 2020, however, about 9 percent women and 4 percent men were unpaid family member. That means more women work in houses and are unpaid. Approximately 90 percent of employed women with higher years of schooling are working in services and related sectors, while more than 70 percent of employed uneducated women are working in agriculture sectors. On the other hand, males are almost evenly involved and spread across all sectors. Figure 2 shows the overall distribution of employed men and women percentage distribution by economic activity for all individuals aged 15 and above. Another reason of such low participation rate is the high and rising unemployment rate see figure 3. From figure the unemployment rate for female is much higher than male. It is due to the continues Israeli occupation, political situations, and looming economic crisis. Majority of the working population in the West Bank are working and dependent on Israeli market and its settlements. That's why when Israel restricts access to it labor market, which creates a lot of repercussions such as less remittances.

In addition to the above reasons, the reasons across gender have been explored and can be observed from figure 4. Where the percentage of individuals aged 15 years and above who are out of labor force, although they can work. The shaded areas for four major reasons: housekeeping; old/ill; study/training; and other have been plotted for male and female from 2000 to 2020. The results indicate that housekeeping is the main reasons for female that keep them out of labor force, followed by study and training. It demonstrates a realistic feature because women are traditionally working as housewives and other unpaid family tasks. Cultural and Islamic principles also play role in this.

### **Gender wage differences**

The average wage in the labour force is one of the critical determinant factors in labour force participation choices and opportunities for both male and female in various economic activities and primary professions and according to their educational levels. It should be noted that the wage here includes the basic salary or cash wage, the family allowance, the cost-of-living allowance, the certificate premium, the educational level, and any bonuses for the profession. The wages of workers in the private sector in Palestine will also be covered in this part. Workers in the public sector will be excluded because all public sectors are subject to the Palestinian Civil Service Law. Therefore, there is no gap in the wage gender gap for this sector.

As shown in the graph below, the average wage of male workers was higher than female workers in all years of the schooling; In the year 2000, the average daily wage



for men was (70) shekels, compared to (52) shekels for women, with a difference of (18) shekels on average, meaning that the wages of men exceeded the wages of women by 36%. In 2012, the difference between men's and women's wages was the lowest during the study period, as it reached (0.8) shekels in favour of men, with an increase of (1%), where the average daily wage for women was (73.4) shekels and for men (74) shekels, and the difference in the average wages increased. In 2015, it reached (7) shekels, as the average wage for men by (77) shekels compared to (70) shekels for women, meaning that the percentage of men's wages over women's wages was (10%). Men's wages continued to increase over women's wages until 2016.

**Figure 4.4:** Average Daily Wage in NIS for Wage Employees from Palestine by sex

**Source:** Palestinian Labour Force Survey (by PCBS) 2000-2020 - Annual Reports

Concerning the gender pay gap through the Gender Pay Gap, which is defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as: "The difference between the average wage of men and the average wage of women as a percentage of the wage of men" (it is mathematically equal to the average wage of men. Men minus the average wage of women / the average wage of men (International Labour Organization, 2013). It is

observed that the gender wage gap has fluctuated between high and low during the study period, according to the prevailing political conditions during that period. It is noticed that the gap was large and began to decrease after the Al-Aqsa Intifada, and since 2013 the gap began to widen significantly.

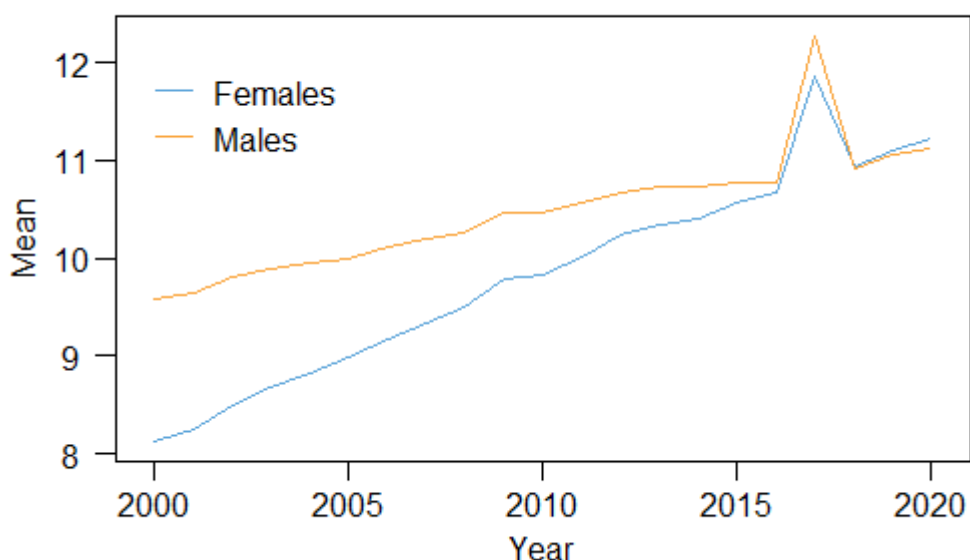
To support our analysis, labor force participation across gender has been shown globally, in Arab States and occupied Palestinian territory see graph 6. As we described earlier, labor force participation rate is very low in Palestine compared to international outlook particularly for women who hardly participate in labor force.

And finally, the above graph shows, that females have achieved the same level of mean years of schooling as males, which means education is not the only barrier to women labor force participation.

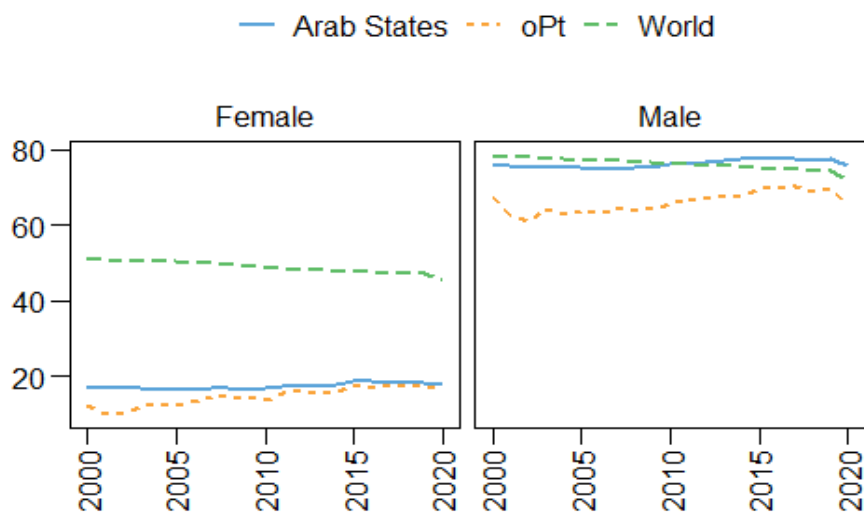
**Source:** ILO modelled estimates, Nov. 2020 (%) – Annual

**Source:** Palestinian Labour Force Survey (by PCBS) 2000-2020 - Annual Reports

**Figure 4.6:** Mean Years of Schooling for Persons (15 years and above) in Palestine by Sex, 2000-2020



**Figure 4.5:** Labor Force Participation Rate Across the World, Arab States and occupied Palestinian territory



**Table 4.1:** Summary Statistics main indicators

Variable	N	mea n	sd	mi n	max
<b>Male</b>					
Average Daily Wage (NIS)	2	97.8	19.5	75.	137.
	1	3		5	1
Mean Years of Schooling	2	10.4	0.61	9.5	12.2
	1	7		8	6
Labor Force Participation Rate	2	68.2	2.4	64.	71.9
	1	4		5	
Unemployment Rate	2	23.6	3.77	14.	33.5
	1	3		6	
<b>Female</b>					
Average Daily Wage (NIS)	2	76.9	13.0	55.	107.
	1	8	8	6	7
Mean Years of Schooling	2	9.82	1.05	8.1	11.8
	1			3	5
Labor Force Participation Rate	2	15.8	2.92	10.	20.7
	1	4		4	
Unemployment Rate	2	29.6	11.7	12.	51.2
	1	3	3	4	

**Source:** Palestinian Labour Force Survey (by PCBS) 2000-2020 - Annual Reports

The following tables show descriptive summaries of the variables under discussion. Apart from the trend analysis, the summary statistics also convey similar results. According to table 2, the average daily wage for males as 97.83, and 76.98 for females. We can say men on average earns around 20 percent more wage than female. Similarly, the average labour force participation portrays a stark difference between males and females. Because average participation rate for females is just 15.84 percent while around 70 percent for males. However, in terms of schooling or education, on average females' performance as good as males. The average unemployment rate is also higher for females than males.

**Table 4.2:** Summary Statistics of Economic Activity by Gender

	Activity	N	Mean	sd	min	max
<b>Male</b>						
	Agriculture, Hunting & Fishing	21	9.38	2.22	5.9	12.6
	Commerce, Hotels & Restaurants	21	22.3	1.1	19.1	24.7

	Construction	21	16.9	2.97	12.8	23
	Mining, Quarrying & Manufacturing	21	13.3	0.71	12.1	14.7
	Services & Other Branches	21	31.3	2.04	27.2	34.9
	Transportation, Storage & Communication	21	6.76	0.467	5.7	7.6
<b>Female</b>	Agriculture, Hunting & Fishing	21	22.5	10.6	6.7	36.8
	Commerce, Hotels & Restaurants	21	8.86	1.61	7.2	11.9
	Construction	21	0.376	0.219	0.1	0.9
	Mining, Quarrying & Manufacturing	21	8.91	1.24	6.9	11.1
	Services & Other Branches	21	58.2	8.64	45.3	73.6
	Transportation, Storage & Communication	21	1.13	0.705	0.4	2.8

**Source:** Palestinian Labour Force Survey (by PCBS) 2000-2020 - Annual Reports

In terms of economic activities, females are mostly work in agriculture and services sectors, while the distribution of males is not concentrated in few sectors and representing all sectors.

**Table 4.3:** Summary Statistics of Reasons of Out of Labor Force

	Reason	N	Mean	Sd	Min	max
<b>Male</b>						
	Housekeeping	21	0.481	0.522	0	1.6
	Old/Ill	21	28.3	6.57	15.7	39.1
	Other	21	18.5	7.09	10.2	34.1
	Study/Training	21	52.8	4.64	40.8	58.4
<b>Female</b>						
	Housekeeping	21	66.5	3.35	61.6	73.3
	Old/Ill	21	5.88	1.13	4.2	7.9
	Other	21	2.86	2.17	0.9	7.3
	Study/Training	21	24.7	2.69	18.9	28.2

**Source:** Palestinian Labour Force Survey (by PCBS) 2000-2020 - Annual Reports

Housekeeping is an eminent factor of being out of labour force for females, followed by study. On the other hand, the two major barriers for males are training and illness, which keep them out of labour force.



## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Gender discriminations or gaps are the most pressing challenges in the labour market. Globally, first it is not easy for women to participate in the labour market, and even if they do so, their chances of getting their desired jobs are very low. Moreover, women either involved in unpaid activities or low-level pay jobs.

These gender gaps are also persistent in the Palestinian labour market. To highlight these gender differences, the current study considered and analysed three broad aspects of the labour market: 1) the available employment opportunities, measured through the labour force participation rate. 2) Working conditions, that refers to the overall work environment such as, working hours, remunerations, trainings, health, and safety conditions etc. Mental demands at workplace are another important feature. 3) And the wage discrimination i.e., there is pay gap between women and men.

Our analysis found low labour force participation rate for women across the countries, and particularly in the occupied Palestinian territory. Numerals factors such as cultural, religious and job requirements have restricted women's participation. Housekeeping is a major such factor. Services sector and agriculture are the major source of employment to women. These have push women to these and others low levels pay jobs. Which created a pay gap, where women are paid less than men did. However, women in Palestine are at par with males in terms of mean years of schooling. Thus, the results also show that, these differences are unexplained by qualification and education, in both formal and informal sectors. In all three aspects, discrimination based on gender is prevalent in the Palestinian labour force.

Apart from housekeeping, religious beliefs and cultural norms, many other factors have caused such gaps. One of such factors is the never-ending Israeli-Palestine conflict. This has triggered and produced many other issues, like political instability, weak economy, and so less production and fewer opportunities. The Palestinian is still dependent on the Israeli economy especially for employment sources.

The private sector gaps appear to be the largest, specifically at the level of wages working conditions. Considering women's low status in the private sector compared to the public sector in which women crowded in service activities, there is a clear difference like work and its conditions in terms of the number of hours and the delay. The social protection also includes the availability of a healthy work environment and permanent and temporary contracts, and the different nature of wages such as wages according to the number of hours, per day or this week, without clear policies to reduce the size of differences the various professional sectors. Due to the diversity of work

patterns within this sector, and the lack of clear policies that protect all workers in this sector, specifically in the weekly and daily wages, the percentage of women's wages accounted for 60% of men's wages the same job.

Based on this analysis, it is recommended that opportunities for women should be the priority of the policy makers. Political stability and economic growth will be the precursor to narrow down such gaps, women will thereby be motivated and encouraged to participate in the labour market. Organizing campaigns and other events where these gaps are discussed is essential.

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