

Indicator Report

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Women's Participation in Political Power

The system of legislation with regard to women acquires special importance when designing public strategies aiming at enhancing women status in the society. Legislation is the most prominent expression of a civilized society. It guarantees the enjoyment of individuals in the society of human rights and basic freedoms without any discrimination on basis of race, language, sex, age, religion or special needs. The mechanisms of implementing laws acquire an equal important role as legislations themselves. They are the means by which legislations are applied in practical life and they are the environment which build the basis for guaranteeing the rights of individuals, and specially women, without discrimination.

The Jordanian constitution, being the basis of the legislation system, underlined the concept of equality. Article 6 of the constitution states that: "Jordanians shall be equal before the law. There shall be no discrimination between them as regards to their rights and duties on grounds of race, language, or religion." The National Charter, in section 8 of chapter one states that: "Jordanian men and women are equal under the law. There shall be no distinction between them in rights and obligations". This concept of equality has also been stressed by international agreements and conventions ratified by Jordan, the most prominent among which is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

In spite of the fact that the Jordanian constitution does not discriminate between men and women because of gender and adopts efficiency as its criterion, reality and everyday practices reveal to us, a violation of this constitutional aspect. There is still an existing gap between legislation and the lack of practical application. Therefore, the powers of the three branch of government the legislative, executive and judicial, have been dominated by men. Throughout the history of Jordan. There fore, we do not find any organized political activities, by women, until the last few decades of the 20th century.

Women's Participation in the Parliament

As women began to develop in different life aspects, they increasingly began to claim their political rights. Women participated for the first time as electors in the elections of 1984. However, women did not run for elections until 1989 and once again in 1993 and 1997. Yet, the percentage of female candidates has not exceeded 3% in the best of situations. Only one woman won in the 1993 Parliamentary elections, her success was not based on solid grounds that can be used in planning for the coming election campaign.

There are several reasons why women could not enter the Lower House of the Parliament once more in the elections of 1997. A study conducted on

Jordanian women in the 1997 Parliamentary Elections shows that the society's view of the role of women was one of the most important reasons women were not able to win parliamentary seats in the Lower House. This indicates that Jordanian society still lacks the willingness to accept the existence of women in the Lower House. According to some statistics, four out of every five men and women believe that men are more capable than women to carry out political work. Even if male and female candidates were to have the same characteristics, qualifications and abilities, 68.5% of the women would still prefer to elect male candidates. In addition, 20% of males do not even want women to practice their electoral right.

All of these figures indicate that the Jordanian society still believes that the Parliament is for men. Furthermore, another study indicates that the other reason which caused women not to reach the Lower House of the Parliament is their inability to lead an election campaign financially and morally. In addition we must not forget other reasons such as the fact that candidates were not fully qualified besides the negative effect of the absence of organized women's institutions capable of adopting and supporting these candidates. Though it is important to mention that women were the main reason behind men's reaching the Lower House of the Parliament, as they have gone to the polls and voted for them. In some areas, their votes reached more than 70% (elections of 1997).

Table 5.1: Number of Men and Women Candidates in Parliamentary Elections. 1989,1993 ,1997, 2003 and 2007.

Year	Sex	
	Men	Women
1989	635	12
1993	531	3
1997	544	17
2003	765	54
2007	686	199

Source: Ministry of Interior

In the 2003 national elections, although 50 of the 750 candidates were women, none of them succeeded. As a result, a landmark amendment, supported by his Majesty King Abdullah II, imposed a quota for the minimum number of women in national parliament. As a result, 6 out of the 110 seats in the Lower House of Parliament were reserved for women. The female candidates were placed on a separate electoral list and the six with the largest number of votes in their districts were elected to parliament

It is noteworthy that the number of women candidates has increased to more than 150 woman in 2007 elections. That number was a new record, However only one woman was elected in addition to the 6 female candidates who were appointed as a result of the reservation system.

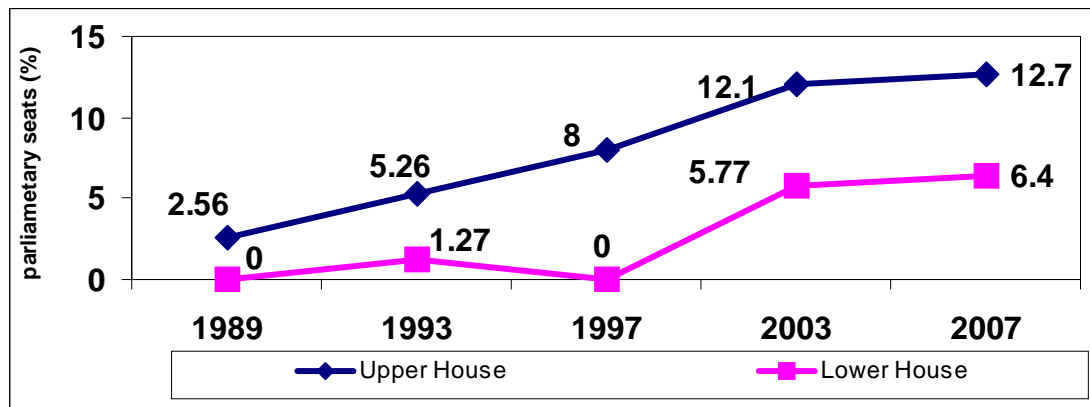


Figure 5.1: Percentage of Parliamentary Seats Occupied by Women, 1989-2007. Source: Ministry of Interior

In the House of Senates, the Upper House of Parliament, whose members are appointed by His Majesty the King, women's share since 1989 has gone up from one woman in that year to two women in 1993 and to three women in 1997 and 2003, that is an increase from 2.5% to 7.5% of the total number of the members of the Senates. The number of appointed women in the Upper House rose from 3 in 2003 to seven in 2007. Figure 5.2 shows the participation of both men and women in the Jordanian Parliament.

Table 5.2: Number of Elected and Appointed Members in the Parliament by Sex ,1989 ,1993,1997, 2003 & 2007

Parliament	Year & Sex									
	1989		1993		1997		2003		2007	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Upper house	39	1	38	2	37	3	34*	3	48	7
Lower House	80	-	79	1	80	0	104	6	103*	7

Source: Ministry of Interior

*The decrease in the number of Upper House members in 2003 is due to the fact that three Upper House members ran as candidates for the Lower House elections .

*The decrease in the number of Lower House male members in 2007 is due to the fact that one woman was elected.

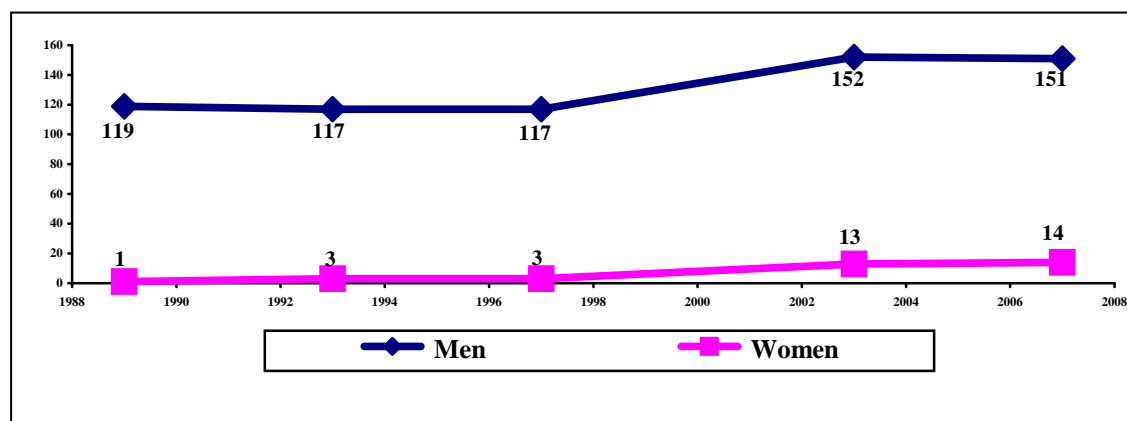


Figure 5.2: Number of Parliament Members by Sex, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2003, 2007

Women's Participation in the Executive Power

As for the executive power, one woman was appointed a Minister of Social Development in 1979 and in 1984, a woman was appointed a Minister of Information. After that, there were a number of governments without any women representatives. Then, a woman was appointed Minister of Industry and Commerce in 1993 and then Minister of Planning. In 1995, two women were appointed to ministerial portfolio (Social Development, and Industry and Trade). Thus, this was the first time when there were two women at the same time in the Government. Then, in 1996, the government changed and women were represented once again by one Minister.

In 1997 one woman was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister. Women's participation in ministerial posts was 3 percent, as there was one woman appointed as a minister among 26 ministers in the government reshuffle of 2001. The 2004 cabinet consisted of 3 females out of 21 cabinet members. However, the number of women increased to 4 ministers in the 2007 cabinet—the highest number in the Jordan's history. These female cabinet members held the important portfolios of Planning and International Cooperation, Tourism and Antiquities, Culture, and Social Development.

Women's Participation in the Judicial and Diplomatic Corps

In the judicial power, Until recently, the judiciary was a field totally confined to men. During the last few years women have entered the field. The total number of women judges rose from 1.2% of total Judges in year 2000 to 5.4% in year 2007.

In the diplomatic field, data reveals a significant improvements in women's status in this field. The percentage of women as member in the diplomatic corps has increased from 2.3% in year 1990 to 16.5% in year 2007.

Table 5.3: Distribution of Employed Persons in the Judicial and Diplomatic Corps by Sex for Selected Years

Years	Diplomatic Corps		Judicial Corps	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
1990	2.3	97.7	0.0	100.0
1995	2.4	97.6	0.2	99.8
2000	3.8	96.2	1.2	98.8
2005	9.8	90.2	2.8	97.2
2007	16.5	83.5	5.3	94.7

Thus, we notice that there has been a consensus on the importance of activating the role of women in the legislative, executive and judicial branches

of government powers, as this was a social need and an integral part of the national strategy for women. This is made evident by the increase of women's representation in the Parliament, the Cabinet and lately in the Judicial and Diplomatic corps.

The existence of the current gap between men and women has led to depriving the whole society of half of its productive capabilities. This goes back to the fact that most of the Jordanian people believe that the role of women in their house and 57% of the group of young men ages 20-24 do not appreciate the idea of having women in leading ministerial or parliamentary positions. Also, the number of obstacles which lead to low representation of women is the heritage and traditions as well as the social structure.

Women's Participation in High Ranking Positions

At the beginning of the nineties, one woman was appointed to a high ranking position (such as heads of independent departments, general secretaries and governors) as the General Director of the Exports Development Institution. In 1997 a woman was appointed as a Secretary General of the Ministry of Administrative Development, that was followed by the appointment of another woman as a Secretary General of the Ministry of Tourism in 1998. In the following year another woman was appointed as a General Director of the Jordan Investment Board. In 2007 the same thing happened to the Housing and Urban Development Corporation.

There have been many questions concerning the actual reasons that stand between women and the High-ranking positions. There has been a tendency to blame women of being incompetent or lack of confidence. Others tend to blame the labor market, either its legislation or its gender discrimination, particularly by the decision-makers with regard to the development of employees.

Moreover, some social trends and upbringing ways continue to emphasize one side of women's roles. These trends do not acknowledge the multi roles of women in the family and in the society. This attitude has its impact on women as it obliges them to refrain from joining the different fields of work and hinders them from pursuing their careers and from progressing in the public life activities and reaching decision-making positions. The financial capacities of women also prohibit them from entering the public life fields. All this indicates the importance of serious efforts to achieve increased women participation in the various fields of public life, to enhance their capacities and to enable them to achieve this objective.

Jordanian Women In Municipal Councils

Women in Jordan have gained more success at the level of local municipalities despite their more conservative nature. The first municipal elections were held in 1925 in accordance with the first Municipalities Law issued on the same year

after the Emirate of Trans Jordan was formed in 1921. In 1982, a new law was issued for the municipalities allowing women to participate in the process of electing the municipal councils. Until 1995, there was a lack of female representation at the municipality level. In the 1995 elections, ten out of fifteen women candidates were elected as municipality council members and one was elected as the first female mayor. However, for this success, women have to thank the royal initiative of princess Basma who succeeded in lobbying for the appointment of 99 women in municipal councils in 1990, opening the door for women to win in 1995. Yet, in the 1999 municipal elections, eight women were elected, however, Jordan's first woman mayor lost her seat.

In 2003, The Jordanian women were less enthusiastic to run as candidates for municipal elections. 102 women have been appointed in the municipal councils, one woman for every municipal council where women were not elected.

The 2007 year had witnessed an important amendment to the Municipalities Law. The most prominent amendments of the 2007 law was to allocate 20 per cent of the seats of the municipal council for women so as to give women the opportunity to become active and effective in popular decision making. The Jordanian government pointed out that the rate of female candidates in the election of that year was above 48 percent and that was unprecedented in the history of Jordan. A female engineer, was elected mayor of the southern town of Hassa — unprecedented for an area considered a Bedouin tribal hub, where men traditionally dominate the political scene. Women also showed up at the polls in higher numbers. Final results had women's turnout outside the capital at 65 percent, compared to 59 percent for men.