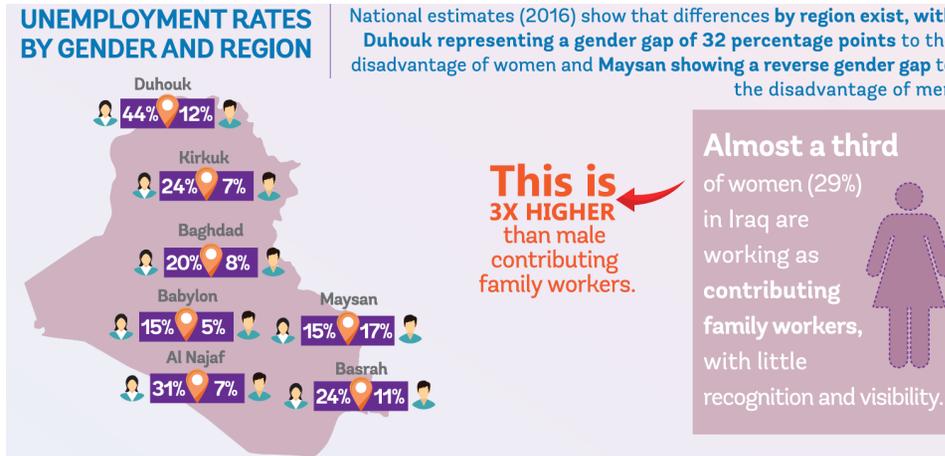


The Republic of IRAQ

Years of conflict and insecurity have posed significant challenges for women in Iraq. Only 13 percent of working age women in Iraq seek employment or work. This is considerably lower than the share of men who are participating in the labor market (76 percent). Unemployment rates are also higher for women (12 percent) compared to men (7 percent), with wide disparities across the country.

A range of different factors contributes to the low labor force participation of women, such as legal barriers, lack of safe and adequate transport, lack of affordable quality child care and low levels of financial inclusion. Preferences for public sector jobs and attitudes around women's traditional role in the household prevail.



The **Government of Iraq** aims to increase the Female Labor Force Participation Rate by **5 percentage points** over the next 5 years and has developed a Women's Economic Empowerment Action Plan to lay out the path forward.

The **Mashreq Gender Facility** is supporting the implementation of the Action Plan based on a government-led 18-month country work plan developed within the context of Iraq, inclusive of the Kurdistan region. In the first period of implementation, the focus is on capacity building: of government on, among other, legal reform and gender sensitive budgeting; of female entrepreneurs through incubators; of rural women through targeted vocational training; and, of NGOs to fully participate in activities on women's economic empowerment. Restrictive social norms is a focus across the plan, by leveraging other projects to operationalize activities.



There are five pillars of work:

- ⇒ Policy & legislative reform
- ⇒ Gender responsive public sector
- ⇒ Private sector employment
- ⇒ Entrepreneurship & access to finance
- ⇒ Social environment

*Data sources:
WDI latest available
Iraq Central Statistical
Organizations Annual
Statistical Abstract 2017*

The **Mashreq Gender Facility (MGF)** is a 5-year Facility (2019-2024) that provides technical assistance to Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon to enhance women's economic empowerment and opportunities as a catalyst towards more inclusive, sustainable, and peaceful societies, where economic growth benefits all. Through collaboration with the private sector, civil society organizations and development partners, the Facility supports government-led efforts, country level priorities and strategic regional activities that:

1. **Strengthen the enabling environment** for women's economic participation;
2. **Improve women's access** to economic opportunities.

The MGF is a **World Bank Group**-facilitated inter-agency initiative that works in partnership with units across the WBG, aid agencies and donors, governments, NGOs, private sector firms, and researchers. The MGF is supported through the WBG's **Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality (UFGE)**.

At the regional level, the **MGF Steering Committee** is a high-level advisory group that provides overall strategic direction and guidance. It counts on two government representatives per country, regional directors of the World Bank and the IFC and selected development partners and private sector donors with strong commitment to women's economic opportunities in the Mashreq.

Mashreq Gender Facility Country Work Plan Pillars

Policy & legislative reform

- * Propose two legislative reforms to close legislative gaps and **remove constraints on women's employment** in the private sector.
- * Enhance awareness, strengthen advocacy and facilitate **policy reforms** that increase women's employment in the private sector and **ownership of agricultural land**.
- * **Increase capacities** of government agencies to identify and address constraints to women's economic empowerment and to **strengthen enforcement mechanisms**.
- * Enable **knowledge generation** and formulation of solutions to increase women's economic opportunities.

Gender responsive public sector

- * Establish **preferential agreements** within government ministries to market and procure products made by women or women-owned firms.
- * Embed a gender perspective in the **preparation of federal and local budgets**.
- * Equip Education Ministry staff with tools and training to promote women in the economy and facilitate enhancements to **curriculum** designs and teaching strategies.



Private sector employment

- * Facilitate **incentives for private sector** to hire and support women and families at the workplace.
- * Improve family-friendly and **discrimination-free work environments** in the private sector.
- * Explore modalities for increasing the supply of **childcare** facilities through sector and policy analysis, and multi-stakeholder dialogue.
- * Enhance employability and productivity of women through **capacity building** that strengthens their skills in computer literacy, digital tools, and modern agricultural practices.

Entrepreneurship & access to finance

- * Strengthen the capacities of **women entrepreneurs** and **business incubators**.
- * Enhance knowledge and awareness among **investment funds, small investors, incubators and accelerators** on gender-lens investing in women and gender-diversity strategies in start-up support.
- * Increase the capacities of **early-stage women-led start-ups** to design business plans, pitch to investors and access finance.
- * Facilitate increased knowledge sharing and connectivity by establishing a **network of women entrepreneurs** to share experiences, lessons learned and the benefits of leveraging technology.

Social environment



- * Enhance awareness of the value of women's economic inclusion and on importance of sharing **household & family responsibilities** between men and women.
- * Enhance women's and families' knowledge of **legal rights** and access to justice
- * Build the **capacities of local NGOs** to successfully implement initiatives for women's economic empowerment.



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The MGF is a WBG initiative in collaboration with the governments of Canada and Norway. It is supported by the **Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality (UFGE)** with generous contributions from the governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.



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