

Women, Business and the Law

Economies in the Middle East and North Africa tend to have the lowest average scores across most *Women, Business and the Law* indicators. Over one-third of the region's 20 economies receive a score of 0 on the protecting women from violence indicator. Seventy percent of economies in the Middle East and North Africa do not have legislation protecting women from sexual harassment at work. At 58% the Middle East and North Africa region has the highest percentage of economies with gender-differentiated retirement ages.

Over the past two years, the following reforms have occurred:

Algeria criminalized domestic violence including physical, psychological and economic violence.

Bahrain introduced its first domestic violence law, which protects spouses and family members and covers physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence.

The Islamic Republic of Iran improved access to credit information by reporting data on credit payments from an automobile retailer.

Iraq enacted a new passport law in 2015 that introduced electronic passports. The application process is now the same for men and women and does not require women to bring a guardian. Iraq also increased the length of paid maternity leave from 72 to 98 days. Further, its new labor code prohibits discrimination based on gender in various aspects of employment, including hiring and dismissal. It also now guarantees workers returning from maternity leave the same position or a similar position with the same wages. Additionally, the new labor code specifically addresses and criminalizes sexual harassment in employment. However, it allows employers to terminate employees' contracts when they reach the retirement age, which is unequal for men and women.

Tunisia strengthened credit reporting by distributing payment information from a telecommunications company.

West Bank and Gaza introduced a social security system that provides maternity benefits and increased the length of paid maternity leave from 70 to 84 days. In 2017 West Bank and Gaza passed a new education law mandating the government to provide one year of free and compulsory public preschool.

Women, Business and the Law measures how laws, regulations and institutions differentiate between women and men in ways that may affect women's incentives, capacities to work or capacities to set up and operate businesses. It analyzes legal differences on the basis of gender in

189 economies through seven indicators: accessing institutions, using property, getting a job, providing incentives to work, building credit, going to court and protecting women from violence. The report is published every two years.

The full report and accompanying datasets are available at wbi.worldbank.org.

Media Contact:

Indira Chand +1 (202) 458-0434, +1 (703) 376-7491, ichand@worldbank.org