

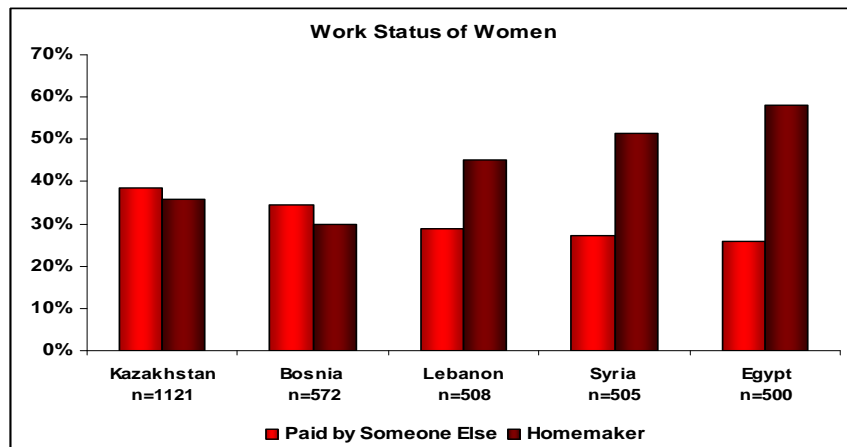
## Divided Lives; Urban Egyptian Women Inside and Outside The Home

by James Courtney, Karl Feld, and Brittany Shanks

Survey research has a role to play in providing Muslim women with a public voice where custom and culture do not permit them their own. It can be used to inform and shape empowerment policies from the perspective of each population. The Women In Muslim Countries (WIMC) study<sup>1</sup> is designed to measure women’s empowerment in actual daily practice, providing a deep look into the oft-perceived gap between current public policy and empowerment initiatives and actual practice on the personal and local level. The answers are intended to yield a metric for promoting excellence in public policy by informing policymakers on women’s attitudes about the affects of policy initiatives, as well as a measure of the degree of effectiveness of those policies.

This survey explores several issues Egyptian women face related to their rights guaranteed by the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), including employment status, health care access, educational attainment and domestic economic influence.

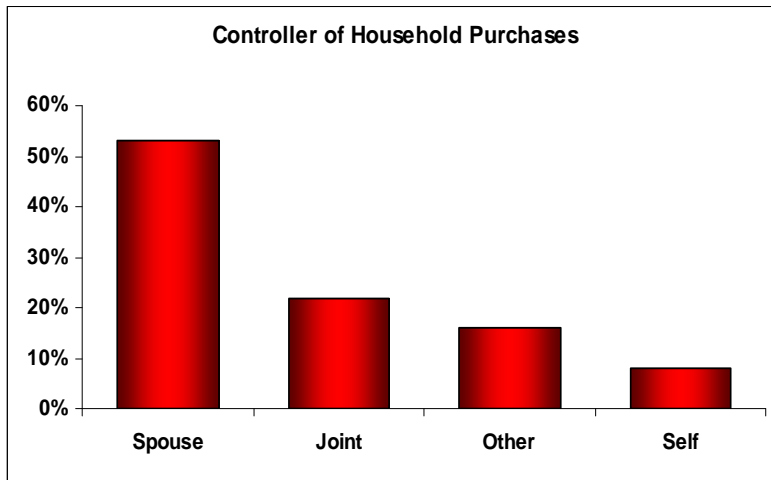
Nearly 58% of Egyptian women interviewed were homemakers. Yet, of the twenty-three countries that have been studied thus far, Egypt has the fifth highest percentage of women who are employed outside of the home, or paid by someone else (26%).



<sup>1</sup>WIMC is sponsored and managed by D3 Systems ([www.d3systems.com](http://www.d3systems.com)) and is conducted in 23 Muslim majority countries of the world. Data for Egypt was collected from March 10 through April 1, 2007 from n=500 women sampled on a stratified, random basis. Cities included in the sample are urban areas of: Cairo, Alexandria, Datakalia, Kalyoubia, Gharbia, Giza and Asyout. Interviewing was conducted face-to-face by native Egyptians. The margin of error is +/- 4% at the 95% confidence level. Survey response rate was 72%

Of those working, 88% are paid directly, rather than to the household, itself. It would seem that this independence outside of the home would give them some influence concerning domestic matters. However, Egyptian women are still limited when it comes to the role they play in daily household economic decisions.

Even though 58% of the Egyptian women surveyed are homemakers, only 8% decide on their own which purchases are made to meet daily household needs. This is the lowest percentage out of all twenty-three countries polled so far. Fifty-three percent of women (the highest of all countries studied) cite their spouse as the main decision-maker. Twenty-two percent decide



jointly which purchases are made for the household.

Of the 52% of Egyptian women whose households have a savings account, only 15% control the savings themselves. Thirty-seven percent say their spouse controls the household's savings. Zero percent of the women have joint control over the savings with their spouse.

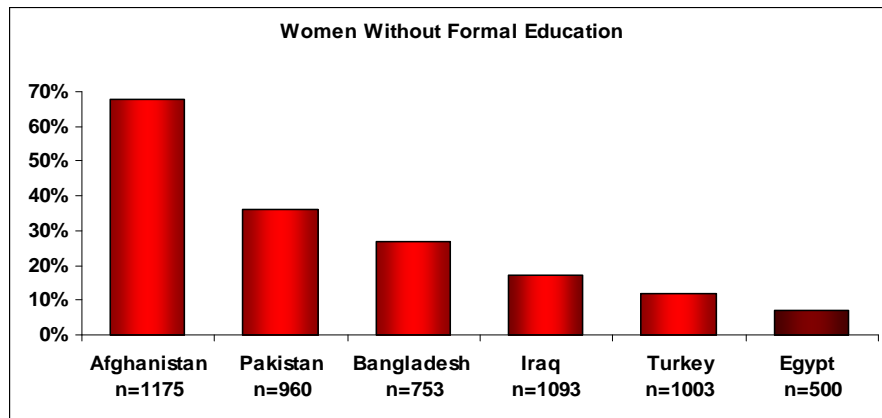
Base: All Egyptian Respondents n=500, Margin of Error +/-4%

With by far the highest percentage out of all countries surveyed (by over 20%), 58% of Egyptian women feel that they were denied health care they needed at some point because of their gender. Sixty-nine percent of these women's families have an income of USD 541 or less per year and are primarily located in the cities of Cairo (32%) and Alexandria (25%) of the urban areas surveyed. This may or may not reflect current conditions in Egypt, as older women have had more opportunity to experience discrimination across time.

The percentage of Egyptian urban women with some formal education is very similar (93%) to national figures for many other countries of the study. It ranks above all five countries in the study with the lowest percentages of formally educated women. Fifty-two percent of urban

Egyptian women reported having 9-12 years of formal education and another nineteen percent have 13 years or higher.

It is important to note however that these figures may differ from the national average. According to statistics provided by The World Factbook (2005 estimates), approximately 59% of the national adult female population in Egypt is literate.<sup>2</sup> If equated with formal education, this would place Egypt's rate of female formal education on par with Pakistan, rather than in the middle of the range of countries.

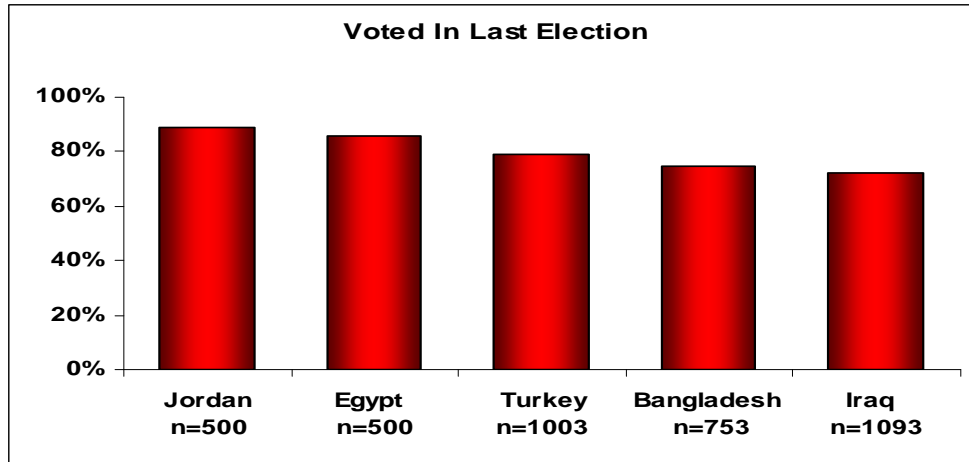


Margin of Error: Afghanistan=+/-3%, Pakistan=+/-3%, Bangladesh=+/-4%, Iraq=+/-3%, Turkey +/-3%, Egypt=+/-4%

Even though many Egyptian women seem to have limited family economic influence, they show widespread interest in news, politics, and bettering themselves outside of the home. All women interviewed in Egypt said they follow the news in at least one form. An overwhelming majority (85%) rely on television as their main source for following the news. This is the third highest percentage of the countries surveyed. Only five percent of Egyptian women use the internet as their source for news. Instead, they tend to be heavier newspaper readers.

Egyptian women are also interested in the idea of business ownership. When asked if they had access to the training and money needed to start up their own business, 85% said they would be both interested and able. This is the second highest among all countries involved. Only 4% of the women interviewed said they would not be interested at all.

<sup>2</sup> "Egypt." Central Intelligence Agency: The World Factbook. 19 February 2010. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html>. 2 March 2010.



Margin of Error: Jordan=+/-4%, Egypt=+/-4%, Turkey=+/-3%, Bangladesh =+/-4%, Iraq=+/-3%

When it comes to politics and voting, Egyptian women are engaged. Egyptian women have the one of the highest voting rates of all twenty-three WIMC countries. When asked if they had voted in the last national election, 86% of Egyptian women responded “yes”. This is very similar (and within the margin of error) to the 89% voting rate of Jordanian women, the country with the highest female voting rate.

Many urban Egyptian women are homemakers with little influence concerning domestic economic decisions. They are however generally well educated and keep track of the news, which allows them to make informed decisions when it comes to political involvement, both voting and holding office. They also show interest when it comes to opening a business and gaining financial independence. This determination and desire can only help to continue improving the overall conditions and level of influence for women in Egypt in the future.