

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 on Gender Equality



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



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- Existing social biases, gender norms and gender-based discrimination against women and girls in the public and private spheres have been exacerbated by the outbreak of COVID-19 in the Arab region.
- Efforts to contain outbreaks often divert resources from routine health services including pre- and post-natal health care and contraceptives, and exacerbate often already limited access to sexual and reproductive health services.
- Women's care work may result in them being overworked or emotionally and physically exhausted, putting them at an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- In the aftermath of the pandemic, more women are expected to fall into poverty given existing

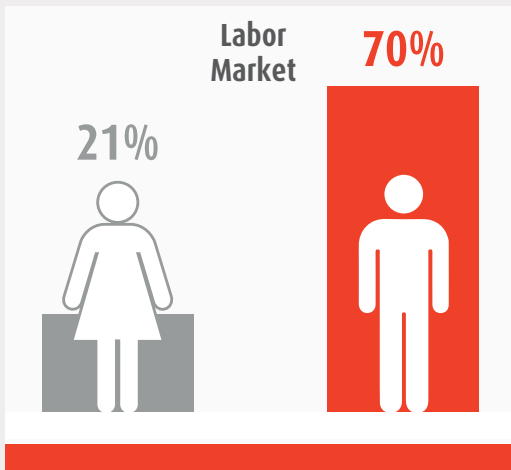


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socioeconomic dynamics and their disproportionate involvement in the informal sector. In the Arab region, women comprise 61.8% of the informal sector and existing information indicates that the informal sector will be directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic further increasing vulnerability.

- Domestic violence in the Arab region may increase due to lockdowns, closures, and enforced coexistence; and women survivors of violence will face difficulties accessing help.
- Refugee and internally displaced women and girls are at an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 owing to their key role in domestic and care work, poor access to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, and limited access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health care.
- The expectation that women stay home and perform care work for dependent individuals in the Arab region may result in more women leaving the labour market, and being forced into further untenable work arrangements.
- Women constitute only 21 per cent of the labour market in the Arab region (compared with 70 per cent for men) and, owing to the knock-on effects of the pandemic, it is estimated that women will lose over 600,000 jobs.



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Policy Solutions for Governments in the Arab Region

- Ensure that the specific needs of women, particularly those in the most at-risk populations, are met, including their ability to access information about how to prevent and respond to the pandemic in ways that they understand.
- Collect gender responsive data and evidence on the impact of COVID-19, particularly disaggregated by sex, age, and physical ability, and ensure more robust monitoring and reporting frameworks.
- Support the inclusion of women frontline responders, women leaders, women-led organizations/networks, and youth rights groups as important partners in the COVID-19 response.
- Consider social protection coverage and ensure that women in different age brackets have equal access to social protection policies.
- Design innovative and unconventional outreach to survivors, including remote counselling and psychosocial support, expand the preparedness of shelter services to include protocols and measures to protect sheltered women from epidemics.



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