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Middle East &  
North Africa

Gender  
Innovation  
Lab

WORLD BANK GROUP

## KEY FINDINGS

- The traditional unequal division of household chores and caregiving hinder women from entering the labor market. Women in Egypt spend 9.5 hours more on unpaid household chores for every hour spent by men. Forty percent of women reported spending more time on household chores during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Lack of access to affordable childcare is a constraint on the female labor supply in Egypt. Almost 96 percent of women in the pilot study expressed interest in childcare centers, but high costs are a concern.
- Weak demand for female workers, especially in the STEM fields, limits women's job opportunities. About 60 percent of employers reported that they prefer to hire men due to women's household responsibilities.
- About 87 percent of respondents noted approval with women working. However, the support declined steadily as additional information about the nature of the job or working hours was specified.
- One-third of women said that their husbands would not allow them to work outside of the house, and none of the men agreed with women working in a mixed-gendered environment, highlighting restrictive gender norms' impact on female labor supply.
- These findings underscore the importance of our two randomized interventions designed to provide low-cost childcare services and signal firms to hire women through our employment services.

RESEARCH & POLICY BRIEF  
MAY 2021

# EVIDENCE to inform POLICY

What Works to Close the Gender Gaps in Middle East & North Africa

## Why is Female Labor Force Participation Low and Stagnant in MENA? Experimental Evidence from Egypt

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### Introduction

Women live in a world of economic opportunity; however, they are not fully participating in the economy because of the gender roles assigned to them. Increasing women's labor force participation, defined as being employed or actively looking for work, has been linked to higher and sustainable economic growth and lower poverty (Verick 2018). Yet female labor force participation (FLFP) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is the lowest globally and remains stagnant. In Egypt, women's participation in the labor market declined from 23 percent in 2014 to 18 percent in 2019 and reached

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a record low of 13.4 percent in September 2020. In addition, while the employment rate recovered for men during the second half of 2020, the overall impact of COVID-19 on women has been negative, and 0.8 million women left the labor force with no hope of returning to work (CAPMAS 2020).

MENA countries are increasingly incorporating a gender lens in their policies and programs, yet this is rarely done in a systematic manner using rigorous evidence. Generating rigorous evidence to understand “what works” and “what does not” is important to help inform policies and programs that deliver effective results. It is especially important now, as women are disproportionately affected by the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, and there are many unknowns about how this could exacerbate existing gender gaps in the region (OECD 2020). The World Bank’s Middle East and North Africa Gender Innovation Lab’s (MNAGIL) mission is to generate new evidence and provide effective interventions to help MENA governments design and implement innovative and evidence-based policy making to tackle gender related constraints.

The MNAGIL has partnered with the Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) in Egypt, to conduct experimental research to develop gender-smart evidence of “what works” to close the gender gap in FLFP in Egypt. The evidence could also be scaled up at the national and regional levels. This policy brief presents the preliminary findings from a pilot study that evaluates several aspects of the three main constraints on the FLFP in Egypt: (1) women’s opportunity cost of time devoted to unpaid family care that is determined by access to affordable childcare services, (2) weak demand for female workers, and (3) restrictive gender and social norms. The findings of the pilot study provide rigorous evidence for the next step, where we randomize two interventions at the level of the individual mother using a randomized control trial. First, mothers assigned to this intervention receive subsidized childcare services based on the price of the local nongovernmental organization (NGO) nursery for one year. In the second intervention mothers that are assigned to this intervention are being connected to local employers providing formal jobs. The

provided employment services are intended to allow observation of the effects of childcare subsidies on female labor supply and firms’ demand to hire women.

## The Problem

**Female labor force participation is particularly low in Egypt and has been declining sharply since 2014, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The female labor force participation (FLFP) rate for women between 15 and 64 years old in MENA is the lowest globally, estimated at 21 percent in 2019, less than half of the FLFP rate globally (Figure 1). The rate for young women ages 15 to 24 stands at 11 percent relative to the global rate at 32 percent for the same year. Egypt is not an exception; it has been experiencing a sharp decline in both youth and total FLFP rates since 2104. The FLFP rate for those age 15–24 stood at 11.8 percent 2019, down from 20 percent in 2014. For women ages 15 to 64 the FLFP rate was 25 in 2013 but declined sharply to 20 percent in 2019. The labor force participation rate for males stood at 75 percent in 2019 in Egypt. During the COVID-19 pandemic, high-frequency data from Egypt’s Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) show that women’s participation in the labor market declined to a low record rate of 13.4 percent in September 2020.

There are a number of reasons cited in the economic literature for the large gap between male and female labor force participation rates in MENA and specifically

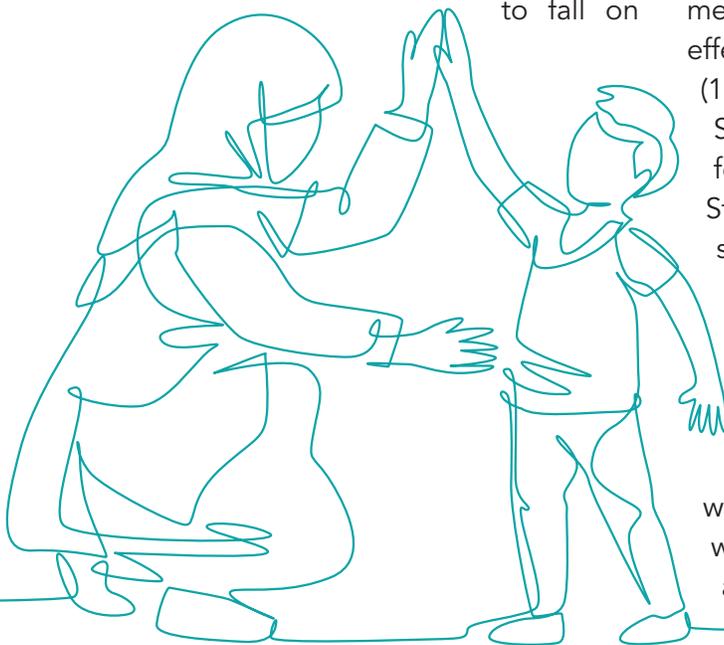
**Figure 1. MENA’s FLFP rates are the lowest globally**



Source: World Bank data.

in Egypt. These include factors related to the supply of female labor as well as factors related to the demand side. First, the economic literature is focused on the biased and unequal division of labor between men and women, with women carrying the bulk of the household chores and caregiving. A study by the PEW research center (Parker 2015) for the United States showed that women are more likely than men to adjust their careers for family and choose flexible jobs. Second, women's opportunity cost of time devoted to unpaid family care determined by access to affordable childcare services is high. Third is the already weak demand for female workers, especially in the field of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). And fourth is the restrictive gender and social norms that control women's ability to join the labor force, their decision to work, the type of job they choose, and their ability to travel outside the house.

Women face difficult choices in reconciling competing demands on their time. The traditional (biased) unequal division of labor between men and women in the households, where women carry significant caretaking responsibilities, limits female labor supply. And the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation putting more pressure on women's and mother's unpaid caregiving and household responsibilities. Similar to the situation in many other parts of the world, the bulk of household chores, childcare, and elderly care responsibilities still tend to fall on



Egyptian women (Assaad, Krafft, and Selwaness 2017). In Egypt, employment status does not change the share of domestic responsibilities that women carry out—responsibilities that consume approximately 31 hours per week, nearly a full “second shift”—a deterrent to long-term work sustainability (Assaad, Krafft, and Selwaness 2017).

Women who provide unpaid caregiving have little or no time to find a job, and this constrains job opportunities and reduces their long-term earning potentials. The opportunity cost of women's time is determined by access to affordable childcare services. Research shows that lack of access to affordable and high-quality childcare services is a significant constraint to women's economic participation (Barsoum and Abdalla 2020). However, there is considerable heterogeneity in the findings. Anderson and Levine (1999) find that the overall elasticity of labor force participation with respect to the market price of childcare is between -0.05 and -0.35, and the elasticity is larger for the least-skilled women. This means that childcare subsidies for most notably less skilled unmarried women with young children could lead to large relative gains. A study by Bainbridge, Meyers, and Waldfogel (2003) finds that spending on childcare subsidies for working families in the United States could have substantial and significant positive effects on single mothers' employment with young children. Van Soest (1995) found effects of childcare on the labor supply for both men and women in the Netherlands, with the female effects being somewhat larger. Fraker and Moffitt (1988), Hoynes (1996), Aaberge, Colombino, and Strøm (1999), and Van Soest, Das, and Gong (2002) found effects for married women in the United States and Europe. Havnes and Mogstad (2011) see no impact of subsidizing childcare on married mothers' employment rate in Norway. The authors conclude that the expansion to universal childcare mostly crowded out informal care arrangements.

Arranging for childcare can be difficult, requiring multiple arrangements with different relatives, which also acts as a deterrent to consistent work for women. External childcare services are expensive, and wages might not sufficiently cover those costs

enough to make working a worthwhile endeavor from a personal cost-benefit standpoint. Households with traditional roles for men and women might also dictate working hours, availability for work-related travel, and other considerations. Inability to pay for childcare is a major constraint. In Egypt, only 8 percent of children ages 0 to 4 years are enrolled in registered childcare programs (UNICEF Egypt 2019), and private childcare costs an average of 324 Egyptian pounds (LE) per child per month.

Weak demand for female workers, especially in the STEM fields, limits women's job opportunities and employability. Employers may be reluctant to hire female workers because they expect domestic responsibilities to make them less productive and harder to retain (Bertrand and Duflo 2017; Petit 2007). In Egypt, 60 percent of employers in a recent survey openly reported that they prefer to hire men. Labor demand is also generally weak (Assaad, Yassin, and Krafft 2018), which exacerbates women's constraints in looking for a job.

Finally, traditional gender roles and restrictive social norms are an additional binding constraint on women's decisions to participate in the labor market. In Egypt, these norms are often not in favor of equality in employment (Krafft, Keo, and Fedi 2019). However, there is significant heterogeneity in female employment attitudes, and recent evidence suggests gender norms are malleable (Bargain, Boutin, and Champeaux 2019; Bursztyn, Gonzlez, and Yanagizawa-Drott 2018). Furthermore, while the most common primary provider of childcare is a woman's mother (27 percent), the second most common primary provider of childcare is a childcare center (19 percent), followed by mothers-in-law (18 percent), the child being at school (14 percent), other relatives (13 percent), others (8 percent), or the father (1 percent) (Assaad, Krafft, and Selwaness 2017). Thus, childcare services already offer a meaningful share of caregiving services, suggesting that they are becoming culturally accepted.

## The Pilot Study<sup>3</sup>

To investigate the relationship between FLFP and access to affordable and high-quality childcare services, we have conducted a pilot study in Egypt. The baseline interview collected information about the mother (particularly the female labor supply), the child or children's development, and the household's dynamics (gender role attitudes and time use).<sup>4</sup> The pilot was implemented over the span of two days in the El Tebin area. El Tebin is located in Helwan governorate in greater Cairo and is a low-income slum area. A total of 30 households were interviewed. Gender social norms are measured through standard survey questions and by running an incentivized elicitation exercise (at both baseline and end-line). The survey is divided into three main parts:

On the mother's side, we measure employment, reservation wages, earnings (of the mother and total household earnings), job quality (in particular, we are interested in studying whether treated mothers choose jobs that allow less flexibility but offer better career prospects), psychological well-being, and time use. The husbands are asked an abbreviated set of questions on labor supply.

On the children's side, we measure a battery of cognitive and noncognitive skills. We use the Measuring Early Learning and Quality Outcomes (MELQO) Measure of Early Development and Learning (MODEL) tools, which are designed for measuring multiple dimensions of development in low- and middle-income countries for ages 3–6, for which they were designed (Fernald et al. 2017). For younger ages, we use the Caregiver-Reported Early Development Instruments (CREDI) short form, which has been validated for children under 3 in low- and middle-income contexts (McCoya et al. 2018).

The survey questions capture attitudes and household bargaining power. We measure gender role attitudes through standard survey questions that have previously been used in Egypt (Krafft, Assaad, and Rahman 2019). The survey questions are asked to both mothers and their partners.

<sup>3</sup> The pilot study was conducted by the J-PAL team in Egypt.

<sup>4</sup> The women interviewed were all married, half of them had one child and the other half had two, and on average lived in a four-person household. For majority of them (77 percent), the husband was not present at the time of the interview.

## From Research to Action

**Preliminary insights from the pilot study show that 77 percent of the mothers interviewed do not use any help for taking care of their children. These findings underscore the importance of the interventions designed to subsidize childcare services and signal firms to hire women through employment services.**

The childcare (nursery) sector in Egypt is under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS). Therefore, the results of this research will directly inform the design and implementation of the ministry's and government's policies on early childhood education and nurseries and increasing FLFP to create jobs for women. Since the nurseries enrolled in this program are all managed by local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), they will also be part of the network that will benefit from this project. The results of this impact evaluation also leverage private sector partnerships in collaboration with Shaghalni<sup>5</sup> to match the mothers with the firms offering jobs to women.

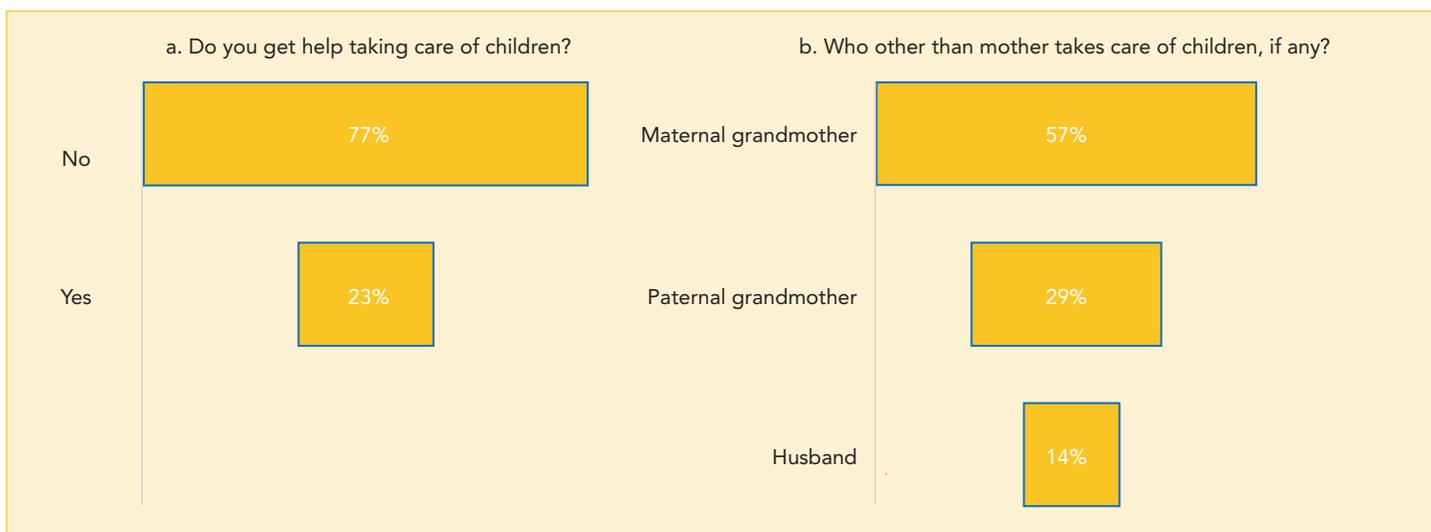
### Unpaid household chores and caregiving

The responsibility for unpaid care work worldwide falls disproportionately on women and girls, leaving

them with less time for education, leisure, political participation, paid work, and other economic activities (IMF 2019). Much of this unpaid work is devoted to caring for household members and doing domestic chores. Care work takes up a significant amount of time in most countries, especially where infrastructure is poor and publicly provided services are limited or absent (Samman, Presler-Marshall, and Jones 2016).

Preliminary insights from the pilot study show that for women in Egypt who worked prior to marriage and left work, the second most common reason for leaving work was "to take care of children" (the most common was the husband's objection to work). Seventy-seven percent of the mothers interviewed do not use any help for taking care of their children (Figure 2, panel a). Only 23 percent of the women interviewed said that they use outside help for taking care of their children. These women's primary sources of help for childcare are their mothers, followed by their mother-in-law and husbands. These mothers reported leaving their children with someone else for an average of 5.5 hours a day (Figure 2, panel b). When asked about their willingness to send their children to childcare should the option become available to them, almost 96 percent of the mothers expressed interest.

**Figure 2.** Share of respondents saying whether they get help for taking care of their children



Source: Pilot survey data collection, 2020.

5 For the second experiment, we will contact firms identified through Shaghalni, a private job-matching website, and ask them to take part in this intervention, randomizing whether the firm will be matched to mothers in the control group or to mothers in the group that receives the childcare subsidy. Firms will be informed of which group of mothers they will be matched with prior to signing up for the service. We will then be able to observe impacts on the firm's decision to use the employment service, on the composition of their subsequent hiring, and on their beliefs.

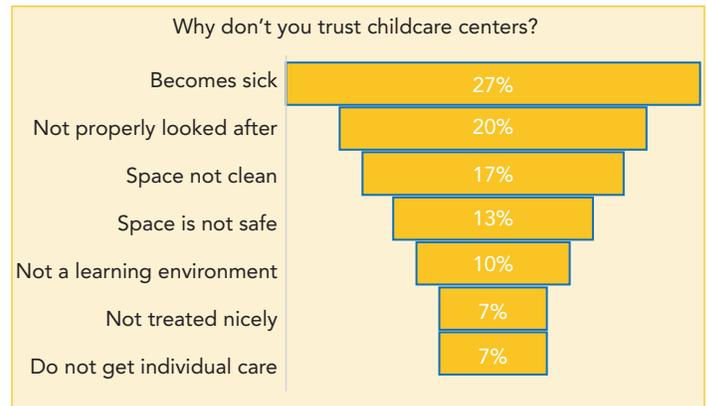
The patterns observed here are consistent with the social norms regarding childcare in Egypt. Furthermore, that maternal grandmother and parental grandmother are the primary sources of childcare consistent with the nationally representative Egypt Labor Market Panel Survey (ELMPS 2018).

These findings underscore the importance of the interventions designed for this impact evaluation. When asked about their willingness to send their children to a nursery should the option become available, almost 96 percent of the mothers expressed interest. Furthermore, when asked about the maximum amount of money they are willing to pay to send their children to a nursery as well the maximum distance they are willing to travel; on average, mothers are willing to pay a maximum of LE 200 per month and walk a maximum of 15 minutes.

Despite having two nurseries in their immediate area that meet these criteria, 37 percent of mothers replied that they were not aware of any nurseries. This highlights the importance of spreading information about the existence of nurseries in the mothers' surrounding area.

To further understand mothers' considerations when deciding to send their children to nurseries, women were asked to list their top concern with nurseries. Almost 27 percent stated that they worry most about their child getting sick, followed by 20 percent fearing inadequate care that cause their child to be injured and 17 percent were most concerned by the cleanliness of the nursery (Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Share of women respondents saying why they don't trust childcare services

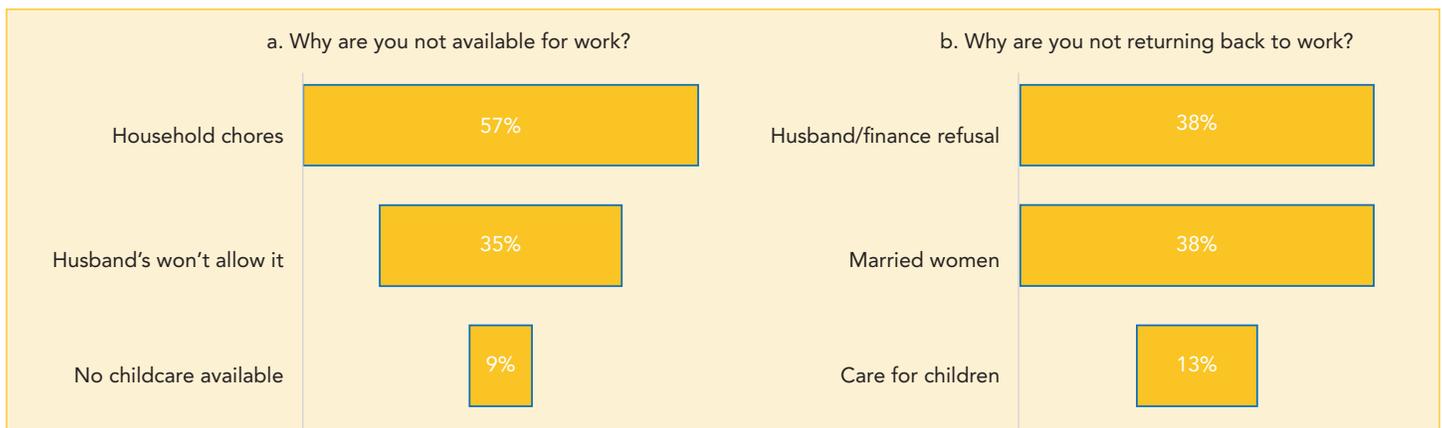


Source: Pilot survey data collection, 2020.

### Looking for a job

The mothers interviewed during the pilot phase were inactive for the most part; we found that none of these women are currently employed. When asked if they were interested in work in the past month, 76 percent replied no. The main reason for this inability to work is household responsibilities; 57 percent said they are busy with household chores, and 9 percent said no childcare is available (Figure 4, panel a). Additionally, 35 percent said that they could not work because their husbands will not allow it, highlighting the gender norms issues regarding Egypt's FLFP. The inability to join the labor force is not new; 73 percent of the respondents have never worked before and have never engaged in any search activities. The few women who had worked before all worked in the private sector, mostly on permanent

**Figure 4.** Women's availability to work is hindered by household chores



Source: Pilot survey data collection, 2020.

contracts. When asked why they left work and stayed unemployed, all women stated reasons related to children or their partners and not related to work conditions (Figure 4, panel b).

## Job preferences

To better understand mothers' decisions regarding joining the labor market, we asked a few questions regarding their preferences in terms of the type of job, work sector, job characteristics, and minimum salary. Working short hours and close to home is among the most listed characteristics women care about.

When asked to specify the job characteristics they care about in a job, we find that all characteristics are almost equally important to the women interviewed except for having flexible hours; only 10 percent of the respondents listed it as something they care about when looking for a job. Working short hours and close to home are among the most listed characteristics women care about (Figure 5). When asked about the maximum distance they're willing to travel for a job; mothers were willing to travel around 35 minutes to get to work on average.

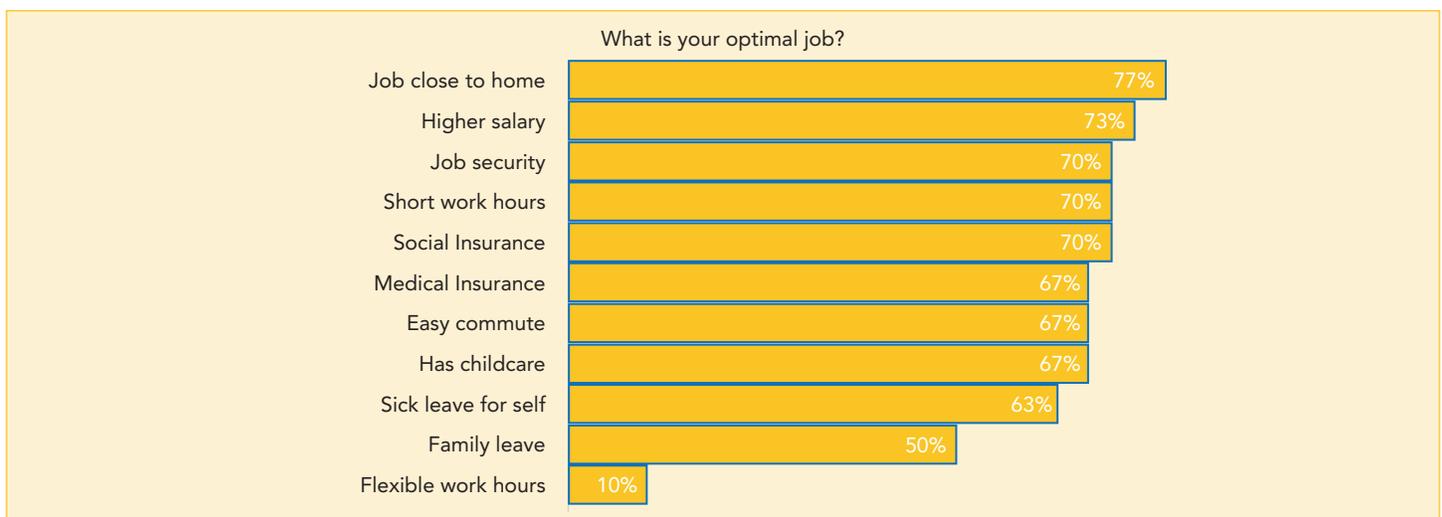
Figure 6 shows women's preference for certain occupations, namely administrative jobs, among the unemployed mothers. Jobs that require much mobility, such as driver, delivery worker, or agricultural

work, were not desired by the respondents. When asked about preferred occupations, 86 percent of the mothers reported that they would accept a job as an employee in the public sector. This had the highest rate among all jobs asked about in the survey. The women in the pilot had lower reservation wages for being hired in the public sector than in the formal and informal private sector. The reported average reservation wage was LE 1,800 in the public sector, around LE 2,700 in the formal private sector, and around LE 2,400 for the informal private sector.

## Gender social norms

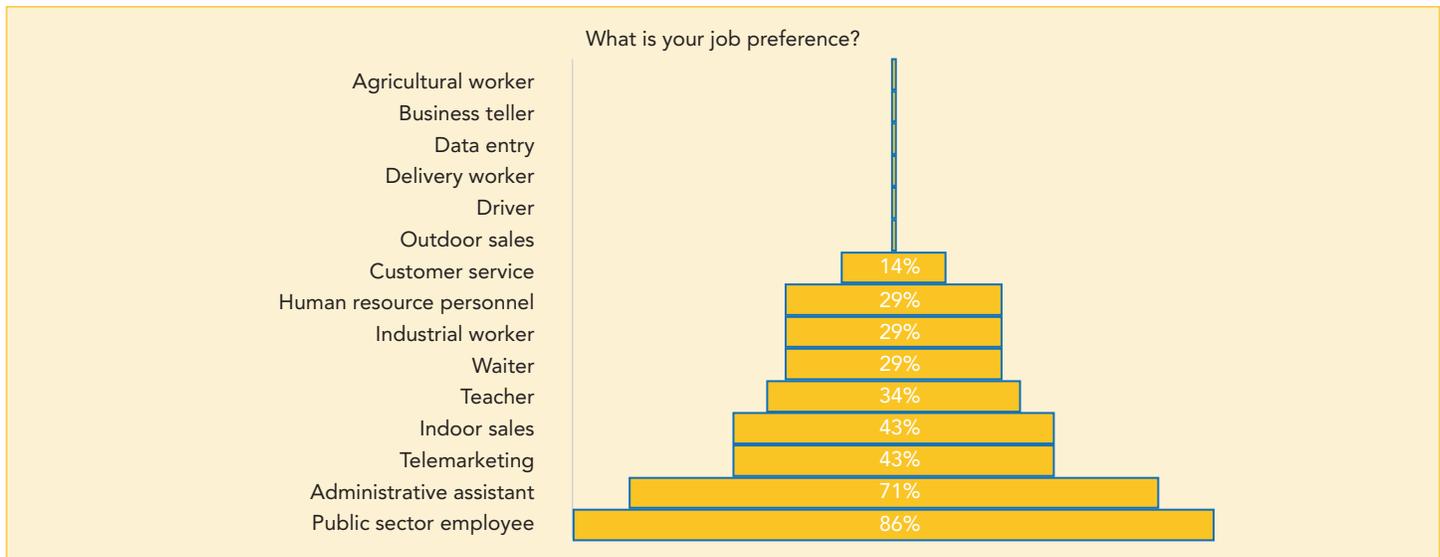
The discriminatory and restrictive social and gender norms affect women's access to economic opportunities and jobs. These norms often arising from culture limit women's ability to make decisions, control their assets, own property, mobility, and work outside of the home. Diwan and Vartanova (2017) analyzed data from the World Values Surveys to examine the links between patriarchal culture and low female participation in MENA. They find that differences in women's education, personal values, and country norms relating to patriarchy explain most of the regional variations in female labor force participation worldwide. These findings help explain stagnation in women's labor force participation in MENA countries.

**Figure 5.** Egyptian women's desired characteristics of a job



Source: Pilot survey data collection, 2020.

**Figure 6.** Share of respondent's preference for certain jobs



Source: Pilot survey data collection, 2020.

To capture attitudes and beliefs surrounding gender roles and women working in the public space, we asked women questions related to (1) general views on whether women should work, (2) beliefs about gender roles as they relate to women's ability and availability to work, (3) beliefs about publicness and mixing of genders in the work environment, and (4) beliefs about the link between women working and family status (see Box 1).

Eighty-seven percent of respondents approved of women working. However, this general support for FLFP declined steadily as additional information about the nature of the job or working women are specified. Seventy-seven percent approved of married women working, while slightly less, 73 percent approved of women working outside the home. Working in mixed-gender environments brought down support for working women to 43 percent. While 63 percent think it is okay for working women to leave their children at a nursery to go to work, returning home from work after 5 PM further lowered the acceptability of women working to 37 percent (Figure 7).

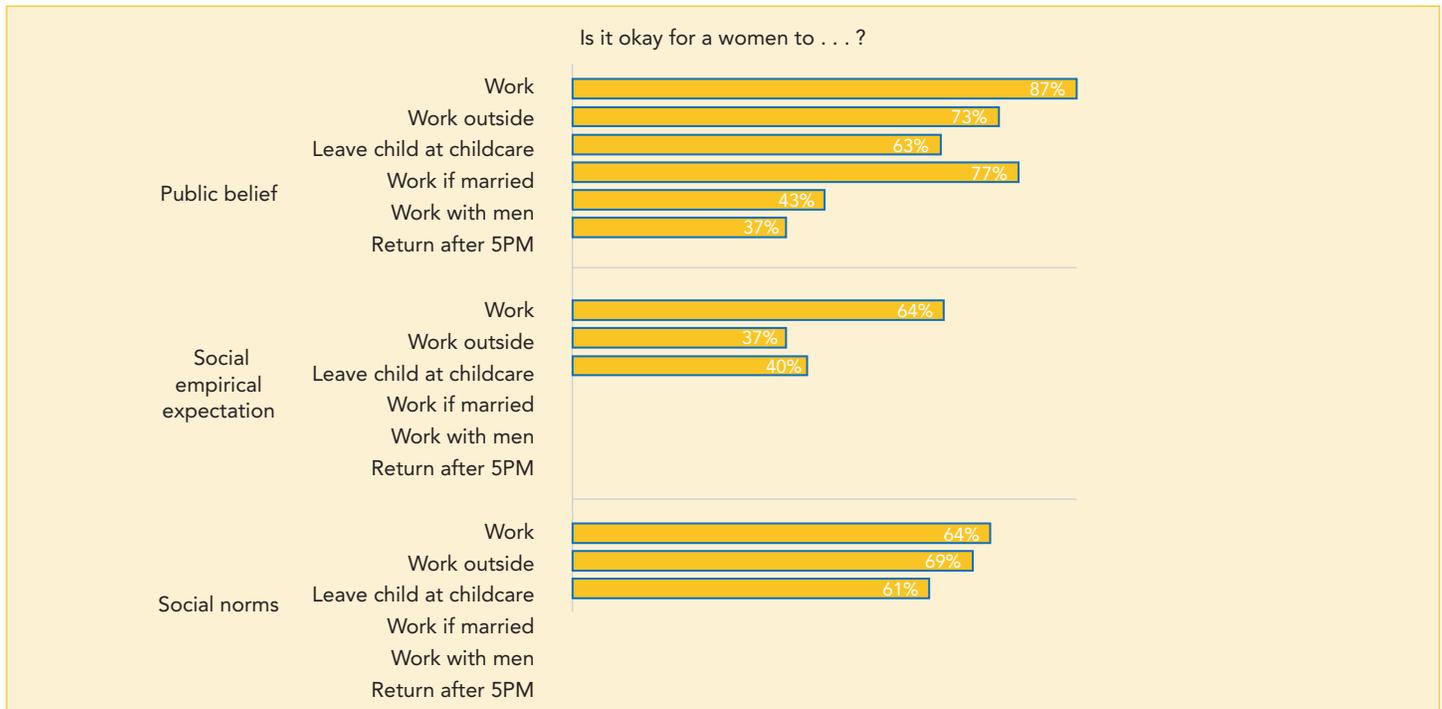
Social empirical expectations (that is, how many women where you live work, work outside the home and leave their children at a nursery) were lower than social normative expectations across the board. Respondents also tended to believe that women worked, in the various scenarios, at lower rates than the respondents themselves endorsed in their own personal beliefs.

### BOX 1. GENDER SOCIAL NORMS

While men are slowly increasing their unpaid contributions, they still spend comparatively little time on routine housework, much less time than women on childcare (though men's allocated time is increasing), and concentrate their unpaid work on less routine chores such as shopping and house repairs. The continuing gender segregation in unpaid care and domestic work points to the difficulties of changing the underlying social norms related to gender roles ("doing gender") (UN Women 2019)

Evidence from our pilot study shows that women believed the men living nearby had more favorable attitudes on women's work than the men reported. While women believed that 69 percent of men thought it was acceptable for women to work outside the home and believed 61 percent of men thought it was acceptable to leave their children at a childcare center, the fact was that 43 percent (for working outside) and 29 percent (for childcare) of the men thought so.

**Figure 7.** Women’s views regarding gender social norms

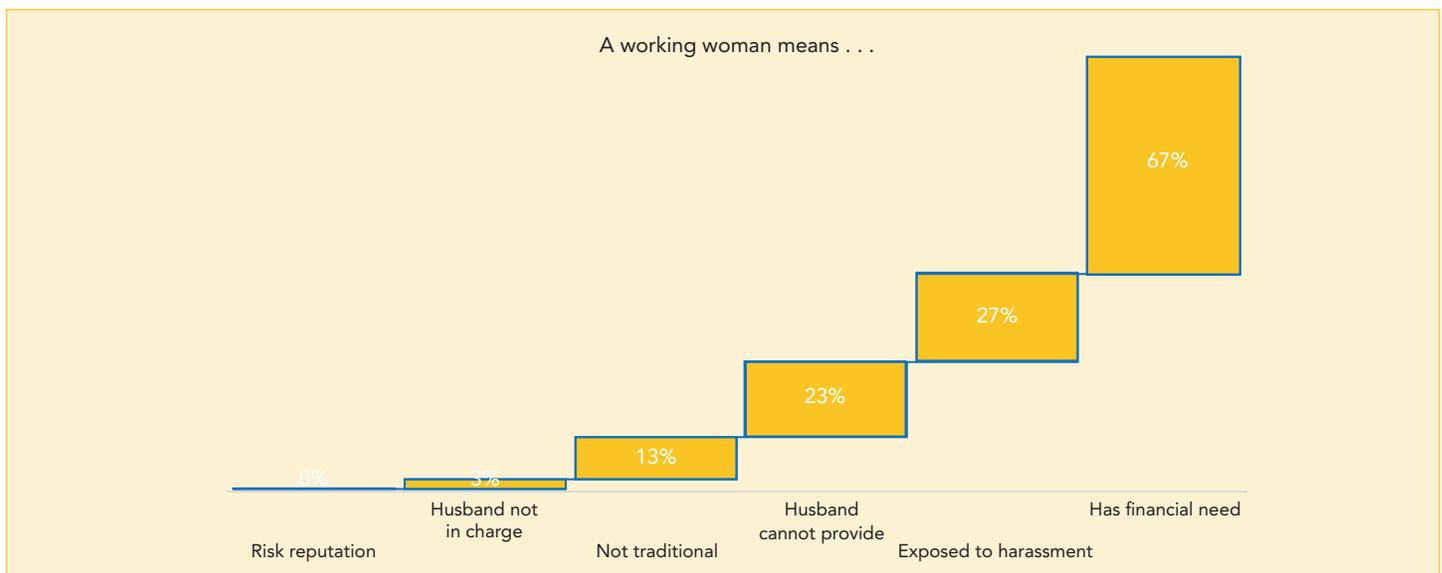


Source: Pilot survey data collection, 2020.

We elicited respondents’ beliefs about the link between women working and their reputation. We find that while around 27 percent of the women interviewed think working puts a woman at risk of being exposed to harassment, none of them think working hurts a woman’s reputation. Their opinion on the effect of a woman working on the family’s status

and the husband’s reputation, while 67 percent think a woman working means their household is in financial need, only 3 percent think it means her husband is not in charge at home. Twenty-three percent think a woman working means the husband can’t fully provide for the family, and 13 percent think working women come from nontraditional households (Figure 8).

**Figure 8.** Perceptions about working women



Source: Pilot survey data collection, 2020.

Men and women have different views surrounding gender roles and women working in the public space. While we observe the same trend in men’s views regarding the different aspects related to women’s work, men’s views are much more conservative than women’s; while 73 percent of women think it is acceptable for women to work outside the home, 43 percent of men think the same. Support for women’s work becomes even more divided regarding leaving children at a nursery to work (63 percent of women think it is acceptable compared to 28 percent of men). As for working in mixed-gendered environments none of the men interviewed felt it was okay (Figure 9). It is worth noting, as described in box 1 that women believed that men living nearby had more favorable attitudes on women’s work than the men reported.

### The impact of COVID–19 on women

The COVID–19 pandemic has severely challenged women, especially those with young children. Disproportionately responsible for caregiving yet faced with the loss of childcare options in light of the pandemic and lockdowns, they face particular difficulties in retaining or gaining work and may face increased stress and pressures within the household.

As part of the baseline survey, we asked a number of questions on the economic and social impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic to (1) mothers, (2) husbands, and (3) firms in order to assess the gendered impact of the pandemic as well as policy responses. We present a summary of the survey results here.

### Unpaid household chores and caregiving

Women do three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men do, although gender inequalities vary across countries and are particularly stark in developing country contexts globally (UN Women 2019). In Egypt, this disparity is larger than any other countries in the region and globally is third, following Pakistan and Cambodia.

A time-use survey worldwide shows that Egyptian women spend nine and half

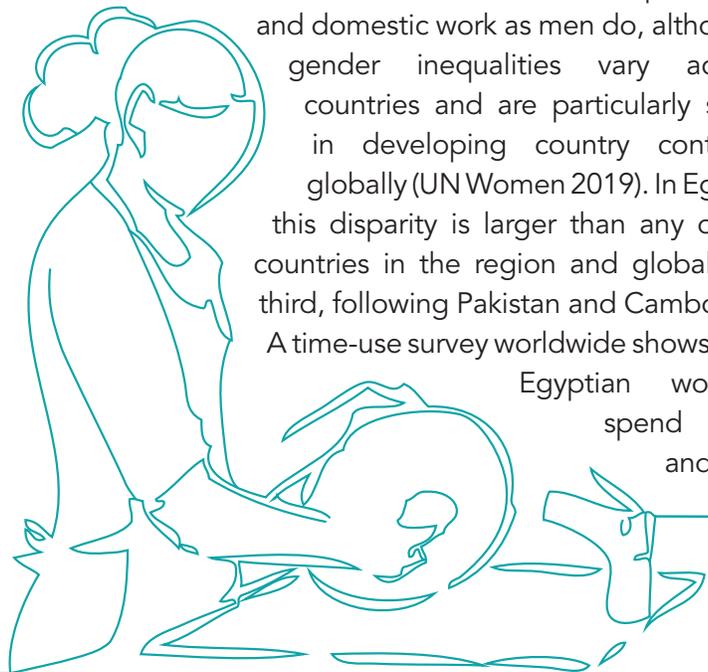
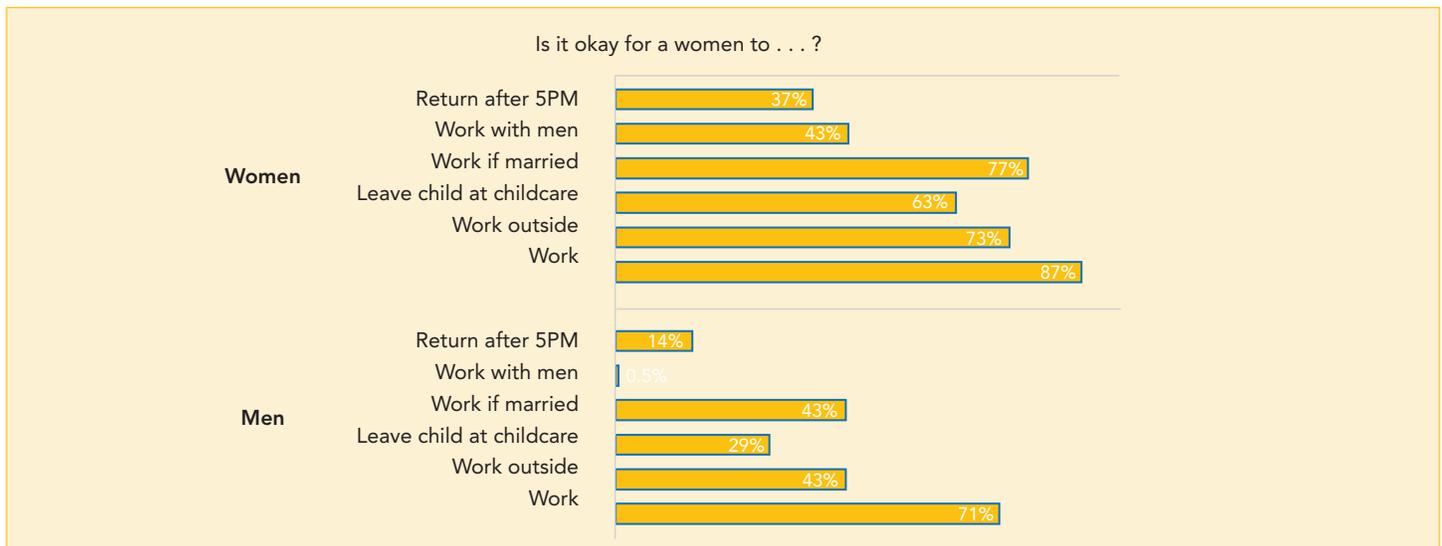


Figure 9. Men’s and women’s attitudes toward women’s job attributes



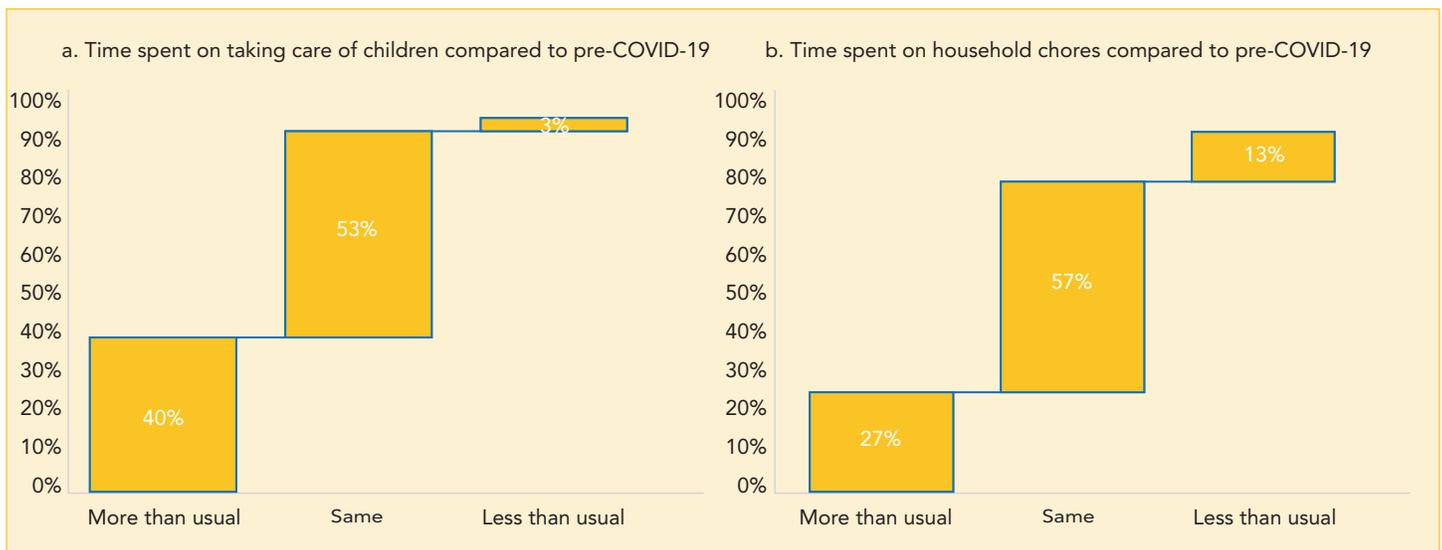
Source: Pilot survey data collection, 2020.

hours on unpaid household chores and caregiving for every hour spent by men on the same activity in the same household (UN Women 2019).

On average, in the pilot study, the mothers in the sample spent 11 hours per day on childcare and 7 hours per day doing household chores in the week prior to our visit. Although 53 percent of mothers have not changed the amount of time spent on childcare in a normal week between February and December 2020, 40 percent reported spending more time than

usual, and only 3 percent reported spending less time (Figure 10, panel a). Time spent on household chores shows similar patterns; 57 percent of women reported no change in the usual time they spend on cleaning, cooking, and other tasks compared to February 2020 (Figure 10, panel b). Perhaps the reason is that all the mothers in the pilot have been unemployed since before February 2020, and most of them don't have children at school age, nor do they use nurseries for their younger ones.

**Figure 10.** Women's time spent on household chores and caregiving during the COVID-19 crisis



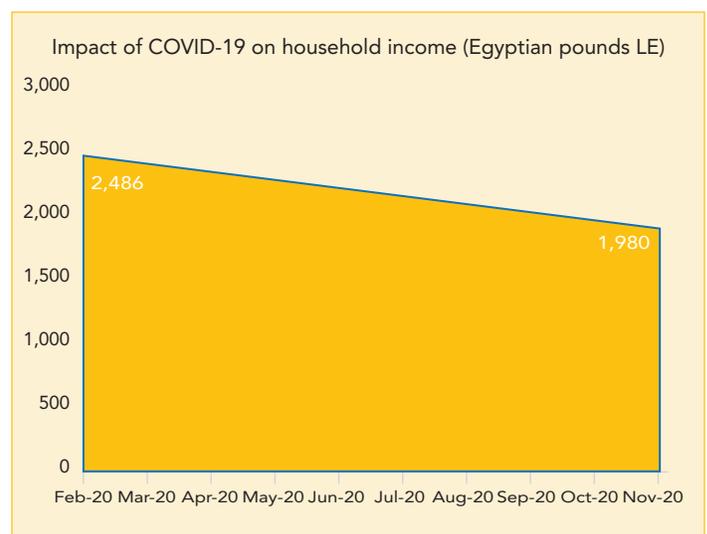
Source: Pilot survey data collection, 2020.

## Household income and finances

Adult incomes continue to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the related job losses and pay cuts. Among the survey respondents, about 30 percent reported a decline in their household income between February 2020 and November 2020. On average, households reported a drop of 20 percent in their income (Figure 11).

To cope with the challenges imposed by the pandemic, 53 percent of the households turned to borrow from family and friends, while 20 percent took money out from their savings. When asked about how they coped with children's education during school closures, 47 percent of mothers said they took over teaching children while around 16 percent depended on online education, and 21 percent reported not doing anything to replace school during its closure.

**Figure 11.** Income loss during the COVID-19 pandemic



Source: Pilot survey data collection, 2020.

## Conclusion and Looking Forward

The MENA region has the lowest FLFP rate globally, especially for the youth. Less than 20 percent of women ages 15 and older participate in the region's labor force, compared to 77 percent for men. At a more disaggregated level, women's economic participation varies considerably across the region, ranging from under 20 percent in Egypt to almost 52 percent in the United Arab Emirates. Many factors contribute to this low female participation rate in the region, including social and gender norms, culture, affordable and high-quality childcare services, employer discrimination, and poor job conditions. Evidence from randomized evaluations conducted in MENA helps shed light on reasons why participation rates are so low and stagnant, and what types of interventions could help increase women's labor force participation.

The baseline data collection for the pilot study offers important insights into the current situation of mothers, children, and their households situation in Egypt. Findings of the pilot study show that women were not aware of the existence of nurseries nearby and stated that childcare is one of the main reasons they are not working. Furthermore, on average, mothers spent 11 hours per day on childcare and 7 hours per day doing household chores. The pilot provides evidence on the need for our intervention to inform mothers of the childcare services around them and give them an opportunity to find a job through our job placement intervention. The fact that household income decreased during the pandemic also provides a promising setup for our subsidies intervention to encourage sending children to childcare. The pilot offers insight into the operational and logistical front in terms of communication and coordination with the childcare and their managing NGO, with MoSS, and with Shaghalni. The pilot also shed light on issues such as how to safely collect data during the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises.

Working with MoSS, the team is selecting a number of childcare centers to work within the greater Cairo area. Moving forward, we will complete data

collection for the baseline phase and deliver the subsidies and employment interventions for the mothers surrounding these childcare centers, as COVID-19 lockdown permits. Following the baseline and the start of the intervention, the follow-up survey will provide a view of the take-up of the intervention and its impact on mothers and their children.

As researchers and policymakers continue to look for rigorous evidence on what works to close the gender gaps in the region, the evidence generated by this experimental research is intended to inform the design and implementation of effective policies and programs that can help enhance women empowerment and increase female labor force participation in Egypt. The evidence could scale up to national and regional levels for learning lessons and good practices.

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The Middle East and North Africa Gender Innovation Lab (MNAGIL) was launched in March 2019 at the World Bank. The Lab conducts experimental research to generate rigorous evidence of what works to close the gender gaps and promote the adoption of evidence-based policies in the MENA region.

The Research & Policy Brief is a product of the MNAGIL with generous support from the [Umbrella Fund for Gender Equality](#). Briefs are designed to bridge research, development policy, and practice. They seek to summarize the key findings of recent experimental research on gender-related issues to help governments and development actors design and implement the most appropriate and effective policies to understand better and address the long-standing gender gaps in MENA countries.

Our team looks forward to hearing new ideas and finding ways to collaborate with your team.

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