

Chapter 3:

Women and Political Participation

Introduction

Women have achieved tangible successes with regard to their role in decision-making processes in various fields. In the past, they have often been marginalized from decision-making roles, both inside and outside of the household. Decision-making is not only confined to household affairs, but it is also integral to work, legal rights and control over economic resources, among other activities. Because women are playing a growing role in numerous fields, various organizations have been concerned with women-related issues and how they are involved in development as well as ways in which to empower women so that they can achieve equity with men.

Arab family life has historically been characterized by traditional patterns. In other words, Arab families typically focus on role integration and the suppression of individualism. Relations in Arab families are pyramidal, in which gender roles are entrenched and men earn the family's living while women are in charge of housework and childcare. This pattern of relations is based on the dominance practiced by males in return for providing females with a comfortable home and on male jurisdiction in return for female obedience.

Women used to acquire their status through performing their traditional tasks as wives and mothers, not through economic activities. Their work is typically viewed as a secondary activity which is not of a high status. Furthermore, their work outside the house is often seen as an indicator of the family's economic lack or poverty and the inability of males to meet their household needs. While women suffer from excess burdens, physical exploitation, deprivation of their rights and lack of free mobility compared with men, their traditional roles in the household provide them with some privileges or advantages.

Women who organize household affairs usually have control over household expenditure and are the most responsible for intra-household communication. To a large extent, they also have control over a number of matters which are of great importance to men, such as sexual relations, family honor, the children and the organization of the home. In general, Arab countries are hesitant to modify national personal status laws due to fear of creating instability in society. Inequality in the household is commonly justified in that equality is seen as reducing spouses' dependence upon one another and therefore does away with the need for marriage and family life.

Power relations in the household allow women to decide on some family issues so long as they are simple, since women are typically not permitted to take decisions considered important or part of public life. Hence, analyzing household decision-making processes is of great importance. The following topics are important to look at when examining women's decision-making roles: visiting family or relatives; household budgeting; disbursement of earnings, savings and investment; having children; childrearing; children's marriage; contraceptive use; and the wife's employment, travel and right to ask for divorce, among many other indicators.

In spite of the development achieved in women-related legislation and women's growing participation in both economic and political life, women's participation is still relatively limited. Moreover, programs aiming to integrate women in development have not led to women's actual and widespread involvement in various development areas.

This chapter addresses the very important issue of women and decision-making. Women's role in household headship and

their participation in decision-making in the public and private sectors, political life, syndicates, parties and civil society organizations are emphasized, and issues related to this topic are tackled in light of the available data.

Women's Participation in Household Decision-Making

All local, regional and international conferences, seminars, workshops and forums on women have emphasized the need to empower women in various household, social and economic fields and to play an active role in these issues.

Jordan's National Strategy for Women includes a social work plan. The plan emphasizes the need to study and monitor female-headed households with the aim of formulating policies and programs to address their problems and provide them with sufficient support so that they can realize and maintain their economic independence. The Strategy also declares the need for removing obstacles hindering women from obtaining credit and loans and accessing resources in order to better develop and improve their social and economic status.

Heading a household normally requires that one takes decisions related to household affairs and living conditions in general. Such issues place a heavy social and economic burden on women, especially when household members are solely dependent on them.

Data from the 1994 Population and Housing Census and the 2002 Annual Report of the Employment and Unemployment Survey indicate that the proportion of female-headed households rose from 9.6 percent of Jordan's total households in 1994 to 12.6% in 2002. Heading the household alone is generally an involuntary situation imposed on women which places additional burdens on them.

Data also revealed that the proportion of uneducated female household heads dropped by 10% between 1994 and 2002, while the proportion of educated female household heads with a university degree rose by 31%. With regard to marital status, the proportion of widowed female house-

hold heads increased by 23.2% during the same years.

When looking at economic activity, the vast majority of female household heads (88%) are homemakers, compared with only around 7 percent who are employed.

Female household heads (be they widowed, educated or employed) have a large number of duties to perform and participate in while, at the same time, they have a great deal of rights to enjoy. They have the right to decide how their earnings will be used and they can make many other family-related decisions. They also have the right to decide on family planning issues and the use of contraceptive methods, both of which are personal matters which affect them primarily as they are females, capable of becoming pregnant and children's caretakers.

Decisions on the Use of Women's Earnings

Table 3.1 presents the distribution of married employed women receiving cash earnings in 1997 and 2002 according to the person who decides how their earnings are to be used. The data reveals a substantial change in the decision-making pattern regarding the disbursement of women's earnings between 1997 and 2002. The proportion of women who decide this matter increased by 10 percentage points between 1997 and 2002 (from 36.3% to 46.2%).

The data in the table suggests a noticeable improvement in women's status in the household in general and in their economic status in particular. Women have more control over their own economic resources, and there is an improvement in the economic empowerment they have achieved through participating in the labor market and their related knowledge and independence in decision-making.

Views regarding the disbursement of women's cash earnings varied considerably by region of residence, particularly in 1997. However, the substantial changes across regions between 1997 and 2002 have reduced these variations. The proportion of wives who decide the expenditure of their earnings on their own rose by 21 percentage points in the North (from 27.5% in 1997 to 48.3% in 2002), compared with 5 and 13

percentage points in the Middle and South, respectively, during the same period.

The figures in Table 3.1 also indicate that less educated women are much more likely than women in higher educational categories to decide on the disbursement of their earnings, especially in 1997. Around 58% of the illiterate women and those with elementary qualifications reported that they have the final say in how their earnings will be spent. Furthermore, a little more than four

and women-related decisions in particular. With regard to women's personal health care, 61% of married women report that they decide by themselves how to care for their health.

A high proportion of women claim that they decide jointly with their husbands on large household purchases and visiting family or relatives. Wives are more likely to decide on the purchase of daily household needs (37.4%) compared to 31% in which

More than half of married women report that large household purchases are decided on jointly with their husbands, 61% make their own decisions regarding their personal health care.

Table 3.1: Percentage Distribution of Married Employed Women Aged 15-49 Receiving Cash Earnings in 1997 and 2002 by Person Deciding the Disbursement of These Earnings and by Selected Background Characteristics

Background Characteristics	*1997				**2002			
	Wife Only	Husband and Wife Jointly	Other	Total	Wife Only	Husband and Wife Jointly	Other	Total
Residence								
Urban	38.2	58.1	3.7	100.0	47.2	47.4	5.4	100.0
Rural	24.9	65.9	9.2	100.0	42.7	53.2	4.1	100.0
Region								
North	27.5	67.6	4.9	100.0	48.3	46.9	4.8	100.0
Middle	42.3	54.0	3.7	100.0	47.4	47.9	4.7	100.0
South	23.9	67.2	8.9	100.0	36.9	56.3	6.8	100.0
Educational Level								
No education	59.4	21.1	19.5	100.0	-	-	-	-
Elementary	56.9	41.0	2.1	100.0	81.5	11.8	6.7	100.0
Secondary	49.1	46.7	4.2	100.0	47.4	45.0	7.6	100.0
Higher	26.1	70.7	3.2	100.0	41.7	54.2	4.1	100.0
Preparatory + Secondary	-	-	-	-	53.7	38.9	7.4	100.0
Total	36.3	59.2	4.5	100.0	46.2	48.7	5.1	100.0

- Data not available.

* Department of Statistics, "Population and Family Health Survey," 1997.

** Department of Statistics, "Population and Family Health Survey," 2002.

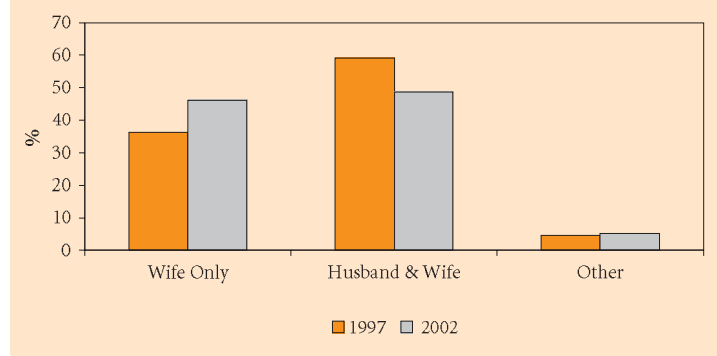
in five (81.5%) of these women said in 2002 that they solely decide the disbursement of their earnings. This percentage should be interpreted with caution, however, due to the small number of sample cases in this category.

In 2002, women with both basic and secondary education ranked second among women who solely decide how their earnings are spent (54%). In general, married women aged 15-49 who receive cash earnings tend to self determine their expenditure, and this clearly indicates a positive improvement in women's household status.

Women and Decisions Related to Household Affairs

Table 3.2 shows the percentage distribution in 2002 of married women according to the person who has the final say in specific household-related decisions in general

Fig. 3.1: Percentage Distribution of Married Women Aged 15-49 who Received Cash Earnings in 1997 and 2002 by Person Who Decides the Disbursement of Those Earnings

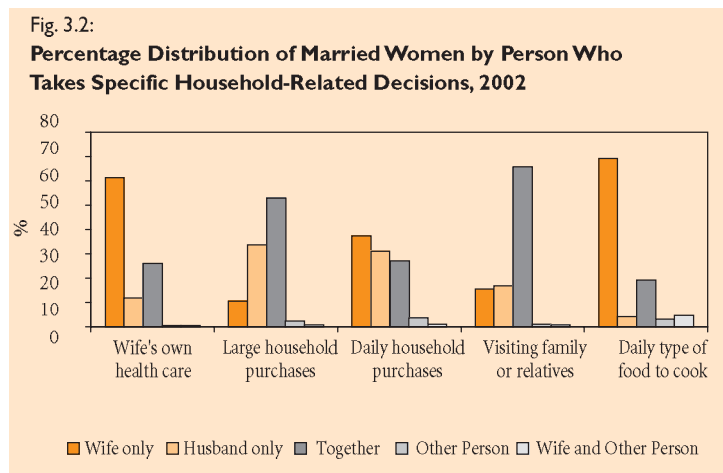


the husband decides alone and 27% in which the husband and wife decide together. Additionally, more than two in three wives (69.2%) have the final say on what food will be cooked on a daily basis.

Table 3.2:
Percentage Distribution of Married Women by Person Who Takes Specific Household-Related Decisions, 2002

Decisions	Wife Only	Husband Only	Wife and Husband Jointly	Other Person	Wife and Other Person	Total
Wife's own health care	61.4	11.7	25.9	0.5	0.5	100.0
Large household purchases	10.5	33.6	53.0	2.2	0.7	100.0
Daily household purchases	37.4	31.2	26.8	3.7	0.9	100.0
Visiting family or relatives	15.5	16.8	66.0	0.9	0.8	100.0
Daily type of food to cook	69.2	4.0	19.1	3.0	4.7	100.0

Source: Department of Statistics, "Population and Family Health Survey," 2002.



About 58% of married women who are not using family planning methods report that the reason for non-use is due to the husband's opposition, while one in five wives claim that their use of contraceptives is their decision alone.

Women and Decisions on Family Planning

Table 3.3 presents the distribution of married women who were not using family planning methods in 2002 and their reasons for not doing so. The data indicates that around three in five non-using women (58%) did not use contraceptives due to the husband's opposition, compared with around 28% who did not use it because they disapproved of it.

Table 3.3:
Percentage Distribution of Married Women Who Are Not Using Contraceptives by Main Reason for Not Using, 2002

Reason for Not Using	%
Wife opposed	27.6
Husband opposed	57.9
Religious reasons	4.3
Rumors	10.2
Total	100.0

Source: Department of Statistics, "Population and Family Health Survey," 2002.

Similar to the decision to not use contraceptives, the decision to use it is exposed to the interference of others. A large majority of married women (79%) report that using contraceptives is a joint decision they make with their husbands, while almost one in five wives (18%) report that the decision they make to use it is one they make alone (see Table 3.4).

Women and Decision-Making in the Governmental Sector

In the last few decades, women's participation in the Jordanian labor market has witnessed tangible progress, particularly in the governmental sector. Women's role in both local and national policies has also increased. Similarly, a few Jordanian women have succeeded in occupying important and high-level positions. In spite of these successes, however, gender discrimination is still a barrier that keeps women from fully participating in decision-making and having the same control as men do over political and economic resources.

Jordan's 1999-2003 Socio-Economic Development Plan recommended that the

female illiteracy rate be reduced to less than 10 percent and that women enjoy equal opportunity to acquire skills and have access to information and specific training services. The Plan also called for women to have equal opportunity in work, wages, job promotion and the attainment of leading positions in all sectors. Women's participation in formulating social and economic policies, however, is still limited due to their lack of presence in leading and higher level administrative positions.

Fig. 3.3:
Percentage Distribution of Married Women Who Are Not Using Contraceptives by Reason for Not Using, 2002

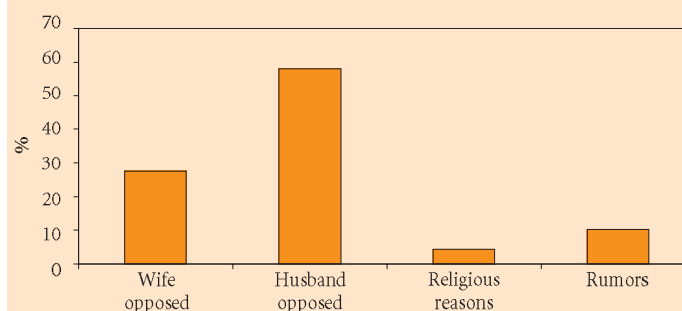


Table 3.4:
Percentage Distribution of Married Women Who Are Using Contraceptives by Person Who Decides on Its Use, 2002

Who Decides on Use	%
Mainly wife	18.0
Mainly husband	3.1
Wife and husband jointly	78.8
Other	0.1
Total	100.0

Source: Department of Statistics, "Population and Family Health Survey," 2002.

Many questions have been raised concerning the reasons that women are hindered from occupying higher positions. Some blame women themselves for their lack of ability or low self-confidence. Others blame women's household burdens and daily needs. Certainly, there are a number of factors that hinder women's progress and job promotion, including legislation and discrimination practiced by some decision-makers, of whom most are men.

Table 3.5 displays the number of employees in government ministries and departments by gender as well as the gender gap in 1994 and 2001. The data reveals that the highest gender gap values were at the Ministry of Waqf and Islamic Affairs (0.94), the Ministry of Water and Irrigation (0.93) and the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (0.90). Thus, the vast majority of employees in these ministries are men. In both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development, the gender gap is in favor of women, which indicates that more women than men are employed in these ministries.

The data from 2001 indicates that no employment policy changes have taken place in the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. On the contrary, the gender gap in that ministry rose to 0.97 in 2001 from that observed in 1994 (0.94). The reason for this gap can be attributed to the nature of activities the ministry performs, as it primarily deals with mosque management and related needs and services.

The majority of married women who are using contraceptives (79%) do so based on a joint decision with their husbands, compared with 28% of wives who disapprove of using contraceptives. However, one in five current users decide on contraceptive use by themselves.

Fig. 3.4:
Percentage Distribution of Married Women Who Are Using Contraceptives by Person Who Decides on Its Use, 2002

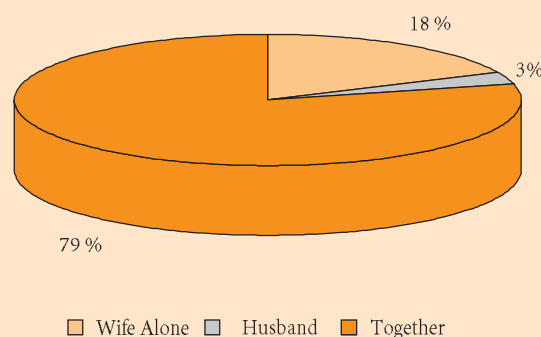


Table 3.5:**Employees in Government Ministries and Departments by Gender and Gender Gap, 1994 and 2001**

Ministries and Departments	1994			2001		
	Men	Women	Gender Gap*	Men	Women	*Gender Gap
Cabinet and Prime Ministry	3352	1010	0.54	3225	681	0.65
Ministry of Interior	1257	491	0.44	1805	395	0.64
Ministry of Justice	1434	216	0.74	1877	326	0.70
Ministry of Health	10,418	8879	0.08	13,203	10,590	0.11
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	408	94	0.63	314	73	0.62
Ministry of Industry and Trade	2443	472	0.68	2290	470	0.66
Ministry of Planning	400	219	0.29	446	218	0.34
Ministry of Youth	268	115	0.40	251	82	0.51
Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Environment	907	286	0.52	935	268	0.55
Ministry of Information	1779	276	0.73	1615	267	0.72
Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	208	57	0.57	1769	139	0.85
Ministry of Finance	4147	627	0.74	5201	694	0.76
Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs	3698	112	0.94	3327	50	0.97
Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources	1355	132	0.87	1030	126	0.78
Ministry of Culture	790	143	0.69	226	93	0.42
Ministry of Agriculture	6744	370	0.90	4726	761	0.72
Ministry of Public Works and Housing	7994	352	0.92	9177	627	0.87
Ministry of Education	29,429	35,105	0.09 -	40,183	48,658	0.10 -
Ministry of Labor	1861	434	0.62	2187	621	0.56
Ministry of Social Development	655	904	0.16 -	1019	894	0.07
Ministry of Water and Irrigation	8600	305	0.93	9452	333	0.93
Ministry of Post and Communications	2273	704	0.53	1608	738	0.37
Ministry of Transport	17,860	1904	0.81	9376	1097	0.79
Arabic Language Forum	-	-	-	27	6	0.64
Royal Scientific Society	488	105	0.65	630	189	0.54
Jordan Diplomacy Institute	-	-	-	36	14	0.44
Royal Cultural Center	-	-	-	79	16	0.66
Total	111,558	53,466	0.35	116,014	68,426	0.26

* Gender Gap= Rates of males – rates of females.

- Data not available.

Source: Department of Statistics, "Employment Surveys," 1994 and 2001.

The gender gap in the Ministry of Education has remained unchanged, while that of the Ministry of Social Development dropped from that observed in 1994; it is still very low, however. As for other government ministries and departments, the gender gap greatly varied, yet it did not approach 1. Table 3.6 presents information on governmental employees by category of work position and sex for 2002.

Table 3.6 shows that 4.2% of government employees in the higher-level category were women. In the first category, which is com-

category increased to around 54% of the total number of employees in this category. It is expected that the higher the position or rank women occupy the more likely they are to be in a position in which they can make decisions. In general, women represented 39% of the total number of governmental employees.

Table 3.7 shows the distribution of high-ranking governmental employees by category and sex in 1996 and 2002.

The data in Table 3.7 indicates that the

Men are dominant in governmental high positions, while women make up only 4.2% of the total employment in this category.

Table 3.6:
Governmental Employees by Category of Work Position and Sex, 2002

Category of Work Position	Sex		Total	(%) Female
	Male	Female		
High	91	4	95	4.2
First	993	79	1072	7.4
Second	35,295	24,522	59,817	41.0
Third	17,023	19,746	36,769	53.7
Fourth	28,570	9,742	38,312	25.4
Contract	3,727	1,129	4,856	23.2
Total	85,699	55,222	140,921	39.2

Source: Civil Services Bureau, Annual Statistics Book, 2002.

prised of the three grades of director-level positions in headquarters or governorate and district centers, women constituted 7.4% of the total number of employees in this category. The proportion of women in the third

proportion of women in high-ranking management positions increased from 1.4 percent in 1996 to 8.8 percent in 2002. Overall, the proportion of women rose by three percentage points (from 5.6 percent to

Table 3.7:
High-Ranking Employees at Public Institutions by Sex, 1996 and 2002

Category	1996			2002		
	Men	Women	Women (%)	Men	Women	Women (%)
Higher management officials	844	12	1.4	2257	217	8.8
Departmental and production directors	1272	114	8.2	1911	179	8.6
Total	2116	126	5.6	4168	396	8.7

Source: Department of Statistics, "Employment Surveys," 1996 and 2002.

8.7 percent) between 1996 and 2002. This indicates a relatively small improvement in women's status in leading positions. Table 3.8 presents the distribution of employees in the diplomatic field by sex in 2002.

Table 3.8:
Employees in the Diplomatic Field by sex, 2002

Position	Men	Women	(%) Women
Ambassador	47	2	4.1
Delegate Minister	20	0	0.0
Chancellor	24	0	0.0
First Secretary	26	2	7.1
Second Secretary	28	2	6.7
Third Secretary	29	4	12.1
Diplomatic Attaché	38	7	15.6
Total	212	17	7.4

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2002.

Fig. 3.5:
Employees in the Diplomatic Field by Sex, 2002

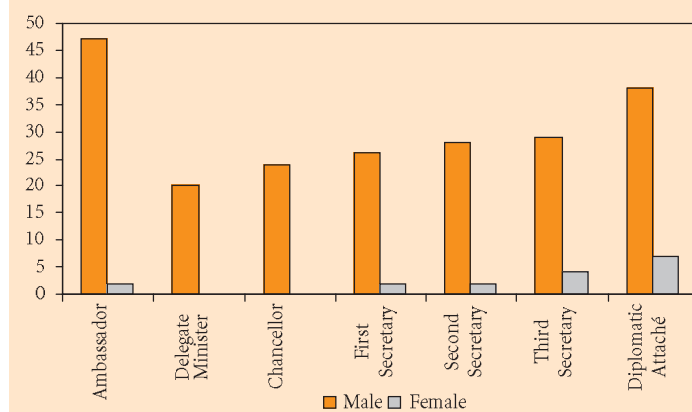


Fig. 3.6:
Percentage Distribution of Employees in the Judiciary by Sex, 2002

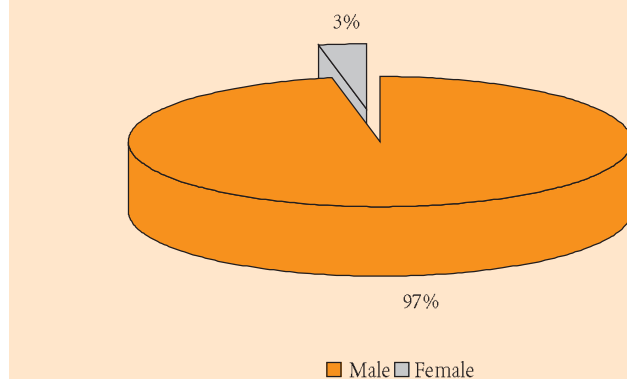


Table 3.8 shows that women make up a small proportion of those employed in the diplomatic field (one woman to every 13 men). Women constitute around 16% of those employed as diplomatic attachés, and they make up 4 percent of the total number of ambassadors. No woman occupies the positions of delegate minister or chancellor.

Women in the Judiciary

Until recently, the judiciary was a field totally confined to men. During the last few years, women have entered the field, and in 2003 they constituted 2.8 percent out of a total of 608 judges.

Women and the Parliament

Jordan's parliamentary life was revitalized in 1984 after a long cessation due to the occupation of the West Bank of Jordan in 1967. Women participated for the first time as candidates in Lower House elections in 1989 and then again in the 1993, 1997 and 2003 election cycles. Despite their participation, their proportion among all Lower House candidates was as low as 7 percent in 2003.

Table 3.9 presents information regarding male and female candidates running for seats in the Lower House over a number of years. The data indicates a low proportion of women candidates to the total number of candidates in all the years under study, with a range from 0.6 percent in 1993 to 7.1 percent in 2003.

The data in the table reflects a high and fluctuating gender gap in all of the years under study. The gender gap ranged from 0.86 in 2003 to 0.99 in 1993, with the 2003 lower gap value indicating women's increasing inclination and tendency to run as candidates.

Table 3.10 shows Jordanian Parliament members from 1989-2003 by sex. The data indicates that during those years women achieved some progress in political participation through their membership in both the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament. The number of women parliamentarians rose from only one woman in the Upper House in 1989 to three women in both 1997 and 2003.

Table 3.9:
Lower House Candidates by Gender and sex Gap, 1989-2003

Year	Men	Women	Women (%)	Gender Gap
1989	635	12	1.9	0.96
1993	531	3	0.6	0.99
1997	544	17	3.1	0.94
2003	765	54	7.1	0.86

Source: Ministry of Interior.

Similarly, the number of women in the Lower House increased from one woman in 1993 to six women in 2003.

It is noteworthy that women did not occupy any of the Lower House seats in 1989 and 1997. Furthermore, although 54 women ran as candidates in the 2003 Lower House elections, none of them succeeded. As a result of a 2003 government-initiated quota system assigning six seats to the women who collect the highest proportion of votes nationwide, six women are currently serving in the Lower House.

Fig. 3.7:
Percentage Distribution of Lower House Candidates by Sex, 2003

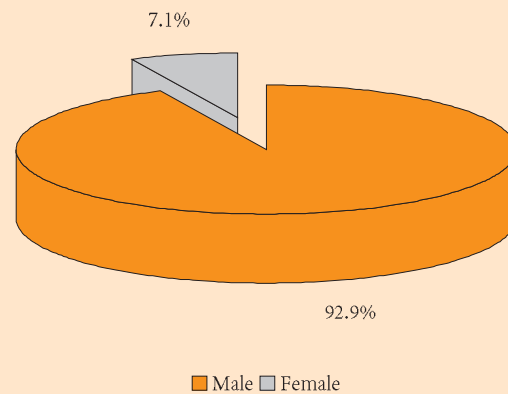


Table 3.10:
Number of Jordanian Parliament Members by Sex, 1989-2003

House	1989		1993		1997		2003	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Upper House	39	1	38	2	37	3	34*	3
Lower House	80	0	79	1	80	0	104	6

Source: Ministry of Interior.

*The decrease in the number of Upper House members in 2003 is due to the fact that three Upper House members ran as candidates for the Lower House elections.

Women show greater tendency to participate in parliamentary elections than in municipal elections, their ratio increased from 1.9% of the total number of candidates in 1989 to 7% in the 2003 elections

Women in Municipal Councils

Municipal councils are service-oriented institutions established with the aim of providing community services for different population localities. Participation of women in these councils as members enables them to take community-related decisions.

Table 3.11 shows the distribution of candidates for the 2003 municipal elections by governorate and sex. The data generally indicates the tendency for women to refrain

Fig. 3.8:
Members of the Jordanian Parliament by Sex, 2003

