



Women's Plight in the Male-Dominated Job Market of Iran

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The official Iranian news agency IRNA published a report on January 17, 2019, indicating that Iran's job market was male-dominated.

Based on the statistics published by the [United Nations Development Program](#) (UNDP), IRNA reported that women's participation rate in Iran's job market in 2017 was only 16.8% which is very low compared to the male participation rate which was 71.4% in the same year.

Around the same time last year, Leila Falahati, from the presidential Directorate on Women and Family Affairs, said women's economic participation in Iran was 17 per cent by the most optimistic estimates, leaving Iran way behind other economic powers in the Middle East region. (The state-run ISNA news agency - January 13, 2018)

The above estimate seems to be an exaggeration since the National Statistical Center (NSC) estimated women's economic participation at 14.3% in 2016 and 13.3% in 2015.

In 2016, the NSC announced that there was a 1.6 per cent drop in women's economic participation compared to the previous year which was 13.3 per cent. Then it set [the rate for 2016](#) at 14.3% instead of 11.7%.

Given the bankrupt state of the Iranian economy and the swelling army of the unemployed, the reports on women's economic participation seem to offer a tampering with numbers rather than a reflection of the reality, and the actual figures must be assumed to be much lower than those officially announced.

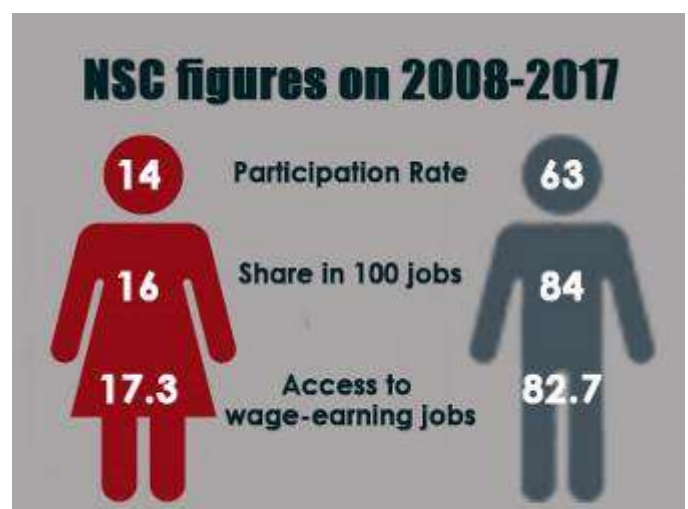


Gender inequality

In its annual survey of Iran's labor force, the National Statistical Center (NSC) also confirmed [gender inequality](#) in the job market of Iran in the 10-year period spanning from 2008 to 2017.

The NSC findings indicate that the Iranian population aging 10 years and older is divided 50-50 between the two sexes but the 63% average participation rate of men in the job market was four times greater than women's participation rate of only 14% in the said period.

The survey also indicated that out of every 100 persons holding jobs in Iran, 84 were men and only 16 were women, a clear indication that the job market is male-dominated.



A survey by the Labor Ministry's Center for Statistics and Strategic Information found unequal access to wage-earning jobs for men and women. According to this study done for the period spanning from March 2016 to March 2017, men's share of wage-earning jobs was 82.7 per cent compared to women's 17.3 per cent share, indicating a fivefold access for men to wage-earning opportunities compared to women. (The state-run Mehr news agency – January 23, 2018)

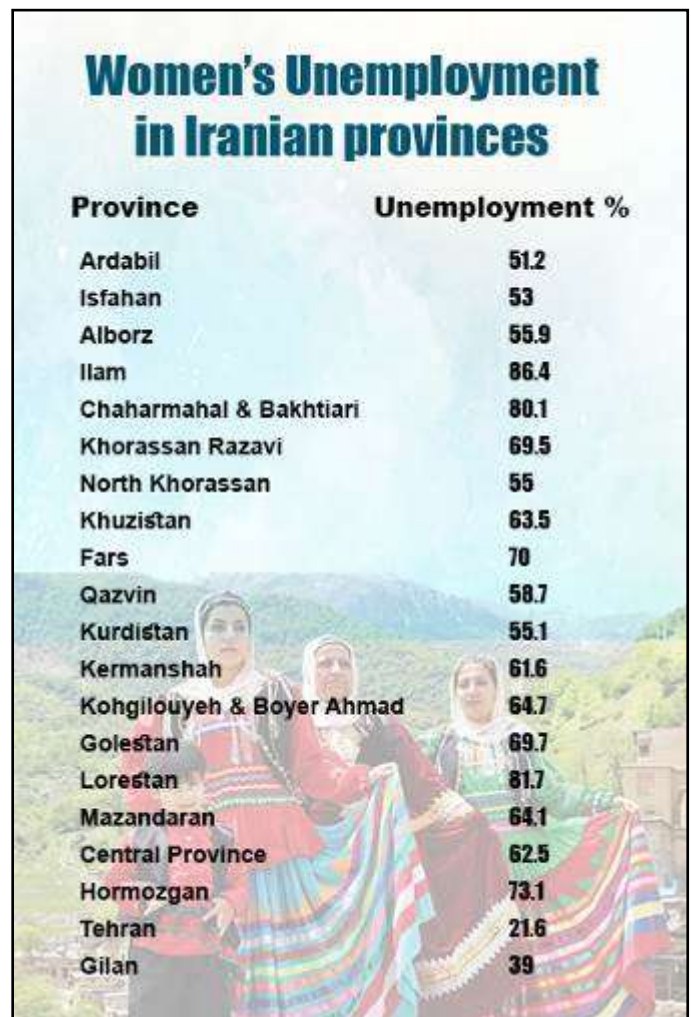
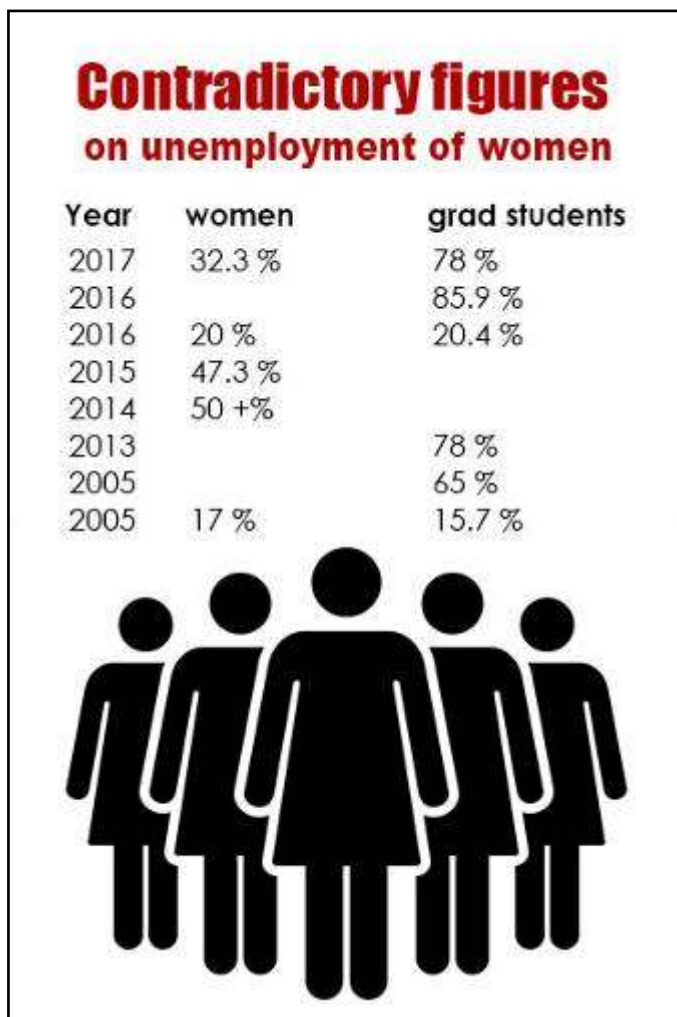
Women's unemployment

Women's unemployment rate in Iran grows rapidly. Based on NSC figures women's share of unemployment is more than men's.

The state-run ISNA news agency reported on November 30, 2018, the average annual unemployment rate in Iran is 1.8%. With an annual growth rate of 3.8%, the population of unemployed women reached 1,037,516 in 2017. That means that Iranian women's unemployment rate reached a peak of 32.3% in 2017.

The unemployment rate of women increased from 17% in 2005 to more than 20% in 2016. The unemployment rate for graduate students in the same period increased from 15.7 percent to 20.4 percent. (The state-run ISNA news agency - November 30, 2018)

In a report on November 21, 2018, the Special Commission for the Protection of National Production and Monitoring of the Implementation of Article 44 of the Constitution announced, "The unemployment rate of young educated people is between 50% and 63%; the unemployment rate for young educated women reaches 78%. These are disturbing figures that indicate a very bad situation in the job market." (The state-run ISNA news agency - November 21, 2018)



This is while in 2016, the unemployment rate for young women under 30 years of age was estimated at 85.9 per cent. (The state-run Mehr news agency, January 5, 2016)

In summer 2016, the National Statistics Center of Iran had declared that the [average unemployment rate for young women](#) in Iran reached 47.3 per cent in summer 2015.

Official statistics on unemployment of the 15-24 age group in 2014 showed that in some Iranian provinces this rate exceeded 50 per cent. (The state-run Economists (*Eghtesad-danan*), August 13, 2015)

Women's unemployment rate in Ardabil Province is 51.2%, in Isfahan 53%, in Alborz 55.9%, in Ilam 86.4%, in Chaharmahal-o Bakhtiari 80.1%, in Khorassan Razavi 69.5%, in Northern Khorassan 55%, in Khuzistan 63.5%, in Fars 70%, in Qazvin 58.7%, in Kurdistan 55.1%, in Kermanshah 61.6%, in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad 64.7%, in Golestan 69.7%, in Lorestan 81.7%, in Mazandaran 64.1%, in Central Province 62.5%, and in Hormozgan 73.1%.

Layoffs and exclusion from work

Abol Hassan Firouzabadi, deputy Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, has acknowledged that 100,000 women get laid off every year. (The official IRNA news agency, September 6, 2015)

Other sources indicate that at least 900,000 women have been fired from their jobs in ten years. Fatemeh Sadeqi, Professor and member of faculty of Teachers' Training University, said, "With a glance over the past ten years we can see that some 100,000 women have been fired from the job market every year. Also, according to official figures, 74,000 women have been expelled from their jobs after returning from maternal leaves. One could therefore say that about 900,000 women have been fired from their jobs and become unemployed." (The state-run Fars news agency, June 16, 2015)

It can be clearly seen that even in this simple calculation the figure 1 million has been decreased to 900,000, without any explanation on the fate of the 74,000 laid off women.

During his election campaign, Hassan Rouhani, the regime's president, gave new statistics on the exclusion of women from the job cycle in Iran. "About 670,000 women lost their jobs from 2004 to 2014," he said and added, "The issue of women as an important sector of society has been neglected in the past." (The state-run Young Journalists Club - May 4, 2017)

The state-run [Donya-e Eqtesad](#) described women's employment as being "on the decline," while asserting that women's employment rate in Iran is the world's lowest. (The state-run *Donya-e Eqtesad* – September 29, 2015)

In November 2013, it was announced that the average unemployment rate of women is only 21.6% in [Tehran](#) despite the highest concentration of industrial plants and administrative centers in the nation's capital.

Status of educated women

Education is an important factor in finding jobs. Iranian women make up 46% of the population with general education and over 50% of the population with higher education. Nonetheless, women's participation in the job market is 9% with general education and 37% with higher education. (The state-run IRNA news agency – January 17, 2019)

The employment quota in the higher education level is 70-30 in favor of men's recruitment. The NSC said out of every 100 people with general education, only 10 are women. And this gap still persists.

A government official has acknowledged that 2 million girls have graduated from Iran's universities in the past 20 years, comprising over 60 percent of college graduates, but unemployment rate among women has increased. (Sussan Bastani, deputy for strategic studies in Rouhani's presidential directorate for Women and Family Affairs, interview with the state-run ISNA news agency, February 13, 2016)

One study indicates that 52 per cent of female university and college graduates are "economically inactive", a euphemism used to refer to the unemployed. (The state-run Kayhan daily newspaper, June 20, 2017)

Another report indicates 46.6% of college graduates are women, 34.5% of whom are economically active (70.1% employed and 29.9% unemployed), and 65.5% are considered economically inactive. (The state-run Aftab News website – January 2, 2016)

According to a survey done on Iran's work force in the period spanning from 2005 to 2013, unemployment rate has had progressive increase among female university graduates as it rose from 65% in 2005 to 78% in 2013. (The state-run Dana news agency – July 2, 2016)

Women with higher education are regarded as a new sector who are either unemployed or have been forced to engage in menial jobs with low wages. Many women with college education have to resort to peddling in the streets, working in restaurants or as secretaries in offices and accept salaries as low as one-third of the minimum wage.

Nearly 39% of educated women with higher education in the northern Iranian province of Gilan are unemployed and have not been able to find jobs. (Fatemeh Rafi'i, director general of women and family affairs in Gilan Province, interview with the state-run Fars news agency – October 5, 2015)

"Women with bachelor's degrees are working in welding workshops, and a graphics major is now a simple worker. Of course, there are many more like them and their numbers are increasing by the day. Furthermore, all these individuals prefer to not mention their degrees in order to get hired by a certain organization or workshop," said Hossein Akbari, a member of the Workers Services Association. (The state-run Asr-e Iran daily, September 23, 2015)

The state-run Shahrvand newspaper, on June 28, 2017, recounted the [stories of educated women](#) who had to work in jobs that are in no way related to their field of study and level of education. These women receive only 150,000 tomans a month while the Supreme Labor Council has set the minimum wage for the year 2017 at 930,000 tomans.

Maryam with a BA in political sciences, has been working in a Falafel shop for six months from 3 p.m. until midnight. She earns 150,000 tomans a month. Shahnaz, a graduate of computer engineering, works 9.5 hours a day in an insurance company and earns 300,000 tomans a month. Shahnaz's friend with a B.S. in accounting works for 10.5 hours a day as an accountant in a shop and earns 200,000 tomans.

Discrimination against women

While women's education rate is equal to men's, they are badly discriminated against in employment.

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap report 2018, Iran ranks 142nd among 149 countries after Mali, Congo, Chad, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan and Yemen. Iran's 2018 score on economic participation is 0.376 while its score on Education Attainment is 0.969.

Shahindokht Molaverdi, former presidential deputy for women and family affairs, acknowledged in an interview that the unemployment rate of young women in 2015 had reached its highest level in 20 years. (The state-run psychnews.ir, January 22, 2017)

According to the figures compiled by the NSC, the rate of unemployment among young women between 20 and 30 years of age is double that of men in the same age range. (The state-run Asr-e Iran website – December 20, 2017)

“In some provinces, unemployed educated women are three times more numerous than men,” said Massoumeh Ebtekar, Rouhani’s deputy in women and family affairs. (The state-run Ghanoun website citing IRNA – October 30, 2017)

In his August 2014 report, the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran, Mr. Ahmed Shaheed tackled “Gender participation and income disparities” in Iran underlining, “The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to have one of the lowest rates of female representation in the labor market globally, with women constituting only 16 per cent of the labor force.... Unemployment gaps between men and women are significantly greater for individuals with higher levels of education, rendering women with post-secondary degrees three times as likely as to be unemployed as their male counterparts.”

Mr. Shaheed also disclosed that, “Participation rates of women in paid work are low, with Iranian women estimated to earn the lowest average incomes in Asia and the Pacific. Men earn 4.8 times more than women, making the income gap between Iranian men and women one of the highest in the world.”

Consequences of women’s exclusion from the job market

Iranian women are the first victims of layoffs, unequal wages and gender discrimination. Sociologists believe that most of women’s economic challenges and problems are due to gender discrimination, the destructive effects of which have caused prejudice against women, inequality and some sort of economic violence.

The Iranian Constitution states that having a decent job is not among the fundamental rights of women in Iran. (Preamble to the regime’s Constitution, section on women)

Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of the clerical regime, has explicitly pronounced, “God has created women for a particular area of life... employment is not among the major issues that concern women.” (Khamenei’s official website - April 19, 2014)

Lack of jobs and lack of economic independence have caused great depression among Iranian women leading to all sorts of social ailments such as homelessness, addiction, prostitution, suicides, etc.

Most recently, Leila Rasouli, a young Iranian paramedic who was unable to find a job, ended her own life. Leila Rasouli, 30, committed suicide on December 29, 2018.

With a paramedic higher diploma, Leila Rasouli had been seeking employment for a long time, but she was not hired in her hometown of [Hamadan](#). After she finished her paramedic term, Leila Rasouli committed suicide with chemicals and died at the hospital.

She was buried on Wednesday, January 16, 2019. The main cause of the suicide of this young woman was the [pressure of unemployment](#) and lack of a suitable profession despite having a high degree of education.

Mohammad Sharifi Moghaddam, deputy director of the Nursing Organization, had earlier acknowledged, “There are 30,000 unemployed nurses in Iran.” (The state-run Young Journalists Club – October 29, 2018)