



## **Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics**

### **Women and Men in Palestine: Trends and Statistics**

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## Foreword

Over the past several decades, the general approach to development has undergone considerable change, especially in the area of the measurement of human development. A major part of this change has been the attempt to understand the different roles of men and women as contributors and beneficiaries of societal development.

While sexual differentiation is a biological construct and considered unchangeable, it is important to understand that gender is socially determined. Gender refers to the relationship between women and men that is affected by the social, cultural, economic and political environment. Biologically, women bear a greater responsibility than men do in the reproductive process. But beyond that our particular cultures and societal attitudes shape the rest of our behaviors as men and women.

During this period, development analysis has shifted from ignoring women altogether in the development process, to considering the behavior of women only in isolation from men, as a separate and distinct participant out of a gender context. As more was learned about women's role, this women in development (WID) approach has now been abandoned in favor of a more comprehensive analysis of gender and development (GAD). This allows for a fuller understanding of not just women in isolation, but of the different roles of both women and men and their interrelationship in the development process, and investigates uneven human development in gender terms.

A tool for such analysis is the gender disaggregation of national statistics, and the compilation of additional data for gender analysis. The lack of adequate statistics on the situation of women and men in Palestinian society has been recognized as a critical deficiency in development planning. For this reason the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics has given the production of gender statistics a high priority since its establishment in 1993.

This is the first publication of PCBS's Gender Statistics Program which was established in 1996 with the assistance of a grant from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The Gender Statistics Program works in close consultation with the government, non-government and academic community to determine the kind of indicators needed for gender analysis and the "user friendliness" of its output. The Program has strengthened PCBS's capacity to produce and disseminate gender statistics by ensuring that all official surveys integrate differences between sexes as a basic component, and that data analysis and presentation reflect a concern for gender issues.

The goal of the compiling and disseminating of such statistics is to raise awareness among policy makers, planners, NGOs, gender advocates and the public at large, about the importance of gender disaggregated data for the purposes of policy formation, planning and lobbying.



Analysis based on these statistics can inform government and non-government development policies concerning the impact of the development process on gender and focus on critical areas requiring attention.

This report attempts to provide a situation analysis of women and men in various areas of Palestinian life: population, education, health, labor and public life. A number of local experts were asked to produce a preliminary descriptive overview of gender differentials in these sectors using PCBS statistics to date. A summary of their findings are included in the Highlights section beginning each chapter and their conclusions direct the reader to areas for further research.

The findings show that Palestinian society is a society in a unique development category, similar in many ways to developing countries in certain areas such as fertility rates and the high percentage of young, but resembling developed countries in other indicators, such as high school enrollment among girls and the higher life expectancy of women.

An in-depth analysis and interpretation are beyond the scope of this first gender statistics report. The resources necessary for deeper statistical analysis and interpretation of data, including statistical tests of significance for bivariate and multivariate analysis, are not presently available to PCBS. However, we hope that this statistical overview of gender and development in Palestine will create the basis and generate interest among researchers and planners to conduct further analysis and interpretation from available data.

***Hassan Abu Libdeh, Ph.D***  
***President***

# 1. POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD

## *Terms*

### **Highlights of Findings**

#### **A. Age-Sex Structure**

Women to Men Ratios

Age-Sex Structure

#### **B. Marriage**

Marital Status

Age at First Marriage

Marriage Patterns

#### **C. Fertility**

Total and Age-Specific Fertility Rates

Age at First Birth

Teenage Fertility

Sex of Child Preference

#### **D. Household**

Household Type

Household Size and Sex of the Head of Household

Marital Status of the Head of Household

Household Structure and Sex of the Head of Household

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## **Terms**

Age at Marriage	The age of the individual in years at the time of his/her actual marriage.
Age-Specific Fertility	The number of births during a time period, usually a year, occurring to women of a specified age group divided by the number of women in the population of the same age group expressed as person-years.
Birth Interval	The time span calculated in months between the birth dates of successive births for a woman.
Composite Family	Refers to families consisting of at least one nuclear family with other non-relatives.
Extended Family	Refers to families consisting of at least one nuclear family with other relatives.
Household	One person or group of persons with or without a family relationship who live in the same dwelling unit, who share meals and make joint provisions for food and other essentials of living.
Head of Household	The person who usually lives with the household and is recognized as head of household by its other members. Often he/she is the main decision maker or responsible for financial support and welfare of the household at the time the survey is conducted.
Life Expectancy	The average additional number of years a person would live if current mortality trends were to continue. Most commonly cited as life expectancy at birth.
Median Age	The age which divides a population into two numerically equal groups: that is, half of the people are younger than this age and half are older.
Nuclear Family	Refers to families consisting of married couples without children, married couples with unmarried children, or single parents with unmarried children.
Sex Ratio	The ratio of males to females, usually expressed as a number of males per 100 females.
Singulate Mean Age at Marriage	The average age at which the population (by sex) first marries. It is calculated in a manner which avoids the downward introduced when one simply averages the age of marriage that can be recorded from those who have already married in the population.
Total Fertility Rate	The average number of children that would be born alive to a women (or group of women) during her life time if she were to pass through her childbearing years conforming to the age-specific fertility rates of a given year. The sum of age specific fertility rates multiplied by 5.

## **Highlights of Findings**

### **Age-Sex Structure**

- There are fewer women in Palestinian society than men although life expectancy for women is higher.
- The Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is young, with 47% of the population (females and males) aged less than 15 years. The percentage of males is higher than females in this age group, with some differences between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- The percentage of persons aged 65 years and above is very small, 3.4%. Within this age group, the percentage of women is higher than the percentage of men, with some differences between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

### **Marriage**

- Women tend to marry at earlier ages than men; the difference between the median ages of women and men at first marriage is five years.
- Education is an important factor in determining age at first marriage. First marriage age increases with higher educational qualifications for both women and men.
- The rate of marriage among women is higher than among men and the percentage of never married men is higher than that of never married women. Widowhood, divorce and separation occur more often among women than among men.
- Men have a greater tendency to marry more than once than women.

### **Fertility**

- Although total fertility rates are gradually decreasing, they are still high, with 6.06 births per woman. In the Gaza Strip, the total fertility rate is higher than in the West Bank.
- Women's education is among the factors that decrease fertility.
- Palestinian women give birth at early ages. The median age at the time of first birth for women aged 25-49 is 21 years.
- The fertility of adolescent women aged 15-19 years is high in comparison to that prevailing in other countries of the world, constituting 9% of the total fertility rate of Palestinian women.
- Palestinian women prefer to have male children, even if they have no female children.

### **Household**

- Males head most Palestinian households; the percentage headed by females is only 7.7%.
- Households headed by females are smaller than those headed by males: 3.9 persons compared to 7.2 persons, with minor differences between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- The majority of all female heads of households are widows (74%), compared to 1% headed by widowers.
- More than 85% of widowed heads of households are female and more than 69% of divorced or separated heads of households are female.
- More than 60% of households headed by women are comprised of women and their children, compared to only 1% of men who form households with their children.

# POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD

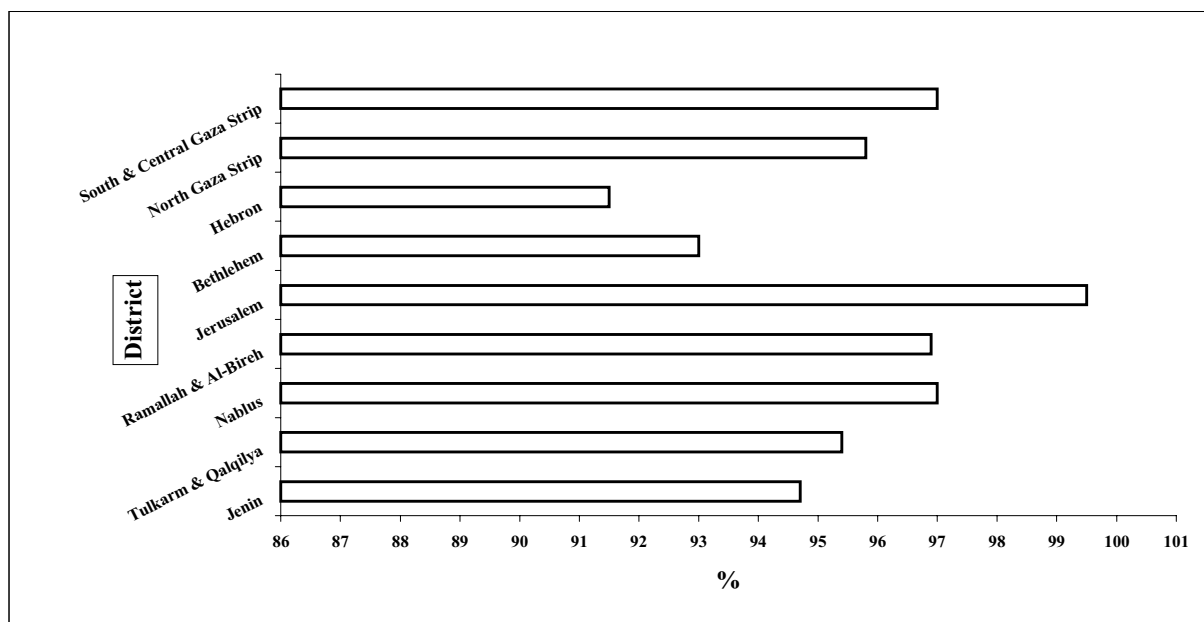
Population and household are highly significant when examining gender issues and indicators characteristics in the society. This chapter aims to shed light on gender gaps in indicators such as age/sex structure of the population, marriage patterns, age at first marriage, fertility rates and trends, preferred fertility, household size, household structure and sex of the head of household. We hope that these indicators will be taken into account by planners and policy-makers in the field.

## A. Age-Sex Structure

### Women to Men Ratios

Although women are believed to live longer than men in Palestinian society, their ratio to men is lower, 96 women per 100 men in 1995 (95 in the West Bank and 97 in Gaza Strip) \*. This ratio varies from one district (governorate) to another. As show in **Figure 1-1**, the Jerusalem district has the highest ratio and the Hebron district the lowest. Reasons behind such minor differences in the ratio could be due to gender differentials in more than one relevant indicator, for example, life expectancy, migrant ratios, mortality rates. These indicators singly, and even more clearly together influence the overall sex ratio as well as the ratio in specific age groups.

**Figure 1-1: Sex Ratio by District, 1995 (women per 100 men)\***



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 1995*; unpublished data.

\* Administrative classifications used in this figure were those adopted at the time of the survey, 1995.

Generally speaking, the ratio of women to men in Palestinian society resembles that in most developing countries, where it is less than 95 women to men. The ratio exceeds 105 women per 100 men in most developed countries, however, where women are known to live

more than men. The average female/male ratio is around 99/100 at the world level. **Table 1-1** shows that the percentage is similar to that prevailing in some neighboring countries and is lower than that in other countries.

**Table 1-1: Sex Ratio of Population in Selected Neighboring Countries, 1995**  
(Women per 100 Men)

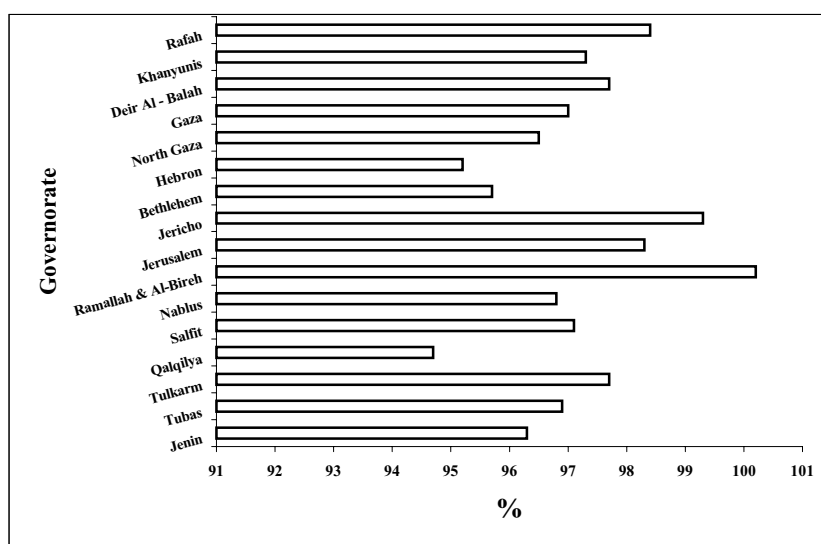
Jordan	Iraq	Egypt	West Bank and Gaza Strip *	Israel	Lebanon	Syria
95.0	96.0	97.0	95.7	102.0	105.0	98.0

Source: United Nations, *Woman in the World 1995, Trends and Statistics*, pp. 23 – 26, Table 1.

\* Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, 1995; unpublished data.

The preliminary findings of the Population, Housing and Establishments Census of 1997 indicate that the percentage of women per 100 men increased to 96.9 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, (96.7 in the West Bank and 97.3 in Gaza Strip). The distribution of women per 100 men by governorate is shown in **Figure 1-2**:

**Figure 1-2: Sex Ratio of Population by Governorate, 1997**  
(Women per 100 Men)

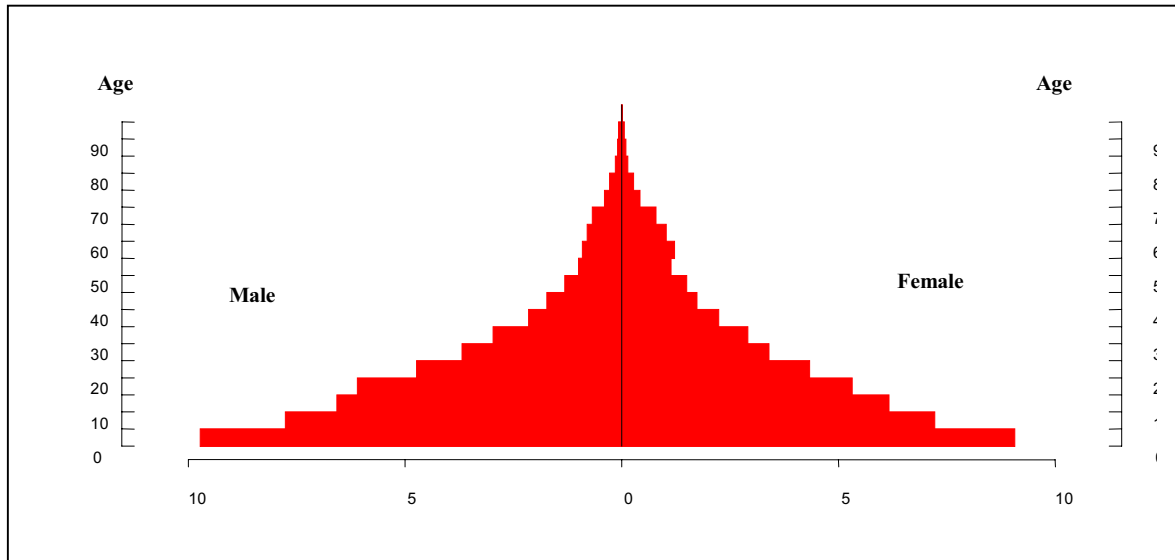


Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Population, Housing and Establishments Census 1997*; unpublished preliminary data.

## Age-Sex Structure

Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is generally characterized as being quite young. The median age of the society is 16 years (the median age is the age dividing a population into two numerically equal groups). The base of the population pyramid presented in **Figure 1-3** is wide. The percentage of young aged less than 15 years is 47% of the total population, 45% and 50% in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, respectively (as shown in **Table 1-2**).

**Figure 1-3: Age-Sex Distribution of the West Bank and Gaza Strip Population, 1995**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Final Report, 1997*.

This regional variation is due to higher fertility rates in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. This implies women are more burdened, especially in households headed by women (divorced or widowed), and shows the need for more health and educational services to be provided by the government, which represents additional burdens on the government.

**Table 1-2. Distribution of the Population By Age Group, Sex and Region, 1995**

Age Group	West Bank				Gaza Strip				Total			
	Women	Men	Both Sexes	Women per 100 Men	Women	Men	Both Sexes	Women per 100 Men	Women	Men	Both Sexes	Women per 100 Men
0 – 4	17.4	17.8	17.6	92.7	20.8	21.4	21.1	94.0	18.5	19.0	18.8	93.2
5 – 14	26.4	27.4	26.9	91.7	29.2	29.2	29.2	96.2	27.4	28.0	27.7	93.3
15 – 49	45.2	45.5	45.3	94.8	40.8	42.3	41.6	93.1	43.7	44.4	44.1	94.3
50 – 64	7.2	5.7	6.4	120.0	6.2	4.5	5.3	133.2	6.9	5.3	6.0	123.9
65 +	3.9	3.6	3.7	101.9	3.0	2.6	2.8	112.0	3.6	3.3	3.4	104.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>95.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>96.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>95.7</b>

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Final Report, 1997*, p. 94 .

The age group under 15 amounts to 40% and 49% in Jerusalem and Hebron districts respectively, compared to 51% in North Gaza Strip. Again, the difference is due to a higher fertility rate in the Hebron district compared to any other district in the West Bank. This rate resembles the rate for the Gaza Strip districts.<sup>2</sup> In addition, this percentage is higher in Palestinian society than in developing countries where it varies from 30 – 54%, as well as in other Arab countries as shown in **Table 1-3**.



**Table 1-3: Percentage of Persons Aged Less than 15 Years in Some Neighboring Countries, 1995.**

Jordan	Iraq	Egypt	West Bank and Gaza Strip *	Israel	Lebanon	Syria
44.0	44.0	38.0	46.5	29.0	34.0	48.0

Source: United Nations, *Woman in the World 1995, Trends and Statistics*, PP 23 – 26.

\* Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Final Results*, 1997, p. 94, table 36

The percentage of female children among females total is almost equal to the percentage of male children among total males. However, the percentage of female children is less than male children. The percentage of girls per 100 boys was 93 in the Palestinian territory (92 in the West Bank and 95 in Gaza Strip). This is mainly due to the fact that the sex ratio at birth favors males over females. Nevertheless, the fact that infant and child mortality rates are higher among males could be due to under-reporting and under registration of female deaths.

The percentage of elderly males and females aged 65 years and above does not exceed 3% in the Palestinian society. This low percentage is due to the high fertility rate and low life expectancy and high mortality rates in this age group, 4% in the West Bank and 3% in the Gaza Strip. The higher life expectancy in the West Bank may account for the minor difference between the two areas. The percentage of elderly varied from 3% in the Hebron District to 5% in the Ramallah and El – Bireh District. The percentage of females in this age group among total female is also higher than the percentage of males from total males. 105 women per 100 men (102 in the West Bank and 112 in the Gaza Strip). Life expectancy, which is higher among females than males in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, accounts for the high female representation in this age group.

Although the differences between females and males in this age group are not consider significant, they should be taken into account when making decisions pertinent to the provision of health care and social services for the elderly and for elderly and women in particular, most of whom live alone. Differences should also be noted when taking decisions about retirement age and social security allowances.

The size of the population of working age, that is the 15 – 64 years age group, constitutes almost 50% of the population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It varies between 52% in the West Bank and 47% in Gaza Strip. The percentage of women (of total women) exceeds the percentage of men (of total men) in this age group. Nevertheless, the percentage of women per 100 men favors men in the 15 – 49 age group and women in the 50 – 64 age group. The higher migration rates among men may account for the differences in the sex ratio between the West Bank and Gaza Strip in this age group, since migration may be higher in the West Bank where mobility is less restricted, than in the Gaza Strip.

An additional factor is that the percentage of women of reproduction age (15 - 49) is high, reaching to 44% of total women in the Palestinian territory, 45% and 41% in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, respectively.

A high dependency ratio (the ratio of those aged 65 years and over plus those under 15 years of age to the population of working age is, of special note in Palestinian society: 99.6 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Given the high unemployment rate, low female participation rate in the labor force, high ratio of females of reproduction age and high school / university enrollment rates for persons aged 15 – 24 years, does not reflect the actual economic

dependency ratios. Half of the population are economically dependent and half are of working age (but may not be working). Still this ratio remains a valid indicator of the extent of burden born by the working population.

## B. Marriage

### Marital Status

The distribution of women and men in specific age groups by marital status has many implications on fertility rates and, consequently, on population growth rates (Marital status has been classified into married, single, divorced, widowed or separated. Marriage typically refers to an engagement between a man and a woman in accordance with legal or traditional procedure. A married person is an actually married person, regardless of whether the couple was living together at the time of the survey or not). Minor differences were noted in the distribution of women and men by marital status for 1991 and 1995: a small decrease in the percentage of currently married, compared to a slight increase in the percentage of never married. Such differences were found to be due to an increase in age at first marriage for both women and men during that period. On the other hand, there were negligible differences in the percentages of divorced, widowed and separated persons, as shown in **Table 1-4**.

The decrease in the percentage of married persons was higher among men than among women and the percentage of never married persons was also higher among men than among women. This could be explained by the fact that the increase in age at first marriage was higher among men than among women in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

**Table 1- 4: Distribution of Women and Men By Marital Status and Region, 1991 and 1995**

Marital Status	1991 *			1995 **		
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
<b>Single</b>						
Women	32.0	26.4	30.1	33.5	27.1	31.4
Men	41.9	35.5	39.8	44.4	38.6	42.6
<b>Married</b>						
Women	57.9	64.5	60.1	57.3	63.1	59.1
Men	56.6	63.3	58.8	54.5	60.0	56.2
<b>Divorced</b>						
Women	0.8	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.4	1.1
Men	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2
<b>Widow / or</b>						
Women	8.7	7.8	8.3	7.8	7.9	7.8
Men	1.1	0.9	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.8
<b>Separated</b>						
Women	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.5
Men	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
<b>Total</b>						
<b>Women</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Men</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: \* Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, *Demography of the Palestinian Population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*. Current Status Report Series, No. 1, 1994, pp. 102 – 104. Ratios Calculated for ages 15 years and over.

\*\* Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, Topical Reports Series (no. 3), Marriage – Detailed Results, 1998, pp. 31 – 33, Tables 1 – 3. Ratios Calculated for ages 14 years and over.

There are also other differences in the relative distribution of women and men by marital status. Whereas the percentage of never married women is lower than the percentage of never married men, the percentages of married, divorced, widowed, and separated women are higher than for men. Again, differences between the ages of women and men at first marriage

account for such varied percentages. Women tend to marry at earlier ages than men, while men tend to marry after reaching a certain age. In addition, men tend to marry more than once and/or have more than one wife. Life expectancy, which is higher for women, could explain the increase in the percentage of widows.

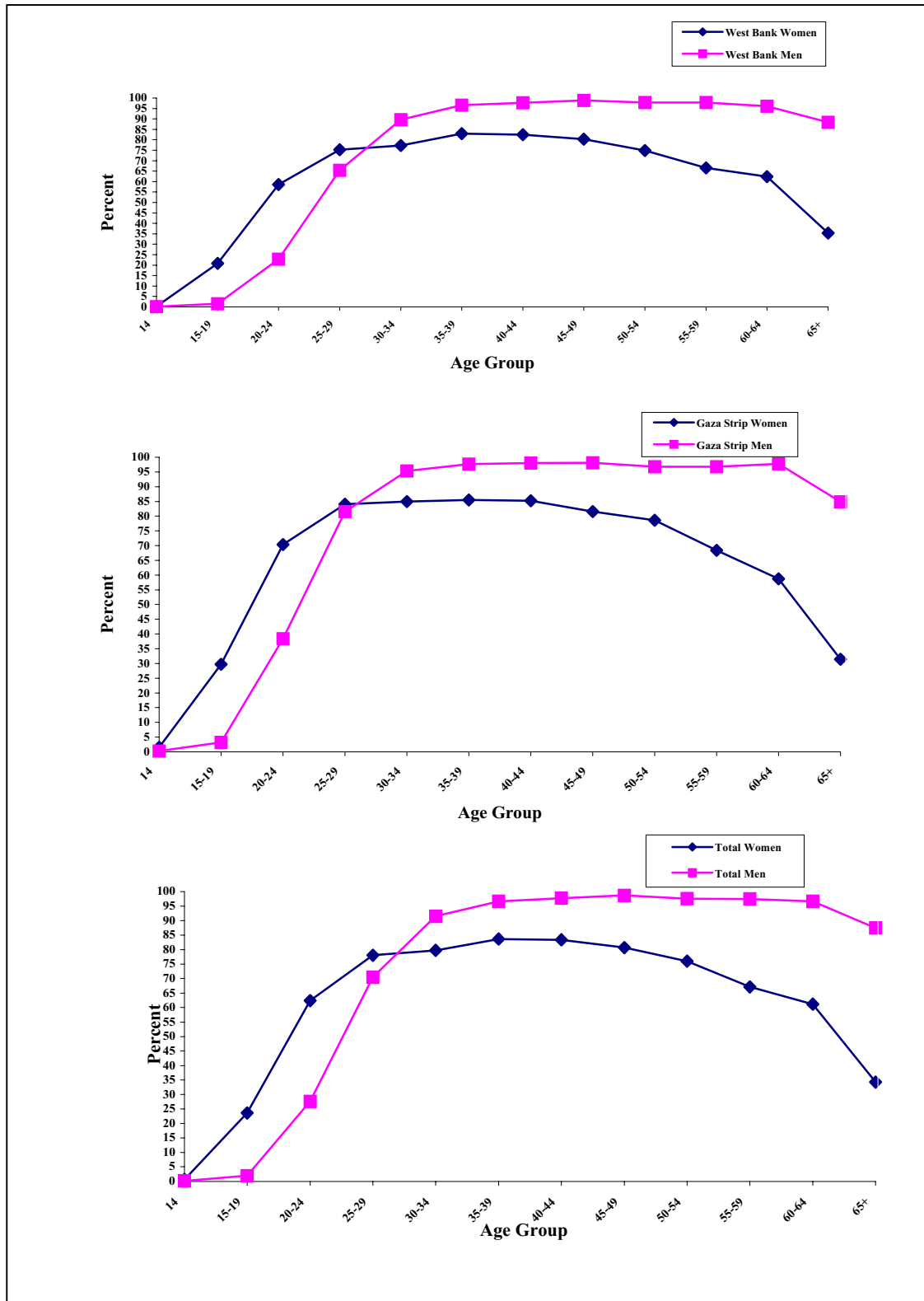
The distribution of women and men by marital status and age reveals significant issues that require special attention, for example, marriage patterns for women and men in Palestinian society. The percentage of currently married women in the age group 15-19 is 24%, compared to only 2% for men in the same age group. This percentage of married teenaged girls is high when compared to that prevailing in neighboring countries. The increase in marriage among women in this age group has a serious impact on their general status and well-being. Early marriage may deny them the opportunity to continue education and higher studies and, thus, hinder their participation in the labor force. The high risk associated with early pregnancy and childbirth has serious implications on mother and child care in addition to increasing female fertility rates.

The gap between the percentages of married women and men reaches the lowest point in the 25-29 year age group: 78% for women and 71% for men. This gap appears to increase among married persons after age 50, and as age increases. 84% of women in the 35-39 year age group were married. For men, the highest percentage was 99% in the 45-49 age group, as shown in **Figure 1-4**. The percentages of married women and men undergo slight increases in the age groups 35-39, 40-44 and 45-49. This figure shows that men marry to younger women the age difference between them varies from 5-15 years, decreasing at the age of 45 for women and 50 for men. This is an obvious indicator that men tend to marry younger women. Nevertheless, the percentage of married men remains high, 88% for men at the age of 65 compared to only 34% for women of the same age. This is due to a common tendency among men to marry at late ages, whether first or second marriages.

These trends are similar in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, except that the percentage of married women and men in the 15-19 age group is higher in the Gaza Strip (30% women and 3% men) than in the West Bank (21% women and 2% men), especially for women.

The highest percentage of married women in both regions is in the 35-39 age group, which is lower in the West Bank (83%) than in the Gaza Strip (86%). On the other hand, the highest percentage of married men is in the 45-49 age group, which is (99%) in the West Bank and (98%) in the Gaza Strip.

**Figure 1-4: Relative Distribution of Married Women and Men by Age and Region, 1995**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Topical Report Series (No. 3), Marital Characteristics – Detailed Results*, 1998, pp.31-33, Tables 1 – 3.

It appears that marriage in the Gaza Strip is characterized by more stability in comparison to the West Bank since the percentage of married women and men is higher in Gaza due to lower age at first marriage. Furthermore, there are differences between women and men in terms of the number of marriages and number of spouses, which is higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank.

The overall percentages of never married women and men (single) comprise 43% and 31% among men and women, respectively. This is also due to differences in age at first marriage between males and females. The percentage of never married decreases as age increases: while it is 20% among women in the 25-29 age group, it decreases to only 3% for women aged 65 and above, compared to 29% and 1% for men in the same two age groups. The percentage of never married women is lower than men in the 15-29 age group but is higher than men after the age of 30. In the age group 35-39, the percentage of never married women is 12%, compared to 2% of never married men. **Figure 1-5** indicates that at 60-64 years, those never married are 4% and 1% for women and men, respectively.

Besides the marriage age for women being lower than for men, women tend to remain unmarried after exceeding the age of 30, whereas men's chances to marry remain valid regardless of age. This could be due to the fact that women are primarily valued for reproduction and since childbirth potential decreases as a woman advances in age, a woman's chances of marrying decrease after she passes her prime reproductive years. This could have a serious impact on a woman's life and cause certain social problems to emerge.

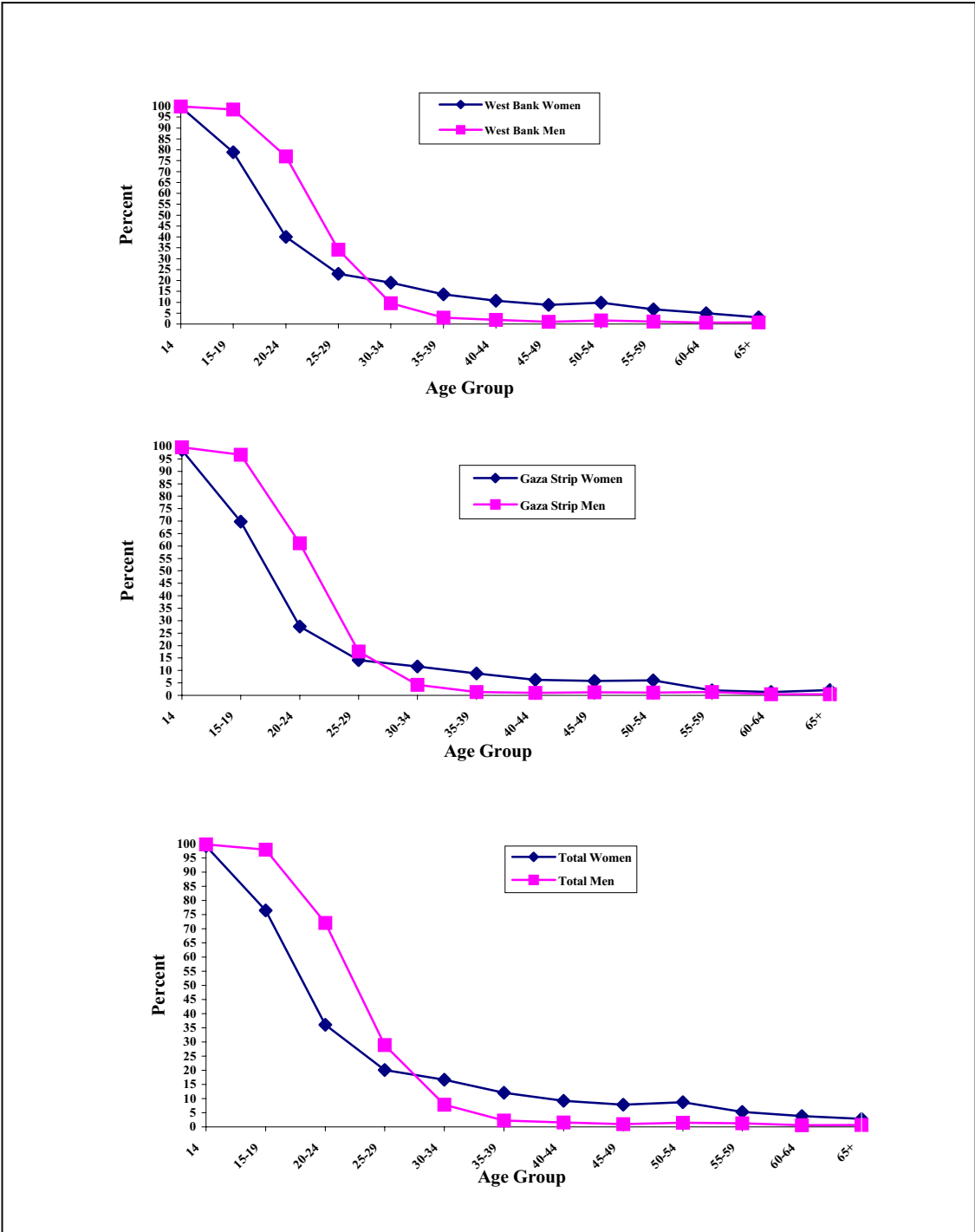
Based on an examination of this data, the percentage of never married women is less than never married men and is lower in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. The overall percentages of never married women and men are also lower in the Gaza Strip. Such differences are attributed to differences in ages at first marriage (lower in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank), on the one hand, as well as to differences in the percentage of persons engaged more than once (higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank).

As for widowed women and men, this percentage is higher among women (8%) than among men (1%), and increases among older age groups, especially among women after the age of 50. Widowhood reaches a peak in the 65+ age group (61% among women and 12% among men).

This pattern prevails in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, of the percentage of widows being higher than widowers and increasing as age increases. In the age group 65+, 60% of women and 11% of men in the West Bank are widowed, compared to 64% of women and 15% of men in the Gaza Strip. The increase in the percentage of widows has much to do with the tendency to remarry after spouse death, especially among widowers and especially in the older age groups. This phenomenon is more evident in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. Life expectancy, which is higher among women than men, might account for differences in these percentages.

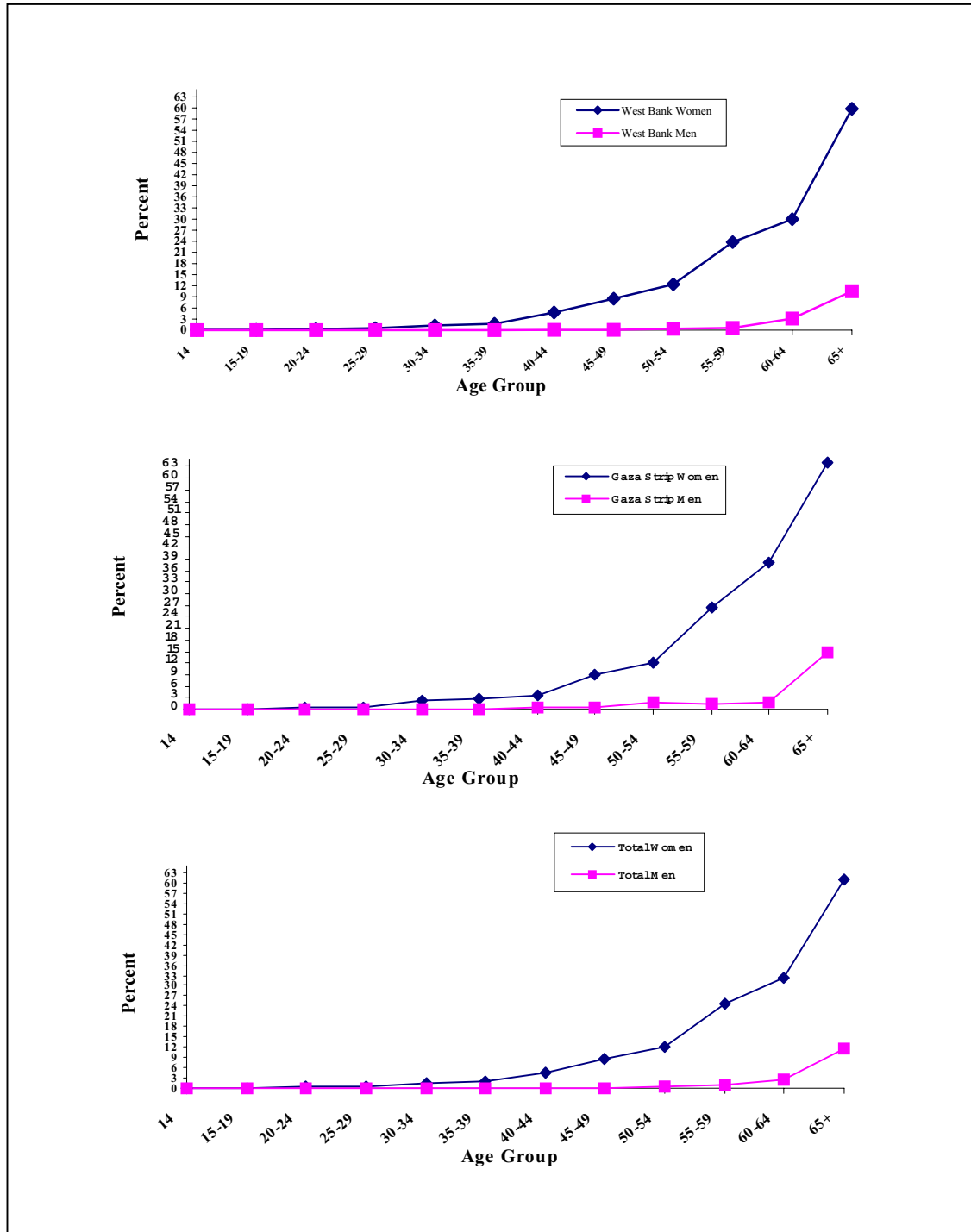
The rate of divorce in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is 1% for women compared to 0.2% for men. It is higher among women across all age groups, for example, 2% of women in the 50-54 age group are divorced compared to 0.1% of men in the same age group. The percentage of divorced women is 1.0% and 1.4% in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, respectively, compared to 0.2% and 0.3% for men in the two regions.

Figure 1-5: Relative Distribution of Never Married (Single) Women and Men By Age and Region, 1995



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Topical Report Series (No. 3), Marital Characteristics – Detailed Results*, 1998, pp.31-33, Tables 1 – 3.

**Figure 1-6: Relative Distribution of Widowed Women and Men By Age and Region, 1995**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Topical Report Series (No. 3), Marital Characteristics – Detailed Results, 1998*, pp.31-33, Tables 1 – 3.



The percentage of cases of separation is slightly higher among women (0.5%) than among men (0.1%), and is higher for women in all age groups and in both regions. Differences between the percentages of women and men in the areas of divorce and separation are due to the fact that men tend more than women to remarry after divorce or separation.

The increase in the percentage of widowed, divorced and separated women creates added social and financial problems for families. Normally these women live alone or with their children, which implies more hardships and more responsibility in securing the basic necessities for her dependents and herself, especially when none of her children earns wages or income. This situation argues for the need to legislate specific allowances for women in cases of widowhood, divorce or separation, especially when the woman has no income source.

## **Age at First Marriage**

From what has been presented so far in relation to individual distribution by marital status and age, we can see that marriage takes place at an early age in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, especially for women. The mean singulate age at first marriage (the average age at which the population (by sex) first marries. It is calculated in a manner which avoids the downward introduced by simply averaging the age of marriage that can be recorded from those who have already married in the population) was 23 years for women and 26 years for men in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, the singulate mean age at first marriage for both women and men is lower, 21 years for women and 24 years for men.<sup>3</sup> This mean age is low when compared to developed countries and more similar to some developing countries.

The median age at first marriage for both women and men supports our previous observation that women marry at earlier ages than men. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the median ages at first marriage were 18 years for women and 23 years for men. The median age at first marriage is higher in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip especially for men.

The median age at first marriage is slightly increasing in a gradual way especially for women. In the age group 60-64 years, the median age at first marriage was 17 years, compared to the 25-29 year age group, which was 19 years for women and 23 years for men

According to **Table 1-5**, there are no great differences among the various districts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in relation to the median age at first marriage for women and men. The median age at first marriage can be seen to decrease as age increases, especially among women, in all districts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

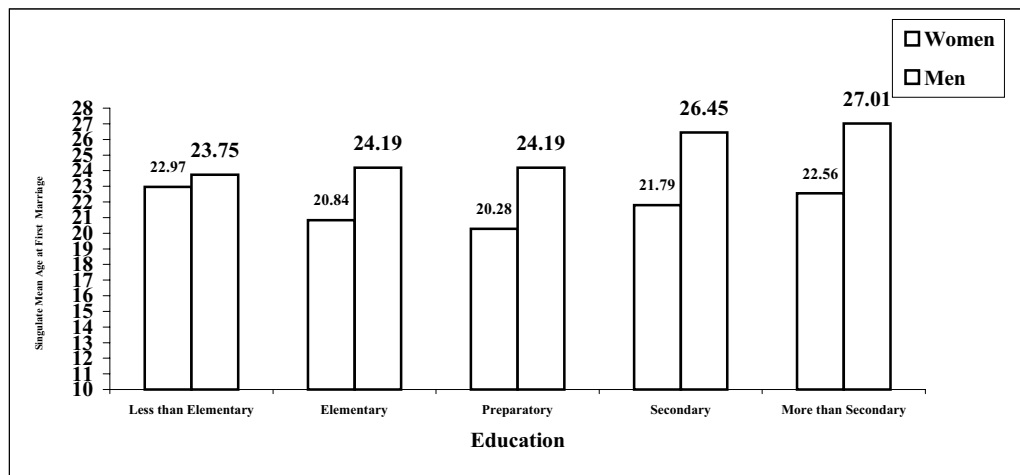
**Table 1-5: Median Age at First Marriage By Sex and District, 1995**

Sex	District								
	Jenin	Tulkarm and Qalqilya	Nablus	Ramallah and El - Bireh	Jerusalem	Bethlehem	Hebron	North Gaza Strip	South & Central Gaza Strip
Women	19.0	19.0	18.0	18.0	18.0	17.0	18.0	18.0	18.0
Men	24.0	24.0	24.0	24.0	24.0	22.0	22.0	22.0	22.0

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, District by District Comparative Results, 1997, p. 58, table 24.

Education affects The average singulate mean ages at first marriage in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which increases parallel to increases in educational qualifications. The increase in the singulate mean ages at first marriage is higher among males than females. For women who completed the elementary stage, the singulate mean age at first marriage was 21 years and for men who completed the same stage it was 24 years. On the other hand, the singulate mean age at first marriage for those who completed stages higher than the General Secondary Certificate was 23 years for women and 27 years for men, as shown in **Figure 1-7**.

**Figure 1-7: Singulate Mean Age at First Marriage for Women and Men by Education, 1995**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Topical Report Series (No. 3), Marital Characteristics – Detailed Result*, 1998, p.81, Tables 33.

The fact that men have higher singulate mean ages at first marriage than women could be a result of the fact that men tend to bear greater financial responsibility than women, that is, men are primarily responsible for covering marriage expenses and the cost of forming a new household.

An examination of the percentages of married men and women at certain ages by current age indicates that early marriage is a social phenomenon especially for women 19% of women aged 15-19 years married at less than 18 years of age, compared to only 1% of men in the same age group (see **Table 1-6**). This phenomenon is especially true for women in the Gaza Strip (25% and 1% of women and men, respectively) and 17% and 0.5% 5% in the West Bank. It is more evident among older generations and increases proportionately with increase in age. It is, nevertheless, higher among women in all age cohorts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Low singulate mean ages at first marriage, especially for women, have negative consequences on mother and childcare besides causing female fertility rates to increase. It constitutes, furthermore, a barrier obstructing women's access to higher educational institutions or work opportunities that can assist in improving living conditions and standards.

**Table 1-6: Persons Who Married at Less than 18 Years of Age by Age and Region, 1995 (%)**

Age Group	West Bank		Gaza Strip		Total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
15-19	16.8	0.5	25.0	1.4	19.4	0.8
20-24	26.0	1.7	35.7	3.4	29.1	2.2
25-29	24.7	2.4	26.7	3.7	25.4	2.8
30-34	27.8	2.5	30.1	5.2	28.5	3.4
35-39	36.4	5.2	32.0	8.1	35.1	6.2
40-44	33.9	4.2	24.3	6.1	30.8	4.9
45-49	29.4	3.6	31.4	4.3	30.0	3.8
50-54	37.0	5.5	46.7	6.3	39.8	5.7
55+	54.0	10.8	56.5	13.4	54.7	11.5

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Topical Report Series (No. 3), Marital Characteristics – Detailed Results*, 1998, pp.73-75, Tables 25-27.

## Marriage Patterns

Monogamy (marrying once for both women and men) is a dominant phenomenon in Palestinian society, with 96% and 90% of the ever-married women and men married once. However, marrying more than once for both women and men also occurs in Palestinian society, but to a lesser extent: the percentage of men married more than once (11%) is higher than of women (4%). This percentage is higher in the Gaza Strip (5% for women and 13% for men) than in the West Bank (3% for women and 9% for men) but is decreasing in both regions.

The percentage of persons married more than once is high among older age cohorts, 8% for women in the age group 60 years and above, compared to 1% for the age group 20-24 years. The percentage of men married more than once is 25% and 2% for the same age groups, respectively. Whereas this observation applies to the Palestinian Territory in general, it is noted that the extent of decrease in the Gaza Strip is less than in the West Bank. According to **Table 1-7**, the percentage of multiple marriages for all age groups is higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank for both women and men.

The prevalence of polygamy in Palestinian society requires special attention. The percentage of men married to two women simultaneously in the Palestinian Territory is 3.5%. In the Gaza Strip, this percentage is higher (4.4%) than in the West Bank (3.0%).

**Table 1-7: Women and Men Married More Than Once by Age and Region, 1995 (%)**

Age Group	West Bank		Gaza Strip		Total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
15-19	0.3	-	0.6	-	0.4	-
20-24	0.7	1.8	1.8	2.7	1.1	2.2
25-29	1.7	2.4	2.1	5.3	1.8	3.4
30-34	2.6	3.3	4.4	8.8	3.2	5.2
35-39	4.1	6.8	5.6	10.7	4.6	8.1
40-44	2.7	7.4	5.1	12.8	3.5	9.3
45-49	3.4	10.9	7.6	16.8	4.8	12.7
50-54	3.8	14.3	9.0	19.6	5.4	15.6
55-59	6.4	17.5	9.2	24.3	7.3	19.5
60+	7.7	22.5	10.2	31.5	8.4	25.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>10.5</b>

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Topical Report Series (No. 3), Marital Characteristics – Detailed Results*, 1998, p.82, Table 34.

The percentage of men married to two wives or more is higher among older age cohorts, which means that it is actually decreasing. **Table 1-8** shows that this percentage is higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank.

**Table 1-8: Men Married to Two Wives or More by Age and Region, 1995 (%)**

Age Group	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Less than 20	-	-	-
20-24	0.3	0.1	0.2
25-29	0.8	1.5	1.0
30-34	1.1	2.9	1.7
35-39	2.7	3.8	3.1
40-44	3.0	5.6	4.0
45-49	5.1	6.6	5.6
50-54	4.8	6.9	5.3
55-59	5.4	8.9	6.4
60-64	5.4	9.4	6.7
65-69	7.0	10.1	7.8
70-74	5.7	12.1	7.6
75-79	8.5	12.3	9.4
80+	4.8	10.5	5.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>3.5</b>

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Topical Report Series (No. 3), Marital Characteristics – Detailed Results*, 1998, p.90, Table 42.

In general men tend to marry more than one wife in their lifetime; they remarry more than women do in case of widowhood, divorce or separation. Differences in customs and traditions may account for the different ratios and percentages in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for this.

The prevalence of polygamy in Palestinian society has negative effects on women, who usually bear the responsibility of securing adequate living standards for their dependent children as well as for themselves. In cases where a man who is married to two or more wives tends to hold such a responsibility, the allocations made to each of the dependents will necessarily decrease. This decrease may be severe enough to bring about actual deterioration

in the living conditions of these women and their children, especially if they were uneducated and/or not working.

Another phenomenon that is spreading in Palestinian society is marriage among relatives. Almost half, or 49%, of ever-married women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are married to first cousins or members of the same *hamula* (largely extended family). **Table 1-9** indicates that this percentage is higher in the Gaza Strip (52%) than in the West Bank (47%).

**Table 1-9: Ever Married Women by Degree of Consanguinity and Region, 1995 (%)**

Age Group	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Cousins	27.2	31.6	28.7
Other Relatives (Same Hamoula)	20.2	20.2	20.2
Other Relatives (Different Hamoula)	18.7	11.7	16.4
No Relation	33.8	36.5	34.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source:* Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Topical Report Series (No. 3), Marital Characteristics – Detailed Results*, 1998, p.86, Table 38.

Marriage among relatives has negative consequences for mother and child health and increases the chances of congenital conditions and hereditary diseases. Furthermore, such a marriage pattern implies that for women, the marriage might have taken place under forced conditions. Safeguarding family and social relations among households and individual relations may account for the prevalence of this phenomenon in Palestinian society. Prevailing socio-economic conditions could also offer explanations.

## C. Fertility

### Total and Age- Specific Fertility Rates

Fertility of Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is generally high. For 1995, the total fertility rate (the average number of children that would be born alive to a woman (or group of women) during her (their) life time if she were to pass through her childbearing years conforming to the age specific fertility rates of a given year. The sum of age specific fertility rates multiplied by 5). was estimated to be 6.06 in the Palestinian territory, 5.4 in the West Bank and 7.4 in the Gaza Strip.<sup>5</sup> Thus, based on data provided in **Table 1-10**, one may infer that the total fertility rate in the Palestinian territory is among the highest rates in the world, in general, and particularly compared to Arab and neighboring countries.

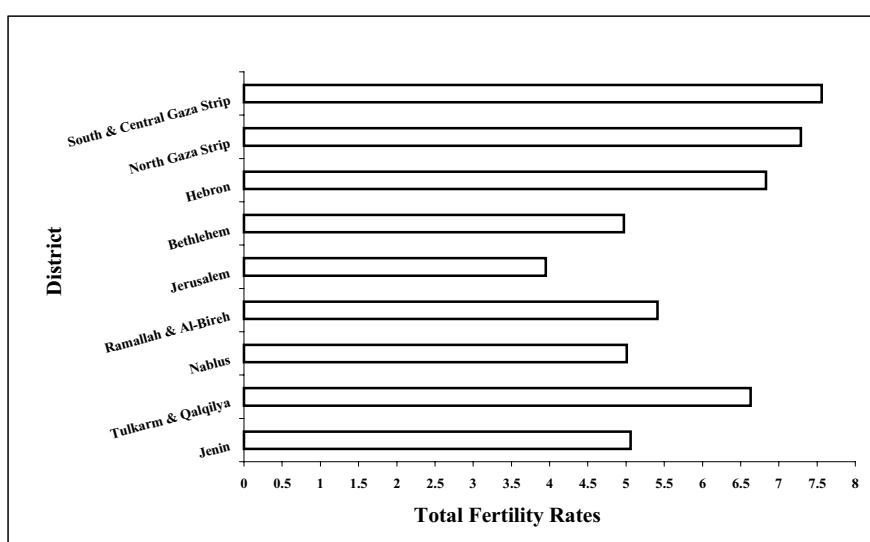
**Table 1-10: Total Fertility Rates in Selected Neighboring Countries, 1990-1995**

	Egypt	Jordan	West Bank and Gaza Strip	Israel	Iraq	Lebanon	Syria
Total Fertility Rate	4.1	5.7	6.06	2.9	5.7	3.1	6.1

**Source:** United Nations, *Woman in the World 1995, Trends and Statistics*, PP 30 – 31, Table 2 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Final Report*, 1997, P. 122, Table 56.

There are differences in total fertility rates between one district and another. The highest rate in the West Bank was found in the Hebron district (6.8) and the lowest was in Jerusalem (3.9). In the southern and middle district of the Gaza Strip, the rate was somewhat higher than in the northern Gaza Strip district, as indicated in **Figure 1-8**.

**Figure 1-8: Gaza districts had the highest fertility rates and Jerusalem the lowest in 1995.**



**Source:** Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, District by District Comparative Results*, 1997, p. 62, Table 27.

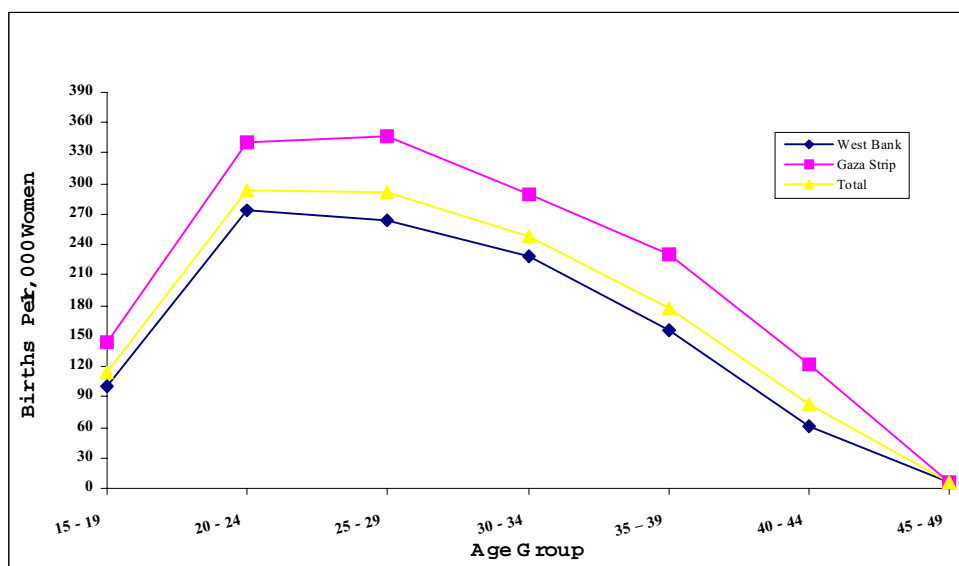
The high fertility rate for Palestinian women is due to several factors, including: early marriage, which means early pregnancy and childbirth, low usage of contraception and,

therefore, short intervals between births, and the beliefs and socio-economic conditions prevailing in Palestinian society. For instance, sons are desired because they are considered a source of strength and social security for the parents in the future; they work and earn income that contributes to improving the economic conditions of the household. Furthermore, sons assure the continuity of the family over time and enhance the value of the mother in society, besides supporting her in case she is widowed or divorced. Increasing the number of sons also has political implications in terms of “overwhelming the enemy” from a demographic point of view.

High fertility rates have also serious, negative implications. They increase the size of the household and promote population growth rates, both of which increase the burdens on society and on the woman.

Age specific fertility rates vary from one age group to another. The highest age specific fertility rate for Palestinian women in the West Bank was among those in the age group 20-24 years, with 273 births per 1,000 women. **Figure 1-9** shows that the highest age specific fertility rate was in the Gaza Strip among the 25-29 age group, which registered 347 births per 1,000 women.

**Figure 1-9: Age-specific fertility rates varied by region in 1995.**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Final Report*, 1997, P. 199, Figure 11.

The total fertility rate has been gradually decreasing in the West Bank by one birth per woman from 1980-1984 to 1990-1994. However, no such decrease is noticed in the Gaza Strip: fertility rates actually increased throughout that period, as shown in **Table 1-11**.

**Table 1-11: Total Fertility Rates by Region, 1980-1994.**

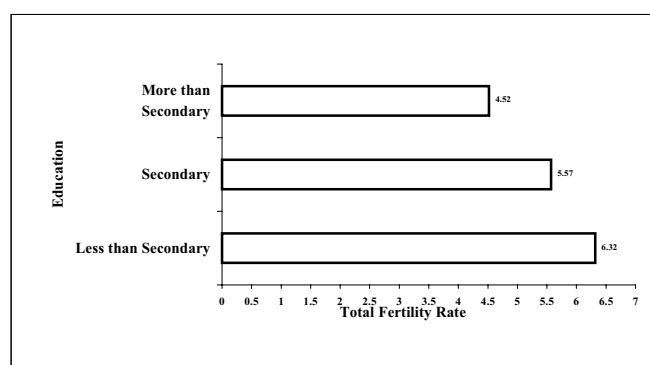
Period	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
1990- 1994	5.84	7.78	6.46
1985- 1989	5.91	7.58	6.43
1980 - 1984*	6.73	7.59	7.00

**Source:** Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Final Results, 1997.*

\*Age up to 44 years only .

Education influences female fertility, which decreases by one birth with each level of educational attainment. The fertility of women with less than a secondary education degree is 6.3, whereas women with more than the secondary level degree have the lowest fertility, 4.5 births per woman.

**Figure 1-10: Total fertility rates fall as academic qualifications increase (1995).**



**Source:** Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Final Report, 1997, P. 123, Table 57.*

This trend could be due to the fact that an educated woman is more capable of planning the number of births as well as of convincing others of the number she desires. She is also more aware of contraceptive use. Education, which tends to play a major role in delaying marriage age, and women's participation in the labor market, influence female fertility rates .

## Age at First Birth

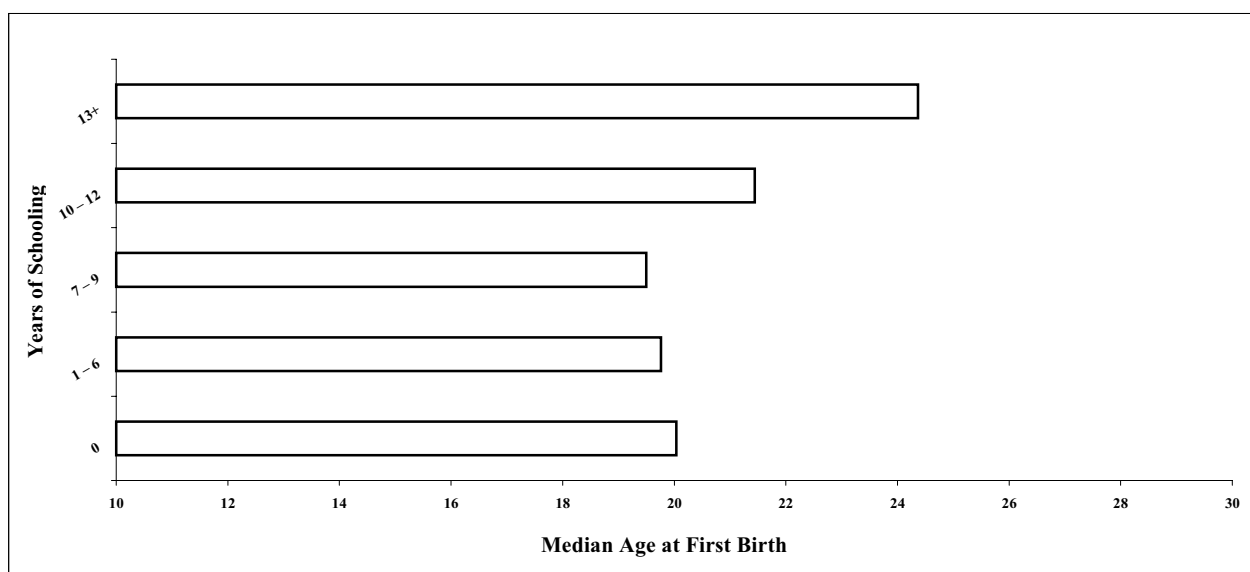
The age of women at first birth is among the factors greatly affecting fertility rates and is significantly related to age at first marriage. The median age at first birth for Palestinian women in the age group 25-49 is 21 years. This means that half of the ever-married women in this age group had their first child before reaching this age. This age is considered low, taking into account that women in this age are expected to be in higher studies. Having such a low median age at first birth is associated with low median age at first marriage, which is 18 years among Palestinian women.



Education influences total fertility rates. It affects the age at first birth, which increases among educated women, as indicated in **Figure 1-11**. Education also increases the age at first marriage in addition to enabling a woman to acquire more abilities to define her needs and to convince others around her.

In addition to the fact that Palestinian women have a low age at first marriage, they also have short spacing between births of less than two years (22 months). 69% of women who had births delivered a second child within a period of less than 18 months (see **Table 1-12**). Low age at first birth and short spacing intervals between births have serious implications for mother and child health as well as on household size and population growth rates.

**Figure 1-11: Education tends to delay the age at which women have a first birth (1995)**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Final Report*, 1997, P. 137, Table 71.

**Table 1-12: Percentage of Women With Short Birth Intervals (Less than 18 Months) By Current Age and Region, 1995**

Current Age	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
15 - 19	61.6	61.9	61.7
20 - 24	58.8	63.9	60.7
25 - 29	63.2	67.2	64.6
30 - 34	70.6	72.0	71.0
35 - 39	75.9	76.7	76.1
40 - 44	75.6	77.3	76.2
45 - 49	73.2	69.5	72.0
50 - 54	70.2	61.9	67.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>69.2</b>	<b>69.8</b>	<b>69.4</b>

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Final Report*, 1997, p. 135, Table 69.

## Teenage Fertility

As previously stated, pregnancy and delivery at early ages increase risks to the mother and child health. It increases the chances of maternal death or serious conditions and diseases for example, anemia, low birth weight or abortion. Pregnancy at early ages also denies the mother the opportunity to continue her studies and negatively affects her participation in the labor force.

The fertility of Palestinian women in the 15-19 age group is high compared to rates prevailing in other countries. The fertility rate in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is 114 births per 1,000 women, and this age group accounts for 9% of the total fertility rate in both regions (100 live births per 1,000 women in the West Bank and 144 live births per 1,000 women in the Gaza Strip).<sup>6</sup> In developed countries, excluding Eastern Europe and Eastern Asia, this rate is about 20 births per 1,000 women in this age group.

**Table 1-13: Births per 1,000 Women Aged 15-19 and Their Contribution to Total Fertility Rates in Selected Countries, 1990-1995.**

Indicator	Egypt	Jordan	West Bank and Gaza Strip*	Israel	Iraq	Lebanon	Syria
Number of Births Per 1,000 Women	78	61	114	23	59	44	112
Contribution to the Total Fertility Rate (%)	10	5	9	4	5	7	9

**Source:** United Nations, *Woman in the World 1995, Trends and Statistics*, PP 30 – 31, Table 2. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Final Report, 1997*. Ratios calculated based on Table 56.

**Table 1-14** shows that there are significant differences among the different districts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in fertility rates and their share in the total fertility rate.

**Table 1-14: Births per 1,000 Women Aged 15-19 and Their Contribution to Total Fertility Rates by District, 1995**

Indicator	District								
	Jenin	Tulkarm & Qalqilia	Nablus	Ramallah & El Bireh	Jerusalem	Bethlehem	Hebron	North Gaza Strip	South & Central Gaza Strip
Number of Births Per 1,000 Women	112	107	95	87	111	103	97	151	137
Contribution to the Total Fertility Rate (%)	11.1	8.1	9.5	7.7	14.0	10.4	7.1	10.4	9.1

**Source:** Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. 1997. *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, District by District Comparative Results*. Ratios calculated based on Table 27.

Early marriages among Palestinian women result in early pregnancy and delivery. Almost 24% of the women in the 15-19 age group are currently married or ever married; 38% of the currently married women are currently pregnant and 12% of them are mothers (11% in the West Bank and 16% in the Gaza Strip). The percentage of women pregnant with their first child is almost the same in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (5%).

**Table 1-15** shows slight differences among the different districts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the percentages of mothers and women pregnant with their first child.

**Table 1-15: Women in the 15-19 Age Group Mothers or Pregnant with the First Child by District, 1995 (%)**

Indicator	District								
	Jenin	Tulkarm & Qalqilia	Nablus	Ramallah & El - Bireh	Jerusalem	Bethlehem	Hebron	North Gaza Strip	South & Central Gaza Strip
Mother	12.0	12.1	10.6	8.4	10.1	9.7	11.4	18.5	13.5
Pregnant (1 <sup>st</sup> child)	5.0	4.1	3.3	2.8	7.3	4.2	5.7	6.2	4.1

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, District by District Comparative Results. 1997, p. 71, Table 34.

## Sex of Child Preference

As is the case in most societies, and especially in the Arab world, there is a birth preference for male children rather than females.

The preference for male children in Palestinian society is quite high: 10% of women who already had four male children were willing to have an additional four male children or more. On the other hand, only 2% who had four female children were willing to have an additional four female children or more.

Almost 14% of women who never had male children were willing to have an additional four male children and more. On the other hand, only 4% of women who never had female children were willing to have an additional four female children and more.

As shown in **Table 1-16**, there are differences between the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the desire to have male/female children. The desire to have more children, especially males, is more clearly prevalent in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. Differences in the socio-economic conditions may account for this phenomenon.

**Table 1-16: Proportion of Ever-married Women by Number of Children Ever Born to Them and Desire to Have Additional Children, by Sex of Child and Region, 1995**

Number of Sons Ever Born	Desire to stop having additional sons			Preference to have 4 sons or more		
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
0	0.5	0.5	0.5	11.3	17.6	13.7
1	2.2	0.8	1.7	9.5	14.7	11.3
2	11.1	9.1	10.4	7.0	11.3	8.6
3	21.1	11.7	17.2	7.7	12.0	9.4
4 +	23.9	17.5	21.0	7.2	12.6	9.7
Number of Daughters Ever Born	Desire to stop having additional daughters			Preference to have 4 daughters or more		
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
0	4.1	4.4	4.2	3.1	5.4	4.0
1	15.1	13.7	14.7	2.1	3.5	2.5
2	41.2	37.6	39.9	1.6	4.2	2.6
3	60.0	61.8	60.8	2.0	2.9	2.4
4 +	68.0	75.4	71.4	1.7	3.1	2.3

**Source:** Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Final Report, 1997*, p. 146-148, Tables 80-82.

## D. Household

### Household Type

Most Palestinian household members are related to one another by social and kinship bonds (using a definition of household as one person or group of persons, with or without family relationship, who live in the same dwelling unit, who share meals and make joint provisions for food and other essentials of living). Almost 69% of Palestinian households are considered nuclear households. Extended family households total 28%, and the remaining 3% represents composite or one person households, with some differences in their distribution between the West Bank and Gaza Strip (see **Table 1-17**).

**Table 1-17: Households by Type and Region, 1995 (%)**

Type of Household	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Nuclear	72.2	62.7	69.4
Extended	24.4	35.3	27.7
Composite	0.3	0.1	0.2
One Person	3.1	1.9	2.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Final Report*, 1997, p. 100, Table 42.

The differences between the West Bank and Gaza Strip might be due to the socio-economic conditions of the regions as well as to prevailing customs and traditions.

### Household Size and Sex of the Head of Household

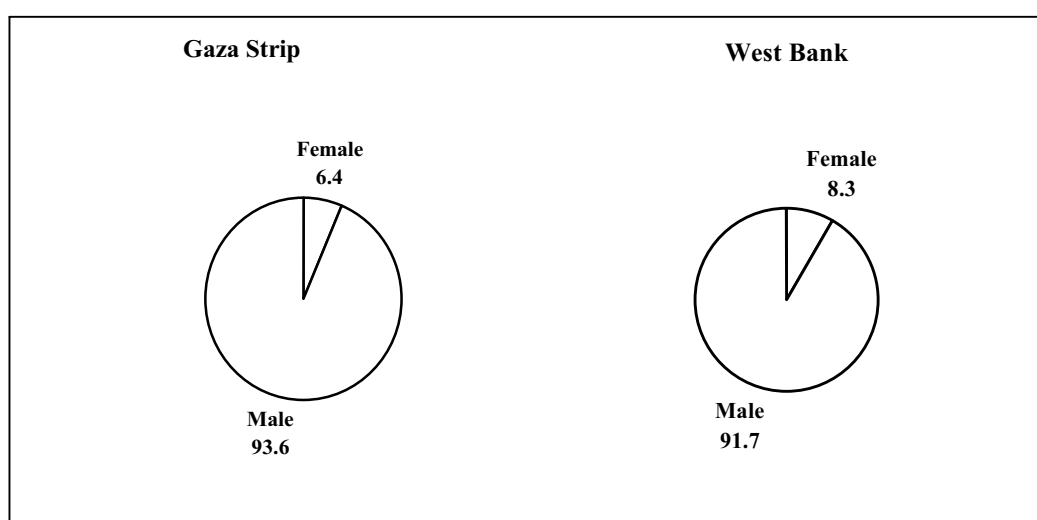
In spite of the increase in the percentage of nuclear households in Palestinian society, the average household size is still large, although it is gradually decreasing. Average household size for 1992 was estimated to be 7.5 persons: 6 in Arab Jerusalem, 7 in the Remaining West Bank and 9 in the Gaza Strip.<sup>7</sup> Average household size for 1995 was estimated at 7 persons in the Palestinian territory overall, with 6.6 in the West Bank and 7.8 in the Gaza Strip.<sup>8</sup> The preliminary findings of the Population, Housing and Establishments Census of 1997 indicated that average household size was estimated at 6.4 persons in the Palestinian territory (6.1 in the West Ban and 6.9 in the Gaza Strip). High fertility rates among women account for such a high average, which has negative consequences on the living levels of the household and, in particular, on the status of women who, besides being mothers, care for the children and educate them at home as well as care for the elderly and sick members in the household. Even if she works, women are still considered responsible for all social care as well as for economic affairs of the household, although other members may assist them.

Although women perform many functions in the household, most Palestinian households are still headed by men as is the case in most developing countries. (The head of the household is the person who usually lives with the household and is recognized as head of the household by its other members. Often he or she is the main decision-maker and is responsible for financial support and welfare of the household at the time the survey was

conducted. When a person functions as head of two households, he or she will be considered head only in the household where he spends most of his time.) The findings of the Demographic Survey conducted in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1995 indicated that 92.3% of households are headed by men, compared to 7.7% headed by women. There are some differences between regions with more households headed by women in the West Bank than in Gaza (see **Figure 1-12**).

Regional differences could be due to differences in the household structure. Whereas the percentage of extended family households is higher in the Gaza Strip, the percentage of one-person households is higher in the West Bank. The higher life expectancy for women in the West Bank compared to the Gaza Strip may explain this as well. Differences in concepts, customs and traditions are believed to play a certain role in such differences.

**Figure 1-12: Households by Sex of Head of Household and Region, 1995**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics., *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip Final Report*, 1997, p. 96, Table 38.

According to **Table 1-18**, there are differences in the percentages of female and male heads of households by district. The highest percentage of households headed by women was found in Ramallah-al-Bireh and Jerusalem districts whereas the lowest was in the northern district in the Gaza Strip. These differences between districts could be explained by the reasons given above or by differences in male migration rates.

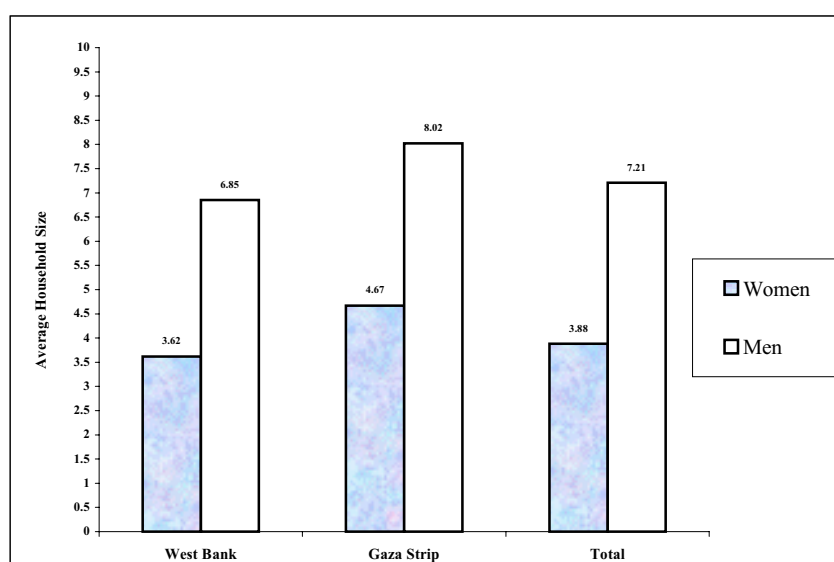
**Table 1-18: Households by Sex of Head of Household and District, 1995**

Sex of Head Of Household	District									
	Jenin	Tulkarm & Qalqilia	Nablus	Ramallah & El - Bireh	Jerusalem	Bethlehem	Hebron	North Gaza Strip	South & Central Gaza Strip	Total
Women	8.8	8.9	8.1	11.3	11.2	5.5	4.6	4.5	8.3	
Men	91.2	91.1	91.9	88.7	88.8	94.5	95.4	95.5	91.7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, District Report Series (1 - 9).

The percentages depict clear differences between households headed by women and those headed by men in terms of household size: the average household size is 3.9 for female-headed and 7.2 for male-headed. As **Figure 1-13** indicates, the average household size for households headed by women or men in the Gaza Strip is generally higher than it is in the West Bank. The household size in general in the Gaza Strip is higher than in the West Bank.

**Figure 1-13: Male-headed households are larger than female-headed households in both regions (1995)**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Final Report, 1997*, p. 97, Table 39.

**Table 1-19** indicates that there are some minor differences between districts in the average size of households headed by women.

**Table 1-19: Average Household Size by Sex of Head of Household and District, 1995**

Sex of Head of Household	District									
	Jenin	Tulkarm & Qalqilia	Nablus	Ramallah & El - Bireh	Jerusalem	Bethlehem	Hebron	North Gaza Strip	South & Central Gaza Strip	Total
Women	3.7	3.2	3.8	3.9	3.5	-	4.1	4.0	5.1	
Men	6.8	6.5	6.4	6.9	6.3	-	7.7	7.9	8.2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.9</b>	

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, District Report Series (1 - 9)*.

The percentage of households headed by women decrease as the size of the household increases. More than one-fourth of households headed by women are comprised of one person (29%), compared to 1% of households headed by men and comprised of one person. On the other hand, 9% of households headed by women are comprised of nine persons and more, compared to 31% of households of this size headed by men. This situation is valid in the West

Bank and Gaza Strip with very slight variations, as shown in **Table 1-20**. This is due to the fact that the percentage of households comprised of one person is higher in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip, noting that female life expectancy in the West Bank is higher than in the Gaza Strip. The one-person household refers mainly to an old woman living alone, a divorced woman, a separated woman, or a never-married woman. It could be due as well to the fact that household size and extended family ratios are higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank.

**Table 1-20: Households by Size, Sex of Head of Household and Region, 1995**

Sex of Head of Household and Region	Household Size									Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 +	
West Bank										
Women	29.7	18.3	11.3	9.3	7.5	6.9	5.1	5.0	7.0	<b>100.0</b>
Men	0.7	6.8	7.5	9.9	12.7	12.7	11.8	10.7	27.2	<b>100.0</b>
Gaza Strip										
Women	25.0	15.7	6.4	7.5	8.3	8.1	6.7	5.7	16.6	<b>100.0</b>
Men	0.4	5.3	4.9	6.9	9.7	10.0	11.3	11.0	40.5	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total</b>										
<b>Women</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Men</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics., The *Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Final Report, 1997*, p. 97, Table 39.

Almost all households headed by women and comprised of more than one member involve no adult male. This may apply as well to widows, divorced women, second wives or women married to migrants and living with their children. In such cases, the woman plays the roles of mother and breadwinner for her economically dependent household. This means those women might be heavily burdened and unable to afford basic needs, which is expected to have a very negative impact on the levels of living for such households.

## Marital Status of the Head of Household

The conditions of Palestinian society are not different from the conditions prevailing in developing countries. The majority of female heads of households are widows (74%) living either alone or with their children without another adult and comprise 86% of the households headed by widows or widowers. Female heads of households might be second wives to husbands married to more than one wife, living with their children when their husbands live with other wives. This applies also to women living with their children and no adult members, for example, wives of migrants. They represent 11% of female-headed households and 1% of the total married heads of households.

Never married women living alone represent 8% of female-headed households and 30% of the total never married heads of households. The percentage of divorced or separated women living alone or with their children and no adult members amounts to 6% of female-headed households and 69% of the total divorced or separated heads of households.

On the other hand, most of the male heads are married (97%), with very few cases in which a never married man (2%), widower (1%) or separated or divorced man (0.2%) lives



alone or with his children (without getting married again). This could be explained by the fact that men tend more than women to marry again if widowed or divorced. Men may marry or remarry at a late age while women rarely marry after reaching a certain age. The fact that women's life expectancy is higher than men's and that women marry earlier than men increases the chances of having widows, divorced women, never married women or old women living alone or with their children. This has negative consequences on the living conditions of households.

There are minor differences between the two regions in the distribution of female and male heads of households by marital status, as shown in **Table 1-21**. However, widowed female heads of households remain the largest category among households headed by women in the West Bank (75%) and Gaza Strip (74%), while the percentage of never married female heads of households is higher in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip. Differences in age at marriage between the two regions may account for this. On the other hand, the percentage of married female heads seems to be higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank, due to the higher percentage of men in the Gaza Strip married to more than one wife and, therefore, an expected increase in female heads of households. Women who are widows or separated and head households are almost the same percentage in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The vast majority of male heads of households are married with almost similar proportions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Of male heads of households, the percentages of never married, widowed, divorced or separated are very similar in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These percentages indicate different structures which impact on the living levels of households headed by men differently than households headed by women. Such differences become clear upon examining household structure by the sex of the head of the household.

**Table 1-21: Heads of Households by Sex, Marital Status and Region, 1995**

Marital Status	West Bank			Gaza Strip			Total		
	Women	Men	Women ratio	Women	Men	Women ratio	Women	Men	Women ratio
Never Married	9.0	1.9	30.3	5.4	1.1	25.8	8.1	1.6	29.5
Married	10.5	96.9	1.0	13.3	97.6	0.9	11.2	97.1	1.0
Widow / er	74.5	1.0	86.9	73.8	1.0	83.2	74.3	1.0	85.9
Divorced	2.5	0.1	63.2	4.7	0.1	79.0	3.1	0.1	66.7
Separated	3.5	0.1	82.5	2.8	0.2	50.0	3.3	0.1	71.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7.7</b>

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*; unpublished data.

## Household Structure and Sex of the Head of Household

As shown in **Table 1-22**, the Palestinian female headed household is either comprised of a woman living alone or a woman living with her children. There are only a small percentage of households comprised of couples living by themselves. Most households headed by men are comprised of couples with children, or other members with children, or couples alone. Only a small percentage is comprised of a single man by himself or a single man living

with children. 61% of households headed by women are comprised of a woman and her children, while in contrast only 1% of households headed by men are of a man and his children. Such female-headed households (a woman and her children) are slightly higher in percentage in the Gaza Strip (64%) than in the West Bank (60%). This distribution could be due to the higher percentage of extended families in the Gaza Strip.

98% of households headed by men are comprised either of couples and their children, couples alone, or with children and other members, or couples and other members but without children. This is compared to 10% for households headed by women and comprised either of couples and their children, couples alone or with children and other members, or couples and other members but without children. These percentages are similar in the West Bank and Gaza Strip although it is noted that there are no households comprised of couples and headed by women in the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, the percentage of such households is very limited (0.7%).

**Table 1-22: Households by Household Composition, Sex of Head of Household and Region, 1995**

Household Structure	West Bank		Gaza Strip		Total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
One Spouse With Children	43.5	0.5	41.7	0.5	43.0	0.5
Married Couple with Children	1.9	67.8	3.1	58.4	2.2	64.9
Married Couples Only	0.7	6.2	-	5.1	0.5	5.9
One Spouse With Children and other Persons	16.5	0.5	22.5	0.8	18.0	0.6
Married Couples With Children and other Persons	0.6	21.4	0.4	32.3	0.6	24.7
Married Couples and other members Without Children	7.1	2.9	7.2	2.6	7.1	2.8
One Person	29.7	0.7	25.0	0.4	28.6	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Final Report, 1997*, p. 99, Table 41.

Furthermore, the percentage of households comprised either of couples and their children or couples and other members but without children are higher in the Gaza Strip than the West Bank. The reasons for this may involve the higher proportion of males married to more than one female in the Gaza Strip, which makes it more probable to have one of such wives a head of a household. This household structure impacts on the structure of living levels of the households. Nevertheless, households headed by men experience different conditions from households headed by women.

## **E. Conclusions**

### **Age-Sex Structure**

- There are fewer women in Palestinian society than men although life expectancy for women is higher.
- The Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is young, with 47% of the population (females and males) aged less than 15 years. The percentage of males is higher than females in this age group, with some differences between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- The percentage of persons aged 65 years and above is very small, 3.4%. Within this age group, the percentage of women is higher than the percentage of men, with some differences between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

### **Marriage**

- Women tend to marry at earlier ages than men; the difference between the median ages of women and men at first marriage is five years.
- Education is an important factor in determining age at first marriage. First marriage age increases with higher educational qualifications for both women and men.
- The rate of marriage among women is higher than among men and the percentage of never married men is higher than that of never married women. Widowhood, divorce and separation occur more often among women than among men.
- Men have a greater tendency to marry more than once than women.

### **Fertility**

- Although total fertility rates are gradually decreasing, they are still high, with 6.06 births per woman. In the Gaza Strip, the total fertility rate is higher than in the West Bank.
- Women's education is among the factors that decrease fertility.
- Palestinian women give birth at early ages. The median age at the time of first birth for women aged 25-49 is 21 years.
- The fertility of adolescent women aged 15-19 years is high in comparison to that prevailing in other countries of the world, constituting 9% of the total fertility rate of Palestinian women.
- Palestinian women prefer to have male children, even if they have no female children.

### **Household**

- Males head most Palestinian households; the percentage headed by females is only 7.7%.
- Households headed by females are smaller than those headed by males: 3.9 persons compared to 7.2 persons, with minor differences between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- The majority of all female heads of households are widows (74%), compared to 1% headed by widowers.
- More than 85% of widowed heads of households are female and more than 69% of divorced or separated heads of households are female.
- More than 60% of households headed by women are comprised of women and their children, compared to only 1% of men who form households with their children.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics *Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*. 1995; unpublished data.
- <sup>2</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics *Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, District by district Comparative Results, 1997, p. 50, Table 18.
- <sup>3</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics *Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, Topical Reports Series (No. 3), Marital Characteristics-Detailed Results, 1998, p. 81, Table 33.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 67, Table. 21.
- <sup>5</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Final Report*, 1997, p. 122, Table. 56.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.; Ratio calculated based on Table. 56.
- <sup>7</sup> Abu-Libdeh et.al., "Population Characteristics and Trends," in *Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem, A Survey of Living Conditions*-edited by Marianne Heiberg and Geir Ovensen, FAFO, Oslo, 1993, p.46.
- <sup>8</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Final Report*, 1997, p. 95, Table 37.

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## 2. EDUCATION

### *Terms and Abbreviations*

### **Highlights of Findings**

#### **A. Basic and Secondary Schooling**

- Literacy
- School Attendance
- Years of Schooling
- Pre-school Enrollment
- Basic and Secondary Education Enrollment
- Repeaters and Dropouts

#### **B. Higher Education**

- Enrollment in Higher Education
- Fields of Specialization
- Women and Men in the Teaching Profession

#### **C. Conclusions**

### **Notes**

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Table 2-2: School Attendance by Age and Residence, by Sex

Table 2-3: Years of Schooling Completed by Sons/Daughters Not Currently Attending School, by Father's Years of Schooling Completed, 1995

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Table 2-5: School Enrollment by Stage and by Sex, 1975-1996

Table 2-6: Gross and Net Enrollment Rates by Stage, Region and Sex, 1996-97

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Table 2-17: Teachers and Principals by Cycle, by Sex, 1996-97

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Figure 2-1: Both sexes aged 15-24 have achieved almost full literacy, but literacy drops with age, and especially among women over age 35.

Figure 2-2: More males consistently complete higher educational levels than females.

Figure 2-3: Patterns of interdependent factors creating situations of dropout

Figure 2-4: Proportion of women teachers at university and college level declines with

education.

## ***Terms and Abbreviations***

Basic stage	The compulsory first ten grades of schooling.
Class	A group of students at any educational stage who make up one grade or more and share one classroom.
Dropout	Student who left school during the last scholastic year and did not transfer to another school, and has no intention of returning to school.
GER	Gross enrollment rates: All enrolled children divided by all school-age children.
MOE	Ministry of Education
NER	Net enrollment rates: The number of enrolled same age children divided by all school-age children, and excluding over-aged and under-aged children.
Pre-school	An educational institution or “kindergarten” licensed by the MOE and offering education to four and five-year old children.
Refugee student	A student registered as a refugee in UNRWA records.
Repeater	A student who did not succeed in one or more subjects, and thus remained in the same grade for two successive years.
Secondary stage	Two years of schooling following the basic stage, that is, years 11 and 12 of schooling.
Tawjihi	Also known as the General Secondary Certificate Examination (GSCE). The matriculating exam applied in the Palestinian territories after completion of Grade 12 and a requisite for advancing to higher education.
UNRWA school	An educational institution run or supervised by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).
Vocational secondary education	A secondary level stream, distinct from the scientific and literary streams, offered by the MOE in which a student chooses one of four areas of study: commercial, industrial, agricultural or nursing.
Gender Gap	The difference between males and females measured against various indicators of development; the gap is calculated by dividing the value for females regarding a certain variable by the corresponding value for males, or vice versa.

## **Highlights of Findings**

### **Enrollment**

- The overall literacy rates for males and females are estimated at 91.5% and 77%, respectively.
- The male to female enrollment ratio has gradually improved from 1.3 in 1975 to 1.04 in 1996-1997. In 1996-97, 656,353 children were enrolled in basic level classes (Grades 1-10). Of these 49% were female. Only 56,467 students were enrolled at the secondary level, of whom 47.5% are female.
- The gross enrollment rate (GER) at the basic level is estimated at 93.5% for boys and 98.6% for females. At the secondary level, enrollment levels drop dramatically to 53.7% for boys and 50.9% for girls.

### **Repeaters and Dropouts**

- Both school and non-school factors determine repetition and dropout rates. School factors include: education cycle, grade level, class size, supervising authority, and school infrastructure (buildings, facilities and equipment), as well as teacher training, school administration, the formal curriculum, and the hidden or “second” curriculum. Non-school factors that affect dropout include economic conditions of the household, socio-cultural practices, beliefs and values, and political stability.
- About 4.3% of boys and 3.8% of girls at the basic level repeat the school year, yielding a 0.5% gender gap in favor of females. At the secondary level, 3.4% of male pupils are repeaters as compared with 1.1% of female students.
- At the basic level the drop out rate is 2.4% for both boys and girls. At the secondary level, 8.1% of females and 6% of males drop out.

### **“Streaming”**

- With increasing education level, gender gaps in enrollment are less important than gender differentials in “streaming” and in fields of specialization. In 1996-97, females comprise 51.6% of arts students and only 41.7% of science students at the secondary level. Only 18.7% of secondary vocational students are females, studying in nursing and commercial schools (as opposed to agricultural and industrial schools).

### **Higher Education**

- Of the total 46,176 students enrolled in eight universities and three colleges offering four-year degrees, 42.5% are female. The proportion of female students is lower in the Gaza Strip as compared to the West Bank by 6.2%.
- The 17 community colleges in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have a total of 4,599 students, of whom 51% are female.
- At Palestinian community colleges, females comprise the overwhelming majority of academic, social work, and para-medical graduates. In contrast, only 5.7% of engineering graduates were female. Female representation among computer science graduates is considerably higher at 44% of the total. Among finance and administration graduates, there is a slight majority of females.
- Similarly, female university students comprise more than half of the total number of students enrolled in fields such as education, the humanities, medical sciences



and health-related studies. They comprise only 6.3% of students in architecture and town planning, about 15% in both agriculture and law, and roughly 25% of the students in business administration, engineering, and trade, crafts and industrial programs.

## **Teaching**

- The proportion of female teaching staff decreases at higher levels of the educational system. At the pre-school level, teachers are almost exclusively female. At the basic level, females are just less than half of all teachers, but at the secondary level their proportion diminishes to 28%. Only 28% of the teaching faculty at community colleges and only 12% of university faculties are female. Low female participation rates in higher education faculties are a result in part of the limited number of women completing post-graduate degrees.

# EDUCATION

This chapter examines gender differentials in education in order to assess whether the current state of Palestinian education provides the proper in-school environment and conditions for encouraging gender equity in Palestinian society. Comparative rates of literacy, enrollment, repetition and dropout, fields of specialization and faculty composition are measured at all levels of the educational system to indicate where improvements have been made and where education policies and programs must be focused to diminish existing gender gaps.

Admittedly, exclusive reliance on this purely quantitative approach can result in an incomplete understanding, and premature and unwarranted complacency for at least two reasons. First, the emphasis on female enrollment may detract from the important negative educational outcomes associated with the ways boys are socialized despite their overall privileged material and social status in Palestinian society. For example, boys' greater freedom of movement is a possible factor in higher levels of school absenteeism and dropout at certain grade levels.

Second, numerical equality may be only part of the picture. The assumption that girls have less access to primary education than boys is not supported by the education enrollment statistics for Palestinian school children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; enrollment rates for 1996-97 indicate that female enrollment exceeds that of males at the basic level, although the reverse is true at the secondary level. By neglecting other measures of gender discrimination which may be more subtle and less measurable in quantitative terms, we may be lulled into thinking that female enrollment is a non-issue at the basic cycle. Nonetheless, quantitative data provides a basis for understanding the nature and structure of the education system in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and how gender plays a factor in the process and outcome of schooling.

## A. Basic and Secondary Schooling

### Literacy

The PCBS demographic survey of 1995 measured literacy rates among the Palestinian population 15 years and over.<sup>1</sup> According to the findings, the gender literacy gap in Palestine is 84.2%. As **Table 2-1** shows, the literacy rate for West Bank males is slightly higher than for Gaza males, while for females, literacy is higher in Gaza than in the West Bank. Given that more than half of West Bank households are located in villages, the low literacy rate among West Bank females is most likely due to low female school attendance in the rural areas. This is particularly visible among earlier generations of Palestinian school girls as indicated by literacy

rates disaggregated by residence and age shown in **Table 2-1** and **Figure 2-1**, respectively.<sup>2</sup>

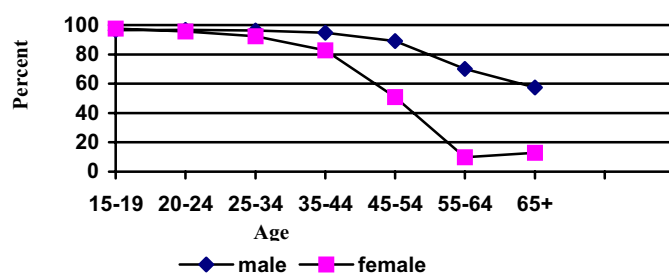
**Table 2-1: Literacy Rate by Region, Residence and Religion, by Sex, 1995 (%)**

		Males	Females	Gender Gap (Males/Females)
<i>Region</i>	West Bank	91.7	76.3	83.2
	Gaza Strip	91.1	78.6	86.3
<i>Residence</i>	Camp	91.7	77.4	84.4
	Village	90.6	72.2	79.7
	City	92.5	81.8	88.4
<i>Religion</i>	Christian	95.3	90.4	94.9
	Moslem	91.4	76.6	83.9
	Total	91.5	77.0	84.2

**Source:** PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Topical Report Series (No. 1), Educational Characteristics, Detailed Results*, October 1996, 35, 36, 39.

Urban residents are the most literate among the population, followed by camp and village residents. The literacy gender gap, female literacy as a percent of male literacy, narrows in urban areas, and is widest in villages. Religion-based factors determining literacy are no longer significant, although rates continue to be slightly higher among the Christian population. The gender gap between the Christian and Muslim population is due to low literacy rates (less than 50%) among Muslim women 45 years or older.

**Figure 2-1: Both sexes aged 15-24 have achieved almost full literacy, but literacy drops with age, and especially among women over age 35.**



**Source:** PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Topical Report Series (No. 1), Educational Characteristics, Detailed Results*, **October 1996, 35.**

**Figure 2-1** indicates that illiteracy has been eradicated among persons 15-24 years and the literacy gender gap eliminated in this age cohort. The literacy rate among persons 15-34 years is more than 90%, regardless of age, sex, refugee status, religion, region, and residence.<sup>3</sup>

The high literacy levels as seen in **Figure 2-1** indicate the value education has assumed for the society as a whole, as well as the universalization of compulsory education all over the region, and the positive intervention of UNRWA schools. As a community under siege in political and economic terms, many aspects of daily life were beyond an individual's control. Schooling remained a mechanism whereby Palestinians could reclaim some mastery over their lives at least in terms of affecting their social and economic mobility. As such, education was perceived by the society as a refuge and a resource and, in the process, schooling began to be recognized as a basic right, rather than a privilege.

## School Attendance

Among children aged 6-11, 9.3% of boys and 8.4% of girls do not attend primary level schooling.<sup>4</sup> Given that children acquire literacy and math skills during the first four to six years of schooling, the less than total attendance figures show that more rigorous enforcement of the basic education law requiring compulsory education may be needed. Although literacy skills may be acquired through non-formal literacy programs, there is likelihood that adult instruction will not be as effective.

**Table 2-2** below indicates that residence is a contributing factor to school attendance. Rural females are the least likely of the entire school-age population to attend secondary and post-secondary education institutions. Rural girls may be disinclined to attend school for several reasons. They may not have access to a school or transportation costs can be onerous; they may be compelled to miss classes in order to care for siblings or perform agricultural work.

**Table 2-2: School Attendance by Age and Residence, by Sex, 1995**

Age Group	Boys				Girls			
	City	Village	Camp	Total	City	Village	Camp	Total
6-11	90.9	90.2	91.5	90.7	92.0	91.9	89.9	91.6
12-14	87.2	90.3	90.6	89.2	91.7	90.6	89.7	90.9
15-17	65.3	66.8	73.5	67.4	68.4	58.6	65.6	63.7
18+	7.5	7.3	9.2	7.7	5.7	4.5	4.6	5.0

**Source:** PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Topical Report Series (No. 1), Educational Characteristics, Detailed Results*, October 1996, 47.

Males at all ages who live in camps are more likely to attend school than males in urban or rural areas. On the surface, these results appear contradictory to those reported in **Table 2-1** regarding literacy rates which imply that urban males are the most likely to attend schools at the primary level. However, the data can be reconciled by reference to the age factor. Among males 65 and older, camp residents have a lower literacy rate (41.3%) as compared with city (65.8%) and village (56.8%) residents. Of males 54 years or younger, more camp residents are literate than their urban and rural counterparts. The low literacy rates among the older generations of camp residents serve to pull down the average literacy rate among this population of males.

Female urban residents are the most likely among the female population to attend school, regardless of age. Female village residents are the least likely to reach the secondary and post-secondary levels. In contrast to male camp residents, who recorded the highest school attendance levels among males, female camp residents are somewhat less likely to attend school than urban and rural females, although their attendance improves at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Given that UNRWA education services are free to registered Palestinian refugees and transportation costs are minimal since UNRWA schools are within camp boundaries, household income does not appear to be the determining factor in these findings, although learning materials and clothing are expenses incurred by the family. Non-economic, non-school factors such as the domestic demands of the household, and social attitudes regarding the purpose of schooling for men and women may be contributing factors to the gender differential.

## Years of Schooling

PCBS examined possible predictors for completed years of schooling including parents' level of schooling. A relationship was found between a father's education level and the number of years of schooling offspring completed before leaving school.

**Table 2-3: Years of Schooling Completed By Sons/Daughters Not Currently Attending School, By Father's Years of Schooling Completed, 1995 (% of children)**

Education level of children	Father's years of schooling				
	0	1-6	7-9	10-12	13+
<b>Sons</b>					
0	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.7
1-6	35.1	22.0	17.1	14.6	7.1
7-9	26.2	30.4	32.7	26.8	12.3
10-12	23.0	30.0	35.2	40.8	42.5
13+	15.3	17.4	14.8	17.6	37.4
<b>Daughters</b>					
0	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4
1-6	37.9	25.1	18.8	14.6	7.9
7-9	28.7	30.2	32.5	28.2	17.7
10-12	25.1	32.1	33.7	40.9	41.5
13+	8.0	12.4	14.6	16.0	32.5
<b>Gender gap (daughters' years of schooling /sons' years of schooling)</b>					
0	100.0	100.0	200	150.0	57.1
1-6	108.0	114.1	109.9	100.0	111.3
7-9	109.5	99.3	99.4	105.2	143.9
10-12	109.1	107	95.7	100.2	97.6
13+	52.3	71.3	98.6	90.9	86.9

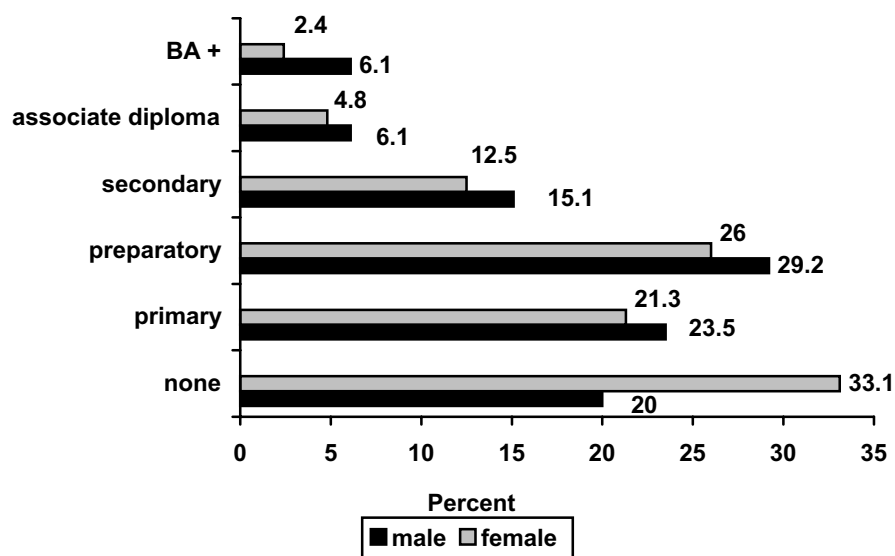
**Source:** PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Topical Report Series (No. 1), Educational Characteristics, Detailed Results*, Ramallah, October 1996.

As **Table 2-3** indicates, in general, the proportion of both sons and daughters attaining higher education levels increases with the father's years of schooling. For example, 15.3% of sons of uneducated fathers completed 13 or more years of schooling, as compared with 37.4% of sons of fathers who completed post-secondary education. A similar pattern is found among the data concerning daughters.

The table also shows that 0.3% of sons and daughters of uneducated fathers did not attend school, and 0.7% of sons and 0.4% of daughters of fathers with post-secondary education also did not attend school. The relatively constant proportion of offspring with no education (generally between 0.2 and 0.4%) suggests that the reasons for not sending children to primary school may have less to do with social attitudes towards schooling and gender, and relate more to factors external to parental influence, such as lack of special education services for a child with a physical or mental disability.<sup>5</sup>

The data concerning the gender gap shown in the table above indicate that fathers, regardless of education level, consistently exhibit son preference when their children reach the post-secondary stage. However, daughters of fathers with preparatory-level schooling are much more likely to attend post-secondary institutions than the daughters of fathers who completed primary level school or less. This contributes to an education ceiling for women illustrated in **Figure 2-2** below. For example, on the one hand, 56.5% of males and 45.6% of females have preparatory level (Grades 7-9) education or more, implying a widespread recognition of the value of basic education, and of the importance of education for future work opportunities and higher income. However, fewer women attain higher education. Only 2.4% of the female population indicated that they had a bachelor degree or higher, in contrast to 6.1% of men. This gender differential at the post-secondary level is reflected in less female access to highly paid occupations for which women have to compete with more qualified men.

**Figure 2-2: More males consistently complete higher educational levels than females.**



Source: PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip Topical Report Series (No. 1), Educational Characteristics, Detailed Results*, October 1996, 80.

## Enrollment in Pre-school Education

The private sector is the main provider of pre-school (kindergarten) education. As **Table 2-4** below indicates, the number of children attending pre-school increased from 11,086 in 1975 to 69,134 children in 1996-97. During this period, female enrollment fluctuated between 45 and 50%, indicating that gender is not a significant determinant in the parental decision to enroll pre-school children in kindergartens.

**Table 2-4: Kindergarten and Pre-school Students, by Sex, 1975-1996**

Year	Number of KG Schools				Number of Children Enrolled			
	Boys	Girls	Co-ed	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Female %
1975	NA	NA	NA	153	6,142	4,944	11,086	44.6
1980	NA	NA	NA	107	6,462	5,630	12,092	46.6
1985	NA	NA	NA	199	10,344	8,531	18,875	45.2
1990	NA	NA	NA	380	15,059	15,099	30,158	50.1
1995	4	10	518	532	23,269	21,658	44,927	48.2
1996	4	11	690	705	36,164	32,970	69,134	47.7

NA = not available.

**Source:** 1975-1990 schools from PCBS, *Education Statistics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Current Status Report No. 5*, August 1995, 112; students from ICBS, *Judea, Samaria and Gaza, Jerusalem Selected years*. Data for 1995-96 from: PCBS and MOE *Education Statistical Yearbook No. 2, 1995-96*, Ramallah, October 1996, (schools) 53, (students) 83. Data for 1996-97 from: PCBS and MOE, *Education Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97*, Ramallah, June 1997, (schools) 43, (students) 58.

**Table 2-4** also shows that the number of pre-schools increased from 153 in 1975, to 705 in 1996-97. This is attributed to a number of possible factors: the entrance of more women into the formal and informal labor market, an increased awareness of the role of early childhood education for the socialization process of children, and the role of NGOs, particularly those associated with the women's movement, in pre-school education service delivery.

## Enrollment in Basic and Secondary Education

Enrollment in basic and secondary education has more than doubled over the past 20 years to total 712,820 students in 1996-97 as indicated in **Table 2-5**. This expansion of the education system is an indicator of increased access to education services despite population growth rates due to persistently high fertility rates and, to a much lesser extent, to in-migration in response to political conditions affecting Palestinians in the Diaspora. The male to female enrollment ratio has gradually improved from 1.3 in 1975 to 1.04 in 1996-1997. Of the 656,353 children enrolled in basic level classes, 49% were female. Of the only 56,467 students enrolled at the secondary level, 47.5% are female.

**Table 2-6** below shows gross and net enrollment rates (GER and NER, respectively). NER estimates are particularly sensitive to population statistics since the number of school-age children used in making an accurate NER assessment needs to reflect up-to-date census numbers.<sup>6</sup> Since population figures used in the GER and NER calculations are based on adjustments to the 1967 Israeli Census, these rates should be regarded carefully.

**Table 2-5: School Enrollment by Stage and by Sex, 1975-1996**

Year	Basic			Secondary			Total			
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	B/G	Total
1975	169,070	133,706	302,776	24,107	14,077	38,184	193,177	147,783	1.31	340,690
1980	182,298	156,098	338,396	32,111	20,670	52,781	214,409	176,768	1.21	391,177
1985	202,490	181,728	384,218	29,379	22,166	51,545	231,869	203,894	1.14	435,763
1990	226,473	207,275	433,748	40,809	28,851	69,660	267,282	234,126	1.14	501,408
1995	313,360	298,497	611,857	27,232	23,538	50,770	340,592	322,035	1.06	662,627
1996	334,402	321,951	656,353	29,634	26,833	56,467	364,036	348,784	1.04	712,820

**Note:** Due to the restructuring of the education cycles after the transfer of authority to the PNA, the cycles are not comparable, except as aggregate. Basic education 1975-1990 is the sum of primary (Grades 1-6) and preparatory (Grades 7-9) students, whereas it comprises Grades 1 through 10 in 1995-96; secondary education in 1975-1990 is the sum of Grades 10-12, whereas it comprises only Grades 11 and 12 in 1995-96.

**Source:** For 1975-1990, PCBS, *Education Statistics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Current Status Report No. 5*, August 1995, 150-51. For 1995-96, PCBS and MOE, *Education Statistical Yearbook No. 2, 1995-96*, Ramallah, October 1996, 84. For 1996-97, PCBS and MOE, *Education Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97*, Ramallah, June 1997, 59.

Both the GER and NER for girls at the basic level exceeds the rate for boys in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by 2-9% indicating that repetition and/or school leaving may be a greater problem for boys at this level as validated in **Table 2-8** below. In contrast, at the secondary level, the enrollment rate for boys is greater than the corresponding rate for girls by about 1-4%. NER for the Palestinian territories indicate that about 12% of children 6-15 years do not attend basic level schools, and almost 60% of children 16-17 years do not attend secondary school. Therefore, encouraging students to complete secondary school is a remaining challenge for education authorities.

**Table 2-6: Gross and Net Enrollment Rates By Stage, Region and Sex, 1996-97 (%)**

Region	Stage	GER			NER			GER-NER
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All	
West Bank	Basic	94.57	96.91	95.70	80.89	91.9	86.23	9.47
	Secondary	52.4	50.47	51.46	41.07	39.93	40.51	10.95
Gaza Strip	Basic	91.97	101.27	96.30	86.97	96.27	91.30	9.97
	Secondary	55.76	51.55	53.71	43.35	40.14	41.79	9.76
<b>Total</b>	Basic	93.53	98.58	95.94	83.33	93.57	88.22	10.36
	Secondary	53.71	50.89	52.33	41.96	40.01	41.01	9.88

**Source:** PCBS, *Demography of the Palestinian Population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Current Status Report Series, No. 1*, Ramallah, West Bank; PCBS and MOE, *Educational Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97*, Ramallah, June 1997.

The GER is a useful tool for comparing the status of Palestinian education with that of selected Arab states and Israel as shown in **Table 2-7** below. Palestinian



schoolchildren of both sexes have the highest enrollment rates of the school age population in the countries represented in the table at all levels of education, except for Egyptian males at the first and second levels.

**Table 2-7: Gross School Enrollment Rates for Boys/Girls in Selected Arab Countries and in Israel**

	1st and 2nd levels		3rd level	
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
Egypt	100	83	24.7	13.3
Israel	90	94	34.7	34.0
Jordan	91	93	22.6	26.7
Lebanon	84	83	33.4	22.1
Palestine	94	99	54	51
Syrian Arab Republic	89	76	21.6	15.8

**Note:** Ratios for all countries are for 1990 except for Lebanon (1st and 2nd levels, 1988; 3rd level, 1991) and Palestine (1996)

**Source:** UNESCO, *1993 Statistical Yearbook*, Paris, 3-22 - 3-54.

## School Repeaters and Dropouts

The approximate 10% difference between GER and NER calculated in **Table 2-6** above is due to the number of over-age and under-age students, which includes repeaters as well as school dropouts. School repeaters who do not advance due to academic failure at Grade 12, regardless of the causal effect, should be differentiated from students who voluntarily repeat the year and re-sit the exam in order to improve their chances of college entry. Chronic repeaters due to academic failure, regardless of grade level, are often frustrated and demonstrate a greater likelihood to eventually drop out of the system. As sources of inefficiency in the schooling system, repetition and dropout are considered general education issues, which cut across gender. Nonetheless, the data indicate that repetition and dropout rates do vary between male and female students.

Both school and non-school factors determine repetition and dropout rates. School factors include: education cycle, grade level, class size, supervising authority, and school infrastructure (buildings, facilities and equipment). Other school factors, which may contribute to repetition and dropout rates, include classroom management techniques and teacher training, the school administration, the formal curriculum, and the hidden or “second” curriculum. The hidden curriculum refers to the unconscious ways in which educational structures in the classroom reproduce the wider gender assumptions existing in the society.

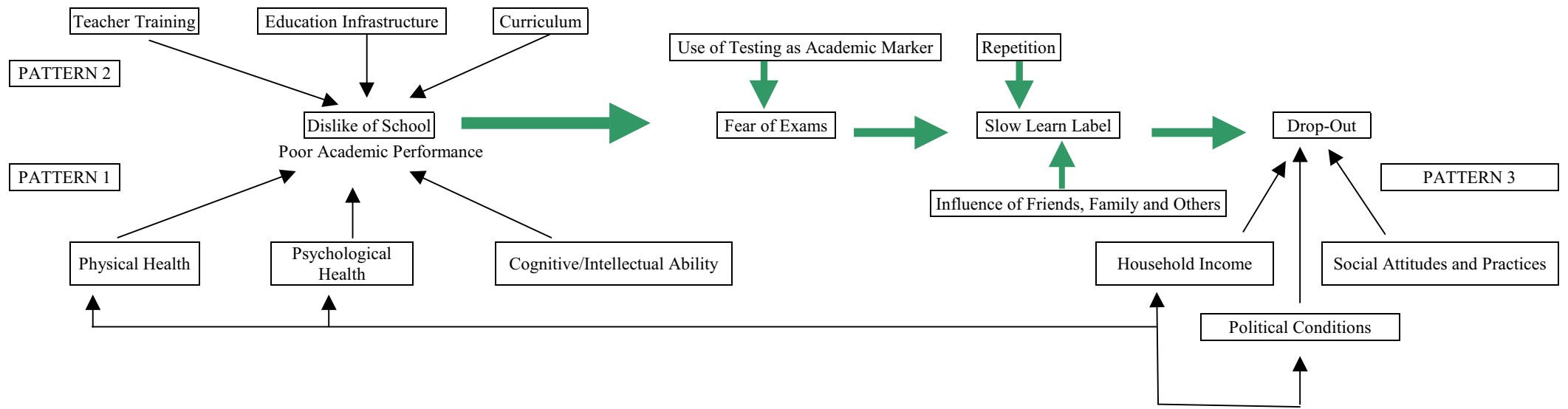
Non-school factors that encourage dropouts include economic conditions of the household, socio-cultural practices, beliefs and values, and political circumstances. School and non-school factors usually work together in determining repetition and dropout rates; rarely is one factor the cause for a student’s decision to leave school. **Figure 2-3** below shows three possible patterns of interdependent factors operating at various stages to create situations of dropout. It also shows the linkages between the various forces operating against school completion.

For children who drop out after consistently demonstrating poor academic performance, the causal factors vary. In **Pattern 1**, the original source of poor academic performance may be ill health resulting in frequent school absenteeism, or an undiagnosed physical disability such as a hearing or visual impairment, or poor cognitive ability. Since testing is the most important source for evaluation, the child comes to fear

exams and is labeled a slow learner. This creates a vicious cycle, with each successive exam being a self-fulfilling prophecy. The stigma of a slow learner earns him/her ridicule and even harassment by classmates. With time, the student internalizes failure and, influenced by friends, teacher, school principal and/or the family, the student eventually drops out of the system.

In *Pattern 2*, dislike for the school is the product of one or more school-based factors such as the curriculum, the teacher and school administration, poor infrastructure (poor lighting and ventilation, noisy, uncomfortable seating arrangements, etc.). From this point onward, the intervening factors in this path to dropout are much the same as in *Pattern 1*.

*Pattern 3*, shows that students, regardless of academic performance, may be subject to the pull of customs and traditions such as early marriage and sex segregation, and/or economic factors affecting household income. The following discussion examines at what points in these patterns the situation between boys and girls may differ.



**Figure 3-2: Patterns of interdependent factors creating situations of dropout**

**School Factors Affecting Repetition and Dropout:**

1) *Education cycle:* About 4.3% of boys and 3.8% of girls at the basic level repeat the school year, yielding a slight 0.5% gender gap in favor of females. At the secondary level, the gender differential is wider: 3.4% of male pupils are repeaters, which is triple the female rate of 1.1%.

The data indicate near gender parity in dropout rates at the basic level, but a female rate of 2.21% greater than males at the secondary level. **Table 2-8** shows that boys tend to be more frequent repeaters, regardless of education stage, while there is a greater likelihood for girls to drop out at the secondary level in all streams.

**Table 2-8: Repeaters and Dropouts by Cycle and Grade Level, by Sex, 1995-96 (%)**

Grade	Repeaters		Dropouts			
	Boys	Girls	Gender Gap (G/B)	Boys	Girls	Gender Gap (G/B)
1	3.13	3.19	101.92	0.48	0.36	75
2	3.28	3.17	96.65	0.28	0.33	113.79
3	3.74	3.61	96.52	0.43	0.36	83.72
4	5.30	4.50	84.91	0.72	0.58	80.56
5	5.48	4.87	88.87	1.55	1.15	74.19
6	5.14	4.06	78.99	2.41	2.07	85.89
7	5.16	4.80	93.02	4.18	3.24	77.51
8	4.53	4.14	91.39	6.01	4.66	77.54
9	4.80	2.95	61.46	6.85	6.42	93.72
10	2.85	1.84	64.56	8.36	13.06	156.22
1st secondary science	0.25	0.45	173.08	4.27	3.08	68.14
1st secondary arts	2.15	1.51	70.23	8.40	10.75	127.98
1st secondary vocational	2.28	1.57	68.86	2.28	5.24	229.82
2nd secondary science	7.06	1.61	22.8	1.20	3.95	329.17
2nd secondary arts	5.00	0.78	15.6	8.11	8.83	108.88
2nd secondary vocational	1.29	0.93	0	3.4	6.87	202.06
Basic level	4.32	3.79	87.73	2.43	2.37	97.13
Secondary level	3.44	1.12	32.28	5.92	8.13	137.33
Basic and secondary	4.25	3.59	84.47	2.71	2.79	102.57

**Source:** PCBS and MOE, *Educational Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97*, Ramallah, June 1997, 101.

2) *Grade level:* Repetition and dropout also vary according to grade level as indicated in **Table 2-8**. MOE regulations stipulate Grade 4 as the first year a teacher can hold a student back. Nevertheless, repetition in Grades 1 to 3 does occur, although at lower rates than the average for the basic level. Repetition rates peak at Grade 5 and subsequently drop for both males and females. With the exceptions of Grade 1 and Grade 11 science students, boys are more likely to repeat a year than girls. The gender gap (calculated here by dividing the value for girls by the value for boys) is widest at Grades 6, 9, 10 and 12. These represent transition points: moving from the primary to the preparatory level, the preparatory to the secondary level, from regular classes to streaming in Grade 11, and from the secondary to the post-secondary level.

The high repetition rates for Grade 12 male students in science and arts may be associated with their desire to improve their General Secondary Certificate Examination (GSCE or *tawjihi* exam) scores. Secondary school girls in the two academic streams outperform boys on the GSCE. For example, in 1995-96 the pass rate was highest among Gaza females who had a success rate of 72% in both the scientific and literary streams. In contrast, 42% of Gaza males in the science stream

and 45% in the literary stream passed the exam.<sup>7</sup> These gender differentials may be partially related to social habits and mores and the scarcity of socially acceptable places where females may spend their leisure time apart from the home and the school. As a result, schoolgirls may be more inclined to study more consistently than their male counterparts for want of an alternative.

**Table 2-8** shows the inverse relationship between repetition and dropout at the basic stage: as repetition rates fall after Grade 5, the dropout rate increases. This is evident for both boys and girls.

By Grade 10, the dropout rate for females increases suddenly to 13.1% from 6.42% in the previous year, and is much higher than the 8.4% of males who drop out at this level. This is the widest gender gap at all grade levels and reverses the general pattern at the basic level of male dropout exceeding female dropout. This is despite the fact that the gender gap in the repetition rates for Grades 1-10 is almost consistently in favor of girls (that is, fewer girls repeat the year as compared with boys), indicating that non-school factors are important determinants in female students progressing to the secondary stage.

3) *Class size*: There appears to be a positive relationship between repetition rate and class size. At basic levels, the Gaza Strip (which has a higher repetition rate than the West Bank) has an average of 45 students per class as compared with 33 students in the West Bank. Directorates in the northern and southern West Bank have a higher average class size as compared with classes in the central West Bank. These Directorates also have the highest repetition rates. This pattern also holds generally true for dropouts at the secondary stage.<sup>8</sup>

As a proxy indicator for the quality of education, large class size may contribute to a higher rate of repetition and dropout. In localities with greater than average class size, teachers may not be able to attend to the educational and psychological needs of each pupil, whether due to time constraints, low morale, or other factors. As a result, slow learners are not given the extra attention required for them to catch up to the average level of their classmates. At lower grades they may be advanced, but as they fall further behind with each successive year, they may be required to repeat a school year, or they drop out of the system. A large class size also affects the ability of the teacher to introduce more innovative teaching methodologies which provides a more stimulating learning environment. High student teacher ratios also make classroom management more challenging. However, class size is only one of a number of factors affecting pedagogy, and may be tangential to other more important variables such as pre- and in-service teacher training, motivation and commitment and knowledge level of teaching staff, and salary scales.

The differential impact of these factors on boys and girls is unclear; for example, when girls are exposed to discipline, are they more likely to react negatively to the school than boys? Are teachers more reluctant to punish girls than boys or, alternatively, are girls less likely than boys to misbehave in the classroom?

4) *Supervising authority*: Differential repetition and dropout rates among school children in UNRWA, public and private schools indicate varying pressures on

teachers to advance students. **Table 2-9** indicates that in private schools, where there is an average 27 students per class, boys and girls have the lowest repetition rates as compared with their counterparts in the public or UNRWA school systems, regardless of education cycle. Within private schools, and also schools run by the other supervising authorities, girls have lower repetition rates at both the basic and secondary cycles. Unlike girls in public schools, private school girls have the lowest dropout rate among both male and female students regardless of supervising authority.

**Table 2-9: Repetition and Dropout Rates by Grade Level and Supervising Authority, by Sex, 1995-96 (%)**

Authority	Grades 1-10		Grades 11-12		Grades 1-12	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
<b>Repetition</b>						
Government	3.49	3.07	1.91	1.01	3.32	2.86
UNRWA	6.86	5.81	NA	NA	NA	NA
Private	1.85	1.54	16.27	2.86	3.71	1.65
<b>Dropout</b>						
Government	2.7	2.79	6.51	8.60	3.1	3.38
UNRWA	2.17	1.78	NA	NA	NA	NA
Private	0.81	0.48	1.65	1.16	0.92	0.54

NA = not applicable. UNRWA provides schooling from Grades 1 through 9.

Source: PCBS and MOE, *Education Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97*, Ramallah, June 1997, 102-104.

A number of reasons may account for the lower rate of academic failure at private schools. First, both public and UNRWA schools are operating at maximum capacity, with class size averaging 36 and 45 students per class respectively at the basic level, compared with 27 students per class in private schools.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, public school and UNRWA teachers may rely more heavily on traditional teaching methods and forms of control, and may not be able to devote the time necessary to attend to slow learners.

Second, given the tuition fees of private schools, administrators may be disinclined to hold students back fearing that parents will view their child's failure as the responsibility of the school and, accordingly, withdraw the child from the institution.

Third, since private schools offer better remuneration packages to their teachers, they are able to attract the most competent and motivated teachers. As a result, they may be able to mitigate some of the problems associated with teacher commitment such as teacher absenteeism and lack of preparation. The quality of the teaching staff in combination with smaller class sizes may facilitate greater teacher-parent follow-up and early attention to the education needs of the pupil.

Fourth, presumably, private school students come from families with higher income levels more able to afford the higher tuition fees than their counterparts in the public or UNRWA school systems. Also associated with family income levels, private school students may live in a home environment with facilities which encourage study skills (such as study space, reference books, a computer, etc.), enjoy better health care and other social services. As a result of the family's financial security, they are less likely to be called upon to financially support the family and may have opportunities to continue their education either locally or abroad.

### ***Non-School Factors Affecting Repetition and Dropout:***

Among the most important non-school factors affecting dropout are: socio-economic conditions, social attitudes, values and practices regarding the roles of men and women; and political exigencies affecting regular school attendance and the psychological health of children. These factors do not necessarily affect males and females uniformly.

1) *Socio-economic factors:* It is generally assumed that school children living in regions with greater demographic pressures and lower income levels, both indicators of relative poverty, are more at risk of becoming early school leavers. Since Gaza is more economically underprivileged as compared with the West Bank, we would expect that Gaza students drop out more frequently than their West Bank counterparts.<sup>10</sup> However, as **Table 2-10** indicates, this is validated only among Gaza females and solely at the basic level: that is, at every other school level, Gaza boys and girls tend to drop out less than their West Bank counterparts.

**Table 2-10: Dropout Rate by Stage and Region, By Sex, 1995-96 (%)**

Stage	West Bank		Gaza Strip		Palestine	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Basic	2.2	2.8	2.6	1.9	2.4	2.4
Secondary	9.5	7.8	5.9	3.3	8.1	6.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.7</b>

Source: PCBS and MOE, *Database of Educational Institutions, 1996-97.*

Relative economic deprivation alone is not sufficient to explain regional differentials in dropout rates. For students who have the cognitive ability but drop out nonetheless, a positive alternative to attending school may be an important pre-condition. This may be in the form of paid or unpaid work. Therefore, despite being the poorer of the two regions, the shortage of local employment opportunities in the Gaza Strip, particularly for females, and the strict limitations in the number of Israeli-issued work permits, may persuade parents to keep their children in school longer.

Moreover, as discussed above in relation to school attendance, male camp residents have higher school attendance levels than their counterparts in urban or rural areas. Since 54.3% of the household population in the Gaza Strip live in refugee camps, compared to 8.9% in the West Bank, residence and refugee status jointly may be a contributing factor to regional differentials in dropout rates. This is assuming that UNRWA provides a buffer for economic hardship *vis-a-vis* school enrollment.<sup>11</sup> Also, the greater role of agriculture in the West Bank, and thus the greater need for child labor on family farms and the long distance to schools in West Bank villages, contribute to the regional variations in dropout.

Employment opportunities may also contribute to intra-regional differences in dropout rates shown in **Table 2-11** below.



**Table 2-11: Dropout Rate by District and Age, by Sex (%)**

District	Age							
	6-11		12-14		15-17		18+	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Jenin	NA	0.5	4.1	3.2	11.0	12.6	1.1	0.6
Tulkarm and Qalqilya	NA	0.7	2.4	3.4	7.2	7.5	0.8	0.6
Nablus	1.0	0.6	4.8	2.5	9.7	8.4	0.7	0.3
Ramallah and al-Bireh	0.5	NA	2.8	3.0	10.2	10.2	1.0	0.8
Jerusalem	1.9	1.8	6.5	1.4	10.8	12.0	0.8	1.1
Bethlehem	0.1	0.2	3.6	0.5	8.6	5.4	0.4	0.8
Hebron	0.8	0.5	4.5	2.9	8.1	9.0	0.9	1.1
North Gaza	0.5	0.7	1.8	1.9	3.8	5.9	0.9	0.7
Central and South Gaza	0.1	0.5	1.7	1.0	4.0	6.1	1.1	0.7

NA = not available

**Source:** PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, District Report Series (No. 10), District-by-District Comparative Results*, Ramallah, June 1997, 46.

Among males 6-14 years, residents of Jerusalem, Nablus and Hebron have the highest dropout rates. The high dropout rates for Jerusalem schoolboys may be due, in part, to the special conditions of the city and, like the industrial cities of Hebron and Nablus, may afford greater work opportunities for male school leavers.

Among females, those aged 6-11 years in Jerusalem, Tulkarm and Qalqilya and North Gaza have the highest dropout rates. Girls aged 12-14 years in Tulkarm and Qalqilya, Ramallah and al-Bireh, and Jenin have the highest rates. Areas with the greatest female dropout coincide with the districts having the highest proportion of households in rural areas, with the exception of Jerusalem and North Gaza. For example, 64.2% of households in Jenin are located in villages as compared with 46.2% of households in Nablus.<sup>12</sup>

Among males and females aged 15-17 years, residents of Jenin, Jerusalem and Ramallah have the highest dropout rates. An examination of the profile of occupations of persons 15 years or older by locality from the PCBS demographic survey of 1995 indicates the type of work opportunities available, and by inference, the level of education required to perform such work. Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqilya, and Ramallah districts have the highest proportion of agricultural workers (12.7, 12.3 and 7.8%, respectively). Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqilya, and Ramallah districts, also have the highest percentage of unskilled workers, along with Hebron. Jerusalem has the highest percentage of service and sales workers (17.7%), but the second lowest proportion of unskilled workers (18.8%) and the second highest proportion of professionals (13.6%) next to northern Gaza.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, while Jerusalem residents appear to be a special case, the data indicates that males at the basic level living in urban, industrial districts are more likely to drop out than their counterparts residing in other areas. Males at the secondary level and females, at all education levels, living in rural, agricultural areas have the highest probability of dropping out of school.

2) *Social attitudes, values and practices:* The dominant social attitudes, values and practices of Palestinian society also play a role in determining school dropout: early

marriage, as well as the perceived level of education necessary for men and women to perform their duties and obligations.

The average age at marriage for women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is 18 years according to PCBS,<sup>14</sup> which means that half of the women surveyed were married at less than 18 years. As indicated by **Table 2-8** above, 8% of secondary school girls drop out compared to only 6% of male students. At this stage, the average schoolgirl is 16-17 years and traditional parents might be inclined to marry a daughter at this age. Family laws in force in both the West Bank and Gaza allow marriage with the court's permission as early as age 15 (*hijri*), and marriage can occur even earlier due to weak enforcement of the law. Girls may drop out of school for other reasons apart from early marriage. The decision may be part of household cost-saving measures to enable higher education opportunities for male family members. Parents may also believe there is no tangible benefit from higher education for their daughters, or even that it may be harmful to their marital opportunities. The young woman may be required to assist in household duties such as taking care of younger siblings, or parents may wish to more closely supervise a daughter as she becomes closer to marriage age.

2) *Political factors*: While stability has been restored to the education system since the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the negative legacy of the occupation continues to affect the education system. This legacy includes the prolonged closure of education institutions by the Israeli military government and civil administration during the *intifada* (Palestinian uprising) and Israeli administration of the education sector including text censorship throughout the occupation period. Movement restrictions still affect school attendance for some students who must cross Israeli-controlled checkpoints.

## B. Higher Education

### Enrollment in Higher Education

Higher education refers to community college or university education. Community colleges offer two-year programs of instruction. There is a strong bias toward university education; universities attract more than 10 times the number of students as community colleges. Moreover, the demand for higher education outstrips the number of student places. In 1996-97, 53% of female and 74% of male applicants were admitted to community colleges. Similarly, 78% of male and female applicants were offered a place in Palestinian universities.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Universities:*

The majority of Palestinian universities were established in the 1970s. Nine of the first 20 graduates of a Palestinian university (Hebron) in 1974-75 were women.<sup>16</sup> Since that time, the number of graduating students from the eight Palestinian universities and three community colleges (offering BA degrees) has multiplied, although in 1987-1989, the number of graduates dropped precipitously as a result of political conditions and the Israeli-ordered closure of Palestinian universities and other education institutions. During this period, the proportion of graduating female students remained stable. By 1994-95, the number of graduates exceeded the pre-1987 level, and by 1995-96, there were 3,441 university graduates, of whom 48.3% were women.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 2-12: Distribution of Students in Palestinian Universities, by Sex, 1996-97**

University	Women	Men	Total	%Women
<b>West Bank</b>				
Al Quds University	1,368	1,196	2,564	53.35
Al Quds Open University	3,605	4,873	8,478	42.52
College of Education /UNRWA	317	182	499	63.53
Birzeit University	1,503	2,143	3,646	41.22
Al Najah University	3,116	4,486	7,602	40.99
Bethlehem University	1,339	732	2,071	64.65
Hebron University	818	809	1,627	50.28
College of Engineering & Technology	118	407	525	22.48
<b>Total in West Bank</b>	<b>12,184</b>	<b>14,828</b>	<b>27,012</b>	<b>45.11</b>
<b>Gaza Strip</b>				
Islamic University	2,386	4,330	6,716	35.53
Al Azhar	3,804	6,599	10,403	36.57
College of Education	1,269	776	2,045	62.05
<b>Total in Gaza Strip</b>	<b>7,459</b>	<b>11,705</b>	<b>19,164</b>	<b>38.92</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,643</b>	<b>26,533</b>	<b>46,176</b>	<b>42.54</b>

Source: PCBS and MOE, *Educational Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97*, Ramallah, June 1997, 205.

A total of 46,176 students are enrolled in universities, of these 42.5% are female as shown in the table above. The proportion of female students is 6.2% lower in the Gaza Strip compared to the West Bank. This disparity may be due to several reasons including comparative economic conditions in these regions and the geographical imbalance of universities in the Gaza Strip. Unlike the West Bank,

where the universities are distributed throughout the region, al-Azhar and Islamic Universities and the local branch of al-Quds Open University are located in Gaza City. Therefore students from central and southern Gaza incur transportation costs which may be prohibitive.

Also, as indicated in **Table 2-11** above concerning dropouts by district, the dropout rate for females 15-17 years in central and south Gaza is slightly higher than the rate for north Gaza. Therefore, the lack of opportunities for higher education in the central and southern Gaza Strip might be a contributing factor to the higher dropout rates and lower enrollment rates at the university level. However, such an explanation is inconsistent with the finding that school enrollment rates for girls 18 years and over from the central and southern Gaza Strip are slightly higher than for girls from the north: 4.9% compared to 4.4%.<sup>18</sup>

As shown in **Table 2-12**, the two teachers education colleges and Bethlehem University have female enrollment levels exceeding 60% of the student population. High female enrollment levels in faculties of education might be expected given the identification of women as teachers. Bethlehem University offers courses of study which also might attract greater numbers of females. It has a strong Faculty of Arts, nursing, midwifery, early childhood and elementary education and tourism programs, fields of specialization which are popular with female applicants, as discussed below. Also, according to the district-by-district comparative results of the 1995 demographic survey, the Bethlehem region has the highest female school enrollment rates among women 18 years and over.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Community Colleges:***

As **Table 2-13** below shows, the 17 community colleges in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have a total of 4,599 students, of whom 51% are female.

Slightly less than one-third of the community college student population attend institutions in the northern West Bank (Tulkarm, Qalqilya and Nablus), 28.7% are enrolled in schools in the central West Bank (Jerusalem, Ramallah, Kalandia), and 18.6% in the southern West Bank (Hebron and Arroub). About one-fifth attend institutions in the Gaza Strip.

There is a positive correlation between the choice of college and the district of residence. Both male and female community college students enroll in institutions near their place of residence, with the exception of students enrolled in Kalandia Community College (UNRWA) for men in Kalandia, the Women's Community College (UNRWA), the Men's Community College (UNRWA), and Palestine Technical College, all located in the Ramallah district. The geographic distribution of students in these four colleges is more diffuse than in other colleges. The four are sex-segregated and offer dormitory facilities. Such facilities may reduce the living costs for students which otherwise might be prohibitive and provide a measure of security for parents, particularly parents of female students.

**Table 2-13: Distribution of Students in Community Colleges by Sex, 1996-1997 (%)**

College	Location	Enrollment		
		Men	Women	Total
Ibrahimiyyah	Jerusalem	15	147	162
Al Ummah	Jerusalem	0	245	245
Kalandia	Kalandia	45	0	45
Women	Ramallah	0	466	466
Men	Ramallah	124	0	124
Palestine Technical	Ramallah	0	189	189
Modern	Ramallah	57	33	90
College of Eng. and Tech.	Hebron	325	184	509
Palestine Technical College	Tulkarm	186	84	270
College of Islamic Sciences	Qalqilya	27	39	66
Al Najah	Nablus	545	381	926
Al Rawdah	Nablus	93	80	173
Palestine Technical College	Arroub	155	148	303
College of Nursing	Hebron	22	20	42
College for Sciences and Technology	Khan Younis	415	174	589
Palestine Technical College	Deir El Balah	245	155	400
Palestine Religious Institute	Gaza	na	na	na
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,254</b>	<b>2,345</b>	<b>4,599</b>

Source: PCBS and MOE, *Education Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97*, Ramallah, June 1997, 216.

Women appear to be less mobile than their male counterparts. For example, among the 33 female students attending the Modern Community College in Ramallah, 88% were from the Ramallah-Jericho-Bethlehem triangle (including Jerusalem), as compared with 65% of the 57 male students. Similarly, at al-Najah Community College, eight of the 381 female students, or 2%, lived outside the northern governorates (Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqilya, and Nablus), as compared with 6.6% of the 545 male students.<sup>20</sup>

## Fields Of Specialization

With increasing education level, gender gaps in enrollment are less important than gender differentials in fields of specialization. How students select their field of specialization is determined by variables including the programs available, household income, parental wishes, and social norms of what is considered appropriate for men and women. Females tend to be under-represented in science and technology-based programs, and over-represented in education, social work, the humanities, nursing and para-medical fields such as physiotherapy in the registers of community colleges and of universities.

The streaming system at the secondary level is the first opportunity to observe how gendered social roles are reinforced by the schooling system in a formal way. As of 1996-97, 16 secondary vocational schools in the West Bank and Gaza have a total student enrollment of only 1,775, or 3.1% of all secondary school students. Only 18.7% of these students are female. The majority of students are clustered in one of two academic streams (science and arts); females comprise 51.6% and 41.7% of arts and science students, respectively.

The delivery of science classes requires greater inputs than arts classes, whether in the form of specialized teachers, laboratories, equipment and material. Therefore science schools are at a premium as compared with arts schools and priority may be given to facilities for males.

While there are 308 classes for men in the first and second year science stream, there are only 225 for women, and 83 co-ed classes. In contrast, in the arts stream, there are 513 classes for men, 536 for women, and 124 co-ed.<sup>21</sup> It is plausible that female students enter the arts stream in greater numbers in accordance with their interests, but it is also reasonable to suggest that this “interest” is an artifact of the social norms pertaining to “women’s work” and an inflexible streaming system.

Vocational secondary education comprises commercial, agriculture, nursing and agricultural studies. **Table 2-14** below indicates vocational education is differentially available to men and women. Women enroll in commercial and nursing schools and men in agricultural and industrial schools. The commercial stream, which involves office and secretarial skills, has high female participation. Students in industrial schools are typically males; they learn a trade enabling them to work as a carpenter, blacksmith, mechanic, plumber, electrician, etc., occupations associated with men. Women are denied access to agricultural training institutions, although one-third of all workers in agriculture are female. This situation reinforces a division of labor with males identified closely with planning and implementing agricultural projects and controlling agricultural inputs, and females solely with providing labor.<sup>22</sup>

**Table 2-14: Distribution of Secondary Vocational Students by Specialization and by Sex, 1996-97**

Specialization	Boys	Girls	Total	% Female
Science	10,145	7,252	17,397	41.69
Arts	18,046	19,249	37,295	51.61
<i>Total Academic</i>	<i>28,191</i>	<i>26,501</i>	<i>54,692</i>	<i>48.45</i>
Commercial	28	291	319	91.2
Agriculture	175	0	175	0
Industrial	1,225	0	1,225	0
Nursing	15	41	56	73.2
<i>Total Vocational</i>	<i>1,443</i>	<i>332</i>	<i>1,775</i>	<i>18.7</i>
<b>Total Secondary</b>	<b>29,634</b>	<b>26,833</b>	<b>56,467</b>	<b>47.52</b>

Source: PCBS and MOE, *Educational Statistical Yearbook 1996-97, No. 3*, Ramallah, June 1997, 73.

Gender-specific fields of specialization extend into higher education as indicated by the distribution of community college graduates and university students by field and sex shown in **Tables 2-15** and **2-16** below. At Palestinian community colleges, females comprise the overwhelming majority of academic, social work, para-medical and vocational graduates. In contrast, only 5.7% of engineering graduates were female. Female representation among computer science graduates is considerably better at 44% of the total. Among finance and administration graduates, there are slightly more females.

**Table 2-15: Distribution of Community College Graduates by Field of Study and Region, by Sex, 1995-96**

Field	West Bank		Gaza Strip		Both Regions			% Female
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Total	
Academic	14	262	0	0	14	262	276	94.93
Engineering	187	16	79	0	266	16	282	5.67
Para-medical	15	156	47	24	62	180	242	74.38
Admin & Finance	8	70	87	35	95	105	200	52.5
Computer Science	11	43	74	24	85	67	152	44.08
Social Work	13	87	0	0	13	87	100	87
Vocational	14	134	0	0	14	134	148	90.54
<b>Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>768</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>851</b>	<b>1400</b>	<b>60.79</b>

Source: PCBS and MOE, *Education Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97*, Ramallah, June 1997, 219.

Similarly, female university students comprise more than half of the total number of students enrolled in fields associated with the “3Cs” — care concern and connection — such as education, the humanities, medical sciences and health-related studies. But they comprise only 6.3% of students in architecture and town planning, about 15-16% in agriculture and law, and roughly 25% of the students in business administration, engineering, and trade, crafts and industrial programs. As such, females tend to be concentrated in programs which incorporate aspects of the “domestic sciences,” rather than management, technical or professional programs.

**Table 2-16: Distribution of University Students by Field of Specialization, by Sex, 1996-97**

Field	Men	Women	Total	% Female
Agriculture, forestry & fisheries	243	45	288	15.63
Architecture & town planning	164	11	175	6.29
Commercial & business administration	3,913	1,596	5,509	28.97
Education science and teacher training	632	912	1,544	59.07
Engineering	1,093	389	1,482	26.25
Fine & applied arts	148	137	285	48.07
Home economics (domestic science)	0	18	18	100
Humanities, religion & theology	3,756	5,526	9,282	59.53
Law	2,994	545	3,539	15.4
Mass communications	198	138	336	41.07
Mathematics & computer science	1,762	1,040	2,802	37.12
Medical sciences & health-related	982	1,184	2,166	54.66
Natural sciences	831	804	1,635	49.17
Service trades	19	15	34	44.12
Social & behavioral science	1,777	1,667	3,444	48.4
Trade, craft & industrial programs	70	23	93	24.73
Other	7,951	5,593	13,544	41.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,533</b>	<b>19,643</b>	<b>46,176</b>	<b>42.54</b>

Source: PCBS and MOE, *Database of Educational Institutions, 1996-97*.

## Women and Men in the Teaching Profession

As **Table 2-17** below indicates, the proportion of female teaching staff decreases at higher levels of the educational system. At the pre-school level, all but five teachers are female out of a total 2,377 pre-school teachers in 1996-97.<sup>23</sup> While females comprise almost half of teachers at the basic level, their share diminishes at the secondary and tertiary levels of education.

**Table 2-17: Teachers and Principals by Cycle, by Sex, 1996-97**

	Teachers				Principals			
	Men	Women	Total	%female	Men	Women	Total	%female
Pre-school	5	2,372	2,377	99.80	17	561	578	97.06
Basic	8,116	7,785	15,901	48.96	523	506	1,029	49.17
Basic & Secondary	4,140	3,243	7,383	43.93	243	151	394	38.32
Secondary	411	158	569	27.77	20	9	29	31.03
Community College	184	70	254	27.56	15	2	17	11.8
University	1,496	209	1,705	12.26	10	0	10	0

**Source:** PCBS and MOE, *Educational Statistical Yearbook 1996-97*, No. 3, Ramallah, June 1997, (pre-school-secondary principals) 124, (full-time university teachers) 211, (full-time community college teachers) 226.

Women account for 28% of secondary school teachers. Moreover, public secondary schools are sex-segregated. While male teachers can teach female secondary school students, female teachers cannot teach male students. The reasons underlying these discriminatory practices are unclear but may be due to the assumption that male secondary students require a male authority figure to better control the class, as well as limited opportunities for female teachers to qualify for secondary school teaching.

**Table 2-18: Basic and Secondary Level Teaching Staff by Qualifications and Supervising Authority, by Sex, 1996-97**

	Secondary	Lower	BA/BSc	Higher	MA/MSc +	Total
<b>Government</b>						
<i>Men</i>	119	4,205	4,502	247	131	9,204
<i>Women</i>	166	4,069	2,944	94	21	7,294
Total	285	8,274	7,446	341	152	16,498
% female	58.2	49.2	39.5	27.6	13.8	44.2
<b>UNRWA</b>						
<i>Men</i>	120	1,496	950	23	16	2,605
<i>Women</i>	178	1,825	328	6	3	2,340
Total	298	3,321	1,278	29	19	4,945
% female	59.7	55.0	25.7	20.7	15.8	47.3
<b>Private</b>						
<i>Men</i>	64	166	543	29	56	858
<i>Women</i>	178	660	669	26	19	1,552
Total	242	826	1,212	55	75	2,410
% female	73.6	79.9	55.2	47.3	25.3	64.4
<b>All Schools</b>						
<i>Men</i>	303	5,867	5,995	299	203	12,667
<i>Women</i>	522	6,554	3,941	126	43	11,186
Total	825	12,421	9,936	425	246	23,853
% female	63.3	52.8	39.7	26.6	17.5	46.9

**Source:** Basic and secondary, *PCBS and MOE, Statistical Yearbook 1996-97*, No. 3, Ramallah, June 1997, 107-109.



**Table 2-18** shows that the share of female teachers drops with higher qualification levels. While 63.3% of teachers with secondary or lower qualifications are female, 39.7% hold a BA/BSc, 26.6% have a higher diploma, and only 17.5% completed a MA/MSc or higher.

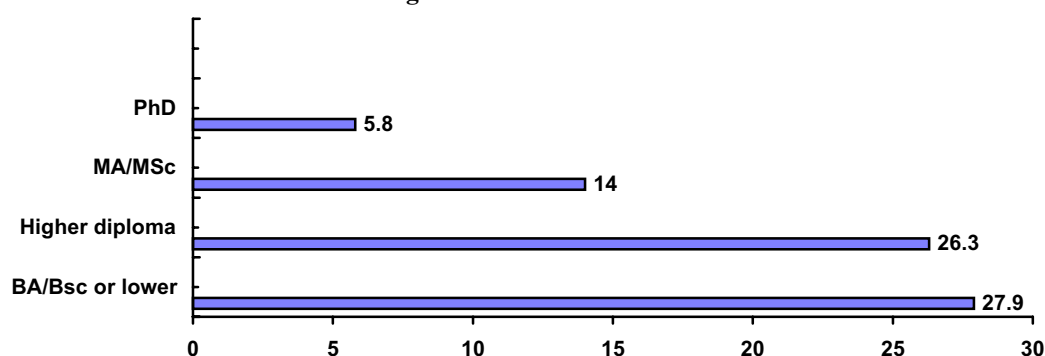
Moreover, a greater percentage of females are employed in private schools than UNRWA or government schools. These teachers tend to be better qualified than their counterparts in the public and UNRWA school systems. For example, 55.7% of female teachers working at private schools hold a BA/BSc degree or higher, as compared with 48.1% and 26.8% of female teachers in the public and UNRWA schools, respectively. Female university graduates may be drawn to the private sector by better working conditions including higher pay scales and other benefits, and lower class size as compared with the public or UNRWA sectors.

As **Table 2-17** above indicates, 28% of the teaching faculty at community colleges are female, as compared with only 12% of university teachers. Birzeit University alone accounts for almost one-fifth of all female university teachers. Bethlehem and Hebron Universities represent the two poles of faculty composition; a little more than one-third of the teaching staff at Bethlehem University are women, as compared with only 1.5% at Hebron.

Faculty composition and the relative shortage of qualified female teachers at secondary and post-secondary education institutions are due to several factors. First gender-specific specialization at the secondary level results in a shortage of qualified female science and mathematics teachers.

Second, the low percentage of females completing post-graduate education (MA or higher) creates a bottleneck in changing staffing patterns, particularly at higher education institutions, as illustrated in Figure 2-4 below.

**Figure 2-4: Proportion of women teachers at university and community college level declines with education.**



**Source:** PCBS, *Education Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97*, Ramallah, June 1997, (universities) 211, (community colleges) 226. *Full-time employees only, 1996-97.*

Third, the division of labor within the society along gender lines and mainstream perceptions of what is considered an appropriate profession for males and females inevitably factors into the occupational decision-making process. Abu Nahleh (1997) reported that secondary school students classify professions in gendered terms.

Some, such as child education, nutrition, and dress making, are gender-specific to women; other more technical professions, such as engineering, are male-specific, while still others are gender neutral such as business, administration, accounting, and secretarial work. Moreover, the gender classification of professions was based largely on the perception of the abilities of men and women, particularly among female students.<sup>24</sup> Social norms, employment opportunities and religious norms also factor into the calculation. But abilities are not necessarily obvious; if untested they remain hidden and latent and sexist assumptions will continue to inform social attitudes. Even within feminized professions such as education, there is an observable hierarchy with males instructing females. Although women comprise the majority of students in education faculties, they comprise only 25% of the teaching staff at the UNRWA College of Education in the West Bank and only 11% at the College of Education in the Gaza Strip.

Fourth, **Table 2-18** above indicates that as of 1996-97, 55.5% of the teaching staff do not fulfill revised MOE regulations which apply Jordanian Education Law No. 27 (1988) stipulating, *inter alia*, that teachers must hold a minimum four-year degree to teach basic and secondary level education. Of these new 13,246 teachers with a lower diploma, GSCE or less, 53.4% are female. A proportion of these persons may be approaching retirement age and therefore will be withdrawing from the system shortly. But those still early or mid-way into their career, and in the absence of in-service training to upgrade degrees, the higher qualification standards may serve to hold back these teachers from advancement and higher salary scales.

While it is still premature to predict trends in the status of women in the teaching profession as a result of the implementation and enforcement of this education law, the number of women who complete a BA/BSc degree may increase in order to meet the requisite qualifications for teaching. An alternative possibility is that the new qualification standards will result in a decrease in the proportion of female teachers as fewer women meet the minimum education requirements.

## C. Conclusions

Comparative analysis of measures of educational attainment indicate that Palestinians have among the highest school enrollment rates and female enrollment levels among the Arab states and developing areas.<sup>25</sup> Having achieved gender enrollment parity at the basic level and near parity at the secondary level, there is a real risk of slipping into complacency and prematurely claiming to have achieved gender equity in education. The enrollment data indicate while significant achievements have been made during the second half of the twentieth century *vis-a-vis* female participation in education, statistics concerning dropout indicate there continues to be some ambivalence regarding male and female school completion at the secondary level and female enrollment in higher education.

Although more Palestinian women are educated as compared with the past, and some have pursued professions traditionally dominated by males such as engineering sciences and computer programming, the majority elect to enter fields involving the “caring professions” traditionally associated with a female role. Men continue to dominate science and technology fields, and legal and business management programs which gives them (versus women) a privileged lead in the age of information technology and positions them to be the authors of national legislation as well as policy decision-makers. This pattern is evident in the hierarchy of the teaching profession itself: females dominate the staff of early childhood education programs and basic level schools; males comprise the majority of secondary school teachers and university faculty, as well as educational management such as school headmasters and deans of higher education.

As indicated by these gendered staffing patterns and enrollment levels in the academic and vocational secondary streams and in post-secondary fields of specialization, the education system is staffed and structured in such a way as to conform to the traditional roles and values ascribed to men and women. An examination of the impact on education achievement by gender of the formal curriculum (i.e., texts and learning material), the hidden curriculum, and teaching methodology is beyond the scope of the study. However, given the structural patterns, we can assume that each, in its own ways, incorporates and transmits gender-stereotyped imagery and directives.

In effect, there is a non-formal two-tier education system in operation, one for females and another for males. But the origin of these tiers is found outside the formal education system: within the Palestinian home, economy and the labor market. Therefore, gender equity (and not just equality) in the classroom cannot be pursued in isolation from equity in the society. While the concepts and principles underlying gender equity must be incorporated into the continuous process of curriculum, teacher training, and considered when mapping new school construction, they must also exist in other dimensions of Palestinian life.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> A literate person was defined as one who can read and write a short abstract about his/her life. PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Preliminary Report, Topical Report Series (No. 1), Educational Characteristics, Detailed Results*, Ramallah, October 1996, 35.
- <sup>2</sup> According to the survey, 55.3% of households in the West Bank were classified in village areas, 36.2% in cities, and 8.4% in camps. In the Gaza Strip, 46.9% of households were located in cities and 53.1% in camps. PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Preliminary Report*, Ramallah, March 1996, 69.
- <sup>3</sup> PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Topical Report Series (No. 1), Educational Characteristics, Detailed Results*, October 1996, 35, 36, 39, and 41.
- <sup>4</sup> The levels cited for the age group 6-11 years may be higher than actual as a result of the timing of the demographic survey. Sampling was undertaken after the beginning of the academic school year.
- <sup>5</sup> PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip Topical Report Series (No. 1), Educational Characteristics, Detailed Results*, October 1996, 95 & 98.
- <sup>6</sup> UNICEF, *A Basic Education Profile of the Middle East and North Africa Region*, Amman, UNICEF, 5.
- <sup>7</sup> PCBS and MOE, *Education Statistical Yearbook No. 2, 1995-1996*, Female-biased pass rates are not found among secondary school vocational students in the nursing and commercial streams where the record shows mixed results.
- <sup>8</sup> PCBS and MOE, *Education Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97*, Ramallah, June 1997, 94-95.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, public schools (96), UNRWA schools (98) and private schools (99).
- <sup>10</sup> For example, the fertility rate in Gaza Strip is 7.4 children as compared with 5.6 children in the West Bank (PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Preliminary Report*, Ramallah, March 1996, 132). The per capita gross national product (GNP) for 1996 is estimated at US\$1,108 and US\$2,144 for the Gaza Strip and West Bank respectively (in constant 1995 US\$). UNSCO, *Economic and Social Conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Quarterly Report*, Gaza, 1 April 1997, 8-10.
- <sup>11</sup> PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Preliminary Report*, Ramallah, March 1996, 69.
- <sup>12</sup> PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, District Report Series (No. 10), District-by-District Comparative Results*, Ramallah, June 1997, 31.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.
- <sup>14</sup> PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Preliminary Report*, Ramallah, March 1996, 122.
- <sup>15</sup> PCBS and MOE, *Education Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97*, Ramallah, June 1997, 209 (universities) and 221 (community colleges).
- <sup>16</sup> The Council for Higher Education, *Graduates from Palestinian Universities, 1975-1995*, Jerusalem, 41.
- <sup>17</sup> PCBS and MOE, *Education Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97*, Ramallah, June 1997, 210.
- <sup>18</sup> PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, District Report Series (No. 10) District-by-District Comparative Results*, Ramallah, June 1997, 45.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.
- <sup>20</sup> PCBS and MOE, *Education Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97*, June 1997, 217-218.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.
- <sup>22</sup> UNSCO, *Economic and Social Conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Quarterly Report*, Winter-Spring 1997, April 1997, 30.

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<sup>23</sup>Three of the five male teachers are supervisors.

<sup>24</sup>Lamis Abu Nahleh, *Gender Planning, Vocational Education, and Technical Training (VETT) in Palestine*, Birzeit University, September 1996.

<sup>25</sup>UNESCO, *1993 Statistical Yearbook*, Paris, 1993.

# 3. HEALTH

## *Terms and Abbreviations*

## **Highlights of Findings**

### **A. Mortality, Morbidity and Related Health Behaviors**

- Infant and Child Mortality
- Perceived Birth Weight
- Breast Feeding Practices
- Diarrhea Morbidity and Treatment
- Acute Respiratory Infection Morbidity and Treatment
- Immunization
- Nutritional Status
- Accidents and Injury
- Disability
- Unexpected Illness and Injury
- Smoking

### **B. Reproductive Health and Related Behavior**

- Maternal Mortality
- Prenatal Care
- Place and Nature of Delivery
- Post-natal Care
- Contraceptive Use

### **C. Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### ***Notes***

#### ***References***

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- Figure 3-1: Infant and child mortality declined by more than 50% since 1976
- Figure 3-2: Neonatal mortality is higher for boys, but post-neonatal mortality is higher for girls
- Figure 3-3: Girls had more severe and more frequent diarrhea episodes
- Figure 3-4: Girls aged 12-23 months have higher immunization coverage rates for measles and MMR than same-age boys.
- Figure 3-5: Malnutrition, measured by weight-for-age among children U5, is higher for girls.
- Figure 3-6: Malnutrition, measured by length/height-for-age among children U5, is higher for girls.
- Figure 3-7: Four-fifths of Palestinian women receive prenatal care.
- Figure 3-8: Women with no education are less likely to receive prenatal care.
- Figure 3-9: The most usual place of delivery is a hospital.
- Figure 3-10: Most women do not seek post-natal care.

## ***Terms and Abbreviations***

ARI	Acute Respiratory Infection
DPT	Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
MCH	Maternal Child Health
MMR	Measles, Mumps and Rubella
MSR	Mortality Sex Ratio
PHC	Primary Health Care
RWB	Remaining West Bank (West Bank excluding annexed Jerusalem)
SD	Standard Deviation
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
U5	Under the age of 5

*Neonatal:* 0-28 days

*Post-neonatal:* 1-11 months

*Infant:* 0-11 months



## **Highlights of Findings**

In general, the data indicates that except regarding disabilities, there have been improvements in bridging the gender gap in physical health. In the data analyzed, the following findings were made:

### **Mortality, Morbidity and Related Health Behaviors**

- National infant and child mortality is 27.3 and 33.2 per 1000 live births respectively. Both rates are higher for males than females.
- When Jerusalem data is excluded, and infant mortality is broken down into neonatal and post-neonatal, females have a 20% higher post-neonatal mortality rate than males. This suggests that differential treatment and care contribute to the higher mortality of females.
- More male children than female children are perceived to have an above average birth weight.
- Among infants 0-11 months of age, the breast-feeding rate is 63.8% for females and 73.1% for males.
- A higher proportion of males than females continued to breastfeed during the second year of life.
- There are gender differentials in treatment and care during a diarrhea episode to the disadvantage of females.
- Females have a higher proportion of acute and chronic malnutrition.
- Female children have a slightly higher immunization coverage rate than male children.
- The proportion of accidents due to poisoning is much higher among females than males, while the proportion of fractures and burns is higher among males.
- The percentage of long-term effect of the injury or accident is slightly higher among females than males.
- Across all age groups, females have lower rates of disability than males with a much larger difference in rates among those over 14 years of age than those under 15. It is speculated that discriminatory treatment and care contribute to the early death of disabled females.

### **Reproductive Health and Related Behavior**

- The maternal mortality ratio ranges from 60 to 140 per 100,000 live births. The highest maternal mortality ratio is among women aged 15-19 and 50-54.
- 19.7% of women do not receive any prenatal care, and 80.3% do not receive any post-natal care.
- The majority of complications during pregnancy can be prevented and/or treated by effective and timely prenatal care.
- Women's knowledge of contraceptive methods is over 98% but use is 45%.
- Social attitudes and beliefs opposing family planning are the main reason for not using contraceptives.

# HEALTH

Within Palestinian society, a preference for male children exists. This son preference may lead to discriminatory treatment and care between females and males that starts early in life and continues through adulthood. The purpose of this chapter is to explore whether or not this son preference translates itself into discriminatory care practices that adversely affect females, and lead to differentials in mortality, morbidity and health service utilization.

The chapter provides a preliminary descriptive overview of gender differentials in mortality, feeding practices, morbidity, selected reproductive health indicators and health service utilization using PCBS demographic and health survey data. These surveys are the first national surveys with external validity, meaning that the results could be generalized to the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza. In addition, the surveys provide baseline data needed for planning and for monitoring future trends.

## ***Health Services:***

Palestine has four main health providers. The public sector operated by the Ministry of Health, local and international non-governmental and charitable organizations, UNRWA and the private for-profit sector.

A network of approximately 443 PHC clinics and 25 hospitals provides services to Palestinians.<sup>1</sup> Access to services is high. However, limited qualitative research indicates that the quality and range of services provided is inadequate concerning outreach and health education services. In addition, current services suffer from the absence of harmonized standard policies and protocols for diagnosis, treatment, referral and follow up of many common disease conditions.

45.5% of the Palestinian population are not covered by any health insurance.<sup>2</sup> However, the public sector provides free primary and secondary health care services for all children under three. In addition, all pregnant women are eligible for free prenatal care and postnatal care for up to six weeks post-delivery. A fee is charged for hospital delivery.

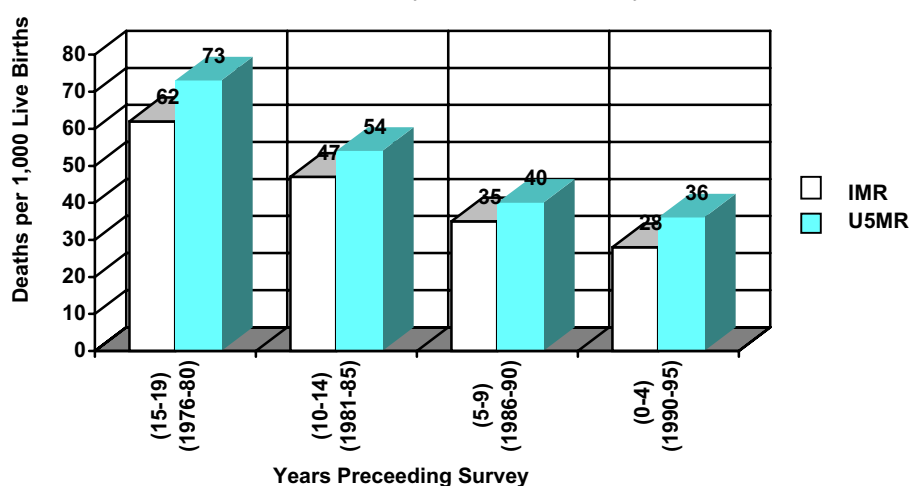
The public sector provides insurance for 37.5% of the population, followed by UNRWA, which covers 13% of the population. Private insurance is not common and covers only 3%.<sup>3</sup> Government and UNRWA insurance covers a higher proportion of the population in Gaza than in the West Bank. Data from PCBS health survey indicate that there are no gender differentials in the overall insurance coverage rates.

## A. Mortality, Morbidity and Related Health Behaviors

### Infant and Child Mortality

Data indicates that there has been a consistent decline in infant and child mortality over the past 20 years. **Figure 3-1** illustrates this decline.

**Figure 3-1: Infant and child mortality rates declined by more than 50% since 1976.**



Source: PCBS, *Demographic Survey*, 1996

This consistent decrease was evident in both the West Bank and Gaza. However, the decrease in mortality rates for both infants and children under 5 mortality was higher in the West Bank than Gaza. During the five years preceding the survey (1990-95), a period of economic recession, IMR still dropped from 34 to 25 in the West Bank and from 34 to 32 in Gaza. This drop in the West Bank is difficult to explain and deserves further investigation especially since the drop was in both neonatal and post-neonatal mortality.

**Table 3-1: Infant and Child Mortality by Sex, 1996**

Sex	Under Five Mortality	Infant Mortality		
		Infant (0-11 months)	Neonatal (0-28 days)	Post-Neonatal (1-11 months)
Boys	36.7	30.3	19.1	11.2
Girls	29.3	24.0	13.2	10.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>33.2</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>16.3</b>	<b>11.0</b>

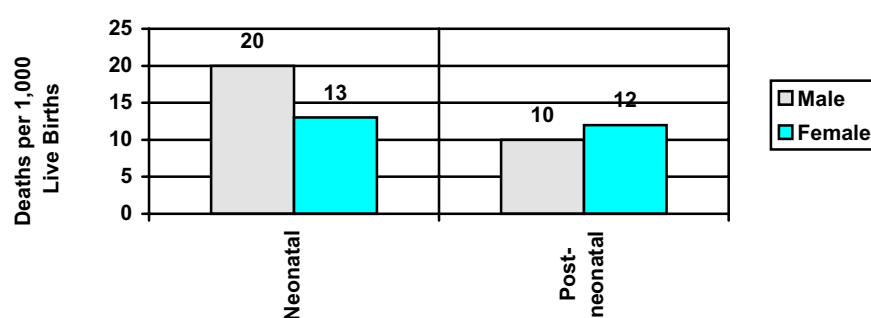
Source: PCBS, *Demographic Survey*, 1996, unpublished data; PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1996.

**Table 3-1** indicates that the national infant and child mortality rates are higher for males than for females in all categories. The overall infant and child mortality rates are consistent with data from developed countries where male mortality is higher in every age group. In addition, a study of sex differentials in mortality in several Arab countries reported that mortality sex ratio (MSR) shows a drop for infants and children.<sup>4</sup>

The much higher neonatal mortality rate for male infants contributed to the overall higher mortality of males compared to females; this is consistent with the fact that female newborns are biologically stronger than male newborns. However, when Jerusalem data is excluded and mortality is broken down into neonatal and post-neonatal, post-neonatal mortality is higher for females, in both the West Bank and Gaza.

**Figure 3-2** illustrates the direct estimates of neonatal and post-neonatal mortality for five years preceding the survey by sex for Remaining West Bank (RWB) and Gaza.

**Figure 3-2: Neonatal mortality is higher for boys but post-neonatal mortality is higher for girls.**



Source: PCBS, *Demographic Survey, 1996*.

Environmental and socio-economic factors are known to have a strong effect on post-neonatal mortality. For this reason it can be speculated that differential care and treatment contribute to the higher mortality of females in the post-neonatal period in the RWB and Gaza.

The data indicates that mortality rates are lowest among children of women with post-secondary education. This is consistent with worldwide research findings. The highest mortality rates are in Hebron, and lowest in Jerusalem, Tulkarem and Qalqilya. The demographic survey reports life expectancy at birth to be higher for females (73.5 years) than for males (70.0 years). In addition, the overall sex ratio (males per 100 females) is 105 (106 for the West Bank and 104 for Gaza).

The sex ratio for the 0-4 age group is 107.3.<sup>5</sup> Given that the mortality rate for children under five is higher for males than females, one would expect more females than males in this age group. The 0-4 male to female sex ratio cannot be explained by mortality, sample size, sampling errors, nor by inaccuracy in reporting of age, which leaves underreporting of females as the possible explanation. If living females are underreported, dead females are also likely to be underreported. This strongly suggests that female mortality is underreported.

The Ministry of Health administrative reports indicate that the major causes of infant and child mortality include prematurity, hypothermia, congenital anomalies, low birth weight, acute respiratory infections, diarrhea and accidents.

## Perceived Birth Weight

Table 3-2 provides the gender differentials in perceived birth weight controlling for age of mother.

**Table 3-2: Perceived Birth Weight by Age of Mother and Sex of Infant**

Age Group of Mother	Sex of Infant	Birth Weight (%)			Total %
		<i>Below Average</i>	<i>Average (2.5-4kg)</i>	<i>Above Average</i>	
14-49	Boys	6.0	85.0	9.0	100
	Girls	6.1	86.8	7.1	100
	<b>All</b>	6.0	85.9	8.1	100

Source: PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1996.

The data indicates that a higher proportion of male newborns is perceived to have an above average birth weight. This was true irrespective of age of mother. It is important to note that male newborns are normally larger in size than female newborns. The data illustrates that there were no gender differentials in the proportion of newborns with low birth weight.

## Breast Feeding Practices

Table 3-3 provides the percent distribution of breast feeding practices by sex among children 0-11 months of age.

**Table 3-3: Breast Feeding Practice Among Infants by Sex**

Age of Infant (Months)	Sex	Breast Feeding Practice (%)				Total (%)
		<i>Still Breast Feeding</i>	<i>Stopped Breast Feeding</i>	<i>Never Breast Fed</i>	<i>Other</i>	
0-11	Boys	73.1	20.5	3.5	2.9	100
	Girls	63.8	16.4	2.2	17.6	100

Source: PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1996.

**Table 3-4: Breast Feeding Practice by Age and Sex of Child**

Age of Infant (Months)	Sex	Breast Feeding Practice (%)				Total (%)
		<i>Still Breast Feeding</i>	<i>Stopped Breast Feeding</i>	<i>Never Breast Fed</i>	<i>Other</i>	
0-3	Boys	87.8	5.9	5.0	1.4	100
	Girls	92.9	3.6	3.4	0	100
4-6	Boys	82.0	13.4	1.2	3.4	100
	Girls	79.9	14.3	1.5	4.3	100
7-11	Boys	60.6	30.8	5.1	3.5	100
	Girls	61.6	25.8	4.2	8.4	100
12-17	Boys	47.7	45.3	1.3	5.7	100
	Girls	34.1	51.0	4.0	10.9	100
18-23	Boys	12.0	52.0	4.9	31.0	100
	Girls	7.0	56.7	3.8	32.5	100
	<b>All</b>	47.5	36.1	3.6	12.8	100

Source: PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1996.

**Table 3-3** indicates that among children less than one year of age, a higher proportion of males are still breast feeding compared to females. A 1992 study on infant feeding practices showed a higher rate of decrease of breast-feeding for females compared to males.<sup>6</sup> Differences exist between the West Bank and Gaza; in the West Bank the proportion of males still breast-feeding is higher than that of females, while the reverse is true in Gaza.

**Table 3-4** illustrates that among the 0-3 month old infants a higher proportion of females are still breast feeding and a higher proportion of male infants stopped breast feeding or were never breast fed. However, male children are more likely than female children to be breast-fed during the second year of age.

## Diarrhea Morbidity and Treatment

Diarrhea is a major cause of mortality and morbidity among children under five. In the PCBS study, which investigated incidence in the two weeks preceding the survey, the data indicated no gender differentials in the mean duration of episodes, but gender differentials existed in prevalence and in severity of episodes. Prevalence was higher among males in both the West Bank and Gaza. However, a higher proportion of females developed dehydration and had vomiting and blood in their stools. **Table 3-5** and **Figure 3-3** illustrates these differentials.

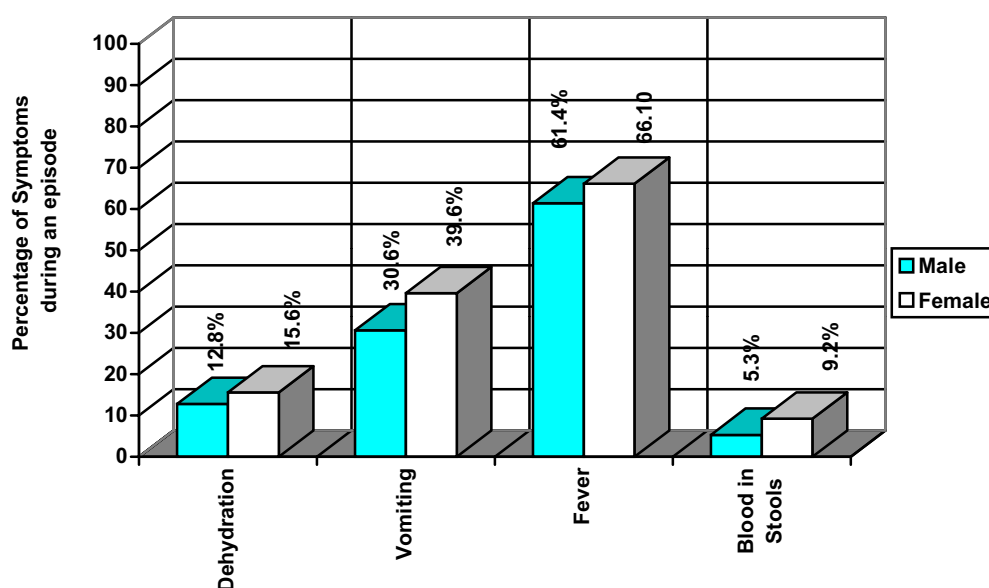
Timely referral to a health provider and administration of Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) are determinants of proper home management, which is key in prevention of dehydration. The higher proportion of dehydration among females might be due to the higher proportion of "vomiting" among females. However, it indicates that differentials do exist in home management of diarrhea between males and females. It is speculated that families might hesitate a little bit longer in seeking health care for females than males.

**Table 3-5: Children Under Five Who Had a Recent Diarrhea Episode by Sex**

Sex	With Diarrhea (%)
Boys	14.1
Girls	12.3
Total	13.2

Source: PCBS, Health Survey, 1997.

**Figure 3-3: Girls had more severe and more frequent diarrheal episodes.**



Source: PCBS, Health Survey, 1997.

Fever and blood in stools indicate severity of a diarrheal episode. General health and nutritional status of a child influence the severity and outcome of a diarrheal episode.

Slightly higher proportions of females (42%) than males (40.7%) were treated with ORT. This might be due to the fact that the proportion of females who had dehydration was higher than males. However, data indicates that there were discriminatory feeding practices during a diarrheal episode between males and females to the disadvantage of females (Table 3-6). A higher proportion of females was given

**Table 3-6: Breast Feeding Practices During a Diarrhea Episode among Children Still Breast Feeding**

Sex	Breast Feeding Practices (%)			
	Stopped	Decreased Amount	Increased Amount	Same Amount
Boys	2.9	8.8	24.2	64.1
Girls	4.2	10.3	21.7	63.8
Total	3.5	9.6	23.0	63.9

Source: PCBS Health Survey, 1997.

less breast milk, or mothers stopped breast feeding them during a diarrheal episode.

Gender differentials also existed in the type of provider selected for treating the diarrhea episode. **Table 3-7** provides the gender differentials for utilization of providers during a diarrhea episode.

**Table 3-7: Children Under Five Who Had a Recent Diarrhea Episode by Source of Advice and by Sex (%)**

Sex	Consulting Any Source	Hospital	Doctor	MCH	Health Center	Pharmacy
Boys	59.0	9.6	43.3	19.0	40.6	13.6
Girls	63.6	9.3	40.8	17.2	49.6	6.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>61.1</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>42.1</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>44.9</b>	<b>10.0</b>

Source: PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997.

The proportion consulting any source was higher for females (63.6%) than for males (59%); however, doctors (in private clinics), hospitals, maternal child health centers (MCH) and pharmacies were utilized more frequently for males than females. A qualitative study of primary health care (PHC) services reported that doctors' clinics and hospitals are usually utilized when the child is considered very sick.<sup>7</sup> Given the higher proportion of severity of symptoms among females, one would have expected greater use of these two providers for females than males. Private physicians were consulted more often when the child was less than six months of age.

## Acute Respiratory Infection Morbidity and Treatment

Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) is the major cause of mortality and morbidity among children under five years of age. Risk factors for ARI are low birth weight, poor nutritional status, overcrowding and passive smoking. The PCBS health survey reported the prevalence of symptoms of ARI as a proxy indicator for the severity of the disease. However, it should be noted that the data collection period included summer months (June-September), when ARI has a lower prevalence. **Tables 3-8, 3-9** and **3-10** illustrate the gender differentials in prevalence of symptoms of ARI and related treatment and provider utilization practices.

**Table 3-8: Children Under Five With Recent ARI Symptoms by Sex**

Sex	ARI Symptoms (%)		
	Fever	Difficulty (Fast) Breathing and Cough	Cough Only
Boys	65.0	42.4	23.9
Girls	61.1	41.6	25.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>63.0</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>24.5</b>

Source: PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997.

Fever and difficulty in breathing indicate severity of ARI. A higher proportion of males than females suffered from fever and breathing difficulty. This may explain the higher proportion of treatment with antibiotics and antipyretics for males and higher proportion of consultation especially from private doctors and hospitals (**Tables 3-9 and 3-10**).



**Table 3-9: Treatment Practices Among Children Under Five with Recent Symptoms of ARI**

Sex	Children by Various Types of Treatment (%)					
	No Treatment	Antibiotic	Herbal Solution	Antipyretic	Cough Medicine	Other
Boys	10.2	52.2	51.0	66.4	48.2	7.8
Girls	10.8	48.1	50.4	60.8	48.1	4.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>50.3</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>63.5</b>	<b>48.2</b>	<b>5.9</b>

Source: PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997.

**Table 3-10: Provider Utilization among Children Under Five with Recent Symptoms of ARI by Sex**

Sex	Source of Consultation						
	Any Source	Doctor	Hospital	MCH Center	Health Center	Pharmacy	Other
Boys	60.0	40.3	7.6	15.5	41.3	13.5	0.6
Girls	51.0	35.0	5.4	13.6	50.8	6.7	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>55.4</b>	<b>37.8</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>45.8</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>1.1</b>

Source: PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997.

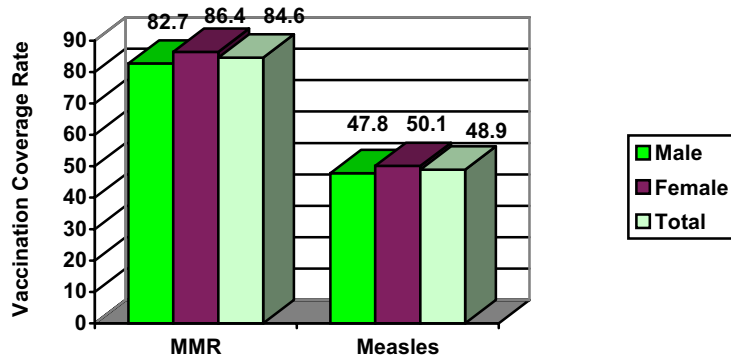
This pattern of provider utilization is similar to that for diarrhea. Utilization of physicians was highest for children under 6 months of age. Contrary to common belief, the proportion of delay (after more than two days) in seeking medical consultation was considerably higher for males (18%) than for females (11.1%). Children fewer than six months of age had the highest proportions of delayed medical consultation. Similar to the analysis of diarrhea data, no gender differentials were reported while controlling for age of child and symptoms.

## Immunization

The immunization program in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is considered a very well developed and established program. Coverage rates from both survey data and routine reporting have always been high. No statistically significant gender differentials have been reported in the past.

The PCBS health survey reports high immunization coverage rates (above 95%) among children 12-23 months of age in both the West Bank and Gaza and for both genders for Polio and DPT. However, Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) and Measles alone had lower coverage rates. The West Bank and Gaza had similar coverage rates for MMR (82.1%), but the coverage rate for Measles was 93.2% for Gaza and only 28.7% for the West Bank. The difference in Measles coverage rates between the West Bank and Gaza Strip suggests that the adopted policy of a unified immunization schedule is not yet fully implemented in the West Bank. **Figure 3-4** provides the gender differentials among children 12-23 months of age in the West Bank and Gaza for Measles and MMR immunizations. **Figure 3-4** illustrates that females had a higher coverage rate than males.

**Figure 3-4: Girls aged 12-23 months have higher immunization coverage rates for Measles and MMR than same-age boys.**



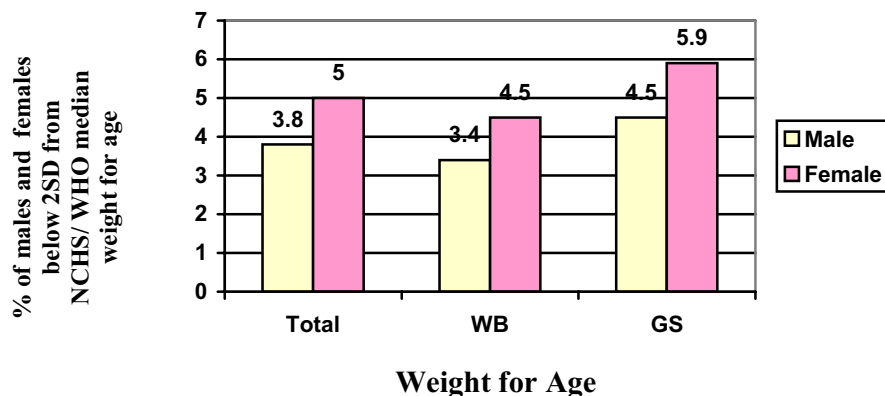
Source: PCBS, Health Survey, 1997.

### Nutritional Status

Nutritional status is one of the indicators of gender differentials in care. The PCBS data indicates that chronic malnutrition is more prevalent than acute and gender differentials existed to the disadvantage of females. The PCBS results are consistent with the findings from an UNRWA 1990 refugee population study.

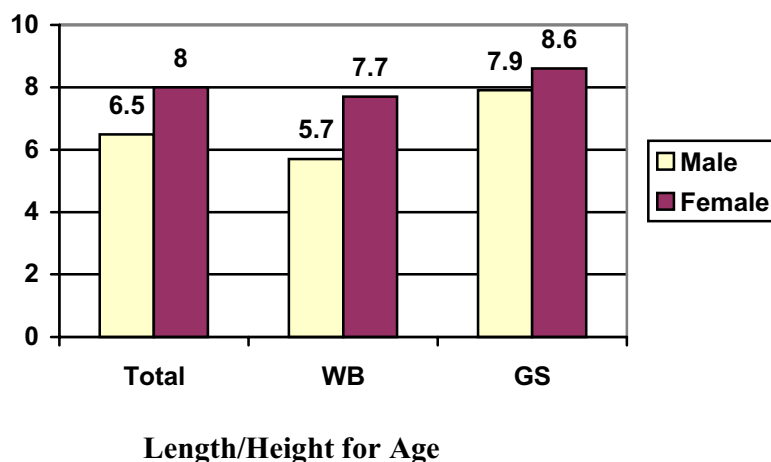
PCBS data indicates that among children under five the percentage of females who fall below two standard deviations (-2SD from the median of the NCHS/WHO reference population) for weight-for-age and length/height-for-age is 5.0 and 8.0 respectively compared to 3.8 and 6.5 for males. (Pocket studies in the past reported higher prevalence rates. However, these studies used a different reference standard for measuring malnutrition and had no external validity.<sup>8</sup>) **Figures 3-5 and 3-6** illustrate the gender differentials in nutritional status.

**Figure 3-5: Malnutrition, measured by weight-for-age among children U5, is higher for girls.**



Source: PCBS, Health Survey, 1997.

**Figure 3-6: Malnutrition, measured by length/height-for-age among children U5, is higher for girls.**



Source: PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997.

## Accidents and Injury

Accidents and injuries are an important cause of morbidity and mortality among children under five. The PCBS health survey did not report on the prevalence of accidents and injuries by sex. However, data on period of occurrence, place of injury, type of injury and outcome were analyzed by sex.

Accidents occurred somewhat more frequently inside the house for females (70.2%), as compared to males (66%) who play outside the house more often than females. Fractures and burns occurred more frequently among males, while the proportion of children poisoned was much higher among females (**Table 3-11**). The percentage of long-term effect of injury was higher among females (13.9%) than males (12.3%). This may indicate delay in obtaining services or greater seriousness of accident or injury.

**Table 3-11: Type of Accident Among Children Under Five<sup>9</sup> by Sex**

Sex	Type of Accident (%)			
	<i>Poisoning</i>	<i>Fracture</i>	<i>Burn</i>	<i>Wounds</i>
<b>Boys</b>	5.0	27.7	24.5	42.8
<b>Girls</b>	20.0	15.4	20.9	43.7

Source: PCBS Health Survey, 1997

## Disability

**Table 3-12** shows that across all age groups, males had higher rates of disability than females. However the difference is much greater among those 15 years and over.

**Table 3-12: Prevalence Rate of Disability by Age Groups and Sex**

Age Group	Disability Rate (per 100,000)	
	Girls	Boys
0-14	1614.6	1753.5
15-29	1460.3	2439.6
30-49	1369.0	2192.8
50+	4025.0	4833.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1802.4</b>	<b>2302.1</b>

Source: PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997

The lower rates for females could be due to one or more of the following:

- a decrease in occurrence of disability
- increase in death rates from disability
- improved cure rate of disability cases
- shorter duration of disability, or
- selective migration (immigration of cases or emigration of healthy)

Analyzing the cause of disability among males and females indicate that a higher proportion of females suffered from disability due to congenital, genetic, birth related and other problems. However, a higher proportion of males suffered from disability caused by accidents, *intifada*-related injury, infectious diseases and other injuries. Females had a higher proportion of hearing disability and males a higher proportion of undefined other disabilities.

The causes rule out that the gender difference can be explained by a decrease in occurrence, improved cure rate or shorter duration of disability. Also, selective migration in the Palestinian context would reduce rate for males not females, since males are more likely to migrate. The relative increase in *intifada*-related injury only partially explains the difference among the 15+ age groups.

The increase in the difference in disability rate among males and females 15+ years of age could possibly be caused by an increase in death rates among females; it strongly supports the speculation that discriminatory care and treatment of disabled females contribute to their early death. This finding is supported by data from studies conducted by the Regional Committees for Rehabilitation in the West Bank and Gaza which found a surprisingly high ratio of males to females among the disabled. These "missing" disabled females deserve further investigation since the available data consistently give grounds to the speculation that disabled females are discriminated against.

## Unexpected Illness and Injury

Published data from the health survey does not provide prevalence rates for the occurrence of unexpected illness or injury. However, it provides a description of distribution of occurrence between injury and illness and the health care utilization related to the occurrence of the sudden illness or injury by sex, and age in both the West Bank and Gaza. The data provided illustrates that unexpected injuries occurred more often among males than females, with no regional differences between the West Bank and Gaza.

In examining data on type of provider utilized and reasons for not seeking care, a higher proportion of males utilized hospitals and MCH centers than females. On the other hand, a higher proportion of females utilized health centers. There were no gender differentials in utilization of doctors and pharmacies. Higher utilization of hospitals by males may be due to the fact that a higher proportion of males suffered from injuries. (Table 3-13).

No gender differentials were obvious for most reasons for not seeking care. (Table 3-14). The higher proportion of females who were too busy to seek care might be due to the general tendency of females to prioritize others over themselves.

**Table 3-13: Utilization of Provider Among Persons who had a Sudden Illness or Injury by Sex**

Sex	Provider Utilized				
	<i>Pharmacy</i>	<i>Doctor</i>	<i>Hospital</i>	<i>MCH</i>	<i>Health Center</i>
<b>Boys</b>	3.3	40.5	16.4	9.1	30.7
<b>Girls</b>	3.2	40.1	11.8	7.9	37.0

Source: PCBS Health Survey, 1997.

**Table 3-14: Reason for Not Seeking Care Among Persons who Had a Sudden Illness or Injury by Sex**

Sex	Reason for Not Seeking Care (%)					
	<i>Busy</i>	<i>Treated Self</i>	<i>No need</i>	<i>Used Traditional Treatment</i>	<i>No Health Facility</i>	<i>Cost</i>
<b>Boys</b>	4.9	24.5	50.4	11.1	1.7	7.4
<b>Girls</b>	6.1	21.5	51.8	11.1	1.7	7.8

Source: PCBS, Health Survey, 1997.

## Smoking

Smoking behavior is considered a major factor contributing to gender differentials in mortality among adults worldwide. The United Nations population bulletin reports that the factor contributing the most to the widening of sex differentials in mortality in developed countries has been male cigarette smoking leading to elevated mortality from lung cancer and heart diseases.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 3-15** illustrates the smoking behavior of males and females reported in the health survey. The gender differential is strikingly large and it is speculated that prevalence rates for both are under-reported due to social desirability. In addition, the person interviewed may not be aware of the smoking behavior of young adult females and males in the household, due to the prevailing social value of disapproval of smoking among females, generally and for this age group particularly.

The regional differences for both males and females may be due to the generally more conservative social norms in Gaza compared to the West Bank. This is especially evident in the difference in rates of smoking among females in the West Bank and Gaza, (3.5 in the West Bank and 0.5 in Gaza).

**Table 3-15: Smoking Behavior Among Persons 14 Years and Older**

Sex	Person Who Smoke (%)		
	<i>West Bank</i>	<i>Gaza</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>Boys</b>	42.0	35.0	40.0
<b>Girls</b>	3.6	0.5	2.7

Source: PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997.

In the Palestinian context, no studies have been done on knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices on smoking. However, social convention governing the smoking behavior of males and females disapproves of females smoking in general, especially in public. In addition, it is considered disrespectful for young adult males to smoke in front of their elders. Thus, it is speculated that the reported prevalence of smoking is most likely influenced by social desirability bias. Analyzing the prevalence of smoking by age groups might clarify the picture.

## B. Reproductive Health and Related Behavior

### Maternal Mortality

**Table 3-16** provides estimates of maternal mortality ratio. It indicates that mortality is highest among women at the beginning and end of childbearing years, 15-19 and 50-54 years and lowest among 25-29 year-old women.

A review of maternal deaths among the refugee population worldwide concluded that deaths most often resulted from routine complications of pregnancy that can normally be managed by a secondary care facility. The care received was described as “too little, too late”.<sup>11</sup> Autopsy studies in Egypt (Ministry of Health, 1994) indicated that most maternal deaths were caused by mismanagement of complications of pregnancy and delivery.

Research indicates that 20-30% of low risk pregnant women turned high risk during labor and delivery. One of the main determinants of the successful outcome of child birth is appropriate and timely referral and quick access to secondary and tertiary hospital services.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 3-16: Maternal Mortality Ratio by Age Groups**

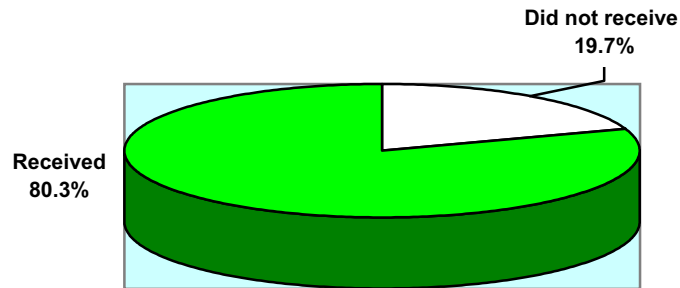
Age Group	Maternal Deaths (per 100,000)
15-19	93
20-24	82
25-29	60
30-34	67
35-39	74
40-44	78
45-49	84
50-54	140

Source: PCBS *Demographic Survey*, 1995, unpublished data.

### Prenatal Care

Provision of prenatal care is proven to be associated with improved outcome for the child to be born, but there is no strong evidence for its contribution to improved outcome to the women herself. Prenatal care is expected to detect, manage and refer high risk pregnancies and to provide women with counseling on self and child care during and after pregnancy such as nutrition, iron supplementation, infant feeding and birth spacing. PCBS health survey data indicated that 19.7% of currently pregnant women did not receive any prenatal care.

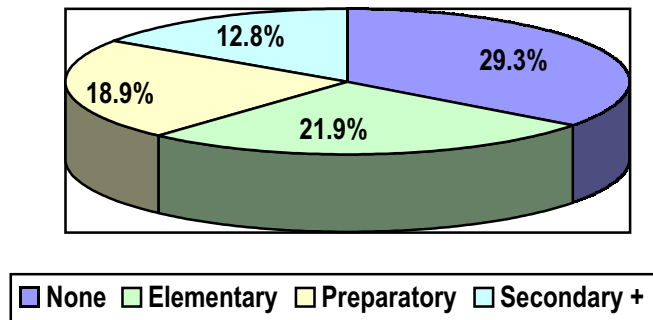
**Figure 3-7: Four-fifths of Palestinian women receive prenatal care.**



Source: PCBS, *Health Survey*.

Age was not a factor in who received prenatal care. However, women with no education were more likely not to receive prenatal care, (**Figure 3-8**). They were also more likely to deliver at home.

**Figure 3-8: Women with no education are less likely to receive prenatal care.**



Source: PCBS *Health Survey*, 1997.

38.8% of women who were in their third trimester did not receive any care, and these women were most likely to deliver without receiving any prenatal care. In addition, 23.1% of women who were in their second trimester did not receive any prenatal care. Among all age groups, 77-81% of women received prenatal care from an obstetrician. The majority of women choose specialized physicians to provide prenatal care services.



**Table 3-17** provides the percent distribution of complications in current pregnancy.

**Table 3-17: Complications Related to Pregnancy**

Complication In Current Pregnancy	%
Swollen Ankles	23.7
Persistent Headache	38.9
High Blood Pressure	19.7
Bleeding	5.3
Convulsions	6.2
Infections	33.6
Other	7.7

Source: PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997.

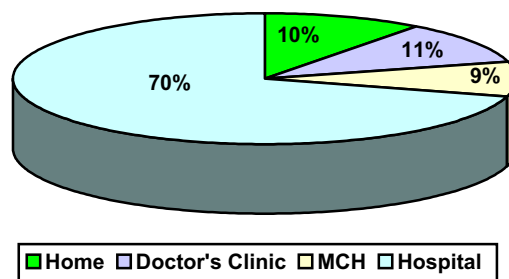
No data is available on population prevalence of reproductive tract infections and sexually transmitted diseases and women generally have no control over the sexual behavior of their partners.

PCBS data on complications of pregnancy is the first national data with external validity on morbidity related to pregnancy and childbirth. It is important to conduct further analysis of data on complications of pregnancy and to explore variables associated with developing these pregnancy-related morbidities.

## Place and Nature of Delivery

The majority (70.9%) of women deliver in hospitals. **Figure 3-10** provides the distribution of place of delivery of the last two births in the five years preceding the survey in the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 3-9: The most usual place of delivery is a hospital.**



Ten percent of women had deliveries at home despite the higher risk to both mother and baby. Older women (40-49) had the highest proportion of home delivery. Specialized physicians and nurse midwives attended the home births of 58.9% of newborns in the West Bank and 34.2% of newborns in Gaza.

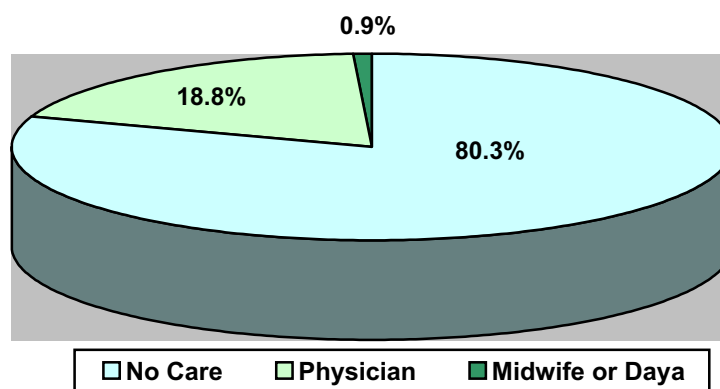
The reasons for delivering at home were cited at access for 3.2% and cost for 16.6% of the cases. Premature delivery, which is more likely to need medical attention, accounted for 21.9%. More than half of women delivering at home (56.1%) preferred to do so.

75.8% of women reported a normal delivery and only 6.1% delivered by Caesarian section. The proportion of normal deliveries was lowest (62%) among the 14-19 year old women and highest (78.4%) among the 40-49 year old women.

## Post-natal Care

80.3% of women did not receive any post-natal care, 77% in the West Bank and 86% in Gaza. 18.8% reported receiving post-natal care from a physician (21.7% in the West Bank and 13.2% in Gaza), and 0.9% from a midwife or *daya*, traditional midwife. These findings are consistent with routine data from MCH clinics where postnatal care is virtually non-existent. Unless women experience post-partum difficulties they will not seek post-natal care.

Figure 3-11: Most women do not seek post-natal care.



## Contraceptive Use

Among ever married women, the data indicates that women's knowledge of contraceptive methods is high (over 98%) across all age groups. However, only 65.7% of these women ever used a contraceptive. Women 30-39 years of age used contraception more frequently than those below 30 years. In addition, better-educated women are more likely to have used contraceptives.

The majority (76%) of ever-users first use contraceptive methods to space children. Among these women, the educated and those under 30 years were more likely to use contraceptive methods for child spacing.

Among currently married women 45.2% are using some contraceptive method. The main method used is the Intrauterine Device (IUD) 21.5%. Reasons for the popularity of the IUD are its convenience and long-term effectiveness. **Table 3-18** provides the percent distribution of currently married women who do not intend to use a contraceptive method by main reason for not using.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 3-18: Currently Married Women who Do Not Intend to Use a Contraceptive Method by Main Reason for Not Using**

Reasons for Not Using Contraceptive Methods	%
Menopause	43.6
Inconvenience	3.7
Cost	0.6
Lack of knowledge	2.1
Fear of side effects	10.8
Husband opposes	17.7
Woman herself opposes family planning	17.7
Religious reasons	7.3
Relative oppose	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997.

Disapproval of family planning by relatives, husband and the woman herself for religious or other reasons contributes 38.9% to the reasons for not using contraceptive methods. Fear of side effects (10.8%) is next and cost (0.6%) is the least important cause. These results indicate that social attitudes and beliefs towards family planning are the major reasons for not using contraceptives and need to be changed. An effective information, education and communication program is needed to convince women of family planning benefits.

## C. Conclusions and Recommendations

In general the data indicates that except for disability, there are improvements in bridging the gender gap in physical health. However, it was not possible to draw conclusions from most of the findings since the differences in proportions were often small, and statistical tests of significance were not conducted. In the data analyzed, the following findings were made:

### **Mortality, Morbidity and Related Health Behaviors**

- National infant and child mortality is 27.3 and 33.2 per 1000 live births respectively. Both rates are higher for males than females.
- When Jerusalem data is excluded and infant mortality is broken down into neonatal and post-neonatal, females have a 20% higher post-neonatal mortality rate than males. This suggests that differential treatment and care contribute to the higher mortality of females.
- More male children than female children are perceived to have an above average birth weight.
- Among infants 0-11 months of age, the breast-feeding rate is 63.8% for females and 73.1% for males.
- A higher proportion of males than females continue to breast-feed during the second year of life.
- There are gender differentials in treatment and care during a diarrhea episode to the disadvantage of females.
- Females have a higher proportion of acute and chronic malnutrition.
- Female children have a slightly higher immunization coverage rate than male children.
- The proportion of accidents due to poisoning is much higher among females than males, while the proportion of fractures and burns is higher among males.
- The percentage of long-term effect of the injury or accident is slightly higher among females than males.
- Across all age groups, females have lower rates of disability than males with a much larger difference in rates among those over 14 years of age than those under 15. Discriminatory treatment and care may contribute to the early death of girls with disabilities.

### **Reproductive Health and Related Behavior**

- The maternal mortality ratio ranges from 60 to 140 per 100,000 live births; the highest maternal mortality ratio is among women 15-19 and 50-54.
- 19.7% of women do not receive any prenatal care, and 80.3% do not receive any post-natal care.
- The majority of complications during pregnancy can be prevented and/or treated by effective and timely prenatal care.
- Women's knowledge of contraceptive methods is over 98%, but use is 45%.
- Social attitudes and beliefs opposing family planning are the main reason for not using contraceptives.

The main recommendations for further analysis and research are:

- Gender desegregated data should be systematically collected and analyzed to monitor gender disparities in both routinely collected health data (administrative reports) and in surveys conducted.
- The most important data analysis gap was the lack of information on the statistical significance of the difference in the proportions reported between males and females.
- The difference detected could be due to chance or actually reflects a real difference between males and females. The above is true not only for gender but also for other variables such as age and education. It is important to note that the sample size is large enough to conduct tests of significance.
- In addition, almost all of the analysis done was bivariate. The sample size lends itself to conducting multivariate analysis and investigating determinants or control for variables of interest.
- Tests of significance and multivariate analysis will be useful in providing a more accurate description of the situation and will assist health planners and administrators in prioritizing target groups and planning appropriate services.
- Further research is needed on gender differentials in rearing practices, psychosocial health and cognitive development of children. In addition, anthropological research is needed to gain a better understanding of gender relations and roles. Moreover, research on gender differentials in knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices (KABP) on a range of health problems is scarce. This further research will provide valuable information for planning programs to reduce gender disparities and raise the status of women.
- Qualitative research to provide an in depth understanding of the social, economic and political determinants of fertility among the Palestinian population is needed.

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Barghouthi and Daibes,1993; Daibes and Barghouthi,1996.

<sup>2</sup> PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Hammoud,1982.

<sup>5</sup> PCBS, *Demographic Survey*, 1995, unpublished data.

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF and JFPPA.

<sup>7</sup> Ayed and Cousins, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Ayed, 1992.

<sup>9</sup> PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997, p.160, Table 92.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Population Bulletin, *Sex Differentials in Life Expectancy and Mortality in Developed Countries*, 1988.

<sup>11</sup> Pappagallo, 1993.

<sup>12</sup> Rooney, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997, p. 99, Table 31.

<sup>14</sup>PCBS, *Health Survey*, 1997, p 157, Table 89.

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# 4. LABOR FORCE

*Terms*

## **Highlights of Findings**

### **A. Labor Force Participation**

- Gendered Labor Markets
- Employment Status
- Occupational Distribution
- Wage Discrimination
- Place of Work
- Demographic Characteristics
- Unemployment

### **B. Non-Participants in the Labor Force**

### **C. Conclusions**

- Further Analysis and Research

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Table 4-22: Unemployment by Years of Schooling, Region and Sex (%)

Table 4-23: Unemployment by District of Residence and Sex (%)

Table 4-24: Population Outside the Labor Force by Age, Reason and Sex (%)

## Terms

Population of working age	All persons in the West Bank and Gaza Strip aged 15 years and above.
Reference week	The week ending on Friday preceding the interviewer's visit to the household.
Work	Includes any activity for wage or salary, for profit or family gain, in cash or in kind. One hour or more of such activity constitutes work. Work also includes unpaid activity on a family farm or business.
Employed	<p><b>Employed:</b> All persons aged 15 years and older who were at work at least one hour during the reference week, or who were not at work during the reference week, but held a job or owned business from which they were temporarily absent (because of illness, vacation, temporary stoppage, or any other reason). Employed persons are classified according to employment status as follows:</p> <p><b>1. Employer:</b> A person who operates his or her own economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires one or more waged employees.</p> <p><b>2. Own-account worker (self-employed):</b> A person who operates his or her own economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires no employees.</p> <p><b>3. Employee:</b> A person who works for a public or private employer and receives remuneration in wage, salary, commission, tips, piece-rates or pay in kind.</p> <p><b>Unpaid family member:</b> A person who works without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a related person living in the same household.</p>
Unemployed	Unemployed persons are those individuals 15 years and older who did not work at all during the reference week, who were not absent from a job and were available for work and actively seeking a job during the reference week. Persons who worked in Israel or were absent from work due to closure are considered unemployed.
Labor force	The economically active population (labor force) consists of all persons 15 years and above who are either employed or unemployed as defined above at the time of survey.
Underemployment:	Underemployment exists when a person's employment is inadequate in relation to alternative employment, account being taken of his/her occupational skills. The underemployment persons are classified into two groups:

Occupation:	Occupation refers to the kind of work done during the reference period by the person employed, or the kind of work done previously if unemployed, irrespective of the industry or the employment status of the person. Occupations are grouped together mainly on the basis of the similarity of skills required to fulfill the tasks and duties of the job. Occupations are classified according to the International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO 1998).
Industry:	Industry refers to the activity of the establishment in which an employed person worked during the reference period, or last worked if unemployed. This activity is defined in terms of the kind of goods produced or service supplied by the industry in which the person works. Industry activities are classified according to the unified commodity classification in the West Bank and Gaza Strip which is based on the International Standard Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC Rev3).
Hours worked	Total number of hours actually worked during the reference period as well as overtime and time spent at the place of work on activities such as preparation of the workplace. Leaves, meal breaks and time spent on travel from home to work and vice versa are excluded from work hours.
Persons outside labor force	The population not economically active comprises all persons 15 years and over, who were neither employed nor unemployed accordingly to the definitions above.
Years of schooling:	The number of regular years of study of study completed successfully. Repetition years and irregular study or courses are not taken into account.
Daily wage per employee	Total net wages paid to all employees divided by total work-days. Wages received in different currencies are converted into New Israeli Shekels according to the exchange rate in the survey month.

## **Highlights of Findings**

### **Labor Force Participation**

- Between 1995 and 1997, the female labor force participation rate has never risen above 12.3% among the working age female population. In comparison, the lowest rate for males during the same period was 87%.
- The male labor force participation rates are highest in the Jenin and Nablus districts followed by the Bethlehem and Hebron districts, and Gaza City. In comparison, female labor force participation is highest in the Qalqilya/Tulkarm district followed by the Nan are concentrated in a very limited number of economic activities compared to their male counterparts. Only two specific economic activities (agriculture and education) account for more than 56% of all employed women in the West Bank and Gaza. In contrast, a similar percentage of employed males are represented by at least four activities.
- Although the majority of employed women are concentrated in services and other related activities in both the West Bank and Gaza, they still constitute a small minority of employees in the services sector (28.4% in West Bank and 15.7% in Gaza).

### **Employment Status**

- 34% of employed males in the West Bank and 25% in Gaza are running enterprises in which they are proprietors (employer and self-employed). In comparison only 15% of employed women in the West Bank and 9% of them in Gaza are business proprietors.
- Women are much more likely to be unpaid family workers than male counterparts. Almost one third (30.5%) of all employed women in the West Bank work without any pay. This high figure is due to the dominance of agriculture as a means of female employment in the West Bank compared to Gaza. Unpaid family labor is much lower among males and females in Gaza and among males in the West Bank (5-6%).

### **Occupational Distribution**

- A large proportion of employed women is found in agriculture (32%), while in Gaza employed women are found grouped in two higher status occupations of professionals and technicals (48%), reflecting their concentration in services.

### **Wage Discrimination**

- The pay differentials between men and women of the same occupation show clear discrimination in favor of males — with every occupation showing a greater male than female wage.

### **Place of Work**

- A significant difference between the male and female labor force is that many men

work in Israel, while very few women do. These low numbers of women working in Israel do not seem to be a result of the closure but reflects a long-term trend throughout the occupation.

### **Demographic Characteristics**

- *Age:* Males tend to enter the labor force at earlier ages than females, with substantially greater proportions of the male labor force entering wage employment by age 21 than females.
- *Education:* Due to the concentration of employed women in services, employed women tend to have a higher educational profile than their male counterparts. However, the majority of women labor force participants who are unemployed also have higher educational levels than male counterparts.
- Women in the labor force have a higher educational profile than males; 37% of female labor force participants have a post-tawjihi education in the West Bank compared to only 14.2% of males.
- In terms of regional differences, employed males in Gaza are more likely to be married than their West Bank counterparts — attesting to the earlier age at marriage among Gaza males generally.

### **Unemployment**

- The high female unemployment rates are even more significant given that the size of the overall female labor force is so small. Unemployment among women tends to be due to the gender segregated nature of the labor force, i.e., the few areas in which women are concentrated (services, agriculture) are consistently incapable of absorbing new female labor force entrants.

### **Non-Participants in the Labor Force**

- The majority of women over 14 years old are considered "outside the labor force." 84% of the female population over 14 years old are outside the labor force compared to only 32% of males.

# LABOR FORCE

Women's participation rate in the Palestinian labor force ranks among the lowest in the world, posing a major challenge for human development and gender equity in Palestinian society. While the Middle East as a region shows the lowest levels of female labor force participation worldwide, from about 21 to 25%<sup>1</sup> of the working age female population, the rate in Palestine is even lower: below 12% since 1995.

In the international literature on women's labor force, low female participation rates have often been found to represent the limitations of labor surveys, rather than the reality of women's work life. For instance, expanded definitions of work have often resulted in remarkable jumps in female labor force rates — especially in developing countries and rural areas.<sup>2</sup> To some extent this is the case in Palestine; a number of studies have documented a dominance of Palestinian women in informal activities — a sector not adequately covered by standard labor surveys.<sup>3</sup> However, PCBS has attempted to expand the traditional definition of work, specifically, through the inclusion of "non-paid family workers" as a category of labor force participants. The inclusion of this category is probably a key determinant in the substantially increased female participation rates found by PCBS in comparison to findings by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics up through the 1990s. Twenty-two percent of all women counted as employed both in the West Bank and Gaza work without receiving wages, rising to one-third (31%) of employed women in the West Bank alone.

Even with the use of an expanded definition for female labor force participation rate, 12% remains an extremely low rate. This suggests that women's absence from the labor force is the outcome of a real rather than statistical exclusion. Thus, women's absence from the formal labor force (even with expanded definitions) attests ultimately to the fact that they have limited access to formal paid employment.

Consistently high unemployment rates among Palestinian women in addition to their extremely limited distribution across various economic sectors supports the view that low female participation is caused by lack of access. Many sectors of the economy are almost exclusively male domains. Unlike men, employed women are crowded into a very limited number of sectors. These are sectors which have very specific entry requirements, such as high educational achievement, or depend on access through family circumstances (such as in agriculture). The consistently high rates of female unemployment found by PCBS are clearly related to this situation of employed women being concentrated in a limited range of sectors. The few sectors that have historically provided employment to women have been over-subscribed, while alternative sectors have not been opening up to women.

The extent of women's exclusion from paid formal employment is dramatic in Palestine. However the patterning of female employment in various sectors of the economy and the specific occupational status, lack of prestige and lower pay accorded to them is quite similar to world trends. Palestine tends to be different predominantly in the overall level of exclusion of women from formal paid work, not in the specific ways

that women are employed or are concentrated in certain sectors.<sup>4</sup>

In the following sections this chapter will present various findings of PCBS labor force surveys concerning male versus female labor force participation in Palestine. Overall participation rates for males and females will be compared, followed by an analysis of their differential sectoral and occupational status. Wage compensation for both sexes will be addressed. Finally, educational and demographic characteristics of males and females in and outside the labor force will be examined as a means to account for the various gender gaps and asymmetries. Throughout the chapter will attempt to look at regional differences. All of the data covered in this chapter, except where stated otherwise, is based on three PCBS labor surveys conducted in 1996.

## A. Labor Force Participation

In the three years (1995-1997) during which PCBS has been conducting labor force surveys, women's labor force participation rates have been found to be persistently low, between 11-12% of the working age female population.<sup>5</sup> In the same period men's labor force participation rates have remained between 67-70% of the working age male population — in spite of the recurrent closures imposed by Israel on Palestinian workers. Overall, women represented 13-14% of the total Palestinian labor force in this period. Data from the Israeli CBS for various periods between 1967 and 1987 show that this low rate is longstanding, never rising above 9% throughout the period of the Israeli occupation.<sup>6</sup> This suggests that women's employment (and unemployment) is to a large extent autonomous from the cycle of crises that have affected male employment.

**Table 4-1: Population Aged 15 Years and Over by Labor Force Status and Sex, 1995-1997**

Labor Force Survey Round/Year	Labor Force				Not in Labor Force
	<i>Full Employed</i>	<i>Under-Employed</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Total</i>	
<i>Round 1</i> <i>Sept.- Oct., 1995</i>					
Male	58.8	22.9	18.3	66.9	33.1
<b>Female</b>	<b>71.7</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>88.8</b>
<i>Round 3</i> <i>July-Oct., 1996</i>					
Male	64.9	13.2	21.9	69.7	30.3
<b>Female</b>	<b>74.7</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>88.6</b>
<i>Round 7</i> <i>July-Sept., 1997</i>					
Male	68.1	10.2	21.7	69.5	30.5
<b>Female</b>	<b>75.4</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>87.7</b>

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

There are strong regional disparities in women's labor force participation. In the West Bank, up to 17% of women were in the labor force between 1995 and 1997, while in Gaza, only 8% of women were in the labor force. We find even greater disparities between different districts in the West Bank and Gaza.

Male labor force participation rates are highest in the Jenin and Nablus districts followed by the Bethlehem and Hebron districts and Gaza City. In comparison, female labor force participation is highest in the Qalqilya/Tulkarm district followed by Nablus and Bethlehem areas. The lowest male participation rates are in the South Gaza Strip, followed by Central Gaza and, surprisingly, in Jerusalem. For females, lowest participation in the labor force is found in the Northern Gaza Strip, followed by Gaza City, Hebron and Central Gaza.



**Table 4-2: Population In and Outside of the Labor Force by District of Residence and Sex (%)**

District of Residence	MEN			WOMEN		
	<i>In Labor Force</i>	<i>Outside Labor Force</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>In Labor Force</i>	<i>Outside Labor Force</i>	<i>Total</i>
Jenin	74.4	25.6	100	15.4	84.6	100
Tulkarm/ Qalqilya	70.7	29.3	100	17.6	82.4	100
Nablus	73.3	26.7	100	17.3	82.7	100
Ramallah	66.7	33.3	100	12.2	87.8	100
Jerusalem	64.7	35.3	100	9.2	90.8	100
Bethlehem	71.2	28.8	100	16.5	83.5	100
Hebron	71.7	28.3	100	7.2	92.8	100
Gaza North	68.6	31.4	100	5.9	94.1	100
Gaza City	71.3	28.7	100	6.7	93.3	100
Gaza Center	61.5	38.5	100	7.1	92.9	100
Gaza South	59.5	40.5	100	8.1	91.9	100
Total	68.7	31.3	100	11.0	89.0	100

**Source:** PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

These findings tend to suggest that within the formal labor force, male and female participation are governed by very distinct and separate patterns and circumstances. In other words, there seems to be little relation between levels of male integration into the labor force in specific regional areas and that of women's. In some areas, high male labor force participation exists simultaneously with relatively high levels of female labor force participation (Jenin, Nablus, Bethlehem), while in other districts relatively high male rates co-exist with low female rates of participation (Gaza City and Hebron).

More in-depth studies need to be made to explain the regional differences in female labor force participation; thus only a preliminary hypothesis will be put forward. Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqilya, with the highest rates of female labor force participation, are districts with high rates of employment in agriculture as a whole, but are also areas with high participation of males in wage labor in Israel. Nablus, also with high female rates, has a large service economy, as well as a large manufacturing base.

Overall, Gaza fares worse for women due to the limited agricultural sector. But what is surprising is the low female participation rates in Hebron and Gaza City — both urban centers with diverse economic activities — compared to Nablus or Bethlehem.

## Gendered Labor Markets

**Table 4-3: Employed Persons by Economic Activity and Region, by Sex (%)**

Economic Activity	West Bank			Gaza Strip		
	Men	Women	% Women	Men	Women	% Women
Agriculture	12.7	34.1	34.5	9.1	9.3	10.1
Mining/Quarrying	1.6	0.1	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Manufacturing	16.6	15.4	15.4	14.8	15.7	10.3
Construction	21.8	0.7	0.6	14.5	0.6	0.4
Commerce/Hotels/ Restaurants	20.7	7.6	6.7	18.6	6.9	3.9
Transportation/ Storage	6.0	0.5	1.6	4.5	1.3	3.0
Services/Other	20.7	41.7	28.4	38.6	66.2	15.7
TOTAL	100	100	16.4	100	100	9.8

Source: See PCBS, *Census of Establishments*, 1994.

Women are concentrated in a very limited number of economic activities compared to male counterparts. Services is the main employer of women in Palestine, accounting for 41.7% of all employed women in the West Bank and a full 66.2% of working women in the Gaza Strip. Women working in the service sector are engaged predominantly as teachers, as medical auxiliaries, and social service workers.<sup>7</sup> However, within the West Bank, agriculture accounts for a substantial portion of employed women (34.1%), although both male and female employment levels in this activity change quite dramatically according to the season, as reflected in the different labor force surveys. There are also substantial numbers of West Bank women working in manufacturing (15.4% of employed females) with the majority of them working in the clothing and textile industry.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of overall comparisons between females in the two regions, it is clear that West Bank women have a greater variety of employment opportunities than women in Gaza. West Bank women can be found in substantial proportions in three activities (services, agriculture and industry), while Gaza women are almost completely concentrated in services. The absence of a large agricultural base in Gaza compared to the West Bank accounts for much of the difference. However, in view of the fact that both regions have a substantial clothing industry, the absence of Gazan women from this activity may be due to priority being given to male workers by workshop owners.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the fact that women are concentrated in only a few activities, in each one they are substantially outnumbered by male employees. The columns in **Table 4-3** entitled "% Women," represent women as a percent of the total workforce employed in each economic activity. Only in West Bank agriculture do women form a sizeable portion of all employed in any particular activity (34.5%). Thus, although the majority of women are concentrated in services and other related activities in both the West Bank and Gaza, they constitute a small minority of employees in this sector (28.4% in West Bank and 15.7% in Gaza). Similarly, while women in the West Bank form a substantial portion of the manufacturing work force there (15.4%), their Gaza counterparts have only a 10.3%

share of that activity in relation to male counterparts.

If we break down the main economic activities into more specific categories we find that women are concentrated in an extremely limited number of occupations. As the following table shows, two activities only (agriculture and education) account for more than 56% of all employed women in the West Bank and Gaza. In contrast, at least four activities are needed to account for a similar percentage of employed males.

**Table 4 -4: Employed Persons by Economic Activity and Sex (%)**

Economic Activity	Men	Women	Total
1. Agriculture	11.5	29.2	14.1
2. Fishing	0.1	0.0	0.1
3. Mining/quarrying	1.0	0.1	1.0
4. Industry	15.9	15.4	15.8
5. Electricity	0.1	0.1	0.1
6. Construction	19.5	0.7	16.7
7. Wholesale trade	6.2	0.5	5.3
8. Retail trade	11.2	6.6	10.6
9. Hotels and restaurants	2.7	0.4	2.3
10. Transport and storage	5.5	0.6	4.8
11. Financial mediation	.8	1.4	0.9
12. Real estate activities	1.5	1.9	1.5
13. Public administration	12.3	5.0	11.3
14. Education	6.1	26.8	9.08
15. Health	2.5	7.5	3.1
16. Social services	2.2	2.6	2.24
17. Domestic services	0.0	0.2	0.0
18. Extra-territorial organizations	0.7	1.0	0.8
TOTAL	100 (19,621)	100 (3,325)	100

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996

A pattern referred to as labor market concentration occurs when specific social groups are found crowded into a few economic activities instead of being evenly distributed across a range of employment sectors available in an economy. The concentration of women and/or minority groups into only a few activities generally reflects direct and indirect forms of discrimination that exclude them from dominant sectors of employment. In simple terms, what labor market concentration analysis proposes about the role of gender is that most economies provide "male jobs" and "female jobs" — rarely are job structures "gender blind." As such, the larger gender relations at work in a society are reflected in the patterns in which men and women are employed, as well as in their differential rights and status in employment.

In the Palestinian context, as reflected in **Table 4-4**, many activities account for only very few jobs for either males or females such as mining, domestic services, social services, real estate activities, financial mediation, fishing and electricity. However, when we look at the activities which employ substantial numbers of males, some interesting patterns emerge. Clearly, women are absent from activities that tend to have strong male subcultures and are perceived as being contrary to their physical attributes and

"femininity." These categories would include construction, and transport/storage. This type of pattern is similar to world trends and does not differ significantly in Palestine. However, only a small percentage (12%) of employed women are engaged in wholesale trade, retail trade, and public administration. In contrast, these activities account for almost 30% of all employed men.

In terms of trade, women's lack of capital as well as differential inheritance probably precludes most women from engaging especially in wholesale trade. The absence of women from public administration contradicts world and regional trends — where women make up substantial parts of the public sector bureaucracies albeit at the middle and lower levels. This suggests that recent hiring practices (if not policies) of the public sector have not equitably hired women.

From the other side, we see that while the educational sector is a dominant area of female employment (26% of all employed women), it accounts for a much smaller percentage of employed males (6%). This does not mean that there are more women working in education than men; in pure numbers, men far outnumber women in this sector. However education accounts for a far greater portion of "female jobs" than male jobs." The following table shows that the majority of women working in education are concentrated at the kindergarten and basic stages, which are lower status and lower paying, while males dominate the secondary, community college and university stages.

**Table 4-5: Employed Persons in the Education Sector by Level, Region and Sex (%)**

Stage	West Bank		Gaza Strip		Total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Kindergarten	1,495	1	877	4	2,372	5
Basic	4,637	4,651	3,148	3,465	7,785	8,116
Basic/secondary	2,888	3,479	355	661	3,243	4,140
Secondary	60	197	98	214	158	411
Community	67	143	3	41	70	184
College						
University	173	948	36	548	209	1,496
Total	9,320	9,419	4,517	4,933	13,837	14,352

Source: PCBS and Ministry of Education, *Educational Statistical Yearbook 1996/1997*, No.3.

As noted in the education section of this report, part of the reason for the concentration of women at the lower stages of education is the fact that these stages are seen as more akin to extensions of women's child-bearing and rearing roles — roles and stages assumed to be inappropriate for male teachers. The uneven sex ratio of teaching staff in favor of males from secondary up through university level contrasts sharply with the almost even sex ratio that exists between students enrolled at those levels.

## Employment Status

The majority of employed men and women in Palestine work for someone else (as wage employees). Beyond this, there are few similarities in the patterning of male versus female employment status in the economy.

**Table 4-6: Employment Status by Region and Sex (%)**

Employment Status	West Bank			Gaza Strip		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Employer	7.3	0.9	6.3	3.2	0.0	2.9
Self-employed	26.6	14.1	24.5	24.4	8.8	23.2
Wage employee	59.5	54.5	58.7	65.8	86.2	67.4
Unpaid family worker	6.6	30.5	10.5	6.6	5.0	6.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

While 34% of employed males in the West Bank and 25% in Gaza are running enterprises in which they are proprietors (employer and self-employed), female business ownership is substantially less in the two regions. Only 15% of employed women in the West Bank and 9% in Gaza are business proprietors.

Furthermore, women entrepreneurs in the formal economy tend to have very small businesses: overwhelmingly, they work by themselves as opposed to having any employees. The above table shows that employers number less than 1% of employed females in the West Bank and in Gaza, while the self-employed account for 14% in the West Bank and 9% in Gaza. The majority of women, like men, are waged employees, with Gaza women showing the greatest dependence on wage employment as a means to access income among men and women in both regions. Simultaneously, women are much more likely to be unpaid family workers than male counterparts. Almost one-third (30.5%) of all employed women in the West Bank work without any pay, compared to 5% in Gaza. This discrepancy is due to the dominance of agriculture as a means of female employment in the West Bank compared to Gaza.

**Table 4-7** shows the importance of unwaged female labor for agricultural production in the West Bank. While most males employed in West Bank agriculture tend to be self-employed (50.5%), in Gaza males engaged in agriculture work more often as waged employees (36.8%). This is due to the structure of agricultural production in the two regions: West Bank agriculture continues to be dominated by smaller owner/producers whereas in Gaza, agriculture is dominated by a small pool of large landowners who are dependent on wage workers for labor. Additionally, in both regions, but especially Gaza, many male wage employees in agriculture are working for Israeli employers. In both regions more than a fourth of males are working as unpaid family workers.

In other words, despite the fact that agriculture accounts for a large proportion of employed women in the West Bank, women are undertaking it as part of their domestic responsibilities within the family — rather than as forms of employment in which they are directly compensated through wage income or profit.

**Table 4-7: Employment Status in Agriculture by Region and Sex (%)**

Employment Status	West Bank		Gaza Strip		Total
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>All</i>
Employer	1.9	0.2	2.5	1.9	1.5
Self-employed	50.5	17.3	33.2	1.9	37.4
Wage employee	20.7	6.4	36.8	14.2	19.2
Unpaid family worker	27.0	76.1	27.5	82.0	41.9
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100

Source: PCBS. *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

Other economic activities are also dependent on unpaid female labor within the family. **Table 4-8** shows that in Gaza, a large percentage of women working in manufacturing are self-employed (40%), while a considerable number of them (36%) work as unpaid family labor.

**Table 4-8: Employment Status in Manufacturing by Region**

Employment Status	West Bank		Gaza Strip	
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Employer	12.4	0.6	14.4	0.0
Self-employed	14.6	20.3	12.7	39.8
Wage employee	66.4	71.6	63.5	23.9
Unpaid family worker	6.6	7.5	9.4	36.3
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

This also reflects differences in the structure of manufacturing activities in the two regions. In Gaza manufacturing activity is much more family and home-based than in the West Bank — and perhaps shows greater levels of subcontracting with "self-employed" women involved in doing piece-work at home. In contrast, while there are substantial numbers of West Bank women engaged in manufacture who are self-employed (20%), the majority of females in this sector, like their male counterparts in the two regions, are wage employees (72%).

Commerce (wholesale and retail trade) is another economic activity where one finds substantial percentages of women working as unpaid family workers. The following table shows that in both the West Bank and Gaza, family-owned commercial enterprises are often dependent on unpaid female labor. However, self-employment among women is at its highest among women working in commerce.

**Table 4-9: Employment Status in Commerce by Region and Sex (%)**

Employment Status	West Bank		Gaza Strip	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Employer	9.8	3.1	7.5	0.0
Self-employed	39.9	30.7	50.2	66.6
Wage employee	40.1	27.2	26.6	7.5
Unpaid family worker	10.3	39.0	15.8	25.9
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

Although we find very few women as employers in commerce, the largest percentage of Gazan women working in commercial activity are self-employed (67%), along with a substantial number of West Bank women (31%) in this sector. Again, women show a greater tendency to work as unpaid family workers in this activity than males. It is important to remember that in pure numbers there are more men than women working as unpaid family workers in commerce in both regions. However, in the West Bank "unpaid family worker" is the dominant status among women working in this activity (39% of all women engaged in commerce), while in Gaza, where self-employment is high among women, a substantial portion of females are working as unpaid family members (26%).

## Occupational Distribution

Men and women also have differential overall occupational distributions. In the West Bank 48% of employed males are in low status occupations — craft and related trade workers and elementary occupations. Employed males in Gaza similarly tend to be grouped in low status occupations but of a different kind; there the service/shop/market as well as trade/craft-related activities represent dominant male occupations (accounting for 46% of employed men). Among women we have a different distribution, as mentioned earlier: in the West Bank, a large portion of employed women are found in agriculture (32%), while in Gaza employed women are found grouped in two higher status occupations of professionals and technicals (48%) reflecting their concentration in services.

**Table 4-10: Employed Persons by Occupation, Region and Sex (%)**

Occupation	Male			Female		
	West Bank	Gaza	Total	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Legislators, senior officials, managers	3.9	5.2	4.3	2.3	2.7	2.4
Professionals	6.3	8.4	6.9	15.0	20.1	16.0
Technicians	5.2	6.7	5.7	14.8	28.5	17.5
Clerks	1.9	2.6	2.1	6.3	8.6	6.8
Service, shop, market	15.8	24.2	18.4	8.9	12.1	9.5
Agriculture and fishery	10.2	5.6	8.8	31.8	8.0	27.2
Craft and related trade	27.3	21.7	25.6	13.8	16.1	14.3
Machine operators/ assemblers	8.3	5.8	7.5	0.5	0.0	0.4
Elementary occupations	21.1	19.8	20.7	6.5	4.0	6.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

Thus, women appear to do better in Gaza than in the West Bank and better than men in either region in terms of dominant occupations. However, if we compare women to men in both regions as a percentage of the total employed in the various occupations (Table 4-11), we find that women's occupational profile is disadvantaged in relation to men's in several ways.

**Table 4-11: Employed Persons by Occupation and Sex (%)**

Occupation	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Legislators, managers	87.1	12.9	100	3.4	2.9
Professionals	72.9	27.1	100	5.8	12.3
Technicians	66.8	33.2	100	6.9	19.5
Clerks	62.3	37.7	100	2.3	7.9
Service, shop, market	91.4	8.6	100	19.2	10.4
Agriculture and fishery	62.7	37.3	100	8.0	27.4
Craft and related trade	91.5	8.5	100	25.8	13.7
Machine operators/ assemblers	98.9	1.1	100	8.7	0.5
Elementary occupations	95.6	4.4	100	19.9	5.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>85.1</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.



We can see that women are largely absent from the top managerial and highest status positions — where they account for 13% of all employees but only 3% of all employed women. Simultaneously, in relation to total employed in any occupation, women have the highest ratio *vis-a-vis* men in the categories of technicians, clerks and agriculture where they account for approximately a third of employees in each of those occupations.

## Wage Discrimination

The pay differentials between men and women of the same occupation show clear discrimination in favor of male wages — with every occupation showing a greater male than female wage. When daily wages of all employed males versus females in the West Bank are averaged, employed women are earning at levels equivalent to only 66.2% of male wages. In Gaza, the average wage gap between males and females is lower: female wages levels are equivalent to 81.3% of that of males. However, in Gaza this is partly due to the fact that overall wage levels are lower than in the West Bank.

**Table 4-12: Average Daily Wages by Occupation, Region and Sex (NIS)**

<i>Occupation</i>	<b>West Bank</b>			<b>Gaza</b>		
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Wage Gap (%)</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Wage Gap (%)</i>
Legislators, senior officials, managers	87	-	-	87	-	-
Professionals	67	52	77.6	65	44	67.7
Technicians	53	41	77.3	54	43	79.6
Clerks	55	41	74.5	40	33	82.5
Service, shop, market	49	32	65.3	41	28	68.3
Agriculture/ fishery	51	-	-	25	-	-
Craft and related trade	68	25	43.1	53	-	35.8
Machine operators/ assemblers	59	-	55.9	42	-	53.8
Elementary occupations	60	33	55	39	-	53.8
<b>Average</b>	61.3	40.5	66.2	48.1	39.1	81.3

**Source:** PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

**(Note:** The indication (-) means that the sample size is too low to make a reliable estimate; however in the category of agriculture this is due to the low numbers of women earning wages, not the low numbers of women working in this activity).

In the West Bank, the highest wage difference by occupation exists between male and females employed in agriculture. It cannot be calculated as a wage gap since the majority of women working in this activity work without pay. However, in order to get a sense of the difference if women were paid on average one shekel (instead of the actual 0 shekels) the wage gap would be approximately 2% , that is, women in agriculture are making the equivalent of 2% of male wages in agriculture in the West Bank and approximately 4% of male wages in Gaza. However, the fact that women’s wages in agriculture are non-existent raises questions about the earlier finding of large numbers of women being self-employed in agriculture. In other words, women listed as self-employed in agriculture may really be only unpaid family workers – but are senior females in the family and thus consider themselves self-employed as part of the family.

The second highest wage gap in the West Bank and Gaza is between male and female craft and related trade workers where women make on average a daily wage equivalent to only 43% of that of West Bank males and 38.5% of Gaza males. Once again, this may be due to the high levels of women actually working as unpaid family workers although reporting themselves as self-employed.

## Place of Work

PCBS labor force surveys categorize place of work predominantly by region (West Bank/Gaza/Israel and settlements) although earlier rounds also categorized place of work in terms of camp/village/city/Israel. The majority of employed women and men are from the West Bank and work there. However, a significant difference between men and women is that many men work in Israel, while few women do. In the first PCBS labor survey in 1995, women made up 4% of the Palestinian labor force working in Israel. **Table 4-13** shows that in 1996, the percent of employed females working in Israel dropped to 2%, while among men it was 16%.

**Table 4-13: Employed Persons by Region of Work and Sex (%)**

Place of Work	Men	Women
West Bank	56.0	78.0
Gaza	27.7	19.5
Israel	16.1	2.3
Other	0.2	0.2
<b>Total</b>	100	100

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

This low rate of women working in Israel is longstanding; in the only three years between 1975 and 1991 for which the Israeli CBS provided gender disaggregated data on Palestinian workers in Israel, women never accounted for more than 3% of the total number of workers.<sup>10</sup>

Men and women tend to work in differing economic activities despite their place of work. **Table 4-14** organizes place of work according to the categories of camp, village, city and Israel for persons engaged in different economic activities.

**Table 4-14: Employed Persons by Economic Activity, Place of Work and Sex (%)**

	City		Village		Camp		Israel	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Agriculture	4.3	4.9	31.1	67.0	5.0	3.0	11.7	53.7
Mining, Quarrying, Manufacturing	19.3	19.6	14.0	9.1	20.3	27.4	12.4	16.3
Construction	14.2	1.2	18.6	0.1	17.4	0.4	59.7	6.6
Commerce, Hotels, Restaur.	23.0	9.4	12.8	3.1	22.5	15.5	10.6	3.1
Transport, Storage, Communication	6.5	1.1	5.9	0.0	6.3	1.7	1.3	0.0
Services, Other Branches	32.7	63.8	17.5	20.6	28.5	52.0	4.3	20.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

Females working in cities tend to be grouped in services (64%), and to a lesser extent in manufacturing (20%). In comparison, males in cities tend to have a more balanced distribution across various economic activities. In villages, the vast majority of employed women are working in agriculture (67%), with some engaged in services (20%). In comparison, only 31% of males employed in villages are working in agriculture and substantial proportions work in construction, services and manufacturing. In camps as in cities, women are predominantly engaged in services (52%) with substantial numbers involved in manufacturing (27%). Males in camps are also predominantly engaged in services (29%), followed by commerce (23%), and manufacturing (20%). Agriculture is the dominant activity of the few Palestinian women who work in Israel (54%), while for working men, construction is the dominant activity in Israel (60%).

## Demographic Characteristics of Labor Force Participants

**Age:** Males tend to enter the labor force at ages earlier than females, with substantially greater proportions of the male labor force entering wage employment by age 21. This is probably due to the differing role that education plays in providing access to employment among males and females. As mentioned earlier, employed females tend to be concentrated in services which require higher levels of education thus resulting in the low numbers of working females in the 15-19 age group.

**Table 4-15: Labor Force Participants by Age, Region and Sex (%)**

Age Group	West Bank		Gaza Strip	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
15-19	17.9	8.2	15.9	4.1
20-24	18.9	20.2	18.5	24.6
25-29	15.5	16.4	17.4	16.6
30-34	13.8	14.2	12.7	22.5
35-39	10.1	13.0	11.0	9.6
40-44	7.8	8.3	9.0	9.5
45-49	5.9	8.0	6.4	8.5
50-54	3.6	5.0	4.2	3.0
55 +	6.5	6.7	4.9	1.6
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

Source: PCBS. *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

Women labor force participants tend to be concentrated in the 21-35 age category which makes up 51% of the female labor force in West Bank, and 64% of the female work force in Gaza.

**Table 4-16: Mean Age of Employed Persons by Economic Activity and Sex**

Economic Activity	Mean Age		
	Men	Women	Total
Agriculture	37	40	38
Mining/Quarrying	30	-	30
Manufacturing	30	31	30
Construction	30	-	30
Commerce/Hotel/ Restaurants	33	40	34
Transportation/ Storage	34	-	34
Services and other	36	34	35
<b>Average</b>	33	36	34

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

The age structure of specific economic activities also varies between men and women. The mean age of women is slightly higher than that of men in every activity except services. The fact that females enter the labor force at relatively later ages than males tends to push up the overall mean age levels of females. However, significant age differences exist among women, and between men and women in the various economic activities. The highest age difference can be found in commerce, hotels and restaurants

where women's mean age is six years greater than that of males. This is predominantly due to the fact that women working in commerce tend to be among the oldest age categories of individuals in the workforce as a whole.

In agriculture a similar pattern exists. The youngest mean age for females (31) is found in manufacturing — reflecting findings of micro-studies on women in the garment industry which have found that employers in this sector prefer young pre-marriage age female workers. The table suggests that women tend to work after childbearing years — especially in agriculture and commerce. The mean age of women in manufacturing potentially represents a split between women in very young (pre-marriage) ages and women past childbearing years. The mean age in the services sector possibly represents the fact that only this sector provides the supports and wage level that allows women to continue working while in their child-bearing years.

A more in-depth look at the differential age structures of an economic activity makes these life-cycle effects on women's employment clear. In agriculture, for instance, we see that employed females tend to be of older age categories in comparison to males. Males tend to work in agriculture in the age categories between 15 and 30 years old, while women tend to predominate in the ages between 35 and 50. For both males and females, however, the largest single age category of those engaged in agriculture is in the 55 years and older group. This age category is probably dominated by proprietors (employers and self-employed), that is, it probably represents senior family members of agricultural households. For male and female the life-cycle differences are very clear; women tend to work in family agriculture in their post child-bearing and child-rearing years. It is harder to explain why men begin to drop out from agricultural work in their 30s. Potentially, by this age men in agricultural households are able to find other forms of employment (wage labor in Israel) and leave female family members in charge of agricultural production.

**Table 4-17: Employed Persons in Agriculture by Age and Sex (%)**

Age Group	Sex		
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>
15-19	15.7	8.8	13.7
20-24	16.1	11.0	14.6
25-29	13.8	9.6	12.6
30-34	10.1	9.5	9.9
35-39	6.8	11.8	8.3
40-44	5.5	11.2	7.2
45-49	6.2	10.6	7.5
50-54	4.9	9.4	6.3
55 +	20.8	18.0	20.0
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

**Education:** Another reason that women enter the labor force at slightly older ages than males is that one of the main economic sectors that provides employment opportunities

to females (services) tends to demand higher rates of education. **Table 4-18** shows that 37% of female labor force participants have a post-*tawjihi* education in the West Bank compared to only 14.2% of males.

**Table 4-18: Labor Force Participants by Education, Region and Sex**

Education Level	West Bank		Gaza Strip	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
None	13.8	24.2	14.7	2.5
Elementary	26.6	15.8	20.6	2.5
Preparatory	24.5	11.4	24.7	9.8
Secondary	7.7	5.3	0.1	-
Tawjihi	13.2	9.7	22.7	17.1
Intermediate Diploma	6.6	19.6	6.1	38.3
Bachelors and above	7.6	14.0	11.1	29.8
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

In Gaza the differences are even more stark; 68% of female labor force participants have post-*tawjihi* education compared to only 17% of males. Male labor force participants in both the West Bank and Gaza tend to have between an elementary and preparatory education (51% of the male labor force in the West Bank and 45% of the male labor force in Gaza). In the West Bank, we find women also at the bottom of the education ladder; a large proportion of the female labor force (24%) has no formal education at all, in comparison to only 2.5% in Gaza. This is due to the greater levels of employment of women in agriculture in the West Bank — a sector which, as we have seen, tends to employ women in older age categories of women who are less likely to have formal education.

**Employment and Marital Status:** Besides age and educational differentials between male and female labor force participants there are also significant differences in marital status. Overall, both male and female labor force participants in the youngest age group (15 to 24) tend to be unmarried (or more specifically never-married). Beyond this age group, we find that males are much more likely to be married than females. **Table 4-19** shows that 80% of male labor force participants in the 25-34 year age groups are currently or previously married, while only 54% of women in the same age category are currently or previously married.

**Table 4-19: Labor Force Participation by Age, Marital Status, and Sex (%)**

Age	Never Married		Ever Married		Other	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
15-24	81.8	74.4	18.0	24.8	.2	.8
25-34	19.5	42.6	79.9	53.8	.5	3.6
35-44	1.7	23.4	97.6	67.7	.6	8.9
45-54	1.5	22.4	97.3	61.9	1.1	15.8
55+	0.4	8.9	96.2	52.5	3.4	38.6

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

The pattern continues to a lesser but still significant degree in all age sets after 35 years.

Another significant difference is the category "other". This represents widowed and divorced — a status much more common of female than male labor force participants — especially among women past 45 years of age. The fact that a higher percent of female than male labor force participants are single (never married, divorced and widowed) suggests that there are greater numbers of women as sole family income earners than one would presume. It also means that for many older women, the loss of a male breadwinner may be what led them to enter the labor force.

Since labor force participation includes the employed, under-employed and unemployed, **Table 4-19** does not necessarily tell us whether employment itself has a relation to male and female marital status. **Table 4-20** below looks at the relation between actual employment (rather than labor force participation) and its relation to marital status.

**Table 4-20: Employed by Marital Status, Sex and Region (%)**

Marital Status	Male			Female		
	West Bank	Gaza	Total	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Never married	31.6	21.1	28.4	38.2	34.0	37.3
Ever Married	67.6	78.0	70.8	52.7	59.2	54.0
Other	.7	.8	.8	9.2	6.8	8.7
<b>Total</b>	69	42	29.3	49	42	16.8

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

While approximately 29% of employed males in both regions are "single" (never married, widowed, divorced), 46% percent of employed women in both regions are single. In terms of the latter, 37% of employed women are never married, while almost 9% of them are widowed or divorced. In terms of regional differences, employed males in Gaza are more likely to be married than their West Bank counterparts, attesting to the earlier age at marriage among Gazan males. In terms of comparisons between women, the regional pattern is similar though less dramatic; employed Gazan women are slightly more likely to be married than their West Bank counterparts. The greatest imbalance

between males and females within a region is in Gaza; the percentage of never married Gaza women is 13% higher than the percent of never married employed Gaza men.

## Unemployment

As stated at the outset, women's unemployment has been found to be consistently high and almost equivalent to that of males since PCBS began conducting labor surveys in 1995. In each labor force survey since 1995, PCBS has found only a 1-2% difference in male and female unemployment rates. These high female unemployment rates are even more significant given that the size of the overall female labor force is so small. This suggests that unemployment among women tends to be due to the gender segregated nature of the labor force, that is, those few areas in which women are concentrated (services, agriculture) are consistently incapable of absorbing the female labor force.

**Table 4-21: Unemployment Rate by Sex, 1995-1997 (%)**

Sex	Round 1 July-Sept., 1995	Round 3 July-Oct., 1996	Round 7 July-Sept., 1997
Men	18.3	21.9	21.7
Women	17.8	21.4	20.5

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

The fact that women's unemployment is caused by the limited jobs available to them in female concentrated economic sectors is borne out by the high numbers of unemployed females holding higher levels of educational achievement. The following table shows that while male unemployed tend to have varying levels of education, the majority of the female unemployed in the West Bank and Gaza have post-*tawjihi* levels of education. In the West Bank, 50% of unemployed females have 13-plus years of education, while in Gaza a full 80% of unemployed females do. This category of women are most likely those who would be looking for work in the service sector.

**Table 4-22: Unemployment by Years of Schooling, Region and Sex (%)**

Age	West Bank		Gaza	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
0	1.8	3.2	2.8	0.0
1-6	20.9	10.8	25.7	3.4
7-9	33.7	15.4	26.0	3.5
10-12	33.6	20.5	30.3	13.3
13+	10.0	50.1	15.3	79.8
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.



In terms of regional differences, both female and male unemployment rates are higher in Gaza than in the West Bank. In Gaza, the average unemployment rate was 33.5% and 31.2% for males and females respectively. In the West Bank it was 19.7% for males and 16.2% for females. As such, one may conclude that in overall terms, where there is more male joblessness, there is also more female joblessness. However, within districts in each region there are some important differences between male and female unemployment levels.

In the West Bank the highest unemployment levels among males and females are found in the Bethlehem district with 26% unemployment among males and 21% among females. However, the second highest level among females is in Jerusalem — which has the lowest male unemployment rate for males in the West Bank. In Gaza there is a much greater degree of similarity in the patterns of male and female unemployment. Central Gaza followed by the southern Gaza Strip are areas of the highest levels of unemployment for both sexes. However, in Gaza city the rate of female unemployment is much higher than that of males.

**Table 4-23: Unemployment by District of Residence and Sex (%)**

District of Residence	Male			Female		
	<i>Employed</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Employed</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Total</i>
Jenin	74.7	25.3	100	85.1	14.9	100
Tulkarm/ Qalqilya	77.4	22.6	100	83.2	16.8	100
Nablus	87.4	12.6	100	85.2	14.8	100
Ramallah	83.6	16.4	100	87.0	13.0	100
Jerusalem	90.4	9.6	100	80.8	19.2	100
Bethlehem	74.1	25.9	100	78.7	21.3	100
Hebron	74.4	25.6	100	86.1	13.9	100
Gaza North	70.6	29.4	100	76.1	23.9	100
Gaza City	74.0	26.0	100	80.2	19.8	100
Gaza Center	60.3	39.7	100	57.6	42.4	100
Gaza South	60.8	39.2	100	61.1	38.9	100
<b>Total</b>	75.7	24.5	100	80.5	19.5	100

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

Unemployment rates can under-represent the real extent of joblessness among males, and even more so among females. Unemployment is measured according to a set

criteria in which respondents who are of working age and are not working are asked a series of questions which assess whether their joblessness is due to ill-health, the political environment (war, strikes, etc.) or lack of desire to work. Lack of desire to work is measured by asking respondents whether they actively searched for work within a given period de-limited by the survey. However, if the respondents did not actively look for work — for whatever reason — they end up being classified as "outside the labor force" as opposed to being considered unemployed. Where individuals have given up hope of looking for work due to long-term joblessness — or based on experience that there are no jobs available for persons with their skills or social characteristics, their actual desire to work is not reflected. Instead they fall outside the labor force.

In situations of long-term structural unemployment, which seems to be the case for many women in Palestine, labor force surveys can hide the fact that many more women are actually long-term unemployed, rather than unwilling or disinterested in employment. It is important to keep this fact in mind when assessing data on males and females "outside the labor force."

## B. Non-Participants in the Labor Force

The vast majority of women over 15 years old (84%) are considered "outside the labor force" compared to only 32% of males over 15 years old.

**Table 4-24: Population Outside the Labor Force by Age, Reason and Sex (%)**

Men					
Age Group	<i>Old/Ill</i>	<i>Home-making</i>	<i>Study</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
15-19	0.5	0.8	85.4	13.4	100
20-24	2.6	2.1	53.5	41.7	100
25-29	6.4	3.1	25.2	65.3	100
30-34	12.0	1.7	5.3	81.1	100
35-39	18.6	3.7		77.7	100
40-44	27.1	3.2	0.4	69.3	100
45-49	38.8	2.1		59.1	100
50-54	57.1	2.1		40.7	100
55+	89.1	0.6		10.2	100
Women					
15-19	0.1	41.7	53.8	4.4	100
20-24	0.2	84.8	9.7	5.3	100
25-29	0.3	94.2	1.8	3.8	100
30-34	0.3	95.8	0.8	3.0	100
35-39	0.3	96.4	0.5	2.8	100
40-44	0.8	95.3	0.2	3.7	100
45-49	4.6	92.0	0.1	3.3	100
50-54	11.0	85.4	0.2	3.4	100
55+	55.8	41.0	0.1	3.1	100
<b>Total</b>	14.5	54.1	21.9	9.5	100

Source: PCBS, *Labor Force Survey*, 1996.

For both males and females aged 15-19, the main reason cited for being out of the labor force is that they are still completing their education (85.4% of males and 53.8% of females). However, even from this youngest age group there is a gender gap with a substantially greater proportion of males than females outside the labor force due to reasons of education. A substantial 41.7% of females in this age group cite "homemaking" as the reason, reflecting the younger age at first marriage of females in the society. In the next age group (20-24), "still in education" remains high for males at 53.2%, whereas for females it has dropped dramatically to account for only 9.7% of women outside the labor force in this age group.

After age 19 the dominant reason cited by women for non-participation in the labor force is home-making until the 55+ year age group where "old/ill" becomes the dominant reason. Among men "other" reasons are cited as why they are not in the labor force among age groups 25 to 50 years old. However, men seem to age earlier than women. From age 50-plus men cite "old/ill" as the main reason for being outside the labor force. This probably has to do with subjective perceptions.

## C. Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research

Worldwide trends have shown that the increased integration of women into national labor forces in general has positive effects on national income. As importantly, women's greater access to income correlates with greater family wellbeing; especially concerning child nutrition, health, and education. The lack of women's formal employment in Palestine, especially as male wage earners confront long-term structural under-employment and unemployment, can no longer be assumed to be simply an issue of women's equality. Women's lack of integration into the formal labor force has strong implications for the developmental future of Palestine and the ability of families to meet the basic needs of their children, as well as invest in resources such as education that will assure them a better future.

In the current situation of limited female integration into wage work, a single male breadwinner is overwhelmingly responsible for providing family income among the majority of families in Palestine. Given that current estimates of PCBS put average family size at 7.8 persons for Gaza and 6.71 for the West Bank this means that, in general terms, one male wage earner is responsible for producing income to cover the needs of seven individuals. Using the one to seven ratio, recent analyses of income versus household consumption data shows that — there is a large and growing gap in the ability of male wage earners to cover family needs. In 1996, an average worker was able to cover 63.5% of family basic needs or only 45.3% of total family expenditures. In 1997, a single average worker was only able to cover 62.8% of family basic needs or 45.3% of total family expenditure. It is no surprise therefore that based on a poverty line calculation of \$650 per capita annually, 19% of the population of the West Bank and Gaza are living under the poverty line.<sup>11</sup>

In the short run, given the limited nature of formal social safety nets, most families will adopt a range of strategies to cope with the increasing gap between needs and income. Cutting expenditures is a strategy that has already been documented by PCBS. Mobilizing more labor from within the household has also been documented in recent studies — but specifically child labor.<sup>12</sup>

In the long-term, however, it is clear that reducing poverty as well as raising standards of living at the household level will ultimately depend on reducing the imbalance between income earners and income dependents. And the only way this can be achieved is through both reducing fertility and providing wage work or income generating activity to women. In other words, reduction in fertility is both a necessity for raising family income (and overall well-being) as well as an outcome of women's integration into wage work. The fact that the recent decline in per-capita income since 1993 has seen a growth in child labor among poor households, attests to the fact that households with large numbers of children cannot mobilize adult women's labor to compensate for the decrease in family income. The data on child labor shows a clear correlation between greater household size and children's labor force participation.<sup>13</sup> In simple terms the practical responsibility of raising children considerably lessens women's ability to enter wage work.

From the other side, it is clear that women who are engaged in both formal wage work, as well as the informal sector have a lower overall fertility rate than women outside the labor force. That is to say, being involved in wage work actually correlates with lowered fertility among women. Evidence of this can be found in the PCBS demographic survey, rather than in the labor force studies. In the fertility survey, "ever married" women were asked to report whether they were working or not — descriptive categories which are not as rigorous as the LFS framework — but nevertheless useful for looking at the way work affects fertility. While the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for all "housewives" was found to be 7.30, the total fertility rate for "working women" was dramatically lower at 2.85.<sup>14</sup> The fact that many working women tend to be more highly educated cannot account for the difference — the TFR of women with 13+ years of education (regardless of working or not) is 4.72, less than housewives but higher than working women. Additionally, Save the Children found that women borrowers in their credit program (informal sector workers) had on average four children.<sup>15</sup>

In the international literature, the inability for male wage earners to fulfill their income responsibilities to the family has been shown to be at the root of a variety of household-level crises and breakdowns (including male "flight," alcoholism, and increased domestic violence.<sup>16</sup> It is often argued locally, that Palestinian norms and traditions mitigate against such consequences of male joblessness. The claim is that the Palestinian family unit and the strength of values supporting it is capable of transcending such structural pressures. Simultaneously, some local commentators cite women's work outside the home as the cause for the disintegration of family values and the family in the West. International literature on the developing world, however, shows that overall women's engagement in wage work and income generation generally has a profoundly positive effect on child welfare and nutrition.<sup>17</sup> Women have been shown to spend greater proportions of their income on the household than men. Moreover, a variety of studies have shown that women's entry into wage work, while often leading to a re-negotiation of roles and responsibilities within the family, has little relation to marital breakdown. Instead, women tend to resist the decay of family norms, values and obligations — even if this actually reinforces gender hierarchies.<sup>18</sup>

## **For Further Analysis and Research**

The following recommendations for further research will be divided into those areas of data gathering within the purview of PCBS and research issues which need more in-depth study by scholars and policy makers interested in issues of gender and labor in Palestine.

### ***Recommendations for PCBS:***

- All publications on economic activity should present data in user-friendly gender desegregated forms as is currently the case in the labor force surveys.
- Data on labor force status by place of residence and district should be regularly included in labor force survey publications in order to show regional disparities and possible areas of intervention at project levels.
- Greater levels of integration between demographic data and labor force data would be useful in showing the ways that various demographic circumstances

effect labor force participation of males and females. They would also be important in showing possible linkages between female employment and lowered fertility levels.

- Similarly, household level data that is integrated to see the relationship between male and female employment at the household level and its varying impact on household income or poverty would be extremely useful.
  - More research needs to be conducted on the differences between male and female unemployment. What is the average length of time that females versus males spend searching for work (especially those of different educational levels)? Do women have a greater tendency to drop out of the labor force when they cannot find work after a certain period?
  - In addition, the varying ways in which males and females both search for and get access to work would be useful to explore. Are there differential obstacles (social and informational) between male and female job seekers?
  - The standard categories used for explaining lack of labor force participation among females do not reveal the obstacles to female employment which serve to render women outside of the labor force.
  - To what extent do women fall under the classification "homemakers" due to their inability to find employment?
  - More transparency for data users is needed in the classifications of work used to measure employment. To what extent do PCBS labor force surveys include activities often associated with the informal sector? To what extent does the category "self-employed" mean unpaid family labor or reflect informal sector activities? Moreover, to what extent does the status of self-employed single worker represent intermittent forms of income generation, especially among women?
  - Annual reports on female employment that integrate a number of survey rounds would provide a larger data set for more complex correlations, for example, between demographic, educational and employment variables.

#### ***Recommendations for Researchers:***

- More research needs to be undertaken on the relationship between female education and access to work. While women with 13-plus years of education seem to have greater chances of accessing employment, unemployment is also highest among this educational category.
- Women's work as unpaid family members has been widely documented by PCBS. The differences between West Bank and Gaza in this area, although largely in agriculture, also point to the fact that women in Gaza work without pay in manufacturing while women in the West Bank tend to be unpaid workers in commerce. What accounts for these differences and what are their differential impacts?
- Women's crucial role in agriculture in the West Bank (again, as unpaid family members) needs further investigation. The fact that more women claim to be self-employed in agriculture than waged points to the fact that there are status differences among female unpaid family workers in agriculture. Further

research needs to assess these differences and their potential in developing women's access to resources and income in the agricultural sector.

- The relationship between female fertility, life cycle and various forms of employment strategies needs further investigation — specifically through life and work history studies.
- Clearly, researchers on fertility need to pay more attention to female employment as a determinant of fertility. Attention should be made to differing types of employment and their relative effects on fertility.
- The relationship between formal unemployment and self-employment strategies among women needs further analysis. Do women actually prefer to be "wage employees" and become self-employed only as a last option?
- More research is needed on cost-benefits of women's employment at the household level. Women's low wage levels in relation to costs of daycare and transport are factors that need to be taken into account in such an investigation.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> UNDP *Human Development Report 1996* (UNDP New York), (p. 38).
- <sup>2</sup> Tzannatos 1997, 2-3.
- <sup>3</sup> Geir Overson. 1994. *Responding to Change; Trends in Palestinian Household Economy*. Oslo: FAFO Publications.
- <sup>4</sup> The three surveys are; Round 2 April-May 1996, Round 3 July-October 1996, Round 4 October-December 1996. The data of these three rounds was integrated in order to provide a larger sample.
- <sup>5</sup> Working age is defined by PCBS as 15 years and over.
- <sup>6</sup> The highest female labor force participation rate found by the Israeli CBS since 1968 was 9.4% in 1976. The final ICBS finding prior to commencement of PCBS operations was 6.2% in 1993. For ICBS figures see PCBS Current Status Report 1995, Labor Force Statistics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- <sup>7</sup> See PCBS, *Census of Establishments*, 1994.
- <sup>8</sup> See PCBS, *Census of Establishments*, 1994.
- <sup>9</sup> For the mid and late 1980s, a number of studies documented the dominance of Gazan women in clothing manufacturing workshops during that period. Although it is not possible to compare data between the closure and post-closure periods, a striking finding of the PCBS Census of Establishments was the extremely low number of Gaza women compared to Gaza males (and West Bank females) engaged in the clothing and textile industry. See Rockwell 1984; Hindiyeh-Maneh 1996, Women's Studies Center 1993.
- <sup>10</sup> The three years and women as percentage of workers in Israel were; 1975 (1.5%), 1977 (2.8%), and 1981 (3.1%). The data is from Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein 1989, 10.
- <sup>11</sup> Figures on basic needs expenditures are from UNSCO, October 1997.
- <sup>12</sup> The first PCBS survey of child labor in late 1995 found that the LFPR of children 12-16 years old was 6.6%. For male children (12 to 16 years of age) the LFPR rate was 11.5% -- a higher rate than adult women's LFPR. Significantly, 60% of them were paid workers as opposed to unpaid family workers (PCBS May 1996, 17-18).
- <sup>13</sup> UNSCO, October 1996.
- <sup>14</sup> This is based on unpublished data from PCBS, *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, 1995, provided by Dr. Marwan Khawaja.
- <sup>15</sup> Nabris, 1997, iv. These numbers should be used carefully; Save the Children claims the numbers may be low because of their low average age of 34 years. It remains to be seen, however, whether in the long run, involvement in income generation will continue to keep fertility rates low among the younger generation of borrowers.
- <sup>16</sup> Jaquette, 1993.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid



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# 5. PUBLIC-POLITICAL LIFE

## *Terms and Abbreviations*

## Highlights of Findings

### **A. Developments in the Women's Movement**

The Mandate Period  
1948-1967  
1967-1987  
The *Intifada*, 1987-1993  
1993-Present

### **B. Formal Political Structures**

The 1996 National Elections

### **C. Participation in Informal Political Structures**

Charitable Organizations  
Workers Unions  
Professional Associations  
University Student Councils  
The Muslim Religious Establishment  
The Media

### **D. Conclusions**

#### **Tables**

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### **Figures**

Figure 5-1: Men and women voted in nearly equal proportion

Figure 5-2: Leftist parties have a higher percentage of women on their central committees.

Figure 5-3: Few women served as Editors-in-Chief but were more likely to head magazines rather than newspapers.

## **Highlights of Findings**

### **Formal Political Structures**

- 7% of Palestinians martyred during the decade between 1987 and 1997 were women. Similarly, about 9% of the injuries reported between 1987 and 1996 were inflicted on women. Five hundred women were imprisoned since the beginning of military occupation in 1967. As of 1997, five remained in Israeli prison.
- There were 25 women among the 672 candidates for the 88-seat Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), or 3.7%. A woman, Samiha Khalil, a founder and the director of the Society for the Welfare of the Family (*In'ash Al Usrah*), was the only other candidate for the position of President of the Palestinian Authority, which was won by PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat.
- Several factors account for women's low representation in the first elected Legislative Council as compared to men. These can be divided into three categories as follows: the nature of the electoral system codified in the Electoral Law for the interim period; voter attitudes regarding the ideal candidate; and the transcendent purpose of the elections.
- Two out of 25 PA ministers are women. Both hold positions in sectors traditionally associated with women — Higher Education and Social Affairs. All 23 deputy ministers are male. At the level of local government (municipalities, village councils, and project committees), females comprise only 15 out of 3,053 personnel, or 0.5%.
- Women's minority status in the political movements/parties limits their participation in governmental and legislative structures since these organizations provide a pool of candidates for appointments to the expanding PA bureaucracy. The available data indicates an inverse relationship between the proportion of females and authority level — that is, with higher authority, the proportion of female cadres declines. For example, females comprise only 5% of Fateh's Central Committee, although they account for 40% of the members of the less important Higher Movement Committee. This relationship is also evident within PLO structures. As of the end of 1996, women comprised 7.5% of the 744-member Palestine National Council (PNC). But the principal decision-making unit of the PLO is the 16-member Executive Committee, which is comprised exclusively of males.

### **Informal Political Structures**

- In 1997, almost 23% of the administrative personnel of charitable organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were women.
- In 1997, women comprised only 7.6% of organized labor. This proportion reflects women's very low labor force participation in the formal economy.
- As of 1996-97, among professionals (doctors, dentists, pharmacists, lawyers, engineers, journalists and veterinarians) comparatively more women were found in health-related fields, particularly dentistry and pharmacy. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 11.7% of medical doctors, 8.5% of lawyers, and 7.4% of engineers werewomen. Regional variations in the rates are minimal.

- 23% of student union members in Palestinian universities were female, although women comprise 42% of the general student population.
- Women are spiritual advisors, guides and Koranic teachers, but they do not perform the role of preachers in the mosque. The important spiritual and political role of imams and preachers is reserved for men, who preach to a mainly male audience.
- Although women comprised 29% of staff in the West Bank operations of the government-operated Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) in 1997, they were mostly employed as editors, news anchors and show hosts. In Gaza, women comprised only 17% of the staff but they were found in all departments (production, programming and news. In the foreign-language news departments (Hebrew, French and other languages) women represented 28.6% of the work force.

# PUBLIC-POLITICAL LIFE

Images of Palestinian women as activists emerged in the global media in the first phase of the *intifada*, but Palestinian women's participation in political and public life began much earlier. Since the early 1900s, this participation has been within the framework of the Palestinian nationalist movement and has had two major dimensions: (1) mobilizing public protest and active resistance to colonization and to abuse of Palestinian rights, whether through demonstrations, petitions, sit-ins or support activities, and participation in active resistance; and (2) moderating the socio-economic impact of crises that have befallen the Palestinian people — in exile, war or occupation — through providing relief and social services, thereby acting as a stabilizing force and preventing social disintegration. In this dual process of resisting external forms of domination, Palestinian women confronted internal forms of domination and the limits to female autonomy.<sup>1</sup> Their political and social activism has resulted in a slow structural transformation of traditional sex roles, affording women the public space for greater participation in political structures and local organizations.

**Defining public-political life:** Public-political life is exercised through formal and informal structures at the local or national level. The formal includes political parties, parliamentary or other legislative structures, government ministries, and local municipalities. The informal includes forms of associations that may not be overtly political, but that nonetheless facilitate participatory politics and concern public life such as labor unions, professional associations, women's organizations, student and youth movements, and charitable organizations. Such forms of associations are the basis for civil society, defined here as “that set of diverse non-governmental institutions which is strong enough to counterbalance the state, and while not preventing the state from fulfilling its role of keeper of the peace and arbitrator between major interests, can nevertheless prevent it from dominating and atomizing the rest of society.”<sup>2</sup>

Conditions particular to political, economic, and social life under military occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip muddled the boundaries defining political and public life. Political became public and *vice versa*. This public-political nexus facilitated a multiple layering of the interests within organizations and movements. The political dimension, more often than not, took precedence, defining and circumscribing organizational structures, objectives, strategies and activities.

In contrast to public-political life, private life refers to forms of associations and activities which take place within the home. Political life may also be exercised in the private sphere, for example, as when Palestinian women provided refuge for youth in their homes during the *intifada*. In the following discussion we examine how the roles of men and women in public-political life have been affected by historic, social, economic and political processes.

## A. Developments in the Women's Movement

Trends in the women's movement closely follow developments in the national political movement.<sup>3</sup> The transition from class-based female political leadership of the Mandate Period to plural mass-based popular political structures of the 1970s and 1980s was the result of a confluence of social, economic and political forces, including: increased access to education, public exposure to mass media, greater women's participation in the labor force, and the emergence of new and alternative political organizations. Similarly, the current absence of any clear pattern or trend in women's political activism reflects the state of confusion and ambiguity regarding the permanent status arrangements for the self-rule areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Apart from the establishment and development of women's research centers and gender departments in both the public and non-governmental sectors and more intensive advocacy, women's organizations are in a transition period, and are continuing to provide the social services such as literacy, education, vocational training, nurseries and kindergartens, technical training and support for income-generating projects.

### The Mandate Period

During the British Mandate period, female political activism *vis-a-vis* the Mandate government policies and Jewish immigration to Palestine was primarily nationalist and class-based. The political activities of rural peasant women were more often spontaneous responses to localized crises.<sup>4</sup> Peasant women, whose lives and livelihood was affected by Jewish immigration and encroachment of Palestinian land, fought alongside rural men.

In contrast, urban, upper-class women were not involved in actual fighting. Women from urban elite families, many of whom were related to the male political leadership, established women's organizations, some with parallel names and structures to the political organizations of their male relations. Such women participated in delegations, international conferences, demonstrations, and met with the representatives of foreign governments to present their political grievances and warn against Jewish immigration and the establishment of a Jewish homeland on humanitarian grounds. They also engaged in relief and charitable work such as supporting the families of prisoners, collecting money, food, and clothing. Their education and linguistic skills facilitated contacts with the diplomatic corps and expatriates. As urban residents they had access to communication links with foreign capitals. Their privileged economic status allowed them to hire nannies and housekeepers, thereby freeing them from their domestic obligations to pursue political and philanthropic activities.



## 1948-1967

As a result of the creation of the State of Israel and the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and until 1967, the West Bank and Gaza Strip were under the administrative control of the Jordanian and Egyptian governments, respectively. The Amman and Cairo governments administering these areas maintained strict control of Palestinian political opposition in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In response to the political and humanitarian crises, women provided social and relief services. They were organized within existing religious institutions, and established charitable organizations, including orphanages and centers for the elderly.<sup>5</sup>

The establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 provided a frame of reference for the national movement and an alternative political structure to the traditional urban elite and pan-Arabism.<sup>6</sup> One year later, the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW), the first women's branch in the PLO, was established. The mobilization of women under the nationalist banner in the West Bank and Gaza Strip may have been integral to the PLO's strategy to politicize the masses and engage them in the struggle for national liberation.<sup>7</sup> Integration into the national movement confirmed legitimacy on the women's movement, and financial resources that otherwise would not have been accessible. At the same time, however, it circumscribed its autonomy and development.<sup>8</sup>

## 1967-1987

During this period, women participated in PLO military operations, as well as continued in their traditional social and relief work within the framework of charitable societies. Such organizations provided social services to the community: literacy training, kindergartens and nurseries, training in traditional handicrafts, embroidery and knitting. But apart from social service delivery, many of these charitable societies were used as vehicles for the political mobilization of women. Gradually, a feminist perspective evolved as the contradiction between women's national consciousness and the normative social order that limited female autonomy was laid bare.<sup>9</sup>

Emerging from this collective experience, four women's committees were established in the late 1970s and early 1980s, each aligned to a political faction. Despite their separate political orientation, in general, they shared similar mandates: (1) to resist military occupation and petition foreign powers to support Palestinian statehood; and, (2) to provide education and vocational training and other support services for women.<sup>10</sup> These programs did not differ significantly from those of the charitable organizations, but as Jad indicates, "the major difference was that these programs were designed to mobilize and empower women politically rather than simply meet immediate needs."<sup>11</sup> The main political parties extended support to the women's committees given their mutual interest in mobilizing women. As such, the situation of Palestinian women activists in the West Bank and Gaza shares parallels with that of their Lebanese counterparts, including the nature of their work. Sayigh writes that their purpose, "was to recruit and train local members, visit the families of

their organization's martyrs, build support for their organization's 'line,' and rally attendance at important ceremonial occasions, such as the organization's anniversary. Such work was important in linking the *tanzimat* to camp communities; women's relatively easy access to homes, and their diplomatic skills made them adept."<sup>12</sup>

Members of the women's committees were mostly from the refugee camps and villages, and included working women as well as housewives.<sup>13</sup> As women increasingly joined mass organizations, the traditional obstacles to women's participation in public affairs slowly eroded. Hiltermann points out the irony that this was not the ultimate goal of the women's committees. The committees "sought to encourage the process of women's proletarianization....by smoothing the transition between home and workplace through the provision of child care and the teaching of necessary skills. The committees did so primarily because they saw the need for the mobilization of women, as indeed for all sectors, for the nationalist cause."<sup>14</sup>

### **The Intifada, 1987-1993**

According to Jad, the *intifada* provided the impetus for the integration of the women's committees into the national political movement. As such, the committees accessed new funding sources from the PLO and international donors, and expanded their activities in response to the crises.<sup>15</sup> This resulted in further loss of autonomy to the political parties, and diminishing contact with women at the grassroots level. Sinoira (1987) and Lang and Mohanna (1992) reported that the majority of women in their respective samplings were unaware of the purpose and activities of the women's committees. Moreover, according to Lang and Mohanna, "a substantial number of women ... saw them [the women's committees] as some high-up, detached, and inaccessible body. When asked what the committees did, these women did not describe local pre-schools or production projects but pointed out that these organizations 'held meetings and conferences'"<sup>16</sup>

The *intifada* blurred the divisions between the formal and informal political spheres. The egalitarian nature of the first phase of the *intifada* opened the public space for all individuals, regardless of age, class or sex. At the same time, there was a sexual division of labor in the forms of resistance adopted by men and women. While the situation was not as black and white as gun-totting men, and self-effacing women serving in the political shadows, nonetheless, as **Table 5-1** shows, males were the main recipients of punitive measures used by the occupying power to suppress the *intifada*. 7% of those martyred during the decade between 1987 and 1997 were girls and women. Similarly, about 9% of the injuries reported between 1987 and 1996 were inflicted on females. Five hundred women were imprisoned since the beginning of military occupation in 1967. As of 1997, five remained in Israeli prison.

**Table 5-1: Persons Killed (12/1987-3/1997) and Injured (12/1987-11/96), as a Result of Occupation Policies by Region and Sex**

	Killed				Injured			
	Male	Female	Total	% Female	Male	Female	Total	%Female
West Bank	1128	89	1217	7.3	3093	301	3394	8.87
Gaza Strip	634	50	684	7.3	859	83	942	8.81
Total	1762	139	1901	7.3	3952	384	4336	8.86

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997. Unpublished data.

Several factors contribute to these findings. The Israeli authorities were averse to provoke the scorn of the international community by killing or imprisoning large numbers of Palestinian women, given international censure and legal instruments providing special protection for women and children in situations of war and armed conflict.<sup>17</sup> Instead, they targeted Palestinian males whom they considered to be sources of political agitation. Also, Israeli prison infrastructure placed constraints on the number of women who could be detained at any one time. But, equally important, Palestinian society, as with other communities in situations of conflict, was loath to place women in peril.

The data presented in **Table 5-1**, however, obscures the importance of women in providing the moral, social, and economic support essential to sustaining community solidarity, and family cohesion during the *intifada*, but also throughout the various stages of the national movement in general. During the *intifada*, Palestinian males were killed, physically disabled, incarcerated, deported and made fugitives, and some were even co-opted as collaborators as a result of the policies of the Israeli military government. Their female relatives were left to raise their children, engage in paid work, endure loneliness, and demonstrate stoic patience, all private acts lacking the glory and bravado reserved for combatants.

The data indirectly reveals that the choices available to men were based largely on the assumptions made of women. Men could risk life and limb in violent confrontations and civil disobedience knowing that their wives, mothers, daughters, or sisters were at home and would, if need be, sustain the family unit. Women, on the other hand, could not transfer their domestic obligations to another party altogether. Their principal priority lay in the welfare of their families, and this usually meant that they could not risk absenting themselves from the home for long periods. Therefore, the overt risk-taking behavior and self-sacrifice exhibited by men was not a feasible option for women. Women might have set for themselves certain boundaries in which they were able to express their political will, such as providing sanctuary for “wanted” youths, conveying messages and other support roles, but, at the same time, to avoid high risk. In other words, they could not afford to be the mythical martyr. In most of the documented cases in which women were killed by Israeli soldiers, the women were not in direct confrontation with the military, participating in demonstrations, marches and other forms of protests.<sup>18</sup>

## **1993-Present**

With the DOP and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, one of the main purposes for funding the women's committees, that is, the mobilization of women to a party's line, was eclipsed by the new political and financial realities. Declining PLO funds and therefore tighter fiscal policies of their patrons, as well as increasing expenditures associated with the process of state- and institution-building, weakened the position of the women's committees. They, and indeed other popular committees and non-governmental organizations, were forced to redefine their mandates, consider unification and rationalization, and alternative funding arrangements to compensate for the financial shortfall. As such, they are in the formative period of restructuring and redefining themselves in response to the establishment of the limited self-rule areas.

## B. Men and Women in Formal Political Structures

### The 1996 National Elections

The 1996 national elections for the presidency of the Palestinian Authority and for the Palestine Legislative Council (PLC) was a measure of how women's political and social activism during this century has been translated into tangible political currency. As **Table 5-2** below indicates 25 out of the 672 candidates for the 88-seat Palestinian Legislative Council, or 3.7%, were women. A woman, Samiha Khalil, director of *In'ash Al Usrah*, a charitable society established in 1965 in Al-Bireh, was the only other candidate contesting the position of President of the Palestinian Authority, which was won by PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat. **Table 5-2** indicates that the majority of the female candidates (52%) for Legislative Council seats on the electoral list were from the five districts in the Gaza Strip. Female candidates from the West Bank were from Nablus, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron and Jenin.

**Table 5-2: Candidates for the Palestinian National Legislative Council by Governorate and Sex, 1996**

	Men	Women	Total	% Female	% Regional Representation of Females
Jerusalem	49	3	52	5.77	12
Jericho	6	0	6	0.0	0.0
Bethlehem	30	0	30	0.0	0
Jenin	35	1	36	2.78	4
Hebron	70	2	72	2.78	8
Ramallah	44	2	46	4.35	8
Salfit	11	0	11	0.0	0.0
Tubas	12	0	12	0.0	0.0
Tulkarm	38	0	38	0.0	0.0
Qalqilya	12	0	12	0.0	0.0
Nablus	51	4	55	7.27	16
West Bank	358	12	370	3.24	48
North Gaza	65	2	67	2.99	8
Middle Area	48	2	50	4	8
Gaza City	89	3	92	3.26	12
Khan Younis	61	5	66	7.58	20
Rafah	26	1	27	3.7	4
Gaza Strip	289	13	302	4.3	52
Total	647	25	672	3.72	100

**Source:** *Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997. Unpublished data.*

**Table 5-3** below shows that about three-quarters of the 672 candidates for Legislative Council seats ran as independents, 11.5% were aligned to Fateh, and the balance were distributed amongst the various groups both inside and outside the PLO, some which were formed expressly for the 1996 elections.<sup>19</sup>

The data concerning female participation can be interpreted in various ways. Leftist parties are more inclined to endorse female candidates than either centrist or Islamic groups. About 18% of candidates on the FIDA list were women as compared with 12.5% in the Arab Liberation Front, 7.6% in the Palestinian People's Party formerly part of the Communist Party, and 5.2% in the mainstream Fateh movement. Most female candidates preferred to run as independent candidates, although they were less likely than males to do so. For example, 64% of the female candidates ran as independents compared to 75% of male candidates.

**Table 5-3: PLC Candidates by Party Affiliation and Sex**

Party Affiliation	Region	Number of Candidates	% of Total	Seats	Female Candidates	% of Candidates	Seats
Independent	WBGS	503	74.85	35	16	3.18	2
Fateh	WBGS	77	11.46	50	4	5.19	3
National Democratic Coalition	GS	5	0.74	1	0	0	0
Fida (Palestinian Democratic Union)	WBGS	11	1.64	1	2	18.18	0
Palestinian People's Party (Hashaf)	WBSGS	26	3.87	0	2	7.69	0
Islamic Struggle Movement	GS	2	0.30	0	0	0	0
Arab Liberation Front (Temporary Command)	WBGS	8	1.19	0	1	12.5	0
Popular People's Struggle Front	WBGS	12	1.79	0	0	0	0
Freedom and Independence Bloc	WB	5	0.74	1	0	0	0
Islamic Jihad (Al Aqsa Brigades)	WBGS	4	0.6	0	0	0	0
Palestinian Liberation Front (Jataf)	GS	4	0.6	0	0	0	0
National Movement for Change	GS	2	0.3	0	0	0	0
The Future Bloc	WB	4	0.6	0	0	0	0
National Progressive Party	GS	2	0.3	0	0	0	0
Independent National Bloc	WB	3	0.45	0	0	0	0
Palestinian National Union (The Tide)	WB	3	0.45	0	0	0	0
Joint Arab Ba'ath Party	WB	1	0.15	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>672</b>	<b>100.03</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>3.72</b>	<b>5</b>

WB=West Bank, GS=Gaza Strip

The People's Party was formerly part of the Palestinian Communist Party, FIDA is an offshoot of the DFLP formed following the DOP.

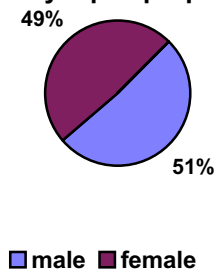
**Source:** Central Election Committee, *Democracy in Palestine: General Palestinian Elections for the Presidency of the Palestinian Authority and the Membership of the Legislative Council* (in Arabic), 1996, pp. 98-99.

This suggests that women are slightly more inclined to seek party backing. Given that three of the five women who won seats in the Legislative Council were aligned to a party (in this case, Fateh), the election results validate the assumption that party endorsement raises a female candidate's probability of success. Two reasons may account for these findings. First, party endorsement confers a degree of legitimacy which may be more important for a female than a male candidate. Second,

the financial expenditures involved in a campaign may be prohibitive in the absence of party support and for candidates who are not independently wealthy or who have support among the upper or entrepreneurial classes. In the 1996 election, being able to mobilize financial support quickly was an important factor given the very brief period between the announcement of elections and the actual voting day.

PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat was elected as President of the PA, accounting for almost 90% of the votes. **Table 5-3** indicates that five women were elected to the Legislative Council in 1996, accounting for 5.7% of the legislative seats. The five female Legislative Council members personify successive trends in Palestinian political leadership during this century — the traditional urban elite, the growth of higher education and the emergence of new mass-based social and political organizations, and (by the notable absence of women on the Islamist-endorsed candidate lists) political Islam. Two elected female Council members ran as independent candidates. One is an academic and a member of the Christian minority for whom a specific number of legislative council seats were reserved, although she did not opt to run for the “reserved” seat and won the second highest total in her district. The second is the daughter of the patriarch of a notable Gaza family with a long political tradition. Among the three Fateh-aligned candidates, one is the wife of a fallen Palestinian military leader and popular political icon, and the other two are Fateh activists.

**Figure 1: Men and women voted in nearly equal proportion.**



As **Figure 5-1** above shows, these electoral results are not due to a low female turnout at the polls. More than one million men and women in roughly equal proportion exercised their right to vote. Several factors account for women’s low representation in the Legislative Council relative to men. These can be divided into three categories as follows: the nature of the electoral system; voter attitudes regarding the ideal candidate; and the purpose of the elections.

***The Structure and Nature of the Electoral System:***

First, according to the Electoral Law governing the interim period, the self-rule areas were divided into 16 electoral districts — 11 in the West Bank and five in the Gaza Strip. Such constituencies incorporate large areas, often of mixed demographic characteristics, such as urban centers, camps and outlying rural areas. Therefore, their traditional support base may not be enough to guarantee victory and, as a result, it was necessary for them to engage in a process of coalition-building among notable families, political parties, movements or factions, and other groups in order to secure a wider popular base. In this respect, men are somewhat better

positioned for such coalition-building than women. First, women’s political activism has been, in large part, through institutions dominated by women and usually in the context of providing services for women. Therefore, their popular base of support tends to be female-centric and often perceived in terms of social work rather than political activism. This may partially explain why neither a female member of a charitable society nor of a women’s committee was elected to the Council. Also, because of social norms, women may encounter greater difficulty in accessing male audiences. For example, being a male facilitates addressing an exclusive male gathering such as a *diwan*.

Second, in more than half of the electoral districts in the West Bank, there were no female candidates, as indicated in **Table 5-2** above. Therefore, even had women preferred to elect female candidates, in several localities they did not have the opportunity.

***Voter Attitudes:***

Some voters hold to the popular conception that women are not as fit as men to run the affairs of state. Such an attitude may vary according to education level. For example, **Table 5-4** below indicates that a greater proportion of women with college and secondary-level voted for Samiha Khalil, compared with their counterparts having either elementary or preparatory level schooling. Similarly, more men with college level education voted for Samiha Khalil.

The opinion poll results also indicate that voters with comparatively lower education level are more inclined than their better educated counterparts to prefer the presidency of the PA to be the seat of political power rather than the Legislative Council.

**Table 5-4: Distribution of Votes According to Sex and Education Level**

	Men				Women			
	<i>Primary or lower</i>	<i>Prep.</i>	<i>Sec.</i>	<i>College +</i>	<i>Primary or lower</i>	<i>Prep.</i>	<i>Sec.</i>	<i>College+</i>
Yasir Arafat	78	62	66.2	59.5	82.3	79.9	72.9	73.8
Samiha Khalil	4.6	7.6	7.4	11	1.7	4.2	10.9	9.1
No one	17.4	30.5	26.4	29.5	16.0	15.9	16.2	17.1
Total	100	100.1	100	100	100	100	100	100
Sample size	347	296	418	336	359	229	281	185

prep=preparatory; sec=secondary

**Source:** Center for Palestine Research and Studies, *The First Palestinian Elections: The political environment, electoral behavior, and results*, (in Arabic), Nablus, March 1997, pp. 106-08.

According to the results of the opinion poll, female voters were more inclined than their male counterparts to prefer the presidency as the main source of decision-making over other governmental structures, regardless of education level. Moreover, the majority of women expressed preference for the presidency at all education levels except those with college education or higher. In contrast, the majority of men expressed preference for the Legislative Council, excepting those with primary level education or lower.<sup>20</sup> One possible explanation for this gender differential is the nature of authority systems and relationships from childhood onward. Girls tend to be



conditioned to bow to the male authority, whether to their fathers, brothers, or husbands and, as a result, as adults they demonstrate a bias to more authoritarian structures. In contrast, boys' relationships with other males tend to be fraternal, and as such they may be more inclined to support a more consultative political process. Education, however, seems to partially offset these social attitudes, and is positively correlated with a greater appreciation for more democratic political structures among both men and women.

According to the same opinion poll of voters, the most important factor among men and women in the choice of candidate was that the candidate be a fighter (27.4%), followed closely by a religious adherent (24.1%), of good character (17%), and demonstrate service to the community (16.3%). Other less important factors included education and being from a notable family.<sup>21</sup> We can see that the most frequently cited factor affecting choice of candidate, as defined conventionally, is one which men may portray with greater ease than women.

Other attitudinal factors include the importance of political identity and loyalty in affecting voting behavior; specifically, voters may have cast ballots along party line, regardless of the gender of the candidates which the parties endorsed on the lists. Also, the political preferences of others, and particularly male relatives, may have played a role in influencing female voting behavior.

#### ***Purpose of the 1996 Elections:***

In several respects, the 1996 national election was used as a quasi-referendum on the peace process with Israel, as evidenced by the election boycott by several political factions. The Palestinian public heard more about the relative merits of signing the Oslo Accords, than future social and development plans. However, almost all candidates put women's rights on their platform. As such, female candidates may not have presented a compelling reason for women voters to elect them over their male counterparts. Their campaign and political platforms may not have been inclusive of specific issues relevant to women such as reform of the personal status codes and labor laws. Furthermore, the nine female candidates running on party lists may have been constrained by the party's position on women's status in the society.

Two out of 25 ministers are women — both hold portfolios in sectors traditionally associated with women, Higher Education and Social Affairs — and all 23 deputy ministers are male. At the level of local government (municipalities, village councils, and project committees), females comprise only 15 out of the 3,053 personnel, or 0.5%. This negligible presence reflects men's traditional authority at the local level, as *makhatir* (traditional arbitrators) and in village councils. In other national contexts, positions in local government, particularly those posts which entail a direct role in education, health and social welfare programs, are a first step to state or national politics. This is not the case in the West Bank and Gaza Strip where municipalities are primarily involved in infrastructure projects and commerce — fields that typically tend to be dominated by males.

## Factors Affecting Men and Women’s Participation in Political Life

**Table 5-5** indicates that women’s minority status in the political apparatus of the political movements/parties is a determinant of their participation in governmental and legislative structures since these organizations provide a pool of candidates for appointments to the expanding PA bureaucracy. Also, one must distinguish between party organs which are repositories of real power and those having comparatively less influence. The data indicates an inverse relationship between the proportion of females and authority level — that is, with higher authority, the proportion of female cadres declines. For example, females comprise only 5% of Fateh’s Central Committee, although they account for 40% of the members of the less important Higher Movement Committee. This relationship is also evident within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). As of the end of 1996, women comprised 7.5% of the 744-member Palestinian National Council (PNC). But the PNC meets too infrequently to be a real decision-making body. The principal decision-making unit of the PLO is the 16-member Executive Committee, which is comprised exclusively of males, and it is here where real power rests within the organization.<sup>22</sup>

**Table 5-5: Female Participation in the Structure of Political Factions**

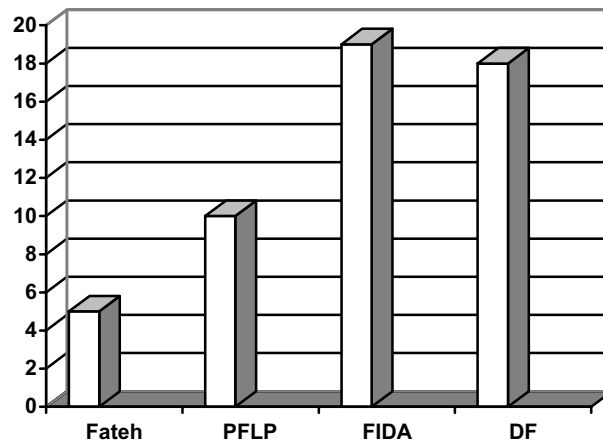
Political faction*	%	
<b>Fateh</b>		
General Movement Conference	25	
Central Committee	5	
Revolutionary Council	33	
Higher Movement Committee	40	
Broadened Movement Council	11	
<b>Total</b>	<b>28.5</b>	
<b>PFLP</b>		
General Central Committee	10	
Sub Central Committee for Central Committee	20	
Leadership of branch in the occupied territories	11	
Conference of the branch	10	
<b>FIDA</b>		
Executive Office	30	
Central Committee	19	
<b>Democratic Front</b>		
	<b>West Bank</b>	<b>Gaza Strip</b>
District Committees	17	9
Central Command	18	13
Secretariat of Central Command	NA	9
General Central Committee	19.5	16.5

na=not available

\*Data for the People’s Party, Islamic Jihad and Hamas were not available.

**Figure 5-2** below shows the proportion of females in the Central Committees. The Central Committee is typically an important decision-making structure within the party structure. While Fateh has a comparatively higher proportion of females among its total ranks, the three leftist organizations shown here have at higher proportion of women in their central committees.

**Figure 5-2: Leftist parties have a higher percentage of women on their central committees.**



Whether women's participation in the Legislative Council and within governmental structures will facilitate public policies and legislation favorable to the female population is not tested, given the short history of the institutional structures of the Palestinian Authority. Yet, the question itself is premised on the common but flawed assumption that women are animated by service to their gender and not by power and other factors similar to men. This misconception stems from the conceptualization of the struggle for women's social, political and economic rights in zero-sum terms — women's gains are men's losses — creating an illusion of polar oppositions. This mentality is reinforced by the typically exclusive female membership of women's organizations. In theory, at least, had the women's committees and other organizations dedicated to raising the status of women recruited and mobilized men who share their objectives of social and gender equity, then the women's movement may not have been perceived as a struggle between "us" versus "them." However, while segregation potentially led to marginalization, integration risked domination. As it stood, the women's committees, though autonomous, still remained a realm within a realm, providing a mechanism for women to establish a network of partisan relations on which to base and expand their personal and political interests.

## C. Participation in Informal Political Structures

As mentioned above, alternative political structures developed comprising Palestinian non-governmental organizations which facilitated the expansion of participatory politics evolving from the experience of statelessness and absence of national government structures. These structures include charitable organizations, workers unions, professional associations, student unions, and women's committees.

### Charitable Organizations

**Table 5-6: Administration and General Assembly Membership of Charitable Organizations by District and Sex, 1997**

	Administration				GA Members			
	Men	Women	Total	% Female	Men	Women	Total	% Female
Bethlehem	138	79	217	36.41	6455	3727	10182	36.6
Ramallah	177	133	310	42.9	1911	1568	3479	45.07
Jerusalem	247	161	408	39.46	2635	634	3269	19.39
Jericho	16	6	22	27.27	66	48	114	42.11
Hebron	69	11	80	13.75	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nablus	254	98	352	27.84	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tulkarm, Salfit, Qalqilya	226	105	331	31.72	NA	NA	NA	NA
Jenin	240	67	307	21.82	NA	NA	NA	NA
West Bank total	1367	660	2027	32.56	11067	5977	17044	35.07
Gaza Strip* total	2680	522	3202	16.3	na	na	na	na
Total	4047	1182	5229	22.6	na	na	na	na

\*Board of Trustees members

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997. Unpublished data.

As **Table 5-6** above indicates, almost 23% of the administrative personnel of charitable organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are women. The highest proportion of women in the administrative structures of West Bank organizations (averaging 40%) are found in Ramallah, Jerusalem and Bethlehem; the lowest is reported for societies in Hebron, where women comprise less than 14% of administrative personnel. Female representation in the northern region is between these two poles.

Several factors can explain these differences. First, there is the historic presence of charitable organizations in the Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Ramallah areas. Second, women are most likely to be part of the administrative structure of women's organizations or child welfare institutions, and many of these are located or headquartered in the central West Bank, although they may have branches in other districts. Third, local social and cultural norms reinforcing male authority may negatively affect women's ability to participate in the administrative organs since these positions are filled ostensibly through an electoral process involving General Assembly members and in accordance with the by-laws of each institution.

## Workers' Unions

**Table 5-7** indicates that 63,054 persons are members of a workers union, comprising 11.4% of the total labor force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.<sup>23</sup> Israeli military occupation has had a profound influence on the economies of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, also affecting the trade union movement. Since 1967, Israel restricted the development of a local manufacturing base. At the same time, the growing importance of the services sector in national production set back the influence of trade unionism based on traditional workers' organizations. In Gaza, trade unions were banned by the Israeli government from 1967 to 1980, and they were not allowed to recruit individuals who had not been members before 1967. Other restrictions were also in force. Gaza trade unions were banned from holding elections, receiving funds from abroad, registering workers without prior permission, and holding educational and cultural lectures or meeting without an Israeli officer present. Similarly, in the West Bank, Palestinian trade unions were also subject to Israeli censure, harassment, intimidation and unilateral measures to close offices and ban union activities.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, the powerlessness of the unions to secure the rights of the large number of workers (the vast majority of whom are male) employed inside Israel further weakened their position among Palestinian workers. For example, the unions were ineffective in securing agreement from the Israeli authorities to remit to workers the income taxes and deductions from health insurance and social security which were deducted from the wages of workers living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israeli efforts to destroy organized labor were countered by union efforts to operate clandestinely with political backing. In the process, union leaders continued their traditional work of representing workers' grievances and providing legal aid, but also used their political persuasion to recruit and mobilize workers for their party's line.

**Table 5-7: Members of Workers' Unions, end 1997**

	Men	Wome n	Total	% Female
Jerusalem	4972	390	5362	7.27
Nablus	7898	583	8481	6.87
Hebron	7501	406	7907	5.13
Ramallah	6534	660	7194	9.17
Jenin	3529	203	3732	5.44
Bethlehem	4414	482	4896	9.84
Tulkarm	2661	143	2804	5.1
Qalqilya	1998	82	2080	3.94
Jericho	1504	109	1613	6.76
Salfit	2240	70	2310	3.03
West Bank	43251	3128	46379	6.74
Gaza Strip	14985	1690	16675	10.13
Total	58236	4818	63054	7.64

**Source:** Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997; unpublished data.

**Table 5-7** above indicates that women comprise only 7.6% of trade unions members. This proportion is a reflection of women's very low labor force participation; women comprise 14.9% of employed persons in the formal labor market. The majority of women workers are employed in the health and education sectors. Women are more prevalent in the informal economy where they constitute

60.6% and 55.6% of the informal economies in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, respectively.<sup>25</sup> These women are involved in such activities as home-based production of clothing, food preparation, micro-vending and hairdressing, and are unlikely to be unionized. As such they are vulnerable to employer exploitation.

Unions in the Gaza Strip have a higher proportion of female members than their West Bank counterparts. These findings suggest that labor force participation is not solely responsible for female union membership levels. Other determinants also contribute to the inter- and intra-regional differences. Female representation is lowest in trade unions in Qalqilya, Salfit, Tulkarm, Hebron and Jenin — all rural areas, with a high proportion of female agricultural workers. In contrast, female representation is highest among the trade unions in the Ramallah and Jerusalem districts, where the unions historically have been concentrated and a “union culture” has had greater time to take root and develop.

Another factor for women’s low participation in organized labor includes female skepticism of the unions’ ability to serve and promote their interests. As with other forms of association, organized labor was politicized and union leaders were engaged in political activities, with the rights of the working class often subordinated to factional interests. Therefore, women may have perceived such organizations as an alternative expression of political activism rather than a vehicle for workers’ rights. Also, the male majority within unions might dissuade women from participating in union activities, and cause their male relations to discourage or prohibit their membership, even if there are separate female branches. Hiltermann offers additional factors including: the practices of factory and workshop owners which isolate women from unions, such as providing them with transportation to work and back; and some membership restrictions work against women due to the high turnover of women in jobs as a result of marriage or childbirth.<sup>26</sup>

## **Professional Associations**

Under occupation, professional associations acted as proxy self-regulating agencies for professional groups in the absence of national bodies to license, oversee the conduct of their members and set standards and guidelines for the profession. **Tables 5-8 to 5-11** suggest that, among other factors including education level, attitudes toward the role of women in Palestinian society influence the choice of professions, as well as specialty, status and, intra-regional variations.

### ***Field of Specialization:***

**Table 5-8** shows a summary of the proportion of women in several professional associations. Comparatively more women are found in health-related fields, particularly dentistry and pharmacy. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, women comprise 11.7% of medical doctors, 8.5% of lawyers, and 7.4% of engineers. The regional variations in the ranking are minimal and do not show regional bias; while there are relatively more female dentists in the Gaza Strip, there are more female engineers in the West Bank. Interesting is the very low participation of women in veterinarian medicine despite women’s role in herding and caring for farm animals.

**Table 5-8: Professionals by Region and Sex, 1996 and 1997**

	West Bank			Gaza Strip			Total
	Men	Women	% Female	Men	Women	% Female	% Female
Dentists	349	91	20.68	220	59	21.15	20.86
Medical doctors	1157	149	11.41	1375	186	11.92	11.68
Pharmacists	na	na	na	399	142	26.25	na
Veterinarians	na	na	na	71	3	4.05	na
Lawyers	768	71	8.46	313	29	8.48	8.47
Engineers	3839	388	9.18	2974	156	4.98	7.39
Journalists	191	17	8.17	na	na	na	na

**Note:** Figures are for 1997 except for dentists and West Bank doctors (1996).

**Sources:** Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997. *Unpublished data*. Arab Medical Association, Gaza (medical doctors, dentists, pharmacists and vets in the Gaza Strip), lawyers, Administrative Records.

### ***Sub-specialty:***

Within each profession, gender differences with regards to sub-specialty are apparent. **Table 5-9** shows gender and regional and sub-specialty differences among registered engineers. While 7.4% of Palestinian engineers are female, the proportion of women relative to men is higher in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip by more than 4%. The greatest number of women are found in civil and architectural engineering which require comparatively less frequent field visits than other engineering categories. The proportion of women relative to men is highest in architectural and chemical engineering, and lowest in mechanical engineering. It is important to note here that the number of chemical engineers, regardless of sex, is the lowest among all major sub-specialties. Many chemical engineers are interested in working in the petroleum industry abroad; the relatively low number of men in the field inflates the proportion of women. As such, the high proportion of women in chemical engineering may reflect the limited local opportunities available to men rather than the professional preferences of women.

**Table 5-9: Engineers by Sub-specialty and Sex, 1997**

	West Bank				Gaza Strip			
	Men	Women	Total	% Female	Men	Women	Total	% Female
Civil	1459	130	1589	8.18	1135	54	1189	4.54
Architectural	391	146	537	27.19	229	36	265	13.58
Mechanical	707	19	726	2.62	501	5	506	0.99
Electrical	1039	53	1092	4.85	474	29	503	5.77
Chemical	144	32	176	18.18	72	13	85	15.29
Other	99	8	107	7.48	563	19	582	3.26
Total	3839	388	4227	9.18	2974	156	3130	4.98

**Source:** Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997. *Unpublished data*.

### **Status:**

**Table 5-10** below suggests that gender also affects status within a professional grouping. For example, while women comprise 8.5% of lawyers (see **Table 5-8**), they account for only 4% of the judges in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

**Table 5-10: Court Judges in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by Region and Sex, 1997**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Men	31	34	65
Women	1	2	3
Total	32	36	68
% Female	3.13	5.56	4.41

**Source:** Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997. Unpublished data.

### **Local Variations:**

Local variations are evident. **Table 5-11** shows that the highest proportion of female physicians and dentists are resident in Nablus, Ramallah and Bethlehem. Nablus and Bethlehem are comparatively wealthy, urban areas; Ramallah is a comparatively wealthy, rural area, as indicated by the 1995 PCBS demographic survey. The higher household income levels in these three districts may afford more opportunities for female higher education. Ramallah, as the headquarters of numerous private, public and non-governmental health-related organizations, also provides employment opportunities.

**Table 5-11: Medical Doctors and Dentists by Region, District and Sex**

	Dentists				Medical doctors			
	Men	Women	Total	% Female	Men	Women	Total	% Female
Jenin	43	6	49	12.24	119	15	134	11.19
Nablus	69	22	91	24.18	244	47	291	16.15
Tulkarm	33	7	40	17.5	144	15	159	9.43
Qalqilya	15	3	18	16.67	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ramallah	40	21	61	34.43	170	23	193	11.92
Jerusalem	57	8	65	12.31	184	22	206	10.68
Bethlehem	30	8	38	21.05	100	15	115	13.04
Hebron	62	16	78	20.51	196	12	208	5.77
West Bank	349	91	440	20.68	1157	149	1306	11.41
Gaza Strip	185	59	244	24.18	1375	186	1561	11.92
Total	534	150	684	21.93	2532	335	2867	11.68

NA=not applicable

**Note:** Figures are totals for 1997 except medical doctors, West Bank (1997).

**Sources:** **Source:** Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997. Unpublished data.

## **University Student Councils**

Student activism at Palestinian university campuses has been a constant feature of participatory politics. Student council election results, as the election results of professional organizations and other organized groups, are used as a proxy indicator of a political faction's level of popularity.



**Table 5-12** below indicates that Bethlehem University had the highest proportion of female student council members, with women constituting half of the council. Females comprise 20% of the student council at al-Quds University in Jerusalem, but they are not represented at universities in Birzeit, Nablus (al-Najah National) and Hebron. Although the number of women in student councils might be expected to be proportional to their representation in the general student population, the data indicates that this is not the case. Females comprise more than 64% of the students at Bethlehem University and half the members of the council, but at Hebron University, where they account for half of the student population, females do not have a single council seat. Similarly, at Birzeit and Najah National Universities, although females constitute 41% of the student body, women are not represented.

**Table 5-12: Student Councils by University and Sex, 1997**

University	Student Council				Student Population*
	Men	Women	Total	% Female	% Female
Najah	11	0	11	0.0	40.99
Birzeit	11	0	11	0.0	41.22
Al-Quds	8	2	10	20	53.35
Bethlehem	9	10	19	52.63	64.65
Hebron	35	0	35	0.0	50.28
Al-Azhar	9	7	16	43.75	36.57
Islamic	9	9	18	50	35.53
Total	92	28	120	23.33	41.39

**Note:** The student councils at al-Azhar and Islamic Universities are sex segregated: there is a council for male students and a council for female students.

\* Data for 1996-97 is calculated from PCBS and MOE, *Educational Statistical Yearbook No. 3, 1996-97* (Ramallah: PCBS, June 1997), p. 205.

Possible determinants of the proportion of females in student councils include university policies and party ideology. For example, the Islamic University (in the Gaza Strip) is sex segregated, therefore warranting two student councils, one for males and the other for females. Although al-Azhar University, also in the Gaza Strip, has co-ed classes, the student council is also sex segregated.

## The Muslim Religious Establishment

**Tables 5-14 and 5-15** indicate women are spiritual advisors, guides and Koranic teachers, but not preachers in the mosque. The important spiritual and political role of imams and preachers is reserved for males.

Women comprise about 16% of the religious establishment in the Gaza Strip, and only 9% in the West Bank. The higher proportion of females in religious occupations in the West Bank may reflect greater religious conservatism in that region; in order to ensure greater religious adherence, the religious establishment in Gaza may be recruiting women as spiritual advisors in order to mobilize housewives and ensure influence within the Palestinian home. Alternatively, the regional variations may reflect a progressive trend whereby it has become socially acceptable for women to enter vocations formerly reserved for men. While the former interpretation equates religious affiliation with conservatism, the validity of the latter

interpretation is dependent on the nature of message being transmitted -- whether it encourages equity between men and women, or endorses male dominance.

**Table 5-13: Workers in Muslim Religious Occupations in the West Bank, 1997**

	Men	Women	Total	% Female
Teachers	88	12	100	12
Advisor & guides	65	61	126	48.41
Imams & preachers	590	0	590	0.00
Total	743	73	816	8.95

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997. Unpublished data.

**Table 5-14: Workers in Muslim Religious Occupations in the Gaza Strip, 1997**

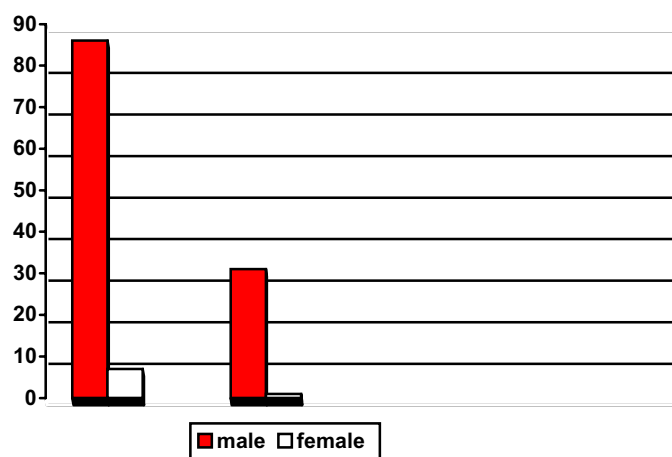
	Men	Women	Total	% Female
Chief reader (sheikh)	1	0	1	0
Koranic Reader in mosque	25	0	25	0
Koranic teacher	73	21	94	22.34
Advisor	30	3	33	9.09
Total	129	24	153	15.69

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997. Unpublished data.

## The Media

As of 1997, women were more likely to be editors-in-chief of magazines than newspapers, as shown in **Figure 5-3** below.

**Figure 5-3: There are few women editors-in-chief but more in magazines than newspapers.**



The Palestinian Broadcast Corporation (PBC) was established after the entry of the PA into areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1993. **Table 5-15** indicates that women comprise 29% of PBC staff in the West Bank, the majority of these

women are employed as radio presenters, editors and television news anchors and show hosts. In Gaza, women comprise only 17.4% of the workers but are found in all departments (production, programming and news) in roughly equal proportion, except in the foreign news departments (Hebrew, French and other languages) where they comprise 28.6% of the work force.

**Table 5-15: Workers in Broadcasting and Television by Sex, 1997**

	Men	Women	Total	% Female
<b>Radio</b>				
Director	1	0	1	0.0
Presenters & editors	25	13	38	34.21
<b>Television/Ramallah</b>				
Directors	7	1	8	12.5
Editors	1	0	1	0.0
Broadcasters and presenters	7	3	10	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>29.31</b>
<b>Gaza Strip</b>				
General administration	40	9	49	18.37
Production dept	31	5	36	13.89
Programming dept	23	5	28	17.86
Arabic news dept	24	3	27	11.11
Foreign news dept	9	3	12	25
Hebrew & French news	6	3	9	33.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>17.39</b>

**Source:** Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997. Unpublished data.

## D. Conclusions

In general, at least three factors have facilitated entry and participation into public and political life for both men and women — mobility, education, and connections. During the Mandate period, individuals from urban, notable families, whether male or female, were more likely than persons from other social classes within Palestinian society to have access to these requisites. After the 1948 War, and particularly after the 1960s coinciding with the expansion of the education system, and the creation of plural, mass-based political organizations under the umbrella of the PLO, schooling and political affiliation became more important than wealth and genealogy for entry into public-political life.

Men and women participate in public-political life through formal political structures such as the PLO and its various constituents, as well as through informal political structures such as charitable organizations, professional associations, women's committees, trade unions, professional associations, and student councils. The available data indicate that women comprise a greater proportion of the members of charitable organizations than other forms of associations facilitating participatory politics.

Each generation of women have had their vanguard, opening new doors for succeeding generations. One of the myths sustained and inflated by conditions of occupation and statelessness has been that a gender 'reformation,' or transformation of women's status, would accompany the establishment of a national authority. What is noteworthy in men and women's representation in public-political life is not the minority status of women in the spheres of public-political activity discussed above, although it is salient; rather, despite conditions of military occupation, women are found in virtually all public spheres, many of which they were absented from at the turn of the century.

The expected reaction of a besieged community would be to reassert its identity and to guard tightly those features which separate the victim from the aggressor, including embedded social structures and the roles of men and women. Yet, despite living under conditions of statelessness and military occupation for 50 years, there are glimpses of activity which run against the grain of social conformity. At the same time, it is perhaps because of the experience of resistance which, having worked its way into a Palestinian ethos, spills over into other aspects of life and enables individuals to confront social taboos and stereotypes. Therefore, increased and more diversified access for women in public-political life will likely continue to be gradual and closely linked with social, political and economic processes taking place at the macro level in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the region.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Julie M. Peteet, *Gender in Crisis: Women and the Palestinian Resistance Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994) p. 5. Gellner qualifies this definition in the pp. 6-12 which follow.

<sup>3</sup> For a description of some of the organizations and their members during the British Mandate see Ellen Fleischman, *Jerusalem Women's Organizations During the British Mandate 1920s-1930s*, Jerusalem (Jerusalem: PASSIA, 1995) in Arabic & English. For an overview of the Palestinian women's movement see Julie Peteet, *op.cit.*; Islah Jad, "Palestinian Women, 1919-1989," in Jamal R. Nassar & Roger Heacock (Eds.), *Intifada: Palestine at the Crossroads*, (New York: Praeger, 1990), pp. 125-142; Joost R. Hiltermann, *Behind the Intifada: Labor and Women's Movements in the Occupied Territories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp. 126-172.

<sup>4</sup> Peteet, *op.cit.*, 101.

<sup>5</sup> Hiltermann, *op. cit.*, 129-30.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of Palestinian political leadership, see Emile Sahliyeh, *In Search of Leadership, West Bank Politics Since 1967* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> Hiltermann, 126.

<sup>8</sup> Peteet, *op. cit.*, 64-66.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>10</sup> The committees and the political alignments are as follows: Women's Committee for Social Work (Fateh); Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (PFLP); Union of Palestinian Working Women's Committees (Communist Party); and the Federation of Palestinian Women's Action Committees (DFLP).

<sup>11</sup> Islah Jad, "Claiming Feminism, Claiming Nationalism: Women's Activism in the Occupied Territories."

<sup>12</sup> Rosemary Sayigh, Palestinian Women and Politics in Lebanon, in Judith Tucker (ed.), *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1993), p.184.

<sup>13</sup> Souad Dajani, "Palestinian Women Under Israeli Occupation", in *ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>14</sup> Hiltermann, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-72.

<sup>15</sup> Islah Jad, "Claiming Feminism, Claiming Nationalism," *op.cit.*, pp. 238-39.

<sup>16</sup> Erica Lang and Itimad Mohanna, *A Study of Women and Work in 'Shatti' Refugee Camp of the Gaza Strip* (Jerusalem, Arab Thought Forum, 1992), pp. 167-170.

<sup>17</sup> Protocol I additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts, Articles 76 & 77 provide for special protection of women and children. International Committee of the Red Cross, *Protocols additional the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949* (Geneva: ICRC, 1977), pp. 57-60.

<sup>18</sup> Al Haq, *A Nation Under Siege* (Ramallah: Al Haq, 1989), p. 504.

<sup>19</sup> In protest against the terms of the Oslo Accords, the PFLP, the DFLP, Islamic Jihad and Hamas boycotted the national elections.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 109-1122.

<sup>21</sup> Center for Palestine Research and Studies, *The First Palestinian Elections: The political environment, electoral behavior, and the results*, (in Arabic), (Nablus: CPRS, March 1997), p. 350.

<sup>22</sup> Neil C. Livingstone and David Halevy, *Inside the PLO* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1990), p. 71

<sup>23</sup> Calculated using the total labor force estimates for first nine months of 1997 (552,661), PCBS, *Labor Force Surveys*, 1997.

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<sup>24</sup>Samih K. Farsoun and Jean M. Landis, "The Sociology of an Uprising: The Roots of the Intifada," in Jamal R. Nassar and Roger Heacock, *op. cit.*, 25-26.

<sup>25</sup>Men comprise 85.1% of all employed persons, PCBS, *1996 Labor Survey* (Ramallah: PCBS, April 1996). For a discussion of women and standard labor force surveys see Rema Hammami, *Palestinian Women: A Status Report No. 4, Labor and Economy, Gender Segmentation in Palestinian Economic Life* (Birzeit: Women's Studies Program, Birzeit University, 1997).

<sup>26</sup>Joost Hiltermann, *op. cit.*, p. 158.