

# Middle East & North Africa

**Women, Business and the Law (WBL)** is a World Bank Group flagship initiative providing comparable data on laws and policies impacting women's economic participation to drive jobs, productivity, and economic growth. Economies with higher WBL scores tend to have higher female labor force participation rates, more women business owners and managers, and narrower gender wage gaps.

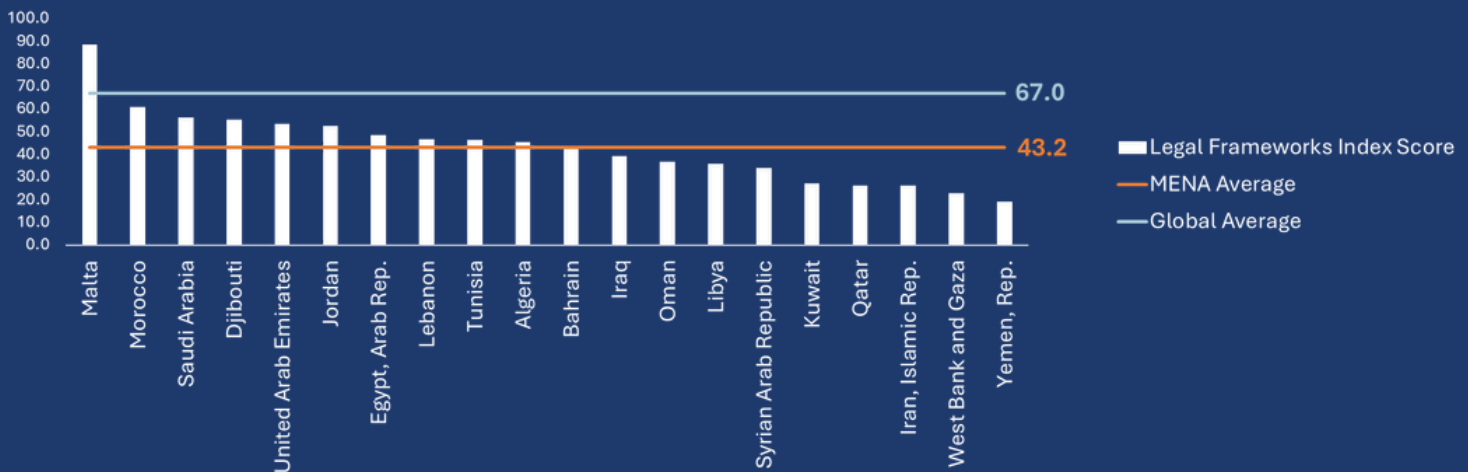
Women in the Middle East and North Africa region have less than half (43.2%) of the economic rights afforded to men. Only about a third of mechanisms (36.2%) are in place to support the implementation of these laws. Experts in the region perceive that women's economic rights are enforced at slightly more than a third (37.3%) of their full potential.

## Reform Highlights from October 2023 to October 2025

- ⚠️ **10 economies in the Middle East and North Africa region have enacted reforms to provide women with greater access to economic opportunities.**
- ✅ **The Arab Republic of Egypt** allowed employees to request flexibility regarding the time and place of work; removed restrictions on a woman's employment in jobs deemed dangerous and on a woman's ability to work at night; mandated equal remuneration for work of equal value; increased paid leave for mothers from 90 to 120 days; and introduced one day of paid leave for fathers.
- ✅ **Jordan** allowed employees to request flexibility regarding time and place of work.

[Click here for a full list of reforms](#)

## Legal Frameworks Index Scores for Middle East and North Africa - WBL 2026 Index



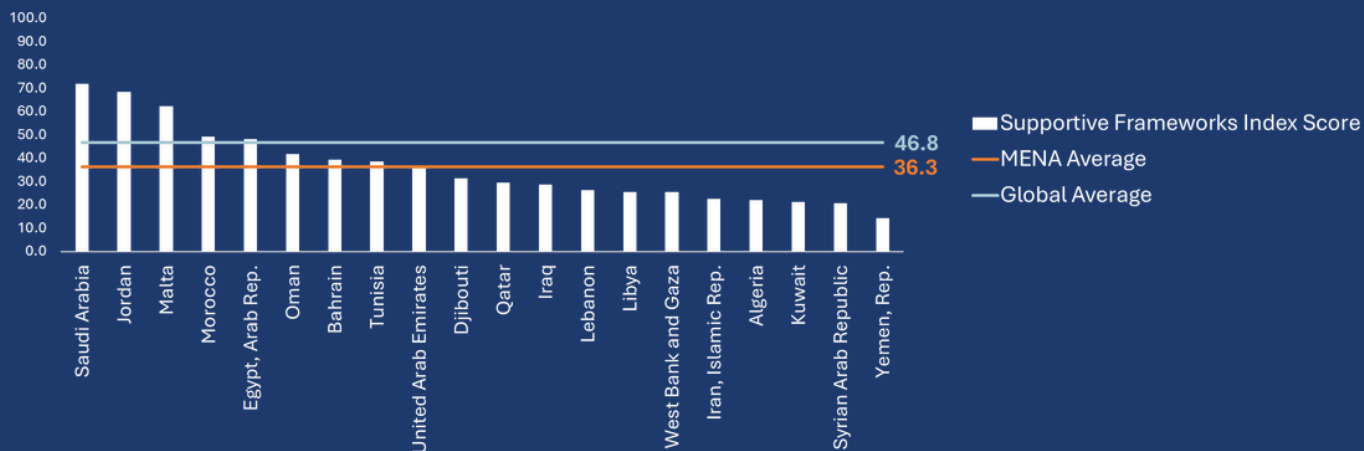
## Legal Frameworks: Measuring equal rights and explicit restrictions on women's work and entrepreneurship

- Across the region, **Malta** performs above the global average, indicating relatively strong legal frameworks promoting women's access to economic opportunities.
- The **Pay** and **Pension** topics perform well with average regional scores of 64.7 and 58.2, respectively.
- The **Safety** and **Marriage** topics show the most room for improvement with average regional scores of 22.8 and 27.5, respectively, indicating persistent gaps in laws protecting women from violence and constraints related to marriage and divorce. To close such gaps, economies could introduce comprehensive legislation addressing child marriage, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and femicide and advance equality in marriage and divorce for women.

## Good Practice Legal and Supportive Frameworks

- **Lebanon** and the **Arab Republic of Egypt** have laws that address all forms of sexual harassment, including in employment, education settings, public places, and online.
- **Saudi Arabia** provides a clearly outlined application procedure for parents to request financial support from the government for childcare services and publishes reports on the quality of childcare services.

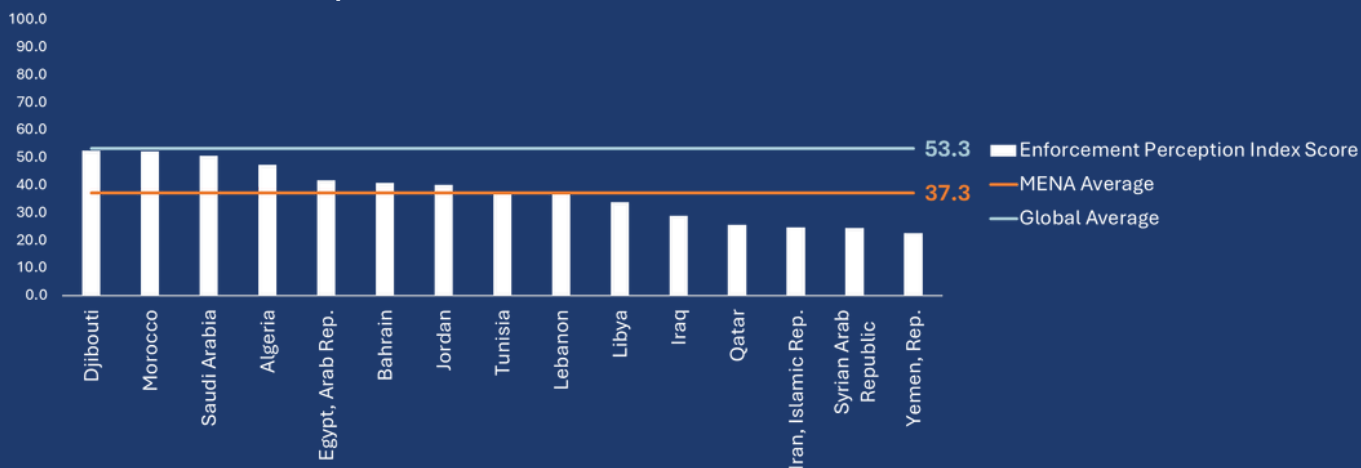
## Supportive Frameworks Index Scores for Middle East and North Africa - WBL 2026 Index



### Supportive Frameworks: Examining policy instruments designed to support the implementation of laws

- Across the region, policies and institutions to implement equal opportunity laws are strongest in **Saudi Arabia** and **Jordan**. Most room for improvement remains in **Syrian Arab Republic** and the **Republic of Yemen**.
- The **Marriage** and **Mobility** topics perform relatively well with average regional scores of 51.9 and 70.6, respectively.
- The **Parenthood** and **Childcare** topics show the most room for improvement with average regional scores of 18.8 and 19.4, respectively, indicating gaps in policies and institutions supporting women’s participation in the labor force after having children and the availability, affordability, and quality of center-based childcare. To close such gaps, economies could publish anonymized sex disaggregated data on unpaid care work and reports on the quality of childcare services.

## Enforcement Perceptions Index Scores for Middle East and North Africa - WBL 2026 Index



### Enforcement Perceptions: Evaluating expert views of how well public authorities enforce laws in practice

- **Djibouti** is the highest scoring economy (52%), suggesting that laws protecting women’s economic rights are enforced about half of the time. Lowest enforcement levels are perceived in the **Syrian Arab Republic** and **the Republic of Yemen**.
- Across the region, experts assess the enforcement of women’s right to **Safety** at only 14.0% of their full potential and the enforcement of **Childcare** laws at only 23.9% of their full potential.