

The Tempo and Intensity of Marriage in the Arab Region: Key Challenges and their Implications

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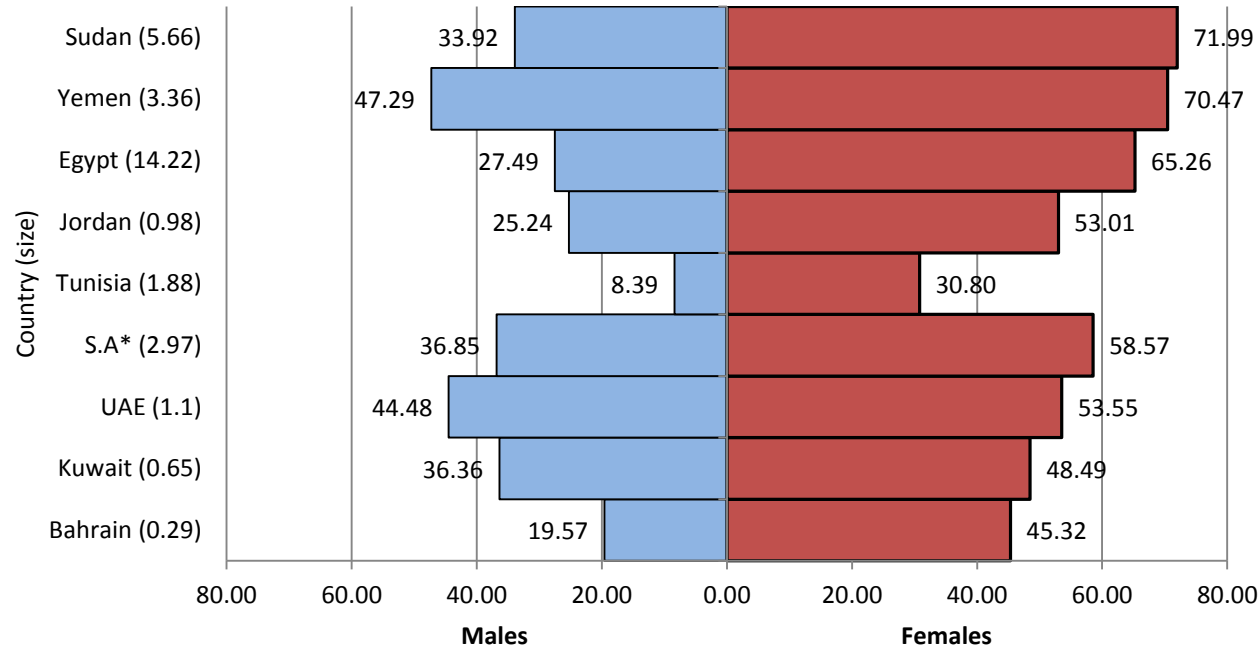
The Tempo and Intensity of Marriage in the Arab Region: Key Challenges and their Implications

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I. Profiles and Nature of Key Challenges

I.1 Marriage Structure

Figure (1) Percentages of population aged 20-29 ever married and the size of the total population in this age group in millions by sex and country



*S.A. data refers to nationals only

Source: Calculated from different censuses

Very different by sex

Females > males

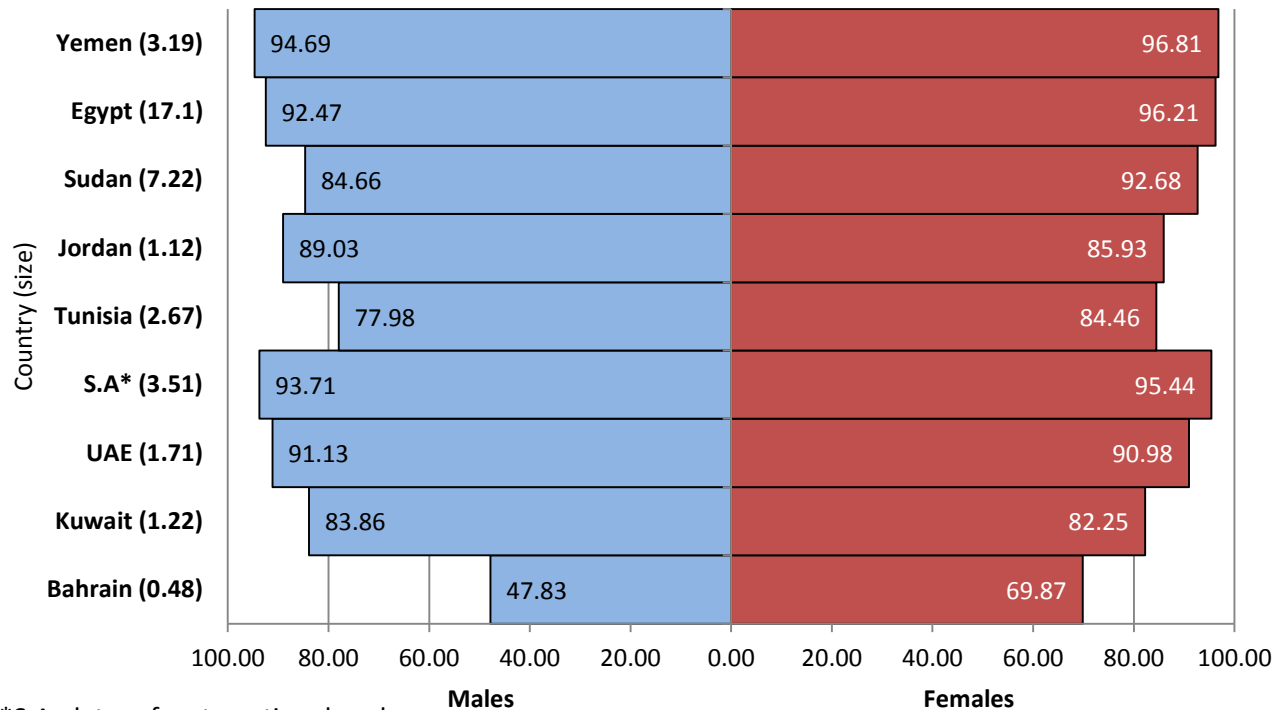
2-3 folds (Sudan, Egypt, Jordan) —————> young ages at mar. (fem)

Lower ratio (Yemen) —————> young ages mar (fem+ male)

Gulf —————> pattern not systematic

I) Profiles/challenges

Figure (2) Percentages of population aged 30-49 ever married and the size of the total population in this age group in millions by sex and country




*S.A. data refers to nationals only

- **Diff by sex diminishes**
- **Majority ever married**
- **Bahrain?**

I) Profiles/challenges

Table (1) Percentages of single males, females, total population and the size of total population in age group 20-49

	% Single male	% Single female	% Total single	Total single	Total population
Tunisia (2004)	50.87	37.60	44.12	2,006,908	4,548,742
Jordan (2004)	40.83	29.07	35.11	736,001	2,096,303
Egypt (2006)	36.97	17.87	27.51	8,611,873	31,306,888
Yemen (2004)	30.03	16.50	23.22	1,520,729	6,550,013
Sudan (2008)	36.77	16.72	25.98	3,344,833	12,875,481
Bahrain (2010)	62.70	39.83	55.13	427,517	775,478
Kuwait (2011)	31.39	30.81	31.15	584,065	1,875,125
UAE (2005)	25.9	26.35	26.02	729,404	2,803,363
S.A* (2004)	32.10	21.64	26.92	1,745,594	6,484,108
Qatar** (2010)	32.51	31.43	32.29	452,299	1,400,688
Total %	36.28	20.27	28.51		70,716,189
Total size	13,201,764	6,958,447		20,159,223	

- % single(23% - 55%); size of single 20-49: large
- Overall 20.2 million  70.7 million
- Total single males (13 million) much larger females (7 million)

Ramifications of sizeable social groups single?

Demographic

- Impact on fertility levels ✓
- Household structures ✓
- Living arrangements ✓

Sociological :

- Livelihoods/wellbeing of individuals
- Gender relations
- Family ties
- Cultural norms/values
- Fabrics of society

**Table (2) Groupings of Arab countries by the nature of key challenges
in the tempo and density of marriage**

Key challenge: Early marriage				
Very high early marriage (32-35%)			High early marriage (17-25%)	
SMAM Low (22-23)			SMAM Low (22-23)	
SMAM Med (25-26)				
Low celibacy (3-4%)	Med celibacy (7.5%)	Low celibacy (3.7%)	Med celibacy (10.4%)	Med celibacy (11.1%)
Mauritania Yemen	Sudan*	Egypt	Iraq Palestine	Syria
Key challenge: Delayed marriage and high celibacy				
Low early marriage (2-8%)				
SMAM High (28-31)				
Very high celibacy (24-32%)		High celibacy (15-18%)		
Libya Kuwait Lebanon	Algeria Tunisia Djibouti			
Combination of challenges:				
SMAM (25-26)				
High celibacy (15-18%)		Med celibacy (7-12%)		High celibacy (17.8%) Med early marriage (13%)
Bahrain Jordan	Qatar UAE	Morocco		
No major challenges:				
Low celibacy (3-4%)				
SMAM Med (25-26)				
Oman Saudi Arabia				

Early Marriage measured by the percentages of all women 20-24 marrying before age 18

Celibacy measured by the percentages of women 35-39 never married

I) Profiles/challenges

Table (3) Summary groupings of Arab countries by the nature of key challenges in the tempo and density of marriage

Key challenge: Early Age at Marriage and no major delays in SMAM (Celibacy low and med)	Key challenge: Celibacy and delays In SMAM (Low proportion of early marriage)
Mauritania(35%)* Sudan (33%) Yemen (32%) Iraq (25%) Palestine (19%) Syria (18%) Egypt (17%)	Libya (31.6%, 31.2)** Kuwait (24.5%, 27.5) Lebanon (23.7%, 28.3) Algeria (16.6%, 29.5) Tunisia (15.5%, 28.7) Djibouti (14.7%,27.7)
Transitional Countries	
Morocco (13%)	Bahrain Jordan Qatar UAE
(Low early marriage, little delays SMAM, Low Celibacy	
Oman Saudi Arabia	

**Early Marriage measured by the percentages of all women 20-24 marrying before age 18
 Celibacy measured by the percentages of women 35-39 never married**

II. Early Marriage

1. International literature

UNFPA (2013)

Huge Global Problem (7.3 million girls) + Implications + policies

Physical health of girls/offsprings

Adolescence Mortality/Morbidity

Premature birth/ perinatal mort. Health

Human right/psychosocial health

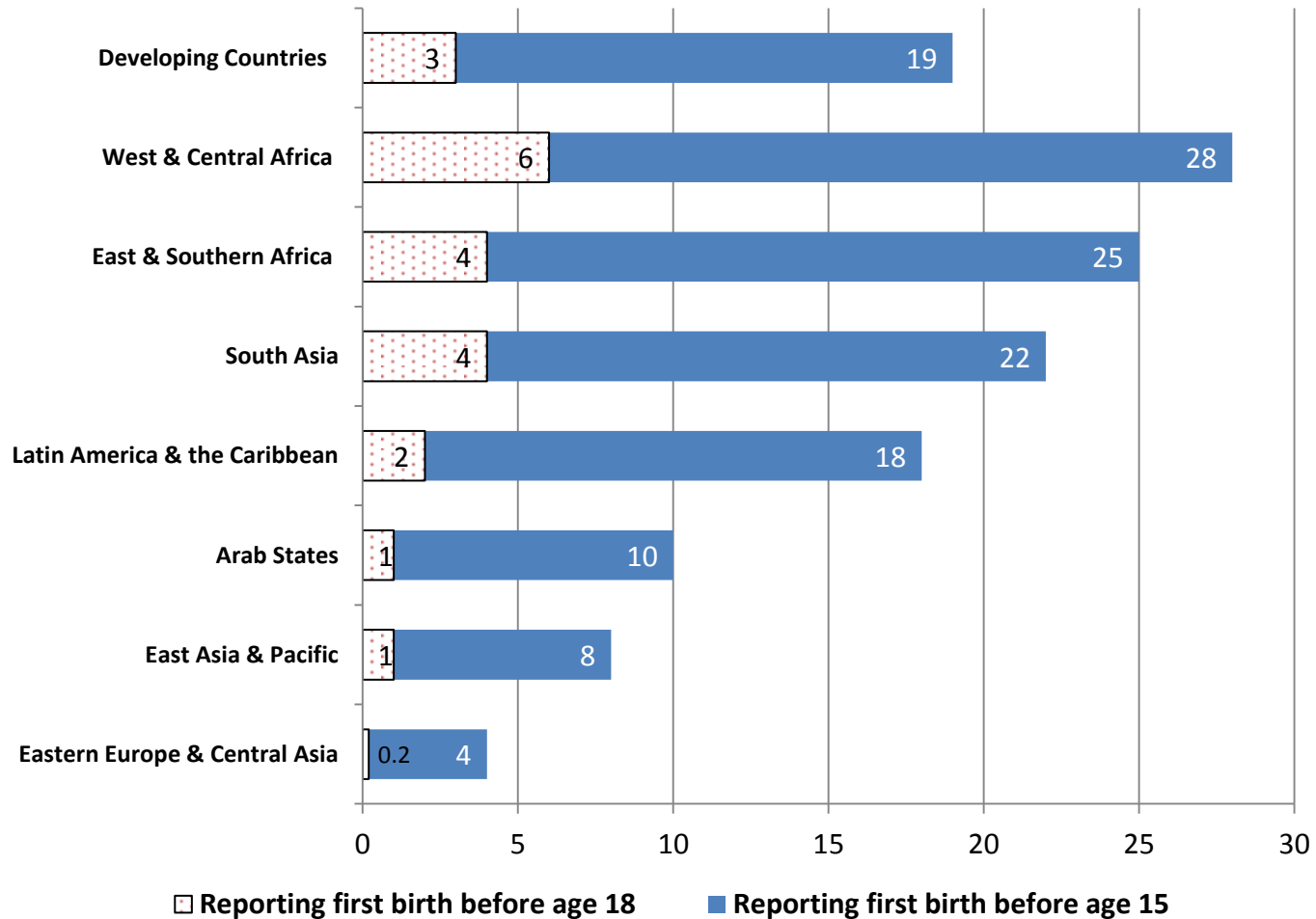
compatibility/adult roles/denial of opportunities

Family Implications

Functioning families

2. Average situation of Arab Region

Figure (3) Percentages of women ages of 20 -24 reporting a birth before age 18 and before age 15



- **Very early marriage (< 15)**

Table (4) Percentage of ever married women aged 20-24 who have been married less than 15 and less than 18

Countries	Ever married aged 20-24	
	Less than 15	Less than 18
Egypt 2008	4.1	30.9
Jordan 2007	3.0	26.3
Morocco 2003-04	6.6	41.5
Iraq 2011	14.6	52.2
Syria 2006	8.7	43.7
Yemen 2006	17.0	54.5

- Under pinning's consequence

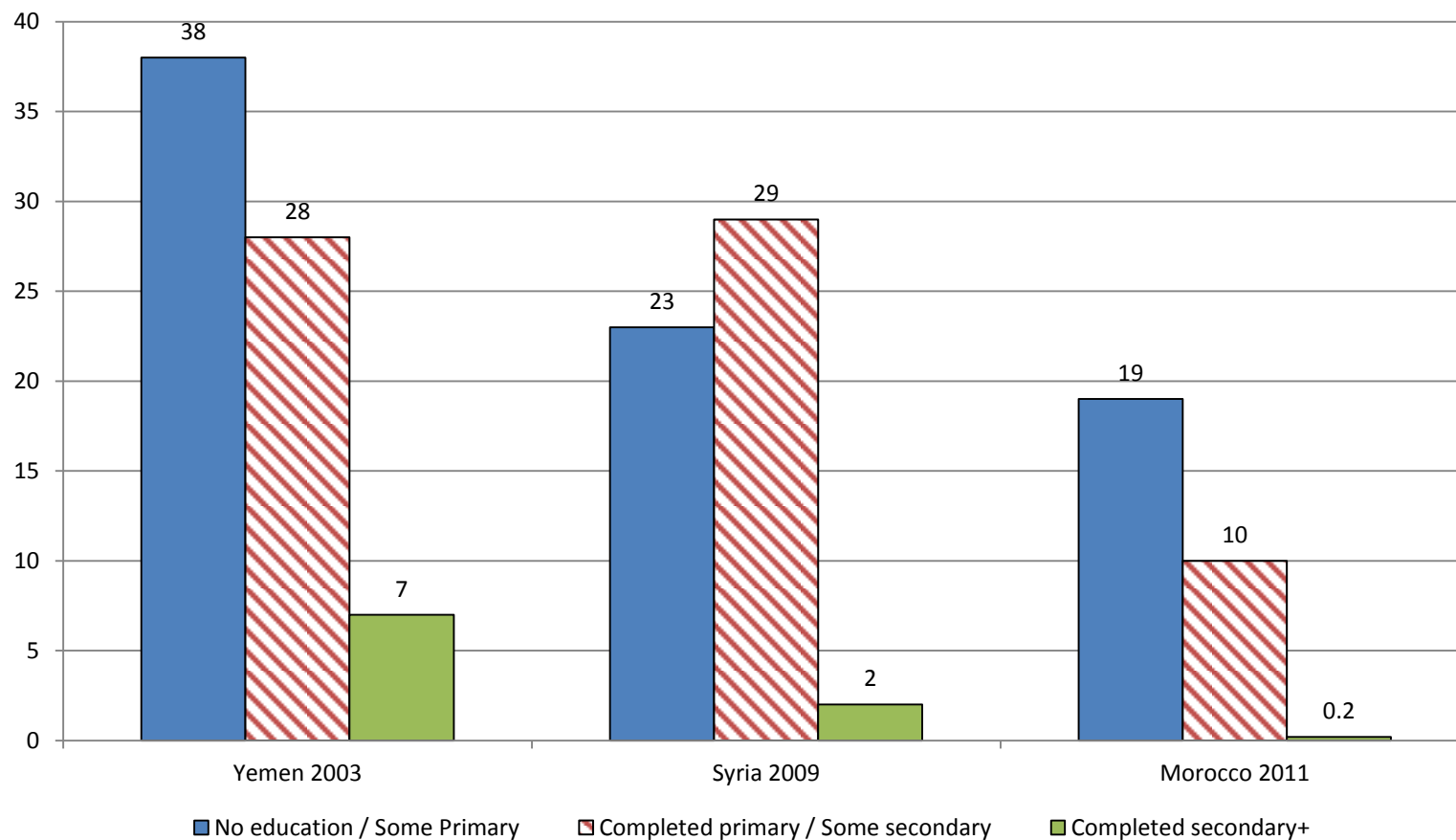
Table (5) Selected indicators of underpinnings and consequences of early marriage

Countries	Income group (1)	% Population below national income poverty line	Adult Illiteracy rate (% ages 15 and older)	Population with at least secondary education (% ages 25 and older)	Female Population with at least secondary education (% ages 25 and older)	Female Labour force participation rate (% ages 15 and older)	IMR	MMR	TFR	*Gender Inequality Index Rank
	2013	2003-2009	2005-2010	2010	2006-2010	2011	2010	2010	2012	2012
High early marriage										
Mauritania	Lower middle	42.0	42	14.2	8.0	28.7	75	510	4.4	139
Sudan	Lower middle		28.9	15.5	12.8	30.9	66	730	..	129
Yemen	Lower middle	34.8	36.1	16.0	7.6	25.2	57	200	5.0	148
Iraq	Upper middle	22.9	21.8	32.4	22.0	14.5	31	63	4.6	120
Palestine			5.1	52.1	48.0	15.1	20	64	4.3	..
Syria	Lower middle	..	16.6	32.8	27.4	13.1	14	70	2.8	118
Egypt	Lower middle	22.0	28	51.2	43.4	23.7	19	66	2.7	126
Comoros	Low income		25.1	..	..	35.1	63	280	4.8	..
Somalia	Low income		..	..	..	37.7	108	1000	6.3	..
Low early marriage										
Libya	Upper middle		10.8	49.6	55.6	30.1	13	58	2.4	36
Kuwait	High income		6.1	48.9	53.7	43.4	10	14	2.3	47
Lebanon	Upper middle		10.4	54.2	53.0	22.6	19	25	1.8	78
Algeria	Upper middle		27.4	24.1	20.9	15.0	31	97	2.2	74
Tunisia	Upper middle	3.8	22.4	37.0	29.9	25.5	14	56	1.9	46
Djibouti	Lower middle	..		..		36.0	73	200	3.6	..
Transitional phase										
Morocco	Lower middle	9.0	43.9	28.0	20.1	26.2	30	100	2.2	84
Jordan	Upper middle	13.3	7.4	73.3	68.9	15.6	18	63	2.9	99
Bahrain	High income		8.1	78.0	74.4	39.4	9	20	2.5	45
Qatar	High income		3.7	63.4	70.1	51.8	7	7	2.2	117
UAE	High income	..	10	64.3	73.1	43.5	6	12	1.7	40
Oman	High income		13.4	53.9	47.2	28.3	8	32	2.2	59
Saudi Arabia	High income		13.4	54.6	50.3	17.7	15	24	2.7	145

Anomalies (Algeria, Tunisia, Djibouti): Why?

- Social Differentiation

Figure (5) Percentages of married women aged 20-24 who wed before age 18 by education



3. Implications for policy/research

- Harmful impact
- Legal age at marriage of 18 (13 countries)
- Weak enforcement (Iraq, Egypt)
- Policies not explicitly articulated (Advocacy) concern (Egypt: NCCM, Jordan: CEDAW), pilots
- Invisibility of social groups (data/analysis)

III- Delayed Marriage and Celibacy

- Relativity of the concept (Time, Social groups)
- Characteristics of delayed: Improved command over resources

Table (6) Percentages of ever married women 15-49 who are highly educated and working among those with low and high age at first marriage

Age at first marriage	% university+		% working	
	22-24	27+	22-24	27+
Egypt 2008	26.5	29.6	24.1	32.5
Jordan 2007	54.4	48.5	20.4	23.1
Morocco 2003-04	7.5	16.5	21.4	34.3

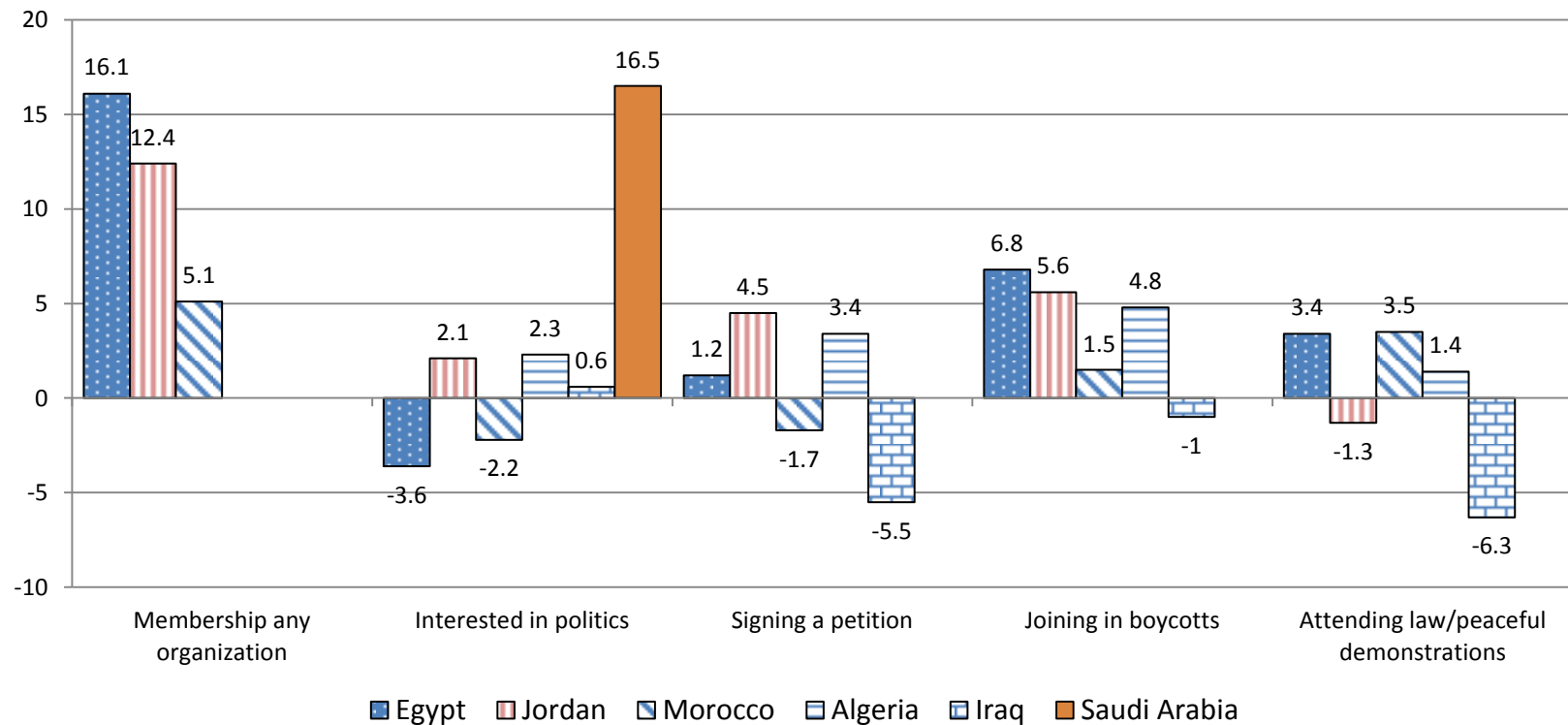
- Negative: Fertility < desired, Sexual / psychosocial?

- **Celibacy: Different underlying dynamics/characteristics**
 - Size (females in thousands) : 13 (UAE) – 159 (Egypt)
 - % total (35-39): 3% (Yemen, Egypt, UAE) – 41% (Bahrain)
 - % single: diversity among countries by social groups
 - Egypt, Jordan highly disadvantaged → celibate
 - Morocco : more privileged → celibate
 - Composition of celibate (different among countries)
 - Interaction of likelihood of celibacy + country level of development

1- Celibates more likely to participate in public life

(Recent DHS Egypt 2008, Jordan 2007 and Morocco 2003-04 no longer collect the working status within the household module)

Figure (6) Gap in percentages participating or interested in civil or political life by selected aspects between never married and married women for different countries

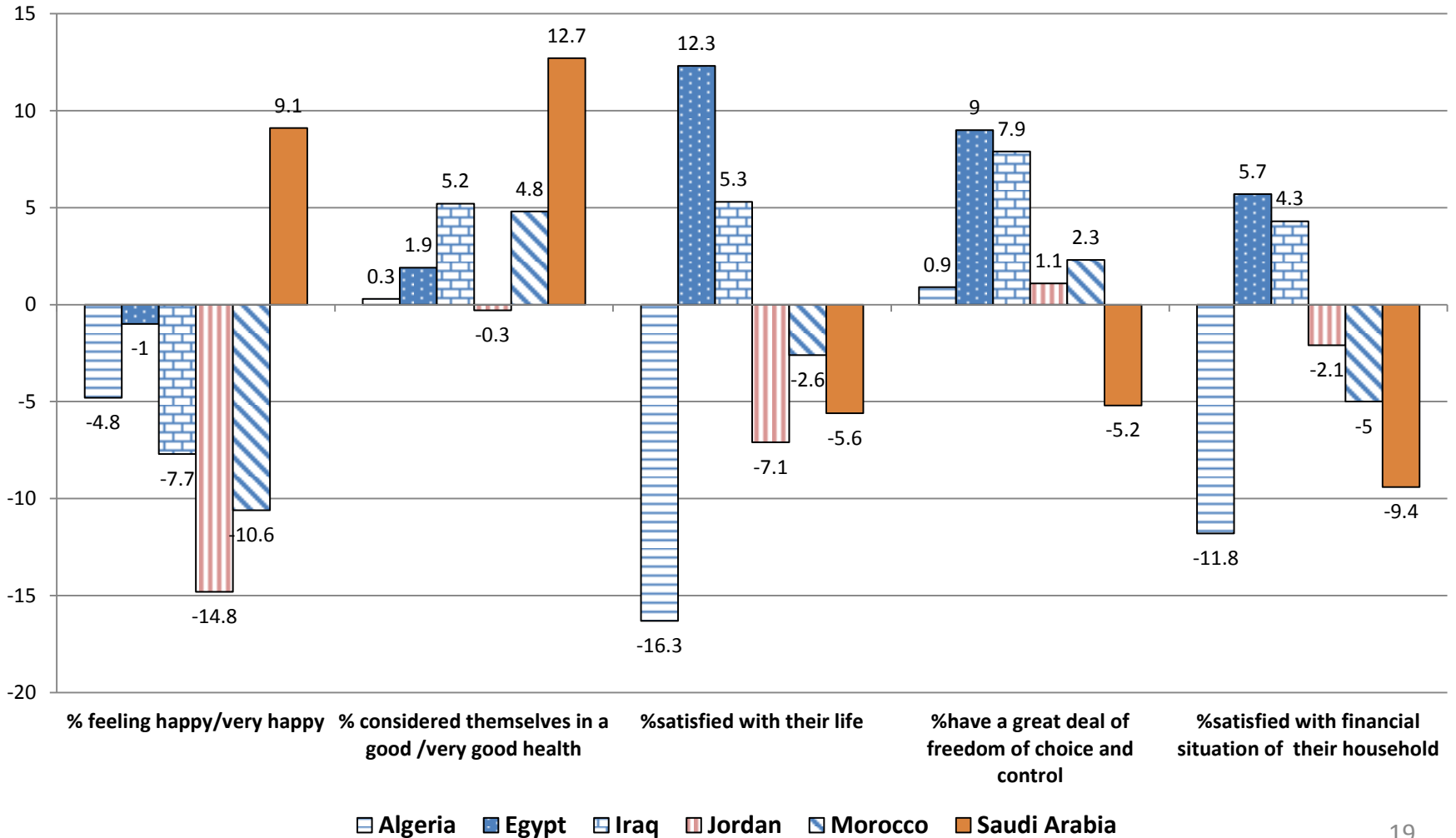


2- Celibates: discourse, wellbeing, how perceived, policies?

- Scanty information: World Value Survey, Master thesis, Blogs, Press articles, Online policies
- Value of marriage √
- Appreciation of challenge contrary to early marriage √
- Inaccuracy of indicators / scare tactics
- Pressures from all circles, exclusion, drawn upon for errands

- Derogatory discourse / stereotyping : sufferers, depressed, envious
Not confirmed by data

Figure (7) Gap in percentages with positive replies on different aspects of wellbeing between never married and married women for different countries



- On Line Discourses & Blogs(e.g: Spinsters for change)

New Social Reality Claiming its Place

“A social movement that seeks to change the negative attitude towards every unmarried girl who finds herself facing two dead ends: either forced to get married to any man so she can get rid of the ‘spinster’ title that’s suffocating her, or maintaining her position, insisting on waiting until she finds the right guy and [in the meantime] dealing with the curses that society will throw at her.”

- Blogs (Spinsters for change)

“We aren’t seeking to make men enemies [...] nor are we calling on girls to boycott marriage. But we reject the idea that girls should get married under pressure from their families or societies or just to get rid of the title ‘spinster,’ [so they don't] come back to their families [...] carrying the label ‘divorcée.’ The group isn’t asking for the right to be single or crossing any of society’s "red lines“”

- Blogs (Spinsters for change)

“The negative outlook of society on unmarried women is part of the issue surrounding Egyptian society’s continued wrongdoing against women.

“It shows how our society looks at women as wives and baby makers. She is born to get married and give birth no matter what kind of marriage she is in. Happily married or not, the point is to [get] married,” Mokhtar added. The concept of a wife as “property” in marriage spans centuries in Egypt, but ancient history may point to a different story.”

Impediments:

Financial (Unemployment, cost of living, independent households,...)

Costs of Marriage (dowries, conditions, ...)

Male side restrictions (Males < females, apprehension of responsibilities, reduced imp. of mar., higher expectations and conditions + shunning away from educ. females)

Female side restrictions (more selectivity, & smaller compatible pool, Reduced centrality of mar., competing opprt...)

- Solutions: financial
- Cultural → strategic addressing “Compatibility of Suitors” as impediment
- → return to early mar., belittling emotional ties, polygamy

III. 3) Delays & Celibacy: Implications for Policy & Research

- Widespread Concern: families, public
- Policy Interest (part. Gulf)
S.A. , Qatar
- Diagnosis and Proper Understanding: Superficial,
- Not evidence informed, dearth of data.
- Framing of unattached years: “Period in Waiting” and not “Time for Acquiring Skills, Material Assets, Self-Fulfillment”.



Teach your Girls to Fulfill their Dreams before Marriage. The Husband is not Santa Claus

III. 3) Delays & Celibacy: Implications for Policy & Research

Solutions do not touch on patriarchal system + gender dynamics and their contradictions, with social realities

- e.g. :** Males shunning away from educated + VS
Fear of financial response.
(Lower age & educational gap Egypt)
- e.g.:** Early marriage , arranged mar., polygamy + VS
more educated, assertive girls seeking causes +
income
- e.g.:** Polygamous
13 million males > 6 million females
- e.g.:** New forms of marriages

IV. Concluding Remarks

- Black Boxes requiring differentiated data analysis within different contexts.
- Societal Framing Recognized , it adopts
“Notions of the self that do not confirm to the individualist, separatist, bounded, autonomous constructs of western psychodynamic theory”
- Complementary analysis on males
- More effective societal responses recognizing differentiated contexts and investigating changing family composition and dynamics, neglect of early marriage, role of patriarchal and gender relations in defining challenge and undermining responses.