



# TITLE

Women's Political Participation  
and Representation in Jordan

**Researcher Name**

Salim F. Nuqul

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# 1 ABSTRACT

In this thesis, the political participation of women in Jordan was researched. The State has enacted several legislation, policies, and programmes to enhance women's political participation in recent decades. Furthermore, a set of constitutional and legislative amendments were passed in 2022 with the explicit goal of moving political reform forward, and broadening women's political participation. However, female involvement in politics remains low. According to this thesis analysis, this results from several sociocultural, economic, and legal factors.

The research methodology employed two different approaches, side by side, to assess the findings. The first approach was quantitative, which involved examining and analysing figures relating to women's representation in successive Parliament and governments and the scale of their presence within political parties. Qualitative research was used as the second approach, where seven political figures from varying backgrounds were interviewed face-to-face.

The thesis established that despite political reforms, the persistent impeding circumstances and factors would continue to act as roadblocks to women's political advancement, unless there were a significant shift in State's policies, and other related actors, including political parties. Accordingly, the thesis concludes with a set of recommendations for different related stakeholders.

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# 2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women's political participation and advancement to higher political roles in Jordan over the previous three decades were the subject of study for this thesis. The country's major political powers were first identified. It recognised that the King, the government, the Parliament, and the military and security forces make up Jordan's four fundamental pillars of authority. The thesis then examined the historical context and its implications for the country's political activity. Indeed, the regional circumstances and the recurring conflicts had affected Jordan. This was reflected in a series of perils and clashes that culminated in a brief civil war in 1970, resulting in a protracted period of political activity ban that lasted more than four decades (1957-1989). This ban had an adverse effect on political work and partisan activity, and its repercussions persist to this day. This also impacted women's political participation, where many turned to other fields, like social work, to offset their public activity. Subsequently, since the revival of democracy in 1989,

significant legislative and political reforms have been enacted, most notably the adoption of new laws governing political parties and elections. This had enthused many political groups to officially resume their activities, and many women have entered the political sphere.

However, the thesis highlighted a number of obstacles that hinder women's political participation and rise to prominent positions in State institutions and political parties. The most notable impediments were related to entrenched sociocultural norms and traditions, influenced by patriarchy and religious notions, which stereotype women in their typical gender family roles. Relatedly, Jordanian women have less access to economic resources than men, contributing to their already limited ability to commit considerable time and effort to political involvement. Some academics and politicians also criticised the State's laws and security measures for women's low political representation. This was investigated by conducting a comprehensive literature review. The review recognised a scarcity of published material regarding women's political engagement and a lack of proper theorisation in that context. However, the researcher relied on the existing resources to frame a realistic assessment of women's political challenges and representation in the past three decades. The review was followed by a two-part analysis, quantitative and face-to-face interviews with seven political figures from diverse political spectrums.

Having established the most significant impediments, a quantitative assessment was conducted to scrutinise the available data and better grasp women's political participation. The evaluation process started with the Lower House, which the people elect. The quota system, implemented in 2003, played a pivotal role in paving the way for women to be elected to the Parliament and maintain their presence. Since 1989, only eleven women out of eighty members have been elected in Jordan through competitive elections outside the quota. The Upper House (Senate) assessment came next. Women have steadily gained representation in the Senate and now make up 15.4% of the body, mirroring the trend in the House of Representatives.

The third analysis reviewed women's representation in successive governments. Ena'am Al-Mufti was the first woman to hold a cabinet position in 1979. In subsequent governments, a few women became ministers. Overall, twenty-seven women assumed the ministerial position until 2016, where some served in more than one cabinet. Notably, no women have been appointed to the so-called sovereign ministries such as Justice, Interior, Finance and Foreign Affairs. Political parties were the final component to be analysed. It was observed in the thesis that Jordanian political parties do not play a significant role in the country's political system, and they have a negligible representation in government and the Parliament. Women make up a sizable portion of

political parties' members, but only a small percentage reached senior positions. However, only a tiny percentage reached senior positions, with only three women having attained the rank of secretary-general in Jordan's history.

A noteworthy development was the passage by the Jordanian Parliament in 2022 of a number of legislative amendments aimed at improving the country's political landscape. Some of these reforms improved women's political opportunities by expanding their participation in political parties and the Parliament. The concomitant reforms demonstrate a robust political will for the inclusion and advancement of women's standing in the country's political realm.

The qualitative analysis involved assessing and comparing interviewees' responses to questions about barriers, quota systems, glass ceilings, the roles of political parties and civil society organisations (CSOs), recent political reforms, and their prospects for the future. While there were varying opinions among respondents on topics like obstacles and the recent legislation amendments, there was a broad agreement on other matters like the importance of the quota system and the lack of restrictions on women's access to prominent positions in the State.

The thesis concluded that women's participation and representation in political life are increasing, albeit with less momentum than planned, ascribing that to the abovementioned factors. It also highlighted the need for a broader set of reforms by the State to ensure the continuation and expansion of political activities in the country, particularly those that promote the participation of women. A set of recommendations were presented next to multiple stakeholders, including State authorities, political parties, CSOs, and researchers.

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## 3 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 3.1 Introduction

There are four primary pillars upon which Jordanian policymakers stand. First, there is the King, the country's highest political figure. Although he has no official duties, he wields considerable power in the country's political sphere, where he exerts his influence through the Royal Court. Second is the executive branch, or the government. The cabinet formation begins with a royal proclamation appointing a prime minister, who then forms his/her government. The newly formed cabinet must then secure a vote of confidence from both chambers of Parliament. The government has extensive authority since it oversees the country's economic, political, and social structures. Jordan's Parliament is the country's third major source of authority. The House of Representatives and the Senate make up the Parliament's two chambers. The people elect the first, while the King appoints the second. Legislation and oversight of the executive branch are the purview of both houses of the Parliament. The military and security apparatuses make up the final pillar of power. Although they do not directly get involved in politics, they enjoy widespread public support and are in charge of maintaining the security and integrity of Jordanian territories.

Despite being beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worth noting that the Jordanian armed forces are a major employer of Jordanians, particularly those with tribal backgrounds.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, women have played an essential role in the military since the 1950s, helping to dispel the traditional role of women as caretakers in Jordan's conservative communities.<sup>2</sup> Also, an increasing number of women have risen to the ranks of generals and directors.<sup>3</sup> Such high military status was subsequently reflected socially and encouraged some military women to enter the political arena after retirement; one such woman was Falak Al-Jamani, who served in the Lower House for three terms post her service.<sup>4</sup>

As such, this thesis examines the status of Jordanian women's political participation and

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy M. Sharp, "Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations" (Congressional Research Service, July 15, 2021). P.3

<sup>2</sup> Daoud Kuttub, "Jordanian Armed Forces Making Great Strides in Gender Equality," 2021, <https://themedialine.org/people/jordanian-armed-forces-making-great-strides-in-gender-equality/>.

<sup>3</sup> Kuttub, 2022

<sup>4</sup> "HE Falak Al-Jamani - Jordanian Parliament," House of Representatives, accessed December 18, 2022, <https://representatives.jo/Ar/pages/CouncilMembersDetails?RepresentativeID=1279&CouncilID=17&FriendshipAssociationID=651>.

representation in the key political positions, namely, the executive governments and Parliament, which both have chief roles in Jordan's political landscape. This will be scrutinised from multiple perspectives, including Jordanian political parties, specifically their roles in promoting or impeding women's inclusion in higher political positions. Additionally, the thesis will provide a background of the gradual changes and developments over the past three decades in women's political presence at the government and Parliament levels.

Before delving into more detail, the definition of political participation is essential. Generally, it is the conscious decision of citizens, both men and women, to engage in political activity, individually or in groups, through means such as participating in political decision-making, voting, joining or forming political parties, or writing or speaking publicly about issues related to politics.<sup>5</sup> Hence, this thesis refers to political participation as the involvement of Jordanian women in the decision-making and direction of the state-run legislation and executive branches, or being a member of a Jordanian political party.

## 3.2 Background

Since its founding in 1921, Jordan, a relatively stable country located in the heart of the tumultuous Middle East, with an estimated total population of eleven million (53% males and 47% females),<sup>6</sup> has been frequently impacted by regional conflicts.<sup>7</sup> In essence, Jordan has witnessed numerous forms of perils, that jeopardised the country's existence, and exerted persistent challenges to its socio-political fabric since its creation.<sup>8</sup> These ever-growing challenges and threats emanated from regional and domestic circumstances. The ramifications of regional conflicts, originating from political disputes and expansionist aspirations of neighbouring countries, persistently spilt into Jordan.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, throughout the last seventy-five years, the Kingdom received multiple waves of compulsory migrations. Millions of Palestinian, Iraqi, and Syrian refugees fled

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<sup>5</sup> Muwafaq Mohammad Abu Hamoud, "The Political Status of Jordanian Women: Constants and Variables," *Dirasat, Human and Social Sciences* 47, no. 3 (2020) :P.385, <https://doi.org/10.35516/0103-047-003-024>.

<sup>6</sup> "Population - Department of Statistics - DOS," Department of Statistics - DOS, accessed November 19, 2022, <http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/population/>.

<sup>7</sup> Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010). P.93

<sup>8</sup> Betty S. Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan: The Street and the State* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2005). P.70-72

<sup>9</sup> Anderson, 2005. P.183



the violence in their countries to settle in Jordan.<sup>10</sup> These multiple flows have resulted in exponential population growth and invariably affected Jordan's social structure and economic permanence.

Local challenges and conflicts between different political actors within Jordan led to inevitable political and armed clashes, including a brief civil war, in 1970, between the armed forces and Palestinian militants.<sup>11</sup> In return, the authorities acted harshly, and martial law was imposed for several decades. These measures, including the ban of political parties, and the halting of democratic life in the country, resulted in controlling the political and social life of citizens.<sup>12</sup> This has had long-lasting impacts on the general propensity toward political engagement, and the ramifications of people's aversion and reluctance can still be observed until now.

Correspondingly, women's political participation had also been confined, where they turned to other interaction approaches with the public as an alternative pathway for political engagement.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Jordanian women activists found in the civic community an alternative environment to pursue their involvement and sustain a presence in the public sphere during the ban period (1957-1989).<sup>14</sup> Multiple organisations and movements were formed to defend women's rights, seeking to improve the status of Jordanian women economically, socially, and politically.<sup>15</sup> Effectively, these efforts in social activism and humanitarianism during the political ban era helped them maintain their public profile, which later paved the way for many women to return to the political arena. Abla Abu Olbeh is one such example; she became socially active and co-founded the Jordanian Women's Union Association in 1974, served later as a member of the Lower House, and is now the Secretary General of the Jordanian People's Democratic Party.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, in 1989, the prohibition of political work and prosecution of political

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<sup>10</sup> Diab M. Al-Badayneh et al., "Radical Thoughts: Fears about and Supporting ISIS among Jordanian College Students," NATO Science for Peace and Security Series – E: Human and Societal Dynamics, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.3233/nhsdp200080>.

<sup>11</sup> Mohammed Bani-Salameh and Khalid El-Edwan, "The Identity Crisis in Jordan: Historical Pathways and Contemporary Debates", Nationalities Papers 44, no.6 (2016) :P.992

<sup>12</sup> Amin A. Al-Azzam, "Cultural Obstacles to Democratization in Jordan," The Arab Journal for Arts 10, no. 2A (2013): P.71.

<sup>13</sup> Kai Spratt, Dima Toukan, et al., "Women's Leadership as a Route to Greater Empowerment - Jordan Case Study," United States Agency for International Development (USAID), November 2014. P.10

<sup>14</sup> Spratt, Toukan et al., 2014, P.5

<sup>15</sup> Rana Hussein, Years of Struggle – The Women's Movement in Jordan (Amman: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2021). P.63

<sup>16</sup> Hussein, 2021. P.41

parties officially ended after political life resumption.<sup>17</sup> Since then, the political parties have been active, striving to delve into the political decision-making process. New parties have been formed, some of which were a recommencement of old parties, such as the Communist and Baath, while others, like the Islamic Action Front, embodied a long-term social presence under the auspices of charity activities of the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition, new political initiatives and rallies were turned into registered parties, reflecting the political changes and environment in the 1990s and beyond.<sup>18</sup> Thenceforth, women also re-joined political action in Jordan. Many Jordanian women have been appointed to consecutive governments and the Upper House (Senate). Others were also elected in the Lower House chamber of the Parliament. Additionally, they became members and cofounders of several parties across the political spectrum. Moreover, Jordanian women have achieved significant presence in the municipality councils and the jurisdiction system in the past three decades.<sup>19</sup>

Noteworthy, the election law was amended in 1974 to allow women to run for elections and vote for the first time.<sup>20</sup> However, it was until 1993 that Ms Toujan Faisal became the first Jordanian woman member of the Parliament. Some scholars have established that women's political progress can be attributed to Jordanian women's struggle to attain their political rights.<sup>21</sup> Also, other scholars ascribed this rise to the regime's political will, who endorsed the quota system, which preserve a certain number of seats for women in elected councils and promoted their inclusion through legislation and several initiatives, thus, advancing the presence of women in Jordan's political life.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Emile Sahliyah, "The State and The Islamic Movement in Jordan", *Journal of Church and State* 47, no.1 (2005). P.114, doi:10.1093/jcs/47.1.109.

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Abu Rumman, Abdulla Jboor and Wael Khatib, *A'la A' tab Al-Tahawwol*, 1st ed. (Amman: Politics and Society Institute, 2022).

<sup>19</sup> Hussein, 2021. P.246

<sup>20</sup> Hussein, 2021. P.40

<sup>21</sup> Margaret W. Pettygrove, "Obstacles to Women's Political Empowerment in Jordan: Family, Islam, and Patriarchal Gender Roles," *SIT Jordan*, May 11, 2006. P.27

<sup>22</sup> Hussein, 2021.P.69

## 4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the aforementioned improvements, women's weak presence and participation in public life in general and the political sphere, in particular, is noticed in Jordan. Women are still underrepresented in decision-making positions, namely, in the government and both chambers of the Parliament. In fact, many indicators verify the near absence of women at the higher authorities' level and political participation in general. For instance, in the last election process in 2020, the percentage of women candidates was 22% out of 1674 total candidates.<sup>23</sup> Only 15 women of them became Parliament members out of 130 members (11.5%), all of whom became members through the quota system.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, published figures indicate that women are less interested than men in participating and voting in the election processes.<sup>25</sup>

While in the executive branch of the State, the number of female ministers was also relatively low. It ranged between 0% and 24% in the past thirty years, with an average of less than 7%.<sup>26</sup> Correspondingly, their participation and membership in political parties are still weak and nominal. So far, and throughout the Jordanian political parties' history, only three were headed by women.<sup>27</sup> Despite the increasing number of new female members in the political parties, only some are assuming leadership positions in these parties. Also, many female members join and participate for a brief period, but then quit to focus on other priorities like family and housework.<sup>28</sup>

Most scholarly works have identified these discrepancies and ascribed them to multiple factors. Indeed, social norms and traditions are believed to strictly stereotype and control the role of Jordanian women socially and politically. Furthermore, Jordanian women are considered weaker financially.<sup>29</sup> They have limited access to financial

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<sup>23</sup> Al Jazeera, "Women, Opposition Lose Seats in Jordan Election," Elections News | Al Jazeera (Al Jazeera, November 12, 2020), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/12/women-lose-seats-in-jordan-vote>.

<sup>24</sup> "Elections 2020 Final Report", Iec.Jo, 2021, <https://www.iec.jo/sites/default/files/2021-06/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%B5%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%202020.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Elections 2020 Final Report, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> See Table (4) in Annex (3) for more details.

<sup>27</sup> Abu Rumman, Jboor and Khatib, 2022. P.86

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Jamil Al-Nimri, interviewed by Salim Nuqul, House of Senates. 21.November.2022

<sup>29</sup> Jessica Morrison, Unlocking the Potential of Women And Youth Jordan, U.S. Agency For International Development", Usaid.Gov, 2022, [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/USAID-Jordan\\_UnlockingThePotentialWomenAndYouth.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/USAID-Jordan_UnlockingThePotentialWomenAndYouth.pdf)

resources and are largely dependent on their family relatives.<sup>30</sup> This gender inequality is affecting the country's development at many levels, and women's political participation and representation are on top of that, as observed by Abla Abu Olbeh.<sup>31</sup>

Jordanian Political parties are often regarded by the public as ineffective. Aside from Islamic factions, namely the Islamic Action Front Party, other parties and ideologies have modest popularity in the country.<sup>32</sup> Also, the parties' presence in the governments and Parliament is marginal. However, the official political will, represented by the King and the Royal Court, is pushing for political reforms. New laws for political parties and elections were recently issued (2022), as discussed in detail in section 10.2 of this thesis. These laws represent a crucial opportunity for various political actors, especially political parties, to pursue a better placement in Jordan's political realm. Additionally, the new legislation, which included essential revisions on women's issues, shall serve as a catalyst for further growth in women's political representation and participation.

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## **5** RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research will cover three areas. First, it will examine the impediments to women's access to political life, particularly senior political portfolios in the government and Parliament. Second, it will scrutinise the 2022 Political Parties law and Elections Law amendments, and their effect on women's political involvement. Third, the thesis will analyse the roles and efforts of the State and the political parties to endorse women's political participation and representation in Jordan. Furthermore, the thesis will assess the approaches of three political parties (Islamic Action Front Party (IAF), Jordanian Social Democratic Party (JSDP), and Jordanian People's Democratic Party (Hashd)) to address the political representation of Jordanian women. The IAF is the largest political party in the country. JSDP is one of few parties that is actively working on women's political empowerment, and Hashd is one of three Jordanian parties headed by a woman.

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<sup>30</sup> Alaa Zuhheir Al-Rawashdeh et al. "Difficulties Prevent Jordanian Women Participation in Political Life in Light of Some Social Variables," Asian Social Science 8, no.10 (August 2012). P.212, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v8n10p208>.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Abla Abu Olbeh, interviewed by Salim Nuqul, Jordanian People's Democratic Party Headquarters, 02. November.2022

<sup>32</sup> Spratt, Toukan, and et al, 2014. P.21



## 6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### Main Question:

- What changes have there been in women's political status in Jordan since political life resumed in 1989, especially in terms of holding senior positions in State's top authorities and political parties?

### Sub-questions:

- What roles did various relevant stakeholders play in facilitating or hindering women's political advancements?
- What barriers prevent more Jordanian women from holding public office, serving in Parliament, and joining political parties?
- To what extent do discriminatory practices prevent women from advancing their political opportunities? Are efforts being made to break the glass ceiling, and if so, how? <sup>33</sup>
- What are the perceptions of political stakeholders regarding the recent political and legislative amendments, and will these changes contribute to empowering women politically?

## 7 LITERATURE REVIEW

The reviewed literature generally agreed upon a set of factors that served as barriers to women's political participation and formed a tacit glass ceiling for them, obstructing their ascent to senior political posts and upholding appropriate and equal representation.

The review scrutinised the published literature in the past twenty years, where this chosen period is the most relevant to the outlined scope, and amply covers the contemporary status and developments of women's political position in Jordan. The analysis found that the available literature on the topic is comparatively minuscule and lacks rigorous fashion in most of them. There is an apparent disinterest by international

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<sup>33</sup> The Glass Ceiling Effect is a metaphoric term described by Murrell and James as an invisible barrier preventing women and minorities from reaching senior and executive management roles. Audrey J. Murrell and Erika Hayes James, "Gender and Diversity in Organizations: Past, Present, and Future Directions," *Sex Roles* 45, no.5/6 (2001): pp. 244, <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1014393312588>

scholars in Middle Eastern democracy research, which also applies to Jordan.<sup>34</sup> Also, in spite of the growth in international interest in women's affairs and gender equality issues, this impetus did not induce the scholarly efforts to delve more into Jordanian women's political status in general and the political parties' activities in that regard. Remarkably, Jordanian research centres and universities did not elicit further efforts, and only a few contributed to the literature. For instance, Jordanian research institutions, such as Al-Quds Center for Political Studies and Al-Hayat Center-Rased issue scant materials on the participation of women in politics. Comparatively, the published material had drawn on local and international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) reports and studies, which Jordanian women activists and leaders broadly stimulated. Having pointed that out, next, this section will outline the main published literature and the spotted gaps in further detail.

The literature's content can be divided into two categories: First, assessments and analysis of Jordanian women's political developments, using published data and statistics. Although few, these documents provided useful information on the legislative and practical changes within, inter alia, the consecutive governments, Parliament, and political parties. For example, Al-Shalabi and Al-Assad presented in their 2012 article multiple quantitative evaluations of Jordanian women's political progress since the 1940s.<sup>35</sup> The article followed the trajectory of the legislative changes, and the relative ratified agreements and conventions by the Jordanian State. It also demonstrated the numerical improvements in women's political participation.

Similarly, Al-Khawladeh's article studied the data on Jordanian women's political involvement and demonstrated the related laws and regulations changes.<sup>36</sup> The article also provided an overview of the progress hindrances, finding that social norms and patriarchal authority tops the issues.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, the author underscored the performance weakness of political parties in general, their apathy to include women in their activities, and the less priority they put on women's issues.<sup>38</sup> Other researchers,

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<sup>34</sup> Jennifer Rowland, "Democracy and the Tribal System in Jordan: Tribalism as a Vehicle for Social Change," Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection, 2009. P.6

<sup>35</sup> Jamal Al-Shalabi and Tareq Al-Assad, "Political Participation of Jordanian Women," *Égypte/Monde Arabe*, no. 9/2012 (January 1, 2012): pp. 211-230, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ema.3033>

<sup>36</sup> Saleh Al-Khawaldeh, "Jordan Women Political Participation During the Arab Spring: An Analytical Study of Jordanian Women Participation in the 2013 Elections.," *Dirassat & Abhath: The Arabic Journal of Human and Social Sciences* 23 (June 1, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.35157/0578-000-023-019>

<sup>37</sup> Al-Khawaldeh, 2016. P.12

<sup>38</sup> Al-Khawaldeh, 2016. P.12

such as El-Kharouf and Al-Jribia, provided comparable content, basing their article on women's political changes in Jordan's history.<sup>39</sup> Research centres like Al-Quds and Rased also issue sporadic monitoring reports of parliamentarians' performance, providing data on parliamentary blocs and individuals' voting trends, among other related indicators.<sup>40</sup>

The second type of literature focused on the factors pushing forward or impeding Jordanian women's political advancements. There is a near consensus in the literature that there have been positive changes at many levels. After being marginalised and overlooked for decades, women in Jordan rose to prominent roles in politics.

<sup>41</sup>Significantly, many researchers, and all the interviewed people in this thesis, agreed that an important milestone was introducing the quota system to the Lower House Elections in 2003. For instance, Pettygrove's 2006 study anticipated that the quota system could be utilized as a legal tool to dismantle socially imposed gender norms.

<sup>42</sup>Furthermore, a 2018 comprehensive study by the OECD regarding women's political participation in Jordan emphasised the significance of the quota system for rural/remote areas Jordanian women to "run for elections for the first time and gain political experience."<sup>43</sup> The study also accentuated women's participation in the Parliament as a key element in altering negative attitudes against women in leadership, and inspiring others to pursue political posts.<sup>44</sup> Al-Awamleh (2020) also asserted the importance of the quota system, where the researcher argued that Jordanian women are unable to compete with men due to many factors and could not have joined the Parliament without the quota.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, most of the literature concurred that women's political advancement in Jordan is still being stymied by a wide range of entrenched influences that have kept

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<sup>39</sup> Amal El Kharouf and Mohummad Al-Jribia, "The Evolution of Women's Political Participation in Various Public Offices in Jordan," *Journal of Social Sciences* 13, no. 1 (2017): P.9-22, <https://doi.org/10.3844/jssp.2017.9.22>

<sup>40</sup> "Analytical Study That Monitors the Performance of Female Deputies in the Sixteenth Council.," Al-Quds Center for Political Studies, 2012, accessed October 01, 2022, <https://www.alqudscenter.org/index.php?l=ar&p-g=QUNUSVZJVEIFUw&sub=U3R1ZGllcyBhbmQgUmVwb3J0cw&id=998>. ; "Publications," Rased | Publications, accessed October 3, 2022, <https://www.rasedjo.com/ar/publications>.

<sup>41</sup> Rowaida Al-Maaitah et al., "Barriers Hindering Jordanian Women's Advancement to Higher Political and Leadership Positions," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 13, no. 5 (October 2012): P.104.

<sup>42</sup> Pettygrove, 2006.

<sup>43</sup> "Women's Political Participation in Jordan" OECD, 2018, P.16 <https://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/womens-political-participation-in-jordan.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> OECD, 2018. P.16

<sup>45</sup> Ra'ad A. Al-Awamleh, "Participation of Jordanian Women in Political Life: Reality and Challenges," *European Journal of Social Sciences* 59, no.1 (February 2020). P.8.

them mainly on the fringes.<sup>46</sup> Generally, most related research engaged in greater depth with this topic. Scholars identified recurring factors and considerations which proved resistant, despite the higher political will and Jordanian women's activism for creating change.<sup>47</sup> These elements are mostly related to sociocultural, economic, and legal aspects, where researchers' conclusions gave some considerations a higher weight than others, as noted below.

Many articles, such as Al-Rawashdeh et al., emphasised that social and cultural impacts are the most intrusive.<sup>48</sup> As Abo Zaytoon argued, the Jordanian social structure is based on tribalism and patriarchal notions, despite all modernisation attempts.<sup>49</sup> While Rowland maintained that the Jordanian tribes play an essential role in political life, and serve as an alternative to political parties in the absence of the latter's political weight.<sup>50</sup> As a political power structure based on traditional principles, the tribe upholds the primacy of men over women.<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, amid this social environment, Jordanian women, with a few notable exceptions, are still stereotyped with the typical gender roles, and their involvement in public life is limited and confined.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, this is noted by Pettygrove, who acknowledged the negative role of families and tribes in advancing women's political involvement, identifying it as a major obstacle.<sup>53</sup>

As noted, women's political participation in Jordan is hindered not only by social norms but also by economic factors. Although there is a paucity of research on Jordanian women's national economic contribution, as noted by Mehtap, published numbers demonstrate the increasing financial hardship of Jordanian women.<sup>54</sup> According to Al-Rawashdeh et al., women in Jordan rely heavily on their families for financial support.<sup>55</sup> Statistics cited in his article show that their percentage of the total workforce is less than 15%.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, experts like Al-Maaitah have highlighted the high unemployment

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<sup>46</sup> Al-Awamleh, 2020. P.6

<sup>47</sup> Spratt, Toukan, and et al, 2014. P.11

<sup>48</sup> Al-Rawashdeh et al., 2012. P.208

<sup>49</sup> Naser Abo Zaytoon, "Jordanian Citizens' Trends towards Women's Social, Economic and Political Rights in (Karak, Tafieleh and Maan) Governorates A Field Study," 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Rowland, 2009. P.26

<sup>51</sup> Rowland, 2009. P.12

<sup>52</sup> Al-Rawashdeh et al., 2012. P.212

<sup>53</sup> Pettygrove, 2006. P.16

<sup>54</sup> Salime Mehtap, "Factors Affecting Women's Participation in the Jordanian Workforce," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 6, no. 10 (2016): pp. 790-793, <https://doi.org/10.18178/ijssh.2016.v6.750>.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Rawashdeh et al, 2012. P.212

<sup>56</sup> Al-Rawashdeh et al, 2012. P.212



rate among Jordanian women and the limitations of financial resources as barriers to political engagement and running for elections.<sup>57</sup> This was also discussed in Dr Abeer Dababneh's article, which noted that women, as a group, have fewer opportunities to access "power, income and wealth, and social status."<sup>58</sup> Intriguingly, some studies made connections between the male-controlled nature of Jordanian society and the financial supremacy of males, which leverages men over women in their families concerning political participation, choice of running for elections, and voting preferences, among other things.<sup>59</sup>

The last spotted factor in the literature was the legislation barriers. Although given less weight as an obstacle, probably due to continuous improvements, some researchers took a critical view of Jordan's legislative reforms. Noteworthy that the laws' scholarly criticisms varied in substance in light of legislative changes at the given period. In her 2001 published book, Abla Amawi contended that Jordan has democracy in name but not in practice, where women's rights and agency have been recognised in shape but not in substance.<sup>60</sup> However, that position was notable before the quota introduction in 2003. Similarly, Rowland corroborated, consistent with other political scientists, that Jordan is not an electoral democracy, noting that despite holding different levels of elections, most power is concentrated in the government's hands.<sup>61</sup> Some scholars indicated that the existing laws favour tribalism and men in terms of elections and political presence.<sup>62</sup> This was also noted in Al-Awamleh article, where the existing electoral law was listed among other obstacles facing women.<sup>63</sup> Other reports maintained that gender inequality in Jordan is evident on the ground, indicating a gap between the constitution, *de jure*, and its application, *de facto*.<sup>64</sup>

As noted above, the literature review revealed a need for more published material on women's political participation in Jordan. Among other things, additional scholarly works are required to study the responsibilities of various stakeholders. For instance,

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<sup>57</sup> Al-Maaitah and et al,2012. P.108

<sup>58</sup> Abeer Bashier Dababneh, "Jordanian Women's Political Participation: Legislative Status and Structural Challenges," *European Journal of Social Sciences* 27, no. 2 (2012): P.220.

<sup>59</sup> Spratt, Toukan, and et al, 2014. P.70

<sup>60</sup> Abla Amawi, *Against All Odds: Jordanian Women, Elections and Political Empowerment* (Amman: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2001).

<sup>61</sup> Rowland,2009. P.6

<sup>62</sup> Kai Spratt, Dima Toukan et al., 2014. P.15

<sup>63</sup> Al-Awamleh,2020. P.10

<sup>64</sup> OECD,2018. P.17

one of the lingering questions is what role political parties and civil society organisations play in promoting or hindering women's advancement in Jordan's political sphere. Therefore, the positions of State institutions and political parties were chosen as the topic for additional analysis for this thesis. Consequently, the research methodology was devised to analyse this topic.

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## 8 METHODOLOGY

After creating the stakeholders' map (available in Annex 3), the thesis employs two interrelated methodologies to conduct its analysis. The first method depends on a quantitative evaluation. The quantitative analysis helps better comprehend the historical context of Jordanian women's representation and engagement. It tracked the growth and fluctuations in the number of women in Jordan's government, Parliament, and political parties since the country's return to political life in 1989.

The second method uses a qualitative approach. The researcher conducted one-on-one, face-to-face interviews with chosen political figures. Certain factors determined the interviewees' selection. In large part, the people who were interviewed fulfilled part of the following criteria, which conforms with the scope of the study:

- Became a member of the government or the Parliament.
- Assuming (or assumed) a leadership position in a Jordanian political party.
- Has a proven record of political engagement or activism.
- Became a member of the Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System.

The researcher was keen to interview people from diverse political spectrums in Jordan to analyse and compare the findings aptly. Each interviewee was asked nine questions, albeit varied slightly based on their political background.<sup>65</sup>

However, the researcher encountered certain difficulties in scheduling meetings and obtaining the consent of those contacted to participate in the study. After reaching out to eleven potential participants, the researcher spoke with seven (a detailed list is added to Annex 1). Each of the seven interviewees has a distinct political background. Three are high-profile political party members, while the other four are senior political and human rights experts with a proven political engagement record.

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<sup>65</sup> All questions to interviewees are available in Annex 2.

## 9 STAKEHOLDERS

### Political Stakeholders

In Jordan's political environment, the government and both chambers of Parliament assume the primary roles in shaping the country's domestic and foreign policies. Notably, the interaction between all political powers is governed by the King through the Royal Court. The prime ministers select the cabinet members based on multiple factors, including geopolitical, technical and experience backgrounds. Meanwhile, despite their presumed significance, the political parties have a weak presence at the decision-making level. Overall, only a few ministers and parliamentarians came from a political party background. This applies to women's political power too. As previously established, women are underrepresented at all political decision-making levels in Jordan.

### Other Stakeholders

Other actors also influence the political process in the country. Namely, Jordanian activists, syndicates, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and local and international NGOs strive to contribute to the process. However, their participation is customarily limited to research, advocacy practices and training programs. Nonetheless, the non-political players are progressively becoming more intertwined in the political environment, given the increase in funding and the decision-makers' political will.

Stakeholders Mapping is demonstrated in Table (1) and Chart (1), added to Annex (3).

## 10 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

As noted in the methodology, the analysis was based on two interlinked approaches: quantitative and qualitative.

### 10.1 Quantitative Analysis

The researcher scrutinised the political presence of Jordanian women, since the recommencement of political life in Jordan, in 1989. The government, the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the political parties were the bodies whose positions were evaluated. The researcher concluded that there is evident progress, albeit slow. However, it is more established in the Parliament's two branches.

### □ 10.1.1 Lower House

It was in 1989 that Jordan finally allowed elections for its Lower House (also known as the House of Representatives) following four decades of political repression. In the first elections, no women were elected out of the eighty new members. During the subsequent three election cycles, only one woman was elected, Toujan Faisal. Considering this, the inclusion of the quota system in the Elections Law of 2001 has directly and significantly impacted the rise in the proportion of female deputies, as seen in Table (2) in Annex (3). The first Law amendment included six designated seats for women. The number gradually increased to fifteen members as of the last elections held in 2020. Furthermore, the latest amendment of the Elections Law in 2022 recognised a further increase to eighteen seats.

Also, more women were elected outside the quota in the past two decades due to the merit of their candidacies. Still, the number of victorious candidates beyond the quota in the preceding elections was not conforming with the projected developments. In total, only eleven women were elected since 2003 by competition outside the quota. In the 2016 elections, for example, fifteen women were elected under the quota, while five others were elected outside the system. Noteworthy, only four of the twenty female parliamentarians in 2016 were members of a political party.<sup>66</sup>

In contrast, in the following 2020 elections, no women joined the Lower House outside the quota. There was no evident justification for this recent setback. Notably, in the 2020 elections, the votes for winning female candidates dropped by 39% compared to the prior elections.<sup>67</sup> Some sources attributed the decline to the Covid-19 outbreak and its nationwide effects, preventing many citizens from voting.<sup>68</sup> Other scholars recognised that many female candidates were subject to cyber-bullying during their campaigns, and their outdoor signs were repeatedly sabotaged.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, other candidates were compelled to withdraw due to pressures from family members, which recurrently happened in preceding election cycles.<sup>70</sup> Other reports also indicated that some male

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<sup>66</sup> OECD, 2018. P.50

<sup>67</sup> Hanaa Ramadan, "Women's Representation in the 19th House of Representatives Declined, and the Upward Trend in Women's Winning of Seats Competitively Halted," Sisterhood is Global Institute Jordan (SIGI), November 12, 2020, <https://www.sigi-jordan.org/?p=9214>.

<sup>68</sup> Fida Nasrallah, "What Pandemic? Parliamentary Elections in Jordan at Any Price," International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2021. P.13

<sup>69</sup> Rana Hussein, "SIGI Report Casts Light on Women's Representation in Parliament," Jordan Times, December 7, 2020, <https://jordantimes.com/news/local/sigi-report-casts-light-womens-representation-parliament>.

<sup>70</sup> Hussein, 2020



candidates discouraged their voters from casting ballots for partner women on the same lists, thereby reinforcing patriarchal and male-domination norms.<sup>71</sup> Such negative attitudes discouraged many women from participating in the elections and being at the forefront. Instead, many women opted to set back, inflicting what, Rana Husseini, the political and human rights journalist, called a "snowball impact" on Jordanian women's political involvement.<sup>72</sup>

Even after being elected, women representatives face significant barriers to navigating the political and operational landscape. As described by Amani Hammad, the Senior Political Advisor at the British Embassy, the Jordanian Parliament is not a woman-friendly institution, and there is a general sense of masculinity. She observed that most employees are men, with women occupying lower-level administrative roles.<sup>73</sup> Also, the Lower House's operational infrastructure has been highlighted and recognised as a shortcoming in a number of assessments, including a 2018 OECD study.<sup>74</sup> As a result of insufficient funding for staffing and research, women—especially those who have to juggle parliamentary duties with household responsibilities—bear an undue amount of the burden. Therefore, most female deputies only serve for one parliamentary term, with only fifty Jordanian women joining the Parliament in Jordan's history until 2016.<sup>75</sup> This has resulted in hardly retaining the existing knowledge and expertise among its female members, therefore, negatively impacting women's overall performance in the Lower House.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, the researcher observed that no woman has ever been elected to the position of Speaker or Deputy Speaker of the Lower House. The researcher also found that most female parliamentarians were chosen to committees pertaining to social matters, indicative of the entrenched perspective in the House of their traditional gender roles.

In sum, there is a fluctuation in the general trend vis-à-vis the national political and electoral mood. Undeniably, there are visible improvements, though slowly and insufficiently. Arguably, the traditional social and cultural presumptions of masculine superiority and entitlement continue to shape voters' preferences.

Table (2) and Chart (2) in Annex (3) demonstrate the number and percentage of female representation in the Lower House since 1989.

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<sup>71</sup> Nasrallah, 2021. P.12

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Rana Husseini, interviewed by Salim Nuqul, Public Place. 25.October.2022

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Amani Hammad, interviewed by Salim Nuqul, Public Place, 14. November.2022

<sup>74</sup> OECD, 2018. P.50

<sup>75</sup> OECD, 2018. P.63

<sup>76</sup> OECD, 2018. P.52

## □ 10.1.2 Upper House

The second part of the analysis focused on the Upper House, often known as the House of Senates. Unlike the Lower House members, whom the people directly elect, the members of the Senate are appointed by the King. There was a corresponding increase in the number of female appointees to the Senate, which was in step with the progress made toward gender parity in the House of Representatives.

In 1974, women were granted the right to vote and take part in legislation for the first time. Subsequently, three women were appointed to the National Advisory Council (1978-1982).<sup>77</sup> The Council was reparation for halting constitutional parliamentary action.<sup>78</sup> This was the first appointment for women in a higher political body in Jordan. Following the restoration of political activity in 1989, one woman was appointed to the Senate. The number of female senators has steadily increased since then, reaching ten members (15.4%) in the present Senate.<sup>79</sup> Like their male counterparts, most female senators come from a leading elite background with a proven record of achievements in different fields. However, the researcher noted that only a few of the appointed women, such as Emily Naffa,<sup>80</sup> who was a member of the Jordanian Communist Party, were chosen based on their political party affiliations or political activism. In addition, no women were elected as Speaker or Vice Speaker of the Senate, mirroring the status in the House of Representatives.

In that context, many political figures, such as Dima Tahboub, the former Lower House Member and the Executive Committee Member of the Islamic Action Front Party (IAF), and Abba Abu Olbeh, accorded the Lower House more importance.<sup>80</sup> These politicians justified their opinions by pointing to the dissimilar processes used to create the two houses, where the Lowerhouse is formed by the popular will and crucial democratic practices, while expressing less enthusiasm for joining the Senate.<sup>81</sup>

In light of this, as the researcher interpreted, the Senate can be viewed from two distinct angles. First, the public engages and follows the Upper House significantly less because it is an appointed body that serves primarily as a legislative bridge rather than exercising

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<sup>77</sup> "Freezing Parliamentary Life and Forming National Consultative Councils (1974-1984)," Parliament, accessed November 5, 2022, <http://parliament.jo/en/node/148>.

<sup>78</sup> El Kharouf and Al-Jribia, 2017. P:12

<sup>79</sup> See Table (3) available in Annex (3).

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Dima Tahboub, interviewed by Salim Nuqul, Open Arab University. 01.November.2022; Abu Olbeh, 2022.

<sup>81</sup> Tahboub,2022; Abu Olbeh, 2022.

its independent constitutional prerogatives. Second, the calibre and backgrounds of its members, which usually include multiple former prime ministers, military generals, and other prominent figures, have given the Senate a high profile and a prestigious image that many public persons seek to attain.

Table (3) and Chart (3) in Annex (3) demonstrate the number and percentage of female representation in the Upper House since 1989.

### 10.1.3 Government

Since 1989, there has been a general upward trend in the appointment of female ministers, as seen in Table (4) in Annex (3). Accordingly, the percentage of women serving as ministers in Jordan's cabinets has increased progressively, reflecting the trend noted in the country's Parliament. In contrast to the Parliament, however, the proportion of women serving in cabinet positions has fluctuated widely over the previous three decades. In subtleties, in terms of the percentage of women in cabinet positions, Jordan placed 95th globally at the end of 2018 and fourth in the Arab World region, up from 149th globally and ninth in the Arab World in 2016.<sup>82</sup> Despite this development, the following year saw Jordan fall back to the 10th position in the region and the 127th position overall.<sup>83</sup>

Nevertheless, no clear explanation was found to account for the observed vacillation of women's representation in consecutive governments. Many experts, such as Esraa Mahadin, the Jordanian Elections analyst, and Abla Abu Olbeh, attributed that to the vision and perspective of the Prime Minister himself.<sup>84</sup> Amani Hammad also added that the political pacts and concessions made when forming the cabinets often leave women behind.<sup>85</sup> As this thesis assessed, more women were represented among liberal progressive prime minister cabinets, such as Omar Al-Razzaz (2018-2020), than their conservative counterparts, like Abdalla Nsour (2012-2016) and Ma'rouf Al-Bakhit (2005-2007, 2011).

In 1979, Ena'am Al-Mufti became the first woman to hold a ministerial position when she

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<sup>82</sup> Abu Hamoud, 2020. P.390

<sup>83</sup> Hanaa Ramadan, "Tadamon: Women's Political Participation in Jordan Declined and the Percentage of Women Holding Leadership Positions (Ministerial Corps) Decreased to 9.38% Compared to Previous Years," SIGI Jordan, February 27, 2022, <https://www.sigi-jordan.org/?p=11982>.

<sup>84</sup> Abla Abu Olbeh, 2022; Interview with Esraa Mahadin, interviewed by Salim Nuqul, Karak Castle Organization Headquarters, 26. December.2022

<sup>85</sup> Hammad, 2022

was named minister of Social Development.<sup>86</sup> Thenceforth, a few women became ministers in consecutive governments. Overall, twenty-seven women assumed the ministerial position until 2016, where some of them served in more than one cabinet.<sup>87</sup> However, their portfolios mostly were related to service ministries, which a number of researchers have interpreted as a reflection of the traditional gender roles.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, according to many scholars, such as Zubaidi et al, and Al-Maaitah et al, there is a noted glass ceiling in which women have never held posts in particular leading ministries such as foreign affairs, Justice, interior and finance.<sup>89</sup>

Moreover, while no woman has ever served as prime minister in Jordan, Rima Khalaf did make history in 1999 as the country's first and only female deputy prime minister.<sup>90</sup> It is worth mentioning that the government's criteria for appointing women to ministerial positions are usually based on their social and academic backgrounds, with the majority being well-educated and from the upper class, and where only a handful have political party backgrounds. According to Abu Olbeh, such appointment standards may be viewed as discriminatory and do not correctly depict or fairly represent Jordanian women across the country.<sup>91</sup>

Overall, albeit moving at a slow pace, progress is palpable. Nevertheless, an explicit policy or strategy still needs to be in place to sustain the rate of women's involvement and participation in the executive branch and ensure their inclusion in more roles and portfolios.

Table (4) and Chart (4) in Annex (3) demonstrate the number and percentage of female representation in the governments since 1989.

#### 10.1.4 Political Parties

As a result of the resumption of political activity, the Political Parties Law was passed in 1992, allowing for partisan work officially. Five amendments were made to the law in subsequent years, progressively reconstructing the partisan scene in the country. This led to the registration of a plethora of new political parties and the resurgence of a few

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<sup>86</sup> Abu Hamoud, 2020. P.390

<sup>87</sup> "27 Jordanian Female Ministers Have Held 52 Portfolios since 1979, (SIGI-Jordan, September 28, 2016), <https://www.sigi-jordan.org/>.

<sup>88</sup> Abu Hamoud, 2020. P.390

<sup>89</sup> Faraj Radwan Zubaidi et al, "An Overview on Women's Leadership Issues in Jordan," Journal of Politics and Law 4, no. 2 (September 2011) :P.69, <https://doi.org/10.5539/jpl.v4n2p67> ; Al-Maaitah et al, 2012. P.109.

<sup>90</sup> Abu Hamoud, 2020. P.390

<sup>91</sup> Abu Olbeh, 2022



old ones. Remarkably, the number of registered and active parties fluctuated over the years and ranged from (24) to (65), with notable increases before election periods and after Political Parties' Law amendments.<sup>92</sup> However, most parties continued to be on the periphery. They did not gain enough traction or public support to form effective critical masses or political blocs to lead in society and impact the State's policymaking.

Nonetheless, the Muslim Brotherhood's (MB) political wing, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), stands out as an exception in this regard, enjoying considerable public support. Even the IAF, though, was unable to secure enough seats in the subsequent elections to form a majority in the House of Representatives. Other Islamic parties, such as the National Congress Party (Zamzam) and the Partnership and Rescue Party, whose leaders are former IAF members, have a respectable presence and are active at the grassroots level, albeit to a lesser extent than the IAF.<sup>93</sup> This also applies to some leftist parties, such as the Democratic Popular Unity Party and the Democratic People's Party.<sup>94</sup> The remaining political parties are less visible on the political and public scenes and rely on yearly government financial assistance to survive.<sup>95</sup> Significantly, the recently passed Political Party Law (2022) linked the party's future financial funding to its performance on multiple criteria. This includes, inter alia, the number of seats won in the Lower House, as well as the proportion of women and youth in those parties, which will entail a thorough restructuring of the current parties' internal policies.

Another indicator of political parties' weakness is their presence in the Lower House, which significantly declined over time. In 2016, for instance, the House had thirty-four members (26%) from ten different parties.<sup>96</sup> While only seventeen members of the present House are affiliated with political parties, representing 13% of the total membership.<sup>97</sup> A detailed list of political parties' presence in the 18th and 19th Parliaments is added to Annex (3), Chart (6) and Chart (7), respectively. Given the ideological divergences and differing programme priorities of those parties, this fragmentation makes it more challenging to influence House legislation and

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<sup>92</sup> Nitham Barakat, *Women's Role in Jordanian Political Parties* (Amman: Al-Quds Center for Political Studies, 2016). P.30

<sup>93</sup> Abu Rumman, Jboor and Khatib, 2022. P.130

<sup>94</sup> Abu Rumman, Jboor and Khatib, 2022. P.130

<sup>95</sup> Abu Rumman, Jboor and Khatib, 2022. P.129

<sup>96</sup> "Parliamentary Elections 2016," Independent Election Commission - Jordan, accessed November 3, 2022, <https://www.iec.jo/en/other/independent-election-commission-jordan-0>.

<sup>97</sup> Amer Bani-Amer, "Political Papers on the Outcomes of the Jordanian Parliamentary Elections 2020" (Hayat Center - Rased, May 2021), <https://www.rasedjo.com/ar/file-download/download/public/3343>.

policymaking.<sup>98</sup> Also, most parties have failed to induce women to join their ranks. In large part, this is due to the parties' lack of supportive agendas and programmes addressing women's issues, as well as the absence of explicit parties' policies for women's advancement. Some studies have reviewed the existing policies regarding women and indicated their limited and largely symbolic presence in almost all parties, and that they are rarely put into practice.<sup>99</sup>

Remarkably, most Jordanians are still wary of joining political parties; hence they remain unpopular. Some politicians attribute parties' weakness to the security grip, in which many citizens avoid the consequences of party affiliation.<sup>100</sup> According to Abu Olbeh, the coercive measures that political parties endured for a protracted period—actions that persisted in part even after 1989—were the cause of their weakness.<sup>101</sup> Others have viewed Jordanian society as unprepared for political party involvement due to the society's nature and structure.<sup>102</sup> Also, there is a notable lack of partisan activity and presence outside of the capital, where many observed parties' tendency to mainly attract political elites, which dissuades people in other cities from joining.<sup>103</sup>

Intriguingly, only 36,461 Jordanians, or less than 0.3% of the total population, are members of political parties, according to the 2021 State of the Country report.<sup>104</sup> This is also reflected in the dwindling numbers of female membership and participation in political parties. Women make up almost 35% (12,710) of the parties in Jordan.<sup>105</sup> Despite that, only a few women held leadership roles in their parties, where only 3% assumed leadership roles, and only three became secretary generals in Jordanian political parties' history.<sup>106</sup> Also worth mentioning is that only 9% of all the political parties founding members were women.<sup>107</sup> Additionally, many studies observed that Jordanian women regularly switch between parties, and their membership tends to be transient.<sup>108</sup> According to a survey conducted by the Al-Quds Centre in 2014, the average tenure

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<sup>98</sup> A detailed list of parties' seats in the 2016 (Chart 6) and 2020 (Chart 7) Lower House is available in Annex (3).

<sup>99</sup> Abu Rumman, Jboor and Khatib, 2022. P.40-41

<sup>100</sup> Tahboub, 2022

<sup>101</sup> Abu Olbeh, 2022

<sup>102</sup> Barakat, 2016. P.37

<sup>103</sup> Barakat, 2016. P.31

<sup>104</sup> "State of the Country Report 2021," The Economic and Social Council (ESC), 2022, <http://www.esc.jo/Report-View.aspx?Id=140>.

<sup>105</sup> State of the Country Report 2021, 2022.

<sup>106</sup> Al-Awamleh, 2020. P.5, Abu Rumman, Jboor and Khatib, 2022. P.86

<sup>107</sup> Barakat, 2016. P.37

<sup>108</sup> Barakat, 2016. P.15

of women in political parties was fewer than five years, where only 27% persisted more than that.<sup>109</sup> As this thesis assessed, all the aforementioned uncertainties allow the parties to compete for the few competent partisan women, ultimately negatively impacting women's political participation and ascent through the party ranks.

Table (5) and Chart (5) in Annex (3) demonstrate the current number and percentage of female representation in the most significant political parties in Jordan.

## 10.2 Quantitative Analysis

As a continuation of the King's political will and approach to political reforms, a Royal Committee was formed in 2021, consisting of ninety-two members from diverse political spectrums in Jordan.<sup>110</sup> The Committee's principal mission was to submit a series of proposals to the Royal Court for alterations to the laws governing political parties and elections. The Committee worked diligently, and ultimately presented their recommendations for the envisioned law changes. Manifestly, the list of changes drew a 10-year roadmap vision for multiple political reforms, including further involvement of women and youth as an integral part of Jordan's political process.<sup>111</sup> The laws were ratified by the Parliament in 2022 and became effective through a royal decree.

Four significant adjustments were established to enhance women's political engagement. First, according to the 2022 Political Parties Law, women must make up at least 20% of a party's members, from at least six governorates.<sup>112</sup> Thus, women from cities outside the capital, who have been underrepresented until recently in political parties, will be more likely to join. Second, under the 2022 Elections Law, the political parties compete by closed lists for forty-one seats in the Lower House out of one hundred and thirty-eight. The new Law mandated a quasi-zipper-list system to ensure better gender representation. As such, the parties' candidate lists must contain at least one woman among their first three names, and so forth, increasing, therefore, their

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<sup>109</sup> Barakat, 2016. P.53

<sup>110</sup> Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System. accessed October 23, 2022, <https://tahdeeth.jo/Home/HM-Message>

<sup>111</sup> Sean Yom and Wael Al-Khatib, "Democratic Reform in Jordan, Breaking the Impasse" (Washington, D.C.: The Project on Middle East Democracy, 2022), P.3.

<sup>112</sup> Karim Merhej, "Latest Political Reforms in Jordan: Systemic Changes on the Horizon?," TIMEP (The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 2022), <https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/latest-political-reforms-in-jordan-systemic-changes-on-the-horizon/>.

prospects.<sup>113</sup> Third, the quota seats were increased to eighteen instead of fifteen, representing Jordan's eighteen constituencies, under the new Elections Law.<sup>114</sup> Chart (8) in Annex 3 demonstrates the electoral seats, according to the new law. Lastly, Jordan's Constitution was amended, as the Second Chapter now has the title "Rights and Duties of Jordanian Men and Women" after the phrase "Jordanian Women" was added.<sup>115</sup>

However, the public received these changes sceptically. There is widespread pessimism among Jordanians that the recent reforms will help the country make any measurable political progress. According to a poll by the Center for Strategic Studies, more than two-thirds (67%) of Jordanians surveyed do not think the revisions will help the country's political system make any measurable progress.<sup>116</sup> Also, only 13% of respondents to the same survey assumed these changes would improve women's political status in the country.<sup>117</sup> Notably, the Jordanian political parties have until the end of 2022 to rectify their status per the modifications stipulated by the new legislation. In the event of failure, they will be dissolved, and their activities will be ceased.<sup>118</sup>

To further investigate the democratic transformation toward better participation and inclusion of women in the Jordanian political realm, the researcher designed and conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with chosen political figures. The candidates were narrowed down using a filtering mechanism to ensure they fit the criteria set out in the selection process's established methodology. Eventually, the researcher interviewed seven political figures from diverse political backgrounds.<sup>119</sup> The following points about women's political growth in Jordan were discussed with the interviewees: obstacles, quota system, glass ceiling, political parties' role, CSO's role, recent political reforms, and the prospected future.<sup>120</sup>

The interviewees were first asked about the obstacles preventing the political advancement of Jordanian women. There were some discrepancies, but overall, their

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<sup>113</sup> Merhej, 2022

<sup>114</sup> Merhej, 2022

<sup>115</sup> "Senate Passes 2022 Draft Constitutional Amendments," Jordan Times, January 18, 2022, <https://www.jordan-times.com/news/local/senate-passes-2022-draft-constitutional-amendments>.

<sup>116</sup> Jordan News, "Only 20% of Jordanians Are Aware of Constitutional Amendments - Poll," Jordan News, January 2022, <https://www.jordannews.jo/Section-109/News/Only-20-of-Jordanians-are-aware-of-constitutional-amendments-poll-12555>.

<sup>117</sup> Jordan News, 2022

<sup>118</sup> Abu Rumman, Jboor and Khatib, 2022. P.136

<sup>119</sup> The detailed list of the interviewed people is available in Annex (1).

<sup>120</sup> The detailed list of the questions is available in Annex (2)

ideas were comparable and consistent with the existing literature. Most respondents cited societal practices and traditions, often overshadowed by masculine favouritism and patriarchy, as the most salient factors, which Amani Hammad described as structural and inherited.<sup>121</sup> As Dima Tahboub also noted, society still regards women's public role as honorary.<sup>122</sup> Ostensibly, women face several obstacles on the thorny road to political activism and participation. Nonetheless, as Amani Hammad and Samar Muhareb, the political and social experts, noted, a woman who strikes a balance between her traditional responsibilities and her political goals will likely be successful.<sup>123</sup> Muhareb also criticised Jordanian women for their lack of political competence and ambition, asserting that most women politicians merely desire positions.<sup>124</sup>

On her part, Esraa Mahadin made connections between the economic, social, cultural, and legislative aspects, while highlighting women's economic challenges as the most significant. She pointed out that if women are denied economic autonomy, they will also lack the freedom to choose their political destiny, including voting, running for elections, or affiliating with a political party.<sup>125</sup> Notably, A significant sum of money is spent on an electoral campaign to win votes or promote candidates. Thus, women's limited economic capabilities have curtailed their political participation.<sup>126</sup>

Moreover, women's subordination and political weakness, Abu Olbeh argued, are the result of a lack of state-level comprehensive development plans aimed at societal advancement. She contended to hold the government responsible for its "non-democratic actions", even after democracy was reinstated in 1989. She noted that the 1993 Election Law and its subsequent revisions, which she referred to as a "categorical-based law", favour certain social groups while excluding others, particularly women and other minorities.<sup>127</sup> This was also underlined by Hussein, who emphasised that the one-person-one-vote law was discriminatory towards women.<sup>128</sup> Within that context, electorates are more inclined to vote for male candidates endorsed by their tribes or political parties, thereby limiting women's access to the House, as some

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<sup>121</sup> Hammad, 2022

<sup>122</sup> Tahboub, 2022

<sup>123</sup> Hamad 2022; Interview with Samar Muhareb, interviewed by Salim Nuqul, ARDD Headquarters, 27. December.2022

<sup>124</sup> Muhareb, 2022

<sup>125</sup> Mahadin, 2022

<sup>126</sup> Barakat, 2016. P.23

<sup>127</sup> Abu Olbeh, 2022

<sup>128</sup> Hussein, 2022

scholars observed.<sup>129</sup>

The quota system was the topic of the discussion that followed. Despite the divergent opinions, the interviewees accentuated the significance of the quota in facilitating women's participation. Tahboub noted that Jordanian society had not yet reached the point where women were elected voluntarily; thus, women had to rely on regulations and a quota system.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, as emphasised by Mahadin, the quota system should remain in the future since it encouraged rural and bedouin women to further engage in politics. She remarked that while larger tribes have a better chance of competing for elected seats, smaller tribes benefited from quotas to win seats, propelling, therefore, their women into the political sphere.<sup>131</sup> Husseini also discussed the changes in Jordanian society during the past two decades, during which more women from tribal origins have got into politics, which was formerly uncommon, attributing it to factors including the quota.<sup>132</sup> Senator and Secretary General of the Jordanian Social Democratic Party Jamil Al-Nimri supported this sentiment, adding that the quota inspired more women to participate in politics, leading to their advancement in prominent roles.<sup>133</sup>

Others expressed more dubious opinions regarding the quota. For instance, Hammad indicated that quotas were necessary to overcome resistance to women entering politics. However, according to her, they have produced a lot of politically mediocre and unremarkable women with no proper political content.<sup>134</sup> Muhareb was more critical, as she asserted that women would not be represented in the Parliament without the quota due to the lack of qualified candidates. In principle, she continued, there should not be a quota because that practice has increased women's dependence and reliance, which has negatively impacted their overall political engagement.<sup>135</sup> Besides, the quota generated women who fell short of the benchmark, leading to the false general perception that this is typical of women, as Abu Olbeh noted.<sup>136</sup>

The existence of a glass ceiling was then a question posed to the interviewees. Most of the responses indicated that there is no glass ceiling exists. On the contrary, they acknowledged the opportunities and support given to women in the past few decades

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<sup>129</sup> Barakat, 2016. P.25

<sup>130</sup> Tahboub, 2022

<sup>131</sup> Mahadin, 2022

<sup>132</sup> Husseini, 2022

<sup>133</sup> Al-Nimri, 2022

<sup>134</sup> Hammad, 2022

<sup>135</sup> Muhareb, 2022

<sup>136</sup> Abu Olbeh, 2022



by Jordan's policymakers through multiple initiatives and legislation. They saw this as evidence of the King's desire to have women represented more effectively and given greater rights over time. Hussein asserted that there are more Jordanian women in politics and leading political roles now than ever before and that this trend is projected to continue.<sup>137</sup> This was also endorsed by Mahadin, who emphasised Jordan's abundance of successful female political figures.<sup>138</sup> In that regard, and according to Al-Nimri, having a female prime minister in Jordan, for instance, would not be socially reprehensible, but "not in the upcoming period, we still need more time", as he acknowledged.<sup>139</sup> However, some respondents, such as Hammad and Muhareb, believe that Jordan still lacks capable women to assume higher positions, citing the absence of calibre and expertise for such responsibilities.<sup>140</sup> An example of women's lack of political competencies is shown in a questionnaire conducted by Al-Quds Center for Political Studies in 2014. More than a quarter of the 500 women who participated in the study of political party members said they had joined their parties without first reading about their policies and objectives.<sup>141</sup> Tahboub, on the other hand, asserted the existence of a "glass ceiling effect," which she characterised as an "unspoken law driven by the patriarchal system," even inside her party (IAF).<sup>142</sup>

Despite the above responses, the researcher realised that the higher political determination is ahead of both the public will and societal awareness. Clearly, many established strategies, programmes, and legislation aimed at advancing women in politics are only partially implemented on the ground, revealing a gap between policymaking and execution. Also, there is an overall devaluation of women's political activity, which is shown in the increased scrutiny women experience as they assume offices, and the public criticism they receive on various media platforms. Furthermore, as previously noted, no women in Jordan had been placed at the helm of the country's three authorities (the Executive, the Legislative, or the Judiciary), or assigned to any sovereign ministries. In addition to the aforementioned factors, this can be also attributed to some religious views. Many Islamists politicians, including moderate ones like Rhayyel Al-Gharayeb, the Secretary General of Zamzam Party, believe women should not be in the highest position of authority.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Hussein, 2022

<sup>138</sup> Mahadin, 2022

<sup>139</sup> Al-Nimri, 2022

<sup>140</sup> Hammad, 2022; Muhareb 2022

<sup>141</sup> Barakat, 2016. P.53

<sup>142</sup> Tahboub, 2022

<sup>143</sup> Hussein, 2021. P194

The next topic of discussion was the part played by political parties in women's empowerment in politics. To reiterate, the country's political parties continue to suffer from low credibility. Compared to more established powers, their influence on the political landscape is still minimal. This is evident from the low percentage of prominent positions they hold in the consecutive governments, and the modest number of seats they won in the elected bodies over the years, where voters preferences are diverted toward traditional social leaders and businesspeople, as the researcher noted. Besides, women's influence in political parties is limited, and they are often overlooked in favour of their male counterparts.

Although opinions were divided, all interviewees agreed that the parties are not doing enough in that regard. Jamil Al-Nimri and Abla Abu Olbeh, two political party leaders, discussed their parties' initiatives to increase female membership and pave the road for them to assume leadership roles.<sup>144</sup> Women's wings in their parties were cited as evidence of their earnest efforts to recruit more women, where women are represented in all party branches. Abu Olbeh stated that the current percentage of female members in her party is close to 42%. However, she acknowledged that most of the women's party members, including the new ones, are still incapable of playing significant political roles and, instead, are more concerned with social issues, while noting that the party is providing training and political education programmes to them<sup>145</sup> Al-Nimri added that his party, the Jordanian Social Democratic Party, is actively recruiting youths and university students, both men and women, through training programs and political education, and that the party is committed to ensuring that all genders are well represented in these settings.<sup>146</sup> Noteworthy, some experts, such as Abu Rumman et al., have observed that the Jordanian Social Democratic Party has more vigorous women's political activities and programs compared to other parties.<sup>147</sup>

Dima Tahboub, on the other hand, remarked that "many religious practices are infiltrated by customs and traditions," which negatively impacts women's representation in her party. However, she noted that notwithstanding the initial reluctance by IAF leaders to give room for women, this attitude is gradually changing as younger generations of leaders became more aware of the significance of women, while taking into account legislative developments, such as the quota system.<sup>148</sup> This was also noted by many

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<sup>144</sup> Al-Nimri, 2022; Abu Olbeh, 2022

<sup>145</sup> Abu Olbeh, 2022

<sup>146</sup> Al-Nimri, 2022

<sup>147</sup> Abu Rumman, Jboor and Khatib, 2022. P.132

<sup>148</sup> Tahboub, 2022

researchers, who observed the positive shift and new approach in the IAF stance regarding women's political participation.<sup>149</sup> Notably, a women's wing has been formed inside the IAF, and women are represented on all party committees. These committees are modelled after those present within Parliament.<sup>150</sup> However, despite the IAF women's sector's prior accomplishments in many national issues in the Parliament, Tahboub emphasised that women's involvement in IAF's policymaking is still negligible.<sup>151</sup>

Non-party figures like Mahadin and Hammad were more forthright in their criticism of the parties. Hammad remarked that political parties' attempts to include women are driven more by official regulations than by strong convictions, where men predominate at most leadership levels.<sup>152</sup> Notably, the marginalisation of women in society is reflected in the attitudes of all political parties, Mahadin argues.<sup>153</sup> While Hussein gave the example of many parties' tendency to hold their meetings at late hours, which discourages many of the party's female members from attending. Consequently, they play a less significant role in their party's decision-making matters.<sup>154</sup>

Arguably, the recent political reforms and amended laws will require parties to incorporate more women and propel them to leadership positions. However, although the laws have already become effective, the researcher found little evidence of progress. Most parties are prioritising other matters, while maintaining the same attitudes toward women's representation, and until now, no effective policies have been put in place to bring about a paradigm shift. Accordingly, due to the absence of an environment conducive to greater women's participation and the challenges of adhering to the new legislation, parties will compete for a small pool of female members who are willing to get involved. As a result, the addition of new female members or the promotion of existing ones, who are qualified to represent the parties in the political sphere may have unfavourable consequences, in terms of number over quality, subsequently influencing women's perceptions of and engagement in politics.

When asked about the CSOs role in promoting women's political engagement, the interviewees had differing stances. Predictably, Tahboub, coming from a political Islamic background, expressed her reservations. Many of these organisations receiving foreign

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<sup>149</sup> Hussein, 2021.P 195

<sup>150</sup> OECD, 2018. P.50

<sup>151</sup> Tahboub, 2022

<sup>152</sup> Hammad, 2022

<sup>153</sup> Mahadin, 2022

<sup>154</sup> Hussein, 2022

funding, she argued, have agendas, and promote notions like gender equality and sexual education, that go counter to Islamic teachings and Sharia law.<sup>155</sup> Muhareb on the contrary highlighted the importance of CSOs role, where the civil society, according to her, creates an environment that is conducive to women's political engagement. She continued, the CSOs can embrace women and youth, provide them with financial support, and help them develop their skills so they can get involved in politics or political parties. However, she emphasised the necessity of official support for civil society, noting that Jordan's civil society is among the weakest in the Arab world.<sup>156</sup>

While Hammad underscored the importance of civil society in supporting women and provided examples of some initiatives that provide programmes women's empowerment, where such activities constitute a sprout of hope as she stated.<sup>157</sup> Similar opinions were expressed by Hussein, who mentioned that CSOs are making strides to educate women on their rights in the social and legal spheres, while noting that CSOs' political programmes are still insufficient.<sup>158</sup> Al-Nimri, for his part, said that women with a history of involvement in CSOs are prime candidates for recruitment into his party.<sup>159</sup> Mahadin and Abu Olbeh also accentuated the prime importance of CSOs in promoting women's political participation, where Abu Olbeh described them, together with the political parties, as the medium between the State and the people.<sup>160</sup>

The next topic of discussion was the latest legislative amendments. It was generally agreed upon that the composition of the Royal Committee properly reflected the diversity of Jordan's political landscape and that women were significantly represented. In concept, the interviewees expressed optimism towards the recent developments, especially as it relates to the advancement of women's political representation. However, responses varied when discussing the details of the laws. For example, Tahboub emphasised the beneficial changes, noting that they will inspire more women to get politically involved, and drive forward the incorporation of women from diverse cities, particularly those with tribal backgrounds.<sup>161</sup> This opinion was shared by Hussein and Al-Nimri, who foresaw a rise in women's political participation in the upcoming period.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Tahboub, 2022

<sup>156</sup> Muhareb, 2022

<sup>157</sup> Hammad, 2022

<sup>158</sup> Hussein, 2022

<sup>159</sup> Al-Nimri, 2022

<sup>160</sup> Mahadin, 2022. Abu Olbeh, 2022

<sup>161</sup> Tahboub, 2022

<sup>162</sup> Hussein, 2022; Al-Nimri, 2022

Whereas Mahadin provided a more balanced appraisal, noting that she prefers to wait and avoid making quick judgments, and that we need to carefully assess the results in the next period before acknowledging the changes.<sup>163</sup> Furthermore, Muhareb and Abu Olbeh underlined the public criticism that has accompanied the recent reforms, which may dissuade many women from participating.<sup>164</sup> Additionally, Abu Olbeh highlighted concerns about the 2.5% electoral threshold for parties' lists, which could prevent, according to her, many parties from earning more than one seat, jeopardising women's prospects accordingly.<sup>165</sup> For her part, Hammad questioned the capacity and drive of the government and political parties to respond to the new conditions, while also alluding to the setbacks of prior reform programmes. Also, she observed that the Royal Committee's final recommendations were not necessarily consistent with the King's political will. Nevertheless, without the King's pledge, she continued, the outcomes could have been entirely different, where the King insisted on adding specific articles to the new laws to guarantee the outcomes.<sup>166</sup>

The final topic of debate concerned the future. The participants discussed their opinions on how women will fare in Jordanian politics in the upcoming period. The interviewees had varying forecasts for the future of women's political status in the country. Al-Nimri expressed his high aspirations for the future, and that his political party will continue working to recruit more women and young people, in conformity with the newly enacted laws. Additionally, despite the strong reactionary voices demonising women's political and social empowerment, Al-Nimri believes they will eventually back down in the face of the high wave of changes.<sup>167</sup> Mahadin shared this optimistic outlook for the future, stressing the importance of the King's political will to challenge public cognition.<sup>168</sup>

In contrast, Hammad pointed out that Jordan is behind other countries in developing feminist theory and epistemology. She added that Jordanian women must take proactive measures to improve their approaches and propagate the feminist movement principles to accommodate the needs of the next phase. Hammad also noted that the transformation would be slower and ineffectual without significant political action by the women themselves.<sup>169</sup> Furthermore, Muhareb believes that the political future is

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<sup>163</sup> Mahadin, 2022

<sup>164</sup> Muhareb, 2022; Abu Olbeh, 2022

<sup>165</sup> Abu Olbeh, 2022

<sup>166</sup> Hammad, 2022

<sup>167</sup> Al-Nimri, 2022

<sup>168</sup> Mahadin, 2022

<sup>169</sup> Hammad, 2022

fraught with challenges for Jordanian women. For women to be able to impact public policies, as Muhareb explained, “we need to see more women involved and openly expressing their political perspectives, while also presenting structured political views to the public.”<sup>170</sup>

In return, Tahboub was less optimistic about the political future of women, particularly IAF members, because of the political orientations of her party and its thorny relationship with successive governments. Despite the recent revisions, which she emphasised their importance in empowering women, she insisted that the State’s strategy of favouring certain political groups over others remained unchanged. Thus, she underscored the importance of the government’s embracing all political spectrums and not “tailoring their policies to fit certain political views.”<sup>171</sup> This, she explained, would guarantee that progress is maintained, and that women would play an equal role in future politics.<sup>172</sup> Finally, Abu Olbeh stressed the importance of tying the recent reforms into state-level developmental strategies to ensure they continue gaining traction, and ultimately evolving women’s capabilities at all levels.<sup>173</sup>

As this thesis assessed, the recent political transformations have solidified the broad political goal for more gender parity. The laws and the designed roadmap will serve as a blueprint for all political powers to govern these changes, but it will require time to evaluate the actual results.

Generally, women’s further involvement in politics, their turnout at the elections, and the number and calibre of their representation in government, Parliament, and other bodies are required indicators of a transformation. Also, the political stakeholders, including the State authorities and political parties are required to change their policies and approaches to conform with the envisioned political future.

A summary of the qualitative analysis is added to Table (6) in Annex (3)

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<sup>170</sup> Muhareb, 2022

<sup>171</sup> Tahboub, 2022

<sup>172</sup> Tahboub, 2022

<sup>173</sup> Abu Olbeh, 2022



# 11 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 11.1 Conclusion

This thesis researched women's political representation in Jordan, specifically within the realm of political leadership and party membership. The study concluded that there had been steady progress over the previous three decades. Also, the researcher noted that the quota system, which helped more women get elected, and gave more seats to women in governorates outside of the capital, helped bring about positive societal changes. Indeed, women's involvement in politics at all echelons in Jordan has served to enlighten conservative tribal communities and other provincial residents about the roles and opportunities available to women in politics, thereby gradually eroding long-held social norms and breaking down traditional social taboos.

Furthermore, it is important to reiterate the significant milestones and accomplishments achieved by many Jordanian women at the State's top authorities in recent decades. In the government, for instance, they had assumed influential portfolios, including a deputy prime minister and ministers of planning, culture, social development, energy, and information. Likewise, several women, such as Toujan Faisal, Abla Abu Olbeh, and Falak Al-Jamani, had a remarkable presence in the Parliament. This is also evident in the judiciary and military, where many women have attained prominent positions as senior judges, and army generals and directors. Moreover, it is similarly apparent in political parties, where three women have been leading their parties for years, two of whom had become members of the Lower House.

However, the quantitative analysis demonstrated that Jordanian women's representation in the government and Parliament remained modest and inconsistent. A similar pattern was observed in political parties, where men predominate across all positions. Moreover, the literature review and the qualitative analysis revealed that significant impediments prevent women's full participation and ascending ranks. The most prominent observed issue is the long-standing cultural conventions and norms that continue to view women through the lens of stereotypical gender roles. Also contributing to this is the pervasive cultural and religious conceptions, driven by masculinity and patriarchy, that limit women's agency in many spheres of life, including politics. Additionally, some scholars and some interviewees in this thesis underscored the economic challenges Jordanian women endure, where their participation in the labour force is below 15%. Thus, the lack of financial resources exacerbates the inability to devote considerable time and effort to political activity, including running for elections.

Many academics and the interviewees in this thesis agree that the King and other authorities clearly aim to increase women's participation in politics. That was demonstrated in the recent political and legislative reforms. In 2022, the Jordanian Parliament enacted legislative reforms to endorse better political and democratic measures. Notably, additional provisions were incorporated into the laws to guarantee a larger percentage of female representation and involvement. Within that context, political parties are urged to facilitate their procedures and make it more conducive to women's political participation. Most of the interviewees expressed positive sentiments regarding the reforms, while some of them reluctantly acknowledged them. They linked the progress to more reforms at the State's Grand Strategy level in terms of sustainable development, further political capacity building for women starting from the grassroots, and equal treatment across the political spectrum.

In sum, progress is slow and falls short of expectations and aspirations. The norms and traditions, the patriarchal system and their reverberations in society, the financial challenges, and other considerations continue to hold women back from full participation in politics. The latest amendments can be seen as a solid attempt by the State for a positive change. However, according to the researcher's assessment, there needs to be more connection between political will and implementation. This existing gap obstructs the change, where some influential people are seemingly keen to keep the advantageous position they already enjoy within the current system, which comes at the expense of many other political actors, including women.

## 11.2 Recommendations

All political stakeholders in Jordan are required to contribute to improving Jordanian women's political status within their respective areas. However, the overwhelming onus relies on the State and its institutions, and the political parties in the second place. Accordingly, and in light of recent reforms and the identified challenges and impediments to women's political participation in Jordan, the researcher recommends the following:

### **At the State level:**

- Develop the State's Grand Strategy to include the empowerment and inclusion of women in various fields, and provide them with political, economic, and social levers.
- Sustain a conducive and enabling political climate to encourage and support the recognised shifts, while remaining equidistant from all political factions.
- Establish appropriate monitoring and assessment mechanisms to ensure that State policies and laws are being carried out as intended.
- Maintain and formally recognise the Royal Committee's role as an impartial body

responsible for routinely revising politically related legislation and regulations.

- Enact more equitable appointment policies for women in various State institutions, including their representation in the cabinets and the Senate.
- Bolster the efforts and role of civil society organisations (CSOs) engaged in political affairs and women's empowerment and providing the necessary support to them.
- Revise the educational curricula by incorporating new lessons on gender equality and showcasing the many achievements of Jordanian women in public life and politics.

Other stakeholders:

### **Political Parties:**

- Empower and give female party members the necessary opportunity to demonstrate their merits and create a holistic strategy to enhance their capacities at all levels.
- Ensure that women have equal opportunity for advancement within the party, while implementing effective systems for power rotation.
- Increase the visibility and influence of the party's women's sector and create one if none exists.
- Go beyond simply adding lip service language to their stated policies and agendas related to women by considering serious revisions of those policies and programs.
- Revise the party's recruitment criteria for women to attract a more representative cross-section of the population, and also to ensure the joining of more qualified women.
- Collaborate with CSOs to improve women's access to training, political literacy, and institutional capacity.
- Extend their presence and activity scope to reach various cities beyond the capital.
- Finally, parties must improve their public image by presenting verifiable evidence of behavioural changes.

### **Media:**

- Avert from baseless targeting and criticism of female politicians and provide more appropriate coverage of their activities and achievements instead.
- Produce purposeful content to promote gender equality and raise awareness of women's political and social roles.

### **CSOs and women groups**

- Secure more funding for women's political and social empowerment programmes and training.
- Dedicate financial support to women and youth to cover logistical requirements (transportation, childcare, among other matters).
- Expand their activities' network to include more women across the country.

## Research centres and academics

- Dedicate more resources and capacities for research and scholarly work regarding women's political empowerment.
- Theorise a feminist theory aptly reflecting the Jordanian context.

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## 12.2 Interviews

- Abu Olbeh, Abla. Interviewed by Salim F. Nuqul, Jordanian People's Democratic Party. November 2, 2022.
- Al-Nimri, Jamil. Interviewed by Salim F. Nuqul, House of Senates. November 21, 2022.
- Hussein, Rana. Interviewed by Salim F. Nuqul, Public place. October 25, 2022.
- Hammad, Amani. Interviewed by Salim F. Nuqul, Public place. November 14, 2022.
- Mahadin, Esraa. Interviewed by Salim F. Nuqul, Karak Castle Organization. December 26, 2022.
- Muhareb, Samar. Interviewed by Salim F. Nuqul, ARDD Headquarters. December 27, 2022.
- Tahboub, Dima, Interviewed by Salim F. Nuqul, Open Arab University. November 1, 2022.

# ANNEXES



## Annex (1) Interviewed People in chronological order:

- Mrs Rana Hussein  
(Senior Political Journalist and human rights activist)  
A senior journalist who is working for the Jordan Times Newspaper.  
Ms Hussein had recently published a book about the women's movement in Jordan, titled "Years of Struggle." The book provides an important perspective regarding Jordanian women's political and social activism in the past decades.  
Date of interview: 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2022  
Location: Public place – Amman.
- Dr Dima Tahboub  
(Executive committee member of the Islamic Action Front Party (IAF)).<sup>174</sup>  
Dr Tahboub was a member of the 18th House of Representatives (2016-2020).  
She was also a member of the Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System.  
Currently, she works as a professor at the Open Arab University.  
Date of interview: 1st of November 2022.  
Location: Open Arab University – Amman.
- Mrs Abla Abu Olbeh  
(Secretary General of the Jordanian People's Democratic Party).<sup>175</sup>  
One of only three females who assumed the position of secretary general of a Jordanian political party.  
A former member of the 16th House of Representatives 2010-2012).  
She was also a member of the Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System.  
Date of interview: 2nd of November 2022.  
Location: Jordanian People's Democratic Party headquarters – Amman.

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<sup>174</sup> The Islamic Action Front Party (IAF) is the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. As noted previously, the IAF is the largest political party in the country, with the highest number of deputies in the House of Representatives.

<sup>175</sup> The Jordanian People's Democratic Party is a progressive leftist party, as described by its secretary-general during the interview.

- **Mr Jamil Al-Nimri**  
(Current Member of the House of Senates)  
Secretary General of the Jordanian Social Democratic Party.<sup>176</sup>  
Mr. Nimri was a former member of the 16th and 17th House of Representatives (2010-2016).  
He was also a member of the Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System.  
Date of interview: 14th of November 2022.  
Location: House of Senates – Amman.
  
- **Mrs Amani Hammad**  
(Senior Political Advisor – British Embassy in Amman).  
Ms. Hammad has an extensive experience in the political scene in Jordan and acts as a senior political advisor to the British Ambassador to Amman.  
Date of interview: 15th of November 2022.  
Location: Public place – Amman.
  
- **Mrs Esraa Mahadin**  
(Founder & Director of Karak Castle Center for Consultations & Training)  
Ms. Mahadin is an attorney, and she has more than 14 years of experience in civil society organisations. She is a specialist in elections processes, reviewing legislation, and elections observation.  
She is also an expert in governmental organisations, women and youth empowerment, and electoral violence against women.  
Date of interview: 26th of December 2022.  
Location: Karak Castle Center for Consultations & Training Office– Amman.
  
- **Mrs Samar Muhareb**  
(Cofounder and CEO of Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development - ARDD)  
Ms. Muhareb is a political and social development expert, working on women’s political empowerment and training, and she has more than 20 years of experience in civil society organisations.  
Date of interview: 27th of December 2022.  
Location: ARDD Headquarters - Amman.

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<sup>176</sup> Jordanian Social Democratic Party is a socialist party and positions itself as a centre-left.

“Who We Are,” Jordanian Social Democratic Party, Accessed October 23, 2022,  
<https://www.sdp-jordan.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d9%86%d8%ad%d9%86/>.



## Annex (2) Interviews Questions

- What are the existing obstacles to women's political engagement?
- Does a glass ceiling exist that prevents women from reaching senior leadership positions? If yes, how have you been handling it?
- The quota system: what do you think of it? What effect did it have on encouraging more women to pursue politics?
- Why does the number of female ministers fluctuate across successive governments?
- What steps are political parties taking to increase the number of women in their ranks, and the political arena generally?
- Which parties have the most progressive policies for advancing women in politics?
- How are women empowered at your party? (A question to party members)
- To what extent are CSOs helping women progress at the social and political levels?
- Considering the current political changes, what are your thoughts? Have all major political perspectives been adequately represented on the Royal Committee? Also, were women adequately represented?
- What are your anticipations about the future?

## Annex (3) Tables and Charts

Table (1) Stakeholders Mapping

Name	Significance	Interests / Incentives	Capacities
Royal Court	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusion of different segments of society.</li> <li>Gender Equality.</li> <li>Equidistant to all political parties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influence and encourage different stakeholders.</li> <li>The King, by the Constitution, ratifies the new laws.</li> </ul>
Government	Very High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruiting additional competencies and qualifications to the cabinet.</li> <li>Compliance with international agreements and conventions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enactment of laws.</li> <li>Promotion of civil rights and obligations.</li> </ul>
Parliament (Lower House & Upper House)	Very High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Translation of voters' interests.</li> <li>Women represent their constituency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legislations of laws.</li> <li>Monitor the government's performance and hold it accountable.</li> </ul>
Political Parties	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get involved in the policymaking through Government and Parliament.</li> <li>Become more influential at the popular bases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in the elections.</li> <li>Forge alliances to become part of the government.</li> <li>Financing Campaigns.</li> </ul>
Local NGOs and CSOs.	Medium/Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Push for better gender inclusion.</li> <li>Political rights literacy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocacy.</li> <li>Training.</li> <li>Research.</li> </ul>
International NGOs	Medium/Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Push for better gender inclusion.</li> <li>Political rights literacy.</li> <li>Promotion of democracy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocacy.</li> <li>Training.</li> <li>Research.</li> </ul>
Professional Unions & Associations	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political involvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social and political support.</li> </ul>
Foreign Embassies	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion of democracy.</li> <li>Gender Equality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding of programs.</li> <li>Diplomatic pressure.</li> </ul>
Academics & researchers	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research and theorisation.</li> <li>Data gathering &amp; analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide academic and scholarly work and knowledge.</li> </ul>

\* (Table prepared by the author based on the research analysis)

Chart (1)

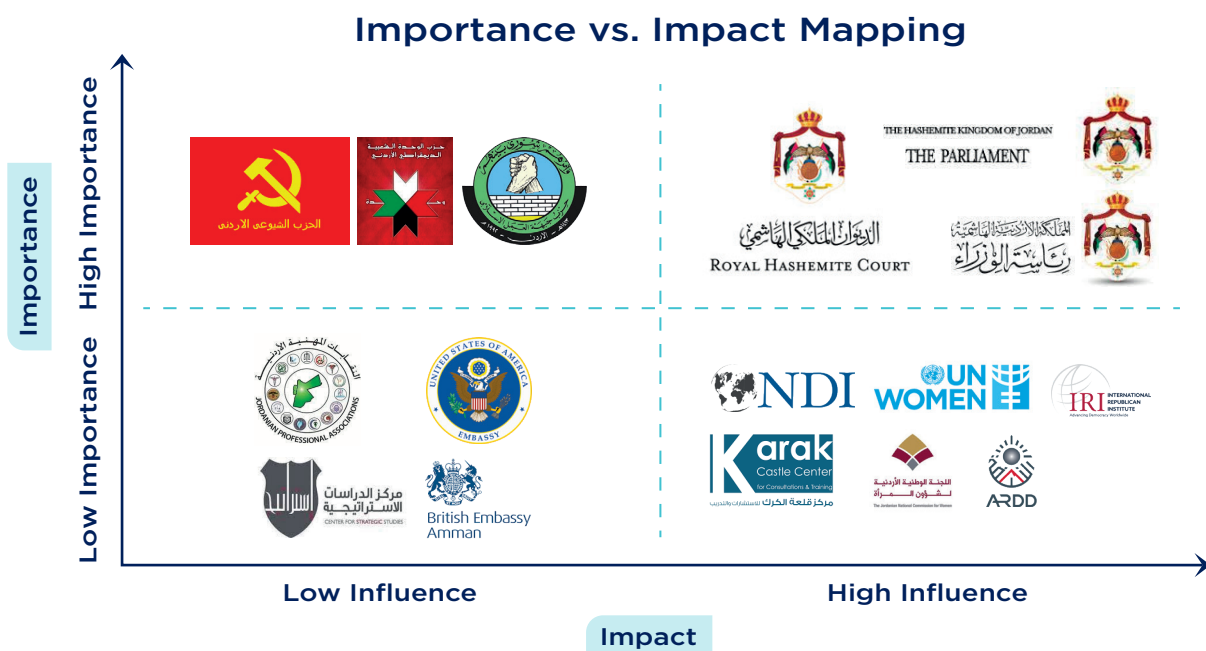


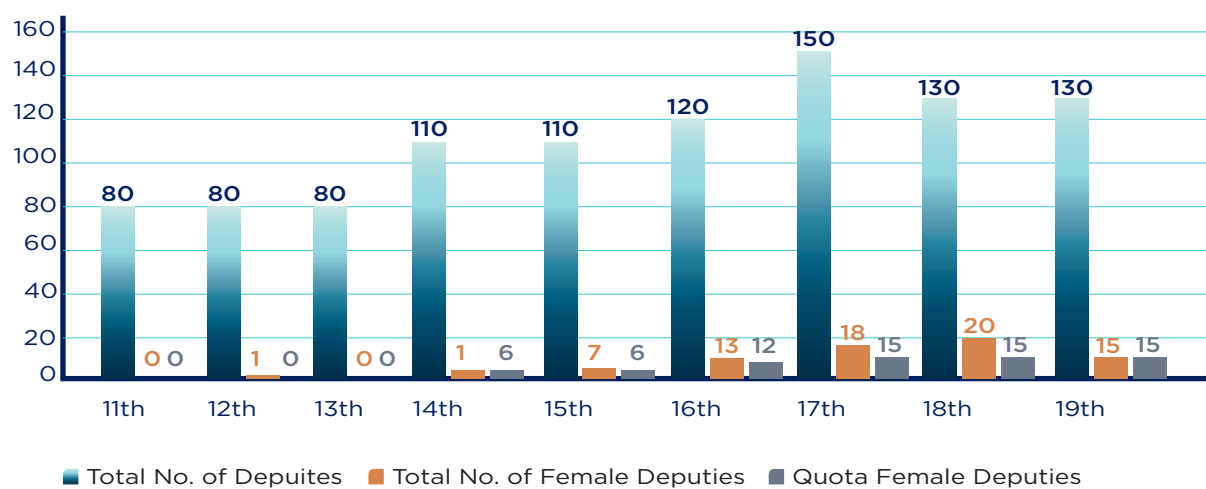
Table (2) Jordanian House of Representatives since 1989

Start Year	End Year	House Number	Female Candidates	% Of Total Cand.	Total members	Female members	Quota Seats	% Of Female Members	% Of Quota / Total Reps.
Nov-89	Aug-93	11th	12	1.9%	80	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Nov-93	Sep-97	12th	3	0.6%	80	1	0	1.25%	0.00%
Nov-97	Jun-01	13th	17	3.0%	80	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Jun-03	Aug-07	14th	54	7.1%	110	6	6	5.45%	5.45%
Nov-07	Nov-09	15th	198	22.4%	110	7	6	6.36%	5.45%
Nov-10	Oct-12	16th	136	17.8%	120	13	12	10.83%	10.00%
Jan-13	May-16	17th	191	0.6%	150	18	15	12.00%	10.00%
Sep-16	Sep-20	18th	257	20.5%	130	20	15	15.38%	11.54%
Nov-20	Current	19th	360	21.5%	130	15	15	11.54%	11.54%
<b>Total</b>			<b>1228</b>	<b>**</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>8.08%</b>	<b>**</b>

\* (The table was prepared by the researcher, based on data from the House of Representatives' official website and other sources).<sup>177</sup>

<sup>177</sup> "Previous Councils," accessed October 15, 2022, <https://representatives.jo/Ar/Pages/PreviousCouncils..>, Barakat, 2016. P.17

Chart (2) Jordanian Lower House since 1989



\* (The Chart was prepared by the researcher, based on data from the House of Representatives' official website)

Table (3) Jordanian House of Senates since 1989

Start Year	End Year	Senate Number	Total Number of Senators <sup>178</sup>	Female Senators <sup>179</sup>	Percentage
Nov-89	Nov-93	16th	40	1	2.50%
Nov-93	Nov-97	17th	40	2	5.00%
Nov-97	Nov-01	18th	40	3	7.50%
Nov-01	Nov-03	19th	40	3	7.50%
Nov-03	Nov-05	20th	55	7	12.73%
Nov-05	Nov-07	21st	55	6	10.91%
Nov-07	Nov-09	22nd	55	7	12.73%
Dec-09	Nov-10	23rd	55	7	12.73%
Nov-10	Nov-11	24th	60	9	15.00%
Nov-11	Oct-13	25th	60	7	11.67%
Oct-13	Sep-16	26th	75	9	12.00%
Sep-16	Sep-20	27th	65	10	15.38%
Sep-20	Oct-22	28th	65	7	10.77%
Oct-22	Current	29th	65	10	15.38%
Total			770	88	11.43%

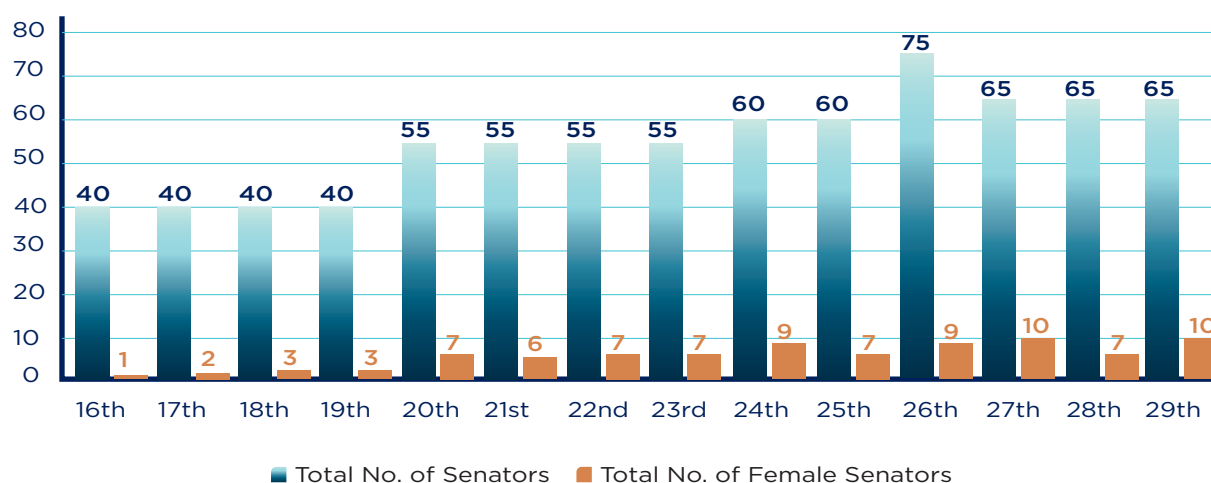
\* (The table was prepared by the researcher, based on data from the House of Senates' official website).<sup>180</sup>

<sup>178</sup> Number of senators is based on the first senate formation, disregarding any subsequent changes.

<sup>179</sup> Number of female senators is based on the first senate formation, disregarding any subsequent changes.

<sup>180</sup> "Previous Council Information," The Jordanian Senate, accessed October 16, 2022, <http://senate.jo/ar/page/%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%82%D8%A9>.

Chart (3) Jordanian Upper House since 1989



\* (The chart was prepared by the researcher, based on data from the House of Senates' official website).

Table (4) Jordanian Governments since 1989

Start Year	End Year	Prime Minister	Total Number of Ministers <sup>181</sup>	Female Ministers <sup>182</sup>	Percentage	Notes
Dec-89	Dec-91	Mudar Badran	24	0	0.00%	
Jun-91	Nov-91	Taher Masri	24	0	0.00%	
Nov-91	May-93	Prince Zaid Bin Shaker	29	0	0.00%	
May-93	Jan-95	Dr Abdul-Salam Al-Majali	27	1	3.70%	
Jan-95	Feb-96	Prince Zaid Bin Shaker	31	2	6.45%	
Feb-96	Mar-97	Abdul-Karim Kabariti	31	1	3.23%	

<sup>181</sup> The total number of ministers is based on the first cabinet formation and disregards any subsequent cabinet reshufflings.

<sup>182</sup> The number of female ministers is based on the first cabinet formation and disregards any subsequent cabinet reshufflings.

Start Year	End Year	Prime Minister	Total Number of Ministers <sup>181</sup>	Female Ministers <sup>182</sup>	Percentage	Notes
Mar-97	Aug-98	Dr Abdul-Salam Al-Majali	24	1	4.17%	
Aug-98	Mar-99	Dr Fayez Al-Tarawneh	23	0	0.00%	
Mar-99	Jun-00	Abdul-Ra'ouf Al-Rawabdeh	23	1	4.35%	Dr. Rima Khalaf Deputy Prime Minister
Jun-00	Jan-02	Ali Abu Al-Ragheb (1)	29	1	3.45%	
Jan-02	Jul-03	Ali Abu Al-Ragheb (2)	27	1	3.70%	Two successive female ministers assumed the same portfolio
Jul-03	Oct-03	Ali Abu Al-Ragheb (3)	29	1	3.45%	
Oct-03	Apr-05	Faisal Al-Fayez	21	3	14.29%	In total, four female ministers only three simultaneously
Apr-05	Nov-05	Dr Adnan Badran	26	4	15.38%	In total, five females; only four simultaneously
Nov-05	Nov-07	Dr Ma'rouf Al-Bakhit	24	1	4.17%	
Nov-07	Dec-09	Nader Al-Dhahabi	28	4	14.29%	
Dec-09	Nov-10	Samir Al-Rifa'i (1)	29	2	6.90%	In total, four female ministers only three simultaneously
Nov-10	Feb-11	Samir Al-Rifa'i (2)	31	3	9.68%	
Feb-11	Oct-11	Dr Ma'rouf Al-Bakhit	27	2	7.41%	
Oct-11	Apr-12	Awn Al-Khasawneh	30	2	6.67%	
May-12	Oct-12	Dr Fayez Al-Tarawneh	30	1	3.33%	Women Affairs Minister
Oct-12	Mar-13	Dr Abdulla Al-Nsour (1)	19	1	5.26%	In total, five female ministers; only four simultaneously.

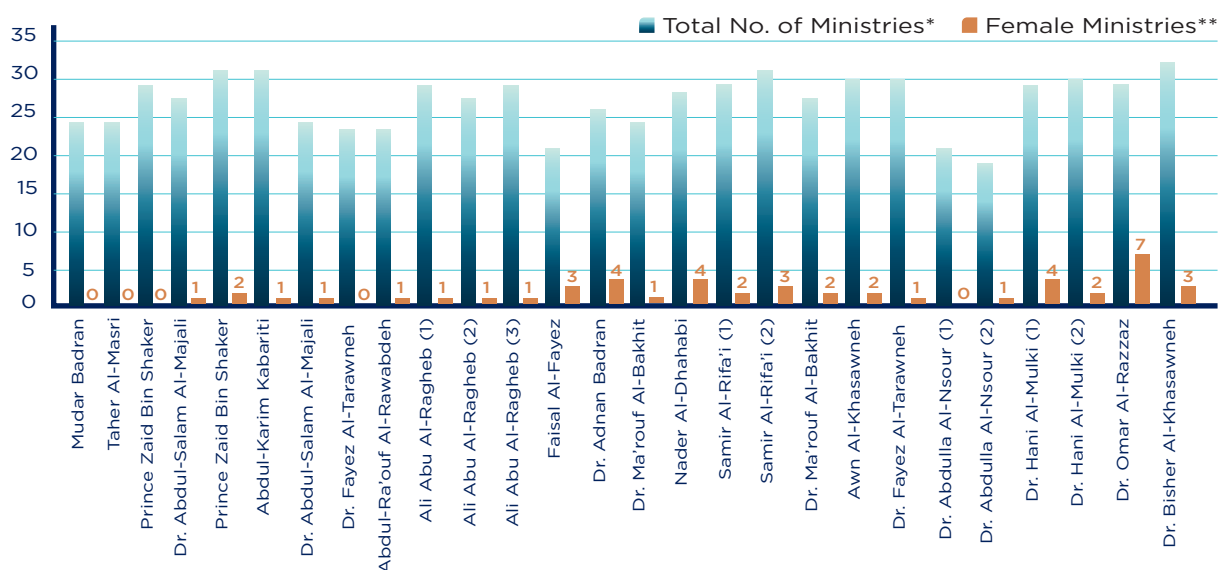


Start Year	End Year	Prime Minister	Total Number of Ministers <sup>181</sup>	Female Ministers <sup>182</sup>	Percentage	Notes
Jun-16	Sep-16	Dr Hani Al-Mulki (1)	29	4	13.79%	
Jun-00	Jan-02	Ali Abu Al-Ragheb (1)	29	1	3.45%	
Sep-16	Jun-18	Dr Hani Al-Mulki (2)	30	2	6.67%	In total, three female ministers, only two simultaneously
Jun-18	Oct-20	Dr Omar Al-Razzaz	29	7	24.14%	In total, nine female ministers, only seven simultaneously
Oct-20	Current	Dr Bisher Al-Khasawneh	32	3	9.38%	Currently five female ministers (Nov. 2022)

\* (The table was prepared by the researcher, based on data from the Prime Ministry's official website).<sup>183</sup>

<sup>183</sup> "Prime Ministry - Governments Database," SearchGovernment (Prime Ministry), accessed October 11, 2022, <https://pm.gov.jo/ar/CustomPages/SearchGovernment>.

Chart (4) Jordanian Governments since 1989



\* (The chart was prepared by the researcher, based on data from the Prime Ministry's official website).

Table (5) Jordanian Political Parties  
(The Most significant political Parties)

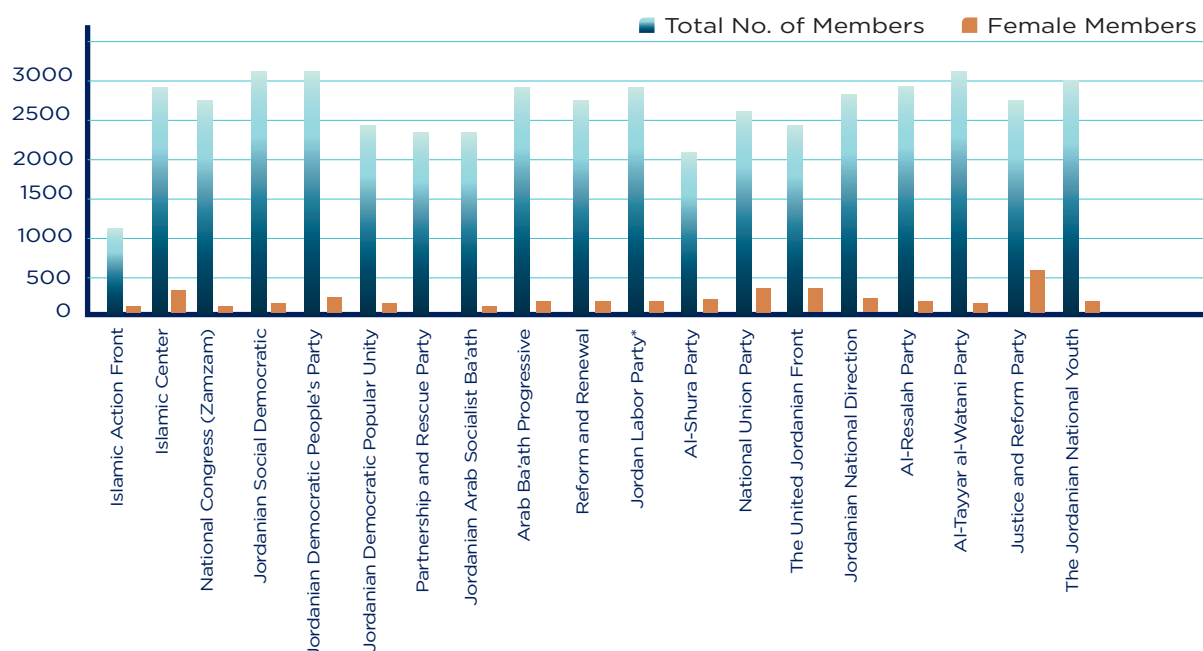
Party Name	Political Position	Creation Date	Current Sec. General	Total Members	Female Members	% Of Female Members
Islamic Action Front Party	Islamist	1992	Murad Al-Adaileh (M)	1,207	92	7.6%
Islamic Center Party	Islamic Democracy	2001	Mustapha Amwai (M)	1,816	418	23.0%
National Congress Party (Zamzam)	Moderate Islamist	2016	Rhayyel Al-Gharayebbeh (M)	915	92	10.1%
Jordanian Social Democratic	Social Democracy	2016	Jamil Al-Nimri (M)	269	117	43.5%
Jordanian Communist	Communist	1993	Faraj Itmaizeh (M)	723	190	26.3%
Jordanian Democratic People's Party	Far left	1993	Abla Abu Olbeh (F)	856	359	41.9%
Jordanian Democratic Popular Unity	Arab Socialism	1993	Sa'eed Thiab (M)	578	159	27.5%

Party Name	Political Position	Creation Date	Current Sec. General	Total Members	Female Members	% Of Female Members
Partnership and Rescue Party	Centrist Islamist	2017	Salem Falahat (M)	304	42	13.8%
Jordanian Arab Socialist Ba'ath	Socialist	1993	Mohammad Humsi (M)	769	87	11.3%
Arab Ba'ath Progressive	Neo-Ba'athism	1993	Khalil Dabbour (M)	840	242	28.8%
Reform and Renewal Party	Centrist	2012	Mazen Riyal (M)	544	226	41.5%
Jordan Labor Party	Centrist	2022	Rula Al-Hroub (F)	496	156	31.5%
Al-Shura Party	Centrist Islamist	2014	Firas Al-Abbadi (M)	836	261	31.2%
National Union Party	Centrist	2011	Zaid Abu Zaid (M)	1,142	436	38.2%
The United Jordanian Front	Centrist	2007	Farouk Al-Abadi (M)	2,631	475	18.1%
Jordanian National Direction	Centrist	2007	Hussein Al-Kayed (M)	566	329	58.1%
Al-Resalah Party	Centrist	2002	Hazem Qashou' (M)	1,172	299	25.5%
National Current Party	Centrist	2009	Hamdi Murad (M)	1,631	223	13.7%
Justice and Reform Party	Centrist	2012	Natheer Arabeyat ((M)	1,768	701	39.6%
The Jordanian National Youth	Centrist	2011	Abdul Salam Hamzat (M)	599	144	24.0%
<b>Total</b>				<b>19,662</b>	<b>5,048</b>	<b>27.8%</b>

\* (The table was prepared by the researcher, based on data from multiple sources).<sup>184</sup>

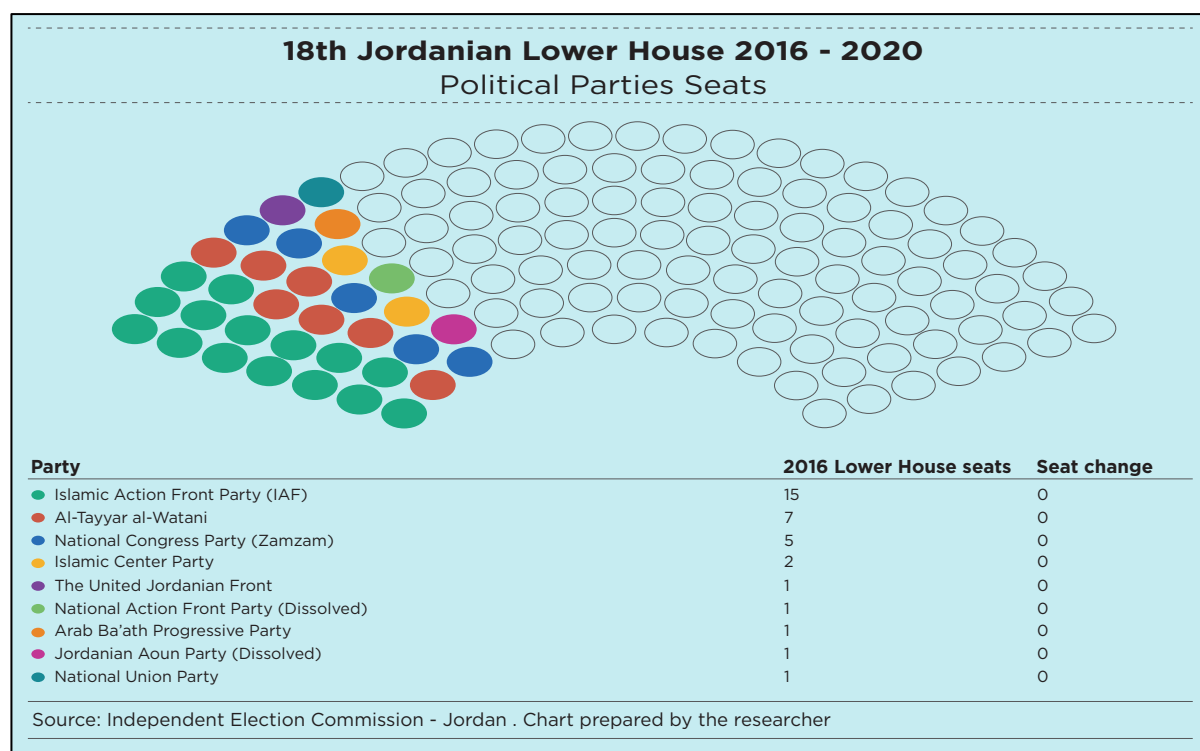
<sup>184</sup> "Political Parties," Ministry of Political & Parliamentary Affairs, accessed September 25, 2022, <https://www.moppa.gov.jo/Default/Ar> ; Abu Rumman, Jboor and Khatib, 2022. P.96-104; "Political Parties," Guide to Jordanian Politics Life, accessed September 27, 2022, <http://www.jordanpolitics.org/ar/parties/1/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AD%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%85%D8%A9>.

Chart (5) Jordanian Political Parties  
(The Most significant political Parties)



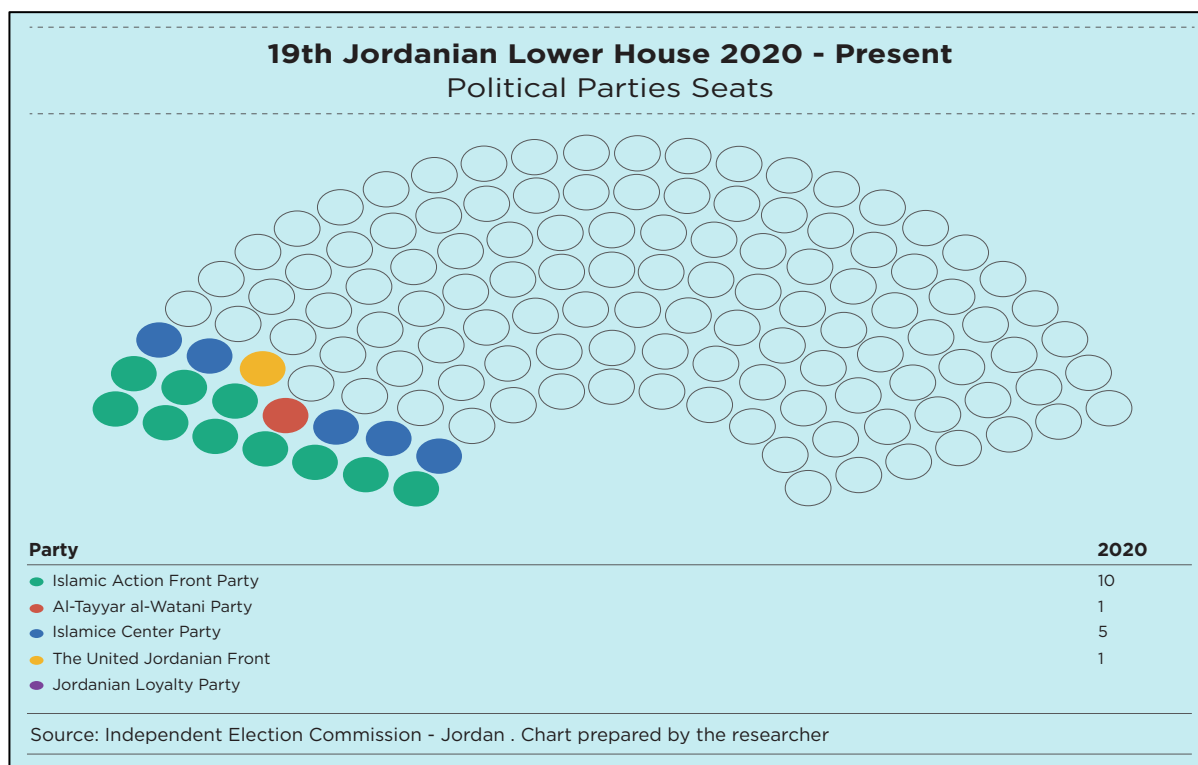
\* (The chart was prepared by the researcher, based on data from multiple sources).

Chart (6) 18th Jordanian Lower House 2016- 2020  
(Political Parties Seats)



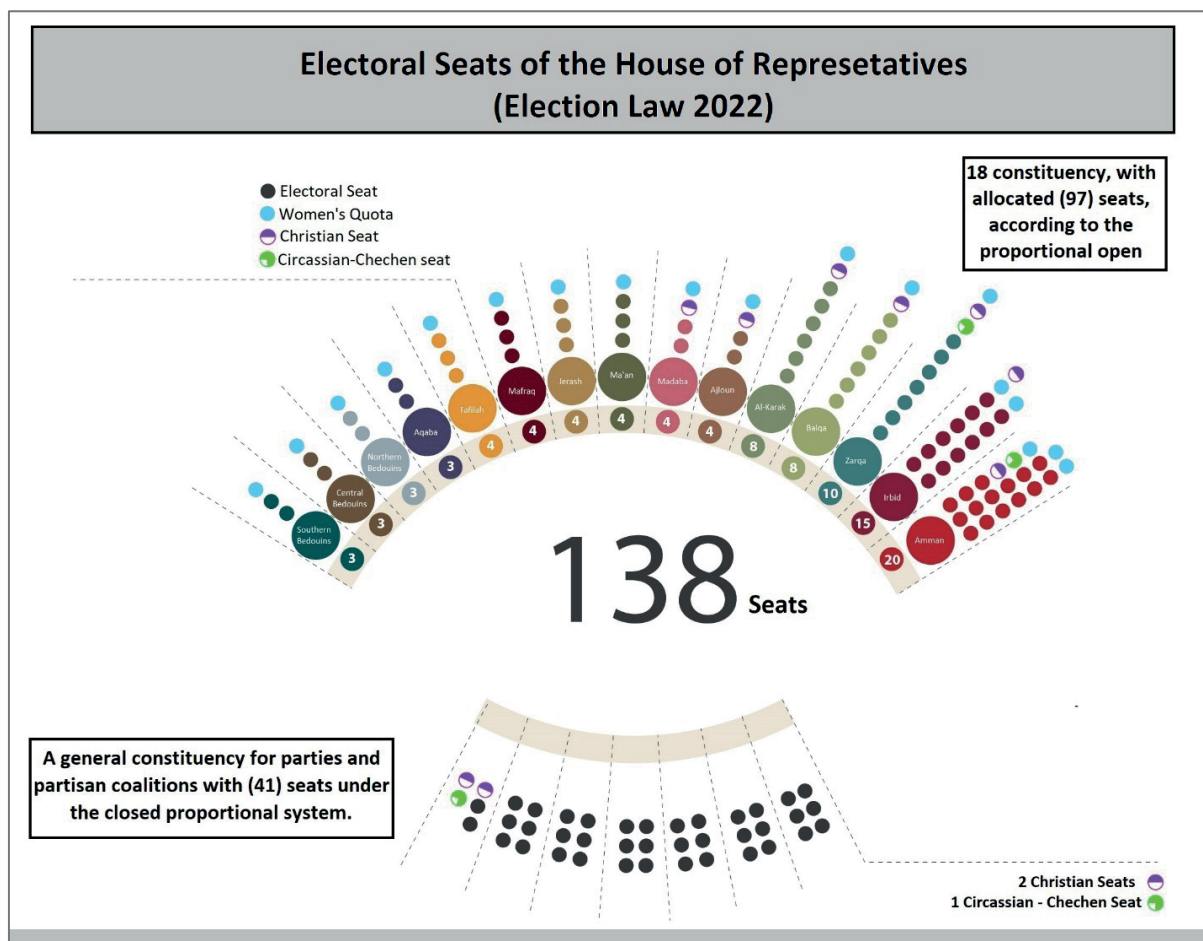
\* (The chart was prepared by the researcher based on data obtained from the Independent Elections Commission)

Chart (7) 19th Jordanian Lower House 2020- Present  
(Political Parties Seats)



\* (The chart was prepared by the researcher based on data obtained from the Independent Elections Commission)

Chart (8) Electoral Seats of the House of Representatives, 2022 Elections Law.



\* (Source: Petra News Agency, 2022). Original chart was published in Arabic, and translated by the researcher).<sup>185</sup>

<sup>185</sup> Waleed Al-Hababbeh, "The House of Representatives Approves the Electoral Law," Petra - Jordan News Agency, March 2022, <https://www.petra.gov.jo/Include/InnerPage.jsp?ID=208416&lang=ar&name=news>.

Table (6) Summary of the Qualitative Analysis

Name Topic	Position	Obstacles	Quota System	Glass Ceiling	Parties Role	CSOs Role	Recent Reforms	Future
Rana Hussein	Senior Political Journalist and human rights activist	Social. Cyber bullying is affecting women's participation. It became a snowball	Briefly it is good. It was a positive addition	No glass ceiling. There are many women in leadership positions	Masculinity prevents parties from engaging women in hierarchy and leadership roles.	Important in raising women's awareness and training.	The new laws put conditions, so we will see more women in the political arena.	The society is changing as most of the new deputies are from tribes.
Abla Abu Olbeh	(Secretary General of the Jordanian People's Democratic Party). A former Deputy. member of the Royal Committee	Legislative, including the Elections Law.	Quota helped women get into parliament, but it is a temporary measure that needs statutory support.	No glass ceiling. Higher leadership is one development indication.	The party aims to empower women. Each branch has women.	CSOs are particularly important, as they are the medium between the state and the people.	New laws have beneficial aspects, however the predicted increase in women deputies is untied to development programmes	Reforms must be tied to SDGs, or they will be ineffective. Her party will soon have roughly 50% women.
Dima Tahboub	Exec. committee member of the Islamic Action Front Party (IAF). A former Deputy. member of the Royal Committee	Social. Some customs and traditions helped disempowerment of women.	Because society did not elect women by choice, we used laws and quotas.	It exists, as an unspoken law driven by the patriarchal system, even in her party.	Many religious practices are influenced by customs. Women's presence in the party is far from ideal.	Foreign agendas are related to CSO funding. Change is only acceptable under Islamic Sharia.	The reforms encourage women's involvement from different cities. Women were well-represented on the Committee.	Without transparency and inclusiveness, change will be selective.



Name Topic	Position	Obstacles	Quota System	Glass Ceiling	Parties Role	CSOs Role	Recent Reforms	Future
Jamil Al-Nimri	Current Senator. Secretary General of the Jordanian Social Democratic Party. A former Deputy member of the Royal Committee	1-Masculinity and patriarchy. 2- personal issues of women, typical house roles.	This quota system encouraged women to get educated, and many became political professionals.	No glass ceiling. Women can be PM without backlash. But not soon.	50% females in party programs. No systemic efforts by other parties.	CSOs help empower women. We rely on CSO socially active members to join the party.	The outcomes when the new regulations are applied. These new laws will help more women run for elections and vote.	Optimistic about the future. The releasing of political and social action, will enhance women's engagement
Amnai Hammad	Senior Political Advisor – British Embassy in Amman	The inherited and structural social system imposes barriers on women's engagement in public life and politics.	Quotas were necessary to overcome resistance to women entering politics, but it has produced mediocre representatives.	No glass ceiling. No official policy in place that prevents women from holding these roles, but the lack of qualified female candidates may be to blame.	women's representation in parties is largely cosmetic, and they do not support women.	Important to support women	Without the king's pledges, the results would not have reflected the political will. The Royal Committee had a decent number and quality of women.	Feminists in Jordan can assist bring about change. The movement must mature and reproduce to be more popular.
Israa Mahadin	Attorney, (Founder & Director of Karak Castle Center). A specialist in elections processes and reviewing legislation.	Sociocultural, economic & legislative. But mainly economic.	It is necessary, specially to women in tribal cities.	No glass ceiling. All ministries are sovereign and important.	*No support for women. *Parties only help women if it benefits them electorally.	They have a significant role.	It is necessary to put the election law and the party legislation to the test before passing final judgement	Optimistic and have faith in political will, but not in popular support.
Samar Muhareb	Cofounder and CEO of ARDD) A political and social development expert,	1- Women's poor capabilities. 2- Customs and traditions 3- Patriarchal System	Without Quota, no female deputies. But it established women's dependency	No glass ceiling. But we lack competent women.	Not supportive of women	Important sector in empowering women. But it is too weak in Jordan.	Positive, but not tied to women's logistical and financial issues.	We need more capable women.



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