



ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

Women in STEM: Middle East & North Africa

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EWIC Staff: Datasheet

- ❖ Within the regions of the Middle East and North Africa, enrollment rates of women in higher education is increasing every year, however, the workforce participation rate of women in STEM careers is not reflective of the high proportion of women that have attended science-based universities.
- ❖ In Saudi Arabia in 2011, women comprised 1% of the research workforce, even though 56.6% of Saudi women were in higher education, and 65% of bachelors of Science degrees were awarded to women.¹
- ❖ According to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Jeddah, female researchers comprise 19% of the STEM workforce in the Palestinian territories.²
- ❖ The physics department of Ains-Shams University in Egypt is host to nearly 25% of women faculty.³
- ❖ In Egyptian colleges 20% of full-time professors are women regardless of the fact that women constitute 60% of entry level junior faculty positions in addition to women comprising over 50% of graduates from highly-esteemed Egyptian colleges.⁴
- ❖ Within North African nations, Tunisia has the highest percentage of women researchers (47%), followed by Egypt with 42%, women in Algeria comprising 35% of the STEM workforce, and Libya has a 25% research participation rate amongst women.⁵
- ❖ Western European nations have similar data; in France 56% of university students are women, whereas 26% of women comprise the research workforce.⁶
- ❖ Within the Gulf regions, two-third of university science students are women; in Kuwait women comprise 38% of researchers and 25% in Oman.⁷
- ❖ There is strong evidence that women are indeed qualified to enter STEM-related careers, however, there is not a strong legal system that encourages women to join the scientific workforce, especially regarding maternity leave, flexible shifts, and providing childcare.
- ❖ There have been efforts to encourage Arab women to pursue STEM careers, such as: Stars of Science by the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, TechGirls Exchange Program, and Women Who Code.⁸

¹ <https://he.moe.gov.sa/en/docs/Doc1/VDMPI030.pdf>

² <http://www.natureasia.com/en/nmiddleeast/article/10.1038/nmiddleeast.2013.33>

³ <http://www.natureasia.com/en/nmiddleeast/article/10.1038/nmiddleeast.2013.31>

⁴ <http://www.aaas.org/page/profiles-women-ste-egypt>

⁵ http://www.uis.unesco.org/_LAYOUTS/UNESCO/women-in-science/index.html#overview!lang=en®ion=40525

⁶ http://www.uis.unesco.org/_LAYOUTS/UNESCO/women-in-science/index.html#details!lang=en®ion=40500&view=map&country=FRA&panel=pipeline

⁷ <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v495/n7439/full/495035a.html>

⁸ <https://www.techwomen.org/>