

# WORKING P A P E R

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## Qatari Women in the Workforce

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## ABSTRACT

A recent study by the RAND Corporation of the post-secondary education opportunities available in Qatar in relation to the nation's economic development needs revealed interesting trends regarding Qatari women in the workforce. This paper explores some of those trends by addressing such questions as what occupations Qatari women are entering, what their attitudes are toward working outside the home, and to what extent are they being educated for workforce participation.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Qatar, a small nation located on the Arabian Gulf, is fortunate to have sufficient natural resources to sustain a high quality of life for its citizens for many years to come. Yet, rather than relying on these resources for its economic future in the modern knowledge society, Qatar has moved to diversify its industry, increase productive efficiency, strengthen the private sector, and engage more Qatari citizens in the labor force. This economic development effort is underpinned by an ambitious educational reform.

Qatari women (females with Qatari citizenship) will likely play a key role in the country's economic future<sup>1</sup>. They are better educated than Qatari men on average, they are entering the labor force in increasing numbers, and once employed they tend to persist in their professional commitments even through child-bearing years. Furthermore, while in some parts of the world the absence of legal rights and protections restrict women's economic participation, Qatar has made important political, educational and social changes that expand opportunities for women.

Nevertheless, throughout the Arab world large numbers of people remain illiterate, most of them women, and female economic participation is lower than in most other countries of the world. This is true for Qatar as well, although participation in the workforce by women is increasing. To meet the country's goals of economic development will require greater participation of women in the workforce.

In a recent study by RAND, Stasz, Eide and Martorell (2007) explored workforce participation trends, but did not report out detailed findings on Qatari women in the workforce. This paper uses the data collected in that study and others to explore more deeply the answers to the following questions:

1. What legal rights and protections are provided Qatari working women?
2. To what extent are Qatari women being educated for workforce participation?
3. To what extent are they participating in the workforce?
4. What occupations are they entering?
5. What are Qatari women's attitudes toward working outside the home?
6. What are the attitudes in Qatar society toward Qatari women working outside the home?

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<sup>1</sup> In this document we focus solely on that portion of the population with citizenship. We denote these citizens as Qatari men and women. The large number of foreign workers are not the focus of this study.

## 2. DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH METHODS

This paper uses existing sources to explore what is known about trends in Qatari women's current and likely future participation in the work force. We use two sources of information. First, we relied heavily on primary data collected by Stasz, Edie and Martorell (2007). Second, we looked at other secondary sources on education, employment, training, and skill needs gathered in numerous prior and ongoing RAND studies, data from the 2004 census, and two labor force studies conducted by the Qatar Planning Council (2001, 2005).

Stasz, Eide and Martorell (2007) recently completed a study of the post-secondary education opportunities available in Qatar in relation to the nation's economic development needs.<sup>2</sup> Special attention was directed to the role that women in Qatar might have in the workforce. Primary data were gathered through formal and informal interviews with employers in the broader public and private sectors, and two surveys: a sample of Qatari nationals out of secondary school since 1998 and another sample of secondary students graduating in 2006. The 1998 cohort survey provided a look at the transition to post-secondary education and employment in the eight years since students graduated from secondary school. The survey of 260 secondary school seniors in 2006, in a randomly selected sample of schools, who were 18 years old or older asked students about their future education and employment aspirations and about the factors that influence their goals and choices. Sample means and proportions were compared across

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<sup>2</sup> For more details regarding the methods used to obtain and analyze the data for the RAND post-secondary study, please see Stasz, Eide, and Martorell, 2007.

different groups identified in the data. For instance, extensive comparisons were made of the responses of men versus women, and because of the particular relevance to policymakers, the responses of individuals who pursued postsecondary schooling and those who did not.

To develop a more detailed understanding of which occupations and skills were perceived as most valuable to economic development, both now and in the future, the study team also interviewed key employers in the public and private sectors. The interviewees were asked about their organization's skill needs, about the quality of graduates from current educational institutions, about their training and recruitment programs, and about their perceptions of women working in their organizations.

### 3. QATARI WOMEN'S WORKING RIGHTS AND PROTECTIONS

In some parts of the world, the absence of legal rights and protections offered women deters their preparation for and participation in the workforce. This is not the case in Qatar. Although a young nation, Qatar has already established a substantial legal foundation that supports Qatari women's working rights and advances their opportunities for employment outside the home.

In 1997, the government adopted a Qatarization policy aimed at increasing the percentage of Qatari citizens in the workforce. The government's goal is that at least 20 percent of employees in all sectors be Qatari. To neutralize the loss of public-sector benefits to Qataris employed in the private sector, all Qataris are eligible for social benefits regardless of where they are employed. The policy does not differentiate employees in terms of gender so both public and private employers have been motivated by the Qatarization policy to hire women as well as men in order to meet Qatarization goals. This has opened and expanded employment opportunities for Qatari women.

Qatari women were accorded the right to vote in 1998. In 2001, the Civil Service Act (Law No. 1) and the regulations of the Council of Ministers (Order No. 13) established the foundation for gender equality in the workforce. This legislation equalized the rights and duties of men and women in the workplace. Law No. 24 of 2002 (the Pensions Law) provides women retirement benefits and makes special provisions that allow working women to combine their earnings and pension entitlement with those of a deceased spouse. A new Labor Law enacted in 2004 (Law No. 14) replaced an older

1962 law that had been in force over 40 years. The new law provides equality in working rights to men and women, including pay, training opportunities, and job advancement.

Overall, the legal foundation for Qatari women's participation in the workforce is advanced compared to many nations in the region. However, while the legal door is open other barriers remain. The long-range question is to what extent Qatari women will be able to seize the career opportunities legally available to them.

#### 4. EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION OF QATARI WOMEN FOR THE WORKFORCE

Qatar has recognized the importance of developing its human capital to ensure the nation's economic and social advancement. Over the past several years a number of initiatives have been introduced to improve the educational level of Qatari nationals, including a major K-12 education reform, the establishment of a new Higher Education Institute to facilitate post-secondary scholarship programs, the attraction of world-class higher education institutions to offer programs in Qatar's new Education City, and the implementation of a comprehensive reform of Qatar University. For the most part, these expanded educational opportunities are equally available to both men and women. As a result, there has been a rise in the educational attainment of Qatari citizens, especially women.

Qatari women are beginning to attain higher levels of education than men. More Qatari girls than boys are completing secondary school. The school dropout rate for boys is three times higher than for girls and boys fail exams at twice the rate of girls (Planning Council, 2005).

More women than men are also pursuing post-secondary education. Among ages 19 to 26, 43 percent of women compared to less than 27 percent of men are enrolled in school (Planning Council, 2005). In the school year 2005-2006, less than 17 percent of Qatar University's enrollment was male. "By the age of 25, for every 100 Qatari women with university qualifications there are only 46 Qatari men equally qualified..." (Planning Council, 2005, 76) and "throughout all cohorts of workers, Qatari male

workers have an average 10.7 years education compared with 14.1 years for females – a difference of 3.4 years (Planning Council, 2005, 13).

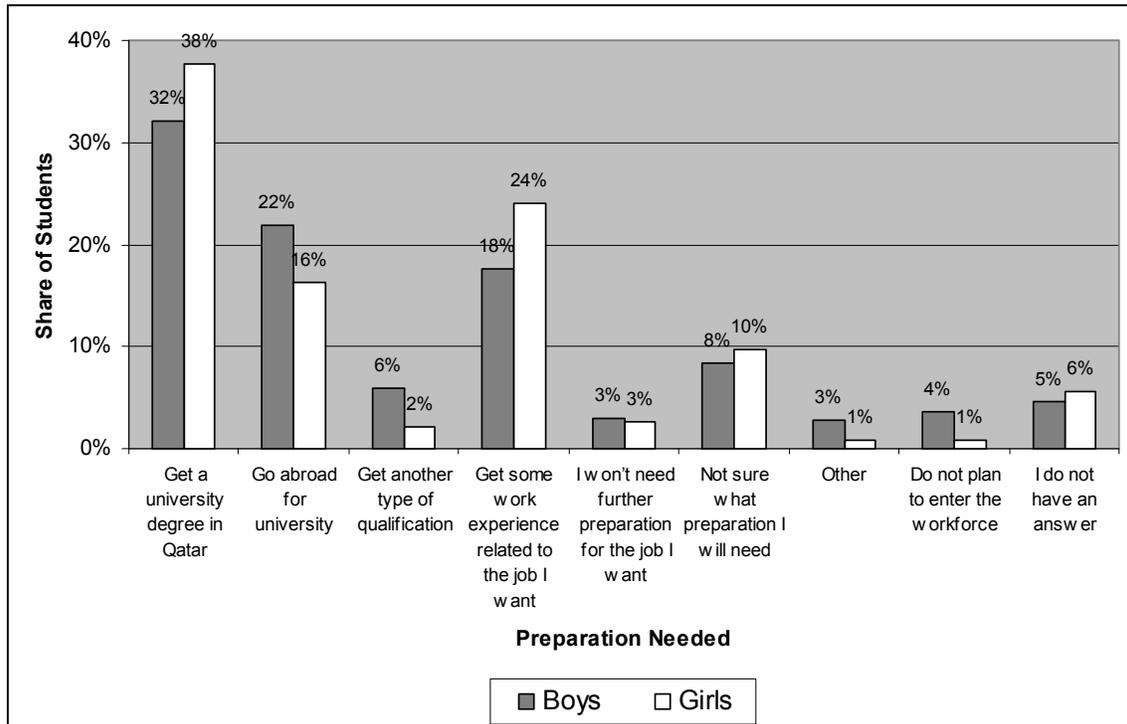
The higher level of Qatari women's educational attainment was also observed in the recent RAND study (Stasz, Eide, and Martorell, 2007). In the 1998 cohort, 79 percent of the women had some post-secondary education compared to 51 percent of the men and 71 percent of the women had a university level degree compared to only 30 percent of the men. Among the younger cohort graduating in 2006, 67 percent of the girls compared to 41 percent of the boys planned to pursue post-secondary education.

Acquiring a higher education may be more important for women's job prospects in Qatar than it is for men's. Social expectations concerning appropriate work for women citizens and the relatively high average Qatar family income make it unlikely that these women will be attracted to low paying labor-intensive jobs so they will likely need a high level of skill to participate in the work force (Bahry and Marr, 2005). Stasz, Eide and Martorell (2007) found that 50 percent of the women in the 1998 cohort were in jobs requiring a university degree compared to 28 percent of the men, while only 14 percent of women compared to 43 percent of men were in jobs that required only a secondary school diploma. In the 2006 cohort only about 16 percent of the girls compared to nearly half of all the boys planned to enter the work force immediately after secondary school.

Students in the 2006 graduating class were anticipating the need for post-secondary education (see Figure 4.1). More than half of these boys and girls felt they needed a university degree achieved in Qatar or abroad to get a job of their choice. While none of the female participants of the 1998 cohort studied abroad compared to 38 percent of the men, the study showed that this may be changing. In the 2006 cohort, 16 percent

of the girls believed that studying abroad would help them achieve their career goals (see Figure 4.1) and over 40 percent believed that in order to get the best education, one should study abroad (see Stasz, Eide, Martorell, 2007, Table 3.10).

**Figure 4.1**  
**Percentage of Students Anticipating the Need for Post-Secondary Education in Preparation for Their Future Career – 2006 Cohort**



While Qatar has made notable progress toward expanding educational opportunities for its citizens, a lack of graduate education in Qatar continues to pose a serious problem for many career-oriented women. Although the Qatari government provides generous scholarship support for academically qualified individuals to study abroad, family responsibilities, cultural tradition, and social attitudes in Qatar continue to limit many women from taking advantage of this opportunity. This means that their opportunities may be limited to graduate programs available in Qatar.

Stasz, Eide and Martorell (2007) also found that there were numerous relevant post-secondary offerings in high demand fields at the certificate/diploma and undergraduate degree levels, but there were very few offerings in any field at the graduate level. As a result, once women achieved the baccalaureate degree, their post-secondary education opportunities dwindled significantly. While the lack of graduate education opportunities in Qatar posed a problem for the advanced education of both men and women, it was a significant career barrier for women seeking job advancement or the skills needed for entry into new fields. This lack of graduate opportunities for women could become a serious deterrent to achievement of Qatar's long-term economic development goals.

## 5. PARTICIPATION OF QATARI WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

The economic participation of women in the Arab states is the lowest in the world: 33.3 percent of women fifteen years and older compared to the world average of 55.6 percent. Their participation is only 42 percent of that of men compared to a global average of 69 percent (UNDP, 2005, 8). Some employers prefer to employ men and there is widespread employment and wage discrimination between the sexes (UNDP, 2005, 8). In the Arab world, “The prevailing masculine culture and values see women as dependents of men. As a result, men take priority both in terms of access to work and the enjoyment of its returns”,(UNDP, 2005, 91).

In Qatar, however, women are the fastest growing group in the labor force with potential to contribute significantly now and in the future to the growth of Qatar’s economy. Their labor force participation rate grew from 14 percent in 1986 (Planning Council, 2005) to over 40 percent in 2003 (UNDP, 2005). Also their share in the total labor force more than doubled in the past 20 years despite the rapid growth of the labor force over this period due to the large influx of expatriate workers. Now, nearly as many Qatari women enter the labor force every year as Qatari men (Planning Council, 2005).

Qatari women are also acquiring and working in their own businesses. Data obtained from the Qatar Chamber of Commerce show that 1,360 business licenses were issued to women from 2003 to 2005, and that women comprised almost 17 percent of active entrepreneurs by 2005 (Al-Ahmadi. 2005).

The higher levels of women’s education combined with changing attitudes toward working women no doubt contribute to this rise in their workforce participation. In many

ways it is easier today than it was for earlier generations of Qatari women to work outside the home. Most families can afford domestic help that frees them from some of their traditional family duties. Their legal right to work has been assured. They can more easily prepare for careers because their educational opportunities have expanded. Many are marrying at a later age, enjoy excellent medical services and have a long life expectancy (SCFA, 2004). Overall, the conditions in Qatar seem to support women's greater participation in the workforce.

Despite the progress of recent years, the overall labor force participation rate of Qatari women is still low. The 2004 census data show that more than half of Qatari women are neither students nor in the labor force. Stasz, Eide and Martorell (2007) found, however, that this might be slowly changing in the younger population. Seventy percent of the women in the 1998 cohort surveyed were either in school or working. However, looking at the employment figures only, 87 percent of the male secondary and 88 percent of male university graduates surveyed were employed compared to 30 percent of female secondary graduates and 58 percent of female university graduates.

The survey asked both the 1998 and 2006 cohorts about the barriers they saw to getting a job. The question is highly relevant, because there is currently a mismatch between women's career choices and the demand for workforce in different fields. Those most prone to unemployment, in addition to the least educated men, are the most educated Qatari women (Planning Council, 2005).

Some of the women of the 1998 cohort were not currently working or looking for work and reported family responsibilities as the main reason for their unemployment.

Other women in this cohort reported that they considered the high level of competition and the lack of job openings to be their greatest barriers.

A majority of the girls in the 2006 cohort believed that their willingness to work hard will help them get a job or career of their choice. However, almost 40 percent of these girls expected the lack of adequate English language skills to prevent them from achieving the kind of job or career they want.



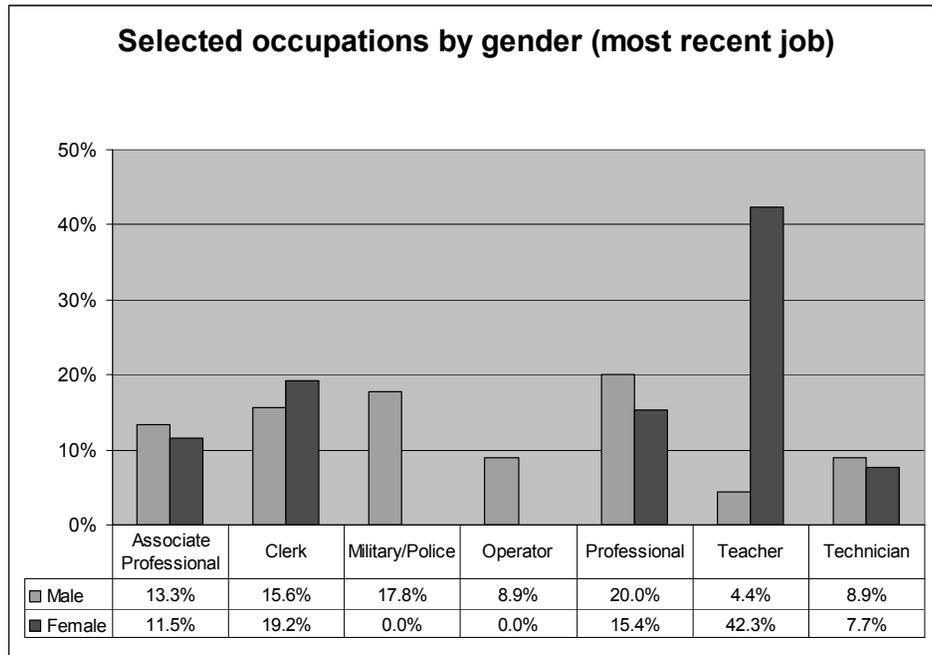
## 6. OCCUPATIONS OF QATARI WOMEN

Qatari women are currently concentrated in a small number of occupations, mainly education, health care professions and clerical work (see Figure 6.1). According to Planning Council data (2005), 53 percent of Qatari women held jobs in education in 2004 (see also Stasz, Eide, Martorell, 2007). Qatari women were totally absent from the construction, trade, and manufacturing sectors, and very few worked in other fields. For example, there were only six Qatari women in the tourism industry in 2004 (Planning Council, 2005). Bahry and Marr (2005) indicate that it is still considered inappropriate by some, especially those representing the more conservative sections of the population, for women to work as flight attendants, hotel and hospitality workers and actresses in public theatre. Also, unlike in other GCC countries, Qatari women still cannot work as diplomats in the Foreign Service.

Stasz, Eide and Martorell (2007) survey findings reflect that close to 45 percent of the surveyed women in the 1998 cohort were teachers, while nearly 20 percent worked as clerks. Some 25 percent of the women were professionals or associate professionals, such as legislators, legal researchers and inspectors, and less than 8 percent worked as technicians. The Qatari men were more evenly distributed across sectors with the exception that only 4.4 percent of the men worked as teachers (see Figure 6.1). Qatari women working in the Civil Service are mainly concentrated in positions of general manager and lower, and are poorly represented at higher levels (SCFA, 2004).

Some 90 percent of all Qatari teachers in the public school system between 1996 and 2001 were women. While women found the education profession attractive, there were not enough teaching jobs for qualified candidates who seek positions.

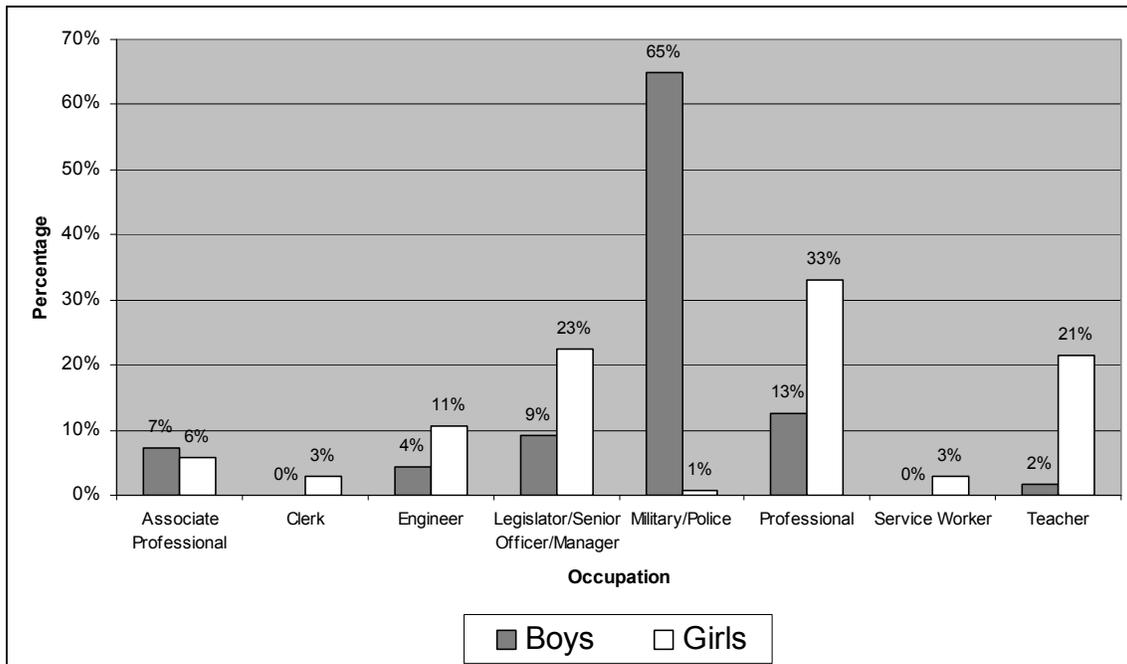
**Figure 6.1**  
**Most Recent Jobs Held by the 1998 Cohort**



Qatari women have slowly started to enter new professions, becoming doctors, lawyers, police officers, and customs agents (Bahry and Marr, 2005). In response to labor market needs, Qatar University recently opened such programs as architecture and chemical engineering to women. When the 2006 seniors were asked about the occupations they were most likely to choose, more girls than boys expressed interest in engineering and management positions. Also significantly more girls than boys were interested in becoming professionals such as accountants, legislators and inspectors. Compared to the current representation of Qatari women in the work force, their

occupational interests were also more broadly distributed across sectors. While education was the preferred field for Qatari women in the past, only about 21 percent of girls in the 2006 cohort aspired to be teachers (see Figure 6.2).

**Figure 6.2**  
**Future Occupations of Choice – 2006 Cohort**



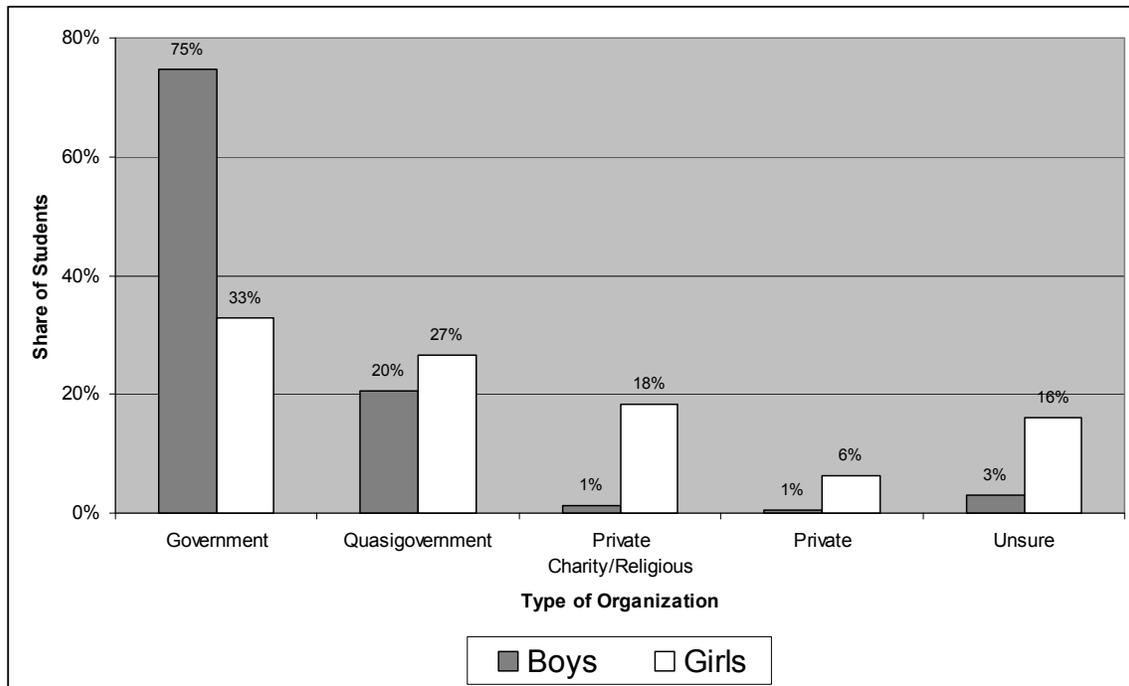
Women are increasingly also engaged in entrepreneurial enterprises. By 2005, the number of female entrepreneurs active in their businesses accounted for about 16.8 percent of the total. Women also own almost all the licenses to operate certain businesses, such as beauty salons (Al-Ahmadi, 2005).

Private sector employment of Qataris remains low, however. A survey of unemployed Qataris confirms a bias against private sector work. Women were mostly concerned about working in a mixed-gender environment (76 percent) and low social

status (53 percent), but less concerned about low wages (18 percent). In comparison, Qatari men reported low wages (50 percent) as the primary reason for not accepting a private or mixed sector job (Planning Council 2002).

Stasz, Eide and Martorell (2007) found, the young Qatari women in the 2006 cohort were slightly more interested than young Qatari men in working for the private sector. Six percent of girls and only one percent of boys in the 2006 graduating class expressed interest in working for the private sector (see Figure 6.3).<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 6.3**  
**Plans for Employment by Sector – 2006 Cohort**



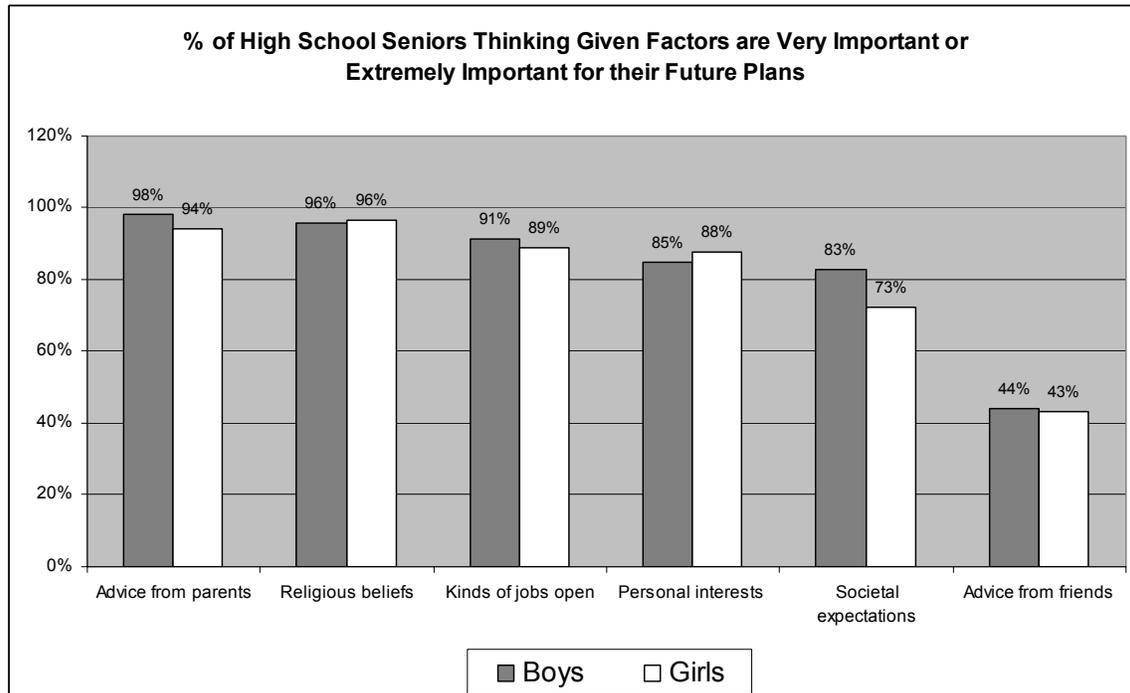
<sup>3</sup> Thirty-three percent of the female graduates of the 2006 class wanted to work for the government compared to 75 percent of males, while 27 percent of the girls and 20 percent of the boys were interested in working for quasi-governmental establishments.

## 7. ATTITUDES OF QATARI WOMEN TOWARD CAREERS

As part of the surveys, Stasz, Eide and Martorell (2007) collected information about women's attitudes toward work, factors affecting their career choices and the job characteristics they most value. This is the first time young Qatari women were systematically asked these questions.

Religious beliefs and parental advice were the top two factors that Qatari women in both cohorts of secondary school graduates said they took into consideration when making career choices. However, 88 percent of the girls who graduated in 2006 also thought it was important that their future careers reflect their own personal interests (see Figure 7.1).

**Figure 7.1**  
**Factors Influencing Career Choices - 2006 Cohort**

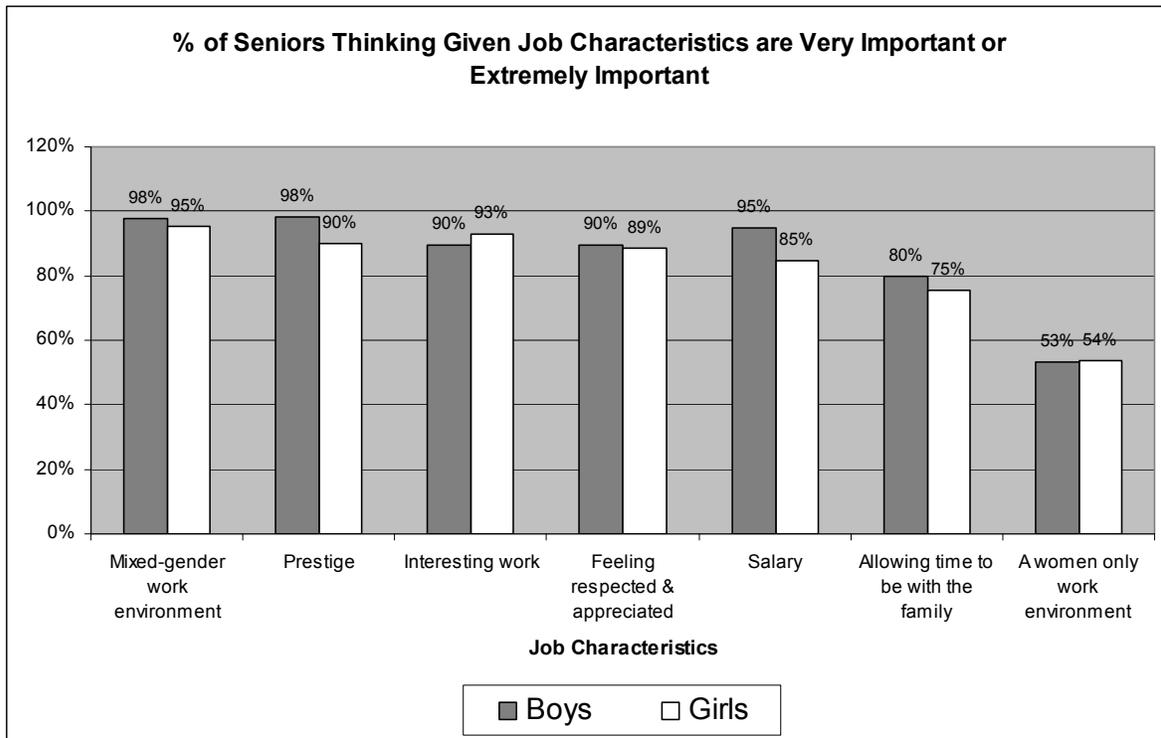


An analysis of the job characteristics perceived as important by the 1998 and 2006 cohort of high school graduates revealed that women who graduated in 1998 considered working in a single-gender work environment as relatively important. In contrast, the young women in the 2006 graduating class did not consider a single-gender environment an important job characteristic. In fact, 95 percent felt that working in a mixed-gender work environment was a very or extremely important characteristic of their future job. Other characteristics considered important by this group included interesting work, prestige and the feeling of being respected and appreciated. Interestingly, more young Qatari men than women said they valued jobs allowing workers to spend more time with the family (see Figure 7.2).

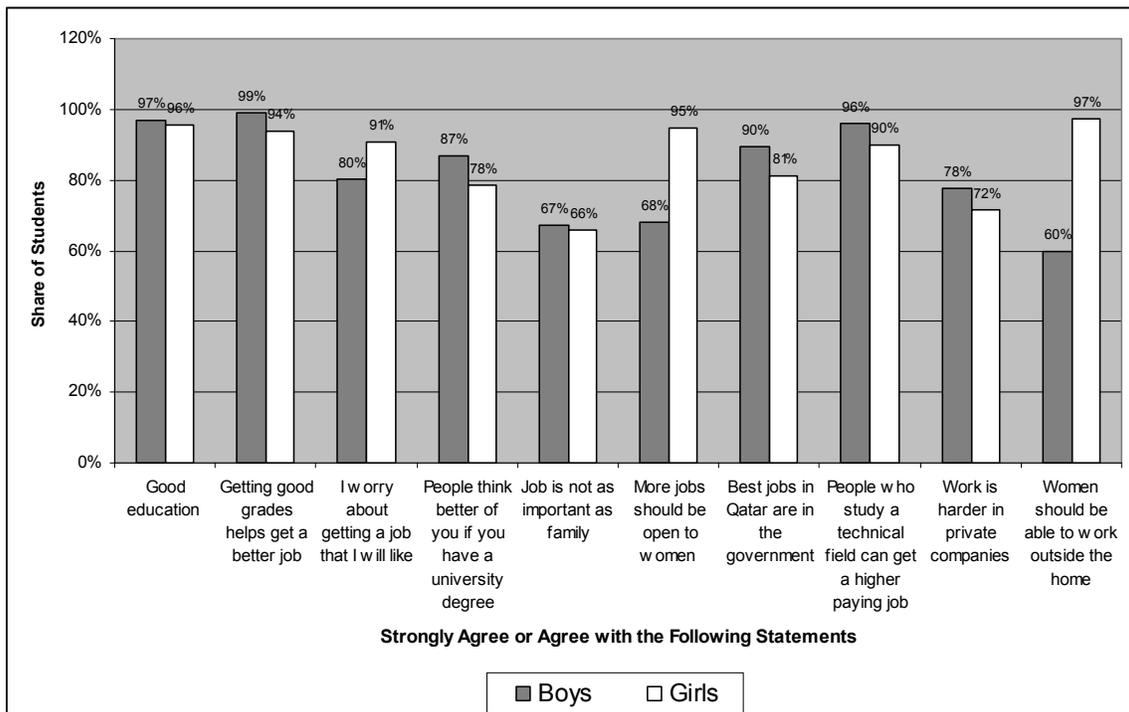
The feeling of being respected and appreciated was also important for the women in the 1998 cohort, while their other top priorities were job security, friendly colleagues and making a contribution to the society. It should also be noted that the sample of 2006 graduating class used to analyze job characteristics perceived as important included all students, while the 1998 sample excluded women who were not employed and who were not looking for work.

The 2006 female graduates strongly felt that there should be more positions open to women, and 97 percent of girls, compared to 60 percent of boys, felt that women should be able to work outside the home (see Figure 7.3).

**Figure 7.2**  
**Important Job Characteristics - 2006 Cohort**



**Figure 7.3**  
**Students' Views of School and Work - 2006 Cohort**



It is also noteworthy that, unlike other countries, Qatari women's labor participation rate does not decline during their reproductive years. This can be explained in part by the positive effect of government policies that support women during periods of pregnancy and childbirth. However, the fact that Qatari women tend to maintain their jobs during the time they are raising young families is an important indicator of the strength of their motivation to work (Planning Council, 2005).

Several reasons have been proposed concerning the motivation of Qatari women to work outside the home. According to Bahry and Marr (2005), Qataris today expect unmarried women who have finished high school or university to work. Some women work to help their families cope with the rising cost of living and some prefer working to the boredom of staying at home. Some also "want to make use of the knowledge they have gained to 'prove themselves' and to be useful members of society" (Bahry and Marr, 2005, 109). A Qatar University administrator echoed this by telling the RAND team that doing well in school is one of the few ways women can experience self-empowerment, and the Qatari women "want to prove themselves".

## 8. ATTITUDES TOWARD WORKING WOMEN IN QATAR SOCIETY

While some conservative sections of the population still consider the issue sensitive, there are signs that positive social attitudes toward Qatari women working outside the home are developing. Important female role models have emerged and are a force for liberalizing attitudes toward the role of women in society. The best known and most celebrated is Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, wife of the reigning Emir and a strong proponent of gender equality in Qatar. She champions educational and social advancement of women and demonstrates through her own behavior the important influence women can have on social and economic policy.

The number of Qatari women holding important leadership positions is growing. Women are currently serving or have served as the nation's Minister of Education, the current President of Qatar, and the head of the Children's Department at Hamad Hospital. The work of these and other women leaders is well known in Qatari society and their success serves as an example that working outside the home can be an option for women.

Less well-known working women are also influencing social attitudes. The large number of Qatari females now employed are demonstrating that they can successfully hold jobs and at the same time meet family obligations. Their associations with family members, relatives, friends and acquaintances impact others' impressions of what is possible and appropriate for women, and their influence on liberalizing attitudes toward working women has expanded as their numbers have increased.

Local attitudes are also changing because of the presence of large numbers of female foreign workers from different cultures and due to the influence of the Internet, television and other international communications media. These experiences expose Qataris to cultures where it is commonplace for women to work side-by-side with men and to compete equally for career advancement (Bahry and Marr, 2005).

Changing family relationships are also reflecting new views of women's roles:

“Ten years ago, no respectable Qatari man would walk side by side with his wife; rather, he walked two or three steps ahead of her. These days men and women not only walk side by side; it is not unusual to see men and their veiled wives strolling together in Doha's fashionable City Center mall holding hands. Only a few years ago, this was considered 'shameful'” (Bahry and Marr, 2005, 114).

Interviews conducted for Stasz, Eide and Martorell (2007) with Qatari employers for the post-secondary study revealed important information about employers' views of women in the workforce. Some employers surveyed expressed skepticism concerning women's ability to balance family and work responsibilities. While most employers offered equal opportunities for both sexes, many indicated that certain positions were “not suitable for women, that women tended to ask for more time off for family reasons, that some women refused to work in mixed-gender environments and in jobs that required them to spend long hours at work and away from their families.” Some employers also indicated that Qataris were naturally shy, which made employment of Qatari women in customer service related positions difficult.

The same interviews showed positive signs that employers were beginning to view Qatari women as valuable assets in the workforce. Employers interviewed seemed to think that Qatari women worked harder than men and also reported that women were

more responsible and had a keener disposition to work. Some employers seemed to have recognized the change in women's own expectations and attitudes, and were willing to encourage their full participation by means available to them.



## 9. ENHANCING QATARI WOMEN'S FUTURE PROSPECTS IN THE WORKPLACE

Many of the factors that previously limited Qatari women's participation in the workforce are being overcome. For example, younger women seem less concerned about working in mixed-gender environments and less likely to accept that they must make a choice between family and career. They are highly motivated to have successful careers and on average appear willing to achieve the education necessary to attain their professional goals. This review shows that they will enter the workforce with more open minds than their predecessors and that they are trying to balance the traditional expectations of their society with their own ambitions to succeed and advance professionally.

Given their preparation and motivation to work, women offer a unique opportunity to help advance Qatar's economic development goals. Qatar wants to increase the percentage of Qatari nationals in the labor force, promote the privatization of industry, and improve the efficiency of the government sector. Encouraging more women to pursue careers could help achieve all of these goals. The following suggestions are offered as ways Qatari women's successful participation in the workforce might be increased.

i. Encourage Private Sector Employment of Women. Progress is being made toward replacing non-Qatari with Qatari workers in the public sector; however despite government efforts to encourage citizens toward private sector jobs, the number of Qataris working in private businesses has declined. According to the Planning Council study:

The trends in Qatari employment are moving in the wrong direction, and currently fewer than 2 percent of Qatari employees are in the private sector. (These are) precisely the categories that have shown a tendency to grow in other countries over time with the rise of the knowledge economy and greater opportunities for entrepreneurship.” (Planning Council, 2005, 2).

Increasing the percentage of Qataris in the private sector is problematic, however. From the employees’ perspective, public sector jobs provide better salaries and benefits than private sector jobs. From the employers’ perspective, many Qataris lack the skills needed to perform effectively in the private sector.

With encouragement, women might come to view the private sector as a promising career opportunity. The RAND study found that more female than male students reported interest in working in the private sector. While the percentage was small (6 percent), it nevertheless suggests that with encouragement more women might be willing to take positions in that sector. The private sector could be marketed to these women as an opportunity for interesting, challenging and purposeful work that might lead to long-range professional achievement and career success.

Education and training organizations could take a leading role in opening the private sector to qualified female graduates. These institutions can reach out, develop and continuously cultivate relationships with private sector employers and influence them to recruit and hire female graduates. They can influence female students to consider employment opportunities and advantages in the private sector. They can operate job placement centers that inform students of job opportunities and match their qualifications to prospective employer needs. Colleges and departments could also aggressively pursue relationships with the private sector by promoting internships for their female students

and by involving work supervisors in a partnership with faculty advisors to monitor and mentor work performance.

ii. Improve Career Education and Counseling. Both male and female participants in the RAND study believed that a good education would make them more employable. However, a large number of Qatari women were preparing for careers in low-demand fields. It will be of utmost importance to link women's educational and training opportunities more closely with the labor market needs.

All students should be oriented from an early age to the world of work and continuously assisted throughout their schooling to relate their educational activities to their career aspirations. Students could be carefully guided to connect their interests and aptitudes to possible career opportunities and choices. This guidance seems particularly important for female students, given the current mismatch between women's career choices and the labor market needs.

Most students will also need special assistance during secondary school to select and achieve admission to quality post-secondary institutions. A Qatari student's chances for admission to a high quality school will increase if she chooses a school that offers programs well aligned with her goals and if her application demonstrates strong potential for academic success at that institution. The best colleges and universities are usually highly competitive and students' chances of admission often rest on the "fit" of their intellectual potential and interests with the institution's student recruitment goals. A skilled counselor can provide the support most students will need to select appropriate schools and prepare competitive applications.

Many countries have infused well-developed career guidance and counseling programs into all levels of their educational systems. A considerable amount of research and expertise exists concerning the knowledge and professional practices that produce the best results. Inasmuch as Qatari women perceive the lack of job openings to be an important barrier to their employment, providing expert assistance to improve and better coordinate the career counseling and job placement services provided Qatari women could produce beneficial results.

iii. Increase Women's Participation in High-Demand Occupations. Qatar hopes to further develop the education, health and tourism industries (Planning Council, 2005). Currently, Qatari women are a dominant percentage of the education labor force and their contributions to the development of this field have been and will continue to be significant. Many well-educated women, however, fail to find employment and job opportunities in education and could improve their employment prospects by turning to other fields.

In other countries women play a major role in the health industry. Qatar's rapidly developing health care system will require increased numbers of medical personnel that could open new job opportunities for Qatar women. Overcoming barriers that currently inhibit their interest in this field, such as working in shifts, and aggressively marketing new career possibilities to them could attract more Qatari women to this field.

Women also hold many positions in the tourism industry in other countries. In Qatar, women have been slow to enter this field. Additional exposure and orientation to the range of women's roles in this field, coupled with career counseling regarding

appropriate job opportunities for women, might increase female interest in tourism as a career.

Just as importantly, both employers and education and training institutions should be proactive in developing opportunities for women in non-traditional fields. Few, if any, occupations should be unavailable to women who genuinely wish to pursue career opportunities in fields currently dominated by males.

iv. Encourage Women to Attend High Quality Higher Education Institutions.

Few Qatari women in the past have had the opportunity to study abroad and thus have missed the experience of attending world-class higher education institutions. Graduates of the world's best colleges and universities usually become leaders in business and government. Given the opportunity, many of Qatar's brightest women have the ability to achieve such high goals.

Some of the girls graduating from secondary school in 2006 viewed studying abroad as an important qualification for future career success. Female students who have the ability and family support to succeed in world-class institutions abroad should be encouraged and assisted to do so.

v. Increase graduate study opportunities for women. Many Qatari women's job prospects, career advancement and future economic contributions would be greatly enhanced if they were able to pursue further education through graduate study or advanced certification programs. For family or cultural reasons, many women are restricted in terms of their interest or opportunity for study abroad and, with the exception of a few graduate programs offered by foreign institutions located in Qatar, women have almost no opportunity for study in most graduate fields. Many young Qatari

women are qualified for Masters and Ph.D. studies at high quality foreign universities, but are unable to study outside of Qatar. As a result, their educational and career ambitions are thwarted. This situation begs improvement, for many Qatari women who hold baccalaureate degrees are finding it extremely difficult to obtain a job of their choice.

Hopefully the number of graduate programs offered by Qatar-based institutions will continue to expand. Qatari women would benefit greatly from quality graduate degrees and certification programs offered in country that prepare them for career opportunities highly relevant to Qatar's economic development needs. Women who are able to study abroad would also benefit from attending higher education institutions outside of Qatar. Fortunately, the scholarship program offered qualified students through the Higher Education Institute is generous and is being systematically streamlined to reach and better serve Qataris.

vi. Provide Opportunities for Development of English Language Skills. The students RAND surveyed recognized that their lack of English language skills was a barrier to the achievement of their career goals. It will take time for the improvements in the school curriculum to achieve the language proficiency goals envisioned in the education reform. In the meantime, attention might be given to strengthen and augment the language development programs for students entering secondary school and for secondary and higher education graduates who need further English language training.

vii. Create Flexible Working Arrangements. The Internet and other technologies have made workplace location more flexible. Today, employees can often perform job tasks as effectively off site as on. Considerable variation of the traditional 8 to 5 job

pattern has been tried and proven effective in other countries. Women in Qatar could benefit from employment options that offer opportunities for working at home, job-sharing, and part-time work and introducing more flexibility into the workplace might attract more Qatari women into the labor force.



## SUMMARY

Qatar has high economic development aspirations and the commitment and resources to achieve them. Qatari women are potentially one of the nation's greatest economic development resources. They are highly educated, interested in having satisfying careers, eager to be of service to their nation, and willing to work hard to succeed. The nation has already eliminated many of the legal and social barriers that block women's career success and has a strong commitment to advancing the role of women in the workforce. Sustaining and expanding efforts to promote women's success will be important for the nation to benefit more fully from their potential contributions. This article describes the advances Qatari women are making in their country's workforce based on findings of recent RAND research and offers suggestions that may improve their future career opportunities and economic development contributions.



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