



1. Please provide information on employment opportunities for Coptic or other Christian women in Egypt.

Limited specific information was found regarding the employment opportunities of Coptic Christian women in Egypt. Nevertheless, sources indicate that women and Christians separately experience employment discrimination and inequality, highlighting the likelihood that Coptic Christian women would face similar obstacles.

Women

Employment opportunities are available for educated women; however, there is strong social pressure against women pursuing a career. Traditional and cultural attitudes and practices limit women's career opportunities.¹ Women are significantly underrepresented in the workforce, and disproportionately engaged in informal, part-time, temporary, or home-based work, reflecting traditional gender divisions of labour in which women's work is compatible with their domestic responsibilities.²

The most recent government data on women in the workforce, provided in 2007, indicates that women make up 22 per cent of the total workforce, including 19 per cent of private sector employment and 29 per cent of public sector employment.³ Nevertheless, female employment has improved in recent years, with 25.7 per cent of women participating in the workforce in 2007, compared to 24.9 per cent in 2004. The female unemployment rate also decreased from 24.3 per cent in 2004 to 18.6 per cent in 2007.⁴ Forty per cent of women in the workforce are employed in the public sector.⁵ However, In July 2010, the State Council ceased employing women in entry-level judicial positions indefinitely.⁶

¹ US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010 – Egypt*, 8 April, Section 6 – Attachment 1

² Tadros, M. 2010, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010: Egypt*, Freedom House, 3 March – Attachment 2; Alquéza, J., Panzica, F. and Popova, N. 2009, *Women and Work in Egypt: Case Study of Tourism and ICT Sectors*, European Training Foundation website, July, p.14
[http://www.etf.europa.eu/pubmgmt/nsf/\(getAttachment\)/D3E0FA7D21DC7D7EC1257610005A2381/\\$File/NOTE7UUM9B.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/pubmgmt/nsf/(getAttachment)/D3E0FA7D21DC7D7EC1257610005A2381/$File/NOTE7UUM9B.pdf) – Accessed 6 July 2011 – Attachment 3

³ US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010 – Egypt*, 8 April, Section 6 – Attachment 1

⁴ Tadros, M. 2010, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010: Egypt*, Freedom House, 3 March – Attachment 2

⁵ Alquéza, J., Panzica, F. and Popova, N. 2009, *Women and Work in Egypt: Case Study of Tourism and ICT Sectors*, European Training Foundation website, July, p.14
[http://www.etf.europa.eu/pubmgmt/nsf/\(getAttachment\)/D3E0FA7D21DC7D7EC1257610005A2381/\\$File/NOTE7UUM9B.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/pubmgmt/nsf/(getAttachment)/D3E0FA7D21DC7D7EC1257610005A2381/$File/NOTE7UUM9B.pdf) – Accessed 6 July 2011 – Attachment 3

⁶ US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010 – Egypt*, 8 April, Section 6 – Attachment 1

Job discrimination against women is evident in Egypt, including in the civil service, despite provisions in the constitution and labour laws for gender equality.⁷ Egypt's *Labour Law 2003* provides equal pay rates for men and women in equal work in the public sector; however, this does not always occur in practice.⁸ The *Labour Law* mandates 90 days paid maternity leave for women after 10 months employment, and protects against the dismissal of a woman on maternity leave. However, the law also allows government ministers to determine that certain working hours are inappropriate for women, determine morally harmful areas of work for women, and ban women from working in certain roles. The law's protections also largely exclude women in certain jobs, such as domestic servants or agricultural labourers.⁹

Furthermore, an early retirement scheme for women in the public sector, introduced in 2006, lowered the retirement age for women to 45, while for men it remains at 50. Problems with the scheme in terms of gender equality have been identified, including: the retirement benefit is significantly less than at later-age retirement, leaving women more dependent on male family members for support; and despite the fact that the scheme is optional, many women could be pressured into leaving the workforce rather than establishing a long-term career, reducing their chances for promotion to managerial roles.¹⁰

Women facing discrimination in employment can seek assistance from the quasi-governmental National Council for Women (NCW), which advocates policies for women's empowerment and promotes women's development.¹¹

Christians

Christians reportedly face employment discrimination in the public sector, particularly in the security services and the military.¹² Despite claims from government officials that Christians are not prevented from holding senior level positions, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom reports that Christians face discrimination in appointments to high-level government and military posts. Only a few Christians hold positions in the upper ranks of the security services and armed forces, there are very few Christian legislators or judges, only one Christian governor, and only one Christian Member of Parliament. In addition, there are no known Christian university deans or presidents, and training programs for Arabic-language teachers in public universities exclude non-Muslims.¹³

⁷ Freedom House 2011, *Freedom in the World 2011 – Egypt*, 26 May

http://www.freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc_country_detail.cfm?year=2011&country=8031&pf – Accessed 30 May 2011 – Attachment 4

⁸ US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010 – Egypt*, 8 April, Section 6 – Attachment 1

⁹ Tadros, M. 2010, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010: Egypt*, Freedom House, 3 March – Attachment 2

¹⁰ Tadros, M. 2010, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010: Egypt*, Freedom House, 3 March – Attachment 2

¹¹ US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010 – Egypt*, 8 April, Section 6 – Attachment 1

¹² Freedom House 2011, *Freedom in the World 2011 – Egypt*, 26 May

http://www.freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc_country_detail.cfm?year=2011&country=8031&pf – Accessed 30 May 2011 – Attachment 4

¹³ US Commission on International Religious Freedom 2011, *USCIRF Annual Report 2011 – Countries of Particular Concern: Egypt*, UNHCR Refworld website, 28 April <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4dbe90c4c.html> – Accessed 6 July 2011 – Attachment 5

Attachments

1. US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010 – Egypt*, 8 April.
2. Tadros, M. 2010, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010: Egypt*, Freedom House, 3 March. (CISNET Egypt CX240622)
3. Alquéza, J., Panzica, F. and Popova, N. 2009, *Women and Work in Egypt: Case Study of Tourism and ICT Sectors*, European Training Foundation website, July
[http://www.etf.europa.eu/pubmgmt.nsf/\(getAttachment\)/D3E0FA7D21DC7D7EC1257610005A2381/\\$File/NOTE7UUM9B.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/pubmgmt.nsf/(getAttachment)/D3E0FA7D21DC7D7EC1257610005A2381/$File/NOTE7UUM9B.pdf) – Accessed 6 July 2011.
4. Freedom House 2011, *Freedom in the World 2011 – Egypt*, 26 May
http://www.freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc_country_detail.cfm?year=2011&country=8031&pf – Accessed 30 May 2011.
5. US Commission on International Religious Freedom 2011, *USCIRF Annual Report 2011 – Countries of Particular Concern: Egypt*, UNHCR Refworld website, 28 April
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4dbe90c4c.html> – Accessed 6 July 2011.