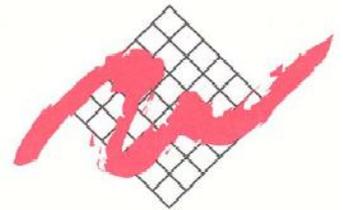


The Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa (SWMENA) Project

Focus on Morocco | Educational Attainment and Career
Aspirations Topic Brief

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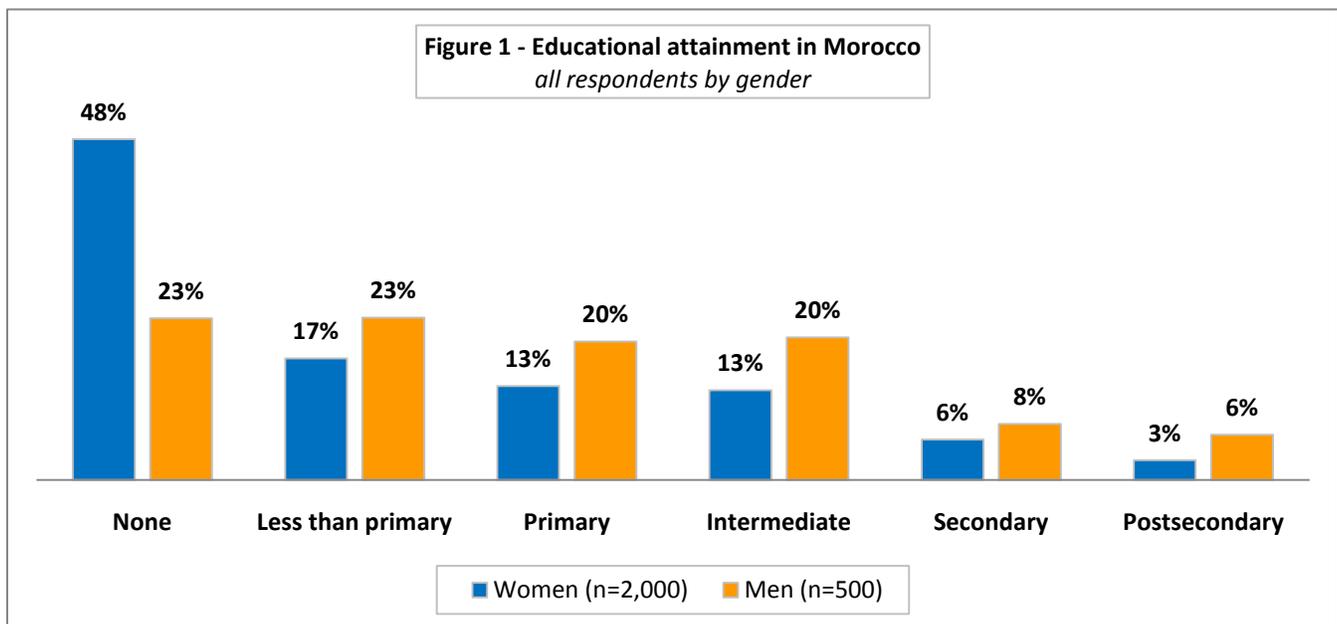
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND ASPIRATIONS

This topic brief presents the main findings on educational attainment and aspirations from the SWMENA survey¹ in Morocco, a survey of 2,500 women and men 18 and older, fielded in 2010.

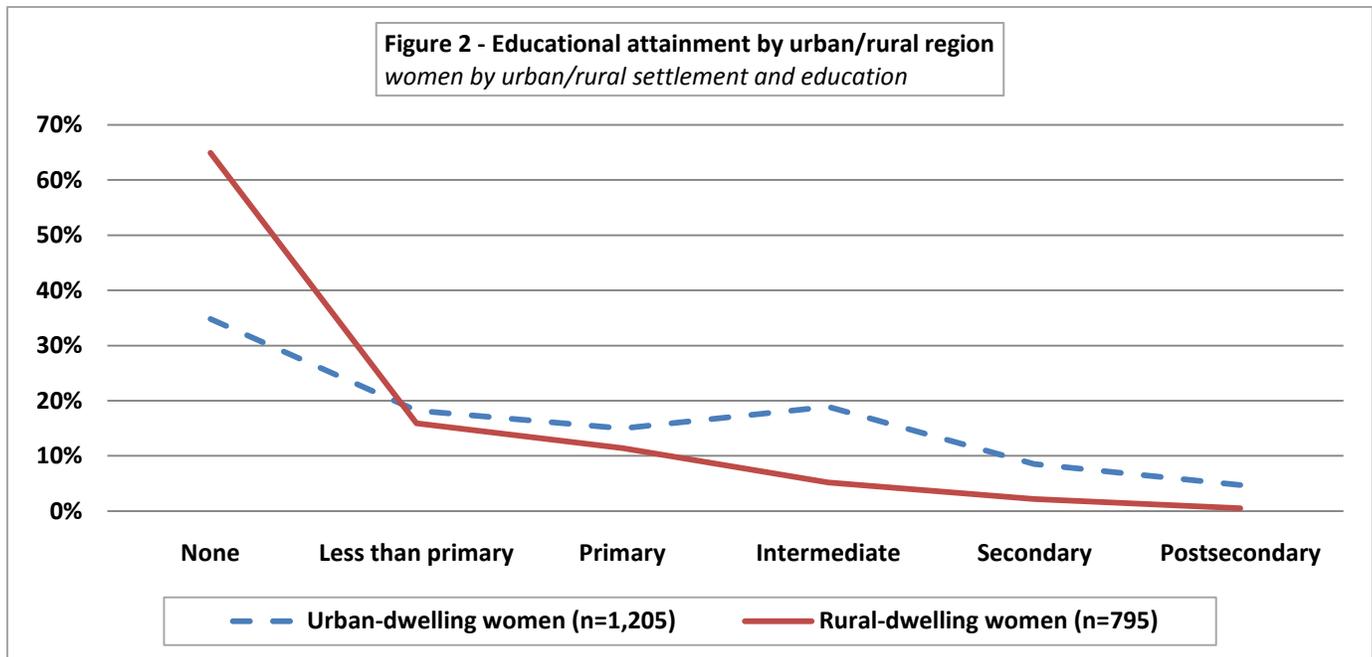
Educational attainment in Morocco is low: nearly half of women and more than two in ten men have no formal schooling (Figure 1). Ninety-one percent of women and 86% of men report that they have less than a secondary-level education. A very low rate of formal schooling among women limits their ability to pursue careers, contribute economically to families, or to be self-sufficient if they so desire. Women without a formal education may lack basic literacy and math skills, which leaves women vulnerable to economic insecurity and limits their power in the workplace and at home.

Among women, educational attainment varies substantially by age, region, and by primary language spoken:

- Education rates do appear to be moving in the right direction: 87% of women 65 or older have no formal education, compared to only 16% of women 18 to 24. Among women in the younger age group, 14% have at least a secondary degree, while none of the 179 women 65 and older interviewed does.



¹ From December 2009 through January 2010, the SWMENA survey was disseminated to 2,000 women and 500 men in Morocco. The survey is designed to assess how women in Morocco view themselves as members of society, the economy and the polity.

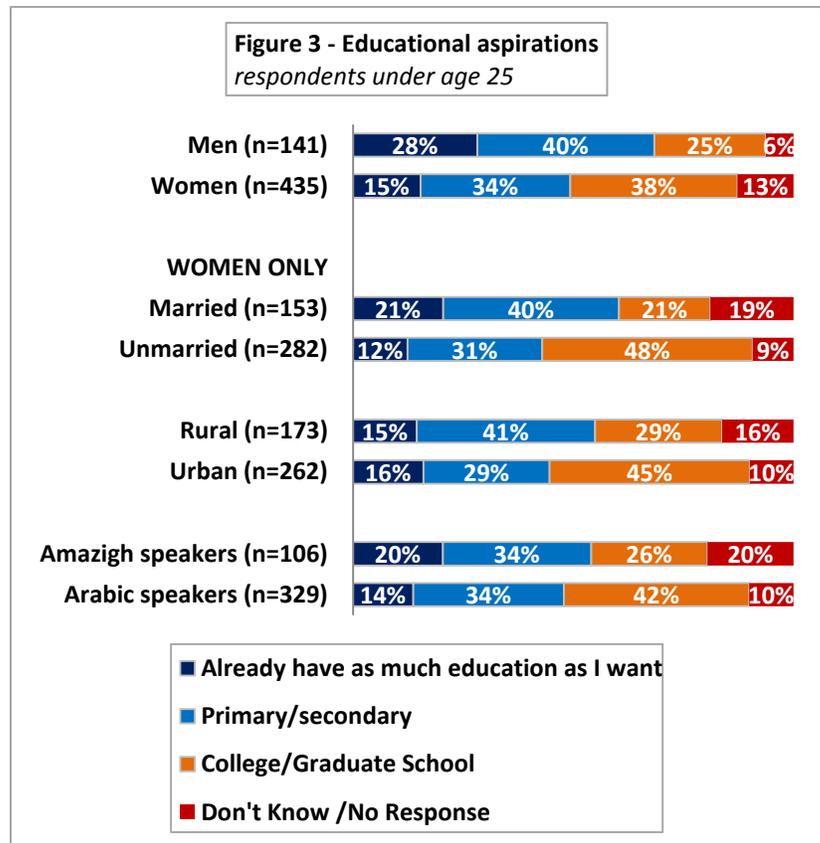


- As shown in Figure 2, women living in rural areas are much less likely to receive formal schooling than urban-dwelling women. Sixty-five percent of women in urban areas receive some formal schooling, compared to only 35% of women in rural areas. Five percent of women in urban areas have a postsecondary degree, compared to fewer than 1% of women in rural areas.
- Only in North (Fes-Boulmane and Taza-Al Hoceima) and Central Morocco (Chaouia-Ouardigha, Grand Casablanca, and Tadla-Azilal) do a majority of women have at least some formal education. North Moroccan women are the most highly educated: 8% have a secondary degree, and 6% have a postsecondary degree, compared to fewer than 3% in all other regions.
- Arabic- or French-speaking women are more likely to be formally educated than their Amazigh-speaking counterparts. 54% of Arabic- or French-speaking women have at least some formal education, and 43% of Amazigh-speaking women can say the same.

Educational Aspirations

In addition to asking respondents about the highest level of education they have completed, the survey asked those ages 18 to 24 about the level of schooling they *would like* to complete. Although educational attainment in Morocco is low, particularly among women, aspirations for postsecondary education among Moroccan women are high, even in comparison to men (Figure 3). Low rates of completed education should not, therefore, be dismissed as simply reflecting preferences among Moroccans, but instead could be evidence of a gap in educational opportunities.

- Women have higher aspirations for education than men: 38% of women would like to complete college or graduate school, compared to 25% of men. Nearly three in ten men are satisfied with their current level of education, compared to just 15% of women, which could in part be because men already have higher levels of educational attainment.
- Married women report less interest in future education than their unmarried counterparts. 48% of unmarried women aspire to complete higher education. However, while just over one in five married women is satisfied with her level of education (which is at the primary school level for the majority of female respondents ages 18 – 24), a similar number of married women want a postsecondary degree.
- Similar proportions of women living in both rural and urban areas are satisfied with their current level of education (15% and 16%, respectively). However, while 45% of urban-dwelling women would like to attend college or graduate school, only 29% of rural-dwelling women would like to do so.
- One in five Amazigh-speaking women is satisfied with the education she has, and one in four aims for a college or university degree. Arabic- and French-speaking women are more likely to aim for higher education (47%), and only 15% are satisfied with their current level of education.



Of the women who said they wanted to attend college or university, 38% were confident that they would face no obstacles to those ambitions. Seventeen percent cited financial obstacles to pursuing higher education, and 14% believed that their parents or husbands would not allow them to go to school (Table 1).

Table 1 - Most commonly cited obstacles to higher education by women (n=169)

Financial (17%)
Parents or husband won't allow it (14%)
Too far away from home (9%)

Moroccan women are interested in a very wide variety of fields, but Medicine, Law, and Economics are the most popular fields of study among women reporting that they would like to attend college or graduate school and who have a field in mind (Table 2). Fifteen percent said they did not have a particular course of study in mind yet.

Table 2 - Top three fields of interest for Moroccan women who hope to attain more education (n=169)

Medicine (12%)
Law (12%)
Economics (8%)

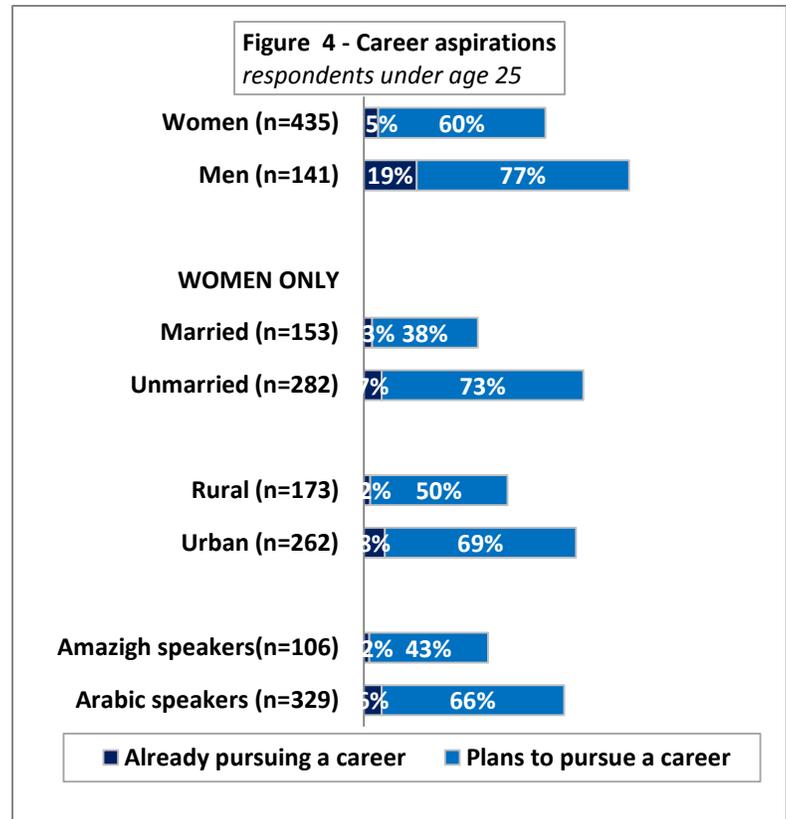


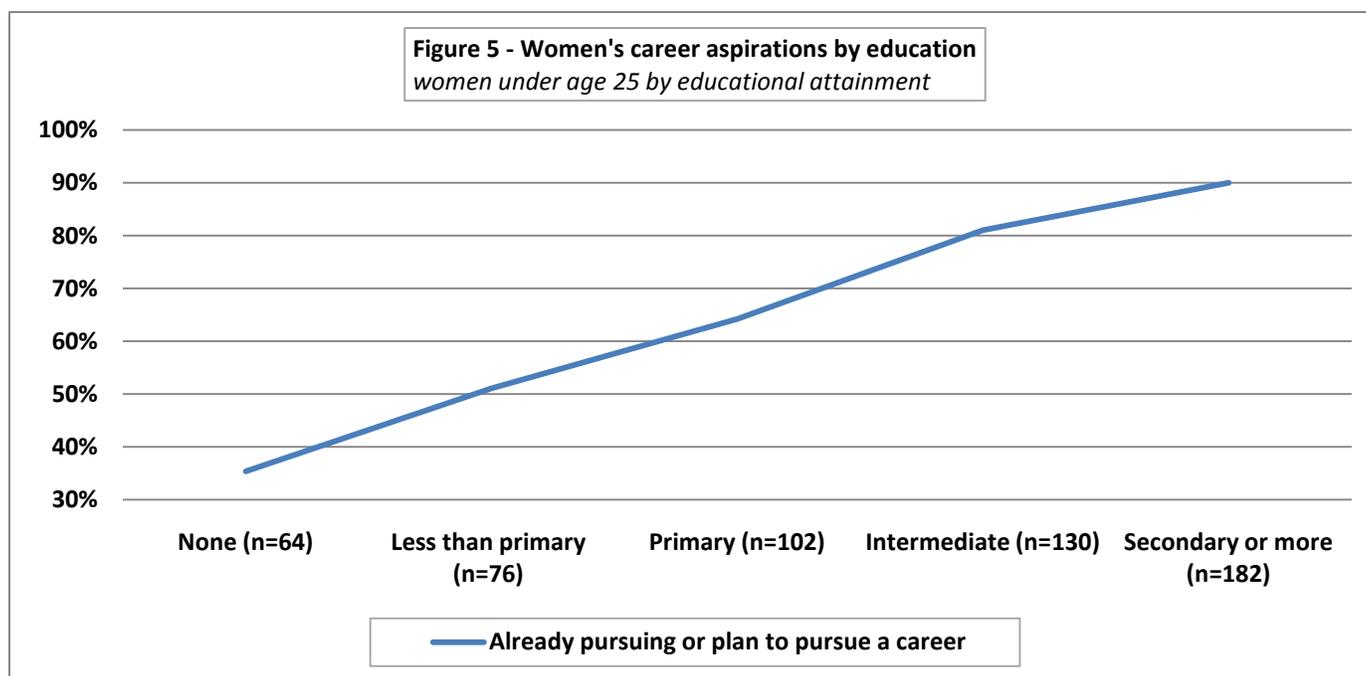
Career Aspirations

Despite very low rates of formal employment reported (see “Paid Work and Control of Earnings & Assets” Topic Brief), Figure 4 shows that majorities of both women (60%) and men (77%) under age 25 say they plan to pursue a career. In addition, 19% of men and 5% of women in this age group reported that they were already working toward a career.

As with educational aspirations, there are marked differences among women in Morocco when it comes to career aspirations.

- Although 80% of unmarried women under age 25 either intend to pursue a career or already work in their chosen field, fewer than half of married women say they would like to pursue a career. Since this question was only asked of respondents in the youngest age group, 18 to 24, differences in attitudes and behaviors between married and unmarried women cannot be attributed to different age profiles among the groups.
- Urban-dwelling women ages 18 to 24 are much more likely than rural women in the same age group to say they intend to pursue a career or are already doing so. Whereas half of women living in rural areas say they intend to pursue a career (50%) and 2% are already doing so, over three quarters of urban women either already work in a career or plan to in the future (77%).
- Amazigh-speaking women report lower career aspirations than their Arabic- and French-speaking counterparts. Fewer than half of Amazigh-speaking women already do or intend to pursue a career (45%), compared to more than seven in ten Arabic- and French-speaking women (72%).





As shown in Figure 5, women’s career aspirations are related to the level of education they have achieved.

- Only 32% of women under age 25 without any formal schooling intend to pursue a career, but among women who have completed primary school, 62% have career aspirations. Nearly eight in ten of those who have finished secondary school or more would like to pursue a career. Including those who are already working toward a career, 90% of the highest educational attainers plan to pursue a career, compared to just 35% among women with the least amount of schooling.
- A similar pattern exists in the relationship between socioeconomic status and career aspirations: 51% of women indentifying as belonging to the lowest socioeconomic category (measured by responses to a question inquiring about whether a family’s income is enough to meet their basic needs) intend to or already are pursuing a career, compared to 92% of women in the highest group.
- Among women who indicated they were interested in pursuing a career and had a particular career in mind, the most popular prospective occupation was Teacher (18%), followed by Tailor (13%) and Doctor (11%), as Table 3 shows. The fact that the non-professional occupation of clothing alteration is among the most popular career paths suggests that it is not only the highly-educated elite that aspires toward having a career, but also those considering work in the trades or handicrafts.

Table 3 - Top Five Career Fields for Moroccan Women (n=267)

Teacher (18%)
Tailor (13%)
Doctor (11%)
Don't know (11%)
Official (6%)

- Among those Moroccan women who stated that they did not intend to pursue a career, 49% specified that they would not pursue a career because their parents or husband would not allow them to work. Twenty-four percent of the women surveyed responded that they would prefer to be homemakers, and one in ten said they would prefer to focus on getting married. In turn, aspirations seem to meet a harsh reality: despite a large majority of Moroccan women reporting that they intend to work and pursue a career, only 10% currently do so, compared to 69% of men.

For more information on actual labor force participation in Morocco, see the “Paid Work and Control of Earnings and Assets” Topic Brief.