



Nagabiya

Bedouin Society Knowledge
and Research Hub

PERIPHERALITY, SOCIO-ECONOMIC MARGINALITY AND THEIR IMPACT ON NEGEV BEDOUIN WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

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ABSTRACT

This report is based on a study conducted among 30 Bedouin women who live in recognized towns and unrecognized villages in the Negev. The purpose of the study is to present an overview of the employment status of Bedouin women in the Negev, while focusing on the structural limitations placed on the women, their unique needs, and their aspirations focusing on the type of locality in which they live.

The document is divided into three sections. The first part reviews the employment conditions of Bedouin women in the Negev on the basis of the administrative data and government programs aimed to promote the employment of Bedouins in the Negev. The second part presents the research findings - the experiences of the interviewees who are in and outside the labor market. The third part of the document presents a summary of the findings and recommendations are formulated based on them.

The interviews with the women show that:

- There are differences in the occupational reality of Bedouin women in relation to the type of locality in which they live. The most significant limitations for women living in the unrecognized villages are related to a severe lack of public transportation and educational frameworks, alongside the lack of infrastructure for electricity and the internet. For women in the recognized towns, the limitations mainly concern access to education and the limited and expensive childcare arrangements that create dependency among the women with small children on their family members.
- For women who do not work for wages, especially in the unrecognized villages, social networks are narrower and more homogeneous than for employed women in the recognized villages and planned towns. Women without social ties find it more difficult to enter the labor market, when the best way to create these networks, in the first place, is through integration into employment outside the home.
- The women's motivation to integrate and advance in the labor market is found in all the different types of localities. The presence of Bedouin women outside the labor market is not due to a lack of motivation, but due to structural constraints that make it difficult for them to integrate into the labor market.
- The low employment supply, combined with the structural conditions that limit women, produces horizontal movement of some women between different occupations in search of a long-term job. However, their ability to move vertically in their current occupations is significantly limited.
- The women who expressed the highest satisfaction with their work are those who experience self-fulfillment in the occupational framework, those who see themselves advancing up the occupational ladder at their current workplace, as well as the women whose occupational framework allows them to juggle between housework and paid labor.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTIONS

A. Introduction

B. Background: Bedouin women in and outside of the labor market and government programs to encourage employment of Negev Bedouin women

B.1. Bedouin women in and outside the labor market

B.2. Government programs to encourage employment of the Bedouin population in the Negev

C. Method and research population



A. INTRODUCTION

The Bedouin population in the Negev suffers from the highest rates of poverty and unemployment in Israeli society, with Bedouin women being the most vulnerable in economic and occupational terms. **The employment situation of these women, both on normal days and during times of emergency, is part of the women's lived reality of multiple marginalization, resulting from an intersection of different forms of structural inequalities (national, ethnic and gender)¹.** As a result, the women encounter structural limitations that differ from those experienced by Jewish women and non-Bedouin Arab women in Israeli society. **Alongside the gender question, the spatial question - the place where the women live - is central to deciphering the occupational reality of these women's lives.** The present study, therefore, deals with these two aspects. In doing so, it joins a trend that has emerged in recent years, in which researchers focus on **the impact of local-spatial aspects on women's entry into the labor market and their ability to advance professionally.²**

Research that dealt with the subject in the past emphasized that the employment reality among women living in the global peripheries is fundamentally different from that of women living in metropolitan areas. The lack of resources, infrastructure and employment opportunities that characterize the geographic and social peripheries of the world make women living in these areas more vulnerable, in terms of employment and economics. Beyond this generalization, it is also important to understand that the term, "periphery," does not indicate the uniformity of the population living there.

Peripherality is always relative: that is, it is placed and examined not only in relation to the center, but also in relation to the social and geographical environment within which it is located³. Thus, in an area that is defined as a periphery in relation to the center, for example, the eastern and western Negev regions, there are "deeper" peripheries than others. These include, for example the unrecognized villages in relation to Rahat and those in relation to Beer Sheva. This awareness is important; however, it seems that, unfortunately, it is also missing in most of the studies that have been undertaken in the last decade that focused on the Bedouin population in Israel and, in particular, on Bedouin women. In fact, few researchers have focused on this variation, while referring to the unique life reality of women in the unrecognized villages⁴. **In many cases, the population is presented and defined as homogeneous, while ignoring the differences between the types of Bedouin communities in the Negev - planned towns, recognized villages and unrecognized villages, even though the type of locality may have a significant effect on women's employment.** Since the unrecognized villages are not surveyed by the administrative bodies⁵, there is limited knowledge about the employment patterns of the women living in these different communities.

The purpose of the study is to present an overview of the employment status of Bedouin women in the Negev, while focusing on the structural limitations placed on the women, their unique needs, and their aspirations focusing on the type of locality in which they live.

To examine these questions, 30 women from the various localities were interviewed. Alongside the focus on the structural constraints that women face when they enter the labor market, the study also deals with aspects concerning the women's employment that are often neglected by the administrative bodies. For example, it focused on the meaning that women attribute to paid work, their occupational aspirations, their perceptions and their positioning in relation to the sphere of paid labor.

1 Abu-Rabia-Quedar, Sarab. 2017. Emerging gender identity: Palestinian professionalism in the Negev. Jerusalem: Magnus.

2 Alshareef, Sara. 2022. "Does Location Matter? Unpacking the Dynamic Relationship Between the Spatial Context and Embeddedness in Women's Entrepreneurship." *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 34 (3-4): 294-318.

3 Pugh, Rhiannon and Alexandre Dubois. 2021. "Peripheries Within Economic Geography: Four 'Problems' and the Road Ahead of Us." *Journal of Rural Studies* 87: 267-275.

4 See, for example, Abu-Rabia-Quedar, Sarab, Avigail Morris, and Heather Ryan. 2018. "The Economy of Survival: Bedouin Women in Unrecognized Villages." *Journal of Arid Environments* 149: 80-88.

5 [Policy Paper: The Statistical Gap and the Indigenous in the Negev. Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, August 2021.](#) (in Hebrew)

This document has three sections:

- **The first section** describes the employment situation of Bedouin women in the Negev, based on administrative data. It reviews the government programs for the promotion of the employment of Bedouin in the Negev, with an emphasis on women. In this section, the research method and population are also presented.
- **The second**, and most important, section of the document presents the experiences of the interviewees in and outside the labor market. This section is organized according to four themes:
 1. The meaning of work for the women.
 2. Structural limitations including: transportation, infrastructure, and childcare.
 3. Factors that enhance integration into employment: education and social networks.
 4. The occupational aspirations of the women.
- **The third** and last section presents a summary of the findings. Recommendations are formulated based on these findings.

B. BACKGROUND: BEDOUIN WOMEN IN AND OUTSIDE THE LABOR MARKET AND GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE EMPLOYMENT OF NEGEV BEDOUIN WOMEN

B.1. BEDOUIN WOMEN IN AND OUTSIDE OF THE LABOR MARKET

The Bedouin Population in the Negev Suffers from Inequality, Consistent Discrimination and One of the Highest Poverty Rates in Israel. According to the 2018 poverty report of the National Insurance Institute, which provides specific data for the Bedouin population, the incidence of poverty - which is the proportion of the group whose income is below the poverty line (which was 2,875 NIS in 2018) - was approximately 68% among the Bedouins in the south ⁶. This rate was significantly higher compared to non-Bedouin Arabs (among which the rate of people living below the poverty line was about 40%), and higher than the rate among residents of East Jerusalem (about 59%), ultra-Orthodox (about 45%) and non-Orthodox Jews (about 11%)⁷. As a result of these high rates, approximately 80% of children in Bedouin society lived below the poverty line, compared to 20% of children in Jewish society.⁸

In recent years, there has indeed been an improvement in this area. According to the latest data from the National Insurance Institute (2022), the prevalence of poverty in the recognized Bedouin towns in the Negev is about 50% for families and 60% for children ⁹. However, despite the decrease in the incidence of poverty among the Bedouin population in the Negev, the disparities between the population groups remain the same.¹⁰

One of the main aspects affecting the socio-economic position of the Bedouin population in Israeli society is the lack of employment opportunities. The data about the employment and unemployment rates among Bedouin men and women in the Negev reveal the depth of inequality in Israeli society, in an ethno-class context. In 2012, the employment rate among Bedouin men was 65% and increased in 2017 to 69%. However, beginning in 2017, a downward trend began, and these rates decreased to 58%

6 [The Dimensions of Poverty and Social Gaps - The Annual Report. The National Insurance Institute, 2018.](#) (in Hebrew)

7 See footnote 6.

8 The Co Impact, Partnership for the Advancement of Employment in the Arab-Bedouin Population. Rothschild Foundation and the Center for High-Employment Education. The Employment of the Arab-Bedouin Society in the Negev. Naas Organization, May 2022. (from here - Co of Impact Report).

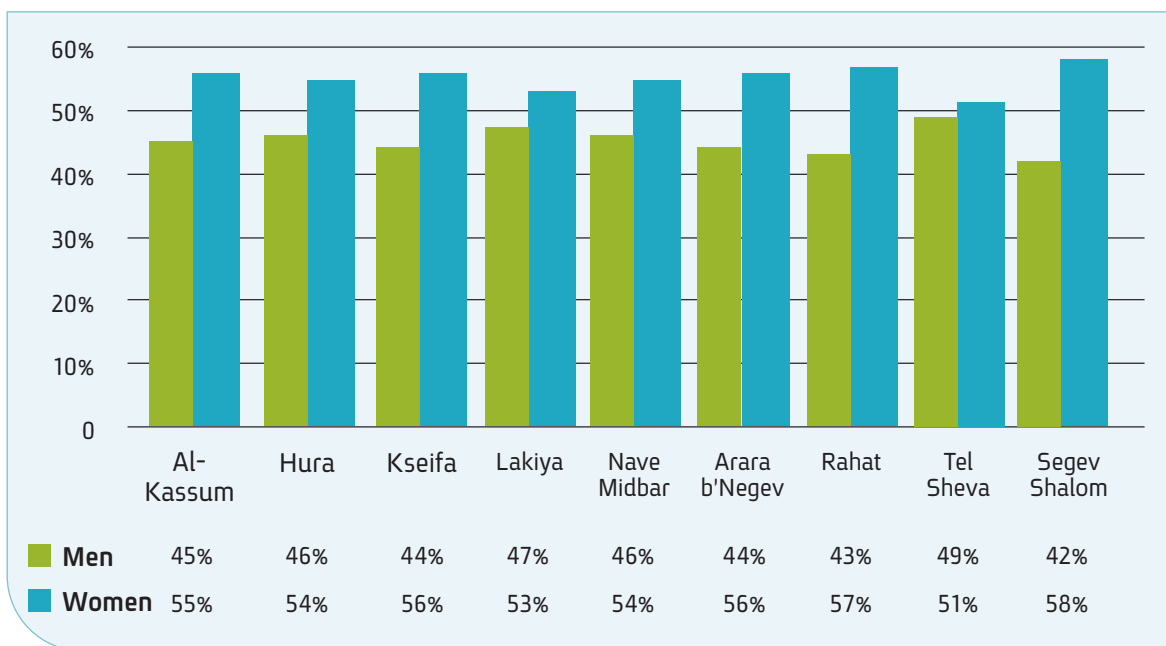
9 [Report of the Dimensions of Poverty and Inequality in Earnings.](#) The National Insurance Institute, 2022.

10 See footnote 9.

in 2020¹¹. The employment rate among Bedouin men is significantly lower than the employment rate of Jewish men in the Negev, which was 82% in 2021¹². These disparities are deeper among Bedouin women in the Negev. For example, while a third of the Bedouin men in the Negev, aged 18-24, are defined as “NEETs” (young people who do not go to school, work or are in vocational training), the rate of NEETs among Bedouin women at these ages reaches 50%¹³.

The data relating to unemployment and income rates indicate that Bedouin women are the most economically and occupationally vulnerable group in Bedouin society, in particular, and in Israeli society, in general. An indication of the situation in the unrecognized villages is found in the data concerning salary rates published by the National Insurance Institute in 2021. The data refer to the category, “Bedouin tribes,”¹⁴ that is, Bedouin residents of the Negev who are not registered in the recognized towns and villages. According to the report, in 2019 the average salary among Bedouin men was 5,513 NIS¹⁵; among Bedouin women, the average monthly salary was only 3,101 NIS. In other words, Bedouin women, who are not registered as residents of the recognized localities, earn on average approximately 44% less than the men in these localities¹⁶. Even among all Bedouin women in the Negev, the average monthly salary is consistently low, both in relation to Bedouin men, and in relation to non-Bedouin Arab women and Jewish women¹⁷. According to the employment service data, among the job seekers in the recognized Bedouin towns in the Negev between 2010-2023, there was an overrepresentation of women (55%) compared to men (45%)¹⁸.

Chart 1: Average Rates of Employment Seekers in Bedouin Towns in the Negev between 2010-2023, by Gender.



Source: Employment Service Data Processing Information at the Locality and Regional Council Level, May 2023

11 Tirosh, Oren, Cohen, Dana, Berlin, Bracha, Levy-Kovshi, Ayelet and Smadar Somech. Patterns of Employment and Obstacles to Employment in the Bedouin Population. Meyers-Joint Brookdale, April 2023.

12 Line of Impact Report.

13 [Idle Youth in the Negev Bedouin Community: A Critical Look. 2023. Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality.](#)

14 The definition of “Bedouin tribes” does not include all the unrecognized villages in the Negev. While the population authority relates to 25 tribes, it does not relate to the locality of residence or to the village in which the residents live. For example, see [Elmasi, Oriana. Data about the Bedouin population in the Negev. The Center for Research and Information of the Knesset, July 2023.](#) (in Hebrew)

15 This statistic is based on the calculation of the average monthly salary in a year, according to the National Insurance Institute. This is the result that is based on the division of the total of the salary that was paid to employees for 12 months, even if they did not work for the entire year.

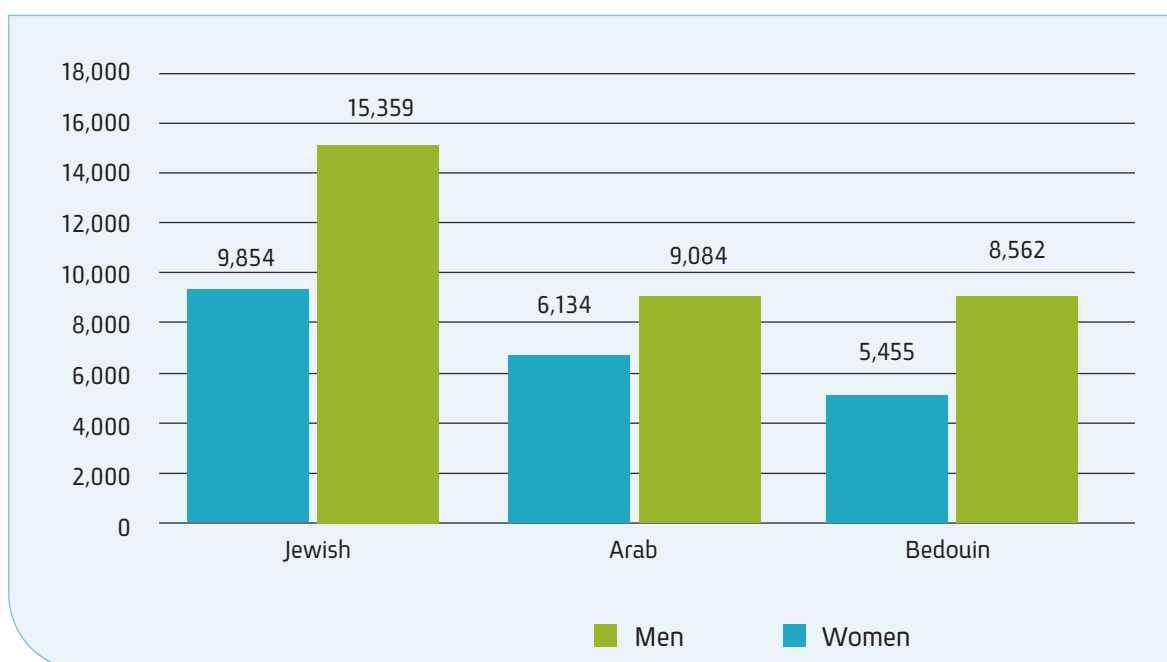
16 [Rosenberg, Marc. Salary and Income from Work, according to Locality and Different Economic Variables 2019. The National Insurance Institute, November, 2021.](#) (in Hebrew)

17 [Data on Employment of Arab Women with an Emphasis on Bedouin Women in the Negev. The Center for Research and Information of the Knesset, February 2022.](#)

18 Nagabiya's analysis of the data from the Employment Service.

The low employment rate of Bedouin women is also noticeable when compared to the employment data of women from Arab society, as a whole, as well as in relation to Jewish women. For example, in 2017, the employment rate among Bedouin women in the south was 23.5%, in comparison to 66% among Jewish women in the same region¹⁹. In 2019, there was a decrease in the rate of employment among Bedouin women, and the percentage of women employed among them was only 21%. This figure compared to 36% employment among Arab women throughout the country, and to 83% among Jewish women²⁰. In 2021, there was an increase in the employment rate among Bedouin women to 25%, and among non-Bedouin Arab women to 41%²¹. However, the gap between the groups widened between 2019 and 2021 by one percent²². The main economic sectors in which Bedouin women are employed are distinctly “feminine” - education, health and welfare services ²³.

Chart 2: Average Monthly Salary according to Population Groups and Gender, 2019.



Source: [Data on the Employment of Arab Women with an Emphasis on Bedouins in the Negev. The Knesset Research and Information Center, February 2022](#)

These disparities deepened following the COVID-19 epidemic, when Bedouin women were affected in the most dramatic way compared to Arab women and Jewish women (according to the calculation of the ratio between the number of people employed before the pandemic and the change in the number of employment seekers during and after the pandemic)²⁴. The current war, including its effect on the localities in the south, continued this trend. The Employment Service data indicate a clear trend of overrepresentation among Arab female job seekers in the south, in relation to their proportion in the general population²⁵.

¹⁹ Haj Yehia, Nasreen, Saif, Ayman, Kasir, Nitza, and Ben Farjon. A Program for the Advancement of Integration of Arab Society into the Labor Market. The Israeli Institute for Democracy, July 2021.

²⁰ [Data on Women's Employment with an Emphasis on Bedouin Women in the Negev. The Knesset Center for Research and Information, February 2022.](#)

²¹ [Naas Organization for Research and Advice. The Integration of Bedouin Society in Hi-tech. Data Booklet. November 2022.](#)

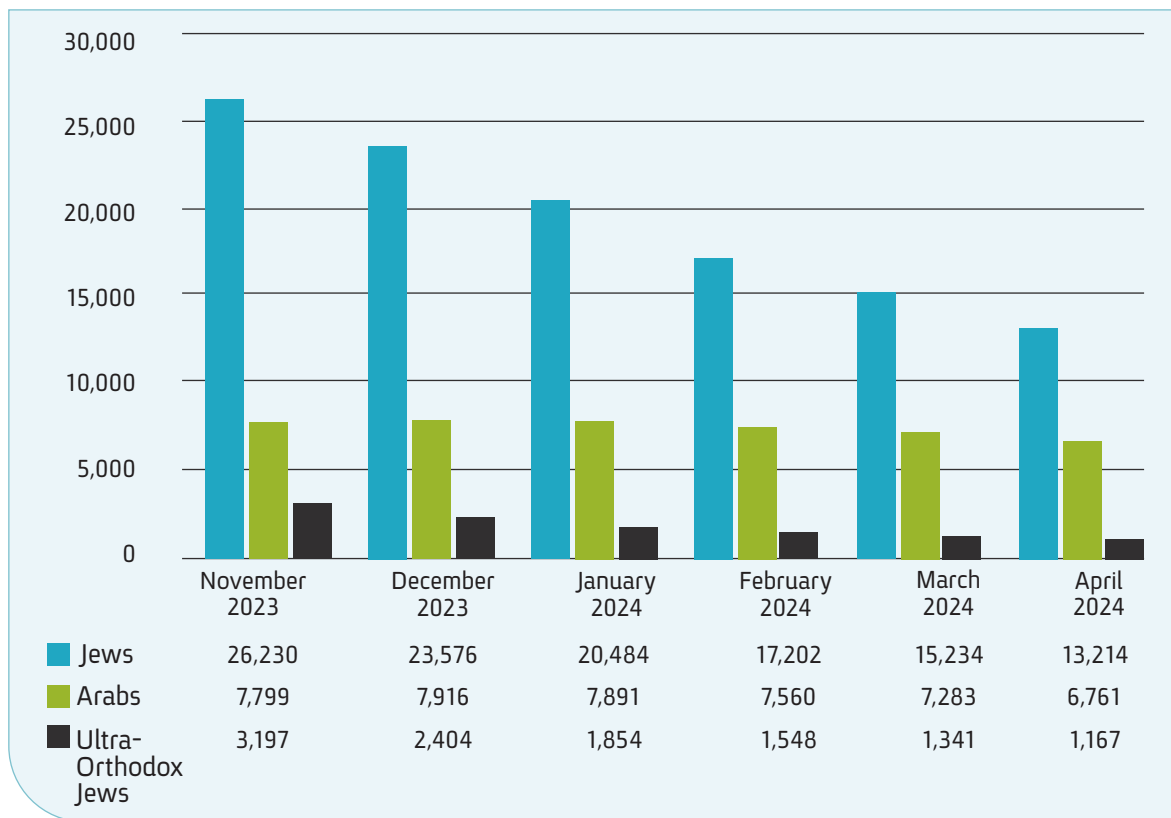
²² [Naas Organization for Research and Advice. The Integration of Bedouin Society in Hi-tech. Data Booklet. November 2022.](#)

²³ See footnote 20

²⁴ See footnote 21

²⁵ The Employment Service divides the employment seekers according to districts, gender and sectors. Up until recent months, the sectorial division was undertaken according to the religious criterion - Muslims, Christians, Jews, Druze and others. Lately, the category of sector was changed and now it only includes Arabs, Jews (without the Ultra-Orthodox) and Haredim (Ultra-Orthodox). In the southern district, and, in particular, in the Negev, most of the Arab population is Bedouin. All of the Arab towns in the Negev are Bedouin localities. Therefore, the data concerning the Arabs in the southern district mainly reflect the Bedouin population.

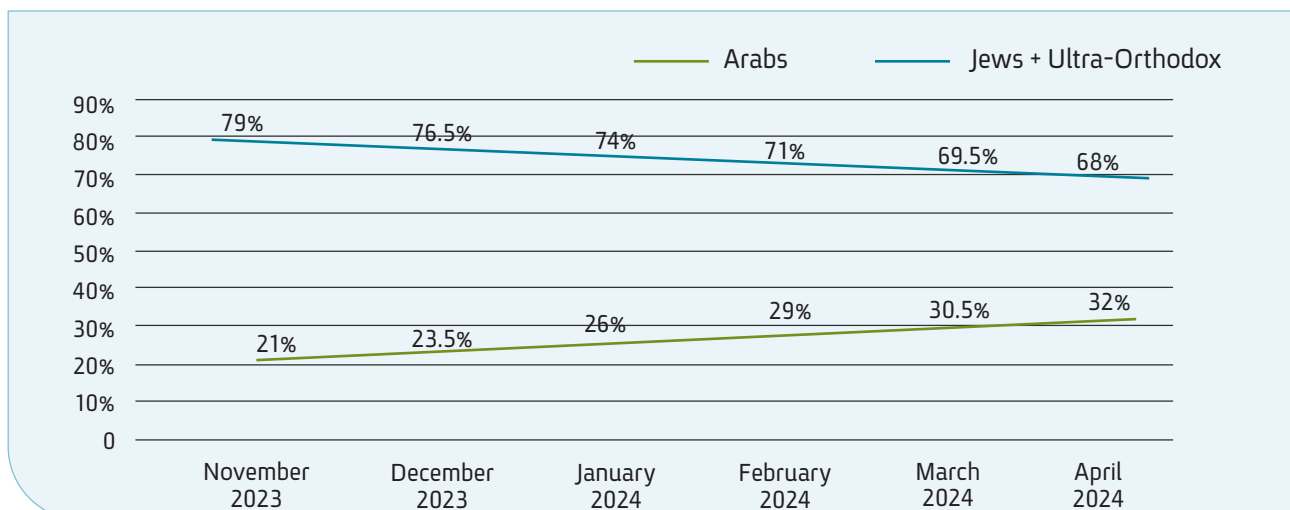
Chart 3: Number of Women Seeking Work in the Southern District between November 2023-April 2024 (the October 7 war).



Source: Processing Data Tables of Employment Seekers - The Employment Service (June 2024).

An examination of the absolute numbers of women seeking employment, according to population groups, indicates that while the number of Jewish women seeking employment decreased by almost half between November 2023 and April 2024 (from 26,230 to 13,214), the decrease in the number of Arab women seeking employment was much smaller (from 7,799 to 6,761). These data reveal a trend of deepening the occupational distress among Bedouin women in the south throughout the months of the war.

Chart 4: Rate of Job Seekers in the Southern District between November 2023-April 2024 (the October 7 war).



Source: Processing Data Tables of Job Seekers - The Employment Service (June 2024).

The analysis of the Employment Service data also shows that **while among ultra-Orthodox women and non-Orthodox Jewish women the rate of job seekers has been on a downward trend during the war months, among Bedouin women, this rate has been consistently increasing.** Moreover, considering the fact that the relative rate of Bedouins in the population of the South is 22%, as of December 2023, the rate of employment seekers among Bedouin women has significantly exceeded their relative rate in the general population of the southern district. **While the Bedouin population comprises approximately one-fifth of the total population in the southern district, as of March 2024, over 30% of the total employment seekers are Bedouin women.**

Administrative and civil bodies deal with the issue of the structural limitations imposed on Bedouin women in employment contexts. Chief among them is a severe lack of public transportation and daycare centers²⁶. In 2016, the State Comptroller pointed out failures in the government's plans to reduce gaps in employment among Arab women, including Bedouin women, due to ignoring or partial consideration of the measures that support employment for women - daycare centers and public transportation²⁷. The main government programs will be reviewed below.

B.2. GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE EMPLOYMENT OF THE BEDOUIN POPULATION IN THE NEGEV

Following the recommendations of the Eckstein Commission, over the past decades, Israeli governments have begun to recognize the importance of promoting employment in Arab society, and in particular, Bedouin society in the south.

Three five-year plans were implemented:

- Government Resolution 3708 for the years 2012-2016
- Government Resolution 2379 for the years 2017-2021
- Government Resolution 1279 for the years 2022-2026

The programs focus, among other things, on promoting the employment of Bedouin men and Bedouin women, based on the concept that increasing the rates of integration into employment and productivity among members of this group will benefit Israeli society, as a whole. The governments of Israel, thus, set employment targets among Arab women, including Bedouin women: the rate of 41%²⁸ for 2020, and 53%²⁹ for 2030.

Despite the declarative focus on women's employment, both in the five-year plans and as part of the government's goals, no plans have been drawn up that focus on the unique and concrete needs related to the conditions of Bedouin women in the Negev. In addition, in the last five-year plans created for Arab society (Government Resolution 550) and Bedouin Society (Government Resolution 1279), budgets were distributed without the lawmakers undertaking an analysis of current data. That is, for example, they did not first study the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's employment and did not relate to the different groups in Arab society, who have different needs, when it comes to employment³⁰. As a result, **the employment rates among Bedouin women have remained consistently low compared to all groups in Israeli society and are not close to the goals that were set by the governments.**

26 Batshun, Shireen. "Main Obstacles to Employment for Arab Women in Israel." *Journal for Equality and Human Rights*, December 2022. Haj Yehia, Nasreen, Saif, Ayman, Keisar, Nitza and Ben Farjon. A Program for the Advancement of Integration of Arab Society into the Labor Market. The Israeli Institute for Democracy, July 2021. Tirosh, Oren, Cohen, Dana, Berlin, Bracha, Levy-Kovshi, Ayelet, and Smadar Somech. *Patterns of Employment and Obstacles to Employment in the Negev Bedouin Population*. Meyers-Joint-Brookdale, April 2023.

27 [Government Actions for the Advancement of the Integration of the Arab Population in Employment. State Comptroller's Report, May, 2016.](#) (in Hebrew)

28 [Government Decision No. 1994. Positioning of Employment Objectives for Woman, 2010-2020.](#) (in Hebrew)

29 [Government Decision No. 198. The Economic Program for Women 2021-2022.](#) (in Hebrew)

30 [The Governmental Treatment of Arab Young Adults Who Are Not Involved in Any Frameworks. State Comptroller Report, May 2023.](#) (in Hebrew)

The Ryan Centers, the Employment Service, and Encouraging Entrepreneurship were the only programs that received an allocation that equaled the budget set forth by Government Resolution 2397: the rest of the programs received an allocation that was lower than the original budget³¹. Therefore, the review presented here focuses on these three programs, concerning the integration of Bedouin women in the labor market in the Negev³².

The Ryan centers, operating under the Ministry of Labor, constitute the flagship program that focused on employment in Bedouin society in the Negev. The centers were established in 2012 with the aim of serving as an umbrella organization for occupational support in Arab society. They offered professional training, employment placement and long-term occupational assistance. In the Negev, five such centers operate in Hura, Kseifa, Tel Sheva, Segev Shalom and Rahat, and six branches are attached to them. According to the Knesset's Research and Information Center, participation in the courses and trainings offered by the centers is based on submission of a voluntary application by people interested. The trainings held at the centers do not entitle the participants to a professional diploma.

Between the years 2017-2020, 7,707 Bedouin women applied to Ryan centers in the Negev. Only 38% were eventually placed in jobs, as a result of the process. **In 2020, only 265 Bedouin women completed vocational training at the Ryan centers**³³. Between 2020-2021, there was an increase in the number of Bedouin women who received services from the Ryan Centers: in 2021, 60% of the participants from Bedouin society were women. The most significant increase was recorded in Rahat, Kseifa and Hura. Despite this increase, in 2021, **only 161 Bedouin women participated in professional training, and the placement rates of these women was extremely low (19%)**³⁴.

In light of these data, **the degree of effectiveness of the Ryan Centers, in regard to the long-term employment of women, is not clear.** In examining the short-term effects, it appears that there is a distinct effect of participation in the trainings offered by the Ryan Centers on employment among Bedouin men, which is reflected in an average increase of about three months of work per year. On the other hand, the effect for Bedouin women is not significant and is reflected, on the average, in an addition of about 0.4 months only of work per year³⁵. In a more recent examination, **the State Comptroller's report found that the activity in the Ryan Centers had no effect on the degree of inactivity among young people in Bedouin society, both among men and among women**³⁶.

Similar to the Ryan centers, the employment service does not have programs designed for Arab women, and in particular for Bedouin women, who, as noted above, suffer from the highest rates of poverty and unemployment in Israeli society. There are 14 employment bureaus operating in the Southern District, but there is only one employment bureau established in a Bedouin town - the Rahat branch. Therefore, most of the Bedouin residents in the Negev are forced to turn to the employment offices in Rahat, Be'er Sheva and other Jewish cities. The employment bureaus mainly provide counseling to job seekers concerning employers, professional training and strengthen digital and soft skills.

31 See details of the summary table of the five-year-plan budgets and its distribution between 2017-2020, in the report of the "Monitoring and Assessment of the Five-Year-Plan for the Social-Economic Development of the Bedouin Population in the Negev, for the Years 2017-2020." The Knesset Center for Research and Information, pp. 10-11. May 2023.

32 The review presented here relates only to the employment programs. However, there are other programs that focus on education as leverage for employment integration in Negev Bedouin society. The main one is the Eshbal program, under the auspices of the Department of Labor. This program, which runs under the government Institute for Technological Training and Science, was only awarded one half of the budget that it was supposed to receive. In this program, there is a significant under-representation of Bedouin women. For more information on the Eshbal program and other programs, see Avger, Ido and Jerry Elmo Capital: "Information on Implementation of Programs for the Advancement of Employment of Arab Women." The Knesset Center for Research and Information. May 2023.

33 Avger, Ido and Jerry Elmo Capital: "Information on Implementation of Programs for the Advancement of Employment of Arab Women." The Knesset Center for Research and Information. May 2023.

34 Co-Impact Report.

35 Deutsch, Tzvika, Tirosh, Oren, Levy, Nir and Smadar Somech. "The Impact of the Ryan Centers on Employment Preparation among the Arab Population of their Employment Status." Meyers-Joint-Brookdale, March 2021. (in Hebrew)

36 [The Governmental Treatment of Arab Young Adults Who Are Not Involved in Any Frameworks. State Comptroller Report, May 2023.](#) (in Hebrew)

The flagship program of the Employment Service is called "Circles of Employment." This program aims to prevent long-term unemployment among populations suffering from multiple barriers. In contrast to participation in the Ryan Centers and the entrepreneurship programs, participation in employment circles is not voluntary: women who receive welfare must report to the employment bureaus in order to participate in the program, since their continued receipt of the welfare benefit is conditioned upon their active participation in the program.

In a study conducted among Bedouin women from the unrecognized villages who participated in the Circles of Employment program, the women reported that the program was not at all adapted to the reality of their lives. Moreover, the program does not offer women good employment and focuses on "soft skills," i.e. on increasing the motivation of the women to work. The structure of the program ignores the lack of employment opportunities for Bedouin women, their family roles, their skills, the changing levels of education and the level of literacy of the women in the Hebrew language that are needed for good employment³⁷.

Alongside the programs operating under the Ministry of Labor, business entrepreneurship programs were developed for the Arab society. Today, two programs are operating under the Ministry of Economy and Industry - the SAWA program and the "Business Entrepreneurs" program of the Ma'of branches. The SAWA program focuses on opening micro-businesses of Arab and Bedouin women by providing micro-loans. During 2011-2019, 5,221 women participated in the program, of which approximately 25% were Arab women from the south (this serves as an estimate of the number of Bedouin women from the Negev who participated in the program)³⁸. That is, approximately 170 Bedouin women participated in the program, on average, each year. Unlike most of the participants from the northern region, most of the Bedouin women who entered the program did not own a business and joined in order to establish a small business. Most of the small businesses opened by Bedouin women, as part of the program, included raising animals, selling clothes and cosmetic treatments.

Over time, the degree of success of these businesses was low: 17% of the businesses that were opened as part of the program were closed, in comparison to nine percent of businesses that were closed in other areas where the women's businesses operated. Correspondingly, the level of income from the business among Bedouin women in the Negev was also lower than the income of women from other parts of the country³⁹. Moreover, it appears that the "Business Entrepreneurs" program does not provide a sufficient answer to the needs of new female entrepreneurs, since it does not focus on female entrepreneurship, but rather on the population, as a whole, and within Arab society. In the Negev, there is one branch of Ma'of intended for the Bedouin population, located in Rahat. Without referring to the gender aspect, it should be noted that from an evaluation study carried out as part of the program, higher satisfaction was reported among existing business owners than among those who entered the program in order to establish a new business⁴⁰. As a result, it can be concluded that the programs mainly contribute to entrepreneurs who already own a small business, than to women who aspire to open new businesses.

In conclusion, as can be seen from the data, it seems that **although the various programs aim for the promotion and occupational integration of the entire Bedouin population in the Negev, in practice, these provide answers mainly to men or to women who do not belong to the Bedouin communities in the Negev.**

37 [Helman, Sarah. "Is the 'Circles of Employment' program suitable for women from the unrecognized villages in the Negev?" Nagabiya - The Center for Information and Research, Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality. June 2024.](#) (in Hebrew)

38 [Evaluation: Small Line of Ex-Bank Credit for Arab Women. The Ministry of Economics and Industry. The Agency for Small and Middle-Size Businesses. September 2020.](#)

39 See footnote no. 37

40 [Report on the Agency of the Small and Medium-Size Businesses of Bedouin in the Negev. The Ministry of Economics: The Agency for Small and Medium-Size Businesses. March 2019.](#) (in Hebrew)

C. METHOD AND RESEARCH POPULATION

The purpose of the study was to **provide an overview of the employment status of Bedouin women in the Negev, while focusing on the structural limitations imposed on women, their unique needs and their occupational aspirations.** These issues were **examined through the spatial perspective.** The research focused on the question: **What is the employment reality of Bedouin women living in different places in the Negev** (planned towns, recognized villages and unrecognized villages)? More specifically, we asked: **Are there any differences in the occupational reality of women's lives in various localities?** How are these differences manifested? Are there points of similarity in the occupational life reality of the women in the different localities? How does this shared similarity manifest itself? What are the advantages and disadvantages inherent in the different types of localities in terms of employment for the women?

The study employed semi-structured interviews with 30 women between the ages of 21-55 (the average age is 35.5) and with different levels of education. The interview questions focused on the structural limitations that affect the employment opportunities for Bedouin women that have long been documented in the literature. These mainly included transportation, daycare centers and the gender division of labor favoring women for childcare⁴¹. Additional questions focused on the infrastructure issue that is particularly relevant to the unrecognized villages, but is also important in relation to other forms of localities.

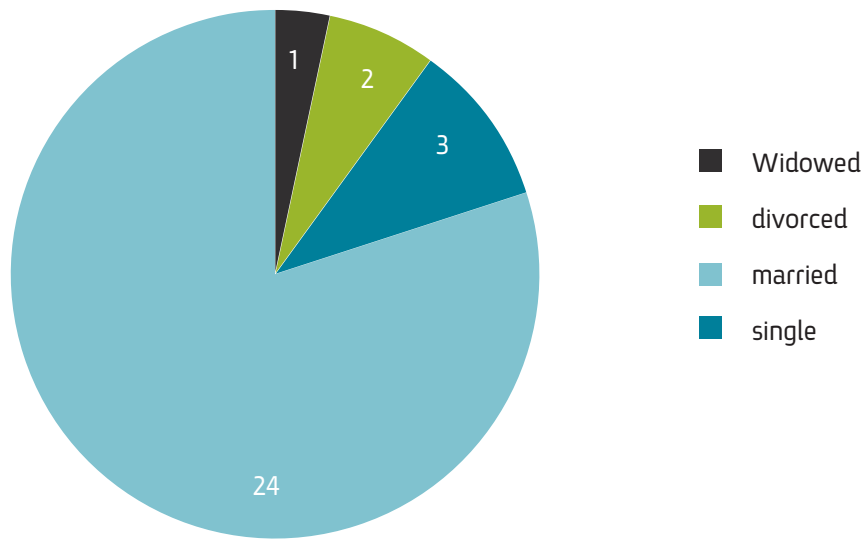
Other questions focused on education, as studies have indicated the correlation between the level of education and the degree of participation in the labor market among Bedouin women⁴². However, the interviews were not limited to these issues: they included questions relating to women's aspirations, social networks and family relationships. All interviews were conducted in Arabic, transcribed in full and translated into Hebrew by the interviewer. Most of the interviews took place in the interviewees' homes. Some of the interviewees were located through "Sidreh" NGO and the Forum for Coexistence in the Negev, and others through the snowball method: some of the interviewees referred the interviewer to other women.

Approximately half of the women we interviewed are employed. We chose to interview both women who are employed and those who are not, in order to avoid reducing the research to the interpretations of the employed or the unemployed. On the one hand, women who are currently working can shed light on the opportunities to which they were exposed in the labor market and the challenges they have faced. On the other hand, the voices of women who are not employed can shed light on the various reasons why they do not enter the labor market and indicate their aspirations for the future. The charts below describe the distribution of the interviewees according to marital status, number of children, education and employment status.

41 Batshun, Shireen. "Main Obstacles to Employment for Arab Women in Israel." *Journal for Equality and Human Rights*, December 2022. Haj Yehia, Nasreen, Saif, Ayman, Keisar, Nitza and Ben Farjon. A Program for the Advancement of Integration of Arab Society into the Labor Market. The Israeli Institute for Democracy, July 2021. Tirosh, Oren, Cohen, Dana, Berlin, Bracha, Levy-Kovshi, Ayelet, and Smadar Somech. *Patterns of Employment and Obstacles to Employment in the Negev Bedouin Population*. Meyers-Joint-Brookdale, April 2023.

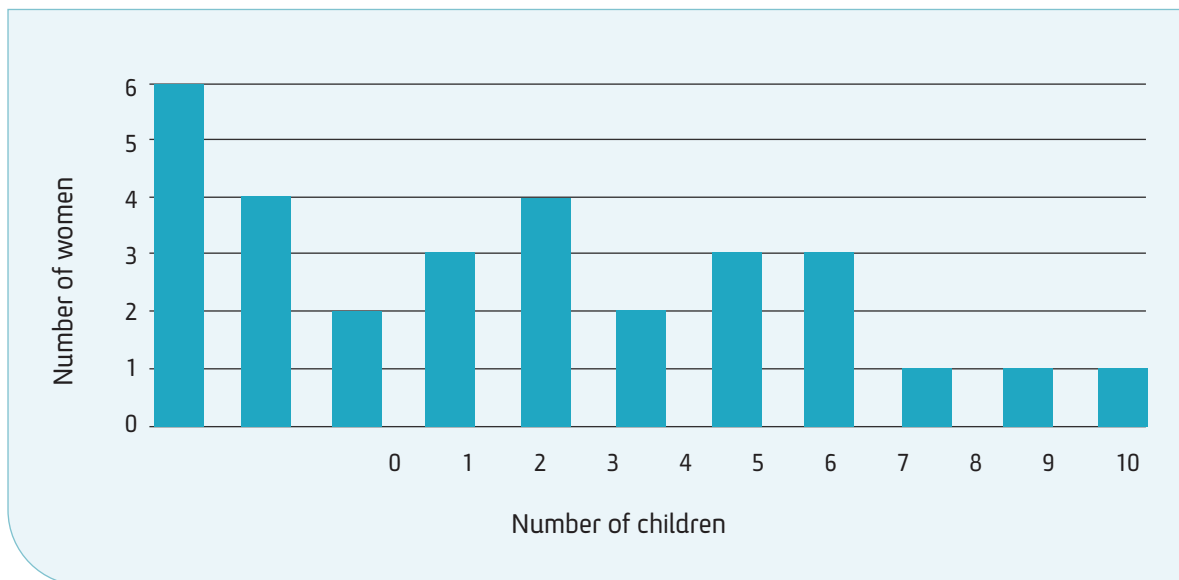
42 Line-Impact Report; Haj Yehia, Nasreen, Saif, Ayman, Keisar, Nitza and Ben Farjon. A Program for the Advancement of Integration of Arab Society into the Labor Market. The Israeli Institute for Democracy, July 2021

Chart 5: Interviewees, according to Marital Status



Most of the women were married and live with their spouse and children. A few of the women are single or divorced. One woman was a widow.

Chart 6: Interviewees, according to Number of Children



Number of children One woman one woman one woman three women three women two women four women three women two women four women 8 women

The average number of the interviewees' children is 3.5. Twenty-four of the women had children and six did not. Out of the women without children, three were single and three were married.

Chart 7: Interviewees, according to Level of Education

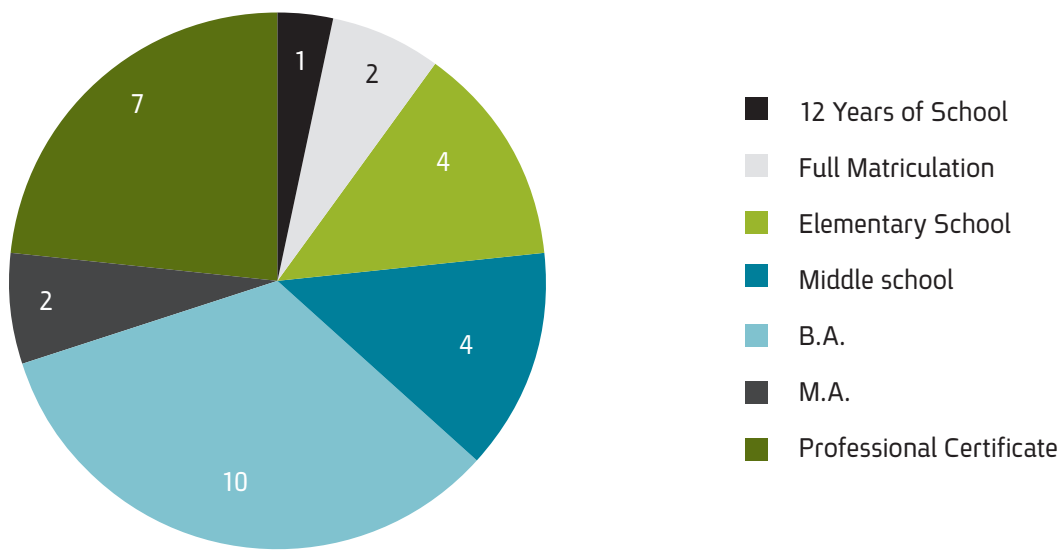


Chart 8: Interviewees, according to Employment Status

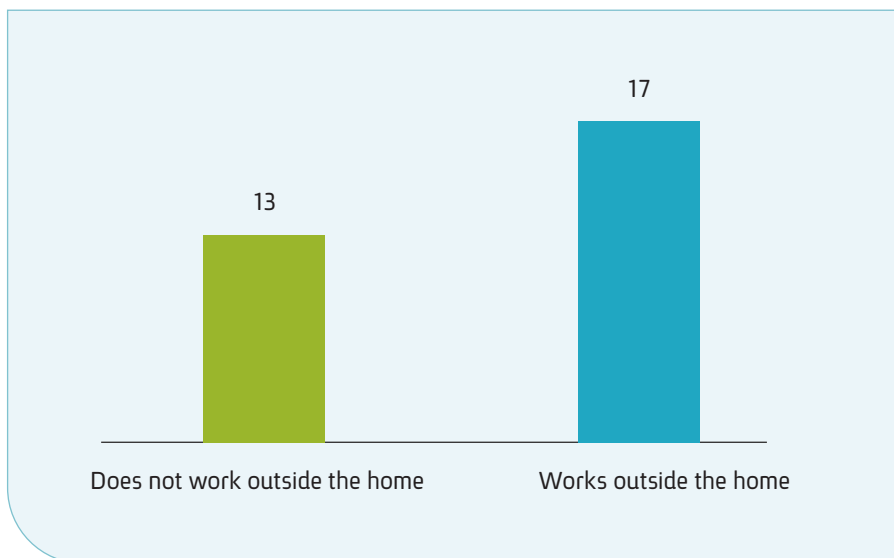
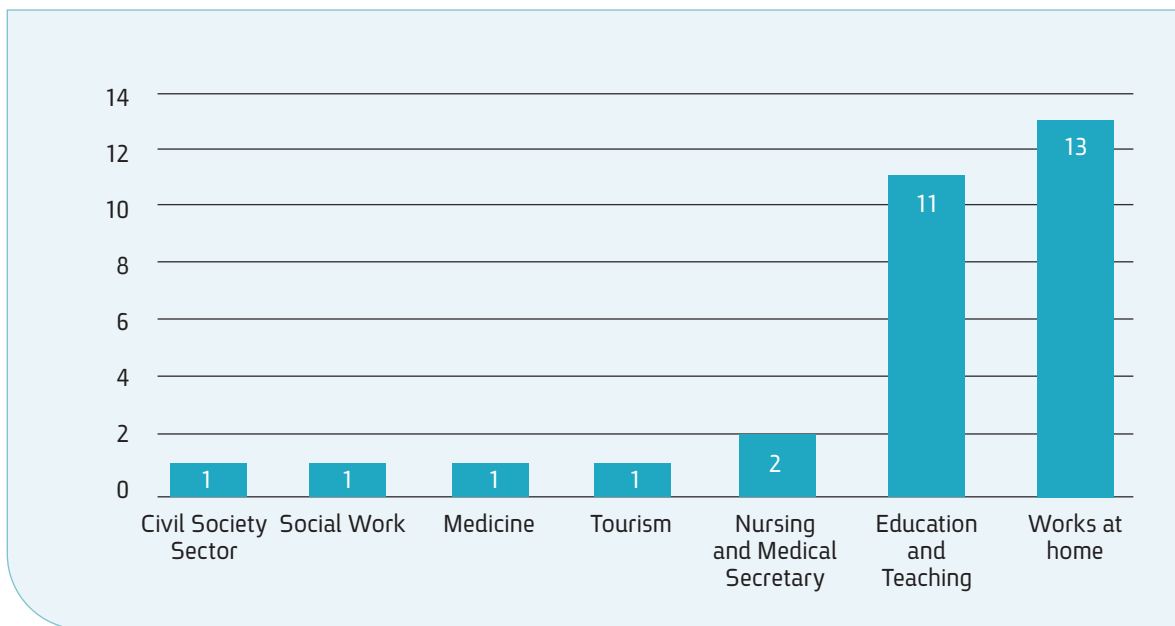
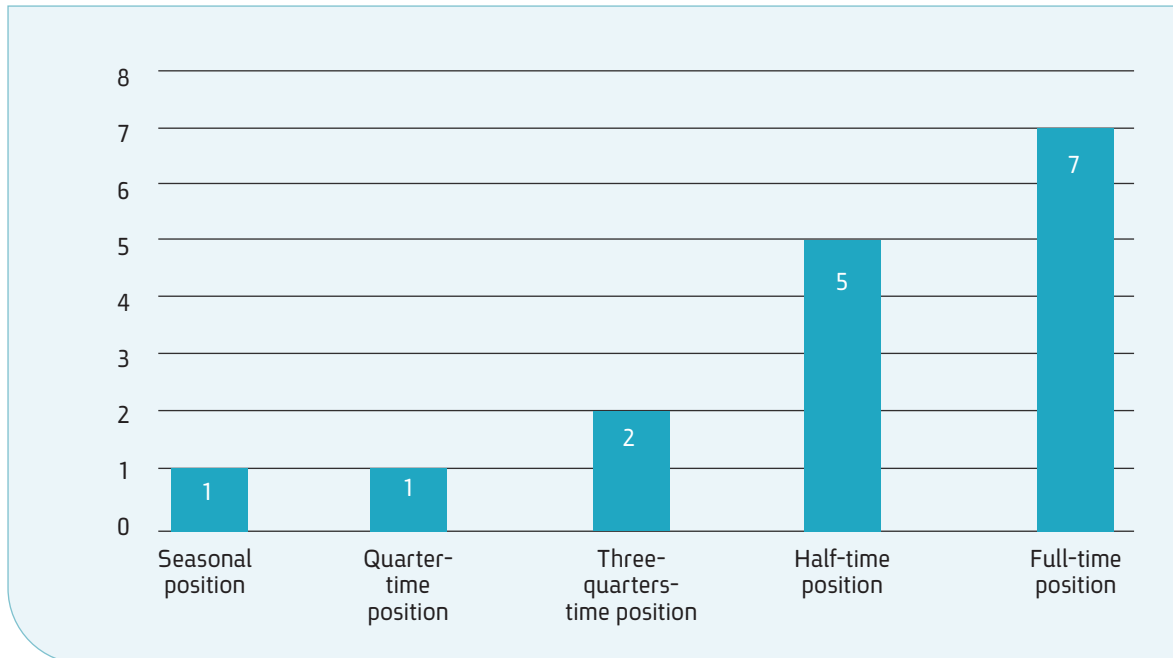


Chart 9: Interviewees, according to Employment Field



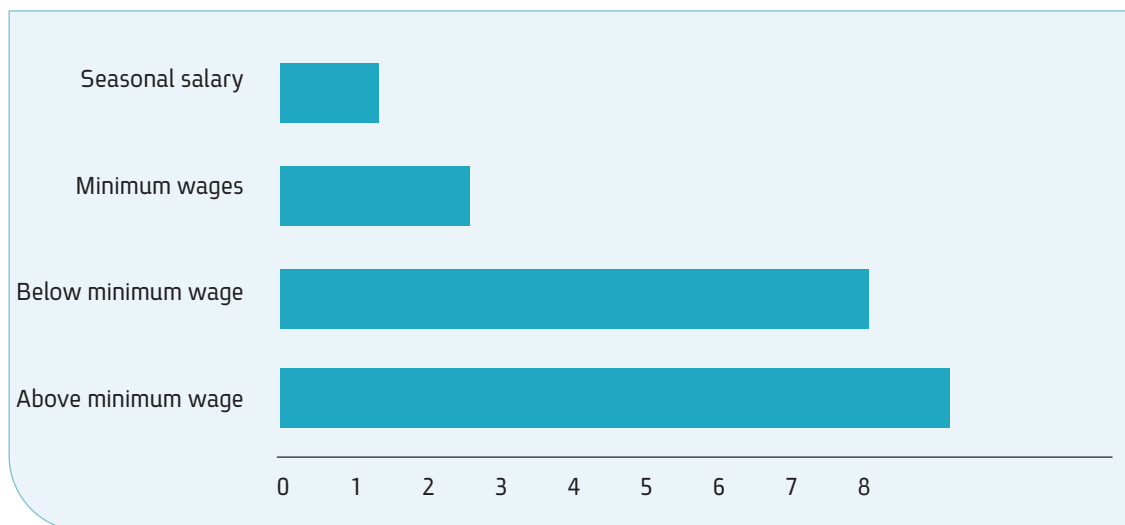
The most common field of employment among the interviewees is education and teaching. This fact matches the general data concerning employment among Bedouin women living in the Negev.

Chart 10: Interviewees, according to Part or Full-time Employment among Employed Women



Most of the employed women who were interviewed work part-time, between 25-75%. Less than half of the employed interviewees have a full-time position.

Chart 11: Interviewees, according to Salary Concerning the number of women who are employed full-time, only seven women earned a salary that was above minimum wage.



The women we interviewed for this research live in three different spatial sites: planned government towns, recognized villages and unrecognized villages in the Negev, according to the following mapping:

1. **Planned towns:** in the Negev, there are a total of seven urban towns planned by the government for [the Bedouin population and where the majority of this population lives (about 212,000 residents, who make up about 70% of the total Bedouin population in the Negev⁴³). Out of these localities, the study focused on three - Rahat, Tel Sheva and Lakiya. These three areas were chosen for the study based on the differences between them, which arise from the size of the population, the form of the locality (city or local council), the time of establishment, and categorization as local councils.

- Rahat is the only Bedouin locality defined as a city (since 1994), and it is the only Bedouin residential area in the Negev where an employment bureau was established. The city has 82,879 residents.
- Tel-Sheva, which has 23,761 residents, is the first Bedouin urban town that was established by the state in 1968. It was declared a local council in 1984.
- Lakiya is defined as a town (not an urban town), due to the size of the population of 17,114 residents. Lakiya was established in 1990 and was declared a local council in 1996.

These areas are also categorized on the socio-economic index of the Central Bureau of Statistics. While all the Bedouin localities in the Negev are ranked in the first and lowest cluster, within this cluster, Rahat is ranked in a higher socio-economic position than Lakiya, with Tel Sheva being located at the bottom of the cluster. The unemployment rate estimated in Rahat is the lowest (8.1%). In Lakiya, this estimated rate is 11.5% and in Tel Sheva this rate is the highest - 12.2%⁴⁴. While Tel Sheva is the oldest planned Bedouin town, the residents suffer from higher unemployment rates than the other planned towns, which makes Tel Sheva an important case study. Compared to Tel Sheva, Rahat is characterized by accelerated urban development processes, as it has a population concentration that allows advantages of scale. Moreover, it is also home to Idan HaNegev industrial park, which was established there and has other employment and commercial centers that are being developed. Lakiya represents a smaller town, which does not have an industrial area or a significant employment center at all. In these three localities, 11 women were interviewed: four in Rahat, four in Lakiya and three in Tel Sheva.

43 Data about the Bedouin Population in the Negev. The Knesset Center for Research and Information. July 2023. (in Hebrew)

44 Dofek Labor Market. Bi-Monthly Statistical Report. Employment Service. June 2023. (in Hebrew)

2. **Recognized villages:** There are 11 Bedouin villages recognized by the State of Israel. Most of the villages were recognized in 1999 or in the early 2000s. These villages belong to two regional councils - El-Kassum and Neve Midbar. In this study, we focused on two recognized villages - Abu-Karinat (Neve-Midbar Regional Council) and Umm-Batin (El-Kassum Regional Council).

The villages not only belong to different regional councils, but also differ by the size of the population and the distance of the villages from Beer Sheva, the largest metropolitan city in the Negev.

- Umm-Batin was recognized in 2005. The village has 5,285 residents and is the third largest village among the recognized villages, in terms of population. The village is located approximately 11 kilometers from Beer Sheva.
- Abu-Karinat was recognized in 1999. The village has 2,415 residents, a population close to the average population of the recognized Bedouin villages in the Negev⁴⁵. Its distance from Beer Sheva is about 30 kilometers. A small industrial area was established in the village.

The employment service does not provide data on the recognized villages individually. As a result, the information about the estimated unemployment rates refers only to the regional councils. In the Neve Midbar Regional Council, to which the village of Abu-Karinat belongs, the estimated unemployment rate for the month of June in 2023 was 11.5%. This rate was significantly higher in the Al-Kassum Regional Council, to which the village of Umm-Batin belongs, and is estimated at 18.5%⁴⁶. Nine women were interviewed in these two villages: five from Abu-Karinat and four from Umm-Batin.

3. **Unrecognized villages:** Approximately 85,000 residents, who make up about 30% of the Bedouin population in the Negev, live in 35 unrecognized villages⁴⁷. As mentioned above, there are no data about the unrecognized villages because these are not surveyed by the official institutions. Therefore, in contrast to the planned towns and recognized villages, the selection of two unrecognized villages as cases, was based on their estimated population size, proximity to Beer Sheva (where there is the largest employment supply in the region), infrastructure, education and health. In this study, we focused on two unrecognized villages - A-Zarnug and Al-Sirrah.

- A-Zarnug is a village with a large population (about 5,000 residents) and is the second largest unrecognized village. The village is located about 15 kilometers from Beer Sheva.
- On the other hand, Al-Sirrah is a relatively small village, with approximately 500 residents and located about 30 kilometers from Beer Sheva.

The two villages are not connected to the national electricity infrastructure and their electricity supply relies on solar panels. Neither village receives basic municipal services, including welfare, education and sanitation services, and they are not part of a municipal government system. In practice, the two regional councils provide partial services in the fields of education and health. A clinic, kindergartens, an elementary school and a high school were established in A-Zarnug, while in Al-Sirrah there are no educational facilities at all. In order to receive education and health services, the residents of Al-Sirrah are forced to go to the nearby town, Kseifa, which is about 12 kilometers from the village, while the situation in A-Zarnug is the opposite, since the schools and the clinic in the village serve some of the residents of the nearby villages. These conditions distinguish the two villages from one another. The residents of these villages suffer from continuous threats of house demolition, and are distinct cases with unique conditions concerning women's employment. In both localities, nine women were interviewed: five in A-Zarnug and four in Al-Sirrah. Another woman was interviewed from an unrecognized village near Drijat village. In total, 10 women from unrecognized villages were interviewed.

⁴⁵ Based on calculating the average population in the recognized villages, according to data on the Negev Bedouin population. The Knesset Center for Research and Information. July 2023. (in Hebrew)

⁴⁶ Dofek Labor Market. Bi-Monthly Statistical Report. Employment Service. June 2023. (in Hebrew)

⁴⁷ See footnote 44.

Chart 12: Interviewees, according to Type of Locality

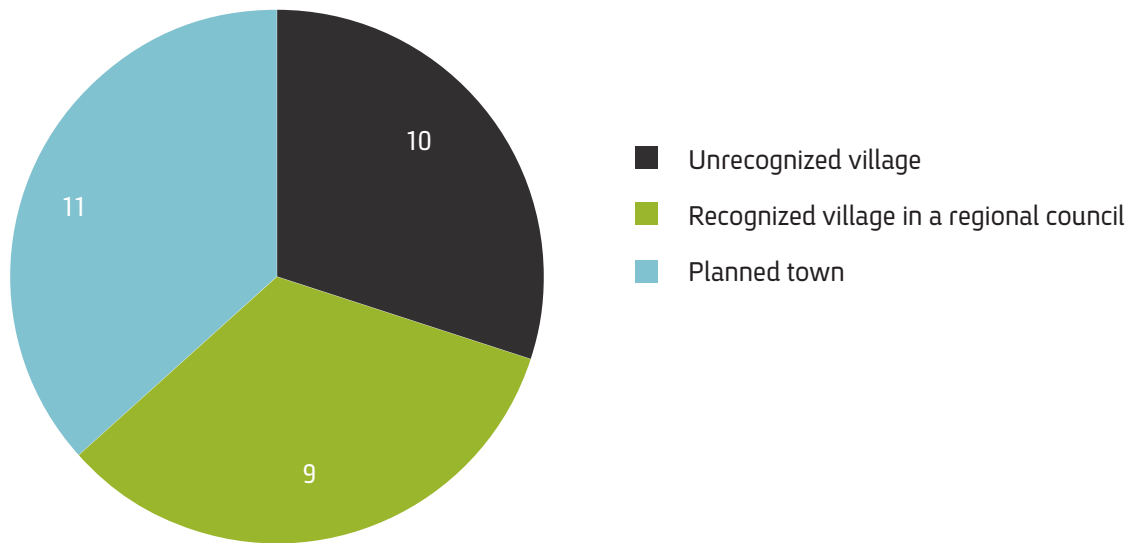
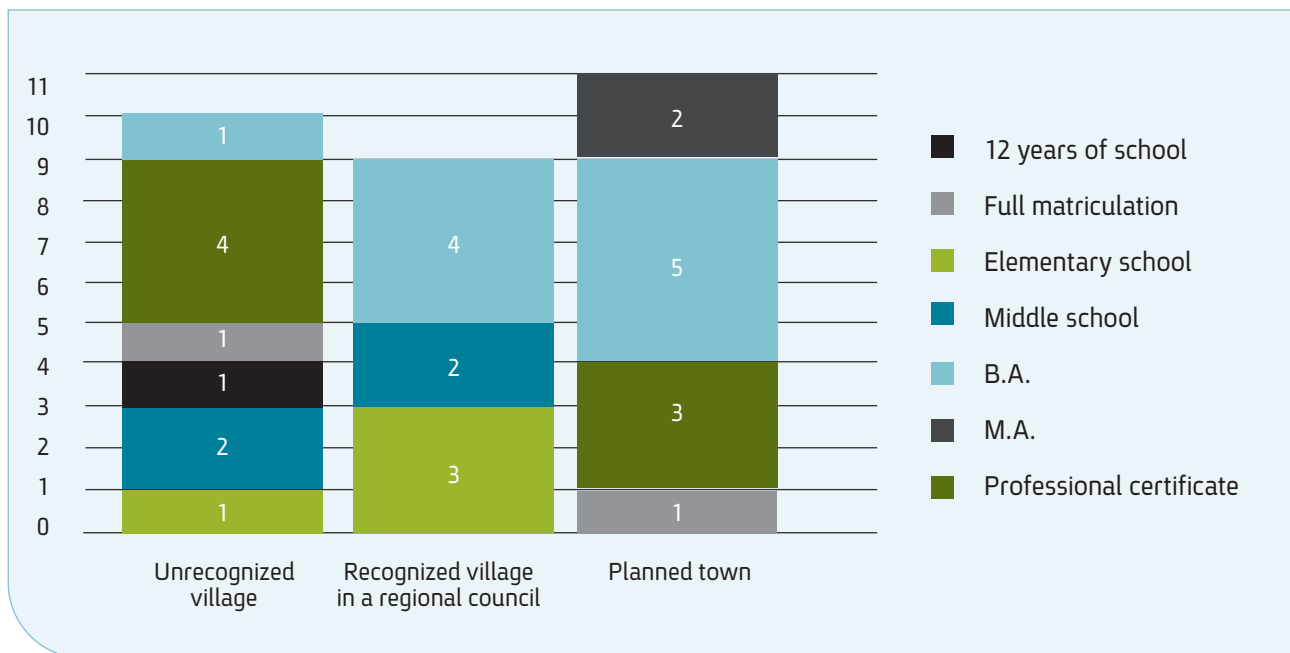


Chart 13: Interviewees' Education, according to Type of Locality



As can be seen from Chart 13, the interviewees from the planned towns and the regional councils are more educated than the interviewees living in the unrecognized villages. Two women from the planned towns have a Master's degree, and half have an undergraduate degree. There is only one interviewee with a Bachelor's degree from an unrecognized village. This interviewee was born and educated in a planned town, and she acquired her first academic degree before her marriage. Following her marriage, she moved with her husband to the unrecognized village where his family resides. In the urban towns, there is only one interviewee with a full matriculation certificate, and there are no interviewees whose education ended in middle school or elementary school.

Chart 14: Occupation of the Interviewees by Type of Locality

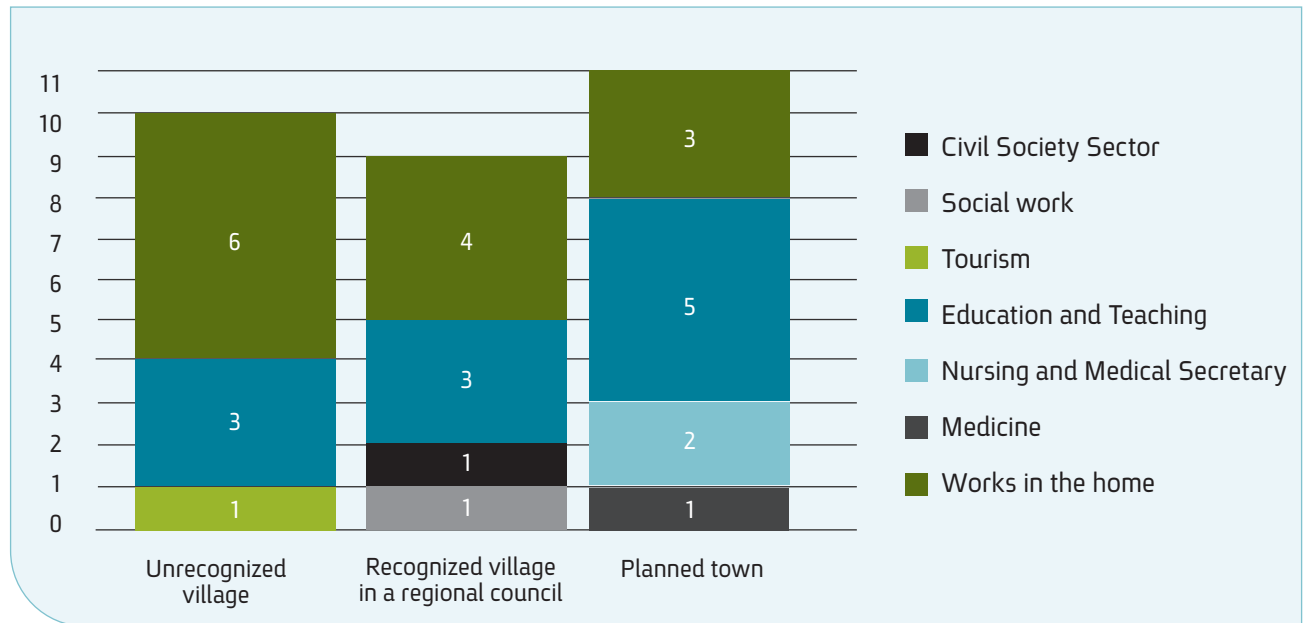


Chart 14 shows that among interviewees from the unrecognized villages, the number of women who do not work outside their home is high, in comparison to interviewees from the planned towns and regional councils.

Chart 15: Salaries of Interviewees by Type of Locality



The data in Chart 15 indicate that more women from the unrecognized villages have no income from wages than the women living in the recognized towns. Moreover, the salary of the women in the recognized towns is higher than that of the employed women who live in the unrecognized villages.

SECTION 2

FINDINGS

- D. Structural constraints and factors that help integration into employment.
- E. The meaning of work from the women's perspectives
- F. A look to the future and plans for promotion from the women's points of view



D. STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS AND FACTORS THAT HELP INTEGRATION INTO EMPLOYMENT

D.1. STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS THAT LIMIT INTEGRATION INTO EMPLOYMENT

Structural constraints refer to the social conditions that limit women's employment opportunities. This section deals with the structural constraints that limit the women, and other conditions that can open up opportunities for the women. The main constraints that the chapter deals with are transportation and mobility, infrastructure, and childcare.

Transportation and mobility

Gender and spatial inequality are connected to access to public transportation and owning a private car. Given the lack of regular and accessible public transportation, women living in peripheral areas are the most vulnerable. In southern Israel, the lack of accessible public transportation is significant, especially for women living in the unrecognized villages. **All interviewees from these villages emphasized the lack of public transportation as a key aspect affecting their quality of life and the employment opportunities open to them.** This is how a woman from an unrecognized village describes the journey to leave the village:

"If I want to leave the village, I have to go to the intersection. If there is a car that takes us to the intersection, it takes five to six minutes by car. Then we take a bus. A few days ago, I walked (to the bus station). It took me 40-45 minutes to walk from the station to the village. I was sick, I couldn't walk. I came here paralyzed."

Another interviewee from an unrecognized village describes how she arrives at her workplace as a classroom assistant every morning:

"I leave with my husband at half past seven to the village where he teaches. Then I take a bus to the school where I work. I finish work by half past twelve."

The lack of public transportation increases the women's dependence on the men in their family to get around outside the residential community, and in particular to reach their workplace. In cases in which the women do not have a family member who can drive them to the workplace, the lack of accessible transportation limits the women's movement to daylight hours only and to certain weather conditions:

"Either they take me in a car, or I sit at home. I once walked and got sunstroke. Sometimes I walk (about 45 minutes), during periods when there is no sun."

All of the interviewees who do not have a driver's license or a car stated that they do not leave the village after dark. Neither do they leave on days when the weather conditions are particularly difficult - extremely high or low temperatures (characteristic of the desert climate in the Negev), or on rainy days that are sometimes bring floods to the area. One of the interviewees who lives in an unrecognized village and does not have a driver's license explicitly stated that she "does not take jobs that require traveling in the dark."

The lack of accessible public transportation for these women limits the working hours and the periods of the year when it is possible for them to use the already sparse public transportation to travel outside of their residential community. Having a driver's license and car are significant factors that affect women's access to employment opportunities. **Most of the interviewees without a driver's license and a car do**

not work outside their home. Some of them work part-time (between a quarter and half time) outside or inside their homes and their wages are below the minimum wage. The only interviewee who does not have a driver's license and is employed full-time as a medical secretary, lives in Lakiya. The bus stop is located about a five-minute walk from her house, which allows her to return home even late in the evening from her workplace, which is outside her town. **On the other hand, most of the women who have a driver's license and a car, work outside their home on a half-time to full-time basis, and the salary of most of these women is above the minimum wage.**

Infrastructure

When examining the existence or absence of infrastructure, such as the supply of water and electricity in homes, a significant difference emerged from the interviews of the women living in the planned towns and those living in the unrecognized villages. All the interviewees from the planned towns stated that they have dependable water and electricity supply at home. On the other hand, women living in the unrecognized villages reported difficulties in this area: all of their houses have a water supply, but in some of them the flow of water is irregular. One of the interviewees from an unrecognized village even stated that sometimes, the water stops during the day between 16:00 and 23:00.

A similar difference also emerged concerning electricity: while **for women in the planned towns, the supply of electricity is dependable, for women in the unrecognized villages, having a constant supply of electricity is a luxury.** All of the interviewees from the unrecognized villages stated that the electricity in their homes is provided through solar energy (solar panels installed on the roofs of their houses); therefore, there is often no electricity during the night hours, as well as during winter daytime hours. Similar to the residents of the unrecognized villages, three interviewees who live in recognized villages said that the electricity in their homes is provided by solar panels. The issue of electricity supply is central for women: when electricity supply is limited to certain hours during the day, it limits the time during which household chores that require the use of electrical products (such as laundry) can be carried out. This temporal limitation, especially during the daytime, **further limits women's ability to work outside the household, making housework more arduous.**

Similar to dependable access to electricity, the internet infrastructure also varies in the Bedouin localities in the Negev. **All the interviewees from the planned towns have internet in their homes,** although some of them talked about having unstable internet connection. Most of the interviewees from the villages in the regional councils also have internet connection at home, with the exception of three of the interviewees from the village of Abu Karinat. **Most of the interviewees from the unrecognized villages do not have internet in their homes.** Due to this scarcity, the women use the internet on their cell phones. However, the use of the cellular network is extremely limiting and does not allow people to make video calls, upload or download files, or have access to a stable and fast internet infrastructure.

The interviewees who are not connected to the internet lack the ability to study or work remotely.

Distance learning and working from home is a trend that increased since the COVID-19 crisis, both in higher education institutions and in the Israeli labor market. As a result, working via the internet enables overcoming spatial gaps and has become an essential component. A stable internet connection is particularly significant in relation to employment opportunities for women who live in remote areas and where there is a lack of good, accessible public transportation. **Not only is a stable home internet infrastructure essential for Bedouin women who seek to acquire higher education, but it is also central for women who work outside the home, both as freelancers and as employees.** For example, one of the interviewees, who lives in an unrecognized village and whose income comes from a family business, emphasized: "All our work, and the orders (from the business) are made via the internet." In this woman's home, efforts were made to install a stable internet connection, which allows her to run an independent business and receive orders from customers outside the local community. In contrast to her, another interviewee who lives in the same village and runs a private nursery, explains: "My reception is weak, and I don't have internet at home. Sometimes I have a Zoom meeting, and I apologize ... (for the lack of

reception) and reconnect when there is strong reception." In the case of this woman, the lack of internet limits her ability to hold work meetings. This severely restricts her ability to work outside the home since she does not have a driver's license and there are no bus stops near her home.

Childcare

The women who live in more remote and less central unrecognized villages do not have access to educational frameworks for their children – nursery schools, kindergartens and schools. The lack of educational frameworks in the unrecognized villages⁴⁸ limits many women in the job they can take, and even prevents some of them from entering the labor market.

Only four interviewees from unrecognized villages work outside their homes. Most of them work from home, which allows them to provide income, while taking care of their children. Only two interviewees from the unrecognized villages, one 43-year-old and one 51-year-old, work outside their homes. The first is employed as an assistant in a kindergarten and the second as a teacher's assistant in a school. The 43-year-old interviewee's work outside the village is supported by the fact that her four children go to school in the village. She returns from her work outside the village every day at the same time that her children's school day ends. The second interviewee is employed as an assistant at a school outside the village. She has been working at the school for a decade on a quarter-time basis. At this point, her children are adults and no longer need supervision.

Compared to the women from the unrecognized villages, **all the interviewees from the planned towns and the regional councils, who are employed, work as salaried workers outside their homes.** They work more hours than the women from the unrecognized villages, and, thus, their salaries are higher (see Charts 14 and 15). Most of these women have children. The women send the school-aged children to local educational frameworks and sometimes get help from relatives (mother, grandmother, sister, etc.) to be with their children after school hours. There are also instances in which family members help the women with their children after giving birth, enabling them to return to the labor market. All the women with family members who help them look after their children, so that they can attend university and work, told us that their family members support their desire to work outside the home. This support appears to be significant for the women who wish to integrate into the labor market, since given the lack of preschool settings in all Bedouin towns in the Negev⁴⁹, women who wish to find employment, find themselves exclusively dependent on the support of the nuclear and extended family.

D.2. FACTORS THAT HELP INTEGRATION INTO EMPLOYMENT

The division between factors that help integration into employment and structural factors that limit integration into employment is, of course, somewhat artificial, since it is difficult to separate these factors that influence each other. For example, the ability to acquire education (defined here as a supporting factor) depends on mobility. Therefore, this factor is dependent upon accessibility to public transportation (whose lack is defined as a structural constraint that makes integration difficult). "Lack of education" or "lack of social networks" can also be defined as limiting factors. In this sense, the division helps to define the factors whose existence is necessary for integration, in comparison to the factors whose absence makes it difficult. However, it is important to note that the reader must not lose the holistic view, which ties all the factors together.

48 The Lack of Childcare Frameworks in Bedouin Society in the Negev. The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, May 2023.

49 Tirosh, Oren, Cohen, Dana, Berlin, Bracha, Levy-Kovshi, Ayelet and Smadar Somech. Patterns of Employment and Obstacles for Employment in the Negev Bedouin Society. Meyers Joint-Brookdale, April 2023. The Lack of Childcare Frameworks in Bedouin Society in the Negev. The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, May 2023. [Frameworks for Pre-school Children as Leverage for Decreasing Gaps – Childcare Frameworks in Negev Bedouin Communities. The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, 2020. Negev Bedouin Women's Employment: From Distress to Crisis Due to the War. The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, June 2024.](#) (in Hebrew)

Education

One of the aspects examined in relation to the employment of Bedouin women is the question of the effect of education on accessibility to employment. **Recent studies among Bedouin women in the Negev have indicated a strong connection between education and employment**⁵⁰. Moreover, among the interviewees in this study, more women with post-secondary education (academic degree or a professional certificate, mainly in the fields of education and teaching) are employed than women with elementary or secondary education. **However, post-secondary education alone does not guarantee employment opportunities for Bedouin women.**

The story of one of the interviewees who participated in the research emphasizes the importance of the spatial context in relation to the employment of Bedouin women in the Negev. This woman, who was born and educated in one of the planned towns, successfully completed her studies for a bachelor's degree in social sciences and humanities. After her marriage, she moved to live near her husband's family in an unrecognized village. This is how she describes the transition and life in the unrecognized village:

"An educated woman who has a bachelor's degree, she must not give up (paid) work. Especially women who live in Bedouin society. No woman should give up (paid) work, because work changes her life. She must have income all the time. It also affects raising her children: they will be smarter and happier. No one will live in 'the Bedouin dispersion.'⁵¹ Life is really hard! and if you want to go to a hospital, you have to wait. For a woman who doesn't have a car, she can't go to the hospital, to the market, to all kinds of places, whenever she wants. Life (in a recognized city or village) is better: there is electricity all the time, there are buses all the time, and everything is close by. There is a difference between a person who always lives in the city and in an unrecognized village. It's a different way of coping. For me, a woman who was born in the city and lived in the city all the time, it will be difficult for her to move to such a place (an unrecognized village)."

In her words, the interviewee emphasizes the close connection between education and employment for women and the importance of the integration of Bedouin women into the labor market, for them and for their children. At the same time, she points out that the conditions in the unrecognized villages, and especially the lack of infrastructure and transportation, significantly harm the quality of life of women, as well as their ability to earn a living, even if they had acquired a higher education.

The lack of accessibility to public transportation and the financial difficulty of purchasing a car are significant limitations for women from the unrecognized villages, who wish to acquire higher education. One of the interviewees, a 54-year-old woman living in an unrecognized village, specifically referred to the most significant limitation that prevented her from acquiring such an education. Although she was the first in her family to successfully graduate from high school, she explains that "there was no transportation" that allowed her to move outside the village, despite her desire to attend college. 'It was a mistake that I didn't continue my studies,' she says, in a tone full of regret. In the same breath, she qualifies the feeling of regret with the mobility limitations that continue to characterize unrecognized villages. **The combination of the poor infrastructure with the lack of transportation and the gender division of labor between women and men illuminates the differences between the lives of women in the unrecognized villages and women in the planned towns and recognized villages.**

The clear differences between the unrecognized villages and other types of localities were emphasized by the interviewees over the age of 40, who live in recognized villages. Since these villages were recognized only in 1999 the women were educated in unrecognized villages until they were 15-20 years old. All the women in this age range in the villages that are now recognized, did not have the opportunity to acquire an education beyond 10 years of schooling. This is because, when they were young, their villages did not

50 Tirosh, Oren, Cohen, Dana, Berlin, Bracha, Levy-Kovshi, Ayelet and Smadar Somech. Patterns of Employment and Obstacles for Employment in the Negev Bedouin Society. Meyers Joint-Brookdale, April 2023. (in Hebrew)

51 This term refers to the Bedouin communities which are dispersed in places at the Negev desert that are defined by the state as illegal, and thus unrecognized.

have high schools and because there was limited transportation to and from their villages. For example, a 45-year-old interviewee who lives in Abu Karinat describes the period when the village was defined as an unrecognized village:

"It was difficult to travel. If you miss the bus, the day is gone. And it's hard to walk. We had to have someone pick us up (to school). I regretted not continuing to study. That's why I wanted my daughters to continue studying. (They) fulfilled the dream that I didn't fulfill."

Compared to women over the age of 40, the women under the age of 30 from the recognized villages we interviewed acquired higher education and all currently work outside their homes. When these women were toddlers or at a pre-kindergarten age, the villages eventually underwent the recognition process. As a result, the women in the planned towns and the young women from the recognized villages are more educated. Most of these women are first generation in higher education, which has opened up employment opportunities for them that are not accessible to women from the unrecognized villages.

The importance of higher education for employment opportunities for Bedouin women increases when examining the fields of occupation of the educated women. Most of the highly educated women who were interviewed stated that they are employed in the fields in which they acquired a higher education, or in occupations that are tangential to their fields of study, mainly in education, teaching, nursing and medicine.

Social networks

One of the narratives that emerged as part of the interviewees' reference to their position in the labor market is social networks. Several women articulated the importance of participating in the labor market by emphasizing their ability to "meet new people" in employment settings, as can be seen in the following two examples:

"Work, for me, is everything, also in a socio-cultural aspect. While you are working [...] you go out and meet new people in your environment, and also outside of it." (A 37-year-old unemployed interviewee from an unrecognized village).

"(I) meet people (at work), with new abilities and talents, new faces. I know many people and other cultures. In addition, the fact that I live in a Bedouin society, the work allows me to meet people from the same (Bedouin) society, who have a different culture and habits. Work exposes you to people you would never meet if you stayed at home. When you meet them (the people) and work with them, it will be a different life for you." (37-year-old interviewee from a planned town, employed in teaching)

The socio-cultural aspect to which the interviewee refers in the first quote, is explained in detail in the following quote by the second interviewee. The meaning of getting to know people in the professional world is linked by the women to exposure to cultures, both inside and outside Bedouin society in the Negev. While staying in the domestic space limits the women's social circles and exposure to others, integration into the labor market enables the creation of both strong and weak social ties.

The importance of social networks for Bedouin women in the Negev is not limited to exposure to worlds of content and rich social diversity. It is essential with regard to women's ability to integrate into the labor market in the first place. In the interviews, the women were asked if their friends were working and what size position they held. **About half of the women did not know at all whether their friends were employed and what their fields of occupation were.** Except for one interviewee, who lives in a small town and is employed as a nurse in an emergency room, the women who did not know how to answer this question neither work outside their home or live in an unrecognized village. In other words, **the social ties outside the family unit among these women are extremely limited.**

The importance of these relationships becomes clear when several women explained that they were exposed to an employment opportunity that turned into the job in which they are currently employed as a result of their social networks. Despite the common perception that in Bedouin society, family ties are the most significant ties with regard to employment, we found that **only two employed interviewees stated that they had the help of family members when looking for employment opportunities**. The rest of the employed interviewees were hired in a variety of ways. While some of them received help from friends and acquaintances, two women, one a doctor and the other a teacher, were hired due to pathways offered since their studies, such as the Teach First Israel (Hotam) program, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. Others found jobs on their own. For example, one woman said:

"I submitted my certificates to schools. They called me and said they needed a Hebrew teacher at the community center." (a 25-year-old interviewee from a recognized village, employed in teaching).

In contrast to the women who are employed, **most of the women who do not work outside their home stated that there is no one to help them in the process of finding paid work**. Only three women stated that they can get help from family members and only one woman stated that she can get help from her friends who are employed in various fields in the public and private sectors. The answers from the unemployed women highlight the importance of social networks in the labor market. **Among Arab women in Israel, female social circles are of central importance as a resource in the local labor market**⁵².

Recent studies indicate the impact of social networks on the ability of women, including women from marginalized groups, to integrate and advance in the labor market. These studies emphasize that women are in need of more diversity of social networks than men in order to succeed in the labor market⁵³. Although homogeneous social networks (connections with similar people) allow exposure to employment opportunities, these kind of networks limit the employment opportunities for marginalized groups, exposing them mainly to precarious employment, which is characterized by low wages and the absence of social benefits⁵⁴. Moreover, dense and homogeneous social-family networks (characterized by strong social ties) are especially important for social support among marginalized groups. However, at times, they block class mobility⁵⁵. On the other hand, when social networks are characterized by heterogeneity, they allow exposure to more opportunities, thus improving women's chances of both getting a job and improving its quality. Therefore, it is not surprising that some women considered exposure to a wider cultural and social diversity as one of the advantages of entering the labor market. Ironically, these women reveal the trap of Bedouin women who have few social connections, or dense and homogenous social networks, when many times the mere lack of diverse connections makes it difficult for them to enter the labor market in the first place. Diverse social networks enable Bedouin women in the Negev to deal with the poor supply of employment and with the limitation of networks created through the family unit, which is characterized by high social homogeneity.

52 Benyamin, Orly and Sarit Nisim. 2018. ["Understanding the Obstacles to Extraction from Poverty in Different Social Positions: Employment Obstacles and Obstacles to the Realization of Rights and Receiving of Services."](#) Research Unit for the Topic of Poverty, Bar-Ilan University.

53 Ibourk, Aomar, and Zakaria Elouaourti. 2023. "Revitalizing Women's Labor Force Participation in North Africa: An Exploration of Novel Empowerment Pathways." *International Economic Journal* 37 (3): 462-484; Lutter, Mark. 2015. "Do Women Suffer from Network Closure? The Moderating Effect of Social Capital on Gender Inequality in a Project-Based Labor Market, 1929 to 2010." *American Sociological Review* 80 (2): 329-358.

54 Salikutluk, Zerrin, and Katrin Menke. 2021. "Gendered Integration? How Recently Arrived Male and Female Refugees Fare on the German Labour Market." *Journal of Family Research* 33 (2): 284-321.

55 Stack, Carol B. 1997. *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*. New York: Basic Books.

E. THE MEANING OF WORK FROM THE WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE

In order to examine the Bedouin women's ability to integrate into employment, it is important to understand the meaning they attribute to it. The interviews show that **most of the women, both those in the labor market and those who do not work outside the household, indicated their desire to continue working or to enter the labor market.** Few women, all in the 44-54 age range, stated that they are uninterested in working outside the home. The two exceptions were two women who run an independent business from their home. The other two women stated that their age poses a significant obstacle for entering the labor market and that at this stage of their lives "the train has left the station." The rest of the interviewees referred repeatedly to the deep meaning of their entry and continued employment, in economic, social and cultural terms.

In a study conducted among Arab women in Israel, it was found that these women may avoid thinking about work in financial terms due to the gender and national trap in which they are found in Israeli society⁵⁶. Despite this claim, many interviewees in our research mentioned the importance of integration into the labor market as a source of income. The women mainly used the terms "to earn" and "financial income" when referring to the economic significance of working outside the household. Only a few women described their employment as a second income for the household, in their words, in order to "help the family."

The economic aspect noted by the women has a central gender meaning - economic independence. This is how a 27-year-old woman from a planned town who works as a teacher describes the meaning of the concept of work for her:

"(Work is) everything: livelihood, it fills the time. It's doing something I really like, being independent and not needing help from anyone. And that brings us back to livelihood."

One of the meanings of work for this young woman is financial independence that reduces her dependence on others. Although studies have long indicated that women who remain at home are an integral part of the economic markets in modern societies⁵⁷, the work of these women remains transparent. That is, since their work is not defined as part of the economic cycle, it constitutes unpaid work. Although women employed for wages also perform transparent housework, women who only work in the household, and are left with no income at all, are completely dependent on their spouses. As a result, these women must accept the fact that they are dependent on the men in their family and are denied economic independence. Thus, some of the women who do not work outside the household referred to work as reflecting "life" or "freedom."

For example, a 52-year-old woman who lives in an unrecognized village and does not work outside her home stated: "Work is life, a person without work does not live." Another 50-year-old woman, also from an unrecognized village who does not work outside her home stated that working outside the household is an "absolute freedom for a woman!"

It is not surprising that it is **women from the unrecognized villages who imbue the meaning of freedom into the concept of work.** The dependence of these women on family members is deeper than others because, as described above, **for these women, housework is extremely arduous (in light of the lack of basic infrastructure) and the employment opportunities are sparse, due to the lack of educational frameworks for their children and the lack of access to public transportation.** In fact, the limitations of women's mobility increase their economic dependence on their family members. Another woman from an unrecognized village who runs a business from her home articulated the meaning of her work as a source of income and as an action through which "you change the atmosphere; you don't stay in a fixed routine.

56 Sa'ar, Amalia. 2010. "Small Initiatives of Women in the Course of Social Mobility. A Number of Paradoxical Aspects." *Israeli Sociology* 11(2): 441-462. (in Hebrew).

57 Brayer-Garb, Rona. 2020. "Transparent Jobs" *Maftach: A Lexical Journal for Political Thought* 15: 79-100. (in Hebrew)

Actually, there is movement, it is important for me to move." This woman who works from her home, both as a housewife and as a breadwinner, describes the management of the business as a metaphorical movement characterized by leaving the routine of housework and emphasizing the importance of paid work (as employed or self-employed), specifically for women who face a significant spatial mobility challenges due to being residents of the unrecognized villages.

The motif of venting and breaking the routine came up in the interviews of many women who work outside the household, regardless of the type of locality in which the women live:

"Work is not only a matter of money, it takes us out of the routine, from boredom, from repeating the same things every time [...] Work relieves boredom and keeps us busy; it changes the way of life as well as the thought and personality. I don't imagine myself sitting at home." (A 24-year-old interviewee from a planned town, works as a nurse in an emergency room)

"Work might be a bit of a release. It's a release [...] it gets me out of the boredom at home." (A 37-year-old interviewee from a planned town, a teacher)

"I go out (to work) also to ventilate myself [...] the person who works goes out, changes the atmosphere, meets new people, brings in money as well. And from the mental aspect, it is a form of rest: the person's system changes (at work) and becomes more orderly. This creates order, between home and work." (A 51-year-old interviewee from an unrecognized village, who works as a teacher's assistant)

It seems that **the women perceive work in the household as passive, as stagnation** so that time stands still, because it is organized in a circular and repetitive sequence of domestic chores. From the women's words, it becomes clear **that the motif of breaking routine and venting involves the principles of order and organization**. These principles have two aspects:

- One aspect refers to a structured agenda, i.e., a framework within which the women can organize a schedule.
- The second aspect refers to the separation between the private space, where housework is done, and the public-occupational space.

These two dimensions intertwine, not only in literal terms, but also in the sense in which the women relate to the "order" that working outside the home allows them. This order is not solely focused on the needs of the family unit and the organization of time around household chores, but one that is focused on constructing a routine outside the family unit as independent subjects. Except for one interviewee, **all the women who referred to the motif of "order" formulated it in terms of being active and in control of their lives:**

"(Work creates) order. You prepare, as you wish, a plan for your day. (Work) arranges my life." (A 39-year-old interviewee, from an unrecognized village, who runs an independent business)

"Work fills your time and arranges your time, creates an agenda." (A 28-year-old interviewee from a planned town, who does not work outside her home, since she is in an advanced stage of pregnancy)

"Work organizes your time, allows you to separate personal life from practical life. You are not the same person who sits at home." (a 29-year-old interviewee from a planned town, works in the field of education)

The interviewees refer to household chores in terms of personal life and do not perceive these chores, however arduous they may be, in terms of work. The reference of the interviewee who differentiates between "personal life" and "practical life" represents the aspiration of some women to separate the private (personal) space from the occupational one, which the interviewee articulates as practical. However, although housework is seen as being worth less because it is not rewarded with a salary, it is sometimes more difficult and arduous, especially compared to occupations that do not require manual labor. For the interviewee from the unrecognized village who runs an independent business, the separation between home and work takes place in the same private-family space. Nevertheless, she emphasizes the importance of the "order" that paid work enables in her life.

It appears that the women who perceive paid work as an organizing system that separates the home from the sphere of paid work, seek to gain meaning through the "practical" world, i.e. the occupational space, and not to remain in the domestic space, which is perceived as passive and as having low social and civic value. Unlike these women, only one interviewee referred to the connection between the domestic space and the occupational space. This 23-year-old woman from a planned town, who has not worked for a salary since going on maternity leave, said: "(Work) is an obligation, a daily routine. (So is) the home; it's work. It is also the children." This interviewee was the only one who treated housework as a job, even if it is not remunerated.

Along with economic independence and the construction of order and separation between the private space and the workspace, **many women described paid work as being self-fulfilling.** This motif was expressed by the women in various ways, including realizing their potential and shaping their personality. It was expressed only the young women who work outside the home or the women who expressed their desire to work outside their home:

"(Work) shapes and strengthens my personality [...] Throughout my life I have been giving birth, breastfeeding, I felt that my brain was wasting away [...] and I feel that I am at an age where I still have the ability to work. I hope to find a place other than the supermarket, where there is a possibility to work. That's why I started (looking for professional training)." (A 38-year-old interviewee from a recognized village, who does not work outside the home).

"(Work generates) self-confidence, helps my personality to develop and progress. It's a (life) experience." (a 26-year-old interviewee from a planned town, who does not work outside the home).

"There is nothing better than work. You see the people who don't study, who don't know how to read or write. Thank God I got out - that I studied, that I worked, that I saw." (a 25-year-old interviewee from a planned town, who works as a medical secretary)

"Self-realization. I feel that I am fulfilled and at peace with myself. It's a good routine, I feel it [...] I feel that I'm more confident, and that there is order in life and meaning in life." (a 28-year-old interviewee from a planned town, employed as a teacher)

Some of the women even formulated the aspects of self-fulfillment in terms of pride and contribution to society:

"When I teach, I help. I teach women the Hebrew language, who haven't finished high school. It's an important thing and it's a source of pride for me." (a 25-year-old interviewee from a recognized village, works in teaching)

The motif of self-fulfillment, which the women break down into components of self-satisfaction, empowerment and personal freedom, does not sum up to these individual themes. Some of the women even formulated it as a process of forming their identity:

"I always say: 'A person looks for himself in the workplace, and if you found the right place, then you found what you should be in.' Today I see myself in a place of giving [...] I try to reach realization, as a human being." (a 30-year-old interviewee from a recognized village, a social worker)

The women's construction of the meaning of work through self-fulfillment demonstrates their motivation to be part of the public space and highlights participation in the labor market as an integral part of their identity. By articulating participation in the labor market as self-fulfillment, the interviewees emphasize the significant role that paid work plays in their lives. It is important to emphasize that, **among most of the interviewees, the motive of self-fulfillment was intertwined with the aspects of economic independence, order and separation between the home and the professional space.** That is, most of the interviewees wove together the different meanings and roles that paid work plays in their lives.

F. LOOKING TO AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE FROM THE WOMEN'S POINT OF VIEW

Aspiration for continuity and fulfilling educational possibilities

As mentioned above, most of the women expressed their desire to start or continue to take an active part in the labor market, and **half of the interviewees expressed their desire to continue working in their current occupation or in the profession they acquired at the university level.** For example, when asked if they would be interested in changing their field of work, women who work as employees said the following:

"I chose the job at the school because it suits me and the time I have. Moreover, I can't take a full-time job because I work another job, I have a shop where I sell handicrafts. I wouldn't want to work in another field. Because I tried other professions until I found myself. I worked in five different jobs, until I found myself in the job I'm in (currently)." (a 23-year-old interviewee from a planned town, employed as a teacher)

"No, I don't see myself in another field. Even though I was told to work somewhere else, I didn't agree because I want to work in art, in the field I studied." (a 37-year-old interviewee from a planned town, who works as an art teacher)

One interviewee even expanded the motif of self-fulfillment to include the way in which she outlines her occupational future. This woman stated that she wishes to remain in the fields of welfare, while emphasizing her ambitions to integrate fieldwork:

"I always set goals for myself. I'm not a person who likes routine habits. Each and every period adds something and innovations to my work. I try to find myself as a human being and not as a social worker. I see myself somewhere else in a few years because I don't like office work." (a 30-year-old interviewee from a recognized village, a social worker)

Alongside these women who aspire to stay in their workplace because, in their words, they "found" themselves in the job in which they are currently employed, **other women referred to the desire to stay in their job, as it allows them flexibility considering the multitude of tasks assigned to them,** as working women and as mothers:

"I feel comfortable at my job. It's also close to my home and my children. I can go to work and come back with them (after work)." (a 43-year-old interviewee from an unrecognized village, employed as a kindergarten assistant)

Although certain workplaces allow mothers flexibility with regard to working hours, these are limited employment frameworks that sometimes do not allow women professional advancement or improvement in employment conditions. Thus, for example, an interviewee who wishes to continue working in teaching described her attempts to change jobs:

"I wanted to teach in a school and not in a community center. I didn't find one, because the schools want a full-time position, and I want (a position of) three days a week because of my daughter." (a 25-year-old interviewee from a recognized village, employed in the field of education)

Another woman described her desire to continue her work as an assistant for a teacher for health reasons:

"I can't work anywhere else. I can't work if it's a job that involves (physical) effort. I can't because I have health problems. That's why I manage in my job as an assistant." (a 51-year-old interviewee from an unrecognized village, who works as a school assistant)

Along with the difficulty of finding employment opportunities suitable for mothers or women with medical limitations, **other women referred to their desire to continue in their occupation, but, at the same time, emphasized the low salary as the main disadvantage for them:**

"I want to (continue) working as a secretary, but the salary is not good and not enough. It's a good job, but the only downside is the money." (a 25-year-old interviewee from a planned town, employed as a medical secretary)

Ambition for promotion

In contrast to the interviewee quoted above, another woman, who is employed as a doctor, expressed her desire to continue working in the field of medicine that offers a path for professional development. Alongside her work, she describes a future ambition for additional income:

"I wouldn't want to work somewhere else. On the other hand, I'm thinking about investing. Staying at my job and investing money in the business, or in the store and someone else will manage it." (a 28-year-old interviewee from a planned town, employed as a doctor in a hospital)

This interviewee was the only one who expressed future ambitions that go beyond the boundaries of her current field of work. It can be assumed that the reason for this lies in the occupational reality of this woman, who works in a field characterized by occupational stability and professional advancement and development. Her occupation can be contrasted to that of the other interviewees who are employed in distinctly "feminine" fields, who sometimes receive low wages, have less stable employment conditions and often lack opportunities for professional development.

A number of employed women stated that they aspire to acquire higher education and even study for an additional degree in order to improve their position in the labor market:

"The truth is that there is no other job that I think I want to work in right now. I see myself in this place. There is something that, at the same time, that I am thinking about, and that is financial independence. But it's still far away from me at the moment, I know I still need to study and I'm still young." (a 27-year-old interviewee from a recognized village, employed in the third sector)

"I want (to study) educational counseling or clinical communication - to start another degree." (a 27-year-old interviewee from a planned town, who works in early childhood education)

"I want to work as a schoolteacher or pursue a Master's degree, and work in welfare as a social worker." (a 27-year-old interviewee from an unrecognized village, who does not work outside the home)

Others referred to their desire to acquire a professional certificate and professional skills in order to integrate into the labor market:

"If it's possible for me, I can work in anything. I have the ability to work in anything. Any job, even if I need studies, I will study. There are courses today - nursery school aide or kindergarten assistant [...] you can get a certificate." (a 37-year-old interviewee from an unrecognized village, who does not work outside the home)

These women emphasized the importance of education and professional skills as a lever for entry and mobility in the labor market. Therefore, they articulate professional and higher education as an integral part of their future occupational aspirations. Alongside these women, **a few women, all over the age of 44, who do not work outside of the home, stated that they are not interested in working outside their home.** However, other interviewees, who are not currently employed or who are self-employed, referred to their future aspirations to integrate into the labor market. Similar to the interviewee quoted above, some of these women explicitly noted their desire to acquire education in order to integrate into the labor market; others expressed the desire to work as teachers' aides.

The dream of your own business

Alongside these women, there were a number of interviewees who articulated their occupational dreams to be self-employed:

"I want a private business. I don't have a specific type in mind at the moment. In a private business, the person is responsible for himself, so there is no one to decide for him." (a 26-year-old interviewee from a planned town, who does not work outside the home).

"I have ambition to own a business in hairstyling, waxing, working with my hands." (a 38-year-old interviewee from a recognized village, who does not work outside the home)

"I want to develop my plan for a salon for women. My mother-in-law and I had a salon. I was the right-hand man in the salon - I (styled) hair and (dealt with) everything related to beauty." (a 23-year-old interviewee from a planned town, who does not work outside the home)

"I'm thinking of opening a business. It's not in my hands, because I don't have money right now. And I'll work on the business, I'll open a business that will be convenient and bring in money at the same time. What the business will be, I still don't know." (a 24-year-old interviewee from a planned town, employed as a nurse in an emergency room)

These women express their future ambitions in establishing a business under their own management, due to the advantages inherent in being self-employed, as they articulate them - independence in making decisions, flexibility and maneuverability when it comes to managing time in their lives. For some women, **running their own business allows them to juggle multiple tasks at home and in the labor market, so the meaning of independence in managing their schedule is essential for their ability to take an active part in the labor market.** As noted in the section on the "Meaning of Work," for women living in the unrecognized villages, running a business from their home allows them to overcome the lack of public transportation that often prevents them from traveling outside their community and separate between housework, which is perceived as passive, and active participation in the public sphere, while providing for their family.

SECTION 3

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS



G. SUMMARY

G.1. FROM THE WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE

This study examined the employment experiences of 30 Bedouin women in the Negev who live in planned towns, regional councils and unrecognized villages. This experience was examined in the context of the structural limitations imposed on the women, as well as the ways in which the women understand the concept of work and articulate their future aspirations in the labor market.

While the structural conditions - which impose limitations and create opportunities for the women - vary on a spatial basis, **the research findings indicate the motivation of the women to integrate and advance in the labor market can be found in all the types of localities.** The main motivations of women to enter the labor market are found in several aspects:

- Economic aspects arising from the search for a source of income
- Gender aspects arising from the aspiration for economic independence
- Individual aspects that express the desire for being an active and self-realizing subject

This motivation is also evident among the young women who do not earn a living, i.e., women who do not work outside their household. In other words, **being outside the labor market does not stem from lack of motivation, but rather from structural constraints that mount difficulties for the women, making it harder to integrate into the labor market.** For women in the recognized villages and the planned towns, opportunities are mainly found in access to education and care for their children, while limited and expensive education frameworks tighten the dependency of mothers with small children on family members, due to gender division of labor in the family.

Most of the employed interviewees aspire to continue in their current occupation, although some would like to change their workplace. The latter wish to remain in their fields of work and, at the same time, change their workplace as these are often part-time jobs, which do not offer proper wages or professional advancement. **Low employment supply combined with the structural conditions, imposes limitations, and produces horizontal mobility of some women between different occupations in search of a long-term job. However, their ability to achieve upward mobility in their current occupations is significantly limited, so that many do not see the prospect of professional development in their work. As a result, the women who expressed the highest satisfaction with their work are those who experience self-fulfillment in the occupational framework, those who see themselves advancing in the occupational ladder at the current workplace, and the women whose occupational framework allows them to juggle their housework and paid work.**

G.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Alongside the lack of suitability of the labor market for women, and especially for mothers, the research findings relating to the aspirations of the women indicate **the need for employment frameworks that allow Bedouin women to integrate into the labor market, while outlining professional development paths and the ability to earn a decent income over time.**

The research findings also point to several differences in the occupational reality of Bedouin women in relation to the type of locality in which they live. The significant limitations for women living in the unrecognized villages are related to a severe lack of public transportation and educational frameworks, alongside the lack of electricity and internet infrastructure. **The combination of these conditions creates an extremely limited structure of employment opportunities for women in the unrecognized villages, leaving many in economic distress and deep dependence on their family members for economic survival**

and mobility. The insights of the present study emphasize that the structural conditions that limit the employment opportunities for Bedouin women in the Negev are not limited to purely employment issues.

While this report is based on a limited number of interviewees, the findings regarding the lack of infrastructure, especially electricity infrastructure in the unrecognized villages, indicate that **the issue of energy poverty - the lack of quality, reliable and safe energy infrastructure⁵⁸ - is not only significant in terms of climate crisis and food security in Bedouin society in the Negev, but also affects the integration of women into the labor market in the deep peripheries.** This issue requires further in-depth research.

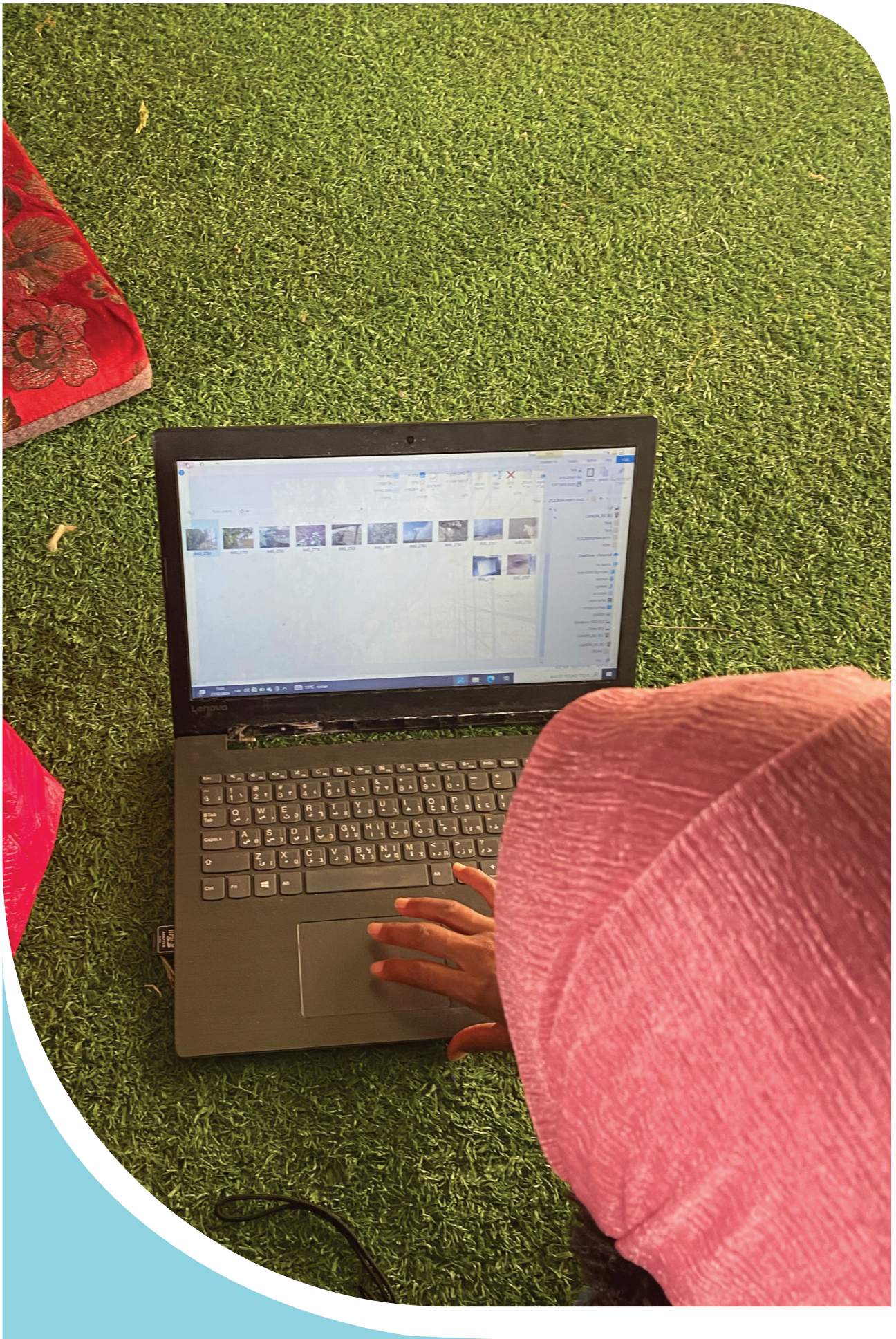
Another distinction between the residents of the unrecognized villages and the residents of the regional councils and planned towns is found in the variety of women's social networks. For women who do not work for wages, especially in the unrecognized villages, social networks are narrower and more homogeneous than for employed women in the recognized villages and planned towns. These social networks play a central role in exposing women to employment opportunities and improving their chances of integrating into employment frameworks and achieving professional advancement. **The research findings indicate that women without social networks have more difficulty entering the labor market, when the best way to create these connections in the first place is through integration into employment outside the private sphere.** This circularity preserves the limited and homogenous social networks among women who have never entered the labor market, or those who live on the outskirts - in the unrecognized villages - most of whom are spatially cut off from their surroundings, due to the lack of transportation and internet infrastructure.

These findings indicate the importance of connections and social networks among women from marginalized groups. **While programs for occupational integration are mainly focused on human capital, on the development of "soft" skills and on the motivation of women who are outside the labor market,⁵⁹ the social capital of women is not taken into account.** Focusing on human capital alone ignores the inextricable link between occupational and class mobility with women's social networking. Therefore, **programs for the occupational integration of Bedouin women must develop systems that will allow women from different backgrounds who attend these programs, to engage in social networking.** It should be emphasized that the proposed set of social connections must expand beyond connecting with potential employers and focus on connectivity between the participants in the programs through tools such as group facilitation, mentoring programs, and so on.

The interviews show the complexity of the collection of factors limiting integration into employment - infrastructure, transportation, gender division of labor and education. In order to formulate solutions for this complex reality, it is advisable to **listen to the voices of the women expressing their needs.** It is evident from the women's words that these aspects cannot be separated from one another, so that one shapes and influences the other. In fact, it is an **intersection of structural conditions.** **Therefore, a solution for only one layer will not lead to a comprehensive solution that will allow the full integration of women into the labor market.** For this reason, an overall view of the structural constraints with which women must deal is required. From an applied point of view, the intersection of these conditions requires an **interministerial coordination committee that can outline a policy that addresses all the structural challenges that limit the integration of Bedouin women into the labor market in the Negev and, in particular, women living in the unrecognized villages.**

58 See, for example, Shibli, Hanin, Teshner, Naama and Stav Shapira. 2022. "Energy Poverty in Conditions of Climate Change and its Ramifications on Community Resilience." *Kriyot Yisraeliot* 2: 122-157. [Hassan, Abu-Kaf, Sara and Shani Bar-On Maman. "Food Insecurity in the Unrecognized Villages in the Negev." *Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality and Adva Center. September 2023.* \(in Hebrew\)](#)

59 [Helman, Sarah. "Is the 'Circles of Employment' program suitable for women from the unrecognized villages in the Negev?" *Nagabiya - The Center for Information and Research, Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality. June 2024.* \(in Hebrew\)](#)







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מרכז הידע והמחקר של האוכלוסייה הבדואית בנגב

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