



Behind the Numbers:
**How the Coronavirus
Affected Women in Israel**

Status Report #1: June 2020





The shrinking of economic activities in the wake of the corona epidemic converged with existing social and economic gender inequalities. Even before the crisis, men and women held different positions in the economy and job market: most women worked in less rewarding fields ranking lower on the organizational hierarchy.

On average

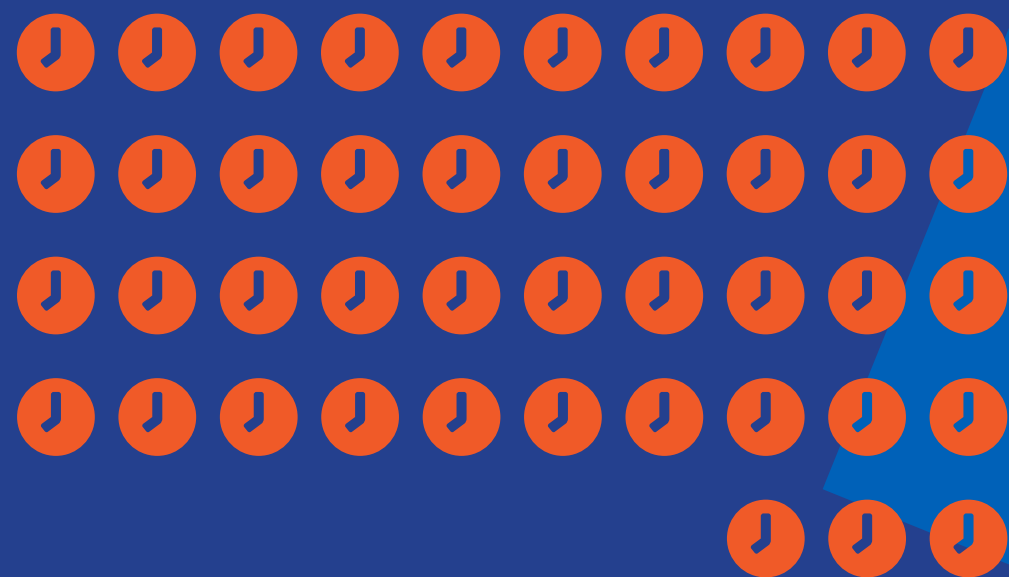
- Women earn less than men
- Women are more engaged in unpaid care work
- Thus, women occupy more part-time positions
- And are more dependent on the social welfare system



Unpaid work

1

Ordinarily, women do much more housework and care work for family members than men:
43 hours a week, compared to 27 for men



43
HOURS



27
HOURS

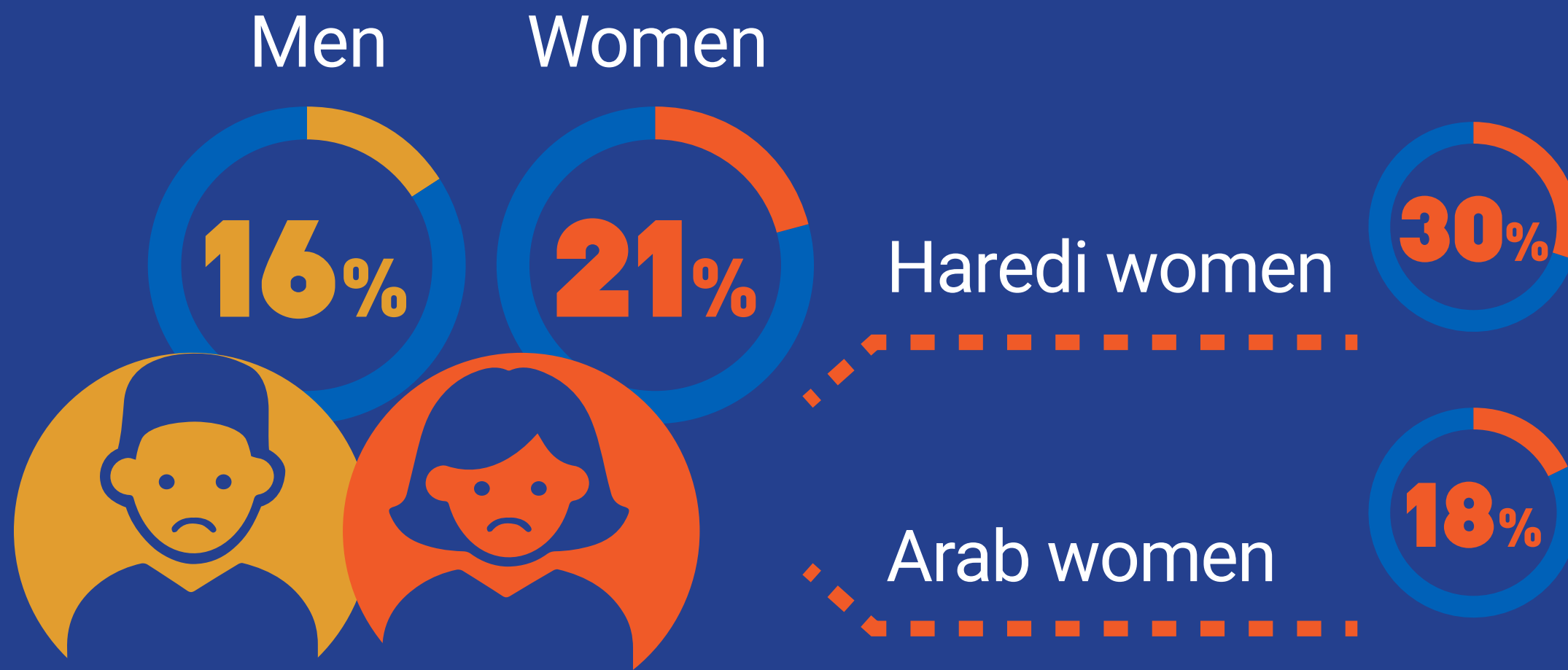


During April 2020, women performed 60% of housework and 63% of care work (in dual income households).

Negative Effects on Employment

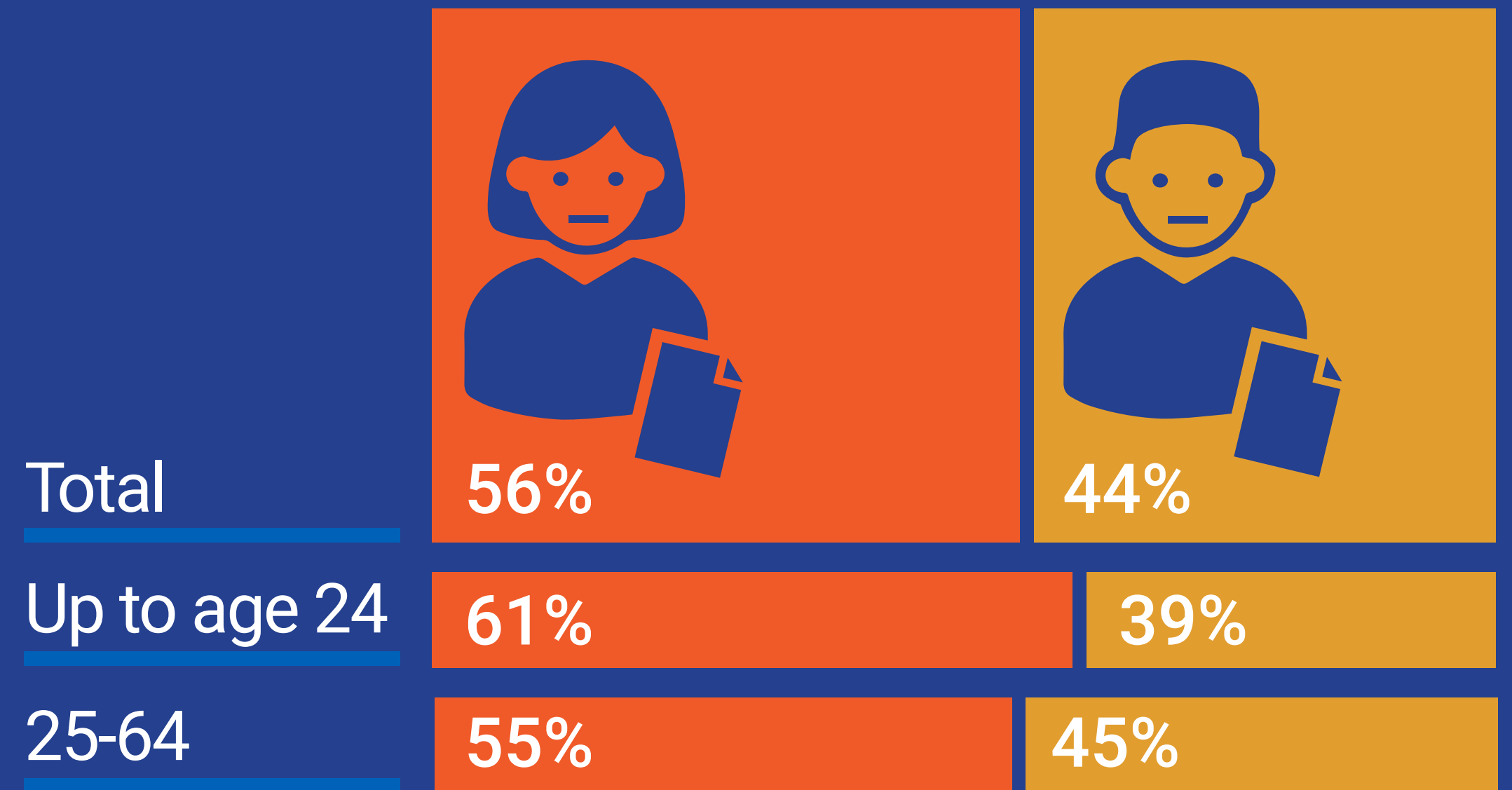
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Workers Dismissed



By the first week of April, 21% of working women found themselves out of work (compared with 16% of men). Among women, this was the situation of 30% of Haredi women and 18% of Arab women.

Breakdown of Job Seekers March/April 2020



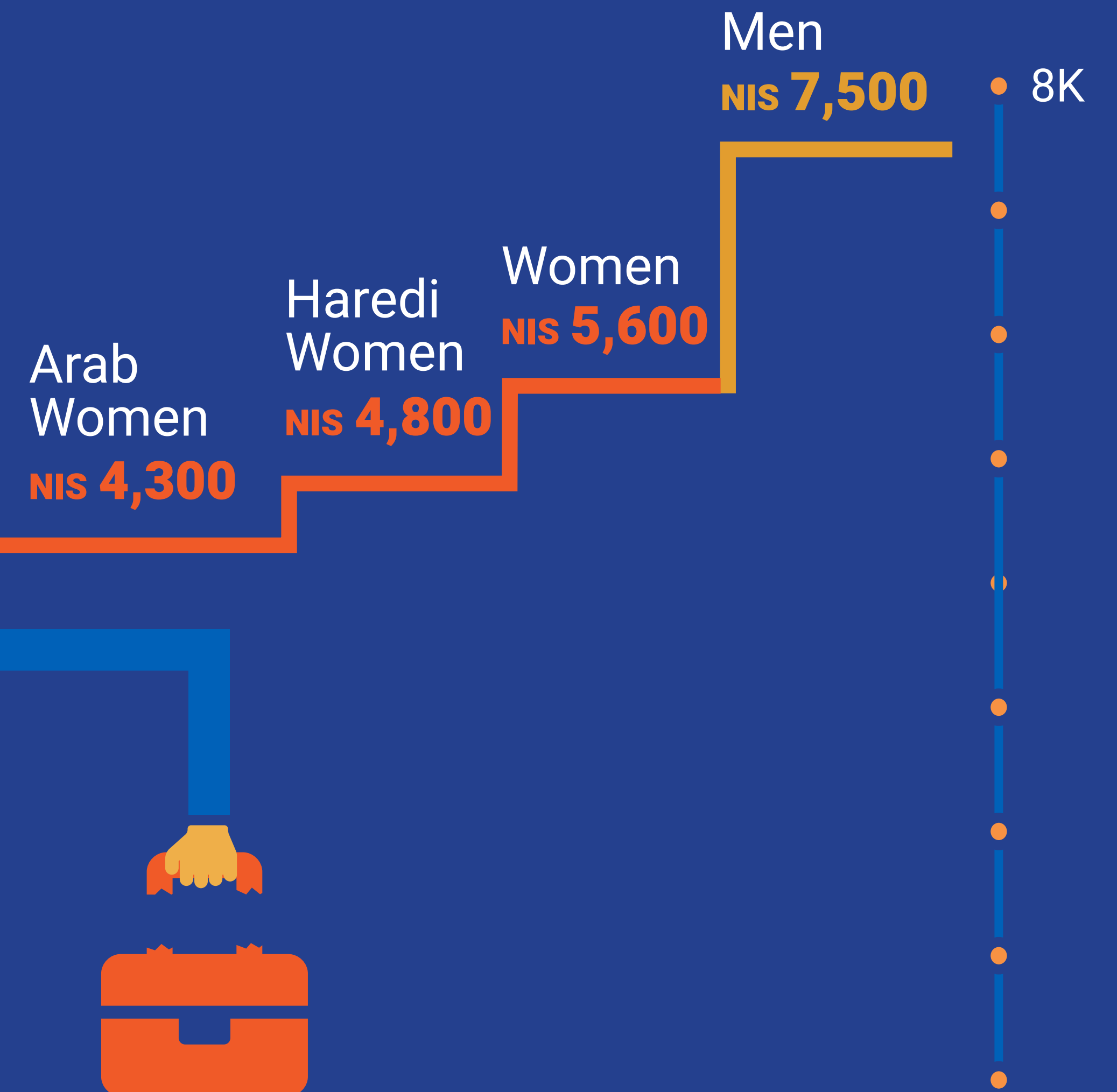
During March and April, women were over-represented among job seekers, accounting for 61% of job seekers among persons aged 24 or less.

Low wage earners were the hardest hit by the corona crisis, and women bore the biggest brunt, as in normal times they constitute the majority of low wage earners. Their unemployment benefits were the lowest.

The median monthly wage of women dismissed was **NIS 5,600** – only slightly higher than the minimum wage: **NIS 5,300**.

The median monthly wage of Haredi women dismissed was **NIS 4,800** and that of Arab women, **NIS 4,300**.

Median Monthly Wage of Persons Dismissed from their Jobs



Self-Employed Women

Among self-employed persons, women constituted only 39% of those eligible for financial aid. The average amount of aid to women was **NIS 3,132**, some **NIS 1,400** less than aid to men. The difference reflects the gender wage gap – a gap of 42% in the median wage (**NIS 5,880** for women versus **NIS 10,081** for men).

Among self-employed persons eligible for financial aid:

Men constitute

61%

Average aid NIS 4,568



Women constitute

39%

Average aid NIS 3,132



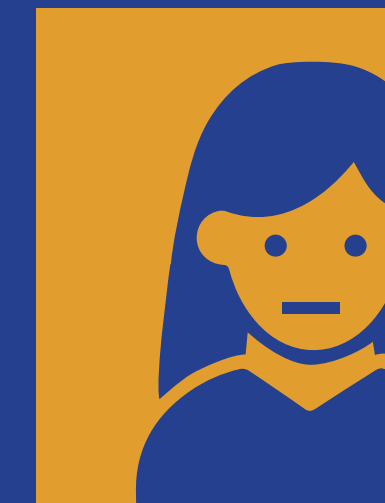
Women at the Margins of the Economy

The threshold for employers for grants to reinstate employees is a monthly wage of **NIS 3,300**.

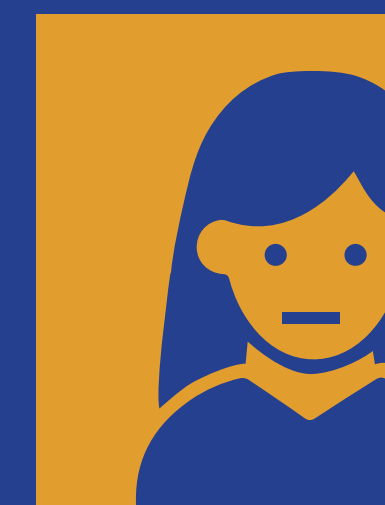
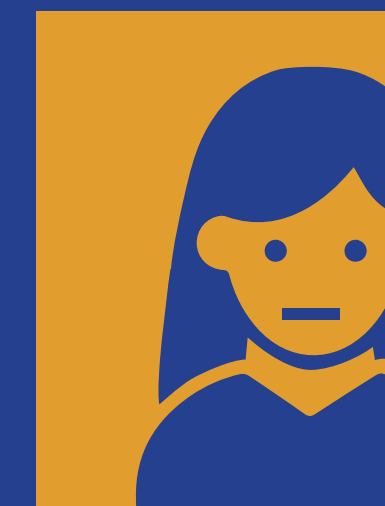


Some 20% of women sent on unpaid leave earned less than **NIS 3,100**. Thus, employers are less inclined to take them back.

It is estimated that 15% of employed Arab women work in the informal economy. They will not be eligible for any sort of compensation.



Women are overrepresented in the informal economy, which includes domestic cleaning ladies, au pairs, asylum seekers, stateless women, sex workers and others. These women have no access to the social security system and therefore loss of income exposes them to the threat of homelessness and hunger.



Essential Workers in the Time of Corona

3



Women are the majority of workers in the public systems that are crucial for coping with the coronavirus. The epidemic exposed the unfairness of the segmented, polarized job market in which many essential workers are the ones who earn the least. These jobs are usually part time positions with low salaries.

Women Men

Laboratory technicians

85%

Occupational therapists

96%

Physiotherapists

75%

Social workers

90%

Nursing care workers

85%

Workers Essential for the Restart of the Economy

Women are the overwhelming majority among teachers and child care workers. They constitute 76% of teachers and the bulk of childcare professionals in nurseries. The latter fought for over two months for compensation for lost income due to the corona crisis.



Women are

76%

of Teachers





Women depend more on the social safety net than men



Over one quarter (26%) of single-parent households (90% are headed by women) lived in poverty even before the epidemic. This has risen to 30%.

Women constitute 70%
of long-term care benefit recipients



Women constitute 60%
of income support recipients



Women are exposed to domestic violence – physical, economic and sexual. The corona lockdown increased the risks to women in their own homes.

- Israeli police report a 17% increase in the number of domestic violence files during March and April 2020, compared with the same period the previous year.
- The Social Services Ministry hotline registered 1,840 domestic violence complaints in May 2020 – a 122% increase over April 2020.

Nevertheless, the working assumption is that many violent incidents remain unreported.

In May alone

1,840

**domestic violence complaints –
Social Services Hotline**



Women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making positions in Israel



Women constitute less than a quarter of cabinet ministers (23%) and slightly more than a quarter of legislators (27.5%).* Only three women were appointed directors general of government ministries. Women's presence was negligible on coronavirus work teams in charge of coping with the disease and its consequences.



* Four more women became legislators following the resignation of men serving as cabinet members.

If the unique challenges women face – including their high proportion among low wage workers, their heavy load of unpaid care work, and gendered violence – are not addressed, we will see a retrenchment of gender equality. Moreover, minority women, women with disabilities, stateless women and single mothers will be the hardest hit by gender-insensitive policies, due to their economic disadvantage.

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