



THE OCTOBER 2023 WAR: IMPACTS ON WOMEN IN ISRAEL

November 2024

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We would like to thank Ety-Konor Attias and Fiona Kop for their significant contributions to this study

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Background and Purpose of the Study

Research from throughout the world points to the differential effects of wars, natural disasters, health and economic crises on women and men, and to the fact that the harm suffered by women as a result of such crises points to the need for gender-sensitive policies at all levels of decision-making. Gender-sensitive policies are also needed in order to ensure that crises do not widen existing gender gaps.

In Israel, although it appeared that the negative effects of an earlier crisis on women, the Corona epidemic, were known, the October 2023 war revealed that there was still a lot to learn, reflected in the failure to identify women's needs in various areas of life, as well as in the lack of suitable responses. Thus, the present war has caused a widening of gender gaps, among others with regard to decision-making, employment, the increased difficulty of balancing salaried work and care work for family members, physical and mental health, and the prevalence of family violence.

The aim of the present study is to examine the gender aspects of the October 2023 "Iron Swords" war that followed the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel, in view of international research on the unique gender effects of crises and emergencies on women, with reference to the gender effects of another crisis – the Corona epidemic. Firstly, we will present a survey of the literature on the gender impacts of crises and emergency situations. Then, following a short description of our methodology, we will present findings regarding the negative effects of the October 2023 war on women in Israel, wherever possible, with reference to the Corona epidemic. In the last part of the study, we will present insights and directions for policy-making. This is the first study in a series in which we examine a number of central issues from a gender point of view: political representation and influence, employment, violence against women, women's needs for social services, and the political silencing and persecution of Arab women in Israel. Due to the lack of data, and to the fact that we are still at war, the

present study will not cover all the issues. In the future, we hope to examine additional areas of life, among them education and economic security.

Although we focus on the effects of the war on the lives of Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel, we are well aware that the present war has serious effects on the lives of Palestinian women living in Gaza and the West Bank, whose voices are neither heard nor reflected in Israeli dialogue vis-à-vis the war. We are also well aware, of course, that the war has horrendous effects on men.

Literature Review: Gender in Times of Emergency

There is a rich literature focusing on states of emergency and disaster from the standpoint of how they affect women. The contexts are varied: wars and political conflicts within and among states, epidemics, economic crises and natural disasters. Despite the huge variation, it is possible to identify common characteristics with regard to the impacts on women, as well as to the responses and patterns developed for dealing with them. The present report will focus primarily on wars and health and economic crises and less on natural disasters. At the same time, despite the fact that in the public imagination natural disasters affect all those residing in the disaster area in the same way, research points to more negative effects on women – during occurrence of the disaster as well as during processes of rehabilitation.¹ The report deals with how women in Israel who have not had to deal with a natural disaster have been affected to date by the Corona epidemic, and of course by the war.

Wars and Political Conflicts

Despite the variation among conflicts occurring throughout the world, from the standpoint of gender, they are all characterized by a dynamics that reflects gendered social norms. While men are expected to fight, in many cases women are forced to flee conflict areas, while they lack the same resources, authority, or political rights needed to provide for their own needs and those of their families. Thus, the experiences of women and men in armed conflicts are quite different.² Violent conflicts often create opportunities to improve women's rights, when women take on new roles during the

1 Mar, Llorente-Marro, Montserrat Diaz-Fernandez, Sandra Bema Moreno, Paz Mendez-Rodriguez. 2020. "Socioeconomic consequences of natural disasters on gender relations: The case of Haiti." *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*. Volume 50.

2 Cimino, Francesca and Paola Degani. 2023. "Gendered impacts of the war in Ukraine: Identifying potential, presumed or actual women victims of tracking at the Italian borders." *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*.

course of the conflict and in so doing put into question the traditional gendered division of labor.³ The new roles include, for example, participation in the conflict, a broadening of employment to take on the functions of men absent due to war, or increasing political participation – including actions in peace and protest movements. At the same time, violent conflicts often have a negative effect on women’s rights and security.

Throughout the world, even when women take on significant roles in the course of armed conflicts, they do not participate in the main arena in which decisions are made regarding conduct of the war or what is to happen afterwards. Likewise, they are excluded from negotiations for ending conflicts and establishing political arrangements. Neglect of the experience and contributions of women in periods of violent conflict are not limited to the sphere of political influence. Some women accumulate operational and administrative or medical expertise during wars that are neither accorded recognition nor taken advantage of afterwards. In addition, their war experience may not be translated into employment or political opportunities.⁴ Moreover, rehabilitation and development programs following conflicts generally do not reward the contributions of women to the formal and informal economies. Even when countries do recognize women’s economic needs in the wake of conflicts, training and employment opportunities are likely to do no more than reinforce traditional gender norms rather than broaden women’s economic opportunities.

What can be learned from the present war between Russia and the Ukraine with regard to the impact of war on women? [Read here](#)

3 Huber, Laura. 2023. "One Step Forward, One Step Back: The Micro-Level Impacts of Conflict on Women’s Security." *International Studies Quarterly*. Volume 67. Issue 2. June.

4 Olmstead, J.C. & C. Killian. 2023. Postconflict Sexual and Reproductive Health and Justice, Gendered Well-being, and Long-term Development. *Review of Radical Political Economics*. 55 (1). 147-165.

Health and Economic Crises

Gender-centered studies of the effects of the economic and health crises that occurred in the wake of the Corona epidemic have shown that their impact on women are related to the demand for care work and the concurrent reduction of access to services provided by the market, like day care centers and long-term care.⁵ Where the crisis is related to health, like AIDS or Ebola, the differential impact on women is related to their increased need for medical services.

Economic crises have an indirect influence on invisible work done mainly by women (work without pay, mainly care for children and other family members, as well as housework). This, due to a number of factors, among them households' decreasing ability to pay for goods and services produced outside the home, reduced access to public services as a result of cutbacks in government outlays, and the relative availability of women due to their growing unemployment.

Economic crises affect both men and women, of course; their impact varies in accordance with the differential employment patterns of women and men. Women's opportunities, security and quality of employment are more restricted than those of men. Moreover, the long-range effect of the crisis is connected with policy responses to it. For example, the financial crisis in Europe and the US at the end of the first decade of the new millennium was, in effect, a "he-session" – that is, it had a more negative effect on men's employment, at least in the short run.⁶ An examination of eight

5 Corsi, M., & I. Ikkaracan. 2023. "COVID-19, Gender and Labor." In Zimmermann, K.F. (eds). *Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics*. Springer. Champaign; Kaplan, Amit, Susie Ben Dori and Hannah Herzog. 2022. "Epidemics are Gendered: Invisible Work as Reflected in Research during the Corona Epidemic." *Israeli Sociology*. Volume 23. Pp 225-236.

6 Encisco-Alfaro. S.Y., S. Marhroub, P.J. Martinez-Cordoba, & I.M. Garcia-Sanches. 2024. "The Effect of COVID-19 on employment: A bibliometric review of a she-session." *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*. 1-24.

European countries (Iceland, United Kingdom, Hungary, Greece, Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Italy) that were severely affected by the economic crisis and by the policies of austerity that followed, shows that in the first stage of the crisis, men lost more jobs than women. This situation reversed itself following the austerity that endangered previous gender equality achievements, which had a negative effect on employment programs and on welfare state protections needed by women.⁷ In Canada, too, men's unemployment grew more than women's as a result of the crisis, as the sectors most affected were construction and industry; however, with recovery, men's employment improved more rapidly than women's, due to government assistance programs that included a significant investment in physical infrastructure.⁸

In contrast to the economic recession, the Corona epidemic is considered a "shecession,"⁹ as it increased existing challenges connected with quality participation of women in the labor market and deepened the gender imbalance vis-a-vis invisible work. This occurred due to the fact that women shoulder the major responsibility for care work for family members, both before and during quarantines and shutdowns of the education system. It is also attributed to the increase in the amount of invisible work and the difficulty of balancing paid and unpaid labor. Finally, the Corona epidemic, which required isolation for prolonged periods of time and limitations on movement, raised the level of danger for women in the home. The increase in the incidence of violence against women worldwide in the wake of the epidemic was labelled "the shadow epidemic."¹⁰

7 Karamessini, Maria and Jill Rubery. 2017. "The challenge of austerity for gender equality in Europe: A consideration of eight countries at the center of the crisis." In Connelly, Rachel & Ebru Kongar (Eds). Date? Gender and Time Use in a Global Context: The Economics of Employment and Unpaid Labor. Pp 51-74. Palgrave Macmillan.

8 MacPhail, Fiona. 2017. "Paid and unpaid work time by labor force status of prime age women and men in Canada. The great recession and gender inequality in work time." In Connelly, Rachel and Ebru Kongar (Eds) Gender and Time use in a Global Context: The Economics of Employment and Unpaid Labor. Pp. 85-112. Palgrave Macmillan.

9 Encisco-Alfaro, S.Y., S. Marhroub , P.J, & Garcia Sanchez, I.M. 2024.

10 Hasson, Yael, Hadass Ben-Eliyahu & Hagar Tsameret. 2021. Behind the Numbers: The Implications of the Corona Epidemic for Women in Israel. Adva Center and the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem. (Hebrew).

Methodology

The present document is based on a variety of sources, including data from state institutions, like official surveys, as well as independent studies and reports of civil society organizations. Gathering up-to-date and relevant gendered data is no easy task, as the various bodies responsible for collecting data do not always do so in such a way as to enable gender breakdowns; in other cases, they publish findings without reference to gender, despite the fact that gender breakdowns would have been possible – not to mention the fact that the law requires such breakdowns. The result: it is difficult to identify gendered effects of the October 2023 war.

The main official sources of data are manpower surveys conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics, State Employment Service data, figures from the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Police – whether published or received following requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act or personal requests. Another source of data was Knesset committee debate protocols. The statistical data refer mainly to the period between October 2023 and May 2024.

Research regarding displaced populations in crisis situations reveals that displaced women are especially vulnerable and that the processes of treatment and rehabilitation require suitable responses. In Israel, there is a lack of gendered data regarding displaced persons and their temporary resettlement in various locations.¹¹

Likewise, there is not enough extant information about the thousands of families not evacuated from their homes. Many of them remained in areas under daily attack, devoid of the wherewithal to make a decent living and deprived of educational frameworks for their children. The systematic collection of such data is necessary as a basis for mapping needs from a gender point of view as well as other issues, including family and community resilience, employment, violence and invisible work.

11 Bar-On Maman, Shani and Tehila Sharabi. 2024. *A New Spacial Survey in Israel*. 2024. Adva Center. (Hebrew)

Power: Representation in Positions of Influence and Political Participation

While women take on significant roles during armed conflicts, they are not represented in decision making during negotiations for solving those conflicts. A survey from 2020¹² of over 13,000 women in 15 countries found that 91% of the women actively participated in conflict situations. They were involved in humanitarian actions like providing meals and shelter for persons fleeing conflicts, they became the primary bread winners of their families, created support networks, developed ways of making their communities safer, and volunteered to provide health services. Despite their demonstration of leadership, women and the roles they assumed in conflicts have received little attention in international discourse. For example, 95% of the media presentations of conflicts occurring since 2013 have ignored women and the vital roles they played.¹³

The representation and influence of women from diverse social groups in decision-making bodies in all areas of life and policy levels are critical if the needs and preferences of half the population are to be taken into account. The absence of women and of a gender perspective at discussions and decision making arenas that determine how our lives are to be lived result in positive harm to women and to the widening of gender gaps.

In crisis situations, the issue becomes even more critical, as experienced during the Corona epidemic, when decisions made without a gender perspective resulted in a high toll on women (for example, regarding abortions and family violence). Against this background, in April 2021 the head of Israel's National Security Council appointed

12 Janoch, Emily, Kalkidan Lakew, Yingxin Zhang, Florence Santos, & Nicole Paul. 2024. "Women in War: Leaders, Responders, and Potential." Care.

13 Janoch et al. 2024.

a public advisory committee to design gender mainstreaming recommendations for national policy in situations of emergency. The committee examined, among others, if and to what extent gender considerations had been involved in policy making during various past emergencies, and it made recommendations whose implementation had the potential to make emergency policy-making processes gender-sensitive.

Much has been said about the exclusion of women from decision-making bodies in general; women's representation in the political arena fell significantly after the last elections, which established Israel's 37th coalition government. This was prior to the outbreak of war, against the background of an attempt to institute regime change. In addition, despite the lessons learned from the Corona epidemic regarding the need for mainstreaming gender into decision-making during times of emergency,¹⁴ there does not appear to be any implementation of those lessons in the main decision-making forums of the present war.

Below are some of the facts about women's reduced representation:

- The number of female legislators decreased in comparison with the previous Knesset: 29 v. 35.¹⁵
- Among directors-general of government ministries, only one woman was appointed, compared with 11 under the previous government.
- The Security Policy Cabinet has only two women among its 15 members; one is an observer, not a full-fledged member.
- In the Social Economic Cabinet, authorized to deal with all civilian aspects of the war, there are only three women among 20 members. Again, one of the women has the status of observer.
- The individual responsible for abducted and missing persons is a man.

14 *Report of the Advisory Committee to the National Security Council on gender mainstreaming during the formulation of recommendations for national policy for different emergencies.* June 2022. (Hebrew)

15 In July 2024, MK Yif'at Shasha-Biton announced her resignation and was replaced by a man.

- The director of civilian matters in the war is a man, and he was chosen from among candidates all of whom were men.
- Unusual is the case of the “Tekuma” directorate (Tekuma = an agency created to rehabilitate the localities in the Gaza envelope destroyed by the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack), which consists of six groups, four of which are led by women.
- Likewise, the absence of women was conspicuous in the discussions and decisions made regarding revision of the **national budget for 2024**, changes that were to constitute responses to the war and its impacts.
- And in municipal elections held at the beginning of 2024,¹⁶ the number of women mayors failed to increase (15 out of 255). The number of women local council members remained at about one-fifth; while this represented a small increase in Jewish localities (27.5%), in Arab localities women’s representation remained very low – only 2%.¹⁷

Women’s Leadership in Civil Society and Protest Movements -- Official positions of leadership contrast sharply with women’s leadership in civil society and in protest movements. Numerous women were and still are involved in volunteer actions, among others setting up and operating situation room assistance mechanisms since October 7, 2023. Against the background of insufficient public services, infrastructure, budgets and personnel, local community organizing has filled in some of the gaps, with the active participation and often the leadership of women, as well as civil society organizations, among them many women’s organizations. The organized activity of mothers against the background of wars and civil conflicts in Chile, like “Madre Despierta” and “Madres el Frente” deserve mention, as well as the continuing protests of “Mothers against Violence” and “Women Building Alternatives” in Israel. It hardly needs mention that women in general and mothers have been at the front of the struggle in Israel to free the hostages.

¹⁶ There are some localities in the area of the western Negev and the North that did not hold elections due to the war.

¹⁷ Israel Democracy Institute. 2024. *Analysis of 2024 Local Elections*.

- In 2023, women constituted less than one-third of press persons appearing on actuality programs in the major media. Among news interpreters on television programs about the war, the situation is even worse: Women comprised only 12% of the speakers.¹⁸

Although numerical representation is not everything, the absence of women from decision-making positions in different areas – during ordinary times and certainly during emergencies, means that their point of view and experience, their social and economic position and their status and individual safety are not taken into account when decisions are made that affect their lives. The inattention to their voices amounts to ignoring half the population of the country.

18 "Summary 2023 of Indicators of Women's Representation." A joint project of "The Seventh Eye," an organization of reporters in Israel, and the non-profit organization "Success." (Hebrew)

Violence against Women

Numerous studies from throughout the world testify that crises involve increased danger for women.¹⁹ The danger stems from the shortage of health, welfare and education services, displacement, economic pressures and the weakening of social support. Different crises lead to different patterns of violence. We are dealing here with violence against women in Israeli society and trends over time.

Research indicates that **family violence increases during violent conflicts**. The war effort often results in men developing hyper masculinity: armed conflicts require militancy, aggressiveness and violence, which increase tensions when women challenge traditional gender roles.²⁰ Violent conflicts also exacerbate risk factors like post-war trauma, communal dispersion, the use of alcohol, and men's inability to fulfill their traditional role as bread winner.²¹ All these factors lead to increased violence against women, in both the private and the public spheres.

Evidence for increased violence against women during crises can be found in **Israel Police data**. During the first year of the Corona epidemic, including the first closure (March-August 2020), the number of files opened due to complaints of violence against women was over 1,000 during each of these months.²²

In comparison, during the first six months of the October 2023 war (October 2023-March 2024), fewer complaints were filed with the police. Moreover, **the Ministry of Social Welfare** reported that fewer women (313) fled to shelters during the war during the months of October 2023-March 2024, compared with 484 during the same

19 Sneha, Kaul and Sara Duerto Valero. 2023. "Disasters, Crisis and Violence against Women: Evidence from Big Data Analysis". UN Women.

20 Huber, Laura. 2023.

21 Olmstead, J. C. & C. Killian. 2023.

22 Analysis of data received from the Police following a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

period the previous year.²³ Indeed, representatives of the Forum of Shelters for Women Victims of Family Violence reported at a meeting of the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality held June 10, 2024, that there had been a significant drop in occupancy in the shelters during the first months of the war. “Women against Violence,” which operates a hotline and shelters for abused women in **Arab society**, also reported a drop in pleas for assistance.²⁴ For example, between October 2022 and June 2023, the Hotline received 477 complaints of violence and 574 of sexual attack. During the same period the following year, there were 315 complaints of violence and 450 of sexual abuse. However, the women who did seek shelter in the later period stayed longer.

Further, at the Knesset committee meeting cited above, the police reported that between January and June 2024, there was a drop of 10% in complaints filed against spousal violence. Moreover the police representative stated that the number of women filing complaints was lower than in previous years. However, the complaints were more serious, as reflected in the number of indictments and the number of arrests.

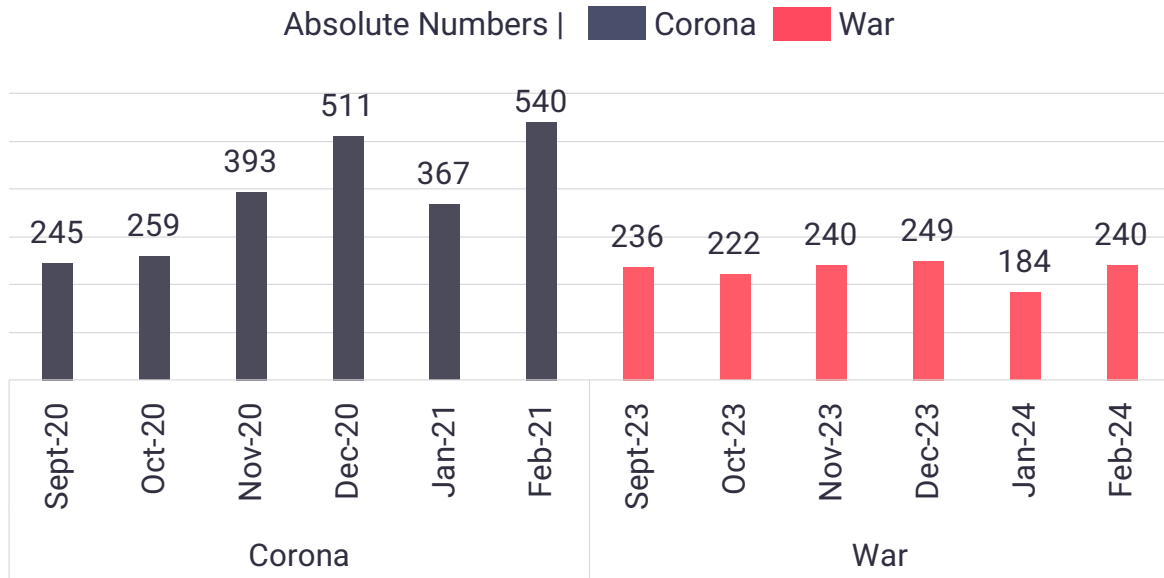
Ministry of Social Welfare figures also indicate a rise in the seriousness of cases of family violence,²⁵ as shown in Figure 1. The Probation Service reported that the Ministry of Social Welfare received 4,565 referrals from the police and the courts regarding family violence, among them 1,165 in the wake of arrests. During the same period the previous year, there were 2,760 such referrals, 864 involving police arrests. The largest increase was in the number of complaints made by spouses – 3,400, compared with 2,036. The data do not include gender breakdowns, but previous data indicate that women are the main victims of spousal violence.

23 <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/by11maoera>.

24 The figures were received from Naila Awad, general director of Women against Violence. July 10, 2024.

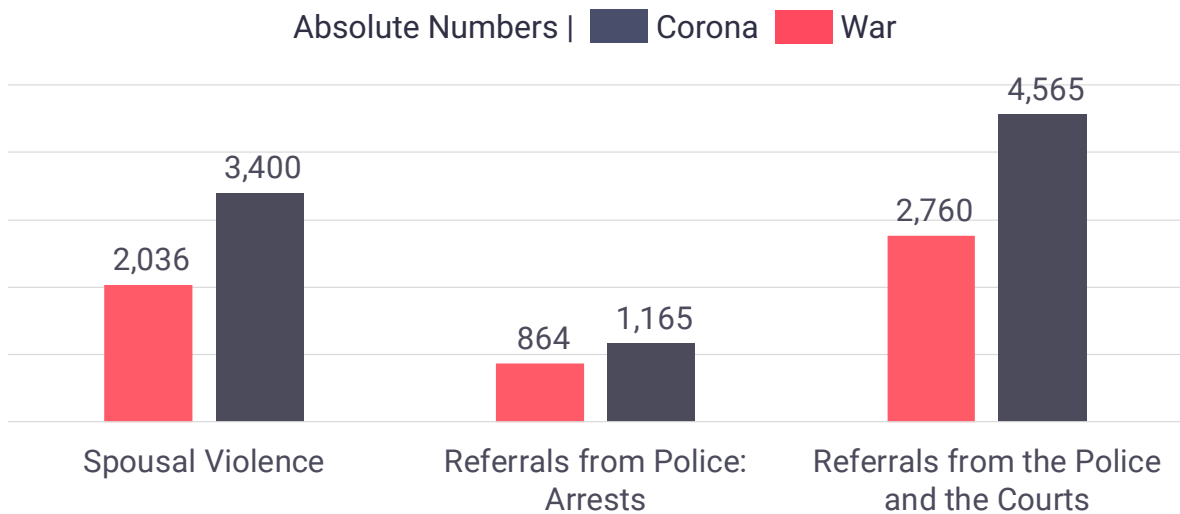
25 Gil-Ad, Hadar. *Ynet*. May 30, 2024. <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/yokra13943164>. (Hebrew)

Figure 1: Cases of Spousal Violence Reported to the Ministry of Social Welfare Hotline during the October 2023 War and during the Corona Epidemic



Source: Analysis of the Van Leer Institute and Adva Center of data received from the Ministry of Social Welfare in response to a Freedom of Information request, May 28, 2024.

Figure 2: Probation Service Figures: Cases of Family Violence Referred to the Ministry of Social Welfare



Source: Meeting of the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality, June 10, 2024.

The Ministry of Social Welfare operates a hotline for violence of many kinds. We have data regarding spousal violence from September 2020, obtained following a request under the Freedom of Information Act. In the second six-month period of the Corona epidemic (September 2020 through February 2021), the traffic in complaints was much greater than during the first six months of the war, as can be seen in Figure 1.

It should be noted that there were not many requests in either period. Thus, a question arises regarding how acquainted the public is with the Hotline.

In a conversation with the director of the Department of Social Work for Family and Sexual Violence at the Ministry of Health,²⁶ we found that in **emergency hospital rooms reserved for treatment of victims of sexual violence**, the number of cases appeared to be on a downward trend during the first six months of the war, but that later they began to return to their prior level. The same is the case with psychiatric wards for victims of sexual abuse, which are not as full as they were before the war.

The supposition of professionals in the ministries of Social Welfare and Health, the Police and civil society organizations is that during wars, and especially during the initial months, women fear that it would not be legitimate to file complaints with the police or to seek treatment vis-à-vis their own private woes. This, due to the serious collective trauma and the distress others are experiencing (“worse things are happening”). In some cases, the economic situation of the family makes it more difficult to extricate oneself from violence. Thus, the figures show a decrease in calls for help, in comparison with the period prior to the war, as well as in comparison with the period of the Corona epidemic (during which there was a jump in appeals shortly after the outbreak of Corona). However, later a 10% increase in appeals for help was recorded by the Ministry of Social Welfare. Among others, there was an increase in the number of women expressing fear because their spouses had obtained a gun license.

26 Dr. Zohar Sahar-Lavie, Director of the Department for Social Work for Family and Sexual Violence. June 23, 2024.

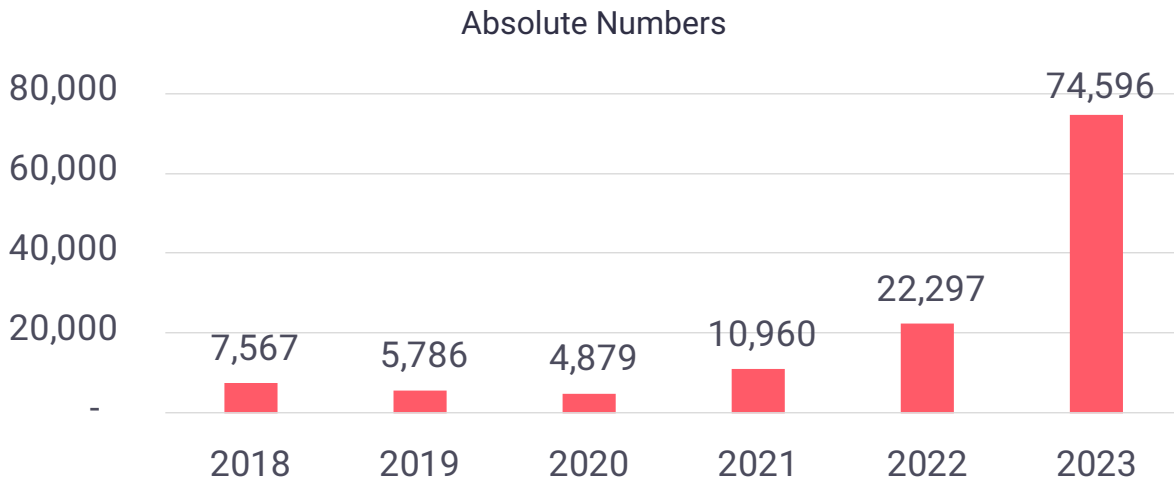
The rise in the number of **private gun licenses** issued in Israel each year and in the accumulated number of licensed arms (See tables below) are reason to fear violence in the family, which may well increase following the war. This is a well-known phenomenon, attributed to the normalization of violence, the return home of men after having participated in violent actions, some of them suffering from post-trauma and financial distress. According to “The Gun on the Kitchen Table,” the number of gun licenses issued by the Ministry of Internal Defense in 2023 was more than three times that of the previous year. In addition, as can be seen in Figure 4, there was a jump of 40% in the total number of guns owned by persons with licenses between 2022 and 2023. The increase in gun distribution deepens the feeling of danger among women experiencing family violence.²⁷ Despite the repeated demand by civil society organizations to involve the Ministry of Social Welfare in the gun licensing process, in view of the information it has on family violence and individuals who constitute a danger to themselves and their surroundings,²⁸ this has not been done. In this context, it should be mentioned that guns were used in one-fourth of the cases of femicide in Israel.²⁹

27 It should be noted that there is also a great number of weapons licensed to organizations, in the defense forces, and of course illegal, unlicensed arms.

28 <https://adva.org/he/weapon-distribution-violence-against-women>.(Hebrew).

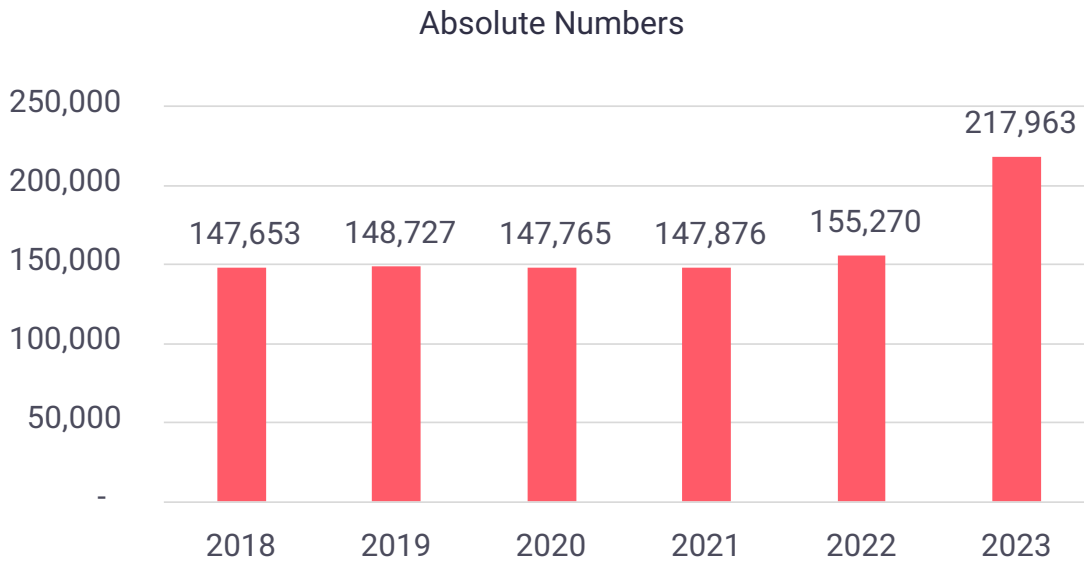
29 <https://www.yodaat.org/item/dataset/4f97e7e404d277e0>.

Figure 3: Licenses for Private Arms Approved by the Ministry of Internal Defense, 2018-2023



Source: Coalition “A Gun on the Kitchen Table,” based on responses of the Ministry of Internal Defense to Freedom of Information requests.

Figure 4: Cumulative Number of Licensed Guns in Private Hands, by Year



Source: Coalition “A Gun on the Kitchen Table,” based on responses of the Ministry of Internal Defense to Freedom of Information requests.

Social Services and the Care Deficit: Needs and Responses

Research³⁰ on the association between increasing militarism and gender inequality in numerous countries, including Israel,³¹ found that to finance defense expenditures, governments reduce outlays for social services, like education, welfare and health,³² which has a disproportionate effect on women, as they are more dependent on social services and constitute the majority of persons employed in them. Moreover, there is a significant association between militarization and gender inequality in the home – cutbacks in social services increase the burden of women’s invisible work.

In 2022, Israel had the highest outlays on defense of all OECD countries: 4.51% of the national expenditure (in comparison with the OECD average of 2.39%).³³ In the wake of the war, Israel’s defense budget grew from NIS 75 billion in 2022 to NIS 100 billion in 2023. In 2022, Israel’s civilian outlay (excluding interest) was among the lowest among OECD countries: 31.3%, compared with the OECD average of 42.6%. In 2023, civilian outlays rose slightly to 32.9 (mainly for non-defense expenses connected with the war in October through December, like assistance to dislocated persons and families and an increase in the budget for mental healthcare), but it remained far below the OECD average.³⁴

30 Elveren, A.Y. & V.M. Moghadam. 2022. “Militarism and Gender Equality: Exploring the Impact.” *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy*. 43 (4). 427-445.

31 Militarism is measured by the Global Militarization Index, which includes military expenditures as a percentage of GDP and of the national budget, as well as the political power of the military.

32 See, for example, Swirski, Shlomo and Noga Dagan Buzaglo. 2017. *The Occupation: Who Pays the Price?* Adva Center.

33 World Bank website. June 2024.

34 Ministry of Finance, Comptroller General. 2024. “Actual Budget Expenditure Reports for 2023 (Hebrew); Bank of Israel. 2024. “Bank of Israel Report for 2023.” (Hebrew)

Increased Needs in the Areas of Health and Welfare

The events of October 7, 2023 and the subsequent war have led to greatly increased needs. Thus, for example, in February 2024, the Ministry of Social Welfare reported a rise in requests for help due to sexual assaults, trauma, and poverty.³⁵

A survey conducted by the Union of Social Workers in January 2024 among 1,850 social workers throughout Israel, found mentions of economic and employment distress among the families of the conscripted, parenting difficulties and increased behavioral problems of their children. The same survey also mentioned increasing mental distress among wounded soldiers and their families, as well as a rise in the use of addictive substances. Similar types of distress were reported for persons displaced from their homes.

A letter sent to the State Comptroller by directors of mental health centers at the end of November 2023, in which they estimated that some 300,000 additional persons would need treatment in the wake of the 7th of October -- not counting shell-shocked soldiers who would also require treatment. The directors also stated that the demand for mental health services had increased by dozens of percentages since the outbreak of the war -- all these in addition to the increase in needs following the Corona epidemic, including a rise in the general level of anxiety and depression. They also mentioned a high level of mental illness, suicides and emergency hospitalizations.³⁶

A survey conducted by the Maccabi Health Services in March 2024 in order to ascertain the effect of the war on the physical and mental health of members,³⁷ found that more

35 Gil-Ad, Hadar et. al. February 11, 2024. "Social Welfare, Health, Education, Police: The Budget Cuts in These Areas Now of all Times. *ynet*. (Hebrew)

36 Forum of CEOs of Psychiatric Hospitals. 2023. "An Emergency of Mental Health in Israel." Letter to the State Comptroller. (Hebrew)

37 The survey was conducted with a sample of more than 1,000 Israelis throughout Israel, among members of the health fund aged 20-75. Information reported by the spokesperson of the Ministry of Health.

than one-third of the women (36%) reported a worsening in their health against the background of the war, compared with less than a fourth of the men (23%). Additional gender disparities are to be found regarding the worsening of survey participants' mental state, reported by 55% of the women, compared with 31% of the men. Also mentioned was the phenomenon of increased difficulties sleeping, reported by 62% of women and 38% of men.

Figures of the Institute for Safety and Hygiene, presented in a Workers' Hotline report, collaborate the above: according to the report, the first months of the war had a greater effect on the health of women than of men: 46% of working mothers reported having trouble sleeping, compared with 24% of working fathers. Working mothers also reported more exhaustion than men (46%, compared with 24%). The study elaborated that chronic pressure at work, difficulties sleeping and accumulated exhaustion have health implications and are liable to cause headaches, indigestion, diabetes, and heart diseases, among others.³⁸

Examples of the Shortage of Caregivers and Its Implications

During the Corona epidemic much was said about “**vital workers.**” This definition helped to lessen the economic effect of the epidemic on women, as women constitute a large proportion of those defined as “vital” in many countries.³⁹ It is well-known that women are over-represented in the social services: they constitute 67% of such employees worldwide. However, the Corona epidemic revealed **the unfairness of segregated labor markets, in which despite the vital work they do, women in the social services receive low remuneration and often work under insecure conditions.** Thus, a positive result of

38 Kahana, Elad and Diana Baron. 2024. “War and unemployment: The lack of policy and its impact on workers.” Workers Hotline.

39 Vital workers are to be found in a wide variety of sectors, primarily health and other social services, food and agriculture, retailers of vital products like food, medications and medical equipment, as well as governmental and community services like garbage collection, street cleaning and public transportation.

their strategic positions during the Corona epidemic could have been an improvement in professional status, salaries and working conditions, an increase in the number of positions and an increase in government investment in these areas. In actuality, none of the desired changes occurred.

The care deficit: It is becoming more and more difficult to provide accessible, quality treatment for those who need it. The war exposed the erosion of the system of public care provided by social workers, psychologists, and school counselors.

Below are three examples:

1. Social workers

The social welfare system was characterized by underfunding to the tune of six billion shekels per year even prior to the October 2023 war, a shortage of wo/man power and unfilled positions for social workers,⁴⁰ due to the nature of the work, working conditions and low salaries. Some 78% of social workers employed under the Ministry of Social Welfare are women. According to figures of the Organization of Welfare Services Directors at Local Authorities, there is a shortage of 1,500 social workers in local social welfare offices throughout the country.⁴¹ The Union of Social Workers estimates that there is a shortage of 5,000 social workers in local authorities and at the ministries of welfare and health. Although they lack sufficient subsidized positions, local authorities do not even manage to fill the positions they do have.

The Union of Social Workers reports that social workers are responsible for 250 families on average, and for 600 families in Haredi and Bedouin societies. The burdens shouldered by social workers are now exacerbated by violence connected with the

40 Gal, John. 2023. "The War: This is what needs to happen so that we continue to function." Taub Center.

41 Gil-Ad, Hadar et. al. 2024.

war.⁴² It is estimated that some 2,000 social workers volunteered their assistance with the outbreak of war; moreover, social workers employed by local authorities worked overtime.⁴³

2. Educational psychologists.

Even before the war, there was a shortage of educational psychologists. According to an estimate of the Forum of Organizations for Public Psychology,⁴⁴ in 2022 there was a shortage of 2,674 positions, and 997 budgeted positions were not even filled due to low remuneration.⁴⁵ Another estimate is that of the Ministry of Education, according to which in 2023, prior to the war, 30% of existing positions for educational psychologists remained unfilled. The figures are even lower for the local authorities affected by the war in the Southern region: In Ofakim, only 51% of official positions were filled and in Sderot, 67%.⁴⁶

3. Psychologists in the Public Service

Prior to the war, there were long waiting times for psychologists in the public services, due to a serious shortage of these professionals. The Forum for Public Psychology estimates that there are only 675 positions for clinical psychologists in the public services, a number that represents no more than 17% of clinical psychologists in Israel.⁴⁷ The Forum estimates that there is a need for 1,500 additional positions in the public services. In general, it appears that clinical psychologists are leaving the public service for the private market, due to low salaries and heavy workloads.

42 Monsour, Lamma. 2024. "War, Social Welfare and Resilience: Insights from Professionals in the Shadow of War." Ad'ar.

43 Gal, John. 2023. Mansour, Lamma. 2024.

44 Shahar, Efrat. 2022. "Intervention Treatment – How to save public psychology services in Israel." Forum of Organizations for Public Psychology and Beit Berl. (Hebrew)

45 NIS 47 per hour for a psychologist with a Master's degree and 15 years of experience.

46 Monikandam-Givon, Monica. 2023. "Educational Psychological Services in Ordinary Times and in Emergencies." Knesset Research and Information Center. (Hebrew)

47 Shahar, Efrat Lia. 2022.

Employment

How Crises Affect Women's Employment

Studies from throughout the world have pointed out that women's job losses during the economic crisis caused by the Corona epidemic were greater than men's. The basis for this phenomenon is gender employment segregation, as women are over-represented in some of the economic sectors worse hit, like hospitality, food services, business services, wholesaling, and retailing. At the same time, women's over-representation among "vital workers," as the majority among workers in the public services, including health and welfare, afforded them a measure of protection which was lessened by the shrinking of the job market.

A review of studies conducted throughout the world indicates that in the long run, the status of women in the labor market worsened in comparison with that of men (a phenomenon called "**female decline**") in the wake of the Corona epidemic. The phenomenon was reflected in job loss (layoffs and resignations), lower compensation and worsening working conditions.

Women's responsibility for care work in the family affects the type and quality of employment opportunities open to them, as well as possibilities of promotion in comparison with men employed in the same economic sectors and occupations. This responsibility also affects what is termed **tolerance of unemployment and social exclusion**: women find it easier to accept situations of economic inactivity, informal work, or precarious employment. These employment situations are liable to perpetuate gender inequality and lack of economic security for women.⁴⁸

48 Alson Brysk. 2023. "Pandemic patriarchy: The impact of a global health crisis on women's rights." Chapter in the book: Rights at Stake and the COVID-19 Pandemic. 1st edition. Routledge.

A gender breakdown of employment figures published during the period of the Corona epidemic in Israel indicated greater employment volatility among women than among men – this directly connected with the gendered structure of the labor market, especially the shutdowns and the problematic functioning of the education and care systems. The evidence for the same is to be found in employment figures published by the Central Bureau of Statistics. The figures point to the fact that during the first and second shutdowns, in April and September 2020, women's unemployment was especially high. Likewise, throughout the epidemic, women constituted the majority of those registered with the Government Employment Service; the highest point was in September 2020, when women constituted 62.4% of the registered unemployed. Women were also the majority among workers sent on leave without pay. The closedown of the education system, especially preschools, apparently contributed to the increased registration of women at the Government Employment Service. On the other hand, the reopening of the education system enabled women to return to work at a faster pace than men.⁴⁹

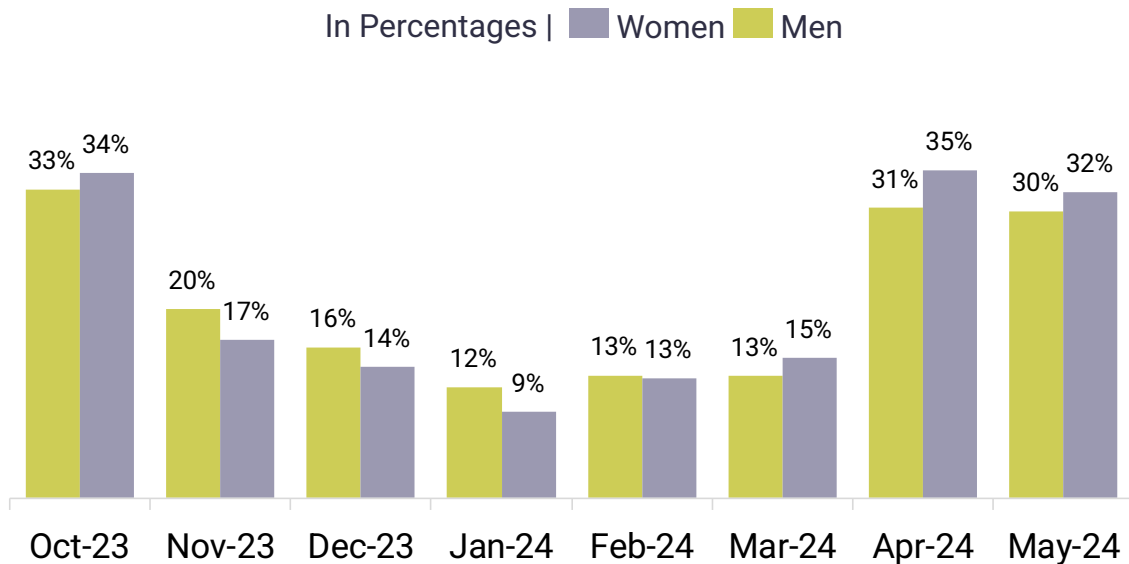
49 Hasson, Ben-Eliyahu and Tsameret. 2021.

The Impact of the October 2023 War on Women’s Employment

The pattern of women’s absences from work during the October 2023 war was different from men’s, as were the reasons behind such absences.

An examination of Central Bureau of Statistics figures indicates that with the outbreak of war, in October 2023, about a third of employed women (721,700) and men (711,900) were absent from their workplaces for various periods of time (part or all of the week). In November 2023, 20% of employed men and 17% of employed women were absent from the labor force, and these percentages decreased during the following months until April or May 2024.

Figure 5: Percentage of Total Employed Persons Absent from Work (Part or All of the Week), by Gender, October 2023-May 2024.



Source: Adva Center and Van Leer Institute analysis based on Central Bureau of Statistics press releases; “Data from Manpower Surveys,” various months.

Examination of the reasons for absence from work indicates differential gender patterns. While during the first months of the war, call-ups to the Reserves constituted the main reason for men's absences from work, women's absences were due to closures or reductions of work hours at workplaces, shutdowns or reduced activity at educational institutions, partners' call-ups to the Reserves (according to IDF figures, up to 2024, half of the men serving in the Reserves – 115,000 – were fathers; 3,000 mothers were also called up).⁵⁰

According to Central Bureau of Statistics data, 18% of men absent from work in October 2023 had been called up to the Reserves – a proportion that increased to a high of 41% in January 2024, then decreased gradually to 6% in April and May of 2024. Among women, 7% of those absent from work in January 2024 had been called up to the Reserves. In contrast, the percentage of women absent from work due to their own **illness** or that of a family member was higher throughout the period; about one-fourth of women were absent from work during the months of January and February 2024 (compared with 16% and 19% of men, respectively). Women also took more **days off** than men.

From December 2023, but mainly from January to March 2024, there was an increase in the percentage of women absent from work due to their opting for **birth leaves** of up to 26 weeks (in January – men as well). The increase can probably be attributed, at least in part, to a one-time grant of NIS 10,700 awarded by the Assistance Fund for Persons Serving in the Reserves, for the purpose of lengthening birth leave for parents, when one of the spouses was serving in the Reserves during this period.⁵¹

Regarding **reductions in working hours or temporary absences from work**, the percentage of women away from work in October and November was 37% and 59%, respectively (in comparison with 34% and 53% for men). According to an analysis of

50 IDF website. "Figures on Reserve Call-ups." (Hebrew)

51 "Persons called up to the Reserves – National Package for Persons Serving and Their Families." IDF Website. (Hebrew).

the Department of the Chief Economist at the Ministry of Finance, more women than men worked from home.⁵²

Reasons for Absence from Work, by Gender, October 2023-May 2024

In percentages, by month and gender

	Illness or Accident		Leave		Reserve Duty		Reduction of Working Hours or Cessation of Work for up to 30 Days		Birth Leave		Other/Unknown Reason	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Oct-23	3%	4%	6%	9%	18%	3%	34%	37%	--	4%	39%	44%
Nov-23	7%	11%	6%	11%	32%	5%	53%	59%	--	9%	2%	5%
Dec-23	11%	14%	11%	29%	39%	6%	36%	36%	--	12%	2%	2%
Jan-24	16%	25%	12%	18%	41%	7%	24%	24%	1%	22%	6%	4%
Feb-24	19%	24%	32%	38%	22%	3%	21%	13%	--	18%	5%	3%
Mar-24	16%	17%	48%	53%	17%	2%	15%	10%	--	17%	4%	2%
Apr-24	5%	5%	84%	82%	6%	1%	4%	4%	--	7%	1%	1%
May-24	4%	6%	84%	84%	6%	1%	4%	2%	--	6%	1%	1%

Source: Adva Center and Van Leer Institute analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics press releases, "Data from Manpower Survey," various months.

According to the Government Employment Service, in September 2023 there were 24,945 **new men and women registered as unemployed and seeking work**. Women constituted 55.5%. In October 2023, with the outbreak of war, the number of new persons registered jumped threefold to 70,295, with women constituting about 59%. The Employment Service

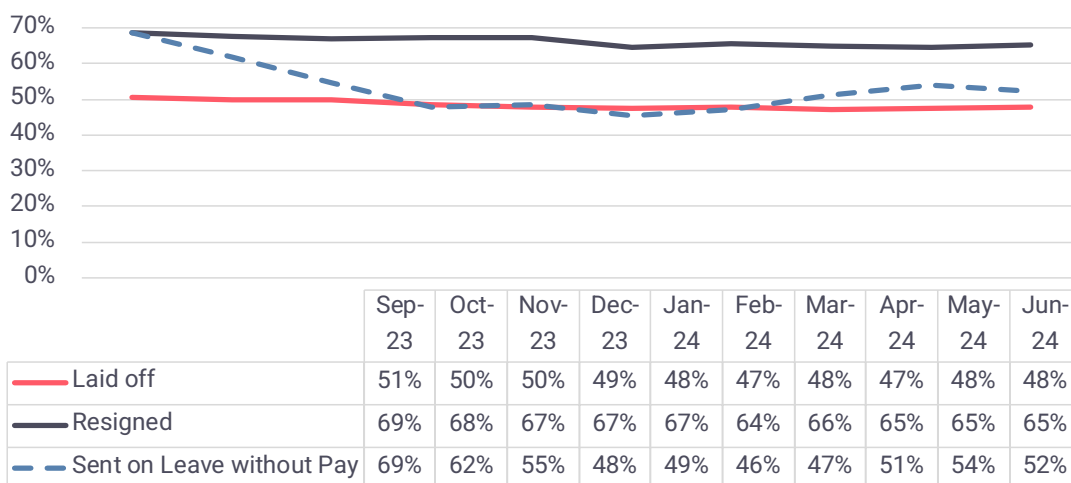
52 Ministry of Finance, Department of the Chief Economist. 2024. "Weekly Survey: The effect of the Iron Swords war on the labor market in November 2023." (Hebrew)

publishes the reasons for registering as unemployed. Among these individuals in October 2023, women constituted 68% of persons laid off, 68% of persons resigning and 62% of persons going on unpaid leave. It should be noted that unpaid leave involves taking a cut in salary and losing social benefits. The largest group of women with unpaid leaves of absence had 10-12 years of education, a figure that accords with the largest work stoppages, those experienced by salespersons, the vast majority of whom are women.⁵³

In November 2023, the number of new persons registering as unemployed and seeking work due to their being on leave without pay was double that of October: 80,513 compared with 42,965. Among the new persons registering for this reason, women constituted 54%, a percentage that declined to 46% in February and increased to 51% in April and 54% in May.

Figure 6: Proportion of Women among New Persons Registered as Seeking Employment due to Resignation, Layoff or Being Sent on Leave Without Pay

September 2023-June 2024



Source: Analysis of Van Leer Institute and Adva Center of data from the Government Employment Service, May 29, 2024.

53 Website of the Government Employment Service. "Labor Market Pulse." (Hebrew)

The Impact of the October 2023 War on Arab Women's Employment in Israel

The employment rate of Arab women of the primary work ages (25-66) was on the increase prior to the war -- 46% in September 2023. In the wake of the war, the employment rate of Arab men declined from 77% in September to 66% in November, and that of Arab women from 46% to 41% during the same months.⁵⁴ The effect of the war includes reductions of work hours: 33% of Arab women reported such a decline.⁵⁵

According to a Bank of Israel report, the decline in Arab women's employment in October 2023 was similar to that of Jewish women. A common reason for unemployment was the shutdown of educational institutions with the outbreak of war. Another possible explanation for the similarity: the occupations in which both groups of women were engaged, in which employment ceased or was reduced with the outbreak of the war. An additional reason for Jewish women's absence from work was the Reserves call-up of their spouses. As this was not a reason for absence from work for most Arab women, one might expect their absentee rate to be lower. The Bank of Israel found that during the months of November and December 2023, Jewish and Arab women's employment was renewed at the same rate, remaining at three percentage points below their rates prior to the outbreak of war. The same report also noted that Arab men experienced a comparatively higher rate of unemployment and a slower rate of return than Arab women.⁵⁶ It should be noted that Arab women's employment rate was lower than that of Arab men to begin with and that Arab women constitute the social group with the lowest employment rate. Their average wage is the lowest: NIS 6,099 per month in 2021, compared with NIS 8,670 for women in general.⁵⁷ Another central issue connected with the decrease in the employment of Arab women is the effect of the war on their **feelings of safety**.

54 Ma'ari, Sami and Arnon Barak. 2023. "The effect of the war and employment trends in Arab society." Fourth report in a series of working papers of the Arab Economic Forum. December ; Tehawkho, Marian, Amit Loewenthal and Ayala Partush. 2023. "The impact of the war on Israel's Arab society and the necessary policy measures." The Center for Economic Policy of Arab Society, Aharon Institute.

55 Ma'ari and Barak. 2023. Op. cit.

56 Bank of Israel. 2024. "2023 Report." (Hebrew)

57 Ben Eliyahu, Hadass, Hagar Tsameret, Naomi Hazan, Hannah Herzog, Yulia Bassin and Hannah Brayer-Garb. The Gender Index 2023: Gender Inequality in Israel. Van Leer Institute. Jerusalem.

The Impact of the War on Women's Workplace Rights

Discrimination: The Commission for Equal Opportunities in Employment reported that between October and November 2023, there was an increase of 53% in the number of complaints of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, opinion, parenthood and Reserve duty, in comparison with the same period in 2022.⁵⁸ A survey conducted by the Commission among 1,051 parents of children up to age 14 revealed that the damage to working conditions was greater among women than men (35% compared with 26%), and that women's absence from work was also greater than men's (57%, compared with 38%).⁵⁹ From figures presented in March 2024 at the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality, by the Administration for the Regulation and Enforcement of Labor Laws at the Ministry of Labor, it appears that in 2023, 3,350 employer requests were received with regard to the **Law of Equal Employment for Women** (compared with 1,730 in 2022), and 3,202 decisions were handed down, among which 1,580 (49%) had to do with permission to terminate employment, 22% with permission to send employees on leave without pay, 18% to reduce positions, and 10% to extend periods of leave without pay – all due to the war. In 75% of the cases, permission was granted.

According to the human rights organization “Workers’ Hotline,” during the first five months of the war, there was a significant increase, in comparison with previous years, of complaints from women whose employers worsened their employment conditions or sent them on leave without pay, in contradiction to the law – which forbids the same during pregnancy or fertility treatments.⁶⁰

58 <https://www.calcalist.co.il/local> news/article/hj004doava (Hebrew)

59 “Special survey of the Commission for Equal Opportunity in Employment.” Ministry of the Economy and Industry. March 5, 2024. (Hebrew)

60 Kahana, Elad and Diana Baron. 2024.

The Workers' Hotline also reported a jump in the number of refugees requesting assistance against the background of illegal layoffs during pregnancy. In general, refugees are vulnerable when it comes to the labor market; most work for low wages and are not eligible for the same rights as residents or citizens, they have no social safety net and they lack bargaining power with employers.⁶¹

According to figures presented to the Knesset by another organization representing women, the **Forum of Women Reservists**,⁶² over 30% of spouses of men serving in the Reserves had reported changes in their employment status since the outbreak of war and the conscription of their spouses: 5% were laid off and 8% were sent on unpaid leave of absence for prolonged periods of time; others were forced to resign or take a leave of absence without pay on their own initiative, thus losing their rights to compensation from the National Insurance Institute -- all of the above transgressions of the Law of Workers during Emergencies that is supposed to protect spouses from layoffs due to caring for children either under the age of 14 or with special needs. The situation is especially problematic for self-employed women and women on parental leave. Even when educational frameworks reopen, these women cope with the double burden of making a living and acting as sole caregiver.

Another workplace rights issue resulting from the war is the **layoffs of women evacuated from the South of Israel**. This was raised in the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality on May 2, 2024. A representative of the *Tecumah* Directorate reported on the difficulties these women experienced finding new employment or returning to their former jobs.⁶³

61 Workers' Hotline and Forum of Refugee and Asylum Seeker Organizations. 2024. "Pregnant refugees laid off." Knesset website. (Hebrew).

62 Workers' Hotline and Forum of Refugee and Asylum Seeker Organizations. 2024. "Assistance, Treatment and Regulation of Women's Layoffs in the Shadow of the War. Knesset Protocol, February 5, 2024.(Hebrew).

63 Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality. 2023. "Report of the Ministry of Labor on Layoffs of Pregnant Women and Women Undergoing Fertility Treatments 2022-2023." Protocol of March 18, 2024. (Hebrew)

Women Paid by the Hour: Still another rights issue involves women paid by the hour: Women constitute 59% of hourly workers in Israel, and women working by the hour comprise 35% of employed women (compared with the equivalent figure for men: 25%).⁶⁴

The feminist organization Itach-Maaki, which has a hotline on women's workplace rights, reported numerous violations of the rights of women paid by the hour.

Complaints received by The Workers' Hotline also indicate rights violations connected with hourly pay: during the initial months of the war, women paid by the hour -- for example those employed in informal education frameworks, caregivers for infants and elders and cleaning workers -- experienced both work and pay cuts.⁶⁵ Existing compensation mechanisms (like grants or unemployment compensation) do not provide for these workers.

Self-Employed Women: Self-employed women were also adversely affected by the war: In a survey conducted among 1,127 female small business owners, graduates of the non-profit organization, "Enterprising a Future," at two months and four months after the outbreak of the war, 53% of the respondents in the first cycle and 40% of those in the second cycle reported a decrease in income of over 50%.⁶⁶

Among spouses of persons serving in the Reserves, some 16,700 are self-employed women who are not eligible for the types of benefits and protections available to employed women.⁶⁷

64 Adva Center analysis of data from the Central Bureau of Statistics Manpower Survey. 2022.

65 Kahana, Elad and Diana Baron. 2024.

66 Amit, Ronit. 2023. *The Effect of the Iron Swords war on women small-business-owners – graduates of the organization's course Summary: report*. Adva Research and Development/ (Hebrew).

67 Avgar, Ido. November 11, 2023. Background data for the discussion on support and assistance to spouses of persons called up to the Reserves. Knesset Center for Research and Information. (Hebrew)

Invisible Work

Health and economic crises as well as wars result in a widening of the gap between women and men regarding the time devoted to paid and unpaid work (invisible work – caring for children and housework).⁶⁸ During the Corona epidemic, the policy of closure of educational institutions resulted in more time being devoted to unpaid work for both men and women; on average, the burden on women was greater. The involvement of men in unpaid work was mainly to cover for working spouses, while women tended to work less or to cease paid work. Studies in Israel and elsewhere found that women pay a heavier economic price than men as they need to increase the time devoted to the unpaid work of childcare and housework, at the expense of hours of paid work.⁶⁹

During violent conflicts and wars, the burden of unpaid work of women in the home increases in households in which men are absent due to their combat roles. **At present, there is no data in Israel regarding the effect of wars on the division of unpaid work between women and men and the changes wrought over time.** State agencies, especially the Central Bureau of Statistics, do not collect such data – neither during ordinary times nor during emergencies.

68 Corsi, M. and I. Ilkkaracan. 2023.

69 Kaplan, Amit, Susie Ben-Dori and Hannah Herzog. 2022; Hasson, Yael, Hadass Ben-Eliyahu and Hagar Tsameret. 2021.

Arab Society in Israel: Silencing and Political Persecution

Against the background of the October 7th attack and the October 2023 war, a public discourse has developed regarding Arab society's loyalty to the state. The discourse was accompanied by proposed laws to indict and even to terminate the employment of anyone expressing identification with the suffering of Palestinians or support for them, thus limiting freedom of expression in Israel. These developments, which occurred in the job market, the education system and academic institutions, deepened the feelings of political persecution among Arab citizens of Israel.⁷⁰

The October 2023 war had a **negative impact on Arab women's feelings of security**, mainly in mixed Jewish-Arab arenas. Forty percent of Arab women working in mixed Jewish-Arab environments reported working fewer hours due to the October 2023 war, compared with 27% working in Arab environments.⁷¹ A document produced in December 2023 vis-à-vis Arab engineers employed in the hi-tech industry by the organization "Tsofen," a non-profit devoted to developing hi-tech in Arab society, revealed that women feared to go to the workplace more than men (30% of the women, compared with 16% of the men) and to speak Arabic at the workplace (19%, compared with 13% for men). Moreover, more women than men were afraid to walk around in Jewish or mixed areas (38%, compared with 30%).⁷²

These findings were corroborated by the results of a survey conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute, which examined the feelings of personal security of Arab women and men in various environments.⁷³ The survey found that women were more likely than

70 Hawari, Areen. 2024. "Palestinians inside the Green Line: Towards the End of the Cursed Specially Privileged." *Kriyot Yisraeliot*. Issue 6. (Hebrew)

71 Maari and Barak. 2023.

72 Survey by the Nas Company for the organization Tsofen. 2024. "Arab Hi-Tech Workers in the Current War: A Situation Report."

73 Asad, Adam and Yaron Kaplan. "Public Opinion Survey of Arab Society in Israel on the War in Gaza." Israel Democracy Institute.

men to report feeling insecurity: 60% of women, compared with 48% of men, reported being uncomfortable in Jewish or mixed localities, where they went to work or to make personal arrangements; 56% of women reported discomfort speaking Arabic in the presence of Jews (on public transportation or near strangers), compared with 36% of men; 79% of women reported that they felt discomfort expressing themselves on social media, compared with 63% of men.

Moreover, a report published by the Workers' Hotline stated that it had received hundreds of complaints by Arab employees of workplace discrimination (without a gender breakdown).⁷⁴ Among others, there were reports of rights violations following social media messages and even illegal layoffs based on ethnicity or opinions expressed.

74 Baron, Diana and Rasha Elatouna. 2024. "Situation Report: Information Gaps of Arab Citizens of Israel and residents of East Jerusalem and the disappearance of workers on the basis of ethnicity and opinions during the first months of the War. Workers' Hotline. (Hebrew).

Looking Ahead

At the time of writing, the war is still raging. Still, it is already possible to identify some of the war's effects on the lives of women, as pointed out in this document. In the future we will continue to analyze the same, as well as additional issues, among them gender effects of the war in the areas of education, poverty and social welfare, and family life. These issues need to be examined regarding displaced persons as well as those residing in areas in which the violence of war is rife, making the conduct of the routine actions extremely difficult.

Over the years, much has been written about the militarism of Israeli society and its multifarious gender impacts. The war has led to the increase of various aspects of militarism – among others the transfer of resources from vital civilian areas, like health and social welfare, to defense. This transfer reduces the state's ability to respond to routine needs as well as expanded ones resulting from the war, a change that is especially harmful to women, as they are more dependent on the social welfare system for both assistance and employment.

In addition, as can be gleaned from international experience, emergencies and wars are likely to reduce women's employment and their access to economic opportunities.⁷⁵ This is due to the fact that in many places the economic growth that follows crises involves workplaces in which mainly men are employed. If one adds to this the fact that gender equality is not a priority of decision-makers during wars as well as in their wake, it is patently clear that increased militarism during wartime will increase gender inequality.

Women's activism in the framework of civil society, despite its critical contribution to

75 Elveren, Adem Y., Valentine M. Moghadam, Selda Dudu. 2022. "Militarization, women's labor force participation and gender inequality: Evidence from global data." *Women's Studies International Forum*. Volume 94. ISSN 0277-5395.

the war effort, is usually not translated into political power in the formal sphere. This is due to the fact that the contribution itself constitutes in part a broadening of women's roles in the private sphere. As such it echoes traditional gender roles as well as an essentialist conception with regard to women's social roles. In addition, the social recognition accorded to men who endanger their lives at the front is often translated into formal political appointments. At the same time, women's formal political power is a central condition for the guarantee of democracy, social justice and gender equality. Thus, what is needed is social recognition of women's war deeds in the framework of civil society and its translation into political power, along with the development of additional avenues to power.

In this context, the maintenance of women's rights, the raising of their status and their heightened protection requires the integration of knowledge accumulated in feminist organizations into decision making – in war and its aftermath. The importance of this knowledge became clear in compensation policies vis-a-vis employment losses during the war – in whose framework women employed in vulnerable workplaces did not receive compensation. This neglect was pointed out by civil society organizations, which recommended the creation of suitable compensation mechanisms.

Experience has shown that military violence increases and normalizes violence in civilian arenas, including the family, notably violence against women. Normalization of violence creates a blunting of sensitivity with regard to the very use of violence. International research, including the figures presented herein, points to the need to raise awareness and to assist women to break out of their own circles of violence.

A clear expression of militarism in wartime is the huge increase in gun licenses issued without involvement on the part of the Ministry of Social Welfare, which could prevent licensing arms to men with histories of family violence. Throughout the world, an

increase in the distribution of arms leads to an increase in the scope of armed crimes, including femicides, suicides and gun accidents. Greater regulation of the issuance of gun licenses, including the involvement of the Ministry of Social Welfare, is the order of the day. In addition, a plan is needed for collecting arms “the day after,” including actions to limit the arming of civilians.

War also increases the tensions between social groups, especially between Jews and Arabs, limits freedom of expression and creates a feeling of persecution among Arab citizens. This feeling shadows Arab women in the various arenas in which they are active, especially in mixed Jewish-Arab spaces – at workplaces and educational institutions. Along with cutbacks in development programs for Arab society, these processes result in a retreat from the recent trend of improving the status of Arab women.

Finally, a deep understanding of the needs of women compared to those of men in wartime and afterwards and the development of policies that provide suitable responses to those needs is lacking. Information and knowledge should be gathered from a variety of sources by national agencies, including those responsible for rehabilitation and compensation.

We end this report with the demand to bring home all the kidnapped persons, now, and with the expectation and hope for a speedy end to the present cycle of violence.

Appendix: The Gender Effects of War: The Case of Russia and the Ukraine

A contemporary example of the gender effects of violent conflicts is the war between Russia and the Ukraine. Gender inequality in the Ukraine was high prior to the war. Since the outbreak of war, the level of gender inequality has risen. A report published by the United Nations shows that 56% of persons in need of humanitarian aid or who had lost their homes were women and girls, and that 72% of unemployed persons were women,⁷⁶ as the percentage of unemployed women displaced from their homes grew from 3% to 20% during the war. Other impacts of war for women include limited access to shelters and other protected places for abused women, limited access to hygienic products, limited health services, and increased exposure to violence, including sexual and family violence. Moreover, there is evidence that Ukrainian women and girls suffered extreme violence on the part of Russian troops, including increased danger of being trafficked or exploited sexually.⁷⁷

Studies also indicate changes in women's traditional roles, a well-known phenomenon in war: 70% of women in the Ukraine assist war victims voluntarily, including setting up humanitarian assistance centers for persons wrenched from their homes, and taking part in rescue crews providing medical equipment to the front. In addition, women constitute 20% of the Ukrainian armed forces. Nearly half of the small businesses opened since the war began were under the leadership of women.⁷⁸ On the family level, 40% of women whose families were displaced stated that they had more authority with respect to raising the children. About a fifth of women who returned to the Ukraine

76 Elveren, Adem Y., Valentine M. Moghadam, Selda Dudu. 2022.

77 "Women and Girls after Two Years of War in the Ukraine." February 2024. UN Women.

78 Pereira, Paulo, Wenwu Zhao, Lyudmyla Symochka, Miguel Inacio, Igor Bogunovic, Damia Barcelo. 2022. "The Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict will push back the sustainable development goals." *Geography and Sustainability*. Volume 3. Issue 3. Pp 277-287.

after fleeing to other countries reported that they had more decision-making power regarding family financial matters, and some 40% reported increased involvement in the planning of family life. Among spouses of persons serving in the armed forces, 54% reported having more financial responsibility in the family.⁷⁹

Despite these changes in women's roles and the important part women play in providing humanitarian assistance during the war, they still do not participate in formal arenas in which decisions are made. Since the outbreak of the war, their representation as experts, leaders or media heroines has decreased: they constitute only 16% of experts quoted in the media, and the heroism of women in the war is mentioned in only 22% of media reports.⁸⁰

Feminist activists and organizations in the Ukraine have a hard time promoting women's rights, due to the attention and state resources channeled to the war, as well as the damage done to men's rights due to the war – especially their inability to leave the country and their conscription.⁸¹ In addition, it is not clear to what extent women active in civil society will be able to turn their vital activities during the war into political achievements during peacetime and to decision making regarding the future of the country. Their actions in the framework of civil society are perceived as no more than the broadening of their family roles and as such not of high worth,⁸² especially in comparison with military service and participation in the war; the contributions considered important are usually those of men.

79 Drobovych, Iryna. 2023. "Women's Meaningful Participation in War and Post-War Ukraine" Women Without Borders. Policy Paper N. 7.

80 "Shifts in roles: How the war has affected the family life of Ukrainian women." October 2023. Gradus Research Company.

81 Strelynk, Olena. 2023. "Gender, Citizenship and War: How Russia's War on Ukraine Affects Women's Political Rights." *Femina Politica*.

82 Strelynk, Olena. 2023

Russia

Existing data indicate that in Russia, too, there were significant gender inequalities prior to the war.⁸³ Moreover, in a patriarchal society like Russia, the accepted image of women is as mothers. In fact, the year 2024 was designated “the year of the family,” and in Putin’s blessings on International Women’s Day in March, he spoke of motherhood as “the glorious mission of women.”⁸⁴ Thus, expectations regarding equality for women, in the country and the family, were smashed. During the war, career development is not a realistic option for most women. In addition, the longer the war lasts, existing financing for health, education and housing services, in which women constitute the majority of employees, diminishes, as budgets are channeled to industries that directly support the war effort.⁸⁵

Family violence was rampant even before the war: 20% of Russian women suffered physical violence at the hands of their spouses, and some 14,000 women were murdered yearly by husbands.⁸⁶ The expectation is that the level of family violence against women will exacerbate as long as the war lasts and as long as violence is committed on the home front by returning soldiers suffering from trauma.

Russian women have a long tradition of opposing the regime, including during periods of war (during the war in Afghanistan, for example). At present women play a central role in anti-war activism: in 2022, over half of anti-war demonstrators were women (at some stages, 70%), and they constituted 45% of persons arrested for actions termed “anti-war actions.”⁸⁷

83 Mathers, J.G. 2024. “Women, Civil Society and Ukraine’s War. *Political Insight*. 15 (1). 26-28.

84 <https://data.unwomen.org/country/russian-federation>.

85 Hartog, Eva. 2024. “Meet the Russian women taking on Putin.” *Politico*.

86 Edel, Anastasia. 2024. “The Broken Bargain of Russian Womenhood. *Foreign Policy*.

87 Ibid.

In Russia there is a small, but stubborn movement of women and relatives of soldiers, which demands the demobilization of soldiers conscripted in 2022, but with the continuation of the war, their critique of the Kremlin became more and more explicit. The movement for the demobilization of conscripts is based on women's identity as wives and mothers, and therefore official Russian media found it difficult to define them as traitors, but instead made efforts to confront protestors with women who declared that their loyalty to husband and country was on one and the same level.

הדעות המובעות בפרסום זה אינן משקפות בהכרח את דעותיה של קרן פרידריך אברט. שימוש מסחרי בפרסומים של קרן פרידריך אברט ללא אישור בכתב של הקרן אסור בהחלט.

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