



Polygamy in Jordan: What do the latest figures tell us?

First: Polygamy among Jordanians according to the Civil Status and Passports Department's (CSPD) marital status stock data

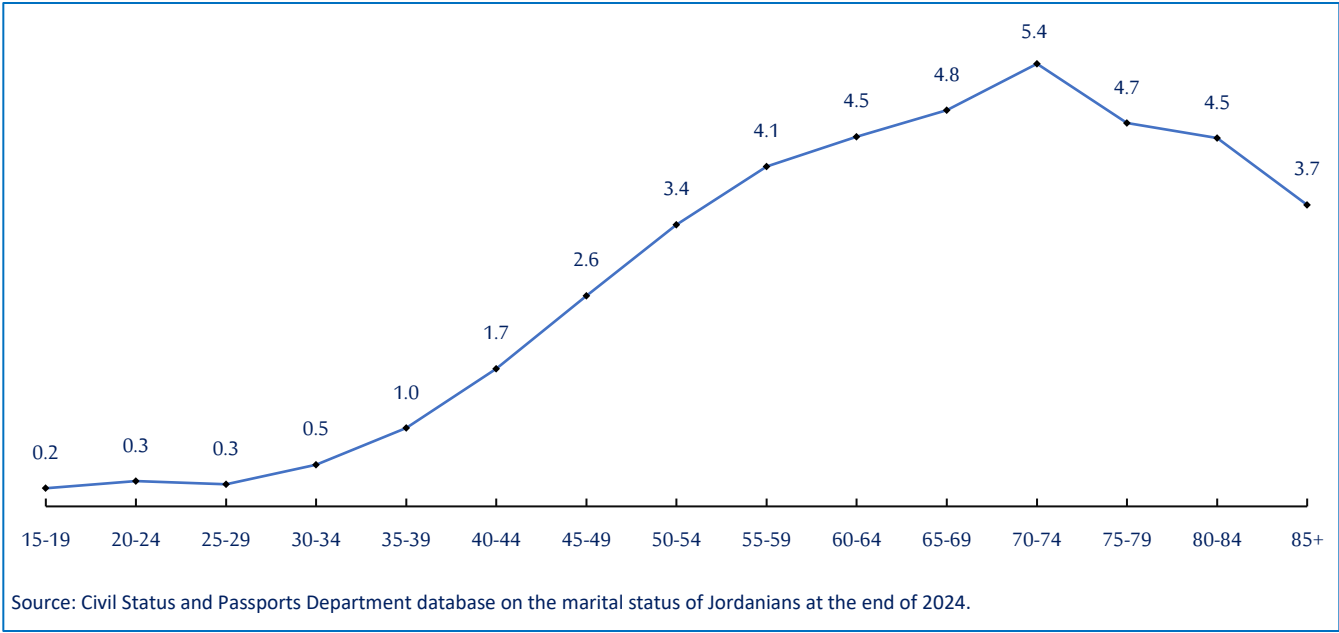
Polygamy is another aspect of marital status in Jordanian society, like singlehood, widowhood, and divorce. Polygamy means that a husband has more than one wife, two wives and rarely three. From the wife's perspective, polygamy also means that her husband has another wife in addition to her. According to the data, the number of Jordanian men with more than one wife was 39,499 in 2022, then increased by about a thousand men in 2023, reaching 40,497 by the end of that year. However, the number decreased to 38,900 in 2024¹.

The Civil Status and Passports Department's database revealed that polygamy is relatively uncommon in Jordan. Polygamous men accounted for 1.37% of Jordanian males aged 15 and above in both 2022 and 2023, decreasing slightly to 1.29% in 2024. Additionally, men married to more than one wife represented 2.37% of all married men in 2024. The low prevalence of polygamy among Jordanians may be attributed to the fact that a man's marriage to a second wife is often preceded by the divorce of his first wife. It is rare to find a married man with a second wife while still maintaining his first marriage.

Regarding polygamy by age group among married men, figure (1) illustrates the percentage of men with more than one wife out of the total number of married men in each age group, based on the Civil Status and Passports Department's 2024 data. The figure shows that the proportion of polygamous men increases with age, peaking in the 70-74 age group at over 5% (5.4%). After this peak, the percentage begins to decline among older age groups, dropping to 3.7% for men in the most advanced age categories.

¹ **Source:** Civil Status and Passports Department database for the years 2022, 2023, and 2024.

Figure (1): Percentage of Married Men with More Than One Wife by Age Group of the Husband (2024)



Second: Polygamy and Its Variations According to Periodic Household Survey Data on Marital Status for Women and Men Aged 15-49 Years

The statistics in Table (1) show a gradual decline in polygamy among Jordanians in recent years, with the percentage of Jordanian married women aged 15-49 whose husbands had another wife dropping from 5.2% in 2009 to 3.6% in 2023. Data from the 2017/2018 and 2023 Population and Family Health Surveys indicate that Jordanian women had lower rates of polygamous marriages (3.6%) compared to Syrian women (5.2%) and women of other nationalities (4.7%) in the latest surveys, reflecting both a downward trend among Jordanians and nationality-based variations in polygamy prevalence.

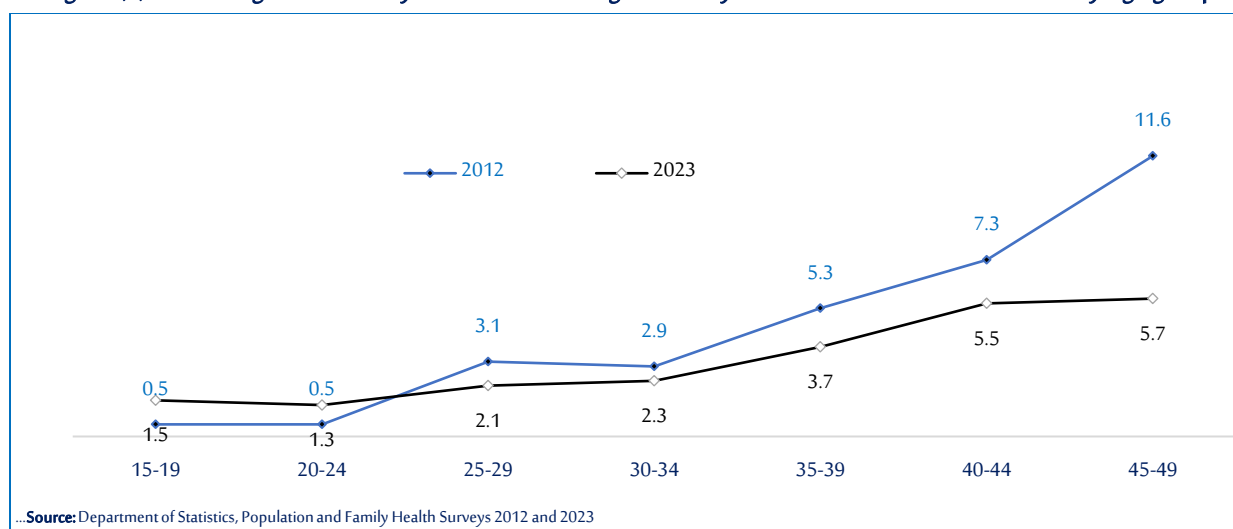
Table (1): Trends in Polygamy in Jordan by Wife's Nationality (2009-2023)				
Percentage of married women aged 15-49 who reported their husbands had another wife*				
Nationality	The 2009 Household Survey	The 2012 Household Survey	The 2017 Household Survey	The 2023 Household Survey
Jordanian women	5.2	5.1	4.1	3.6
Syrian women	Not specified	Not specified	5.1	5.2
Other nationalities	Not specified	Not specified	5.8	4.7
*General Statistics Department, results of the Population and Family Health Surveys for the mentioned years.				

The two most recent household surveys also asked married men aged 15-49 whether they had more than one wife. According to the 2023 survey results, 1.1% of Jordanian men, 0.3% of Syrian men, and 2.9% of men of other nationalities reported having more than one wife. These percentages are lower than those reported by women. The following are the key characteristics of wives of all nationalities who report that their husbands have more than one wife, by age, education, governorate and welfare quintiles:

1. Polygamy among husbands by age groups of married women aged 15-49 years

Figure (2) reveals two key findings: First, polygamy has declined across all age groups in Jordan over the past decade. Second, polygamy prevalence increases with wives' age. Data from the 2012 and 2023 Population and Family Health Surveys show rates rose from 0.5% among women aged 15-19 and 20-24 to nearly 11.6% for those aged 45-49 in 2012. The 2023 survey recorded an increase from 1.3% (age 20-24) to 5.7% (age 45-49), confirming that a wife's advancing age may motivate husbands to marry younger women.

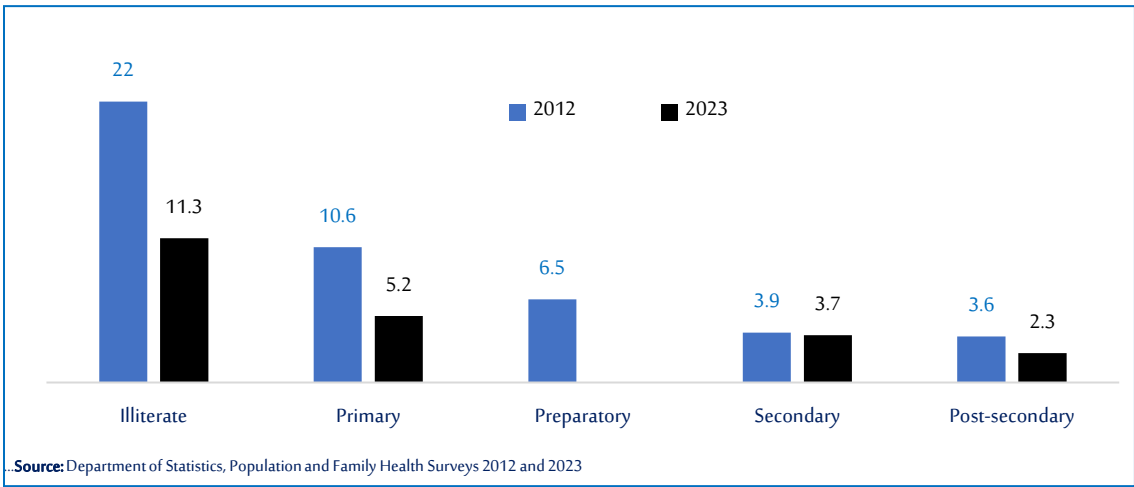
Figure (2): Percentages of currently married women aged 15-49 years with one or more co-wives, by age group



2. Polygamy among husbands by educational level of married women aged 15-49 years

Figure (3) shows the percentages of currently married women aged 15-49 years with one or more co-wives by educational level. The results indicate a clear association between lower education levels among women and higher percentages of polygamy. Women with low educational qualifications ("illiterate or less than secondary") show higher rates of having co-wives compared to more educated women. However, this marriage pattern declined from 22% and 11% among illiterate women (between 2012 and 2023 Population and Family Health Surveys) to 3.6% and 2.3% among women with higher than secondary education.

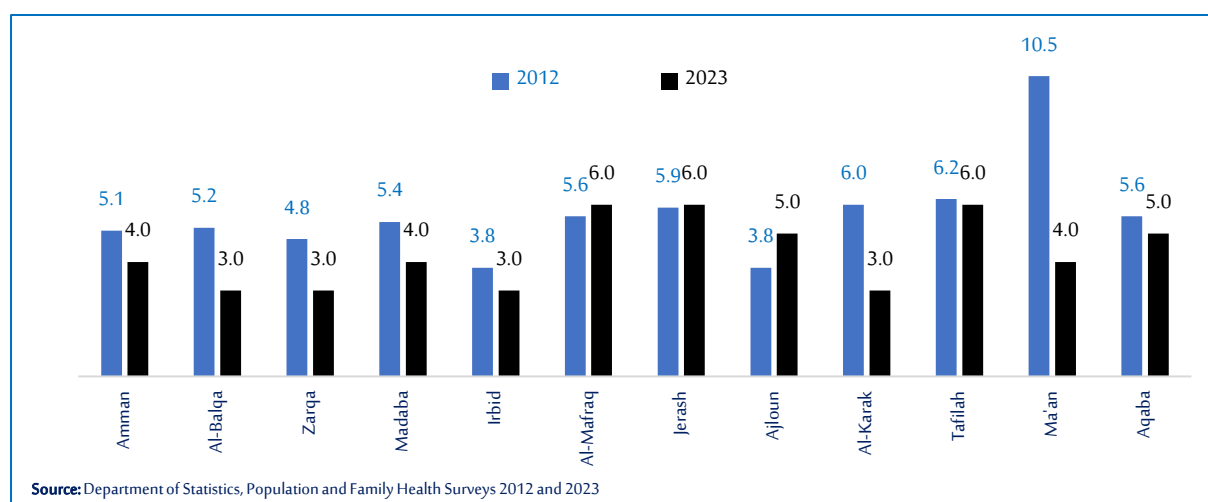
Figure (3): Percentages of currently married women aged 15-49 years with one or more co-wives by educational level, from the 2012 and 2023 Population and Family Health Surveys.



3. Polygamy among husbands by governorate for married women aged 15-49 years

Figure (4) presents the percentages of currently married women aged 15-49 years with one or more co-wives by governorate, based on the 2012 and 2023 Population and Family Health Surveys. The data shows a decline in this marriage pattern in eight governorates (Amman, Balqa, Zarqa, Madaba, Irbid, Karak, Ma'an, and Aqaba), while it slightly increased or remained stable in the other four governorates (Mafraq, Jerash, Ajloun, and Tafilah). Prevailing social and cultural norms in these regions appear to reinforce this marriage practice. Additionally, variations exist by place of residence (urban/rural). Results indicate that rural women have higher rates of co-wives compared to urban women. However, this marriage pattern declined from 5.7% to 3.7% among urban women (between 2012 and 2023 survey) and from 6.5% to 4.6% among rural women (between 2012 and 2023 survey), respectively.

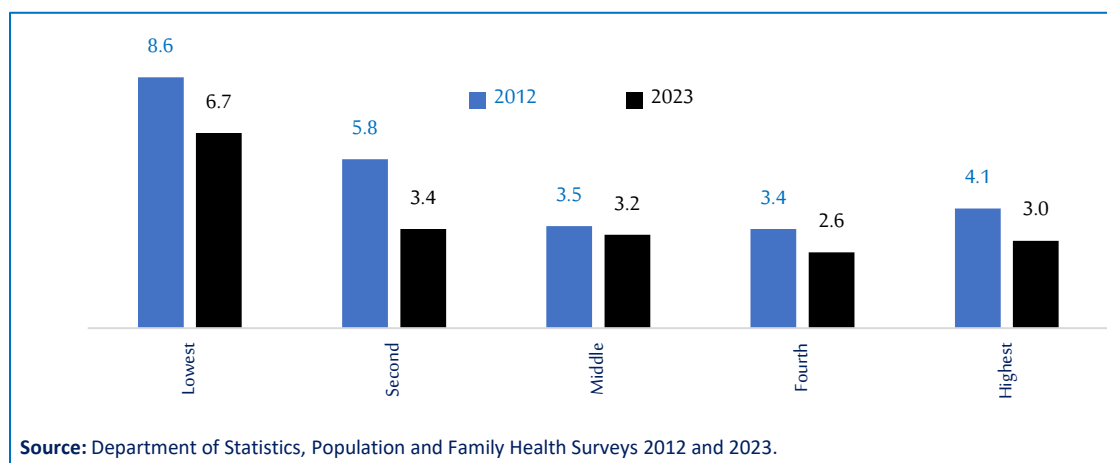
Figure (4): Percentages of currently married women aged 15-49 years who have one or more co-wives sharing the same husband, by governorate, from the Population and Family Health Surveys (2012 and 2023).



4. Polygamy among husbands by wealth quintiles for married women aged 15-49 years

Figure (5) displays the percentages of currently married women aged 15-49 years with one or more co-wives by wealth quintile. The data demonstrates a clear correlation between lower household living standards (measured by wealth quintiles) and higher rates of polygamous marriages in both survey years. Results show women in the lowest wealth quintile had significantly higher prevalence of co-wives (8.6% in 2012 and 6.7% in 2023) compared to those in the highest quintile (4.1% in 2012 and 3% in 2023), based on the 2012 and 2023 Population and Family Health Surveys.

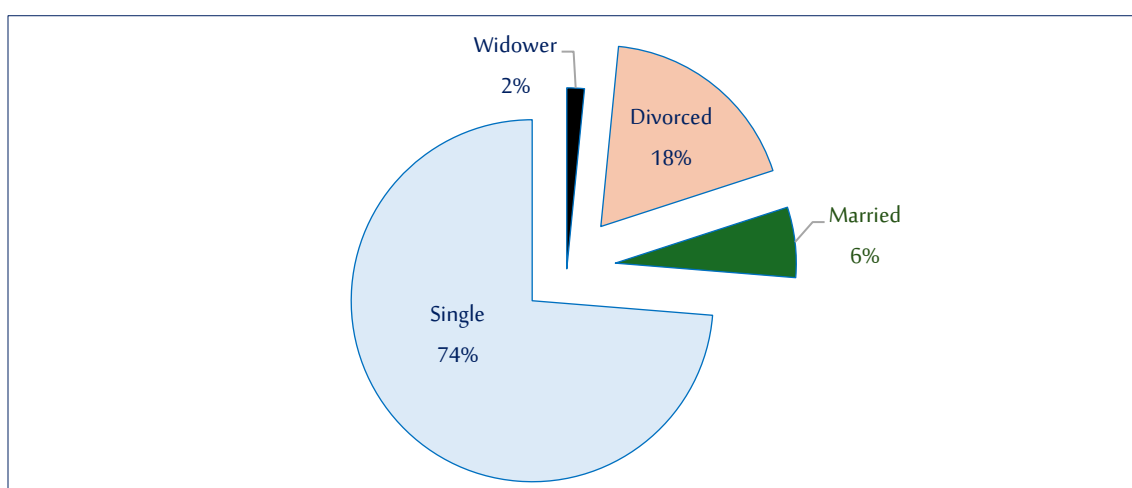
Figure (5): Percentages of currently married women aged 15-49 years with one or more co-wives sharing the same husband, by wealth quintile, from the Population and Family Health Surveys (2012 and 2023).



Third: Polygamy Cases in Annual Marriage Data (Annual Marriage Cases by the Groom's Marital Status²)

The annual records of divorces involving one wife and marriages of already married men contribute to determining the prevalence of polygamy in Jordanian society. Data from the Chief Justice Department on 2024 marriage cases (totaling 62,970 marriages) by groom's marital status, shown in Figure (6), indicate that approximately 6% involved already married men (i.e., entering polygamous marriages). Statistics for 2019–2024 corroborate this, with polygamous marriages averaging 6.9% of total marriages during this period.

Figure (6): Marriage contracts by the groom's marital status (2024)



Conclusions

- ♦ Polygamy in Jordan is not a concerning phenomenon, as the rates are still low.
- ♦ Polygamy prevalence increases with wives' age.
- ♦ The prevalence of polygamy has decreased in eight governorates over the past decade; while slightly increased or remained stable in the other four governorates (Mafraq, Jerash, Ajloun, and Tafilah). Prevailing social and cultural norms in these regions appear to reinforce this marriage practice
- ♦ Polygamy is more common among women in the lowest wealth quintiles compared to the highest.
- ♦ A clear correlation exists between lower education levels among women and higher rates of polygamy (currently married women aged 15-49 with co-wives). Results show women with low educational

² The total number of marriage contracts during 2019-2024, according to annual reports from the Chief Justice Department, was 396,884, of which 27,439 involved grooms who were already married. Thus, the percentage of polygamous marriages during these six years was approximately 6.9%.

qualifications ("illiterate or below secondary") have higher rates of co-wives compared to more educated women.

- ♦ The prevalence of co-wives is higher among rural women compared to urban women.