# Public Opinion Poll of Women's Role in Public Life in Saudi Arabia 

May 10-31, 2015

## Detailed Methodology

- Research was conducted by the Arab World for Research and Development and the Center for Poll and Measuring.
- The survey was conducted between May 10-31, 2015, via telephone by 10 researchers in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The sample size was 1,256 with a non-response rate of five percent. The margin of error is plus or minus three percent.
- The interviews were conducted through computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). The sample was a random probability sample utilizing a systematic interval for selecting respondents.
- The sampling frame was a national household phone directory in which all household numbers are registered. Only Saudi adult citizens (18 yrs. or older) were selected through a filtering question at the beginning of each interview.
- No weighting was conducted.
- Two in-person focus groups were organized on May 18-19, 2015, that included 20 participants, 11 women and nine men.
- Research was sponsored by the Arab Women's Leadership Institute through funding from the National Endowment for Democracy.
- Charts and graphs may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.


## Demographics

| Gender |  |
| :--- | :---: |
| Male | $52 \%$ |
| Female | $48 \%$ |
|  | Age |
| $18-35$ | $59 \%$ |
| $36-50$ | $32 \%$ |
| $51+$ | $9 \%$ |
| Marital Status |  |
| Single | $31 \%$ |
| Married | $62 \%$ |
| Other | $7 \%$ |


| Education Level | Work |  |  |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Illiterate | $1 \%$ | Public <br> sector | $35 \%$ |
| Read and <br> write | $1 \%$ | Private <br> sector | $29 \%$ |
| Primary <br> school | $3 \%$ | Volunteer | $9 \%$ |
| Middle <br> school | $7 \%$ | Housewife | $14 \%$ |
| High school | $24 \%$ | Student | $11 \%$ |
| TVET | $8 \%$ | Unemployed | $1 \%$ |
| University | $44 \%$ | Retired | $1 \%$ |
| More than <br> BA (MA and <br> Phd) | $12 \%$ |  |  |

## Demographics

| Income | Religious |  |  |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :---: |
| Good/ <br> Above <br> average | $53 \%$ | Very <br> religious | $48 \%$ |
| Average | $41 \%$ | Religious | $48 \%$ |
| Weak/ <br> below <br> average | $5 \%$ | Not religious <br> Not religious <br> at all | $1 \%$ |
| No answer | $0 \%$ | Don't know <br> Region | $2 \%$ |
| No answer | $1 \%$ |  |  |
| South | $7 \%$ |  |  |
| East | $16 \%$ |  |  |
| North | $5 \%$ |  |  |
| West | $27 \%$ |  |  |
| Middle | $45 \%$ |  |  |

# For Women, Driving Not as Important as Education and Participation in Community Development Projects 

What level of influence will the following issue have in achieving greater participation of women in public life in Saudi Arabia?

Allowing Women to Drive


What level of influence will the following issue have in achieving greater participation of women in public life in Saudi Arabia?

Improving Education Opportunities for Girls


What level of influence will the following issue have in achieving greater participation of women in public life in Saudi Arabia?

More Opportunities for Women to Participate in
Community Development Projects


What level of influence will the following issue have in achieving greater participation of women in public life in Saudi Arabia?

Lifting the Guardianship Law


Do you know of any organizations that works in the field of promoting women's engagement in public life?


If yes, do you think that these organizations contribute positively towards women's engagement in public life in Saudi Arabia?
( $\mathrm{n}=548$ )


## Do you support women working outside the home?



In your opinion, does social media help promote a positive image of women in general?


## Qualitative Insights of Participation in Public Life

"Women are coming together to voice their views and assert their demands through civil society organizations and the new media. For example, we established our group to work on all fronts especially political participation and women representation in decision making positions." (Female, 51)
"Many organizations are supportive of women's rights including the support of organizations established by Al Walid Bin Talal; his organization already supports women in many fields."
"We see changes in the media. While some media outlets continue to demean women, others - especially new media and regional and international outlets - show new images of women."
"The media reinforces discrimination against women; regressive groups have more access to media now than any time before." (Male, 28)
"Most women's groups reinforce the traditional roles of women; they work with them to only become better mothers, wives and to be more accepting of the status quo." (Female, 29)

## Women's Role in Decision Making

To what extent do you believe women on the Shura council play a role in advancing legal (laws) reforms?


Do you believe Saudi Arabia is promoting policies and programs to support the equal rights of Saudi women?


To what extent do you believe local councils elected in 2015 will have a role in building stronger community services for citizens in Saudi Arabia?


If two equally-qualified candidates, one man and one woman, are running for local elections, who would you vote for?


If municipal elections take place as planned, are you planning to vote?


How important do you view the following issue for the people of Saudi Arabia?

Unemployment


■Men ■ Women

## Do you agree with the following statement:

Women should be equally represented in decision making positions in your country's government.


## Do you agree with the following statement:

Women should be equally represented in decision-making positions in your country's private sector.


## Qualitative Insights on Women's Role in Decision Making

"For the first time, women will be allowed to run for local councils; we will have to do our best to win some seats." (Female, 29)
"Women must run for the local elections; we are winning just by running and raising the profile of women issues and showing that women are part of the political life in our country." (Female, 41)
"This change in the law is a major achievement; it is a clear statement that our country is committed to the rights of women and working to support them." (Male, 26)
"Our group of activists is ready to help women campaigning and training them to be effective candidates. We will get support from some liberal local institutions and leaders" (Female, 48)
"Women now have access to new technology and social media; many women activists are reaching to greater audiences through Twitter." (Male, 31)
"Local elections are superficial; these councils have no power and no utility to the citizens and most people will not be participating because the councils are irrelevant in their life." (Male, 35)

## Qualitative Insights Women's Role in Decision Making

"All decision making in the country is made by a few men with power and from a specific background; all citizens are not part of the decision making on issues that matter to them." (Male, 34)
"It is a male-dominated society; women work hard in the government but they are kept outside of the high positions in the ministries; the private sector is almost completely controlled by men."
"People will not vote for women anyway as most believe that women are not qualified." (Male, 24)
"Some religious local leaders will make a Fatwa against the participation of women which will render their efforts fruitless; how could you fight a religious Fatwa?" (Female, 42)
"Women just don't have the resources to run; most people just don't vote for women. They don't have financial resources; I personally would like to run, but how can I campaign if I am not allowed to drive freely and go to some places where only men are allowed to enter." (Female, 39)

## Men and Women Generally Agree on Political Issues Except for Gender Equality

How important do you view the following issue for the people of Saudi Arabia?

Domestic Violence



How important do you view the following issue for the people of Saudi Arabia?
Administrative and Financial Corruption


How important do you view the following issue for the people of Saudi Arabia?

Environment Cleanness


How important do you view the following issue for the people of Saudi Arabia?
Gap Between Extreme Poverty and Wealth


How important do you view the following issue for the people of Saudi Arabia?

Gender Equality


To what extent do you feel that women are allowed to freely participate in the following aspects of society?

Economic Issues


> To what extent do you feel that women are allowed to freely participate in the following aspects of society?

Public Issues


# To what extent do you feel that women are allowed to freely participate in the following aspects of society? 

Cultural Issues


## To what extent do you feel that men are allowed to freely participate in the following aspects of society?

Economic Issues


To what extent do you feel that men are allowed to freely participate in the following aspects of society?

Public Issues


To what extent do you feel that men are allowed to freely participate in the following aspects of society?

Cultural Issues


## Qualitative Insights on Men and Women Who Generally Agree on Political Issues Except for Gender Equality

"Women shouldn't be asking for more rights; they already have full rights as stipulated in religion; they enjoy all services and allowances from the government." (Male, 31)
"This is not an issue of women or men; there is no real participation for citizens in general; all the recent changes, including Majlis Shurra and local councils are cosmetic and most people will continue to be outside of the public realm that is controlled by a few leaders." (Male, 34)
"Saudi society is increasingly in support of women entering to the labor market; it is an economic need for most new couples; it is also related to the increasing education of women who are demanding to have jobs." (Female, 30)
"While women are now entering the work force, they are facing many obstacles as they are demanded [by men] to do all the house work and child care and at the same time suffer from discrimination in the workplace." (Female, 48)
"I don't see why women should work outside of the home; they can't balance their household work with outside work; I want my wife to stay at home and I will take care of her expenses." (Male, 22)

## Qualitative Insights on Men and Women Who Generally Agree on Political Issues Except for Gender Equality

"The general rule is to keep women inside of the home as women, in the opinion of most, belong to kitchen and must only produce children and serve men." (Female, 46)
"If a woman wants to participate, she must pay a heavy price and must jump through many hoops including the resistance of her family, the employers, the politicians and the religious leaders." (Female, 38)
"The participation of women in politics, work, and social life is dismal and doesn't compare to the vast majority of countries in the region." (Male, 28)
"Women are now making progress in all fields; they are competing with men over levels of education, working in most fields, becoming active in creating their own businesses and leading NGOs." (Female, 51)
"Women, like men, are now appointed in the Shurra Majlis and are allowed to become members of local councils. These are huge achievements that broke the taboos." (Male, 24)

## Both Men and Women Agree that Saudi Arabia is Headed in the Right Direction

Do you believe that things are moving in the right direction for women in Saudi Arabia?


# How hopeful are you for improvement in life in Saudi Arabia? 

## Over the Next Year



# How hopeful are you for improvement in life in Saudi Arabia? 

Over the Next 5 Years


# How hopeful are you for improvement in life in Saudi Arabia? 

Over the Next 10 Years


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