



Sinem Cengiz writes in Opinion



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Eight in 10 Saudis want women to drive: Arab News/YouGov poll

- 85% of women who plan to drive want to buy a car when ban lifted
- Half will use vehicle to travel to work more easily, exclusive poll finds
- Black, white cars favorite; Toyota named most popular model

BEN FLANAGAN
ARAB NEWS STAFF

LONDON: Almost eight in 10 Saudis who reside in the Kingdom agree with the decision to allow women to drive, with the majority of females saying they plan to apply for a license, an Arab News/YouGov poll has found.

The wide-ranging poll of more than 500 adults revealed the models of car favored among Saudi women and found that most think driving will "transform" their lives.

King Salman last month issued a decree that will allow women to get behind the wheel by June next year. The current "ban" is considered a social issue in the Kingdom, as there is no actual law or religious edict that prohibits women driving.

The Arab News/YouGov poll, which was conducted in early October, found that 95 percent of Saudis are aware of the decision to allow women to drive, with a generally positive reaction to the move. The sample was representative of the online adult Saudi population in terms of age and gender.

A total of 77 percent of Saudis polled said they agree with the decision to allow women to drive

— although the move was more popular with women than men. Seven in 10 males agree that women should have the right to drive, compared with 82 percent of females.

Freedom of movement for women and the belief that driving "is a basic human right" were the top reasons cited by those in agreement with the decision to lift the driving ban.

But among those who disagreed with the move, 54 percent believe "it is not safe for women to drive," while 36 percent said "it is against local cultural traditions."

When asked about the impact of women driving, mainly economic factors were cited by the Saudi men and women polled.

Four in 10 said the move would help boost the economy, while 35 percent said it would allow more women to work.

The poll illustrates how the decision will have a huge impact on society, with two-thirds of women questioned saying that it will significantly "transform" their lives, and half saying it will allow them to get to work more easily.

Faisal J. Abbas, editor in chief of Arab News, said that the poll reveals the true significance of the "historic" decision for Saudi society.

"Lifting the driving ban is the latest step in a raft of reforms underway in the Kingdom, both

DRIVING DEMAND: MOST SAUDIS WANT WOMEN BEHIND THE WHEEL

77% of Saudis agree with decision to allow women to drive
65% of women in KSA plan to apply for a license
Two thirds say driving will transform their lives

SOURCE: Arab News / YouGov poll



arab news

social and economic. But this change will, arguably, have the biggest positive impact on the day-to-day lives of citizens," said Abbas.

"One of the most revealing findings of the Arab News/YouGov survey was that most women who plan to get behind the wheel will do so in order to get to work.

"That will see more of the Kingdom's highly educated women finding fulfilling employment, boosting household incomes, and helping to meet Saudi Arabia's ambitious economic aim of shaking its 'addiction' to oil."

The automotive industry can also expect a massive financial boost

from the move to allow women to drive, with 85 percent of Saudi women who plan to drive saying they will buy a car, the poll revealed.

Budget models are favored, with 44 percent saying they expect to spend just SR40,000 (\$10,666) or less on a motor.

Medium-sized sedans are the

most favored among Saudi women, with Toyota, BMW and Jeep named among the top brands, the poll found.

The top car colors chosen were black (29 percent) and pearl white (12 percent) with the least popular being pink, grey and brown.

Detailed coverage — Pages 2 to 4

A poll that reflects how Saudis feel, not just the stereotypes

By Maha Akeel
— Page 3



Princess Reema to head sports federation in Saudi first

ARAB NEWS

RIYADH: A princess has been named to head a Saudi multi-sports federation, in the latest of a string of such appointments in the Kingdom.

An official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP that Princess Reema bint Bandar bin Sultan has become "the first woman to lead a federation" covering sporting activities for men and women.

In August 2016, the princess scored another first for women in Saudi Arabia when she was named by the Cabinet to a senior post in the Kingdom's equivalent of a sports ministry.

A daughter of a former Saudi ambassador to Washington, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Princess Reema is a graduate in museology from an American university.

Several women have this year been appointed to top jobs in Saudi Arabia, which is undergoing a huge program of reforms which includes moves to encourage more women into work.

In February three women were appointed to top jobs in Saudi Arabia's male-dominated financial sector in the space of just one week.

Sarah Al-Suhaimi was named chair of Saudi Arabia's stock exchange, the Tadawul; Rania Nashar became the CEO of Samba Financial Group; while Latifa Al-Sabhan was appointed chief financial officer of Arab National Bank (ANB).

Other changes introduced this year include the announcement that physical education classes for girls would be introduced in schools, and a review of the guardianship system.



Princess Reema bint Bandar bin Sultan

The Kingdom announced last month that it will lift a ban on women drivers from next June.

A poll by Arab News and YouGov found that half of Saudi women who said they want to drive plan to use a car to get to work more easily.

US: Deal reached to evacuate Raqqa

DAMASCUS: The US-led coalition fighting Daesh said a deal negotiated by local officials and tribesmen has been reached in Syria's Raqqa to evacuate civilians and local Daesh fighters but not foreign militants.

Omar Alloush, an official from the Local Raqqa Council, confirmed the deal Saturday saying local fighters have been included in the evacuation. He did not immediately comment on the number of evacuees. The deal was negotiated by the Raqqa Civilian Council and tribal leaders.

In a statement Saturday, the coal-

ition said it is not involved in the talks but "believes that it will save lives" and allow the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces and the Coalition to focus on defeating Daesh in Raqqa with less risk to civilians.

The deal reached on Thursday allows the SDF to screen and search all those leaving the area.

Separately, Syria state media said pro-regime troops have seized the town of Mayadeen, a Daesh stronghold in the country's east, after weeks of fighting with the militants.

Meanwhile, Syria demanded on Saturday that Turkish troops who had

entered northwestern Syria leave immediately, saying their presence constituted a "flagrant aggression."

A Foreign Ministry statement carried on state media said the entry of Turkish military vehicles into opposition-held northwest Syria through the Bab Al-Hawa crossing late on Thursday was a violation of international law.

"Syria condemns in the strongest terms the incursion of units of the Turkish Army in Idlib province, which constitutes a flagrant aggression against the sovereignty and security of Syrian territo-

ry," the statement said.

Turkey says it is operating alongside Syrian opposition groups to implement a deal reached last month with Russia and Iran in the Kazakh capital Astana to reduce fighting between insurgents.

But Syria's statement said: "The Turkish aggression is not tied in any way with the understandings that were reached between the guarantor states in the Astana process, but constitutes a violation of these understandings."

— AP, REUTERS

Related report — Page 6

Iraq troops in armed standoff with Kurd forces

MARYAM BEIK, Iraq: Thousands of Iraqi troops were locked in an armed standoff with Kurdish forces in the disputed oil province of Kirkuk on Saturday as Washington scrambled to avert fighting between the key allies in the war against Daesh.

The clock was ticking down to a 2 a.m. Sunday (2300 GMT Saturday) deadline that the Kurds say Baghdad has set for their forces to surrender positions they took during the fightback against the terrorists over the past three years.

Armored cars of the Iraqi Army bearing the national flag were posted on the bank of a river on the southern outskirts of the city of Kirkuk, an AFP photographer reported.

On the opposite bank, Kurdish Peshmerga fighters were visible behind an earthen embankment topped with concrete blocks painted with the red, white green and yellow of the Kurdish flag.

"Our forces are not moving and are now waiting for orders from the general staff," an Iraqi Army officer told AFP, asking not to be identified.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi has said there can be no further discussion of the Kurds' longstanding demands to incorporate Kirkuk and other historically Kurdish-majority areas in their autonomous region until the independence vote is annulled.

He insisted on Thursday that he

was "not going... to make war on our Kurdish citizens." But thousands of heavily armed troops and members of the Popular Mobilization Force (PMF) — paramilitary units largely made up of Iran-trained Shiite militias — have massed around Kirkuk.

They have already retaken a string of positions to the south of the city after Kurdish forces withdrew.

The Kurds have deployed thousands of Peshmerga fighters to the area around Kirkuk itself and have vowed to defend the city "at any cost."

Just hours before the deadline, a Peshmerga commander on the western front said Kurdish fighters had "taken all the necessary measures"

and were "ready for a confrontation" if necessary. If "the other side makes the mistake of advancing, we'll give them a lesson they won't forget in a hurry," Kamal Kirkuki said.

"The deadline set for the Peshmerga to return to their pre-June 6, 2014 positions will expire during the night," a senior Kurdish official told AFP, asking not to be identified.

— AFP

Related report — Page 6



Saudi economy set to enter the fast lane

From greater car sales to an upturn in GDP, the decision to allow women to drive is sending all the right signals, analysts say

REBECCA SPONG & OLIVIA CUTHBERT

SPECIAL TO ARAB NEWS

LONDON: One of the biggest benefits of allowing women in Saudi Arabia to drive is expected to be the positive effect it will have on the Kingdom's economy.

That was a key finding of an Arab News/YouGov survey of the Saudi public, in which 42 percent said the main impact of lifting the driving ban is that it will enable more women to find employment, which should boost the overall economy.

A third said the most significant impact would be an increase in household income — presumably due to women being able to find new forms of employment, as well as families no longer having to pay for drivers.

The economic benefits of the move to allow women to drive — which comes into force in June — were viewed as more significant than women's fight for greater equality. Just 28 percent of the poll respondents said the biggest impact would be ensuring women felt empowered and equal to men.

The initial economic effects of the decision will be felt by car producers, said analysts. "In the short term, the main discernible impact will probably be a temporary jump in car purchases as families buy additional vehicles, boosting consumer spending," said Jason Tuvey, Middle East economist at Capital Economics.

Economists agree with the Arab News poll findings, which suggest that women driving could give a long-term economic boost. "The decision should make it easier for women to seek and acquire employment, which should help to boost the female labor force participation rate which, at around 20 percent, is among the lowest in the world," said Tuvey.

As of the third quarter 2016, there were a total of 12,376,699 people employed in Saudi Arabia, including non-Saudis, according to government statistics. Women accounted for just 1,482,284 of those employed, of which 835,726 were Saudi nationals.

Hala Kudwah, Saudi Arabia financial services consulting leader at PwC, forecasts a change in consumption patterns in the Kingdom, such as diverting the salaries paid to drivers to other activities such as in retail, tourism and entertainment.

She sees women playing a greater role in the small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME) sector.

"Forty percent of startups launched in the Kingdom are owned by women and therefore there is potential for more engagement in this sector," said Kudwah.

"The decision to lift the ban on women driving is an economic necessity triggered by the Kingdom's transformation that is sweeping the nation economically and socially."

The tangible economic benefits of the decision could go some way to making the new legislation more palatable among members of Saudi Arabia's more conservative society, analysts suggest.

"The Saudi population is more accepting because it sees the strategic and economic relevance, it appreciates the incremental milestones leading to it," Kudwah said.

However, there are plenty more "hurdles" for women in the Kingdom to overcome to gain greater equality, said Tuvey.

"In particular, the guardianship system means that a male guardian still has the authority to take a number of critical decisions on the behalf of women," he said.

Employment drive

While the overall Saudi economy is tipped to benefit from the move to allow women to drive, the impact on certain businesses is still unclear.

Vitali Bielski, senior consultant at consultancy firm Frost & Sullivan, said he sees a short-term impact on companies such as Uber and Careem, which could see their revenue streams come under threat as more women learn to drive.

"Until recently a large part of the population was forced to rely on ride-hailing applications. These apps are really popular in the region," he said.

Yet those two companies have embraced the move, announcing plans to recruit women drivers.

Careem, which plans to open 100,000 jobs to female drivers in the wake of the decree, said that far from losing business, the company stands to benefit from an energized economy.

"While it's true that 70 percent of our users in Saudi are female, our success and growth in the country is mainly because we offer a safe, reliable and affordable service," said Abdulla Elyas, cofounder and chief people officer at Careem.

"When we have more women who are employees and entrepreneurs, and the whole country has increased mobility, the domestic economy gets energized and that's when transportation services will be in more demand.

"As with the possibility of registering women Captains (drivers), we will be able to welcome new female customers who feel more comfortable riding with another female."

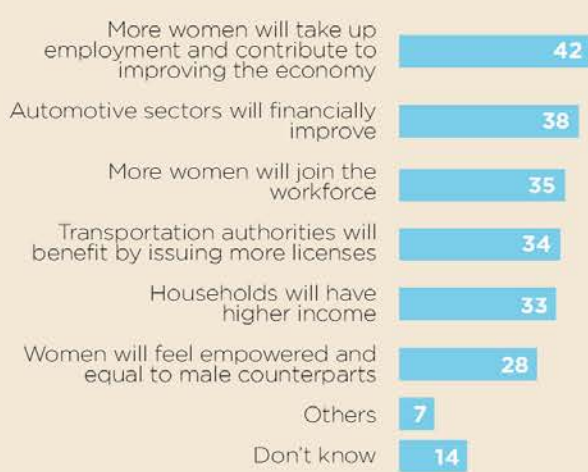
Uber also intends to champion women drivers in Saudi Arabia by opening its first "female partner support center" and recruiting women to work for the company by the end of the year.

DRIVING SOCIAL CHANGE

PERCEPTIONS OF HOW WOMEN DRIVING WILL IMPACT SOCIETY

Economic factors cited as key benefits of the move

Perceived impact of women driving in KSA



Saudi women who plan to drive say it will transform their lives



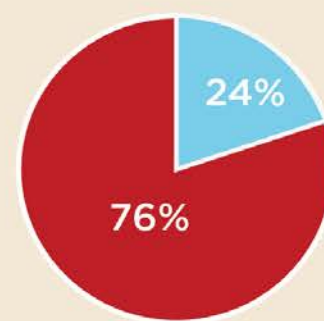
Main reasons for women wanting to drive



Why some Saudi women don't want to get behind the wheel



A quarter of Saudi women have driven a car in another country



Of those 24%, nearly half have obtained a driving license from another country



75% of Saudi women currently rely on a male relative to get around

65% of Saudi women plan to apply for a driving license

Of those 60% say they will hit the road as soon as the law permits



SOURCE: Arab News / YouGov poll

Women want to drive — and fast

Most are set to apply for a Saudi driving license, Arab News/YouGov poll suggests, but analysts expect some lag given the licensing requirements

OLIVIA CUTHBERT
SPECIAL TO ARAB NEWS

LONDON: Most Saudi women want to hit the road — and aim to start driving as quickly as possible.

An Arab News/YouGov poll of 503 KSA nationals found that 65 percent of Saudi women plan to

apply for a license, three-fifths of whom want to do so as soon as the driving ban is lifted next year.

Close to a quarter of Saudi women have driven a car in another country, with 43 percent in possession of a license obtained outside KSA, the poll found.

Despite the eagerness for Saudi women to hit the road, analysts

expect there to be some lag given the licensing requirements.

"It could potentially take a while for women to get the necessary driving lessons and go through the bureaucratic hurdles of getting a license in order to actually start driving," said Tom Rogers, an economist at Oxford Economics specializing

in Saudi Arabia.

Others pointed to the cultural adjustment as Saudi society incorporates the idea of women behind the wheel.

"The implementation of these things takes time. It's not just a matter of issuing driving licenses," said Crispin Hawes, managing director for the Middle East

and North Africa at Teneo Intelligence, a global advisory firm.

"The government decision is the easy part. Implementation, particularly on an issue that has been sensitive, may take much longer."

A report by Frost & Sullivan estimated that up to 90,000 to

150,000 women would get driving licenses in Saudi Arabia annually — currently up to 400,000 are issued to men — and anticipated an initial surge in the numbers as women rush to pass the test.

The report also predicted an improvement in road safety across the Kingdom as a result of the decree, due to women replac-

ing taxi drivers and sharing driving responsibilities with other family members.

The ban on issuing women driving licenses will be officially lifted in June 2018, allowing a nine-month period to iron-out issues that remain, such as whether male driving instructors will be able to teach female pupils.

A poll that reflects how Saudis feel, not just the stereotypes

The vast majority of people in the Kingdom support women driving, despite false impressions to the contrary created by vehement opposition voices.



Maha Akeel | SPECIAL TO ARAB NEWS

media campaigns to lift the ban, several official statements hinting at the possibility, and countless articles identifying the social and economic benefits. All of this was accompanied, of course, by loud opposition voices and counter campaigns.

The Arab News/YouGov survey on Saudi citizens' attitudes toward women driving in the Kingdom confirms the overall views in the society, and sheds light on some prevailing convictions and contradictions.

The sample was not large, but offers a good representation of the population, with an equal split of men and women. Furthermore, the majority of the sample — 80 percent — was from the age group most concerned by the decision (20-39), with most married, highly educated and employed, reflecting a level of awareness and reasoning.

Considering the huge media coverage that followed the royal decree to allow women to drive, it is no surprise that the vast majority of those surveyed said they were aware of the decision.

More than half of the respondents said they feel happy, ecstatic, excited, relieved, encouraged, inspired or empowered about the move to allow women to drive; only 14 percent said they feel offended, angry or sad. This is surprising considering the vehement opposition voices, which had given the false impression that the majority of Saudis are against, or would object to, women driving.

This raises questions about the findings of previous surveys on "controversial" social issues, some of which claimed that the majority of Saudis are against women driving.

The Arab News/YouGov survey, on the other hand, found that more than three quarters of Saudi nationals support the decision to allow women to drive.

Slightly more women than men agreed with the move, but the difference in the percentages was negligible. This disputes another commonly held, but false view that Saudi men are old fashioned, and against women driving.

The reasons the poll respondents gave for agreeing or disagreeing with the decision were not so surprising. Many of those in favor of women driving based their opinion on a belief in individual freedom and rights, indicating a high degree of awareness of the issue from the legal, financial and security angles.

On the other hand, those who disagree with the decision to let women drive said their reasons were based mostly on collective social beliefs and personal opinions, followed by religious and economic factors.

Of course, many esteemed scholars have long refuted claims that there is any religious justification to prevent women from driving. Half of those polled who said they disagree with women driving cited safety concerns; yet this can be addressed through traffic laws and anti-harassment

legislation targeting male drivers, with steps being taken in that direction. The other reasons cited by those who disagreed with the move to allow women to drive are simply biased male-centric opinions that might change over time.

It is understandable that many respondents expect women driving to positively impact the economy, employment rates and household incomes. Clearly, women have waited long enough for this decision, with many of the poll respondents saying they will apply for a license and start driving as soon as the decree takes effect.

About a quarter of Saudi women said they have already driven a car in another country, which is not as big a proportion as one might expect. This suggests that the growing awareness among women about their right to drive, and the importance of it, was not solely led by those with experience of getting behind the wheel.

Saudi women expect a major transformation in their lives once they start driving — and their reasons for wanting to drive are exactly the same as those for other women around the world.

It is a great feeling to know that you have the choice and ability to drive. As for those who do not plan to drive, for whatever reason, that is their choice too.

• Maha Akeel is a Saudi writer. Twitter: @MahaAkeel1

Bumper forecast for budget car sales

Black or blue? Honda or Hyundai? Arab News/YouGov poll reveals favorite models among Saudi women

GREG WILCOX
ARAB NEWS STAFF

LONDON: A boom in sales of budget motors is forecast in KSA, according to an Arab News/YouGov poll that revealed 85 percent of Saudi women who intend to drive say they will buy a car.

One finding of the poll, which was conducted in early October, was that 65 percent of Saudi women plan to get a driving license once the driving ban is lifted next year. Small, cheap sedans are the vehicles of choice.

With the female population of the Kingdom estimated at 14 million — with 6.5 million of those in the target age range of 20-49 — a lot of cars are set to fly off the forecourts.

That would be a boon for the flagging Saudi car market, which has seen sales of new vehicles decline from 685,000 in 2015 to a forecast 530,000 this year.

The Arab News/YouGov poll of more than 500 Saudis suggests that millions of women will look to buy a car — although cheaper makes proved most popular. Of the female respondents who intend to buy a car, 44 percent said their expected budget was just SR40,000 (\$10,666) or less.

Medium-sized sedans were named as the top models, with Toyota, BMW and Jeep chosen as the most popular brands among Saudi women, the poll revealed. Black and pearl white cars are the favorites, the respondents said.

Analysts agreed that vehicle sales are set to rise in Saudi Arabia — but said the jump might be more modest than the poll suggests.

"Saudi families are big, 5.6 people per household, and most already have more than one car. So while 85 percent say they plan to purchase a new car I think in reality the figure will be much less," Emmanuel Darku, Middle East and Africa analyst for IHS Markit, told Arab News.

David Oakley, an analyst at LMC Automotive, estimated that car sales in Saudi Arabia will see a jump of 15-20 percent next year, thanks to the lifting of the ban.

"(LMC's) initial estimate of the impact of the lifting of the ban on female drivers was for a 15-20 percent increase in sales per year until

the mid-2020s," Oakley said.

"This would bring the Saudi market into line with the UAE, which is culturally and economically somewhat similar to Saudi Arabia, but does allow women to drive."

While the number of women saying they intend to buy a car surprised the analysts, the preferences regarding the types of car did not. While the Gulf may be synonymous with big SUVs, experts said Saudi women's preference for smaller vehicles makes sense.

"I'm not at all surprised women would want to swap out the large SUV for something more fun to drive," said Rebecca Lindland, an analyst for Cox Automotive in the US.

"Small to medium sedans are easier to maneuver, park, and manage overall, and reflect preferences seen in other parts of the world."

"I can also imagine women are thinking of zipping around in traffic and expressing their personalities. That can be done better in a fun, sporty sedan than in an SUV."

Indeed, Saudi women's preference for smaller vehicles would simply mirror the fashion around the world.

"The trend worldwide is women buying smaller cars, or smaller SUV models such as the Hyundai Creta," Darku said.

"In that way women in Saudi Arabia are no different to their counterparts in Europe or Asia, they go for smaller cars and I expect Saudi women to as well."

On top of that the small budgets revealed in the poll suggest Saudi women will seek to buy smaller vehicles rather than large gas-guzzlers.

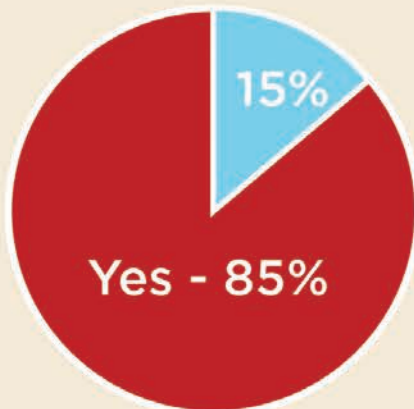
"Given the budget restrictions that the survey has highlighted, the simple fact is that new SUVs may not be affordable for a large number of women," Oakley said.

"One example of a car that could do well would be the Renault Symbol, which starts at SR39,900. Apart from the price, the Symbol also fits within the small segment which the survey respondents indicated they preferred."

"A Toyota Corolla, one of the most popular cars in the country, starts at SR61,000, and a Hyundai Elantra, also extremely popular, costs upwards of SR59,000, placing them out of the reach of many buyers."

WHICH CARS SAUDI WOMEN PREFER MOST SAUDI WOMEN WHO PLAN TO DRIVE SAY THEY WILL PURCHASE THEIR OWN VEHICLE

Plan to purchase a car



Expected car budget



SMALL SEDAN OR SUPERSIZED SUV? TYPES OF CAR FAVORED BY SAUDI WOMEN

Type of car to drive



Vehicle color



Preferred model/brand



SOURCE: Arab News / YouGov poll

Support for women driving shows public on board for Saudi reforms

- 'Women are a priority' in Saudi Arabia, commentator says
- Other social changes include introduction of physical education classes in schools and review of guardianship law

OLIVIA CUTHBERT
SPECIAL TO ARAB NEWS

LONDON: Saudi society supports a recent decision to lift the long-standing ban on granting women driving licenses, with 77 percent of participants in favor of the decision, according to a recent Arab News/YouGov poll.

The survey of more than 500 Saudis residing in the Kingdom showed 82 percent of women and 71 percent of men were behind the decision.

Commentators said that the move to lift the driving ban — one of many social and economic reforms underway in Saudi Arabia — shows the Kingdom is modernizing, but in a way that does not abandon its traditions.

"Conservatives saw the ban on driving for women as a way to resist progressive policies. To them, reversal of the policy would mean a bow to Westernization," said Ola Salem of the Arabia Foundation.

"Saudi Arabia is nonetheless making it clear that the direction of change is toward an embrace of modernization without abandoning traditions and customs the country holds dear."

Senior Saudi religious figures were among those voicing their support in the aftermath of the announcement, including the commission of top Islamic clerics, which tweeted, "May God bless the king who looks out for the interest of his people and his country in accordance with Shariah law."

Sheikh Khaled Al-Mosleh, a professor of religion in Saudi Arabia, also tweeted: "Women driving is not against Shariah and women will choose what best suits them."

More freedom of movement and easier access to employment for women were among the main reasons cited in the poll for supporting the decree, which will come into effect by June.

Many participants felt that driving is a basic human right, while some said it would help to ensure more equality in society.

"Lifting the ban on driving will have a big impact on women's lives here and it's about time," said Maha Akeel, a Saudi writer.

Salem pointed to a series of "monumental changes" in Saudi Arabia this year, particularly in promoting women's rights.

"From the introduction of physical education in government schools to reviewing the country's guardianship law, to allowing women into stadiums to celebrate national day, these changes show that women are a priority in the country today," she said.

Boosting the economy was another reason cited for supporting the move, seen by some as a major step in a series of far-reaching reforms being ushered in under the banner of Vision 2030.

Part of the plan is to harness the capacity of women to help drive a modernized Saudi economy, with an initial aim to increase female participation in the workforce to 30 percent.

"Lifting the ban on women driving is part and parcel of Vision 2030, which is all about building sustainable economic and social structures that are uplifting for all," said John Sfakianakis, director of economic research at the Gulf Research Center in Riyadh.

The benefits are likely to resonate through all aspects of life in the Kingdom, where traditionally male family members have had to set aside time for driving-related errands or allocate income to pay for a driver.

Lifting the driving ban allows women to take on a more equal distribution of tasks, freeing up time and resources to use for other purposes like retail and entertainment, said Hala Kudwah, financial services consulting leader at PwC in Saudi Arabia.

"There's this productivity black hole where male members of the family take time off work to collect kids from schools, respond to emergencies, pick up the groceries etc. When women are able to drive it will increase the efficiency of the system."

"Planning transport logistics can be quite demanding, particularly if your husband is busy or there are no men available to drive," she added.

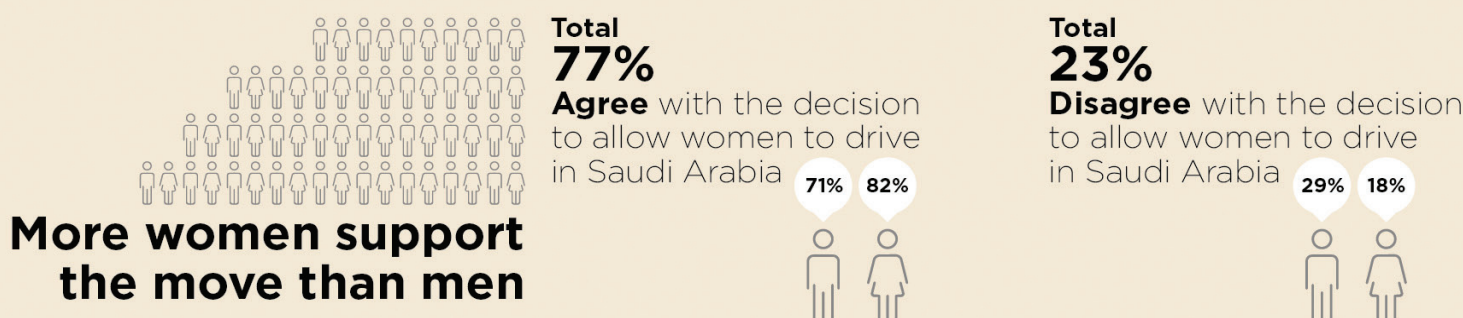
Despite the advantages, 23 percent of participants in the poll expressed their discomfort with the decree, with many claiming that women driving is unsafe and flies in the face of local cultural traditions. Other factors included concerns that it will create too much freedom in society as well as a belief that women should be accompanied by a male relative in public, while some said women driving violates religious teachings.

The announcement that the ban on women driving would be lifted generated a huge response on social media, with many expressing their congratulations.

The Arab News/YouGov poll found that 98 percent of women and 92 percent of men said they were aware of the decision, with 27 percent of women and 13 percent of men saying they felt happy or ecstatic at the news.

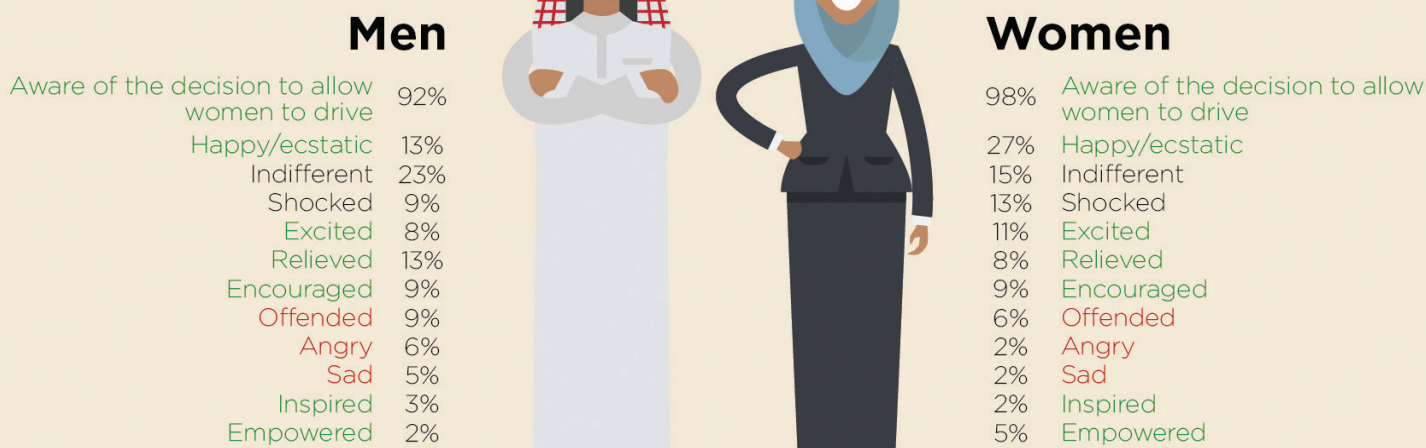
FULL SPEED AHEAD

HOW MOVE ON ALLOWING WOMEN TO DRIVE IS VIEWED AMONG SAUDIS

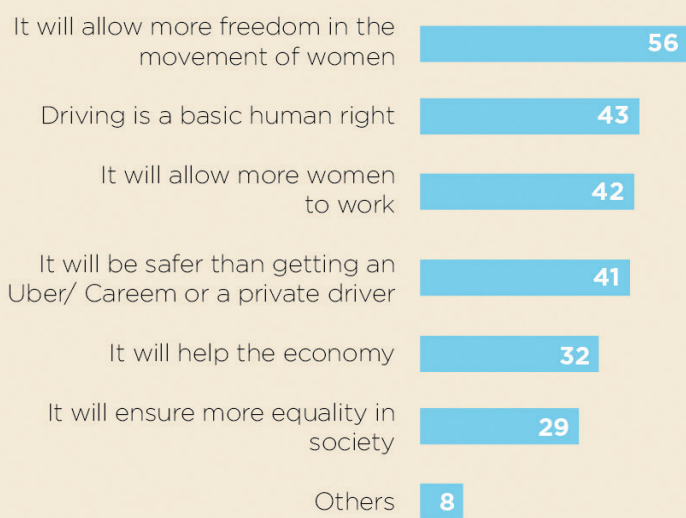


More women support the move than men

How Saudi men and women view the move



Reasons most Saudis agree with the decision



Reasons some disagree with the decision



SOURCE: Arab News / YouGov poll

How the poll was conducted

YOUGOV

As part of the continued partnership between YouGov and Arab News to research attitudes within and about the Arab world, YouGov conducted an opinion poll among Saudi nationals about their views of the decision to allow women to drive in the Kingdom.

Topics were designed to capture a

range of views, including the current level of familiarity with the decision, initial reactions to it, reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with the move, the impact of women driving, reasons for women wanting or not wanting to drive in KSA, and their car-purchase intentions.

The survey was conducted using an

online interview administered among members of the YouGov Plc panel of close to 728,500+ individuals across the MENA region who have agreed to take part in surveys.

An email was sent to panelists selected at random from the base sample, inviting them to take part in the survey and providing a link to the

survey. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov.

The total sample size was 503 Saudi nationals who reside in the Kingdom. Fieldwork was undertaken between Oct. 1-4, 2017.

The sample was representative of the urban adult Saudi population in terms of gender, age and city of resi-

dence. The overall margin of error is 4.38 percent, which is under the admissible level.

The questionnaire included a total of 21 close-ended questions. The effective number of questions applicable per respondent groups were, however, different as they were filtered mainly based on gender.

There was an even gender split among respondents, with 50 percent males and 50 percent females. Eight in 10 of the sample group fell between the ages of 20 and 39.

The sample included residents of Riyadh (26 percent), Jeddah (19 percent) Dammam (9 percent) and other cities in Saudi Arabia.