



مؤشر المشاركة السياسية
في دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي 2022
Political Participation Index
in the GCC States 2022



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The *Gulf House for Studies and Publishing* is a think tank based in London, working as a non-profit institution for research and publishing. It is also concerned with the production and publication of monitoring and analytical studies as well as strategic and in-depth studies on policies and issues related to the Gulf states and the regional neighbourhood.

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Introduction

The third edition (2022) of the *Political Participation Index in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCCPPI)* provides a monitoring and analysis of the most essential changes and developments in the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council countries: Kingdom of Bahrain, State of Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman, State of Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. The index provides an annual overview and scientific monitoring of the degree of political, social and cultural participation within the research countries.

It is worth noting that the Gulf House for Studies and Publishing, being the entity that supervised the design and implementation of this index study, is a think tank based in London. It is a non-profit research institution and publishing house concerned with the production and publication of monitoring and analytical studies, as well as strategic and in-depth studies on policies and issues related to the Gulf states and its regional neighbourhood.

The significance of this index lies in being the first specialised research publication concerned with measuring the degree of “political participation” in the GCC countries. The uniqueness of the index lies in the fact that it combines all conceptual settings (academic, international agreements and covenants, knowledge and practical expertise), and the peculiarities, emergence conditions and structure of governance systems in the GCC countries.

As the issue of “Political Participation” is one of the most essential components of the achievement of a democratic state, the existence of this index represents an urgent necessity for governments and civil society organisations in the Gulf states, as well as for the relevant international bodies and research institutions.

The index attempts to answer a major question pertaining to the extent and proportion of the GCC countries’ engagement of their citizens politically, and the consequent desire and ability of citizens themselves (individuals and groups) to participate in decision-making and influence the State policies, legislation, and in all aspects of political and social life in their states.

The index seeks to provide an adequate effort to shed light on the most prominent achievements, failures and recommendations regarding the ability of Gulf citizens to “participate politically” and contribute effectively to “decision-making”.

This index takes advantage of regional and international indices, especially with regard to some approved scales.

However, it differs in several ways: its “specific” scope by focusing on a more precise and specific topic, namely “political participation”, taking into account the nature and specificity of the region covered in this study (the Gulf Cooperation Council countries). This specificity enabled the researchers to formulate the index benchmarks with the desired level of accuracy and appropriateness.

The selection of countries in this index is based on the fact that they are primarily within the scope of interest and work of the Gulf House for Studies and Publishing. In addition, the historical, cultural, social aspects these countries share, and their similar systems of government (hereditary monarchies), all contribute to making the scales adopted in the index consistent and homogeneous.

While there is a consistent conceptual consensus that “political participation” is an inherent component for achieving a democratic state, it is, in practice, a “mechanism” that guarantees individuals’ ability to achieve their aspirations and influence decision-making politically, economically, socially and culturally, in order to achieve “development” and “public welfare”.

This index depends in its analysis of political participation on the fact that individuals have the right to effective and equitable participation in political life and legislative institutions and to monitoring and criticising the three authorities, with the need to take into account the equitable and proportional representation of different groups and minorities without discrimination, including the empowerment of women and youth.

Despite the many definitions, and the degree of agreement and difference among their explanations, this indicator defines “political participation” as: **“the actual and effective involvement (direct and indirect) of individuals and groups’ contribution to and influence on decision-making processes, in the management and representation of the state, in making development policies and in ways of spending wealth”.**

Summary of Results

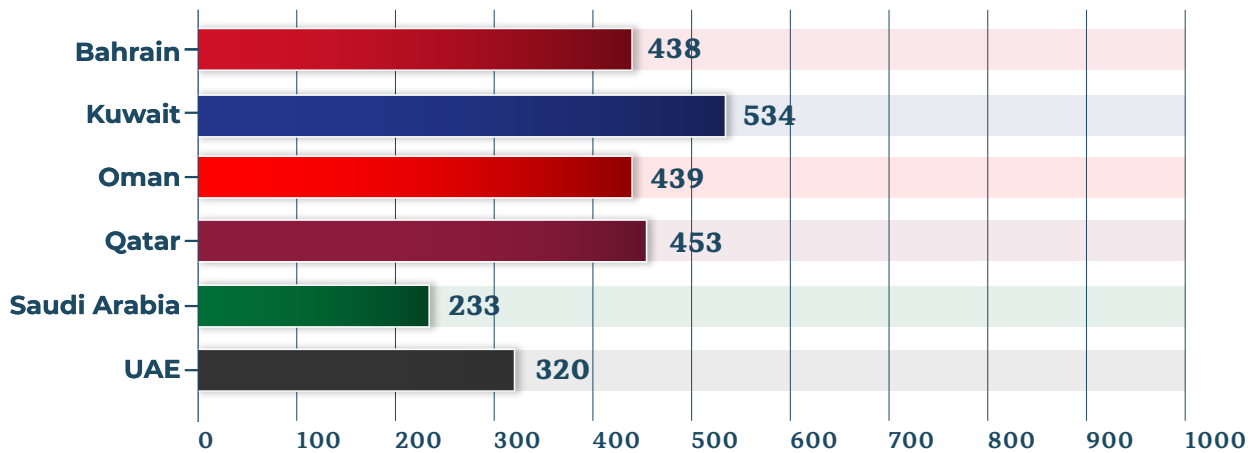


Figure 1: Index overall results 2022

The State of Kuwait has maintained first rank, with a score of 534 out of a total of 1,000 on the GCCPPI (which means 9 scores up in comparison to last year), followed by the State of Qatar, which moved up to the second rank, with a score of 453 (which means 6 scores up).

The Sultanate of Oman declined to third rank with a score of 439 (which means 10 scores down). The Kingdom of Bahrain remained in the fourth rank with a score of 438, followed by the United Arab Emirates in the

fifth rank with a score of 320, and then the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the last rank with a score of 233.

Kuwait alone still exceeds the 500-score mark, as the other countries remain below it. This indicates a state of stagnation in the development of political environments within the GCC countries, since with the exception of the decline of Oman (10 scores down), progress in the rest of the countries remains marginal, the best of which was in Kuwait (9 scores up).

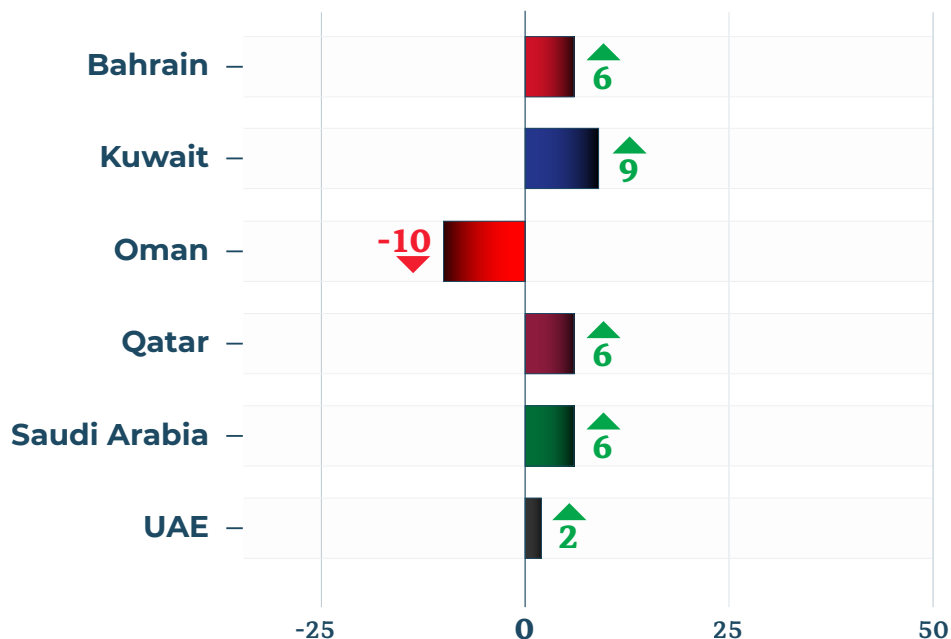


Figure 2: Extent of change in the index between 2021 and 2022

The index results illustrate the need of the GCC countries to expand frameworks for political participation and decision-making, especially strengthening and expanding the powers of elected councils, improving election laws, promoting equal citizenship and ensuring freedom of opinion and expression and the safety of individuals engaged in political work. It is also noted that Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates tend to tighten restrictions on civil society institutions, while the margin available in the rest of the countries – except for Kuwait – remains little.

The formation of political organisations, the availability of dissenting tools and ensuring the safety of practitioners represent serious challenges in all GCC countries. In addition, the monopoly of ruling families on the authority to appoint governments and senior positions in the security and military institutions and the judiciary reduces the ability of citizens to choose their representatives in the executive authorities. Furthermore, the powers of oversight, accountability and inquiry in the legislative authorities are often prohibited or restricted.

Oman represents a unique model in promoting a climate of equal citizenship and proportional representation of its groups and minorities. On the other hand, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain adopt discriminatory policies and unequitable representation with regard to the right of political participation in legislative and municipal council elections for their citizens. These policies are based on barriers and controls defined by the laws of nationality, exercise of political rights and organisation of elections. These laws make the issue of equal citizenship a very important file.

The index results state that the senior, leadership and

sensitive positions in the majority of the GCC countries are almost monopolised by members of the ruling families and the tribes/families close to them, which results in the presence of marginalised minorities or underrepresented groups in parallel with their numbers in society. Qatar is characterised by a high permeability of its citizens to access these positions. While Oman declined (8 scores) due to the increasing appointments of members of the ruling family to senior positions, Bahrain advanced (7 scores) after reducing the number of ministers from the ruling family.

Except for Saudi Arabia, which advanced (4 scores), the rest of the countries did not achieve any significant improvement in creating an environment that promotes freedom of opinion and expression or that combats hate speech and incitement to violence. Moreover, the levels of societal participation in independent monitoring of the performance and spending of state institutions are limited.

Results of the Political Participation Index in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCCPPI) indicate that the majority of Gulf countries have achieved positive progress in empowering women and youth, and the United Arab Emirates, which adopts a serious and distinguished policy in empowering women, leads this scale for the third year in a row.

Bahrain continued its leadership in securing stable and effective residency and guaranteeing the rights of foreign communities and expatriate workers. In addition, the rest of the countries achieved slight improvement. However, the freedom of trade union work and participation in municipal elections are still prohibited or restricted.

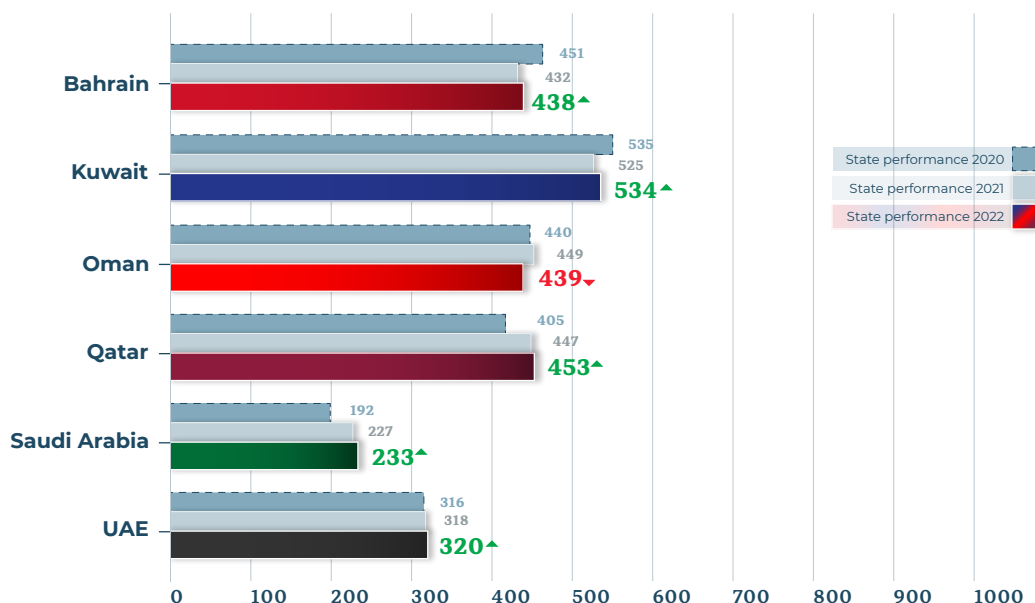


Figure 3: Index overall results 2020, 2021 and 2022

2.1 State of Kuwait

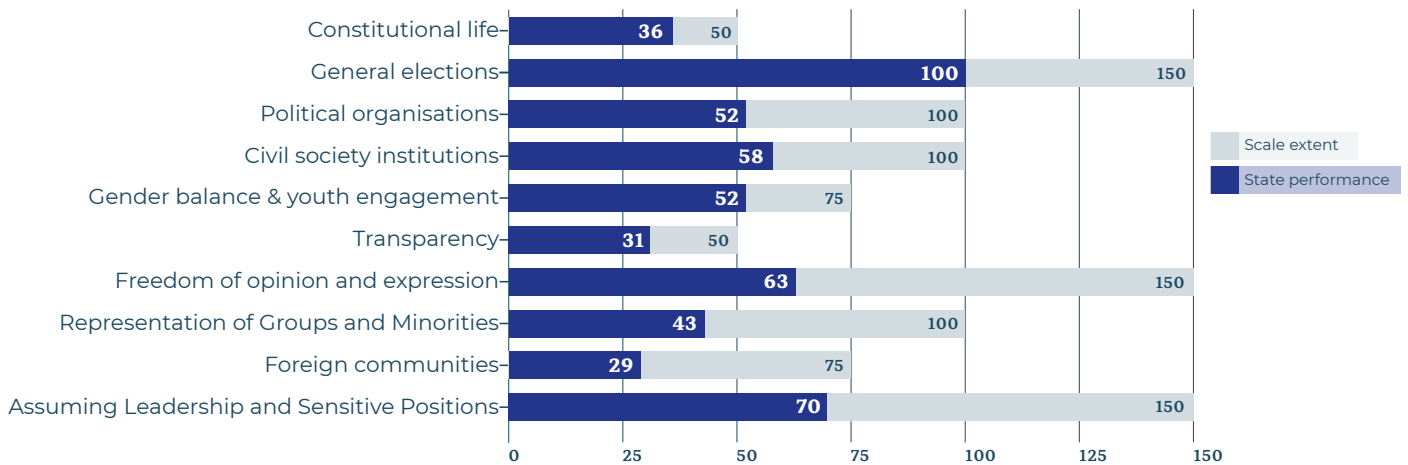


Figure 4: Kuwait – Scales Results 2022

Kuwait advanced (9 scores) and maintained the first rank in the GCC political participation index, with a score of 534, exceeding the 500-score barrier out of the index's total score (1,000).

Results indicate an improvement in Kuwait's performance on the *Political Organisations* scale (5 scores), the *Gender Balance and Youth Engagement* scale (4 scores), and the *Transparency* scale (4 scores), and declined on the *General Elections* scale with a loss of 4 scores.

Kuwait ranked first on the *Political Organisations* scale for the first time, and continued to lead the Arab Gulf countries on 4 other scales: *Constitutional Life*, *General Elections*, *Transparency*, and *Freedom of Opinion and Expression*. Nevertheless, low scores were reported on the *Political Organisations* and *Foreign Communities* scales, with significant challenges emerging with regard to the stability and efficiency of the work of the Legislative Council (National Assembly), the legislation of the work of political parties, the resolution of the Bidoon (stateless) issue, the

policies of discrimination among citizens with regard to accessing senior positions and political participation in the elections, and ensuring stable and effective residence of foreign and expatriate workers in the country.

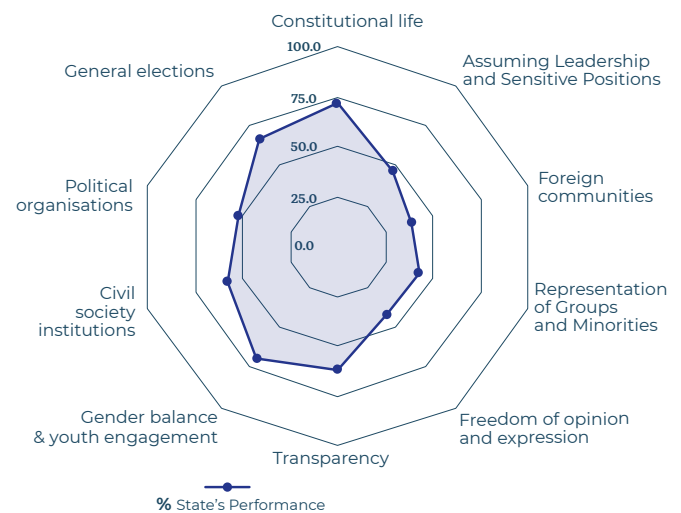


Figure 5: Kuwait – Political Participation 2022

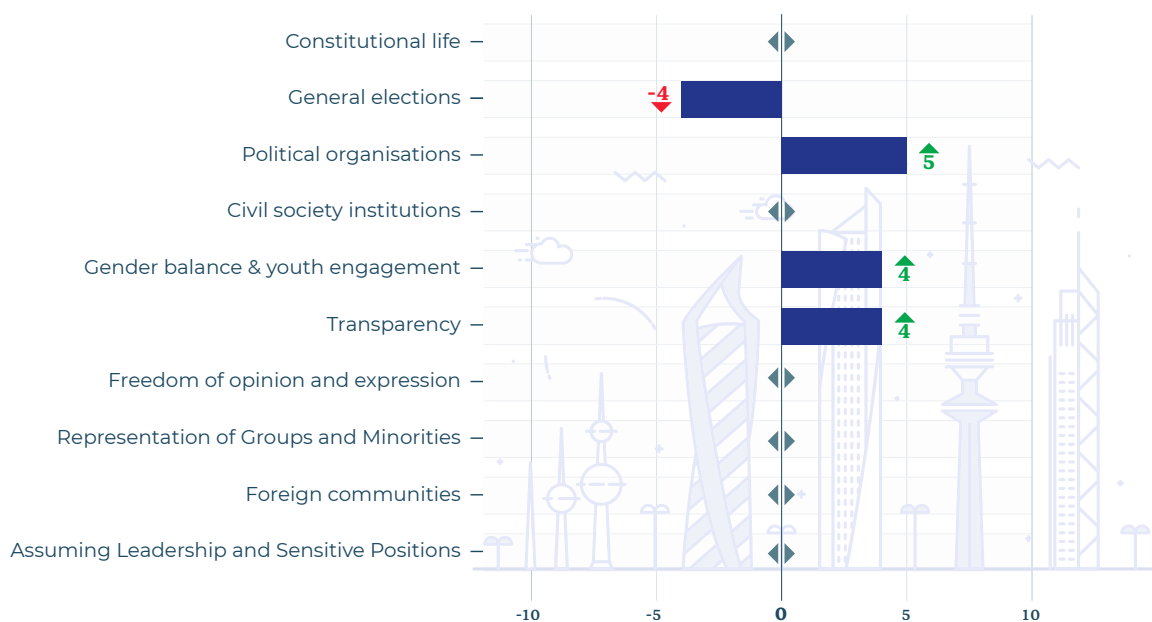


Figure 6: How much Kuwait's results have changed between 2021 and 2022

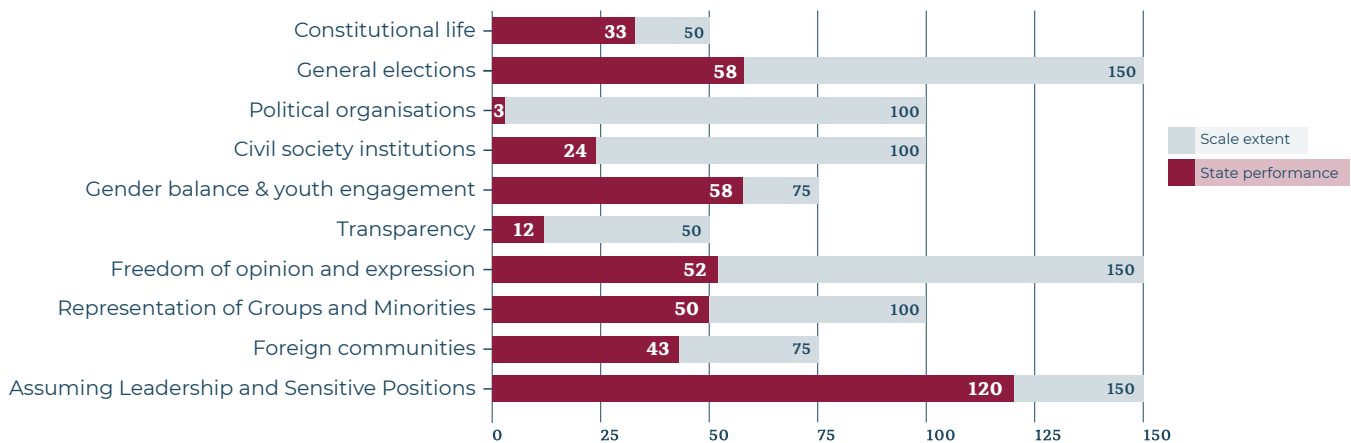


Figure 7: Qatar – Scales Results 2022

Despite the slight progress (6 scores) in the total index scores, Qatar moved up to the second rank, registering 453 scores to exceed the Sultanate of Oman by 14 scores difference. This improvement comes with the holding of the Shura Council elections.

Qatar has maintained its lead of the Arab Gulf countries in the *Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions* scale, and the state performance was promising in the *Constitutional Life* scale (33 out of 50 scores) and the *Gender Balance and Youth Engagement* scale (58 out of 75 scores). Qatar declined for the second year in a row on the *Political Organisations* scale (two scores) and the *Freedom of Opinion and Expression* scale (3 scores), due to the issuance of severe judgments against participants in protests against the laws on citizenship and election. Qatar also reported low scores on the *Transparency* and *Political Organisations* scales.

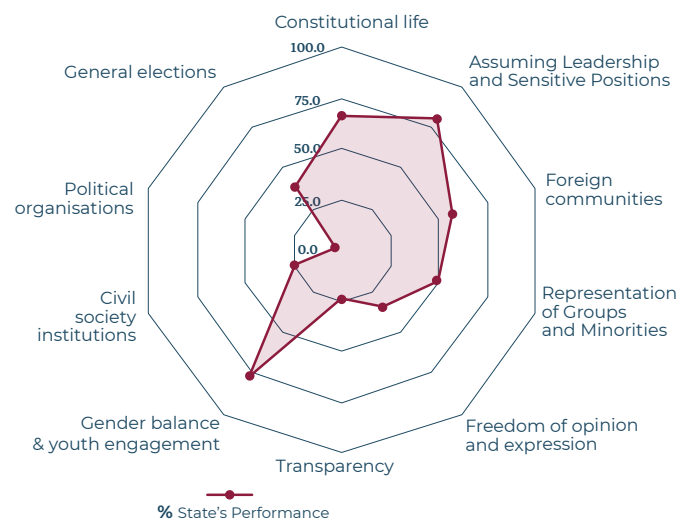


Figure 8: Qatar – Political Participation 2022

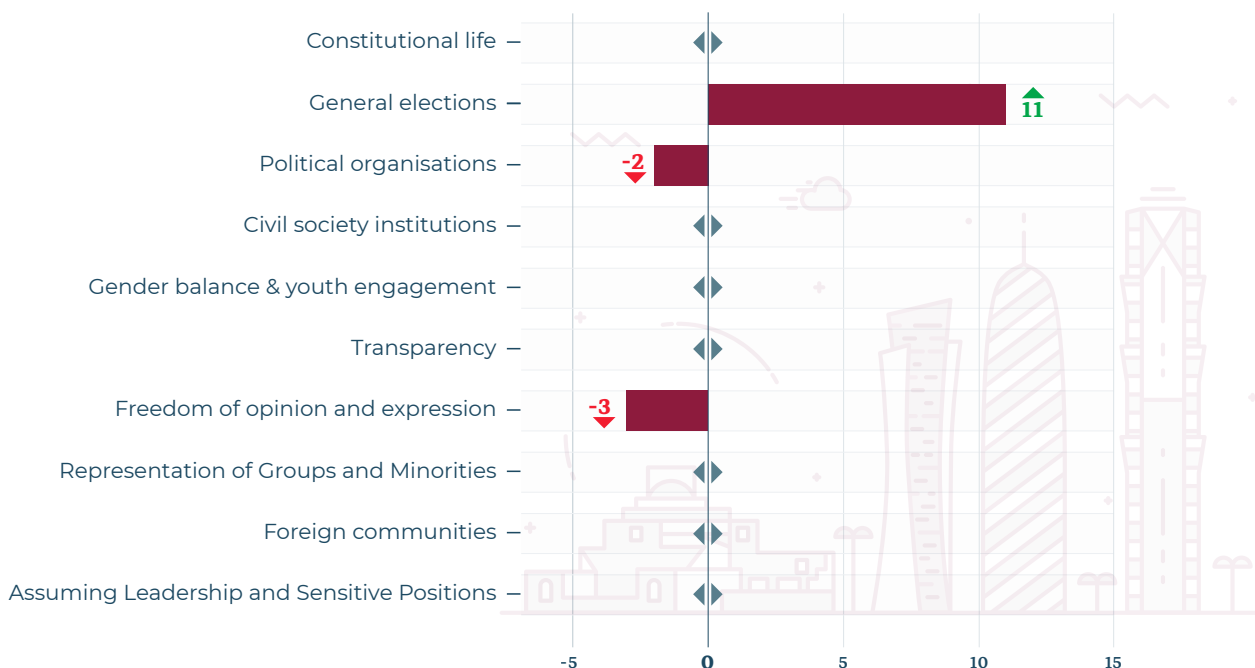


Figure 9: How much Qatar's results have changed between 2021 and 2022

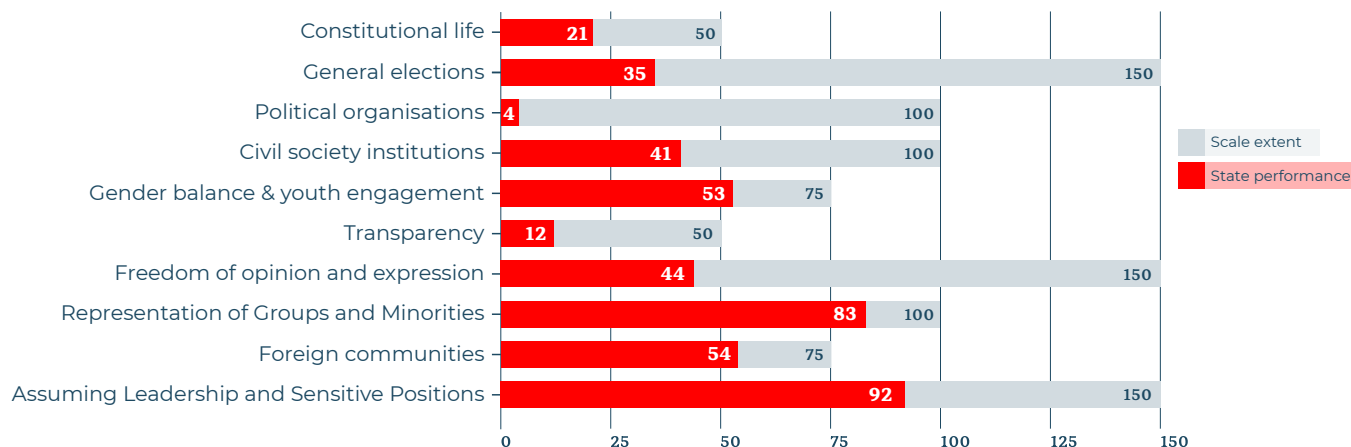


Figure 10: Oman – Scales Results 2022

The Sultanate of Oman declined (10 scores) out of the total index scores and fell down to the third rank at (439 out of 1,000 scores) ahead of Bahrain by one score difference. The State performance is still disappointing on the *Political Organisations* scale (4 out of 150 scores) and the *General Elections* scale (35 out of 150 scores).

Oman topped the *Representation of Groups and Minorities* scale (83 out of 100 scores) for the third year in a row, relying on government policies that guarantee equality among its citizens and the proportional representation of the various society components. Oman ranked the second among Arab Gulf countries on *Foreign Communities* scale (54 out of 75 scores).

Oman declined (8 scores) on the *Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions* scale due to the increasing appointments of the ruling family members in the highest and sensitive positions. Nevertheless, Oman is still at an advanced rank on this scale. The State also reported a slight decline in the *Freedom of Opinion and Expression* scale (two scores).

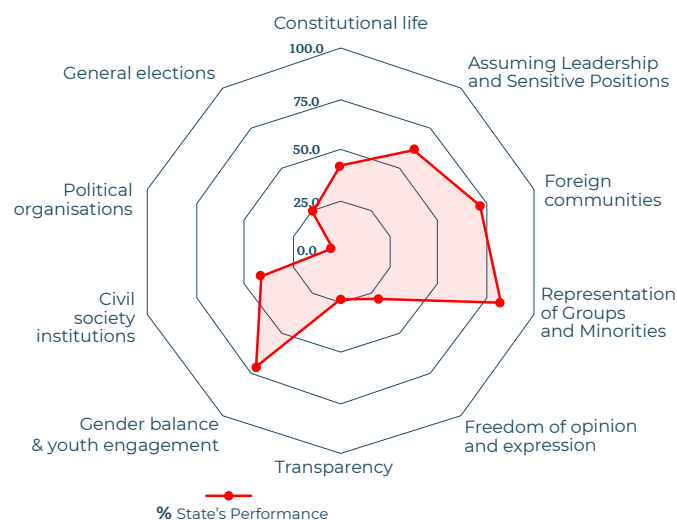


Figure 11: Oman – Political Participation 2022

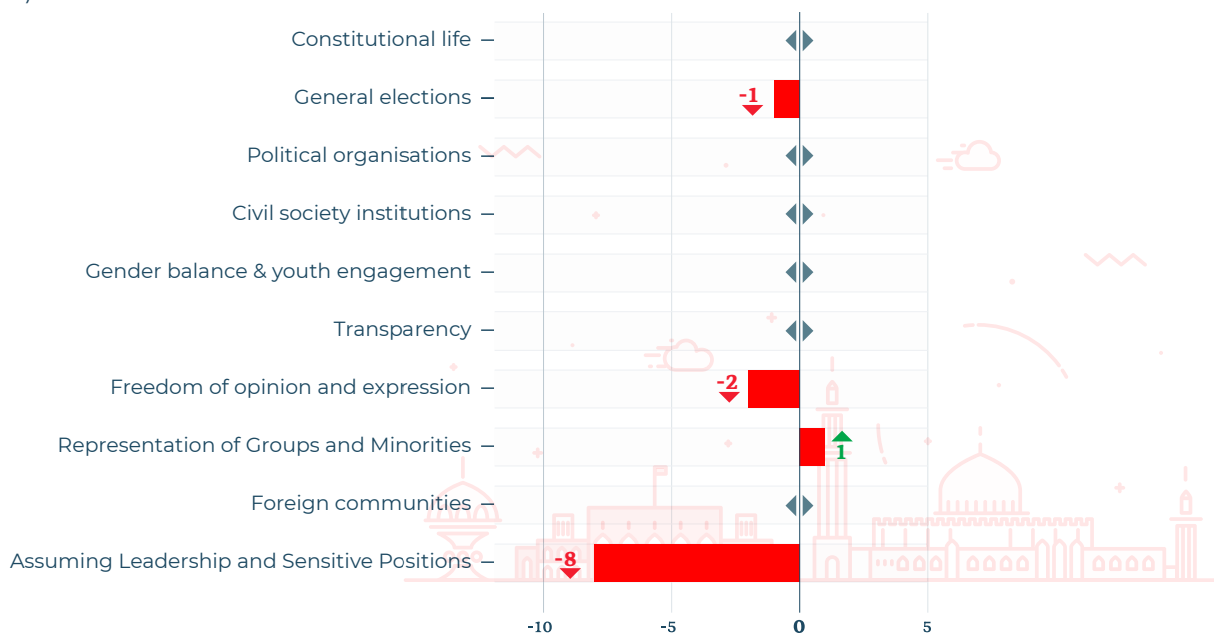


Figure 12: How much Oman's results have changed between 2021 and 2022

2.4 Kingdom of Bahrain

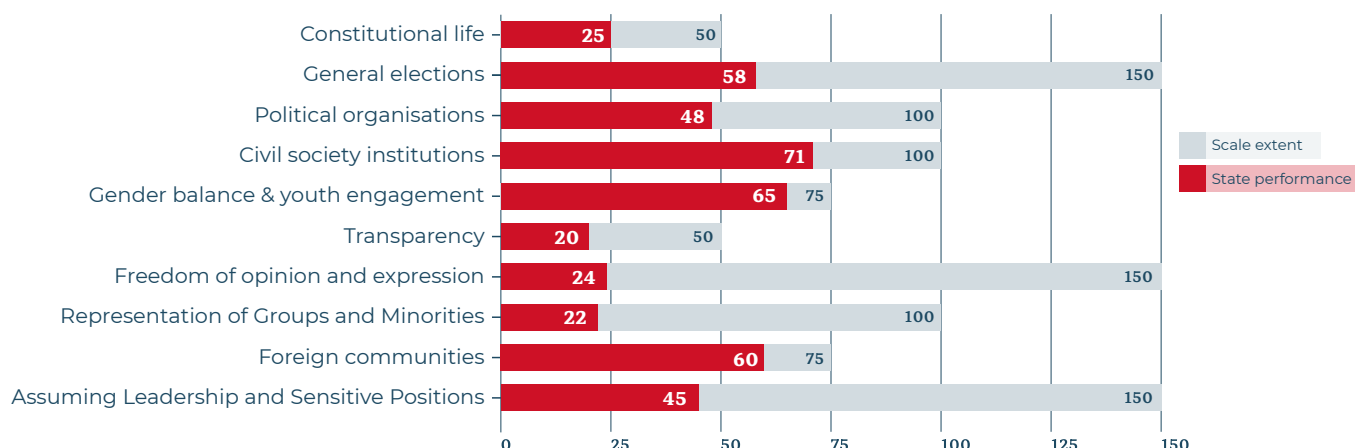


Figure 13: Bahrain – Scales Results 2022

Bahrain witnessed a slight improvement (6 scores) and continued in the fourth rank by reporting (438 scores) out of the total index scores.

Bahrain reported its best progress on the *Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions* scale (7 scores), since the representation of the members of the ruling family in the Council of Ministers has remarkably declined. However, it remained at the bottom of this scale, where the largest decline (8 scores) was on the *Civil Society Institutions* scale, as a result of imposing more restrictions and obstacles on the activities, membership and independence of the institutions.

Bahrain has advanced in a limited manner on the *Representation of Groups and Minorities* scale (3 scores), *Gender Balance and Youth Engagement* scale (two scores) and *Freedom of Opinion and Expression* scale (two scores). Bahrain continued to lead the *Civil Society Institutions* scale (71 out of 100 scores), and the *Foreign Communities* scale (60 out of 75 scores) by ensuring stable and effective residence of foreign communities as well as their representation by trade union.

Bahrain ranked low among index countries on the *Freedom of Opinion and Expression* scale (24 out of 150 scores).

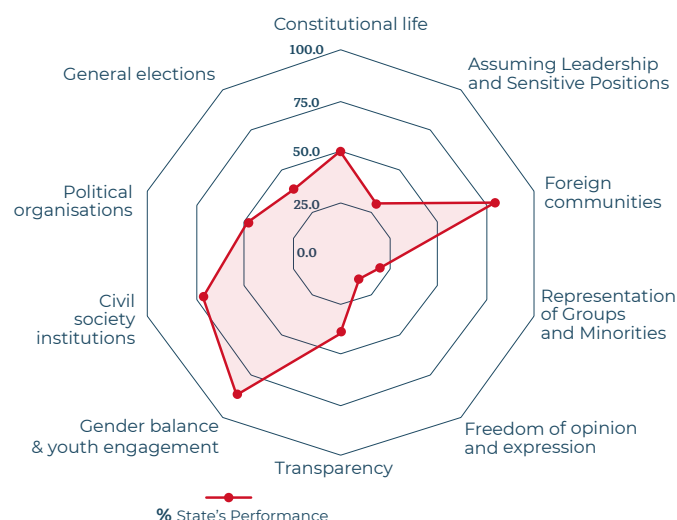


Figure 14: Bahrain – Political Participation 2022

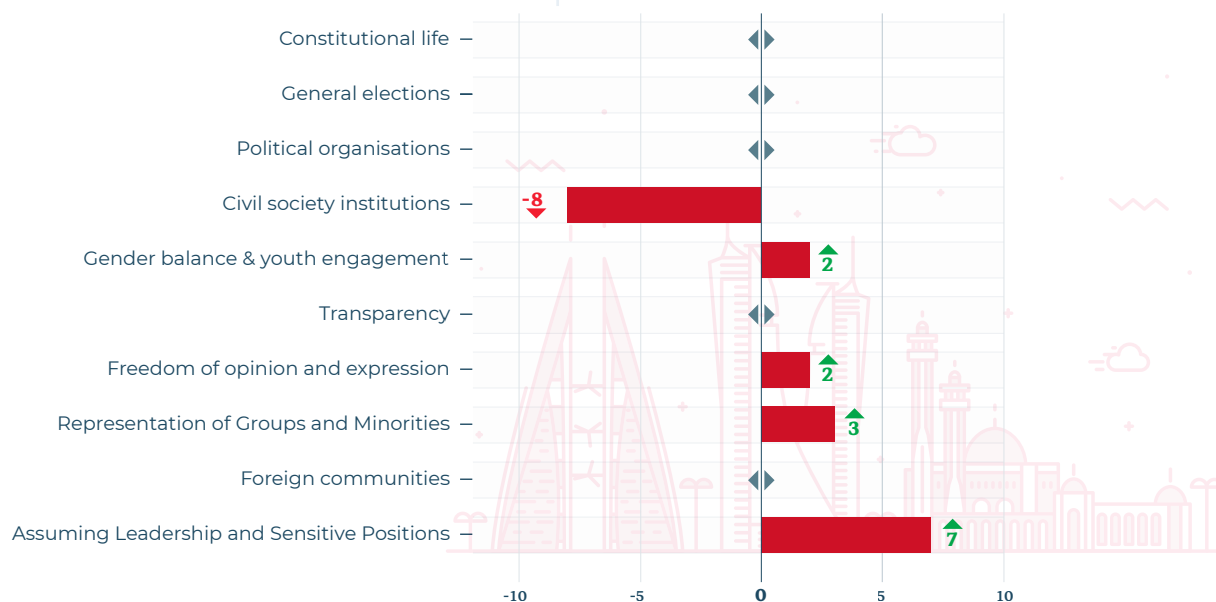


Figure 15: How much Bahrain's results have changed between 2021 and 2022

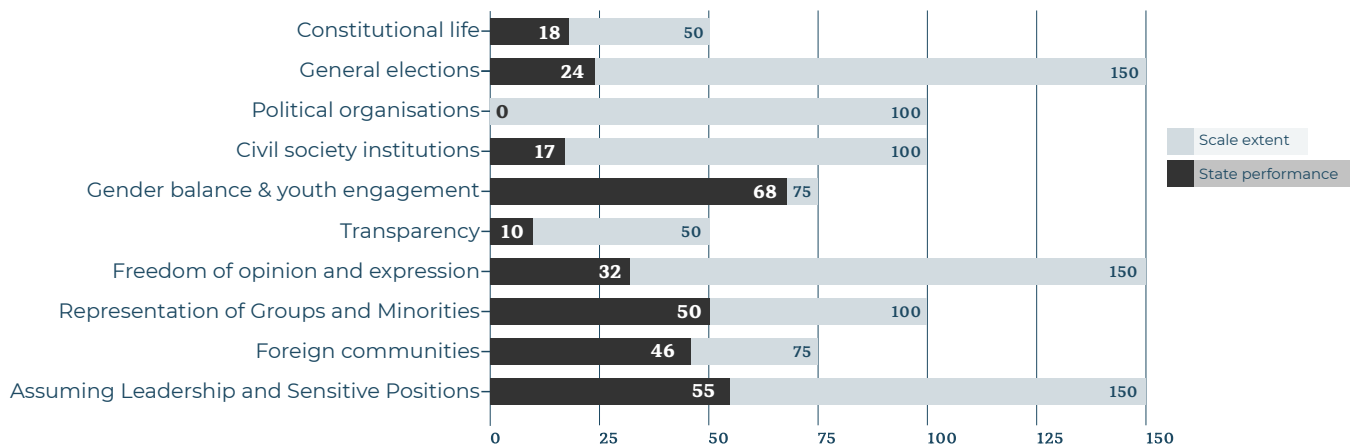


Figure 16: UAE – Scales Results 2022

The UAE ranked fifth among the Arab Gulf countries by 320 scores, as it added (two scores) to its outcome compared to the results of last year.

The UAE maintained the top rank on the *Gender Balance and Youth Engagement* scale (68 out of 75 scores), due to the continuation of government policies and special procedures to ensure a balanced representation of Emirati women and the youth group in various state institutions, as well as on *Representation of Groups and Minorities* scale (50 out of 100 scores) where it ranked second with Qatar. It also reported a better performance on the *Foreign Communities* scale with an increase of 6 scores.

The UAE maintained a “zero” mark on the *Political Organisations* scale and low results on the *General Elections* and *Civil Society Institutions* scales. It also ranked last among Arab Gulf countries on the *Transparency* scale.

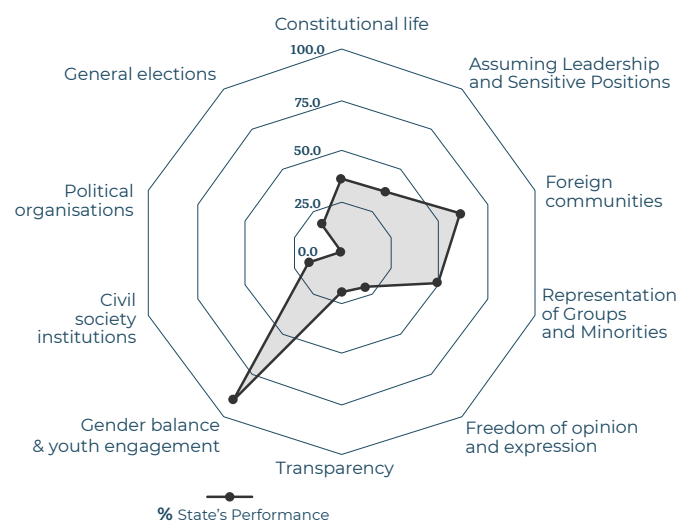


Figure 17: UAE – Political Participation 2022

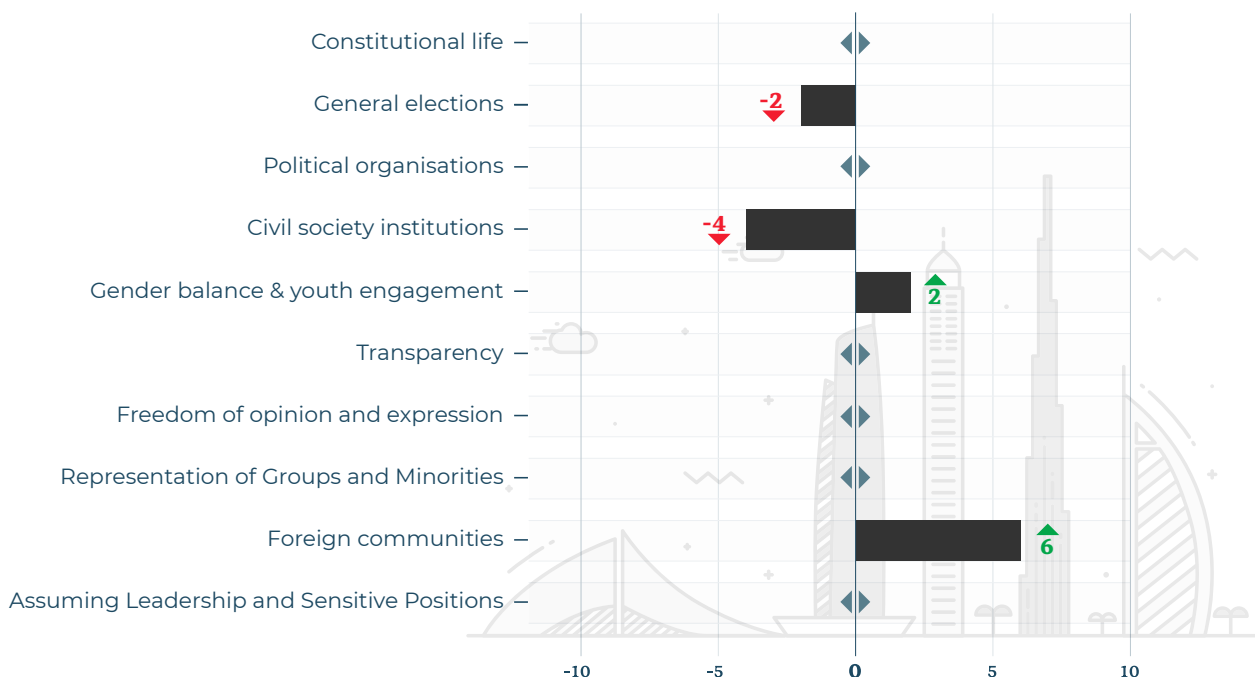


Figure 18: How much UAE's results have changed between 2021 and 2022

2.6 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



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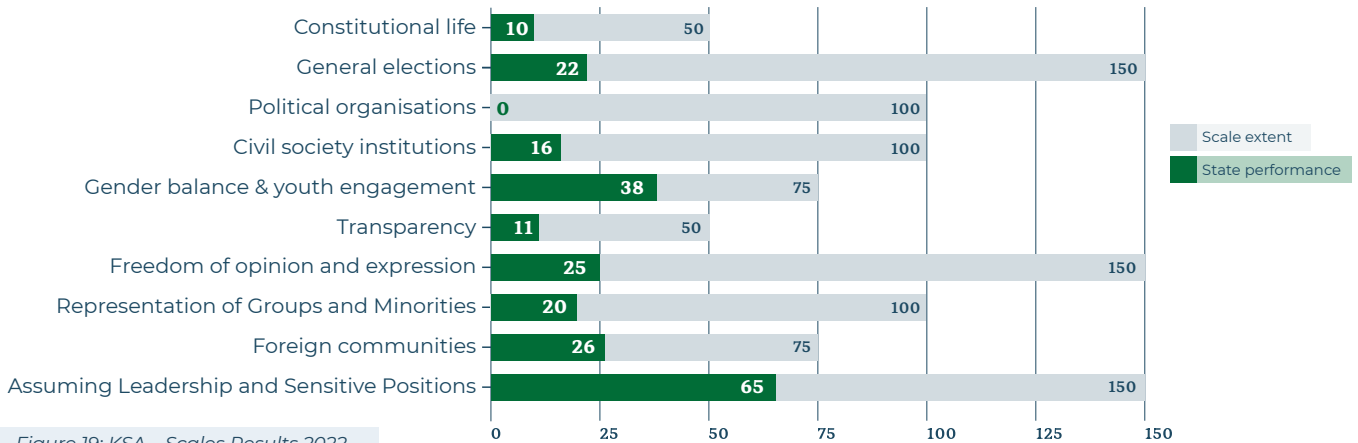


Figure 19: KSA – Scales Results 2022

Saudi Arabia has made slight progress (6 scores) compared to the results of the previous year, but remained at last rank among the Arab Gulf countries, reporting 233 out of 1,000 scores.

Saudi Arabia witnessed progress on the *Freedom of Opinion and Expression* scale (4 scales) according to the improvement of the State actions to combat hate speech and incitement to violence, yet its results continued disappointing (25 of 150 scores). Saudi Arabia also advanced on the *Women's Empowerment and Youth Engagement* scale (3 scores), as the pace of empowerment of women is obviously noticed as one of the fastest progressions of reform. The results of Saudi Arabia also advanced on the *Foreign Communities* scale (two scores).

Saudi Arabia declined (3 scores) on the *General Elections* scale, as the Government did not specify the date of the elections of the new session of municipal council elections. The State remained with a "zero" mark on the *Political Organisations* scale, and reported low cores on the *Constitutional Life* and *Transparency* scales.

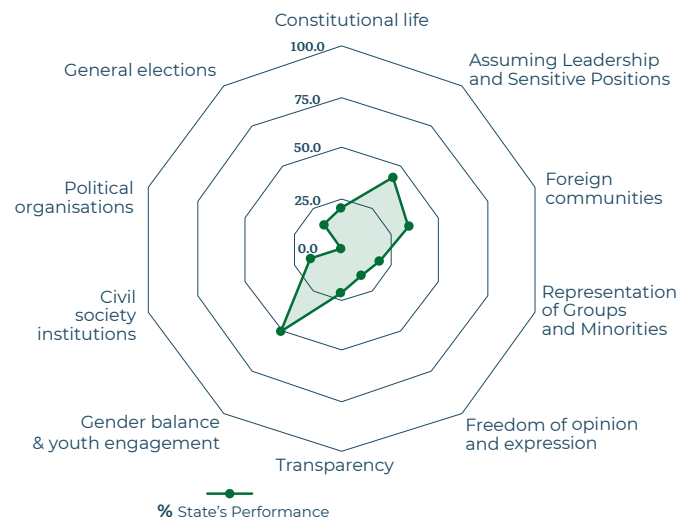


Figure 20: KSA – Political Participation 2022

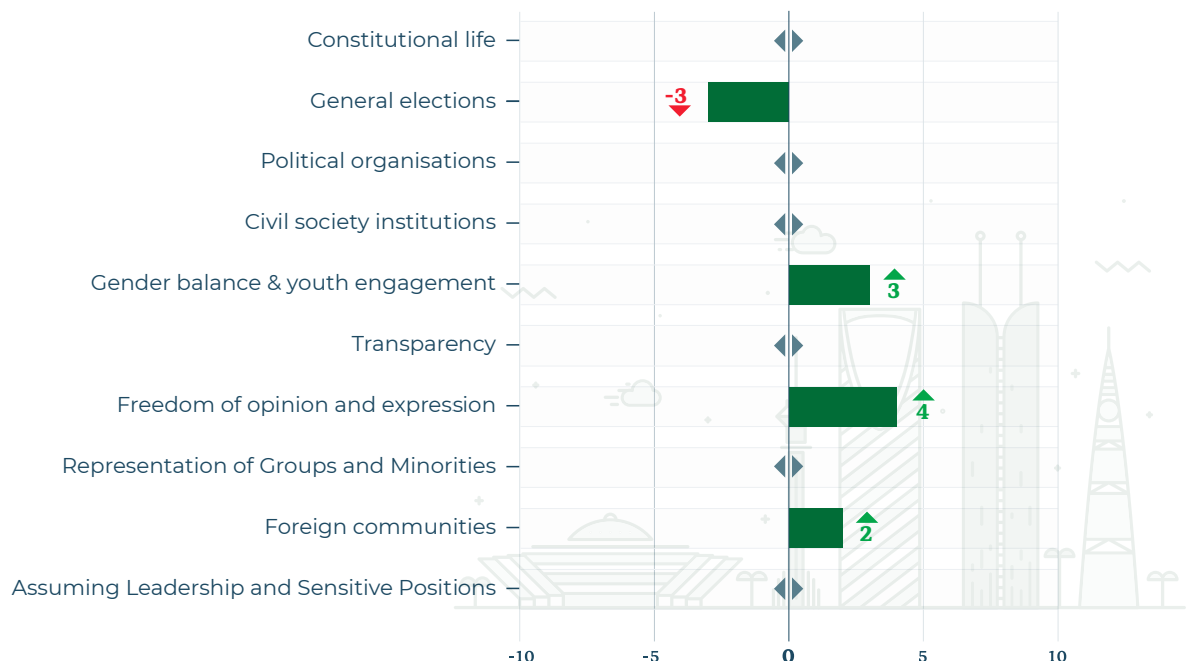


Figure 21: How much KSA's results have changed between 2021 and 2022

Presentation of Results

3.1 Scale 1: Constitutional Life

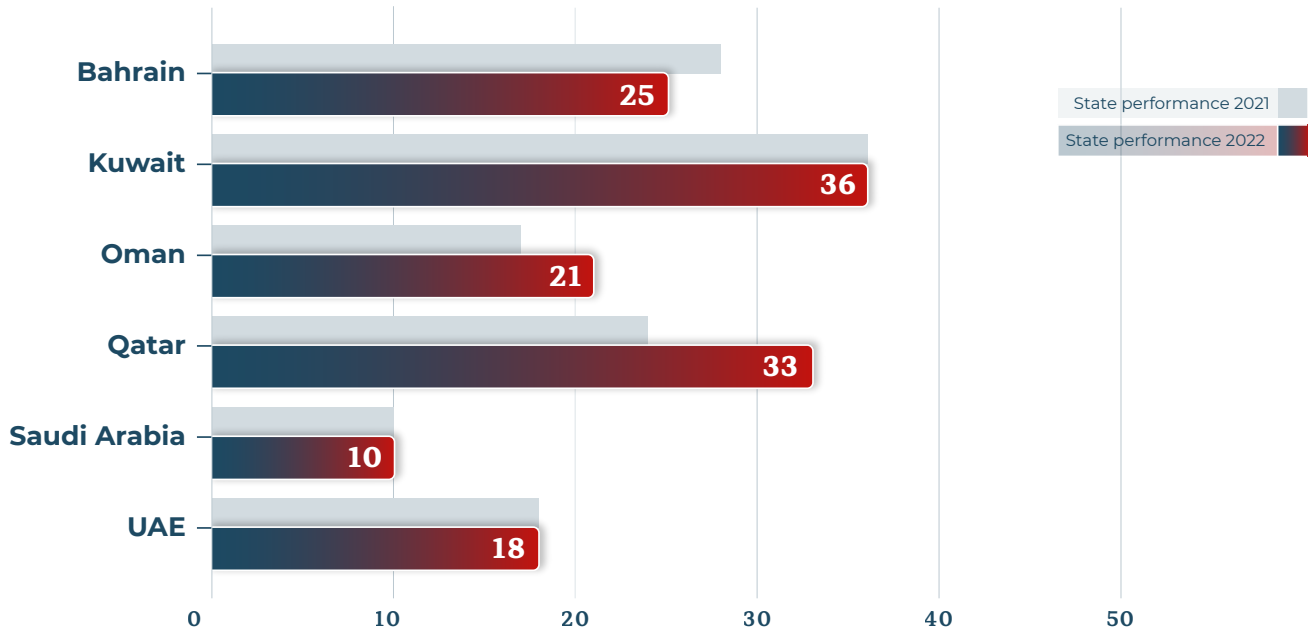


Figure 22: Constitutional Life Scale Results

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
Constitutional Authority: Mechanisms for Issuance and Amendment	6	8	3	7	2	5
Guaranteeing the right to political participation	8	9	5	9	1	3
Regulating / restricting laws	4	10	5	9	3	5
Compliance with the provisions of the Constitution	7	9	8	8	4	5
Total 50 Points	25	36	21	33	10	18

Table 1: Results / First Scale – Constitutional Life Scale Scores

Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain continues its measures to constrict areas of political participation. In June 2022, an amendment was issued to the Law on Social, Cultural and Sports Associations and Clubs, which stipulates for the prevention of any member to a political society, a practitioner of political work or a member to the legislative authority from candidacy for membership in the boards of directors of sports clubs or bodies.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain was promulgated on February 14, 2002, by royal order, and while some opposition parties describe it as a “non-contractual” constitution, it is considered by the ruling establishment as a result of a mandate and interpretation of the referendum of the National Action Charter, which was approved by 98.4% of the voters in 2001.

Any constitutional amendment requires the approval and ratification of the King for amendments, which have to be approved by two-thirds of the members of the National Assembly, which includes the Council of Representatives (elected) and the Shura Council (appointed by the King).

The Constitution includes a clear and explicit provision guaranteeing the right to political participation without discrimination among citizens. The Kingdom of Bahrain has a good package of laws that regulate candidacy and elections.

However, some of these laws include obstacles or exclusions of some groups, especially the Law on Exercising Political Rights that forbids leaders and members of political societies, which were dissolved by a judicial ruling, from candidacy for the Parliament.

State of Kuwait

The Constitution of the State of Kuwait was promulgated on November 11, 1962, through an elected Constituent Assembly composed of twenty members, but it was not put to a direct popular referendum.

The Emir and one third of the members of the National Assembly have the right to propose a revision of the Constitution, and the approval of any amendment requires

the approval of two thirds of the members as well as the ratification of the Emir.

The Constitution has given Kuwaiti citizens the right to political participation, which is evident in the National Assembly elections.

Some Government laws restrict the rights and freedoms stipulated in the provisions of the Constitution.





Sultanate of Oman

The Basic Law of the Sultanate of Oman, promulgated by Sultan Haitham ben Tariq Al Said on January 12, 2021, is the supreme constitutional document in the State.

The Basic Law was promulgated without a democratic mechanism for its drafting or a referendum for its approval. It provides for a well-defined mechanism for the succession of the ruling, and cancelled the detailed articles related to the (two-chambered) Oman Council. This annulled the parliamentary powers that the Shura Council had acquired after the 2011 protests, being powers stipulated in the Basic Law, which were reduced to legal articles in the Shura Council Law.

The Basic Law enshrines the civil dimension in the State, including the promotion of rights and equality between women and men.

The Basic Law gives a constitutional character to the follow-up and control of government performance, through a committee whose work reports directly to the Sultan through the "State Financial and Administrative Control Authority".

So far, a competent judicial authority has not been formed to settle disputes related to the extent to which the laws, proceedings and royal decrees are in conformity with the Basic Law of the State.



State of Qatar

Qatar witnessed its first parliamentary elections in October 2021, after suspension for 17 years since the promulgation of the State Constitution.

The Constitution of the State of Qatar was promulgated in 2004 after a popular referendum held in 2003 on the draft drawn up by a drafting committee composed of 32 appointed members. It was approved by 96.6% of the voters, replacing Qatar's first provisional Basic Law of Governance, issued at the beginning of the 1970s.

The Constitution provides for a number of principles of political participation, such as freedom of assembly, association and addressing the authority.

However, the organisation of these principles is left to the laws that were issued in a way that restricts the exercise of some of these rights by individuals, in addition to granting the executive authority – in some cases – the powers of approval of such rights and allowing them to be practised.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia still relies on the Basic Law of Governance issued in 1992, which is a combination of the Shura Council system and the Council of Regions system to define the system of governance in the Kingdom. None of these three systems contains any articles defining the concept or nature of political participation.

According to the Basic Law of Governance, the King has the exclusive authority to enact and amend laws, and is the reference for all authorities.

The terms of reference of the Allegiance Council (unelected and concerned with the sons of the founding King Abdul-Aziz Al Saud) do not seem clear in regulating the transfer of power, and its decisions do not seem necessary or binding in this regard, as the crown princes were dismissed and appointed without consulting to the Allegiance Council. Accordingly, there does not appear to be an explicit text that can be referred to as a legal reference.



United Arab Emirates

The Constitution of the United Arab Emirates was promulgated as a temporary constitution in 1971, and it was declared a permanent constitution for the country in 1996 by the Federal Supreme Council, the highest constitutional authority in the country and the key legislative and executive body that formulates public policies and approves federal legislation.

None of the members of the Federal Supreme Council

is elected, and the Constitution was not put to a popular referendum. Although the Constitution does not explicitly refer to the right to political participation, its preamble indicates that the final intent is to reach "a full-fledged representative democratic regime," which has not yet been reflected as far as State institutions are concerned.

Some State laws restrict the rights and freedoms stipulated in the provisions of the Constitution.

Presentation of Results

3.2 Scale 2: General Elections

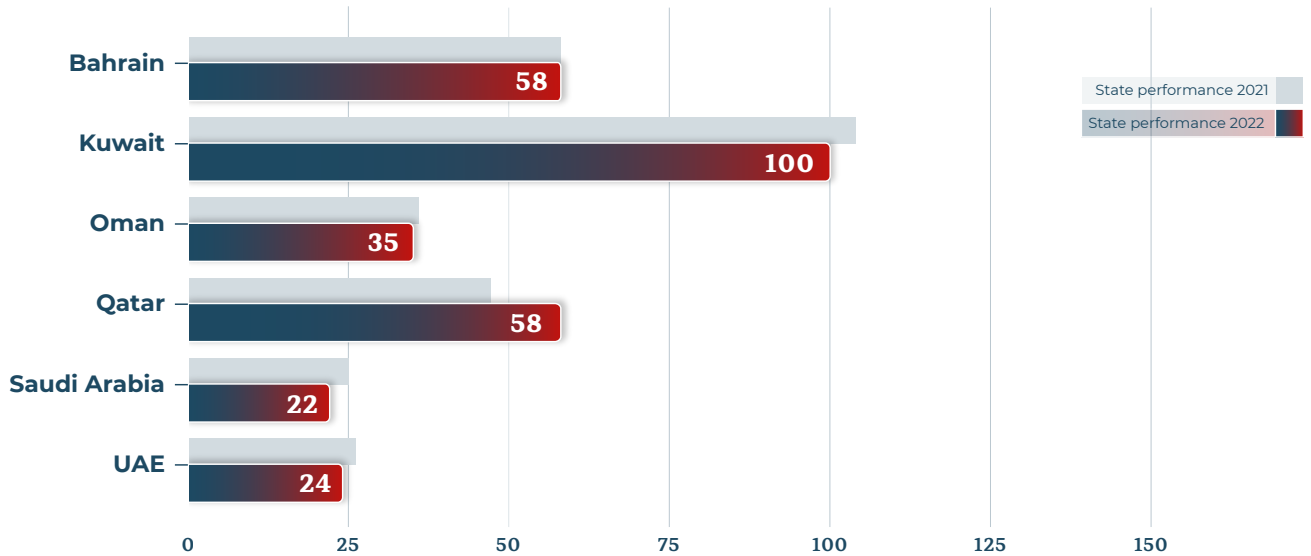


Figure 23: General Elections Scale Results

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
Electoral Areas (governmental, representative and municipal councils) 20 points	8	10	4	8	2	3
Power of elected institutions (authority / separation of powers / oversight / legislation / accountability /partnership in decision making / powers to dissolve institutions) 50 points	15	35	9	26	6	9
Effectiveness and efficacy of elected institutions 40 points	15	25	10	14	6	9
Mechanism for drafting the electoral system and drawing districts 40 points	20	30	12	10	8	3
Total 150 Points	58	100	35	58	22	24

Table 2: Results / Second Scale – General Elections Scale Scores

Kingdom of Bahrain

Although there have been periodic direct parliamentary and municipal elections since 2018, several laws have been in force that forbid anyone who was a member of a judicially dissolved political association from running for elections, and all those convicted of criminal penalties are also denied this right, even if special a pardon has been granted or they have been rehabilitated. These laws are considered permanent obstacles that deprive those affected of the right to contest an election for life. These provisions also apply to elected members who have decided to terminate their mandate unilaterally or leave parliamentary work in a manner that is considered as “intentionally harming or disrupting the functioning of constitutional or parliamentary life,” pursuant to the law.

Although the parliamentary and municipal electoral process has continued since 2002, the High Elections Committee is still affiliated with the government and is not independent. Clear violations of the provisions of the constitution have not been reported, but it is possible to note that some articles of a number of laws issued may contradict the principles and rights stipulated in the constitution, especially the House of Representatives’ By-Law, which reduces the powers of MPs and is deemed a clear restriction of the powers of the legislative authority in public debates, and stipulates that, debates may not include “criticism, blame or accusation” on the government.

The Municipal Council of the Capital Governorate is the only one (among the four governorates of the country) that has been formed by royal decree since 2014. The laws grant residents the right to vote – without running for office – in municipal elections, provided they own real estate in the country, allowing this category to have good proportional participation.

Electoral districts (40 constituencies) in Bahrain are drawn by a special royal decree, and some opposition groups considers the existing distribution to be “unfair” as it gives a numerical advantage to areas over others.

The constitution and relevant laws restrict the powers of members of the legislative authority (Council of Representatives). While the right to question ministers is allowed, the Prime Minister is exempted from this, and the Council of Representatives does not have the power to grant confidence to the government or withdraw it from it, but it has the power to grant confidence to the government’s program. The constitution includes explicit texts about the mechanism of withdrawing confidence from one of the government ministers (who are appointed by royal decree) or declaring the inability to cooperate with the Prime Minister (appointed by royal order), a matter to be referred to the king for final decision. However, no case of dismissal of a minister has been reported so far through this mechanism, which requires a two-thirds majority of the members of the Council of Representatives.

In accordance with the constitution, the detailed annual financial and administrative oversight, falls within the jurisdiction of the Financial and Administrative Audit Office (National Audit Office), affiliated to the King. The statute of the Council of Representatives restricts their roles within the Council, as it specifies for the deputy to not exceed more than one question per month, and a parliamentary committee is assigned the task of examining the “seriousness” of interrogation requests submitted by representatives and decide on their validity.

The King has the power to dissolve the legislative authority after consulting with the chairpersons of the Council of Representatives and the Shura Council or based on the opinion of the Prime Minister. In accordance with the constitution, the king has a direct role in the legislative process by issuing decrees that have the force of law (unless one of the two chambers rejects them later). It is noted that the king makes frequent use of this right. The King also exercises an indirect role through the appointment of all members of the Shura Council.



State of Kuwait

Kuwait declined (4 scores) on this scale due to the delay in holding the National Assembly sessions for two months due to absence of the government. The Prime Minister resigned in April 2022 after an interrogation that ended with a number of MPs declaring their agreement to submit a letter of non-cooperation to the Emir, which could lead to non-confidence in the Prime Minister and his dismissal.

The National Assembly has relatively impressive powers and has broad authority to legislate and monitor government performance. It is noted that despite the constitutional right granted to the Emir to dissolve the National Assembly, Kuwait is one of the countries that overuse this right.

The National Assembly has the Constitutional right to discuss decisions made by the Government, direct questions at ministers and the Prime Minister, submit requests for discussion or form investigation committees, receive and process petitions and complaints from citizens, is also entitled – after the questioning process – propose a motion of no confidence against the minister concerned, or submit a letter to the Emir related to the inability to cooperate with the Prime Minister. The Emir is supposed to replace the Prime Minister in this case, but until now the National Assembly has not reached the stage of proposing a motion of no confidence against the Prime Minister, and usually the National Assembly is dissolved before reaching this step.

Pursuant to Article (82) of the Constitution, “a member of the National Assembly must be originally of Kuwaiti nationality in accordance with the Law”.

The nationality law further defines original Kuwaiti nationals as “those persons who were settled in Kuwait prior to 1920”.

The law also prohibits those naturalised citizens from voting as well, except after prolonged periods of time have elapsed. According to the election law, men of the armed forces and the police are denied the right to vote.

In May 2022, Kuwait witnessed the thirteenth elections for the Municipal Council, with a turnout of 20%. The Municipal Council is composed of 16 members, 10 of them are elected and 6 members are appointed by Emiri decree.

Law No. (5) of 2005 reduced the powers of the Council, so its decisions are more like decisions of an advisory council that do not bind the municipal executive body of the government.

Article (12) of the Law specifies many powers for the Municipal Council, of which more than a third of the members are appointed, the most important of which is the authority to allocate land plots, as the Government cannot utilise any land owned by the State for any projects without the Municipal Council's approval. This is almost the most important authority of the Council.



Sultanate of Oman

Elections are held in the Sultanate of Oman to select the members of the Shura Council (half the members of the Oman Council) and two-thirds of the members of the municipal councils, while the remaining members are appointed by the Sultan.

Elections are held within all provinces according to the administrative division determined by the Government, so that each province, with more than 30,000 citizens, is represented by two MPs in the Shura Council, while provinces with fewer than 30,000 citizens are represented by one MP. This distribution resulted in a variation in the number of voters in districts.

There is debate in society concerning the fairness of the electoral system and the distribution of electoral districts. Additionally, certain cases have been monitored of people

excluded from the candidate list, some of whom had opposing views. Omani law expressly prohibits all security and military personnel from running for office or voting in general elections until two years after leaving the service.

The law does not regulate the issue of campaign financing, but it applies stricter the penalties for buying and selling votes.

The Basic Law grants the elected Shura Council limited oversight powers, particularly with regard to the right to interrogation, non-confidence and performance measurement. In addition to the fact that the Law of the Council of Oman does not provide for a specific period during which the Council of Ministers must respond to the request for interrogation, the questioning of the Minister of Information has been suspended.

State of Qatar

The Constitution provides for the right to political participation through the Shura Council, and provides for the election of 30 members out of 45 (15 members appointed by the Emir). The Constitution explicitly stipulates that the Shura Council shall assume the power to legislate, approve the State's general budget, and monitor the performance of the executive authority.

Despite the advancement achieved by Qatar through conducting Shura Council elections in October 2021, the formation of a Supreme Committee for Elections, the issuance of the Election Law, and the resolution of the Ministry of Interior to divide the country into 30 electoral districts, the drawing of districts and registration of voters have been the subject of internal debate for adopting of tribal classifications.

Municipal council elections have been held in Qatar since 1999 and are continuing periodically. As for members of the Government, all are appointed by the Emir. The only institution whose members are elected is the Central Municipal Council, which in effect has control only over the implementation of laws and decisions related to municipal affairs, but has no control over the performance of the executive authority bodies relevant to municipal affairs.

The Council has the right to present proposals with desire to the executive authority, which has the discretionary power to adopt or disregard them.

The municipal electoral process remains in compliance with the electoral system formulated by the Government (represented by the Ministry of the Interior), which has drawn up the constituencies.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Shura Council is composed of a president and 150 members appointed by the King. Members' rights, duties and all their affairs are defined by royal decree. The Council's role is limited to providing non-binding advice to the executive authority. The power relationship between the Shura Council and the Government is unbalanced, making it devoid of any legislative or oversight powers, leaving the Government the final and supreme reference authority in public affairs.

In December 2021, the Ministry of Municipalities announced the end of the third session of the work of municipal councils, after an extension for two years. Contrary to the provision of Article (16) of the Law on Municipal Councils System, the government has not scheduled the date for the new elections, which led to decline of Saudi Arabia by 3 scores.

According to statistics of municipal councils in 2019, there are 285 municipal councils in various regions and governorates of Saudi Arabia, while the number of members has reached 3,159, including 2,106 elected members.

The experiment of municipal councils is the only experiment – in recent times – in which election is held to elect two-thirds of the seats in each council, while the Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs appoints the remaining third.

The first municipal electoral process was held in 2005, followed by 2011 and 2015.

The authority charged with setting up the electoral mechanism into a system and districts is the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, which has the authority to amend the electoral system and the districts.





United Arab Emirates

The Federal National Council is defined as the legislative authority of the State, whose powers are still advisory, is the federal authority is considered fourth of the five federal authorities stipulated in the Constitution, which are “The Supreme Council of the Union, the President of the Union and Vice President, the Council of Ministers of the Union, the Federal National Council, and the Federal Judiciary”.

The Constitution does not provide for the right to vote, nor does it deal with it as the formation of the Federal National Council was originally by appointment by the rulers of the Emirates; however, since the end of 2006, elections have been conducted to select half of the members, a process in which a limited number of citizens from each emirate voted. Those are selected by the ruler of the emirate and their names are registered within the Electoral College. It is noticeable that there is no law regulating the electoral process, with a guide issued by the National Election

Committee in 2019 considered to be sufficient.

In accordance with the Constitution, the powers of the Federal National Council are limited to discussing, approving or rejecting constitutional amendments presented to it, draft laws, the federation’s annual general budget and its final accounts, international treaties and agreements. While all members of the Council (those elected and appointed) have the right to direct questions and inquiries to members of the government, they lack the right to question them and set up investigation committees or propose a motion of confidence. Pursuant to Article (92) of the Constitution, the Council of Ministers has the power to forbid the discussion of any subject if it is in the “higher interest of the Union”. In addition, the powers of the National Council do not extend to the local governments of the seven emirates, and the Emirate of Sharjah is the only one that has an elected advisory council.



Presentation of Results

3.3 Scale 3: Political Organisations

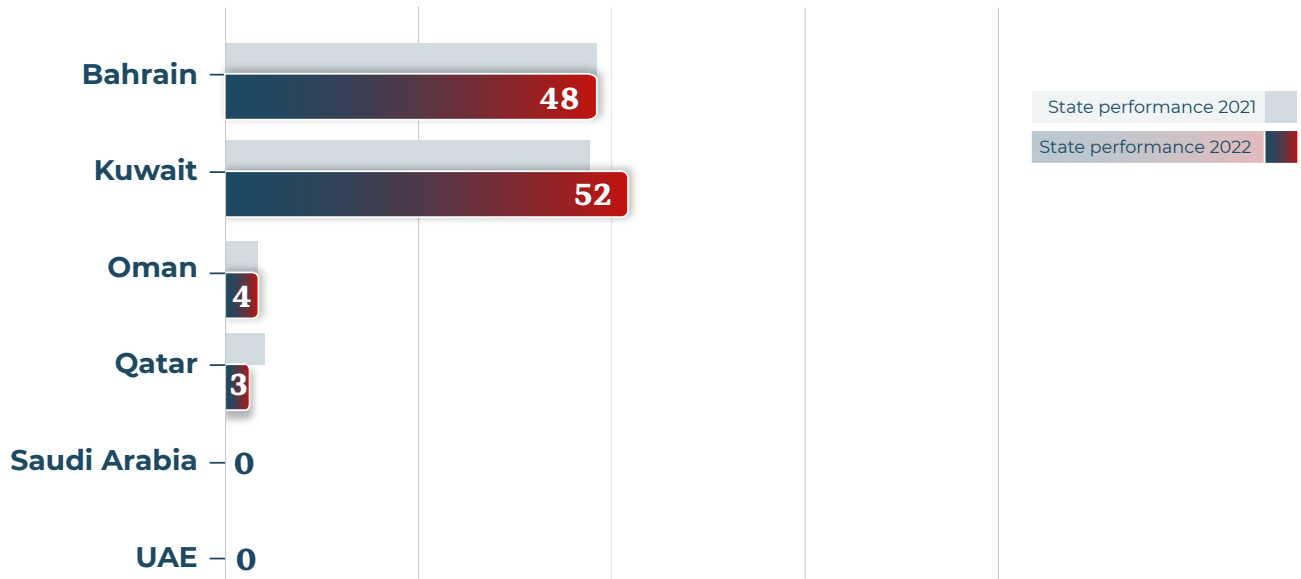


Figure 24: Political Organisations Scale Results

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
Legitimacy of political organizations 30 points	22	8	0	0	0	0
Availability of opposition tools 25 points	5	14	0	0	0	0
Safety for political activists 25 points	6	21	4	3	0	0
Administrative and financial independence 10 points	6	3	0	0	0	0
Participation in elections on slates 10 points	9	6	0	0	0	0
Total 100 Points	48	52	4	3	0	0

Table 3: Results / Third Scale – Political Organisations Scale Scores

Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain has a law regulating the work of political organisations as “political associations”. However, the legal environment through which these associations operate is considered a hostile one where activists and politicians may be subjected to harassment and prosecution.

Based upon the existence and expansion of laws restricting political participation, organised political action in the country becomes marginal.

Those associations exercise their political action similar to that of political parties, except for participation in Government.

The electoral system does not oppose the participation of political societies in the parliamentary and municipal elections through their own electoral lists.

Some political associations – particularly of the opposition – have been dissolved by court decisions, while some opposition groups operate underground or from outside the country. It is also noteworthy that many leaders of opposition political groups have been arrested, while some are living in exile.

Political associations are prohibited from receiving donations or funding from outside the framework of the organisation, and their financial resources are limited to member donations and membership subscriptions, in addition to the funds provided by the Ministry of Justice. These societies are also subject to the supervision of the Ministry of Justice and the audit by National Audit Office, affiliated to the King’s Court.

State of Kuwait

Kuwait has advanced (5 scores) on this scale after political reconciliation and the promulgation of the two Emiri decrees (November 2021) pardoning and commuting the sentences of 35 political opponents, including 11 living in exile.

There is no provision in the Constitution of Kuwait that provides for or prohibits the freedom to establish political parties.

However, the actual practice of the State forbids the official formation of parties. In October 2019, the Supreme Judicial Council refused to approve the proposal for a law on the organisation of political bodies submitted by a number

of DPs, deeming it “a danger to the integrity of democratic governance and the unity and stability of the country”.

There are major political blocs of various streams that operate openly. These political blocs work on the ground and have their positions and groupings as political forces that voice their positions on events and participate in elections through candidates whose identity is clearly known to the Kuwaiti public opinion. Some of these groups have complained about the one-person-one-vote electoral system that makes it difficult for them to win as slate of candidates. There is lack of transparency in the action of these blocks and their funding sources.

Sultanate of Oman

The Law of Oman criminalises forming or joining political organisations. Although the Basic Law of the State grants citizens civil rights such as peaceful assembly, addressing public authorities and expressing opinion, laws regulating the exercise of those rights have not yet been promulgated. In addition, other laws (the Penal Code and the Press and Publications Law) restrict some of those rights.

In 2020, the Sultanate of Oman acceded to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural

Rights, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The Sultanate offers Omani opponents and jurists outside the country the opportunity to return back and settle their situation in a way that seems systematic and continuous. Nevertheless, this does not include allowing them to engage in any political activity inside the Sultanate.

State of Qatar

Qatar has declined on this scale due to the judgments against a number of citizens after gatherings protesting the Citizenship Law and the right to run in the Shura Council elections, sentencing some of them to "life imprisonment".

There are no laws in Qatar to regulate or allow the formation of political organisations in any way, and it lacks any organised work practised by citizens to address issues of politics and public affairs.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Political organisations of all kinds are prohibited in Saudi Arabia, and in accordance with the law, membership in any political organisation is a crime.

In accordance with the Basic Law of Governance, demands related to public affairs are dealt with as individuals' demands, as stipulated in the Basic Law of Governance that "the King's Council and the Council of the Crown Prince shall be open for all citizens and anyone else who may have a complaint or a grievance, and every individual shall have the right to address public authorities in matters of concern to him".

The active political groups (internally or externally) are not officially recognised. Some are organised in overt, secret or semi-secret organisations, and the leaders are always arrested or forced into exile.

Targeting political activists has increased noticeably in recent years.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva had condemned (March 2022) the execution of 81 people, including 41 from the Shiite minority, who participated in the 2011/2012 protests to claim for more political participation.

United Arab Emirates

Laws in the United Arab Emirates do not permit the existence of any type of political action, and it has been noted that a number of previous attempts to organise

political activities or others critical of the performance of the authorities have exposed organisers to harassment, imprisonment, citizenship revocation or deportation.



Presentation of Results

3.4 Scale 4: Civil Society Institutions

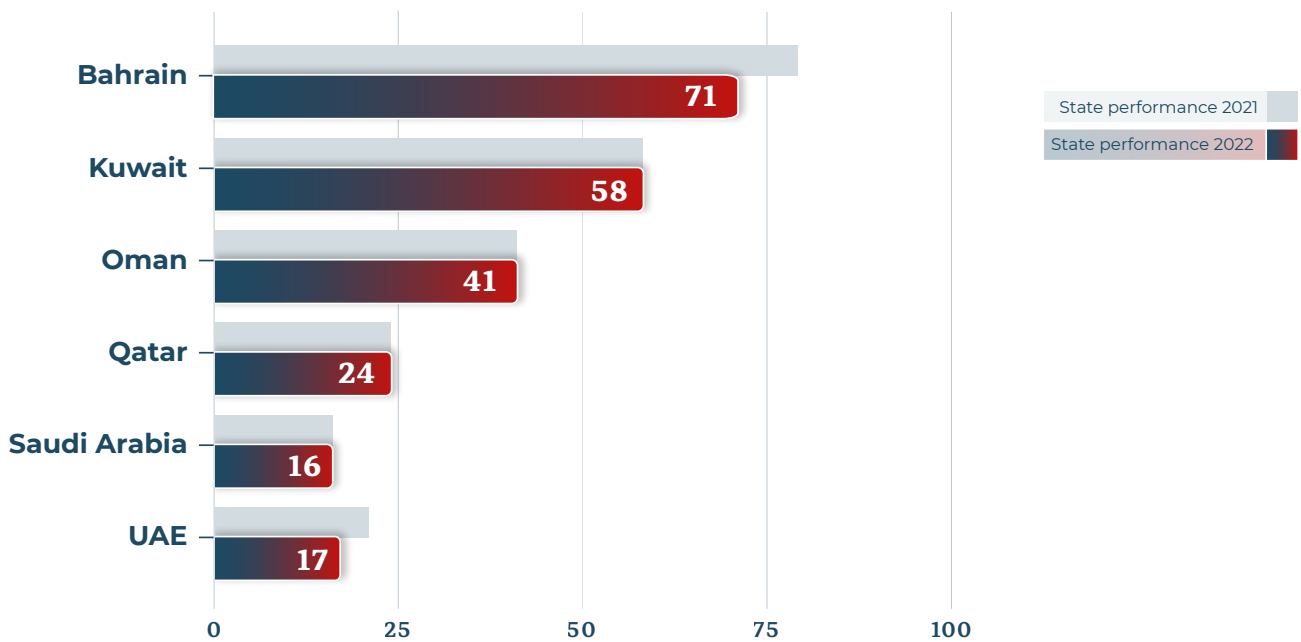


Figure 25: Civil Society Institutions Scale Results

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
Legal environment: guaranteeing the right of individuals and groups to form NGOs and pressure groups 40 points	30	30	15	10	8	11
Trade unions and professional societies: legislation / union pluralism and trade unions/ availability of union work tools, including the right to strike 40 points	30	18	20	10	4	2
Institutional independence 10 points	6	5	3	2	2	2
Restrictions and obstacles 10 points	5	5	3	2	2	2
Total 100 Points	71	58	41	24	16	17

Table 4: Results / Fourth Scale – Civil Society Institutions Scale Scores

Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain declined by 8 scores on this scale, as a result of its adoption of an amendment to the Law on Social, Cultural and Sports Associations and Clubs, which stipulates for the prevention of any member to a political association, a practitioner of political work or a member to the legislative authority from candidacy for membership in the boards of directors of sports clubs or bodies. Add to this the package of restrictions and obstacles, including security checks.

The government restricts all relationships of NGOs to any party outside the country, whether in terms of obtaining funding, scholarships, training or field visits. The government requires prior official approvals in this context.

Bahrain has more than 650 legally licensed NGOs. The law requires that applications for incorporation be submitted to the relevant ministry, and there is a limited number of associations that have suspended their applications without handing over a rejection decision to their founders. The law obligates board members of NGOs to hold periodic elections and submit annual reports. A number of NGOs have been dissolved because they were deemed “ineffective or because they were unable to provide something that

would benefit society”. Over the past two years, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development has intervened in the appointment or dismissal of some 60 administrative boards. With some exceptions, the government generally does not interfere in directing the internal activities of NGOs.

Bahrain enjoys reasonable freedom of trade union activity, as the law provides for the formation and operation of trade unions, including the formation of federations of trade unions.

The Government does not interfere in the formation and management of these trade unions, where members freely elect their leaders.

The law also guarantees the right to protest, including the right to strike, but in recent years extensive restrictions have been placed on organising protests.

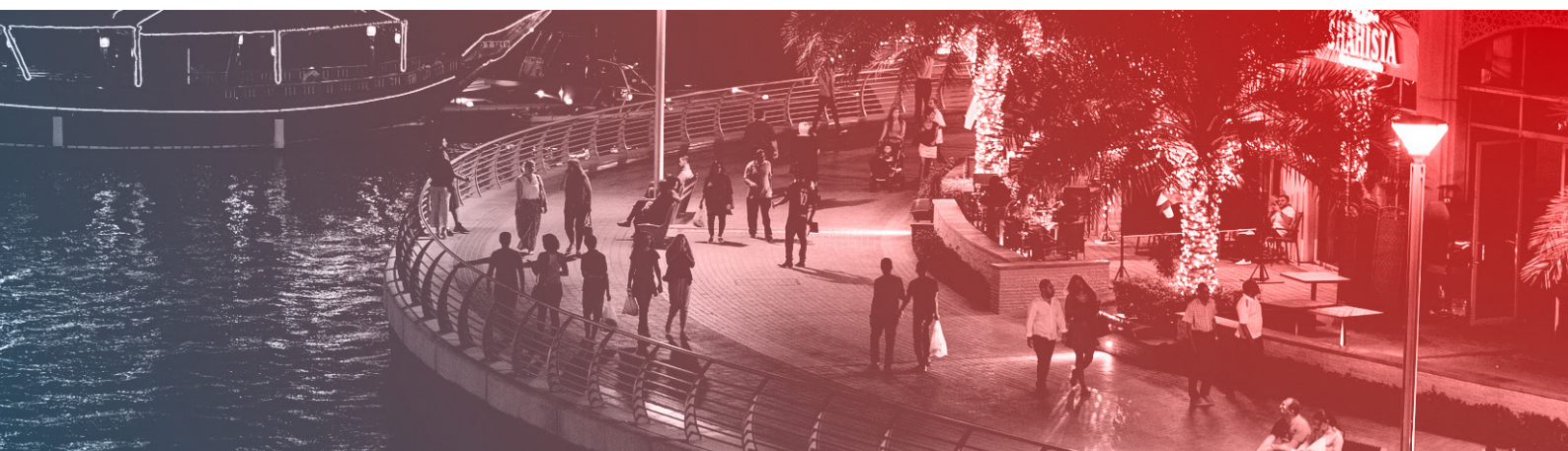
Employees working in Government institutions are not allowed to form trade unions that represent them, but they can join professional societies under the NGOs law, as is the case with doctors, engineers and journalists, but these entities lack many of the privileges and legal status enjoyed by trade unions.

State of Kuwait

The Law of Kuwait regulates the right to form civil societies, and although the Government resorts to the same law to dissolve a number of NGOs for committing “violations” or carrying out overseas activities “without permission”, the margin of activity and action for NGOs is still noticeable.

The law allows the formation of trade unions in all sectors (private and Governmental) with the requirement of approval of the Minister of Social Affairs for the trade union to acquire legal status. The Kuwait Trade Union Federation has continued its activities since its establishment in 1961.

There is no legal framework governing professional trade unions, so professionals in Kuwait organise activities under the framework of the Clubs and Public Welfare Societies Law. Despite the nonexistence of legal articles regulating the right to strike, a number of strikes were organised in the past. It is noticeable that the Government interferes in financing trade union organisations, all of which receive various forms of funding, and some of which receive funding continuously on an annual basis.





Sultanate of Oman

The law in the Sultanate of Oman regulates the formation and operation of NGOs, but it gives the Minister of Social Development a broad range of supervisory powers.

A number of cases have been reported for societies whose establishment registration requests were rejected without explaining reasons for rejection.

The Government interferes with the nature of NGOs' funding, but some receive financial support from the Government.

Trade unions in Oman are regulated by provisions within the labour law, and some administrative regulations that clarify the procedural aspects and licensing requirements for trade unions and trade union federations, which also prohibit the formation of trade unions in the public sector as well as vital sectors.

It is noticeable that Omani trade unions – despite their limited powers – have financial independence from the Government, and to some extent a space of free trade union action uncontrolled by the Government.



State of Qatar

Qatari law grants the Minister of Interior the right to approve or reject the formation of civil organisations, and a number of formation requests have been rejected without providing any reasons.

As for trade union work, workers in an establishment in which the number of Qatari workers is not less than 100

workers have the right to form a workers' committee from among Qataris only. Although the law restricts the powers of Workers' Committees, strikes are allowed under many conditions including Government's approval.

As for professional associations, licensing is granted for three years only, to be renewed by a government's decision.





Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

According to official statistics (July 2021), the number of NGOs decreased to 1910 in the Kingdom, in comparison to 2158 in the previous year.

The organisation of civil society institutions and NGOs is considered late in Saudi Arabia, and it began with the issuance of a special royal decree in 2015, which stipulated that the Ministry of Interior is the competent authority for licensing and rejection, along with the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, in addition to any other authority overseeing the sector in which the organisation will operate.

Human rights groups have documented a number of requests which have not been approved by the relevant authorities, while some activists have been arrested for their activities in organisations deemed by the state as

“unlicensed”.

Saudi legislation lacks a law on trade unions, and there are no labour organisations in the country, with the exception of some committees, associations and bodies involving practitioners of some professions, the “National Committee on Labour Communities”, which was formed by a resolution of the Minister of Labour and Social Development (January 2019), is concerned with representing labour committees in some private sector institutions. It is a (semi-official) committee with advisory powers, which is concerned with Saudi labour only.

The right of labour to organise themselves into free unions is still prohibited. Moreover, taking a step of this kind may subject them to forced dismissal, arrest or deportation in case of foreign labour.



United Arab Emirates

The UAE declined on this scale as the government authorities intensified financial and administrative control over civil society institutions. Dubai promulgated the Decree No. (9) of 2002 “subjecting private entities of public interest established under legislation to the superintendence and control of the Community Development Authority in Dubai”, which prejudices the independence of civil society institutions and restricts their activities”.

The UAE has about 250 licenced NGOs that are active in various sectors, which are regulated by a law that grants

the Ministry of Community Development the licencing authority and broad supervisory powers. In the past, cases of associations that were dissolved for reasons related to finance or political action were reported.

In the absence of a law on the formation of trade unions, the labour law permits the employer to deprive a worker of his/her wages if he/she takes part in strikes. Although there are some professional associations, they are closer to civil work than to trade unions.



Presentation of Results

3.5 Scale 5: Gender Balance and Youth Engagement

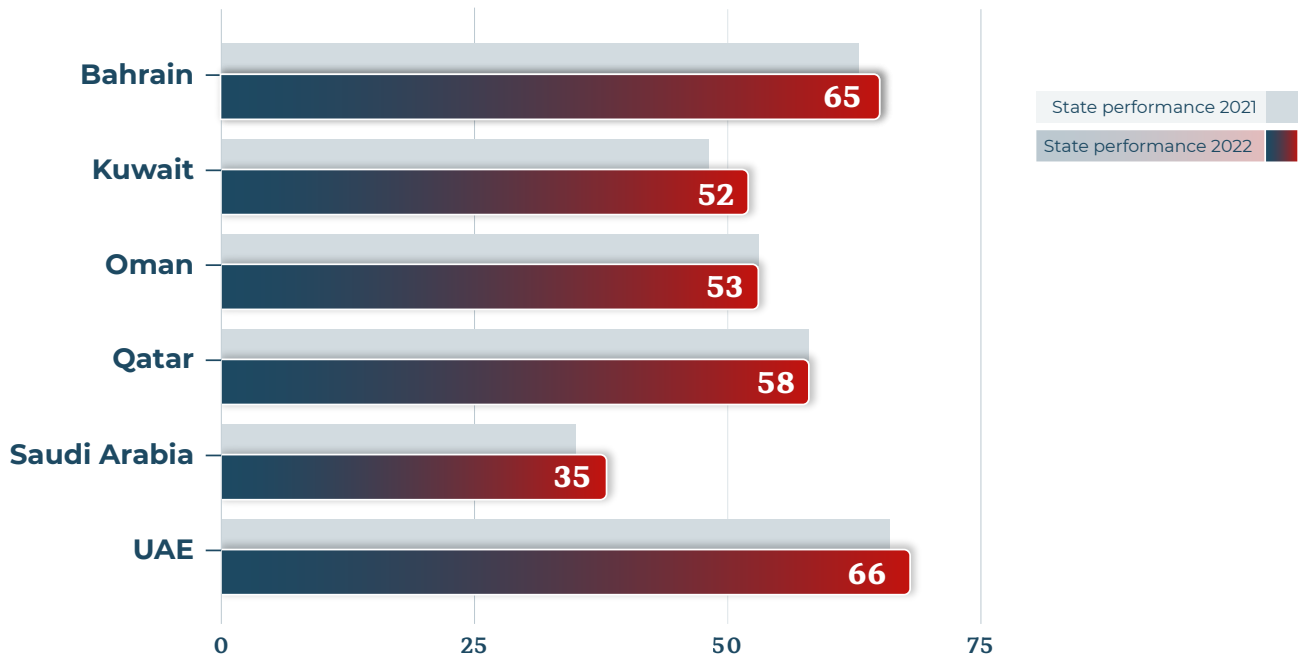


Figure 26: Gender Balance and Youth Engagement Scale Results

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
Empowering women: the right to vote / a quota in elected councils / holding leadership and senior positions 50 points	46	39	40	40	23	48
Youth engagement: voting age/ holding senior positions 25 points	19	13	13	18	15	20
Total 75 Points	65	52	53	58	38	68

Table 5: Results / Fifth Scale – Gender Balance and Youth Engagement Scale Scores

Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain advanced on this scale with the enhancement of the representation of women and youth in the government formation (June 2022), which is an unprecedented change since State independence. Government appointments and some high-ranking positions in the country included the appointment of 4 women ministers and notably young faces. Despite the progress over the past years, including the access of women to the presidency of the House of Representatives, there is no clear policy for empowering women to assume leadership and senior positions in the State, and the percentage of women's representation remains low.

According to the constitution, Bahraini women have the right to run for office and vote. There are no binding laws

or special procedures that guarantee gender balance in the government, the Shura Council, or the elected Parliament. Nevertheless, the Supreme Council for Women (an official body affiliated with the king) leads projects and initiatives to empower women. In the youth sector, Resolution No. (2) of 2022 was promulgated to establish and form a Committee for the Empowerment of Youth in Public and Private Sectors.

The conditions for candidacy for the House of Representatives stipulate that the age of the candidate on election day should not be below 30 years old. In addition, one the conditions for participating in voting is that the citizen has reached the age of 21, which makes a segment of young people outside the electoral process.

State of Kuwait

Kuwait advanced (4 scores) on this scale with notable strides in empowering women after the appointment of 15 female judges in the judiciary and 4 women in the municipal council (out of a total of 6 appointed members), in addition to the appointment of 4 youth ministers in the government and two youths in the municipal council. Women's representation in the Kuwaiti government is still limited (one female minister).

Kuwaiti women have the right to vote and run for office in the National Assembly and Municipal Council elections.

There are no laws or measures that guarantee gender balance in the Government or in the elected institutions, and the state also lacks a clear political program for political empowerment of women.

The voting age is 21 years, and to run for office a candidate must be 30 years old, which excludes a segment of the youth from the electoral process.

In addition, the Kuwaiti authorities do not have a clear policy towards involving youth in decision-making.

Sultanate of Oman

The Basic Law of the Sultanate provides for gender balance, making it a duty of the State. It is also noted that women's representation has been enhanced at the level of appointments of ministers and undersecretaries. However, it is still limited (3 female ministers out of a total 23 ministers), in addition to promoting youth participation in ministerial formation and at the level of undersecretaries, although it is not clear that these measures are carried out under a clear or official policy.

Omani women have the right to vote and enjoy equal opportunities to run for office in the Shura Council and Municipal Council elections. There are no laws that guarantee gender balance in the Government or elected institutions, nor is there a written national policy or national strategy aimed at empowering women to reach leadership

or senior positions in the State. In this context, the authority relies on royal directives and decisions in addition to references in national speeches.

With the exception of the position of the Sultan, there are no fields or positions in the State from which women are legally excluded from accessing.

The voting age in the Sultanate of Oman is 21 years, and to run for office, a candidate must be at least 30 years old, which leaves a segment of the youth outside the electoral process. With the exception of the statute of the National Youth Commission, formed by the Government following the events of the Omani Spring in 2011, there are no laws guaranteeing the inclusion of youth in the Government or elected institutions, nor is there a written national policy or a national strategy aimed at youth engagement.



State of Qatar

The share of women in leading State positions has increased, and the government formation (2021) included the appointment of 3 women to ministerial positions. The number of women in the judiciary has also increased in parallel with Qatar Vision 2030, which aspires to raise the percentage of women “judges” to around 30%.

Qatari women have the right to vote and run for office, but there are no laws or customs that guarantee gender balance, whether in Government formation, the Consultative Assembly, or Municipal Council.

Despite the candidacy of 28 women for membership in the Shura Council, none of them managed to win. Despite the Emir’s appointment of two members (out of 15 appointed members), the percentage of women’s representation in the Shura Council remains marginal (2 out of 45 members).

With regard to youth inclusion, Qatar sets the age for voting in municipal councils at 18 years, and 30 years for running for office. There is no clear policy regarding the empowerment of youth and their political participation, but it is noticeable that many holds essential positions in the State.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia advanced by 3 scores on this scale, as it is noted that the pace of the empowerment of women in public affairs is accelerating as one of the fastest paths of reform in recent years. For example, in the education sector, the total number of Saudi female faculty members is about 44%, and 1300 women hold senior leadership positions in universities. At the same time, the percentage of Saudi women on scholarships to complete postgraduate studies is about 43%.

The first woman was appointed to the position of a member of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank (June 2022), and the Ministry of Justice created a “women’s department” in late 2021 and assigned a number of “notaries” tasks to women by licensing 57 women to carry out notary services. The Ministry of Defence has also opened the door for women to take positions in various military sectors at various ranks.

Saudi women participated for the first time as voters and candidates in the municipal council elections and won

20 seats. There are no laws in Saudi Arabia that guarantee gender balance in Government or State institutions, including municipal councils.

Despite the announcement of the establishment of a committee for the empowerment of women, so far none of them has held a ministerial position.

With regard to youth engagement, and in accordance with the municipal council elections system, the voting age was set at 18 years and candidacy at 25 years. Since the appointment of Prince Muhammad bin Salman Al Saud as Crown Prince, discussion has focused on the role of youth, and a several have undertaken sensitive advisory and executive roles, including young princes who have held the positions of regional princes, undersecretaries and ambassadors.

The policies of empowering young people who have been promoted to senior positions and in the decision-making circle are facing criticism that they do not represent the various sections of Saudi society.





United Arab Emirates

The UAE advanced on this scale due to the continuation of the active State policy in empowering women. The percentage of women's representation in the Council of Ministers increased to 9 women ministers, and the percentage of women amounted to about 60% of the total national workforce at "Expo 2020 Dubai".

Emirati women have the right to run for office and voted in the Federal National Council elections. In 2019, the Federal Supreme Council issued a decree mandating that women represent half of the elected seats in the Federal National Council headed by a woman.

In order to enhance the presence of women in State institutions and gender balance at work, the Government established the UAE Gender Balance Council in 2015, which seeks to establish positive discriminatory measures

to ensure the participation of women in appropriate fields of work and membership of representative councils and boards of directors of companies, especially public and listed companies.

With regard to youth engagement, the laws stipulate that the age to run for office in elections is 25 years. Laws, however, do not specify the age for voting, and there is an emphasis in media coverage on the participation of the elderly due to the novelty of the idea. The researchers were not able to find a written or approved policy or strategy on engaging youth in decision-making, but in 2016 the Government created a youth council, which has an advisory role on topics and areas that concern youth. It is also noteworthy that there are several young ministers in the Federal Government, and there are many projects, and financial and political support for youth of both sexes.



Presentation of Results

3.6 Scale 6: Transparency

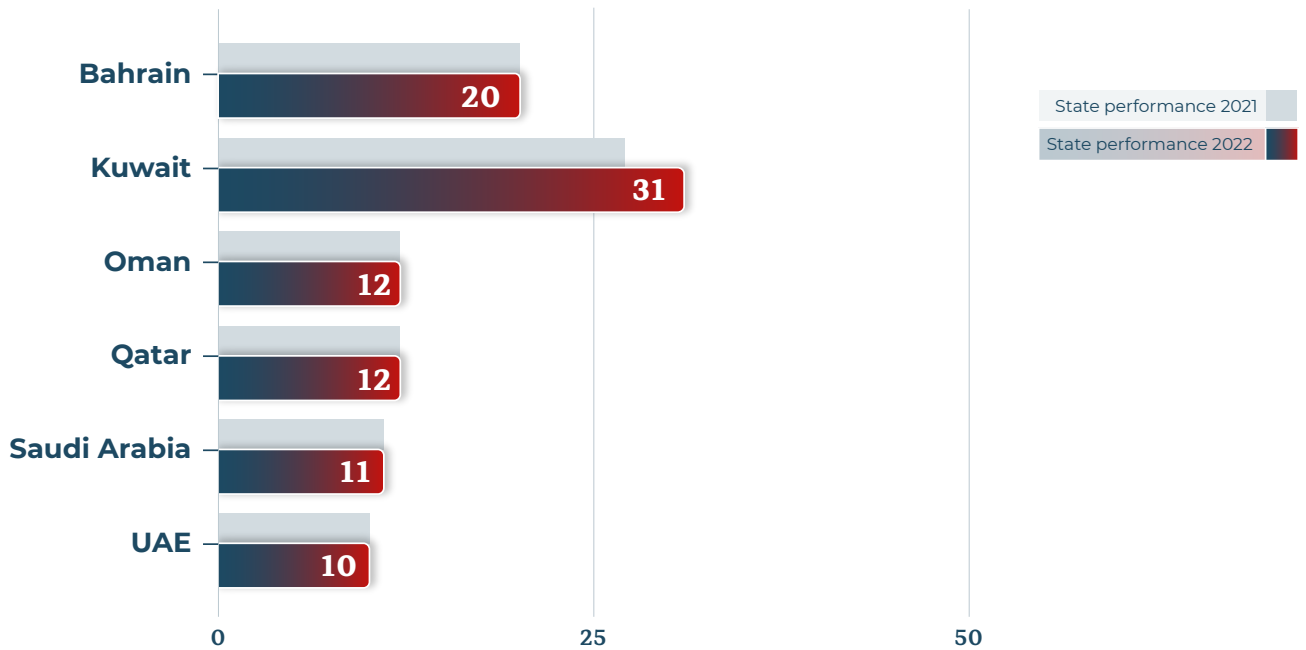


Figure 27: Transparency Scale Results

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
Information sharing: right to access, circulate and disseminate Information 25 points	10	16	7	7	6	5
Independent oversight: the actions and performance of the executive, legislative and judicial authorities, sources of wealth, spending of public funds 25 points	10	15	5	5	5	5
Total 50 Points	20	31	12	12	11	10

Table 6: Results / Sixth Scale – Transparency Scale Scores

Kingdom of Bahrain

The law regulating the press, printing and publishing provides for the right to obtain and publish information. Nevertheless, government authorities refuse to disclose data and information under debate in the society, including arms expenses and lists of scholarships.

There are documented cases where journalists, photographers, activists, and citizens were subjected to pressure, threats or arrest for publishing or circulating information, or participating in the media, by virtue of the

Penal Code, which provides for imprisonment and financial fines.

With regard to community oversight, the Bahrain Transparency Society was licensed in 2001, but it is not specialised in monitoring aspects of public spending.

Its activity is limited to issuing statements and participating in events to promote the values and principles of transparency and anti-corruption.

State of Kuwait

The Law No. (12) of 2020 provides for the right of access to information and obliges ministers and government institutions to archive and organise all data and information, facilitate access to them and ensure their disclosure. Nevertheless, Kuwait reported cases of summoning activists for publishing information or exposing "corruption cases".

In 2016, Kuwait established the Public Anti-Corruption Authority (NAZAHA), which receives complaints from individuals confidentially.

It has the authority to investigate and refer to the Public Prosecution the suspects in cases of financial corruption, which is the body authorised to obtain financial disclosure statements from the Prime Minister and members of the Council of Ministers, the National Assembly, the Municipal Council and the Judiciary, in addition to heads and members of councils and executive bodies and those occupying leadership positions in the government.

With regard to community participation in oversight, the Kuwaiti Transparency Society was established in 2006, but it was dissolved by the authorities, and in March 2018 the General Assembly of the Transparency Society elected a new board of directors.

The Kuwait Association for Protecting Public Funds, established in 2005, is a public benefit society whose aim is to educate citizens about the importance of guarding, defending and maintaining public funds.

The Kuwait State Audit Bureau (KSAB) reports directly to the National Assembly and assists the Government and the Assembly in monitoring the collection of state revenues and its expenditure within the limits of the budget.

Despite this, sharp criticism of rampant corruption in State institutions is increasing in Kuwait.

Sultanate of Oman

There is no law regulating or guaranteeing the right to access information. Official State data is generally available. However, according to observers and opponents, there is doubt about its accuracy.

The Law on Avoiding Conflicts of Interest and Protecting Public Funds requires officials to disclose their property, assets, and wealth, but they remain confidential and are not published to the public.

In previous years, cases of journalists or activists who were threatened, arrested or imprisoned for publishing or

circulating information were documented, and newspapers, media and journalistic institutions were closed for the same reasons. This year, a journalist was referred to trial for publishing a court ruling in a corruption case.

With regard to community participation in oversight, there are no independent civil society institutions dedicated to transparency and monitoring public expenditure. The Omani Economic Association, in cooperation with Transparency International, sometimes performs this role within a limited framework due to the strict laws and the wide discretion of those responsible for law enforcement.

State of Qatar

In March 2022, the Shura Council approved a proposal for a “law regulating the right to access information,” but it has not been published so far and its details are not known. In previous years, cases of activists and journalists being harassed and pressured due to the circulation of information were monitored, as both the Law on Press and Publications and the Anti-Cybercrime Law impose severe restrictions.

With regard to community oversight, there are no independent civil institutions in Qatar that are specialised in transparency and oversight of public expenditure. There is a Governmental body, the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority (ACTA), as well as the National Committee for Integrity and Transparency, which is a Governmental committee.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

In February 2021, the Shura Council approved the Personal Data Protection and the Freedom of Information laws. Despite the adoption of the principle of transparency and disclosure of information, the right to obtain it is still restricted by loose political and security controls and determinants.

According to human rights organisations concerned with freedom of opinion and expression, including Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists – the United States – Saudi Arabia is witnessing a decline in press freedom, and anti-terrorism and cybercrime laws give the courts a free hand in imprisoning journalists and bloggers.

Saudi Arabia detains dozens of journalists and online activists. Human rights reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch confirm that journalists and

activists have been subjected to torture.

With regard to community participation, there is no civil institution concerned with transparency and scrutiny in the areas of disbursement of public funds, despite the popular demands through petitions and articles stressing the need to fight corruption. Citizens can address the National Anti-Corruption Commission, which was established in 2011.

The Freedom House report 2022 indicates a relative improvement in the availability of some economic data, including data related to the government budget, but it stated that the mechanisms for spending state funds and internal decision-making are unclear, as there is no general mechanism to hold senior officials accountable for their decisions, and the defence budget is far from public oversight, and the sovereign wealth fund's data is also largely obscure.

United Arab Emirates

Despite the development of the UAE's supervisory procedures with regard to combating corruption, there is no law regulating or guaranteeing the right to access information to allow individuals and civil society institutions to participate in oversight.

There is what is known as a Guide to Access Government Information from federal agencies, as well as the Law on Data Dissemination and Exchange in the Emirate of Dubai, which is primarily concerned with establishing the Dubai

Data Authority. It is noted that the provisions of the articles of the Penal Code and the Law on Combating IT and Cyber-crimes have broad discretionary power and heavy penalties, especially with regard to accessing or disseminating information.

With regard to popular participation, there are no civil society institutions specialised in transparency and scrutiny of disbursement of public funds.



Presentation of Results

3.7 Scale 7: Freedom of Opinion and Expression

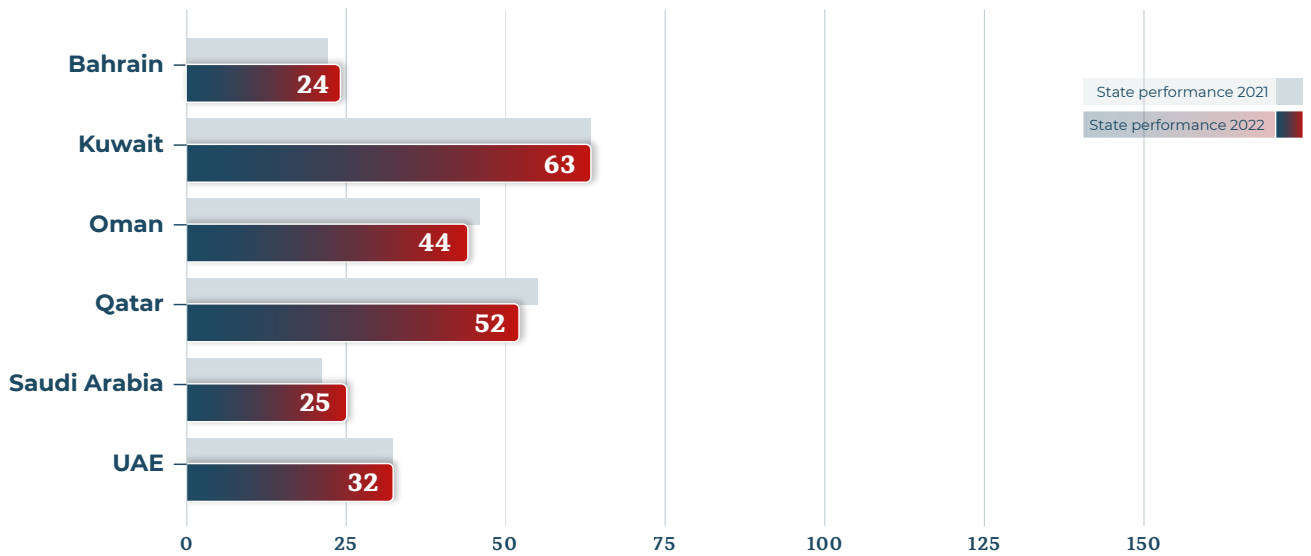


Figure 28: Freedom of Opinion and Expression Scale Results

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
Press freedoms 30 points	5	15	5	11	2	4
Independence of media institutions 30 points	5	15	5	7	5	5
Internet Censorship 30 points	6	14	5	7	4	4
Freedom and safety of individuals to exercise criticism 30 points	3	7	4	8	4	4
Confronting hate speech and incitement to violence 30 points	5	12	25	19	10	15
Total 150 Points	24	63	44	52	25	32

Table 7: Results / Seventh Scale – Freedom of Opinion and Expression Scale Scores

3.7 Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain is constantly imposing restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression, especially on opinion leaders who do not express official positions. Such restrictions may involve legal prosecution, defamation, forced dismissal, revocation of citizenship and other measures. These are sometimes justified legally by resorting to such laws as the Law on Protecting Society from Terrorism or the Law on Regulating Printing and Publishing.

Bahrain's Anti-Cybercrime Directorate pursues social media activists, subjecting them to legal accountability and intimidation, blocking and disrupting sites or targeting the owners of influential accounts.

Bahrain is accused of spying on its citizens inside and outside the State. The US Freedom House Organisation also classifies Bahrain as a "repressive, not free" country (March 2022).

Bahrain advanced one place on the "Reporters Without Borders" index 2021. Bahrain ranked 167 out of 180 countries assessed by the report.

Media institutions do not have true independence from State policies, and no individual can freely establish media institutions due to political, legal and financial constraints.

The Constitution of Bahrain and the Law regulating the Press, Printing and Publishing provide for freedom of opinion, expression and the press. However, due to unequal interpretations, laws are used to restrict freedom of the press. There are many arrests and judicial trials against citizens and residents for expressing their opinions, and these arrests have affected many journalists and opposition activists.

The Penal Code in Bahrain addresses the issue of incitement to hatred in Article 172, which stipulates that stipulates penalties of imprisonment and a fine for anyone who "publicly incites hatred or contempt for a group of people, if such incitement is likely to undermine public peace". Nevertheless, calls for hatred and targeting for political and sectarian reasons spread in the country, and it is noted that the State applies this article selectively.

State of Kuwait

Kuwait continued to use the Cybercrime Law to restrict freedom of opinion and expression, kept on exercising severe censorship of Internet content, and summoned a number of activists for investigation into the arrest of at least one.

Although the pace of legal prosecutions against activists has declined, the laws restricting freedoms have not been amended.

Kuwait monitors what is published on the Internet through the Cybercrime Law issued in 2015, which provides for penalties that involve imprisonment and fines, resulting in a backlog of cases before Kuwaiti courts. The Anti-Cybercrime Department (affiliated with the Ministry of Interior) pursues everything it considers a breach of the law. Because of the Cybercrime Law, (which has been criticised by international human rights organisations), a number of bloggers and other opinion leaders have been imprisoned.

According to Reporters Without Borders' classification, Kuwait retreated to the 158th place in the World Press Freedom Rating. The RWB stated that although Kuwait was the "least repressive" country in the Gulf region, it exercises "great control over the media field".

Most of the local newspapers and private television channels are owned by powerful families, and accordingly, it seems difficult to consider them completely independent from the executive authority in the country, especially since licensing procedures require Government's approval.

Kuwait does not deal strictly and repressively with every criticism of the government and its performance. However, it is strict in punishing any opinion that criticises matters that concern the Emir or raises criticism against any Gulf country. Kuwait sometimes blocks some websites with political content.

Kuwait enacted the Law on the Protection of National Unity and Rejection of Hate, promulgated in 2012, which prohibits "initiating, advocating, or inciting by any means of expression [...] hatred or contempt for any group of society, inciting sectarian or tribal strife, or spreading ideas calling for the superiority of any race, group, colour, origin, religious sect, gender, lineage, or incitement to violence". Nevertheless, hate speech for sectarian reasons and against expatriate workers are documented, especially after the outbreak of Covid-19. It is noted that the government does not deal seriously with such cases.



Sultanate of Oman

The Press and Publication Law (which includes online platforms) restrains freedom of opinion and expression in the Sultanate, as pressures on individuals and institutions have been documented. Omani citizens are subjected to arrest, interrogation and pressure, as per local and international human rights organisations. Judicial rulings have also been issued against citizens accused of “insulting the divine” and “insulting the heavenly religions.”

According to Reporters Without Borders classification 2022, Oman declined 30 places to rank 163 in the world press freedom rating, which included 180 countries.

Generally speaking, freedom of opinion, expression and the press in the Sultanate of Oman appears to be restricted, and high levels of self-censorship are observed. There is a climate of fear of raising many issues in a way different from official line due to the vagueness in the laws and wide discretionary authority to interpret what is published and apply the relevant articles of the law.

Media institutions do not have real independence from state policies or public discourse in society, and any institution departs from official line may suffer rejection, persecution, or banning the activity.

Any individual may establish a media organisation, but within restrictions and conditions that some regard to be financially insurmountable, and are also linked to security

approvals. As for radio stations and live broadcasting services, they are prohibited except under restrictions or on subjects that the Government does not consider political or critical.

There is a set of laws related to censorship, some of which are general, such as the Law on Censorship of Artistic Works and the Law of Publications and Publishing, and some of them are special, such as the Omani Penal Code and the Law on Cybercrimes. These laws generally clarify practices that warrant arrest, detention, or banning the activity. There is close monitoring and follow-up on the content posted on the Internet, which includes blocking websites that publish political analyses or studies classified by the Government to be anti-government or causing trouble.

The accusations levelled by the authorities against the citizens and residents who are arrested because of their opinions vary from public defamation, insulting or outraging public decency, or what might be considered inconsistent with the traditions and customs of society, as well as stirring up public opinion, disturbing public order or violating public morals.

The Omani Penal Code deals well clearly and strictly with regard to confronting hate speech and incitement to violence, and the application of the law in this aspect is strict to everyone, giving a high sense of coexistence and protection.



State of Qatar

Qatar declined on this scale (4 scores) due to severe judicial sentences (life imprisonment) for citizens who led protests against the Election Law.

While Qatar has advanced on the Reporters Without Borders index (9 ranks) to 119 (first in the Gulf), the State faces criticism from human rights organisations due to pressure and judicial trials affecting activists, as the State allows media institutions within it to address the Arab and international situation with a high ceiling of freedoms, which is not notes on local issues.

Local media do not appear to be independent, and in accordance with the law, establishing a newspaper requires approval from the Minister of Information. A number harassment and targeting cases of citizens and residents for expressing their opinions have been documented.

The authorities monitor the Internet using a set of laws, including the Anti-Cybercrime Law issued in 2014, which received widespread criticism from international human rights organisations. Freedom of opinion and expression

is also subject to monitoring, as Article 19 of the Law on Combating Terrorism grants the authorities broad powers to conduct surveillance by any means for a period of 90 days before any judicial review. The Anti-Cybercrime Law includes similar provisions that are broad and vague, as it permits, for example, the imprisonment of anyone for setting up or running a website that publishes “fake news, with the intent to endanger the safety of the State, its public order, its internal or external security”.

There are laws that criminalise incitement to hatred and violence. Qatar acceded to a number of international conventions related to confronting racial discrimination, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965, the International Convention for the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid of 1973, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), but the State has not yet enacted clear laws in this context. It is commonplace to monitor inflammatory and racist speech against expatriate workers.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has witnessed an advancement (4 scores) on this scale due to the improvement of State measures in the face of hate speech and incitement to violence. Nevertheless, the State continued to adopt strict policies towards freedom of opinion and expression.

According to Reporters Without Borders, press freedom in Saudi Arabia in 2022 witnessed a slight improvement (ranked 166 out of 180), jumping up 4 places from the previous year. Freedom House ranked Saudi Arabia in the Freedom Index for the year 2021/2022 below last.

Despite the release of some journalists and activists this year, dozens of citizens are subject to closed trials related to exercising freedom of opinion and expression and criticising the authorities, and many of them are serving prison sentences. Some prisoners (according to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch) are also subjected to systematic torture.

Cases of arrests and trials of foreign journalists and activists on charges of "atheism and exposure to religious symbols" were monitored.

The International Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) classified Saudi Arabia as one of the world's most violating countries for journalists and freedom of expression, according to a statement in December 2021.

The Saudi Committee ranked eighth globally in the detention of journalists, with 14 journalists detained.

There is no free media in Saudi Arabia and journalists and activists are subject to strict surveillance.

Penal, anti-terrorism and anti-cybercrime laws provide for imprisonment or suspension of journalists for any criticism in any matter of State affairs, including religious matters. The accusations vary from blasphemy, harming religion, threatening national unity, or harming the image of the King and the State.

Saudi Arabia does not allow any internal criticism of its foreign policies, and is accused of spying on its citizens inside and outside the country.

The state exercises strict control over the press, and most media institutions are owned by those close to the ruling establishment. The ban on issuing licences for newspaper establishments has also been documented.

Although the Press and Publications Law provides for the right to practice "objective and constructive criticism aimed at the public interest", the law grants the institution of government immunity from any criticism.

Saudi authorities use the Cybercrime Law to silence dissidents, journalists, and human rights defenders on a large scale and block their websites. The State justifies the reasons for blocking websites on the pretext of violating the Saudi State's religious belief and criticising the State's foreign or internal policies.

Numerous cases of hate speech and incitement on sectarian grounds are documented, often against Shia, Ismailis and Sufis. The edicts (fatwas) of takfir (declaring that a fellow Muslim is guilty of apostasy) are still rife on the website of the Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Ifta, which is an official Government agency.



3.7

Freedom of Opinion and Expression



مؤشر المشاركة السياسية
في دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي
Political Participation Index
in the GCC States 2022



United Arab Emirates

The UAE continues to restrict freedom of opinion and expression, and individuals and institutions adopt high levels of self-censorship. The penal code criminalises insulting the rulers of the Emirates or criticising the ruling families of the seven emirates and the governments of friendly countries. The UAE is accused of spying on individuals, activists and politicians inside and outside the country. The State controls electronic censorship over journalists and civil society activists through the Cybercrime Law. They are subject to defamation and judicial charges that include insulting the State or publishing false information. According to Reporters Without Borders, the country retreated to rank (138) on the organisation's index (2022).

Media institutions are not independent from State policies, and in accordance with the law, any violation is subject to prosecution or suspension of activity. While the law permits anyone to establish media institutions, it sets exaggerated restrictions and conditions linked to security approvals. There is a vast number of private media organisations that operate only in the entertainment and commercial fields.

There is a well-established legal system to prosecute any criticism of the State, including what is general, such as the UAE Press and Publications Law, and the UAE Penal Code, and what is special, such as the Law on Combating Cybercrimes. These laws generally clarify practices that require arrest, detention, or banning an activity.

The State blocks websites that publish political analyses or studies that may be classified as violating State policies. There are societal and legal restrictions and broad discretionary powers for law enforcement authorities such as the public prosecution, police and security agencies to interpret what is said, written, or published, which makes freedom of opinion restricted.

In a number of articles, UAE laws criminalise incitement to hatred, division, or anything that would harm national unity or social peace. If religion, religious institutions, or any public institutions or civil organisations are used for these purposes, this is considered a compounding circumstance to double the penalty. Despite this, cyberspace is awash with sectarian posts from some of the tweeters who are not subject to any legal prosecution.



Presentation of Results

3.8 Scale 8: Representation of Groups and Minorities

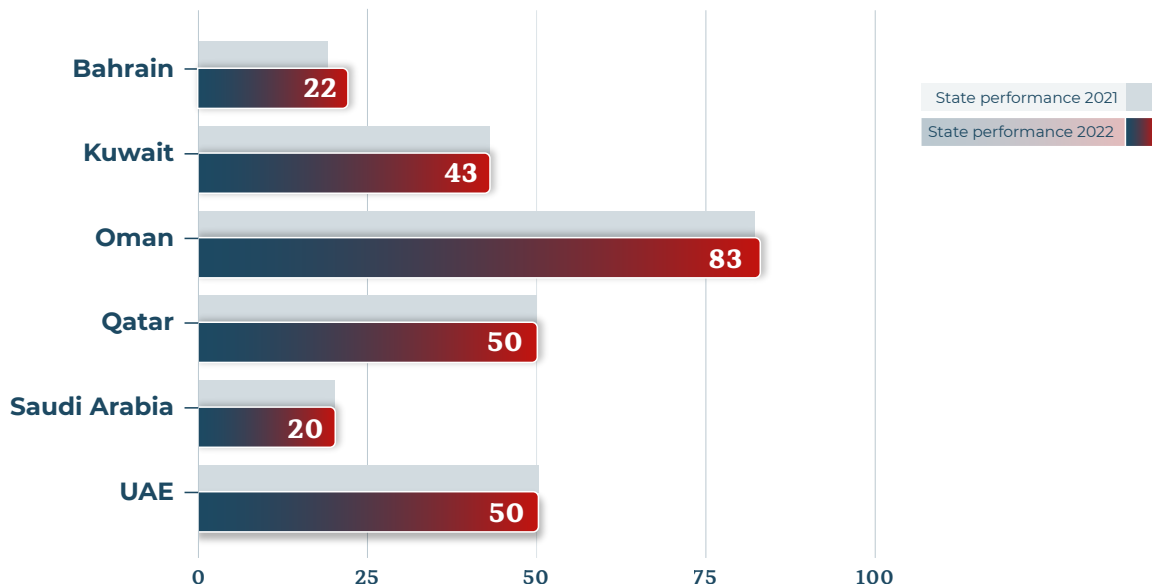


Figure 29: Representation of Groups and Minorities Scale Results

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
Equality: ensuring the equal right of all citizens to full citizenship 40 points	12	15	35	21	7	20
Discrimination: ensuring that there is no discrimination on political, religious, cultural, regional, ethnic, or class grounds 40 points	5	20	30	19	6	20
Discrimination: ensuring that there is no discrimination on political, religious, cultural, regional, ethnic, or class grounds 40 points	5	8	18	10	7	10
Total 100 Points	22	43	83	50	20	50

Table 8: Results / Eighth Scale – Representation of Groups and Minorities Scale Scores

Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain advanced 3 scores on this scale due to the government formation (June 2022), which included a significant representation of the Shiite community compared to previous governments. Notwithstanding, human rights bodies and organisations state “the existence of sectarian and ethnic policies” (the Periodic Review of Human Rights, reports by the US and British State Departments). The government is accused of pursuing (sectarian, ethnic, racial and tribal) discriminatory policies in appointments to senior posts, sovereign ministries, electoral districts, judicial appointments, wealth distribution, housing services, and scholarships.

The Constitution provides for equality between citizens. Bahrain has also ratified international conventions on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

against Women, and acceded the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights. Notwithstanding, there are wide criticisms related to the Bahraini government's commitment to implementing and adhering to these legislation and laws.

There is no law criminalising discrimination in Bahrain, and the Government has previously rejected a proposal submitted to the Council of Representatives to this effect.

State institutions do not reflect a representation commensurate with the size of groups and minorities in the country, and there are certain groups whose dominance of some or all of the State's institutions is proportionally higher than their actual size in society.

The majority of Bahrainis are not represented in State institutions in proportion to their size in society.

State of Kuwait

There was no sign of finding a solution to the file of the “Bidoon” and “illegal residents” in Kuwait, where more than 100,000 individuals suffer from difficulties in living and integrating into society.

According to Human Rights Watch, authorities summoned 19 Bidoon activists for interrogation because of their participation in weekly gatherings.

The Bidoon issue represents the harshest manifestations of discrimination in the state. This marginalised minority group is considered the most important in Kuwait, as it is deprived of citizenship rights, in addition to having positions and representation in the State.

The Constitution of Kuwait states the principle of equality: Article (7) stipulates that “justice, liberty, and equality are the pillars of society; co-operation and mutual help are the firmest bonds between citizens”. Only an “original” Kuwaiti

citizen is eligible to run for office, that is, to be a member of the families who settled in Kuwait before 1920. As for Kuwaitis who obtain citizenship under other articles (such as non-Kuwaiti women married to Kuwaitis or who acquired citizenship because of their great services to Kuwait), they cannot vote in the elections except after twenty years from the acquisition of citizenship.

It is noted that the government formation, leadership positions and the judiciary do not reflect representation that is commensurate with the diversity and size of groups and minorities in Kuwait.

There is no clear law in Kuwait that criminalises discrimination, but in 2021, a Law on the Protection of National Unity and Rejection of Hate was enacted, yet it does not seem sufficient to address the gaps and manifestations of discrimination in the State.





Sultanate of Oman

The Sultanate's Basic Law states that justice, equality and the Shura are the basis for governance, and it prohibits "discrimination between citizens on the grounds of gender, origin, colour, language, religion, sect, domicile or social status". However, there is no national law criminalising discrimination.

The Sultanate ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, these conventions have not been translated into laws, regulations or practices that criminalise discriminatory practices.

There are special laws, such as the Civil Service Law and the Labour Law, which prohibit discrimination between equally qualified citizens in obtaining a job being applied for, but such these laws do not criminalise such discriminatory practices.

Some court cases were filed against Government bodies based on the Civil Service Law to invalidate appointment decisions. Cases have also been filed against some Government agencies related to discrimination between males and females.

Citizens are treated equally, but there are exceptions that may be due to individual practices – tribal or traditional – that do not appear to be systematic.

It was recently noted that the appointments by Royal Decrees included Omanis of Indian origins. The Oman Investment Authority has also amended the membership of some (semi-governmental) corporate boards to promote ethnic diversity among its members.

The manifestations of discrimination appear to be limited because the Omani Penal Code criminalises insulting religions (Articles 269 and 273). Discrimination is also interpreted as inciting religious, sectarian or tribal strife, which is also criminalised under the Omani Penal Code.

The most visible example of discrimination in Oman is the qualification for jobs advertised in entities that are not subject to central or unified operation, such as state-owned companies, regulatory bodies, and public bodies established for special purposes. There are also manifestations of discrimination and social pressure against Omani women married to non-Omanis.

In addition, there is discrimination in interpreting competency requirements contained in the Personal Status Law, and there are cases where the Supreme Court adopted the interpretation of the Court of First Instance or the Appeals Court regarding the ethnic or class dimension (social status) as one of the interpretations of competency requirement, which was subsequently used as the basis to annul marriage contracts.



State of Qatar

The Nationality Law (2005) reduces the rights of (equality) and (proportional representation) of social components of Qataris. Although the constitution stipulates that "citizens are equal in public rights and duties and there is no discrimination between them on the grounds of gender, origin, language, or religion", the Nationality Law prohibits Qatari citizens "naturalized" after 1930 from the right to run for office or vote.

Pursuant to the effects of the law, Qatari citizenship is divided into "native" citizens and others, which indicates the existence of social stratification, where participation in elections and housing services are on top of the issues subjected to discrimination

Despite Qatar's accession to the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 1976, country lacks any special legislation that criminalises or prosecutes acts of racial discrimination and racial segregation that may be committed by individual, groups or organisation.

It seems difficult to understand the distribution of formations in State institutions and to ensure fairness, especially in the absence of accurate statistics. There are allegations that tribes that are closer to the ruling family have a greater share in the State's institutions, from highest Government positions to the rest of civil, security and military institutions, as well as minorities with limited representation.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

As per the US State Department's Report on Religious Freedoms (June 2022), Saudi Arabia has been designated a "Country of Particular Concern" since 2004 due to its involvement in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom.

The British Foreign Office (January 2022) stated that Saudi Arabia "remains a priority" in the human rights file, especially due to the application of the capital penalty, restrictions imposed on women's rights and discrimination in the distribution of wealth and services.

There are no constitutional or legal provisions guaranteeing equal representation among the components of society. Addressing the concepts of citizenship and national unity is not based on any legal background.

In contrast, there are government positions and rhetoric based on Islamic law, and the principle that discrimination is forbidden in Islam.

Article (12) of the Basic Law of Governance states that "Promoting national unity is a duty, and the State shall prevent whatever leads to disunity, sedition and division". However, this article is rarely applied in documented cases of discrimination in the country on sectarian, tribal, or regional grounds. In its report 2022, Human Rights Watch states that Saudi Arabia does not allow followers of religions

other than Islam to practice their rituals in public places, and systematically discriminates against Muslim religious minorities, especially Twelver Shiites and Ismailis, including discrimination in government education, the judiciary, religious freedom, and employment.

Despite steps to reduce hate speech and intolerance contained in some religious school textbooks during 2021, current provisions retain content that degrades practices associated with Shiite and Sufi Muslims.

The Religious Freedom Report prepared by the US State Department for the year 2021 monitored many cases of hate speech and bullying on an ideological basis. At the same time, the report spoke of a "relative improvement" in removing passages from school textbooks that incite hatred and violence against other religions (Christianity and Judaism).

There is no law criminalising discrimination, and Saudi Arabia has entered many reservations to international covenants and treaties it has signed, some of which relate to women's rights of citizenship (including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) and others about other rights that the State considers in violation of the provisions of Sharia (including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racism).



United Arab Emirates

Articles (14 & 25) of the Constitution provide for the right to "equality, social justice, ensuring safety and security and equality of opportunity for all citizens shall be the pillars of the Society", and that "all persons are equal before the law, without distinction between citizens of the Union regarding race, nationality, religious belief or social status". Nevertheless, there is implicit discrimination in enjoying some rights or preferential treatment related to whether a citizen's nationality is acquired by law, naturalisation, or dependency in accordance with the provisions of the law (the UAE Nationality Law). Discrimination in this regard includes denying Emirati citizens by naturalization or dependency from running for office or voting in elections and citizenship revocation in the event of absence from the country for two years.

In 2015, a decree-law was issued to combat discrimination and hatred, but it does not adequately define discrimination and its various forms. There are also special laws such as labour laws that prohibit discrimination between equally qualified citizens in obtaining a job being applied for or failure to treat them equally, but these laws that do not criminalise discrimination. In the event a violation of this

prohibition occurs, no criminal or freedom-depriving penalty is imposed. In such cases, the only action taken is to nullify the decision, restore the rights, and provide compensation for material and psychological harm suffered in such cases.

The enforcement of international conventions ratified by the UAE, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1974) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2004), requires the State to amend national laws, issue legal tools, or take appropriate administrative measures.

Officially, there are no specific ratios or preferential criteria that give one class or group of people priority or accessibility to leadership and sensitive positions in State institutions. Despite this, international human rights organisations (Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch) confirm that citizens have been subjected to discrimination related to rights due to their political stances, in addition to some tribal considerations, as most sensitive positions in the State are held by members of specific tribes falling under tribal alliances that have accompanied the establishment of the Emirates.

Presentation of Results

3.9 Scale 9: Foreign Communities

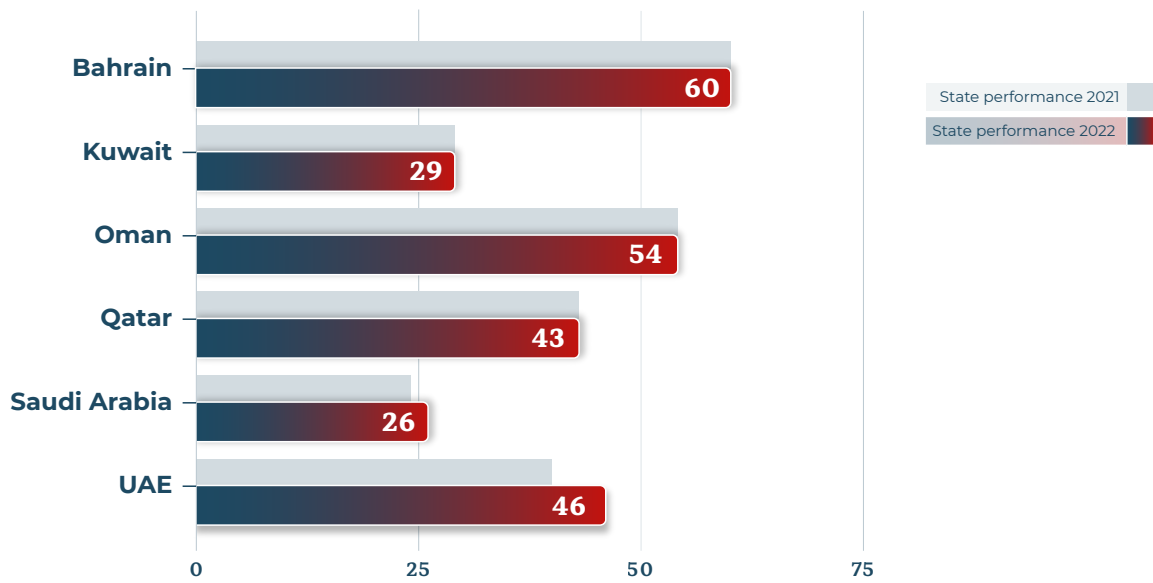


Figure 30: Foreign Communities Scale Results

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
Stable and effective residency: the existence of regulations that allow expatriates to have fair and clear residency that guarantees rights, including participating in the election of municipal institutions 35 points	30	10	22	23	17	24
Union / professional representation: membership, election, candidacy and protection of interests 20 points	10	11	12	2	4	2
Societal activities: the right of communities to organize activities and establish associations and clubs 20 points	20	8	20	18	5	20
Total 75 Points	60	29	54	43	26	46

Table 9: Results / Ninth Scale – Foreign Communities Scale Scores

Kingdom of Bahrain

The government enhanced opportunities for stable residency by promulgating a long-term visa “golden residency” (February 2022), which is given to expatriate workers whose monthly income is above two thousand dinars (about USD 10.600), retirees whose monthly income is above four thousand dinars (about USD 10.600), real-estate owners or talented people, according to government requirements. The government had previously approved “flexible work” permits that give foreigners the right to employment and residency without any need for a sponsor.

Bahrain ratified 10 International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions, five of which are basic. The State has a

distinguished and pioneering record of equitable residency for expatriate and expatriate workers and their families, and rarely faces human rights criticism in this regard.

With regard to participation in municipal elections, foreign residents who own real estate have the right to vote in the elections without standing as a candidate.

The State laws give expatriate workers the right to be a member and vote in union and professional association elections, but they do not allow them to run for office. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development guide, there are dozens of organisations, associations, and clubs for communities.

State of Kuwait

The State of Kuwait acceded to the International Labour Organisation in 1961 and ratified nineteen of its conventions, including seven of the eight fundamental agreements.

Kuwait is facing widespread criticism regarding the rights of expatriate workers (Human Rights Watch). In 2015, Kuwait issued a standard contract for expatriate workers, and in 2016 it allowed some workers to transfer their sponsorship to a new employer after three years of work without any conditions.

However, these reforms do not include migrant domestic male and female workers. A large number of expatriate workers fall prey to residency dealers.

Foreigners do not have the right to vote in municipal elections. State laws allow expatriates to join unions but not the right to run for office, which is restricted to Kuwaiti citizens only. The labour law also allows expatriate workers the right to choose a representative to communicate their opinion to the union's board of directors.

The Law on Clubs and Public Benefit Societies prohibits non-Kuwaitis from establishing any association or club. While it allows them to have “affiliate” membership, it prevents them from registering in the general assembly or running for board of directors. Communities are allowed to organise their national, social, sports and religious events on a small scale.

Sultanate of Oman

Oman has ratified five of the eight fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organisation since acceding the ILO in 1994. In June 2022, the Sultanate also signed with the ILO a Memorandum of Understanding on extending the “Decent Work” programme.

Foreigners residing in the Sultanate of Oman are not permitted to participate in the municipal elections, which are restricted to Omanis.

In 2021, the Omani government abolished the non-objection certificate system, which required expatriate workers to obtain a non-objection certificate from the sponsor before moving to another sponsor.

The current system considers the contract term (two years) sufficient to fulfil the right of the first sponsor, and after that the worker can transfer his sponsorship freely. The Foreigners' Residence Law and its executive bylaws allow non-Omani workers to bring their families or their

dependents within specific rules and conditions, including the minimum wage for the worker who can bring his family.

Sponsors are responsible for ensuring that an expatriate worker and his/her family have access to adequate health care coverage, and there are exceptions depending on the circumstances to take into consideration family and cultural conditions.

Expatriate workers can participate in trade union activities through joining the General Assembly of Trade Unions and participating in all aspects related to the tasks of the General Assembly, but they cannot establish trade unions or run for its administrative body, a right restricted to Omanis.

In coordination with the Ministry of Social Development, members of foreign communities can organise their own social, cultural and sports activities, as well as establish and manage private associations or clubs.

State of Qatar

Despite the package of laws and resolutions made by the Qatari government during the past two years to improve the work environment for expatriate workers, human rights reports indicate that some reforms are “ineffective” and that some workers are “still being exploited”.

The law allows expatriate workers to change their workplace without obtaining the consent of the employer, and establishes for the abolition of the sponsorship system.

The government approves a minimum wage of QAR 1,000 (USD 275), in addition to providing workers with decent housing and food conditions.

The ILO has an office in Doha that monitors the implementation of a technical cooperation programme with the government in order to carry out reforms of work environment.

Foreigners do not participate in the municipal council election. The Law No. (12) of 2004 on Private Associations and Foundations, under which professional associations operate, does not permit expatriate workers to join or run as candidates except in exceptional cases.

There are clubs for some Arab and foreign communities, and allows communities to establish special schools for them.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Despite the positive changes in labour laws during the period 2021/2022, the State lacks regulations that allow expatriates to enjoy fair residence, and the rights and privileges it entails, including participation in public life and municipal elections. The “initiative for improving contractual relationship” includes a number of policies and controls, including approving the employment contract system between the employer and the expatriate, which replaced the sponsorship system. The initiative does not include domestic, herding, guarding, and private transport workers, who are considered the most vulnerable groups. The government platform “Qiwa” seeks to improve working conditions, guarantee the rights of expatriate workers, reduce labour disputes, and ensure job mobility.

The Saudi Labour Law provides for the right of expatriate workers to leave, profits, end-of-service gratuity, prohibiting forced labour and prohibiting all that prejudices their dignity and discrimination on religious, racial or ethnic grounds. Saudi Arabia acceded the International Labour Organisation in 1976 and ratified 16 conventions, including 6 fundamental ones.

In April 2022, the 2014 Protocol supplementing Convention No. (29) of 1930 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on Forced Labour, which protects workers

from fraudulent and abusive employment practices and promotes preventive measures, protection, compensation and elimination of all forms of forced labour.

On 7 December 2020, Saudi Arabia filed documents of ratification of the Convention No. (95) of 1949 on the Protection of Wages and the Convention No. (120) of 1964 on Health Rules in Commerce and Offices, which were placed in the category of guarantees to protect the rights and welfare of workers.

Expatriates face persecution, raids of their residence places and mass forced deportations without fair trials or a guarantee of their material rights.

Saudi laws do not provide for the right of expatriate workers to establish social or sports clubs or even to organise them. Such activities remain limited and are restricted to closed labour complexes and are based on agreement between workers and employers rather than a clear and published legal code.

It is worth noting that non-Muslim expatriates do not have the right to freely practice their religious rituals except on a small scale; and in the event expatriates practice worship in private, they are subjected to arrest, imprisonment or deportation.



United Arab Emirates

The UAE advanced on this scale (6 scores) in accordance with the legislation approved by the State during the past years, which allows migrant workers to obtain the benefits of obtaining green residency (5 years) and golden residency (10 years) without the need for a guarantor or sponsor, as per specific requirements and for specific categories. Nevertheless, criticism of the labour system, the sponsorship system, and the consequent restrictions on the movement of expatriate workers continue.

Human rights organisations continue to document cases of forced deportation of expatriate workers without guaranteeing their legal rights.

Expatriate residents, whether employees, investors or business owners, may sponsor immediate family members and request a residence visa for them in the UAE.

There are no trade unions in the Emirates, which means citizens and expatriate workers are not permitted to defend their rights and represent their interests.

Expatriate businessmen can run in the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry elections.

As for professional associations, this right is limited to citizens only.

Expatriates may become members and participate in voting and running for office to the boards of some of these associations.

Members of expatriate communities can organise their own social, cultural and sports activities, or establish and manage their own societies or clubs, subject to the approval and supervision of the Ministry of Community Development.



Presentation of Results

3.10 Scale 10: Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions

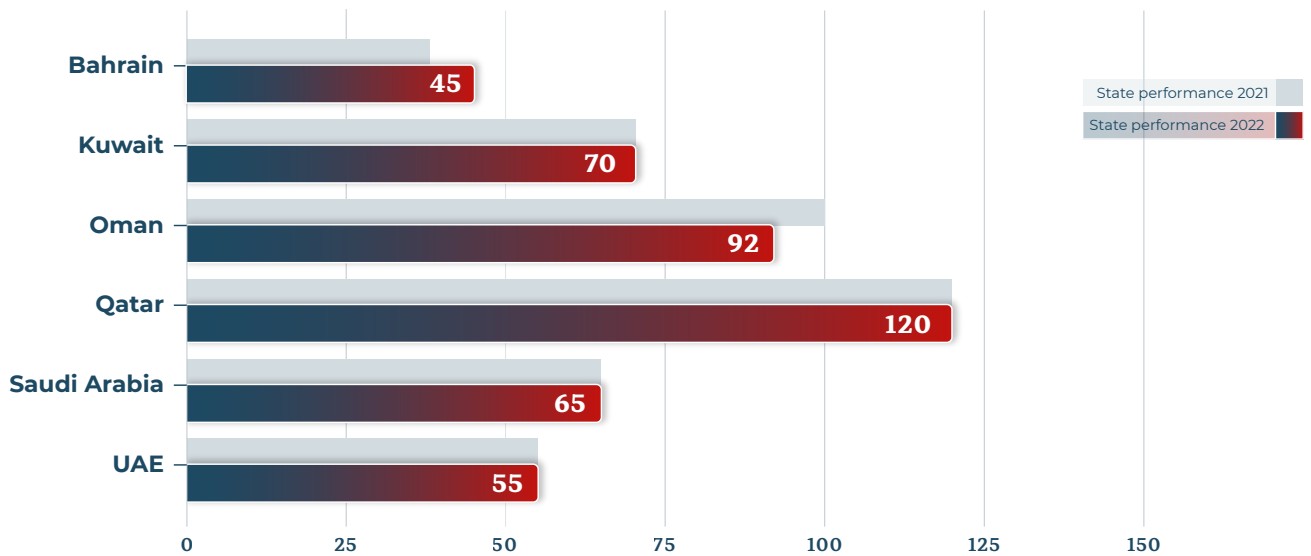


Figure 31: Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions Scale Results

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
Influence of the royal families: representation of royal family members in higher positions: government: ministries and authorities / judicial / security and military institutions. 100 points	28	50	55	80	35	35
Localization of positions: ability and priority for citizens to access leadership and sensitive positions in the judicial, security and military bodies. 50 points	17	20	37	40	30	20
Total 150 Points	45	70	92	120	65	55

Table 10: Results / Tenth Scale – Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions Scale Scores



Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain advanced by 7 scores on this scale, Bahrain advanced by 7 degrees in this scale, as the representation of members of the ruling family in the government formation (June 2022) was noticeably reduced to the prime minister, his deputy, and the ministers of interior and finance, and citizens hold the portfolios of the ministries of foreign affairs, justice and defence affairs.

Nevertheless, in addition to the ruling family's dominance over the State supreme bodies and councils, appointments of family members to high military and governmental positions (undersecretaries/general directors) were observed. In addition, in judiciary institutions, family members constitute a balanced proportion with the

presence of the rest of the societal components in unequal proportions.

It can be said that a third of the leadership and high-ranking positions in the State belong to members of the ruling family, and as it is observed that there are recruitment policies that tend to depend on how close to the royal family one is, and this applies to specific tribes and families that enjoy preferential advantages over the rest of the citizens.

There are existing policies favouring reliance on foreigners in the military and security services due to discriminatory policies against Shia citizens (reports of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, reports of the US State Department, and the periodic review of the Human Rights Council).



State of Kuwait

Members of the ruling family in Kuwait are predominant in sovereign and other high-ranking positions in the State.

The ruling family does not have a monopoly over all important positions in Government, including the ministries of finance and justice, as ministers from outside the family have been appointed to these positions. In 2019, Kuwait witnessed for the first time the appointment of a minister who did not affiliate to the ruling family in the position of Minister of Interior. However, the subsequent government

formations witnessed the return back of family sons to this position.

No presence of the ruling family is noticed in the judiciary compared to the significant presence in the security and military institutions. It should be noted that only original Kuwaiti nationals are permitted to occupy high positions in these bodies as well.

In general, Kuwait allows citizens to take positions in the judicial, security, and military institutions.



Sultanate of Oman

Oman continued its decline (8 scores) on this scale, with the continuation of appointments from within the Sultan's family, including the positions of Deputy Prime Minister, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Interior Affairs, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, President of Sultan Qaboos University, President of the Supreme Court and some governor positions.

It is noticed that members of the ruling family are present in some senior and academic positions. As for the higher military positions – other than the position of the Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs – all are occupied by citizens who do not belong to the ruling family.

There are no specific ratios or preferential treatment criteria that give one category of people priority or accessibility in leadership and sensitive positions in the

judicial, security and military bodies. It can be seen that there is a rotation between different tribes or representatives of interests in leadership and sensitive positions.

Except for the positions of the President of the Supreme Judicial Council and the Vice-President of the Supreme Court, there is no observable presence of the ruling family members in the judicial institutions.

As for the senior positions in the security and military agencies (national security and intelligence institutions), there are some members of the ruling family by virtue of their military or administrative hierarchy, but there is no evidence of preferential treatment.

It is reassuring that, in principle and the practice, access to jobs in the judicial, security and military institutions in origin is open to everyone without discrimination.



State of Qatar

The presence of members of the Qatari ruling family in the Council of Ministers is restricted to the positions of Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Qataris from other families may occupy senior and leadership positions, although it is noticeable that specific family names are appointed in these positions repeatedly.

The ruling family does not have a monopoly over judicial positions, nor does the Constitution stipulate that the Emir heads the judiciary, which is something that is unique to

Qatar compared to the rest of the Gulf countries.

The Supreme Commander of the army is the Emir of the State, but most military positions in the army are open to citizens, who are allowed to assume judicial and military positions, although the priority is for the tribes and families that are close to the ruling family.

It is also worth noting that Qatar allows expatriates to work in its military and security institutions.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The ruling family monopolises most sovereign ministerial positions. These include the Ministry of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Defence, National Guard, and the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, with the exception of the Ministry of Finance.

The Crown Prince oversees a number of bodies: Economic and Development Affairs Council, Political and Security Affairs Council, Supreme Council for Saudi Aramco, General Investment Authority, Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption, and National Risk Assessment Unit.

The ruling family princes control the positions of regional princes in the kingdom, and most of the military institutions are headed by princes.

There is no indication of any presence of members of the ruling family in the judiciary, and foreigners do not assume any positions within the judicial institutions. Citizens can assume judicial, security and military jobs, but employment is subject to strict criteria determined by how close to the ruling family one is. There also seem to be regional and sectarian norms and influences involving access to public positions in the State.



United Arab Emirates

Members of the ruling families in each emirate monopolise many sovereign ministerial and higher executive positions, but at the federation level, it seems possible for citizens to reach some important ministries, such as the economy, education and health. Members of the ruling families, however, retain the sovereign ministries such as foreign affairs, security, defence and the interior.

Members of the ruling families are predominant in higher positions of the State, but it is possible to note political and tribal balances in sovereign and military portfolios. As for

other service ministries, most occupants are citizens. There is a core of tribes and families linked to the ruling families that seem to have a monopoly over a part or share in the structures and positions of the State.

Judges are often from outside the ruling families. However, tribal and family connections play a role in these appointments.

Members of the ruling families and tribal representatives have ample access to leading positions in security and military services.



Methodology and Adoption of Scales

This study has been prepared for three years by a team of researchers from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and specialists in the study of the Gulf region, specifically in the fields of political sciences and humanities. The index relied on 10 main scales to measure the level of “Political Participation” in the research countries. Each “scale” includes a set of “elements” and then “details” that are evaluated and researched.

Based on the results of the two previous editions, the researchers proceeded to evaluate, explain, and explicate the circumstances of each country under study in terms of scales, elements and details, through monitoring forms used as a unified guide to track cases of participation, disruption, obstruction or absence, in addition to monitoring the variables which have occurred until mid-2022.

Like the two previous editions, this third edition relies on the ten scales that consist of sub-elements that have been adopted as basic components for weighing each scale and determining its coherence to infer the participation status. Each item is divided into details, each of which has weights whose final scores are determined based on reading the data and observing phenomenon and events. The areas of the scales, their topics and the distribution of scores over them were adopted in the first edition according to the significance of each scale, the extent of its interaction and its impact on the nature of the existing political systems in the six countries and the social conditions therein.

Weights were also distributed on the scales on the basis of adopting (1,000) scores as a hypothetical end result for the ideal state in which political participation is most effective and included in all fields and sectors. Similarly, the scores on each scale were similarly distributed among the elements in each scale. It was taken into account that the disparity in the weights and scores of examination should not be big between the various measures and elements in order to avoid linking the final results to signs and factors that dominate everything else, without actually having weight and influence in the cases of the countries under study, which may give the index skewed readings based on a purely distant theoretical diagnosis unrelated to the complex political, social and cultural

structure of these countries.

Researchers relied for their information on several sources, namely official government data, official statements, legislation and laws in force, reports of official and civil institutions, data of international organisations and bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and reports of organisations and committees of the United Nations. Researchers were keen to scrutinise the data to ensure it is valid and realistic so that the results are not biased to what the official narratives may promote in describing a fictitious state of openness and internal participation, or by contrast, what may be raised by non-objective and unscientific political opinions of individuals or parties opposing the ruling authorities.

In addition to evaluating the authorities' performance in legislating, restricting, making available or monopolising the spaces and tools for political participation, the researchers were also interested in noting the desire and potential of local communities to engage in political interaction in the spaces available in a given state and to seek to expand these spaces or develop mechanisms for accessing or working within them.

The results of the third edition (2022) provide a reading of the extent of progress or decline of the six countries in cases of political participation and the nature of the areas in which change has occurred, positively or negatively, between the mid-2021 and the year 2022.

The index lists the countries displaying the results in the alphabetical order of their names in English.

The progress or decline of any country in the final results of the index does not reflect its detailed results in all adopted scales.

Adopted Scales

First scale: Constitutional Life 50 points: It deals with these elements:

Constitutional Authority: Mechanisms for Issuance and Amendment.	10 points
Guaranteeing the right to political participation	15 points
Regulating / restricting laws	15 points
Compliance with the provisions of the Constitution	10 points

Second scale: General Elections 150 points: It deals with these elements:

Electoral Areas (governmental, representative and municipal councils)	20 points
Power of elected institutions (authority / separation of powers / oversight / legislation / accountability / partnership in decision making / powers to dissolve institutions)	50 points
Effectiveness and efficacy of elected institutions	40 points
Mechanism for drafting the electoral system and drawing districts	40 points

Third scale: Political Organizations 100 points: It includes these elements:

Legitimacy of political organizations.	30 points
Availability of opposition tools.	25 points
Safety for political activists.	25 points
Administrative and financial independence.	10 points
Participation in elections on slates.	10 points

Fourth Scale: Civil Society Organisations 100 points: It includes these elements:

Legal environment: guaranteeing the right of individuals and groups to form NGOs and pressure groups.	40 points
Trade unions and professional societies: legislation / union pluralism and trade unions/ availability of union work tools, including the right to strike.	40 points
Institutional independence.	10 points
Restrictions and obstacles.	10 points

Adopted Scales

Fifth Scale: Gender Balance and Youth Engagement 75 points

It includes these elements:

Empowering women: the right to vote / a quota in elected councils / holding leadership and senior positions.	50 points
Youth engagement: voting age / holding senior positions.	25 points

Sixth scale: Transparency 50 points:

It includes these elements:

Information sharing: right to access, circulate and disseminate Information.	25 points
Independent oversight: the actions and performance of the executive, legislative and judicial authorities, sources of wealth, spending of public funds.	25 points

Seventh scale: Freedom of Opinion and Expression 150 points

It includes these elements:

Press freedoms.	30 points
Independence of media institutions.	30 points
Internet Censorship.	30 points
Freedom and safety of individuals to exercise criticism.	30 points
Confronting hate speech and incitement to violence.	30 points

Eighth scale: Representation of Groups and Minorities 100 points

It includes these elements:

Equality: ensuring the equal right of all citizens to full citizenship.	40 points
Discrimination: ensuring that there is no discrimination on political, religious, cultural, regional, ethnic, or class grounds.	40 points
Proportional representation: ensuring proportionate and fair representation of groups and minorities in State institutions.	20 points



Scale Adoption Factors

The scales used in this index were adopted based on several factors, namely:

- In-depth readings in: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights- the United Nations General Assembly – December 10, 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, United Nations General Assembly Resolution – December 16, 1966, and the Covenant International Conference on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “United Nations General Assembly Resolution of 16 December 1966.”
- A comparative study of other indices, including: Freedom House Index, the Arab Democracy Index – (ARAB REFORM INITIATIVE), the World Press Freedom Ranking – Reporters Without Borders, and other international and regional measures.
- The extent of the ability to access information, analyze it and verify its sources.
- The ability to apply and measure these scales – as much as possible – to all countries in accordance to the nature of the systems of government and the structure of the political system.
- Results of the workshops in which a group of experts, academics and other interested people participated, in addition to the technical observations the research working team received from the consultants.



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