



مؤشر المشاركة السياسية في دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي 2023 Political Participation Index In The GCC States 2023



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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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01

INTRODUCTION



After 4 years of monitoring and analyzing the state of political participation in the GCC countries, the fourth edition (2023) of the "Political Participation Index in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCCPPI)" presents the most essential changes and developments in the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

This index provides an annual overview and scientific monitoring of the level of political, social and cultural participation within the Kingdom of Bahrain, State of Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman, State of Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE).

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 their regional neighbourhood.

This index is unique in that it is the first specialised research publication concerned

with measuring the level of "political participation" in the GCC countries. Another unique feature of this 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 influencing State policies, legislation, and all aspects of political and social life in their states.

The index also strives 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 has 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".

02

SUMMARY OF RESULTS





The State of Kuwait has maintained first rank for the fourth year, with a score of 534 out of a total of 1,000 on the GCCPPI. The State of Qatar has maintained the second rank, with a score of 472

The Sultanate of Oman has remained in the third rank with a score of 445. The Kingdom of Bahrain remained in the fourth rank with a score of 433, 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 250.

It is noted that the progress of both Qatar (+19 scores) and Saudi Arabia (+17 scores) is the most prominent compared to the

results of the previous year. Oman has also advanced by 6 scores, while Kuwait and the UAE have remained at the same score. Bahrain was the only state that has witnesses a decline of 5 scores.

Kuwait alone still exceeds the 500-score mark of the total index scores within the last four years, which indicates a state of stagnation in the development of political environments within the GCC countries.

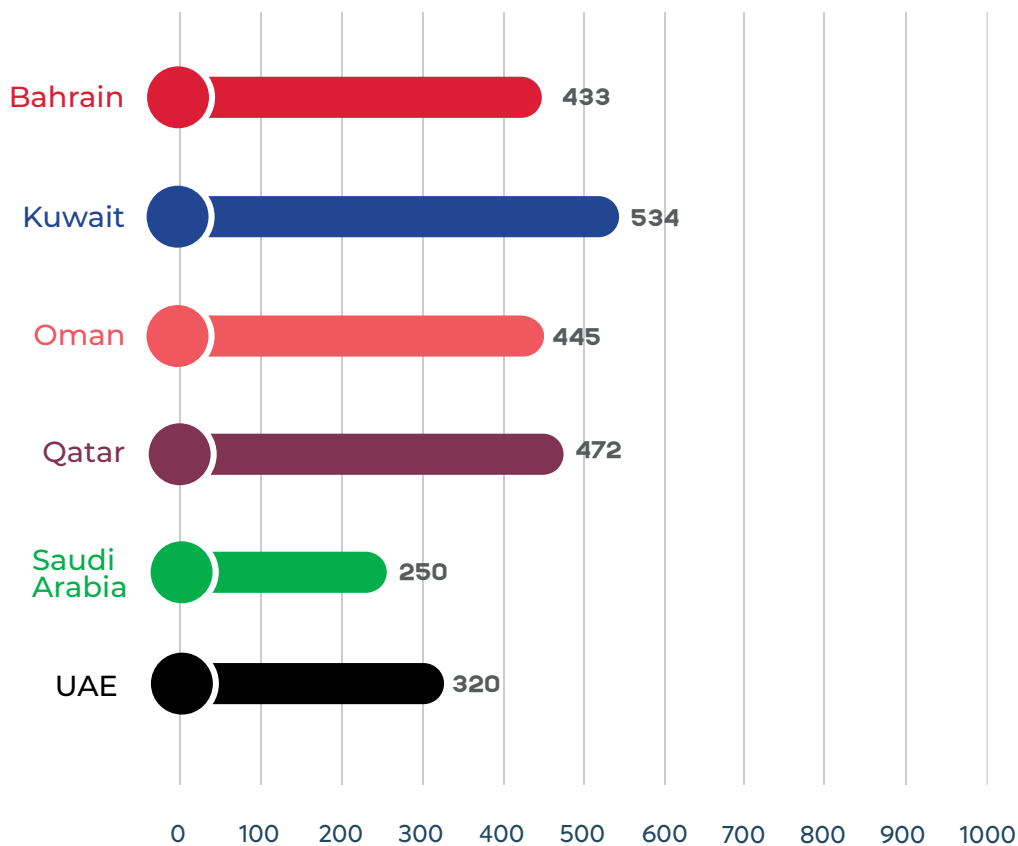


Figure 1: Index overall results 2023

Kuwait alone still exceeds the 500-score mark of the total index scores within the last four years, which indicates a state of stagnation in the development of political environments within the GCC countries.

The index results illustrate the need of the GCC countries to adopt clear national strategies towards expanding frameworks for political participation, 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. In this context, it is noted that the rates of popular participation in the general elections witnesses by some Gulf States during the past year have declined.

The Gulf States lack encouraging climates and safe spaces to consider public affairs issues

and to discuss the promotion of political participation in those countries, especially as the powers of oversight, accountability and inquiry of the legislative or advisory authorities in the Gulf States are often prohibited or restricted. The formation of political organisations, the availability of dissenting tools and ensuring the safety of practitioners represent serious challenges in all GCC countries. With the exception of Bahrain, all Gulf States criminalise the formation of political organisations.

The percentages of members of the ruling families in the Gulf States holding senior positions in government, security and military institutions and the judiciary are high, which limits the opportunities of access for the rest of societal components to these positions.

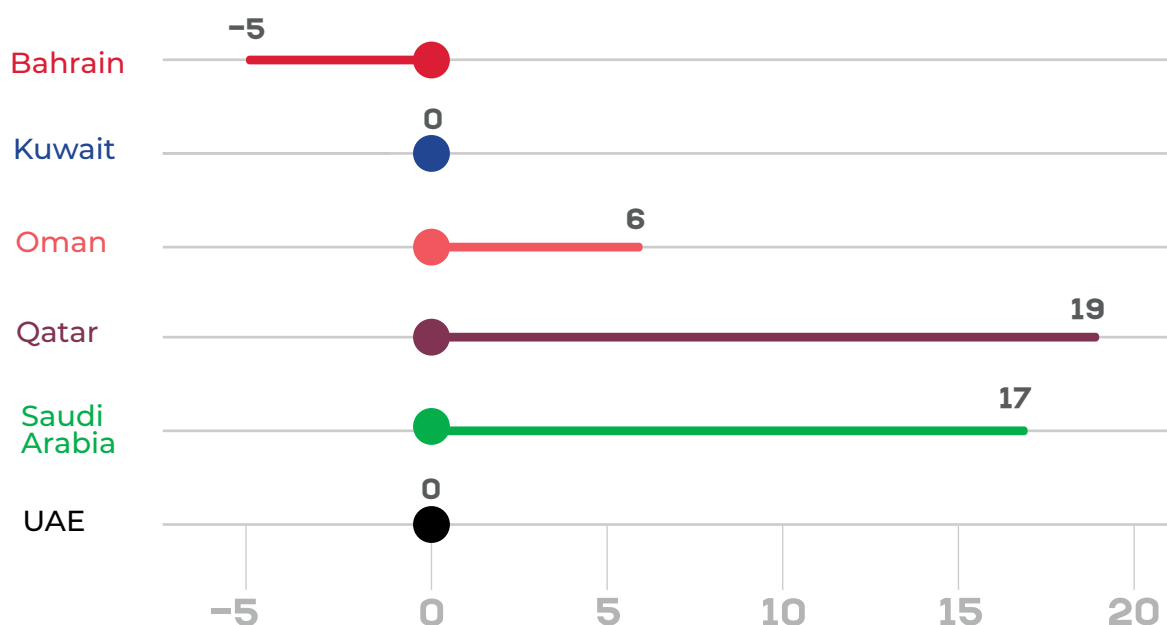


Figure 2: Extent of change in the index between 2022 and 2023

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 their citizens' right to access to senior positions, standing and voting in general elections. These policies are based on barriers and controls defined by the laws of nationality, exercise of political rights and organisation of elections.

The results of most index measures indicate the importance of equal citizenship in the GCC countries, as some practices and laws obstruct

the effective participation and proportional representation of some groups and minorities, with the "stateless people" being one of the most marginalised groups in these countries. Women's empowerment steps are accelerating in Saudi Arabia, while the UAE, Bahrain and Qatar are making progress in improving women's participation and launching initiatives to enhance their opportunities in public affairs and the labour market. In contrast, steps are still slow in the Sultanate of Oman and significantly backward in Kuwait, as the representation of Kuwaiti women in the executive and legislative branches is very modest.



Despite the increasing number of civil society organisations established in the Gulf States, the powers and roles of those institutions are limited and diminished, as the laws regulating the work of those institutions impose rigorous restrictions on funding sources and activities.

Levels of community participation in independent oversight of state institutions' performance and spending remain limited. The GCC countries also continue to provide low levels of freedom of opinion and expression, while some countries impose harsh penalties on opposing or critical opinions.

Bahrain and Oman are distinguished by ensuring 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.

The results of the four editions (2020-2023) of the "Political Participation Index in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCCPPI)" reflect a continuing positive development in Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and while the results show a state of stagnation in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, the results for Bahrain and Oman appear to fluctuate from one year to the next.

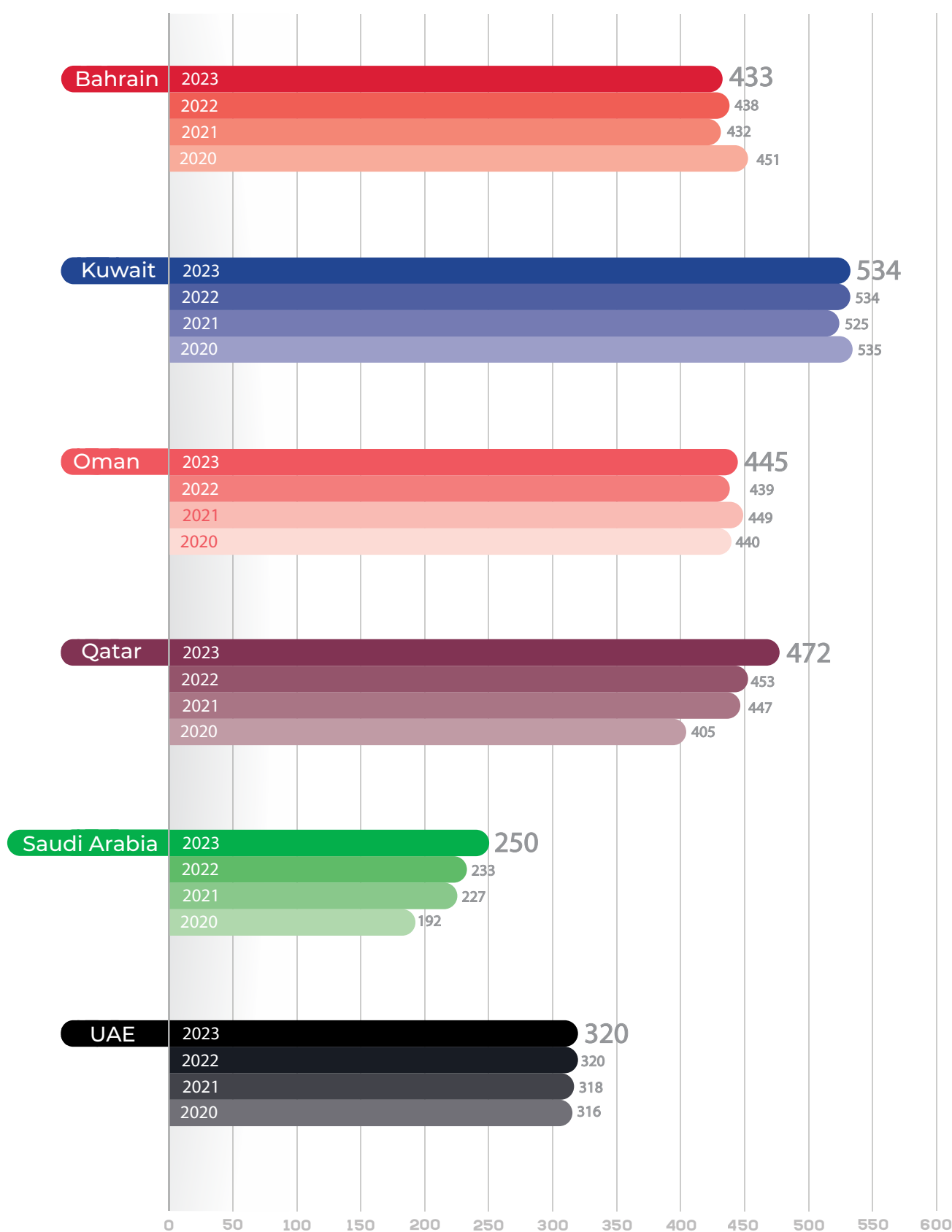
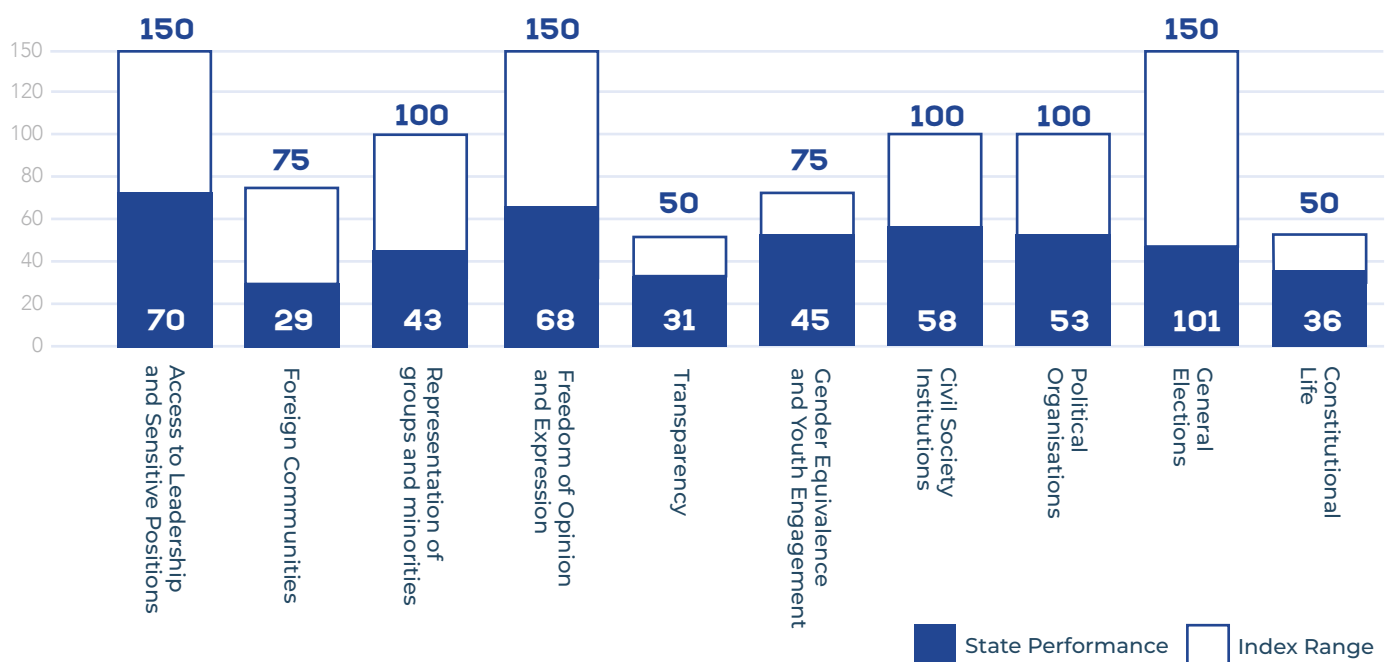


Figure 3: Index overall results 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023



2.1 STATE OF KUWAIT



State Performance Index Range

Figure 4: Kuwait – Scales Results 2023



2.1 STATE OF KUWAIT



Figure 5: How much Kuwait's results have changed between 2022 and 2023

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

This year's results indicate an improvement in Kuwait's performance on the Freedom of Opinion and Expression scale (5 scores), and a decline on the Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement scale with a loss of 7 scores. The General Elections and Political Organisations Scales witnessed a slight increase.

Kuwait ranked top on 5 scales: Constitutional Life, General Elections, Political Organisations, Transparency, and Freedom of Opinion and Expression. Nevertheless, Kuwait ranked low on the Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement scale, and reported low scores on the Foreign Communities scale, where it ranked low equally with Saudi Arabia.

Significant challenges are noted with regard to the empowerment of Kuwaiti women and their quota in the executive and legislative powers, as well as 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.

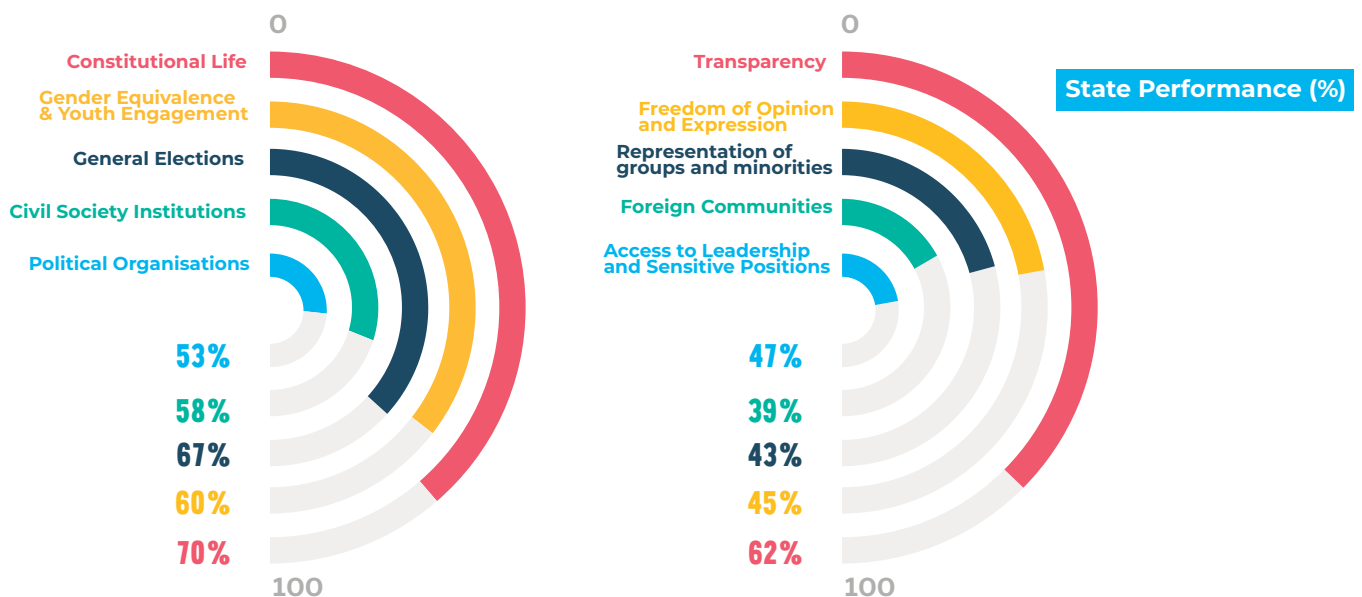


Figure 6: Kuwait – Political Participation 2023



2.2 STATE OF QATAR

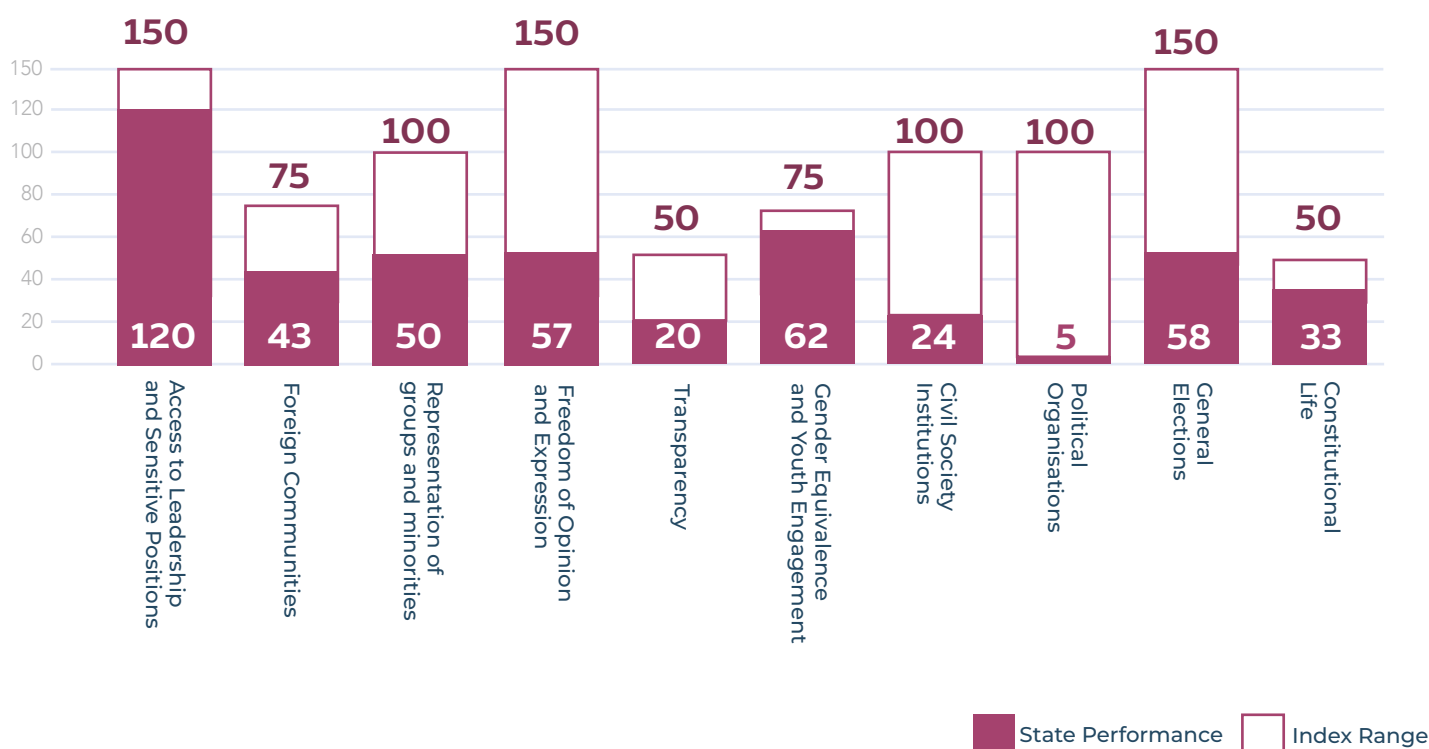




Figure 8: How much Qatar's results have changed between 2022 and 2023

Qatar has achieved the most noteworthy progress among the GCC countries by advancing (19 scores) on the total index scores, and has maintained second rank recording 472 scores, expanding the difference between it and Oman to 27 scores.

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 on the Transparency scale, where it rose by 5 scores, as well as on the Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement scale by (4 scores).

Qatar has improved on the Freedom of Opinion and Expression scale, where it rose by 5 scores, as well as on the Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement scale by (4 scores).

Qatar still scores low on Political Organisations scale (5 out of 100) as well as on Civil Society Institutions scale (24 out of 100).

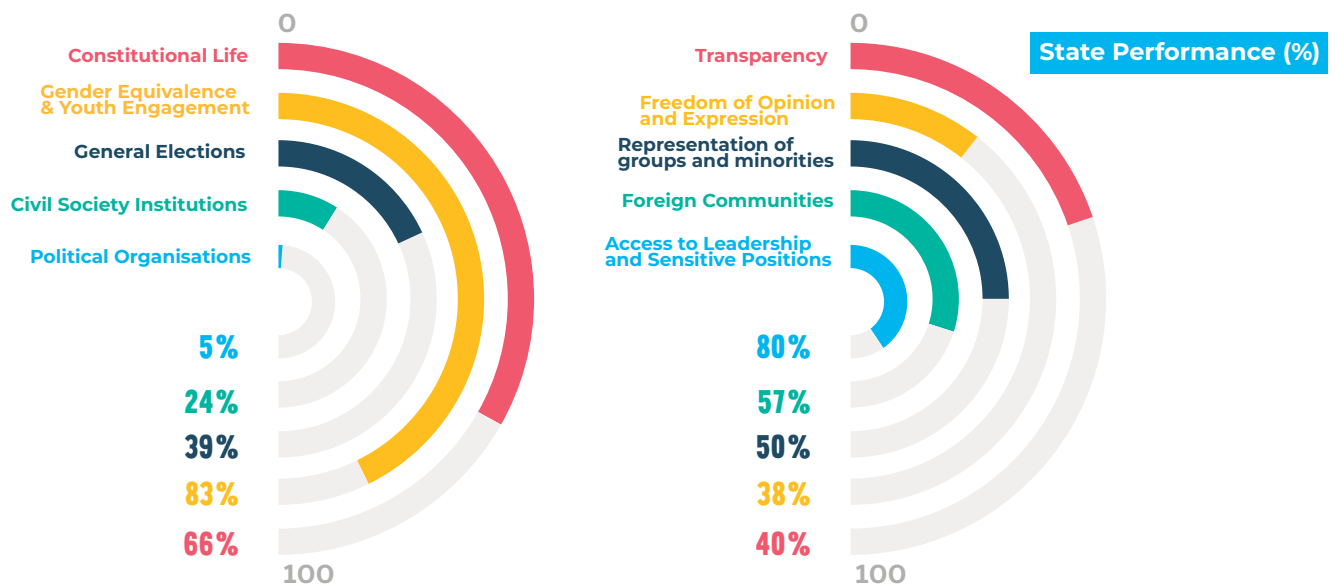
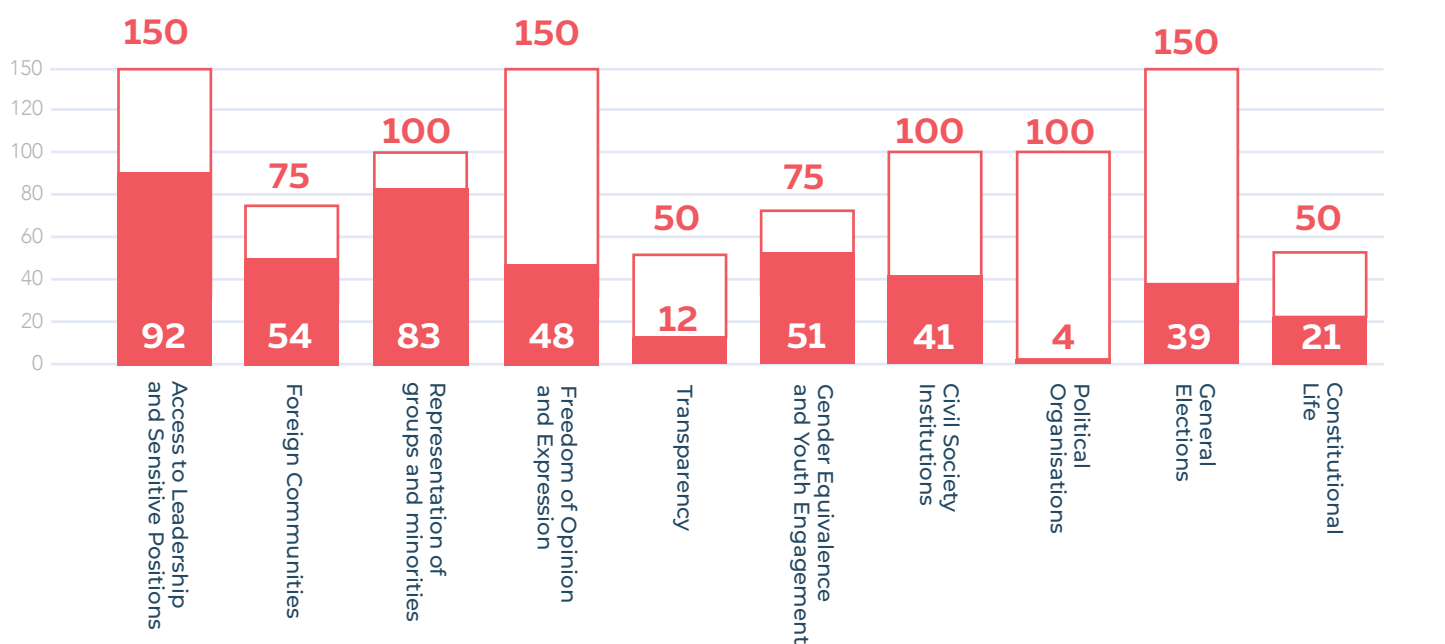


Figure 9: Qatar – Political Participation 2023



2.3 SULTANATE OF OMAN



State Performance Index Range

Figure 10: Oman – Scales Results 2023



2.3 SULTANATE OF OMAN

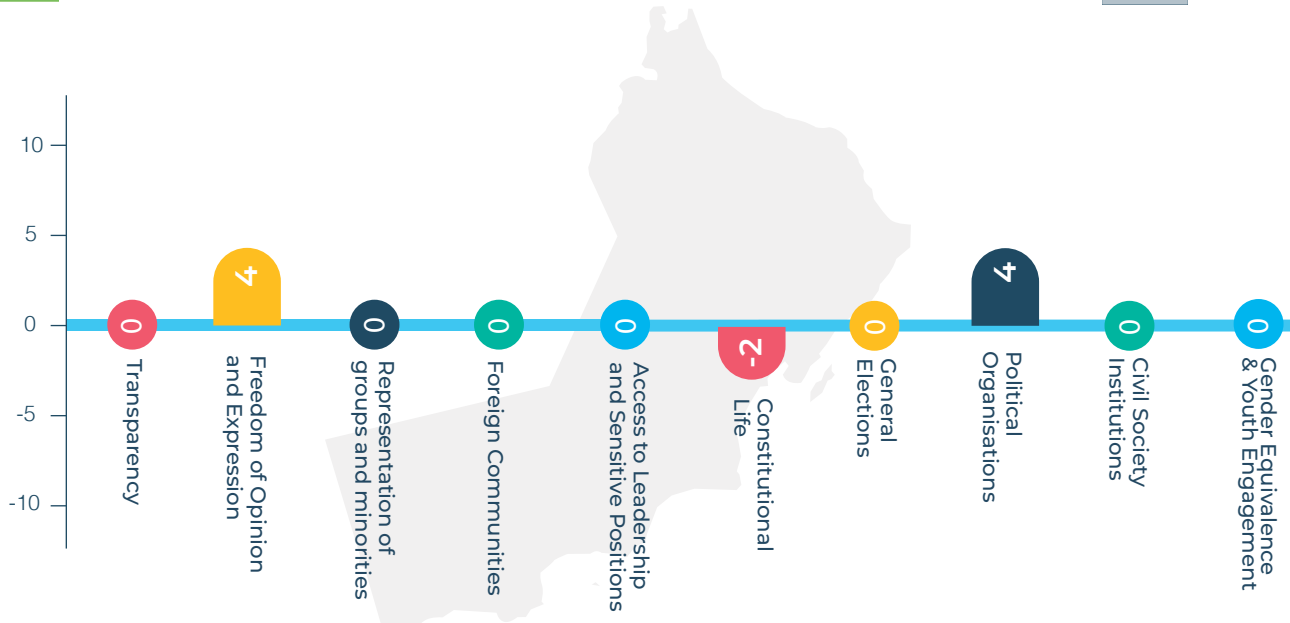


Figure 11: Oman's results change between 2022 and 2023

Oman has ranked third at (445 out of 1,000 scores), ahead of Bahrain by 12 scores.

The Sultanate topped the Representation of Groups and Minorities scale (83 out of 100) for the fourth year in a row, relying on government policies that guarantee equality among its citizens and proportionate representation of the various components of society. Oman ranked second among the GCC countries on the Foreign Communities scale (54 out of 75).

Despite its advance (6 scores) on the index's total scores this year, the country's performance is still disappointing on the Political Organisations scale (4 out of 100), the General Elections scale (35 out of 150) and the Transparency scale (12 out of 50).

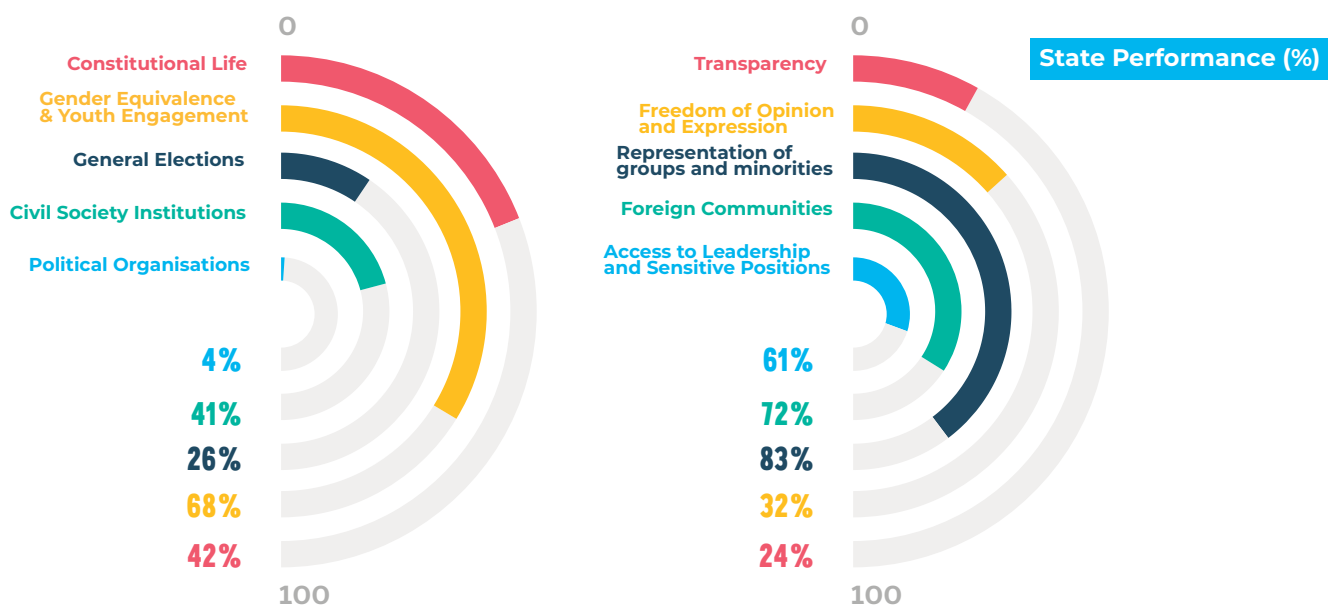
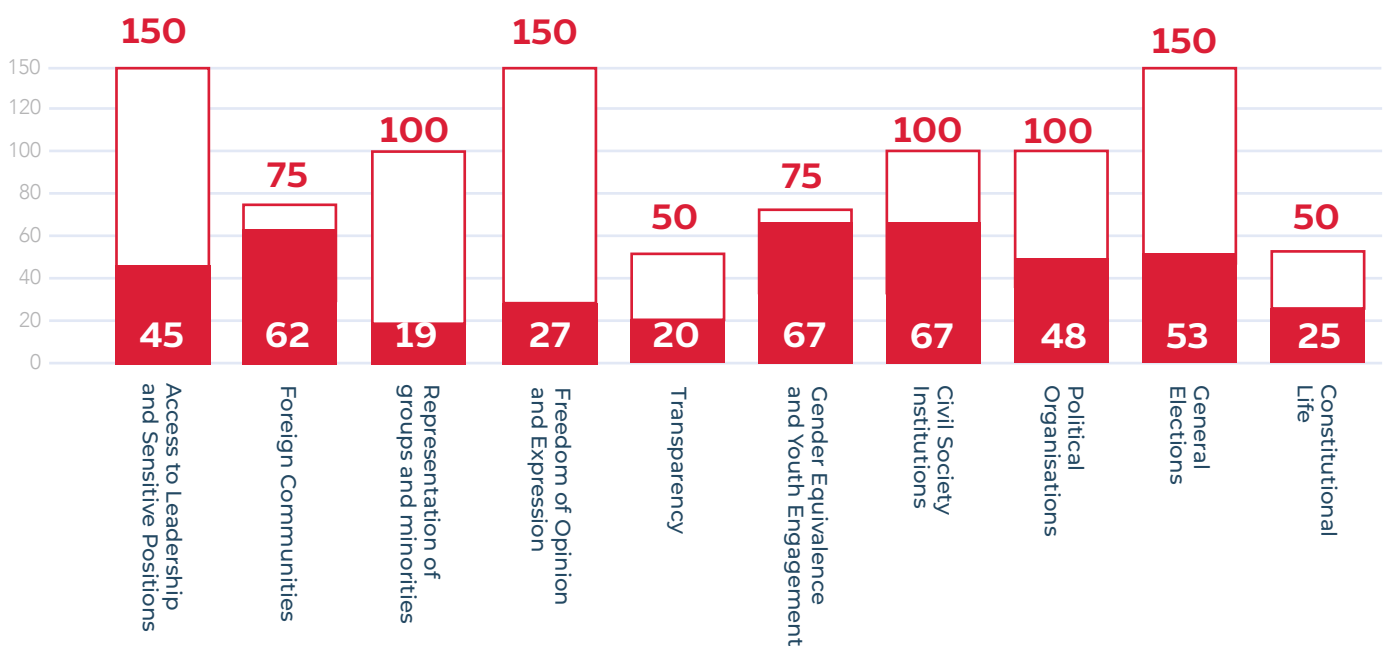


Figure 12: Oman – Political Participation 2023



2.4 KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN



State Performance



Index Range

Figure 13: Bahrain – Scales Results 2023



2.4 KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN



Figure 14: How much Bahrain's results have changed between 2022 and 2023

Bahrain has continued to rank fourth, scoring (433) out of the total index scores.

Bahrain has reported its best progress on the Freedom of Opinion and Expression scale (3 scores), and has also made limited progress on the Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement scale (2 scores) as well as on the Foreign Communities scale, while the largest decline (5 scores) on the General Elections scale was due to the introduction of new amendments to the internal regulations of the Council of Representatives that reduced the powers of its elected members, in addition to measures that deprived citizens from participating in the parliamentary elections held in the country.

Although Bahrain has also declined by 4 scores on the Civil Society Institutions scale, it has continued to be considered the best performing country among the GCC countries on this scale. It has also maintained its top rank on the Foreign Communities scale (62 out of 75) by ensuring stable and effective residency for foreign communities residing there.

Bahrain has declined (3 degrees) on the Representation of Groups and Minorities scale (19 out of 100 scores), placing it at the bottom of the list of countries on this scale. Bahrain also ranked at the bottom of the Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions scale (45 out of 150).

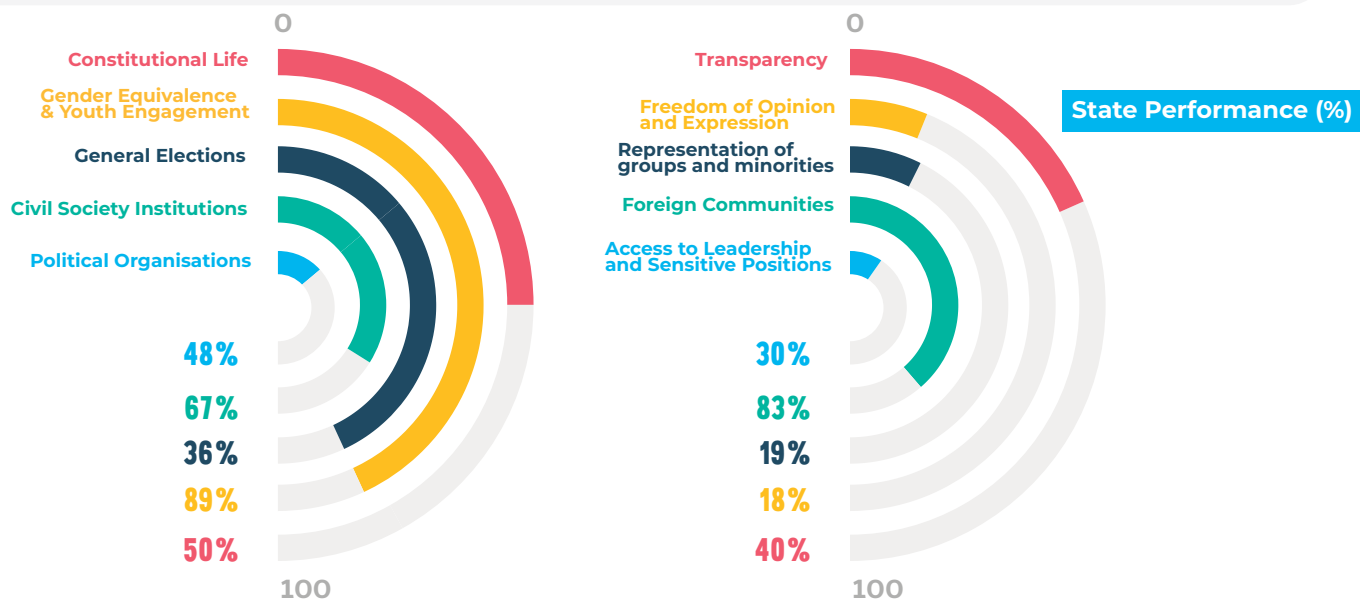


Figure 15: Bahrain – Political Participation 2023



2.5 UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

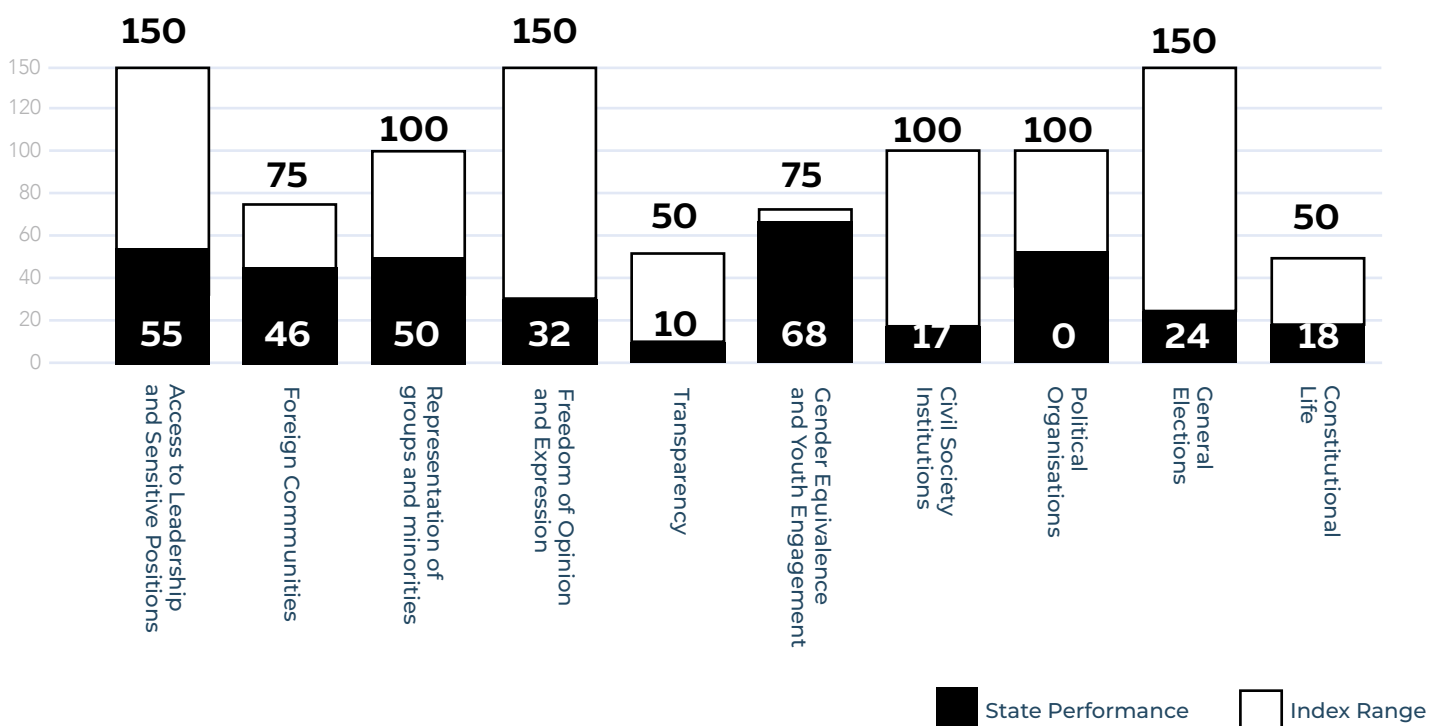


Figure 16: UAE – Scales Results 2023



Figure 17 UAE's results change between 2022 and 2023

The UAE has ranked fifth among the Arab Gulf countries by 320 scores out of the total index scores. The final tally of the country's scores did not witness any change.

The UAE has maintained the top rank on the Gender Equivalence 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.

The UAE has maintained a "zero" mark on the Political Organisations scale and low results on the General Elections scale. It has also ranked last among Arab Gulf countries on the Civil Society institutions scale (17 out of 100) equally with Saudi Arabia as well as on the Transparency scale (10 out of 50).

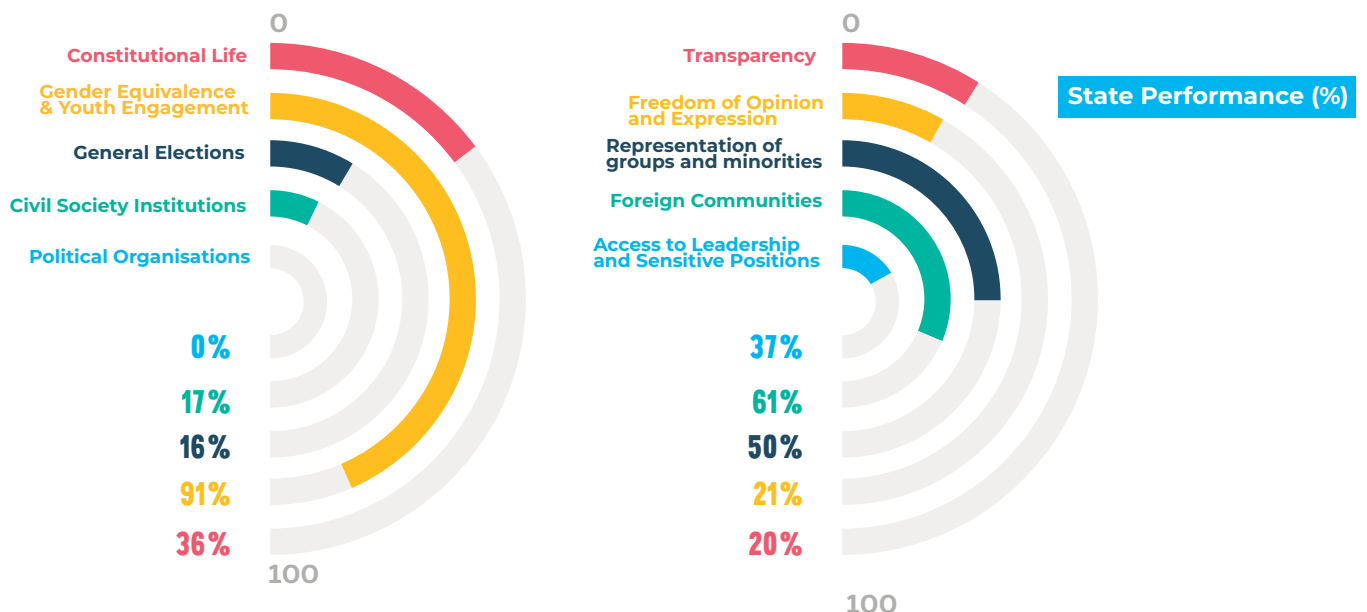
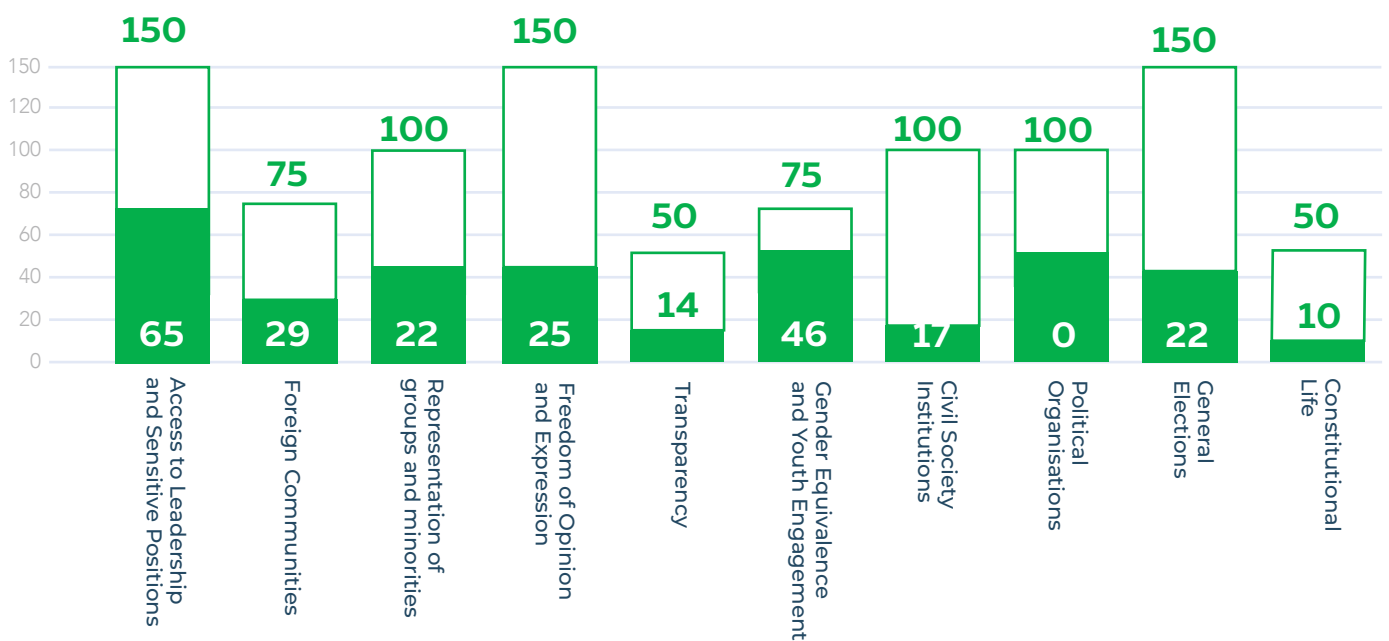


Figure 18: UAE – Political Participation 2023



2.6 KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA



State Performance Index Range

Figure 19: KSA – Scales Results 2023



Figure 20: How much KSA's results have changed between 2022 and 2023

Saudi Arabia has continued to progress for the fourth year in a row, as it has achieved 17 additional scores so that its total scores reached 250 out of 1,000. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia has remained at the bottom of the ranking.

Saudi Arabia has witnessed significant progress on the Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement scale (8 scores) as a result of the continuation of government policies and initiatives to empower women and the youth at a pace that appears to be the fastest among the GCC countries. Saudi Arabia has witnessed progress on the Transparency scale (3 scores), Foreign Communities scale (3 scores) and the Representation of Groups and Minorities scale (2 scores). Saudi Arabia has not witnessed any decline on any of the index scales. However, it remained with a "zero" mark on the Political Organisations scale, and reported low scores on the Constitutional Life, General Elections, Civil Society Institutions, Freedom of Opinion and Expression and Foreign Communities scales.

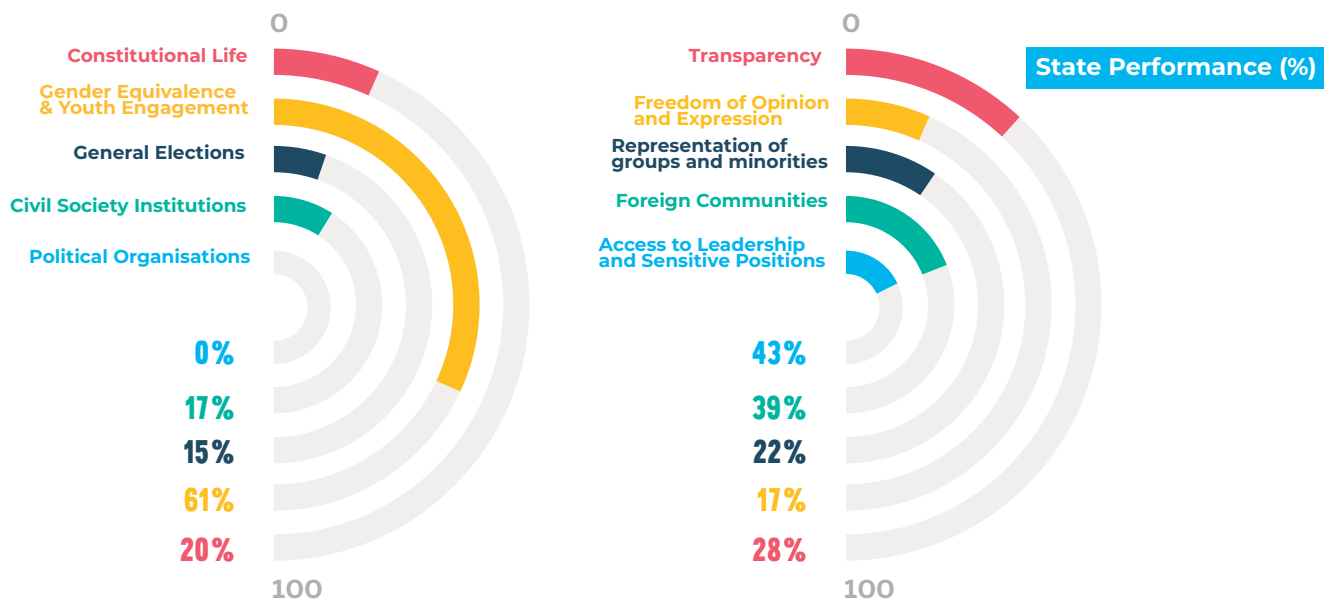


Figure 21: KSA – Political Participation 2023

03

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS





3.1 Scale 1: Constitutional Life

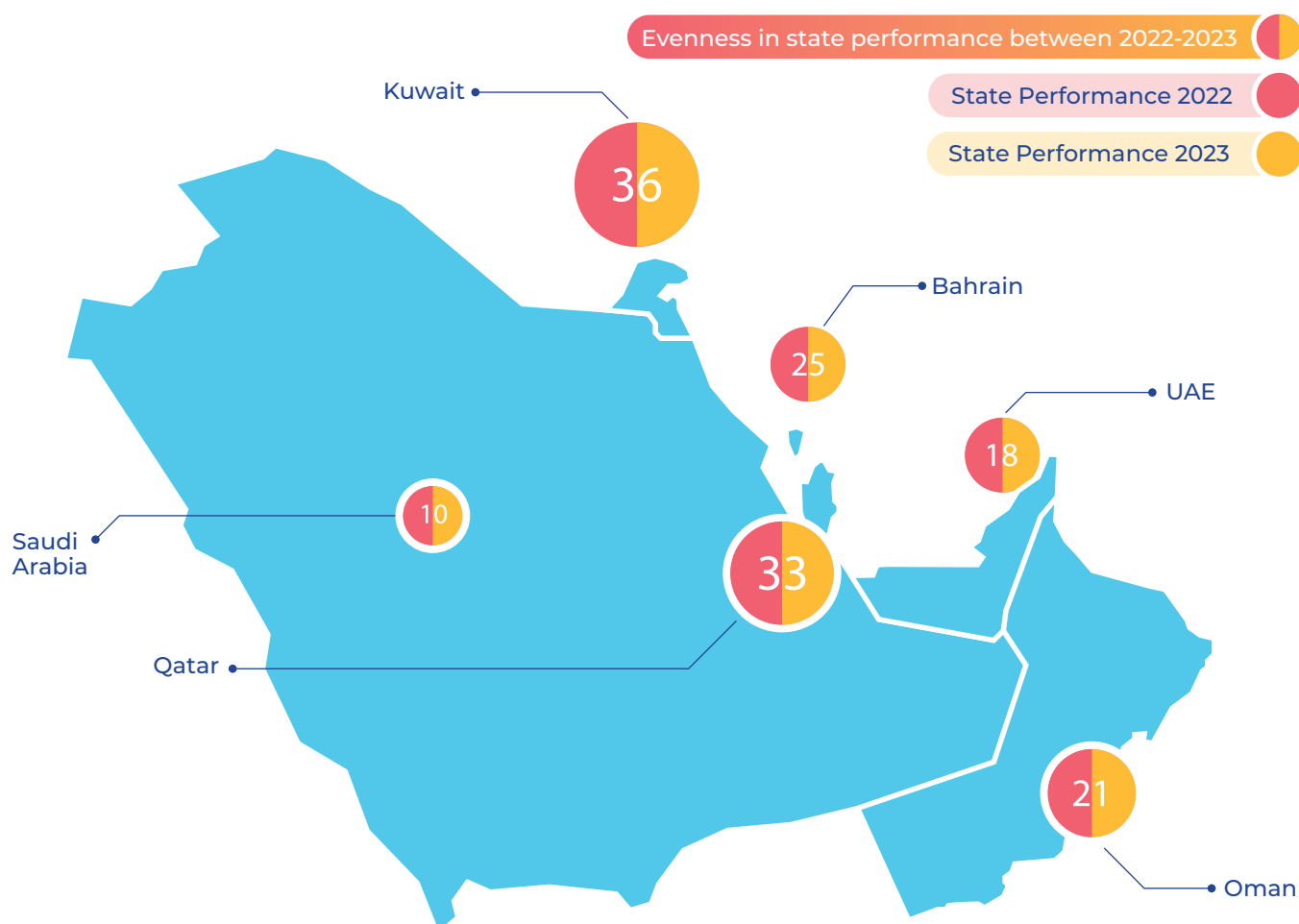


Figure 22: Constitutional Life Scale Results

Scale Elements		Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Constitutional Authority: Mechanisms for Issuance and Amendment	10 Scores	6	8	3	7	2	5
Guaranteeing the Right to Political Participation	15 Scores	8	9	5	9	1	3
Regulating / Restricting Laws	15 Scores	4	10	5	9	3	5
Compliance with the provisions of the Constitution	10 Scores	7	9	8	8	4	5
TOTAL	50 Scores	25	36	21	33	10	18

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

Kingdom of Bahrain

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, 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.

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



State of Kuwait

In March 2023, the Constitutional Court ruled that the parliamentary elections that took place in September 2022 were void, and that the previous assembly elected in 2020 must be reinstated, as the decision to dissolve the 2020 Council was deemed unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court.

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 and stipulated for it in a special law, which abolished the financial and administrative independence of the Council of Oman, and gave each of the two councils the power to draw up internal regulations and

publish it in the Official Gazette.

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

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.



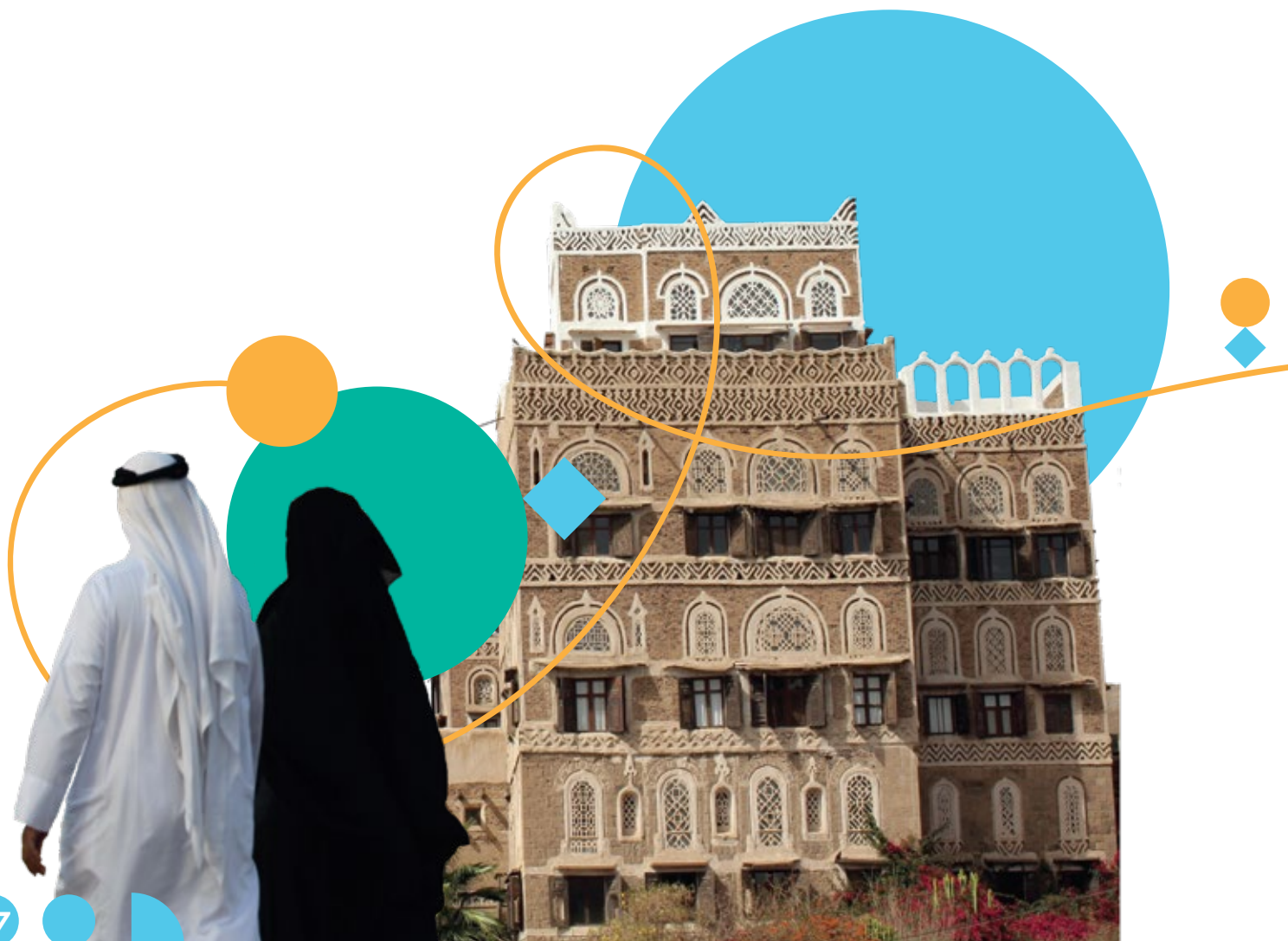
United Arab Emirates

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.





3.2 Scale 2: General Elections

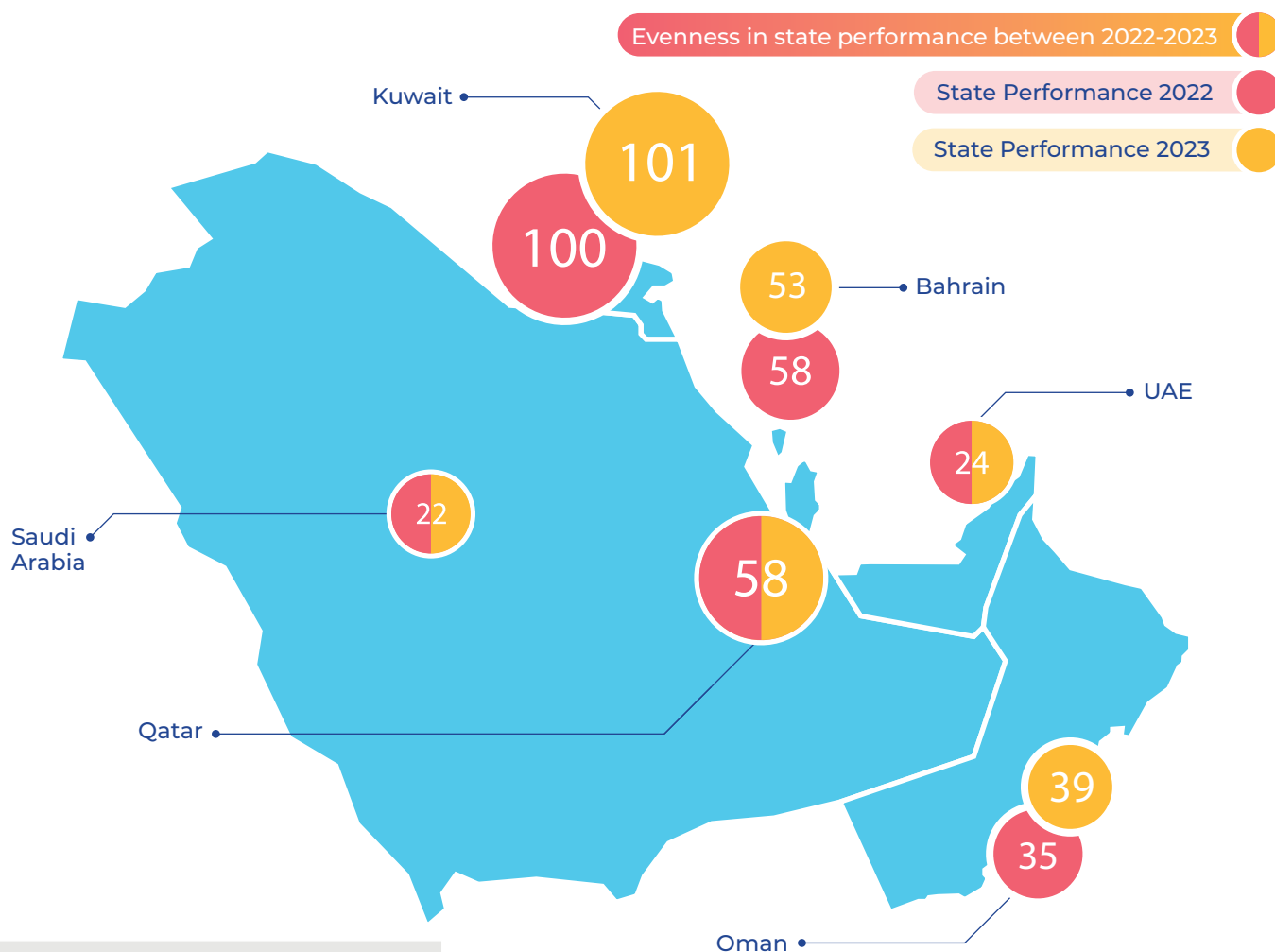


Figure 23: General Elections Scale Results

Scale Elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Electoral Areas (governmental, representative and municipal councils) 20 Scores	8	10	6	8	2	3
Power of elected institutions (authority/ separation of powers / oversight/ legislation / accountability/ partnership in decision making/ powers to dissolve institutions) 50 Scores	14	35	11	26	6	9
Effectiveness and efficacy of elected institutions 40 Scores	14	25	10	14	6	9
Mechanism for drafting the electoral system and drawing districts 40 Scores	17	31	12	10	8	3
TOTAL 150 Scores	53	101	39	58	22	24

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



Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain declined (5 scores) on this scale due to the introduction of new amendments to the internal regulations of the House of Representatives in October 2022, which reduced the powers of its elected members, in addition to the effects of the amendments made in 2018 to the Law on the Exercise of Political Rights, including preventing leaders and members of political associations that have been judicially dissolved from running the elections, in addition to removing the names of citizens from the voter lists.

In November 2022, Bahrain witnessed legislative and municipal elections, the sixth since the restoration of the constitutional life in 2002, amid the absence of the opposition, which decided to boycott the elections. A number of citizens were unable to have their names reinstated on the voter lists despite resorting to the announced legal channels, and local human rights activists estimated that those removed from the voter lists numbered tens of thousands.

The amendments approved to the Council of Representatives by-laws grant the Government the authority to decide on the fate of draft laws related to the previous Council sessions.

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 offences 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.

The High Elections Committee is still affiliated with the government and is not independent. 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 Council of Representatives’ By-Laws, which reduce the powers of MPs and is deemed a clear restriction of the powers of the legislative authority in public debates, as they stipulate that, debate may not include “criticism, blame or accusation” levelled at 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 consider the existing delimitation of electoral districts 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 or withdraw confidence in the Government, but it has the power to grant confidence to the government’s programme.

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 Council member 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).





State of Kuwait

Kuwait has declined by (5 points) on the General Elections scale due to the continued turmoil in political life through the dissolution of the National Assembly elected for two consecutive times, as an Emiri Decree was issued in May 2023 stipulating the dissolution of the National Assembly and the organization of new legislative elections on June 6, 2023. Prior to that, in March 2023, the Constitutional Court ruled that the elections held in Kuwait in September 2022 were void following the dissolution of the National Assembly by Emiri Decree in April 2022, and the court ruled for the reinstatement of the elected National Assembly in 2020.

The National Assembly elections have witnessed a decline in voters' turnout percentage from 65% in the September 2022 elections to 56% in the June 2023 elections. Kuwait adopted new procedures for voting using the residential address documented in the civil card instead of what was previously done through the address written in the citizenship document, which allowed updating electoral lists and counting the number of actual voters in each district. Notwithstanding, there is still a noticeable disparity between the numbers of voters in the five electoral districts.

The Government, based on the directives of the Emir and Crown Prince, voluntarily abstained from voting in the 2022 and 2023 National Assembly Speaker and committee elections, allowing elected representatives to elect members to these positions without Government's interference.

The National Assembly has relatively an

influential power and a broad authority to legislate and monitor Government's performance. The Constitutional grants the Emir the right to dissolve the National Assembly, and it is worth noting that Kuwait is one of the countries where this right is overused.

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, and is also entitled – after the questioning process – to 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 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.



Sultanate of Oman

Oman has witnessed the third municipal elections in the history of the Sultanate, in which 696 candidates, including 27 women, competed for 126 seats, distributed among 11 municipal councils for 11 governorates comprising 63 states. The participation rate reached 39.42%, and the authorities allowed participation in the elections via an electronic application on their phones, which is a Gulf and Arab precedent.

Legislative amendments were also made to the powers of the Ministry of Interior, transferring the jurisdiction of governors' affairs to municipal councils, which granted limited decentralisation in decision-making related to municipal services and fees. Thus, there was a slight development in the field of separation between the powers of the Shura Council and municipal councils in terms of law and practice, and the latter now has a more specific relationship in the administrative apparatus of the state and local administration.

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 deputies in the Shura Council, while provinces with fewer than 30,000 citizens are represented by one deputy. This distribution resulted in a variation in the number of voters in districts.

There is currently public debate 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 Oman Council Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 7 of 2021 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 more than one minister has been suspended.



State of Qatar

On June 22, 2023, Qatar held municipal council elections (7th session), where 110 candidates, including 4 women, competed to win the 29 seats representing the approved districts. The elections resulted in a participation rate of 40.8%. Participation rates were low during the last three sessions. In Qatar, elections have been held for the Municipal Council since 1999, which is a council that actually only has the ability to monitor the implementation of laws

and decisions related to municipal affairs and not to monitor the performance of the relevant executive authority agencies. The Council also has the right to submit proposals and wishes to the executive authority, which it may adopt or ignore. The municipal electoral process remains compliant with the electoral system formulated by the Government (represented by the Ministry of Interior), which delimited its districts.

Members of the Government (Ministers) are entirely appointed by the Emir. The Qatari Constitution stipulates for the right to political participation through the Shura Council (45 members), of whom 30 members are elected while the Emir appoints 15 other members. The Constitution explicitly stipulates that the Shura Council assumes the authority to legislate, approve the State's general budget, and monitor the performance of the executive authority.

Qatar held the first Shura Council elections in

October 2021 after the formation of a higher elections committee, the issuance of the election law, and the decision of the Ministry of Interior to divide the country into 30 electoral districts. Notwithstanding, the delimitation of constituencies and voter registration were subject to internal debate because they adopted tribal classifications, in addition to restricting the right to run and vote to indigenous Qataris, whom the law defines as families that settled in Qatar before 1930.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Despite the holding of 8 sessions of the Shura Council (1993-2022), it is noted that the Council's interaction with public issues is limited.

The Shura Council is composed of a chairman 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 or explained the reasons for the delay.

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 practice 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, but its powers are still advisory. It is regarded as the fourth federal authority among 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, 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 Constituency. 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, as well as 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 do not have 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. The number of 34 members of the National Council reflects the varying influence of each emirate, with Abu Dhabi and Dubai having 8 members each, Sharjah and Ras Al Khaimah have 6 members each, and Ajman, Umm Al Quwain and Fujairah have 4 members each.





3.3 Scale 3: Political Organisations

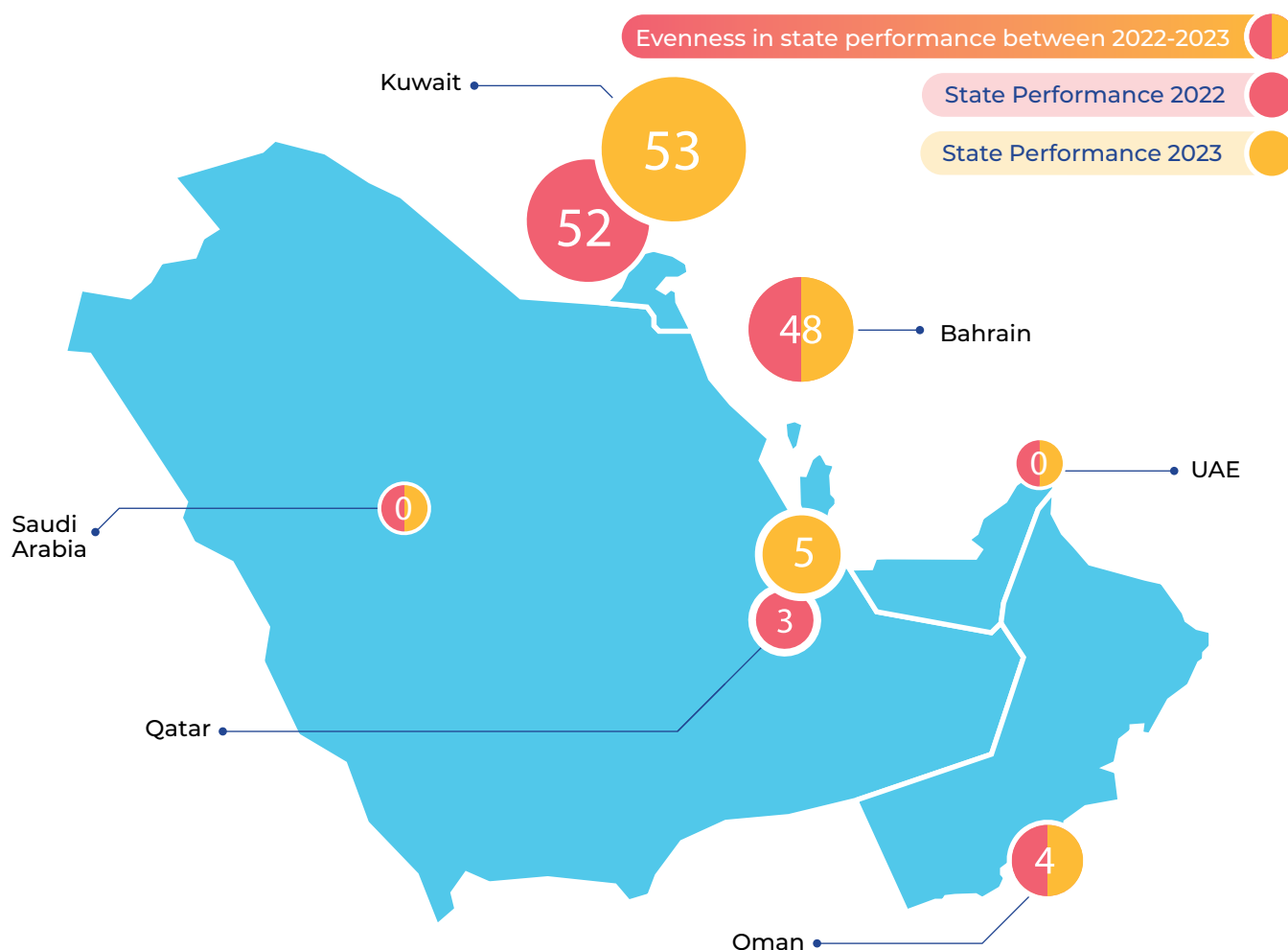


Figure 24: Political Organisations Scale Results

Scale Elements		Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Legitimacy of political organisations	30 Scores	22	8	0	0	0	0
Availability of opposition tools	25 Scores	5	15	0	0	0	0
Safety for political activists	25 Scores	6	21	4	5	0	0
Administrative and financial independence	10 Scores	6	3	0	0	0	0
Participation in elections on slates	10 Scores	9	6	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	100 Scores	48	53	4	5	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 societies”. However, the legal environment through which these societies operate is considered hostile where activists and politicians may be subjected to harassment and prosecution. Due to the existence and expansion of laws restricting political participation, organised political action in the country remains marginal.

These political societies engage in 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.

During the 2022 parliamentary and municipal elections, it was noted that there were no lists of political societies, and

the number of candidates belonging to these societies decreased to 9 candidates out of a total of 343 candidates.

Some political societies – 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 societies 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 the National Audit Office, affiliated to the King’s Court.



State of Kuwait

Kuwait has continued, for the second year in a row, to advance on the political organisations scale after the promulgation of an Emiri decree in January 2023 pardoning dozens of people convicted in political cases over the past years, some of whom live in exile. A Government decision was also promulgated to remove security restrictions imposed on citizens who had participated in protests or expressed opposition political positions. In November 2021, the country witnessed the promulgation of two Emiri decrees pardoning and commuting sentences for political opponents.

There is no provision in the Constitution of Kuwait that provides for or prohibits the freedom to establish political parties. However, in practice the State forbids the official formation of parties. In October

2019, the Supreme Judicial Council refused to approve a proposal for a law on the organisation of political bodies submitted by a number of MPs, 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 a slate of candidates. There is a lack of transparency in the work of these blocs and their funding sources.



Sultanate of Oman

The Law in 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 home and settle their positions 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

There are no laws in Qatar to regulate or allow for the formation of political organisations in any way, and the country lacks any organised work practised by citizens to address issues of politics and public affairs. Candidates for membership in the Shura Council run in the elections as independent candidates, not

affiliated with any party or forming any electoral alliances.

The judiciary in Qatar issued prison sentences for a number of citizens, some are up to “life imprisonment,” after protest gatherings against the citizenship law and the right to run in the Shura Council elections in 2021.





Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Political organisations of all kinds are prohibited in Saudi Arabia. In March 2014, the Ministry of Interior published a list of “security and intellectual prohibitions” that confirmed the criminalisation of “anyone who supports, shows affiliation with, sympathizes with, or promotes organizations, groups, movements, gatherings, or parties, or holds meetings under its umbrella, whether inside or outside the Kingdom, and this includes participation in all audio, print, or visual media...” The list is the first official document that includes an explicit text banning political parties of all kinds.

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 US State Department’s Human Rights Report 2022 refers to repeated examples of what it considered “human rights violations,” including unlawful or arbitrary killing, including extrajudicial killing, enforced disappearance, torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment... and arbitrary arrest and detention, political prisoners and detainees, serious restrictions on freedom of expression, and interference with freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association”.



United Arab Emirates

Laws in the United Arab Emirates do not permit any type of political work, 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.





3.4 Scale 4: Civil Society Institutions

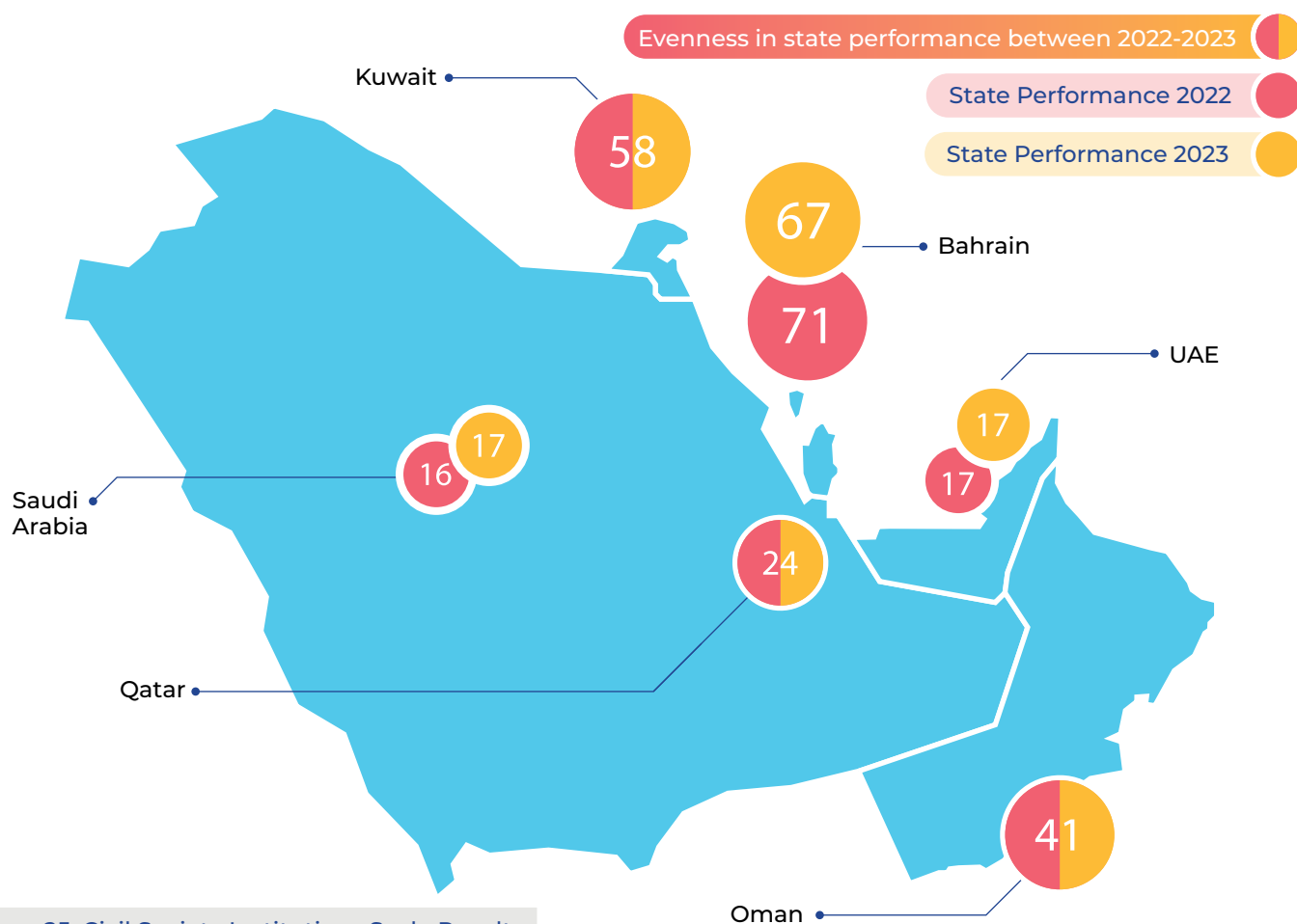


Figure 25: Civil Society Institutions Scale Results

Scale Elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Legal environment: guaranteeing the right of individuals and groups to form NGOs and pressure groups 40 Scores	27	30	15	10	9	11
Trade unions and professional societies: legislation / union pluralism and trade unions / availability of union work tools, including the right to strike 40 Scores	30	18	20	10	4	2
Institutional independence 10 Scores	5	5	3	2	2	2
Restrictions and obstacles 10 Scores	5	5	3	2	2	2
TOTAL 100 Scores	67	58	41	24	17	17

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



Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain has declined by 4 points on this scale due to the influence of local laws on the elections of a number of civil society associations, by rejecting the candidacy of members of political societies that were judicially dissolved, or postponing the elections without clear justification. Members of both the Bahraini Human Rights Society and the Islamic Awareness Society were prevented from running for membership for the boards of management of the two societies.

The decisions to prevent candidacy are based on an amendment issued in June 2022 to the Law on Social, Cultural and Sports Associations and Clubs, which stipulates that any member of a political association, practitioner of political activity, or member of the legislative authority is prohibited from running for membership in the boards of management of sports clubs or bodies. This is in addition to a set 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 approval in this context.

Bahrain has more than 650 licensed NGOs. The law requires that applications for incorporation be submitted to the competent ministry, and there is a limited number of associations that have had their

applications suspended 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 organisations 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 NGOs, 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 work for NGOs is still noticeable.

In May 2023, the Ministry of Social Affairs addressed public benefit associations through a reminder circular that included instructions and decisions that NGOs considered obstructing their work. The circular included a reminder that any licensed association is prohibited from conducting any activity or issuing any publications except with prior approval from the Ministry. It also stipulated that no government agency may be addressed except through it.

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 allows for the establishment of civil organisations and associations. However, it prevents them from engaging in any political activities and places restrictions on their activities and sources of funding. The law requires the approval of the Minister of Interior, who has the authority to dissolve them administratively. Over the past years, it has been reported that a number of requests were rejected without providing any reasons.

As for trade union work, the Labour Law

guarantees Qatari citizens (only) to participate and form labour organisations. This right is limited to establishments in which the number of Qatari workers is not less than 100 workers. Strikes are prohibited for foreign workers, but they are allowed under many conditions including Government's approval. The government also determines the procedures and conditions for the workers' committees.

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



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

It is noted that the number of non-profit organisations has increased in Saudi Arabia, including 3,159 NGOs that operate under the umbrella of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development and are prohibited from working outside the scope of charitable and solidarity work. In parallel, civil society organisations specialising in different fields and activities are being licensed by other government ministries. 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 considered by the State to be "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 workers to organise themselves in free trade unions is still prohibited. Moreover, taking a step of this kind may subject them to forced dismissal, arrest or deportation for expatriate workers.



United Arab Emirates

The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association within the limits of the law. There are about 300 licensed civil society organizations in the Emirates that are active in various sectors and are regulated by a law that grants the Ministry of Community Development broad licensing and supervisory powers. In the past, there have been cases of rejection to license human rights associations, as well as cases of associations being dissolved for reasons related to funding sources or political work.

Government authorities intensify financial and administrative oversight of civil society

institutions. Dubai issued Decree No. (9) of 2022 to “subject private entities of public benefit established under legislation to the supervision and control of the Community Development Authority in Dubai,” which affects the independence of civil society institutions and restricts their activities.

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.





3.5 Scale 5: Gender Equivalence & Youth Engagement

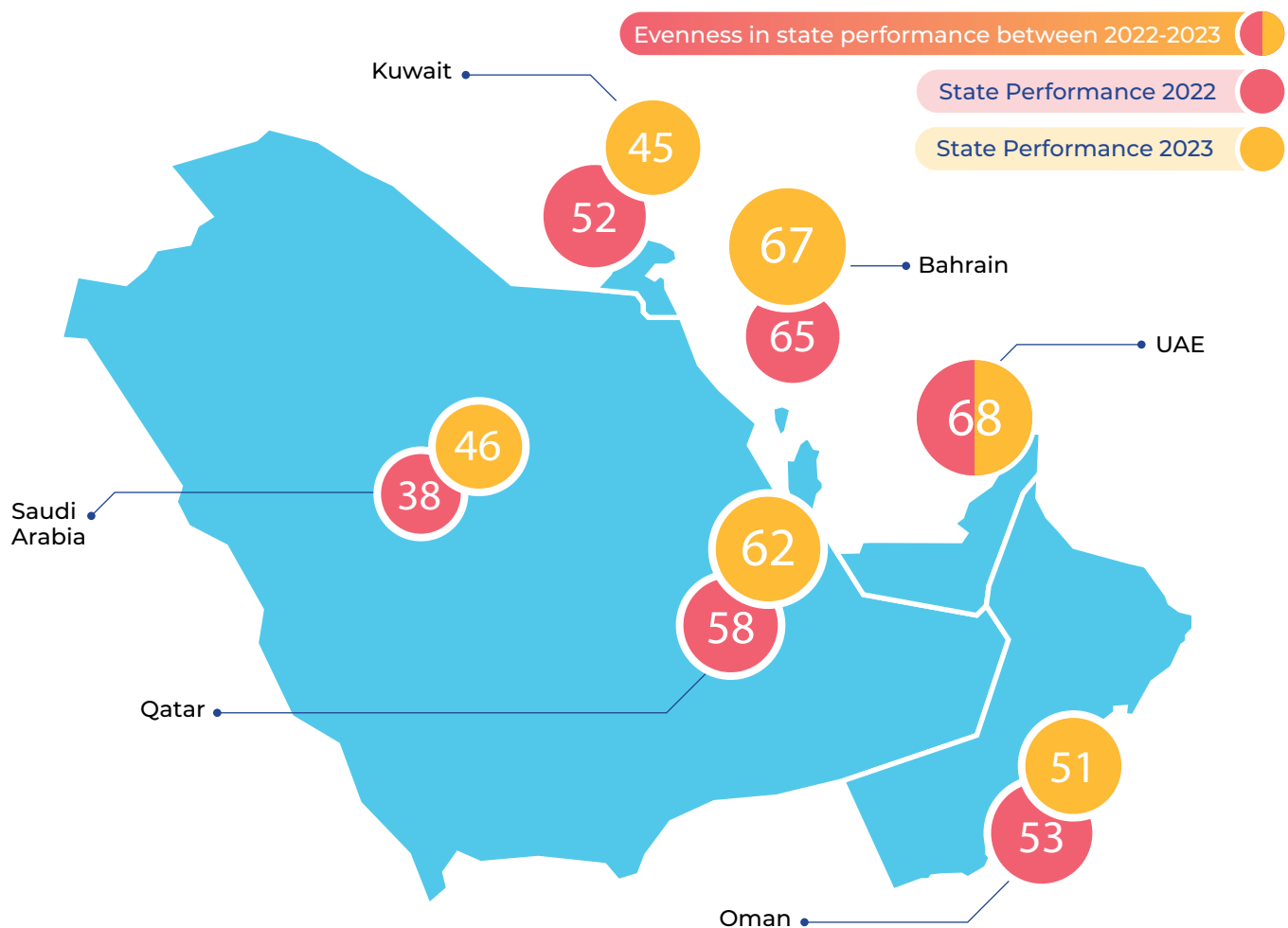


Figure 26: Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement Scale Results

Scale Elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Women empowerment: the right to vote / a quota in elected councils / holding leadership and senior positions 50 Scores	46	34	38	40	28	48
Youth engagement: voting age / holding senior positions 25 Scores	21	11	13	22	18	20
TOTAL 75 Scores	67	45	51	62	46	68

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



Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain has advanced on Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement Scale with the increase of the representation of women in the Parliament (8 women with a total of 40 members) in the parliamentary and municipal elections that the country witnessed in November 2022. 3 women also won seats in the municipal councils. Women's representation in the appointed Shura Council also increased from 9 to 10 women, equivalent to 25% of the council's seats.

There was an increase in the representation of women and youth in the government formation that followed the elections with the appointment of a new minister who assumed the youth affairs portfolio, bringing the representation of women in the Council of Ministers to 5 women.

According to the Constitution, Bahraini women have the right to run for office and vote. There are no special binding laws or procedures that guarantee gender

balance in the government, the Shura Council, or the elected parliament. Notwithstanding, the Supreme Council for Women (an official body affiliated with the King) leads projects and initiatives to empower women.

In the youth sector, Decree No. (2) of 2022 was promulgated to establish and form a youth empowerment committee in the public and private sectors. There are also government institutions that provide funding and training programs that clearly specialize in helping and developing the youth group.

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 declined (7 scores) on the Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement Scale, as the presence of Kuwaiti women declined at the Government level (one minister) and the National Assembly (one representative), which is the lowest among the Gulf states. There is a disparity in terms of the number of women candidates (15 candidates) for the National Assembly elections compared to the male candidates (254 candidates) due to the lack of laws or procedures that guarantee gender balance in the government or in

elected institutions.

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

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 the youth in decision-making, and their appointment in senior government positions is limited.



Sultanate of Oman

Only one female candidate won out of a total of the 27 female candidates who competed with a total of 942 candidates for 126 seats in the municipal council elections that the Sultanate of Oman, held in December 2022. This is considered a further decline (women held 7 seats in the second municipal session) in women's representation and participation in making... the decision. It is also noted that Omani women are reluctant to run in the Shura Council elections scheduled to be held in October 2023.

The Basic Law of the Sultanate provides for Gender Equivalence, 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 Equivalence 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.

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

Qatari women have the right to vote and run for office, but there are no laws or customs that guarantee Gender Equivalence, 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).

After the ministerial reshuffle in March 2023, the share of women in the government formation remained constant (3 ministerial positions). It is noted that the number of women in the judiciary has increased in line

with Qatar Vision 2030, which aspires to raise the percentage of women "judges" to about 30%. In addition, women hold high-ranking positions, including the position of head of the permanent delegation of Qatar to the United Nations in the New York and Geneva offices, the presidency of the National Human Rights Committee, and the presidency of the Qatar Charity Foundation.

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 has advanced on this scale for the fourth year in a row (by 8 points). The results in the Saudi Women's Report 2022 issued by the General Authority for Statistics shows a rise in the unemployment rate among Saudi women in the fourth quarter of 2022 to reach 15.4%, and the ratio of female workers to the population rose in the same period to reach 30.4%, while the rate of women's participation in the labour market is 36% compared with men.

The pace of women's empowerment in public affairs is accelerating as it is one of the fastest reform paths in recent years. In mid-2022, a royal order appointing Dr. Hala bint Mazyad bin Mohammed Al-Tuwaijri as President of the Human Rights Commission at the rank of minister. 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.

Women hold 30 of the 150 seats in the

Shura Council. 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 equivalence 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.

Saudi Arabia reported progress in empowering youth, through a series of decisions that encourage this group to participate in public work and give them priority in recent appointments, in addition to having a clear policy to involve youth in decision-making.





United Arab Emirates

The UAE has an effective policy for the empowerment of women. There are nine women ministers in the Council of Ministers. Emirati women have the right to vote and run for office 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 equivalence at work, the Government established the UAE Gender Balance Council in 2015, the aim of which is to seek 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 unable 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 the youth. It is also noteworthy that there are several young ministers in the Federal Government, and there are many projects, financial and political support for youth of both sexes.





3.6 Scale 6: Transparency

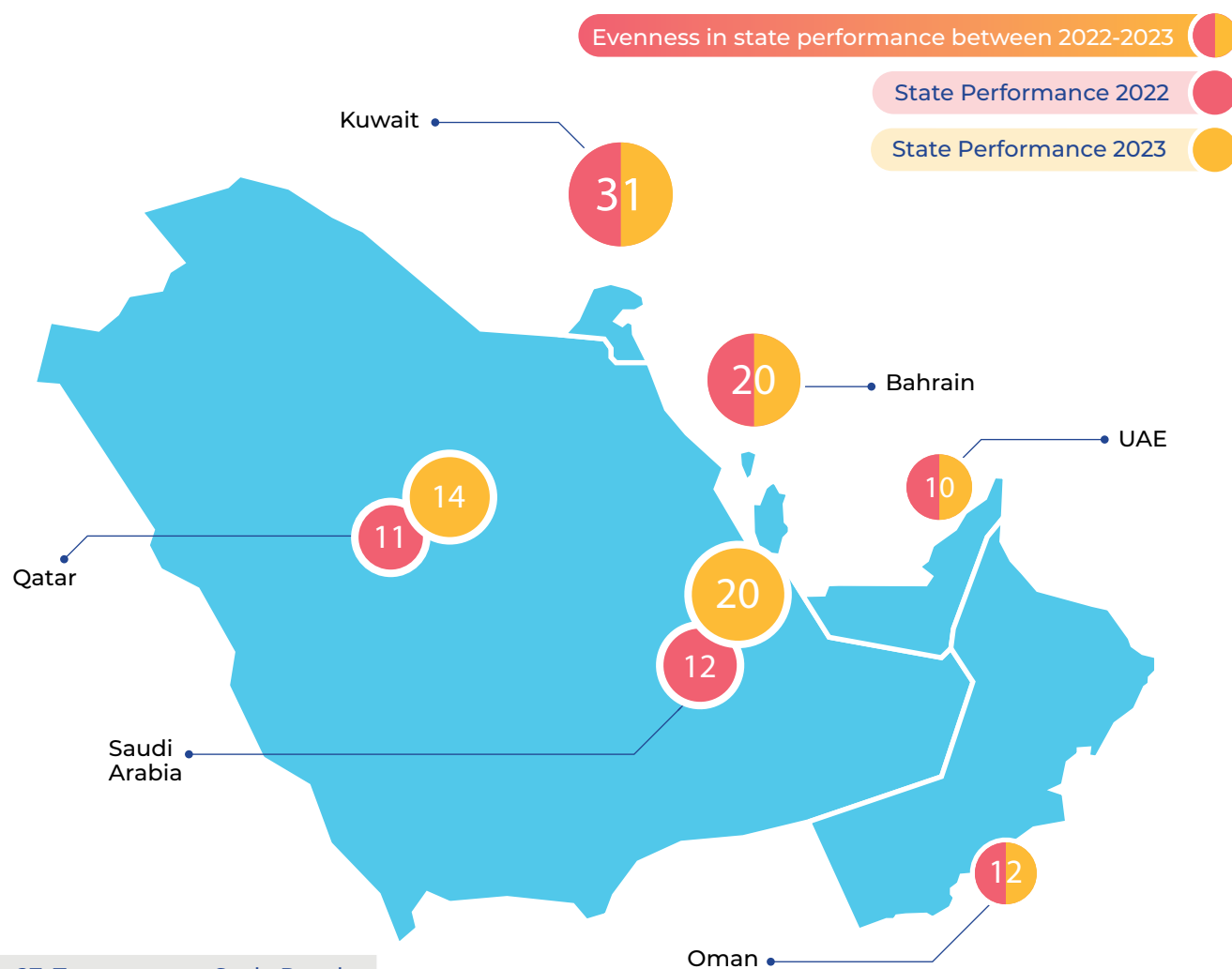


Figure 27: Transparency Scale Results

Scale Elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Information sharing: right to access, circulate and disseminate information 25 Scores	10	16	7	15	9	5
Independent oversight: the actions and performance of the executive, legislative and judicial authorities, sources of wealth, spending of public funds 25 Scores	10	15	5	5	5	5
TOTAL 25 Scores	20	31	12	20	14	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 society, including arms expenses and oil revenues.

There are documented cases where journalists, photojournalists, activists, and citizens were subjected to pressure, threats or arrest for publishing or circulating information, or participating in

the media through the use of the Penal Code, which provides for imprisonment and fines.

With regard to community oversight, the Bahrain Transparency Society was licensed in 2001, but it is not involved in monitoring aspects of public spending. Its activity is limited to issuing statements and participating in events to promote values and principles of transparency and anti-corruption.



State of Kuwait

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 information and ensure their disclosure. Nevertheless, cases of summoning activists for publishing information or exposing “corruption cases” have been reported in Kuwait.

In 2016, Kuwait established the Public Anti-Corruption Authority (NAZAH), 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, and it 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. Nevertheless, 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 for the Protection of Public Funds and Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest requires officials to disclose their property, assets, and wealth, but they remain confidential and are not made 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. 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

Qatar has advanced by eight points on this scale after the Emir ratified the law regulating the right to access information and entered into force. According to Law No. 9 of 2022, any person has the right to submit an official request to any government agency to obtain information. The law requires that the request be decided upon within a period not exceeding 30 days, with the necessity of stating the reasons in the event of rejection. The law imposes fines and penalties that may reach to imprisonment in the event of deliberately withholding or refraining from providing information or providing incorrect information.

In previous years, cases have been

documented of activists and journalists subjected to harassment and pressure due to the circulation of information, as both the Press and Publications Law 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 affiliated with the Government.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has advanced on this scale by (3 points) due to its adoption of several effective procedures across several government bodies to organise and classify data. Electronic platforms provide ministries and government institutions the right to obtain information under legal controls. The Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA) and its subsidiary entities also serve as a source of information available to the public. In February 2021, the Shura Council approved the Personal Data Protection and the Freedom of Information laws.

The Freedom House report 2022 points to a relative improvement in the availability of some economic data, including data

related to the government budget, but it states that the mechanisms for spending state funds and internal decision-making are unclear, as there is no general mechanism to hold senior officials to account for their decisions. The defence budget is far from public oversight, and the sovereign wealth fund's data is also largely obscure.

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.



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.



3.7 Scale 7: Freedom of Opinion & Expression

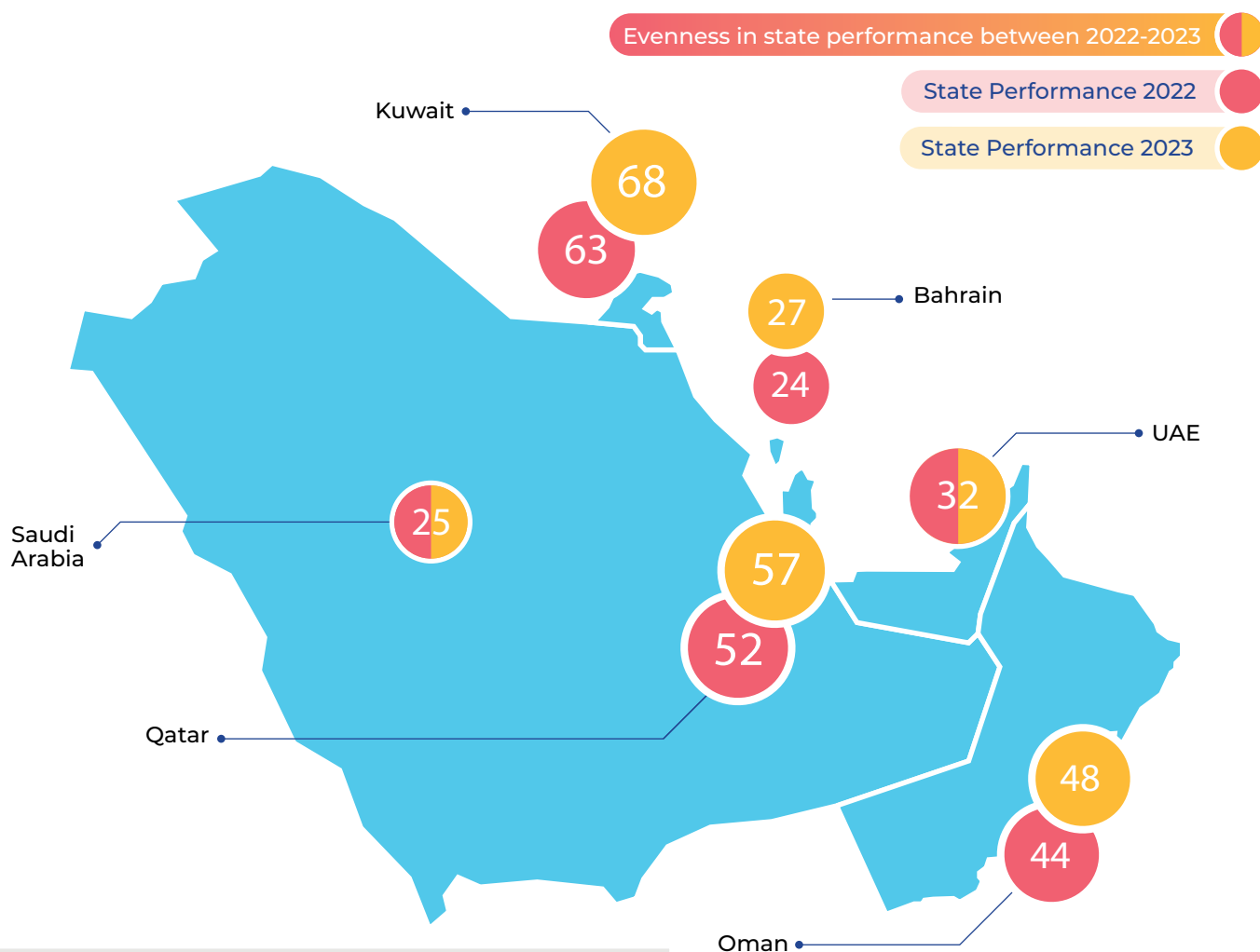
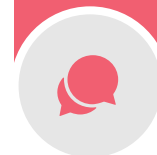


Figure 28: Freedom of Opinion and Expression Scale Results

Scale Elements		Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Freedom of the press	30 Scores	5	17	6	14	3	4
Independence of media institutions	30 Scores	5	15	5	7	5	5
Internet censorship	30 Scores	7	14	5	7	4	4
Freedom and safety of individuals to exercise criticism	30 Scores	5	10	7	10	3	4
Confronting hate speech and incitement to violence	30 Scores	5	12	25	19	10	15
TOTAL	150 Scores	27	68	48	57	25	32

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



Kingdom of Bahrain

Despite noting a slight improvement (3 points) in the area of freedom of opinion and expression, Bahrain is still witnessing instances of prosecutions against some activists and opinions opposing the Government in accordance with the Law on Protecting Society from Terrorism, the Penal Code, and the Law Regulating Printing and Publishing. The Cybercrime Department is responsible for summoning and interrogating activists on social media sites, blocking and disabling websites, and targeting influential accounts. It is noted that the government continues to ignore inflammatory speeches that include calls for hatred towards some social components and not others.

Bahrain ranked last among the Gulf countries in the annual "Press Freedom Index" for 2023 issued by Reporters Without Borders. It also dropped 4 ranks on the global index (180 countries) for 2022 from 167 to 171, placing it among the last ten countries in the organisation's classification.

The Bahraini Press Association documented 41 violations against journalists, media professionals, writers, and Internet activists during the year 2022. It also documented 30 cases during the first half of 2023. The Association indicated that the "National Communication Centre" controls what is published in the press, including news headlines and official statements. The country also witnessed summonses and trials of individuals who expressed religious and sectarian views.

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), as it scored only 12 points out of 100 on the organisation index.

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. Therefore, the opposition resorted to establishing media outlets from outside the country.

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 broad interpretations, laws are used to restrict freedom of the press.

The Penal Code in Bahrain addresses the issue of incitement to hatred in Article 172, which stipulates penalties of imprisonment and a fine for anyone who "publicly incites hatred or contempt for a certain faction of society, 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 has advanced by 5 points on the Freedom of opinion and Expression scale, with positive developments resulting from the Ministry of Interior's abolition in November 2022 of "security restrictions" on about 15,000 citizens "in support of freedom of opinion and expression." The pace of prosecutions against activists has also decreased. Despite these measures, no amendments were made to the laws restricting freedoms.

Kuwait continues to use the Cybercrime Law to restrict freedom of opinion and expression, and exercise severe censorship of Internet content. The Cybercrime Law provides for sentences of imprisonment and fines.

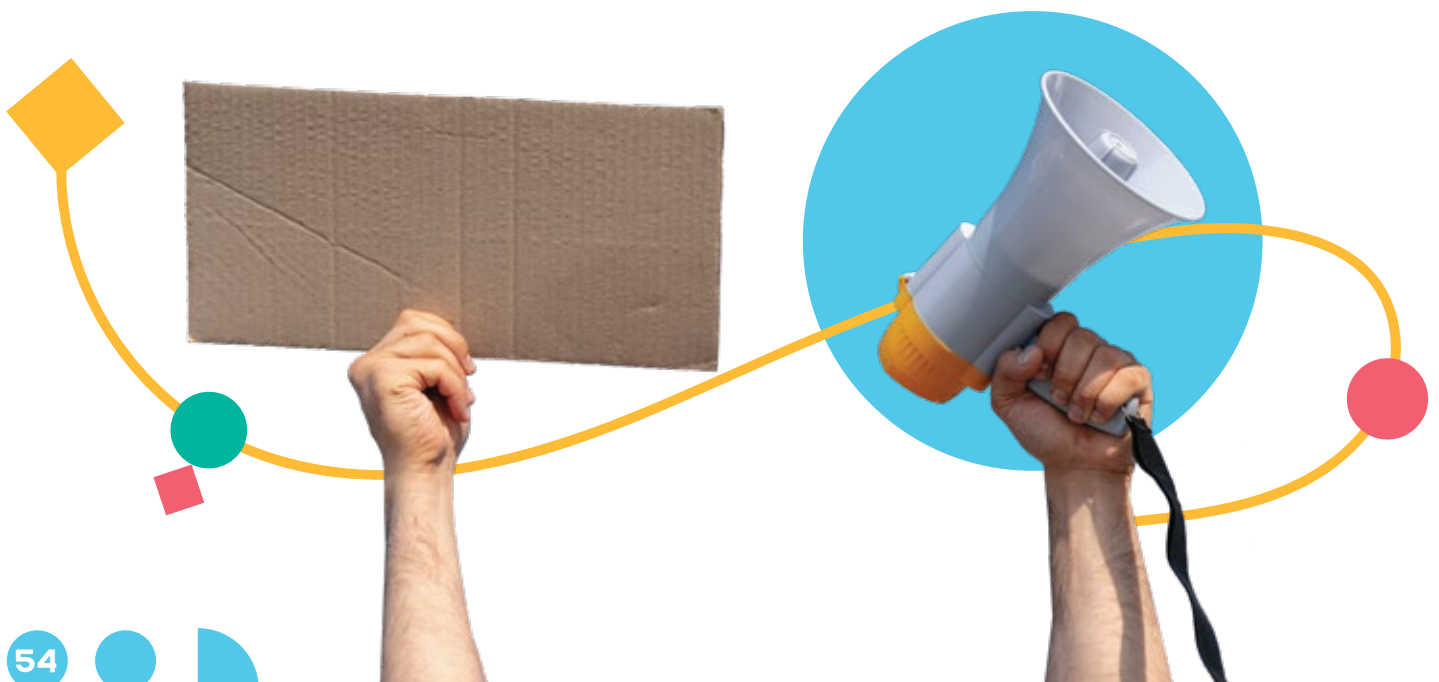
According to Reporters Without Borders' classification, Kuwait has advanced 4 places to the 154th place on the World Press Freedom Rating.

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 against any Gulf country. Kuwait sometimes blocks some websites with political content. The Kuwait Journalists Association points out in a study that the practical reality of press freedom in Kuwait is based primarily on tolerance by the government and not on strict legal regulation, as the Government can at any time control or abolish this freedom.

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, instances of sectarian-motivated hate speech as well as against expatriate workers have been 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) restricts freedom of opinion and expression in the Sultanate, as pressure on individuals and institutions have been documented. Omani citizens are subjected to arrest, interrogation and pressure, according to local and international human rights organisations. Judicial rulings have also been issued against citizens accused of "blasphemy" and "insulting the heavenly religions", which were subsequently followed by issuance of royal pardon (April 2023).

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 very 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 faces constant criticism from human rights organizations due to pressure, arrests, and judicial trials against some activists, despite its advance in the Reporters Without Borders index (14 places) to 105th place (first in the Gulf).

Qatar allows media institutions within it to address Arab and international issues with a high level of freedom, which is not observed in local issues. Local media do not appear to be independent, and under the law, establishing a newspaper requires approval from the Minister of Information.

Harassment and summonses of a number of citizens and foreigners for expressing their opinions have been documented. This included, during the past year, individuals from journalists and fans who were present in Qatar while it was hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup matches, as some fans were prevented from attending the matches for reasons related to their expression of their sexual orientation. Despite this, it was noted that the Qatari authorities allowed various international media outlets to be present and cover the events of the world championship.

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”.

The Qatari law criminalises 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

Cases of arrest and prosecution of citizens and residents for expressing their opinions continue in Saudi Arabia. According to the Reporters Without Borders report, press freedom in Saudi Arabia in 2023 fell by four points, ranking 170 out of 180 compared to 166 in the previous year.

In May 2023, human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International called on the Saudi government to enable civil society organizations, activists, and opponents to freely formulate their vision and agenda.

According to an Amnesty International report issued in February 2023, the organization documented 15 cases in which during the year 2022 they were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 10 to 45 years simply for engaging in peaceful activities on the Internet, including a sentence believed to be the longest period issued to a Saudi woman for expression of opinion. The organization also documented the cases of 67 people who were prosecuted for exercising their rights to freedom of expression.

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.

Saudi Arabia lacks free media, and journalists and activists in Saudi Arabia are subject to tight surveillance.

The state exercises strict control over the press, and most media institutions are owned by those close to the ruling establishment.

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 Arabia justifies the reasons for blocking websites on the pretext of violating the Saudi State's religious belief and criticising the State policies.

Numerous cases of hate speech and incitement on sectarian grounds are documented, often against Shia, Ismailis and Sufis. Notwithstanding, it is noted that Saudi Arabia has adopted more serious measures in face of hate speeches.



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 (145) on the organisation's index (2023).

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. Nevertheless, cyberspace is awash with sectarian posts by some tweeters who are not subject to any prosecution.



3.8 Scale 8: Representation of Groups & Minorities

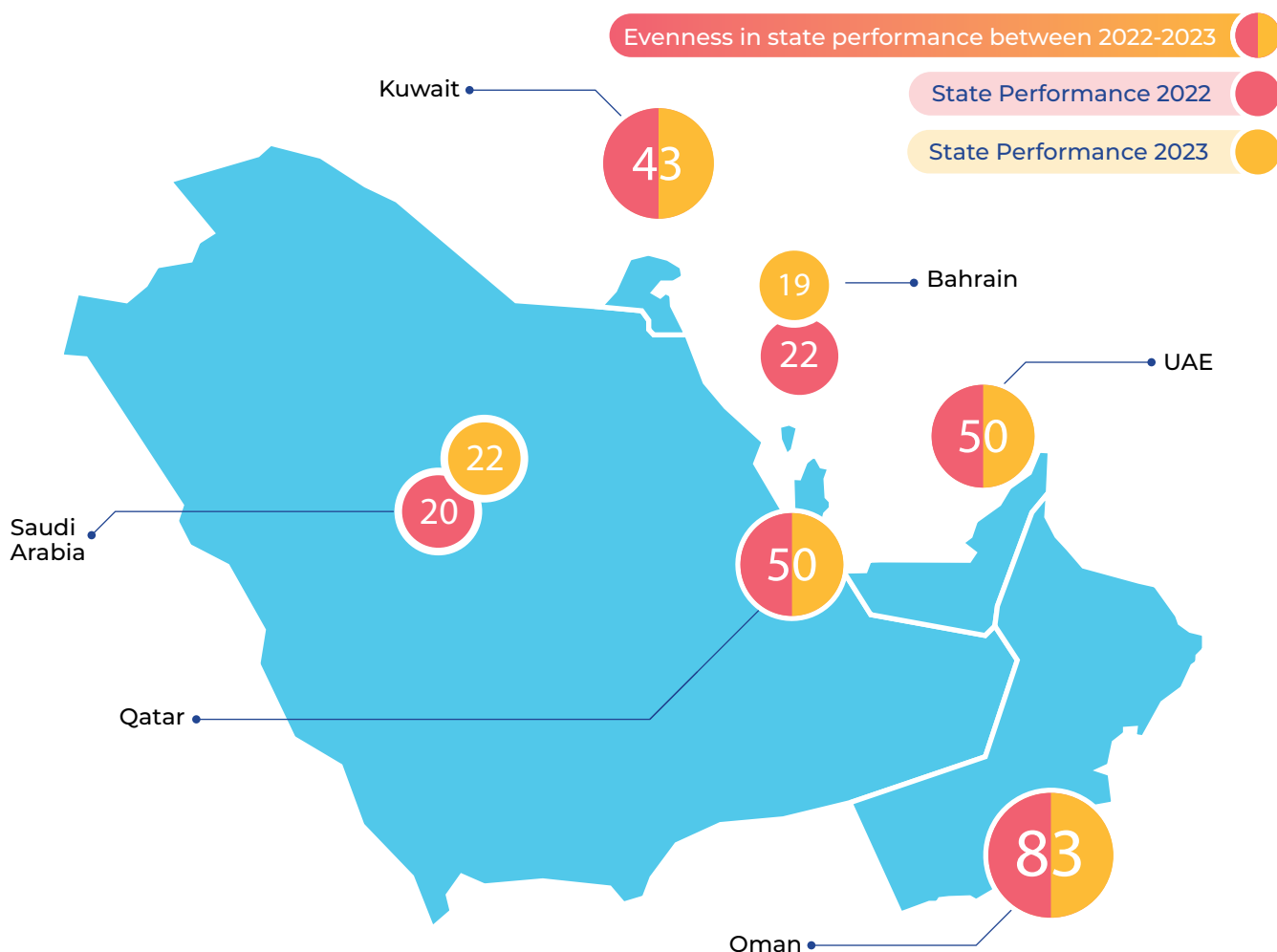


Figure 29: Representation of Groups and Minorities Scale Results

Scale Elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Equality: ensuring equal right of all citizens to full citizenship 40 Scores	10	15	35	21	9	20
Discrimination: ensuring that there is no discrimination on political, religious, cultural, regional, ethnic or class grounds 40 Scores	4	20	30	19	6	20
Proportional representation: ensuring proportionate and fair representation of groups and minority in state institutions 20 Scores	5	8	18	10	7	10
TOTAL 100 Scores	19	43	83	50	22	50

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



Kingdom of Bahrain

Shiite citizens complain of “discriminatory policies” pursued by the state towards them, and express constant feeling of being targeted. The Religious Freedom Report issued by the US State Department for the year 2022 documented dozens of incidents related to the harassment of Shiite clerics and the targeting of their religious rituals during the Ashura season in particular. The Ministry of Interior prohibited the participation of preachers and religious chanters from abroad in the Ashura event, contrary to the freedom available to followers of other religions and sects in Bahrain. The government Survey and Land Registry refused to register some land plots within the endowments affiliated with the Jaafari Endowments Administration.

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 appointment 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.





State of Kuwait

Kuwait has maintained the same scores on this index as there was no sign of finding a solution to the file of the stateless "Bidoon" and "illegal residents" in Kuwait, where more than 100,000 individuals suffer from difficulties in living and integrating into society. This stateless "Bidoon" issue represents the harshest manifestations of discrimination in the state. This marginalised minority group is considered the main issue in Kuwait, as it is deprived of citizenship rights and having positions and representation in the State.

Although five governments were formed within one year, not all of them reflect a proportionate representation of the various components of Kuwaiti society, including appointments to leadership positions and the judiciary.

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.

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. 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

According to the US State Department’s Human Rights Report (2022), there are about 2,500 stateless individuals who were born in Qatar. They have the right to education and health care, but they are prohibited from

owning property. Qatari authorities refer to stateless persons as “individuals holding temporary Qatari identity documents.”

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

In its report (May 2023), the US Embassy in Riyadh renewed its designation of Saudi Arabia as a “Country of Particular Concern (CPC)” under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 for engaging in or tolerating severe violations of religious freedom. On November 30, 2022, the Foreign Minister renamed Saudi Arabia as a country of particular concern.

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.

The 2023 Religious Freedom Report prepared by the United States Civil Liberties Commission indicated that “religious freedom in Saudi Arabia is still low despite slight improvement. The government also continues to prevent non-Muslims from building places of worship.” 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 Council of Senior Scholars and the Fatwa Committee in the Kingdom are still limited to the Hanbali school of thought, as is the case in the judiciary and criminal courts, and local courts are allocated to other schools of thought that are limited to matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance.

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. Human rights organizations also documented cases of family members of those convicted in political cases who were subjected to forms of discrimination in renewing their official documents and ensuring the right to travel and movement.

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. Notwithstanding, 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 UAE.





3.9 Scale 9: Foreign Communities

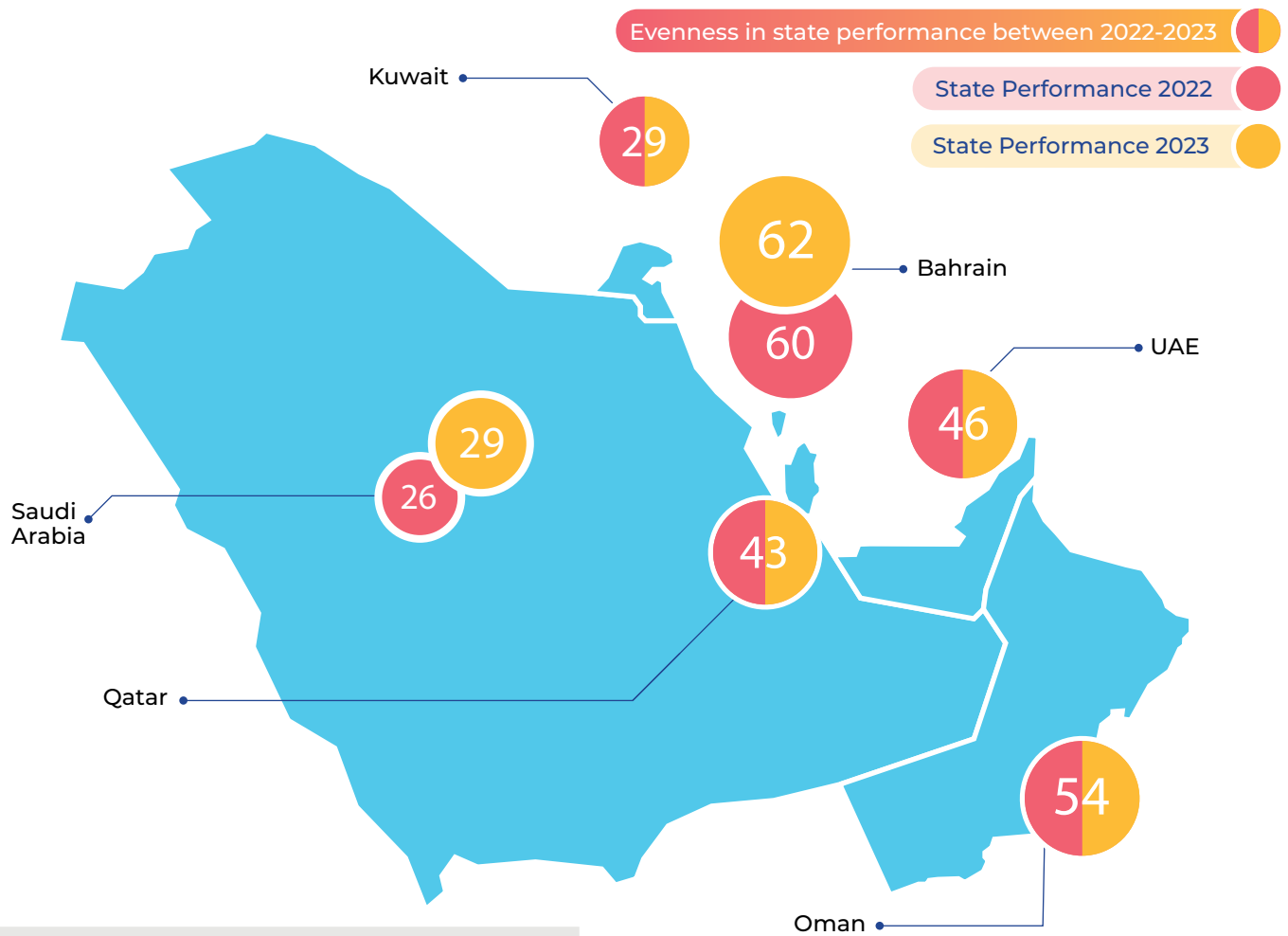


Figure 30: Foreign Communities Scale Results

Scale Elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	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 Scores	32	10	22	23	20	24
Union / professional representation: membership, election, candidacy and protection of interests 20 Scores	10	11	12	2	4	2
Societal activities: the right of communities to organise activities and establish associations and clubs 20 Scores	20	8	20	18	5	20
TOTAL 75Scores	62	29	54	43	29	46

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

Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain is still ahead with regard to ensuring stable residency opportunities for expatriates by allowing foreigners the right to own property in 18 projects and tourist and investment areas.

In June 2023, the Government approved the “Platinum Residency” category, which allows its holder to leave and return to Bahrain, in addition to owning built properties and land, with the exception of some areas, in addition to obtaining entry and residence permits for the husband or wife, children, and parents. To obtain residency, the foreigner’s period of residence must not be less than 15 years, and the average basic salary must not be less than 4,000 dinars in the last five years. Bahrain also grants a long-term “Golden Residency” visa to working foreigners whose monthly income is not less than two thousand Bahraini Dinars (about 5,300 USD), retirees whose monthly income is not less than four thousand Bahraini Dinars (about 10,600 USD), 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 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, but not standing as candidates.

The State laws give expatriate workers the right to join and vote in unions 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 expatriate communities.





State of Kuwait

Kuwait is facing widespread criticism regarding the rights of expatriate workers, including the Kuwaiti Council of Ministers' decision in February 2023 to approve the formation of a national committee to regulate the demographics in the country, which sparked widespread controversy about determining policies related to the appropriate cap for workers' nationalities, which may result in the termination of services of a large number of residents.

In 2015, Kuwait approved a standard contract for expatriate workers, allowing 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 victims of the phenomenon of "residency trade".

The State of Kuwait acceded to the International Labour Organisation in 1961, and ratified 19 of its conventions, including seven of the eight basic conventions. 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. 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 the law concerned allows non-Kuwaitis to have "affiliate" membership, it prevents them from registering in the general assembly or running for board of directors. Expatriate 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 a Memorandum of Understanding 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 transferring to another sponsor. The current system considers the contract term (two years) sufficient to fulfil the right of the first sponsor, but following that the worker can have his sponsorship transferred freely. However, in practice, some official authorities still require a no-objection certificate from the

previous sponsor.

The Foreigners' Residence Law and its executive bylaws allow expatriate workers to bring their families or their dependents within specific rules and conditions, including the minimum wage for the worker wishing to 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 certain circumstances taking into consideration such as 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 expatriate communities may 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 issued 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”. In addition, deportation cases have continued against the backdrop of labour protests due to “late salary payments”. 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’s approved minimum wage is 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 municipal council elections. 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 their own schools.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has advanced on this scale (3 points) as it witnessed an improvement in working conditions and guaranteeing the rights of expatriate workers, thanks to the expansion of government oversight over companies and institutions to ensure compliance and commitment to the new laws concerned with reducing fraudulent and abusive practices and strengthening preventive measures, providing protection, compensation, and eliminating forced labour. In June 2023, seven royal orders were issued regarding the conditions of foreign workers, including prohibiting employers from keeping documents related to workers’ housing contracts. The Government assumed responsibility for settling all fees owed by foreign workers, in addition to giving foreign workers the opportunity to change jobs easily, and setting a maximum limit of 800 Saudi riyals per month for accompanying dependents.

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, guarantees the rights of expatriate workers, reduces labour disputes, and ensures job mobility.

The Saudi Labour Law provides for the right of expatriate workers to leave, profits, end-of-service gratuity, as well as prohibiting forced labour and all practices 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 came into force.

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.

Annual reports by human rights organisations

state that some expatriates face persecution, raids of their residences 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 compounds and are based on agreement between workers and employers rather than on 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 legislation allows migrant workers the benefits of obtaining the 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.

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 association, 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.

3.10 Scale 10: Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions

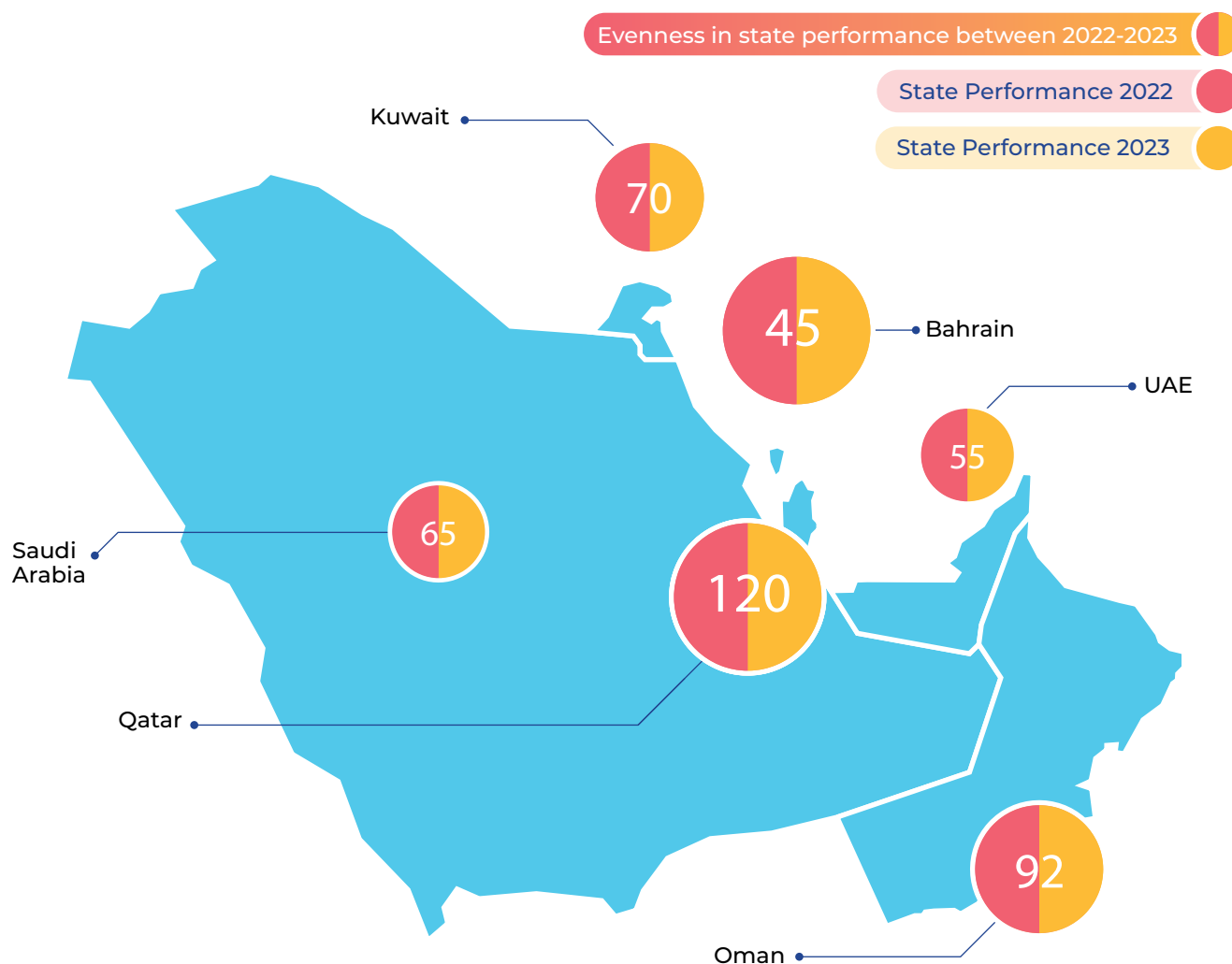


Figure 31: Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions Scale Results

Scale Elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Influence of the royal families: representation of royal family members in higher positions 100 Scores	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 Scores	17	20	37	40	30	20
TOTAL 150 Scores	45	70	92	120	65	55

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

Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain witnessed a fall in the representation of members of the ruling family in the Cabinet formation (June 2022), which was limited to the Prime Minister, his deputy, and the ministers of interior and finance, with citizens holding 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) have been observed. In addition, in judiciary institutions, ruling family members constitute a significant proportion compared with the unproportional presence of the rest of the other

components of society.

Estimates state that the leadership and high-ranking positions in the State (especially the sensitive ones) 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, which 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. Family members constitute about one third of the seats in the Council of Ministers (5 ministers out of a total of 14 ministers).

No presence of ruling family members is observed in the judiciary compared to

their 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

The Sultan's family hold senior positions, including Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Vice President of the Supreme Judicial Council (who serves as President of the Supreme Court), Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Interior, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, President of Sultan Qaboos University, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Central Bank governors and some governor positions.

It is noteworthy 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 significant 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.



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.

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 Interior, Foreign Affairs, Defence, National Guard, and the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, with the exception of the Ministry of Finance. The number of ministers who are family members is 10 out of a total of 35 ministers.

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.

Ruling family members 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 hold 9 ministerial portfolios out of a total of 34 ministerial positions.

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. However, members of the ruling families are not present in the Federal National Council. 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.



04

Methodology and Adoption of Scales



4 Methodology and Adoption of Scales

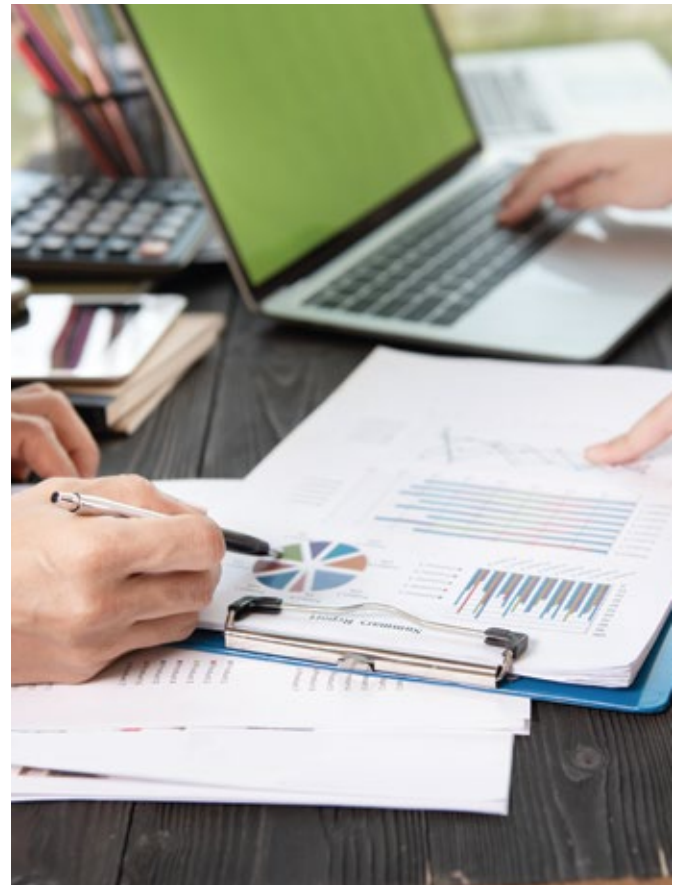
This study has taken for four years to prepare by a team of researchers from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and specialists in the study of the Gulf region, specifically in the fields of political sciences and humanities. The index relied on 10 main scales to measure the level of “Political 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-2023.

Like the two previous editions, this fourth edition relies on the ten scales that consist of sub-elements 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.



4 Methodology and Adoption of Scales

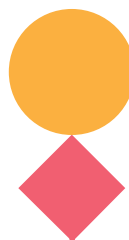
Researchers relied for their information on several sources, namely official government data, official statements, legislation and laws in force, reports of official and civil institutions, data of international organisations and bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and 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 fourth edition (2023) 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-2022 and the year 2023.

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.



4.1 Adopted Scales

Scale 1

Constitutional Life 50 Scores It includes the following elements:	
Constitutional reference: mechanisms for issuance and amendment	10 Scores
Ensuring the right to political participation	15 Scores
Regulatory/Restrictive Laws	15 Scores
Commitment to the provisions of the constitution	10 Scores

Scale 2

General Elections 150 Scores It includes the following elements:	
Electoral processes (governmental, parliamentary, municipal councils)	20 Scores
Governance of the elected institutions (powers / separation of powers / oversight / legislation / accountability / partnership in decision-making / powers to dissolve institutions)	50 Scores
Effectiveness and efficiency of the elected institutions	40 Scores
Mechanism for drafting the electoral system and drawing electoral districts	40 Scores

Scale 3

Political Organisations 100 Scores It includes the following elements:	
Legality of political organisations	30 Scores
Availability of opposition tools	25 Scores
Practitioners' safety	25 Scores
Administrative and financial autonomy	10 Scores
Participation in elections as lists	10 Scores

Scale 4

Civil Society Institutions 100 Scores

It includes the following elements:

Legal environment: ensuring the right of individuals and groups to establish NGOs, public benefit associations and pressure groups	40 Scores
Trade unions and professional associations: legislation / plurality of unions and unions / availability of trade union tools, including the right to strike	40 Scores
Independence of institutions	10 Scores
Constraints and obstacles	10 Scores

Scale 5

Gender Equivalence & Youth Engagement 75 Scores

It includes the following elements:

Empowerment of women: the right to vote / quota in elected councils / access to leadership and senior positions	50 Scores
Engaging youth: voting age / senior positions	25 Scores

Scale 6

Transparency 50 Scores

It includes the following elements:

Information sharing: the right to access, exchange and disseminate information	25 Scores
Independent oversight: actions and performance of the executive, legislative and judicial branches, sources of wealth and expenditure of public funds	25 Scores

Scale 7

Freedom of Opinion & Expression 150 Scores

It includes the following elements:

Press freedoms	30 Scores
Independence of media institutions	30 Scores
Internet censorship	30 Scores
Freedom and safety of individuals when making any critical remarks	30 Scores
Combating hate speech and incitement to violence	30 Scores

Scale 8

Representation of Groups & Minorities 100 Scores

It includes the following elements:

Equality: ensuring that all citizens are equally entitled to full citizenship rights	40 Scores
Discrimination: ensuring that there is no discrimination on political, religious, cultural, regional, racial or class grounds	40 Scores
Proportional representation: ensuring proportionate and fair representation of groups and minorities in state institutions	20 Scores

Scale 9

Foreign Communities 75 Scores

It includes the following elements:

Stable and effective residency: existence of systems that allow the foreigner to reside in a fair and clear manner that guarantees rights, including participating in election of municipal institutions	35 Scores
Trade union / professional representation: the right to membership, election, candidacy, and care of interests	20 Scores
Community activity: the right of communities to organise activities and establish associations and clubs	20 Scores

Scale 10

Access to Leadership & Sensitive Positions 150 Scores

It includes the following elements:

Influence of royal families: representation of family members in senior positions (government ministries and agencies / the judiciary / security and military institutions)	100 Scores
Nationalisation of positions: the permeability and priority of citizens in accessing leadership and sensitive positions in the judicial, security and military agencies	50 Scores

4.2 Scale Adoption Factors

- The scales included in this index were adopted based on several factors, namely
- In-depth readings in International Bill of Human Rights: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights – United Nations General Assembly – December 10, 1948; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly – December 16, 1966; and the Covenant International Conference on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly of 16 December 1966.
- A comparative study involving other Indexes, including Freedom Index (Freedom House), Arab Democracy Scale (Arab Reform Initiative), the World Press Freedom Ranking (Reporters Without Borders), and other international and regional standards.
- The extent of the ability to access and analyse information, and verify its sources.
- The ability to apply and measure these scales – as much as possible – to all countries according to the nature of governance systems and the structure of the political system.
- The results of the workshops in which a group of experts, academics and concerned people participated, as well as the technical notes received from the consultants.



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