



# مؤشر المشاركة السياسية في دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي 2025

## Political Participation Index in the GCC States 2025

**Gulf House**  البيت الخليجي  
Studies & Publishing للدراسات والمؤشر

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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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# 04

## Introduction

# 06

## Summary of Results

09	State of Kuwait	15	Kingdom of Bahrain
11	State of Qatar	17	United Arab Emirates
13	State of Oman	19	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

# 21

## Presentation of Results

22	Scale One: Constitutional Life	50	Scale Seven: Freedom of Opinion and Expression
26	Scale Two: General Elections	56	Scale Eight: Representation of Groups and Minorities
32	Scale Three: Political Organisations	61	Scale Nine: Foreign Communities
36	Scale Four: Civil Society Institutions	66	Scale Ten: Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions
41	Scale Five: Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement		
46	Scale Six: Transparency		

# 70

## Methodology and Adoption of Scales

71	Adopted Scales	73	Scale Adoption Factors
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# 01

## Introduction

**The sixth edition (2025) of the GCC Political Participation Index presents the most important changes and developments in the six GCC countries: the Kingdom of Bahrain, the State of Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.**

This Index provides an annual overview and scientific monitoring of the degree of political, social and cultural participation in these countries and is unique in being the first specialized research publication concerned with measuring the degree of political participation in the GCC countries. It is characterized by combining a combination of conceptual contexts (academics, international conventions and agreements, knowledge and practical experiences) with the particularities, conditions of origin and the structure of governance systems in the GCC States.

This sixth edition provides an assessment of the transformation paths in the performance of the six GCC countries towards enabling or restricting the ability of their citizens to participate in tangible politics, as well as explaining the apparent reasons for the improvement or decline of these countries in their constitutional articles, local laws, institutional structures, declared strategies and executive exercises, as well as the interaction of local communities with these variables over the past five years.

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.

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 key question related to the extent and proportion of the GCC states’ political engagement of their citizens, and the consequent desire and ability of citizens themselves (individuals and groups) to participate in decision-making and influence state policies, legislation, and all aspects of the political, social and economic fields.

This Index takes advantage of regional and international indices, especially with regard to some adopted 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 states). This specificity has enabled the researchers to formulate the index benchmarks with the desired level of accuracy and relevance.

The Index is based on describing and determining the nature of possible political participation in the research countries based on the political history of these countries, hereditary systems of governance, the nature of their communities and local cultures. While there is a steady conceptual consensus that political participation is an inherent component of the achievement of a modern and democratic state, it is, in practice, the 'mechanism' that guarantees individuals the realization of their 'aspirations' and the ability to influence political, economic, social and cultural decision-making in order to achieve 'development' and "public welfare".

Despite the many definitions, and the degree of agreement on the definition of "political participation", this Index defines it as "the actual and effective involvement (direct and indirect) of individuals and groups' contribution to and influence on decision-making processes, in the administration and

representation of the state, in making development policies and in the ways of spending wealth".

While researchers have not neglected to monitor traditional patterns of participation such as tribal and family consultations and social spaces in decision-making, the Index's measures are concerned with the extent to which these patterns of participation are institutionalized and transformed into modern and effective constitutional and legal establishments that allow each citizen the ability to represent themselves or choose their representatives in the administration of public affairs.

The index seeks to highlight the most prominent successes and failures in terms of empowering Gulf citizens and facilitating their political participation and contribution to community development and decision-making.

The selection of countries in this Index was based on the fact that they fall within the field of interest and work of the Gulf House for Studies and Publishing. Historical, cultural and social commonalities and similarities in governance systems (hereditary monarchies) between these countries have also contributed to consistent and homogeneous scales of the Index.



# 02

## Summary of Results



The results of the sixth edition of the Political Participation Index in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries reveal that the paths of modernization and change are still concentrated in the social and economic aspects in light of the decline of public spaces in political expression and criticism.

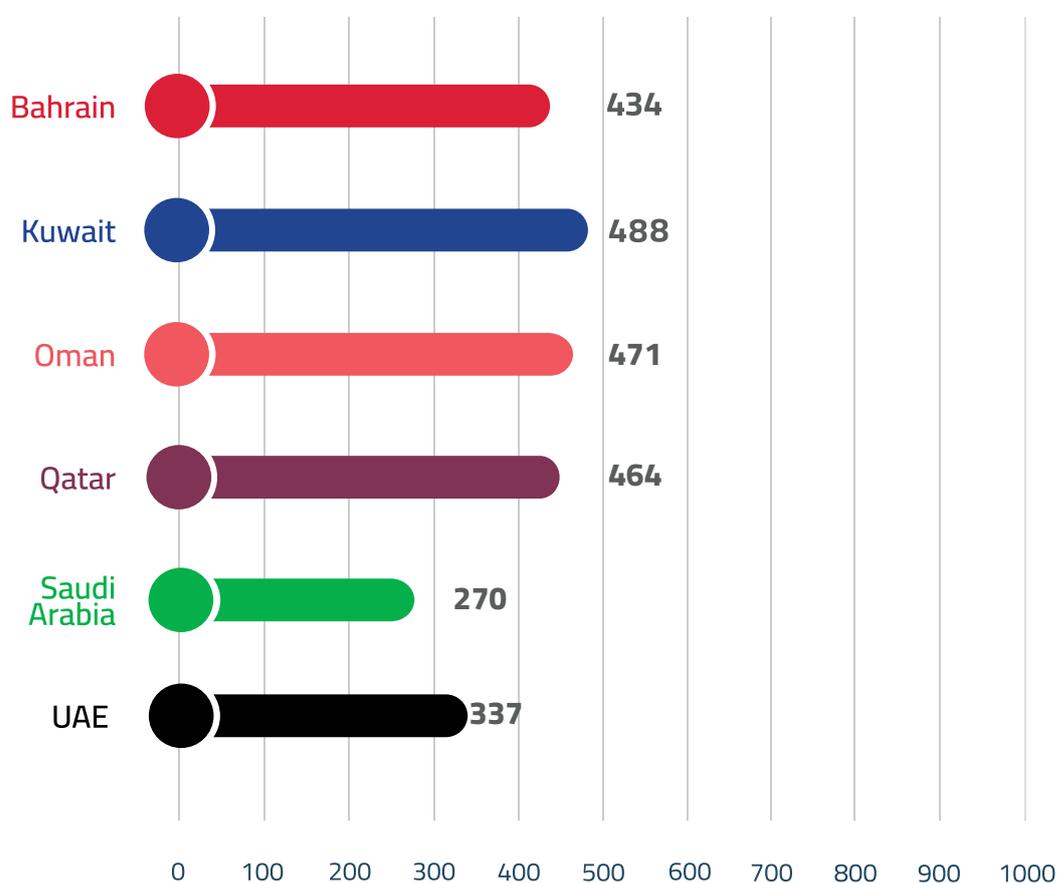


illustration 1: General Results of the Index 2025

The Gulf states do not tend to develop mechanisms or make changes to their political systems to frame people's participation in decision-making on the patterns of Western regimes, and it is noted that these countries tend to adopt traditional and historical establishments (the principle of shura (local councils and diwans, tribal ties, social relations) in political communication with their societies.

The results of the previous six years indicate the trend of the GCC States towards convergence in the patterns of running political systems and in the laws and executive mechanisms in the management of public affairs, which leads to the conclusion that there is an exchange of experiences or an interinfluence due to the similarity of governance systems and the convergence of social structures. While Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain have seen declines in the governance of elected institutions, the UAE and Saudi Arabia have made significant progress in the areas of women's empowerment, youth engagement, and facilitation of civil society institutions.

Steps to enhance the representation of minorities and various components of society appear slow or declining, and some practices and laws have disrupted effective participation and proportionate representation of some groups and minorities, and stateless people are emerging as one of the most prominent marginalized groups in these countries.

The formation of political organizations, the availability of opposition means, and ensuring the safety of activists remain serious challenges across

GCC countries. With the exception of Bahrain, the rest of the GCC states criminalize or do not legalize the formation of political organizations.

While powers of oversight, accountability, and questioning in the legislative or advisory authorities in the GCC States are predominantly absent or restricted, channels of civilian community oversight over the performance and expenditure of government agencies remain limited.

Despite the increasing number of civil society organizations established in the GCC States, the powers and roles of these institutions appear to be limited or curbed, and the laws regulating the work of these institutions impose severe restrictions on the activities and sources of funding.

Foreign communities benefit from ongoing legislative reforms in the areas of accommodation, employment, and social activities, but they lack effective union representation in most countries.

Members of the ruling families in most GCC States hold high positions in governments and senior positions in security, military, and judicial institutions, limiting access to these positions for the rest of societal groups.



## 02 Ranking of states on the index

- 1- State of Kuwait: (488 points)
- 2- Sultanate of Oman: (471 points)
- 3- State of Qatar: (464 points)
- 4- Kingdom of Bahrain: (434 points)
- 5- United Arab Emirates: (337 points)
- 6- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: (270 points)

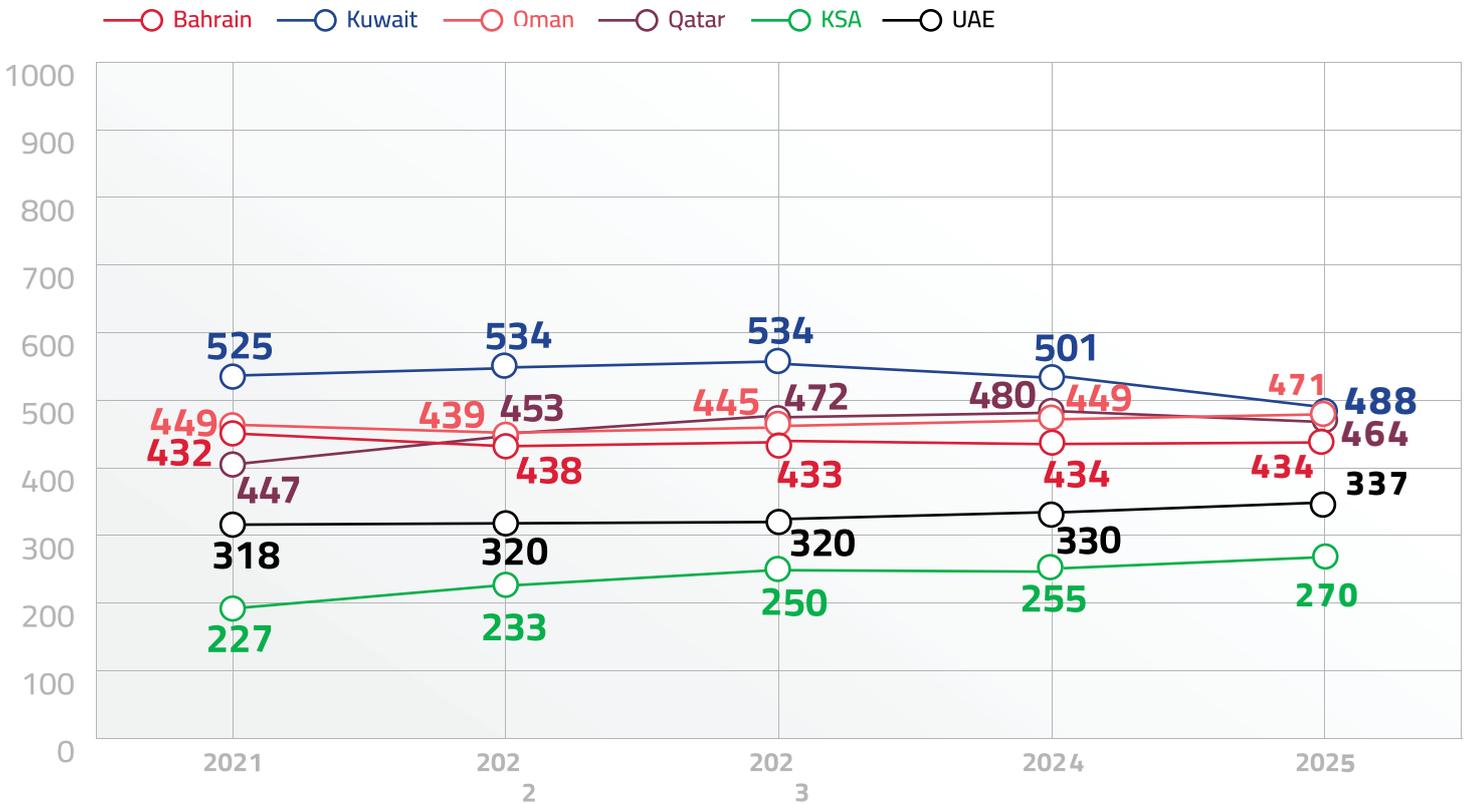


illustration 2: the extent of change on the index between two years 2021 and 2025



# 2.1

## STATE OF KUWAIT

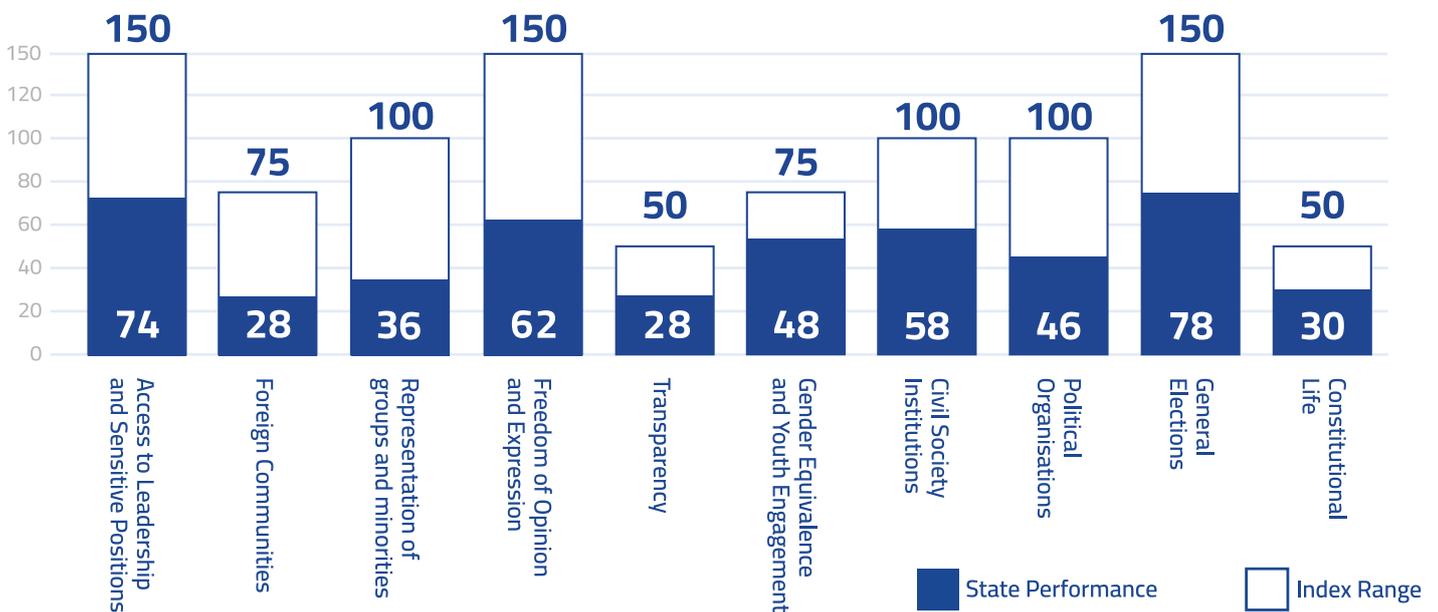


illustration 3: Kuwait - Metric results 2025

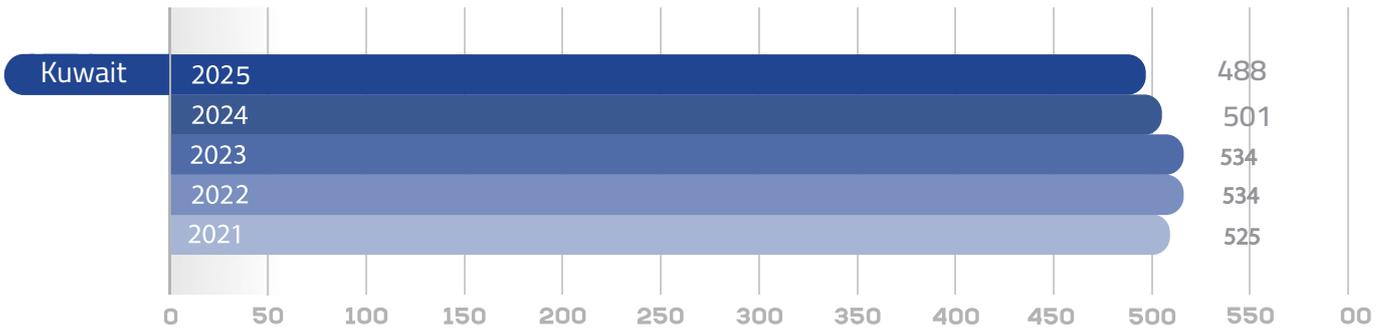


illustration 4: Index overall results between 2021 and 2025

The results of the State of Kuwait this year indicate that the performance continued to decline by 13 points, with the decline in the Scale of Representation of Groups and Minorities (-7 points), the Scale of Freedom of Opinion and Expression (-4 points), the Scale of Transparency (-3 points), and the Scale of Foreign communities (-1 point), while it advanced on the Scale of Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement (+2 points).

Although Kuwait maintained the first rank in the Political Participation Index, it fell below the barrier of 500 points out of the total mark of the Index (1,000 points), recording 488 points.

Kuwait topped three scales (Constitutional Life, General Elections, and Transparency) and shared with Qatar topping the Scale of Freedom of Opinion and Expression. Off the line, the state bottomed the Scale of Foreign Communities.

The most prominent challenges in Kuwait are related to the governance of elected institutions, the role of the legislative authority (the National Assembly), the regularity of elections, and the guarantee of equal citizenship rights. The issues of empowerment of Kuwaiti women and their representation in the executive and legislative branches are also highlighted, as well as the legislation to the framework of political organizations, the resolution of the "Bidun" issue, addressing the laws that prevent social groups from accessing senior positions and participating in elections. Other pending issues include empowering youth and representing them in the executive branch and ensuring stable and effective residency for foreign and expatriate workers.

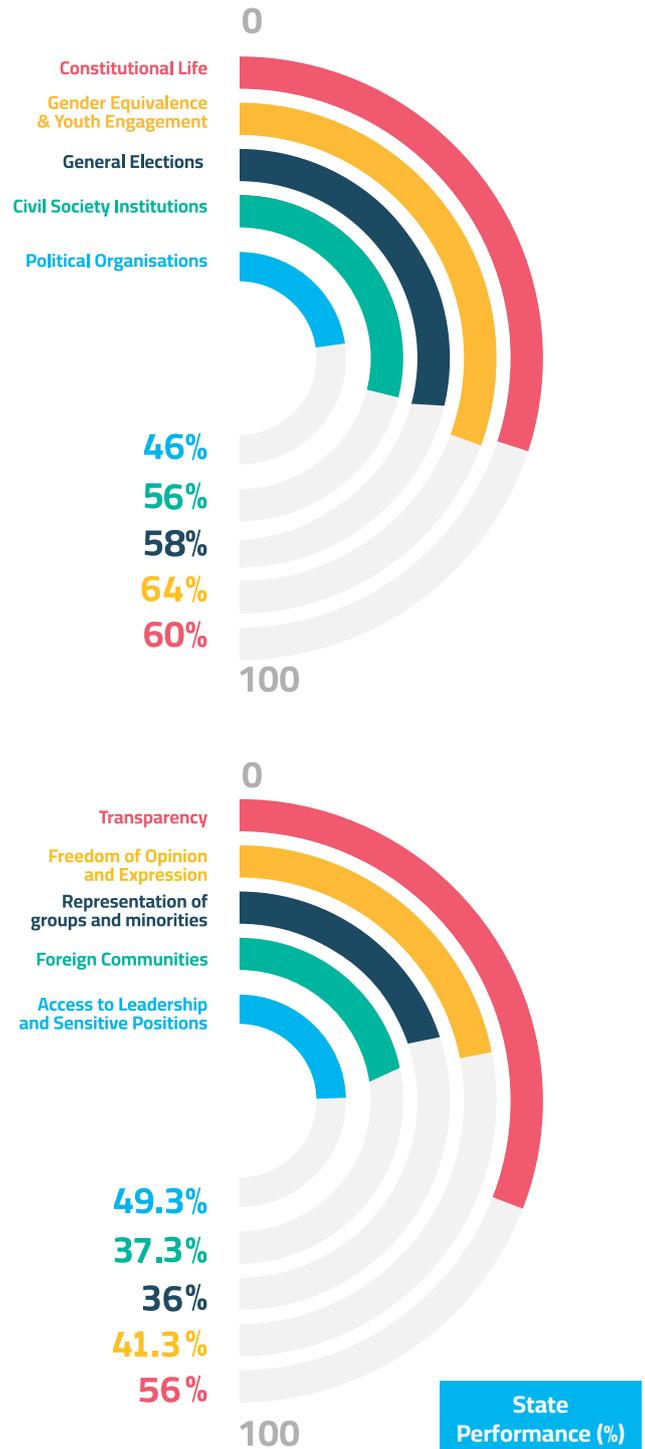


illustration 5: Kuwait – Political Participation 2025



# 2.2

## SULTANATE OF OMAN

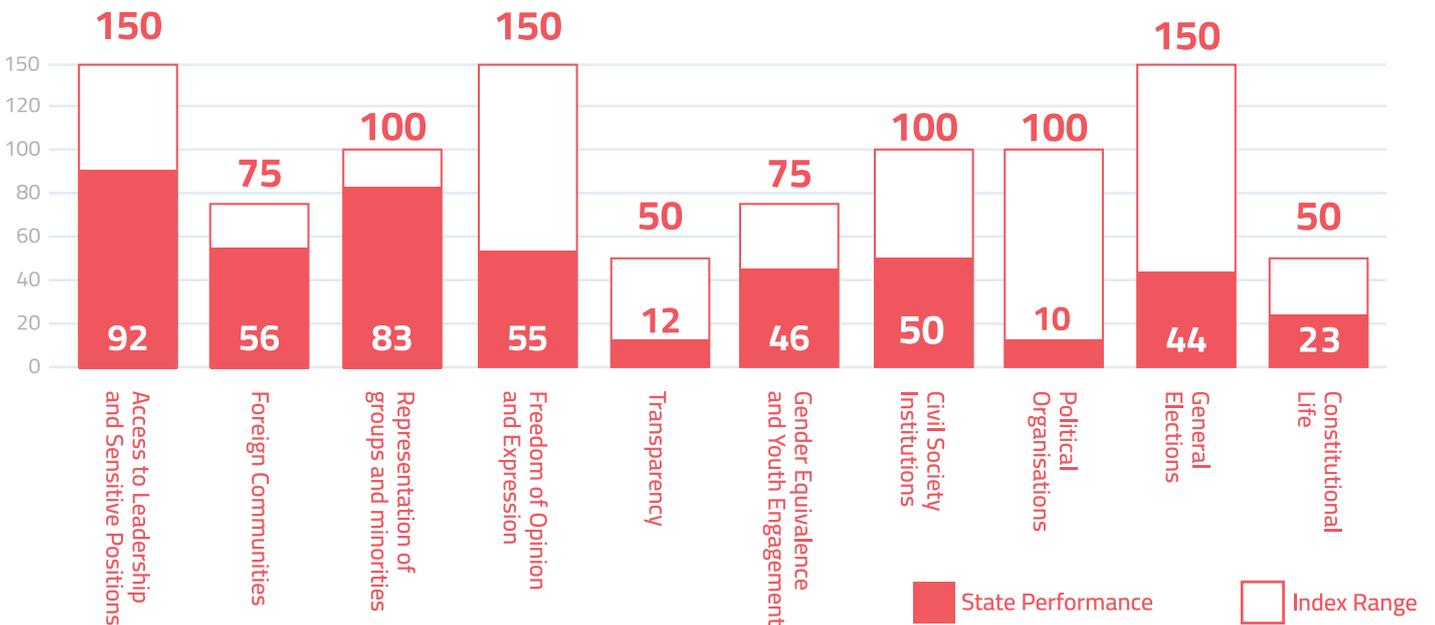


illustration 9: Oman - Metric results 2025



## 2.2 State of Oman

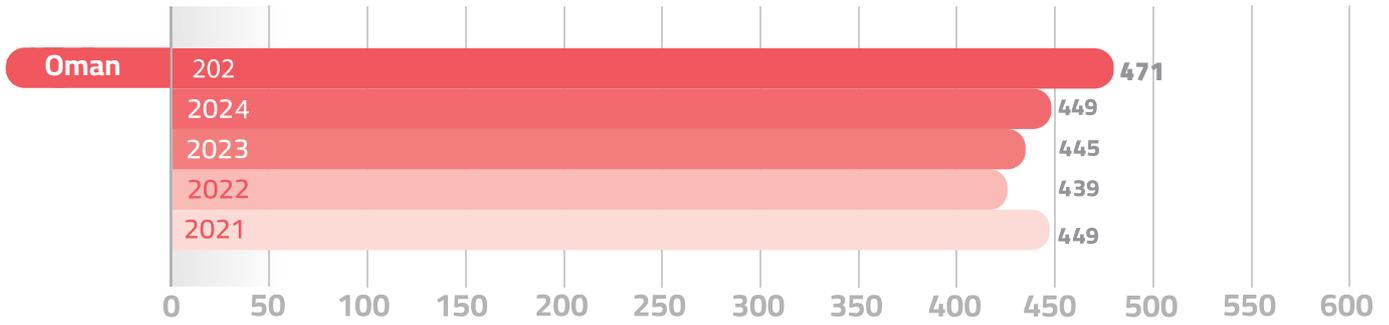


illustration 10: Index overall results between 2021 and 2025

Oman continued to improve its performance and achieved the highest progress among the GCC countries (+22 points), thus advancing to the second place in the ranking of the Index with a score of 471 points (out of 1,000).

The Sultanate has advanced on the Scale of Constitutional Life (+2 points), the Scale of Political Organizations (+6 points), the Scale of Civil Society Institutions (+9 points), and the Scale of Freedom of Opinion and Expression (+5 points).

The Sultanate topped the Scale of Representation of Groups and Minorities (83 out of 100 points), while bottomed the Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement (46 out of 75 Points).

The most prominent challenges in Oman are related to the powers of legislative institutions, the formation of political organizations, the absence of a clear policy of encouraging women's candidacy and support in elections, as well as the absence of a national policy or strategy aimed at engaging and empowering youth.

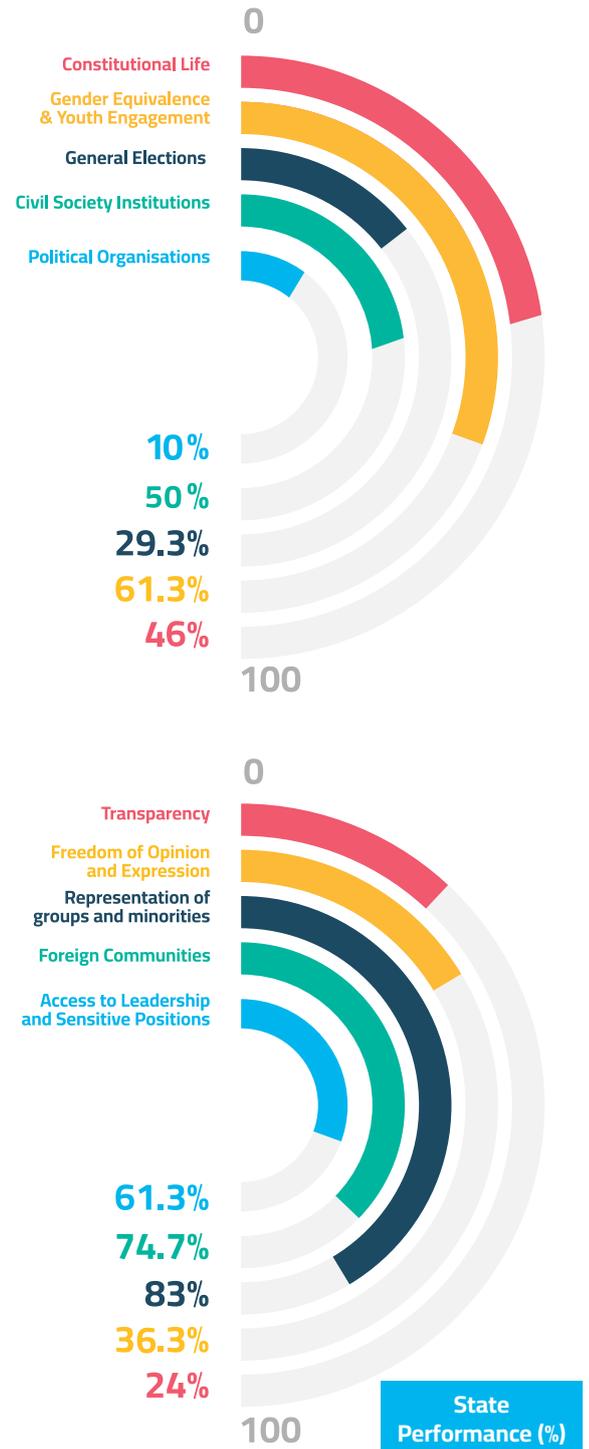


illustration 11: Oman – Political Participation 2025



# 2.3

## STATE OF QATAR

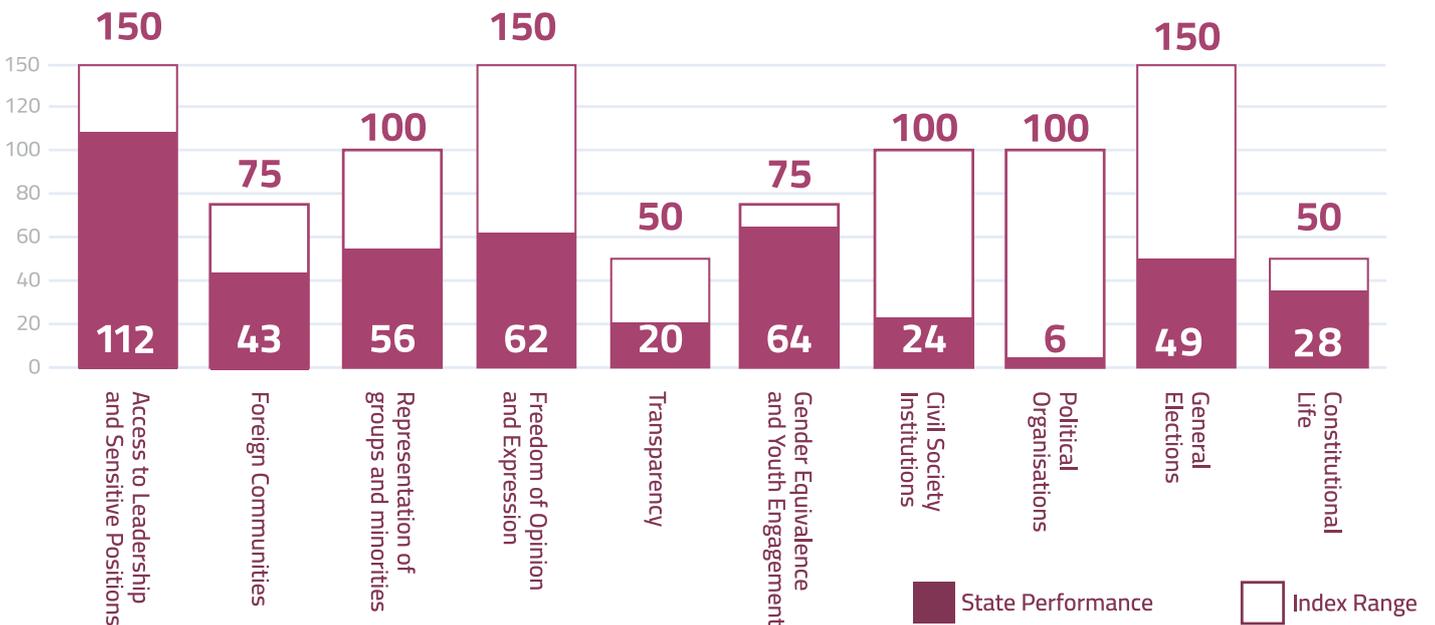


illustration 6: Qatar - Metric results 2025



## 2.2 State of Qatar

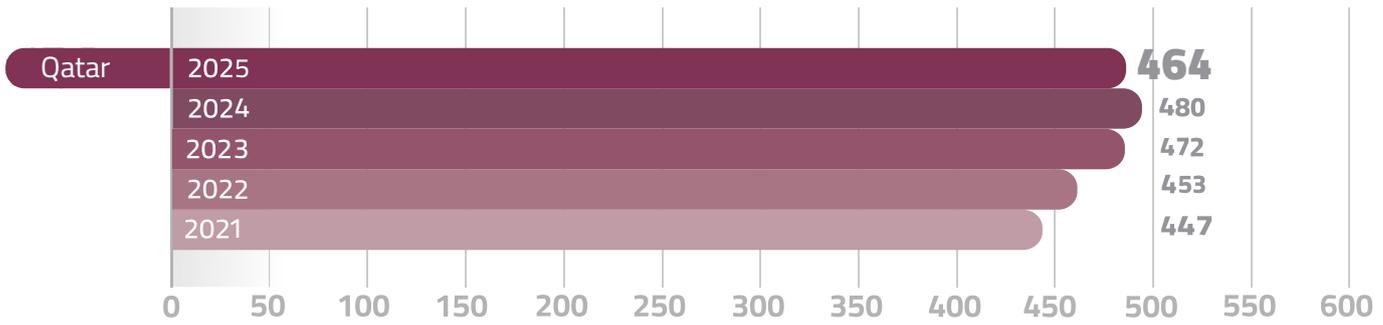


illustration 7: Index overall results between 2021 and 2025

After years of progress, Qatar recorded the largest decline among the GCC countries (-16 points) after a referendum cancelled the elections of the legislative authority (the Shura Council), and the country also dropped from second to third place in the Index ranking, recording 464 points.

Qatar fell on the Scale of Constitutional Life (-5 points), the Scale of General Elections (-9 points), and the Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions Scale (8 points). In contrast, the country advanced on the Representation of Groups and Minorities Scale (6 points).

While the state has retreated from the top of the Scale of Constitutional Life, it continued to top the Scale of Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions. Qatar also shared with Kuwait topping the Scale of Freedom of Opinion and Expression.

Qatar remains low on the Scale of Political Organizations (6 out of 100) as challenges to the legitimacy of organized political action and the safety of practitioners emerge. Similarly, on the Scale of Civil Society Institutions (24 out of 100), where the laws place restrictions on institutions and do not allow them to operate independently.

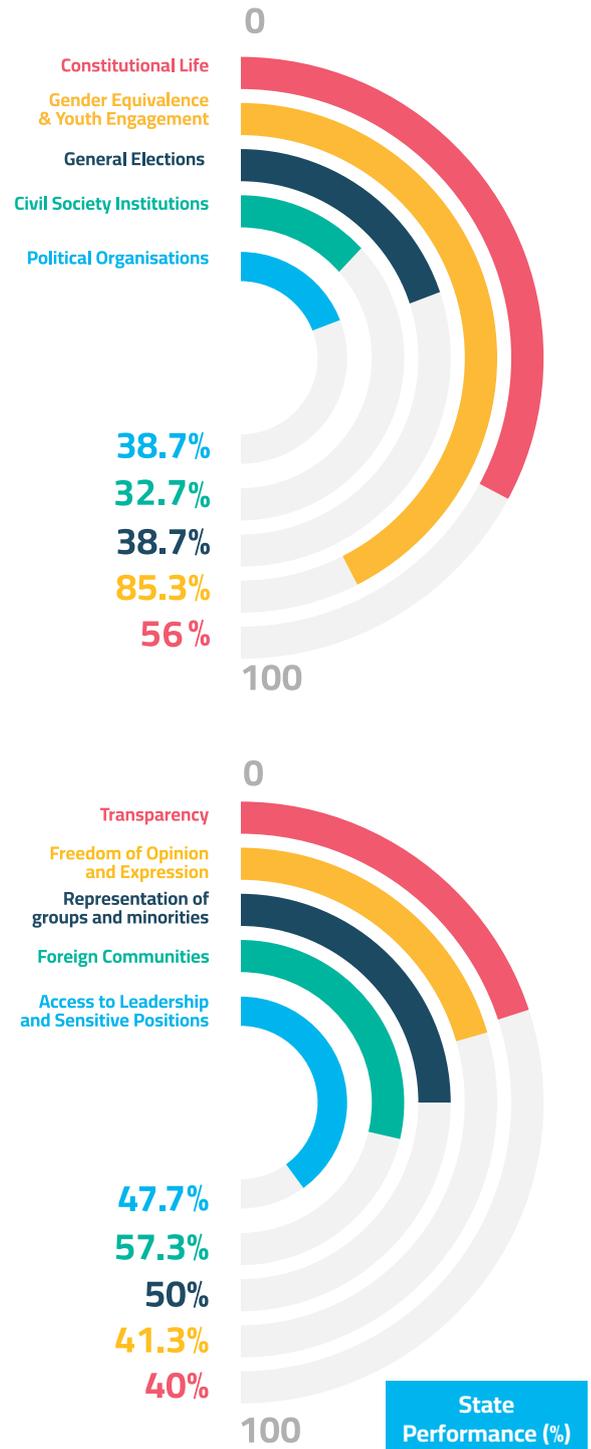


illustration 8: Qatar – Political Participation 2025



# 2.4

## KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

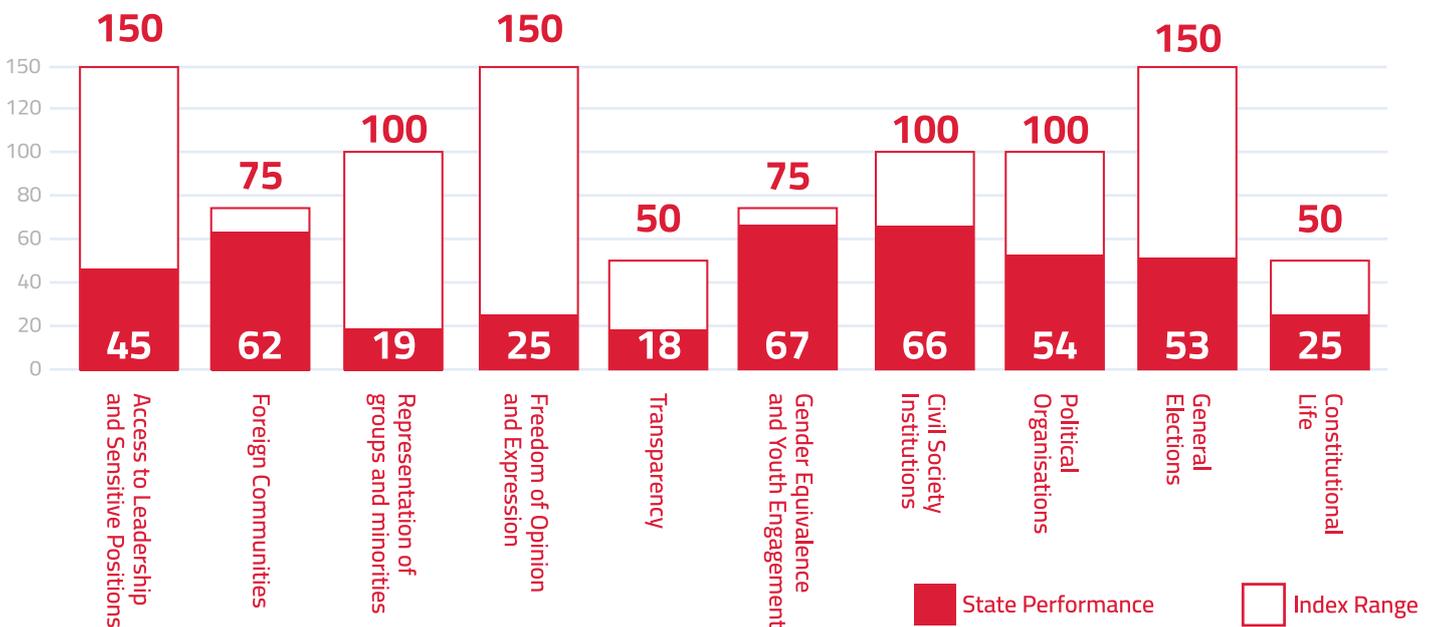


illustration 12: Bahrain - Metric results 2025



## 2.4 Kingdom of Bahrain

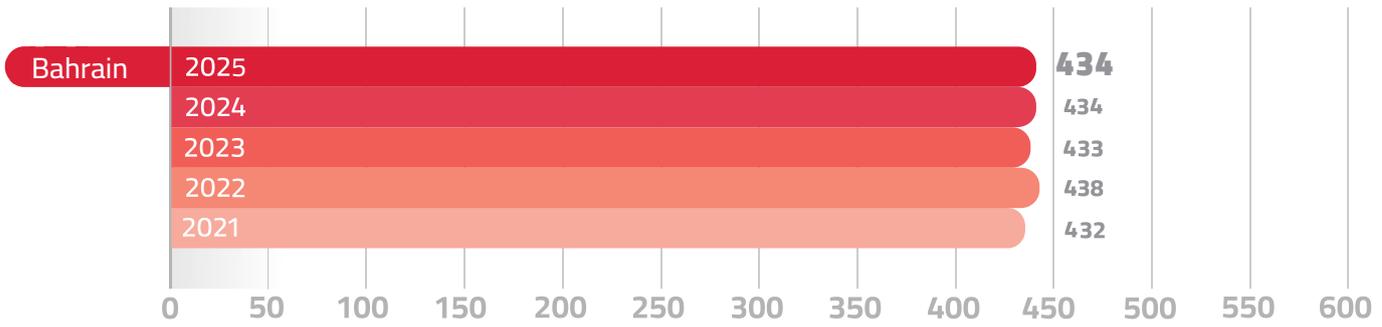


illustration 13: Index overall results between 2021 and 2025

Bahrain continued to rank fourth with no change in its scores (434 points) out of the total mark of the Index.

Bahrain maintained the top ranks on the Scale of Political Organizations, the Scale of Civil Society Institutions, and the Scale of Foreign Communities. On the other side, the Kingdom has been at the bottom of the Scale of Representation of Groups and Minorities and the Scale of Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions, and has shared with Saudi Arabia bottoming the Scale of Freedom of Opinion and Expression.

The most prominent challenges for Bahrain in ensuring proportionate representation of groups and minorities, promoting equal citizenship, ensuring freedom of opinion and expression, and the accessibility of citizens to hold leadership and sensitive positions.

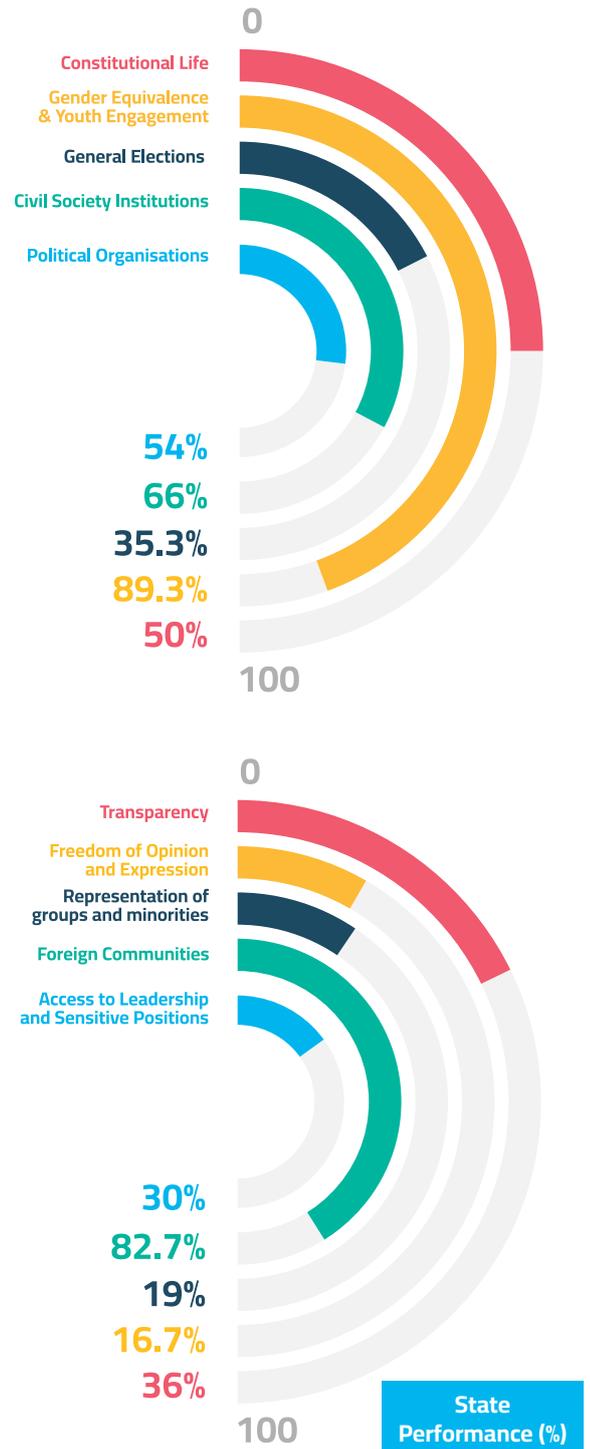


illustration 14: Bahrain – Political Participation 2025



# 2.5

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

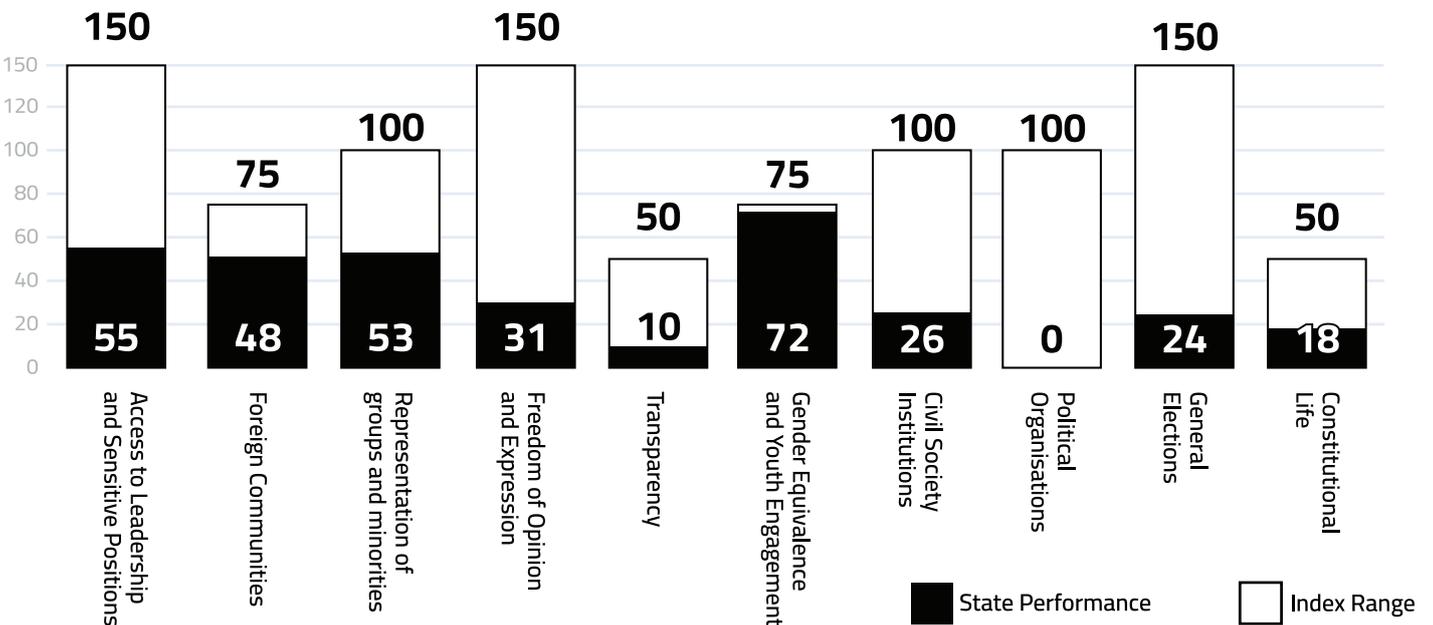


illustration 15: UAE - Metrics Results 2025

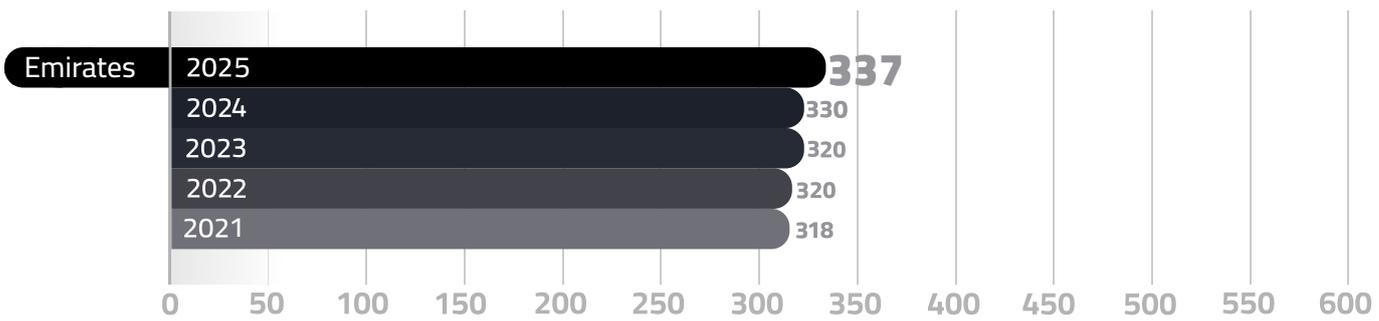


illustration 16: Index overall results between 2021 and 2025

For the second year in a row, the UAE continued to progress (+7 points), achieving a total of 337 points (out of 1,000).

The UAE advanced on the Scale of Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement (+2 points), the Scale of Representation of Groups and Minorities (+3 points), and the Scale of Foreign Communities (+2 points).

While the UAE maintained topping the Scale of Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement, it remained with a “zero” mark on the Scale of Political Organizations and a low result on the Scale of General Elections (24 out of 150 points). The UAE ranked the bottom of the Scale of Transparency (10 out of 50 points).

The most prominent challenges in the UAE are related to the powers of legislative institutions and their election mechanisms, as well as the formation of political organizations, ensuring freedom of opinion and expression, and providing independent societal observation over the state’s activities and finances.

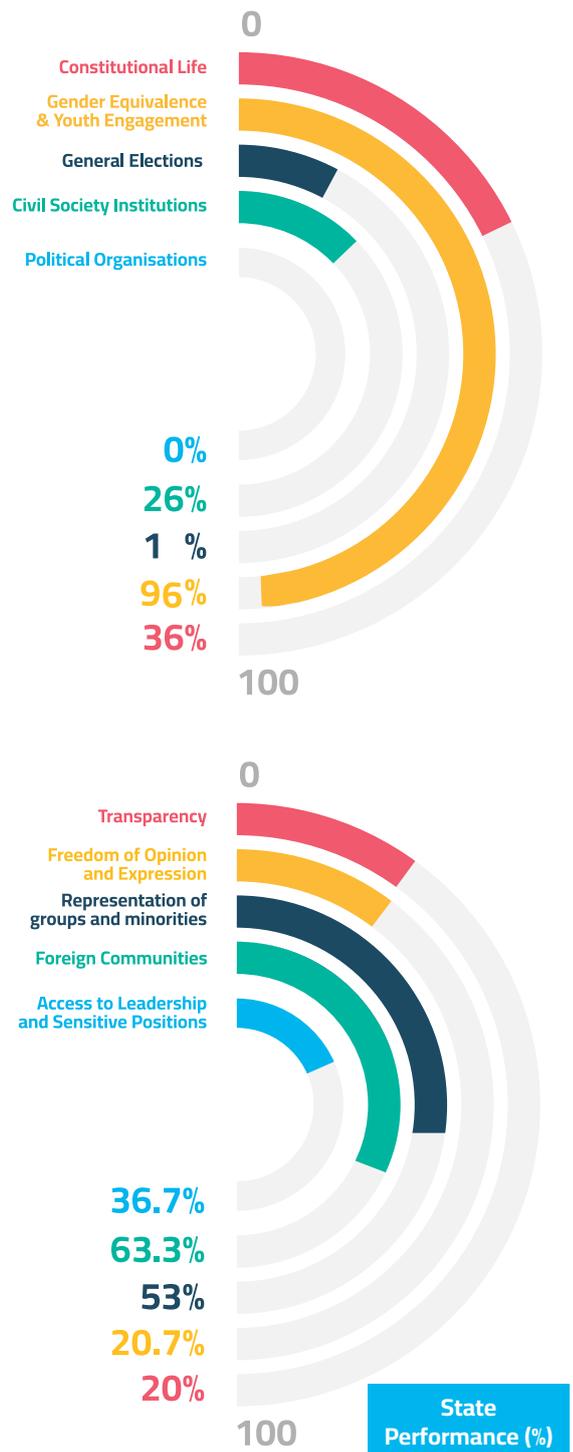


Illustration 17: UAE – Political Participation 2025



# 2.6

## KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

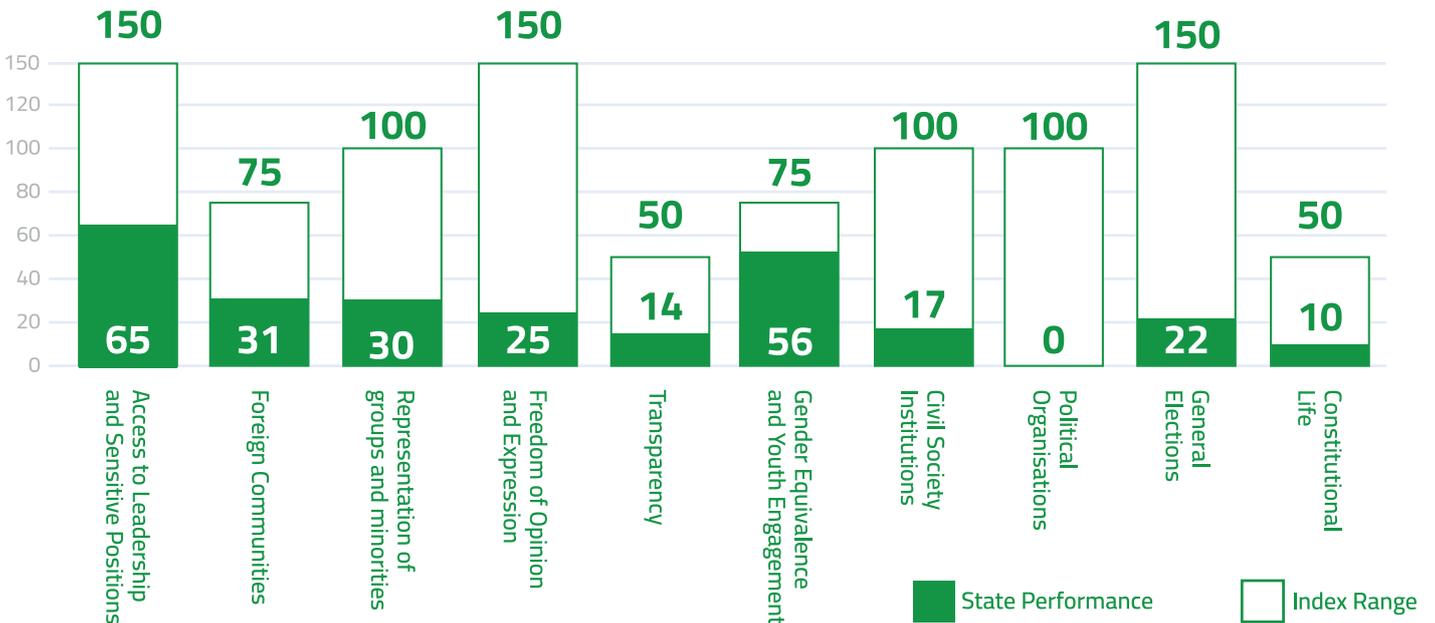


illustration 18: Saudi Arabia - Results for metrics 2025

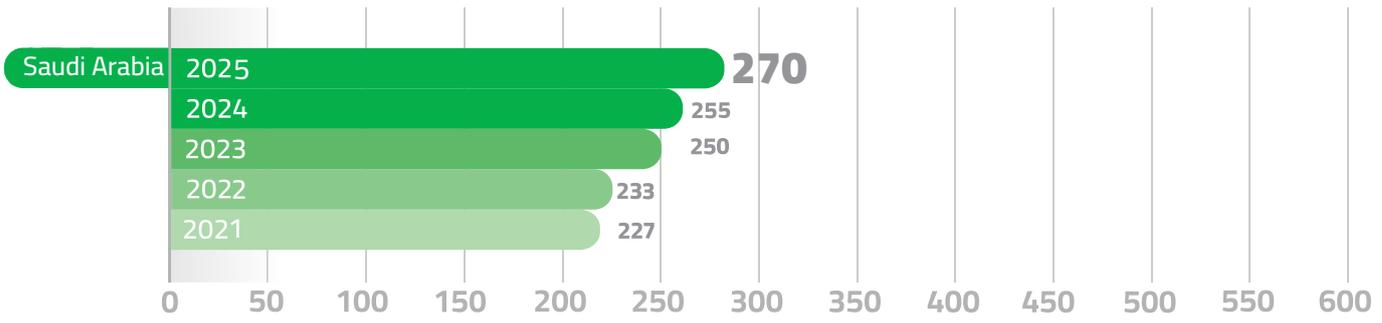


illustration 19: Index overall results between 2021 and 2025

Saudi Arabia has followed an upward trajectory during the years of monitoring, and in the sixth edition of the Index, it achieved an increase (+15 points) to reach 270 points out of 1,000. Despite this, the Kingdom remained at the bottom of the ranking among the GCC States.

Saudi Arabia continued to progress on the Scale of Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement (+7 points), and it also advanced on the Scale of Representation of Groups and Minorities (+8 points).

For the third year in a row, Saudi Arabia did not witness any decline in any of the Index Scales, but it remained at a “zero” score on the Scale of Political Organizations, and shared with Bahrain the bottom of the Scale of Freedom of Opinion and Expression (25 out of 150 points). Saudi Arabia ranked bottom on the Scales of (Constitutional life, General Elections, Civil Society Institutions, and Foreign Communities).

Saudi Arabia faces challenges regarding the constitutional system, the powers of legislative institutions, the regularity of elections, the formation

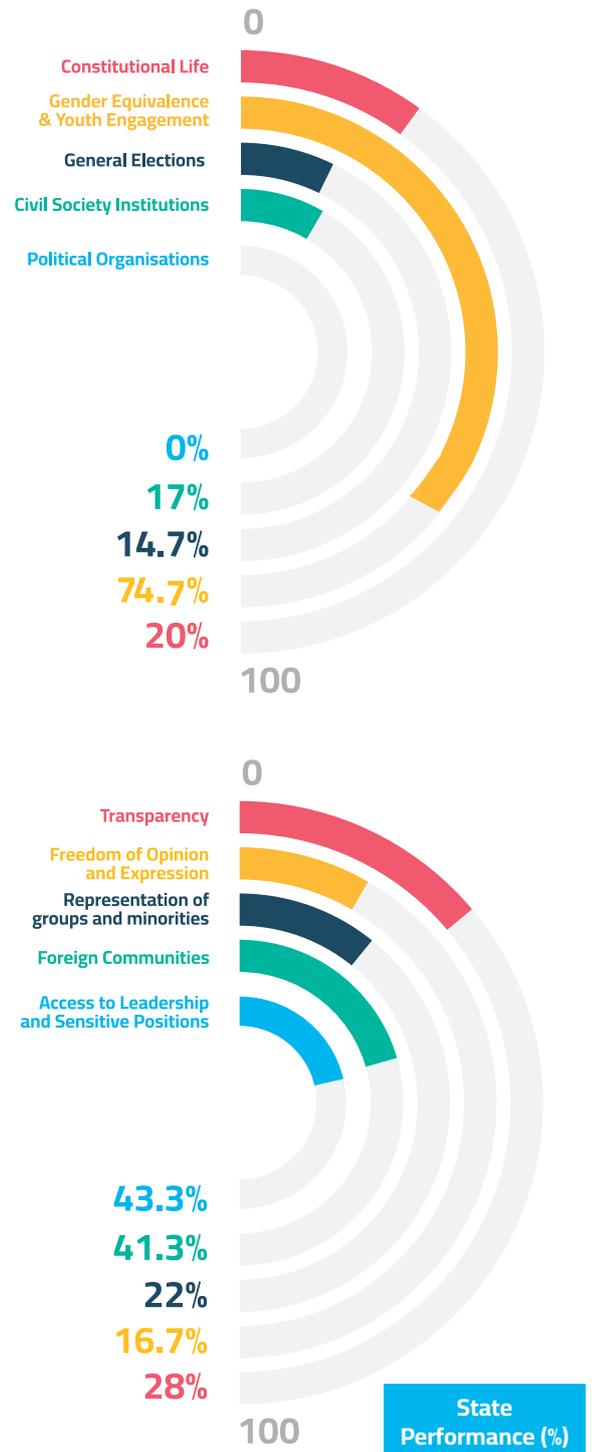


Illustration 20: KSA – Political Participation 2025

# 03

## Presentation of Results





# 3.1 Scale One: Constitutional Life

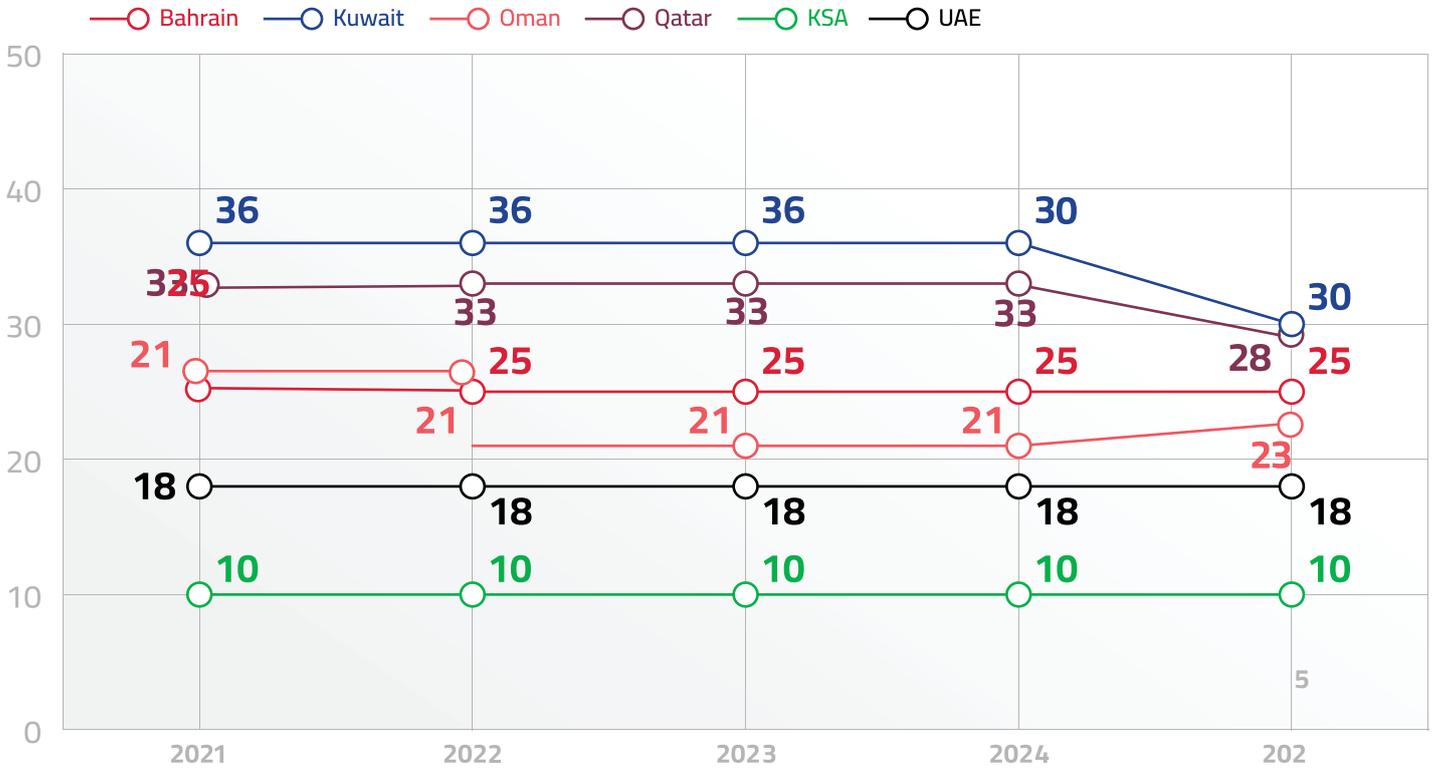


illustration 22: Constitutional Life Scale Results 2021-2025

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	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	7	4	1	3
Regulating / restricting laws 15 scores	4	7	5	9	3	5
Compliance with the provisions of the Constitution 10 scores	7	6	8	8	4	5
<b>Total 50 scores</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>

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 decree. 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 amendments approved by two-thirds of the members of the National Assembly, which includes the Chamber of Deputies (elected) and the Shura Chamber (appointed by the King).

Bahrain has a good package of laws regulating candidacy and election, but some of them include obstacles or exceptions for some groups, especially the Law on the Exercise of Political Rights, which prevents the leaders and members of actual political societies dissolved by a court ruling from running for the House of Representatives.

In June 2022, Bahrain continued to restrict the areas of political participation and an amendment was issued to the Social, Cultural and Sports Associations and Clubs Law, which stipulated that any member of a political association, a practitioner of political work, or a member of the legislative authority would be prohibited



## State of Kuwait

Some articles of the constitution are still pending against the backdrop of the Amiri order issued on May 10, 2024, to dissolve the National Assembly for a period of “not more than 4 years.” The suspended articles “51, 65 (paragraphs two and three), 71 (paragraph two), 79, 107, 174 and 181”, were related to the elected National Assembly. This is the third parliamentary pause in Kuwait’s political history, where similar actions were taken in 1976 and 1986.

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.





## State 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.

Article 12 of the Basic Law provides for the right to participate in public affairs, and the 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.

In 2006, a royal decree was issued to establish the "Allegiance Commission" (appointed by the king and limited to the sons and grandchildren of the founding King, Abdulaziz Al Saud). The commission has jurisdiction over nominating the king or nominating a replacement to be named crown prince.



## 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 Two: General Elections

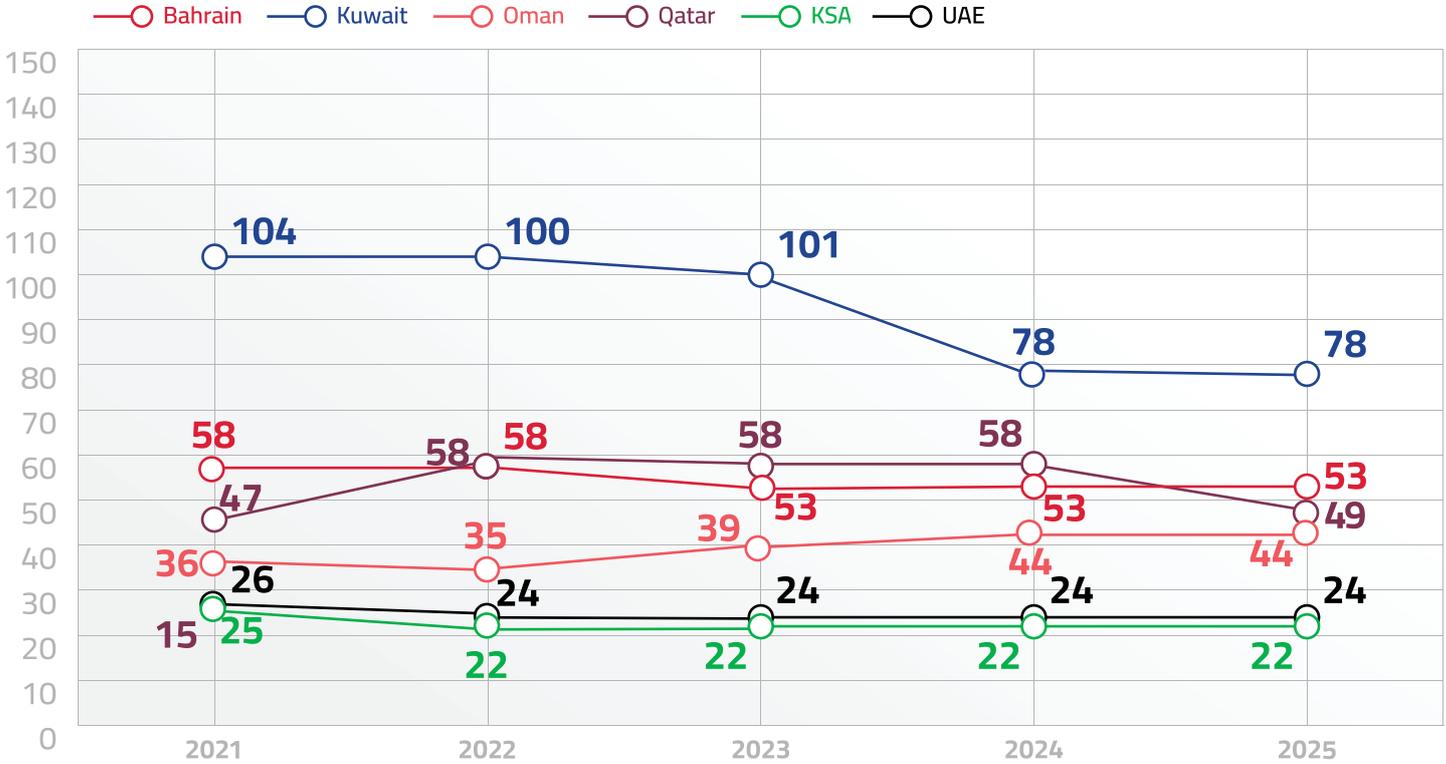


illustration 22: General Election Scale Results 2020-2024

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
<b>Electoral Areas</b> (governmental, representative and municipal councils) <b>20 scores</b>	8	5	7	5	2	3
<b>Power of elected institutions</b> (authority / separation of powers / oversight / legislation / accountability /partnership in decision making / powers to dissolve institutions) <b>50 scores</b>	14	24	11	22	6	9
<b>Effectiveness and efficacy of elected institutions</b> <b>40 scores</b>	14	18	10	12	6	9
<b>Mechanism for drafting the electoral system and drawing districts</b> <b>40 scores</b>	17	31	16	10	8	3
<b>Total 150 scores</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>

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



## Kingdom of Bahrain

On June 19, 2024, Decree-Law No. 7 was issued amending Article 28 of Decree-Law No. (15) of 2002 Concerning the Shura Council and the Council of Representatives, regarding the revocation of the membership of elected MPs. The new amendments granted the Court of Cassation the power to revoke the membership of the Council of Representatives “if the member loses the confidence or respect of the Council or fails to fulfill the duties of membership... Official bodies may, at any time, request the Court of Cassation to rule on the invalidation of a member’s membership in those cases.”

In November 2022, Bahrain witnessed legislative and municipal elections, the sixth since the return of constitutional life in 2002, amid the absence of the opposition, which decided to boycott the elections. That Elections witnessed 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. 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.

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 – through this mechanism – has been reported, 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



## State of Kuwait

Kuwait remained low on this Scale due to the dissolution of the National Assembly and the suspension of parliamentary life under the Emiri Decree issued on May 10 of the same year, which suspended key constitutional articles related to the powers of parliament for a period not exceeding four years. This decision marked a major shift in the constitutional structure of the political system.

The dissolution of the council led to a legislative vacuum that was now being filled by the government in consultation with the emir. This has also disrupted the National Assembly's governance and constitutional powers.

In the last elections, a disparity was observed between the number of voters in the five electoral districts, and the government voluntarily abstained from voting in presidential elections and membership of committees in the National Assembly in the 2022 and 2023 chambers, which allowed elected deputies to elect the occupants of these positions without government interference.

The National Assembly, which has been dissolved 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).

suspended, has relatively influential powers and broad authority to legislate and monitor the performance of the government. The National Assembly has the constitutional right to discuss decisions taken by the government, direct questions and interpellations to ministers and the prime minister, submit requests for discussion or form investigation committees, receive and address petitions and complaints from citizens, and it also has the right – after the interpellation process – to withdraw confidence in the minister concerned or submit a letter to the Emir that it is not possible to cooperate with the Prime Minister, and the Emir is supposed to replace the Prime Minister in this case.

Article 82 of the Constitution limits the right to run for the National Assembly in Kuwait to those who hold nationality "by foundation", namely Kuwaitis who are defined by law as "settlers in Kuwait before 1920", and the law also prohibits those with acquired nationality from voting until 20 years have elapsed since their naturalization. According to the electoral law, members of the armed forces and police are denied the right to vote.



## State of Oman

The Sultanate of Oman enjoys stability in the periodic general elections, both for the Shura Council and the municipal councils.

In October 2023, the Sultanate witnessed the elections for the tenth term of the Shura Council, and the percentage of registered voters reached 49.67% of the total number of Omanis over the age of 21, and 65.88% of the registered voters cast their votes. While the Supreme Elections Committee did not receive any complaints or reports of any violations or illegal practices, it was noted that enhancing the integrity and transparency of elections and facilitating the voting process using electronic applications that take into account the needs of voters with visual and hearing impairments.

Oman witnessed legislative amendments to the competencies of the Ministry of Interior that transferred the competence of governors' affairs to municipal councils, which were granted limited decentralization in decision-making related to municipal services and fees, thus witnessing a slight development in the field of separation of the powers of the Shura Council and municipal

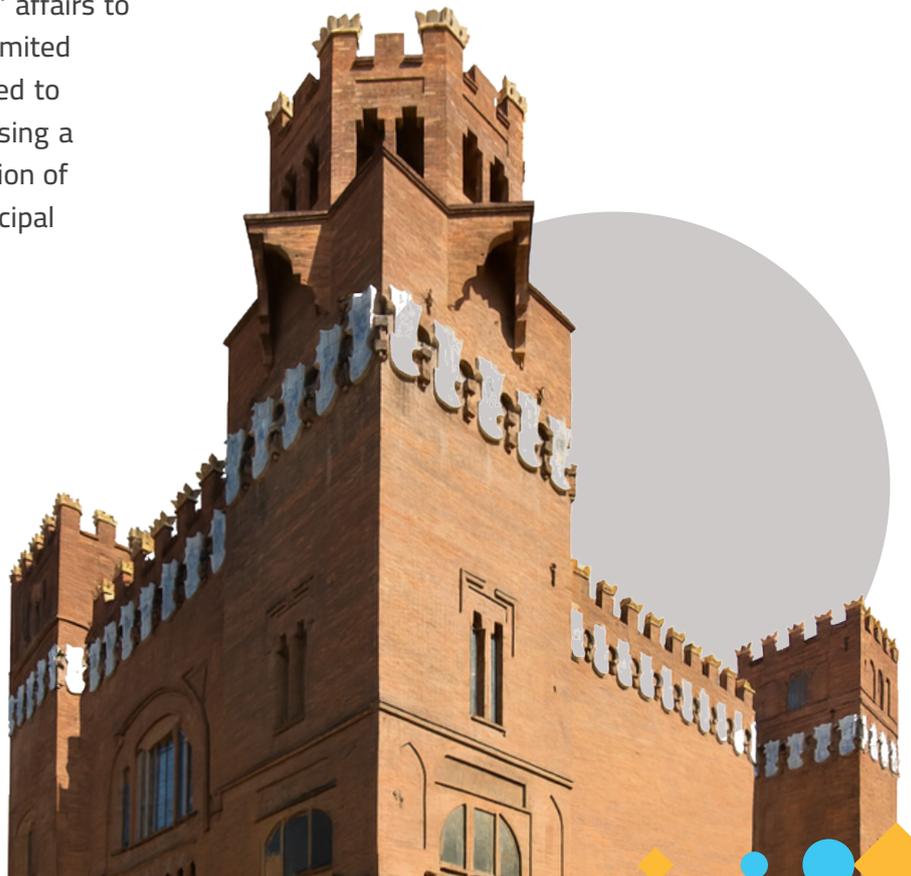
councils in terms of law and practice, and the latter now has a more specific role in the administrative apparatus of the state and local administration.

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

Omani law explicitly prohibits all members of the security and military services from running or voting until two years have elapsed since their departure.

The law does not regulate campaign financing, but increases penalties for buying and selling votes.

The Council of Oman Law (promulgated by Royal Decree No. 7/2021) grants the elected Shura Council limited oversight powers, particularly with regard to





## State of Qatar

Qatar dropped 9 points on this Scale after the abolition of the right to elect two-thirds of the members of the legislative authority (the Shura Council). Article 77 of the constitution stipulates that "the Shura Council shall consist of at least forty-five members, and the appointment of members shall be issued by an Emiri decree." The Council shall have the authority to legislate, approve the general budget of the State, and supervise the performance of the executive authority, but the oversight is limited to asking questions for the purpose of clarification without the right to political accountability and the question of confidence.

Members of the Government (ministers) are appointed entirely by the emir.

Municipal council elections have been held in Qatar since 1999 and continue periodically, the last of which was in June 2023, when Qataris elected 29 members. The elections resulted in a turnout of 40.8%. Low turnout was observed during the last three sessions. The municipal council can only effectively monitor the implementation of laws and decisions relating to municipal affairs without monitoring the performance of the executive apparatus. The Council also has the right to submit proposals and proclivities to the executive authority, which decides to adopt or neglect them. The municipal electoral process remains in compliance with the electoral system formulated and demarcated by the Government (represented by the Ministry of the Interior).



## 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.

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 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.



## United Arab Emirates

The fifth round of elections for half of the members of the Federal National Council took place in October 2023, with turnout of 44% of the electoral bodies chosen by the official authorities in each of the seven emirates.

The Federal National Council is the fourth federal authority in terms of ranking in the five federal authorities stipulated in the Constitution: (the Supreme Council of the Federation, the President and Vice-President of the Federation, the Council of Ministers of the Federation, the Federal National Council, and the Federal Judiciary).

The Constitution does not stipulate that the National Council is a legislative authority, but lists powers such as debating, approving or rejecting constitutional amendments, draft laws, the annual general budget of the Federation and its final accounts, and international treaties and agreements. It also does not stipulate the right of the Council to propose draft laws, but rather to discuss what is presented to it. The Council's opinion is not considered binding, as the President of the Union has the right to issue laws alone.

The constitution does not state the right to vote and does not mention it, leaving each emirate the right to determine the method of selecting its representatives in the Federal National Council, which was done through appointment.

At the end of 2006, the first elections were held to select half of the members, in which a limited number of citizens of each emirate chosen by the ruler of the emirate vote and their names are registered in the electoral college. It is noted that there is no law regulating the electoral process, but a guide issued by the National Elections Committee in 2019.

While all council members (elected and appointed) have the right to ask questions and queries to members of the government, they lack the right to interpellate, form commissions of inquiry, or withdraw confidence. According to Article 92 of the Constitution, the Council of Ministers has the power to prohibit the discussion of any subject if it is in the "supreme interests of the Union". The powers of the National Council do not extend to the local governments of the seven emirates.

The number of members of the Council (40 members) reflects a variation in the size and influence of each emirate, with Abu Dhabi and Dubai holding 8 members each, 6 members each for Sharjah and Ras Al Khaimah, and 4 members each for Ajman, um Al Quwain and Fujairah.

The Emirate of Sharjah is unique in having an elected advisory council, as there are no elections in other advisory and municipal councils in various emirates.





# 3.3 Scale Three: Political Organisations

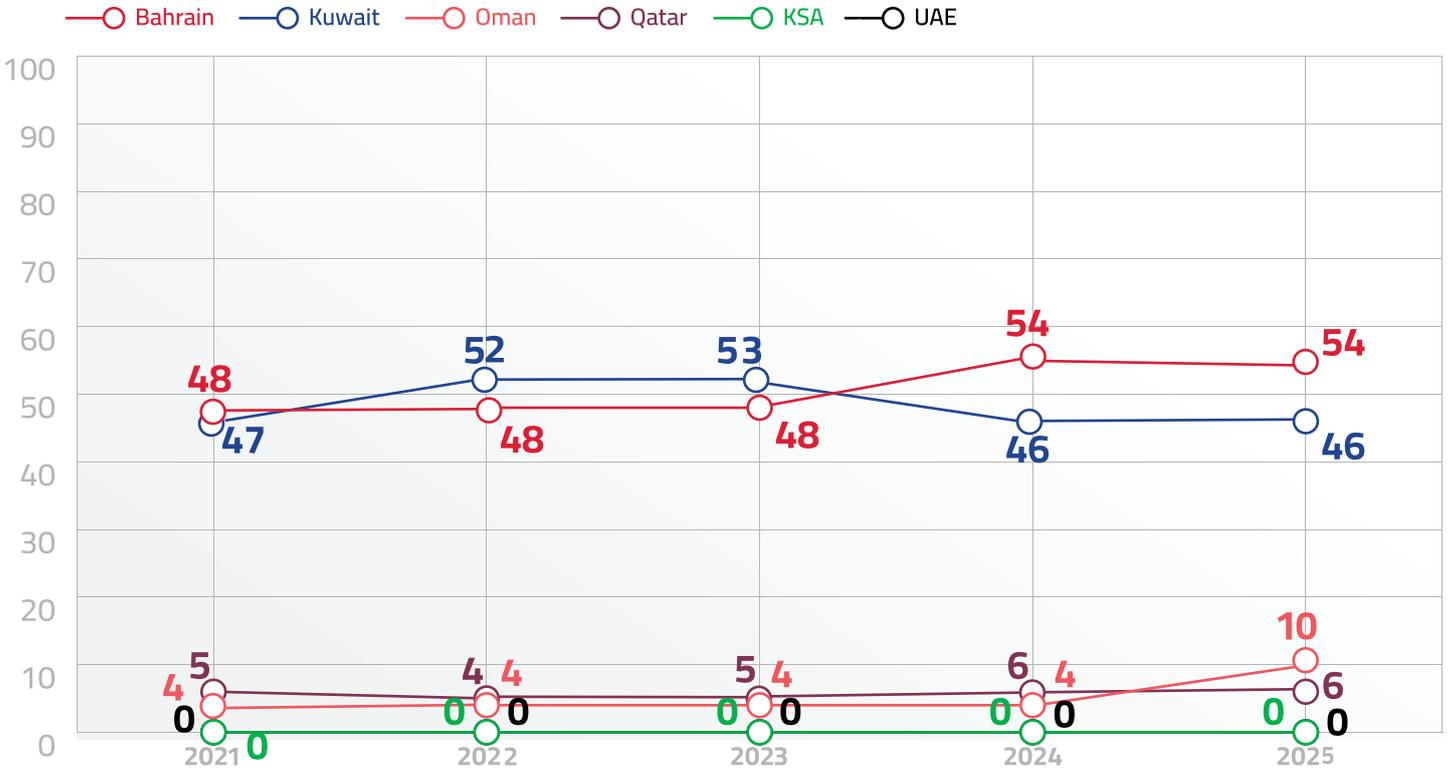


illustration 23: Results of the Political Organisations Scale 2021-2025

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
Legitimacy of political organisations <b>30 scores</b>	22	8	0	0	0	0
Availability of opposition tools <b>25 scores</b>	7	12	5	0	0	0
Safety for political activists <b>25 scores</b>	10	17	5	6	0	0
Administrative and financial independence <b>10 scores</b>	6	3	0	0	0	0
Participation in elections on slates <b>10 scores</b>	9	6	0	0	0	0
<b>Total 100 scores</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

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



## Kingdom of Bahrain

On September 4, 2024, the King of Bahrain issued a royal pardon for 457 prisoners, including those sentenced to life in prison, in connection with the country’s political crackdown since 2011. The move followed a royal pardon for 1,584 convicts in April 2024, which has been welcomed by political and human rights groups, which they consider to create a positive atmosphere in the country and ease political tensions.

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

Restrictions (arrests and judicial trials) against activists and former MPs, including MPs in the dissolved 2024 parliament, continued, and prison sentences were issued against the background of opposing the suspension of the constitution and the dissolution of the National Assembly.

Kuwait’s constitution does not provide for or prohibit the freedom to establish political parties, but the actual practice of the state prohibits the formal formation of parties.

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.



## State of Oman

Oman advanced 6 points on this Scale due to the authorities' tolerance of the speeches of political activists, with the Sultanate providing Omani opposition and human rights defenders in exile the opportunity to return and settle their positions in a seemingly systematic and continuous manner.

The Civil Societies Law prohibits the formation of parties or the practice of any political activity under the form of organizations, and violating this is punishable by penalties of up to three to ten years in prison.

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 these rights have not yet been promulgated, and other laws (the Penal Code and the Press and Publications Law) restrict some of these rights.

In 2020, the Sultanate of Oman acceded to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, as well as the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.



## 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 2023 notes numerous violations including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and restrictions on freedom of expression and the media, which include censorship, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists.

Statements issued by the Saudi Ministry of Interior indicate that a number of death sentences have been carried out against citizens. Human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, consider that the judiciary has used vague legal provisions under the laws against cybercrime and terrorism that equate peaceful expression and online activities with terrorism.



## 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.

In December 2023, the UAE began retrying at least

65 former defendants in the so-called “UAE 94” case, and authorities charged defendants who had completed prison sentences in previous sentences with “establishing a secret organisation for the purpose of committing acts of violence and terrorism,” which referred them to receiving new life sentences.





# 3.4 Scale Four: Civil Society Institutions

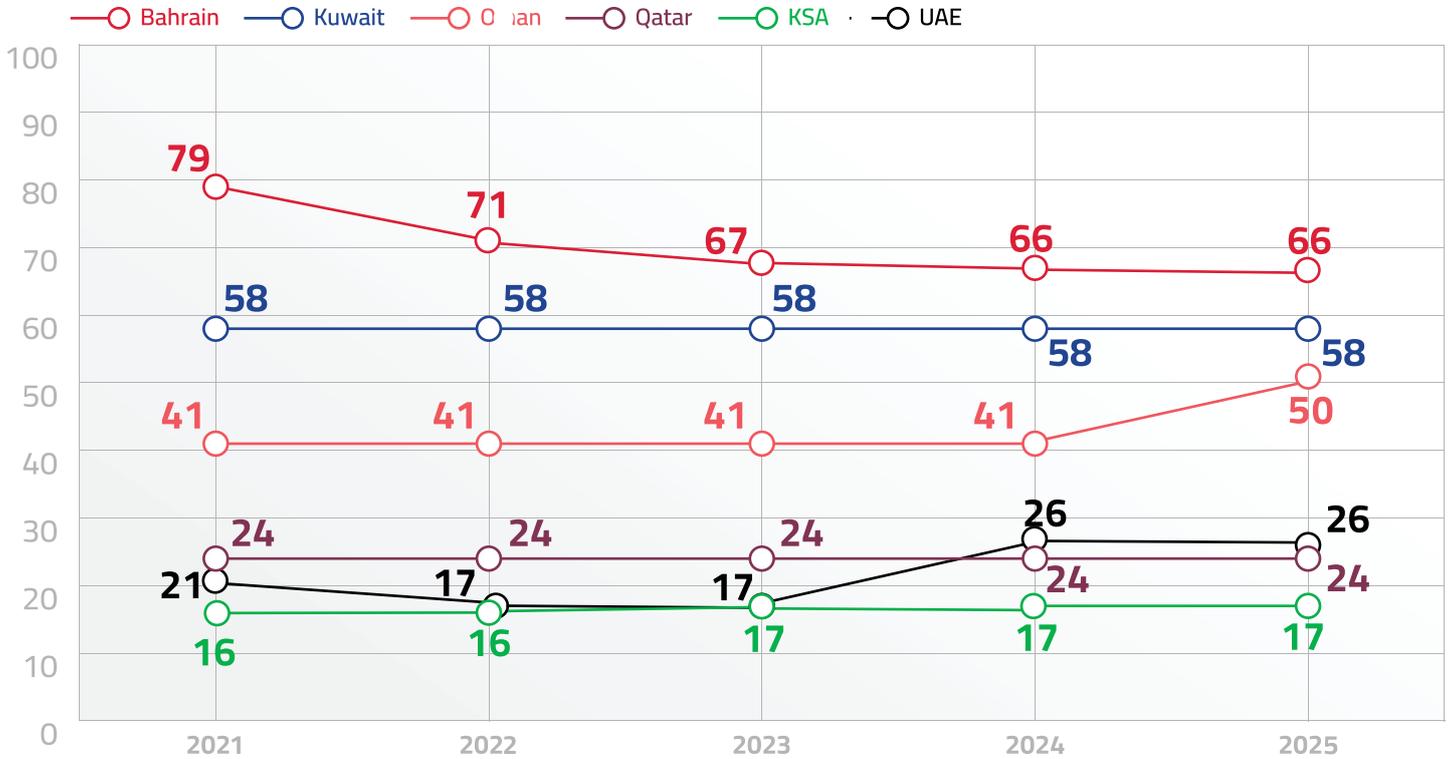


Illustration 24: Results of the Civil Society Institutions Scale 2021-2025

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
<b>Legal environment</b> guaranteeing the right of individuals and groups to form NGOs and pressure groups <b>40 scores</b>	27	30	20	10	9	18
<b>Trade unions and professional societies</b> legislation / union pluralism and trade unions / availability of union work tools, including the right to strike <b>40 scores</b>	30	18	22	10	4	2
<b>Institutional independence</b> <b>10 scores</b>	5	5	4	2	2	3
<b>Restrictions and obstacles</b> <b>10 scores</b>	4	5	4	2	2	3
<b>Total 100 scores</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>

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



## Kingdom of Bahrain

Security restrictions continue on members of dissolved political associations from running for the boards of directors of civil society organizations. The bans are based on a June 2022 amendment to the Law on Social, Cultural and Sports Associations and Clubs. The amendment prohibits any member of a political society, a practitioner of political action or a member of the legislative authority from running for membership in the boards of directors of clubs or sports bodies. This is in addition to the bundle of restrictions and obstacles, including security checks.

The Government restricts all NGO relations with any party outside the country, whether in terms of obtaining funding, scholarships, training, or field visits, and requires prior official approvals in this regard.

Bahrain has more than 675 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

Kuwait's constitution (article 43) stipulates for the right to form associations and trade unions. Kuwaiti law regulates the right to form NGOs, and although the Government has resorted to the same law to dissolve a number of associations for committing "violations" or carrying out foreign activities "without permission", the margin for the work of associations remains noticeable.

In dissolving the boards of directors of cooperative societies, the state relies on internal investigation committees in the Ministry of Social Affairs, and there are societal demands for the adoption of judicial rulings in these decisions.

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.



## State of Oman

Oman advanced on this Scale 9 points due to the growing number of NGOs and professional syndicates and the improvement of the legal environment regulating these institutions. According to government statistics, the number of labour unions in the Sultanate is 335 in addition to 41 professional associations, while the number of sectoral labour unions is 8 unions and 110 civil societies.

The law in the Sultanate of Oman regulates the formation and work of NGOs, but it gives the Minister of Social Development broad supervisory powers, and cases in which the Ministry of Social Development

rejected applications for the establishment of associations without explaining the reasons continued to be documented. The government interferes in the nature of the funding of NGOs, some of which receive material support from them.

Trade union action in Oman is regulated through articles within the Labor Law and some administrative regulations that clarify the procedural aspects and licensing requirements for trade associations and unions, which also prohibit the establishment of unions in the public and vital sectors.



## 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, who make up more than 90% of the workforce, but they are allowed under many conditions including Government's approval. The government also determines the procedures and conditions for the workers' committees.



## Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The number of non-profit NGOs in Saudi Arabia has increased, as the number of non-profit associations in Saudi Arabia has reached about 4,942 NGOs operating under the umbrella of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, and these associations are specialized in charitable and solidarity work. In parallel, NGOs specialized in civic fields are licensed by other government ministries.

Rights groups have documented that a number of applications have not been approved by the competent authorities, while activists in organizations deemed "unlicensed" by the state are being detained.

In July 2024, the Minister of Human Resources issued a ministerial decision on the "Rules for the Organization of Private Sector Funds" that aims to unify supervisory references and regulate the work of private sector funds with an improved institutional path, but does not strengthen the independence of associations or expand their powers.

It is noted that government authorities dissolve some associations or report some of them to the security authorities without specifying the judicial frameworks governing these decisions.

The organization of societies and NGOs is considered a late one, which began with the issuance of a royal decree in late 2015, which stipulated the competence of the Ministry of Interior to license and refuse, along with the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development and any other body supervising the sector in which the organization will operate.

Saudi legislation lacks a law on trade unions, and there are no labour organizations in the country, except for some committees, associations, and bodies that include practitioners of certain professions. The National Committee for Labor Committees, which was formed by a decree of the Minister of Labor and Social Development in January 2019, is responsible for representing labour committees in some private sector institutions, and it is a (semi-official) committee with advisory powers and is only for Saudi workers.

The right of workers to organize themselves into free unions remains prohibited and such a step could expose them to arbitrary dismissal, arrest or deportation for foreign workers.



## United Arab Emirates

Federal Decree-Law No. (50) of 2023 was issued on the regulation of public benefit institutions, and while it is noted that the law does not include labour unions, places restrictions on the activities of associations, and grants the executive authorities the power to dissolve and liquidate public benefit institutions without resorting to the judiciary, it has established a comprehensive framework for the work of NGOs, including their sponsorship, funding, and allowing them to make financial investments in accordance with the law. The law gives associations the right to appeal government decisions to the authority of ministers and judicial institutions.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association within the limits of the law, and there are about 535 licensed NGOs in the UAE operating in various sectors and regulated by a law that gives the Ministry of Community Development licensing authority and broad supervisory powers.

In the past, there have been cases of refusal to license associations specialised in human rights, as well as cases of associations that were dissolved for reasons related to sources of funding or political action.

Government authorities tighten financial and administrative control over civil society organisations. 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 limits the independence of civil society organisations 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 action than to trade unions.





# 3.5 Scale Five: Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement

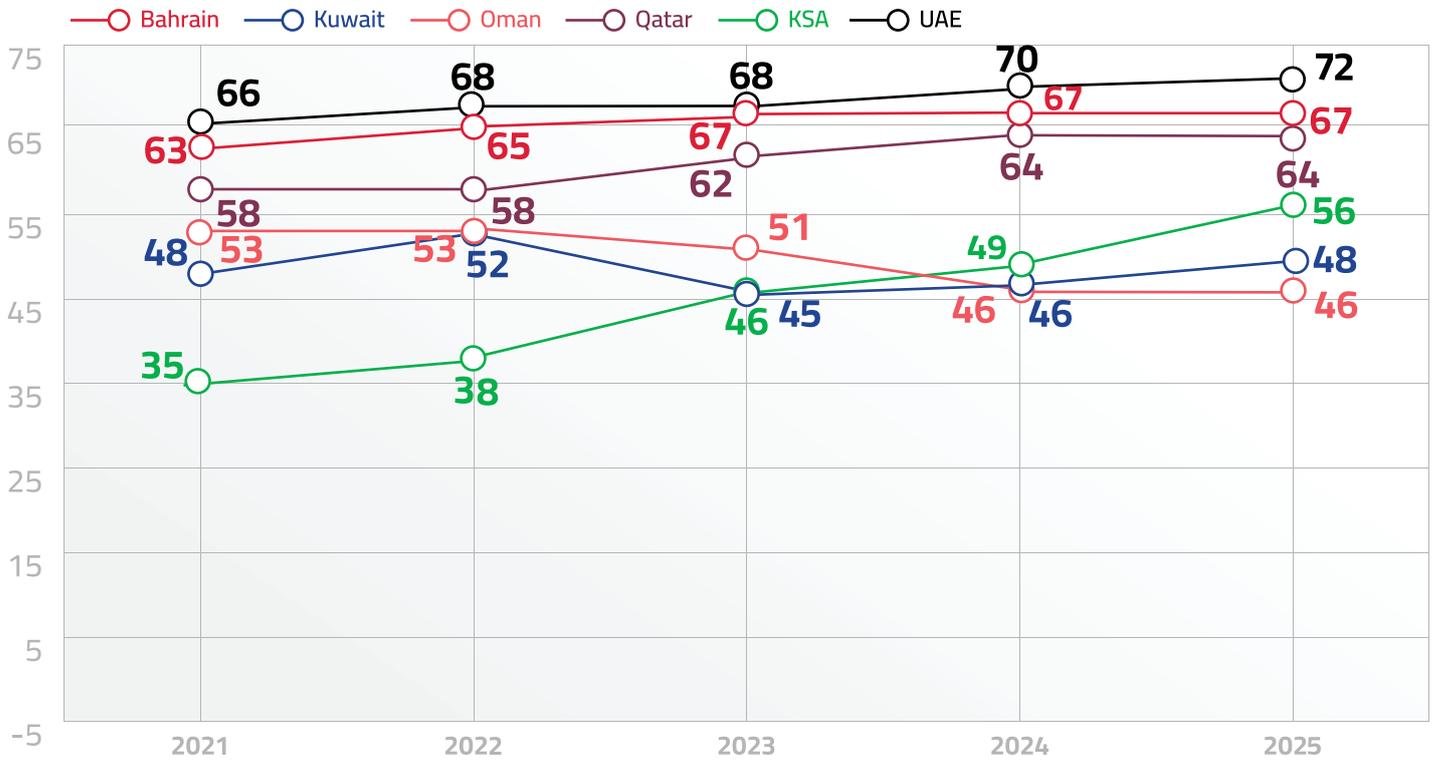


illustration 24: Results of the Gender Equivalence and Youth Engagement Scale 2021-2025

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
<b>Women empowerment</b> the right to vote / a quota in elected councils / holding leadership and senior positions <b>50 scores</b>	46	36	33	42	34	49
<b>Youth engagement</b> voting age / holding senior positions <b>25 scores</b>	21	11	13	22	22	23
<b>Total 75 scores</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>70</b>

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



## Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain's policies have continued to be effective in empowering women. According to 2024 statistics, Bahraini women represent about 60% of government sector employees, while the percentage of Bahraini women in executive positions is about 50%. In the private sector, they were represented by about 36%, while the percentage of Bahraini women in executive positions reached 36%, and the percentage of virtual records owned by women reached about 54% of the total registers.

Women are represented in the elected parliament (8 women of total 40 members), and 3 women have won seats in municipal councils. The representation of women in the appointed Shura Council increased from 9 to 10 women, equivalent to 25% of the council's seats.

The representation of women and youth in the Council of Ministers has increased, where 5 women hold ministerial portfolios.

According to the Constitution, Bahraini women have the right to run for office and to be elected. There are no binding laws or special procedures

that ensure gender balance in the government, the Shura Council, or the elected parliament. However, the Supreme Council for Women (an official body under the King) leads projects and initiatives to empower women.

It is noted that young people continue to be appointed in most of the new government appointments.

Decree No. (2) of 2022 was issued to establish and form the Youth Empowerment Committee in the Public and Private Sectors. There are also government institutions that provide funding and training programs that are clearly concerned with the assistance and development of the youth.

The conditions for candidacy for the House of Representatives stipulate that the candidate must be at least 30 years old on the day of the election, and one of the conditions for participation in voting is that the citizen must have reached the age of 21, which makes a segment of the youth excluded from the electoral process.





## State of Kuwait

Kuwait advanced two points on this Scale following official confirmation that the percentage of women in senior leadership positions in various government sectors reached 28%. Despite the absence of any legislative measures to ensure gender balance, this figure represents an indication of gradual progress in women’s empowerment within the executive agencies. In the same context, an Emiri order was issued on August 25, 2024, to carry out a cabinet reshuffle in which a new minister was appointed, raising the number of female ministers to three, a figure unprecedented in modern Kuwaiti governments.

In the National Assembly elections in April 2024, only one woman was successful. The elections witnessed a significant disparity between the number of female candidates (13 candidates) compared to the number

of male candidates (187 candidates), due to the lack of laws or procedures to ensure gender balance in the government or in elected institutions.

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

The voting age for elected institutions is 21 and the age for candidacy is 30, which keeps a segment of young people out of the electoral process. Kuwaiti authorities have no clear policy on involving youth in decision-making and their appointments to senior government positions are limited. However, some government institutions are undertaking special measures to empower youth and women, including the Central Bank of Kuwait, where women hold about



## State of Oman

Omani women have the right to vote and enjoy equal opportunities to run for the Shura Council and municipal council elections. There are no laws that ensure gender balance in government or elected institutions, nor is there a national policy or strategy aimed at empowering women in leadership or senior positions.

In the 2023 Shura Council elections, 32 women competed alongside 843 male candidates for 90 seats without any of them winning, while the previous round witnessed 40 women running and two winning.

In November 2023, a Royal Decree was issued appointing members of the State Council, the second legislative chamber, and the appointed council members consist of 86 members, including 18 women. The Sultan also issued a decree appointing 14 members, including 3 female members of the Omani Human Rights Committee.

In the 2022 municipal councils’ elections, only one

of the 27 female candidates who competed with 942 male candidates, on 126 seats, succeeded. This is seen as a further decline in women’s representation, given that women held 7 seats in the previous municipal elections.

Basic Law of the Sultanate provides for gender equality and makes it a duty of the State. Although women’s representation has been strengthened at the level of ministerial and deputy appointments, it is still limited (3 out of 23 female ministers). Despite increasing youth representation in ministerial positions and at the level of undersecretaries, it is not clear that these measures are being carried out under a clear or formal policy.

In civil society institutions, the low level of representation of women in executive positions has been observed.

Statistics from the Ministry of Social Development indicate that the number of Omani women’s



associations and their branches has reached about 68 associations.

Except for the position of sultan, there are no areas or positions in the state to which women are legally excluded.



### State of Qatar

Women’s representation in the last cabinet formation (November 2024) decreased from three ministerial portfolios to two out of 19 ministers. Women’s representation in the Shura Council is limited after the appointment of two women out of 15 appointed members forming the Council along with 30 elected members.

Qatari women hold senior positions, including head of Qatar’s permanent delegation to the United Nations in the New York and Geneva offices, chairman of the National Human Rights Committee, and chairman of Qatar Charity.

Qatari women have the right to run for office and be elected to municipal councils, but there are no laws or norms that guarantee gender balance.

Women’s labour force participation (economically

Oman’s voting age is 21 and the age to run for office is 30, which keeps a segment of young people out of the electoral process. There is no stated national policy or strategy aimed at engaging and empowering young people, and their appointment to senior positions remains limited.

active women) is estimated at 63.3% in 2024, according to World Bank data.

The percentage of women on the judiciary in Qatar has reached 13%, with plans to increase it to 30% by 2030. The representation of women in the judiciary administration is 46.8%, while their representation in judiciary administration leadership positions is about 51%.

With regard to youth engagement, Qatar sets the age of election at 18 years and candidacy at 30 years. There is no clear policy regarding youth empowerment and political involvement, but it is noted that many of them have assumed leadership positions in the country, and the results of the 2023 municipal council elections saw young faces reach the council.



### Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia continued to progress for the sixth consecutive year (+7 points) on this Scale, driven by the expansion of women’s representation in public office, the labour market, entrepreneurship, and the existence of a national policy to encourage youth empowerment.

According to data from the General Authority for Statistics, the rate of women’s participation in the labour market reached 36% at the beginning of 2025, exceeding the target set by 30% in Vision 2023, while the percentage of Saudi females working in the private sector reached 41.4% of the total citizens working in

this sector, in continuation of the upward trend.

The unemployment rate among Saudi women has fallen to a historic low, reaching 10.5% in the first quarter of 2025.

Female appointments to prominent executive and diplomatic positions continued, with women occupying 30 of the 150 seats on the Shura Council.

Saudi women participated for the first time as voters and candidates in municipal council elections in 2015 and won 20 seats. Although the establishment of a committee for women’s empowerment was



announced, no woman has yet held a ministerial position.

On March 8, 2022, the Cabinet issued a new Personal Status Law that provided guidelines for marriage, divorce, and child custody to enhance women’s participation in public life.

In January 2025, the Saudi government announced the launch of the National Youth Development Strategy, the first comprehensive plan aimed at empowering the age groups between 15 and 34 years through integrated educational, representative and

economic programmes, under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Sports and the Youth Empowerment Centre.

Over the past years, it has been noted that the role of youth has been strengthened, and a number of them have taken on sensitive advisory and executive roles, including young princes who have assumed the positions of regional princes, undersecretaries and ambassadors.

According to the municipal council electoral system, the voting age is set at 18 and running for office at 25.



## United Arab Emirates

The UAE continued to progress on this scale (+2 points) driven the rise of attention and policies seeking to empower Emirati women and youth.

On July 14, 2024, the Government made a cabinet reshuffle that included the appointment of a female minister of education (the youngest female minister. On September 18, 2024, the Ministry of Economy issued a ministerial decision that at least one seat must be allocated to women on the boards of directors of private shareholding companies starting in January 2025.

The UAE has an effective policy in empowering women, as the percentage of female representation in the current Cabinet is 9 out of a total of 37 ministers. Emirati women have the right to run and be elected in the Federal National Council, and in 2019, the Federal Supreme Council issued a decision to make it mandatory for women to represent half of the seats elected in the FNC.

In order to enhance women’s presence in state institutions and gender balance in work, the government established the Gender Balance Council in 2015, which seeks to develop positive discriminatory measures to ensure women’s participation in

appropriate areas of work and membership in representative boards and boards of directors of companies, especially public and listed for trade.

The laws stipulate that the age of candidacy for election is 25, and the laws do not specify the age of voting.

The UAE adopts a National Youth Strategy on youth involvement in decision-making and social and economic empowerment, and in 2016, the Government established a youth council with an advisory role on topics and areas related to youth.

It is noted that there are several young ministers in the Federal Government, and there are many projects and financial and political support for the youth of both genders. The percentage of young members in the seventeenth legislative term of the Federal National Council reached about 37.50%.

In June 2019, the UAE recognized “the right to include members of Emirati youth on the boards of directors of government entities, institutions, and companies.” In February 2020, the Government recognized “the right to involve youth in the official tasks of the Federal State agencies.”



# 3.6 Scale Six: Transparency

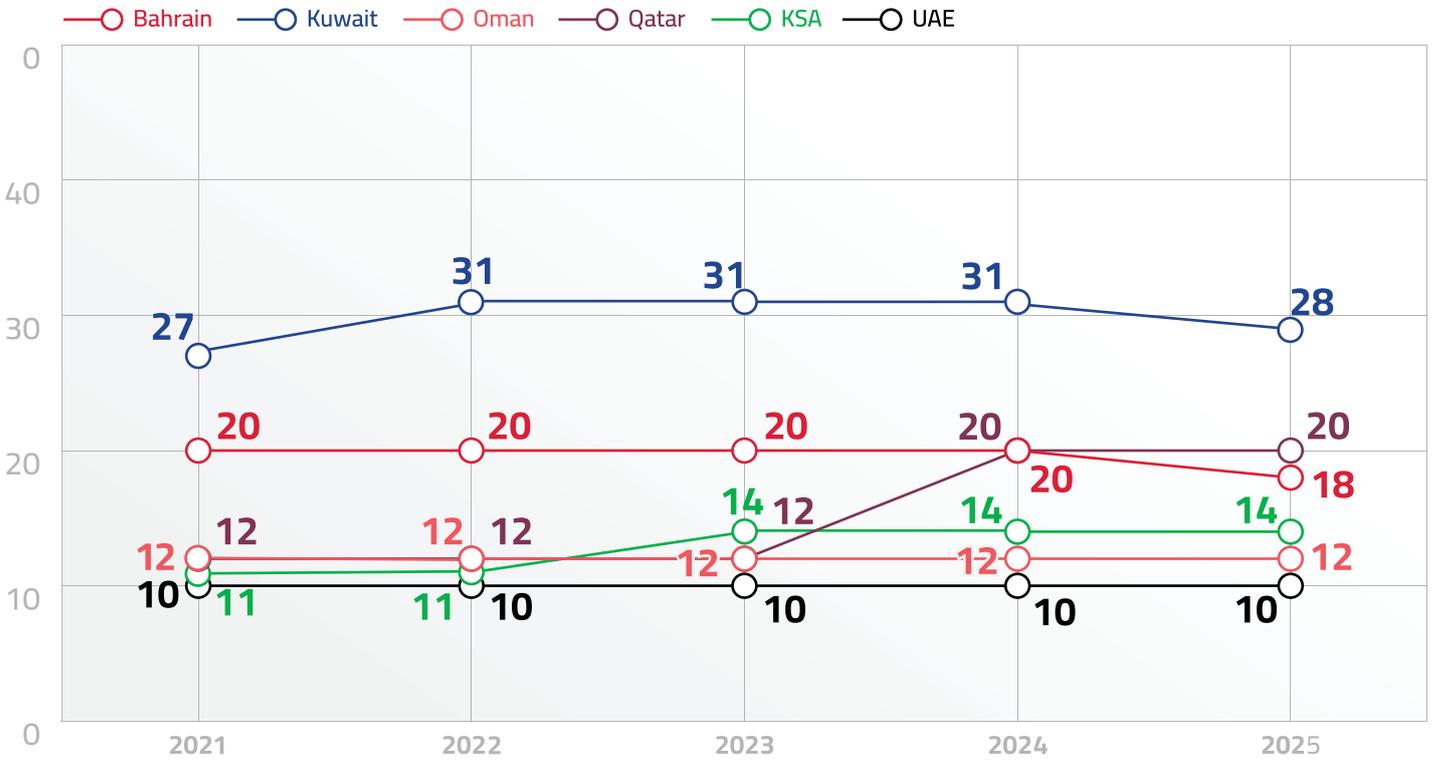


illustration 25: Transparency Scale Results 2021-2025

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
<b>Information sharing</b> right to access, circulate and disseminate information <b>25 scores</b>	10	16	7	15	9	5
<b>Independent oversight</b> the actions and performance of the executive, legislative and judicial authorities, sources of wealth, spending of public funds <b>25 scores</b>	8	12	5	5	5	5
<b>Total 50 scores</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>

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

Kuwait declined 3 points on this Scale following a circular issued by the Council of Ministers in October 2024 restricting the scope of the State Audit Bureau (an oversight body affiliated with the National Assembly). The circular directed the submission of new annual reports to the Government and the Minister of Finance. While no new annual reports have been issued since the dissolution of the National Assembly, it was noted that previous reports have been deleted from the SAB's website.

In 2016, Kuwait established the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), which receives complaints from individuals in discretion. The authority investigates and refers defendants in cases of financial corruption to the Public Prosecution, and is the body authorized to obtain financial disclosure declarations from the heads and members of the Council of Ministers, the National Assembly, the Municipal Council, and the judiciary, as well as the heads and members of councils and executive bodies, and those holding leadership positions in the Government.

During the current year, Decree-Law No. 69 of 2025 was issued amending some provisions of the Anti-Corruption Authority Law, to include financial declaration procedures for officials in

additional public entities, with the development of the mechanism for receiving declarations through online platform.

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 July 2019, the Supreme Committee for Leading and Coordinating the First National Strategy for Enhancing Integrity and Combating Corruption was formed with the membership of government institutions and with the participation of civil society organisations.

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 (Diwan Al Mohasabah) 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.



### State of Oman

There is no law that regulates or guarantees the right to information.

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

With regard to community participation in

oversight, there are no independent civil society organizations that are specialized to transact and audit the disbursement of public funds. The Economic Association, in cooperation with Transparency International, sometimes plays this role in a limited framework due to strict laws and the broad discretion of law enforcement officials.



### State of Qatar

The law in Qatar guarantees the right to information. According to Law No. 9 of 2022, anyone has the right to submit an official request to any government agency to obtain information, and the law requires that the request be decided within a period not exceeding 30 days, with the reasons must be stated in case of rejection. The law imposes fines and penalties that may reach imprisonment in case of withholding, deliberately refraining from providing information or providing incorrect information.

In terms of community oversight, there are no independent civil institutions in Qatar that are responsible for transparency and scrutiny of the disbursement of public funds. There is an official body directly under the Emir, the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority (ACTA), as well as the National Commission for Integrity and Transparency, which is a government committee.





## Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia continued to strengthen digital platforms to provide official data, and the number of datasets available through the National Open Data Platform reached more than 11,400 sets issued by about 289 government entities. In December 2024, it was announced that Saudi Arabia’s ranking in the Open Data Inventory Global Index issued by the Open Data Watch Foundation had improved, ranking 41st out of 197 countries.

In contrast, the legislative environment on the right to information has not seen significant development.

Civil society’s participation in oversight of public

funds remains severely limited with the absence of any independent NGO concerned with transparency or accountability, and the legal environment lacks open audit mechanisms related to state budgets, particularly in areas such as defence and the sovereign wealth fund.

While citizens can address the National Anti-Corruption Commission (Nazaha), which was established in 2011, transparency and accountability mechanisms remain under the control of official institutions, without independent community participation.



## United Arab Emirates

Government websites have undergone operational updates to facilitate the procedures for requesting “open data”, and the Emirates Accountability Authority (UAEAA) has continued to issue executive governance decisions and document its international involvement in international transparency organizations (IAACA/ ASOSAI) without the establishment of an independent oversight body outside the Government apparatus. Therefore, despite the UAE’s sophisticated anti-corruption surveillance measures, there is no law that regulates or guarantees the right to information that allows individuals and civil society institutions to participate in the oversight.

There is also the Guidelines for Access to Government Information from Federal Entities, as well as the Law on Regulating and Disseminating Data Exchange in Dubai, which is mainly concerned with the establishment of the Dubai Data Authority.

It should be noted that the provisions of the Penal Code and the Law on Combating Information Technology Crimes have broad discretion and severe penalties, especially with regard to access to or dissemination of information, and there are no independent oversight bodies in the UAE, whether from civil society or the public, specialized in transparency and scrutiny of the disbursement of public funds.



# 3.7 Scale Seven: Freedom of Opinion and Expression

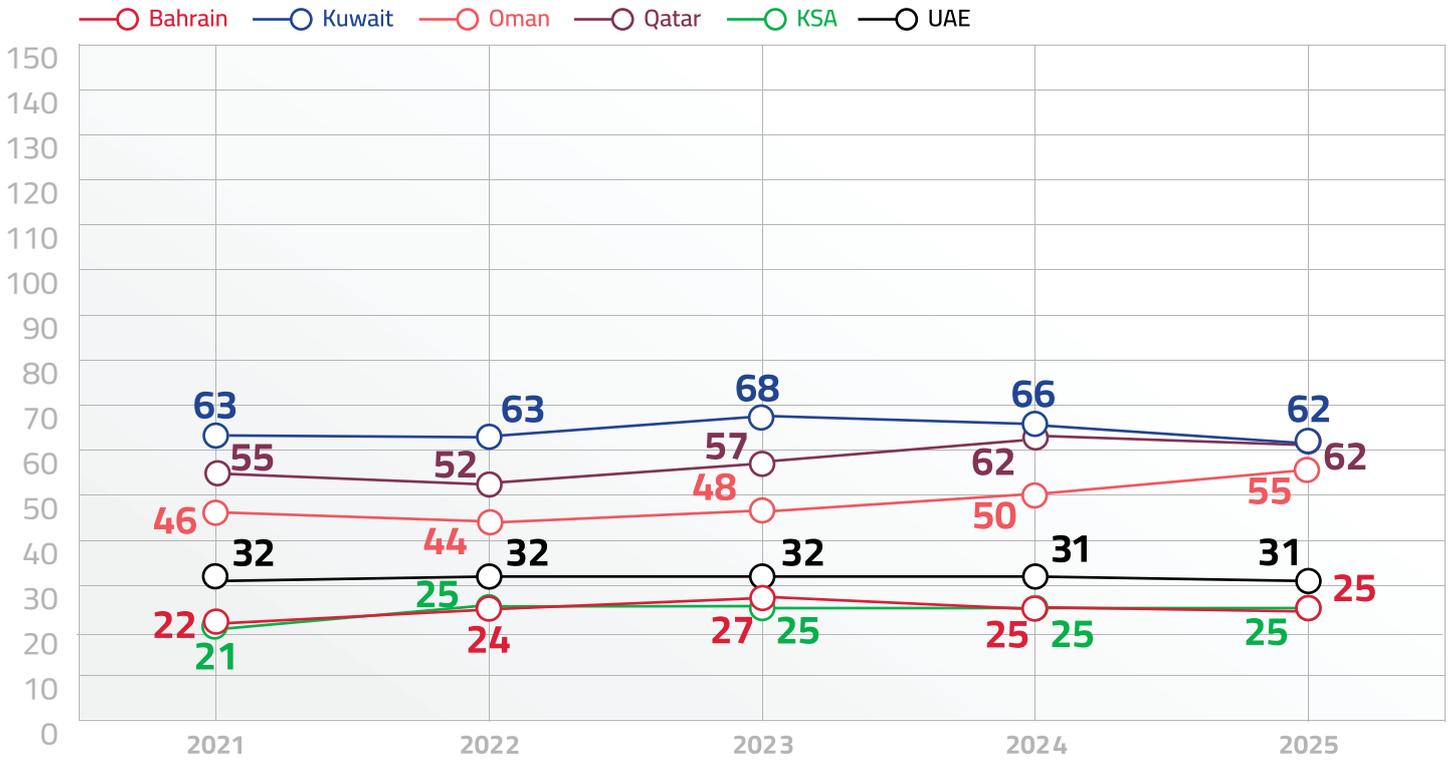


illustration 26: Results of the Freedom of Opinion and Expression Scale 2021-2025

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
Freedom of the press 30 scores	5	16	8	16	3	4
Independence of media institutions 30 scores	5	15	7	7	5	5
Internet censorship 30 scores	6	12	7	7	4	4
Freedom and safety of individuals to exercise criticism 30 scores	4	7	7	13	3	3
Confronting hate speech and incitement to violence 30 scores	5	12	26	19	10	15
<b>Total 150 scores</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>

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



## Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain continues to witness legal summons of activists and politicians, through the Law on the Protection of Society from Terrorism, the Penal Code, and the Law Regulating Printing and Publishing. The Department of Combating Cybercrime is in charge of summoning and interrogating activists on social media and banning and disrupting websites. It is also noted that some inflammatory and hateful discourses towards certain social components continue to be ignored.

Despite this, Bahrain advanced on Reporters Without Borders' annual Press Freedom Index for 2025, ranking fourth in the Gulf (157th out of 180 countries).

The Bahrain Press Association documented 100 violations against journalists, media professionals, writers, and internet activists during the year 2024, and documented 37 violations during the first half of 2025. It pointed to "the glaring contradiction between Government authorities that are fortified by a set of laws and mechanisms[...] compared to Bahraini society, which is living in a complex state of fear and constant threats."

Bahrain is accused of spying on its citizens inside and outside the country. Freedom House (March 2025) also classifies Bahrain as a "repressive and not free" country, scoring only 12 points out of 100 on the organization's Index.

Media organizations have no real independence from state policies, and no individual can establish media institutions freely due to political, legal, and financial constraints, while opposition groups resort to practicing their media activity from outside the country.

Bahrain's Constitution and the law regulating the press, printing and publication provide for freedom of opinion, expression, and the press, but due to unequal interpretations, the laws are exploited to restrict freedom of the press.

Bahrain's Penal Code addresses incitement to hatred in article 172, which provides for penalties of imprisonment and a fine for anyone who "publicly incites hatred or contempt for a group of people, if such incitement would disturb public peace." However, calls for hatred and targeting on political and sectarian reasons are widespread in the country, and the state selectively applies this article.



## State of Kuwait

Kuwait continued to decline (-4 points) on this Scale following the continuation of security summons and the issuance of judicial rulings against activists and politicians due to social media posts on topics related to the suspension of political life in the country and the revocations of citizenship.

Security authorities have intensified summons, arrest and trial procedures following the

suspension of some articles of the Constitution and the dissolution of the National Assembly, while most Kuwaitis have imposed "self-censorship" on themselves after the security crackdown that affected dozens.

Kuwait monitors what is published online through the Cyber Technology Crimes Law issued in 2015, which stipulates penalties of up to imprisonment and fines, and the Anti-



Cybercrime Department (affiliated with the Ministry of Interior) prosecutes everything it deems to be in violation of the law. Under the Cybercrime Law (which has been criticized by international human rights organizations), a number of bloggers and dissidents have been imprisoned.

According to Reporters Without Borders' 2025 report, Kuwait ranked 128th globally out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index, down three places from its previous ranking, and ranked among countries with "structural restrictions on journalism." Although Kuwait is still one of the least strict countries in the Gulf with the press, the organization's report noted that "the continued dominance of the state in the media field and the lack of real independence of press institutions, which are mostly owned by powerful families and whose licenses are subject to government supervision."

According to Freedom House, Kuwait moved from the classification of a "partially free" country to a

"non-free" country, reflecting a decline in freedoms over the past year. Kuwait scored 31 points out of 100, a decrease of 7 points on the organization's Index.

The State does not deal sharply and repressively with all criticism of the Government and its performance, but it is strict in punishing any opinion that criticizes matters related to the emir or provokes criticism against any Gulf state. Kuwait blocks websites with political content at different times.

Kuwait enacted the Law on the Protection of National Unity and the Rejection of Hatred issued in 2012, which criminalizes "the acting, advocacy or incitement of any means of expression [...] hatred or contempt for any segment of society, inciting sectarian or tribal strife, or spreading ideas calling for the supremacy of any race, group, colour, origin, religious sect, sex or lineage, or incitement to an act of violence." However, there is documentation of sectarian and anti-migrant hate speech, and the Government is not seen taking these cases seriously.



## State of Oman

The Sultanate of Oman continued to progress on this scale (+5 points) against the backdrop of strengthening the legal structure related to countering hate speech and incitement to violence through a new media law.

In November 2024, the Media Law was promulgated by Sultanate Decree. The articles of the law guarantee freedom of opinion and expression and prohibit prior censorship of media activities, as well as the right of natural and legal persons to practice media activities in accordance with the law, as well as the right to obtain and circulate information in a lawful manner.

The new law includes electronic media within its scope of media activities, including websites and digital news accounts.

Arrests, interrogations, and judicial rulings (in accordance with the Penal Code or the Information Technology Crimes Law) continued to be issued against citizens for reasons related to expressing their opinions.

Oman's ranking in Reporters Without Borders' annual World Press Freedom Index 2024 has dropped to 134th (3 places down).

Oman's Penal Code deals clearly and rigorously in confronting hate speech and incitement to violence, contributing to a sense of coexistence and public safety. The Media Law also establishes penalties related to the publication of any content that incites hatred or violence, through fines or criminal penalties.



## State of Qatar

The state allows media institutions within it to deal with Arab and international issues with a high ceiling of freedoms, which is not observed in local issues. Local media do not appear independent and by law the establishment of a newspaper requires approval from the Minister of Information.

Harassment and summons of a number of citizens and foreigners for expressing their opinions are documented.

In Reporters Without Borders' 2025 Press Freedom Rankings, Qatar continued to advance to the top of the rankings among the Gulf countries, moving from 84th to 79th out of 180 countries surveyed.

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

Saudi Arabia continues to lag behind on this Scale, with cases of arrests and prosecutions of citizens and residents for expressing their opinions, including on social media platforms.

The Kingdom's ranking in the Reporters Without Borders Index for 2025 improved from 166th to 162nd out of 180 countries, but the report described Saudi Arabia as "one of the most repressive countries for media freedom", pointing to the absence of any independent media outlet and the existence of strict state censorship on the press, in light of the ownership of most media institutions by individuals and companies close to the state.

Human rights reports, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, indicate that "the Saudi authorities continue to use anti-terrorism and cybercrime laws to suppress dissenting opinions." Websites that are classified as contrary to state doctrine or critical of its policies also continue to be blocked.

Local laws, such as the Publications and Publications Law and the Anti-Cybercrime Law, contain provisions that criminalize publications that include "insulting religion" or "harming the image of the state."

Saudi Arabia does not allow criticism of its domestic or foreign policies, and is accused of the of spying on its citizens inside and outside the country. Although the Press and Publishing Law provide for the right to exercise "objective criticism and constructive criticism aimed at the public interest," it prohibits criticism of the ruling establishment.

With regard to hate speech, sectarian practices are still present in media discourse or on social media and are often not met with firm legal action despite the existence of the 2012 Law on the Protection of National Unity and the Rejection of Hate. Numerous cases of hate speech and sectarian incitement are documented, often against Shia, Ismailis and Sufis. However, Saudi Arabia has recently taken more serious measures to counter hate speech.





## United Arab Emirates

On July 10, 2024, 53 Emiratis were convicted in the “UAE 94” case with sentences ranging from 10 years to life. On June 26, 2025, the Federal Supreme Court sentenced an additional 24 defendants to life imprisonment in the same case, raising the number of defendants to 83, including 67 to life.

The Penal Code criminalizes insulting the rulers of the Emirates or criticizing 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 governs online censorship of journalists and civil society activists through the Cybercrime Law, and they are subject to defamation and judicial charges that include insulting the state or spreading false information.

According to Reporters Without Borders, the UAE’s ranking in the 2025 Index has dropped to 164th from 160th in 2024.

There is no independence of media organizations from state policies, and any violation is subject to prosecution or suspension of activity according to the law.

While the law allows any individual to establish media

institutions, the law places excessive restrictions and conditions that are linked to security approvals. There are a number of private media organizations that work only in the entertainment and commercial fields. There is a tight legal system to prosecute any criticism of the State, including public issues, such as the Press and Publications Law and the UAE Penal Code, and some of them are specific such as the Law on Combating Information Technology Crimes.

The state blocks websites that publish political analysis or studies that may be classified as contrary to state policies.

There are societal and legal restrictions and broad discretion of law enforcement authorities – the Public Prosecution, the police, and the security services – in interpreting what is said, written or published, which restricts freedom of opinion.

UAE laws provide in a number of articles for the criminalization of incitement to hatred or division or anything that may harm national unity or social peace, and if religion, religious institutions, or any public institution or civil society organization is used for these purposes, it is considered a severe circumstance in doubling the penalty. Still, cyberspace is witnessing sectarian posts.





# 3.8 Scale Eight: Representation of Groups and Minorities

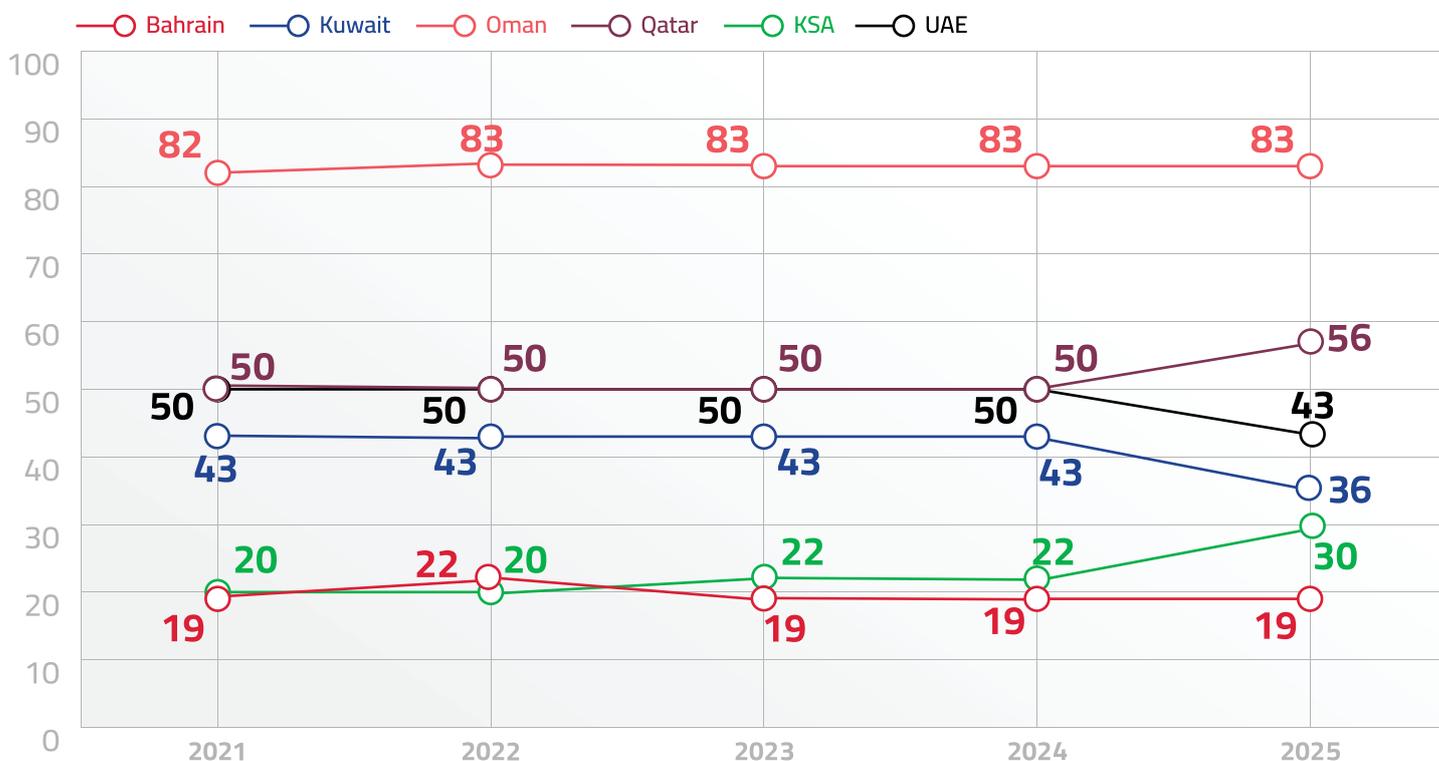


illustration 27: Results of the scale of representation of groups and minorities 2021-2025

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
<b>Equality</b> ensuring equal right of all citizens to full citizenship 40 scores	10	11	35	24	12	22
<b>Discrimination</b> ensuring that there is no discrimination on political, religious, cultural, regional, ethnic or class grounds 40 scores	4	17	30	22	11	21
<b>Proportional representation</b> ensuring proportionate and fair representation of groups and minority in state institutions 40 scores	5	8	18	10	7	10
<b>Total 100 scores</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>53</b>

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



## Kingdom of Bahrain

Shia citizens complain of “discriminatory policies” towards them, and express constant feeling of being targeted. The Religious Freedom Report issued by the US State Department for the year 2023 documented dozens of incidents related to Shia harassment of their rituals and discrimination against them in jobs, especially in the military. The Bahraini Ministry of Interior prevented the participation of preachers and religious chanters from abroad in the occasion of Ashura, contrary to the freedom available to followers of other religions and sects in Bahrain. Events of assaults by security forces on the manifestations of Ashura and the summoning of dozens of preachers and religious chanters participating have also been documented.

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 dropped 7 points on this Scale as a result of the escalation of administrative procedures that affected nationalities, as more than 42,000 people have been revoked their citizenship, the majority of whom are naturalized women through marriage and their minor children, as well as those naturalized under “honourable services”. These measures have led to the expansion of the “Bidun” segment and the complexity of their situation, which is considered a regression in terms of equality and the guarantee of citizenship rights.

More than 100,000 members of the Bidun (a marginalized minority in Kuwait) suffer from difficulties in living, integrating into society and accessing government services.

The country’s cabinet composition does not reflect a proportionate representation of various components of Kuwaiti society, as well as appointments to leadership positions and the judiciary.

The Constitution of the State of Kuwait refers to the principle of equality, as Article 7 states



that “justice, freedom and equality are the pillars of society, and cooperation and compassion are the bonds of trust between citizens.”

With regard to the right to vote, only native Kuwaiti citizens have the right to run for office, i.e., they must belong to the families that existed in Kuwait before 1920. Kuwaitis who have obtained citizenship by other means (such as women married to Kuwaitis or who have been granted citizenship because of their

outstanding services to the country) can only vote in elections after 20 years of acquiring citizenship.

Kuwait does not have a clear law criminalizing discrimination, but in 2012 the Law on the Protection of National Unity and the Rejection of Hatred was enacted, which does not seem to be enough to fill the gaps and manifestations of discrimination in the country.



## State 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

Qatar advanced on this Scale by 6 points after constitutional amendments that eliminated the requirement of “aboriginal nationality” for members of the Shura Council and the Government, which means affirming the right of all Qataris, including newly naturalized citizens, to fill these positions.

According to the US Department of State’s Human Rights Report (2023), 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 with temporary Qatari identity documents.”

Although Qatar has acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination since 1976, it lacks any special legislation in the country that criminalizes or punishes acts of racial discrimination and apartheid by an individual, group, or organization.

It does not seem easy to understand the distribution of representations in state institutions and ensure its fairness, especially in the absence of accurate statistics. There are claims that tribes that are closest to the ruling family have a greater share in state institutions, from senior government positions to the rest of civilian, security, and military institutions, and that there are minorities with limited representation.



## Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has advanced on this Scale (+8 points) due to its openness to minorities in terms of expanding the space for the expression of their religious and ethnic identities. However, there is a lack of legal frameworks that guarantee equality and representation of minorities in state institutions.

In May 2024, the US State Department renewed Saudi Arabia’s designation as a Country of Particular Concern for its “involvement in or condone serious violations of religious freedoms, including discrimination against religious minorities and the prohibition of the construction of houses of worship for non-Muslims.” The 2023 report of the Committee on International Religious Freedom also noted that religious freedoms remain “severely restricted” despite some limited changes in official discourse and curriculum.

Article 12 of the Saudi Basic Law states that “the promotion of national unity is a duty, and the State shall prohibit anything that leads to division, strife and division.”

During the 2024 and 2025 Ashura seasons, Saudi

authorities imposed severe restrictions on certain religious rituals performed by Shia citizens. According to Human Rights Watch, Saudi Arabia does not allow followers of religions other than Islam to practice their rituals in public and systematically discriminates against Muslim religious minorities.

Despite steps to curb hate speech and intolerance in some religious textbooks, they still contain texts that degrade practices associated with Shia and Sufi Muslims.

The Council of Senior Scholars and the Fatwa Committee in the Kingdom are still limited to the Sunni sect, as is the case in the judiciary and the criminal courts, and local courts are allocated to other schools of faith that are limited to matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance.

There is no law criminalizing discrimination, and Saudi Arabia has reservations about many articles of international conventions and treaties it has signed, some of which relate to women’s citizenship rights (CEDAW) and others to other rights that the state considers to be contrary to Sharia (CERT).



## United Arab Emirates

The UAE has advanced on this Scale (+3 points) due to the improvement of the legal system to ensure equality and non-discrimination, and to counter hate speech and incitement to violence.

Articles 14 and 25 of the constitution provide for the right to equality between citizens and social justice and that there is no discrimination between citizens of the Union on the basis of origin, domicile, religious belief, or social status. However, there is an implicit distinction in the enjoyment of certain rights or preferential treatment linked to whether a citizen is Emirati by law, naturalization, or dependency (the UAE Nationality Law), including the prohibition of naturalization or dependency Emiratis from running for and being elected, and revoking their citizenship in the event of absence. For two years. Human rights organizations have also documented cases of family members of some political convicts who have been subjected to forms of discrimination in renewing their official documents and guaranteeing the right to travel and movement.

The Anti-Discrimination, Hatred and Extremism Law

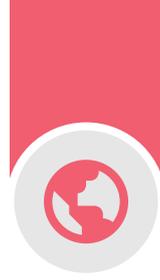
of 2023 criminalizes acts, words, and actions related to contempt of religion, discrimination, hatred, and extremism.

There are special laws such as labour laws that prohibit discrimination between citizens who are equal in obtaining jobs, and in the event of a violation of this prohibition, the decisions are invalidated and the rights are restored along with compensation for material and psychological damage.

The UAE has ratified 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).

Officially, there are no specific proportions or preferential criteria that give one group of people priority or influence over another in leadership and sensitive positions in state institutions. However, there are some tribal considerations, as most of the sensitive places are held by members of specific tribes that are involved in tribal alliances that accompanied the establishment of the UAE.





# 3.9 Scale Nine: Foreign Communities

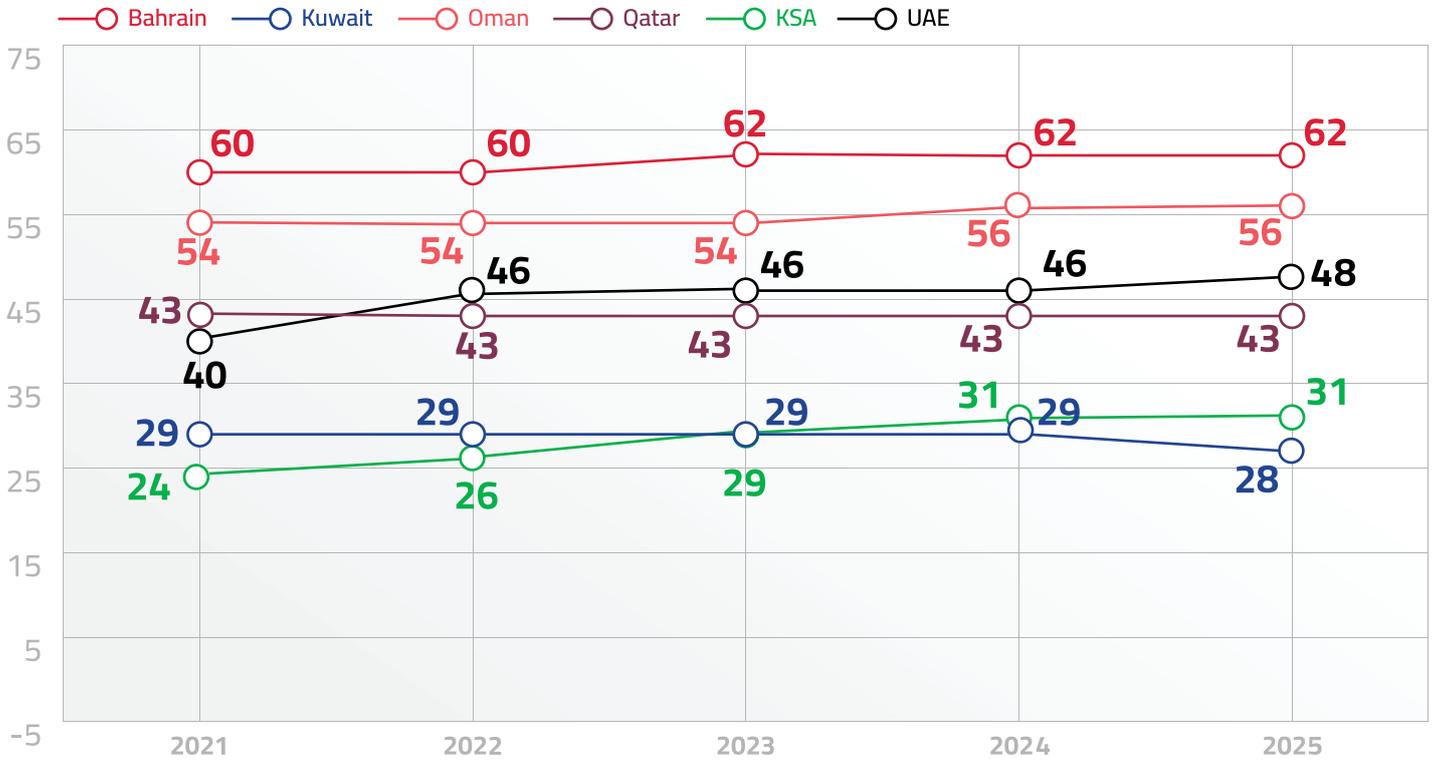


illustration 28: Results of the Foreign Communities Scale 2021-2025

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
<b>Stable and effective residency</b> 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	9	23	23	22	26
<b>Union / professional representation</b> membership, election, candidacy and protection of interests 20 scores	10	11	13	2	4	2
<b>Societal activities</b> the right of communities to organise activities and establish associations and clubs 20 scores	20	8	20	18	5	20
<b>Total 75 scores</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>48</b>

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



## Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahrain continues to be advanced in providing stable residency opportunities for expatriates by offering foreign-owned projects in a number of tourist and investment areas, in addition to offering “Platinum Residency” and “Golden Residency”.

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 fell one point on this Scale, as a result of further restrictions on the freedom of travel and movement of expatriate workers.

In mid-June 2025, the Public Authority for Manpower announced the implementation of a mandatory system for obtaining an exit permit from the employer for workers in the private sector, whether the departure is temporary or final.

In October 2024, a ministerial decision was issued prohibiting expatriates from owning more than one vehicle.

Kuwait has been subjected to human rights criticism regarding the rights of migrant workers, including the decision of the Kuwaiti Council of Ministers in February 2023 to approve the formation of the “National Committee for Regulating Demographics”, which sparked a wide debate over the determination of policies related to the appropriate ceiling for labour nationalities, which may result in the termination of the services of a large number of residents.

The Government is resorting intensively to “administrative deportation”, and the number of expellees by the authorities during 2024 reached



about 35,000 , while official statistics indicate that about 19,000 expatriates were deported during the first half of 2025, and the Ministry of Interior says that most of those deported violated the residency law or “committed acts that would harm the security of the country”, while local media published “cases of deportations of violators of traffic regulations, or because of online publications”.

Other government measures point to restrictions on arrivals, most notably the suspension of visas to join a family for temporary periods, and the obligation of expatriates to pay their bills before leaving the country.

In 2015, Kuwait issued a standard contract for migrant workers that allows some workers to transfer their sponsorship to a new sponsor after 3 years of work without any requirements, but these reforms do not include domestic workers. A large number of expatriate workers fall victim to the phenomenon of

the “residency trade”.

The State of Kuwait has joined the International Labour Organization (ILO) since 1961 and has ratified 19 of its conventions, including seven of the eight core conventions.

Foreigners are not eligible to vote in municipal elections. State laws allow non-Kuwaitis to join trade unions without the right to run for leadership. The Labour Code also gives foreign workers the right to choose their own representative to express their opinion before the trade union board.

The Law on Clubs and Public Benefit Associations prohibits non-Kuwaitis from establishing any association or club, and while they are allowed to be members of “affiliation”, it prohibits them from registering in the General Assembly or running for the Board of Directors. Communities have the opportunity to organize their own national, social, sporting and religious events on a small scale.



### State of Oman

On July 25, 2023, the Labor Law (Private Sector) was promulgated, which adopted regulations for workers’ strikes and permits for migrant workers involved in labour disputes to remain in the country, as well as reducing the maximum working hours from 45 to 40 hours per week, increasing the duration of paid sick leave, and allowing workers to leave their employer if the latter does not pay their salaries for two consecutive months. The new law comes in conjunction with a number of reforms included the introduction of a wage protection system, a social security law, and the introduction of a mandatory health insurance system.

Despite some improvements to the Labour Law, organizations point out that its implementation in remains weak, and the kafala system plays a key role in creating vulnerabilities in migrant workers’ living and working conditions.

Reports indicate that some workers live in inadequate overcrowded housing conditions.

The Sultanate of Oman has ratified five of the eight core conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) since its accession in 1994. The Sultanate also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the extension of the “Decent Work” program.

Foreigners residing in the Sultanate of Oman are prohibited from participating in municipal elections, which are exclusive to Omanis.

In 2021, the government abolished the NOC system, which required foreign workers to obtain a NOC from the sponsor before moving to another sponsor, and the current system is sufficient to consider the duration of the contract (two years) sufficient to fulfil the right of the first sponsor.

The Foreigners’ Residence Law and its implementing regulations allow non-Omani workers to bring in their families or dependents within specific rules and conditions, including the minimum salary for a worker



who can bring in his family.

Foreign workers can participate trade unions by joining the General Assembly and participating in all aspects related to its tasks, but they cannot establish these unions or run for their administrative body, which is limited to Omanis.

In coordination with the Ministry of Social Development, members of foreign communities can organize social, cultural and sports activities that concern them, as well as establish and manage private associations or clubs, and according to the ministry's data, the number of social clubs for foreigners is 23.



### 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 seen improvement over the past years, driven by administrative reforms in the work environment despite continued challenges over the rights of domestic workers and low-income foreigners.

In March 2024, the General Directorate of Passports announced an expanded list of professions that foreign workers can practice without the need for a sponsor in a move as part of the "Contractual Relationship Improvement Initiative", which aims to promote freedom of professional mobility and reduce the dominance of employers. In June 2024, the Executive Regulations of the Labor Law were amended by introducing 29 new articles dealing with the electronic documentation of contracts, the

determination of working hours, the reduction of arbitrary dismissals, and the improvement of the work environment by obliging employers to provide healthy and safe environment.

In October 2024, the Ministry of Human Resources launched the "Domestic Worker Wage Insurance" program to cover workers' wages when they are delayed for more than 6 months. However, human rights reports considered the program to be inadequate due to strict conditions for the payment of compensation and weak enforcement mechanisms.

Despite the official announcement of the abolition of the kafala system in March 2021, its impact is still noticed. Human rights organizations report that



some patterns of exploitation such as withholding passports, restricting freedom of movement, and working long hours without rest continue.

In May 2025, Amnesty International released a report documenting widespread abuses against domestic workers, including forced confinement, delayed salaries and ill-treatment. These abuses are still possible as a result of legal loopholes, selective enforcement of laws and the absence of a clear framework for protecting female domestic workers.

Saudi regulations still do not allow expatriates to establish or manage their own associations or clubs, and they are prohibited from running or voting in professional unions and associations, while allowing

limited membership in some cases. Religious practices for non-Muslims are limited to their homes, amid constant fears of persecution or deportation.

Annual reports by human rights organizations indicate that some foreigners face persecutions, raids on their places of residence, and mass forced deportations without fair trials or guarantees of their material rights.

Despite Saudi Arabia's accession to the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1976 and its ratification of a number of its core conventions, the implementation gap, especially for domestic workers and low-wage expatriates, continues to limit real progress on this issue.



## United Arab Emirates

The UAE has advanced two points due to the start of the implementation of compulsory health insurance for all workers in the private sector and domestic workers (early 2025) for those who are not previously covered by the Abu Dhabi and Dubai regulations. According to its legislation, the UAE provides migrant workers with many benefits, including obtaining a Green Visa (5 years) and a Golden Visa (10 years) without the need for a guarantor or sponsor, according to specific conditions and categories. Despite this, criticism of the labour and kafala system and the consequent restriction on the movement of migrant workers continues.

Human rights organizations continue to document cases of arbitrary deportation of migrant workers without guaranteeing their legal rights.

A resident, whether an employee, investor or employer, may bring in their immediate family members and apply for a residence visa for them in the UAE. There are no trade unions in the UAE, which does not allow national and foreign workers to defend their rights and represent their interests.

Foreign traders can run in the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry elections. As for professional associations, the right to form them is limited to citizens only, and foreigners have the right to membership and participate in candidacy and election to the boards of directors of some of these associations.

Members of foreign communities can organize social, cultural and sports activities that concern them or establish and manage their own associations or clubs, subject to the approval and supervision of the Ministry of Community Development, and in accordance with Decree-Law No. (50) of 2023 on the Organization of Public Benefit Institutions, persons who do not hold UAE nationality may participate in the establishment of NGOs, provided that their percentage does not exceed 30% of the total number of founding members. However, the law allows for "an exemption from all or some of the conditions by virtue of a decision issued by the Council of Ministers."



# 3.10 Scale Ten: Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions

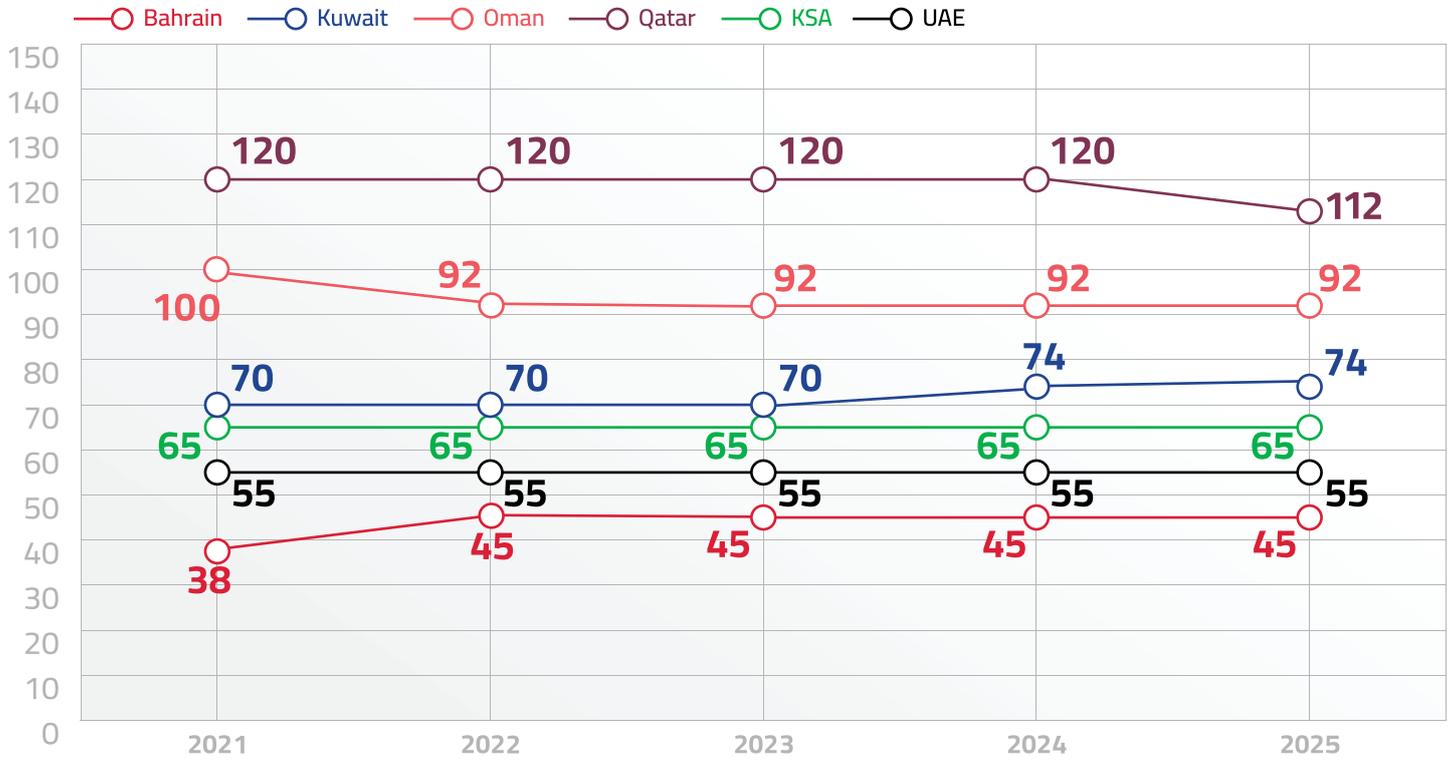


illustration 29: Results of the scale of access to leadership and sensitive positions 2021-2025

Scale elements	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE
<b>Influence of the royal families</b> representation of royal family members in higher positions <b>100 scores</b>	28	54	55	72	35	35
<b>Localization of positions</b> ability and priority for citizens to access leadership and sensitive positions in the judicial, security and military bodies <b>50 scores</b>	17	20	37	40	30	20
<b>Total 150 scores</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>55</b>

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



### Kingdom of Bahrain

The ruling family is represented in the Government, headed by the Crown Prince, about 16% of the total number of Cabinet members.

With the exception of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Ministers of Interior, Finance, and Transportation and Communications, citizens outside the family hold the portfolios of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, and Defense. However, the ruling family has dominance over the country's supreme bodies and councils which have high directive and executive powers.

Appointments of members of the ruling family to senior military and government positions (undersecretaries/directors general) were also noted. As well as judicial institutions, in which family members constitute a significant

proportion, with the rest of the social components in disproportionate proportions.

It is estimated that the leadership and senior positions in the country (especially sensitive ones) are held by members of the ruling family, in parallel with the existence of appointment policies that tend to rely on the factor of proximity to them, and this applies to specific tribes and families that enjoy preferential advantages over the rest of the citizens.

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



### State of Kuwait

Kuwait has maintained its scores on this Scale, and the cabinet lineup includes two ministers from the ruling family (Interior and Defense) in addition to the Prime Minister. Despite the low representation of the family within the Government, it still has a clear presence in other sovereign positions, such as governors (4 out of 6 governors).

The presence of members of the ruling family in the judiciary is not noticeable compared to the presence of senior positions within the security and military institutions. It is worth noting that only the children of Kuwaiti families who hold citizenship by establishment (native Kuwaitis) are entitled to be present and occupy senior positions in the State.

Kuwait generally allows citizens to take up jobs in judicial, security, and military institutions, however, there are social and political networks

of influence that limit equal access to them.





## State of Oman

Members of the ruling family hold senior positions, including Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs, Deputy Prime Minister for Defense Affairs, Vice President of the Supreme Judicial Council (who also serves as President of the Supreme Court), Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Interior, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, President of Sultan Qaboos University, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank, and some governors.

Four members of the ruling family sit on the 86-seat appointed Council of State.

While family members are noted in sovereign, political and academic positions, senior military positions — other than the position of Deputy Prime Minister for Defense — remain occupied by citizens who do not belong to the ruling family.

There are no specific percentages or preferential criteria that give one group of people priority or permeability in leadership and sensitive positions in the judiciary, security and military apparatus.

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

With the exception of the positions of the President of the Supreme Judicial Council and the Deputy President of the Supreme Court, there does not appear to be dominance of positions in judicial institutions by the ruling family. As for the leadership of the security and military services (national security and intelligence agencies), there are some members of the ruling family by virtue of their military or administrative hierarchy, but there is no indication of preferential treatment.



## State of Qatar

Qatar has fallen 8 points on this Index with the increase in the representation of members of the ruling family in the Government, with members of the ruling family holding 7 ministerial portfolios (out of 19 members). With this number, the family has taken more than a third of the seats in the Cabinet.

Notable is the appointment of ambassadors from the family in the main capitals of Washington and London, as well as the permanent representative to the United Nations in New York.

The ruling family does not have a monopoly on judicial positions, and the Constitution does not provide for the Emir to head the judiciary, something

that is unique to Qatar compared to the rest of the GCC States. Qataris from other families may hold senior and leadership positions, although it is noteworthy that certain family names are repeated in these positions.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Army is the Emir, but most military positions are for generic citizens, as they are allowed to assume high judicial and military position, but priority is given to the tribes and families that have been present in Qatar since before 1930, and to tribes and families close to the ruling family.

Qatar allows foreigners to work in its military and security institutions.



## Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The ruling family has a monopoly on the majority of sovereign ministerial positions: the Prime Minister, the Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Defense, the National Guard, and the Ministry of Energy, with the exception of the Ministry of Finance.

The number of ministers from ruling family members is 10 out of a total of 35 ministers.

The Crown Prince (and Prime Minister) oversees a number of bodies: the Council of Economic and Development Affairs, the Council of Political and Security Affairs, the Supreme Council of Aramco, the General Investment Authority, the Supreme National Anti-Corruption Commission, and the National Risk Council.

Princes from the ruling family fully occupy the positions of princes of the regions in the Kingdom and most military institutions are run by princes.

There is no indication that members of the ruling family are in the judiciary and foreigners are not hired to hold any positions within the judiciary. Generic citizens can hold judicial, security, and military jobs, but recruitment appears to be subject to criteria, including proximity to the ruling family, and there appear to be regional and sectarian norms and influences in holding public positions in the State.



## United Arab Emirates

The members of the seven ruling families have a monopoly, in each emirate, on the top sovereign and executive ministerial positions, and it seems possible for other families to access some significant ministries such as the Economy, Education, and Health. Members of the ruling families retain the sovereign ministries such as Foreign Affairs, Finance, Defense, and Interior, and they hold 10 ministerial portfolios out of a total of 37.

Members of the ruling families are predominantly in the highest positions of the State, but it is possible to see the emergence of political and tribal balances

in the sovereign and military portfolios, but the members of the ruling families are not present in the Federal National Council. There is a centrality of tribes and families associated with ruling families that seem to have a monopoly on a part (or share) within State apparatus and positions.

The judges are often from outside the ruling families. However, tribal and family affiliations play a role in these appointments.

Members of ruling families and tribal representatives have better opportunities in leading the security and military bodies.



# 04

## Methodology and Adoption of Scales

**This study has been prepared by a team of researchers from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states 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 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-2025.

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

Researchers relied for their information on several sources, namely official government data, official statements, legislation and laws in force, reports of official and civil institutions, data of international organisations and bodies such as the International

## 4.1 Adopted Scales

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 sixth edition (2025) provide an insight into the progress or regression of the GCC

states in cases of political participation and the nature of the areas in which change has occurred, positively or negatively, between the mid-2024 and mid-2025.

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.

### Scale One Constitutional Life (50 scores) It is concerned with the following elements

Constitutional reference: mechanisms for issuance and amendment	10 scores
Ensuring the right to political participation	15 scores
Regulatory/Restrictive Laws	15 marks
Commitment to the provisions of the constitution	10 scores

### Scale Three Political Organisations (100 scores) It includes the following elements

Legality of political organisations	30 scores
Availability of opposition tools	25 scores
Practitioners' safety	25 marks
Administrative and financial autonomy	10 scores
Participation in elections as lists	10 scores

### Scale Two General Elections (150 scores) It is concerned with 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 Four**  
**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	<b>40 scores</b>
Trade unions and professional associations: legislation / plurality of unions and unions / availability of trade union tools, including the right to strike	<b>40 scores</b>
Independence of institutions	<b>10 scores</b>
Constraints and obstacles	<b>10 scores</b>

**Scale Five**  
**Gender Equivalence and 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.	<b>50 scores</b>
Engaging youth voting age / senior positions.	<b>25 scores</b>

**Scale Six**  
**Transparency (50 scores)**  
It includes the following elements

Information sharing the right to access, exchange and disseminate information.	<b>25 scores</b>
Independent oversight actions and performance of the executive, legislative and judicial branches, sources of wealth and expenditure of public funds.	<b>25 scores</b>

**Scale Seven**  
**Freedom of Opinion and Expression (150 scores)**  
It includes the following elements

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

**Scale Eight**  
**Representation of Groups and Minorities (100 scores)**  
It includes the following elements

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

Scale Nine Foreign Communities (75 scores) It includes the following elements		Scale Ten Access to Leadership and Sensitive Positions (150 scores) It includes the following	
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	Influence of royal families: representation of family members in senior positions (government ministries and agencies / the judiciary / security and military institutions)	100 scores
Trade union / professional representation the right to membership, election, candidacy, and care of interests	20 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
Community activity the right of communities to organise activities and establish associations and clubs	20 scores		

## 4.2 Scale Adoption Factors

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

- 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.



# مؤشر المشاركة السياسية في دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي 2025

## Political Participation Index in the GCC States 2025

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