

Women in The United Arab Emirates

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Access to Education

- 1970: 19,000 women students
 - Now: student body is typically 60-75% female
- Free!
- Increase in schools from 1950s
- Literacy rate improved
- Outperforming males
 - Dropout rates
 - exams



Effect of Education in Employment

- Mostly public sector jobs
- Still higher unemployment rates than men
 - Conflict with traditional standards
- Increase role in health services
- Sheikha Lubna Khalid Al Qasimi
 - well-educated
 - Minister of State for Tolerance



Effect of Education Socially

- Still lesser to men
 - “Disposable income”
- Government segregated schools
 - Taught separately
 - To give girls a safe space
 - Ex. Zayed University, Higher College of Technology
- Some are coeducational
 - Ex. American University of Sharjah



Comparison to Neighboring Countries

- Saudi Arabia
 - Worse education for women
 - Need male guardian
 - Improved literacy rates
- Oman
 - Graduating at high rates
- Yemen
 - High illiteracy rates
 - Negative attitudes towards educating women

Female Workforce Population

- As of 2008, women account for 59% of the UAE's workforce
 - Engineering, science, healthcare, law, commerce, government
- 40% of employees in education are women
- Much of the workforce is made up of expatriates
 - Attracted to booming economy
 - Hard to move up
- Both nationals and expatriates struggle to acquire better jobs
 - Social restraints
 - Despite the UAE being very liberal, compared to the rest of the Middle East
 - Similar to Western stereotypes, less harsh than other gulf states

Comparison to International Standards

- Global leader in gender equality
 - Increasing role in the workforce
- Creation of the UAE Gender Balance Council
 - Helps increase women's roles
- UAE has signed all international treaties on protecting the rights of women
 - UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (2004)
- Second in the Gulf for overall performance

Relationships in The UAE

- Still domestic issues
 - Need for more protective laws that protect women in the home
 - Very hard to divorce, compared to men
 - Child Custody
 - Joint custody is forbidden
 - Very hard for women to gain complete custody, especially after divorce or death
 - Abuse must be “proven,” and only then can a wife leave their husband
- Sex is forbidden outside of marriage
- Unmarried couples are not allowed to live with each other
- Homosexuality is outlawed
- Rape victims can be punished
- Shari’a law is applicable- Dutch woman and rape

Nationals vs Expatriates



Government in U.A.E.

- Federal absolute monarchy
 - 7 emirates & each ruled by an absolute monarch
- Federal National Council
 - 40 members and the 7 emirs of the U.A.E.
 - The emirs choose a certain number of people to join the FNC
 - 9 women hold positions
 - 25% of FNC
- 2006, est. Electoral College
 - 20/40 seats chosen by designated electors
 - 48% women
- Federal Supreme Council
 - Made up of the 7 Emirs
 - Grants/allows legislative action & est. general policies

Women Suffrage

- 2006, women granted the right to vote
- Voting
 - Electronic voting machines
 - Only 36 location in all of the U.A.E.
 - 12% of Emirati population in FNC



Historic Achievements in Female Governmental Employment

- UN Women Office in Abu Dhabi
- Great improvements in female equality but not ideal
 - Treaties signed since 1996 (CMA, CEDAW, CPC)
- 1995- 11.6%; 2005- 22%; 2007- 66% female governmental employment
- 2009, 21% of females were employed
- 2015, Gender Balance Council
- October 2008, first female judge sworn in
- November 2015, leader of FNC & in 2006, first female in FNC
 - Dr. Amal al Qubaisi

Current Women in Government

- Minister of State for Happiness*
 - Ohood Al Roumi (28 years-old?)
- Minister of Tolerance (current); Minister of Economy & Planning; Minister of Foreign Trade*
 - Sheikha Lubna bint Khalid al Qasimi (55 years-old)
 - “100 Most Powerful Women”
- Minister of Youth Affairs*
 - Shamma Al Mazrui (22 years-old!)
- Minister of State of the U.A.E.
 - Maitha Salem Al-Shamsi
- Dubai Women Establishment
 - Shaikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum
- Female Ambassadors*
 - Dr. Hessa Al Otaiba (Spain) & Sheikha Najla Al Qassimi (Sweden)
 - Current female ambassadors to UN, Spain, Portugal, & Montenegro
- Minister of State (February 2008)
 - Reem Al Hashimi

Healthcare in the UAE

- Free for UAE nationals
- Access through government funding
- Swelling numbers of healthcare workers
- Partnerships with US organizations (John Hopkins Medical School, Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation)
- 76.5 life expectancy

Motherhood/Abortion

- Mother mortality rate about 8-12/100,000
- 146th in the world, United States 136th (184)
- Increase in pre-natal/post-natal care, still little
- Abortion illegal except if
 - Endangers life
 - Major deformities
- Considered sin (despite rape)
- Husband /guardian approval (Law No. 7, Law on the Practice of Human Medicine)
- Accomplices 5-7 years in prison, mothers 1-5 years



Rape

- Demonization , criminalization of victims
 - British woman imprisoned (British nationals)
- Stoning, prison, flogging
- “Premarital sex, extra-marital sex”
- Stigma
- Unlikely to report

Women's health in the UAE

- Few specialized care centers
- Breast cancer 2nd biggest killer
 - Little precautionary access
 - Lack of education
 - Stigma
- Gender specific problems solved through relaxation of patriarchy?
 - Abortion: husband's consent, less dangerous w/ access
 - Rape: criminalization of sexual conduct
 - Pre-marital, extra-marital sex
 - Once rolled back, problems can be addressed

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