

Press Release

## Nine in Ten Young Arabs Concerned About Unemployment, 11<sup>th</sup> Arab Youth Survey 2019 shows

*Survey's findings discussed at International Monetary Fund and World Bank Annual Meetings 2019*

**DUBAI, October 19, 2019:** An overwhelming 89 percent of young Arabs expressed concern about levels of unemployment in their countries, according to a new finding from the 2019 ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey, unveiled at an event organized by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the IMF and World Bank Annual Meetings in Washington, DC today.

The event, “*Youth Aspirations in the Middle East and North Africa*,” was moderated by Brian Cheung, a reporter with Yahoo Finance, and featured a presentation of key findings from this year's Survey - now in its 11th annual edition - by Sunil John, Founder, ASDA'A BCW, and President, Middle East, BCW, which included new data about young Arabs' concerns over their careers.

Joining John on the panel were Her Excellency Sahar Nasr, Egyptian Minister of Investment and International Cooperation, Jihad Azour, Director, IMF Middle East and Central Asia and Syrine Chaalala, co-Founder and Managing Director, nextProtein.

As the largest demographic group of the Middle East and North Africa region, many Arab youth face severe hurdles joining the labour force, with [World Bank research](#)<sup>1</sup> indicating 30 percent of 18-24 year olds are out of work in the Middle East and North Africa - the highest unemployment rate in the world. The 11<sup>th</sup> Arab Youth Survey shows that the rising cost of living and unemployment are the top two concerns among Arab youth but indicates a marked divide in opportunity between young Arabs living in the oil-rich Gulf states and their peers elsewhere, especially when it comes to expectations of their governments to address issues that matter to young people.

For example, while 97 percent of youth in UAE are confident their national government has the capacity to battle rising unemployment, 80 percent of youth in Iraq have no confidence in their governments to do the same.

Young Arabs in the wealthy Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states also look to their governments as a source of employment. Seven in 10 (69 percent) of youth in the GCC want to work in the public sector – while those elsewhere are more amenable to private sector jobs, with just four in 10 youth in North Africa (40 percent) and the Levant (39 percent) preferring government jobs.

Presenting these findings to the panel, Sunil John said, “As a developing region with some of the fastest growing economies in the world, Arab youth cannot afford to be left behind. Now, more than ever, the region's young people require the support of their governments if they are

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<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database, “Unemployment, youth total (% of total labour force ages 15-24) (modelled ILO estimate)”. Data retrieved in September 2019 by The World Bank

to realise their potential and take up the productive, fulfilling and rewarding careers which are needed to drive the economies of the region to greater heights.”

Addressing the audience at the event, John said, “We are privileged to present our research at the prestigious IMF and World Bank Annual Meetings, and to share actionable insights with international governments and other decision makers. The Arab Youth Survey is for a platform for dialogue and I hope that the dialogue we spark today can be the basis of policies and actions that can help change the future for Arab youth.”

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group Annual Meetings bring together financial experts, government representatives, private sector executives, academics and other civil society organisation representatives to discuss issues of global concern, including the world economic outlook, poverty eradication, economic development, and aid effectiveness.

The Arab Youth Survey is the largest study of its kind into the region’s largest demographic: its youth. Every year, ASDA'A BCW generates evidence-based insights that provide governments, the private sector, media and civil society with critical information and analysis to inform decision-making and policy formation and build greater awareness of Arab youth.

The full survey data is available at [www.arabyouthsurvey.com](http://www.arabyouthsurvey.com).

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#### **About ASDA'A BCW**

ASDA'A was founded in 2000 as an independent agency by Sunil John, who continues to lead in the agency's 20th year. In 2008, WPP acquired a majority stake in the firm and ASDA'A became an integral part of the Burson-Marsteller global network. After the recent merger of Burson-Marsteller and Cohn & Wolfe to create Burson Cohn & Wolfe, the firm is now ASDA'A BCW. Today, the agency employs over 160 professionals across nine wholly-owned offices and eight affiliates in 15 Middle East & North Africa (MENA) countries. The Agency now serves more than 100 retained clients in the region and is the leading PR consultancy in MENA. [www.asdaa-bcw.com](http://www.asdaa-bcw.com)

#### **About the ARAB YOUTH SURVEY**

Now in its 11th year, the annual ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey is one of the most important pieces of research produced in the Middle East and offers unique insight into the attitudes and aspirations of the region's biggest demographic. With 65 percent of the Arab population under the age of 30, the Survey presents evidence-based insights into the attitudes of Arab youth, providing public and private sector organisations with data and analysis to inform their decision-making and policy creation. The survey is the largest of its kind of the region's largest demographic, based on face-to-face interviews with 3,300 Arab men and women aged 18 to 24, and covers five of the Gulf Cooperation Council states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the UAE), North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia) the Levant (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestine territories) and Yemen. [www.arabyouthsurvey.com](http://www.arabyouthsurvey.com)

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