

Press Release

13th annual ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey

Optimism of Arab youth is a call to action to build a better future, say experts

Dubai, UAE; October 12, 2021: A wide cross-section of Middle Eastern experts, including representatives from government, multilateral institutions, civil society, media, academia and the literary world, have called upon decision-makers in the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) to heed the call to action of Arab youth and build a better future, following the launch today of the [13th annual ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey](#).

H.E. Yousef Al Otaiba, Ambassador of the UAE to the US and UAE Minister of State, said: "The data reflected in the 13th ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey indicates a shift is pulsating within the region; one that bends toward a more hopeful outlook for our youth, yet confirms a series of profound changes currently underway. A rising spirit of nationalism is gaining resonance for Arab youth. This generation is increasingly looking inward at their Arab brethren for leadership. A growing self-reliance on ourselves, especially model Arab nations like the UAE, is fuelling this pride. As the UAE celebrates the Expo 2020 Dubai and marks the Golden Jubilee of our nation's formation in December, we feel hope for the future, which coincidentally is the title of this year's Arab Youth Survey."

Dr Jihad Azour, Director of the International Monetary Fund's Middle East and Central Asia Department, Washington DC, said that the survey results show that Arab youth are looking to the future with confidence. "We have a call to action, and decision-makers must examine the impact of the findings on government policy closely, including both the areas of common ground and the areas where the data diverges. To achieve the aspirations of Arab youth, we must increase financial inclusion, providing our young Arab entrepreneurs ready access to affordable finance. They must have a level playing field, where red tape and the interference of the state in economic management is kept to a minimum. And we need a new, citizen-based social contract."

Veteran Saudi editor Khaled Almaeena highlighted the value of the data underpinning the ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey. "In a region where accurate information is sometimes in short supply, these findings offer a refreshing insight into the mindset of young Arabs. These hopeful citizens, who live in a society that is part-tribal and part-patriarchal, need an environment that will allow them to articulate, and then strive towards, their own vision. They want their voices to be heard because they are the future of this region; they are stakeholders, not merely bystanders."

"These findings are an opportunity for those in power to pinpoint their priorities," said **Faisal Al Yafai, Journalist and Partner at Hildebrand Nord in the UK**. "Young Arabs are the rising generation, and we must ensure we have the right structures in place to realise their aspirations. The last thing we want them to say is, 'We had such optimism but you couldn't

deliver.' At the end of the day, it comes down to the relationship young people have with the political classes. Providing the kitchen table issues are being addressed, they won't take to the streets."

Highlighting the positivity of the findings, **Dania Khaled Al Maeena, CEO of Aloula Non-Profit Organization, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**, added: "Arab youth's hope for the future is extremely refreshing. They are excited about the future, which is a sentiment we see on the ground in Saudi Arabia. Youth are now more creative; many no longer want a steady government job like their parents had. Instead, they want to do what they are passionate about. But we can't take the optimism of our young people for granted. We must bridge the gap between the education sector and the needs of the workplace. This will involve creating new skill sets to ensure our youth are prepared for the new economy."

Describing the survey as the story of a "pragmatic" generation, **Afshin Molavi, Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute of the John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Washington DC**, said: "Arab youth are unswayed by the chest-thumping populists; they are eager for opportunities to work and for self-advancement; they are hungry for change in the way their governments operate; and they are ready to take the initiative. While some have described Arab youth as 'the burned generation' - burned by poor governance and mismanagement - they are also a pragmatic generation, with energy and vision and creativity that can not only change their own country, but the whole world - if given an opportunity."

Kim Ghattas, journalist, analyst and the author of *Black Wave: Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Forty Year Rivalry that Unraveled Culture, Religion and Collective Memory in the Middle East*, said this year's Arab Youth Survey countered the prevailing view in some political circles that the United States was turning away from the MENA region.

"If American influence and power are on the wane as the news headlines proclaim, you wouldn't be able to tell from the 2021 ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey: young Arabs believe the US is still the country with the most influence in the region, trailed far behind by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. If the talk is all about retreat and turning away from America, the survey shows that a small majority of young Arabs still see America as an ally. These two data points are some of the most surprising findings in the survey."

Hussein Ibish, Senior Resident Scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, was also surprised by the results of this year's research. "Some of the most counter-intuitive findings concern the attitude of Arab youth towards emigration. The widespread perception in the West is that Arab youth are clamouring to leave their countries. But this survey points in a very different direction. The UAE has established a particularly strong 'brand' among Arab youth; this suggests that its model of diversity and tolerance has a good chance of influencing the social and cultural development of other Arab societies over time."

The findings of the Middle East and North Africa's largest study of its kind on its largest demographic - the region's over 200 million youth - reveal several new insights on the shifting trends in the region. The survey was conducted for [ASDA'A BCW](https://www.asdaabcw.com), the MENA region's

leading Public Relations consultancy, by [PSB Insights](#), a global strategic research and analytics consultancy. The study polled 3,400 young Arab nationals aged 18 to 24 from 50 cities and territories in 17 Arab states in MENA with a 50:50 male female split during June 6 to 30, 2021.

Download for free, the full findings and a White Paper, featuring expert commentaries, on this year's ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey at arabyouthsurvey.com

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Notes to Editors:

About the ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey

The Annual ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey, launched in 2008, is the largest survey of its kind of the Arab world's largest demographic – its over 200 million youth. The survey fills an important gap in the data and insights on this influential community. It informs governments, the private sector, multilateral institutions, and academia on policymaking and future strategy.

The 13th Annual ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey 2021, conducted by the international research firm PSB Insights, explores the hopes, fears and aspirations of Arabs aged 18 to 24 across 50 cities and territories in 17 states in the Middle East and North Africa.

A total of 3,400 face-to-face interviews were carried out between June 6 and June 30, 2021, in both Arabic and English, with male and female citizens of each country. The cohort was split equally between men and women. The survey covers five Gulf Cooperation Council states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the UAE), North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia), the Levant region (Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories, Syria) and Yemen.

www.arabyouthsurvey.com

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About ASDA'A BCW

ASDA'A was founded in 2000 as an independent communications firm by Sunil John, who leads the agency in its 21st year. In 2008, WPP (NYSE: WPP) acquired a majority stake in ASDA'A and merged it with BCW (Burson Cohn & Wolfe), one of the world's top three communications firms.

The agency employs more than 160 professionals across eight wholly owned offices. The agency has a further nine affiliates covering 15 Middle East & North Africa (MENA) countries. The agency serves over 100 retained clients and is the leading PR consultancy in MENA.

www.asdaa-bcw.com

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About BCW

BCW is the global communications agency that moves people on behalf of clients. BCW partners with clients in the B2B, consumer, corporate, crisis management, healthcare, public affairs, purpose and technology sectors to set strategic direction for all communications and create powerful and

unexpected ideas that earn attention. Through an 'earned-plus' offer - earned media plus paid media, creative technology, data, AI and an expanding suite of innovative capabilities - BCW moves people with power and precision to move its clients forward. BCW is a part of WPP (NYSE: WPP), a creative transformation company.

www.bcw-global.com.

About PSB

PSB is a full-service strategic consultancy. We offer custom research and analytics-based solutions including, fast-turn, quantitative and qualitative that are underpinned by innovation and our strong legacy of custom design and hard to reach audiences. We create insights that give global brands, local businesses, and world leaders the confidence to make informed decisions. We are collaborative and act as strategic partners to help clients tackle the most difficult brand, business and communications issues. We collect all of the useful nuggets from various sources to go deeper and address the most difficult challenges, and find the WHY behind the data. We help keep data and insights at the heart of every decision. PSB is a member of the BCW Group of companies, which is part of WPP (NYSE: WPP), a creative transformation company.

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