

Press Release

13th Annual ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey

Saudi youth strongly support their government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and say the response of their health service has been 'excellent'

- *93% said they have either had a vaccine or intend to get one, compared to 49% of youth who said so across MENA*
- *Despite concerns over rising living costs, Saudi youth universally support the Kingdom's Vision 2030 strategy and say the country has the right policies in place*
- *80% of Arab youth across MENA name Saudi Arabia as one of their country's top-three allies*

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, October 12, 2021: More than eight in 10 (82%) young Saudi citizens say they strongly approved of their government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and 84 per cent describe the performance of their health service as 'excellent'. That compares with a government approval rating of 51 per cent in the GCC states and 25 per cent in the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) overall.

Confidence in Saudi Arabia's handling of the pandemic was one of the key findings of the [13th Annual ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey](#), which polled 3,400 young Arab nationals in 50 cities and territories in 17 MENA countries from June 6 to 30, 2021. The largest study of the region's largest demographic, its 200 million youth, was conducted by [PSB Insights](#), the global research and analytics specialist, amongst a cohort of 18- to 24-year-olds equally split between men and women.

While many young adults around the world are reluctant to have any of the COVID-19 vaccines now available to them, young men and women in Saudi Arabia strongly support inoculating themselves against the virus, with 93 per cent of survey participants in the country saying they had either taken a COVID-19 vaccine or plan to do so, compared with the regional average of 49 per cent.

This year's ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey also revealed surprisingly high levels of optimism and positivity across the MENA region, despite the damaging effects of the pandemic, economic turbulence and ongoing military conflicts. When asked whether they believed their best days were either ahead of them or behind them, nearly two-thirds (60%) of respondents expressed hope for the future – the highest level in five years.

Although very concerned about rising living costs and access to quality education, 82 per cent of the Saudi youth polled agreed that their best days lay ahead, and two-thirds (65%) said they expected to have a better life than their parents.

Nearly all (98%) said they felt their country's economy was heading in the right direction, compared with 86 per cent who said so last year, illustrating a general feeling among Arab youth that the region is pulling out of the COVID-19 pandemic. And the same percentage (98%) said they were confident that Vision 2030, the Kingdom's strategy for economic and social reform, would succeed, up from 91 per cent last year.

The importance of Saudi Arabia as a regional ally was also highlighted by the participants in this year's survey. The country was named alongside Egypt and the United Arab Emirates as a strong ally of their country, or somewhat of an ally, by 80 per cent of interviewees across all 17 Arab states, with China and Russia ranked fourth and fifth, respectively. Arab youth also continue to feel the presence of the United States in regional affairs, with over half (51%) saying that the country has the most influence over the Arab world, followed by Saudi Arabia (29%) and the UAE (23%).

"Over the past 13 years, the findings of our annual Arab Youth Survey have provided fascinating insights into the hopes, fears and aspirations of the generation that will shape the future of MENA, a region of great importance to the prosperity, security and well-being of the entire world," said **Sunil John, President, MENA, BCW and Founder of ASDA'A BCW.**

"Despite the grave social and economic challenges facing much of the region, the hopefulness of young Arab men and women has been one of the most pleasing, if somewhat unexpected, findings of this year's research, although regional decision-makers have a tremendous responsibility to ensure the ambitions of their young people are fulfilled," said John.

"The maturity of Saudi youth has also shone through in this year's study, particularly with regards to their country's handling of the pandemic," he added. "Moreover, these ambitious and resourceful young men and women have issued a clear vote of confidence in their leadership's social and economic vision for the future, which is an extremely positive sign."

Nine in ten young Saudi citizens (91%) believe their opinions matter to their leadership, while 96 per cent say the government has the right policies in place to address the issues most important to young people.

And despite concerns among the cohort generally about education quality, ninety-seven of young Saudi men and women said their schooling had equipped them to succeed in technology-related industries. Reflecting the Kingdom's economic diversification drive, two-thirds of respondents (62%) said they were 'very interested' to pursue a career in tourism, compared with the regional average of 27 per cent.

Despite 93 per cent of Saudi interviewees saying they worried about rising living expenses, a quarter (24%) disclosing that their income had fallen since COVID-19, and a fifth (17%) admitting they struggled to save regularly, more than eight in 10 (83%) believed their government would overcome these and other challenges. Only 43 per cent of the respondents across MENA felt similarly confident about their governments.

Compared to their peers in the GCC, the survey also found that Saudi youth are the most career focused, with 35 per cent saying that starting a career was their priority over the next 10 years, compared with 24 per cent who said finishing their studies was most important, and 13 per cent who prioritized starting a family.

"As one of the region's largest communications consultancies, with a rich heritage stretching back 21 years, ASDA'A BCW has been committed to giving young Arab men and women in MENA a voice through our annual Arab Youth Survey," said John. "That voice has become more emphatic as we have expanded our research over the years, from nine countries in 2008 when we launched the survey, to 17 Arab states and territories today."

"We have also been able to reflect changing youth perceptions of the direction in which their countries are heading; this has certainly been true of Saudi Arabia, which has embarked on a hugely ambitious economic diversification drive in recent years," he added.

"The results of this year's study indicate that while Saudi youth are facing many of the same challenges as their regional peers, such as rising living costs and increasing job market competition, they are fully behind their leadership's vision for social and economic reform. The country has an exciting opportunity to build on this positive momentum as it emerges from the challenges of COVID-19."

To know more about the findings and to download the white paper on this year's ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey log on to 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.

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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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