

**T.C.
ISTANBUL KÜLTÜR UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**THE IMPORTANCE AND IMPACTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS POLICIES ON
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES' GENDER EQUALITY**

MA Thesis by

**SEVDE ÖZBEY
2200006954**

Department: International Relations

Programme: International Relations

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Çağla Gül YESEVİ

MAY 2025

**T.C.
ISTANBUL KÜLTÜR UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**THE IMPORTANCE AND IMPACTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS POLICIES ON
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES' GENDER EQUALITY**

MA Thesis by

**SEVDE ÖZBEY
2200006954**

Department: International Relations

Programme: International Relations

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Çağla Gül YESEVİ

Members of Examining Committee: Asst. Prof. Nur Sinem Kourou

Asst. Prof. Kamala Valiyeva

MAY 2025

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of numerous individuals whose contributions and invaluable assistance were essential to its completion. I extend my deepest gratitude to my husband and daughter, whose patience and understanding kept me motivated throughout this demanding process. Balancing academic life with motherhood was not always easy, but her presence made every challenge worthwhile. I am also deeply grateful to my beloved parents, whose encouragement has been fundamental to my academic journey. This achievement would not have been possible without their unconditional support.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to all the women who participated in the interviews, whose insights were invaluable in shedding light on the experiences of Emirati women.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to İstanbul Kültür University for offering me the invaluable opportunity to pursue my studies in such an intellectually enriching environment.

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Çağla Gül YESEVİ, for her exceptional mentorship and guidance, which were pivotal to the successful completion of this research. It has been an honor to work under her supervision, where her profound expertise and insights have not only enriched my research but also inspired my academic growth.

Sevde ÖZBEY

Üniversite : **İstanbul Kültür Üniversitesi**
Enstitü : **Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü**
Dalı : **Uluslararası İlişkiler**
Programı : **Uluslararası İlişkiler**
Tez Danışmanı : **Prof. Dr. Çağla Gül YESEVİ**
Tez Türü ve Tarihi : **Yüksek Lisans – Mayıs 2025**

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Birleşmiş Milletler'in (BM) genel politikaları ve önerilerinin Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri'nin (BAE) toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği hedeflerine ne ölçüde etki ettiğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Uluslararası kuruluşların cinsiyet eşitliği üzerindeki rolü ve etkisi, çeşitli ülkelerde vaka çalışmalarıyla analiz edilmiştir. Bu araştırmalar, genellikle Avrupa Birliği (AB) ülkelerinde en iyi uygulamaların olduğunu göstermektedir. Buna karşılık, savaş ve iç çatışmalar nedeniyle istikrarsızlaşan ve demokratik olmayan ülkelerde yapılan araştırmalar, bu ülkelerde cinsiyet eşitliği konusunda ciddi eksiklikler olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Federal monarşi ile yönetilen ve nüfusunun çoğunluğu Müslüman olan Orta Doğu ülkesi BAE, 1995 Pekin Konferansı'nın tavsiye kararlarını benimseyerek bu doğrultuda ulusal stratejiler ve eylem planları geliştirmiş ve toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği konusunda önemli ilerlemeler kaydetmiştir. Bu bağlamda, BAE, bahsedilen yapısal özelliklerine rağmen uluslararası girişimlerdeki aktif rolüyle özgün bir vaka çalışması olarak öne çıkmakta ve bu çalışma, söz konusu girişimlerin ülkenin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği dinamiklerini nasıl etkilediğini araştırarak literatüre katkı sağlamayı hedeflemektedir. Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği birçok açıdan incelenebilir ve ölçülebilir. Ancak bu çalışmada, temsil, istihdam ve kadın hakları bağlamında, birincil ve ikincil kaynaklar ile Emirati kadınlarla gerçekleştirilen derinlemesine görüşmeler aracılığıyla değerlendirilmektedir.

Bu araştırmanın temel katkısı, BM politikalarının BAE'nin toplumsal cinsiyet hedeflerine ulaşmasındaki etkinliğini ve etkisini incelemektir. Aynı zamanda bu politikaların ülke genelinde tüm kadınlara eşit şekilde fayda sağlayıp sağlamadığını araştırmaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği, Birleşmiş Milletler, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri, Kadın hakları

University : **Istanbul Kültür University**
Institute : **Institute of Graduate Studies**
Department : **International Relations**
Programme : **International Relations**
Supervisor : **Prof. Dr. Çağla Gül YESEVİ**
Degree Awarded and Date : **MA – May 2025**

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the extent to which general policies and recommendations of the United Nations (UN) were effective for gender equality in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The impact and role of international organizations in various countries were examined through case studies, often highlighting European Union countries as models of best practices. Research conducted in war-torn, conflict-affected, and undemocratic countries has revealed shortcomings in terms of gender equality.

The UAE, as a Middle Eastern Muslim-majority country and a federal presidential elected monarchy, has made significant progress in gender equality by adopting the recommendations of the Beijing Conference 1995 and setting national strategies and action plans to implement these recommendations. This makes the UAE a unique case to study and contribute to the literature on gender equality, with the aim of investigating how these international initiatives influence the country's gender equality dynamics. Gender equality can be measured in terms of many aspects, but in this study, it is analyzed in terms of representation, employment, and women's rights through primary and secondary sources as well as in-depth interviews conducted with Emirati women.

The main contribution of this study will be to assess the effectiveness and impact of the UN policies in advancing the gender ambitions of the UAE, while also examining the extent to which these policies equally benefit all women across the country.

Keywords: Gender Equality, United Arab Emirates, United Nations, Women's rights

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT	i
ÖZET	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
List of Abbreviations	vi
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Importance of the Research	3
1.2 Literature Review	5
1.2.1 Gender mainstreaming	6
1.2.2 United Nations' approach to gender equality	11
1.2.3 The Gender-Related Aspirations of the United Arab Emirates	13
2. Methodology	17
3. Historical Context of Gender Equality in the United Arab Emirates	19
3.1 Overview of the United Arab Emirates: Historical and Social Background	19
3.2 Evolution of Women's Rights in the UAE	26
3.3 Emirati Women's Economic Role throughout History	29
3.3.1 Emiratization and Gender Equality	32
3.3.2 Cultural Perceptions of Gender Equality in the UAE	33
3.3.3 Progressive Gender Equality	35
4. United Arab Emirates' Engagement with the UN Gender Equality Policies	37
4.1 Analysis of key UN Policies and Resolutions related to Gender Equality	37
4.1.1 International Women's Conferences	38
4.1.2 Sustainable Development Goals and Gender Equality	40

4.1.3 Gender Equality Agendas of UN Bodies	41
4.2 The UAE’s Achievements in Gender Equality: Analysis of the UAE’s implementation of the UN policies and initiatives on gender equality	43
4.2.1 Impact of CEDAW on the UAE: Legal and Regulatory Reforms in the UAE	44
4.2.2 UAE’s Contribution to the UN’s Women, Peace and Security Agenda.....	46
4.2.3 Impact of Engagement with UN Platforms on UAE’s Gender Equality ...	47
4.2.4 Advancing Gender Equality through the UN SDGs	55
4.2.5 Legal and Policy Frameworks for Women’s Empowerment	55
5. Navigating Gender Equality in the UAE: An Analysis of Global Reports.....	65
5.1 The Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) by the World Bank	66
5.2 Human Development Report (HDR) by the UNDP.....	68
5.3 The Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum	70
5.4 The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor	71
5.5 Women, Peace, and Security Index by the Georgetown Institute.....	75
6. Conclusion	76
7. References.....	88
Appendix A. Interview Questions	102
Appendix B. List of Interviewees	103

List of Abbreviations

ADBWC	:	Abu Dhabi Business Women Council
CEDAW	:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
DWE	:	Dubai Women Establishment
FNC	:	Federal National Council
GCC	:	Gulf Cooperation Council
GWU	:	General Women's Union
HDR	:	Human Development Report
ILO	:	International Labor Organization
IPU	:	Inter-Parliamentary Union
OECD	:	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SDGs	:	Sustainable Development Goals
UAE	:	United Arab Emirates
UN	:	United Nations
UNECE	:	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
UNIDO	:	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UN WEPs	:	UN's Women's Empowerment Principles
WBL	:	Women, Business, and the Law
WEF	:	World Economic Forum

List of Tables

Table 4.1 : Impact of UN Policies and Organs on the Amendment of Laws and Regulations Related to Gender Equality in the UAE	62
Table 5.1 : Women, Business, and the Law 2024 2.0 Indicator Scores.....	67
Table 5.2 : Women, Business, and the Law.....	68
Table 5.3 : Human Development Report Gender Inequality Index.....	69
Table 5.4 : Global Gender Gap Index.....	70
Table 5.5 : Global Entrepreneurship Monitor.....	74
Table A.1 WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2024.....	104
Table A.2 WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2023.....	106
Table A.3 WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2020.....	107
Table A.4 WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2019.....	108
Table A.5 Gender Inequality Index (GII) - Human Development Report 2023-2024.....	109
Table A.6 The Global Gender Gap Index 2024 rankings.....	110



List of Figures

Figure 5.1 Total Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) by gender and country, GEM 2022.....	72
Figure 5.2 Relative gender gaps for new businesses (female % TEA/male % TEA) and for established businesses (female % EBO/male % EBO).....	73
Figure 5.3 National expert scores for the perceived social support for women entrepreneurs, and their relative access to the resources necessary to start and run their businesses.....	74



1. Introduction

The role of women in the 19th century was limited to maintaining a household and raising children by looking after their families. The decrease in men's population after the World Wars and other social factors provided an opportunity for women in the late 19th century, starting with the suffrage movement, which enabled women to be more active in work life, to have voting rights, and to gain rights in marital status. Furthermore, feminist thinking has been an essential factor in elevating women's perception within society, and with the emergence of the contemporary world, we can see how the role of women has changed and evolved positively.

However, discrimination against women is still observed all around the world, and women are deprived of the same opportunities provided to men in social, economic, and political settings. Gender equality is on the agenda of many international organizations, and various projects are implemented to empower women and ensure gender goals. The United Nations, as the largest intergovernmental organization, steadfastly upholds the principle of gender equality and by integrating women's empowerment into its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and leveraging its sub-organs and technical bodies, the UN has been conducting several initiatives to raise awareness on this issue through the strategy of gender mainstreaming.

In this context, the Beijing Platform for Action Declaration in 1995, with its 189 signatories and strategic approach for women's empowerment at all levels, is considered one of the most crucial steps towards integrating common objectives into national policies. Furthermore, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which was ratified by 186 countries following its adoption by the UN General Assembly in 1979, is generally portrayed as an "international bill of rights for women" (UN Women, 2024).

There is consensus on the importance and contribution of these initiatives to the national implementation of gender mainstreaming; on the other hand, the level of implementation has never been the same for all countries, considering their different social, cultural, religious, and economic background and structures. This explains why we observe various success stories and good examples of gender equality among developed/developing countries that have gender priorities. However, many countries with geographical boundaries have become part of joint efforts, yet not showing commitment to implementing gender mainstreaming.

Hence, in theory, the numbers for becoming a signatory of international agreements and declarations on gender equality seem to demonstrate a good level of indicator for the support and promotion of gender equality, but in practice, not all countries share the same enthusiasm to truly execute gender action plans. In this regard, this study aims to enhance and contribute to the current scholarly discourse by examining the impact of policies of the United Nations and its sub-organs on gender equality in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) which adopted Beijing Conference recommendations and ratified the CEDAW in 2004 and submits its reports regularly to the CEDAW Committee.

It is noteworthy to state that the UAE prioritized its strategic objectives on gender, issued laws, and established the Gender Balance Council in 2015 to empower Emirati women across all fields of work and bolster the UAE's standing both locally and globally. The organizational framework for the Gender Balance Council, with Shaikha Manal Bint Mohammad, appointed as the chairperson, was approved by the UAE Cabinet (The UAE Cabinet, 2024). The country is committed to bridging the gender gap in many strategic areas, including representation and employment, and is determined to be ranked higher in the global reports with its strong ambitions (United Arab Emirates, 2019, p.7). Its religious identity, monarchical structure, cultural background, or geographical boundaries do not seem to pose problems or excuses for the UAE on the contrary, the country with its government institutions -both federal and local- alongside NGOs has been striving to achieve gender equality by amending the laws to minimize or eliminate discrimination against women thereby ensuring equitable access to constitutional rights and by providing equal education opportunities and building women's capacities with the overarching objective of attaining gender balance in representation.

This study investigates in detail to what extent the UAE has benefitted from UN decisions and recommendations and how these non-binding policies are implemented in the country despite all the socio-cultural and other sorts of challenges. The reason why I chose gender equality is due to my interest and passion for women's rights and gender studies and to be able to share my working experience as a gender focal point of an intergovernmental organization that has become a signatory of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Gender Responsive Standards Initiative (GRSI) and developed a Gender Action Plan. The GRSI aims to offer a pragmatic approach for standards bodies aspiring to advance gender equality through the standards they create and the processes by which these

standards are developed. Additionally, through its Working Party 6, for which I serve as the focal point, the Commission provides a platform for stakeholders to convene, collaboratively cultivate expertise, and generate guidance that can be widely disseminated (The UNECE, 2024).

1.1 Importance of the Research

According to the UN Women (2024), gender equality is “300 years away,” which is nearly three centuries later than it is hoped. The persistent absence of women in leadership roles, poor recruitment conditions and opportunities for women, and some conservative movements hindering further development of women’s rights seem to continue to occupy our agenda for a long time hence, there is now an ever-greater need to speak up for the rights of women by making more researches to demonstrate current situation and applications. While seeing some unfortunate cases or unsatisfactory facts of discrimination against women will make us feel sad, it will also help us to discover best practices in others, which will surely motivate us to reach our goals.

Undoubtedly, international organizations are pivotal in advancing such initiatives, with the United Nations, as the largest among them, making substantial contributions, whether directly or indirectly, to the achievement of countries' gender equality goals. For instance, the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), introduced by the UN in 2010, represent a pivotal milestone in advancing gender equality, particularly within the framework of the UN Global Compact (UNGC). These principles serve as a comprehensive guideline for promoting best practices and fostering responsible corporate conduct regarding gender equality. They not only underscore the importance of gender inclusivity within businesses but also emphasize their role in contributing to sustainable development. With over 4,000 company CEOs worldwide endorsing a statement in support of these principles, the influence of the UN as an international organization in championing gender equality and encouraging corporate accountability cannot be overstated (Bexell, 2012, pp. 389-407).

In September 2015, global leaders pledged to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the overarching aim of eliminating poverty, safeguarding the environment, and fostering prosperity and peace globally by 2030. While gender inequality had been recognized in previous international initiatives like Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals, and the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

(UNDESD), the SDGs placed greater emphasis on addressing gender disparities (Hesketh and Williams, 2021, p.2). The UN Women highlights the critical role of women in addressing each of the 17 SDGs, as they are disproportionately affected by poverty, food insecurity, climate change, economic setbacks, and insufficient medical services. The escalating climate, as well as ecological crises, underscore the urgent need for policies prioritizing sustainable and equitable outcomes over purely economic interests.

The SDGs explicitly recognize women's equality and empowerment as essential for achieving all targets, with women's involvement mentioned in several goals beyond Goal 5, including poverty reduction, food security, education, clean water, economic growth, sustainable cities, climate action, healthcare, conservation, biodiversity preservation, and peace-building (The United Nations, 2015, p.10). Women's engagement and empowerment are crucial prerequisites for realizing the SDGs and fostering economically prosperous, equitably fair, and ecologically robust societies where all individuals can thrive (Hesketh and Williams, 2021, p.2).

Gender equality transcends mere economic considerations and stands as an indispensable factor in the pursuit of peace and security. The need for streamlined coordination among United Nations (UN) member states and the requisite political determination for ensuring the effective operationality of the UN is imperative. The normative framework promulgated by the UN delineates essential benchmarks and standards, with particular emphasis placed on the pivotal contribution of women in efforts for peace and security, as underscored by the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Notwithstanding the existence of a robust legislative apparatus, the principal obstacle resides in its implementation, as evidenced by the current underrepresentation of women, who constitute less than 10% of negotiators and mediators engaged in peace processes. There is a common belief that women contribute a multifaceted perspective to peace negotiations, thereby engendering more efficacious outcomes (Dubai Women Establishment, 2020, p.54).

The examination of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) holds particular significance due to its government's prominent position in spearheading gender balance initiatives within the region. With women assuming influential roles such as judges and ministers, the UAE has become an exemplar for both the private sector and governments throughout the Middle East. The UAE government has implemented various measures aimed at fostering women's representation, education, and participation in the workforce under the theme of "gender

balance" (Fardan and Marochi, 2021, p.142). Thus, the study is essential in providing detailed information on the subject matter and is intended to be a guide for future researchers on the same or similar issues. The UAE is one of the unique settings for studying gender equality, and this research aims to shed light on the UAE's gender ambitions by analyzing to what extent they are achieved or not. Hence, it could provide good examples and best practices for other countries having similar structures or backgrounds.

Research into the UAE's gender equality activities and motivations exists, but an in-depth investigation into the non-binding policies, decisions, or bodies of the UN in a Middle Eastern country like the UAE would be original, particularly given the recent strides made. Providing the most current information, this study will analyze literature, country reports, social media accounts, institutional websites, and the opinions of Emirati women and aim to answer this research question: To what extent general policies and recommendations of the United Nations (UN) were effective for the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) gender equality?

The hypothesis of the study stands on the following arguments:

- While the United Arab Emirates is a very active member of the United Nations and its sub-organs about gender equality, as well as becoming a signatory to international agreements addressing this matter, not all women across the country have equal access to the initiatives and support implemented for women's empowerment.
- Socio-cultural, religious, and geographical boundaries have significant impacts on the execution of gender policies and action plans; however, this situation does not pose an obstacle for the UAE.

This research aims to analyze the situation of Emirati women within the UAE. Acknowledging the substantial population of expatriate women residing in the country, it is important to note that this study primarily focuses on Emirati women. Consequently, a limitation of this research is that it does not encompass the entire female population in the UAE, particularly excluding the experiences and perspectives of expatriate women. This narrowed focus is essential to provide a detailed and specific understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Emirati women. However, it also means that the findings may not be fully representative of the broader female demographic within the nation.

1.2 Literature Review

Given the extensive scope of the study, the literature was reviewed through the perspectives of gender mainstreaming, the United Nations' approach to gender equality, and the gender-related aspirations of the United Arab Emirates.

1.2.1 Gender mainstreaming

The initial conception of gender primarily functioned as a political strategy, centered on achieving legal parity, echoing a liberal interpretation of the equality principle, and aligning closely with the objectives of early feminists during the first wave. This perspective gained prominence in Western democracies starting from the early 1960s (Jacquot, 2015, p.7). Second-wave feminists became linked with the idea of equal opportunities and presented the concept of "difference" to investigate the particular types of oppression faced by women. According to Rees (1998, as cited in Jacquot, 2015, p.7), this alternative thinking, centered on the exploitation experienced by women in the business sphere, started to be more influential in the 1980s. Subsequently, the third strategy, known as gender mainstreaming, emerged approximately a decade later, coinciding with the increasing adoption of the gender concept.

Meyer and Prügl (1999) point out that gender mainstreaming was first introduced by feminists in the 1970s and later formally adopted at the Beijing Conference in 1995. This idea is supported by Kabeer (2003), who argues that the roots of gender mainstreaming are primarily found in feminist approaches to development, which explored various methods of integrating gender equity into processes (as cited in Walby, 2005, p.19). Feminist approaches to global governance contributed to the emergence of gender mainstreaming by engaging with state institutions and advocating for women's representation in political processes. Feminists emphasized the importance of women's labor and rights and the impact of economic policies on women while organizing within both formal and informal political spheres to push for gender-sensitive state policies. They also created political and epistemic networks that influenced policy debates, particularly in the fields of economics and development studies. These efforts were crucial in challenging the male bias in economic policy-making and embedding gender considerations in global governance discussions (Rai, 2004, pp. 587-589).

Ylöstalo (2016, p. 550) argues that while gender mainstreaming, rooted in feminist theories and political frameworks, is adopted by organizations, it is frequently redefined to align with organizational objectives such as competitiveness, productivity, and financial gain. As a result, the original transformative potential of gender mainstreaming—its ability to challenge and change gender inequalities—may be overlooked. Additionally, feminists incorporated the concept of gender into political discourse to examine how societal constructs of male and female identities shape women's experiences, roles, and opportunities in various spheres of life (Eveline & Bacchi, 2005, p. 497).

Prügl (2009, pp. 175-176) argues that gender mainstreaming reflects a feminist engagement with the state but has raised concerns about the risk of de-radicalizing and co-opting feminist aims. Feminists who were not part of the state sought to campaign and influence lawmakers. They faced opposition but also built alliances with supportive legislators to promote feminist viewpoints. After laws were passed, feminists depended on the executive branch and courts to enforce them. practices in society.

Gender mainstreaming is a strategic and transformative approach aimed at addressing gender inequality by incorporating gender perspectives into all aspects of policymaking, organizational structure, program development and processes, implementation, and evaluation (UN Women, 2024). With its endorsement in the Fourth International Conference of the UN on Women (Beijing-1995), gender mainstreaming stands as the globally recognized approach to achieving gender parity (Daly, 2005, pp. 434-435). In contrast to previous initiatives aimed at mitigating the challenges encountered by women in labor, the introduction of gender mainstreaming led policymakers to adopt an approach that scrutinizes the societal norms of gender roles across all policy sectors (True, 2003, pp. 369-372).

Gender mainstreaming is not an ultimate objective but rather a means to achieving gender equality. It entails the incorporation of gender perspectives into various facets, encompassing policy formulation, legislative measures, research, and resource distribution (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2024). Therefore, gender equality remains the primary and enduring objective of development, with gender mainstreaming serving as a set of strategic methodologies, technical procedures, and institutional mechanisms aimed at realizing this objective. It encompasses the integration of gender equality within national public and private entities, influencing policies at central or local levels, as well as services and sectoral initiatives. However, as stated in the texts of the UN, the originator of the concept, the mainstreaming approach should be tailored to the specific topic at hand, as there is no universal formula or one-size-fits-all model that applies across all contexts (The United Nations, 2002, p. 2).

Gender mainstreaming has been a significant milestone, prompting substantial efforts to promote gender equality, particularly in developing countries. True and Mintrom (2001, pp. 27-28) argue that the spread of gender mainstreaming is propelled by international networks of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the United Nations (UN). These networks have been exerting significant efforts to maintain gender mainstreaming as a priority. Countries that integrate gender mainstreaming into their institutions often do so because of their connections

to the global community. However, the success of gender-focused policies ultimately hinges on whether countries establish dedicated institutions to address gender equality. Additionally, having supportive individuals in decision-making roles is crucial, but this relies on how effectively mainstreaming practices are implemented within institutions.

In 2006, the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) approved the UN System-Wide Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment to advance gender equality within UN policies and programs, in line with the 1997 conclusions of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). To implement this policy, the United Nations created a System-wide Action Plan (SWAP), developed through broad inter-agency consultations led by UN Women, aiming to foster consistency and promote gender mainstreaming across the organization (UNCEB, 2024).

Following the initial UN-SWAP period (2012-2017), a second phase, UN-SWAP 2.0, was introduced in 2018 after extensive consultations across UN entities. This updated framework integrated lessons from the first phase and aligned with the 2030 SDG Agenda, shifting the focus toward measurable outcomes. While UN-SWAP 1.0 emphasized gender mainstreaming, the second phase prioritizes results, with 12 of the 17 SDGs supporting gender equality through gender-specific targets (Asante, 2020, p. 13).

Additionally, performance indicators were introduced to assess the contributions of UN institutions at the country level and within regulatory frameworks. There is a consensus that the SWAP has played a key role in fostering dialogue on gender mainstreaming, though opinions vary on its impact. Organizations with initially lower performance, like the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), viewed it as a valuable tool for setting minimum benchmarks. Meanwhile, those with established gender initiatives, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), viewed it as a means of further enhancing and institutionalizing their efforts. The Action Plan also highlighted areas requiring further enhancement and secured internal backing to resolve those shortcomings (D'Errico & Zengeni, 2019, pp. 4-5).

Numerous Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports demonstrated progress in promoting gender equality through policy measures, as well as efforts to prevent laws and programs from perpetuating discrimination. Notable examples include Lebanon's abolition of a law that allowed rapists to avoid prosecution by marrying their victims, Namibia's adoption of gender-responsive budget guidelines, and Mexico's incorporation of a comprehensive gender perspective into its national development plan. However, challenges such as gender-based violence and inequalities in leadership roles and pay still remain (D'Errico & Zengeni, 2019, p. 3).

Gender mainstreaming is guided by various strong mandates taken at the UN level, which are crucial for focusing on gender equality and women's rights. United Nations ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2, Beijing Platform for Action 1995, Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) Decision 2006/2, General Assembly resolution 64/289 on system-wide coherence (2010), Rio+20 outcome document, The Future We Want (2012), ECOSOC Resolution 2021/7 and Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review 2020 are key mandates used to clarify responsibilities, provide guidance on actions, and facilitate policy dialogue in development organizations and practices (UN Women, 2022, p.16).

The implementation of gender mainstreaming marked a notable shift in which the responsibility for gender equality policies ceased to be solely borne by activists or feminist figures. However, this strategy was also criticized in that it fails to acknowledge the absence of consensus regarding the precise definition of the term "equality," even among the entities tasked with advancing policies related to gender mainstreaming. Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the European Commission (2016) provide descriptions that are relatively noncommittal, focusing on "equal opportunities" and acknowledging a "gender perspective." In contrast, the Council of Europe (2018) underscores the importance of "gender equality," a term that is inherently more effective in prioritizing outcomes compared to "equal opportunities" (Meier and Celis, 2011, p. 472).

Moreover, Booth and Bennett (2002, pp. 433-436) advocate that while gender mainstreaming has the potential to address gender disparities and contentious issues, including gender quotas for women, its application should encompass a holistic understanding of equality, integrating perspectives from both women and men. Buckingham et al. (2021, p. 673) argue that within the EU, gender mainstreaming tends to prioritize neoliberal managerialism, focusing on institutions leveraging women's expertise and capabilities instead of promoting gender

equality. On the other hand, Butale (2023), in his study conducted for the Southern African Development Community (SADC), concludes that gender mainstreaming tends to focus on women's roles as contributors to economic growth, rather than driving transformation, and stresses the importance of improved monitoring, sector-wide collaboration, and capacity building to enhance conditions in the informal sector (p. 726).

Similarly, the current approach to gender equality is also criticized for being abstract, rigid, and reinforcing existing inequalities. In response to these concerns, Rittenhofer and Gatrell (2012, p. 203) propose an analysis of gender from a situational and organizational standpoint, taking into account the social roles and expectations attributed to men and women. This underscores the necessity for a more flexible interpretation of gender that encompasses socio-cultural and post-structural perspectives. Kardam and Acuner (2003, pp. 96-99) argue that most UN member states have national machineries, established since the 1980s and 1990s, which differ in structure and mandate but all aim to promote gender equality, though they are often limited in resources and political influence, sparking debates about their relevance and impact.

On the other hand, there is another perspective on the more effective implementation of gender mainstreaming at an institutional level, which involves modifying organizational rules and policies to promote gender equality, known as institutional gender mainstreaming (Ravindran & Kelkar-Khambete, 2021, p. 2). This concept is integral to the UN-SWAP, which has been implemented by UN Women for over a decade and plays a crucial role in programmatic gender mainstreaming, utilizing policies, actions, and programs to advance gender equality. The UN-SWAP framework is proof of the UN's commitment to the accountability of gender mainstreaming, with 70 entities participating in 2020, 62% of which met or exceeded requirements, and an increase in gender equality scorecard assessments from 33 to 38 country teams (UN Women, 2022, p.8).

Gender mainstreaming operates at two levels: programmatic and institutional. Programmatic efforts involve gender analysis, program design, resource allocation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, while institutional efforts focus on setting up arrangements like gender units and focal points, allocating resources, and enforcing accountability mechanisms to advance gender mainstreaming (UN Evaluation Group (UNEG), 2018, p.8).

A multiple-track strategy for gender mainstreaming, combining gender-targeted interventions and integrated gender efforts across all sectors, is considered more effective in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. This approach promotes sustained societal change by addressing various factors contributing to gender inequalities and ensuring that both specific and general gender-focused measures are implemented (UN Women, 2020, p.5).

The integration of women and gender policies through these strategies has significantly catalyzed political actions that have strengthened regulatory systems for gender equality globally. Despite these developments, substantial challenges remain, including a lack of enforcement mechanisms and insufficient commitment to data collection by members, and much work is still needed to translate gender mainstreaming into practical reality (Maenza, 2018, p.32).

1.2.2 United Nations' approach to gender equality

Gender equality through various strategies, including gender mainstreaming, has been embraced and promoted by international organizations to have a collective and systematic action for the successful implementation of policies set particularly by the United Nations (UN), its relevant organs, and specialized agencies. Women's issues were initially considered and managed within the framework of human rights throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and as a result, they were exclusively debated in the Commission on the Status of Women and the UN General Assembly, where social and humanitarian matters are discussed. Nonetheless, approaches and attitudes began to shift in the 1970s, and it was decided to designate 1975 as the International Women's Year, which has received great attention by improving the recognition of the issue (Oke, 2018, p. 54). One of the most striking actions at that time was to announce the UN Decade for Women (1975 and 1985) as an awareness initiative to empower women socially, politically, economically, and educationally, which was taken a step further with the CEDAW in 1979.

International organizations have been influential in setting norms and guides that encourage their members to take action for gender equality in their respective countries. This is evident in the activities of the UN which has gathered and shared statistics that highlight how crucial women are particularly for 12 strategic areas declared in the Beijing Conference 1995 (UN Women, 2024) and how the UN system urges its member states to execute policies and strategies for the successful engagement and empowerment of women.

The 4th International Conference on Women (1995) introduced gender mainstreaming as a crucial and tactical approach to fulfilling gender equality pledges (UN Women, 2024). The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was the result of this conference, urging all players in development policies and programs, such as the UN members and institutions, as well as civil society participants, to actively engage in this endeavor. Further engagements and commitments reinforced by the Millennium Declaration, and numerous resolutions and decisions of the UN General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, and the Commission on the Status of Women have culminated in a global awakening on the importance of the gender mainstreaming (Skard, 2009, pp.160-170). Based on 40 years' experience of using gender mainstreaming as a policy tool, much has been achieved internally within organizations, including staffing and policies, however, this does not cover the failure witnessed particularly in the implementation, as not all countries have shown the same devotion to producing significant results in reducing gender disparities and transforming organizational approaches, often reducing it to a mere procedural formality.

Despite considerable efforts exerted to refer to and focus on gender equality, beginning with the founding of the UN in the 1940s, human rights declaration in the 1950s and 1960s, the Women's Year and Women Decade initiatives between 1975-1985, various conferences on women held within the presence of a global audience (Mexico City in 1975, Nairobi in 1985, and Beijing in 1995 conferences and so on) as well as millennium development goals, significant disparities still exist and much work and planning still need to be executed to bridge gender gaps (Arat, 2015, pp. 675-683).

Although all United Nations agencies have adopted gender mainstreaming policies and taken seriously the implications of gender policies when making decisions and prioritized the issue by making it one of the Sustainable Development Goals, overall, they seemed to be ineffective; researchers and analysts who have examined the results of such policies have shared the same opinion that there has not been a significant change at the UN since 1997 (Nivedita & Deshpande, 2019, p. 293). Novovic (2023, p. 1059) states that it is uncertain how these policy initiatives influence the inherently political nature of gender mainstreaming, raising the question of whether Agenda 2030 is advancing the circumstances for its execution.

It is demonstrated in Tibor Kozma's research (2012) that no progress has been achieved in some member states' gender mainstreaming implementation, and this issue is mostly overlooked by not having any law enforcement mechanisms. On the other side, some nations

have developed detailed strategies and actions that incorporate gender mainstreaming into their policies. The former are mostly developing countries, whereas the latter are developed countries like Spain, Sweden, and others in Western Europe (p. 91).

Hence, the role of international organizations in ensuring gender equality will be most likely studied in the future as well considering the two-pronged debate on this issue by highlighting the well-developed guiding plans and programs of the UN and other bodies on the one hand and the inefficient structure of the international organizations due to lack of enforcement mechanism on the other hand. In this regard, countries' will and commitment to implement gender mainstreaming policies will be the main determinant in achieving gender equality, considering the gap between theory (advanced discourse and rhetoric) and practice (Arat, 2015, p. 675).

It is widely agreed that gender issues should be systematically addressed by specifying targets and performance indicators to be evaluated and monitored within gender action plans. The UN, UN Women, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the UNECE, the UNDP, the World Bank, and the World Economic Forum along with other organizations have demonstrated a marked improvement by incorporating sophisticated gender lenses into their fields of activities (Ergas, 2013, p.16). Over the last couple of years, the role of the UN was studied in a selected country or group of countries, particularly focusing on the EU nations as best practices and war-torn, undemocratic countries to prove otherwise.

Although gender policies have contributed immensely to women's empowerment within representation, educational, and legal framework in various countries over the past decades, in the absence of enforcement and political will, gender equality is expected to be a constant struggle for us until gender parity is fully achieved and desired level is maintained all around the world (Nivedita & Deshpande, 2019, pp. 293-294).

1.2.3 The Gender-Related Aspirations of the United Arab Emirates

The historically patriarchal structure of the UAE society echoed in neighboring nations, presented a significant barrier for many women, who have long been confined to traditional domestic roles as mothers, wives, and caregivers, while men are viewed as the primary family providers (CEDAW, 2015; Tlaiss, 2013, as cited in Miller et al., 2017, p.30). Arab women navigating careers face a cultural tug-of-war, as societal norms place great importance on motherhood and family commitments, often instilling a sense of guilt when these pursuits

conflict with professional aspirations. Although Islamic teachings appear to support women's participation in the workforce, traditional interpretations prioritize their roles as homemakers, perpetuating a patriarchal system evident in the UAE family law and gender roles (Gallant and Pounder, 2008; UAE Federal Law 28 on Personal Status, 2005; CEDAW, 2015, as cited in Miller et al., 2017, p.30). This deeply rooted patriarchy extended into the workplace, as evidenced by Tlaiss and Klauser's research, shaping Arab women's unique career experiences and challenges in the UAE (Tlaiss and Klauser, 2011, as cited in Miller et al., 2017, p.30).

However, this trajectory has changed, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has stepped forward in advancing gender equality. The country is committed to bridging the gender gap in many strategic areas, including representation and employment, and is determined to be ranked higher in the global reports with its strong ambitions (United Arab Emirates, 2019, p.7).

In line with this, the UAE adopted the recommendations of the 1995 Beijing Conference, ratified the CEDAW in 2004, and consistently reported to the Committee, demonstrating various efforts to ensure gender equality. The prioritization of strategic objectives for gender equality by the UAE, including enacting laws and establishing the Gender Balance Council as a federal body in 2015, constitutes crucial steps (UAE Gender Balance Council, 2020, pp. 91-103).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has gender ambitions as part of its broader developmental goals and societal aspirations. These ambitions stem from recognizing the significance of gender parity as well as the impact of empowering women on social progress, economic development, and sustainable growth. Additionally, promoting gender equality aligns with international standards and commitments, such as the SDGs and the UN's agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment. Moreover, addressing gender disparities enhances the UAE's global competitiveness and reputation as a modern, inclusive, and forward-thinking nation (UAE Gender Balance Council, 2020, pp. 6-8).

The shift in perspective revealed that for gender mainstreaming to be effective, organizations must first show dedication to gender equality by enacting meaningful internal transformations, setting this as a necessary basis for mainstreaming activities (Mehra & Gupta, 2006, p.6). In this context, in 2017, the Gender Balance Council collaborated with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to prepare the Gender Equality Guide, which serves as a significant guide for relevant public and private sector organizations. This document sets goals through the lens of mainstreaming gender, taking

critical steps toward achieving the 2021 UAE vision. By endorsing gender mainstreaming, the country has attained significant gains in gender equality, supporting international organizations' efforts in this regard (Gender Balance Guide, 2017).

Seeking regional leadership in the Middle East and aiming to manage economic development effectively, the UAE has closely monitored the UN and its sub-organizations' initiatives regarding gender equality. Collaborations between the UAE government and UN Women have laid the groundwork for the country's success, including the development of its first National Action Plan (United Arab Emirates, 2021, pp.3-4).

While the UAE is very ambitious and target-oriented in minimizing gender inequality in various strategic areas such as representation and employment, it aims to achieve higher rankings in global reports with its robust objectives. The country's efforts to minimize or eliminate discrimination against women through constitutional regulations and provide equal educational opportunities demonstrate its determination to achieve gender balance.

The motivation behind these reforms is somewhat contentious. It is stated (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2024, pp.1-2; Filho et al., 2022, pp. 14179-14182; Nazish, 2024, p. 42) that changes in gender discrimination laws are mainly attributed to international initiatives like CEDAW, the SDGs, and the #MeToo campaign. On the other hand, Pinto (2019, pp. 345-347) links these changes to a political movement aimed at enhancing the portrait of the UAE as a country positioned to attract global human capital and investments (LSE Business Review, 2023, p.2). Particularly in the private sector, the need for foreign employees in the UAE has necessitated changes in the country's gender policies. The UAE boasts a remarkably diverse demographic landscape, with over 200 nationalities represented among its residents. Expatriates constitute more than 80% of the population, reflecting the country's status as a global hub for international talent and business (The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

Heskett and Williams (2021, p.13) highlight that the need to draw in international financial and human resources has resulted in a heightened focus on the country's gender policies, driven by the increasing presence of expatriates. The UAE's government-level campaign strategy and generous government sponsorship to promote women's rights organizations have led to initiatives being labeled as "state feminism" (LSE Business Review, 2023, p.3) referencing Stetson and Mazur's (1995, p.16) definition of mechanisms employed by states as the official agents for advancing women's status and gender equality.

However, Carvalho Pinto (2019, p.346) by embracing a different line of argument regarding the UAE's gradual success in international ranking states that this is a part of the "status-seeking strategies" of the UAE's foreign policy which is aimed at changing perception and separating the UAE from other Arabic countries through increasing the number of women politicians and promoting a particular group of business women. However, he still believes that the UAE is worth exploring, considering that the country is a latecomer yet striving hard to be a prominent actor in gender policies. Considering all these views, this research endeavors to illustrate the UAE's historical trajectory, the evolving perception of women within the workforce, the impact of the UN on the country, and the initiatives aimed at fostering gender equality.



2. Methodology

To test the accuracy of the hypothesis and the main objective of the research, the qualitative method was used to access more explanatory information. The study utilized both primary and secondary data, as well as benefited from in-depth interviews to better comprehend how gender policies are applied in the UAE.

In this research, the role of the United Nations and its organs was searched and analyzed in terms of laws enacted in the UAE, government policies executed, as well as investigating the functions of ministries and relevant bodies, and the cooperation mechanisms between them. National and international reports showing the index of all UN countries were also used to provide important statistical data to understand the situation and level of implementation in the UAE. By conducting in depth-interviews with Emirati women, it was targeted for further elaboration and first-hand experience and perspective on gender actions of the UAE.

In this study, the stance on gender equality in the United Arab Emirates, societal perceptions, and their impacts on professional life were addressed through interview questions. Within the framework of relevant questions, the perception of gender equality within society and how this affects individuals' professional lives was examined. Additionally, the perception and attitude of men towards gender equality, women's experiences in accessing job opportunities, perceptions of equal treatment, and measures taken to encourage participation in the workforce were also evaluated.

I conducted interviews with six Emirati women representing diverse professional fields: two¹ engineers—one employed in a private tech company and the other in a logistics firm—an academic at a private university, a tour guide and cultural presenter at a cultural center, and an academic at a public university with prior experience in the private sector. All participants have higher education, with some having completed postgraduate studies, and are professionals in either the private or public sectors, with no aristocratic or royal backgrounds. They live and work in the largest emirates, Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

¹ It is worth noting that the document titled 'Balance for Better' and the websites of government institutions are all available in English. Given the high value placed on gender equality, I encountered no language barriers during my research.

The interviews were conducted via an online meeting platform, recorded, and then transcribed for analysis. To establish trust with the participants, I ensured that their informed consent was obtained and each interviewee received detailed information about my background, including my university affiliation, as well as an overview of the research objectives and the interview questions before the interview.

To maintain confidentiality and protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned to each individual involved in the study. For instance, Interviewee 1 was referred to as 'Lana,' Interviewee 2 as 'Fatima,' Interviewee 3 as 'Aaliyah,' Interviewee 4 as 'Leila,' Interviewee 5 as 'Amira,' and Interviewee 6 as 'Samira' throughout the analysis.

Following a literature review, sources were analyzed with specific categorizations, and academic publications were consulted for topics such as the historical development of gender equality, gender mainstreaming, the UN's decisions and initiatives in this regard, the socio-cultural and economic development of the UAE after its integration into the international system, and the role and evolution of women in society during this process. Country reports with the most up-to-date data were also selected based on issues such as women's rights, representation, and employment, and the data were analyzed in this context. Interviews are considered an important part of the analysis, as they reflect the information contained in all these written sources to the public.

While the six interviews conducted do not claim to represent the full spectrum of Emirati women's experiences—a limitation that must be acknowledged—the insights shared were compelling and enlightening. These firsthand perspectives provided valuable depth and nuance to the research, revealing culturally specific viewpoints and lived experiences that were not accessible through publicly available sources. Although the primary analysis did not rely on these interviews, they played an important role in enriching the study and complementing the broader data.

3. Historical Context of Gender Equality in the United Arab Emirates

This section will provide a comprehensive overview of the United Arab Emirates, focusing on its historical and social background and detailing the evolution of women's rights within the country. It will examine the crucial economic role played by Emirati women throughout history and explore the significant changes in gender equality over time.

3.1 Overview of the United Arab Emirates: Historical and Social Background

Situated on the southeastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, the UAE is a federal monarchy that shares borders with Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Iran. Encompassing an area of 83,600 square kilometers, it includes 200 islands within its territory. The population of the UAE, which is around 10 million, is diverse, comprising both Emirati nationals and a significant expatriate community hailing from various countries around the globe (The Department of Culture and Tourism, 2022, p. 3).

The modern history of the UAE traces back to the 18th century, during which coastal tribes were actively involved in pearl diving, fishing, and trade, laying the foundation for the region's cultural and economic development. This region, known as the Trucial States, became intertwined with the rise of the British Empire in the 19th century. The British Navy played a crucial role in maintaining maritime peace, suppressing piracy, and facilitating trade. Political residencies in key coastal cities served as administrative centers for British agents managing defense, diplomacy, and trade. Despite maintaining internal autonomy, the emirates were significantly influenced by British governance, with rulers often seeking British consultation on governance matters. British assistance contributed to the development of ports and industries, boosting the region's economy and infrastructure (Augsburg et al., 2009, p.1). As global decolonization unfolded, Britain announced its withdrawal from the Gulf in 1968, leading individual emirates to pursue independence and culminating in the formation of the UAE in 1971.

The discovery of oil in the 1950s marked a significant turning point in this regard, giving the State the courage to make such a big decision. Following the oil exports in 1962, the economic development gained momentum, driven by price increases during the early 1970s oil crisis. In 1971, a significant shift occurred when the ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, initiated dialogues with neighboring emirates. This led to a historic moment as Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Um al Quwain, Sharjah, Ajman, Fujairah, and later Ras al Khaimah joined

hands to establish a unified federation known as the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This marked the beginning of a new chapter in the region's history, characterized by sovereignty and unity (Randeree, 2009, p.72).

Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama's establishment of a sea route to India in 1498 initiated European competition for regional trade, ultimately leading to British control by the mid-17th century. The British imposed a series of treaties on the Arab Sheikdoms, resulting in the region being known as the Trucial States until British withdrawal and the formation of the UAE in 1971 (The Department of Culture and Tourism, 2022, p.5). After gaining independence in 1971, the focus shifted towards nation-building, with the UAE prioritizing the establishment of essential state institutions for effective governance. H.H. Al Nahyan, assuming leadership of Abu Dhabi in 1966, spearheaded a vision for the country's development and modernization. His investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and economic diversification drastically improved living standards and transformed the Emirates' fortunes. This transformation extended even to remote Bedouin communities, providing access to modern amenities such as roads, water, electricity, education, and healthcare.

As a latecomer to the international arena, education emerged as a key aspect of this endeavor, receiving significant investments to cultivate a skilled workforce tailored to the nation's evolving needs. The UAE's commitment to education remains steadfast to this day, which is evident in its policies and strategic directions. Initially, there was a strong emphasis on asserting Arab and Islamic identity, reflected in the educational curriculum. However, as the country progressed and aimed for global competitiveness, there has been a gradual shift towards adopting Western educational models while still preserving core cultural values (Al-Sayegh, 2001, pp.17-18).

Subsequent to this educational evolution, additional initiatives were implemented to empower women, aiming to maximize the effective utilization of human resources and foster comprehensive progress. Nevertheless, integrating women into the business sphere proved to be more challenging than simply providing equal educational opportunities. At that time, the concept of a working woman faced challenges due to the strict adherence to Shariah law in the UAE. In countries with a majority Muslim population like Tunisia, Türkiye, and Egypt, Islamic movements have been affected by processes of secularization and Westernization. Türkiye embraced secularism under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1937, with the principle of secularism officially included in the Turkish Constitution (Birdiqli & Kaçar, 2017, p.7).

Similarly, Tunisia's independence in 1956 (McCarthy, 2014, pp. 2, 10, 24) was marked by extensive secularization efforts, including the banning of headscarves and the closure of Sharia courts. Egypt initiated secularization debates in 1925 (Tanriver, 2019, pp. 2, 47), resulting in a legal system less focused on Sharia (Ross, 2009, pp. 6-8). These movements within Islamic countries may have influenced perceptions in the UAE regarding the initiation of similar evolutionary activities.

On the contrary, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries' constitutions underscore Islamic Sharia law as the foundational basis for legislation, leading to varying practices concerning women's rights as reflected in the degree of empowering women across these nations. The United Arab Emirates is a constitutional federation and has a government led by a president and vice president elected by the Supreme Council of Rulers for renewable five-year terms. The prime minister, appointed by the president, forms a Council of Ministers to manage federal policy, while the Federal National Council (FNC) reviews legislation and holds ministers accountable (UAE Embassy in Washington, 2024). The political system of the UAE is founded on a constitution that defines the nation's political and constitutional structure, detailing the federation's purpose and the rights of its citizens. This Constitution, made up of 152 articles, addresses ten key areas, including the federal framework, citizens' rights, and the distribution of authority between the federation and the emirates (Government of the United Arab Emirates, 2024).

In the UAE, significant efforts have been made to enhance the social position of women, with the empowerment of women emerging as a key government policy, both domestically and internationally. This commitment was underscored by Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, Minister of Foreign Affairs, during his address to the UN General Assembly in 2012. He explained the human rights policy of the UAE, highlighting values of moderation, tolerance, and acceptance of other communities within a big, diverse community grounded on mutual respect (UN General Assembly, 2012).

The UAE constitution, which came into effect on 02 December 1971 ensures social justice and equal rights for both genders, granting women the same legal status as well as rights to education, medical service, recruitment, and welfare as men (Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs, 2008, p.3). However, Sharia-based laws, such as the Personal Status law governing issues related to family, may supersede these constitutional assurances. Despite challenges in reconciling Sharia law with globally recognized standards, the government has

made great strides to align with global norms, particularly regarding women's rights. For example, plans were announced in March 2014 to enact a new law addressing domestic violence and providing unified support services for women across all seven emirates. However, as of July 2017, this law had yet to be implemented (Alhmoudi, 2016, p.26).

At this stage, the influence of the UN on the UAE's initiatives becomes apparent. Following the endorsement of the new constitution, the UAE initiated efforts to align with international norms and global trends, aiming to enhance its status as an influential nation. For instance, **Article (14)** of the Constitution states that *Equality, social justice, safety, security, and equal opportunities for all citizens shall be the pillars of the Society*, and **Article (25)** indicates that *All persons are equal before the law, without discrimination between citizens of the Union in regard to race, nationality, religious belief or social status*. **Article (34)**, which stipulates that *Every citizen shall be free to choose their occupation, trade, or profession within the limits of the law*, helps break down barriers that might limit women's participation in certain professions or industries (UAE Government, 2025). **Article 4** of the UAE Labor Law promotes equality and prohibits discrimination in the workplace. It specifically bans forced labor and any discrimination based on factors such as gender, race, color, sex, religion, national or social origin, or disability, ensuring fair and equal treatment for all individuals (UAE Government, 2025).

The CEDAW upholds gender equality and serves as a key international instrument for safeguarding the rights of women. The convention has influenced national laws and constitutions in numerous countries, protecting against gender-based discrimination. While 186 countries have ratified the Convention, due to the existence of various regimes, the Islamic world remains divided on its adoption. Some countries, including Iran and Sudan, have declined to ratify it, while others, like Türkiye and Tunisia, initially ratified it with reservations but later withdrew them (CEDAW Task Force of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, 2014, as cited in Alhmoudi, 2016, p.16).

The UAE, on the other hand, ratified the CEDAW in 2004 but entered reservations on several articles citing perceived conflicts with Sharia law and state policy. These reservations reflect a conservative stance, contrasting with the principles advocated by Sharia (CEDAW/C/ARE/1, 2008, pp.16-17). Reservations made by the UAE on the CEDAW articles, along with their justifications, can be summarized as follows: **Article 2(f)** (*on the obligation to modify or abolish discriminatory laws, regulations, customs, and practices*) was not accepted

because it was believed to contradict the inheritance rules set forth by Shariah law. **Article 9** (*on the right to nationality*) was another challenging article that was not accepted since the acquisition of nationality is viewed as a domestic issue regulated by national laws, which set specific conditions and controls. **Article 15(2)** (*on legal capacity*) was not accepted because it was considered to conflict with Shariah precepts concerning legal capacity, testimony, and the right to conclude contracts (International Federation for Human Rights, 2010, p.3).

Though initial reservations may seem discouraging, the Convention has played a significant role in empowering women in many Middle Eastern countries. The ratification marked a significant milestone for Emirati women, as it required the UAE to submit its regular reports to the CEDAW Committee and engage multiple ministries and NGOs to demonstrate progress. This process paved the way for political and economic empowerment, bolstered by governmental initiatives aimed at enhancing women's participation across various sectors. The UN initiative sparked a national awakening, prompting the establishment of a dedicated commission comprising representatives from various ministries, including the Ministries of Interior, Labor, State for Federal National Council Affairs, and Social Affairs, along with some civil society organizations. This commission was formed to drive forward women's empowerment efforts (United Arab Emirates, 2021, p.49).

This level of government dedication would not have been possible without the support of the UAE Emirs. H. H. Al Nahyan, later succeeded by H. H. Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, as President of the State, alongside diligent oversight by H. H. Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak, demonstrated a deep commitment to improving the status of Emirati women. No background on this subject would be complete without acknowledging the significant contributions of H. H. Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak, often referred to as the "Mother of the Nation." She holds influential positions such as the Presidency of the General Women's Union, President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, and Supreme Chairperson of the Family Development Foundation. Her efforts have been instrumental in elevating women's issues to the center of development agendas, as evidenced by their integration into governmental and national frameworks. In 1973, she formed the country's first women's organization, Abu Dhabi Women Development Society, laying the groundwork for Emirati women's remarkable achievements since the UAE's inception in 1971. Recognizing the vital role of women in society, Sheikha Fatima actively engages with them to promote the nation's progress, following the footsteps of H. H. Sheikh Zayed (GWU & UNDP Guide on Gender Mainstreaming, 2018, p.31).

Although no prominent women's movements or widely recognized feminist figures were identified in the UAE for inclusion in this research, H.H. Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak stands out as a pioneering leader in advancing women's empowerment and gender equality in the country. She initiated nationwide campaigns to educate young girls and founded the UAE Women's Federation in 1975 to elevate women's image, promote education, eradicate illiteracy, and enhance cultural standards, both domestically and internationally. The Federation became a pioneer in representing women on the global stage, participating in conferences that resonated worldwide, such as the inaugural women's summit in Mexico City in 1975. Her initiatives to promote women's careers extended to both the public and private sectors, notably encouraging women in the country to pursue roles in media and seek membership in the Federal National Council (FNC), the country's parliamentary assembly. In 2003, H. H. Sheikha Fatima facilitated meetings between the FNC and the General Women's Union (GWU), aiming to foster cooperation and coordination before approving female membership in the FNC (UAE Gender Balance Council, 2020, pp. 22-23).

All these initiatives did not go unrecognized; she has been honored with over 500 awards and certificates from national and international organizations. In 1997, Sheikha Fatima was acknowledged by five different UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO, UNIFEM, UNFP, and UNFPA) for her significant contributions to women's rights. Furthermore, she was awarded the UNESCO Marie Curie Medal in recognition of her efforts to promote women's rights, education, and literacy, becoming the first Arab recipient of this prestigious award. (Graziamagazine, 2021). Through its visionary leaders, the UAE placed paramount importance on empowering women and established numerous women's organizations to achieve its objectives and some of them are given below:

The General Women's Union (GWU) occupies a pivotal role as one of the earliest institutions dedicated to advancing the status of women in the UAE. Founded by H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak in 1975, it consolidated UAE's all existing women's associations to foster female entrepreneurship within the country. Serving as a multifunctional platform for ensuring women's involvement at the community, regional, and global scales, the GWU engages in women's conferences worldwide and advocates for Emirati women's political empowerment. Since 2004, the primary objective of the GWU has focused on increasing the representation of women parliamentarians. Since its establishment, the Union has tackled a wide range of issues affecting women, including educational programs, career development workshops, family mediation services, and health awareness initiatives (United Arab Emirates, 2021, pp.13-15).

In May 2015, the UAE government inaugurated the **UAE Gender Balance Council**, signaling a significant commitment to advancing the indispensable contribution of Emirati women to the nation's progress. Entrusted with the responsibility of supervising the adoption of exemplary practices and procedures, the Council ensures that federal entities adhere to their gender balance objectives, in line with the UAE's aspiration to rank among the top 25 nations globally for gender parity by 2021. Steered by H.H. Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, President of the Dubai Women Establishment and spouse of H.H. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs, the Council assumes a pivotal role in advancing gender equity within the UAE (UAE Gender Balance Council, 2020, p.6).

During the 2017 session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61), the Gender Balance Council of the UAE introduced the "Global Gender Circle" initiative. This endeavor was designed to address the disparity in women's economic involvement by offering forward-looking proposals to propel the global gender agenda (United Arab Emirates, 2021, pp.15-16). It encompasses the creation and distribution of white papers outlining gender policy suggestions, as well as the formation of a repository of gender specialists. Serving as a pivotal forum for cross-border intellectual exchange, it facilitates the generation of novel perspectives and forward-thinking resolutions concerning gender parity.

Since its inception, the Council has actively collaborated with various governmental bodies to facilitate the implementation of policies conducive to transformative change. It consistently evaluates existing practices and legislation while advocating for new policies supportive of women, many of which have been successfully enacted. Among the principal functions of the Council were to assess existing legislation, policies, and initiatives and recommend new measures aimed at achieving workplace gender parity. It advocated for the implementation of laws, resolutions, and international accords to combat any kind of discrimination that women face. Additionally, it monitored global competitiveness assessments and formulated programs, strategies, and policies to reduce the gender disparity in the UAE. Furthermore, the Council submitted regular reports to the Council of Ministers detailing its advancements, initiatives, projects, and resource needs essential for fulfilling (UAE Gender Balance Council, 2020, pp. 144-149).

Founded in 2006 through Law No. 24 by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, **the Dubai Women Establishment (DWE)** operates as an institutional entity within the Dubai government framework. Under the leadership of H.H. Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who also chairs the Gender Balance Council, the UAE Deputy Prime Minister, the DWE is mandated, as outlined in its establishment framework to foster and support the involvement of Emirati women in both professional spheres and societal realms (UAE Gender Balance Council, 2020, p.155).

Established in 2001 under Decision No. 62 of the Board of Directors of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ADCCI), **the Abu Dhabi Business Women Council (ADBWC)** was formed to support women in business. Its principal aim is to empower women to become integral partners in the comprehensive development of Abu Dhabi. The council offers women vital resources and training opportunities to expand their capabilities as entrepreneurs, business leaders, and innovators within the private sector. Moreover, it provides consultancy services to address obstacles encountered by women in business and entrepreneurship, while fostering a culture of female entrepreneurship within a competitive business landscape. Additionally, the ADBWC prioritizes scientific research and development in entrepreneurship to further bolster women's economic empowerment agenda (UAE Gender Balance Council, 2020, p.159).

3.2 Evolution of Women's Rights in the UAE

The United Arab Emirates has witnessed remarkable advancements in recent decades, particularly within the framework of women's rights. Emirati women, once confined to traditional roles within society, have emerged as active participants in various spheres, contributing significantly to the nation's development and progress. This transformation reflects the UAE's ambitions for gender equality and its recognition of the invaluable role women play in shaping the country's future. From legislative reforms to educational initiatives and economic empowerment programs, the UAE has embarked on a journey to secure equitable opportunities for women, enabling their flourishing and attainment of success across various spheres of life (Presidential Court - Human Rights Office, 2024).

The UAE is dedicated to advancing women's rights, recognizing women's empowerment as a cornerstone of fostering a more modern and broad-minded community. Within the UAE, women actively engage in civil, economic, and political spheres on an equal

footing with their male counterparts (UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). In the UAE, just like other Gulf countries, women are subject to Islamic law, which dictates that they have a male guardian, known as a mahram, typically a close male relative, who plays a crucial role in decision-making concerning their daughters and wives. For instance, women were required to obtain permission from their mahram, commonly their father or husband, for activities such as employment or marriage (Thomson, S., 2015; Fitzgerald, 2022, as cited in Thompson, 2022, pp. 16-17). Emirati women continue to be required to secure their guardian's consent in order to marry (The UAE Government Portal, 2024). However, since 2021, women have been allowed to seek employment without needing their husbands' consent (Women, Business and the Law (WBL), 2021, p.44).

In some cases, women are limited in their employment opportunities, being confined to certain fields traditionally perceived as more "feminine," such as healthcare or education. In addition, some women may be restricted to workplaces that are exclusively female-dominated. Reforms have been introduced to address domestic violence, criminalize sexual harassment, and eliminate discrimination against women. The establishment of the Gender Balance Council and legal changes allowing women to apply for passports and hold leadership positions signify progress in women's empowerment (Hamel & Dexter, 2021, as cited in Saeed, 2022, p. 2). All these initiatives have contributed to creating more inclusive workplaces in traditionally male-dominated fields.

The UAE has been very outcome-oriented in enhancing women's rights, particularly in areas such as equal pay for similar work, literacy rates, and education, reflecting its dedication to women's empowerment. In 2018, the UAE cabinet approved draft legislation -Article 32- which mandates that women receive equal pay to men for equivalent work, with the objective of ensuring parity in wages and salaries between genders (Alhmoudi, 2016, p. 206). This legislative measure aligns with the National Strategy for Women's Empowerment (2015-2021), initiated by H. H. Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak, and encompasses endeavors to safeguard women's rights and foster their participation in these domestic initiatives.

Moreover, Emirati women have achieved notable milestones in various sectors, including the judiciary, where female judges have been appointed to federal courts. Additionally, the UAE has implemented provisions to ensure women's social and material well-being, including Islamic marriage contracts that require husbands to provide dowries and cover their wives' expenses. International recognition for these efforts is reflected in rankings by the

UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law (WBL) index. Moreover, the UAE continues to introduce new laws to enhance and protect women's rights, including measures against domestic violence and honor killing, as well as granting women the freedom to pursue careers in previously male-dominated fields. Furthermore, the UAE actively supports women's rights globally through foreign aid, showcasing its commitment to gender equality both domestically and internationally (Saeed, 2022, p.2).

Acknowledging that education stands as a pivotal factor in advancing women's economic empowerment, the UAE has made substantial progress in achieving educational equality between genders. Comprising 70% of all college degree holders in the country, more than 77% of Emirati women pursue tertiary education subsequent to finishing high school, as indicated by statistical data (United Arab Emirates, 2021, p. 9).

Lana, in confirming these initiatives, points out that women in the UAE are highly educated, often surpassing men in graduation rates from local universities. This educational advantage positions them to start their careers on an equal footing with men. She also explains the “Mentor Her” program at her workplace, where women receive mentorship from men to help advance beyond mid-level positions, emphasizing mentorship as a crucial tool for empowering women in male-dominated fields. Fatima echoes this educational and professional advantage, adding that, although she comes from a rural area, she received a good education, highlighting the equal opportunities available. She also states that dedicated night schools for women have been established to support those who did not receive adequate education during the day, thereby promoting women's education overall.

On the other hand, Aaliyah underscores that achieving gender equality necessitates a foundation of equity, which involves equipping women with targeted education and upskilling opportunities. She expresses concern that placing women in roles without providing the necessary skills and support could lead to setting them up for failure, emphasizing the need for strategic investments in training, mentorship, and awareness-raising to empower women entering traditionally male-dominated fields.

The UAE, during its tenure in the Human Rights Council of the UN, has been proactive in promoting equal educational rights for girls, with a specific focus. The UAE presented a draft resolution during the Council's 35th session in Geneva, which was unanimously passed, emphasizing girls' entitlement to education in June 2017. This resolution urged nations to

address barriers hindering the education of girls, encompassing biased policies, cultural norms, poverty, and economic constraints. It further advocated for measures to safeguard the safety of girls, particularly from threats like sexual violence and terrorism. Moreover, in June 2014, the UAE took the lead in coordinating a collective declaration involving 75 nations at the Human Rights Council, denouncing assaults targeting girls who are currently enrolled in or aspiring to pursue educational opportunities. Additionally, the UAE played a leading role in the unanimous adoption of a resolution at the Council's September 2014 session, aimed at convening a panel discussion in June 2015. The objective was to exchange insights and best practices for realizing every girl's equal right to education (UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

Furthermore, engaging with fellow nations and the UN, the UAE actively champions the global rights of women and girls. Its tenure on the Executive Board of UN Women, the specialized UN body committed to women's empowerment and gender equality, extended over two periods, commencing in 2013 and concluding in 2015, then resuming from 2016 to 2018. Furthermore, in Abu Dhabi, the UAE initiated the establishment of the UN Women Liaison Office, aimed at strengthening collaborative endeavors with the United Nations to advance women's participation and empowerment initiatives (UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

3.3 Emirati Women's Economic Role throughout History

The origins of gender disparity in the Middle East have sparked contentious discourse, with contrasting perspectives attributing the phenomenon either to entrenched Islamic customs and traditional society or to the impact of oil-derived prosperity. In this context, Inglehart and Norris (2003) posit that the principal catalyst for gender inequity in wealthy Middle Eastern nations endowed with oil reserves lies in their adherence to Islamic traditions (Inglehart and Norris, 2003, as cited in Alibeli, 2015, p. 112). They cite examples such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, where, despite comparable per capita GDP levels to Sweden, women encounter significant impediments to political engagement, including exclusion from candidacy for public office, alongside constrained rights and limited opportunities beyond domestic realms.

According to Ross (2008), the primary factor inhibiting women's integration into the workforce, thereby diminishing their societal and political agency, is not religious doctrine but rather the influence of oil-derived prosperity. Consequently, women in nations with modest to moderate economic means often enter the labor market through low-wage employment. Such

positions possess the potential to foster women's social and political empowerment. However, in contexts characterized by substantial oil wealth, these industries tend to become economically unviable, further discouraging female workforce participation beyond domestic confines (p. 107).

During the pre-oil era, the social standing of women was intricately linked to the status of their male counterparts. Women belonging to the upper echelons of society, encompassing individuals from ruling lineages and affluent spouses of pearl merchants, enjoyed esteemed positions. However, societal conventions frequently restricted them to domestic spheres, delineating the boundaries of their engagement. Middle-class women, such as those married to minor merchants, exhibited a greater degree of adaptability and receptiveness to evolving societal norms. Conversely, women from lower socioeconomic spheres, notably spouses of divers and craftsmen, experienced heightened levels of autonomy and actively engaged in economic endeavors (Al-Sayegh, 2001, pp. 19-24).

Amidst the thriving phase of the early twentieth-century pearling industry, women assumed a pivotal economic role and witnessed enhancements in their societal standing. Nevertheless, the industry's abrupt downturn in 1929 precipitated economic and social adversities, culminating in a regression of women's societal status as the conventional social framework deteriorated (AlMutawa, 2016, p.1).

Between 1929 and 1971, the Emirates underwent significant economic shifts that greatly impacted the lives of women. The pearl market's decline after the 1929 economic depression resulted in hardships, compelling many women to dive to settle their husbands' debts. Moreover, the downturn of the pearl industry, along with its impact on slave ownership, resulted in women taking on heightened domestic responsibilities, requiring them to assume additional household duties (Augsburg et al., 2009, p.27). While the mid-1930s ushered in a degree of alleviation through the discovery of fresh economic reservoirs such as oil concessions, the emergence of oil reservoirs in neighboring countries led to a significant outflow of men from the Emirates, thereby increasing domestic obligations for women. The absence of adequate medical care and health services additionally hindered women's engagement in the economy.

During the 1940s, the aftermath of World War II instigated political upheaval and economic instability; nevertheless, a period of stability followed the cessation of hostilities, fostering progress. Although the war had caused political turmoil and economic instability, post-war stability eventually brought improvements. British involvement prompted the creation of public amenities, such as hospitals, which mitigated certain health-related issues for women (Al-Sayegh, 2001, p. 28).

In the 1950s, strides made in education resulted in a significant increase in female enrollment and consequently enhanced integration into the labor force. However, this progress was adversely disrupted by perceptions regarding female employment and apprehensions regarding its effects on family dynamics, contributing to a decline in women's roles and social status. In the early stages, particularly during the emergence of the petro-economy in the late 1960s, women were predominantly relegated to household roles and excluded from the workforce. As the oil boom took hold from the 1970s onward, the necessity for women's employment diminished as family incomes soared, and refraining from work became synonymous with wealth and societal esteem. Nevertheless, in recent years, Emirati women, propelled by enhanced educational opportunities championed by the government, have begun to penetrate various professions traditionally dominated by men. This transformation is evident in media coverage highlighting "female workforce milestones" and portraying successful women across different sectors as both career-oriented individuals and committed mothers and spouses (Prager, 2020, pp. 52-53). The UAE, during the 1970s, experienced substantial political shifts subsequent to gaining independence, and this prompted a development strategy propelled by the nation's new wealth source: oil. Aligned with its efforts in nation-building, a spotlight was placed on education, with a specific focus on encouraging women to participate in the workforce.

In doing so, the state strategically leveraged the influence of both local and global media to amplify its message. In 2014, the UAE intensified its efforts to project its commitment to modernity and political reform by highlighting the first military operation against ISIS, led by Major Mariam Al Mansouri, a female fighter pilot. The operation was covered by prominent media such as The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times, and widely shared on social media platforms. It was considered a symbol of social transformation that serves to strengthen the UAE's reputation as a modern, forward-thinking nation, while also positioning it as a key player between the Middle East, North Africa, and the West (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018, p.74). This event also served as an inspiring example for Emirati women, while also contributing to

the state's image. By 2023, the UAE further reinforced its reputation as a hub for influential women, with 15 Emirati women making it to the Forbes 100 Most Powerful Arab Businesswomen list (Zawya, 2024).

3.3.1 Emiratization and Gender Equality

The employment landscape in the UAE has undergone a transformation, particularly in the public sector, historically the main employer of Emiratis. This sector faced a reduction in job opportunities due to oversaturation. To counter this trend, the Emiratization policy was introduced to encourage Emiratis to enter the private sector and decrease the dominance of expatriates in top-level positions. The implementation of Emiratization since 1997 has resulted in a rise in female workforce participation, bolstered by initiatives such as the establishment of the Businesswomen Council in 2002. Women entrepreneurs in the UAE have achieved significant advancements, with many assuming leadership roles in prosperous enterprises (Thompson, 2022, p.6).

Women in the UAE actively contribute to the country's business ecosystem, benefiting from equal rights to property ownership, inheritance, and access to financial services. The growing impact of women in the UAE's private sector is evident through remarkable milestones. Women hold ownership of 10% of private companies, and between 2018 and 2022, more than 44,000 trade licenses were awarded to women, 58% of which went to Emirati entrepreneurs. Furthermore, 23,000 Emirati women are leading projects with a combined worth exceeding AED 50 billion (\$13.6 billion). To further advance gender equality, the UAE Gender Balance Council has set a target for women to fill 30% of leadership positions in the private sector by 2025 (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2024).

Nonetheless, Emirati women often gravitate towards the public sector, finding it a secure option. Working in the public sector enables them to achieve financial stability while managing childcare responsibilities or adhering to religious practices. (Madichie, 2010, as cited in Hamade, 2015, p.43). Additionally, it inherently supports the notion of gender equality within the public domain.

In the interviews, it is noted that policies like Emiratization and quotas for women in leadership positions play a significant role in advancing women's participation in the private sector. Aaliyah provides insight into Emiratization, pointing out that while this initiative aims to prioritize Emirati nationals, its implementation has been particularly favorable for Emirati

women. However, she describes the need for upskilling women, indicating the importance of capability-focused equity over merely filling gender quotas in initiatives such as women on boards. Leila and Amira share the same concerns regarding qualifications and underscore the significance of supporting women's career advancement, leaving no doubt about their commitment to fairness. Moreover, Aaliyah emphasizes the critical need for upskilling women to ensure they can compete effectively in performance-based roles. This perspective underscores the importance of focusing on capability and performance rather than merely filling gender quotas. By advocating for skill development, Aaliyah highlights a commitment to achieving true equity in the workplace, where women are empowered to excel alongside their male peers.

Women in the UAE Private Sector report (2023, p.17) reveals that gender quotas or targets are seen as beneficial by 90% of men and women in the UAE. Among executives and senior managers, this sentiment is even more pronounced, with 92% regarding targets as either essential (53%) or advantageous (39%). Noteworthy strides were made in female literacy rates, escalating from 22% in 1970 to 70% by 1985 (Al-Abed et al., 1997, as cited in Sinha et al., 2023, p.4). In 2022, the literacy rate for women is recorded as exceptionally high at 97.6%, showcasing significant progress in education and gender parity (World Bank, 2025). However, by diverging from the conventional correlation between economic expansion, enhanced education, and the fostering of gender parity, the United Arab Emirates witnessed a progressive regression in economic and societal prospects for women concurrent with the accumulation of oil wealth (Sinha et al., 2023, p.4).

3.3.2 Cultural Perceptions of Gender Equality in the UAE

Discouraged from entering the oil sector due to harsh working conditions, women faced additional barriers to workforce participation, which was worsened by the significant earnings that male family members were reaping from the booming oil industry. As a result, female workforce engagement witnessed a decline, thereby increasing the likelihood of women allocating more time to domestic roles (Ross, 2008, pp. 109-114).

Between 1990 and 2000, the UAE witnessed notable progress in economic, social, and technological spheres, reshaping evolving perceptions of women's societal roles. Emphasizing education as a driving force for progress, women attained access to educational opportunities across all levels, exceeding the enrollment of males in both public schools and universities. Under the leadership of Sheikha Fatima, the women's movement in the UAE embarked on a

campaign to champion women's rights and empowerment. This endeavor saw the establishment of women's associations and federations aimed at fostering literacy initiatives and facilitating women's involvement in public affairs. Between the 1980s and 2000s, the women's movement in the UAE actively contested conventional societal norms, advocating for parity between genders and accentuating the equal standing of women alongside men (AlMutawa, 2016, p.1).

Advancing gender equality in the UAE has started with shifting perceptions, and the support of Emirati men has been pivotal in driving this top-down approach, leading to a positive response from the wider public. Although the level of support from Emirati men, as highlighted in the interviews, varies, their positive influence as fathers, husbands, colleagues, and bosses in a patriarchal society was undeniably instrumental.

Lana acknowledges the varying stances of Emirati men on supporting gender equality in the UAE, with some offering strong support for women's advancement, particularly in professional settings, while others hold traditional views that can pose challenges. She highlights the role of the economic landscape, noting that dual-income households have become necessary, which has encouraged more acceptance of women working. Additionally, she notes generational and sectoral differences, indicating that younger generations and more progressive industries tend to support gender equality more openly. However, in male-dominated fields, women may face resistance, jealousy, or a lack of support from men, pointing to the persistence of stereotypes and biases.

On the other hand, Fatima, from a conservative rural background, reflects on her own experiences of support from Emirati men, noting that women in her family have been empowered by the encouragement of their father and other Emirati men throughout their education and professional lives. She contrasts this support with experiences of resistance from foreign men, particularly in her career abroad, suggesting that Emirati men have been more encouraging and supportive throughout her professional journey.

Aaliyah views Emirati men as supporters of a pragmatic approach to gender equality, one that strives for balance without compromising standards of competency. She suggests that men's support is contingent on both awareness and the readiness of women for particular roles, aligning with a performance-driven approach to gender inclusion.

Amira highlights a supportive workplace environment, noting that Emirati men in their family and workplace encourage women to work and pursue their ambitions. She also attributes this to the rising cost of living, which has made women's economic contributions more valued. She depicts Emirati men as strong advocates for women's professional advancement while acknowledging that some conservative family norms, such as restrictions on women traveling alone, still persist.

3.3.3 Progressive Gender Equality

The government's dedication to gender equality manifested itself in tangible outcomes and the UAE has witnessed a swift blend of Emirati women into the labor force, evidenced by a notable increase in the employed female Emirati population from 1,000 in 1975 to 135,000 in 2015 and as of 2023, women make up 30.8% of the total workforce in the UAE, equating to approximately 2,933,285 Emirati women employed, according to the World Bank (2024). Approximately 31% of Emirati women are actively engaged in the workforce, predominantly within the public/government sector. Moreover, within the public sector, 30 percent of employed Emirati women occupy leadership roles, affording them substantial decision-making prerogatives and control over organizational resources (Forster, 2017, as cited in Prager, 2020, p. 4).

Efforts undertaken by the UAE such as 1999's pension schemes and two-day weekends have contributed to the increase of women integration thereby playing a role in altering the longstanding societal attributes regarding women's employment, which had traditionally been confined primarily to education and healthcare sectors as a result of cultural norms and the presence of flexible work schedules. Over the last couple of years, notable shifts occurred in its social landscape, marked by a surge in female participation in education and the workforce. This trend has fueled a growth in entrepreneurial ventures led by women. As the UAE transitions towards a service-oriented economy, there is a strong emphasis on fostering innovation, especially within service industries. This reflects the nation's proactive stance in embracing novel technologies and offerings (Tahir, 2024, pp. 313-314).

The United Arab Emirates has demonstrated remarkable proficiency in fostering the growth of emerging enterprises, offering them substantial support aimed at facilitating their success (UN Women, 2022, pp. 8-10). Institutions such as the Dubai Business Women Council and the UAE Gender Balance Council collaborate synergistically, extending financial backing and conducting workshops tailored to equip women with the necessary capabilities.

Hence, it can be concluded that women in the UAE played an active role in the workforce, particularly in the pearl industry, until the Great Depression (1929). The discovery of oil in neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia and Bahrain in the 1930s led to male migration from the UAE for better job opportunities, leaving women with household responsibilities and distancing them from the workforce. This trend persisted until the discovery of oil in the UAE in the 1960s, after which the government prioritized women's education and capacity building (Sinha et al., 2023, p.4). These initiatives resulted in a significant alteration in the enrollment rates of female students. While there was a notable rise in the number of female graduates, not all exhibited equal eagerness to enter the workforce. Primarily, this disparity stemmed from personal preferences, which inclined some women towards pursuing education but subsequently opting to prioritize the preservation of their family roles by remaining at home.

However, having women in every sector and as pioneers is essential for fostering diverse perspectives in decision-making and creating inclusive environments that drive social and economic progress. In this context, the following women have made history in the UAE by becoming groundbreakers in their respective fields. Dr. Shaikha Al Maskari paved the way for women in the energy sector by becoming the first female petroleum engineer in the GCC and the first woman to work in the UAE's oil fields in 1970. Decades later, Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi broke new ground in 2004 as the UAE's first female minister, followed by Dr. Amal Al Qubaisi, who became the first female Federal National Council (FNC) member in 2006. In 2008, Khulood Al Dhaheri became the UAE's first female judge, while Dr. Hissa Al Otaiba and Sheikha Najla Al Qasimi made history as the country's first female ambassadors. Lana Nusseibeh further strengthened the UAE's global representation by becoming the first Emirati female ambassador to the United Nations in 2013. That same year, Major Mariam Al Mansouri shattered gender barriers in defense by becoming the UAE's first female fighter pilot, demonstrating the nation's commitment to women's empowerment across various sectors (Khaleej Times, 2025).

4. United Arab Emirates' Engagement with the UN Gender Equality Policies

This section explores the United Arab Emirates' interaction with United Nations gender equality policies, focusing on two main areas. Firstly, key UN policies and resolutions related to gender equality are analyzed, providing a comprehensive overview of the global standards and expectations set by these documents. Secondly, the UAE's achievements in gender equality are explained by examining how the country has implemented these UN policies and initiatives, with interviewees' opinions provided as supporting insights. This analysis will highlight the UAE's progress, challenges, and contributions toward advancing gender equality in alignment with international practices.

4.1 Analysis of key UN Policies and Resolutions related to Gender Equality

The establishment of the United Nations (UN) unfolded within a global landscape heavily dominated by male influence. Throughout the formative years of the organization, particularly in 1945, the presence of female members within parliamentary and governmental spheres was very rare. This gendered disparity persisted largely unchanged in the subsequent decades. By 1975, statistical data revealed a stark reality where only one out of every ten Members of Parliament (MPs) was a woman, and the representation of female ministers remained notably sparse (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 1997).

Within the framework of the UN system, decision-making bodies are predominantly, if not exclusively, comprised of male representatives, with a scarcity of women professionals occupying positions within the secretariats. Despite the absence of explicit prohibitions within the Charter concerning the participation of women in any capacity (article 8), the imperative to uphold 'the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity' among staff, coupled with a mandate for broad geographical representation (article 101), presented significant hurdles in the recruitment of women (Skard, 2009, p.158). This was made worse by prevailing societal norms where women generally possessed fewer educational opportunities and limited administrative and political experience compared to their male counterparts, thus complicating efforts to foster gender-balanced representation within the UN workforce.

4.1.1 International Women's Conferences

Following the introduction of a comprehensive declaration aimed at eradicating discrimination against women in 1967, the International Women's Year (IWY), which was initially greeted with skepticism, was proposed in 1975 and proved to be a pivotal moment for the women's movement. The IWY World Conference, convened in Mexico mid-year, along with the inception of the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985), and the subsequent adoption of CEDAW in 1979, collectively played pivotal roles in fostering this transformative process. Furthermore, notable global conferences for women took place in Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), and Beijing (1995), with each event acting as a crucial catalyst in the advancement of women's status worldwide. Subsequent to Beijing, there has been a notable absence of large-scale global conferences, however, significant gatherings such as the special session of the UN General Assembly in 2000 and a session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2005 were crucial for maintaining the momentum gained (Skard, 2009, p.162).

The World Conference of the International Women's Year "Mexico Conference 1975", by surpassing the initial expectations typically associated with an intergovernmental gathering, proved to be profoundly significant in terms of its outcomes, as it acknowledged the discrimination that women faced worldwide and promoted gender equality. These issues were incorporated into the Plan of Action, which marked the introduction of the first global policy advocating for the active involvement of women in development initiatives as part of efforts to strengthen world peace. Following the Mexico conference, women's empowerment became a concern for all organizations, including the entire UN system. Various UN programs, funds, and specialized institutions were tasked with actively contributing to the execution of the recommendations adopted. Recognizing the importance of women's involvement in decision-making at both domestic and global scales, member states were urged to strive for gender parity through equal representation at all platforms, whether they be conferences, international meetings, or committees of international organs (Skard, 2009, p.163).

The Nairobi conference in 1985, themed 'World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women,' marked a pivotal moment wherein women were acknowledged as active participants who could shoulder responsibilities as planners, decision-makers, intellectuals, contributors, and policymakers in development efforts. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies featured a notably detailed section on "equality in political participation and decision-making," emphasizing the imperative of enhancing women's

representation in legislative bodies at both national and local levels (U.S. Department of State, 1985, para. 86). The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies additionally incorporated a provision advocating for the increased appointment of women to diplomatic roles and decision-making positions in the UN system, as articulated in paragraph 79 (U.S. Department of State, 1985). Subsequently, in 2001, the General Assembly (GA) adopted Resolution 56/126, mandating the compilation of data concerning the quantity and proportion of women occupying various positions across all organizational units and hierarchical levels within the UN framework (The 56th UN GA, 2001). This was followed by Resolution 57/180 in 2002, which reiterated the call for intensified endeavors aimed at realizing gender parity throughout the United Nations apparatus (The 57th UN GA, 2002).

Regarding security policy, the integration of gender mainstreaming has gained momentum within the UN peacekeeping and peace-building missions, primarily propelled by the directives outlined in Resolution 1325 and, more recently, through the mandates articulated in the UN Security Council Resolutions 1820 and 1888, as noted by True (2009, p.43).

While strides have been made at the international level in promoting women, peace, and security, such as the adoption of 17 significant frameworks encompassing 11 resolutions of the United Nations Security Council 1325 (between 2000 and 2020), the pace of progress has not reached the desired level. Statistics reveal a stark reality: only 3% of mediators and 13% of negotiators in formal peace talks from 1992 to 2018 were women (United Arab Emirates, 2021, p.25).

Subsequent to Nairobi, the Beijing conference in 1995 notably shifted the discourse from a focus solely on women to one encompassing gender dynamics, highlighting the imperative to reassess societal structures and gender relations comprehensively. The outcome of Beijing culminated in the formulation of a Platform for Action outlining 12 distinct "strategic objectives," complemented by references to two overarching "mega-strategies" aimed at achieving gender equality: foremost, the promotion of gender-balanced decision-making, which advocates for the equitable representation of women in policymaking roles; and secondly, the principle of gender mainstreaming, emphasizing the critical importance of incorporating a gender-sensitive perspective throughout all stages of policy development and execution (Krook and True, 2010, p.3).

In this context, the Beijing Platform for Action can be seen as an effort to enhance the understanding of women's full and equal participation in political spheres. Notable advancements of this Action comprise a specific objective aiming for a 30% representation of women (as delineated in paragraphs 184 and 189), intensified rhetoric advocating for affirmative measures (articulated in paragraphs 189, 192, and 194), exploration of the potential impact of various electoral systems on facilitating or impeding the enhanced election of women (highlighted in paragraph 192), and recognition of the necessity for political parties to actively endorse women in candidate selections and internal party configurations (as underscored in paragraph 193) (Krook and True, 2008, p.7).

The concept of “gender mainstreaming” as a novel approach to gender equality marked an important turning point in the integration of “a gender perspective” across all policies. Recognizing the limitations of previous methods, the platform emphasized the need to develop strategies that actively prevent unintentional marginalization, rather than merely incorporating gender considerations superficially into operations (Krook and True, 2008, p.13). Gender mainstreaming can significantly impact gender equality as long as sustained efforts, involvement of diverse stakeholders across all levels of society, and institutional support are achieved. The lack of common understanding or commitment among relevant parties, insufficient political will, and resistance to change may hinder the implementation of gender policies. However, gender mainstreaming can lead to evolutionary changes in society, as exemplified by the UAE, if all the aforementioned aspects are achieved.

4.1.2 Sustainable Development Goals and Gender Equality

Another significant milestone in gender equality at the UN level was the adoption of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, which included a dedicated goal specifically addressing Gender Equality: Goal 5- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Incorporating gender equality not only as a specific goal but also as an objective within other goals is a strong indication of the UN’s ambitions for gender equality. With this strategy, the UN has underscored that sustainable development is unattainable without women's empowerment and gender equality, and it is imperative for every nation to prioritize the full realization of these goals, regardless of cultural or traditional norms. Various SDGs have direct relevance to gender equality, such as Goal 4, Quality Education; Goal 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth; and Goal 16, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. Goal 4 aims to ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development

by 2030 through education, human rights, gender equality, global citizenship, and the contribution of culture and cultural diversity to sustainable development. Equal educational rights are one of the most critical goals in achieving gender equality (United Nations, 2024).

One of the key objectives of Goal 8 is to ensure full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities, by 2030. Additionally, it emphasizes the complete implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work, regardless of gender. Goal 16 focuses on the role of women in building peace and is one of the cornerstones of the UN's Women, Peace, and Security Policy (United Nations, 2024). All these goals are associated with Goal 5, which aims to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere, ensuring their full and effective participation in political, economic, and social decision-making processes and ensuring equal opportunities for women to lead at all levels of decision-making.

There is no doubt that the SDGs have sparked enthusiasm and bolstered the momentum for advancing gender equality. The SDGs provide a common framework for global movement and mobilization around gender equality issues. They encourage collaboration between governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to accelerate progress towards gender equality goals. In addition to the SDGs, United Nations institutions have played a crucial role in encouraging countries to take proactive measures in gender equality. The Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity advises all entities within the United Nations system to either align existing strategies or develop new ones, complete with defined targets, indicators, and resource allocations, in order to effectively pursue gender parity objectives and incorporate the Strategy's recommendations. The Secretary-General, in 2020, mandated all entities to draft revised implementation plans for a two-year cycle. Subsequently, in 2022, all entities of the UN were urged to formulate new implementation plans spanning the period of 2022 to 2024 (UN Women, 2024).

4.1.3 Gender Equality Agendas of UN Bodies

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) remains dedicated to addressing the systemic discrimination faced by women and girls, regardless of their backgrounds. Its initiatives aim to change social norms and power structures by enhancing women's roles in formal economic sectors, environmental preservation, and climate change mitigation. Collaborating with various actors at both the UN and national levels, the UNIDO

seeks to challenge stereotypes for women by facilitating access to resources, supporting entrepreneurship, and capacity building, thereby contributing to a world where women can thrive equally with men (The UNIDO, 2024).

The UNIDO systematically integrates gender considerations across all its programs, projects, and internal operations. In September 2019, the UNIDO introduced its Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, outlining the organization's commitments to gender equality. Additionally, the UNIDO formulated the Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, covering the period from 2020 to 2023, serving as a blueprint guiding the UNIDO's systematic endeavors with the aim of accelerating progress towards fulfilling its gender equality objectives (The UNIDO, 2024).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN's global network promoting transformation by linking nations to information, resources, and experiences has prioritized gender equality and developed its Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025 (UNDP, 2024). This strategy integrates a concentrated effort to address inequalities with targeted actions aimed at promoting women's empowerment and decision-making capabilities. The UNDP collaborates with governments in various national contexts, employing a contextualized, country-specific strategy to implement its priorities (UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025, p.18).

Another important initiative conducted within the UN framework for gender equality is the Human Development Report (HDR), which was first launched in 1990 and continues to be prepared regularly by the UNDP. This report plays a crucial role in advancing gender equality by providing data-driven insights and informing policy guides, raising awareness, monitoring progress, empowering women, and fostering global dialogue and partnerships for change. Due to the slow pace of progress in gender equality, UN Women and the UNDP have partnered to strengthen initiatives that shape domestic and international policies aimed at empowering all women as well as promoting gender equality. Gender indexes prepared by the UN organs, such as the Human Development Report and the Global Gender Parity Index, offer a comprehensive view of countries' achievements in gender equality (UN Women & UNIDO The Paths to Equal, 2023, p. 5).

The International Labour Organization (ILO), as a specialized agency of the UN, collaborates closely with its stakeholders, including the UN agencies and partners, to achieve gender equality, equal treatment, and equitable opportunities for all. This overarching agenda encompasses various strategic priorities, such as advancing gender parity, fostering non-discrimination and inclusivity, mitigating the disparity in wages of men and women, advocating for decent work opportunities within the care sector, and combating instances of violence and harassment within work environments globally (The ILO, 2024).

Pursuant to its gender ambitions, the ILO has adopted various conventions for gender equality. Some of the most important ones include the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), the Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183), the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111) (The ILO, 2024). Therefore, it can be stated that the United Nations and its sub-organs are tirelessly advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment. They implement policies, initiatives, and programs designed to address systemic inequalities and advance women's rights on a global scale.

4.2 The UAE's Achievements in Gender Equality: Analysis of the UAE's implementation of the UN policies and initiatives on gender equality

The efforts of the UN and its organs toward gender equality are commendable, however, these initiatives primarily serve as recommendations for member states. Hence, the true game changer lies in the dedication of respective countries. The issues highlighted often revolve around the challenges in policy implementation and the critical need for coordination, a concern that is particularly relevant for international organizations like the United Nations, which rely on member states for enforcement (Nivedita & Deshpande, 2019, p.5). In this context, the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the United Arab Emirates serves as a notable example. The UAE is considered one of the committed members of the United Nations, following the recommendations and implementing policies on gender equality. The UAE has made efforts to enhance women's status, create opportunities, address gender discrimination, and promote equality and full participation, especially in the political and economic sectors (Alhmoudi, 2016, p. 250).

After gaining its independence in 1971, the UAE accelerated its initiatives on women's empowerment, with a special focus on educating girls and women, which were intensified following the adoption of the Beijing Conference recommendations in 1995. The United Arab Emirates drafted national action plans and strategies to turn its commitments into action and presented its national reports detailing its achievements and the significant challenges faced during the implementation process since the Beijing Conference to the 33rd Special Session of the UN General Assembly held in 2000 (United Arab Emirates, 2019, p.4).

Notably, during this period, the UAE ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2004 and subsequently submitted its reports to the CEDAW Committee. The State has also been very active in taking part in and hosting various global events related to women's empowerment. Since its establishment, being part of collective action on many topics has been a strategy of the UAE, believing this would lead to acceptance by global powers and the international system. Therefore, the UAE became a signatory of all international treaties dedicated to safeguarding women's rights. These treaties include the Convention on Minimum Age (1996), the Equal Remuneration Convention (1996), the Child Protection Convention (1997), the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention (1982), the Convention concerning Night Work of Women Employed in Industry (1982) (United Arab Emirates, 2021, p.20).

4.2.1 Impact of CEDAW on the UAE: Legal and Regulatory Reforms in the UAE

Following the 2010 recommendation by the CEDAW Committee to amend the Nationality and Passports Law to allow Emirati women married to non-Emirati men to pass their nationality to their children and foreign husbands, the State issued a royal directive on December 2, 2011. Federal Law No. (17) of 1972 allowed Emirati men to pass their citizenship to their children but did not grant the same right to women. This affected the children's residency, voting rights, and access to education and healthcare. A decree issued in 2011 sought to address this by permitting children of Emirati women married to foreigners to apply for nationality at age 18, resulting in the citizenship of over 2,047 children. However, this decree does not grant nationality at birth, and practical delays continue to be an issue (Alhmoudi, 2016, p. 254).

In the interviews, this issue was raised to gather their perspectives. Leila states that Emiratis born to an Emirati father have rights to three things: free education, free healthcare, and land when they get married. However, if they are born to an Emirati mother who is married to a non-Emirati man, they have access to free education and healthcare but do not receive free land or property. Lands are not granted to non-Emiratis to preserve the culture and traditions, given that the population of the Emiratis is relatively small and more than 200 different nationalities live in the country. She also mentions the application of Sharia law, which can be challenging to enforce with non-Emirati fathers, thus complicating financial obligations within mixed-nationality families. Having three women in her family married to non-Emirati men, she believes this issue does not pose significant problems for women in the UAE.

Amira believes that women married to non-Emirati men still enjoy certain rights similar to those of Emiratis, although they do not have the same full status as locals. She notes that, despite some people in her circle having this experience, these children still receive free education and healthcare, akin to Emiratis, but do not have the right to free land. However, she points out that there can be challenges, particularly in job searching, as priority is often given to nationals. She adds that those in her circle, including her neighbors, seem to be okay with this arrangement.

Samira discusses the significant issue of citizenship laws in the UAE and states that this legal restriction creates familial and societal tensions, with the inability to transmit citizenship seen as a major disadvantage for children, especially in terms of opportunities and societal status. Despite some advancements, Samira believes the system is still far from perfect and that many people, especially those born in the UAE but without citizenship, continue to face significant disadvantages, such as limited career opportunities and second-class citizen status. She acknowledges the government's delicate balancing act between preserving Emirati culture and managing a diverse, globalized population. She understands the concerns about cultural dilution, particularly given that Emiratis constitute only 10% of the population, but argues that policies should be more inclusive to enhance the important role of women in shaping the future of the country.

To address the CEDAW Committee's recommendation for women's equal participation in public affairs, the UAE enacted Cabinet Decision 319/15F/22 in 2012. This decision aimed to enhance gender equality and efficiency by promoting women's leadership in federal authorities and government-owned companies. Additional initiatives included appointing

women to the Federal National Council, designating the first female deputy speaker, appointing a female permanent representative to the UN, conducting periodic legislative reviews, and establishing an advisory committee to address the needs of working women (Alhmoudi, 2016, p. 255).

4.2.2 UAE's Contribution to the UN's Women, Peace and Security Agenda

As a co-sponsor of UN Resolution 2242, the UAE emphasized the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in preventing conflicts and maintaining global peace and security, and actively promoted the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda both within the UN and domestically. By supporting this resolution, the UAE urged the international community to integrate their agendas on women, peace, security, counterterrorism, and countering violent extremism, recognizing the unique impacts on women and girls. The resolution also highlighted the need for women's participation in developing strategies against terrorism and violent extremism, and the creation of National Action Plans (NAPs) to outline government commitments and strategies for implementing these objectives (United Arab Emirates, 2021, p.23).

In 2019, the initial group of Arab women peacekeepers completed a UN training course conducted in the UAE. It was a comprehensive and rigorous training, demonstrating their leadership, adaptability, mental and physical resilience, and integrity, all essential characteristics of a genuine soldier. This joint initiative was organized by UN Women and the UAE Ministry of Defense in collaboration with the General Women's Union, engaging over 130 women from the UAE, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan, Sudan, and Bahrain. Additionally, it is recorded that there are four female fighter pilots in the UAE, which has provided training for over 30 women to serve within the nation's special security forces (UAE Gender Balance Council, 2020, p. 64).

Furthermore, the Permanent Mission of the UAE to the UN hosted a training on WPS organized by the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA) in 2023. This annual event aims to enhance participants' understanding of the gendered impacts of conflict and provide tools to improve women's roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Nearly 30 attendees, including UN staff from various missions, participated in the training, during which Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh emphasized that hosting the event reflects the UAE's strong commitment to the WPS agenda and support for UN DPPA's efforts (UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

The UAE's national plan to implement the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 for 2021-2024 serves as a pivotal framework for collaboration involving significant contributions from various ministries, government and private sector entities, and civil society organizations. This National Action Plan (NAP) highlights the UAE's commitment to the Women, Security, and Peace Agenda of the UN by detailing specific activities for driving change and providing operational tools for successful execution (United Arab Emirates, 2021, p. 49). The UAE, pioneering as the first Gulf Cooperation Council member state to launch national programs in alignment with the UN agenda of women, peace, and security, currently holds a seat on the UN Women executive board. This follows its previous membership spanning from 2013 to 2019, during which it also served as the board's president in 2017 (Emirates News Agency [WAM], 2024).

In areas traditionally dominated by men, such as the military, aviation, and defense, women are now actively participating and assuming leadership positions. In February 2018, fifteen Emirati women became part of the inaugural Women's Firefighting Unit at Sharjah Civil Defense. Since 1991, women have been contributing to the armed forces, following the establishment of the Khawla Bint Al Azwar Military School by the vision of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. This institution, the first of its kind in the UAE and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), was created to prepare young women for military careers (UAE Gender Balance Council, 2020, p. 64).

4.2.3 Impact of Engagement with UN Platforms on UAE's Gender Equality

During the United Nations' sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) in New York in 2017, the Gender Balance Council introduced the "Global Gender Circle" initiative to narrow the gender gap in women's economic participation. The initiative aimed to introduce innovative approaches and recommendations, establish a repository of gender experts, and facilitate a forum where global intellectual leaders could collaborate to devise forward-thinking solutions. Additionally, the Council hosted the inaugural UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel (HLP) meeting on Women's Economic Empowerment. This meeting convened government officials, business leaders, representatives from education, and civil society to further the goals of reducing gender disparities across governmental sectors and bolstering the UAE's standing in global competitiveness reports on gender equality (UAE Gender Balance Council, 2020, p.152).

To benefit from globally recognized experiences and insights, the UAE collaborated with various UN agencies and other international organizations. These collaborations aimed to evaluate the existing structure of the State and take necessary steps to advance its efforts for gender equality systematically. The UAE Gender Balance Council joined forces with the OECD, an official observer to the UN, to create a Global Best Practices in Gender Balance Toolkit, which was designed to highlight successful policies and initiatives implemented worldwide to achieve gender equality. Its objective is to share effective strategies, thereby encouraging other nations and organizations to undertake significant transformations (Dubai Women Establishment, 2020, pp. 50-51).

Women in the UAE are making notable advancements in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) fields, and high-tech industries. They represent 56% of STEM graduates and 44.5% of engineering undergraduates, which are among the highest percentages worldwide. Emirati women form 86% of the national workforce at Strata, a leading high-tech aircraft manufacturer, and hold over 20% of leadership roles at Masdar, an energy company. Additionally, they comprise about 20% of the nuclear sector and account for 45% of the national space sector (Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, 2024).

In the interviews, interviewees acknowledge that while there are still challenges, particularly in operational roles, there is a growing presence of women in fields such as STEM, petroleum, and space industry, etc. Lana reflects on her personal experiences in a male-dominated sector, highlighting a positive shift towards increased leadership roles for women. The reference to female engineers in these traditionally male roles emphasizes how perceptions are gradually changing. She points out that while women may still feel like "the token" in certain environments, the rise of successful female role models is crucial for breaking stereotypes.

On the other hand, Leila, while acknowledging that women are encouraged to work, emphasizes the historical constraints that have shaped career choices, often steering women towards specialties deemed more "suitable." She also notes a shift over the past few decades, indicating that women are beginning to assert their preferences more strongly, even against societal pressures. Amira points out that there was a time when women were largely confined to specific roles, but now there is a noticeable shift in how society perceives women in diverse sectors. She also mentions changing attitudes toward marriage, where men are now more open to marrying women in traditionally male-dominated fields, which can be considered a significant cultural transformation.

Samira points out that in the architecture and construction industries, the clear male dominance is rooted in structural demands that disproportionately disadvantage women, particularly in terms of balancing career progression and family responsibilities. While women may enter architecture at similar rates to men, the profession's long timelines and intensive demands make it difficult for women to gain the experience needed to reach professional maturity. The gender imbalance is further compounded by societal expectations that women are primary caregivers, limiting their ability to commit fully to the time-intensive nature of architectural practice.

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women has set forth seven globally recognized principles, all of which are being followed and executed in the UAE (UAE Gender Balance Council, 2020, p. 69). The UAE benefits from the assistance of the UN CEDAW with a view to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. The adherence of States-Parties to the Convention is regularly monitored, leading to constructive communication between the UAE officials and the UN team. Consequently, this type of dialogue serves as a support mechanism for the UAE government in its initiatives to enhance women's empowerment in the workplace (Miller et al., 2017, p. 29).

The UAE demonstrated its dedication to promoting women's rights by inaugurating a regional office for UN Women in Abu Dhabi, aligning with the overarching vision of the Empowerment of Emirati Women 2015 - 2021 strategy. This vision serves as a guiding framework for government entities to design women's empowerment initiatives spanning multiple facets of sustainable development (Miller et al., 2017, p. 29).

UN Women's Flagship Programme Initiative, "Stimulating Equal Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs," in partnership with the UAE's NAMA Women Advancement, aims to advance gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the UAE and South Africa, aligning with the SDGs. Specifically targeting SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 8 on promoting decent work, the program seeks to foster entrepreneurship and job creation for women, from those in the informal sector to established businesses. Through the promotion of procurement practices that are sensitive to gender considerations and by facilitating women's access to both financial resources and skill development opportunities, the initiative strives to incorporate women entrepreneurs into global value chains. This endeavor is reinforced by policy advocacy efforts and the provision of technical assistance (UN Women, 2022, p.4).

As explained in this section, many joint initiatives were conducted between 2017 and 2021 in collaboration with the UN organs and other international organizations. These initiatives have had profound impacts on the implementation of projects related to women's empowerment, as they mostly guide the UAE in adopting best practices. UN Women with its flagship initiative offered various recommendations and interventions tailored to fit the UAE's distinctive entrepreneurship ecosystem and its unique economic, political, and social context (UN Women, 2022, p. 20). In general, when international organizations are involved as partners, government entities and the private sector take the issues more seriously, considering the concerns over the status and reputation of the UAE in the international arena.

As evident from their national reports and strategies, the UAE places significant importance on the publications and findings of leading international organizations and companies. With that purpose, the State strives to improve the conditions identified as inefficient in these reports. For instance, the World Bank as a specialized agency of UN Women annually publishes the Business and the Law (WBL) report which analyzes laws and regulations as they exist in theory versus their implementation and real-world practices and supports legal reforms to advance gender equality (World Bank, 2022, p. 9).

The position and ranking of the UAE in the reports of the World Bank, UNDP, and so on have been a priority for the State, leading to various initiatives and reforms. In 2019 and 2020, the UAE implemented groundbreaking legal reforms to boost women's economic involvement, reflecting the nation's dedication to gender balance. For instance, the UAE notably became the region's pioneer in offering paid parental leave to both male and female private sector employees and revised Personal Status Laws to enhance gender equality in accordance with Sharia principles. These reforms led to the UAE being recognized as the top performer in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and GCC regions in the 2021 WBL Report, and they have bolstered the substantial representation of women in STEM fields and the national space program (World Bank, 2022, p. 5).

Over the last twenty years, there has been a notable enhancement in women's involvement in politics within the nation. This evolution began in 2004 with the nomination of Sheikha Lubna Khalid Al Qasimi as the Minister of Economy, marking the first appointment of a female cabinet member. Dr. Amal Al Qubaisi achieved another milestone in 2006 by becoming the first woman elected to the parliament, known as the Federal National Council. Her historic journey continued in 2015 when she broke new ground in the Middle East as the

first woman to preside over a national assembly (Sinha et al., 2023, p.4). In 2014, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE's Foreign Affairs Minister, became the first Arab foreign minister to publicly endorse the UN Women's "HeForShe" campaign, aiming to involve Emirati men and boys as champions of gender equality (Chehab, 2023, p.8). By 2024, women hold 9 out of 33 ministerial positions, making up 27.3% of the total, making it one of the highest percentages of female ministers in the region. Women are increasingly afforded opportunities not just in domestic matters but also in international representation. Women constitute 30% of the UAE's diplomatic corps, holding 234 positions, including 42 in foreign missions and 9 as ambassadors. Since 2009, the UAE has been appointing women as ambassadors, and currently, there are 9 female ambassadors, including the Permanent Representative to the UN (Government of the United Arab Emirates, 2024).

According to Towns and Nicklasson (2017, pp.2-4), male diplomats are often sent to states with greater economic and military importance, while women are posted to less strategic locations. However, strategic ambassadorial roles may also be determined by the nature of key issues, not just a country's economic or military influence. Thus, issue areas can be as vital as economic and military ties in defining a post's importance. Food security is a top national priority for the UAE, which recognized Brazil as a key partner for farming and appointed a woman ambassador there from 2018–2020 (Hafsa Al Olama) to enhance trade ties. Similarly, important posts in France, Switzerland, Egypt, and the UN mission in New York are also considered strategic and have been led by women diplomats. Furthermore, climate change and renewable energy are key priorities for the UAE. Since 2018, the UAE's permanent representative to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) has been a woman; Nawal Al Hosani (Chehab, 2023, p.4).

Following a Presidential Decree issued in 2019 requiring equal representation of women and men in the Federal National Council, the UAE now boasts one of the highest rates of female political participation globally, with 50 percent representation, previously recorded as 22 percent in 2018. According to the ranking of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), as of 2024, the UAE shares fifth place with Andorra, closely following Rwanda and Cuba (The IPU, 2024). Another decree by the UAE Cabinet entered into force in 2012 and required that all federal entities, government-related enterprises, and authorities must include at least one woman on their boards. In 2018, a decree for equal representation in the judiciary was issued, and in 2019, amendments to federal labor and discrimination laws were made to outlaw gender-based discrimination in both employment and promotion processes. In 2021, this mandate was

expanded to encompass all publicly listed companies, following a decision by the Securities and Commodities Authority Board. Additionally, government entities with over 50 female employees have been required to provide free or heavily subsidized childcare facilities (World Bank, 2022, p. 8).

In the interviews, women's increasing representation in leadership roles, both in government and corporate boards, is noted as a crucial aspect of gender equality progress. Interviewees express pride in the concrete steps taken by the government. Lana commends the government's efforts in this area but also highlights that there is still some underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, particularly in male-dominated fields like technology and government posts. She describes instances in which women feel marginalized as “token” representatives in the room, with their voices often going unheard due to gender biases. The example of a high-ranking woman leader who was mistaken for a subordinate underlines the deep-rooted stereotypes that hinder women’s visibility and credibility in leadership roles.

Fatima, on the other hand, offers a more optimistic view, stating that the UAE is progressing well in representing women in STEM, politics, and other critical industries. By comparing the UAE’s advancements with other cultural or national contexts, the speaker implies that the UAE’s proactive approach to female representation in leadership sets it apart from other regions. She highlights the recent legislation that mandates women occupy at least 30% of board positions, with all listed companies required to have at least one female board member. She points out that, specifically in leadership roles, women account for over 66% of public sector positions and hold 30% of decision-making roles across the country.

Amira describes the UAE's achievements in promoting women in leadership roles across multiple fields, bolstered by governmental initiatives and changing societal attitudes. The speaker gives specific examples of young female ministers and mentions women’s high representation in the UAE National Council (50% women). She believes that women taking on significant roles in diplomacy, government, and even space missions highlights the UAE's commitment to fostering female leaders across diverse fields.

Since adopting gender mainstreaming, the UAE has fully embraced this strategy, developing action plans within this framework. The UAE believes that gender mainstreaming will help fulfill international commitments and improve its competitiveness in closing the gender gap. The rapid transformation of the UAE into an advocate for gender equality can be attributed to the success of this UN strategy. The UAE has taken women's empowerment very

seriously, developing plans through a top-down approach with the government, particularly the head of state, playing an active role in advancing this cause. Given the successful implementations of gender mainstreaming in Europe and other pioneering countries, the UAE through its women's organizations collaborated with the UN bodies to leverage these best practices. One of the important examples of these partnerships was between the General Women's Union of the UAE and the UNDP to prepare a comprehensive Guide on Gender Mainstreaming (2018). This document serves as an essential handbook for UAE institutions, outlining each step to be taken and the necessary actions to be implemented. Furthermore, it is enriched with practical examples showing best practices, along with suggestions for further enhancement (UNDP Guide on Gender Mainstreaming, 2018, pp. 47-51).

Another significant collaboration was conducted between the UAE's Gender Balance Council and the OECD, for preparing the Gender Balance Guide: Actions for the UAE Organizations (2017). This guide presents a path for the UAE and its entities to discover the capabilities of women. Drawing on OECD expertise, it presents a range of practical actions for the UAE organizations, both in the public and private sectors, to pursue gender balance and strive for gender equality. These actions encompass five key areas: commitment and oversight, policies and programs, personnel engagement, leadership, and communication (Gender Balance Guide, 2017, p. 11).

Following this established good dialogue, the UAE Gender Balance Council took part in the OECD Forum titled "Gender Equality: Navigating Global Transitions," which took place on June 10th and 11th, 2024, in Paris. During the Forum, the Gender Balance Council's groundbreaking initiative, the 'Framework for Gender Balance in the 4th Industrial Revolution,' developed in partnership with the World Economic Forum, was emphasized as a global guide for governments, businesses, and educational institutions to successfully attain gender parity and create a fairer future. Furthermore, the "National Program for Coders," designed to strengthen the expertise of 100 Emirati women in artificial intelligence, and the 'Women in Sustainability, Environment, and Renewable Energy (WiSER)' initiative, which focuses on empowering skilled women and equipping them for leadership roles in sustainability and renewable energy, have been launched (WAM, 2024).

Over the past decade, the UAE has consistently collaborated with influential organizations to gain insights into effective women's empowerment strategies, customizing them to suit the needs of the State. UN Women and the NAMA Women Advancement partnership in preparing the *Women-owned Businesses in the United Arab Emirates: A Golden Opportunity* is an excellent example of these endeavors. In this report, UN Women conducted an extensive examination of access to finance for SMEs and businesses owned by women, specifically within the United Arab Emirates. The report concludes with recommendations for customized interventions aimed at enhancing their access to finance and resources (UN Women, 2022, p. 10).

On the other hand, the Gender Balance Council maintained the cooperation dialogues established with the World Economic Forum (WEF) and considers the Council a knowledge partner to drive forward global initiatives promoting gender balance (Media Office, 2024). This cooperation aimed at organizing forums and events that leverage international best practices, especially in nations facing persistent challenges in achieving gender balance. Such an approach is poised to expedite advancements toward Sustainable Development Goal 5, which seeks to realize gender equality and empower all women and girls (KhaleejTimes, 2024).

Until 2019, legal disparities persisted regarding women's mobility, marital rights, parenthood, and asset management in the UAE. In response, the UAE government sought the World Bank Group's assistance to implement further legislative reforms. Collective and committed cooperation among government bodies and the World Bank Group resulted in the revision of the Personal Status Law to ease travel restrictions for women. Additionally, the Labor Law was updated to ensure equal pay for equal work and eliminate gender discrimination in hiring and financial services. Additionally, amendments to the Labor Law later removed restrictions on night work and expanded job opportunities for women, including in mining (Hamel & Dexter, 2021). Later, the World Bank, in collaboration with the Gender Balance Council, published '*United Arab Emirates (UAE): Legal Reforms to Strengthen Women's Economic Inclusion – Case Study.*' This publication examined the specifics of legal reforms launched by the UAE in 2019-2020 and their potential impact on women's economic empowerment and the UAE's gender policy objectives, as well as the factors that created the conditions for these changes (World Bank, 2022, p. 5).

4.2.4 Advancing Gender Equality through the UN SDGs

In October 2017, the UAE pioneered the Gulf region by establishing the SDG Data Hub, a collaborative endeavor between the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre (FCSC) and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). On the international stage, the UAE was also the first to incorporate SDG-related initiatives into the SDG hub in 2019, underscoring the country's persistent efforts towards realizing the SDGs (The UAE SDG Data Hub, 2024).

The UAE prioritizes the SDGs both within its borders and on the international stage. By centering the SDGs and fostering international partnerships, the UAE strives to make meaningful contributions to these overarching objectives (United Arab Emirates, 2022, p. 2). In 2022, the UAE Government and over 20 local and multinational companies introduced the "SDG 5 Pledge to Accelerate Women's Leadership in the UAE Private Sector," aiming to achieve 30% female leadership by 2025. Since its launch, the SDG 5 Pledge has become a landmark gender balance initiative for the UAE government, underscoring the UAE's commitment to gender equality and showcasing the effectiveness of public-private partnerships in advancing strategic priorities and sustainable development goals (United Arab Emirates, 2022, p. 142). At the 2017 World Government Summit (WGS) held in Dubai, the UAE Gender Balance Council organized a three-day workshop aimed at expediting the realization of the UN SDG 5 under the umbrella of 'SDGs in Action @ WGS (United Arab Emirates, 2021, p.19).

Lana expresses the UAE's commitment to SDG 5 and highlights the motivation among companies in the UAE to align with the SDGs by emphasizing the importance of reporting against these goals. She adds that many companies in the UAE have joined the United Nations Global Compact, a private-sector coalition aimed at advancing the SDGs through collaboration. She also notes that SDG 5 is a significant focus for many businesses in the UAE, which incorporate it into their Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) reports to ensure alignment with global frameworks.

4.2.5 Legal and Policy Frameworks for Women's Empowerment

The UAE made significant legal reforms to enhance gender equality, including amendments enabling married women to apply for passports without spousal consent, allowing women to head households, imposing criminal penalties for workplace sexual harassment, and introducing protections against domestic violence. Amendments to labor laws prohibited

gender-based discrimination, lifting restrictions on women's employment, while a Central Bank Circular ensured gender-neutral access to credit. These reforms mark substantial progress in addressing gender disparities within the legal framework, prompting a comprehensive review of all the UAE legislation in 2020 to further advance gender equality (World Bank, 2022, p. 8).

The Interviewees are well aware of the laws and regulations enacted in the country and frequently reference relevant legal reforms in their responses. Fatima explains that in addressing domestic violence and workplace harassment, the UAE has implemented specific legal protections and penalties, reinforcing a safer work and home environment. In terms of economic empowerment, recent reforms have enhanced women's participation in the labor market, including equal rights to apply for passports and travel without male guardianship approval. She believes that the laws have enhanced women's autonomy and their legal standing within the family structure.

Interviewees agree that the UAE government addresses equal opportunities in career development, and thanks to that, they have not personally faced discrimination in their professional lives. Fatima emphasizes the effectiveness of local UAE regulations in reducing discrimination within government roles, while also acknowledging the challenges of discrimination in global contexts.

Aaliyah shares that she has not personally experienced gender discrimination, instead observing that skilled, educated, and capable women have more opportunities than ever. She provides an example from her workplace regarding the rollout of a global policy on anti-discrimination, harassment, and bullying, which signals a commitment to creating a safer work environment. She also notes that the establishment of a women's council consisting of leadership team members demonstrates a proactive step toward inclusivity and representation.

Additionally, Aaliyah emphasizes the importance of data and analytics, which were previously underutilized. The introduction of scorecards to track progress reflects a strategic approach to accountability. Collaborating with the UAE Gender Balance initiative and engaging with other companies in the region to learn best practices shows a willingness to adapt and improve.

Amira focuses on her experience in a small, predominantly female workplace, where decisions are based on qualifications rather than gender. She notes that their department is subject to strict anti-discrimination regulations, and gender is not considered when hiring, reinforcing an emphasis on merit-based assessment.

Samira, on the other hand, expressed that the UAE has made significant strides in institutional gender equality through structural reforms like mandatory female representation on boards and increased visibility of women's rights in public discourse. However, she added that challenges remain, as the focus on Emiratization and the prioritization of nationality over gender equality limit the tangible impact of these policies. She believes that while external pressures drive progress, the gap between policy announcements and practical implementation highlights the need for stronger enforcement and integration of gender initiatives into broader societal priorities.

The UAE's gender legislation underwent comprehensive revisions aimed at enhancing working conditions for women. Previously, there were restrictions on women working night shifts or in certain sectors deemed hazardous, such as mining, energy, and transportation. However, these legal barriers have since been lifted, allowing women to pursue employment opportunities in these industries as well. Additionally, amendments were made to maternity leave regulations in 2016, extending it to 90 days in the public sector, which had a positive impact on the workforce of the public sector of the UAE, where 66% comprises women 30% of whom are in leadership roles and the overall women participation rate is calculated as 46.6% (Gender Balance Guide, 2017, pp. 37, 41). The 'UAE in Numbers' report indicates that in the private sector, 78% of workers are female. In the education sector, this figure stands at 62%, while in the government sector, it is 58%, and in the health sector, it is 56% (Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre, 2022, p.22).

The 2023 “Women in the UAE Private Sector” report, based on a survey of 500 women and 300 men, reveals that two-thirds of women pursued promotions through self-advocacy, with 80% of them succeeding. However, only 57% feel at ease expressing their perspectives during discussions, compared to 69% of men, underscoring the need for more inclusive workplace dynamics (Oliver Wyman, 2024, p.5).

The interviewees describe differences between the public and private sectors. While the public sector seems to be more influenced by government-led reforms, the private sector follows more global or corporate directives, which may not always align with UAE government

policies on gender equality. Lana highlights the UAE government's role in setting an example for gender equality, particularly through initiatives like equal pay policies. However, she points out that although equal pay regulations exist for the private sector, enforcement and transparency remain significant issues. She questions whether private companies consistently report and share data on gender equality, indicating concerns about accountability in the private sector compared to the more structured, government-led initiatives in the public sector.

Fatima emphasizes the UAE's strong representation of women in the public sector, noting that they comprise 57.5% of the public workforce and hold significant leadership roles, accounting for 66% of positions in this sector. She believes that public sector policies, including equal pay and anti-discrimination regulations, are enforced rigorously. Although similar policies exist in the private sector, she implies that the public sector maintains a higher standard for gender equality due to more consistent regulatory enforcement and alignment with the UAE's gender balance goals.

Aaliyah discusses the differences in law compliance and gender equality initiatives between the public and private sectors in the UAE. In the public sector, initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality are closely aligned with national goals, as government entities are required to adhere to state policies. However, the private sector's approach to gender equality is less uniform and often depends on the priorities set by the company's headquarters or "mother company."

Leila emphasizes the significance of regulatory transparency in the public sector, particularly regarding the enforcement of gender-related policies such as maternity leave. She notes that public sector employees are entitled to 90 days of maternity leave, compared to the 45 days available to private sector employees. Although she feels that pay is fairly distributed in her workplace based on position levels, she acknowledges that this perception may be "sheltered" or "naive." She also illustrates that standardized pay structures, like those in the public sector, may provide a framework for pay equity.

Samira highlights that pay transparency is an important issue, noting that in her university, salary ranges are openly accessible, as it is a public institution. This practice fosters accountability and reduces disparities. She also mentions that her workplace, a historically female-dominated university, offers an "ideal world" but may not fully reflect the challenges of achieving gender equity in male-dominated environments. Furthermore, she describes a shift in role and responsibility between the public and private sectors for women architects. The public

sector is framed as offering a more managerial position, where architects focus on overseeing the project's execution rather than on the design itself. This role demands less direct technical involvement but requires significant dedication in terms of time and energy.

In 2017, the UAE Cabinet enacted a resolution prohibiting the termination of women's contracts due to pregnancy (UAE Gender Balance Council, 2020, p. 92). In 2020, additional amendments were made to laws concerning violence and harassment against women. Specifically, references to 'honor crimes', where male relatives could receive lenient punishment for assaulting a female relative in the name of protecting the family's reputation, were removed (Kerr, 2020 as cited in Hesketh and Williams, 2021, p.9). In addition to laws, the UAE considers publicity a key strategy for raising awareness and achieving its set objectives. In line with this, the UAE has been employing various tools to advance gender equality and introduced "Emirati Women's Day in the United Arab Emirates," scheduled for the annual celebration on 28 August (United Arab Emirates, 2021, p. 7). This is an important initiative complemented by international forums showcasing the progress and dedication of the State. Additionally, the UAE Gender Balance Council took the initiative in 2017 to organize the first-ever United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel (HLP) meeting on Women's Economic Empowerment, a historic event as it was the inaugural gathering of its kind in the MENA region (United Arab Emirates, 2021, p. 19).

There is a significant increase in the number of women entrepreneurs, with 25,000 Emirati women owning 50,000 trade licenses valued at AED 860 billion in 2021, according to H.E. Abdalla Sultan Mohammed Al Owais, Chairman of the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). This marks a notable rise from the reported figures in 2010, where 11,000 Emirati businesswomen managed businesses worth AED 12 billion, as stated by H.E. Rajaa Al Gurg, Chairman of Dubai Businesswomen Council (as cited in UN Women, 2022, p.6).

The UAE is dedicated to fostering gender balance and empowering women across all domains. Efforts are focused on improving the work environment, ensuring equal opportunities in diverse sectors, and reinforcing women's roles as essential contributors to future development. The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (MoHRE) reported a 23.1 percent increase in women's participation in the private sector in 2023 compared to 2022 (WAM, 2024).

The interviewees underscore women's advantages in the workforce. Aaliyah believes that skilled and qualified women may even have an advantage over men in terms of career opportunities due to the UAE's focus on gender equality initiatives. Leila observes that women currently have a hiring advantage in cases where candidates have comparable qualifications. She notes that, when candidates have equal capabilities, hiring priority is often given to women. Amira echoes this view and humorously notes that women in the UAE sometimes receive "princess treatment" with the facilities and privileges provided to them.

Globalization, coupled with heightened competition, has made it essential for countries to build and uphold a positive national image, particularly for countries such as the UAE. Investing in global cultural icons, such as the Burj Khalifa and prominent public buildings, is considered a strategic move to enhance the UAE's international image. This image-building extends to a modernizing agenda that emphasizes women's empowerment, showcasing women in leadership roles such as ministers, educators, entrepreneurs, and businesswomen (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018, p.1).

The UAE's progress is significantly highlighted through external recognition, such as studies like the Harvard Business Review's research on Emirati women's job satisfaction and praise from international organizations, which emphasize the country's commitment to gender parity (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018, p.135). Samira believes that, as a relatively young country, the UAE has faced challenges in overcoming its image in the West. This is an issue the country continues to navigate and address. In recent years, however, there has been a notable increase in discussions and policies surrounding these matters. This shift is partly driven by global attention on the UAE, with the world closely watching its progress, particularly in relation to women's rights and broader gender equality.

Collaborations with relevant international organizations, whether in preparing guides for the UAE or assessing the State's current structure regarding gender equality, have also prompted questions about the primary motivations behind these actions. When addressing why the UAE is emphasizing women's rights in its foreign policy, Pinto believes that this effort serves to signal a quest for higher status, aligning with its ultimate strategy for international prominence as rooted in the nation's founding principles (Pinto, 2019, p. 354).

All the interviewees, except Amira, were aware of the UN and its collaborations in the UAE. On the other hand, Samira was unaware of the SDG-related activities conducted in the UAE. Lana's insights on the UAE's alignment with the UN initiatives reveal a high degree of

familiarity with UN frameworks regarding gender equality. She outlines the UAE's proactive approach to incorporating international practices into its domestic policy and corporate landscape. She highlights the integration of gender equality policies into the UAE's Vision 2021, as well as the Gender Balance Agenda, demonstrating alignment with SDG 5 on gender equality. Lana also notes that many UAE companies have adopted the UN's Women's Empowerment Principles (UN WEPs), a set of principles for business practices that promote gender equality in the workplace. Additionally, her mention of the OECD's involvement, as well as the country's engagement with UN Women for research purposes, highlights the UAE's broader interest in international guidance on gender policy. She illustrates the UAE's dedication to being competitive globally by aligning closely with UN guidelines, ensuring transparency in reporting, and advancing workplace gender equality.

On the other hand, Fatima offers a different perspective on the UAE's commitment to women's empowerment, emphasizing that this commitment predates, and operates independently from, any alignment with UN agendas. She underscores that the UAE's dedication to women's rights and empowerment is an integral part of its social fabric, rooted in a long-standing cultural legacy rather than external pressures or global frameworks. Highlighting the personal history, Fatima illustrates how UAE women, including older generations, have traditionally held empowered roles within society, implying that the advancement of women has deep, indigenous roots. She further asserts that the establishment of institutions like the General Women's Union in 1975, led by the First Lady of the UAE, reinforced the country's internal dedication to women's rights shortly after the UAE was formed as a federal entity. This early institutionalization of gender empowerment reflects a national priority—underscored by the Interviewee's view that UAE women's empowerment is a fundamental, home-grown policy rather than an attempt to meet international benchmarks or conform to UN standards.

Aaliyah illustrates an understanding of the interaction between the UAE government and international organizations, specifically highlighting the influence of United Nations (UN) commitments on national policies. By mentioning the government's alignment with initiatives like gender balance through collaborations with the UN, she demonstrates a keen awareness of how international partnerships can catalyze policy changes and foster gender equality, particularly within public institutions.

Table 4. 1 Impact of UN Policies and Organs on the Amendment of Laws and Regulations Related to Gender Equality in the UAE

UN Impact (<i>Direct and Indirect</i>)	UAE Action	Contribution to Gender Equality
CEDAW Committee's recommendation (2010) for discrimination regarding nationality and citizenship	Amending the Nationality and Passport laws in 2011 (Federal Law 17 of 1972)	Allowing Emirati women married to non-Emirati men to pass nationality to their children (right to apply for nationality at age 18)
CEDAW Committee's recommendation (2010) for women's equal participation in public and political affairs	Cabinet Decision 319/15F/22 in 2012	Mandating the presence of Emirati Women on board of federal authorities and government-owned companies <i>(In 2021, the Securities and Commodities Authority Board issued a chairman's decision that expanded this requirement to include all publicly listed companies.)</i>
CEDAW Committee's recommendation (2010) for establishing independent associations including women's rights organizations	Status: Federal Entity	Establishment of Gender Balance Council
CEDAW Committee's recommendation (2010) for violations of freedom of movement	Federal Decree-Law No. 16 of 2017	Enabling a married woman to apply for a passport without the written consent of her husband
CEDAW Committee's recommendation (2010) and UNDP & General Women's Union Collaboration - Gender Mainstreaming Guide (2018) <i>(Enforcing the role of the federal government in enacting and enforcing effective legislation)</i>	Federal Labor Law, Art. 32	Ensuring equal pay for men and women in the public sector. <i>(extended to the private sector in 2020)</i>
CEDAW Committee's recommendation (2010) for women's equal participation in public and political affairs and UNDP & General Women's Union Collaboration - Gender Mainstreaming Guide (2018) <i>(Enforcing the role of the federal government in enacting and enforcing effective legislation)</i>	Presidential Decree, Federal Decree in 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Requiring equal representation of women in political participation in the Federal National Council, with a 50% quota <i>(recorded as %22 in 2018)</i> 2. Ensuring equal representation in the UAE judiciary

<p>CEDAW Committee's recommendation (2010) for discrimination in the workforce and UNDP & General Women's Union Collaboration - Gender Mainstreaming Guide (2018) <i>(Enforcing the role of the federal government in enacting and enforcing effective legislation)</i></p>	<p>Federal Law No. 11 of 2019 2019 Family Protection Policy</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prohibiting gender-based discrimination in the workforce. 2. Addressing domestic violence and sexual harassment,
<p>CEDAW Committee's recommendation (2010) for protecting women in the workforce and UNDP & General Women's Union Collaboration - Gender Mainstreaming Guide (2018) <i>(Enforcing the role of the federal government in enacting and enforcing effective legislation)</i></p>	<p>Federal Decree-Law No. 4 of 2019 amending Federal Law No. 3 of 1987 (the Penal Code)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Criminalizing sexual harassment in the workplace 2. Allowing women to work at night and in industrial or hazardous jobs, while also prohibiting employers from terminating pregnant workers.
<p>UNDP and General Women's Union Collaboration - Gender Mainstreaming Guide (2018) <i>(Enforcing the role of the federal government in enacting and enforcing effective legislation)</i></p>	<p>Federal Decree-Law No. 49 of 2022, Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021</p>	<p>Extending maternity leave for public sector employees from two to three months with full pay <i>(In the private sector; 45 days of maternity leave with full pay, followed by an additional 15 days with half pay)</i></p>
<p>World Bank Group Collaboration to amend laws and regulations (2019-2022)</p>	<p>Personal Status Law No. 28/2005, as amended by Federal Decree No. 5/2020, Arts. 56, 71 and 72</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Giving women the same right as men to choose their place of residence by eliminating financial and legal penalties for not living in the marital home. 2. Granting women the right to alimony, even if they refuse to travel with their husbands without a valid reason. 3. The right to travel independently without requiring their husbands' permission. 4. Taking out the provision in the Law requiring a woman to obey her husband.

World Bank Group Collaboration to amend laws and regulations (2019-2022)	Personal Status Law No. 28/2005, as amended by Federal Decree No. 5/2020, Art. 72	Gaining the right to work on equal terms with men by having the same requirements for working outside the home.
World Bank Group Collaboration to amend laws and regulations (2019-2022)	Federal Decree-Law No. 6 of 2020, Art. 74	1. Introducing five days of paternity leave for private sector employees (<i>before there was none</i>) 2. Mandating both federal and local government entities to establish workplace nurseries
World Bank Group Collaboration to amend laws and regulations (2019-2022)	Central Bank of the UAE Notice No. CBUAE/ BSD2019/3457	Ensuring gender-neutral access to credit



5. Navigating Gender Equality in the UAE: An Analysis of Global Reports

The UAE places great importance on global gender reports that track gender equality and women's empowerment because these indices highlight areas for improvement and showcase progress in addressing gender disparities. Like many other nations, the UAE acknowledges the significance of closing the pay gap, promoting equal opportunities for career advancement, and enacting legal reforms to combat gender discrimination, all of which play a vital role in fostering inclusive environments where individuals of all genders can contribute fully to society. The UN Foundation (2022, as cited in Lee & Ben Romdhane, 2023, p.3) emphasizes the ongoing challenges, including the gender pay gap and limited access to mentorship opportunities, but it also signals a positive shift toward a more equitable future. The UAE is committed to being part of this global trend. By embracing gender mainstreaming, the UAE adopts a holistic and cooperative approach to gender equality. This ensures that its policies not only focus on individual sectors like education, employment, and political representation but also address deeper issues like gender stereotyping, prejudice, the glass ceiling, and the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions (GWU & UNDP Guide on Gender Mainstreaming, 2018, pp. 23,36).

Aiming for good rankings in global gender reports can be attributed to various motivations: positional strategy, as stated by Saeed (2021, as cited in Sinha et al., 2023, p.7), or status-seeking aspirations, as advocated by Pinto (2019, as cited in Sinha et al., 2023, p.7). Another key reason for the UAE's implementation of gender equality programs is explained through its soft power strategy, which aims to strengthen bilateral relations by promoting cooperation, dialogue, and peace (Chehab, 2023, p.3). All these approaches support the idea that, by advancing gender equality, the UAE demonstrates its commitment to shared global values, positioning itself as a partner in fostering positive international relations and building stronger, more peaceful alliances. Thus, these reports not only measure progress in gender equality and women's empowerment but also serve as a key indicator of a nation's commitment to the ambitions of international society. By prioritizing gender equality, the UAE enhances its global image as a progressive, forward-thinking nation that supports human rights and social justice.











This section reviews global gender reports, commonly referenced on international platforms, compares them with past years, and details the UAE's strengths and weaknesses in gender equality and the advancement of women. World Bank and UNDP reports are crucial for analysis as, by the 1990s, both institutions embraced the gender mainstreaming approach, making their insights vital for comprehending global gender policy frameworks (Razavi and Miller 1995, as cited in Krook and True, 2008, p.9).

5.1 The Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) by the World Bank

The Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) Index prepared by the World Bank is considered an essential report that identifies legal barriers that hinder women's economic participation and provides a benchmark for assessing progress in gender-related reforms. By highlighting areas where laws need improvement, it helps drive policy changes that promote equal opportunities for women in the workplace and society. Since 2009, the Women, Business, and the Law has deepened the exploration of gender equality and influenced efforts to improve women's economic opportunities and empowerment. The revised Women, Business, and the Law 2.0 framework evaluates not only the presence of legal measures but also their actual implementation. The 2024 edition presents a thorough framework consisting of three components—legal frameworks, supportive frameworks, and expert opinions—to assess gender inequalities in economic access across 190 economies (The World Bank, 2024).

In the Women, Business, and the Law (2024, p.90), countries in North Africa and the Middle East exhibit lower performance in both legal and supportive frameworks compared to other regions. For instance, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which has made considerable progress in the last couple of years by reforming laws to promote gender equality, demonstrates a substantial disparity between its legal framework score (62.5) and its supportive framework score (24.2). This gap primarily arises from deficiencies in supportive frameworks across key indicators, including workplace equality, safety, entrepreneurship, parenthood, assets, and pensions, as shown in Table 5.1. This observation indicates that while countries having considerable gaps may face challenges in establishing robust supportive frameworks, they can still demonstrate considerable advancements in women's empowerment. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of women's empowerment should consider not only the extent of these gaps but also the absolute scores achieved in relevant domains.

Table 5. 1 Women, Business, and the Law 2024 2.0 Indicator Scores

										
WBL 2.0	Safety	Mobility	Workplace	Pay	Marriage	Parenthood	Childcare	Entrepreneurship	Assets	Pension
Legal frameworks score	50.0	75.0	75.0	100.0	50.0	50.0	25.0	75.0	25.0	100.0
Supportive frameworks score	0.0	100.0	0.0	50.0	66.7	0.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Expert opinions score	75.0	100.0	75.0	50.0	75.0	93.8	100.0	75.0	75.0	100.0

The UAE leads the region with a score of 82.5 out of 100 on the WBL 2.0 index. As shown in Table Annex 1, the UAE's legal frameworks score is 62.5, which is below the global average of 64.2 but above the Middle East & North Africa average of 38.6. The UAE excels in laws related to women's pay and pensions, achieving a perfect score of 100.0. However, its supportive frameworks score is 24.2, lower than both the global average of 39.5 and the regional average of 24.9, though it also scores 100.0 in supportive frameworks for freedom of movement (The World Bank, 2024). Compared to other Middle Eastern countries listed in the WBL dataset, the UAE demonstrates significantly stronger performance and outperforms its regional counterparts by a substantial margin. For instance, Saudi Arabia scores 71.3 in WBL 1.0 and 85.6 in WBL 2.0 expert opinions, showing notable progress but still trailing the UAE in legal frameworks. Meanwhile, countries like Qatar and Kuwait lag far behind, with WBL 1.0 scores of 35.6 and 38.1, and WBL 2.0 scores of 22.5 and 20.0, respectively, illustrating slower legal reforms and less supportive environments. Yemen ranks lowest, with just 26.9 in WBL 1.0 and 15.0 in WBL 2.0 (Women, Business, and the Law [WBL], 2024, pp. 95-100).

The UAE has made significant progress in gender equality as reflected in the previous WBL reports. In 2019, the UAE ranked 186 out of 187 countries, but by 2020, it improved to 165 out of 187. Recent reforms, including the introduction of equal pay legislation and the removal of restrictive provisions regarding women's mobility and employment, have driven substantial improvements. The establishment of the Gender Balance Council has further supported these advancements. By 2023, as shown in Annex Tables 2, 3, and 4 respectively, the UAE ranked 84 out of 190 countries and is recognized for having one of the fastest growth rates in the index (WBL Reports, 2019, p.9; 2020, p.13; 2023, p.16).

Table 5. 2 Women, Business, and the Law

Year	UAE's rank	Total Countries	Progress Highlight
2019	186	187	Near the bottom of the rankings.
2020	165	187	Legal amendments starting to show their impact.
2021	79	187	One of the fastest growth rates in the index.
2022	83	190	Maintaining a relatively strong position yet suggesting the need for further policy enhancements.
2023	84	190	Indicating sustained progress but highlighting the challenge of surpassing other rapidly improving nations.
2024	68	190	Significant improvement within a year, reinforcing the impact of continued efforts in policy reform and implementation.

5.2 Human Development Report (HDR) by the UNDP

Another important publication is the UNDP’s annual Human Development Report (HDR), which includes the Gender Inequality Index (GII). The report, which was initially introduced in 1990 (The UN, 2024), assesses human development across three dimensions: health (life expectancy at birth), education (average years of schooling and expected years of schooling), and standard of living (gross national income (GNI) per capita). The latest report (2024) establishes a connection between the UN's SDGs and Human Development Index (HDI) indicators, ranking 193 countries based on three key metrics (The UNDP, 2024). Hence, this index offers a broad perspective on gender inequalities worldwide.

In the 2024 edition of the HDR, the UAE ranked 1st in the MENA region and 17th globally, as shown in Annex Table 5, achieving a notable leap of 9 places from 2023. Life expectancy at birth reached 79.2 years, aligning with the third SDG of good health and well-being, indicating a robust healthcare system. Additionally, the education metrics demonstrate a strong commitment to quality education, with expected years of schooling at 17.2 years and an average of 12.8 years of schooling. This aligns with the fourth SDG and reflects ongoing efforts to improve access and outcomes in education. Furthermore, the GNI per capita reached USD

74,104, highlighting economic prosperity and the potential for continued investment in social infrastructure. This progress places the UAE in the "Very High Human Development" category, highlighting its leadership in promoting gender equality within the region (The HDR, 2024, p.274).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), with a Gender Development Index (GDI) of 0.986, demonstrates relatively high gender parity among Middle Eastern countries listed. While Qatar (1.027) and Kuwait (1.014) score higher in GDI, indicating greater gender equality, the UAE surpasses most others in education indicators. In contrast, countries like Saudi Arabia (GDI 0.928) and Bahrain (0.937) show wider gender gaps in both income and education, with males significantly outperforming females in gross national income. Although Qatar has higher overall income levels, its gender gap in income is also wider than that of the UAE. Overall, the UAE strikes a stronger balance in gender parity in education and income compared to most of its regional peers, despite not having the highest GDI value (The HDR, 2024, pp. 288-291).

Table 5. 3 Human Development Report Gender Inequality Index

Year	UAE's Rank (Global)	Total Countries	Progress Highlight
2017	49	189	Showing a strong global position but with room for improvement.
2018	35	189	Significant jump, reflecting enhanced policies and strategic initiatives.
2019	31	189	Continued improvement, demonstrating sustained policy effectiveness.
2020	18	189	A major leap into the top 20, highlighting the impact of key legal amendments and policy implementations.
2021 2022	26	191	A slight drop yet maintaining a strong position in the global ranking.
2023 2024	17	193	Achieving its highest ranking and reaffirming its commitment to continuous progress

5.3 The Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum

The Global Gender Gap Report 2024 (pp. 5-9), initially launched by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2006 to measure advancements toward gender equality, assesses 146 countries, scoring them from 0 (complete inequality) to 1 (full equality) across 14 metrics. Based on 93% hard data and 7% soft data, these metrics are categorized into four main areas: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Health and Survival, Educational Attainment, and Political Empowerment.

Since 2020, the UAE has made significant progress in gender equality, climbing from 120th in the Global Gender Gap Index of the WEF to 72nd in 2021 and further improving to 68th in 2022 (Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre, 2024). This demonstrates a notable leap of 52 positions over just two years, underscoring the country’s commitment to advancing gender parity.

In 2023, the UAE ranked 71st out of 146 countries and is among the five nations achieving full gender parity in national parliamentary seats, alongside Mexico, Nicaragua, Rwanda, and New Zealand. In political empowerment, the UAE ranked 35th, with women holding 50% of the seats in the Federal National Council, a clear reflection of the strides made in enhancing women’s political participation (Global Gender Gap Report, 2023, pp.14, 358).

Table 5. 4 Global Gender Gap Index

Year	UAE’s rank	Total Countries	Progress Highlight
2018-2020	121	149	Ranking near the lower end
2021	72	146	Remarkable improvement, reflecting major policy changes and effective implementation.
2022	68	146	Continued progress, placing the UAE in a stronger competitive position globally.
2023	71	146	Among the top five nations with full gender parity in parliamentary seats, ranking 35th in political empowerment.
2024	74	146	Another minor decline, signaling the need for sustained efforts to maintain progress.

In the most recent 2024 index, the UAE, with a score of 0.713, ranks 74th globally and leads the MENA region, as shown in Annex Table 6. It performs exceptionally well in several areas, securing the top global spot in secondary and tertiary education enrolment, sex ratio at birth, and women’s parliamentary representation. In this report, the UAE ranks 124th in Economic Participation and Opportunity with a score of 0.553, indicating ongoing challenges in gender equality. A notable improvement is in wage equality, where the UAE ranks 10th with a score of 0.783, which is 1.4 times higher than the overall score, showing significant progress in narrowing the gender pay gap. However, labor-force participation remains low at 118th (score: 0.618), and estimated earned income ranks 127th with a score of 0.396, highlighting substantial disparities in income despite improvements in wage parity. Women’s representation in leadership roles (ranked 114th, score: 0.306) and in professional and technical positions (125th, score: 0.445) further underscores areas where gender inclusion remains limited. While strides have been made in wage equality, broader economic participation and leadership opportunities for women require further attention (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2024, p.355).

In the 2024 Global Gender Gap Index rankings, Israel ranks at 80th (0.700), while Bahrain (0.666), Saudi Arabia (0.647), and Egypt (0.629) trail behind, reflecting wider gender disparities. Jordan (0.652), Kuwait (0.636), Qatar (0.641), and Lebanon (0.632) also rank lower than the UAE. Despite being mid-tier globally, the UAE leads much of the Arab world in narrowing the gender gap, particularly when compared to Gulf neighbors like Saudi Arabia and Oman (0.629, rank 136) (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2024, p.12).

5.4 The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) is the sole global research platform gathering data directly from primary sources, which are entrepreneurs (p.15). In the GEM 2022/23 Women’s Entrepreneurship Report, the Total Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) by Gender and Country Graph shows that men engage in entrepreneurial activities at a higher rate than women in the UAE, though both genders demonstrate strong involvement compared to other high-income nations. The UAE ranks among the top for female entrepreneurial activity within this group, alongside countries like Saudi Arabia and Slovenia. While a gender gap exists, it is smaller than in countries such as Japan or Germany, indicating progress in supporting female entrepreneurship. Regionally, the UAE and Saudi Arabia both exhibit high levels of

entrepreneurship, though Saudi Arabia has a wider gender gap. Globally, the UAE stands out for strong participation by both men and women, outperforming countries like Japan and South Korea (p.25).

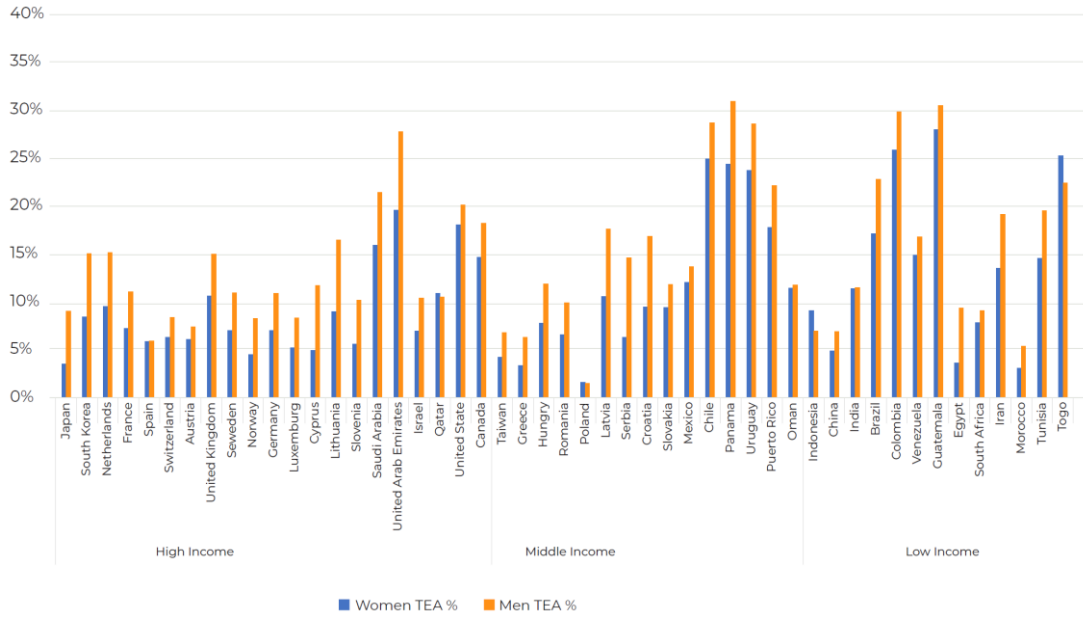


Figure 5. 1 Total Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) by gender and country, GEM 2022

In this report, sustainability indicators in the Middle East and Africa were largely below global averages, with no awareness of the SDGs reported by entrepreneurs in Egypt, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. In contrast, the United Arab Emirates showed the highest awareness, with 28.1% of women entrepreneurs familiar with the SDGs, 90% integrating social sustainability into business decisions, and approximately 66% actively applying sustainable practices (p.74). This also indicates that the UAE is empowering women entrepreneurs through a systematic framework supported by the UN SDGs. In 2022, the UAE ranked in Level A, exhibiting a strong gender ratio close to 1.0, which indicates nearly equal participation in entrepreneurial activities between women and men and reflects an improvement from 2019, when the ratio was slightly lower. This positive trend underscores the UAE's commitment to empowering women entrepreneurs and promoting gender parity in entrepreneurship. Additionally, the UAE stands alongside other high-income nations, such as the United Kingdom, Sweden, and the United States, which also demonstrate high gender ratios in both 2019 and 2022, signifying the country's competitive edge in fostering an inclusive entrepreneurial environment for women (GEM 2022/2023 Global Report, 2023, p.89).

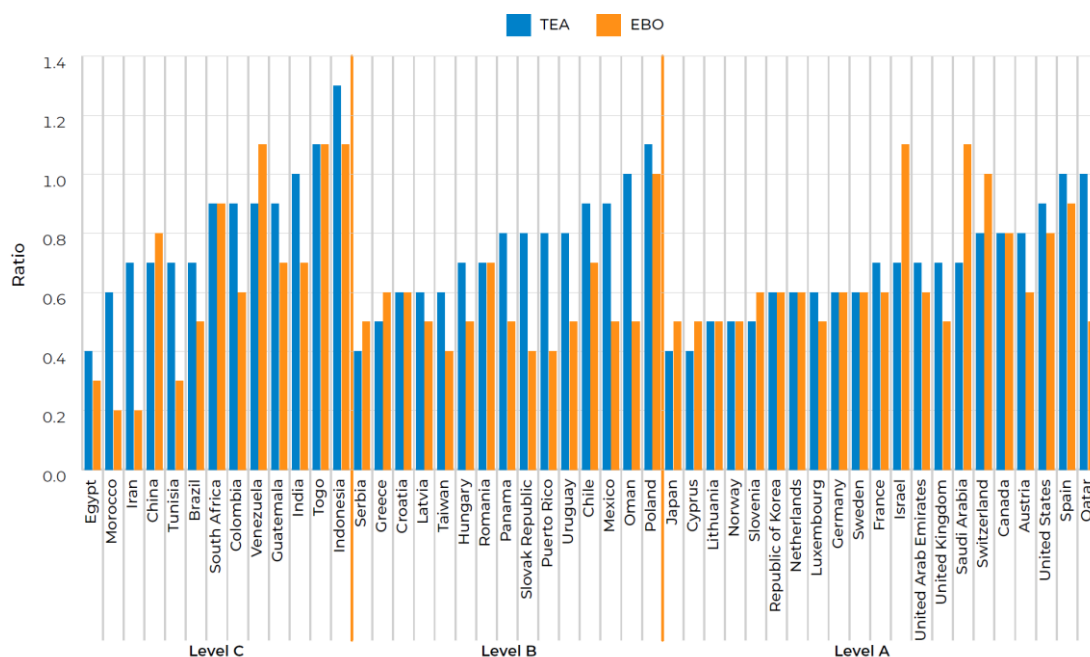


Figure 5. 2 Relative gender gaps for new businesses (female% TEA/male% TEA) and for established businesses (female% EBO/male% % EBO).
 Source: GEM Adult Population Survey 2022

For the third consecutive year, the GEM report for 2023-2024 has placed the United Arab Emirates at the top globally, with an unprecedented score of 7.7, the highest in the report's history. In terms of supporting and allocating resources to women entrepreneurs, the UAE demonstrated a commitment to creating an empowering environment compared to other countries. While the figure shows that many countries, especially in Level C and Level B (classification based on income levels), struggle with providing equal levels of support and access to resources, the UAE's performance is quite impressive. The 8.0 score in support reflects national policies and social systems designed to uplift female entrepreneurs, while the 7.4 resource score indicates substantial access to financial and non-financial resources, further solidifying the UAE's leading position (GEM 2022/2023 Global Report, 2024, p.104).

In contrast, other Middle Eastern countries are making progress but still lag behind. Saudi Arabia, for instance, ranks third globally in the National Entrepreneurship Context Index (NECI) and has improved support for women entrepreneurs through Vision 2030 reforms and partnerships with institutions like the University of Texas at Austin. Bahrain has implemented the Riyadat Financing initiative, a \$100 million fund aimed at women-majority-owned startups and SMEs. However, challenges persist across the region, including limited access to capital, cultural barriers, and underrepresentation in leadership roles (World Economic Forum, 2023).

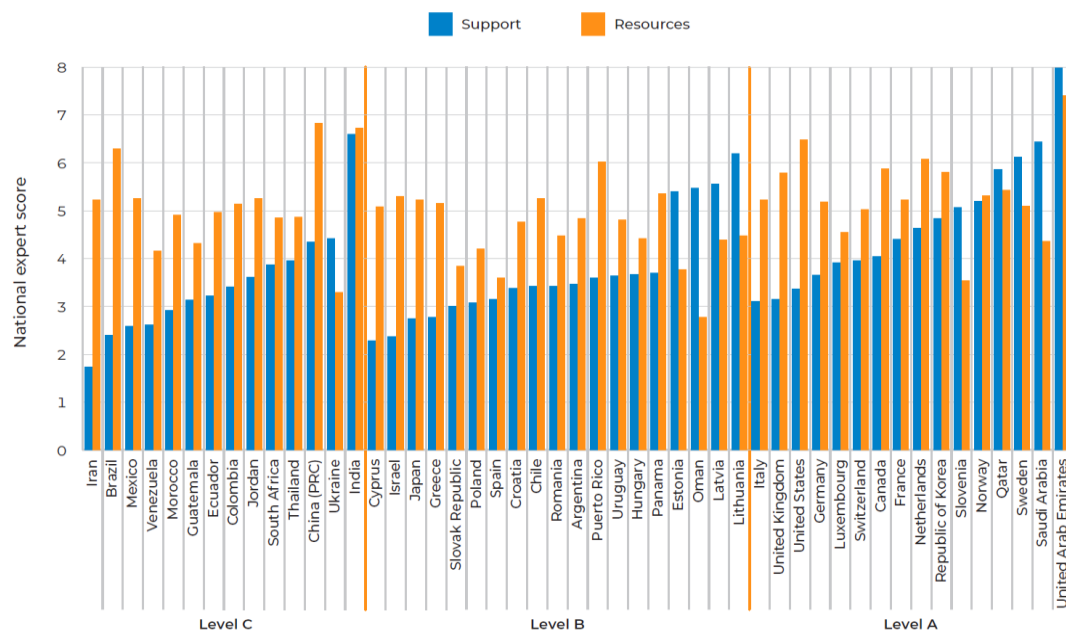


Figure 5.3 National expert scores for the perceived social support for women entrepreneurs, and their relative access to the resources necessary to start and run their businesses
 Source: GEM National Expert Survey, 2023

However, the UAE's experience highlights a common trend observed across other countries: despite strong support mechanisms, further improvement is necessary to address potential gaps in sustained social support systems, particularly in bridging access to resources for women entrepreneurs. While the UAE excels in both areas, there are lessons to be drawn for other countries to enhance their frameworks, especially in Levels C and B, where the gap between support and resource provision remains significant (GEM 2022/2023 Global Report, 2024, p.109).

Table 5.5 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor

Year	Gender Ratio (TEA) out of 8.0	Progress Highlight
2019	Below 1.0	The gap in participation between men and women in entrepreneurship.
2022	Close to 1.0	Achieved nearly equal participation between women and men.
2023 2024	7.7	Ranked first globally with a record-breaking score, the highest in GEM history.

5.5 Women, Peace, and Security Index by the Georgetown Institute

According to the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security's 2023 WPS Index, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) ranks 22nd globally among 170 countries, with a score of 0.868 (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security Index, 2023, p.2). This ranking reflects a strong commitment to women's empowerment across several dimensions, though it also highlights areas for improvement. In the Inclusion dimension, the UAE shows promising results in education (score of 12.5) and financial inclusion (86.7%), suggesting that women have significant access to education and financial resources. The employment rate for women is at 55.7%, indicating a reasonable level of workforce participation but still leaving room for growth, especially compared to global averages. The Justice dimension reveals a score of 82.5 for the absence of legal discrimination, which is encouraging, but challenges remain, particularly regarding access to justice, with a rate of 2,107. In terms of Security, the UAE scores well in community safety (93.0), which is critical for women's everyday security, but the data on intimate partner violence requires further focus. The absence of political violence targeting women, shown by a score of 0.000, reflects significant progress in creating a safe political environment for women (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, 2024).

6. Conclusion

The primary objective of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the United Nations (UN) policies and recommendations in advancing gender equality within the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Having gained independence just 53 years ago, the UAE has rapidly emerged as a regional leader and a global advocate for gender equality, earning recognition as one of the top nations driving progressive gender policies. However, ranking highly in global reports or implementing gender quotas does not necessarily guarantee that these advancements translate into tangible, inclusive opportunities for all women across the country, forming the basis of my first hypothesis. Alaimo (2016, p.2496) notes that when states are more concerned with their reputations than the well-being of their citizens, they may resort to cosmetic reforms rather than substantive changes in response to international criticism, where governmental narratives are primarily crafted to enhance their image for a global audience, rather than reflecting genuine efforts to support women.

Therefore, Pinto criticizes the UAE for its limited approach, which targets increasing women's representation in politics and highlighting the professional accomplishments of a select group of women in untraditional or high-level decision-making roles (Pinto, 2019, p. 347). Sinha et al. (2023, p.10) also highlight the issue that Emirati media with government backing enhances visibility by publishing articles that showcase women excelling as astronauts, diplomats, surgeons, engineers, pilots, ministers, and so on. However, interviewees do not perceive these efforts as mere cosmetic reforms. They highlight that the UAE government's initiatives—such as legal amendments and media campaigns showcasing women excelling in traditionally male-dominated fields—have played a crucial role in challenging societal norms and expanding opportunities for women. They take pride in their government's efforts, and while full equality has yet to be achieved, they remain satisfied with the rights they have.

Given the existence of criticisms against the reports of globally acknowledged organizations, it was important to understand the real situation in the UAE. In this context, this study makes a significant contribution to the literature by offering a comprehensive analysis of global reports, meticulously examining legal and regulatory frameworks, initiatives undertaken, previous studies, and newspapers, and assessing the impact of international commitments on gender equality in the UAE. By evaluating global indices and reports, the UAE's progress within broader international benchmarks was demonstrated which allowed for a clearer comparison of its progress relative to global standards. The study also conducts a thorough

examination of national laws and recent legal reforms, highlighting how frameworks such as CEDAW and collaboration with the UN have influenced legislative amendments aimed at enhancing women's rights. Furthermore, the inclusion of firsthand insights from interviewees adds depth to the analysis, providing varied perspectives on the effectiveness of these reforms in practice. These interviews serve as crucial qualitative evidence, reflecting both the achievements and remaining challenges in gender equality efforts. By integrating the analysis of policies (such as laws, regulations, and reforms) with the data collected from interviews and global reports, the study contributes to academic discussions on gender equality while also providing practical insights that can help countries with similar ambitions. It emphasizes how international drivers (like UN collaborations and CEDAW) and national efforts (such as domestic legal reforms) interact in shaping gender policies in the UAE.

The UAE has made significant progress in enhancing women's rights through legal reforms, addressing issues such as domestic violence, equal pay legislation, removal of mobility and employment restrictions, and promoting women's participation in traditionally male-dominated fields. In this context, interviews with Emirati women and country profiles in the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law (WBL) reports, as well as many others included in Section 5, provide some support for this perspective, indicating that while the UAE's progress in gender equality is commendable, there remains room for improvement in bridging the gap between legal reforms and the supportive structures necessary for the everyday empowerment of all women.

This need for improvement is particularly evident in the private sector, where the policies of parent companies often take precedence unless explicitly overridden by binding national legislation. The UAE recognizes the pivotal role of women in strengthening human capital; hence, the State has leveraged Emiratization to reduce dependence on expatriates while boosting the global competitiveness of local businesses. With women surpassing men in higher education (Dickson & Tennant, 2019, p.89), the Emiratization policy has significantly impacted women's employment opportunities in the UAE by introducing quotas for both public and private sectors. Nonetheless, as highlighted in the interviews, the key is not merely meeting gender quotas but equipping women with the necessary skills and capacities to ensure their empowerment is both meaningful and sustainable. This approach moves beyond symbolic gestures, fostering genuine progress that integrates women as equal contributors to societal and economic development, rather than serving as a superficial demonstration of inclusivity.

However, the private sector in the UAE has faced growing challenges in recruiting qualified Emiratis, as citizens particularly women expect higher salaries and benefits, more stable employment, and reduced working hours compared to expatriates (Randeree, 2012, p.9). More importantly, as highlighted in interviews, public entities are obliged to prioritize gender balance due to government mandates, whereas private companies typically only pursue similar initiatives when legally required. Thus, although the private sector is strongly encouraged and the Emirati government has introduced initiatives to attract Emiratis, particularly women, to it, public sector roles remain the preferred choice for many Emirati women (Thompson, 2022, p.29).

While all these critics raise valid concerns, it is important to acknowledge the progress that has been made in the UAE particularly considering the structure and values of the country. Women now hold significant positions across both the private and public sectors, with a remarkable 23.1% increase in female participation in the private sector between 2022 and 2023 (WAM, 2024), alongside their growing presence in diplomatic and ministerial roles. Their influence is increasingly felt in regulatory and legislative arenas, which is essential for promoting greater gender parity in employment opportunities moving forward. Thus, these advancements represent a noteworthy shift toward greater gender equality and a more inclusive workforce (Patterson et al., 2021, p.905). In the coming years, with government initiatives, the continued integration of women into leadership positions and entrepreneurship will likely contribute to shaping a more inclusive, diverse, and dynamic business environment in the UAE, with the potential for women to further influence economic and policy decisions at both local and global levels. This growth could also inspire other nations in the region and beyond to adopt similar initiatives that promote gender equality in economic participation.

The interviewees generally view the UAE government's efforts toward gender equality as substantial and effective, with policies such as Emiratization, gender quotas, women on board, and legal reforms playing a crucial role in advancing women's participation in the workforce. While some acknowledge persistent challenges, they largely consider these initiatives meaningful and emphasize the importance of education, mentorship, and upskilling in ensuring sustainable progress. They also point out that although legal reforms have enhanced women's rights and workplace protections, challenges persist, particularly in citizenship laws and balancing Emiratization with gender priorities. The interviewees presented mixed perspectives, with some attributing the UAE's progress in gender equality to external influences like UN frameworks, while others emphasized that these efforts are deeply rooted in the

country's national agenda and longstanding cultural priorities. Overall, the interviews suggest that the UAE's commitment to gender equality is considered both a national priority and a strategy aligned with global frameworks like the UN policies and the SDGs, demonstrating a blend of internal motivation and international recognition.

The UAE's progress on global standing is both motivating and enlightening and highlights significant cultural and economic transformations toward gender equality. It serves as a powerful example of how visionary leadership and a strong commitment can drive progress, showing that with effective strategies and initiatives, challenges can be overcome (Talu, 2024). The UAE Constitution, affirming equal rights for men and women in areas such as property, education, health, inheritance, and employment, reflects the visionary leadership of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (02.12.1971–11.03.2004), whose unwavering commitment to gender equality laid the foundation for a more inclusive and progressive nation. Since assuming the presidency on 11 March 2004, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan upheld the legacy of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who championed women's fundamental rights as integral to the empowerment of society. Inspired by this vision, Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, the Mother of the Nation, has embraced this mission with unwavering dedication, spearheading numerous initiatives and providing continuous support to advance gender equality across the UAE (Permanent Committee for Human Rights, 2024).

Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan was deeply committed to empowering women, emphasizing that their opportunities stem from their inherent capabilities rather than legal privilege or favoritism. *“Opportunities made to women are not dictated by favor or legal preference, they are, in fact, the nature of things”* he stated. Under Sheikh Khalifa's leadership, the UAE has achieved remarkable milestones in advancing gender equality and national progress. Key achievements include introducing mandatory female representation on government boards (2012), launching a national strategy for Emirati women and establishing the Gender Balance Council (2015), and aligning national visions with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 5 on gender equality. Other milestones include appointing the youngest minister, Shamma Al Mazrui (2016), achieving gender parity in the Federal National Council (2018), and making history with the Mars Hope mission led by HE Sarah Al-Amiri (2021). Recent advancements also include equal pay legislation, expanded parental leave, and mandatory female representation on corporate boards (2021) (Locke, 2022).

Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, appointed as the third President in 2023, appears to be following in the footsteps of his predecessors, building on their legacy of leadership and progress. In a federal monarchy like the UAE, the views and actions of the Emirs on gender equality are crucial, as they directly influence public sector policies, regulate the private sector, and shape public perception. The UAE's significant progress in a relatively short time may also be attributed to its political structure, which facilitates the efficient implementation of gender mainstreaming.

As a Middle Eastern, Muslim-majority country with a federal presidential elected monarchy, the UAE may not initially be perceived as one of the leading nations in terms of gender equality. Socio-cultural, religious, and geographical boundaries have significant impacts on the execution of gender policies and action plans; however, this has not appeared to pose an obstacle for the UAE, supporting my second hypothesis. This research also aimed to explore how, despite socio-cultural, religious, and geographical factors influencing policy execution, these elements have not hindered the UAE's overall progress in advancing gender equality. A key factor driving this progress, as studied and demonstrated in this research, is the UAE's ambition to become an internationally recognized state. To achieve this, the UAE leveraged UN platforms, implemented UN policies, and aligned its domestic frameworks with global standards. Since its establishment, the UAE has positioned itself as a regional leader in gender equality within the GCC through progressive policies and regulations, and gaining recognition on a global scale. The greatest credit goes to the Emirs, who have upheld the founding vision and elevated it to new heights through transformative progress in gender equality, driven by government-led initiatives, including the implementation of pivotal laws.

Beginning with education and women empowerment policies, supported by women's organizations and gender quotas, the UAE has transformed its image, setting an example that has also inspired neighboring countries. From its initial commitment to CEDAW to advancing equal pay initiatives, the UAE has achieved notable progress, securing a prominent position in global rankings and reports through strategic collaborations with various UN entities. These partnerships were instrumental in adopting best practices from pioneering countries in gender equality and establishing a new order through a top-down approach anchored in the widely recognized strategy of gender mainstreaming. The comprehensive Guide on Gender Mainstreaming (2018), prepared in collaboration with the UNDP, the establishment of the SDG Hub in the UAE in 2017 in partnership with UNDESA, the introduction of the "SDG 5 Pledge to Accelerate Women's Leadership in the UAE Private Sector" to more than 20 local and

multinational companies in 2022, the establishment of the UN Women Liaison Office in Abu Dhabi, the launch of national programs aligned with the UN agenda on women, peace, and security, and Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE's Minister of Foreign Affairs, becoming the first Arab foreign minister to publicly endorse the UN Women's "HeForShe" campaign in 2014, are among the many initiatives supporting this argument and are explained in detail in Section 4.

The importance of empowering women and fostering their participation in the economy is widely acknowledged on a global scale, a reality that the UAE fully embraces and actively supports (UAE Public Policy Forum Reports, 2020, p.7). As a nation with a large expatriate population, the UAE seeks to position itself as a progressive hub that embraces inclusivity, diversity, and modern values. This commitment aligns with its broader goals of economic development, recognizing that greater inclusion of women in the workforce fosters innovation, boosts productivity, and strengthens the country's economic resilience. Additionally, these advancements in gender equality serve as a cornerstone of the UAE's soft power strategy, projecting an image of openness and modernization to attract international partnerships, investment, and talent (Chehab, 2023, p.2). Through these efforts, the UAE also demonstrates how empowering women is integral to its vision of becoming a model for progress in the Arab world and beyond.

In conclusion, the UAE's approach to gender equality reflects both its domestic priorities and its international ambitions, yet it is not without its complexities. By fostering women's inclusion in the workforce, the state aims to strengthen its economic resilience and bolster its global reputation as a forward-thinking, inclusive society. However, such efforts must be critically examined to ensure they go beyond surface-level initiatives and effectively address structural challenges that persist in achieving genuine equality. While these strides project an image of modernity and inclusiveness, lasting progress depends on the depth of societal transformation and the ability to balance economic objectives with meaningful empowerment. The UAE's founding principles, UN policies, and collaborations—along with its drive to strengthen its global reputation—have significantly influenced the country's approach to women's empowerment and gender equality, both of which are examined in this research. Although enacted and amended laws have undoubtedly improved the lives of women, disparities in opportunities remain, which is also a broader global challenge.

7. References

- Alaimo, K. (2016). Increased efforts by modern states to improve their reputations for enforcing women's human rights. *International Journal of Communication*, 10, 2481–2500. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/5218>
- Alhmoudi, M. K. (2017). *The impact of international human rights on women's rights in the United Arab Emirates: Progress towards gender equality* [Doctoral dissertation]. <https://ezproxy.iku.edu.tr:2444/10.13140/RG.2.2.19517.37608>
- Ali, A. (2021, December 10). *Human rights reform in the UAE: Natural socio-political evolution or positional strategy?*. <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/12/10/human-rights-reform-in-the-uae-natural-socio-political-evolution-or-positional-strategy/>
- Alibeli, M. A. (2015). *Gender and Attitudes toward Women in the United Arab Emirates. Perspectives on Global Development & Technology*, 14(1/2), 109–125. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15691497-12341335>
- Allagui, I., & Al-Najjar, A. (2018). *From Women Empowerment to Nation Branding: A Case Study From the United Arab Emirates. International Journal of Communication*, 12, 68–85. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323737727_From_Women_Empowerment_to_Nation_Branding_A_Case_Study_From_the_United_Arab_Emirates
- AlMutawa, R. (2016). *Awareness of Emirati Women's Economic Roles Before the Oil Boom: Changing Perceptions of Gender Roles. Inquiries Journal*, 8(10). <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=1456>
- Al-Sayegh, F. (2001). Women and economic changes in the Arab Gulf: The case of the United Arab Emirates. *Digest of Middle East Studies (DOMES)*, 10(2), 17–29. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1949-3606.2001.tb00419.x>
- Arat, Z. F. K. (2015). Feminisms, Women's Rights, and the UN: Would Achieving Gender Equality Empower Women. *The American Political Science Review*, 109(4), 674–
<https://doi.10.1017/S0003055415000386>
- Asante, P. (2020). *An Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming in Project Design and Implementation in the UN FAO; A Case Study of the Ghana Country Office* [Master's thesis, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology]. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jeit.2000.00324iae.002>.
- Augsburg, K., Claus, I. A., & Randeree, K. (2009). *Leadership and the Emirati woman: breaking the glass ceiling in the Arabian Gulf*. LIT Verlag Münster. <https://pureportal.coventry.ac.uk/en/publications/leadership-and-the-emirati-woman-breaking-the-glass-ceiling-in-th>

- Bexell, M. (2012). Global Governance, Gains and Gender: UN–Business Partnerships for Women’s Empowerment. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 14(3), 389–407. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2012.659855>
- Birdiřli, F., & Kaçar, F. (2017). Paradoxes of Secularism in Turkey in Process of European Union Access. *Kahramanmarař Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 14(1), 1-19. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/311427>
- Booth, C., & Bennett, C. (2002). Gender mainstreaming in the European Union: Towards a new conception and practice of equal opportunities? *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 9(4), 430–446. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13505068020090040401>
- Buckingham, S., Perello, M., & López-Murcia, J. (2021). Gender mainstreaming urban waste reduction in European cities. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 64(4), 671–688. <https://ezproxy.iku.edu.tr:2444/10.1080/09640568.2020.1781601>
- Butale, C. T. (2023). The ambiguous conceptualisation of gender mainstreaming in the Southern African Development Community. *Development Southern Africa*, 40(3), 713–727. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2022.2102968>
- Chehab, S. (2023). *Women Empowerment and Gender Balance: Soft Power Tools in UAE Foreign Policy*. https://www.agda.ac.ae/docs/default-source/2023/women-empowerment-and-gender-balance--soft-power-tools-in-uae-foreign-policy.pdf?sfvrsn=c712673b_3
- Daly, M. (2005). Gender Mainstreaming in Theory and Practice, *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 12, 433–450, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxi023>
- Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi. (2022). *The formation and history of UAE*. <https://adtt.dct.gov.ae/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Section-3-The-Formation-and-History-of-UAE.pdf>
- D’Errico, S., & Zengeni, T. (2019). *Equity-focused, gender-responsive evidence: A blind spot in VNR reporting*. International Institute for Environment and Development. <http://pubs.iied.org/17497IIED>
- Dickson, M., & Tennant, L. (2019). Emirati University Student Mothers Post-Childbirth: Support Systems in the Home. *Journal of Women and Gender in Higher Education*, 12(1), 88-105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407882.2018.1533479>
- Dubai Women Establishment. (2020). *GWFD 2020 Declaration*. <https://dwe.gov.ae/en/publications/gwfd-2020-declaration>
- Embassy of the United Arab Emirates. (2024, July 28). *Women in the UAE*. <https://www.uae-embassy.org/discover-uae/society/women-in-the-uae>

- Ergas, Y. (2013). Placing Gender on the Agenda of International Affairs: Changing Conceptual and Institutional Landscapes. *Journal of International Affairs*, 67(1), 1-23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24461669>
- European Institute for Gender Equality. (2024, April 2). *What is gender mainstreaming*. https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming?language_content_entity=en
- Eveline, J., & Bacchi, C. (2005). What are we mainstreaming when we mainstream gender? *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 7(4), 496–512. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740500284417>
- Fardan, M. A., & Maroch, B. (2021). Implementation of Gender Policies by the Private Sector in the UAE: Challenges and Opportunities. *The Journal for Interdisciplinary Middle Eastern Studies*, 7(2), p.142. <https://doi.org/10.26351/JIMES/7-2/2>
- Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre. (2022). *UAE numbers 2022*. https://fcsc.gov.ae/en-us/Lists/D_Reports/Attachments/63/26%20December%20UAE%20Numbers%20En%202022.pdf
- Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre. (2024, September 8). *Global gender gap*. <https://fcsc.gov.ae/en-us/Pages/Competitiveness/Reports/Global-Gender-Gap.aspx?rid=28>
- Gender Balance Guide: Actions for UAE Organisations. (2017). <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/gender-equality/gender-balance>
- General Women's Union & United Nations Development Programme. (2018). *Gender mainstreaming in policies, strategies, and budgets in the United Arab Emirates: Guide on methodologies and tools*. General Women's Union. <https://gwu.ae/Content/uploads/HAZKLBQQLWTSZCTBAWENFBIBGILQRQ.pdf>
- Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. (2023). *Women, Peace, and Security Index 2023/24*. <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/WPS-Index-full-report.pdf>
- Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. (2024, August, 6). *United Arab Emirates*. <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/united-arab-emirates/>
- Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. (2023). *GEM 2022/2023 global report: Adapting to a 'New Normal'*. <https://gemconsortium.org/report/20222023-global-entrepreneurship-monitor-global-report-adapting-to-a-new-normal-2>
- Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. (2024). *GEM 2023/2024 global report: 25 years and growing*. <https://www.gemconsortium.org/report/global-entrepreneurship-monitor-gem-20232024-global-report-25-years-and-growing>

- Government of the United Arab Emirates. (2019). *Gender guide (Version 2019)*. https://www.gbc.gov.ae/assets/uploads/gbc_gender_guide_en_2019.pdf
- Government of the United Arab Emirates. (2024, July 13). *The Constitution of the UAE*. <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/the-constitution-of-the-uae>
- Government of the United Arab Emirates. (2024, July 29). *Gender Balance Council*. <https://www.gbc.gov.ae/>
- Government of the United Arab Emirates. (2024, July 30). *Gender equality and women's empowerment*. <https://www.pchr.gov.ae/en/priority-details/gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment>
- Government of the United Arab Emirates. (2024, August 01). *Women's rights*. <https://www.mofa.gov.ae/en/The-Ministry/The-Foreign-Policy/Women-rights>
- Government of the United Arab Emirates. (2024, August 02). *SDG data hubs*. <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/digital-uae/data/sdg-data-hubs>
- Graziamagazine. (2021, November 8). *HH Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak: Everything to know about the UAE's First Lady*. Grazia Middle East. <https://graziamagazine.com/me/articles/hh-sheikha-fatima-bint-mubarak-everything-to-know-about/>
- Hamade, M. (2016). *Women and Emiratisation in the UAE workforce*. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.35941>
- Hamel, I., & Dexter, G. A. (2021). *UAE: The sky is the limit for gender reform*. World Bank. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/gender-reforms-united-arab-emirates>
- Hawthorne, S. (2004). The political uses of obscurantism: Gender mainstreaming and intersectionality. *Development Bulletin*, 64, 87–91. <https://crawford.anu.edu.au/rmap/devnet/dev-bulletin.php>
- Hesketh, A., & Williams, J. (2021). Public policy on gender equality in the United Arab Emirates: A critical appraisal. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3798367>
- International Federation for Human Rights. (2010). *United Arab Emirates: Women's rights in the spotlight – Summary report for CEDAW*. https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/UAE_summaryreport_for_CEDAW.pdf
- International Labour Organization. (2022). *Direct request (CEACR) - adopted 2021, published 110th ILC session*. https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID,P13100_COUNTRY_ID:4123457,103495
- International Labour Organization. (2024, August 2). *Gender equality*. <https://www.ilo.org/gender-equality>

- International Labour Organization. (2024, August 2). *Normlex*.
<https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12001>
- International Institute for Environment and Development. (2015). *Evaluation of the early impacts of the better health programme: Evidence from the field*. International Institute for Environment and Development.
<https://www.ied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/17497IIED.pdf>
- Inter-Parliamentary Union. (1997). *Men and women in politics: Democracy still in the making*. Geneva. <http://archive.ipu.org/english/sur99-97.htm#Wom-pol>
- Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2024, September). *Global ranking of women in parliament*.
https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_year=2024&date_month=09
- Jacquot, S. (2015). *Transformations in EU gender equality: From emergence to dismantling* (1st ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137436573>
- Kardam, N., & Acuner, S. (2003). National women's machineries: Structures and spaces. In S. M. Rai (Ed.), *Mainstreaming gender, democratizing the state: Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women* (pp. 96–113). Manchester University Press.
<https://ezproxy.iku.edu.tr:2444/10.7765/9781526137494.00014>
- Khaleej Times. (2024, May 8). *UAE Gender Balance Council selected as WEF's knowledge partner to advance women empowerment globally*.
<https://www.khaleejtimes.com/uae/uae-gender-balance-council-selected-as-wefs-knowledge-partner-to-advance-women-empowerment-globally>
- Khaleej Times. (2025, February 3). *From 1970 to now: How UAE empowered women to create history*. Retrieved February 7, 2025, from <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/uae/from-1970-to-now-how-uae-empowered-women-to-create-history>
- Kirk, D., & Napier, D. (2009). Issues of gender, equality, education, and national development in the United Arab Emirates. *International Perspectives on Education and Society*, 10, 301–331. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3679\(2009\)0000010012](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3679(2009)0000010012)
- Kozma, T. (2012). Understanding Gender Mainstreaming in Modern Law Enforcement. *Connections*, 11(2), 87-94. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26326277>
- Krook, M. L., & True, J. (2008, March 26-29). *Global strategies for gender equality: The United Nations before and after Beijing*. [Conference presentation]. Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, San Francisco, CA, United States.
https://mlkrook.org/pdf/Krook_True_ISA_2008.pdf
- Krook, M. L., & True, J. (2012). Rethinking the life cycles of international norms: The United Nations and the global promotion of gender equality. *European Journal of International Relations*, 18(1), 103-127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066110380963>

- Leal Filho, W., Kovaleva, M., Tsani, S., & others. (2023). Promoting gender equality across the sustainable development goals. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 25(12), 14177–14198. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-022-02656-1>
- Lee, S., Alsereidi, R. H., & Ben Romdhane, S. (2023). Gender Roles, Gender Bias, and Cultural Influences: Perceptions of Male and Female UAE Public Relations Professionals. *Social Sciences*, 12(12), 673. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12120673>
- Locke, S. (2022, May 23). *Sheikh Khalifa: A legacy of women's advancement*. Aurora50. <https://aurora50.com/sheikh-khalifa-a-legacy-of-womens-advancement>
- LSE Business Review. (2023, October 18). *The gap between perceptions and outcomes of women's rights in the United Arab Emirates*. London School of Economics and Political Science. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/businessreview/2023/10/18/the-gap-between-perceptions-and-outcomes-of-womens-rights-in-the-united-arab-emirates/>
- Madichie, N. O. (2010). United Arab Emirates. In D. L. Hughes & J. E. Jennings (Eds.), *International research handbook on successful women entrepreneurs* (pp. 189–203). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781849806695.00020>
- Maenza, C. V. (2018). *Feminist tensions in equality policies: An analysis of gender mainstreaming in the European Union* [Doctoral dissertation, Universitat Pompeu Fabra]. <https://www.tdx.cat/bitstream/handle/10803/664613/tcm.pdf;jsessionid=3B2D2E8B6CAE350871C5FEF030DFEAF1?sequence=1>
- Mazur, A., & McBride, D. (2019). Conclusion: The case for state feminism. In D. McBride Stetson & A. Mazur (Eds.), *Comparative state feminism* (pp. 272–291). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333561989_Conclusion_The_Case_for_State_Feminism_With_Dorothy_McBride_Stetson_In_Comparative_State_Feminism_Stetson_and_Mazur_eds_Thousand_Oaks_CA_Sage_Publications_1995_272-291
- McCarthy, R. (2014). Re-thinking secularism in post-independence Tunisia. *Journal of North African Studies*, 19(5), 733–750. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2014.938729>
- Mehra, R., & Gupta, G. (2006). *Gender mainstreaming: Making it happen*. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Gender-Mainstreaming-Making-It-Happen.pdf>
- Meier, P., & Celis, K. (2011). Sowing the seeds of its own failure: Implementing the concept of gender mainstreaming. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 18(4), 469–489. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxr020>
- Miller, K., Kyriazi, T., Morris, C., & Paris, P. (2017). Arab women employment in the UAE: Exploring opportunities, motivations, and challenges. *International Journal of Sustainable Society*, 9(1), 20–40. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSSOC.2017.085737>

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates. (2020, December 16). UAE ranks first in the Arab world in Human Development Report 2020. <https://www.mofa.gov.ae/en/mediahub/news/2020/12/16/16-12-2020-uae-rank>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. (2024, July 28). *Women rights*. United Arab Emirates. <https://www.mofa.gov.ae/en/The-Ministry/The-Foreign-Policy/Women-rights>
- Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs. (2008). *Women in the United Arab Emirates: A Portrait of Progress*. United Arab Emirates. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session3/AE/UPR_UAE_ANNEX3_E.pdf
- Nazish, M. (2024). United Nations and women's rights: A historical analysis of CEDAW. *Sprink Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(1), 41–47. <https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v3i1.224>
- Nivedita, C., & Deshpande, M. (2019). Role of Feminist Movements in Gender Mainstreaming Policies: The Case of UN. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)*, 6(1), 289-295. <https://www.ijrar.org/papers/IJAR19J2603.pdf>
- Novovic, G. (2023). Gender mainstreaming 2.0: emergent gender equality agendas under Sustainable Development Goals. *Third World Quarterly*, 44(5), 1058–1076. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2023.2174848>
- Oke, L. (2018). International organizations and gender. *Case Studies Journal*, 7(4), 54–63. <http://www.casestudiesjournal.com>
- Oliver Wyman. (2024, March). *Women at Work: Advancing Gender Equity in the UAE Private Sector*. <https://www.oliverwyman.com/content/dam/oliver-wyman/v2/publications/2024/mar/women-at-work.pdf>
- Patterson, L., Varadarajan, D. S., & Saji Salim, B. (2021). Women in STEM/SET: gender gap research review of the United Arab Emirates – a meta-analysis. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 36(8), 881–911. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-11-2019-0201>
- Pinto, C.V. (2019). Signaling for status: UAE and women's rights. *Contexto Internacional*, 41(2), 345–363. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-8529.2019410200006>
- Presidential Court - Human Rights Office. (2024, July 28). *Gender equality and women's empowerment*. <https://pchr.gov.ae/en/priority-details/gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment>
- Prügl, E. (2009). Does gender mainstreaming work? Feminist engagements with the German agricultural state. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 11(2), 174–195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740902789542>

- Rai, S. (2004). Gendering global governance. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 6(4), 579-601. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461674042000283345>
- Randeree, K. (2009). Strategy, Policy, and Practice in the Nationalisation of Human Capital: 'Project Emiratisation'. *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management*, 17(1), 71-91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2009.11655337>
- Randeree, K. (2012). *Workforce Nationalization in the Gulf Cooperation Council States*. Georgetown University, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/141001/KasimRandereeCIRSOccasionalPaper9.pdf>
- Ravindran, T. K. S., & Kelkar-Khambete, A. (2021). *Institutional gender mainstreaming in health in UN agencies*. *Global Public Health*, 16(11), 1737–1751. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2021.1941183>
- Rittenhofer, I., & Gatrell, C. (2012). Gender mainstreaming and employment in the European Union: A review and analysis of theoretical and policy literatures. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 14(2), 201–216. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2012.00333.x>
- Ross, M. L. (2008). Oil, Islam, and women. *The American Political Science Review*, 102(1), 107–123. <https://doi.org/10.2307/27644501>
- Ross, M. L. (2009). Does oil wealth hurt women? A reply to Caraway, Charrad, Kang, and Norris. *Politics & Gender*, 5(4), 575–582. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X09990390>
- Sinha, R., Lehmann, K., & Djankov, S. (2023). *The sudden surge in gender legal reform in the UAE* (Financial Markets Group, Discussion Paper No. 889). Financial Markets Group. <https://www.fmg.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-10/DP889.pdf.pdf>
- Skard, T. (2009). Gender in the Malestream — Acceptance of women and gender equality in different United Nations organizations. *Forum for Development Studies*, 36(1), 155–198. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2009.9666429>
- Stubbs-Richardson, M., Gilbreath, S., Paul, M., & Reid, A. (2024). It's a global #MeToo: a cross-national comparison of social change associated with the movement. *Feminist Media Studies*, 24(6), 1330–1349. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2023.2231654>
- Tahir, R. (2024). Integration of work and life roles: An interpretive study of women entrepreneurs in the United Arab Emirates. *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*, 31(2), 309–334. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CCSM-06-2023-0104>
- Talu, E. (2024, March). *Shattering Ceilings, Building Futures: How the UAE's Leap in Gender Equality Inspires Global Change* [Post]. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/shattering-ceilings-building-futures-how-uaes-leap-gender-esra-talu-mggkf/>

- Tanriver, E. (2019). *Secularization and desecularization in Egypt: The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood*. [Master's thesis, Dokuz Eylül University] <https://avesis.deu.edu.tr/dosya?id=0b18e75e-1986-483c-be24-d61c471d60d4>
- Thompson, S. (2022). *Work equality in the Emirates: How Emirati women are kept out of the workforce*. [Master's thesis, University of Westminster] <https://10.13140/RG.2.2.17962.08643/1>
- Towns, A., & Niklasson, B. (2017). *Gender, International Status, and Ambassador Appointments*. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 13(3), 521–540. <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orw039>
- True, J. (2003). Mainstreaming Gender in Global Public Policy. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 5(3), 369–372. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461674032000122740>
- True, J., & Mintrom, M. (2001). Transnational networks and policy diffusion: The case of gender mainstreaming. *International Studies Quarterly* 45(1), 27–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0020-8833.00181>
- True, J. (2009). The unfulfilled mandate: gender mainstreaming and UN peace operations. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 10(2), 41-51. https://www.academia.edu/4311288/The_Unfulfilled_Mandate_Gender_Mainstreaming_and_UN_Peace_Operations
- UAE Embassy. (2024, July 25). *Political system and governance*. United Arab Emirates Embassy. <https://www.uae-embassy.org/discover-uae/governance/political-system-governance>
- UAE Media Office. (2023, May 8). *The UAE Gender Balance participates*. <https://www.mediaoffice.ae/en/news/2023/May/08-05/The-UAE-Gender-Balance-participates>
- UNCEB. (2024, April 5). *UN system-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP)* <https://unsceb.org/un-system-wide-action-plan-gender-equality-and-empowerment-women-swap>
- United Arab Emirates. (2012). *Statement by the United Arab Emirates*. United Nations General Assembly, 67th Session. https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/67/ae_en_25.pdf
- United Arab Emirates. (2019). *National report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: (Beijing +25)*. UN Women. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/UAE_en.pdf

- United Arab Emirates. (2021). *UAE National Action Plan on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325*. <https://1325naps.peacewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/UAE-NAP-FINAL-ENG.pdf>
- United Arab Emirates. (2022). *Voluntary national review: UAE's progress on the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. United Nations Economic and Social Council. https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/UAE_vnr_2022_en.pdf
- United Arab Emirates. (2024, August 02). *Marriage as per the Sharia law*. <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/marriages/marriage-as-per-the-sharia-law>
- UAE Gender Balance Council. (2020). *Annual report*. https://www.gbc.gov.ae/ENG_GBC_Report.pdf
- United Arab Emirates Cabinet. (2024, March 18). *Cabinet approves setting up of UAE Gender Balance Council*. <https://uaecabinet.ae/en/news/cabinet-approves-setting-up-of-uae-gender-balance-council>
- United Arab Emirates Government. (2025, February 2). *Anti-discrimination laws and policies*. <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/anti-discrimination-laws-and-policies>
- United Arab Emirates Government. (2025, February 2). *Constitution of the United Arab Emirates*. <https://uaelegislation.gov.ae/en/constitution>
- United Arab Emirates Public Policy Forum. (2020). *Towards Increasing the Emirati Women Participation Rate in the Workforce*. <https://www.uaepublicpolicyforum.com/reports/towards-increasing-the-emirati-women-participation-rate-in-the-workforce>
- United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. (2008). *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Initial periodic report of States parties: United Arab Emirates (CEDAW/C/ARE/1)*. 17 September 2008, pp. 16-17. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>
- United Nations. (2002). *Gender Mainstreaming an Overview*. Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/e65237.pdf>
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, (A/RES/70/1). <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2024, March 2). *Achieving full gender equality still centuries away, warns UN in new report*. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/desa/achieving-full-gender-equality-still-centuries-away-warns-un-new-report>
- United Nations. (2024, August 2). *Sustainable Development Goals*. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
- United Nations. (2024, August 2) *Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2018). *Human Development Statistical Update 2018*. UNDP. <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/2018humandevstatisticalupdate.pdf>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2019). *Human Development Report 2019*. UNDP Kyrgyzstan. <https://www.undp.org/kyrgyzstan/publications/human-development-report-2019>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2020). *Human Development Report 2020*. UNDP Türkiye. <https://www.undp.org/turkiye/publications/2020-human-development-report>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2021). *Human Development Report 2021/22: Uncertain times, unsettled lives: Shaping our future in a transforming world*. UNDP. https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22reportenglish_0.pdf
- United Nations Development Programme. (2023). *Human development report 2023/24: The next frontier: Human development and the future of the world*. UNDP. <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2023-24reporten.pdf>
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2024, August 2). *UNDP and UN*. <https://www.undp.org/turkiye/undp-and-un>
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2024, August 2). *UNDP Gender Equality Strategy*. <https://genderequalitystrategy.undp.org/>
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). (2024, August 2). *Gender*. <https://www.unido.org/topics/gender>
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). (2024, August 2). *Gender equality and empowerment of women*. <https://www.unido.org/our-focus-cross-cutting-services/gender-equality-and-empowerment-women>

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2018). *UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021*. <https://www.undp.org/publications/undp-gender-equality-strategy-2018-2021>
- United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2024.). *Annex III - United Arab Emirates* [Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review, 3rd Session]. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session3/AE/UPR_UAE_ANNEX3_E.pdf
- United Nations Evaluation Group. (2023). *Guidance on evaluating institutional gender mainstreaming*. <https://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2133>
- United Nations General Assembly. (2012). *Foreign Minister's statement at the General Debate of the 67th Session*. <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1m/k1m0cbkm0o>
- United Nations Women. (2020). *Gender mainstreaming strategy for achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls*. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Gender-mainstreaming-Strategy-for-achieving-gender-equality-and-empowerment-of-women-girls-en.pdf>
- United Nations Women. (2022). *Handbook on gender mainstreaming for gender equality results*. UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Handbook-on-gender-mainstreaming-for-gender-equality-results-en.pdf>
- United Nations Women. (2022). *Women-owned businesses in the United Arab Emirates: A golden opportunity*. United Arab Emirates. https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/UN-Women_WOB_layout_ENG_webspread.pdf
- United Nations Women. (2024, March 18). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/#:~:text=The%20Convention%20on%20the%20Elimination,bill%20of%20rights%20for%20women>
- United Nations Women. (2024, April 2). *Gender Mainstreaming*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/gender-mainstreaming>
- United Nations Women. (2024, March 25). *UN calls for gender equality push, central to SDGs*. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1138542>
- United Nations Women. (2024, April 10). *Feature stories*. In Focus: CSW59. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw59/feature-stories>
- United Nations Women. (2024, August 2). *Gender parity in the United Nations: Implementation plans*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/gender-parity-in-the-united-nations/implementation-plans>

- United Nations Women. (2024, August 2). *UN Women strategic plan 2022-2025: Policies and institutions*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/un-women-strategic-plan-2022-2025/policies-and-institutions>
- United Nations Women & United Nations Industrial Development Organization. (2023). *The Paths to Equal: New twin indices on gender equality and women's empowerment*. <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdp-document/pathsequal2023.pdf>
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. (2024, July 19). *Gender-Responsive Standards*. <https://unece.org/trade/wp6/gender-responsive-standards>
- U.S. Department of State. (1985). *From Nairobi to Beijing: Second world conference on women – Equality, development, and peace*. Retrieved August 02, 2025, from <https://1997-2001.state.gov/picw/archives/nairobi-equality.html>
- Walby, S. (2005). Gender mainstreaming: Productive tensions in theory and practice. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 12(3), 321–343. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxi018>
- WAM (Emirates News Agency). (2020). *GWFD 2020 Declaration*. <https://www.wam.ae/en/details/1395302852781>
- World Bank. (2022). *United Arab Emirates (UAE): Legal reforms to strengthen women's economic inclusion – Case Study*. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099419309142218876/pdf/IDU073eb970d033eb04d4608fc80d158fa944973.pdf>
- World Bank. (2024, August 04). *Population, female (% of total population) - United Arab Emirates*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.IN?locations=AE>
- World Bank. (2024, August 05). *Women, Business and the Law*. <https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/aboutus>
- World Bank. (2019). *Women, Business and the Law 2020-Decade of Reform 2019*. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/702301554216687135-0050022019/original/WBLDECADEOFREFORM2019WEB0401.pdf>
- World Bank. (2020). *Women, Business and the Law 2020*. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/6c2b5974-9a3b-5249-995b-2b22e5fd7909/content>
- World Bank. (2021). *Women, Business and the Law 2021*. https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/sites/wbl/documents/2021/02/WBL2021_ENG_v2.pdf
- World Bank. (2023). *Women, Business and the Law 2023*. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b60c615b-09e7-46e4-84c1-bd5f4ab88903/content>

- World Bank. (2024). *Women, Business and the Law 2024*. <https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl>
- World Bank. (2024). *Women, Business and the Law 2024 - United Arab Emirates*. <https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/documents/wbl/2024/pilot/WBL24-2-0-United-arab-emirates.pdf>
- World Bank. (2025, January 22). *Gender data portal: United Arab Emirates*. <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/ united-arab-emirates>
- World Economic Forum. (2018). *The global gender gap report 2018*. World Economic Forum. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf
- World Economic Forum. (2020). *The global gender gap report 2020*. World Economic Forum. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf
- World Economic Forum. (2021). *The global gender gap report 2021*. World Economic Forum. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf
- World Economic Forum. (2022). *The global gender gap report 2022*. World Economic Forum. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf
- World Economic Forum. (2023). *The global gender gap report 2023*. World Economic Forum. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf
- World Economic Forum. (2023, June). *How the Middle East is empowering female entrepreneurs*. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/06/middle-east-empowering-female-entrepreneurs/>
- World Economic Forum. (2024). *The global gender gap report 2024*. World Economic Forum. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2024.pdf
- Ylöstalo, H. (2016). Organizational perspective to gender mainstreaming in the Finnish state administration. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 18(4), 544–558. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2016.1149307>
- Zawya. (2024, August 11.). *The Importance of Empowering Emirati Women to Drive the Nation's Workforce*. <https://www.zawya.com/en/press-release/companies-news/the-importance-of-empowering-emirati-women-to-drive-the-nations-workforce-c3txqo89>
- 56th session of the UN General Assembly, 2001. (2024, August 2). https://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/56?_gl=1*1qzh1o9*_ga*MTA2MDgwODIyOC4xNzE0MDU4NjY1*_ga_TK9BQL5X7Z*MTcxNDQwODc1Ni4zLjAuMTcxNDQwODc1OC4wLjAuMA
- 57th session of the UN General Assembly, 2002. (2024, August 2). <https://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/57>

Appendix A. Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to verify the validity of the research hypothesis and can be supplemented with sub-questions during the interview if necessary to gain a comprehensive insight into the research subject.

- 1) How has gender equality been addressed among the public since its initial implementation and has gender equality affected your professional life?**
- 2) How do you describe men's perception and position to gender equality in the UAE?**
- 3) Based on your observations, do you think every woman in the UAE can truly access the same employment/representation opportunities as men? If not, what steps can be taken to enhance?**
- 4) Have you ever considered whether your gender identity has been a factor in the lack of a raise, promotion, or important assignments?**
 - a. Do you think there are particular areas where women employees are not treated equally?
- 5) Can you tell us what measures are being taken to promote women's participation in the workforce based on your current and previous experiences?**
 - a. Is there a significant gender pay gap in the UAE?

Appendix B. List of Interviewees

No	Interviewee	Work Area	Degree	Date of Interview
1	Lana	Engineer (Private Tech Company)	M.A	01 July 2024
2	Fatima	Academic (Private University)	PhD	18 July 2024
3	Aaliyah	Engineer (Logistics Company)	Bachelor's	29 July 2024
4	Leila	Cultural Presenter	Bachelor's	14 October 2024
5	Amira	Tour Guide	Bachelor's	25 October 2024
6	Samira	Architect and Academic (Public University)	M.A	15 November 2024

Table A. 1 WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2024

TABLE 3A.1		WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 1.0 AND 2.0 SCORES			
Economy	WBL 1.0 legal frameworks score	WBL 2.0 legal frameworks score	WBL 2.0 supportive frameworks score	WBL 2.0 expert opinions score	
Belgium	100.0 ●	90.0 ●	69.2 ●	90.0 ●	
Canada	100.0 ●	90.0 ●	97.5 ●	—	
Denmark	100.0 ●	80.0 ●	60.0 ●	91.3 ●	
France	100.0 ●	90.0 ●	87.5 ●	72.5 ●	
Germany	100.0 ●	85.0 ●	82.5 ●	85.6 ●	
Greece	100.0 ●	87.5 ●	44.2 ●	83.1 ●	
Iceland	100.0 ●	82.5 ●	69.2 ●	94.4 ●	
Ireland	100.0 ●	85.0 ●	81.7 ●	89.4 ●	
Latvia	100.0 ●	77.5 ●	49.2 ●	88.8 ●	
Luxembourg	100.0 ●	85.0 ●	70.0 ●	90.0 ●	
Netherlands	100.0 ●	90.0 ●	60.8 ●	79.4 ●	
Portugal	100.0 ●	92.5 ●	50.8 ●	75.0 ●	
Spain	100.0 ●	90.0 ●	82.5 ●	81.3 ●	
Sweden	100.0 ●	82.5 ●	72.5 ●	91.3 ●	
Estonia	97.5 ●	85.0 ●	48.3 ●	92.5 ●	
Finland	97.5 ●	85.0 ●	77.5 ●	95.0 ●	
Italy	97.5 ●	95.0 ●	65.0 ●	68.8 ●	
New Zealand	97.5 ●	92.5 ●	70.0 ●	—	
Togo	97.5 ● ✓	77.5 ●	27.5 ●	71.3 ●	
United Kingdom	97.5 ●	82.5 ●	87.5 ●	81.3 ●	
Australia	96.9 ●	90.0 ●	81.7 ●	88.8 ●	
Austria	96.9 ●	90.0 ●	82.5 ●	85.6 ●	
Cyprus	96.9 ● ✓	82.5 ●	55.8 ●	82.5 ●	
Norway	96.9 ●	87.5 ●	75.8 ●	97.5 ●	
Slovenia	96.9 ●	90.0 ●	60.8 ●	90.0 ●	
Côte d'Ivoire	95.0 ●	77.5 ●	24.2 ●	53.8 ●	
Gabon	95.0 ●	77.5 ●	29.2 ●	53.1 ●	
Peru	95.0 ●	85.0 ●	68.3 ●	58.8 ●	
Paraguay	94.4 ●	80.0 ●	40.8 ●	46.9 ●	
Croatia	93.8 ●	87.5 ●	61.7 ●	—	
Czechia	93.8 ●	82.5 ●	59.2 ●	76.3 ●	
Hungary	93.8 ● *	87.5 ●	52.5 ●	93.1 ●	
Lithuania	93.8 ●	85.0 ●	54.2 ●	91.9 ●	
Poland	93.8 ●	82.5 ●	67.5 ●	61.9 ●	
Serbia	93.8 ●	82.5 ●	56.7 ●	73.8 ●	

(Table continues next page)

TABLE 3A.1		WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 1.0 AND 2.0 SCORES (continued)			
Economy	WBL 1.0 legal frameworks score	WBL 2.0 legal frameworks score	WBL 2.0 supportive frameworks score	WBL 2.0 expert opinions score	
North Macedonia	85.0 ●	80.0 ●	56.7 ●	78.8 ●	
San Marino	85.0 ●*	77.5 ●	33.3 ●	93.8 ●	
Ukraine	85.0 ●	75.0 ●	50.0 ●	82.5 ●	
Venezuela, RB	85.0 ●	70.0 ●	24.2 ●	60.0 ●	
Colombia	84.4 ●	77.5 ●	62.5 ●	63.8 ●	
Benin	83.8 ●	70.0 ●	29.2 ●	65.6 ●	
Kenya	83.8 ●*	70.0 ●	45.0 ●	60.6 ●	
Puerto Rico (US)	83.8 ●	80.0 ●	29.2 ●	66.9 ●	
St. Lucia	83.8 ●	57.5 ●	26.7 ●	80.0 ●	
ganda	83.8 ●✓	67.5 ●	41.7 ●	50.6 ●	
São Tomé and Príncipe	83.1 ●	65.0 ●	16.7 ●	27.5 ●	
Belize	82.5 ●	62.5 ●	62.5 ●	58.1 ●	
Burkina Faso	82.5 ●	65.0 ●	20.8 ●	62.5 ●	
Fiji	82.5 ●	62.5 ●	34.2 ●	30.6 ●	
Mozambique	82.5 ●	65.0 ●	35.0 ●	61.3 ●	
Singapore	82.5 ●	65.0 ●	64.2 ●	84.4 ●	
Türkiye	82.5 ●	80.0 ●	55.8 ●	58.8 ●	
United Arab Emirates	82.5 ●	62.5 ●	24.2 ●	81.9 ●	
Uzbekistan	82.5 ●✓	75.0 ●	55.8 ●	53.8 ●	
Bahamas, The	81.3 ●	55.0 ●	17.5 ●	63.8 ●	
Cambodia	81.3 ●	55.0 ●	40.0 ●	71.3 ●	
Liberia	81.3 ●	60.0 ●	23.3 ●	—	
Tanzania	81.3 ●	65.0 ●	24.2 ●	51.9 ●	
Zambia	81.3 ●	72.5 ●	29.2 ●	78.8 ●	
Grenada	80.6 ●	67.5 ●	17.5 ●	60.0 ●	
Israel	80.6 ●	75.0 ●	50.8 ●	—	
Lesotho	80.6 ●✓	55.0 ●	20.0 ●	60.0 ●	
Nepal	80.6 ●	62.5 ●	43.3 ●	47.5 ●	
Barbados	80.0 ●	65.0 ●	25.8 ●	75.0 ●	
Chile	80.0 ●	77.5 ●	65.0 ●	62.5 ●	
Ethiopia	80.0 ●*	60.0 ●	30.8 ●	43.1 ●	
Malawi	80.0 ●	57.5 ●	29.2 ●	65.0 ●	
Namibia	80.0 ●*	67.5 ●	29.2 ●	74.4 ●	
Angola	79.4 ●	62.5 ●	26.7 ●	66.3 ●	
Argentina	79.4 ●	75.0 ●	56.7 ●	56.3 ●	
Panama	79.4 ●	80.0 ●	33.3 ●	77.5 ●	
Congo, Dem. Rep.	78.8 ●	60.0 ●	22.5 ●	36.9 ●	

Source: Women, Business and the Law database.

Note: Economies with a green check (✓) saw an improvement in score due to reforms in one or more areas. Economies with a red X (X) introduced at least one legal change that reduced the score. Economies with an asterisk (*) saw a change in their score due to revisions made as a result of new information (Djibouti, Germany, Guatemala, Vietnam) and coding consistency (Bhutan, Madagascar, Mali, Nigeria).

Table A. 2 WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2023

TABLE 1.1 WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2023									
Economy	Score	Economy	Score	Economy	Score	Economy	Score	Economy	Score
Belgium	100.0	Malta ✓	91.3	St. Lucia	83.8	Burundi	76.3	Botswana	63.8
Canada	100.0	Taiwan, China	91.3	São Tomé and Príncipe	83.1	Kiribati	76.3	Mali *	63.8
Denmark	100.0	United States	91.3	Burkina Faso	82.5	Seychelles	76.3	Dominica	62.5
France	100.0	Bulgaria	90.6	Fiji	82.5	Belarus	75.6	Haiti	61.3
Germany *	100.0	Mongolia ✓	90.6	Mozambique	82.5	Kazakhstan ✓	75.6	Micronesia, Fed. Sts.	61.3
Greece	100.0	Romania	90.6	Singapore	82.5	Morocco	75.6	Cameroon	60.0
Iceland	100.0	Ecuador	89.4	Türkiye	82.5	Bhutan *	75.0	Papua New Guinea	60.0
Ireland	100.0	Mauritius	89.4	United Arab Emirates	82.5	Ghana	75.0	Lebanon	58.8
Latvia	100.0	Bolivia	88.8	Togo	81.9	Honduras	75.0	Myanmar	58.8
Luxembourg	100.0	El Salvador	88.8	Bahamas, The	81.3	Samoa	75.0	Pakistan ✓	58.8
Netherlands ✓	100.0	Mexico	88.8	Cambodia	81.3	Trinidad and Tobago	75.0	Tonga	58.8
Portugal	100.0	Uruguay	88.8	Liberia	81.3	India	74.4	Congo, Rep. ✓	58.1
Spain	100.0	Georgia	88.1	Tanzania	81.3	Jamaica ✓	74.4	Algeria	57.5
Sweden	100.0	Lao PDR	88.1	Uganda ✓	81.3	Guatemala *	73.8	Niger	56.9
Estonia	97.5	South Africa	88.1	Zambia	81.3	Guinea	73.8	Solomon Islands	56.9
Finland	97.5	Switzerland	88.1	Grenada	80.6	Maldives	73.8	Palau	56.3
Italy	97.5	Vietnam *	88.1	Israel	80.6	Suriname	73.8	Vanuatu	55.6
New Zealand	97.5	Armenia	87.5	Kenya	80.6	Russian Federation	73.1	Brunei Darussalam	53.1
United Kingdom	97.5	Moldova	87.5	Nepal	80.6	Senegal ✓	72.5	Equatorial Guinea	51.9
Australia	96.9	Guyana	86.9	Barbados	80.0	Sierra Leone	72.5	Egypt, Arab Rep.	50.6
Austria	96.9	Zimbabwe	86.9	Chile	80.0	Djibouti *	71.3	Libya	50.0
Hungary	96.9	Cabo Verde	86.3	Malawi ✓	80.0	Saudi Arabia X	71.3	Malaysia	50.0
Norway	96.9	Dominican Republic	86.3	San Marino	80.0	St. Kitts and Nevis	71.3	Bangladesh	49.4
Slovenia	96.9	Namibia	86.3	Angola	79.4	Indonesia ✓	70.6	Iraq ✓	48.1
Côte d'Ivoire ✓	95.0	Nicaragua	86.3	Argentina	79.4	Uzbekistan	70.6	Mauritania	48.1
Gabon ✓	95.0	Timor-Leste	86.3	Belize	79.4	Eritrea	69.4	Jordan	46.9
Peru	95.0	Bosnia and Herzegovina	85.0	Panama	79.4	Gambia, The	69.4	Somalia	46.9
Cyprus	94.4	Brazil	85.0	Azerbaijan	78.8	Madagascar *	69.4	Eswatini	46.3
Paraguay	94.4	Korea, Rep.	85.0	Congo, Dem. Rep.	78.8	Bahrain ✓	68.1	Guinea-Bissau	42.5
Croatia	93.8	Montenegro	85.0	Japan	78.8	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	68.1	Syrian Arab Republic	40.0
Czechia	93.8	North Macedonia	85.0	Philippines	78.8	South Sudan	67.5	Oman	38.8
Lithuania	93.8	Slovak Republic	85.0	Tajikistan	78.8	Antigua and Barbuda	66.3	Kuwait	35.0
Poland	93.8	Ukraine	85.0	China ✓	78.1	Chad	66.3	Afghanistan X	31.9
Serbia	93.8	Venezuela, RB	85.0	Lesotho	78.1	Nigeria *	66.3	Iran, Islamic Rep.	31.3
Costa Rica ✓	91.9	Colombia	84.4	Thailand	78.1	Marshall Islands	65.6	Qatar	29.4
Hong Kong SAR, China	91.9	Benin ✓	83.8	Central African Republic	76.9	Sri Lanka	65.6	Sudan	29.4
Kosovo	91.9	Puerto Rico (US)	83.8	Ethiopia	76.9	Comoros	65.0	Yemen, Rep.	26.9
Albania	91.3	Rwanda	83.8	Kyrgyz Republic	76.9	Tunisia	64.4	West Bank and Gaza	26.3

Source: Women, Business and the Law database.

Table A. 3 WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2020

TABLE 1.2 WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2020									
Economy	Score	Economy	Score	Economy	Score	Economy	Score	Economy	Score
Belgium	100.0	Bulgaria	90.6	Montenegro	81.9	Benin	74.4	Papua New Guinea	60.0
Canada	100.0	Romania	90.6	Bahamas, The	81.3	Gambia, The	74.4	Niger	59.4
Denmark	100.0	Ecuador	89.4	Puerto Rico	81.3	India	74.4	Comoros	58.8
France	100.0	Hong Kong SAR, China	89.4	Zambia	81.3	Maldives	73.8	Marshall Islands	58.8
Iceland	100.0	El Salvador	88.8	Philippines	81.3	Nepal	73.8	Myanmar	58.8
Latvia	100.0	Malta	88.8	Grenada	80.6	Angola	73.1	Palau	58.8
Luxembourg	100.0	Uruguay	88.8	Kenya	80.6	Burundi	73.1	Tonga	58.8
Sweden	100.0	Lao PDR	88.1	Malawi	80.6	Russian Federation	73.1	Vanuatu	58.1
Estonia	97.5	South Africa	88.1	Costa Rica	80.0	Uganda	73.1	Algeria	57.5
Finland	97.5	Guyana	86.9	Samoa	80.0	Kazakhstan	72.5	Gabon	57.5
Germany	97.5	Zimbabwe	86.9	San Marino	80.0	Bhutan	71.9	Cameroon	56.9
Greece	97.5	Cabo Verde	86.3	Belize	79.4	Ethiopia	71.9	Solomon Islands	56.9
Ireland	97.5	Dominican Republic	86.3	Burkina Faso	79.4	Madagascar	71.9	United Arab Emirates	56.3
Italy	97.5	Namibia	86.3	Fiji	79.4	Central African Republic	71.3	Brunei Darussalam	53.1
Netherlands	97.5	Nicaragua	86.3	Panama	79.4	St. Kitts and Nevis	71.3	Lebanon	52.5
Portugal	97.5	São Tomé and Príncipe	86.3	Azerbaijan	78.8	Guatemala	70.6	Equatorial Guinea	51.9
Spain	97.5	Georgia	85.6	Congo, Dem. Rep.	78.8	Saudi Arabia	70.6	Libya	50.0
United Kingdom	97.5	Switzerland	85.6	Kiribati	78.8	South Sudan	70.0	Malaysia	50.0
Australia	96.9	Bosnia and Herzegovina	85.0	Tajikistan	78.8	Tunisia	70.0	Bangladesh	49.4
Hungary	96.9	Korea, Rep.	85.0	Ukraine	78.8	Eritrea	69.4	Pakistan	49.4
Norway	96.9	North Macedonia	85.0	Vietnam	78.8	Djibouti	68.1	Somalia	46.9
Peru	95.0	Venezuela, RB	85.0	Rwanda	78.1	Jamaica	68.1	Bahrain	46.3
Austria	94.4	Moldova	84.4	Thailand	78.1	Sri Lanka	68.1	Congo, Rep.	46.3
New Zealand	94.4	Tanzania	84.4	Chile	77.5	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	68.1	Eswatini	46.3
Paraguay	94.4	Togo	84.4	Israel	77.5	Uzbekistan	67.5	Mauritania	45.6
Slovak Republic	94.4	Liberia	83.8	Barbados	76.9	Antigua and Barbuda	66.3	Egypt, Arab Rep.	45.0
Croatia	93.8	Mexico	83.8	Kyrgyz Republic	76.9	Chad	66.3	Iraq	45.0
Czech Republic	93.8	St. Lucia	83.8	Mozambique	76.9	Suriname	66.3	Guinea-Bissau	42.5
Lithuania	93.8	Côte d'Ivoire	83.1	Argentina	76.3	Guinea	65.0	Jordan	40.6
Poland	93.8	Timor-Leste	83.1	Seychelles	76.3	Indonesia	64.4	Oman	38.8
Serbia	93.8	Armenia	82.5	Belarus	75.6	Botswana	63.8	Afghanistan	38.1
Slovenia	93.8	Bolivia	82.5	China	75.6	Senegal	63.8	Syrian Arab Republic	36.9
Kosovo	91.9	Mongolia	82.5	Lesotho	75.6	Nigeria	63.1	Kuwait	32.5
Mauritius	91.9	Singapore	82.5	Morocco	75.6	Sierra Leone	63.1	Qatar	32.5
Albania	91.3	Turkey	82.5	Cambodia	75.0	Dominica	62.5	Iran, Islamic Rep.	31.3
Cyprus	91.3	Brazil	81.9	Ghana	75.0	Haiti	61.3	Sudan	29.4
Taiwan, China	91.3	Colombia	81.9	Honduras	75.0	Micronesia, Fed. Sts.	61.3	Yemen, Rep.	26.9
United States	91.3	Japan	81.9	Trinidad and Tobago	75.0	Mali	60.6	West Bank and Gaza	26.3

Source: Women, Business and the Law database.

Table A. 4 WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2019

Economy	WBL 2019 Score	Economy	WBL 2019 Score	Economy	WBL 2019 Score
Belgium	100	Malawi	83.75	Uzbekistan	70.63
Denmark	100	United States	83.75	Congo, Dem. Rep.	70
France	100	Armenia	83.13	Antigua and Barbuda	69.38
Latvia	100	Mongolia	83.13	Bhutan	69.38
Luxembourg	100	Bolivia	82.50	Nigeria	68.75
Sweden	100	Singapore	82.50	Guinea	68.13
Austria	97.50	Switzerland	82.50	Jamaica	68.13
Canada	97.50	Brazil	81.88	St. Kitts and Nevis	68.13
Estonia	97.50	Montenegro	81.88	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	68.13
Finland	97.50	Tajikistan	81.88	Chad	66.25
Greece	97.50	Vietnam	81.88	Equatorial Guinea	66.25
Ireland	97.50	Philippines	81.25	Vanuatu	66.25
Portugal	97.50	Puerto Rico	81.25	Sri Lanka	65.63
Spain	97.50	Israel	80.63	Suriname	65.63
United Kingdom	97.50	Rwanda	80.63	Indonesia	64.38
Australia	96.88	Costa Rica	80	Eswatini	63.75
Iceland	96.88	Timor-Leste	80	Senegal	63.75
Serbia	96.88	Belize	79.38	Sierra Leone	63.13
Peru	95	Georgia	79.38	Dominica	62.50
Croatia	94.38	Japan	79.38	Papua New Guinea	62.50
Czech Republic	94.38	Panama	79.38	Micronesia, Fed. Sts.	61.25
Italy	94.38	Turkey	79.38	Botswana	60.63
Netherlands	94.38	Azerbaijan	78.75	Djibouti	59.38
Norway	94.38	Belarus	78.75	Comoros	58.75
Paraguay	94.38	Ukraine	78.75	Lebanon	58.75
Slovak Republic	94.38	Zambia	78.75	Marshall Islands	58.75
Bulgaria	93.75	Côte d'Ivoire	78.13	Palau	58.75
Hungary	93.75	Chile	77.50	Tonga	58.75
Lithuania	93.75	San Marino	77.50	Tunisia	58.75
Poland	93.75	Trinidad and Tobago	77.50	Gabon	58.13
Germany	91.88	Angola	76.88	Haiti	58.13
Kosovo	91.88	Burkina Faso	76.88	Algeria	57.50
Malta	91.88	Kyrgyz Republic	76.88	Cameroon	56.88
Mauritius	91.88	Mozambique	76.88	Solomon Islands	56.88
Albania	91.25	São Tomé and Príncipe	76.88	Libya	56.25
New Zealand	91.25	Argentina	76.25	Myanmar	56.25
Taiwan, China	91.25	China	76.25	Mali	54.38
Romania	90.63	Seychelles	76.25	Brunei Darussalam	53.13
Slovenia	90.63	Kazakhstan	75.63	Nepal	53.13
Ecuador	89.38	Cambodia	75	Niger	53.13
St. Lucia	89.38	Ghana	75	Egypt, Arab Rep.	50.63
Cyprus	88.75	Honduras	75	Malaysia	50
Dominican Republic	88.75	Liberia	75	Bangladesh	49.38
El Salvador	88.75	Thailand	75	West Bank and Gaza	46.88
Uruguay	88.75	Benin	74.38	Congo, Rep.	46.25
Bosnia and Herzegovina	88.13	Fiji	74.38	Pakistan	46.25
Lao PDR	88.13	Gambia, The	74.38	South Sudan	45.63
North Macedonia	88.13	Barbados	73.75	Oman	44.38
South Africa	88.13	Maldives	73.75	Iraq	41.88
Guyana	86.88	Samoa	73.75	Mauritania	41.88
Zimbabwe	86.88	Burundi	73.13	Afghanistan	38.13
Cabo Verde	86.25	Morocco	73.13	Bahrain	37.50
Hong Kong SAR, China	86.25	Russian Federation	73.13	Guinea-Bissau	36.25
Mexico	86.25	Uganda	73.13	Jordan	35
Namibia	86.25	Kiribati	72.50	Kuwait	35
Nicaragua	86.25	Lesotho	72.50	Syrian Arab Republic	34.38
Colombia	85	Eritrea	71.88	Qatar	32.50
Korea, Rep.	85	Ethiopia	71.88	Iran, Islamic Rep.	31.25
Moldova	84.38	Grenada	71.88	Sudan	29.38
Tanzania	84.38	Madagascar	71.88	United Arab Emirates	29.38
Togo	84.38	Central African Republic	71.25	Saudi Arabia	25.63
Bahamas, The	83.75	India	71.25		
Kenya	83.75	Guatemala	70.63		

Source: Women, Business and the Law database.

Table A. 5 Gender Inequality Index (GII) - Human Development Report 2023-2024

HDI RANK	Gender Development Index		Human Development Index		SDG 3 Life expectancy at birth		SDG 4.3 Expected years of schooling		SDG 4.4 Mean years of schooling		SDG 8.5 Estimated gross national income per capita ^a		
	Value	Group ^b	Value		(years)		(years)		(years)		(2017 PPP \$)		
			Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male			
	2022	2022	2022	2022	2022	2022	2022 ^c	2022 ^c	2022 ^c	2022 ^c	2022	2022	
Very high human development													
1	Switzerland	0.971	2	0.949	0.977	85.9	82.5	16.7	16.5	13.5 ^d	14.3 ^d	56,928	82,109 ^e
2	Norway	0.986	1	0.957	0.970	85.1	81.7	19.5 ^f	17.8	13.2 ^d	12.9 ^d	61,067	77,164 ^e
3	Iceland	0.975	1	0.946	0.969	84.3	81.4	20.5 ^f	17.8	13.9	13.7	45,506	63,420
4	Hong Kong, China (SAR)	0.972	2	0.943	0.970	86.9	81.8	17.9	17.8	12.0	12.8	51,563	75,270 ^e
5	Denmark	0.981	1	0.942	0.960	83.8	80.0	19.4 ^f	18.2 ^g	13.2	12.8	51,753	72,387
5	Sweden	0.983	1	0.941	0.957	85.1	81.9	20.7 ^f	17.5	12.8 ^d	12.5 ^d	47,828	66,019
7	Germany	0.966	2	0.932	0.964	83.5	78.5	17.4	17.3	14.0	14.5	41,022	70,040
7	Ireland	0.991	1	0.943	0.951	84.4	81.0	19.5 ^f	18.8 ^g	11.9 ^d	11.4 ^d	66,876	108,424 ^e
9	Singapore	0.991	1	0.945	0.954	86.3	82.0	17.0	16.8	11.6	12.3	76,611 ^h	99,844 ^e
10	Australia	0.978	1	0.935	0.956	85.5	81.7	22.0 ^f	20.2 ^g	12.8	12.6	41,131	57,496
10	Netherlands	0.960	2	0.925	0.964	83.9	80.9	18.9 ^f	18.2 ^g	12.4	12.8	44,139	70,575
12	Belgium	0.975	1	0.929	0.952	84.4	80.2	19.9 ^f	18.0	12.5 ^d	12.6 ^d	43,720	63,804
12	Finland	0.989	1	0.937	0.947	84.9	79.8	20.3 ^f	18.3 ^g	13.1 ^d	12.7 ^d	42,302	56,914
12	Liechtenstein	0.949	3	0.924	0.974	86.1	83.0	14.5	16.4	12.1 ^d	14.0 ^d	114,829 ^h	179,045 ^e
15	United Kingdom	0.976	1	0.926	0.949	83.8	80.4	18.2 ^f	17.1	13.4	13.4	35,910	57,591
16	New Zealand	0.970	2	0.924	0.953	84.7	81.3	20.2 ^f	19.2 ^g	12.9	13.0	34,940	52,542
17	United Arab Emirates	0.986	1	0.923	0.936	81.4	77.7	19.8 ^f	16.4	12.6	12.9	51,510	84,088 ^e
18	Canada	0.988	1	0.929	0.940	84.8	80.9	16.5	15.4	14.0 ^d	13.8 ^d	39,765	57,230
19	Korea (Republic of)	0.948	3	0.900	0.950	87.1	80.7	16.1	16.8	12.0 ^d	13.3 ^d	31,063	61,037
20	Luxembourg	0.993	1	0.920	0.927	84.8	80.4	14.3	14.1	12.9 ^d	13.0 ^d	66,697	90,256 ^e
20	United States	1.005	1	0.928	0.923	81.0	75.5	17.3	15.6	13.7	13.5	53,469	77,898 ^e
22	Austria	0.972	2	0.912	0.938	84.6	80.2	16.8	15.9	12.0 ^d	12.6 ^d	41,899	71,616
22	Slovenia	0.999	1	0.924	0.925	84.6	79.6	18.3 ^f	16.6	12.9 ^d	12.8 ^d	35,264	47,843
24	Japan	0.968	2	0.904	0.933	87.8 ⁱ	81.8	15.4	15.5	12.4	13.0	33,478	54,395
25	Israel	0.991	1	0.910	0.918	84.5	80.6	15.6	14.5	13.5 ^d	13.4 ^d	37,415	49,792
25	Malta	0.980	1	0.903	0.922	85.7	81.6	16.6	15.2	12.0	12.4	33,971	54,099
27	Spain	0.988	1	0.902	0.913	86.5	81.2	18.4 ^f	17.2	10.5	10.7	32,835	47,543
28	France	0.986	1	0.903	0.916	86.0	80.4	16.4	15.6	11.5 ^d	11.9 ^d	38,135	57,263
29	Cyprus	0.977	1	0.895	0.916	83.7	80.1	16.6	15.8	12.4	12.5	31,777	48,470
30	Italy	0.969	2	0.890	0.918	86.0	82.0	17.1	16.2	10.6	10.9	31,413	57,808
31	Estonia	1.022	1	0.908	0.888	83.0	75.0	16.8	15.1	13.8	13.3	31,199	43,737
32	Czechia	0.988	1	0.888	0.899	81.2	75.1	16.9	15.8	12.8 ^d	13.1 ^d	30,761	49,404
33	Greece	0.969	2	0.878	0.907	83.3	78.0	20.2 ^f	19.9 ^g	11.1	11.7	24,821	38,227
34	Bahrain	0.937	3	0.847	0.904	80.5	78.2	17.0	15.7	10.8	11.2	22,722	64,700
35	Andorra	-	-	-	-	85.8	81.4	12.8	12.8	11.5	11.7	-	-
36	Poland	1.009	1	0.884	0.876	80.8	73.2	16.7	15.2	13.3	13.0	27,366	43,446
37	Latvia	1.022	1	0.887	0.868	80.1	71.5	17.3	15.9	13.6 ^d	13.0 ^d	26,345	38,716
37	Lithuania	1.028	2	0.891	0.867	79.1	69.5	17.1	15.8	13.6	13.4	33,012	43,912
39	Croatia	0.993	1	0.875	0.881	82.0	76.4	16.5	14.7	12.1 ^d	12.6 ^d	27,573	41,433
40	Qatar	1.027	2	0.893	0.869	83.1	80.6	15.3	12.6	11.8 ^d	9.7 ^d	47,964	114,135 ^e
40	Saudi Arabia	0.928	3	0.832	0.897	79.5	76.7	15.5 ^g	14.8 ^h	10.7	11.7	24,647	69,723
42	Portugal	0.998	1	0.873	0.874	84.9	79.3	17.1	16.6	9.6	9.5	31,845	39,199
43	San Marino	0.966	2	0.853	0.883	84.7	82.0	12.0	12.9	10.7 ^d	10.5 ^d	50,410	65,363
44	Chile	0.973	2	0.847	0.870	81.9	77.2	17.1	16.5	11.0 ^d	11.2 ^d	18,612	30,337
45	Slovakia	1.002	1	0.856	0.854	78.8	71.9	15.3	14.2	13.0 ^d	13.0 ^d	26,634	37,967
45	Türkiye	0.941	3	0.825	0.876	81.5	75.4	19.6 ^f	19.8 ^g	8.1 ^d	9.6 ^d	20,538	45,077

Main data sources

Column 1: Calculated based on data in columns 3 and 4.

Column 2: Calculated based on data in column 1.

Columns 3 and 4: HDRO calculations based on data from Barro and Lee (2018), IMF (2023), UNDESA (2022, 2023), UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2023), United Nations Statistics Division (2023) and World Bank (2023).

Columns 5 and 6: UNDESA 2022.

Columns 7 and 8: CEDLAS and World Bank 2023, ICF Macro Demographic and Health Surveys, UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2023 and UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys.

Columns 9 and 10: Barro and Lee 2018, ICF Macro Demographic and Health Surveys, OECD 2023, UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2023 and UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys.

Columns 11 and 12: HDRO calculations based on ILO (2023), IMF (2023), UNDESA (2023), United Nations Statistics Division (2023) and World Bank (2023).

Table A. 6 The Global Gender Gap Index 2024 rankings

Rank	Economy	Score	Score change from		Rank	Economy	Score	Score change from	
			0-1, 1=parity	2023				2023	0-1, 1=parity
1	Iceland	0.935	+0.023	-	74	United Arab Emirates	0.713	+0.001	-3
2	Finland	0.875	+0.012	+1	75	Kenya	0.712	+0.004	+2
3	Norway	0.875	-0.004	-1	76	Kazakhstan	0.710	-0.011	-14
4	New Zealand	0.835	-0.021	-	77	Togo	0.710	+0.014	+13
5	Sweden	0.816	+0.001	-	78	Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.710	+0.012	+8
6	Nicaragua	0.811	-	+1	79	Ethiopia	0.709	-0.002	-4
7	Germany	0.810	-0.005	-1	80	Sierra Leone	0.708	+0.040	+32
8	Namibia	0.805	+0.003	-	81	Paraguay	0.707	+0.011	+10
9	Ireland	0.802	+0.007	+2	82	Dominican Republic	0.706	+0.002	-1
10	Spain	0.797	+0.007	+8	83	Uganda	0.706	-	-5
11	Lithuania	0.793	-0.007	-2	84	Cyprus	0.705	+0.027	+22
12	Belgium	0.793	-0.003	-2	85	Mongolia	0.705	-	-5
13	Moldova	0.791	+0.003	+6	86	Timor-Leste	0.704	+0.011	+9
14	United Kingdom	0.789	-0.002	+1	87	Italy	0.703	-0.002	-8
15	Denmark	0.789	+0.008	+8	88	Ghana	0.701	+0.013	+12
16	Ecuador	0.788	+0.051	+34	89	Lao PDR	0.700	-0.033	-35
17	Portugal	0.787	+0.022	+15	90	Kyrgyz Republic	0.700	-	-6
18	South Africa	0.785	-0.002	+2	91	Israel	0.699	-0.002	-8
19	Costa Rica	0.785	-0.008	-5	92	Zambia	0.697	-0.002	-7
20	Switzerland	0.785	+0.002	+1	93	Guatemala	0.697	+0.038	+24
21	Chile	0.781	+0.004	+6	94	Republic of Korea	0.696	+0.016	+11
22	France	0.781	+0.025	+18	95	Belize	0.696	-0.001	-6
23	Albania	0.780	-0.011	-6	96	El Salvador	0.695	-0.019	-28
24	Australia	0.780	+0.002	+2	97	Cameroon	0.693	-	-3
25	Philippines	0.779	-0.012	-9	98	Lesotho	0.691	-0.011	-16
26	Serbia	0.779	+0.019	+12	99	Bangladesh	0.689	-0.033	-40
27	Mozambique	0.776	-0.001	-2	100	Indonesia	0.686	-0.011	-13
28	Netherlands	0.775	-0.002	-	101	Hungary	0.686	-0.003	-2
29	Estonia	0.774	-0.008	-7	102	Cambodia	0.685	-0.010	-10
30	Latvia	0.773	-0.020	-17	103	Azerbaijan	0.685	-0.007	-6
31	Barbados	0.773	+0.003	-	104	Czechia	0.684	-0.001	-3
32	Argentina	0.772	+0.009	+4	105	Brunei Darussalam	0.684	-0.009	-9
33	Mexico	0.768	+0.003	-	106	China	0.684	+0.005	+1
34	Slovenia	0.766	-0.007	-5	107	Mauritius	0.683	-0.006	-9
35	Guyana *	0.765	n/a	n/a	108	Uzbekistan *	0.681	n/a	n/a
36	Canada	0.761	-0.010	-6	109	Senegal	0.679	-0.001	-5
37	Jamaica	0.758	-0.022	-13	110	Gambia (Republic of the)	0.679	+0.028	+9
38	Burundi	0.757	-0.006	-3	111	Vanuatu	0.673	-0.004	-3
39	Rwanda	0.757	-0.038	-27	112	Tajikistan	0.673	+0.001	-1
40	Peru	0.755	-0.009	-6	113	Angola	0.668	+0.012	+5
41	Cape Verde	0.755	-0.006	-4	114	Malaysia	0.668	-0.015	-12
42	Liberia	0.754	-0.006	-3	115	Tunisia	0.668	+0.026	+13
43	United States of America	0.747	-0.001	-	116	Bahrain	0.666	-	-3
44	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	0.746	+0.016	+12	117	Nepal	0.664	+0.004	-1
45	Colombia	0.745	-0.006	-3	118	Japan	0.663	+0.016	+7
46	Luxembourg	0.744	-0.003	-2	119	Comoros	0.663	-0.001	-5
47	Eswatini	0.744	-0.001	-1	120	Burkina Faso	0.661	-0.015	-11
48	Singapore	0.744	+0.004	+1	121	Côte d'Ivoire	0.655	+0.005	+1
49	Austria	0.743	+0.003	-2	122	Sri Lanka	0.653	-0.010	-7
50	Panama	0.742	+0.018	+8	123	Jordan	0.652	+0.006	+3
51	Poland	0.740	+0.018	+9	124	Bhutan	0.651	-0.031	-21
52	Zimbabwe	0.740	-0.007	-7	125	Nigeria	0.650	+0.013	+5
53	Suriname	0.739	+0.003	-1	126	Saudi Arabia	0.647	+0.010	+5
54	United Republic of Tanzania	0.734	-0.005	-6	127	Türkiye	0.645	+0.007	+2
55	Belarus	0.733	-0.019	-14	128	Fiji	0.642	-0.009	-7
56	Slovakia	0.731	+0.011	+7	129	India	0.641	-0.002	-2
57	Botswana	0.730	+0.012	+7	130	Qatar	0.640	+0.013	+3
58	Republic of North Macedonia	0.727	+0.016	+15	131	Kuwait	0.636	-0.015	-11
59	Honduras	0.726	-0.009	-6	132	Maldives	0.633	-0.016	-8
60	Bulgaria	0.723	+0.009	+5	133	Lebanon	0.632	+0.003	-1
61	Croatia	0.723	-0.007	-6	134	Benin	0.629	+0.013	+4
62	Malta	0.723	+0.010	+8	135	Egypt	0.629	+0.003	-1
63	Ukraine	0.722	+0.008	+3	136	Oman	0.628	+0.014	+3
64	Armenia	0.721	-	-3	137	Morocco	0.628	+0.007	-1
65	Thailand	0.720	+0.009	+9	138	Niger	0.628	+0.006	-3
66	Madagascar	0.720	-0.017	-15	139	Algeria	0.612	+0.039	+5
67	Montenegro	0.718	+0.004	+2	140	Democratic Republic of the Congo	0.609	-0.002	-
68	Romania	0.717	+0.020	+20	141	Mali	0.604	-	-
69	Georgia	0.716	+0.007	+7	142	Guinea	0.601	-0.016	-5
70	Brazil	0.716	-0.010	-13	143	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	0.579	+0.004	-
71	Uruguay	0.715	+0.001	-	144	Chad	0.576	+0.006	+1
72	Viet Nam	0.715	+0.003	-	145	Pakistan	0.570	-0.005	-3
73	Greece	0.714	+0.020	-	146	Sudan *	0.568	n/a	n/a