



## Women in the UAE

The constitution of the United Arab Emirates guarantees equal rights for both men and women. Under the Constitution, women enjoy the same legal status, claim to titles, access to education and the right to practice professions as men. They are also guaranteed the same access to employment, health and family welfare facilities. The rights of women to inherit property are also guaranteed and ensured.

### Education and literacy

- The literacy rate of women in the UAE was 90% in 2007.
- The number of UAE national women enrolled in higher education is actually 24 percent more than the number of UAE national men enrolled in higher education and reflects a staggering statistic: 77 percent of UAE females continue on to higher education from high school.
- With 3,200 female students and campuses in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the US-accredited Zayed University is producing graduates who are strong in technology, business, the arts and leadership.
- Women currently make up 75 percent of the student body at the national university in Al-Ain.

### Women in government and business

Women graduates in the UAE can now be found working in government, engineering, science, health care, media, computer technology, law, commerce, and the oil industry.

- Four UAE cabinet ministers are women—including Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi, Foreign Trade Minister, who was on *Forbes* magazine's 2007 list of the 100 most powerful women in the world.
- Women form two-thirds of government sector workers. In October 2008, the first female judge was sworn in.
- In 2006, nine women took up seats within the Federal National Council, accounting for 22.5 percent of the Council's membership. In March 2007, these nine FNC members sat for the first time and began full participation in the deliberations of the Council.
- In 2003, for the first time, the Abu Dhabi police trained 32 women to work with the special security forces. The UAE has four women fighter pilots, the first to serve in UAE military forces.

### Employment protections

Employers in the UAE are prohibited from firing or threatening to fire a female employee on the basis of pregnancy, delivery, or parenting. Maternity leave in the public sector is two to six months. While on maternity leave, a woman is entitled during the first two months to full pay, the third and fourth months to half salary, and the last two months to no pay. A woman may take one paid hour break from work per day for 18 months to nurse her baby.

### **International participation**

In 2004, the UAE became a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The UAE regularly participates in and hosts international and GCC conferences on women's issues.

The 2007 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) status report on Millennium Development Goals recognized the positive outcome of the UAE's target-oriented policies in a number of areas, including women's empowerment. It particularly noted that the state legislations in the UAE do not discriminate on the basis of gender with respect to education, employment, or the quality of services provided.

According to the findings of the report, educational indicators show that women's achievements in education have reached its targeted levels, and in some cases, exceeded that of men because of a strong desire among women to become financially independent and professionally successful. Along with economic growth, the UAE has progressed in the social arena. According to the UNDP's Gender-Related Development Index for 2007-2008, the UAE ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> among 177 countries and 29<sup>th</sup> in the world under the Gender Empowerment Measures, which is the best rating in the Arab World.

The UAE released a report in the fall of 2008, *Women in the United Arab Emirates: A Portrait of Progress*, which outlines both the developments and challenges associated with the status of women in the Emirates. The report notes that "Having made significant progress, the UAE does not intend to stagnate with regards to its women's empowerment policies but rather to continue and develop... The UAE intends to establish a new benchmark for gender empowerment in the region."

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