

THE POWER OF CHOICE

Insights into women's employment
decisions and societal perspectives
in the United Arab Emirates



GOVERNMENT OF DUBAI

مؤسسة دبي للمرأة
DUBAI WOMEN ESTABLISHMENT



ABOUT DUBAI WOMEN ESTABLISHMENT

Dubai Women Establishment (DWE) was formed as a statutory body of Dubai Government in 2006 under law no. (24) by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum – UAE Vice President and Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai. DWE is headed by Her Highness Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum – President of the UAE Gender Balance Council and wife of His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs.

In line with DWE's vision to pioneer distinction amongst working women, the Establishment's mission is to champion women in driving the socio-economic future of Dubai through influencing policies, sharing knowledge and leading initiatives. Through its ongoing work, DWE aims to increase the number of Emirati women joining the workforce and enhance their representation in decision-making positions.

DWE's strategic plan is built on four key pillars, which encompass providing recommendations to shape policies; conducting in-depth research and studies, data profiling and knowledge exchange to drive engagement; fostering strategic partnerships across the public and private sectors; and developing customised, interactive programmes with leading institutions across the world to enhance the skills and capabilities of Emirati women, and foster the next generation of women leaders.

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ABOUT THE STUDY

As Emirati society continues to offer more choices for women, understanding the aspirations of non-working Emirati women is essential for enabling all women in the UAE to contribute to society in whatever way they choose. Higher levels of educational attainment and supportive government policies provide national women with many choices. The UAE government is looking at shaping policies to increase the relatively low proportion of working Emirati women so that it does not discourage any woman who wishes to work from doing so.

This research has been conducted to better understand whether non-working Emirati women are interested in working, and what barriers and enablers there may be for them. Throughout the report these women are referred to as “Deciding Women.” The research spanned two and a half years. Participants in the research include both Emirati males and females above the age of 18 from each of the seven Emirates. For the purposes of this survey, Deciding Women were not employed nor had applied for a job in the four months prior to the survey.

“Emirati women have the capabilities and ambition to excel and contribute to the UAE’s ongoing development and prosperity.

The UAE government is establishing policies and innovative solutions to enhance female participation across all sectors and empower them to play their part in the country’s future growth and achieve their aspirations. This comes in line with our national objective to position the UAE as one of the best countries in the world by 2071.”

Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum
President of the UAE Gender Balance Council
President of Dubai Women Establishment

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD

Mona Ghanem Al Marri

Dubai Women Establishment

Remarkable strides have been made in establishing a society where highly educated, confident, and pioneering women work side-by-side with men to support the UAE's ongoing growth and prosperity. The UAE was founded on values of equal opportunity and diversity. Its constitution and wise leadership grant and ensure that Emirati women have the same rights as men, and perform an essential role in the development process.

As part of UAE's vision 2021 to become one of the world's top nations for gender equality, enhancing gender balance and the status of Emirati women has been and will always remain a top national priority.

I am incredibly proud to say that Emirati women have more opportunities open to them now than ever before – they are taking on more leadership roles, establishing their own businesses, entering traditionally male-dominated sectors and outpacing men in higher education participation.

Since the inception of Dubai Women Establishment (DWE) in 2006, under the directives of HH Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, DWE's President, we have played a vital role in supporting the government's vision to empower women in achieving their goals and shaping the future of the Emirate.

As part of our strategic aims to build on DWE's position as a research and knowledge hub on women's studies at a local, regional and international level, we are adopting knowledge-based, practical methodologies to provide valuable insights to how the government can establish a conducive work environment that attracts, retains, and supports talented Emirati women.

The Power of Choice Report is a prime example of this ongoing work. We are glad to have developed this report as a valuable addition to identify and support opportunities that aim to expand the participation of women in the workforce. The study also serves as a reference which will allow policy-makers to understand the goals and aspirations of non-working Emirati women, hence paving the way for new perspectives and initiatives that benefit the country's national priorities and promote its prosperity and progress.



CEO'S MESSAGE

Shamsa Saleh

Dubai Women Establishment

The Power of Choice report provides us with a unique insight into the views, ambitions, and aspirations of non-working Emirati women, exploring women's interest in working, their perspectives on employment and the barriers and enablers there may be for them to participate. It is only through these insights that we can identify how to harness the talents and potential of this untapped segment.

With limited quantitative data and available research on non-working Emirati women, we wanted to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind their decision to not enter the workforce.

It is clear from the research results that Emirati women have an interest in working, whilst family remains at the core of their lives and identity – meaning that the ability to strike a work-life balance is crucial. Both the public and private sectors alike have a responsibility to assist women to achieve this balance. This demand can be met through new and enhanced policies related to maternity and childcare in the workplace, alongside flexible working arrangements such as flexi hours, and part-time or home-based positions.

The research also reveals that a number of Emirati women are more interested in starting their own businesses than working outside of the home. Accordingly, providing

opportunities through training and funding is an important factor in attracting these women to contribute their talents to the continued development of the economy and our society. Career awareness and guidance, re-entry programmes to help women return to work, and female leadership initiatives are also vital in supporting women's work decisions.

In line with the Government's strategic aim to increase the representation of UAE nationals in the private sector, streamlining some policies between the public and private sectors, such as standardising public holidays, and introducing policies to develop an attractive work environment for Emirati women across the private sector, is another key consideration.

With this research as a basis, we aim to engage in partnerships and collaborations across various industries in both the public and private sectors, prioritising initiatives according to their effectiveness, practicality and the barriers addressed to ensure the most sustainable impact.

We have been honoured to work on this report and we wish to thank all the stakeholders who contributed to its findings. We hope the reflected perspectives will advance the dialogue on female participation, and address the aspirations and potential of non-working women in the UAE.



MESSAGE FROM RESEARCH PARTNER

Sally Jeffery

Partner, PwC Middle East

Middle East Education & Skills Practice Leader

Global Education Network Leader

When we first took on the task of trying to understand the low rates of workforce participation among Emirati women, I must admit that we had preconceived ideas regarding the cultural and societal barriers preventing Emirati women from working.

I was particularly delighted when our study led us to the illuminating realization that our biases were indeed based on ill-informed and out of date opinions, and that employment was a choice made by Emirati women through a very deliberate decision making process.

I am excited to share with you the findings of our study. We learned that education is one of the most important factors linked to job participation levels, and that having a role model in the family is essential. We also learned that Emirati women will prioritize their role as a wife and a mother during the family formation years, when their kids are small. Emirati women, we discovered, are for the most part open to working provided certain conditions are met: there are some clear preferences for a conducive work environment, working in the education and healthcare sectors, availability of training opportunities and flexible working hours. In the absence of these working conditions, they lean towards running their own businesses.

Above all we found that Emirati women feel empowered to choose: they are choosing when they want to work, in which sectors and how they want their work-life balance. There is little difference between their preferences and those of women seeking to balance family and work all over the world.

For anyone interested in this subject, I am sure they will find many more interesting threads of future study in the data. We could not present all the findings here, but have instead chosen those key ones that shine out most brightly from the data set.

This is an encouraging report from both a social and economic stand point and makes me optimistic about the continued growth and prosperity of this amazing country I have called home for the past ten years.

My PwC team and I are very proud to have been associated with the study and look forward to seeing its findings put in action supporting initiatives that provide even more choices for these inspiring and confident women.

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW AND APPROACH

PHASE I

The first phase included interviews with twenty-two Emirati women, selected through convenience sampling. Themes emerging from these interviews and previous research conducted by DWE form the foundation for the survey and Phase II interviews.

PHASE II

1 Quantitative Research

The first part of the second phase was a survey administered in Arabic by an independent third party using randomised Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). The survey also incorporated previously validated measures: the Multi-dimensional Aversion to Women Who Work Scale, and the Reproductive Attitudes and Behaviours Scale (see Appendix).

Survey participants included 1,550 women and 393 men residing in one of the seven Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Ras-Al-Khaimah, and Fujairah. This sample of respondents was randomly drawn at a 95% confidence interval and was further supplemented by respondent referrals. The use of 'snowballing'^a referrals has been restricted to Emirates in which it was more difficult to reach respondents, such as in the Northern Emirates.

The survey consisted of 67 questions for women and 48 questions for men. It explored views, attitudes and perceptions towards working women, leadership, influencers, gender and cultural interactions in the workplace, and the labor market. In addition, the survey looked at demographic variables such as individual employment history, personal goals, reproductive attitudes, support systems, and traditional role preferences.

a. A sampling technique where one respondent nominates another potential respondent to be surveyed

2

Qualitative Research

The second part of the second phase consisted of an additional round of focus groups (the participants were different from those in Phase I), in addition to follow-up interviews with survey participants and interviews with relevant experts.

Focus groups in this phase also employed convenience sampling techniques. Participants in the female focus group included seven Emirati women: six under the age of 35, four married with children, two unmarried, and one divorcee. All women had been in previous paid employment. Participants in the male focus group included eight Emirati men: seven from the Emirate of Dubai, six who were married, and five who were in their early-to-late 30's.

Ten telephone interviews – seven with women; three with men – were conducted with those who had participated in the survey and who had agreed to follow-up conversations.

The final set of six interviews included experts from academia, prominent community members, and key government employees commenting on the issues explored in the survey and focus groups.

Survey participants included 1550 women and 393 men residing in one of the seven Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Ras-Al-Khaimah, and Fujairah.

HIGHLIGHTS

ATTITUDES ARE SHIFTING

As the next generation of Emiratis grows and evolves, so too does the thinking about what roles a woman can and should take on to contribute more widely to society. Women in leadership roles are valued by both men and women throughout the nation, and these roles can take many forms including volunteering in the community and participating in the labour force. Working outside of the home is becoming the norm for women throughout the UAE. In particular, younger women, who may have grown up with working mothers or other female working role models, are increasingly seeing work outside of the home as a desirable choice, given the right conditions. These shifts have placed today's Emirati woman in a powerful position; she can choose who she wants to be and how she wants to participate in society and the economy.

AMBITION FOR SUCCESS IN MULTIPLE ROLES

Emirati women feel empowered to make their own life choices. They have increasing aspirations for success in many roles: as wives and mothers, as career women, and as contributors to their community and country. They value national and community service and want to leverage their education and entrepreneurial spirit for self-fulfilment. These roles may differ at different life stages – for example, women tend to prioritise family when their children are young.

FAMILY IS IMPORTANT

Family remains at the core of an Emirati woman's life and identity, and her family plays a prominent role in her decisions. Those who are wives and mothers consider their life choices primarily in light of fulfilling their important family roles. Unmarried women's choices are most often shaped by their parents, while married women are most influenced by their husbands. A woman's openness to working outside of the home is directly related to her role models while she was growing up.

Men are also influenced by the actions and attitudes of their family members. They hold similar attitudes towards working women as the men in their families did while they were growing up. When men grow up in families where women work, they are more likely to have wives and sisters who also work.

A DESIRE FOR FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Over 80% of our study's Deciding Women^a have children. While being a wife and mother remains a priority, many Deciding Women want a successful career as well. Flexible working options, including part-time work, shorter work hours, and small business opportunities, are a necessity for these women to appropriately balance their work and family life. Working in the private sector is viewed as an interesting option for many women, as it provides them with the opportunity to expand their horizons and exposes them to new skills, people, and working environments.

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL BUILDING

Deciding Women are well-educated (47% have a Bachelor's or higher degree), yet they still value opportunities for continued learning. Deciding Women want skills training, career guidance, and support in particular for pursuing entrepreneurial ventures. If they choose to work, they prefer opportunities that leverage their education, which is primarily in business, education, and information technology.

a. Deciding Women are Emirati women who have either never worked or have worked in the past but not actively looked for work or held a job for a minimum of four months prior to this survey

INTRODUCTION

As attitudes towards the role of women in UAE society are shifting, it is becoming the norm for women to work outside of the home and fulfil roles in addition to those as wives and mothers. This, together with higher levels of educational attainment and supportive government policies such as Emiratisation, opens up a wide array of options; Emirati women now have the opportunity to choose whether or not to work as well as how and where to work.

Yet today, more than half of Emirati women age 15 and over do not work outside the home.¹

Understanding the views, ambitions, and aspirations of non-working women is crucial to maximising their contributions to society. We chose the term ‘Deciding Women’ to describe the women in our study because these women are currently unemployed and either had already decided or were in the process of deciding whether or not to work. While over 80% of the women in our study have an interest in working, it is clear that this work may take many forms. Women desire self-fulfilment and want to make a significant contribution to society; but for them, there are other ways to achieve this besides joining the labour force.

As a part of this study, we engaged with many different Emiratis across the nation. In addition, we utilised data from a survey of working Emirati women,^a explored national statistics, and reviewed relevant policies for working Emirati women and men.

The report is divided into six chapters:

1 **The Deciding Woman in Modern Emirati Society:**

Provides a contextual overview of both the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Deciding Women’s background, mind-set and points of view. The chapter explores socio-demographic, economic, and policy trends and structures of the UAE relevant to Deciding Women.

2 **Profiling the Deciding Woman:**
Defines and segments Emirati Deciding Women using the Transtheoretical Model of Behavioural Change (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1983), the framework underpinning the structure and analysis of the survey.

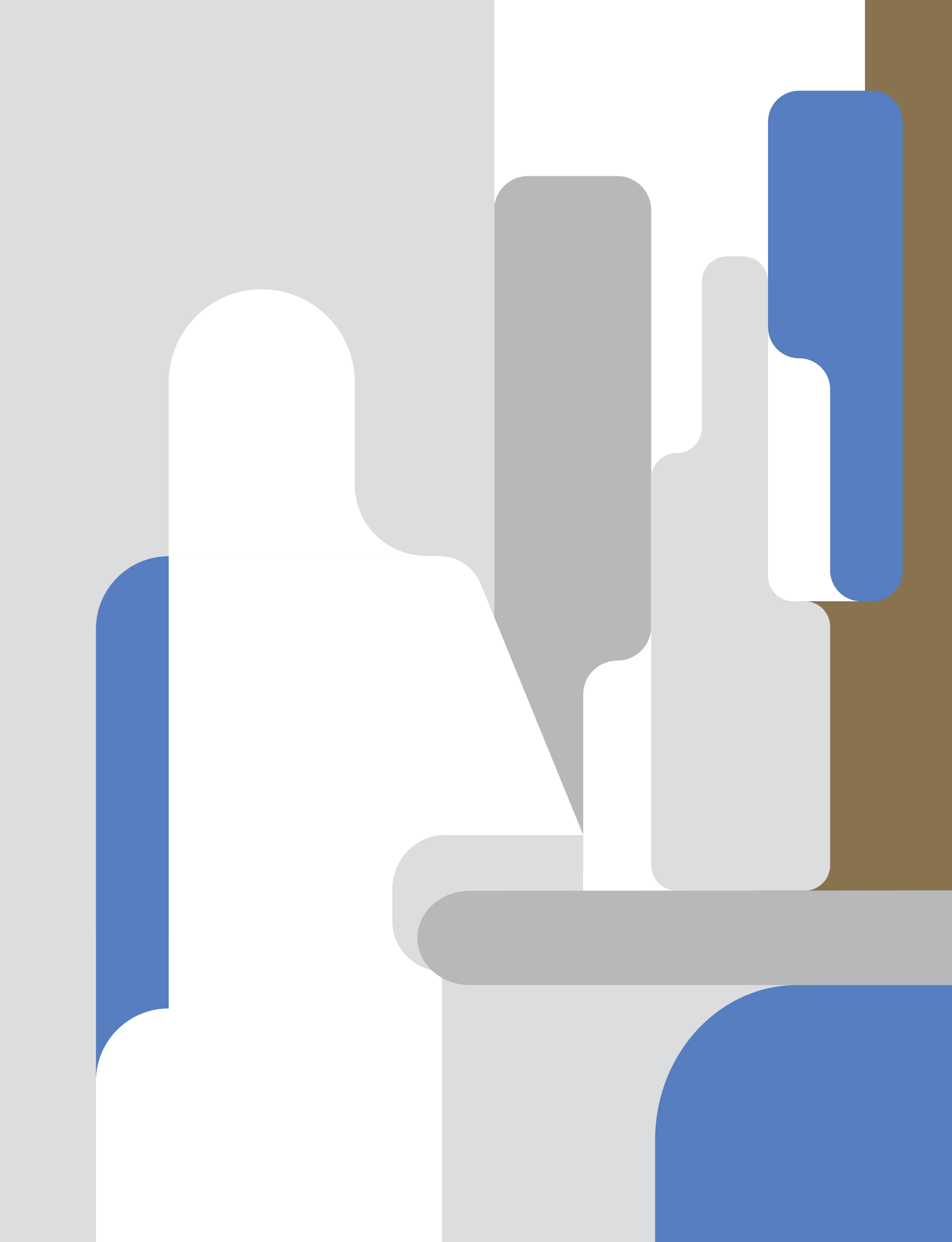
3 **Her views on herself and other women within the Emirati community:**
Provides a review of findings from the survey related to the Deciding Woman’s education, career, society, and country.

4 **Her views on the influence of family and society:**
Provides a review of findings from the survey related to how family and friends shape the Deciding Woman’s choices around working.

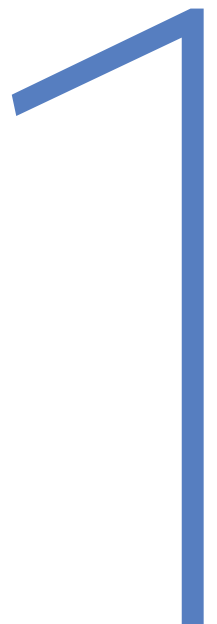
5 **Her views on the workplace:**
Provides a review of findings from the survey on the impact of government and employer policies and preferences for the workplace environment. This includes views on the public and private sector, working with expatriates and nationals, compensation, benefits, and working hours.

6 **Recommendations:**
In the report’s final chapter, recommendations are proposed on how to harness the ambitions and talents of the Deciding Woman. These are broken out by relevance to each of the Deciding Woman’s life stages. Action points for engaging Deciding Women are described as well as considerations for policy implementation.

a. Data for Working Emirati Women was derived from a 2015 study conducted by Sally Jeffery, a Master’s student from the University of Liverpool, entitled ‘The Effects of Government Interventions on Female Workforce Participation in the United Arab Emirates.’



THE DECIDING
WOMAN IN MODERN
EMIRATI SOCIETY



THE DECIDING WOMAN IN MODERN EMIRATI SOCIETY

The Emirati woman today is very different from what she was a mere decade ago, and has more choices than ever before. This section explores how UAE society is changing and how these changes are impacting and shaping Emirati women's lives and aspirations.

UAE CONTEXT

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a young country that has grown rapidly since the nation's birth in 1971. It has flourished into a global economic hub by investing the country's oil and gas profits into diverse industries such as finance, trade, and tourism. Rapid population growth, largely fed by a steady flow of expatriate employees, has contributed to the UAE's explosive economic development, with expatriates working hand-in-hand with Emiratis to realise the leaders' aspirations for the nation. Industrial growth has vastly improved standards of living and the UAE is now considered a very highly developed country on par with other very highly developed countries (Table 1). The nation offers many opportunities to all its citizens, and like other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the UAE is endeavouring to engage more national women in the labour force.² In this section, we explore the social, economic and cultural factors that influence Emirati Deciding Women.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND THE EMIRATI FAMILY

Although the total population of the UAE has increased exponentially over the past 40 years, only 15% of the UAE's residents are nationals.³ A vast wave of international workers from Europe, Africa, and Asia has been the main source of population growth in the UAE.⁴ In addition, birth rates have been steadily dropping since the nation's founding. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has dwindled from 6.5 to 1.8 over a 40-year period (see Table 2). This figure is comparable to rates typically found in More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs).

This shift from high-mortality, high-fertility to low-mortality, lower fertility rates is typical as countries transition from developing to developed economies – meaning women may have fewer child-rearing activities within the home and more opportunity for activities outside the home, such as paid

Table 1.
Human Development Index (HDI) Indicators for UAE relative to selected countries (2015)⁵

	UAE	ARAB STATES	VERY HIGH HDI COUNTRIES
Life expectancy at birth	77.1	70.8	79.4
Expected years of schooling	13.3	11.7	16.4
Mean years of schooling	9.5	6.8	12.2
GDP per capita (PPP USD)	\$66,102	\$16,377	\$39,989

Table 2.
Forty years of socio-demographic progress in the UAE⁶

	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Total fertility rate	6.5	5.3	4.2	2.5	1.8
Mortality (under 5 years)	89.1	31.9	15.6	10.9	8.2
Life expectancy	62.7	68.4	72.0	74.7	76.9

employment. In the UAE, declining birth rates are attributed to increasing urbanisation, delayed marriage, changing attitudes about family size, and increased education and work opportunities for women.⁷

However, this trend is for the UAE population as a whole and is not as pronounced for Emirati nationals who have a TFR of 3.4 – 3.6 children.⁸ While this is half the TFR of 40 years ago, it is still larger than that of many other high-income, natural resource dependent countries (Table 3).

Furthermore, Emirati families and households are typically larger than those in other developed countries. The average Emirati household size ranges from 7 people in urban zones to 12 people in rural areas. This compares to an average of 4.6 people for non-Emirati households in the UAE⁹ and an average OECD household of 2.63 people per household.¹⁰

Cultural dynamics and government incentives within the UAE are considerable factors in this disparity. For example, family allowances and housing subsidies encourage nationals to

have larger families (Marmenout and Lirio, 2014). In addition, the widespread availability and acceptance of domestic help in the UAE plays a significant role in supporting a larger Emirati family size.¹¹

ROLE OF CULTURE AND RELIGION

Islamic culture, the socio-political history of the region, and the unique context of Emirati customs and traditions all play a role in shaping gender roles in the UAE.

Emirati culture is a collectivist culture, deeply rooted in nomadic tribal and Islamic customs, which shape family composition and living arrangements. Collectivist cultures, found in countries like South Korea, Indonesia, and Egypt,¹² can be characterised by close interpersonal relationships, strong extended family networks, and social values that emphasise closeness and family loyalty rather than independence and self-reliance (Crabtree, 2007).

Table 3.

Total Fertility Rates of the UAE compared to selected countries^a

* All figures in second column are from UNDP 2014;

** Figures in the third column are from various sources including: Marmenout and Lirio 2014; Singapore Population in Brief 2015,¹³ The Brunei Times 2015¹⁴

COUNTRY	TFR (2014)*	TFR FOR NATIONAL POPULATION**
UAE	1.8	3.4 - 3.6 (2014)
Arab States	3.6	-
Singapore	1.3	1.3 (2015)
Brunei Darussalam	1.7	1.9 (2015)
Very High HDI	1.8	-

a. These countries were selected based on their similarity to the UAE on certain features. Brunei Darussalam is a small oil country with a GDP similar to the UAE's. Singapore is a small nation with many expatriate employees.

For UAE nationals, this translates into larger families and multigenerational households, where gender roles are traditionally split between male “provider” and female “carer” roles.

Along with collectivism, Islamic religion also has an influence on gender and family roles in Emirati society. Islam accords both women and men specific rights and duties. A woman’s primary duty is to care for her family, while a man’s primary duty is to protect and provide for his family.

According to Dr. Ahmed al Haddad, Grand Mufti, Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department, a woman’s most important obligation in Islam is to care for and nurture her children, husband and family. But Islam also recognises a woman’s duties to her community and the wider society. As long as a woman does not neglect her primary responsibility at home, Islam accords great value and respect to a woman’s contribution to society. A woman who is educated is in a better position to positively contribute to her wider society through a more enriched upbringing of her children as well as the ability to productively pursue activities that promote the development of the community around her.

Islamic law is also evidenced to be one of the earliest to accord women the right to own land and property.¹⁵ By allowing ownership and unprecedented access to resources that for centuries had been exclusively under the authority of men, Islam placed women in a position of economic power that was unique at the time.¹⁶ Women in Islamic culture and history are valued for their contributions to society and the economy, including their ability to manage business. There are many examples in history of influential, highly respected, and successful Arab women who were economically active, particularly in commerce and trade. An early example of this can be found in Khadija, wife of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and first follower of Islam. Islamic history celebrates Khadija as a successful merchant, wife, and employer (Khadija hired Prophet Mohammed to manage trade transactions for some time prior to their marriage).¹⁷

Despite the change in times, it remains clear that there is a large consensus around the value of women and their ability to contribute to their communities should they, themselves, choose to do so. In fact, in the majority of the Muslim world today, women participate in the same activities as men, in fields such as agriculture, commerce, manufacturing, management and even the military.

“Islam gave women their full rights, and the situation on the ground reflects that. Women in the Arab and Islamic world participate and have participated in all the [same] activities [as] men. Women are teachers, women are managers, women are employees. Women are creative contributors to their organisations and women are men’s support system, allowing them to be effective contributors to their community as well.”

Dr. Ahmad al Haddad, Grand Mufti, Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department^a

While most analysis on modern history in the UAE often focuses on developments in the last 30-40 years (post-oil era), it is crucial to also examine the culture and attitudes towards women’s employment during the pre-oil era (1900s to 1960s).¹⁸ Evidence suggests that the economic contribution of women in the region before the discovery of oil was also significant.¹⁹ Women routinely balanced family responsibilities with work outside of their homes. They also ran their own businesses or worked in sectors such as agriculture, midwifery and weaving.²⁰ In regions that were heavily reliant on the pearling business, a significant portion

a. Interview with Dr. Ahmad Al Haddad, Grand Mufti, Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department, conducted August 2016

“We are all aware that the country is moving towards granting women positions in public service, politics, education and management, and we should all support the country in achieving that great vision.

The woman doesn't merely represent half the population number, but she truly represents half the population's capacity, if not all, considering the fact that she raises future generations, as per the saying “The mother is a school, if well nurtured, will nurture a well-bred nation.”

Dr. Ahmad al Haddad, Grand Mufti, Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department^a

of the female population, left without husbands, sons, or brothers for months at a time during the pearling season, had to manage their households without men. This accorded them significant influence and decision-making power.

The discovery of oil in the 1960s actually saw a decline in women's economic participation as rising household incomes seemed to be associated with the dwindling need, importance and interest of women in the workforce, although there was an increased focus on female health and education.²¹

In the UAE today, however, there is a renewed commitment to support women to achieve their ambitions. Women are being championed and supported by the nation's leaders, and they occupy many roles at high levels.

For example, in October 2017 three new female ministers were appointed to the 31-member UAE Cabinet, bringing the total number of female ministers to nine, amongst them the 23-year-old Her Excellency Shamma bint Suhail bin Faris Al Mazrui as the Minister of State for Youth.²²

Whereas culture and religion play an important role in emphasising the importance of family, Emirati women today have many choices and are supported by their culture and the country's leadership to contribute to the economy, should they decide to do so.

THE ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET

The UAE has been classified by the World Bank as a high income country for nearly 20 years.²³ As the nation transforms from an economy dependent upon its natural resources to a knowledge-based one, it is well-positioned for continued prosperity and affluence.

However, despite significant economic progress,

employment policies and economic dynamics unique to the UAE do shape Emirati engagement in the workforce, for both men and women. First, the UAE has a dual labour market roughly delineated by citizenship; Emirati nationals serve in the majority of public sector jobs while expatriates dominate the private sector. Few countries have such a stark separation in their workforce. While women represent 66% of the federal government workforce, there are far fewer Emirati women working in the private sector, where there is the most potential for economic growth.²⁴

The dual labour market is reinforced by citizenship rights. Private sector organisations are required to meet nationalisation hiring quotas which were put in place over a decade ago to ensure the availability of jobs for all Emiratis. Furthermore, the government has strict regulations for terminating UAE nationals who work in the private sector.²⁵

His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the UAE's founding father, is quoted as saying "Women have the right to work everywhere", (Al-Nahyan, 1987). His vision for the country's women is reflected in the nation's federal statutes. The UAE Federal Labour law of 1980 provided for equal pay rights regardless of gender and maternity laws to facilitate women's entry into the labour market. In 2008, the Dubai Women Establishment's (DWE) National Child Care Centre (NCCC) initiative helped enforce legislation requiring public sector entities to establish childcare centres for working mothers.

However, despite women's high education levels and supportive federal legislation, the UAE is not as advanced as other very high Human Development Index (HDI) countries in terms of women's workforce participation. In 2015, labour force participation rates of women in the UAE were 41.9%.²⁶ Compared to other countries, this level of participation is a mixed message: while it is almost double that of other Arab states (22.3%), it is still lower than that of very high HDI countries (52.6%). A focus on figures for national women shows that there is an even larger gap. Emirati women make up only 28% of the total UAE workforce.²⁷

Two practical issues are particularly relevant for Emirati

women in the private sector (DWE, 2010). The first is the relatively underdeveloped market for flexible working hours. Flexible working arrangements are becoming increasingly important globally, regardless of gender and nationality. They are especially important to Emirati women. Without flexible working arrangements, Emirati women often end up making uncomfortable compromises in both their personal and professional lives. This may include things such as a slower career progression, spending more time away from family, resorting to less favourable childcare options or being penalised for missing days off of work to fulfil commitments related to raising children.

The second issue is short paid maternity leave. The national standard for maternity leave is 45 days for the private sector and 60 days for the public sector. Many women simply do not feel this is enough time to devote to their newborns, thus forcing them to resign from their jobs in order to fulfil their childcare obligations.²⁸ There has been some progress with regards to paid maternity leave under the latest instituted laws. As of 2016, female employees at government entities are entitled to an extended paid leave of 3 months across the country.

The lack of flexible hours and paid maternity leave, particularly in the private sector create challenges for Emirati women, who may be interested in working.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The UAE government plays an active role in maintaining the Emirati welfare, often in ways that sway women's decisions to enter the workforce. It provides subsidies, cash and in-kind benefits via pro-birth policies to promote the family, and by extension, national population growth. These provisions –homes, marriage benefits, and subsidies for living costs – alter the economic calculation that Emirati households make when considering paid employment.

In OECD countries, between 1975 and 1999, women with children were more likely to be employed if family allowances from the government were limited (Nieuwenhuis, Need & Van Der Kolk, 2012). Thus, in light of the generous

social support provided by the UAE government, the economic 'need' to be employed outside the home is much less than that found in other comparatively developed countries.

Economically advantaged nations with large populations of expatriate residents, like the UAE, frequently offer their national citizens special benefits. Two examples are Singapore and Brunei Darussalam (Table 4). Singapore's benefits are not as wide in scope as the UAE's, while Brunei Darussalam has similar levels of social provisions for its citizens as the UAE.

The UAE provides a more universal benefits system for its citizens, compared to other More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs), where such benefits exist primarily as social protections for citizens against negative labour market conditions (e.g. unemployment or low incomes due to low wage work). Emirati social provisions are focused on sharing wealth and preserving national identity. In this context, there is a misleading perception that all Emirati families, and women in particular, are extremely wealthy due to the country's wealth transfer and subsidy systems. While this characterisation is often exaggerated, the UAE government does comfortably care for its citizens through subsidies.

EMIRATI WOMEN WITHIN THE UAE


Socio-Economic Context

Emirati women's socio-economic development has kept pace with the UAE's upward developmental trajectory. With respect to the UNDP's gender inequality indicators, Emirati women far surpass their Arab states' counterparts and are nearly equal to women in very high Human Development Index (HDI) countries (See Figure 1). In 2015, the UAE ranked 42nd out of 188 countries on key economic, health, and education indicators for women.

Maternal Health

Table 4.

Types of social provisions in the UAE and comparison countries for citizens^a

CITIZENSHIP	UAE	SINGAPORE	BRUNEI DARUSSALAM
 Tax incentives	✓	✓	✓
 Free healthcare	✓	Only needy	✓
 Free primary/secondary education	✓	Primary	✓
 Free or subsidised tertiary education	✓	✓	✓
 Pension plans	✓	✓	✓
 Home grants/loans or subsidised housing	✓	✓	✓
 Marriage benefits	✓		
 Debt settlement	✓		✓
 Paid Maternity leave (minimum length)	45 days/90 days ²⁹	112 days ³⁰	91 days ³¹
 Housing allowance	✓	As per contract	N/A
 Education allowance	✓	As per contract	N/A

a. PwC Analysis

The UAE's transformation into a developed, high-income nation, has been accompanied with improvements in health outcomes. The nation as a whole has benefited from the decline in child mortality, maternal mortality, and fertility rates, but the wider availability of quality healthcare has benefited women the most, with improved ante - and post-natal outcomes and overall better health outcomes for the children they raise. Combined with lower fertility rates and smaller families, more women are able to explore more opportunities outside the home, such as advanced education, volunteering in the community or paid employment.

Women's Education

Emirati women enjoy access to wide-ranging educational opportunities from primary through tertiary education. Around 77% of the Emirati female population has reached at least a secondary education level.³² In terms of higher education, Emirati women are amongst the most highly educated in the region – 77% of Emirati women are enrolled in university and over two-thirds of students who graduate from public universities in the UAE are women.³³ These numbers surpass those of Emirati men in higher education, and there are both push and pull factors behind this gender gap in education. Work opportunities, such as easy access to government, police, and military jobs, as well as the cultural preference for men to enter the workforce soon after secondary school, are some of the reasons there are fewer men in tertiary education.³⁴ Women are more likely to continue their education because their families value education, they feel education will make them better wives and mothers, or they feel they need additional qualifications to compete in the labour market.³⁵

Paradoxically, it has been shown that an inverse relationship exists between unemployment rates and education levels for women as compared to men in the UAE. Roughly 90% of non-working women have a secondary or higher education level while 90% of non-working men have a secondary or lower education level (Strategy&, formerly Booz & Company, 2012), indicating that employment and education have different associations for women in the UAE context.

Previous research on Emirati women and work indicates other reasons for lower representation in the labour market to-date:

1 **Highly-educated women experience a disconnect between the roles they believe they are qualified for and the work conditions that often accompany such roles (DWE 2010).**

There is a lack of awareness about the realities of working in the private sector and the career opportunities that are available (Al Waqfi, 2012). Career guidance and counselling services would be valuable to help set more realistic expectations for women as they look to enter the job market. Such services are in the process of being built and expanded, as demonstrated by the Ministry of Education's support to INJAZ Al Arab, an organisation that provides career guidance and encourages entrepreneurship among high school students.³⁶

2 **Decisions about work are also influenced by family dynamics and reinforced by the collectivist culture.**

Immediate family members shape job location and the choice of profession, which in turn impacts a woman's decision to enter the workforce. Oftentimes it is necessary to choose a workplace close to home in order to limit disruption to family duties. Cultural views on women working and ultimately living in places outside the family home dissuade some women from taking a job in another city. The choice of profession encompasses both the type of work (e.g. traditionally female) and the conditions for work (e.g. flexible or shorter hours).

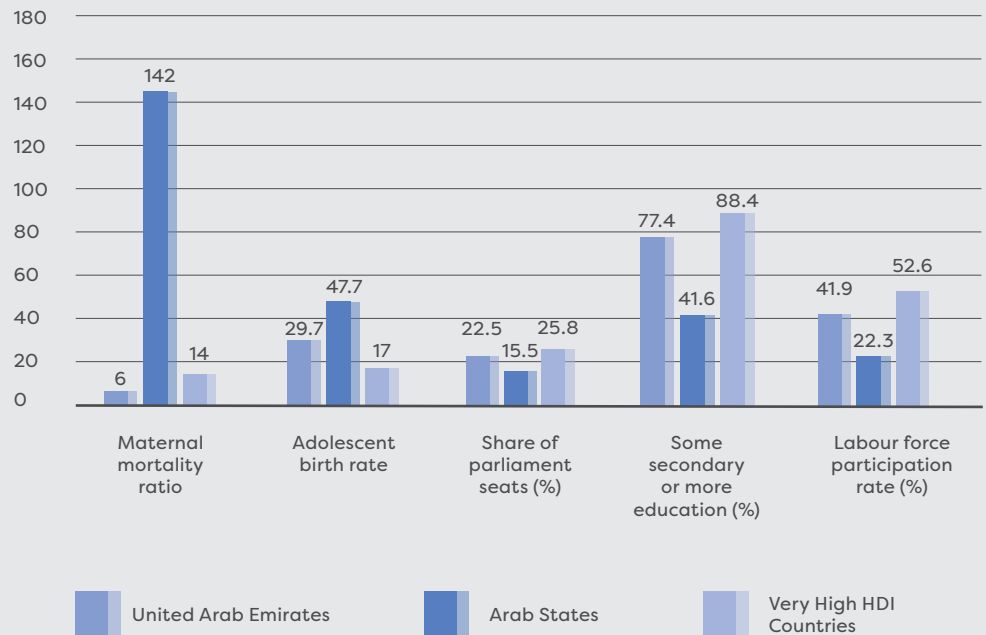
3 **There are a limited number of role models to help shape career decisions and expectations.**

This is partly because many Emirati women have less educated and/or non-working mothers and grandmothers (Rutledge, Al Shamsi, Bassioni & Al Sheikh, 2011), which may result in some women not considering work as an option. There is also a continued need to highlight working women and female role models more prominently at a national level.³⁷

The UAE Government is funding a series of research initiatives to better understand how to shape policy more effectively to encourage women to work.³⁸ The reconfiguration of the UAE ministries (most notably the merger of the national workforce body, Tanmia, with the Ministry of Labour, into a combined Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation), may help accelerate efforts to increase the participation of Emiratis in the private sector

workforce as well as women in the overall labour market. See *Chapter 5* for a more comprehensive overview of the labour market related initiatives and their impact on women’s participation levels.

Figure 1.
UNDP’s Gender Inequality Index Indicators for Females, 2015^a



a. Figures drawn from UNDP’s Human Development Report 2016

IN SUMMARY

Today's UAE exhibits a perplexing paradox. It is a high-income, highly-developed country. Like its socio-economic nation-state peers, the country's population is healthy, relatively long-lived and has smaller families than previous generations. With fewer children to care for, the well-educated Emirati woman theoretically has more time to work outside the home. Yet, despite the UAE's socio-economic ascent and the corresponding prosperity of its citizens, Emirati women still occupy a very small share of the labour market; with roughly 1 in 5 national females working outside the home, the employment rate is much lower than that of a comparable country such as Singapore.

What accounts for the low number of Emirati females in the labour force? Are factors related to women's self-identity, values, and ambition relevant? Are family influences and societal norms responsible? Or, are more practical matters, such as the characteristics of the UAE workplace or compensation and benefits, stronger considerations? Our survey explores some of the potential reasons Emirati women are not participating in the workforce in larger numbers; it seeks to present a deeper understanding of women's beliefs and attitudes towards employment.



PROFILING THE
DECIDING WOMAN



PROFILING THE DECIDING WOMAN

It took several months to get to know the many faces of Emirati Deciding Women; extensive interviews, hundreds of telephone surveys, and follow-up focus groups and discussions helped shed light on women's attitudes, ambitions and behaviours throughout the UAE. This chapter outlines the approach we used to segment and thereby gain a better understanding of the respondents.

DEFINITION: WHAT DOES THE TERM DECIDING WOMEN MEAN?

Deciding Women are Emirati women who have either never worked or have worked in the past but not actively looked for work or held a job for a minimum of four months prior to this survey. To better understand Deciding Women and their attitudes about employment, this study segments and analyses survey responses using Prochaska and Diclemente's Model of Change, the Transtheoretical Model of behavioural change (TTM).^a While the TTM has most often been used in health behaviour change research, it has also been used in labour market studies in the Middle East.³⁹ The TTM's relevance here is to categorise women by their interest in and readiness for working. This approach helps identify practical interventions to support these women in achieving their goals, whether they choose to actively participate in the labour force or not.

The TTM model presumes that individuals change their behaviour through a five-stage sequential process. An adapted version of this model, which is depicted in Figure 2, provides a useful lens through which we can understand Emirati women's attitudes and behaviours towards work. Figure 2 includes a brief description of the model's relevant stages, and maps the percentage of survey respondents across each stage.

a. Prochaska, J. and DiClemente, C. (1983) Stages and processes of self-change in smoking: toward an integrative model of change. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 5, 390-395.

Figure 2.

The Transtheoretical Model and percentage of Deciding Women respondents in each stage^a

> PRE-CONTEMPLATION 20% OF RESPONDENTS

Women in this stage show no interest in working, but may respond to attempts at engaging them in the workforce.

> CONTEMPLATION 56% OF RESPONDENTS

Women in this stage consider working but have not yet taken steps towards this goal.

> PREPARATION 24% OF RESPONDENTS

Women in this stage are interested in working and have taken steps towards this goal, but not within the past 4 months.

> ACTION

In this stage, women have recently begun working (within past 3-6 months) and are eager to continue with a career.
No women in this category were included in the survey.

> MAINTENANCE

Women in this stage have been working for more than 6 months and show continued commitment to maintaining their careers.
No women in this category were included in the survey.

a. Percentages total to 101 as they were rounded up for each individual group

The Deciding Women in this report fall into the first three TTM stages, based on how they described themselves at the beginning of the survey. 80% of respondents are in the Contemplation and Preparation stages of the TTM model and are at a point where they have an interest in working.

WHO ARE THE DECIDING WOMEN?

Descriptive demographics

The majority of respondents live in the same Emirate in which they grew up. Of the 1,550 respondents, 42% live in Abu Dhabi,^a 25% in Dubai, and 13% in Sharjah. Almost half (44%) are between 30 - 39 years of age and over a quarter are Millennials aged 18-29.

Family characteristics

The roles of wife and mother are two family roles our Deciding Women know well; 88% of respondents are married and raising a median of three children. Many are busy with toddlers and infants; almost a third have children under the age of four. Of those respondents who had never married (9%), 87% are Millennials (under the age of 30). Only 3% are widowed or divorced.

Education characteristics

Like many Emirati women, Deciding Women are well-educated. 47% hold a Bachelor's degree or higher. The most popular areas of study are Business (33%), Education (22%),

and IT (13%). Most women have already completed their schooling (97%), with only 3% still in education at the time of the survey.

However, there is significant variation in educational background between Pre-contemplation stage and Contemplation/Preparation stage women (Figure 3). Those in the Pre-contemplation stage spend far fewer years studying than women in the other stages; only 24% have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 52% of Contemplation stage and 53% of Preparation stage women.

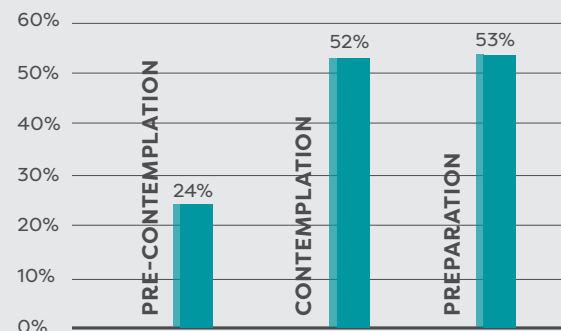
Personal priorities and ambitions

The roles of wife and mother are the top priority (94%) for the Deciding Women across all Transtheoretical Model (TTM) stages, although the priorities do differ between stages (Figure 4).

Pre-contemplation women value their family roles above all others. Interestingly, however, they also want successful careers and desire to contribute to society, despite not being interested in or considering work at the time of the survey. This suggests that Pre-contemplation women have ambitions beyond their roles as wife and mother.

Those in the Contemplation and Preparation stages have many ambitions: they want to be wives and mothers, have successful careers, work at jobs related to their education, and be financially independent.

Figure 3.
Percentage of Deciding Women with a Bachelor's degree or higher by TTM stage



a. This is inclusive of Al Ain and the Western Zone.

Figure 4.
Relative priorities of Deciding
Women across TTM stages

> PRE-CONTEMPLATION

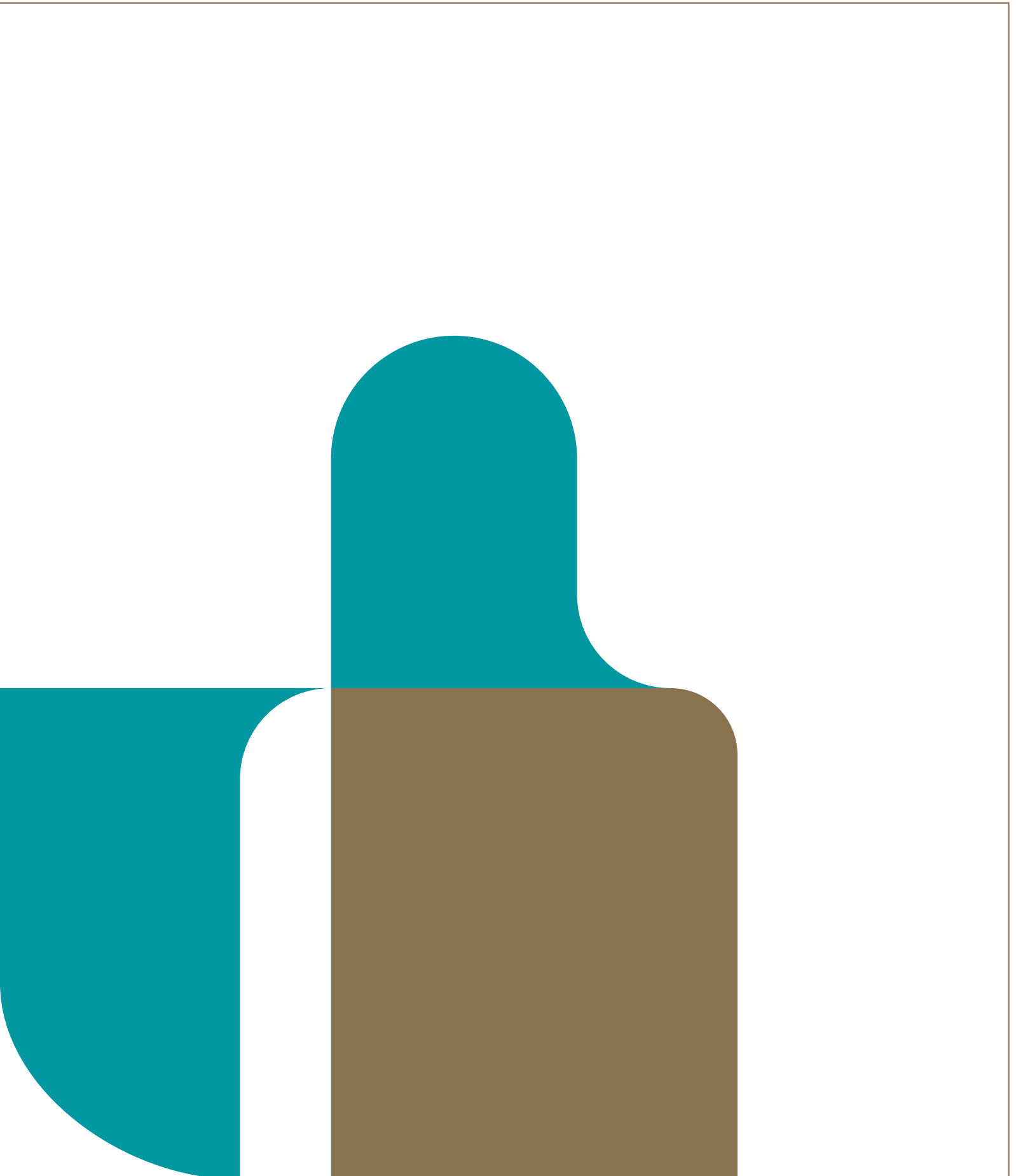
1. Role as wife and mother (97%)
2. Successful careers (62%)
3. Contribution to society (58%)

> CONTEMPLATION

1. Role as wife and mother (93%)
2. Successful careers (88%)
3. Use of education (84%)
4. Financial independence (82%)

> PREPARATION

1. Role as wife and mother (94%)
2. Successful careers (89%)
3. Use of education (82%)
4. Financial independence (83%)



IN SUMMARY

Throughout our survey, follow-up conversations, and in-depth interviews, we have learned that the UAE's Deciding Women are well-educated mothers and wives from every Emirate of the country. They value both their family roles as well as the opportunity for career success.

While none of the women in our study were working outside of the home, they vary in their attitudes towards considering paid employment; this differentiation is captured by the TTM stage segmentation. 20% of our respondents are not interested in working (Pre-contemplation), although they gave indications as the survey progressed that they might consider working under certain circumstances. The rest are interested in joining the labour force, although most (56%) have not yet taken steps to do so (Contemplation), with less than a quarter (24%) having taken active steps to achieve this goal (Preparation).



HER VIEWS ON HERSELF
AND OTHER WOMEN
WITHIN THE EMIRATI
COMMUNITY

3

HER VIEWS ON HERSELF AND OTHER WOMEN WITHIN THE EMIRATI COMMUNITY

In this next section, we explore some psychological research and theories to better understand what might shape the Deciding Woman's views. This is followed with a review of Deciding Women's attitudes towards different types of women in their society. We follow with a discussion of Deciding Women's journey to paid employment and what may have encouraged these particular life steps. At times, the women's perspectives are compared with those of Emirati men and working women.

“We see women now [and] their view of themselves differently. Things are changing and changing fast.”

Dr. Madalla Alibeli, Assistant Professor, United Arab Emirates University^a

UNDERSTANDING THE MINDSET OF THE DECIDING WOMAN

Psychological theories and prior research studies provide some insight into Deciding Women’s ways of thinking

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982) help explain why some women choose not to work, especially during the family formation life stage, when their roles as wife and mother are a priority. Social Cognitive Theory explains the impact of society and role models on the learned behaviour of others. It shows how other women’s attitudes and behaviours, as well as society’s endorsement or rejection of these behaviours, influence how an Emirati woman behaves. This influence starts very early in life and these learned behaviours can be very difficult to change. In a collectivist culture such as the UAE, the influence of society’s views is even more significant than in individualistic cultures such as the United States or United Kingdom. These theories are relevant in later sections where the influence of family is discussed.

In addition to social cognitive theories, behaviourist theories also play a role. Positive and negative reinforcement at a societal, cultural and policy level can encourage or discourage employment seeking behaviours. For example, limited maternity leave and inadequate childcare in some sectors act as negative reinforcements to entering the workforce.

Personal agency and self-efficacy also help explain the study’s findings. These concepts explain the confidence levels a woman has in her ability to overcome difficult tasks and achieve her goals. Self-efficacy is developed based on external experiences and self-perception. In this study, younger women in particular, who grew up with working mothers or other female working role models, are increasingly seeing work outside of the home as a desirable choice, given the right conditions.

This study finds limited evidence of strong patriarchal influence in shaping mind-sets

Although previous studies have highlighted the impact of paternalism in the UAE, there is limited evidence for its influence in this study. When asked who influences their decision about whether or not to look for work, respondents predominantly cite themselves as the main driver for this decision. Husbands and fathers play a role, but it is usually a supporting role and a small one at that.

Perspectives on working women vs. non-working women

Based on the overwhelmingly positive adjectives that study participants use to describe working and non-working Emirati women, our study concludes that both are equally respected in Emirati society. Deciding Women (64%) most often characterize working women as ‘hard working’. They additionally describe them as individuals with ‘strong personalities’ who are ‘successful’, ‘sociable’, ‘organised’ and ‘confident’. Views differ on whether working provides more opportunity to develop a social life through meeting new people or detracts from investing time in her existing social network.

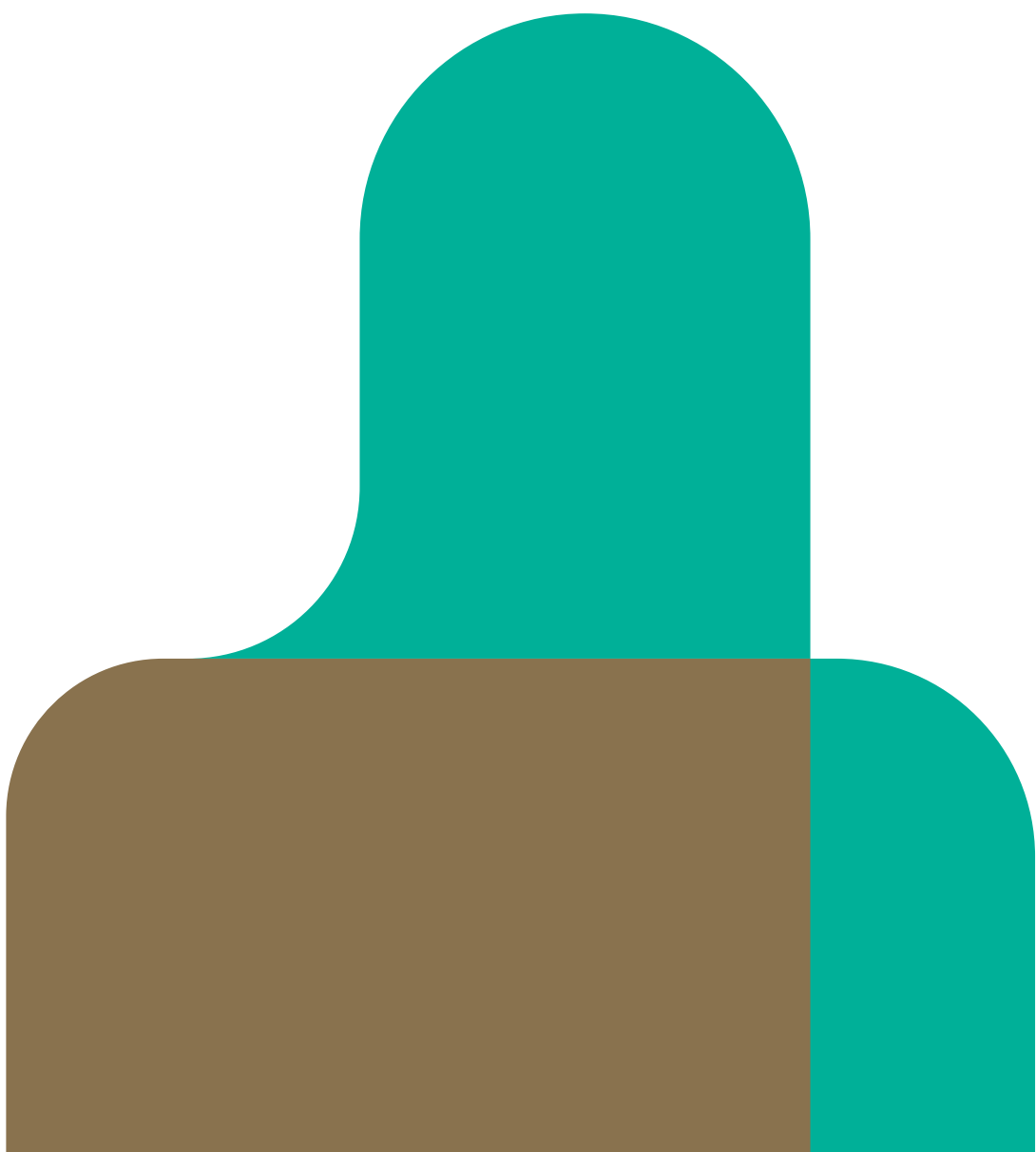
a. Interview with Dr. Madalla Alibeli, Assistant Professor, United Arab Emirates University, conducted March 2016

“I think a working woman likes to work. She’s successful. She can make her own decisions. If you work you have that power. What keeps her in the workforce is being independent.”

“At home we are restricted in our network. We keep talking to the same people. But a working woman constantly meets new people.”

“An advantage of working is being organised. It gives you a second income. It gives the kids a different view on their mother.”

Female interviewees’ perspectives on working women



Views on non-working Emirati women were also positive, though different in nature. Adjectives used to describe these women are 'comfortable', 'relaxed', 'organised', and 'busy with domestic duties'.

Overall, adjectives describing working women convey a sense of strength and confidence, while adjectives describing non-working women convey a sense of comfort, relaxation and organisation. It is clear that Emirati society values both these roles and their accompanying attributes.

EMIRATI WOMEN LEADERS

Although Emirati men and women respect the nation's female leaders, Emirati women do not feel supported by their families for their own leadership aspirations

Both Deciding Women and Emirati men deeply admire the nation's female leaders. Well over 90% of respondents from both groups feel that there is a positive image of Emirati women in leadership roles. Additionally, Deciding Women (97%) and Emirati men (84%) believe more women leaders are good for the country.

However, while there is admiration for Emirati female leaders in general, our study suggests there are still challenges in creating a family environment from which such leaders could emerge. 86% of Deciding Women feel that their families would not be supportive of their own leadership aspirations. Furthermore, 69% of the men in our study would not encourage the leadership aspirations of women in their own families.

Exploring the attitudes towards Emirati female leadership in more detail and through the lens of our Deciding Women's TTM stages reveals that, self-reporting bias notwithstanding, these women are choosing to forge ahead despite the views of their families. Only 21% of Pre-contemplation stage women, 16% of Contemplation stage women, and 6% of Preparation stage women feel their families would be supportive of their leadership aspirations.

These findings suggest that there is still much progress to be made in order to make the pursuit of leadership positions a more viable choice for Emirati women. This reinforces the findings of the Dubai Women Establishment's Arab Women Leadership Outlook report,⁴⁰ which found that a supportive environment is essential for allowing and nurturing the skills necessary for leadership.

WORK EXPERIENCE OF DECIDING WOMEN

29% of our respondents had once been in the workforce, spending a median of 5 years working in various sectors (See Figure 5).

Nearly three-quarters of these women had worked in the public sector, while only 23% had ventured into the private sector. Of these women who had once worked, only 7% had worked part-time, while the rest had been employed full-time. Around one-fifth of all Deciding Women had seen women in their own families working while they were growing up. This number is higher for women with prior work experience (33%).

Those in the Preparation stage differ from other Deciding Women in four specific areas related to work experience:

54%

They are more likely to have previously worked

31%

A higher percentage had worked in the public sector

37%

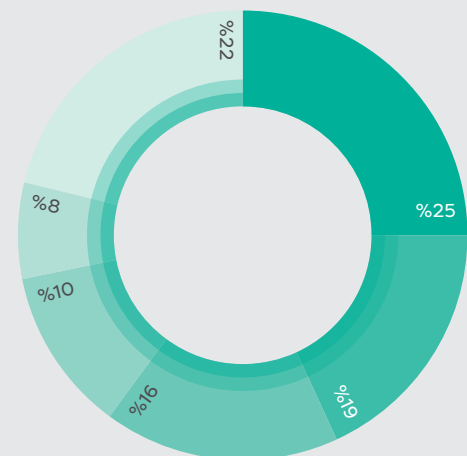
They are more likely to have grown up around working women

10%

Slightly more of the Preparation stage women had worked part time

Figure 5.

Sectors that our Deciding Women have worked in

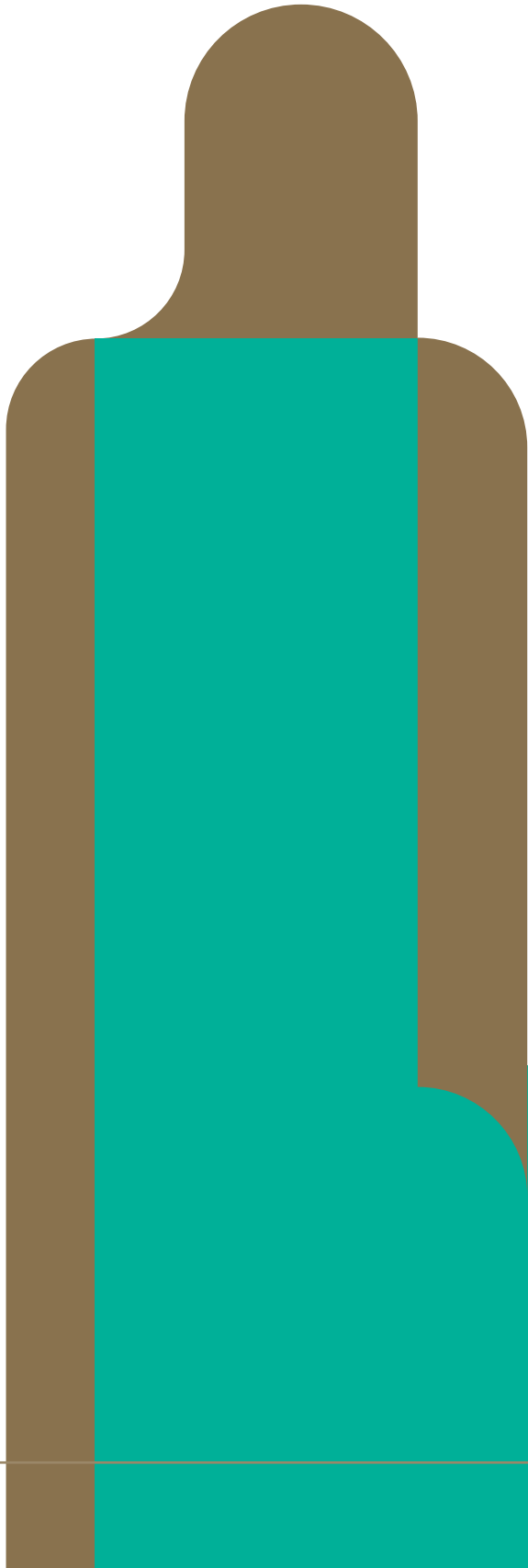


“The non-working woman will be better able to fulfil her social duties.”

“A disadvantage of working is that the sense of being laid back is taken away.”

“A lot of women here have to sacrifice their social lives because they work.”

Female interviewees' perspectives on non-working women



Reasons for entering and leaving the workforce

Financial independence and utilising their education are strong motivators for women to enter the workforce

We asked our Deciding Women specifically what drew them into and what pushed them out of the workforce. The most frequently cited factors for entering work are financial independence (73%), fulfilment (60%), and an opportunity to use education (45%).

Financial independence is important across all three Transtheoretical model (TTM) stages, but fulfilment is also a key motivator for women across all TTM stages (Table 5).

Utilising her education is a primary focus for both Contemplation and Preparation stage women (50% and 42%, respectively), while Pre-Contemplation stage women additionally view work as a way to fight boredom (36%) – which could possibly be interpreted as a self-fulfilment issue.

“...we should be very careful when equating non-employment with non-work. The work that is being done in the home is incredibly important.”

Dr. May Al Dabbagh, Assistant Professor,
New York University Abu Dhabi^a

Table 5.

Percentage of Deciding Women who cite financial independence and fulfilment as key motivators by Transtheoretical Model (TTM) stage

	FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE	FULFILMENT
Pre-contemplation (not interested in working)	64%	39%
Contemplation (would consider working, not taken steps)	66%	50%
Preparation (interested in working, have taken steps)	82%	74%

a. Interview with Dr. May Al Dabbagh, Assistant Professor, New York University Abu Dhabi, conducted March 2016

“...from the perspective of the Deciding Woman, family and work are highly intertwined. So the real question is how we think about employment, does it enable women to achieve the goals they want for themselves but also for their families at the same time?”

Dr. May Al Dabbagh, Assistant Professor,
New York University Abu Dhabi^a

a. Interview with Dr. May Al Dabbagh, Assistant Professor, New York University Abu Dhabi, conducted March 2016

“Most of the time [not entering the workforce] is [due to] these four reasons: family, mobility, culture, and studies.”

Dr. Noura Al Badour, Employment Department,
Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization^a

Interestingly, Emirati men have similar, but slightly different, perspectives. Those with women in their families who worked when they were growing up cited the reasons for working as: contributing to society (65%), being a role model for their children (59%), feeling happier (33%), contributing to household income (30%), and using their education (28%). Those who have wives or sisters working also gave similar responses.

These findings suggest that both men and women broadly agree about why women enter the workforce. However, it is important to note the interconnectivity of work and family life for Emirati women.

Unsuitable work hours and the routine nature of work are key reasons why women leave the workforce

Deciding Women most frequently cited reasons for leaving the workforce as being: unsuitable work hours (30%), a job that is routine in nature (20%) and a job that is too difficult to perform (15%). These findings are consistent across all TTM stages. The lack of mentoring and career advancement counselling are also relevant reasons.

Emirati men attribute workforce departure to factors related to family responsibilities

In contrast to Deciding Women, Emirati men perceive family factors as the main drivers behind Deciding Women leaving the workforce. They cite the birth of a child (21%), the lack of trust in childcare (24%) or the unaffordability of childcare (24%) as the main reasons why women in their families had left the workforce. However, these perceptions are most often based upon their observations of the women in their families as they were growing up, not on their current observations.

These findings indicate that both Deciding Women and men feel that women have much to contribute outside the home. Yet, with family responsibilities and the unsuitability of working hours being the top reasons cited by men and women respectively, there is a clear indication that their priorities remain firmly in the home.

Reasons for not entering the workforce

Being married with children and pursuing higher education are some reasons why Deciding Women do not enter the workforce

Family factors are, however, the main barrier that keep many Deciding Women from ever stepping into paid employment. Most of the Deciding Women who had never worked attribute this to 'being married with children' (42%). Another 5% did not want to leave their children with a maid while they worked. In particular, Deciding Women in the Pre-contemplation stage cite 'being married with children' (70%) more often than women in the other TTM stages.

A focus on education is the second most cited reason for not entering the workforce. Women who had never been married cite continuing their education and going to school (38%) as their primary reason for not working. The majority of these women (61%) were students at the time of participation in the study.

There is the overall perception, particularly for women in the Pre-contemplation stage, that the balancing act required for working outside the home is challenging. The welfare of their children and the capabilities of those caring for them are important factors.

“We need to respect womens’ wishes to be stay-at-home mothers and not want a career... Part of empowering a woman is giving her the choice and not pushing her towards [the] one choice of leaving the house. If she’s happy, financially stable and content within, I think we need to respect that.”

Dr. Basmah Omair, CEO Al-Sayedah Kadijah Bint
Khwaliid Centre, Saudi Arabia^a

a. During an address at the Global Women’s Forum Dubai 2016

Family factors play a significant role in why women in the family never worked in the past

A large proportion of Deciding Women (79%) and Emirati men (86%) had grown up in households where women focused solely on family responsibilities and did not pursue work outside of the home due mostly to marriage and the birth of a child.

Lack of support from male family members is also noted as a contributing factor by both Emirati men (18%) and Deciding Women (4%), though this latter finding indicates that men and women perceive the impact of male influence on this decision differently. We explore the role of influencers on Deciding Women's perceptions and decisions about work more fully in the next chapter.

“To make work conditions better, they should reduce work hours. I would be the first to apply to a job. We are people with energy. I don't have a lot of children and my husband is able to manage financials, so I do not have to work. But if the hours were fine, I would be the first one to apply.”

Female interviewee

“I wouldn't say that a working mother fails at raising her children, but as long as there's no one reliable to raise the children, the mother must stay at home.”

“A woman needs to work harder than a man, because a working woman has more responsibilities than a working man.”

Female focus group participants

IN SUMMARY

Psychological theory points to cultural norms and the influence of the UAE's collectivist society as explanatory factors for why Deciding Women express the views observed in this study. However, while patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles play a part in their lives, our respondents clearly hold their own points of view and feel they make their own decisions regarding work. They are self-confident and committed to following their interests, whether through entering the workplace or by pursuing other interests.

Deciding Women hold positive views of all women in society, including women leaders, women working in paid employment, or women solely working in the home. They also have a variety of perspectives on what brings them into or keeps them out of the work place. Independence and fulfilment are big drawbacks for women to enter the workforce. Unsuitable work characteristics, such as long hours, repetitive work, and difficult tasks, drive women out of the work force. Also, family factors like marriage and children keep many Deciding Women from ever entering the world of work.



HER VIEWS ON THE
INFLUENCE OF FAMILY
AND SOCIETY



HER VIEWS ON THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY AND SOCIETY

Emirati Deciding Women have specific views on what they want for themselves as well as on the characteristics of the ideal workplace. While these women are most definitely the drivers of these ideas, other people and forces in their lives help shape the development of these thoughts. This section examines how family and society shape women's attitudes towards working in paid employment.

ROLE OF THE FAMILY

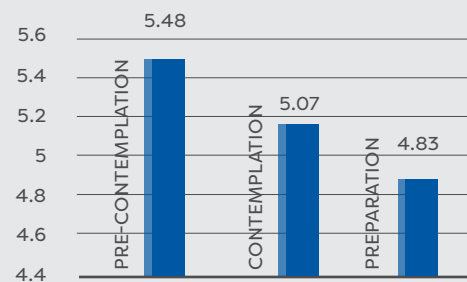
Deciding Women play pivotal roles in their families as wives and mothers, and their families play an influential role in their decisions. The UAE's collectivist culture is built on strong extended family networks and social values that emphasise closeness and family loyalty. In the context of Emirati women, family is the most influential part of this system; young children, male and female, spend a significant amount of time in the care and influence of their mothers (Crabtree, 2007). Older males move on from their mothers to spend more time being mentored by their fathers. Older females remain under the guidance and care of their parents, especially their fathers, who maintain legal custody over them and their actions, until they are married. Once a woman marries, her husband then plays a significant role in helping her make certain decisions and assumes these legal responsibilities. When it comes to choices about work, a woman's husband often has a significant say on the matter. Pursuing work may be even more difficult for a woman once she has moved into the family formation stage and started having children (Marmenout and Lirio (2014), Gallant and Pounder (2008)). This is linked to strong family and societal views of the woman needing to first and foremost fulfil her responsibilities as a wife and mother.

FAMILY SIZE

To better understand trends in the number of children women have as well as their views on family size, the survey used Alibeli's (2014) Reproductive Attitudes and Behaviour Scale (RABS) to assess attitudes toward childbearing. RABS includes questions to determine how many children a woman currently has, how many more she would like to have, and what the ideal number of children for her as an individual, and the ideal number for Emirati women in general. The Deciding Women's score (5.03) is significantly higher than the score of Working Women^a (3.85).

RABS scores varied by Transtheoretical Model (TTM) stage as well; those in the Preparation stage had lower scores than either women in the Contemplation or Pre-contemplation stages (Figure 6).

Figure 6.
RABS Scores for Deciding Women
by TTM Stage



a. Data from a study conducted by Sally Jeffery on working Emirati women is used at some points in this report for comparison between working and non-working Emirati women.

Working women have fewer children and regard smaller families as more ideal for both themselves and Emirati women overall. Emirati women in the workforce have fewer children than Deciding Women (Figure 7).

These findings suggest that employment has some correlation with an Emirati woman's attitude towards having children: women who work tend to have or desire fewer children on average than those who do not.

Both sets of women had lower RABS scores than those found in previous research by Alibeli (2014), which reported an average RABS of 6.31. This change shows that attitudes in general are shifting towards smaller family sizes. This is important for workforce participation, as fewer children means a woman will have less responsibilities at home, which may increase women's likelihood to work.

INFLUENCERS WITHIN THE FAMILY

Many members of a Deciding Woman's immediate social circle (parents, husband, and friends) shape her decision to look for work. In this section, we learn more about who plays the biggest role and the views of male Emiratis on how they influence a woman's decision to work or not.

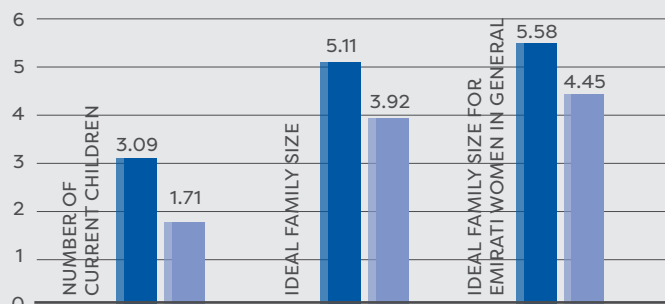
Who are the influencers and why are they important?

Deciding Women feel that they make their own decisions about whether or not to seek employment. However, the study finds that others within a Deciding Woman's social network can either support or deter her from entering the work force (see Figure 8).

Figure 7.

Reproductive preferences, represented by average number of children, for Deciding Women^a versus working Emirati women

■ DECIDING WOMEN
■ WORKING WOMEN



a. Emirati women who have either never worked or have worked in the past but not actively looked for work or held a job for a minimum of four months prior to the survey conducted for this report

The relative influence of members of a Deciding Woman's social network varies with her respective relationship status

When broken down by relationship status, the primary influence of parents in encouraging single Deciding Women to work is higher (22%) than for married women (4%). Evidence from focus groups reinforces the idea that parents play an important role in encouraging women to seek jobs. Several participants in the focus groups indicate their mothers were highly influential, specifically mentioning that their mothers encouraged them to find employment before marriage so that it would be less of a challenge to earn their husbands' approval to pursue a career once married.

Husbands are the strongest secondary influence on married Deciding Women who chose not to work (29%). For single women who did not work, it appears that parents have the biggest impact. Fathers play a much more significant role for single women; 23% of single women cited their fathers as an influence, compared to 8% who indicated their mothers as their main influence.

A husband's influence on non-working women is most likely tied to a woman's role as a wife and mother. Female focus group participants express fear of losing spousal support as a result of entering the workforce. Some participants indicate that abandonment is possible in cases where a woman worked without her husband's approval. For them, not working at all presents a more attractive and 'safer' option. Participants also feel that recently married females need time to settle into their new families, and working can jeopardise this social adjustment.

The perspective from male focus group participants is that traditional gender roles make more sense for the good of society and that men are more productive, a fact which is not supported by the views of many employers.⁴¹

They also believe that there is little need for a woman to work if her husband could provide for her and their family.

"My mother didn't complete her education. She dedicated all her time to her kids, but she doesn't want me to do the same... She says I should work regardless of my husband's financial situation. She encourages me to get a job and contribute to the community."

Female focus group participant

"A woman isn't really a leader at work if she's negligent at home. You need to look at leadership holistically, a woman's ability to properly manage both her professional and personal life is key."

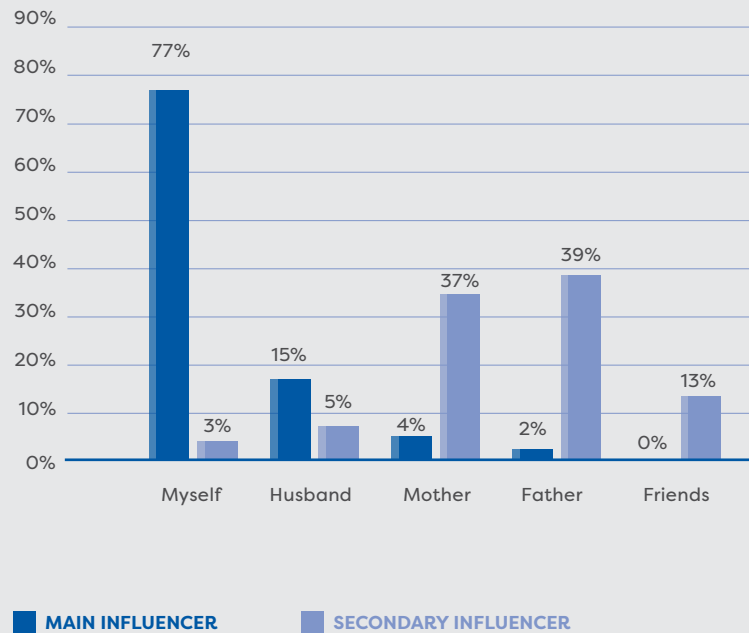
Male focus group participant

Figure 8.

Sources of influence for
Deciding Women

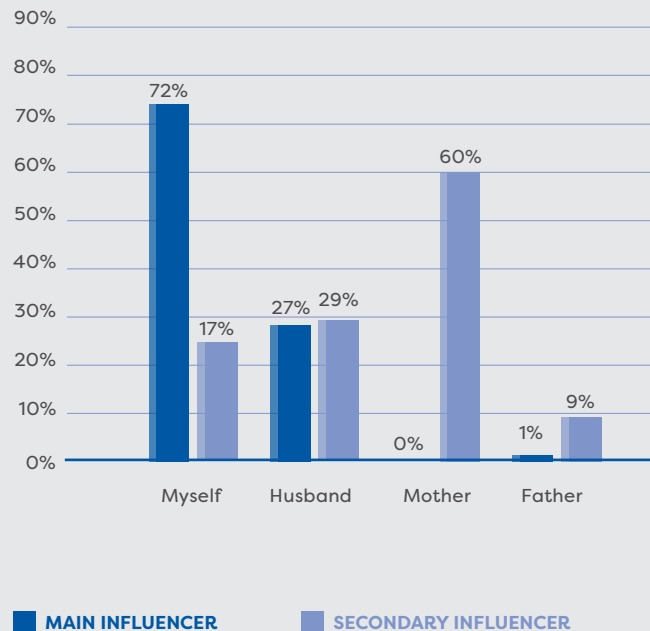
Deciding Women who seek employment

- 77% say they play the greatest role in their decision to seek employment
- Husbands are cited as the second major influence for choosing to work by 15% of our Deciding Women
- Parents are the most important secondary influencers, with mothers and fathers exerting similar influence (37% and 39%, respectively)



Deciding Women who do not seek employment

- 72% say they play the greatest role in their decision not to seek employment
- Husbands are cited as the second major influence for choosing to work by 27% of our Deciding Women
- Mothers are specifically the most important secondary influencer (60%)



Influencers shape Deciding Women's work decisions from a young age

As previously discussed, there is a correlation between female workforce participation and observing other working women in the family when young. 45% of the Deciding Women in the study who had been in previous paid employment grew up seeing other women working, compared to 24% of those who worked without seeing other women doing so in their childhood.

Women who had grown up seeing other women working in their families are significantly more likely to fall into the TTM stages of Contemplation (47%) and Preparation (42%), as opposed to Pre-contemplation (11%). This finding suggests the importance of female role models within the family in Deciding Women's decisions around work.

Views of the influencers

Husbands, fathers, and brothers - men who form a part of the Deciding Woman's microsystem - play an important role in employment decisions.

An Emirati man's attitude towards working women appears to be influenced by the observed attitudes of other men in the family

Our findings indicate that male influencers of Deciding Women have their own sources of influence that shape their perceptions as well. The majority of Emirati men surveyed have attitudes towards working women that are similar to those of the men they grew up with.

Overall, only 20% of the men in our study are supportive of women in their family working, with a further 14% supportive,

but under specific conditions. However, only a mere 5% feel proud of women who work. Over 90% of these men report that their views towards women working in their families are the same views held by the men in their families when they were growing up (see next page). Given that this finding is based on a small subset of respondents (as male response rates are lower than female rates), this is an area that warrants further research.

Early exposure to working women has a positive association with Emirati men's attitudes towards the idea of working women

Although only 14% of the men in our study had grown up in households with working women, a higher percentage of these men (61%) have wives or sisters working than the other men in the sample (39%). This suggests that there is a correlation between early exposure to working women in the family and whether men support working women in their own family spheres.

This early exposure is especially important once a man is married. 78% of married men who had grown up around working women have wives who work compared to 35% of husbands who had no previous exposure to working women in their families.

Emirati men have the same attitudes towards working women today as those of the men they had observed growing up

100%

WHO GREW UP WITH MEN WHO WERE **'SUPPORTIVE'** OF WOMEN WORKING REPORTED **FEELING THE SAME**

92%

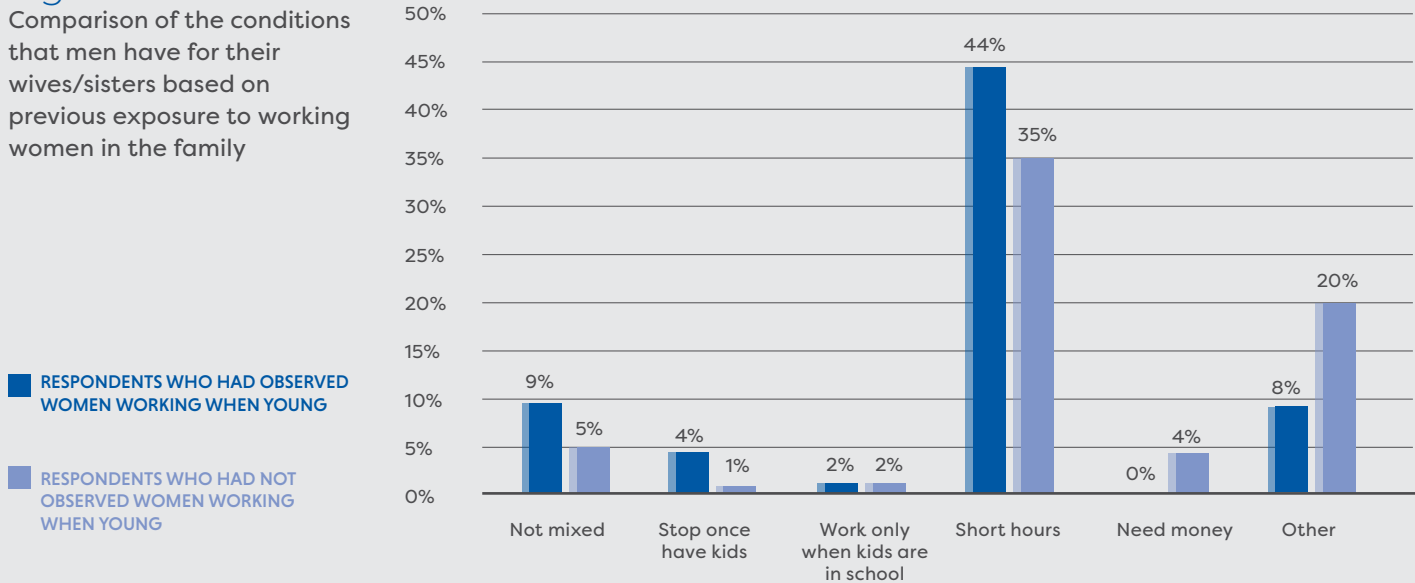
OF THOSE WHO GREW UP WITH MEN WHO WERE **'SUPPORTIVE WITH CONDITIONS'** REPORTED **FEELING THE SAME**

100%

OF THOSE WHO GREW UP WITH MEN WHO WERE **'PROUD'** OF WOMEN WORKING REPORTED **FEELING THE SAME**

Figure 9.

Comparison of the conditions that men have for their wives/sisters based on previous exposure to working women in the family



Nonetheless, while men who had grown up with working women in their families are more likely to have working wives, there appears to be some ambivalence towards the situation. Fewer of these men report being unconditionally supportive of their working wives or sisters, as compared to being supportive with conditions (39% vs. 52%).

On the other hand, more of the men who had not grown up around working women report being unconditionally, rather than conditionally, supportive of working women in their families (55% vs. 34%), even though they are less likely to actually have working wives or sisters.

This finding, that men who had observed women working in their childhood are more inclined toward conditional support, may suggest that their early observations make them more aware of the challenges that women face

at work. However, further research would be required to validate this conclusion.

A closer examination of the conditions under which men would be supportive of their working wives reveals that shorter working hours are the only significant condition for both men who had grown up in households with working women and those who had not (44% vs. 35%).

EMIRATI SOCIETAL INFLUENCE

To understand how society beyond the family influences the attitudes of Emirati working women, our study included a scale that has been used in similar studies, and also looked at how attitudes vary by life-stage.

Table 6.

Breakdown and comparison of MAWWWS (Multi-dimensional Aversion to Women Who Work Scale) Scores^a

Respondent Group	MAWWWS Score	Employment Scepticism Mean Score	Traditional Roles Preference Mean Score
Deciding Women (Overall)	22.4	10.2	12.2
Pre-contemplation Stage	23.0	10.4	12.6
Contemplation Stage	22.3	10.4	11.9
Preparation Stage	22.0	9.6	12.4
Emirati Men	24.0	11.6	12.5
Working Emirati Women	15.8	7.0	8.8
Young Emiratis (Mostafa, 2005) ^b	20.4	*	*
Older Emiratis (Mostafa, 2005)	23.2	*	*

a. The separate Employment Skepticism and Traditional Roles Preference scores add up to a figure greater than the MAWWWS score because these figures are rounded up to the nearest tenth.

b. Mostafa, 2005's study does not include the breakdown of scores for traditional roles preferences and employment skepticism, so this is not reported here.

Attitudes towards Women Who Work

The survey included questions that are part of the Multi-dimensional Aversion to Women Who Work Scale (MAWWWS). The 10 MAWWWS^a questions measure traditional role preferences and employment scepticism to determine how opposed a person is to working women. On a scale from 0-40, higher MAWWWS scores indicate less support for working women. MAWWWS scores from this study are near the mid-point of 20, which shows that respondents hold relatively accepting attitudes towards working women.

Neither gender nor TTM stage significantly influence how Emiratis feel about women in the workforce

On average, Emirati men (24.0) and Deciding Women (22.4) scores are closely aligned. There are also no significant differences between the MAWWWS scores of women across the different Transtheoretical Model stages (see Table 6). However, these findings should be interpreted with caution as the scale does not test actual behaviours.

Work experiences shape attitudes towards working women

Based on their MAWWWS scores, working women (15.8) unsurprisingly hold the most accepting attitudes towards working, suggesting positive work experiences among these women. Emirati men with private sector experience (23.7) view working woman more favourably than others in their respective groups. Conversely, Deciding Women (24.7) who had worked in the public sector are least accepting of women in the workplace, suggesting less positive experiences of work among these women.

Further exploration of the MAWWWS scores suggests that respondents' value of traditional roles outweigh their scepticism of women in work. The 'Traditional Role' scores for all three groups are higher than their Employment Scepticism scores. There is strong agreement with many of the statements found in the Traditional Roles section of the survey, particularly to statements about women being

happier in traditional roles. Deciding Women and Emirati men both strongly agree with the statement that traditional husband/wife roles are best.

Views of Emirati society on working women are changing

Although traditional roles and values remain important to Emiratis, there has been some improvement in attitudes toward working women over the last decade. Mostafa (2005) assessed MAWWWS scores 11 years ago in the UAE and found a generational gap between older (23.2) and younger (20.4) Emiratis' feelings about women in the labour force. The attitudes for Deciding Women overall and Working Emirati women are more positive than those of older Emiratis ten years ago. As illustrated in the table 6, a similar study on working women finds quite a difference in the score (15.8).^b

Views are evolving, and it is progressively more acceptable for women to work and bring income into the household. Some of our Deciding Women explicitly state this in interviews, and trends in the survey reflect this view. For example, a greater percentage of Millennial Deciding Women (39%) had grown around working women in the family than Deciding Women between 40-49 years of age (9%).

LIFE STAGES AND THE WORKING WOMAN

Our survey responses indicate that women themselves are more accepting of working women than men. Both Emirati men and Deciding Women were asked about which life stages are most appropriate for an Emirati woman to work (see Figure 10). These stages include pre-marriage, married without children, and married with children. We also look at whether conditions of needing additional income and being widowed or divorced affect responses. Men (38%) are overall significantly less likely than women (83%) to agree that an Emirati woman could work whenever she liked. However, for men who had grown up around working women in the family, this percentage increases to 52%.

a. The maximum MAWWWS score is 40; higher scores indicate a higher level of aversion to working women and more traditional views. The MAWWWS scores for this paper are calculated on a 4-point scale to allow for comparison to results in Professor Mohamad Mostafa's previous study. The Cronbach Alpha for the scale is 0.85.

b. Data for Working Emirati Women is derived from a 2015 study conducted by Sally Jeffery, a Master's student from the University of Liverpool, entitled 'The Effects of Government Interventions on Female Workforce Participation in the United Arab Emirates.'

Figure 10.
Acceptance levels among
Emirati men and Deciding
Women for women working
at various life stages



DIVORCED OR WIDOWED
(OR IN A SITUATION OF
FINANCIAL NEED)

EMIRATI MEN:
98%

DECIDING WOMEN:
94%



UNMARRIED

EMIRATI MEN:
92%

DECIDING WOMEN:
90%



MARRIED WITHOUT
CHILDREN

EMIRATI MEN:
83%

DECIDING WOMEN:
42%



MARRIED WITH
CHILDREN

EMIRATI MEN:
25%

DECIDING WOMEN:
45%

DECREASING OVERALL ACCEPTANCE



Before and after marriage

As Figure 12 illustrates, there is significantly greater acceptance for women to work before they are married from both men (92%) and Deciding Women (90%). Yet, many men and Deciding Women feel that it is only acceptable to work after marriage (40% men and 47% women). Pre-contemplation stage women are less likely to find working after marriage (33%) acceptable than other groups of women.

It is likely that working as a single woman is more acceptable in Emirati society due to her lesser home responsibilities. Male focus group participants note that after marriage, a woman's main focus needs to be on spousal responsibilities and home life. Female focus group participants express the belief that after marriage, Emirati men usually feel that females needed time to settle into their new families and that working might jeopardise this social adjustment; therefore, not working is the safer option to avoid spousal disapproval.

Married without children

Surprisingly, men are more accepting of married women without children working than Deciding Women are. A significantly higher percentage of Emirati men (83%) agree that women could work at this life stage, compared with Deciding Women (42%). Support levels vary by TTM stage among women; those in the Contemplation stage (71%) are more supportive than those in the Pre-contemplation (54%) or Preparation (52%) stages.

Married with children

Only 25% of Emirati men are supportive of married women working when they have small children at home. Emirati women are less polarised; almost half of both Deciding Women and Working Women^a (45% and 48%, respectively) feel it is acceptable for women to work at this life stage, although childcare issues are a major determining consideration for this decision. For example, female focus group participants point out the difficulty of finding good nannies for young children.

Support for women to work soars as married women's children enter school. However, the increase in support is greater among men. 94% of men are supportive of mothers working once their children are old enough to attend school, compared to 83% of Deciding Women. Curiously, support for working mothers is lowest among Preparation stage women (74%), which is the group of Deciding Women who are in theory most interested in working. This may be due to her greater awareness about the reality of working conditions and the challenges they present for balancing work with home responsibilities.

Other life conditions

There is high support for women to work in situations of perceived financial need.

94% of both Emirati men and Deciding Women agree that it is acceptable for women to work to increase household income. Almost all men (98%) and Deciding Women (94%) believe widowed or divorced women can work. These findings suggest that it is more acceptable for women to enter the workforce when it is an economic necessity.

“I am married, and my wife has a job. It is unrealistic for me to ask her to quit her job if I am unable to provide financially for the family. I can't do that!”

Male focus group participant

a. Data for Working Emirati Women is derived from a 2015 study conducted by Sally Jeffery, a Master's student from the University of Liverpool, entitled 'The Effects of Government Interventions on Female Workforce Participation in the United Arab Emirates.'

IN SUMMARY

Family is important to shaping ideas for both Deciding Women and Emirati men. As women go through different life stages, different members of the family, mainly male, inform their decisions. Fathers hold sway when women are still living at home, while husbands are most influential once women marry.

For both men and women, exposure to working women in the family while growing up makes them more accepting of women in the workforce. However, men tend to take on the attitudes held by the men in their family while they were growing up and seem to conform more to traditional societal views.

Deciding Women are clear that they hold the decision of whether to work or not. However, when single it is her parents who exert the most influence and then once married, her husband.

Women's attitudes about family size are shifting. Overall, women prefer to have smaller families themselves, even though they think Emirati women in general should have larger families.

Emirati societal attitudes are generally positive towards working women. There is support for working women in most life stages, although there is concern about women working when they have young children at home. However, while our study's respondents are generally accepting of working women, there remains an underlying theme that indicates concerns about a working woman's ability to fulfil her traditional role of wife and mother. Interestingly, there is less scepticism about a woman's capabilities in the working world; this may be a reflection of the higher level of education that Emirati women tend to have.



HER VIEWS ON THE
WORKPLACE

5

HER VIEWS ON THE WORKPLACE

This part of the report looks at Deciding Women's preferences for the workplace. It specifically explores ideas about ideal careers, co-workers, desired benefits and working hours, as well as working in the private sector. The section closes with a discussion of government and employer supports that are available to Deciding Women in the UAE.

JOB AVAILABILITY

The majority of Deciding Women believe that there is a shortage of jobs linked to educational qualifications and considering geographical preferences

For Deciding Women interested in working, greater awareness about and the availability of jobs tied to their education can help facilitate their entry into the labour force. While 84%^a of Deciding Women believe there are jobs available for Emirati women, nearly 70% also think there is a lack of job opportunities for Emirati women that are either linked to their education and qualifications or located near to their residential location. Deciding Women also believe that there is a shortage of part-time (54%) and private sector (58%) jobs.

In particular, a high proportion of Deciding Women in Umm Al Quwain (81%), Ras-Al-Khaimah (79%), and Ajman (77%) feel that there is a lack of job opportunities in their Emirate. Deciding Women in Ajman (50%) in particular, feel that there is a shortage of private sector job opportunities.

Interestingly, of the participants who had chosen not to answer these sets of questions, 75% did so because they were unsure how to respond.^b This indicates that more information about job availability might be helpful to these women.

PREFERRED JOBS AND INDUSTRIES

Running home businesses, teaching and healthcare are top occupational choices for Deciding Women

When Deciding Women are asked what the best types of jobs are for Emirati women, running her own business and healthcare were the top two choices. This is true for Deciding Women overall and for those in each of the TTM stages. Interestingly, teaching is cited as a desirable job across all stages, with 45% of the respondents indicating they would teach even if it was not their field.

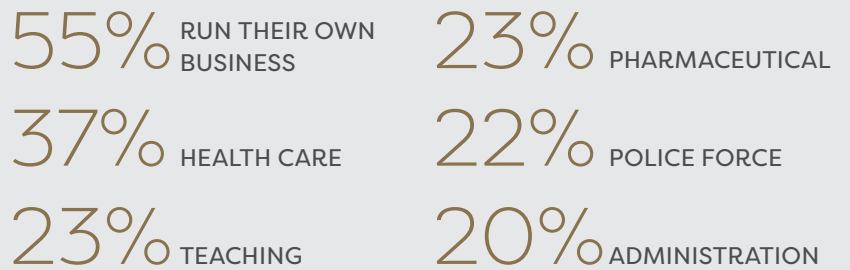
“As long as a woman is entrepreneurial, there are no challenges she can’t overcome.”

Dr. Amna Khalifa, Chairperson,
Ajman Business Council^c

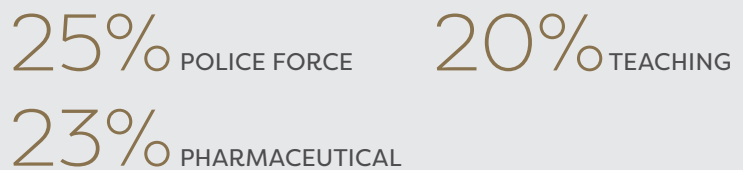
- a. Survey reporting includes only those who presented response options. Those who had refused are excluded as are those who are unsure, since this was not an offered response option but a way to capture why someone chose not to answer a question. Where relevant, unsure responses are discussed when it appears that this may uncover areas where Deciding Women may benefit from additional interventions or education to increase how informed they are on a particular topic.
- b. Those who choose to select one of the given response options could either indicate they refuse to answer the question or they are unsure on how to answer the question. High percentages of women are unsure for these questions with the exception of the statement “There are plenty of job opportunities for Emirati women.”
- c. Interview with Dr. Amna Khalifa, Chairperson, Ajman Business Council, conducted March 2016

Figure 11.
Best types of jobs for
Emirati women

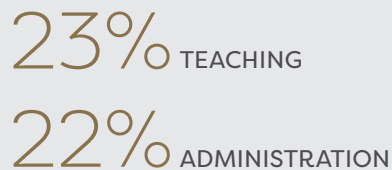
BEST JOBS FOR
EMIRATI WOMEN
FROM DECIDING
WOMEN OVERALL



PRE-CONTEMPLATION
(not interested in working)



CONTEMPLATION
(would consider working,
not taken steps)



PREPARATION
(interested in working,
have taken steps)



“A woman running her own business has less limitations. She is free to set her own working hours, which is particularly useful for a woman with a husband and kids. A private business better accommodates a married professional’s needs.”

Female focus group participant

“If I wanted to work now I wouldn’t look for employment. I would start my own business. I don’t want people telling me that I had stayed at home for a while.”

Female interviewee

Running their own business is cited by more than half of survey respondents overall and within each TTM stage as the preferred type of work. Providing support for such potential businesswomen may therefore be a successful way to attract Deciding Women into the workforce.

When asked which industries they would most like to work in, respondents show preference for Government (32%), Teaching (15%), Business (15%), Health Care (7%), and Banking (7%).

A high percentage of Deciding Women are open to joining the armed forces

Over half of the Deciding Women (54%) are interested in the armed forces. Military service is mandatory for men 18–30 years old, but the UAE Federal Law No.6, issued in 2014 on the National Military Service and Reserve, allows women in this same age group to voluntarily enrol in the military with guardian consent. The public endorsement of the importance of National Service by the young leadership of the country has also helped encourage more Emiratis to join the armed forces.

The Khawla bint Al Azwar Military School (KBAS), founded in 1990 at the direction of the late His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, is the UAE and Gulf region’s first and only military college training women for national service.⁴² Its namesake is a prominent female warrior who fought during the era of Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him). Under the new national and reserve service law for military service, the School opened its doors to its first female conscripts in 2014 for the required 9-month training period, which has since been increased to 12 months. Other schools such as the Rabdan Academy have also introduced military training for females. Today, many Emirati women occupy senior ranks within the Armed Forces, particularly the Air Force.⁴³

ATTRACTING WOMEN TO AND RETAINING THEM IN THE WORKFORCE

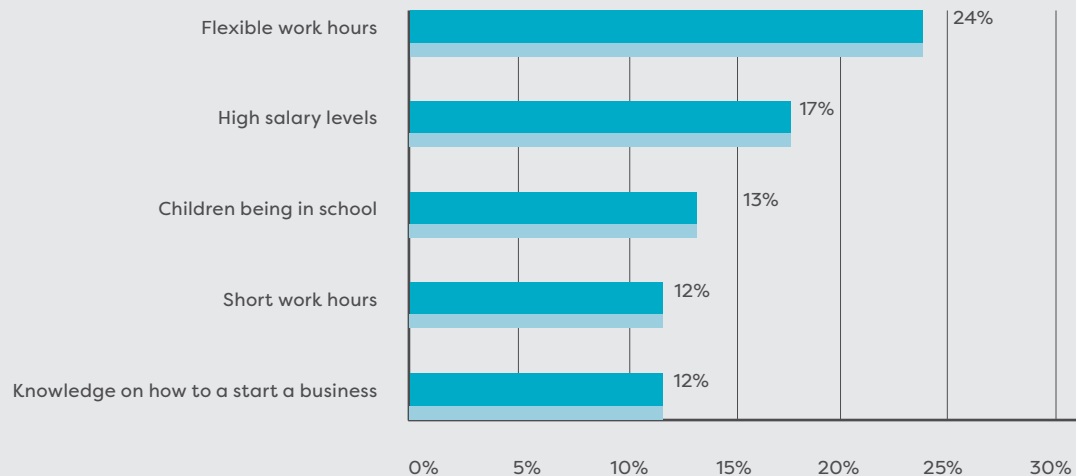
Work hours play a key role in attracting women to the workplace

Deciding Women were asked to choose which factors would positively impact their decision to work. Figure 14 illustrates their responses, with flexible work hours being the most popular.

“I think that teaching is where women can do a better job.”

Female Interviewee

Figure 12.
Factors that would attract
Deciding Women to the
workforce



About one-fifth of Deciding Women indicated that none of the elements listed would have an impact and therefore were not a barrier; of these, nearly half were in the Pre-contemplation stage. This latter finding is interesting, as it indicates that more than half (55%) of Pre-Contemplation stage women – those who self-identified at the beginning of the survey that they had no interest in working – might actually consider work under the right conditions. However, further research is needed to understand what interventions might be effective, as they do not appear to be the more practical considerations mentioned here.

The responses vary by TTM stages (Figure 13). The Pre-contemplation stage women who would consider working cite flexible hours and having school-age children as important factors to help attract them into a job. Contemplation stage women also value flexible hours along with a high salary and learning how to start their own business. Preparation stage women focus on high compensation, and work hours, as well as their children being in school (20%).

Post-entry support systems desired by Deciding Women include training and career guidance

Once in the workforce, Deciding Women desire support for skills training (83%), starting a business (82%), and career guidance (81%). We discuss such area of support in more detail in the following sections of this report.

Additionally, Pre-contemplation stage women want childcare (73%) and those in the Preparation stage want help with re-connecting with the job market (88%) and childcare (81%). Our Deciding Women would also like to see awareness campaigns that promote positive views of working Emirati women (81%).

These findings suggest an overall willingness of Deciding Women to enter and remain in the workforce, but many practical factors are impacting their ability to do so.

“...things such as flexible work, working from home, job sharing, equal holidays between private and public sector... the Ministry can implement these changes.”

Dr. Noura Al Badour, Employment Department, Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation^a

IEWS ON WORK COLLEAGUES

Deciding Women view working with expatriates positively, particularly those who have worked in the private sector

Contrary to some of the prior research that helped shape this study, Deciding Women view working with expatriates positively. The women in our study feel that working with expatriates is a good experience because of the learning opportunity (86%) and respect (93%) they receive from expatriates. The majority disagree with statements that it was difficult to work with expatriates due to cultural misunderstanding, perceived lack of Emirati commitment to work, or beliefs that Emiratis were hired based on Emiratisation policies and not merit. Those with prior private sector experience have even more positive views as can be seen in Figure 14.

Such positive attitudes towards working with expatriates is encouraging for attracting more Emirati women into the private sector, since it is primarily expatriates who work in this sector.

a. Interview with Dr Noura Al Badour, Employment Department, Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation, conducted March 2016

Figure 13.

Relative attractiveness of career facilitators by TTM stage

> PRE-CONTEMPLATION

18% FLEXIBLE HOURS

11% CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

> CONTEMPLATION

27% FLEXIBLE HOURS

15% HIGH SALARY

14% KNOWLEDGE ON HOW TO START A BUSINESS

> PREPARATION

33% HIGH SALARY

33% SHORT WORK HOURS

21% FLEXIBLE HOURS

20% CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

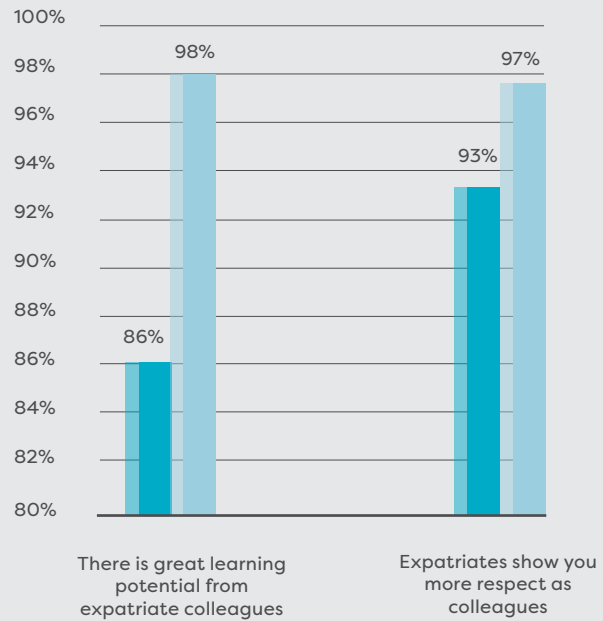
Figure 14.

Deciding Women's views on working with expatriates

Percentage of Deciding women who agree with positive statements about working with expatriates (overall versus those who had worked in the private sector)

■ ALL DECIDING WOMEN

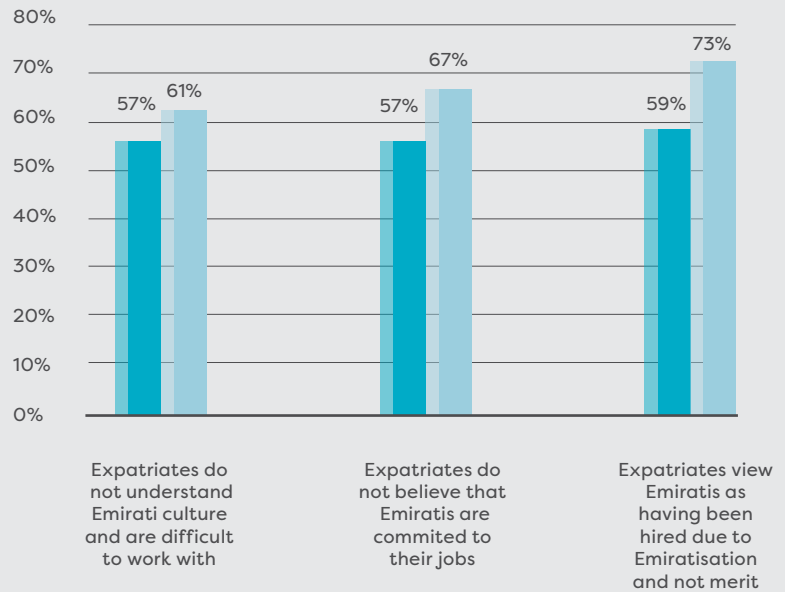
■ DECIDING WOMEN WHO HAD WORKED IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR



Percentage of Deciding women who disagree with negative statements about working with expatriates (overall versus those who had worked in the private sector)

■ ALL DECIDING WOMEN

■ DECIDING WOMEN WHO HAD WORKED IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR



Women in the Contemplation stage feel less comfortable working with expatriates. They believe there would be challenges working with expatriates due to cultural issues (52%), perceived job commitment (54%), and beliefs that an Emirati was hired due to Emiratisation policies (50%). These assumptions may make it more difficult to attract this set of Deciding Women into the private sector.

The views of those who had worked in the private sector are compelling because this group of Deciding Women would most likely have had interactions with expatriates at work. Therefore, sharing these positive experiences might encourage other women, particularly those in the Contemplation stage, into private sector employment.

Deciding Women seem comfortable working in mixed gender environments and prefer to work with Emirati - as opposed to expatriate - men

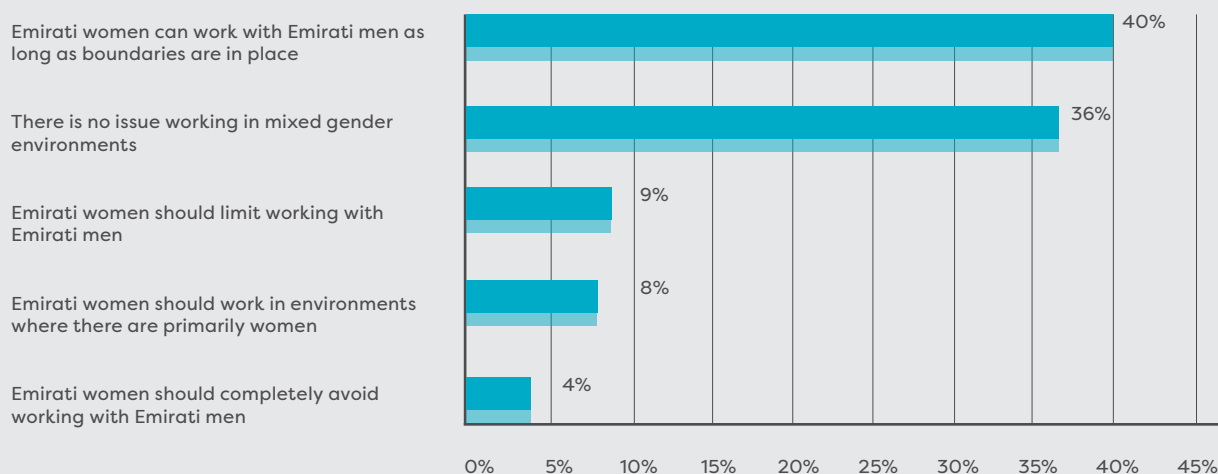
Most Deciding Women think that working with Emirati men is not an issue as long as there are boundaries in place (40%), although many women think there is no issue at all (36%). A much smaller percentage feel that Emirati women should limit working with Emirati men, work mostly with women, or avoid working with Emirati men entirely (Figure 15).

The only differences by TTM stage are that those in the Pre-contemplation stage feel strongest about working mostly with women (17%). Female-only work settings may therefore be worth exploring for this segment of women.

Despite the positive views on expatriate co-workers, the prospect of working with expatriate men seems more disconcerting than working with Emirati men for Deciding Women (57%). This is true regardless of work experience or a woman's TTM stage.

Figure 15.

Deciding Women's views on working with Emirati men (all TTM stages)



Overall, Deciding Women are comfortable working in mixed gender (with limitations) and mixed culture work environments. If given a choice, they would prefer to work with Emirati men instead of expatriate men. Based on some of the earlier focus group findings, it is possible that this may be related to the opportunity to broaden her social network.

BENEFITS AND HOURS

Emirati Deciding Women desire shorter work hours and seem to favour work schedules that better align with part-time work

As previously discussed, fewer work hours in the day are most appealing to Deciding Women. Female survey respondents suggest an optimal average workday of 6.44 hours (32.7 hours/week). This work day preference is similar across all TTM stages.

There are a few, minor differences in work hour preferences based on certain background characteristics, a finding that is likely correlated with lesser home responsibilities and more realistic expectations. Deciding Women without children are willing to work 30 minutes more per day than women with children. Women with prior work experience are also willing to work 40 minutes more per workday.

Women who had never been married before are willing to work the longest hours (7 hrs/day and 35 hours/week). This is almost an hour longer than Deciding Women who had never been married.

These desired daily and weekly hours are more aligned with part-time roles, yet there is low awareness of part-time work as an option among Deciding Women. This may explain why most Deciding Women did not specifically mention part-time work as a desired work feature when asked what factors would help attract or retain them in the work force.

60% of Working Emirati Women^a surveyed did indicate that more part-time job opportunities are needed for Emirati

women. By virtue of being in the workforce, it is possible that these women may have better awareness of part-time work and what it entails.

Key to enabling women to seek alternative work options is the introduction of new policies in more recent years. Among these is Resolution No. 25 of 2010, which was passed by The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiritisation Cabinet, and subsequently followed by the introduction of labour cards in 2011. The new policy allows certain categories of citizens and residents, such as housewives, to work part-time. Prior to this, there had been no legal provision for part-time work in the UAE. It is likely that many non-working Emirati women are unaware of this change in regulation; thus, raising awareness in this area is vital.

Deciding Women, particularly those in Pre-contemplation, respond positively to salary increases

Salary levels are a significant motivator for attracting Deciding Women into the workforce, especially those women in the Pre-contemplation stage. 60% of Pre-Contemplation stage women, who had initially expressed no interest in working, are very likely to accept a job offer for 40,000 AED per month. Deciding Women in other TTM stages are also responsive to salaries, though at higher levels. The majority of Contemplation (60%) and Preparation (54%) stage women are very likely to take a position if it offered 80,000 AED per month.

Interestingly, as can be seen in Figure 16, Deciding Women in the Preparation stage respond to higher salaries more slowly than Deciding Women in other TTM stages, particularly those in the Pre-contemplation stage. It would take a larger salary and benefits package to entice the majority of Preparation stage women to accept a job. 80% of those in this Deciding Women segment would take a job only if it offered more than 80,000 AED in monthly compensation. This may be due to their greater awareness of the effort and expectations of a full time role.

a. Data for Working Emirati Women is derived from a study conducted by Sally Jeffery, a Master's student from the University of Liverpool, in 2015 entitled 'The Effects of Government Interventions on Female Workforce Participation in the United Arab Emirates.' The 202 participants are working Emirati women over 18 years of age; of which the majority (46%) are in their 30's. 97% of these women work full time and 85% work in the public sector.

These findings support the results in Chapter 3 – *Reasons for Entering the Workforce* – which indicates financial independence as a reason Deciding Women might choose to work.

AVERAGE DESIRED WORK HOURS:

6.44 HRS
PER DAY

32.7 HRS
PER WEEK

“I was going to work with [a specific company] but the hours started before the nursery opens and continue till after the nursery closes. With such scenario, part-time job would suit me better.”

Female Interviewee

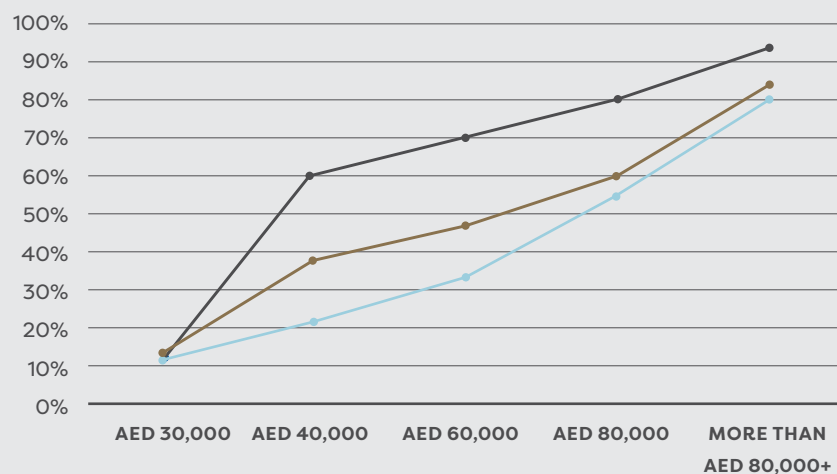
“I wouldn’t go into a government job because I fit more in environments that are not purely local.”

Female Interviewee

Figure 16.

Likelihood of accepting a job offer by monthly income offered

—●— PRE-CONTEMPLATION
—●— CONTEMPLATION
—●— PREPARATION



VIEWS ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Deciding Women view private sector jobs as more interesting but see them as offering lower salaries and less career progression opportunities

Views on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the private sector give insight into what may help attract Deciding Women to jobs in the sector. Respondents feel that the private sector provides more interesting work (58%), better bonus payments (69%), more on the job training opportunities (58%), and a better choice of suitable job opportunities for Emirati women (63%).

62% disagree that the private sector has less flexible hours than the public sector, indicating that they believe the private sector offers at least equal but possibly greater flexibility than the public sector.

When considering how views change based on the TTM, women in the Contemplation stage have the most positive views of the private sector. They agree with statements about the private sector offering more interesting work (70%), better bonus payments (74%), more on the job opportunities (70%), and a good choice of suitable job opportunities for Emirati women (71%). It may be possible, therefore, to encourage Deciding Women in the Contemplation stage to work if the position is in the private sector, since many of these women have a very positive view of the sector.

However, respondents have two key concerns about the private sector that align with previous study findings; salaries and benefits are perceived to be lower in the private sector, and a slight majority (55%) are concerned that the private sector provides fewer opportunities for career progression.

“People leave because there is no career path for them, for women.”

Dr. Noura Al Badour, Employment Department, Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization^a

Views are more mixed when it comes to flexible hours. Compared to Deciding Women, a higher percentage of those with private sector work experience disagree with the statement that the private sector has less flexible hours (57%). While this does not necessarily mean that the private sector actually has more flexible working hours, it suggests that flexible working opportunities may be perceived as being similar in both the public and private sectors.

There seems to be a lack of awareness about private sector employment opportunities

One-third of Deciding Women (30-36 %) are unsure about how to respond to survey questions on the private sector.^b With less than 10% of respondents having prior work experience in the sector, it is clear that providing Deciding Women with a more informed view about what the sector has to offer may attract them more. Internship programmes or shadowing opportunities are two ways to enable them to see for themselves the realities of working in the sector.

“... private sector organisations can highlight their efforts with diversity and inclusion, articulate the career progression their company offers, and show how the work they do is globally connected, while allowing room for flexibility. They will be able to attract those female millennials in this region looking for those opportunities, which may be different from the opportunities in the public sector.”

Zina Janabi, Director, Women in Business Leader, PwC Middle East^c

Interestingly, respondents with prior experience of working in the private sector are more negative. These women do not believe that the private sector provides more interesting work (61%) or more on-the-job training opportunities (52%) than the public sector. Also, a slightly larger percentage of

a. Interview with Dr Noura Al Badour, Employment Department, Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization, conducted March 2016

b. This figure is based on reviewing responses for all 1,550 survey participants, including those who had refused, those who are unsure, and those with different levels of agreement.

c. Interview with Zina Janabi, Director, Women in Business Leader, PwC Middle East, conducted April 2016

Deciding Women say that the UAE Government is supportive of their choices on work

96%

BELIEVE THAT THE UAE GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS EMIRATI WOMEN WORKING

96%

AGREE THAT THE UAE GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS WOMEN IN MAKING CHOICES WHETHER OR NOT TO WORK

90%

SAY EMIRITISATION POLICIES HELP WOMEN FIND WORK

these women feel that the private sector offers less career progression (59%) compared to public sector respondents (51%).

Since these women should have the best insight into what the sector has to offer, these negative views around career progression, training, and availability of interesting work need to be more fully explored. These perceptions remain even though those with private sector work experience feel there are many opportunities for Emirati women in this sector (69%).

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

One of the UAE government's Vision 2021 priorities is to "harness the full potential of its National human capital" on the country's journey to developing a competitive, knowledge-based and innovative economy.⁴⁴ Commitment to achieving this goal is woven throughout Emirati labour and social policies. As previously discussed, these policies can reinforce attitudes and behaviours and thereby influence Emirati women's choices.

There is always a lag, however, between policy implementation and the impact being felt by the intended beneficiaries. Whereas the policy framework may imply a receptive labour market for women, the reality is often different, and this is borne out in many of the findings from our study. For instance, whereas there is no barrier to offering part-time employment from a regulatory perspective, the women in this study still do not believe there is sufficient opportunity, suggesting more needs to be done to incentivise employers.

For detailed information on Government Policies in the United Arab Emirates, please see Appendix 1.2.

EMPLOYER-LEVEL SUPPORT

While governmental policies shape the broader context in which Deciding Women consider paid employment, employer-led workplace policies and practices play a more immediate role in attracting and retaining Deciding Women.

Recruitment and retention policies

Although Emiratisation programmes inform the recruitment of Emiratis for certain sectors, recruitment efforts are primarily designed by employers themselves. Hiring and recruitment strategies developed around gender diversity commitments are one way women are targeted. Female recruitment on university campuses or partnerships with semi-governmental organisations – such as the Business Women Councils in Dubai, Sharjah, and Ajman – help create additional pathways to employment for women.⁴⁵

“There are real opportunities to connect women who are interested and motivated to work with concrete resources that enable them to find a really good fit with what they want and desire.”

Dr. May Al Dabbagh, Assistant Professor, New York University, Abu Dhabi^a

a. Interview with Dr. May Al Dabbagh, Assistant Professor, New York University Abu Dhabi, conducted March 2016

As shown earlier, skills training and career progression are key features for retaining Emirati women in the workplace. Skill development programmes aimed at attracting talented young women are mutually beneficial, as they allow employers to train employees in a structured way on their business or line of work while simultaneously allowing employees to gain skills and feel that their employers have invested in developing their careers.

Our survey results have also suggested the importance of social support tools such as childcare, lengthier maternity leave and flexible work arrangements to increase the retention of Emirati women at the workplace. Figure 17 summarises ideal workplace support systems based on our findings.

While the public sector has shown its commitment to professionally developing Emirati women in the workplace through its prominence of national women in positions of power, the private sector can improve on providing a career path for Emirati women. These issues are important to Emirati Deciding Women, where 55% perceive that private sector organisations offer less career progression than the public sector.

“Career development opportunities are the most important element for national women to choose the private sector over the public sector, especially when there are attractive opportunities in the public sector.”

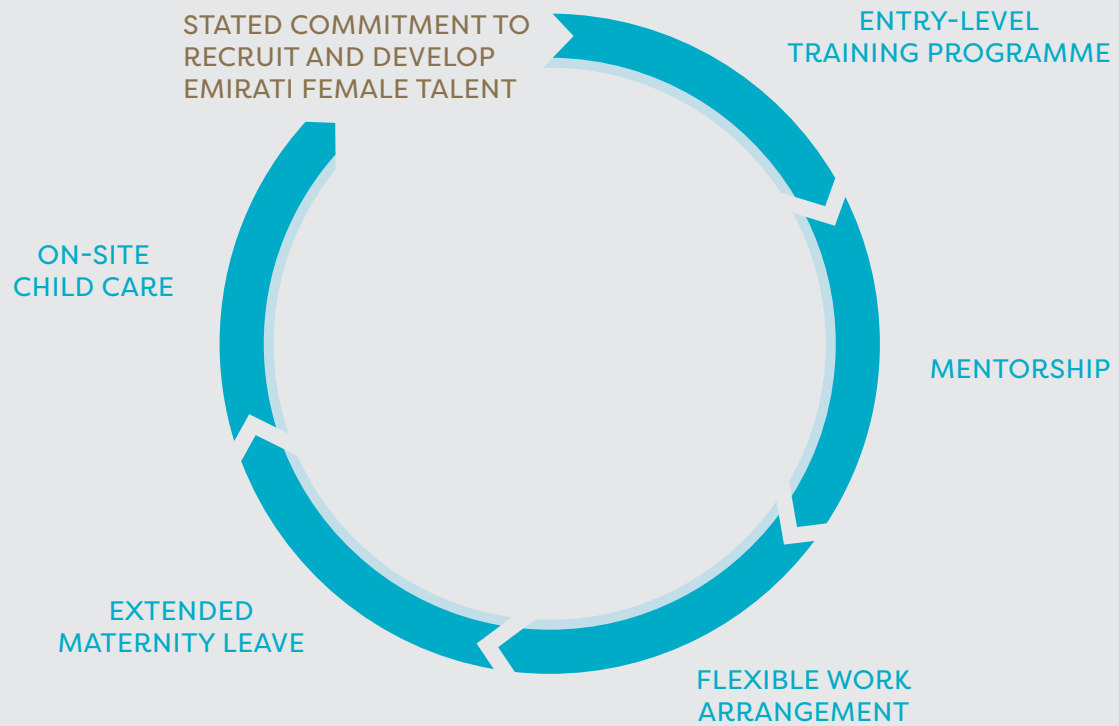
Zina Janabi, Director, Women in Business Leader, PwC Middle East^a

For more information on employer-led support in the United Arab Emirates, please see Appendix 1.3.

a. Interview with Zina Janabi, Director, Women in Business Leader, PwC Middle East, conducted April 2016

Figure 17.

Effective practices in workplace design to attract and retain Deciding Women



CASE STUDY

FEATURED INITIATIVE: THE DU FUJAIRAH CONTACT CENTER

'du' is a major telecom company in the UAE, and an equal opportunity employer. The company has been actively working to alter the traditional 'male' perception of the telecom sector, and has several initiatives in place to encourage women to join the workforce. One example is the Fujairah Contact Center (FCC) which has been providing employment opportunities for Emirati women in the Northern Emirates.

About du Fujairah Contact Center

- Established in 2011
- Has an all Emirati staff of nearly 90 employees, of which 86% are female
- Operates for 12 hours/day, from 8 AM – 8 PM
- Employees work in 8 hour shifts for 40 hours/week
- In 2015, turnover rate was 3%, compared to an average rate of 15% in call centers nationally

Focusing on Female Recruitment

The Fujairah Contact Center (FCC) was designed to provide Arabic language customer service to the UAE National mobile customer base. In doing so, the Center is generating employment, particularly for women, in the Northern Emirates. In the Emirate of Fujairah, where women are primarily homemakers or fresh graduates, the FCC provides a viable employment option for women without necessitating travel to the business hubs of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah. Furthermore, women tend to stay in employment for at least 3 years at FCC, which is indicative of employee satisfaction.

Making career development a priority

'du' believes that part of retaining valuable resources is to set a career development path which not only keeps resources motivated but also imparts a competitive culture within the setup.

At FCC, recruits go through a comprehensive soft skills and technical training to assist them in understanding du's products and offers, thus delivering exceptional customer service. Staff are able to enrol in any of the courses offered under the du University training platform, allowing for continuous skill development towards future roles and promotions.

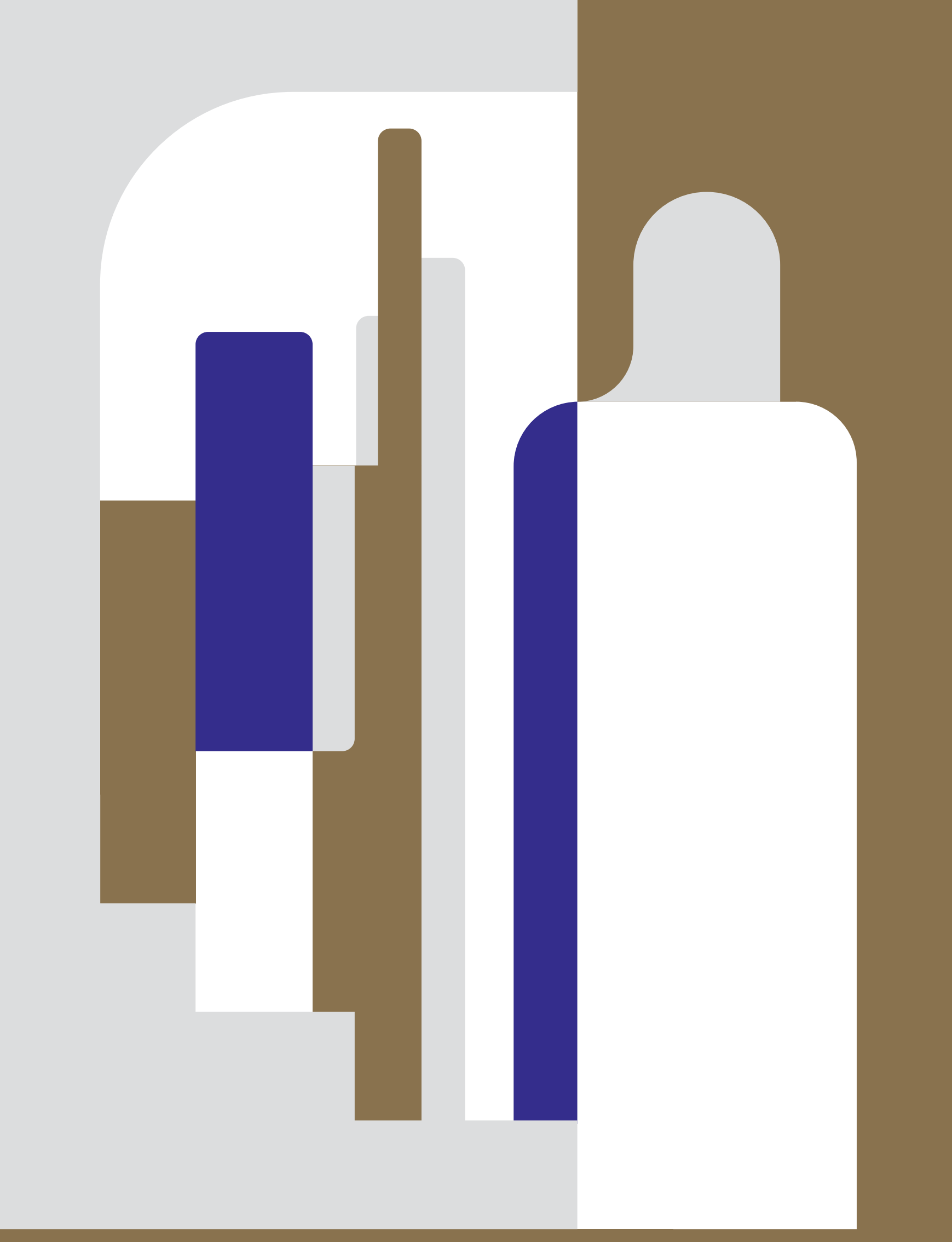
With career development paths in mind, 14 female employees have held several leadership roles at FCC since its launch. At present, 5 females are in Team Leader positions managing front and back office operations, supported by 2 other females in Quality Analyst positions.

IN SUMMARY

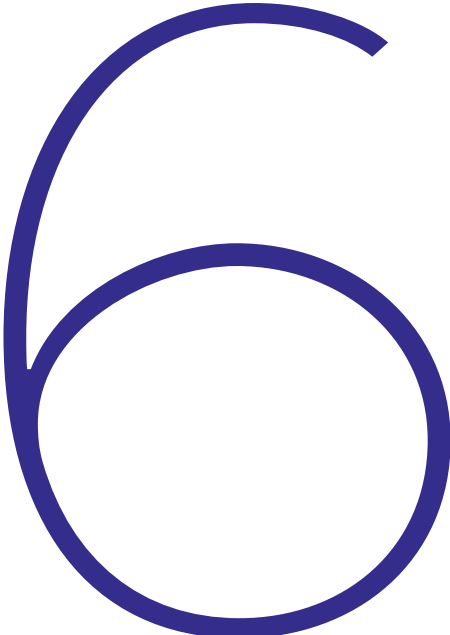
While only one-third of Deciding Women have worked in the past, most of the women in our study hold clear ideas about the workforce. They prefer jobs in government, teaching, and business as well as positions with shorter and more flexible hours. Trustworthy and affordable childcare is critical for many women who wish to pursue a career.

When it comes to ideal working conditions, Deciding Women are specific in what they want. Generous salaries and benefits are attractive to women of all TTM stages. Mixed-culture and mixed-gender work environments are of interest, though there is a desire to have some boundaries in place when working with men. Although there is a high preference towards working in the public sector, Deciding Women see benefits to working in the private sector as well.

The UAE government offers a variety of policy support for Emirati women interested in working. It guarantees basic rights as well as supports recruitment and retention. Due to policy differences by sector – federal and Emirate-level – government positions are typically more attractive to prospective Emirati employees. Part of the UAE Vision 2021 goals is to increase the representation of nationals in the private sector.⁴⁶ Policy changes and more positive or negative reinforcements are needed to encourage employers to see the business benefits of providing a working environment that is more attractive to Emirati women.



KEY AREAS OF
FOCUS



KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

Deciding Women possess a variety of talents and skills that can be used to further strengthen UAE society. This chapter discusses areas that require sustained focus to best support Emirati women in achieving their goals for themselves, their families, their community, and their country whether they choose to work or not.

Many of the key focus areas, based on our survey findings and complementary research, are staple features of local and global discourse on women in the workforce. Although initiatives are currently underway in the UAE in a significant number of these domains, there needs to be a strengthening in the scale of implementation, continued debate, more innovative thinking and increased engagement of relevant policymakers and thought leaders. The discussion in this section has been framed around the three Transtheoretical model (TTM) stages to present a more nuanced view on how to reach out to women within the larger Deciding Women segment. Also featured are initiatives that illustrate how some of these areas are being tackled in practice.

PRE-CONTEMPLATION STAGE

Support for entrepreneurship and small business ownership

Although Pre-contemplation stage women are not interested in working, they are enthusiastic about entrepreneurship. In fact, 37% of global entrepreneurial enterprises are owned by women.⁴⁷ Additionally regionally in MENA, a higher percentage of women (22%) are entrepreneurially active than men (18%).⁴⁸ Despite this difference, men still account for a larger percentage of economic activity than women (14% vs 4%).⁴⁹ Emirati women's contributions – particularly from those within this TTM stage – could increase if there was wider availability of training and funding for their entrepreneurial endeavours.

Establishing resources for women to explore entrepreneurship and small business ownership could be a first step to attract these women into the workforce. In fact, Deciding Women across all TTM stages have a high interest in starting their own business, but they also indicate uncertainty as to what this actually means for themselves as individuals and how they would go about doing so.

Specifically, there are differences between small business enterprises and entrepreneurship, and such a resource could focus on developing the necessary understanding, skills and attitudes for each. For example, small businesses usually are created around known or established products and services, deal with known risks, and are less interested in growth than in making a living. Entrepreneurs, on the other hand, most often create new products or offerings, deal with many unknown risks and are most interested in high and rapid returns. The Intilaq Programme⁵⁰ run under Dubai SME (Small and Medium Enterprise), an agency of the Department of Economic Development, is an example of a program that lends advisory and licensing support to home based microenterprises which can be particularly attractive for women. Eligible individuals must be UAE nationals based in Dubai with a support staff that does not exceed 10 and only includes household members. In 2003, nearly 25% of all Intilaq licence holders were women.⁵¹ Support provided includes a range of activities such as consultancy, technical support, access to training courses as well as financial, legal and marketing guidance. Intilaq licences are provided at a reduced and fixed rate of AED 1,060 annually and are valid for three years.

Education and empowerment around health care

Globally, the majority of women (59%) make health care decisions for others.⁵² As mothers and wives, Deciding Women are overseeing the welfare of their children and husbands. Additionally, as more households care for aging parents, these women are also instrumental in the health of family elders. Education and outreach – such as health information sessions and preventative screenings – can provide the opportunity for Pre-contemplation stage women to channel their energy and enthusiasm and contribute more fully to creating a healthier family and community. This would be especially useful for reducing the prevalence of chronic diseases, like diabetes, that have been on the rise in the region.⁵³

Encouragement to pursue leadership

There is wide agreement among the men and women in our study that female leaders are a benefit to Emirati society. Women in Pre-contemplation were most likely to believe that their families would support their leadership ambitions (21%). Understanding what leadership means for these women and then developing programmes to recruit and develop women leaders in the community would further utilise the talents of Deciding Women. In addition, practical leadership skills can be taught and nurtured through coaching, mentoring by female role models and providing learning pathways for women leaders across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Senior leadership can best promote their commitment to Emirati women's development by creating a supportive environment for the development of female leaders within the organisation. Leadership programmes and professional development (through mentoring) are important aspects of creating a socially supportive environment for women in the workplace.⁵⁴ This support can take many forms, from formal human resource programmes, similar to entry-level training programmes, to more informal opportunities such as networking events that connect female employees to senior leadership. The latter gives women exposure to and understanding of an organisation's leadership.

Targeted programmes take into account the specific gender and cultural dynamics involved in becoming a leader within the context of women's experiences in the organisation, and are thus more successful in addressing women's specific career development needs.⁵⁵ Such support helps recruitment efforts and lends credence to retention tools such as career guidance and progression programmes.

“Sometimes women lack a wise man or wise woman to talk to them and show them.”

Dr. Mona Al Bahar, Chief Executive Officer, Al Jalila Cultural Centre for Children, former Member of the UAE Federal National Council^a

CONTEMPLATION STAGE

Targeted support through education

Contemplation stage women are interested in the option of working, but they need more information and insight about the workforce and how to establish a career. Career guidance and awareness building in secondary and higher education, helping these women to better understand the different sectors, industries and opportunities that are available, are all ways to encourage them to take the next step.

Schools, colleges and universities can play a role in addressing this gap but this requires more than job fairs. Establishing an on-site career guidance office staffed by career counsellors with broad work experience, offering internship opportunities as part of the curriculum, and creating mentoring programmes by working professionals can all make a difference.

More flexible working arrangements

Flexible working can be beneficial in bringing Contemplation stage women into the workforce, enabling them to better balance their work with their household commitments. This is particularly relevant for engaging more women in rural areas.

Some companies such as PwC Middle East have recently introduced such “flex-frameworks” that allow employees flexibility in their workday hours, workweek hours, or in their work location, so that they can better balance their lives and tend to their outside commitments like child or elder care.

Considerations for increasing home-based working options include understanding which roles and industries are most adaptable for such work. Employers will also need education and support to best manage home-based work so that the arrangement is mutually beneficial for both employers and employees. Contracts and benefits, including pensions, also need to be addressed in the context of a home-based work arrangement. Review of provisions for home-based work in other countries, such as Saudi Arabia which has many such programmes, will be useful as a starting point.

Other flexible working arrangements include part-time and contract work. Job sharing can also be introduced for certain positions, such as teaching.

Altogether, flexible working options can be a means through which to attract Contemplation stage women into work and provide them more ways to manage their work and home lives. However, employers need to see the value in changing their traditional working conditions. Therefore careful consideration is needed to evaluate what incentives may be needed.

Develop public awareness campaigns on working life

Public awareness campaigns are often a first step in changing attitudes or providing information that is not easily accessible. They differ from career guidance programmes in that career guidance assumes a foundation of knowledge and is often rooted within the educational system. Public awareness campaigns engage their audiences through multiple channels instead of solely within a physical space, and both social and general media channels are broadly utilised to great effect.

Our study suggests that many Deciding Women in the Contemplation stage simply do not know where to go to discover more about working life, or where and how they might contribute their energy and skills outside of the home. A public awareness campaign brings information and views to them in a variety of ways that will enable them to make the best decisions for themselves and their families.

a. Interview with Dr. Mona Al Bahar, Member, Chief Executive Officer, Al Jalila Cultural Centre for Children, former Member of the UAE Federal National Council, conducted March 2016

PREPARATION STAGE

High-quality childcare

More than anything else, women who intend to work need support for childcare. Corporate childcare facilities are one option to meet those needs. While only public sector entities are required to provide on-site childcare, if more Emirati women are going to enter the private sector, they will need better access to high-quality childcare, whether this is on-site or subsidised. One example of providing on-site childcare in the public sector is the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA). DEWA's nursery was established in 2010 as a National Child Care Centre (NCCC) project by DWE, enabling their female employees to achieve a better work-life balance. DEWA currently operates childcare centres in three out of 28 of their office locations.

Lactation rooms are another necessity for working mothers with small children but are more the exception than the norm. These should be made available in both workplaces and public spaces (e.g. office buildings and shopping malls). This would complement the government policy that already gives mothers at least one hour per day to nurse their young children. A shared facility among multiple employers in an office building is a more practical and cost effective option for those businesses that may not employ enough female staff to make such a room feasible.

Maternity leave is another concern for many women. Extending maternity leave to 100 days for all sectors and eventually providing 6 months are benchmarks being considered. There already seems to be some progress on this point. Since 2016, the maternity leave has been extended to 3 months paid leave for workers at government entities across the country.⁵⁶ Private sector employers, moreover, can provide for additional leave in their human resource policies. Many private companies are taking advantage of this allowance by instituting policies allowing for additional leave.

Re-entry training for women returning to the workforce

Many of the Preparation stage women have previously worked. Re-entry training provides a solid foundation upon which these women can build both skills and confidence and find a suitable way to continue their careers. This can be a challenge for smaller employers and thus incentives may be needed, or this role may need to be assumed by non-governmental bodies, training institutes or professional associations.

FEATURED INITIATIVE

Forsaty Programme

The Forsaty Programme is a development programme designed to help UAE nationals attain financial independence and to increase family income by encouraging entrepreneurship and home businesses.

About Forsaty

- Forsaty is managed by a team of 5 and has supported 1,400 families as of 2015
- Programme currently supports 1,600 families
- 'Forsaty' received over 10 million AED in donations from government entities, business leaders and community organisations
- Returns for the families are nearly 4 million AED a year
- Programme works with students, women, people with disabilities and elderly

A Programme for All

'Forsaty' offers all community members a chance to start their own small businesses; anyone with a skill that generates a product is eligible to join. The Programme sells products ranging from heritage products, national foods and clothing to IT services and app designs. It offers services to those working from home and unable to attain a trade licence or afford to start their own business. It offers them training sessions, marketing opportunities and channels to sell their products.

A Focus on Students, Rural Areas and Women

'Forsaty' aims to recruit students from universities, colleges, and high schools to help them develop an entrepreneurial business sense. It also capitalizes on the skills of families in rural areas to increase their income and help them overcome the challenge of limited job opportunities in their regions. However, the majority of Forsaty's participants are women, as the programme attempts to capitalize on the talents of women who are single, divorced, or widowed, providing them with the opportunity to use their time effectively and generate income.

FEATURED INITIATIVE

Watani Programme

‘Watani’ is a PwC programme that gives ambitious and talented UAE nationals, both men and women, the opportunity to work, travel and study with PwC in both the UAE and the UK. The programme focuses on education, training, and international business exposure across the firm’s various lines of services.

About Watani

- ‘Watani’ is a 3 year programme open to fresh graduates and graduates with up to two years work experience
- Graduates qualify for Senior Associate/Consultant roles at the firm
- Upon completion, participants receive an Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) Accounting Skills Certificate specially designed by PwC’s Academy

A focus on education and skills development

‘Watani’ recognizes that education and skills development support professional growth as well as the exposure to the dynamic work that the private sector has to offer can help bright, young nationals, particularly women, to feel comfortable with choosing private sector over public sector opportunities. Structured mentoring and training is therefore core to Watani’s philosophy, and it begins at day one with comprehensive induction programmes. Graduates also earn an Accounting Skills Certificate at the end of the programme to assist them in their future careers.

Opportunities for international experience

In year two of the ‘Watani’ programme, participants are eligible to travel to the UK firm, thereby allowing them to interact with, learn from and work alongside people from diverse backgrounds in multicultural work environments.

FEATURED INITIATIVE

DEWA Childcare Centre Service

DEWA is a government Electricity, Water & Cooling Company. It recognises the importance of female engagement in shaping workplace policies and strives to provide its female employees with a supportive environment that allows them to balance workplace and family commitments.

DEWA WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Women at DEWA occupy positions of all types and levels, from full-time to part-time, senior to junior, and technical to administrative. For the benefit of their female staff, DEWA has an active Women's Committee that studies and regularly suggests programmes, policies, and initiatives that benefit women and maximize their satisfaction at the workplace. They recently launched the 'Healthier, Happier and Prettier Employees' initiative which includes activities that aim to educate women about their health and its importance to their internal and external beauty.

QUALITY AND AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE

A 2006 cabinet decision required all government departments with more than 50 female employees to open childcare facilities on their premises, and DEWA was one of the first government organisations to comply. The DEWA Childcare Centres have improved productivity, punctuality, issues with turnover, transfers and absenteeism among employees with young children. DEWA ensures that the childcare centres are affordable and equipped with highly qualified staff.

About DEWA

- > Has 28 offices across UAE
- > Employs over 10,937 people of which 23% are Emiratis, and 16% are female
- > Operates from 7.30 AM – 8.30 PM on a rotational shift basis
- > Operates 3 childcare centres (HQ - established 2010, Al Quoz - established 2013, Warsan - established 2014)
- > Centres serve 175 children ages 2 months – 4 yrs old, at a monthly charge of 500 AED
- > The number of women working has increased by nearly 32% since 2013

CONCLUSION

In speaking to Emirati Deciding Women, men, and working women, we have learned a lot about Deciding Women and the society they live in. They are multi-talented wives and mothers who value their families and contribute to their country. Many are interested in entering the labour force or establishing their own business and some want to pursue other interests. Altogether they represent a group of Emirati citizens who have much to give back to their country. These are women with many aspirations, perhaps caught between what traditional society encourages and the exciting opportunities being increasingly presented by their rapidly developing country and its ambitious leaders.

Through learning more about Deciding Women, it is hoped that new ways can be found to attract them into channelling their talents for the good of the nation.

The Deciding Woman in Modern Emirati Society

In this opening chapter, we saw that the UAE has quickly become a very highly developed and wealthy country. Its citizens have high standards of living, like other developed countries, but it differs from many of its peer nations by having larger family sizes and fewer women in the workforce.

The Profile of the Deciding Woman

Deciding Women in the UAE have a diverse background. They come from every Emirate and are well-educated wives and mothers who see these roles as a top priority in their lives. Applying the TTM to our survey respondents, we have found that 80% of the women in the study are open to employment or establishing their own business, provided working conditions meet their expectations and do not interfere with their roles as wives and mothers.

Views on Herself and other women within the Emirati community

Cultural norms shape women's attitudes towards working. Deciding Women view other women positively, whether they work inside or outside of the home, and female leaders in the UAE are well-regarded. While their life paths may have differed in regard to pursuing paid employment or not, Deciding Women have strong reasons for how they have led their lives thus far.

Views on the Influence of Family and Society

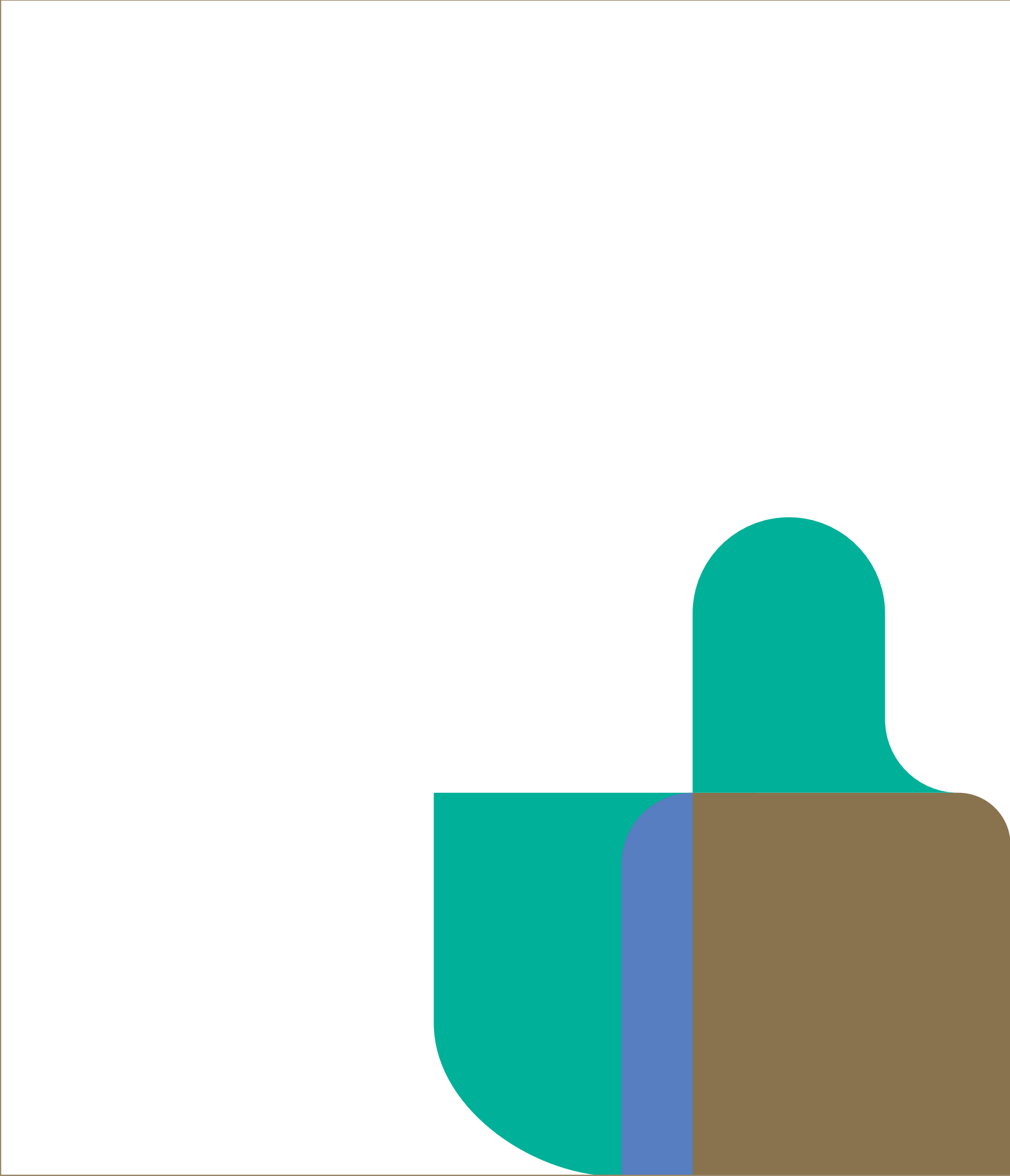
Many members of a Deciding Woman's sphere of influence shape her ideas about work. Male family members are influential throughout a woman's life stages, whether they be single or married. Societal and family influence, and their experiences when young significantly impact the attitudes of Emirati men towards working women. When comparing this study's findings with previous studies, it is evident that attitudes towards working women have changed: women working outside of the home is increasingly the norm. There is concern, however, for women working when they have young children at home.

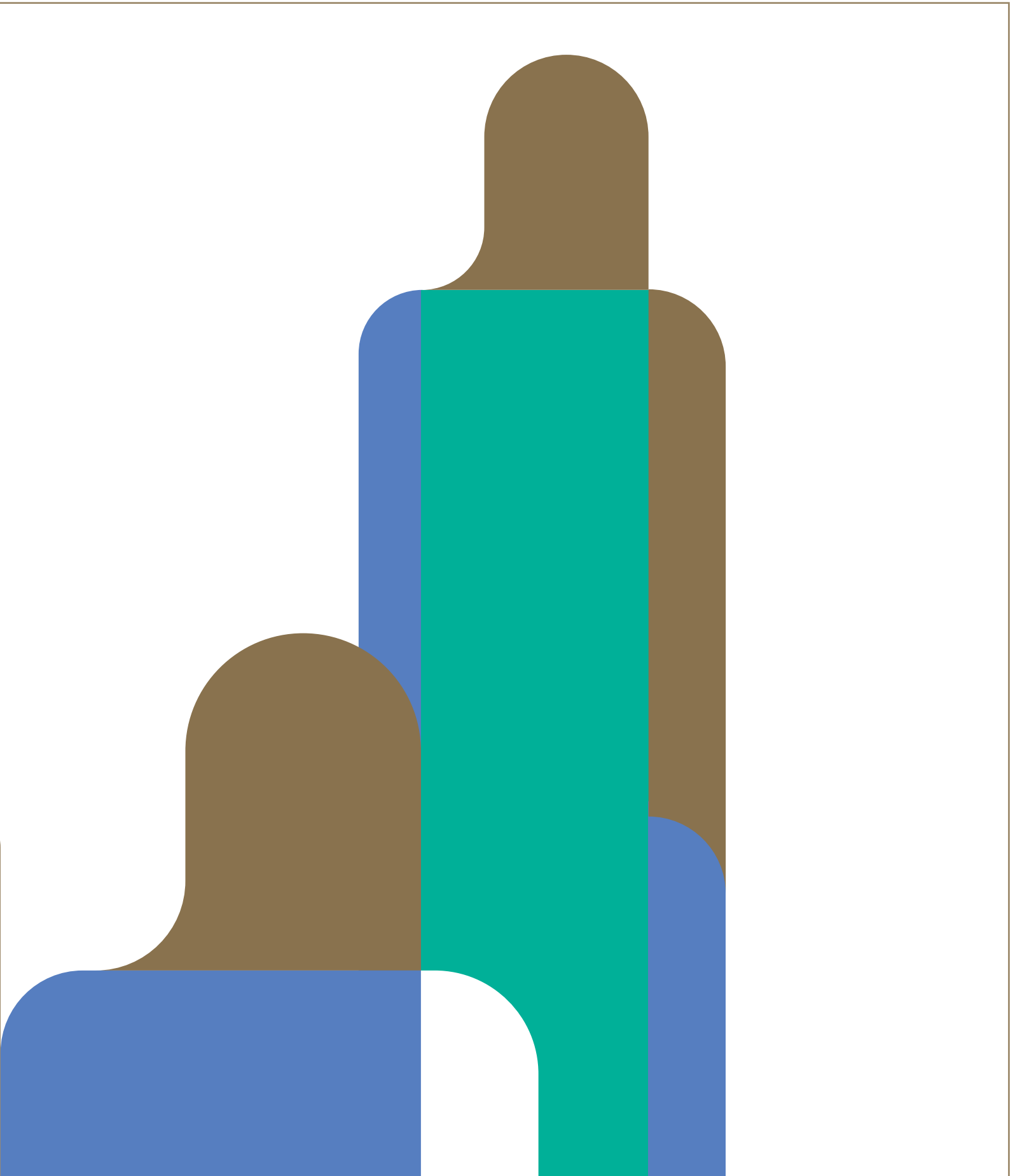
Views on the Workplace

When it comes to job preferences, most Deciding Women would like to work in the public sector with its shorter, more flexible hours. There is some affinity for the private sector, which is viewed as offering more interesting work and training opportunities. Government and employer entities shape women's relationship to work. Federal and Emirate level policies on different work rights and benefits, such as wage equality and maternity leave, provide a broader context in which women consider their options for work. Employer-level policies also shape women's views, with those going beyond the basic letter of the law proving to be more attractive.

Recommendations

In the report's final chapter, we make recommendations on how to capitalise on Deciding Women's talents. These recommendations are tailored according to a woman's TTM stage. For Pre-contemplation stage women - those not interested in working outside the home - recommendations include support for establishing small businesses, home-based work, and working to improve health outcomes for their families and communities. Recommendations for Contemplation stage women - those who have an interest in working - include career awareness and guidance, as well as options for flexible working. For those women in the Preparation stage - ready to take steps towards employment - recommendations for childcare and re-entry programmes are highlighted.





APPENDIX 1.1

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

MAWWWS – Multidimensional Aversion to Women Who Work Scale

RABS – Reproductive Attitudes and Behaviours

TTM – Transtheoretical Model

METHODOLOGY NOTES

The survey included two established measures: the “Multidimensional Aversion to Women Who Work Scale” (MAWWWS) (Valentine, 2001), and Alibeli’s (2014) “Reproductive Attitudes and Behaviour Scale” (RABS). The MAWWWS has been previously used in the UAE, translated into Arabic and validated in an Arab non-Western context. The MAWWWS scale consists of ten inter-related items that assess employment-related gender attitudes in the areas of employment scepticism and traditional role preferences. The MAWWWS score was calculated by combining the scores of all responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The calculations were based on the responses to the following two sets of five questions. The first set measures Employment Scepticism and the second set measures Traditional Roles Preference.

1 (Employment Scepticism). To what extent do you agree with the following statements about women in the workforce?

- a. Women lack the skills and abilities needed at work
- b. Women are not suited for work outside the home
- c. I am sceptical about women’s effectiveness in the workplace
- d. Women’s personal characteristics make life at work difficult
- e. Women frequently find the demands of work difficult

2 (Traditional roles preference). To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the roles of men and women in the UAE?

- a. Traditional husband/wife roles are the best
- b. Women are happier in traditional roles
- c. A woman’s place is in the home
- d. An employed wife leads to juvenile delinquency
- e. Women with families do not have time for other employment

The questions are worded so that high scores are positively correlated with high agreement with traditional values. The reliability MAWWWS scale in the Deciding Women study was reliable ($\alpha = 0.84$).

Alibeli (2014) found that the Reproductive Attitudes and Behaviours Scale (RABS) was reliable for measuring attitudes on the ideal number of children an Emirati woman should have ($\alpha = 0.86$). RABS was calculated based on the responses to the following four questions:

- a. How many children do you currently have?
- b. In general what is the ideal number of children for Emirati Women?
- c. What is the ideal number of children for you?
- d. How many more children would you like to have?

The total RABS score equals the average number of children based on three variables: b, c, and (a+d). The formula is $(c + b + (a + d))/3$, where “c” is the ideal number of children for the respondent, “b” is the ideal number of children for Emirati women, “a” is the current number of children, and “d” is the additional children. The virtual number of ideal children is given by the formula $(a + d)$. The RABS scale for the Deciding Women study was moderately reliable ($\alpha = 0.66$).

APPENDIX 1.2

GOVERNMENT POLICIES IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Policies can be divided into fundamental policies, core labour policies, and supportive policies (Figure 18). Fundamental policies guarantee the right of all Emirati men and women to freely choose his or her own occupation, trade, or profession.⁵⁷ The combination of core labour rights and broader support policies shape women's decisions regarding entering the workforce, remaining employed, and determining which type of employment to seek.

Governmental laws and policies regulate both the public and private sector in the UAE. Federal government jobs come under the jurisdiction of the Federal Authority for Government Human Resources (FAHR) while Emirate-level public sector jobs are governed by Emirate-specific human resource policies.^a UAE Labour Law outlines the requirements for the private sector.

a. Federal Law by Decree No. 11 of 2008 covers wages, working hours, benefits, leave, and other entitlements for employees, national and expatriate. The human resource laws at the Emirate level vary. In Dubai, for example, Human Resource Management Law No. (27) 2006 and its further amendments in 2010 in Law No (14) outline the human resource policies for all government employees working in the public sector.

Figure 18.

Layers of governmental policies
shaping the employment
context of Deciding Women

SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

- **Law on Pensions and Social Security**
pension entitlements between work
in private and public sector national
employees

CORE LABOUR RIGHTS

- **UAE labour law (applicable to private sector)**
 - Article 30: statutory paid maternity leave of 45 days, followed by 100 consecutive unpaid leave days.
 - Article 31: nursing leave of total 1 hour per day up to 18 months after birth of child
 - Article 32: equal wage between men and women doing the same work
- **Federal Law by Decree No.11 of 2008 on Human Resources in Federal Government:**
allowance benefits for nationals
- **Government of Dubai Human Resource Management Law No. (27) 2006 and its further amendments in 2010 in Law NO (14):**
benefits and policies for employees in the public sector
- **Cabinet Resolutions on Emiritisation**

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

- **Constitution of 1971**
 - Article 34 UAE Constitution of 1971: women's right to work
 - Article 9 of UAE Labour Law: work is an inherent right of the UAE Nationals

Encouraging women to join the workforce

There are policies, organisations and other supports available to help attract Emirati women who want to work. Wage equality, regardless of an employee's gender, is stipulated in UAE Labour Law. Emiratisation policies set quotas for commercial entities (2%), banks (4%), and insurance companies (5%) for the percentage of Emirati employees private sector companies should hire.⁵⁸ While Emiratisation policies are not specifically targeted for women, they will be especially beneficial to women since there are higher percentages of non-working national women than there are national men.

There are a number of public and private sector entities supporting female Emirati job seekers. The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation provides training and career guidance services to all Emirati job seekers looking to enter the workforce and approximately 70-75% of these job seekers are women.

“With this (merger between Tanmia and the Ministry of Labour to become the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation), I think, there will be focus on women especially. There is a committee caring about the demand of the labour market, and they will create and enforce policies.”

Dr. Noura Al Badour, Employment Department, Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation^a

There are also resources for Emirati women who are interested in establishing and operating home-based businesses to help them increase income, and achieve financial independence and stability. The Ministry of

Community Development's Forsaty programme, for example, provides training, marketing services, and access to sales outlets for home-based entrepreneurs. As of 2015, the programme supported over a thousand female entrepreneurs.⁵⁹

Encouraging women to stay employed

Key priorities for retaining women in the workforce include provisions for reconciling work and family obligations. Specific policies address parental leave as well as flexible and part-time work arrangements.

The UAE Labour Law,⁶⁰ applicable to nationals and non-nationals in the private sector, stipulates paid statutory maternity leave of 45 days, followed by 100 consecutive days of unpaid leave in addition to nursing leave of up to one hour per day for the first 18 months of a child's birth (Article 31). These policies are on par with social policies of the UAE's neighbours in the GCC.^b

Federal and Emirate level public sector policies go slightly further than UAE Labour Law for paid parental leave. Until recently, full-time female employees were given two months' maternity leave followed by two hours per day for nursing leave in the four months after their return to work. Men received three days paid paternity leave that can be used in the child's first month of life.

Part-time work can help women juggle both employment and home responsibilities. UAE nationals can be hired for part-time work as per federal and some Emirate-level regulations.⁶¹ Importantly, labour cards for part-time work in the private sector were introduced by the Ministry of Labour in 2010.⁶² With part-time work options now possible in both the public and private sectors, Deciding Women have more choices when it comes to entering the workforce and remaining employed.

a. Interview with Dr Noura Al Badour, Employment Department, Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation, conducted March 2016

b. Saudi Arabia 10 weeks half wage maternity leave, Oman six weeks maternity leave, Bahrain 45 days maternity leave, Kuwait 70 days maternity leave

Childcare becomes a top priority and is the major concern for women in the family formation years of their lives. On-site child daycare facilities – such as those at Dubai Customs and DEWA – are only mandated in the public sector for those federal level employers with 50 or more women in their workforce or those employing 20 or more women with young children. Currently, there are no official requirements for the private sector to provide on-site childcare facilities.

Factors impacting women's decisions about choice of employment

Three areas have a major impact on Emirati women's choices of the type of work they may want to pursue: salaries, working hours, and pension benefits. The private sector is less attractive than the public sector when it comes to salaries. For example, there are minimum wage guarantees for public sector employees⁶³ but not for the private sector. Although UAE Labour Law states that a minimum wage may be set for particular occupations or sectors as per federal decree, companies are also encouraged to offer competitive wages based on market dynamics.

When comparing salary rates by nationality, Emiratis are better compensated than the expatriate workforce within the UAE. Federal wage scales list higher rates for nationals in comparison to non-nationals.⁶⁴ Also, when comparing wage levels by nationality, nearly 45% of Emiratis in Dubai earned 20,000 AED or more per month compared to 7% of expatriates.⁶⁵ This illustrates the disparity between public and private sector salaries since the majority of expatriates work in the private sector while the majority of Emiratis work in the public sector. It also highlights the fact that there is a large number of expatriate workers in low-paying labour jobs.

The private sector is also allowed to require longer daily and weekly working hours than the public sector. According to UAE Labour Law, the private sector is allowed a maximum of 8 working hours a day, up to 48 hours per week.⁶⁶

Conversely, federal government employment sets a 7-hour workday, up to 35 hours per week, for a full-time employee. Articles 11 and 12 set provisions for part-time contracts, with a 14 to 28-hour workweek. In Dubai, public sector employment has similar provisions, with Article 31 stipulating part-time and temporary contracts, and Article 19 stating a 7-hour workday and 35-hour work week. For the Deciding Women in our study, 34 hours per week and 6.7 hours per day are the ideal number of hours to work – indicating a better alignment with public sector working life.

While Emiratis are eligible to draw pension benefits in either public or private sector positions, there are key differences between the pension administrations that make the public sector more appealing. Notable differences are listed in Table 7 and demonstrate that, for Emirati nationals entering the private sector, there are negative consequences for their pensions that require careful consideration, pension carry-over when changing jobs being of primary concern.⁶⁷

Previous pension contributions can be transferred when switching between public sector jobs, but not when moving into the private sector from a government job. Pension reconciliation has been highlighted as a major issue by Emirati officials who are encouraging greater participation in the private sector workforce to all Emiratis.

Table 7.

Notable differences between the public and private sectors in the application of pension benefits for Emirati national employees⁶⁸

ARTICLE	PUBLIC SECTOR	PRIVATE SECTOR
Salary of contribution calculation (Article Number 1)	Basic salary and all monthly bonuses and allowances	Contracted salary
Rules of calculating the contribution between employee, employer and government (Article Number 9)	<p>Employee pays 5% of monthly salary</p> <p>Employer pays 15%</p> <p>Government pays 6%</p> <p>(Total + 26%)</p> <p>The employee never has to pay the employer's share in cases of exceptional leave or other circumstances</p>	<p>Employee pays 5% of monthly salary</p> <p>Employer pays 12.5%</p> <p>Government pays 2.5%</p> <p>(Total + 20%)</p> <p>For exceptional leave and other circumstances, the employee must pay his/her share and the employers share</p>
Pension salary calculation after termination (Article Number 20)	60% of the final pensionable salary after 15 years of contributions	Cannot be more or less than 20% of the average pensionable salary in the preceding 4 years
Minimum pension limits per month (Article Number 23)	Not less than AED 2.500 a month	No minimum guarantee

APPENDIX 1.3

EMPLOYER-LED SUPPORT IN THE UAE

As with governmental policies, employer-level policies differ across the public and private sectors, but more variation is found from employer to employer within the private sector. In the public sector, policies are outlined by the Federal Authority for Government Human Resources (FAHR) at the federal level or by the appropriate local human resource authority on the Emirate level, therefore tending to be more consistent. While government policies may underpin the regulatory environment and guidance frameworks, employers are market-driven and will choose whether to meet or exceed the minimum requirements.

Employer-level support in both sectors can be broadly categorized along two focus areas: recruitment and retention policies, and workplace support (Figure 19). Recruitment and retention policies are forms of support that bring women into and help them remain in the workforce. An employer's human resource policies shape the working environment through recruitment procedures, training and professional development, working hours and conditions, and employee benefits. Workplace forms of support enhance a woman's employee experience. For public sector employees, these forms of support tend to be specifically defined within a regulatory framework, and few exceptions are made. For private sector employees, there is greater variation in the application of policies, which, in the absence of strict inspections and controls, are more often viewed as guidelines.

More informally, a culture of feedback and coaching, while supported through human resource policies, occurs on 'the shop floor' with managers taking interest in and providing timely feedback aimed at developing their female talent. Training of all employees on gender biases, cultural and gender diversity sensitivity, such as the language used to describe leaders (e.g. using 'she' as well as 'he' when using the generic term 'leader') is crucial to creating a supportive environment where national female talent is recognised and 'normalised'.

Beyond human resource policies and programmes, there are broader cultural aspects of the workplace that can shape a Deciding Woman's experience and perception of her workplace. Many of these cultural features primarily come from senior leadership's commitment to the professional development and social support that can improve a woman's working experience.

Figure 19.
Categories and tools of
employer-level support



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PROJECT TEAM

Dubai Women Establishment

Shamsa Saleh – Chief Executive Officer

Sultana Saif – Corporate Director of Development & Research

Maitha Shuaib – Director of Corporate Communication

Waad Omar – Senior Research Officer

Kyra Atekwana – Research Officer

Hessa Tahlak – Corporate Director of Development & Research (former)

Aznita Aziz – Senior Manager, Strategy & Business Development (former)

PwC Middle East

Sally Jeffery – Partner, Education and Skills Practice

Jumana Salti – Director, Education and Skills Practice (former)

Dr. Donna Winston and Laila Kuznezov – Project Management

Team members: Nishaat Shafi, Sara Marie, Piyali Kundu, Noora AlSindi, Nermine Chatila, Roula Hajjar, Najat Allawi, Shreya Bahl, Rana Al Mutawa, and Lina Shabeeb

UAE Expert Interviews

Dr. Madalla Alibeli – Assistant Professor, United Arab Emirates University

Noura Al Badour – Employment Department, Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization

Dr. Mona Al Bahar – Former Member of the UAE Federal National Council

Afra Buhumaid – Director, Productive Families Program, Ministry of Community Development

Dr. May Al Dabbagh – Assistant Professor, New York University, Abu Dhabi

Dr. Amna Khalifa – Chairperson, Ajman Business Council

Dr. Ahmad al Haddad – Grand Mufti, Dubai Fatwa Department, Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department

Zina Janabi – Director, Women in Business Leader, PwC Middle East

Featured Initiatives

Dubai Electricity & Water Authority's Women's Committee and Female-Friendly Workplace

du - Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company's Fujairah Call Centre

The Ministry of Community Development's Forsaty Programme

PwC's Watani Programme

Other Contributors

Dr. Basma Omair – Chief Executive Officer, Alsayedah Khadijah Bint Khawilid Center, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

GRMC Advisory Services

