



Muslim Millennial Attitudes on Religion & Religious Leadership

Arab World

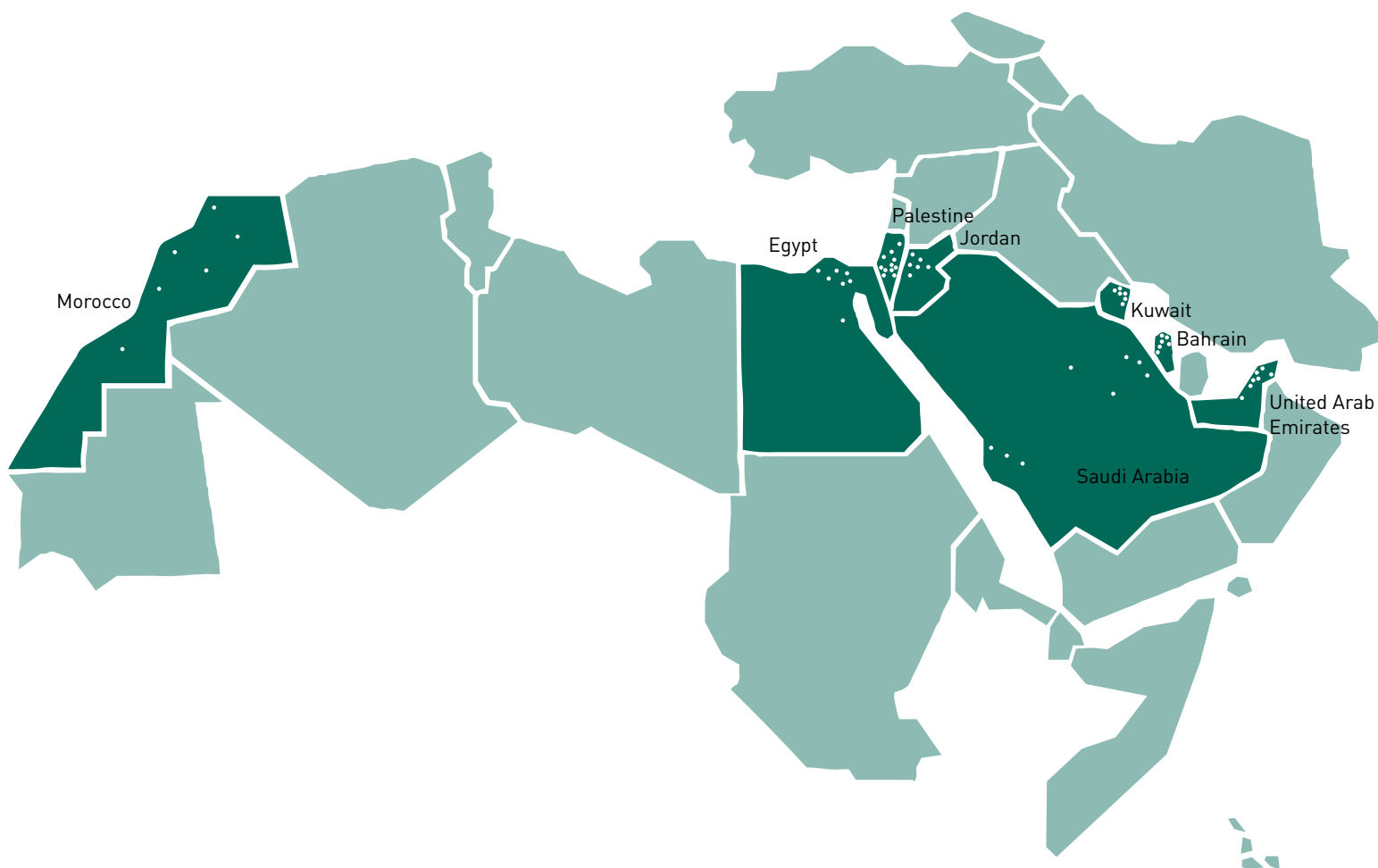
This edition of *Muslim Millennial Attitudes on Religion and Religious Leadership, Arab World*, was prepared and published by the Futures Initiative at Tabah Foundation.

To arrange a detailed presentation of further analysis of the results, please contact our staff at the address or email below.

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Countries and cities in which interviews took place.

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Foreword

Muslim millennials comprise the largest demographic in the Arab world today. Future projections affirm this status. At the Futures Initiative at Tabah Foundation we believe that it is only by knowing this generation that we can address the seismic religious, cultural, social and political shifts taking place in the Arab world today and in the future.

Muslim Millennial Attitudes on Religion and Religious Leadership is a statement of intent. We explore a diverse range of issues and topics related to religious identity, thought and practice that will provide the region's religious and policy leadership with much-needed evidence-based insight on the religious life of Arab Muslim youth.

The unique advantage of this survey is its engagement of questions related to the Muslim religious experience. The Futures Initiative's expertise on Muslim faith-based affairs in the modern world allowed us to formulate a set of questions that not only addressed intricate aspects of religious life but ensured that the questions were relevant to Muslims and how they particularly experience and understand their faith. This allowed us to avoid the problem of imposing foreign conceptions of faith on its local experience. By doing so, the results have credibility since they speak to the audience on its own terms.

The Futures Initiative was delighted to partner with Zogby Research Services on this project and would like to thank everyone who participated in and supported it.

The full report can be downloaded from Tabah Foundation's website
<http://mmgsurvey.tabahfoundation.org>

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Executive Summary

During October and November of 2015, Zogby Research Services (ZRS) conducted face-to-face polls, surveying 5,374 Arab Muslims, both citizens and expatriates, between the ages of 15 and 34 in eight Arab countries: Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, and Palestine. The Futures Initiative at Tabah Foundation commissioned ZRS to explore attitudes of the Muslim millennial generation, specifically with respect to their attitudes toward religious identity, faith-based leadership, scholarship, religion and politics, personal religious devotion, reform, and religious extremism. A summary of the results is presented as follows.

Identity as a Muslim

Majorities of millennials in all eight countries say it is important that they be known by their Muslim identity.

In Morocco, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Jordan, and Palestine, almost 7 in 10 respondents say that their principal identity is either their “country” or “being Arab.”

The four countries (UAE, Egypt, Morocco, and Kuwait) where more than nine in 10 millennials say that it is important that they be known as Muslim are also the only four countries where a majority of respondents say that in their circle of acquaintances they know persons of another faith.

Personal Devotion & Conceptions of Faith

In six of the eight countries the percentage of millennials who believe that religion is a private spiritual affair is greater than the percentage who believe that religion is “just about beliefs and laws that define right and wrong.”

Only in Saudi Arabia do a substantial majority of millennial Muslims say that it is easy to be an observant Muslim and to resist temptations currently found in their society.

More than seven in 10 in UAE and about six in 10 in Kuwait, Egypt, and Palestine acknowledge that they feel tension between the temptations of today’s society and preserving their religious identity and practice.

In almost every country, millennials say that the aspect of Islam that is most important to them is “living by Islamic ethics and standards,” followed by “the political issues facing Muslims.”

There is near unanimous agreement among millennials in all surveyed countries that their belief in Islam is based on their conviction that it is the truth. At the same time, strong majorities in Bahrain, Palestine, Egypt and UAE acknowledge that their belief in Islam is due to their being brought up in the faith.

Religion in the Public Sphere

Strong majorities in all countries agree that people have the right to dispense religious advice in public, with the caveat that it is best if done with courtesy. In the UAE, Kuwait, and Palestine around one in five express some resistance to such public interventions.

Role of Governments

Overall, majorities of Egyptians, Kuwaitis, and Palestinians see a role for government involvement in almost every area of religious life, while majorities of Bahrainis are opposed to almost all government involvement except in the area of stopping incitement to violence and hatred. Strong majorities of millennials in all eight countries agree that the government should be involved in insuring that religious discourse does not incite violence and hatred and that if movies and TV programs breach the moral and ethical standards of society, they should be banned.

Religion and Contemporary Relevance

In five of eight countries, majorities disagree that Islam as it is currently taught and practiced conflicts with the modern world and needs to be reformed. This disagreement is strongest in UAE, followed by Jordan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. Only in Palestine and Morocco do more than six in 10 feel that “reform” is needed.

Substantial majorities of millennials in all eight countries feel that the language used by religious leaders to express Islam, and the topics and issues they address, need to be brought up to date and made more relevant for the present .

Substantial majorities in all eight countries agree that religion as it is currently taught and practiced respects and empowers women and that there is a need for more women religious scholars and preachers. Given the diverse nature of the countries covered and the millennials who were surveyed, it appears that respondents may have varying interpretations of “respect and empower.”

Role of Religion

Overwhelming majorities of millennials in seven of the eight countries reject the notion that religion is a major cause of decline in the social, political, and economic realms in the Arab world. Only Palestinians believe that religion is a cause of decline.

In all eight countries, substantial majorities of millennials believe that religion has a key role to play in their countries’ futures.

Sources of Religious Learning and Views on Religious Services

When asked “who has the right to interpret religion?” the most frequently given responses provided by millennials are their country’s Grand Mufti and qualified scholars (Shaykhs).

When asked “what is their most important source of guidance and direction?” majorities in four of the eight countries say religious TV shows. In three other countries, millennials say they derive guidance from religious lectures in their towns.

In five of the eight countries, majorities say that the religious discourse they hear through religious addresses, lectures and lessons are relevant to the issues facing Muslims today.

Opinions on the Friday sermon are split. Majorities in Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Palestine view the sermon as either “a loud, angry tirade,” “bland and boring,” or “the government’s voice,” with 44% of millennials in Kuwait & 42% in Jordan agreeing with this view. Large majorities in Egypt (69%) and the UAE (79%) feel that the sermon is “inspiring & uplifts your faith.”

As expected, there is a correlation in most countries between those who feel that there is a need for renewal in religious discourse and those who find sermons less inspiring.

Religious Extremism

A vast majority of all respondents say that movements like ISIS and Al-Qaeda are a complete perversion of Islam.

Between 75% and 93% of all respondents say that movements like ISIS and al Qaeda are either a complete perversion of Islam and/or that these groups are “mostly wrong but sometimes raise ideas I agree with.”

When asked to select the reasons leading young people to join extremist groups, the most frequently cited reason is “corrupt, repressive, and unrepresentative governments,” followed by extremist religious discourse and teachings.

Among Palestinians, “foreign occupation” is the number one choice as to why people join extremist groups.

Respondents who say that these groups are either “mostly right” or “not a perversion of Islam” are more inclined to point to the “conviction that these groups represent the truth” or “seeking adventure” as the reasons that young people join them.

Results

Identity

Table 1		When you think of who you are, what is your principal source of identity?						
	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
My country (being Egyptian, Saudi, etc.)	59%	43%	35%	14%	31%	35%	19%	50%
Being Arab	21%	5%	38%	66%	27%	35%	56%	17%
My religion	15%	49%	19%	14%	42%	19%	10%	17%
My family or tribe	4%	1%	7%	4%	0%	10%	10%	14%
The region I am from	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	4%	2%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

When asked to select their principal source of identity from among the following choices: my country, being Arab, my religion, my family or tribe, or the region I am from, millennials in all countries surveyed place country, being Arab, and religion among the top three. Everywhere but Egypt and Bahrain, the respondent's country and "being Arab" are the two principal identifiers, while religion is most important in Egypt and Bahrain.

"My country" is the top choice for majorities in Morocco (59%) and Palestine (50%), and for 35% in Kuwait, as well as the second most frequently selected choice in Egypt (43%), Saudi Arabia (35%), Bahrain (31%), and UAE (14%).

"Being Arab" is the top choice for majorities in UAE (66%) and Jordan (56%), as well as for 38% in Saudi Arabia and 35% in Kuwait, and the second place source of identity in Morocco (21%). Young Egyptians are least likely to say being Arab is a principal source of identity (5%).

Pluralities in Egypt (49%) and Bahrain (42%) choose "my religion" as their principal source of identity, with about one in five respondents in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait (19% each), and Palestine (17%) agreeing.

Familial and tribal affiliation is noted as a principal source of identity by 12% of Palestinian millennials, 10% of Kuwaitis, and 10% of Jordanians, and fewer respondents in the other countries surveyed.

Region is the least cited source of identity across the board.

Table 2 How important is it to you that those you meet know that you are a Muslim?

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Important	92%	95%	83%	98%	52%	91%	68%	83%
Not important	8%	5%	17%	2%	48%	8%	32%	17%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding. Important is the aggregation of the responses “very important” and “somewhat important.” Not important is the aggregation of the responses “somewhat unimportant” and “not at all important.”

Being known as a Muslim is of great important in almost every country—except Bahrain where opinion is divided on this question (52% vs. 48%). More than nine in 10 respondents say this is important in UAE (98%), Egypt (95%), Morocco (92%), and Kuwait (91%), as well as high percentages in Palestine (83%) and Saudi Arabia (83%), and two-thirds of respondents in Jordan (68%).

Table 3 Do you know anyone in your circle of friends or acquaintances who is a believer in another faith?

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Yes	66%	60%	4%	99%	45%	87%	41%	17%
No	34%	40%	96%	1%	55%	13%	59%	84%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

There is near unanimity in UAE (99%) among millennial respondents that they have a friend or acquaintance of another faith. Majorities in Kuwait (87%), Morocco (66%), and Egypt (60%) concur. More than four in 10 respondents in Bahrain (45%) and Jordan (41%) also have a friend or acquaintance who is a believer in another faith. Far fewer respondents in Palestine (17%) and Saudi Arabia (4%) have friends or acquaintances of other faiths.

Religious Understandings and Devotion

Table 4 Religion is just about beliefs and laws that define the boundaries of right and wrong.

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Agree	77%	44%	75%	16%	93%	44%	100%	80%
Disagree	23%	56%	25%	84%	7%	56%	0%	20%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding. Agree is the aggregation of the responses “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree.” Disagree is the aggregation of the responses “somewhat disagree” and “strongly disagree.”

There are significant differences of opinion among millennial respondents in the Arab world when asked if they agree that “religion is just about beliefs and laws that define the boundaries of right and wrong.” All respondents in Jordan (100%) and strong majorities in Bahrain (93%), Palestine (80%), Morocco (77%), and Saudi Arabia (75%) agree with this assessment of religion primarily related to beliefs and laws. On the other hand, attitudes about this issue are divided in Egypt (44% vs. 56%), and Kuwait (44% vs. 56%), and decidedly negative in UAE (16% vs. 84%).

Table 5 Religion is a private spiritual affair.

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Agree	98%	99%	84%	84%	88%	78%	80%	81%
Disagree	2%	1%	16%	16%	12%	22%	20%	19%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding. Agree is the aggregation of the responses “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree.” Disagree is the aggregation of the responses “somewhat disagree” and “strongly disagree.”

More than three-quarters of millennial respondents across the board agree that religion is a private spiritual affair, with near unanimity in Egypt (99%) and Morocco (98%), as well as very strong agreement in Bahrain (88%), Saudi Arabia (84%), and UAE (84%).

In seven of the eight countries, support for the idea that religion is a private, spiritual affair is greater than support for the idea that religion is only laws and beliefs. In Egypt, UAE, and Kuwait, the difference is substantial.

Table 6 Which of the following statements, A or B, best reflects your point of view?

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
A	46%	60%	22%	74%	42%	62%	50%	57%
B	54%	40%	78%	26%	58%	38%	50%	43%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

A: I feel tension between the temptations and vices faced by my generation in today's society and preserving my identity and practice as a Muslim.

B: Even with the temptations and vices that are prevalent in today's society, I find it easy to observe my identity and practice as a Muslim.

When asked about the tension between the temptations of society and Muslim identity and practice, opinions of millennials vary considerably. Majorities in UAE (74%), Kuwait (62%), Egypt (60%), and Palestine (57%) acknowledge that they feel this tension “between the temptations and vices faced by my generation in today's society and preserving my identity and practice as a Muslim.” On the other hand, majorities in Saudi Arabia (78%), Bahrain (58%), and Morocco (54%) say that “even with the temptations and vices that are prevalent in today's society, I find it easy to observe my identity and practice as a Muslim.” Jordanian opinion is evenly split on this question (50% vs. 50%).

Table 7 Which aspect of Islam is most important to you?

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Seeking Islamic knowledge	11%	13%	13%	6%	12%	14%	9%	6%
The political issues facing Muslims	21%	14%	28%	15%	23%	36%	18%	31%
Living by Islamic ethics and morals	24%	47%	19%	39%	13%	25%	23%	22%
Spirituality and Spiritual Practice	15%	11%	15%	24%	11%	10%	18%	15%
Performing religious obligations and avoiding prohibitions	25%	11%	16%	15%	21%	10%	23%	19%
The sense of identity that Islam provides	4%	5%	9%	1%	19%	5%	9%	5%
None of the above	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

When asked which aspect of Islam is most important to them, millennial respondents gravitate toward “living by Islamic ethics and morals” and “the political issues facing Muslims.” Islamic morality and ethics is the most frequently selected choice overall and is ranked first in three countries (Egypt: 47%, UAE: 39%, Jordan: 23%), and second in an additional four countries (Kuwait: 25%, Morocco: 24%, Palestine:

22%, Saudi Arabia: 19%). Political issues is the top choice in four countries (Kuwait: 36%, Palestine: 31%, Saudi Arabia: 28%, Bahrain: 23%), second in Egypt, and third in the remaining three countries.

“Performing religious obligations and avoiding prohibitions” and “spirituality” are the next tier of important aspects of Islam to millennials. In fact, religious obligations and prohibitions is the top choice in Morocco (25%) and Jordan (23%), and the second ranked choice in Bahrain (21%). Spirituality is particularly noted as important by millennials in the UAE (24%), who rank it second among the aspects of Islam.

“Seeking Islamic knowledge” is noted as the most important aspect of Islam by fewer than one in seven respondents across the board. And “the sense of identity that Islam provides” is considered most important by fewer than one in 10 millennials, except in Bahrain where 19% (ranked 3rd) say this is the most important aspect of Islam to them.

Table 8 I believe in Islam because I am convinced of its truth.

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Agree	77%	90%	100%	90%	100%	100%	100%	90%
Disagree	23%	10%	<1%	10%	0%	<1%	0%	10%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding. Agree is the aggregation of the responses “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree.” Disagree is the aggregation of the responses “somewhat disagree” and “strongly disagree.”

There is unanimity among respondents in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan that they believe in Islam because they are convinced of its truth. Nine in 10 respondents in Palestine (90%), Egypt (90%), and UAE (90%) agree, as do more than three-quarters of those in Morocco (77%).

Table 9 I believe in Islam because I was brought up with it.

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Agree	77%	90%	52%	84%	96%	29%	40%	92%
Disagree	23%	10%	48%	16%	4%	71%	60%	8%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding. Agree is the aggregation of the responses “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree.” Disagree is the aggregation of the responses “somewhat disagree” and “strongly disagree.”

Strong majorities of millennials in Bahrain (96%), Palestine (92%), Egypt (90%), UAE (84%), and Morocco (77%) say they believe in Islam because they were brought up with it. This view is far less prevalent among respondents in Saudi Arabia (52%), Jordan (40%), and Kuwait (29%).

Religion in the Public Sphere

Table 10

Which of the following statements, A or B, best reflects your point of view?

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
If cultural content (movies, TV, theatre, adverts, etc.) breaches the moral and ethical values of society, it should be banned.	70%	76%	85%	88%	63%	74%	67%	74%
Cultural content shouldn't be regulated by moral sensitivities. If people don't like something, they don't have to watch it.	30%	24%	15%	12%	37%	26%	33%	26%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

There is broad agreement —majorities of millennials in all eight countries surveyed— that “if cultural content breaches the moral and ethical values of society, it should be banned.” This opinion is strongest in UAE (88%), Saudi Arabia (85%), and Egypt (76%).

Table 11

How would you feel if someone approached you in a public space (school, workplace, mall, mosque, cafe, etc.) and imparted religious advice to you?

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
People have a right to advise others on matters of religion, ethics and morality.	39%	20%	40%	31%	33%	31%	55%	24%
If a person was to dispense advice with courtesy and discretion, it is acceptable.	56%	71%	56%	45%	59%	48%	36%	56%
No one has a right to advise others in a public space.	6%	9%	4%	25%	9%	21%	10%	20%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

Strong majorities in all countries agree that people have the right to dispense religious advice in public, with at least pluralities of millennials in seven of the eight countries saying that it must be done with courtesy and discretion. The requirement for courtesy is strongest in Egypt (71%), Bahrain (59%), Palestine (56%), Morocco (56%), and Saudi Arabia (56%). The only country where a majority holds that this right is absolute without discretion is Jordan where 55% of millennials say that “people have a right to religiously advise others on matters of religion, ethics, and morality.” While fewer than one in 10 respondents in Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia feel that no one has the right to advise others in a public space, this view is slightly stronger in UAE (25%), Kuwait (21%), and Palestine (20%).

Table 12 On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being “very involved” to 5 “not involved at all”) How involved do you think the state should be in each of the following areas?

		Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Appointment of imams, administration of mosques, and arranging preparations for holy occasions	Involved	36%	87%	62%	67%	26%	90%	33%	75%
	Not Involved	46%	5%	31%	22%	58%	4%	51%	11%
Regulating religious discourse in Friday sermons, public religious lectures, and religious TV shows	Involved	70%	77%	62%	32%	38%	82%	41%	68%
	Not Involved	13%	8%	25%	33%	61%	9%	14%	12%
Ensuring that religious discourse is not used to promote violence, incitement, and hatred	Involved	89%	90%	72%	66%	60%	77%	82%	66%
	Not Involved	3%	3%	9%	16%	24%	2%	2%	16%
Full authority to get involved in anything related to religion in society	Involved	34%	62%	24%	48%	12%	41%	7%	63%
	Not Involved	57%	22%	56%	16%	72%	30%	89%	18%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding, and because responses of “3” are not included. Involved is the aggregation of the responses “1” and “2.” Not involved is the aggregation of the responses “4” and “5.”

Millennials in the eight surveyed countries were asked how involved they think the state should be in various aspects of religious life in society. Overall, Egyptians, Kuwaitis, and Palestinians see a role for the state in every area. Bahrainis are the most opposed to government involvement, except in stopping incitement.

The greatest area of agreement among respondents in the eight countries relates to state involvement in “ensuring that religious discourse is not used to promote violence, incitement, and hatred” where at least six in 10 respondents in all countries think that the state should be involved. The strongest agreement comes from Egypt (90%) and Morocco (89%), followed by Jordan (82%) and Kuwait (77%).

Majorities in five countries say that the state should be involved in “regulating or defining religious discourse in Friday sermons, public religious lectures, and religious TV shows,” including Kuwait (82%), Egypt (77%), Morocco (70%), Palestine (68%), and Saudi Arabia (62%). A plurality in Jordan also agrees with state involvement in this area (41% vs. 14% who say the state should not be involved). Opinion is split in UAE where one-third says the state should be involved in regulating religious discourse (32%), one-third says it should not (33%), and the remainder say “neither.” Finally, a majority in Bahrain (61%) say the state should not be involved in regulating religious discourse (with 51% saying it should “not be involved at all”), while 38% say the state should be involved.

With respect to the “appointment of imams, administration of mosques, and arranging preparations for holy occasions,” majorities of millennials in five countries think the state should be involved, including 90% in Kuwait, 87% in Egypt, 75% in Palestine, 67% in UAE, and 62% in Saudi Arabia.

Majorities in Bahrain (58%) and Jordan (51%), as well as a plurality in Morocco (46%), disagree, saying that the state should not be involved in appointing imams and other aspects of mosque administration.

Only in Egypt and Palestine do majorities think that the state should have “full authority to get involved in anything related to religion in society” (62% and 63%, respectively). Pluralities in UAE (48%) and Kuwait (41%) agree. However, majorities in Jordan (89%), Bahrain (72%), Morocco (57%), and Saudi Arabia (56%) say the state does not have this authority.

Religion & Contemporary Relevance

Table 13

Religion as it is currently taught and practiced in my community conflicts with the modern world and needs to be changed and reformed.

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Agree	62%	47%	31%	3%	55%	30%	29%	71%
Disagree	38%	53%	69%	97%	45%	70%	71%	30%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding. Agree is the aggregation of the responses “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree.” Disagree is the aggregation of the responses “somewhat disagree” and “strongly disagree.”

When asked if they agree that religion as it is currently taught and practiced in their communities conflicts with the modern world and needs to be reformed, majorities in five of the eight countries reject this notion. This view is strongest in UAE (97%), followed by Jordan (71%), Kuwait (70%), and Saudi Arabia (69%); a slim majority in Egypt (53%) also disagree. Alternatively, in Palestine, Morocco, and Bahrain majorities of millennial respondents do feel that religion and the modern world are in conflict and that religion as it is currently taught and practiced needs reform (71%, 62%, and 55%, respectively).

Table 14

There needs to be a renewal in the language that religious scholars and preachers use to talk about Islam in sermons and lectures.

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Agree	90%	90%	72%	64%	78%	66%	76%	78%
Disagree	10%	10%	28%	36%	22%	34%	24%	22%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding. Agree is the aggregation of the responses “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree.” Disagree is the aggregation of the responses “somewhat disagree” and “strongly disagree.”

There is broad agreement among millennials surveyed that “there needs to be a renewal in the language used to talk about Islam in sermons, talks and public outlets,” with majorities in all eight countries agreeing to this statement. The strongest agreement is in Morocco (90%) and Egypt (90%), followed by Bahrain (78%), Palestine (78%), Jordan (76%), Saudi Arabia (72%), Kuwait (66%), and UAE (64%).

Table 15 The topics and issues which scholars, preachers and speakers address need to be updated to be relevant to people today.

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Agree	79%	93%	85%	69%	76%	81%	63%	75%
Disagree	21%	7%	15%	31%	24%	19%	37%	25%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding. Agree is the aggregation of the responses “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree.” Disagree is the aggregation of the responses “somewhat disagree” and “strongly disagree.”

Again, there is agreement among a majority of respondents in all eight countries surveyed that “the topics and issues which scholars, preachers and speakers address need to be updated to be relevant to people today.” The strongest agreement on this point is in Egypt (93%), Saudi Arabia (85%), and Kuwait (81%), followed by Morocco (79%) Bahrain (76%), Palestine (75%), UAE (69%), and Jordan (63%).

Table 16 Which of the following statements, A or B, best reflects your point of view?

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
A	86%	82%	84%	93%	66%	73%	92%	74%
B	14%	18%	16%	7%	34%	27%	8%	26%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

- A: Religion as it is currently taught and practiced in my community respects women and empowers them.
- B: Religion as it is currently taught and practiced in my community restricts women and is used to reduce their role.

Strong majorities across the board feel that religion respects and empowers women rather than restricts women and reduces their role. More than eight in 10 respondents in UAE (93%), Jordan (92%), Morocco (86%), Saudi Arabia (84%), and Egypt (82%), as well as 74% in Palestine, 73% in Kuwait, and 66% in Bahrain say that “religion as it is currently taught and practiced in my community respects women and empowers them.”

Table 17 We need more female religious scholars and preachers who are given the opportunity and space to preach in society more widely.

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Agree	87%	80%	76%	63%	95%	66%	85%	88%
Disagree	13%	20%	24%	37%	5%	34%	15%	12%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding. Agree is the aggregation of the responses “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree.” Disagree is the aggregation of the responses “somewhat disagree” and “strongly disagree.”

Majorities in all countries surveyed also feel that their societies need more female religious scholars and preachers who are given the opportunity and space to preach more widely. This view is strongest among millennials in Bahrain (95%), Palestine (88%), Morocco (87%), Jordan (85%), and Egypt (80%), as well as by 76% in Saudi Arabia, 66% in Kuwait, and 63% in UAE.

The responses here closely track the responses to the previous question, except, in the UAE where respondents are 30 points less supportive of the need for more women preachers and Bahrain where respondents are 29 points more supportive.

Table 18 Religion has been a major cause for the Arab world’s decline in the social, political and economic realms in recent times.

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Agree	24%	10%	4%	19%	29%	4%	14%	57%
Disagree	76%	90%	96%	81%	71%	96%	86%	43%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding. Agree is the aggregation of the responses “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree.” Disagree is the aggregation of the responses “somewhat disagree” and “strongly disagree.”

In all countries except Palestine, majorities of millennial respondents do not think that “religion has been a major cause for the Arab world’s decline in the social, political, economic realms in recent times.” More than nine in 10 respondents in Kuwait (96%), Saudi Arabia (96%), and Egypt (90%), as well as 86% in Jordan, 81% in UAE, 76% in Morocco, and 71% in Bahrain, hold this view. On the other hand, a majority of young Palestinians (57%) agree that religion has been a major cause for the Arab world’s decline.

Table 19 Religion has an important role to play in my country's future.

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Agree	77%	90%	88%	89%	63%	93%	75%	86%
Disagree	23%	10%	12%	11%	37%	7%	25%	14%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding. Agree is the aggregation of the responses "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree." Disagree is the aggregation of the responses "somewhat disagree" and "strongly disagree."

Again, there is broad agreement among millennials that religion has an important role to play in their country's futures, with the strongest agreement in Kuwait (93%), Egypt (90%), UAE (89%), Saudi Arabia (88%), and Palestine (86%), followed by Morocco (77%), Jordan (75%), and Bahrain (63%).

With the exception of Palestine, responses to this question are nearly mirror images of the responses to the previous question. In every country except Palestine, overwhelming majorities reject the idea that religion has been a cause of the Arab world's decline and nearly identical majorities support the idea that religion has an important role to play in their countries' futures.

Scholarship, Learning and Knowledge

Table 20 Of the following, who do you think has the right to interpret and explain religion and decide what is permissible and forbidden, and right and wrong in the religion? (Select all that apply.)

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
The Grand Mufti of my country	70%	61%	34%	10%	38%	13%	49%	47%
Shaykhs (graduates of Islamic seminaries who have authorisations)	33%	34%	46%	83%	31%	49%	39%	43%
The imam in my local mosque	24%	36%	25%	20%	43%	7%	25%	21%
Muslim professors of Islamic Studies in university	21%	47%	42%	29%	23%	53%	36%	24%
Preachers who have television shows	63%	27%	33%	4%	49%	13%	32%	17%
Any devoted and observant Muslim	16%	19%	20%	14%	27%	15%	11%	11%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

When asked who has the right to interpret and explain religion, including what is permissible and what is forbidden, the top selections by millennials in this survey are “Shaykhs” and “the Grand Mufti of my country.” Shaykhs are the top choice for rightful interpreters of religion by 83% of young people in the UAE as well as by 46% of those in Saudi Arabia. They are ranked second among respondents in Kuwait (49%), Palestine (43%), and Jordan (39%). The Grand Mufti of my country is the top choice in Morocco (70%), Egypt (61%), Jordan (49%), and Palestine (47%).

The next tier of responses for rightful interpreter of religion is composed of Muslim professors of Islamic Studies and preachers who have television shows. A majority of respondents in Kuwait (53%) select Muslim professors (ranked 1st in that country), while this group finishes second among those in Egypt (47%), Saudi Arabia (42%), and UAE (29%). TV preachers are viewed as rightful interpreters of Islam by 49% of respondents in Bahrain (ranked 1st), as well as by a majority in Morocco (63%, ranked 2nd).

Local imams are not as highly ranked, though 43% of young people in Bahrain (ranked 2nd) and 36% of those in Egypt (ranked 3rd) do indicate that the imams in their local mosques have the right to interpret and explain religion.

Finally, devoted and observant Muslims are the least likely to be considered rightful interpreters of Islam by millennials. Aside from Bahrain (where 27% say any observant Muslim can interpret Islam), fewer than one in five respondents see this as a proper role for even devoted and observant Muslims.

Table 21 Which of the following is most important to you for providing guidance and direction in your general life affairs?

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Friday sermon	20%	44%	14%	15%	20%	12%	15%	29%
Religious lectures/talks in my town	27%	25%	35%	56%	18%	54%	27%	32%
Religious TV shows	51%	20%	38%	28%	52%	19%	54%	21%
Social media networks/ accounts of famous religious personalities	2%	11%	13%	1%	10%	15%	5%	17%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

When asked to select the most important source for guidance and direction in their general life affairs, millennial respondents in four of the eight countries say religious TV shows are the most important source, including majorities in Jordan (54%), Bahrain (52%), and Morocco (51%), and 38% of those in Saudi Arabia. TV shows are the second most important source for millennials in UAE (28%) and Kuwait (19%).

Religious lectures are the top choice for guidance and direction among respondents in UAE (56%), Kuwait (54%), and Palestine (32%), and the second most important source for those in Saudi Arabia (35%), Morocco (27%), Jordan (27%), and Egypt (25%).

Friday sermons are considered the most important source only in Egypt (44%), but rank second in Palestine (29%) and Bahrain (20%).

In seven of the eight countries surveyed, social media networks are ranked last among the choices for important sources of guidance for everyday life.

Table 22	Which of the following statements, A or B, best reflects your point of view?							
	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Religious sermons, teaching and preaching successfully address the issues related to being a Muslim in the world today.	36%	43%	73%	97%	37%	74%	69%	72%
Religious sermons, teaching and preaching do not address the issues related to being a Muslim in the world today.	64%	57%	27%	3%	63%	26%	31%	28%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

In five of the eight countries surveyed, majorities of millennial respondents say that “religious sermons, teaching, and preaching successfully address the issues related to being a Muslim in the world today.” There is near unanimity on this in UAE (97%), while about seven in 10 respondents in Kuwait (74%), Saudi Arabia (73%), Palestine (72%), and Jordan (69%) concur. On the other hand, majorities in Morocco (64%), Bahrain (63%), and Egypt (57%) feel that religious sermons and teaching do not address the issues relevant to being a Muslim in the world today.

Table 23	Which of the following best describes the Friday sermon at your local mosque?							
	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
A loud, angry tirade	11%	2%	12%	3%	9%	14%	9%	13%
Bland and boring	11%	13%	13%	5%	21%	10%	3%	19%
The government’s voice	40%	12%	28%	10%	47%	20%	30%	25%
Inspiring and uplifts your faith	38%	69%	47%	79%	23%	56%	57%	37%
None of the above	0%	4%	1%	3%	0%	1%	1%	6%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

When asked to describe the Friday sermon in their local mosques, millennial respondents in six of the eight countries surveyed say the sermon tends to be “inspiring and uplifts their faith,” including majorities in UAE (79%), Egypt (69%), Jordan (57%), and Kuwait (56%), as well as 47% in Saudi Arabia and 37% in Palestine.

“Inspiring and uplifting” is the second most popular choice for describing the Friday sermon in Morocco (38%) and Bahrain (23%), topped by “the government’s voice” in both countries (Bahrain: 47% and Morocco: 40%).

The remaining respondents in the eight surveyed countries (ranging between 8%–32%) are divided between describing the Friday sermon in their local mosques as “a loud, angry tirade” and “bland and boring.”

Table 24 **Where do you prefer to go when you have questions about faith and morality?**

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
An observant/ devoted family member, friend or someone I know	44%	58%	25%	81%	15%	28%	36%	39%
Internet	68%	27%	25%	10%	28%	30%	22%	40%
Local mosque Imam	64%	64%	49%	30%	56%	34%	55%	24%
The official Fatwa centre for my country	10%	34%	45%	16%	24%	49%	53%	16%
Religious TV show phone-in	75%	36%	32%	32%	34%	28%	16%	10%
Islamic books	34%	17%	23%	15%	25%	21%	7%	17%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

When asked where they prefer to go with questions about faith and morality, respondents in four countries surveyed rank local mosque imams first, including 64% in Egypt, 56% in Bahrain, 55% in Jordan, and 49% in Saudi Arabia. Almost two-thirds of Moroccan millennials (64%) also say they prefer to go to the local mosque imam, the third most popular answer in Morocco.

Overall, the second most popular choice is an observant family member or friend, which is ranked first among respondents in UAE (81%) and second among those in Egypt (58%) and Palestine (39%).

Phoning in to religious TV shows is preferred by a majority in Morocco (75%), where it is the favorite choice. This option is selected by one-third or fewer respondents in all other countries surveyed.

The Internet is the preferred choice for questions on faith and morality for 68% in Morocco (ranked 2nd in that country), as well as 40% in Palestine (ranked 1st), and is chosen by fewer than three in 10 respondents everywhere else.

The official Fatwa centre is the top choice among millennial respondents in Kuwait (49%) and the second most preferred source for faith and morality questions for young people in Jordan (53%) and Saudi Arabia (45%).

Finally, Islamic books are overall the least preferred source for answers to questions about faith and morality, with one-third or less respondents selecting this option in all countries surveyed.

Ideological and Thought Trends

Table 25 Do you know anyone in your circle of friends or acquaintances who is an atheist?

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Yes	<1%	<1%	<1%	3%	7%	7%	1%	6%
No	100%	100%	100%	97%	93%	93%	99%	94%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

Very few millennial respondents across the board say they know anyone in their circle of friends or acquaintances who is an atheist, with the highest rates of affirmative responses in Bahrain and Kuwait where just 7% of respondents say they know an atheist.

Table 26 Have you seen or heard traces of atheism in your locality, community, and society?

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Yes	3%	5%	3%	51%	6%	4%	7%	8%
No	97%	95%	97%	49%	94%	96%	93%	92%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

While less than 8% of millennial respondents in all other countries say they have seen or heard traces of atheism in their locality, community or society, about one-half of respondents in the UAE (51%) say they have noticed such things.

Table 27 To what extent do you think that groups or movements like ISIS and Al-Qaeda are a perversion of the teachings of Islam?

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
They are a complete perversion of Islam's teachings.	93%	83%	57%	92%	65%	45%	61%	58%
They are mostly wrong, but sometimes they raise and discuss issues that I agree with them on.	6%	11%	28%	8%	21%	39%	15%	17%
They are mostly right, but I disagree with some of their words and actions.	<1%	2%	5%	1%	10%	8%	11%	10%
They are not a perversion at all.	<1%	4%	10%	<1%	4%	7%	13%	15%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

At least three-quarters of millennial respondents in all countries surveyed say groups or movements like ISIS and Al-Qaeda are either a complete perversion of Islam's teachings or mostly wrong. In many cases, the opinions are far stronger. More than nine in 10 respondents in Morocco (93%) and UAE (92%) call ISIS and Al-Qaeda a complete perversion of Islam, as do 83% of those in Egypt, 65% in Bahrain, 61% in Jordan, 58% in Palestine, and 57% in Saudi Arabia. In a few countries there are significant percentages of respondents who say these groups are "mostly wrong, but sometimes raise issues I agree with," including 39% in Kuwait, 28% in Saudi Arabia, and 21% in Bahrain.

About one in 10 millennial respondents in Bahrain, Palestine, and Jordan say ISIS and Al-Qaeda are "mostly right, but I disagree with some of their words and actions."

Finally, at least one in 10 respondents in Saudi Arabia (10%), Jordan (13%), and Palestine (15%) do not feel that these groups are a perversion at all.

Table 28

In your opinion, of the factors listed below, which are the two most important reasons leading young men and women to join extremist groups?

	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
Corrupt, repressive, and unrepresentative governments	50%	38%	36%	69%	34%	27%	37%	29%
Foreign occupation of Arab lands	13%	15%	30%	17%	33%	26%	21%	46%
Extreme religious discourse and teachings	44%	46%	23%	38%	27%	28%	30%	27%
A conviction that these groups represent the truth	33%	36%	30%	37%	31%	32%	28%	30%
Alienation of young people	13%	22%	25%	9%	24%	27%	27%	24%
Poor levels of education	39%	32%	31%	22%	28%	33%	33%	29%
Young people seeking adventure	7%	12%	25%	8%	23%	26%	24%	14%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

When asked to select the two most important reasons leading young men and women to join extremist groups, millennial respondents overall are most likely to point to “corrupt, repressive, and unrepresentative governments.” This is the most cited reason in UAE (69%), Morocco (50%), Jordan (37%), Saudi Arabia (36%), and Bahrain (34%), and the choice ranked second in Egypt (38%). The question was not asking for respondent’s views on why citizens of their country join extremist groups, but why young people in general may be driven to join these groups. The view “corrupt, repressive and unrepresentative governments” was a generic description and not referring to the local government. The cross analysis of the results and other independent studies and polls confirm this point.

Three additional reasons are most widely cited by millennial respondents for young people joining extremist groups: “extreme religious discourse and teachings,” “a conviction that these groups represent the truth,” and “poor levels of education.” Extreme religious discourse is the most frequent response in Egypt (46%) and the second ranked choice in Morocco (44%) and UAE (38%). A conviction that extremist groups represent truth is selected as an important reason for youth joining such groups by about one-third of respondents in almost every country surveyed. Poor education is the most popular response in Kuwait (33%), and is cited by about one-third of respondents in most surveyed countries.

“Foreign occupation of Arab lands” is the most important reason according to 46% of millennial respondents in Palestine, as well as about one-third of those in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Finally, the notion that young people are joining extremist groups as a means of seeking adventure is by far the least cited reason, though about one-quarter of millennials in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Bahrain do note this as important.

Demographics and Methodology

Demographics

Table 28	Demographics							
	Morocco	Egypt	KSA	UAE	Bahrain	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine
15–24	51%	52%	50%	32%	44%	42%	57%	59%
25–34	50%	48%	51%	68%	56%	58%	43%	41%
Sunni	99%	98%	85%	91%	36%	75%	96%	100%
Shia	1%	2%	15%	10%	64%	25%	4%	0%
Male	50%	52%	53%	67%	53%	57%	51%	48%
Female	50%	48%	47%	33%	47%	43%	49%	52%
No Univ	87%	88%	84%	89%	73%	82%	78%	79%
Univ+	13%	12%	16%	11%	27%	18%	22%	21%
Live in city	59%	60%	81%	84%	73%	97%	80%	72%
Live outside city	41%	40%	19%	16%	27%	3%	20%	16%
Refugee camp	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

Geographic Coverage

Country	Geographic Coverage
Morocco	Casablanca, Marrakech, Fes, Meknes, Rabat, Tanger
Egypt	Cairo, Giza, Shoubra Al Khima, Alexandria, Mansura (urban and rural), Asyut (urban and rural), Tanta (urban and rural)
Jordan	Amman City, Balqa, Madaba, Irbid, Jarash, Zarqa
KSA	Riyadh, Buraydah, Jeddah, Makkah, Taif, Dammam, Al Khobar, Dhahran
UAE	Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Northern Emirates
Bahrain	Manama, Muharraq, Al Riffa, Madinat Isa, Hammad, Sitra
Kuwait	Farwaniya, Andalus, Fardous, Kuwait City, Jabriya, Hawalli, Mubarak Al Kabir
Palestine	Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Hebron, Jericho, Tulkarem, Tubas, Qalqilya, Salfit, Gaza City, North Gaza, Dier Al-Balah, Khan Yunis, Rafah

Sample Sizes, Dates of Survey, Margins of Error

Country	Sample size	Dates of Survey	MOE
Morocco	738	Oct. 29 – Nov. 15, 2015	±3.7
Egypt	826	Oct. 28 – Nov. 15, 2015	±3.5
Jordan	527	Oct. 29 – Nov. 15, 2015	±4.4
KSA	831	Oct. 28 – Nov. 16, 2015	±3.5
UAE	527	Oct. 29 – Nov. 16, 2015	±4.4
Bahrain	522	Oct. 29 – Nov. 16, 2015	±4.4
Kuwait	523	Oct. 28 – Nov. 15, 2015	±4.4
Palestine	880	Oct. 29 – Nov. 18, 2015	±3.4

Sampling Methodology

The approach used for conducting the poll involved face-to-face, personal interviews. Urban as well as rural centres were covered in each country to cover a widespread geography. The sample obtained is nationally representative and is comprised of adult Muslim males and females, who are 15–34 years of age.

Sampling for the polls varied by country. In Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, and Kuwait, where door-to-door sampling is not possible, a referral sampling approach was used. In the remaining countries where random, door-to-door sampling is possible a multi-stage sampling methodology was employed for selection of respondents.

In each country, the selected study centers were stratified depending on the predominant social class/income levels of the people residing in various areas. This is because in most cities/towns, people of a specific social class/income segment/religious grouping tend to stay in clusters. These strata were further sub-divided into blocks of roughly equal size, based on available data about population. Thereafter, blocks were selected at random depending on the sample size for that center and keeping in mind the social class/religious cluster distribution. A pre-assigned number of starting points were used for each selected block and sampling within the blocks was undertaken using right hand rule method. Within each selected household that agreed to participate, we took an inventory of all family members between 15 and 34 years of age and randomly selected one adult to be interviewed in a way that ensured that both genders had an equal chance of inclusion, with no one allowed to self-select into the sample.

