

Social Institutions and Gender Index

# United Arab Emirates

## SIGI Country Profile

17 of June 2024

SIGI Country Profiles are produced by the OECD Development Centre

The information and analysis contained in this profile are based on data from the fifth edition of the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) published in March 2023. The cut-off date for legal data is 31 August 2022; the cut-off date for quantitative data is 1 January 2023.

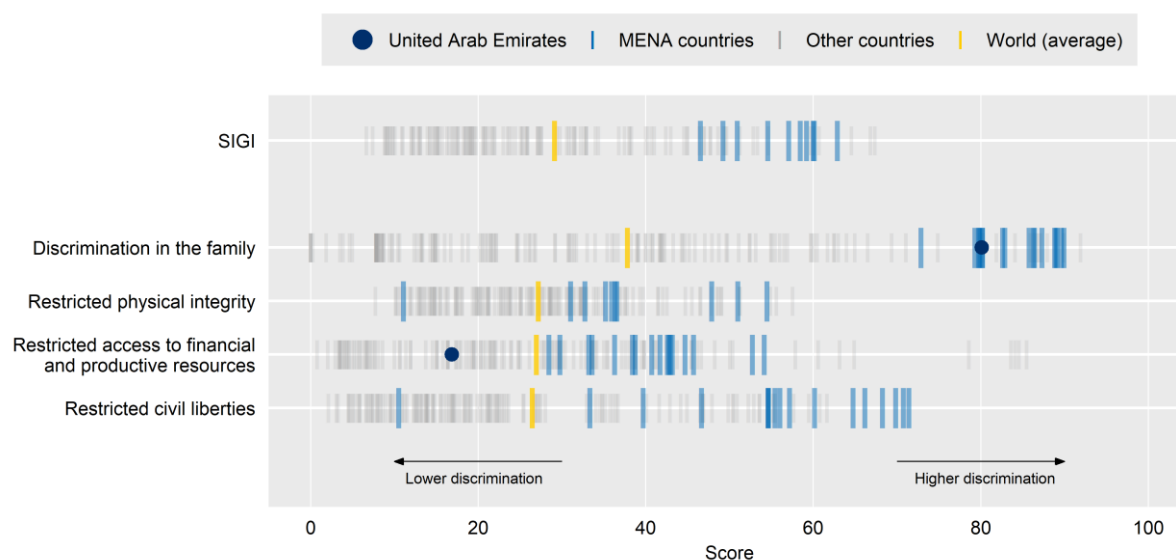
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# Social institutions in the United Arab Emirates

## The state of gender equality in the United Arab Emirates

The SIGI 2023 profile for the United Arab Emirates provides a comprehensive overview of the state of gender equality in the country, as measured by the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI). The fifth edition of the SIGI, released in 2023, assesses 140 countries based on the level of gender-based discrimination in their social institutions. These discriminatory social institutions encompass both formal and informal laws, as well as social norms and practices that restrict women's and girls' access to rights, justice, empowerment opportunities and resources, thereby undermining their agency and authority.

**Figure 1. SIGI and dimension scores for the United Arab Emirates, 2023**



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The MENA region covers Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Yemen.

Source: OECD (2023), "Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

In 2023, the United Arab Emirates did not obtain a SIGI score due to missing data in the "Restricted physical integrity" and "Restricted civil liberties" dimensions (Figure 1). The country is missing data on

attitudes and practices related to violence against women and access to justice – more specifically, (1) the share of women aged 15-49 who think a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances, (2) the share of women and girls aged 15-49 who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner at least once during their lifetime, and (3) the share of women among those declaring not having confidence in the judicial system and courts of their country. The country obtained a score of 80 in the “Discrimination in the family” dimension, followed by “Restricted access to productive and financial resources” (17).<sup>1</sup>

## Legislative framework in the United Arab Emirates

The legal system is based on Civil Law and Islamic law. Distinct personal status laws (regulating marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance) apply to different religious communities. Article 7 of the Constitution states that Islam is the official religion of the UAE and that the Islamic Sharia is the main source of legislation. In the Personal Status Law, which governs personal matters such as marriage or inheritance, Article 1 stipulates that the provisions of the law shall apply to all citizens, except for non-Muslims who are subject to special provisions applicable to their community or religion. In 2022, the UAE issued Federal Decree-Law No. 41 of 2022 regarding Civil Personal Status, which entered into force on 1 February 2023 – after the cut-off date for SIGI legal data – and which applies to non-Muslims citizens and non-Muslim foreigners residing in the country. This law governs marriage, divorce, inheritance and custody for non-Muslims.

The Constitution (as amended in 2019) recognises and prohibits multiple and intersectional discrimination, namely on the basis of race, nationality, religious beliefs, social status, or gender – an essential provision to enhance gender equality from a legal perspective. Moreover, the UAE ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>2</sup> in 2004, but expresses reservations on Articles 2(f), 9, 15(2), 16 and 29(1).<sup>3</sup> Regarding Article 2(f) on inheritance, Article 15(2) on the capacity to testify, and Article 16 on equality in marriage and family life, the UAE considers them to be in violation of the provisions of the Islamic Sharia.

Gender-disaggregated, gender-relevant and intersectional data and indicators are essential to better identify policy areas that have strong linkages with gender. In the United Arab Emirates, there are no applicable legal provisions regulating the production and dissemination of gender statistics.

## Positive highlights and significant challenges since the fourth edition of the SIGI

### Positive highlights

Recent law reforms in the United Arab Emirates promote women’s economic empowerment and establish mechanisms to address discrimination in the public sphere. Since 2019, legislated quotas are in place to promote women’s political participation at the national level. In this context, gender parity was reached among parliament members in 2022. In 2021 and 2022, the Labour Code was amended to prohibit gender

<sup>1</sup> SIGI scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. Levels of discrimination in the SIGI and its dimensions are assessed based on scores as follow: very low [0-20]; low [20-30]; medium [30-40]; high [40-50]; and very high [50-100].

<sup>2</sup> United Nations (1979), *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, United Nations, New York, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations (2023), “Status of Treaties: Chapter IV- 8. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women”, *Treaty Collection*, United Nations, New York, [https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg\\_no=IV-8&chapter=4](https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4).

discrimination in the workplace, mandate equal pay for work of equal value, and provide paid parental leave. In 2020, an amendment to the Personal Status Law repealed the article that required a married woman to obey her spouse, and an amendment to the Penal Code abrogated the article which previously permitted reduced penalties for “honour crimes.” These amendments represent important steps, but further reforms are needed to eliminate all discriminatory provisions.

### ! Significant challenges

Discriminatory social institutions undermine women’s and girls’ rights at the household level and limit their reproductive and citizenship rights. The Personal Status Law contains discriminatory provisions that restrict women’s rights to be legal guardians of their children, to file for divorce, and to inherit on equal grounds as men. Moreover, women do not have the same rights as men to confer their nationality to their spouse or their children. A general lack of data on the population’s attitudes towards gender roles and responsibilities and the prevalence of violence against women complicates a full assessment of gender-based discrimination within social institutions and limits the ability to design gender-transformative policies.

## Summary of results for the United Arab Emirates

<b>Discrimination in the family</b>	Unit	Value
Laws on child marriage	Score	50
Girl child marriage rate <sup>1</sup>	%	6.8
Boy child marriage rate <sup>1</sup>	%	2.4
Laws on household responsibilities	Score	75
Share of the population that agrees or strongly agrees that “if a woman earns more than her husband, it is a problem”	%	-
Share of the population that agrees or strongly agrees that “when a mother works for pay, the children will suffer”	%	-
Female-to-male ratio of time spent on unpaid care and domestic work	Ratio	-
Number of hours spent by men on unpaid care and domestic work in a 24-hour period	Hours	-
Number of hours spent by women on unpaid care and domestic work in a 24-hour period	Hours	-
Laws on divorce	Score	100
Laws on inheritance	Score	100
<b>Restricted physical integrity</b>	Unit	Value
Laws on violence against women	Score	50
Share of women who consider a husband to be justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances	%	-
Lifetime intimate-partner violence rate <sup>2</sup>	%	-
12-month intimate-partner violence rate <sup>2</sup>	%	-
Laws on female genital mutilation	%	50
Share of the female population who has heard about female genital mutilation and think the practice should continue	%	-
Prevalence of female genital mutilation (% of women aged 15-49 years who have undergone FGM)	%	-
Boy-to-girl ratio at birth (natural = 105) <sup>3</sup>	Ratio	108
Laws on reproductive autonomy	Score	75
Unmet needs for family planning <sup>4</sup>	%	16.7
<b>Restricted access to productive and financial resources</b>	Unit	Value
Laws on land assets	Score	0
Share of women among landowners	%	-
Laws on non-land assets	Score	0
Share of women among house owners	%	-
Laws on financial assets	Score	0
Share of women among bank account owners	%	27.7
Laws on workplace rights	Score	0
Share of the population declaring that “when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women”	%	-
Share of the population declaring that “men make better business executives than women do”	%	-
Share of women among managers	%	17.7
Share of firms with a woman as top manager	%	-
<b>Restricted civil liberties</b>	Unit	Value
Laws on citizenship rights	Score	100
Laws on political voice	Score	0
Share of the population declaring that “men make better political leaders than women do”	%	-
Share of women in Parliament (lower chamber)	%	50
Laws on freedom of movement	Score	0
Share of women among those who declare not feeling safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live	%	28.7
Laws on access to justice	Score	25
Share of women among those who declare not having confidence in the judicial system and courts of their country	%	-

Note: Scores of legal variables range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.

<sup>1</sup> % of girls/boys aged 15-19 years who have been or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union.

<sup>2</sup> % of ever-partnered women and girls who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner during their lifetime/over the previous 12 months. Population base for lifetime IPV: 15-49 years. Population base for 12-month IPV: 15 years and older.

<sup>3</sup> A natural boy-to-girl sex ratio at birth is generally estimated to be below 105. A ratio exceeding 105 implies the existence of more boys aged 0-4 than one would expect, indicating a potential phenomenon of son preference resulting in the systemic elimination of new-born girls.

<sup>4</sup> % of married or in-union women of reproductive age who want to either stop or delay childbearing but are not using any contraception method.

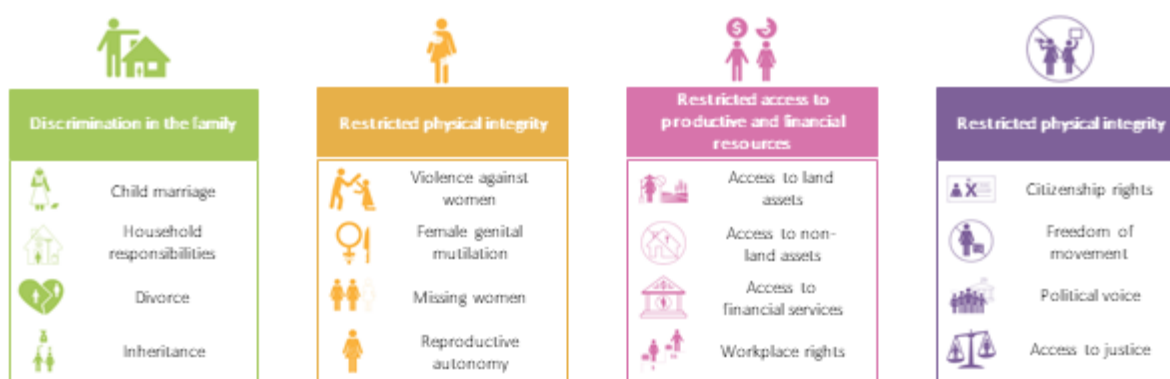
Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), “Gender, Institutions and Development Database”, <https://doi.org/10.1787/7b0af638-en>.

# Results across the SIGI's four dimensions

The SIGI measures gender-based discrimination across four dimensions covering the major socio-economic areas that affect women and girls throughout their lifetime:



- The **“Discrimination in the family”** dimension captures social institutions that limit women’s decision-making power and weaken their status in the household and the family.
- The **“Restricted physical integrity”** dimension captures social institutions that increase women’s and girls’ vulnerability to multiple forms of violence and limit their control over their reproductive autonomy.
- The **“Restricted access to productive and financial resources”** dimension captures social institutions that limit women’s economic opportunities and rights.
- The **“Restricted civil liberties”** dimension captures social institutions restricting women’s access to, and participation and voice in, the public and political spheres.

Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the fifth edition of the SIGI



Each dimension builds on four indicators which, in turn, build on one to three variables depending on data availability (Figure 2). This section features the results by dimension, examining the pertinent social norms, practices and legal frameworks for each indicator.

The legal information collected through the *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey* covers both formal and codified laws, as well as informal laws. The information is assessed based on whether the law protects women’s rights or not, and is icon-coded as follows:

-  : The legal framework protects women’s rights.
-  : The legal framework does not fully protect women’s rights.

There is no universal agreement on what informal laws refer to, given contextual differences across time and place, as well as distinct disciplinary or theoretical approaches. In the context of the SIGI, informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) describe mechanisms that operate outside the formal legal system of state-based laws. Informal laws vary from one community to another and are generally uncodified and unwritten. In some cases, informal laws may reflect unequal power dynamics within a given community and discriminatory social norms, with adverse consequences on women and girls and other vulnerable groups. Informal laws are unsteady and have been adapted over time in response to external factors.

For example, customary laws are laws that are embodied in customs, rules or traditions and accepted by members of the community as binding but remain adaptable, dynamic and flexible.<sup>4</sup> The CEDAW General Recommendation No. 33 also recognises indigenous laws.<sup>5</sup> These are similar to customary laws but are often given a distinct identity in recognition of the specific international standards related to the rights and protections of indigenous peoples and their justice systems. Informal religious laws may refer to norms that are derived from interpretations of codified religious texts and/or longstanding traditions.

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations (2018), "Module 1: The Theory and Practice of Women's Access to Justice Programming", *A Practitioner's Toolkit on Women's Access to Justice Programming*, UN Women, UNDP, UNDOC and OHCHR, New York, Vienna and Geneva, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/PractitionerToolkit/WA2J\\_Module1.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/PractitionerToolkit/WA2J_Module1.pdf).

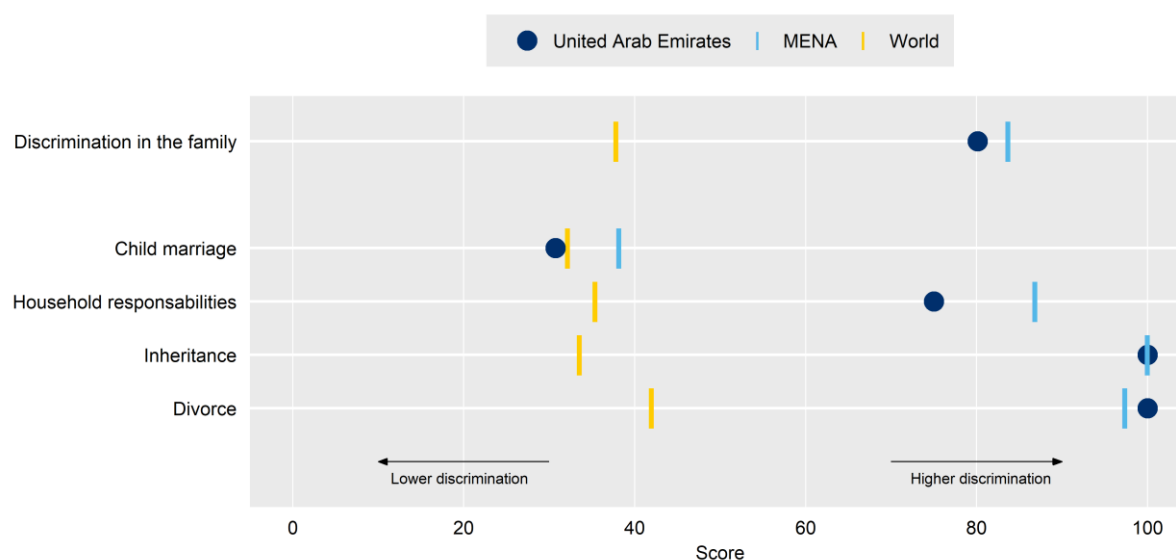
<sup>5</sup> UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2015), "General recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice", *CEDAW/C/GC/33*, United Nations, New York, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/807253>.

## Discrimination in the family

The United Arab Emirates exhibits very high levels of discrimination within the family with a score of 80, compared to a world average of 38 and an average score of 84 in the MENA region – based on countries for which scores could be calculated.

In this dimension, women and girls in the UAE experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Inheritance” and “Divorce” indicators with scores of 100 for both, followed by “Household responsibilities” with a score of 75. The lowest levels of discrimination are found in the “Child marriage” indicator with a score of 31, still denoting medium levels of discrimination.

**Figure 3. Discrimination in the family scores for the United Arab Emirates, 2023**



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The MENA region covers Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Yemen.

Source: OECD (2023), “Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)”, *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

## Child marriage

### Practices related to child marriage

Child marriage remains a concern in the United Arab Emirates. In 2023, 7% of girls aged 15-19 were or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union, compared to 2% of boys.

### Legal frameworks concerning child marriage

Article 30 of the Personal Status Law,<sup>6</sup> as amended, establishes 18 years as the minimum legal age of marriage. However, a judge can authorise the marriage of minors. Article 1 of the Personal Status Law

<sup>6</sup> United Arab Emirates (2005), “Federal Law No. 28 of 2005 on Personal Status”, *Official Gazette No. 439*.



stipulates that the law shall apply to all citizens, except for non-Muslim communities who are subjected to their own laws for personal and family matters.

Question	Answer	Assessment
What is the legal age of marriage for men?	18	✓
What is the legal age of marriage for women?	18	✓
Are there legal exceptions to the legal age of marriage that allow women and men under the legal age of marriage to marry with the consent of parent and/or legal guardian?	No	✓
Are there legal exceptions to the legal age of marriage that allow women and men under the legal age of marriage to marry with the consent of judge or court?	Yes	!
Are there legal exceptions to the legal age of marriage that allow women and men under the legal age of marriage to marry with the consent of another person or institution?	No	✓
Does the legal age of marriage apply to all groups of women?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that allow or encourage the early marriage of girls?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

## Household responsibilities

### Practices and social norms related to household responsibilities

There are no available data in the United Arab Emirates that are comparable to other countries on practices and social norms related to the division of household responsibilities. In 2023, across countries with available data, women dedicate 2.6 times more time on unpaid care and domestic work than men<sup>7</sup> worldwide, while in the MENA region this ratio is 5.9. Moreover, 56% of the world's population believes that when women work, the children will suffer. In the MENA region, this percentage reaches 70% – based on countries for which data are available.

### Legal frameworks concerning household responsibilities

Articles 146 and 213 of the Personal Status Law,<sup>8</sup> as amended, establish the father as the legal guardian of a child, whereas child custody belong in priority to the mother. In 2021, Article 410 of the Crimes and Penalties Law<sup>9</sup> decriminalised consensual relationships out of wedlock and provides that illegitimate children are now legally recognised. However, although it governs how parents can acknowledge their child, it does not contain any provision on child custody.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be “head of household” or “head of family”?	n.a.	n.a.
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be the legal guardians of their children during marriage?	No	!
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be legal guardians of their children in informal unions?	No	!
Regarding women's legal rights to be recognised as head of household or head of family, does the law apply to all groups of women?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to being recognised as the head of household?	Yes	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to being the legal guardians of their children?	Yes	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to the choice of where to live?	Yes	!

<sup>7</sup> This indicator corresponds to SDG indicator 5.4.1

<sup>8</sup> United Arab Emirates (2005), “Federal Law No. 28 of 2005 on Personal Status”, *Official Gazette No. 439*.

<sup>9</sup> United Arab Emirates (2021), “Federal Decree-Law No. 31 of 2021 promulgating the Crimes and Penalties Law”, *Official Gazette No. 712*.

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022. The law in the United Arab Emirates does not refer to the “head of household” or “head of family”.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

## Divorce

### Legal frameworks concerning divorce

Book II of the Personal Status Law,<sup>10</sup> as amended, regulates the dissolution of marriage for Muslim citizens. Article 1 of the Personal Status Law establishes that the law applies to all citizens, except for non-Muslims provided that they have their own personal status laws. The Personal Status Law provides for different mechanisms, rights and requirements according to which men and women can file for and finalise divorce. While a married man can unilaterally divorce his spouse (*talaq*), the law stipulates the circumstances upon which a woman can ask for divorce. The law also grants married woman the right to seek divorce by *khul'* – the process whereby the woman obtains divorce in exchange of paying her spouse an agreed financial compensation. Meanwhile, Article 156 of the Personal Status Law stipulates that child custody belongs in priority to the mother following a divorce until the age of 11 years for boys and 13 years for girls. In 2023, the Civil Personal Status Law<sup>11</sup> came into force. It applies to non-Muslim citizens and foreigners residing in the country and grants equal rights to women and men.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Do women and men have the same rights to initiate/file for a divorce?	No	!
Can women and men finalise a divorce or annulment with the same requirements?	No	!
Do women and men have the same rights to child custody following a divorce?	No	!
Regarding divorce, does the law apply to all groups of women?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to initiating divorce?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to being the legal guardians of their children after divorce?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

## Inheritance

### Legal frameworks concerning inheritance rights

The Personal Status Law,<sup>12</sup> as amended, governs inheritance for all citizens, except for non-Muslims provided that they have their own personal status laws regulating inheritance. The Personal Status Law follows the principles of Islamic Sharia, whereby female heirs are entitled to half of the inheritance share of male heirs. Articles 321 to 388 provide a detailed distribution of the estate. In general, sons are entitled to twice the share received by daughters, whereas a surviving widower receives one half of the estate (or one quarter if there are surviving children) compared to one quarter for a surviving widow (or one eighth if they are surviving children).

Question	Answer	Assessment
Do daughters and sons have the same rights to inherit?	No	!
Do female and male surviving spouses have the same rights to inherit?	No	!
Regarding inheritance rights of daughters, does the law apply to all groups of women?	No	!

<sup>10</sup> United Arab Emirates (2005), “Federal Law No. 28 of 2005 on Personal Status”, *Official Gazette No. 439*.

<sup>11</sup> United Arab Emirates (2022), “Federal Decree-Law No. 41 of 2022 on Civil Personal Status”.

<sup>12</sup> United Arab Emirates (2005), “Federal Law No. 28 of 2005 on Personal Status”, *Official Gazette No. 439*.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Regarding inheritance rights of female surviving spouses, does the law apply to all groups of women?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between sons and daughters when it comes to inheritance?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between male and female surviving spouses when it comes to inheritance?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

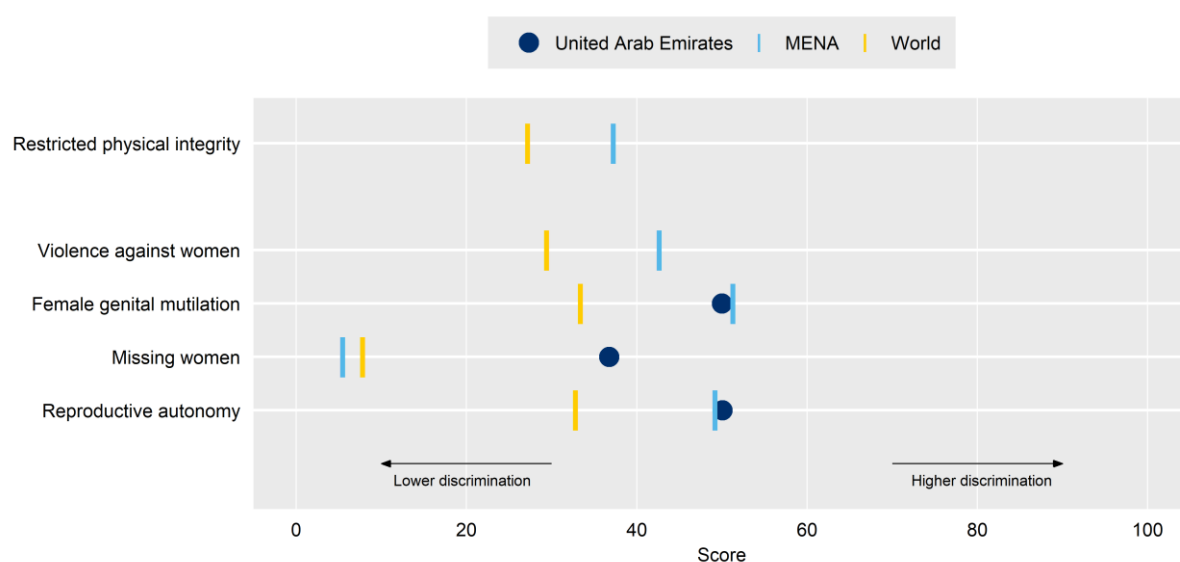
Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

## Restricted physical integrity

The United Arab Emirates did not obtain a score in the “Restricted physical integrity” dimension because of missing data points in certain underlying variables – namely (1) the share of women who have experienced intimate-partner violence at least once over the last 12 months or during their lifetime, and (2) the share of women who think a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances.

Nevertheless, scores could be calculated in the remaining indicators of the dimension. In this dimension, women and girls in the United Arab Emirates experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Female genital mutilation” and “Reproductive autonomy” indicators with scores of 50 in both indicators. The lowest levels of discrimination are found in the “Missing women” indicator with a score of 37.

**Figure 4. Restricted physical integrity scores for the United Arab Emirates, 2023**



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The MENA region covers Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Yemen.

Source: OECD (2023), “Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)”, *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

## Violence against women

### Practices and social norms related to violence against women

There are no available data in the United Arab Emirates that are comparable to other countries on the prevalence of intimate-partner violence against women nor on the social acceptance of it – whether it is calculated over their lifetime or during the last 12 months. In 2023, across countries with available data, 30% of women aged 15-49 think that it is justified for a husband to hit or beat his wife under certain circumstances, such as burning the food, arguing with the spouse, going out without telling him, neglecting the children, or refusing to have sex. In the MENA region this percentage reaches 30%.

### Legal frameworks concerning violence against women

The United Arab Emirates do not have a dedicated law addressing all forms of violence against women. Different forms of violence against women (such as domestic violence or sexual violence) are covered in separate or general pieces of legislation. Although Article 354 of the Penal Code,<sup>13</sup> as amended in 2020,<sup>14</sup> criminalises rape, it does not ground its definition in the notion of consent and does not specifically cover marital rape.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Is there a law specifically addressing violence against women?	No	!
If there is a specific law addressing violence against women, are there specific provisions for investigation, prosecution and punishment of the perpetrator?	n.a.	n.a.
If there is a specific law addressing violence against women, are there specific provisions for protection and support services for victims/survivors?	n.a.	n.a.
Does the law include reduced penalties in case of so-called "honour crimes"?	No	✓
<b>Domestic violence</b>		
Is domestic violence a criminal offence?	Yes	✓
Does domestic violence legislation cover physical abuse?	Yes	✓
Does domestic violence legislation cover sexual abuse?	Yes	✓
Does domestic violence legislation cover psychological abuse?	Yes	✓
Does domestic violence legislation cover economic abuse?	Yes	✓
Are there any exceptions included in informal laws (traditional, religious, and/or customary rules/laws) that reduce penalties for domestic violence?	No	✓
<b>Rape</b>		
Is rape a criminal offence?	Yes	✓
Is the legal definition of rape based on lack of consent?	No	!
If the legal definition of rape is based on lack of consent, does this require proof of physical force?	n.a.	n.a.
If the legal definition of rape is based on lack of consent, does this require proof of penetration?	n.a.	n.a.
Does the legal definition of rape include marital rape?	No	!
Does the law permit the reduction or removal of legal punishment if the perpetrator marries the victim?	No	✓
<b>Sexual harassment</b>		
Does the law prohibit sexual harassment?	Yes	✓
Does the law on sexual harassment include criminal penalties?	Yes	✓
Do legal protections from sexual harassment apply in the workplace?	Yes	✓
Do legal protections from sexual harassment apply in educational establishments?	No	!
Do legal protections from sexual harassment apply in public spaces?	Yes	✓
Do legal protections from sexual harassment apply online / on the internet?	No	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

## Female genital mutilation

### Practices and social norms related to female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C)

Female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) is traditionally concentrated in a limited number of countries that have been well-identified and documented by international organisations at the forefront of the fight against this harmful practice. Yet, evidence highlights that FGM/C takes place across all regions, among indigenous and/or diaspora communities originating from countries where FGM/C is known to be common.

<sup>13</sup> United Arab Emirates (1987), "Federal Law No. 3 of 1987 promulgating the Penal Code", *Official Gazette No. 182*.

<sup>14</sup> United Arab Emirates (2020), Federal Decree-Law No. 15 of 2020 amending certain provisions of the Federal Law No. 3 of 1987 promulgating the Penal Code".

In some contexts, girls are taken across national borders to undergo FGM/C in a country where the legislation against the practice is either non-existent or less strict.<sup>15</sup>

There are no available data in the United Arab Emirates that are comparable to other countries on practices and social norms related to female genital mutilation and cutting.

### Legal frameworks concerning female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C)

Articles 388, 389 and 390 of the Crimes and Penalties Law<sup>16</sup> allow to prosecute FGM/C acts on broad grounds, namely under acts of bodily injury and harming of a person's organs. However, the law does not criminalise FGM/C on narrow grounds.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law criminalise FGM/C on broad or narrow grounds?	Yes	✓
Does the law criminalise FGM/C on narrow grounds only?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws) that allow or encourage FGM/C?	Yes	!
Does the law take precedence over informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws) that allow, condone or prescribe FGM?	Yes	✓

Note: The SIGI methodology assesses laws on FGM/C according to two scenarios: (1) criminalisation on narrow grounds includes laws that contain criminal penalties for acts of “female genital mutilation”, “permanent altering/removal of external genitalia”, “female circumcision”, “excision”, “infibulation” and “genital mutilation”; (2) criminalisation on broad grounds includes “mutilation”, “harming of a person's organs”, “serious bodily injury” and “bodily injury/hurt/assault.” The presence of informal laws that allow or encourage FGM/C is proxied by the existence of nationally representative data on FGM/C or the existence of indirect estimates (usually used in countries where FGM/C is mainly practiced by diaspora communities), small-scale studies, or anecdotal evidence and media reports as reported by Equality Now, the End FGM European Network and the US End FGM/C Network in 2020.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>, and Equality Now, End FGM European Network and US End FGM/C Network (2020), *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Call For A Global Response*, <https://www.equalitynow.org/resource/female-genital-mutilation-cutting-a-call-for-a-global-response/>.

### Missing women

#### Practices related to missing women

The “Missing women” indicator captures whether there are any existing imbalances in the natural sex ratio between girls and boys aged 0-4 due to pre- and postnatal gender-biased sex selection. These imbalances can result from sex-selective abortions, female infanticide, and/or inadequate healthcare and nutrition for girls. A natural boy-to-girl sex ratio at birth is generally estimated to be below 105. A ratio exceeding 105 implies the existence of more boys aged 0-4 than one would expect, indicating a potential phenomenon of son preference resulting in the systemic elimination of new-born girls.

In the United Arab Emirates, the “missing women” phenomenon is a severe issue. The boy-to-girl sex ratio for children aged 0-4 is estimated at 108, which means that there are approximately 108 boys aged 0-4 for 100 girls of the same age. This ratio is substantially higher than the natural sex ratio at birth.

### Reproductive autonomy

#### Practices related to women's reproductive autonomy

<sup>15</sup> Equality Now, End FGM European Network and US End FGM/C Network (2020), *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Call For A Global Response*, <https://www.equalitynow.org/resource/female-genital-mutilation-cutting-a-call-for-a-global-response/>.

<sup>16</sup> United Arab Emirates (2021), “Federal Decree-Law No. 31 of 2021 promulgating the Crimes and Penalties Law”, *Official Gazette No. 712*.

Unmet needs for family planning are calculated as the proportion of women of reproductive age (15-49 years), married or in union, who wish to interrupt or delay childbearing but do not use any method of contraception.

In the United Arab Emirates, the gap between women's reproductive intentions and their contraceptive behaviour exists, with 17% of women aged 15-49 who declare having an unmet need for family planning, compared to a world average of 12% and an average of 13% in the MENA region – based on countries for which data are available.

### Legal frameworks concerning women's reproductive autonomy

Women's reproductive autonomy can be restricted by laws that prohibit the access to safe and legal abortion under essential circumstances (in cases of rape, incest, threats to the life or health of the pregnant woman and severe foetal impairment).<sup>17</sup> Evidence shows that the share of unsafe abortions is higher in countries with restrictive abortion laws. Unsafe abortions are a leading but preventable cause of maternal mortality and millions of girls and women are hospitalised every year following complications of unsafe abortion procedures.<sup>18</sup>

Article 391 of the Crimes and Penalties Law<sup>19</sup> criminalises abortion. However, Article 16 of the Law on Medical Liability<sup>20</sup> introduces legal exceptions and permits doctors to carry out an abortion only if it is necessary to save the pregnant woman's life or in case of foetal impairment.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Is abortion illegal under any circumstances?	No	✓
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: it is essential to save the woman's life?	Yes	✓
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: it is essential to preserve the physical health of the woman?	No	!
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: it is essential to preserve the mental health of the woman?	No	!
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: pregnancy is the result of rape or statutory rape?	No	!
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: pregnancy is the result of incest?	No	!
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: social and economic reasons do not allow the mother to sustain a pregnancy?	No	!
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: foetal impairment?	Yes	✓
Does a woman require the approval of a medical practitioner to seek a legal abortion?	Yes	!
Does the law require the approval of the father of the foetus to seek a legal abortion?	Yes	!
Is there any national plan or policy that provide universal access to family planning services?	No	!
Is there any law or national policy that provide free or subsidised access to contraception?	No	!
Does the national school curricula include mandatory and comprehensive sexuality education?	No	!

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

<sup>17</sup> CEDAW (2022), *Access to safe and legal abortion: Urgent call for United States to adhere to women's rights convention*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/07/access-safe-and-legal-abortion-urgent-call-united-states-adhere-womens-rights>.

<sup>18</sup> UNFPA (2022), *State of World Population 2022: Seeing the Unseen - The Case for Action in the Neglected Crisis of Unintended Pregnancy*, UNFPA, Geneva, <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789210015004>.

<sup>19</sup> United Arab Emirates (2021), "Federal Decree-Law No. 31 of 2021 promulgating the Crimes and Penalties Law", *Official Gazette No. 712*.

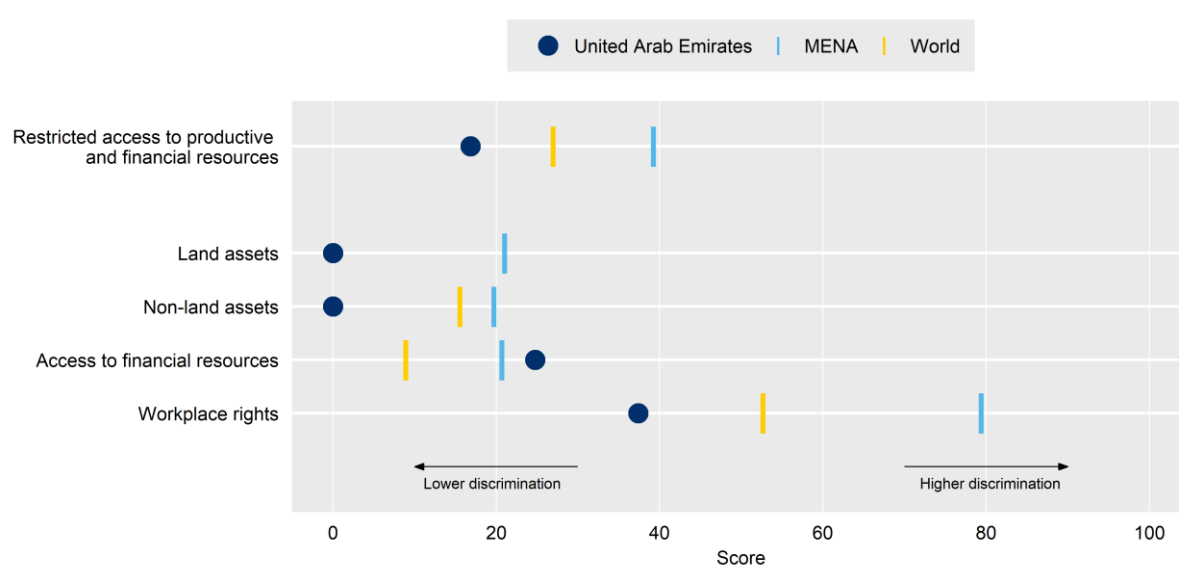
<sup>20</sup> United Arab Emirates (2016), "Federal Decree-Law No. 4 of 2016 on Medical Liability".

## Restricted access to productive and financial resources

The United Arab Emirates exhibits very low levels of discrimination within the family with a score of 17, compared to a world average of 27 and an average score of 39 in the MENA region – based on countries for which scores could be calculated.

In this dimension, women and girls in the United Arab Emirates experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Workplace rights” indicator with a score of 37, followed by the “Access to financial services” indicator with a score of 25. No discrimination is found in the “Access to land assets” and “Access to non-land assets” indicators, with a score of 0 for both.

**Figure 5. Restricted access to productive and financial resources scores for the United Arab Emirates, 2023**



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The MENA region covers Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Yemen.

Source: OECD (2023), “Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)”, *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

### Access to land assets

#### Practices related to women’s access to secure land assets

In the United Arab Emirates, there are no available data that are comparable to other countries on practices related to access to land assets.

#### Legal frameworks concerning women’s access to land assets

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to own land?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to use land?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to own land?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to use land?	Yes	✓



Question	Answer	Assessment
Regarding land, does the law apply to all groups of women?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to the ownership or use of land assets?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

## Access to non-land assets

### Practices related to women's secure access to non-land assets

In the United Arab Emirates, there are no available data that are comparable to other countries on practices related to access to non-land assets.

### Legal frameworks concerning women's access to non-land assets

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to own property and other non-land assets?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to use property and other non-land assets?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to own property and other non-land assets?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to use property and other non-land assets?	Yes	✓
Regarding property and other non-land assets, does the law apply to all groups of women?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to the ownership or use of non-land assets?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

## Access to financial services

### Practices related to women's access to formal financial services

Gender imbalances in terms of access to financial services are not an issue in the United Arab Emirates, and the overall access of the population is very high. In 2023, 86% of women have a bank account at a financial institution, compared to 84% of men. In comparison, at the global level, 67% of women have a bank account, compared to 72% of men. Across the MENA region, on average, 40% of women have a bank account, compared to 54% of men, translating into women accounting for only 39% of bank account holders.

### Legal frameworks concerning women's access to financial services

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to open a bank account at a formal financial institution?	Yes	✓
Does the law require married women to obtain the signature and authority of their husband to open a bank account at a formal financial institution?	No	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to obtain credit?	Yes	✓
Regarding access to formal financial services, does the law apply to all groups of women (regardless of race, ethnicity, caste, etc.)?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to opening a bank account?	No	✓

Question	Answer	Assessment
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to obtaining credit?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

## Workplace rights

### Practices and social norms related to women's workplace rights

Women remain largely excluded from positions with decision-making power in the economic sphere. Women only account for 18% of employees in a managerial position,<sup>21</sup> compared to a world average of 25% and an average of 14% in the MENA region – based on countries for which data are available.

There are no available data in the United Arab Emirates that are comparable to other countries on attitudes related to women's ability to be business executives or to men's priority to have a job compared to women. In 2023, 45% of the world's population agrees that when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women. In the MENA region this percentage reaches 73% – based on countries for which data are available.

### Legal frameworks concerning women's workplace rights

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law prohibit discrimination in employment on the basis of sex?	Yes	✓
Does the law mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value?	Yes	✓
Does the law prohibit women from entering certain professions?	No	✓
Does the law allow women to work the same night hours as men?	Yes	✓
Does the law mandate paid maternity leave?	Yes	✓
Does the law mandate paid paternity leave?	No	!
Does the law mandate paid parental leave?	Yes	✓
Does the law require women to have permission from their husband or legal guardian to take a paid job?	No	✓
Does the law require women to have permission from their husband or legal guardian to register a business?	No	✓
Regarding women's legal right to take a paid job or work and/or register a business, does the law apply to all groups of women (regardless of race, ethnicity caste, etc.)?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to entering certain professions?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that require women to have the permission from their husband or legal guardian to take a paid job?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that require women to have the permission from their husband or legal guardian to register a business?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

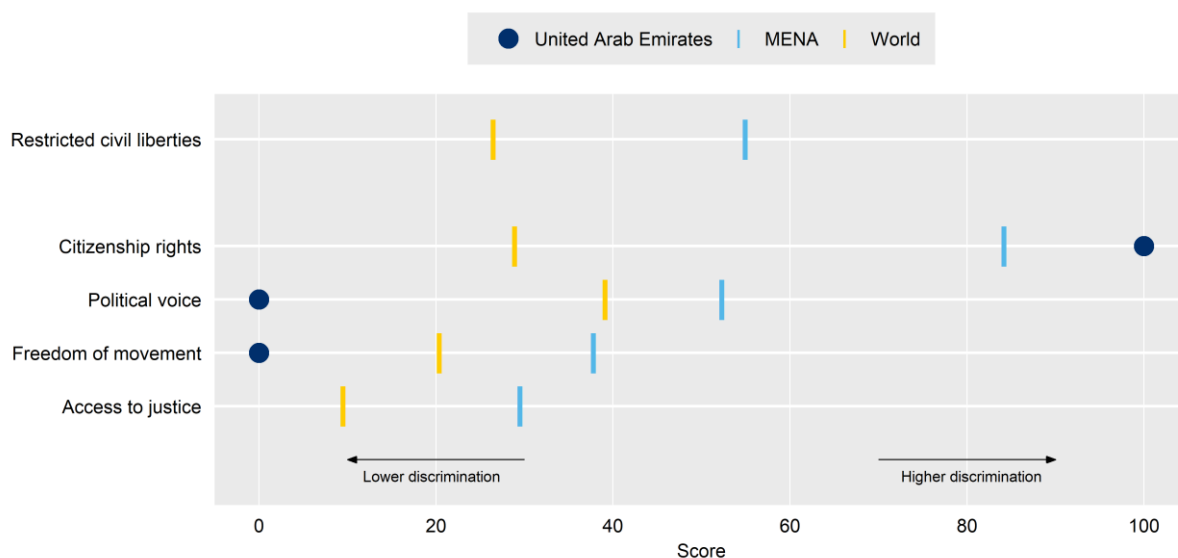
<sup>21</sup> This indicator corresponds to SDG indicator 5.2.2

## Restricted civil liberties

The United Arab Emirates did not obtain a score in the “Restricted civil liberties” dimension because of missing data points in certain variables – namely the proportion of women among the people not having confidence in the judicial system and courts of their country.

Nevertheless, scores could be calculated in the remaining indicators of the dimension. In this dimension, women and girls in the United Arab Emirates experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Citizenship rights” indicator with a score of 100. Conversely, no discrimination is found in the “Political voice” and “Freedom of movement” indicators with a score of 0 for both.

**Figure 6. Restricted civil liberties scores for the United Arab Emirates, 2023**



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The MENA region covers Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Yemen.

Source: OECD (2023), “Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)”, *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

## Citizenship rights

### Legal frameworks concerning women’s citizenship rights

Articles 2 and 10 bis of the Nationality Law,<sup>22</sup> as amended in 1975 and 2017, establish that an Emirati father automatically confers his nationality to his child, whereas an Emirati mother can only do so under certain circumstances stipulated by the law. Moreover, Article 14 of the Nationality Law, as amended, stipulates that an Emirati woman who marries a foreign man retains her citizenship unless she acquires her spouse’s foreign nationality. The same provision does not exist for an Emirati man who marries a foreign woman. Articles 3 and 4 provide for the cases upon which a foreign woman married to an Emirati man can obtain the nationality, whereas no such provisions are made for a foreign man married to an Emirati woman.

<sup>22</sup> United Arab Emirates (1972), “Federal Law No. 17 of 1972 on Nationality and Passports”, *Official Gazette No. 7*.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to acquire nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to acquire nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to change their nationality?	No	!
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to change their nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to retain their nationality?	No	!
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to retain their nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to confer nationality to their spouse?	No	!
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to confer nationality to their children?	No	!
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to confer nationality to their children?	No	!
Regarding women's nationality rights, does the law apply to all groups of women (regardless of race, caste, ethnicity, etc.)?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional, or religious laws) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to acquiring, changing, or retaining their nationality?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional, or religious laws) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to conferring nationality to their spouse and/or children?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

## Freedom of movement

### Practices related to women's freedom of movement

Freedom of movement is recognised as a human right and mobility is essential in everyday life, for instance to reach the workplace or healthcare facilities. In the United Arab Emirates, women feel as safe as men. Across the country, 7% of women and men declare not feeling safe walking alone at night in the city or in the area where they live.

### Legal frameworks concerning women's freedom of movement

Beyond the challenge of ensuring that everyone feels safe enough to move around in public spaces, laws must guarantee women and men the same rights to obtain identification documents and to travel by themselves within and outside of their country.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the government provide national identity cards?	Yes	✓
Can a married woman apply for a national identity card in the same way as a married man? (in terms of rights and procedures)	Yes	✓
Can an unmarried woman apply for a national identity card in the same way as an unmarried man? (in terms of rights and procedures)	Yes	✓
Can a married woman apply for a passport in the same way as a married man (in terms of rights and procedures)?	Yes	✓
Can an unmarried woman apply for a passport in the same way as an unmarried man (in terms of rights and procedures)?	Yes	✓
Regarding identity cards and/or passports, does the law apply to all groups of women (regardless of race, caste, ethnicity, etc.)?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to travel outside the country?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to travel outside their homes?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to applying for identity cards or passports?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

## Political voice

### Practices and social norms related to women's political voice

The United Arab Emirates have reached parity in terms of women's political representation, with women accounting for 50% of the members of parliament in 2023.

Regarding attitudes on women's ability to be political leaders, there are no available data in the United Arab Emirates that are comparable to other countries. In 2023, 48% of the world's population thinks that men make better political leaders than women. In the MENA region, this percentage reaches 69% – based on countries for which data are available.

### Legal frameworks concerning women's political voice

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to vote?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to hold public and political office in the legislative branch?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to hold public and political office in the executive branch?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to hold public office in the judiciary branch?	Yes	✓
Do constitutional/legislated gender quotas exist to promote women's political representation at the national level?	Yes	✓
Do constitutional/legislated gender quotas exist to promote women's political representation at the local level?	No	!
Does the law provide for special measures other than quotas to promote women's political representation at the national level?	No	!
Does the law provide for special measures other than quotas to promote women's political representation at the local level?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to voting?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to holding public office?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

## Access to justice

### Practices related to women's access to justice

There are no available data in the United Arab Emirates that are comparable to other countries on practices related to access to access to justice.

### Legal frameworks concerning women's access to justice

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to sue?	Yes	✓
Does a woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight as a man's in the civil courts?	Yes	✓
Does a woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight as a man's in the criminal courts?	Yes	✓
Does a woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight as a man's in the family courts?	Yes	✓
Does a woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight as a man's in the tribunals?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes suing someone?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to providing testimony in court?	Yes	!
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to being judges, advocates or other court officers?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.