

Saudi Arabia



Location: Saudi Arabia encompasses around four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula, bordered by the Gulf, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to the east, the two Yemens and Oman to the south, the Red Sea to the west, and Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait to the north.

Geography: Saudi Arabia is divided into four major regions: Najd, Hijaz, Asir and Al-Hasa; and for administrative reasons it is divided into five major provinces: Western (Hijaz), Central (Najd), Eastern (Al-Hasa), Southern (Asir) and Northern province.

Area: 2,261,070 sq.Km.

Capital: Riyadh.

Languages: Arabic.

Religions: Islam 99 % (predominantly Sunni), Hijrah (AD 622).

Education: First girl's schools opened in 1960, and Saudi women were first admitted to universities in 1962. In 1980, women comprised 27 % of students at 5 universities.

Birth Rate: Per 1000 pop., (1975-1980): 49

Death Rate: Per 1000 pop., (1975-1980): 18

Life Expectancy: (1975-1980): Female 49 years, male 47 years.

Government: Saudi Arabia was officially proclaimed fully sovereign on September 22, 1932. Absolute Monarchy of the *Saud* family. Juriprudence is based on the Islamic Shari'a. A

21-member council of ministers advises *King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz*.

Currency:

Riyal.

Production:

Dates, wheat, barley, petroleum and petroleum products, cement, plastic products.

Equal Pay Policy:

Women in the public sector are to receive equal pay for equal work.

Family:

An employed woman is entitled to a fully paid maternity leave 4 weeks pre- and 6 weeks post delivery. Child-care centers are subsidized by the government; in 1983 there were around 200 day-care centers (both public and private). Social services include institutional care, social security, community development and service centers. The Ministry of Health, along with 13 other government agencies, offer free health-care services to all citizens.

Finance:

In 1980, *Al-Rajih* money exchange company of Riyadh opened the first women's branch (13 branches in 1982), with women directors and staff. Saudi women control an estimate of 30-40 % of Saudi Arabia's wealth.⁽¹⁾

(1) «Saudi Women Moving into Banking». International Herald Tribune, Feb. 4, 1982.