

Saudi Arabia



COUNTRY FACTS:

Capital: Riyadh

Population: 25,731,776

Area, sq. mi.: 823,000

Real GDP per capita: 23,300

Adult literacy rate: 85% (male);
71% (female)

Ethnic make-up: Arab 90%,
Afro-Asian 10%

Religion: Muslim 100%

School Classes

Saudi schools are segregated by gender. Saudi high school classes generally have around 25 students, though this could vary from school to school. Saudi schools generally grade with more weight given to examinations than day to day assignments and participation. Students in Saudi Arabia remain in one classroom during the day and teachers rotate to different rooms.

School Relationships

Students in Saudi Arabia generally have formal relationships with their teachers and use formal titles when addressing them.

Extracurricular Activities

Saudi high schools generally do not have a variety of extracurricular activities, if any at all. If a student participates in a private club sport or other activity, Saudi parents' involvement varies.

School Rules

Saudi high schools have a "zero tolerance" policy regarding cell phone usage, and fighting. These are not allowed at all in school and the penalties for engaging in them are often severe. Saudi students are accustomed to school uniforms (thoubs, long white robes, for males).

Family Life

Rarely do grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins live in the same house, even if they live in the same town, though the youngest child of a family will house the grandparents. In Saudi Arabia it is common for the father to be professional and financially responsible for the family, but not the mother. Parents are likely to have different authority over household decisions, and it varies by household, but authority is shared. Respect is shown to elder family and community members by the youth and a formal relationship is maintained.

In Saudi Arabia, generally lunch and dinner are eaten all together as a family, unless parents work late. It is considered respectful to allow family members to regular, individual time by themselves, to pursue their own activities, socialize with friends or to simply relax.

Saudi teenagers are not accustomed to gender equality amongst peers or family when it comes to division of tasks or chores. Chores are divided along strict gender lines with women responsible for most household activity including cooking and cleaning. Men are responsible for life outside of the home and for more laborious tasks.

Teen Life

If a Saudi child has something, it is generally his or her own, and not understood to be the shared property of siblings, including clothing. When siblings want to borrow something from each other, it is generally understood that they must ask first.

Responsibilities

Saudi household members are rarely given specific tasks or chores, although in many cases the female and male members help in specific areas. It is however very common that each household have a housekeeper. Typically students, male or female, will not have experience preparing meals.

Saudi parents give allowances to their teenage children in regular, fixed amounts. It is rare for a Saudi student to work, even part-time. Saudi teenagers are not accustomed to planning daily routines independently, yet they are not necessarily reliant on their parents either.

Parental Involvement

Saudi parents' monitoring of their children's online activities varies from household to household. Generally, though, students are accustomed to unlimited usage or access to the internet. Many Saudi parents are in direct contact with their children's school and are kept aware of their academic progress.

Pets

It is not common to have pets in Saudi homes.

Personal Interactions

Mixed Gender Socializing

It is not traditionally acceptable for Saudi teens to have friends of the opposite sex and to socialize with them individually, however it is still done and it is becoming more and more acceptable.

Friendships

Saudi teenagers sometimes socialize in groups, and sometimes one-on-one. Both ways are considered appropriate, and the choice is left up to the individual. Saudi teenagers make friends through common activities and interests, as well as family and neighborhood connections. It is common for Saudi teenagers to share money with each other.

Saudi teenagers don't often think of peers with whom they are only casually associated as friends, rather they are considered acquaintances. In Saudi Arabia, greetings are easily dragged to larger conversations but this is mostly true for adults rather than teenagers.

Communication Styles

Saudi teenagers are generally not comfortable expressing negative emotions to their friends and family. Saudis tend to communicate indirectly out of humility.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is not important in the Saudi culture and looking down is more of a sign of respect.

Cultural Norms

Saudis tend to expect a large amount of personal space, both in terms of living space and during personal interactions.

Punctuality is respected in Saudi Arabia; however lack of punctuality is not considered a grave sign of disrespect. Being a little bit late to an appointment can go unnoticed or even be expected.

Personal Hygiene

Saudi teenagers generally take a quick shower once a day, and sometimes maybe twice if they are involved in physical activities. However, it is possible that they are accustomed to longer showers if they are of middle-class or higher. Most Saudis rely on the house maid to keep bathrooms clean and dry.

It is generally thought to be unclean in Saudi Arabia to wear the same clothes two days in a row or twice without washing them.

Saudis usually change clothes upon entering the house, especially females since they wear uniforms at school. Saudi students will have a choice whether to keep clothes on or change them upon entering the house. It depends on their activities.

Food and Culture

Diet

It is very easy for Saudis to find halal meat at home in Saudi Arabia. Most Saudi families prepare meals from scratch.

Gifts

For major holidays like Eid, Saudi teens usually expect gifts from their parents. Teens are expected to give gifts to family members or close friends on their birthdays.

Religion

Generally Saudi males are expected to attend the Friday prayer at the mosque.

Holidays

School, work and marketplace hours change during Ramadan. There are increased family and friend visits and gatherings. Eid al Fitr is celebrated amongst families. Major holidays in Saudi Arabia include Eid al Fitr, Eid al Adha, national day, and spring holiday.