



POSTERITY INSTITUTE
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Sustainable Consumption

Among Youth in the Arab World

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As the world is increasingly embracing sustainable practices, people from all walks of life are becoming more interested in what this shift means for them, how it affects them, and what they can do to support sustainable development. Large organizations like businesses, governments, and non-profits usually focus on large-scale actions and long-term plans. But for individuals, there is more emphasis on making everyday choices that add up over time. This is often centred on how we buy and use products and services in a way that doesn't harm the environment or society. We call this "**sustainable consumption.**"

This shift is growing in the Arab World as society becomes more aware of the urgency of moving towards sustainable development. Driven by global trends as well as shifts in demand, eco-friendly and ethically produced products or services are becoming more and more important. Governments and businesses around the world are becoming more concerned with understanding and fulfilling needs and the purchasing power of younger consumers, whose tastes have shifted towards sustainable preferences².

To improve our understanding of Arab youth's thought processes when it comes to making sustainable consumption-related decisions, this survey aims to evaluate and explore to what extent Arab youth consider sustainability and environmental effects when making purchases or consumption decisions related to nutrition, clothes shopping, travel, transportation, home design, and more, and the reasons why – or why not. This exploration of Arab youth's understanding of sustainable practices in several areas of consumption as well as the reasons behind their relevant choices will be explored.



1. <https://nielseniq.com/global/en/insights/analysis/2023/shaping-the-future-how-sustainable-practices-are-shaping-the-middle-east-and-africa-market/>

2. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/03/generation-z-sustainable-practices-buying-decisions/>

Methodology



Conducting the survey involved distributing the survey digitally to **758** youth between the ages of **18-35** without any specified additional requirements.

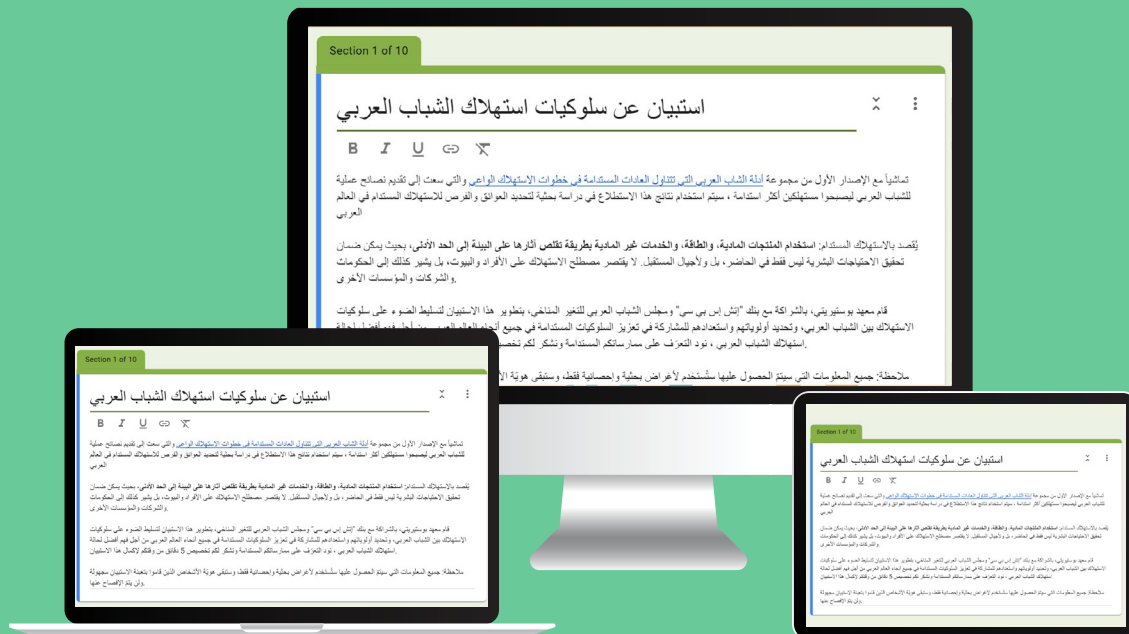
The survey was distributed to individuals in **22 Arab countries** in the Middle East and North Africa region, including, Jordan, the UAE, Bahrain, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Kuwait, Morocco, Tunisia, Comoros, Djibouti, Syria, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Mauritania, and Yemen.

Along gender lines, the sample was almost equally distributed, with **48.7%** of respondents reporting they are **female** and **51.3%** reporting they are **male**.

Additionally, a majority of respondents accounting for **64%** attained higher education degrees, while **28%** only received their high school diploma.

Research Limitations

The survey was distributed by Forga. The sample was limited to Forga subscribers, who presumably share relatively similar views or motivations, meaning that the sample may not be reasonably diverse enough to qualify it as an accurate representation of the broader Arab youth population. Additionally, survey results were collected through self-reporting, making it difficult to discern whether Arab youth truly have an understanding of sustainable consumption.



Executive Summary

Consumerist behaviour is prevalent among youth in the region, in part because companies promote consumerist tendencies and because consumption has become increasingly easier through digitalization and e-commerce. With that said, sustainability and as a result sustainable consumption have become increasingly important issues throughout the Arab world. Particularly, Arab youth are concerned with sustainable fashion, plant-based diets, zero-waste lifestyles, and more.

Our primary findings include results that point to the following:



1. Arab youth have a general understanding of sustainable consumption.



6. Recycling is the area that Arab youth are most knowledgeable about.



2. A majority of Arab youth take environmental impact and climate change into account when making their water and nutrition choices.



7. Despite not knowing much about environmental tourism, many Arab youth claim they would prefer to travel to destinations that preserve the environment.



3. Most Arab youth also try to align with sustainable shopping principles when purchasing clothes or other consumer goods.



8. Green finance benefits do not seem to be quite as important as green financial institution strategies.



4. Most Arab youth try to take sustainable transportation options as much as possible.



9. A major challenge to sustainability that Arab youth face is a lack of 'green' options that support implementing sustainable consumption habits.



5. Some surveyed Arab youth have implemented sustainable design elements in their homes; however, a majority have a limited understanding of sustainable design.



10. Cost did not seem to be a significant factor limiting the adoption of sustainable consumption habits.

Based on the findings above, we propose six key recommendations to accelerate the uptake of sustainable habits including an increase in awareness raising and education efforts, subsidizing the provision of, and rewarding the consumption of, sustainable options, and mandating sustainability labelling.

Sustainable Consumption in the Arab World

Consumerism, the process of overconsuming goods and services to promote personal well-being and satisfaction, has become normalized across various parts of the world, including the Arab World. These behaviours have also become prevalent among youth in the region, as a variety of factors such as culture, social class, affordability of goods and services, and use of technology have facilitated the adoption of a consumerist-based lifestyle where youth consume and discard their goods and services and move onto purchasing new items and experiences.

Additionally, youth in the current age have access to certain goods and services, through e-commerce, that they previously were incapable of accessing³.

As these commodities are now available at one's fingertips 24 hours a day as opposed to via a physical store and are easily attainable from the comfort and convenience of their homes without any mobility restrictions.



This allows youth to engage with these online merchants and conduct transactions at any given time

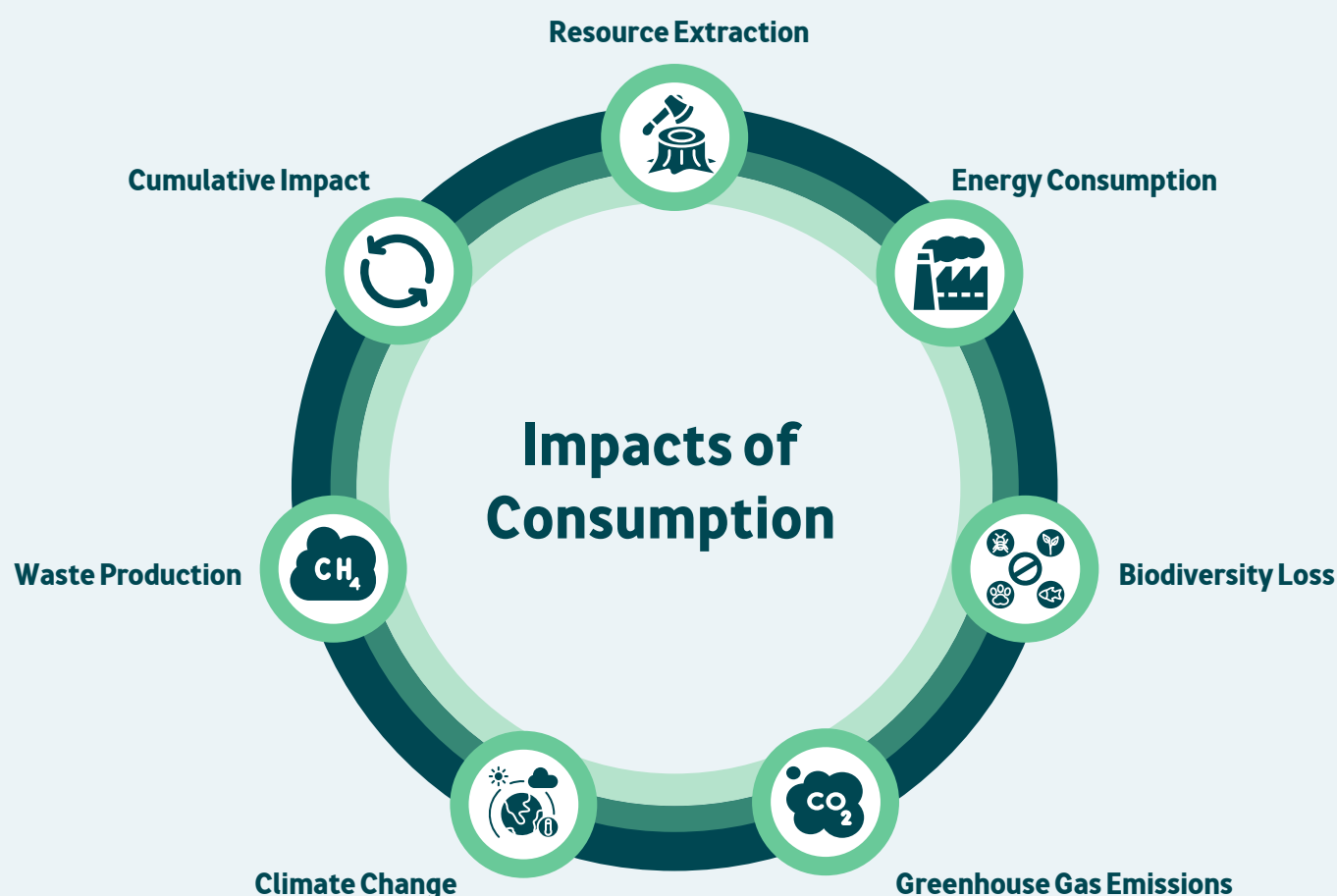
from virtually anywhere. While it is true that consumer spending fuels economic growth, a rise in demand can also lead to increasing price levels. It could also encourage wasteful spending and lead youth to overconsume as they continue to repurchase items that they might have already bought. With time, these high levels of consumption become the norm, giving rise to a consumerist culture in which spending, and consumption are prioritised over other economic factors, like saving, and over environmental factors as well.



3. Rico, J. (20 February 2020). 'The Role of Consumerism in Contemporary Youth Experience'. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/role-consumerism-contemporary-youth-experience-jo%C3%A3o-rico/>

Impacts of Consumption

The most obvious negative effect of consumerism is the exploitation of natural resources. This would lead to the destruction of forests for wood, the disruption of the earth to extract minerals, and expeditions into the oceans to extract fossil fuels. Not only are all these processes⁴ energy-intensive, a characteristic which will be further discussed later, but they also disturb natural ecosystems and the biodiversity in the surrounding areas. As per a report published by the UNEP's International Resource Panel, over 90% of global biodiversity loss is caused by resource extraction processes. Next, these raw materials must be transported to facilities where they are processed, manufactured, and then distributed as the end-product to the consumer. At each stage of the process, starting at the extraction process to the final delivery of the product, notable amounts of greenhouse gases are released, with a cumulative impact of up to 70% of direct and indirect carbon emissions⁵. These emissions are the main contributors to one of humanity's most complex challenge in modern history: climate change. The increased demand for goods and services amplifies each of the aforementioned processes, further exacerbating and magnifying the volume of emissions entering the atmosphere, thus catalysing climate change. Additionally, consumerist societies are mass producers of waste, and with conventional waste management techniques, these waste materials are often disposed of in landfills – a prominent source of methane emissions, a much more potent and harmful greenhouse gas, roughly 11% of the global annual total⁶. Consumerist lifestyles are extremely detrimental to the environment, and only further delay and hinder global efforts in combatting climate change.



4. (18 November 2020). 'Resource Efficiency and Climate Change: Material Efficiency Strategies for a Low-Carbon Future'. United National Environment Programme. https://www.unep.org/resources/report/resource-efficiency-and-climate-change-material-efficiency-strategies-low-carbon?_ga=2.40173728.306018139.1670501360-1093080042.1670501360

5. Kolaczowski, M. (February 8 2021). 'What can consumers do to help solve the climate change crisis?' World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/02/consumers-help-solve-climate-change/#:~:text=Consumers%20are%20responsible%20for%2060,%2D%20and%20high%20income%20households>

6. Dickie, G. (August 11 2022). 'Landfills around the world release a lot of methane – study'. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/landfills-around-world-release-lot-methane-study-2022-08-10/#:~:text=Landfill%20waste%20%E2%80%93%20responsible%20for%20about,according%20to%20the%20World%20Bank>

Impacts of Consumption

Consumerism has an equally negative impact on social sustainability as well.



For one, to be able to meet the ever-growing demand for goods and services, large corporations have been outsourcing their production to nations where manufacturing costs and labour are **much cheaper**, and **more loosely regulated** than they would be should they opt for local production. Many companies also pay **unliveable wages** to many of their outsourced employees, marking up products with huge profit margins to unjustly increase revenue while maintaining low costs at the expense of the underprivileged and implementing further cost-cutting procedures by cutting corners in health and safety processes⁷. In many instances, and to keep up with the manufacturing of required supply quantities, many factories resort to the **exploitation of child labourers**⁸. Finally, consumerist societies are a 'luxury' to those who can afford such behaviours. To put this into context, high-income countries that host roughly 16% of the world's population consume almost three-quarters of the available global resources, leaving the majority of the world's population to distribute barely a quarter of global resources⁹. This implies that the majority of the global

population, specifically the portion that isn't as heavily responsible for polluting the planet and driving climate change and which is simultaneously significantly less capable of effectively adapting to them and their effects, must deal with the brunt of the impacts caused by this consumerist lifestyle.

Despite these notable consequences, many companies are still concerned with promoting these behaviours to maximise their income. Scrolling through social media feeds is no longer exclusive to updates about family and friends or interests and hobbies. The average person is now heavily exposed to advertisements for goods and services several times a day and through outlets they regularly use, such as smartphones and laptops. In fact, hugely popular websites such as Google or Facebook could charge companies almost \$500,000 per day to take up their advertising space¹⁰. This is just one example that demonstrates the willingness of companies to drive and encourage individuals to purchase more. Ultimately, these amounts seem insignificant next to the estimated \$3 trillion spending power of millennials (Generation Y), and Generation Z¹¹. That said, while companies play a major role in promoting consumerism, individuals also bear responsibility for their purchasing decisions. By becoming more aware of the impacts of their consumption habits and making mindful choices, consumers can influence companies to prioritize ethical and sustainable practices.

7. Nguyen, L. (October 10, 2022). 'Fast Fashion': The Danger of Sweatshops'. Earth.Org. <https://earth.org/sweatshops/>

8. UNICEF USA. (n.d.) 'Conscious Consumerism and You: Demanding an End to Child Labor and Trafficking'. <https://www.unicefusa.org/sites/default/files/UUSA%20Conscious%20Consumerism%20and%20You.pdf>

9. Hickel, J. (06 April 2022). 'High-income countries are responsible for 74 percent of excess resource use causing ecological breakdown'. London School of Economics News. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/News/Latest-news-from-LSE/2022/d-Apr-22/High-income-countries-responsible-for-74-percent-of-excess-resource-use#:~:text=They%20found%20that%20high%20income,cumulative%20excess%20resource%20use%20worldwide.>

10. Kovalenko, I. (14 October 2021). 'How Much Should I Charge for Advertising on My Website: Deconstructing Website Ad Rates'. Smartyads. <https://smartyads.com/blog/web-site-ad-rates-how-much-should-i-charge/>



Consumption at One's Fingertips: Digital Tools as Facilitators

E-commerce is expected to grow rapidly across the Middle East, with the **UAE's** market reaching **\$9.2 billion** by **2026**, **Saudi Arabia's** market reaching **\$13.3 billion** by **2025**, and **Egypt's** market reaching **\$4.74 billion** by **2025**.

With the rise of 'tech-savvy generations', as well as the massive integration of a digital ecosystem within the Arab World's largest economies, e-commerce has already become a well-established and significant contributor to the regional economy, particularly from youth consumers.

In fact, according to the Arab Youth Survey, **three-quarters** of the Arab youth questioned in **17 Arab countries** and territories said they had made an online purchase in **2021**:



53% said it was for dining out and ready-made meals



45% said it was for apparel¹²

Several financial tools have also been developed to support the spread and growth of e-commerce as well. For instance, digital wallets or e-wallets (such as PayPal, Apple Pay or Google Pay) have facilitated and enabled the online shopping experience, with consumers in countries such as Kuwait and Qatar utilising digital wallets for 6% of online purchases, whereas almost a quarter of all online transactions in the UAE completed using a digital wallet tool in 2021¹³. Moreover, a massive driver of e-commerce amongst youth consumers is the

integration of online stores directly into popular social media platforms such as Instagram or Facebook. The rise of "Buy Now, Pay Later" (BNPL) technology has also fuelled consumerism, particularly in regions with low credit card penetration rates. Its popularity is driven by its ability to provide short-term credit lines to young buyers and make goods more affordable, leading to significant market growth projections, reaching over \$90 billion by 2030 in the GCC alone¹⁴.

However, consumerism in the Arab World is not all positive and does not solely reflect economic growth, as there are many challenges that a consumerist-based lifestyle creates for youth in the Arab world which mainly includes becoming a financial burden on youth. Since consumerism requires youth to continuously overspend, the adoption of this lifestyle leads to financial struggles in the medium and longer term. For instance, in 2023, 9% of young Arabs in the region suffered from personal debt due to excessive shopping¹⁵, a 2% increase from levels in 2020; showing a growth in the region's over-consumption levels. There is also evidence of BNPL tools increasing debt among consumers, demonstrating that fintech tools that are meant to facilitate transactions for individuals could also cause serious financial issues¹⁶. That said, there has been an observable shift in consumer behaviour amongst Arab youth, where sustainability plays a more central role.

11. (January 09, 2020). 'Millennials & Gen Z Teens' Combined Spending Power is Nearly \$3 Trillion in 2020'. YPulse. <https://www.ypulse.com/article/2020/01/09/millennials-gen-z-teens-combined-spending-power-is-nearly-3-trillion-in-2020/>

12. (2021). 'Arab Youth Survey – 13th Annual Edition 2021'. Asda'a BCW. https://arabyouthsurvey.com/wp-content/uploads/whitepaper/AYS-2021-WP_English-14-Oct-21-ABS-FINAL.pdf

13. (04 April 2023). 'Digital Wallets are Driving E-commerce Momentum in the Middle East and Africa'. FYST. <https://fyst.com/blog/digital-wallets-are-driving-e-commerce-momentum-in-the-middle-east-and-africa>

14. Mathew, J. (29 August 2022). 'GCC's BNPL market predicted to explode over 1100 percent by 2030'. Arabian Business. <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/industries/banking-finance/gcc-buy-now-pay-later-market-predicted-to-explode-over-1100-percent-by-2030>

15. (2023). 'Arab Youth Survey – 15th Annual Edition 2023'. Asda'a BCW. <https://arabyouthsurvey.com/en/findings/>

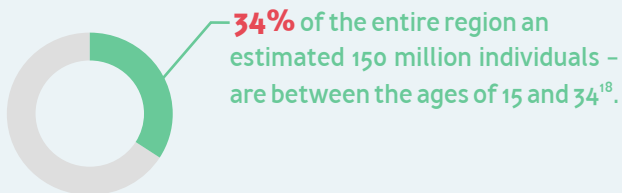
16. Ramady, M. (20 September 2021). 'BNPL: Democratization of credit or a looming debt crisis'. Arab News. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1932426>

Intraregional Consumption Trends

There are also parallels to be found in the purchasing habits of the Arab World and, more specifically, of Arab youth.

To give just one example, Kearney's 2021 Global Retail Development Index, which ranks the attractiveness of national markets to global retailers, found that five of the top twenty developing market states were in the Arab World.

A large segment of the region's consumer base is composed of Arab youth, considering that

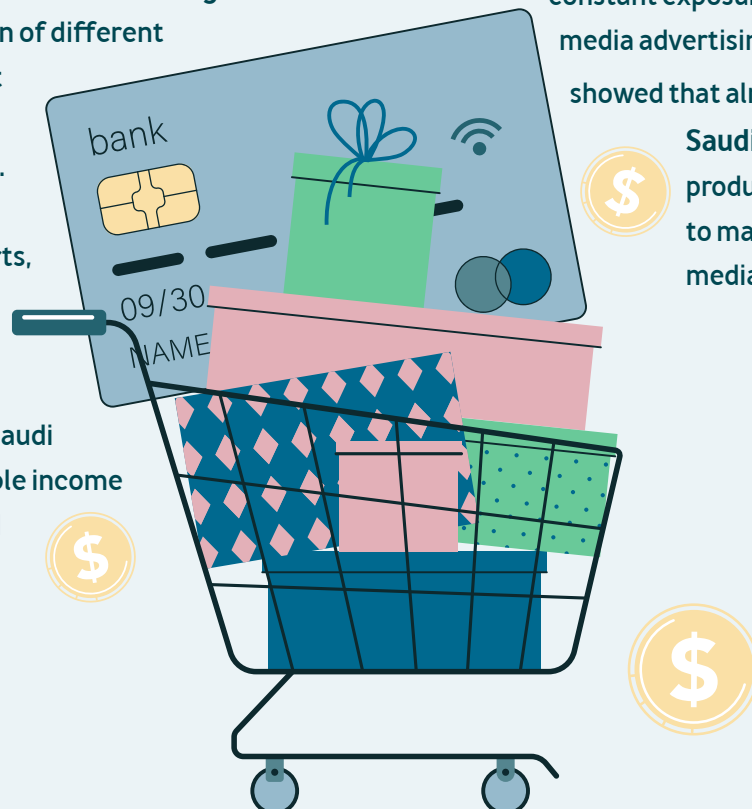


Variances in the socioeconomic and political states of each of the **22** countries of the Arab League have also led to the creation of different customer profiles amongst Arab youth, each with its distinct spending priorities. For instance, compared to their Levantine counterparts, young people in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, have more disposable income and different spending and consumption habits.

A research study demonstrated that **hyper-consumption** in the Arab World, especially in high purchasing power states, is used as a "**status symbol**". According to the study, young consumers in states with high purchasing power, particularly young female consumers, are more likely to purchase branded commodities to demonstrate the plentifulness of their resources and differentiate their status from those around them¹⁹. This was further confirmed in a comparative study that highlighted that while the quality of high-end and luxury products plays a role in the deciding factor of the purchase of such products, a sense of fulfilment, a sense of 'social prestige', and the exclusivity that the items could provide consumers play just as significant a role as well²⁰. In fact, it is estimated that the luxury goods markets, especially in the higher purchasing power states of the Arab World such as the GCC, will almost double in value and reach **\$24 billion** by 2027²¹. Another strong influence that drives this lifestyle, especially with luxury commodities, is the

constant exposure of Arab youth to social media advertising strategies. A study showed that almost **75%** of surveyed

Saudis have purchased fashion products due to their exposure to marketing from social media²².



17. 'Leapfrogging into the future of retail – The 2021 Global Retail Development Index', Kearney. <https://www.kearney.com/global-retail-development-index>

18. Selim, A. (11 May 2021). 'The Challenges Behind Youth Leadership in the Arab World'. Fikra Forum. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/challenges-behind-youth-leadership-arab-world>

19. Na'ameh, M. M. (11 July 2019). 'Brand consumption among Emirati youth: a socio-cultural perspective'. Social Identities. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2021.1948827>

20. Farah, M. and Fawaz, R. (June 2016). 'A Comparison of the Influence of Personal and Cultural Values on the Consumption of Luxury Goods across Arab Regions: Levant versus Gulf' Contemporary Management Research. doi:10.7903/cmr.15067

The Rise of Sustainable Consumption

Sustainability has become an increasingly important issue among Arab youth for several reasons including climate anxiety and concern, heightened awareness of environmental and social issues associated with consumerism, and socioeconomic issues that favour a more conscious consumer lifestyle as opposed to overspending. As a result, there has been a growing trend towards more sustainable consumer practices which include:



1. Ethical and sustainable fashion: Arab youth are becoming more conscious of the environmental and social impact of the fashion industry and are increasingly seeking out sustainable and ethical fashion options. This includes clothing made from sustainable materials, such as organic cotton or recycled materials, as well as brands that prioritize fair labour practices and environmental sustainability²³. There has also been significant growth in the demand for pre-owned luxury goods²⁴ as well as thrift stores²⁵ for both economic and environmental reasons.



2. Plant-based diets: Many Arab youth are adopting plant-based diets to reduce their environmental impact and improve their health and well-being. This trend is particularly notable in the UAE and Saudi Arabia²⁶, where a growing number of vegan and vegetarian restaurants and food options throughout grocery stores are emerging.



3. Zero-waste lifestyle: Arab youth are also increasingly interested in living a zero-waste lifestyle, which involves reducing waste by avoiding single-use plastics, recycling, and composting. This trend has led to the emergence of zero-waste stores and bulk food markets across the region. For instance, The Arab Youth Climate Movement Qatar launched a zero-waste lifestyle campaign to encourage youth across Qatar to reduce their wastes²⁷.

These are a few examples to showcase that sustainability is becoming an increasingly important issue for Arab youth, and they are adopting new consumer trends and practices to reduce their environmental impact and promote a more sustainable future. However, these trends are yet to become normalised throughout the entire region as consumerism is still an extremely popular lifestyle amongst youth. Hence, this study was developed to capture the current state of the average youth consumer in the region and to further understand the willingness of Arab youth to adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

21. IMARC Group. 'GCC Luxury Market: Industry Trends, Share, Size, Growth, Opportunity and Forecast 2022-2027'. <https://www.imarcgroup.com/gcc-luxury-market#:~:text=The%20GCC%20luxury%20market%20was,US%24%2012.5%20Billion%20in%202021.>

22. Alatawy, K. S. (December 2021). 'The Role Social Media Marketing Plays in Customers' Purchase Decisions in the Context of the Fashion Industry in Saudi Arabia'. International Journal of Business and Management. 10.5539/ijbm.v17n1p117

23. Essaid, Salim. (20 October 2022). 'Arab designers respond to demand for sustainable fashion'. Al Monitor. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/10/arab-designers-respond-demand-sustainable-fashion#ixzz80LbYn7l>

24. Naaman, M. (05 June 2021). 'Pre-Owned Luxury and the Arab Youth'. Fashion Trust Arabia. <https://fashiontrustarabia.com/pre-owned-luxury-and-the-arab-youth/>

25. Halawi, D. (05 December 2021). 'Thrift stores become popular in crisis-hit Lebanon' ZinhuaNet. http://www.news.cn/english/2021-12/05/c_1310353075.htm

26. Tashkandi, H. (25 July 2019). 'Appetite for veganism has added bite among Saudi youth'. Arab News. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1530911/lifestyle>

27. MENAFN. (04 June 2021). 'Environmental group aims for 'zero-waste' lifestyle in Qatar'. <https://menafn.com/1101873312/Environmental-group-aims-for-zero-waste-lifestyle-in-Qatar>

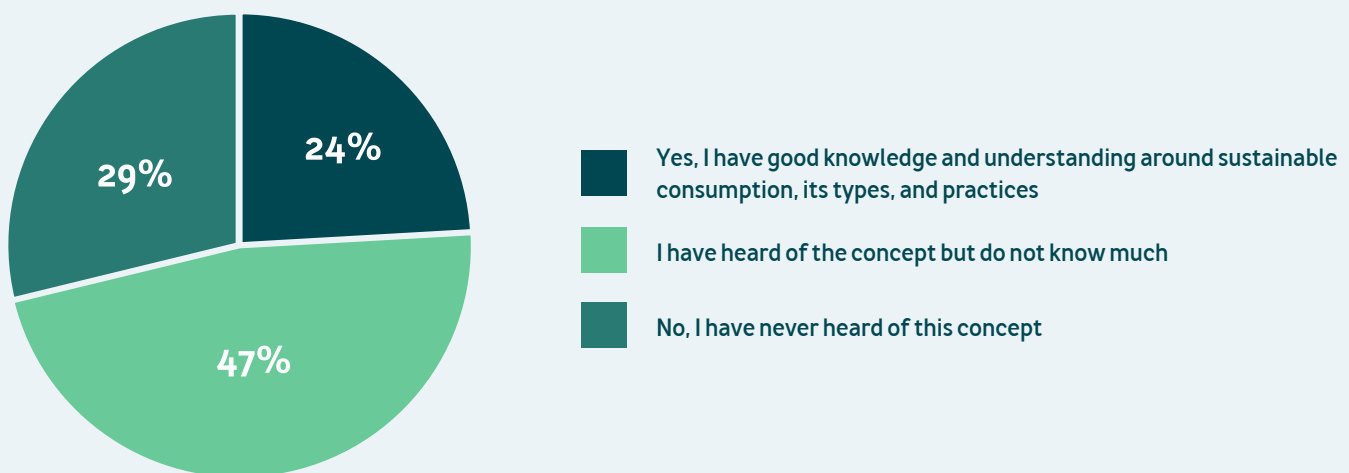
Arab Youth and Sustainable Consumption

Based on the results of the survey, ten major trends were identified when discussing sustainable consumption among Arab youth:

1. Many Arab youth have some - but not a deep - understanding of the concept of sustainable consumption.

Less than 30% of respondents had no knowledge of the term or concept of sustainable consumption. Most respondents, approximately 47% of the total sample, fell somewhere in between—they had heard of and had a general idea of what constituted sustainable consumption, but did not know enough to demonstrate a degree of comfort with it.

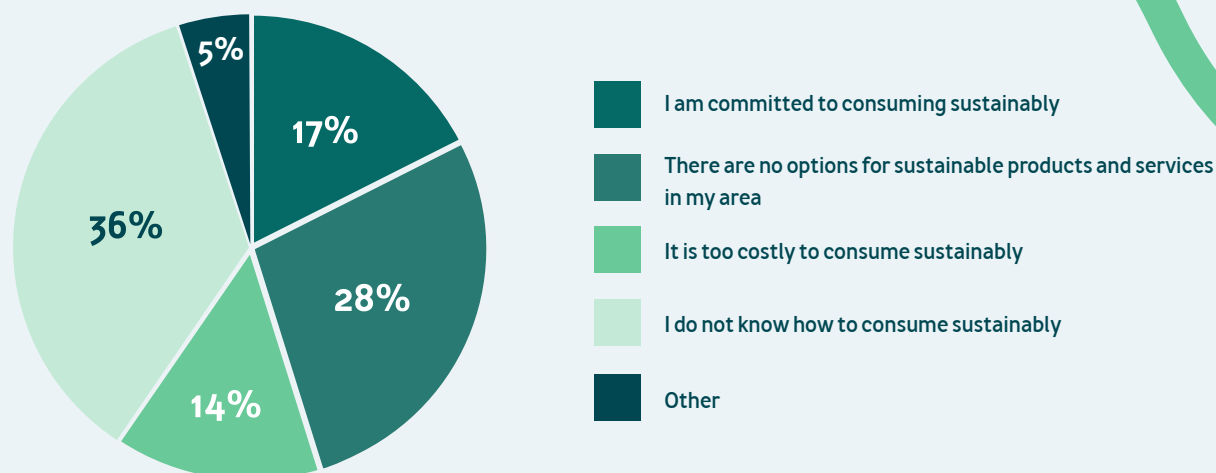
Have you previously heard of sustainable consumption?



When asked whether they faced any barriers or difficulties to consuming sustainably, 17% of the sample denied experiencing any barriers and affirmed their commitment to sustainable consumption. 28% of the population cited a lack of sustainable options in their area, while 14% said that sustainable consumption came at too high a cost. 36% claimed they had no knowledge of how to consume sustainably.

Furthermore, the proportion of the population that claimed to not understand how to consume sustainably is greater than the proportion of the population that claimed to have never heard of this concept. This means that, to some extent, some Arab youth who are somewhat aware of the concept of sustainable consumption do not yet know enough to act upon their understanding, even if they want to.

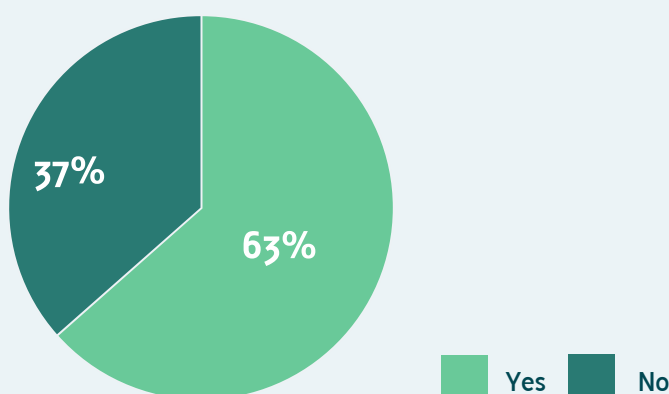
What are the major barriers preventing you from consuming sustainably?



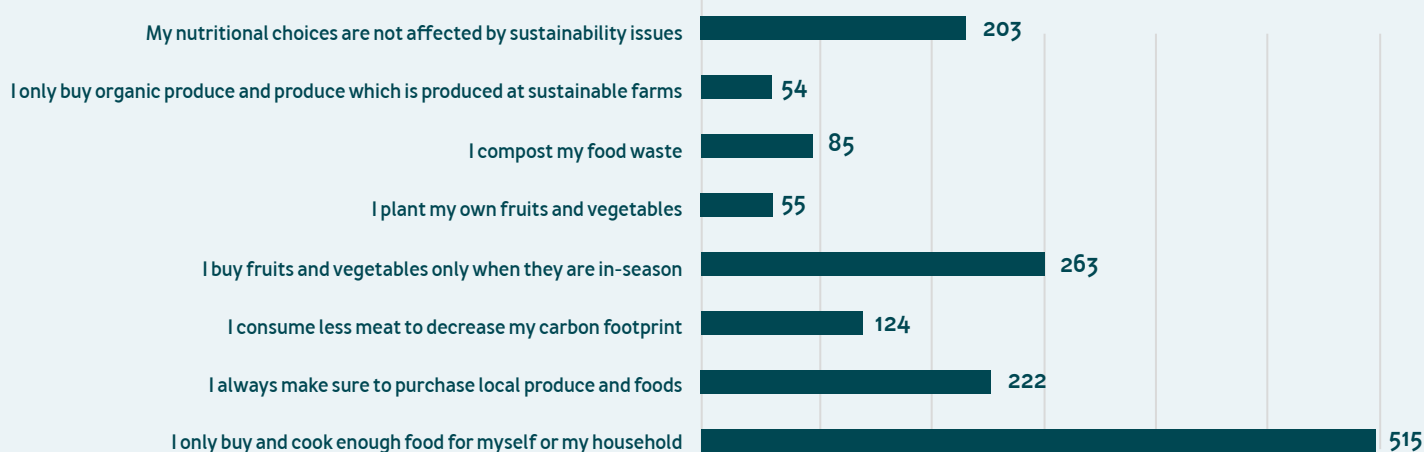
2. Sustainability and climate change-related issues generally affect the nutritional and food choices of approximately two-thirds of Arab youth.

For most respondents, just under 65%, sustainability and climate change issues affect their nutritional choices. Approximately 68% of respondents mentioned that they only buy and cook just enough food for themselves and their households without splurging. Other responses included purchasing in-season fruits and vegetables, locally produced food items, and limiting meat intake specifically to minimize carbon footprint.

Are your nutritional choices affected by sustainability issues and climate change?

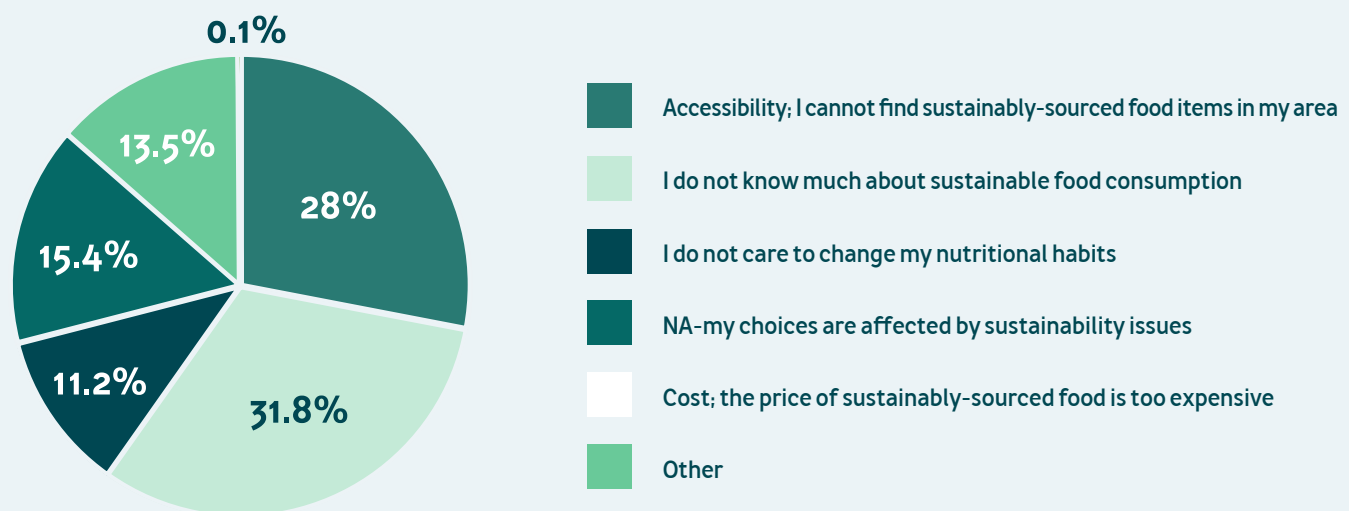


Which sustainable practices apply to your food consumption habits?



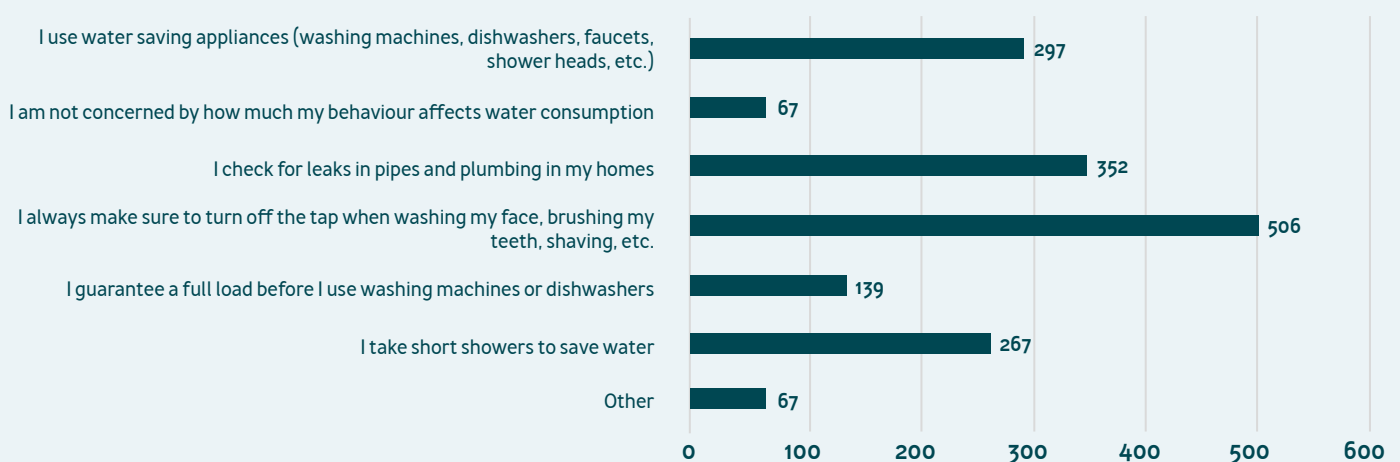
When asked to further elaborate on their nutritional choices and its overlap with sustainability, 27%, reported that their nutritional choices are not affected by climate change or sustainability issues. While this inconsistency may not mean much, it does signify that perhaps, upon greater thought, Arab youth's nutrition habits are more sustainable than initially anticipated or assessed. The largest proportion of 32% of respondents claimed that the main reason behind their food and nutrition choices being unaffected by sustainable consumption was their lack of knowledge around sustainable food consumption.

If your nutritional choices are unaffected by sustainability issues and climate change, what is the main reason behind that?



When it comes to sustainable water use, however, two thirds of respondents agreed that they always check to make sure the tap is shut while they are attending to their personal hygiene (washing their face and hands, brushing their teeth, etc.). Meanwhile, 46% of the sample responded that they check to make sure all existing and potential leaks in pipes and toilets are sealed. A small 9% of respondents claim to not be concerned by their water usage habits.

Which sustainable practices apply to you when consuming water?



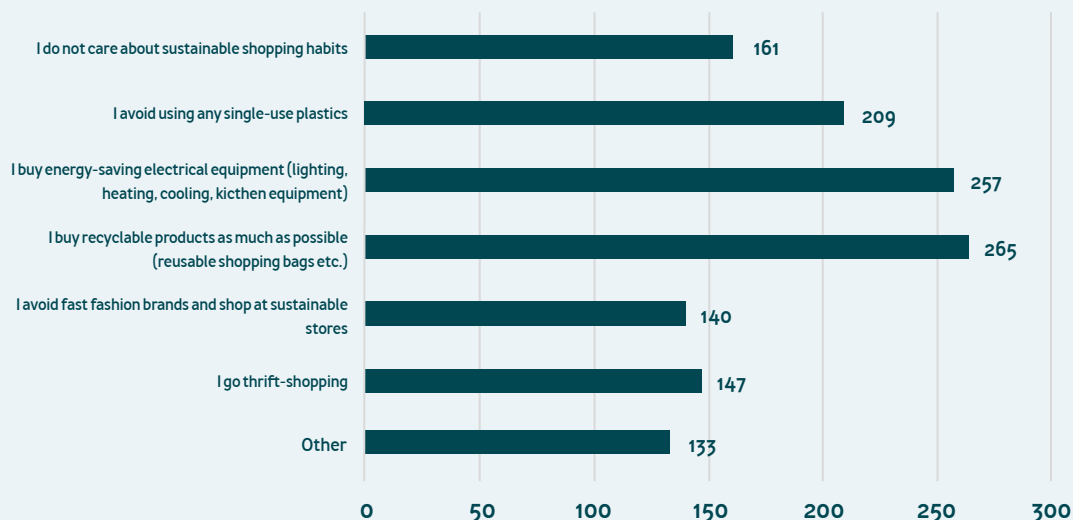
3. Most Arab youth engage in some sustainable consumption habits when it comes to shopping for clothes or other goods.

When it comes to shopping habits related to clothing and fashion, 64% of respondents claimed that they only purchased new clothes on a need-based basis. Reducing overall consumption of fashion and clothing items is a shift towards sustainable habits, thus most Arab youth, who only buy new clothes on a need basis, have adopted more sustainable shopping habits to some degree.

How do you evaluate your shopping habits?



Which sustainable practices apply to your shopping habits?



That said, 21% of respondents claimed that they did not care about sustainable shopping habits-whether in terms of fashion/clothing or more general shopping habits. However, the majority of respondents practiced some sustainable habits when making purchases. Chief among them, practiced by almost 35% of respondents, is the purchasing of reusable items like grocery bags, which again lowers overall consumption.

As 22% of respondents claim that they follow sustainable shopping practices, 34% of respondents also claim that they had no understanding of what sustainable shopping practices would be. 30% claim that they do not have access to sustainable shopping options in their region. 14% of respondents also claim that they do not care about sustainable shopping habits.

If your shopping habits are unaffected by sustainability, what is the reason behind this?

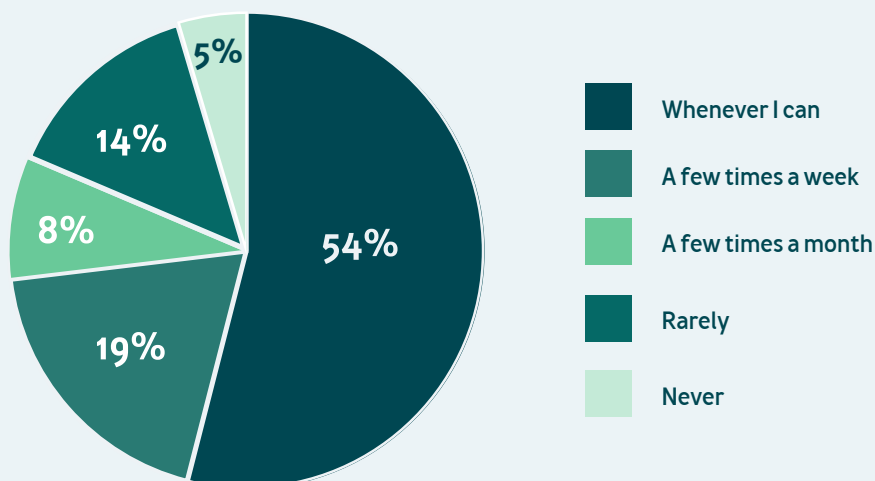


4. Transportation seems to be the main way in which Arab youth practice sustainable consumption habits.

The MIT Energy Initiative conducted a study ranking the UAE, KSA, and Egypt as 3 of the top 10 countries with "car pride", which refers to how different individuals awards social status and personal image to owning and using a car²⁹. Despite the emphasis on car ownership, there have recently been significant investments in EV infrastructure, public transportation, "active" transportation like biking and walking, and more to help make transportation across the region more green³⁰.

With that context, it's not surprising that transportation thus far seems to be the popular way for youth to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability, with 54% of respondents claiming that they resort to sustainable methods of transportation, which for the sake of this survey have been defined as walking, biking, using public transportation, or carpooling, when they are trying to get from one place to another.

To what extent do you use sustainable methods of transportation (walking/cycling/public transportation/carpooling) to reach your destination?



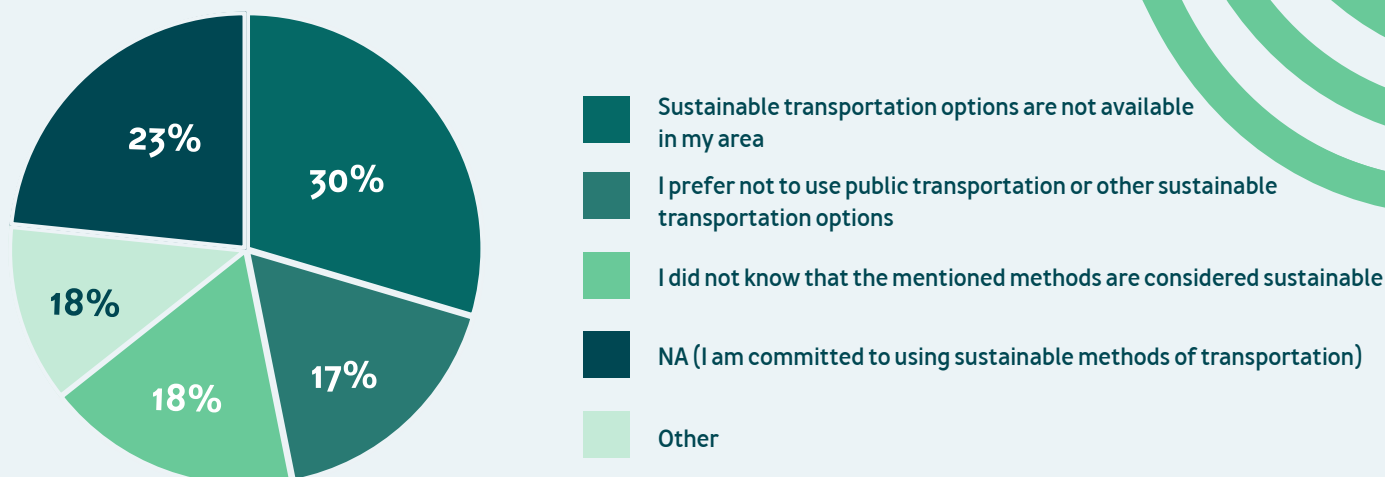
However, it becomes evident that "whenever I can" means different things to different people. That said, the high number of respondents indicates that there is a degree of commitment from Arab youth to use sustainable methods of transportation, and their willingness to use them might be stunted by other factors.

When answering a question regarding the reasons respondents do not resort to sustainable modes of transportation, 30% claim that sustainable options of transportation are unavailable in their area. 17% of respondents claim they did not know that the mentioned modes of transportation qualified as sustainable modes of transportation, while another 17% claimed that they do not prefer to use public transportation or other modes of transportation. 12% of respondents claimed that they had other reasons which are not included in those listed above for avoiding the use of sustainable transportation options.

28. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/sustainable-mobility-middle-east-you-might-expect-elbermbali/>

29. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/sustainable-mobility-middle-east-you-might-expect-elbermbali/>

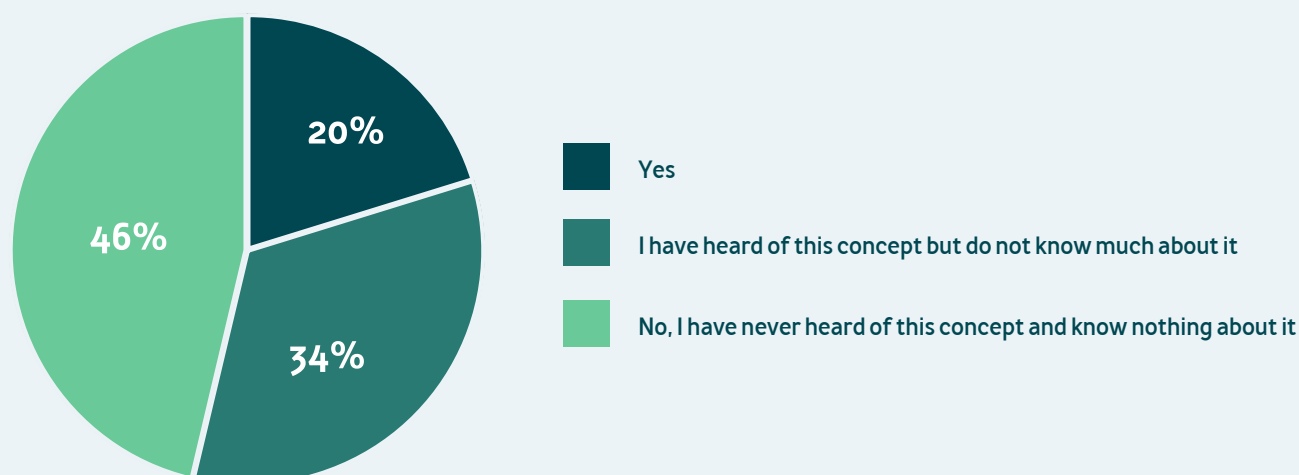
What are the reasons that deter you from resorting to sustainable methods of transportation?



5. Few Arab youth possess a good understanding or awareness of sustainable design, although most have implemented or have plans to implement sustainable design elements in their homes

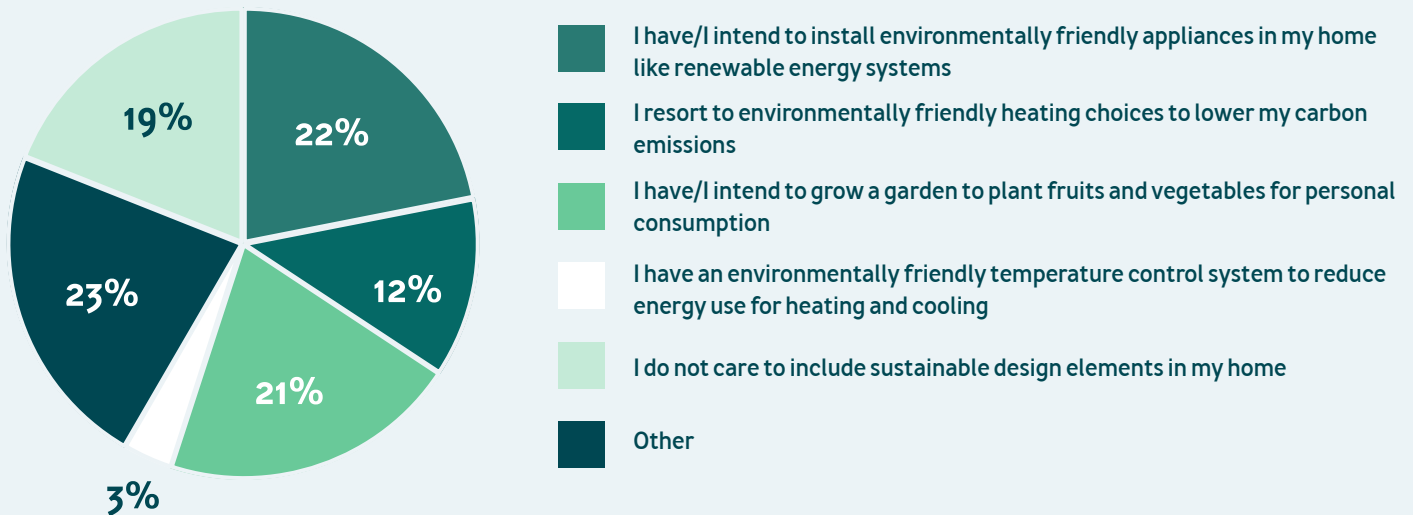
In contrast to sustainable consumption, a near majority of Arab youth surveyed had no knowledge or understanding of the term "sustainable design." This could be tied to cultural reason-typically in the region, young adults live with their parents in their parents' homes until they are ready to start their own families, and as a result, they have little need to understand sustainable design until the time comes for them to move out. 46.3% of respondents claimed no prior knowledge of the term, and only 33% claimed to have previously heard of the term while having no significant understanding of it.

Have you previously heard of sustainable design?



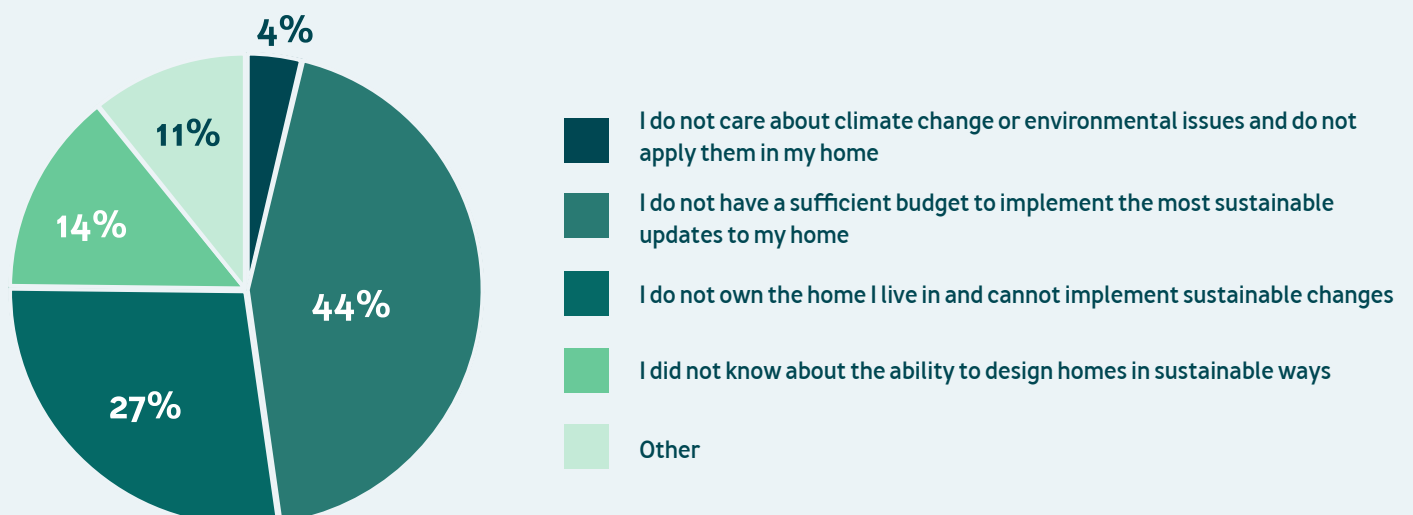
When asked which sustainable practices may apply to them when they design or update their homes, there was no clear leading practice - those who intended to apply a sustainable practice to their home modelling plan were almost equally likely to install and use renewable energy as they were to grow a green garden or not include sustainable design elements in their homes.

Which of the following sustainable practices apply to your home's design or remodelling plans?



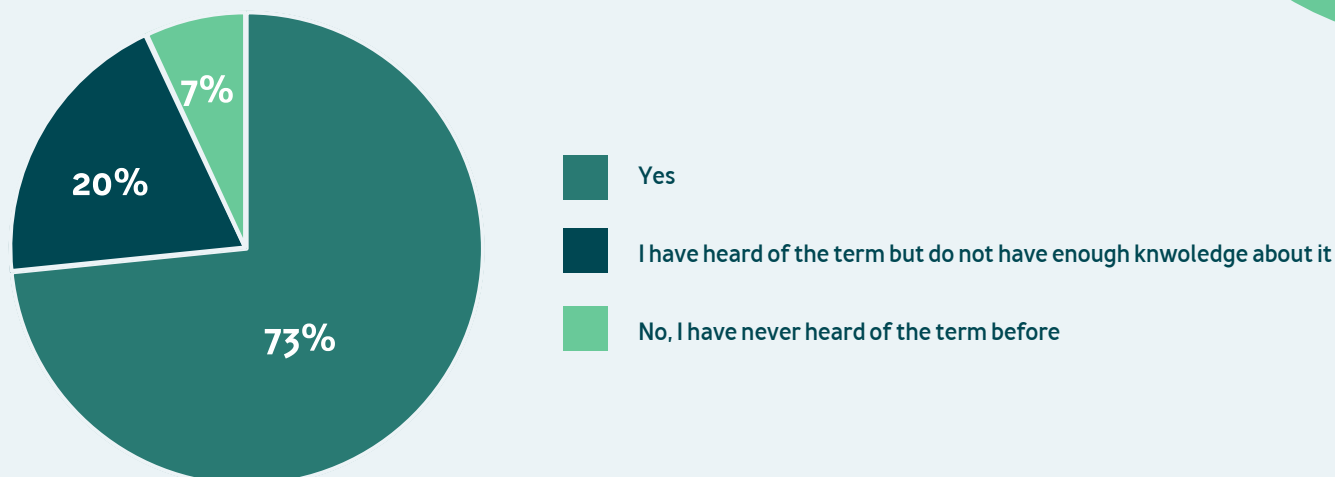
Cost seems to be a major barrier to incorporating sustainable design practices for many Arab youth, with 44% of respondents citing it as the main reason for them not having incorporated sustainable design elements into their homes. Other pertinent issues include home ownership structures and a lack of awareness of how to make homes more sustainable. Interestingly, a small minority of 4% of the population do not care about sustainability and climate change issues, and therefore do not apply them in home design.

If you have not or do not intend to apply sustainable design practices in your home, what is the reason?



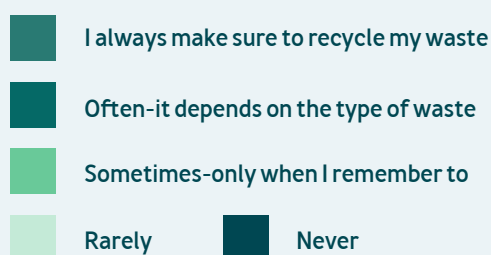
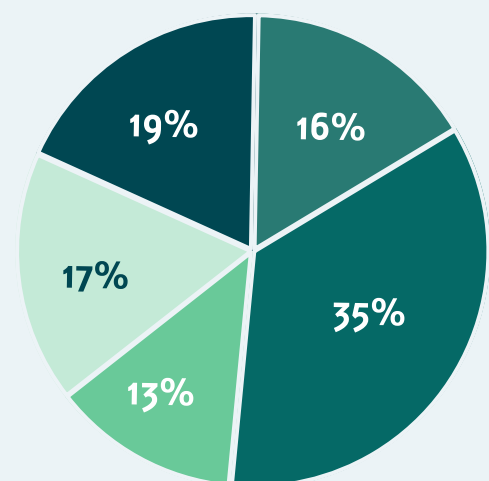
6. While a clear majority of Arab youth are knowledgeable about recycling, only a minority display a clear commitment to recycling, citing accessibility as a barrier

Have you ever heard about recycling?

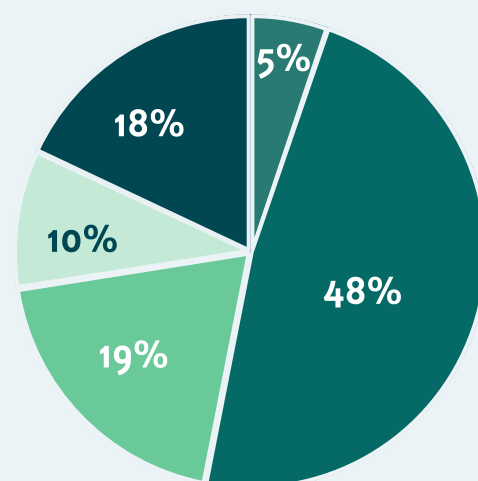


When asked about their commitment to recycling, 35% claimed to recycle as much as possible, depending on the type of waste, compared to 16% of respondents who always recycled regardless of the type of waste.

To what extent are you committed to recycling your own waste?



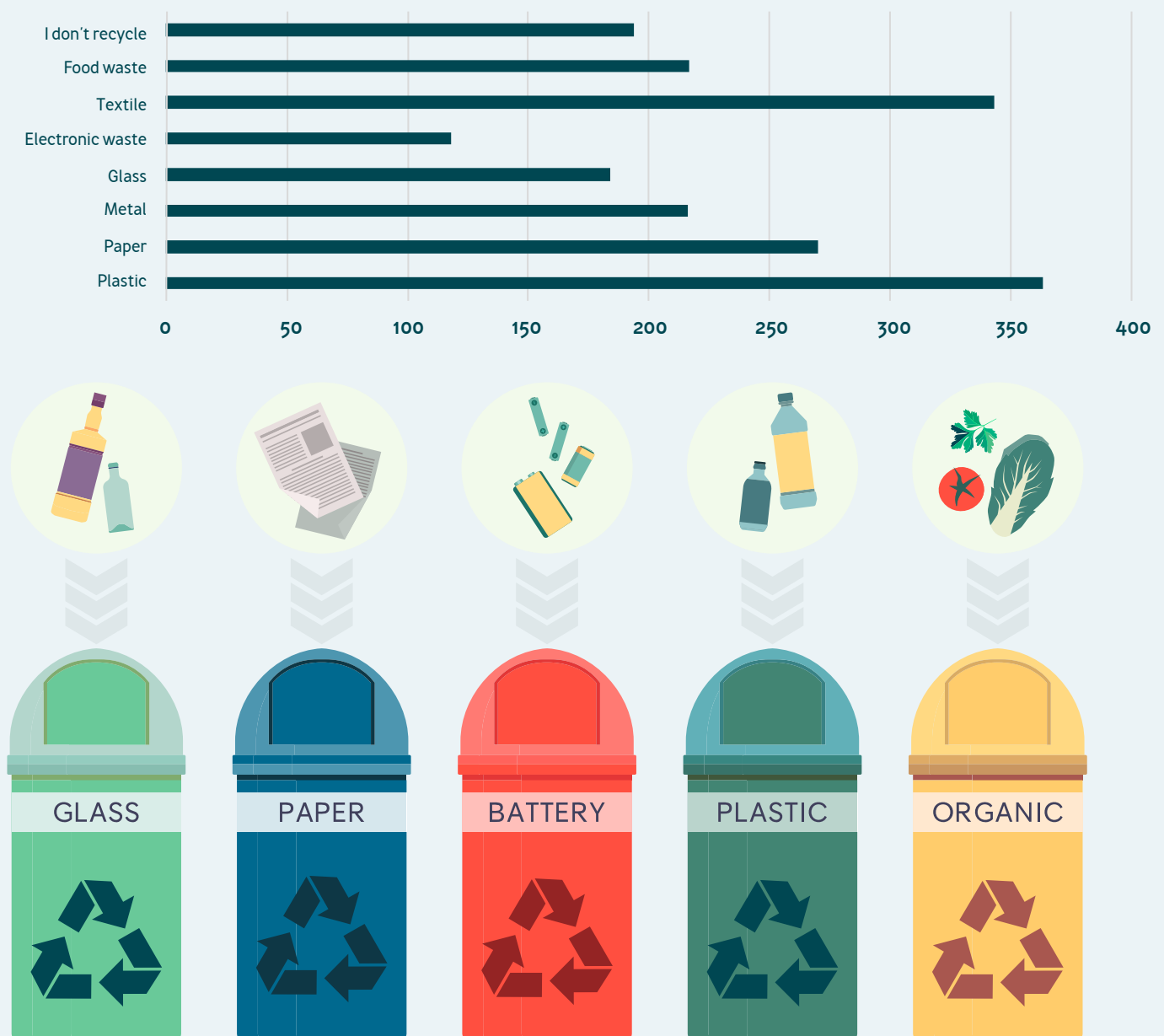
In case you are not committed to recycling, what is the reason behind that?



At nearly a fifth of respondents, 18% claimed to never recycle their personal waste. Understandably so, as just under 50% of respondents claim that there is a lack of recycling options near their residential area, while 19% of respondents claim that they do not know how to recycle – this could include knowledge of what can be recycled, knowledge on how to properly segregate waste, and knowledge of segregated waste disposal points. A further (and much smaller) 5% claim that they do not care about recycling, or environmental conservation.

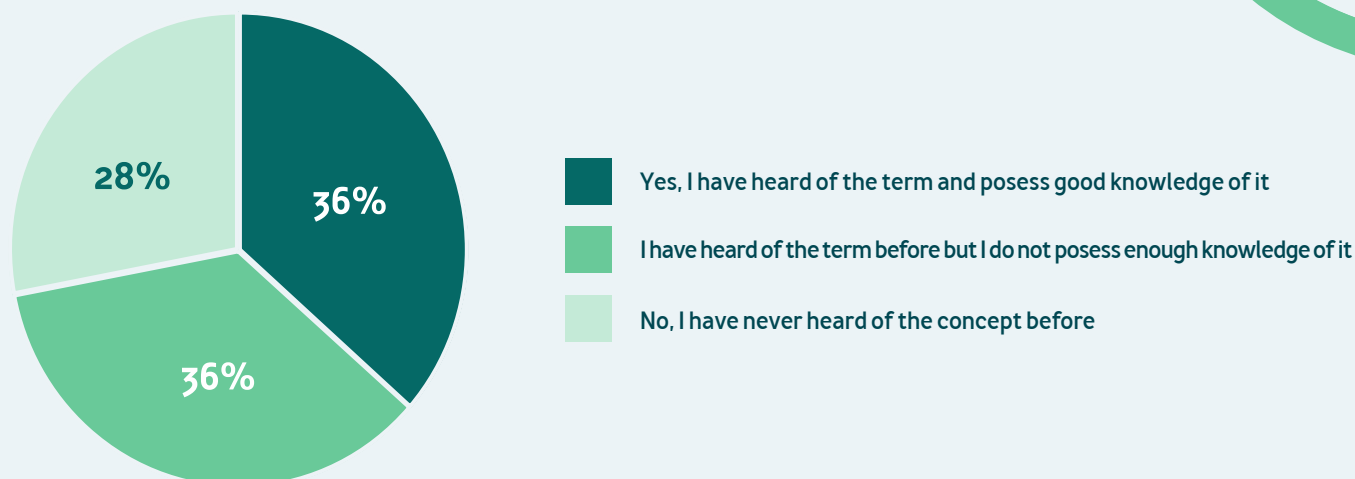
The most popular recyclables among Arab youth are textile and clothing and plastics, with the former option chosen by 45% of respondents and the latter chosen by 48% of respondents. At approximately 36% response rate is paper, followed by metals and food waste at approximately 29%. Glass is recycled by only 24% of respondents, while electronic waste is recycled by only 16% of respondents. What is interesting is that this does not seem to reflect what industry says about recycling – glass and aluminium seem to be the two materials that, when recycled, yield the most benefit, while recycling plastic seems to be much less effective³¹. Furthermore it is interesting to see how many respondents claim to recycle any of these materials given that most of them also responded that a lack of accessibility to convenient recycling options is a major barrier to committing to recycling.

What are the materials that you recycle?

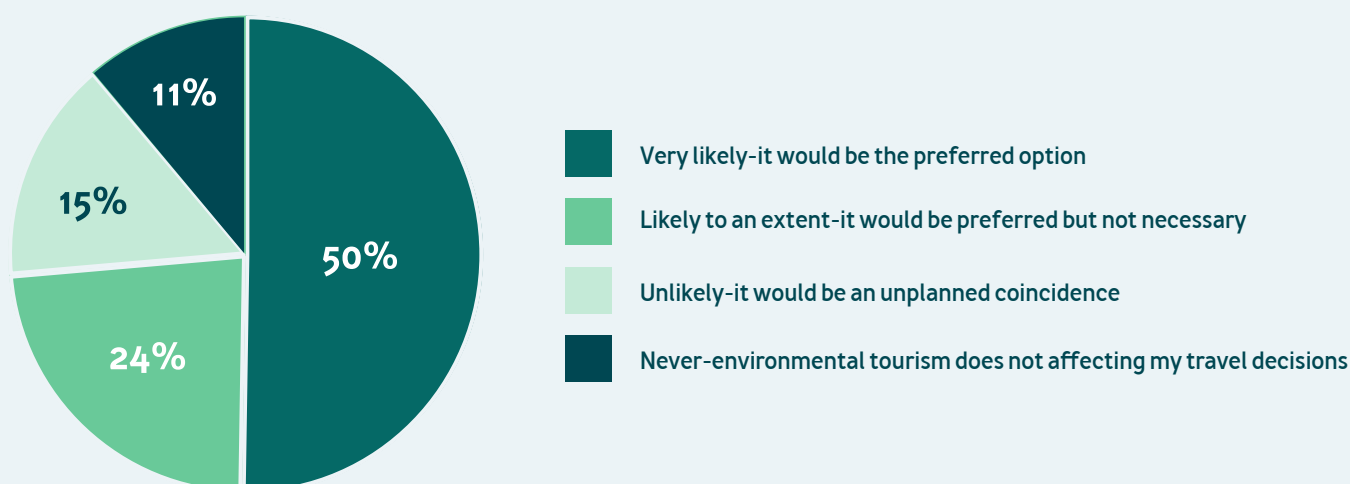


7. While most Arab youth may not possess a deep understanding of environmental tourism, most of the youth would prefer to travel to environmental tourism destinations.

Have you previously heard of environmental tourism?



To what extent would you choose a travel destination based on its status as an "environmental tourism" destination?



72% of respondents are familiar with the term environmental tourism, divided almost equally into the buckets of those who have a good understanding of the term and those who have less of an understanding of the term. This reflects a rise in the popularity of dubbing tourism destinations in the region as "sustainable" - looking specifically at AlUla and the Hatta Master Development Plan as well as El Gouna and an increasing number of eco-lodges around the region³². Our survey shows that this high level of awareness and availability shows that there is also a level of enthusiasm at taking part in sustainable tourism, with just over 50% of respondents claiming it is highly likely that they would choose an environmental tourism destination, 11.2% claim that environmental tourism has no stake in their travel decision.

32. <https://wired.me/business/is-sustainable-tourism-the-next-big-thing-in-menas-travel-industry/>

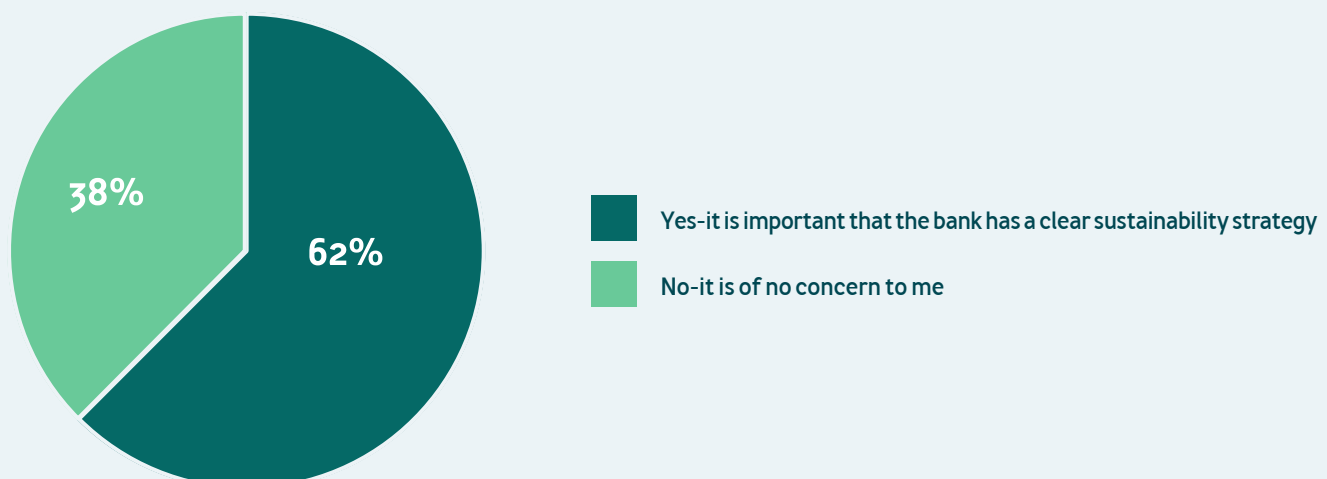
8. While green strategies seem to be important, green finance benefits do not yet seem as important to Arab youth

44% of respondents agreed that it would be highly probable for them to choose a credit card based on its environmentally friendly practices and perks, with the added condition that it would offer the same interest rates and financial benefits as a traditional credit card. 39% mentioned it would be a nice perk but not a necessity. At the same time, just under two-thirds of respondents said that their bank's sustainability efforts would affect their decision to open an account.

How likely would you choose a credit card with a green/environmental rewards program knowing it would offer the same financial benefits and interest rate as a traditional credit card?



Do a bank's sustainability efforts affect your decision to open an account with them?



Furthermore, a few overarching observations can be made across all types of sustainable consumption. Somewhat mirroring global trends, cost and a lack of support or accessibility are two of the main barriers preventing people from achieving a sustainable lifestyle. In a study conducted by a consortium of global multinational corporations, these were both regarded as critical barriers. However, they found that cost is thought to be a more prominent barrier³³. To a certain degree, this specific finding is not reflected by our own research.

33. <https://globescan.com/2019/09/24/healthy-sustainable-living-report-2019/>

9. Accessibility and lack of options are a major barrier to implementing sustainable consumption habits.

As mentioned above, accessibility is a barrier for Arab youth wanting to practice sustainability in recycling, transportation, shopping, and nutrition, with approximately 48%, 30%, 34%, and 28% of respondents respectively citing accessibility or a lack of options as the main reason they do not partake in relevant sustainable habits.



Recycling

48% of respondents
cite accessibility or lack
of options



Transportation

30% of respondents
cite accessibility or lack
of options



Shopping

34% of respondents
cite accessibility or lack
of options



Nutrition

28% of respondents
cite accessibility or lack
of options

10. Cost does not seem to be a significant factor limiting the adoption of everyday sustainable consumption habits but is a prominent factor for larger investments in sustainability.

Arab youth generally do not seem to consider cost to be a major factor affecting their ability to consume sustainably - the sustainable choice for everyday options like nutrition, shopping, and transportation does not present as being much more costly in comparison to the non- or less-sustainable option. However, when making greater, more long-term decisions, such as those relating to home design, cost does seem to be an inhibitor, with 44% of those surveyed responding that cost is the greatest factor preventing them from implementing sustainable design elements.



Recommendations

Leveraging collected insights, the following recommendations aim to promote and nurture sustainable consumption among Arab youth:



Raise Awareness

Whether through national campaigns, education programs, social media campaigns, or large-scale public events, it is important to ensure that all Arab youth become at least somewhat familiar with the different types of sustainable consumption to ensure an efficient and effective transition to a circular economy. It would be even more prudent to ensure that Arab youth become extremely familiar with different types of sustainable consumption as well as the benefits sustainability can afford them. While many of these programs could be government-led, it is critical to involve both the private sector and civil society to help implement and amplify sustainability awareness.



Subsidize Sustainable Options

Despite cost not being the primary issue faced by Arab youth in their sustainable consumption transition, subsidizing sustainable choices may serve as a useful incentive, for both short-term impact choices and longer-term impact choices alike (that is, for choices like choosing locally sourced produce at the supermarket as well as for deciding on light fixtures in one's home). Bolstering youths' ability to choose and afford to choose the sustainable option may increase their propensity to "go green" with every purchase. Likewise, ensuring that businesses are incentivized to provide more sustainable options will in turn float more sustainable options into the market, giving consumers a wider variety of sustainable options to choose from.



Mandatory Sustainability Labelling

Raising awareness and providing more options may not be enough, especially if consumers are not able to clearly identify what differentiates the sustainable choice from the less sustainable choice. Clarifying the sustainable option through clear labelling indicating the product or service's impact on the environment in comparison to the impact of the non- or less-sustainable option would be particularly useful to help guide Arab youth to the more sustainable option at the time of purchase. If a regional government implements a regulation which states that "green" goods and services can be identified through a green label, for example, then it would be up to companies and service providers to apply that label to qualifying goods and services to help differentiate their sustainable goods and services from less sustainable goods and services.

Integrate Sustainability Into Education Curriculum



Embedding sustainability principles and practices into the educational curriculum at all levels can foster a culture of environmental consciousness from an early age while supporting the development of sustainable habits. By incorporating topics such as environmental science, conservation, and sustainable development into school subjects, Arab youth can develop a deeper understanding of the importance of sustainable living and its relevance to them. Additionally, they would be exposed to practical habits that they could integrate into their daily lives to lead a more sustainable lifestyle. Collaborating with educational institutions and curriculum developers to integrate sustainability into existing courses can ensure that this knowledge becomes an integral part of the learning experience.

Encourage Sustainable Financing Options



Banks and financial institutions play a crucial role in promoting sustainable consumption by offering financial products and services that support environmentally friendly initiatives. They can develop special loan packages or investment opportunities tailored to young consumers who wish to pursue sustainable lifestyle choices, such as eco-friendly home renovations, energy-efficient appliances, or electric vehicle purchases. By incentivizing sustainable investments and offering favourable terms for green initiatives, banks can empower Arab youth to make more environmentally conscious financial decisions while contributing to the transition to a more sustainable economy.

Implement Government Regulations on Businesses



Governments can enact regulations targeting businesses to promote sustainable consumption. This includes measures such as banning single-use plastic bags and other non-biodegradable materials, mandating the use of renewable energy sources in production processes, and setting emissions standards for industries. By imposing these regulations on businesses, governments can influence the availability and accessibility of sustainable products and services for Arab youth. This regulatory framework encourages businesses to adopt environmentally friendly practices and provides consumers with more sustainable options, contributing to the overall transition to a greener economy.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the pivotal role of Arab youth in shaping a sustainable future for the region. As the future sustainability leaders of tomorrow, their engagement and commitment to sustainable consumption practices are essential to driving positive change. Through collective action and collaboration among governments, businesses, educational institutions, and civil society, a concerted effort can be made to foster a culture of environmental consciousness and responsibility. By empowering Arab youth with the knowledge, resources, and opportunities to embrace sustainability, the Arab World can safeguard its resources for future generations while cultivating a society founded on principles of stewardship and resilience and materialising a more sustainable tomorrow.





FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE LED BY YOUTH

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