Growth in the digital age: the women’s perspective

UAE Female Leaders Outlook

October 2018

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The first KPMG Global Female Leaders Outlook shows that women are taking on the challenges of the digital age.

The world today is becoming increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, with technology and digitalization on the rise. New capabilities are required for organizations to survive. Companies are increasingly cognizant of the power of a diverse workforce and the talent and perspective that female leaders bring to the table. Finding the right digital know-how and qualified employees to support transformation is a challenge.

Participants in the survey affirm they feel comfortable with new technologies and the business impact of these. They see themselves as both digital and data savvy, and favor promoting the application of more data analysis in their companies. Both global and United Arab Emirates (UAE) female leaders are realistic about growth expectations and possess a farsighted entrepreneurial vision. They believe they are equipped with the necessary skills for successfully driving transformation processes, benefiting from their strong networking and communication skills, openness to innovation, and a straightforward, customer-centric attitude.

Our study shows that UAE female leaders feel well-prepared for — and are embracing — the new digital environment.

We are proud to present the results of the UAE Female Leaders Outlook, which we believe is the first survey of its kind in the Emirates. This report is based on feedback from senior female executives across a comprehensive range of sectors in the UAE economy. It represents the voice of female leaders who understand the times we live in, are business-savvy and instinctively develop themselves and their skills to enhance their position in the workplace of the future. Put simply, we believe our research shows that female leaders are prepared for the current technological revolution, and the digital age holds the potential to be the women’s era.

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UAE female leaders are...

- Confident about growth expectations.
- Focused on innovation and organic growth.
- Digitally oriented and tech-savvy.

- 76% are confident about growth expectations for their company.
- 93% state that, over the next three years, innovation processes and execution will need to be improved in order to achieve organizational growth.
- 59% believe AI will create more jobs than it eliminates.
- 75% expect headcount to increase over the next three years.
- 36% plan to focus on organic growth.
...making confident, data-based decisions.

79% of respondents expect the use of predictive data models/analytics to increase.

45% trust insights provided by data when making critical decisions.

48% believe focusing on acquiring new customers will not impact their existing customer base.

52% of female leaders intend to collaborate with innovative startups (e.g. FinTechs, InsurTechs, HealthTechs).

...customer-centric, with a strong belief in networking and cooperation.

Thorough know-how of new technologies is ranked as the second most important trait to achieve personal success (after active personal network).
The Global CEO Outlook and the Global Female Leaders Outlook
KPMG published the Global CEO Outlook survey in May 2018 for the fourth consecutive year. The vast majority (84%) of the almost 1,300 CEOs who took part in the survey were male leaders of large companies. This realization was the impetus for conducting a survey of global female leaders. Together with Management Circle, we believe it is vital the many women in leadership positions and/or who manage their own company are also given the chance to express their views on topics such as economic and technological developments, innovation, data use and customer expectations. The objective of the new Global Female Leaders Outlook (GFLO) is to give a voice to a group that is often underrepresented in reports and analyses. This is why the GFLO is based closely on the questionnaire used for the Global CEO Outlook.

The project generated an astounding response. Almost 700 female leaders from around the world voluntarily participated in our online survey, with 29 of these from the UAE. This shows how overdue such a report is, and how important the respondents believe it is to create platforms for global female leaders’ voices — both in business and in society in general.

We are convinced that the GFLO requires no comparison, being a true benchmark in itself. Nonetheless, there are differences between the results of the GFLO and the Global CEO Outlook. We share some of these differences with you on the following page and encourage you to further compare results with the Global CEO Outlook.

In summary, the two sets of results indicate that women leaders tend to be realistic and are likely to look for gradual, sustained growth.

For example, global female leaders are cautious with respect to growth prospects for their company over the next three years, as well as for the global economy, their country and their industry.

Further, as many as eight out of ten female leaders believe a strong cyber risk strategy is critical to engender trust with their key stakeholders, compared with only 55% of global CEOs. Nearly half (45%) of women leaders believe organic growth is the most important business strategy for achieving growth, compared with only 28% of respondents in the Global CEO Outlook. Finally, almost half of female senior management (47%) think artificial intelligence (AI) will create more jobs than it will eliminate, compared to 62% of those surveyed in the Global CEO Outlook.
“Success in this disruptive business environment will take courage of conviction and leadership with a focus on long-term results rather than short-term profitability.”

Maureen Jensen
CEO and Chair
Ontario Securities Commission
A strong cyber risk strategy is critical to engender trust with our key stakeholders

We are waiting for growth before hiring people with new skills

Organic growth is the most important strategy for achieving the organization's growth objectives over the next three years

AI will create more jobs than it will eliminate
Results of the UAE Female Leaders Outlook
Digitalization and technological developments, along with a changing political and demographic landscape, have catapulted the world into a new age of disruption.

It is useful to preface the survey’s results by looking at the context of the current global business environment. From a business perspective, we have seen the rise of information and communications technology (ICT) super-companies. We deal with technology-driven ‘unicorns’ that have raised the bar on company value to previously unseen heights and observe many old-world market leaders struggling to cope with the speed of innovation.

Social media and online shopping have given customers new buying power, enabling them to determine the success or failure of a product or company in just one click. And time is the new cost factor, allowing increasingly little latitude to make thorough, detail-founded strategic decisions, for example, about innovations or go-to-market processes. In other words, the business world is changing at an unprecedented pace.

**Female representation in the UAE**

Although there is a lack of concise data about female representation in UAE organizations, it is clear that more women are rising to the top in companies across the Emirates. There is, however, scope for greater progress.

Women and men have equal rights and obligations under UAE law, meaning they have the same access to education, healthcare and jobs. For example, 65% of university graduates in the UAE are women. And two-thirds (66%) of the government workforce is female, with 30% of them having decision-making powers.¹ As much as one-third of the cabinet is made up of women, and HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, has announced his intention to increase this figure to 50%.²

In addition, the UAE established the Gender Balance Council in 2015 to strengthen the role of Emirati women locally and internationally. A recent regulation by the UAE’s Securities and Commodities Authority also requires listed company candidates for board membership be comprised of at least 20% women, making the UAE the only Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country to have this type of quota for female representation.³

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Results of the UAE Female Leaders Outlook

Growth

UAE female leaders are optimistic about growth potential, strategies and headcount. Finding a way to face the challenges of digitalization, technological developments, and changing political and demographic landscapes are priorities for female leaders in the Emirates.

UAE female leaders are confident about growth — with realistic, clear and confident opinions about what can be achieved. Three-quarters (76%) of our respondents are optimistic about growth for their own company and 62% anticipate growth for their industry. However, 72% expect company growth to be harder to achieve today than it has been before.

We see a few differences between the UAE and global findings in this area. Confidence in their own company and industry is fairly consistent (77% and 66% globally, respectively); however, UAE female leaders expect growth to be much harder to achieve today than it has been before, with global figures at only 60%.

How confident are you with the following growth prospects for the next three years?

- The global economy:
  - Very confident: 10%
  - Confident: 35%
  - Neutral: 28%
  - Not very confident: 7%
  - Not at all confident: 3%

- Your company:
  - Very confident: 24%
  - Confident: 66%
  - Neutral: 10%
  - Not very confident: 7%
  - Not at all confident: 3%

- Your country:
  - Very confident: 7%
  - Confident: 62%
  - Neutral: 31%
  - Not very confident: 7%
  - Not at all confident: 3%

- Your industry:
  - Very confident: 7%
  - Confident: 55%
  - Neutral: 31%
  - Not very confident: 7%
  - Not at all confident: 3%
Despite this, the UAE’s female leaders are positive about growth for their own country (69%). When asked about their view on the growth prospects of the global economy, they are more cautious, however, with only 35% being confident, 55% being neutral, and 10% not being confident. Global female leaders are more certain about the growth prospects of the global economy, with 50% being confident in its growth.

When asked about topline growth, both global and UAE participants reacted positively as well. Forty-eight percent of respondents expect growth of 5% or more. Seventy-five percent of respondents expect an overall growth in headcount over the next three years, while only 25% see a shrinking or steady employee base. This result supports the opinion shared by the survey’s global female leaders on how AI implementation will impact headcount. Fifty-nine percent see AI creating more jobs than it eliminates, meaning that UAE female leaders are slightly more positive than global female leaders (47% of whom believe AI will eliminate more jobs than it creates).
Turning expected positive growth into reality requires a clearly defined strategy. A company can either rely on its own strengths and grow by optimization (organic growth), or it can grow by partnering with other companies or being active in the mergers and acquisitions (M&A) field.

There is a clear emphasis on organic growth among female leaders. Findings indicate that a large share (36%) believe that focusing on innovation, research and development (R&D), capital investments and recruitment is the most important growth strategy. This result is supported by 93% of respondents, who agree with the statement that their company needs to improve innovation processes and execution over the next three years. Another 62% see agility as the new currency of business.

When it comes to inorganic growth, strategic alliances (24%) and M&A (18%) are the preferred options.

Opportunities and threats are often closely linked. When asked about the greatest risks to their organization’s growth, participants rated operational risk in first place, at 18%. Emerging/disruptive technology risk is rated second, with 17% of respondents naming this threat within their top three risks.
“Female leaders in the UAE are receptive to technological challenges and have a clear understanding of their strategic direction. They are confident about growth and I feel sure, based on their positivity and flexibility, that they will achieve their goals.”

Clare McColl
Partner
Head of Indirect Tax
KPMG Lower Gulf Limited
Digitalization is the new paradigm of our changing world. However, many companies are struggling to find the right path to transform their business models, products and organizations. The implementation of new technologies that rely on data and digital processes such as blockchain and AI presents an additional challenge.

Three-quarters of UAE female leaders view technological disruption as an opportunity rather than a threat (76%), and the same proportion (76%) already acknowledge significant transformation happening within their industry; this is similar to the global picture. Unlike the rest of the world’s respondents, however, where more than half of respondents consider their company to be disrupting their sector, in the UAE only 31% of female leaders believe their company is doing so.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about disruption within your industry?

- My organization is struggling to keep pace with the rate of technological innovation in our sector
- Rather than waiting to be disrupted by competitors, my organization is actively disrupting the sector in which we operate
- We already see significant progress on transformation within our industry
- We see technological disruption as more of an opportunity than a threat
Only 17% of UAE female leaders feel their board of directors has unreasonable expectations regarding return on investment (ROI) in the field of digital transformation. Furthermore, almost 61% state that their company has not experienced significant losses due to investing in the wrong emerging technologies over recent years. Both figures reflect the sentiments of global respondents.

**To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your organization’s investment in digital transformation?**

- My company’s board of directors has an unreasonable expectation for a return on investment related to digital transformation
- We have suffered significant financial losses in the past by occasionally investing in the wrong emerging technologies

![Survey Results](image-url)
“Thirty percent of businesses are owned and managed by women. Since 2012, the gender equality topic’s perception has got minor signs of progress. But it’s still an abyss between gender equality objectives and status quo. Even progressive parts of society, opinion leaders in business and culture, policy-makers are ignorant in terms of gender, gender identity and sexism. So a lot still needs to be done to empower women leadership and educate non-discriminative attitudes and norms.”

Irina Rubis
CEO
Ekonomika Communication Hub
Concerning new technologies, about four in ten (38%) of UAE female leaders agree they are either very comfortable or comfortable with topics such as AI, blockchain, mixed reality and three dimensional (3D) printing, compared with 48% globally. Only 21% state that they feel uncomfortable with new technologies, and 41% are unsure. This demonstrates a possible lack of confidence in new technologies, which is underscored by the fact that know-how of new technologies ranks as the second most important factor that would contribute to their future personal success.

In terms of the benefits AI will bring to organizations over the next three years, UAE female leaders are pragmatic. They believe new technology will reduce operational costs (18%) and help improve data analysis capabilities (13%). However, 14% admit their organization has no plans to implement AI over this period.

As well as the technological aspects, new workforce capabilities and know-how are important for overcoming the challenges of the changing business environment. The UAE’s female leaders expect evolving workforce experts, emerging markets professionals and scenario- and risk-modelling specialists to play the most important role in successful transformation. However, respondents have mixed feelings about the existing capabilities within their companies, and feel that they will have to acquire new specialists across the board. Companies are taking a cautious approach, with 66% stating that they are waiting to achieve certain growth targets before hiring new skills (compared with only 45% globally).
“The need for diverse thinking at all levels of an organization is becoming even more important as we grapple with the challenges of technological disruption and society’s increased expectations on business.”

Karina Robinson
CEO
Robinson Hambro Ltd

“An inclusive company culture is vital: a diverse workforce brings new perspectives to the table, which will help drive innovation.”

Fiona Tullett
Director
People & Change
KPMG Lower Gulf Limited
How important do you expect the following workforce capabilities to be in supporting future growth plans?

- **Evolving workforce experts**: 86%
- **Emerging markets experts**: 82%
- **Scenario- and risk-modeling specialists**: 79%

Note: Respondents rating the above workforce capability as highly or somewhat important

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How effective is your organization’s existing workforce in these areas?

- **Cyber security specialists**
  - Highly effective: 10%
  - Somewhat effective: 28%
  - Neither/nor: 38%
  - Rather not effective: 17%
  - Not at all effective: 7%

- **Data scientists**
  - Highly effective: 45%
  - Somewhat effective: 34%
  - Neither/nor: 17%
  - Rather not effective: 4%
  - Not at all effective: 4%

- **Digital transformation managers**
  - Highly effective: 3%
  - Somewhat effective: 29%
  - Neither/nor: 43%
  - Rather not effective: 18%
  - Not at all effective: 7%

- **Emerging markets experts**
  - Highly effective: 4%
  - Somewhat effective: 45%
  - Neither/nor: 38%
  - Rather not effective: 10%
  - Not at all effective: 3%

- **Emerging technology specialists (i.e. artificial intelligence experts)**
  - Highly effective: 4%
  - Somewhat effective: 28%
  - Neither/nor: 34%
  - Rather not effective: 17%
  - Not at all effective: 17%

- **Evolving workforce experts (i.e. workforce learning, talent management, leadership development)**
  - Highly effective: 7%
  - Somewhat effective: 43%
  - Neither/nor: 39%
  - Rather not effective: 7%
  - Not at all effective: 4%

- **Governance/ethics experts**
  - Highly effective: 52%
  - Somewhat effective: 38%
  - Neither/nor: 7%
  - Rather not effective: 3%
  - Not at all effective: 3%

- **Scenario- and risk-modeling specialists (i.e. to predict and mitigate future business risks)**
  - Highly effective: 45%
  - Somewhat effective: 28%
  - Neither/nor: 21%
  - Rather not effective: 17%
  - Not at all effective: 10%

- **Sustainability experts (i.e. to lead the integration of sustainable thinking into business strategy)**
  - Highly effective: 7%
  - Somewhat effective: 28%
  - Neither/nor: 31%
  - Rather not effective: 21%
  - Not at all effective: 13%
Results of the UAE Female Leaders Outlook

Any company that wants to benefit from upcoming technologies like AI and blockchain needs to have strong data analysis capabilities. About eight in ten (79%) UAE female leaders state their company will increase the use of predictive modeling or analytics over the next three years. Presently, 55% acknowledge they have overlooked insights offered by data analysis models in the past three years because they were contrary to their intuition.

At the same time, 42% of UAE female leaders are planning to increase the use of unstructured data (i.e. text-heavy) compared with structured data (i.e. primarily numeric or fixed field) over the next three years.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the data you rely on for decision-making?

- Over the next three years, we will increase our usage of predictive models or analytics
  - Strongly agree: 3%
  - Agree: 14%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 24%
  - Disagree: 14%
  - Strongly disagree: 3%

- Over the next three years, we will increase our usage of unstructured data (i.e. text-heavy) compared to structured data (i.e. primarily numeric or fixed field)
  - Strongly agree: 41%
  - Agree: 14%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 3%
  - Disagree: 14%
  - Strongly disagree: 28%
“We fully expect the broader workforce to be equipped with more skills in analytics, AI, blockchain etc. when we are more clearly on the execution path. However, in the meantime, we feel the best option is acquiring third-party talent, which is closest to what is happening in the global marketplace and knows what is working – and what is not.”

Anne Marie O’Donovan
Board of Directors
Cadillac Fairview, Aviva Canada, Indigo, MDC Partners
When asked about which information sources they trust most, half (52%) of the UAE’s female leaders said they relied on traditional media, while using independent secondary information providers was ranked second. Social media is unsurprisingly considered the least trusted source. The relatively negative perception of social media may be linked to increased concerns about cyber security and data leaks among some of the larger social media platforms.

What level of trust do you have in each of the following data sources when it comes to informing your strategic decisions?

Respondents in %

- **Traditional media**
  - Very strong trust: 4%
  - Strong trust: 48%
  - Neutral: 38%
  - Weak trust: 10%
  - Very weak trust: 4%

- **Government-commissioned research**
  - Very strong trust: 11%
  - Strong trust: 41%
  - Neutral: 48%
  - Weak trust: 10%
  - Very weak trust: 3%

- **Independent secondary information providers (e.g. Bloomberg, Thomson Reuters)**
  - Very strong trust: 3%
  - Strong trust: 46%
  - Neutral: 10%
  - Weak trust: 41%
  - Very weak trust: 0%

- **Open data from government agencies**
  - Very strong trust: 7%
  - Strong trust: 45%
  - Neutral: 48%

- **Social media**
  - Very strong trust: 4%
  - Strong trust: 31%
  - Neutral: 17%
  - Weak trust: 38%
  - Very weak trust: 0%
The age of online shopping and social media is boosting consumer power. For companies, a good understanding of the customer and positive brand positioning are essential for increasing revenues. New technologies open up a wide range of opportunities to support both aspects. Indeed, as far as customer data is concerned, the risk of a company damaging its reputation is rising as data security issues and correct data use climb higher on the agenda of customers and regulators.

UAE female leaders are customer-centric. Eight out of ten (80%) respondents see the protection of customer data as one of the most important responsibilities to enable growth of their customer base. This is aligned with the firm belief, again among 80% of respondents, that a strong cyber risk strategy is critical for cultivating trust among stakeholders. Both are in line with global figures (78% and 81% respectively). The UAE’s female leaders seem to have a clear sense of data protection and use-related risks. However, 31% are concerned about losing existing customers due to disproportional resources spent on acquiring new customers, which is significantly higher than the global figure of 13%.
Opinions vary regarding investments made to personalize the customer experience. While 37% believe that investments are well spent for expected growth benefits, 35% believe the opposite, and 28% neither agree nor disagree. Overall, UAE female leaders are aware of strategic challenges in customer management and make decisions from an entrepreneurial perspective.

### To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your relationship with your customers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A strong cyber risk strategy is critical to engender trust with our key stakeholders</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our organization is in danger of losing existing customers because disproportionate resources are spent on attracting new customers</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting customers’ data is one of the most important responsibilities to enable my organization to grow its customer base in the future</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To date, the investments we have made in trying to personalize the customer experience have not delivered the growth benefits for which we hoped</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Leaders, whether they be male or female, need to be tech savvy and conscious of cyber threats and data protection requirements to connect with new customers and improve customer experience.”

Harriet Cobb
Associate Director
Forensic
KPMG Lower Gulf Limited
Results of the UAE Female Leaders Outlook

Career expectations
Confident about success factors, quotas and expectations

Female leaders in the UAE are strongly aligned with their global counterparts on what they view as personal success factors. When asked to rank the most crucial, their first choice was an “active personal network” (also the highest ranked answer globally), followed by “thorough know-how of new technologies”. The third most important factor was “courage to make unpopular decisions”.

Indeed, another valuable leadership quality, “strong communication skills”, was ranked fourth. All of these aspects complement working in a digital environment and with new technologies like AI. There is a close parallel between global and UAE respondents, with the same qualities being highlighted by both.
Which of the following are crucial for your future personal success? Please rank your top two.

**UAE**

- Active personal network: 37%
- Thorough know-how of new technologies: 20%
- Courage to make unpopular decisions: 13%
- Strong communication skills: 13%
- Good network within your company: 8%
- Access to predictive data and analytics: 7%
- Quotas for female leadership: 3%

**Global**

- Active personal network: 26%
- Strong communication skills: 24%
- Thorough know-how of new technologies: 15%
- Courage to make unpopular decisions: 12%
- Good network within your company: 10%
- Access to predictive data and analytics: 9%
- Quotas for female leadership: 4%
One interesting aspect of the study is participants’ attitude towards quotas. Only 3% rank female leadership quotas as a crucial factor for their personal success. Despite this, however, when asked if women’s enablement programs are a good method of bringing more women into the business world, many agreed: eight out of ten (79%) backed such initiatives (compared to 84% globally). The UAE’s female leaders are committed to fighting for their involvement and advancement and want to make it easier for the next generation. Most UAE female leaders do not expect change in these areas to be voluntary, and believe that pressure is needed to reach such a goal.

A further point to note is that approximately half (48%) believe their successor will be female. Perhaps not surprisingly, this is below the global figure of 59%.

With regard to their next career step, less than a third (28%) expect their next job to be outside their current company and 31% do not know where it will be. This indicates a certain flexibility among UAE female leaders to reach out for an opportunity that might arise. Forty-one percent of respondents, however, plan to stay within their current company for their next career step, compared with only 28% globally.

**Is your next career step likely to be within or outside your current company?**

- **41%** Within
- **31%** Do not know yet
- **28%** Outside
“To truly break through the glass ceiling, a fundamental organizational culture change is required, with leadership taking a stand and supporting change. This can be made possible through leadership training and career development programs, and taking an in-depth look at how to enable business practices to help women advance to senior positions.”

Marketa Simkova
Director
People & Change
KPMG Lower Gulf Limited
Harnessing disruption

Digital disruption has changed the way almost every business operates. The opportunities are immense, but only for organizations that understand how much and how fast they need to change. For many companies, digital is a daunting challenge. However, as with any challenge, there are great rewards for those who manage to master the disruption.

The UAE Female Leaders Outlook shows that these top-level executives are ready and willing to accept digital opportunities. Digital-savvy organizations tend to perform better than others, and the results demonstrate that UAE female leaders are well-prepared for the digital future. Furthermore, they have internalized three of the main principles of the digital age: agility, speed to market and the need for constant innovation.

UAE female leaders express their openness to data analytics and have trust in the results. They are data-driven and make decisions based on facts. As far as customers are concerned, UAE female leaders seem to have a good understanding of the needs of digital consumer groups. This is probably why they rate the importance of cyber and data security so highly. They are also aware that communication skills in the new platform and/or network environment will be critical to success. As the worldwide economic power of female leaders rises — with female consumers driving about 70-80% of purchases and accounting for a global spend of an estimated $18 trillion in 2018⁴ — these findings are of particular significance.

The UAE’s female leaders seem to have a strong entrepreneurial approach regarding growth. They appear more pragmatic than their global counterparts. At the same time, UAE female leaders are open to innovative input and new business models, as well as alternative ways of doing business; they are turning to collaboration with startups and online platform providers in order to pursue growth.

Work environments will change dramatically over the next few years. Virtual workplaces will be common and AI will have a significant impact; coordination and review tasks will become central to many processes. UAE female leaders recognize the impact of these developments and see the necessity of hiring experts to drive these changes. They already sense the urgency of finding the right people. When asked about the inclusion of female leaders and greater diversity in the workplace, most UAE female leaders still think that pressure is needed before we can see greater gender equality in all levels of organizations. Nevertheless, half of the UAE’s female leaders expect their successor to be a woman.

“Companies have a duty to all stakeholders to mobilize their workforce to break down biases towards female leaders. We need to support, mentor and empower women.”

Peter Haugaard
Head of People, Performance & Culture
KPMG Lower Gulf Limited
Conclusions

The results of the UAE Female Leaders Outlook suggest that:

1. UAE female leaders understand the capabilities their companies will need to acquire and the strategic decisions to be made to achieve growth.

2. They have a thorough understanding of the strategic and operational requirements of the digital age, including a grasp of the needs of digital customer groups. Being data driven, they expect to see an increase in the use of predictive modeling and analytics in decision-making, and understand the importance of a robust cyber risk strategy.

3. They are comfortable with new technologies, trust data and are willing to invest in alliances/cooperation. In addition, they have the ability to quickly adjust to new developments.

4. They bring the necessary personal and professional expertise to succeed in a digital environment, focusing on networking and communication skills, and have a deep understanding of the qualities that help them thrive in leadership positions.
Demographics and methodology
Demographics
The data published in this report is based on an online survey of 699 female business leaders across 42 countries. There were 29 respondents in the United Arab Emirates. Six out of ten (58%) in the Emirates occupy an executive-level position such as a board member, CEO/chairwoman, C-level executive or vice president; the others included heads of department, business unit or functional heads, and founders. About half (49%) have been with their company for at least six years. Twenty-four percent are employed by companies with annual revenues greater than US$250mn. Twelve key industries are represented, with transport, logistics and leisure, banking, and business services representing the largest contingent, as shown in the chart on the following page.

Methodology
The survey was carried out as an online questionnaire which closely followed the questions contained in the KPMG 2018 Global CEO Outlook. The questionnaire, completed anonymously, was accessible from 6 March 2018 to 13 April 2018. The link was sent to selected female leaders around the world by Management Circle and KPMG member firms, including KPMG Lower Gulf Limited.
Demographics and methodology

Respondents by job title

- Board member: 10%
- CEO/chairwoman: 14%
- Other C-level executive: 3%
- Vice president: 24%
- Business unit or functional head: 21%
- Head of department: 10%
- Founder: 7%
- Other: 14%

Total: 29

Respondents by age

- 25-35: 31%
- 36-45: 24%
- 46-55: 7%
- 56 or more: 38%

Total: 29

Respondents by duration of affiliation

- 1-5: 51%
- 6-10: 21%
- >10: 28%

Respondents organization revenue

- Less than $250mn: 76%
- $250mn - $499mn: 7%
- $500mn - $999mn: 7%
- $1bn - $9.9bn: 10%
Respondents by sector

- Transport, logistics and leisure: 17%
- Banking: 14%
- Business services: 14%
- Other: 10%
- Real estate and infrastructure: 10%
- Asset management: 7%
- Media: 7%
- Chemicals, pharmaceuticals and life science: 3%
- Consumer and retail: 3%
- Energy and natural resources: 3%
- Industrial manufacturing: 3%
- Technology: 3%
- Telecommunications: 3%

Note: numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
About KPMG

KPMG is a global network of professional firms providing audit, tax and advisory services across a wide range of private, public and not-for-profit sectors. We operate in 154 countries and have about 200,000 people working in member firms around the world.

KPMG has been established in the UAE since 1973. We are proud of our reputation for delivering cutting-edge solutions and exceptional client value. With over 75 partners and directors leading 850 professionals across offices in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah, we work shoulder-to-shoulder with our clients, helping them solve their most complex business issues in support of their growth objectives.

Audit
High-quality, independent financial statement audits are essential to maintaining investor confidence.

Our audit professionals are committed to the public interest. They seek to challenge assumptions and unlock valuable insights based on a thorough understanding of an organization’s business and industry, and innovative audit methodologies and approaches.

Understanding the financial performance of any business must be placed in the context of strategic priorities, risk appetites and competitive positioning. Our technology-enabled audit approach applies extensive data analytics to provide the necessary evidence confirming that critical controls and disclosures uphold the highest level of integrity.

Management Consulting
Our high-capability teams offer expertise, deep industry and technical knowledge, and market-leading tools to deliver solutions across every business and industrial sector.

Our expert practitioners assist clients to make better decisions, reduce costs, enhance organizational effectiveness and develop appropriate technology strategies.

Risk Consulting
Our risk consulting practice combines the knowledge and expertise of over 100 partners, directors and professionals. We assist organizations transform risk and compliance efforts into competitive advantage by applying a risk lens to corporate strategy. This improves risk intelligence and decision making, protects financial and reputational assets, and enhances business value.

Deal Advisory
Our experienced investment professionals skilfully assess how opportunities to buy, sell, partner, fund or fix a company can add and preserve value. Our teams combine a global mind-set and local experience with deep sector knowledge and superior analytic tools to support clients.

From assisting to plan and implement strategic change to measurably increasing portfolio value, we deliver tangible results.

Tax
A business’s approach to tax is increasingly subject to public scrutiny and is now a major reputation driver. From company set-up to cross-border and transfer pricing solutions, we work with a wide range of national and multi-national organizations to deliver effective tax solutions. Our tax professionals combine international experience with local knowledge to provide leading-edge commercial tax strategies tailored to specific client needs.

Tax issues are constantly evolving. Changes in law, practice, or approach – in the UAE and globally – can have major ramifications on local and international organizations.