What is the legal driving age? And what are the rules for driving in Saudi Arabia?

The legal driving age in Saudi Arabia is 18 years old. The rules for driving in Saudi Arabia include:

1. All drivers must have a valid driving license issued by the Ministry of Interior.
2. The license must be renewed every three years.
3. The license must be carried at all times while driving.
4. All drivers must be of sound mind and body.
5. The driver must not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

From learning to drive to getting a license and buying a car — our experts have the answers for a generation of Saudi women eager to hit the road.
Women in Saudi Arabia now free to drive as Vision 2030 reforms begin to bear fruit

Independent Day

Women throughout Saudi Arabia waited for the stroke of midnight on Saturday, turned the keys in the ignition, fired up their engines — and hit the road to a bright new future.

It was the moment they had waited for since King Salman issued the royal decree on Sept. 23, 2017, to lift the driving ban on women. Just after midnight, Samah Algosbi grabbed the keys to her family’s 2018 Corvette C1 and drove out of the driveway of her beach-house in Alkhobar. “We are witnessing a history in the making as we look toward the dawn of a promising future,” said Algosbi, the first female board member of Ahmed Hamad Algosaibi & Bros. As a Saudi ese in Saudi Arabia, I am grateful for the women’s empowerment movement taking place. Today, I am honored to be sitting behind the wheel of change.”

Lina Almaeena, a member of the Saudi Shoura Council, also hit the road after midnight. “It feels very liberating,” she said about driving her mother’s Lexus. Almaeena, also the founder and director of Jeddah United Sports Co., had exchanged her U.S. license for a Saudi one. “I am thrilled!” Sarah Alwassia, 35, a nutritionist in Jeddah, told Arab News. “I learned how to drive 18 years ago in the States where I got my driving license. I can’t believe that the day to drive in my own homeland has come.”

Alwassia obtained her first American license in 2000, when she was 18, and had exchanged for a Saudi license on June 6 in Jeddah. “This explained that she is a mother, and this change provides comfort for her and her family. It also comes with advantages such as taking quick, smart actions in emergencies, and economic benefits such as saving money instead of using public transport when she needs to run errands. “I will be driving my car for personal and picking them up in comfort and privacy,” she said.

Many women and men said the day would change their lives. “Independence is a huge thing for me,” Alwassia said. “Driving is one small part of it. I am very optimistic about the change that our loving country has made.”

Alwassia applauds the efforts the country has made to support women. “I am confident that driving in the beginning will be pleasant, since our country has made all of the efforts to support women and to protect them. “I think our society was looking forward to this change, and I am sure the majority will adopt fast. “I feel this is our country that everybody to make this transition pleasant and fruitful for all Saudi women,” she added.

Today is the day my high-school dream becomes reality.

HEN WE WITNESS HISTORY IN THE MAKING… TODAY, I AM HONORED TO BE SITTING BEHIND THE WHEEL OF CHANGE. A. ALMAEENA, A MEMBER OF THE SAUDI SHOURA COUNCIL

Saudia Women Can Drive

Inside our cover: The Top 10 FAQs about women driving answered

INSIDE

We are witnessing history in the making as we look toward the dawn of a promising future.

Lina Almaeena

Saudi Arabia is transforming fast. As a Saudi ese in Saudi Arabia, I am grateful for the women’s empowerment movement… today, I am honored to be sitting behind the wheel of change. That same year, on Dec. 2, I was appointed as editor-in-chief of the Saudi Gazette during my high-school years, I wrote an article entitled “Can dreams be true?” It was all about the things I desired to dream of in Saudi Arabia, like cruising in my car on Tablia Street, or going to Al-Shindad and Al-Ahli football matches, and having equal opportunities to work as a woman in whatever field I desired. All those things seemed impossible at the time, and I felt they could never happen during my lifetime as a woman, and I set sights on it.

When I graduated from high school, my father and mother sent me to study with my cousin at the University of New Mexico, majoring in political science, and later communications as there were no job opportunities whatsoever for women in politics. In 2006, I received my B.A. from George Mason University, and joined Lambda Pi Eta, the National Communication Association’s official honor society.

Eventually, I returned home, and got married. Dealing with new motherhood challenges, I needed a counterbalance in my life, and I got an opportunity to work as a freelancer in the field of advertising. This has been my life since then. I have been the founder and director of Jeddah United Sports Co., an NGO that works on empowering women and youth. I believe that sports can be a tool to promote the health and health industry. Jeddah United also provides support to any woman who wants to enjoy riding. For sports, I wonder if we are not missing an opportunity to make a difference. I am very optimistic about the change that our loving country has made. A huge thing for me is that our country has made all of the efforts to support women and to protect them.

I think our society was looking forward to this change, and I am sure the majority will adopt fast. “I feel this is our country that anybody should be able to drive in our own home-town.”

Samah Algosbi

It’s not a train that we have to catch, but rather a futuristic hyperloop ride that we should strive to enjoy.

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Another mission accomplished

The end of a ban on women driving crowns a year of dramatic achievements since Mohammed bin Salman’s appointment

**TIMELINE**

**June 21, 2017:** King Salman appoints Mohammad bin Salman as crown prince of Saudi Arabia.

**Sept. 26, 2017:** Saudi Arabia opens up the stock market to women driving.

**Oct. 19, 2017:** Princess Reema bint Bandar becomes first Saudi woman to be appointed head of a sports federation.

**Oct. 24, 2017:** Speaking at a Future Investment Initiative conference in Riyadh, the crown prince pledges a reform to moderate Islam and women’s right to cut hair.

**March 8, 2018:** In a historic move, Saudi Arabia’s first woman to be appointed head of a sports federation.

**March 9, 2018:** The crown prince orders lifting of decades-long ban on women driving.

**April 28, 2018:** The Kingdom launches #DriveWithHer, its first multi-Billion entertainment, sport and cultural city in Riyadh.

**June 6, 2018:** Saudi Arabia’s General Directorate of Traffic begins issuing driver’s license to women.

**June 24, 2018:** Saudi women are allowed to drive on #DriveWithHer.

**April 7, 2019:** Saudi Arabia’s King Salman launches the entertainment sector.

**April 9, 2019:** During the crown prince’s visit to France, Riyadh and Paris sign an agreement to collaborate on developing cultural, entertainment, sport and cultural city in Riyadh.

A crackdown on corruption, guarantees of women’s rights, an overhaul of the entertainment sector and a shake-up of the economy – in the past year, Saudi Arabia has witnessed extraordinary changes.

The bold reforms, introduced in the 12 months since Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman took the post last June 21, have made headlines locally and globally.

The first signs of social transformation in the Kingdom came on Sept. 26, 2017, with a royal decree lifting the decades-long ban on women driving. Less than a month later, Princess Reema bint Bandar became the first Saudi woman to be appointed head of a sports federation.

Then, last November, Saudi Arabia initiated unprecedented anti-corruption measures that included princes, government officials and major business owners among its targets. The Kingdom so far has recovered more than $100 billion in its crackdown, and, on a clear signal that those who engage in corrupt business practices will face prosecution.

Corruption was not the only obstacle facing the crown prince, who made clear that embracing moderate Islam is the way forward. “We are returning to a Wahhabi school of thought,” bin Salman said in the speech that touched on women’s freedom.

By the beginning of 2018 brought a new era. The arrest of a number of high-profile officials, including princes, was seen as a warning to the private sector and the international community that the days of favoritism, cronyism and wasteful spending were over.

From top: Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince; Donald Trump, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman meets British Prime Minister Theresa May.

By May 4, 2018, the crown prince announced the creation of a super committee to combat corruption and order the arrest of a number of princes and businessmen.

So from all of us here at Arab News to all women in Saudi Arabia, to all women in the world, to all those who believe that the road forward is one where women are valued, respected and treated with the respect they deserve: "Happy Women’s Day!"
As the clock struck 12 at midnight, the decade-old ban on women driving was lifted in the Kingdom. What was unimaginable a few years ago has now become a reality.

Several women with foreign licenses have already obtained Saudi driving licenses and those who do not know how to drive are making full use of the infrastructure set in place to help them learn.

From today onward, women behind the wheel will be a common sight on the Kingdom’s roads. People should also prepare themselves to see women revving motorcycles as well.

Oeping for the two-wheelers gives many women a sense of empowerment. Alia Abu Dhuhair, a Saudi banker from Tabuk, told Arab News how it was an amazing experience.

Both Saudi bike lover agree that Harley-Davidson motorcycles are the best in the world. As a matter of fact, Harley-Davidson is the dream of every person passionate about motorbikes.

The brand is also very popular here in Saudi Arabia. Harley-Davidson is special because of its unique design, luxury and history, said Alin Dhahar.

Both believe that their parents might not encourage them to ride motorbikes mainly because of safety concerns. Alin Dhahar said: “My parents are very protective and I do not think they will be supportive of the idea. They may feel uneasy because of the stories we hear about accidents involving motorbikes.

“I believe Saudi women will prove to be good motorcycle riders because they drive cautiously and strictly follow traffic rules,” she added.

In Saudi Arabia and many other countries, it is mandatory to have a license to ride a bike. Like elsewhere, there are training institutes in the Kingdom.

Wael bin Huraib, director of the Bikers Skill Institute, told Arab News about the institute and what programs it offers to women.

“We train people who are passionate about biking. All of our instructors are well experienced and certified,” he said.

The Riyadh-based Bikers Skill Institute is considered the first institute to conduct structured motorbike training in Saudi Arabia.

Established in 2011, the institute mainly focuses on safety through skills and other courses, such as the Basic Motorcycle Riding, Smart Riding, Top Gun, Motorcycle Tournaments, Off-Road Trainings and Bike Motorcycle Schools.

It not only offers training to males but has also designed special courses for women.

Huraib said: “The female section is well equipped and has female trainers. The courses comply with international standards and generally consist of two parts: theory and field training.”

Harley-Davidson has been operating in Saudi Arabia since 2004. Initially, it started operations from Riyadh but over time it has expanded to other cities such as Jeddah and Alhudair.

The CEO of Harley-Davidson in Saudi Arabia, Mishal Al-Moalaq, said: “We care about the safety of our clients so we focus on the safety features of our motorcycles. These days, the number of women visiting our store has increased. We have brought in feminine colors that will be appreciated more by females. A motorcycle is just like a car. Its features and engine have nothing to do with genders. Women can drive all kinds of Harley-Davidson motorcycle like their male counterparts.”

Harley-Davidson is famous for organizing events like motorcycle rallies, especially for its motorcycles. When asked about the possibility of organizing such an event in the Kingdom, he said: “In the near future, we might consider a special event for females and hire female instructors and trainers in the sales department. We use to have female employees in the female accessories section. We are planning to focus on that more.”

“Today the store does not only carry motorcycles but also accessories, souvenirs and clothes for females so we are used to seeing females in the store buying things from us.”

The Saudi Driving School in Princess Noura University also offers a motorbike driver’s license. In its website says, the requirements for obtaining a motorbike license are the same for the male and female. The candidate must be 16 or older, unlike the private driver’s license, where the applicant must be 18 or older.

To obtain a motorcycle driver’s license, the applicant also needs to bring written permission from a guardian if he is under 18, along with official documents like IDs and photos.

We are here to show them that it is not that difficult, it is something everybody can do and the basics are not that difficult. We are here to give them a real-life driving experience,” Chehade added.

Rahaf Aseeri, a participant, said: “It was a lovely experience. I learned how to use the brakes and other things. I learned things I never knew before. It was a great event and I recommend a lot from it.”

Not just four-wheelers, women want to vroom ahead on two-wheelers

Training institutes in Saudi Arabia offer lessons in how to ride motorbikes

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**ENCOURAGEMENT**

*Have faith and drive, women told*

**Women on the Go**

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**Women Chahade, the event organiser, said: “This program is really important. Our message is for females as it is their first time to drive and we are here to teach them the Arts of driving.”**

He said he sometimes knowing the basics is more important than driving itself as it makes things easier at a later stage.

“He took a long time to prepare the program, studying how it can have an impact on people. We are covering topics from mechanics to safety, using special simulators, and the basics of knowing how to park a car.”

He said that the program was created to encourage women to learn how to drive.

“We created it for women who think they might not be able to drive or obtain a license, who are questioning if they are ready to go take the required course — wondering if it is the right time.”

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**WOMEN VIEWS**

**Saudi Arabia** is undergoing a huge social and economic transformation. Granting women the right to drive is part of the drive to ensure sustainable economic development.

Women in the Kingdom are pretty excited by this decision. Arab News spoke to four women of different age groups with different educational backgrounds to gauge their views on this issue. "I can finally drive," she enhancement of quality of life, I believe that women's society is now ready for this change. This is more than enough. The authorities have laid the groundwork for the effective implementation of this decision by organizing awareness campaigns on women driving and workshops to educate women about different aspects of driving and maintenance of vehicles etc. in place to prevent harassment. Insurance companies are also offering discounts for women.

There arelocationalights options for cars as well. Now only one thing is left: Saudi women driving in Saudi Arabia.

"I believe that women are ready. The majority of men support their female relatives in this regard. The society is ready in supporting this idea. That means we, women, should start driving at the earliest. In my opinion, it's a right thing to do and it's the only way to get rid of discrimination and gender roles."

"I am ready, say many."

We are part of the drive to ensure that women have the right to drive is part of the development of our country. I believe women aged 35 and above will be the first to start driving immediately while the younger ones are likely to follow suit."

"My family supports me. I will wait for some time before I start."

"We are ready to drive."

WOMEN VIEWS

**Sh_fh Ali Khamis**

Several Shoura members, diplomats and rights activists have hailed the landmark decision allowing women to drive, which will cut accidents, support women drivers, and boost job growth in the Kingdom.

"We will empower women and also change the omnipresent attitude of the country," said Mohammed Al-Khunaizi, a member of the Shoura Council.

Expressing his happiness over this historic moment, Al-Khunaizi told Arab News that "the number of traffic accidents in the country today exceeds one million." "The Kingdom will save around SR1 billion and SR2 billion annually after phasing out foreign drivers," said the Shoura member, while calling the day (June 24) "the biggest day in the history of the Kingdom." He said that "the female driving will help create more and diverse job opportunities for women, a move which is in line with the Saudi Vision 2030." In fact, a large number of Saudi women, as far as I know, have decided to drop their kids to schools, go to supermarkets and visit government offices themselves, ensuring more cohesion, security and dignity for women," added Al-Khunaizi.

"It is indeed a courageous step of the Saudi government and its institutions," said the Shoura member while referring to the support extended by the Shoura Council to this decision.

Commenting the decision, which is like history in the making before our eyes, German ambassador Dieter W. Haller said: "June 24 marks another important step on Saudi Arabia's way to modernity. It helps the families and it will boost the Saudi economy... and we welcome it and commend the Saudi leadership for this wise decision."

"I am very proud to witness this historic moment in the Kingdom," said Luca Ferrati, Italian ambassador. He said women driving is a major milestone in the implementation of "the economic and social transformation plan wide enough covered by King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman." The Italian envoy, while referring to the reforms in the Kingdom, said: "Women empowerment is a crucial step toward a more inclusive society and a balanced economic growth." "I believe that women are ready. The majority of men support their female relatives in this regard. The society is ready in supporting this idea. That means we, women, should start driving at the earliest. I prefer to let my daughters wait for some time." Furthermore, the historic decision was bestowed last year, but the implementation took time.

"I prefer to start driving after a few months. The reason for this delay is that I don't have enough knowledge about car maintenance. However, if I wait some time, I will learn from other women and men and I will teach them. Furthermore, the historic decision was bestowed last year, but the implementation took time.

"I wish to start driving after some months."

**SUHA AL-ABDULLAH**

"I can finally drive. It will enhance mobility and ease pressure on family members. Boosting mobility and ease pressure on family members. Most employees, at least in the public sector, accept the racial norm, implying that driving one's wife is a legitimate reason not to be present at work," he added. "This makes it onerous for men to do any errands, especially helping the women working in health and banking sectors.

"Women driving on their own." In my opinion, it's a right thing to do and it's the only way to get rid of discrimination and gender roles."

"The Saudi government and its institutions have multiplied efforts to educate women on traffic regulations and train them to drive."

"The lifting of the ban on women driving marks a milestone for women in the Kingdom who have had to rely on drivers, male relatives, taxis and ride-hailing services to get to work, go shopping and simply move around."

**WOMEN VIEWS**

"We invite all Saudi women to join Najm as this is the beginning of a new chapter in their lives. We will support them in every possible way to achieve this milestone."

"The Kingdom likely to save between SR9bn and SR12bn annually after phasing out foreign drivers."

**Vesan 2030**

Saudi Arabia has made significant progress in terms of women empowerment, especially in the areas of education and employment. However, the law banning women from driving has been a controversial issue in the Kingdom for decades. The decision to lift the ban on women driving is a significant step in the right direction. It will empower women and also change the omnipresent attitude of the country.

"We are ready, say female accident inspectors."

We are ready, say female accident inspectors. A group of 40 Saham women on Sunday began their careers as car accident inspectors in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dam- mam as the ban on women driving was lifted. Private insurance company Saham, in partnership with the General Depart- ment of Traffic, has hired 40 women and provided them with training to respond to road accidents involving female drivers.

Inspector Anna Abdul Aziz Al-Kha- niz, who was hired by Saham as a female accident inspector, said: "As a Saudi woman, we can play a vital role in managing and responding to ac- cidents, supporting women drivers, and contributing to raising awareness about traffic safety."

Inspector Maham Damen from Dam- mam was enthusiastic about her new role. She said: "I hope to make the Kingdom a safer place for women."

"I am ready, say many."

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