

The Report on the State of Culture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2024

Cultural Impact



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“ The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes in the importance of culture as a fundamental pillar in building communities, strengthening national identity and driving economic and social growth. ”

Bader bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al Saud
Minister of Culture



Acknowledgment

A broad range of stakeholders involved in cultural affairs collaborated to create the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's sixth edition of the State of Culture Report 2024. Together with contributions from the private sector and nonprofit organizations, it represents the combined efforts of numerous government agencies and ministries.

To effectively monitor cultural changes, document accomplishments, and confidently and competently handle challenges, this collaboration has helped build a strong foundation for improving the report's content quality.

As we appreciate this commitment, we would like to express our gratitude to everyone who shared their efforts, skills, and knowledge, helping to shape Saudi Arabia's rich cultural landscape and emphasizing its role in bolstering the country's economy, upholding social values and fostering national unity.



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Executive Summary

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- **Creativity and Cultural Production**
- **Knowledge and Skills**
- **Cultural Participation**
- **Creative Economy**
- **Cultural Impact**



Management and Conservation

The introduction of technology-driven initiatives to support Arabic persisted in 2024. The creation of the "Arabic AI Center" which focuses on linguistic modeling and automated processing, the "Balsam Index," which assesses and measures Arabic AI models, the "Falak" platform for linguistic corpora, and the "Siwar" platform for digital dictionaries were some of the most noteworthy initiatives. Several projects aimed at researching and tracking the current state of the Arabic language were also part of the efforts to serve it. The Arabic Language Index and the Arab Translation Observatory were the two most notable of these. Alongside the ongoing institutional efforts in translation and Arabization, the year also saw the publication of several specialized dictionaries. In 2024, 743 books were translated into and out of Arabic due to the "Tarjim" initiative, representing a 25% increase over the 2023 translation output. The Council of Ministers resolution regarding the governance of official document translation, the merger of the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language and the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Center for Language Planning and Policies, and the publication of a guiding framework for children's linguistic rights were among the essential linguistic laws and policies.

The National Plan for Collecting, Documenting, Archiving, and Managing Cultural Heritage Assets and Elements was announced during the year, marking a significant advancement in the field of cultural heritage documentation and preservation. The goal of this project is to create a framework that encourages coordination and collaboration between numerous pertinent organizations. Significant progress was made in the documentation of tangible heritage, as evidenced by the addition of 24 sites to the National Register of Industrial Heritage, over 23,000 sites to the National Urban Heritage Register, and 470 sites to the National Antiquities Register. Additionally, Saudi Arabia added four cultural components—the Simsimiyya (a traditional string instrument), Arabic coffee, Henna, and the Taif Rose—to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. There are now eight Saudi sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List, following the addition of the Cultural Landscape of Al-Faw Archaeological Area. Ongoing efforts in the field of archaeological excavation produced essential findings in several regions of the Kingdom. The discovery of a Bronze Age village in Khaybar Governorate was one of the most well-known finds. With the introduction

of the Cultural Insurance product by the Ministry of Culture and the Insurance Authority, the year also saw significant advancements in efforts to preserve tangible heritage. The goal of this program is to help owners of historic and heritage structures protect and preserve them.

It is still challenging to provide a thorough and cumulative assessment of the cultural infrastructure due to the persistent lack of reliable data on cultural facilities, particularly as efforts to survey, license, and develop theaters, museums, and libraries continue. According to the report, the expansion of commercial theaters slowed for the second year in a row. There are now 64 theaters, up from 63 in 2023, as three new ones opened and others closed. In the meantime, there are still no movie theaters in the Al-Baha, Najran, or Al-Jouf provinces. Despite this slowdown, the year saw the opening of the Performing Arts Center in Historic Jeddah and the House of Cinema (CineHouse), which is devoted to showing independent films in Riyadh City. In addition, two artisan houses were established in the Riyadh and Jazan provinces, as well as five public libraries (Culture Houses) in Dammam, Ahad Rafidah, Sakaka, Hail, and Buraydah.

The most notable organizational development this year was the release of regulatory frameworks for cultural commissions, which marked the beginning of a stable phase after years of rigorous regulatory work. Regarding empowerment and support, the report emphasized noteworthy advancements in cultural investment and funding, indicating increased private sector involvement in fostering creativity and culture. The creation of an investment fund to support the film industry and the introduction of the Cultural Fund's financing product in partnership with multiple local banks were the most important of these. The Ministry of Culture launched the first cycle of the Research Grants Program. It announced the research priorities for the cultural sector as part of its efforts to support creativity and culture. The program's goal is to promote intellectual and scientific output in areas that have a knowledge-based and practical impact on the cultural sector. The pace of support programs remained consistent, with 41 cultural projects receiving about 195 million Saudi Riyals in financial support from the Cultural Fund in 2024, more than the number of projects supported in the two years prior. More than 600 people and organizations benefited from the 7,826,875 Saudi Riyals in total value of cultural awards and competitions provided by different sector stakeholders.



Creativity and Cultural Production

For the second consecutive year, Saudi authors' literary output declined in 2024, with 509 books published compared to 523 in 2023. This decline follows the 2022 peak in literary production. It aligns with structural shifts in the literary publishing landscape in recent years, including fewer publications by literary clubs and fewer external publications. Despite this general decline, the year saw a significant increase in novel production, with 218 titles produced, the most in the previous five years.

The results of programs promoting cultural production also improved during the year. For example, the "Tarjim" (Translate) initiative helped translate 734 books, including 590 that were translated from other languages into Arabic. In addition, there were more target languages available than in prior years. In addition to expanding its three tracks, the "Digital Publishing Program" saw a 124% increase in publishing figures over the previous year and a rise in the number of works published on digital platforms compared to previous years.

With 83 films made in 2024 compared to 102 in 2023, the film industry saw a 19% drop in production levels. While the number of feature-length films stayed relatively stable at 22, the number of short films significantly decreased, primarily contributing to this decline. In the meantime, the year saw encouraging developments in the theater and performing arts industry, including the entry of new players and the diversification of production entities. Despite a decrease in the overall number of theatrical performances, these positive trends were mirrored in the rise in the number of productions put on by actors from outside of significant institutions, such as associations, private companies, and non-profit groups. As catalysts and facilitators of artistic and cultural production, cultural festivals were important throughout the year. In addition to the sixth Gulf Theater Festival for universities and higher education institutions in the GCC, which Taif University hosted, the fourteenth edition of the Gulf Theater Festival was held in Riyadh city following a ten-year break. With 281 performances spread across eight venues in Asir's cities and villages, the third edition of the Qemam International Festival for Mountain Performing Arts took place in the area. According to the report, there were 176 art exhibitions in the visual arts sector in 2024. These exhibitions featured a variety of styles, such as installation art, light art, digital and industrial arts, Arabic calligraphy,

sculpture, and contemporary art, with the majority of them showcasing pictorial fine art. Additionally, Riyadh Metro stations opened that year, demonstrating a growing interest in incorporating architectural and cultural identity into the design of public spaces. One example of this is the Qasr Al-Hukm station, which was designed with inspiration from the King Salman Charter for Architecture and Urbanism.

A growing interest in the scholarly and research aspects of culture was noted in the report. It documented 22 research papers that were funded by the Ministry of Culture grant programs and published in peer-reviewed academic journals. Two of these were supported by grants aimed at recording Saudi art history, and twenty were a part of the Arabic Poetry Grant. Academic publishing and research output in cultural fields increased both qualitatively and quantitatively. Although the majority of research efforts were still focused on language and literature, the report observed a rise in activity in fields like film, digital culture and intangible heritage, fashion and jewelry that have historically had lower levels of research engagement.

There were encouraging indications of progress despite the report's conclusions regarding the ongoing gender disparity in cultural production. For the first time, the percentage of female translators surpassed that of male translators, with women making up 40% of literary works and 52% of those involved in the "Tarjim" (Translate) initiative. Additionally, the percentage of women who publish research in cultural fields increased by 3%, to 36% of all research output. This illustrates the continuous need to expand women's access to meaningful cultural and creative contributions.

According to the creativity index, national cultural awards in 2024 were distributed across a variety of creative fields, with roughly 640 winners from institutions and individuals across 13 cultural fields. Saudis excelled in nine different fields on the international scene, winning the Kingdom 156 international honors, most of them in architectural and design arts.



Knowledge and Skills

The most notable aspect of 2024 was the ongoing strategic cooperation between education and culture. Alongside a discernible increase in teacher preparation for arts education, efforts to incorporate culture and the arts into curricula and activities continued. The Qualifying Program for Kindergarten Teachers for Musical Arts Training now has 12,115 kindergarten female teachers, a 33% increase over the previous year. Additionally, 100 male and female teachers were sent overseas to pursue master's degrees in Chinese language, and 37 male teachers were the target of specialized summer culinary arts programs.

The pace and variety of extracurricular activities increased as well, with a persistent focus on identifying talents early in life. With about 470,000 male and female students taking part in its second edition after it was expanded to include lower elementary grades, the Cultural Skills Competition continues to be the most notable instrument in furthering this strategy. Compared to other fields, the performing arts and theater had the highest percentage of new talent discoveries.

The number of departments and programs devoted to culture and the arts in higher education has notably increased. The opening of King Saud University's College of Arts, the Kingdom's first specialized college in this field, was the most important development. Additionally, new graduate and undergraduate programs were introduced, including those in intellectual property, museum studies, manuscript sciences, and playwriting and musical composition. These programs were created through collaborations between academic institutions, cultural bodies, and organizations.

This occurred concurrently with the ongoing Cultural Scholarship Program, which by the end of 2024 had awarded scholarships to 568 students, including 115 this year. In general, the most significant percentage of scholarship students had a culinary arts specialty, followed by a filmmaking specialty and an architectural arts specialty.

Except for architectural arts and filmmaking, where the percentage of male and female students was almost equal, females accounted for 60% of all students. While females were completely absent from the music specialization, the theater specialization had a higher percentage of male students. A

similar gender gap was noted in the 1,769 male and female students who were sent overseas to study cultural disciplines through the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Scholarship Program, with 62% of the recipients being female. Relative stability in the number of trainees was the general trend in cultural training. Twenty-six thousand seventeen trainees benefited from Cultural Commissions' programs, similar to 2023.

Despite persistent inequalities in the distribution of training opportunities, there was a noticeable improvement in the geographic expansion of training coverage, which reached all administrative provinces of Saudi Arabia. Only one training program was held in each of the Al-Jouf, Najran, and Al-Baha provinces, with nearly half of the programs concentrated in the Riyadh province.

A total of 1,003 training programs were provided throughout the year by a variety of private and non-profit cultural centers and institutions, whose contributions were also documented in the report.

With 365 programs, the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts was ranked first, followed by the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language (195 programs), the Misk Art Institute, and the Royal Institute of Traditional Arts (WRTH). The majority of the programs focused on music and visual arts. The report also highlighted licensing data from the Abde'a platform and tracked regulatory developments in cultural training. In addition to 72 licenses approving training programs and 33 licenses for program activation, 120 licenses had been granted to training institutions by the end of 2024. More than 48% of all licensed programs were in the culinary arts sector, with music and visual arts programs ranking second and third, respectively.



Cultural Participation

According to the Cultural Participation Chapter, levels of participation in cultural events remained steady throughout 2024. The Cultural Participation Survey in its sixth wave showed that 69% of people participated in at least one cultural activity. The results of the survey indicated that the growth rates of various activities varied. The most significant annual increase between 2023 and 2024 was 19.6% for art exhibition visits, followed by 17.7% for museum visits. On the other hand, after a notable increase in 2023, the growth in theater attendance slowed, and attendance at various events, including literary gatherings, poetry evenings, and concerts, slightly decreased.

The findings also showed that participation rates were still balanced across demographic groups, especially when it came to active participation rates between genders. 26% of the female respondents had engaged in a cultural activity more than six times, the same as the male respondents.

Nonetheless, the most significant determinant of recurring attendance was income, with higher income levels being associated with higher levels of participation. This emphasizes how economic factors continue to influence cultural engagement and how important it is to make sure that cultural opportunities are open to and accessible to all societal segments.

Among the general trends shaping cultural participation in 2024 was the steady rise in domestic tourism, which increasingly incorporated cultural activities. Notably, natural heritage and environmental experiences showed the highest growth compared to other activities, such as attending cultural festivals or visiting museums and art exhibitions. This variance reflects regional variations in cultural appeal as well as a distinct separation between cultural practices in the residents' home cities and those pursued while traveling. At the level of social participation, the chapter observed a notable increase in the number of non-profit cultural organizations being established; 34 new organizations were established in 2024, bringing the total to 140, which is seven times the number prior to 2020. This growth is still not balanced across sectors, though. While fields like museums, music, translation, and fashion did not see any new

organizations and still only make up a small portion of the total, heritage and literature saw the most significant expansion, underscoring the need for focused assistance and incentives. Strong support and empowerment for amateur cultural activities are reflected in the chapter's observation of the ongoing and rapid growth of cultural amateur clubs. In 2024, 381 amateur clubs were formed, nearly double the number formed in 2021 and 2023. This expansion encompassed all cultural sectors, unlike non-profit organizations. Despite this remarkable growth, population density and geographic distribution remain out of sync. Below-average participation rates were noted in provinces like Makkah, Al-Madinah, and Asir.

The chapter concluded by presenting several significant public cultural events, such as festivals and exhibitions, which, despite their diversity, were primarily located in major cities like Riyadh and Jeddah. Festivals and exhibitions of culinary arts were an exception, exhibiting a broader geographic reach. A summary of specialized cultural events, including symposia, scientific conferences, and cultural forums, was also included in the chapter. Despite drawing smaller audiences, these demonstrate the scholarly and intellectual involvement of experts in the culture landscape.



Creative Economy

As global trends have redefined culture as an independent economic contributor, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's cultural sector has experienced qualitative changes. The National Strategy for Culture has made fostering economic growth a primary objective in recognition of this dimension. Due to the intricate and interconnected nature of the industry, determining the economic worth of culture remains challenging. The conceptual and methodological difficulties in assessing the economic impact of culture are the primary focus of this chapter, which also highlights three important indicators: the GDP contribution of the cultural sector, employment in the cultural sector, and cultural imports and exports.

I: Culture's Contribution to GDP

Because cultural activities overlap with other productive sectors, it is not easy to classify the contribution of culture to GDP. No updated data is available after 2021, when the sector contributed 1.49% of non-oil GDP, despite the creation of a national classification for cultural activities and the creation of a satellite account for culture through cooperation between the General Authority for Statistics and the Ministry of Culture. The General Authority for Statistics made extensive revisions to the GDP calculation methodology, including expanding the classifications of economic activities and changing the base year. These changes have caused a temporary delay in the release of detailed data on sub-sectors, including culture, resulting in a lack of recent data.

II: Employment in the Cultural Sector

High employment rates in the cultural sector are a defining feature of its economic contribution globally. However, there are methodological issues with defining who is considered a "cultural worker." According to national data, the Kingdom's cultural sector employs no more than 1.75% of the labor force, which is significantly lower than the global average of 6%. The lack of systematic tracking of independent cultural work, a prominent feature of the sector, and the exclusion of people in non-cultural roles within cultural institutions are linked to this disparity.

III: Cultural Exports and Imports

Despite being crucial for evaluating the sector's integration into the global economy, no data on cultural trade in the Kingdom has been released since the 2019 State of Culture Report. The lack of a single national definition of what qualifies as a cultural product or service that can be imported or exported, as well as the limited alignment between locally used trade classifications and cultural activities, are the primary causes of this issue. To improve the integration of culture into the national economy in line with Saudi Vision 2030, the chapter ends with a call for the development of precise statistical tools that take into account the sector's distinctive features and aid in the formulation of cultural policies. Data-driven cultural policies that support the Vision's objectives are made possible by developing tools to track independent and seasonal cultural work, broadening the cultural occupational classification to reflect the diversity of the sector, and establishing an index to track cultural trade based on matching trade classifications with cultural activities through institutional coordination among pertinent entities.



Cultural Impact

This chapter marks the end of five years of significant change in Saudi Arabia's cultural sector, a period during which the Kingdom witnessed unprecedented institutional support for culture as a productive sector that contributes to overall development and as a pillar of national identity. The chapter aims to highlight the importance of assessing cultural impact as a strategic tool for guiding policies, directing investments, and improving the quality of cultural interventions.

The definition of "impact" as a change brought about by a particular intervention, which distinguishes it from performance assessment and evaluation, forms the basis of the chapter. The long-time horizon needed for real impact to manifest and the difficulty of demonstrating causal relationships between interventions and outcomes are just two of the theoretical and practical issues it tackles in impact assessment.

The chapter gives particular attention to this complexity because culture is distinct and defies standard quantitative measurement methods. Culture is more than just the material world; it is intangible and symbolic, intricately woven into everyday existence, and plays a significant role in forming social cohesiveness, identity, and belonging.

Finding a balance between "culture for its own sake" and "culture for broader purposes," as well as between immediate economic impact and long-term symbolic value, is a significant challenge.

Three main scales for assessing cultural impact are presented in this chapter:

1. Direct economic impact, as determined by quantitative metrics like GDP contribution and the number of cultural jobs.
2. Indirect economic impact, as demonstrated by the growth of industries like education, tourism, and creativity.
3. Broader cultural impact, as manifested by the improvement of social well-being, identity, and belonging; quantified using qualitative and analytical methods such as audience experiences and ethnographic research.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, the chapter emphasizes the tremendous potential for Saudi Arabia's cultural industry, which can be attributed to government support, accumulated expertise, and increasing organizational maturity.

It highlights how government agencies, cultural organizations, and entrepreneurs must work together to create a strong ecosystem that positions culture as a significant force behind development and a crucial component of realizing Saudi Vision 2030.

The chapter concludes by urging the creation of a thorough national framework for managing cultural impact, one that incorporates proactive planning and post-intervention evaluation in addition to assessment.

This calls for overcoming several challenges, chief among them being the scarcity of data, the lack of standardized methodological frameworks, the lack of cross-sector integration, and the requirement to improve technological and human capabilities.



Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's cultural sector started to take shape within a more structured and well-defined vision after years of empowerment and foundation, starting with the creation of the Ministry of Culture in 2018 and the National Culture Strategy in 2019. These turning points signaled the beginning of a transforming process that reshaped the cultural landscape, its fields, and its functions, establishing culture as an essential component of Saudi Vision 2030's goals. The National Culture Strategy's pillars—culture as a source of national pride and international engagement, culture as a catalyst for economic growth, and culture as a tool to foster creativity and community involvement—all reflect this change. Culture has evolved into a dynamic force for development, a foundation of the national economy, and a conduit for international communication. It is no longer just a reflection of identity. Within the characteristics of this change is a narrative that merits recording and examination—a narrative of a sector reshaping, expanding, and reestablishing itself on new pillars. The State of Culture Report's sixth edition is essentially an effort to help tell this story by documenting the changes in the cultural sector and showcasing both its strengths and weaknesses as well as its opportunities and potential. The need to develop methodological tools that can assess cultural impact and capture its economic, social, and symbolic dimensions is evident at a time when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's cultural sector is transitioning toward institutional maturity and stability, and as awareness of the significance of incorporating culture into national development pathways grows. To highlight the importance of developing a thorough evaluation framework based on dependable reference data and unambiguous indicators, as well as to guide cultural initiatives, policies, and interventions and optimize their long-term impact, the theme of "Cultural Impact" was selected for this edition of the State of Culture Report.

An Overview of 2024

There were indications of stability in 2024, particularly in two significant facets of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's cultural landscape. The first was cultural participation, with 69% of people attending cultural events for the second year in a row after a sharp increase following the pandemic. This consistency may signify the beginning of a balanced phase wherein cultural momentum transitions towards a more ingrained role in everyday cultural conduct and becomes less responsive to abrupt changes.



The cultural sector's organizational movement also showed signs of stability. After years of intense foundational work, the release of regulatory frameworks for cultural Commissions this year marked a significant step toward a more mature phase. These legislative actions contributed to the establishment of methodological procedures for heritage preservation and the promotion of the Arabic language. Prominent institutional initiatives like the "Arabic Language Index" and the "The Arabic Observatory of Translation," as well as documentation and archiving projects for cultural heritage and creative output, reflected this. Additionally, efforts were made to improve the Arabic language's technological infrastructure, which included the creation of the "Arabic AI Center," which is devoted to Arabic language modeling and automated processing. The year also saw ongoing strategic cooperation between the educational and cultural sectors, contributing to the firm base that supports the cultural landscape, which may have the most profound impact in the long run. The first arts-focused college was established, teachers were trained in arts education, more students enrolled in scholarship programs in cultural fields, and multiple postgraduate programs in museum studies, manuscript sciences, and intellectual property rights were started. All of these programs promise a more dynamic and empowering cultural environment and show a growing commitment to training specialized talent for the cultural labor market. The report monitored the rise in the number

of nonprofit cultural organizations and amateur cultural clubs because community involvement is the best way to demonstrate the vitality of the cultural sector and because cultural activity is inextricably linked to its surroundings and context. There were 700 amateur clubs and 140 nonprofit organizations overall this year, a significant increase. These entities' sectoral and geographic distributions show that grassroots cultural activity is becoming more varied, adaptable, and pervasive, setting it apart from the institutional elements of the cultural scene, which the report repeatedly identified as being geographically concentrated. Broader initiatives to empower and advance culture and creativity through business accelerators, incubators, and artist residencies further support this growth. The quantity, quality, and distribution of the data from these initiatives were all comparatively stable. This year also saw the beginning of more active private sector involvement through targeted initiatives, like the introduction of a cultural financing product in collaboration with multiple local banks and the launch of an investment fund for the film industry—developments that indicate a growing and diversified base of funding and support for the arts. Additionally, the report revealed the impact of support programs on production levels, such as the increase in supported translated works and the extension of support for digital publishing. The cultural scene was still being stimulated by cultural festivals, which also gave artists and cultural producers a platform to present their work, particularly in the visual arts, theater, performing arts, and film. This year, the focus of these festivals expanded to include hosting prominent regional events, which improved access to Saudi cultural output worldwide and forged closer ties between Saudi artists and their counterparts throughout the region. Nevertheless, a more thorough examination of other markers of cultural production, like film production, literary publishing, and art exhibitions, showed a decrease in activity. Although it is still unclear if this downturn is short-term or a sign of a longer trend, it necessitates greater efforts to direct and stimulate activity in less active fields.

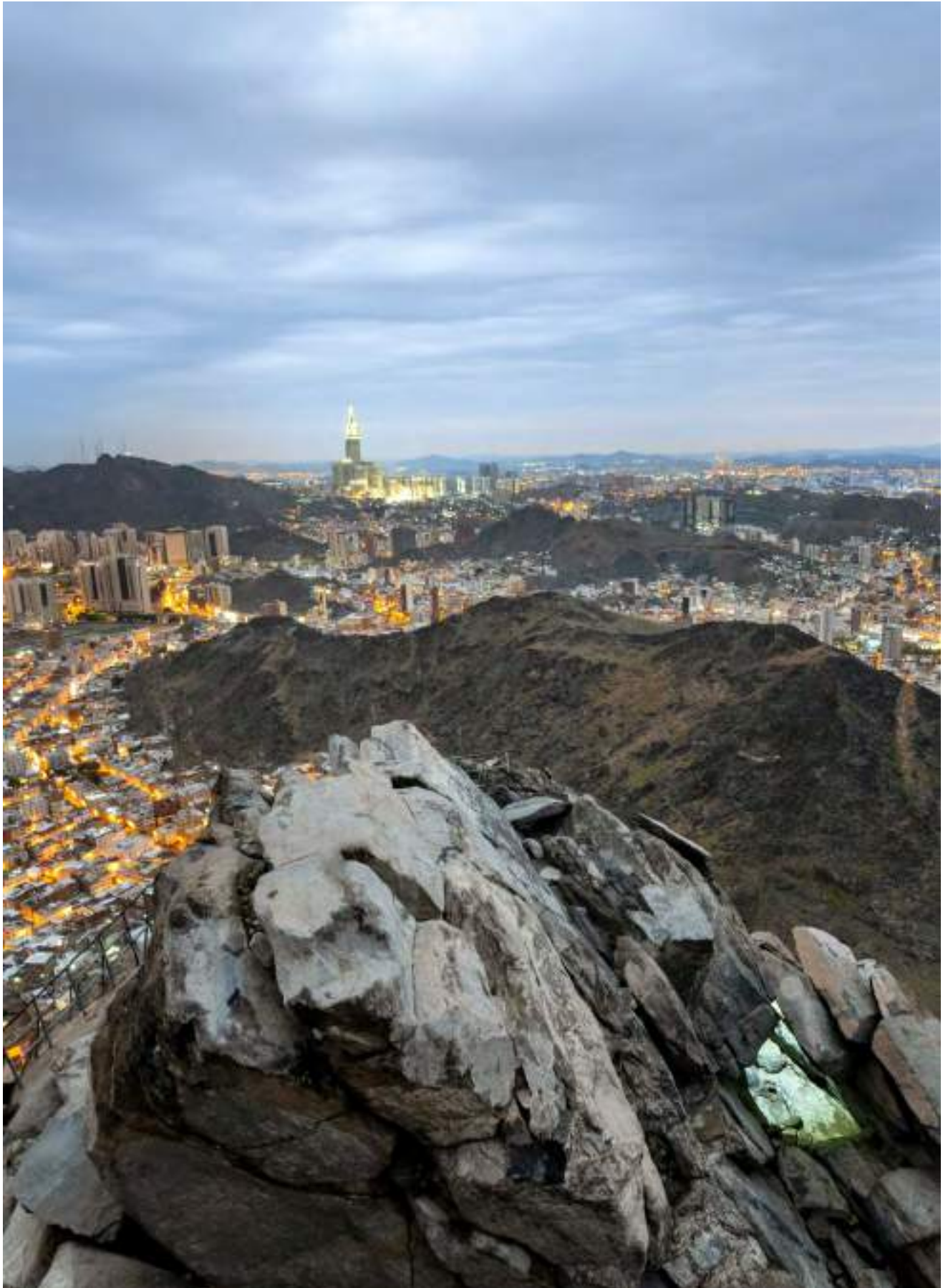


Assessing the Cultural Impact

Despite early indications of institutional maturity and signs of vitality in the cultural sector, the report identified several challenges that need to be addressed and resolved with greater vigor. Inequalities in participation and production opportunities among various social groups, enduring challenges with infrastructure and facilities supporting creative endeavors, and patterns of geographic centralization and unequal distribution of cultural activities are a few examples. The lack of available data, especially when it comes to assessing cultural impact, is the most urgent issue that has received insufficient attention. Issues like outdated data systems, a lack of centralized and comprehensive datasets, and inadequate updates hinder accurate tracking of cultural indicators and general growth trends. Despite advancements in developing classifications about the cultural satellite account, this difficulty is particularly noticeable in efforts to quantify the economic impact of culture, where indicators are still scarce or out of date. The lack of essential indicators in this edition of the report's creative economy chapter was a clear reflection of this.

This edition of the report focuses on the difficulties in assessing cultural impact. In contrast, the previous edition examined sustainability in the cultural sector, tracking its practices across activities, facilities, and cultural domains. The current state of the cultural sector in Saudi Arabia does not yet reflect a practical translation of the growing national interest in evaluating the impact of culture, particularly its economic effects. The availability and maturity of data and studies that can first create a baseline for comparison in the future and secondly allow tracking of results across various implementation stages, which aids in understanding and interpreting impact, are crucial components of any impact assessment system that are currently lacking. The report's chapter on cultural impact seeks to provide a preliminary approach to assessing cultural impact, one that takes into account the fact that culture is a dynamic and complex field with social, identity-based, and symbolic components. This approach emphasizes the value of combining quantitative and qualitative tools to enable a multifaceted reading of the effects of cultural policies and programs, going beyond simple economic indicators. The report advocates for a more thorough understanding of the role of culture by differentiating between three primary levels: direct economic impact, indirect impact, and broader impact, which includes the symbolic and intangible value of culture. This covers its impact on raising awareness, fortifying identity, and encouraging creativity, as well as its contribution to the national economy.

In summary, the State of Culture Report does not purport to include all aspects of the situation in its data and analyses. Instead, by considering its tracks and halting at significant turning points characterized by change and difficulty, it aims to provide a critical analysis of the current status of the cultural industry in Saudi Arabia. It is an invitation to keep studying, recording, and discussing the Kingdom's culture, both now and in the future, and to expand the body of knowledge that will help shape policies and practices that will enable culture to have its sustainable impact.



Chapter One



1

Management and Conservation

- Serving the Arabic Language
- Heritage Conservation and Sustainable Management
- Infrastructure and Cultural Spaces
- Empowerment and Regulatory Frameworks



The Management and Conservation chapter focuses on monitoring and reviewing the state of the cultural sector in terms of the organizational frameworks and cultural infrastructures that enable other parts of the cultural cycle, such as participation, production, and creativity. It also reviews efforts to protect and preserve cultural and natural heritage, as well as support for the Arabic language, in addition to institutional support and empowerment initiatives aimed at boosting creativity and production. By keeping an eye on the most significant events of the year, it is possible to identify some general patterns and trends. The release of the cultural bodies' regulations was a big step forward in terms of organizational and institutional frameworks. It shows that the cultural sector is becoming more stable after years of building and restructuring. The fact that support and empowerment programs are still thriving and offer diverse forms of material and non-material support is a positive sign that efforts to support and encourage creativity and cultural production will endure and be comprehensive. In this situation, launching a cultural financing product in partnership with local banks was a good idea that will encourage the private sector to do more to help and empower people. The year also saw remarkable progress in the efforts to inventory and document cultural heritage. For example, the number of items registered in the National Antiquities Register, urban and industrial heritage lists, and international lists all went up. Four items were added to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the Cultural Landscape of Al-Faw Archaeological Area was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Although there isn't enough data to accurately track the number of cultural facilities, several public libraries, independent movie theatres and artisans' houses opened this year. This shows that work is still being done to improve cultural infrastructure.

Serving the Arabic Language

The Index focuses on showcasing fresh initiatives to support Arabic as a cultural container in 2024. Additionally, it reviews the most well-known institutional language services, programs, and projects, including translation and language computing initiatives, monitors the most significant organizational initiatives and policies related to the Arabic language, and highlights the benefits of teaching Arabic to non-native speakers. The decision to merge the the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Center for Language Planning and Policies into the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language signifies the clear organizational policies and directions established in 2024 to unify language planning efforts in the Kingdom. The establishment of the Arabic AI Center, the Kingdom's first artificial intelligence center dedicated to modelling and automated processing of the Arabic language, was the most significant of the year's noteworthy advancements in the field of linguistic artificial intelligence models. With the announcement of the Abjad Center for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers and the launch of several projects aimed at researching and tracking the reality of the Arabic language worldwide, including the Arabic Observatory for Translation, measures to study and monitor the reality of the use of the Arabic language and translation to and from it also saw noticeable progress.

Language Policy Updates

The Council of Ministers' decision on Jumada Al-Thani 20, 1445 AH, or January 2, 2024 AD, concerning the governance of translating statutory documents in the Kingdom was one of the most significant developments in the field of language policies that year. In addition to translating the laws and regulations issued by the Council of Ministers, the decision mandates that government agencies translate these laws, regulations, and similar documents into English and several other languages within two years of the decision's date. Additionally, the Official Translation Division of the Bureau of Experts, in collaboration with the Literature, Publishing, and Translation Commission, will draft guidelines for translating regulatory documents into foreign languages¹. To encourage foreign investment, the government has decided to simplify the process for interested parties to obtain authorized official translations of relevant laws and regulations.

At the institutional level, the Council of Ministers issued a resolution on 11 Rajab 1445 AH, corresponding to 23 January 2024 AD, to merge the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Center for Language Planning and Policies with the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language and to annul the organizational structure of the Center. Pursuant to this resolution, the

Academy assumes full responsibility and authority over the Center's functions, including those related to language planning and policy formulation². This merger supports the ongoing efforts of the Academy since its establishment in 2008, which have encompassed the development of numerous guidelines, the creation of databases, and the publication of more than 180 books and three academic journals³.

In alignment with its role in developing guidelines and frameworks, and formulating language policies under the new organizational structure, the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language issued, in 2024, the "Guiding Framework for Children's Linguistic Rights." This represents the Academy's second such framework and aims to reinforce the linguistic rights of children, assess the extent to which these rights are adopted in the systems and practices of child care institutions, protect Arabic-speaking children from discrimination, and foster their sense of Arab identity through a set of instructional materials and measurement indicators.⁴ The Translator's Professional Guide, which benefits translators and all parties involved in the translation process, was published in 1445 AH/2023 AD by the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission in collaboration with the Translation Association. Clarifying the fundamentals of the translation profession, outlining its standards for quality, and providing a range of data to support its practice are the goals of the guide, which aims to enhance the sector's standards.⁵

Language Services, Programs and Projects

This Index focuses on monitoring the most recent advancements in the institutional efforts system in the area of language services, programs, and projects. It examines the most notable advancements in localization and translation initiatives within institutions, as well as scientific endeavors to track and examine the actual usage of Arabic and translations into and out of it. It also discusses the most significant technical initiatives aimed at advancing the use of the Arabic language. It tracks advancements in the field of linguistic computing.

Translation and Localization Projects

The "Tarjim" initiative, launched by the Literature, Publishing, and Translation Commission under the Ministry of Culture in 2020, is the most prominent institutional effort in the field of translating books and academic journals. In 2024, 743 books were translated from and into Arabic as a result of the initiative, representing a 25% increase over the number of books translated in 2023. This raises the total number of books translated under the program since its inception to 1971. In 2024, 590 books were translated into Arabic, primarily English-language works, followed by Chinese and French. Additionally, 153 books were translated from Arabic into various languages, mainly English, Chinese, and French. Within the academic journals track, the initiative helped translate 21 journals, primarily from Chinese to Arabic,⁶ and 778 articles into and out of Arabic. The initiative's translation trends are covered in greater detail in the Creativity and

Production chapter. The third cycle of the "Ithra Content" initiative, which was launched in 2020 with support from the Cultural Development Fund, commenced in 2024 at the Ithra Center as part of its institutional efforts to enhance the quality of Arabic visual, readable, and audible content. Seventeen cultural projects were awarded across the six tracks of the third edition, which encompassed six distinct topics, including publishing and translation, video games and visual content, music and audio content, and more.⁷ During the year, there were also notable institutional initiatives to investigate and track the reality of Arabic translation and its usage, chief among them the establishment of the Arabic Observatory for Translation in 2022 as a collaboration between the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO)⁸ and the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission. In addition to providing a digital database of translated titles and reports that aid in understanding the realities of translation in the Arab world, the Observatory seeks to stay up to date on Arabic translation activities, track and evaluate their output from and to Arabic, and compile statistics, documentation, and inventory that track the accomplishments of the Arab translation movement. As part of the same endeavors, the Academy established the Arabic Language Index, which utilizes a range of quantitative and qualitative indicators to monitor the actual usage of the Arabic language across eight key and diverse domains worldwide.

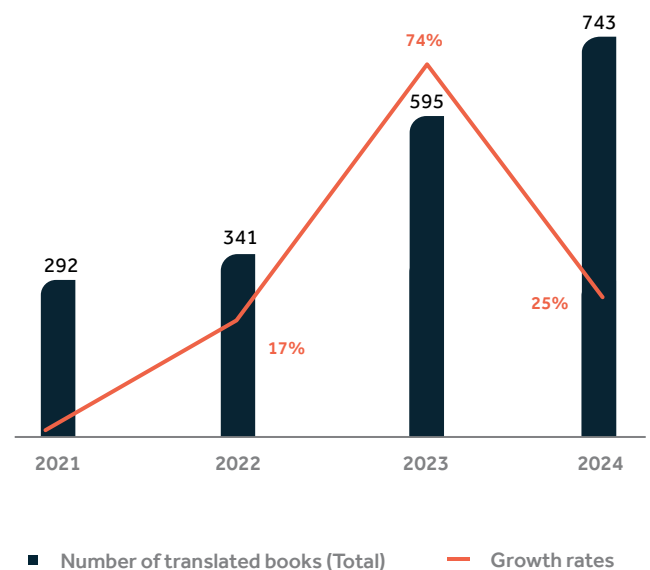


Figure 1: Number of books translated through the Tarjim initiative and its growth rates during the period 2021-2024

The index’s first pilot report was released this year to test its methodology and tools. It is intended to serve as a reference for creating reports about the Arabic language as well as a guiding tool for decision-makers creating language policies both domestically and internationally.⁹

Four publications in the “Arabic Around the World” series, which examines the reality of Arabic language usage worldwide and focuses on the case of a single nation, were also presented by the Society during the year.¹⁰

The UNESCO Chair in Cultural Translation was also established by the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies with assistance from the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission. Its objectives include fostering research and collaborations that translate cultures from other languages into Arabic and vice versa, offering training to cultural translation specialists, and identifying novel approaches and techniques in cultural translation. The events planned by the chair for 2024 are listed in Table 1.¹¹



Table 1: Events organized by the UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Translation in 2024

Event Title	Date of the Event	Type of Event
Beyond Cultural Transformation in Translation Studies: Meeting the Challenges of ChatGPT	May 2024	Virtual lecture
Rethinking the Translation of Cultures in Sixteenth-Century Islamic Spain	May 2024	Virtual lecture
Classical and colloquial, extinct and alive: Debates on language reform between Chinese and Arabic	July 2024	Virtual lecture
Language Revival, Writing and Translation	September 2024	In-person lecture
Was Arabia translated into Arabic? Questions about translation and cultural/civilizational representation	October 2024	Public Lecture
What is Translation? Theory, Practice, and Significance	October 2024	In-person lecture
Cosmopolitanism in Translation and Untranslatable Domains	November, 2024	Virtual lecture
Ontological pluralism: Rethinking Difference in Translation	December 2024	In-person lecture





Dictionaries

Efforts to standardize terminology in related systems continued, in addition to the translation and Arabization initiatives the report tracked. The Glossary of Legal Terms was introduced by the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language on 19 Jumada Al-Thani 1446 AH, or 30 December 2024 AD. It includes the most important legal terms found in laws, rules, and regulations issued by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's government, serving as a valuable resource for students, researchers, and legal professionals. It also helps to improve communication between lawyers and international legal institutions on a global scale.¹² In collaboration with several Saudi governmental organizations, the Society also released several specialized linguistic dictionaries throughout the year. These dictionaries aim to prevent discrepancies in the translation of specialized terms, ensure uniformity in distribution, and provide a single point of reference for relevant authorities, scholars, and interested parties. The dictionaries published in 2024 are listed in Table 2, including the Media Glossary, published in collaboration with the Ministry of Media; the Energy Glossary, produced in partnership with the Ministry of Energy; and the Digital Government Glossary, created in collaboration with the Digital Government Authority.

These lexicons aid in the dissemination of their terms and enhance the Arabic language in these fields¹³. The Arabic lexicographic industry still lacks key dictionaries, such as representative and stage dictionaries that trace the history of vocabulary and its development over time, as well as educational dictionaries that would help non-native speakers

learn the language, despite a recent increase in the number of published dictionaries.

Updates on technical projects related to the Arabic language

The field of linguistic computing in the Kingdom saw several noteworthy developments in 2024, including the launch of the (Falak) platform for language blogs and dictionaries by the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language. This was due to the rapid advancement of technology and the proliferation of artificial intelligence applications, which have led to the emergence of numerous technical projects aimed at creating natural language models. Through linguistic materials that include a wide range of digital blogs with linguistic purposes and numerous contemporary tools for analyzing linguistic data¹⁴, the platform offers linguistic samples that allow researchers to investigate phenomena related to the Arabic language. To facilitate advanced research in linguistic dictionaries and the study of lexical phenomena, the Academy has also introduced the Siwar platform for linguistic dictionaries. This platform is concerned with publishing, authoring, and managing dictionaries as well as offering linguistic and computational tools for searching and studying terminological phenomena. With 18 dictionaries to date—ranging from contemporary to heritage dictionaries¹⁵—the platform assists lexicographers in the process of writing and publishing their dictionaries. These platforms are a valuable resource for scholars interested in linguistic phenomena and a significant addition to the Arabic language's technical infrastructure. The intellectual property rights of the texts and dictionaries included in the platform's present difficulties for these efforts, despite their significance,

Table 2: The most prominent dictionaries issued during 2024

Dictionary	Date of Issue	Issuing Organization
Dictionary of Digital Government Terms	March 2024	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language and Digital Government Authority
Dictionary of Administrative Terms in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	April 2024	Reyadah Publishing and Distribution House
Glossary of Energy Terms	May 2024	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language and Ministry of Energy
Ethnographic Dictionary of Vernacular Terms in the Traditional Urban Environment in Al-Ahsa	August 2024	King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Darah)
Glossary of E-Sports Terms	October 2024	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language and the Saudi Esports Federation
Glossary of Musical Terms	October 2024	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language and the Music Commission
Glossary of Media Terms	December 2024	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language and the Ministry of Media
Camel Glossary	December 2024	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language
Glossary of Legal Terms	December 2024	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language and the Bureau of Experts at the Council of Ministers

necessitating the creation of suitable frameworks and laws. Numerous initiatives were also launched during the year to improve the capacity and expertise for creating and assessing linguistic AI models. The Arabic AI Center, the first artificial intelligence facility dedicated to automated Arabic language processing, was established by the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language. The center hosts meetings and training sessions, supports research in the area of automated Arabic language processing using artificial intelligence,¹⁶ and provides services to experts and entities involved in developing AI mechanisms related to the Arabic language. It also offers linguistic and technical consultations in this area. As part of the Arabic Intelligence Center's initiatives, the Saudi Data and AI Authority (SDAIA) and the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language introduced the Balsam Index to assess and measure Arabic models in artificial intelligence. The index utilizes specialized tests to evaluate the performance of artificial intelligence techniques for the Arabic language, aiming to determine how well Arabic language models perform automated processing by international standards.¹⁷ Additionally, the Arabic AI Center at the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language hosted the third Training Modeling Program, which aims to enhance capacity in areas such as creating linguistic models¹⁸, blogs, and digital dictionaries. To develop and improve Arabic language models and generate creative solutions in the fields of linguistic modeling, SDAIA also implemented the Alam Challenge, which focuses on serving the Arabic language by

building and developing linguistic models¹⁹ using the Alam model launched by SDAIA in 2023, in a variety of fields like Arabic poetry and Arabic expression.

Raising the degree of integration among the various Arab technical projects and giving innovation, improvement, and accumulation precedence over repetition and reproduction are necessary to achieve the intended impact of technologically advancing the Arabic language. Making language resources open source and developing platforms for developers and researchers to share and update data are two potential ways to achieve this integration. The availability of Arabic big data is a major factor in the accuracy and efficiency of Arabic smart applications, which are still less accurate and efficient than their counterparts in other languages. This points to the significance of combining efforts to optimize and enrich digital Arabic content with those to develop AI applications.

Arabic Language Education

The most significant advancements in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers²⁰ are reviewed by the Arabic Language Education Index, which is addressed by the Kingdom's higher education establishments, including specialized schools that provide courses on teaching Arabic to non-native speakers. The most well-known Arabic language schools and departments for non-native speakers in Saudi universities are listed in Table 3. Since Arabic language instruction is one of the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language primary areas of focus, the Index is only able to track the institution's contributions and activities in this area, as data on university-affiliated institutes and centers is unavailable, as in the 2023 report. The Academy announced at the beginning of 2024 that construction on the Abjad Center for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers had begun and that the first 150 students had been admitted to the institute. In addition to teaching Arabic, the Abjad Center aims to attract distinguished students from around the world who wish to learn Arabic as a second language and promote Saudi Arabian culture internationally.²¹ The center's "Arabic for the World - Kids" YouTube channel, a subset of the center's "Arabic for the World" channel, was established in 2023 to help children who do not speak Arabic learn the language.²² The King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language hosted 36 training programs for non-native Arabic language learners in 2024, benefiting 2,384 students, and 47 training programs for non-native Arabic language teachers, both within and outside the Kingdom, benefiting 2,001 trainees.²³



Table: 3 Institutes and Departments of Arabic Language Education for Non-Native Speakers in Saudi Universities

Institute	University
Institute of Arabic Language Education for Non-Native Speakers	Umm Al-Qura University
Institute of Arabic Language for Non-Native Speakers	King Abdulaziz University
Department of Arabic Language for Non-Native Speakers	Saudi Electronic University
Arabic Language Institute for Non-Native Speakers	Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University
Institute of Arabic Language Education	Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University
Arabic Language Education Unit for Non-Native Speakers	Taif University
Institute of Arabic Language Education	Islamic University of Madinah
Institute of Arabic Linguistics	King Saud University

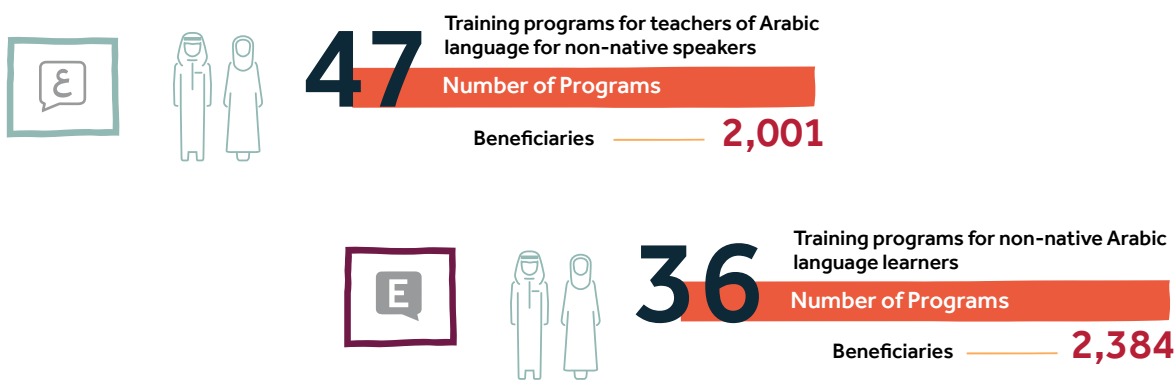


Figure 2: Training courses for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers offered by the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language during 2024

Heritage Conservation and Sustainable Management

Cataloging and Documentation

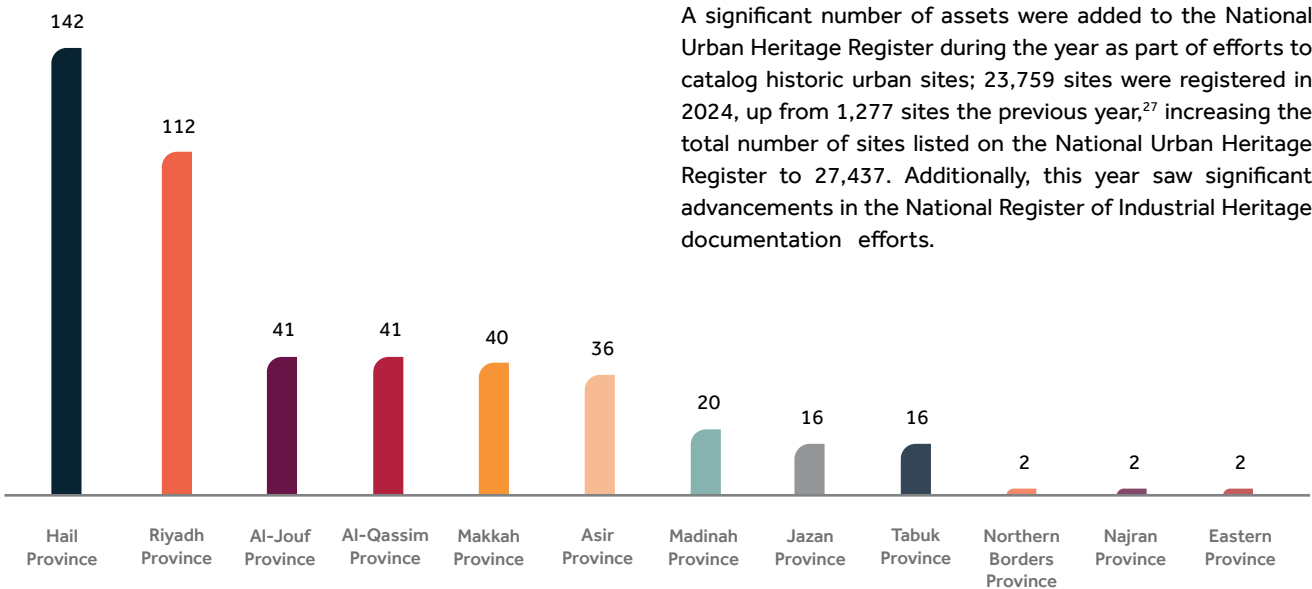
By examining recent advancements in national antiquity, urban, and industrial heritage records, as well as the most well-known systematic documentation projects and initiatives, and international lists, this Index tracks efforts to inventory and document aspects of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. Since they serve as the foundation for initiatives to conserve heritage and guarantee its sustainability, inventory and documentation are two of the most crucial methods for preserving its components. While documentation documents cultural heritage in its current state and in its various physical forms and gathers all relevant documents, inventory incorporates cultural heritage assets in records to create a shared understanding of elements of cultural importance.²⁴ To preserve its rich and varied components, which are integral to the national identity and contribute to its construction, several organizations in the Kingdom are dedicated to gathering and documenting aspects of Saudi cultural heritage. Following these efforts, the Ministry of Culture launched the National Plan for the Collection, Documentation, Archiving and Management of Cultural Heritage Assets, Elements in the first quarter of 2024. This plan aims to digitally document cultural assets and elements, providing a trustworthy knowledge reference for comprehending and safeguarding Saudi Arabia’s cultural heritage, in collaboration with stakeholders from the cultural sector and beyond.²⁵

Cataloging and Documentation of Physical Cultural Heritage

As evidenced by the substantial increase in the number of registered elements in the three registers and the distribution



of registered elements across the Kingdom, the national heritage records show the results of ongoing archaeological research efforts and documentation of physical cultural heritage sites, along with their various elements, such as historical monuments, urban heritage, and industrial heritage. As illustrated in Figure 3, 470 heritage sites were registered in the National Antiquities Register throughout the Kingdom in 2024, thereby increasing the total number of sites in the Register to 9,318.²⁶



A significant number of assets were added to the National Urban Heritage Register during the year as part of efforts to catalog historic urban sites; 23,759 sites were registered in 2024, up from 1,277 sites the previous year;²⁷ increasing the total number of sites listed on the National Urban Heritage Register to 27,437. Additionally, this year saw significant advancements in the National Register of Industrial Heritage documentation efforts.

Figure 3: Geographical distribution of heritage sites registered in the National Antiquities Register.

Table 4: Industrial heritage sites cataloged by the end of 2024

	Site	Region	Province
1	Wireless Telegraph Tower	Riyadh	Riyadh
2	Dammam-Riyadh Railway	Riyadh	Riyadh
3	Old Mahlab	Al Kharj	Riyadh
4	Water Tower in Al Kharj	Al Kharj	Riyadh
5	Solar Village in Al-Ayyinah	Ad- Dir'iyah	Riyadh
6	Salted cane	Ad- Dir'iyah	Riyadh
7	Jax District	Ad- Dir'iyah	Riyadh
8	Mahd Al Dahab Mine	Mahd	Madinah
9	Al-Duqal Leather Industries Factory	Madinah	Madinah
10	Madinah Railway Station	Madinah	Madinah
11	Printing, Press and Publishing Organization Building	Jeddah	Makkah
12	Halwani Brothers' Factory	Jeddah	Makkah
13	Taifi Rose House	Taif	Makkah
14	Al Khobarah Electricity Company Station	Riyadh Al-Khubara	AL-Qassim
15	Al Babbain Gas Refinery	Buraydah	AL-Qassim
16	Salted Al-Jarif	Al-Rass	AL-Qassim
17	King Abdulaziz Industrial Port	Dammam	Eastern Province
18	Zamil Shipbuilding Factory	Dammam	Eastern Province
19	King Fahd Bridge	Dammam	Eastern Province
20	Al-Ahsa Oasis Irrigation and Drainage Project	Al-Ahsa	Eastern Province
21	Fourth Mills	Dammam	Eastern Province
22	Jubail Pearl District	Jubail	Eastern Province
23	Jubail Desalination Plant	Jubail	Eastern Province
24	Al Nabak Abu Qasr Fan	Sakaka	Al-Jouf
25	Tapline	Turaif	Northern borders
26	Turaif Old Airport	Turaif	Northern borders

Table 5: Regional dishes in the Kingdom’s provinces

Province	Dish
Riyadh Province	Marrakouk
Makkah Province	Al-Saleeq
Eastern Province	Hasawi rice
Tabuk Province	Sayadiya
Northern Border Province	Malihiya
Al-Baha Province	Maqanah bread
Madinah Province	Madinahn rice
Najran Province	Al-Ruqash
Al-Jouf Province	Al-Bakila
Asir Province	Al-Hunaydh
Qassim Province	Al-Kaliya
Jazan Province	Maghash
Hail Province	Kubaiba Hail

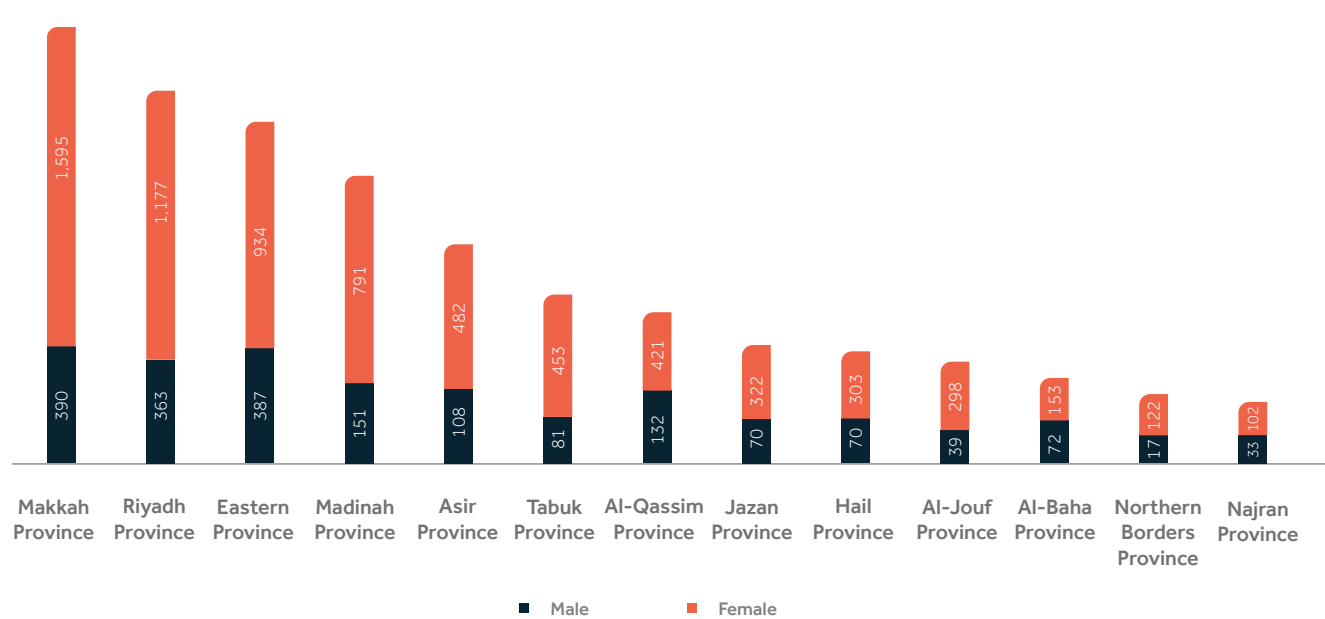


Figure 4: Distribution of craftsmen and craftswomen in the Kingdom’s provinces.

Previously restricted to two sites, the register now includes 24 sites, bringing the total number of registered sites from two in 2023 to 26 by the end of 2024.²⁸ Table 4 shows the list of industrial heritage sites included in the Registry.

Cataloging and Documentation of Intangible Cultural Heritage

To preserve, comprehend, and pass on Intangible Cultural Heritage to future generations, the Ministry of Culture released the Cultural Heritage Documentation and Digital Archiving Guide in 2022. This guide offers a framework for efforts to inventory and document all Intangible Cultural Heritage. Alongside the variety of intangible cultural heritage, several organizations worked in 2024 to update the National Register of Artisans and document dialects, social history, and culinary arts.

The “Saudi Voices Blog” project, a transcribed podcast that aims to document Saudi dialectal diversity by adding it to a linguistic-acoustic database that aids in the study of various Regional dialects and encourages research in this area, was started by the King Salman International Center for Arabic

Language (KSICAL) (King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language) as one of these initiatives.²⁹ In the same vein, the Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah Research and Studies Center continues to work on the Oral Documentation Initiative, which HRH Prince Faisal bin Salman initiated in October 2017. The goal of this initiative is to record the stories of notable social and scientific figures in the Madinah Province through published and filmed interviews. Five of these interviews were released in 2024, increasing the total number of figures whose stories were recorded to over 70.³⁰ Initiatives to catalog and record the culinary heritage have been ongoing in the culinary arts sector since 2022.

The establishment of the Culinary Arts Documentation Project, which aims to thoroughly document Saudi culinary heritage, encompassing all culinary elements and provinces of the Kingdom, is one of the notable developments in the sector this year. Through a unified codification methodology and local community involvement, the project aims to empower various stakeholders to preserve the information that has been documented. To date, the project has documented 12 provinces and codified over 1000 items, including dishes, agricultural products, and animal products. As the Culinary Arts Commission revealed the list of regional dishes for every Province of the Kingdom, the project is an extension of the National and Regional Dishes Narratives initiative, which was started in 2023 and finished this year. The Regional dishes listed in Table 5 were selected based on a variety of factors, with the most significant being the dish’s cultural and historical significance, its ability to capture the region’s natural environment, and its potential to boost the local economy.³¹

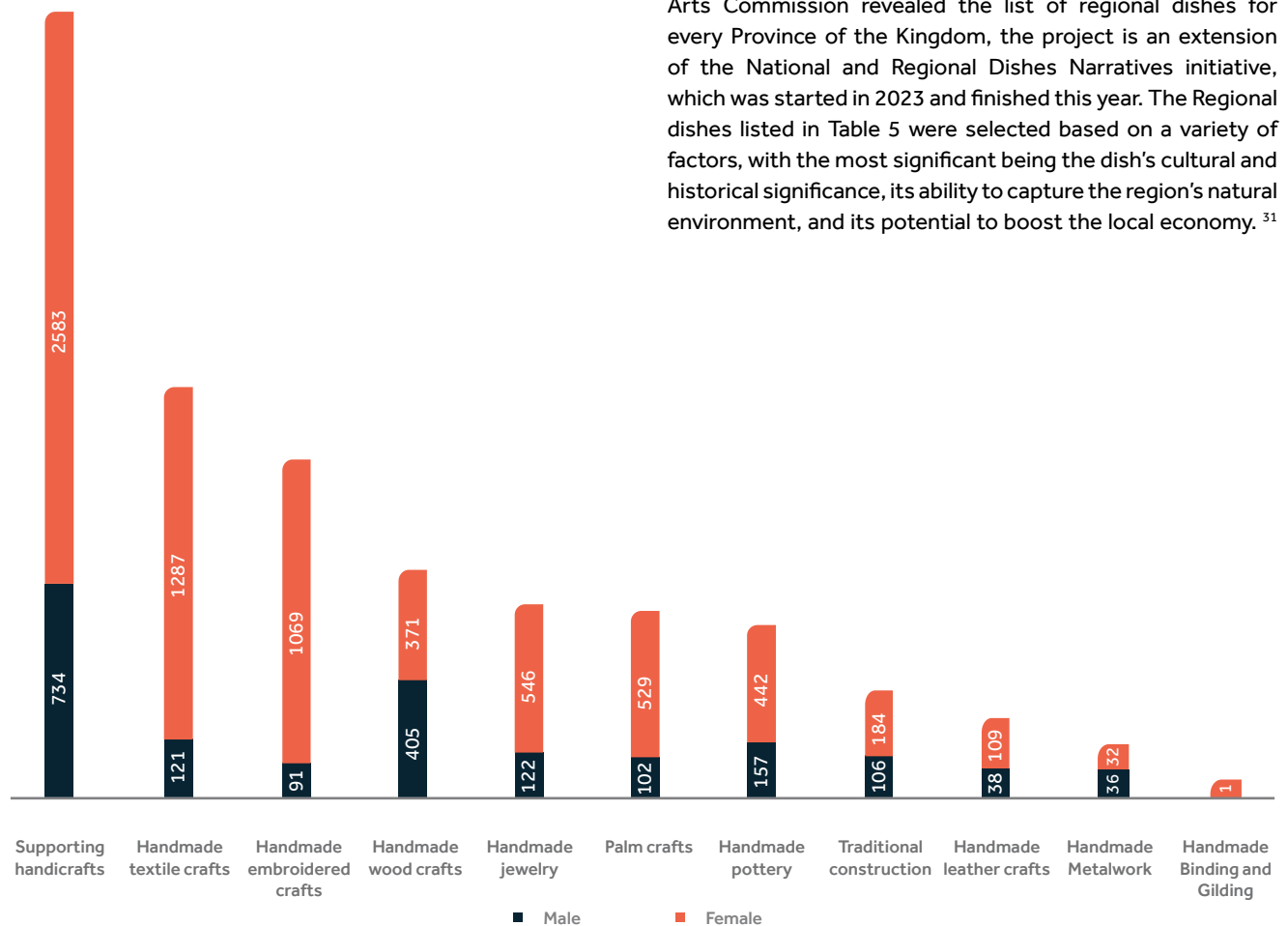


Figure 5: The number of artisans and craftsmen and craftswomen registered in the fields of traditional handicrafts.

There were 2,229 male and female practitioners added to the National Register of Artisans in 2024, bringing the total number of listed craftsmen and craftswomen to 9,066 (1,912 males, 7,154 females), up from 6,837 in 2023 (1,347 males, 5,490 females). Half of the practitioners registered this year were concentrated in Makkah, Riyadh, and the Eastern Province, as shown in Figure 4. As in previous years, the number of practitioners and practices in all handicraft cultural industries increased, except for wood and metal crafts, as illustrated in Figure 5.

Global Lists

In this context, the Kingdom was recognized by UNESCO in 2024 for four cultural elements on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Cultural practices related to the sectarian rose were recorded in a national file. At the same time, the remaining elements were documented in joint files with several Arab nations. For example, Arabic coffee was registered as a symbol of generosity in a joint file with the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman and Jordan; Samasmia was registered as an industry and tool in a joint file with Egypt; and Henna was registered as an aesthetic ritual and social practice in a joint file with fifteen other Arab nations.³² By the end of the year, a total of 16 items were registered from Saudi Arabia, up from 12 in 2023, thanks to the addition of these four items.

The “Cultural Landscape of Al-Faw Archaeological Area” in the southern part of Riyadh Province has been registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a cultural site that satisfies the requirements of the World Heritage List due to its exceptional global value for human heritage. This is one of the national heritage documentation efforts in 2024. As shown in Figure 6,³³ this registration increases the total number of sites listed to eight. Since Saudi sites listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List are expected to reach this number in 2030,³⁴ the Kingdom

has accomplished one of its cultural goals six years ahead of schedule. Taif was added to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in 2023, joining three other Saudi cities: Al-Ahsa, Buraydah, and Taif. In 2024, the Culinary Arts Commission added three different baked goods to the Creative Cities Bakery Initiative, which aims to highlight baked goods that represent the culinary arts and culinary heritage of the listed cities: red bread for Al-Ahsa, kalija for Buraydah, and malla bread for Taif.³⁵

Due to its historical and cultural significance, Jabal Akmah in Al-Ula was registered with UNESCO in 2023 AD. This made it the most extensive open library in the Arabian Peninsula, containing symbols, inscriptions, and archaeological notations carved thousands of years ago by various civilizations that once called Al-Ula home.³⁶ In 2024, the Culinary Arts Commission registered 60 items in the global Slow Food organization’s tasting vessel, which aims to preserve endangered heritage foods, as part of the Commission’s ongoing efforts to protect the Kingdom’s culinary heritage.³⁷ This raises the list’s total to 120 national items. Since the North Riyadh Geopark and Salma Geopark exhibit distinctive geological diversity spanning millions of years and satisfy the requirements for geological areas of global importance, they will be nominated to the UNESCO Global Geopark List in 2024, marking the Kingdom’s first foray into the worldwide geopark network and part of the Kingdom’s global role in conserving geological heritage.³⁸

Archiving

In addition to reviewing the steps taken to preserve and digitize cultural heritage, this index tracks the efforts made to archive creative and knowledge works. These components include the manuscript heritage, which is maintained by several institutions, libraries, and museums throughout the Kingdom.

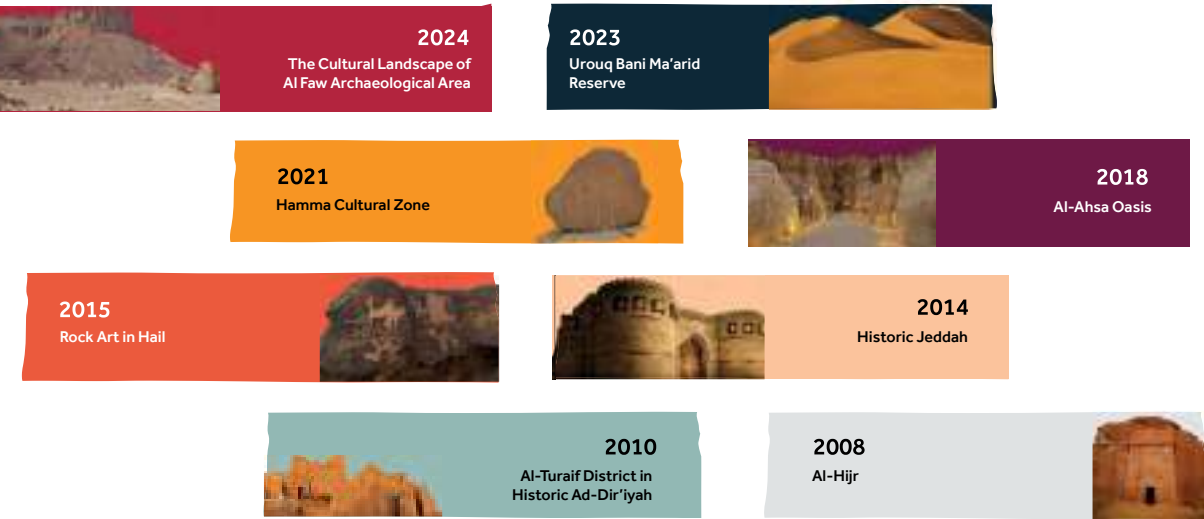


Figure 6: Sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List by the end of 2024

Table 6: Number of digitized materials at King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Darah) until the end of 2024

Manuscripts	Documents	Photographs	Books	Oral history	Maps	Historical films
7,034	40,405	50,965	89,257	2,053	3,075	114,836

Table 7: Number of digitized collections in public museums

Museum	Number of digitized collections in public museums
Black Gold Museum in Riyadh	407
Madinah	612
Jazan	1308



They do this by restoring and processing the original manuscripts, after which they digitize them, using sound standards that help preserve historical materials and documents. Archiving efforts also extend to creative production of all kinds, as cultural bodies undertake many projects to protect Saudi artistic memory in their areas of competence, such as projects to archive theatrical and cinematic productions and document the singing works of Saudi artists, which contribute to a greater knowledge of the Kingdom's artistic history and help document its most important stages.

Digital Archiving

Digital archiving was the primary means of maintaining and conserving the knowledge heritage in 2024. In this regard, King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Darah) continues to digitize its historical documents and manuscript collections. By the end of this year, the Darah had 307,625 digitized materials, nearly four times as many as the previous year, as shown in Table 6. The same initiatives are being pursued by the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, where 28,500 manuscripts have been archived, 81.23% of which are digital. The number of digitized holdings and collections in the Saudi National Museum at the end of 2024 amounted to 2,132 items, and for public museums, it is as follows: ³⁹ The 2024 survey of private museums, which comprised a sample of 37 museums, revealed that only 16% of the sample had digital holdings, indicating a lack of digitization efforts in private museums.⁴⁰

Archiving Creative Production

Throughout 2024, several areas continued the efforts to archive the artistic and creative heritage. The Film Commission continued to preserve the audiovisual cultural heritage in the film industry through the National Film Archive, which started documenting 57 films in 2023. The archive saw a remarkable expansion in 2024, archiving 121 films, including feature films, short and long documentaries, and animated films, as illustrated in Figure 7. With this, the total number of archived films now stands at 178. This year, the Commission launched the "Film Deposit" initiative, which provides a means for individuals to deposit film from various sources into the National Film Archive, aiming to engage community members and organizations from both the public and private sectors in the archiving process. ⁴¹

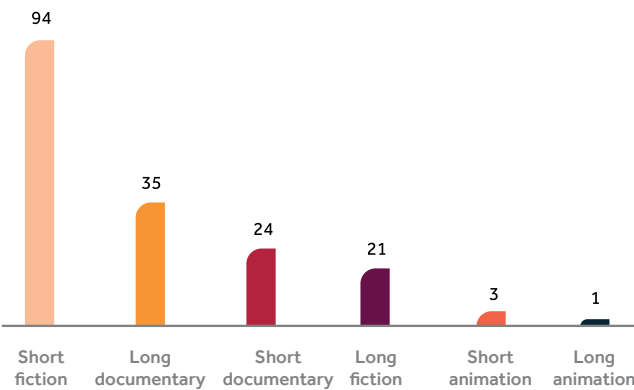


Figure 7: Numbers and types of films archived at the National Film Archive.



In the performing arts sector, the year marked the completion of the project to archive the contributions of Saudi theater pioneers, launched by the Theater and Performing Arts Commission in 2023. The project aimed to document the oral history of Saudi theater by conducting interviews and incorporating them into an archival database that sheds light on the early foundations of the theatrical sector in the Kingdom, as well as the experiences of its pioneers and their successors. A total of 150 individuals from various regions of the Kingdom participated in these interviews. The project's outcomes are expected to be made available to researchers and enthusiasts, contributing to a deeper understanding of Saudi art.⁴² The Saudi Music Memory Project, which aims to catalog and record the creative and lyrical works of Saudi artists from the Kingdom's founding until the mid-1980s, was also undertaken by the Music Commission. In 2024, the project successfully classified 1,449 songs and obtained the rights to use them; these songs ranged from sentimental to national to emotional to social to general.⁴³



Archaeological Excavations and Discoveries

Under the direction of scientific missions that included several international universities, there were 60 ongoing archaeological excavation projects. Figure 8 illustrates how the excavation and survey projects were conducted throughout the Kingdom, yielding significant finds. Of particular note were the excavations at the Al-Akhdoob site in Najran, which yielded numerous bronze and ceramic statues, and the excavation at Al-Uqair port in the Eastern Province, which uncovered multiple pottery pieces and jewelry.⁴⁴ In February 2024, the Historic Jeddah program announced the discovery of significant collections of ceramic and shell materials, as well as numerous glass and pottery artifacts used in architectural styles spanning various historical periods, including the early Islamic era and the modern era.⁴⁵ The discovery of a Bronze Age archaeological village in the Khaybar Governorate was also announced by the Royal Commission for AlUla. Since the town serves as an illustration of the shift from a pastoral to an urban and sedentary way of life in northwest Arabia, this discovery, along with the subsequent research, provides valuable insights into the lifestyles of ancient Khaybar.⁴⁶

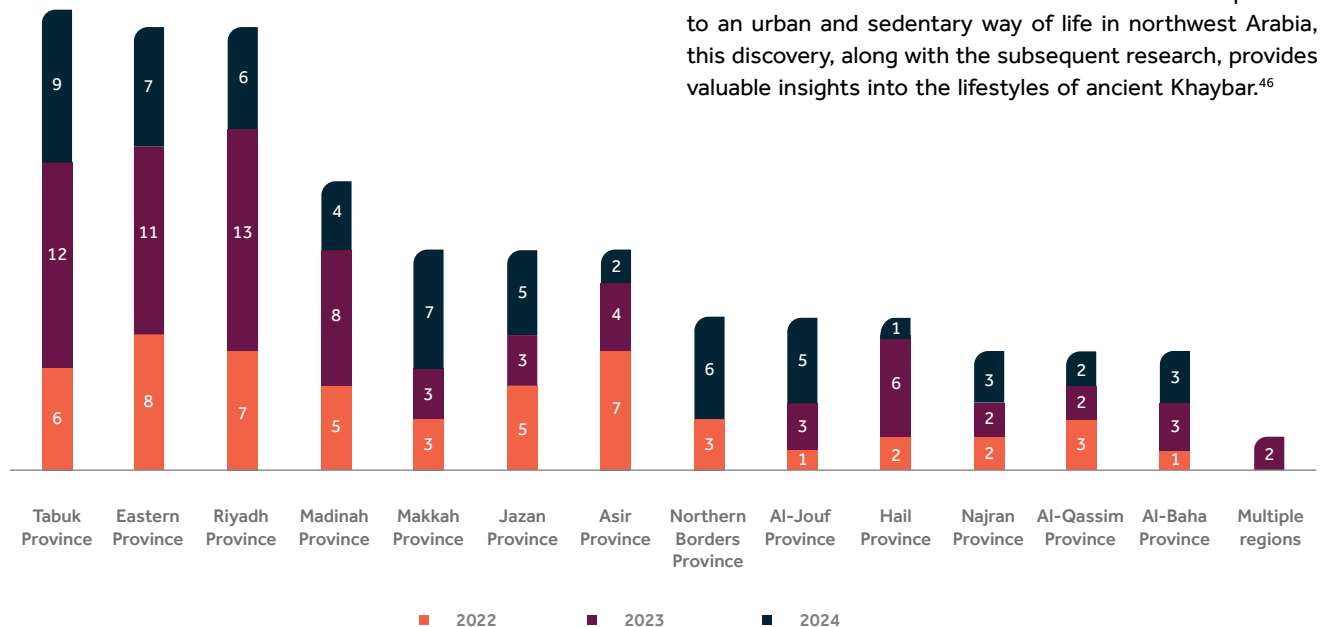


Figure 8: Archaeological survey and excavation projects of the Heritage Commission in the Kingdom's provinces during the years 2022-2024.

Protection and Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development of Cultural and Mixed Heritage

To ensure the sustainability and revitalization of the legacy, the Heritage Commission, in collaboration with other organizations, continues to accelerate its efforts to preserve, develop, and restore cultural heritage sites. In 2024, there were 24 heritage site development and rehabilitation projects spread across the majority of the Kingdom, in addition to urgent preventive restoration projects.⁴⁷ The project's second phase involved the construction and restoration of 30 historic mosques throughout the Kingdom. By 2024, 26 of these had been completed, bringing the project's total number of historical mosques since its inception in 2018 to 56.⁴⁸

Alongside the Historic Jeddah Program's efforts, which have led to the restoration of 58 buildings since its inception in 2018, 233 heritage buildings have been strengthened and preserved.⁴⁹ To support the plans for establishing Al-Ula as a destination for cultural tourism, the Royal Commission for Al-Ula continued its work on mud house restoration and revitalization projects in the old town. These projects focused on restoring several heritage buildings to serve as museums, art galleries, and retail establishments.⁵⁰ Similarly, in 2024, 163 cultural heritage sites were open to visitors, down from 175 the previous year.⁵¹ This decline is attributed to the transfer of some sites to other entities, the impact of weather, and the closure of specific sites for restoration.

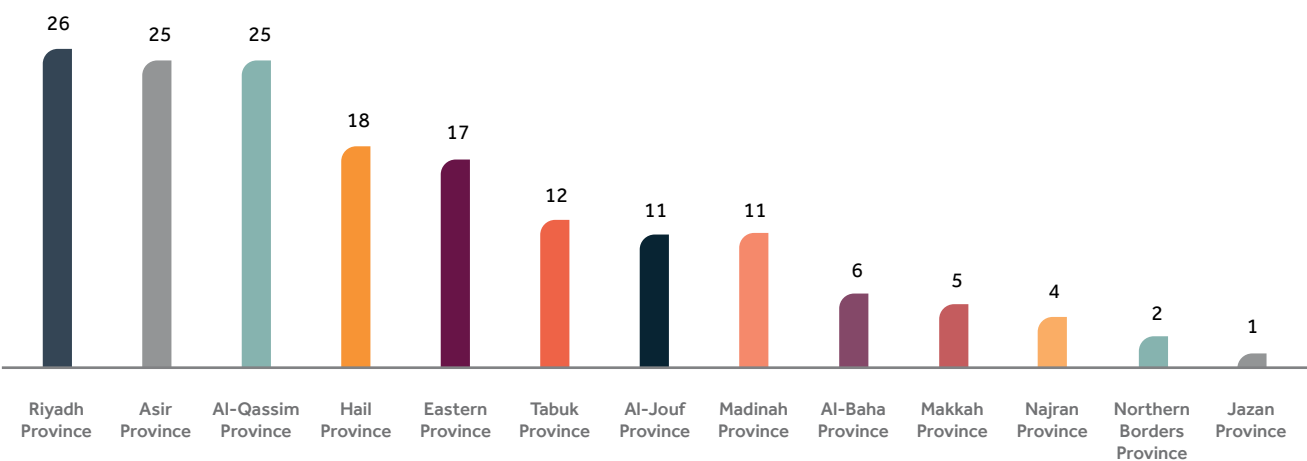


Figure 9: Number of heritage sites eligible for visitation, by province.





The Heritage Commission's efforts to recover artifacts both inside and outside the Kingdom are among the most significant steps taken in 2024 to safeguard the nation's cultural heritage. There are now 940 artifacts that have been recovered, and almost 400 of them are being examined to ascertain their historical significance. Five artifacts from Morocco, Britain, the United States, the Netherlands, and Yemen are still being recovered.⁵² The significance of financial tools that guarantee the sustainability of heritage asset protection initiatives is emphasized in tandem with field initiatives to conserve and revitalize cultural heritage sites. The cultural insurance product, introduced in 2024 by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the Insurance Authority, assists owners of historical and archaeological structures in maintaining and preserving them by offering insurance coverage tailored to the types of risks that endanger them, as well as all the necessary requirements to safeguard them.⁵³

Sustainable Development of Natural Heritage

Since environmental sustainability encompasses numerous policies and practices related to biodiversity and natural resource protection, it inevitably impacts the preservation of all forms of natural heritage, including biological systems and environmental features that have evolved over time, serving as a record of the Earth's ecological history. This Index tracks the contribution of sustainable development to the preservation of the Kingdom's natural heritage. As part of its efforts to preserve its natural heritage, the Kingdom has increased the percentage of protected areas, preserved natural habitats, and protected and propagated fungal species in their natural habitats. Additionally, it has developed vegetation and afforestation projects and initiatives that enrich ecosystems and fulfill the Kingdom's commitments in this area.

Protected Areas

Protected areas have been receiving considerable attention lately due to their significance in preserving the natural heritage and the Kingdom’s commitment to the objectives of the Green Saudi Initiative and international environmental agreements. In 2024, there were a total of 27 protected areas, covering a land area of 361,145.70 km² and 14,382.72 km² of the Kingdom’s waters. Table 7 displays the area of each of the reserves, which are divided into eight royal reserves, thirteen reserves owned by the National Center for Wildlife Development, five reserves owned by the Royal Commission for AlUla, and one marine reserve located in Yanbu Industrial City.



Table 8: Table 8: Land area of protected areas in the Kingdom by the end of 2024.

Protected areas	Area of terrestrial protected areas	Percentage of terrestrial protected areas in (%) the Kingdom	Area of Marine Protected Areas	Percentage of the area of marine reserves of the Kingdom's water area
National Center for Wildlife Development Reserves	25,906.58	1.3	7433.03	3.354028383
Royal Reserves	312,947.97	15.65	6940.3	3.131692349
Al-Ula reserves	12575	0.63	-	-
Other reserves	9716.15	0.49	9.39	0.004237078
Total	361,145.70	18.06	14382.72	6.48995781

According to the 2023 State of Culture Report, the proportion of wild protected areas in the Kingdom’s land area was 18.06%, exceeding both the global average of 16.11% for wild protected areas and the Kingdom’s commitment to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, which is set at 17%.⁵⁴

Protection of Natural Fauna

Through reintroduction and settlement programs, as well as the implementation of measures that would protect endangered creatures, the National Center for Wildlife Development continues to work to protect wildlife species in the Kingdom as part of the efforts to preserve biodiversity. 531 species were released and generated in the Kingdom’s reserves and wild parks in 2024 as a result of the resettlement and reintroduction programs. As shown in Table 9, the list featured a variety of land animals like owls and eagles, seabirds

like spoon-billed and Caspian gulls, and terrestrial species like antelopes, ibex, and oryx.⁵⁵ Following the start of the lynx reintroduction program in 2022, the Prince Saud Al-Faisal Wildlife Research Center in Taif recorded the first lynx birth.⁵⁶ Together with the birth of four hunting cheetah cubs, this marked the establishment of the National Center for Wildlife Development, the national strategy for hunting cheetah conservation, and the release of its specifics, which include locating appropriate settlement sites and incorporating the public in protection initiatives.⁵⁷

Regarding endangered species protection measures, Table 10 shows that 142 species are protected this year, up from 135 in 2023. This is because several species were added to the list under these measures, while others were removed, resulting in an increase of seven in the total number of species protected by these measures.⁵⁸



Table 9: Number of species in the breeding and resettlement programs in 2024.

Species	Count
Arabian Sand Gazelle (<i>Gazella marica</i>)	195
Mountain Gazelle (<i>Gazella gazella</i>)	52
Nubian Ibex (<i>Capra nubiana</i>)	75
Arabian Oryx (<i>Oryx leucoryx</i>)	78
Addax (<i>Addax nasomaculatus</i>)	10
Caracal (<i>Caracal caracal</i>)	2
Cheetah (<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i>)	4
Terrestrial Wild Birds	32
Marine Wild Birds	57
Other Species (<i>Unspecified</i>)	26
Total	531

Table 10: Number of Wild Species Under Protection Measures at the End of 2024.

Species	Number
Endangered reptile species	5
Endangered freshwater fish species	3
Endangered sea turtle species	5
Endangered marine mammal species	3
Endangered species of bony fish	10
Endangered land mammal species	10
Endangered coral species	4
Endangered land and sea bird species	27
Endangered mollusk species	3
Endangered echinoderm species	5
Endangered cartilaginous fish (shark and stingray) species	67
Total	142

Vegetation Development

Thanks to its efforts to coordinate environmental protection initiatives and facilitate the transition to a sustainable lifestyle, the Saudi Green Initiative is widely recognized in the Kingdom for afforestation and the expansion of green spaces. In March 2024, the Council of Ministers designated March 27 of each year as Saudi Green Initiative Day.⁵⁹ By the end of this year, the initiative had achieved several notable milestones, including the fact that, since its inception in 2021, 115 million trees had been planted. Additionally, the initiative had distributed millions of seeds across different provinces and completed the restoration of 118,000 hectares of degraded land.⁶⁰

According to data from the National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification, the center planted 12.8 million trees in parks, reserves, and other locations throughout the Kingdom between 2017 and 2024, which is 85% of the goal of 15 million trees.⁶¹ One of the most significant ways to increase the Kingdom's green spaces is through the creation of national parks; as of 2024, there were 339 national parks, a considerable increase from the 199 parks listed in the Report on the State of Culture 2022.⁶² Figure 10 shows that the provinces of Riyadh, Al-Qassim, and Asir have the highest number of parks. In contrast, Figure 11 indicates that Madinah has the most parks overall, followed by Riyadh and Al-Qassim.

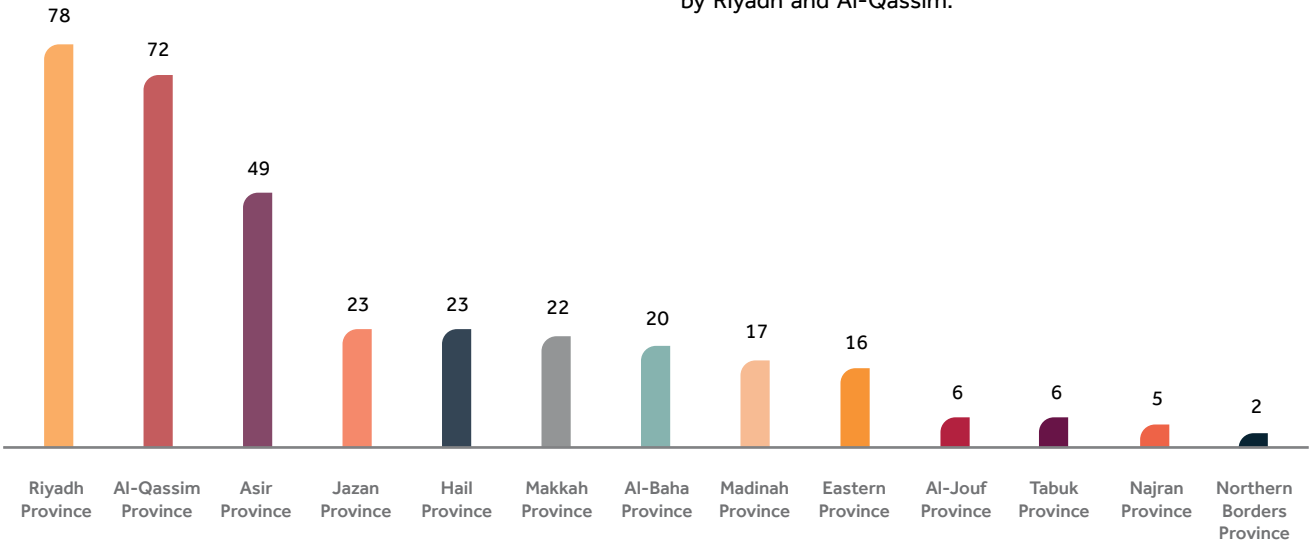


Figure 10: The number of national parks and their distribution by province at the end of 2024.

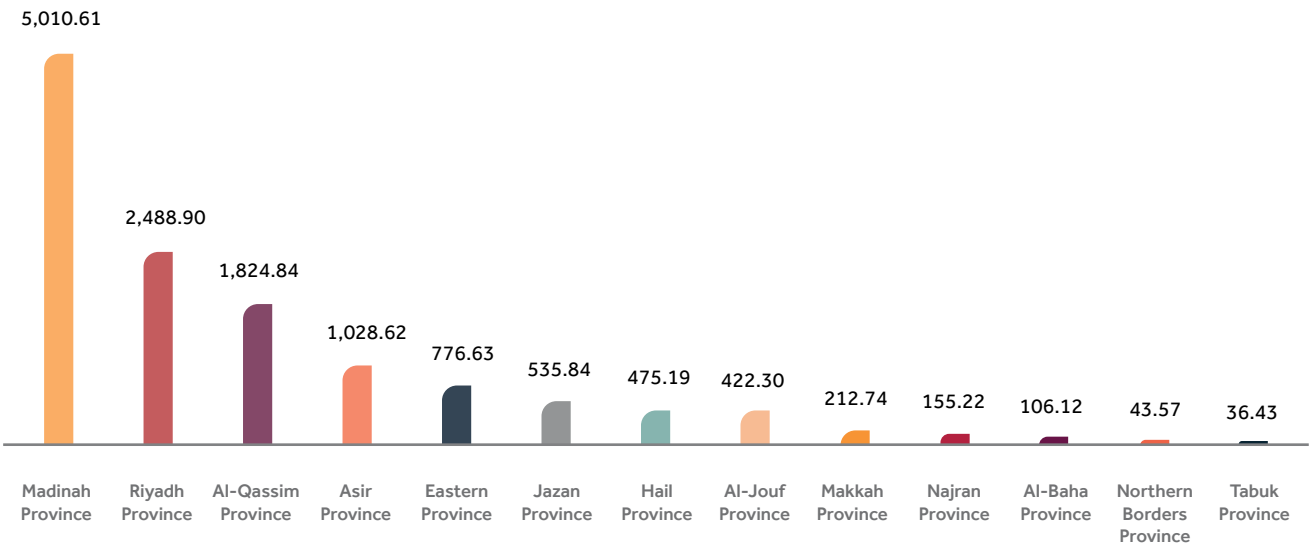


Figure 11: Distribution of national parks to provinces, by area (Km²).



Infrastructure and Cultural Spaces

Cultural Facilities

This Index reviews the number and distribution of libraries, theaters, museums, cinemas, literary cafes, and artisans’ houses in the Kingdom. It does this because it recognizes the significance of cultural infrastructure as a major facilitator of cultural participation, production, and creativity in all of its forms. Since many library and theater facilities are still in the development stage and must meet licensing requirements, as is the case in the museum sector, the 2024 baseline reveals that the cultural sector faces a challenge due to the lack of data on cultural facilities. This could be because the

field’s development and regulatory efforts are still ongoing. Following the slowdown noted in the 2023 report, the number of theaters and screens in the movie theater industry stabilized at the same time. This could be because some areas had an adequate number of theaters. In contrast, the number of craft stores continued to increase, gradually expanding into new locations, and is anticipated to see significant growth as a result of 2025 being designated as the Year of Handicrafts.

Libraries

Libraries are vital institutions for learning, cultural engagement, and the preservation of knowledge. As part of the Library Sector Development Strategy, which the Libraries Commission announced in 2021, the library sector in the Kingdom is undergoing significant development.⁶³ The Index is restricted to public libraries affiliated with the Libraries Commission as well as private libraries due to the absence of reliable data on libraries in various categories. As of the end of 2024, there were 53 public libraries spread across the Kingdom, except Al-Baha Province. The distribution of public libraries varies significantly between areas, as illustrated in Figure 12.

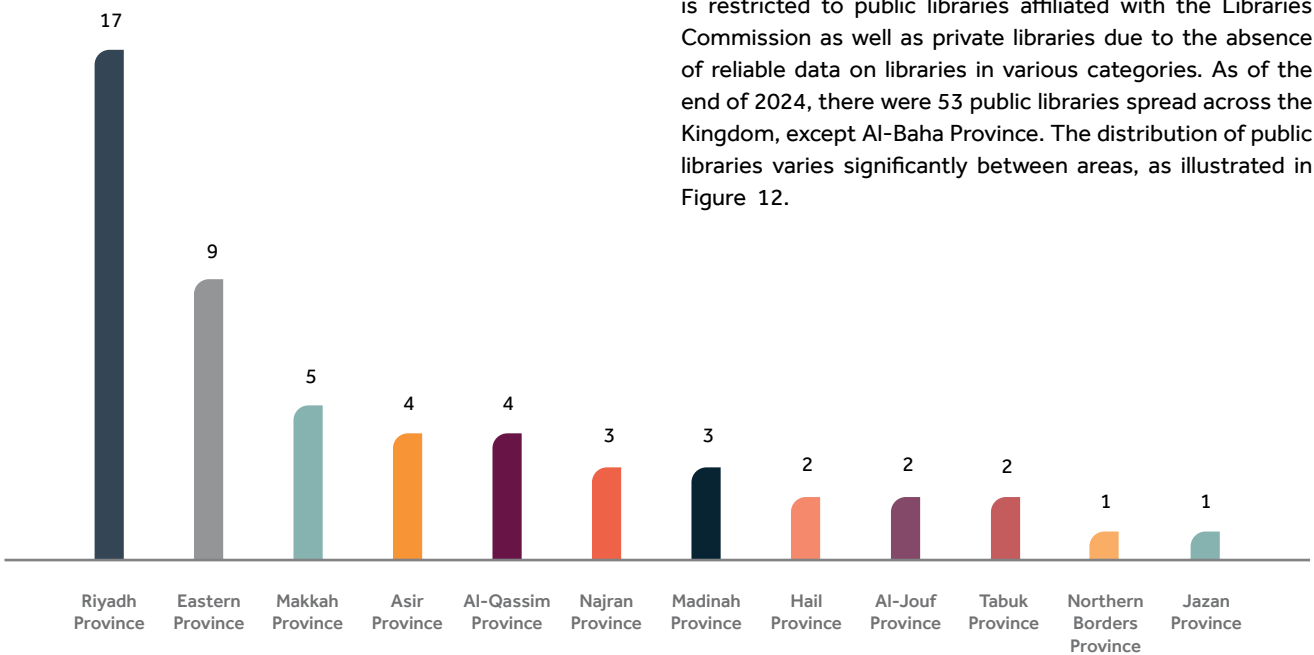


Figure 12: Number and distribution of public libraries in the Kingdom.



Although there are 17 public libraries in Riyadh Province, which accounts for 32% of all public libraries in the Kingdom, there are only five or fewer in densely populated areas, such as Makkah Province, and none in the Al-Baha Province. As part of the Libraries Commission's plan to enhance libraries' cultural presence and activate their roles as cultural hubs, it is noteworthy that several public libraries throughout the Kingdom are undergoing development and restoration.⁶⁴ Five public libraries in Dammam, Ahad Rafidah, Sakaka, Hail, and Buraydah will open as cultural centers in 2024 as a result of these efforts. As development projects are finished, it is anticipated that the number of public libraries will rise in the

upcoming years. As seen in Figure 12, there are 99 private libraries in all, the majority of which are located in the Makkah and Riyadh provinces.

Museums

By the end of 2024, there were 101 licensed museums, the majority of which were located in the Asir, Makkah, Eastern Province, and Riyadh Provinces. Additionally, there were 14 public museums, with the majority situated in Riyadh Province. It is anticipated that accurate data reflecting the reality of the museum sector will be available after the current organizational efforts are completed. The museum sector is currently experiencing organizational efforts and licensing requirements for both public and private museums, which explains the decrease in the number of museums compared to previous years. In previous years, there were over 50 public museums scattered throughout the Kingdom, while there were more than 230 private museums.

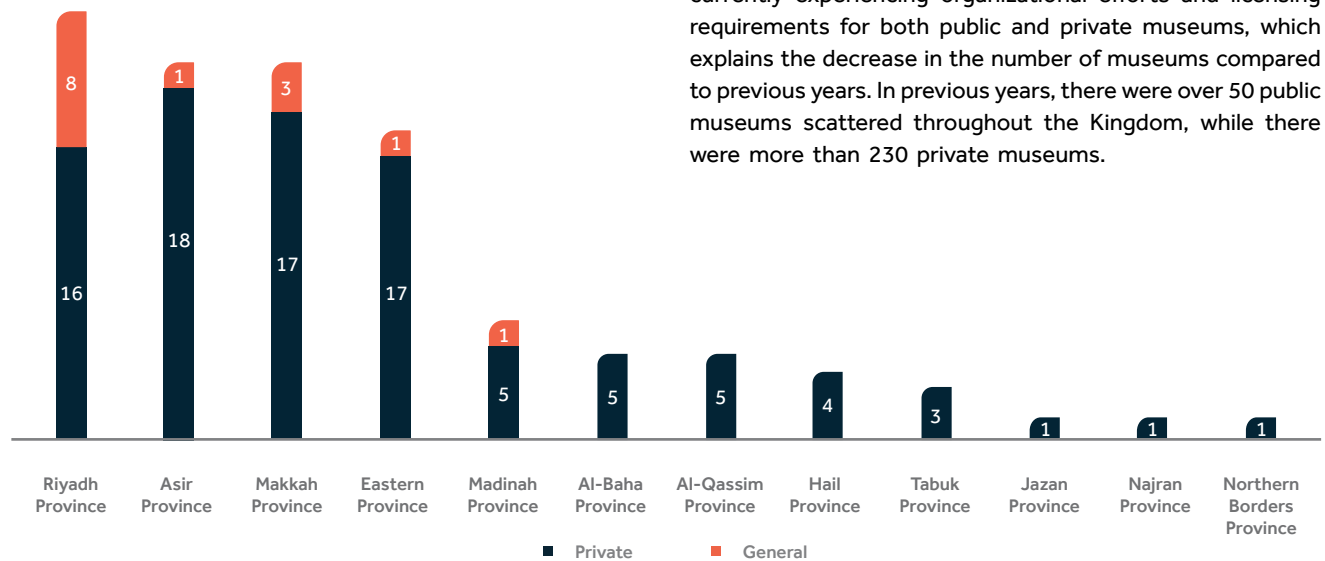


Figure 13: Number of licensed private and public museums and their geographical distribution.





As a result, the Index was limited to the revenue of licensed museums only. Numerous facts of the private museum industry's reality are depicted in the survey, which comprised a sample of 37 museums. The survey's findings showed that almost 40% of the private museums surveyed had between 100 and 5000 pieces in their holdings, compared to roughly 19% with between 5000 and 10,000 pieces, and 21% with more

than 10,000 pieces, with one museum having 50,000 pieces.⁶⁵ This diversity and large number of holdings reflect the interest in heritage and indicate the potential opportunities for those interested and invested in the field, especially in light of the encouraging turnout of visitors.

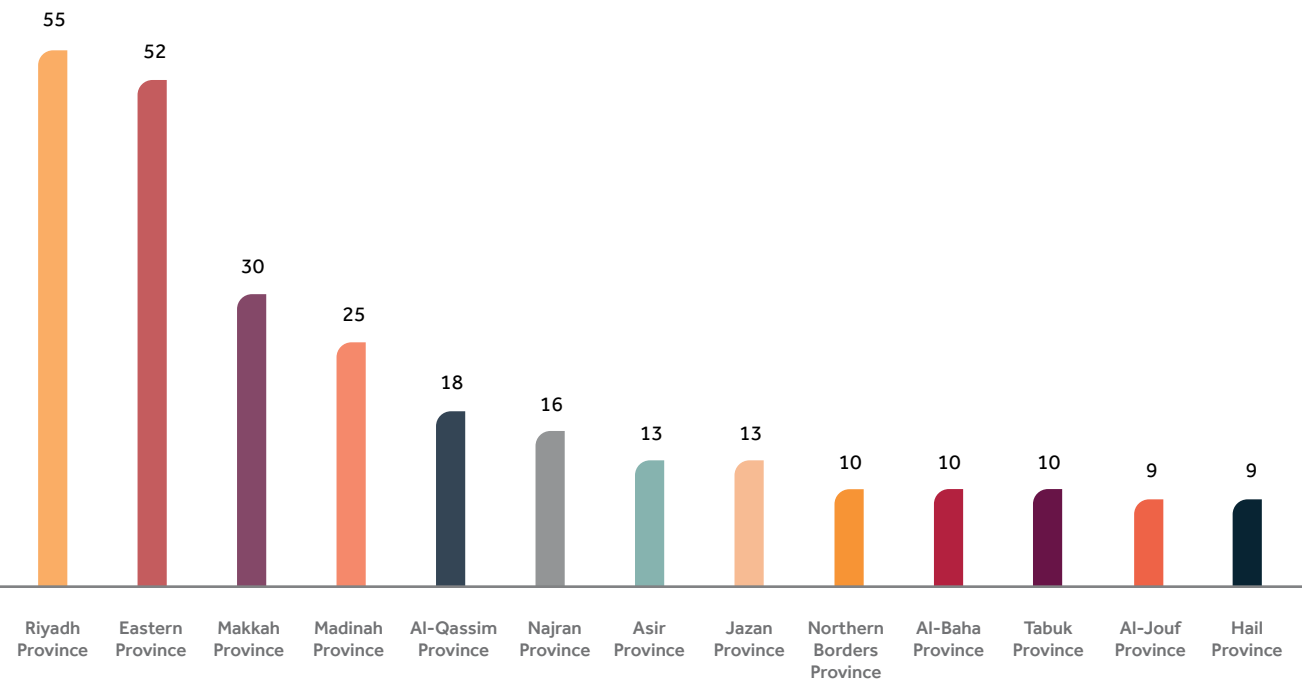


Figure 14: The number of theaters and their geographical distribution, by province.

Theaters

Although the data shows that many theaters in different parts of the Kingdom have different designs (open or closed), they differ in terms of capacity and preparedness to host different events. Nevertheless, efforts to develop the theater sector's infrastructure continue. The Report on the State of Culture 2023 mentioned a partial survey of a sample of theaters, which revealed that some of them require development and rehabilitation to host events. As in other cases, the lack of detailed data makes it difficult to make a thorough assessment of the status of theaters as venues for creativity and cultural participation. The number and distribution of theaters in the Kingdom's provinces are depicted in Figure 15. In 2024, there were 270 theaters in total, with half located in Makkah, Eastern Province, and Riyadh. Other theaters were owned by government buildings or private and non-profit organizations.

Cinemas

Following the official opening of the first movie theater in 2018, the number of theaters increased rapidly over the next four years. However, as the 2023 report tracked, the growth rates slowed. In 2024, the total number of theaters stabilized at 64, up slightly from 63 the previous year. In 2024, there were 630 screens, up from 613 in 2023. Despite the opening of three new movie theaters in Makkah and Al-Qassim provinces this year, the expansion of the total number of theaters to 64 was halted by the closure of several theaters in Riyadh Province. Intense competition among operators and a decline in demand for movie theaters in Riyadh, Makkah, and the Eastern Province are the reasons for this slowdown, which is in its second consecutive year, as well as the closure of some theaters for investment purposes.

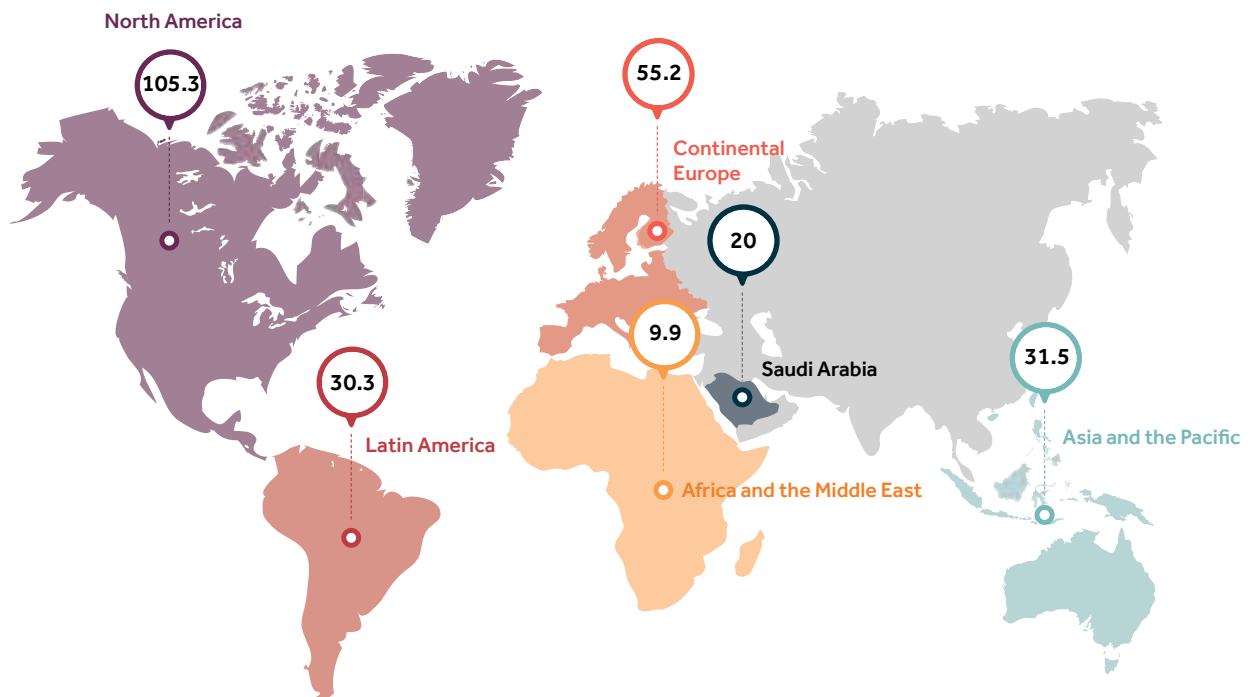


Figure 15: National Average of Screens per Capita Compared to Global Rates (Screens per One Million People).



Additionally, it reflects the mounting pressure on movie theaters, a worldwide issue that is not unique to the Kingdom. At the national level, the average number of screens per population, a measure of the number of movie theaters, increases to 20 screens per million people, up from 19 screens in 2023. The average number of screens per population in the Kingdom is higher than the average in Africa and the Middle East, but lower than the averages in South America and Asia, as well as lower than the averages in both Europe and North America, according to Figure 16.⁶⁶ In comparison to those countries, the Kingdom's cinema industry is relatively new,

which accounts for this decline. As a result, it is characterized by a lack of operating companies and a growing film production market.

At the same time, there is still a discrepancy in the locations of movie theaters across the Kingdom's provinces. Compared to last year, a slight increase in the number of cinemas and screens can be observed in the provinces of Al-Qassim and Makkah, as shown in Figure 17, compared to the total absence of cinemas in the provinces of Al-Baha, Najran, and Al-Jouf, despite more than eight years having passed since cinemas

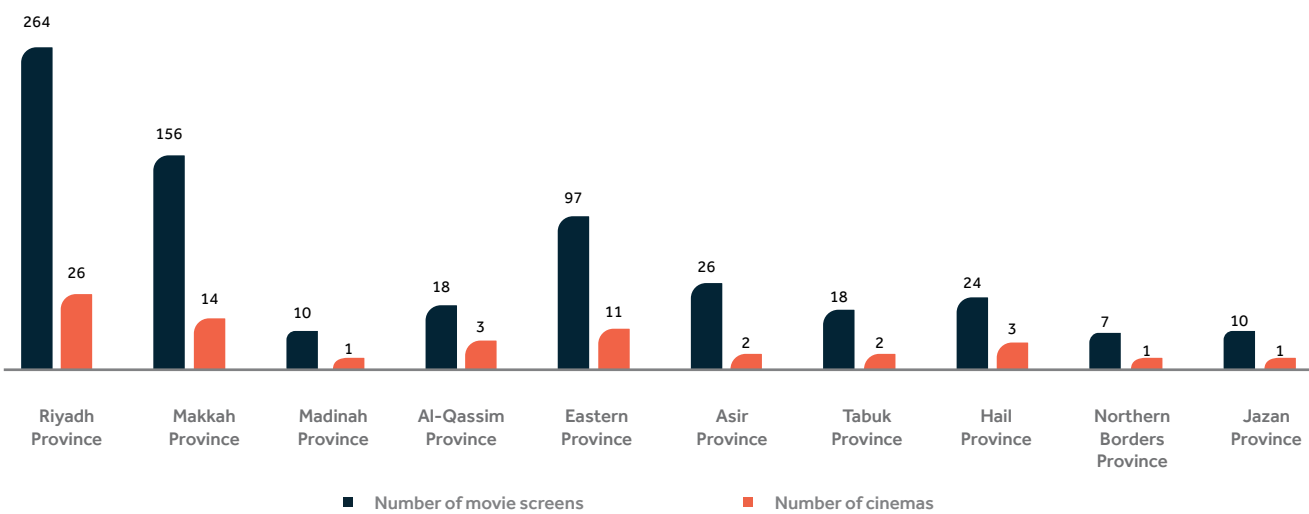


Figure 16: Distribution of cinemas and movie screens in the Kingdom's provinces.

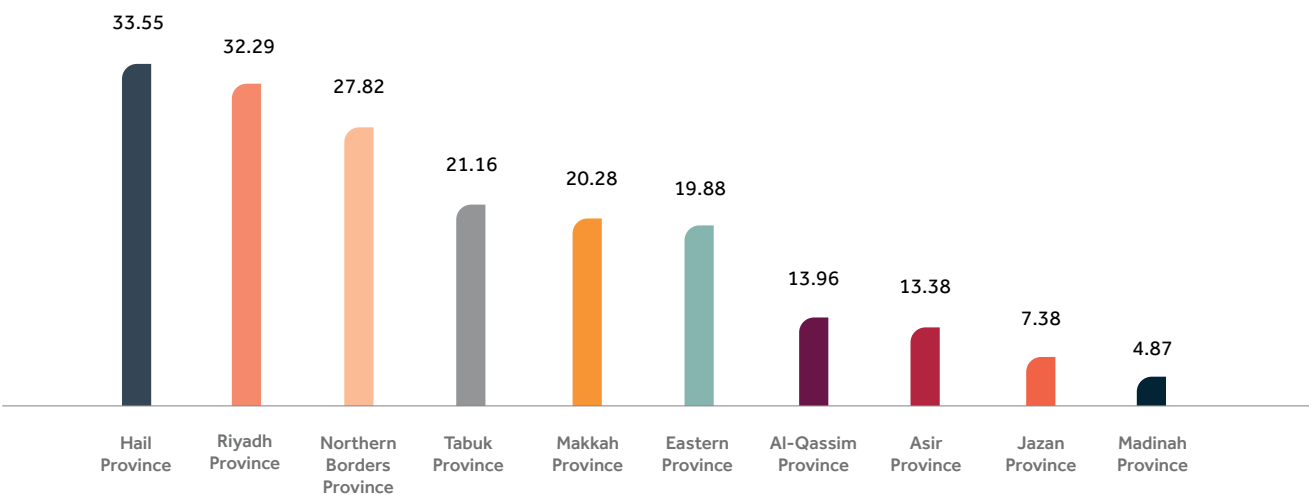


Figure 17: Distribution of display screens per million population in 2024.

were allowed to operate. The disparity in the geographical distribution of cinemas is also clearly reflected in the rate of screens per million inhabitants in the Kingdom's provinces, as Figure 17 shows that the Hail and Riyadh provinces have

almost equal rates of screens. In contrast, the rate decreases in other provinces, such as Madinah, which has less than five screens per million inhabitants, followed by Jizan with a rate of 7.38, then the Asir and Al-Qassim provinces. The majority

of the Kingdom's provinces, including Asir, Madinah, and Jazan, fall short of the national average of 20 screens per million people. In contrast, only six provinces surpass or come close to it. Except for Makkah Province, where the number of screens increased from 16 to 20 the previous year, there was minimal change in the distribution of screens per population in each Province compared to last year.

While the independent cinema industry in 2024 saw several developments, the most significant of which was the opening of "Cinema House" in Riyadh, a theater dedicated to showcasing new independent films that might not be commercially popular, creating a crucial environment for critics, filmmakers, and moviegoers. Commercial cinemas have been marked by slow growth and increased competition among operators.⁶⁷ In the same vein, the Performing Arts Center was established as a component of Jeddah's historic Culture Square, which houses movie theaters and cinemas in addition to the Red Sea Film Festival's main office.⁶⁸

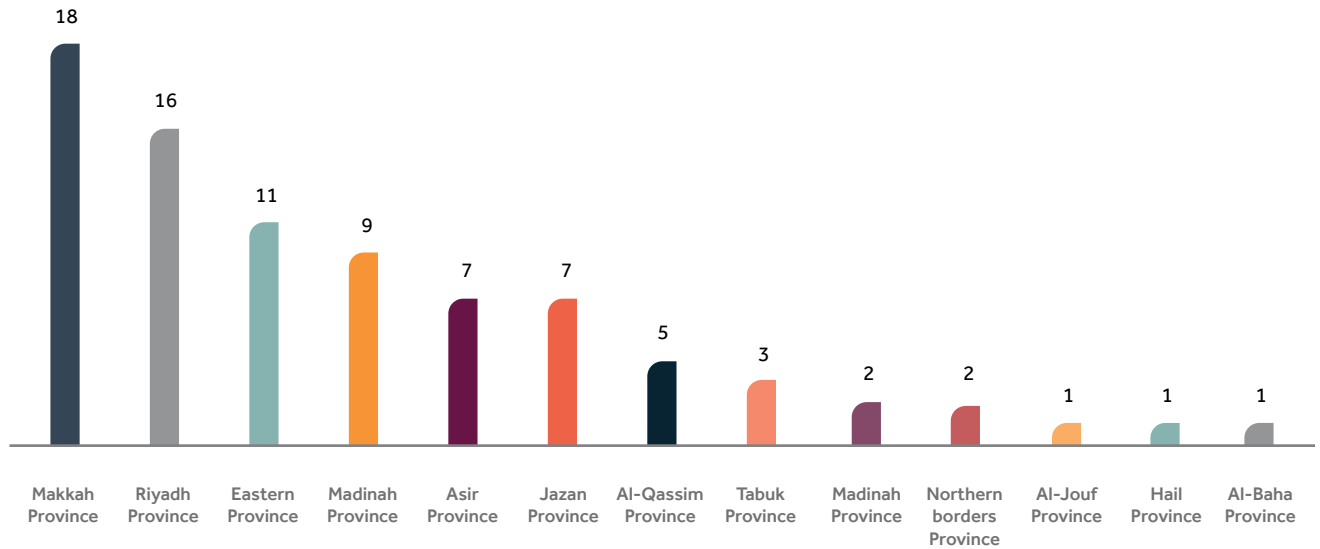


Figure 18: Geographical distribution of literary cafes registered in the Literary Partner Initiative in 2024.

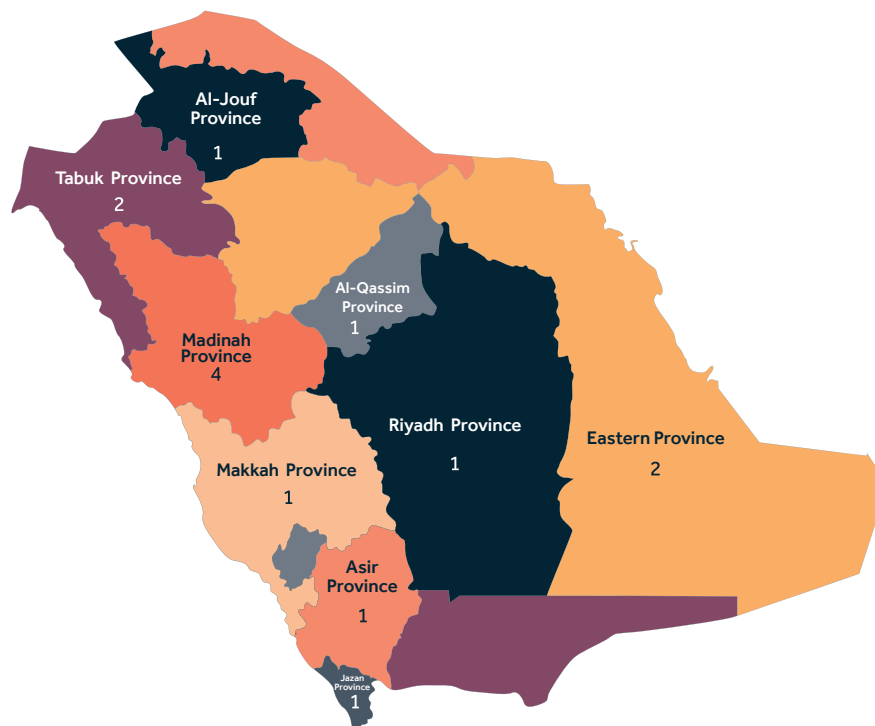


Figure 19: Number of facilities enrolled in the Craft House Initiative and their distribution by province.⁷⁰

Literary Cafes

Established by the Literature, Publishing, and Translation Commission three years ago, the Literary Partner Initiative continues to create venues for cultural events in cafes, enhancing the public’s exposure to culture and fostering relationships between individuals and locations. As the program enters its fourth year, there are 80 participating literary cafes overall in 2024, the same number as the previous year. The geographical distribution of literary cafes in the Kingdom’s provinces is depicted in Figure 18, where the discrepancy noted in the 2023 report is also present this year. Riyadh, Makkah, and the Eastern Province have seen a slight decline in the number of cafes participating in the initiative. In contrast, other Provinces, such as Madinah and Jazan, have seen an increase. For the first time since the initiative’s inception, a cafe has been added in Hail.⁶⁹

Artisans’ Houses

The Craft Houses Initiative, one of the Heritage Commission’s initiatives, continues to register and activate craft facilities in heritage sites as part of its ongoing efforts to support and empower practitioners of cultural industries’ handicrafts by developing their skills and offering stimulating environments for practicing traditional handicrafts in the Kingdom. Along with the opening of a fourth artisan house in Madinah, this year saw the opening of two new artisan houses in Riyadh and Jazan. As seen in Figure 19, the artisan houses are spread across nine Provinces. Even though three artisan houses opened this year, the closure of an artisan house in the Eastern Province meant that their total number only increased by two facilities.

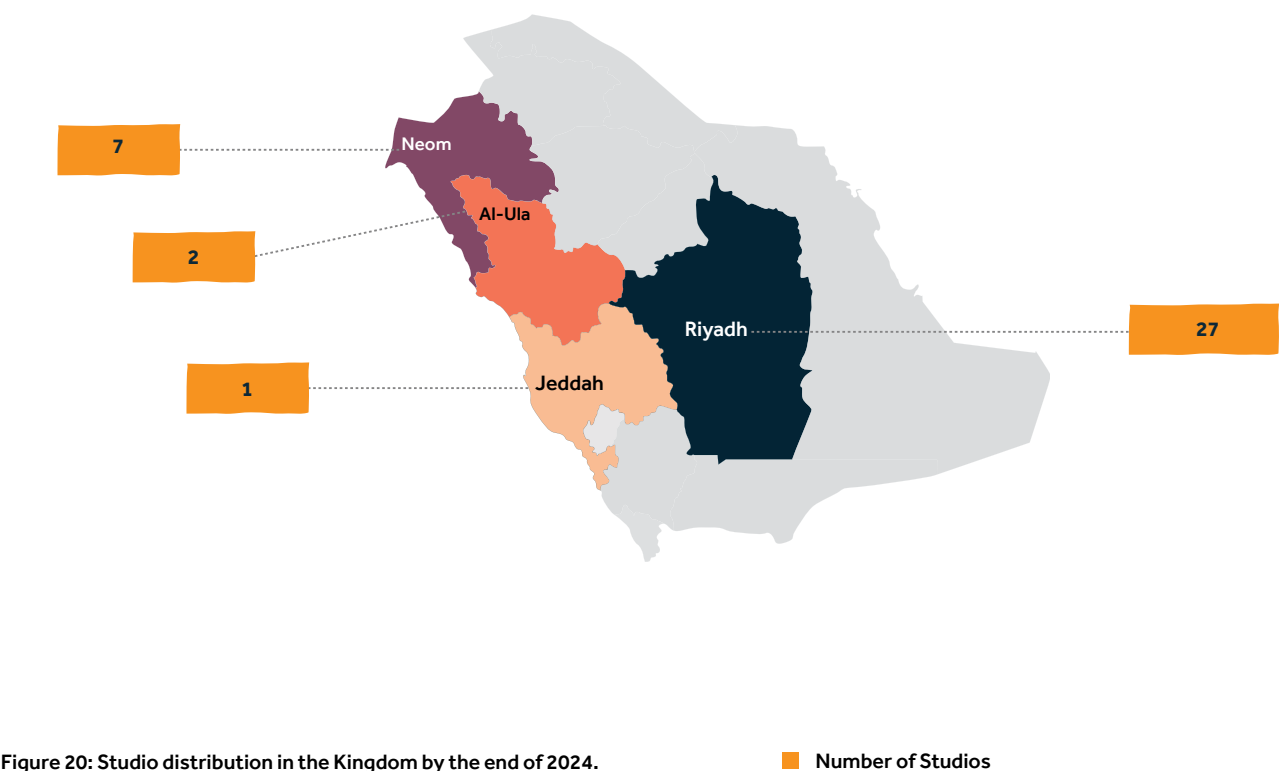


Figure 20: Studio distribution in the Kingdom by the end of 2024.

In addition to providing a venue for the exhibition and sale of their products at cultural events and tourist destinations, craft houses also offer training programs and workshops for practitioners in their respective industries to enhance their skills and improve the products of the cultural sector. All provinces’ craft shops concentrate on the traditional goods and industries for which the area is renowned. For instance, the House of Artisans in the Yanbu governorate specializes in the production of rasheen and the Samasmia machine.⁷⁰ At

the same time, the House of Artisans in the Jazan Province offers shell crafts and swafi weaving. Since 2025 has been designated as the Year of Handicrafts, it is anticipated that there will be a lot of activity in the artisans’ homes. This is because the Year of Handicrafts aims to promote the presence of traditional handicrafts in the cultural sphere and to highlight their cultural significance.

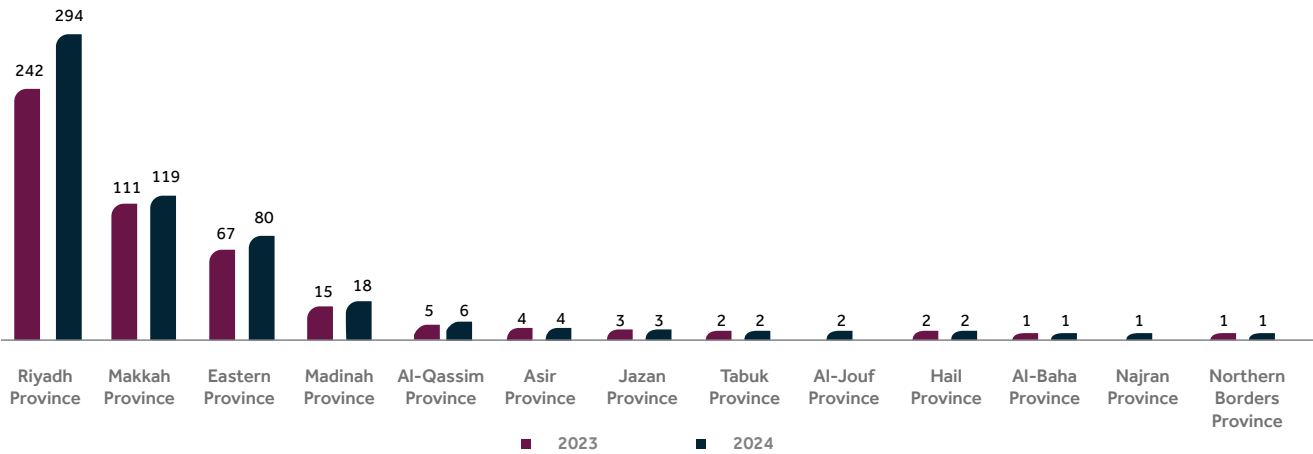


Figure 21: Number of publishing houses by province and their distribution in the Kingdom's provinces during 2023 and 2024.



Cultural Production Infrastructure

Since it converts imaginative concepts and visions into actual, observable results, this Index examines the facilities that support the cultural production process, or one of its stages, across various cultural sectors. In 2024, the Index is restricted to tracking the number and distribution of publishing houses and film production studios due to the same problem of lacking the data needed to evaluate the infrastructure of the cultural content production process and its various components.

Film Production Studios

The cities of Riyadh, Jeddah, Neom, and Al-Ula were home to 37 different film production studios. Riyadh had the most studios, with 27, followed by Tabuk with 7. This is shown in Figure 20. Given that numerous domestic and foreign films have been produced in Neom City and Al-Ula Governorate in recent years, the data demonstrate the appeal of these areas as filming locations.⁷²

Publishing Houses

According to data on publishing houses, there were 533 publishing houses at the end of 2024, a 21% increase from the previous year, indicating a slight increase in the number of publishing houses. With Riyadh making up roughly 52% of all publishing houses in the Kingdom, and the remaining 8% spread across the other Provinces, Figure 21 shows that the great majority of publishing houses are concentrated in the areas of Makkah, the Eastern Province, and Riyadh.⁷³

Empowerment and Regulatory Frameworks

Organizational Frameworks for Culture

This index tracks institutional and regulatory changes in the cultural sector, examines updates on cultural sector-related decisions and regulations, and tracks trends and developments in the licensing of cultural professions and services.



Table 11: List of Resolutions and Regulations Related to the Cultural Sector Issued in 2024.

Regulation or Resolution	Date
Council of Ministers’ resolution to merge the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Center for Language Planning and Policy into the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language	February 2024
Organization of the Saudi Tourism Commission	February 2024
Council of Ministers’ resolution to designate March 27th of each year as the official day of the Saudi Green Initiative	March 2024
Approval of Cultural Organizations	June 2024
Approval of the Kingdom’s accession to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance	May 2024
Approval to designate 2025 as the Year of Handicrafts	September 2024

After years of work on developing the regulatory and institutional structure of the cultural sector, the year saw a limited number of regulatory and institutional developments, the most significant of which were the approval of cultural bodies' regulations, the establishment of the Riyadh Non-Profit Foundation, and the designation of 2025 as the Year of Handicrafts.

Regulations and Policies

The Council of Ministries decision was issued on 27 Dhu'l-Qa'dah 1445 AH, corresponding to June 4, 2024, to approve

the regulations of the eleven cultural bodies and to cancel their organizational arrangements issued in 2020. This replaced the new rules that accompanied the establishment of the cultural bodies temporarily and helped to coordinate their relationship until a decision was made. The decision is a vital regulatory function that allows the bodies to carry out their tasks and accomplish their objectives. This decision also complements the development of the institutional and organizational structures of the cultural sector in the Kingdom, which has seen significant growth in the years since the establishment of the cultural bodies in 2020.⁷⁴

Table 12: Resolutions and regulations issued by the Ministry of Culture or cultural bodies in 2024.

Resolution or Regulation	Date	Issuing Body
Reduction of financial fees for cinema licensing and ticket charges	April 2024	Film Commission
Authorization to add book sales activity among eight related commercial activities	May 2024	Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Municipalities and Housing
Completion of procedures to transfer jurisdiction over the film and cinema sector from the General Authority for Audiovisual Media to the Film Commission	May 2024	Film Commission
Regulation for the provision of non-reimbursable grants and incentives for film projects	September 2024	Film Commission



The year 2025 was designated as the Year of Handicrafts. This is part of the Cultural Years initiative launched by the Ministry of Culture in 2020. It was also approved on 14 Rabiul Awwal 1446 AH, corresponding to September 18, 2024. In addition to supporting Saudi artisans and their craft production to help diversify the economy, the Year of Handicrafts aims to highlight the cultural significance of these occupations and handicraft-based products, increase awareness of their historical importance, define their types, and enhance their visibility in cultural events and daily life.⁷⁵

The Council of Ministers authorized the Kingdom's accession to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance in 2024 as part of the efforts to preserve natural heritage. This Convention seeks to protect, conserve, and manage the use of wetlands due to their biodiversity, which serves as a habitat for a variety of animal species. The Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, which helps mitigate climate change and conserve species by protecting their natural

habitats, is made possible by the Convention, which allows the Kingdom to rationalize the use of its wetlands.⁷⁶

The sale of books will be permitted as an extra activity within eight related commercial activities, such as cafes and supermarkets, according to announcements made by the Ministry of Culture, Municipalities, and Housing. Without needing a separate commercial license for selling books, the licensee can include this activity through the Baladi platform as part of the main commercial permit for activities specified in the decision. This promotes book acquisition and reading culture among the people.⁷⁷

Following the Council of Ministers' resolution in 2024, the necessary legal procedures were completed to transfer the Public Authority for Media Regulation's jurisdiction over the cinema and film industries to the Film Commission. The transfer consolidates the Commission's role in building the cinema industry's value chain by encompassing all aspects of the movie business, including licenses for operating,

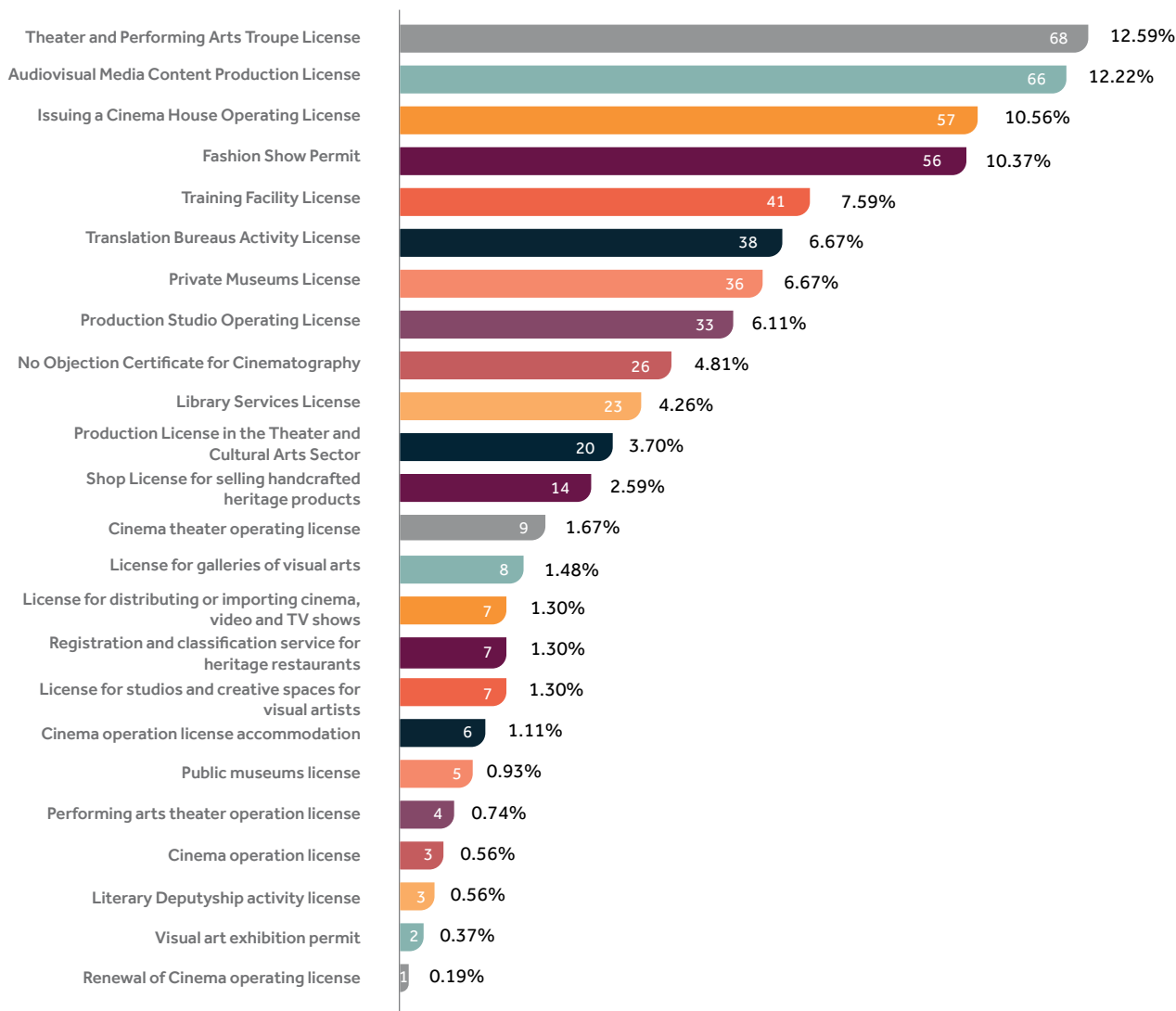


Figure 22: Number of licenses issued by Abde'a platform in 2024.



production, import, and distribution.⁷⁸ As part of this function, the Film Commission decided in April 2024 to reduce the financial compensation for movie theater operating licenses and ticket sales, aiming to incentivize operators to lower ticket prices and offer deals to customers, which would help increase the number of theaters and boost attendance.⁷⁹

Institutional Developments
The year saw the establishment of the non-profit Riyadh Foundation and the issuance of a royal decree approving its statute at the institutional level. In addition to supporting culture, the arts, and initiatives that enhance people's quality of life, the Foundation focuses on developing,

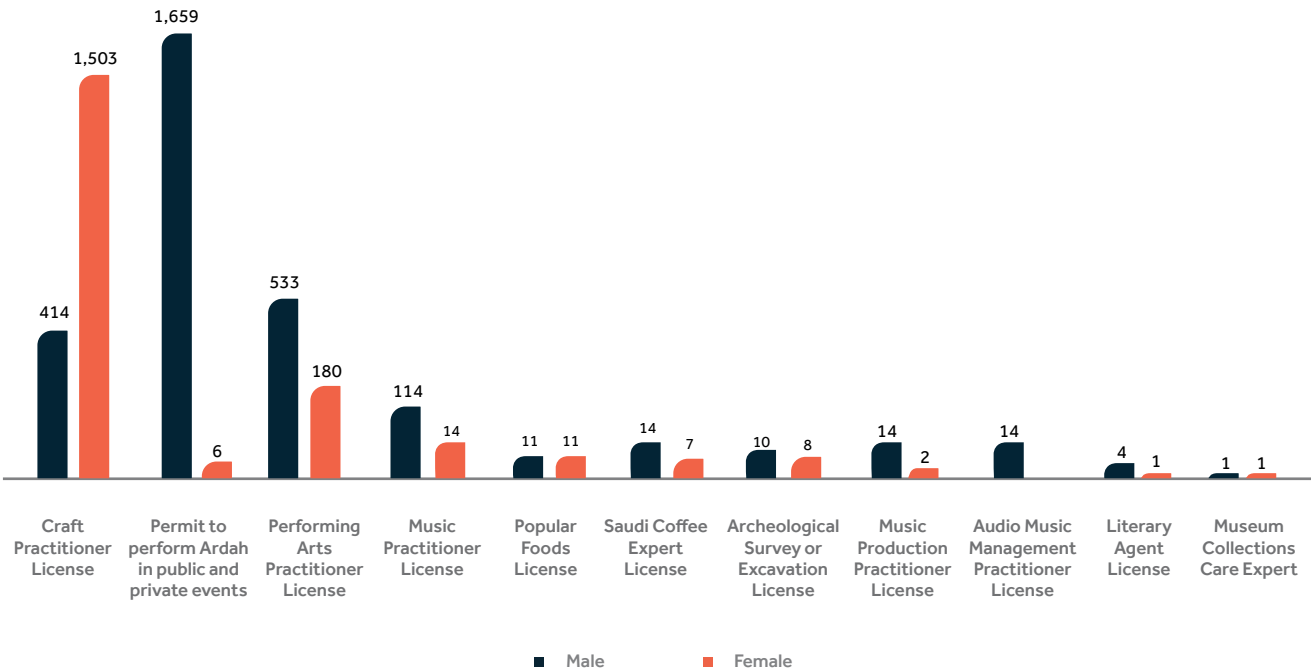


Figure 23: Distribution of licensed practitioners on Abde'a platform in 2024, by gender.

implementing, and financing social programs. It also aims to become a preeminent organization in its field both locally and internationally.⁸⁰ The resolution to combine the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Center for Language Planning and Policies and Planning into the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language was another of this year’s institutional developments; the Serving the Arabic Language Index reviewed the specifics of the decision.

Licenses

The Abde’a platform grants licenses for various cultural activities to individual practitioners and establishments as part of efforts to regulate the cultural field, improve the outputs of cultural products and services, and increase their contributions to the national economy.

Following the increase in licenses submitted in previous years due to the introduction of new licenses, 2024 saw stability in the number of license types provided by the Abde’a platform, reaching 37 licenses compared to 36 permits in the previous year.

The platform issued significantly more licenses than it did in 2023; in 2024, there were 540 licensed establishments, representing a 32% increase from 409 in 2023. Although the “Theater and Performing Arts Troupe” license of the theater sector is the most issued this year, the film sector, specifically the “production of audiovisual media content” and “accommodation of a cinema operating license,” accounted for the most significant percentage of licenses issued during the year, as illustrated in Figure 22.

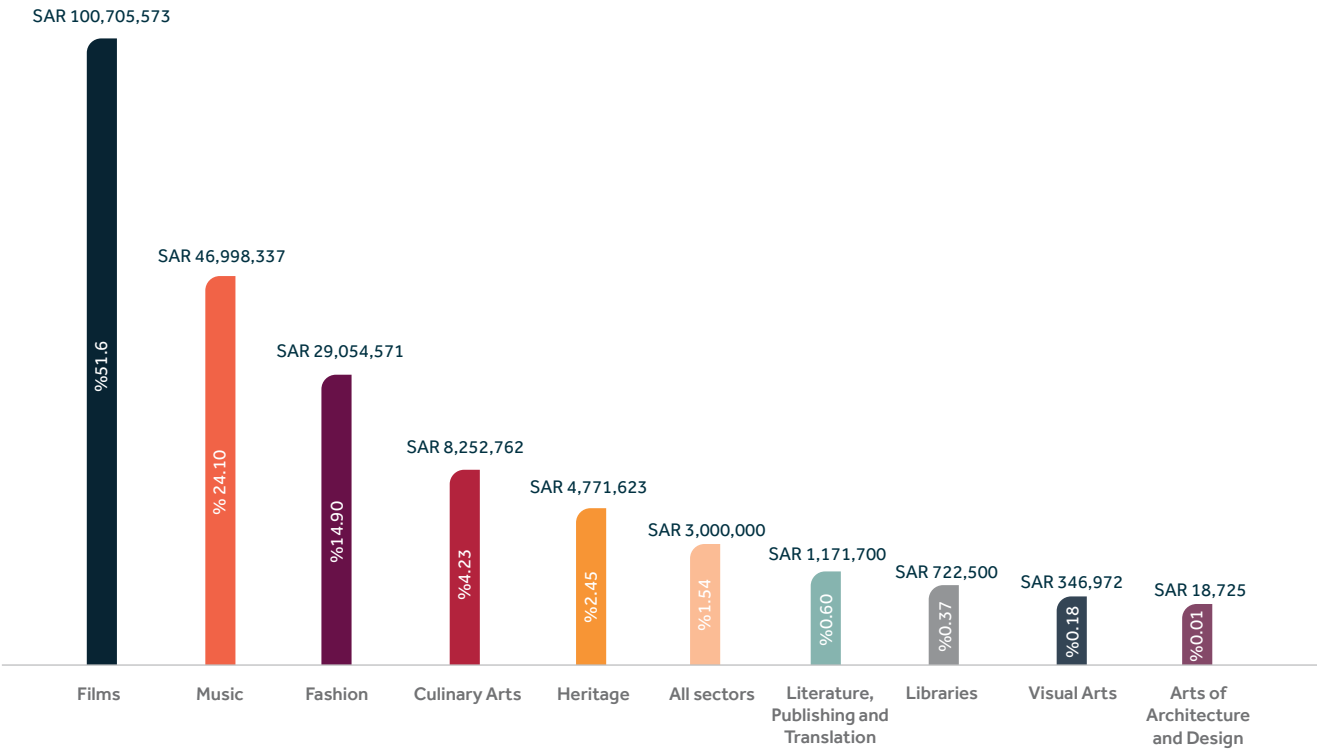


Figure 24: Support provided by the Cultural Development Fund in 2024, by sector (in Million Saudi Riyals).

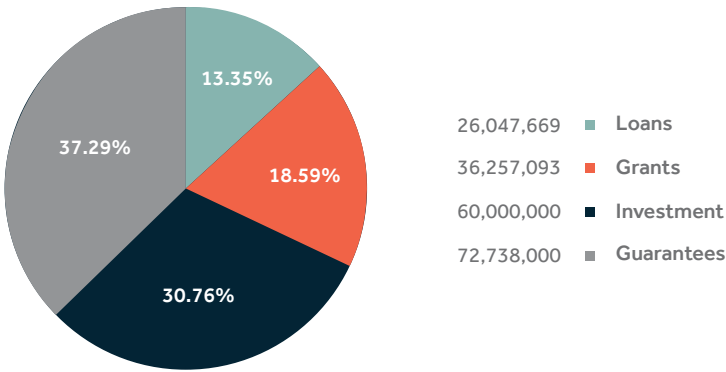


Figure 25: Support provided by the Cultural Development Fund in 2024, by type of support.

The establishment licenses were distributed among various cultural activities.⁸¹ The number of licensed practitioners in the cultural sectors also increased, rising by 22% to 4,521 this year from 3,699 in 2023. Even so, the growth rate is significantly slower than it was the previous year, which indicates that the cultural sector has entered a period of regulatory stability, especially after the introduction of the stable license types. With 42% of all licenses granted this year, the “Craft Practitioner” license was the most common, followed by the “Performing Ardha in Public and Private Events” permit (37%). The Theater and Performing Arts Commission issued half of the licenses, with the Heritage Commission coming in second.⁸² In terms of license distribution by gender, minor adjustments were made in 2024. Although the high number of males in most of the licenses still persists, the “Craft Practitioner” license - the most issued license this year - was primarily issued to females and by a large margin over males, which is consistent with the data of the craft registry, which shows the predominance of females in most crafts. Figure 23 demonstrates that the proportion of male and female license holders was close in “Archaeological Survey or Excavation” and equal in “Popular Food” and “Expert in the Care of Museum Collections”.⁸³

Supporting Culture and Creativity

The Kingdom’s cultural system offers numerous initiatives and programs to empower the cultural industries and support creative individuals. This Index tracks various forms of support, including non-material support through training and development programs, consultations from literary and artistic residencies, incubators, and accelerators, as well as material support through funding, grants, and financial awards. The majority of empowerment and support programs are provided by government organizations, particularly the Ministry of Culture and cultural authorities. The non-profit sector collaborates with them on several projects. These noteworthy characteristics define cultural support efforts in 2024. However, the private sector’s limited assistance—which is restricted to sponsorships, such as the Fashion Commission and the International Red Sea Festival Awards—is apparent. The year witnessed notable advancements in the fields of cultural investment and financing, including the establishment of an investment fund for the film industry and the introduction of a cultural finance product by the Cultural Development Fund in collaboration with regional banks. These developments suggest that the private sector will play a more significant role in promoting creativity and culture. Furthermore, a wide range of cultural sectors received support, albeit in different amounts and forms. There was a noticeable lack of non-material support for the music industry. In contrast, the fields of film, literature, the arts, and translation received substantial support in both material and non-material forms. They were represented by funds, grants, literary and artistic residencies, business incubators and accelerators, and awards, so the types of support were essentially unchanged from prior years.

Table 13: Number of works supported by the Red Sea Fund in 2024.

Program	Number of Works
First Cycle of Film Funding (In - Progress)	6
Second round of film funding (Production stage)	24
Third round of film financing (Development stage)	12
Fourth round of film financing (In - Progress)	8



Support Funds

One of the most significant sources of funding for cultural initiatives and projects is the Cultural Development Fund. In 2024, the Fund awarded 41 cultural projects a total of approximately 195 million Saudi riyals in grants, loans, and guarantees, surpassing the number of projects it had supported in the two previous years.⁸⁴ The most significant portion of support went to the film industry, with SAR 40.7 million going to 15 projects. Additionally, SAR 60 million was set aside as a contribution to the film industry investment fund, which the Fund established in collaboration with MIFIC Capital and Ruya Media Ventures.⁸⁵ The allocation of the Cultural Development Fund’s support to different cultural sectors is depicted in Figure 24, and its types—grants, loans, investments, and guarantees—are shown in Figure 25. In collaboration with Regional banks, the Cultural Development Fund introduced its cultural financing product that year to finance micro, small, and medium-sized cultural businesses through adaptable and low-risk financing options.⁸⁶ The introduction of the cultural financing product stimulates the private sector’s contribution to efforts supporting culture

and creativity, making it a significant addition to the Fund's cultural sector support mechanisms, which already include investment, incentives, consultancy, and vouchers. Through the Red Sea Fund, which offers assistance through four programs that include projects in progress, development, and production, the Red Sea Film Foundation has made significant contributions to the film industry since its founding in 2020. This year, 50 works spread across the four programs received financial support from the Fund.⁸⁷



Figure 26: Literary retreats organized by the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission in 2024, and numbers of beneficiaries.

Creative Support Programs

Literary and Artistic Residencies

In 2024, numerous literary and artistic residencies were available, encompassing the visual arts, literature, film, and handcrafted cultural industries. Twelve literary retreats covering a variety of literary genres, including poetry, short stories, and novels, were organized by the Literature, Publishing, and Translation Commission and dispersed throughout the Kingdom. In terms of literary residencies, four Saudi authors and poets participated in four local and

international literary residencies in Scotland and Al-Ula, Asir. These residencies covered topics such as poetry writing, children's literature, and criticism. The year also saw a large number of artistic residencies, ranging from domestic to foreign residencies and encompassing the visual arts and film industries. To support individuals working in the film industry at various stages, the Film Commission organized two residencies in Riyadh and the Eastern Province. The first residency was dedicated to turning novel texts into feature film scripts, and twelve screenwriters benefited from it.

Table 14: Residencies in 2024, and numbers of beneficiaries.

Residency	Organizer	Place	Number of beneficiaries		
			Male	Female	Total
Saudi Novel-to-Screenplay Residency	Film Commission	Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia	5	7	12
Film Production Residency		Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	6	4	10
Golden Globe Residency	Red Sea Foundation Visual Arts Commission	Los Angeles, United States	?	?	?
Bush International Art Residency	Visual Arts Commission	Paris, France	-	6	6
Intermix Residency Program		Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	8	37	45
Delfina Residency Program		London, United Kingdom	1	2	3
International Residency Program - Lugano, Switzerland		Lugano, Switzerland	-	1	1
Short Residency Silkscreen Poster Printing	Misk Art Institute	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	2	6	8
Short Residency - Photography			6	4	10
Short Residency - Graphic Design and Arabic Calligraphy			2	8	10
Short Residency - Professional Painting Practice			-	6	6
Space Residency (7th and 8th cycles)			6	18	24
Craft residency	Heritage Commission	Florence, Italy	2	4	6
Visual Arts Residency (2 residencies)	Misk Art Institute in collaboration with the Berlin Art Institute	Berlin, Germany	2	2	4
Textile Art Residency	Misk Art Institute in collaboration with KHOJ	New Delhi, India	-	2	2
Contemporary Art Residency	Misk Art Institute in collaboration with Mono Lisboa Residency	Lisbon, Portugal	-	2	2
Contemporary Art Residency	Misk Art Institute in collaboration with Al Riwaq Art Space	Manama, Bahrain	1	1	2

Ten participants benefited from the second residency,⁸⁸ which concentrated on the phases of film production. Several filmmakers benefited from the Red Sea Film Foundation's international residency in Los Angeles, which included meetings with Cine Conference filmmakers and training workshops.⁸⁹ Fifty-five artists benefited from the Visual Arts Commission's four art residencies, three of which were international and took place in the UK, Switzerland, and France.⁹⁰ The Misk Art Institute continued to offer short and long-term local art residencies in the fields of photography, painting, and graphic design. In partnership with four art institutions in Bahrain, Germany, Portugal, and India, the Institute arranged five international residencies that benefited ten artists.⁹¹ Six Saudi artisans and women participated in a craft residency in Florence, Italy, organized by the Heritage Commission in the field of craft cultural industries. The purpose of the residency was to teach Saudi artisans traditional Italian pottery techniques. Table 14 shows the most critical artistic residencies organized during the year.

Incubators and Accelerators

One of the most well-known forms of non-financial assistance is provided by incubators and accelerators, which effectively support entrepreneurs and accelerate the development of cultural initiatives by offering funding, mentoring, and training. Three incubators were established in 2024, two of which had already been established in prior years. For example, the Culinary Arts Commission's Kawn Incubator, currently in its third season, aims to create investment opportunities in the culinary arts industry and launch businesses with innovative

ideas, with 60 beneficiaries this year. In its second season, the Literature, Publishing, and Translation Commission also launched the Writers Incubator, which supports emerging Saudi authors in their writing, publishing, and regional promotion, particularly in niche literary genres such as mystery, science fiction, autobiography, and travel. Ten writers—three men and seven women—benefited from the six-month Writers' Incubator, which took place in various cities throughout the Kingdom.⁹²

The year also saw the establishment of a new incubator, the Royal Institute of Traditional Arts' Traditional Arts Business Incubator, which aims to equip its beneficiaries with the knowledge and abilities necessary for project innovation and entrepreneurship in the traditional arts sector. It also seeks to expand the local market for conventional arts and handmade cultural industries by promoting the products of its beneficiaries and by creating an investment environment that supports the incubator's projects. Ten beneficiaries and twenty-five female beneficiaries benefited from the incubator's numerous training workshops and individual counselling sessions.⁹³

This year saw the launch of two business accelerators. The Royal Institute of Traditional Arts' Traditional Arts Business Accelerator, which benefited 15 participants, featured multiple training workshops on project financing, brand building, design, and intellectual property.⁹⁴ The Heritage Commission also provided a business accelerator aimed at developing investment opportunities and developing startups in the heritage sector,⁹⁵ which reached 269 beneficiaries (131 males and 138 females).⁹⁶



Grants

A significant advancement in the grants track occurred in 2024 with the adoption of the Ministry of Culture's strategic direction for cultural research and the announcement of cultural research priorities, which coincided with the start of the cultural research grants program. Research grants are concerned with funding research and studies in various cultural fields. Culture and its environment, cultural communication, diversity and inclusion, sustainability and quality of life, and cultural organizations and policies are among the program's top research priorities. In an attempt to promote scientific and knowledge production in areas that impact cognition and application, or that address the needs of the Saudi cultural sector, the research grants program's first cycle featured six topics drawn from the research priorities.⁹⁷

The year also saw the introduction of several grants, which were dispersed across the creative and knowledge domains. These ranged from grants to support artistic production and the Arabic audiovisual content industry to research grants aimed at promoting scientific production related to the cultural sector. The Ministry of Culture established the Camel Studies Grant in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture. Its goal was to close knowledge gaps in camel research and emphasize the cultural significance of camels and their role in social and economic life. Twenty experts, comprising 15 male and 5 female researchers, benefited from the grant, and their work produced 20 studies in the grant's field.⁹⁸

The Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission offered three grants this year to support research in addition to the ministry's efforts. The first grant, the Philosophy Grant, is being provided for the second consecutive year and is intended to support Saudi researchers in producing and publishing their work in peer-reviewed scientific journals. Nineteen researchers, both male and female, benefited from the 60,000 Saudi riyal grant. The Commission's efforts to support Arab researchers in publishing 100 translation-related research papers, as reported in the previous year's report, are being continued with the Translation Grant. Two new grants in the areas of children's and adolescent literature were introduced during the year. The first is the Children's Literature Grant, which aims to produce 10 scientific studies to be published in peer-reviewed journals, worth SAR 60,000 per grant, from which 10 male and female researchers benefited, and another grant in cooperation with the Chair of Children's Literature at Princess Norah University, worth SAR 8,500, from which six female researchers benefited.

The Misk Art Grant, awarded by the Misk Art Institute for the fifth consecutive year, was the most well-known of the creative production grants in 2024. This year's award went to five winners.⁹⁹ Along with the Ithra Content Initiative grants, previously mentioned in the Arabic Language Service Index, the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) also continued to support filmmakers with Ithra grants for film production, benefiting 15 projects.¹⁰⁰

Table 15: The most prominent research and creative production grants in 2024.

Grants	Donor Organization	Number of Beneficiaries
Camel Studies Grant	Ministry of Culture in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture	20
Philosophy Grant	Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission	9
Translation Grant	Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission	100
Children's Literature Grant	Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission	10
Children's Literature Chair Grants	Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University in collaboration with the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission	6
Ithra Grants to Support Film Production	King Abdulaziz World Cultural Center (Ithra)	15 projects
Ithra Content Initiative Grants	King Abdulaziz World Cultural Center (Ithra)	17 projects
Misk Arts Grant	Misk Art Institute	5
Total		182

Cultural Competitions and Awards

One of the best ways to honor and promote creativity and cultural production—whether individually or institutionally—is through competitions and awards. More than 600 people and organizations benefited from the numerous cultural awards presented in 2024, encompassing fields such as theater and film, culinary arts and architecture, design and visual arts, Arabic language, and publishing. The combined total monetary value of the awards exceeded SAR 8 million.¹⁰¹ The management and conservation chapter offers a concise summary of the most well-known cultural awards and competitions as an indicator of the reality of support and empowerment in the cultural sector. In contrast, the creativity and production chapter keeps a closer eye on cultural awards, analyzing their trends and winners. The most notable cultural honors and contests held in 2024 are listed in Table 16.

As previously stated, the majority of awards are still given out by governmental or semi-governmental entities, and the private sector's involvement in award launches and sponsorships has increased modestly. It is essential to note that some of the awards, such as the Red Sea Market and Labs Awards and the Amateur Theater Clubs Festival Awards, included various forms of support in addition to the competitive aspect, including training and guidance programs and production funding. The Library Hackathon, organized by the Libraries Commission in collaboration with the Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority (Monsha'at), also inspired participants to create innovative and valuable solutions across various fields,¹⁰² the Tanween Challenge organized by the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra),¹⁰³ and the Theaterthon Challenge organized by the Theater and Performing Arts Commission to develop technical innovations in theater.¹⁰⁴



Table 16: Examples of the most prominent cultural prizes and the number of winners in 2024.

Award	Organizer	Number of winners	Monetary value Prizes
King Salman Urban Charter Award	Architecture and Design Commission	9	SAR 160,000
King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language	8 (Individuals and Organizations)	SAR 1,600,000
Al Yesser Awards	Red Sea Film Festival	10	SAR 740,625
Red Sea Market Awards	Red Sea Market	6	SAR 356,250
Red Sea Labs Awards	Red Sea Labs	4	SAR 675,000
Kingdom Photographic Award - Second Cycle	Visual Arts Commission	5	SAR 200,000
Children's Diction Challenge	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language	60	SAR 250,000
Literary Partner Initiative Awards, Third Cycle	Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission	12	SAR 1020,000
Dezantathon	Architecture and Design Commission	8 teams	SAR 525,000
Prince Abdullah Al Faisal Prize for Arabic Poetry (Fifth Session)	Academy of Arabic Poetry	8	SAR 1,100,000
KAPSARC Arabic Language Award	King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center (KAPSARC), in cooperation with the King Salman International Center for Arabic Language	7	SAR 220,000
Your Design in Every Home	Architecture and Design Commission in collaboration with Abyat	13 (Individuals and Teams)	SAR 100,000
Ad-Dir'iyah Mosque Architectural Design Competition	Ad-Dir'iyah Company	3 teams (36 participants)	SAR 95,000
Saudi Elite Chefs Competition	Culinary Arts Commission	6	Necklace
Regional and National Dishes Competition	Culinary Arts Commission	15	SAR 300,000
Saudi Heritage Revival Award	Fashion Commission in collaboration with Swarovski	5	Training opportunities
Amateur Theater Clubs Festival Awards	Theater and Performing Arts Commission	12 (clubs and individuals)	Shields ¹⁰⁵
Prince Sultan University Regional Translation Award	Prince Sultan University	6 organizations	Shields
Theaterthon Competition	Theater and Performing Arts Commission	3 teams	SAR 80,000
Library Hackathon	Libraries Commission	5 teams	SAR 300,000
Ithra Art Prize - Sixth Edition ¹⁰⁶	King Abdulaziz World Cultural Center (Ithra)	1	SAR 375,000
Riyadh International Book Fair Excellence in Publishing Awards	Literature, Translation and Publishing Commission	5 publishing houses	SAR 250,000
Total Financial Value of the Awards			SAR 8,046,875

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Chapter Two

2

Creativity and Cultural Production

- Cultural Production
- Creativity



Based on the UNESCO (2009) model of the culture cycle, the chapter discusses two interrelated aspects: creativity and cultural production. Regarding production, the chapter examines the quantity and distribution of cultural activity in the Kingdom using several important metrics, such as the kinds of audiovisual, theatrical, and artistic productions, as well as publishing and translation productions. As a reflection of the vibrancy of the creative scene and the variety of its paths, the chapter defines creativity as a distinctive style of work that is measured by looking at notable awards at the local, regional, and international levels.

The report's data showed a range of cultural production levels, from encouraging growth to decline. For instance, support for translating into and out of Arabic has grown dramatically. However, the quantity of published literary works is still declining. More than half of the translators for the 743 books that the Tarjim Initiative has translated are women. There was also an increase in published research in cultural fields, suggesting that the research gaps noted in earlier editions are being filled. The first two studies in the field of films were published, and this was the most noteworthy of these. A variety of providers, such as theater groups, amateur clubs, and university theaters, were noted despite the drop in theatrical production. Although fewer films were made this year, feature films continued to grow at a favorable rate over the previous three years (2022–2024), reaching 41%. The number of applications and certificates for voluntary registration of copyrighted works has also significantly increased, indicating a greater understanding of the value of safeguarding cultural production and the efficacy of policies adopted to control it.

Cultural Production

Literary Publishing

In 2024, only 509 books were published by Saudi authors. According to data from researcher Khaled Al-Youssef's Bibliography of Authorship and Literary Publishing in the Kingdom, this year's literary publishing volume is the lowest since 2018 and even lower than the literary output documented during the pandemic in 2021. Following a ten-year peak in production that reached 701 books in 2022, the pace of literary publishing has been gradually slowing down over the last two years, as shown in Figures 1 and 2. Since the decline in literary publishing may be counterbalanced by an increase in the publication of other kinds of books and publications, the data available for the report is still insufficient to explain this decline or to read it in its larger context. This demonstrates the pressing need for thorough, centralized data that tracks trends and measures publishing indicators in the Kingdom. Given that domestic publishing figures are rising and show encouraging activity by publishing houses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, this decline may also be ascribed to the limited access of new authors, publishing houses, or literary publishing patterns to Al-Youssef's bibliography.

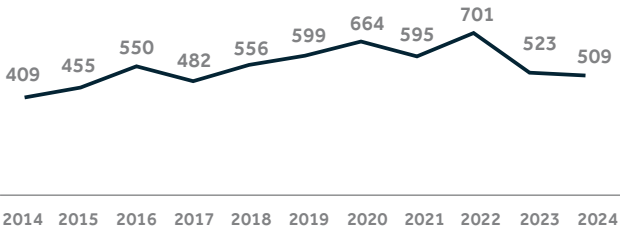


Figure 1: Literary writing and publishing in 2014-2024. ¹

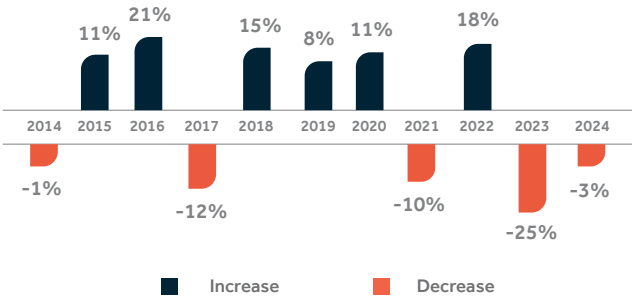


Figure 2: Growth rate in literary publishing in 2014-2024. ²

The Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission introduced the first iteration of the Writers Incubator Program in 2023 to assist up-and-coming Saudi authors. Ten novels in a variety of unusual literary genres, such as autobiographical, travel, science fiction, mystery, crime, and graphic novels, were published this year, marking the beginning of its first fruits. ³ The majority of literary genres saw a general decline in publishing, except novels, which saw their highest level since 2019 (218 novels published this year, up nearly 20% from 2023). The quantity of books published in other genres, including short stories, translated Arabic poetry, the history and criticism of Arabic poetry, and others, also showed a fair amount of stability. New initiatives in theatrical publishing were also seen this year, as evidenced by a push to publish books on theater and performing arts, including several critical studies, a study on children's theater, and other topics. The Theater and Performing Arts Commission provided the framework for these initiatives. ⁴

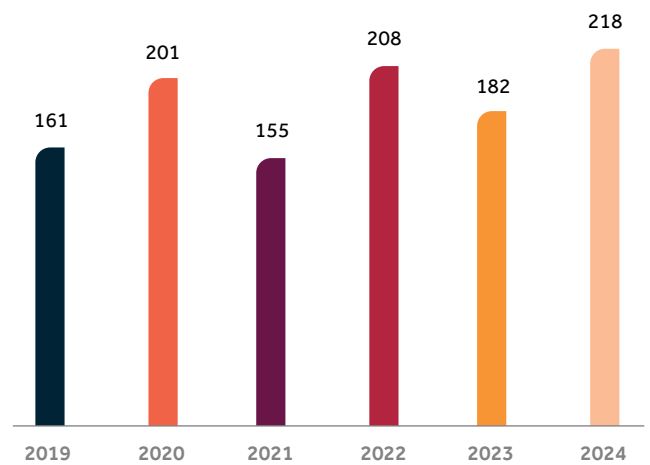


Figure 3: Number of novels published by Saudi authors in 2019-2024. ⁵





Figure 4: Number of literary works by Saudi authors in 2023-2024 and their distribution, by literary genre. ⁶

The most notable aspect of Al-Yousef’s bibliography is the ongoing drop in the rate of foreign publishing since 2017, when the Kingdom started to see tangible changes in its literary publishing landscape and indications of cultural change. As illustrated in Figure 5, reliance on foreign publishing houses decreased from over half of all publications in 2016 to less than a quarter in 2024. As literary club publishing has decreased, co-publishing has also decreased to just six books. According to earlier iterations of the report, the drop in foreign publishing

numbers is a reflection of the Kingdom’s publishing houses’ continued support and incentive programs, as well as their recovery and appeal. For instance, the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission started an international training program for publishing houses and a program to assist printing for publishing houses in 2024. These programs will help the local publishing market grow sustainably in the years to come, even though it is still too early to gauge their direct effects on the volume of literary production and publishing.

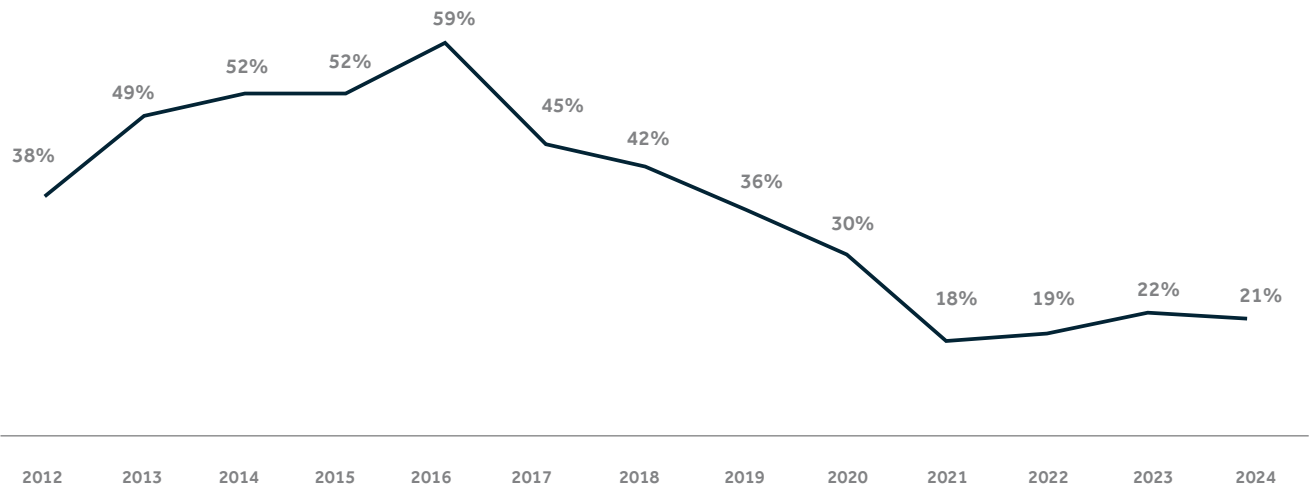


Figure 5: Percentage of foreign publications out of the total literary publications of Saudi authors in 2012-2024. ⁷

The contribution of literary clubs, which have always been important to the literary publishing movement, has decreased as a result of the changes in the Kingdom's literary publishing scene. In 2024, they produced a total of just 17 books, or 3% of all literary publishing this year. This is the lowest drop in literary club output in five years (Figure 6). Out of the 16 clubs, only five published these books. The Taif Club and the Najran Club each published six publications, keeping the latter club among the most publishing literary clubs for the third consecutive year.

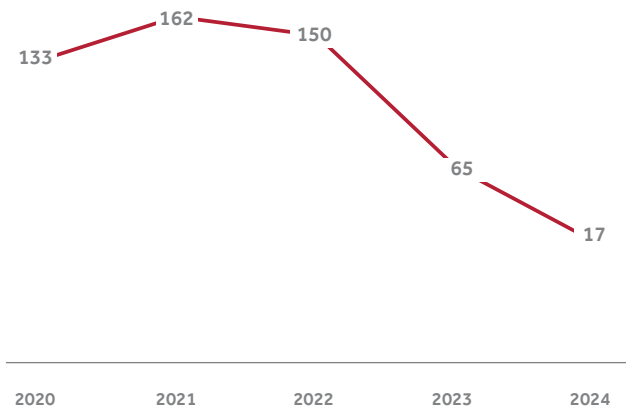


Figure 6: Total production of literary clubs over five years. ⁸



Despite an improvement in women’s contribution to 40% after hitting its lowest level last year, the data show a persistent gender gap when examining the distribution of literary output by authors’ gender (as shown in Figure 7). Before the gap progressively widens in favor of male authors and peaks in 2023, this improvement may indicate a return to the balance attained in 2019 and 2020. To close the gender gap in literary writing and publishing, these findings emphasize the importance of empowering and supporting female authors.

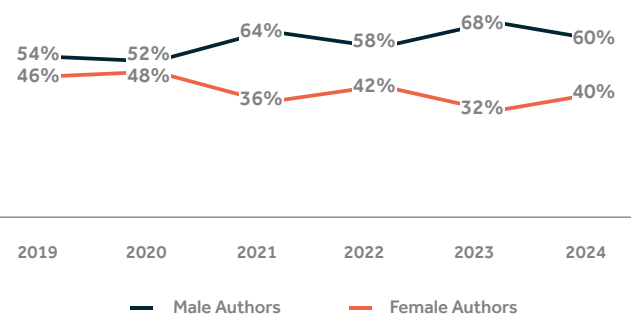


Figure 7: Relative distribution of literary production by authors’ gender between 2019-2024. ⁹



Digital Publishing

The most notable institutional initiative to create digital content in Arabic is the Digital Publishing Program, which was introduced by the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission in late 2021. Throughout its three tracks, the program has gradually expanded the conversion of books into digital and audio formats (Figure 8). With 200 of those books falling under the digital children’s books track and 300 under the audiobooks track, the program’s total number of digitized and audiobooks reached 878, a 124% increase over 2023. This indicates that in just one year, the total number of books published under the program has almost doubled. Additionally, the program aimed to publish and disseminate

these works on digital platforms; in 2024, there were 455 works overall, compared to just 30 in 2023, demonstrating the program’s emphasis on increasing access to this content.¹⁰ Despite this encouraging expansion, these efforts are still modest and limited given the global digital acceleration, which reflects issues with the technical infrastructure’s weakness, the dispersion of the efforts, and the scarcity of digital content in Arabic. In line with what was mentioned in the chapter on management and preservation about the difficulties in creating Arabic language models, this hinders the creation of an integrated digital environment that promotes and spreads the Arabic language. ¹¹

Track	2022	2023	2024
Digital Children's Books Track (Interactive and Audio Formats)	-	140	200
E-books Track	198	202	378
Audiobooks Track	-	50	300

Figure 8: Number of books published within the Digital Publishing Program in 2022-2024. ¹²

Published Translations

The chapter's measurement of the translation index relies primarily on data from the Tarjim Initiative launched by the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission. However, this initiative does not capture the full scope of activity in the sector. The chapter also sought to track the contributions of other entities, such as universities and others. As with other publishing indicators, the lack of centralized data limits the ability to measure the actual volume of production in the translation sector in the Kingdom. In general, the initiative continued to expand its support for translated books, which this year reached 743 books, a growth rate of 25% compared to 2023 (as shown in Figure 9).

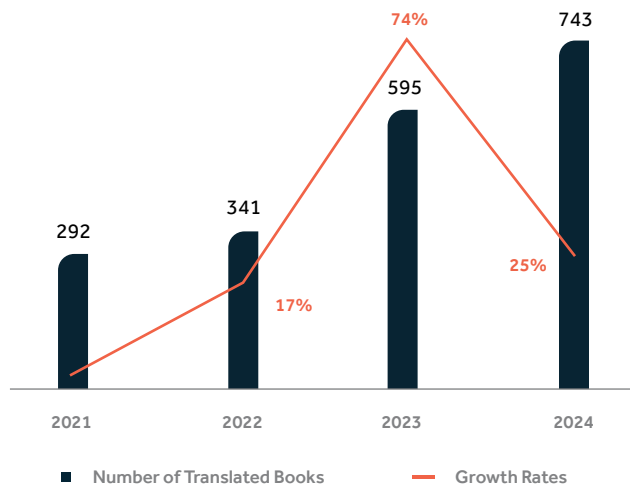


Figure 9: Number of books translated through the Tarjim Initiative and their growth rates in 2021-2024. ¹³

The most notable trend in this year's data is the rise in the proportion of female translators contributing to book translation; as illustrated in Figure 10, the percentage of female translators increased from 30% in 2023 to 52% in 2024, surpassing the rate of male translators in the initiative for the first time. This increase is noteworthy given that earlier iterations of the report highlighted the need to expand opportunities for female translators to contribute to the cultural and creative scene and the evident disparity in female participation in the publishing and translation industries as one of the sector's challenges. ¹⁴

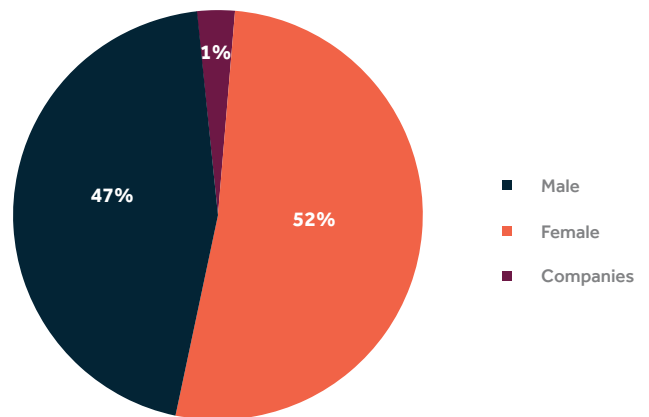


Figure 10: Percentage distribution of the books translated within Tarjim Initiative in 2024, by the translators' gender. ¹⁵

Creativity and Cultural Production

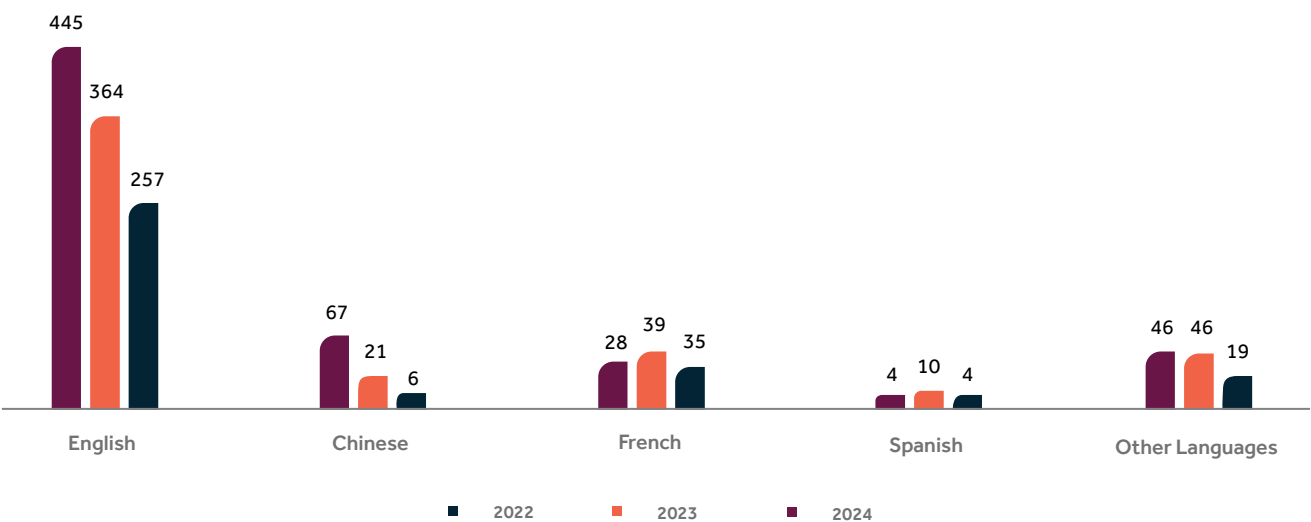


Figure 11: Number of books translated into Arabic within the Tarjim Initiative, by source language, between 2022-2024.¹⁶

The majority of works translated from and into Arabic are still in English, despite the linguistic diversity of the translated content. In particular, 75% of the 590 books translated into Arabic under the Tarjim Initiative were translated from English, a slight decline from the 80% of books translated from English in 2022. This drop reflects the initiative’s foray into translating from other languages, including Chinese, where the quantity of translated works more than tripled in comparison to 2022 (Figure 11). There has also been a growing, albeit limited, presence of other languages, including Korean, Turkish, Czech, Hungarian, Albanian and others. Over the past three years, there has also been a notable increase in the Tarjim initiative’s translation of Arabic into

other languages. From 20 in 2022 to 115 in 2023 and then to 153 in 2024, the number of titles increased by 33% from the year before. This expansion demonstrates the initiative’s emphasis on expanding the visibility of Arabic content worldwide. While the number of translated books in some languages, like Portuguese, Albanian, and Serbian, remained relatively low, with only two or three translations, the list of target languages expanded in 2024 as well when compared to prior years (see Figure 12). Even though there are not many, this increase in linguistic diversity nevertheless shows the initiative’s aim to introduce Arabic literature and ideas to new and varied cultures.

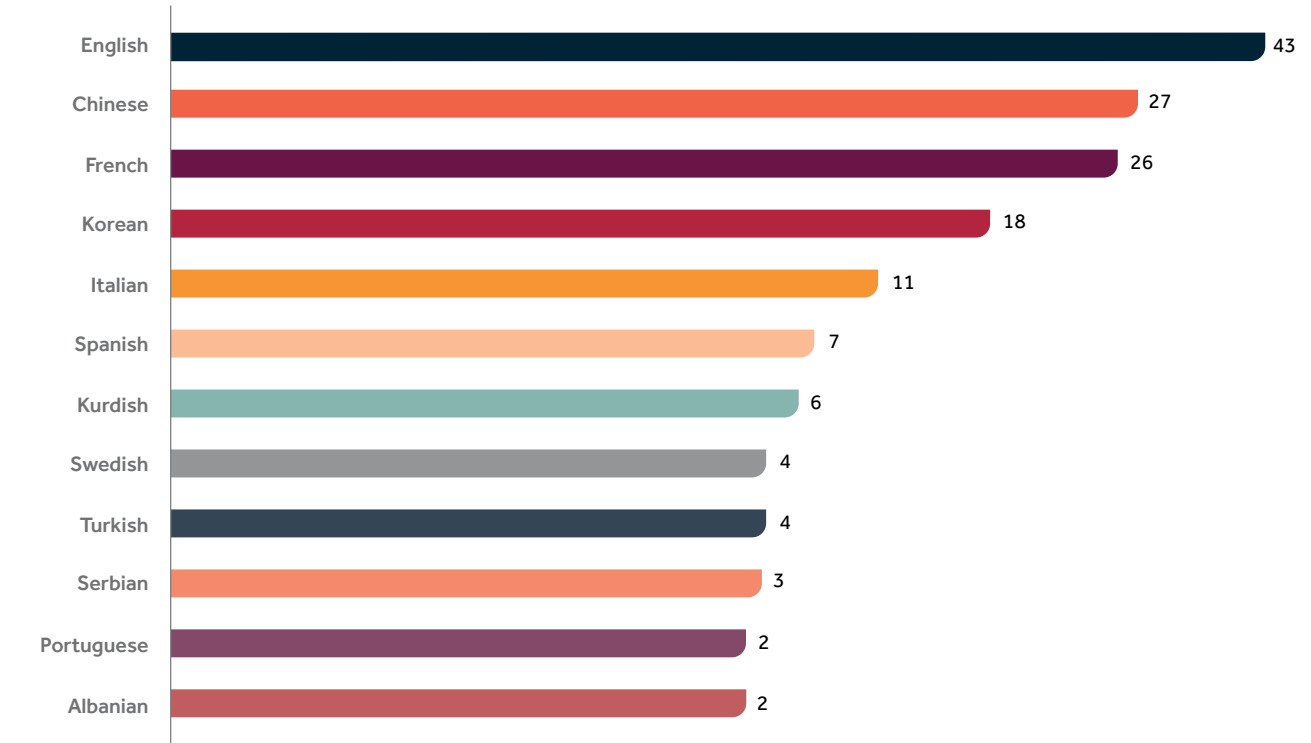


Figure 12: The number of books translated from Arabic within the Tarjim Initiative in 2024, by target language.¹⁷

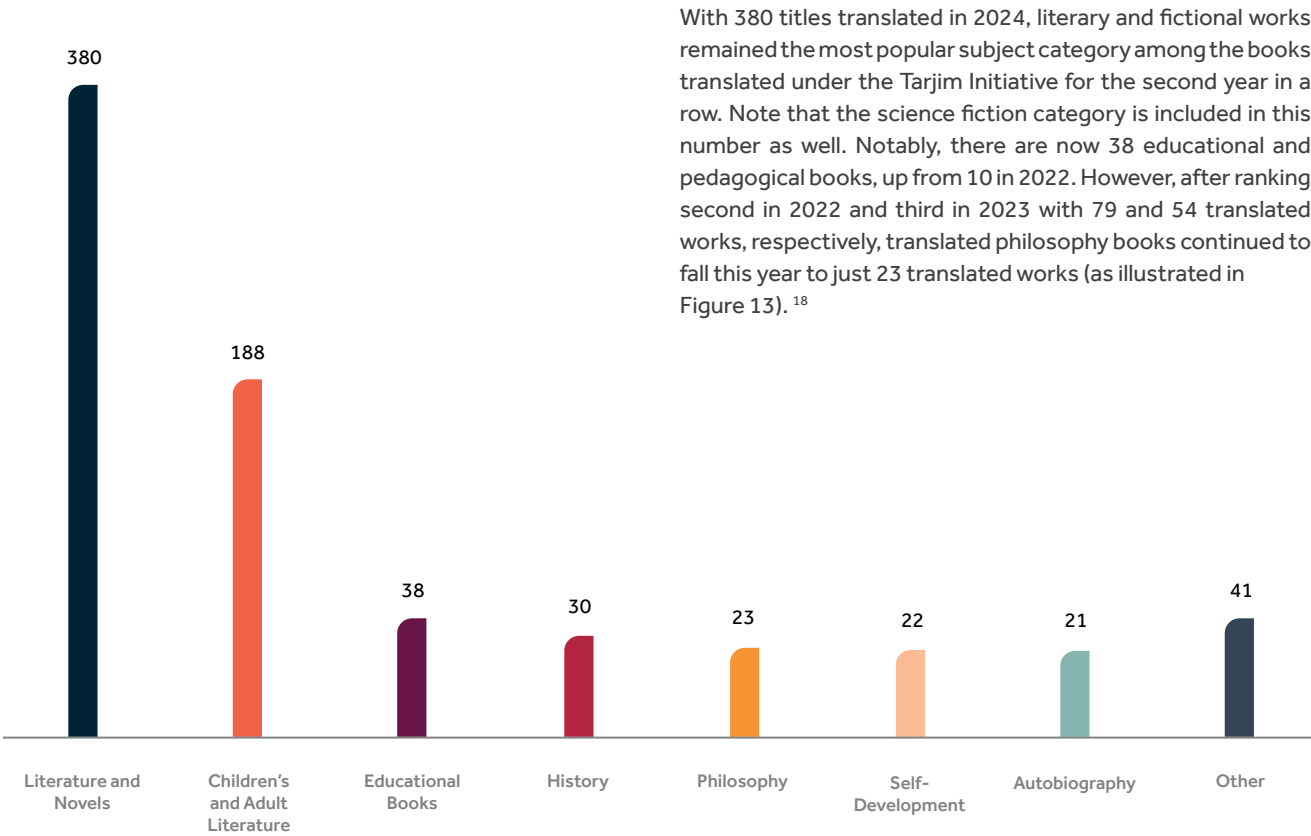


Figure 13: Number of translated books, by literary classification, in 2024.¹⁹



To measure the actual activity of translation and Arabization centers at the Kingdom’s universities, the report had to come up with a more thorough list, which is why the chapter also gives an overview of universities’ contributions to book translation. Universities naturally prioritize specialized academic works or works with an educational or pedagogical focus when making translation decisions. The report’s translation data shows that universities differ in the proportion of women who contribute to translation (see Figure 14). At Umm Al-Qura University, there was only one work by a female translator as opposed to four works by male translators. In contrast, women translated the eight works published by Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University.

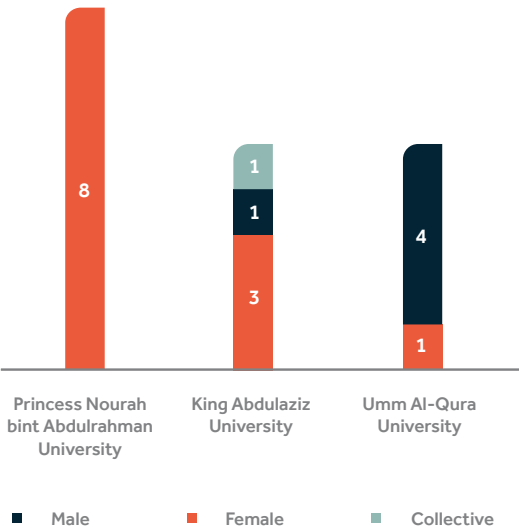


Figure 14: Number of books translated by certain universities in 2024, and their distribution, by authors’ gender. ²⁰

Translation of Periodicals and Articles

Additionally, 21 periodicals and 778 articles were translated by the Tarjim Initiative. Philosophical, psychological, and sociological fields were the focus of article translation, but only news and economics were covered in periodical translation; academic periodicals, which the initiative had previously supported²¹, were conspicuously absent. The “Mana” platform produced all of the articles. This year, it translated 548 English-to-Arabic articles (shown in Figure 15) and 115 Arabic-to-Chinese and English articles, for a total of 230 Arabic-to-English articles.

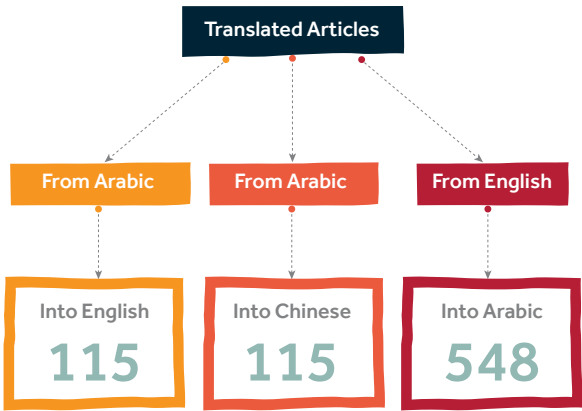


Figure 15: Number of articles translated in 2024 and their distribution, by source and target language. ²²



Research Production and Scientific Publishing in Cultural Fields

The report keeps up its unique survey of studies that have been published in the Kingdom's peer-reviewed scientific journals. In 2020–2024, there were 2,061 research papers published in 33 peer-reviewed scientific journals. Through the analysis of keywords found in research titles and abstracts and their categorization into primary topics, the survey seeks to provide statistical indicators of trends and characteristics of research production in cultural fields. It is crucial to remember that a single study could fall under more than one category²³. The return of growth in publishing research in cultural fields to a level near high growth between 2020 and 2021 was one of the survey's most notable findings (see Figure 16).²⁴

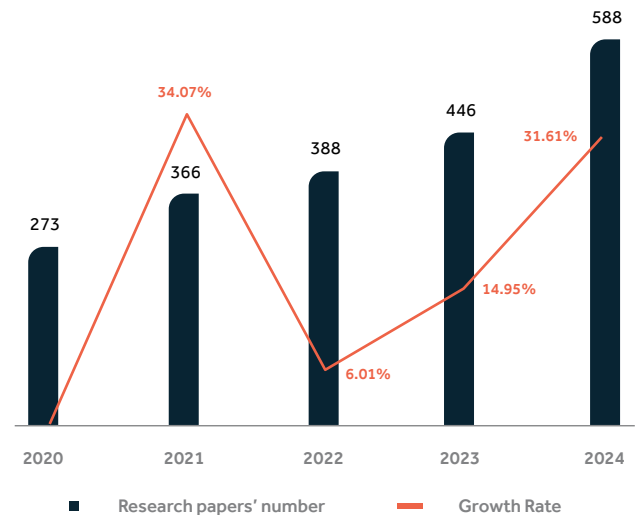


Figure 16: Number of research papers published in the cultural fields in peer-reviewed scientific journals in the Kingdom between 2020–2024, and their growth rate.²⁵



Additionally, it was observed that, as illustrated in Figure 17, the proportion of female researchers in the total research published increased from 33% in 2023 to 36% in 2024. This low percentage still highlights the need for research institutions to support female researchers more. This percentage is not evenly distributed when looking at the specific topics; for example, fashion and jewelry, children's literature, cultural and childhood studies, and intangible heritage all have high contributions from female researchers, with the percentage of research produced by women in these areas being 83.33%, 78.57%, and 58.33%, respectively. In other areas, such as antiquities, heritage, documents, and manuscripts, however, this percentage sharply declines. Upon comparing the two most researched fields, language and literature, it is evident from the survey results that female

researchers have a stronger preference for literature and its subjects than for language, except for linguistic corpus and language computing (see Figure 18). The reason for this discrepancy is that the proportion of female researchers who contribute to academic journals that concentrate on language and its sciences—namely, the Journal of Linguistic Studies published by the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, the Islamic University Journal of Arabic Language and Literature, the Journal of Arabic Sciences published by Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, and the six journals published by the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language—did not surpass 17% to 30%. The Legal Sciences and Arabic Language Journal, published by Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, is an exception to these rules, with over 43% of its authors being female researchers.

Creativity and Cultural Production

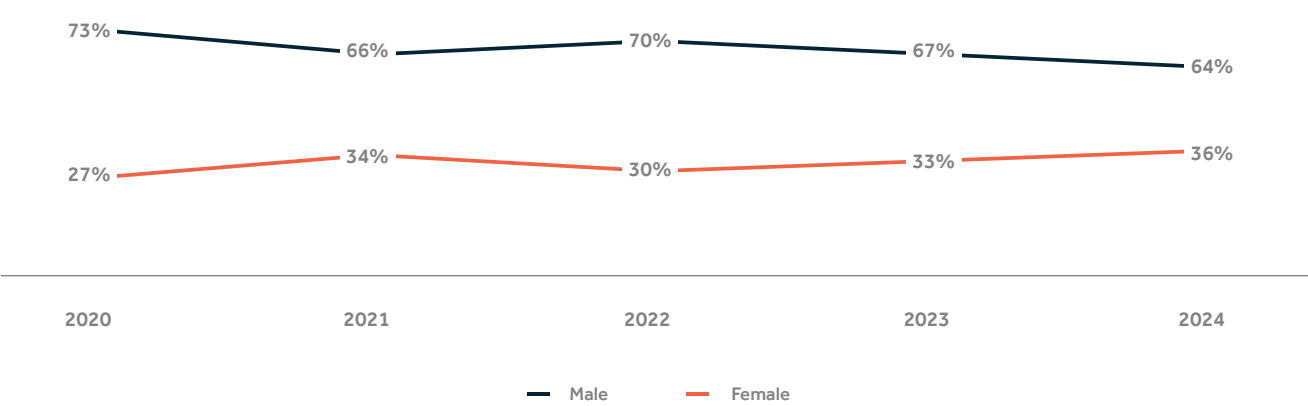


Figure 17: Percentage distribution of research papers published in cultural fields between 2020-2024, by researchers' gender. ²⁶

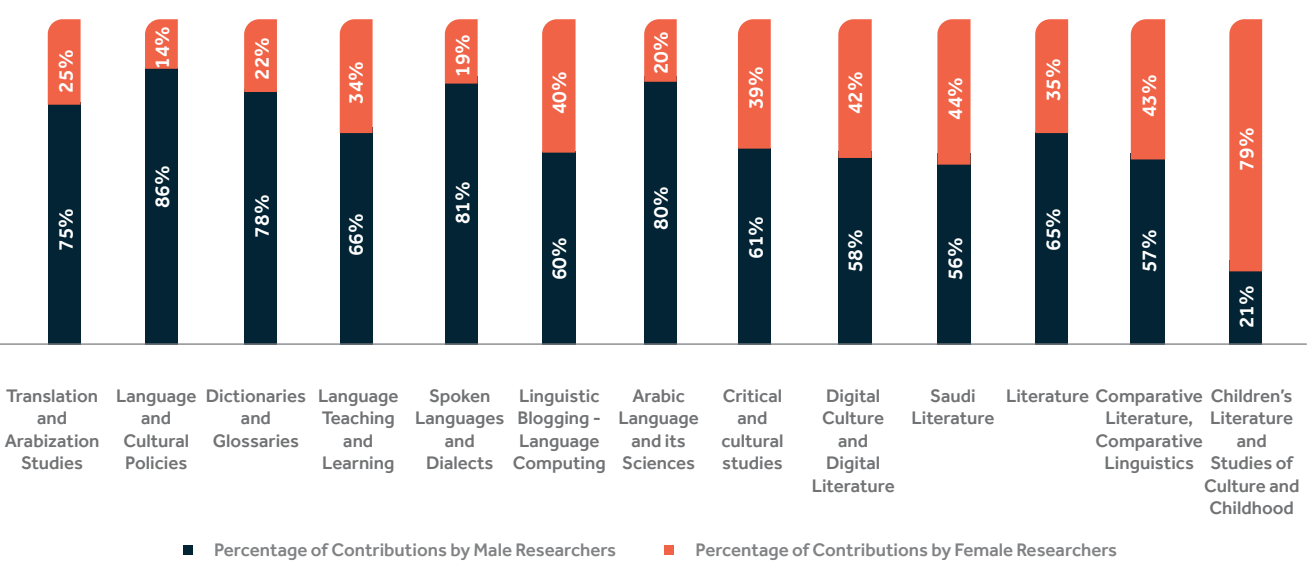


Figure 18: Percentage distribution of published research on language and literature topics in 2020-2024, by researchers' gender.

The majority of research published in peer-reviewed scientific journals in the Kingdom is still in the fields of language and literature, in all of their branches, which together make up more than three-quarters of the total. After being absent from the report's previous two editions, the publication of the first two studies on film this year indicated a promising diversity. Digital culture and digital literature, intangible heritage, translation and Arabization studies, arts and culture education, fashion and jewelry²⁷ and other topics that are still among the least studied have also seen rapid growth. The survey tracked 22 studies published in peer-reviewed scientific journals in the Kingdom that were funded by the Ministry of Culture's

research grant programs. Of these, 20 were part of the Arabic poetry grant and two were part of the Saudi art history grant (as shown in Table 1), even though the Management and Preservation chapter examines the research grant programs within the support and empowerment index. These results highlight the function of academic institutions and research in guiding and facilitating studies aimed at filling in cultural knowledge gaps.

Table 1: List of research studies supported by research grant programs provided by the Ministry of Culture that were included in the survey.²⁸

Research Title	Grant	Journal
Popular games in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and their role in promoting cultural interaction and preserving intangible heritage.	Saudi Art History Grants	Jazan University Journal of Human Sciences
Theatrical achievements in Tabuk, historically and artistically		University of Tabuk Journal for Humanities and Social Sciences
Rituals of the First Ode: The Origins of Ruin-Poetry in Pre-Islamic Talaliyyah and the semiotics of rituals	Arabic Poetry Grant	The Journal of Umm Al-Qura University for Language Sciences and Literature - Special Issue on the Arabic Poetry Research Grant
Biography (Sira ghayriyya) in Classical Arabic Poetry: Publicizing, Immortalizing, and Mythologizing		
Poetry in Islamic Historiography: The Dialectics of Creativity and the Politics of Truth		
The Body Language in Classical Arabic Poetry: A Cognitive Approach		
The Rhetoric of Spatial Signifiers in Gulf Poetry at the Dawn of the Third Millennium		
Semiotics of Spatiality in Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry: The Mu'allaqat as a Model		
Literary Tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Poetic Tourism in Najd)		
The Spaces of Poetry: Realms of Intimacy and Estrangement in the Works of Minimalist Poets		
The Genius of Al-Mutanabbi: A Study in the Evolution of Poetry		
Questions of Renewing Modern Arabic Poetry: The Cultural-Creativity Debate		
Dynamics of Variable and Constant: An Analytical Study of Temporal Rotation in Khalid Al-Faisal's Poetry		
The Semiotics of Place in Saudi Women's Poetry: Ashjan Hindi as a Model		
The Saudi Poetry of Fouad Al-Khatib — Between the Moment of History and the Moment of Verse		
Saudi Poetry in Francophone Culture: Issues of Reception and Translation		
The Interaction of Paper and Technology in the Production of Arabic Poetry: The Hypothesis of "Technopaper Poetry" as an Example		
Interactive Digital Poetry and the Horizons of Experimentation: A Study of the Works of Digital Poet Mushtaq Abbas Ma'n		
The Image of Saudi Culture in Digital Poetry		
Genre Blending and Carnavalesque Aesthetics in Digital Literature: The Interactive Poem "Who Said...???" by Souad Aoun as an example		
Spatial Suitability for Coffee Tree Cultivation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Using Geographic Information Systems		
Emotional Design and the Consolidation of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Saudi Coffee Between Sensory and Spatial Experience		

Audio-Visual Production

Films

By including new information on the distribution of box office debuts and the distribution of films in theaters by operating company, this year’s Film Index broadens its assessment of production and distribution levels for 2024. By following the film production cycle from production company to theater, this enables a more comprehensive understanding of the filmmaking process. The production index follows last year’s methodology, counting the year a film (feature, short, or documentary) was first screened in theaters inside or outside the Kingdom as the year of production. In addition to tracking the number of films screened in theaters in 2024 and their duration, the distribution index this year also looks at the distribution of screenings by operating company and region. It also tracks the premiere venues for films made this year, including theaters, festivals, and digital platforms.

According to the internationally recognized classifications that designate a film as a cultural product of the nation of production, the index also keeps track of all films that are categorized as Saudi productions, irrespective of the nationality of the film’s crew or producers. A total of 83 films were screened this year, down from 102 last year, according to data for the first screenings of films made in the Kingdom in 2024. As seen in Figure 18, there were 44 short films and 22 feature films produced in 2024, a 40% drop from 2023’s 25 films. In both the long and short categories, the film production index increased last year when compared to 2022.²⁹ However, since feature film production grew at a rate of 41% over the three years 2022–2024, these numbers do not point to a drop in film sector production levels. Despite a notable surge in short film production in 2023, the annual growth rate for this genre has dropped by 7% over the last three years. Despite the drop in production numbers this year, these figures show moderate and steady growth in the sector’s

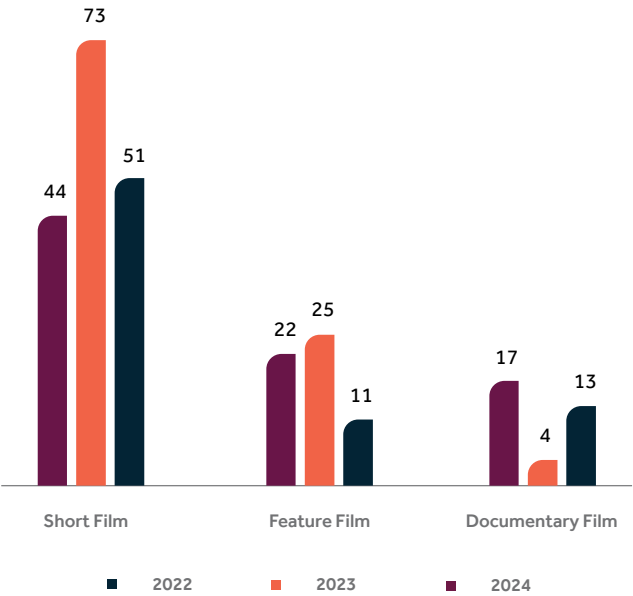


Figure 19: Total number of Saudi film premieres between 2022-2024.³⁰

production levels during the years 2022–2024, considering the growth rates in the context of a cultural sector that is new to the Kingdom. With 17 films recorded this year, the number of documentaries has significantly surged over the previous two years (Figure 19). The data indicates a persistent focus on short films in terms of production levels. This pattern is regarded as typical of the Kingdom’s filmmaking activity, which started with the short film. The production of short films is roughly double that of feature films in 2023 and 2024, whereas the difference between the two was greater in 2022, as illustrated in Figure 20. This might point to a shift in the Kingdom’s overall filmmaking trend, with a greater focus on feature films and a decline in short and documentary films. This observation aligns with the numerous development and support initiatives observed by the film sector, which are described in detail in the chapter on management and preservation.

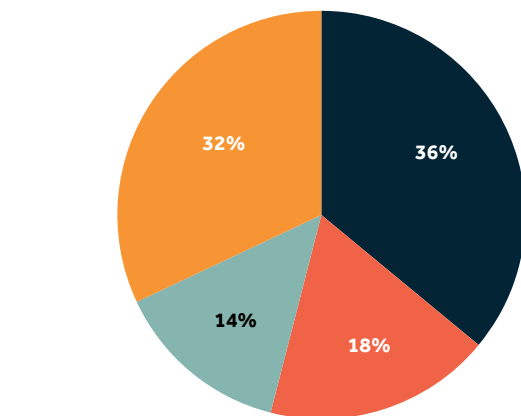


The Red Sea International Film Festival screened the most feature films, followed by the Saudi Film Festival, with the majority of the official first screenings occurring at film festivals in the Kingdom (45%), according to distribution indicators and monitoring of film screening venues in the Kingdom (Figure 21). Eight feature films, or 36% of the total number of feature films made this year, were screened in theaters during their official premieres. Additionally, three

feature films were screened in their premieres on Netflix, and one on the Shahid platform. Digital platform offerings ranked last among screening outlets (Table 2).³¹ Selecting film festivals as the initial release platform is a widely accepted custom since they serve as a meeting point for a variety of sector professionals and enthusiasts, as well as a destination for viewers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, offering a broad and unique opportunity for the film's release from the outset.

Table 2: Number of Saudi films produced in 2024, by category and distribution, by official premier venues.³²

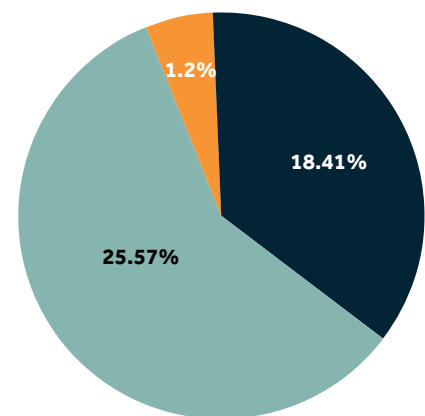
Official Premiere Venue	Feature Film	Short Film	Documentary	Total
Cinemas Inside the Kingdom	8	-	-	8
Saudi Film Festival	3	18	17	38
Red Sea International Film Festival	7	25	-	32
International Festivals Abroad	-	1	-	1
Digital Platforms (Netflix and Shahid)	4	-	-	4
Total	22	44	17	83



- Cinemas within the Kingdom
- Digital Platforms
- Saudi Film Festival
- Red Sea International Film Festival

Figure 20: Percentages of Saudi feature film premieres in 2024, by outlet.³³

Film festivals once again serve as the premiere location for short films. Still, they might also be the only ones available for this genre of films because art cinemas were not founded in the Kingdom until 2024 AD, and their operations were seasonal before that.³⁴ The 10th Saudi Film Festival served as the premiere location for all the documentaries produced in 2024. Digital platforms are crucial for Saudi short and documentary



- International festivals
- Red Sea International Film Festival
- Saudi Film Festival

Figure 21: Percentages of Saudi short film premieres in 2024, by official screening venue.³⁵

films in this regard because they offer a second outlet to keep the lifespan of these types of films from dwindling. Because it is a commercial distribution and is therefore tied to the profit and loss calculations in the economic cycle of the film sector, which comes from feature films, distribution activity in the Kingdom is concentrated on feature films, in contrast to the production process.

Considering cinema screenings (as shown in Table 3), in 2024, 18 Saudi feature films were screened in all 10 administrative regions in the Kingdom that have cinemas. Except for one operator, which screened two films, all seven of the Kingdom’s commercial theater operators screened all eighteen films, according to the data. However, an examination of the duration of film screenings in theaters is necessary to comprehend the efficacy of the distribution process. Examining this new data within the distribution index, Table 4’s content demonstrates the wide range of movie theater showing times, from as little as two weeks to roughly six months. The nature and length of the contracts between the production and distribution companies and theaters are among the numerous factors contributing to this discrepancy, in addition to the lackluster reception that short-release films receive from the general public. The movies that have the most extended runtimes in Kingdom theaters are Hoopal, Shabab Al-Bomb, and The

Night Delegate. Note that the 18 films mentioned here are not necessarily made in 2024. In other words, the distribution index counts the number of screenings of films that are shown in theaters throughout the year, not necessarily the first showings of those films.

Table 4: Duration of Saudi feature films in cinemas in the Kingdom in 2024. ³⁷

Films	Number of Films
Films shown for 3 months or more	5
Films shown from 8 to 4 weeks	8
Films shown for less than 4 weeks	5



Table 3: Number of Saudi films shown in cinemas in 2024, by province. ³⁶

Province	Number of Cinemas	Number of Saudi Films Shown
Riyadh Province	26	18
Makkah Province	14	18
Madinah Province	1	18
Al-Qassim Province	3	18
Eastern Province	11	18
Asir Province	2	18
Tabuk Province	2	18
Hail Province	3	18
Northern Border Province	1	18
Jazan Province	1	18
Total	64	18

Film Festivals

After a decade of serving as a platform for the Kingdom’s film sector and fostering regional connections through the participation and screenings of its Gulf neighbors, the Saudi Film Festival in Dhahran celebrated its tenth edition this year. Fifty-one films competed for the Golden Palm Award this year, which is comparable to the number of films that competed in 2023 (Figure 22). This year’s film competition included 20 documentaries, 23 short films, and eight feature films. From 2019 to 2024, the number of films competing in the festival has increased by 13% (Figure 23). ³⁸ Although not a high percentage, the film production index above shows that this percentage is proportionate to the volume of production in the emerging sector.



Table 5: Films competing in the feature film competition at the Saudi Film Festival in 2024. ³⁹

Director	Country of Production	Movie Title	Language	Classification
Faris Quds	Saudi Arabia	Dreams of the Age	Arabic	Drama
Gigi Hazema	Saudi Arabia	That Feeling That	Arabic	Romantic
Hamza Tarzan	Saudi Arabia	I am Al Ittihad	Arabic	Historic, Athletic
Mohammad Al-Atawi	Saudi Arabia	Between the Sands	Arabic	Drama, Suspense, Adventure
Naila Al Khaja	UAE	Three	Arabic/English	Drama/Horror
Amr Gamal	Yemen	The Tired	Arabic	Drama
Mahmoud Al-Sheikh	Bahrain	Rose Water	Arabic	Drama
Abu Bakr Shawqi	Saudi Arabia	[Racing] Camel	Arabic	Drama



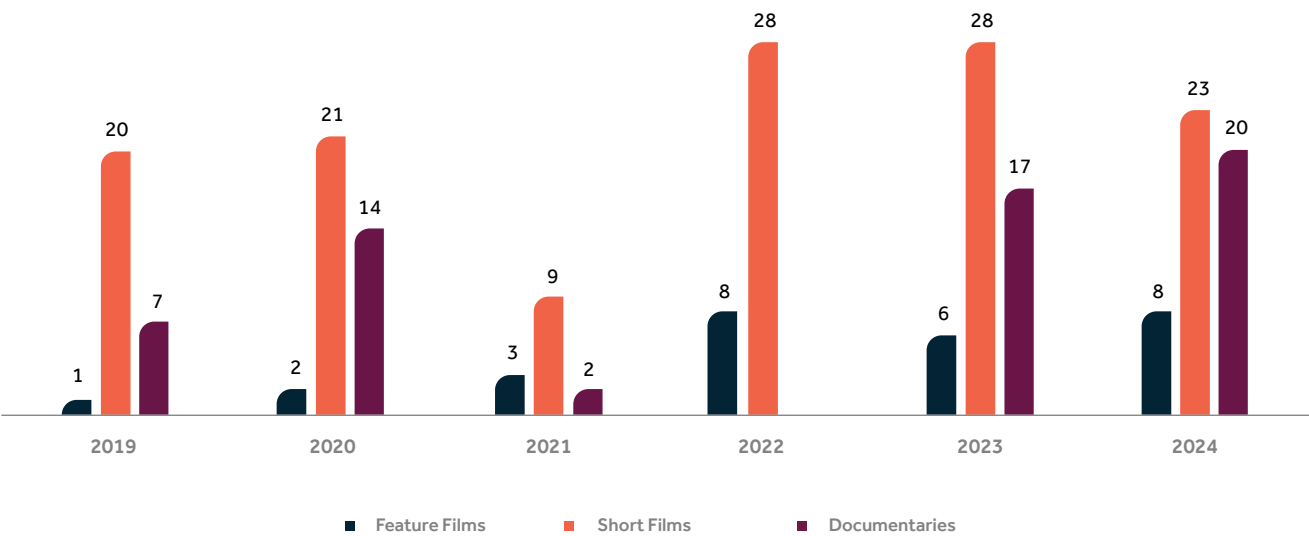


Figure 22: Total number of films competing in the Saudi Film Festival competitions, by film category, between 2019-2024. ⁴⁰

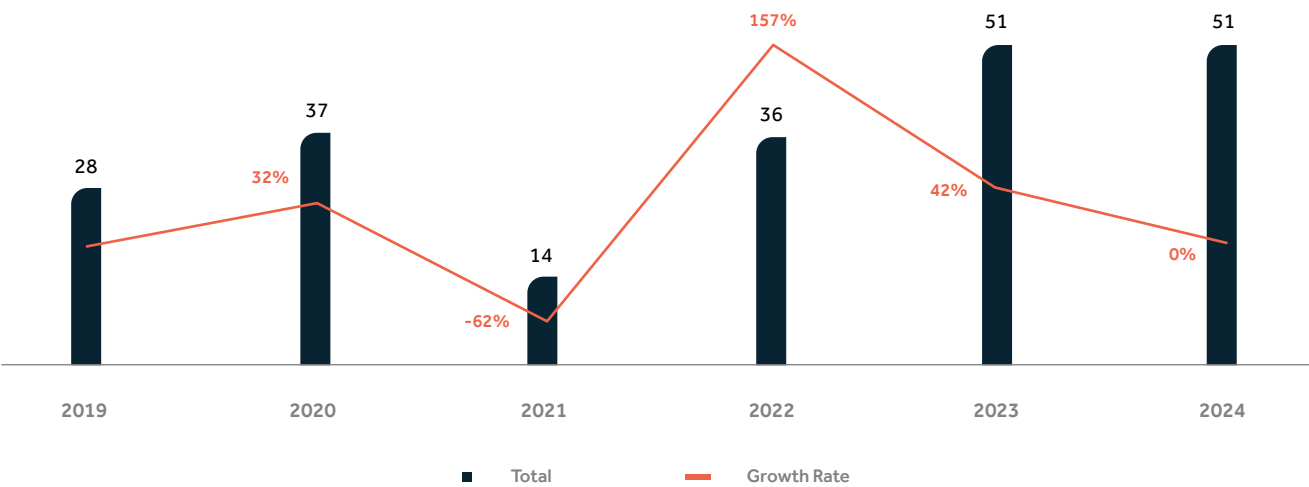


Figure 23: Total number of films competing in the Saudi Film Festival competitions and their growth rates, between 2019-2024. ⁴¹

Through information on registration requests for festival programs (competitions, production market, and workshops), film festivals contribute several indicators to the film production index and production levels. These indicators include the number of films produced, unfinished film projects, and the stage of production throughout the year. Applications for film competitions, unfinished scripts, production market projects, and development workshops were among the 1,576 registration applications received for the tenth edition of the Saudi Film Festival. Compared to 2023, this is a 19% increase. After staying at nearly constant levels since 2020, registration applications have increased for the second year in a row.

Consequently, from 2020 to 2024, the festival's registration applications grew at a compound annual growth rate of 15% (Figure 24). The specific numbers for registration applications show the growth in the previous two years, 2023 and 2024. This year, 2024, saw 707 registration applications (224 films, 483 scripts) for film and unproduced script competitions, a 12% increase over 631 applications (230 films, 401 scripts) the year before. Between 2020 and the 2024 edition, the compound annual growth rate for these applications was roughly 16% (Figure 25).

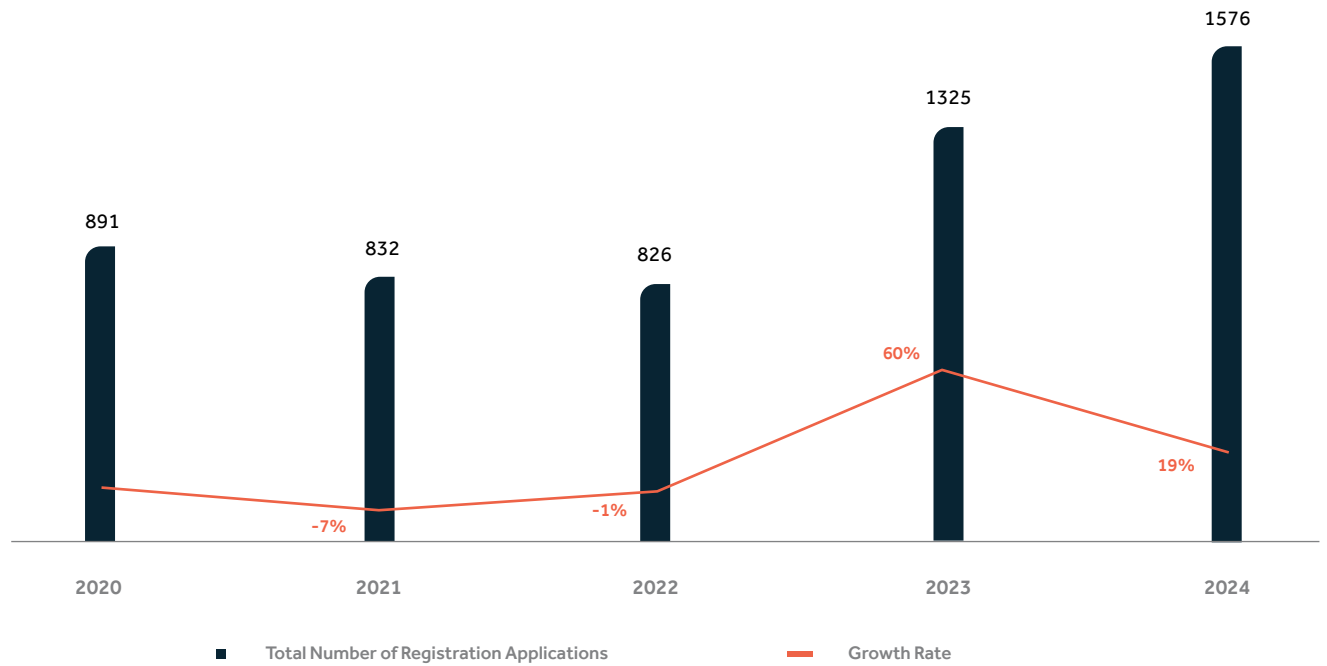


Figure 24: Total number of applications submitted to participate in the Saudi Film Festival, between 2020-2024. ⁴²

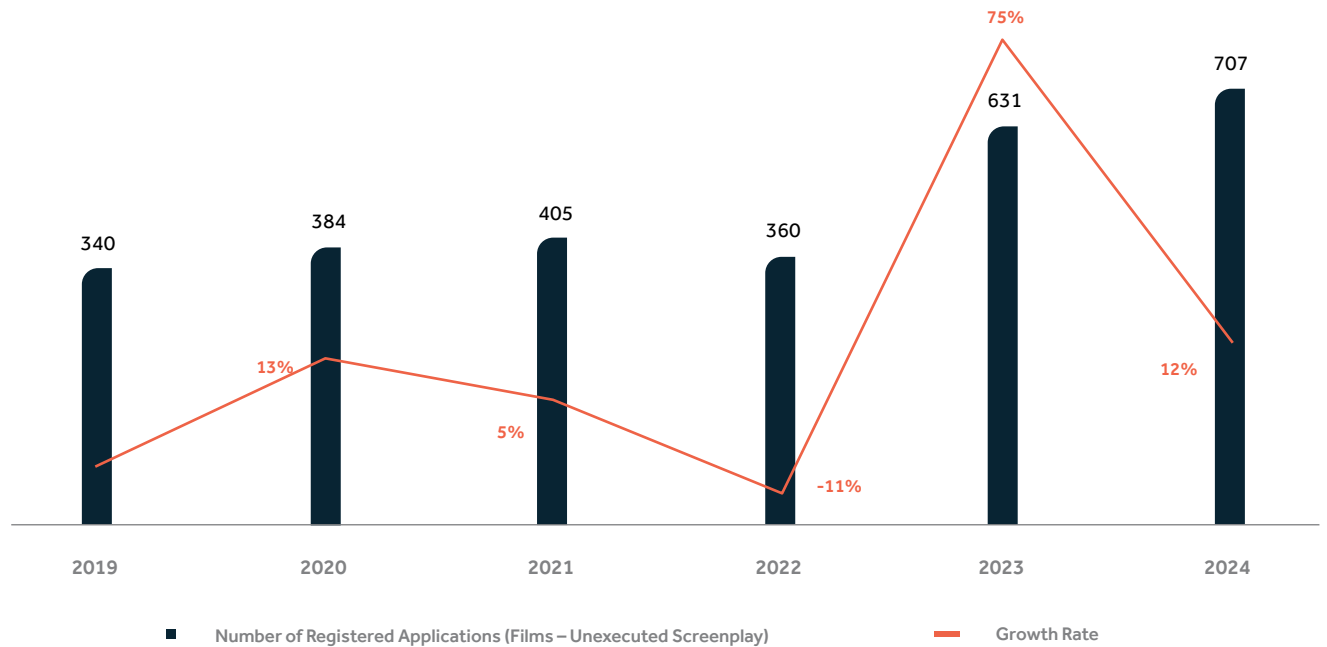


Figure 25: Number of film and unexecuted screenplay registrations submitted to the Saudi Film Festival, between 2019-2024. ⁴³

Seventy-four films were chosen from this year's submissions to be screened at the festival's tenth edition. Among these were 51 films that competed in the festival's competitions, 13 films that were shown in parallel, two kid-friendly films, four films that were featured in the Spotlight on Indian Cinema program, and four foreign films in the science fiction category—the latter of which was chosen to be the primary focus of the tenth Saudi Film Festival.

In addition to Arab films and entries from other nations, Gulf films were shown as part of the festival's regional expansion. Eleven countries, including the United States, Yemen, India, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, took part in the film screenings this year, 2024. Compared to the two years prior, 2023 and 2022, when only nine countries took part, this indicates a rise in the number of Gulf and international entries. 50 of the 119 projects that were submitted to the festival's production market were eligible to compete for grants and awards in the financial and service markets, representing a 78% increase over the 67 projects that were submitted

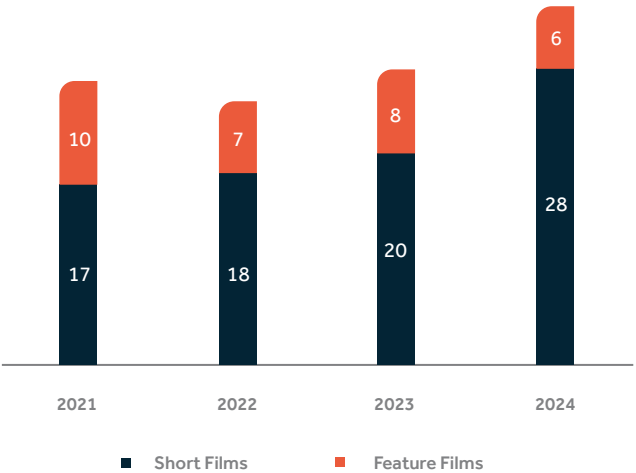


Figure 26: Number of Saudi feature and short films participating in the Red Sea International Film Festival, between 2021-2024. ⁴⁷

in 2023. Nine editions of Sa'afa Magazine were released in conjunction with the festival as part of its educational initiatives. The "Saudi Cinema Encyclopedia," an initiative that expands on previous years' efforts to publish books and research on cinema, was also announced by the Saudi Cinema Association, which organizes the festival. As part of the initiative's program, the festival released 23 books this year. The initiative's first year, which started with the festival's tenth edition, aims to publish 100 books in total. ⁴⁴

The fourth Red Sea International Film Festival took place in Jeddah's Al-Balad district in the western portion of the Kingdom. With 122 films from 85 countries⁴⁵, the number of film projects taking part in the 2024 edition of the festival was comparable to that of the previous year. Although there have been fewer film projects in the festival's last two editions (Table 6), more countries have participated, which is in line with the festival's geographic expansion to include Asia in addition to Arab and African nations. Of these, 34 Saudi films were screened this year, marking the most Saudi films to participate in the international festival since its inception in 2021 (Figure 26). As indicated in Table 7, these films were categorized into six artistic genres.

Table 6: Total number of films shown at the Red Sea International Film Festival and the number of participating countries, between 2021-2024. ⁴⁶

Year	Number of Films Shown	Number of Participating Countries
2021	138	67
2022	143	66
2023	125	75
2024	122	85



Table 7: Number of Saudi films participating in the Red Sea International Film Festival for 2024, by film category. ⁴⁸

Film Category	Number
Feature-Length Documentaries	1
Short Documentaries	5
Short Animated Films	2
Feature Films	5
Short Narrative Films	21
Total	34

In 2024 AD, six Saudi feature films participated in the festival's competition; most of them were Arab and international co-productions (Table 8). These films competed with sixteen films from the Asian and African continents, as well as various Arab nations.



Table 8: Saudi feature films competing in the Red Sea International Film Festival 2024 competition. ⁴⁹

Movie name	Director	Country of Production
Summer	Wael Abu Mansour	Saudi Arabia
Searching for an Exit for Mr. Rambo	Khaled Mansour	Saudi Arabia and Egypt
Red Offspring	Lotfi Ashour	Tunisia, France, Belgium, Poland, Saudi Arabia and Qatar
To an Unknown World	Mahdi Fleifel	United Kingdom, Palestine, France, Greece, Netherlands, Germany, Qatar, Saudi Arabia
Adam's Hymns	Adi Rashid	Iraq, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia and United States
Aisha	Mahdi Al-Barsawi	Tunisia, France, Italy, Saudi Arabia and Qatar

In 2024, 199 Saudi films were submitted to the festival, spanning six artistic genres (Table 9), with over 60% of those films being short narratives. According to the data, the number of films submitted to participate increased annually between 2021 and 2024, with a compound growth rate of 28% (Figure 27).

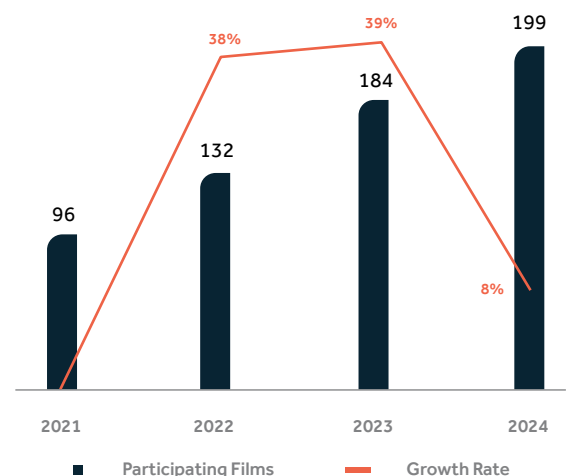


Figure 27: Total number of Saudi films submitted to participate in the Red Sea International Film Festival, between 2021-2024. ⁵⁰

Table 9: Saudi films submitted to participate in the Red Sea International Film Festival for 2024, by category. ⁵¹

Film Category	Number
Animation Movies	1
Feature Documentary Films	4
Feature Films	15
Short Animation Movies	15
Short Documentary Films	39
Short Narrative Films	125
Total	199

Podcasts

According to a special survey that was carried out in 2024 specifically for the report’s purposes, a sample of digital radio shows (podcasts) with cultural content, ⁵² the topics covered in these programs are depicted in the Podcast Programs Index. The sample, as shown in Table 10, suggests that the most common topics covered in these programs’ dialogues and discussions are general culture and literature. Publishing, books, and music also receive equal attention. However, as the 2023 edition of the report points out, there are still no specialized podcasts in the visual arts, fashion, or culinary arts. It’s essential to keep in mind, though, that many podcasts discuss a variety of general and diverse cultural subjects; in fact, several episodes touch on these and other broad cultural topics.

Table 10: Number of episodes produced in a sample of podcasts related to the cultural field during 2024.

Podcast	Field	Number of Episodes in 2024
An Unquiet Mind Podcast	General Cultural	2
1949 Podcast - From the Ministry of Culture		16
Table Podcast - From the Ministry of Culture in 2024		8
Shorfa Podcast - Samawah		9
Lampshade		13
فنان (Finjan) Podcast - From Eight		41
Club Podcast	Music	9
Sharq Podcast - Singing Has a Story		8
Kitabiology Podcast	Publishing and Books	22
Sharq Podcast - Books That Changed Us		15
Asmar Podcast	Literature	35
Joulan Podcast		25
Tadwini podcast		10
Fos'ha Podcast	Heritage	16
Historical Session Podcast		16
Lesn Podcast	Language	1
Alson Podcast		8
Tashakil Podcast	Theater and Performing Arts	1

Production in Theater and Performing Arts

This year has seen an increase in the variety of organizations creating performances in the theater and performing arts sector, including both the public and private sectors, as well as non-profit organizations and associations. This demonstrates the involvement of various sectors in cultural productions, driven by a dedication to social responsibility. Cultural festivals also effectively stimulate the sector and give its stakeholders a platform to showcase their productions. The Gulf region was included in this year's festivals, which provided theater companies and university troupes with opportunities for collaboration in cultural production.

Theatrical Performances

According to the data used in the report, there were 155 theatrical performances in 2024, which is less than the number in the previous year (Table 11). This shift is a result of fewer plays being presented by prominent organizations in the field, including the Theater and Performing Arts Commission and the General Entertainment Authority. Nonetheless, the data indicates that the sector is becoming more diverse and effective, as evidenced by the rise in plays produced by actors outside of major institutions in each of these categories,⁵³ encompassing non-profit government organizations, businesses, civil society organizations, and academic and theater organizations.⁵⁴ This variety of production companies represents a level of activity in the sector that may not be described in the overall numbers, indicating increased activity in the sector in the years to come, as well as more chances for actors to participate and for new talent to be discovered. It is important to remember



that profit-making organizations' social initiatives include non-profit theatrical productions,⁵⁵ in a shift in consciousness regarding the social responsibility of these entities and a convergence of cultural production with the other active sectors in the Kingdom.



Creativity and Cultural Production

Table 11: Number of theatrical performances, by implementing ncy deputyship, in 2023-2024.

Implementing Deputyship	2023	2024
Ministry Of Culture System	6	3
Theater and Performing Arts Commission	14	3
General Entertainment Authority	54	24
King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra)	4	3
Royal Commission for AlUla	0	2
King Abdulaziz Public Library	2	0
Branches Of the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts	72	49
Theater Clubs	1	6
Theater Groups	1	8
Associations - Non-Profit Organizations	4	2
Theater Production Companies - Profit-Making Entities	1	32
Gulf Theater Groups	0	5
University Theater (Local Universities)	13	18 ⁵⁶
Total	172	155







According to earlier iterations of the report, the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts is the top sponsor with 49 theatrical productions. Even though the Society’s branches are still at the forefront of the theater sector’s production scene, as they have in the past, the number of Society’s shows in 2024 fell by almost half (44%) from the year before, following a surge in post-pandemic recovery since 2022 (Figure 28). The same is true of the Society’s children’s theater productions, which saw a decline to eight performances from 29 in 2023, although it remains the biggest supplier of this genre of performances.⁵⁷ The fourteenth Gulf Theater Festival was one of the most notable events in the theatrical performances sector. It debuted at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University in Riyadh. More than 200 theater groups from the Kingdom and the Gulf states participated in the festival; the latter gave five of the performances. Gulf and Arab theater pioneers, as well as festival attendees, attended workshops and seminars.⁵⁹ This edition is significant not only because it is the first to be held after a ten-year break, but also because it links and strengthens artistic and cultural knowledge in the region and supports the Gulf theater movement. The Theater and Performing Arts Commission supported this return, which is anticipated to serve as a springboard for a renewed cultural collaboration between Saudi and Gulf theater as well as the start of a plan to host Arab and international festivals to support and assist the theater sector.⁶⁰

With 21 theater productions spread across six provinces of the Kingdom, Table 12 also demonstrates activity in university theater performances. In the Sixth Gulf Theater Festival for Universities and Higher Education Institutions in the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, which was hosted by Taif University and had a total of 11 theatrical participations, universities from Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman took part in these productions, with one show per university, as indicated in Table 12. More than 200 people participated in the festival, which was organized in collaboration with the Secretariat General of Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and the Theater and Performing Arts Commission. The festival provided playwrights and theater arts experts with workshops, talks, and courses, fostering interaction, knowledge and cultural exchange among Gulf University students.⁶¹ Given that 22 theatrical performances—including those from the Riyadh Theater Festival and the Ithra Competition for Short Theatrical Performances—were presented as part of theatrical competitions, it can be concluded that these events play a stimulating role in the sector’s activity. This amounts to about 12% of all theatrical performances presented by theater groups and clubs (see Table 13).

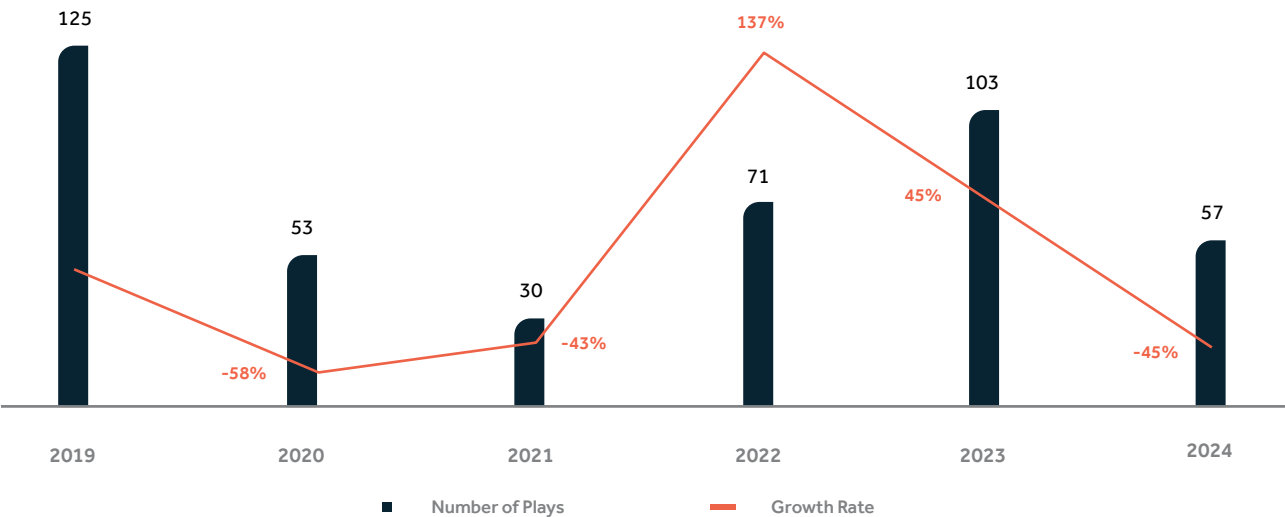


Figure 28: Number of theatrical performances presented by the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts between 2019-2024.⁵⁸

Table 12: Number of university theater participations, by university, in 2024.

University	Number of Participations
King Saud University	7
Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University	1
Imam Mohammad ibn Saud University	1
Umm Al-Qura University	1
King Abdulaziz University	3
Taif University	1
Taibah University	1
Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University	2
University of Tabuk	1
University of Bahrain	1
Qatar University	1
University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Muscat	1
Total	21

Table 13: Number of performances in the 2024 theatrical performance competitions, by entity.

Festival and event	Number of shows in theatrical competitions
Riyadh Theater Festival ⁶²	13
Ithra Competition for Short Theatrical Performances ⁶³	9

The majority of theatrical activity is concentrated in the three central provinces, with Riyadh ranking first with roughly 44% of the performances taking place there. Makkah and the Eastern Provinces follow with approximately 18% of the performances, while the remaining 21% are spread across nine administrative provinces. Additionally, the data only shows a few performances in the Hail, Al-Jouf, and Jazan provinces—no more than three—while the Najran province does not appear to have hosted any theatrical productions.

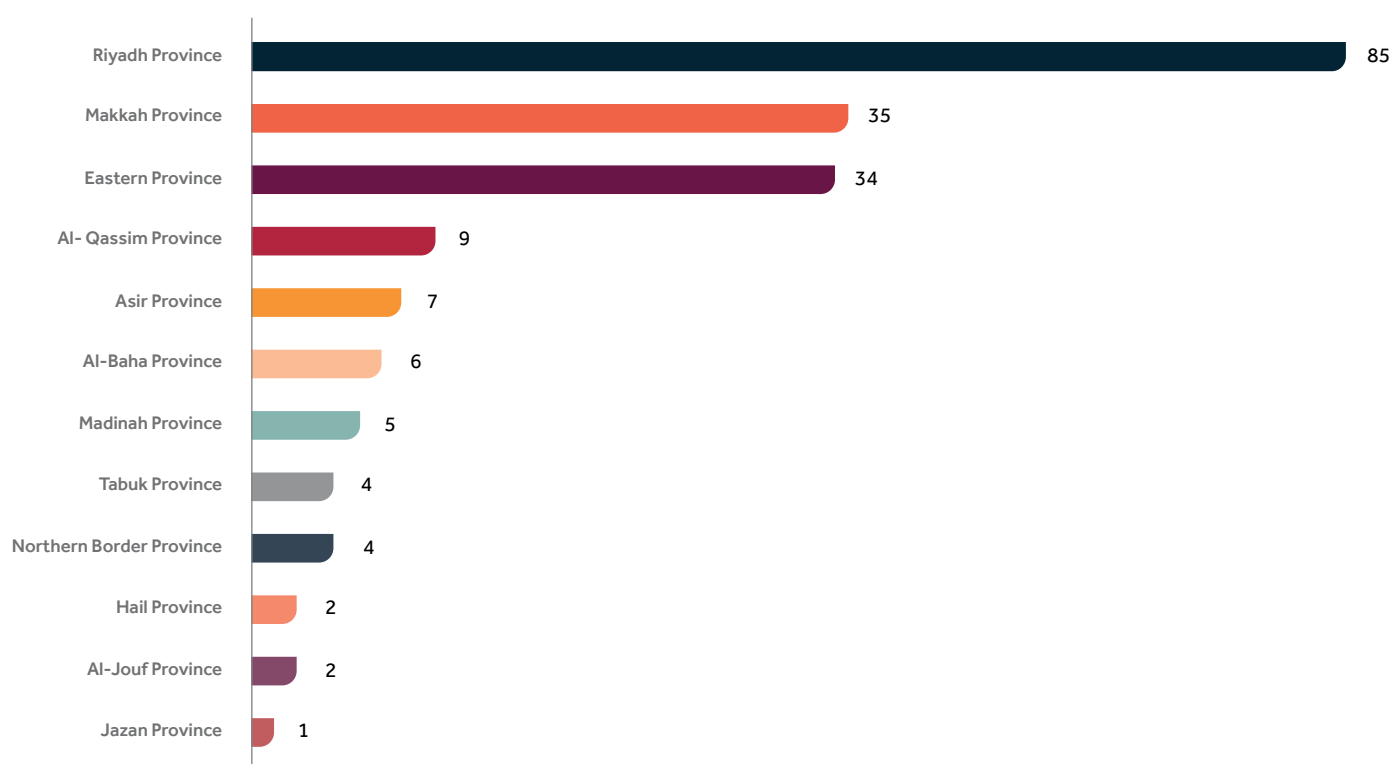


Figure 29: Distribution of theatrical performances by province, in 2024.

Performing Arts Shows

From traditional games to musical theater, circus acts, and even stand-up comedy, performances showcase a variety of cultural practices in both form and content. A significant portion of these performances takes place in social settings, such as weddings, holidays and the fringes of other events, rather than in theaters. They are, therefore, challenging to measure statistically. Thus, by looking at the number of performances held by several prominent players in the field and comparing them across years, the report estimates the density of the performance. Except for the Qemam International Festival for Mountain Performance Arts, the majority of the performances put on by these organizations have been traditional, continuing the trend from prior years. The majority of these performances were also organized by branches of the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts, in which the Theater and Performing Arts Commission and the Ithra Center were also involved. The premiere of the first Saudi opera, “Zarqaa Al-Yamama,” is this year’s high point.

Performers from the Kingdom and other countries participate in this performance of a story inspired by Arab heritage. It took place in Riyadh at the King Fahd Cultural Center Theater. ⁶⁴

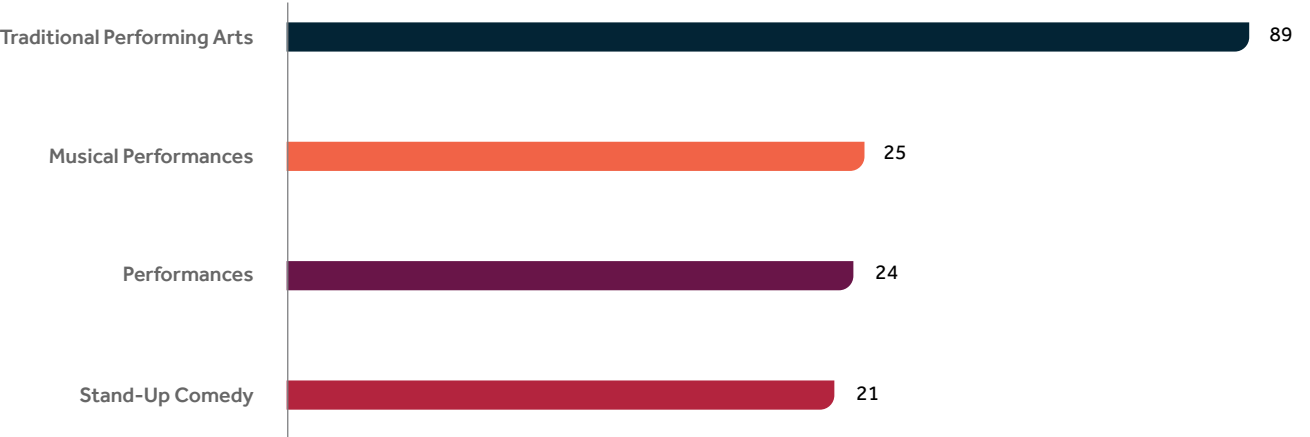


Figure 30: Number of performances presented in 2024 and their distribution, by type of performance⁶⁵.

Table 14: Number of performances, by organizing entity, in 2024. ⁶⁶

Entity	Performances presented
General Entertainment Authority	11
Museums Commission	1
Theater and Performing Arts Commission	2
Royal Commission for AlUla	6
King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra)	13
Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts	86
Comedy Clubs For-Profit Entities	26
Local Universities	14

The third international festival for mountain performing arts in the province, organized by the Theater and Performing Arts Commission, was the most notable event in the performing arts field in 2024. It included 281 performances in eight venues throughout the Asir province's cities and villages (Figure 31). It is important to note that the third edition of the festival, which focuses on mountain performances, has increased the number of performances in the traditional performing arts mentioned above (Figure 30). This is added to the fact that this kind of performance is linked to well-liked festivals and occasions in the majority of the Kingdom, which leads to an annual increase in its quantity. Riyadh leads the Kingdom in both the amount and variety of performances, followed by the Eastern Province and the Makkah province, excluding the Summits Festival performances from the total number of performances shown throughout the Kingdom. According to the data available, the Asir province had the same number of performances as both Al- Qassim and Madinah, whereas the Jazan province had none.



Figure 31: Performance locations of the third edition of the Qemam International Festival for Mountain Performance Arts in the Asir province in 2024.

Arts, Designs and Handicrafts Production

Visual Arts

Examining the activities of a number of prominent non-commercial institutions active in the visual arts, the report identified 176 art exhibitions in 2024, in addition to 72 exhibitions organized by universities. In terms of quantity and spread, i.e. reaching all provinces, the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts remains the most active institution, with 130 exhibitions held in its branches,⁶⁷ a figure that was higher than the year before but still lower than 2022. Though visual art dominated the majority of the exhibitions, the themes of the art shows varied in terms of styles and media, including installations, light, digital, industrial, Arabic calligraphy, sculpture, and contemporary art.



Table 15: Number of exhibitions of non-commercial art institutions, by the year. ⁶⁸

Non-Commercial Art Institutions	2022	2023	2024
Riyadh Art	1	2	2
Diriyah Biennale Foundation	1	1	3
Visual Arts Commission	5	5	3
Art Jameel	7	3	4
Misk Art Institute	10	16	16
King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra)	3	12	18
Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts	209	117	130



Table 16: Distribution of art exhibitions in universities in 2024. ⁶⁹

University	Number of art Galleries
King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST)	1
Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University	10
University of Hail	4
Al-Qassim University	35
Umm Al-Qura University	2
University of Tabuk	8
King Abdulaziz University	4
King Saud University	3
Dar Al-Hekma University	2
Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University	3

Exhibitions from other institutions are of a high caliber in terms of the pieces on display, the prominent participation, and the worldwide reach. The most well-known of these is the Diriyah Biennale Foundation, which hosted the Diriyah Biennale Foundation for Contemporary Art's second edition with the theme "After the Rain," featuring over 100 male and female artists from 44 different nations, ⁷⁰ and showcased a variety of modern media, including conceptual art, video, and installations. Additionally, it evaluated the Royal Commission for AlUla's "Throw My Eyes" exhibition, which was held at Maraya Hall to honor the development of contemporary art. Using a range of media, such as paintings, sculptures, videos, and artistic installations, the works of a group of contemporary artists from throughout the Kingdom explored poetic concepts on a variety of topics, such as homeland, identity, belonging, and more.

With the establishment of the Diriyah Art Futures and the opening of its inaugural exhibition, "Art Should Be Artificial: Prospects for Artificial Intelligence in the Visual Arts," art connected to contemporary technology also became more prevalent. The exhibition featured pieces by over 30 Saudi and foreign artists, examined the evolution of computer art since the 1960s, and discussed the connection between artificial intelligence and the visual arts ⁷¹.

The Riyadh Art Foundation organized the fourth edition of "Noor Riyadh" in the light arts sector with the theme "Between the Earth and the Pleiades." It is the world's largest celebration of light arts, and this edition featured 62 light art pieces created by 90 local and international light arts specialists, 22% of whom were Saudis. ⁷²

The fifth edition of the Tuwaiq Sculpture Exhibition, which focuses on sculpture exhibitions, was organized by the Riyadh Foundation with the theme "Moving Dimensions." By viewing thirty sculptures created using local granite stones from the Kingdom, this experience offers everyone the chance to take part in an artistic journey of live sculpture. This highlights how art and the local environment are intertwined. In addition to well-known sculptors from the Kingdom, 32 artists—31 percent of whom are women—from 20 different countries are producing the sculptures. The Prince Faisal bin Fahd Arts Hall's second edition, which the Misk Art Institute arranged in the summer of 2024, is one example of a multimedia art exhibition that included audio, visual, and digital mixed media. It featured 35 pieces that addressed the role of technology in visual expression using both conventional and contemporary media and techniques. 57% of the artists who took part were female. ⁷³ In terms of planning global traveling exhibitions, the Visual Arts Commission hosted the "Imagine Picasso" exhibition, which used interactive digital experiences to re-present more than 200 of Picasso's works. ⁷⁴

It was preceded by similar exhibitions in other cities, including Madrid, Toronto, Lyon, San Francisco, and others. ⁷⁵ The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) also organized the "Net Zero" exhibition, which featured two modern Saudi artists and 25 multimedia pieces created by international artists. ⁷⁶ In the realm of installation art, Art Jameel's "Salt on the Lips of the Sea" exhibition featured 19 pieces by 14 artists that explored tales about the Red Sea and its connection to its surroundings. ⁷⁷ In keeping with the ongoing development of Riyadh's urban and cultural landscape, the year also witnessed the incorporation of artwork into public areas. When the Riyadh train stations opened in 2024, the Riyadh Art Program, one of the Royal Commission for Riyadh's initiatives, featured four pieces of art there. Saudi and foreign artists showcased these pieces. The Saudi artist Zaman Jassim displayed his piece "When the Moon is Full" at the Qasr Al-Hukm station. The artist Ugo Rondinone's piece "The Sun" was on exhibit at the station's entrance. In the meantime, the sculptures "Jani Wani" by Alexander Calder and "Love," which is a worldwide representation of interconnectedness, were on display at the Financial District (KAFD) station. These modern pieces of art represent the capital's transformation into an open art gallery and have become a part of Riyadh's cultural narrative. ⁷⁸

Architecture and Design

Interest in incorporating architectural and cultural identity into public space design has grown as a result of the Kingdom's urban projects. This interest is reflected in the designs of the Riyadh Metro stations, which opened at the end of the year. These include the King Abdullah Financial District (KAFD) station, designed by architect Zaha Hadid, who drew inspiration from the Arabian mashrabiya on its façade and the desert sands, and the Qasr Al-Hukm station, inspired by the ideas of King Salman Charter for Architecture and Urbanism.

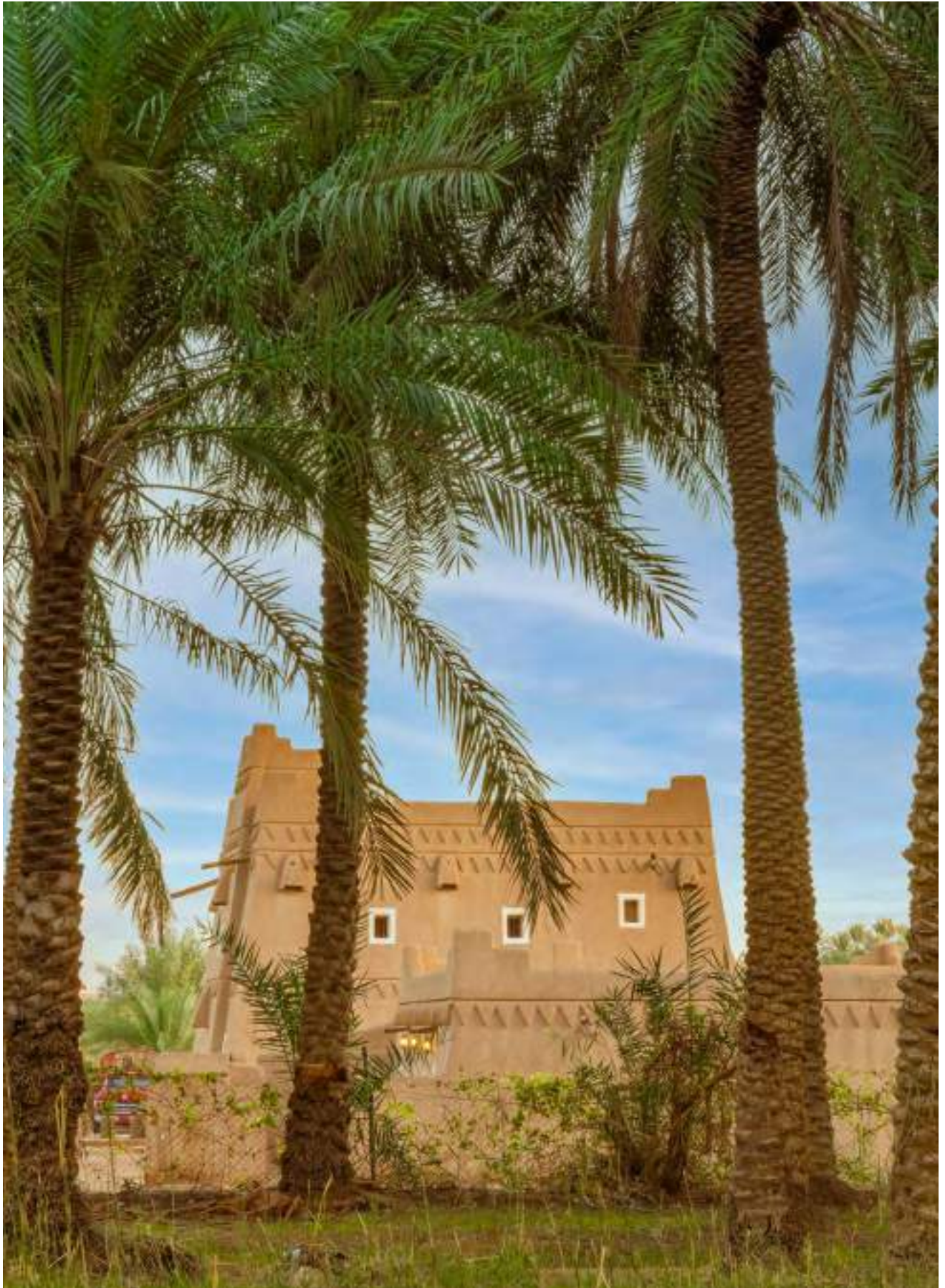
Several notable architecture and design-related exhibitions

and forums presented by various entities in 2024 are reviewed in this chapter (Table 17). The most prominent of these was the exhibition that accompanied King Salman Charter for Architecture and Urbanism Award ceremony, where the winning projects were showcased through visual and photographic displays⁷⁹. The Museums Commission's "Nabil Fanous" exhibition highlighted the late architect's legacy of influencing Saudi urban landscape by showcasing a selection of his works that stood out for fusing modern design principles with Saudi identity.⁸⁰ One of the designer's projects is "Tuwaiq Palace," one of the most notable architectural landmarks in Riyadh's Diplomatic Quarter. Eight Saudi and foreign designers participated in the "Mawrid" exhibition, which was organized by the Royal Commission for AlUla and showcased Al-Ula-inspired architectural and urban planning designs.⁸¹

The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) hosted the "Tanween Challenges" exhibition, which showcased the winning designs from the "Tanween Challenges for 2024." To promote the growth of production in the creative economy, the exhibition also gave the selected projects the chance to be manufactured commercially in collaboration with production partners. Models from the earlier iteration that were turned from design concepts into commercially available goods were also on display.⁸² As the report observed 16 exhibitions about the Kingdom's universities, the design and architecture departments in universities were also active,⁸³ which featured architectural art exhibitions, product design, interior and graphic design, and more.

Table 17: Examples of exhibitions in architecture and design held in 2024.⁸⁴

Exhibition	Submitting Entity	Exhibition Type	City
Exhibition of Products Designed in Saudi Arabia	Architecture and Design Arts Commission	Product design	Riyadh
The exhibition accompanying the King Salman Charter Award ceremony		Architecture and Design Arts	Riyadh
Supplier Gallery: Celebrating Inspired Design	Royal Commission for AlUla	Architecture and Design Arts	Al-Ula
Tanween Challenges Exhibition	King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra)	Product design	Dhahran
Nabil Fanous Exhibition	Museums Commission	View architectural designs	Riyadh
Saudi Index	INDEX Design	Interior design, furniture and fittings in the Kingdom	Riyadh
International Construction and Interior Design Exhibition "CIDEX 2024"	CIDEX International Building and Interior Design Exhibition	Interior design and furniture	Dhahran
Quarterly Exhibition of Architecture and Design Arts	Al-Qassim University	Architecture and Design	Al-Qassim
Studio 2024 (College of Architecture and Planning Annual Exhibition)	King Abdulaziz University	Architecture and Design	Jeddah
College of Design Annual Exhibition (CODEX *24)	Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University	Interior Design, Print and Multimedia Design and Industrial Design	Dammam
Starts 2024	Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University	Graphic Design	Riyadh
The Fifth Nabtaker Exhibition The Fifth Nabtaker Exhibition		Product Design	Riyadh
Vision: Shaping the Future 2024	Dar Al-Hekma University	Interior and graphic design and architecture	Jeddah



Fashion

The report tracks 21 fashion shows and exhibitions held in 2024, encompassing everything from sportswear and seasonal fashion shows to luxury, traditional, and contemporary fashion. The variety of themes featured in these exhibitions demonstrated the local scene’s development and receptivity to international trends. In addition to several exhibitions organized by university fashion and textile departments, the Fashion Commission, the General Entertainment Authority, and the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) were among the cultural organizations that organized the fashion shows. (Figure 32)

The Fashion Commission’s Red Sea Fashion Week, which included a live showcase of high-end clothing, jewelry, and seasonal swimwear collections from Saudi and foreign designers,⁸⁵ was one of the most significant fashion events the report tracked. Additionally, 100 Saudi brands participated in the Commission’s second iteration of “Riyadh Fashion Week.” Adnan Akbar, a Saudi designer, kicked off the week with his “Treasures” haute couture show, alongside Elie Saab’s “1001 Seasons” exhibition, which drew a sizable crowd during the Riyadh Season. Following a global tour that included Paris, New York, London, and Tokyo, the National Museum also hosted the exhibition “Christian Dior: Dream Designer,” which featured over 200 fashion and accessory pieces. The “Art and Fashion Studio” exhibition, which was organized in partnership between the Visual Arts Commission and the Fashion Commission, was one of the most well-known shows this year. It featured the experimental works that focus on the intersections of fashion

and visual arts, known as “Art and Fashion Reimagined,” and the results of the “Meeting Residency” program. In addition, the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) hosted the “Extension” exhibition, “Traditional Fashion in the Kingdom,” which featured live models highlighting the diversity of provincial heritage and its incorporation into modern designs, illustrating the development of Saudi fashion across various Provinces. Sportswear, specifically the uniforms of Formula 1 drivers, will be on display at another exhibition.

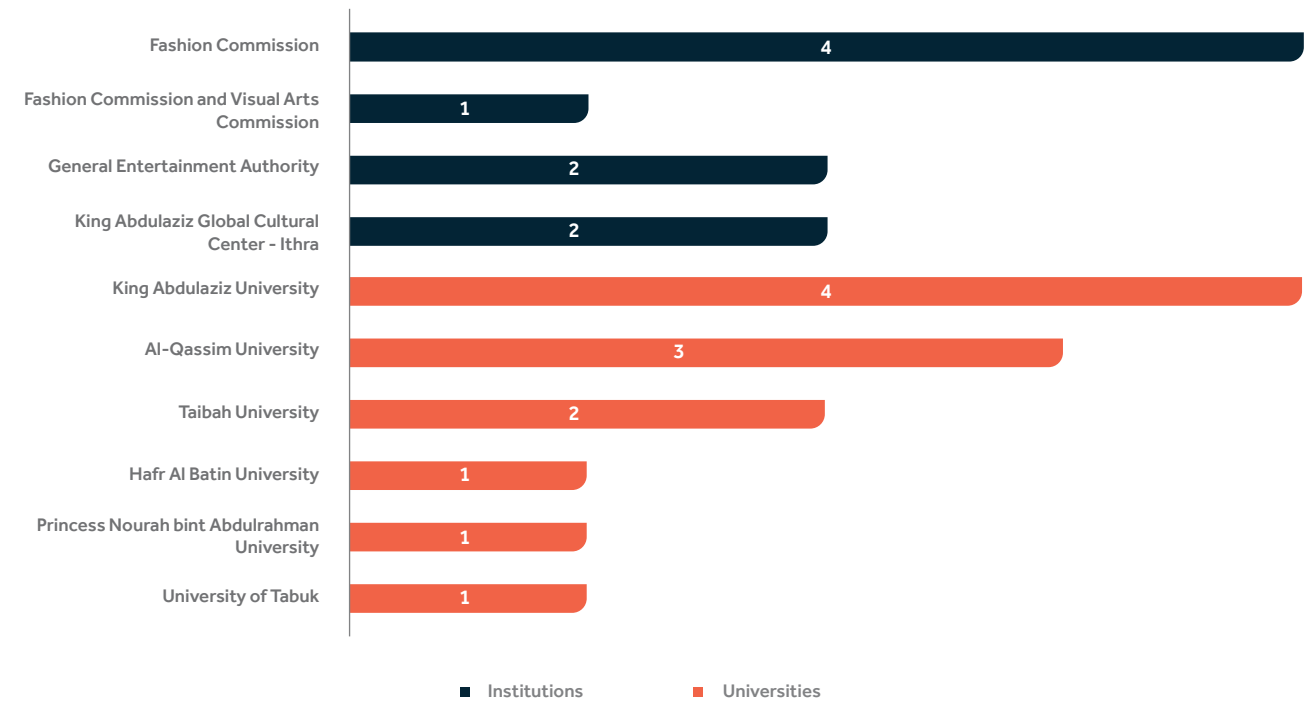


Figure 32: Number of fashion exhibitions held in 2024, by Province.⁸⁶



Handicrafts and Cultural Exhibitions

The report tracked 15 handicraft exhibitions that took place in 2024, including the second Saudi International Handicrafts Week (Banan) in Riyadh. In addition to 50 pavilions for organizations, associations, and business owners, the show included 452 pavilions for handicraft practitioners, 69% of whom were Saudis. There were also nine pavilions for the homes of artisans.⁸⁷ The Royal Institute of Traditional Arts (Wrth) launched the "Crafts Bus" initiative as part of a tour to

promote traditional arts. The initiative traveled to three cities in the Kingdom to give the public live handicraft demonstrations. Sadu, hand embroidery, leather tanning, incense production, and metalworking were all featured in these exhibitions to create traditional jewelry and ornaments. Alongside the Islamic Art Conference, the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) hosted several exhibitions under the theme "In Praise of the Artisan."



Table 18: Examples of handicraft cultural exhibitions held in 2024.

Exhibition	Commission	City
International Handicrafts Week Exhibition in Banan - Second Edition	Heritage Commission	Riyadh
Artisans' Fair		Namas
Traditional Crafts Exhibition	King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture – Ithra ⁸⁸	Dhahran
Exhibition in Praise of the Artisan		
Mini-exhibitions – Accompanying the Islamic Art Conference		
Crafts Dialogue Exhibition: The Meeting of Traditional Art with Contemporary Art		
Behind the Curtain Exhibition: Glimpses of Crafts		
Artisan Bus	Royal Institute of Traditional Arts -Wrth ⁸⁹	Jazan - Dumat Al-Jandal - Hafr Al-Batin
Artisans' Corner	Jazan Province Municipality ⁹⁰	Irth Village in Jazan



Copyrighted Works

The National Intellectual Property Rights Exchange Platform (ATM), one of the initiatives of the National Intellectual Property Strategy launched in 2022, was launched this year, demonstrating the ongoing regulatory efforts in the field of intellectual property.⁹¹ By facilitating access, transferring rights, and opening up new investment channels, the platform is anticipated to stimulate creativity and cultural production. Three months after 15 WIPO member states finish the ratification or accession processes, the Riyadh Design Law Treaty, which was adopted in November 2024, will come into effect.⁹² Establishing a legal framework that streamlines processes and protects the creative rights of designers both inside and outside the Kingdom is the goal of the treaty. This indicator aims to track information on voluntary registration applications and certificates for copyrighted works, since safeguarding intellectual property rights is a component of the environment that supports cultural production. In 2024, there were 2,568 applications for voluntary registration of copyrighted works, a 63% increase.

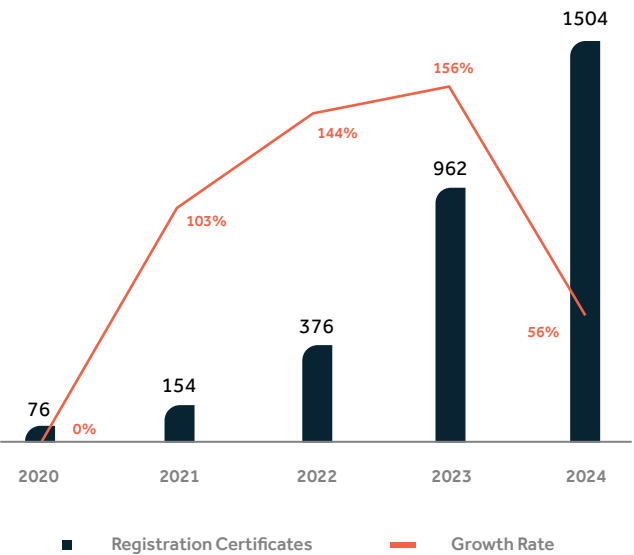


Figure 33: Certificates of optional registration of copyrighted works, and their growth rate in 2020-2024. ⁹⁵

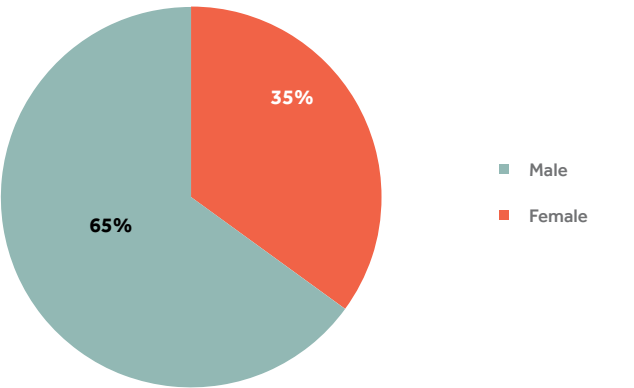


Figure 34: Percentage distribution of voluntary registration certificates for copyrighted works in 2024, by gender of applicant. ⁹⁶

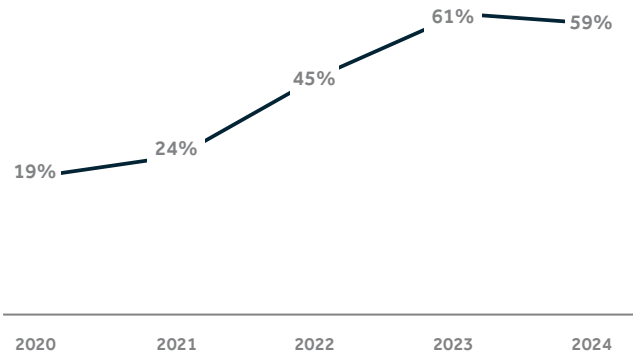


Figure 35: Ratio of certificates issued out of the total number of applications for voluntary registration of copyrighted works in 2020-2024. ⁹⁷

In line with the gender gap in indicators of literary production and scientific research, as shown by the previous version of the report, 1,504 registration certificates were issued this year, with a slower growth rate than in 2023 (as shown in Figure 33). The percentage of female applicants to male applicants for these certificates was 35% to 65% (as shown in Figure 34).⁹³ Over the previous five years, the yearly growth rates for registration applications and certificates in 2020–2024 were 59.6% and 114.7%, respectively. The effectiveness of laws intended to control and safeguard creativity and cultural production is reflected in the growing interest in registering works, which is a sign of heightened awareness of intellectual property rights.

This year, there was a minor decline in the percentage of certificates granted relative to the total number of applications for voluntary registration (Figure 35). This percentage, however, varies according to the submitting entity and the type of work. With 72.1% of all voluntary registration applications for copyrighted works in 2024 coming from individuals, individual applications account for the largest share. Despite this, a below-average 54.8% of the submitted applications resulted in certificates. On the other hand, 87.1% of certificates were issued out of all applications submitted by government agencies, and companies issued 68.6%. However, the shares of each of the total registration applications were 3.54% and 15.9%, respectively,⁹⁴ which suggests areas for improvement and raises awareness among people, as well as the maturity of handling registration systems in institutions.

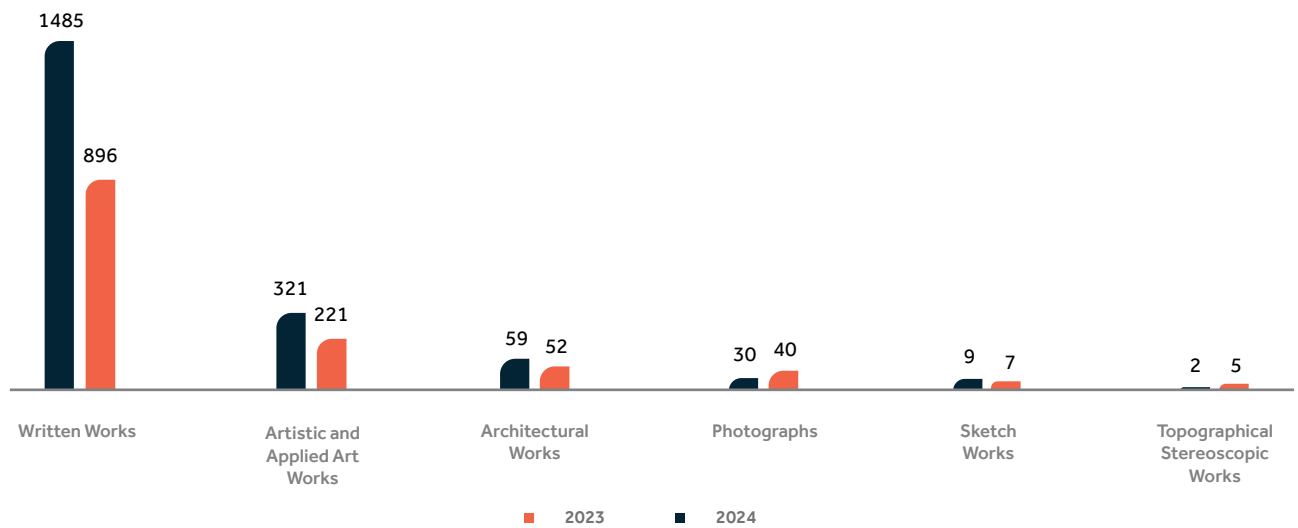


Figure 36: Applications for voluntary registration of copyrighted works in fields related to the cultural sector between 2023 and 2024.⁹⁸

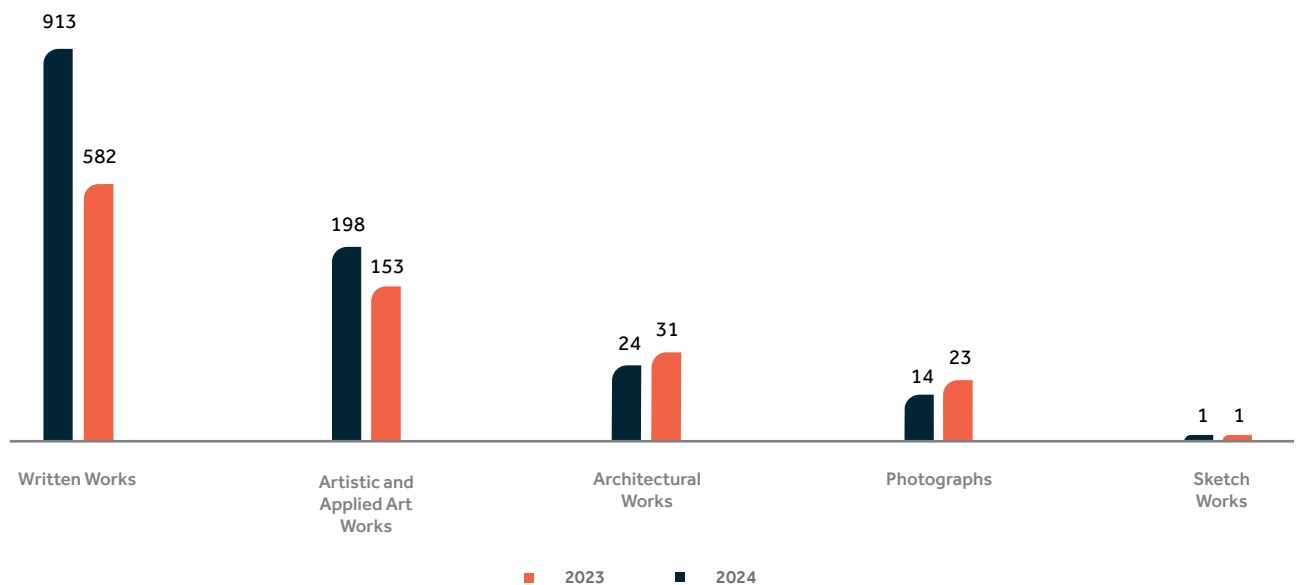


Figure 37: Optional registration certificates for copyrighted works in fields related to the cultural sector between 2023 and 2024.⁹⁹

There is a comparable discrepancy according to the nature of the work. For instance, the percentage of certificates awarded out of all applications submitted for written work is roughly 61.5%, whereas the rate for graphic work is not higher than 11%. Over the last four years, no certificates have been granted for three-dimensional topographic works. With 1,485 registration applications and 913 registration certificates issued for written works (as illustrated in Figures 36 and 37), written works continue to lead the other copyright categories

overall. This represents a high growth rate of over 350%, or more than four and a half times in a single year. However, not all works benefited equally from the general increase in voluntary registration statistics for copyrighted works. For instance, even though the number of registration applications increased, the number of certificates granted for architectural works decreased slightly. In contrast, there was a decrease in the number of registration applications and certificates awarded for photographic works.

Creativity

National Cultural Awards

The National Cultural Awards Initiative, which covered 11 cultural sectors, presented 16 national awards in its fourth edition in 2024. This is equivalent to the number of sectors and awards given out over the preceding two years.

With half of the individual honorees hailing from academic circles, this year's National Awards stood out for emphasizing academic and research-based activities in cultural fields. This suggests that supporting organizations are becoming more interested in new venues for cultural contribution, like research facilities and universities.

For instance, Dr. Saad Al-Suwaian received the Cultural Personality of the Year Award for his work in social anthropology and oral culture documentation. For his studies and documentation of the traditional and heritage foods of the Kingdom, Dr. Mohammad Al-Mansouri was awarded the Culinary Arts Award. For her work documenting the evolution of fashion in the Kingdom, Dr. Laila Al Bassam was also honored with the Fashion Award. Badr Al Bawardi won the Businessmen and Women Award for his and his family's

efforts to preserve cultural heritage and to develop and restore many heritage landmarks. At the same time, Dr. Abdullah Al Sharekh received the National Heritage Award for his academic work in promoting heritage. Past reports have shown that the winners' field choices reflect a general interest in heritage and its documentation across a variety of cultural disciplines, which is consistent with previous years' trends. The King Faisal Foundation won the Cultural Institutions Award in the non-profit category for its efforts to promote interest in heritage and cultural education. This interest has also permeated the awards given to institutions, with the selection of organizations that have supported heritage in the Kingdom. Additionally, the Turquoise Mountain Foundation in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was recognized for its efforts to promote Saudi heritage internationally with the International Cultural Excellence Award (Figure 38).

The National Awards Program announced the establishment of two new award categories, the "Cultural Media Award" and the "Handicrafts Award," beginning with the 2025 cycle, as part of its enlarged focus on cultural and creative fields and cultural actors.



 Cultural Personality of the Year Award	Dr. Saad Al-Suwaian	 Publishing Award	Leadership Education House
 Youth Culture Award	Diaa Youssef	 Theater and Performing Arts Award	Mohammad Al-Tuwaiyan
 International Cultural Excellence Award	Turquoise Mountain Foundation	 Culinary Arts Award	Dr. Mohammad Al-Mansouri
 Cultural Institutions Award (For-profit)	MBC Group	 Architecture and Design Award	Dr. Khaled Azzam
 Cultural Institutions Award (Non-profit)	King Faisal Charity Foundation	 Translation Award	Dr. Walid Al-Omari
 Business Owners Award	Badr bin Mohammad Al-Buwardi	 Fashion Award	Prof. Dr. Laila Al-Bassam
 National Heritage Award	Dr. Abdullah Al-Sharekh	 Film Award	Tawfiq Al-Zaidi
 Literature Award	Osama Al-Muslim	 Music Award	Abadi Al-Johar

Figure 38: Winners of the National Cultural Awards in 2024. ¹⁰⁰

Local Awards

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's 2024 local cultural awards were awarded in a variety of cultural fields. There were roughly 640 winners in all, both individuals and institutions, spread across 13 cultural sectors. ¹⁰¹ Literature, publishing and translation, visual arts, film, theater and performing arts, language, music, fashion, architecture and design, culinary arts, heritage, and museums are all included in (Figure 39).

Literature Sector

Starting with the literature sector, which awarded 16 prizes for critical studies, literary projects, poetry and novels. Nearly a third of literary awards go to poetry, making it the most prominent genre. The Prince Abdullah Al-Faisal Award for Arabic Poetry and the "Year of Arabic Poetry 2023" initiatives, whose activities and influence continue into 2024, are the main drivers of this. Poetry has also become more widely known thanks to a variety of cultural contests, such as the

Schools Competition for the Year of Arabic Poetry, which reflects a movement among various age groups to foster poetic creativity. Even though the novel became a competitive field, its share was still lower than poetry's, and it did not account for a tenth of the total number of winners.

The Literary Partner Initiative, overseen by the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission, announced in its third edition that it will present 12 awards in 2024, all of which will be focused on the cultural cafés sector. These awards will be divided into three main categories (A, B, and C), with three awards for each category, as well as three special appreciation awards, such as the Innovative Contribution Award, Provincial Cultural Representation Award, and Media Excellence Award. Paradigm, Formation, Arab, Comma, Aura, Ninth Hour, Sweet Coffee Beans, Sense 12, Roshen, Recipe, Twelve, and Growth are the winner cafés.

The overlap between literary awards and the media sector is a noteworthy aspect of 2024. The addition of writing

categories to the media awards made this overlap clear. For instance, the Saudi Media Forum featured an award for writing and literary creativity in a media context, and the National Day Media Excellence Awards featured a category for best written journalistic content. This blending of media and literature has impacted the quality of the winners, as journalists and media content creators have joined the list of literary honorees alongside poets and novelists. Regarding the

winner categories, it is noteworthy that winning institutions were underrepresented, whereas individuals dominated the literature awards. In addition, men predominated in the majority of local literary contests, making up almost two-thirds of the winners. In 2024, the General Entertainment Authority also introduced several competitions, such as the “Golden Pen Competition” initiative with its novel and screenplay categories.

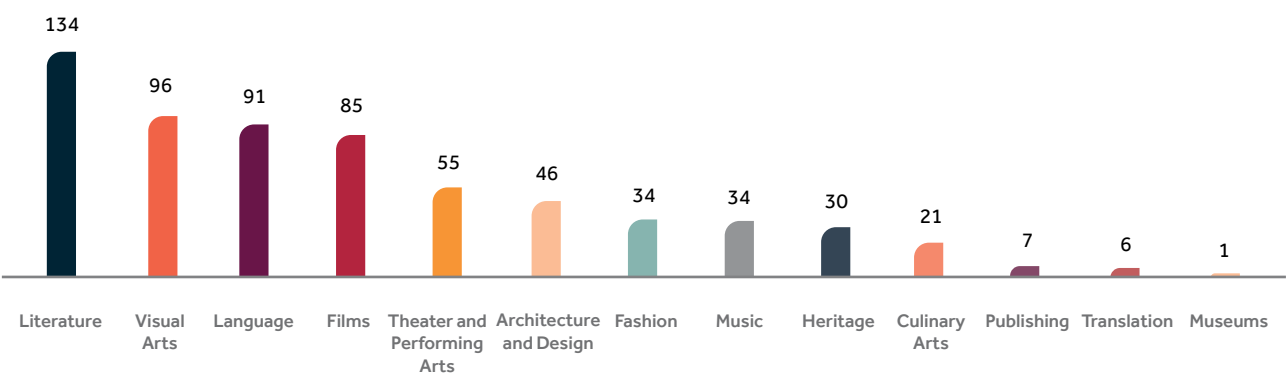


Figure 39: Total number of winners of local awards presented in 2024, by cultural sector.

Table 19: Winners of the Best Literary Partner title in the third edition of the Literary Partner Initiative 2024. ¹⁰²

The winning literary partner	Category	Center
Paradigm Café	Class A	First place
Tashkeel Café		Second place
Orayb Café		Third place
Fasila Café	Class B	First place
Aura Café		Second place
Nine O’Clock Café		Third place
Sweet Coffee Beans Café	Class C	First place
Sense 12 Café		Second place
Roshen Café		Third place
Recipe Café	Appreciation awards	
Café Twelve		
Café Growth		

Visual Arts Sector

With 11 distinct awards, the Visual Arts Sector announced 96 winners for 2024. When examining the artistic accomplishments of these winners, Arabic calligraphy stands out as the most prominent category, accounting for roughly half of the winners. The existence of specialized programs and awards that have helped to promote this art and highlight its practitioners is what has made Arabic calligraphy the most popular category. For instance, the Ministry of Education’s Arabic Calligraphy Competition (Prophet of Mercy) and the Prince Mohammad bin Salman Global Center for Arabic Calligraphy Competition have helped to provide a list of winners for this field. With 12 winners spread across the general education stages and additional winners in specific tracks like “Camel Portrait,” which is related to The Dia Aziz Portrait Award, which focuses on the art of drawing faces and embodying the features of local heritage, photography came in second in terms of the number of winners (roughly a quarter of the total winners). Thirty-seven female winners were exceptional in Arabic calligraphy, photography, and cultural skills, while there were 57 male winners (60%) overall. The Saudi Press Agency (WAS) was acknowledged as the recipient of the Media Excellence Award in the photography category.



Table 20: Examples of local awards presented in 2024 in the visual arts sector.

Award Presenter	Rank	Track	Winners	Award
Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts in Jeddah ¹⁰³	First	-	Said Said	The Dia Aziz Portrait Award, Eighth Edition
	Second		Jana Turki Qandeel	
	Third		Iman Hamad Hussein	
Prince Mohammad bin Salman Global Center for Arabic Calligraphy ¹⁰⁴	First	Jali Thuluth Track	Mohammad Ayash	Prince Mohammad bin Salman Center for Arabic Calligraphy Initiative Competition
	Second		Omar Nour	
	Third		Masoud Hafez	
	First	Naskh Script Track	Obaid Al-Nafie	
	Second		Abdulrahman Al-Saeedi	
	Third		Abdulrahman Rizk	
	First	Diwan Script Track	Abdul Mohsen Al-Nassar	
	Second		Youssef Al-Balqi	
	Third		Mohammad Al-Riyami	
King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) ¹⁰⁵	Art in Nature Track		Obaid Al-Safi	Ithra Art Award (Sixth Edition)

Arabic Language

Six awards were given out in 15 categories, including language instruction, technology, research, and community creativity, as part of the 2024 Arabic language support and enrichment awards. The King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language was principally responsible for presenting these honors. The award's 2024 edition recognized Saudi and foreign organizations. The Saudi Data and AI Authority (SDAIA) won an award for its work digitizing Arabic, and King Saud University Press was recognized for its contributions to Arabic language instruction. International organizations received awards in some categories, such as the Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation in Dubai for its efforts to promote linguistic awareness and the Institute of Arabic Manuscripts in Cairo for its research. One person recognized for his research contributions was Dr. Abdullah Al-Rasheed of Saudi Arabia. The award's global reach was reflected in the list of winners, which also included non-Saudi individuals like Chinese researcher Lin Luo. The King Salman Global Academy

for Arabic Language, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, presented 60 prizes in the fourth edition of the Children's Challenge Competition for 2024 across multiple tracks. Through competitions open to children from both inside and outside the Kingdom, the initiative seeks to strengthen the connection between young people and the art of public speaking in classical Arabic from an early age.

Another notable event was the KAPSARC Arabic Language Award. In collaboration with the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language, the King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center (KAPSARC) established this honor. Academics, graduate students at Saudi universities, and staff members of the Saudi energy system were the focus of the award's third iteration in 2024. Three tracks—writing scientific articles, translating summaries, and enrichment projects—had seven winners. These included Dr. Abdullah Al-Mahna, who took first place in the article writing track, and Engineer Ziad Al-Ghamdi, who took first place in the translation track. Dar Al-Hekma University and the Saleh Kamel Humanitarian



Foundation also gave out an award in the area of Arabic language revival.

Publishing Sector

The Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission presented the Riyadh International Book Fair Awards, which stood out as one of the most significant programs bolstering the publishing movement at the 2024 Publishing Sector Awards. Five publishing houses received awards in various excellence categories. Dar Ta'thir received the Distinguished Saudi Content Award, and Takween United Group received the Excellence in Publishing Award. Arab publishing houses were also recognized; the Excellence in Children's Books Award went to Hamad Bin Khalifa University Publishing in Qatar, the Excellence in Translation Award went to Assir Al-Kutub in Egypt, and the Excellence in Digital Platforms Award went to Jabal Amman Publishers in Jordan. Similarly, two awards for excellence in scientific publishing and graduate studies were given out by Umm Al-Qura University.

Film Sector

The Red Sea International Film Festival gave out 29 awards, while the Saudi Film Festival took home 36, according to the analysis of the film industry. During the Entertainment Makers Awards ceremony, the General Entertainment Authority presented eight film awards. In addition, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education collaborated to present the second season of the Cultural Skills Competition for students in the film track. Twelve pupils took first place.

In 2024, the Saudi Cinema Association, in collaboration with the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), and with assistance from the Film Commission, organized the 10th edition of the Saudi Film Festival. With a focus on science fiction film, the session showcased its numerous awards in three primary competitions: the Documentary Film Competition, the Short Film Competition, and the Feature Film Competition. "Hagan" took home four awards in the feature film category, including Best Actor and Actress and the Jury Prize, while "Between the Sands" took home Best Film and Best Cinematography. "Memory of Asir" and "Donkey Racing" were the winners of the Best Documentary Award. "Saleh's Story" took home the Best Short Film award in the competition, while "Aidarous and I" took home the Jury Prize and Best Acting for its star.

The Yusr Awards, which are presented to the top participating films based on the assessment of an international jury, were part of the Red Sea International Film Festival's fourth edition in 2024. Lotfi Achour, the director of the Tunisian film "The Red Offspring," won the Best Director award, while the film itself won Best Feature Film. Mahmoud Bakri, who starred in the Palestinian film "To an Unknown World," won the Best Actor Award and the Silver Yusr Award. Adi Rashid won Best Screenplay for Anasheed Adam, and Maryam Sharif won Best Actress for her performance in Snow White. "Searching for

Mr. Rambo's Exit" received the Special Jury Award. "Feast" took home the Golden Yusr Award in the short film category, while "Lazarus" took home the Silver Yusr Award. "State of Silence" took home the Orient Award for Best Documentary Film in the documentary genre. The festival offered special awards based on audience votes in addition to the competition. The Audience Award for Best International Film went to "Little Jaffna," while the Audience Award for Best Saudi Film went to "Hoopal," directed by Abdulaziz Al Shalahi. Additionally, Rula Dakhil Allah's performance in "Salma and Qamar" earned her the Saudi Rising Star Award.

In its 2024 edition, the General Entertainment Authority's Joy Awards ceremony honored several of the most notable films and figures in the film industry. The audience's engagement with local productions is reflected in the "Favorite Film" award that went to the Saudi film "Sattar." Karim Abdel Aziz took home the acting category's "Favorite Actor in the Cinema Category" prize for his performance in "Beit Al-Ruby." In contrast, Nelly Karim took home the "Favorite Actress in the Cinema Category" prize for her performance in "Voy! Hey! Proceed." The ceremony featured several honorary and commemorative awards in addition to the competitive ones. The Arab Art Leader Award went to Egyptian actor Adel Emam, and the Lifetime Achievement Award went to American actor Kevin Costner. In keeping with the event's expanding global



reach and wide range of artistic and cultural influences, the ceremony also presented the Honorary Entertainers Award to other international celebrities, such as director Zack Snyder, actor Martin Lawrence, and actress Alia Bhatt.

The “Cultural Skills Competition” has become one of the venues for identifying up-and-coming general education talent within the framework of collaborative efforts between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education. As a reflection of the target groups’ inclusivity and the two ministries’ efforts to foster cultural creativity in its infancy, the competition featured several tracks, including the “Film Track,” in which students from different levels participated.

Theater and Performing Arts Sector

There were 55 winners in the theater and performing arts category overall, split among six award categories and presented by three primary organizations. Thirty awards were given out by the Theater and Performing Arts Commission in three tracks. The majority of the awards were given out at the Riyadh Theater Festival. The categories emphasized acting, directing, design, and script excellence. The play “Saliq and Baqit,” which took home the “Best Costumes” prize, and the play “Tawq,” which took home the “Best Set Design” prize, were among the winners. In addition, Hussein Youssef was named the “Best Leading Actor,” Fatima Al-Jishi was named the “Best Leading Actress,” and director Aqeel Al-Khamis was named the “Best Play Direction” winner. The second track was the “Masrahathon” competition, which uses creative technical solutions to enhance theatrical experiences. The third track featured a variety of awards given to amateur clubs as part of the Commission’s efforts to assist the local theater community. In contrast, awards were presented to theatrical groups from all over the Kingdom.



Through the Dammam Theater Forum, the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts, the second honoree, presented fifteen awards. The Best Theatrical Script award went to Yahya Mohammad Al-Alkami for “Ghayaba,” Ali Al-Ghazwi for “Hawan,” and Ishraq Al-Ruqi for “Nahaya Al-Qalb.” With an emphasis on fostering up-and-coming talents in school and educational theater, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education presented ten awards as part of school and educational activities. With 28 awards, nine of which went to women, it is evident that women received half of the honors in the theater and performing arts category. The Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education and Masrahathon awards went to mixed teams, while the remaining awards were for plays.

Heritage Sector

In 2024, there was a lot of activity to recognize contributions to the Kingdom’s heritage sector. The six main prizes, which covered broad categories like environmental excellence, creative design, heritage digitization, support for artisans, audio and visual production, children’s content, and accelerators with a focus on heritage elements, were given out to a total of 30 winners. A variety of organizations gave out these awards, chief among them Umm Al-Qura University, which organized the “Historical and Cultural Sites Hackathon” in collaboration with the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah. Eleven awards were given out at the event, all of which focused on using digital technologies to promote marketing, heritage, enrichment, and other subjects. Among the winners were the “Milestones” project in the “Digitization of Historical Heritage” category and the “Murshid” project, which ranked first in the “Design and Creative Thinking” category.

Targeting children and young adults, the Ministry of Culture also held the “Adventure with Mazyouna” competition, which blended education and fun in cutting-edge digital and historical formats. Yara Mohammad Al-Nial and other students won the competition. Abdullah Ali Al-Jaidan was the first recipient of the “My Handicraft Award,” which was started by the Wad Charity Association for Solidarity and Family Development to support artisans. The “Camel Hackathon,” which focused on camels as a cultural and economic element, was also hosted by the “Saleh Al-Rukhis Cultural Center.” The “Our Heritage” project emerged victorious. Basima bint Abdullah Al-Khazam won first place in the “Our Authentic Heritage” competition, which showcases students’ inventiveness in showcasing aspects of local heritage. The Emirate of Hail Province took part. Notably, eighty percent of the winners in this sector are institutions, whereas six out of the ten individuals who participated were male. Along with the active participation of young men and women who made individual contributions that boosted the sector’s vitality and diversity, this distribution highlights the significant institutional role in assisting heritage projects.

Table 21: Samples of local awards presented in the theater and performing arts sector in 2024.

Award	Awarding Body	Winning Play	Track
Riyadh Theater Festival Awards	Theater and Performing Arts Commission	"Tawq " play	Best Stage Design Award
		"Sleeq and Baqit " play	Best Theatrical Costume Award
		"Container " play	Best Theatrical Lighting Award
		" Hussein Al-Youssef" For his role in the "Al Qumqum" play	Best Actor in a Leading Role Award
		" Fatima Al-Jashi " For her role in the play "The Stage Keeper"	
		Amal Al-Ramadan For her role in "Tawq" play	Best Supporting Actress Award
		Rashid and what he did in the land of Wah wah	Best Musical Theatrical Award
		Writer Abdulaziz Al-Youssef For his play "Tawq "	Best Play Script Award
		Saeed Al Shamrani For his role in the play "Ghaima "	Best Supporting Actor
		Ali Al-Wadaei For his role in the play "Ghaima "	
		Aqeel Al Khamis For his play "Container "	Best Theatrical Direction
		"The Stage Keeper" play	Best Theatrical Performance Award in the (Social Track)
		"Tawq" play	Best Theatrical Performance Award in (Contemporary Track)
Dammam Theater Forum Award for Monodrama and Duodrama	Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts	"Me too in this darkness" play	Best Decor Award
		Ghaida Salam For her role in "Lipstick" play	Best Actress Award
		"Lipstick " play	Best Makeup Award
		Ahmed Al-Ahmari For his play "Light "	Best Director Award
		"Hazayan" (Delirium) play	Best Costume Award
		Writer Ibrahim Al-Harhi For his play "Expatriate's Ticket"	Best Script Award
		"Daw" (Light) play	Best Lighting Award
		Moataz Al-Abdullah For his role in "Expatriate's Ticket" play	Best Actor Award
		"Expatriate's Ticket " play	Best Effects Award
		Mohammad Abdul Qawi " The First Viewer "	Theatrical Script Competition
		Fatima Al-Hadary " Aghwar "	
		Laila Hussein Al Nasser " Jean Constantine "	

Architecture and Design Sector

Forty-seven winners—both individuals and institutions—were recognized as part of the 2024 Saudi Architecture and Design Awards, demonstrating the expanding creative and professional presence in this crucial field. Architectural design, interior design, industrial design, urban design, and creative projects aimed at practitioners and students were all covered by the awards' 14 categories. With 32 awards in five major categories—all of which were professional and inspirational—the Architecture and Design Commission led the awarding bodies in both quantity and variety. The most well-known of these is “Your Design in Every Home,” a contest that asks male and female students to create usable and manufactured furniture designs. To solve urban problems, the Commission also arranged the Designathon, a group challenge that integrated digital technologies and design thinking. The competition had a professional and educational component because both practitioners and students attended. The purpose of King Salman Charter for Architecture and Urbanism Award was to recognize projects that exemplify the architectural ideals and concepts outlined in the Charter. Its awards were centered on the “University Student Design Projects” track, which was won by Abdulaziz

Al-Talib and Sadeem Al-Jabreen, and the “Built Projects” track, which was won by multiple projects. Awards were also given out through the INDEX Interior Design Exhibition, which highlights accomplishments in the furniture and interior design industries.

Through the Diriyah Mosques Architectural Design Competition, which Group 907 won, the Diriyah Company also made contributions to this field.

The Royal Commission for AlUla gave out architecture and design awards, the Madinah Regional Municipality, and the Emirate of Makkah Province. The Al-Ula Design Award, given by the Royal Commission for AlUla, recognizes designs that draw inspiration from Al-Ula's natural and cultural heritage. The winners were Ismail Hoteit and Maryam Al-Hamid. Maryam Al-Abdulqader, an engineer, was the recipient of the “Najran Facade Design” award, presented by Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University. A further example of the academic institutional presence that supports the revitalization of this sector is the Charité Eco-Architecture Award, which was organized by King Abdulaziz University's College of Architecture and Planning.



Since women received the majority of the individual awards in the 2024 Architecture and Design Awards, the results demonstrated the strong representation of women in the field. There were 25 female winners, compared to just three male ones, indicating a notable advantage across a range of categories. Additionally, seven mixed-gender teams took part and showcased group projects that took home awards across multiple categories. Ten institutions emerged victorious at the provincial level, accounting for roughly 21% of all awards.



Table 22: Samples of local awards presented in the theater and performing arts sector in 2024.

Award	Awarding Body	Winners	Track
Next Generation ATP Trophy Design Competition	Saudi Tennis Federation	Lina Al-Shanqiti Ghalia Al-Sawaf Al Anoud Al Qasimi Reem Al-Zahrani	Sports Cup Design
King Salman Urban Charter Award	Architecture and Design Arts Commission	King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture - Ithra Owner: Saudi Aramco Architect: Snøhetta	Built Projects Track
		Project: Banyan Tree Al-Ula Owner: Al-Ula Development Company Architect: AW	
		Project: Dar Al-Rahmaniya Building Owner: Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy Cultural Center Architect: John Lingley	
		Project: The Grand Mosque - KAFD Owner: King Abdullah Financial District Architect: Omraniah	
		project: Innovation Tower Owner: King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology Architect: Lava Laboratory of Visionary Architecture	
		Project: Sports Track Owner: Sports Boulevard Architect: Sports Track Design Team	Unbuilt Projects Track
		Project: Mihrab Owner: Mihrab Naht Supervised by Al Madinah Region Development Authority Architect: Mihrab Team	
		Project: King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language Designed by the Student: Abdulaziz Ghanem Al-Talib University: King Saud University	University Student Design Projects Track
		Project: Contemporary District Design Designed by the female Student: Sdeem Al-Jibrin University: University of Sheffield	

Music Sector

In 2024, 34 music industry winners were also honored. Their awards were given out in three different categories, presented by three other government agencies, and covered a variety of topics, including playing, singing, and music production. The “Hoopal Melody” award, which the Ministry of Culture organized as part of its cultural initiatives this year, was at the forefront of these honors. The prize recognized two composers whose compositions were inspired by the local acoustics. Shadi Mishaal Al Harbi placed second, and Mohammad Hashem Sultan took first place. This award is distinctive in its artistic qualities related to identity and reflects the movement to support local musical composition and experimentation. The “Entertainment Makers Awards,” which recognized eight winners in various musical genres, were also highlighted by the General Entertainment Authority. The awards for Favorite Male Artist, Favorite Female Artist, Favorite New Face, and Favorite Song went to Ayed, Assala, and Talal Sam, respectively.

The song “Ya Leil Ya Ain” won the Favorite Song Award. Prominent artists were also honored at the ceremony, including Rabeh Saqr, who was given a career award. In addition to other Arab and international figures, Maestro Walid Fayed and Najwa Karam received honorary awards. Twenty-four male and female students from different educational levels won the Cultural Skills Competition, which the Ministry of Culture organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. The competition included ten cultural tracks, such as singing and

musical instruments. The competition stood out due to its balanced representation of men and women, age-appropriate inclusion, and geographic reach. Women made up 56% of the winners in the music industry awards overall, highlighting the impressive representation of women in this creative field.

Fashion Sector

The Fashion Awards, which honored designers, brands, photographers, and creatives in a variety of fashion-related fields and featured concepts like sustainability, heritage, and innovation, featured 34 winners vying for 19 awards. The Chalhoub Group, in collaboration with the Fashion Commission, organized the Kingdom’s first fashion awards ceremony in 2024, which took place in Riyadh. Ten prizes were given out, including “International Designer of the Year,” which went to American designer Norma Kamali, “Brand of the Year,” which went to Loro Piana, and “Sustainable Brand,” which went to the Saudi company “Chaldene”. Together with awards for jewelry and men’s and women’s fashion, Nourah Al Omari and Al Anoud Al Suwailem were recognized in the “Photography” and “Appearance Coordination” categories, respectively, demonstrating the variety of specialties and the power of local representation. Additionally, as part of the “Reviving Saudi Heritage” competition, which emphasized sustainable design, the Fashion Commission, in partnership with Swarovski, presented five awards through its “100 Saudi Brands” program. Al Anoud Al Jaber and Hiba Baatiya were among the winners. The contest provides a forum for



showcasing how innovation and tradition can coexist while promoting eco-friendly practices in the fashion industry. Elie Saab, a designer, received one prize from the General Entertainment Authority's "Entertainment Makers Awards." The Ministry of Culture, on the other hand, offered 12 prizes in a competition for designing horse scarves. The competition was split into four categories, each of which had three winners and was based on the names of historical horses. Joud Al-Sultan, Adel Al-Ahmadi, and Rawabi Al-Otaibi were among



Translation Sector

According to the observed data, Prince Sultan University awarded several local translation awards in 2024. The university focused on two translation tracks through the Translation and Culture Competition: oral and written. Three winners were chosen for each track, crowning [five] Saudis. The Culinary Arts Commission presented 21 awards in the culinary arts category for 2024. Through two main competitions, Elite Saudi chefs and provincial and local dishes, an elite group of Saudi chefs—of whom over three-quarters were women—were crowned.



the winners. Through modern designs that strengthen national identity, the competition sought to bring back traditional aesthetics. Six prizes were given to winning teams in categories like sustainability, tech solutions, and traditional attire at a tech fashion hackathon hosted by the Jeddah Girls' Technical College. Approximately 65% of the sector's awards were given to individuals, while 35% were given to organizations or groups. The fact that 76% of the winners were female shows the strong representation of women in the Kingdom's fashion industry.

Table 23: Winners of the Ministry of Culture's Horse Scarf Design Competition.

Winners	Track
Waad Al-Khamisi	Al-Mutarraf Track
Khaled Al-Hajili	
Omar Al-Nafisa	
Ismail Al-Maymani	Yaboub Track
Omamah Al-Sadiq	
Bayan Al-Rubaiqi	
Rawabi Al-Otaibi	Al-Asma'a Track
Adel Al-Ahmadi	
Good Al Sultan	
Badr Maroun	Manifa Track
Statement Of Al-Bouزيد	
Midaa Al-Ruwaizan	

International Awards

According to the report's data on international awards in 2024, Saudis won 156 international awards and excelled in nine different fields (Figure 40). With 65 awards, the architecture and design arts sector was the most prominent and well-represented. The strength of the industry and the advancement of Saudi architectural and design projects are demonstrated by this international recognition.

The Arabian Property Award, which 34 winners won, and the Commercial Interior Design Awards, which 13 winners won, are two of the most prominent honors that Saudis have received in this field. Additionally, they have won international design awards, including the Heritage Commission's iF Design Award in Germany, which is regarded as one of the most prestigious design awards. At the 2024 World Architecture

reflected in these and other results, as well as the variety of fields in which Saudis excel, with a particular emphasis on

design and architecture, literature, theater and performing arts, and film.



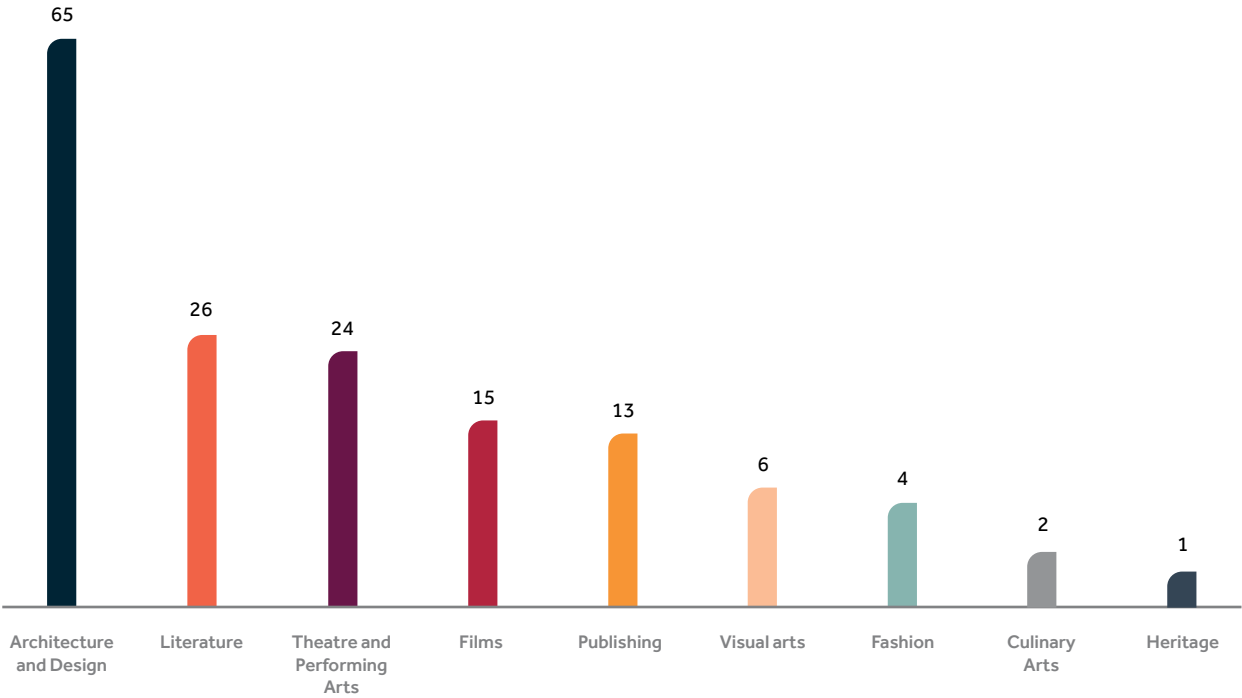


Figure 40: Total number of Saudis winners of international awards in the cultural sectors during 2024.

Table 24: Examples of international awards won by Saudis in the film sector.

Award	Winners
Cannes Film Festival: Special Mention from the Jury of the "Un Certain Regard" Competition	The Saudi film Nourah - Directed by Tawfiq Al-Zaidi
Awards of the 12th Oran International Arab Film Festival	The Saudi film Night Courier- Directed by Ali Al-Kalthami
Toronto International Film Festival	The Saudi film Night Courier- Directed by Ali Al-Kalthami
Egyptian Film Critics' Awards	The Saudi film Night Courier- Directed by Ali Al-Kalthami
Ho Chi Minh International Film Festival 2024	Director Ali Al-Kalthami
Asian Film Festival 2024	The Saudi film Night Courier- Directed by Ali Al-Kalthami
Hermes International Creative Award	Horizon movie

Table 25: Examples of international awards in various cultural sectors in 2024.

Sector	Award	Awarding Body	Winner	Track
Visual arts	Sony World Photography Awards 2024	Sony	Yasser Al-Omari	-
Literature	French Order of Arts and Letters	French Ministry of Culture	Princess Adwa bint Yazid bin Abdullah	Knight Rank
			Ahmed Mater	Knight Rank
			Nourah bint Saidan	Knight Rank
			Muhannad Shono	
			Sarah Ibrahim	Knight Rank
Theater and Performing Arts	Sharjah Award for Theatrical Writing (Texts for Adults)	Sharjah Department of Culture	Ahmed Al-Ban Hamda	First Place Award For Playwriting
Publishing	Sheikh Zayed Book Award	Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Center	Finjan Podcast	Publishing And Modern Technologies
			Awad bin Mohammad Salem Al-Duhail Al-Awlaqi	Manuscript Verification
			Hassan Abdo Samili	Young Author
			Dr. Lafay Ben Lafi Al-Salami	Manuscript Verification
			Ziad bin Abdulaziz Al Sheikh	Literature
			Dr. Adi Jasser Al-Harbash	Arts And Critical Studies
			Muhammad Khair Mahmoud Al-Baqaei	Manuscript Verification
			Maqbool Al-Alawi	Literature
Architecture and Design Arts	Seoul Smart City Award	Institute of Administrative Development & The World Organization for Smart Sustainable Cities	Al Madinah Region Development Authority	Open Living Museum Project

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Chapter Three



3

Knowledge and Skills

- Culture and Education
- Cultural Training and Rehabilitation



A key tenet in the growth of the Kingdom's cultural sector is the development of cultural knowledge and abilities. It directly enhances the presence of culture in both formal and informal educational settings, building qualified human capacities. This report's Knowledge and Skills chapter examines the key components of cultural education and training for 2024, outlining the current situation in two primary streams: formal education at different levels and informal training in the arts and cultural sector. By tracking the policies and programs that have influenced their paths, as well as supply and demand trends indicated by the number of participants in programs, the availability of education and training opportunities, and attitudes toward them in formal education, this chapter seeks to present advancements in the field of cultural education and training. Efforts to incorporate culture and the arts into curricula continued and grew in 2024, as evidenced by the noticeable increase in culturally themed classroom and extracurricular activities, as well as the introduction of specialized training programs to enhance the proficiency of both male and female educators, particularly in the early grades. In line with an accelerated, methodical approach to promoting arts and cultural education, the year also saw the introduction of specialized programs, including training kindergarten female teachers in audio arts, a program to prepare teachers for scholarships in the Chinese language, and specialized summer training programs in culinary arts. With a steady number of scholarship recipients compared to prior years, the Cultural Scholarship Program in higher education has continued to supply the industry with national talent, focusing on culture and the arts. This illustrates the ongoing effort to create educational pathways that assist the regional cultural sector.

In 2024, 129 different training programs covering cultural handicrafts, heritage, music, and digital arts were implemented in the informal cultural training sector, benefiting 26,017 male and female trainees. Through adaptable platforms and licenses, these programs offer a variety of educational opportunities. In particular, the "Abde'a" platform has continued to grow, providing over 136 accredited training programs. In addition to offering field partnerships within museums and cultural organizations that provide trainees with firsthand, practical experience, this expansion has helped meet the growing demand for developing cultural skills outside the purview of formal education. This expansion demonstrates that the community's needs for specialized and long-lasting training opportunities outside the formal education system, aimed at enhancing its cultural capabilities, have been effectively met.

Culture and Education

One of the most crucial instruments for establishing culture as an essential component of the younger generation's development is education, which serves as a fundamental pillar in the development of cultural knowledge and skills. By tracking and assessing available opportunities and capabilities, as well as trends in supply and demand in the field of cultural education, this section illustrates the extent of cultural presence in formal education programs and curricula at various levels, ranging from general education to higher education. This section provides in-depth details about teacher training programs for teaching culturally relevant curricula, culturally relevant extracurricular activities, and talent discovery initiatives. With an emphasis on cultural scholarship programs that foster the development of cultural capabilities in this area, it also examines the opportunities and capacities for culture and creativity in higher education.



Culture and Arts in Public Education

Training teachers to deliver curricula related to the cultural sector

In comparison to prior years, the scope and quality of male and female teachers training programs in the cultural and artistic domains increased dramatically in 2024. This progress was demonstrated by the growing number of female trainees and the variety of programs available, including the introduction of summer culinary arts training programs, the qualification of teachers for Chinese language scholarships, and the training of kindergarten teachers in the musical arts.

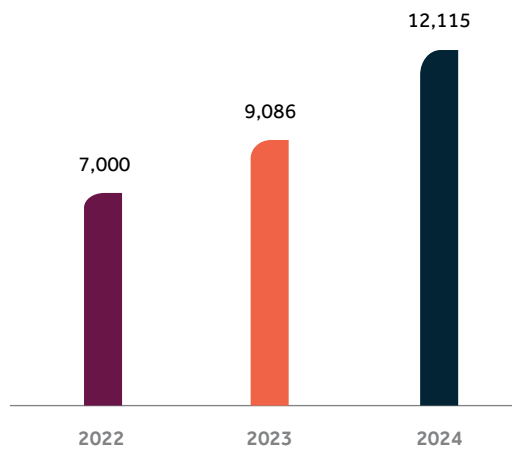


Figure 1: Number of female trainees in the kindergarten teachers' training program in musical and auditory arts during the years 2022-2024

Training programs for kindergarten female teachers in the musical and auditory arts continued to grow at a rapid pace in 2024, with 12,115 teachers enrolled, representing a 33% increase from 2023 (9,086 female teachers) and a 73% increase from 2022 (7,000 female teachers), as illustrated in (Figure 1). The approval of the training package by the Ministry of Culture, the Music Commission, the Ministry of Education, the National eLearning Center, and the National Institute for Educational Professional Development demonstrated a step toward improving the caliber of training materials and ensuring their conformity with general education standards. By the end of the year, 37% of female teachers had successfully finished the training, and 63% of them are still enrolled. As seen in (Figure 2), the program's implementation in only eight regions—not all of the Kingdom—indicates the need to broaden its reach in the upcoming years.

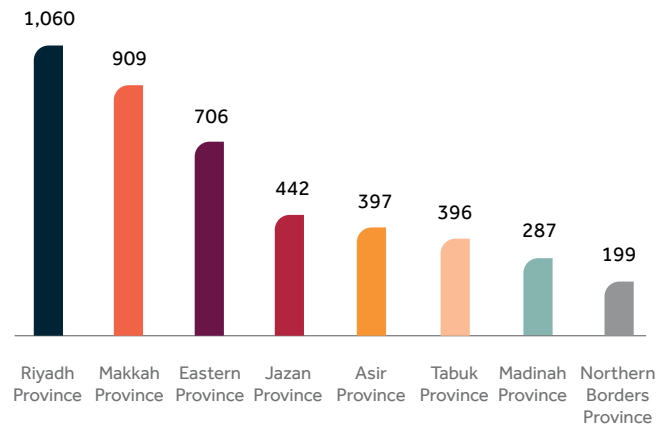
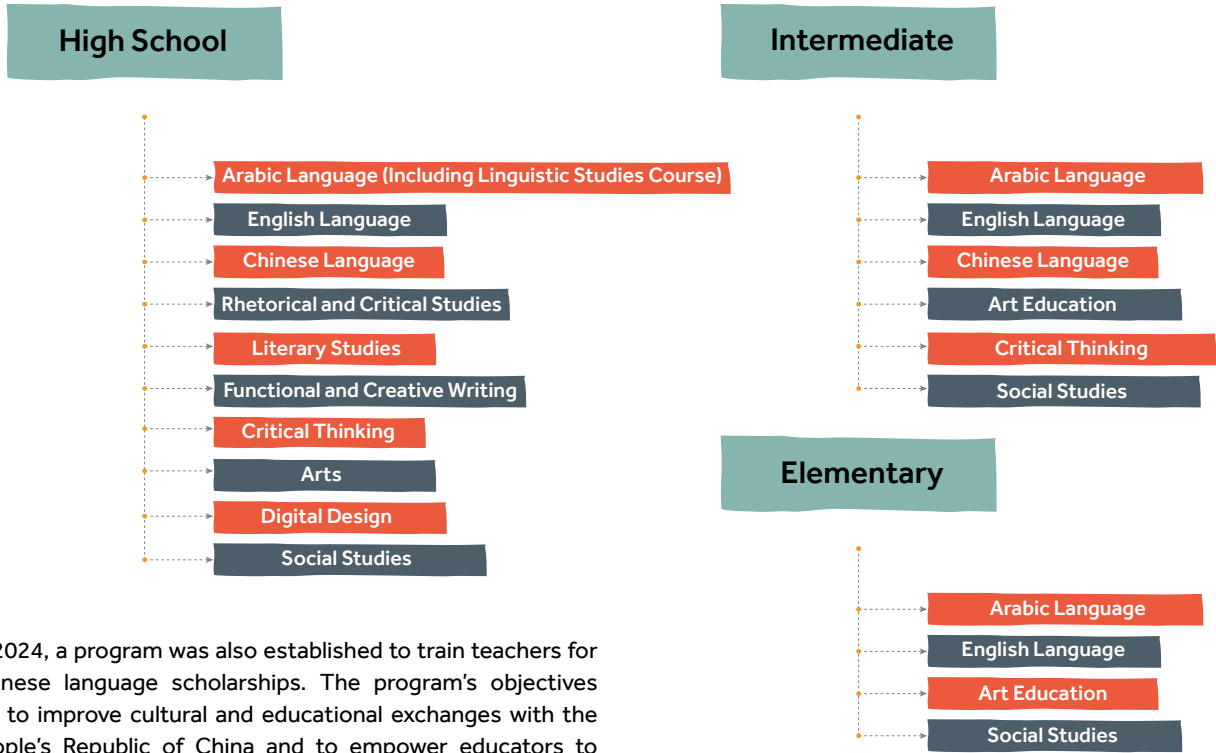


Figure 2: Distribution of female teachers enrolled in the kindergarten teacher training program in musical and auditory arts during 2024.





In 2024, a program was also established to train teachers for Chinese language scholarships. The program’s objectives are to improve cultural and educational exchanges with the People’s Republic of China and to empower educators to teach Chinese at all public-school levels in the Kingdom. One hundred teachers, both male and female, were sent to China to finish their master’s degrees in Chinese. The Culinary Arts Commission conducted a 30-day in-person teacher training program in the summer of 2024 in five regions (Riyadh, Madinah, Makkah, Asir, and the Eastern Province) as an extension of the initiatives tracked in the 2023 report. A total of 37 teachers participated in the program, which aimed to enhance the practical skills of educators interested in the culinary arts.

Cultural Educational Classes and Activities in Primary Education and Kindergarten

The amount of cultural and artistic content taught in primary and secondary education has increased in recent years. According to earlier iterations of the report, the second secondary grade was taught art, and the third intermediate, first, and third secondary grades were taught critical thinking. At the secondary level, literary studies, rhetorical and critical studies, and digital design were also taught (Figure 3), in addition to other courses that might be regarded as cultural and artistic, like sustainable development and event management. Twelve primary-grade classes, nine upper-primary-grade classes, and eleven intermediate-level classes made up the weekly class distribution for the general education levels. There were seven to ten classes at the secondary level¹. Depending on the level, these classes make up anywhere from 22% to 40% of the entire curriculum. This proportion rose to 40% in elementary school, 29% in upper elementary school, and 32% in middle school. In schools where Chinese is taught in the first middle grade, this percentage increased to 37%. In high school, it increased to 22–31%. It is also observed that, about the total number of language classes, the number and percentage of classes devoted to teaching international languages—specifically, English and Chinese—increases as students advance in their educational level (as illustrated in Figure 4).

Figure 3: List of courses related to culture and arts in general education stages²

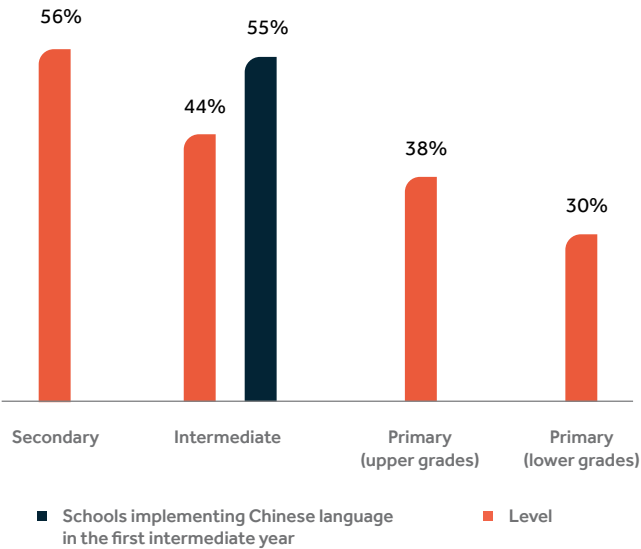


Figure 4: Ratio of weekly international language classes to total language classes in primary education classes.³

In 2024, 20 minutes a week were devoted to teaching culture and the arts to kindergarteners. Every classroom had a library with a selection of books, audiobooks, and periodicals. At an approximate weekly rate of 1.33%, cultural and artistic activities were also incorporated into the core curriculum. Throughout the daily program, children had the opportunity to learn and practice in various designated learning areas, including a percussion instrument corner, an arts corner, and a dramatic play corner.

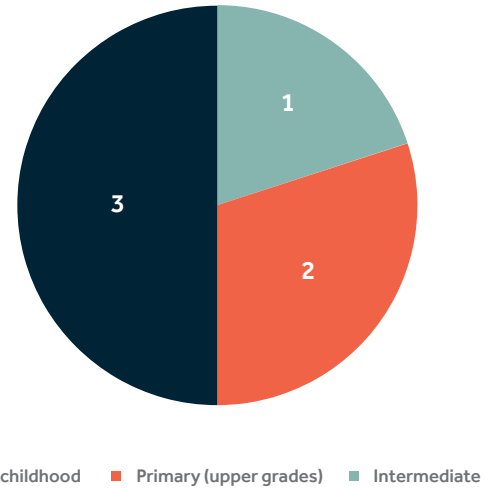


Figure 5: Number of hours allocated to in-school extracurricular activities related to the cultural sector in basic education classes, by stage.

Cultural field-related extracurricular activities and talent-discovery initiatives

In 2024, the scope of integrating culture and the arts into extracurricular activities within general education expanded, with increased emphasis on discovering talents among male and female students at early stages, as a foundational phase for refining and guiding creative skills. This follows reports from 2022 and 2023 regarding the incorporation of cultural elements into extracurricular activities and the acceleration of cultural days and events in schools, respectively. In primary education classes, several hours were devoted to extracurricular cultural activities (see Figure 5)⁶ which are restricted to two periods in the upper grades of primary school and one period in intermediate school, but are observed to be more concentrated in the younger age groups, reaching three periods in early childhood. This pattern of cultural interaction has continued, as evidenced by the roughly 49,970 school trips and visits related to practical field activities that took place in 2024.

Finding and Encouraging Talent

The index assesses the presence of a nurturing environment, which encompasses laws and programs designed to foster creativity from a young age. Through initiatives and events aimed at identifying and promoting these skills at various educational levels, efforts to support students' cultural talent development continued in 2024. One of the most significant of these initiatives is the Cultural Skills

Competition, which began in 2023 and targets students in middle and secondary school as well as the upper primary grades. The competition's scope of participation was expanded to include lower primary school grades for the first time in its second season, in 2024, which helped boost the number of competitors to approximately 470,000 male and female students⁴. The competition stands out for its varied tracks, which encompass ten primary areas that cover a broad range of artistic and cultural abilities, including theater, literature, visual arts, Arabic calligraphy, heritage, and more. This competition, along with other competitions such as the Baba Taher Literature Competition, the Athar Story for Arab Youth, photography, Designathon, and other competitions, contributed to revealing a diverse spectrum of student talents and discovered abilities⁵ (as illustrated in Figure 5). It was observed that, in comparison to other sectors, the theater and performing arts sector had the most significant number of newly discovered talents and abilities. Along with the talents showcased through the Cultural Skills Competition's theater track, 187 talents were also revealed through the playwriting competition and the Amateur Theater Clubs Festival. This aligns with the Cultural Participation chapter's observation that amateur clubs are highly active in the theater industry. Following this were the 39 discovered talents and abilities in the literature and publishing sector, as well as 41 in each of the visual arts, architecture, and design sectors.

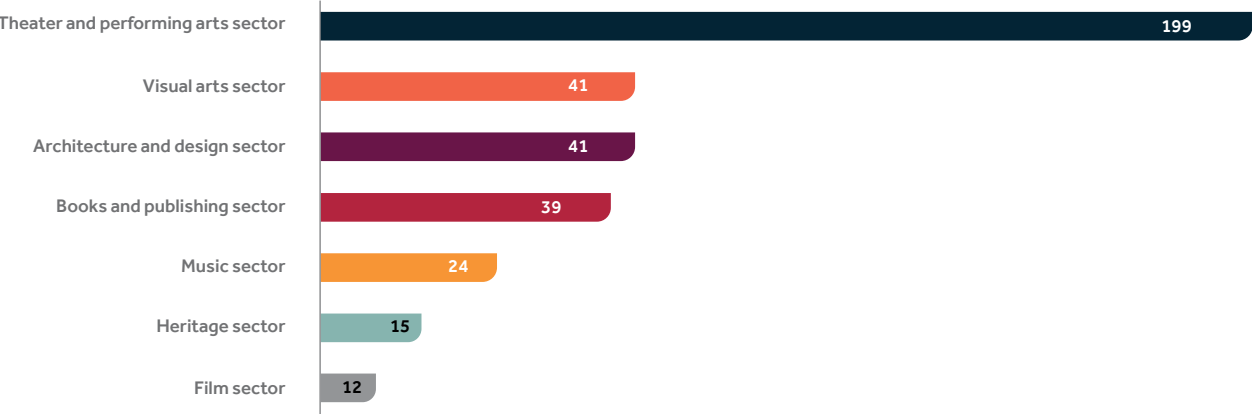


Figure 6: Number of capabilities discovered during local programs and events by cultural sector.⁶

In addition to general programs, the initiatives also included targeted efforts and programs that improved equality of opportunity and inclusion in the cultural field. In collaboration with the Children with Special Needs Association, the “Summer Step” Club program was launched in 2024 and took place over the summer break. Its main goal was to identify the skills that students with special needs possess. The club’s activities were divided into four primary categories: children’s theater, handicrafts, cooking, and environmental awareness.

They were carried out in various parts of the Kingdom through several initiatives and events, totaling 30 activities.⁷

A number of significant cultural events and activities were also implemented during the year, targeting all educational levels (Table 1). They worked in a variety of fields, including theater, language, reading, and heritage. The Arab Reading Challenge was one of the most well-known of these, with over 1.4 million male and female students taking part.



Table 1: Examples of the most prominent student cultural activities implemented in 2024.⁸

Effectiveness	Category	Stage	Number
Arab Reading Challenge	Male and Female Students	All stages	1,400,000
Cultural Skills Competition	Male and Female Students	All stages	470,000
Reading Comprehension Competition	Male and Female Students	All stages	6,300
School Theater Festival	Male and Female Students	Secondary + Intermediate	5,000
Arabic Language Competition	Male and Female Students	Secondary + Intermediate	3,000
National Folklore Festival	Male Students	Secondary + Intermediate	1,500
Story, Novel and Poetry Competition	Male and Female Students	Secondary + Intermediate	700
Arabic Language Competition	Male and Female Students	Secondary + Intermediate	300
Rawi ad-Dir'iyah Competition	Male and Female Students	Secondary + Intermediate	187
Our Authentic Heritage, Crafts and Artistic Works Festival	Male and Female Students	Secondary + Intermediate	126
Read Competition	Male and Female Students	All stages	53
The Second Gulf Arts Festival	Male and Female Students	Secondary + Intermediate	21
The Second Gulf Arts Festival	Male and Female Students	Secondary + Intermediate	9

Participation in these events indicates the level of student engagement and interaction as well as the cultural sector's capacity to reach and successfully involve kids and teens by utilizing its adaptability in offering cultural experiences outside of the conventional classroom.

Other organizations have been active in providing programs aimed at fostering students' cultural talents in addition to the direct efforts of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education. The King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (Mawhiba) is the most prominent of these. Mawhiba continues to implement various programs in collaboration with cultural organizations, such as the creative writing program "Generation of Writers," which is organized

in conjunction with the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission. The goal of this enrichment program is to help gifted students improve their language and literary abilities. Ninety-four students participated in the program, which was conducted both in-person and virtually in a few schools in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dhahran. The percentage of participants did not surpass 21% of all students enrolled in the program, despite the expansion opportunities provided by the virtual option, which could have reached a larger segment of students nationwide. To help talented students enhance their design abilities, Mawhiba has introduced the second iteration of the Talented in Architecture and Creative Design program. The program was implemented in Dhahran, Jeddah, Dammam, and

Riyadh. This year, 170 male and female students participated in the program, up from 130 in 2023⁹. Although the number of male and female students participating in the Generation of Writers program showed convergence (Figure 7), it was notable that the gap grew in favor of female students in the Talented Architecture and Creative Design program, where they comprised 70% of the total number of enrolled students.

Higher Education in Disciplines Related to Culture and Creativity

The potential and opportunities in higher education programs about the cultural sector and its diversity The opening of new departments, colleges, and programs catering to the cultural sector within higher education institutions has coincided with the growth in the inclusion of culture and arts-related courses in general education. To match educational outcomes with the demands of the cultural labor market, this aligns with the strategic direction of developing cultural capabilities. One of the most significant developments in this regard is the opening of King Saud University's College of Arts in early 2024; it is the Kingdom's first college dedicated to arts education. The performing arts, visual arts, and design are its three primary areas of focus.¹¹

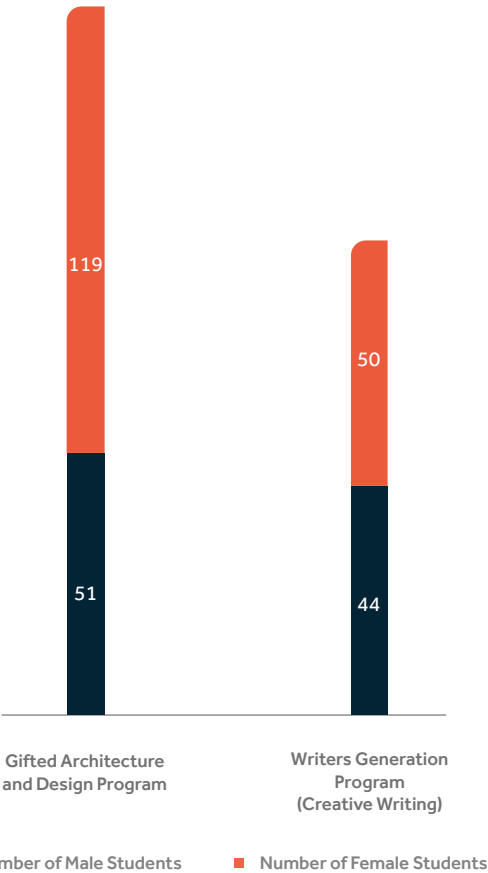


Figure 7: Programs offered by the King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (Mawhiba) and the number of beneficiaries, by gender.¹⁰



Other new performing arts programs were also introduced that year, including Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University's bachelor's degree in theater production, music production, and audio.¹² Graduate programs launched this year have shown a trend toward cooperation between academic and cultural institutions. For instance, Umm Al-Qura University, the Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property, and the World Intellectual Property Organization collaborated to launch the Master's Program in Intellectual Property, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation¹³. Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University, Effat University, and the Museums Commission collaborated to launch the Higher Diploma Program in Museum Studies. Taibah University and the King Abdulaziz Complex for Endowment Libraries collaborated to launch the Higher Diploma Program in Manuscript Sciences.¹⁴

The Ministry of Culture's Cultural Scholarship Program As of the conclusion of its fourth year in 2024, the Cultural Scholarship Program has sent 568 students to study abroad since its inception in 2021. I hope these students will contribute academically and professionally, as qualified local talent, to the cultural labor market. The most significant number of students was admitted to the program in 2024 (227), and 115 of them were sent overseas¹⁵. Similar to previous years, the most significant proportion of students in 2024 were pursuing

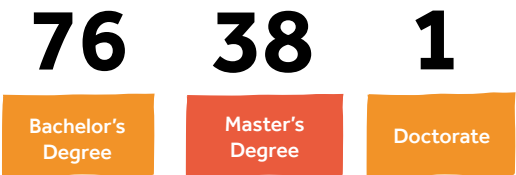


Figure 8: Distribution of the number of scholarship students in 2024, by academic degree.¹⁶

bachelor's degrees, accounting for roughly two-thirds of the total student body (Figure 8). When considering the countries of study, the United States and the United Kingdom accounted for the most significant percentage of the program's students, with their combined enrollment comprising approximately 80% of the total number of students from the program's inception until 2024 (Figure 9). With 15 students studying there, Egypt became the only Arab nation with as many students as Australia.

With 119 students enrolled through 2024, the number of scholarship students in the Culinary Arts program has grown when compared to the program's scholarship specializations (Figure 10). With 95 and 81 students enrolled, respectively, filmmaking and architecture come next. On the other hand, there were only 44 scholarship students in the Arts, Languages, and Linguistics department, and a sizable portion of them graduated this year. Given the dearth of

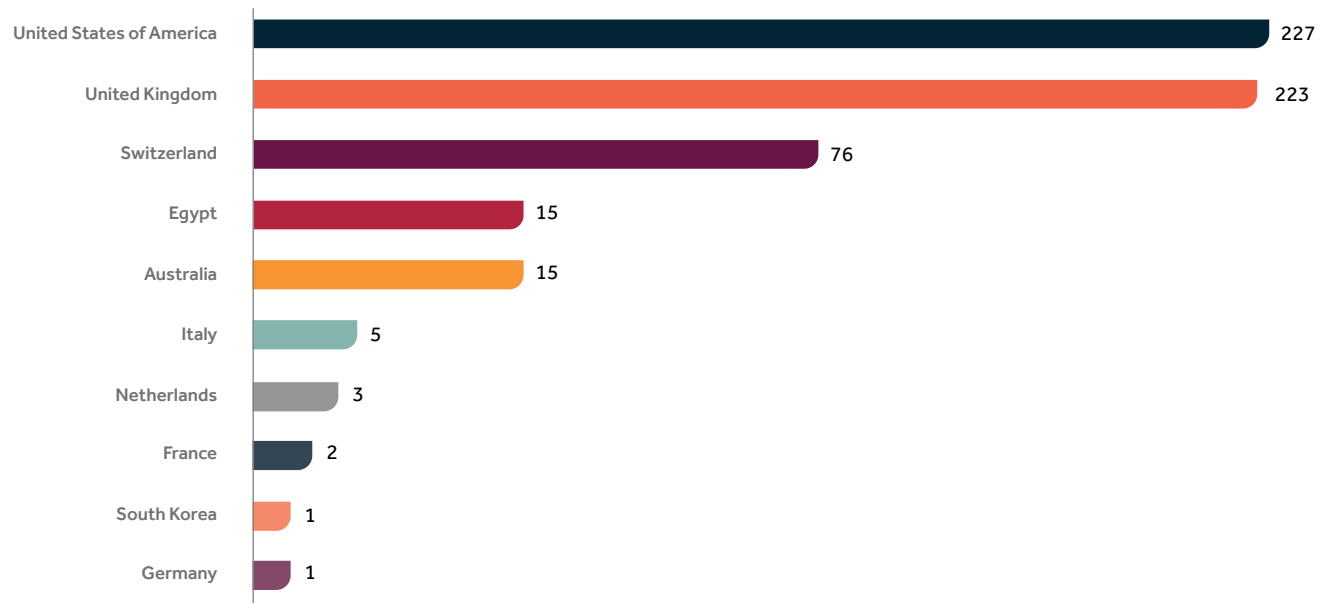


Figure 9: Number of students on cultural scholarships until 2024, by the country of scholarship.¹⁷



Knowledge and Skills

local academic programs offered in emerging disciplines like culinary arts and film, the current distribution of scholarship students reflects a greater degree of balance and diversity across these disciplines. In comparison to 40% of male scholarship students, 60% of all scholarship students enrolled in the program until 2024 were female. The majority of majors mirrored this discrepancy (Figure 10). Nonetheless, the data showed a discernible gender convergence among architecture and filmmaking majors. On the other hand, male scholarship recipients were more likely to major in theater, accounting

for approximately 73% of all theater majors. There were 17 scholarship students enrolled in the music major, but none were female.

According to data for 2024, the number of graduates from the Cultural Scholarship Program has increased to 203, with women making up roughly 72% of the total number of graduates to date. This aligns with the fact that since the program's inception, the proportion of women among all scholarship recipients has increased. With 169 graduates,

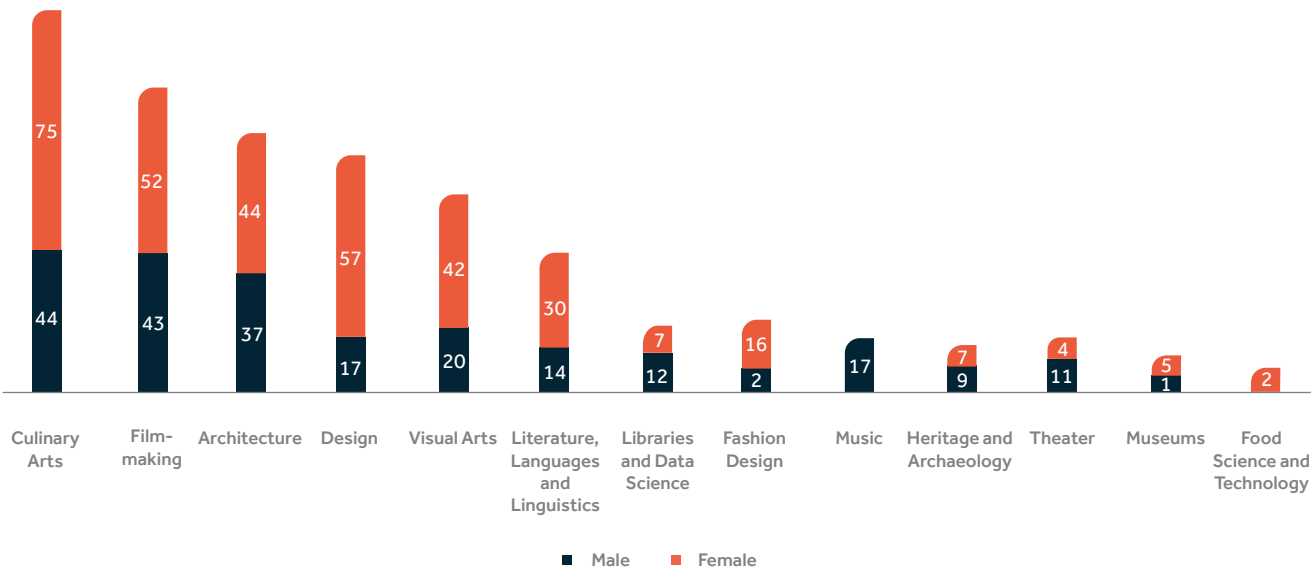


Figure 10: Distribution of the number of students on scholarships in the Cultural Scholarship Program until 2024, by gender and specialization.¹⁸

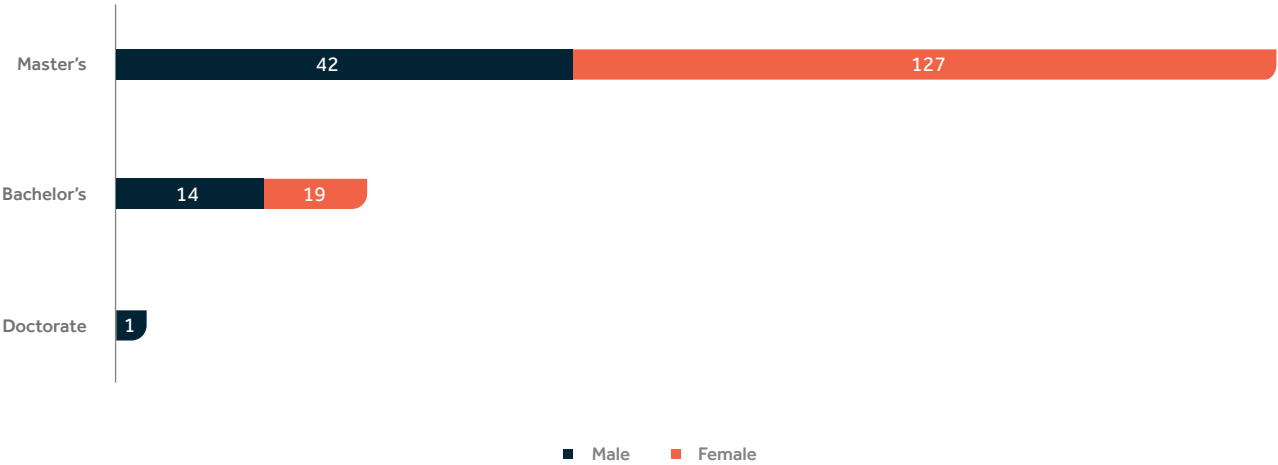


Figure 11: Number of graduates from the Cultural Scholarship Program in 2024 and their distribution, by gender and academic degree.²⁰

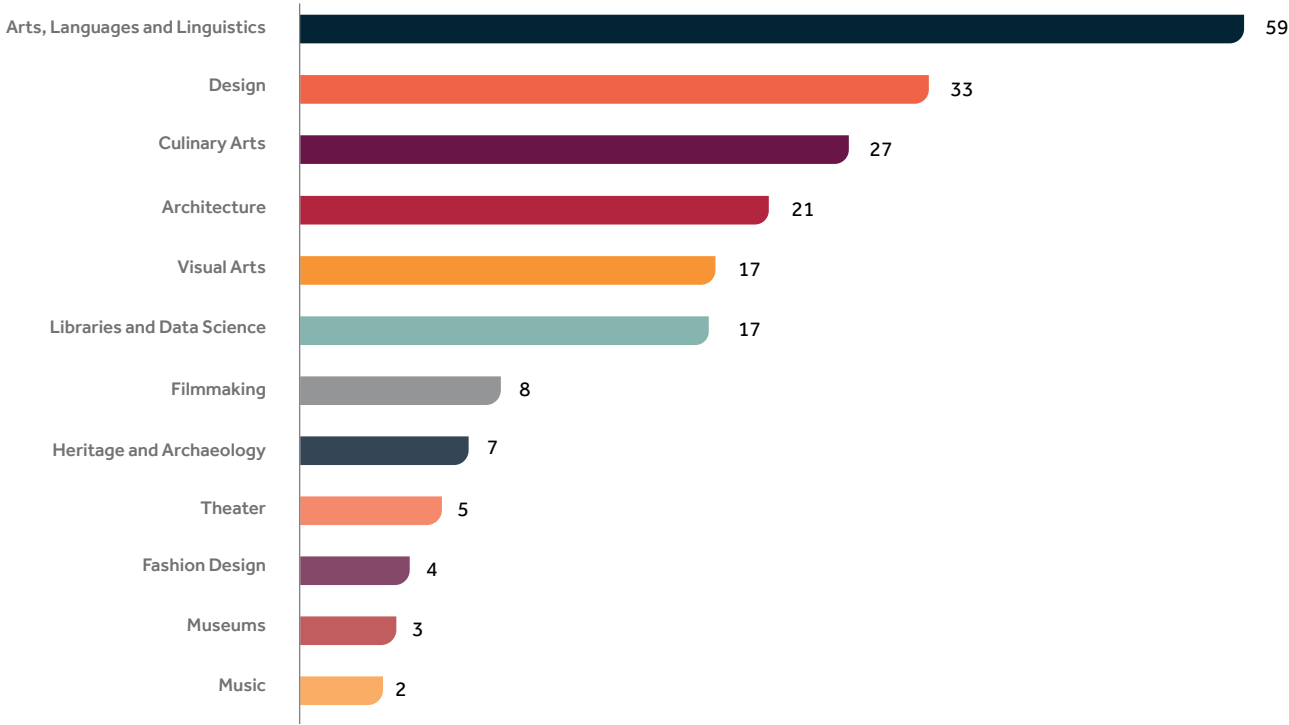


Figure 12: Number of graduates from the Cultural Scholarship Program in 2024, by specialization.²¹

master's degree holders made up 83.25% of all graduates. This is because master's programs are shorter than bachelor's and doctoral programs. (As illustrated in Figure 10), 33 graduates received bachelor's degrees, and one graduate received a doctorate. With 59 graduates, the most significant percentage of 2024 graduates were from majors in the arts, languages, and linguistics. Given that the proportion of scholarship students in Arts and Linguistics majors alone reached approximately 22% of all scholarship students in 2021, this percentage aligns with the growth in scholarship students in these fields during the program's first year¹⁹. Following them were graduates of the Design major (33), followed by those of the Culinary Arts and Architecture majors (27 and 21 graduates, respectively) (Figure 12).

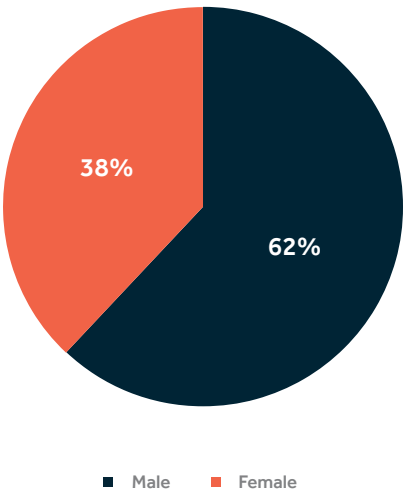


Figure 13: Distribution of the percentage of students sent on scholarships in cultural specializations by the Ministry of Higher Education, by gender.

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Program for Foreign Scholarships of the Ministry of Education

By awarding scholarships to students in cultural and artistic specializations, the Ministry of Education continues to support the cultural sector through the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Foreign Scholarship Program. The Ministry of Education's 2024 State of Culture Report states that there were roughly 1,769 scholarship male and female students in these specializations in 2024, with 62% of them being female and 38% being male, (as illustrated in Figure 13). According to scholarship destinations, the United States and the United Kingdom had 743 and 545 scholarship students, respectively, accounting for 73% of all scholarship students. The remaining percentage was divided among other nations, (as illustrated in Figure 15). Nearly half of scholarship students in cultural specializations (49.97%) are pursuing bachelor's degrees, followed by roughly a third (31.71%) pursuing doctorates, and then a fifth (18.20%) pursuing master's degrees. The percentage of students pursuing higher diplomas is minuscule (0.11%), reflecting the scholarship policy's emphasis on advanced research qualifications and a broad university foundation, rather than short professional programs.

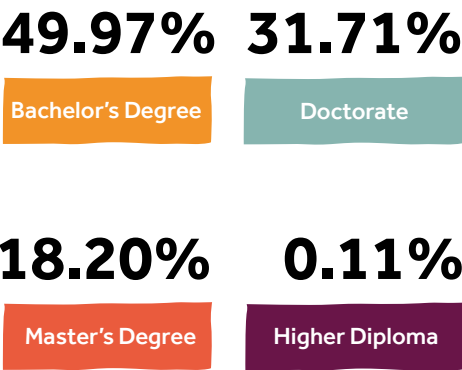


Figure 14: Distribution of the percentage of scholarship students sent on scholarships in cultural specializations by the Ministry of Higher Education, by academic degree.

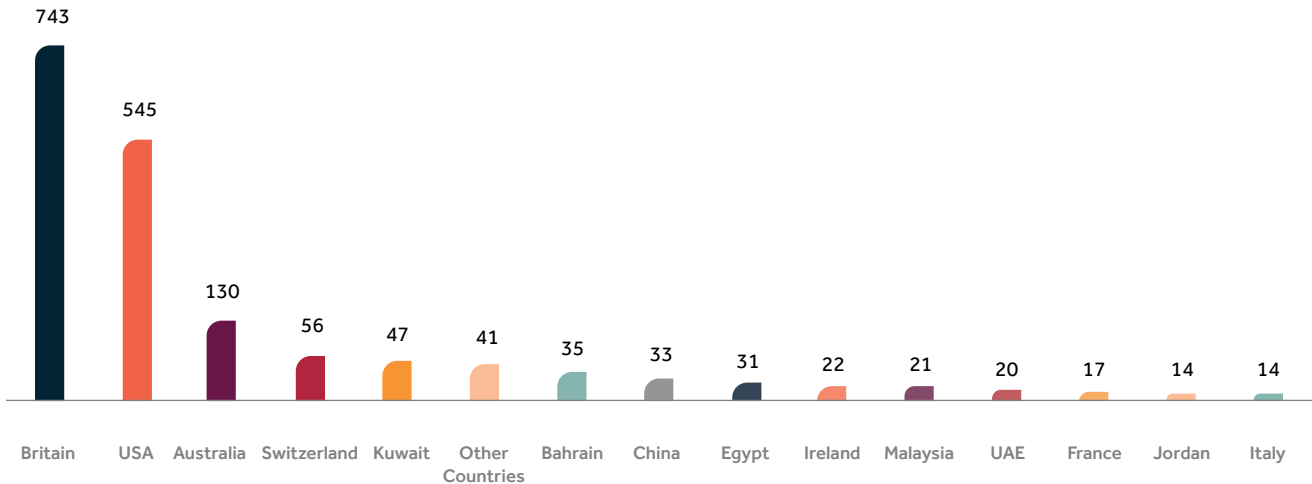


Figure 15: Distribution of the number of students sent on scholarships in cultural specializations by the Ministry of Higher Education, by country.

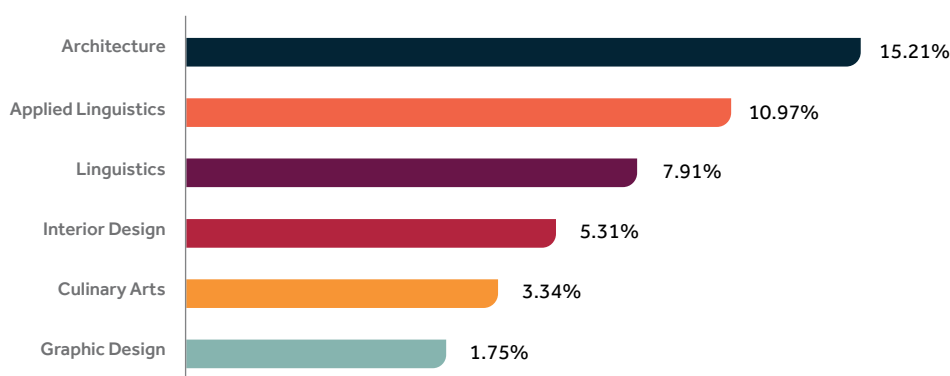


Figure 16: Distribution of the percentage of students sent on scholarships in cultural specializations by the Ministry of Higher Education, by specialization.



(Figure 16), which illustrates the variety of cultural pathways and their overlap with creative, urban, and cognitive fields, shows that architecture ranked first in terms of specializations with 15.21%, followed by applied linguistics with 10.97%. These indicators suggest that cultural specializations are well-represented in official scholarship frameworks, not as purely technical occupations, but rather as intellectual and educational components that support the development of a complex, critical consciousness.

AI-Ula Scholarship Program

The Royal Commission for AIUla offers the AI-Ula Scholarship Program, which was launched in 2018 to support the cultural sector with specialists in various cultural fields. This number has grown exponentially, as 125 male and female students were sent in 2024, distributed at a rate of 14% for the diploma stage, 33% for the bachelor's stage, and 53% for the master's stage. The tourism and hospitality specialization had the highest number of scholarships, at a rate of 54%, and the remaining specializations had a rate of 46%, (as shown in Figure 17).

Cultural Training and Rehabilitation

While the number of people who benefited from training opportunities offered by cultural bodies remained essentially unchanged from the previous year, training programs in the cultural sector continued to expand in 2024, in terms of the number of implementing entities and geographic coverage. Throughout the year, a variety of training models were offered. Still, short courses that do not lead to certifications were noticeably more common.

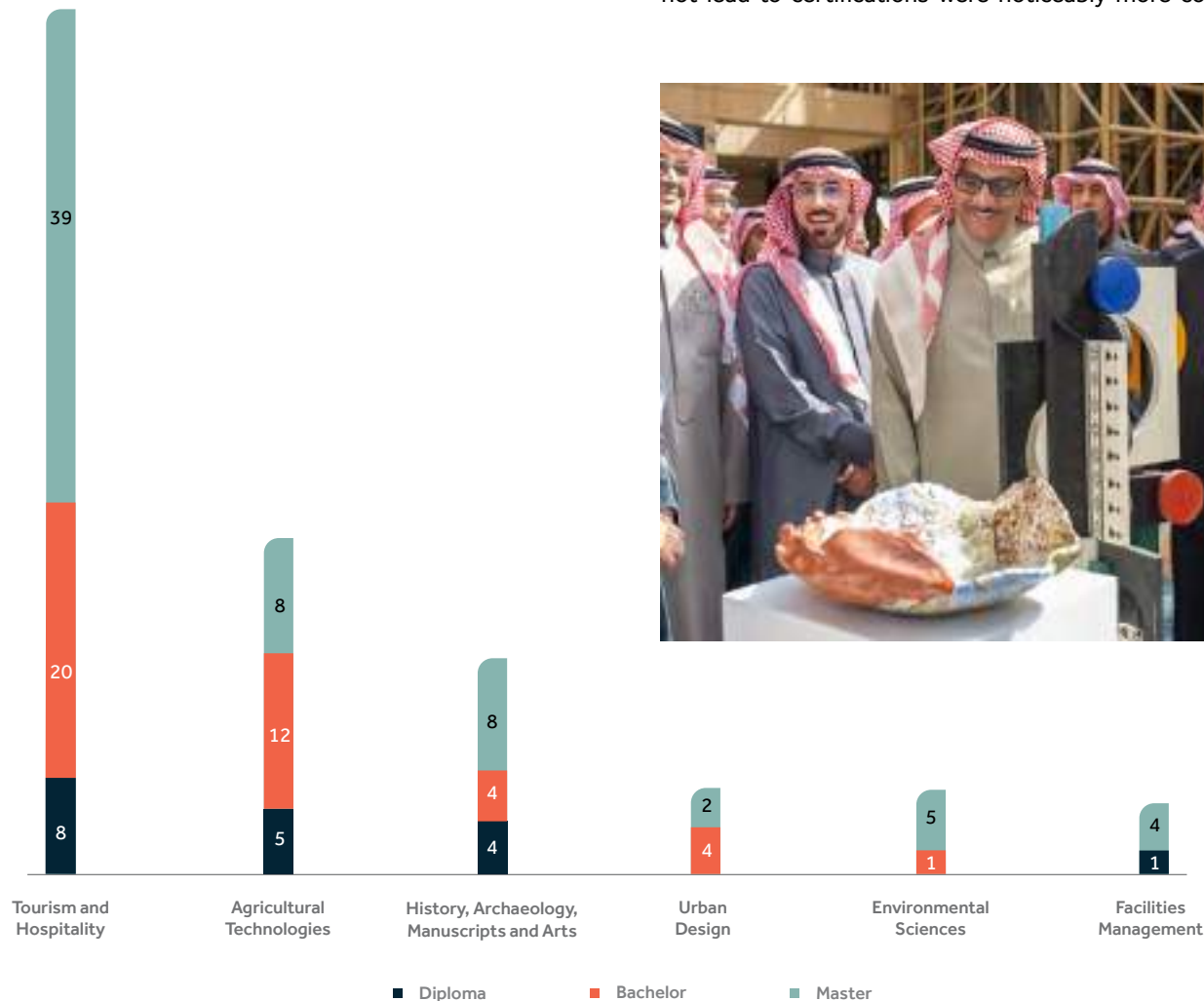
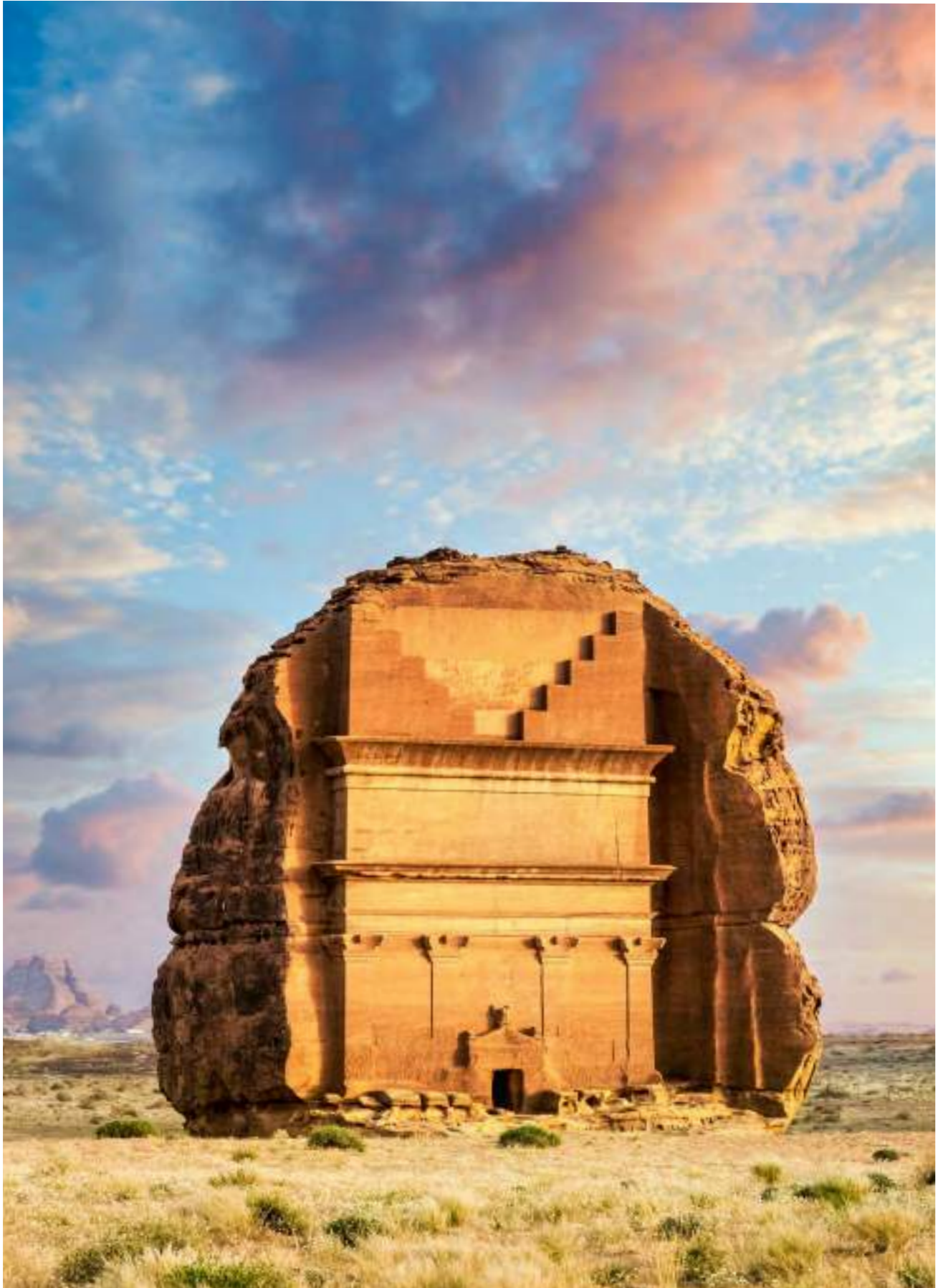


Figure 17: Distribution of the number of students on scholarships in the AI-Ula Scholarship Program, by academic degree and specialization.



Although programs remained concentrated in certain areas, their geographic coverage improved. In addition to cultural bodies, the range of training offered by public and private cultural institutions also expanded. Despite limited distribution in some peripheral regions, licensing data at the organizational level revealed early signs of a developing cultural training infrastructure. According to the Cultural Participation Survey, beneficiary satisfaction with training programs decreased gradually as educational levels rose, but improved for those with intermediate qualifications. This might suggest that the specific expectations of more qualified groups are not being met.

Cultural Training Programs and Initiatives

Cultural Training in Cultural Bodies

With a total of 26,017 trainees across the sector, the number of beneficiaries of training programs run by cultural bodies in 2024 was nearly equal to that of the previous year, representing a decrease of no more than 1.63%. (As illustrated in Figure 17), over half of the beneficiaries were concentrated in three organizations: The Music Commission, with 1,920 beneficiaries; the Theater and Performing Arts Commission, with 15,438 beneficiaries; and the Heritage Commission, with 4,636 beneficiaries. Approximately half of the 129 training programs that were implemented to train this number were non-qualified developmental courses. (As illustrated in Figure 18), the remaining programs were divided among qualifying courses (14 programs), workshops (21 programs), and specialized programs, including career guidance initiatives, residencies, and incubators. 94% of

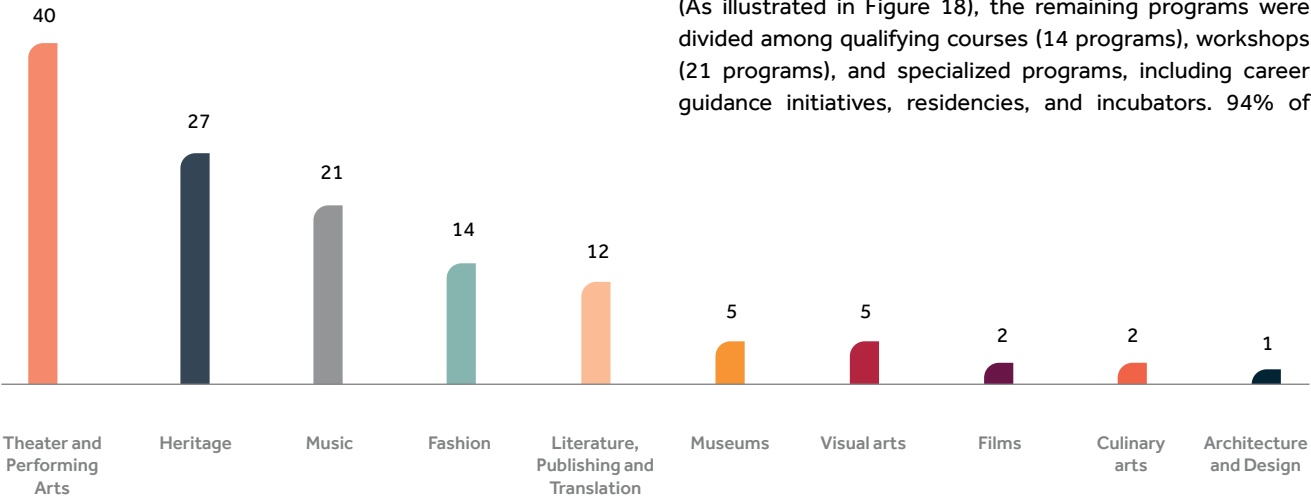


Figure 18: Number of training programs offered by cultural bodies in 2024, by sector.

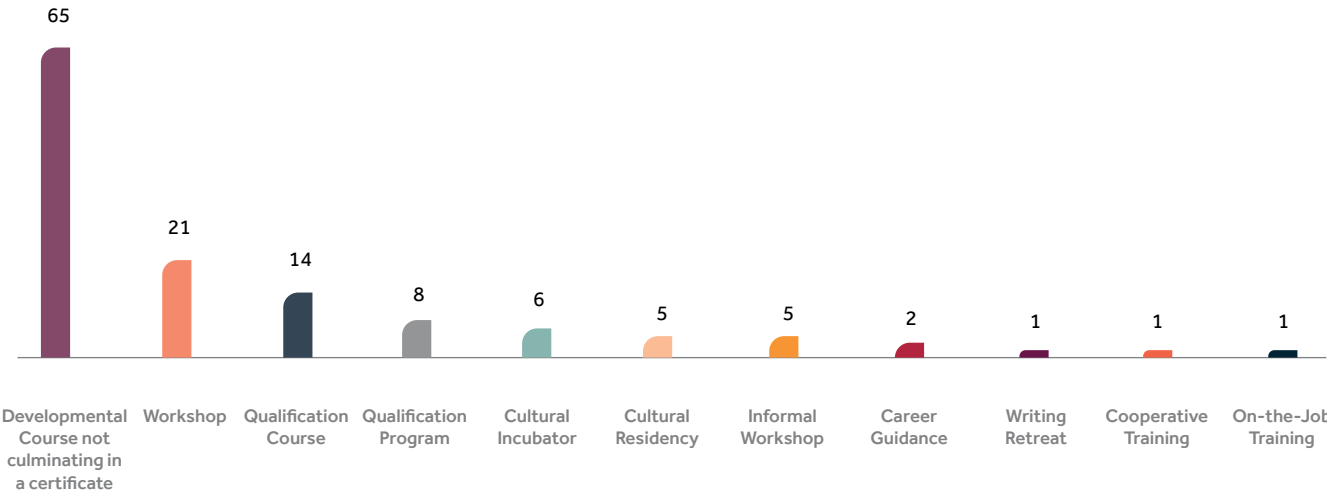


Figure 19: Number of training programs offered by cultural bodies in 2024, by program type.

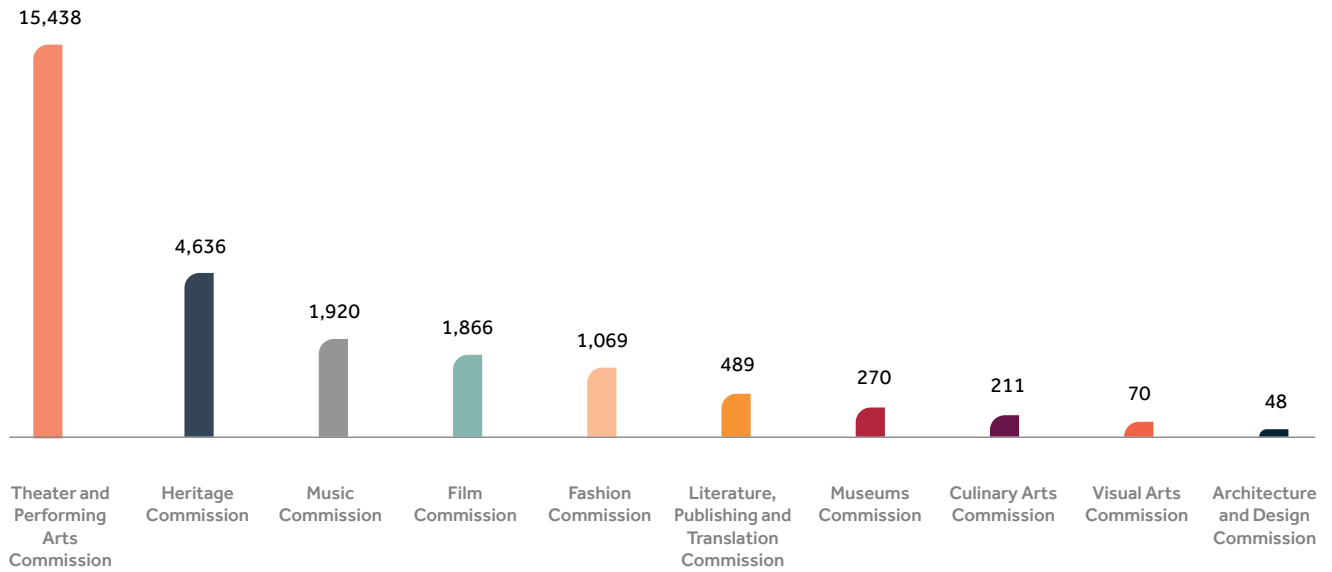


Figure 20: Number of attendees at training programs, by cultural body.

programs were implemented in-person, which is the most common type of program (Figure 20). Given the nature of the sectors, it is critical to read the numbers in terms of the variation in the number of trainees across deputyships. There is a discernible variation in training intensity between sectors. For instance, an average of nearly 400 trainees are enrolled in a single program in a field such as theater. In contrast, the average number of participants in programs offered in the architecture and design sector during 2024 was 16.

The expansion of geographic coverage to encompass all administrative regions of the Kingdom in 2024, as opposed to 2023's nine regions, was a notable improvement (see Figure 21).

This is even when population is taken into consideration; training opportunities are still concentrated in the Riyadh region, far ahead of other regions. The Riyadh region implemented nearly half of all programs (Figure 21). In the meantime, the sector as a whole only had one training program implemented in Al-Jouf, Najran, and Al-Baha regions, suggesting that future efforts should improve the equitable distribution of programs among the Kingdom's different regions.

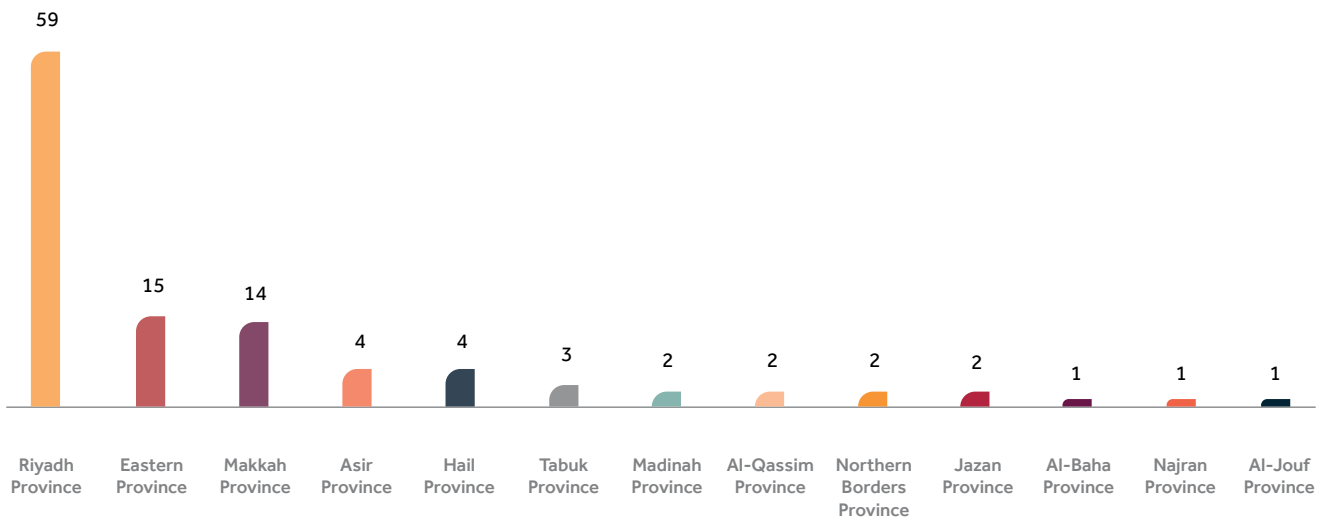


Figure 21: Geographical distribution of capacity development programs in cultural bodies for 2024.

Cultural Training Provided by Other Institutions

According to (Figure 34), the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts topped the list of institutions offering the most cultural programs in 2024, with 365 programs, (as shown in Figure 22). These programs targeted a wide range of specializations, most notably visual arts with 251 programs,

(as shown in Figure 22), followed by music training programs. In the same context, public and private cultural centers and institutes continued to offer training programs and opportunities to develop cultural and artistic capabilities in their various sectors.

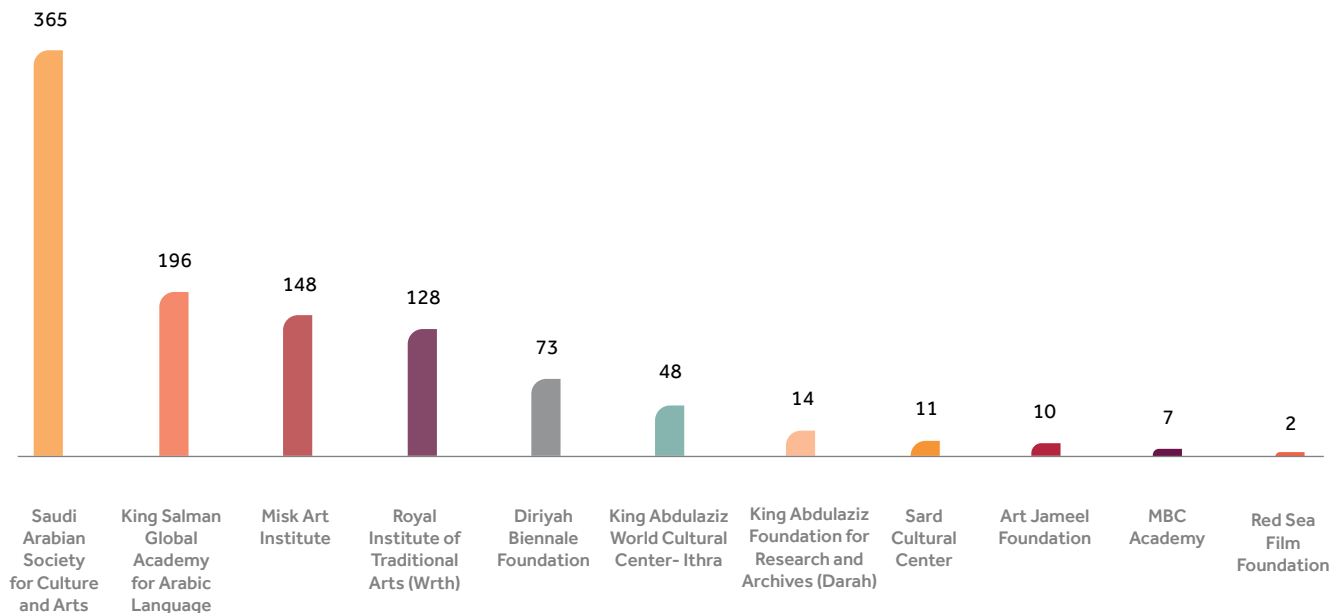


Figure 22: Distribution of the number of training programs offered in 2024 from public and private cultural institutions, by entity. ²²

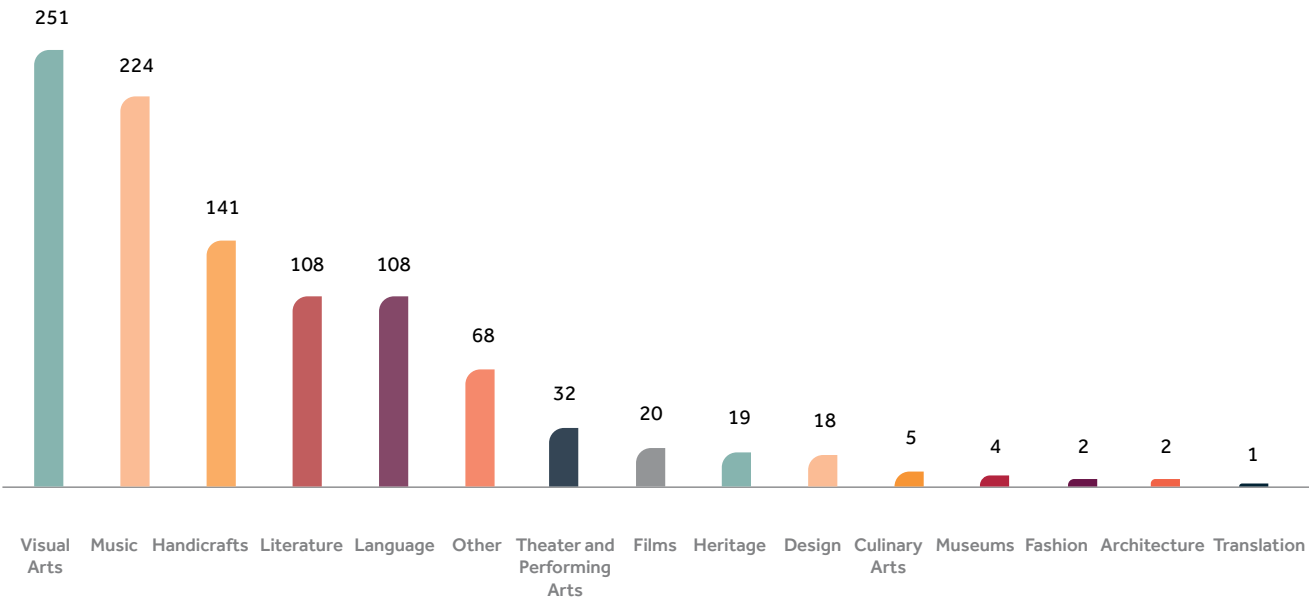


Figure 23: Distribution of the number of training programs offered in 2024 from public and private cultural institutions, by organization. ²³



Providing a range of training programs for Saudis and non-Saudis is another way that specialized public cultural institutions, like the Royal Institute of Traditional Arts, have come to play a part in preserving traditional arts practices in the Kingdom. About 5,142 trainees were enrolled in academic, apprenticeship, and higher education programs in 2024, while 2,074 graduates graduated in the same year (Figure 24).



Figure 24: Distribution of enrollment and graduation figures of the Royal Institute of Traditional Arts.



Cultural Training in Training Institutes and Centers

Licensing Environment for Cultural Training Facilities

An overview of the regulatory environment for cultural training, in particular, should be provided by the Knowledge and Skills chapter, even though the Management and Preservation chapter examines all licensing data in the Cultural Sector Regulation Index. The licensing information for training programs and facilities is the primary focus of this index. The collaboration between the Ministry of Culture and the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC), which is responsible for licensing training facilities and centers in the Kingdom, was mentioned in earlier iterations of the report. In addition to allocating licenses for training facilities that were already licensed by the corporation before the platform’s creation²⁴, the Abde’a platform permits the licensing of facilities and training programs related to the cultural sector. Between 2021 and the end of 2024, Abde’a issued a total of 120 facility licenses, 45 of which were transfers of prior licenses (see Figure 25). It is worth noting that these figures do not encompass all the training facilities in the industry. By creating frameworks and standards that enhance the efficiency of the training process and ensure its responsiveness to the industry’s and its employees’ needs, the Kingdom’s ongoing efforts to regulate cultural training will help advance the cultural sector to higher levels of professionalism.

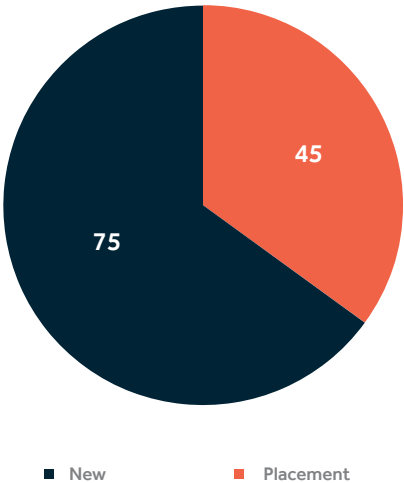


Figure 25: Number of training facility licenses issued through the Abde’a platform until the end of 2024, by license type.²⁵

The data shows limited coverage and geographic spread, especially in peripheral areas, when considering the regional distribution of training facility licenses. Al-Jawf, the Northern Borders, Al-Baha, and Najran do not have any training facilities licensed by the Abde'a. Additionally, the combined percentage of facility licenses from other peripheral regions, such as Asir, Jazan, and Tabuk, is only about 7%. On the other hand, three out of every four licensed facilities are situated in one of the two regions of Makkah or Riyadh, which account for 75% of these facilities (Figure 26).

According to Figure 27, 51% of all training facilities licensed through Abde'a were for females, 42% for males, and 8% for joint facilities. It should be noted that one facility may apply for two separate licenses, one for males and one for females. In contrast, another facility may apply for a joint license for a facility. This could indicate a problem with the facilities' preparedness or have an impact on how effectively infrastructure and training resources are utilized.

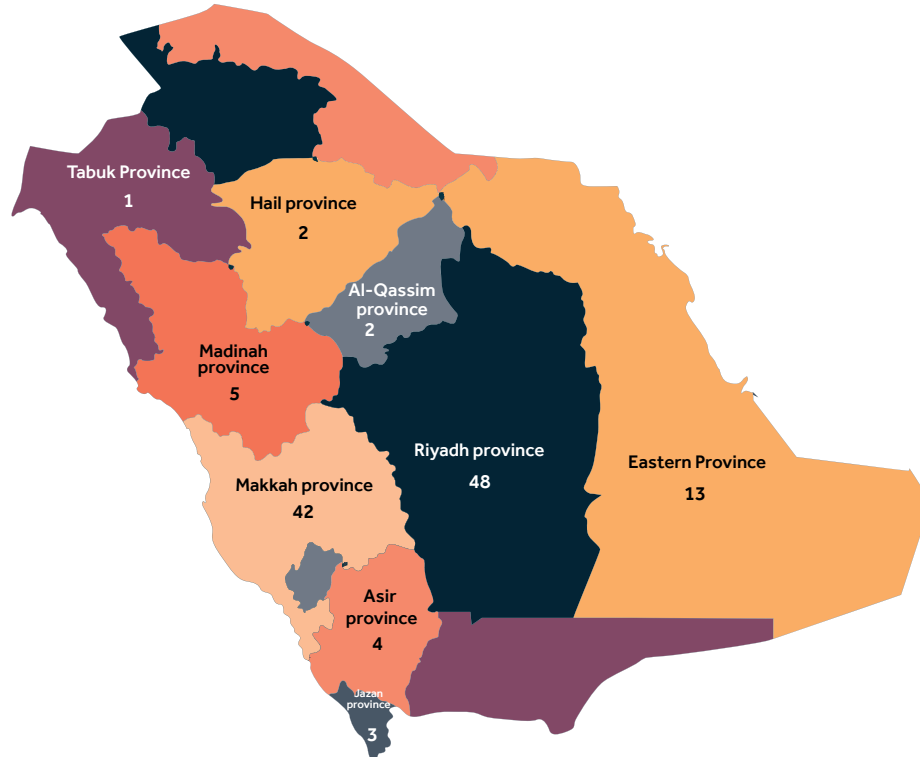


Figure 26: Number of training facility licenses issued through Abde'a until the end of 2024, by province. ²⁶

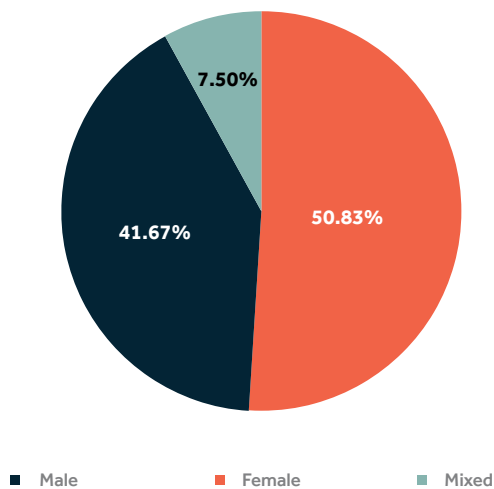


Figure 27: Percentage Distribution of training facility licenses issued through Abde'a platform until the end of 2024, by target group. ²⁷

Knowledge and Skills

By the end of 2024, Abde'a had issued 33 training program activation licenses and 72 training program approval licenses (Figure 28). More than 48% of all program licenses were in the culinary arts sector, with 17% and 14% of all program licenses coming from the music and visual arts sectors, respectively. The lack of licenses for programs in the fashion industry, which has continuously made up a large portion of training programs in recent years, was noteworthy. Development courses²⁸, which are brief training programs with a maximum duration of one month and a maximum of sixty training hours, accounted for the majority of licenses. According to (Figure

29), they were responsible for over 77% of all training program approval or activation licenses. This might be indicative of a broader movement to create training programs that are more affordable or flexible²⁹. However, the number of licenses granted for qualifying programs and training diplomas³⁰ that lasted one year or longer did not surpass eight, and they were restricted to diploma programs in philosophy, music, and culinary arts³¹.

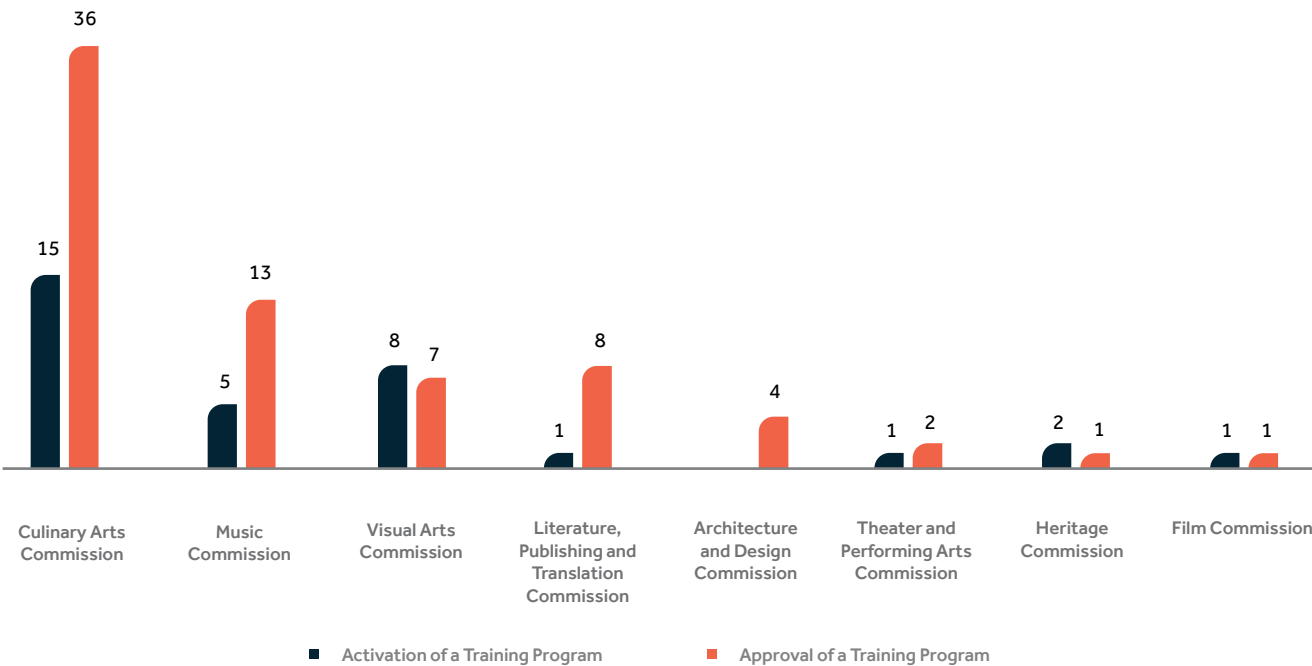


Figure 28: Number of training program licenses issued through Abde'a platform until the end of 2024, and their distribution, by cultural body.³²



Figure 29: Number of training program licenses issued through Abde'a until the end of 2024, and their distribution, by program type.³³

Beneficiary Attitudes and Satisfaction with Cultural Training Programs

The sixth cycle of the Cultural Participation Survey, conducted in 2024, provides a summary of how sample members perceive cultural education and training, as well as their level of satisfaction with the offered training options. The survey is expected to help shape policies that address the demands of the cultural sector and create more comprehensive and diverse training initiatives. Overall, the field survey's findings indicated that public opinions of these programs had improved in 2024, as evidenced by a marginally higher overall satisfaction rate (3.43%) than in 2023³⁴. The results of the survey also showed that respondents' satisfaction with cultural skills and capabilities development programs was inversely correlated with their educational attainment,

with satisfaction progressively declining as educational qualifications increased. At 75% of the sample, those with an intermediate qualification had the highest satisfaction rate, (as seen in Figure 30). In contrast to their more educated peers, whose lower satisfaction levels may be attributed to their desire for more specialized and in-depth content, these findings suggest that training programs offer this group an opportunity to improve.

When examining how gender affects sample members' satisfaction with training programs, the findings reveal a small gender gap, with 62% of survey participants identifying as female. In comparison, 59% of respondents were male. However, (as shown in Figure 31), their rate of complete satisfaction was lower, which aligns with the findings of the survey's previous round.

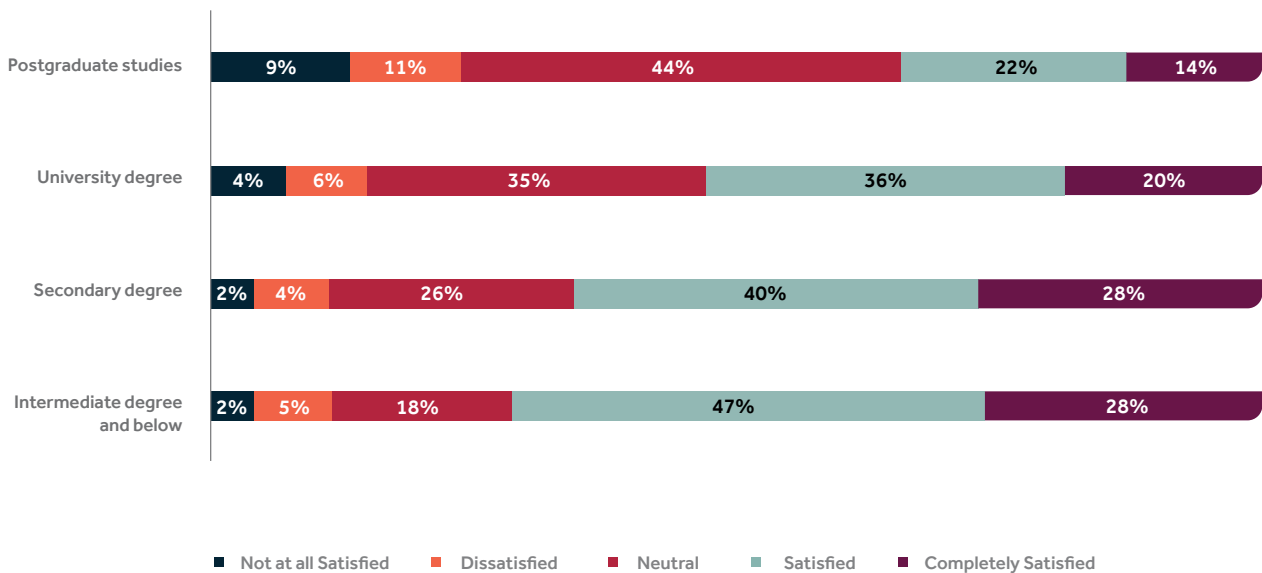


Figure 30: Satisfaction rate with training programs provided to develop cultural skills and capabilities in 2024, by educational level.³⁵

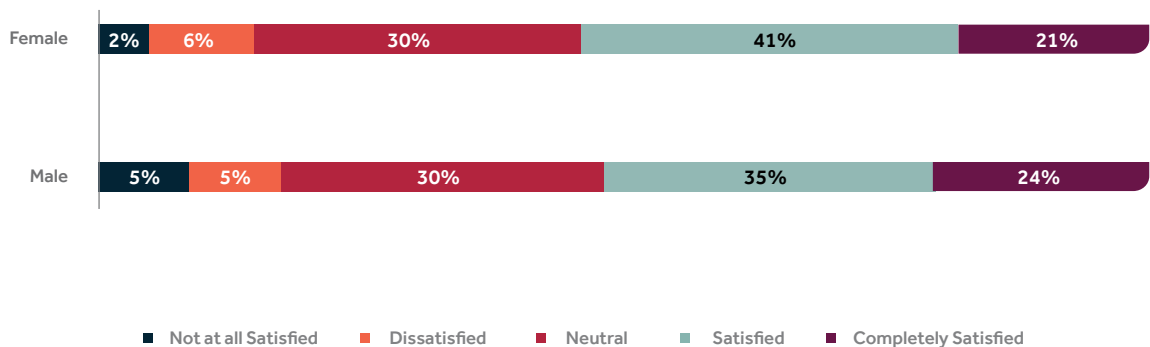


Figure 31: Satisfaction rate with training programs provided to develop cultural skills and capabilities in 2024, by gender.³⁶

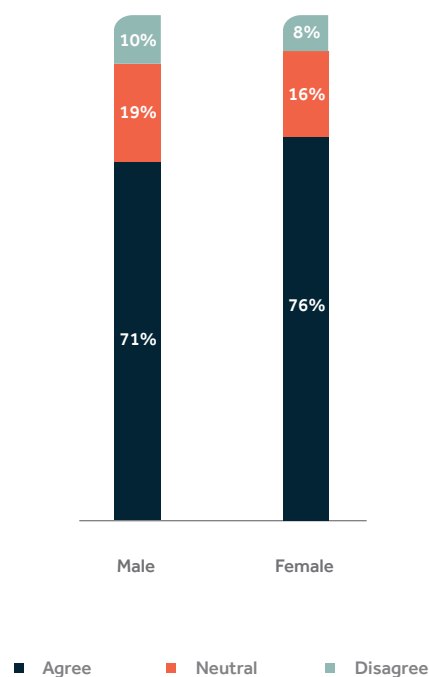


Figure 32: Percentage of those who agree with the statement “Academic cultural specializations have a promising future in the labor market,” by gender.³⁷

These findings align with the survey’s investigation of how society views the future of cultural specializations. Compared to 71% of men, 76% of women in the sample thought these specializations had a potential in the workforce (Figure 32). Despite the lack of adequate data on women’s participation in cultural production to support such a perception, women’s optimism is consistent with their satisfaction with cultural capacity development programs, which may be attributed to their perceptions of the breadth of opportunities that the cultural sector promises.

In a similar vein, positive views of the future of cultural specialties are negatively correlated with higher educational attainment; the more educated one is, the more hesitant or reserved one is about the viability of these specialties in the job market (Figure 33). Overall, the results of the Cultural Participation Survey’s sixth round show a disparity between the percentage of people who have positive views about the future of cultural specialties and their level of satisfaction with training programs. This is an opportunity to improve. Plans for cultural education and training that are more successful and satisfying should reflect this optimism about the future of cultural specialties.

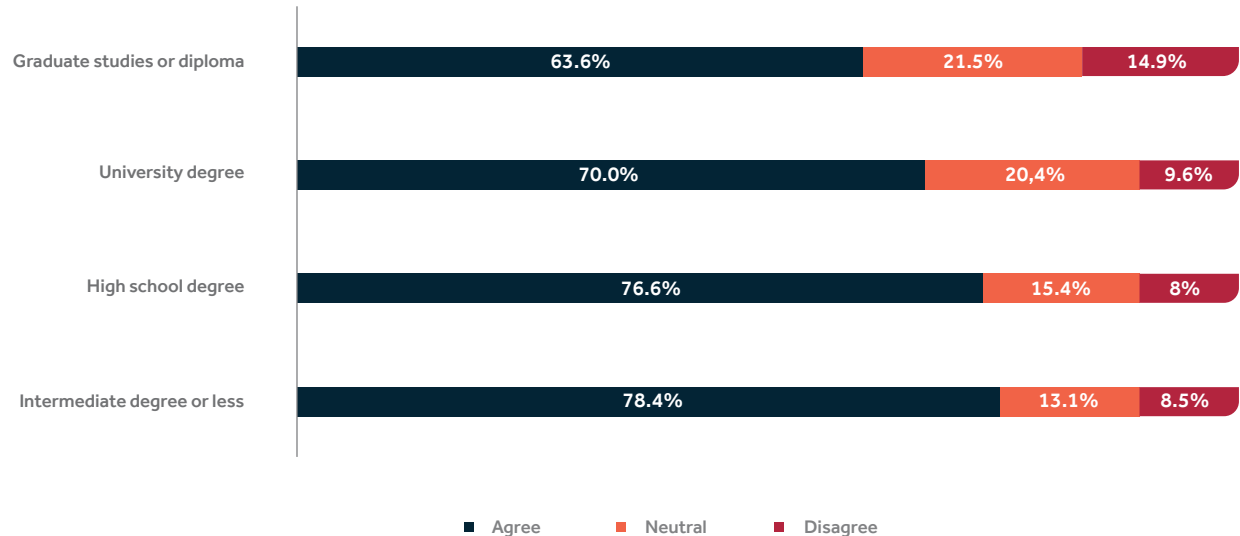


Figure 33: Percentage of those who agree with the statement “Academic cultural specializations have a promising future in the labor market,” by educational level.³⁸



Endnotes

- 1 Data from the Ministry of Education, (March 30, 2025).
- 2 Data from the Ministry of Education, (March 30, 2025).
- 3 Data from the Ministry of Education, (March 30, 2025).
- 4 Data from the Ministry of Education, (March 30, 2025).
- 5 "Discovered abilities" in this context means talents or abilities that were identified at an early stage using detection, observation or evaluation tools, such as: Standardized tests, observation checklists, nomination questionnaires, individual interviews, portfolios, open-ended assignments, or results from competitions and extracurricular activities.
- 6 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (February 19, 2025).
- 7 Data from the Ministry of Education, (March 30, 2025).
- 8 Data from the Ministry of Education, (March 30, 2025).
- 9 Ministry of Culture, State of Culture Report in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2023 AD: Sustainability in the Cultural Sector, (Riyadh, Ministry of Culture, 2023 AD), 129.
- 10 Data from the King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (Mawhiba), (January 30, 2025).
- 11 Data from the King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (Mawhiba), (January 30, 2025).
- 12 "Cultural / Ministry of Culture and King Saud University launch the first College of Arts in the Kingdom," SPA, (February 11, 2024), retrieved on: June 30, 2025. <https://www.spa.gov.sa/N2045445>
- 13 "Princess Nourah University offers (4) new academic programs for the next academic year," Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University , (July 1, 2024) , retrieved on: June 30, 2025 AD, <https://pnu.edu.sa/ar/NewsActivities/Pages/news32457.aspx>
- 14 Data from Umm Al-Qura University, (February 11, 2025).
- 15 Data from the King Abdulaziz Complex for Endowment Libraries, (April 7, 2025).
- 16 Data presentation is limited to the year 2024 due to the lack of similar details (such as the number of scholarship students who have begun their studies or who have received scholarship decisions but have not yet enrolled) in data from previous years, nor were they addressed in earlier versions of the report.
- 17 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (April 22, 2024).
- 18 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (April 22, 2024).
- 19 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (April 22, 2024).
- 20 Ministry of Culture, State of Culture Report in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2021: Culture in the Public Sphere, (Riyadh, Ministry of Culture, 2021), 145.
- 21 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (April 22, 2024).
- 22 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (April 22, 2024).
- 23 For Details: Methodology Appendix
- 24 For Details: Methodology Appendix
- 25 Ministry of Culture, State of Culture Report in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2022 AD: Investment in the Cultural Sector, (Riyadh, Ministry of Culture, 2022), 131.
- 26 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (May 29, 2025).
- 27 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (May 29, 2025).
- 28 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (May 29, 2025).
- 29 Ministry of Culture, State of Culture Report in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2021: Culture in the Public Sphere, (Riyadh, Ministry of Culture, 2021), 151; Ministry of Culture, State of Culture Report in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2023: Sustainability in the Cultural Sector, (Riyadh, Ministry of Culture, 2023), 141.
- 30 Review: Glossary of terms used in the report.
- 31 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (May 29, 2025).
- 32 Review: Glossary of terms used in the report.
- 33 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (May 29, 2025).
- 34 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (May 29, 2025).
- 35 It should be noted that the percentages presented in the previous version of the report were calculated, after excluding the neutral responses from the total sample, as conditional rates for the satisfaction and dissatisfaction categories.
- 36 Cultural Participation Survey, Sixth Cycle, 2024. For details, see: Methodology Appendix.
- 37 Cultural Participation Survey, Sixth Cycle, 2024. For details, see: Methodology Appendix.
- 38 Cultural Participation Survey, Sixth Cycle, 2024. For details, see: Methodology Appendix.



Chapter Four

4

Cultural Participation

- Attendance and Diversity
- Cultural Tourism
- Social Integration



Using two primary dimensions derived from the UNESCO model, this chapter investigates the reality of cultural participation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Indicators of individual participation include attending events and performances, visiting cultural facilities, and engaging in other cultural activities outside the home. To highlight aspects of inequality and equality in the distribution of cultural opportunities, the chapter utilizes this dimension to analyze the degree of interest in these activities and the extent to which they encompass various segments of society. The social component of cultural participation, which encompasses collective engagement in cultural activities and the construction of cultural identity, is addressed in the second dimension. It is gauged by the number of amateur cultural clubs and non-profit cultural organizations, their growth traits, and the success of their initiatives. The chapter adds a third dimension to these dimensions: culture outside one's home city, or the activities people engage in when travelling for tourism. When combined, these factors provide a broad framework for assessing the cultural sector's health and capacity to serve all societal groups.

According to the chapter's findings, the percentage of respondents who engaged in at least one cultural activity remained at 69% of the entire survey sample, suggesting a period of stability following the COVID-19 pandemic's momentum of growth and recovery. As the percentage of females who participated in at least one cultural activity was more than six times higher than that of males in the survey sample, the results also showed ongoing convergence in participation levels across various groups, particularly in terms of gender parity in the rate of repeated participation. Ecotourism emerged as one of the fastest-growing activities compared to other tourism activities, and the chapter also tracked the consistent growth and increasing diversity of cultural activities included in local tourist trips. The number and variety of activities of amateur clubs and nonprofit organizations have also grown significantly, and they are now spread out geographically more widely than they were in prior years. Even with these encouraging signs, geographic dispersion must continue to align with population density to ensure fair access and participation opportunities in various areas.

Attendance and Diversity

To determine the degree of equal opportunities for cultural participation, the attendance and diversity index measures participation rates in cultural activities, examines their characteristics and growth trends, and assesses the social determinants that influence participation levels. It also discusses the accessibility of cultural facilities, examining the number of visitors to a sample of the Kingdom's museums and libraries. The index is generally based on the findings of the Cultural Participation Survey, whose sixth round was conducted at the start of the first quarter of 2025 and whose sample comprised 3,046 people who were citizens or residents of all provinces of the Kingdom and who were at least eighteen years old. By calculating attendance rates for nine cultural activities- visiting museums, public libraries, historical and heritage sites, parks and nature reserves, attending festivals and cultural events, going to plays and performances, attending concerts, attending poetry and literary evenings, and visiting art exhibitions- the Cultural Participation Survey seeks to track trends in cultural participation. Note that certain cultural activities, like movie attendance rates, and

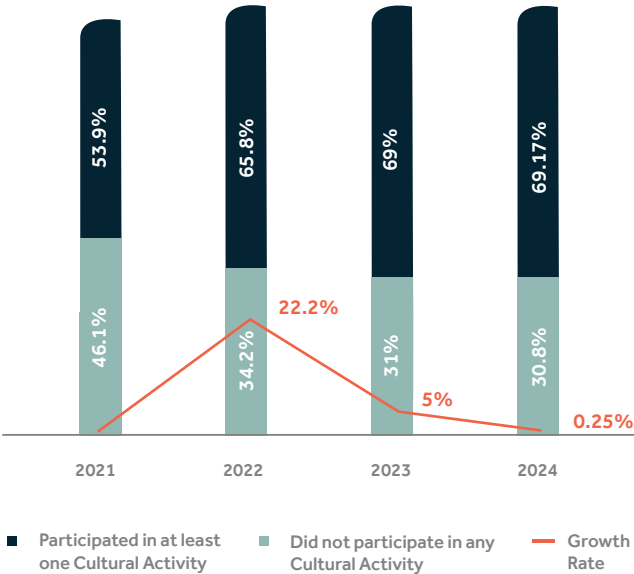


Figure 1: Participation rate in any cultural activity during the past twelve months and its growth during the period 2021-2024.¹

imprompt activities that take the form of social customs, like holidays and celebrations, are not measured by the survey. The results of the 2024 survey revealed consistent participation rates, maintaining the levels achieved following

the notable increase in 2022, after the pandemic's aftermath. Another indicator of stability in cultural participation rates was the rate of repeat attendance, or those who attended any cultural event more than six times a year, which remained at 25.3% in both 2023 and 2024 (see Figure 1).

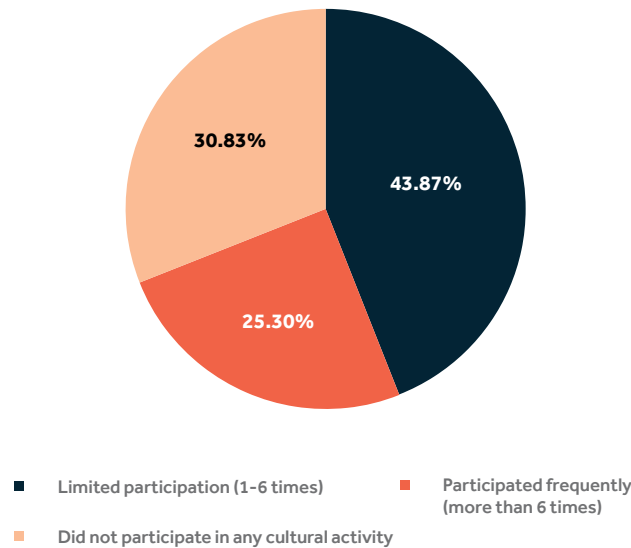


Figure 2: Percentage distribution of participation in any cultural activity during the past twelve months according to frequency of participation.²

Growth in Participation Rates in Cultural Activities

The results of the sixth round of the Cultural Participation Survey showed an increase in the level of cultural participation in most activities, with varying growth rates between them (as shown in Figure 3). Art exhibition visits recorded the highest growth rate of 19.6%, compared to a decline last year. The data also indicates a slight improvement in visitation rates to nature reserves and parks, with a growth rate of 3.1%, after activity had declined the most in the results of the previous round of the survey. The results also reflected continued growth in museum visitation rates, reaching 17.7%, a level close to last year's. Attendance at theatrical and performance events witnessed a slowdown in growth, with the growth rate in this activity not exceeding 64%, compared to the high growth rate between 2022 and 2023, which amounted to 46.3%. This disparity reflects the varying interest in cultural activities, despite the general trend towards growing participation in them. In contrast, the two cultural activities witnessed: Attending concerts and poetry readings decreased by 2.3% and 2.7%, respectively, despite the latter being among the top three activities survey respondents would like to see more of.

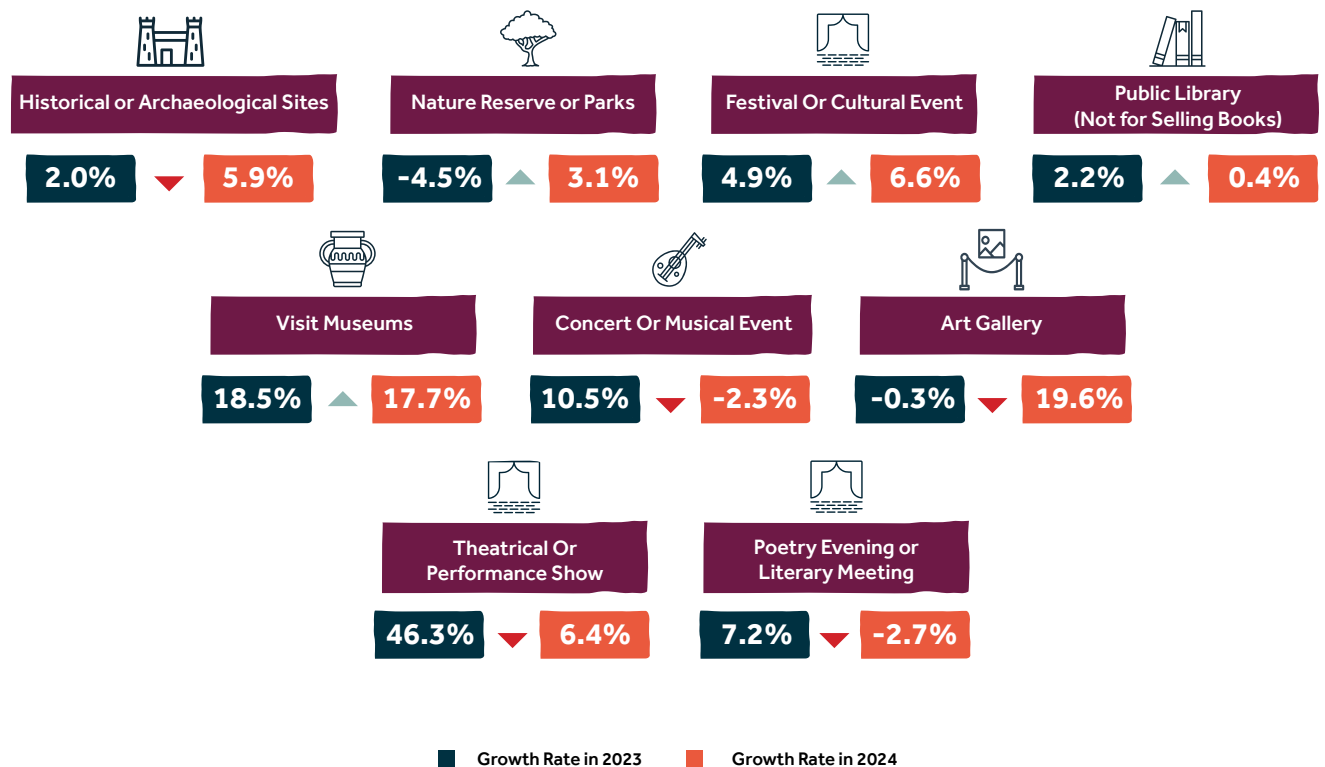


Figure 3: Growth rates in participation rates in at least one activity between 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, by cultural activities.³

Cultural Participation

Considering the average growth in participation in cultural activities reflected in the survey results over the past five cycles (Figure 4), a noticeable disparity emerged between the various types of events, reflecting the different levels of interest and audience trends. Visiting historical and archaeological sites topped all activities in terms of average growth rate during the period 2020-2024, recording 30.2%. This is due specifically to the high increase in visits after the pandemic, as that period witnessed a noticeable recovery in demand after a period of relative stagnation, which may have been linked to the general restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which places this activity in an advanced position in terms of cumulative growth despite the slowdown in the pace of increase in subsequent years. This is followed by attendance at poetry and literary evenings, which achieved an average growth of 18.8% over the same period. However, data indicates a marked slowdown in growth over the past two years, and even a slight decline in 2024. Cultural festivals and events also achieved an average growth rate of 16.1%, reflecting relative stability in attendance, without sharp spikes or significant declines. This is a positive indicator of continued interest in this type of event. It is noteworthy that museum visitation activity has seen an average growth rate of about

15.4%, which is a promising increase, especially considering the common perception of low attendance at museums. In contrast, the survey results reflected a fluctuation in the growth rate over the past five years in the activities of visiting art exhibitions and attending concerts or events, with the average growth in these activities reaching 10.2% and 4%, respectively. This may indicate that the audience for these two activities is limited or that demand for them is fluctuating. These indicators highlight that the average growth over five years not only reflects rising numbers, but also reflects the stability of activity. Its development over a continuous period of time is an important tool for assessing the impact of cultural policies and future expansion strategies. It underscores the need to strengthen activities that are experiencing stable growth, while reconsidering those whose performance is declining despite increased interest in them in terms of desire and preference. It is also worth noting that this reading of the Cultural Participation Survey results provides an overview of the levels of cultural participation in the Kingdom, limited by the lack of centralized and comprehensive data on cultural offerings, which could explain sudden increases or decreases in the level of interest in any one of these activities.

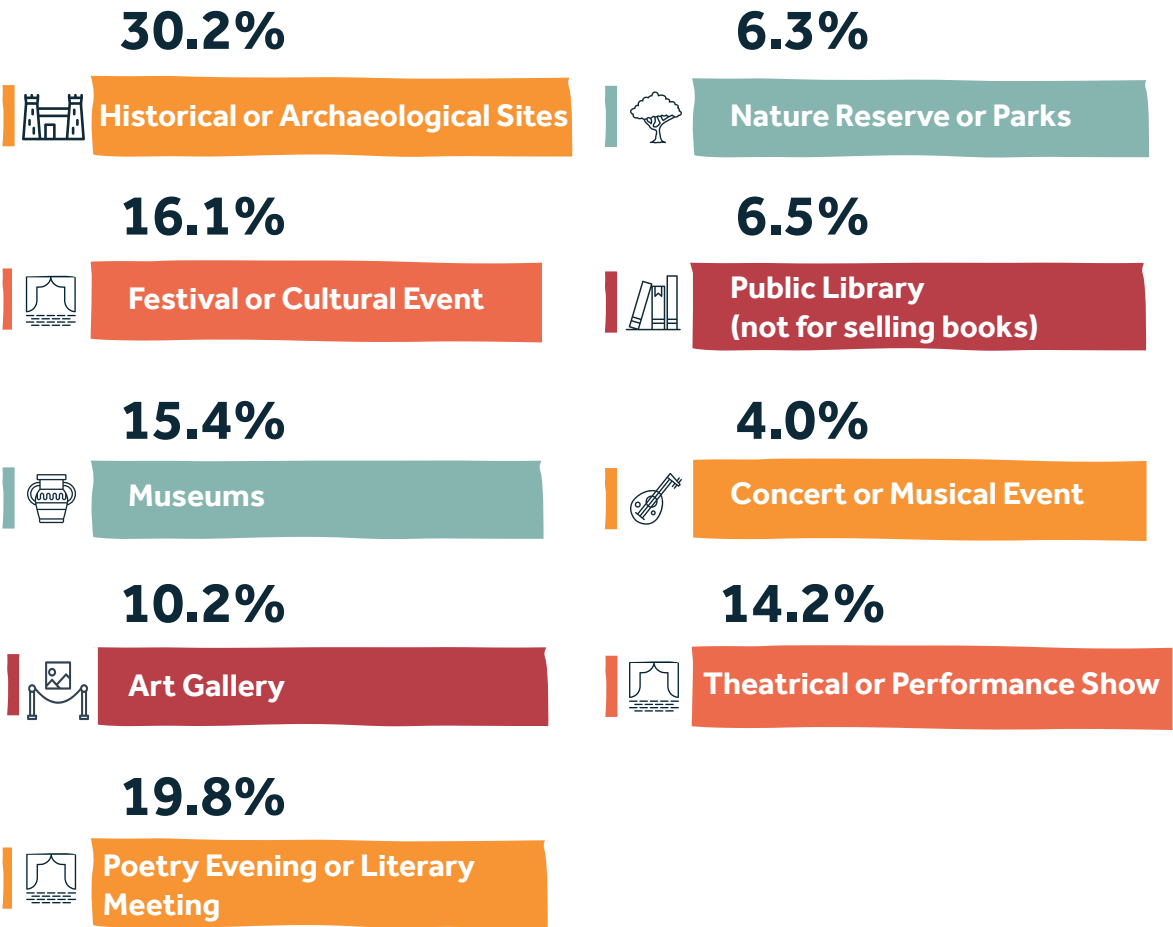


Figure 4: Average growth rate over the five years between 2020- 2024. ⁴



Cultural Participation

Social Diversity

To expose differences or inequalities among various social groups, this indicator focuses on the elements that affect opportunities to participate in cultural activities. As the participation rates of younger and older age groups continued to converge, whether through limited or frequent participation, the overall stability in the level of cultural participation was reflected in each group's participation rates independently (as shown in Figure 5). This convergence persists because the survey sample's youth group, those between the ages of 18 and 25, saw a slight decrease in participation of about 2%, while the survey sample's over-55 age group saw a slight increase of 1%. Age has an impact on opportunities for cultural participation, as evidenced by the fact that over one-third of this group still does not engage in any cultural activities throughout the year.

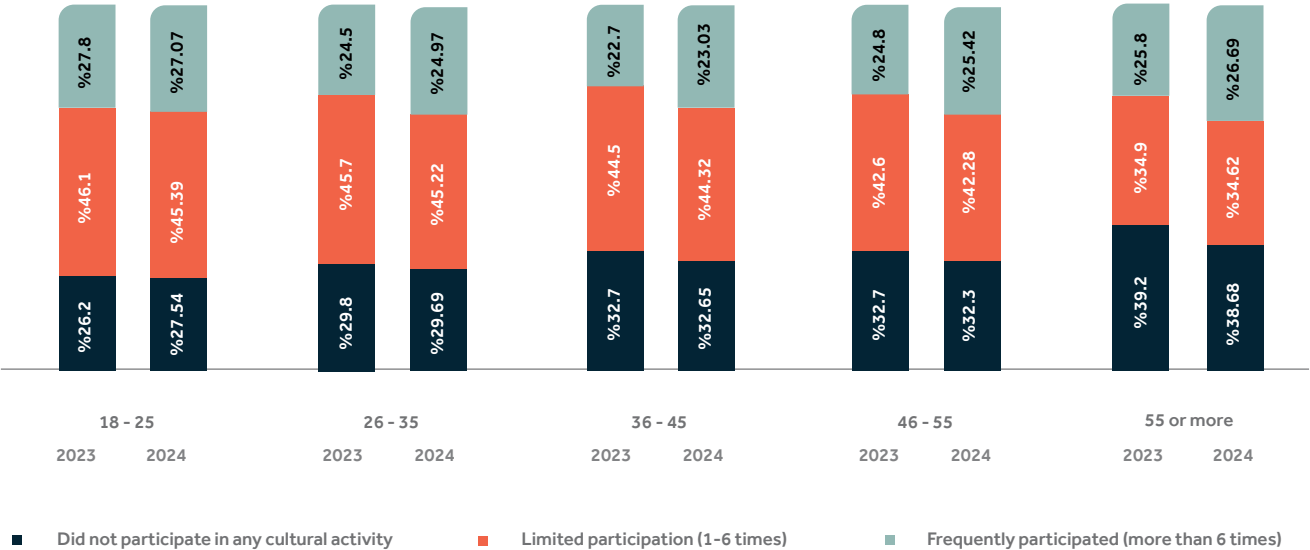


Figure 5: Percentage distribution of participants in any cultural activity during the past twelve months by age group in the years 2023-2024. ⁵

As the likelihood of engaging in a cultural activity increases by more than six times with higher income levels, income level is the most significant factor affecting participation levels and frequency (Figure 6). On the other hand, the survey sample members with the highest rates of limited participation are from the middle class. These findings, which demonstrate the ongoing stability of cultural participation levels and the factors influencing them, are consistent with those from earlier survey rounds. These findings underscore the importance of cultural organizations enhancing access to cultural activities for lower-income groups to ensure inclusive cultural offerings.



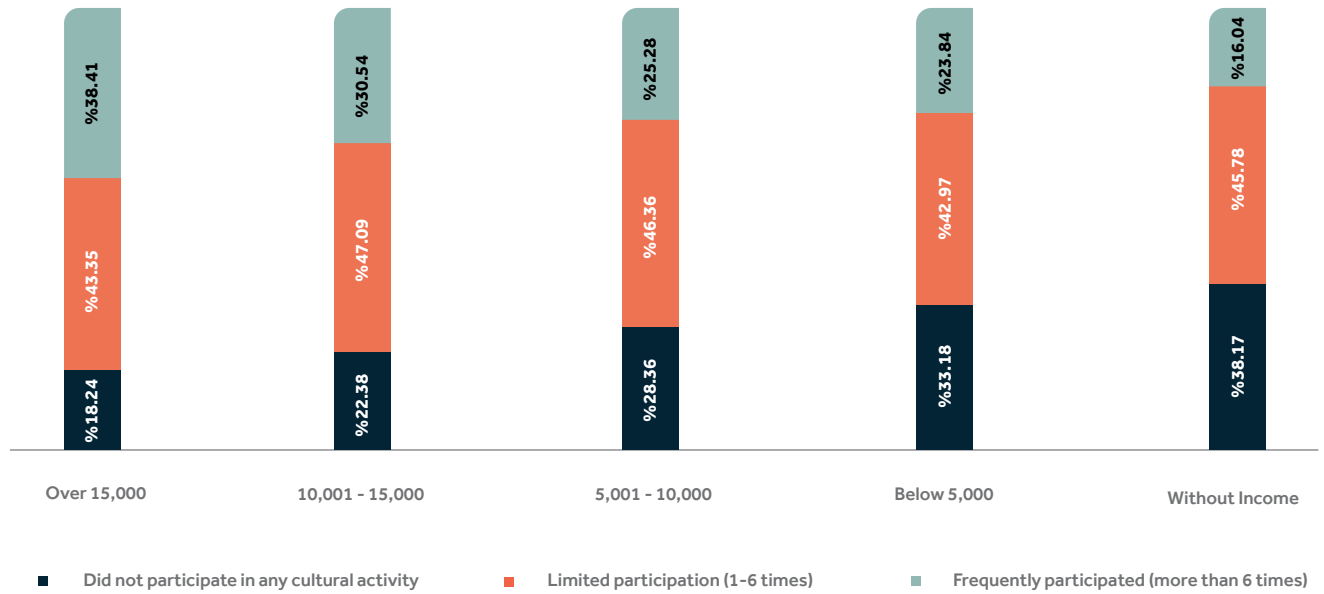


Figure 6: Percentage distribution of participants in any cultural activity during the past twelve months, by income level. ⁶

In contrast, the percentage of men and women in the survey sample who participated in at least one cultural activity was equal, indicating that gender did not affect rates of cultural participation. The results of this survey round showed a promising convergence between the genders within the survey sample, which contrasted with the previous edition of the report's suggestion regarding the disparity in the likelihood of repeat participation. In the survey sample, the proportion of females who engaged in at least one cultural activity more than six times rose from 21% in 2023 to 25.9% in 2024, nearly matching the proportion of males who participated repeatedly (as in Figure 7).

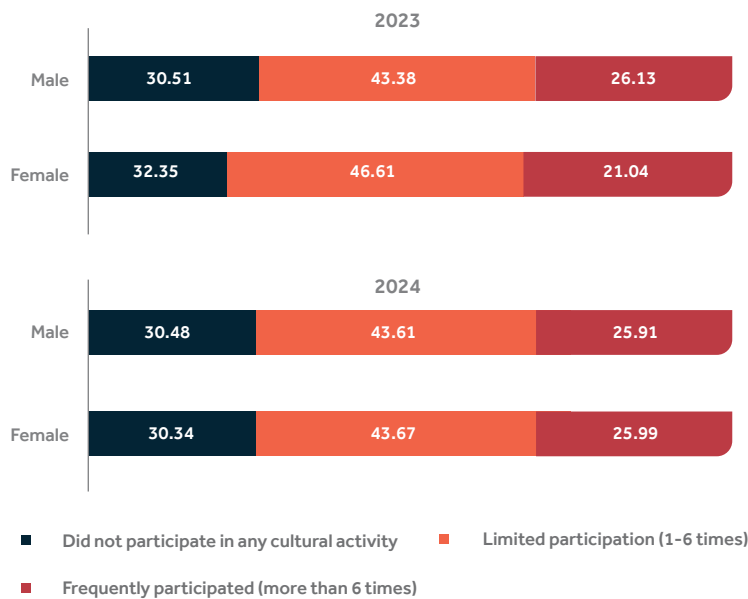


Figure 7: Percentage distribution of participants in any cultural activity during the past twelve months, by gender. ⁷



Cultural Participation

Cultural Facilities Visits

This indicator is significant because it provides a more comprehensive picture of the level of interest in cultural facilities in the Kingdom, complementing the findings of the participation survey and the rates of library and museum visits. The lack of centralization and discipline in the available data still restricts the accuracy of the estimates at the national level. As a result, the index is content to display estimated data for visitors to various cultural institutions, the most significant of which are the King Fahad National Library and The National

Museum. One of the most notable developments anticipated to improve access to various cultural facilities is the opening of the Riyadh Metro in late 2024. It links critical cultural landmarks and the major stations dispersed throughout Riyadh, giving tourists a variety of ways to take advantage of events and engage with the local culture. To ensure more equitable and inclusive access to cultural facilities and events, this step highlights the need to expand public transportation options in major cities and integrate them with cultural planning.

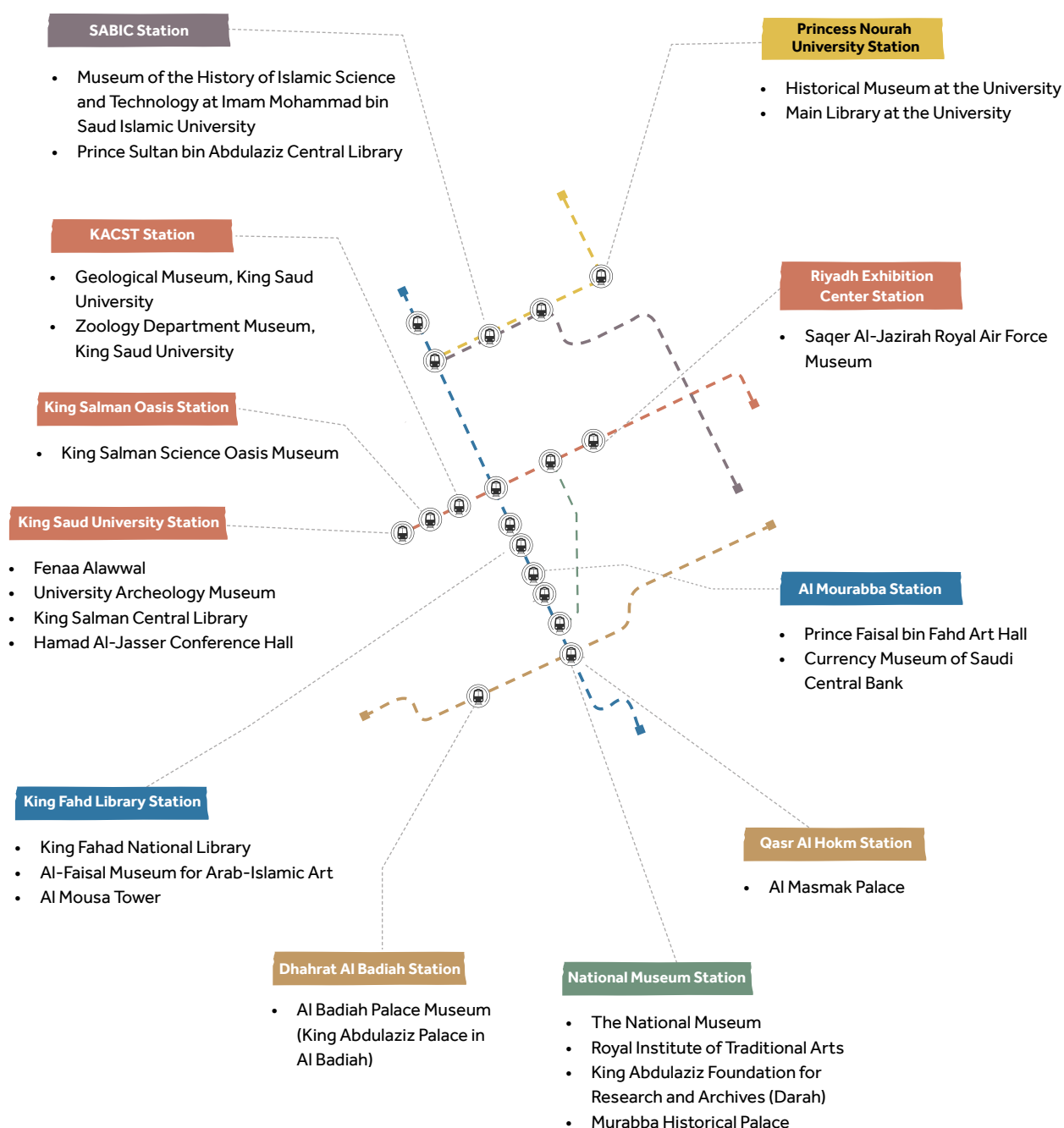


Figure 8: A sample of cultural facilities near Riyadh train stations.

The King Fahad National Library station and the National Museum station, which serve the Royal Institute of Traditional Arts and the King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Darah), in addition to the museum, are two of the most significant stations and the primary entry points to several notable cultural establishments in Riyadh. In addition to other amenities, such as museums and theatres, university libraries are accessible from the university stations or those nearby, including King Saud University Station, Princess Nourah University Station, and SABIC Station (as shown in Figure 8). Measuring the effect of the Riyadh Train on the number of people visiting cultural institutions near its stations or the level of interest in cultural participation generally is still too early.⁸

Museum Visits

Over the last four years, the number of visitors to the Saudi National Museum has increased. The museum saw 38,893 visitors in 2021 and 44,584 in 2022, representing a 14.6% growth rate. The number of visitors increased significantly in 2023, reaching 203,224, and continued to grow in 2024, with a growth rate of 69.6% over the previous year (Figure 9). The rise in the percentage of museum visitors, as revealed by the Cultural Participation Survey results over the last two years, is in line with the increase in the number of visitors to the National Museum. In the context of a complete recovery from the pandemic's effects,⁹ from which museums were among the most affected sectors,¹⁰ it also aligns with reports from around the world about the rise in demand for museum visits.

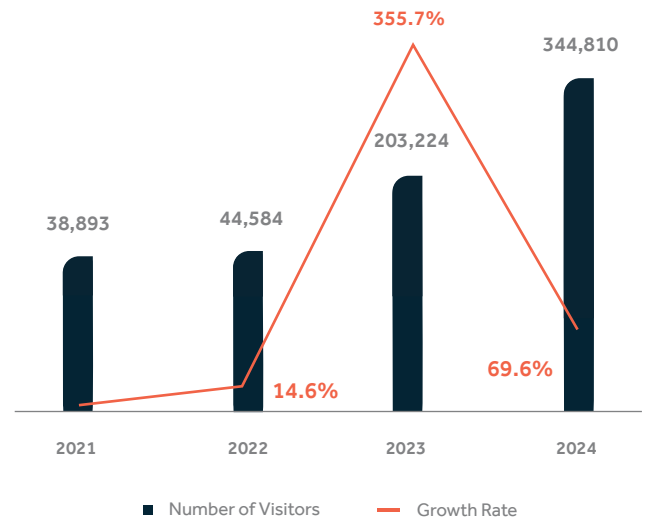


Figure 9: Number of visits to the National Museum during the period 2021-2024 and their growth rates.¹¹



Cultural Participation

Library Visits

According to Figure 10, the King Fahad National Library’s visitor growth rate peaked between 2021 and 2022, rising by 123%. Although growth slowed in 2023, it still increased by 17.4%. With more than 150,000 visitors in 2024, the growth rate increased to 56.3%.

The report also tracked the number of people who attended Cultural Houses in their first year; according to the previous version, the first one in Dammam and the second in Ahad Rafidah were scheduled to open in May 2024,¹³ where the total number of visitors reached approximately 160,000, the proportion of female visitors is higher than that of male visitors, and children made up about 25% of the total visitors. This increase in female visitors is corroborated by the data on the number of public libraries (as shown in Table 1), which highlights the significance of creating cultural facilities that cater to the needs of all groups. The number of recorded visits suggests that this model has the potential to grow and attract a diverse audience, despite the cultural houses’ experience being relatively new and currently only existing in two cities.

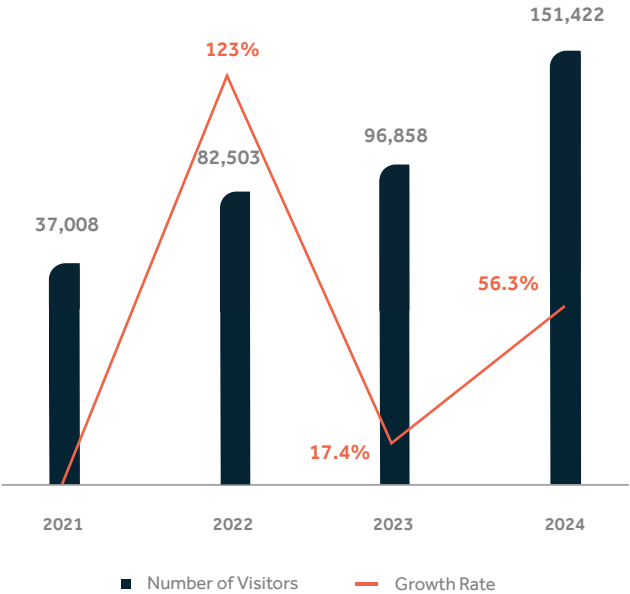


Figure 10: The King Fahad National Library’s visitation numbers and growth rates from 2021 to 2024.¹²





Table 1: Number of visitors to a number of public libraries in 2024.

Library	The city	Number of visitors		
		Males	Females	Children
King Fahad Public Library Jeddah ¹⁴	Jeddah	7,524	9,184	4,205
Library Of Imam Ibn Al Qayyim ¹⁵	Riyadh	200		—
Saleh bin Saleh Educator Center Library, and Princess Noura Center Library (Al Salhia Civil Society in Unaizah) ¹⁶	Unaizah	450	930	1,200
Dar Al-Ulum Library (Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy Cultural Center) ¹⁷	Al-Jawf	5,423	10,112	
Munira Al-Malham Women's Library (Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy Cultural Centre) ¹⁸	Ghat	—	1,101	—

The Libraries Commission began testing mobile libraries in Riyadh in 2024, concurrently with the expansion of public library services in the Kingdom. 28,372 people attended the 28 mobile library tours that the Commission arranged. To bring cultural activities closer to the local environment and its inhabitants- a challenge that the report has consistently stated needs to be addressed- the mobile library tours concentrated on visiting school locations, district parks,

municipal squares, and marketplaces. As part of the national cultural project to rekindle the connection with books, the King Abdulaziz Public Library continues to offer mobile library tours and mobile learning resources. Although these programs have the potential to increase knowledge availability and accessibility significantly, their impact is limited in Riyadh, particularly given the need for such programs in outlying cities and areas lacking a robust cultural infrastructure.

Table 2: Number of visitors to the mobile libraries of the Libraries Commission and the King Abdulaziz Public Library during 2024. ¹⁹

Commission	Number of Mobile Library Tours	Number of Visitors
Libraries Commission (Mobile Library)	28	28,372
King Abdulaziz Public Library (Mobile Library)	105	175,510
King Abdulaziz Public Library (Mobile Learning Resources)	510	236,238

Notable Cultural Festivals and Exhibitions

While the chapter on creativity and cultural production addresses events and exhibitions that showcase creative and artistic works- such as art exhibitions, fashion shows, and theatrical and performance events- this indicator focuses on large-scale or interactive events, including festivals, book fairs, museum exhibitions, and other activities that are fundamentally based on attendance and audience engagement.

Cultural Festivals

According to the report, audience attendance at cultural festivals has remained consistent over the past five years, with an average growth of 16.1%. The social aspect of participation is responsible for this continuity. According to the survey's findings, 41%²⁰ of respondents cite spending time with friends and family as the primary reason for attending festivals and other cultural events for the third consecutive year. Aside from the culinary arts industry, where festivals were more widely spread geographically, the data also showed that these festivals remained concentrated in large cities.

Targeting different facets of society, a wide range of cultural and artistic festivals were organized in 2024 and co-organized by government organizations and educational

and cultural institutions. Theatrical and performance festivals were popular this year; the Qemam International Festival for Mountain Performance Arts in Abha, which drew over 198,000 attendees, was the most attended. The Amateur Theater Clubs Festival and the second Riyadh Theater Festival were also organized by the Theater and Performing Arts Commission. The Riyadh International Jazz Festival, the Classical Arabic Singing Festival, and Riyadh Music Week, which collectively drew over 457,000 visitors, were among the notable festivals in the music sector.

The food and culinary arts sector is one that frequently hosts festivals; the National Center for Dates organizes the Buraydah Date Festival, which is the oldest and most significant of these. The Madinah Date Season and the Unaizah Date Season are two more date seasons and festivals that the center hosts. The seventeenth edition of the Al-Jouf International Olive Festival, organized by the Al-Jouf Province Municipality and featuring 32 farmers, entrepreneurs, and agricultural companies from various countries, took place in 2024.²¹ It is one of the most prestigious international festivals in the culinary arts sector. The festival aims to enhance investment opportunities in olive production and cultivation, empower farmers and entrepreneurs, and provide them with a platform to showcase and sell their goods. In addition, the Culinary Arts Commission



hosted several other festivals, such as the fourth Saudi Feast Festival and the half-million-person Klija Festival. Long-term events, like the Abha Popular Food Festival, which lasted for a full year, have become increasingly popular this year.

The main event of this year was the Writers and Readers Festival, organized by the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission, and held in Khamis Mushayt. Poetry evenings, seminars, interactive and artistic performances, and public

areas for children, the visual arts, and literature were all part of the festival's varied schedule. The Heritage Commission in Riyadh organizes the International Festival of Folk Games, another well-known celebration that highlights Provincial and global folk games as a common cultural element among people. The Al-Harat area, the interactive Al-Faw Village, a folk games tour, workshops for creating traditional toys and decorations, handicraft pavilions, and a special pavilion for the Year of the Camel were all part of the festival's rich experience.

Table 3: Examples of the most prominent cultural festivals held in 2024 and their estimated attendance numbers. ²²

Festival	Organizing Body	City	Number of Attendees
Children of Culture	Ministry of Culture	Riyadh	10,057
Cultural Year Camel Festival	Ministry of Culture	Riyadh	25,685
Riyadh Theater Festival 2	Theater and Performing Arts Commission	Riyadh	6,948
3rd Qemam International Festival for Mountain Performance Arts	Theater and Performing Arts Commission	Abha	198,022
Amateur Theater Clubs Festival	Theater and Performing Arts Commission	Riyadh	2,700
Gulf Theater Festival	Theater and Performing Arts Commission	Riyadh	5,200
Writers and Readers Festival	Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission	Khamis Mushayt	224,864
Riyadh International Jazz Festival	Music Commission	Riyadh	1,708
Classical Arabic Singing Festival	Music Commission	Riyadh	5,056
Riyadh Music Week	Music Commission	Riyadh	457,644
International Festival of Folk Games	Heritage Commission	Riyadh	108,481
Travel Festival	Museums Commission	Riyadh	807
Tariq Abdel Hakim Festival	Museums Commission	Jeddah	541
Saudi Feast Festival	Culinary Arts Commission	Jeddah	46,100
Klija Festival	Culinary Arts Commission	Buraydah	500,000
Popular Food Festival	Culinary Arts Commission	Abha	260,600
Buraydah Date Festival	National Center for Palms and Dates	Buraydah	700,000
Unaizah Date Season	National Center for Palms and Dates	Unaizah	200,000
Madinah date season	National Center for Palms and Dates ²³	Madinah	215,000

Cultural Participation

The two most significant film festivals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are the Red Sea International Film Festival, which is in its fourth edition, and the Saudi Film Festival, which will hold its eleventh edition in 2024. While the Red Sea International Film Festival experienced comparatively stable attendance numbers, the Saudi Film Festival saw a slight decline compared to the previous year (Figure 11). The report also monitored other film festivals, as 1,308 people attended the fourth Gulf Film Festival session, hosted by the Film Commission in Riyadh,²⁴ and King Abdulaziz University contributed to holding the first student film festival in Jeddah, with the attendance of 2,027 visitors.²⁵

Cultural Exhibitions

The Riyadh International Book Fair, the largest exhibition with over a million visitors (Table 4), was one of several cultural events observed in the report. Two additional book fairs were arranged in Madinah and Jeddah by the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission. First held in 2023, the Eastern Province Book Fair did not return this year. Among the exhibitions this year was the Saudi Manuscripts Exhibition, hosted by the Libraries Commission in Riyadh and featuring the theme “Stories told for a lasting legacy.” For the

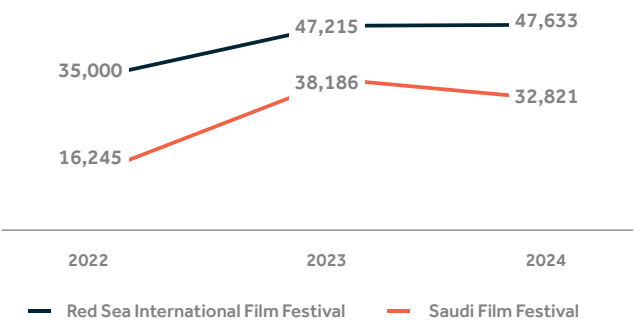


Figure 11: Number of attendees at the Saudi Film Festival and the Red Sea International Film Festival during the period 2022-2024.²⁶

first time, a unique collection of ancient manuscripts is on display, accompanied by related activities such as interactive digital experiences and specialized workshops. The exhibition aims to showcase the Kingdom’s efforts to conserve its manuscript heritage, raise awareness of its cultural and scientific significance, and facilitate communication among scholars, organizations, and the local and global communities interested in this field.

Table 4: Examples of the most prominent cultural exhibitions held in 2024 and estimated numbers of attendees.

Exhibition	Organizing Body	City	Number of Attendees
Riyadh International Book Fair	Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission	Riyadh	1,008,932
Jeddah Book Fair	Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission	Jeddah	580,071
Madinah Book Fair	Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission	Madinah	167,283
Between two cultures	Ministry of Culture	Riyadh	15,525
Saudi Manuscripts Exhibition	Libraries Commission	Riyadh	9,000
Asir Manuscripts Exhibition	Libraries Commission	Ahad Rafidah	3,982
Paperback Exhibition	Ministry of Culture	Diriyah	5,542
Oriental Perfumes Exhibition	Museums Commission	Riyadh	6,289
Creative Solutions Exhibition	King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra)	Dhahran	5,344
Exhibition on the History of Camels in Saudi Arabia	King Abdulaziz Public Library	Riyadh	20,000
Exhibition of rare photos and manuscripts from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	King Abdulaziz Public Library	Riyadh	1,330
Exhibition of the library’s holdings of rare Islamic Qur’ans	King Abdulaziz Public Library	Riyadh	1,151

According to festival data, the culinary arts sector stands out for its numerous exhibitions and their extensive geographic reach, which includes cities such as Arar, Sakaka, and Sabya that are typically less well-known at events. For instance, 19 farmers’ market exhibits were hosted in over 16 cities,

attracting 436 participants and more than 220,000 visitors overall (Table 5). The Saudi National Dishes Cart Exhibition, which traveled throughout the Kingdom and drew 36,691 visitors, was also organized by the Culinary Arts Commission.

Table 5: Geographical distribution of farmers’ markets held in 2024, and estimated numbers of participants and visitors. ²⁷

Province	Number of Farmers’ Markets	Number of Participants in Exhibitions	Total Number of Visitors
Madinah Province	2	50	75,198
Asir Province	3	75	38,884
Al-Qassim Province	3	70	26,392
Eastern Province	2	50	24,133
Riyadh Province	1	21	22,644
Northern Border Province	1	25	9,583
Makkah Province	2	40	8,590
Al Baha Province	2	35	7,254
Al-Jawf Province	1	25	6,333
Jazan Province	2	45	3,719
Total	19	436	222,730



Conferences and Forums

Researchers, practitioners, and decision-makers are among the cultural sector actors who can engage in dialogue through the knowledge platforms offered by cultural conferences and forums. Given their specialized and scientific nature, which caters to a particular audience, they might not garner as much attention as festivals and exhibitions. Still, they are a qualitative measure of the level of intellectual and scientific engagement with cultural issues. The second edition of the Islamic Art Conference took place this year, with the theme “In praise of the craftsman...” The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) hosted a brand-new, highly regarded exhibition on the practice of Islamic arts and crafts that drew more than 20,000 visitors. By showcasing the contributions of handicraft practitioners who continue to preserve these genuine arts, the conference underscored the significance of promoting and revitalizing Islamic artistic traditions. The conference offered a forum for reflection on the history of mosque maintenance throughout the various Islamic eras, as well as the creative and

architectural diversity it has witnessed. It also demonstrated an interest in mosque architecture, paying attention to its aesthetic and architectural details. Scientific seminars, lectures, workshops, and specialized exhibitions were among the ancillary events included in the conference program. Since its inaugural edition in 2021, the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission has organized the Riyadh International Philosophy Conference, which is one of the most significant gatherings on the Kingdom’s cultural landscape. Compared to the 4,941 visitors who attended the conference in 2023, the number of attendees in 2024 increased by almost 10% to 5,425 registrants.²⁸ Under the theme “Voice in Cinema,” the Film Commission organized the International Film Criticism Conference this year in Riyadh to advance critical movement as a key pillar in the film industry. Panel discussions, film screenings, critical discussions, interactive workshops, art exhibits, and kid-friendly educational activities were all part of the conference’s program, offering a stimulating experience that advances cinematic culture.

Table 6: Examples of the most prominent cultural conferences held in 2024 and estimated numbers of attendees.²⁹

Conference	Organizing Body	City	Number of Attendees
Riyadh International Conference on Philosophy	Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission	Riyadh	5,425
International Conference on Museum Education and Innovation	Museums Commission	Riyadh	1,482
Scientific Conference on Underwater Cultural Heritage	Heritage Commission	Jeddah	200
Islamic Art Conference ³⁰	King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra)	Dhahran	20,817
Architecture and Design Research Conference	Architecture and Design Commission	Riyadh	3,000
Sustainability Conference	Architecture and Design Commission	Riyadh	739
Film Criticism Conference	Film Commission	Riyadh Hail Al-Ahsa	9,936

The report cited notable instances of cultural forums and gatherings in the fields of translation, literature, design, reading, and film. For example, the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission held the fourth edition of the International Translation Forum in Riyadh with the goals of reviewing the most well-known local and international professional practices, discussing the difficulties currently facing the translation industry, and shedding light on the realities of the field.

The Commission also organized, in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, the Gulf Poetry Forum 2024 in the city of Taif, which has been closely linked to the poetry scene since it was a destination for poets at Souq Okaz, and until its registration in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in 2023 in the field of literature, as an extension of this poetic legacy. Another noteworthy event was the International Reading Forum, which was hosted by the Libraries Commission in Riyadh.



Table 7: Examples of the most prominent cultural meetings and forums held in 2024 and the estimated number of attendees.³¹

Forum	Organizing Body	City	Number of Attendees
International Translation Forum 2024	Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission	Riyadh	3,000
International Camel Forum	Ministry of Culture	Al-Ahsa	315
International Reading Forum	Libraries Commission	Riyadh	2,000
Forum on Antiquities and History of the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries	Heritage Commission	Riyadh	933
Gulf Poetry Forum	Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission	Taif	428
Knights of Poetry Forum	Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission	Jazan	200
First Fanaa Forum	Museums Commission	Riyadh	664
Designed with Excellence Form	Architecture and Design Commission	Riyadh	73
First Film Forum ³²	Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University	Dammam	100
Saudi Film Forum 2024	Film Commission	Riyadh	70,000

To encourage reading habits and provide venues for intellectual exchange, the forum brought together people from diverse cultural backgrounds, featuring a range of dialogue sessions, workshops, and activities. As part of the Year of the Camel 2024 events, the Ministry of Culture also hosted the International Camel Forum in Al-Ahsa in collaboration with King Faisal University. The forum covered a wide range of subjects, such as camel economics, camels in contemporary art, and camels in social and cultural heritage.

Cultural Tourism

Painting a complete picture requires more than just discussing the economic side of cultural tourism. Cultural tourism should be highlighted in the chapter on cultural participation because it is more than just an economic activity; it is an essential component of the broader cultural participation system. In keeping with the growing trend that cultural tourism indicators have tracked in recent years, more than 34 million local tourists engaged in cultural activities in 2024, accounting for 39% of all domestic travel to the Kingdom during that year. It is important to note that this percentage includes attending a movie, which has been added to the list of cultural activities that are part of tourist excursions.³³

Local Cultural Tourism

The majority of cultural activities that domestic tourists engaged in in 2024 contributed to this growth, with the notable exception of museum and art gallery visits, which saw a sharp decline following the 2023 peak (Figure 12). There was also a minor drop in trips that included attending cultural events and festivals, which has been the activity with the largest share in recent years due to the increased variety and expansion of cultural tourism options. In comparison to trips that included visits to cultural events and facilities, it was found that tourist excursions that featured nature and environmental activities were generally the ones expanding the fastest.

There is a notable difference in the degree of interest in these activities, specifically between what people do inside and outside their cities of residence, when trends in cultural activities during tourist trips are compared with levels of cultural participation. According to the Cultural Participation Survey, visits to museums and art galleries increased significantly this year, but trips that included such visits decreased. Similarly, a slowdown in the growth of the same activity in the Cultural Participation Survey offset the notable increase in domestic travel, which included visits to parks and nature reserves. Given that they are essential components

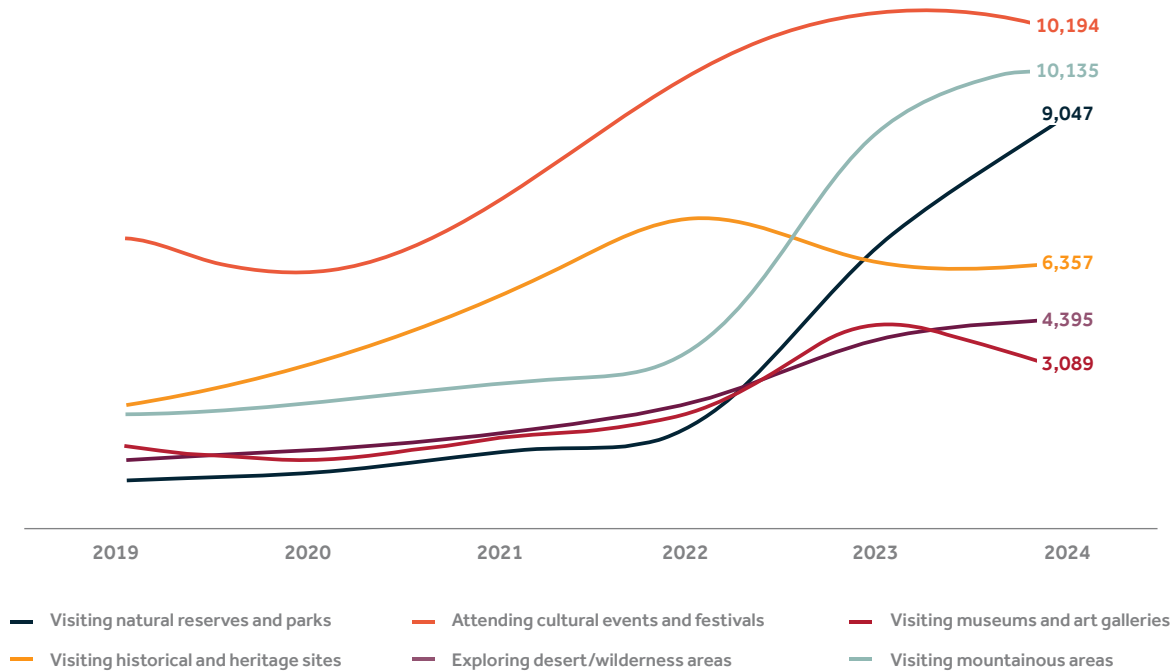


Figure 12: Number of domestic tourist trips that included cultural activities during the period 2019-2024, in thousands.³⁴

of the cultural experience and that prior indicators suggest a rise in interest and desire to engage in them, this distinction highlights the importance of cultural planning and focusing

support on less tourist-friendly cultural activities. As noted in the previous edition of the report³⁵, a comparable discrepancy is evident in the geographic distribution of domestic travel,

which reflects the distinct cultural elements and attractions in each location. As illustrated in Figure 13, the Madinah Province, for instance, continues to lead in the number of local tourist trips that include visits to historical, heritage, and archaeological sites. In contrast, it is one of the provinces with the fewest number of tourist trips that include other activities, such as visiting museums and art galleries, and participating in

cultural festivals. As shown in Figure 14, Riyadh Province, on the other hand, stands out for having the most tourist trips that included attendance at festivals and cultural events. This aligns with the chapter's findings on the importance of hosting cultural festivals. This discrepancy underscores the importance of diversity and inclusivity in cultural experiences, particularly in tourist-friendly cities and areas.

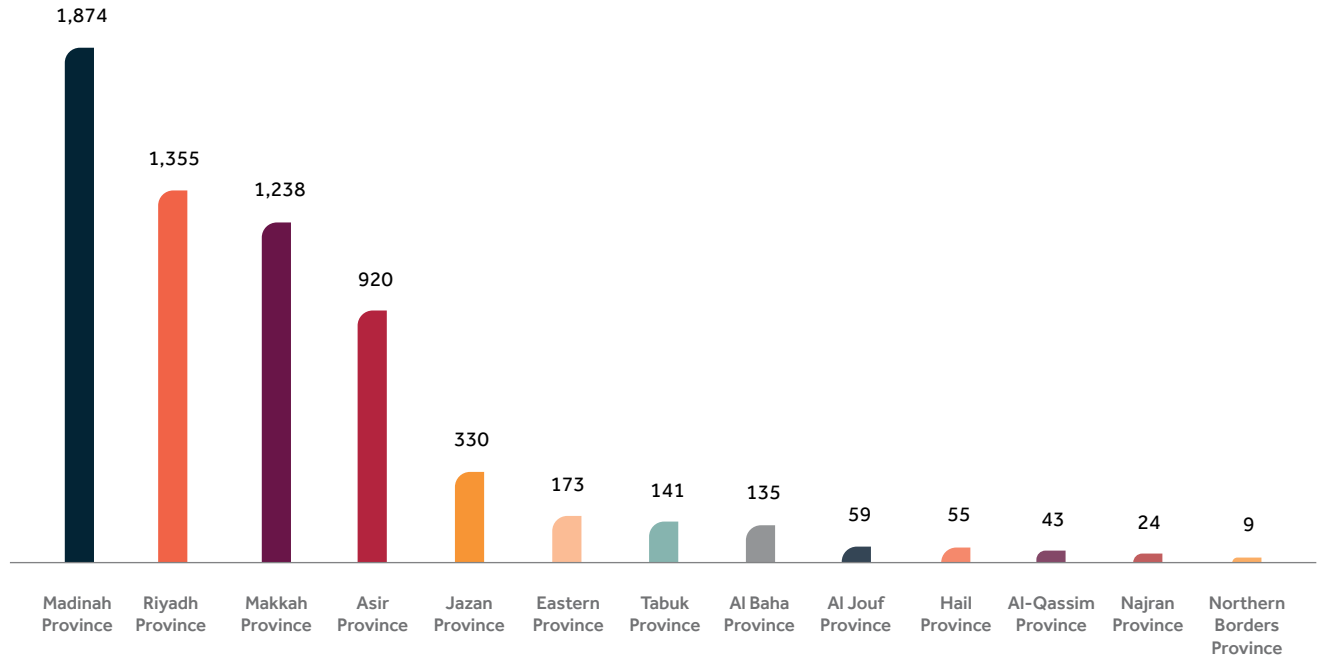


Figure 13: Geographical distribution of domestic tourist trips that included visits to historical and heritage sites and archaeological sites in 2024, in thousands. ³⁶

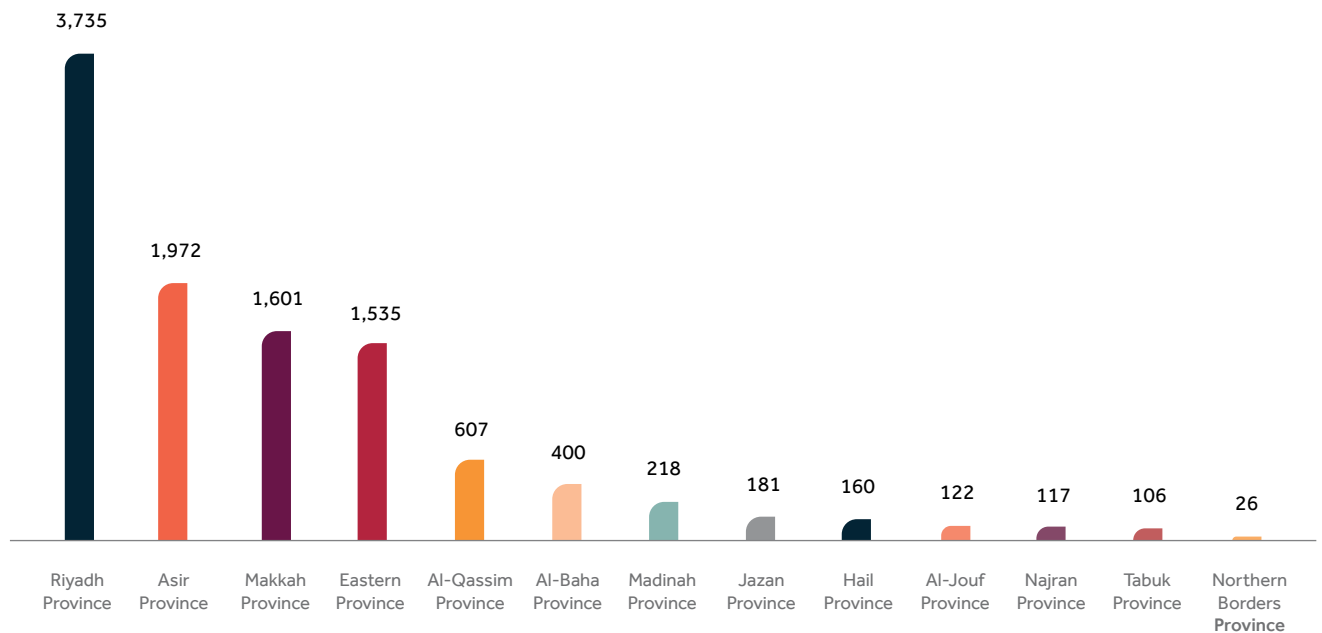


Figure 14: Geographical distribution of domestic tourist trips that included the presence of Festivals and cultural events in 2024, in thousands. ³⁷

Social Integration

Because it measures the degree to which people are involved in cultural work as a common societal concern, this indicator assumes particular significance. The report’s definition of cultural participation goes beyond gauging individual attendance and reception to include monitoring trends in group participation. Through the use of two sub-indicators, the chapter tracks the activities and events offered by amateur clubs and non-profit cultural organizations, as well as their growth trends, geographic distribution, and diversity in their fields. The data for this year showed a notable acceleration in the formation and diversification of amateur clubs, as well as a sustained increase in the number of new cultural organizations. Notwithstanding these encouraging signs, the geographic dispersion of these clubs and organizations does not accurately reflect the population distribution, underscoring the need for further growth to keep pace with this trend.

Non-profit Cultural Organizations

Organizational development efforts continue in the non-profit sector, as indicated in the previous version of the

report.³⁸ In 2024, the Donations System was launched, accompanied by guidelines for coordination among civil institutions, associations, and official bodies. Other guidelines include the Guidance Policy for Grants and Providing Services to Beneficiaries and the Guidance Guide for newly established civil institutions and family funds. By royal decree, the King Salman Foundation’s bylaws were adopted in 2024, and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince established the Riyadh Foundation.³⁹ To encourage and support capacity development in the non-profit sector, a decision was made at the end of the year to exempt non-profit sector entities from licensing fees for e-learning and training programs at the National eLearning Center.

Growth of Non-Profit Cultural Organizations

The number of non-profit cultural organizations has been increasing in tandem with regulatory changes. These two characteristics are the most noticeable aspects of the industry in recent years. In 2024, there were 45 non-profit cultural organizations, more than twice as many as in 2023 (see Figure 15). The jump occurred between 2020 and 2021, when the Ministry of Culture introduced its strategy for the non-profit sector and related organizations, considering

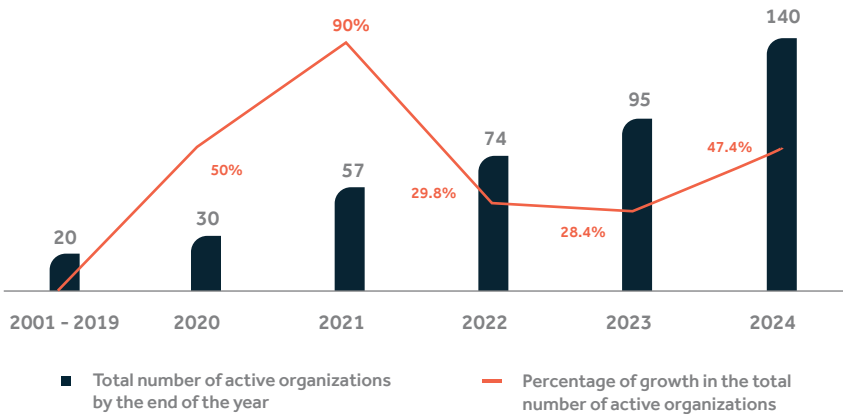


Figure 15: Number of active non-profit cultural organizations during the period 2020-2024, according to the year of establishment and their growth rate. ⁴⁰



the growth rate in the overall number of active cultural organizations. The overall number of organizations increased by 90%. Over the following two years, growth remained steady before accelerating once more in 2024, with an increase of over 47% (Figure 15). By the end of 2024, there were 140 non-profit cultural organizations, representing a sevenfold increase from 2020.

Since no new cooperative or professional associations were formed in 2024, the non-profit cultural organizations established during that year were limited to civil institutions and specialized associations only (as illustrated in Figure 16). Notably, between 2023 and 2024, the number of civil society institutions grew at a faster rate than the number of specialized associations, rising by 73.33% and 59.65%, respectively.⁴¹

Diversity of Non-Profit Cultural Organizations

With 15 new organizations, the literature sector saw the most significant number of newly formed organizations for the second consecutive year. This sector accounted for one-third of all non-profit organizations formed in 2024 (Figure 17).

Eleven new organizations were formed in the heritage sector, followed by six in the visual arts and four in libraries. Nevertheless, as Figure 18 illustrates, until the end of 2024, the heritage sector continued to have the most significant overall number of operational non-profit organizations. When examining the growth rate in the establishment of new organizations, the literature sector is particularly noteworthy, as it achieved the highest growth rate between 2023 and 2024, reaching 115.4%.

Additionally, the libraries and visual arts sectors displayed encouraging growth rates of 80% and 85.71%, respectively. However, it was notable that other industries, such as museums, experienced slight expansion. There was no established organization for music, translation, or fashion. This year's new share is the Sum of the Sectors taken together. Since it makes up no more than 7% of all non-profit cultural organizations, assistance should be directed toward boosting the less active sectors.



Figure 16: Number of non-profit cultural organizations established during the years 2021-2024, by type of organization.⁴²

Cultural Participation

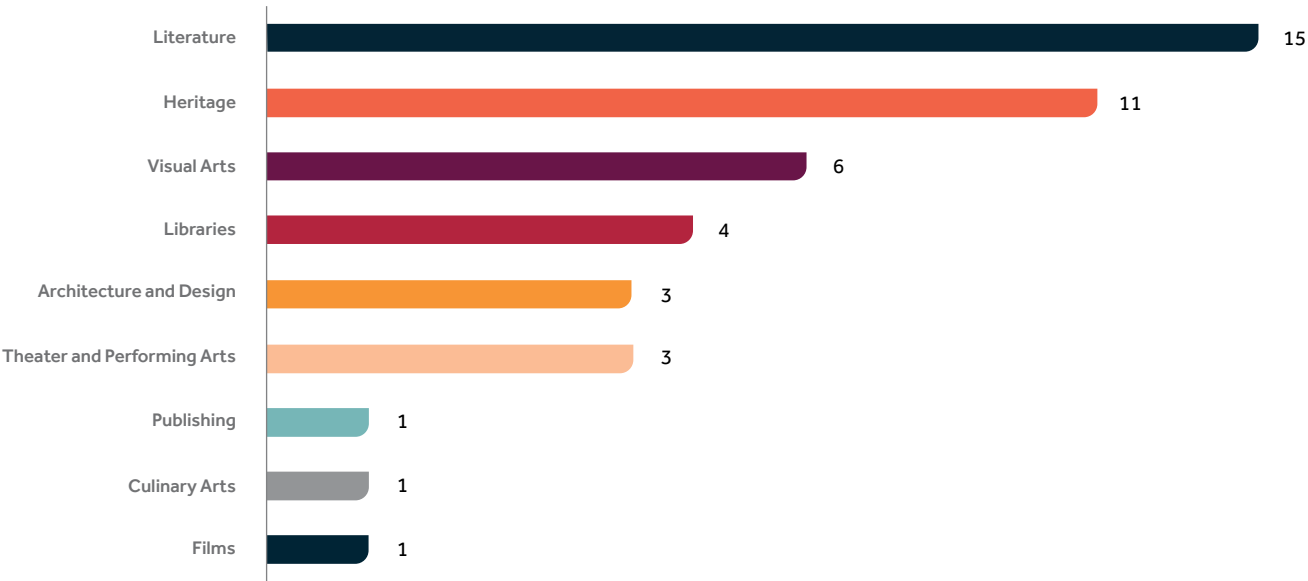


Figure 17: Number of non-profit cultural organizations established during 2024 and their distribution, by field. ⁴³

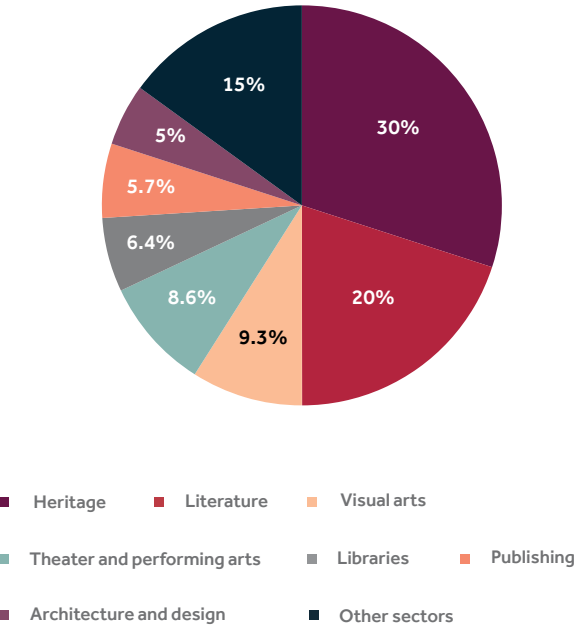


Figure 18: Percentage distribution of active non-profit cultural organizations until the end of 2024, by field. ⁴⁴

The geographic dispersion of cultural non-profit organizations suggests a restricted growth rate that is not keeping pace with the encouraging annual increase in the number of new organizations being established. Riyadh Province was home to 40% of the organizations founded in 2024, suggesting that the creation of new cultural organizations continues to follow a centralized pattern. Nonetheless, there are indications of expansion in a few outlying areas that earlier iterations of the report suggested were among the least represented in terms of the number of non-profit organizations. For example, the number of non-profit organizations in Hail and Tabuk has quadrupled, respectively.

In each province, the average number of organizations per million people is four, as shown in Figure 20. Since the per capita share in Riyadh Province is higher than the average and represents an improvement over 2023,⁴⁵ the data clearly shows a disparity between areas with high population density. However, in provinces of Makkah, the Eastern Province, Asir, and Madinah, a disparity remains between the number of non-profit organizations and the population density. Support is therefore needed to ensure that cultural activities are geographically well-covered and to encourage non-profit organizations in these areas in a manner proportionate to population growth. The minor and peripheral provinces also exhibit a similar discrepancy, with Al-Baha leading by a significant margin, with 12 organizations per million people. In comparison, the rates in the Najran and Jazan provinces are less than two organizations per million people, respectively. The Northern Borders Province has no non-profit cultural organizations, according to the data. ⁴⁶

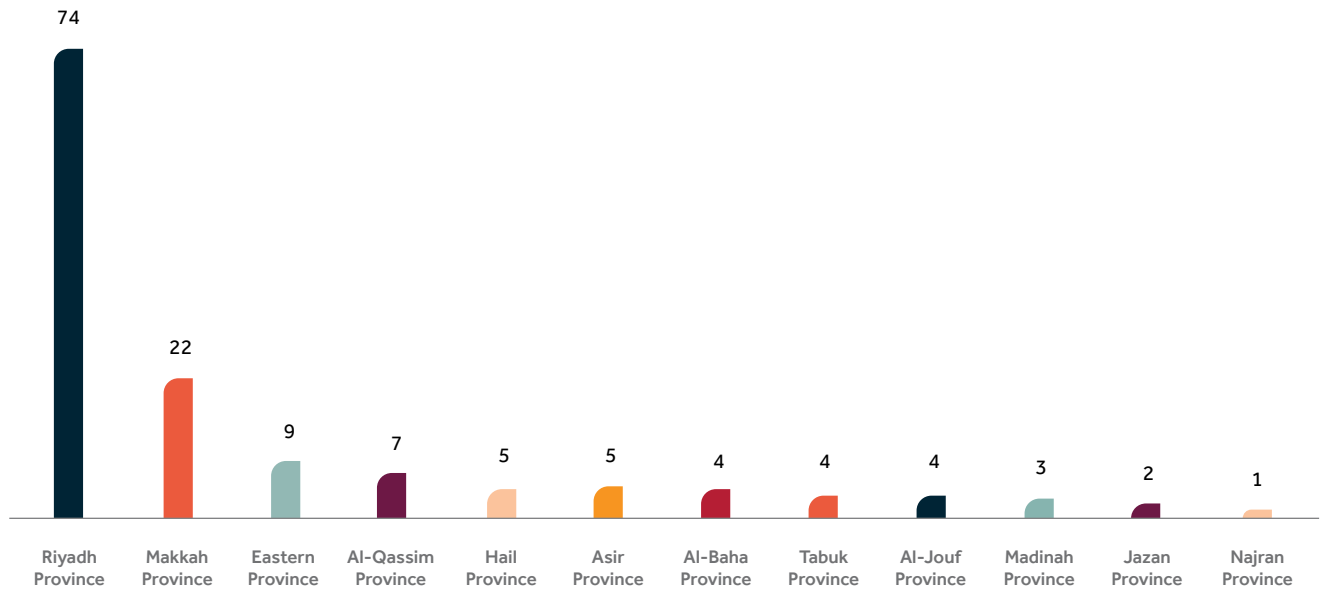


Figure 19: Geographical distribution of active non-profit cultural organizations by the end of 2024. ⁴⁷

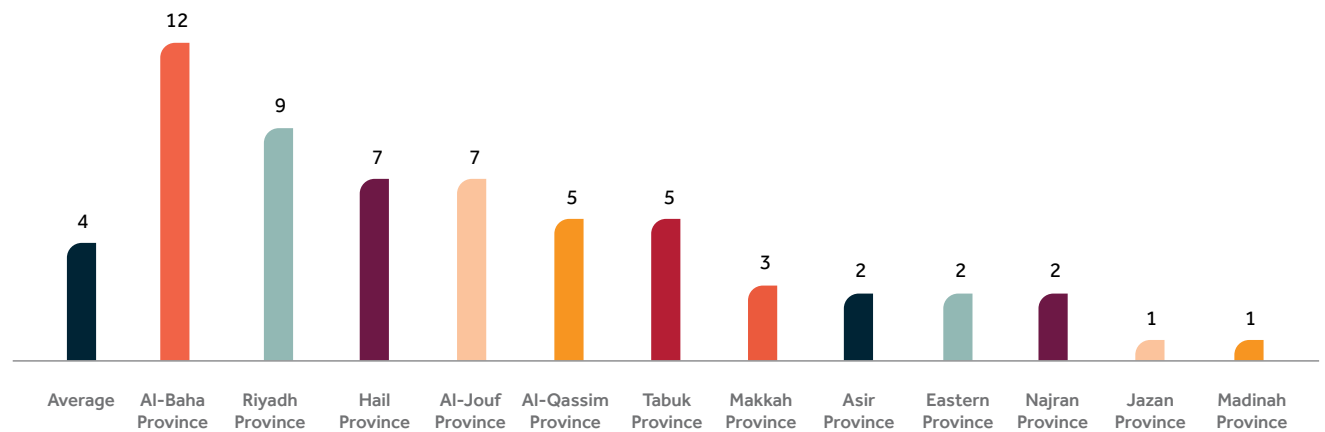


Figure 20: Number of active non-profit cultural organizations by the end of 2024 per million population, by Province. ⁴⁸

Activities of Non-Profit Cultural Organizations

Since the index is the most reliable indicator of the efficacy, cultural contribution, and capacity to engage with the social environment of non-profit cultural organizations, it offers a broad picture of their operations. According to the report, the number of cultural activities per non-profit cultural organization increased slightly from 1.8 in 2023 to 3 in 2024. Considering the prior version of the report, which showed relative stability in the rate of activities per organization between 2021 and 2023, this represents promising growth.⁴⁹ It should be noted that this information only pertains to event permissions and excludes other activities provided by non-profit organizations.

Generally speaking, the trend toward events offered by non-profit cultural organizations with cognitive or educational content remains prevalent; dialogue sessions, seminars, lectures, and training programs are more common than public events such as festivals and heritage exhibitions. There is a discernible difference in their data regarding the events and activities associated with creative production (as illustrated in Figure 21). For instance, compared to literary and poetry evenings, which accounted for 11% of all events, and art exhibitions, which accounted for 10%, fashion exhibitions and theatrical performances were among the least.

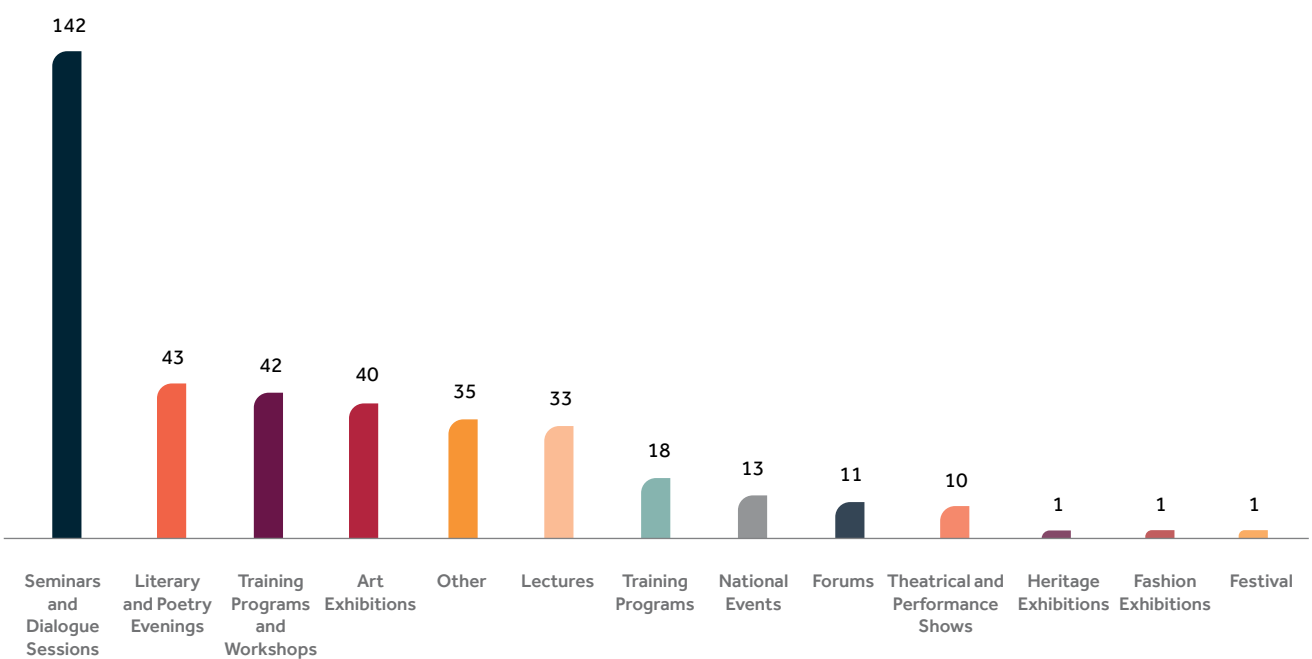


Figure 21: Number of events and activities offered by non-profit cultural organizations in 2024, by type of activity.⁵⁰

The most significant issue, given the geographic dispersion of non-profit cultural organizations' operations, is whether the cultural offerings are appropriate for the local populace. The rates of 11 and 10 activities per million inhabitants, respectively, are lower than the average in densely populated provinces, such as Makkah and Riyadh. In contrast, the Al-Baha Province has the highest number of non-profit organizations (see Figure 20) and stands out with 74 activities per million residents (as shown in Figure 22). Unlike Hail Province, which has activity levels comparable to Madinah despite having more organizations than average, provinces like Madinah, Jazan, and Najran—with fewer organizations relative to their populations—also show lower-than-average activity rates (see Figure 20).





Cultural Participation

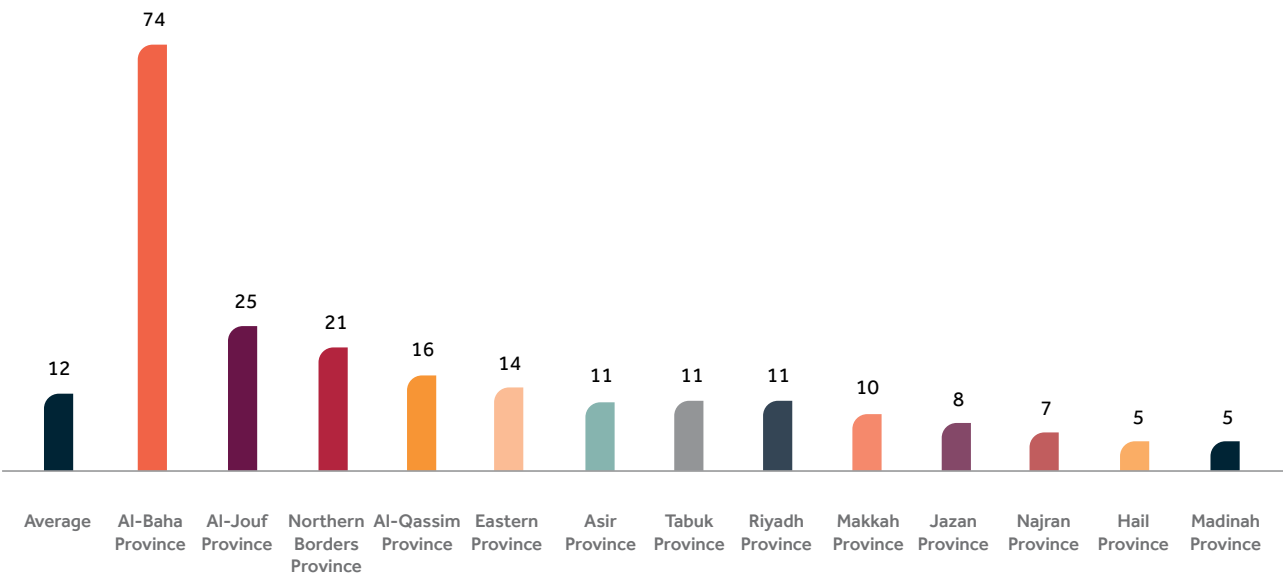


Figure 22: Geographical distribution of events and activities offered by non-profit cultural organizations per million population. ⁵¹

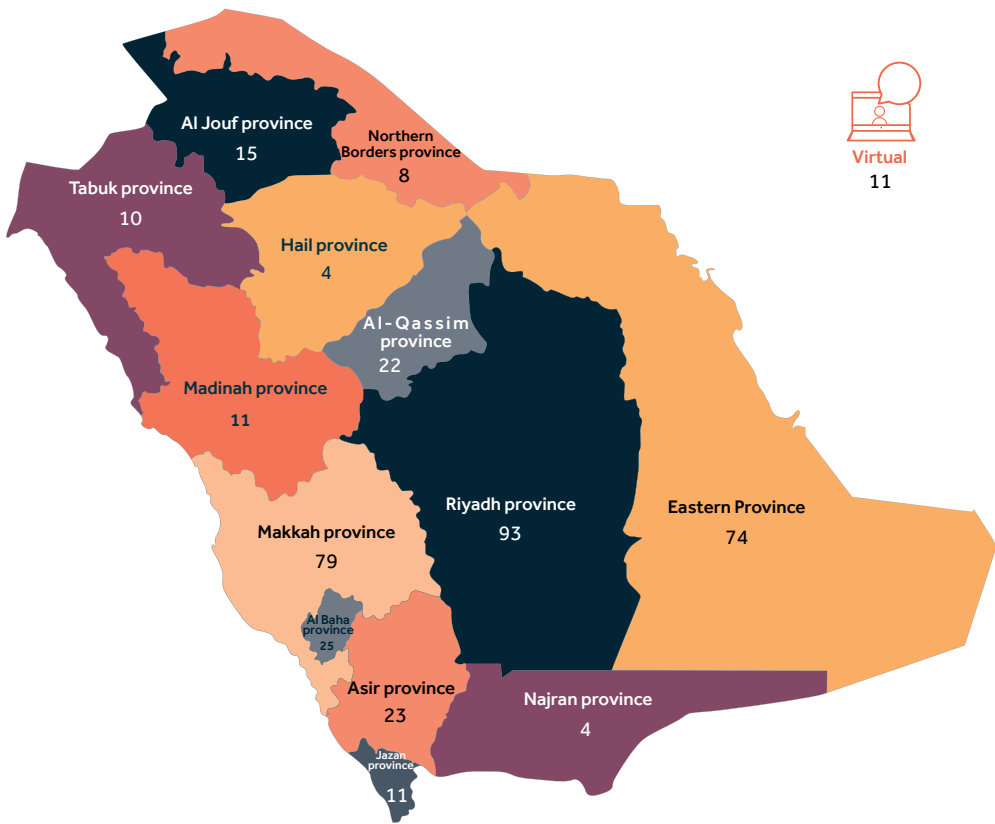


Figure 23: Geographical distribution of events and activities offered by non-profit cultural organizations.

Amateur Clubs

The most notable trend noted in the 2024 report is the ongoing and quickening expansion of new cultural amateur clubs. The scope of these clubs has significantly expanded in tandem with this growth. The year also saw the release of the electronic application for the Hawi platform.⁵² In addition to the ongoing encouragement and empowerment of amateur activities in the Kingdom, such as the Libraries Commission's introduction of the Library Ambassadors Initiative to promote reading as a hobby, the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission's extension of the Literary Partner Initiative to include amateur clubs in addition to cafes, and the creation of the Amateur Clubs Theatre Festival by the Theater and Performing Arts Commission, which makes the amateur experience easier, this growth was facilitated.

Figure 24 illustrates that 381 amateur clubs were established in 2024, nearly doubling the total number of amateur cultural clubs formed between 2021 and 2023 since the launch of the Hawi platform. According to Figure 25, the number of active amateur cultural clubs increased by more than 257% between 2023 and 2024, with an annual growth rate of 179%. Given that amateur clubs were once considered among the least represented groups in the institutional cultural scene, the rapid growth in amateur club establishment is indicative of the health of the cultural sector and its capacity to offer opportunities for broader segments to engage in cultural activities.

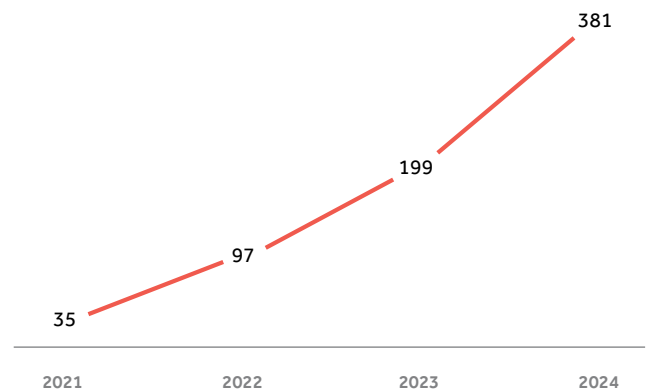


Figure 24: Number of active cultural amateur clubs established during the period 2021-2024, by the year of establishment. ⁵³



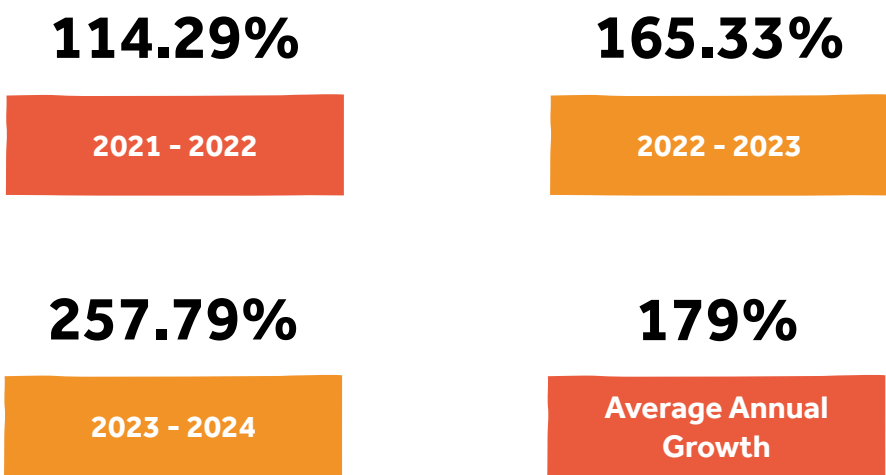


Figure 25: Growth rate of active cultural amateur clubs during the period 2021-2024, and the average annual growth during the same period . ⁵⁴



All cultural sectors experienced an increase in club numbers (see Figure 26), with the majority of these sectors showing growth rates of over 200%, indicating a promising future for the clubs. Following a lull in recent years, the second museum club was formed, along with the first amateur translation club. The share of other sectors, which had been among the lowest in recent years, also increased. For example, the share of libraries rose from 6% to roughly 13%, surpassing the literature sector, and the share of heritage in all active cultural amateur clubs rose from 5.4% to approximately 10%. The performing arts, visual arts, and theater sectors all continued to grow, accounting for the largest share of all amateur cultural clubs.

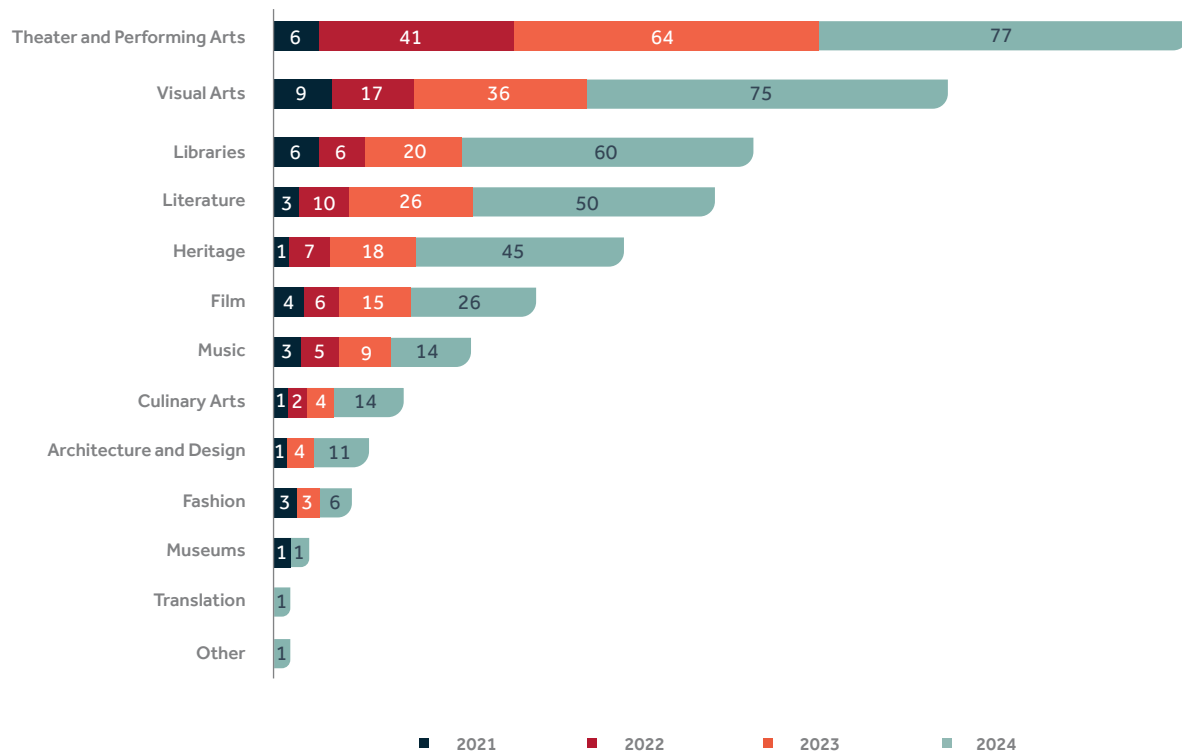


Figure 26: Total number of active amateur clubs until the end of 2024, and their distribution by sector and year of establishment.⁵⁵

The report's previous edition highlighted the significance of establishing comprehensive and geographically expansive cultural clubs to keep up with the steady increase in population. However, this encouraging growth in amateur cultural clubs is constrained by the geographical spread that keeps pace with population growth, as some densely populated areas, such as Makkah, Madinah, and Asir, remain below average (as shown in Figure 27). Al Baha and Tabuk, on the other hand, have lower population densities and are exhibiting a higher-than-

average rate (Figure 27). After being below average in 2023, the number of clubs in Riyadh Province showed a promising increase compared to the population.⁵⁶ In contrast to the central pattern typically observed in the infrastructure of cultural facilities, the organization of events, exhibitions, and festivals, or in the activities of public institutions, this data reveals a more comprehensive distribution. This suggests that institutional work does not always keep pace with the civil efforts and flexible cultural ties reflected in amateur clubs.

Cultural Participation

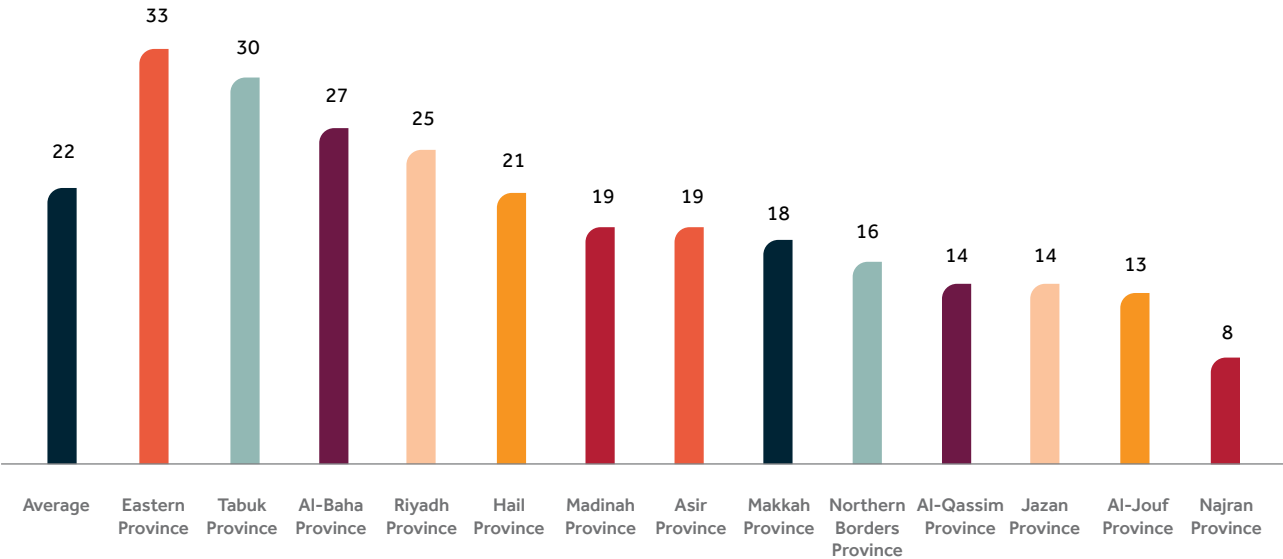


Figure 27: Number of active cultural amateur clubs until the end of 2024 per million people, by province. ⁵⁷

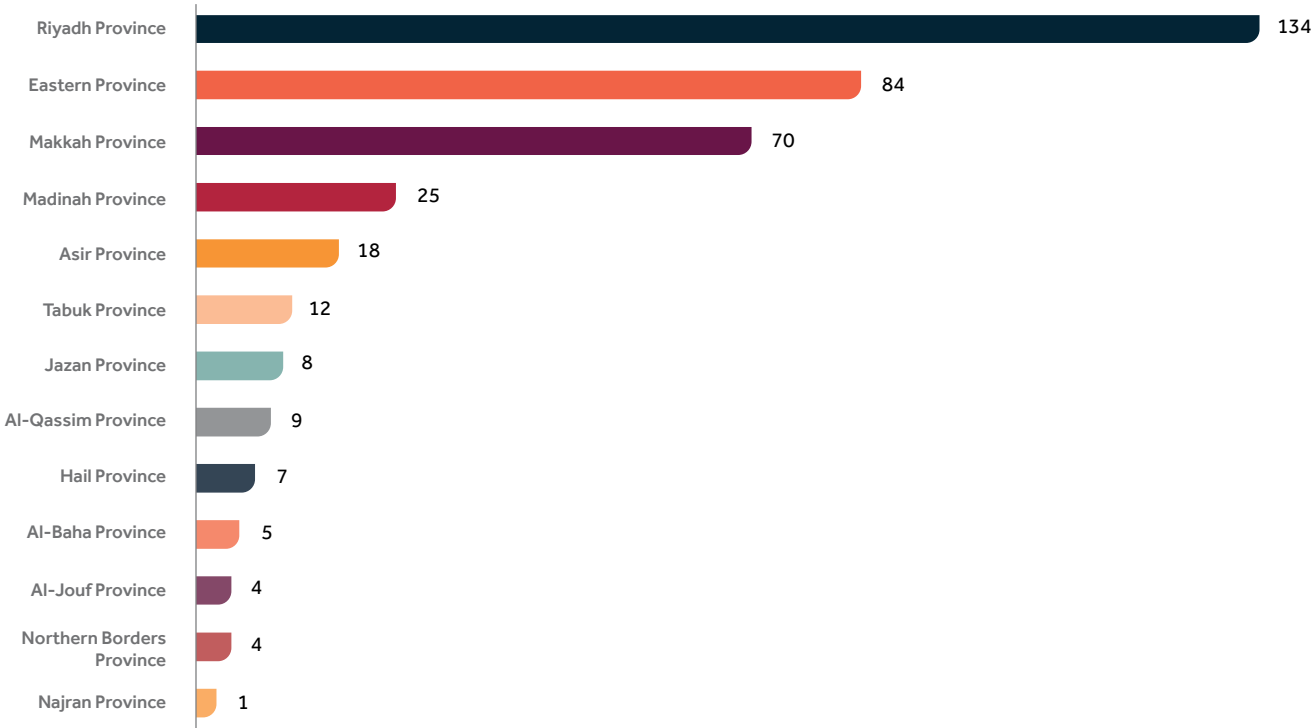


Figure 28: Geographical distribution of amateur cultural clubs established in 2024. ⁵⁸



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- 2 Cultural Participation Survey in its sixth session, 2024. For details, see: Methodology Appendix.
- 3 Cultural Participation Survey in its sixth session, 2024. For details, see: Methodology Appendix.
- 4 Cultural Participation Survey, cycles 2020-2024, for details see: Methodology Appendix.
- 5 Cultural Participation Survey in its sixth session, 2024. For details, see: Methodology Appendix.
- 6 Cultural Participation Survey in its sixth session, 2024. For details, see: Methodology Appendix.
- 7 Cultural Participation Survey in its sixth session, 2024. For details, see: Methodology Appendix.
- 8 For more details on the subject of the report: See the Impact Measurement chapter.
- 9 See, for example: EMA, "The European Museum Academy Reports on The Museum Temperature by the end of 2024".
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- 40 For more, see the Administration and Maintenance chapter.
- 41 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (April 13, 2025).
- 42 A civil institution is defined as any entity that continues for a specific or indefinite period, established by one or more persons of natural or legal character, or both, that is not primarily for profit, in order to achieve one or more public or private benefit purposes, and that relies on the funds allocated to it by the founder or founders. For details, see Appendix Glossary of terms included in the Report.
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- 46 Data from the Ministry of Culture, (April 13, 2025).

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Chapter Five

5

Creative Economy

- Contribution of the cultural sector to the GDP
- Working in the Cultural Sector
- Cultural Exports and Imports





As cultural activity has started to take shape as an economic sector with a comparatively independent contribution from other sectors, it has experienced significant changes in management strategies and public policies intended to support it over a quarter century of change. The cultural sector strategy within the framework of Saudi Vision 2030 adopted the new development policies that were required by this transformation, which increased the value of financial support and regulatory incentives as facilitators for generating economic value and job opportunities. One of the objectives of the National Strategy for Culture is economic growth. The cultural sector has the potential to be economically valuable because it is linked to creative minds and skills, which are theoretically inexhaustible resources. Two pieces of cloth with equal natural resources and manufacturing materials serve as the most basic illustration of this. However, if one piece is made by expert hands, using a traditional style or a creative design based on an original concept and unique skill, its value may be many times higher than that of the other. In addition to the economic advantages, cultural activities also serve different purposes, such as enhancing social networks, fostering community cohesion, and enhancing people's everyday lives and well-being.

The unique nature of the cultural sector, whether it be the difficulty of defining and categorizing cultural activity or its connection to a wide range of social life aspects and activities, makes it difficult to measure this value in detail with the level of precision required by public policymakers, investors, or entrepreneurs, despite the general awareness of the economic dimension of culture and the opportunities it provides. In contrast to earlier reports, this edition's Creative Economy chapter, which discusses assessing cultural impact, is devoted to improving transparency while also reviewing the difficulties in determining the economic value of culture. This is done by discussing methodological issues worldwide and the lack of data locally for three critical economic indicators (contribution to GDP, statistics on cultural work, and the export and import index of cultural services and products) that still lack data or disciplined technical frameworks. The chapter reviews significant factors that influence any attempt to assess the impact of culture by pointing out the flaws in data from the cultural sector; this will be covered in greater detail in the chapter devoted to it.



Measures of the economics of culture: Theoretical limitations and practical insufficiency

For several interconnected, complex reasons, assessing the economic impact of culture is a complex undertaking that transcends the bounds of conventional statistical models. Since the value of a cultural act is shaped by its social and historical context, the first of these challenges is the reliance of cultural activity on context and content. This makes the process of quantifying something in isolation from meaning and context susceptible to reductionism. There are gaps in official data, making it challenging to determine the precise economic contribution, as well as the size of the informal economy in the cultural sector, where many artists and creators operate independently outside of institutional frameworks.¹

By its very nature, culture also interacts with a variety of sectors, including education, media, tourism, and creative technologies, making it challenging to separate its purely

economic effects without affecting these industries. The complexity rises when we take into account that culture is evaluated not only by its economic output but also by the social value it generates, which serves as the foundation for the development of other economic endeavors. Culture enhances identity, fosters trust, and generates social capital, which is in itself a prerequisite for the attractiveness of cities and the essence of innovation and investment environments. Because it is related to the enabling structures that initially enable economic activity in other areas, the indirect economic impact of culture may therefore outweigh its direct impact. However, it is still the most challenging to track and quantify.

Economic indicators of culture

The Report on the State of Culture bases its approach to tracking and assessing the cultural economy on the six primary indicators listed in the UNESCO framework for Culture Indicators 2030:

1. Culture's contribution to GDP.
2. Workers in the cultural sector
3. Commercial cultural Institutions
4. Households' spending on cultural goods and services
5. Public spending on culture
6. Exports and imports of culture

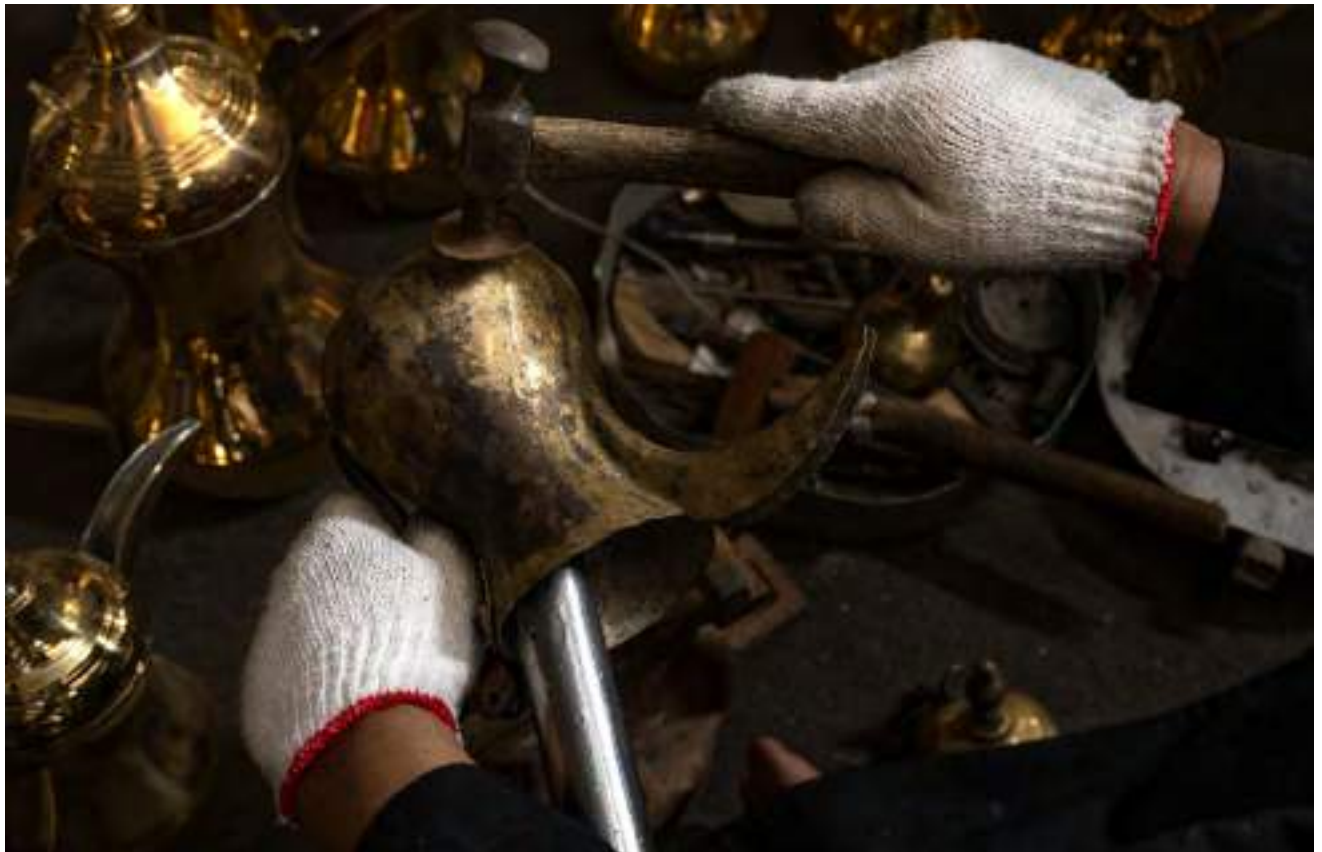
For the first time since the report's initial release, data on each of these six indicators is absent. In light of this, it is crucial to examine the data and developments presented therein, as well

as the associated methodological and organizational issues. The chapter focuses on three of these issues: the cultural sector's GDP contribution, employment in the cultural sector, and cultural exports and imports.

Contribution of the cultural sector to the GDP

The ability of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to condense an economy's performance into a single number that can be monitored quarterly or annually makes it one of the most significant global economic indicators and a vital instrument for evaluating the state of a nation's economy. The standard indicator for figuring out the economic value produced by each sector and its share of the total economy makes measuring the contribution of economic activities crucial. Because of this, this indicator ranks highest among the standards that UNESCO has adopted for its cultural statistics.

Even though the Gross Domestic Product is a straightforward number, its calculation necessitates a complex set of interrelated statistical procedures, such as data collection, analysis, classification, and periodic updating, in compliance with the globally recognized National Accounts Framework (SNA 2008). The General Authority for Statistics in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia carries out this duty in collaboration with several government departments and data suppliers,



utilizing global approaches while customizing them for the local environment. Since it calculates the net added value of each economic activity independently, the production method is the most popular of the internationally recognized techniques for determining GDP when examining the contributions of various economic activities,² which makes it the standard tool for calculating the contribution of the cultural sector to GDP.

General Challenges

The biggest obstacle to assessing the economic impact of culture is defining what constitutes a cultural activity. Can the creative aesthetics of car design be considered a cultural activity? Even if traditional pottery production uses industrial production lines, is it still considered a cultural activity? Since culture—including perceptions, modes of expression, and creative abilities—is intricately woven into social life and economic activity, its isolation and statistical classification are fundamentally contextual and subjective, illuminating the complex nature of the cultural sector.

This presents two difficulties: To avoid leaving out the

cultural dimension, some classifications may overestimate the non-cultural aspects of a group of activities. On the other hand, because the boundaries of the classification are unclear, activities that have a partial cultural component may be excluded. In 2009, UNESCO established guidelines for classifying cultural activities and products to address these issues,³ based on global standards like the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) and the Central Product Classification (CPC). The UNESCO Statistical Institute acknowledges, however, that this classification is always speculative and contingent upon the particulars of the national context due to the interwoven nature of culture with other activities.

Practical examples of this complexity are:

- Cultural domains overlap with other productive sectors: For instance, publishing activities are spread across the manufacturing, information, and education sectors, making it challenging to separate them as separate sectors when determining GDP.
- Culture depends on context and content: Since software



is essentially a technical activity, some software development may involve cultural content that calls for creative input, but this is typically excluded from cultural classifications.

- Culture as a part of larger economic endeavors: It is typically categorized as a separate economic sector that is not wholly cultural, much like the advertising industry, which is highly dependent on cultural production.

While acknowledging that the economic contribution of culture will always be a relative and assumption-based calculation and that there are aspects of cultural impact that cannot be captured by statistical tools alone, FCS allows for considerable national discretion in defining cultural activities. Nonetheless, creating a sub-account of culture is an essential part of any statistical system and a key component of developing data-driven cultural policies.

Sub-account for Culture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Because the GDP sub-sectors use classifications like ISIC, which split the economy into major sectors like agriculture and livestock, mining, manufacturing, construction, communications and information, financial activities, and others, there are several service sectors whose operations are shown separately in the national accounts. To demonstrate the contribution of these sectors—of which the cultural sector is one—as well as other sub-accounts like tourism, the

environment, and health, the global trend since the year 2000 has been to create non-core national accounts, or those that do not add up to GDP. This is done by identifying the components of these sub-accounts and distributing them among the different activities that make up the cultural sector (see Figure 1 as an example). A fundamental component of statistics and metrics about the economic influence of culture is the existence of a uniform classification of the culture sub-account.

Based on the AIESEC National Classification of Economic Activities, which is in line with the international AIESEC and takes into consideration modifications that address the local context,⁴ the General Authority for Statistics collaborated with the Ministry of Culture to create this sub-account, which is informed by international frameworks like the UNESCO framework.⁵ The same thing was done, but with more discretion and consistency, when creating the sub-account for culture (Figure 1), which reflected the consistent way in which the classification of cultural activities reflects the regulatory framework for managing culture locally. This was done by taking into account the National Strategy for Culture's comprehensive definition of culture, which includes the culinary arts and various forms of design, including some fashion design-related activities, as well as others that are not considered cultural in the classifications developed by other countries. One of the most significant economic indicators of the cultural sector, the percentage contribution of cultural activities to GDP, can be calculated thanks to the existence of a consistent classification and sub-account for culture.

Sector Name According to ISIC	Examples of Cultural Activities Included
Manufacturing Industries	Printing Of Books and Newspapers, Recorded Media, and Manufacturing of Musical Instruments
Wholesale and Retail Trade	Selling Books, Artwork, Crafts, and Musical Instruments
Information and Communications	Publishing, Cinema, Radio, Television and Music
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	Architecture, Design, Advertising and Research & Development in Cultural Fields
Education	Artistic and Cultural Education
Arts, Entertainment and Leisure Activities	Performing Arts, Museums, Libraries, Cultural Heritage and Festivals

Figure 1: Examples of the Distribution of Cultural Activities in the Main Classification Sectors.



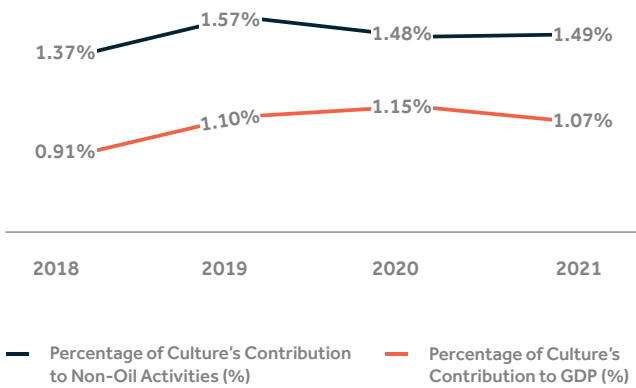


Figure 2: Percentage of culture's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product and non-oil activities during the period 2018-2021

Data Status

There is currently a dearth of recent data regarding the contribution of culture to the GDP indicator. However, the stability of the classifications for the Culture Sub-Account is a significant accomplishment in developing economic indicators for the cultural sector. According to the most recent

data available, which goes back to 2021, the cultural sector's operations accounted for 1.49 percent of the non-oil GDP, which was less than its 2019 peak. The State of Culture Report in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2023 provides a thorough examination of data from 2018 to 2021.

The General Authority for Statistics was working on a thorough review of the gross domestic product calculation methodology from 2022 to 2024, which resulted in a complete update project that expanded the classifications of economic activities from 85 to 134 and changed the base year to 2023. More than 60 administrative sources, including those from ministries and government agencies, were integrated into the update, along with expanded data from field surveys that covered over 2.4 million establishments and 122,000 households. Real growth was also calculated using the moving series methodology, which enhances data consistency⁶. These changes are seen as a step that calls for optimism in the short term, regarding the possibility of providing more accurate and consistent data on economic indicators of culture in the upcoming years, even though they have affected the gap in calculating detailed data on the contribution of some sub-sectors, such as the cultural sector.





Working in the Cultural Sector

Global estimates indicate that the cultural sector employs a large number of people and makes a significant economic contribution. To put it another way, cultural workers make up 6% of the workforce overall, but they only contribute 3% of the global Gross Domestic Product.⁷ Because of this characteristic, the cultural industry is a desirable place to work, and the concerns of its employees—including designers, artists, and creators—become the top priority for cultural policymakers. Notwithstanding this significance, there are still significant obstacles to labor statistics in the cultural sector, which means that the currently available data is incomplete and insufficient to account for all worker categories in the industry or comprehend the dynamics of its labor market. These difficulties arise not only from the nature of the sector and the size of its informal sector, but also from definitional problems, particularly when determining the sector's GDP contribution.

General Challenges

Determining who qualifies as a cultural worker is the first step in any attempt to quantify the scope of work in the cultural sector. This problem presents complex methodological issues. Incorporating a director from a theater production company into the cultural workforce is simple, but what about a graphic designer employed by an advertising agency? Or a movie theater receptionist?

There are three primary categories in this context, according to international experiences:⁸

- Employees in cultural occupations in cultural establishments (Category A), such as a museum curator.
- Employees in cultural occupations in non-cultural organizations (Category B), like architects employed by construction firms.
- Employees in cultural institutions who work in non-cultural occupations (Category C), such as a public library maintenance technician.

First, we have a methodological question: Are all three categories included in cultural labor force statistics? Although UNESCO advises that all three categories be included in cultural accounts, some national statistics do not include category C, claiming that non-cultural jobs—even those that are located within cultural institutions—should not be included in the sector's size.

The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), which defines cultural occupations, and the International Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities (ISIC), which is used to classify establishments, must be linked to address this challenge. Even though it makes cross-border comparisons challenging, the three-category division complicates data collection and control, necessitating a uniform national classification system.

The biggest obstacle at the global structural level is still the cultural sector's significant reliance on independent and informal work, even though classification issues can be resolved through national frameworks. Since many independent artists and creators are not included in national economic statistics, estimates of the cultural sector's actual economic and social impact are insufficient because data on employment opportunities and workforce size are below reality.

Cultural Jobs Statistics in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

According to earlier iterations of the report, the Ministry of Culture spearheaded an endeavor to expand the classification of cultural professions by incorporating new occupations not covered by the National Unified Occupational Classification and defining cultural professions within this framework. This effort was carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. As a result,

national statistics were able to release information on the number of employees in the cultural sector in prior years.⁹ Although Category C, or non-cultural occupations within cultural institutions, was excluded from these recent classification efforts, they did make a significant distinction between the two job types:

- **Direct Cultural Professions:** These include librarians and fashion designers, and all employees in these fields are counted equally, regardless of the organization they work for.
- **Indirect Cultural Professions:** These are typically categorized as non-cultural, but they are deemed cultural if they are practiced within the context of a particular cultural activity. For example, a carpenter or a blacksmith is only included if they work for an organization that promotes traditional handicrafts.

A significant portion of cultural practitioners, particularly independent artists and craftsmen, were left out of these statistics since the methodology, of course, lacked any means of tracking independent work in the field. This makes it difficult to determine the actual size of the cultural workforce.¹⁰

Data Status

The methodology used to construct the labor data framework for the Kingdom's cultural sector stood out for being sensitive to the local needs of the sector and the supporting regulatory frameworks. For instance, by the National Culture Strategy's comprehensive definition of culture, the profession of "chef," which is hardly regarded as a cultural profession in other national contexts, was added to the classification. But more work needs to be done to ensure the framework aligns with sector stakeholders. This includes considering whether adding Category C cultural workers—as suggested by international standards—is appropriate and creating a novel way to include self-employment in statistics. Given the high share of culture



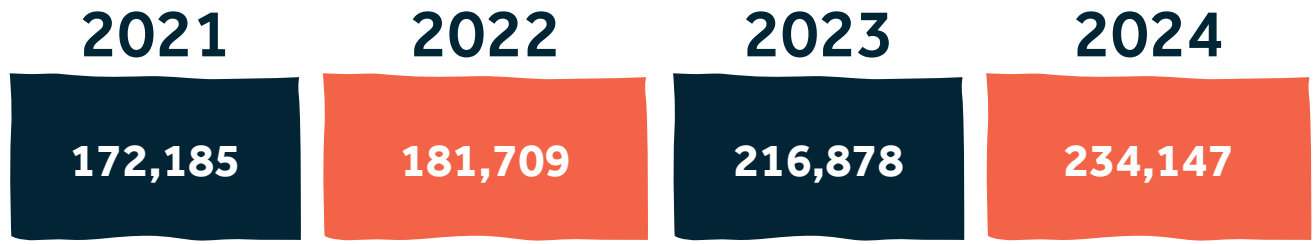


Figure 3: Number of Workers in Direct and Indirect Cultural Professions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.¹²

in the labor market relative to its GDP contribution, this may help to explain why the percentage of workers in the cultural sector is so low, at just 1.75 percent, which is lower than the global trend.¹¹

For all these reasons, the State of culture reports for the last two years have not included a thorough analysis of the condition of the Kingdom's cultural labor market. It is hoped that future efforts to develop the methodology will result in more accurate and detailed data, even though aggregate figures for the size of the labor market are available (see Figure 3). This is especially important to ensure that the data includes a broad segment of workers whose productive activities are linked to seasonal cycles and independent work, as in sectors like film and theater, as well as taking into consideration jobs that are involved in the operation of cultural commercial institutions, even if they are not cultural in and of themselves.

Cultural Exports and Imports: Between Conceptual Complexity and Statistical Challenges

Despite its significance in gauging the competitiveness and integration of the cultural sector into the global economy, tracking international trade in cultural goods and services is one of the most complicated economic indicators in the field of culture. Established international trade classifications, like the Harmonized System (HS) or the Extended Balance of Payments Services Classification (EBOPS), lack the flexibility and accuracy to separate the economic value of culture from other sectors, unlike production or employment indicators based on national accounts frameworks. This complexity explains the disparity between the wealth of international reports that have addressed the topic since the mid-



2000s and the scarcity of standard data on cultural trade. Of particular note are the reports published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which has been keeping track of international trade in creative goods and services since 2008.

This disparity highlights a more serious issue with the absence of a consensus definition of what “cultural trade” is. While UNCTAD and others embrace a broader concept of the “creative economy” that includes sectors like software, research and development, and information services—areas that produce creative value but are not necessarily contained within cultural activities according to narrow classifications—cultural frameworks like UNESCO’s Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCS) and sub-national accounts aim to capture goods and services generated by purely cultural activities (such as arts, heritage, and publishing).

Technical Difficulties in Assessment

One significant barrier is that, regardless of the cultural context to which they belong, the majority of international trade classifications focus on the goods and services exchanged as units of trade rather than the nature of the productive activity. Projectors and screens, for instance, are utilized in education and business in addition to the film industry and art galleries. Although they fall under the category of general office consumption, paper and printers are also crucial components of cultural publishing. This overlap results in gaps in the ability to track cultural trade accurately, weakens comparability between countries, and renders the inclusion of these goods in international trade data insufficient to indicate cultural activity in and of itself.

Due to these challenges, some nations and international organizations have experimented with hybrid classification systems that combine lists of goods and services with indicators of the production context. For example, the Canada Experience that tried to match Harmonized System codes with the activities of the Culture Sub-Account, or the European Union Experience in preparing “Cultural Satellite Accounts,” which reflects the cultural component of trade by combining data on production and consumption with data on trade flows.

Conceptual Confusion Between the Cultural and Creative Economy

A more general conceptual issue about the differentiation between the cultural economy and the creative economy is added to the technical difficulties. According to UNCTAD’s periodic reports, such as the 2024 report, creative services exports worldwide totaled about US\$1.4 trillion. However, according to UNESCO classifications and national satellite accounts (sub-accounts), software, research and development, and information services account for almost US\$1 trillion of this total, industries that frequently fall outside the purview of cultural activities.¹³ The media, entertainment, advertising, and specific creative industries are the sectors that most closely fit the cultural definition. The lack of reliable alternative statistics that are consistent with cultural sub-accounts, despite the fact that these reports clearly highlight the differences between the two concepts, confuses research and policy, and makes it challenging to determine the actual size of cultural trade as a separate economic sector.

Towards a More Accurate Approach

The urgent need to create a uniform framework for trade in cultural goods and services that combines the specificity of the cultural sector with the accuracy of international trade classifications is reflected in these discussions. This necessitates:

- Matching the cultural classifications used in the sub-accounts with those used in global trade.
- Develop tools to identify the cultural context of products and services, not just their physical nature.
- Creating national and international time series that enable comparison and precise trend monitoring.

This intricacy explains why, since the State of Culture reports’ inception in 2019, information on cultural imports and exports has been missing from the Kingdom. Drawing on global conversations on creating evaluation tools and eliminating the conceptual ambiguity between the cultural and creative economies, this necessitates institutional efforts to develop this indicator locally through collaborations between the Ministry of Culture, the General Authority for Statistics, and the Zakat, Tax, and Customs Authority.

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Chapter Six

6



Cultural Impact



Why Assessing Cultural Impact

A growing understanding of the value of culture as a productive sector that can support social and economic development plans, as well as a vital part of national identity and a storehouse of heritage, has resulted in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's cultural sector receiving unprecedented institutional support over the past five years. The National Strategy for Culture, which the Ministry of Culture introduced over the past few years, acted as the North Star and the connection between the cultural sector and Saudi Vision 2030. Up until the end of 2024, it converted the vision's pillars into strategic goals. It sought to accomplish them through several national programs and initiatives, 35 of which had a direct connection to the vision programs. Their goals included promoting and conserving the Kingdom's cultural heritage, expanding Saudi Arabia's contribution to the arts, and other goals that support the performance metrics for the Saudi Vision 2030 initiatives.¹ After five years, the cultural sector should closely examine the accomplishments of the previous years by analyzing the impact of the efforts of cultural sector actors and workers, building on the momentum that the sector has seen and that has been documented in previous editions of The Report on the State of Culture. This acknowledges the critical role impact assessment plays in enhancing the caliber of cultural policies and interventions, as well as in guiding public and private cultural investments toward the advancement of sustainable development and the Saudi Vision.

Although some see culture as a supplementary field that is theoretically significant but frequently overlooked in practice, particularly when contrasted with fields that are thought to be more "economically viable," like health or infrastructure, this conventional view runs counter to the various ways that culture fosters social cohesion, builds communities, shapes identities, and fosters creativity and innovation in addition to its direct and indirect economic contributions. Therefore, assessing cultural impact becomes crucial as a methodological tool for proving the worth and utility of culture, turning it from

a "symbolic benefit" to a "public good" and a crucial part of equations for sustainable development. Impact assessment is more than just tracking accomplishments and performance. Instead, it makes it possible to draw attention to facets of impact and transformation that conventional performance metrics are unable to measure. This strengthens the culture's place among planning and spending priorities and solidifies its function as a powerful force behind development policies.

The Report on the State of Culture 2024 discusses cultural impact because it acknowledges its significance. Using reference materials and frameworks related to impact assessment, it examines the idea, its characteristics and dimensions, and the theoretical and practical difficulties in assessing impact in general and cultural impact in particular. The chapter also discusses how cultural impact is measured in the Kingdom, addresses the opportunities and challenges that those working in the cultural sector face, and offers a vision for the future that aims to create a methodical framework for assessing cultural impact within the broader framework of culture. As stated in Saudi Vision 2030 and reflected in the National Strategy for Culture through its numerous projects and activities, this will assist in achieving the intended impact of the culture sector.



What is Impact Assessment?

Impact describes the intended or unintended, direct or indirect changes that an intervention or policy causes in people, communities, or environments. Impact assessment is distinct from performance assessment, which tracks the effectiveness of activity implementation, the caliber of results, and their adherence to short-term objectives, even though their tools and approaches are similar. A longer time horizon and a cumulative approach that permits real behavior or condition change are frequently necessary for the emergence of impact. Impact assessment aims to provide an answer to the question, “What changed as a result of what was implemented?” Performance assessment focuses on what was put into practice. Evaluation, which comes after assessment to analyze the impact and assess the efficacy, viability, and suitability of the intervention that caused it, is also distinct from impact assessment. Therefore, one of the evaluation process’s steps is impact assessment, which depends on assessing results to produce analyses and conclusions that assist decision-makers in creating interventions that are more successful and likely to have the intended effect.

However, there are many theoretical and practical obstacles to impact assessment. The most noteworthy of these are probably the challenges of establishing a causal relationship between impact and outcome, the difficulty of separating the effect of unaccounted-for external factors, and the distinction between the change that follows an outcome used to evaluate performance and the achieved outcome used to assess impact. Programs for education and capacity building, for instance, are anticipated to boost national output in any field. It is not easy to establish a direct link between the outcomes of these programs and any favorable shift in the production market, though. The development of legislative capabilities, the provision of financial support, and other possible external influences must be isolated before attributing change to these programs. These difficulties are compounded by the fact that it frequently takes longer for an impact to materialize than it does to produce the desired outcomes. This makes it challenging to assess in the short or medium term, particularly if the effect is indirect and complex.

The Specificity of Cultural Impact and its Problems

Given the structural issues with the concept that pertain to the nature of culture as a measurable subject, the topic of assessing cultural impact becomes more complicated. Culture is not a tangible field with distinct borders or easily quantifiable outcomes. Instead, it is an overlapping field that is bound together by several dualities that make assessment challenging and necessitate more intricate and adaptable methods. This issue stems from the conceptual dispute over what constitutes culture, which some restrict to the so-called “fine arts,” typically promoted and controlled by governmental organizations, and includes classical music, theater, and literature. Others view it as “public culture,” which, according to the anthropological approach, is a way of

life that encompasses everyday routines, traditions, customs, and symbolic manifestations. Because it significantly alters the nature of the anticipated impact and the methods of monitoring it, this variation presents fundamental assessment challenges. It is simpler to track its correlations, like beneficiary satisfaction or participation, when culture is viewed from an organized sector-wide perspective. However, the cultural impact is often indirect and accumulative, making it difficult to measure with traditional quantitative methods. This is because culture is seen as a symbolic sphere that permeates everyday life and reshapes meanings identities. For example, while attendance at a performance is an important metric, a quantitative indicator such as the number of attendees cannot demonstrate the extent to which the theatrical experience has changed audience attitudes, strengthened sense of belonging, or altered collective awareness—dimensions that are essential to the concept of impact. The question of viability raised by the division between “culture for others” and “culture for itself” adds to this complexity. In the first scenario, culture is seen as a self-contained goal with inherent aesthetic and emotional worth, and its promotion is acceptable regardless of the costs. In the second instance, culture is portrayed as a means of achieving additional development objectives, such as fostering community cohesion, mental health, or tourism, whether they are social, educational, or economic. The policymaker is faced with tough decisions because of this duality: Does the impact of culture get assessed by the tangible benefits it creates in other areas or by how it fosters creativity, identity, and a sense of belonging?

In addition, determining which aspects of cultural impact are most important to measure is a methodological challenge that necessitates making well-informed choices about what to monitor and quantify. Should we concentrate on the immediate effects on the economy? The wider social effect? Or the long-term symbolic changes? Based on interpretation and context, which of these dimensions can be tracked using quantitative tools and which ones call for qualitative tools?



Deconstructing the dualities surrounding culture as a concept is the first step towards assessing cultural impact, which goes beyond simply creating indicators. To ensure a more thorough reading of the effects of cultural action, this calls for a complex and adaptable framework that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative tools and accounts for the symbolic specificity of culture.

Assessing Cultural Impact and its Dimensions

Assessing Cultural Impact and its Emergence as a Practice

Compared to environmental and social impact assessment techniques, which became established in the 1960s as interest in how development plans affect the environment and society grew, cultural impact assessment is relatively new. Later, this interest grew to encompass the material and intangible cultural effects of development plans on local communities as well as the cultural impacts of development initiatives implemented by national and local governments, particularly in urban areas.² The predictive component, or analyzing the

possible advantages and disadvantages of implementing an intervention or policy, is the primary focus of this impact assessment model. As culture gained prominence as a sector supported by government public policy agendas, the 1980s saw the a practice of assessing its impact to defend cultural spending by proving its economic and social viability and its capacity to support national development plans.³ This arose from a larger discussion about the “value of culture,” focusing on the contrast between its intrinsic value as a benefit in itself and its instrumental value, which encompasses its cross-cutting benefits that can be quantified using data and numbers.⁴ The final declaration of the Mondiacult 2022 conference, which called for “establishing the status of culture as a global public good, and including a special, stand-alone goal related to culture in the post-2030 sustainable development plan,” may be the clearest example of the growing global awareness of the importance of culture in public policies. The conference is known as the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development, also referred to as “Mondiacult.”⁵

Culture in the Context of Impact Assessment

Since what cannot be defined cannot be measured, it is impossible to discuss assessing the influence of culture without first discussing its definition. However, considering the variety of its manifestations and the various viewpoints on it, it can be argued that the lack of a universally accepted definition of culture is precisely what sets it apart. A group or society’s way of life can be described as its culture, and it can also be seen as a description of artistic and creative forms of expression. While the other definition restricts culture to the results of artistic and creative action or activity, such as literature, theater, music, and painting, the anthropological view of culture places more emphasis on customs and spontaneous and collective expressions. This latter idea is typically where cultural policies begin, but when discussing cultural heritage—especially intangible heritage—they are always entwined with the anthropological perspective on culture. This distinction is accompanied by other



dichotomies that were previously discussed, such as elitism versus populism, whether culture and the arts should have a higher role and purpose beyond entertainment and pleasure, and whether culture is a tool available to policymakers to accomplish development goals in other sectors or an end in itself. It is crucial to remember that the answers to these questions serve as the benchmark for judging the worth of culture and, consequently, the way to gauge its influence. This is evident when one follows the controversy surrounding the “value of culture” since the middle of the 20th century. After World War II, for instance, a discourse centered on national pride and the cultural impact of the arts emerged in the United Kingdom. A change followed this in the way that support for the arts and culture was justified in the context of the larger transformation of public administration with the emergence of what is known as “New Public Management,” which took its tools from the private sector and adopted output assessment, data management, and performance indicators as standard practices. Following this change, there was a decrease in interest in the emotional objectives that have long been linked to culture and the arts, such as improving people’s and society’s cultural tastes, fostering the human spirit, and bolstering moral sensibility, in favor of instrumental objectives that can be quantified as immediate social and

economic results. The cultural sector’s core goals have been marginalized due to the prevalence of this instrumental approach. To further economic and social objectives, culture has been repositioned as a public policy priority. As a result, funding for culture is now contingent on proving its influence in fields beyond its purview, such as fostering the travel and tourism industry, creating jobs, encouraging the creative industries, and assisting with social integration initiatives. This strategy was an attempt to explain the “usefulness of culture” in a way that decision-makers could understand. Still, it also puts culture at risk of being reduced and simplified by depriving it of its symbolic meaning and undermining its capacity to carry out its intricate and intangible functions in shaping identities and collective awareness.

Trends calling for a more balanced approach—referred to in some literature as “defensive instrumentalism”—have emerged to counteract the growing criticism of this instrumental perspective, particularly about the commodification of culture or its belittling to a merely functional tool. To support the value of culture as a public good rather than simply as an economic resource or social tool, this strategy is founded on the same instruments and data that donors and decision-makers require.



This strategy has not been without its detractors, though, as voices from the cultural sector have cautioned that, even when done with the best of intentions, giving in to the pressure to prove impact could ultimately neutralize culture's unique status as an open field of meaning that cannot be entirely subjected to bureaucratic evaluation procedures or performance standards. Fundamental concerns have been raised regarding whether cultural policies have ultimately been so constrained by evaluation processes that they may deprive culture of its inherent value dimension and stifle creativity and freedom of expression in the name of practicality and outcomes. Some cultural organizations and legislators have created more thorough models for gauging the impact and value of culture in response to these difficulties. These models transcend the conventional dichotomy of "intrinsic value" and "instrumental value." Their goal has been to comprehend culture as a lively living experience that is influenced by the interactions between audiences and cultural actors in dynamic historical and social contexts. The "culture as experience" approach is one of the most well-known of these contemporary trends, which views cultural impact through the prism of the participatory experience that people have, whether they are the ones who create the cultural action or the ones who receive it.⁶

By analyzing the experiences of those working in the culture industry, the audiences who consume it, their interactions with it, and how this process impacts the cultural value chain, this approach advocates for letting go of conceptual dualities and attempting to investigate cultural impact. It also highlights the significance of overcoming the obsession with quantitative metrics and embracing qualitative instruments that can record the imperceptible changes in society and awareness brought about by culture. While evidence and

evaluation are still necessary, this calls for a redefining of "what counts as impact" and a broader range of factors to be taken into account, such as symbolic impact, subjective experience, and gradual cultural change—all of which are frequently left out of traditional assessment reports.

This all-encompassing view of culture is reflected in the new Framework for Cultural Statistics published by UNESCO as a consultation draft. It provides a fresh approach of assessing culture in the context of sustainable development, taking into account but not restricting its economic influence. To take into account the existence of artistic practices, living heritage, and cultural participation as crucial elements in creating value within the cultural and creative industries, it also revisits the cultural value chain model, which was developed by the UK Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS).

To gain a more thorough understanding of the interactions between cultural actors and communities, including non-market processes and intangible values, the new framework aims to broaden the scope of assessment from the conventional emphasis on purely productive activities. By capturing the fundamental differences between the value generated by organized artistic practices and that generated by broader societal processes involving cultural groups and local communities, the new framework aims to go beyond previous statistical efforts that attempted to estimate culture's contribution to GDP through sub-accounts. This will enable it to explain and calculate the value generated as a result of the interaction between artists, communities, and audiences within the cultural and creative industries.⁷

Levels and Dimensions of Assessing Cultural Impact

The aforementioned allows us to differentiate between three levels of impact, each of which differs in terms of its nature, the tools and levels of assessment it employs, and the degree to





which it can be processed quantitatively. These are depicted in Figure 1: direct and indirect economic effects, as well as the wider cultural influence that extends beyond financial gains.

I: Direct Economic Impact

The products and services generated by the cultural and creative industries, as well as the employment and business opportunities they offer, constitute the direct quantitative contribution of culture as a separate economic sector. Standard indicators used to measure this kind of impact include:

- The percentage of the GDP that comes from the cultural and creative sectors;
- The number of employees in the cultural sectors;
- The volume of exports of cultural goods and services;
- The number of registered cultural institutions and facilities.

The sub-accounts for culture are based on these indicators,⁸ which, according to the report from the previous year, the Kingdom recently finished classifying its operations, allowing the cultural sector's financial performance to be tracked and contrasted with that of other sectors. This kind of impact is the bare minimum needed to prove the value of making cultural investments, particularly in environments where resource allocation is based on rigid economic standards.

II: Indirect Economic Impact

Through sectoral interactions and the impact on the environment, culture also indirectly stimulates other economic activities. This effect includes:

- Promoting cultural tourism (by organizing festivals and exhibitions, for example).

- Increasing cities' appeal for housing and investment (as in the creative cities experiments).
- Using the arts to promote creativity and education.
- Using cultural events to enhance workplace well-being and productivity.
- Generating new economic opportunities in supply chains related to cultural sector (like transportation, hospitality, and digital technologies).

This kind of impact is quantified through economic estimation tools like input-output models, cumulative impact studies, and case studies that examine how cultural activities affect neighboring sectors. The findings of these studies indicate that the indirect economic return of culture is frequently higher than the direct financial return. As evidenced by the high proportion of visitor spending in the tourism and hospitality industries, impact studies, for instance, show that the economic benefits of Edinburgh's festivals go beyond their immediate effects. According to the findings of a 2023 study, 82% of spending is associated with the city's renowned yearly festivals, indicating that these festivals are a significant driver of the expenditure.⁹

III: The Broader Impact of Culture

This degree of influence transcends the language of statistics and economic metrics, touching on the moral and symbolic significance of culture in people's and societies' lives, as well as its social impacts and changes in identity, behavior, and cognition.

Cultural Impact

This impact is more complex to monitor and measure, but it is no less important than the previous levels, as it includes:

- Strengthening national identity and cultural belonging
- Developing social capital and community cohesion
- Consolidating human and aesthetic values.
- Enabling cultural participation and fostering creativity.

This type of impact is measured using qualitative and interpretive techniques like beneficiary experience analysis, specialized surveys, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic research. By understanding culture’s influence at all three levels, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of it as a symbolic and productive force. Culture contributes to the creation of meaning, a sense of community, creativity, and social cohesiveness, as well as increasing GDP. These factors cannot be ignored when formulating cultural policies or evaluating the long-term cultural Return on Investments (ROI).

International Frameworks for Assessing the Impact of Culture

As the critical role of culture in development has come to be recognized, there has been a growing awareness in recent years of the significance of quantifying the contribution of culture. Numerous international initiatives to create concepts and indicators to assess culture have demonstrated this interest. The Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCC), whose updated version is anticipated to be released in 2025, the Culture 2030 Indicators published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Culture Statistics 2019 published by the European Union are arguably the most significant examples. These initiatives provide a good picture of the dimensions or areas of potential cultural impact, which aids in the development of suitable indicators and tools for assessing it, even though they do not provide a thorough methodological framework for doing so.



Figure 1: Levels of Assessing Cultural Impact

The UNESCO-created Culture 2030 Indicators, for instance, offer a conceptual framework for the influence of culture by highlighting its role in sustainable development along four critical dimensions. In addition to being a source of entrepreneurship and job creation, culture is seen as a driver of resilience and adaptation to environmental and climate change. It also serves as a means of improving its many social benefits, including social cohesion and the fight against discrimination. As seen in Figure 2, the framework comprises several indicators within the four primary dimensions that will help gauge the extent to which culture contributes to sustainable development at the local or national level.¹⁰ As mentioned earlier, UNESCO’s new statistical framework identifies three critical aspects of cultural impact: environmental sustainability, social cohesion, and well-being. This goes beyond simply assessing economic impact.¹¹

Environment and Climate Change Resilience	Prosperity and Livelihoods	Knowledge and Skills	Integration and Participation
Expenditures on Heritage	Contribution of Culture to GDP	Education For Sustainable Development	Culture For Social Cohesion
Sustainable Heritage Management	Job Opportunities in the Culture Sector	Cultural Knowledge	Artistic Freedom
Adaptation to and Resilience to the Impacts of Climate Change	Cultural Commercial Institutions	Multilingual Education	Easy Access to Culture
	Trade In Cultural Goods and Services	Cultural and Artistic Education	Cultural Participation
Cultural Facilities	Public Funds Allocated to Culture	Training in Cultural Fields	Collaborative Processes
Open Spaces for Culture	Culture Management		

Figure 2: Thematic indicators for the role of culture in implementing the sustainable development plan

Some nations have created their national frameworks for assessing cultural impact that represent their objectives and priorities in the absence of a single, international framework. Australia's Culture Indicators, for instance, highlight the role of the arts and culture in three critical areas: social impact, cultural value, interaction, and economic development. The framework's dimensions, as shown in Figure 3, show a desire to emphasize not only the economic and social effects of culture but also its inherent worth as a goal unto itself through the dimension of "cultural value." Using metrics that track the quantity of international art tours, international artist residencies, and cultural exchange initiatives, this framework highlights the role that culture and the arts play in boosting Australia's visibility abroad.¹²

The impact dimensions in South Korea, which has set up legal requirements for proactive (predictive) impact assessment on culture, are in line with local policy priorities of protecting cultural identity, preserving cultural diversity, and increasing cultural expression and participation. Additionally, two levels of impact assessment are specified by impact assessment frameworks. One level measures the general dimensions of impact that were previously established at the national level.

In contrast, the other level measures the specific dimensions that are developed according to the project or initiative's nature (Table 1).

This succinct analysis of various frameworks for gauging the impact of culture shows that, although all frameworks concentrate on the economic effects of culture and the creation of assessment instruments, they also highlight the inherent worth of culture that goes beyond its financial advantages. This is accomplished by emphasizing how it shapes and expresses identity and by providing chances for self-expression as worthwhile ends in and of themselves. It is also observed that certain aspects of economic, social, and environmental impact overlap, with one impact falling under the social or cultural category while another framework places it under the economic category.

The national priorities and public policy goals of each nation influence the different frameworks for assessing cultural impact, even though they overlap considerably. This emphasizes the necessity of creating a framework for assessing national cultural impact that takes into account the reality and structure of the Saudi cultural sector while concentrating on areas of national priority.

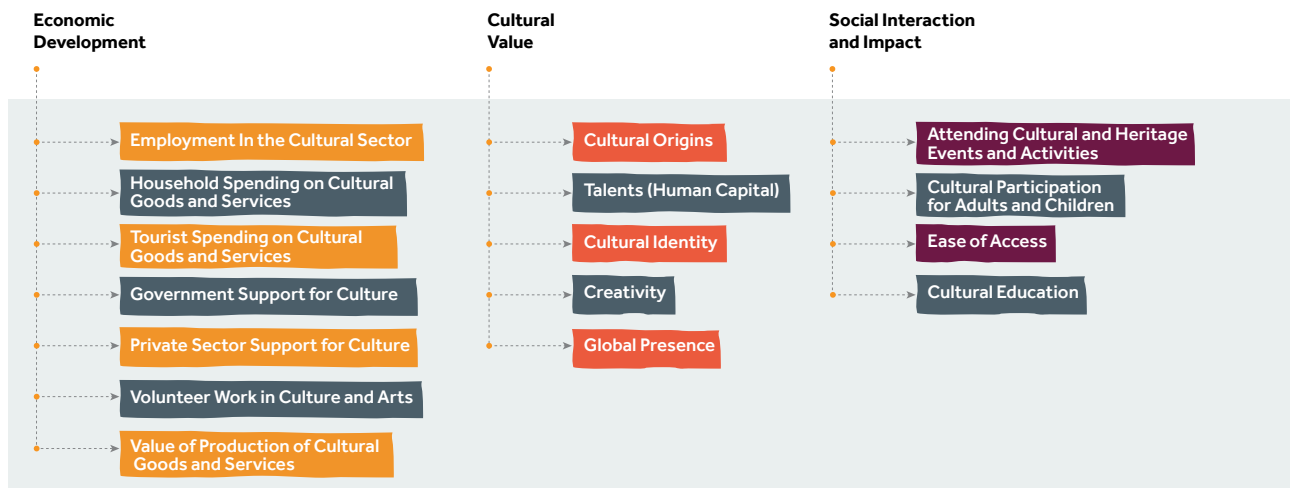


Figure 3: Main and sub-dimensions covered by the Culture Indicators Framework for Australia



Table 1: Levels and Dimensions of Impact Assessment on Culture in South Korea ¹³

Evaluation Levels	Main Dimensions	Field of Impact
At the National Level General Dimensions	Basic Cultural Rights	Impact on Cultural Enjoyment
		Impact on Cultural Expression and Participation
	Cultural Identity	Impact on Cultural Heritage
		Impact on Local Communities
	Cultural Development	Impact on Cultural Diversity
		Impact on Creativity
At the Level of Projects and Initiatives	Special Dimensions are Determined Independently by the Relevant Institutions Based on the Nature of the Project.	

Towards a Comprehensive Methodological Framework for Evaluating Cultural Impact in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Assessing the effects of cultural interventions and projects is becoming increasingly important as the Saudi cultural sector reaches a stage of organizational stability and many cultural initiatives and projects mature. This is to maximize the sector's impact and sustainability, as well as to comprehend what has been accomplished. As part of a comprehensive system that starts with planning and ends with evaluation for improvement, impact assessment, however, cannot truly benefit the cultural sector if it ignores the processes that precede and follow it.

From Impact Assessment to Impact Management

Impact management is a comprehensive strategy that helps prevent unforeseen adverse effects while achieving the intended impact. An essential prerequisite for successful subsequent evaluation is the incorporation of impact assessment techniques into cultural initiatives and projects at every stage of their lifecycle, from the planning stage of cultural interventions to their implementation. To build assessment indicators based on the strategic objectives of the Kingdom's cultural sector, it is necessary first to identify

the most significant impact dimensions. From national initiatives to medium-sized initiatives and small projects, these indicators will serve as a guide for efforts. The initiative or project will then have the desired impact after a theory of change or logical framework has been adopted to direct the identification of interim outcomes and their final results. Several impact assessment techniques that are suitable for the initiative's size and scope can be used to quantify this impact. Although it is an essential part of the impact management system, impact assessment is not a goal unto itself. The impact management system goes beyond simply quantifying the effect or the change brought about by an intervention; it also incorporates impact evaluation through a thorough assessment of its efficacy, applicability, and sustainability. In turn, this review informs the planning process, allowing sector workers to maximize and multiply the positive effects of an intervention or initiative while avoiding any unintended adverse effects.

Challenges of Assessing and evaluating impact in the Saudi cultural sector

Data is the foundation of any impact planning, assessment, or evaluation process and is mainly responsible for the success or failure of an impact management system. A vital place to start when predicting the possible effects of cultural initiatives is with baseline data. They offer an apparent reference for future comparisons and enable an understanding of the

pre-intervention initial reality to help guide results and achieve the desired impact.¹⁴ Since the impact of the intervention or initiative cannot be measured or assessed without tracking and analyzing the outcomes, data collection is necessary during the implementation phase. In addition to efforts led by non-profit organizations and the private sector, the State of Culture Report has tracked government-supported initiatives over the past five years to gather data and establish baselines, documenting and monitoring the reality of the cultural sector. Limited data availability continues to be a significant barrier to developing an effective impact management system, despite the efforts made. The lack of standardized classifications and metrics makes this problem worse by causing disparities in data collection techniques that hinder accumulation and restrict comparability between projects or over time.¹⁵ There are still data gaps, especially in the areas of self-employment, informal employment, and the digital cultural economy, despite the advancements in data collection efforts in prior years, as reported in the State of Culture reports. It is important to note that this issue is not specific to the Saudi cultural sector; rather, it is a worldwide issue associated with the nature of the sector. Additionally, there are no universal international standards or classifications that can be used for comparison, which reflects the marginalization of culture's role in other sectors at the level of public policy.¹⁶ The most significant causes of the present deficiencies, in addition to issues with data, are the absence of methodological frameworks and the deficiency of technical and human resources in the areas of assessment and evaluation. This weakness can be seen in the propensity to track easily quantifiable metrics, like visitor numbers or spending rates, or to measure the ultimate impact of cultural products without taking the complete cultural value chain into account. Due to this methodological flaw, outcomes and impact are conceptually confused, and quantitative economic indicators are prioritized over social and symbolic aspects that are challenging to quantify directly.¹⁷

In addition to the issues mentioned above, there is the problem of inadequate integration between cultural data and data from other sectors, given that the cultural sector intersects with different sectors like education, tourism, entertainment, and others. This is particularly problematic given the difficulty in reaching a consensus regarding what constitutes a "cultural activity," which could result in the undervaluation and neglect of many facets of culture's contribution.

The Future of Cultural Impact in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

It is essential to acknowledge the potential and opportunities that the Kingdom's cultural sector has despite these obstacles. The National Strategy for Culture, which places a high priority on creativity, cultural participation, and the consolidation of cultural identity, demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the role of culture and its many contributions that extend beyond economic advantages, in addition to the extensive

government support for various facets of cultural activity. This understanding of the inherent worth of culture is demonstrated by the focus placed on cultural projects and fields that might not yield immediate financial gains, especially those about heritage conservation and preservation, and Arabic language service. The Report on the State of Culture's five-year accumulation of knowledge also serves as a basis for the development of impact assessment techniques in the cultural sector. Multi-stakeholder collaboration is necessary to build a comprehensive national system for managing the impact of the cultural sector. This collaboration starts with government agencies, primarily the Ministry of Culture and cultural bodies, and extends to cultural institutions and stakeholders, such as business leaders and entrepreneurs. Determining the cultural scope, creating national indicators to gauge impact, and building capacities in both quantitative and qualitative data collection, assessment, and evaluation are all crucial tasks for decision-makers in the cultural system.¹⁸ Owners of cultural initiatives and projects, on the other hand, need to find indicators to gauge the impact at the project level and assess the results of their efforts. Providing actors, researchers, and other interested parties with access to data helps improve impact assessment procedures, minimize bias, increase transparency, and maximize the use of data when developing future projects and interventions. In alignment with Saudi Vision 2030 and representing its goal to reinforce the role as a catalyst for all-encompassing development, this integration turns impact assessment into a strategic tool for raising performance, allocating resources, and bolstering the cultural sector's sustainability



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Conclusion

Characteristics of the 2024 Cultural Environment

Following the establishment of the Ministry of Culture in 2018, which can be considered a pivotal milestone in the history of the sector, the cultural sector of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has undergone numerous changes. These include organizational restructuring, a redefinition of roles and domains, and foundational efforts. Driven by the momentum of its initial launch and the subsequent expansion of programs and initiatives, the sector has made significant strides in empowerment and organization over the last six years. The 2019 introduction of the National Strategy for Culture, which acted as the Ministry of Culture's overarching framework and compass for the sector, was one of the journey's most significant strategic turning points. The Ministry's 2021 Non-profit Sector Strategy came next, with the goal of redefining culture as a systematic grassroots activity that makes a substantial contribution to social and cultural ecosystems. Next came the 2022 Cultural Capacity Development Strategy, which put training and education at the center of cultural development with an emphasis on empowering talent and equipping qualified workers for the cultural labor market. Following these formative years, the cultural sector's organizational movement persisted in 2024, albeit more slowly, indicating a relative stabilization in terms of institutional maturity and structure. Programs for empowerment and support provided by cultural ecosystem also reflected this sense of stability. The amount of financial and non-financial support that these organizations continued to offer, including grants, residencies, and business accelerators, increased significantly following the pandemic and has now leveled off over the last two years.

At this point in the cultural sector's development, which is characterized by indications of maturity and stability, it is more crucial than ever to consider the sector's history, its evolution, its landmarks, and its untapped potential. This emphasizes how critical it is to create impact-assessing tools before looking to the future, which could help the sector move closer to fulfilling the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Development and Growth in the Cultural Non-profit Sector

Two significant trends have influenced Saudi Arabia's non-profit cultural sector in recent years: the expansion of regulations and the sharp rise in the number of amateur cultural clubs and non-profit cultural organizations. In response to a more encouraging climate, the number of new cultural organizations has increased since the Ministry of Culture's Strategy for the non-profit sector was introduced,

along with new regulations. There were 140 non-profit cultural organizations in total by the end of 2024, which is seven times more than there were before 2020. In the same way, 381 amateur clubs were formed in 2024 alone, which is almost twice as many as were formed in the three years following the Hawi platform's launch in 2021. This expansion shows how amateur clubs, which have historically been among the least represented in the cultural sector, have evolved from a marginal phenomenon to a crucial indicator of growing cultural participation and the success of initiatives to engage them. The reach of amateur clubs and non-profit cultural organizations has also shown encouraging growth in recent years. The majority of cultural domains have seen growth in amateur clubs, with notable expansion into previously underrepresented fields like museums and translation. Additionally, clubs in disciplines like literature, libraries, and heritage continued to expand, while the most significant number of active amateur clubs remained in the theater and visual arts.

Non-profit organizations, on the other hand, have grown more locally concentrated and less broadly. In terms of active organizations, the heritage sector remains dominant, followed by literature, which has seen an increase in new organizations during the last two years. A persistent gap that needs more encouragement and support is evident in other sectors, such as museums, music, translation, and fashion, where no new organizations were established in 2024.

The high caliber of activities provided by top associations and grassroots institutions is a more notable indicator of the sector's vitality than the numbers tracking the expansion of non-profit cultural organizations. Although the numerical representation of specific sectors may be lower, their activities frequently have a greater impact than quantitative measures and leave a noticeable mark on the cultural landscape. The Red Sea Film Foundation and the Cinema Association, for instance, are prominent in the film industry, through essential film festivals, specialized training programs, production assistance, or establishing chances for both domestic and foreign representation. Similar leadership is demonstrated in the visual arts by the Misk Art Institute and the Diriyah Biennale Foundation, which both support and train initiatives and help host significant art exhibitions in Saudi Arabia. With sixteen branches that allow for a broad geographic reach throughout the Kingdom's cities and provinces, the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts continues to play a significant role in fostering talent in the performing arts and theater. These illustrations highlight the fact that quantitative metrics by themselves might not adequately convey the vitality of the non-profit cultural sector or gauge the efficacy and significance of its contributions.

Conclusion

Additionally, unlike the centralized patterns frequently seen in the distribution of public cultural institutions or facilities, the geographic distribution of amateur clubs and non-profit cultural organizations presents a unique feature that reflects the sector's ability to reach broader segments of society. The cultural sector's adaptability is embodied by amateur clubs and nonprofits, which distinguish them from other institutional elements. However, the number of amateur clubs and non-profit cultural organizations is still below average in some populated provinces, including Makkah, Madinah, and Asir. In keeping with their continuously increasing populations, this necessitates focused efforts to promote non-profit cultural activity in these areas.

Digitization and Archiving Activity in Language and Heritage

Through methodical projects centered on documentation, archiving, and digitization, significant efforts have been made in recent years to create an integrated institutional framework for preserving cultural heritage in all of its tangible and intangible forms. The national reference point for establishing documentation standards, developing capacities, and structuring cultural databases is the Saudi Cultural Memory Center (formerly the Cultural Archive Center), which was founded in 2021. The center announced the creation of a national project plan for gathering, recording, archiving, and managing cultural heritage assets in 2024. It also published the second edition of the "Guide to Documenting and Digitally Archiving Cultural Heritage in Saudi Arabia" last year. This project is being implemented in partnership with pertinent organizations and local communities, strengthening the idea of community involvement, which is a crucial component of agreements for heritage preservation.



Initiatives like "Music Memory" and "Oral History of Theater," as well as projects aimed at preserving intangible cultural heritage, like the "Saudi Troq" project for recording musical and performance traditions, have gained significant traction. Projects like "National Dishes," "Regional Dishes," and the "Food Atlas" have also been used to document culinary heritage. The "Saudi Voices Codex," a significant step in recording the variety of dialects spoken throughout Saudi Arabia and making them available as an extensive resource for scholars and linguists, was a noteworthy project this year. Additionally, the project offers a database for creating artificial intelligence models in Arabic.

In addition to these initiatives, there has been an increase in interest in digitally preserving tangible heritage, such as museum collections and the documentation of heritage assets in the three national registries—the National Register of Industrial Heritage, the National Urban Heritage Register, and the National Antiquities Register—as well as intellectual and creative heritage, such as plays, movies, and manuscripts. The digitization of document and manuscript collections has been carried out by prominent cultural institutions, including the King Abdulaziz Public Library, King Fahad National Library, King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Darah), and university libraries. Nevertheless, there are still a few digitization initiatives in private museums, which reflect differences in preparedness and resources between various organizations.

To create a digital infrastructure for Arabic, several ambitious tech-driven projects have emerged in response to the growing interest in heritage preservation, which goes beyond documentation practices to include the Arabic language as a vehicle of cultural identity and a form of its expression. These initiatives, while still in their infancy, are the first steps in closing gaps in this field. In response to the demands of rapid digital advancement, language computing and the creation of AI models have evolved into contemporary tools of preservation. The creation of the Arabic AI Center within the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language was the most noteworthy event of 2024. Building on earlier projects started by the Academy, such as the "Falak" and "Siwar" platforms—the former offering processable linguistic corpora, and the latter offering digital tools for compiling and searching dictionaries—this center focuses on automated Arabic language processing using AI technologies. Prototype AI language models have also been released by other organizations, such as the Saudi Data and AI Authority's (SDAIA) "Allam" app and the Cultural Fund-backed "Ases" system. As part of a collaborative effort between SDAIA and the Academy to create national evaluation standards, the "Balsam Index" was introduced this year to assess the effectiveness of AI technologies in handling Arabic.

Even though heritage preservation and Arabic language technology initiatives are gaining traction, national cooperation and institutional role alignment are still urgently needed. There are still challenges with digital infrastructure and data accessibility, and some legal frameworks need to be reviewed and updated to reflect changes in the cultural



industry. Rapid technological advancement also creates new opportunities for reevaluating cultural policies, particularly those about accessibility, archiving, and intellectual property rights.

Obstacles and Goals

The report traces the characteristics and changes of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's cultural landscape over six years of observation and analysis, exposing several obstacles to the sector's advancement. To overcome these obstacles and create a more sustainable cultural environment, government deputships, the commercial sector, and non-profit organizations must work together and play integrated roles. The geographic concentration of cultural activities is one of the biggest obstacles, as it restricts the variety and inclusivity of participation opportunities throughout the Kingdom's provinces. The majority of training programs and cultural events are centered in large cities and reach fewer people in smaller or more remote governorates and towns. Additionally, it is common practice to hold these events in the heart of towns, leaving public areas and residential districts largely uninvolved in cultural activities. This limits the ability of local communities to plan and co-design events and lessens the likelihood that culture will permeate people's daily lives. This emphasizes the necessity of increasing cooperation with local municipalities, charitable institutions, and neighborhood projects, all of which help to achieve inclusive and geographically balanced cultural activities. The differences in participation opportunities between social groups are another significant challenge that the Cultural Participation Survey's previous cycles' results have highlighted. The disparity between the higher

and lower income groups is especially noticeable when it comes to repeated participation, which is defined as going to cultural events more than six times a year, and becomes more prevalent as income levels rise. This illustrates how economic factors affect both the frequency and efficacy of cultural engagement and attendance opportunities. About 25% of survey participants cited high ticket costs as the primary deterrent to attending festivals and other cultural events, which supports this finding in terms of attendance motivations and barriers. These results highlight how crucial it is to broaden cultural offerings and ensure they are inclusive in order to accommodate the needs of various social groups. The low level of female participation in cultural production is another significant issue facing the industry. This is especially noticeable because more Saudi women are working in cultural occupations than men, and there are more female graduates in cultural fields than male graduates. Survey results also demonstrate gender parity in cultural participation at the reception and consumption levels. Despite this, there is still a significant gender disparity in favor of men in cultural production, particularly in academic publishing and literary authorship. Measures of women's contributions in other cultural production fields, such as the visual arts, film, and theater, including the percentage of female artists, directors, screenwriters, actresses, and more, are still lacking in comprehensive, centralized data.

Over the past ten years, women's participation in publishing and literary authorship indicators has gradually improved, approaching parity by 2020, when it was close to 50%. This percentage, which reflects variations in women's participation levels, did, however, noticeably decline before increasing once more in 2024. This necessitates greater assistance for

Conclusion

female authors and a more determined attempt to establish their visibility in the Saudi literary landscape. The contribution of female researchers to published studies in the Kingdom shows a similar discrepancy. Their share only rose to 36% in 2024, the highest level in the previous five years. This disparity emphasizes how important it is to establish a more encouraging and welcoming research environment for female scholars.

To comprehend the cultural landscape, its changes, and phenomena, as well as to develop policies based on solid, cumulative knowledge, the report also emphasized the current state of knowledge production in cultural fields. Research gaps were identified by analyzing data from a survey of studies published in peer-reviewed academic journals over five years. For example, there are very few studies published in the field of music, and only two studies were published in the field of film in 2024. There was also a dearth of published research in other fields, such as children's culture, theater studies, museum studies, intangible heritage, translation and Arabization studies, and cultural and arts education. These results highlight how important academic and research institutions are in empowering and assisting researchers as well as in directing scholarly endeavors to close gaps in knowledge and application.

In light of this, the Ministry of Culture declared in 2024 that the research priorities for the cultural sector would begin. This project was created in response to recognized knowledge gaps and drew from a variety of sources, such as policy reviews, expert consultations, and an examination of regional and global research trends. The setting of these research priorities will likely direct and encourage scientific endeavors in directions that are more in line with the demands of the industry and its prospects. The expansion of research grant programs noted in the report highlights the need for methodological tools to assess how these initiatives affect the scientific research environment, not just in terms of the quantity of published studies but also in terms of the subjects' diversity, academic rigor, and applicability to the needs of the industry. Without addressing the fundamental issue of the lack of developed and centralized data systems for measuring and tracking cultural indicators, it is impossible to discuss the difficulties facing Saudi Arabia's cultural sector. This difficulty is related to both the new international practices in cultural statistics and the relatively recent institutional structuring of the sector at the local level. Basic information, such as the quantity and distribution of published books, is still unavailable, even in fields like publishing and translation that have long had institutional roots in the Kingdom.

Several other fields are also affected by this data gap, including theater, audiovisual production, and cultural infrastructure like museums, art galleries, and libraries, particularly those that are not governed by the Ministry of Culture or its affiliated organizations. The industry also has trouble standardizing definitions and classifications, both practically (classifying training programs, cultural events, and literary and theatrical

genres) and conceptually (what constitutes a cultural activity, for example). These discrepancies hamper the ability to create consistent and comparable reference data.

Despite significant advancements in creating classifications for the cultural satellite account, these difficulties are also visible in measuring the economic indicators of culture, where data is still scarce or out of date. This explains why the creative economy chapter in this edition of the report does not include critical economic indicators.¹

Assessing Cultural Impact

The importance of assessing cultural impact has become much more apparent in recent years due to the growing need for objective tools to evaluate the effects of cultural policies and initiatives and the ever-increasing global recognition of culture's role in sustainable development. The theme chosen for this year's edition of the annual report reflects this ever-increasing significance, reinforcing the importance of assessing cultural impact and carrying on the report's five-year history of reporting on the status of Saudi Arabia's cultural sector and tracking its changes and trends.

As was already mentioned, one of the most critical issues raised in the report is the immaturity of the data that is currently available, which makes it challenging to create a system that is efficient in assessing and managing cultural impact. Quantifying the influence of culture—across all of its levels and dimensions—remains a significant obstacle for the industry. Impact assessment procedures are still not deeply ingrained in cultural project planning and execution. It is common to overlook the methodological tools that allow for a more thorough comprehension of the long-term social and cultural aspects of these initiatives. Dealing with the intangible effects of culture, which might not be represented in numerical metrics or easily quantifiable results, makes this problem even more difficult.

Building institutional and individual capacities in assessment and evaluation—through skill development and the adoption of more adaptable and inclusive methodologies that take into account the complex nature of culture and its symbolic and intangible dimensions—is crucial, as highlighted. To reposition culture as a foundational pillar in developmental policies and planning, rather than just a supporting sector, a national framework for impact management involving government agencies, cultural institutions, and independent initiatives is required.

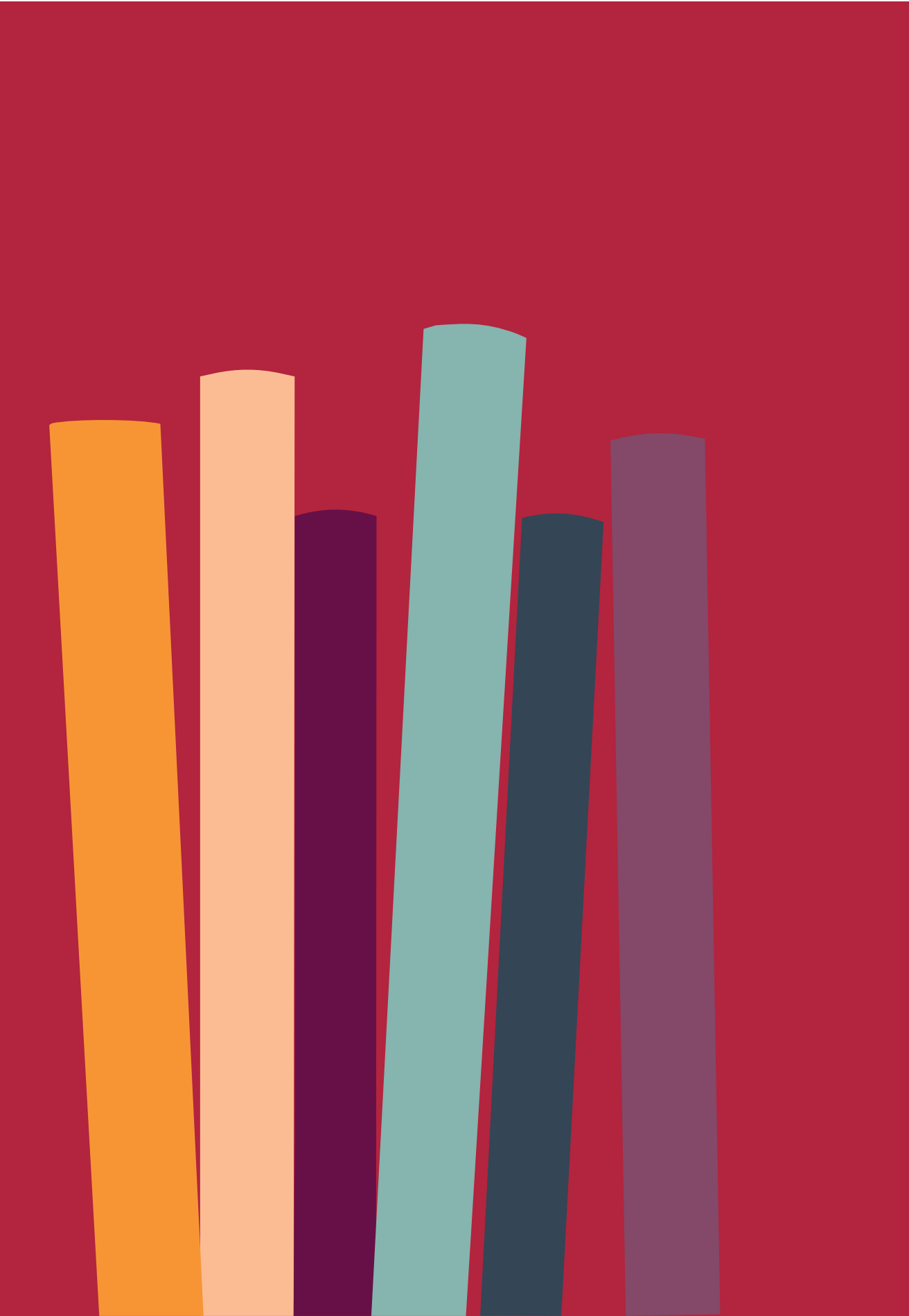
To sum up, the sixth edition of the Report on the State of Culture aims to document this critical juncture, where indications of sectoral stability meet hopes for the future. Although the report does not purport to provide a thorough understanding of the whole cultural landscape, the information, perspectives, and conclusions it offers provide fresh perspectives on the state of cultural affairs today, the difficulties and obstacles the industry faces, and the chances and potential it has to support Saudi Vision 2030's objectives.

¹ For details, see the Creative Economy Chapter.



Appendices

- Appendix (1): Methodological Framework and Data Sources
- Appendix (2): Cultural Participation Survey 2024
- Appendix (3): Private Museums Survey 2024
- Appendix (4): Glossary





Appendix (1): Methodological Framework and Data Sources

Overview

The sixth edition of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Report on the State of Culture follows the same methodological frameworks as earlier editions, which have been shown to guarantee conceptual consistency and the continuity of data collection, presentation, and comparison in a seamless and integrated way. Through five major chapters that represent the cultural dimensions in various facets of Kingdom culture, the report can continue tracking the reality of cultural sectors and measuring their indicators. Additionally, the report continues to dedicate a sixth chapter to tracking its features and annual focus, which in this edition is Cultural Impact.

I: Methodology of the Sixth State of Culture Report, 2024

Drawing its primary material and methodological framework from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) "Culture Cycle" (2009) and Objective Indicators of Culture (2019) models, Report on the

State of Culture 2024 is built upon the same foundations as its predecessors. It also takes into account the Kingdom's unique cultural sectors and local realities, as well as the report's goals and scope. The report's overall format was identical to the adopted format. While keeping the production and creativity dimension added in the previous cycle, the internal chapters were constructed over the past three years using objective indicators of culture and a variety of elements and definitions derived from the "Culture Cycle." This gave the report a sense of stability and consistency in several areas, notably the framework for qualitatively assessing the state of culture, which can be statistically measured through five dimensions. Using its five dimensions, the report examines the state of the Kingdom's cultural sectors: The first five chapters that make up the report's general framework are about Creativity and Production, Cultural Participation, Knowledge and Skills, Management and Preservation, and the Creative Economy. Since the 2022 edition, Chapter Six has been included, and it provides a focused, thorough, and detailed discussion of the report's particular theme. It creates the broad methodological framework and preserves the adaptability needed to develop mechanisms that make the best use of the data.



Continuing to Develop and Restructure Indicators

This year, there were no significant adjustments made to the quarterly indicators. The same modifications that were made in the previous year's report were implemented, such as moving some indicators from one quarter to the next and removing others. The exception was when the Infrastructure and Cultural Spaces Indicator was expanded to include a new sub-index: cultural production infrastructure, which is represented by publishing houses and film production studios, in addition to cultural facilities. For the second consecutive year, it was not included in the Arabic language education index. As a result, the index was restricted to tracking the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language's contributions and activities in this area.

II: The Five Dimensions and Chapters of the Report

The report consists of six chapters and three appendices: Methodology and Data Appendix, Cultural Participation Survey Appendix, and Glossary Appendix. The first five chapters address the following dimensions:



1. Management and Preservation

The effectiveness of its cycle, which is examined in the other chapters, and the potential circumstances for the contribution of sustainable culture to public life are covered in this chapter. To assess the efficacy of the cultural system in four primary areas—serving the Arabic language, conserving and sustainably managing heritage, infrastructure, and cultural spaces, empowerment, and regulatory frameworks, as well as the sub-indicators that fall under each of these categories, the chapter discusses the management and preservation dimension.

2. Creativity and Cultural Production

According to the definitions given in the previous iterations of the report, this dimension encompasses the two phases of the cultural cycle: creativity and production. While creativity is defined as the distinctive pattern of work, production refers to all processes related to cultural production in terms of quantitative measurement of production levels and diversity. The report is satisfied with local and international cultural awards as a criterion to indicate the creative status, but it does not include an artistic evaluation of the content.

3. Knowledge and Skills

In terms of evaluating the effectiveness of the educational system in imparting cultural knowledge and skills and developing capacity at all academic levels, from basic education to specialized cultural training, the chapter outlines the characteristics and trends of cultural education and training in the Kingdom through 2024. The chapter derives its title from one of UNESCO's cultural thematic indicators and is based on their definitions.

4. Cultural Participation

This dimension measures the effectiveness of cultural presence and accessibility to its diverse activities in different cities and provinces, as well as social participation that extends beyond the conventional cycle of production and consumption. Indicators of social integration and cultural

tourism, a cultural participation survey, and an index of participation levels based on visitor data are examples of measurement tools.

5. Creative Economy

This chapter treats cultural activity as an industry and quantifies its economic dimension. The economic component is the main focus of its indicators, which track market size, growth patterns, and spending on cultural goods and services. The chapter also examines the number and distribution of operational commercial establishments in cultural sectors, the cultural tourism index, workforce growth trends in cultural fields, and the status of the cultural labor market. A thorough picture of the market for cultural services and products, the identification of possible demand areas, and the creation of value for market participants, such as investors, organizers, and entrepreneurs, are the goals of tracking economic statistics and indicators related to culture.

6. Theme of the Report on the State of Culture 2024: Cultural Impact

The annual theme, which this year will be “cultural impact,” typically takes up Chapter 6 of the report. Following a conceptual overview of impact assessment, the report will tackle this subject using two primary tenets: the influence of national organizations and policies on culture, and the influence of culture, the arts, and cultural policies on social and economic development. To create a thorough national framework for evaluating cultural impact in the Kingdom, it examines international impact assessment practices.

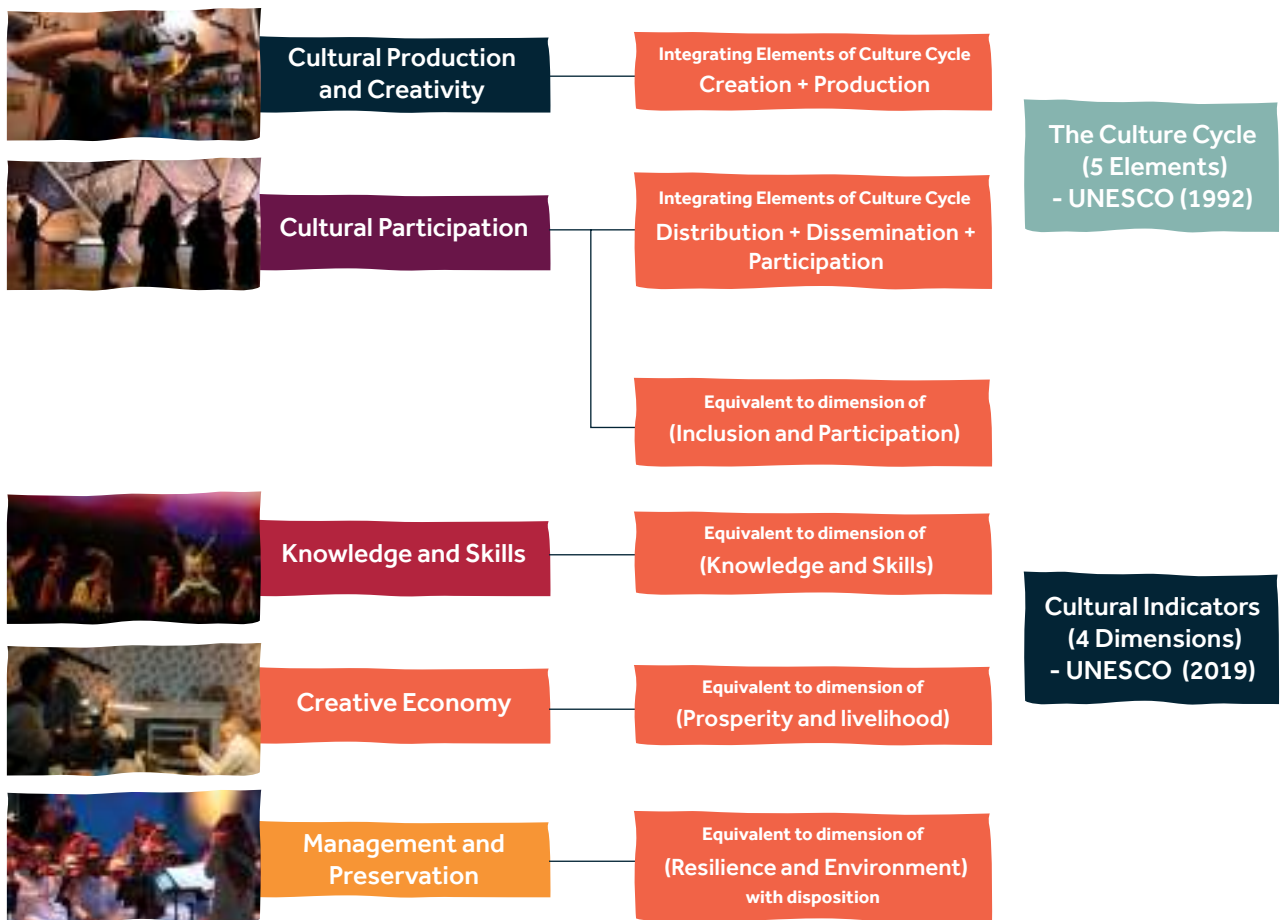
III: Definition of Indicators

To guarantee accurate meaning and the method for measuring it, the report stuck to the format used in earlier sessions for defining the terms and indicators it contained (refer to the glossary of terms included in the report). The following resources were used to illustrate this methodology: I: The definition of the organization that supplied the data for the report, if any, is used if central data is used. II: Accept

the definitions found in the applicable national guidelines. Third: Using global definitions and models that align with the chapter indicators. Fourth: Using reliable scientific studies and linguistic dictionaries as needed for the report. Fifth: The report creates its definition to measure the indicator if an appropriate definition is not available in earlier sources. As a result, the report glossary keeps using the same definitions while expanding on the definition of several indicators, including:

- The Cultural Facilities Index is now one of its sub-indices and has been renamed Infrastructure and Cultural Spaces Index.

- To guarantee standard classifications, data accuracy, and reference, it zeroes in on monitoring cultural facilities, exclusively those licensed by the Abde'a Platform.
- The Film Index extended its measurement of production and distribution levels for 2024 by adding new data on the distribution of movie premieres at the box office and movie distribution in theaters by operating company. Regardless of the nationality of the film's crew or producers, the Production Index tracked all movies that were included in the index as Saudi productions.



IV: Data Sources:

1. Preliminary Data from Relevant Commissions

In addition to ministries, universities, and governmental and private entities, the Ministry of Culture, cultural bodies, and active institutions in the cultural system were among the 104 entities that submitted the report on the state of culture in

the Kingdom this year (Table No. 1). The report concentrated on reexamining the data through update rounds and additional requests from the relevant entity to ensure the integrity of the data from any conflicts with any other sources.

Table 1: Entities Contributing to the 2024 Report's Data.

Number	Entity
Entities within the Culture Ecosystem	
1	Ministry of Culture, Research and Cultural Heritage Deputyship
2	Ministry of Culture, Cultural Strategies and Policies Deputyship
3	Ministry of Culture, Corporate Communication Deputyship
4	Ministry of Culture, National Partnerships and Capacity Development Deputyship
5	Ministry of Culture, Legal and Regulations Affairs Deputyship
6	Ministry of Culture, International Culture Relations Deputyship
7	Ministry of Culture, Cultural Festivals and Events Deputyship
8	Ministry of Culture, General Administration of Investment and Licensing
9	Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission
10	Fashion Commission
11	Film Commission
12	Heritage Commission
13	Visual Arts Commission
14	Museums Commission
15	Theater and Performing Arts Commission
16	Libraries Commission
17	Music Commission
18	Culinary Arts Commission
19	Architecture and Design Commission
20	Royal Institute of Traditional Arts
21	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language
22	Red Sea Film Foundation
23	Diriyah Biennale Foundation
24	Cultural Fund

Number	Entity
Ministries	
25	Ministry of Media
26	Ministry of Investment (Including Shareek Program)
27	Ministry of Economy and Planning
28	Ministry of Municipalities and Housing
29	Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture includes the National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification and the National Center for Wildlife.
30	Ministry of Commerce
31	Ministry of Education
32	Ministry of Sport
33	Ministry of Tourism
Other Government Agencies	
34	Holy Makkah Municipality
35	Taif Municipality
36	Municipality of Tabuk
37	Jazan Municipality
38	Jeddah Municipality
39	Riyadh Region Municipality
40	National eLearning Center
41	National Events Center
42	National Center for Non-Profit Sector includes the National Volunteer Portal
43	Social Development Bank
44	Quality of Life Program
45	King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Darah)
46	Tourism Development Fund
47	Human Resources Development Fund (HADAF)
48	King Abdulaziz Complex for Endowment Libraries
49	King Fahad National Library
50	Saudi Red Sea Authority

Number	Entity
51	Saudi Data and AI Authority (SDAIA)
52	Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property
53	Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority (Monsha'at)
54	Royal Commission for Riyadh City
55	Royal Commission for AIUla
56	Saudi Broadcasting Authority
57	Research, Development and Innovation Authority + King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST)
58	Saudi Export Development Authority
59	Imam Turki bin Abdullah Royal Nature Reserve Development Authority
60	King Salman bin Abdulaziz Royal Reserve Development Authority
61	King Abdulaziz Royal Reserve Development Authority
Universities	
62	Saudi Electronic University (SEU)
63	Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University
64	Al-Baha University
65	Qassim University
66	Majmaah University
67	Al Yamamah University
68	Umm Al-Qura University
69	Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University
70	King Abdulaziz University
71	King Abdullah University of Science and Technology
72	King Saud University
73	University of Tabuk
74	University of Hail
75	University of Hafr Al Batin
76	Dar Al-Hekma University
77	Taibah University

Number	Entity
Private and Civil Sector Institutions	
78	MBC Academy
79	Salhia Civil Society in Unaizah
80	The Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts, including the Thaqaf Institute
81	Cinema Association
82	Telfaz 11
83	Rwaq
84	Rotana
85	Diriyah Development Company
86	Soudah Development Company
87	Jeddah Central Development Company
88	ROSHN Group
89	Merwas Audiovisual Production Company
90	Art Jameel
91	Sheikh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah Center (Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim Library)
92	Abdul Rahman Al-Sudairy Cultural Center
93	King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture - Ithra
94	King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies
95	Misk Art Institute
96	Sulaiman Al Rajhi Public Library
97	King Fahad Public Library in Jeddah
98	King Abdulaziz Public Library
99	Saudi Film Festival
100	Athra Platform
101	Hikma Platform
102	King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity - Mawhiba

2. Cultural Participation Survey

The first quarter of 2025 saw the completion of the sixth round of the Cultural Participation Survey. The survey's objective was to gather precise and comparable data showing the participation rates of citizens and residents in the range of available cultural activities. "The European Framework for Community Participation" and other popular surveys that gauge cultural participation use UNESCO's benchmarks as their foundation. While accounting for some adjustments about the report's specificity, this guarantees that the results are in line with internationally recognized measurement techniques. This survey round maintained the strategy of substituting open-ended and closed-ended questions to gauge participation frequency for the gradual questions used to gauge attendance at cultural events. There are eleven demographic variables, seven personal/explanatory variables, and 29 significant variables in the survey questionnaire (refer to the Appendix for the Cultural Participation Survey 2024). The Cultural Participation Survey maintained the methodologies employed in earlier reports, except for a few changes to the variables. In addition to measuring attendance rates for cultural events (20 variables), the survey also measured the degree of cultural hobby practice, satisfaction with cultural services, and preferences and factors influencing the demand for cultural goods and services (5 variables). Trends in cultural education and training were also included in

the survey (two variables). The period for repeating attendance was established as "the past twelve months" in the majority of the questionnaire questions, particularly in the attendance rates dimension, by the methodology employed in numerous comparable surveys to gauge cultural participation. (Refer to the "Measuring Community Participation" box, 2009 UNESCO).

- Data Collection for the Sixth Round of the Survey**Like previous rounds, this round of the Cultural Participation Survey used telephone calls to target a simple random sample that was chosen using a computer program that generates potential numbers with a margin of error of (±1.81%). Data was gathered and surveys were conducted in collaboration with the Saudi Center for Opinion Polling. The survey was conducted in the first quarter of 2025, from January 23 to February 11, and the sample consisted of 3,046 people.
- Survey Population and Sample Characteristics**All male and female citizens and residents in all thirteen provinces of the Kingdom who were at least eighteen years old were included in the survey population. 71.3% of Saudi citizens and 27.5% of residents took part in the survey. The percentage of non-Saudis who were either the wife of a male citizen or the spouse/children of a female citizen was 0.8%. The number of survey respondents and their percentage by province are displayed in the following table.

Table 2: 2024 Cultural Participation Survey Community Members and their Distribution, by Province.

Province	Repetition	Percentage
Riyadh Province	846	27.8%
Makkah Province	777	25.5%
Madinah Province	195	6.4%
Al-Qassim Province	123	4.0%
Eastern Province	494	16.2%
Asir Province	183	6.0%
Tabuk Province	78	2.6%
Hail Province	67	2.2%
Northern Border Province	31	1.0%
Jazan Province	122	4.0%
Najran Province	50	1.7%
Al Baha Province	30	1.0%
Al-Jouf Province	48	1.6%
Total	3046	100%

3. Focus Group Discussion

Focus Discussion Sessions (Focus Groups) are still being held by the report to track the views of practitioners, experts, and specialists in related fields. The report aims to comprehend and analyze the current state of the cultural sectors by utilizing the qualitative data produced by these sessions. The focus groups were limited to three sessions conducted between May 4 and May 6, 2025, all of which centered on the topic of this year's report, 'Cultural Impact'. Refer to Table 3. These sessions involved twenty-nine participants, including academics, cultural practitioners, representatives of cultural institutions, and experts in assessing cultural and social impact.



Table 3: Focus Group Discussions

Category Participating in the Session	Session
Academics and those Interested in Cultural Affairs	Cultural Impact
Workers In Cultural Institutions	Cultural Impact
Business Owners	Cultural Impact



4. Other Surveys

To define the quarterly indicators, the report was eager to present precise and consistent data. As a result, it made extensive use of data from central authorities. In addition to continuing to survey research published in peer-reviewed journals within the Kingdom and gathering data from podcasts, the most recent version of the report included a survey of private museums licensed by the Museums Commission.

• Museums Survey

To guarantee that every geographic province is represented in the study in a manner that accurately reflects the distribution of museums, the proportionate stratified sampling method was employed. Out of the 93 museums licensed by the Museums Commission through the Abde'a Platform, which were categorized into strata according to their distribution areas, 41 museums were included in the sample, and 37 operators answered the questionnaire.

Table 4: Museum Survey Samples

Number	Museum	Province
1	Abu Nourah Heritage Museum	Asir Province
2	Museum of Memories of Time	
3	Abdulrahman Nazih Abdulrahman Al-Shahri Museum for Museum Display	
4	Al-Raqidi Museum	
5	Ibn Soufan Historical Museum	
6	Bin Hamsan Heritage Village Museum	
7	Legwan Museum	
8	Yahya Mahfouz Saeed Asiri Museum of Archaeological Sites	
9	Museum of Civilizational Calligraphy for Museum Display	Eastern Province
10	Authenticity of the Deira Museum Exhibition	
11	Al-Falwa and Al-Jawhara Heritage	
12	Bu Radha Heritage	
13	Walid bin Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Najem Museum for Museum Display	
14	Basra Pilgrimage Route Museum	
15	Khalid bin Abdulrahman Albu Obaid Museum	
16	Rose History Museum	Makkah Province
17	Al-Jumum Museum	
18	Al-Aseel House Museum Exhibition	
19	Hothali Heritage Museum	
20	Abu Bakr Al-Amoudi Heritage Museum	
21	Saudi Coffee Museum	
22	Al Tayebat International City Museum of Science and Knowledge	
23	Old Education Museum	Riyadh Province
24	Abdulrahman Hamoud Suleiman Al-Dhuwaihi Heritage Museum	

Number	Museum	Province
25	Palace Museum	Riyadh Province
26	The Castle Museum	
27	Past Years Museum	
28	Al-Aaridhi Heritage House Museum	
29	Hamad Al Salem Museum	
30	Authenticity Facade Museum for Museum Display	Al Baha Province
31	Mtyr Al Aish Historical and Heritage Museum for Museum Display	
32	Al-Rajhi Heritage Museum	Al-Qassim Province
33	Saeed Al-Bowaytan Museum	
34	Hijra Route Museum	Madinah Province
35	Salem Eid Al-Jahni Museum for Museum Display	
36	Stone Age Museum	Hail Province
37	Al-Eyada Museum	
38	Al-Sadu House Heritage Museum	Tabuk Province
39	"A monument of the past" Museum for museum display	Northern Border Province
40	Belghazi Heritage Museum for Museum Display	Jazan Province
41	Al-Ukhlood Museum	Najran Province



• **Scanning Scientific Papers Published in Peer-Reviewed Journals in the Kingdom**

The research production index in cultural fields is based on the findings of a survey of studies published in peer-reviewed scientific journals in the Kingdom

between 2020 and 2024. The survey included 2,061 research papers published in 33 peer-reviewed scientific journals (see Table 4), and they were classified into 29 topics, with some developments from last year's classifications. The classification of research papers under the heading of "Arabic

Table 5: Peer-reviewed scientific journals surveyed in previous years, and in 2024

Number	Journal	Publisher
1	Islamic University Journal of Arabic Language and Literature	Islamic University of Madinah
2	Journal of Umm Al-Qura University (UQU) for Language Sciences and Literature	Umm Al-Qura University
3	Journal of Umm Al-Qura University for Engineering and Architecture	
4	Saudi Art and Design Journal	Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University
5	Legal Sciences and Arabic Language Journal	
6	The Saudi Journal for Library and Information Studies	
7	Journal of Arabic Sciences	Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University
8	Albaha University Journal of Human Sciences	Al-Baha University
9	Al-Jouf University Journal of Human Sciences	Al-Jouf University
10	The North Journal for Humanities	Northern Border University
11	Taif University Journal of Human Sciences	Taif University
12	Journal of Arabic Sciences and Humanities	Qassim University
13	Journal of Arts	King Saud University
14	Journal of Educational Sciences	
15	Journal of Architecture and Planning	
16	Journal of Humanities	King Khalid University
17	King Faisal University Scientific Journal of Humanities and Administrative Sciences	King Faisal University, Humanities and Administrative Sciences
18	Humanities and Administrative Science Journal	Majmaah University
19	University of Bisha Journal for Humanities	University of Bisha
20	University of Tabuk Journal for Humanities and Social Sciences	University of Tabuk
21	Jazan University Journal of Human Sciences	Jazan University
22	Taibah University Journal of Arts and Humanities	Taibah University
23	Darah Journal	King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Darah)
24	Journal of Linguistic Studies	King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies

Number	Journal	Publisher
25	Adumatu Magazine	Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy Cultural Center
26	Language Testing Magazine	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language
27	Journal of Language Planning and Policy	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language
28	Journal of Arabic Linguistics	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language
29	Journal of Computational Linguistics and Arabic Language Processing	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language
30	Journal of Teaching Arabic as a Second Language	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language
31	Journal of Arabic Linguistics Sciences	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language
32	Journal of King Abdulaziz Waqf Libraries Assembly	King Abdulaziz Complex for Endowment Libraries
33	King Fahad National Library Journal	King Fahad National Library

calligraphy” was eliminated, and those papers were combined based on the other subjects they covered, including cultural studies and the visual arts. As is customary when conducting the survey, the classification of impact measurement was introduced by adding the annual theme to the report. Additionally, the classification of language policies and planning was expanded to include cultural policies. Finally, the classification of traditional arts was replaced by the classification of intangible heritage. It should be mentioned that, depending on the subjects it covers, a single research paper may fall under more than one category. The survey was carried out using the same methodology as in prior years, which was based on three primary stages: Following the identification of research published in open-access peer-reviewed journals, the research was statistically processed after being categorized into primary topics using keywords found in the titles and abstracts.

• Podcast Data Collection

18 digital radio (podcast) stations that focused on cultural topics, including publishing, literature, heritage, language, theater, etc., were included in this year’s survey sample. The sample vocabulary was selected because the podcast accounts’ (or the organization’s) Twitter followers exceeded 1,000. The information was obtained via Google Podcasts or direct contact with the producing entity, in addition to several other sources, such as YouTube, Apple Podcasts, and the website of the podcast that was included in the sample.

5. Published Reports

The report, in several instances, relied on information contained in published reports from government agencies or international organizations. These sources included periodic reports, statistical bulletins, and reports dedicated to specific

programs implemented by the relevant authorities, including reports from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

6. Media Sources and Social Media

In addition to direct data received from various sources, the report refers to information and data published in the news and others issued by government media agencies, including: Saudi Press Agency {WAS} This also includes information available from the media centers of official bodies, taken from their websites or official accounts on social media.

7. The Movement of Literary Authorship and Publishing in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the Year 1445/1446 AH (2024) And A Bibliographical and Phylometric Study

As in previous years, the report used data from a study by researcher Khaled Al-Youssef on the movement of literary authorship and publishing to calculate this year’s literary publishing index. As the researcher states in the introduction, the study is restricted to paper books, with a brief discussion of what is readily available from digital books, and it focuses on tracking the Saudi literary movement in 2024. It is broken



Table 6: Entities on which the Report Relied in Presenting Theatrical Performance Data

Number	Entity
1	Ministry of Culture
2	Museums Commission
3	Theater and Performing Arts Commission
4	General Entertainment Authority
5	King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture - Ithra
6	Royal Commission for AlUla
7	King Abdulaziz Public Library
8	Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts



down into bibliographical and bibliometric components, upon which he bases his research: obtaining all of the published works by Saudi authors, both inside and outside the Kingdom, through purchases or donations. In addition to following newspapers, magazines, periodicals, book news, and websites interested in books, analyzing them, or publishing them, and finally through the researcher’s relationships with those interested in collecting new and distinctive books, or those with connections with creators and authors, it is worth noting that the researcher tracks and corrects the numbers included in his study regarding publications from previous years that he did not record at the time, so this report relies on the numbers published in the latest version of the bibliography.

V: Aggregate Data Lists
To ensure a more thorough analysis, the report integrates data from various sources. This version includes the following data: theater performance data (Table No. 6); performance data (Table No. 7); art exhibition data (Table No. 8); architecture and design exhibition data (Table No. 9); and fashion exhibition data (Table No. 10).

Table 7: Entities on which the Report Relied in Presenting the Performance Data

Number	Entity
1	Museums Commission
2	Royal Commission for AlUla
3	General Entertainment Authority
4	King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture - Ithra
5	Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts
6	Theater and Performing Arts Commission
7	Saudi Electronic University
8	Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University
9	King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST)
10	University of Tabuk
11	Comedy Pod Site





Table 8: Entities on which the Report Relied in Presenting Art Exhibition Data

Number	Entity
1	Riyadh Art
2	Diriyah Biennale Foundation
3	Visual Arts Commission
4	Art Jameel
5	Misk Art Institute
6	King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture - Ithra
7	Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts
8	King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST)
9	Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University
10	University of Hail
11	Qassim University
12	Umm Al-Qura University
13	University of Tabuk
14	King Abdulaziz University
15	King Saud University
16	Dar Al-Hekma University
17	Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University

Table 9: Entities on which the Report Relied in Presenting Data on Architecture and Design Exhibitions

Number	Entity
1	Royal Commission for AlUla
2	Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University
3	Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University
4	Qassim University
5	King Abdulaziz University
6	Dar Al-Hekma University
7	Taibah University
8	Jax District
9	King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture - Ithra
10	Museums Commission
11	Architecture and Design Commission

Table 10: Entities on which the Report Relied in Presenting Fashion Exhibition Data

Number	Entity
1	Fashion Commission
2	King Abdulaziz University
3	Qassim University
4	King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture - Ithra
5	Taibah University
6	General Entertainment Authority
7	Fashion Commission
8	Visual Arts Commission
9	University of Tabuk
10	Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University
11	University of Hafr Al Batin





Appendix (2): Cultural Participation Survey 2024

Have you visited any museums in the kingdom during the past 12 months?

Percentage	
Yes	17.3
No, I didn't attend at all	18.0
No, but I would like to attend in the future	64.7
Total	100

If yes, how often?

Percentage	
1 to 3 times	87.7
4 to 7 times	8.8
More than 7 times	3.5
Total	100

Have you attended any poetry or literary evenings in the past 12 months?

Percentage	
Yes	7.1
No, I didn't attend at all	34.4
No, but I would like to attend in the future	58.5
Total	100

If yes, how often?

Percentage	
1 to 3 times	84.4
4 to 7 times	9.0
More than 7 times	6.7
Total	100

Have you attended any concert or musical event in the past 12 months?

Percentage	
Yes	17.0
No, I didn't attend at all	45.2
No, but I would like to attend in the future	37.8
Total	100

If yes, how often?

Percentage	
1 to 3 times	86.5
4 to 7 times	8.9
More than 7 times	4.7
Total	100

Have you visited a public library (non-commercial bookstore) in the past 12 months?

Percentage	
Yes	22.9
No, I didn't attend at all	23.6
No, but I would like to attend in the future	53.5
Total	100

If yes, how often?

Percentage	
1 to 3 times	75.9
4 to 7 times	14.5
More than 7 times	9.6
Total	100

Have you visited historical or archaeological sites (places) in the past 12 months?

Percentage	
Yes	37.7
No, I didn't attend at all	16.0
No, but I would like to attend in the future	46.3
Total	100

If yes, how often?

Percentage	
1 to 3 times	78.2
4 to 7 times	15.3
More than 7 times	6.5
Total	100

Have you visited a nature reserve or park in the past 12 months?

Percentage	
Yes	33.7
No, I didn't attend at all	16.5
No, but I would like to attend in the future	49.8
Total	100

If yes, how often?

Percentage	
1 to 3 times	69.8
4 to 7 times	17.1
More than 7 times	13.1
Total	100

Have you attended any theater or performance in the past 12 months?

Percentage	
Yes	11.7
No, I didn't attend at all	35.5
No, but I would like to attend in the future	52.8
Total	100

If yes, how often?

Percentage	
1 to 3 times	92.7
4 to 7 times	5.9
More than 7 times	1.4
Total	100

Have you attended any art exhibitions in the last 12 months?

Percentage	
Yes	12.8
No, I didn't attend at all	32.6
No, but I would like to attend in the future	54.6
Total	100

If yes, how often?

Percentage	
1 to 3 times	91.2
4 to 7 times	7.2
More than 7 times	1.6
Total	100

Have you attended a festival or cultural event in person in the past 12 months?

Percentage	
Yes	27.3
No, I didn't attend at all	25.3
No, but I would like to attend in the future	47.5
Total	100

If yes, how often?

Percentage	
1 to 3 times	58.8
4 to 7 times	10.9
More than 7 times	3.3
Total	100

If yes, what is the most important reason for your attendance?

Percentage	
Appropriate Times	16.2
Participation Is Free or at Reasonable Ticket Prices	16.0
Accompanying Family and Friends	40.7
I Heard that the Organization is Good and the Location is Easy to Access	8.9
To Visit Different Sites	10.3
Other	7.8
Total	100

If no, what is the most important reason for your absence?

Percentage	
Time Constraints	20.9
High Ticket Prices	15.0
Safety Concerns	1.0
Busy or Busy with Work	30.1
Health Problems	3.6
Lack of Transportation	7.7
Lack of Advertising	11.0
Prefer to Participate in other Activities (Health, Educational, etc.)	4.7
Other	6.0
Total	100

Have You Practiced a Cultural or Artistic Hobby During the Past 12 Months?

Percentage	
Yes	17.1
No, But I Would Like to in the Future.	50.5
No, I Don't Think About That.	32.5
Total	100

What was your favorite artistic or cultural hobby in the past 12 months?

Percentage	
Singing or Playing a Musical Instrument	6.1
Performance or Traditional Performance	3.4
Writing and Reciting Poems	8.7
Traditional Handicrafts	7.6
Acting Hoppy	1.1
Creative Writing	9.9
Reading	24.6
Translation	3.6
Fashion Design	2.0
Graphic Design	4.0
Drawing or Sculpture	11.0
Photography	7.6
Cooking, Not Including Daily Cooking	7.1
Other	3.4
Total	100

What kind of events, cultural festivals would you like to host more of?

Percentage	
Theatrical Performances	9.7
Poetry or Literary Evenings	15.6
Concerts and Singing	10.8
Cultural Lectures and Seminars	14.3
Heritage Events	16.0
Fashion Shows	6.3
Art Galleries	9.6
Cultural Festivals	15.7
Other	2.1
Total	100

What was your favorite way to watch movies in the past 12 months?

Percentage	
TV channels	16.1
Cinemas	16.6
Video Tapes or Discs	0.3
Virtual Viewing Platforms (Such As Shahid Net, Netflix)	43.3
Never Watch Movies	23.7
Total	100

What was your favorite way to watch a Saudi movie during the past 12 months?

Percentage	
In cinemas	24.5
On Virtual Viewing Platforms, such as Shahid and Netflix	41.0
In cinemas and Virtual Viewing Platforms	7.6
Satellite Channels	12.5
Never watch Saudi movies	14.4
Total	100

What was your favorite way to listen to songs in the past 12 months?

Percentage	
CDs	1.8
TV channels	6.3
Attending Parties	7.5
Digital Platforms with a Subscription (Such as Spotify and Anghami)	5.6
Digital Platforms Without Subscription (Such As Soundcloud)	10.5
Digital Video Platforms (Such As YouTube) And Social Media Sites	30.7
Radio	7.1
I Don't Listen to Music at All	30.5
Total	100

What was your favorite way to read books for purposes other than study or work during the past 12 months?

Percentage	
Reading Paper Books	35.0
Reading e-books (using computers or other electronic devices such as a Kindle).	26.1
Listening to Audiobooks	14.7
I don't read books for reasons other than study or work.	24.2
Total	100

How satisfied are you with the training programs provided to develop cultural skills and capabilities?

Percentage	
Not satisfied At All	3.9
Dissatisfied	5.6
Neutral	30.2
Satisfied	37.2
Completely Satisfied	23.1
Total	100

What do you think about the following statement: "Academic cultural specializations have a promising future in the job market"?

Percentage	
Strongly Agree	29.6
Agree	42.8
Neutral	18.2
Disagree	5.8
Strongly Disagree	3.6
Total	100



Appendix (3): Private Museums Survey 2024

What are the museum’s operating hours? Is it open year-round or during specific seasons?

Status	Number
Not Yet Open - Only for Special Delegations	1
By Arrangement and Reservation	1
During the Summer	2
All year round	30
Not open	1
Specific Seasons and Occasions	1
Open Upon Request	1
Total	37

Does the museum have a website?

Status	Number
No	17
Yes	20
Total	37

Does the museum have a social media account(s)?

Status	Number
No	9
Yes	28
Total	37

How many holdings does the museum have?

Category	Number of Museums	Total Collections	Percentage
Less than 100	10	1,500	27%
100 to less than 10,000	18	90,000	49%
10,000 to 50,000	9	816,000	24%
Total	37	907,500	100%

Does the museum have digitized collections and holdings?

Status	Number
No	31
Yes	6
Total	37

If the answer to the previous question is yes, how many digitized collections or holdings does the museum have?

Museum	Number of Collections	Number of Digital Collections
Beit Al-Sadu Heritage Museum	Unknown	Not Listed
Abdulrahman Hamoud Sulaiman Al-Dhuwaihi Heritage Museum	11,000	11,000
(Taif) Rose History Museum	10,000	10,000
Asala Facade	10,000	Most of the Collections
Mutair Al-Aish Historical and Heritage Museum for Museum Display	3,000	Most of the Collections
Hijrah Route Museum	1,000	200

What is your estimate of the number of visitors to the museum in 2024?

Status	Number
Not Applicable	3
Similar to the previous year's numbers	8
Less than the previous year's numbers	11
More than the previous year's numbers	15
Total	37

Has the museum ever received financial support from a governmental or non-governmental organization?

Status	Number
No	3
Yes	34
Total	37







Appendix (4): Glossary

Term	Meaning	Source	Chapter
Language Proficiency Test	A standardized test to evaluate the Arabic language competencies of non-native speakers. The exam evaluates the four skills of speaking, writing, listening, and reading by international standards and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).	Education and Training Evaluation Commission	Management and Conservation
Social Integration	This dimension provides a framework for assessing the extent to which culture promotes social cohesion and encourages participation and inclusion. It places a strong emphasis on everyone's right to participate in cultural activities, freedom of expression, and access to the cultural world.	Culture Indicators 2030	Cultural Participation
Creativity	Distinctive work style	Report Definition	Creativity and Cultural Production
Artist Residency	These programs allow a group of creative people from a particular cultural field to live outside their usual residence. By giving them housing, financial and moral support, professional advice, and chances to integrate into the host community and engage with the environment, they strive to grow their works.	Ministry of Culture	Management and Conservation
Deposit at King Fahad National Library	Copies of works covered by this system obligatory deposited, at no cost, in the King Fahad National Library if they are ready for publication and public circulation.	King Fahad National Library (Deposit System)	Creativity and Cultural Production
Saudi Literature	Published works of literature by Saudi authors, whether Kingdom-based or published by foreign publishing houses, were produced.	The publishing and literary writing movement of Youssef	Creativity and Cultural Production
Archiving	Digital records must be identified, assessed, described, stored, preserved, managed, and retrieved to preserve their integrity over time.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation
Schematic Works	Engineering, mechanical, scientific, and technical drawings with enough portion of graphic or pictorial work.	Guide to Registering Copyright Works (Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property)	Creativity and Cultural Production
Architectural Works	Works are completed by the architectural plan until a building, bridges, or gates, etc., are finished.	Guide to Registering Copyright Works (Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property)	Management and Conservation/ Cultural Participation/ Creativity and Cultural Production

Term	Meaning	Source	Chapter
Cultural Activities	Activities that, irrespective of their commercial value, represent or transmit cultural expression. Cultural pursuits can either serve as a goal unto themselves or aid in the creation of cultural products and services.	UNESCO 2009 Framework for Cultural Statistics	Cultural Participation Management and Conservation Knowledge and Skills
Antiquities	Objects that were constructed, manufactured, produced, adapted, or drawn by humans and that have acquired archaeological characteristics as a result of human intervention over the ages, whether they are fixed, movable, buried, or submerged; this is true even if the objects' history dates back at least a century.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation
Rehabilitation Program	A one-year to less than two-year training program.	Technical and Vocational Training Corporation, General Administration of Private Training	Knowledge and Skills
Educational Program	A regular or sequential series of educational activities planned and structured to accomplish pre-established learning goals or finish a particular set of learning assignments over an extended length of time.	Education and training areas in ISCED	Knowledge and Skills
Cultural Training	A term used to describe training in any area of cultural interest as defined by the National Culture Strategy's 16 sectors of culture and the arts.	Ministry of Culture	Knowledge and Skills
Cultural Heritage	Manifestations of the cultural heritage of local communities that have been passed down through the generations and have acquired historical, religious, artistic, or cultural significance for the communities in question. These manifestations can be material (tangible) or immaterial (intangible).	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation
Natural Cultural Heritage	Habitats of endangered animal or plant species and geological or physiographic formations with aesthetic, scientific, or cultural significance (natural heritage is deemed world heritage if it contains outstanding universal value).	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation
Urban Heritage	Every human-made city, village, districts, and building, as well as the areas, amenities, and artifacts that are part of them and have historical, architectural, scientific, cultural, or national significance.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation
Hybrid Learning	An e-learning model that accomplishes the goals of the instructional material by combining in-person and remote learning. The goals, requirements, and capacities all influence the amount of blending required.	Guidelines for the Secondary Education Tracks System, Ministry of Education	Knowledge and Skills
Distance Education	Learning that takes place using a variety of technologies and in which teachers and students are geographically, chronologically, or both separated.	Guidelines for the Secondary Education Tracks System, Ministry of Education	Knowledge and Skills

Term	Meaning	Source	Chapter
Archaeological Excavation	Finding antiquities underground, on the surface, in lakes, rivers, or marine areas is the goal of all excavation, sounding, research, and diving activities conducted by scientific principles.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation
Sustainable Development	Development that satisfies current demands without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations to meet their own	United Nations	Management and Conservation
Sustainable Heritage Development	Sustainable development and heritage are connected by two principles: First, heritage must be preserved and passed down to future generations to ensure sustainability. Second, it is a way for heritage to support sustainable growth.	UNESCO, World Cultural Heritage Management	Management and Conservation
Cultural Services	Commercial endeavors that meet cultural demands or preferences without producing tangible goods, though they might include manufacturing and delivery procedures. Film screenings, performances, design services, and heritage preservation services are some examples of these products.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation, Creative Economy
Training Diploma	A training program lasting two to three years.	Technical and Vocational Training Corporation, General Administration of Private Training	Knowledge and Skills
Qualifying Course	A training program with over 60 training hours that lasts longer than a month but less than a year.	Technical and Vocational Training Corporation, General Administration of Private Training	Knowledge and Skills
Development Cycle	A training program that lasts no more than a month and consists of no more than 60 training hours.	Technical and Vocational Training Corporation, General Administration of Private Training	Knowledge and Skills
Common Year	All students take part in studying a set of common year subjects during the first academic year of the track system.	Guidelines for the Secondary Education Tracks System, Ministry of Education	Knowledge and Skills
Cultural Tourism	Excursions for tourists that incorporate one or more cultural activities, like visiting exhibitions and museums, festivals and other cultural events, heritage sites, or reserves.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Cultural Participation
Language Policies	It is a collection of concepts, laws, rules, and procedures aimed at bringing about linguistic change within a community, group, or system. A thorough assessment of planning is possible if such a policy is in place.	Language Policy and Planning Book	Management and Conservation

Term	Meaning	Source	Chapter
Performance Presentation	A public live performance where body language blends with rhythm and sound, and expressive paintings that represent intangible human creativity are displayed. It is performed in a variety of settings, including Performance, opera, and puppet theater, by professionals or amateurs, one-person or in groups.	Arts Curriculum - Second Secondary Grade - (Ministry of Education)	Cultural Participation
Theatrical Performance	A type of performing arts where actors transform a written theatrical text (either poetry or prose) in front of an audience into a live performance on stage.	Arts Curriculum - Second Secondary Grade - (Ministry of Education) / Theater Commission	Cultural Participation/ Creativity and Cultural Production
Translated Work	A text or work that has been translated into a different language and culture.	Report Definition	Creativity and Cultural Production
Saudi Film	The movie satisfies the requirements of "the Cultural Test," which is an assessment method with four categories: 1) Content, encompassing the language, characters, setting, and theme of the movie. 2) Originality, Tradition, and Variety. 3) Principal Production Studios and Filming Sites. 4. Film Crew.	Standard Definitions for Films (Film Commission) British Film Certification	Creativity and Cultural Production
Feature Film	Forty minutes or more of narrative art in the form of audiovisual content is disseminated to the public display via suitable media and platforms.	Standard Definitions for Films (Film Commission)	Management and Conservation/ Creativity and Cultural Production
Short Film	Less than forty minutes of narrative art in the form of audiovisual content are disseminated to the public display via suitable media and channels.	Standard Definitions for Films (Film Commission)	Management and Conservation/ Creativity and Cultural Production
Digital Book	A book in digital electronic format, such as interactive EPUB or Portable Document Format (PDF), that is displayed on a computer with specialized hardware and software so that a person can read it.	Dictionary of Curriculum and Teaching Methods Terms (ALECSO)	Creativity and Cultural Production
Museum	A permanent display of archaeological, artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific materials that is open to the public at set hours and serves cultural, educational, or recreational purposes.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation
Nature Reserves	Sites on land, in the sea, or along the coast that have been designated for wildlife development and protection by the National Center for Wildlife Development and the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture.	Executive Regulations of the Environmental System	Management and Conservation
Linguistic Blog	They are sets of spoken or written language data organized using a particular framework to fulfill the intended purpose.	King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language	Creativity and Cultural Production
Cultural Facilities	According to the cultural fields that the Ministry of Culture pursues, different cultural activities are organized within the legally designated structures, spaces, their annexes, and complementary elements.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation,/ and Cultural Participation

Term	Meaning	Source	Chapter
General Track	A secondary education track that seeks to foster integration between the scientific and humanities domains while equipping students with knowledge, abilities, and positive attitudes toward subjects linked to Islamic, humanities, natural, and applied sciences.	Secondary Tracks, Ministry of Education	Knowledge and Skills
Specialized Tracks	To meet the needs of the twenty-first century, the track system has added four new specialized tracks. Pupils sign up for the course that best suits their tendencies, interests, and aptitudes.	Secondary Tracks, Ministry of Education	Knowledge and Skills
Archaeological Survey	Every archaeological site, whether on the surface, underground, or underwater, is explored and documented using a variety of scientific methods.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation
Theater	The place on which plays are performed. The building's name encompasses all of its features, including the stage, backstage, audience hall, dressing rooms, makeup room, and storage spaces for décor and accessories, etc.	Theater and Performing Arts Commission	Management and Conservation
Cultural Participation	Any deliberate action taken by a person to engage in or receive a cultural activity can take many forms, such as: Trying to learn more about culture, or expressing oneself through cultural activities or products, including spending money on cultural services or goods.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Cultural Participation
Workbook	Any work of literature, science, or art.	Guide to Registering Copyright Works (Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property)	Creativity and Cultural Production
Artistic and Applied Artistic Works	Applied art is three-dimensional art, whereas art work is two-dimensional.	Guide to Registering Copyright Works (Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property)	Creativity and Cultural Production
Written Works	Works in the literary, scientific, and artistic domains that are expressed in words, regardless of their content, such as books, brochures, or the like.	Guide to Registering Copyright Works (Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property)	Creativity and Cultural Production
Cultural Training Institutes	They are training facilities licensed to invest in training activities and authorized to fund cultural and artistic training initiatives. They are separated into three categories: higher education institutions, training centers, and training institutes.	Ministry of Culture	Knowledge and Skills
Art Gallery	A collection of mostly transient artworks by one or more artists that are on display in galleries, commercial galleries, open spaces, or other exhibition venues.	Report Definition	Cultural Participation/ Creativity and Cultural Production

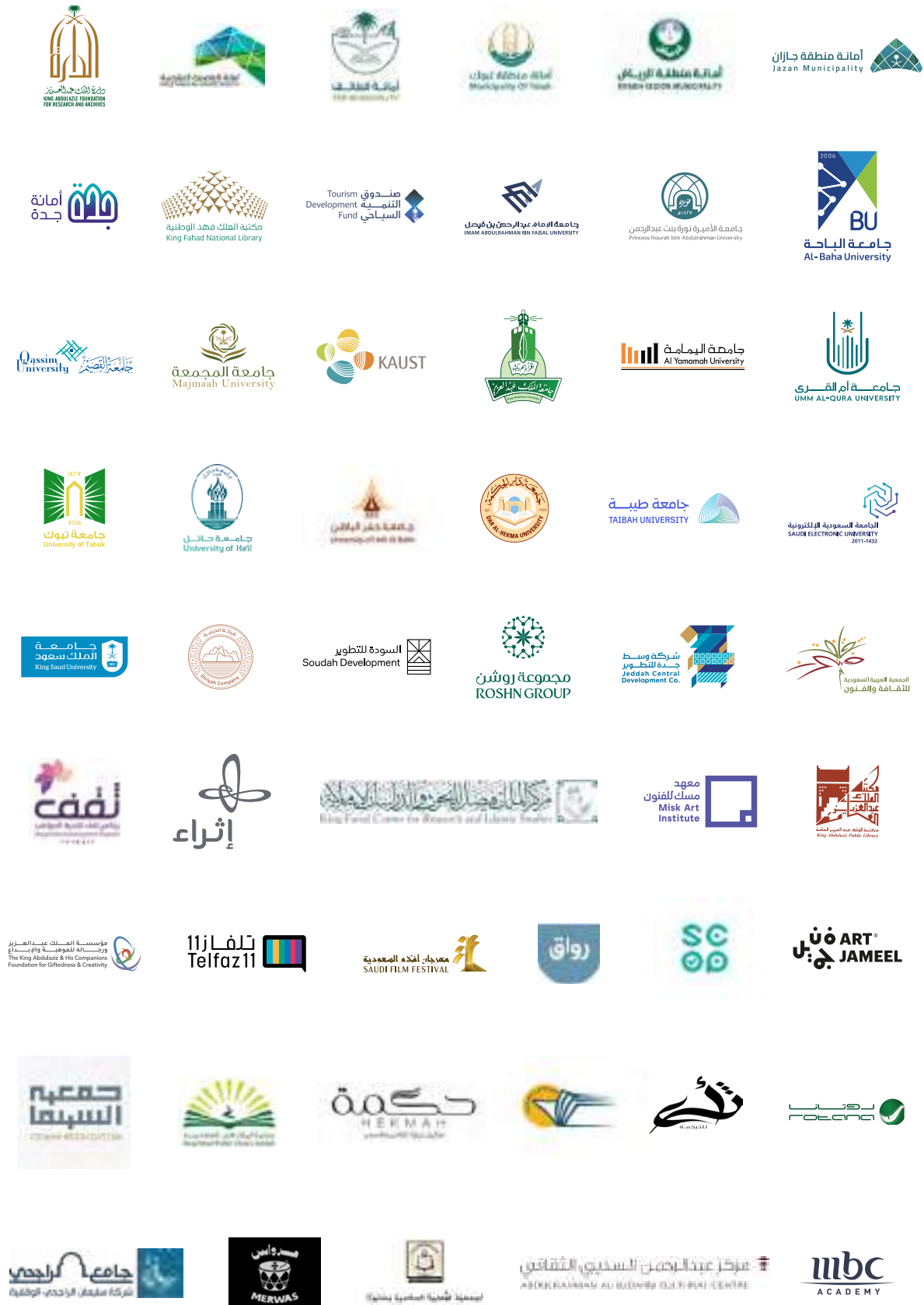
Term	Meaning	Source	Chapter
Curriculum	A methodical and carefully chosen body of knowledge (i.e., facts, abilities, and values-based attitudes) that students must gain via organized learning experiences in both formal and informal contexts.	Culture Indicators 2030	Knowledge and Skills
Library	A well-structured library of printed books, periodicals, or other written, audio, or visual materials, along with the services of personnel in charge of providing readers with access to these materials and enabling their use for research, education, entertainment, or information.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation
Traditional Clothing	Costumes are frequently worn by a specific society or societies, at particular times, days, or periods, and are linked to and symbolic of their customs, traditions, and events. They may have been passed down through the generations within the society or societies in which they were used, or they may have been used during a particular historical period or era, after which their inheritance—including the process by which they were made—has persisted to this day.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Creativity and Cultural Production
Cultural Product	A product whose artistic, aesthetic, symbolic, and spiritual qualities set it apart from other products and services.	UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics 2009	Management and Conservation/ Creativity and Cultural Production
Non-Profit Cultural Organizations	The system of non-governmental organizations, civil activities, and voluntary services is mainly non-profit and works toward achieving specific cultural goals or the public good.	Ministry of Culture	Cultural Participation
Cultural Professions	Jobs involving the creation of art and creativity or the gathering and conservation of cultural heritage, including the creation, evolution, contemplation, or maintenance of cultural significance.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Creative Economy
Historical Sites	Locations that saw significant national or historical events or were referenced in literature do not always have buried or visible monuments.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation/ Cultural Participation
Civil Institution	Any organization that depends on the funds given to it by the founder or founders is primarily non-profit, and is created by one or more people of natural or legal character, or both, to achieve one or more public or private benefit purposes and that lasts for a set amount of time or indefinitely.	National Center for Non-Profit Sector	Cultural Participation
Publishing	Distributing information to the general public via a variety of channels, including websites, printed materials and other electronic applications.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation/ Creativity and Cultural Production
Literary Publishing	Published works of literature, such as plays, novels, stories, poetry, biographies (sirah), criticism, travel literature and literary translations.	The publishing and literary writing movement of Youssef	Creativity and Cultural Production

Term	Meaning	Source	Chapter
Stereoscopic Topographic Works	Three-dimensional models and designs that convey geography, science, and topography; they may also contain data and information that is graphic or pictorial.	Guide to Registering Copyright Works (Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property)	Creativity and Cultural Production
Cultural Heritage Inventory	Adding components and assets related to cultural heritage to the State Register: The list contains basic information (name, location, date, origin, etc.) to create a clear and shared understanding of which elements are deemed culturally crucial for conservation and management purposes.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation
Copyright	One of the creative domains of intellectual property is that it grants the creator or author the authority to utilize and profit from the work while preventing others from doing so without their permission.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Creativity and Cultural Production
Culture Cycle	The cultural production process is the outcome of several interrelated steps or processes that collectively make up the cultural cycle, the set of events that contribute to cultural value, or the supply chain in the cultural industry.	UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics 2009	Management and Conservation/ Creativity and Cultural Production
Preserving Heritage	Is an example of actions intended to ensure the survival and transmission of an element of intangible cultural heritage to future generations. These arrangements include identification, defining, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, and transmission, primarily through formal and informal education, as well as the revitalization of various aspects of it.	Glossary of the Cultural System	Management and Conservation
Photographic Classifications	The recording of light or other radiation on any medium on which an image is produced or from which an image can be produced by any means, and which does not form part of a film.	Guide to Registering Copyright Works (Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property)	Creativity and Cultural Production
Visit Rates to Cultural Facilities	Trend in the number of people visiting a particular set of performing arts or cultural venues.	Culture Indicators 2030	Cultural Participation
Attendance Rates for Cultural Activities	Percentage of people who, during the previous 12 months, engaged in at least one cultural activity outside of their homes.	Culture Indicators 2030	Cultural Participation
Impact Assessment	Assessing Cultural Impact: A methodological tool for demonstrating the value and effectiveness of culture, and one of the phases in the assessment process that uses measurement data to generate analyses and conclusions that assist decision-makers in creating interventions that are more successful and have the intended effect.	The Report on the State of Culture 2024	Cultural Impact



Data-Providing Entities





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