

Cross Cultural Perceptions



**HOW AMERICANS AND ARABS SEE EACH
OTHER...AND HOW IT ACTUALLY IS**

“It’s like a scene from
Desperate Housewives.”



Arab Perceptions of the American Family

A Look at the American Family



Arab Perceptions

- Upper Middle Class
- 2 Parents, 3 Children
- Disconnected from Religion
- Focus on Education

American Reality

- Median Income: \$63,211
- Average Household: 2.61 people; 21.4% married parents with children
- 51% attend religious services at least once a month; 84% say religion is important
- 84.5% have a high school degree or higher

“Tight knit, larger than Western families, almost clan or tribal in basis.”



American Perceptions of the Arab Family

A Look at the Arab Family



American Perceptions

- Very traditional and patriarchal
- Tight-knit and very close
- Religion oriented

Arab Reality

- Father is “always the provider;” sons have more freedom than daughters
- Women are housewives, with hired help to run the household
- Close relationships among siblings; meals with extended family weekly

“Women are empowered in America, but not to their full potential.”



Arab Views of American Women's Rights

American Women




Arab Perceptions

- Legally, women are equal to men
- Women are mostly empowered
- Some belief that it's still a male dominated nation

American Reality

- Men and women are legally equal
- 55.4% of women have at least some college education; 54.4% of men do
- 72.1% of women and 83.5% of men are in the work force



“They have the right to get married and have kids. And get stoned to death.”



American's Views of Arab Women's Rights

Arab Women




American Views

- Forced to dress conservatively, often covering faces
- Can't work, go to school, drive
- Dependent on country

Arab Reality

- Dependent on country, but in the UAE covering is a choice
- Women's universities are present in the UAE; women can work and keep the money they make
- Rights are drastically increasing in the UAE



“It is considered a ‘shame’ if a female graduates high school and is still a virgin.”



Arab's Views of American Romantic Relationships

American Relationships




Arab Views

- Sex dictates American relationships
- Relationships start early and teens are sexually promiscuous
- Marriage and love are secondary to physical attraction

American Reality

- Only 2% say sex is the key component in a successful relationship
- 48% of teens have sex before graduating high school
- 50.2% of people 15 and older are married; over 34% of people between 20 and 34 are married



“As far as I know, most relationships are arranged. The father of a female will search for a male partner for his daughter. She does not really have a say in who she marries.”



American's Views of Arab Romantic Relationships

Arab Relationships



American Views

- Arranged marriages
- Dating is prohibited or secret
- “Love” is absent

Arab Reality

- Mostly arranged marriages, increasingly for love
- Dating occurs, but privately; can bring “shame” to the family
- Love is increasingly a reason for marriage

Information Sources



- Quotes were collected in the open-ended surveys that were distributed in the USA and the UAE
- Statistics were collected using the Roper Center's iPoll and the US Census Bureau website