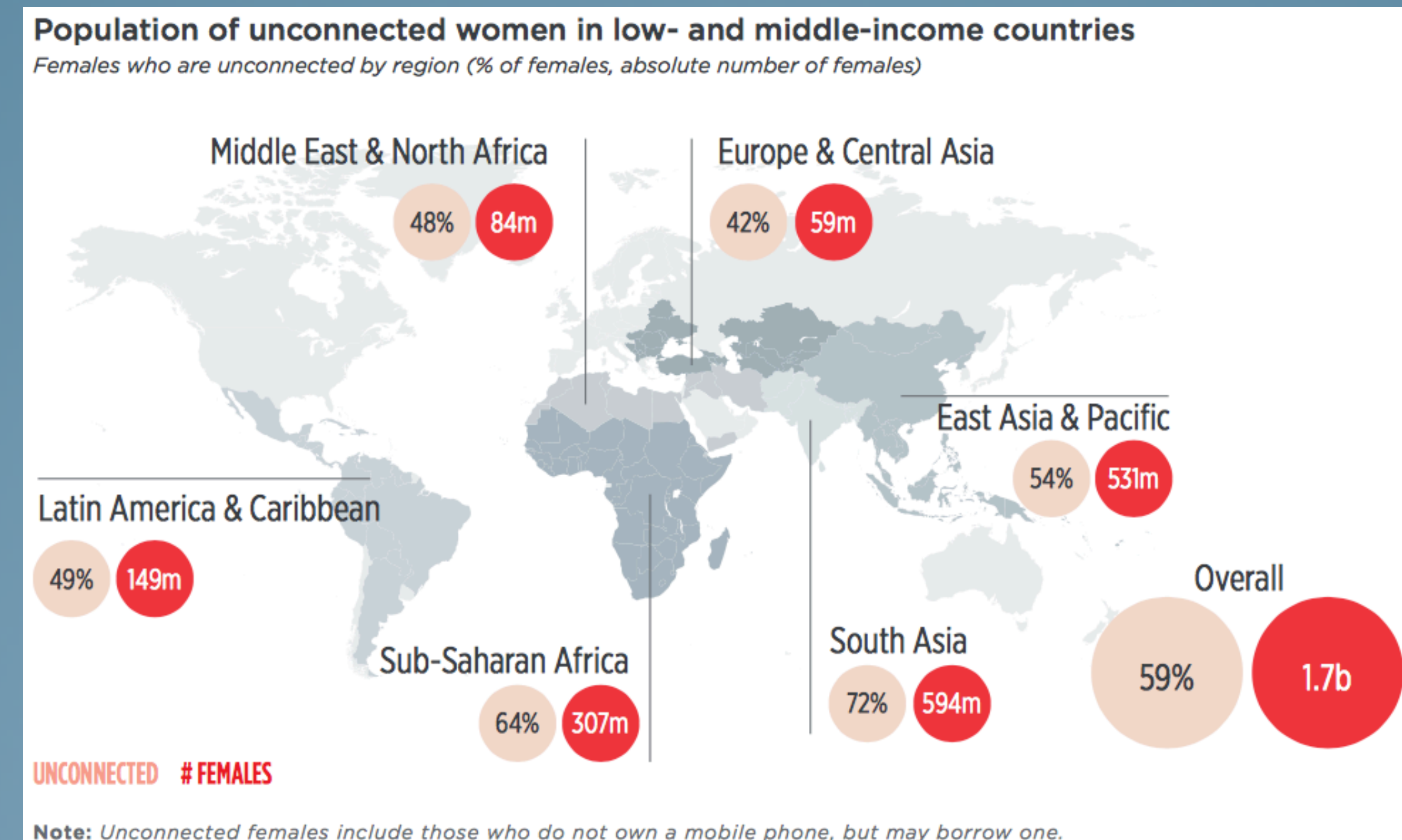


Social Media: Agent for Change for Women in the Middle East

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Abstract:

The MENA region consistently ranks as one of the worst places in the world to be a woman. Current events suggest that there is a positive relationship between communication instruments and women's movements in the region. A positive relationship means that there is evidence suggesting that the correlation has led to successful awareness and mobilization efforts, regardless of if the overall goal had not been achieved (i.e. passing legislation to overturn a specific ban).



This map shows that 48% of females in MENA lacked access to mobile phones in 2015

Source: GSMA Intelligence and World Bank data, Altai Consulting analysis
Retrieved from: Connected Women 2015 Report

Discussion:

Importance of the Arab Spring:

- al-Huwaider uploaded her video 2½ years before the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi, making her a trailblazer in digital activism
- al-Sharif's video was successful in sparking a mass movement because the power of new forms of media were fully recognized by 2011

Access to Technology:

- Differential resource capacity between 2008 and 2011 was quite extreme due to the availability of ICTs

Harassment, Detainment and Violence:

- A strong collective identity led members to deliberately take actions that threatened their safety

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Country	Overall rank	Overall score
Israel	44	0.721
Tunisia	117	0.651
United Arab Emirates	120	0.649
Bahrain	126	0.632
Algeria	127	0.629
Kuwait	129	0.628
Qatar	130	0.626
Turkey	131	0.625
Mauritania	132	0.614
Egypt	134	0.608
Jordan	135	0.604
Morocco	136	0.598
Lebanon	137	0.596
Saudi Arabia	138	0.584
Iran, Islamic Rep.	140	0.583
Syria	142	0.568
Yemen	144	0.516

This table ranks countries in the Middle East and North Africa according to their rank on the Global Gender Gap Index

Source: Global Gender Gap Index 2017
Retrieved from: Global Gender Gap Report 2017

Methodology:

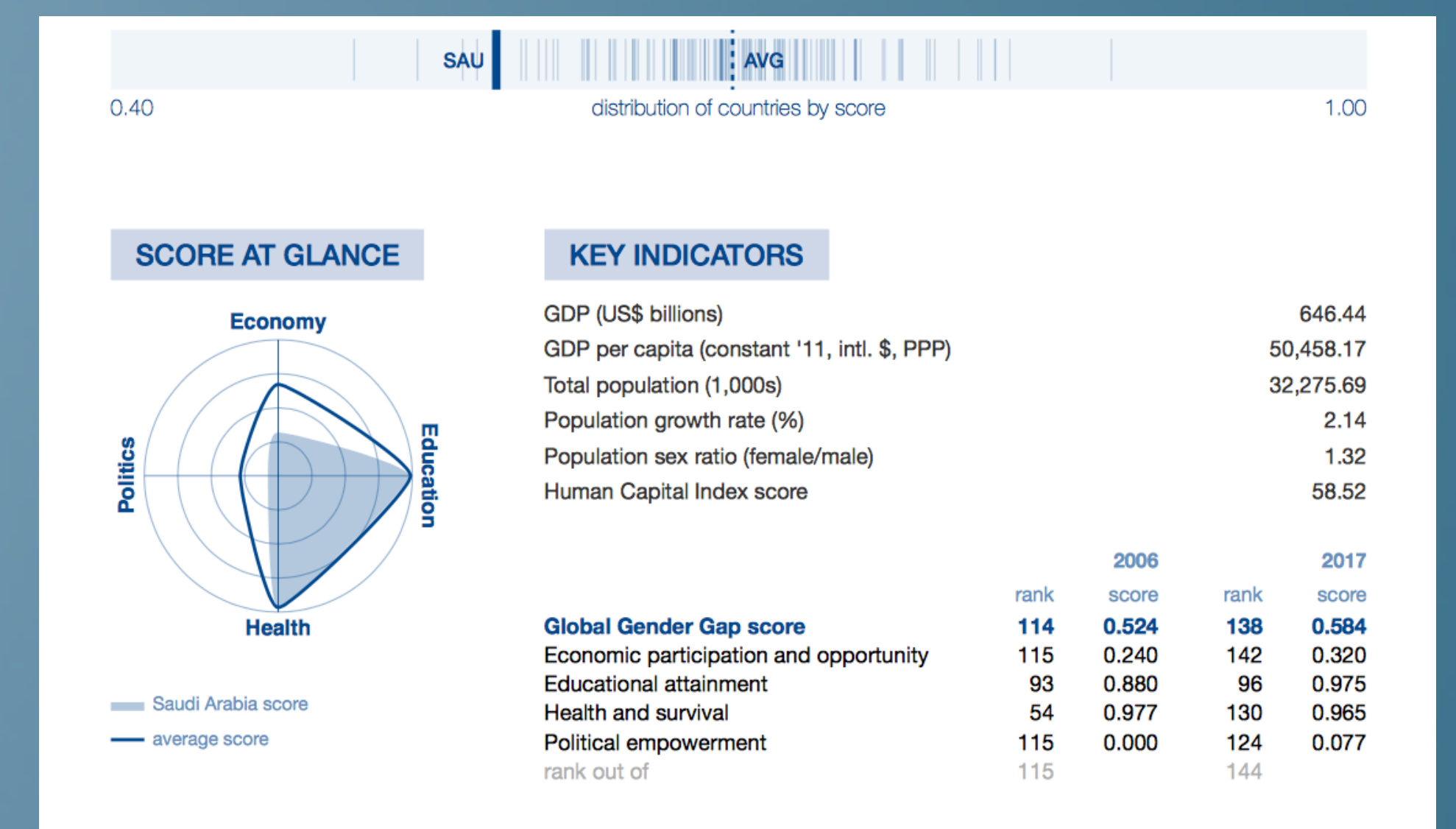
This research uses the movement for the women's right to drive in Saudi Arabia as the primary case study. The analysis is supported by a theoretical background on social movement and communication instruments.

Timeline of Key Events

- 1957:** Women banned from driving in Saudi Arabia
- November 6, 1990:** First major public protest
- March 8, 2008:** First YouTube driving video uploaded
- May 2011:** YouTube driving video sparks a mass movement
- June 17, 2011:** Women2Drive campaign formed
- October 26, 2013:** First mass protest to have no arrests
- September 2017:** Announcement that the driving ban will be overturned
- June 2018:** Women will be allowed to drive

Thesis:

This paper explores the intersection of communication instruments and women's movements in the Middle East in order to assess if there is a positive relationship occurring in this interesting and timely phenomenon.



Conclusion:

Despite leading to seemingly contrary phenomenon including increased harassment, there is evidence that a positive relationship exists between increased access to ICTs, the proliferation of social media platforms and the progress towards achieving the the movement's goal.