

For more information: Beth Lester  
 Penn, Schoen & Berland  
 +1 202 962 3042  
 blester@ps-b.com

Katarina Wallin Bureau  
 Burson-Marsteller EMEA  
 +32 2 7436608  
 katarina.wallinbureau@bm.com

## Arab youth optimism about future surpasses that of Western peers

According to first *ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey*

- *Saudi, Jordanian and Emirati youth most optimistic in region*
- *Economic insecurity dominates concerns among Arab and Western youth; two sides divided over importance of religion and traditional values*
- *Survey based on 1,800 interviews in Middle East and West; compares youth attitudes in both regions*
- *Results presented in Dubai by Burson-Marsteller Global CEO; followed by high-profile panel debate of survey findings*
- *Marks relaunch of ASDA'A within global Burson-Marsteller network*

**Dubai, November 11, 2008:** Arab youth are considerably more optimistic about the future than are their Western peers, according to the first *ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey* commissioned by ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller, the leading public relations consultancy in the Middle East. Just 34% of Western youth feel their country is heading in the right direction, according to the survey. In contrast, Arab youth are considerably more optimistic, with 52% arguing their country is on the right course.

Among the Middle East states surveyed, 65% of Saudi youth, 60% of Jordanian youth and 57% of Emirati youth feel their country is heading in the right direction.

The survey of 1,800 young people between the ages of 18-24 was carried out in six Middle East states and three Western nations, and was unveiled today by ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller, which has been formally relaunched within the global Burson-Marsteller network.

The rising cost of living and overall economic outlook is the overriding concern for both groups, including 43% of Western youth and 30% of their peers in the Arab world. Within the Middle East, Jordanian youth expressed the greatest level of fear for their financial security, with 42% highlighting this area. By comparison, just 23% of Qatari youth cited the rising cost of living and overall economic outlook as a central challenge.

While the survey shows that young people in the Middle East and the West share similar concerns – about the economy, their ability to live in a good area and stay in touch with their family – nowhere is the contrast between Arab and Western youth more pronounced than when examining the importance of religious belief. Some 68% of Middle East youth say that religion defines them as a person, compared to just 16% in the West.

“Today’s generation of young people, born as the Cold War was winding to a close and coming of age in a geopolitical landscape defined by the events of September 11th and its aftermath, are the first to be raised in a truly globalised environment,” said Burson-Marsteller Global CEO Mark Penn, former advisor

to US President Bill Clinton and author of the recent bestseller *Microtrends: The Small Forces Behind Tomorrow's Big Changes*, who presented the findings today in Dubai. "This important study of the hopes, fears and aspirations of Arab and Western youth demonstrates how both groups are adapting to the forces of change – and how their values are evolving over time."

Following the presentation in Dubai, ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller hosted the same evening a high-profile roundtable discussion, chaired by Mark Penn, examining the challenges and opportunities facing the youth of this dynamic region. Additional participants in the discussion included: Mohamed Alabbar, Chairman, Emaar Properties; Hassan Fattah, Deputy Editor, The National; Saudi Arabian academic and playwright Dr. Maisah Sobaihi; and Mohammed Saeed Harib, Managing Director of Lammtara Productions and creator and producer of the animated sitcom *Freej*.

"This fascinating study shows that Arab youth are generally more conservative than their Western peers. They are also far more idealistic and optimistic about the future," said Joseph Ghossoub, President & CEO of The Holding Group.

"The strategic realignment between ASDA'A and Burson-Marsteller creates a winning combination of unmatched local experience and truly global reach," said Jeremy Galbraith, Chief Executive Officer, Burson-Marsteller Europe, Middle East and Africa. "This landmark study, which examines trends in the West and Arab world, is indicative of the standard of best practice consultancy we provide to clients here in the Middle East and across the world."

"Sixteen years after our agency first opened its doors in Dubai, we are very pleased to mark our relaunch by sharing these critical insights with the regional and international community," said Sunil John, Chief Executive Officer, ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller. "Here in the Middle East, where one in five people is between the ages of 15-24, understanding this vital demographic is more important than ever. Comparing and contrasting these findings with the survey results from the West provides additional powerful insights."

In September 2008, Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, Inc. (PSB) and The Nielsen Company conducted some 1,800 interviews with respondents between the ages of 18-24 in six Middle East nations (Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) and three Western countries (Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States). The results have a margin of error of +/-5.66% in the Middle East and +/-5.7% in Western nations.

Piyush Mathur, Nielsen's Regional Managing Director – Middle East, North Africa and Pakistan, said: "The Arab Youth Survey is one of the largest studies of youth to have been conducted in the region, in terms of scope and respondent numbers. By comparing attitudes in the region and the West, the study also provides unique insights for a variety of audiences, especially marketers and the communications industry."

-ends-

## Editor's Notes

### About the ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey:

The ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey is a landmark research study into the hopes, fears and aspirations of the Arab world's largest demographic: its youth population. Commissioned by ASDA'A

-more-

Burson-Marsteller, this proprietary research study contains 44 open and closed-ended questions on subjects ranging from optimism about the future and issues surrounding globalisation to questions of culture and values, and lifestyle and technology. Additional findings from the survey, which will provide useful insights for government, policymakers, NGOs, business and industry, will be released throughout the coming year.

#### **About Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates**

Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB) is a global research-based consultancy that specializes in messaging and communications strategy for blue-chip political, corporate, and entertainment clients. They have over 30 years of experience leveraging unique insights about consumer opinion to provide clients with a competitive advantage – what they call Winning Knowledge™. PSB executes polling and message testing services for corporations, including Microsoft, BP, McDonald's, Vodafone, Coca-Cola, AT&T, Procter & Gamble, and Merrill Lynch, and have helped elect more than 26 presidents and prime ministers. PSB is a trusted advisor to corporate CEOs and national leaders around the world. For more information, please visit [psbresearch.com](http://psbresearch.com).

#### **About ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller:**

Established in 1992, ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller ([www.asdaa.com](http://www.asdaa.com)) is the region's leading public relations consultancy, with over 160 communications professionals in 11 fully-owned offices across the region. The agency provides services to governments, multinational businesses and regional corporate clients through its six practices in the sectors of Technology, Corporate, Finance, Healthcare, Consumer Marketing and Public Affairs. Its services include reputation management, media training, crisis & issues management, media relations, media monitoring and analysis and event management.

#### **About Burson-Marsteller:**

Burson-Marsteller ([www.burson-marsteller.com](http://www.burson-marsteller.com)), established in 1953, is a leading global public relations and communications firm. It provides clients with strategic thinking and program execution across a full range of public relations, public affairs, advertising and web-related services. The firm's seamless worldwide network consists of 71 wholly-owned offices and 58 affiliate offices, together operating in 83 countries across six continents. Burson-Marsteller is a part of Young & Rubicam Brands, a subsidiary of WPP (NASDAQ: WPPGY), one of the world's leading communications services networks.

#### **For further information, please contact:**

Beth Lester  
Penn, Schoen & Berland  
+1 202 962 3042  
[blester@ps-b.com](mailto:blester@ps-b.com)

Katarina Wallin Bureau  
Burson-Marsteller EMEA  
Tel: +32 2 7436608  
Mob: +32473421141  
e-mail: [katarina.wallinbureau@bm.com](mailto:katarina.wallinbureau@bm.com)