



ACPF 2024

المنتدى العربي
لحماية المستهلك

Arab Consumer
Protection Forum



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



20-21 February 2024 - Bahrain

E/ESCWA/CL6.GCP/2024/ACPF/Infographics.1

Perspectives on the Arab region: consumer protection policies

Consumer protection policies have become increasingly important in recent decades owing to the rapid evolution of markets and the incorporation of technology in business operations. The Arab region has also made significant progress in implementing policies and laws to address various aspects of consumer protection and to keep up with the fast-paced developments and market changes. These consumer protection policies are helping Arab countries promote fair market practices, enhance economic competitiveness, and improve the welfare of consumers.

Consumer protection policies contribute to sustainable development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):



Supporting the SDGs

By ensuring fair trade, ethical marketing and safeguarding against harmful products, consumer protection policies help in achieving the sustainable development targets, such as health and well-being, responsible consumption and climate action.



Enhancing the business environment, innovation and ethics

Consumer protection policies create a reliable environment for businesses to innovate and compete ethically, which is essential for economic growth and employment—two core elements of the SDGs.



Promoting equality and inclusivity for consumers

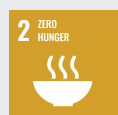
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Alignment of consumer protection policies with the SDG targets



SDG 1.4 (Access to basic services and economic resources)

Consumer protection policies ensure equitable access to essential services and protect against financial exploitation, thus helping to alleviate poverty.



SDG 2.1 (End hunger and ensure access to safe, nutritious food)

Policies that enforce food safety and quality standards are crucial for achieving this target.



SDG 3.9 (Reduce illnesses and death from hazardous chemicals and pollution)

Consumer protection policies regulate and reduce exposure to harmful substances, promoting public health.



SDG 8.4 (Promote resource efficiency in consumption and production)

Sustainable protection policies encourage eco-friendly production and consumption patterns.

SDG 8.8 (Protect labour rights and promote a safe working environment)

Consumer protection policies include workers' rights and safety, particularly in consumer industries.



SDG 10.2 (Empower and promote social, economic and political inclusion)

Consumer protection policies help ensure fair treatment and market access for all, thus reducing inequality.



SDG 12.2 (Sustainable management and use of natural resources)

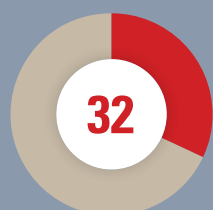
Sustainable protection policies advocate for the responsible use of resources.

SDG 12.8 (Promote universal understanding of sustainable lifestyles)

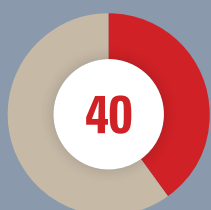
Consumer education and protection policies support informed choices about sustainable consumption.

Sustainable consumption status globally and in the Arab region

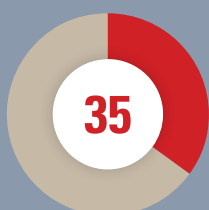
Sustainable consumption is gaining momentum globally and in the Arab region. Several Arab countries have launched initiatives to promote sustainable consumption and production practices. Nevertheless, changing consumer behaviour and lack of access to sustainable products and services remain the biggest challenges. Achieving true sustainability will require concerted efforts from Governments, businesses and individuals to change consumption patterns and adopt sustainable practices.



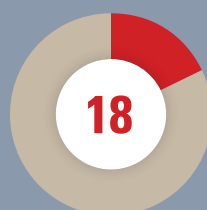
Countries with consumer protection laws related to sustainable consumption



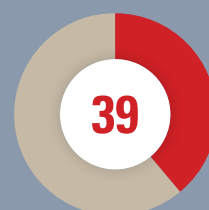
Countries with policymaking powers related to sustainable consumption



Countries with enforcement powers related to sustainable consumption



Countries that have cooperation agreements related to sustainable consumption



Countries that have education initiatives related to sustainable consumption

	Worldwide	Arab region	Arab country
Countries with consumer protection laws related to sustainable consumption	32	1	United Arab Emirates
Countries with policymaking powers related to sustainable consumption	40	7	Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia
Countries that have cooperation agreements related to sustainable consumption	18	0	-
Countries that have education initiatives related to sustainable consumption	39	4	Morocco, Oman, Qatar and United Arab Emirates
Countries with enforcement powers related to sustainable consumption	35	1	United Arab Emirates

Source: UNCTAD World Consumer Protection Map and Arab Business Legislative Framework Report 2023 (ABLF).

Main developments in consumer protection laws in the Arab region

Over the past three years (2020-2023), the Arab region witnessed widespread reform in consumer protection laws, with many Arab countries amending their existing laws or adopting new ones. High-income and developing countries have made considerable progress by incorporating e-commerce provisions in their laws, while others are still in the early stages of development.

Arab region scores and classifications in the ESCWA assessment of consumer protection laws

	2020			2023		
E-commerce and consumer protection	-	-	-	2.83	▲ ●	Basic
Measures enabling consumers to obtain redress	3.22	●	Moderate	4.06	▲ ●	Developed
Physical safety regulations	3.82	●	Moderate	4.30	▲ ●	Developed
Promotion of sustainable consumption	1.41	●	Weak	2.15	▲ ●	Basic
Protection of consumers' economic interests	4.83	●	Developed	5.30	▲ ●	Strong

Source: ESCWA regulatory assessment results from the Arab Business Legislative Frameworks report, 2023

Note: The score is from 0 to 7 (where 0 is the lowest and 7 is the highest).

Consumer protection institutional framework in the Arab region

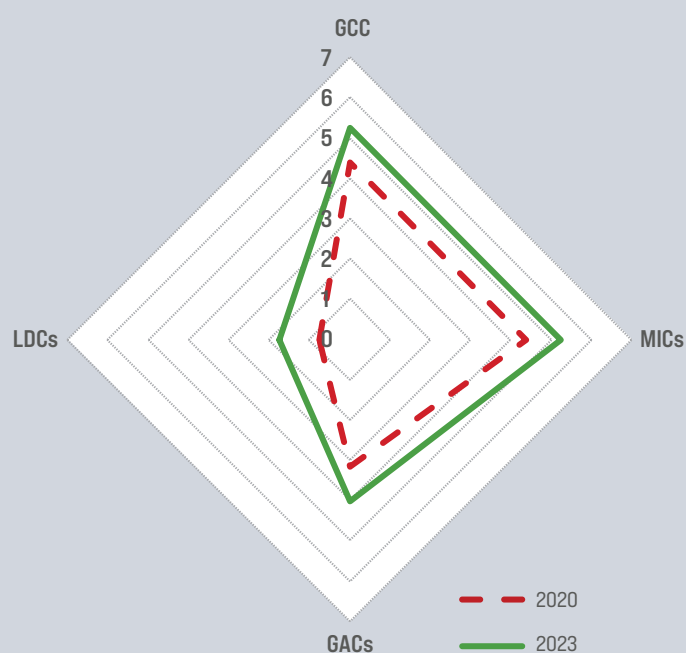
A total of **18 Arab countries** have established consumer protection bodies, while **4 countries** have not yet established such institutions. These countries are Comoros, Djibouti, Libya and Yemen.



Empowerment of consumers and redress mechanisms in the Arab region

Consumers are empowered when they have access to a redress mechanism that provides remedies and compensation when they experience harm to their physical safety or economic interests, encounter false advertisements or misleading information, or sign abusive contractual clauses. A strong dispute resolution mechanism helps to settle disagreements between consumers and businesses as quickly as possible. In the Arab region, these protections are particularly noteworthy and diverse in strengths between the different subregions.

Assessment of measures enabling consumers to obtain redress in the Arab subregions



Source: ESCWA legislative assessment results from the [Arab Business Legislative Frameworks](#) report, 2023.

Note: Score is from 0 to 7 (where 0 is the lowest and 7 is the highest).

GCC refers to Gulf Cooperation Council countries; LDCs refers to least developed countries; MICs refers to middle-income countries; CACs refers to conflict-affected countries

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Countries have adopted **redress mechanisms** that empower consumers to file complaints before national courts or through consumer protection organizations.

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Countries have established **dispute resolution bodies** to settle disputes within a specific timeframe based on a determined threshold.

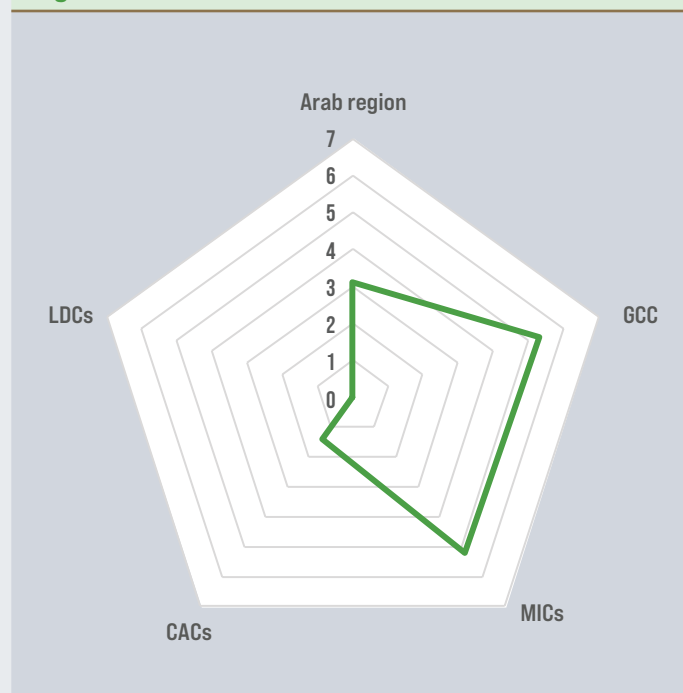
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Countries have established an **online platform** to allow consumers to submit and track complaints.

E-commerce regulations in the Arab region

In the Arab region, there has been a significant rise in the number of businesses operating through digital platforms. As a result, policymakers have begun implementing provisions to address consumer data privacy issues, the protection of consumers' economic interests and physical safety, the duty to publish accurate information, advertisement duties, and dispute mechanisms.

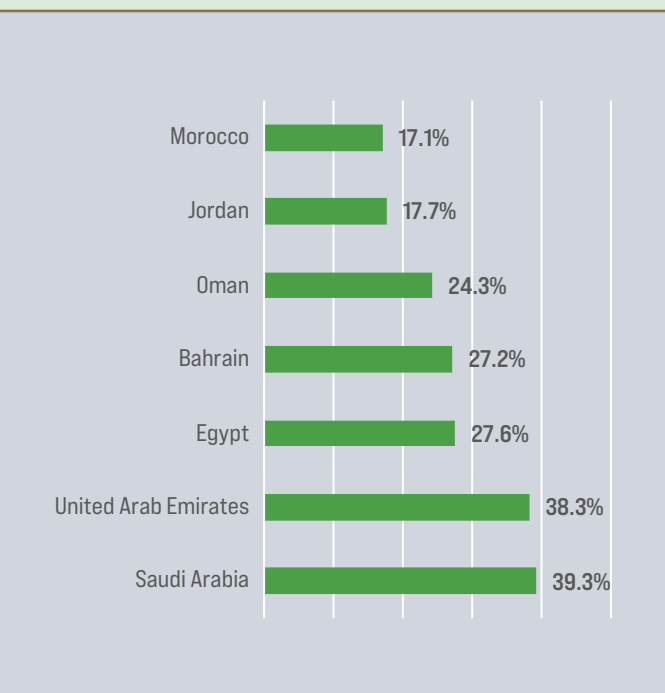
E-commerce regulations assessment in the Arab region, 2023



Source: ESCWA.

Note: Score is from 0 to 7 (0 is the lowest and 7 is the highest). GCC refers to Gulf Cooperation Council countries; LDCs refers to least developed countries; MICs refers to middle-income countries; CACs refers to conflict-affected countries.

E-commerce sales compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in selected Arab countries (2019 -2022)



Source: World Bank, International Monetary Fund: DinarStandard 2019 to 2022

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Arab countries have adopted **provisions or mentioned in their legislation that provisions are enforced on e-commerce operations.**¹

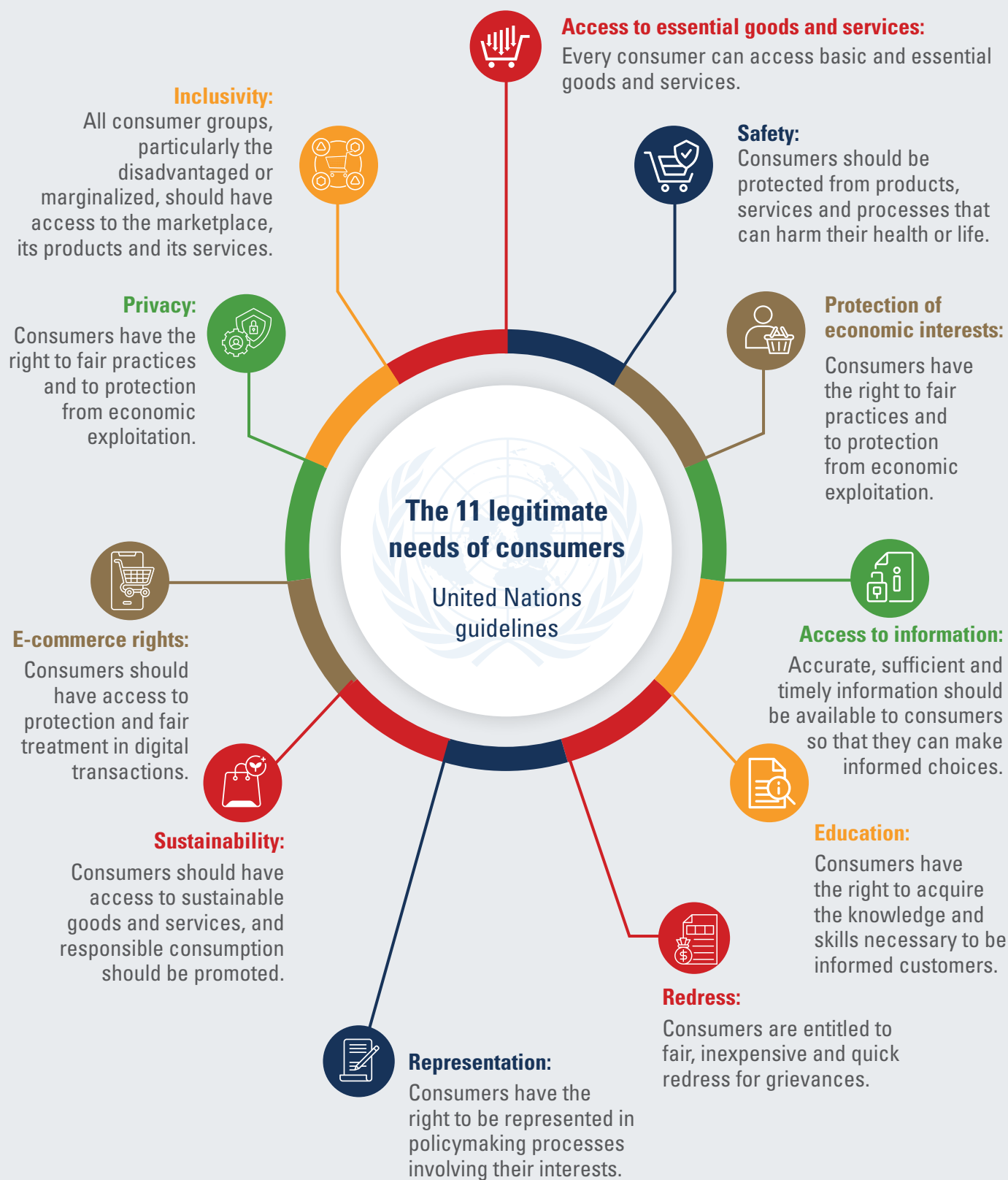
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Arab countries (especially LDCs) **lack legislative provisions tackling e-commerce.**

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Arab countries **adopted incentive programmes** for small and medium-sized enterprises to encourage them to establish online platforms.

¹ ESCWA, Arab Business Legislative Frameworks 2023.



The 11 legitimate needs of consumers, as outlined in the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection, represent a comprehensive framework for ensuring the rights and well-being of consumers globally. These needs encompass essential aspects, such as access to goods and services, safety, information and privacy, and extend to broader concerns like sustainability and inclusivity.



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