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Saudi Arabia: Think tank state of the sector 2023

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Alzou'bi

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Saudi Arabia: Think tank state of the sector 2023

Emergence and growth of think tanks in Saudi Arabia:
Harnessing Vision 2030 for transformation

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Introduction¹

The development of think tanks in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a relatively recent phenomenon, with the first organisations having been established in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Two key factors have significantly influenced the growth of the think tank sector in Saudi Arabia in the last decade. The first factor was the 2016 launch of Vision 2030, which serves as the country's blueprint for economic, social and political transformation. The second factor was Saudi Arabia's presidency of the Group of 20 (G20) forum in 2019/20 and coordination of the Think20 (T20).

In this report, we provide an overview of the Saudi Arabian think tank sector, including its history, growth, research focus, funding sources and key functions. We also examine awareness of the sector among the public, and the sector's role in driving policy development. Additionally, we explore the impact of Vision 2030 on the political context and the sector's outlook for the future.

The Saudi Arabian government formulated Vision 2030, a strategic policy framework, to delineate the country's future goals. Its aim is the transformation of Saudi Arabia's oil-based economy, centred around three pillars: an ambitious nation, a thriving economy and a vibrant society. Our findings suggest that this plan has been instrumental in stimulating the growth and recognition of think tanks in Saudi Arabia. The sector is benefitting from the increased interest in research that the plan has generated and think tanks are uniquely positioned to play an important role in driving the transformations. The implementation of Vision 2030 therefore presents an opportunity for substantial growth. Saudi thinktankers anticipate that positive political developments and funding initiatives associated with the plan will bolster the sector, enabling its expansion.

Saudi Arabia's presidency of the G20 and its involvement in the T20 process further boosted levels of confidence and engagement within the think tank sector. This historic milestone allowed Saudi think tanks to actively contribute to global issues, incorporate regional concerns into the G20's agenda, and develop cross-border partnerships.

Despite limited public awareness of the sector, Saudi think tanks are increasingly being recognised for their valuable contributions to policymaking. While challenges in fundraising and partnerships exist, think tank professionals in Saudi Arabia remain optimistic about the future, with expectations of sector growth and improved funding prospects.

The positive momentum generated by Vision 2030 and Saudi Arabia's active participation in global affairs has positioned the think tank sector to play a crucial role in shaping the country's progress and fostering evidence-informed decision-making. With their optimism and commitment, Saudi Arabian think tanks are poised to overcome the sector's challenges and make significant contributions to domestic and international policy dialogues.

In the following sections, we delve deeper into specific dimensions of the Saudi Arabian think tank sector, providing insights into its current landscape and future prospects.

1. The Saudi Arabia: Think tank state of the sector 2023 report is a collaborative initiative between OTT, the Center for Research & Intercommunication Knowledge (CRIK) and the DEVE Initiative. It draws on a literature review, data on Saudi Arabian think tanks from the [Open Think Tank Directory](#), and a survey completed by 37 Saudi Arabian thinktankers (details in Annex 1).

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Emergence and growth of think tanks in Saudi Arabia

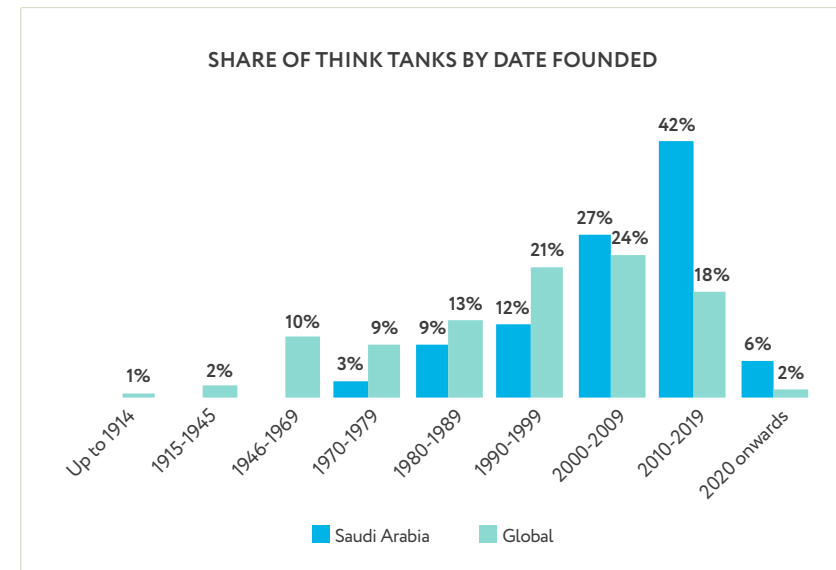
History

The establishment of think tanks in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is relatively new, with the first organisations having been founded in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It's worth noting that during that time, the term 'think tank' was not commonly used in Saudi Arabia; these early organisations were known as 'research centres' and 'institutes' – terms that are still used today.

From then on, the think tank sector grew slowly until the 2000s, after which it experienced a substantial upsurge, peaking during the decade of 2010–2019. The growth curve followed by Saudi Arabian think tanks aligns with the global trend, albeit with a slight time lag (see Chart 1). Alongside local factors, global growth and interest in the think tank sector seem to have contributed to the expansion of Saudi Arabian think tanks.

Two key factors have significantly influenced the growth of the think tank sector in Saudi Arabia in the last decade (2010–2019). These were the 2016 launch of Vision 2030, setting out the country's blueprint for economic, social and political transformation, and Saudi Arabia's presidency of the 2019 G20 and coordination of the T20.

Chart 1



n=2943

Source: Open Think Tank Directory

Vision 2030

Vision 2030 is a strategic policy framework developed by the Saudi Arabian government in 2016 to outline the country's aspirations and objectives. It aims to facilitate Saudi Arabia's transition 'from an oil-based economy to a knowledge-based economy' (Nurunnabi 2017) and emphasises three central pillars:

- (1) *an ambitious nation* focused on enhancing government efficiency and social responsibility;
- (2) *a thriving economy* with diverse revenue streams, sustainable growth and increased employment opportunities; and
- (3) *a vibrant society* that embraces a fulfilling lifestyle rooted in religious values, environmental sustainability, leisure and good health (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2022).

The vision will be implemented through 11 'Vision Realization Programs' – covering areas such as 'Quality of Life', 'Fiscal Sustainability' and 'Health Sector Transformation' – designed to collectively deliver on 96 specific objectives derived from the original three pillars (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2022).

Vision 2030 has been instrumental in stimulating the growth – both in numbers and in recognition – of think tanks in Saudi Arabia. Previously, the country relied on international expertise to guide its growth trajectory (Malik 2022); however, Vision 2030's emphasis on research and innovation has encouraged local experts to devise home-grown solutions (Al-Haddad 2021).

The launch of Vision 2030 coincided with the establishment of at least six new think tanks in 2016, indicating heightened interest and support for research, ideas and innovation (On Think Tanks n.d.). It has facilitated a government-supported environment enabling think tanks to recognise their relevance, meet international standards and contribute to national progress. As Simavoryan (2022) observes, the vision has 'clearly boosted the function and prominence of think tanks', offering a unique opportunity for growth.

T20 Saudi Arabia

The second factor that facilitated the growth of Saudi Arabia's think tank sector was the Kingdom's role in coordinating the T20 process. In 2019, Saudi Arabia achieved a historic milestone by becoming the first Middle Eastern country to preside over the G20. This also required the nation to co-chair the G20's research and policy advice network, known as the T20. The impact of this attainment on Saudi Arabia's think tank sector was profound.

Amid the urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the T20 Inception Conference (T20 Saudi Arabia 2020) went ahead in Riyadh to promote evidence-informed debate and solutions. The group was organised into 11 task forces focussing on a range of policy issues, their efforts culminating in an output of 146 policy briefs co-authored by over 600 scholars worldwide (T20 Saudi Arabia 2020).

T20 Saudi Arabia was a turning point that enabled Saudi think tanks to actively contribute to global issues and incorporate regional concerns into the G20's agenda (Görlich n.d.). This boosted the confidence of the Saudi Arabian think tank sector to present research at a global level, develop local expertise and build cross-border partnerships.

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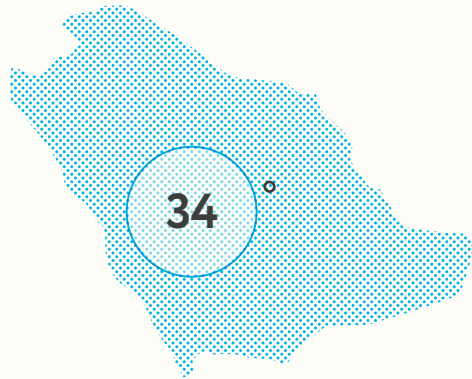
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Data snapshot

■ Saudi Arabia ■ Global

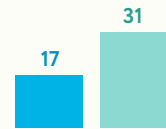
THINK TANKS IN THE OPEN THINK TANK DIRECTORY



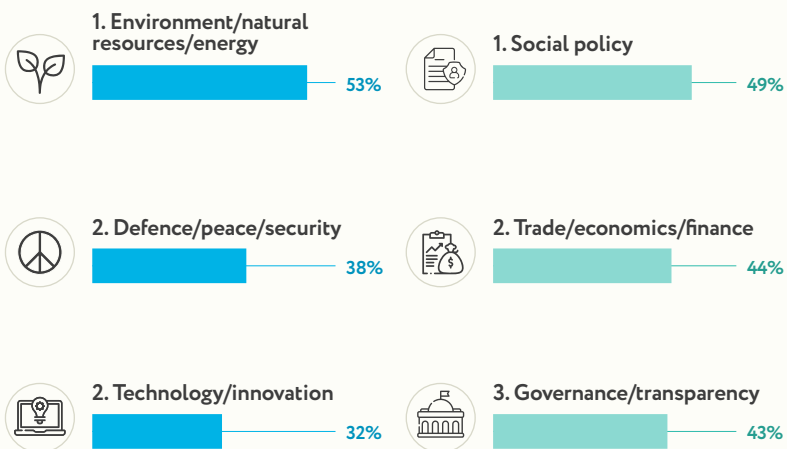
City with the most think tanks

27 Riyadh

AVERAGE THINK TANK AGE (YEARS)

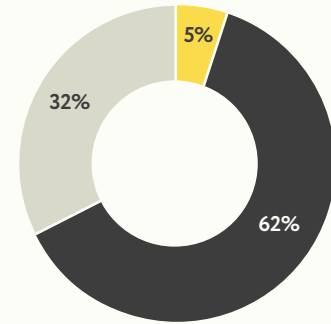


TOP 3 RESEARCH AREAS



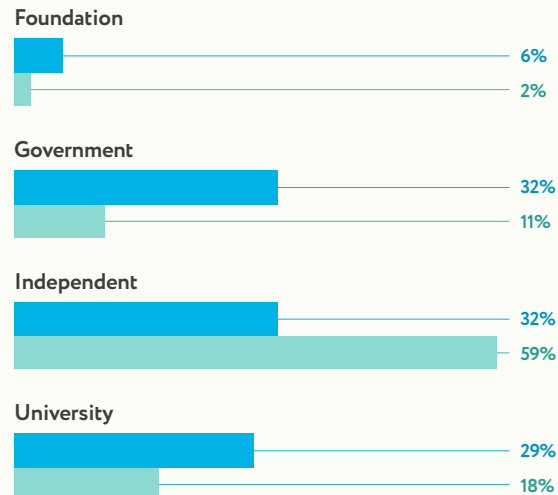
PERCEIVED PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THINK TANKS

Is the concept of think tanks in Saudi Arabia understood within your community?



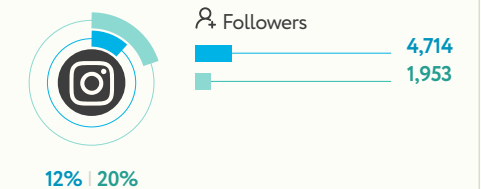
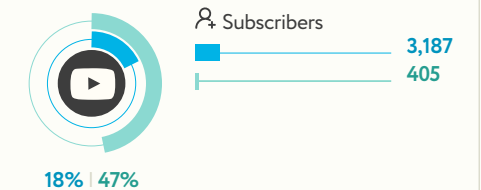
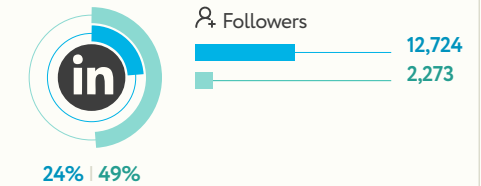
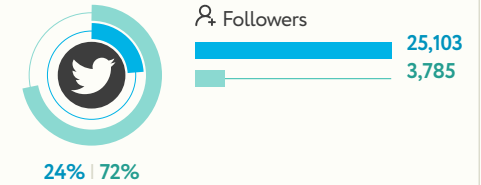
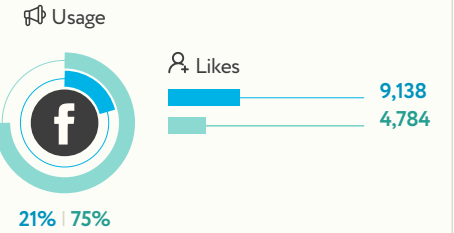
■ Yes ■ No ■ Limited knowledge

INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION OF THINK TANKS IN SAUDI ARABIA



SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

(Averages)



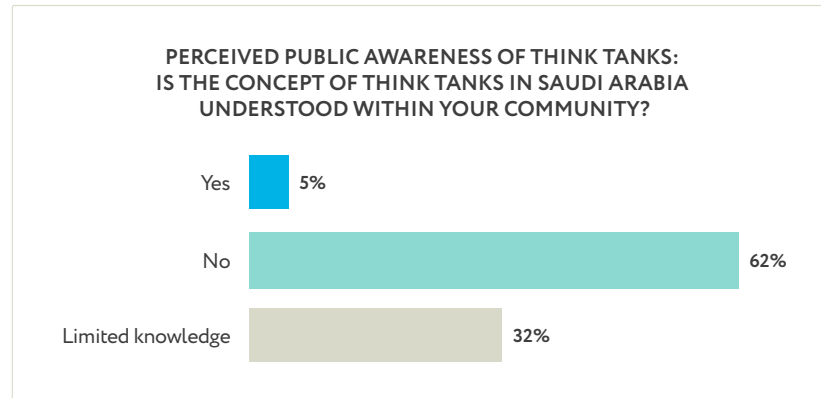
Saudi Arabian think tanks: A closer look

Overview

SECTOR AWARENESS

Nearly 95% of respondents to our survey perceived a lack of understanding about think tanks within the country (see Chart 2). However, as expected, they observed that individuals associated with academia, research institutions and government had a higher level of awareness.

Chart 2



n=37

These results may be better understood when considered in context, with regard to the overall profile of Saudi Arabia's think tank sector. Firstly, it should be noted that around a third of the country's think tanks are affiliated with the government (32%), and another third with universities (29%). In contrast, the majority of think tanks worldwide (59%) identify as independent institutions. This could possibly explain why, in Saudi Arabia, understanding of the think tank sector is markedly higher among actors who work within government and academia than among the general public.

And secondly, a closer analysis of data from the Open Think Tank Directory on 34 active Saudi Arabian think tanks shows that the sector is relatively young, with an average age of 17 years. In comparison, the global average age of think tanks is 31 years – almost twice as old as the Saudi sector (Nicolle, Baertl and Gilbreath 2022). For Saudi Arabia, this means there is still work to be done to embed its young think tank sector and raise levels of public awareness.

Our survey respondents agreed that there is a need for greater awareness of the sector, and suggested that Saudi think tanks could foster higher levels of understanding by communicating their work and objectives more clearly to the public.

KEY FUNCTIONS

Think tanks in Saudi Arabia are primarily seen as having these key functions:²

- Generating ideas
- Undertaking policy analysis and economic and development research
- Thought leadership
- Capacity building for the public, civil society, policymakers, the media, etc.
- Providing a sounding board for policymakers and/or opinion leaders
- Undertaking collaborative research with other organisations.

In addition to the importance of policy analysis, respondents emphasised the valuable role that these institutions fulfil as resources for policymakers and other stakeholders – either as platforms for policy ideation or as capacity-strengthening entities. The results also identified the need for research partnerships for think tanks, highlighting the crucial importance of collaboration and knowledge exchange for Saudi Arabia's development.

2. Respondents were provided a list of options from which to make a selection. These were the most selected options.

FUNDING

Common funding mechanisms for think tanks in Saudi Arabia include:

- **Endowments:** Certain organisations – especially those affiliated with the royal family – have been set up with endowments, on which they rely for their operations. For example, the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (KFCRIS), which is affiliated with the King Faisal Foundation, has played a significant historical role in Saudi Arabia over the course of four decades.
- **Self-generated income:** Some think tanks fund their operations through commercial businesses that are part of their organisation. This includes selling intellectual products like books and annual publications, offering consulting or training services, or charging subscriptions for access to scientific journals.
- **Contracts:** Contracts and commissions from government or private entities are another funding source for Saudi think tanks. However, as these are often project-specific and time-bound, they may not provide a consistent stream of income or cover operational overheads.
- **Sponsorships:** Some think tanks secure funding through sponsorships to undertake research that aligns with a sponsor’s area of interest. Sponsors can be individuals or organisations, and the partnerships are formalised through contractual agreements, which can span several years. This form of funding is known as ‘strategic sponsorships’ and is mutually beneficial for both parties. Sponsors benefit from the advancement of their specific interests, while the think tank partner benefits from financial support and valuable opportunities to expand their influence through enhanced access to diverse sectors, stakeholders and decision-makers.
- **Charitable donations:** Some think tanks rely either predominantly or partially on financial contributions from their founders or from charitable organisations.

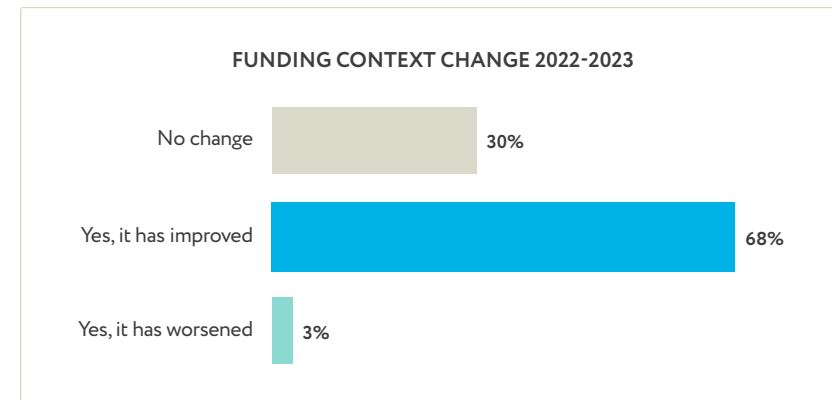
Looking back on 2022–2023

FUNDING CONTEXT OVER THE LAST YEAR

Respondents observed a positive trend over the past year, with nearly 70% reporting an improvement in their funding environment (Chart 3).³ This positive change is largely credited to Vision 2030, which highlights the significance of expertise and evidence in policy formulation. Several respondents also indicated that this growing appreciation for expertise and evidence could lead to better financial planning and sustainability measures for think tanks.

Saudi Arabian thinktankers’ generally positive perspective on the funding landscape contrasts sharply with the global findings reported in 2022.⁴ In the global survey, 61% of respondents indicated either ‘no change’ or ‘mixed changes’ in their funding situations over the last year, while 25% reported a deterioration and only 14% an improvement (Nicolle, Baertl and Gilbreath 2022).

Chart 3



n=37

3. Due to the rounding of figures in the charts, it is possible that some charts might display a cumulative range of 99% to 101%.

4. It is important to note that the 2022 global think tank survey was conducted between April and July 2022. As such, respondents in the 2022 and 2023 surveys refer to different time periods. Despite these differences, the results offer valuable insights and prompt further reflection on the topic.

IMPACT OF VISION 2030

When asked about the current impact of Vision 2030 on Saudi Arabia’s political climate, thinktankers expressed overwhelmingly positive views. At least **three positive changes** emerged from the responses:

The creation of a central framework: Vision 2030 was commended for its unifying effect on the Kingdom. Respondents described it as a national framework that offered clear guidance and shared objectives to steer the country’s policy agenda. It was especially credited for its ability to bring together different sectors (social, political, economic and innovation) while both staying true to local values and incorporating contemporary global thinking.

Opening Saudi Arabia to the world in an unprecedented way: Thinktankers expressed the belief that Vision 2030 had transformed Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy, enabling the Kingdom to become an active global player. This involved forging partnerships with neighbouring countries, advancing the Kingdom’s interests in the region and making valuable contributions to global issues such as energy and health.

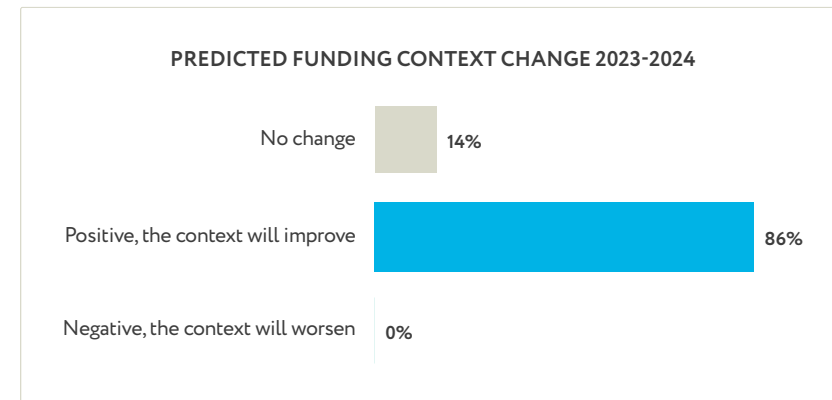
Promoting greater inclusivity: Thinktankers emphasised the significance of promoting diverse viewpoints and civic participation under Vision 2030. This includes the vital role of research centres and think tanks, as well as youth, in shaping policy. The inclusion of youth perspectives is key as over 60% of the population is under 30-years old (Reuters 2023). Young people are recognised for raising important issues, often classified as ‘low politics’, such as employment, housing, cost of living and healthcare (Thompson and Quilliam 2022).

Looking forward to 2023–2024

FUNDING CONTEXT IN THE YEAR AHEAD

There was a prevailing sense of optimism among respondents, with the majority (86%) expressing optimism about their organisation’s future funding prospects. Upon further analysis, we found that, of these (i.e., the respondents who were optimistic about the year ahead), 72% had already witnessed positive changes over the last year. These results indicate that a majority of respondents believe this positive trend in funding will continue to improve, with Vision 2030 being frequently mentioned as a key reason for this optimism.

Chart 4



n=37

The funding outlook among Saudi Arabian thinktankers appears to be more positive in comparison to that of thinktankers worldwide. Globally, nearly twice as many thinktankers were pessimistic about their future funding situation compared to those who were optimistic (29% vs 15%) (Nicolle, Baertl and Gilbreath 2022). This overall pessimism was attributed to a range of factors, including the impact of COVID-19 on the global economy, rising inflation and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

VISION 2030: EXPECTED CHANGES

Nearly all the respondents reported a high level of optimism regarding the future political context in light of Vision 2030. They strongly supported the intended outcomes of the vision and held a positive outlook on its potential for transformative change. Their confidence and optimism were evident in their use of terms such as ‘prosperity’, ‘positive progress’ and ‘positive change’ to describe the future envisioned under Vision 2030.

In fact, respondents felt that the positive impact of Vision 2030 has already manifested in the form of an increased number of research centres, expansion of research topics to include unconventional and forward-thinking areas, and a growth in think tank activities. They also noted an improvement in financial support from local banks and the private sector.

Respondents felt that Vision 2030 offered a clear strategic blueprint for key focus areas, which they anticipated would inspire think tanks to improve their fundraising initiatives. By aligning their research objectives with national development plans, think tanks could attract more funding and ultimately play a significant role in shaping Saudi Arabia’s future.

Notably, respondents revealed that they share a sense of purpose – not only endorsing the vision but also expressing their commitment to its achievement. This corresponds with Al-Haddad’s (2021) assertion that Vision 2030 will be ‘a source of inspiration’ for Saudi think tanks.

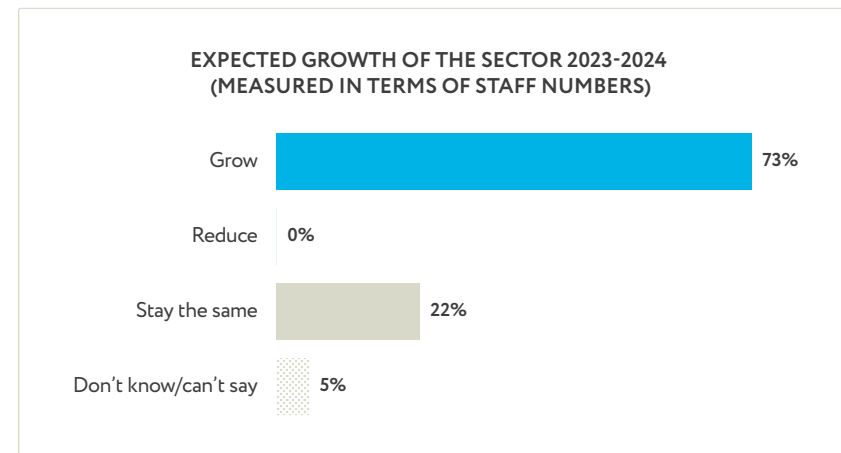
At the domestic level, Vision 2030 was regarded as a cohesive framework of governance that will fulfil public aspirations for stability and prosperity. Respondents believed that Vision 2030 will play a vital role in diversifying Saudi Arabia’s revenue sources and boosting investments in technology and innovation. From a social and political perspective, respondents felt that Vision 2030 will foster a policy landscape that prioritises people-centred approaches, with a distinct role for intellectuals and young people. These views align with the next phase of the vision, which will focus on greater public participation (Al Shammari 2021).

At an international level, respondents viewed Vision 2030 as a driving force behind Saudi Arabia’s increased confidence and more active engagement in global affairs. They anticipated proactive pursuit of foreign interests and development of strategic international relationships.

GROWTH FORECAST

The optimism observed in both the funding and the political contexts seems to have informed the sector’s expectations for growth in the year ahead. The majority of respondents (73%) expected the think tank sector to grow in Saudi Arabia (measured in terms of increased staff numbers). However, a smaller percentage believed that the sector would remain unchanged (22%) or were uncertain about its growth prospects (5%).

Chart 5



n=37

Thinktankers in Saudi Arabia were considerably more optimistic than were many of their counterparts in other regions. According to the 2022 worldwide sector survey conducted by OTT, 59% of thinktankers were uncertain about the growth prospects (in terms of staff numbers) of think tanks in their respective countries. Only 13% expected an increase in staff numbers, with 10% anticipating a reduction in staff and 17% believing there would be no change (Nicolle, Baertl and Gilbreath 2022).

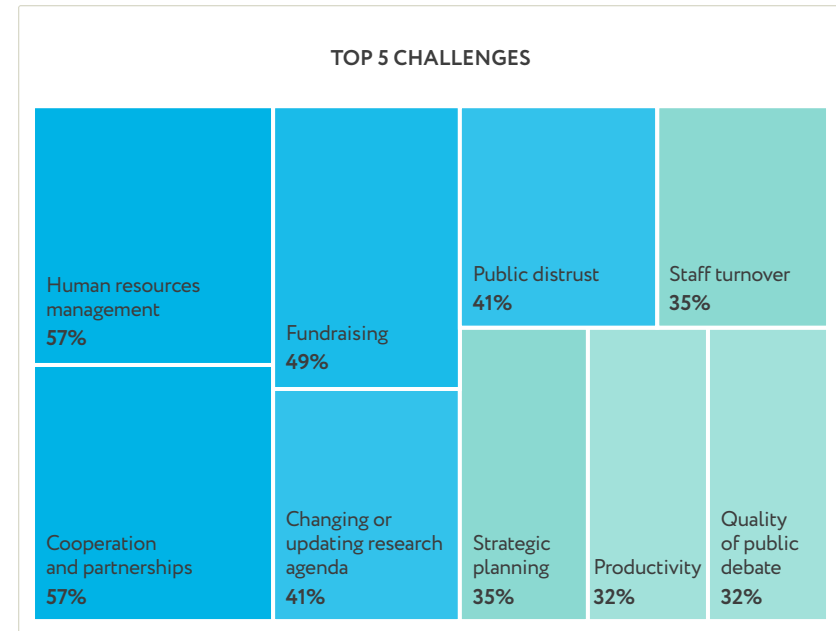
Key challenges

We set out to understand the key challenges facing Saudi Arabian think tanks. We presented respondents with a list of challenges and asked them to select the ones they felt were the most important. Many of the challenges they selected related to the management and development of think tanks, with 57% of respondents selecting *human resources management* and *cooperation and partnerships* as the most pressing issues. When asked to elaborate on their selections, respondents explained that good human resource management and partnerships are essential for successful fundraising. Although respondents expressed overall optimism about future funding prospects, they tempered this with the observation that without the right partnerships and operational support, raising funds would be difficult. This implies that fundraising is likely to be the most pressing challenge facing Saudi Arabian think tanks, despite emerging as only the third-highest response.

Another group of challenges selected by respondents pertained to the political and civic context, including public trust and the quality of debate.

The challenges faced by Saudi Arabian thinktankers are largely similar to those faced by their counterparts worldwide. Thinktankers in the global sample listed fundraising as their foremost challenge (Nicolle, Baertl and Gilbreath 2022). Concerns around the political and civic context were also salient in the global responses, particularly due to public frustration with poor governance systems and political leadership. Although challenges related to think tank management and development were also prevalent, cooperation and partnerships were a greater concern for those organisations with smaller budgets and younger organisations.

Chart 6



n=37

Key policy issues

The main policy issues highlighted in the survey responses appear to align with several thematic areas covered in Vision 2030.⁵

For example, Vision 2030 recognises that scientific discovery and technological progress will play a vital role in realising the country’s overarching goals. This was echoed in the survey results, where 41% of respondents felt that policy issues related to science, technology and innovation were key areas for think tanks to focus on. However, they did not elaborate on any specific focus areas within these broad fields. One possibility is that science, technology and innovation are being incorporated into various programmes and projects, rather than being confined to a specific domain.

Respondents also highlighted the importance of policy issues related to media, culture and sports. These areas align with Vision 2030’s Vision Realization Programs on [Quality of Life](#) and [Pilgrim Experience](#), with tourism and cultural development being key priorities. Sports is also a priority for the Kingdom, evidenced by the country’s considerable investments in popular sports like football, golf and boxing.

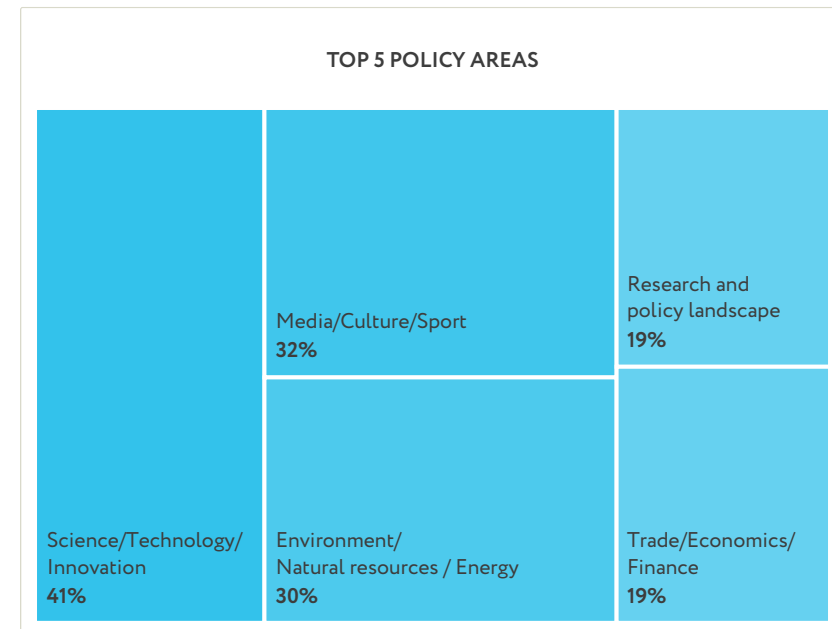
Policy issues relating to the environment, natural resources and energy were among the top-three policy concerns selected by survey respondents. This aligns with the Kingdom’s focus in these areas, as evidenced by Vision 2030’s commitment to streamline the energy sector and address environmental concerns at a global scale through initiatives like COP27 and a carbon capture and storage hub (Reuters 2022).

It’s worth noting that not all areas of focus featured in Vision 2030 were selected by think tanks as priority issues. For example, policy issues related to the private sector and health received fewer (or no) selections, even though they are key parts of Vision 2030. However, there might be a methodological reason for this, related to the survey sample.

The policy priorities of Saudi Arabian thinktankers differ slightly from their global counterparts. The global sector identified international affairs/development as the top policy-focus area for the year ahead (Nicolle, Baertl

& Gilbreath 2022), whereas Saudi respondents selected science/technology/innovation. Interestingly, this emphasis on science is shared by African thinktankers, who ranked this category higher compared to other global respondents. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabian thinktankers aligned more closely with the global sector in their selection of environment/natural resources/energy, which ranked as the second choice among global respondents and the third for Saudi Arabia.

Chart 7



n=37

5. We asked respondents to list the key policy issues that Saudi Arabian think tanks should prioritise to better understand how think tanks can contribute to evidence-informed policy. Their responses were grouped under the research categories used in the *Think tank state of the sector 2022* report and the [Open Think Tank Directory](#).

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Conclusion

The joint survey conducted by OTT, CRIK, and the DEVE Initiative has generated a valuable profile of the Saudi Arabian think tank sector – and reveals a crucial moment for its future direction.

Think tanks in Saudi Arabia are relatively young organisations compared to the global average. They focus on a range of research areas – including environment/natural resources/energy, defence/peace/security, and technology/innovation – and are funded from a variety of sources including endowments, commissions and charitable donations, among others.

The development of think tanks in the Kingdom has experienced significant growth in recent years, driven by a confluence of enabling factors – most notably the launch of Vision 2030 and Saudi Arabia’s presidency of the G20 and corresponding role in the T20.

Vision 2030 in particular has created a significant supportive environment for Saudi think tanks. Its emphasis on research and innovation has stimulated the growth of the sector in terms of both the number of active think tanks in the country and levels of recognition and awareness. Driven by this positive momentum, Saudi think tanks feel empowered to actively shape the country’s progress and promote evidence-informed decision-making. Meanwhile, the Kingdom’s G20 presidency and associated role in the T20 process has boosted the confidence of Saudi think tanks and increased their levels of engagement and collaboration on a global scale.

Although there is still limited public awareness about think tanks in Saudi Arabia, the sector is increasingly being recognised for its valuable contributions to policymaking. Other challenges faced within the sector include fundraising, with half of the survey’s respondents identifying this as a critical issue. Nevertheless, respondents reported that the funding landscape had improved over the previous year and most (86%) were optimistic that this trend would continue.

Indeed, Saudi Arabian think tanks are confident about the sector’s future across the board. The nation’s active engagement in global affairs has empowered Saudi think tanks to contribute significantly to international policy dialogues, and the sector is rising to this opportunity proactively and with confidence. Meanwhile, the alignment of the sector’s domestic priorities with those of Vision 2030 puts Saudi think tanks in a strong strategic position from which to overcome their challenges, grow the sector and make substantial contributions to the country’s progress. On all fronts, thinktankers’ commitment and optimism inspires hope for the sector’s future success – and it will be intriguing to witness their progress.

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Introduction

Emergence and growth
of think tanks in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabian think tanks:
A closer look

Conclusion

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Annex

Annex

About the survey

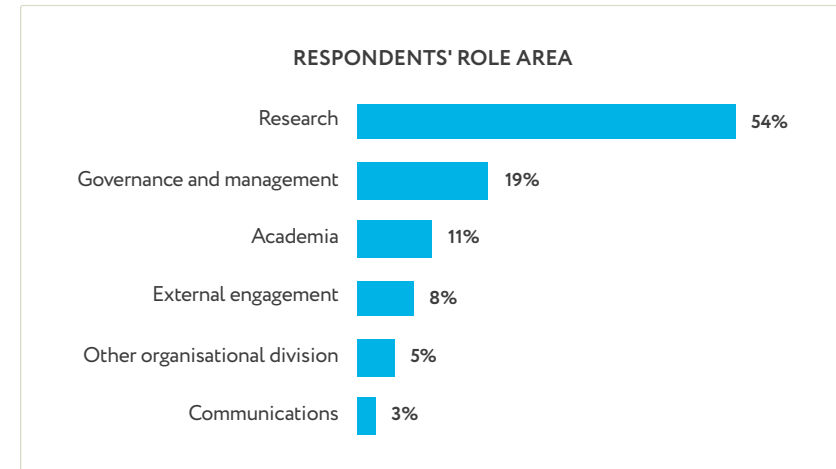
The Saudi Arabia think tank survey was jointly designed by OTT, CRIK and the DEVE Initiative. The survey questions were informed by OTT's annual [think tank sector survey](#), but were tailored to suit the research and policy landscape in Saudi Arabia.

The objective of the survey was to gain an understanding of the current state of the think tank sector in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the context of Vision 2030, and how it compares with the global think tank sector

The survey was conducted between 13 February and 21 March, 2023. CRIK and the DEVE Initiative distributed it, in Arabic, among thinktankers in the country via email and WhatsApp. In total, 37 respondents completed the survey. The organisational role and seniority of the respondents are shown in Charts 8 and 9.

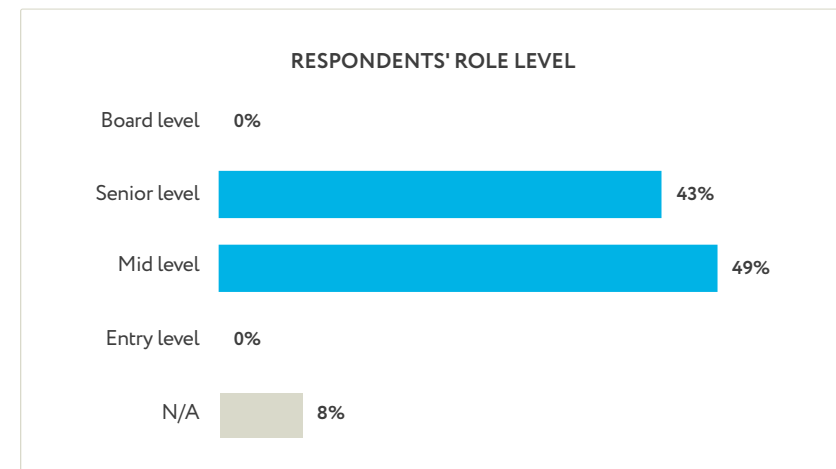
Over 50% of the respondents were engaged in research roles; more than 40% held senior positions, and 49% occupied mid-level positions. These senior and mid-level respondents, with their deep understanding of both the political context and organisational operations, were able to offer key insights into the sector's priorities and challenges.

Chart 8



n=37

Chart 9



n=37

The organisational role area and level were determined using the following guiding criteria:

ROLE AREA	EXAMPLES
<p>Governance and management Individuals (1) involved in the general governance and/or management operations in the organisation and (2) not linked to a specific work area or division (such as research, finance, IT). If they are connected to a specific work area or division, then their role area will be listed under that specific category.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → CEO → Director → Board member → Project manager
<p>Academia Individuals working in universities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Lecturer → Professor → Faculty member
<p>Research Individuals connected to think tank divisions that conduct research and analysis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Research director → Analyst → Research manager → Research fellow
<p>Communications Individuals connected to or part of a think tank's communications team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Head of communications → Editor → Communications officer
<p>External engagement Individuals who are not full-time employees of a think tank yet occasionally work with one in the capacity of an advisor, consultant etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Advisor → Consultant
<p>Other organisational divisions This category includes all other divisions in a think tank that do not fall under research or communications but have a specific focus area. It is separate from the governance and management category, which is broad and generalist rather than specific.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → HR → Administration and operations → IT → Finance
<p>N/A The area of work or think tank division was not mentioned by the respondent.</p>	

ROLE LEVEL	EXAMPLES
<p>Board member Board members were listed separately from the other think tank levels as the board operates as a separate entity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → President of the board → Member of the board
<p>Senior level Individuals holding a senior position within a think tank. Generally, senior members are consulted in decision-making processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → CEO → Director of research → Head of finance → Communications lead
<p>Mid-level Individuals that are broadly part of the mid-level management tier in a think tank.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → HR manager → Project manager → Researcher → Consultant
<p>Entry level Individuals that are broadly part of the entry-level, or early career, tier of a think tank, comprising all positions below the mid-level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Research officer → Research assistant → Junior manager
<p>N/A Their seniority level was not mentioned by the respondent.</p>	

Examples of organisational role area and level classification:

- CEO: governance and management; senior level.
- Communications manager: communications; mid-level.
- HR assistant: other organisational divisions; entry level.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What is your first name?
2. What is your email?
3. What is the name of your organisation?
4. What is your role within the organisation?
5. Reflecting on the last year, did the think tank funding context in Saudi Arabia change? If so, how?
 - No change
 - Yes, it has worsened
 - Yes, it has improved
6. If you'd like to elaborate more on the funding context over the past year, please share your reflections here.
7. Has Vision 2030 changed the political context in Saudi Arabia? If so, how?
8. How do you foresee the funding context in Saudi Arabia in the year ahead?
 - No change
 - Negative, the context will worsen
 - Positive, the context will improve
9. If you'd like to elaborate more on the funding context in the year ahead, please share your reflections here.
10. What are your expectations for how Vision 2030 will shape the political context in Saudi Arabia?
11. In terms of staff, do you expect think tanks in Saudi Arabia to grow (increase in staff numbers), reduce or stay the same in the year ahead?
 - Grow
 - Reduce
 - Stay the same
 - Cannot say/Don't know
12. What are the key challenges think tanks in Saudi Arabia are currently facing? Select as many as you like.
 - Changing or updating research agenda
 - Civic space closed/shrunk
 - Cooperation and partnerships
 - COVID-19 related challenges
 - Expanding reach and visibility
 - Fundraising
 - Human resources management
 - Increased policy demands
 - Less visibility in policy space
 - Organisational strengthening
 - Political uncertainty
 - Productivity
 - Public distrust
 - Quality of public debate
 - Rethinking delivery and work model
 - Risk mitigation
 - Staff turnover
 - Strategic planning
 - Travel restrictions
 - Other
13. If you selected 'Other' challenges, could you say which?
14. What do you think the research agenda in Saudi Arabia should be in the year ahead?
15. In your opinion, what are the functions of think tanks in Saudi Arabia? Select as many as you like.
 - Generate ideas
 - Undertake research to inform policy and practice
 - Thought leadership
 - Provide legitimacy to policies, ideas and practices (whether ex-ante or ex-post)
 - Create and maintain spaces for debate and deliberation
- Sounding board for policymakers and/or opinion leaders
- Safe house for intellectuals and their ideas
- Financing channel for political parties and other policy interest groups
- Influence the policy process
- Provide cadres of experts and policymakers for government, interest groups and leaders
- Foster exchange between sectors (government, academia etc.) through staff that move and change between sectors
- Capacity building for the public, civil society, policymakers, media etc.
- Participate in networks with other organisations
- Publish in scholarly journals
- Promote strategic links and alliances among organisations
- Promote accountability, enforcement and solutions for the country's problems
- Advocacy
- Political consulting and technical assistance
- Undertake policy analysis and economic and development research
- Undertake collaborative research with other organisations
- Implement development projects
- Others
16. Is the concept of think tanks in Saudi Arabia understandable in your community? Please elaborate.



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