

Literacy Rate and Standard of Living

Middle East

SS7G8 *The student will describe the diverse cultures of the people who live in Southwest Asia (Middle East).*

e. Evaluate how the literacy rate affects the standard of living.

Literacy, or the ability to read and write, has a big effect on the standard of living of a country. Those who cannot read or write have a very difficult time finding decent jobs. Lack of education also prevents many young people from becoming the engineers, doctors, scientists, or business managers that the modern economies need in order to bring improvements to their countries. Many parts of Southwest Asia, particularly those where there are fewer cities and towns, have lower literacy rates than one finds in Europe or the United States. Often schooling is only available to those who can afford to pay to attend. Many countries in this region are working hard to raise literacy rates among young people. Girls tend to have less opportunity to go to school than boys in many areas of Southwest Asia, a problem these countries are trying to correct.

Country	Total Literacy	Literacy of Males	Literacy of Females	GDP-Gross Domestic Product, per capita**
Bahrain	86.5%	88.6%	83.6%	\$32,000
Iran	77%	83.5%	70.4%	\$1,100
Iraq	74.1%	84.5%	64.2%	\$10,600
Israel	97.1%	98.5%	95.9%	\$25,800
Jordan	89.9%	95.1%	84.7%	\$4,900
Kuwait	93.3%	94.4%	91%	\$39,300
Lebanon	87.4%	93.1%	82.2%	\$11,300
Oman	81.4%	86.8%	73.5%	\$24,000
Qatar	89%	89.1%	88.6%	\$80,900
Saudi Arabia	78.8%	84.7%	70.8%	\$23,200
Syria	79.6%	86%	73.6%	\$4,500
Turkey	87.4%	95.3%	79.6%	\$12,900
United Arab Emirates	77.9%	76.1%	81.7%	\$37,300
Yemen	50.2%	70.5%	30%	\$2,300
United States (for comparison)	99%	99%	99%	\$45,800

****Gross Domestic Product** is the value of all goods and services within a nation in a given year and converted into US Dollars for comparison. When divided into a value per capita (or person), it can be used as a measure of general welfare or living conditions of the country. The higher the GDP value, generally the better the living conditions of a country.

Use the chart to answer the next five questions.

1. Which two Southwest Asian countries have the lowest literacy rates?

2. Which two Southwest Asian countries have the highest national wealth as determined by GDP?

3. Which two Southwest Asian countries have the lowest national wealth?

4. What generalization can be made about the relationship between national wealth and literacy?
 - a. Literacy is always higher in wealthy countries.
 - b. Literacy is usually higher in wealthy countries.
 - c. Countries with oil wealth always have the highest literacy rates.
 - d. There is no relationship between a country's wealth and its literacy rate.

5. How do literacy rates in Southwest Asia differ for men and women?