# **For immediate release**

**Safety on the Road Top of Mind for Saudi Women as Ford’s First Virtual Reality *DSFL* ProgrammeKicks Off in Dammam**

* Over 100,000 women from the Kingdom’s major cities participated in Ford’s latest Twitter poll
* Ford’s poll marks the first anniversary of the lifting of the driving ban for women in Saudi Arabia
* Ford’s *Driving Skills for Life* has progressed over the past year to support participants of all skill levels, from inexperienced drivers looking to gain more confidence behind the wheel to newly licensed students
* The new VR version of *DSFL* debuts in Dammam’s upcoming Lady Cars Accessories Show, bringing driver training into the digital world

**RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, June 12, 2019** – Just a year after women in Saudi Arabia were given the right to drive again, safety on the roads remains a top concern for the women behind the wheel in the Kingdom according to Ford Middle East’s latest Twitter poll.

Saudi Arabia lifted its ban on women driving in June 2018 – and Ford marked the historic occasion by launching its *Driving Skills for Life for Her*, a specially-designed introductory driving skills programme for women only. Ford has remained in the passenger seat with Saudi women drivers ever since, conducting more education initiatives in Jeddah and Riyadh since the lifting of the ban.

“As the needs of newly-licensed drivers have evolved, so too has *DSFL*; from theory, to hands-on experience – and that’s why we were so keen to reach out to as many women drivers in Saudi to understand their concerns with this survey,” said Simonetta Verdi, Director of Government and Community Relations, Ford Middle East and Africa. “It’s clear that personal safety on the roads remains a key concern – much more so than the thought of a mechanical breakdown or even getting lost.”

The poll targeted women aged 20-45 in Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam and ran for six days, attracting more than 107,000 responses. Of those polled, 13 per cent said they had obtained their driving license, and five per cent said they were now driving every day.

Safety concerns seemed to drive their choice in vehicle, with 33 per cent saying they drove SUVs – which are often perceived as safer than smaller vehicles – and 29 per cent saying they drove a truck. Third most popular choice for female drivers in the Kingdom are sedans.

When asked what drove their buying decision, 38 per cent of participants said that driver assist technology was the most important factor. Design, for 31 per cent of respondents, was an important consideration but practicality and interior space was not a major concern for many of the respondents. Only 15 per cent of those polled said interior space topped their list of priorities.

More than half (52%) of women polled said aggressive drivers concerned them the most on the roads – more than breaking down (17 per cent), parking (15 per cent) or getting lost (16 per cent) combined. They also said that better traffic management would help improve safety on the road (48 per cent) – while 26 per cent agreed that safety was the joint responsibility of all road users.

Ford’s *Driving Skills for Life* has been running in the Kingdom for five years, targeting students in key universities. Last year, following the driving ban lift, the Ford Motor Company Fund launched *DSFL for Her* specifically tailored for Saudi women who needed to build their confidence behind the wheel as they embarked on their new journey.

This weekend (June 13-15, 2019), *DSFL* brings driver training into the digital world as it debuts in virtual reality out of the *Lady Cars Accessories Show* in Dammam. Participation in the programme, which focuses on the dangers of distracted driving, is open to show attendees regardless of their driving skill level, and is free of charge.

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***About Ford Motor Company Fund***

*As the philanthropic arm of Ford Motor Company, Ford Fund’s mission is to strengthen communities and help make people’s lives better. Working with dealers and nonprofit partners in 63 countries, Ford Fund provides access to opportunities and resources that help people reach their full potential. Since 1949, Ford Fund has invested more than $2 billion in programs that support education, promote safe driving, enrich community life and encourage employee volunteering. For more information, visit* [*http://www.fordfund.org*](http://www.fordfund.org) *or join us at @FordFund on*[*Facebook*](http://www.fordfund.org)*and* [*Twitter*](https://twitter.com/fordfund_)*.*

***About Ford Motor Company***

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*Ford’s history in the Middle East goes back more than 60 years. The company’s local importer-dealers operate more than 155 facilities in the region and directly employ more than 7,000 people, the majority of whom are Arab Nationals. For more information on Ford Middle East, please visit* [www.me.ford.com](http://www.me.ford.com)*.*  
  
*Ford Middle East is also a responsible corporate citizen with currently three CSR initiatives running in the region including the Ford Motor Company Conservation & Environmental Grants, Ford Warriors in Pink® breast cancer awareness campaign and Ford Driving Skills for Life safe driving awareness programme for young drivers and teens.*

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