

Saudi Arabia Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL) – 2021

PDPL is Saudi Arabia's data protection law that requires organizations to safeguard personal data and uphold individuals' privacy rights.



What it is

The Saudi Arabia Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL) is a national data protection regulation that requires organizations to safeguard personal data and respect individuals' privacy rights throughout data processing activities. Its primary purpose is to ensure the secure handling, storage, and use of personal information, supporting data protection and regulatory compliance within Saudi Arabia.

Enacted and enforced by the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA), PDPL applies to all entities—public and private—processing personal data related to individuals living in Saudi Arabia. The law covers core areas such as data privacy, cybersecurity controls, individual rights, consent management, data breach notification, and cross-border data transfers.

At a glance

PUBLISHER Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA)	TYPE Framework	VERSION PDPL with Implementing Regulations
EFFECTIVE September 14, 2021	DOMAIN Privacy	FAMILY Global Privacy Regulations
REGION Saudi Arabia	ADOPTION MODEL Regulatory Compliance	IMPLEMENTATION COMPLEXITY High

Source: <https://sdaia.gov.sa/en/SDAIA/about/Documents/Personal%20Data%20English%20V2-23April2023-%20Reviewed-.pdf>

Why it matters

- **Enhance privacy governance** Promote organizational accountability and structured oversight of personal data throughout its lifecycle, reducing risks of accidental misuse.
- **Strengthen regulatory compliance** Provide clear mandates for meeting local data protection obligations, minimizing legal exposure and potential penalties for non-compliance.
- **Support individual data rights** Empower individuals to control their personal data, aligning organizational practices with modern privacy expectations and regulatory requirements.
- **Improve incident response readiness** Mandate breach notification procedures and security controls, enabling quicker detection and handling of potential data security events.

How SmartSuite supports Saudi PDPL

Processing Inventory and Purpose Controls Document data categories, purposes, retention, and sharing with traceability.	Consent, Notices, and Governance Track notice language, consent practices, and policy review cadences.	Access, Correction, and Deletion Requests Manage access, correction, and deletion requests with deadlines and evidence.
Transfer Decision and Safeguard Tracking Track transfer decisions, contractual safeguards, and ongoing reviews.	Vendor and Processor Oversight Manage vendor contracts, safeguards, and monitoring evidence.	Compliance Reporting Report request performance, open issues, and accountability evidence.

Common framework mappings

APPI

GDPR

ISO 27701

LGPD

NIST Privacy Framework v1.0

Singapore PDPA

Official resources

Saudi Arabia Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL)
Provides the official framework outlining the regulations on personal data protection in Saudi Arabia.
sdaia.gov.sa/en/SDAIA/about/Documents/Personal%20Data%20English%20V2-23April2023-%20Reviewed-.pdf

Frequently asked questions

- What is the Saudi Arabia Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL) used for?**
The PDPL is designed to protect personal data and ensure individuals’ privacy rights are respected throughout data processing activities. It sets regulatory requirements for the secure handling, storage, and processing of personal data within Saudi Arabia. Organizations use PDPL to guide their data protection practices, risk management, and compliance efforts.
- Is the Saudi Arabia PDPL required or mandatory for organizations?**
Yes, PDPL is a mandatory regulation that applies to all public and private entities processing personal data related to individuals in Saudi Arabia. Organizations must comply with PDPL requirements or risk enforcement actions and penalties from the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA).
- Who does the Saudi Arabia PDPL apply to?**
The PDPL applies to any entity—whether located inside or outside Saudi Arabia—that processes personal data of individuals residing in Saudi Arabia. This includes both controllers and processors, regardless of organizational size or industry sector.
- What are the key compliance requirements of the PDPL?**
Key compliance requirements include obtaining valid consent, providing data subject rights (such as access and rectification), implementing appropriate technical and organizational controls, conducting risk assessments, and reporting data breaches. Organizations are also required to maintain records of data processing activities and restrict cross-border data transfers unless adequate protections are ensured.
- How does an organization implement PDPL requirements?**
Organizations typically implement PDPL by developing and updating privacy policies, conducting data mapping and risk assessments, embedding privacy-by-design into processes, and training employees on data protection obligations. Regular monitoring and internal audits are conducted to ensure ongoing compliance with PDPL controls and governance requirements.

How does the PDPL relate to other privacy regulations or frameworks?

The PDPL shares similarities with international frameworks such as the EU GDPR, particularly around core privacy principles, data subject rights, and breach notification. However, PDPL contains specific local requirements and is enforced by the SDAIA, making it essential for organizations operating in Saudi Arabia to account for regional nuances.

What are the ongoing compliance and governance obligations under PDPL?

Ongoing compliance involves maintaining up-to-date records of processing activities, performing periodic risk assessments, updating policies in response to regulatory changes, and monitoring for data breaches. Organizations must also regularly review their technical and organizational controls to adapt to evolving privacy risks.

How would SmartSuite support Saudi Arabia PDPL?

SmartSuite enables organizations to manage PDPL compliance by centralizing risk tracking, automating control management, and supporting evidence collection for audits. Its policy governance modules and structured control libraries streamline the documentation of compliance activities. Dashboards and reporting tools facilitate ongoing monitoring and audit readiness, helping organizations demonstrate PDPL compliance to regulators.

License included / downloadable: Yes The Saudi Arabia Personal Data Protection Law is national legislation and is publicly available through official government sources.

Full framework page and mappings: smartsuite.com/frameworks/saudi-arabia-personal-data-protection-law-pdpl-2021