HR DELIVERY
*Making Sure HR Delivers*

GULF COUNTRY BRIEFS / COMPLETE COLLECTION

# THE GULF

## People, economy and working life

A regional overview and six country profiles for HR professionals



## Understand the region. Know the differences.

Saudi Arabia / Qatar / United Arab Emirates
Kuwait / Bahrain / Oman

OCTOBER 2026

FOREWORD / DR PHILLIP WELSH

# Understanding before advising

A regional view should sharpen our interest in the people and places behind every organisation.



## The value of country knowledge is not that it gives us every answer. It helps us begin with better questions.

**Dr Phillip Welsh**

These guides begin from a simple belief: before we advise an organisation, we should take an interest in the country in which its people live and work. A skyline, a growth figure or a summary of employment law can be useful, but none is the whole story.

The Gulf is often discussed as one market. Reading the six profiles together reveals something more interesting: connected countries with distinct histories, institutions and working lives. That difference is not an inconvenience to be removed. It is the context in which thoughtful HR practice becomes possible.

A conversation about talent may be a conversation about a graduate's first real opportunity. A discussion about an international appointment may also involve school places, a partner's plans and the daily journey to work. Decisions become better when those human details remain visible.

That is why these chapters go beyond the commercial headline. History and institutions help explain expectations; transport and housing help explain the working day. Details that look secondary in a boardroom may determine whether an appointment succeeds.

This collection invites the reader to move between two perspectives. The regional overview makes differences easier to see; the individual guides give them substance. Neither perspective should replace a conversation with the people who know the organisation and its community.

For consultants, this is a way to prepare with greater care. For HR leaders, it is a reference for discussions that cross borders. For colleagues moving to the region, it offers an introduction to the places in which a new chapter of life may begin.

The common chapter structure also makes careful comparison possible. A difference between two countries can open a useful discussion without turning either into a stereotype or assuming that one approach should be transplanted wholesale.

I hope the guide encourages curiosity rather than certainty. Read the dates, ask what a number includes, and notice what a national description cannot tell you about one employer. Above all, approach local experience with respect. Understanding is not a preliminary task before the real work of HR; it is part of the work itself.

Foreword text prepared for Dr Phillip Welsh. His approval is required before publication under his name.

START HERE

# A country guide, with a regional lens

Read across the region to understand differences; read into a country to understand the setting.

This volume brings the six supplied HR Delivery country briefs into one navigable reference. The new opening section does not replace them with a generic Gulf summary. It draws their evidence together around the questions an HR professional is likely to bring to a client meeting, a workforce discussion or a relocation decision.

## Use it before the conversation

Establish the country's geography, economic setting and main institutions before discussing the organisation. The useful starting point is not 'What is typical in the Gulf?' but 'Which part of this country, which employer and which workforce are we talking about?'

## Use it to support real decisions

The comparisons help frame questions about national capability, international recruitment, employment conditions and household needs. They are not a salary survey, a ranking of employer quality or a substitute for local legal, tax or immigration advice.

## Use it to compare like with like

The country guides share a structure, but their statistics do not always share a year or a denominator. The overview keeps those distinctions visible. A population share, employment count and social-insurance register must not be treated as interchangeable.

## Use the source trail

A reference such as [QA 05] opens page 5 of the Qatar brief within this volume. Each country retains its own reference pages and reporting dates. The supplied country pages have not been rewritten or silently updated.

FIND YOUR WAY THROUGH THE REGIONAL OVERVIEW

**05-08** Place, scale, population and history

**09-11** Economy, sectors and national direction

**12-15** Workforce, national talent and institutions

**16-19** Operating rules, employment and reward

**20-22** Relocation, culture and the working year

**23-24** Evidence notes and topic-by-topic navigation

## Two page references, one clear route

The country booklets keep their printed 01-16 folios. The main contents and topic finder use the combined volume's 1-120 page positions. Use the PDF bookmarks or select a reference to move between the regional comparison and the underlying country page.

THE COUNTRY COLLECTION

# Six countries. One reference.

Select a country to open its complete profile. Page numbers refer to this combined volume.

## Saudi Arabia

Scale, regional labour markets and an economy in active transition.



PROFILE / 25-40 **25**

## Qatar

An international workforce, LNG and a concentrated urban economy.



PROFILE / 41-56 **41**

## UAE

Seven emirates, connected cities and distinct operating jurisdictions.



PROFILE / 57-72 **57**

## Kuwait

Merchant traditions, public employment and petroleum wealth.



PROFILE / 73-88 **73**

## Bahrain

An island economy of finance, industry and international connections.



PROFILE / 89-104 **89**

## Oman

Maritime trade, regional industries and a geographically varied workforce.



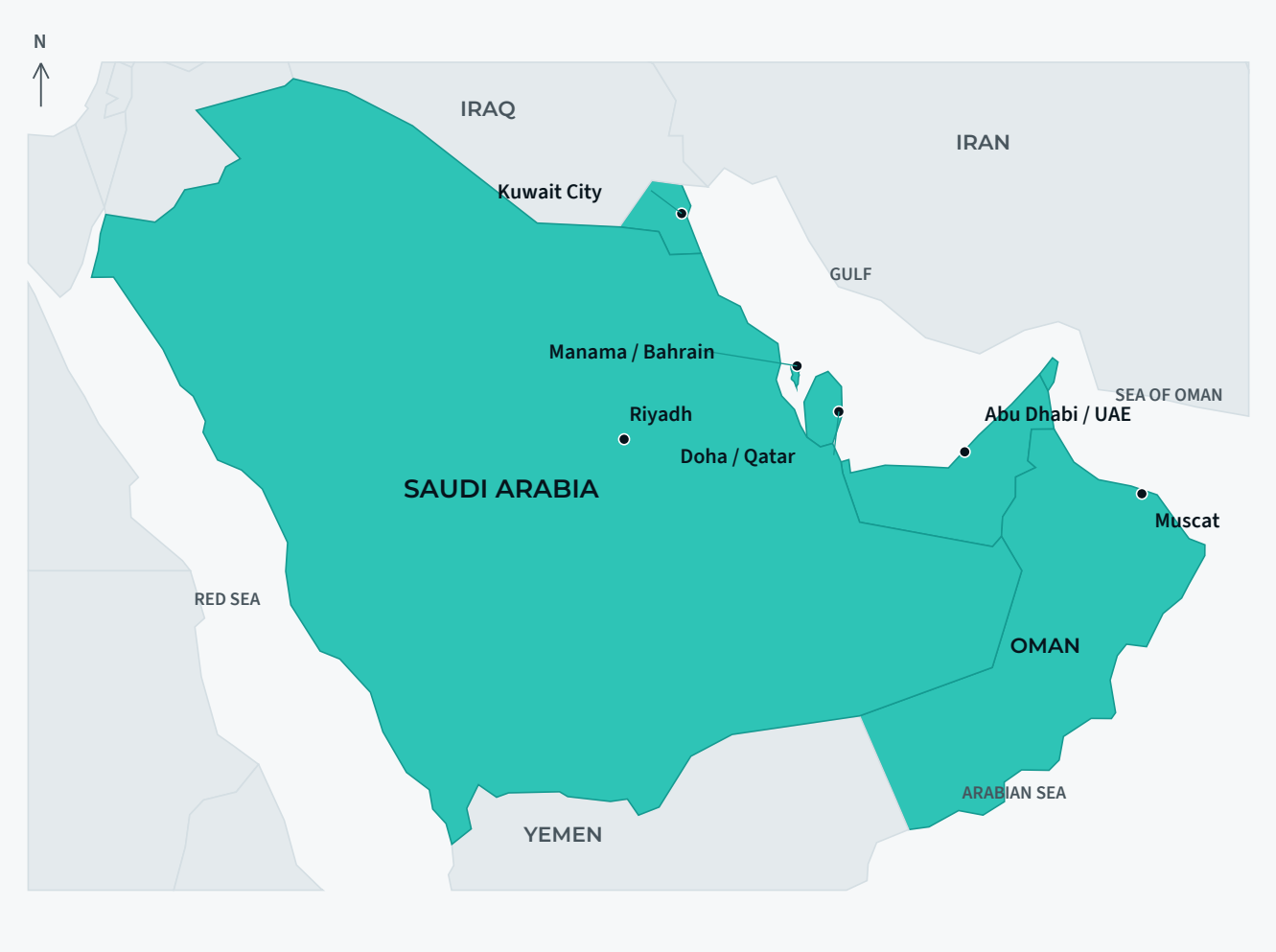
PROFILE / 105-120 **105**

Generalised country silhouettes, individually scaled - not a land-area comparison. Topic finder: page 24.

01 / REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

# One region. Six distinct settings.

The geography explains why a regional assignment rarely means one labour market or one daily journey.




Geographic orientation: generalised Natural Earth boundaries; Bahrain main-island coastline from GSHHG. Not an official boundary map.

## The region extends beyond the shoreline

Saudi Arabia faces both the Red Sea and the Gulf. Oman's mainland looks towards the Sea of Oman and Arabian Sea, while Musandam overlooks the Strait of Hormuz. Inland cities, industrial areas and ports all belong in the regional picture. [SA 03] [OM 03]

## Shared proximity, different practical distances

Bahrain's island connections, Qatar's concentrated urban area, the UAE's adjoining emirates and Kuwait's coastal corridor create different travel and housing choices. A capital-city address is not a reliable description of the employee's working environment. [BH 03] [QA 03] [AE 03] [KW 03]

02 / SCALE AND WORKING GEOGRAPHIES

# The address changes the answer

The same country label can cover a headquarters, a port, a production site or a destination business.

| Country | Area in the brief | Useful working geographies | Why the distinction matters |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** | More than 2m sq km | Riyadh; Jeddah and the west; the Eastern Province | 13 administrative regions; distinct city and project markets. [SA 03] |
| **Qatar** | About 11,600 sq km | Doha and Lusail; Ras Laffan; Mesaieed | A compact urban market alongside separate industrial settings. [QA 03] |
| **United Arab Emirates** | About 83,600 sq km | Abu Dhabi; Dubai; Sharjah; northern emirates | One federation with seven emirates and different local economies. [AE 03] |
| **Kuwait** | 17,818 sq km | Kuwait City corridor; Shuwaikh; Ahmadi; Al Zour | Six governorates; headquarters and southern industrial commutes differ. [KW 03] |
| **Bahrain** | About 787 sq km | Manama; Muharraq; Sitra; southern industry | Land area uses the brief's 2022 basis; short distances still require route checks. [BH 03] |
| **Oman** | 309,500 sq km | Muscat; Sohar; Duqm; Salalah; Musandam | A wide, varied coastline and separate regional employment centres. [OM 03] |

## Where the role sits

A national recruitment plan should still identify the worksite. A specialist who is willing to move to a capital may not be accepting a remote operating assignment, an extended daily drive or a rotational pattern.

## Where the household can settle

The relevant geography includes schools, healthcare, family support and the actual commute. These are not minor details added after salary agreement; they help determine whether the appointment is workable.

### Ports and industrial places have different operating roles

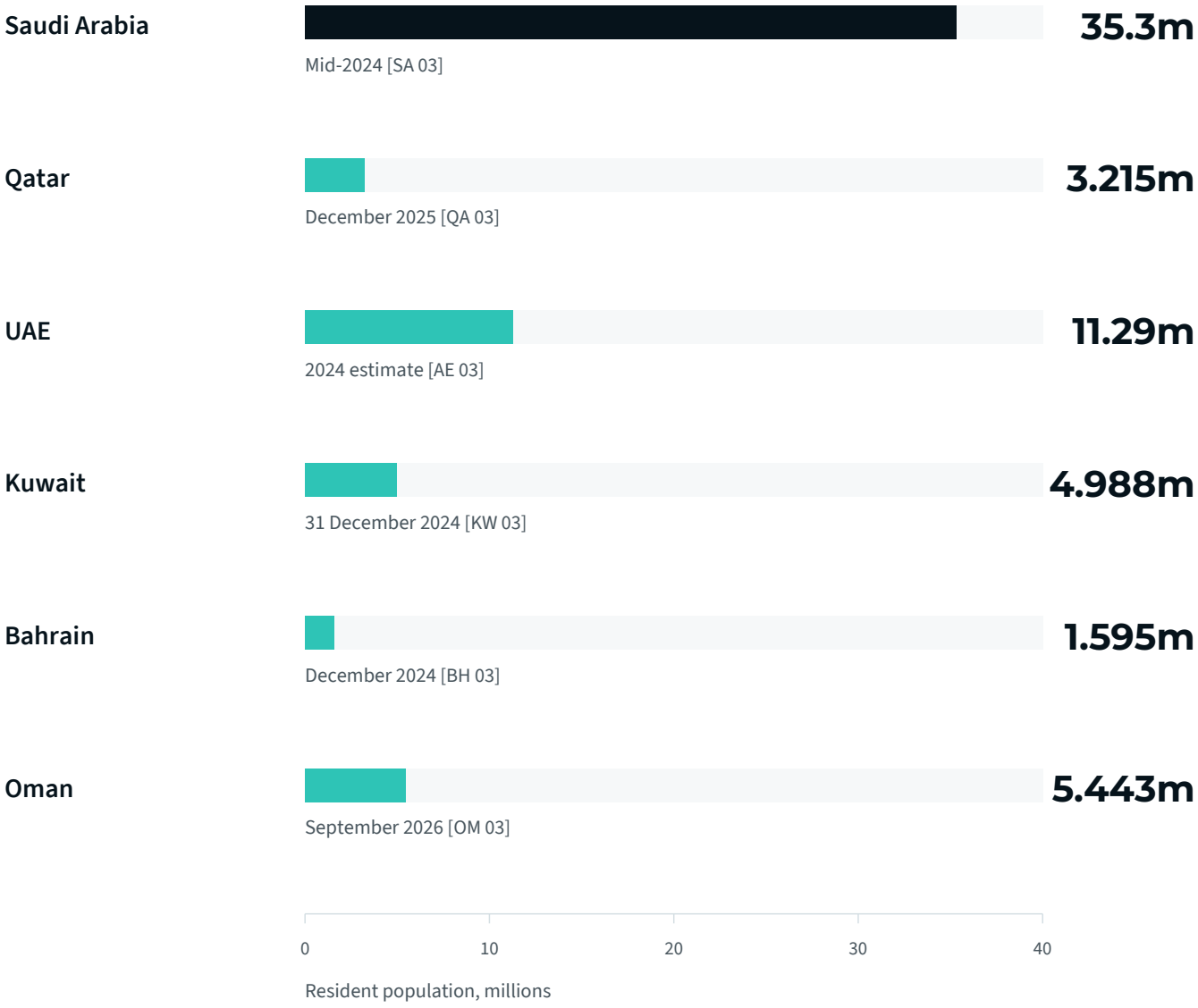
Oman's guide distinguishes Sohar, Duqm and Salalah; Bahrain's identifies the Khalifa Bin Salman Port ecosystem. Qatar separates Ras Laffan's LNG activity from Mesaieed's wider industry, while Kuwait's southern coast contains refining and export facilities. These locations should not disappear inside a capital-city workforce assumption. [OM 03] [BH 03] [QA 03] [KW 03]

Areas are reproduced at the precision used by the supplied briefs. They are not remeasured from the generalised maps.

03 / POPULATION AND SCALE

# Different scales of society and work

Dated resident-population observations from the six briefs - not a synchronised regional census.




## Scale helps; totals can mislead

Saudi Arabia's population scale differs markedly from the smaller Gulf states. That helps explain the range of domestic markets and cities in its guide. It does not establish the size of a particular skill pool or the number available for a specific job.

## No combined population is claimed

The observations span 2024 to 2026. Adding them would produce a mixed-date total, not 'the Gulf population in 2026'. The chart is useful for broad orientation; workforce comparisons require a separate, defined population.

04 / HISTORY AND INSTITUTIONS

# Modern economies, longer memories

Trade, state-building and national identity give the six countries distinct starting points.

| Country | Selected milestones | Context carried into modern working life |
|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** | 1727 / 1932 | The Saudi states and unification sit alongside the religious significance of Makkah and Madinah. Transformation is framed within a strong national history. [SA 04] |
| **Qatar** | 1878 / 1971 | Maritime livelihoods and the modern state precede the LNG economy. Independence and the history commemorated by National Day are different reference points. [QA 04] |
| **UAE** | 1971 / 1972 | Six emirates formed the federation in 1971; Ras Al Khaimah joined in 1972. Federal identity did not erase emirate-level institutions and belonging. [AE 04] |
| **Kuwait** | 1961 / 1991 | Merchant traditions, independence, constitutional history and liberation remain important to understanding the state and society. [KW 04] |
| **Bahrain** | 1932 / 1971 | Dilmun, pearling and maritime commerce form a longer history behind early oil development, independence and modern finance. [BH 04] |
| **Oman** | 1970 / 2020 | Seafaring, regional trading links and local communities sit behind the modern development period and the succession to Sultan Haitham. [OM 04] |

## Continuity and change are not opposites

The guides consistently ask the reader to value local experience. A new operating model or leadership programme lands better when the discussion recognises what people wish to preserve as well as what they want to improve.

Institutional structures also differ. The UAE's federal and emirate levels, Oman's governorates, Kuwait's constitutional changes and each country's ministries and commercial state holdings should not be reduced to one 'Gulf government' model. [AE 04] [OM 04] [KW 04]

05 / ECONOMY AND DIVERSIFICATION

# Read the economy in context

The briefs report different years and measures. This comparison preserves them rather than manufacturing a regional average.

| Country | Period | Headline growth | Related measure | How to read it |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** | 2025 | +4.5% real GDP | +4.9% non-oil growth | National programme reporting in the supplied brief. [SA 06] |
| **Qatar** | 2025 | +2.9% real GDP | US$215.6bn nominal GDP | The separate Q2 2026 discussion is not the same annual observation. [QA 06] |
| **UAE** | 2025 | +6.2% real GDP | +6.8% non-oil growth | Non-oil share is 76.6% of real GDP in the cited release. [AE 06] |
| **Kuwait** | 2024 | -2.6% real GDP | +1.8% non-oil growth | IMF 2024 series retained; later forecasts are identified separately. [KW 06] |
| **Bahrain** | 2025 | +3.5% real GDP | +4.1% non-oil growth | Non-oil activity is 85.8% of real GDP in that release. [BH 06] |
| **Oman** | 2024 | +1.6% real GDP | +3.3% non-oil growth | 2024 outcomes reported in the January 2026 assessment. [OM 06] |

## Diversification is not one journey

Finance and manufacturing are established parts of Bahrain's economy; trade, aviation and services have a large role in the UAE; Oman links diversification to ports and regions. Saudi Arabia's breadth and project activity differ again. These are different economic structures, not places on one simple ladder. [BH 06] [AE 06] [OM 06] [SA 06]

## Growth is not a vacancy forecast

An energy production cut, a new construction phase, an operating refinery and a mature bank can imply different staffing needs. Qatar and Kuwait's guides explicitly separate petroleum conditions from activity elsewhere. Ask about the actual business unit, approved investment and source of demand. [QA 06] [KW 06]

### Do not add GDP measures that are not on the same basis

Nominal GDP, real GDP, GDP per person, sector shares and growth rates answer different questions. This volume does not sum them into a regional GDP figure or rank countries by mixed-year growth.

06 / ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

# Six economic settings, not six labels

Energy matters across the region. The employment landscape is substantially wider.

| Country | Distinctive sector mix | What it means for the work |
|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** | Energy, chemicals, mining and large-scale development | Riyadh professional services; western tourism and heritage; Eastern Province industry. Technical, commercial and operating capability all matter. [SA 07] |
| **Qatar** | LNG, finance, aviation and public services | Ras Laffan and Mesaieed are different from a Doha office. Education, healthcare, visitor services and digital business extend the talent picture. [QA 07] |
| **UAE** | Trade, logistics, aviation, energy, finance and property | Federal, emirate and commercial priorities overlap. Industrial operations, digital services, hotels and regional offices have distinct staffing models. [AE 07] |
| **Kuwait** | Petroleum, banking, retail, property and services | Oilfield and refining work sits alongside consumer businesses, distribution, education, health and international group operations. [KW 07] |
| **Bahrain** | Finance, aluminium, refining and connected services | Manufacturing, port operations, aviation, hospitality and digital business require different work patterns from financial-sector offices. [BH 07] |
| **Oman** | Energy, ports, industry, tourism and regional trade | Sohar, Duqm and Salalah have different operating roles. Fisheries, local enterprise and future-industry ambitions add to the capital-city economy. [OM 07] |

### The project stage is part of the labour market

Design, construction, commissioning and steady-state operations are not one workforce requirement. A destination announcement is not a hotel roster; a new factory is not yet a mature maintenance organisation. This distinction recurs across the six guides.

For a regional client, establish the activity before choosing a comparator. Two engineering roles in different operating environments may be less comparable than the same job family in matched industries across a border.

07 / NATIONAL DIRECTION

# Ambition has different national forms

The visions explain priorities. They do not establish the timing of every project or every vacancy.

SAUDI ARABIA

## Saudi Vision 2030

Economic participation, investment, tourism, quality of life and national capability are connected. The brief describes both new sectors and the continued importance of existing industry. [SA 07]

QATAR

## Qatar National Vision 2030

Human, social, economic and environmental development form the wider frame. NDS3 translates that direction into skills, productivity, diversification and private-sector priorities. [QA 07]

UAE

## We the UAE 2031

Federal direction sits alongside emirate agendas such as Dubai D33 and industrial programmes such as Operation 300Bn. Their scopes and targets should not be merged. [AE 07]

KUWAIT

## New Kuwait 2035

The brief presents a financial and commercial hub ambition, a larger private-sector role and priorities for administration, infrastructure, healthcare and human capital. [KW 07]

BAHRAIN

## Economic Vision 2030

Sustainability, competitiveness and fairness frame the ambition to improve living standards through economic and institutional development. Productive work is part of that story. [BH 07]

OMAN

## Oman Vision 2040

People and society, economic development, governance and the environment connect to national capabilities and regional opportunity. Five-year planning carries the longer vision into programmes. [OM 07]

### From direction to demand

National vision -> funded programme -> operating organisation -> specific work -> required capability. This is an editorial reading sequence, not a claim that every announced initiative will pass through those stages on schedule.

08 / PEOPLE AND THE WORKFORCE

# Not every workforce number counts the same thing

The profiles deliberately use different evidence where that is what the country data support.

| Country | Selected indicator | What is actually counted | What it does not establish |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** | 44.4% non-Saudi | Resident population; mid-2024 | Describes the population, not the nationality share of all employed people. [SA 05] |
| **Qatar** | 94.3% non-Qatari | Economically active people aged 15+; 2024 table | A labour-force-type base, not all residents or all employees in every survey. [QA 05] |
| **UAE** | 1.9% unemployment | All-resident labour-market measure; 2024 | Not an Emirati-only unemployment rate or an indication of skill scarcity. [AE 05] |
| **Kuwait** | 84.8% non-Kuwaiti | Employed people across three sectors; Q1 2025 | Includes domestic employment; narrower business surveys can differ. [KW 05] |
| **Bahrain** | 75.1% non-Bahraini | SIO registered contributors; Q1 2026 | An administrative contributor base, not the complete labour force. [BH 05] |
| **Oman** | 43.4% non-Omani | Registered residents; November 2025 | Not the denominator for the newer September 2026 population observation. [OM 05] |

## Two different national-career pictures

The Kuwait brief reports 83.8% of employed Kuwaitis in government in Q1 2025. Bahrain reports 66.8% of Bahraini contributors in the private sector in Q1 2026. Those are informative country observations, but their different coverage prevents a simple national league table. [KW 05] [BH 05]

## The employee still matters more than the label

The guides describe graduates, experienced nationals, internationally recruited professionals, operational workers and families. Nationality may shape eligibility or administration. It does not tell a manager what one person can do, what support they need or what they hope to achieve.

Source-derived comparison. The differing denominators are retained; no unified GCC employment count or foreign-workforce percentage is calculated.

09 / NATIONAL TALENT

# Six nationalisation contexts

A common interest in national capability does not create one regional quota or one hiring rule.

| Country | Policy language in the brief | The distinction to carry into a workforce discussion |
|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** | Saudization / Nitaqat | The brief describes occupation- and sector-specific decisions alongside Nitaqat. Role titles and professional requirements can affect who may be recruited. [SA 12] |
| **Qatar** | Qatarisation | Private-sector localisation duties sit alongside NDS3 workforce objectives. A national strategic target is not automatically the employer's own quota. [QA 12] |
| **UAE** | Emiratisation / Nafis | The brief distinguishes covered establishments with 50+ employees from selected 20-49 employee establishments, and separates employment requirements from support programmes. [AE 12] |
| **Kuwait** | Kuwaitisation | National-employment ratios are organised by activity and occupation. National labour support is distinct from an employer's salary and career commitments. [KW 12] |
| **Bahrain** | Bahrainisation / Tamkeen | LMRA tables depend on business activity and establishment size. Tamkeen support for employment and progression does not replace genuine roles or supervision. [BH 12] |
| **Oman** | Omanisation | Activity, occupation and employer circumstances matter; some jobs are reserved. Meeting an establishment ratio does not settle whether a particular occupation may be filled internationally. [OM 12] |

### National capability is a career proposition

A first job needs meaningful work, capable supervision and a realistic route to competence. An experienced national employee needs credible progression. Recruitment, development, job design and retention therefore belong in the same conversation.

The practical regional discipline is to check the actual employer, activity and role rather than transferring a percentage from one country to another. Rules in these pages are drawn from the supplied briefs, not newly verified company-specific compliance advice.

10 / MAJOR EMPLOYERS AND COMPANIES

# Names that help you read the market

Selected examples from the country briefs - not a ranking by size, quality or local employee numbers.

| Country | Names worth recognising | Why they help explain the country |
|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** | Aramco / SABIC / stc / Maaden / PIF | Energy, chemicals, digital business, mining and investment-led company creation. Operating companies and a sovereign investor play different roles. [SA 08] |
| **Qatar** | QatarEnergy / QNB / Qatar Airways / Ooredoo / Nakilat | Energy and finance sit beside internationally operating aviation, telecoms and shipping groups. Local and global employment need separate analysis. [QA 08] |
| **UAE** | ADNOC / Emirates Group / DP World / e& / FAB / TAQA | Integrated energy, aviation, ports, technology, finance and utilities reveal the breadth of the economic base. Group operations often extend abroad. [AE 08] |
| **Kuwait** | KPC / NBK / KFH / Zain / Alshaya / Mabanee | Petroleum, conventional and Islamic banking, telecoms, retail and property connect Kuwait to wider regional business networks. [KW 08] |
| **Bahrain** | Alba / Bapco / Beyon / NBB / Bank ABC / Gulf Air Group | Industry and refining are as important to the picture as finance and connected services. The site and operating subsidiary determine the relevant talent market. [BH 08] |
| **Oman** | PDO / OQ / Oman LNG / Bank Muscat / Omantel / Asyad | Production, integrated energy, banking, telecommunications and maritime logistics form distinct technical and professional employment settings. [OM 08] |

### A familiar name is not yet a valid comparator

The briefs report a mixture of assets, revenue, output and headcount. Those measures should not be ranked together. A worldwide workforce, a bank balance sheet and a refinery's capacity are not alternative measures of domestic employment.

Before using an employer in a pay or talent comparison, establish the legal entity, geography, sector, job family and level. A national champion can provide context without being the right benchmark for a small local business.

11 / INSTITUTIONS AND WIDER BUSINESS

# Look beyond the company name

Government, investment, regulation, education and enterprise support shape employment in different ways.

| Country | Institutional reference points | What the organisation actually does matters |
|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** | PIF / HRSD / MISA | Investment and new sectors; labour-market policy; investment arrangements. Ministries, portfolio businesses and family groups do not share one decision structure. [SA 09] |
| **Qatar** | QIA / Qatar Foundation / QDB | Long-term investment; education and research; enterprise support. Government services and commercial state companies are separate statistical and organisational categories. [QA 09] |
| **UAE** | Federal and emirate bodies / sovereign institutions | A federal ministry, an emirate authority and a commercial government-related entity are not interchangeable. The brief also distinguishes education regulators and local institutions. [AE 09] |
| **Kuwait** | KIA / PAM / KDIPA | State investment; labour administration; investment promotion. Public-sector career patterns influence the market without becoming a private employer's own policy. [KW 09] |
| **Bahrain** | Mumtalakat / LMRA / Tamkeen | Investment holdings; work permits and employer duties; skills, employment and enterprise support. Programme eligibility does not create one employment model. [BH 09] |
| **Oman** | OIA / OPAZ / SME Authority | State investment; economic zones; smaller-enterprise support. Governorates, educational institutions and service providers extend the picture beyond Muscat headquarters. [OM 09] |

## Ownership is only the beginning

Ask who holds the budget, who sets the rules and who can approve a change. Shared ownership does not prove identical grades, reward policies, accountabilities or management practice.

## Skills are developed beyond the employer

The guides include universities, technical education, schools, healthcare and development programmes. A qualification is a starting point; role-specific practice and the quality of supervision still shape readiness.

12 / BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

# Crossing a border changes the context

Currency, time, commercial registration, residence and permission to work are separate considerations.

| Country | Capital | Currency arrangement in the brief | Time | Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** | Riyadh | SAR 3.75 per US$1 | UTC+3 | [SA 03] [SA 10] |
| **Qatar** | Doha | QAR 3.64 per US$1 | UTC+3 | [QA 03] [QA 10] |
| **UAE** | Abu Dhabi | AED 3.6725 per US$1 | UTC+4 | [AE 03] [AE 10] |
| **Kuwait** | Kuwait City | KWD: managed currency basket | UTC+3 | [KW 03] [KW 10] |
| **Bahrain** | Manama | BHD 0.376 per US$1 | UTC+3 | [BH 03] [BH 10] |
| **Oman** | Muscat | US$2.6008 per OMR1 | UTC+4 | [OM 03] [OM 10] |

## A regional meeting can span two time zones

UAE and Oman are one hour ahead of the other four countries in these guides. The dollar-linked currencies also differ from Kuwait's basket arrangement. Neither a fixed dollar reference nor a common meeting language creates one cross-border employment system.

## Start with the legal employer

Commercial registration, ownership rules and licensed activities matter before staffing commitments. The country briefs describe separate investment routes and the need to check the actual organisation and work being undertaken. [SA 10] [KW 10] [BH 10] [OM 10]

## Free zones are not one legal category

The UAE brief separates DIFC and ADGM employment regimes from the federal private-sector framework. Qatar's QFC also has a distinct position. Do not assume every free zone or international-facing business uses the same rules. [AE 10] [QA 10]

## Residence is not the whole permission question

A business licence, a residence status and approval to carry out a job should not be collapsed into one decision. This also matters for visiting consultants and secondees, not only permanent employees. [AE 10] [BH 10] [KW 10] [OM 10]

## Tax is not captured by the phrase "tax-free"

The Oman brief separates current rules from a personal-income-tax framework scheduled for 2028. The UAE, Kuwait and Bahrain briefs describe different corporate or minimum-top-up arrangements. A salary-tax assumption is not a complete assessment of a business or an international package. [OM 10] [AE 10] [KW 10] [BH 10]

13 / EMPLOYMENT SETTING

# Similar headings. Different entitlements.

Orientation from the supplied private-sector summaries; coverage and current implementing rules require local checking.

| Country | Ordinary hours | Annual leave reported by the brief | Probation reported by the brief |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** | 8 daily / 48 weekly | 21 days; 30 after five consecutive years | Up to 180 days, subject to the contract and exclusions. [SA 11] |
| **Qatar** | 8 daily / 48 weekly | 3 weeks under five years; 4 weeks thereafter | Up to six months with the same employer. [QA 11] |
| **UAE** | 8 daily / 48 weekly | 30 days per completed year; earlier accrual rules apply | Up to six months; separate probation notice rules. [AE 11] |
| **Kuwait** | 8 daily / 48 weekly | 30 working days; first-year entitlement after six months | Up to 100 working days; one probation per employer. [KW 11] |
| **Bahrain** | 8 daily / 48 weekly | At least 30 days after one year; proportional entitlement | Three months; up to six for designated occupations, in writing. [BH 11] |
| **Oman** | 8 daily / 40 weekly | At least 30 days on gross wage; ordinarily after six months | Up to three months for monthly-paid staff; two for others. [OM 11] |

## Days are not necessarily the same unit

Kuwait's summary explicitly uses working days and excludes weekly rest and public holidays. Qatar's leave is expressed in weeks. Do not convert these into an apparently precise ranking without checking the statutory definition and work pattern.

## Ramadan treatment varies

The summaries specify reduced hours, but coverage is not worded identically. Oman reports 6 daily / 30 weekly for Muslim employees; Saudi Arabia and Bahrain report 6 / 36 for Muslim employees; the UAE summary uses two fewer hours daily. [OM 11] [SA 11] [BH 11] [AE 11]

## Scope comes before the table

Government employees, domestic workers and specified special categories may have separate regimes. The UAE's DIFC and ADGM and Qatar's QFC must be checked separately. These are boundaries on the comparison, not footnotes to ignore. [AE 11] [QA 11] [KW 11]

## Company policy can be more generous

The table is neither a complete compliance checklist nor a recommendation to reduce benefits to a statutory floor. It preserves the supplied briefs' general baselines; actual contracts and the applicable law still determine the position.

# Benefits do not travel unchanged

Employment promises need a country-specific explanation, especially where service or scheme coverage matters.

| Country | Maternity / parental context | The benefit or ending distinction worth noticing |
|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** | 12 weeks on full pay; statutory conditions | The supplied brief covers resignation procedures and employer responsibility for employee and dependant health insurance. It does not quantify a gratuity formula. [SA 11] |
| **Qatar** | 50 days on full remuneration after one year; conditions | After one year, the brief describes a minimum three weeks of last basic wage per service year, subject to applicable provisions. [QA 11] |
| **UAE** | 60 days: 45 full pay, 15 half pay; separate parental leave | Eligible foreign full-time staff: 21 days' basic pay per year for the first five years, then 30; coverage and approved schemes can alter the position. [AE 11] |
| **Kuwait** | 70 days on full pay, including childbirth; further rules | The monthly-paid formula in the brief starts at 15 days per year for five years, then one month; caps and termination circumstances also matter. [KW 11] |
| **Bahrain** | 60 days on full pay; additional provisions | Eligible non-Bahraini private-sector staff fall within the SIO-funded scheme introduced in March 2024. Earlier-service liabilities remain a separate employer issue. [BH 11] |
| **Oman** | 98 days' maternity; seven days' paternity in the summary | Eligible staff outside social-protection coverage: at least one basic monthly wage per year; scheme transition and accrued service need separate checking. [OM 11] |

## A funding change does not erase the employee's history

Bahrain's brief distinguishes new scheme contributions from earlier-service liabilities. Oman's brief distinguishes social-protection branches and commencement. The practical lesson is to establish the scheme, coverage period and accrued service before calculating an entitlement.

This is a source-based orientation, not an individual settlement calculation. Basic and gross pay, employee category, service, contract type, scheme participation and the reason for leaving may all affect the answer. Where a supplied brief does not give a figure, this overview does not invent one.

15 / RECRUITMENT AND REWARD

# The offer is more than the salary

The guides share one useful principle: compare complete, clearly defined employment propositions.

## Recruitment begins with the actual role

Each guide describes recruitment from nationals, existing residents and overseas markets. The work permit, job category, professional requirements and actual responsibilities need to agree. An accepted offer is not proof that every approval or family arrangement is already in place. [SA 12] [QA 12] [AE 12]

## National support and company pay are different

Kuwait's national labour support, Bahrain's Tamkeen programmes and the UAE's Nafis context are not interchangeable with an employer's own contractual promise. Genuine work, supervision and progression remain important after an eligibility or compliance condition is met. [KW 12] [BH 12] [AE 12]

## Define the comparison before finding the number

Specify the country, city or region, legal employer, sector, job family, level and work pattern. Then separate basic salary, guaranteed allowances, variable pay, insurance and family benefits. A similar title does not necessarily describe a similar job.

## A wage floor is not a market benchmark

Qatar's brief separates its minimum basic wage and accommodation/food provisions from professional pay. The UAE brief separately identifies an Emirati-specific minimum-wage requirement. Neither should be presented as a universal 'Gulf salary'. [QA 12] [AE 12]

| Compare the same component | Questions that keep the comparison useful |
|---|---|
| **Role and level** | Accountability, required capability, scope and working conditions. |
| **Cash and benefits** | Basic pay; allowances; incentive terms; insurance; employer commitments. |
| **Household position** | Rent, schooling, transport, childcare, relocation and one-off arrival costs. |

No regional salary average, cost-of-living league table or employer ranking is inferred from these briefs. Their value is to make the terms of the comparison clear before external pay data or individual quotations are used.

# A move involves a household

A helpful employer makes the practical sequence clear before travel, not after a family discovers a gap.

| Country | Location changes the move | The human detail to clarify |
|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** | Riyadh, Jeddah and the Eastern Province are different relocation decisions. | Check the real commute and family needs; the brief treats health-insurance responsibilities separately from a vague promise of medical cover. [SA 13] |
| **Qatar** | Doha's districts, Lusail and industrial sites create different daily journeys. | A metro connection is useful but does not guarantee site access. School availability, health-card access and private insurance are different questions. [QA 13] |
| **UAE** | Abu Dhabi, Dubai and the northern emirates are not one commuting market. | Check local school information, family-cover exclusions, road costs and the final stage of the commute. A lower rent can come with a longer journey. [AE 13] |
| **Kuwait** | The metropolitan corridor differs from southern energy locations. | Test the workplace, school and shift pattern together. Residence-linked health administration is not a complete description of private medical benefits. [KW 13] |
| **Bahrain** | Manama, Muharraq and industrial locations create different travel patterns. | Do not assume every trip is easy because the country is small. Check school fit, provider networks, transport after late work and the final walk. [BH 13] |
| **Oman** | Muscat, Sohar, Duqm and Salalah may be separate household decisions. | The actual site can affect organised transport, accommodation or work patterns. Verify school places and policy detail before treating the family arrangements as settled. [OM 13] |

## The first month deserves as much thought as the offer

Housing, deposits, school places, unfamiliar paperwork and a partner's plans often arrive together. A named contact, an honest explanation of dependencies and realistic expectations can make a new appointment feel manageable.

For a visiting consultant, check permitted activity, entry and residence route, insurance, worksite access and the local contact. A previous visit or an established client relationship does not settle the requirements for the next assignment. [KW 13] [BH 13] [OM 13]

17 / CULTURE AND WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

# Be interested in the place and its people

Country knowledge should make a professional conversation more thoughtful, not more formulaic.

## Saudi Arabia: continuity amid change

The guide places hospitality, religion, region and national identity alongside visible changes in participation and business life. A government body, technology firm and international joint venture should not be approached through one cultural script. [SA 14]

## Qatar: relationships before assumptions

The Qatar guide emphasises introductions, respectful communication and checking which language helps the audience. Fluency in meeting-room English is not proof that every employee can interpret a policy confidently. [QA 14]

## UAE: national identity and international lives

Emirati identity sits alongside a highly international resident population. The same country includes varied emirate, employer and community experiences. Neither a nationality nor an expatriate team is representative of one fixed culture. [AE 14]

## Kuwait: commerce and community

Family and community ties, trading heritage and reliable follow-through are important themes in the guide. Time in Al-Mubarakiya and along the waterfront can reveal more than a sequence of meetings alone. [KW 14]

## Bahrain: trading history in everyday places

Muharraq, Bahrain Fort and the Pearling Path connect the country's commerce to neighbourhood life. Curiosity and courtesy are more useful than trying to imitate an elaborate set of local gestures. [BH 14]

## Oman: communities beyond the capital

Oman's regions, ports and landscapes have different histories and rhythms. The brief encourages listening to how people describe their communities rather than assuming a nationality fully explains their response to work or change. [OM 14]

### Respect is expressed through ordinary professional care

Make space for introductions. Explain the purpose of the visit. Ask which language helps. Be considerate around prayer, dress and public conduct. Then let the organisation and the people tell you what matters to them.

# The calendar is part of the operating context

A holiday date, office pattern and operational roster are different pieces of information.

| Country | Dates highlighted in the brief | What to notice when planning work |
|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** | 22 February / 23 September | Founding Day and National Day. Ramadan and Eid affect work, travel and family routines. [SA 14] |
| **Qatar** | 18 December / February sports day | National Day; National Sports Day on the second Tuesday of February. Sunday-Thursday is a usual government and office pattern. [QA 14] |
| **UAE** | 2-3 December | National Day holidays. The federal government has a four-and-a-half-day pattern; Sharjah government has a four-day week. Private schedules vary. [AE 14] |
| **Kuwait** | 25-26 February | National Day and Liberation Day. Government closure dates are not automatically the roster of an airline, hospital, shop or refinery. [KW 14] |
| **Bahrain** | 16-17 December | National Day holidays alongside Labour Day and Islamic occasions. Religious dates remain subject to confirmation. [BH 14] |
| **Oman** | 20-21 November | The brief reports revised National Day dates under a 2025 decree; older references may still use 18 November. Check that year's announced arrangements. [OM 14] |

## Ramadan is not only a scheduling issue

Reduced statutory hours and changed family, customer and travel patterns should be read together. Plan meetings and service cover with consideration, while avoiding assumptions about any individual's observance. The exact employment coverage is country-specific. [SA 11] [QA 11] [AE 11] [KW 11] [BH 11] [OM 11]

## Climate is an operating condition

The country briefs describe different seasonal outdoor-work controls. Their dates and hours should not be pooled into a single regional ban. Shade, water, rest, transport and supervision still matter outside a prohibited period. Oman's Dhofar khareef adds a different seasonal setting. [QA 14] [AE 14] [KW 14] [BH 14] [OM 14]

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND EDITORIAL NOTES

# Read the dates, definitions and source trail

The new overview is a synthesis of the supplied country guides, not a silent replacement of their evidence.

| Code | Source booklet | Edition / note retained in the source | Source pages here |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SA** | Saudi Arabia | 7 October 2026; cover and locator corrected 8 October | 39-40 |
| **QA** | Qatar | 7 October 2026 | 55-56 |
| **AE** | United Arab Emirates | 7 October 2026 | 71-72 |
| **KW** | Kuwait | 8 October 2026 | 87-88 |
| **BH** | Bahrain | 8 October 2026 | 103-104 |
| **OM** | Oman | 7 October 2026 | 119-120 |

## Country evidence remains the basis

Short references such as [BH 05] identify the country and its printed local page. They open the relevant page in this volume. Each booklet retains its original references, dates, wording and page design; the regional comparisons point back to that evidence.

## No unsupported regional totals

The population observations use different dates. Workforce measures cover residents, economically active people, employed people or registered contributors. Economic tables mix neither units nor periods into a single regional total. Missing comparables are not filled with estimates.

## Interpretation is identified as interpretation

Practical observations about comparator selection, household needs and the route from strategy to staffing are editorial synthesis. They do not establish a new empirical ranking or certify an employer's compliance.

## How to use the legal summaries

The employment comparisons report the supplied briefs' general orientation. They are not an independent current-law review. Before acting, check the relevant authority, employer, employee category, contract and implementing rules. Original country material has not been revised in this collection.

## Images, maps and authorship

Cover: AI-generated aerial-style illustration of the Gulf, not a documentary photograph or navigation image. Regional map: generalised Natural Earth geography; Bahrain main-island coast from GSHHG. Contents silhouettes: supplied locators and Natural Earth/GSHHG. Portrait and logo: approved September 2026 HR Delivery brand pack.

## Publication details

HR Delivery, October 2026. Foreword prepared for Dr Phillip Welsh; approval required for attribution before publication. New regional overview: 24 pages. Original country collection: 96 pages. No external endorsement or formal accessibility certification is claimed.

Cartographic background: naturalearthdata.com | GSHHG coastline data. Maps are generalised and are not official boundary statements.

NAVIGATION / READ ACROSS THE COUNTRIES

# Find the same subject in six places

Select a page number to open that topic. Numbers below are the pages of this combined volume.


| Topic | Saudi | Qatar | UAE | Kuwait | Bahrain | Oman |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Country at a glance | 27 | 43 | 59 | 75 | 91 | 107 |
| History and identity | 28 | 44 | 60 | 76 | 92 | 108 |
| People and the workforce | 29 | 45 | 61 | 77 | 93 | 109 |
| Economy in context | 30 | 46 | 62 | 78 | 94 | 110 |
| Sectors and national direction | 31 | 47 | 63 | 79 | 95 | 111 |
| Major companies | 32 | 48 | 64 | 80 | 96 | 112 |
| Institutions and wider business | 33 | 49 | 65 | 81 | 97 | 113 |
| Business environment | 34 | 50 | 66 | 82 | 98 | 114 |
| Employment setting | 35 | 51 | 67 | 83 | 99 | 115 |
| National talent, hiring and pay | 36 | 52 | 68 | 84 | 100 | 116 |
| Living and relocating | 37 | 53 | 69 | 85 | 101 | 117 |
| Culture and the working year | 38 | 54 | 70 | 86 | 102 | 118 |
| Sources and reading | 39 | 55 | 71 | 87 | 103 | 119 |
| Source notes and publication | 40 | 56 | 72 | 88 | 104 | 120 |


## From regional comparison to country understanding

For a workforce discussion, read the people, employment and national-talent pages together. For a new client, begin with sectors, companies and institutions. For a relocation, keep the living and culture pages alongside the actual household's questions.

The complete country guides follow next in the requested order: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman. Their original printed page numbers are retained. The PDF page counter and this navigator provide the position within the combined volume.

HR DELIVERY
*Making Sure HR Delivers*



# SAUDI ARABIA

## People, economy and working life

A country brief for HR professionals



## Understand the country. Know the context.

Country background / People and workforce / Major employers
Business environment / Living and working in Saudi Arabia

OCTOBER 2026

START HERE

# Understanding Saudi Arabia

A useful country brief should help you understand Saudi Arabia before you try to advise an organisation within it. The Kingdom is large, regionally diverse and changing quickly; a Riyadh boardroom, an Eastern Province industrial site and a hospitality operation in the west can sit within very different labour and business contexts.

This brief brings together the country's background, population, workforce, economy, major employers and everyday realities of working and doing business. It is written for HR professionals preparing for a client meeting, joining an organisation, benchmarking a workforce or supporting colleagues who are moving to Saudi Arabia.

**03** The country at a glance

**04** History, government and identity

**05** People and the workforce

**06** The economy in context

**07** Sectors and national direction

**08** Major companies

**09** Institutions and wider business

**10** Doing business in Saudi Arabia

**11** The employment setting

**12** National talent, hiring and pay

**13** Living and relocating

**14** Culture and the working year

**15-16** Sources, data notes and publication information

### Read the dates as well as the numbers

The edition is dated 7 October 2026. Figures retain their own reference periods, and strategic targets are distinguished from outcomes. Links in the text lead to the source register. This is a country introduction, not legal, tax or immigration advice.

01 / COUNTRY FUNDAMENTALS

# The country at a glance

A vast country with several distinct business and labour markets.

**2m+**
**square kilometres**
largest GCC country [2]

**35.3m**
**population**
mid-2024 [1]

**SAR 3.75**
**per US dollar**
official parity [12]

## A country of continental scale

Saudi Arabia occupies most of the Arabian Peninsula and covers more than two million square kilometres. It faces both the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf and is divided into 13 administrative regions. Riyadh is the capital, but the scale of the country means labour markets, travel patterns and operating conditions vary considerably by region. [2][5]

## Three business geographies matter immediately

Riyadh is the political and increasingly important corporate centre. Jeddah is a major Red Sea commercial and logistics hub and gateway to Makkah. The Eastern Province contains much of the oil, gas, petrochemical and industrial base, including Dhahran, Dammam, Al Khobar and Jubail. A national salary survey or policy can hide these local differences. [5]




Geographic locator: Natural Earth boundary data; cities from GeoNames / UNGEGN. Generalised; not for legal use.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Capital / language** | Riyadh; Arabic is official and English is widely used in business. [5] |
| **Time** | GMT+3 throughout the year; no daylight saving. [1] |
| **Climate** | 13 administrative regions with varied climates, landscapes and economic centres. [2] |

## Beyond the three largest centres

Makkah and Madinah are shaped by pilgrimage and the visitor economy; the north-west includes Tabuk, NEOM and Red Sea developments; mining and industrial activity stretches across several regions; and tourism growth is opening new employment markets in places such as AlUla and Aseer. For HR, Saudi Arabia is rarely a single commuting or talent market. [7][24][37]

02 / HISTORY AND SOCIETY

# A modern state with a long memory

Energy transformed the economy. It did not erase the country's history or its sense of identity.

## A state with deep roots

The first Saudi state began in Diriyah in 1727 under Imam Mohammed bin Saud. The second Saudi state was established in 1824. King Abdulaziz recovered Riyadh in 1902 and then led a long process of unification across the peninsula. [3]

## The modern Kingdom

A Royal Order named the unified country the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 23 September 1932. That date is now National Day. Founding Day, observed on 22 February, commemorates the establishment of the first Saudi state in 1727. [4][36]

## Institutions and national life

Saudi Arabia is a monarchy with Riyadh as its capital. The Kingdom is also home to Makkah and Madinah, Islam's two holiest cities, giving religion and pilgrimage a distinctive place in national life and in parts of the economy. [5]

## Oil changed the scale of development

Commercial oil transformed public finances, infrastructure and employment during the twentieth century. Aramco remains one of the world's leading energy and chemicals companies, but the national development agenda now deliberately seeks a broader economic base. [25][6]

**1727**
First Saudi state

**1902**
Riyadh recovered

**1932**
Kingdom unified

**2016**
Vision 2030

Timeline sources: Saudi historical milestones [3][4]; Vision 2030 [6].

### Why the history still matters

The speed of contemporary change can make Saudi Arabia look entirely future-facing, yet identity, religion, family, region and national history remain important. Good consulting work recognises both sides: the appetite for transformation and the value placed on continuity, dignity and local ownership of change.

03 / PEOPLE AND THE WORKFORCE

# Who lives and works in Saudi Arabia?

A growing Saudi workforce and a large international workforce shape the labour market together.

**35.3m**
**residents**
mid-2024 [1]

**44.4%**
**non-Saudi share**
mid-2024 [1]

**6.4%**
**Saudi unemployment**
Q1 2026 [8][9]

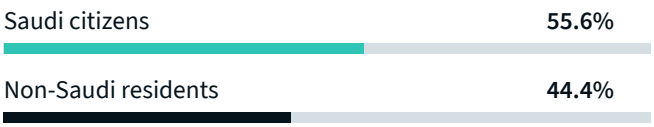
## A large population with two demographic stories

GASTAT estimated 35.3 million residents at mid-2024: 19.6 million Saudi citizens and 15.7 million non-Saudi residents. Saudis were 55.6% of the population and non-Saudis 44.4%. The expatriate population is particularly concentrated in working ages and is strongly male-skewed. [1]

## International labour remains structurally important

Non-Saudi residents support construction, industry, healthcare, hospitality, retail, logistics, domestic work and many professional occupations. Their role is not temporary in the simple sense: Saudization is expanding while the economy continues to recruit international expertise for skills, projects and growth. [1][7][20]

POPULATION BY NATIONALITY / 2024




GASTAT mid-2024 population estimates. [1]

## Unemployment is lower, but not uniform

GASTAT's Q1 2026 survey put Saudi unemployment at 6.4%, with Saudi women's unemployment at 9.0% and men's at 4.9%. The all-resident unemployment rate was lower because the expatriate population is predominantly in Saudi Arabia for work. [8][9]

## The human perspective

A national workforce plan sits behind individual careers. A Saudi graduate entering a newly localized profession, an experienced Saudi manager and an expatriate specialist hired for a transformation programme may all be critical to the same organisation. The useful question is not nationals versus expatriates; it is what capability the organisation needs, where it will come from and how it will be sustained.

04 / ECONOMY

# Wealth, diversification and exposure

Oil remains important, while non-oil sectors are reshaping growth and employment.

**4.5%**
**real GDP growth**
2025 [6]

**4.9%**
**non-oil growth**
2025 [6]

**2.0%**
**inflation**
2025 [6]

## A large economy in active transition

Vision 2030's 2025 report recorded real GDP growth of 4.5% and non-oil growth of 4.9%, with non-oil activities accounting for more than half of GDP. Oil still matters enormously, but retail, construction, tourism, finance, logistics, digital services and other sectors now form a larger part of the employment story. [6]

## Oil still shapes the cycle

Energy revenues and production decisions remain important to public finances, investment and supplier demand. Aramco alone employed 76,664 people at the end of 2025 and sits within a much larger ecosystem of engineering, industrial, contracting and professional-services businesses. [25]

## Diversification is visible in real sectors

Tourism, entertainment, mining, logistics, advanced manufacturing, financial services, technology and major urban development are no longer side stories. Vision 2030 reported 123 million tourists in 2025 and an ambition of 150 million by 2030, while PIF continues to build domestic economic ecosystems. [7][29]

## The 2026 picture shows why dates matter

GASTAT's Q2 2026 flash estimate reported a 4.8% year-on-year contraction in real GDP as oil activity fell sharply, while non-oil activities still grew 0.6%. A consultant should therefore distinguish structural diversification from the quarter-to-quarter effects of oil output. [10][11]

### The 2026 picture is different

GASTAT's Q2 2026 flash estimate reported real GDP down 4.8% year on year as oil activity fell sharply, while non-oil activity still grew 0.6%. This is a useful reminder that structural diversification and the oil production cycle can move in different directions. [10][11]

Saudi Arabia can contain rapid growth, mature operations, project mobilisations and restructuring at the same time. Sector, city, ownership and project stage usually tell you more about immediate workforce demand than a single national growth headline.

05 / SECTORS AND NATIONAL DIRECTION

# Where economic activity takes place

The national direction is broader than energy, even though energy remains a major source of demand.

## Energy, chemicals and industry

Aramco, SABIC and a large industrial supply chain remain central to the economy. The Eastern Province and industrial cities such as Jubail require technical, engineering, operational, safety, project and commercial capability at scale. [25][26]

## Investment and new economic ecosystems

PIF is a major engine of diversification. Its 2025 annual report described more than US$199 billion of domestic investment from 2021-2025 and a contribution of more than US$342 billion to real non-oil GDP over that period. PIF companies create new talent markets as well as investment flows. [29]

## Tourism, hospitality and entertainment

Saudi Arabia reported 123 million tourists in 2025, including more than 30 million international visitors. Growth spans religious tourism, leisure, events, heritage and new destinations. This creates demand well beyond hotels, including operations, digital, marketing, experience design and destination management. [7]

## Mining and minerals

Maaden's workforce exceeded 7,100 in 2025 and the company reported a 78.7% Saudization rate. Mining expansion creates roles in remote operations, geology, engineering, processing, supply chain and community relations. [28]

## Digital, finance and professional services

stc, banks, fintechs, cloud providers and global professional firms are part of a fast-changing corporate market, especially in Riyadh. stc KSA reported 10,448 employees in 2025 and 89.6% Saudization across KSA and local subsidiaries. [27]

## Construction, logistics and major projects

Large-scale urban, transport and destination programmes create strong demand for project management, procurement, commercial management, engineering and logistics. Saudization decisions increasingly target exactly these professional occupations, so workforce planning needs to anticipate regulation as well as project demand. [21][23]

### Vision 2030: transformation across society and the economy

Vision 2030 is reshaping economic participation, public services, investment, tourism, quality of life and the labour market. The 2025 annual report recorded 4.5% real GDP growth, 4.9% non-oil growth and Saudi unemployment of 7.2% for 2025. These are national outcomes, not guarantees for every sector or employer. [6][7]

**Tourism at scale:** the 2025 Vision report recorded 123 million tourists, including more than 30 million international visitors, with a new ambition of 150 million visitors by 2030. [7]

06 / MAJOR COMPANIES

# Names that shape the business landscape

A selected guide to important companies, not a league table: revenue, assets and domestic employment are different measures.

| Organisation | Business | Why it is useful to know |
|---|---|---|
| **Aramco** | Energy / chemicals | 76,664 company employees at 31 December 2025; a major influence on the Eastern Province, industry, suppliers and specialist employment. [25] |
| **SABIC** | Chemicals / materials | 26,000+ employees globally in 2025; Saudi chemicals champion with major industrial and technical capability requirements. [26] |
| **stc group** | Telecoms / digital | 18,921 group employees in 2025; 10,448 in stc KSA and 89.6% Saudization across KSA and local subsidiaries. [27] |
| **Maaden** | Mining / minerals | 7,107 FTEs in 2025 with 78.7% Saudization; central to the Kingdom expanding mining and minerals ecosystem. [28] |
| **Public Investment Fund** | Sovereign investment | A major investor and creator of new domestic companies and sectors; its portfolio shapes talent demand far beyond PIF itself. [29] |
| **Al Rajhi Bank** | Banking | One of the Kingdom most significant banking institutions and a useful reference point for financial-services employment. |
| **Saudi Electricity Co.** | Utilities | A major national infrastructure and engineering employer within the power and energy-transition landscape. |
| **Saudia Group** | Aviation | National aviation group within a wider tourism, airport, logistics and visitor-economy expansion. |

### A useful distinction for HR

A large company's global headcount does not tell you how many people it employs in Saudi Arabia. Equally, a company may be commercially important without being the country's largest domestic employer. Establish the relevant business unit and geography before using a company as a pay or talent comparator.

07 / INSTITUTIONS AND WIDER BUSINESS

# Beyond the company names

Public services, education, research and smaller businesses are part of the country's employment story too.

## Government is a major employer and market shaper

Ministries, regulators, public authorities and state-linked organisations influence standards, procurement and employment across the economy. For an HR consultant, understanding whether the client is a ministry, government-owned company, PIF portfolio company, listed business, family group or multinational subsidiary is fundamental to interpreting how decisions are made.

## PIF changes the corporate landscape

The Public Investment Fund is both a global investor and a domestic transformation institution. Its portfolio and new-company creation affect sectors from tourism and entertainment to technology, mobility, construction and financial services. The portfolio is commercially diverse, so PIF ownership should not be treated as one employment model. [29]

## Education and skills are part of economic policy

Universities, technical education, HRDF programmes, academies and employer-led training all sit behind the localization agenda. Vision 2030's 2025 report notes that the challenge is increasingly about alignment between qualifications, skills and employer demand rather than participation alone. [6][7]

## Healthcare is both a service and a workforce market

Saudi Arabia has large public and private healthcare systems and continues to recruit internationally for specialist capability. For private-sector employment, the Council of Health Insurance states that employers are responsible for insurance premiums for employees and dependants, including during probation. [31]

**PIF**
**investment and new sectors**
domestic transformation engine [29]

**HRSD**
**labour market**
employment and Saudization policy [20]

**MISA**
**investment**
business and investor framework [13]

### Reading an organisation in context

A Riyadh headquarters, an industrial operating company, a PIF-backed start-up and a regional family business may all be ambitious but have very different governance, reward and decision rhythms. Country knowledge is useful only when it is connected to the actual organisation.

08 / BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

# How the operating context works

The right country knowledge starts with the right legal entity, business activity and set of rules.

## The investment environment has been redesigned

Saudi Arabia's updated Investment Law applies to local and foreign investors and is intended to provide clearer rights, registration and equal treatment under similar circumstances, subject to excluded or restricted activities and other applicable laws. It also allows for investment incentives and alternative dispute-resolution methods. [13][40]

## Riyadh is becoming a regional corporate centre

Government, PIF, financial institutions, major national companies and an expanding international business community are concentrated in the capital. The growth of KAFD and the regional-headquarters market has deepened demand for professional, commercial and leadership talent.

## The private sector is expected to do more

Vision 2030 has deliberately expanded the role of private investment and enterprise. That creates opportunity, but also means employers face a more sophisticated regulatory environment covering localization, contract documentation, wage payment, occupational classifications and professional accreditation. [6][14][20]

## Currency is stable against the US dollar

The Saudi riyal is pegged at SAR 3.75 per US$1. That provides a stable dollar reference, but expatriate employees paid in riyals can still experience changes in the home-currency value of savings and remittances. [12]

### The practical point for HR

Saudi Arabia's investment environment is opening while labour-market regulation is becoming more occupation-specific. A business case for a new function should test both commercial opportunity and whether the intended job architecture is compatible with current Saudization and professional requirements. [13][20][21][22][23]

Before using a benchmark or recommending a policy, establish the employing entity, sector, city, ownership, workforce composition and relevant localization rules. In Saudi Arabia, a job title itself can affect Saudization compliance, professional registration and the talent pool available to the employer.

09 / EMPLOYMENT SETTING

# The rules behind working life

A short orientation to the general Labour Law, with important boundaries rather than a universal checklist.

Saudi Arabia's Labour Law was materially amended with changes taking effect on 19 February 2025. The amendments revised 38 articles, deleted seven and added two, so old employment summaries should not be treated as current without checking the amended law and implementing regulations. [14]

| Topic | General baseline for covered employees |
|---|---|
| Ordinary hours | Generally 8 hours a day / 48 a week; for Muslim employees during Ramadan, 6 a day / 36 a week. [15] |
| Probation | Up to 180 days when specified in the contract; statutory exclusions and repeat-probation rules apply. [18] |
| Annual leave | At least 21 days a year, rising to at least 30 days after five consecutive years with the employer. [16] |
| Maternity | 12 weeks on full pay, with six weeks mandatory after childbirth; additional provisions apply. [17] |
| Other leave | Marriage and specified bereavement leave are five days; paternity leave is three days; Hajj leave is available subject to conditions. [16] |
| Resignation | A resignation can be deemed accepted after 30 days without response; the employer may postpone acceptance for up to 60 days with written reasons. [19] |
| Health insurance | Private-sector employers are responsible for employee and dependant insurance premiums, including during probation. [31] |

This is an orientation, not legal advice. Sector, occupation, contract type and implementing rules can change the position.

### A live compliance environment

Saudization decisions, occupational classifications, professional accreditation, contract documentation and the Labour Law all interact. HR teams should maintain a current compliance map by occupation rather than relying on a single annual policy review. [14][20][21][22][23]

# Joining the workforce

Saudization and international recruitment are both part of the Kingdom's labour-market direction.

## Saudization is no longer one percentage

Nitaqat remains an important framework, but the localization landscape is increasingly profession- and sector-specific. A new Nitaqat Mutawar phase began in 2026 with a three-year objective of localizing more than 340,000 additional private-sector jobs. Employers also need to track separate ministerial decisions affecting particular occupations. [20]

## 2026 brought material profession-level changes

Marketing and sales professions moved to 60% Saudization; procurement professions to 70%; tourism occupations are subject to sector rules; and 69 administrative-support professions moved to 100% Saudization in October 2026. The administrative list includes several HR, recruitment, workforce-planning and public-relations roles. [21][22][23][24]

## Women participation has changed the talent market

Female labour-force participation reached 35.0% in 2025 against a 40% Vision 2030 target. The change is visible across professional, managerial and customer-facing work, although participation and career progression still differ by sector and region. [6]

## International recruitment remains important

Saudiization does not mean the end of expatriate recruitment. Employers continue to source international specialists, executives, healthcare professionals, engineers and project talent. Work visas require formal processes, and Premium Residency now offers separate routes for exceptional competence, talent, investors, entrepreneurs and other eligible applicants. [34][35]

### Saudization now reaches into professional job architecture

In 2026, profession-specific decisions included 60% Saudization in marketing and sales, 70% in procurement and 100% across 69 administrative-support professions. The administrative list includes HR development, workforce planning, recruitment and public-relations roles, making job-title governance a direct HR compliance issue. [21][22][23]

Saudi reward packages vary by sector, city, grade, scarcity and employer type. Housing, schooling, transport, medical cover and variable pay can be material for expatriate packages, while Saudi employees may compare career progression, allowances, development and employer reputation differently. A single 'Saudi salary' figure is rarely useful.

# The everyday side of a move

Housing, schooling, healthcare and the journey to work turn an employment offer into a real life.

## A move can mean a different city and a different life

Relocating to Riyadh, Jeddah or the Eastern Province is not the same decision. Housing, commuting, schools, climate, family networks and leisure options differ. The best relocation support starts with the actual work location and household needs, not a generic Saudi package.

## Housing and the daily journey

Riyadh is geographically large and traffic remains an important practical consideration despite major transport investment. Jeddah and the Dammam-Al Khobar area have different urban patterns. Test the journey to the actual workplace before deciding where a family should live.

## Schools are a real part of the employment proposition

GASTAT's 2025 livability report counted 3,062 international schools nationally in 2024, including 1,206 in Riyadh, 664 in Jeddah and 408 in the Dammam metropolitan area. Availability is broad, but curriculum, fees, admissions and location still require family-specific checking. [32]

## Healthcare and insurance

For private-sector employment, health insurance is not an optional relocation extra. The Council of Health Insurance states that the employer is responsible for premiums for employees and their dependants, and that employee cover applies during probation. Confirm network, limits and dependant eligibility rather than relying on the word 'medical'. [31]

## Getting around is changing

Riyadh Metro's six lines cover 176 kilometres and 85 stations and were fully activated by January 2025. The network materially improves access to locations including KAFD and the airport, but many workplaces and family journeys still require road transport. [33]

## Residency routes are evolving

Most expatriate employees still enter through employer-linked work arrangements, but Premium Residency now offers products for exceptional competence, talent, investors, entrepreneurs and others. These routes can change the assumptions around sponsorship, mobility and long-term residence for eligible people. [34][35]

### For a relocating employee or visiting consultant

Agree the work location, access arrangements and contact person before travel. Check the current visa, work-permission requirements for the activities you will perform, as well as travel advice and insurance. In a changing regional situation, a familiar route or previous visit is not enough assurance for the next journey. [12][32]

# Working with consideration

Respect matters most when it is informed, practical and free from stereotypes.

## Hospitality is more than a business ritual

Saudi hospitality has deep cultural roots. Coffee, conversation and time spent building trust can be part of professional relationships as well as social life. The useful response is not to imitate etiquette mechanically, but to be present, courteous and interested in the people you are meeting. [36]

## Respect the national and religious context

Islam shapes the public calendar and aspects of daily life. Makkah and Madinah have particular religious significance. Professional dress, respectful public behaviour and awareness of prayer and Ramadan are sensible expectations for visitors and residents. [5][36]

## Communication varies by organisation

Arabic is the official language and English is common in many professional workplaces. Seniority and relationships can matter, but Saudi organisations differ greatly. A government body, a technology company and an international joint venture should not be approached through a single cultural stereotype.

## The working year has its own rhythm

Ramadan reduces statutory working hours for Muslim employees to six hours a day or 36 a week. Eid periods, National Day on 23 September and Founding Day on 22 February affect travel, leave and business schedules. Exact religious holiday dates follow official announcements. [15][36]

## Change is visible in everyday working life

Women's participation, new sectors, flexible work, digital government and the growth of Riyadh as an international business centre have changed the experience of work quickly. Different generations may have lived through very different versions of the Saudi labour market. [6][7]

## See more than the meeting room

Diriyah, Jeddah's historic districts, AlUla, the Red Sea, Aseer and the Kingdom's varied landscapes give a much fuller sense of Saudi Arabia than an airport-office-hotel itinerary. Understanding the country makes it easier to understand why employees may feel strongly about region, family, heritage and the pace of change. [37]

### A brief, not a stereotype

Saudi Arabia's regions, institutions, employers and residents are not interchangeable. Use the country context to ask more thoughtful questions and to interpret what you see. Then let the organisation and the people themselves tell you what matters in their particular situation.

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND READING

# Sources and further reading

Select a reference to open the original source. The numbers match the links in the brief.

**01 General Authority for Statistics**
Population Estimates 2024: 35.3m residents; 55.6% Saudi and 44.4% non-Saudi
stats.gov.sa

**02 Saudipedia**
Saudi Arabia: geography and administrative regions
saudipedia.com

**03 Saudipedia**
History of Saudi Arabia and the Saudi states
saudipedia.com

**04 Saudipedia**
Timeline of unification; Kingdom proclaimed in 1932
saudipedia.com

**05 Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
About the Kingdom and major cities
mofa.gov.sa

**06 Saudi Vision 2030**
Vision 2030 Annual Report 2025 - executive summary
vision2030.gov.sa

**07 Saudi Vision 2030**
Vision 2030 Annual Report 2025 - full report
vision2030.gov.sa

**08 General Authority for Statistics**
Labour Market Statistics Q1 2026
stats.gov.sa

**09 GASTAT / reported release**
Q1 2026 Saudi unemployment: 6.4%; women 9.0%; men 4.9%
saudigazette.com.sa

**10 General Authority for Statistics**
GDP Flash Estimate Q2 2026
stats.gov.sa

**11 GASTAT / reported release**
Q2 2026 GDP flash: real GDP -4.8%; non-oil +0.6%; oil -24.7%
saudigazette.com.sa

**12 Saudi Central Bank**
Official exchange-rate policy: SAR 3.75 per US dollar
sama.gov.sa

**13 Ministry of Investment**
Updated Investment Law and investor rights
eservices.misa.gov.sa

**14 MHRSD**
2025 Labour Law amendments entered into force 19 February 2025
hrsd.gov.sa

**15 MHRSD**
Working hours and Ramadan hours
hrsd.gov.sa

**16 MHRSD**
Annual leave and statutory leave provisions
hrsd.gov.sa

**17 MHRSD**
Women employment: 12-week maternity leave
hrsd.gov.sa

**18 MHRSD**
Probation period: up to 180 days
hrsd.gov.sa

**19 MHRSD**
Resignation provisions under the amended Labour Law
hrsd.gov.sa

**20 MHRSD**
New Nitaqat Mutawar phase from 2026; 340,000 additional jobs targeted
hrsd.gov.sa

## What the company figures mean

Company amounts retain the reporting period and group scope stated by the issuer. Revenue and assets are deliberately not ranked together. No comprehensive ranking of Saudi-based employee headcounts is claimed.

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND READING

# Source notes and publication details

Official information is the starting point; definitions and reporting periods still need care.

**21 MHRSD**
100% Saudization of 69 administrative-support professions from October 2026
hrsd.gov.sa

**22 MHRSD**
60% Saudization in marketing and sales professions from April 2026
wide.hrsd.gov.sa

**23 MHRSD**
70% Saudization in procurement professions from May 2026
hrsd.gov.sa

**24 MHRSD**
Tourism-sector localization guide and 2026 implementation
hrsd.gov.sa

**25 Aramco**
At a glance: 76,664 employees at 31 December 2025
aramco.com

**26 SABIC**
Integrated Annual Report 2025: 26,000+ employees
sabic.com

**27 stc group**
2025 workforce: 18,921 group employees; 89.6% Saudization in KSA/local subsidiaries
stc.com

**28 Maaden**
Integrated Report 2025: 7,107 FTEs and 78.7% Saudization
minedocs.com

**29 Public Investment Fund**
Annual Report 2025: assets, domestic investment and non-oil contribution
annualreport.pif.gov.sa

**30 Public Investment Fund**
Annual Report 2024: 2,962 employees, 2,503 Saudi nationals
pif.gov.sa

**31 Council of Health Insurance**
Employer responsibility for employee and dependant health insurance
chi.gov.sa

**32 General Authority for Statistics**
Livability in Saudi Cities 2025: international schools by city
stats.gov.sa

**33 Royal Commission for Riyadh City**
Riyadh Metro: six lines, 176 km and 85 stations
rcrc.gov.sa

**34 Premium Residency Center**
Premium Residency products for talent, investors and entrepreneurs
my.gov.sa

**35 Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
Permanent work visa process
my.gov.sa

**36 Visit Saudi**
Saudi culture, hospitality and public holidays
visitsaudi.com

**37 Visit Saudi**
About Saudi Arabia: regions, heritage and contemporary development
visitsaudi.com

**38 Saudi Vision 2030**
National Transformation Program Annual Report 2025: labour-market indicators
vision2030.gov.sa

**39 Saudi Central Bank**
Saudi riyal currency and national symbol
sama.gov.sa

**40 Ministry of Investment**
Saudi investment laws and regulations overview
misa.gov.sa

**Data note.** Population figures use GASTAT mid-2024 estimates. Labour-market indicators retain their stated quarter or year. Vision 2030 figures are programme reporting and should not be mixed with later quarterly releases without noting the reference period.

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GULF COUNTRY BRIEFS / 01

# QATAR

## People, economy and working life

A country brief for HR professionals



## Understand the country. Know the context.

Country background / People and workforce / Major employers
Business environment / Living and working in Qatar

OCTOBER 2026

START HERE

# Understanding Qatar

A useful country brief should help you understand the place before you try to advise the organisations within it. Qatar deserves that attention: its business life cannot be understood from the skyline, its energy wealth or a list of employment rules alone.

This brief brings together the country background, the people who live and work here, the economy, important employers and the everyday realities of doing business. It is written for HR professionals who need an informed introduction to Qatar, whether they are preparing for a client meeting, joining an organisation or supporting colleagues moving to the country.

**03** The country at a glance

**04** History, government and identity

**05** People and the workforce

**06** The economy in context

**07** Sectors and national direction

**08** Major companies

**09** Institutions and wider business

**10** Doing business in Qatar

**11** The employment setting

**12** National talent, hiring and pay

**13** Living and relocating

**14** Culture and the working year

**15-16 Sources, data notes and publication information**

### Read the dates as well as the numbers

The edition is dated 7 October 2026. Figures retain their own reference periods, and strategic targets are distinguished from outcomes. Links in the text lead to the source register. This is a country introduction, not legal, tax or immigration advice.

01 / COUNTRY FUNDAMENTALS

# The country at a glance

Small in area, with a concentrated urban centre and an international outlook.

**~11,600**
**square kilometres**
rounded land area [2]

**3.215m**
**population**
December 2025 [8]

**QAR 3.64**
**per US dollar**
official parity [39]

## A peninsula with a concentrated centre

Qatar projects into the Arabian Gulf from the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia is its only land neighbour; Bahrain, Iran and the United Arab Emirates lie across surrounding waters. Doha is the capital and the centre of government, finance and much of the country's commercial life. [1]

## Doha is not the whole country

West Bay is associated with offices and hotels; Msheireb and the historic centre bring together commercial activity and heritage. Lusail extends the urban area to the north. For a visiting consultant, a Doha address is a starting point, not a reliable description of the employee's daily journey. [2][34]




Simplified locator. Coastline and place positions are simplified. The land boundary is not delineated.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Capital / language** | Doha; Arabic is official and English is widely used. [1] |
| **Time** | GMT+3 throughout the year; no daylight saving. [1] |
| **Climate** | Hot desert summers, mild winters and limited rain. [1] |

## Where industrial work happens

Ras Laffan, north of Doha, is the onshore base for processing North Field gas and a major LNG export location. Mesaieed, to the south, combines refining, gas processing, petrochemicals and metals. These are operational environments with transport, site-access and accommodation requirements that differ from an office in the capital. [14]

02 / HISTORY AND SOCIETY

# A modern state with a long memory

Energy transformed the economy. It did not erase the country's history or its sense of identity.

## Before energy wealth

Pearling, fishing and maritime trade supported coastal communities long before the modern economy. The decline of the natural pearl market brought severe hardship. Oil was first struck at the end of 1939, but the Second World War interrupted development; the economic benefits of exports became visible in the early 1950s. [3]

## The making of the modern state

The 1868 agreement with Britain recognised Qatar's sovereignty. Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani's leadership from 1878 is central to the national story. Independence was declared on 3 September 1971, ending the 1916 treaty relationship with Britain. National Day is celebrated on 18 December rather than on the independence date. [1][3]

## Institutions today

Qatar is a hereditary constitutional monarchy. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani has been Amir since 2013. The Council of Ministers exercises executive responsibilities; the Shura Council has legislative functions, and courts exercise judicial authority. The Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs is Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. [1][4][5]

## A wider international presence

Energy supply, investment, aviation and diplomacy give Qatar a reach beyond its physical size. Mediation remains an explicit part of its international role. In September 2026, the government reaffirmed energy reliability, investment partnerships and economic resilience as priorities. [15]

**1939**
First oil strike

**1971**
Independence

**2008**
National Vision

**2022**
FIFA World Cup

Timeline sources: historical milestones [3]; National Vision [6]; World Cup and visitor context [2].

### Why the history still matters

For a newcomer, it is worth appreciating that rapid modernisation and continuity of national identity are not opposing ideas here. A conversation about change can recognise what people want to preserve as well as what they hope to improve. That is a more respectful starting point than treating an international management practice as automatically superior.

03 / PEOPLE AND THE WORKFORCE

# Who lives and works in Qatar?

The scale of international labour migration is essential to understanding the country.

**2.24m**
**economically active, 15+**
2024 survey table [9]

**94.3%**
**non-Qatari share**
same 2024 base [9]

**17.0%**
**women's share**
2024 sex/status table [10]

## A resident population, not a citizen count

The NPC's reported population at the end of December 2025 was 3,214,609. This is a dated population observation, not a count of Qatari citizens and not a forecast for October 2026. Monthly movements can reflect travel and migration as well as longer-term demographic change. [8]

## An exceptionally international labour market

The 2024 labour-force tables record about 2.24 million economically active people aged 15 and above, excluding people seeking work for the first time. Non-Qataris account for 94.3% of that population. The figures below use the same table and denominator rather than mixing population and employee statistics. [9]

WHERE PEOPLE WORK / 2024




2024 base above. Government combines departments and companies. Rounded shares. [9]

## What a headline can hide

Women account for 17.0% of the economically active population in the 2024 sex/status table. This is not the female participation rate: it does not say what proportion of working-age women are employed or looking for work. Nor does a national average describe the gender balance of every profession or organisation. [10]

## The human perspective

An international workforce is not one uniform 'expatriate' group. Someone recruited into a technical role, a family relocating for a professional appointment and a worker living in employer-arranged accommodation may have very different needs. Language, take-home income, family contact and confidence in a supervisor can matter as much as a formal policy.

04 / ECONOMY

# Wealth, diversification and exposure

Qatar's economic strength and its international connections need to be read together.

**US$215.6bn**
**nominal GDP**
2025 [11]

**US$72,525**
**GDP per capita**
2025 [11]

**+2.9%**
**real GDP growth**
2025 [11]

## The scale of the economy

World Bank country data report GDP of about US$215.6 billion in 2025, GDP per capita of approximately US$72,525 and annual real GDP growth of 2.9%. GDP per capita describes economic output per person; it is neither an average salary nor a guide to the standard of living of every resident. [11]

## Energy remains the foundation

Natural gas, LNG and related industries remain central to Qatar's export economy. QatarEnergy's North Field programme also creates demand for shipping, engineering, maintenance, project services and industrial support. An organisation need not sell energy to be influenced by the energy investment cycle. [13][14]

## Diversification is already visible

Non-hydrocarbon activities represented 65.6% of real GDP in the NPC's Q2 2025 release. Finance, construction, trade and services are therefore part of the current economy, not just future aspirations. This is a dated, pre-disruption benchmark; it should not be presented as a permanent sector share. [40]

## Wealth is also invested for the future

Established in 2005, Qatar Investment Authority manages state assets with a long-term investment purpose. In September 2026, the government announced Doha Investment to develop QIA's domestic portfolio and strengthen private-sector growth. Sovereign investment and the domestic employment market are connected, but they are not the same thing. [19][15]

### The 2026 picture is different

The NPC's Q2 2026 release reported non-hydrocarbon growth of 2.6%, but a 50.7% decline in hydrocarbon GDP amid regional restrictions on shipping and exports. The positive services figure should not be presented as growth for the whole economy. Travel, project timing and supply-chain assumptions require current checks. [12]

Qatar offers substantial institutional and investment capacity, but demand is not evenly distributed. A new project, a delayed contract and a mature service operation can have quite different staffing needs at the same time. Sector and project stage are more informative than a general claim that 'the market is growing'.

05 / SECTORS AND NATIONAL DIRECTION

# Where economic activity takes place

The national direction is broader than energy, even though energy remains a major source of demand.

## Energy and industrial production

North Field gas, LNG processing and export infrastructure anchor the industrial economy. Mesaieed adds refining, petrochemicals and metals. For employers, this creates a mix of permanent operating roles, specialist projects and contractor-based work. [13][14]

## Finance, investment and business services

QNB, Qatar Islamic Bank and QIA sit alongside the QFC's financial and professional-services community. The QFC is an onshore business centre with a common-law-based legal environment. Risk, compliance, technology and commercial skills matter alongside traditional financial expertise. [16][19][20][38]

## Aviation, maritime and logistics

Qatar Airways, Nakilat and Milaha connect the country to international passenger, cargo and energy markets. They illustrate why transport in Qatar is more than a local support service: it is also an internationally operating industry. [17][36][37]

## Tourism, hospitality and the visitor economy

Hotels, attractions, events, restaurants and cultural destinations are part of the diversification story. Government announcements in September 2026 included substantial prospective real-estate and hospitality investment. Announced opportunity should not be confused with an operating business or a confirmed recruitment requirement. [15]

## Education, research and healthcare

Qatar Foundation's Education City brings universities, research institutes and innovation activity into one community. PHCC and HMC are central to the public health system. These sectors need specialist professionals as well as strong administrative and operational teams. [24][25]

## Digital services and entrepreneurship

Ooredoo's telecommunications and digital infrastructure, together with QDB's finance, advisory and enterprise support, form part of the environment for technology-enabled businesses. Skills needs extend to digital products, data, customer operations and business development. [18][23]

### Vision 2030: development in four dimensions

Qatar National Vision 2030 brings together human, social, economic and environmental development. NDS3, covering 2024-2030, turns that direction into priorities for skills, productivity, diversification and the private sector. It is a national strategy, not a guarantee that every announced project will proceed on its original timetable. [6][7]

**North Field expansion objectives:** 110 MTPA (East), then 126 MTPA (South), and 142 MTPA (West, published end-2030 target). These are planned LNG capacity stages, not current output or guaranteed commissioning dates. [13]

06 / MAJOR COMPANIES

# Names that shape the business landscape

A selected guide to important companies, not a league table: revenue, assets and domestic employment are different measures.

| Organisation | Business | Why it is useful to know |
|---|---|---|
| **QatarEnergy** | State energy company | North Field development and LNG; a major influence on industry, suppliers and specialist employment. [13][14] |
| **QNB Group** | Banking | QAR 1,391bn total assets at year-end 2025. This is a group balance-sheet figure, not revenue or a Qatar-only measure. [16] |
| **Qatar Airways Group** | Aviation | QAR 83.75bn revenue and 57,800+ people reported for FY2025/26. The figures cover the group, including its wider operations. [17] |
| **Ooredoo Group** | Telecoms / digital | QAR 24.6bn revenue in 2025 across its markets. A regional group, not a measure of Qatar telecommunications revenue alone. [18] |
| **Industries Qatar** | Industrial production | Group interests in petrochemicals, fertiliser and steel, including businesses associated with QAPCO, QAFCO and Qatar Steel. [35] |
| **Nakilat** | LNG shipping | Energy transportation, LNG carriers, ship repair and maritime services, with an internationally operating fleet. [36] |
| **Milaha** | Shipping / logistics | Maritime services, transport and integrated logistics; part of the supply-chain environment serving Qatar and the region. [37] |
| **Qatar Islamic Bank** | Islamic banking | QAR 212.1bn total assets at 30 June 2025. A significant Islamic financial-services business. [38] |

### A useful distinction for HR

A large company's global headcount does not tell you how many people it employs in Qatar. Equally, a company may be commercially important without being the country's largest domestic employer. Establish the relevant business unit and geography before using a company as a pay or talent comparator.

07 / INSTITUTIONS AND WIDER BUSINESS

# Beyond the company names

Public services, education, research and smaller businesses are part of the country's employment story too.

## The public sector is an important employer

Government is more than a regulator or a customer. The 2024 labour-force sector table records 166,013 economically active people in government departments and a further 80,102 in government companies or corporations. These are separate statistical categories, not a single public-sector headcount. [9]

## A concentration of education and research

Education City is a 12-square-kilometre Qatar Foundation initiative that combines schools, international branch campuses, a homegrown research university, research facilities and cultural institutions. Its programmes span subjects such as medicine, computing, business, international affairs and the arts. The practical value is not only graduate supply: the concentration supports partnerships and specialist communities. [24]

## Healthcare as a national capability

PHCC health centres and HMC facilities form important parts of Qatar's public healthcare provision. Citizens and residents can apply for a health card, which provides access to subsidised services. For an employer, however, a health card is not the same as a private insurance policy, and employee or dependant cover should be explained accurately. [25]

## Businesses beyond the national champions

A country brief should not leave the impression that every employer is a state-backed group. QDB supports the local private sector through financial and non-financial programmes, including entrepreneurship, training, mentoring, manufacturing and export support. Its eligibility conditions vary by programme; support is not automatic for every firm. [23]

**QIA**
**long-term investment**
state investment institution [19]

**QF**
**education and research**
Education City community [24]

**QDB**
**enterprise development**
private-sector support [23]

### Reading an organisation in context

A ministry, a government-owned company, an owner-managed business and an international subsidiary can share a postcode while operating very differently. Ownership, purpose, funding and decision-making authority deserve attention before a consultant makes assumptions about pay, organisational structure or how quickly a proposal can be approved.

08 / BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

# How the operating context works

The right country knowledge starts with the right legal entity, business activity and set of rules.

## Choose the operating route carefully

A business's legal route matters to its employment arrangements as well as to its commercial activity. Mainland entities, QFC firms and businesses in specialist investment zones should not be treated as if they all share one set of rules. Confirm the licensed activity, employing entity and relevant regulator before making staffing commitments. [20][26][27]

## The Qatar Financial Centre

The QFC permits 100% foreign ownership and full repatriation of profits, with a 10% corporate tax rate on locally sourced profits. Its legal environment is based on common law. The route is subject to permitted activities, licensing and, where relevant, financial regulatory approval; it is not a universal substitute for mainland registration. [20]

## Tax: avoid the phrase "tax-free country"

Qatar's general income-tax framework includes a 10% rate on taxable Qatar-sourced income, subject to its rules and exemptions. Salaries, wages and allowances are outside that income-tax charge, but an individual may still have obligations elsewhere. Separate global-minimum-tax rules apply to qualifying large multinational groups, so the standard rate is not the entire corporate tax story. [21][22]

## Currency and international packages

The riyal is pegged to the US dollar at QAR 3.64 per US$1. This gives a stable reference against the dollar, not against every employee's home currency. The value of remittances or a package expressed in sterling, euros or rupees can still change. [39]

### Investment announcements are not completed projects

In September 2026, the government announced nearly US$38.5bn of infrastructure projects planned over five years and US$22.5bn of expected private real-estate and hospitality investment. These are announced plans and expectations, not realised investment or confirmed jobs. [15]

Country knowledge helps when it is tied to the actual client. Understand who employs the staff, where decisions are made, which business line generates revenue and whether the assignment concerns Qatar operations or an international group. A group annual report is useful background, but its revenue and global headcount are not a substitute for the local workforce position.

09 / EMPLOYMENT SETTING

# The rules behind working life

A short orientation to the general Labour Law, with important boundaries rather than a universal checklist.

Labour Law No. 14 of 2004 is a principal reference for covered private-sector employment. Government staff, specified energy-sector entities and other excluded categories are not automatically covered. The QFC has its own employment framework. Law No. 9 of 2026 also changed exclusions, including part-time and freelance categories. Confirm scope before relying on the baseline below. [26][27]

| Topic | General baseline for covered employees |
|---|---|
| Ordinary hours | Generally 8 hours a day / 48 a week; during Ramadan, 6 a day / 36 a week. Exceptions apply. |
| Probation | Up to six months with the same employer; probation notice has separate rules. |
| Annual leave | After a full year: at least three weeks below five years of service; four weeks at five years or more. |
| Sick leave | After qualifying service: two weeks on full pay, then four on half pay, with further conditions. |
| Maternity | 50 days on full remuneration after one year of service, subject to statutory conditions. |
| Notice after probation | Generally one month during the first two years; two months thereafter. [29] |
| End-of-service gratuity | After one year: at least three weeks of last basic wage per year, subject to the applicable provisions. |

Baseline source: Labour Law and amendments [26]; job-change notice [29]. Company policy may be more generous.

### A material 2026 update

Law No. 9 of 2026 introduced further changes, including vocational certification for designated occupations and non-compete provisions of up to two years subject to Department approval. It also amended dispute and worker-representation provisions. Old templates and summaries should not be treated as the current consolidated law. [27]

# Joining the workforce

National participation and international recruitment are both part of Qatar's labour-market direction.

## Qatarisation is about participation and capability

Qatarisation is the development and employment of Qatari nationals. Law No. 12 of 2024 gives covered private-sector employers duties relating to the recruitment, training and qualification of Qataris, with priority to children of Qatari women when a Qatari candidate is not available. Application depends on the law's scope and Ministry measures; there is no sound basis for assuming one universal quota for every employer. [31]

## The national direction

NDS3 seeks a more skilled and productive workforce, including a skilled/high-skilled share above 46%, annual labour-productivity growth of 2%, and more than 20% of the Qatari workforce in private and mixed sectors by 2030. These are national strategic targets, not interchangeable company-level hiring quotas. [7]

## Recruitment draws on several markets

Employers may recruit Qataris, people already resident in Qatar and candidates overseas. The removal of the general NOC requirement has changed the local mobility picture, but notice and the formal change-of-employer process still matter. Residency, a visit visa and permission to perform a job are different questions. [29][32]

## Packages need a clear explanation

For a professional hire, salary may be considered alongside housing, transport, medical insurance, schooling and travel. What is included depends on the employer and contract; these are not universal benefits. Describe basic pay separately from allowances, especially where statutory calculations depend on basic wage.

### The minimum wage is a floor, not a market salary

The monthly minimum basic wage is QAR 1,000. Employers must also provide accommodation and food, or at least QAR 500 and QAR 300 respectively in allowances. The Wage Protection System supports monitoring of covered wage payments. These amounts are statutory protection, not a benchmark for professional pay. [28]

There is no single meaningful 'Qatar salary' for an occupation without a level, sector and package definition. Compare like with like: base salary, guaranteed allowances, variable pay and family benefits. This brief deliberately does not turn a handful of job advertisements into a national salary benchmark.

11 / LIVING AND RELOCATING

# The everyday side of a move

Housing, schooling, healthcare and the journey to work turn an employment offer into a real life.

## A move involves a household, not only an employee

Someone can accept a role with enthusiasm and still find the first month unsettling. Housing, school places, family paperwork, healthcare and the journey to work all influence whether a move feels manageable. A helpful employer makes these practical matters clear before arrival, rather than leaving people to discover the exceptions later.

## Housing and location

Doha's neighbourhoods and the wider urban area offer different mixes of apartments, compounds, hotels and services. West Bay, The Pearl, Lusail, central Doha and areas further inland should be considered in relation to the actual work and school location. An attractive address does not remove the need to test a daily commute. [2][34]

## Schools and childcare

Qatar has public and private education, with international options that can be important to relocating families. Check admissions, curriculum continuity, year-group availability, fees, transport and any support needs before treating a school allowance as a solved problem. Schooling and nursery arrangements are separate cost items. [32]

## Healthcare and family cover

A resident health card provides access to subsidised PHCC and HMC services. Private medical cover may add access or benefits, but its network, limits and dependant eligibility need checking. A visiting consultant should establish their own travel and medical cover rather than assuming an employee policy applies. [25][32]

## Getting around

The Doha Metro has three lines and 37 stations, with connections to locations such as the airport, West Bay, Education City and Lusail. It can be useful for commuting, but a metro line on a map does not guarantee convenient access to an industrial site or a particular workplace. [33]

## A realistic cost-of-living view

Housing, schooling, childcare, cars, utilities and travel should be budgeted separately. Prices change and households make different choices. The sensible basis for a relocation decision is a dated set of relevant quotations, not an unexplained national average or a promise that a tax-free salary automatically goes further.

### For a visiting consultant

Agree the work location, access arrangements and contact person before travel. Check the current entry and work-permission requirements for the activities you will perform, as well as travel advice and insurance. In a changing regional situation, a familiar route or previous visit is not enough assurance for the next journey. [12][32]

# Working with consideration

Country knowledge is most useful when it helps people feel understood, not categorised.

## Make room for relationships

A first meeting is not always just a transaction. Make time for introductions, show interest in the organisation and be clear about the purpose of your visit. Courtesy and reliable follow-through are useful starting points; there is no need to perform an exaggerated version of local etiquette.

## Communicate without making assumptions

Arabic is the official language and English is widely used. Check which language helps the particular audience understand, especially for contracts, safety information or sensitive conversations. Fluency in meeting-room English is not proof that every employee can confidently interpret a policy. [1]

## Respect the setting

Islam is the official religion. Modest professional dress, consideration around prayer and respectful conduct in public are appropriate. Avoid assuming that every Qatari colleague, every expatriate or every organisation shares identical preferences. National context should help you be considerate, not encourage stereotyping. [1][34]

## Working across the year

Ramadan and the two Eids affect the rhythm of work and family life. Exact Eid dates follow official announcements. National Day is 18 December and National Sports Day falls on the second Tuesday in February. Sunday-Thursday is the usual government and office pattern; private operational rosters can differ. [1][26]

## Summer is an operating condition

Heat matters particularly for outdoor and exposed work. The summer restriction covers 10:00-15:30 from 1 June to 15 September; work must also stop above the specified WBGT threshold of 32.1 C. WBGT is a heat-stress measure, not a normal weather-app air temperature. These rules do not make all other hours automatically safe. [30]

## See something beyond the meeting room

The Corniche, Souq Waqif, museums and cultural destinations offer a better sense of the country than an airport-hotel-office itinerary alone. The value is not a checklist of attractions. It is an opportunity to understand the place in which your client's employees are building their lives. [2][34]

### A brief, not a stereotype

Qatar's institutions, employers and residents are not interchangeable. Use the country context to ask more thoughtful questions and to interpret what you see. Then let the organisation and the people themselves tell you what matters in their particular situation.

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND READING

# Sources and further reading

Select a reference to open the original source. The numbers match the links in the brief.

**01 Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
Key facts and general information
mofa.gov.qa

**02 Visit Qatar**
Country background, geography and visitor context
visitqatar.com

**03 Amiri Diwan**
History of Qatar
diwan.gov.qa

**04 Amiri Diwan**
System of government
diwan.gov.qa

**05 Council of Ministers**
Prime Minister: official biography
cm.gov.qa

**06 Government Communications Office**
Qatar National Vision 2030
gco.gov.qa

**07 National Planning Council**
Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030
npc.qa

**08 The Peninsula / NPC figures**
Population at December 2025; published 6 January 2026
thepeninsulaqatar.com

**09 GLMM / NPC Labour Force Survey**
2024 economically active population by nationality and sector
gulfmigration.grc.net

**10 GLMM / NPC Labour Force Survey**
2024 economically active population by sex and employment status
gulfmigration.grc.net

**11 World Bank**
Qatar country data: 2025 GDP, GDP per capita and growth
data.worldbank.org

**12 Qatar News Agency / NPC**
Q2 2026 economic release; 30 September 2026
qna.org.qa

**13 QatarEnergy**
Published North Field LNG expansion objectives
qatarenergy.qa

**14 QatarEnergy**
Ras Laffan and Mesaieed industrial cities
qatarenergy.qa

**15 Government Communications Office**
Qatar Economic Forum announcements; 20 September 2026
gco.gov.qa

**16 QNB Group**
Financial results for the year ended 31 December 2025
qnb.com

**17 Qatar Airways Group**
Annual report highlights, financial year 2025/26
qatarairways.com

**18 Ooredoo Group**
2025 financial results
ooredoo.com

**19 Qatar Investment Authority**
Purpose and institutional background
qia.qa

**20 Qatar Financial Centre**
Limited liability companies and operating proposition
qfc.qa

## What the company figures mean

Company amounts retain the reporting period and group scope stated by the issuer. Revenue and assets are deliberately not ranked together. No comprehensive ranking of Qatar-based employee headcounts is claimed.

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND READING

# Source notes and publication details

Official information is the starting point; definitions and reporting periods still need care.

**21 General Tax Authority**
Income tax framework and salary exclusions
gta.gov.qa

**22 General Tax Authority**
Global and domestic minimum tax framework
gta.gov.qa

**23 Qatar Development Bank**
Private-sector development and SME support
qdb.qa

**24 Qatar Foundation**
Education City and its education/research community
qf.org.qa

**25 Primary Health Care Corporation**
Health cards and access to PHCC/HMC services
phcc.gov.qa

**26 Al Meezan legal portal**
Labour Law No. 14 of 2004, as amended
almeezan.qa

**27 Al Meezan legal portal**
Law No. 9 of 2026: Labour Law amendments (Arabic)
almeezan.qa

**28 Government Communications Office**
Labour reforms, minimum wage and wage protection
gco.gov.qa

**29 International Labour Organization**
Changing employer: procedures and notice
ilo.org

**30 International Labour Organization**
Qatar heat-stress protection measures
ilo.org

**31 Al Meezan legal portal**
Law No. 12 of 2024: private-sector localisation (Arabic)
almeezan.qa

**32 UK Government**
Living in Qatar; updated 10 February 2026
gov.uk

**33 Visit Qatar**
Doha Metro: lines, stations and connections
visitqatar.com

**34 Visit Qatar**
Doha: places, local customs and practical information
visitqatar.com

**35 Industries Qatar**
Group activities: petrochemicals, fertiliser and steel
iq.com.qa

**36 Nakilat**
Company overview and maritime services
nakilat.com

**37 Milaha**
Maritime, logistics and supply-chain activities
milaha.com

**38 Qatar Islamic Bank**
Results for the six months ended 30 June 2025
qib.com.qa

**39 Qatar Central Bank**
Exchange-rate parity and monetary policy tools
qcb.gov.qa

**40 National Planning Council**
Q2 2025 GDP release; 21 September 2025
npc.qa

**Data note.** The population figure is the December 2025 NPC observation reported by The Peninsula. The workforce charts use 2024 NPC tables reproduced by GLMM and exclude first-time jobseekers; percentages are calculated from those counts. GDP figures follow World Bank definitions, not the monthly population series.

**Publication.** HR Delivery, 7 October 2026. English edition. Brand reference: September 2026 pack. Cover art is an AI-generated Doha-inspired illustration, not a documentary photograph. Locator uses a simplified GSHHS coastline. No external endorsement or PDF/UA certification is claimed.

HR DELIVERY
*Making Sure HR Delivers*

GULF COUNTRY BRIEFS / 03

# UAE

## People, economy and working life

United Arab Emirates | A country brief for HR professionals



## Understand the country. Know the context.

Country background / People and workforce / Major employers
Business environment / Living and working in the UAE

OCTOBER 2026

START HERE

# Understanding the UAE

A useful country brief should help you understand the place before you try to advise the organisations within it. The United Arab Emirates deserves that attention: Dubai's skyline is only one part of a federation with seven emirates, different economic centres and many ways of working.

This brief brings together the country background, the people who live and work here, the economy, important employers and the everyday realities of doing business. It is written for HR professionals preparing for a client meeting, joining an organisation or helping colleagues settle into the UAE. The aim is to make the country easier to understand, without reducing its people to a set of assumptions.

**03** The country at a glance

**04** History, government and identity

**05** People and the workforce

**06** The economy in context

**07** Sectors and national direction

**08** Major companies

**09** Institutions and wider business

**10** Doing business in the UAE

**11** The employment setting

**12** National talent, hiring and pay

**13** Living and relocating

**14** Culture and the working year

**15-16 Sources, data notes and publication information**

### Read the dates as well as the numbers

The edition is dated 7 October 2026. Figures retain their own reference periods, and strategic targets are distinguished from outcomes. Numbered references link to the source register. This is a country introduction, not legal, tax or immigration advice.

01 / COUNTRY FUNDAMENTALS

# The country at a glance

A federation of seven emirates, with connected cities and distinct local economies.

**~83,600**
**square kilometres**
national area [1]

**11.29m**
**residents**
2024 estimate [8]

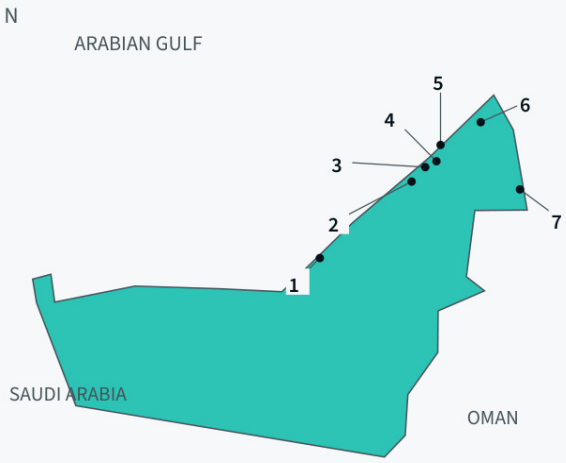
**AED 3.6725**
**per US dollar**
official parity [1][12]

## One country, seven emirates

The UAE lies in the south-east of the Arabian Peninsula, bordering Saudi Arabia and Oman. Abu Dhabi is the federal capital. The federation also includes Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah. National rules and emirate-level institutions work alongside one another. [1][2][4]

## The address changes the picture

Abu Dhabi combines government, energy and investment. Dubai is a commercial and transport centre. Sharjah has its own educational, cultural and industrial identity. The adjoining urban areas are connected, but an office in Dubai and a home in Sharjah are not automatically a convenient daily combination. [2]




1 Abu Dhabi
2 Dubai
3 Sharjah
4 Ajman
5 Umm Al Quwain
6 Ras Al Khaimah
7 Fujairah

Simplified country locator with seven emirate capitals. Boundaries and coastlines are generalised; not for legal use.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Capital / language** | Abu Dhabi; Arabic is official and English is widely used. [1] |
| **Time** | GMT+4 throughout the year; no daylight saving. [1] |
| **Climate** | Hot summers, milder winters; mountains and coast add local variation. [1][2] |

## Beyond Abu Dhabi and Dubai

Ras Al Khaimah adds a diversified industrial and visitor economy; Fujairah faces the Gulf of Oman. Ajman and Umm Al Quwain have their own business communities and local authorities. A UAE-wide policy still needs to make sense at the actual place of work. [2]

02 / HISTORY AND SOCIETY

# A modern state with a long memory

The federation brought the emirates together without removing their distinct identities.

## Before the federation

Maritime trade, pearling, fishing and inland communities shaped life before oil revenues changed the scale of development. The coastal sheikhdoms became known as the Trucial States through their treaty relationship with Britain. The modern country's story is therefore one of commerce and community as well as energy. [3]

## The making of the union

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum helped lead the discussions that made federation possible. Six emirates formed the UAE on 2 December 1971. Ras Al Khaimah joined on 10 February 1972, completing the seven-emirate union. National Day recalls that shared beginning. [3]

## Institutions today

The UAE is a constitutional federation. The Federal Supreme Council comprises the rulers of the seven emirates. Federal institutions include the Presidency, Cabinet, Federal National Council and judiciary; local governments retain responsibilities of their own. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan is President. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum is Vice-President and Prime Minister. [4][5]

## National identity and local belonging

An Emirati identity and an attachment to a particular emirate can sit comfortably together. For a consultant, that is an important starting point: federal policy does not mean every public institution, family business or government-related company has the same history, priorities or decision-making culture.

**1968**
Union discussions

**1971**
Federation formed

**1972**
Seven emirates

**2022**
We the UAE 2031

Timeline sources: federation milestones [3]; national vision launched in 2022 [6].

### Why the history still matters

Rapid development and a strong sense of continuity are not opposites. A thoughtful conversation about change recognises what people want to preserve as well as what they hope to improve. Local experience deserves the same curiosity and respect as an international model.

03 / PEOPLE AND THE WORKFORCE

# Who lives and works in the UAE?

International migration and national participation shape the labour market together.

**11.29m**
**resident population**
2024 estimate [8]

**200+**
**nationalities**
official country description [10]

**1.9%**
**unemployment rate**
all-resident measure, 2024 [8]

## A resident population, not a citizen count

FCSC's 2024 estimate was 11,294,243 residents. It includes citizens and non-citizens; it is not a count of Emiratis or a forecast for October 2026. The population is male-majority, reflecting the importance of working-age migration. The chart below describes residents, not employees. [8][9]

## An international labour market

The expatriate community outnumbers Emirati citizens. It includes people in construction, services, operations and professional careers, alongside families with long-standing connections to the country. Nationality alone tells an employer little about someone's skills, income, family needs or expectations of work. [1][10]

## What a headline can hide

The 1.9% unemployment figure refers to the whole labour market, not specifically to Emirati jobseekers or graduates. It should not be used as proof that every occupation is difficult to recruit. Equally, an all-UAE figure does not reveal the available talent around a particular industrial site or emirate. [8]

## The human perspective

A graduate entering the private sector, a specialist relocating with children and a worker living in employer-arranged accommodation may work for the same group. Clear communication, dependable pay, fair supervision and time with family matter across these different lives. The practical question is what each population needs to work well and feel secure.

RESIDENT POPULATION BY SEX / 2024




Calculated from FCSC counts reported by Gulf News: 7,235,074 male and 4,059,169 female residents. Not workforce shares. [9]

04 / ECONOMY

# Wealth, diversification and exposure

Energy, international trade and services all help explain the country's economic reach.

**AED 1.9tn**
**real GDP**
2025, rounded [11]

**76.6%**
**non-oil GDP share**
2025 [8]

**+6.2%**
**real GDP growth**
2025 [11]

## The scale of the economy

FCSC reported real GDP of approximately AED 1.9 trillion in 2025, with growth of 6.2%. Non-oil activity grew by 6.8%. These are national-accounts measures, not business revenue or household income. They describe the last complete year, not an assured growth rate for a client's current assignment. [8][11]

## Abu Dhabi and Dubai are different

ADNOC and Abu Dhabi's investment institutions keep energy and capital central to the national economy. Dubai combines trade, aviation, finance, property and tourism in a different mix. The distinction is useful, but neither emirate has only one economic role. [2][15][16][23]

## Diversification is already visible

Non-oil activities represented 76.6% of real GDP in 2025. Construction grew by 11.1%, finance and insurance by 10.4%, real estate by 7.9%, and transport and storage by 7.8%. These different rates are more informative than treating the UAE as one uniform market. [8][11]

## International connections bring exposure

The reach of Emirates and DP World shows how strongly local organisations connect to global passenger, cargo and trade flows. International operations create opportunity, but can also transmit disruption. Group-level success and the immediate staffing needs of a UAE business unit are different questions. [16][17]

### Read the reference period, not just the headline

The economic cards use 2025 outcomes. They are not 2026 forecasts. A project announcement, a property sales backlog and realised revenue also mean different things. Read the reporting period and the nature of the measure before using a number to explain demand or justify recruitment.

For HR, sector, emirate, ownership and stage of development usually say more about immediate workforce needs than a national average. A new service business, an established plant and a regional headquarters can be recruiting for very different reasons.

05 / SECTORS AND NATIONAL DIRECTION

# Where economic activity takes place

National ambition is delivered through sectors, emirates and individual organisations.

## Energy and advanced industry

ADNOC anchors an integrated energy value chain. Operation 300Bn broadens the industrial agenda into manufacturing, technology, healthcare and food security. The employment story includes engineering, skilled operations, safety and supply-chain capability, not only new office-based roles. [13][15]

## Finance, investment and business services

Abu Dhabi and Dubai support banking, investment and professional services. DIFC and ADGM have distinct legal environments and international business communities. Risk, compliance, relationship management and digital capability sit alongside traditional financial expertise. [19][20][27][28]

## Aviation, ports and logistics

Emirates Group and DP World show the scale of internationally connected businesses based in the UAE. Airports, ports, logistics and support services bring together safety-critical work, frontline service, commercial management and complex operational rosters. [16][17]

## Property, hospitality and tourism

Emaar's businesses span development, retail and hospitality. The visitor economy also extends beyond Dubai into Abu Dhabi and the northern emirates. Project delivery, hotel operations and ongoing community management need different people and employment models. [2][22]

## Digital services and artificial intelligence

e& combines telecommunications with a wider technology portfolio. Dubai's AI blueprint seeks wider adoption across public services and strategic sectors. For employers, the practical challenge is usable data, reliable systems and people who can apply technology responsibly. [14][18]

## Education, research and healthcare

National and emirate authorities shape education and professional standards. Institutions need teachers, researchers and clinicians, but also capable managers and service teams. Check programme accreditation and professional eligibility rather than treating all qualifications as interchangeable. [24][35]

### We the UAE 2031: a national direction, not a company forecast

The national vision includes an ambition to raise GDP to AED 3 trillion by 2031. Dubai's D33 separately seeks to double its economy over a decade, while Operation 300Bn targets an industrial contribution of AED 300 billion by 2031. These are different strategic targets with different scopes. [6][7][13]

An announced target can help explain direction. It is not evidence that every related project is funded, every operating date is fixed or every proposed role will be recruited.

06 / MAJOR COMPANIES

# Names that shape the business landscape

A selected guide to important companies, not a league table: revenue, assets and domestic employment are different measures.

| Organisation | Business | Why it is useful to know |
|---|---|---|
| **ADNOC** | Energy group | Wholly owned by the Abu Dhabi Government. An integrated energy business with a substantial technical, industrial and supplier ecosystem. [15] |
| **Emirates Group** | Aviation / services | AED 150.5bn revenue and 130,919 employees in FY2025/26. Group figures include Emirates and dnata worldwide, not UAE-only employment. [16] |
| **DP World** | Ports / logistics | US$24.4bn revenue in 2025 across its international group. Jebel Ali is part of a much wider logistics and maritime network. [17] |
| **e&** | Telecoms / digital | AED 72.9bn consolidated revenue in 2025. The group spans several markets; this is not UAE telecommunications revenue alone. [18] |
| **First Abu Dhabi Bank** | Banking | AED 1.40tn total group assets at year-end 2025. A balance-sheet measure, not revenue or the value of its domestic workforce. [19] |
| **Emirates NBD** | Banking | Total group assets exceeded AED 1tn in 2025. Its reported results include businesses outside the UAE. [20] |
| **TAQA** | Power / water | AED 54.8bn group revenue in 2025. Power, water and transmission investment supports significant engineering and operational activity. [21] |
| **Emaar Properties** | Property / hospitality | AED 49.6bn revenue in 2025 across development, retail, hospitality and other group operations. Sales and revenue are not the same measure. [22] |

### A useful distinction for HR

A company's worldwide workforce does not tell you how many people it employs in the UAE. Nor does its size make every subsidiary a suitable pay comparator. Establish the relevant entity, geography, occupation and job level before using a national champion as a benchmark.

07 / INSTITUTIONS AND WIDER BUSINESS

# Beyond the company names

Public services, investment institutions and smaller businesses matter to working life too.

## Federal and emirate institutions

The UAE has federal and local government structures. A federal ministry, an emirate authority and a government-owned trading company are not interchangeable employers. Identify who sets policy, who holds the budget and who can approve a decision before interpreting the organisation's structure. [4]

## A changing investment landscape

ADIA, Mubadala and L'IMAD are key Abu Dhabi investment institutions. In January 2026, a resolution consolidated L'IMAD and ADQ assets and investments under L'IMAD. Older presentations may still describe the previous structure. Dubai's Investment Corporation of Dubai is the owner of Emirates Group. [23][16]

## Education and healthcare

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Commission for Academic Accreditation sit alongside emirate education authorities, including KHDA and ADEK. This layered structure matters when checking institutions and qualifications. Healthcare similarly combines public services, private provision and local insurance arrangements. [24][35]

## Beyond the national champions

Family businesses, international subsidiaries, entrepreneurs and smaller employers are an essential part of the picture. Operation 300Bn includes enterprise and financing support through Emirates Development Bank. A smaller business can have very different management capacity and recruitment needs from a large state-backed group. [13]

**ADIA**
**long-term investment**
Abu Dhabi institution [23]

**Mubadala**
**sovereign investment**
Abu Dhabi institution [23]

**ICD**
**government portfolio**
Dubai; Emirates owner [16]

### Reading an organisation in context

Ownership is the beginning of the conversation, not the answer. Ask how the business earns income, which jurisdiction it operates in, where decisions are made and what authority the local team actually has. Similar branding or a shared shareholder does not prove a common employment model.

08 / BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

# How the operating context works

The right country knowledge starts with the right legal entity, activity and jurisdiction.

## Choose the operating route carefully

Mainland licences are issued through relevant local authorities. Many activities allow full foreign ownership, subject to the applicable rules and restricted activities. Free zones offer their own licensing environments; permission to establish a business is not automatic permission to perform every activity throughout the UAE. [25]

## DIFC and ADGM are distinct

Dubai International Financial Centre and Abu Dhabi Global Market have their own legal and employment frameworks. They are not simply office districts. Other free zones should not automatically be treated as if they share the same exemptions or rules. Confirm the employer and the law governing the employment relationship. [27][28]

## Tax: avoid blanket promises

The ordinary federal corporate-tax rates are 0% on taxable income up to AED 375,000 and 9% above that threshold. Exemptions and special treatment require their own conditions. A separate domestic minimum top-up tax applies to qualifying large multinational groups for financial years beginning from 1 January 2025. [26]

## Currency and international packages

The dirham is pegged to the US dollar at AED 3.6725 per US$1. That provides a stable dollar reference, not a fixed value against every employee's home currency. Savings and remittances expressed in sterling, euros or rupees can still change in value. [1][12]

### A business licence, a residence visa and permission to work are different

The right to establish a company, live in the UAE and perform a particular job should not be treated as one approval. ADGM, for example, requires temporary work permits for specified non-employees, including consultants and secondees. Check the route that applies to the actual assignment. [25][28][34]

A useful first client discussion establishes the legal employer, emirate, licence, activity and workforce location. Only then is it sensible to compare pay, recommend a contract or decide which policies should apply.

09 / EMPLOYMENT SETTING

# The rules behind working life

A short orientation to federal private-sector law, with important boundaries.

Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021, as amended, is the principal federal private-sector reference. Government employees and domestic workers have separate frameworks; DIFC and ADGM have their own employment regimes. Confirm coverage before applying the general baseline below. [27][28][29]

| Topic | General baseline for covered employees |
|---|---|
| Ordinary hours | Normally 8 hours a day / 48 a week. Ramadan: two hours fewer daily. Exceptions apply. [29] |
| Probation | Up to six months; separate notice rules apply during probation. [29] |
| Annual leave | 30 days for each completed year; two days per month after six months but before one year. [30] |
| Sick leave | After probation: up to 90 days yearly - 15 on full pay, 30 on half pay, then 45 unpaid. [30] |
| Maternity / parental | 60 days: 45 on full pay, 15 on half pay. Parental leave: five working days within six months of birth. [30] |
| Notice after probation | The contract normally specifies between 30 and 90 days, subject to the law. [29] |
| End-of-service gratuity | Eligible foreign full-time staff: 21 days' basic pay per year for the first five years, then 30 days; one year minimum service. [29] |

General orientation only. Different work patterns, pension coverage and approved savings schemes can change the calculation. [29]

### Do not merge three employment regimes into one

DIFC Employment Law and ADGM Employment Regulations must be checked separately. ADGM's 2024 regulations took effect on 1 April 2025. A federal leave table should not be copied into a DIFC or ADGM policy simply because all three employers are located in the UAE. [27][28]

# Joining the workforce

Emirati participation and international recruitment are both part of the country's direction.

## Emiratisation has a defined scope

Covered private-sector establishments with 50 or more employees must increase Emirati participation in skilled jobs by two percentage points annually, with half-year milestones, towards 10% by end-2026. Selected establishments with 20-49 employees have separate hiring requirements. Do not apply one blanket percentage to every UAE employer. [31]

## Nafis supports genuine careers

Nafis supports Emiratis entering and developing in the private sector. Employers still need real roles, appropriate contracts, wage payment and pension registration. Government support is not a reason to reduce an employee's contractual pay. Development and fair treatment matter after the hire as well as at the compliance deadline. [32]

## Recruitment draws on several markets

Employers recruit Emiratis, existing residents and people overseas. Standard employment residence, Green residence and Golden residence serve different circumstances. Longer-term residence can support continuity, but it does not remove the need to check the work-permit and licensing arrangements for a particular role. [34]

## Packages need a clear explanation

Explain basic pay, allowances, variable pay and family benefits separately. A Dubai office role, an Abu Dhabi specialist appointment and an industrial job in another emirate can involve different living costs and work patterns. Compare the whole offer, including what is excluded, rather than an attractive monthly headline.

### A material 2026 wage requirement

The minimum monthly wage for Emiratis in the private sector rose to AED 6,000 from 1 January 2026. Existing contracts had to be adjusted by 30 June; enforcement measures began on 1 July. This is an Emirati-specific requirement, not a universal UAE salary benchmark or an expatriate wage floor. [33]

There is no single useful 'UAE salary' without a role, level, emirate, sector and package definition. A dependable comparison separates basic salary, guaranteed allowances, variable pay and family costs.

# The everyday side of a move

Housing, schooling, healthcare and the journey to work turn an offer into a real life.

## A move involves a household

Someone can accept a role with enthusiasm and still find the first month unsettling. Housing, school places, paperwork and a partner's plans all influence whether the move feels manageable. Helpful employers explain these matters before arrival rather than leaving a family to discover the gaps.

## Housing and location

Start with the actual workplace. Abu Dhabi, Dubai and the northern emirates are not one commuting market. A lower rent can be offset by a long journey, road costs or school transport. Test a realistic weekday commute and clarify deposits, utilities, furnishings and what the housing allowance must cover. [2]

## Schools and childcare

In Dubai, KHDA's School Fees Fact Sheet sets out mandatory and optional charges. Tuition is only part of the cost. Check curriculum continuity, admissions, transport, childcare and additional support. Abu Dhabi has its own education authority, ADEK; do not assume Dubai's information applies everywhere. [24][36]

## Healthcare and family cover

Mandatory employee health-insurance coverage was extended across the emirates from January 2025 through the residence-issuance and renewal process. Family cover still needs explicit checking. Ask about dependants, provider networks, co-payments and pre-existing conditions; the word 'medical' is not a complete description. [35]

## Getting around

Dubai's Red and Green Metro lines, Tram and other services help many journeys, but proximity to a station is not the same as easy access to the workplace. Other emirates have different transport arrangements. Plan the final part of the journey and consider summer heat as well as the route map. [37]

## A realistic cost-of-living view

Build the decision around a household budget: rent, schooling, childcare, utilities, transport, insurance and travel. Use dated quotations, not an unexplained national average. A package that works for a single person may leave a relocating family with a very different disposable income.

### For a visiting consultant

Agree the work location, access arrangements and contact person before travelling. Check entry, residence and work-permission requirements for the activities you will undertake, along with travel advice and insurance. A previous visit or a familiar client is not a substitute for checking the next assignment. [28][34]

# Working with consideration

Country knowledge is most useful when it helps people feel understood, not categorised.

## Make room for relationships

A first meeting need not begin with the presentation. Allow time for introductions, show interest in the organisation and be clear about the purpose of your visit. Courtesy and dependable follow-through are more useful than trying to perform an exaggerated version of local etiquette.

## Communicate without assumptions

Arabic is the official language and English is widely used. A multilingual workplace does not mean every employee understands a technical policy in English. Check which language helps the audience, especially for contracts, safety information or a sensitive conversation. [1][10]

## Respect the setting

The UAE brings an Emirati national identity together with an exceptionally international population. Professional dress, consideration around prayer and respectful public conduct are sensible starting points. Neither an Emirati colleague nor an expatriate team should be treated as a representative of a single fixed culture. [1][10]

## Working across the year

Federal government follows a four-and-a-half-day week, with Friday afternoon, Saturday and Sunday off. Sharjah government uses a four-day week; private schedules vary. Ramadan and Eid affect work and family routines. National Day holidays fall on 2 and 3 December; religious dates follow official announcements. [38][39]

## Summer is an operating condition

The 2026 midday restriction prohibited work in direct sunlight and open areas from 12:30 to 15:00, from 15 June to 15 September. Exemptions and wider safety duties need checking. The restriction is not a guarantee that all other hours are safe; shade, rest, hydration and supervision remain important. [40]

## See beyond the meeting room

Abu Dhabi's cultural sites, Dubai Creek, Sharjah's heritage areas and the northern emirates offer a broader view than an airport-office-hotel itinerary. Taking an interest in the place helps a visitor understand the communities in which colleagues are building their lives. [2]

### A brief, not a stereotype

The UAE's emirates, institutions, employers and residents are not interchangeable. Use country context to ask more thoughtful questions and interpret what you see. Then let the organisation and the people themselves tell you what matters in their particular situation.

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND READING

# Sources and further reading

Select a reference to open the original source. The numbers match the links in the brief.

**01 UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
Country facts: area, population context, language and currency
mofa.gov.ae

**02 UAE Government**
The seven emirates: geography and local context
u.ae

**03 National Library and Archives**
Formation of the federation; 1971 and 1972 milestones
nla.ae | background

**04 UAE Government**
Constitutional federation and the political system
u.ae

**05 UAE Government**
The President, Vice-Presidents and Prime Minister
u.ae

**06 UAE Government**
We the UAE 2031: national direction and targets
u.ae

**07 UAE Government / Dubai**
Dubai Economic Agenda D33
u.ae

**08 Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre**
2024 population and unemployment; 2025 economic indicators
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**09 Gulf News / FCSC figures**
2024 resident population by sex; total 11,294,243
gulfnews.com

**10 UAE Government**
International population, tolerance and co-existence
u.ae

**11 Emirates News Agency / FCSC**
2025 GDP and sector growth; release of 30 May 2026
wam.ae

**12 Central Bank of the UAE**
Monetary system and the US-dollar exchange-rate peg
centralbank.ae

**13 Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology**
Operation 300Bn: industry, skills and enterprise development
moiat.gov.ae

**14 UAE Government / Dubai**
Dubai Universal Blueprint for Artificial Intelligence
u.ae

**15 ADNOC**
Group ownership, integrated businesses and energy strategy
adnoc.ae

**16 Emirates Group**
2025/26 results and worldwide workforce; 7 May 2026
emirates.com

**17 DP World**
2025 annual report: global revenue and operating footprint
dpworld.com

**18 e&**
2025 group financial results; 24 February 2026
eand.com

**19 First Abu Dhabi Bank**
2025 group assets and annual results confirmed at AGM
bankfab.com

**20 Emirates NBD**
2025 financial results and group balance-sheet scope
emiratesnbd.com

## What the company figures mean

Company figures retain their reporting period and group scope. Revenue and assets are not ranked together. No comprehensive ranking of UAE-based employee headcounts is claimed. Company descriptions explain significance rather than recommend an employer.

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND READING

# Source notes and publication details

Official information is the starting point; definitions and reporting periods still need care.

**21 Emirates News Agency / TAQA**
2025 results: power, water and infrastructure investment
wam.ae

**22 Emaar Properties**
2025 results: property, retail and hospitality businesses
emaar.com

**23 Emirates News Agency / Abu Dhabi**
L'IMAD and ADQ consolidation; 30 January 2026
wam.ae

**24 UAE Government**
Higher education: national and emirate regulatory bodies
u.ae

**25 UAE Ministry of Investment**
Ownership and mainland/free-zone operating routes
invest.gov.ae

**26 UAE Government / Ministry of Finance**
Corporate tax, thresholds and domestic top-up tax
u.ae | related source

**27 Dubai International Financial Centre**
Legal database and Employment Law No. 2 of 2019
difc.com

**28 Abu Dhabi Global Market**
Employment Regulations 2024; effective 1 April 2025
adgm.com

**29 UAE Legislation**
Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021, as amended
uaelegislation.gov.ae | related source

**30 Dubai Government**
Private-sector leave and weekly-rest entitlements
dubai.ae

**31 Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation**
Employer guide: 50+ and selected 20-49 employee targets
mohre.gov.ae

**32 UAE Government**
Emirati employment, Nafis, pensions and employer duties
u.ae

**33 Emirates News Agency / MoHRE**
AED 6,000 Emirati minimum wage and 2026 implementation
wam.ae

**34 UAE Government**
Employment residence and Golden residence routes
u.ae | related source

**35 UAE Government**
Mandatory health-insurance coverage from January 2025
u.ae

**36 KHDA**
School Fees Fact Sheet: tuition and additional charges
web.khda.gov.ae

**37 Roads and Transport Authority, Dubai**
Dubai Metro and Tram: current network and station map
rta.ae

**38 UAE Government**
Public holidays and National Day on 2-3 December
u.ae

**39 UAE Government**
Federal and local government working weeks
u.ae

**40 Dubai Media / MoHRE**
2026 midday outdoor-work restriction: 15 June-15 September
dmi.gov.ae

Data note. Population and unemployment use 2024 FCSC reporting; the chart uses resident counts by sex, reproduced by Gulf News. Economic cards use 2025 national accounts, not 2026 forecasts. Emirate figures are not added together across different years. Sources were reviewed for this edition.

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HR DELIVERY
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GULF COUNTRY BRIEFS / 05

# KUWAIT

## People, economy and working life

A country brief for HR professionals



## Understand the country. Know the context.

Country background / People and workforce / Major employers
Business environment / Living and working in Kuwait

OCTOBER 2026

START HERE

# Understanding Kuwait

A useful country brief should help you understand the place before you try to advise the organisations within it. Kuwait deserves that attention: its merchant traditions, public institutions, oil economy and international workforce make it quite different from its Gulf neighbours.

This brief brings together the country's background, the people who live and work here, the economy, important employers and the everyday realities of doing business. It is written for HR professionals preparing for a client meeting, joining an organisation or helping colleagues settle into Kuwait. The aim is to make the country easier to understand, without reducing people to a set of assumptions.

**03** The country at a glance

**04** History, government and identity

**05** People and the workforce

**06** The economy in context

**07** Sectors and national direction

**08** Major companies

**09** Institutions and wider business

**10** Doing business in Kuwait

**11** The employment setting

**12** National talent, hiring and pay

**13** Living and relocating

**14** Culture and the working year

**15-16** Sources, data notes and publication information

### Read the dates as well as the numbers

This edition is dated 8 October 2026. Figures retain their own reference periods, and strategic targets are distinguished from outcomes. Numbered references link to the sources. This is a country introduction, not legal, tax or immigration advice.

01 / COUNTRY FUNDAMENTALS

# The country at a glance

A northern Gulf state with a concentrated urban corridor and a substantial industrial hinterland.

**17,818**
**square kilometres**
national area [1]

**4.988m**
**resident population**
31 December 2024 [8]

**KWD**
**Kuwaiti dinar**
currency-basket regime [13]

## A country at the head of the Gulf

Kuwait lies between Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Gulf. Kuwait City is the capital, but the connected urban area extends through several governorates. Kuwait Bay, the islands and the oil-producing interior are important parts of the geography, not simply background to the skyline. [1][2]

## The workplace address matters

Sharq's offices, Shuwaikh's commercial and port activity, the residential areas around Hawalli and the energy operations around Ahmadi create different daily journeys. Kuwait has six governorates. A national salary figure or a city-centre office address will not explain the experience of a shift worker at a southern industrial site. [2][3]




Simplified country locator; boundaries and place positions are generalised. Not for legal or navigation use.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Capital / language** | Kuwait City; Arabic is official and English is widely used. [1] |
| **Time** | GMT+3 throughout the year; no daylight saving. [1] |
| **Climate** | Hot desert summers, cooler winters and coastal humidity. [1][2] |

## Where industrial work happens

Burgan and the Ahmadi area are closely associated with oil production, while the southern coast contains refining and export facilities. KPC's businesses span production, refining, petrochemicals and international marketing. For an employer, these are operating environments with site-access, transport and safety requirements that differ from an office in the capital. [3][15]

02 / HISTORY AND SOCIETY

# A modern state with a long memory

Trade, state-building and energy wealth all belong in the national story.

## Before the oil economy

Maritime commerce, fishing, pearling and shipbuilding connected Kuwait to other Gulf ports and the Indian Ocean. Family and merchant networks grew around that trading life. Oil changed the scale of public spending and employment, but commerce was not introduced by the petroleum industry. [3][38]

## The making of the modern state

Kuwait became independent on 19 June 1961, ending its treaty relationship with Britain. The constitution followed in November 1962. The Iraqi invasion of August 1990 and liberation in February 1991 remain defining experiences; National Day is celebrated on 25 February and Liberation Day on 26 February. [4][21][37]

## Institutions today

Kuwait is a hereditary emirate. Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah became Amir in December 2023. Its constitutional history includes an elected National Assembly, but the order of 10 May 2024 dissolved the Assembly and suspended specified constitutional provisions for up to four years. That change matters when reading older descriptions of government. [5][6]

## A wider international presence

Kuwait invests and does business beyond its borders through petroleum companies, banks, telecoms and sovereign funds. The Kuwait Investment Board was established in 1953; today's Kuwait Investment Authority dates from 1982. The long-term investment story and the domestic employment market are connected, but they are not the same thing. [14][15][18]

**1938**
Burgan oil discovery

**1961**
Independence

**1962**
Constitution

**1991**
Liberation

Timeline sources: petroleum history [3]; independence and constitution [4]; liberation context [21].

### Why the history still matters

For a newcomer, it is worth recognising that public service, family, national security and commercial enterprise can all carry deep meaning. A conversation about change can acknowledge what people want to preserve as well as what they hope to improve. That is a better starting point than assuming that a familiar international model must fit.

03 / PEOPLE AND THE WORKFORCE

# Who lives and works in Kuwait?

The balance between public employment and international labour is essential to understanding Kuwait.

**2.957m**
**employed people**
all three sectors, Q1 2025 [9]

**84.8%**
**non-Kuwaiti share**
same employment base [9]

**83.8%**
**of employed Kuwaitis**
in government, same quarter [9][11]

## A resident population, not a citizen count

PACI's year-end 2024 figures, reported by Al Jarida, recorded 4,987,826 residents: 1,567,983 Kuwaitis and 3,419,843 non-Kuwaitis. This is a dated population count, including children and people outside employment. It should not be substituted for a labour-force figure or presented as an October 2026 estimate. [8]

## Two connected employment systems

The CSB employment tables for Q1 2025 record 450,233 employed Kuwaitis and 2,506,742 non-Kuwaitis. Of the Kuwaiti total, 377,232 worked in government and 73,001 in the private sector. Public-sector career patterns and private-sector recruitment therefore need to be understood together. [9][10][11]

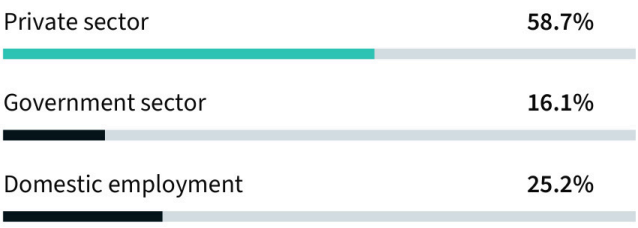
## What a headline can hide

These employment totals include domestic workers. A business survey excluding household employment will produce a different total and nationality share. Government employment is also not the same as a count of every state-owned commercial company. Check the table definition before comparing one employer with 'the Kuwait workforce'. [9][10][11]

## The human perspective

An international workforce is not one uniform expatriate group. A technical specialist, a retail colleague, a domestic worker and a family relocating for a professional appointment may have very different needs. Language, dependable pay, family contact and confidence in a supervisor can matter as much as a formal benefits policy.

WHERE PEOPLE WORK / Q1 2025




Calculated from CSB totals reproduced by GLMM; domestic employment is the residual. Rounded shares. [9][10][11]

04 / ECONOMY

# Wealth, diversification and exposure

Substantial oil and investment wealth sits alongside a commercially active domestic economy.

**US$160.2bn**
**nominal GDP**
2024, IMF series [12]

**+1.8%**
**non-oil GDP growth**
2024, real terms [12]

**2.9%**
**consumer inflation**
2024 annual average [12]

## The scale of the economy

The IMF's February 2026 country report puts 2024 nominal GDP at about US$160.2 billion. Total real GDP contracted by 2.6% that year while non-oil activity grew by 1.8%. Oil production and the domestic service economy can move in different directions; neither headline alone describes an individual employer's workload. [12]

## Energy remains the foundation

KPC's integrated businesses connect oilfields, refineries, petrochemicals, shipping and overseas markets. The employment effects extend into engineering, maintenance, procurement and contracting. A supplier may be exposed to energy investment even when its own employees work in logistics, technology or professional services. [15]

## Commerce extends beyond petroleum

Banking, telecommunications, property, retail and aviation are substantial business activities in their own right. NBK and KFH have international operations; Zain is a regional group; The Avenues and Alshaya illustrate the importance of property and consumer businesses. Their different business models generate different talent requirements. [16][17][18][19][20]

## Wealth is also invested for the future

KIA manages the General Reserve Fund and the Future Generations Fund. Its mandate is distinct from a ministry's annual spending programme or a commercial subsidiary's staffing budget. Sovereign wealth can support national resilience without implying that every domestic organisation has unconstrained resources. [14]

### Keep estimates separate from outcomes

The February 2026 IMF report estimated 2025 growth at 2.6% and projected 3.8% for 2026. Those figures were estimates and forecasts at publication, not completed-year 2026 results. The cards above deliberately retain one comparable 2024 reference year. [12]

Kuwait can contain a new project, a delayed contract and a mature service operation at the same time. Sector, ownership, funding and project stage usually explain immediate staffing needs better than a general statement that the economy is growing.

05 / SECTORS AND NATIONAL DIRECTION

# Where economic activity takes place

The employment landscape includes national industry, regional businesses and local services.

## Energy and industrial production

KPC and its operating businesses remain central to oil, gas, refining and petrochemicals. Production sites and processing facilities need engineering, maintenance, safety and operational capability, alongside a substantial contractor and supplier workforce. Industrial employment is more than a corporate headquarters story. [15]

## Finance and business services

NBK, KFH and Gulf Bank illustrate the depth of conventional and Islamic financial services. Credit, treasury, compliance, cybersecurity and digital delivery sit alongside relationship management and branch operations. Group reporting can include overseas businesses, so the relevant employment market must be defined carefully. [16][17][22]

## Aviation, distribution and trade

Kuwait Airways links the country to international passenger and cargo markets. Retail and franchise groups also need procurement, distribution, finance and logistics teams. These businesses connect a relatively concentrated domestic market to regional and international supply chains. [19][21]

## Retail, property and hospitality

Alshaya's brands and Mabanee's property portfolio show how consumer spending supports a wide range of work: store operations, food service, property management, leasing and customer experience. A development project and an operating shopping destination are different workforce propositions. [19][20]

## Education and healthcare

Public services operate alongside private schools and healthcare providers. The education system includes Kuwait University and applied education and training routes. Teaching, clinical and technical roles require their own qualification checks; strong administrative and service teams are important too. [33][34][35]

## Digital services and enterprise

Zain's regional operations and banks' digital services demonstrate the demand for technology, data and customer capability. Smaller suppliers and professional firms participate in the same economy. Their growth depends on real client demand and delivery capacity, not simply the availability of a new platform. [16][18][22]

### New Kuwait 2035: a national direction

The vision seeks a financial and commercial hub with a larger private-sector role. Its seven pillars include effective administration, a diversified economy, infrastructure, sustainable living, healthcare, creative human capital and international positioning. These are national priorities, not a guarantee that every announced project will proceed on its original timetable. [7]

For HR, the useful connection is between the national direction and the actual organisation: which services are being built, what skills they need and where those skills can be developed locally.

06 / MAJOR COMPANIES

# Names that shape the business landscape

A selected guide to important companies, not a league table: revenue, assets and domestic employment are different measures.

| Organisation | Business | Why it is useful to know |
|---|---|---|
| **Kuwait Petroleum Corporation** | Energy group | State-owned integrated petroleum group; a major influence on industry, suppliers, technical talent and contractor employment. [15] |
| **National Bank of Kuwait** | Banking | KWD 45.6bn total group assets at year-end 2025; a balance-sheet measure, not domestic employee headcount. [16] |
| **Kuwait Finance House** | Islamic banking | KWD 42.8bn assets at year-end 2025 across its banking group, including businesses outside Kuwait. [17] |
| **Zain Group** | Telecoms / digital | KWD 2.3bn consolidated revenue in 2025 across its markets; not a measure of Kuwait telecoms alone. [18] |
| **Alshaya Group** | Retail / franchising | January 2025 disclosure: 50,000 colleagues across 16 countries. A regional retail workforce, not a Kuwait-only figure. [19] |
| **Mabanee** | Property / retail | Developer and operator associated with The Avenues; activities in Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. [20] |
| **Kuwait Airways** | Aviation | National carrier established in 1954; flying, engineering, ground operations and international service. [21] |
| **Gulf Bank** | Banking | KWD 7.7bn assets at year-end 2025. Its strategy includes a planned Islamic-banking transition. [22] |

### A useful distinction for HR

A company's worldwide workforce does not tell you how many people it employs in Kuwait. Nor does its size make every subsidiary a suitable pay comparator. Establish the relevant entity, geography, occupation and job level before using a national champion as a benchmark.

07 / INSTITUTIONS AND WIDER BUSINESS

# Beyond the company names

Public services, investment institutions and smaller businesses matter to working life too.

## The public sector is an important employer

The Q1 2025 government employment table records 476,983 people, including 377,232 Kuwaitis. This helps explain the influence of public-sector careers on the wider market. It does not mean that a private employer should adopt civil-service pay, progression or employment rules. [11]

## Education and skills have several routes

Kuwait University, applied education and training, public institutions and private education all contribute to the talent pipeline. Employers should distinguish a qualification from readiness for a specific role. For a new entrant, supervised practice and a clear first job can make the transition into employment much more manageable. [34][35]

## Healthcare as a national capability

Public health services and private provision are part of the country's employment and relocation setting. Resident health-insurance registration is linked to residence procedures. It should not be described as equivalent to a comprehensive private medical policy: access, additional charges and family cover still need a clear explanation. [32][33]

## Businesses beyond the state sector

Family groups, retailers, franchise operators and property businesses are important parts of commercial life. Alshaya and Mabanee demonstrate that corporate activity extends well beyond petroleum. A smaller supplier or owner-managed firm may have quite different resources and decision-making arrangements from a national champion. [19][20]

**KIA**
**long-term investment**
reserve and future funds [14]

**PAM**
**labour administration**
work permits and labour law [26][31]

**KDIPA**
**investment promotion**
licensed investment routes [23]

### Reading an organisation in context

A ministry, a government-owned company, an owner-managed business and an international subsidiary can share a postcode while operating very differently. Ownership, funding and decision-making authority deserve attention before assumptions are made about pay, organisational structure or how quickly a proposal can be approved.

08 / BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

# How the operating context works

The right country knowledge starts with the right legal entity, business activity and set of rules.

## Choose the operating route carefully

Under the direct-investment framework, a licensed Kuwaiti company may have up to 100% foreign participation; branches and representative offices have separate defined roles. This is a licensing route with conditions, not blanket permission for every foreign business to undertake any activity. Establish the legal employer before making staffing commitments. [23]

## Investment and local capability

KDIPA's framework links investment to the country's development direction. For an employer, local capability, supplier relationships and the ability to operate sustainably matter alongside incorporation. The practical HR questions concern the actual activity, occupations, operating site and skills required, not only the ownership percentage. [7][23]

## Tax: avoid blanket promises

Kuwait's ordinary corporate income tax generally applies at 15% to the profits of foreign corporate bodies operating in Kuwait, subject to the framework and exemptions. A separate 15% domestic minimum top-up tax applies to qualifying large multinational groups for financial years beginning from 1 January 2025. Neither is a personal salary-tax calculation. [24][25]

## Currency and international packages

The dinar is managed against an undisclosed weighted basket of international currencies. Unlike the fixed US-dollar pegs used by several neighbours, there is no permanent KWD-per-dollar parity to print as a national fact. Savings and remittances expressed in an employee's home currency can still change in value. [13]

### A licence, a residence permit and a job are different questions

Private-sector work entry requires a PAM work permit and the relevant immigration process. Residence procedures have their own documentation. Do not assume that the right to establish a company, visit a client or hold residence automatically answers every question about a particular assignment. [31][32]

Country knowledge helps when it is tied to the actual client. Understand who employs the staff, which operation earns the income, where decisions are made and whether the assignment concerns Kuwait operations or an international group.

09 / EMPLOYMENT SETTING

# The rules behind working life

A short orientation to general private-sector law, with important boundaries.

Labour Law No. 6 of 2010, as amended, is a principal private-sector reference. Public employment, domestic work and the oil sector require separate scope checks. Some English copies retain superseded wording, so amendments matter as much as the original text. [26][27]

| Topic | General baseline for covered employees |
|---|---|
| Ordinary hours | Generally 8 hours a day / 48 a week; during Ramadan, 36 hours a week. Statutory exceptions apply. [26] |
| Probation | Up to 100 working days, stated in the contract; one probation per employer. [26] |
| Annual leave | At least 30 working days; first-year entitlement after six months. Weekly rest and public holidays are excluded. [27] |
| Sick leave | 15 days full pay, then 10 each at 75%, 50% and 25%, followed by 30 unpaid days; medical evidence applies. [26] |
| Maternity | 70 days on full pay, including childbirth; further unpaid leave may apply. [26] |
| Notice | For indefinite contracts: generally three months for monthly-paid workers, one month for others. [26] |
| End-of-service | Monthly-paid staff: 15 days per year for the first five years, then one month; cap and termination rules apply. [26] |

General orientation, not an individual settlement calculation. Remuneration basis, service and the reason for leaving can change the result. [26]

### A material change to travel administration

Employer-approved exit permits became mandatory for covered expatriate private-sector workers from 1 July 2025. This is distinct from employment notice or the right to change employer. HR teams need a workable travel-approval process, including for urgent personal circumstances. [28]

# Joining the workforce

National participation and international recruitment both shape the country's direction.

## Kuwaitisation has an organisational context

National-employment ratios are organised by activity and occupational category; they should not be reduced to one universal percentage. The Kuwait Chamber's published material explains that structure. The current requirement must be confirmed with PAM for the employer and job categories concerned, rather than copied from an old sector table. [29]

## Careers, support and participation

National labour-support arrangements sit alongside employment policy. A 2023 Cabinet decision extended support to specified eligible micro-enterprise and self-employment categories. Eligibility-based public support is different from an employer's own salary commitment. Real work, progression and capable managers still determine whether a private-sector career is attractive. [30]

## Recruitment draws on several markets

Employers recruit Kuwaitis, existing residents and people overseas. Private-sector entry and Article 18 residence are formal processes, not an assumed start date following an accepted offer. The work permit, job category, documents and immigration route should be checked together, particularly for regulated or specialist work. [31][32]

## Packages need a clear explanation

A professional hire may compare basic pay, allowances, variable pay, housing, schooling, medical insurance and travel. None should be left to an informal assumption. A public-sector package, a bank appointment and a contractor role can be quite different propositions even when the job titles sound similar.

### The transition into private employment deserves attention

In the comparable Q1 2025 tables, about 83.8% of employed Kuwaitis were in government and 16.2% in the private sector. These are observed shares, not company quotas. They help explain why career expectations and the quality of a first private-sector role matter. [9][10][11]

There is no single meaningful 'Kuwait salary' without a role, level, sector and package definition. Compare like with like: basic pay, guaranteed allowances, variable reward and family costs.

11 / LIVING AND RELOCATING

# The everyday side of a move

Housing, schooling, healthcare and the journey to work turn an employment offer into a real life.

## A move involves a household

Someone can accept a role with enthusiasm and still find the first month unsettling. Housing, family paperwork, school places and a partner's plans influence whether the move feels manageable. Explain the sequence and likely dependencies before arrival rather than leaving a family to discover them later.

## Housing and location

Kuwait City's urban corridor extends through connected governorates, while southern energy sites can involve a different commute. Start with the workplace, school and shift pattern. A pleasant address or lower rent is not enough: test the journey, parking and transport arrangements that the household will actually use. [2]

## Schools and childcare

The government portal provides public and private school directories. For a relocating family, curriculum continuity, admissions, support needs, fees and school transport should be checked individually. Nursery arrangements are a separate question. A schooling allowance is not evidence that a suitable place is available. [34]

## Healthcare and family cover

Resident health-insurance registration is part of the administrative picture, but private medical benefits need separate explanation. Check providers, exclusions, dependants, emergency treatment and any additional charges. A visiting consultant should arrange cover appropriate to the assignment rather than assume an employee scheme applies. [32][33]

## Getting around

KPTC publishes the K-Bus network and route information. Public transport can help some journeys, but an available bus route does not guarantee convenient access to a particular site or shift. Consider the final part of the journey, summer heat and reliable transport home after late work. [36]

## A realistic cost-of-living view

Build the decision around a household budget: rent, deposits, utilities, transport, school, childcare, insurance and travel. Use dated quotations for the relevant neighbourhood. The same monthly salary can leave two households with very different disposable incomes.

### For a visiting consultant

Agree the work location, access arrangements and contact person before travelling. Confirm entry and work-permission requirements for the activities you will undertake, together with insurance and any relevant exit-permit arrangements. A familiar client is not a substitute for checking the next assignment. [28][31][32]

# Working with consideration

Country knowledge is most useful when it helps people feel understood, not categorised.

## Make room for relationships

Kuwait's traditions include strong family and community ties. Allow time for introductions, take an interest in the organisation and follow through reliably. Attention and courtesy are more useful than an exaggerated performance of local etiquette. [38]

## Communicate without assumptions

Arabic is official and English is widely used. A multilingual workplace does not mean everyone can interpret a contract or technical policy in meeting-room English. Ask which language helps the audience understand, particularly when discussing safety, benefits or a sensitive concern. [1]

## Respect the setting

Ramadan, religious occasions and family gatherings are part of the social calendar. Professional dress, consideration around prayer and respectful conduct are sensible starting points. Avoid assuming that every Kuwaiti colleague or expatriate team shares identical preferences. [38]

## Working across the year

National Day is 25 February and Liberation Day 26 February. Ramadan and Eid affect work and family routines; exact religious holidays follow announcements. Government closure dates are not automatically the operating roster of a hospital, airline, retailer or refinery. Plan coverage with the actual business. [26][37][38]

## Summer is an operating condition

The 2026 outdoor-work rule prohibited exposed work from 11:00 to 16:00 between 1 June and 31 August. It also addressed unsafe climatic conditions and protective measures. A permitted hour is not automatically a safe hour: water, shade, rest and appropriate supervision remain important. [39]

## See beyond the meeting room

Al-Mubarakiya brings Kuwait's trading heritage into everyday life. Time in the market and along the waterfront can give a fuller sense of the country than an airport-office-hotel itinerary. The purpose is not a checklist of attractions, but an interest in the place where colleagues are building their lives. [40]

### A brief, not a stereotype

Kuwait's institutions, employers and residents are not interchangeable. Use the country context to ask more thoughtful questions and interpret what you see. Then let the organisation and the people themselves tell you what matters in their particular situation.

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND READING

# Sources and further reading

Select a reference to open the original source. The numbers match the links in the brief.

**01 Kuwait Government Online**
Geographical location, area and country setting
e.gov.kw

**02 Kuwait Government Online**
Governorates and physical geography
e.gov.kw

**03 Kuwait Petroleum Corporation**
Oil history: discovery, exports and industry milestones
kpc.com.kw

**04 Kuwait Government Online**
Independence, constitution and governing institutions
e.gov.kw

**05 Kuwait Government Online**
The Amir: official biography and accession
e.gov.kw

**06 Kuwait News Agency**
10 May 2024 order on parliament and constitutional articles
kuna.net.kw

**07 KDIPA**
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## What the company figures mean

Company amounts retain the reporting period and group scope stated by the issuer. Revenue, assets, output and headcount are different measures. No comprehensive ranking of Kuwait-based employee numbers is claimed.

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND READING

# Source notes and publication details

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Al-Mubarakiya: heritage and national celebrations
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**Data note.** Population uses PACI's 31 December 2024 count reported by Al Jarida. Employment uses comparable CSB Q1 2025 tables reproduced by GLMM; percentages are calculated from those counts and include domestic employment. Economic cards retain IMF's 2024 series. Company figures retain the issuer's reporting scope.

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HR DELIVERY
*Making Sure HR Delivers*

GULF COUNTRY BRIEFS / 06

# BAHRAIN

## People, economy and working life

A country brief for HR professionals



## Understand the country. Know the context.

Country background / People and workforce / Major employers
Business environment / Living and working in Bahrain

OCTOBER 2026

START HERE

# Understanding Bahrain

A useful country brief should help you understand the place before you try to advise the organisations within it. Bahrain deserves that attention: an island kingdom with a long trading history, an established financial sector, substantial industry and a highly international population.

This brief brings together the country's background, people, workforce, economy, important employers and everyday realities of doing business. It is written for HR professionals preparing for a client meeting, joining an organisation or helping colleagues settle into Bahrain. The aim is to understand the country without reducing its people to a set of assumptions.

**03** The country at a glance

**04** History, government and identity

**05** People and the workforce

**06** The economy in context

**07** Sectors and national direction

**08** Major companies

**09** Institutions and wider business

**10** Doing business in Bahrain

**11** The employment setting

**12** National talent, hiring and pay

**13** Living and relocating

**14** Culture and the working year

**15-16** Sources, data notes and publication information

### Read the dates as well as the numbers

This edition is dated 8 October 2026. Figures retain their own reference periods, and strategic targets are distinguished from outcomes. Numbered references link to the sources. This is a country introduction, not legal, tax or immigration advice.

01 / COUNTRY FUNDAMENTALS

# The country at a glance

An island kingdom with closely connected communities and several distinct business settings.

**~787**
**square kilometres**
land area, 2022 basis [1]

**1.595m**
**resident population**
December 2024 [8]

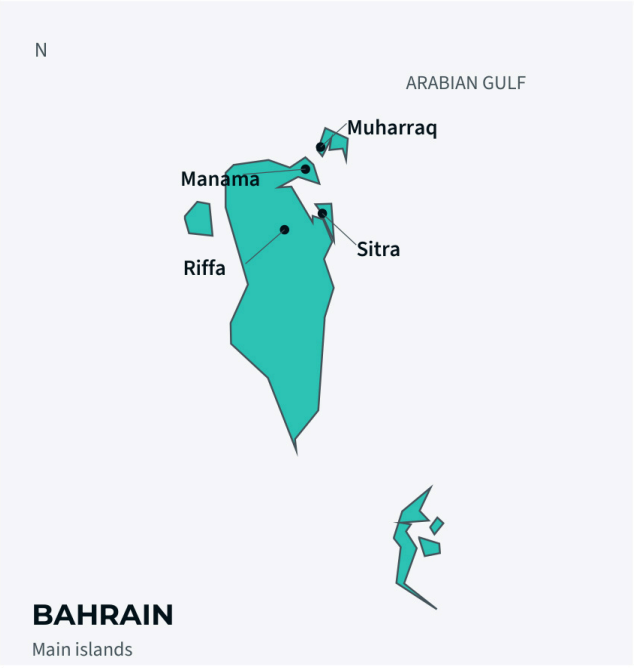
**BHD 0.376**
**per US dollar**
official exchange-rate peg [12]

## An archipelago, not just Manama

Bahrain lies in the Arabian Gulf, east of Saudi Arabia. Manama is the capital; Muharraq has a separate historic identity and is home to the airport. The mainland connection through the King Fahd Causeway is important, but the islands, industrial areas and neighbourhoods deserve attention in their own right. [1][18]

## The workplace address matters

Manama's financial and commercial districts, the airport and port around Muharraq and Hidd, and the industrial operations near Sitra and Alba create different working environments. Short distances on a map do not remove congestion, shift patterns or the need to get safely from the last bus stop to a worksite. [13][14][18][19][35]




Simplified main-island locator. Coastlines and place positions are generalised; not for navigation.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Capital / language** | Manama; Arabic is official and English is widely used. [1] |
| **Time** | GMT+3 throughout the year; no daylight saving. [1] |
| **Climate** | Hot, humid summers and milder winters; limited rainfall. [1] |

## Where industrial work happens

Alba's aluminium operations, Bapco's refinery and the Khalifa Bin Salman Port ecosystem are part of a substantial industrial economy. Engineering, maintenance, safety, logistics and supplier work sit alongside financial and professional services. A Bahrain office address is not a reliable description of every employee's daily workplace. [13][14][19]

02 / HISTORY AND SOCIETY

# A modern state with a long memory

Trade, pearling and early industrialisation all help explain the country beyond its modern skyline.

## Before the oil economy

Ancient Dilmun connected Bahrain to regional trading routes. Much later, pearling helped shape the merchant houses, shops and maritime communities of Muharraq. The UNESCO-listed pearling property preserves buildings, oyster beds and a seashore connection: evidence of an economy that influenced social life as well as commerce. [2][3]

## The making of the modern state

Bahrain's oil era began in 1932, earlier than those of its GCC neighbours. Independence followed on 15 August 1971, and the country became a kingdom in 2002. National Day is celebrated in December rather than on the independence date. Modernisation and continuity are both part of this history. [1][14][39]

## Institutions today

Bahrain is a constitutional monarchy headed by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. The legislature comprises the Council of Representatives and the Shura Council. Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa is Crown Prince and Prime Minister. National institutions, regulators and commercial state holdings perform different roles and should not be treated as one organisation. [1][5]

## An identity shaped by the sea

Muharraq's merchant quarters and the ancient harbour at Bahrain Fort make the trading story tangible. A visitor can recognise connections between place, work and community without assuming that every Bahraini has the same background. Local identity sits alongside the experience of a large international resident population. [2][3][8]

**1932**
First oil discovery

**1971**
Independence

**2002**
Kingdom proclaimed

**2008**
Economic Vision 2030

Timeline sources: country and energy history [1][14]; national vision [6].

### Why the history still matters

For a newcomer, it is worth recognising that financial services and modern industry did not arrive in a place without commercial traditions. A thoughtful conversation about change values local experience and continuity as well as new ideas. Ask what people want to preserve, not only what they hope to improve.

03 / PEOPLE AND THE WORKFORCE

# Who lives and works in Bahrain?

National participation and international migration shape the labour market together.

**637,029**
**registered contributors**
SIO, Q1 2026 [9]

**75.1%**
**non-Bahraini share**
same contributor base [9]

**66.8%**
**of Bahraini contributors**
in the private sector [9]

## A resident population, not a citizen count

The iGA's December 2024 population series, reproduced by GLMM, records 1,594,654 residents: 742,234 Bahrainis and 852,420 non-Bahrainis. Children and people outside employment are included. This dated population count is not a current employee total or an estimate of the number of citizens living abroad. [8]

## A substantial private-sector national workforce

SIO's Q1 2026 report lists 52,542 Bahraini contributors in the public sector and 105,780 in the private sector, alongside 478,707 non-Bahraini private-sector contributors. The figures show why national talent cannot be discussed only as a public-sector population. They also reveal the scale of registered international employment. [9]

BAHRAINI CONTRIBUTORS BY SECTOR / Q1 2026




Calculated from 158,322 Bahraini contributors in the SIO report. These are insured contributors, not all employed citizens. [9]

## What a headline can hide

SIO contributors are not the whole labour force. The administrative coverage differs from a household survey and does not capture every form of work. The 75.1% figure here is therefore the non-Bahraini share of this contributor base, not the foreign share of all residents or every person working in Bahrain. [8][9]

## The human perspective

A Bahraini graduate, an experienced banker, an expatriate technician and a hospitality colleague can be important to the same economy while facing different choices. Career progression, reliable transport, family contact and fair treatment matter across these groups. Nationality alone tells an employer little about someone's skills or aspirations.

04 / ECONOMY

# Wealth, diversification and exposure

Financial services, industry and international connections are already part of the economic model.

**+3.5%**
**real GDP growth**
2025 outcome [10]

**85.8%**
**non-oil GDP share**
2025, real terms [10]

**+4.1%**
**non-oil growth**
2025, real terms [10]

## The scale and composition of activity

The Ministry of Finance and National Economy's April 2026 release reported real GDP growth of 3.5% in 2025. Non-oil activity grew by 4.1% and accounted for 85.8% of real GDP. Diversification is therefore a description of much of the present economy, not only a future ambition. [10]

## Growth is not evenly distributed

In the 2025 release, professional, scientific and technical activity and accommodation and food services each grew by 6.4%; financial and insurance activity grew by 5.6%. These different rates help explain why an aggregate growth figure cannot describe every client's recruitment needs. [10]

## Industry remains a major foundation

Alba produced more than 1.62 million tonnes of aluminium in 2025. Bapco's modernised refinery adds another substantial industrial operation. These businesses support technical employment and supply chains; they also require commercial, technology and management capability beyond the production plant itself. [13][14]

## Capital and regional business

Mumtalakat's portfolio includes major commercial holdings, while Bank ABC operates internationally and Beyon combines domestic telecommunications with wider digital businesses. The island's economic reach is larger than its physical size. Group success and demand for a particular Bahrain-based job are still different questions. [15][17][20]

### Read the reference period, not just the headline

The cards use completed 2025 national accounts, not 2026 forecasts. The earlier 2024 release recorded 2.6% real GDP growth and an 86.0% non-oil share. A changing percentage can reflect both oil and non-oil activity; it is not, by itself, a score for diversification policy. [10][11]

For HR, the useful economic questions are close to the organisation: what customers it serves, which investment is approved, how it earns income and where capability is needed. A growing national economy can still contain businesses facing very different conditions.

05 / SECTORS AND NATIONAL DIRECTION

# Where economic activity takes place

Bahrain combines internationally connected services with a significant industrial base.

## Finance and business services

Banking, insurance, investment and related professional services are established parts of Bahrain's economy. NBB and Bank ABC illustrate different domestic and international business models. Risk, compliance, client relationships, technology and specialist judgement matter alongside traditional financial expertise. [4][16][17]

## Aluminium and manufacturing

Alba is a large primary-aluminium producer with a downstream industrial ecosystem. Manufacturing requires technical operations, quality, maintenance, safety and supply-chain capability. The employment proposition for a plant-based specialist is different from a financial-services role in Manama, even within the same national market. [13]

## Energy and refining

Bapco's modernisation programme expanded refining capability; its December 2025 announcement reported capacity of 405,000 barrels per day. Capacity is not daily output. Operations, asset reliability and contractor skills are central to turning investment into dependable performance. [14]

## Aviation, ports and logistics

Gulf Air Group spans the airline, airport and aviation-training businesses. Khalifa Bin Salman Port is operated by APM Terminals Bahrain. These connections create work in transport, ground services, engineering, safety, logistics and customer operations, often with round-the-clock staffing requirements. [18][19]

## Tourism, hospitality and heritage

Hotels, food services and the visitor economy sit alongside cultural sites such as Bahrain Fort and the Pearling Path. Hospitality requires service and operational capability; heritage activity also depends on conservation, interpretation and community understanding. These are related but not identical talent markets. [2][3][10]

## Telecommunications and digital services

Beyon's businesses bring together telecommunications and a wider digital portfolio. For employers, technology demand involves more than recruiting developers: customer operations, data, cyber risk, commercial skills and the ability to implement reliable services are part of the same capability picture. [15]

### Economic Vision 2030: development through three principles

Launched in 2008, the vision is framed around sustainability, competitiveness and fairness. Its ambition is improved living standards through economic and institutional development. For HR, the connection is to productive work and genuine opportunity, not simply a list of projects carrying a national label. [6]

A national target explains direction. It is not evidence that every associated business is funded, every operating date is fixed or every proposed role will be recruited.

06 / MAJOR COMPANIES

# Names that shape the business landscape

A selected guide to important companies, not a league table: revenue, assets and domestic employment are different measures.

| Organisation | Business | Why it is useful to know |
|---|---|---|
| **Aluminium Bahrain (Alba)** | Aluminium | 2025 output: 1,623,139 tonnes. A major industrial producer supporting manufacturing, suppliers and technical talent. [13] |
| **Bapco Energies** | Energy / refining | National energy group; December 2025 announcement reported refinery capacity of 405,000 barrels per day. [14] |
| **Beyon** | Telecoms / digital | BHD 496.6m group revenue in 2025; includes Batelco and wider digital and international businesses. [15] |
| **National Bank of Bahrain** | Banking | BHD 6.277bn consolidated assets at year-end 2025; a balance-sheet measure, not revenue. [16] |
| **Bank ABC** | International banking | US$49.9bn group assets at year-end 2025; a Bahrain-headquartered international banking business. [17] |
| **Gulf Air Group** | Aviation / services | Includes Gulf Air, Bahrain Airport Company and Gulf Aviation Academy: different operating and talent needs. [18] |
| **APM Terminals Bahrain** | Ports / logistics | Operator of Khalifa Bin Salman Port; distinguish the Bahrain company from its global parent network. [19] |
| **Mumtalakat** | State investment holdings | Government investment company; portfolio-company workforces are not Mumtalakat employee headcount. [20] |

### A useful distinction for HR

A company's worldwide workforce does not tell you how many people it employs in Bahrain. Nor does its size make every subsidiary a suitable pay comparator. Establish the relevant entity, geography, occupation and job level before using a national champion as a benchmark.

07 / INSTITUTIONS AND WIDER BUSINESS

# Beyond the company names

Public services, investment institutions and smaller businesses matter to working life too.

## Public institutions have distinct roles

A ministry, a public-service organisation and a state-owned commercial company are not interchangeable employers. SIO's public-sector contributor category is also not a count of everyone working for a state-linked business. Ask who holds the budget, sets policy and has authority to make the decision. [1][9]

## Investment and enterprise development

Mumtalakat holds commercial investments; the Economic Development Board promotes investment; Tamkeen supports employment, skills and enterprise development. These organisations influence business conditions in different ways. Their programmes and portfolio connections do not create one common employment model for the companies involved. [4][20][26][27]

## Education and the transition to work

Bahrain's education and training institutions sit alongside employer-led development. The Education and Training Quality Authority publishes school review reports, while Tamkeen programmes support employment and progression. Qualifications are an important starting point, but role-specific practice and the quality of supervision still shape readiness. [26][27][33]

## Beyond the national champions

Smaller employers and professional firms share the same need for capable people, but may have less management capacity or recruitment reach. Sijilat makes the diversity of licensed activities visible. For a consultant, the actual activity and business model matter more than assuming that every Bahrain client resembles a bank or industrial group. [7][30]

### Mumtalakat

**state investment**

commercial portfolio [20]

### LMRA

**labour regulation**

permits and employer duties [31][32]

### Tamkeen

**enterprise and skills**

employment and progression [26][27]

### Reading an organisation in context

Ownership is the beginning of the conversation, not the answer. Ask how the organisation earns income, which rules govern it, where decisions are made and what authority the local team holds. Similar branding or a shared shareholder does not prove a common employment proposition.

08 / BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

# How the operating context works

The right country knowledge starts with the right legal entity, business activity and set of rules.

## Choose the operating route carefully

Bahrain permits full foreign ownership in many activities, but the activity and licensing conditions still matter. Sijilat's search distinguishes ownership categories and required approvals. A commercial registration does not remove sector regulation or make every proposed service permissible under the same licence. [4][7][30]

## An accessible market is not one rulebook

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce's services link business registration to the licences and approvals required for each activity. A financial-services firm, a manufacturer and a professional practice need different compliance knowledge. Confirm the legal employer and licensed activity before designing an organisation or committing to recruitment. [7][30]

## Tax: avoid blanket promises

The standard VAT rate is 10%, subject to the rules for particular supplies. A 15% domestic minimum top-up tax applies to qualifying multinational groups from 1 January 2025, including the relevant EUR 750 million revenue threshold. Neither a personal tax assumption nor the phrase 'tax-free' is an adequate business assessment. [28][29]

## Currency and international packages

The Bahraini dinar is pegged to the US dollar at BHD 0.376 per US$1. This provides a stable dollar reference, not a guaranteed value against every employee's home currency. Savings, remittances and an overseas school or mortgage commitment can still change in local-currency cost. [12]

### Residence and permission to work are separate

Bahrain has a specific work-permit service for Golden Residency holders who wish to work. Longer-term residence can support continuity, but it does not mean that an employment arrangement needs no permit checks. The correct route depends on the person's circumstances and the employing entity. [34][38]

A useful first client discussion establishes the employer, activity, licence, workforce location and relevant regulator. Only then is it sensible to compare packages, recommend contracts or decide which policies should apply.

09 / EMPLOYMENT SETTING

# The rules behind working life

A short orientation to general private-sector law, with important boundaries.

Labour Law No. 36 of 2012, as amended, is the main private-sector reference. Government employment and some categories have different arrangements. Confirm coverage, current amendments and social-insurance treatment before applying the general baseline below. [21][23]

| Topic | General baseline for covered employees |
|---|---|
| Ordinary hours | Generally 8 hours a day / 48 a week; for Muslim workers in Ramadan, 6 a day / 36 a week. [21] |
| Probation | Three months; up to six for designated occupations, agreed in writing. [21] |
| Annual leave | At least 30 days on full pay after one year; proportionate entitlement for shorter service. [21] |
| Sick leave | After three months' service: 15 days full pay, 20 half pay and 20 unpaid; medical evidence applies. [21] |
| Maternity | 60 days on full pay; additional statutory provisions apply. [22] |
| Notice | Generally at least 30 days' written notice; contract and statutory termination provisions also matter. [21] |
| End-of-service | Eligible non-Bahraini private-sector staff fall within the SIO-funded scheme introduced in March 2024. [23][24] |

General orientation only. Coverage, remuneration, earlier service and the reason for termination require an individual check. [21][23][24]

### End-of-service funding changed in 2024

For covered non-Bahraini workers, employer contributions are 4.2% of wages for the first three service years and 8.4% thereafter. The scheme took effect in March 2024. Earlier service liabilities remain with the employer; transferring future funding to SIO does not erase the past obligation. [23][24]

# Joining the workforce

National participation and international recruitment both shape the country's direction.

## Bahrainisation has a defined context

LMRA publishes Bahrainisation tables by business activity and establishment size. The applicable ratio and any parallel-system arrangements should be checked for the actual commercial registration. There is no sound basis for applying one blanket percentage to every employer or copying a rule from another Gulf country. [25][34]

## Support should lead to real careers

Tamkeen's National Employment and Wage Increment programmes support employment and career progression under their respective conditions. Support eligibility is not a substitute for a genuine role, capable supervision or an employer's contractual commitments. The useful outcome is sustained work and development after the initial hiring decision. [26][27]

## Recruitment draws on several markets

Employers recruit Bahrainis, existing residents and people overseas. LMRA states that expatriate workers entering for employment need the proper employer-linked work permit, rather than working illegally on a visit visa. Residence options also exist for eligible people, with work-permit requirements checked separately. [31][34][38]

## Packages need a clear explanation

Describe basic pay, allowances, variable reward, insurance and family benefits separately. A professional role in Manama, a plant-based appointment and an operational service job can involve very different travel patterns and household costs. An attractive monthly headline is not the same as a clearly understood employment offer.

### Worker protection belongs in everyday administration

LMRA says employers must bear work-permit fees and must not charge workers for issuing or renewing permits. Its multilingual worker-support hotline is 995. Recruitment and payroll arrangements should be understandable to the employee, not merely complete in an internal file. [31]

There is no single useful 'Bahrain salary' without a role, level, sector and package definition. A dependable comparison separates basic pay, guaranteed allowances, variable reward and household costs.

11 / LIVING AND RELOCATING

# The everyday side of a move

Housing, schooling, healthcare and the journey to work turn an employment offer into a real life.

## A move involves a household

Someone can accept a job with enthusiasm and still feel unsettled by the first month. Housing, a partner's plans, school places and family paperwork all matter. Helpful employers explain the sequence before arrival and give people a named contact who can resolve the practical questions.

## Housing and location

Manama, Muharraq and the southern industrial areas offer different living and commuting patterns. Start with the actual workplace, school and shift, not an assumption that every journey is short because Bahrain is small. Check parking, the final walk and access to reliable transport after late work. [1][18][19][35]

## Schools and childcare

BQA publishes school review reports that families can read alongside curriculum and admissions information. A review is useful evidence, not a guarantee of a place or a fit for every child. Confirm fees, transport, additional support and nursery needs before treating a schooling allowance as a solved problem. [33]

## Healthcare and family cover

LMRA identifies health-insurance costs among employer obligations, while residence routes can have their own documentation. Ask what the actual policy covers: dependants, providers, exclusions, co-payments and emergency treatment. A visiting consultant should arrange insurance for the assignment rather than assume an employee's policy applies. [31][38]

## Getting around

Bahrain Public Transport Company publishes day, night and regional route maps, including connections through Manama, Muharraq and the southern areas. A route on a map is only a starting point. Test the journey at the relevant time and consider heat, waiting and the final part of the trip. [35]

## A realistic cost-of-living view

Build the decision around a household budget: rent, deposits, utilities, transport, school, childcare, insurance and travel. Use dated quotations for the relevant area. A package that suits a single person may leave a relocating family with a very different disposable income.

### For a visiting consultant

Agree the work location, access arrangements and local contact before travelling. Check the permitted activity, entry and residence route, work authorisation and insurance for the actual assignment. A previous visit or a long-standing client relationship does not replace these checks. [31][34][38]

# Working with consideration

Country knowledge is most useful when it helps people feel understood, not categorised.

## Make room for relationships

Bahrain's trading and neighbourhood history is visible in places such as Muharraq. Take time for introductions, show interest in the organisation and follow through reliably. Courtesy and curiosity are more useful than imitating an elaborate set of local gestures. [3][40]

## Communicate without assumptions

Arabic is official and English is widely used. A multilingual workplace does not guarantee that everyone understands technical instructions or employment terms in English. Check which language helps the audience, especially for safety, benefits, grievance procedures or a sensitive conversation. [1][31]

## Respect the setting

The country's heritage brings religion, commerce and community into the same story. Professional dress, consideration around prayer and respectful public conduct are sensible starting points. Neither a Bahraini colleague nor an expatriate team should be treated as a representative of one fixed culture. [3][40]

## Working across the year

Ramadan and Eid affect both work and family routines. The official calendar includes Labour Day, Islamic occasions and National Day holidays on 16-17 December. Lunar dates remain subject to confirmation. A government holiday calendar does not, by itself, determine staffing for an airport, hospital or industrial operation. [21][39]

## Summer is an operating condition

The 2026 restriction covered exposed outdoor work from 12:00 to 16:00 between 15 June and 31 August. That year's Cabinet decision and implementing announcement should not be confused with an older summer period. Shade, water, rest and attention to heat stress remain important beyond the prohibited hours. [36][37]

## See beyond the meeting room

Bahrain Fort and the Pearling Path offer a fuller view of the country than its business towers alone. Their value is not simply as attractions: they reveal how work, trade and community shaped local life. Taking an interest in that history can make a professional visit more thoughtful. [2][3][40]

### A brief, not a stereotype

Bahrain's communities, institutions, employers and residents are not interchangeable. Use country context to ask more thoughtful questions and interpret what you see. Then let the organisation and the people themselves tell you what matters in their particular situation.

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND READING

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Select a reference to open the original source. The numbers match the links in the brief.

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bahrain.bh

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whc.unesco.org

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Pearling: Muharraq and the island economy
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2025 financial results, released February 2026
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**16 National Bank of Bahrain**
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Khalifa Bin Salman Port and Bahrain logistics operations
www2.apmterminals.com

**20 Bahrain Mumtalakat**
2025 results, investment portfolio and subsidiaries
mumtalakat.bh

## What the company figures mean

Company amounts retain the reporting period and group scope stated by the issuer. Revenue, assets, output and headcount are different measures. No comprehensive ranking of Bahrain-based employee numbers is claimed.

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Official information is the starting point; definitions and reporting periods still need care.

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npra.gov.bh

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aim.mtt.gov.bh

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whc.unesco.org

**Data note.** Population uses the iGA December 2024 series reproduced by GLMM. Workforce cards use SIO Q1 2026 registered contributors, not the whole labour force; percentages are calculated from the published counts. Economic cards use 2025 national accounts. Company figures retain their reporting year and group scope.

**Publication.** HR Delivery, 8 October 2026. English edition. Layout follows the supplied Qatar brief and September 2026 brand identity. Cover: Bahrain-inspired AI illustration, not documentary photography. Locator: generalised GSHHS main-island coastlines. No external endorsement or PDF/UA certification is claimed.

HR DELIVERY
*Making Sure HR Delivers*

GULF COUNTRY BRIEFS / 04

# OMAN

## People, economy and working life

A country brief for HR professionals



## Understand the country. Know the context.

Country background / People and workforce / Major employers
Business environment / Living and working in Oman

OCTOBER 2026

START HERE

# Understanding Oman

A useful country brief should help you understand the place before you try to advise the organisations within it. Oman deserves that attention: a Muscat office, a Sohar industrial site and a Salalah tourism business belong to the same country, but not to the same daily working environment.

This brief brings together the country's background, people, workforce, economy, important employers and everyday realities of doing business. It is written for HR professionals preparing for a client meeting, joining an organisation or helping colleagues settle into Oman. The aim is to make the context clearer while leaving room for people themselves to explain what matters to them.

**03** The country at a glance

**04** History, government and identity

**05** People and the workforce

**06** The economy in context

**07** Sectors and national direction

**08** Major companies

**09** Institutions and wider business

**10** Doing business in Oman

**11** The employment setting

**12** National talent, hiring and pay

**13** Living and relocating

**14** Culture and the working year

**15-16** Sources, data notes and publication information

### Read the dates as well as the numbers

This edition is dated 7 October 2026. Figures retain their own reference periods, and strategic targets are distinguished from outcomes. Numbered references lead to the source register. This is a country introduction, not legal, tax or immigration advice.

01 / COUNTRY FUNDAMENTALS

# The country at a glance

A maritime country with mountains, desert and several distinct economic centres.

**309,500**
**square kilometres**
national area [1]

**5.443m**
**residents**
September 2026 [1]

**US$2.6008**
**per Omani rial**
official fixed parity [10]

## Facing the Indian Ocean

Oman occupies the south-east of the Arabian Peninsula, with coasts on the Sea of Oman and Arabian Sea. It borders the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Musandam overlooks the Strait of Hormuz, while the main coast connects the country to long-established Indian Ocean trading routes. [1][2]

## Muscat is a starting point

Government, finance and professional services are concentrated in an extended coastal urban area. Mutrah's harbour, Ruwi's commercial district and newer business areas towards the airport have different characters. A Muscat address alone does not establish an employee's commuting time or a visitor's site-access arrangements. [2][36]




Simplified country locator. Musandam is separated from the mainland by the UAE. Small enclaves, coastlines and boundaries are generalised.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Capital / language** | Muscat; Arabic is official and English is widely used. [1] |
| **Time** | UTC+4 throughout the year; no daylight saving. [1] |
| **Climate** | Hot summers; mountain variation and the Dhofar khareef. [2] |

## Where industrial and regional work happens

Sohar combines a port, free zone and industrial base. Duqm is a major industrial and logistics development on the Arabian Sea. Salalah connects a container port, free zone and visitor economy in Dhofar. These are different recruitment, housing and transport settings, not simply extensions of the capital. [20][36]

02 / HISTORY AND SOCIETY

# A modern state with a long memory

Trade, seafaring and regional connections sit behind the modern energy economy.

## Before oil revenues

Oman's story reaches back to copper trading, frankincense routes, farming communities and maritime links with India and East Africa. Ports were places of exchange long before modern oil production. Forts, irrigation systems and trading settlements remain part of a living identity, not simply a collection of visitor attractions. [3][36]

## The modern development period

Sultan Qaboos bin Said's reign, from 1970 to 2020, is associated with a major expansion of schools, healthcare, roads and state institutions. Sultan Haitham bin Tarik succeeded him in January 2020. Oman Vision 2040 now provides the national reference for planning from 2021 to 2040. [3][4][6]

## Institutions today

Oman is a hereditary monarchy headed by Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The Basic Statute issued in 2021 sets out the state framework. The Council of Oman comprises the appointed State Council and elected Shura Council. National institutions work alongside 11 governorates with distinct local geographies and priorities. [1][2][4][5]

## Continuity and wider connections

The country's trading history helps explain its outward-looking relationships. Modernisation can sit beside pride in local heritage, religious life and community. For a newcomer, listening to how people describe their region and family connections is more revealing than assuming every Gulf workplace shares one culture. [3][36]

**1970**
Modern development

**1996**
First Basic Statute

**2020**
Sultan Haitham

**2021**
Vision 2040 period

Timeline: national history and state framework [3][4][5]; Vision 2040 planning period [6].

### Why the history still matters

Change is easier to understand when it recognises what people value as well as what they want to improve. National capability, regional opportunity and continuity of identity belong in the same conversation. International experience is useful, but it is not a substitute for understanding local experience.

03 / PEOPLE AND THE WORKFORCE

# Who lives and works in Oman?

Omani careers and international labour both shape the employment story.

**3.034m**
**Omani residents**
November 2025 [8]

**2.323m**
**non-Omani residents**
same register and date [8]

**43.4%**
**non-Omani share**
calculated, same base [8]

## A population, not an employee count

NCSI's November 2025 register records 5,357,728 residents: 3,034,368 Omanis and 2,323,360 expatriates. Those figures include children and people outside employment. The newer September 2026 total on page 3 is a separate observation, not the denominator for this earlier nationality split. [1][8]

## Geography changes the labour market

The same register shows Omanis represented 38.8% of Muscat's population, compared with 56.6% nationally. Industrial sites, coastal cities and remote operations draw on different talent pools. They may also involve organised transport, accommodation or rotational arrangements that a national average cannot describe. [8][20]

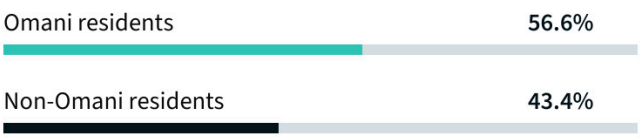
## National participation and skills

Vision 2040 connects employment with skills, productivity and opportunities across the governorates. Employers need suitable roles and realistic routes to competence as well as compliance with nationalisation requirements. A new entrant's success depends partly on the work available and the manager's ability to help them learn. [7]

## The human perspective

An Omani graduate, a technician on a remote site and a specialist arriving with children can all be important to one employer. Their practical needs will differ. Clear pay, dependable supervision, transport and time with family can matter as much as a policy. Nationality alone does not tell you what support a person needs.

REGISTERED RESIDENTS BY NATIONALITY / NOVEMBER 2025




Calculated from NCSI counts on the same date. Population shares, not employment or labour-force participation rates. [8]

04 / ECONOMY

# Wealth, diversification and exposure

Energy, logistics and a broader private sector need to be read together.

**+1.6%**
**real GDP growth**
2024 outcome [9]

**+3.3%**
**non-oil GDP growth**
2024 outcome [9]

**0.6%**
**average inflation**
2024 outcome [9]

## The scale of the economy

NCSI records nominal GDP of about OMR41.2bn in 2024. The IMF's January 2026 assessment reports 1.6% real growth and low inflation for that year. Nominal size and real growth are different measures; neither is a forecast of demand for a client's current project. [8][9]

## Energy remains a foundation

PDO, OQ and Oman LNG anchor producers, contractors, engineering firms and suppliers. Employment extends into maintenance, logistics and specialist support. A business need not sell oil itself to be affected by the energy investment cycle or the timing of a major operating project. [11][12][13]

## Diversification has a geography

Sohar, Duqm and Salalah connect manufacturing and trade to ports and investment zones. Tourism draws on the coast, mountains and Dhofar, while fisheries and agriculture remain part of the productive economy. This is a geographically spread story, not one concentrated solely in a capital-city business district. [2][20][36]

## Investment and public finances

Oman Investment Authority manages state investment interests and supports domestic economic development. Vision 2040 gives the private sector a larger role. Sovereign investment, government spending and an individual company's hiring plan are connected, but they are not the same measure of demand or the same pool of funding. [6][19]

### Read the reference period, not just the headline

The cards use 2024 outcomes from a January 2026 assessment. Later estimates and forecasts have different dates and assumptions. For staffing decisions, distinguish a functioning operation from an announced investment, and a funded contract from an ambition in a national strategy.

Oman's direction creates opportunities in established industries as well as new ones. For HR, the useful question is where demand is actually materialising: in an operating plant, a service business, a construction phase or a new commercial team. Each implies a different workforce need.

05 / SECTORS AND NATIONAL DIRECTION

# Where economic activity takes place

National ambition is delivered through ports, industries, communities and employers.

## Energy and industrial production

PDO's oil and gas operations, OQ's integrated energy businesses and LNG processing near Sur create demand for technical, operational and commercial capability. Sohar and Duqm add refining, manufacturing and industrial supply chains. Permanent operations and project-based construction require different workforce arrangements. [11][12][13][20]

## Ports, shipping and logistics

Oman's position on Indian Ocean routes supports port, maritime and logistics businesses. Asyad's activities span shipping and wider logistics services. Sohar, Salalah and Duqm have different cargo and industrial roles; access, shift cover, safety and the final journey to a site matter alongside the headquarters address. [16][20]

## Finance and business services

Bank Muscat and other banks support households, commerce and corporate investment. Professional-services firms also serve state-linked companies, industrial projects and private businesses. Banking, risk, finance, procurement and digital capabilities are relevant beyond the financial institutions themselves. The useful comparator is the role and operating context. [15][19][24]

## Tourism, hospitality and heritage

Muscat's waterfront, the Hajar mountains and Dhofar's khareef season support different visitor experiences. Hotels are only part of the employment story: transport, destination operations, food services and local businesses also matter. Seasonal demand should not automatically be translated into permanent headcount. [36]

## Hydrogen and future industry

Hydrom coordinates development of Oman's green-hydrogen sector. Renewable energy, ports and industrial users connect to that ambition. Announced projects indicate direction, but technical studies, financing and commissioning stages determine when particular skills are needed. A project pipeline is not a list of vacancies already available. [39]

## Education, health and digital services

Sultan Qaboos University, other education providers and public and private health services support specialist employment and national capability. Telecommunications and digital infrastructure serve every sector. Qualifications, professional registration and the ability to apply knowledge at work matter alongside recruitment volumes. [14][21][22]

### Oman Vision 2040: a national direction, not a company forecast

Vision 2040 connects people and society, economic development, governance and the environment. Its priorities include national capabilities, the labour market and a competitive private sector. Five-year planning translates that direction into programmes; it does not guarantee that every proposed role or project will proceed. [6][7]

Country context becomes useful when connected to the client's sector, governorate, operating stage and actual source of revenue.

06 / MAJOR COMPANIES

# Names that shape the business landscape

A selected guide to important companies, not a league table: revenue, assets and domestic employment are different measures.

| Organisation | Business | Why it is useful to know |
|---|---|---|
| **Petroleum Development Oman** | Oil / gas | A principal operator. Direct employees and its substantial contractor ecosystem need separate workforce analysis. [11] |
| **OQ** | Integrated energy | US$41.5bn consolidated revenue in 2025, rounded. Trading and international activities are part of the group scope. [12] |
| **Oman LNG** | LNG production | Operations at Qalhat, near Sur; specialist production, maintenance and export-related employment. [13] |
| **Bank Muscat** | Banking | OMR15.13bn consolidated assets at year-end 2025, rounded. A balance-sheet measure, not revenue or workforce size. [15] |
| **Omantel** | Telecoms / digital | OMR3.41bn group revenue in 2025, including Zain. Domestic operations revenue was OMR676.1m; the scopes differ. [14] |
| **Asyad Group** | Shipping / logistics | Ports, shipping and logistics services. Individual operating companies and locations have different employment settings. [16] |
| **Oman Air** | Aviation | The national airline connects Muscat internationally, combining safety-critical, service and commercial roles. [17] |
| **Sohar Aluminium** | Industry | Aluminium production within Sohar, with engineering, operational and supply-chain employment. [18] |

### A useful distinction for HR

A group's global revenue or workforce does not establish its Oman employment. Nor does size make every subsidiary a suitable pay comparator. Identify the legal employer, location, occupation and job level before using a national champion as a benchmark.

07 / INSTITUTIONS AND WIDER BUSINESS

# Beyond the company names

Public services, investment bodies, education and smaller businesses matter too.

## Government is more than a regulator

Ministries and governorates set policy and deliver services, while state-linked businesses operate commercially. A ministry, an OIA portfolio company and a privately owned supplier should not be treated as one employment model. Budgets, accountabilities and routes to approving a people decision can differ considerably. [5][19]

## Education and national capability

Sultan Qaboos University is a major public university and research institution. The wider system includes technical, vocational and private provision. For employers, relevant programmes, accreditation and partnerships matter more than assuming one qualification automatically demonstrates readiness for every role. Professional experience also deserves careful attention. [21][34]

## Healthcare as an institution and employer

The Ministry of Health and private providers are part of both the service system and employment market. Clinical work carries licensing and professional requirements. An employer's insurance promise should be explained separately from access to public services or the existence of a hospital near the workplace. [22][34]

## Beyond the national champions

The SME Development Authority supports entrepreneurship and smaller enterprises. These organisations may have different recruitment needs and management capacity from a large industrial group. Local suppliers and owner-managed firms belong in a country brief as much as the better-known national companies. Programme eligibility should be checked for the business concerned. [23]

### OIA

**state investment**
portfolio and development [19]

### OPAZ

**economic zones**
industrial operating routes [20]

### SME Authority

**enterprise support**
smaller business development [23]

### Reading an organisation in context

Ownership is the beginning of the conversation, not the answer. Ask who controls the budget, who employs the staff and who can approve a change. A shared national identity or shareholder does not establish identical reward policies, decision rights or management practice.

08 / BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

# How the operating context works

Operating routes, business activities and employment permissions all need attention.

## Choose the operating route carefully

Oman permits full foreign ownership in many activities, subject to licensing and restricted activities. Invest Oman provides an official starting point. Company registration is not permission to employ every occupation or deliver every professional service. Check the actual activity, employing entity and approvals before making staffing commitments. [24][28]

## Zones have their own proposition

OPAZ oversees economic and free zones including Duqm, Sohar and Salalah. Their propositions include land, infrastructure and specified incentives. A headline tax holiday or ownership benefit should not be assumed to apply to every mainland business or every activity undertaken by a zone company. Eligibility and conditions matter. [20]

## Tax: current and future rules differ

The standard corporate income-tax rate is generally 15%, subject to the applicable provisions; VAT is generally 5%. A separate personal income-tax law has been enacted for commencement in 2028. Describing Oman as permanently 'tax-free' would therefore be misleading for businesses and long-term international assignments. [25][26][27]

## Currency and international packages

The Omani rial is fixed at US$2.6008 per rial. This provides a stable dollar reference, not a constant value against every employee's home currency. An unchanged OMR salary can produce a different value of overseas savings or remittances as other currencies move. [10]

### Keep the 2028 tax change separate from current payroll

The enacted personal income-tax framework concerns specified income where annual total income exceeds OMR42,000, with a 5% rate on taxable income. It is scheduled to begin in 2028, not October 2026. Scope, deductions and implementing guidance require case-specific review. [27]

Establish the legal employer, permitted activity, work location and Omanisation requirements before recommending an arrangement. A business licence, residence document and permission to perform a particular job answer different questions. This matters for external consultants as well as permanent employees. [24][28][33]

09 / EMPLOYMENT SETTING

# The rules behind working life

A short orientation to the general private-sector framework, with important boundaries.

Royal Decree 53/2023 introduced the Labour Law. Government employment and categories governed by separate provisions should not be assumed to follow identical rules. Social Protection Fund arrangements also affect leave and benefits. Confirm coverage before using the general baseline below. [28][29][30]

| Topic | General baseline for covered employees |
|---|---|
| **Ordinary hours** | Generally 8 daily / 40 weekly; Muslim employees in Ramadan: 6 daily / 30 weekly. [28] |
| **Probation** | Up to 3 months for monthly-paid staff; up to 2 months for others, as agreed. [28] |
| **Annual leave** | At least 30 days on gross wage; ordinarily taken after six months of service. [28] |
| **Sick leave** | Up to 182 days yearly, with pay tiers of 100%, 75%, 50% and 35%; conditions apply. [28] |
| **Maternity / paternity** | 98 days of maternity leave; seven days of paternity leave under the statutory provisions. [28][29] |
| **Notice after probation** | Indefinite contracts: generally 30 days for monthly-paid staff; 15 days for others, unless longer agreed. [28] |
| **End-of-service** | Eligible workers outside social-protection coverage: at least one basic monthly wage per year; check scheme transition. [28][30] |

General orientation only. Contract type, statutory coverage and benefit-scheme implementation matter. Company terms may be more generous.

## Social protection is not one uniform scheme

The SPF describes separate insurance branches and a provident arrangement for non-Omani workers. Coverage and commencement differ by programme and category. Confirm current implementation and accrued-service treatment, rather than assuming every expatriate employee has moved from employer-paid gratuity to a funded savings scheme. [29][30]

# Joining the workforce

National participation and international recruitment are both part of the direction.

## Omanisation reaches into occupations

Omanisation concerns the employment and development of Omani nationals. Requirements vary by activity, occupation and employer circumstances; some jobs are reserved. Decision 501/2024 introduced additional restrictions with phased dates. Meeting an establishment-level ratio does not replace checking whether a particular occupation may be filled by a non-Omani. [28][31]

## Capability is the longer-term goal

Vision 2040 seeks a productive labour market and opportunities based on competence. Career pathways and skill transfer matter alongside recruitment. A graduate needs meaningful work and support; an experienced national employee needs a credible route to greater responsibility, not simply another training course. Managers help turn that ambition into everyday experience. [7]

## Recruitment draws on several markets

Employers recruit Omanis, eligible residents and people overseas. Work visas depend on labour authorisation, with professional requirements for some occupations. The job description, permit occupation and actual work should agree. Permission to visit Oman is not the same as permission to undertake paid consulting or employment. [28][33]

## Packages need a clear explanation

Describe basic pay, allowances, variable pay and family benefits separately. A Muscat office appointment and a remote operational role may need different support. Housing, transport, flights or schooling are not universal entitlements because another employer provides them. Explain both what is included in the offer and what is not.

### Reliable wage payment is part of the employment proposition

The Wage Protection System supports monitoring of salary payment through the banking system. Accurate contract data and timely transfers matter alongside an attractive offer. Minimum-wage rules for specified national categories should not be confused with a market salary for every occupation. [32]

There is no single useful 'Oman salary' without a role, level, governorate, sector and package definition. Compare base pay, guaranteed allowances, variable pay and household costs on the same basis, rather than turning a handful of advertisements into a national benchmark.

11 / LIVING AND RELOCATING

# The everyday side of a move

Housing, schooling, healthcare and the journey to work turn an offer into a real life.

## A move involves a household

A new role can be welcome and the first month still feel unsettling. Housing, a partner's plans, school places and unfamiliar paperwork arrive together. Helpful employers explain these matters before travel and provide a named contact. Clear expectations are kinder than leaving a family to discover exclusions after accepting the offer.

## Housing and the actual work location

Muscat stretches along the coast, and a home near one business district may not suit another. Sohar, Duqm and Salalah are separate relocation decisions. Test the commute, school route and site access before choosing housing. Operational assignments may require organised transport or a different accommodation arrangement. [2][20][34]

## Schools and childcare

Public and private schools include international options. Check curriculum continuity, year-group availability, fees and additional learning support. A school allowance does not guarantee a place or cover nursery and transport costs. Verify admissions and documentation with the actual school before treating education arrangements as settled. [34]

## Healthcare and family cover

Check the policy, not just the word 'medical'. Ask about eligible dependants, provider networks, co-payments and specialist treatment. Public-service access and private insurance are different arrangements. A visiting consultant should arrange suitable travel and medical protection rather than assume a client's employee policy applies to an external adviser. [22][34]

## Getting around

Mwasalat operates city and intercity bus services; other journeys may require a car, taxi or employer transport. The useful choice depends on the worksite and timetable, not simply whether a city has a bus route. Allow for summer conditions and verify driving requirements for the intended residence or visit status. [34][35]

## A realistic cost-of-living view

Budget separately for rent, deposits, schooling, childcare, utilities, transport, insurance and travel. Costs vary by location and family choices. Relevant, dated quotations are more dependable than a national average or an assurance that a familiar Gulf salary will automatically go further. Include the one-off costs of arrival as well as monthly spending.

### For a visiting consultant

Agree the work location, access arrangements and contact person before travelling. Check entry and work-permission requirements for the activities you will undertake, alongside current travel advice and insurance. Previous visits do not establish the correct route for a new assignment. [33][34]

# Working with consideration

Country knowledge should help people feel understood, not categorised.

## Make room for relationships

Omani hospitality and conversation can be part of professional as well as social life. Allow time for introductions, show interest in the organisation and explain the purpose of the visit. Courtesy and dependable follow-through are more useful than trying to perform an exaggerated version of local etiquette. [36]

## Communicate without assumptions

Arabic is official and English is widely used. That does not mean every employee can interpret a technical policy confidently in English. Ask which language serves the audience, particularly for safety information, contracts and sensitive discussions. A fluent meeting room can conceal different needs elsewhere in the workforce. [1]

## Respect the setting

Islam is central to national life, but Oman's communities and individuals are not interchangeable. Modest professional dress, consideration around prayer and respectful conduct are sensible starting points. A colleague's nationality, region or religion is not a complete explanation of how they will work or respond to change. [1][36]

## Working across the year

Sunday to Thursday is a common office pattern, while operating rosters differ. Ramadan and Eid affect work and family routines. A 2025 decree set National Day dates at 20 and 21 November; older references may still say 18 November. Check officially announced holiday arrangements for the particular year. [28][37]

## Climate is an operating condition

The midday outdoor-work restriction runs from 12:30 to 15:30 in June, July and August, subject to the applicable rules. It does not make all other hours safe. Shade, hydration, rest and supervision still matter. Dhofar's khareef produces a different local climate and visitor pattern. [2][38]

## See beyond the meeting room

Mutrah, Nizwa, the Hajar mountains, Sur and Dhofar reveal different sides of Oman. Curiosity about the place helps a visitor understand the communities where colleagues live. It is an opportunity to listen and learn, rather than another checklist to fit between an airport and a meeting room. [36]

### A brief, not a stereotype

Oman's regions, employers and residents are not interchangeable. Use country context to ask thoughtful questions and interpret what you see. Then let the organisation and the people themselves tell you what matters in their particular situation.

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND READING

# Sources and further reading

Select a reference to open the original source. The numbers match the links in the brief.

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**02 Oman Foreign Ministry**
Geography and regional context
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**03 Oman Foreign Ministry**
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**16 Asyad Group**
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**18 Sohar Aluminium**
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**19 Oman Investment Authority**
State investment and domestic portfolio
oia.gov.om

**20 OPAZ**
Economic zones and industrial context
opaz.gov.om

## What the company figures mean

Company figures retain their year and group scope. Revenue, profit and assets are different measures. These profiles are not a ranking of domestic workforce size or employer quality.

REFERENCE / EVIDENCE AND READING

# Source notes and publication details

Official information is the starting point; definitions and reporting periods still need care.

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squ.edu.om

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Health services and professional information
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**23 SME Development Authority**
Enterprise development and support
sme.gov.om

**24 Invest Oman**
Investment routes, ownership and incentives
investoman.om

**25 Oman Tax Authority**
Income-tax rates and obligations
tms.taxoman.gov.om

**26 Oman Tax Authority**
VAT standard rate and exemptions
tms.taxoman.gov.om

**27 Oman Tax Authority**
Personal income-tax law; starts in 2028
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**29 Social Protection Fund**
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spf.gov.om

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**Data note.** Page 3 uses the Foreign Ministry's September 2026 population observation. Page 5 uses NCSI November 2025 nationality counts and matching percentages. Economic cards use 2024 outcomes in the IMF January 2026 assessment. Company figures preserve the stated year and group scope.

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