

EMIRATISATION MARKET REPORT:



A Changing Landscape in the Private Sector

By Mark Williams in collaboration with Martin Mayerchak



20
24

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Christopher Cornwall
Co-founder & Managing Partner

I am delighted to share the 2024 Mark Williams Emiratisation Market Report featuring insights from our latest Emirati workforce survey.

Our findings highlight the monumental strides the UAE has taken to foster a dynamic workforce through its visionary Emiratisation initiatives.

Since the launch of the NAFIS program in September 2021, the UAE has witnessed an unprecedented surge in UAE Nationals working in the private sector. This phenomenal growth reflects an increase of over 200%, with a rise of circa 63,000 UAE Nationals contributing their skills and expertise to the private sector since the inception of Emiratisation initiative.

In the pursuit of Emiratisation objectives, companies initially emphasised the hiring of UAE National graduates. However, some have encountered challenges in retention and engagement along the way. Recognising the need for ongoing improvement, companies are now actively refining their Emiratisation strategies. This involves a shift towards recruiting senior Emirati professionals, establishing a structured path for mentorship programs, training, development, and cultural engagement. This strategic evolution aims to foster a more sustainable and skilled workforce, aligning with long-term Emiratisation goals and reflecting collaborative efforts observed across government initiatives and industry programs.

As UAE Nationals increasingly lean towards the private sector for personalised growth, Mark Williams is helping to shape this transformative journey. Let us continue to champion Emiratisation together.





Executive Summary

Overview



The shifting dynamics of employment preferences among UAE Nationals is a topic of keen interest to employers, policymakers, and academics. The primary intent of our survey was to delve deeper into these evolving perceptions, with a specific focus on understanding the inclination of UAE Nationals towards the private sector. Traditional perceptions have often skewed in favor of public sector employment for UAE Nationals, a viewpoint we aimed to explore through data-driven inquiry.

Methodology: The survey reached out to a diverse segment of UAE Nationals to ensure a well-rounded view. Our primary data collection channels included:

Direct Network Outreach

RU'YA Career Fair 2023

To ensure a varied representation of UAE Nationals, we engaged with Emiratis across genders, ages, and professional backgrounds spanning mid-to-c-suite-level roles, to gather qualitative data on perceptions and concerns, and to foster a comprehensive understanding.

Leveraging our strategic partnership with Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) at this prominent career event, we conducted face-to-face interviews and collected questionnaire-based feedback. This provided insights from fresh perspectives, particularly from recent graduates and young jobseekers.

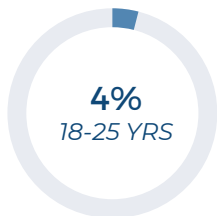
Survey Methodology

Sample Size:

Our comprehensive survey was conducted with a sample size ensuring a diverse representation. We reached out to nearly **150 UAE National Graduates** at the Ru'ya Career Fair and **570 UAE National Professionals** through our direct network, a number statistically significant enough to draw reliable conclusions and understand underlying patterns. Of the 570 in the latter group, 38% are currently employed in the private sector, 56% in the public sector, and 5% are unemployed.

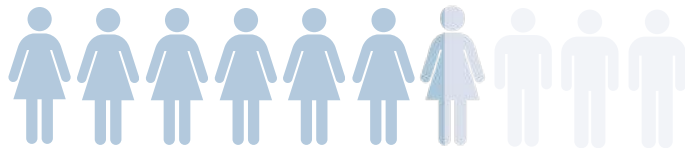
Demographics (Direct Network) :

Participants ranged from 18 to 50 years old, divided as follows:



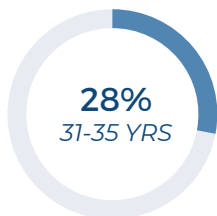
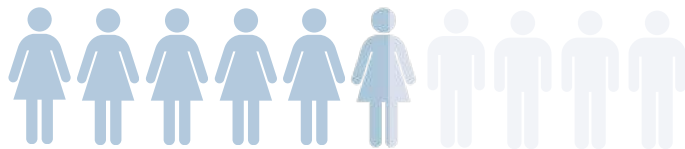
Female: 72%

Male: 28%



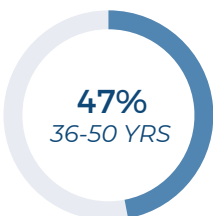
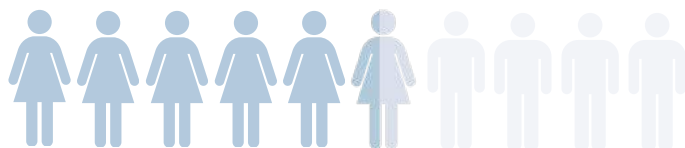
Female: 69%

Male: 31%



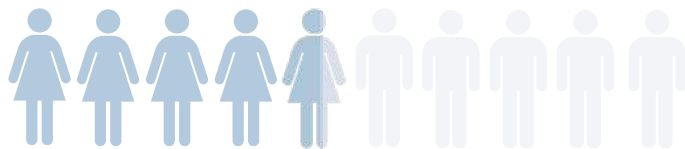
Female: 64%

Male: 36%



Female: 57%

Male: 43%



Female: 36%

Male: 64%





Purpose of the Survey

Despite the recent expansion of UAE Nationals working in the private sector, our survey aimed to explore several key questions further: What is motivating Emiratis to embrace private sector opportunities? Does the allure of the public sector still hold strong, or are perceptions changing? How can private sector companies further embrace Emiratisation?

Therefore, the purpose of our survey was to explore three main subjects:

Understanding Preferences:

To better ascertain current employment preferences and motivating factors of UAE Nationals.

Exploring Inclinations towards the Private Sector:

To specifically dissect the sentiment around private sector employment. Are UAE Nationals open to it? If so, what are the attracting factors? If not, what are the deterrents?

Perception versus Reality:

To break down misconceptions of the private sector to better understand the market dynamics.

Key Findings

Over the past decade, UAE National male graduates' interest in the private sector has soared from **4% to 90%**, and female graduates' interest has risen from **10% to 95%**

70% of UAE Nationals employed in the public sector would currently consider a move to the private sector

45% of private sector companies face challenges in hiring UAE Nationals due to skills gaps*

80% of UAE Nationals perceive the public sector to be more aligned with Emirati cultural values

** Data from Mark Williams' Client Survey*



As private sector companies embrace Emiratisation,

67% of UAE Nationals overall* are **interested** to work in the private sector

*Overall figure includes survey findings from both direct network and career fair respondent groups



*“Expanding the pool of establishments subject to Emiratisation targets is based on a study of the economic sectors in the UAE and the business activities and nature of work of companies with 20 to 49 employees, which indicated the rapid growth this segment of establishments is experiencing and its ability to provide additional jobs and a suitable work environment.” - **H.E. Dr. Abdulrahman Al Awar, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation***



Introduction

Background

The United Arab Emirates, since its inception in 1971, has witnessed a meteoric rise in terms of infrastructure, global engagement, and economic development. In parallel, its labor market dynamics have evolved, often reflecting the nation's broader developmental goals and strategic shifts.

Traditionally, the public sector has been viewed as the epicenter of employment for UAE Nationals. Several factors have contributed to this perception:

- **Security and Stability:** The public sector historically offered long-term employment stability, ensuring a consistent livelihood. For many, a government job became synonymous with a lifelong career, free from the volatility often associated with private market dynamics.
- **Cultural Significance:** Public sector roles, especially in the realms of administration, defense, and diplomacy, were often seen as prestigious, carrying significant cultural and societal weight.
- **Financial Benefits:** Competitive salaries, comprehensive benefits packages, and other perks contributed to the financial allure of the public sector.
- **Work-life Balance:** Standardised working hours and more paid time off made public sector roles appealing to those prioritising personal and family time.



As the UAE ventured into diversifying its economy beyond oil, especially with initiatives like Vision 2021, the private sector's prominence has grown substantially...

As of January 4th 2024,

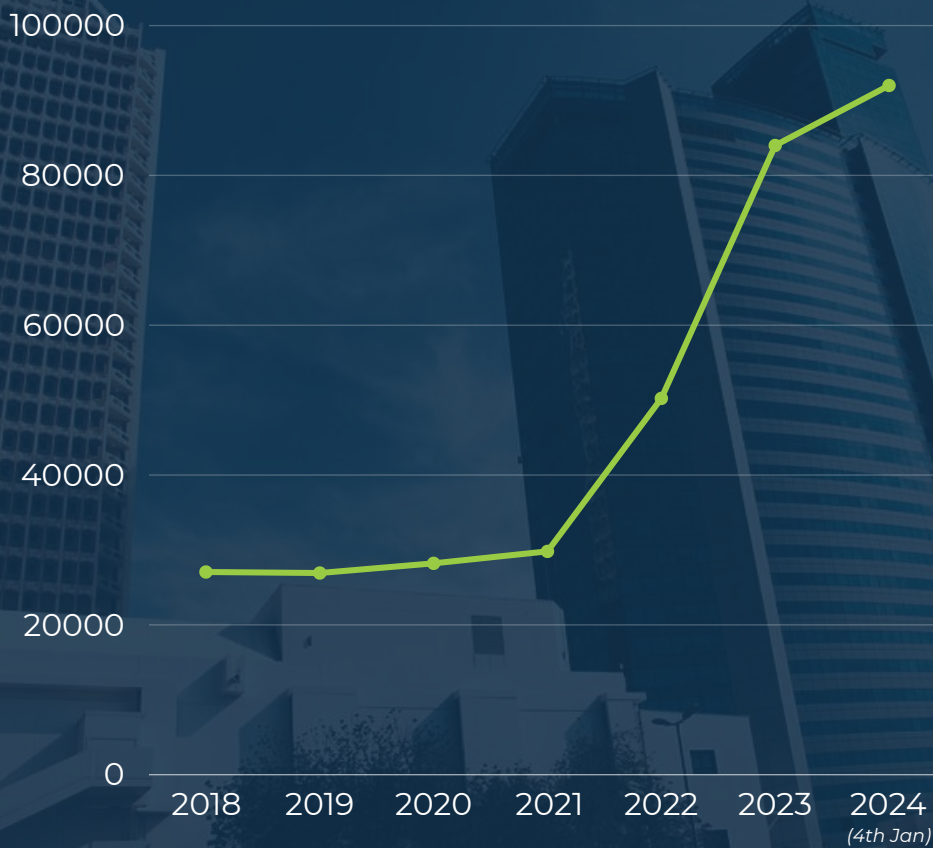
92,000 UAE Nationals work in the private sector

Representing a significant rise from 29,810 in 2021

“

The notable growth in the number of Emirati Citizens employed in the private sector reflects the effectiveness of the Emiratisation policies that have been implemented on a semi-annual basis...” - **H.E. Dr.**

Abdulrahman Al Awar, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation



Impact of NAFIS



Since NAFIS' inception in September 2021, the private sector has onboarded nearly **63,000** UAE Nationals.

With a vision to ultimately benefit 170,000 UAE Nationals, several key areas of impact to highlight thus far include:

- **Strategic Workforce Growth:** Serves as a catalyst for substantial growth in Emirati employment rates, particularly within the private sector. The initiative strategically aligns companies with national workforce development goals and enables private sector entities to compete with public sector offerings.
- **Diversified Career Landscape:** Broadens the spectrum of employment opportunities for UAE Nationals, spanning key sectors such as finance, healthcare, technology, and tourism. This diversification not only enhances career options but also aligns with broader economic sustainability objectives.
- **Empowered Professional Development:** Prioritises comprehensive training and development. This ensures that UAE Nationals not only secure positions but also possess the skills needed for excellence in their roles. This focus on professional growth enhances marketability and directly addresses an important private sector need.
- **Cultural Integration and Collaborative Synergy:** Emphasises integration of cultural identity in workplaces, fostering localised environments that embody Emirati values. Simultaneously, the initiative promotes collaboration between government, private entities, and educational institutions, creating synergies that streamline workforce development.



Preference for the Private Sector

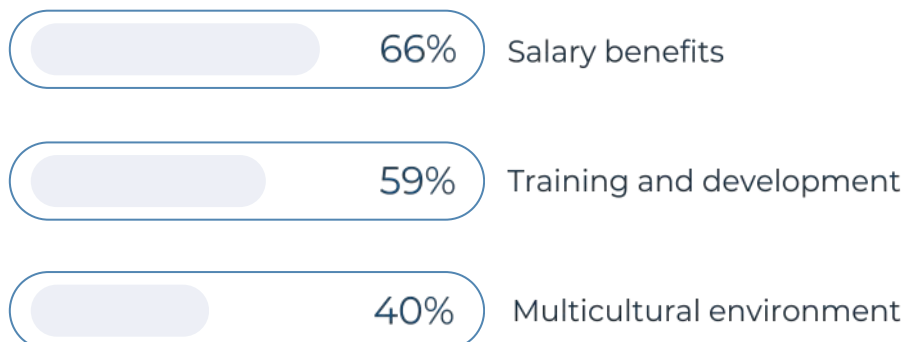
Among the 67% of UAE Nationals interested to work in the private sector,

75% are drawn to the private sector due to career growth opportunities

With increasingly proactive efforts of leading private sector companies to outline transparent career paths, UAE Nationals now stand poised to excel in a dynamic professional landscape. This paradigm shift reflects a notable evolution in perceptions of the private sector as a pivotal avenue for robust career development.

Moreover, this change in the appeal of private sector opportunities underscores an adjustment over time, driven by sectoral changes. This nuanced shift has significantly heightened the appeal of the private sector for career advancement among UAE Nationals. Notably, **83% of UAE Nationals** currently employed in the public sector express a desire to transition to the private sector, citing career growth opportunities as their primary motivation.

Additional factors driving UAE Nationals' interest in joining the private sector include:



**Respondents were asked to select up to three options in the Mark Williams survey.*



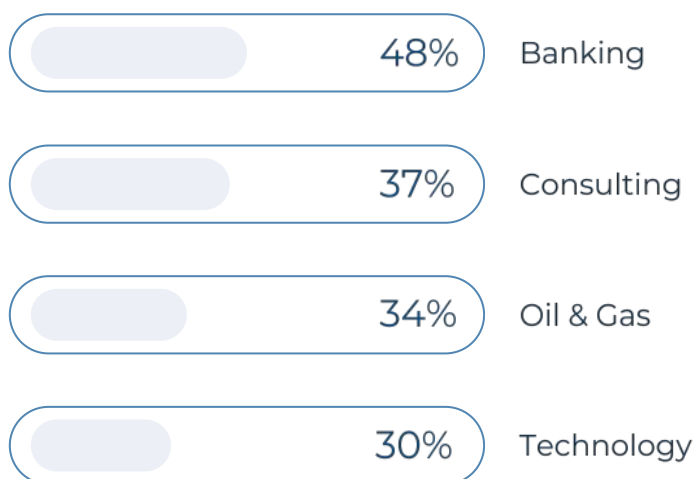
“Working in the UAE Private Sector feels like an international experience. As a UAE National, I constantly challenge myself, learning new languages and developing skills to meet sector expectations. It's a journey of growth that I highly recommend.”

- Hind Al Hosani, Head of External National Engagement,
New York University Abu Dhabi

48% of UAE Nationals are inclined to join the banking sector



*Respondents were asked to select up to three options in the Mark Williams survey.



"I think the private sector is a transformative arena for young graduates and experienced UAE Nationals, underscoring the importance of broadening skill sets and thriving in a diverse work environment..."

- Ahmed Al Refaei, CEO

Since 1999, when the banking sector was mandated to achieve a 4% year-over-year growth in hiring UAE Nationals, it has consistently developed strategies to onboard and retain UAE Nationals. For example, the sector, comprising local and international banks, prioritises dedicated graduate programs for UAE Nationals. This initiative emphasises talent rotation across functions, ensuring continuous development and retention. In addition, foreign banks offer international graduate programs, exposing Emirati talent to diverse environments for accelerated learning, and leadership programs to prepare mid-senior talent for executive roles.

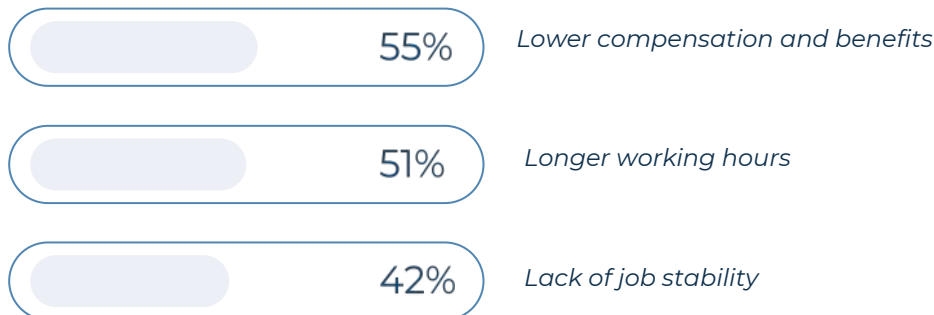
This trend extends beyond banking, with consulting firms and other financial institutions implementing similar initiatives to attract, develop, and nurture local talent. Speaking to UAE Nationals, we have found these programs play a pivotal role in cultivating interest in banking, finance, and consulting roles.



Concerns About Working in the Private Sector

33% of UAE Nationals are currently **not open** to work in the private sector

Out of which, 79% are currently working in the public sector. Deterring factors include:



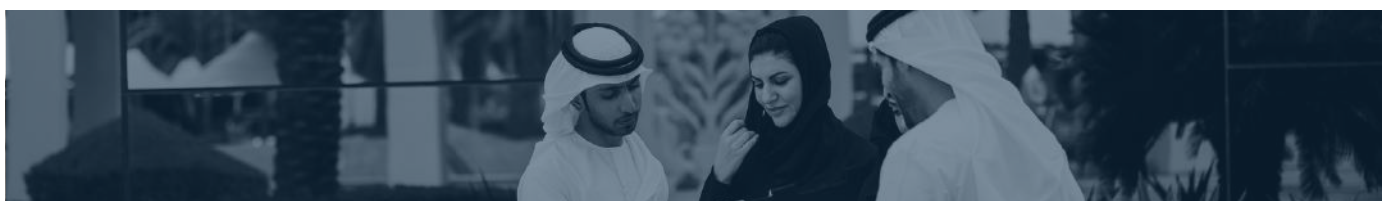
**Respondents were asked to select up to three options in the Mark Williams survey.*

55% of those not open to work in the private sector perceive compensation and benefits as the primary hurdle. However, this sentiment is not shared by 67% of respondents interested to work in the private sector, as 66% of this group are enticed to the private sector precisely due to its salary benefits. This indicates that the perception of salary discrepancies can vary greatly among different segments of the workforce but that it remains an important topic to address.

Many private sector companies have leveraged NAFIS to begin or to strengthen Emiratisation initiatives by ensuring they can offer competitive compensation rates. However, with NAFIS set to conclude in 2026, it will be important to continue efforts in this area. For example, H.E. Dr. Abdulrahman Al Awar, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation, reassures that Emiratisation efforts in the private sector will continue, and he emphasises the commitment of the nation's leadership to Emiratisation programs through continued incentives for private sector employers hiring UAE Nationals.

Additionally, the UAE implemented labor rules in 2021 to align public and private work systems, ensuring comparable paid time off, end-of-service benefits, and similar working hour structures. While the public sector introduced a new 4.5-day workweek, private companies responded by offering flexibility, including remote and work-from-home options.

In conclusion, both public and private sector initiatives have had an important impact on supporting the Emiratisation program with a range of initiatives. However, with the conclusion of NAFIS, continued efforts to develop innovative solutions and incentives will be important to maintain continued progress.



The image features a blue-tinted background with a large, circular architectural element at the top. In the center, two men are shown in profile, facing each other as if in conversation. The man on the left is wearing a traditional white Emirati thobe and ghutra with a black agal. The man on the right is wearing a dark Western-style suit, white shirt, and dark tie. The overall scene suggests a meeting or discussion between individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Recommendations



59% of experienced UAE Nationals want to work in the private sector because of Training and Development Initiatives

However, **45%** of private sector companies identify skills gaps to be the primary challenge to hiring experienced UAE Nationals

Perception or reality?

Recalibrating the approach to Emiratisation could help companies target specific business needs where skilled UAE National talent pools are more prevalent. Highly specialised roles pose challenges, necessitating a strategic focus on job families that offer optimal opportunities for Emiratisation. Understanding the market and honing recruitment by directing attention to the right areas is crucial to making UAE National hiring even more effective.

In light of current labor market dynamics, where the Emirati working population constitutes less than 10% of the overall workforce, the pool of candidates is relatively limited. Consequently, salaries are poised to rise, which should alleviate the reservations of some Emiratis about seeking private sector opportunities. However, the alignment of private sector companies' objectives with the Emiratisation mandate also necessitates adopting a more strategic and targeted hiring approach. This not only addresses the perception-reality gap but also actively contributes to fostering the development and growth of a proficient Emirati workforce.

79% of UAE Nationals perceive the public sector to be better aligned with Emirati cultural and social values

Along with providing an environment where UAE Nationals can grow and shape their careers, it is important to nurture that environment by understanding and implementing the right cultural values to truly be able to embrace Emiratisation. Research highlights several core values crucial for this integration:




Hierarchical Structures and Respect




Strong Relationships



Community and Solidarity



Work-Life Balance and Family Values



Respect for Tradition



National Pride as a Driving Force



“The UAE is already a melting pot of cultures. In every entity, there are people from all over the world working. In my company, we have people from 18 different nationalities, so why is it different if a local joins? At the end of the day, we are still people...”

- Abdulla Galadari, Senior Partner within Galadari Advocates



83% of UAE Nationals working in the public sector wants to move to the private sector due to career growth initiatives

“

“Earlier, there was a perception among Emiratis that the private sector may not offer them the opportunities they are seeking. Things have changed now... The private sector must look beyond competing with the public sector on pay and benefits in order to attract and retain Emirati talent. It is important to create a positive work environment. It's also important to recognise employee contribution...”

- Abir Araki, Emiratisation Manager at Cigna Insurance

Motivated by a drive for dynamic career growth, challenging roles, and the promise of enhanced professional development, these individuals seek the vibrancy and agility that private sector environments are known for. The allure lies not just in job transitions but in the prospect of being part of innovative, high-paced workplaces that offer diverse opportunities for skill development and advancement. To effectively harness and retain this talent, current market leaders in the private sector are implementing the following:

- **Tailored Career Paths:** Individuals are drawn to private sector companies that offer personalised career trajectories, outlining clear growth paths aligned with their professional goals and aspirations.
- **Mentorship Programs:** The appeal extends to organisations with robust mentorship initiatives, facilitating skill development and providing guidance to navigate the intricacies of the private sector.
- **Continuous Learning Opportunities:** Private companies fostering a culture of continuous learning attract these individuals, offering various training programs, workshops, and online platforms to enhance skills and knowledge.
- **Succession Planning:** Organisations with well-defined succession plans gain favor, assuring UAE Nationals of opportunities for advancement and growth within the company.
- **Transparent Performance Feedback:** The desire for transparent feedback on performance leads individuals to companies that prioritise open communication, enabling employees to understand their strengths and areas for improvement.



Future Outlook for Emiratisation

Enhancing Workforce Diversity and Economic Growth

In 2024, the UAE Government introduced pivotal updates to the Emiratisation policy, specifically targeting the private sector to augment the employment of UAE Nationals. This strategic overhaul aims to not only diversify the economy but also to reduce dependence on foreign labor, propelling a more inclusive private sector job market.

Private Sector Expansion

Private sector companies with 20 to 49 employees are now mandated to employ at least one Emirati, increasing to two in 2025. This extends Emiratisation beyond larger companies, signaling a significant policy expansion.

Targeted Sectors

Revised criteria now cover 14 key sectors, including Information and Communication, Financial and Insurance, Real Estate, and Healthcare. Emiratisation's broader reach ensures employment opportunities across diverse fields, contributing to economic growth.

Penalties for Non-Compliance

Non-compliance incurs financial penalties: AED 96,000 in 2024, escalating to AED 108,000 in 2025. Repeat violations may result in fines reaching up to AED 500,000, highlighting the government's commitment to regulation.

Monitoring and Compliance

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE) actively monitors compliance, penalising breaches through fines and the downgrading of licenses within the private sector classification system. This supports effective policy implementation.

Salary Guide

Quoted numbers are monthly and exclude bonuses and other incentives

Financial Services

	Abu Dhabi		Dubai	
Position	Min (AED)	Max (AED)	Min (AED)	Max (AED)
Investment Banking				
Managing Director	120,000	160,000	110,000	150,000
Director	95,000	120,000	82,000	115,000
VP	80,000	92,000	65,000	80,000
Senior Associate	60,000	78,000	52,000	65,000
Associate	40,000	58,000	38,000	50,000
Analyst	28,000	38,000	25,000	35,000
Private Equity & Asset Management				
Chief Investment Officer	120,000	200,000	120,000	190,000
Director	80,000	112,000	85,000	115,000
Portfolio Manager	60,000	80,000	65,000	85,000
Associate	42,000	58,000	38,000	60,000
Analyst	20,000	45,000	25,000	39,000
Risk				
Chief Risk Officer	110,000	140,000	90,000	130,000
Head of Risk Management	85,000	100,000	70,000	80,000
Credit Risk Manager	40,000	50,000	35,000	45,000
Market Risk Manager	37,000	45,000	30,000	40,000
Operational Risk Manager	37,000	45,000	30,000	40,000
Risk Analyst	27,000	35,000	25,000	28,000

	Abu Dhabi		Dubai	
Position	Min (AED)	Max (AED)	Min (AED)	Max (AED)
Compliance				
Chief Compliance Officer	110,000	140,000	90,000	130,000
Head of Compliance	85,000	100,000	70,000	80,000
Regulatory Compliance Manager	55,000	65,000	45,000	55,000
Compliance Manager	40,000	55,000	35,000	50,000
AML Manager	35,000	40,000	30,000	35,000
Finance				
Chief Financial Officer	110,000	150,000	90,000	130,000
Finance Director	85,000	100,000	75,000	90,000
Finance Controller	70,000	85,000	65,000	80,000
Finance Analyst	30,000	40,000	25,000	35,000
Wholesale Banking				
Head of Wholesale Banking	120,000	150,000	80,000	100,000
Regional or Divisional Head of Corporate	100,000	120,000	75,000	95,000
Unit Head	70,000	80,000	60,000	70,000
Senior Relationship Manager	55,000	65,000	45,000	55,000
Relationship Manager	40,000	50,000	30,000	40,000
Assistant Relationship Manager	32,000	37,000	26,000	30,000

Information Technology

	Abu Dhabi		Dubai	
Position	Min (AED)	Max (AED)	Min (AED)	Max (AED)
CTO/CIO	110,000	140,000	100,000	130,000
Chief Data Officer	110,000	140,000	100,000	130,000
VP of IT	90,000	120,000	80,000	110,000
Head of IT	70,000	90,000	60,000	80,000
Director of IT	100,000	130,000	80,000	100,000
Program Manager	50,000	70,000	40,000	60,000
Applications				
Director of Data	90,000	120,000	70,000	90,000
Head of Data	50,000	70,000	40,000	70,000
Development Manager	40,000	70,000	40,000	60,000
Applications Developer	30,000	50,000	25,000	35,000
Technology Consultant	30,000	50,000	30,000	50,000
Business Analyst & Project Management				
Business System Manager	40,000	70,000	30,000	50,000
Business Intelligence Manager	40,000	70,000	40,000	60,000
Business Intelligence Specialist	30,000	50,000	25,000	35,000
Project Management Office, Head	60,000	90,000	50,000	70,000
Project Manager	40,000	60,000	30,000	50,000

	Abu Dhabi		Dubai	
Position	Min (AED)	Max (AED)	Min (AED)	Max (AED)
System Administration				
System Analyst	40,000	50,000	25,000	35,000
System Administrator	30,000	40,000	20,000	30,000
Database Administrator	30,000	40,000	20,000	30,000
Technical Support Specialist	30,000	50,000	25,000	35,000
Architecture				
Head of Architecture	80,000	110,000	80,000	110,000
Enterprise Architect	70,000	80,000	60,000	80,000
Solutions Architect	40,000	60,000	30,000	50,000

Marketing/Communications

	Abu Dhabi		Dubai	
Position	Min (AED)	Max (AED)	Min (AED)	Max (AED)
Marketing/Communications				
Chief Marketing Officer	120,000	140,000	100,000	120,000
Marcomms Director	100,000	120,000	80,000	90,000
Senior Marcomms Manager	65,000	80,000	50,000	60,000
Marcomms Manager	45,000	60,000	35,000	45,000
Marcomms Assistant Manager	32,000	37,000	27,000	30,000
Marcomms Associate	25,000	30,000	23,000	25,000
Marcomms Graduate	18,000	22,000	15,000	20,000

Strategy

	Abu Dhabi		Dubai	
Position	Min (AED)	Max (AED)	Min (AED)	Max (AED)
Strategy (In-House)				
Chief Strategy Officer	80,000	130,000	80,000	110,000
Head of Strategy	60,000	80,000	50,000	70,000
Senior Manager	45,000	55,000	35,000	45,000
Manager	31,000	40,000	28,000	35,000
Associate	25,000	32,000	20,000	25,000
Analyst	15,000	25,000	15,000	23,500

	UAE	
Strategy (Consulting Firm)		
Senior Partner	180,000	220,000+
Partner	90,000	140,000
Principal	70,000	90,000
Engagement Manager/Project Lead	50,000	70,000
Manager	40,000	65,000
Associate	28,000	40,000
Analyst	22,000	28,000

Human Resources

Position	Abu Dhabi		Dubai	
	Min (AED)	Max (AED)	Min (AED)	Max (AED)
CHRO	120,000	140,000	90,000	110,000
HR Director	90,000	100,000	75,000	90,000
Senior HR Manager	70,000	75,000	55,000	70,000
HR Manager	60,000	70,000	50,000	55,000
L&D Manager	45,000	55,000	35,000	40,000
Talent Acquisition Manager	45,000	55,000	35,000	40,000
HR Assistant Manager	30,000	35,000	25,000	28,000
HR Executive/Associate	22,000	25,000	18,000	22,000
HR Graduate	18,000	22,000	15,000	20,000

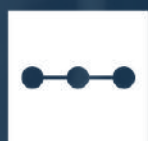


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