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## Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE

**Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population**

GLMM - EN - No. 1/2018

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**Support:** The Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population Programme (GLMM) receives support from the International Migration Initiative (IMI) of the Open Society Foundations (OSF), the National Priority Research Program (NPRP) of the Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP - Kuwait) and relies on the institutional resources of GLMM partners.

# Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE\*

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**Abstract:** The objective of the paper is to draw a sketch of the population and migration dynamics of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), using the data available from federal and emirate-level statistical bureaus. In 2016, the total population of the UAE was estimated to be 9,121,167, thirty-two times the population counted in 1971, the year the country was established. The Emirate of Fujairah had the smallest share of foreign nationals in its total population (61 per cent) while Dubai had the largest (91 per cent). Most expatriates were from Asia and especially from India: the India-UAE corridor could be the second largest in the world, and Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani expatriates outnumbered Emirati citizens around 2015. In the employed population, foreign nationals accounted for an even larger share (96 per cent of Dubai's employed population in 2011). In 2016, federal and local governmental bodies employee figures were as follows: 78.5 per cent Emirati and a mere 6 per cent foreign nationals. Expatriates mostly worked in the private sector (73 per cent), while nationals accounted only for 8.3 per cent. Fifty-two per cent of female expatriates were employed in the domestic sector in 2016. Unlike in other GCC states, a quarter of the working expatriates in the UAE were in managerial posts, employed in a spectrum of activities across all sectors. The number of expatriates shot up during the 2000s, a period of spectacular economic growth propelled by soaring oil prices. Since the financial downturn in 2008, however, the economy has recovered and the hiring of foreign workers is resuming, stimulated by large-scale infrastructure projects, especially in Dubai. Nonetheless, reforms in immigration policies are now being undertaken, fuelled by security concerns, pressures from human rights' protection bodies, and the need to bolster citizens' employment (Emiratisation) and upskill the labour force to implement a knowledge-based economy in the country. To that end, the planned introduction of skills certification requirements for migrants by countries of destination is likely to have significant impact on the size and composition of future migration flows, migrants' activities, and their expectations in terms of rights.

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\* This is a fully revised (updated till February 2018) version of the paper with the same title that was published by the author (GLMM - EN - No. 7/2015). The author would like to thank all the reviewers of this paper, especially Froilan Malit, who helped her in gathering policy evidence on labour issues and reforms in the UAE.

**Keywords:** United Arab Emirates; Foreign Population; National Population; Nationals and Foreign Labour; Migration Policy; Statistics; Work Conditions; Identity; Human Rights; Family Reunification; Second Generation.

## Introduction

Before oil was first discovered in the late 1950s in Abu Dhabi, and in 1966 in Dubai, the then Trucial States under British rule had attracted various flows of migrants: merchants from the Indian subcontinent, Baluchi families, and seasonal workers and traders from neighbouring Persia, among whom were the Ajamis, a class of merchants who settled mostly in Dubai in the mid-nineteenth century. Abu Dhabi was the first of the emirates to begin exporting oil in 1962. That same year, expatriates were estimated to comprise half of its population.<sup>1</sup> After the 1973 oil boom, large streams of foreign workers entered the newly formed United Arab Emirates (UAE), a federation of seven emirates created in 1971 under the leadership of Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

In these two emirates, as well as in Sharjah, the population soared dramatically between the late 1960s and 1980: from 44,000 to 420,000 in Abu Dhabi and from 59,000 to 279,000 in Dubai. Expatriates, who made up 72 per cent of the total population that year, comprised mainly European and Arab workers, as well as Asians due to the historical ties between the region and the subcontinent. However, like elsewhere in the Middle East, the fear of “revolutionary” ideologies supposedly held by Arabs (Nasserism, Baathism)<sup>2</sup> and of labour-led claims led to their progressive replacement by Asian workers. Many Asians also migrated on government-supervised schemes, which ensured a rapid turnover of migrants and no family reunions.<sup>3</sup> Asians were also deemed politically docile and cheaper to employ.<sup>4</sup> These new labourers from the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, for instance, swelled the ranks of the already established communities from Pakistan and India, of whom Keralites (people from the Indian state of Kerala) made up the bulk. The First Gulf War of 1990-1991 forced Yemenis, Jordanians, and Palestinians out of the country and put a halt to the recruitment of an Arab workforce.

Soaring oil prices during the 2000s gave a new impetus to the hiring of large numbers of foreign workers from everywhere in the world, including the Arab states. Two-digit rates of economic and demographic growth during the decade propelled this new phase of development, characterised by attempts to reduce the country’s dependence on oil exports and diversify the economy. Every emirate designed a master plan to monitor its development process, which pointed to the huge manpower needed to perform such labour-intensive activities as construction and infrastructure development. Yet, development of the business, tourism, financial, hospitality, retail and education sectors is also high on the agenda, and these sectors mostly attract highly skilled professionals in a wide range of specialisations. For instance,<sup>5</sup> the Vision 2020 Plan outlined in 2003 by Sharjah focussed on improving urban and community developments, as well as boosting tourism, developing academic institutions, and promoting trade and investment. Dubai embarked early on the diversification of its economy focusing on developing the ports, trade, services, and finance sectors. The emirate’s Strategic Plan 2015, unveiled in 2007, touched on urban planning, energy, roads and transportation, and the environment. Owing to the credit boom that built up after 2000, Dubai also turned itself into the financial gateway and cosmopolitan hub of the Middle East. Between 1995 and 2005, Dubai city’s size quadrupled and its

population doubled. The 2030 roadmap for Abu Dhabi was announced in April 2009. The vision laid out plans for the development of Al Ain, the second biggest city in the emirate, focused on the provision of better transportation and housing for UAE nationals as well as on environmental protection. The Abu Dhabi development plan included new industries, cultural attractions, hotels, schools, and hospitals. Yet, maintaining a balance between managing population growth (it is forecasted that the population of the capital could treble in the coming two decades) on the one hand, and fostering tourism and trade while preserving the city's cultural heritage and natural environment on the other, was deemed a priority.<sup>6</sup>

This development phase revealed the distinct characteristics of each of the seven emirates, and especially, the different development paths chosen by Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The UAE's oil reserves are the fourth largest in the world; however, 95 per cent of these resources as well as 92 per cent of the gas reserves accrue to Abu Dhabi. It funds much of the federal budget from the huge revenues generated by its hydrocarbons as well as by the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), believed to be one of the largest sovereign wealth funds worldwide. By contrast, Dubai's dependence on foreign direct investment (FDI), particularly in "mega real estate projects," explains why the emirate was hard hit by the 2008 financial crisis. The rate of growth of GDP fell from 5.2 per cent in 2007 to -2.2 per cent in 2009.<sup>7</sup> Projects were put on hold, companies went bankrupt, and many expatriates (exact numbers unknown) left Dubai, some of them relocating to Abu Dhabi and others leaving the UAE. Yet, high economic growth rates are expected for 2018 in the country, especially in the non-oil sector.<sup>8</sup>

Abu Dhabi's financial assistance to Dubai during the crisis solidified the economic and socio-political power of the capital city. Its more "conservative" visions of social structure and migrants' incorporation, especially, can be witnessed in the recent responses to burning issues such as long-term migrants' naturalisation. The enduring pre-eminence of blood descent (*nasab*, genealogy)<sup>9</sup> in granting citizenship over *jus soli* and services rendered is a marked feature of the UAE naturalisation process under the rule of the Al-Nahyan, which runs against the more inclusive perception of former Dubai ruler Shaikh Rashid bin Saeed Al-Maktoum.<sup>10</sup> Concerns for the preservation of an Emirati identity against the strong "demographic imbalance" characterising the UAE are addressed in 'UAE Vision 2021,' under the general target of safeguarding social cohesion.<sup>11</sup>

From the early 2010s, the UAE significantly reformed its migration policies for many reasons. First was the emergence of nationals' unemployment (9.2 per cent in the total population, 17.2 per cent for the 15-29 age group),<sup>12</sup> a politically sensitive issue: nationals choosing unemployment instead of taking on jobs available in the public sector revealed the mismatch between education and employment, and the low quality of jobs proposed in the private sector as an alternative to fading public employment. This raised the urgency to "update the social contract" in every GCC country, where well paid and secure government jobs along with generous welfare systems had been, for decades, an element of the redistribution of oil wealth.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, since the onset of oil exploitation, *laissez-faire* policies had been ruling over the management of the private sector, where wages were too low to attract local job-seekers, hence creating what the latter saw as an "unfair competition" between nationals and non-nationals in the labour market. Improving the monitoring of labour migration to the UAE thus became a necessity.

Second, security concerns also led to tightened control over migrants suspected of political activities. Several waves of Lebanese expatriates have been expelled since 2009, some accused of sympathy with

Hizbollah;<sup>14</sup> Syrian and Palestinian families were also asked to leave the country.<sup>15</sup> Since 2011, hiring workers from Syria,<sup>16</sup> Tunisia, Egypt, and other countries affected by the Arab uprisings has become more difficult.<sup>17</sup> Migrants in irregular administrative situation were also targeted by rounding up operations and amnesty campaigns. Several of the latter took place in 2012–2013 and the two-month amnesty ending February 4, 2013 led to the exit of 62,000 foreign residents in irregular administrative situation.<sup>18</sup> More recently, a six-month amnesty running from January 4 to June 2015 was granted to firms to adjust their employees' labour cards with reduced fines.<sup>19</sup> The Foreigners and Illegals Sector of the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs (GDRFA) in Dubai conducted a total number of 224,548 transactions. The number of sponsor complaints the GDRFA received in 2014 about matters such as employees leaving work decreased by six per cent when compared with 2013.<sup>20</sup> A further 35,000 residency law violators were deported from Dubai in the first half of 2016, most of them Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, while a special "humanitarian committee" looking at the reasons for breaches of immigration rules was set up, amid a sharp rise in Dubai visa overstays in 2017.<sup>21</sup> Since February 2018, a certificate of good conduct (clean criminal record obtained from the sending country) has become a mandatory precondition to obtain a new work visa to the UAE.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, the creation of the Emirates Identity Authority (EIDA) tasked with identifying and cataloguing all residents (they are now required to obtain personal identification cards [Emirates ID], and be incorporated in the population registry) significantly enhanced the monitoring of expatriate populations.<sup>23</sup> By the end of 2013 (last data available at the time of writing), EIDA stated that 95.22 per cent of Emiratis and 95.33 per cent of foreign residents were enrolled in the population register.<sup>24</sup>

Lastly, the call by various international human rights organisations as well as sending countries for the protection of migrants' rights, especially after several demonstrations by Asian workers claiming appalling work and salary conditions on construction sites in the mid-2000s,<sup>25</sup> has led to the introduction of many new measures. A specific action plan to raise awareness on human rights-related labour issues was outlined by the then-Labour Ministry (now the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation, MoHRE) at the beginning of 2009, coordinated by 17 government departments and including the private sector. The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation also launched a "Know Your Rights" campaign, as part of which foreign workers arriving at the Dubai International Airport (and soon Abu Dhabi International Airport) in the UAE receive pamphlets informing them of their rights and obligations under their new work contracts.<sup>26</sup> The campaign is ongoing.<sup>27</sup> Most recently, Abu Dhabi authorities announced that over 100,000 workers would be provided lessons about their rights and privileges this year by the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department, under the Year of Zayed 2018 initiative.<sup>28</sup>

A new facility established by the Dubai Police, the Dubai Police Human Trafficking Crime Control Centre, monitors human trafficking. It also has the mandate to address workers' complaints. In 2013, the UAE government amended a federal law to better safeguard victims of human trafficking and launched an awareness-raising campaign targeting those who may be in a position to combat trafficking, such as airport security personnel.<sup>29</sup> A Wage Protection System was implemented in 2009<sup>30</sup> by the then-Ministry of Labour, besides a Decent Work Programme in coordination with the ILO. The control of the practices of recruitment agencies, labour inspections, settlement of labour disputes, and health and

safety performances were also significantly enhanced over the years, in partnership with international bodies such as ILO and with input from the private sector.<sup>31</sup> The Abu Dhabi Dialogue, an ongoing platform in conjunction with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), brings together ministerial-level leadership from both labour-source and labour-receiving nations and aims to create a regional framework for regulating labour rights and migration.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the UAE reformed its sponsorship system by abolishing the no-objection certificates (NOC), which prevented workers from moving jobs without their employer's consent for employees who have been in a job for two years.<sup>33</sup> Lastly, permitting some categories of expatriate professionals to work in Dubai without the need for a sponsor was under discussion as of early 2015.<sup>34</sup> Ministerial Decrees 764, 765 and 766 of 2015, that took effect in 2016, went further in protecting employment rights in the UAE.<sup>35</sup>

The UAE Federal National Council in 2012, for the first time, approved a legislation to specifically address the protection of domestic workers' rights. In September 2017, H. H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE, approved Federal Law No. 10 of 2017 also known as Domestic Labour Law, enhancing support to service workers. Domestic labourers previously fell under the purview of the Ministry of Interior; the new law placed them under the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation. The law aims to strengthen good practices (establishment of contracts, payment of wages, weekly day of rest, duties of employers and agencies towards the worker, prohibition of verbal and physical offenses, workers' rights and duties in line with the revised Labour Law of 2016).<sup>36</sup> Centres called Tadbeer<sup>37</sup> were to replace domestic worker recruitment agencies by the end of 2017. The MoHRE selected 15 private companies to participate in the public-private partnership agreement for setting up dedicated Tadbeer Service Centres for the recruitment and handling of all foreign domestic workers (FDWs). Under the supervision of MoHRE, these centres would guarantee proper visas, orientation and training for the workers,<sup>38</sup> as well as propose dispute resolution and counselling assistance.

The UAE has now entered a new phase of post-crisis booming development, for instance with the successful bid for Expo 2020 by Dubai. In the face of the extraordinary rates of population growth again characterising the country, the enhancement of political control and management of resources, natural and human, is the priority of the new migration policies in the UAE. Besides, concerns about upskilling the labour force, the "demographic imbalance" between GCC citizens and outsiders, as well as the large size of some expatriate communities, are addressed in most recent reforms. For instance, a reform of labour permit fees, enacted in December 2017, classifies companies into three categories, based on the company's size, ratio of skilled workers, and "commitment to cultural diversity" (i.e., rate of employment of Emirati and other GCC citizens). Fees would range between Dh300 (skilled labourer, high level of diversity) to Dh3,500 (low-skilled labourer, diversity less than 50 per cent).<sup>39</sup> In line with similar policy trends increasingly followed in other GCC countries,<sup>40</sup> such financial incentives aim to bolster citizens' employment (Emiratisation) and implement a knowledge-based economy in the country. To that effect, the planned introduction of skills certification requirements on migrants by countries of destination is likely to spur a competition among countries of origin, based on their ability to prepare workers in line with employers' needs. The measure is thus expected to have significant implications on the size and

composition of future migration flows, on the nature of migrants' work, and on their expectations in terms of rights,<sup>41</sup> in the GCC in general and in the UAE in particular.

## Inward Migration

### Stocks

#### *Data Issues*

In contrast to other GCC countries which have set up a population registry like Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman, in the UAE population figures and demographic characteristics of the resident population (Emiratis and foreigners) are not yet disclosed to the public in real time. Since 1971, five censuses have been conducted at the federal level: in 1975; 1980; 1985; 1995; and 2005. As of March 2018, the last comprehensive population census available was that of 2005. The federal census originally due to be carried out in April 2010 under the supervision of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, the federal entity in charge of statistical research) was eventually cancelled.<sup>42</sup> Only Abu Dhabi and Fujairah conducted an emirate-level census in 2011,<sup>43</sup> followed by Sharjah in 2015, and Ajman in 2017.<sup>44</sup> Yet, to date no detailed results from any of the four censuses have been disclosed to the public.

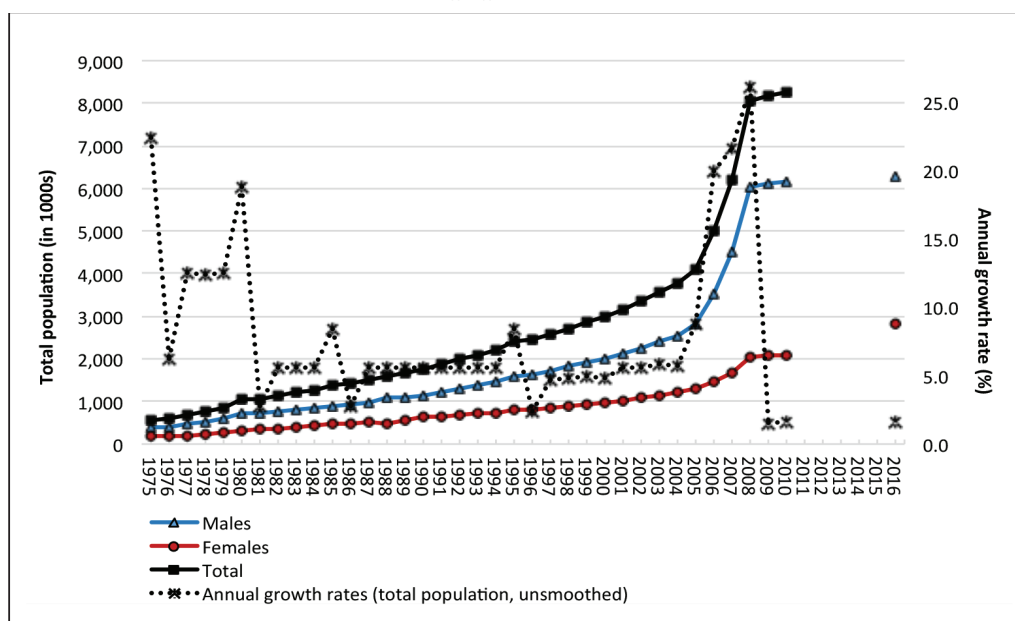
Therefore, intercensal population data as well as post-2005 figures are estimates, underlining the fragility of UAE's population statistics as also pointed out by some international agencies.<sup>45</sup> Population projections and estimates in the UAE have to be taken with caution, for three sets of reasons. First, the scale of irregular sojourn and labour cannot be overlooked, given the speed of population growth in the country, and especially in Dubai, partly due to the dependence of UAE's economy on labour-intensive sectors such as the construction sector. Second, the methodology used to project population figures since 2010 was recently questioned, as it led to the release of extraordinary rates of demographic growth, for example in Ras Al-Khaimah where the population was said to have jumped from 267,000 inhabitants in 2009 to 413,000 in 2010.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the figure of 8,064,270 residents in the UAE in late 2010 could be overestimated.<sup>47</sup> Third, most recent estimates are based on the number of residents officially registered with EIDA. Yet, Emirates ID cards do not cover 100 per cent of Emiratis and expatriates. Besides, estimates do not include foreign residents in irregular administrative situation. Consequently, the population figures for the UAE at every geographic level must be considered with caution.

#### *Population and Immigration*

At the end of 2016, government estimates of UAE's total population stood at 9,121,167.<sup>48</sup> This would signify that UAE's resident population has multiplied by 32 per cent since 1971, the year the country was established, at a stunning average growth rate of 8 per cent annually. The hike in population numbers was particularly pronounced from 2000 to 2008, the year of the onset of the world financial crisis. Annual demographic growth rates peaked at more than 20 per cent during this period,<sup>49</sup> propelled by the massive, short-term recruitment of labourers to complete the mega-projects undertaken during the decade (the Palm and World Islands, Burj Khalifa, landmark shopping malls and housing projects, as well as other large-scale infrastructural projects described earlier).<sup>50</sup> Rates collapsed below 2 per cent per annum in 2009-2010 and have remained low until the end of 2016 (last available data) (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Evolution of UAE's total population and growth rate (1975-2010; 2016)



Source: National Bureau of Statistics / Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority.<sup>51</sup>

Time-series available for the emirates of Dubai and Abu Dhabi (Table 1) confirm the relative slowdown of annual demographic growth rates in recent years to 4 per cent in Abu Dhabi in 2016 and 5 per cent in Dubai in 2014-2015, down from 9 per cent in 2005. Yet, Dubai seems to be experiencing a new demographic rebound since 2015, with a 10 per cent growth rate in 2016 and 2017 (10.3 per cent for the foreign population alone).<sup>52</sup> Unlike oil-dependent Abu Dhabi's economy which has suffered from low petroleum prices, Dubai's economy is diversified and propelled by large-scale projects (Dubai Expo 2020, for instance). It has thus become more attractive to foreign expatriates.<sup>53</sup>

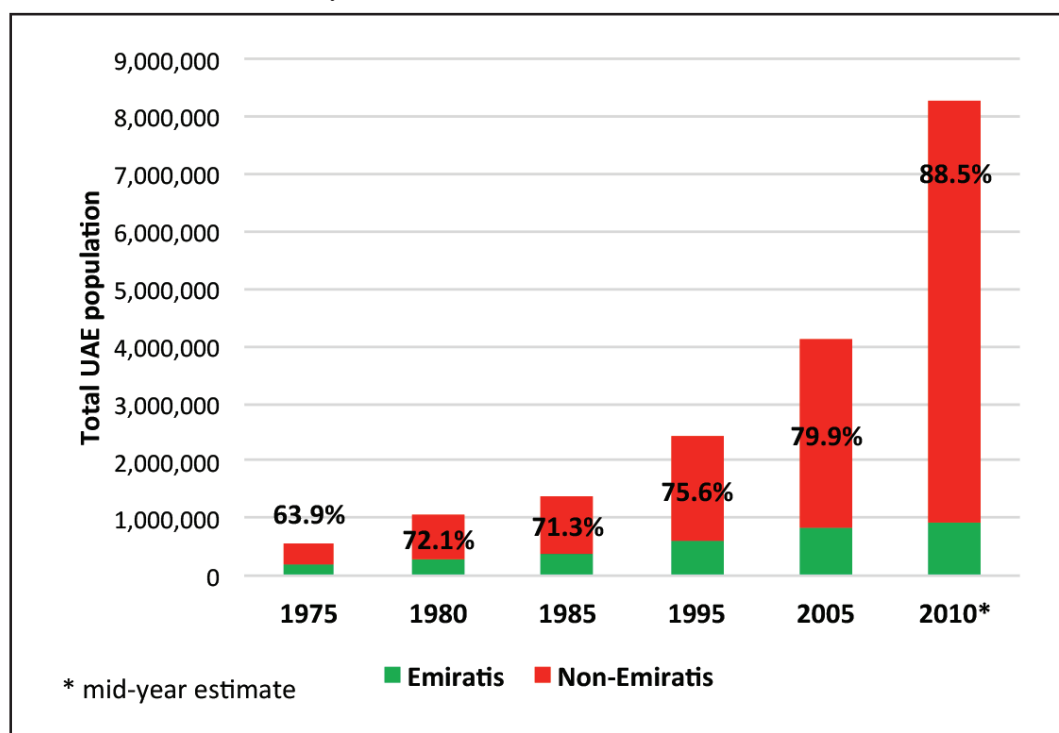
**Table 1: Evolution of population and demographic growth rates in Abu Dhabi and Dubai (selected years, 1968-2017)**<sup>54</sup>

	Abu Dhabi		Dubai	
	Total population	Average annual growth rate per period (%)	Total population	Average annual growth rate per period (%)
1968	44,552		59,000	
1975	196,539	21	183,187	16
1980	420,455	15	276,301	8
1985	553,668	6	370,788	6
1995	920,271	5	689,420	6
2000	1,112,716	4	862,387	4
2005	1,374,169	4	1,321,453	9
2006	1,461,478	6	1,421,812	7
2007	1,574,281	7	1,529,792	7
2008	1,695,788	7	1,645,973	7
2009	1,826,674	7	1,770,978	7
2010	1,967,659	7	1,905,476	7
2011	2,161,619	9	2,003,170	5
2012	2,314,819	7	2,105,875	5
2013	2,492,518	7	2,213,845	5
2014	2,656,448	6	2,327,350	5
2015	2,784,490	5	2,446,675	5
2016	2,908,173	4	2,698,600	10
2017			2,994,003	10

Source: Statistics Center Abu Dhabi and Dubai Statistics Center.<sup>55</sup>

High levels of immigration indeed explain the UAE’s high demographic growth rates. Non-Emiratis were 356,343 in 1975 after the first oil boom, thus accounting for 64 per cent of the resident population. Thirty-five years later, in 2010, according to NBS’s estimate, their number had multiplied by twenty to an estimated 7,316,073 persons, or 88.5 per cent of the total resident population of 8.3 million (Figure 2).<sup>56</sup> As noted earlier, demographic expansion was particularly high during the 2000s: between 2005 and 2010, Emirati nationals grew by 2.8 per cent annually on average, while foreign residents’ rate of growth reached 16 per cent.

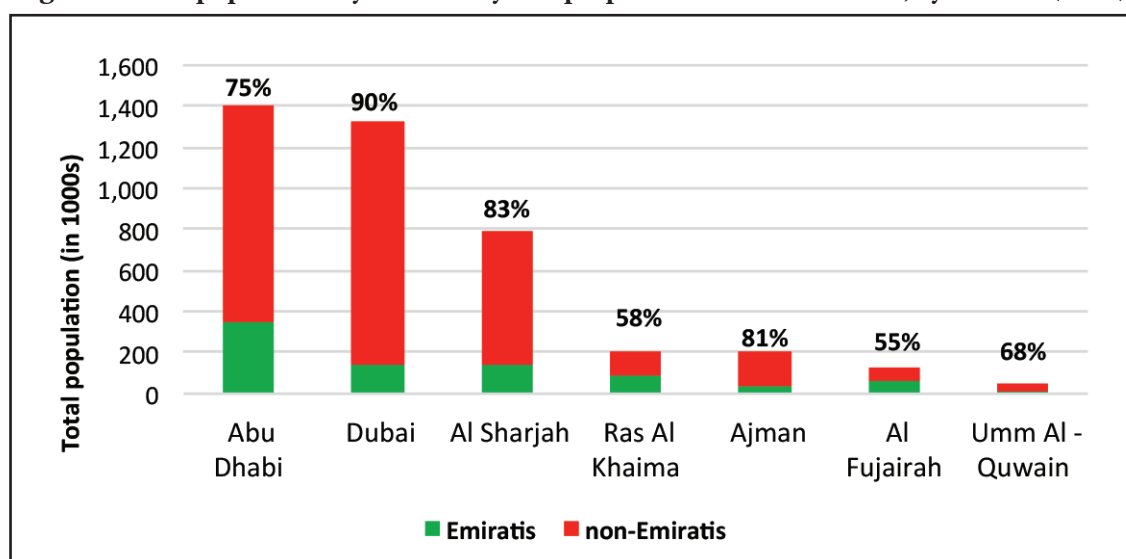
**Figure 2: UAE’s total population and estimates of the proportion of non-nationals in census years (1975; 1980; 1985; 1995; 2005 and 2010)**



Source: National Bureau of Statistics/ Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority.<sup>57</sup>

Each of the seven emirates of the UAE displays a different demographic situation, partly due to the diversity of economic paths chosen by them, as described earlier. The most populated regions, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, hosted two-thirds of the total as well as foreign populations in the UAE in 2005. However, the share of non-nationals ranged from 55 per cent in the small emirate of Ajman to 90 per cent of all residents in Dubai that same year.

Figure 3: UAE population by nationality and proportion of non-Emiratis, by emirate (2005)



Source: National Bureau of Statistics, UAE Census 2005.<sup>58</sup>

As of 2016, estimates for Fujairah showed that expatriates formed 61 per cent of the population.<sup>59</sup> In Abu Dhabi that same year, there were 551,535 Emiratis and 2,356,638 foreign nationals, or a proportion of 81 per cent expatriates.<sup>60</sup> The population of Dubai appeared more skewed, with expatriates forming 91.3 per cent of the 2,698,600 residents (2016 estimates), a ratio near to that of Sharjah during census 2015 (Table 2).

**Table 2: Estimates of UAE population by nationality (Emiratis/ non-Emiratis), emirate of residence and sex (last available data as of December 2017)**

Emirate	Year	Emiratis			non-Emiratis			Total			% non-nationals
		Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	
Abu Dhabi	2016	282,632	268,903	551,535	1,574,986	781,652	2,356,638	1,857,618	1,050,555	2,908,173	81
Dubai	2016	n.a.	n.a.	233,430	n.a.	n.a.	2,465,170	n.a.	n.a.	2,698,600	91
Sharjah	2015	86,325	89,098	175,423	834,542	395,875	1,230,417	920,867	484,973	1,405,840	88
Ras Al -Khaima	2012	49,860	49,662	99,522	215,140	107,338	322,478	265,000	157,000	422,000	76
Ajman	2017	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	504,847	n.a.
Al-Fujairah	2016	43,991	43,823	87,814	104,821	32,725	137,546	148,812	76,548	225,360	61
Umm Al - Quwain	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
UAE	2016							6,298,294	2,822,873	9,121,167	

Source: Various emirate-level and federal sources.<sup>61</sup>

### *Population Structure*

The UAE resident foreign population is imbalanced demographically like in all other GCC states. In 2016, men outnumbered women by 1 to 2.2 in the UAE total population (69 per cent men and 31 per cent women). Within the foreign population, there were four men for every woman in 2010 in the country<sup>62</sup> and 308 men for 100 women in Dubai.<sup>63</sup> In 2010, Abu Dhabi's foreign population (aged 15 and above) showed a sex ratio of 380 men for 100 women. The ratio became lower in 2015, at 250 males for 100 females. This suggests that the socio-demographic make-up of the emirate changed within the five-year span, with female professionals now accounting for a larger share among expatriates. Indeed, the relative proportion of expatriates in working age groups (15-64 years) remained similar between the two dates, at 88 per cent of all foreign residents. Children (aged 0-14 years) made up only 11.4 per cent of expatriates, down from 16 per cent in 2005 and a high of 23 per cent in the mid-1980s.<sup>64</sup>

Concerning education, 55.8 per cent of non-Emiratis held below-secondary education in 2005 (a level similar to that of Emiratis). The share of tertiary educated (holding university degrees) was higher among foreign nationals (15 per cent) than among Emiratis that year (11.8 per cent). Among those employed in Dubai in 2016 (aged 15 and more), 43 per cent of Emiratis and 29 per cent of foreign employees held a university degree.<sup>65</sup>

The spectacular levels of economic growth experienced by the UAE during the 2000s gave an impetus to the settlement of a very diverse foreign population. Demographic data on non-national residents disaggregated by country of citizenship is unavailable in the UAE. Yet, some estimates published in the media in 2015, retrieved from embassy sources, suggested that the top-ranking nationalities in the UAE were Indians, by far the largest national community with 2.6 million;<sup>66</sup> Pakistanis (1.2 million); and Bangladeshis (700,000). Emiratis would thus be ranking third in numbers with 1.085 million nationals.<sup>67</sup> The expatriates-to-nationals demographic gap is even larger among the working population. In 2016, in Dubai, non-nationals made up 96 per cent of all employed residents.<sup>68</sup> Their distribution by nationality group emphasises the enduring numeric domination of Asians in the emirate [83 per cent of all employed population, 86 per cent among males and 66 per cent among females (Table 3)]. According to data from the 2005 census,<sup>69</sup> people from Asian countries made up around 85 per cent of all expatriates at that time in Dubai. Arabs constituted around 8 per cent and Americans and Europeans together around 4 per cent.<sup>70</sup>

**Table 3: Dubai: Percentage distribution of employed population by nationality group and sex (2016)**

	Total	Males	Females
<b>UAE</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>9.2</b>
<b>GCC countries</b>	<b>0.1</b>	0.1	0.0
<b>Other Arab countries</b>	<b>6.4</b>	6.2	7.7
<b>Asia</b>	<b>82.6</b>	86.0	66.3
<b>Africa</b>	<b>2.9</b>	1.6	8.9
<b>Europe</b>	<b>2.7</b>	2.1	5.3
<b>North America</b>	<b>0.8</b>	0.6	1.8
<b>Caribbean &amp; Central America</b>	<b>0.1</b>	0.1	0.1
<b>South America</b>	<b>0.1</b>	0.1	0.1
<b>Oceania (Australia, New Zealand, etc.)</b>	<b>0.3</b>	0.2	0.6
<b>Total non-Emiratis</b>	<b>96.0</b>	<b>97.0</b>	<b>90.8</b>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Dubai Statistics Center, Labour Force Survey 2016.<sup>71</sup>

Yet, slight changes may have occurred recently in the recruitment policies of the emirate, since the economic boom years of the 2000s. In 2011, the relative share of Asians was slightly higher at 87 per cent of all employed laborers. The share of citizens from African countries went up from 1.7 per cent to 3 per cent of the total. This confirms the process of diversification of the recruitment pools observed during recent years, which responds to employers' need for fresh as well as inexpensive labour in sectors such as construction and other service-based jobs. For this reason, temporary labour migration from Africa was said to be increasing during the 2010s.<sup>72</sup>

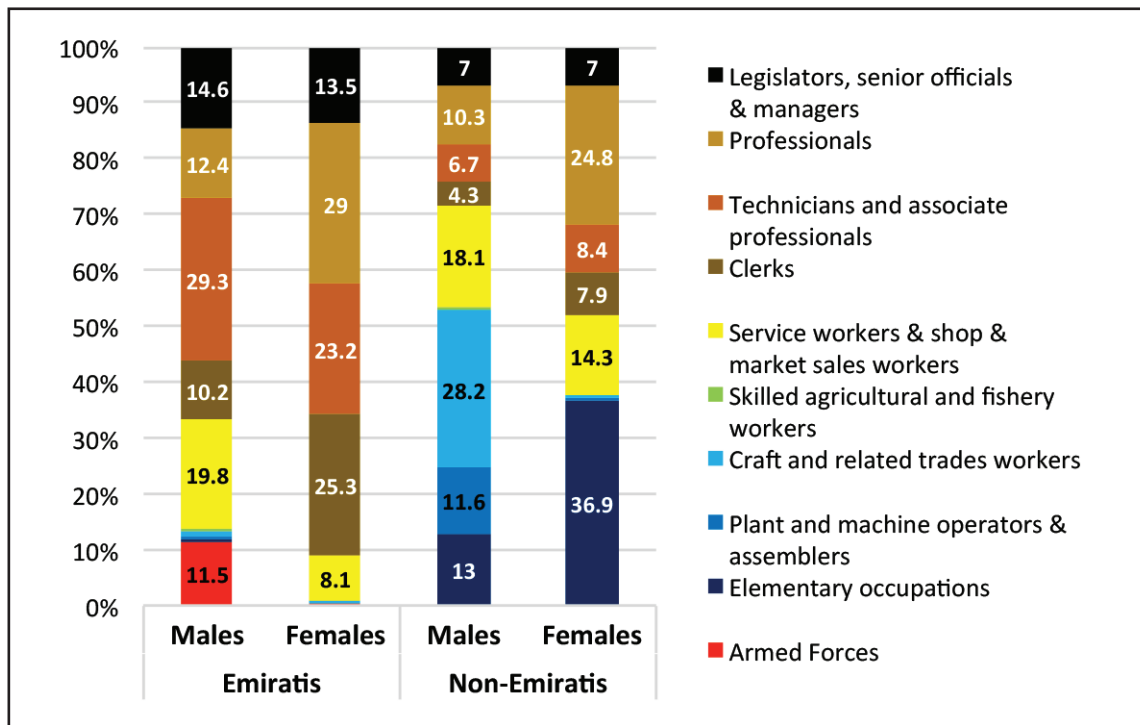
### *Foreign Workers in UAE's Economy*

In recent years, Emiratis comprised 60 per cent of the total workforce in the public sector, but only 0.5 per cent of the private sector workforce, a matter of great policy concern in the country.<sup>73</sup> In 2009, the public sector (federal and local) employed 90 per cent of the working nationals and 15 per cent of the foreign employees. Another 15 per cent of the foreign workers worked in the domestic sector but 65 per cent were in the private sector.<sup>74</sup> In 2016, federal and local government bodies employed "only" 78.5 per cent of Emirati workers and a mere 6 per cent of expatriates. Expatriates overwhelmingly worked in the private sector (73 per cent), as compared to 8.3 per cent of nationals. Thirteen per cent of expatriates, and 52 per cent of females among them, were employed in the domestic sector in 2016.<sup>75</sup>

Due to the "demographic imbalance" characterising the UAE, and especially its workforce, foreign workers indeed dominate numerically at every occupational level. A 2008 survey of establishments indicated that foreign employees made up 89 per cent of all managers and 99 per cent of those in unskilled positions.<sup>76</sup> Foreign workers display a relatively diverse profile in general. As emphasised in the example of Dubai in 2015,<sup>77</sup> the "blue-collar" categories (from "craft and related trade workers" to "elementary occupations," in blue colours in Figures 4 and 5) employed half of the foreign males

and 37 per cent of females, while 18 and 14 per cent more, respectively, were in “trade and services” occupations (Figure 4).<sup>78</sup> On average, 24 per cent of Dubai foreign male residents and 40 per cent of female expatriates were holding managerial and professional positions. Emirati nationals are absent from low-skilled categories, and 11 per cent of males were employed in the military.

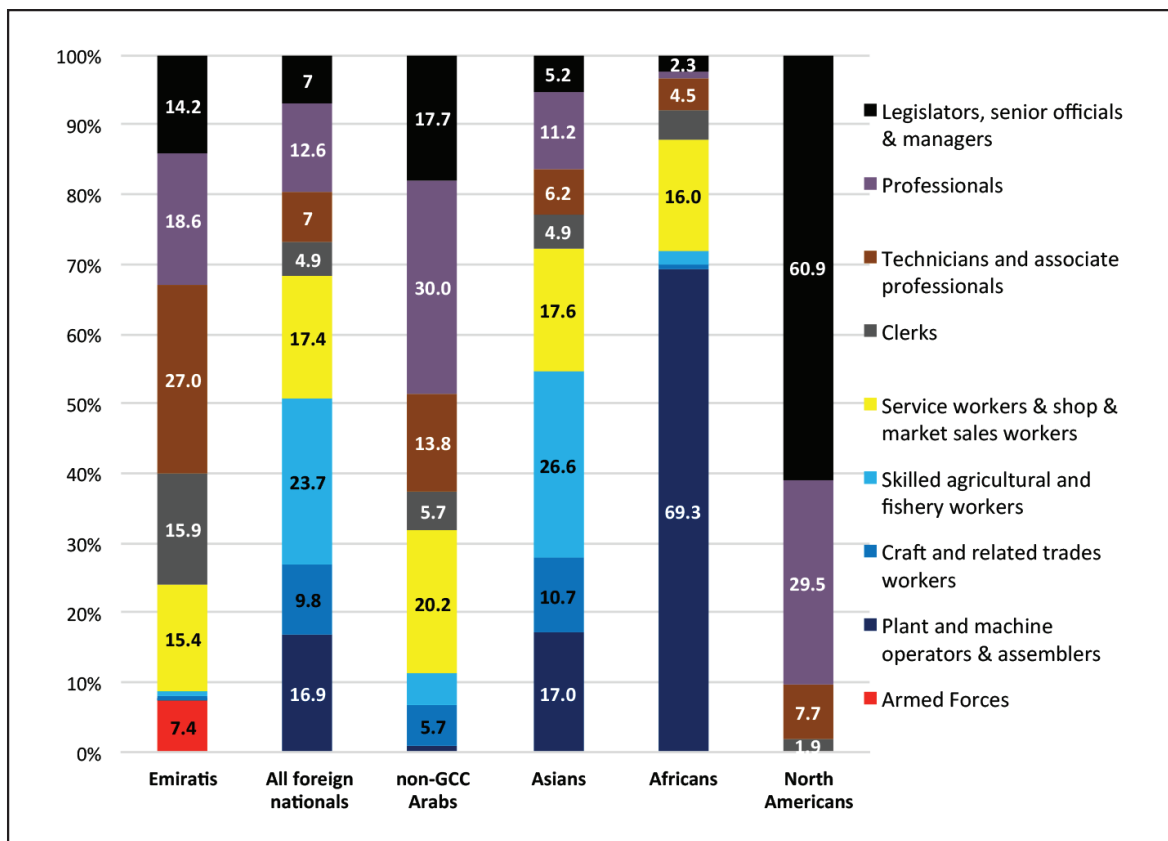
**Figure 4: Dubai: Employed population by nationality (Emirati/ non-Emirati) sex and occupation category (2015)**



Source: Dubai Statistics Center, Labour Force Survey 2015.<sup>79</sup>

These figures do not show the important variations between nationality groups. In Dubai (Figure 5), “Western” nationals (here, North Americans) almost exclusively perform highly-skilled occupations. By contrast, 70 per cent of Africans are in “blue collar,” low-skilled professions, as well as half of the Asians. Nonetheless, nationals from Asian countries are better distributed across the occupation scale and about a quarter of them perform managerial and professional jobs. Arab workers, like elsewhere in the Gulf, mostly occupy highly-skilled positions (61 per cent), as well as clerical and services-related jobs.

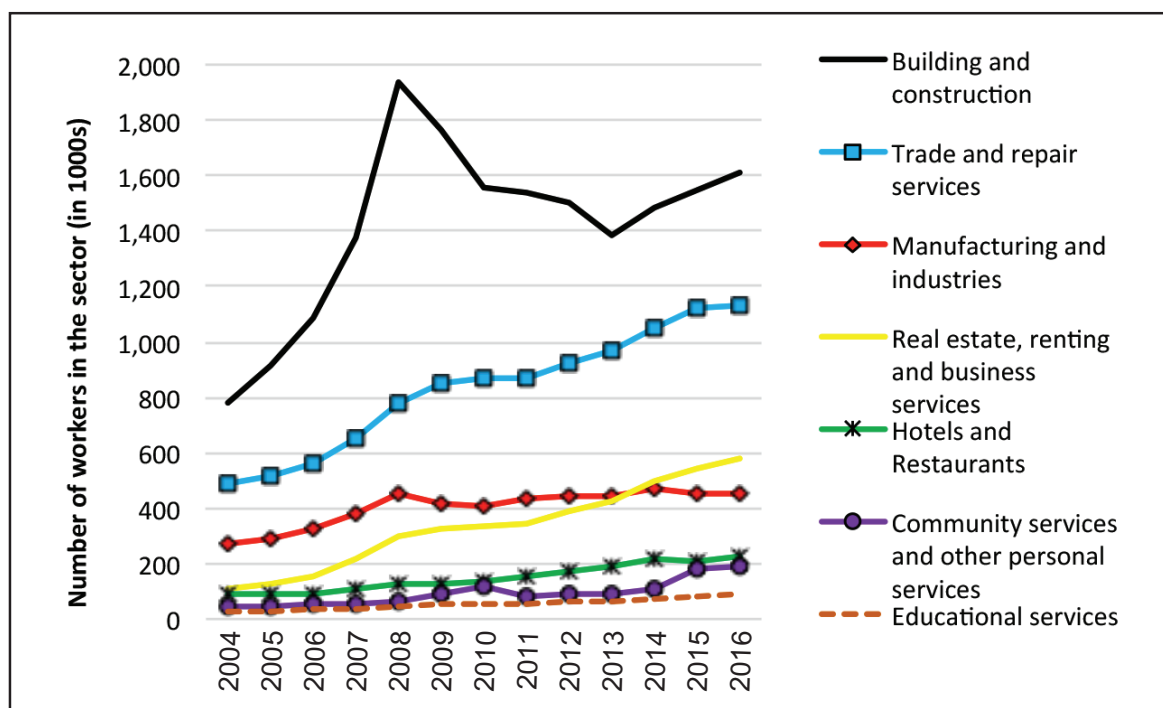
**Figure 5: Dubai: Employed population by nationality group and occupation category (selected nationalities, 2015)**



Source: Dubai Statistics Center, Labour Force Survey 2015.<sup>80</sup>

Recent data for 2016 also indicate that Emirati nationals, like several years ago in 2009, are still mostly concentrated in the “Public Administration, Defence and Social Security” sector of activity (63 per cent of men, 44 per cent of females and 57 per cent of all employed Emiratis). The mining sector employed 8 per cent of nationals and education 5 per cent. As for non-Emiratis, their activity sectors were still rather diverse in 2016. The bulk was employed in construction (30 per cent), while 12 per cent were in retail trade and many others in the domestic services sector (52 per cent of expatriate women alone), manufacturing as well as the administrative support sectors (9 per cent each). This further highlights the scale of expatriates’ participation in the UAE economy in the private and public sectors, as well as the diversity of the non-national population, in terms of skills and areas of specialisation.

**Figure 6: Foreign labourers employed in the UAE private sector by activity (2004-2016, selected activities)**



Source: Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (MoHRE).<sup>81</sup>

Yet, the data also highlight the vulnerability of foreign labour to economic climate and short-term policies. Employment in the construction sector decreased significantly after the financial crisis in the late 2000s, down from a peak in 2008 at almost 2 million foreign labourers (private sector only). Employment in trade, as well as in the real estate sector, on the contrary, recovered rapidly after a slowdown in the years 2009-2012 (Figure 6). The foreign labour force's stocks in the private sector (4.9 million in 2016, up from 2 million in 2004 and 4 million in 2012-2013) also highlight the country's economic recovery, after some stagnation between 2009 and 2014. Yet, the slump in oil prices after 2014 slowed down the expansion of the labour force.

### *Resident Family Dependents*

Besides workers, the UAE also hosts a sizeable population of family dependents. The Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi estimated, for instance, that 10 per cent of Indian nationals residing in the UAE in 2015 were dependent family members.<sup>82</sup> Among the non-Emirati residents of Dubai, 15 per cent were out of the labour force in 2016.<sup>83</sup> By comparison, this is double the proportion of the non-economically active residents in Qatar during the same period.<sup>84</sup> Sixty-seven per cent of these non-economically active residents of Dubai were homemakers and 24 per cent were students. Interestingly, foreign housewives displayed a very highly-educated profile: 64 per cent of them were tertiary-educated.

The rule governing family reunion in the UAE may be part of the explanation. The GDRFA states that "Male residents who are employed in the UAE can sponsor their immediate family members, such



as wife and children, subject to conditions which include minimum salary of Dh4,000 or Dh3,000 plus accommodation.<sup>85</sup> However, this law de facto excludes more than half of Dubai's workers from bringing their family over to the emirate: 50.2 per cent of all labourers there earned less than Dh2,500 per month in 2016.<sup>86</sup> For the high salaried, on the contrary, it is also possible for the wife to sponsor her husband and children if she holds a residence permit stating that she is an engineer, teacher, doctor, nurse or in any other profession related to the medical sector and if her monthly salary is not less than Dh10,000 or Dh8,000 plus accommodation.<sup>87</sup>

Nonetheless, the 2005 census showed that expatriates stay in the UAE for a long time. The weighted average of stay for all expatriates in the country was around 8.7 years<sup>88</sup> and almost one-third (31 per cent) of the foreign population aged 10 and above had been residing in the country for ten years and more.<sup>89</sup> By comparison, only 14 per cent of the foreign residents in Qatar surveyed during the 2010 census were recorded as having stayed as long in the country.<sup>90</sup> The sizeable proportion of young age groups (aged 0-14) among non-national residents also suggests some degree of family reunion. It was 15 per cent in 2010 for the UAE and 11.4 per cent of all foreign residents of Abu Dhabi in 2015. Everywhere else in the GCC (except in Saudi Arabia), the figure is lower: from 5 per cent in Oman to 13 per cent in Kuwait (2015-2016 data).<sup>91</sup> Interestingly, in 2005 the non-nationals were already the majority among the 0-14 year-olds in the UAE (61 per cent).<sup>92</sup>

Apart from workers and families, the UAE also attracts growing numbers of foreign university students. Latest available higher education statistics for the academic year 2016-2017 indicate that 58,601 foreign students were enrolled in Higher Education Establishments (HEI) in the UAE that year (up from 50,882 in 2013-2014).<sup>93</sup> Of these students, 52,975 were in private education, which comprises the 25-30 branches of western HEI opened in the country over the last decade and local private universities following foreign curricula (such as the American University of Sharjah; American University of Dubai; INSEAD-Abu Dhabi; Paris-Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi; University of Strathclyde Business School, NYU Abu Dhabi, and Dubai Harvard Foundation for Medical Research).

## INWARD MIGRATION

### Flows

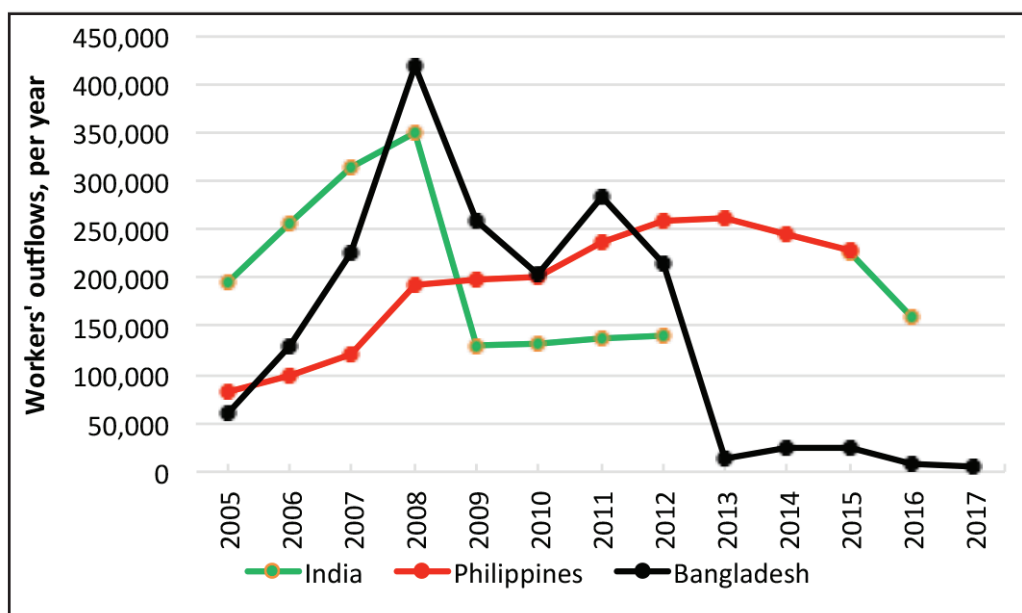
#### *Resumption of Sustained Inflows of Workers*

Since 2008, data on labour permits are not systematically published in the UAE.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, statements from the Labour Minister in the press confirmed the resumption of large-scale hiring from abroad, suggested by the recent increase in the size of the private sector's foreign labour force. The ministry announced in April 2015 that 1.2 million new labour permits had been issued in 2014. In 2012, this figure stood at 945,460 and was topped up by a further 658,422 renewed permits. In comparison, the last available figure of first permits delivery for 2008, before the financial crisis, was 1.51 million.<sup>95</sup>

The figures of workers deployed to the UAE, released by Bangladeshi, Filipino, and Indian sources (Figure 7) clearly illustrate the effect of economic fluctuations and growing security concerns on the UAE's immigration policies. Filipinos seem relatively less affected, probably because a large share of

females among them often work in the domestic and health sectors, which are less sensitive to economic fluctuations. The fall in Bangladeshis' deployment figures stems from the UAE government's decision to suspend the issuance of new visas to these workers in 2012,<sup>96</sup> allegedly due to malpractices in the recruitment process and security concerns.<sup>97</sup> As for Indian (and Bangladeshi) labourers, a vast proportion among them is employed in the construction sector, which was hit hard by the 2008 crisis and subsequent economic slowdown. However, outflows from India to the UAE regained strength in the mid-2010s, in line with the rebound of some economic sectors (construction, trade, real estate and business) noted earlier. It should be noted, too, that Indian expatriates comprise a share of highly-skilled labourers, much in demand in the UAE labour market.

**Figure 7: Deployed overseas workers from Bangladesh, Philippines and India to the UAE (2005-2017)**

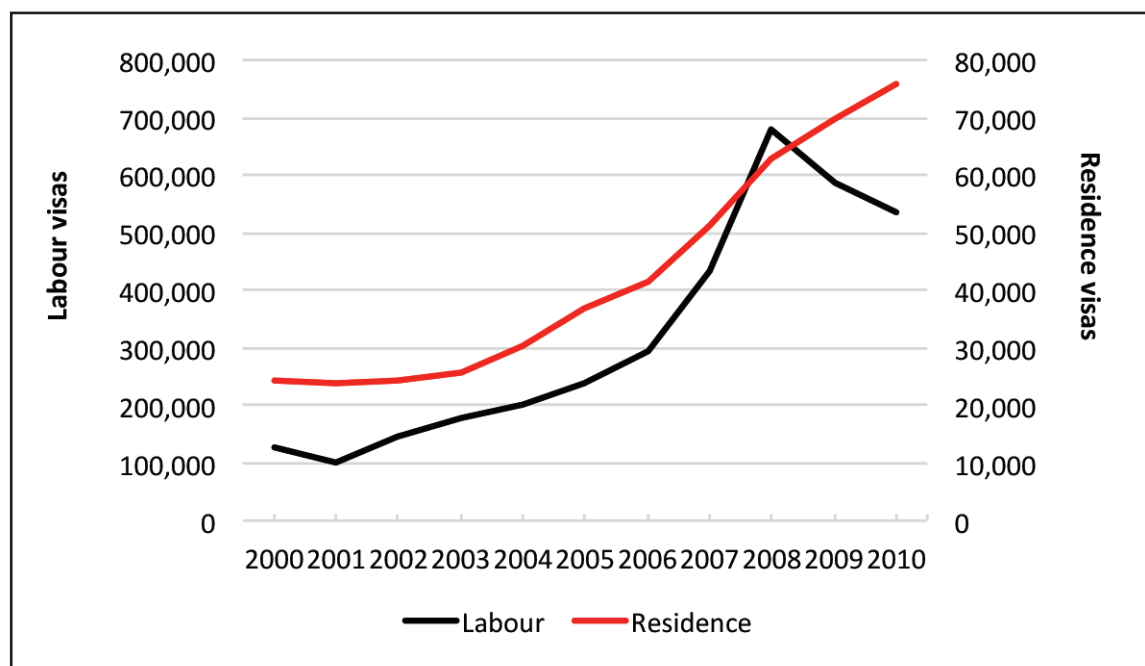


Source: Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA); Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) of Bangladesh; Ministry of External Affairs, India.<sup>98</sup>

### *Foreign Nationals' Long-Term Stay in the UAE*

As regards movements for the purpose of residency, which pertain to workers and to family dependents, time-series data available for Abu Dhabi suggest that they have not been affected by the economic downturn, in contrast to workers' movements. The number of entry visas for residency increased steadily over the 2000s.<sup>99</sup> This confirms the hypothesis of a trend, noticed earlier, towards the settlement or long-term stay of certain foreign families in the Gulf state. It should be understood, however, that the two categories are not mutually exclusive: family dependents are allowed to work in the UAE, under certain conditions.<sup>100</sup>

Figure 8: Abu Dhabi: Entry visas issued by purpose of entry (2000–2010)

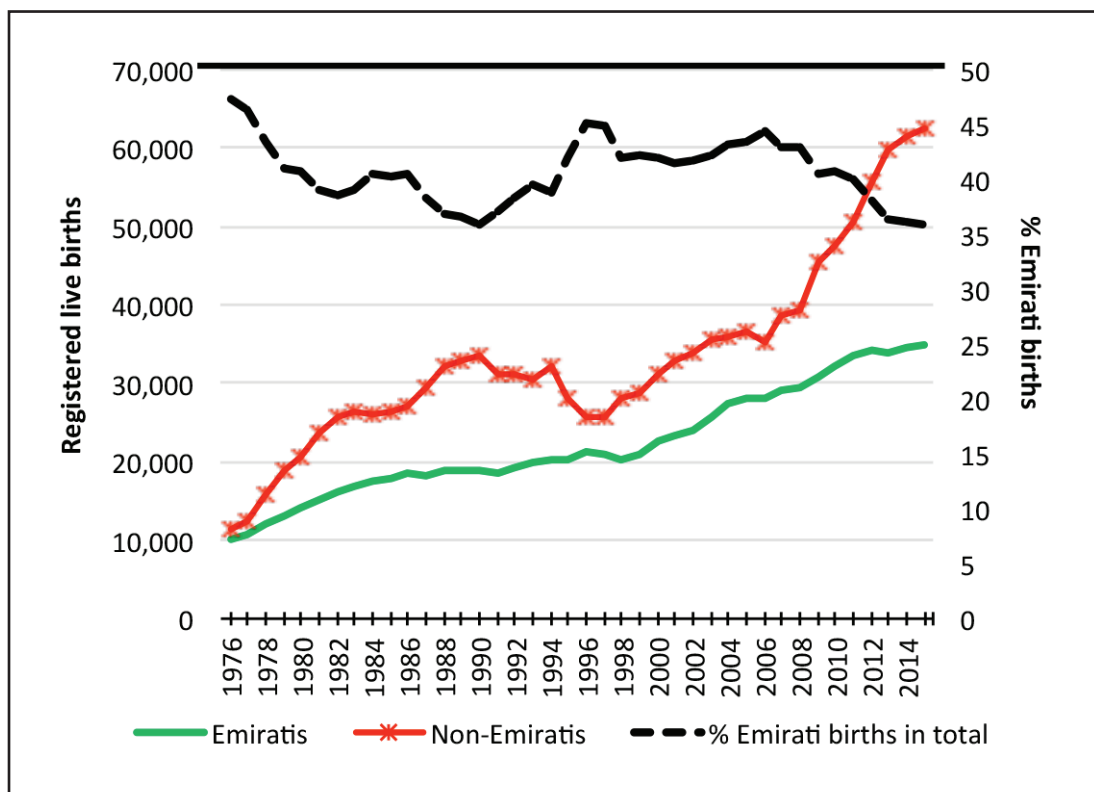


Source: Statistics Center Abu Dhabi.<sup>101</sup>

More recently, the Director of the Ministry of Interior's GDRFA in Dubai was quoted in the press as saying that the first half of 2014 had seen a 30 per cent increase in the number of residency visas issued compared with the same period in 2013. There were 570,917 new residency visas issued in the first half of 2014 as opposed to 436,993 in 2013.<sup>102</sup>

A clear indication of foreign families' long-term stay, or perhaps settlement in the UAE, is the increasing number of non-Emirati births recorded in the country. Of these UAE-born non-nationals, an (unknown) share comprises second or even third-generation descendants of migrants. Figure 9 illustrates the diversity of the UAE population since the mid-1970s. The number of foreign births has grown consistently over the years, despite a slowdown during the 1990s, following the Gulf War. Interestingly, the upward trend in the number of foreign births was not affected by the recent economic slump. Emirati newborns have been a minority in the country since the onset of the oil boom four decades ago. As of 2015, Emiratis accounted for only 36 per cent of all births in the country.

Figure 9: Registered live births by nationality of the child (Emirati/ foreign national) (1976-2015)



Source: Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, Births and Deaths Publications.<sup>103</sup>

A small share of these foreign babies may be born to an Emirati mother and a foreign father. As a matter of fact, the proportion of Emiratis marrying a non-national has remained high throughout the decade 2005–2015. One out of five Emirati males marries a foreign bride (from 19 per cent of all marriages of male Emiratis in 2005 to 22 per cent in 2015); yet, Emirati women are less prone to such unions (around 10 per cent of all marriages of female Emiratis between 2005 and 2015). No data is available regarding the citizenship or nationality group of the foreign spouses.

### Policy Changes

Foreign migrants indeed sustain UAE’s demographic and economic growth rates, and some families may settle for years, and even for generations. The non-nationals, even the ones born in the UAE as second or even third-generation descendants of migrants, have no right so far to naturalisation and no protection against expulsion by authorities. The limited duration of most labour contracts compels foreign residents to a transient and insecure life. The complex mosaic of origins, lifestyles, skills and income levels creates a multiplicity of different situations among expatriates in the UAE, of perceptions of one’s agency and resources, of transnational connections, and sense of permanency in the UAE.<sup>104</sup> This is further complicated by the “tiering of citizenship and residency and hierarchisation of migrant

communities” performed by Emirati authorities, especially since 2004 and the start of the process of issuing ID cards.<sup>105</sup>

A Presidential decree was passed in 2011, which grants children of Emirati women married to non-nationals the right to apply for citizenship after reaching the age of 18. In 2012, 1,117 children of Emirati mothers were subsequently naturalised,<sup>106</sup> and 500 more were granted citizenship in 2013.<sup>107</sup> In late 2013, a decree by the Ruler of Sharjah, Dr Shaikh Sultan bin Mohammed Al-Qasimi, granted children of Emirati mothers and foreign fathers equal pay and benefits in government jobs in the emirate. They were also given access to other benefits such as allocated land and housing, scholarships, medical care, and child support for the mothers.<sup>108</sup> These measures privilege the rule of the pre-eminence of blood descent (nasab) over that of patriarchal lineage. This seemed to reflect the “Abu Dhabi view” on nationality. It was also a political move that enhanced the feeling of citizenship and sense of belonging of Emirati females. Yet, beyond such concerns, this move was also a way to cope with the expansion of the country’s resident population in line with Abu Dhabi 2030 and similar development targets. This very slow and selective way of expanding the citizenry is an indication of the enduring domestic socio-political tensions that ensue from the extraordinary population growth patterns of the UAE.

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## Endnotes

1. In general, however, British authorities did not record population movements in and out of the territory.
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4. "In addition, Asians had a distinct political advantage: Asian workers were unlikely to make claims for citizenship. Asians were a lien and could continue to remain disenfranchised. They were regarded as more likely to be passive observers of political processes rather than as potential activists or claimants on social services and other benefits of citizenship" See Nazli Choucri, "Asians in the Arab World: Labor Migration and Public Policy," *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 22, no. 2 (1986): 252-73, p. 252.
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6. UAE and Emirates' policy roadmaps are: *UAE Vision 2021: United in Ambition and Determination*, <https://www.vision2021.ae/en/our-vision>; *UAE Centennial Plan 2071*, <https://government.ae/en/about-the-uae/uae-future>; *Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030*, <http://www.tdic.ae/TDICWSAssets/En/pdf/Abu-Dhabi-Economic-Vision-2030.pdf>; *Dubai Plan 2021*, <https://www.dubaiplan2021.ae/dubai-plan-2021/>.
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11. <https://www.vision2021.ae/en/national-priority-areas/cohesive-society-and-preserved-identity>.
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22. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/how-to-get-good-conduct-certificate-in-the-uae->
23. “Emirates ID is responsible for the issuance of electronic identity cards for the whole population in the country, nationals and residents, in order to verify and confirm the identity of each individual through the unique identification numbers and smart cards that are linked with their biographical and biometric details. (...) Emirates ID is also responsible for the establishment of a modern population register in order to facilitate the obtainment of government services as well as to provide the required information for supporting decision making, strategic planning and the allocation of resources in all vital sectors in the UAE.” EIDA, *Strategic Plan 2014–2016*, p. 22, <http://www.id.gov.ae/assets/ql375iED.pdf.aspx>. See also Lori 2011.
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31. See for 2015: MoHRE, *Worker Welfare Report 2015*, <https://business-humanrights.org/sites/default/files/documents/UAE-MOHRE-Worker-Welfare-Report-2015.pdf>. The UAE also committed to the New York Declaration of September 2016 and the subsequent Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (<https://business-humanrights.org/sites/default/files/documents/UAE-MOHRE-Worker-Welfare-Report-2015.pdf>drafting of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration). See <http://gulftoday.ae/portal/aa619a64-9b54-4074-ae3e-f43768eb8787.aspx>.
32. Launched in 2008, the ADD brings together the Colombo Process states with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Yemen, Malaysia and Singapore. Topics currently discussed among the members are labour recruitment patterns and improvement of practices; pre-departure and post-arrival orientation programmes; the use of technology and labour data sharing; skills, certification, and recognition (see, for instance, <http://abudhabidialogue.org.ae/en/regional-ministerial-consultations/senior-officials-meeting-agenda-colombo-sri-lanka-2017.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>).
33. The NOC will be replaced by a visa stamp from the Ministry of Labour. The reforms also give employees the right to leave their companies if their employers do not respect contractual arrangements or other employment standards. The reform allows expatriates who have work permits to act as sponsors of their dependents, a role traditionally reserved for companies. See <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/uae-leads-on-path-to-worker-sponsorship-reform>.
34. [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?xfile=data/editorial/2015/April/editorial\\_April30.xml&section=editorial](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?xfile=data/editorial/2015/April/editorial_April30.xml&section=editorial).
35. Ministerial Decree No. 764 of 2015 on Ministry of Labour-approved Standard Employment Contracts introduces a mandatory employment offer which needs to be submitted to the Ministry of Labour before an entry permit is granted to an expatriate employee. The terms and conditions of the employment contract, which is subsequently signed between the two parties, cannot differ from the employment offer unless more favourable terms to the employee are agreed upon. Ministry of Labour Decree No. 765 of 2015 targets the Rules and Conditions for the Termination of Employment Relations and Ministerial Decree No. 766 of 2015 is on Rules and Conditions for Granting a Permit to a Worker for Employment by a New Employer. See: M. Zahra, "United Arab Emirates' Legal Framework of Migration," Explanatory Note No. 2/2017, GLMM, [http://gulfmigration.euhttp://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/exno/GLMM\\_EN\\_2017\\_02.pdf](http://gulfmigration.euhttp://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/exno/GLMM_EN_2017_02.pdf).
36. <https://government.ae/en/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/workers-safety-and-protection#passing-the-domestic-labour-law>.
37. Operating under a public-private partnership plan, the ministry assures the new centres of complete support, bringing functionality and service levels to match the preceding successor, Tasheel centres (<https://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/dubai/labour-ministry-reveals-details-for-hiring-domestic-workers>). Tasheel is an online government system managing all labour-related processes (application, labour permit delivery, transfer of sponsorship, cancellation of labour permits, etc.) with MoHRE, serving employers and foreign labourers (<http://www.tasheel.ae/>).
38. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new\\_delhi/documents/presentation/wcms\\_566151.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/presentation/wcms_566151.pdf).
39. <http://gulfnnews.com/news/uae/government/uae-work-permit-fees-linked-to-company-classification-1.2134346>.
40. Froilan T. Malit, Jr. and George Naufal, "Labour Migration, Skills Development and the Future of Work in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries," ILO Working Paper, October 2017.

41. Malit and Naufal, “Labour Migration, Skills Development and the Future of Work in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries,” 14.
42. <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/door-to-door-census-in-uae-is-scraped>.
43. Respectively by the Statistics Center-Abu Dhabi (SCAD) and the Fujairah Statistics Center. No detailed results have been published from Abu Dhabi’s census, and population estimates released by SCAD are still based on the 2005 census. Only one table was published on Fujairah’s population composition in 2011.
44. Respectively for Sharjah and Ajman: <http://www.sharjahupdate.com/2017/01/sharjah-census-2015-results-announced-sharjah-population-reaches-1-4-million/>, and <http://www.emirates247.com/news/emirates/ajman-s-population-totalled-504-847-people-2017-05-26-1.653531>.
45. <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2014/cr14187.pdf>, 15.
46. <http://www.thenational.ae/business/industry-insights/economics/standard-poors-warns-on-rak-rating-as-it-questions-population-data>.

The methodology used by UAE statistical apparatuses until 2010 was the component method, which projects the various components of population growth (fertility, mortality, migration) separately by sex, age group, etc., based on the 2005 census results. The UN estimated that the UAE civil registration system ensures a good coverage of events (90 per cent) (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/vitalstatkb/Attachment206.aspx>). However, administrative records pertaining to migration movements and to events affecting migrants may not be as accurate for reasons stated above. In a second phase, after 2010, the methodology for calculating population figures switched to an exponential growth model, whereby population is assumed to grow at a constant, geometric rate. Given the speed of demographic changes in the UAE, the assumption of a constant rate of growth is hard to confirm; moreover, the small size of each of the emirates’ population may amplify the errors, if any.

47. Total population figures by emirate published after 2010, at the level of each emirate, do not add up to the figure of 8.3 million but to a significantly lower figure of 5.6 million. Sources for each of these estimates are as follows:

Emirate	Est. total population (2010)	Federal and emirate-level sources of estimates
Abu Dhabi	1,967,659	Statistical Yearbook 2011
Dubai	1,905,476	<a href="https://government.ae/en/about-the-uae/the-seven-emirates/dubai">https://government.ae/en/about-the-uae/the-seven-emirates/dubai</a>
Sharjah	829,730	Statistical Yearbook 2012
Ras Al-Kh.	413,000	Statistical Yearbook 2013
Ajman	262,186	<i>Ajman in Figures</i> 2011
Al Fujairah	163,751	Statistical Yearbook 2011
Umm Al-Q.	65,000	<a href="https://government.ae/en/about-the-uae/the-seven-emirates/umm-al-quwain">https://government.ae/en/about-the-uae/the-seven-emirates/umm-al-quwain</a>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,606,802</b>	
<b>NBS estimate</b>	<b>8.3 million</b>	<a href="http://fcsa.gov.ae/layouts/download.aspx?SourceUrl=%2Fen-us%2FLists%2FD_StatisticsSubject%2FAttachments%2F68%2FPopulation%20Estimates%202006%20-%202010.pdf">http://fcsa.gov.ae/layouts/download.aspx?SourceUrl=%2Fen-us%2FLists%2FD_StatisticsSubject%2FAttachments%2F68%2FPopulation%20Estimates%202006%20-%202010.pdf</a>

The UN population database uses the figure of 8.3 million as a base for further estimates. The *CIA World Factbook* selected lower estimates, close to the sum of emirate-level population estimates <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ae.html>. No methodological indications were available, as to

how these were calculated. To date, it is impossible to figure out if the emirate-level population figures were underestimated, or if the federal-level figures were overestimated. Therefore, in this paper, we use the estimate provided by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority (FCSA), formerly NBS.

48. Estimate in line with the UN's: 9,400,145 (mid-year 2017). The *CIA World Factbook* quoted the estimate of 6,072,475 (July 2017 est.).
49. 21.6 and 26.1 in 2007 and 2008, respectively (unsmoothed data). If data are smoothed, the annual rate of increase is 23 and 15.3. These may be closer to reality, since intercensal estimates of population figures are obviously too low.
50. <http://www.constructionweekonline.com/article-14853-top-40-uae-projects-from-the-past-40-years/1/print/>.
51. The National Bureau of Statistics became the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority in 2015. Figures for 1970-2010: <http://gulfmigration.eu/uae-estimates-of-total-population-by-sex-sex-ratios-and-annual-demographic-growth-rates-1970-2010/>. Estimate for 2016: <http://fcsa.gov.ae/en-us/Pages/Statistics/UAE-Population-2016.aspx>.
52. Intercensal data are estimates. For details available from SCAD and from DSC on the source of the data for each year, please see: <http://gulfmigration.eu/uae-abu-dhabi-mid-year-population-estimates-by-nationality-emiratinon-emirati-and-sex-1960-2010/> and <http://gulfmigration.eu/uae-dubai-estimates-of-total-population-by-sex-1953-1968-census-dates-2006-2013/>.
53. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/economy/dubai-set-to-grow-faster-in-2016-imf>.
54. Abu Dhabi: mid-year figures and Dubai: end-of-year figures.
55. Abu Dhabi: <http://gulfmigration.eu/uae-abu-dhabi-mid-year-population-estimates-by-nationality-emiratinon-emirati-1960-2010/>. Figures for 2011-2016: SCAD's website, *Abu Dhabi Statistical Yearbooks*, chapter "Population and Demography": <https://www.scad.ae/en/pages/GeneralPublications.aspx?pubid=79&themeid=7>; Dubai: <http://gulfmigration.eu/uae-dubai-estimates-of-total-population-by-sex-1953-1968-census-dates-2006-2013/>. Figures for 2014-2016: DSC's website, "Reports" section, "Estimated Population Number by Nationality" [https://www.dsc.gov.ae/en-us/Themes/Pages/Population-and-Vital-Statistics.aspx?Theme=42&year=2016#DSC\\_Tab1](https://www.dsc.gov.ae/en-us/Themes/Pages/Population-and-Vital-Statistics.aspx?Theme=42&year=2016#DSC_Tab1).
56. FCSA's population estimate for 2016 is not disaggregated by nationality. Using the estimate of 5.6 million residents in the UAE in 2010, foreign residents would have made up 83 per cent of the total population.
57. Source of the data: see <http://gulfmigration.eu/uae-population-by-nationality-emirati-non-emirati-at-census-dates-1975-2005-and-2010-estimate/>.
58. Source of the data: see <http://gulfmigration.eu/uae-population-by-nationality-emirati-non-emirati-and-emirate-2005/>.
59. Fujairah Statistics Center, *Statistical Yearbook 2016*.
60. SCAD Abu Dhabi, *Statistical Yearbook 2017*, <https://www.scad.ae/en/pages/GeneralPublications.aspx?pubid=79&themeid=7>.
61. SCAD Abu Dhabi SYB 2017; Dubai: DSC statistics, [https://www.dsc.gov.ae/Report/Copy%20of%20DSC\\_SYB\\_2016\\_01%20%2001.pdf](https://www.dsc.gov.ae/Report/Copy%20of%20DSC_SYB_2016_01%20%2001.pdf); Sharjah: census 2015, <http://www.sharjahupdate.com/2017/01/>

sharjah-census-2015-results-announced-sharjah-population-reaches-1-4-million/; Ras Al-Khaimah: Government of RAK, Department of Economic Development, SYB 2013; Ajman: census 2017, <http://www.emirates247.com/news/emirates/ajman-s-population-totalled-504-847-people-2017-05-26-1.653531>; Fujairah: Fujairah Statistics Center, SYB 2016; UAE total population: Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority (FCSA), <http://fcsa.gov.ae/en-us/Pages/Statistics/UAE-Population-2016.aspx> (estimation based on administrative records).

62. The sex ratio of total population aged 15 and more is 357 males for 100 females. For the non-nationals alone: 420 males for 100 females. See: <http://gulfmigration.eu/national-and-non-national-populations-aged-15-and-above-by-sex-and-sex-ratios-in-gcc-countries-national-statistics-latest-year-or-period-available/>.
63. Population aged 15 years and more, respectively in 2011 and 2013.
64. SCAD, Abu Dhabi Statistical Yearbooks 2015 and 2016.
65. DSC, Labour Force Survey 2016.
66. Indians were even estimated to number 3.3 million in 2017, according to the UN, which would make the India-UAE corridor the second largest in the world after the Mexico-US corridor (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017); *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2017 Revision* (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2017), workbook UN\_MigrantStockByOrigin AndDestination\_2017.xls). The exact source of the estimate is not available in UN database's metadata.
67. <http://www.bqdoha.com/2015/04/uae-population-by-nationality>. *BQ* is a business newspaper based in Doha, Qatar. Data presented in the article were the most recent estimates supplied to the writers by origin countries' embassies.  

In general, sending countries' estimates cannot be as accurate as receiving countries'. Moreover, embassies alone do not have the means to record comprehensively the presence and characteristics of their resident nationals, which relies on expatriates' will or need to frequent consular services, declare their presence and departure, etc. A comprehensive account of national communities thus has to rely on the receiving country's records of residents (from Interior Ministries or population registers). In the UAE, EIDA is in the process of completing the recording of all residents, nationals and non-nationals, in the country in order to deliver ID documents to all.
68. It should be kept in mind that the following data are taken from labour force surveys, which are sample surveys. The sampling base of these surveys is family budget surveys, which in turn depend on the 2005 census with minor modifications. Therefore, the Labour Force Surveys' results should be taken with caution, even though they are the only available source for describing the emirate's population. I thank one of the reviewers of this paper for informing me on the LFS's sampling procedure.
69. These data have not been published (i.e., disclosed to the public).
70. Mouawiya Al Awad, "The Population of Dubai," WP: 16-08, Dubai: Dubai Economic Council, 2008, 8.
71. DSC's website, "Reports" section, [https://www.dsc.gov.ae/en-us/Themes/Pages/Labour.aspx? Theme=41#DSC\\_Tab1](https://www.dsc.gov.ae/en-us/Themes/Pages/Labour.aspx? Theme=41#DSC_Tab1).
72. Malit, F. and A. Al-Youha, "Kenyan Migration to the Gulf Countries: Balancing Economic Interests and Worker Protection," *Migration Information Source*, May 18, 2016.
73. 2013 data, <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/new-rules-for-emiratis-in-private-sector-jobs>.
74. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), *Labor Force Survey 2009* (Abu Dhabi: NBS, 2011). The remaining 5 per cent is employed in "joint" and other sectors.

75. *FCSA, Labour Force Survey 2016.*
76. <http://gulfmigration.eu/uae-employed-population-by-nationality-group-and-major-occupation-group-2008/>.
77. We use Dubai Statistics Center's Labour Force Surveys, because they distinguished the Armed Forces among categories of occupations. The Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority's Labour Force Survey 2016 excluded those working in these occupations.
78. DSC, Labour Force Survey 2015.
79. DSC's website, "Reports" section, [https://www.dsc.gov.ae/en-us/Themes/Pages/Labour.aspx? Theme=41&year=2015#DSC\\_Tab1](https://www.dsc.gov.ae/en-us/Themes/Pages/Labour.aspx? Theme=41&year=2015#DSC_Tab1)
80. *Ibid.*
81. MoHRE, Open data section (<http://www.mohre.gov.ae/en/data-library.aspx>).
82. <http://indembassyuae.org/en/community-affairs/indian-community-in-the-uae/>. (link dead).
83. And 49 per cent of foreign women. Population aged 15 and above. Dubai Statistics Centre (DSC), Bulletin of Labor Force Survey Results 2016 [Dubai: Population Statistics Section (DSC), June 2017 (in Arabic only)].  
However, the two categories are not mutually exclusive and wives, husbands and daughters sponsored by family member visa are allowed to work (given that no UAE national is available to take the post). Yet, sons over the age of 18 have to be sponsored by their employer if they secure a job. Article 6 of Ministerial Resolution No. (1188) for 2010 states that: "A work permit is issued to those sponsored by their family residency under the following categories:  
1- Females over the age of 18.  
2- Husband of a female national.  
3- Sons and daughters of female nationals."
84. 7.9 per cent in 2015 (<http://gulfmigration.eu/qatar-population-aged-15-nationality-qatari-non-qatari-sex-relation-labour-force-2015/>).
85. <https://government.ae/en/information-and-services/visa-and-emirates-id/sponsoring-residency-visa-by-expatriates>. The amounts are equivalent to \$817 and \$1,089 (663 and 884 Euros), respectively, as of January 2018. In May 2014, a hike in the salary threshold for family reunion was announced (at a minimum salary of Dh10,000 was announced and later denied (<http://www.emirates247.com/news/dubai-says-no-hike-in-minimum-salary-for-uae-family-visa-2014-05-04-1.547896>)).  
This Dh4,000 level of income allowing for family reunification is similar to that of Kuwait where the minimum salary allowing for family reunification is KD250 (F. De Bel-Air, "The Demographic and Economic Framework of Migration in Kuwait," EN 1/2013, GLMM, <http://gulfmigration.eu/>).
86. [https://www.dsc.gov.ae/Report/DSC\\_LFS\\_2016\\_02\\_08.pdf](https://www.dsc.gov.ae/Report/DSC_LFS_2016_02_08.pdf).
87. <https://government.ae/en/information-and-services/visa-and-emirates-id/sponsoring-residency-visa-by-expatriates>.
88. However, with differences according to nationality. For example, 30 per cent of Arab expats stayed in the UAE for more than 10 years, as opposed to 21 per cent of Asians and 15 per cent of Europeans and Americans. See Mouawiya Al Awad, "The Population of Dubai."
89. <http://gulfmigration.eu/uae-non-emirati-population-by-sex-age-group-and-duration-of-stay-in-the-uae-five-year-periods-2005/>.

90. <http://gulfmigration.eu/percent-distribution-of-non-qatari-population-by-duration-of-stay-in-qatar-for-each-municipality-2010/>.
91. <http://gulfmigration.eu/gcc-national-non-national-populations-aggregated-age-groups-gcc-countries-national-statistics-2005-2016/>; Qatar: <http://gulfmigration.eu/qatar-population-nationality-qatari-non-qatari-five-year-age-group-2015/>.
92. <http://gulfmigration.eu/national-and-non-national-populations-by-aggregated-age-groups-in-gcc-countries-national-statistics-latest-year-or-period-available/>.
93. <http://fcsa.gov.ae/en-us/Pages/Statistics/Statistics-by-Subject.aspx>.
94. Some data are published sporadically by relevant authorities, but with no continuity in time and consistency of definition of document between periods.
95. *UAE Yearbook 2010*.
96. Malit and Youha, "Labor Migration in the United Arab Emirates."
97. <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/bangladesh/country-to-try-for-reviving-manpower-market-in-uae-1517112434>.
98. Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), compendium of OFW statistics: <http://www.poea.gov.ph/ofwstat/ofwstat.html>; Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) of Bangladesh: <http://www.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction>; Ministry of External Affairs, *MEA Annual Yearbooks*.
99. Last available data. These figures concern visas, not permits. The visas delivered are more than the permits.
100. See endnote 83.
101. Ministry of Interior data, see <http://gulfmigration.eu/uae-abu-dhabi-entry-visas-issued-by-purpose-of-entry-1974-2010/>.
102. <http://gulfnnews.com/news/uae/general/uae-residency-visas-issued-up-30-this-year-1.1357431>.
103. <http://fcsa.gov.ae/en-us/Pages/Statistics/Statistics-by-Subject.aspx>.
104. Among many field works available on migrants in the UAE, N. Vora's book on second- and third-generation middle-class Indians in Dubai emphasises the feeling of belonging through "consumer citizenship" (Neha Vora, *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2013). See also Syed Ali, "Going and Coming and Going Again: Second-Generation Migrants in Dubai," *Mobilities* Vol. 6, no. 4 (2011): 553-568, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2011.603947>.
105. Manal A. Jamal, "The "Tiering" of Citizenship and Residency and the 'Hierarchization' of Migrant Communities: The United Arab Emirates in Historical Context," *International Migration Review* (Fall 2015), doi: 10.1111/imre.12132.
106. <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/1-117-foreign-children-granted-uae-citizenship-446111.html>.
107. <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/sheikh-khalifa-grants-uae-citizenship-to-500-children-of-emirati-mothers>.
108. <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/sharjah-ruler-issues-citizenship-decree>.

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**Françoise De Bel-Air** (Ph.D.) is a researcher and consultant based in Paris, France. A socio-demographer by training, she specialises in the political demography of Arab countries, with an emphasis on the Middle Eastern and Gulf States. She has been a research fellow and programme manager in the French Institute for the Near East (IFPO) in Amman, Jordan. She is currently involved in several European and international projects focusing on recent changes in family structures in the Arab world, highly-skilled and female migration, as well as GCC countries' demographic dynamics and policies. She has published over thirty-five book chapters, scientific articles and research papers, and an edited volume on Migration and Politics in the Middle East (2006). She is currently working on a book on Jordan and the refugee issue. Contact: [f\\_dba@hotmail.com](mailto:f_dba@hotmail.com)

**Publication Reference:** Citations and quotations should always include either the long or the short reference provided here. Generally the long reference should be used but in exceptional cases (e.g., not enough room), the short reference may be used.

**Long Reference:** Françoise De Bel-Air, "Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE," Explanatory Note No. 1/2018, Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population Programme (GLMM) of the Migration Policy Center (MPC) and the Gulf Research Center (GRC), <http://gulfmigration.eu>.

**Short Reference:** F. De Bel-Air, "Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE," Explanatory Note No. 1/2018, GLMM, <http://gulfmigration.eu>.

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