Introduction
In September of 2015, Oxford Strategic Consulting conducted a survey of Emirati nationals on their opinions pertaining to employment in the UAE. This report provides a summary of the results and offers new insights underpinning the current and future aspirations of Emiratis which will serve as a useful tool to both the private and public sectors as well as governments and organisations. It is clear that there are significant and dynamic shifts in the labour market in terms of motivation, ideal careers and approaches to employment for Emirati citizens – both young professionals and later-career professionals.
Methodology
▪ We asked a representative sample of 300 working Emirati nationals about their views and attitudes towards employment in the UAE.

▪ Interviews were conducted over the phone by a third party fieldwork provider.

▪ The survey covered their perceptions of the best employers, their ideal job role in the future, the best way for employers to attract Emiratis, the least attractive employment sectors for Emiratis, the importance of the private sector and difficulties faced when searching for jobs.

▪ The results have been presented at an overall level and also split by gender, age, working status and employment sector. Chi square and correlation tests have been carried out where appropriate.
Sample Breakdown
The survey was nationally representative of males (50%) and females (50%)

Respondents were aged between 18 and 69 years old
- 55% were aged between 18 and 29 years old
- 45% were aged between 30 and 69 years old

Respondents were based in Abu Dhabi (40%), Dubai (37%) and Sharjah (23%)

Two thirds of respondents worked in government and semi-government (87%) and the remaining 13% worked in either the private sector or family businesses
Results
Employers of Choice by Sector

- The sectors Emiratis most wanted to work in were the public sector (54%), defence and security (35%), banking & finance (20%) and oil & gas (20%)
- Telecommunications (14%) and aviation (11%) were also frequently mentioned
- Males were significantly more likely than females to want to work in defence and security (52% vs. 18%)
- Females were significantly more likely than males to want to work in banking and finance (29% vs. 11%)
- Those aged under 30 were significantly more likely than those aged over 30 to want to work in oil and gas (25% vs. 14%)
- Those aged over 30 were more likely than those aged under 30 to want to work in the public sector (60% vs. 49%)

Please tell us the top three organisations you would like to work for as an Emirati national

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis by sector</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence and Security</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Banking and Finance</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Oil and Gas</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aviation</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utility</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Real Estate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shipping</td>
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<td>Industrial</td>
<td>1%</td>
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Employers of Choice by Organisation

▪ On average respondents named three organisations they would like to work for as an Emirati national

▪ They were most likely to want to work for the General Command of Police (29%), Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) (19%), Municipality / Civil Service (16%), Road & Transport Authority (RTA) (15%) Armed Forces (15%) or Etisalat (14%)

▪ Males were significantly more likely than females to want to work for organisations related to defence and security:
  ▪ The General Command of Police (43% vs. 15%)
  ▪ Armed Forces (23% vs 7%)
  ▪ Ministry Of Defence (4% vs. 0%)

▪ Females were significantly more likely than males to want to work for organisations related to banking & finance and education:
  ▪ Real Estate Bank (15% vs. 3%)
  ▪ National Bank of Abu Dhabi (15% vs. 3%)
  ▪ Ministry of Education (10% vs. 4%)
  ▪ Tamweel (8% vs. 1%)
  ▪ Emirates Islamic Bank (7% vs. 0%)

▪ Those aged under 30 were significantly more likely than those aged over 30 to want to work for:
  ▪ Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) (24% vs. 13%)
  ▪ Emirates Airline (11% vs. 4%)
  ▪ Emirates National Oil Company (ENOC) (7% vs. 0%)

▪ Those aged over 30 were significantly more likely than those aged under 30 to want to work for:
  ▪ Ruler’s Court (11% vs. 4%)
  ▪ Chamber of Commerce and Industry (3% vs. 0%)
Please tell us the top three organisations you would like to work for as an Emirati national

Top 10 organisations mentioned

- General Command of Police: 29%
- Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC): 19%
- Municipality/Civil Service: 16%
- Road and Transport Authority (RTA): 15%
- Armed Forces: 15%
- Etisalat: 14%
- Real Estate Bank: 9%
- National Bank of Abu Dhabi (NBAD): 9%
- Customs: 8%
- Emirates Airline: 8%
Ideal Job Role

- Emiratis were significantly more likely to want to work in Administration than any other job role (54%)
- Engineering (18%), Accountancy (18%) and Banking & Finance (13%) were also popular choices
- Males were more likely than females to consider their ideal role in Engineering (22% vs. 15%) or Accountancy
- Females were significantly more likely than males to consider their ideal role in Banking & Finance (21% vs. 4%) or Teaching (8% vs 1%)
- Those aged under 30 were significantly more likely than those aged over 30 to consider their ideal role in Accountancy (22% vs. 12%)
- Those aged over 30 were significantly more likely than those aged under 30 to consider their ideal role as a Business Leader (15% vs. 8%) or running their own business (13% vs. 8%)

What would be your ideal role in the future?

- Administration 54%
- Engineering 18%
- Accountancy 18%
- Banking and Finance 13%
- Public Sector role 12%
- Business leader 11%
- IT/Computing 11%
- Running my own business 11%
- Customer Service 9%
- Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations 8%
- Journalism or media 6%
- Retail 6%
- Caring for others 5%
- Teacher or lecturer 4%
- Lawyer or legal advisor 4%
- Medical role 2%
- Join family business 2%
Attracting Emirati Employees

- Over half of respondents felt organisations needed to offer high salaries (59%) or generous benefit packages (57%) to attract the best Emiratis.

- Flexible working hours (38%), international assignments (21%) and easy work (20%) were also frequently selected.

- Only around one out of 10 mentioned the opportunity to serve society (12%) or work in challenging job roles (10%).

- Males were significantly more likely than females to select high salaries (66% vs. 53%).

- Females were significantly more likely than males to select generous benefit packages (63% vs. 51%), international assignments (26% vs. 16%) and fast promotion (17% vs. 9%).

- Those working in government job roles were more likely than those working in the private sector to select high salaries (62% vs. 59%), generous benefits packages (59% vs. 54%) and easy work (21% vs. 19%).

- Those working in the private sector were more likely than those working for the government likely to select fast promotion (24%) and challenging job roles (16%).

If you were an employer what would you offer to attract the best Emiratis to your organisation?

- High salaries: 59%
- Fringe benefits like medical insurance, interest free loans and...: 57%
- Flexible working hours: 38%
- International assignments: 21%
- Easy work: 20%
- Reputation to be proud of: 16%
- Fast promotion: 13%
- Great training and development: 13%
- Offer the opportunity to serve society: 12%
- Provide challenging roles: 10%
Least Favoured Employment Sector

- Aerospace was considered as the least attractive employment sector by four out of 10 respondents (40%) – followed by Manufacturing (35%) and Agriculture (34%)
- Males were more likely than females to select Construction (23% vs. 19%) or Entertainment (12% vs. 5%)
- Females were significantly more likely than males to select Tourism and hospitality (29% vs. 18%) or Health Care (18% vs. 10%)

Which are the least attractive employment sectors for Emiratis?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Sector</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aerospace</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tourism and hospitality</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chemical/Pharmaceutical</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer/IT</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1%</td>
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</tbody>
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0% 100%
Importance of the Private Sector

- Three-quarters (74%) felt the private sector was very or extremely important for Emirati employment – no significant differences between demographic subgroups

Ease of Finding a Job

- Over half (55%) felt it was easy for an Emirati national to find a job – only a fifth (20%) felt it was difficult
- Those aged under 30 were significantly more likely than those aged over 30 to feel it was easy to find a job (64% vs. 44%)
- Those working in the private sector were significantly more likely than those working in government/semi government roles to feel it was easy to find a job (73% vs. 52%)
Difficulty Sourcing Employment

- Respondents were most likely to feel that low pay was the main difficulty faced by Emiratis when searching for a job (41%)
- Long hours (33%), awareness of jobs (32%) and suitability of jobs (31%) were also frequently selected
- Males were significantly more likely than females to mention low pay (47% vs. 35%)
- Females were significantly more likely than males to mention awareness of jobs (37% vs. 27%), suitability of jobs (37% vs. 25%) and knowing how to approach companies (27% vs. 15%)

What difficulties (if any) do Emirati nationals face finding jobs?

- Pay is too low: 41%
- Hours are too long: 33%
- Don’t hear about jobs: 32%
- Not enough suitable jobs: 31%
- Don’t know how to approach companies: 21%
- Don’t know how to do an interview: 12%
- Don’t know how to write a CV: 10%
- Don’t want to work just with expats: 10%
- Emiratis don’t want to employ Emiratis: 10%
- Don’t know enough good contacts: 9%
- Expats don’t want to employ Emiratis: 6%
- No difficulties: 9%
Analysis
Maximising female employment

The survey found UAE female nationals are significantly more likely than their male counterparts to want to work for organisations related to the banking & finance sector. Given the increased interest in maximising female employment across the GCC, the banking & finance sector serves as an excellent starting point for employing more Emirati females in the UAE’s workforce.

Governments and organisations would do well to tailor their employment programmes to more closely reflect the attitudes and motivations of their female nationals. For example, Emirati females ranked the Real Estate Bank and the National Bank of Abu Dhabi as top prospects for employment.

These results suggest that the Real Estate Bank and the National Bank of Abu Dhabi are taking the right steps to attract Emirati females. More can be done to identify what these organisations are doing correctly so that other organisations within the sector can learn useful techniques for attracting and employing more Emirati women. Moreover, female employment lessons from the banking & finance sector should be shared with other sectors to replicate similar success stories in other aspects of the UAE’s economy.
Emiratis prefer local employment flavour

Emiratis are significantly more likely to work for local, Emirati organisations rather than international companies. In fact, ARAMCO and Total were the only international companies listed by the entire sample of surveyed Emiratis as one of the top 3 companies to work for. On the one hand, these results suggest that government and semi-government organisations will be most sought after by job-seeking Emiratis.

However, the strong preference for local, Emirati organisations also suggests that Emirati entrepreneurs growing local companies may be better-suited to attract Emirati employees than international organisations. In this light, Emiratis’ preference for Emirati companies over international organisations also supports the UAE’s continued initiatives to develop more Emirati entrepreneurs in the country.

The results of these surveys can also be utilised by new Emirati entrepreneurs. Emirati entrepreneurs could align their business strategy and services with key national organisations, like the General Command of Police, in order to attract more national employees. Not all Emirati nationals will receive the opportunity to work for the Police, but they may be more likely to work with a start-up if the company works closely with the police, for example. By aligning entrepreneurial start-ups with key national organisations, local entrepreneurs will enjoy the additional benefit of contributing to strategic country goals.
Aim high but prepare the baseline

Emiratis were significantly more likely to work in Administration than any other role (54%), and females were no more likely than men to prefer a role in Administration. On the one hand, there is plenty of room to improve the employment ambitions of UAE nationals. Emirati nationals can certainly aim higher than administrative roles – in fact Oxford Strategic Consulting believes that nearly 60% of Emirati nationals need to be groomed as leaders if nationals are to run their country.

On the other hand, if a large number of Emiratis are going to work in Administration, then management and HR roles need to be adequately professionalised. Oxford recommends that Emirati nationals in Administration be trained, qualified and accredited from top awarding bodies, like CMI and CIPD.

It is worth noting that females were no more likely than men to designate Administration as an ideal role in the future. These results suggest that stereotypes about females preferring administrative roles may not be as salient in the UAE as in other places around the globe. At the same time, ‘Administration’ could cover a wide range of roles from junior to very senior roles.
Money is important but not everything

Employees across the globe consider salary and benefits as very important aspects of their jobs, and in this respect Emirati employees are no different than their global counterparts. Yet Emiratis also view flexible working hours (38%) and international assignments (21%) as other ways in which employers can attract national employees. The rapidly changing nature of the traditional ‘workspace’ should leave plenty of room for flexible hours and options to work remotely.

Moreover, the flexible hours and remote working will also help attract more female nationals. At the same time, promoting jobs with international assignments may also help attract additional national employees. While the survey results found that Emiratis overwhelmingly prefer to work for a local company, emphasising positions with international assignments and travel components can help attract those Emirati nationals who are excited to travel outside the country.

The results from this question stand in contrast to results from previous surveys on the motivations of young Emiratis, which repeatedly suggest a high motivation to serve the country/society and to make the family proud. There are three probable explanations for these contrasting survey results. First, this question asks ‘what employers could offer’ and it may be that the respondents did not think employers could offer anything to meet those motivations. Second, the age profile was different (previous surveys have addressed younger Emiratis) and the motivations might actually be different. Third, the respondents to previous surveys have been ‘pre-work’ and motivations might change once they join the working population.
Focus talent development on strategic sectors

The survey results clearly indicate the least attractive employment sectors for Emirati job seekers. Aerospace was considered as the least attractive employment sector by four out of 10 respondents (40%) – followed by Manufacturing (35%) and Agriculture (34%). It is imperative that nationally strategic sectors are made attractive for Emirati candidates.

Oxford Strategic Consulting has demonstrable experience in addressing negative perceptions and dramatically increasing the attractiveness of sectors. Jumeirah Group, for example, has been extremely effective in demonstrating that careers in tourism can be exciting, challenging, and rewarding. Consequently, it is no surprise that Jumeirah Group in the UAE touts an impressive number of nationals amongst their management team.

Specific national demographics have differing employment preferences that should not be ignored. For example, the older a participant, the more likely they are to consider a role in Customer Services.¹ At the same time, Emirati women are more than 3 times more likely as men to aspire to a career in the medical profession.²

¹ Test: correlation: \( r = .205, p < .01. \)
² Test: Chi Square (1) = 11.380, \( p < .01, \) Odds Ratio = 3.14.
Emiratis as allies to private sector employment

It is clear that governments across the GCC consider private sector development to be a strategic country goal, and major consultancies operating in the region echo the importance of the private sector for employment. However, few have thought to ask national citizens directly about their thoughts on the private sector. When given a choice between the public and private sector, many national citizens tend to prefer the public sector.

Yet when asked exclusively about the private sector, 74% of UAE citizens surveyed felt that the private sector was ‘Very Important’ or ‘Extremely Important’ for employment. These results reveal that UAE citizens must be viewed as allies, rather than obstacles, in the development of the private sector. While many may ultimately prefer to work in the public sector, the vast majority of citizens recognise the importance of the private sector for employment and are aligned with the government on this strategic country goal.
Unemployment overestimated?

Despite the fears concerning youth unemployment in the MENA region, youth in the UAE appear significantly more optimistic about employment prospects than older citizens, according to the survey results. Those nationals aged under 30 were significantly more likely than those aged over 30 to feel it was easy to find a job (64% vs. 44%). These results seem to suggest that claims made across the region regarding the high levels of youth unemployment and dissatisfaction may not be as salient within the UAE.

Oxford Strategic Consulting has long argued that the employment challenges in the UAE revolve more around finding the right job for young Emirati citizens rather than just finding a job. For this reason, we recommend that organisations pay closer attention to youth motivations (see Oxford’s Maximising Emirati Talent report) in order to understand what roles Emiratis are interested in and why.
Survey respondents were most likely to feel that low pay was the main difficulty faced by Emiratis when searching for a job (41%), and long hours (33%) also represented a main difficulty. Aside from low pay and long hours, awareness of jobs (32%) and suitability of jobs (31%) were also frequently selected by nationals.

These results suggest that UAE-based organisations can do more to advertise vacant positions as well as help connect Emiratis with suitable roles. The results also suggest that a greater focus on direct interventions like CV workshops and interview trainings for job seeking nationals may help increase the self-confidence of nationals and consequently improve their employment prospects.
Contact & inquiries

For additional information about the survey findings and analyses in this report, or to learn more about Oxford Strategic Consulting’s other research on Nationalisation in the UAE, please contact Robert Mogielnicki at robert.mogielnicki@oxfordstrategicconsulting.com.

For more insights, publications and services related to HR in the GCC, please visit www.oxfordstrategicconsulting.com.