

# Recruiting Top Emirati Graduates



## Introduction

- **Employment of young UAE nationals** is now a top priority for the country and for companies at all levels. There is intense competition between employers for attracting, recruiting and retaining qualified Emirati graduates
- Online recruiting firm, GulfTalent, in association with ten leading universities in the UAE, has conducted a research study on the **employment preferences** of Emirati graduates and which organisations they would most like to work for
- The study is based on a survey of **112 Emirati youth**, both male and female, who are about to graduate from university or have recently graduated
- It is hoped that the survey findings will help employers **evaluate and improve** their approach to **recruiting Emirati graduates**

# Universities Represented in the Survey



جامعة زايد  
ZAYED UNIVERSITY

Zayed University



American University  
of Sharjah



جامعة أبوظبي  
ABU DHABI UNIVERSITY

Abu Dhabi  
University



American University in  
Dubai



Al Ain University of  
Science and Technology



British University in  
Dubai



Al Ain Men's  
College



كلية دبي للإدارة الحكومية  
DUBAI SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

Dubai School of  
Government



الجامعة الكندية دبي  
CANADIAN UNIVERSITY OF DUBAI

Canadian University  
of Dubai



Middlesex  
University

Middlesex University  
Dubai Campus

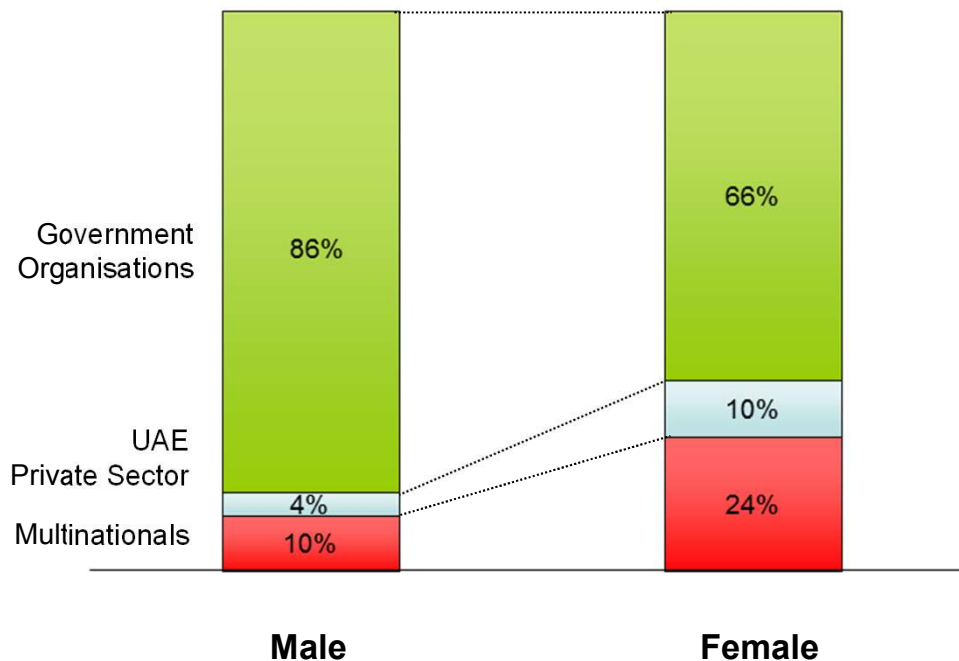
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## **Employment Preferences of Graduates**

# Government vs. Private Sector

## Graduate Preferences by Type of Employer



## Observations

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- **Government organisations** are the dominant choice for both male and female graduates, preferred over both UAE private sector and Multinational employers
- **UAE private sector firms** are the last choice for Emirati graduates, both male and female
- **Female graduates** are more willing than males to consider a career in the **private sector**

## Reasons for attractiveness of Government jobs

### Key Findings

- The graduates' preference for government jobs appears to be driven by the following widespread perceptions:
  - Better **salaries and benefits** than the private sector
  - Shorter **working hours** and more holidays
  - Greater **job security**
  - Good **working conditions** (office based, without shifts, etc.)
  - More overall **flexibility** at work
  - **Cultural fit** and presence of other Emiratis (see next page)
- Government organisations seem to dominate the heart and minds of Emirati graduates, with private sector firms rarely even getting considered
- A small number of Emirati graduates prefer the private sector due to perceived greater challenge and learning opportunity in private companies, particularly multinationals



### Selected Quotes from Graduates

- *“The government sector has better packages for us: AED 30,000 and above, at least for my major. If I get married and have children, they will have education fees paid for as well. Also, the working hours are better. I like to work 8-2 or 8-3”*
- *“Government salaries are way above private companies. Private sector salaries are almost 1/3 of the salary that government employees get.”*
- *“The other benefit is that I can't be fired in government. I feel more secure in my job”*
- *“We are in a country where family is more important than anything else. We have family commitments that mean we sometimes need 2-3 days off or need to leave early”*
- *“I prefer government sector for holidays. Private sector may not give holidays when you need it. They have stricter rules”*
- *“I like to work in the office, a normal job so you can see your family. I don't like to work shifts”*

## Cultural Considerations

### Key Findings

Interviews with Emirati graduates suggest that the cultural atmosphere of the workplace plays a huge part in their job selection:

- Emiratis are attracted by the prospect of **working with other Emiratis**
- While open to working with other cultures and nationalities, it is important for Emirati graduates to feel that **their culture and values** are respected in the workplace
- Workplaces that are heavily expatriate with very few locals may make some Emirati graduates feel uncomfortable, because they are not sure that they will be **understood or respected** there
- Among female Emiratis in particular, there is some apprehension on whether heavily expatriate-based private sector firms will accommodate their norms and traditions – including **dress code** and, for some, the need for **dedicated working areas** separate from men



### Selected Quotes from Graduates

- *“I would prefer locals in the work environment as I feel more comfortable with them. We have the same ways and behavior, which is different to other nationalities”*
- *“I like to work with other people who are not from my country or religion, to learn about their beliefs and culture. As long as I am keeping my beliefs, I have no problem accepting others”*
- *“I have worked with people from different backgrounds before and it’s fine. I don’t mind working at any place as long as the people respect my culture and religion. But I prefer locals as we have the same beliefs. ”*
- *“Expats sometimes have habits which make me uncomfortable. I find it not respectful to my culture when it is done in front of me. For instance the way men and women interact”*
- *“If there are more expats than Muslims in the workplace, it might be difficult for me to work there”*
- *“The job I am looking for is a place that suits me. Lots of Emirati girls want to work with companies but they should have women only section. That’s why some won’t work. [Company X] want Emiratis but there is no private section”*



# Most Popular Employers

## Ranking of Top 40 Employers by Popularity

Based on number of votes received from Emirati graduates surveyed\*

1. Mubadala
2. Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC)
3. Masdar
4. Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (ENEC)
5. Abu Dhabi Executive Council
6. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA)
7. Emirates Airline
8. Abu Dhabi Media Zone Authority (twofour54)
9. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)
10. Abu Dhabi Water & Electricity Authority (ADWEA)
11. Ministry of Presidential Affairs
12. Leo Burnett
13. Health Authority - Abu Dhabi (HAAD)
14. Sheikh Khalifa Medical City (SKMC)
15. Musanada
16. Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD)
17. Al Ain City Municipality (AACM)
18. Yahsat
19. Dolphin Energy
20. Tourism Development & Investment Co. (TDIC)
21. Emirates Aluminium (EMAL)
22. Department of Transport (DoT)
23. Emirates National Oil Company (ENOC)
24. Abu Dhabi Accountability Authority (ADAA)
25. Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture & Heritage (ADACH)
26. Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC)
27. Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council (UPC)
28. United Nations
29. Etisalat
30. Ministry of Education
31. Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA)
32. KPMG
33. Emaar
34. Family Development Foundation (FDF)
35. Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research
36. Etihad Airways
37. Al Tayer Group
38. Abu Dhabi Health Services Company (SEHA)
39. Tawam Hospital
40. Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care and Special Needs (ZHO)

\*Further rankings by segment (gender, region and major) are shown separately.

For methodology and profile of respondents, see section on "Methodology"

Source: GulfTalent Survey of Emirati Graduates

# Basis of Graduates' Choice of Employers

## What Graduates Look for in their chosen Employers

% selecting item as one of the top 3 factors for them

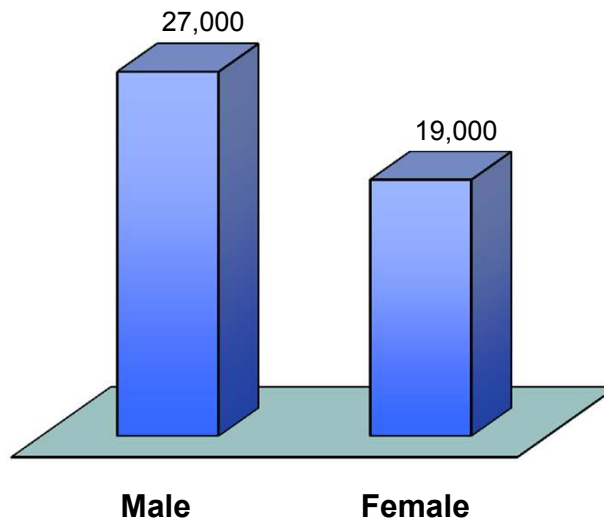


## Observations

- While the majority of graduates opt for the government sector, their specific **choice of employer** within this sector is driven by several factors
- **Challenging and interesting work** is the top factor for graduates when selecting an employer
- Other **top attractions** for graduates include:
  - Training and development
  - Good public image and reputation of company
  - Attractive salary and benefits

# Salary Expectations

## Median Salary Expectation of Graduates UAE Dirham per Month\*



## Observations

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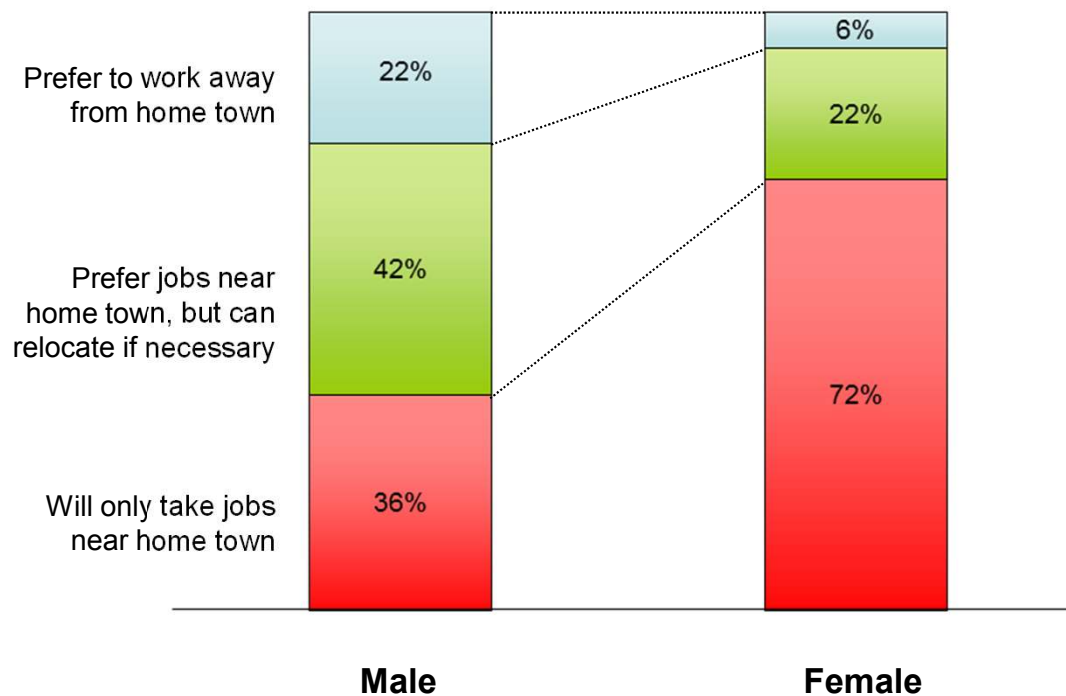
- Male graduates seek a minimum monthly salary of **27,000** Dirhams (median expectation)
- Female graduates' expectations are lower than males, at **19,000** Dirhams per month
- At the top end, many graduates reported their ideal desired packages to be in the range of **35,000 - 40,000** Dirhams per month

\* All guaranteed cash payments, including allowances

Source: GulfTalent Survey of Emirati Graduates

# Impact of Job Location on Career Decisions

## Relocation Preferences of Graduates\*



## Observations

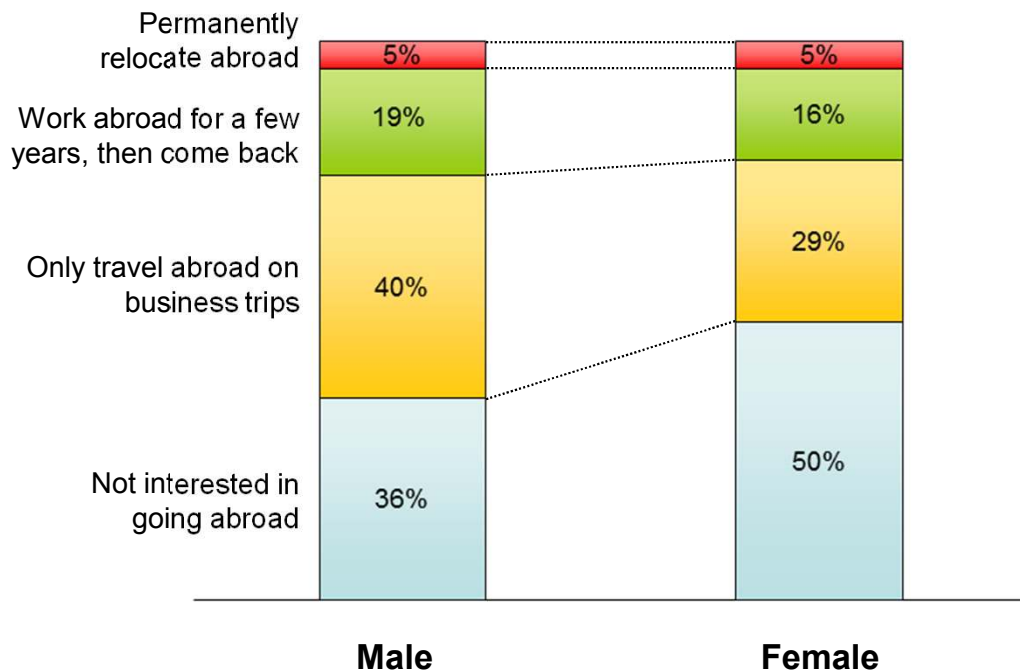
- Most graduates prefer to work **close to their home town**
- Despite their preference, 42% of the **male graduates will consider** taking jobs that are away from home if required
- Most **female graduates will not relocate** at all, or would have a strong preference not to

\* Assuming job location within UAE

Source: GulfTalent Survey of Emirati Graduates

# International Exposure

## Graduates' Interest in Working Outside the UAE

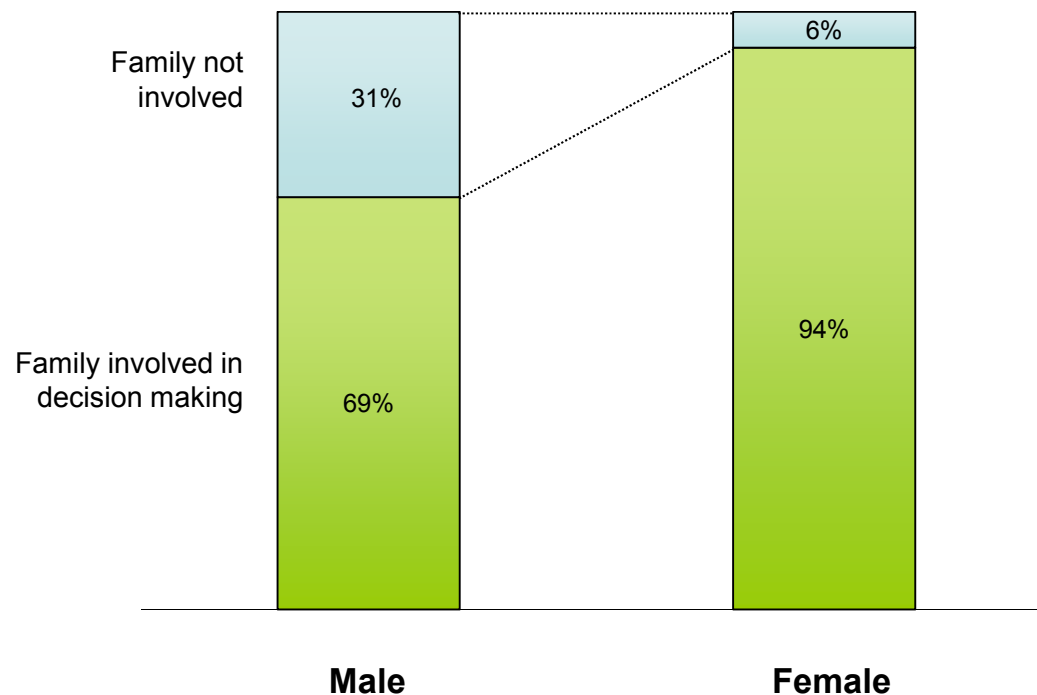


## Observations

- Half of the female graduates and a significant portion of the male graduates are **not interested in going abroad** at all
- Many graduates would like to **travel abroad** on business trips, especially male graduates, while a smaller proportion would like to **work abroad** for a few years to gain international exposure
- Very few graduates wish to **permanently relocate** to another country
- Among the graduates intending to work overseas, the most popular choice of countries are the **USA, UK and Australia**

# Influence of Family

## Role of Graduate's Family in their Career Decision



## Observations

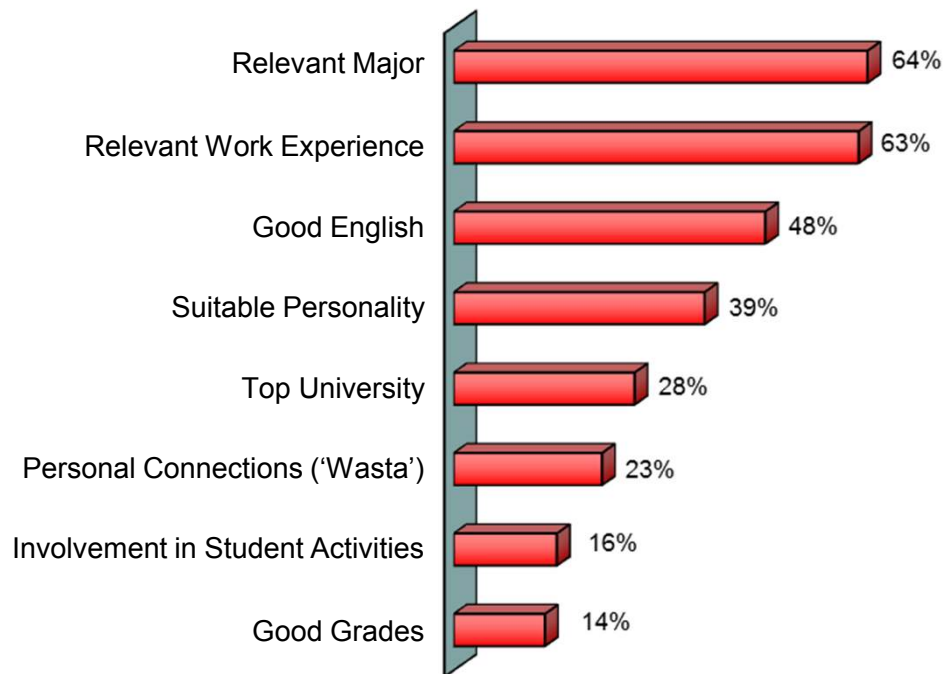
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- Family plays a big part in graduates' career decisions, for both male and female graduates
- The most common role of family is to **influence** the decision through their advice, but in some cases for female graduates the family actually **makes the decision**
- It is not sufficient to win the hearts and minds of graduates themselves. Employers that enjoy wide public appeal gain a further advantage by winning the **endorsement** of graduates' families
- The family's view is largely determined by the company's **public image** as well as information received from **people they know** inside the company

## Perceptions of Employment Criteria

### Graduates' Perception of What Employers Look For

% of graduates believing item is among top 3 factors for employers



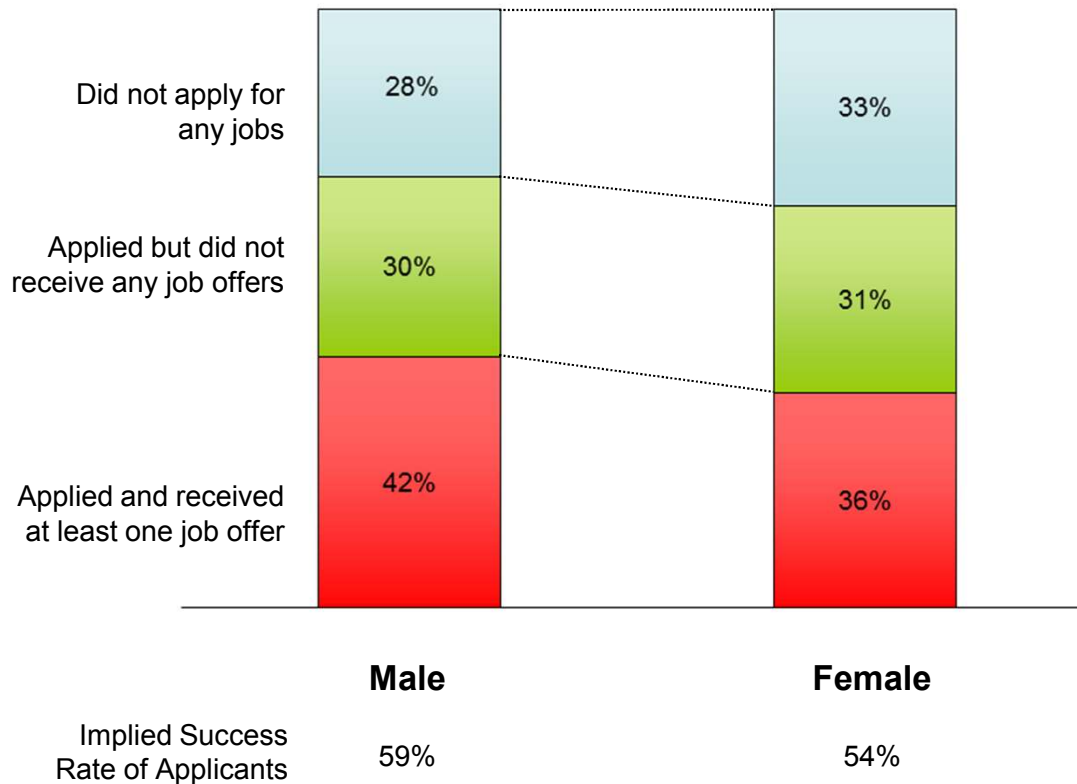
### Observations

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- Most graduates believe relevant **work experience** (e.g. Internships) and **relevant major** to be the most important factors determining their chances of employment
- Many graduates believe **personal connections** ('Wasta') to be a key factor in the employers' recruitment process
- Graduates complain that official recruiting processes are inefficient, take too long and are extremely **impersonal**. They prefer updates to come with a personal phone call rather than email

# Job Search Activity

## Graduates' Job Search Activity and Results Status 3 months after graduation\*



## Observations

- Female graduates are slightly **less proactive in job search** than males – with 33% not applying for any jobs, compared with 28% of males
- Male graduates who apply for jobs have a **higher success rate** on their applications than female applicants

\* Based on graduates who indicated they were interested in full-time employment, excluding those seeking further studies



## Graduates' Views on Private Sector Employers and Emiratisation

### Key Findings

- Many Emirati graduates feel that expats have an **advantage** in the workplace due to having more experience, international qualifications and being perceived to be more flexible
- Respondents felt that Emiratisation was helpful to them and necessary to **level the playing field** and allow Emiratis to get jobs in a very competitive employment market
- Respondents believe that prioritizing Emiratis was both **fair**, as they are nationals of the country, and also **in the best interest of companies and the country**, because expatriates will be more transient while nationals will stay in the long term
- Some graduates felt holding a university degree made them too expensive to hire and therefore less interesting for private sector employers



### Selected Quotes from Graduates

- *“I think private firms must try to hire Emiratis. They should develop us, not other people as expats will leave after a while. Emiratis will stay”*
- *“Companies prefer Emiratis with diplomas, not bachelors. Maybe because they have to pay more to bachelors. I have a bachelors degree. We put a lot of effort getting educated. After that you want us to apply with a diploma? I don't want to be a secretary after 4-5 years of working hard on my education”*
- *“The atmosphere in some private companies is not helpful to locals. Expats do not always transfer knowledge to locals. Maybe they are scared we will be taking their jobs. This further pushes locals to leave”*
- *“Private companies, as much as they search for UAE nationals, still prefer expats as they are more flexible”*

## Additional Quotes from Graduates



### *On Company Image and Reputation*

- *“Companies with good reputation have good packages and good training, which is important to me.”*
- *“They have a good image. It will add more to my CV, compared to an unknown company.”*
- *“From the good advertisements, I know that the company has a good reputation.”*
- *“I don’t believe papers or websites. I ask people who work there so that I know I have inside knowledge, not information from publicity”*



### *On Recruitment Process*

- *“I mostly apply online, and then I don’t hear much. It’s very difficult to get a job; you need to know someone there to find a position.”*
- *“Honestly, it’s about the people you know. If you know someone in the company, then you get special treatment.”*
- *“In some places, the recruitment process takes months and months, and they don’t even reply.”*
- *“One to one interaction is better than communication by email. Applications sent online tend to get undervalued.”*

**Most Popular Employers by Segment**

## Employer Popularity Ranking – by Graduates' Gender

### Male

1. Mubadala
2. Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC)
3. Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (ENEC)
4. Masdar
5. Abu Dhabi Executive Council
6. Abu Dhabi Water & Electricity Authority (ADWEA)
7. Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD)
8. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA)
9. Emirates National Oil Company (ENOC)
10. Al Ain City Municipality (AACM)
11. Yahsat
12. Dolphin Energy
13. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)
14. Sheikh Khalifa Medical City (SKMC)
15. Department of Transport (DoT)
16. Emirates Aluminium (EMAL)
17. Abu Dhabi Accountability Authority (ADAA)
18. Ministry of Presidential Affairs
19. Health Authority - Abu Dhabi (HAAD)

### Female

1. Mubadala
2. Emirates Airline
3. Abu Dhabi Media Zone Authority (twofour54)
4. Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC)
5. Masdar
6. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA)
7. Leo Burnett
8. Musanada
9. Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC)
10. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)
11. Ministry of Presidential Affairs
12. Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (ENEC)
13. Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture & Heritage (ADACH)
14. Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC)
15. Health Authority - Abu Dhabi (HAAD)
16. Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council (UPC)
17. United Nations
18. Etisalat
19. Ministry of Education
20. Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA)

## Employer Popularity Ranking – by Graduates’ Region of Origin

For graduates whose home region is:

### Abu Dhabi

Preferred Employers:

1. Mubadala
2. Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC)
3. Masdar
4. Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (ENEC)
5. Abu Dhabi Executive Council
6. Abu Dhabi Media Zone Authority (twofour54)
7. Abu Dhabi Water & Electricity Authority (ADWEA)
8. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA)
9. Ministry of Presidential Affairs
10. Health Authority - Abu Dhabi (HAAD)
11. Sheikh Khalifa Medical City (SKMC)
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16. Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC)
17. Department of Transport (DoT)
18. Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council (UPC)
19. Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research
20. Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC)

### Dubai

1. Mubadala
2. Emirates Aluminium (EMAL)
3. Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC)
4. Emaar
5. Al Tayer Group
6. Etisalat
7. Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA)

## Employer Popularity Ranking – by Graduates’ Major

### Engineering & Science

1. Emirates Nuclear Energy Corp. (ENEC)
2. Emirates Aluminium (EMAL)
3. Al Ain City Municipality (AACM)
4. Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. (ADNOC)

### Finance & Accounting

1. Mubadala
2. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA)
3. Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. (ADNOC)
4. Dolphin Energy
5. Abu Dhabi Accountability Authority (ADAA)

### IT & Computer Science

1. Mubadala
2. Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC)
3. Masdar
4. Musanada
5. Etisalat
6. Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA)
7. Injazat Data Systems

### Business & Management

1. Mubadala
2. Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. (ADNOC)
3. Masdar
4. Abu Dhabi Media Zone Authority (twofour54)
5. Abu Dhabi Executive Council
6. Emirates Airline
7. Ministry of Presidential Affairs
8. Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC)
9. KPMG
10. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA)
11. Health Authority - Abu Dhabi (HAAD)
12. Al Tayer Group
13. Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (ENEC)
14. Emaar
15. Etisalat

## Survey Methodology

# Methodology followed to compile this report

## Analysis of Employer Ranking

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- Each participant was asked to name their top 3 choices for employment
- **No pre-compiled list** of employers was presented to the participants and they had to come up with the names themselves
- Different weights were given to preferences 1, 2 and 3 when producing the final rankings
- Votes were weighted by approximate relative population of Emirates as well as by gender
- Rankings are based on companies with the highest value of weighted mentions, out of a total of ~140 firms mentioned by respondents
- Subsidiaries that received mentions separately from their parent (e.g. Masdar which is a subsidiary of Mubadala) were listed separately
- When two different names of the same organisation were mentioned, they were added together to determine the overall votes of the organization (e.g. 'ADIA' and 'Abu Dhabi Investment Authority')

## Survey Execution

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- 20 UAE universities were invited to participate in the survey, with 10 universities agreeing to participate
- The survey was conducted online
- A subset of participants were subsequently interviewed by telephone to better understand their response
- The survey and interviews were conducted over the course of 2011-2012

## Additional Comments

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- The research made significant efforts to gather maximum participation from as many Emirati graduates as possible
- While best efforts have been made to provide an independent representative picture, the survey results ultimately reflect the opinion of those who participated and may not be representative of the views of all Emirati graduates



## Profile of Survey Respondents \*

University	
• Zayed University	29%
• American University of Sharjah	28%
• Abu Dhabi University	14%
• Al Ain Univ. of Science and Tech.	7%
• American University in Dubai	5%
• British University in Dubai	5%
• Al Ain Men's College	4%
• Dubai School of Government	4%
• Canadian University of Dubai	3%
• Middlesex University Dubai Campus	1%

Nationality	
• UAE national	100%

Region of Origin	
• Abu Dhabi	56%
• Dubai	23%
• Sharjah	21%

Major / Degree Subject	
• Business	35%
• Engineering	17%
• IT/Computer Science	9%
• Finance	8%
• Medical	3%
• Language/Literature	2%
• Other	26%

Degree Stage	
• Final-year student	84%
• Recent graduate	16%

Gender	
• Female	50%
• Male	50%

\* Total of 112 respondents. Showing weighted breakdown.

## About GulfTalent

GulfTalent is the leading online recruitment portal in the Middle East, covering all sectors and job categories. It is used by over 3 million candidates across the region, including 600,000 professionals and managers in the UAE, for finding top career opportunities. It is also the primary online recruitment channel for over 5,000 companies, providing them access to both local and expatriate talent.

Further information is available at:

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