

# foundit Insights Tracker

January 2026

## Hiring Trends in Gulf



# Contents

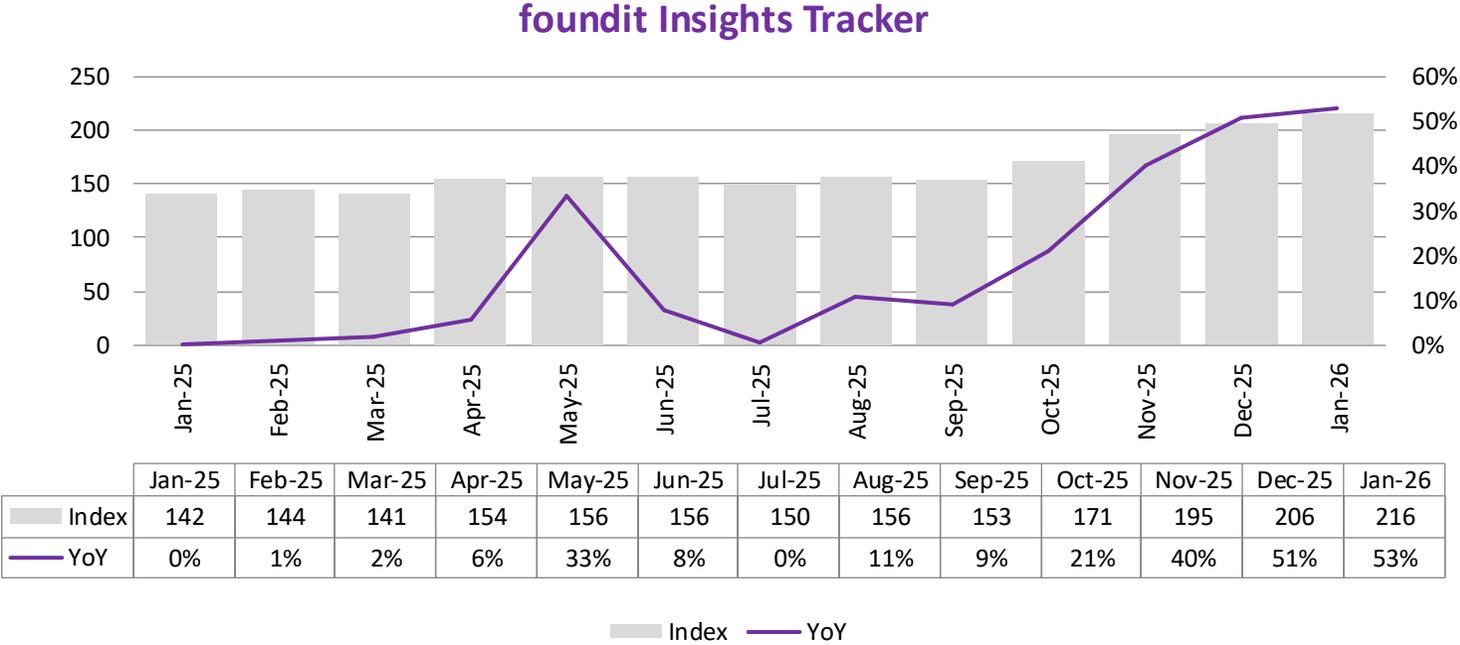


01 Key Highlights of the Month	Page 3
02 Hiring Trends - Summary	Page 4
03 Hiring Trends - Industry	Page 5
04 Hiring Trends - Functional Area	Page 6
05 Hiring Trends –Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Page 7
06 Hiring Trends – United Arab Emirates	Page 8
07 Data & Methodology	Page 9
08 About foundit APAC & Gulf	Page 10
09 Annexure	Page 12-17

# Key Highlights of the Month

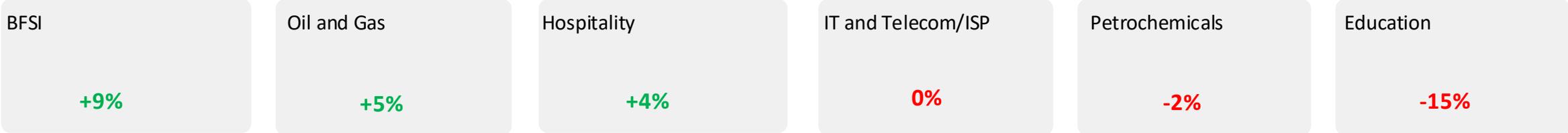
foundit Insights Tracker reports increased hiring activity in the Middle East, recording 53% annual growth in January 2026

- ✓ According to the latest data from the foundit Insights Tracker (fit), the index moved significantly from 142 in January 2025 to 216 in January 2026, reflecting rising hiring activity.
- ✓ The month-over-month analysis from the tracker shows a 5% increase, with the index rising from 206 in December 2025 to 216 in January 2026.
- ✓ Middle East hiring remained strong with a 3 month rise of 26% and a sharper 6 month increase of 38%, driven by sustained non-oil economic expansion across GCC markets. Large infrastructure projects, tourism and retail scale-up, logistics and trade growth, and continued investment in digital and energy transition roles supported longer-term hiring plans, while near-term hiring grew at a slower pace as companies phased recruitment in line with budget cycles and project milestones.

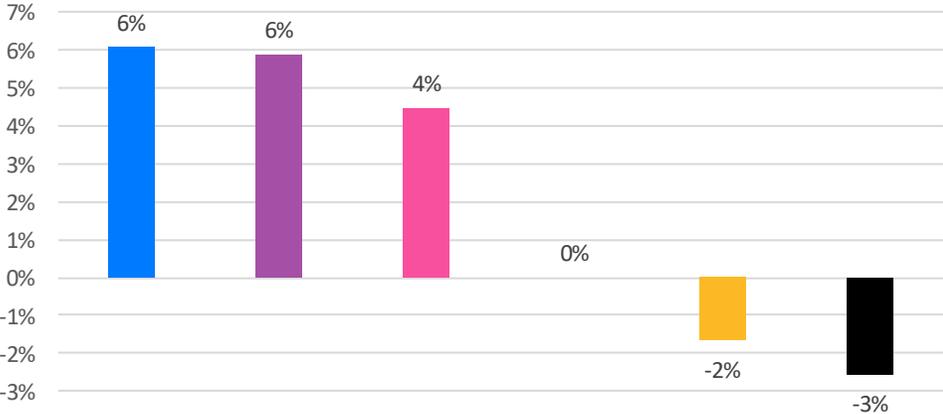


# Hiring Trends – MoM\*

## INDUSTRY

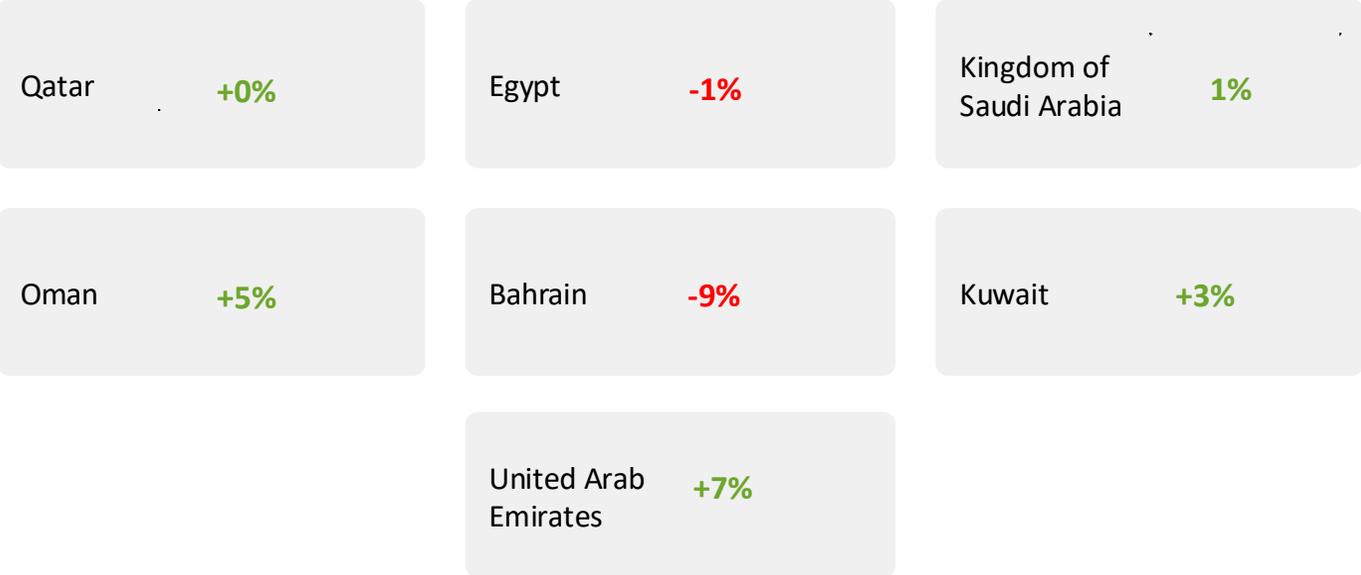


## FUNCTIONAL AREA



- Marketing & Communications
- Engineering and Production
- Software, Hardware, Telecom
- Customer service
- Hospitality and Travel
- HR & Admin.

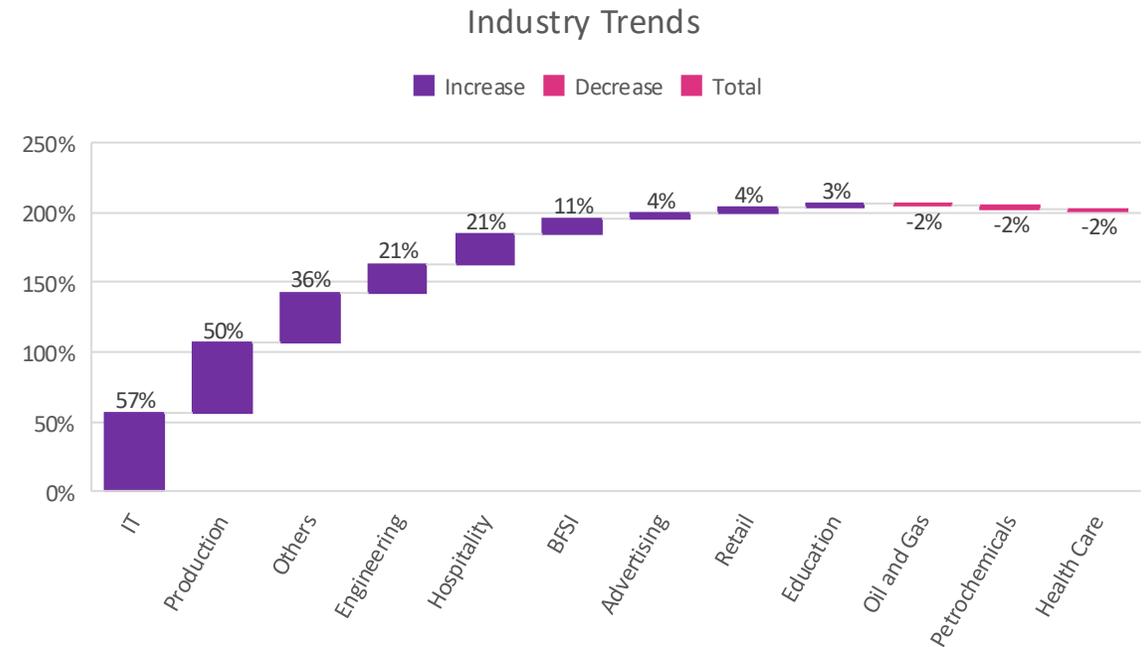
## ACROSS REGIONS



# Hiring Trends – Industry\*

9 out of 12 industries monitored by the tracker registered an annual increase in hiring activity in January'26.

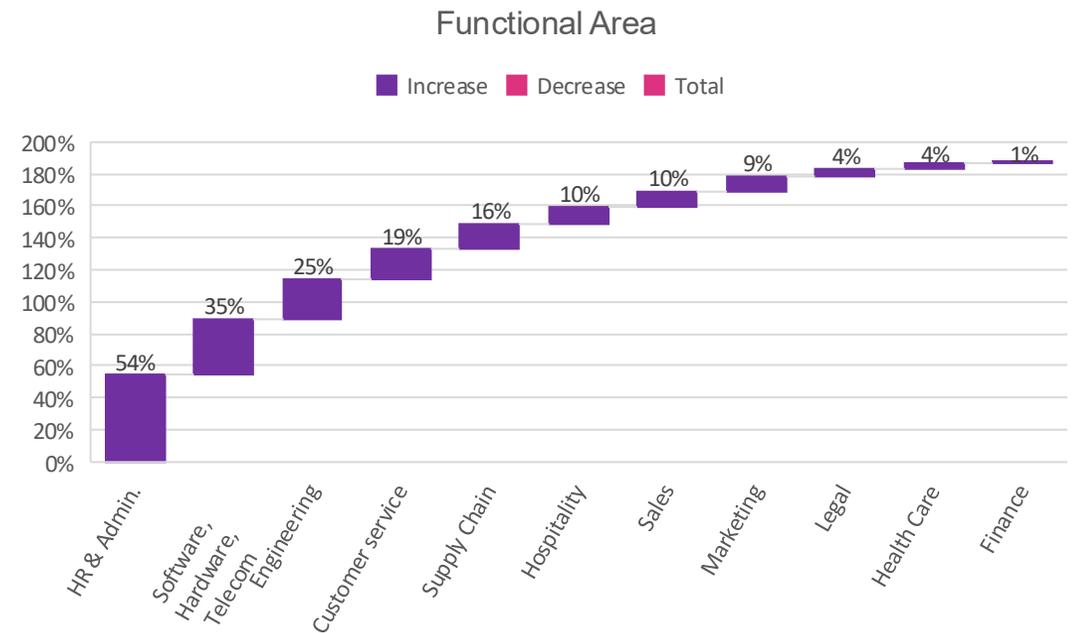
- ✓ IT and Telecom/ISP (**57%**) led hiring as cloud adoption, data centres, cybersecurity, AI, and 5G programs continued to scale across the region. Production and Manufacturing including Automotive (**50%**) followed, supported by industrial diversification, localisation, EV manufacturing, and supply chain resilience initiatives. Engineering, Construction and Real Estate (**21%**) remained strong due to sustained infrastructure and large development activity.
- ✓ Consumer Goods and FMCG (**-7%**) saw the sharpest contraction as firms prioritised cost control and margin protection amid cautious consumer demand. Oil and Gas (**-2%**) declined due to production discipline, capex optimisation, and phased project execution. Petrochemicals and Chemicals (**-2%**) also softened on global oversupply and weak downstream demand.
- ✓ Hospitality (**21%**) stayed positive, driven by tourism and events, though hiring was productivity-led. BFSI (**11%**) grew moderately, supported by compliance and digital banking roles with automation limiting scale. Advertising and Media (**4%**), Retail and Logistics (**4%**), Education (**3%**), and Health Care (**-2%**) showed muted movement as organisations focused on efficiency and role consolidation.



# Hiring Trends - Functional Area\*

Online recruitment activity surpassed the year-ago level in all occupation groups monitored by the tracker

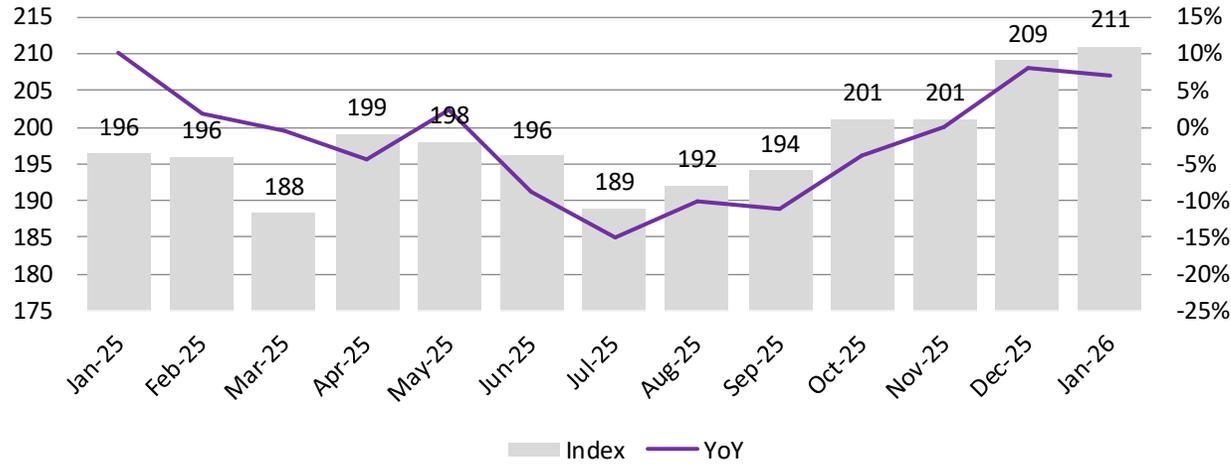
- ✓ HR & Admin (**54%**), Software, Hardware, Telecom (**35%**), and Engineering and Production (**25%**) led function hiring as organisations scaled teams to support business expansion, localisation and nationalisation requirements, and regulatory compliance. HR demand increased to manage workforce planning and restructuring, while tech hiring was driven by digital transformation, cloud, cybersecurity, and telecom infrastructure programs. Engineering and production hiring reflected sustained activity in infrastructure delivery, industrial projects, and manufacturing operations.
- ✓ Finance and Account (**1%**), Legal (**4%**), and Health Care (**4%**) remained at the lower end as these functions saw controlled, need-based hiring. Finance roles were limited by automation, shared services, and tighter cost controls. Legal hiring stayed compliance-focused with low volume requirements, while health care hiring prioritised replacement and specialised roles over expansion.
- ✓ Customer Service (**19%**), Purchase/Logistics/Supply Chain (**16%**), Hospitality and Travel (**10%**), Sales and BD (**10%**), and Marketing & Communications (**9%**) showed moderate growth. Customer service hiring balanced rising service demand with automation and self-service tools. Supply chain roles aligned with trade activity and logistics optimisation. Hospitality, sales, and marketing hiring tracked steady tourism and business activity, with productivity focus shaping headcount additions.



# Hiring Trends – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia \*

foundit Insights Tracker in KSA saw an incline with 7% annual growth in January'26

foundit Insights Tracker

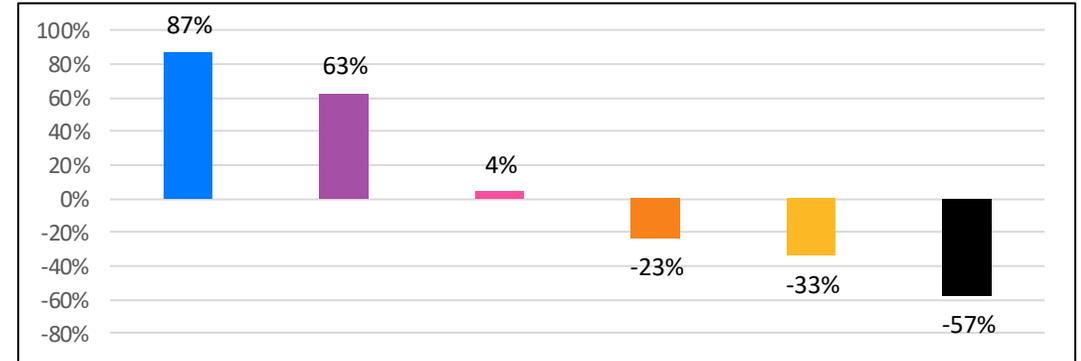


✓ The Index in KSA saw a significant increase to 211 in January 2026 from 196 in January 2025.

✓ In Saudi Arabia, **Production/Manufacturing (+87%)** led hiring due to Vision 2030–driven industrial localisation and non-oil manufacturing expansion, while **Education (-57%)** declined sharply amid slower institutional expansion and budget rationalisation.

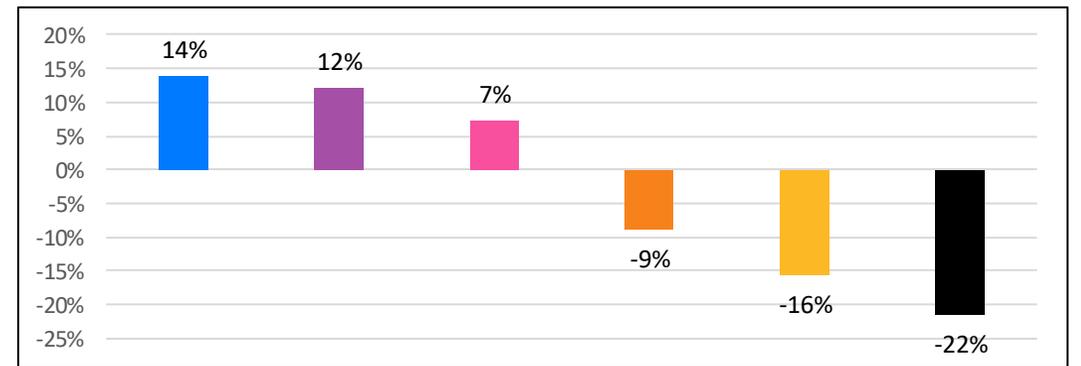
✓ Among functions, **Hospitality and Travel (+14%)** led hiring driven by peak season of festivals and year end holidays, while **Finance & Accounts (-22%)** declined as organisations consolidated finance functions and increased automation.

Industry Trend



- Production/Manufacturing
- IT and Telecom/ISP
- Hospitality
- Engineering, Construction
- Oil and Gas
- Education

Functional Area Trend

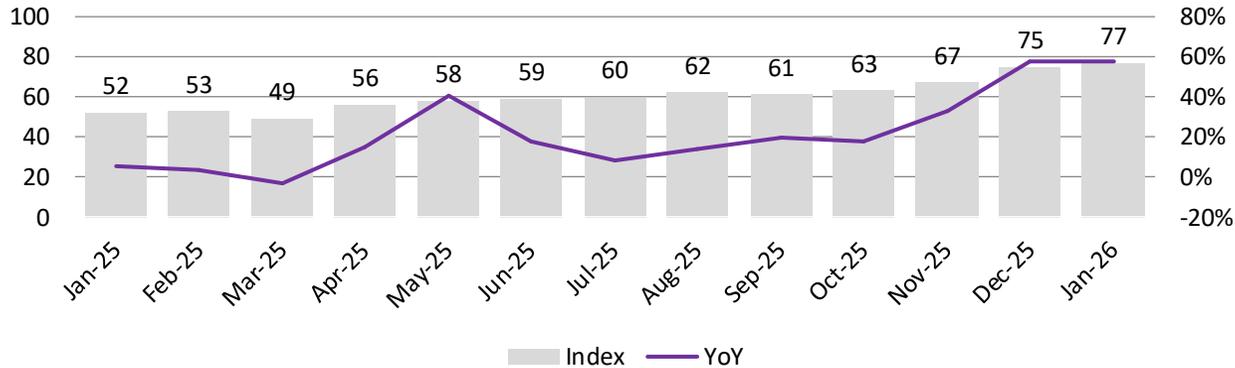


- Hospitality and Travel
- Marketing & Communications
- Health Care
- Software, Hardware, Telecom
- HR & Admin.
- Finance and Account

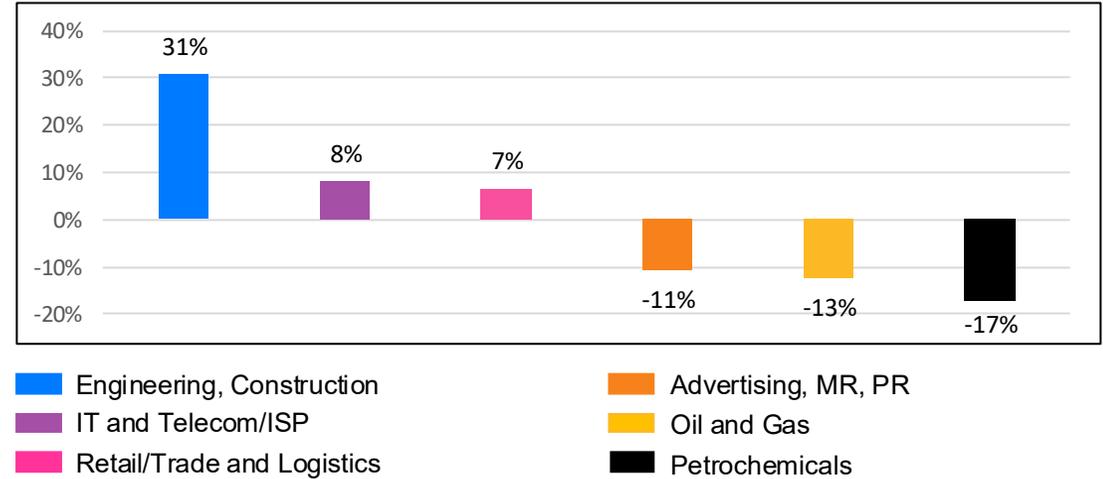
# Hiring Trends – United Arab Emirates\*

foundit Insights Tracker in UAE noticed a 48% surge annually in recruitment activity in January'26.

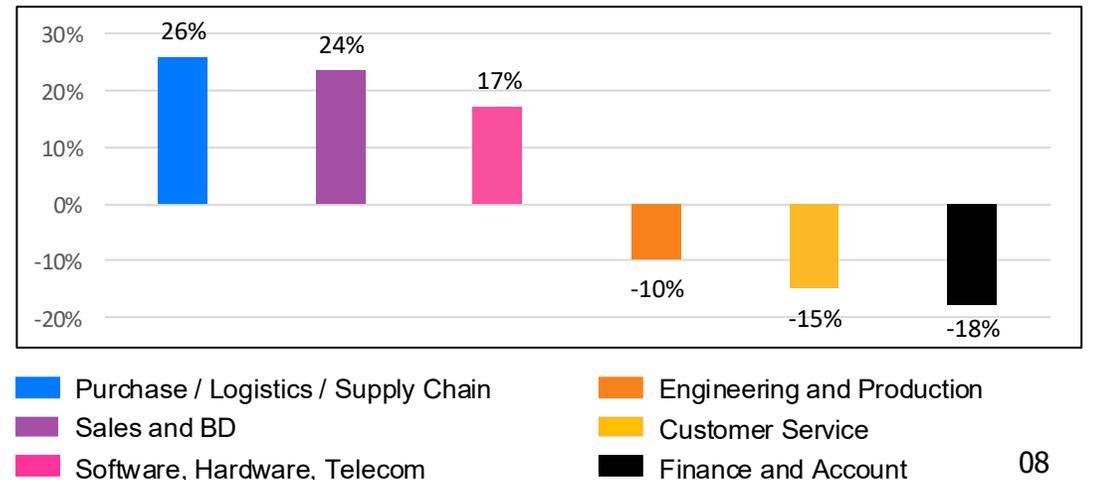
## foundit Insights Tracker



## Industry Trend



## Functional Area Trend



- ✓ The Index in UAE jumped to 77 in January'26 from 52 in January'25.
- ✓ In the UAE, **Engineering, Construction & Real Estate (+31%)** led hiring due to strong infrastructure and property development, while **Petrochemicals (-17%)** declined amid global oversupply and margin pressures.
- ✓ Among functions, **Supply Chain hiring rose (+26%)** driven by trade, logistics, and inventory complexity, while **Finance & Accounts declined (-18%)** due to automation and tighter cost controls.

# Data & Methodology

The foundit Insights Tracker (fit) is a comprehensive monthly analysis of online job posting activity conducted by foundit.in. Based on a real-time review of millions of employer job opportunities culled from a large, representative selection of online career outlets, fit presents a snapshot of employer online recruitment activity nationwide. In its earlier form (as Monster Employment Index), it gave a broader view of hiring trends by industry, function, location and experience levels. In its new avatar, it provides next-level insights on recruitment trends and tracks developments in demand for key skills, roles available and salary range on offer in the market.

In order to avoid excessive monthly fluctuations, the index is calculated using a volatility-adjusting formula. We publish the data in a volume index format with the base value of 100. The index describes changes in the level of online job demand against the baseline. An increase in the index indicates growth in online job availability and suggests an increase in the demand for employees by employers.

Foundit Insights Tracker (formerly Monster Employment Index ) was first launched in India in May 2010 with data collected since February 2009 followed by Gulf in April 2011 with data collected since February 2010; Singapore in May 2014 with data collected since January 2011; Philippines and Malaysia in May 2015 with data collected since February 2014.

foundit has taken due care in compiling and processing the data available from various sources for foundit Insights Tracker (fit), but does not guarantee the accuracy, adequacy or completeness of any information and is not responsible for any errors or omissions or action / decision taken or for the result obtained from the use of such information.



# About foundit.in APAC & Middle East

foundit.in, formerly Monster, is a leading talent platform offering comprehensive employment solutions to recruiters and job seekers across India, SEA, and Gulf. Since its inception, the company has been assisting over 90 million registered users to find jobs, upskill, and connect with the right opportunities across 18 countries. Over the last two decades, the company has been a catalyst in the world of recruitment solutions with advanced technology, seeking to efficiently bridge the talent gap across industry verticals, experience levels, and geographies. Today, foundit.in is committed to enabling and connecting the right talent with the right opportunities by harnessing the power of deep-tech to sharpen hyper-personalised job searches, and precision hiring. foundit.in strongly believes that a job title doesn't define one's potential and leverages technology to dig deeper to curate opportunities central to the needs, aspirations, and dreams of each user.

To learn more about foundit in APAC & Gulf, visit:

[www.foundit.in](http://www.foundit.in)

[www.foundit.my](http://www.foundit.my)

[www.founditgulf.com](http://www.founditgulf.com)

[www.foundit.com.ph](http://www.foundit.com.ph)

[www.foundit.sg](http://www.foundit.sg)

[www.foundit.hk](http://www.foundit.hk)



# Annexure



## Annexure: All Gulf Industry Data\*

Industries	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26
Engineering, Construction and Real Estate	102	99	102	106	101	100	109	112	112	119	115	120	123
BFSI	106	106	91	92	103	101	128	132	115	107	111	108	118
Production/Manufacturing, Automotive and Ancillary	84	86	85	89	84	87	108	111	96	106	116	122	126
Retail/Trade and Logistics	76	74	82	87	73	73	67	67	66	74	76	76	79
Oil and Gas	59	58	57	58	53	47	49	50	54	55	53	55	58
IT and Telecom/ISP	322	339	354	376	367	368	394	420	422	422	474	506	504
Hospitality	102	102	106	110	108	105	108	109	111	107	117	118	123
Education	131	132	133	134	136	126	138	143	148	150	158	159	135
Petrochemicals	112	114	113	111	119	108	115	118	112	111	109	112	110
FMCG, Food & Packaged Food , Home Appliance, Garments/ Textiles/ Leather, Gems & Jewellery	149	165	151	144	125	118	114	112	112	111	126	133	138
Health Care	111	110	109	107	104	104	106	108	105	104	109	108	109
Advertising, Market Research, Public Relations, Media and Entertainment	71	71	68	72	69	68	65	65	63	66	69	72	74

\* Represents Index figures

## Annexure: All Gulf Functional Area Data \*

Industries	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26
Engineering and Production	144	144	143	147	152	153	165	169	162	167	160	170	180
Finance and Account	89	88	83	81	86	86	88	88	77	79	85	87	90
HR & Admin.	74	75	81	84	89	86	101	113	105	110	122	117	114
Sales and BD	80	78	76	83	83	81	81	83	77	80	86	88	88
Purchase / Logistics / Supply Chain	139	144	150	162	156	155	161	162	158	162	156	157	161
Hospitality and Travel	106	106	103	109	108	106	104	113	123	108	124	119	117
Health Care	98	98	95	92	95	92	98	100	96	99	102	100	102
Software, Hardware, Telecom	208	210	201	217	210	212	208	217	217	214	261	269	281
Marketing & Communications/Arts/Creative	128	128	118	131	130	128	122	124	121	131	131	132	140
Customer service	91	87	93	112	106	108	112	99	105	104	109	108	108
Legal	92	94	90	90	88	90	90	94	87	91	91	93	96

## Annexure: KSA Industry Data\*

Industries	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26
Engineering, Construction and Real Estate	155	151	147	150	139	137	143	135	119	122	117	124	119
BFSI	140	137	129	129	128	126	127	127	126	127	125	125	141
Production/Manufacturing, Automotive and Ancillary	103	99	97	100	127	136	150	162	176	192	195	196	193
Retail/Trade and Logistics	105	104	94	96	87	85	82	77	82	85	82	85	83
Oil and Gas	102	91	90	86	80	76	72	69	69	67	66	67	68
IT and Telecom/ISP	189	225	234	255	263	265	270	283	299	303	291	300	308
Hospitality	136	124	121	124	124	121	121	125	145	143	142	150	142
Education	237	187	176	158	141	130	120	114	110	106	103	102	101
Petrochemicals	118	121	122	122	123	120	116	114	112	110	108	110	108
FMCG, Food & Packaged Food , Home Appliance, Garments/ Textiles/ Leather, Gems & Jewellery	148	157	150	143	134	129	127	124	127	126	134	143	142
Health Care	115	115	115	117	114	113	113	113	113	112	113	114	108
Advertising, Market Research, Public Relations, Media and Entertainment	378	367	333	346	323	315	279	296	295	297	309	316	339

## Annexure: KSA Functional Area Data\*

Industries	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26
Engineering and Production	165	157	152	155	154	152	157	154	156	159	159	172	174
Finance and Account	144	143	128	125	122	118	116	116	115	113	110	110	113
HR & Admin.	141	137	133	139	139	135	133	134	132	131	127	125	119
Sales and BD	154	162	144	164	151	149	144	143	129	142	148	151	144
Purchase / Logistics / Supply Chain	195	194	191	198	207	204	199	200	223	234	230	211	202
Hospitality and Travel	72	71	69	73	71	69	64	67	74	78	78	94	82
Health Care	110	109	113	113	116	114	117	118	116	113	116	121	118
Software, Hardware, Telecom	343	331	320	324	319	315	313	313	327	320	322	324	313
Marketing & Communications/Arts/Creative	174	179	170	185	186	186	186	173	173	192	195	193	195

## Annexure: UAE Industry Data\*

Industries	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26
Engineering, Construction and Real Estate	94	85	92	95	97	103	99	90	95	109	112	120	123
BFSI	94	89	91	84	85	75	69	64	75	77	81	80	84
Production/Manufacturing, Automotive and Ancillary	74	75	73	75	82	92	90	93	80	74	74	73	73
Retail/Trade and Logistics	75	78	81	85	77	76	73	73	107	75	75	76	80
Oil and Gas	56	57	55	56	53	51	49	48	50	50	49	49	49
IT and Telecom/ISP	109	110	106	110	115	112	106	100	109	112	111	117	118
Hospitality	81	80	78	79	76	74	71	69	74	75	80	82	80
Education	138	134	141	142	132	124	171	186	154	155	143	142	137
Petrochemicals	128	131	130	125	124	110	146	140	135	134	114	113	106
FMCG, Food & Packaged Food , Home Appliance, Garments/ Textiles/ Leather, Gems & Jewellery	111	115	112	116	113	111	99	97	82	94	106	112	111
Health Care	96	100	101	101	101	104	92	94	85	87	87	87	91
Advertising, Market Research, Public Relations, Media and Entertainment	84	81	79	78	79	78	80	79	72	74	76	76	75

## Annexure: UAE Functional Area Data\*

Industries	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26
Engineering and Production	186	192	173	188	196	196	183	181	155	161	161	171	168
Finance and Account	51	49	47	46	45	46	46	48	48	45	43	42	42
HR & Admin.	31	31	33	36	35	35	40	49	49	45	41	36	33
Sales and BD	34	33	30	35	32	30	28	25	27	32	34	37	42
Purchase / Logistics / Supply Chain	104	106	116	125	136	128	109	110	115	126	123	121	131
Hospitality and Travel	57	58	55	57	53	50	49	52	53	52	55	56	54
Health Care	65	67	67	67	67	67	69	68	66	68	68	67	67
Software, Hardware, Telecom	93	95	93	95	90	91	92	94	94	96	102	107	109
Marketing & Communications/Arts/Creative	113	107	97	105	110	107	104	103	90	100	108	112	113
Customer service	61	60	61	60	60	58	59	54	53	53	54	50	52

**Thank you**

