

Middle East market most for cyber

Andrew Hudson of SSR writes of the Middle East part of the recruitment firm's global salary survey, supported by ASIS International reviews more than 12, 000 security professionals (nationals and expatriate) with data gathered from multiple sectors, including; the finance sector, manufacturing, hospitality, extractives, consumer goods and logistics.



Pictured: the two sides of a United Arab Emirates coin

The fastest growing security roles that SSR have tracked in the Middle East in the last 12 months are those in cyber security. These have also had the largest average salary increases (over 7pc) in the last two years. This is largely due to an increased demand for cyber professionals, which have traditionally been in short supply regionally with a lack of local talent. More cyber-attacks targeted at the Middle East along with the consumer shift to mobile data processing and evolving web technology, have increased demand for such professionals. We are predicting an increased level of local talent coming to market in 2019-20 through more nationals seeking qualifications in digital processing, content protection and cyber prevention.

Job creation

We expect to see job creation and an increased need for security professionals in the region, as a result of continued infrastructure development including the nuclear power plants being built in UAE and Saudi Arabia, new cities such as NEOM in Saudi Arabia and Al Nayeem in Kuwait. Transport projects are underway across the region including railways in all six GCC countries and metro projects in Riyadh, Jeddah, Doha and Abu Dhabi. Major events are also expected to provide an economic boosts and many job opportunities, including the Expo 2020 in Dubai and the FIFA World Cup in Qatar in 2022.

Tensions

Regional tensions have caused some business disruption and uncertainty

but with time this has quietened down. Initially this had impacted businesses and caused concern, with travel being the most inconvenienced as Saudi Arabia and UAE closed their land borders and suspended air and sea travel, to and from, Qatar.

Importance of India

The importance of India to the Middle East and vice versa continues to grow. India has become an integral and strategic trade partner, growing from \$5.5 billion of trade in 2001 to \$137.7 billion by 2015. This partnership has been extremely significant in both directions. It is viewed in the West that India was just a source of qualified labour, but latest estimates predict 10.2m Indian tourists will visit the region annually from 2020.

Salary review

As for salary budgeting de-coupling from traditional drivers such as inflation and unemployment, the picture from the data is mixed – both in terms of gross and real salary budget increases, and what may be driving employers' decision-making.

Still oil

Despite major diversification efforts, oil continues to dominate and shape the macro-economic outlook for Middle Eastern economies with elevated oil production levels and notably higher oil prices compared to last year. The ME economy growth is forecast to rebound from an eight-year low of 0.9pc in 2017 to 2.3pc in 2018 – although growth remains below the 2010 to 2016 average of 3.9pc. In addition, job creation in the UAE has

been quite modest this year as judged by the Emirates NBD employment index – in fact it turned into negative territory in August and September 2018, indicating a decline in jobs. But as the overall macroeconomic conditions continue to improve, the pace of job creation in 2019 will pick up. Gender employment parity in the workplace in the Middle East is expected in 2024. In terms of tertiary education, women are outpacing men with 52pc of university places being taken up by women. While security globally has been male-dominated more women are joining the industry. SSR predicts a 15pc increase in the number of women in the Middle East security industry this year. All this highlights various instabilities in the global economic landscape, yet when we look at the outlook for salary budgets, the global picture is one of continuity. □

About the author

Andrew Hudson is a recruitment manager, working from Dubai since 2004. He was a senior manager of a multi-national security company, managing their 'in-house' recruitment. It soon expanded to cover a variety of sectors and operating in North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. Andrew has been involved in international project recruitment, executive search, employee outsourcing (with over 4,000 staff members on his payroll) and training services, among other things. He's a Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute. He has an MSc in psychology and criminology and holds level 'A' accreditation for psychometric testing. □

