

ARE YOU VALUED BY YOUR ORGANISATION?

Peter French MBE and Andrew Hudson of SSR Personnel reflect on the findings of the company's Middle East security salary survey

The Middle East and in particular the Gulf countries have endured high economic turbulence, not just since the outbreak of COVID, but since the fall out of the oil price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia. 2021 was a year of recovery and strategic reform for most countries. Those in the security sector have risen to the challenges and a general perception is that there will be great opportunities during 2022. Vacancies have increased for qualified risk and resilience professionals. Cybersecurity practitioners remain in high demand, with 70% of companies surveyed intending to recruit into these roles in the next 12 months.

Headlines from our surveys

The increase in remote working has led to the need to implement up-to-date business continuity plans. Many businesses found that, during the pandemic, their plans were weak or outdated. A high proportion will prioritise their cybersecurity strategy, migrate to enterprise data storage and invest in systems upgrades in processes and hardware.

With the shift to work from home across many countries, companies have highlighted the importance of cybersecurity and making it a strategic priority. Many companies in the region have accelerated the



adoption of cloud infrastructure, increasing the demand for physical security.

Kaspersky reported there were 161 million Malware attacks across the Middle East in the first half of 2021. Turkey and Egypt suffering the largest number of attacks at 44 million and 42 million respectively.

2021 has seen steady growth in employment across the Gulf as vaccine rollout has been successful, borders have reopened and businesses rebound and aim to grow. Governments are working hard and fast to ensure that they have sufficient employment opportunities for their nationals.

Physical security professionals are increasingly being asked to be part

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of the cybersecurity solution. Over 90% of those questioned quoted that cyber preparedness was now part of their role. Over 55% of respondents had received an increase in basic pay or bonuses. In 2022, most expect to have salary increases above inflation.

As one Chief Security Officer recently told us: "My role as the CSO has been enhanced; my team have even more respect. We are part of a holistic approach to our employee care."

The Saudi Arabia Ministry of Human Resources said that new entrants to the job market who had not previously worked had reached over 200,000 over two years. To support local employment, increasing numbers of professions such as accountants, pharmacists and engineers have been localised.

As part of its 'Projects at 50' programme, the UAE government announced plans to increase Emirati employment in the private sector, including a US\$6.53 billion budget to facilitate 75,000 Emiratis into private sector jobs. This included several incentives to UAE citizens to work in the private sector, like a salary top-up, child support payments and financial grants to start a business. Also offered to government employees was the opportunity to take a sabbatical on 50% of their salary to start their own business. Many countries are seeking to reverse the preference of nationals to work in the public sector.

Gender parity

With the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the share of women in professional and technical jobs is set to more than double by 2030 through digitisation, online platforms and entrepreneurship.

The UAE was ranked 1st across the Arab countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021. They are the most-improved country in the world for women in parliament and over 23,000 businesses are run by Emirati women with a combined worth of approximately US\$50 billion.

The Emirates Ministry of State for Advanced Sciences has revealed that women are 80% of the science team behind the current Mars mission.

Saudi Vision 2030 aims to create over one million jobs for women. In 2020, the Saudi female labour force participation was around a third of



the working population. By decree, women cannot be discriminated against based on their gender when it comes to private sector salaries.

Digitisation will likely have a high impact across all sectors and occupations, driving exponential growth in the demand for tech skills up to 2030 and creating new job opportunities for tech-educated women. Female graduates are well

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represented in Science, Technology, Environmental and Mathematics (STEM) areas at university. While this is a higher ratio than in the West, the picture is very different after graduation. With positive encouragement, this should reverse by 2025.

Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) rankings

Investors in western markets are using ESG rankings for companies

to better inform them on the direction of a business for its employees, suppliers and other stakeholders. While not yet fully understood by the high street consumer, the pandemic has sharpened thinking towards climate change and communities where our actions could adversely affect them. Employers will need to attract that future workforce by showing how compelling their ESG offering is. This was the direction of travel of employment before the pandemic but has now been accelerated. As a global organisation, the C-suite will want assurances that wherever their operations exist, policies will be consistent and not cause embarrassment - a polarising East v West dichotomy.

Methodology

The SSR Personnel & Executive Profiles 2021 annual salary survey partners with ASIS International. Data is collated from more than 12,000 security professionals from across 40 business sectors including finance & insurance, manufacturing, extractives, e-commerce, FMCG and logistics. We also populated with data collected during our bespoke salary surveys which covered 1.3 million employees and EURO 1.2 trillion revenues.