The Role of the Expatriate Population (Non-GCC Citizens) in the Overall Population Growth and Structure

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Abstract:

Governments all around the world take an active interest in the population situation and structure. Since there is a strong correlation between population and development, the demographic indicators are critical in helping decision-makers achieve some strategic targets such as active participation of all populations in different and large parts of the development of GCC countries.

The six countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) - United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Oman, State of Qatar and State of Kuwait, adopted a common population strategy in 1998[i]. One of the main target of the policy was to better balance population growth with the long-term development aspirations. The region has since undergone considerable development over the last fifty years. Along with the well-known infrastructure developments that cover different aspect areas, there have been significant improvements in social development, including health and education outcomes. Much of this development has been heavily dependent on the non-GCC citizen population.

This paper reviews a selection of demographic indicators for the GCC region, which explains the impact and contribution of the expatriate population (non-GCC citizens) in the GCC population structure, and provides an assessment of their economic participation. The paper also discusses the importance of indicator selection, which are relevant to answer the research question about the role of the expatriate population (non-GCC citizens) in overall population growth and structure such as (population size/ gender/age group/ nationality) and its consequences in influencing employee structure.

Keywords: GCC, Population Strategy, Demographic Indicators, Citizens, Non-Citizens, Expatriate Population, Demographic Situation.

1. Introduction:

The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) region is comprised of six oil and gas producing countries in the Middle East. The six countries (United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Oman, State of Qatar and State of Kuwait) have all undergone significant development in the last fifty years.

As with other parts of the world, three main demographic events – births, deaths and the movement of people (migration) determine the structure and composition of the population of the GCC and member states.

This paper highlights the main major demographic and vital statistical indicators for the non-citizens population (people who do not have citizenship in one of the six GCC countries) and the citizen's population.

Each of these populations has different demographic drivers. Among non-citizens, the movement of people into/out of the region is the main driver of population change. Among citizens, natural increase (the difference between births and deaths) is the main determinant of growth.

Many of the non-citizens are male, and as a result, approximately 70.6% of the non-citizens population are male. The sex ratio of the Non-citizen population reached 242.9 in 2021, compared with 102.5 for citizens[ii].

GCC-Stat, the Statistical Centre of the GCC, provides a range of statistics to support the monitoring and evaluation of the role of the expatriate population in the overall population growth and structure in the GCC region. The paper begins with a brief overview of the population situation in the GCC.

The Population Situation in the GCC

Over the past few years, the demographic structure of the GCC (citizens / non-citizens), has been discussed by many researchers (e.g. Pranav Naithani and A.N. Jha, 2009).[iii] The study shows the percentage of expatriates has systematically been growing over the last decades in some of the GCC member states; the total population in the region has grown more than ten times in 50 years.

Approximately, more than half of the GCC population are non-citizens, with the balance being non-citizens who have come to work and help build the GCC countries, economies and societies.

GCC-Stat estimates that the population of the GCC in 2021 was 56.4 million [1] , compared to the UN Population Division (UNPD) estimate of 28.0 million in 1998 [2]. This was an increase of 28.4 million or 101.4%, over the period from 1998 to 2021. The figures represent an annual growth rate of 1.7% over the period.

There is also a significant sex difference in the citizen and non-citizen populations. Whereby the total population remains predominantly male – with a sex ratio (ratio of males to females) of 151.8 in 2021[iv]. This means that males made up 60.3% of the overall population, totalling 34.0 million. There were 22.4 million females, or 39.7% of the total population.
The overall sex ratio is higher than international patterns, due to the large number of non-citizen males in many GCC countries [1]

The working age population (15-64) makes up majority of the citizens, with an average of 64.4% in 2021, with median age of 31.4 years (GCC-Stat, 2021). The non-citizen population is also comprised mainly of working age, with an average of 84.6% with the median age of 34.7 [1]

2. Methodology:

Indicators for monitoring the role of the expatriate population in overall population growth and structure:

This report focuses on the comparison of population size, by calculating growth rate of citizens and the non-citizens population during 2010 and 2021. This is to identify the exact impact of the expatriate population in overall population growth and structure over the last 50 years.

The following indicators were used in this paper:

    I.   Composition and growth rate of citizens and non-citizens.
   II.   Doubling time of local and expatriates population.
 III.   Distribution by age and sex.
 IV.   Sex ratio.
  V.   Labour force characteristics
 VI.   Contribution of the expatriate population in overall population growth

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[1] GCC-Stat Center, 2022, Population statistics in GCC countries
https://www.gccstat.org/images/gccstat/docman/publications/Population2021_1.pdf

[2] United nation, 2020, population division- Population data by age and sex from
https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/

Data Sources

For the purposes of this study, GCC level indicators were initially sourced from the GCC-Stat portal (GCC-Stat, 2021). Where the required indicators were not available, data was sourced from the United Nations Population Division[3]. This means that the indicators presented in the next section come from GCC-Stat directly, or a combination of GCC member countries and UNPD data. National data are not always available for all member states by disaggregation (e.g. by citizen/non-citizens). For example, disaggregation by citizen/non-citizen for UAE and Qatar were sourced from UNPD data.

3. Results and Discussions:

Key results are provided below for the six indicators that were selected:

Growth of Population

The total population of the GCC was 56.4 million in 2021, compared with 44.3 million in 2010, an increase of 27.2% (GCC-Stat). The total citizen population in 2010 was 23.7 million compared with 27.6 million in 2021. An increase of 16.7% or 3.9 million between 2010 and 2021[4]. In the same period, the non-citizen population increased from 20.7 million in 2010 to reach 28.8 million in 2021[4]. This represented an increase of 8.1 million or 39.4%.

During 2010-2021, the annual growth rate for non-citizens was 3.1%[v], a rate far higher than the annual growth rate for citizens, which averaged 1.4% during the same period. While there was considerable growth of the non-citizen population during the 2010-2021 period, this should be seen in the context of the longer-term growth.

The demographic effect of these differences in growth rates was that non-citizens (expatriates) made up 50.9% of the total population of GCC countries by 2021, an increase from 2010 where they were 46.6% of the total population.

Doubling Indicator

The Doubling Indicator – the number of years that it will take for a population to double in size, based on current growth patterns, provides a picture of the possible future population structure. If the population components continued to grow at the average population growth rate, experienced over the 2010-2021 period, then it is estimated that the non-citizen population would double in about 23 years, reaching approximately 57.6 million people in 2044.
On the other hand, if the current growth rate for citizens was maintained, it is expected that the GCC citizen population would double in 49 years, to reach 55.2 million in 2070. This slower increase is because the annual growth rate for citizens has been much smaller.

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[3] United nation, 2020, population division- Population data by age and sex from
https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/

[4] **Derived from GCC-Stat and UNPD (UAE & Qatar data by nationality from UNPD)**

GCC-Stat Center, 2022, Population statistics in GCC countries
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Age and Sex Structure for Non-Citizens [5]

To understand some of the demographic drivers for the population imbalance, it is useful to examine the age and sex structure for the non-citizens (expatriates) population.

As Figure 1 shows, the non-citizens population of the GCC is dominated by the working age (15-64) population, which accounts for 84.6 % of the non-citizens population. People under 15 years of age represent (13.6%) of the non-citizens population.

This is because the non-citizen population contains a large proportion of men of working age. In 2021, approximately 20.3 million of non-citizens were male.

However, the male working age population is not uniformly distributed. As Figure 1 shows, the non-citizen population is heavily concentrated among the 25-49 age groups. In 2021, 62.5% of all non-citizens were aged between 25 and 49 years.

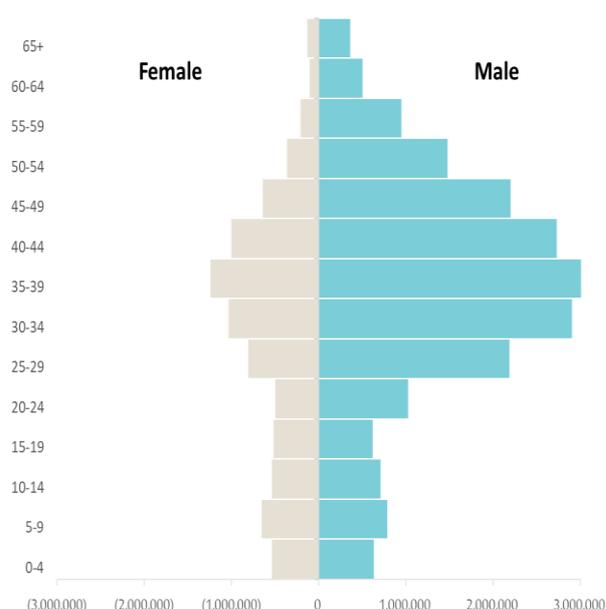Figure 1: Population Pyramid for GCC Non-Citizens Population

Table 1: Population by Nationality and Gender in GCC, 2021[5]

Item	Kuwait	Qatar	Oman	KSA	Bahrain	*UAE	GCC
Total	4,216,900	2,677,001	4,527,446	34,110,821	1,504,365	9,282,410	56,318,943
Male	2,505,146	1,941,660	2,761,154	19,363,656	925,747	6,468,460	33,965,823
Female	1,711,754	735,341	1,766,292	14,747,165	578,618	2,813,950	22,353,120
Citizen	1,420,836	450,809	2,804,117	21,690,648.00	719,333	566,078	27,651,821
Male	705,843	98,875	1,412,508	11,028,006.00	364,891	48,668	13,658,791
Female	714,993	351,934	1,391,609	10,662,642.00	354,442	517,410	13,993,030
Non-Citizen	2,796,064	2,226,192	1,723,329	12,420,173	785,032	8,716,332	28,667,122
Male	1,799,303	1,842,785	1348646	8,335,650	560,856	6,419,792	20,307,032
Female	996,761	383,407	374683	4,084,523	224,176	2,296,540	8,360,090

Sex Ratio

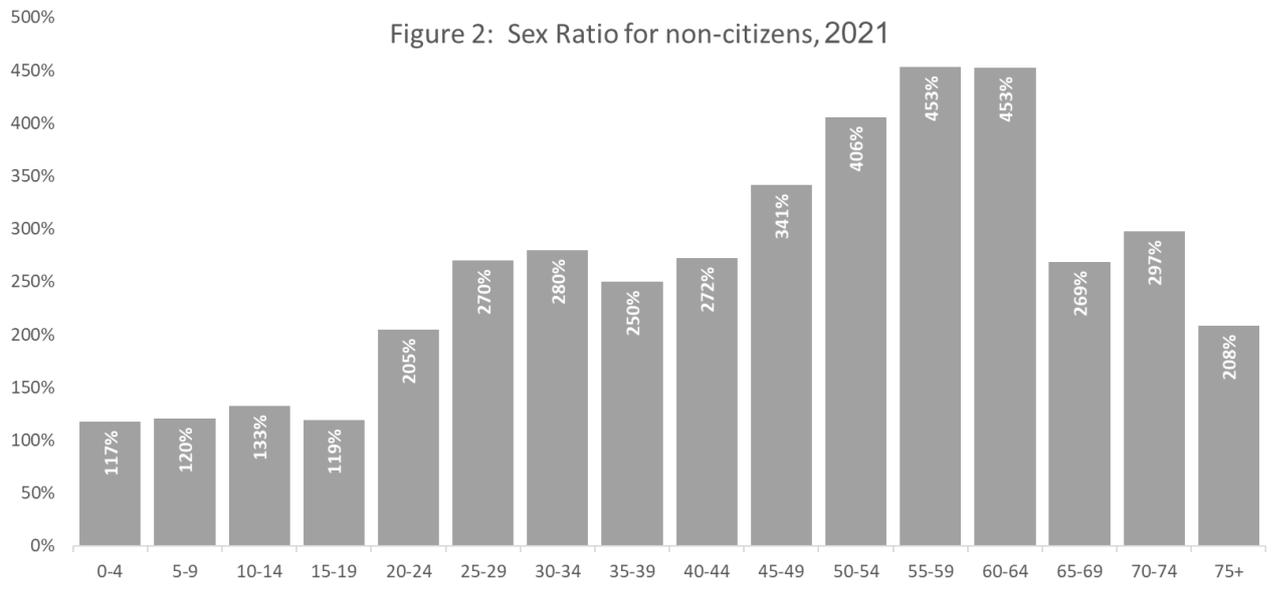[5] **Derived from GCC-Stat and UNPD (UAE & Qatar data by nationality from UNPD)**
GCC-Stat Center, 2022, Population statistics in GCC countries
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United nation, 2020, population division- Population data by age and sex from
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The sex ratio - The number of males for every 100 females provides another way of assessing the population structure. While the sex ratio for the GCC citizen population tends to replicate standard demographic patterns, the sex ratio for non-citizens shows the high proportion of male workers. In 2021, the sex ratio was 262.7 [6], an increase from the 206.6 recorded in 1990[7]. As Figure 2 shows, the sex ratio increases with age. The sex ratios among the working age of non-citizens population rapidly increase – peaking among people in the 55-59 age group, to reach a level of 453[6], before declining very rapidly.

Figure 2: Sex Ratio for non-citizens, 2021

Labour Force Characteristics

As noted earlier, most of the non-citizen population is male and of working age. It is therefore important to understand their role in the labour force, compared with citizens.

The total number of employed people in the GCC (excluding the UAE) was estimated to be 20.6 million in 2020 (GCC-Stat portal). Excluding the UAE, 15.5 million were non-citizens and 5.0 million were citizens.

Consistent with the population growth discussed earlier, the non-citizen labour force grew rapidly. Between 2014[vi] and 2021, the non-citizen labour force in the GCC (excluding the UAE) increased by 3.7 million, growing on average 530 (thousands) per year. The non-citizen share of the labour force increased from 66.6% to 75.6% during this period, with a corresponding decline for the proportion of citizens among the labour force.

In 2021, the majority of non-citizens were concentrated in non-specialized or unskilled occupations such as craft and related trades workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers and elementary

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[6] GCC-Stat Center, 2022, Population statistics in GCC countries
https://www.gccstat.org/images/gccstat/docman/publications/Population2021_1.pdf

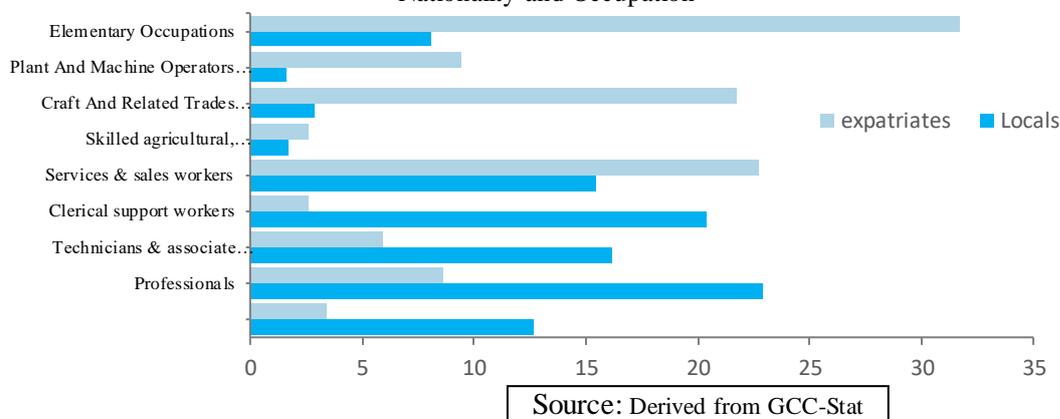United nation, 2020, population division- Population data by age and sex from
https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/

[7] United nation, 2020, population division- Population data by age and sex from
https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/

occupations. In comparison, citizens were heavily concentrated among the specialized technical professions, including the higher administrative roles, which require scientific qualifications.[vii]

Figure 3: Percentage Distribution of Employed (15 Years and Above) by Nationality and Occupation

Source: Derived from GCC-Stat

Contribution of expatriate population in overall population growth[viii]

- The contribution of **natural increase**
- The contribution of **movement of people into/out of** (temporary workers)

There are three factors that affect the population change in any country or region; live births, deaths and migration (movement of people between countries).

Natural Increase refers to the difference between the number of births and deaths. When the number of births is greater than the number of deaths, the natural increase will be positive, and assuming that the impact of migration is not negative, the population will increase.

By comparing population change with natural increase, it is possible to determine the impact of natural increase contribution on population change and the impact of the expatriate population in overall population growth.

During (2010-2019), natural increase contributed an average of about 48.3% of the total population change at the GCC level. Table No. (2) Reviews the vital statistics (live births, deaths, and natural increase) for the GCC over the 2010- 2020 period.
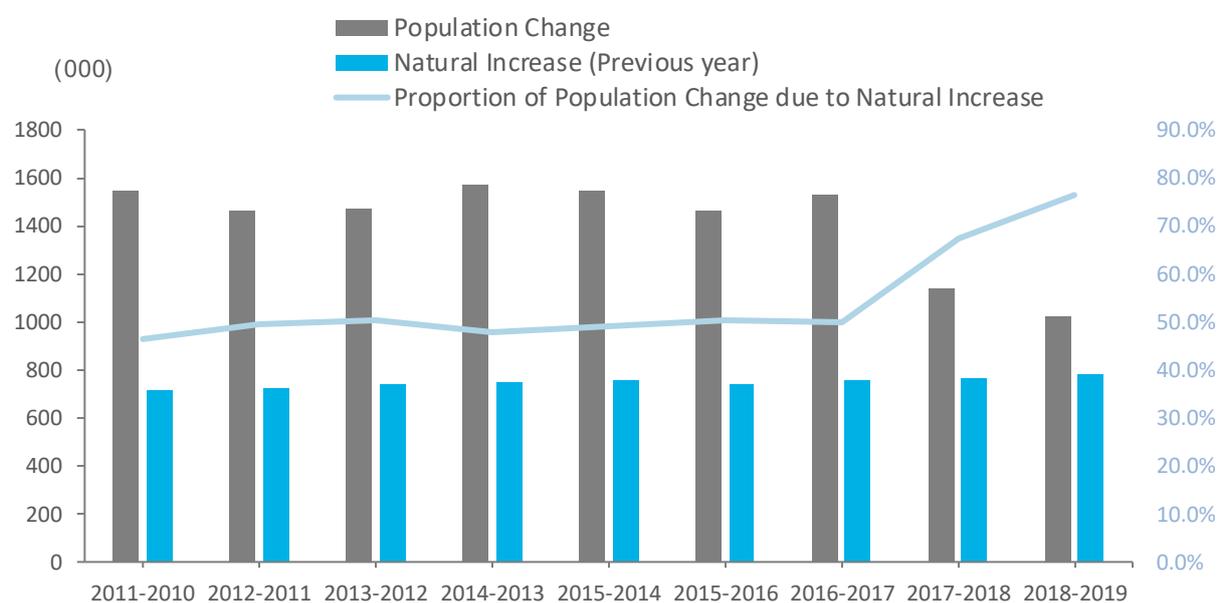
The natural increase among citizens is the main factor explaining the increase in the population of citizens in GCC countries. The impact of permanent migration among the citizen population or people taking up GCC citizenship is very small.

Therefore, we can conclude that the average migration contribution (temporary workers) of total population change is about 51.7% at the GCC level during (2010-2019).

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Table 2: Live Births, Deaths and Natural Increase in GCC, 2021 [ix]

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Live births	843,854	854,950	870,806	884,214	894,145	878,280	880,283	888,816	890,854	859,697	859,089
Citizens	654,753	661,166	669,866	677,816	684,169	667,906	668,678	673,053	679,668	653,449	647,580
Non-Citizens	189,101	193,784	200,940	206,398	209,922	210,374	212,037	215,763	211,182	206,248	211,509
Deaths	124,720	126,899	130,380	132,816	134,973	140,045	121,412	123,966	110,253	110,349	118,060
Citizens	91,381	92,867	94,725	95,777	95,751	100,744	86,504	88,324	77,712	77,706	80,622
Non-Citizens	33,339	34,028	35,642	37,039	39,214	39,295	34,908	35,628	32,541	32,643	37,438
Natural Increase	719,134	728,051	740,426	751,398	759,172	738,235	759,391	764,850	780,601	749,348	741,029
Citizens	563,672	568,299	575,141	582,039	588,418	567,162	582,175	584,729	601,955	575,742	566,957
Non-Citizens	155,762	109,756	165,298	169,359	170,708	171,079	177,128	180,135	187,742	173,606	174,072
Population change		1,549,588	1,467,370	1,468,711	1,567,456	1,548,725	1,462,571	1,527,661	1,136,043	1,021,747	331,448

Figure 4: Impact of Natural Increase on Population Change in GCC, 2010-2019 [x]

Findings

Six indicators were selected to assess the impact of the expatriate population in the overall population growth. Analysis of these indicators at the GCC level shows the following:

- The growth rate of the non-citizen population is more than twice the growth rate for the citizen population.
- The working age population (15-64) of the expatriate population accounts for 84.6% of the total population - most of them are male.
- The sex ratio is higher than international patterns, due to the large number of non-citizen males.
- The majority of the non-citizen labour force are concentrated in non-specialized or unskilled occupations.
- Average migration contribution (temporary workers) of total population change is about 51.7% at the GCC level during (2010-2019).

4. Conclusion

Over the last decades, the reliance of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) economy on the expatriates workforce has increased incessantly. This increase in the demand of expatriates is due to the rapid growth of development in different aspects.
The growth in demand for this category of population has shown the role of the expatriate population (non-GCC citizens) in the overall population growth and structure.

The impact of the expatriates population will continue for the coming years, since development is going forward and demands more expatriate workers. It is likely that the proportion of expatriates to be more than the percentage of locals in the GCC for the coming years.

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