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Danish Trade Union
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Bahrain

Labour Market Profile

2014

This Labour Market Profile is a yearly updated report that provides a broad overview of the labour market's situation and development. The report is based on the latest data available and following trends. Each section has also accesses to the sources' links that can be used to go more in-depth on selected themes. This is a revised version.



Bahrain – Labour Market Profile 2014

Executive Summary

Unlike Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt and Libya, when the Arab Spring protests erupted in 2011, it did not lead to reform or toppling of the monarchy in Bahrain. The turmoil had sectarian tensions between the ruling Sunnis and the population majority of Shias. More than three quarters (77%) of Bahrain's workforce are foreign. Muslim migrants who come from South Asia are usually Sunni, which have been a factor in the tensions.

Bahrain's economic wealth depends on exporting oil. The oil wells are expected to be the first in the region to dry up. The country is in progress of developing a more diversified economy and it is ahead than other Gulf States. The government crackdown on protesters in 2011 and the more labour intensive industries have been somewhat set back, though. The economic growth only reached a low at 2.1% in 2011, but the economy recovered in 2012-2013 partly as a result of improved tourism.

Prior to 2011, Bahrain had more progressive labour relations than many of the neighbouring Gulf States. At least among Bahraini citizens, trade unions were free and giving relatively stable industrial relations. There are some significant restrictions, e.g. the law prohibits trade unions in the public sector.

The largest trade union centre, General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions (GFBTU), gave its support to the protest by launching general strikes. The second strike was called off after nine days in March 2011 after protests started escalating into demanding overthrow of the king and after government assurance that dialogue would be opened. Instead, violent crackdowns continued, including arrests, torture and forced confessions.

The government unilaterally, and without notice, amended the trade union law in 2012. It gave the government control of who participates at the International Labour Organization (ILO) and to remove trade union officers who participated in the 2011 uprising. BLUFF, which is a rival trade union centre, was established and receives government financial and political support. On this background, the Bahraini trade union movement is witnessing a period of

stagnation and on a membership decline that may last for a while. Bahrain was also categorized as a 'country at risk' by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in 2013, i.e. the existence of trade union and democratic institutions are at extreme risk.

The many labour migrants workers do not have Bahraini citizenship. From 2008 to 2012, Bahrain had a net influx of migrants at about 22,000, which is a significant decrease in comparison with the period 2006-2010 where it was 450,000. The country has officially abolished the *kafala* sponsorship system used in many Gulf States, which binds the migrant to an employer; but the implementation has been somewhat reversed.

Though few women participate in the labour market, the unemployment rate is much higher for women than men. The youth unemployment rate gap between men and women is less diverging. On the contrary, men are more likely to be in long-term unemployment than women.

Bahrain has a minimum wage for the public sector, which was settled as BHD 300 (US\$798) in 2011. The minimum wage system has gone through a revision in the private sector and in January 2014 the parliament approved a bill that effectively guarantees a BHD 300 minimum wage for Bahraini employees and pensioners in the private sector. A fund was set up that would supplement the salaries and pensions of those receiving less than BHD 300 per month. It is also noteworthy that non-Bahraini citizens are paid considerably lower wages.

The health social protection covers the entire population. The trend of government expenditure has been on a decline, though. Several groups are excluded from the pension scheme, such as domestic workers, casual workers and temporary non-citizens, thereby excluding the majority of migrant workers, which compose the largest share of the workforce.

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Trade Unions

Trade unions in Bahrain	
Number of basic unions (GFBTU)	57
Dues (standard)	N/A
Members of trade unions (GFBTU & BLUFF)	38,000
Trade union members share of labour force	5.0 %
Trade union members to waged workers	5.6 %
Female member share of trade unions	N/A
Number of CBAs	N/A
Workers covered by CBAs	N/A
Share of workers covered by CBA	N/A
Labour force (2012)	763,000

Bahrain's constitution and labor law recognize the right to form independent trade unions and the right to strike. Though, there are some significant restrictions, e.g. prohibits strikes in 10 key sectors such as oil, gas, education, telecommunications, transportation, and health sectors, as well as in pharmacies and bakeries. In addition, the law does not provide for the right to collective bargaining, but a Ministerial Order from May 2013 on Collective Labour Agreement provides a model collective labour agreement to be used as a guide by the parties to collective negotiations and bargaining.¹ It is noted that the APM Terminals Bahrain signed a three-year collective bargaining agreement in February 2014 which improve workers job security, including families of employees will be covered under the company's medical insurance policy.²

It is also noteworthy that the law prohibits trade unions in the public sector. On the other hand, public sector workers may join private sector trade unions and professional associations, although these entities cannot bargain on their behalf.³

A royal decree that places multiple unions under one organization has been on the table. Unionists claimed the move would divide workers, but supporters of the decree explained it would ensure trade unions were not monopolized.⁴

General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions (GFBTU)

GFBTU was founded in 2002, when the government of Bahrain adopted new legislation, which made trade unions legal. Labour organising had been going on for much longer, especially among the oil extraction workers.⁵

For a national trade union centre, GFBTU has a special structure, as all enterprise unions are directly affiliated with GFBTU, and many enterprises have varied types of jobs in the same union. Social dialogue is therefore not given inputs from industrial federation unions, which could voice the interest of particular worker groups.

GFBTU has around 25,000 members. All unions were until recently affiliated to GFBTU, some have switched to the newly established - and only other national trade union centre - Bahrain Labour Union Free Federation (BLUFF). GFBTU works actively to organize and extend its service to the large immigrant workforce. However, the majority of members are Bahraini citizens.⁶

Before the protest in early 2011, Bahrain had more progressive labour relations among the Gulf States. Trade unions are allowed and - at least among Bahraini citizens - workers organised and bargained collectively, producing relatively stable industrial relations.⁷

Pro-democratic protests erupted in Bahrain in February 2011, as part of the Arab Spring. GFBTU supported the protests in March 2011 by calling for a general strike. Afterwards the government declared a state of emergency and violently started to suppress the protests. GFBTU called off the general strike after nine days. But arrests and crackdowns continued until the uprising was suppressed. Torture and forced confessions were also well documented.

The government then systematically started to fire workers and trade union leaders who had participated in the general strike. Most of them in state owned or controlled enterprises, but also in fully private companies such as Gulf Air, due to government pressure.⁸ According to government statistics, 2,462 private employees and 1,945 public employees were dismissed.⁹

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, also known as the 'Bassiouni Commission', reiterated that workers have the right to strike and participate in demonstrations, and protected against arbitrary dismissals. Following international pressure and investigations by ILO, a tripartite commission was established between the Government, GFBTU and

Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), which recommended full reinstatement. Because of this, most of the public workers have since been reinstated, though not necessarily under the same conditions.¹⁰ The reinstatements and the report by the Bassiouni Commission are being interpreted as a vindication of workers, as they were in their right to demonstrate.

When GFBTU held its congress in October 2012, several international observers and ILO officials were denied their entry visas.¹¹

(BLUFF) Bahrain Labour Union Free Federation

BLUFF was established in 2012 as an alternative to GFBTU, which BLUFF claims had become too political. It claims to represent 13,000 members and have 12 unions affiliated.¹² There is, however, several allegations that BLUFF is a government controlled rival federation. State financial support that was previously given for GFTBU is now being provided to BLUFF, lead members of BLUFF have been involved in defamation campaigns against GFBTU,¹³ and unions have switched affiliation to BLUFF without their member's approval.¹⁴

Trade Unions in Bahrain							
Members, Dues, Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA) and Occupational Safety and Health committees							
Trade Union / Trade Union Centre	National affiliation	Total Members	Female Members	Dues	Number of CBAs	Workers covered by CBAs	Number of OSH committees at workplaces
GFBTU General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions		25,000	-	-	-	-	-
BLUFF Bahrain Labour Union Free Federation		13,000	-	-	-	-	-
Delmon Poultry Company Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO) Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Midal Cables Ltd Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Petrochemical Corporation Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
BALEXCO Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
ASRY Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fisher Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gulf Industrial Investment Co. Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alba Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bahrain Duty Free Complex Co. Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bahrain Airport Services (BAS) Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gulf Air Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
BANAGAS Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hospitality and Catering Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Batelco Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
BAFCO Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hempel Paints Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
GARMCO Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bahrain Flour Mills Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bankers Association	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Postal Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Insurance Organisation Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bahrain Danish Dairy Company Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
DHL Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Company زخري ادس Workers Unions	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Works and Housing Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
General Union of Flight Attendants	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
NASS Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel and tourism sector workers union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-

Ministry of Electricity and Water Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Insurance Association	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry Workers' Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
General Union of Workers in the garment and textile factories	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
EDS Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ministry of Health Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
AMA Group Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
SEFP Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Workers Union in Kars company for public transport	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ministry of Interior Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
DynCorp Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ibrahim Khalil Kanoo Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Olayan Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unilever Bahrain Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Seaports Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kindergartens and nurseries Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bahrain Association of Concrete Cast Workers	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hajj Hassan Group Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
United Cement Company Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Secure - Security Services Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dairy Almarai Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Komsp Group Association	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Krupp Association	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Metal Spray Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
PWC Global Logistics Bahrain Workers Union	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bahrain Cinema Association	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Youssef Khalil Group Workers Association	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bramco Group Association	GFBTU	-	-	-	-	-	-

Employers' Organisations

Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI)

BCCI is the main employers' organisation in Bahrain, and is also a chamber of commerce. The first chambers of commerce were established in 1939 changing its name to BCCI in 1967. BCCI provides services in supporting national exports, as well as advocating the interests of members and the private sector towards the competent authorities and likewise representing them in related local, regional and international committees, bodies, and institutions and defending their interests.¹⁵

In the early days of the protests of 2011, BCCI along with GFTBU stressed that dialogue was the best mean to solve the crisis. But, internal changes in leadership

in BCCI tilted it more towards the government, according to ITUC.¹⁶

The Chamber has a well-established arbitration committee for labour disputes between employers and employees, usually resolving disputes on a case-by-case basis. The Chamber plays the role of judge and its final judgment is legally binding.

BCCI has also a Businesswomen's Committee, together with a Bahrain Businesswomen's Association to support female entrepreneurs.

Central Tripartite Structures

Mediation and Arbitration

Individual labour disputes are handled by the authority of settlement of individual labour disputes, established by the ministry in charge of labour. The parties in a collective labour dispute has 60 days to settle, thereafter either party may submit the dispute to the Council of Settlement of Collective Disputes. Sixty days after, either party may submit the dispute for arbitration at the Arbitration Court, which is composed of three arbitrators from the high court, an arbitrator each appointed by BCCI, GFBTU and the Ministry.¹⁷

Council of Occupational Safety and Health

The council is headed by the Minister in charge of Labour, and has representatives from administrative authorities, and representatives BCCI and GCWTU. It is in charge of drafting and following-up on the implementation of general policies in terms of

occupational safety and health and the provision of the appropriate working environment.²¹

The Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA)

The LMRA is an independent public corporation fully authorized to regulate the labour market in Bahrain, with a view to creating a balanced working relationship that protects both employers and workers. The LMRA issues and regulates licenses to workers, labour-importation agencies, employment bureaus and foreign workers doing business in Bahrain. The LMRA ensures that the labour market regulatory decisions and regulations are fairly and appropriately applied.¹⁸ A tripartite committee was formed in 2011 and consisting of a representative from the Ministry of Labor, the BCCI, and the GFBTU.

Ministerial Order No. 17 of 2013 establishing an administrative unit responsible for matters relating to collective labour bargaining and agreements and monitoring the implementation of such agreements.¹⁹

National Labour Legislation

Constitution²⁰

Bahrain has had two constitutions, one from the independence from the United Kingdom in 1971, and the current from 2002. The Constitution guarantees the freedom to join and form trade unions on national principles. Guarantees job opportunities, fair working conditions, social security for vulnerable groups. It prohibits compulsory work and forced memberships of unions.

Labour Law²¹

The Labour Law, which only applies to the private sector, was amended in 2012 (Law No. 36). It introduced tougher sanctions for violating working standards, better protection of workers and longer leaves. The law regulates areas such as employment relations, wages, working hours, leave, working conditions, compensation for injuries and disease, collective bargaining, individual and collective labour disputes. It also establishes the Council of Occupational Safety and Health, and the authority of occupational safety and health inspection. In addition, the rights of domestic employees were included as employed under "clear contractual terms" and

provides for penalties for violators. The amendments, however, do not accord all of the rights that Law 36 provides to other private sector workers, including limits on daily and weekly working hours and weekly days off. During 2013, 21 Ministerial Orders with implementing texts of regulations were induced.

Workers Trade Union Law²²

The law regulates trade unions and the right to strike. The law was amended in 2011. There has been criticism of several of the amended articles. According to the ITUC²³ and an U.S. review of the U.S.-Bahrain trade agreement,²⁴ the law was amended to undermine GFBTU, by letting the ministry of labour decide who participates as workers representatives before ILO and to remove trade union leaders from office who had participated in activities considered illegal, i.e. the uprisings starting 2011.

Several other various legislations exist, which regulates and sets standards and restrictions for the labour market.²⁵ Overall, Bahraini laws are primarily based on Islamic law (Shari'a).

ILO Conventions

Ratified ILO Conventions ²⁶		
Subject and/or right	Convention	Ratification date
Fundamental Conventions		
Freedom of association and collective bargaining	C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948	Not ratified
	C098 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949	Not ratified
Elimination of all forms of forced labour	C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930	1981
	C105 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957	1998
Effective abolition of child labour	C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973	2012
	C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999	2001
Elimination of discrimination in employment	C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951	Not ratified
	C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958	2000
Governance Conventions		
Labour inspection	C081 - Labour Inspection Convention, 1947	1981
	C129 - Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969	Not ratified
Employment policy	C122 - Employment Policy Convention, 1964	Not ratified
Tripartism	C144 - Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976	Not ratified
Up-to-date Conventions		
Working time	C014 - Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921	1981
OSH	C155 - Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981	2009
Employment policy and promotion	C159 - Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983	1999
<p>Fundamental Conventions are the eight most important ILO conventions that cover four fundamental principles and rights at work. Equivalent to basic human rights at work.</p> <p>Governance Conventions are four conventions that the ILO has designated as important to building national institutions and capacities that serve to promote employment. In other words, conventions that promotes a well-regulated and well-functioning labour market.</p> <p>In addition, there are 71 conventions, which ILO considers "up-to-date" and actively promotes.</p>		

Trade Union Rights Violations

Bahrain was categorized as a 'country at risk' by the International Trade Union Conference (ITUC) in 2013, i.e. the existence of trade union and democratic institutions are at extreme risk.²⁷ A clear indicator is that GFBTU was one of the most vibrant trade union movements in the Arab region, but a period of relative freedom after the organization birth in 2002 came to an abrupt end in 2011, as part of the Arab Spring turmoil.

It followed by peaceful mass pro-democracy protests were met by brutal intervention by the state security forces, and several were killed and hundreds of protesters were wounded and hospitalized. The government declared a three-month state of emergency in March 2011. Many prominent trade union leaders and up to 4,000 workers were fired. It opened a case at ILO's Committee of Freedom of Association to reinstate workers in their jobs. According to the government practically all case have been resolved now in both the public and private sector, while GFBTU claims that hundreds still have not been reinstated after the mass protests. Moreover, among those reinstated, some were rehired with inferior conditions and job statuses and on lower pay to those jobs they held prior to their dismissal. During 2013 there were activities in the tripartite committee to address the dismissals and reinstatements as part of the government's response to recommendations set forth in the 2011 Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). In November 2013 the ILO visited the country to facilitate a tripartite agreement. The Ministry of Labour postponed signing the agreement pending a "legal review."

It has been noted that sectarian discrimination is on a rise. It has been more frequent that jobs are being denied to Shias as well as companies are hiring non-Bahrainis and Sunnis with lesser qualifications and announcing new job vacancies. According to ITUC, the Government has allegedly pressured many contractors to fire qualified Shia workers by denying those tenders. These violations are continuous and recurrent, and the labour legislation fails to protect workers fired on account of their religion.²⁸

There have been continuous threats to the personal safety of trade union leaders including arrests, harassment, prosecution and intimidation.

Trade union leaders have and continue to face criminal charges. For example, a Bahraini military court sentenced the trade union leaders Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb to prison terms for their involvement in the protests. Moreover, reports indicate that both Mahdi Abu Dheeb and Jalila al-Salman have been tortured in detention.

The Labour Law does not apply to domestic workers, and according to the U.S. Annual Human Rights Report,²⁹ this group is vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. Reported violations included having their identity documents confiscated, 12-16 hour workdays as well as verbal, physical and sexual abuse. Most domestic workers are too intimidated to press charges. The government has conducted awareness campaigns in several languages.

In September 2013 the European Parliament issued a resolution on the deteriorating rights situation in Bahrain.³⁰

As previously mentioned, there is one active case in the ILO's Committee of Freedom of Association related to the GFBTU and ITUC alleged serious violations of freedom of association in March 2011, as well as interference in the GFBTU internal affairs.

ILO Complaints Procedure ³¹ Freedom of Association cases (2013)	
Active	1
Follow-up	0
Closed	7

Based on the Interim Report (Report No 371, March 2014),³² the Committee of Freedom of Association follow-up on: i) remaining cases of dismissal following the 2011 demonstrations; ii) GFBTU allegations relating to a defamation campaign against it; iii) detailed information on the results of the investigations into the allegations of torture and mistreatment of Abu Dheeb and Jalila al-Salman while in detention; iv) amendments to the Trade Union Act and the Prime Minister's Decision No. 62 of 2006 law such as practice are into conformity with Conventions No. 87 and 98; and v) anti-union discrimination and interference by the employer in trade union affairs in several listed companies.

Working Conditions

Wages and earnings Monthly average, median and legal minimum wages			
	Source	Current dinar (BHD)	2011 constant (US\$)
Average wage (2010)	Global Wage	322	884
Minimum wage Public sector (2011)	Database ³³	300	798
Minimum wage Private sector (2014)	Al Bawaba ³⁴	300	753
Median wage Public sector (2014)	LMRA ³⁵	659	1,653
Median wage Private sector (2014)		375	941
Wage Share Unadjusted (2009)	Global Wage	35 %	
Growth of real average wage (2002-2010)	Database ³⁶	3.5 %	
<i>The Wage Share is the share of GDP that goes to wages and other forms of labour compensation. It is not adjusted for the self-employed, and can therefore underestimate the amount of GDP that goes to workers, if there are many self-employed in the economy.</i>			

Bahrain has a minimum wage for the public sector, which was settled as BHD 300 (US\$798) in 2011. The minimum wage system has gone through a revision in the private sector, which hoped to scrap informal unified minimum wages that should be replaced with salaries that would depend on people's job titles. In January 2014 Bahrain's parliament approved a bill that effectively guarantees a BHD 300 (US\$753) minimum wage for Bahraini employees and pensioners in the private sector. A fund was set up that would supplement the salaries and pensions of those receiving less than BHD 300 a month.

In 2014 the median wage for Bahrainis in the public sector is BHD 659 (US\$1,653) per month while it is BHD 375 (US\$941) in the private sector. The labour cost gap between Bahraini and non-Bahraini workers in target sectors (Construction, Trade, Hotels and Restaurants and small-scale Manufacturing) reached BHD 302 (US\$803).

The table on average wages and number of workers shows workers without Bahraini citizenship vastly outnumber Bahraini citizens. Among the insured workers, wages are also much higher for Bahrainis,

especially for men. There are many uninsured non-Bahraini workers, especially females, and the group has the lowest wages at BHD 71 (US\$189) per month. Notably, female insured non-Bahraini workers earn double the amount than their male counterparts, whereas the opposite is true for self-employed non-Bahrainis. The table also shows that wages are often below or close to the minimum wage of the public sector at BHD 300.

There were 1,682 reported cases of fatal or non-fatal occupational injuries, mostly in the sectors of supply of utilities (629), construction (407) and commerce (346), with the latter including automobile repair which was particularly dangerous.³⁷ The Labor Ministry reported in 2013 that it received 2,121 complaints, including joint complaints, brought during 2013 by 856 female and 1,265 male workers. The vast majority of cases involving abused domestic workers did not reach the ministry or the public prosecutor.

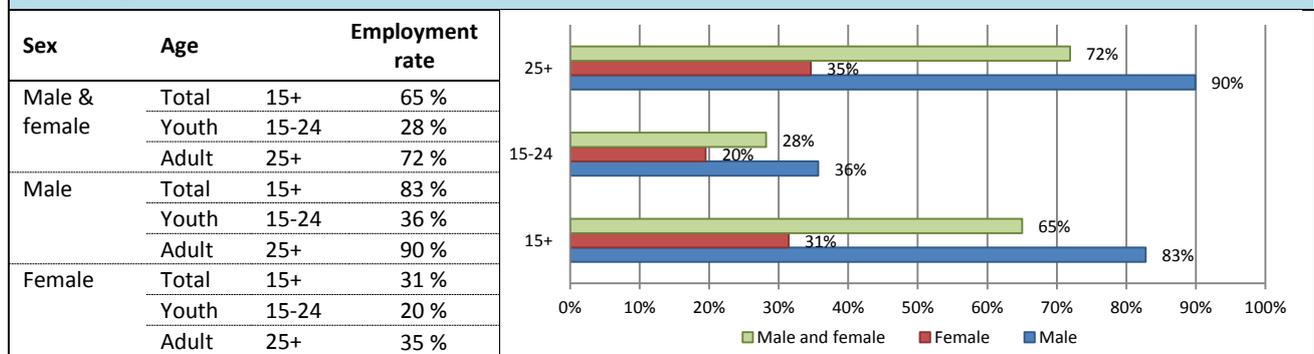
According to the U.S. human rights report,³⁸ Violations of wage, overtime, and occupational safety and health standards are common in sectors employing foreign migrant workers, such as construction, automotive repair, and domestic service. According to NGOs workplace safety inspection and compliance were substandard. A study by the LMRA found that 65% of foreign workers had not seen their employment contract and 89% were unaware of their terms of employment. Furthermore, the labor law does not fully protect domestic workers, and this group was particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

Average wages and number of workers (2011 Q2)³⁹ Distribution along citizenship, gender and employment status Wages are in Dinar.				
	Bahraini			
	Male		Female	
	Workers	Wages	Workers	Wages
Insured employees	81,780	738	44,489	689
Uninsured employees	-	-	-	-
Self-employed	11,032	342	1,413	251
	Non-Bahraini			
	Male		Female	
	Workers	Wages	Workers	Wages
Insured employees	360,737	229	24,635	440
Uninsured employees	32,182	71	52,291	71
Self-employed	9,285	400	708	191

Workforce

Employment rates⁴⁰

(2012), Age and Sex distribution



Bahrain's total population is 1.3 million persons out of which 763,000 cover the labour force. The country has a quite low employment rate for 15+ year olds at 65%, though it is higher than the average for the Middle East, which is 42%.⁴¹ The employment rate is low, mainly because few women are employed or participate in the labour market. National data from the 2014 show that employment cover 153,525 Bahrainis and 508,002 non-Bahrainis. It also shows that the total workforce soared by 6.7% in one year in public and private sectors from 2013. The proportion of Bahraini employees in the public and private sectors grew by 3.6% in the same period, compared with 7.7% for expatriates.⁴² However, the employment growth of Non-Bahraini peaked in 2013 2nd Quarter, but is decreasing fast, which can be observed by the fall of new work visas.

Unskilled foreign workers, mostly from South and Southeast Asia, are approximately 60% of the total workforce (76 percent of the private sector workforce). These workers were also vulnerable to dangerous or exploitive working conditions.

The economic sector with the highest number of new work permits for regular workers continued to be the Construction sector with a share of 31% of total permits issued, followed by Wholesale and retail trade achieving 24%, then Manufacturing and Hotels and restaurants sectors at 12% each.

Data on working poverty does not exist for Bahrain, but they are likely low due to Bahrain's wealth.

Unemployment

Unemployment, youth unemployment and long-term employment ⁴³ (2012)			
	Un-employment	Youth Unemployment	Long-term unemployment (2004)
Total	7.4 %	28 %	20 %
Male	4.8 %	25 %	25 %
Female	18 %	32 %	16 %

Long term unemployment is the share of unemployed who have been continuously unemployed for more than a year.

The overall unemployment in Bahrain is estimated as 7.4% in 2012. The rate is quite high on women on 18% while it is 4.8% for males. The unemployment rate peaked in 2004 on 9.0% and the trend slightly declined afterwards.

The youth unemployment is quite high on 28%, but the gap against males (25%) and females (32%) is

Migration

Migration ⁴⁴		
Net migration (2008-2012)	Bahrain	+ 22,081
Net migration to average population per year (2008-2012)	Bahrain	+ 1 : 279 inhabitants
	MENA (all income levels)	+ 1 : 1,977 Inhabitants

Compared to the size of its population, Bahrain is one of the largest receivers of labour migrants. From 2008 to 2012 there was a net immigration of 22,081 persons - equivalent to 1 in every 279 inhabitant in that period. In comparison with the period 2006-2010 there has been a decrease in the net migration, which was 1 in every 12 inhabitant. This is probably due to the impact of the Arab Spring on the labour market. The three countries sending the most migrants to Bahrain are India, Pakistan, and Egypt.⁴⁵

The large majority (84%) of non-Bahraini workers are men. They mainly find employment in the construction industry. Female non-Bahraini workers mainly (67%) find work as domestic workers. These workers are uninsured, and in addition only 42% of both male and female domestic workers have official Ministry of Labour work permits⁴⁶ The fear of deportation or employer retaliation prevented many foreign workers from complaining to authorities.

reduced. This trend started to increase since 2001's 19%, with an especial upturn to 27% in 2004, which, so far, peaked in 2012. The share of youth unemployed in total unemployed decreased from 56% in 2001 to 42% in 2012. Therefore it has been a problem long before the global financial recession or the Arab Spring.

Due to Bahrain's well developed economy, social safety nets and small informal employment, the open unemployment rate is a good indicator of labour market dysfunctions. Data on hidden unemployment or underemployment could reveal how good an indicator the open unemployment rate is, but such does not exist. The latest data from 2004 showed that around 20% of the unemployed were long-term unemployed, and women were much more likely to be unemployed, whereas men were more likely to be in long-term unemployment.

According to ITUC,⁴⁷ many of migrant workers work in temporary employment and have not had their wages paid. Especially domestic workers are vulnerable to violence, and sexual abuse and exploitation. Bahrain has made several steps to improve the rights of migrants, such as granting the right to organise and abolishing the *Kafala* sponsorship system, in which a migrant was tied to an employer for better or worse. Non-citizens have the right to organise, but cannot establish their own unions. However, the decision has been somewhat reversed, by making it more difficult for migrants to change their employer.⁴⁸ Recently it was raised that migrant workers in Bahrain efforts and difficulties of including them in the workers' movement is to some degree 'cultural', and changing the culture is the most difficult endeavor.⁴⁹

Since the large migrant labour force segment has a high risk of exploitation, GFBTU have entered agreements with their trade union counterparts in Sri Lanka and Nepal. In 2009, GFTBU signed a memorandum of understanding with the Sri Lankan trade union centres CWC, NWC, and NTUF, on securing migrant workers labour rights.⁵⁰ A similar agreement has been made with the large Indian trade union centre INTUC. In January 2012 GFTBU signed a memorandum of understanding with the Nepalese trade union centre GEFONT, involving cooperation and coordination between the two centres, on areas such as outreach activities, awareness-raising, monitoring of recruitment agencies, among others.

Informal Economy

Though no specific data exists on the informal sector other indicators suggests it is rather small in Bahrain: Out of an employed labour force of both citizens and non-Bahraini citizens, 14% are uninsured domestic workers, 1.4% are own account workers, and 0.5% are unpaid family workers. All domestic workers are non-Bahrainis.

Child Labour

Limited data exists on child labour in Bahrain, and the latest data from 2000 reported that 5% of children are engaged in child labour, which is a low rate.

Bahrain ratified ILO Convention 138 in March 2012. The new Labour Law (No. 36) increased the minimum age for work from 14 to 15. The current minimum age for hazardous work is 16, which is below the age of 18 recommended in international standards. According to the U.S. Department of Labor,⁵² although there do not appear to be widespread incidents of the worst forms of child labour, gaps remain in the legal framework regarding hazardous work and domestic service. Children continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, particularly in domestic service.⁵³

Gender

In terms of Global Gender Gap Index, which is constructed to rank countries on their gender gaps not on their development level, Bahrain is the third best performer within MENA region and ranking 112 out of 136 countries in 2013.⁵⁶

As noted elsewhere in this report: the gender difference in education is very small, both in terms of enrolment and educational levels attained. The employment rate is much lower for women (31%) than men (83%), because few Bahraini women participate on the labour market. Only 16% of employed non-Bahraini are women, who mainly find work as domestic workers, a group vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse.

Youth

According to a report from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,⁵⁷ the youth in Bahrain are rising up during the region's spreading wave of demonstrations in 2011. The 'February 14 Youth Coalition', which is a leaderless network formed in the early days of Bahrain's uprising, was winning over some of Al Wefaq's supporters. It rejected dialogue

These types of employment are more commonly informal, and apart from domestic workers they are a relatively small share of the labour force. Among the domestic workers 58% do not have a work permit from the ministry of labour and could be considered as informal employment. There are reports of forced or compulsory labour, particular among the domestic workers.⁵¹

Working children			
Proportion of all children in age group			
Region	Year	Type	Rate
Bahrain (age 5-14) ⁵⁴	2000	Child labourers	5 %
Average for Middle East, North Africa, Europe and North America (age 5-17) ⁵⁵	2008	Children in employment	8.4 %
		Child labourers	6.7 %
		Hazardous work	5.7 %
Children in employment include all children who conduct some kind of work, whereas child labourers are a narrower term without mild forms of work. Hazardous work is the worst form of child labour as defined in ILO C182.			

The gender wage gap is larger among non-Bahraini, than Bahraini citizens. Bahraini men earn an average of BHD 691 (US\$1,838) per month and women BHD 676 (US\$1,798), whereas non-Bahraini men earn BHD 221 (US\$588) per month and women BHD 189 (US\$502). Still, there are large differences in-between different employments, for example insured non-Bahraini women earn almost double their male counterparts.

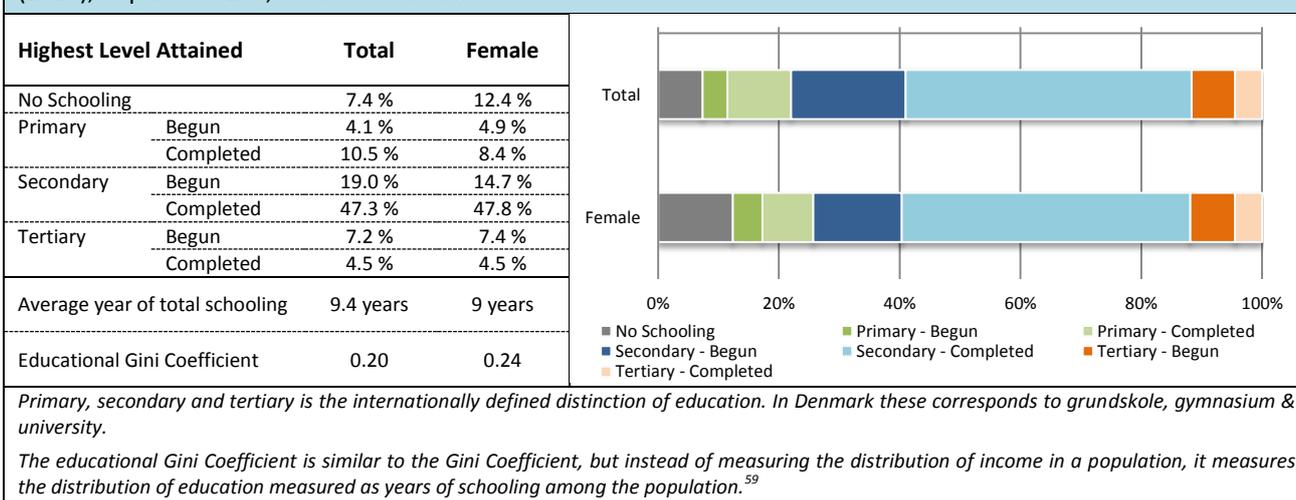
Before a Shari'a court a woman is not considered a 'full person' as her testimony is worth half of that of a man.

with the regime, called for the creation of a republic, and confronted security forces with sporadic violence. A main factor of the youth's frustration was the failure of the older Al Wefaq administration to promote more progressive reforms, as well as the regime's failed promises. The youthful followers proved highly susceptible to the wave of protests.

Characteristics of the Working Age Population

Highest level attained and years of schooling in the population⁵⁸

(2010), Population 25+, Total and Female



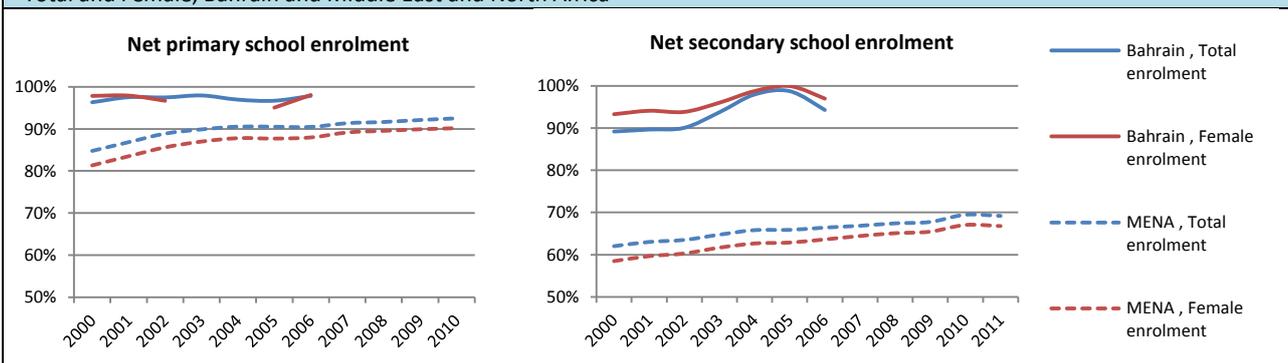
Bahrain has a high average years' of schooling per capita for the Middle East and North Africa. Few have no schooling, over half of the population has completed secondary school, and many have progressed into university. The gender difference is also rather small. Though more women have no schooling, slightly more women than men have completed secondary school and progress into university.

The graph above shows the educational attainment of all Bahrainis above 25 years of age, thereby giving a glance of the human capital of the labour force.

Data is not available for enrolment into Bahrain universities, but enrolment into primary and secondary schools are high. Notably more women than men enrol into secondary schools.

Enrolment in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary schools (2000-2011)⁶⁰

Total and Female, Bahrain and Middle East and North Africa



Net enrolment is the ratio of children of official school age, who are enrolled in school to the population of the corresponding official school age. Gross enrolment is the ratio of total enrolment, regardless of age, to the population of the corresponding official school age. Gross primary enrolment is therefore sometimes higher than 100%.

Vocational training

Bahrain has slightly less in vocational training than the average for the MENA region. A region where there is a general lack of employable skills.⁶¹ The number of vocational students has fallen steadily from 15,200 in 2006 to 5,708 in 2011, and a slightly increase in 2012 to 6,204 vocational pupils.

Bahrain has reformed its technical and vocational training into a dual system: It now includes a theoretical School-Based Learning as well as a Work-Based Learning of four to six weeks workplace training.⁶² The government is also launching the National Workforce Observatory project which is a database for the labour market through which

decision makers can study market indices and link them to educational and training output.⁶³

GFBTU is the sole legitimate representative of the workers in the Supreme Council for Vocational Training.

Vocational Training ⁶⁴		
Pupils in vocational training (2012)	Bahrain	6,204
Ratio of pupils in vocational student to all pupils in secondary education (Average 2009-2012)	Bahrain	8.4 %
	MENA	9.8 %
Ratio of pupils in vocational training out of 15-24 year olds (Average 2009-2012)	Bahrain	3.8 %
	MENA	4.3 %

Social Protection

Public spending on social protection schemes ⁶⁵ (2011)		
Public social protection expenditure, excl. health	Bahraini Dinar	157 million
	US\$	414 million
	% of GDP	1.6 %
	per capita	331 US\$
	% of government expenditure	12 %
Public health care	% of GDP	2.4 %
Health social protection coverage	% of population	100 %
Trends in government expenditure in health	% changes per year (2007-2011)	-5.4 %
Total social protection expenditure	% of GDP	4.0 %

Benefits, coverage and contributions to pension schemes ⁶⁶ (2008-09)		
Social benefits for the active age	% of GDP	1.5 %
Pensionable (60+) age receiving an old age pension	Proportion of total	41 %
Old age effective coverage as proportion of programs	Proportion of contributory	N/A
Active contributors to an old age pension scheme	15-64 years	11 %

Bahrain has a total social protection expenditure of 4.0% of GDP. The health social protection covers the entire population; but, the trend of government expenditure has been on a decline. It is estimated that 41% of 60+ age population are receiving an old age pension.

The Social Insurance Organisation manages contributory schemes in Bahrain. Private sector employees are covered by pensions and work injury schemes. Self-employed can be voluntarily covered by the pensions schemes. They provide pension for old age, disability, and survivors.

To the pension scheme, the employer contributes 9% of salary, the employee 6%, and voluntary self-employed contribute 15%. The employer contributes 3% of salary to the work injury scheme.

Several groups are excluded, such as domestic workers, casual workers and temporary non-citizens, thereby excluding the majority of migrant workers which compose the largest share of the workforce.

Public sector workers are covered by the Public Sector Pension fund, providing pension for old age, disability, survivor, and work injury pensions.

Bahrain introduced unemployment benefits in 2006. It is directed towards civil servants, private-sector employees and first time job seekers; the latter only for Bahraini citizens. Self-employed are not covered. It is a contributory scheme with 1% of salary each paid by employee, employer and the government. The unemployment benefits can be claimed for six months at 60% of previous earning at a maximum of BHD 500 per month (US\$1,330).⁶⁷ Data from 2008 suggest 37% of unemployed were covered, which is a rate comparable to OECD countries.

General Economic Performance

Key Facts ⁶⁸ (2013 est.)				
GDP	GDP per capita (PPP) (US\$)	GDP real growth	HDI (2012) ⁶⁹	Gini Index
28 billion US\$	29,800 49 of 228 countries	4.4 %	0.796 48 of 187 countries	N/A
<i>The Human Development Index (HDI) measures the average of a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living.</i>				

Doing Business ⁷⁰	Control of corruption	Government effectiveness	Rule of Law
53 of 189 countries	0.25 (2007) 0.39 (2012)	0.42 (2007) 0.54 (2012)	0.57 (2007) 0.28 (2012)
<i>A high ranking on the Ease of Doing Business Index means the regulatory environment is more conducive to the start-up and operation of a local firm.⁷¹</i>			
<i>The selected Governance Indicators cover the years 2007 and 2012, and ranking from -2.5 to 2.5; i.e. negative tendencies below the zero mean and unit standard deviation, score negative measurements.⁷²</i>			

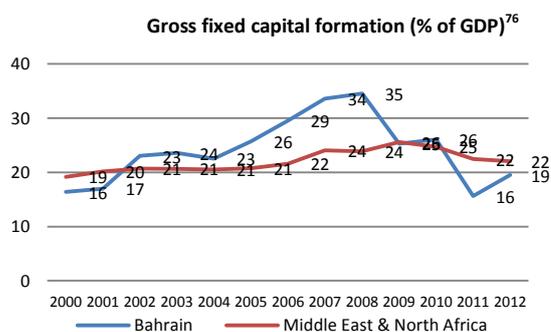
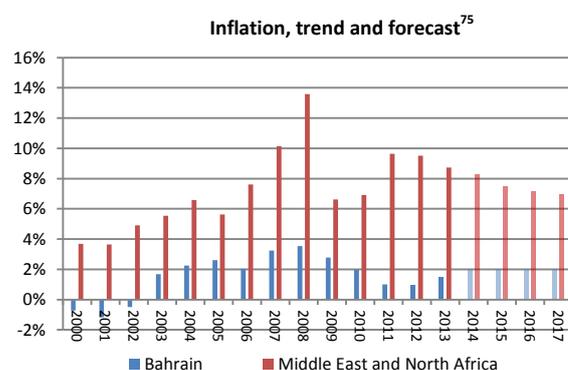
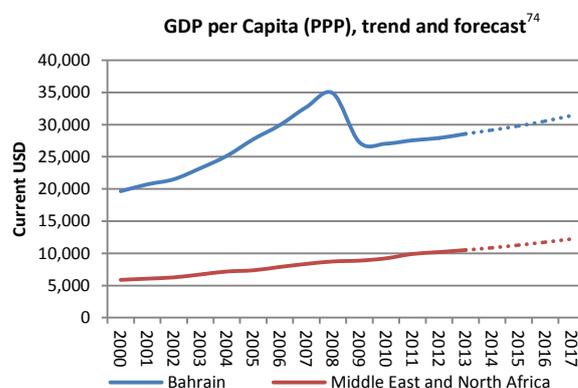
In 2002 Bahrain became a constitutional monarchy, where the king appoints the prime minister. The current prime minister and brother of the previous king, has occupied the post since 1971. The lower house is elected, and the upper house is appointed by the king. The monarchy and elite are Sunni Muslim, while 70% of the population are Shia, which has created tensions and allegations of discrimination.⁷³

Bahrain's economic wealth depends on exporting oil. It is a relatively rich country and the GDP per capita measured in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) is higher than the average for the MENA region. The oil wells are expected to be the first in the region to dry up, and Bahrain is developing a more diversified economy than the other Gulf States. It has enjoyed particular success in positioning itself into becoming a major financial center, particularly competes with Malaysia in the field of Islamic banking. Aluminium production and construction are also important sectors. After the civil unrest and government crackdown on protesters in 2011, the more labour intensive industries have been somewhat set back.

Though Bahrain's economy was affected by the global fall in oil prices in 2008 and the instability following the Asian Spring uprising, Bahrain never entered a recession, but the economic growth only reached a low of 2.1% in 2011, but the economy recovered in 2012-13, partly as a result of improve tourism.

Inflation has been kept below 4% over the last decade, much lower than the average for the MENA region, and it is projected to stay low. The gross fixed capital formation has experienced a significant decrease from the peaking 35% in 2008, which currently is 19% in 2012. It is due to weak investors sentiments.

The Doing Business Indicator ranks Bahrain higher than average at 53 out of 189 countries. On the three governance indicators, Control of Corruption, Government Effectiveness, and Rule of Law; Bahrain has relatively good scores. The country also scores relatively good on the Human Development Index (HDI) as 48 out of 187 countries, but dropping down on 4 steps during the HDI rank change 2007-2012.



Trade

Trade and Foreign Direct Investment ⁷⁷ (2013 est.)			
Exports	Imports	FDI flow ⁷⁸ (average 2008-12)	FDI Stock
21 billion US\$	14 billion US\$	0.8 billion US\$	18 billion US\$
73 % of GDP	51 % of GDP	2.7 % of GDP	63 % of GDP

At 73% to GDP, Bahrain has a very high export share compared to the size of the economy, one of the highest in the world. Though minerals and metals dominate the export industry, Bahrain has a wide range of trade partners, with the four largest only comprising about 11% of total exports. Before global fall in oil prices in 2008, petroleum exports were over 60% of exports. Now other sectors such as metal, machinery and chemicals are also large parts of exports, as previously mentioned.

Imports are also high but not to an extent to offset the positive balance of trade. Imports are mainly from Asia and Europe and within machinery and chemicals.

To achieve Bahrain's government's economic objectives under Vision 2030, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has outlined priorities in a multifaceted strategy with a focus on generating high value-added exports and employment opportunities for nationals. It includes enhancing FDI to support technology diffusion; further harmonizing business and tax regimes within the Gulf Cooperation Council; and expanding exportable services in the financial and tourism industries.⁷⁹

Trade agreements

Bahrain is part of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area, which entered into force in 1998. It includes 16 other member states of the Arab League.

Bahrain is also part of the Gulf Cooperating Council, which launched a common market in 2008. It is between the countries Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman, and includes cooperation on social issues.⁸⁰

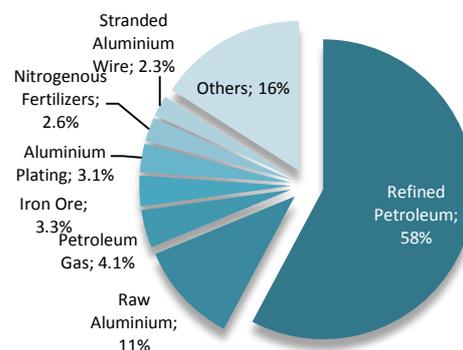
Bahrain has bilateral trade agreements with Jordan, the U.S. and is negotiating one with Singapore.

The U.S. trade agreement entered into force in 2006. It requires the two countries to uphold the four core ILO labour standards, as well as acceptable conditions of work, in a manner that does not affect trade.⁸¹ A report by the U.S. Department of Labour from 2012 found that Bahrain had breached this part of the trade agreement, following the deterioration of labour standards after the general strike in 2011.⁸²

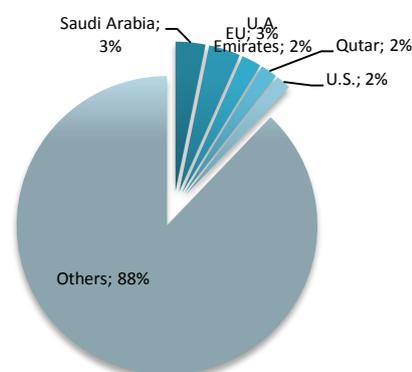
Export Processing Zones (EPZ)

According to an ILO survey from 2007, Bahrain had 9 EPZs with about 300,000 employees, 10% of them female, producing services worth US\$6.9 billion. This would account to about 75% of the labour force back then. The types of jobs are within finance and business services, including tourism, banks and insurance companies, international law firms, business consultancies and IT.

Bahrain's main products share of exports (2012)⁸³



Bahrain's main export markets (2013)⁸⁴



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