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The background of the cover is a photograph of three African women. They are wearing traditional, brightly colored patterned dresses. The woman in the foreground is looking down, while the woman next to her is looking towards the camera. A third woman is visible in the background, also looking down. A large blue diagonal shape covers the lower half of the image, and a red triangle is in the bottom right corner.

Statistical Report on African Migrant Workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, Jordan and Lebanon

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First published 2026.



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ISBN: 9789220437971 (print); 9789220437988 (web PDF)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54394/00034960>

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Statistical Report on African Migrant Workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, Jordan and Lebanon

ILO Regional Office for Africa

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► Acknowledgments

Under the first phase of the FAIRWAY Programme, the ILO commissioned in 2023 a study on the stocks and flows of African migrant workers in the Arab States, covering eight countries of origin (Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda) and eight destination countries (the GCC, Jordan and Lebanon). The original study was prepared by **Françoise De Bel-Air**, Senior Fellow, with support from the Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population (GLMM) Programme.

The present publication is an updated version of that study. The update was undertaken by **Richard Horne**, with research assistance from Marina Cruz de Andrade, during the second phase of FAIRWAY and includes three in-depth country case studies on Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda.

The ILO would like to express its appreciation to the colleagues who provided valuable technical guidance and comments throughout the development of this study, including Theo Sparreboom, Ryszard Cholewinski, Amish Karki, Vanessa Leigh, Siham Nuseibeh, Olukemi Osoba, Augustine Erameh, Andrew Mukulu, Elisa Benes, Nadia Touihri, Grace Eid, and Maria Payet (all ILO).

This publication was made possible through the support of the FAIRWAY Programme funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The paper was edited and designed by Pauline Delrue.

► List of acronyms and abbreviations

BLMAs	Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements
EEMIS	External Employment Management Information System, Uganda
ESS	Ethiopian Statistical Service
FMLE	Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, Nigeria
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GHS	General Household Survey
ICLS	International Conference for Labour Statisticians
ILO	International Labour Organization
KCHSP	Kenya Continuous Household Survey Program
KPHC	Kenya Population and Housing Census
LFS	Labour force survey
LMRA	Labour Market Regulatory Authority, Bahrain
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda
MHRSD	Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development
MOLS	Ministry of Labour and Skills, Ethiopia
NCSI	National Centre for Statistics and Information, Oman
NELEX	National Electronic Labour Exchange, Nigeria
NiDCOM	Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, Nigeria
NIS	National Immigration Service, Nigeria
NLFS	Nigeria Labour Force Survey
PACI	Public Authority for Civil Information, Kuwait
PHC	Population and Housing Census, Nigeria
QLFS	Quarterly labour force survey
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

► Executive summary

This report, produced under the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s FAIRWAY Programme, presents the first comprehensive statistical mapping of international labour migration statistics for African migrant workers in eight Arab States of destination – the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates), Jordan and Lebanon.

These Arab States attract a significant number of African workers. However, up-to-date, comprehensive, and detailed estimates of stocks and flows of international migrant workers from African countries into and from Jordan, Lebanon and the six GCC states are limited. This report seeks to bridge this information gap. It identifies data sources for international labour migration statistics of African migrant workers' stocks and flows to the GCC countries, Jordan and Lebanon. The report focuses on eight African countries of origin: three North African countries (Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco), and five Sub-Saharan African countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania).

Based on the information available, the report also analyses trends and characteristics in stocks and flows of migrant workers, including sex-disaggregation and institutional sectors of employment. Recommendations are also provided for the improvement of international labour migration statistics in countries of origin and destination for labour migration of African migrants to the Arab States.

The mapping of data sources of international labour migration statistics for this report was compiled via a desk review and stakeholder consultations – building on preliminary research prepared in 2024. The desk review was conducted for all focal countries of destination and origin, respectively, and stakeholder consultations were conducted for selected countries of origin (namely, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda) as well as with key experts.

Administrative records: the main data source for both countries of destination and origin

Administrative data is the main source of information for the countries of destination in this report. All countries, with the exception of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, publish estimates on international migrant worker stocks that are separated by country of origin and therefore allow for the identification of migrant workers from different African countries. Kuwait and Lebanon also provide information on the flows of migrant workers, and Jordan, potentially also publishes information that can be used for estimates of flows but does not have sufficient methodological information to be able to use the data for these purposes.

For countries with estimates available, information is usually provided in a sex-disaggregated format with some exceptions. Additionally, most cases have breakdowns by institutional sector (i.e. public sector, private sector and households (i.e. domestic workers)). Only the non-GCC states had other breakdowns, including by economic activity (Jordan) and occupation (Lebanon).

Countries of origin covered in this report have lower coverage for stock of nationals abroad and outflows, with only five out of eight African countries of focus with any datapoints. Indeed, there are datapoints for Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tunisia and Uganda, with no datapoints for Morocco, Nigeria or Tanzania. All the countries with datapoints had outflow information from administrative records. Administrative data, while helpful especially for understanding trends in outflows, are however limited to regular migrants and typically formal placements but are likely to be significant undercounts.

In all cases, while sex-disaggregated data was typically collected, very few data sources had information beyond that, such as occupation, institutional sector or economic activity. This makes it difficult to paint a picture of the characteristics of outflows of migrant workers. For instance, the data does not help answer the question of the skill profile of outgoing migrants, how this varies by country and what profiles are most likely to migrate via formal or official channels versus irregular or unofficial channels

The scale and distribution of African migrant workers in countries of destination varies greatly

Jordan has the highest share of migrant workers from the focal African countries, accounting for 63.3 per cent of the total migrant worker stock, followed by **Lebanon** at 57.7 per cent. This reflects the differences in characteristics of migrant workers between the GCC states and Jordan and Lebanon. While there are still African migrant workers in the GCC states, they represent a lower share, at 21 per cent in **Kuwait**, 14.2 per cent in **Saudi Arabia** and less than 5 per cent in **Bahrain** and **Oman**. Despite this, the number of African migrant workers in absolute terms is highest in **Saudi Arabia**, based on the latest available data, accounting for more than 1.1 million migrant workers. This is followed by **Kuwait** with 468,000 African migrant workers, and **Jordan** with 198,000. There were no common trends over time across the Arab States, with mixed trends in absolute numbers and for African migrants as a share of all migrant workers. Nonetheless, specific points of interest are:

- ▶ In **Bahrain**, around 76 per cent of migrant workers from the focal African countries were men in 2023. Women are most likely to be domestic workers (noting that for domestic workers only Ethiopians and Kenyans are listed from the focal countries of origin). The number of domestic workers from these countries has been decreasing from 2019 to 2023, from nearly 25,000 to around half this amount. Notably, as the share of these workers of all domestic workers has also decreased, it suggests that domestic workers from these countries have been replaced by domestic workers from other countries of origin. In Bahrain, most of the migrant workers in the public sector were from Egypt.
- ▶ In **Jordan**, there was a notable dip in total numbers in 2020 owing to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, from 186,000 in 2019 to 110,000 in 2020. Levels recovered by 2021 and remained similar to 2024.
- ▶ In **Kuwait**, levels have remained relatively stable over the time period with available data, both in absolute terms, and relative terms, as a share of total migrant workers. By sex, however, there are more marked trends. In 2015, women accounted for around 16 per cent of the migrant workers from the focal African countries. This decreased to around 8.5 per cent by 2025. This decrease was driven by reductions in African migrant workers in domestic work. Specifically, Ethiopian women in domestic work in Kuwait.
- ▶ In **Lebanon**, in absolute terms, the total stock of African migrant workers decreased from around 160,000 in 2017, to 46,000 in 2022. The major decrease between 2017 and 2023 was also accompanied by a change in the composition of migrant workers. Ethiopia accounted for 86 per cent of all the focal African migrant workers in 2017 and decreased to less than 70 per cent in 2023. At the same time, migrant workers from Kenya increased from 1 per cent in 2017 to more than 18 per cent of the focal African migrant workers in 2023.
- ▶ In **Oman**, around 35 per cent of all migrant workers from the African countries of focus were women. The majority of migrant workers from the focal African countries of origin were in the government sector, accounting for 83 per cent in 2025. In terms of the countries of origin, the vast majority in the government sector were from Egypt, with only a fraction from Tanzania and Ethiopia. Most of the non-Egyptians were women, as nearly all the men from these focal African countries of origin in the Government sector were Egyptian.
- ▶ In **Saudi Arabia** there has been an increase in absolute terms, from 886,000 in 2020 to 1.1 million in 2022, while the share of total migrant workers remains around the same at 14 per cent over this same period. It suggests that there has been an increase overall of migrant workers to a similar degree as the number from the focal African countries. Most workers were employed in the private sector, accounting for 99 per cent of all employment in 2022. Egyptians were the main nationality of the focal African countries of origin.

Arab States are increasingly significant destinations for African migrant workers using regular migration channels

Outflows of African migrant workers by country of destination were more common than stocks of Africans abroad. This data was mostly from administrative records of migrants going abroad for employment, including work permits to work abroad (Egypt), contracts and employment attestations (Kenya) and data processed in Uganda from the External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS).

- ▶ In **Egypt**, there were around 1 million Egyptians a year being granted work permits for the first time and going to Arab States' countries of destination in 2023. It corresponds to around 97 per cent of all work permits issued, suggesting that the Arab States are the prime destination for Egyptian migrant workers.
- ▶ In **Ethiopia**, there are two datapoints only, for 2018 and 2020. They show that the number of Ethiopian migrant workers in the Arab States decreased from around 20,000 to 7,500 between 2018 and 2020. This is likely to reflect the decrease as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic and more recent data would be more informative. Nonetheless, the share of Ethiopian migrant workers going to the Arab States was estimated at more than 90 per cent, suggesting again that the Arab States are the prime destination for Ethiopian migrant workers. Kuwait accounted for nearly a quarter of all outflows in 2018, but this became a negligible amount by 2024. Instead, Jordan became a significant country of destination for Ethiopians, accounting for around 20 per cent of outflows in 2024 compared to a negligible amount in 2018.
- ▶ In **Kenya**, the data shows that there were around 1,300 Kenyan migrant workers officially going to the Arab States, according to contract and attestation information held by the State Department for Labour in 2024. The Arab States as a destination accounted for more than 90 per cent of all outflows. Qatar was a major destination for Kenyan migrant workers in 2018, accounting for nearly 90 per cent of outflows. By 2024, this had shifted and Saudi Arabia became the main destination, accounting for 76 per cent of outflows.
- ▶ In **Uganda**, data suggests that around 20,000 migrant workers went to the Arab States in 2024, down from a peak of 90,000 in 2022. The Arab States have grown as a key destination for Ugandans, for which almost all Ugandans in the dataset were destined for the Arab States in 2024, compared to less than 60 per cent in 2016. Finally, in Uganda, the most noticeable change has been the increase in outflows to Saudi Arabia, which increased from around 200 workers in 2016 to around 20,000 in 2024, accounting for around 92 per cent of outflows in 2024.

Recommendations

The report advances several recommendations for the improvement of international labour migration statistics in terms of collection, analysis and dissemination in the Gulf states, Lebanon and Jordan and focal African countries of origin.

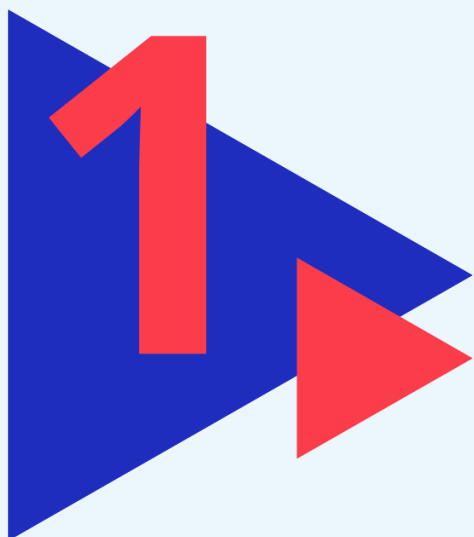
Expand data access and dissemination in countries of destination

- ▶ **Raise awareness of the importance of sharing detailed information on migrant workers:** The business case needs to be developed to demonstrate how publishing country of origin information, as well as sex-disaggregated and other relevant data, can contribute to a better understanding of national labour markets, including by informing localisation policies and providing insights into the composition of labour and skills demand, as well as existing mismatches and challenges.
- ▶ **All countries of origin should be listed and not just the most prevalent:** A challenge in this report was identifying the focal countries when only the top most numerous migrant worker countries were listed. This is useful information but insufficient for fully analysing the labour market data, and results in gaps and breaks in time series, thereby undermining the analysis.

- ▶ **Ensure sampling frames are representative of different migrant worker groups:** When surveys are used and not administrative records, migrant workers living in collective quarters are often omitted. The collection and compilation of statistics on these groups should be more fully integrated into national statistical systems through appropriate sampling frames for migrant worker populations, to ensure this population is adequately covered.
- ▶ **Compile and disseminate analyses in a regular and timely manner:** Ministries and departments can disseminate information on a regular and timely basis, particularly by automating data processing and drafting processes so that bulletins can be produced regularly with minimal resource requirements.

Improving data availability and access in countries of origin

- ▶ **Establish a technical working group on international labour migration statistics in each country where such groups do not currently exist,** led by the national statistics office and with representatives from different agencies. The purpose of this technical working group would be to raise awareness of the importance of international labour migration statistics and identify support needed for the processing of international labour migration statistics by different agencies.
- ▶ **Conduct a mapping exercise of available data on international labour migration statistics:** A first step for understanding what exists and who the key data-producing stakeholders are is to conduct a mapping of existing and potential data sources on international labour migration statistics per country. This would entail a mapping of different data sources and their suitability and limitations for capturing information on international migrants; it can be a first step to developing a roadmap for improving international labour migration statistics.
- ▶ **Improve coverage, quality and use of relevant administrative records for statistical purposes:** National statistics offices should provide appropriate support to different ministries and departments in the processing of these administrative records by ensuring compliance with statistical codes of conduct.
- ▶ **Improve knowledge sharing between data producers on methodologies for capturing information on nationals abroad and outflows:** There is potential for national statistics offices to learn from one another's experience on including new questions and modules in official statistics to help gather information on nationals abroad and outflows. The sharing of good practice examples through peer learning is one means of knowledge sharing and can be facilitated through regional workshops and conferences.
- ▶ **Compile and disseminate analyses in a regular and timely manner:** Ministries and departments can disseminate information on a regular and timely basis, particularly by automating data processing and drafting processes so that bulletins can be produced regularly with minimal resource requirements. Beyond this, relevant ministries and departments should also consider developing analytical reports on the outflows of migrant workers to help inform different stakeholders on trends and characteristics of these movements.



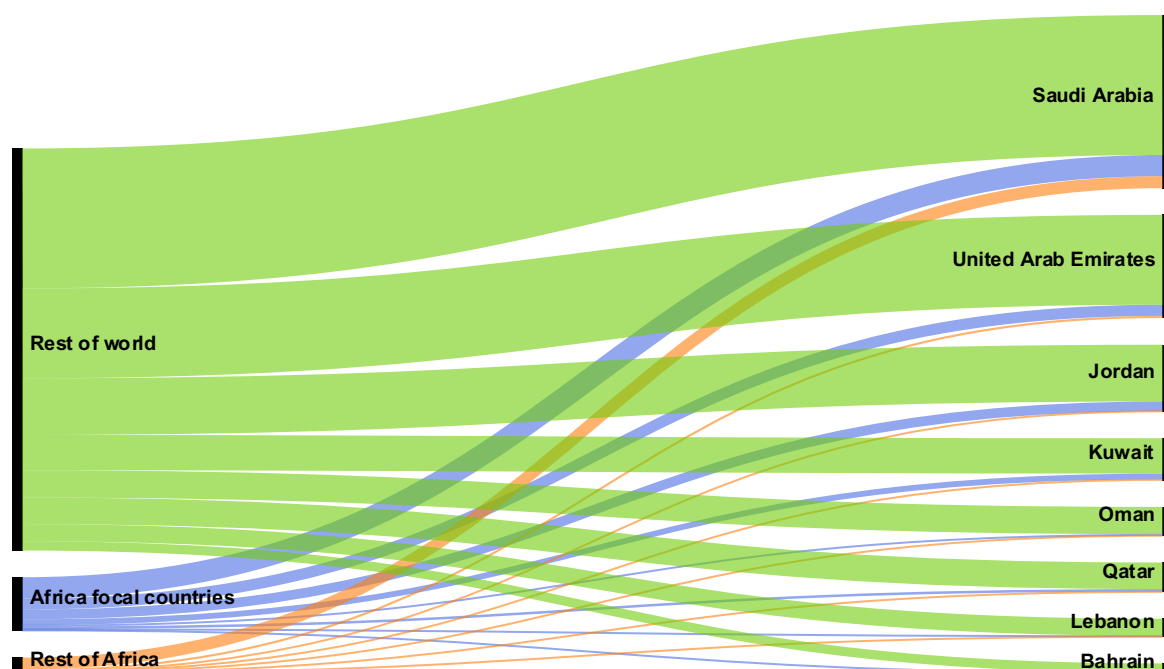
Introduction

The Arab states of the Middle East (hereafter 'Arab States') and especially the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states¹, attract a significant number of African workers. However, up-to-date, comprehensive, and detailed estimates of stocks and flows of international migrant workers from African countries into and from Jordan, Lebanon and the six GCC states are limited. The paper seeks to bridge this gap. It aims to identify sources of data for mapping African migrant workers' stocks and flows to the GCC countries, Jordan and Lebanon and additionally, to analyse trends and characteristics in migrant worker stocks and flows, including sex-disaggregation and institutional sectors of employment.

This report focuses on eight African countries of origin: three North African countries (Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco), and five Sub-Saharan African countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania). For context, these African focal countries of origin accounted for an estimated 76.6 per cent of all African migrant stock in the eight countries of destination in 2024 (Figure 1.1). Despite this, the African focal countries accounted for only an estimated 11.4 per cent of total migrant stock to these selected countries of destination.

¹ Also referred to as the GCC countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Figure 1.1. International migrant stock, by selected regions of origin and selected Arab States' countries of destination, 2024



Notes: International migrant stock (i.e. all those aged 0+), not limited to the working age population or international migrant workers.

Source: (UNDESA 2024).

The report is structured as followed:

- **Section 2** details the methodology of the report: the identification of data producers, and the selection and classification of data sources. It then summarises the United Nations (UN) and ILO definitions of international migrants and international migrant workers, and highlights existing discrepancies between international definitions and the definitions applied in the statistics of the two groups of countries (countries of destination and origin).
- **Section 3** summarises the current state of data production on migration and labour migration to the GCC countries, Jordan and Lebanon, and pinpoints the data available to measure the size and characteristics of African migrants and migration to the eight countries
- **Section 4** does the same with the data from countries of origin, and locates statistical sources permitting to measure and analyse the characteristics of migration and labour emigration from the eight African states to the eight countries of destination
- **Section 5** processes existing migration statistics and seeks to draw a picture of African migrant workers in the eight countries of destination (GCC, Jordan and Lebanon).
- **Section 6** concludes the report and proposes some recommendations aimed at improving knowledge on the populations of African migrant workers in and to the GCC region, Jordan and Lebanon.



Methodology

This study builds on preliminary research conducted in 2024. This preliminary research was based on a desk review and sought to consolidate all publicly available information, drawing particularly from the Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population (GLMM) Programme (GRC, n.d.-b). A report was prepared in 2024 and in 2025 a consultant was commissioned to update this report with newly released data and to do a deeper dive into areas of the assignment, particularly around data from countries of origin. This report was prepared from November 2025 to March 2026, and data should be considered the latest available at the time of drafting in February 2026.

2.1. Objectives of the study

The study has three main objectives:

- ▶ To identify sources of data for mapping African migrant workers from the stocks and flows of migrant workers from the focal countries of origin to the Gulf states, Jordan and Lebanon.
- ▶ To estimate and analyse migrant worker stocks, flows and other characteristics of African migrant workers from the focal countries of origin to the Gulf states, Jordan and Lebanon.
- ▶ To make recommendations for the improvement of international labour migration statistics in terms of collection, analysis and dissemination in the Gulf states, Jordan and Lebanon and focal African countries of origin.

2.2. Methodological approach

Data collection for the data source mapping and analysis of international labour migration statistics was carried out through a desk review and stakeholder consultations. The desk review covered all countries of destination and origin, respectively, while stakeholder consultations were conducted for selected countries (namely, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda) as well as key experts.

2.2.1. Data collection

Desk review

The data collection and mapping process for countries of destination differed from that for countries of origin. Information on the countries of destination in the preliminary report drew largely from material made available by the Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population (GLMM) Programme (GRC, n.d.-b). Data gathered by the GLMM programme is based on extensive desk reviews, as well as field visits to Gulf states and regular contacts with academics, statisticians and migration data producers based in each of the six GCC countries. The review of countries of destination's data sources drew heavily from a comprehensive assessment of international labour migration statistics in the Arab States published in 2024 (ILO 2024g). This assessment produced comprehensive country-level assessments of all available international labour migration data sources per country of destination covered by this report. Notably, this report and the associated materials were published in 2024 but developed in 2021, and therefore the assessment reflects what was available at the time of research, which needed updating.

The data collection and mapping process for countries of origin in the preliminary report were also able to draw upon existing work including a mapping of statistical sources for migrants relevant to North African countries (ICMPD 2020); and ILO delegates provided input and feedback on the mapping of resources available in Tunisia and Morocco. For sub-Saharan Africa, data collection in the preliminary report was limited to desk research with stakeholder consultation in the countries of origin limited only to exchanges with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) in Uganda. To address the lack of stakeholder consultation in sub-Saharan African countries of origin, the updated report included a deep-dive into three countries of origin (Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda), with extensive stakeholder consultation (see below), processing of available microdata, as well as making use of more recent publications including a report mapping international labour migration statistics in Uganda (ILO 2024h).

The data collection and mapping process for both the countries of destination and countries of origin followed the framework outlined in Section 2.2.3.

Stakeholder consultation

A preliminary list of stakeholders was prepared as part of the inception phase and input was provided by the ILO FAIRWAY Project Team. The full list of the institutions contacted is provided in Appendix II and includes the following categories:

- National statistics offices
- Ministries of labour or equivalent
- Ministries of interior
- Ministries of foreign affairs or equivalents
- Other bodies and institutions engaging with diaspora populations, including public and private employment agencies
- Social partners including workers' and employers' organisations
- Key experts, including those from the ILO and Gulf Research Centre

The ILO FAIRWAY Project Team provided contact points for the different institutions and departments and consultations with these contact points were made through different means (interviews, email exchanges or questionnaires), depending on factors including: the type of institution, how each institution produces, uses or has relevance for international labour migration statistics and the information sought for the report. While semi-structured interview and questionnaire templates were developed early in the assignment, the range of stakeholder types and the information sought from each meant that custom questions were developed for each stakeholder.

2.2.2. Framework for mapping of data sources

A framework was used to map the data sources in both countries of destination and countries of origin (Table 2.1). Firstly, the approach outlines what national government data sources have international labour migration statistics globally available, and this was used as an initial checklist. Each data source was reviewed for different criteria as relevant to the assignment (see subsections below). Notably, there is a distinction to be made between statistical sources (e.g. surveys and censuses) and non-statistical sources, namely administrative records. Public administrations routinely collect data on individuals and record-keeping is intended to address the administrative needs of the state. Administrative data cover a wide spectrum of domains, such as housing, tax collection, business, health, education and border crossings. Though their primary objective is not the production of statistics, administrative data is an important source of international labour migration statistics and often the main and sometimes the only source of data for some concepts such as inflows and outflows (ILO 2024j; 2023c).

Table 2.1. Assessment framework of data sources with international labour migration statistics

Data sources		Assessment questions
Population Census		1: Does the data allow for the identification of country / region of origin (for countries of destination) or country / region of destination (for countries of origin)? 2: Is this information published or only collected? 3: Does the data allow for estimates of migrant stock, flow or both? 4. What data breakdowns and disaggregation are available?
Surveys	Labour Force Survey (LFS)	
	Household income and expenditure survey	
	Establishment survey	
	Other surveys	
Administrative records	Population register	
	Residence permit records	
	Work permit records	
	Border statistics	
	Other	
Official estimates		
Establishment census		

Source: Author's compilation.

Country of origin or destination

For countries of destination, the first criterion was whether country of origin could be identified in data collection (i.e. in the underlying questionnaire or data form), usually by place of birth or citizenship. This is fundamental for the assessment of these data sources for migration between the focal African countries and the selected Arab States. For countries of origin, it required the country of destination to be identifiable. In both cases, sometimes regions or groups of countries are used in the data source. If there is no way of identifying country of origin or destination, then this data source is no longer considered as part of the assessment. It may, however, still be considered for its potential to be used with changes to the questionnaires or forms. Given the difficulties of making changes to official statistics sources such as surveys or censuses, these options would not form primary recommendations from the report but long-term considerations.

Collection and publication

In many cases data would be collected in the underlying questionnaire or data form, but the information is not published or made public. This was found to be the case especially for the specific variable allowing for identification of country of origin. This was used as a key assessment point in the data framework and directly related to recommendations around dissemination of data.

Stock and/or flow

Migrant stocks and flows are two different measures. Migrant stock refers to the migrant population resident in the destination country at a given point in time (either total or disaggregated by specific characteristics), e.g. number of residents, number of residence or work permit holders. Meanwhile, migrant flows can be separated by inflows and outflows. Inflows in the context of this report refer to immigration inflows (i.e. arrivals with a change in residence) over a specified reference period. Inflows are examined from the perspective of the country of destination. Outflows refer to emigrant flows, that is emigrations (i.e. departures with a change in usual residence) over a specified reference period. At the same time, there is also the inflow of returnees, which refers to the return of native-born population who previously resided in another country and became residents of the country in a given period. Whether the data sources allow for stock and flow is identified in the data framework.

Data breakdowns and disaggregation

If the data allowed for the identification of country of origin or destination and was publicly available, the data was then reviewed for what breakdowns and disaggregation were feasible. Predominantly, this included sex-disaggregation of data and characteristics of employment, including by branch of economic activity, occupation, age and other variables. In most cases, data was only disaggregated by sex and institutional sector (i.e. public sector, private sector and households).

2.3. Concepts and definitions

For context, it is helpful to understand the statistical definition of key terms used in this report around international migration and international labour migration.

2.3.1. International definitions

International migration

In 2025, the United Nations published updated Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration and Temporary Mobility (United Nations 2025), which specified: *“An international migrant is defined as a person who has changed her/his country of residence and established a new residence in another country within a given year”*. It comprises international migration and international temporary mobility, where:

- International migration refers to all movements of persons that cross international borders within a particular year, that result in a change in the country of residence of the person.
- International temporary mobility refers to all movements of persons that cross international borders within a particular year, that do not result in a change in the country of residence of the person.

As the scope of statistics covered in this report relates only to foreign born or foreign citizens who change country of residence, the international definitions provided here only cover international migrants and not temporary mobile populations, i.e. foreign-born or foreign citizens who cross borders for short periods of time without changing the usual country of residence.

The Recommendations further clarify that the international migrant population refers to persons who have changed their country of residence, including:

- Immigrants — persons resident in the country of measurement, who were born in another country (or do not hold national citizenship),
- Emigrants — persons born in the country of measurement (or national citizens) who are resident in another country, and
- Returned migrants — persons born in the country of measurement (or national citizens) who emigrated and subsequently came back to reside in the country.

International labour migration

The 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2023 established the Guidelines on statistics of international labour mobility, international remote work and authorizations to work (ILO 2023b). These guidelines specify how international labour migration falls under international labour mobility which covers statistics on the labour attachment of persons involved in international mobility, comprising two forms:

- International labour migration covers statistics on the labour attachment of persons involved in international migration. That is, persons who cross international borders and change their country of residence, including those who migrate for work or employment purposes and those who establish a labour attachment after migration, including jurisdiction over fishing rights and rights to fuels or minerals.
- International temporary labour mobility covering statistics on the labour attachment of persons involved in international temporary mobility.

It should be noted again that this report is focused primarily on foreign-born or foreign citizens who change their country of residence, and not the temporarily mobile population.

Additionally, the guidelines state: *“Place of birth (i.e. foreign-born) is the primary criterion to capture persons who have crossed international borders, while the citizenship criterion identifies those with legal citizenship in a country other than the country compiling the statistics (i.e. foreign citizens)”* (ILO 2023b).

2.3.2. Considerations in the study context

None of the countries of destination examined in this report (GCC countries, Jordan and Lebanon) provide an official definition of international migrants in employment, but de facto, the definition of international migrant is citizenship-based. Immigration to the Gulf states and Jordan is mostly linked to employment, and foreigners' sojourn is not meant to exceed the duration of their labour contract.² Therefore, the very notion of immigration/immigrant is rejected by these countries.

Most migrant workers in these countries of destination are considered temporary, and are thus labelled "guests" or *wafidîn*,³ "expatriates" (in Oman), "foreign workers" (in Bahrain),⁴ or referred to as "non-nationals" (non-Emirati; non-Jordanian, etc.). Naturalisations are almost non-existent⁵ and the birthright to citizenship and maternal transmission of citizenship do not apply in these countries.

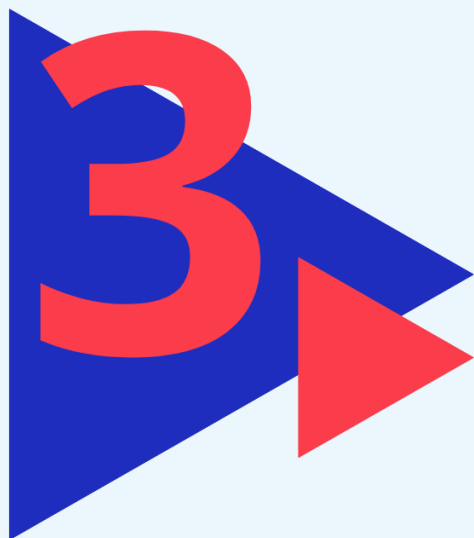
Finally, all data sources covered in this report fail to fully capture migrant workers in an irregular situation. For example, administrative records cannot capture information on workers in an irregular status, such as workers who entered outside border posts, without an entry visa, or workers in irregular administrative situations. In some GCC countries such as Saudi Arabia and Oman, foreign nationals may enter outside border posts, and therefore, would remain unaccounted for in any administrative record, unless arrested by the police. The large number of migrants from Yemen and the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia especially, as well as Somalia and Eritrea) seeking to enter Saudi Arabia at several points of the Yemen-Saudi border from war-torn Yemen is well known. Yet, estimates of the number of these undocumented entries are unavailable. At the same time, some pilgrims may also be overstaying their specific Hajj or the Umrah visa, to stay in Saudi Arabia, and it is difficult to know if they left the country outside regular border posts. However, entering Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar without a visa outside official border posts is difficult due to the geography of these countries, bordered by heavily militarised seas or desert areas, and neighbouring countries difficult to access for migrants, such as Iran or Iraq. Therefore, it is likely that these three countries have at least a record of entries of foreigners with visa and can deduce the presence of foreign nationals on the territory from entry or residency/work permits records, if no exit has been registered. As a result, all estimates provided in this report are likely to be underestimates of the total migrant stock or flow.

² In Lebanon, where refugees (registered and de facto) outnumber labour and for work international migrants, long-term stay is not officially envisaged as an option for non-nationals either.

³ The Arabic term used to designate foreign residents in these countries is *wafed*, pl. *wafidîn*, which designates foreigners who arrived, and is generally used for students and workers.

⁴ See "citizenship" and "foreign worker" articles: https://blmi.lmra.gov.bh/mi_glossary.xml#Foreign%20worker

⁵ Except in Bahrain (naturalisations of Sunni Muslims to counterbalance the Shi'ite demographic majority in the country during the 2000s) and in Jordan, concerning Palestinian refugees of 1948 and 1967, who are out of the scope of this report. In 2020, the UAE opened a path for naturalisation, but it is extremely selective and only concerns very wealthy expatriates or foreigners of exceptional talents.



Data from countries of destination

This section provides a summary of what data exists from the focal countries of destination (namely, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) that allows for estimates of migrant workers in these countries from the focal African countries of origin (Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Tanzania, Tunisia, Nigeria and Uganda). The section highlights what data sources exist for migrant workers between these sets of countries, including whether the data is published and highlights what breakdowns and disaggregation are available with these statistics.

3.1. Data sources for international labour migration in the Africa-Arab States migration corridor

A comprehensive assessment of international labour migration statistics in the Arab States was published in 2024 that outlined the different data sources available for Arab countries of destination (ILO 2024g). However, not all the data sources were suitable for assessing the Africa-Arab States migration corridor as for data sources from countries of destination, a key criterion was whether the country of origin could be identified in the underlying data collection (see Section 2.2.2). Table 3.1 presents a summary of what data sources have information that allows for the identification of 'country of origin' – noting that this can be either explicitly listing the countries or can include clusters of countries, such as 'sub-Saharan Africa'. In addition, the table highlights where data is collected and publicly available (denoted by a solid black dot) or where it is collected but not made publicly available (denoted by a hollow dot).

Table 3.1. Data sources collected and/or published for international labour migration stock and flow that identifies country of origin, by country of destination

Indicator	Bahrain	Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Population statistics	○	○	○		○	○	○	○
Surveys (including labour force surveys)		○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Administrative records (stock)	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○
Administrative records (flow)	○	○	●	●		○	○	○

Source: Author's compilation.

Notes: UAE = United Arab Emirates. Key (empty cells denote no data collected):

- = Country of origin collected and data published
- = Country of origin collected, but data not published

The table shows that, with the exception of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, all countries of destination collect and publish some form of data – either for stock or flow – that identifies international migration stocks by country of origin. Notably, while Qatar and the United Arab Emirates do not publish stock data by country of origin, this information is collected. Information on international migration flows by country of origin is collected by all countries except Oman, but only published in Kuwait and Lebanon.

3.2. Summary of main data sources

For countries of destination, according to the data assessment framework outlined in Section 2.2.2, the data is available (i.e. collected and published) for either stock or flow for all the countries of destination in the study, except for Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. A summary of the data available is provided in Table 3.2, with further information per country provided in the subsections that follow on the main categories of data sources: i) population statistics, ii) surveys (including labour force surveys⁶), and iii) administrative records.

Table 3.2. Summary of data sources available for the focal countries of destination, and key characteristics therein

Country	Name of publication	Characteristics of data
Bahrain	Bahrain Labour Market Indicators: (i) foreign workers in the private sector; (ii) foreign workers in the public sector; (iii) foreign workers in the domestic household sector Data source: Administrative records	Frequency: Quarterly Latest: Q4 2024 Disaggregation: Sex, institutional sector Type: Stock
Jordan	Ministry of Labour, National Labour Market Figures Reports: Number of registered non-Jordanian workers by nationality and work permits issued to non-Jordanian workers Data source: Administrative records Ministry of Labour, Annual Reports: Number of registered non-Jordanian workers by nationality and economic activity and sex Data source: Administrative records	Frequency: Annual Latest: 2024 Disaggregation: None Type: Stock Frequency: Annual Latest: 2024 Disaggregation: Economic activity and sex Type: Stock
Kuwait	Kuwait Labour Market Information System: Numerical and percentage distribution for the employees in all sectors by top-10 most numerous nationalities and sex Data source: Administrative records	Frequency: Quarterly Latest: Q3 2024 Disaggregation: Sex, institutional sector Type: Stock
	Annual Migration Statistics Bulletin: Residence permits by category, identifying residences for employment in the public sector, private sector, domestic sector and freelancers. Available for groups of countries only (Arab countries and non-Arab African countries) Data source: Administrative records	Frequency: Annual Latest: 2024 Disaggregation: Sex, institutional sector Type: Flow

⁶ From the mentioned countries in the Arab States, only KSA, UAE, Jordan, and Lebanon have aligned their LFS with the 19th ICLS guidelines.

Country	Name of publication	Characteristics of data
Lebanon	Ministry of Labour, Labour Permits Statistics: (i) labour permits granted for the first time; (ii) renewed labour permits Data source: Administrative records	Frequency: Annual Latest: 2023 Disaggregation: Occupation Type: Stock and flow
Oman	National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), Statistical Yearbooks: Workers by nationality in: i) the government sector and ii) private and domestic sector (most numerous nationalities only) Data source: Administrative records Monthly Statistical Bulletin: Expatriates workers by nationality (most numerous nationalities only) Data source: Administrative records	Frequency: Annual Latest: 2024 Disaggregation: Sex, institutional sector Type: Stock Frequency: Monthly Latest: 2025 Disaggregation: None Type: Stock
Qatar	No published data available	NA
Saudi Arabia	Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD), Open Data: Workers employed in the governmental and private sectors by country of citizenship ⁷ Data source: Administrative records	Frequency: Annual Latest: 2022 Disaggregation: Public and private sector Type: Stock
United Arab Emirates	No published data available	NA

Source: Author's compilation.

⁷ The Saudi General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT) also publishes labour market statistics, including data on Saudis and non-Saudis in the labour market. However, the available data are not disaggregated by country of origin. See <https://www.stats.gov.sa/en/home>

3.2.1. Bahrain

Population statistics

- **Census 2020** collected data by the resident population's region or country of origin but did not publish the results beyond a nationality breakdown (Bahrainis/non-Bahrainis). One table only provides a distribution of the total population by groups of countries (region) of origin, sex and administrative region in Bahrain, which allows pinpointing the numbers of migrants from Sub-Saharan African countries (Information & eGovernment Authority, Kingdom of Bahrain, n.d.). Nationals from North African states (Egyptians, Tunisians and Moroccans) are included within the category of migrants from 'Arab countries' according to the classification used in the Arab region.

Surveys

- **Labour force survey:** Bahrain conducts a quarterly labour force survey and captures information on Bahrainis and non-Bahrainis, but it is unclear whether it captures information on the country or region of origin. No data is published that distinguishes country of origin (ILO 2024a).

Administrative records

- **Bahrain Labour Market Indicators portal:** The Labour Market Regulation Authority (LMRA), a government body responsible for issuing entry visas, as well as identification cards for foreign workers in coordination with the competent bodies, remains the only publicly available source of statistics on migrant workers by country of origin. It includes information processed from the Expatriate Workers System and Social Insurance Organisation for the public and private sector, by sex. Notably, while information is available for the public sector by country of origin, the share of African workers in the public sector was negligible. The Domestic Workers System has information for domestic workers, from the top-8 nationalities, by sex from 2019 onwards. All data processed by the LMRA have been available on a quarterly basis from the Bahrain Labour Market Indicators portal since 2007, until Q2 2023 (as of January 2026), with only partial data available for Q1 2024 (LMRA, n.d.).

3.2.2. Jordan

Population statistics

- **The general Population and Housing Census 2015** is the most recent census conducted to date in Jordan by the Department of Statistics (DoS). While the census identified country of citizenship, tables published by citizenship are only for the total population and not for migrant workers.

Surveys

- **Labour force surveys** (also known as the Employment and Unemployment Surveys) are conducted quarterly and capture country of birth, citizenship and the country of residence prior to arriving in Jordan. The surveys also include information on whether the non-Jordanian arrived as a refugee, as an asylum seeker, for work, study, as a dependent or for other reasons. Microdata provides detailed information about the characteristics of the non-Jordanian population; however, country codes are used for the countries of origin, and there is a lack of supporting information to clarify which countries the codes correspond to. The Department of Statistics, Jordan, shares data for tabulations of the Jordanian and non-Jordanian population but focuses on the Jordanian and non-Jordanian split, without specifying the countries of origin.
- **Job creation survey:** Provides information on movements into and out of jobs, on a biannual basis. It includes breakdowns for some nationalities, namely, Jordanians, Egyptians, Iraqis and Syrians (as well as other Arabs and non-Arabs).
- **Employment and compensation of employees' surveys** (Establishments Surveys) include all establishments of the public sector excluding military and security establishments, establishments of the private sector engaging 50 workers and more, and a sample (since 1999) of smaller establishments (total: 7,573 establishments). Some data are published which single out Arab workers, including Egyptians (by sex, occupation, education level).

Administrative records

- **Ministry of Labour, Statistical Yearbooks:** Publishes figures for the number of non-Jordanians holding work permits for selected nationalities only. It is available disaggregated by sex and economic activity. The numbers of workers with permits align with the numbers provided in the 'National Labour Market Figures' reports (see below).
- **Ministry of Labour, National Labour Market Figures Reports:** Provides detailed labour market trends and characteristics for the country and includes two tables: i) number of non-Jordanian registered workers by nationality and ii) number of work permits issued to non-Jordanians by nationality. The number of work permits issued could allow for estimates of flows; however, there is a lack of information about the methodological approach or meaning of the indicators. In all cases, the number of work permits issued is considerably higher than the total number of non-Jordanians working with a permit. Hence, it is not clear if the work permits issued include multiple renewals per person. Due to this lack of clarity, the work permits issued are not used to estimate flows in this report.

3.2.3. Kuwait

Population statistics

- **Registration Census of Kuwait 2021:** The Central Statistical Bureau is responsible for the country's population census with the latest being in 2021. This 2021 Census was compiled from the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) administrative records and is the country's first registration census (CSB, n.d.-c). Country of citizenship is captured; however, information is only published for groups of countries (including for the labour force), such as 'African', 'Arabic' and 'Gulf' which makes it difficult to ascertain, for instance, where African countries classified as Arabic are included (CSB, n.d.-a). There may be some overestimation of non-nationals by failing to discount residents who leave the country with a valid residency but do not come back and do not cancel their residency.

Surveys

- **Labour force survey:** The last labour force survey was conducted in 2014, 2015 and 2016-17 and while it included country of origin, the information by country is not published (ILO 2024b).

Administrative records

- **Annual Migration Statistics Bulletin:** Data held by the Ministry of Interior and processed by Central Statistics Bureau, includes stocks and flows of valid permits (residence and work permits issued/renewed/cancelled) recorded by the Ministry of Interior. These are disaggregated by permit category including permits for government, private sector and domestic work contracts, sex and permit holders' region of origin (Arab states, non-Arab African states, non-Arab Asian states, etc.). As the information provides new residency permits issued, it can be used for estimates of inflows (for groups of countries only). Information captured by the Ministry of Interior would allow for estimates of inflows by specific country of origin, however, the breakdown by country is not published (ILO 2024b).
- **The Kuwait Labour Market Information System** provides tabulations of basic data on the employment of nationals and foreign nationals processed by the Central Statistics Bureau from different administrative sources. The database is disaggregated by (selected) countries of origin and updated on a quarterly basis. Information on employees in all institutional sectors (workers in the public and private sectors, and workers in the domestic sector, by sex) is available for top-10 countries of citizenship, and by region of origin (workers in the public and private sectors, by sex) (CSB, n.d.-b).

3.2.4. Lebanon

Population statistics

- **Census:** There has been no population census in Lebanon since 1932 for reasons of a political nature.⁸ As a result, there is no monitoring of the actual size of the resident population, which also means that any household surveys lack an up-to-date sampling frame.

Surveys

- **The Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey 2018–2019 and the Lebanon Follow-up Labour Force Survey 2022:** Although the microdata is not shared or publicly available, citizenship was collected through the questionnaires in both surveys.

Administrative records

- **Ministry of Labour, Labour Permits Statistics:** The Bureau of the Labour Force, Department of Employment and Foreign Labour Monitoring issues work permits, renews and cancels permits granted to foreign workers employed in Lebanon, disaggregated by country of nationality and profession. Statistics are provided online annually, from 2014 to 2023. As of January 2026, 2024 data only includes prior approvals for work permits. As these are provided for each year, they constitute flow statistics which, when combined with renewals, constitute stock estimates. While data is available from 2014 to 2024, the files are not always legible. Also, while occupation is provided, it is not clearly aligned to any national or international standard classification but does highlight domestic workers.

3.2.5. Oman

Population statistics

- **Census 2020** outlines the top-10 nationalities, in which Egyptians and Tanzanians feature. However, no further disaggregation is available.

Surveys

- **Household surveys:** Oman does not conduct labour force surveys, but instead compiles labour market information predominantly through administrative resources. There is, however, one survey, the Comprehensive Household Survey 2015-16, which captured country of citizenship, but the information by country was not published (ILO 2024c).

Administrative records

- **National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), Statistical Yearbooks:** Includes a section on workers by nationality in the government and the combined category of private and domestic sectors, by country of citizenship (most numerous countries only) and by sex. From 2020, either the data or the labelling changed, in that pre-2020, the breakdown is for: i) the government sector and ii) the private sector only, and from 2020 the latter category is for the combined category of private sector and domestic workers.
- **NCSI, Monthly Statistical Bulletin:** The monthly statistical bulletin provides a summary of 'expatriate workers' by country of nationality. Not all countries are listed, and the list of countries varies across the bulletins as it only includes the most numerous nationalities. For the countries of focus in this assignment, Egypt, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda feature in several bulletins (noting that Ethiopia and Uganda do not feature in all). No sex-disaggregated data is provided.

⁸ The Lebanese political system distributes political functions according to sectarian affiliation, which grants political stakes to population statistics. Moreover, some also fear that a general census would underline the unequal distribution of resources between Lebanon's regions. See De Bel-Air, F., "Migration Profile: Lebanon", Migration Policy Center, *RSCAS Policy Brief, Issue 2017/12*, May 2017.

3.2.6. Qatar

Population statistics

- **The General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments 2020** collected information on country of origin, but does not publish breakdowns for migrant workers by country of origin. There are plans to shift to a registry-based methodology for the next census round.

Surveys

- **Labour force sample surveys:** Qatar conducts quarterly labour force sample surveys, which ask questions on country of citizenship. Information on Qataris and non-Qataris is published in regular statistical bulletins, but it does not provide information on country of origin.

Administrative records

- **Work permit data:** The Ministry of Labour, formerly the Labour Department, Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs (MADLSA) collects information on work permits, including details of work permits for private and joint sectors (including temporary work permits, issuances, renewals and cancellations) and work permit holders. However, this information is not published (ILO 2024d). Presumably, this data would allow for information on stocks and flows.

3.2.7. Saudi Arabia

Population statistics

- **Saudi Census 2022** applied a combined methodology, i.e., administrative records data supported by fieldwork and digital self-enumeration. The “residency”, or migration data section, collected information on the interviewee’s country of birth, parents’ countries of birth, residency abroad, year of entry to Saudi Arabia and place of residence one year ago. However, microdata is not available, and the only information broken down by country of origin is the population summary for 34 nationalities by citizenship. No data is publicly available for migrant workers by country of origin.

Surveys

- **Labour force surveys:** Quarterly labour force surveys have been conducted since 2016. These are comprehensive and identify country of citizenship, however published information does not provide any breakdown by country of origin (ILO 2024e).
- **Other surveys:** There have been a range of other surveys implemented, including those targeted at specific sectors (e.g. tourism sector, financial sector, non-profits), which have identified the number of foreign employees. However, no information is published on workers by country of origin from these studies. The same is true of other types of survey, e.g. institutional innovation survey, which again documents the number of foreign workers but does not identify or publish the numbers by country of origin (ILO 2024e).

Administrative records

- **Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD), Open Data** – a section on the MHRSD website published raw datasets for 2020, 2021 and 2022, listing workers employed in the private and government sectors, by country of citizenship (all countries) (in Arabic only). These are also summarised in English on the GLMM website (GRC, n.d.-a). The MHRSD Open Data datasets currently available cover only up to 2022 and do not provide information specifically on the domestic work sector or sex-disaggregated data.⁹

⁹ More recent labour market statistics are published by the Saudi General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT), including 2026 Q1 data on migrant workers in the domestic work sector, disaggregated by sex – 4.3 million migrant domestic workers in total, comprising 2.8 million men and 1.5 million women. However, the GASTAT data do not provide a breakdown by country of origin (GASTAT, 2026).

3.2.8. United Arab Emirates

Population statistics

- **Population statistics:** There are no federal-level censuses conducted in the UAE. Instead, individual emirates have conducted censuses, such as Abu Dhabi, but do not publish information on migrant workers by country of origin (ILO 2024f). Population estimates instead tend to be based on administrative records including the population registry under the Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Authority. This entity is responsible for registering population data and issuing identification cards, and while there is an Open Data section on the website, no information is provided by the country of origin.

Surveys

- **Labour force surveys:** Labour force surveys have been implemented annually, and the results published. However, while country of citizenship is captured in the survey, this information is not published (ILO 2024f).

Administrative records

- **Work permit data:** The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE) regulates employment in the private and domestic work sectors, monitors work contracts, and issues work permits to private-sector workers. Some information is published by the Labour Market Information Department on workers in the private sector on the MoHRE website. However, no information is available by country of origin.
- **Domestic workers:** The recruitment and placement of domestic and household workers, as well as all the administrative procedures pertaining to their entry, employment, residence, and exit (entry permit, change of status, identification card issuance, medical insurance, visa renewal and cancellation), are handled by the Tadbeer Service Centers, a private company operating under a public-private partnership with the MoHRE. No data are available on domestic workers in the Ministry's releases or other official documents.

3.3. Conclusions

In the GCC states, ‘smart identity cards’¹⁰ were introduced in the mid-2000s and residents’ registration became mandatory.¹¹ This process formed the basis of new centralised population registries,¹² and promoted the use of administrative records for monitoring population stocks, flows and characteristics. As a result, a gradual shift occurred from survey-based to administrative records-based statistical production, especially in the Gulf states (ILO 2024g).

However, information from these administrative records is relatively guarded, and despite collecting population statistics that identify country of origin, most countries of destination publish only limited information by country of origin, usually only for the total population and not distinguishing either the working-age population or by labour force status. Assumptions could be made, for instance, on the basis that for many of the Gulf states visas are tied to a work permit, but it is an assumption and would fail to distinguish dependents of those with work permits.

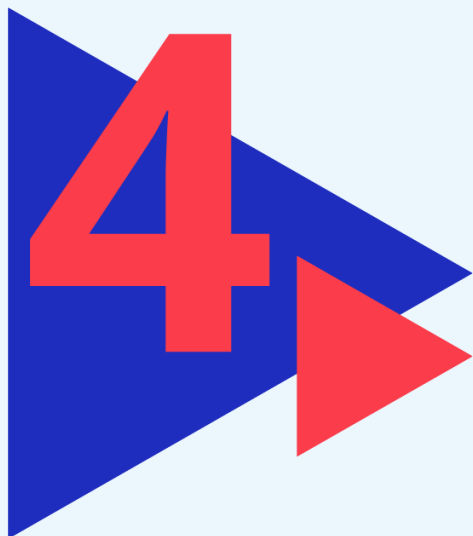
Instead, administrative data is the main source of information for the countries of destination. All countries, with the exception of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, publish some kind of estimates on international migrant worker stock that is separated by country of origin and therefore allows for the identification of migrant workers from different African countries. Kuwait and Lebanon also provide information on the flows of migrant workers, and Jordan, potentially also publishes information that can be used for estimates of flows but does not have sufficient methodological information to be able to use the data for these purposes.

For countries with estimates available, information is usually provided in a sex-disaggregated format with some exceptions. Additionally, most cases have breakdowns by institutional sector (i.e. public sector, private sector and households (i.e. domestic workers)). Only the non-GCC states had other breakdowns, including by economic activity (Jordan) and occupation (Lebanon).

¹⁰ Residents must hold these new identity and residency documents, whose microchip contains several data on the holder (biometric, socio-demographic, events pertaining to the migration and economic status and more).

¹¹ Access to health and other services, for example, and completion of administrative procedures are dependent on the resident’s registration and card holding. Administrative files are connected to each other.

¹² The data recorded on each cardholder constitute a *de facto* population registry. Moreover, this register is updated in real time: arrivals, departures, returns, visa applications, permits granted, renewed, cancelled by category of stay, changes of permit category, of sponsorship, change of address, births, and deaths, etc. Information pertaining to the residents is increasingly centralised in one single institution in each country.



Data from countries of origin

This section provides a summary of what data exists from the focal African countries of origin (namely, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Tanzania, Tunisia, Nigeria and Uganda) that allows for estimates of migrant workers to the focal countries of destination in the Arab States (Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates). The section highlights what data sources exist for migrant workers between these sets of countries, including whether the data is published and highlights what breakdowns and disaggregation are available with these statistics.

4.1. Data sources for international labour migration in the Africa-Arab States migration corridor

Table 4.1 provides an overview of data sources on international labour migration from the focal African countries of origin. Given the focus on labour migration from African countries to the Arab States, the data sources are assessed as to whether they allow for the identification of 'country of destination' or regional identifiers (e.g. 'Arab countries'). The table highlights where data is collected and publicly available (denoted by a solid black dot) or where it is collected but not made publicly available (denoted by a hollow dot). Empty cells denote where there is no country of destination information collected.

Table 4.1. Data sources available with information for international labour migration stock and flow for country of destination, by focal country of origin

Indicator	Egypt	Ethiopia	Kenya	Morocco	Nigeria	Tanzania	Tunisia	Uganda
Population statistics	○		●		○			○
Surveys (including labour force survey)	○	○			○			○
Administrative records (stock)					○	○	○	
Administrative records (outflows)	●	●	●		○	○	●	●

Source: Author's compilation. Key (empty cells denote no data collected)

- = Country of destination collected and data published
- = Country of destination collected, but data not published

The table shows that most countries of origin with data available have information for flows. This is typically based on administrative records. Morocco, Nigeria and Tanzania were not found to have any publicly available data, although there are signs that data is collected, but it is not shared publicly. Only Kenya had information on stocks available from population statistics, namely the census. It does not explicitly publish the combinations of emigration for employment combined with the destination but does provide data upon request.

4.2. Summary of main data sources

For countries of origin, according to the data assessment framework outlined in Section 2.2.2, the data is available (i.e. collected and published) for either stock or flow, for all the countries of origin in the study, except for Morocco, Nigeria and Tanzania. A summary of the data available is provided in Table 4.2, with further information per country provided in the subsections that follow on the main categories of data sources: i) population statistics, ii) surveys (including labour force surveys), and iii) administrative records.

Table 4.2. Summary of data sources available for the focal countries of origin, and key characteristics therein

Country	Name of publication / dataset	Characteristics of data
Egypt	Annual Bulletin of Work Permits: For Egyptians to Work Abroad Data source: Administrative records	Frequency: Annual Latest: 2023 Disaggregation: Sex Type: Flow

	Quarterly Labour Market Bulletin: Work permits issued to Egyptians to work abroad Data source: Administrative records	Frequency: Quarterly Latest: Q4 2021 Disaggregation: Sex Type: Flow
Ethiopia	ILOSTAT: Ministry of Labour and Skills, Outflows of workers by country of destination Data source: Administrative records	Frequency: Annual Latest: 2020 Disaggregation: Sex Type: Flow
Kenya	Ministry of Labour, Labour Migration Indicators Report: Attestation records and migration clearance desk Data source: Administrative records	Frequency: Annual Latest: 2024 Disaggregation: Sex, occupation, education level Type: Flow
	Kenya Population and Housing Census, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics: Emigrants for reasons of employment	Frequency: Decennial Latest: 2019 Disaggregation: sex, country of residence, reason for migrating Type: Stock
Morocco	No publicly available data	NA
Nigeria	No publicly available data	NA
Tanzania	No publicly available data	NA
Tunisia	Exploratory Study on Placement Opportunities for Tunisian Workers in the Gulf Countries (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar): Placements by public and private employment agencies Data source: Administrative records	Frequency: NA Latest: 2021 Disaggregation: Occupation Type: Flow
Uganda	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Statistical Abstracts: Deployment of Ugandans through the External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS) Data source: Administrative records	Frequency: Annual Latest: 2024 Disaggregation: Sex Type: Flow

Source: Author's compilation.

4.2.1. Egypt

Population statistics

- **General Census for Population, Housing and Establishments 2017:** For those that declared a change in their place of residence during the 10 years prior to the census (since November 2006), the previous place of residence and reason for change are asked. This partially captures emigrants, but means the census would fail to capture the migrants who emigrated with their entire household. It also does not capture information on workers whose usual residence is abroad. Information is not publicly available by country of destination.

Surveys

- **Labour force surveys:** There is a question about members of the household who travelled outside of Egypt since 2007. However, there is no question on the country of residence abroad. Additionally, there is a question in the 2024 Q4 questionnaire that asks the geographical location of the main job, and 'abroad' is one of the options. However, there is no further question as to the location abroad.
- **The 2013 Egypt Household International Migration Survey** as part of the Mediterranean Household International Migration Survey collected data on socio-demographic characteristics of return migrants and emigrants, country of destination during emigration, period of departure, reason for emigrating/migrating/ returning, education level, administrative situation at arrival and at the time of the survey, holding of contract before departure, networks in country of destination and nature of the assistance to the migration process, occupation and activity patterns, intentions of staying abroad (for current emigrants), and remitting patterns. While this information is insightful for returnees, it does not represent the characteristics of migrants residing in the Arab States, as the characteristics of returnees will be biased towards migrants who no longer reside abroad.

Administrative records

- **Quarterly Labour Market Bulletin:** Ministry of Manpower, General Directorate for Employment, Sub-Directorate for External Employment oversees employment, labour relations and emigration of Egyptian workers, even though the Ministry of Interior issues the final clearance and permit to work abroad. A single quarterly "Labour Market Bulletin" for Q4 2021 publishes first-time labour permits issued to Egyptian workers for each country of destination, by sex, type of permit (personal, secondment, leave) and education level of applicant.
- **Annual Bulletin of Work Permits:** Prior to effective emigration upon receiving a permit to work abroad, the General Department for Work Permits of the Ministry of Interior control the situation and validity of the prospective emigrant's details, the validity of the employment contract in relation to the terms of bilateral labour agreements in force. It then issues the individual with a "permit to work abroad". This category of migrants is categorised as "temporary migrants", as it is mostly directed to countries which do not acknowledge permanent settlement of foreign nationals, such as the GCC states. Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) publishes the Annual Bulletin of Work Permits Issued to Egyptians to Work Abroad (CAPMAS 2024). While the GCC, Jordan and Lebanon are not explicitly mentioned, 'Arab States' can be used as a proxy although it likely includes more countries than the focal countries of destination in this study.

4.2.2. Ethiopia

Population statistics

- **Ethiopian National Population and Housing Census:** It is difficult to assess the use of census data in Ethiopia owing to ongoing issues with census implementation since the planned 2017 census. No public report is available for the 2017 census; instead, only projected estimates are available. Accordingly, no publicly available questionnaire exists to be able to assess whether the planned census would capture information on emigration.

Surveys

- **Labour Force Survey:** Conducted by the Ethiopian Statistical Service (ESS), Ethiopia's National Statistical Organisation, the 2021 labour force survey was the first to cover the issue of labour emigration. Section 8 of the survey questionnaire collected data on household members living abroad at the time of the survey (current emigrants). Table 9.6.1 of LFS 2021's Statistical Report lists Ethiopian emigrant workers by sex in their top-10 countries of residence. These include Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, and Lebanon. Despite the questionnaire identifying country of residence as well as whether the household member abroad has taken citizenship or has a work permit, these tabulations are not publicly available and the microdata has the emigration questions missing from the dataset.

Administrative records

- **The Ministry of Labour and Skills (MOLS)** oversees the issuance of legal permits for Ethiopians seeking to work abroad. The MOLS migration data portal went offline at the beginning of the pandemic for technical reasons and therefore information is still collected manually and then re-entered into Excel at the MOLS. It is stored digitally but is not accessible. A key informant interview undertaken for this report indicated that the migration portal is part of the MOLS' plans to create an integrated Labour Markets and Migration Information System. This is echoed by the ILO assessment of the status of the labour market and migration information system, which highlighted that while the system was not functional as of 2022, the labour migration component was to be a secondary component (ILO 2022). At the time of writing in January 2026, the Ministry's website was not providing any online data and there is no sign of a labour market information system. Despite this, ILOSTAT has a system for the sharing of data for international labour migration statistics, and the Ministry of Labour and Skills provides detailed information on the outflow of nationals for employment by country of destination, which is then available on the ILOSTAT website. It also provides information on occupational skill levels and education levels, but not by country of destination. However, it is likely that this is because the form used for the submission of data to ILOSTAT does not ask for this cross-tabulation.

4.2.3. Kenya

Population statistics

- **Kenya Population and Housing Census (KPHC), Analytical Reports:** The latest available population census in Kenya is for 2019 (KNBS 2019). Both 2009 and 2019 censuses included a questionnaire module devoted to emigration, with questions specifically targeted at households that reported having members who emigrated in years prior to each census including the reasons for movement (with employment as an option) (KNBS 2024). Public use datasets and accompanying documentation from both KPHC editions are publicly available upon request at the Kenya National Data Archive online portal. The KNBS also published online various KPHC 2019 and 2009 reports presenting their respective methodologies, results and analyses. For both census editions, an analytical report devoted to the migration theme is available, which covers both internal and international migration, with immigration and emigration results being presented and discussed albeit to varying extent. At the same time, KNBS notes in the reports that population censuses have limitations as sources of emigration statistics, which should be used and interpreted carefully. The 2019 KPHC captures information on emigrants from the 15 years prior to the census, including by country of destination and reasons for migration, for which 'employment' is one option. This information is available upon request from KNBS.

Surveys

- **Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) & Kenya Continuous Household Survey Program (KCHSP):** The QLFS is a modular survey within the KCHSP. It was conducted every quarter between 2019 and 2022 by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics but discontinued in 2023. Between 2019 and 2022, the QLFS included a migration module to obtain information on internal migration and immigration only, and no questions on emigration were included. In 2026, the labour force survey will be relaunched as the Integrated Labour Force Survey (ILFS). The ILFS will start as a pilot and potentially continue as a quarterly survey. It contains questions on resident international migrants, returnees and emigration. The questions on emigration (asked to the head or most knowledgeable person of the household) include the country of destination and therefore this future data source should be an important source of information on emigration of Kenyans to the Arab States.

Administrative records

- The Ministry of Labour's Labour Migration Indicators Report 2024 published an analysis based on data from two administrative sources, attestation records and Migration Clearance Desk (State Department for Labour and Skills Development 2024). The Migration Clearance Desk, under the Directorate of Immigration Services, State Department for Immigration and Citizen Services, Ministry of Interior and National Administration tracks outbound migrants and regulates entry and exit of persons in Kenya. Information is provided by sex, occupation and education level. Notably, there are some errors and typos in the analytical reports that should be taken into account; further, the number of observations varies, and 2019 has the highest number of observations and would therefore be the most reliable of the reports available.

4.2.4. Morocco

Population statistics

- **General Population and Housing Census 2014** (*Recensement Général de la Population et de l'habitat 2014*) asks households to count the number of emigrants abroad in the last 10 years but does not identify the place, nor does it ask detailed questions about these emigrants. It also asks place of previous residence and place of residence as of July 2011 and therefore would capture some information on returnees.

Surveys

- **The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on Moroccans working abroad 2020** (*L'impact socioéconomique de la COVID-19 sur les travailleurs marocains résidant à l'étranger*) presents the results of a field survey conducted on Moroccans residing abroad, among which a selection of Moroccans residing abroad in the Gulf states. The report presents their socio-demographic and economic characteristics and examines the effect of the COVID-19 on their employment and remitting capacities. It is not however representative of migration of workers from Morocco to the Arab States.

Administrative records

- **The Union du Maghreb Arabe's (UMA) Report on labour migration statistics in UMA countries 2022** (*Rapport sur les statistiques de la migration de main d'œuvre dans les pays de l'UMA*) presents figures of the estimated stocks of Moroccans residing abroad and Tunisians residing abroad by country, including Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia (2018 and 2020). Data are taken from consular records. These are however for the diaspora population and do not distinguish migrant workers.
- **Hassan II Foundation for Moroccans Residing Abroad** (*Fondation Hassan II pour les Marocains Résidant à l'Etranger*) "**Moroccans Overseas**" (*Marocains de l'Extérieur*) **reports (2003, 2007, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2021)** include figures of Moroccans abroad by country, taken from the Bureau of Consular and Social Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. These are for the whole diaspora and do not distinguish migrant workers.

4.2.5. Nigeria

Population statistics

- **Population and Housing Census (PHC):** The most recent in Nigeria was in 2006. The National Population Commission (NPC) is the government body responsible for conducting the population census and collecting population statistics, including on migration and vital events. Another PHC was planned for 2023 in Nigeria but ended up being postponed and has not yet been rescheduled (National Population Commission 2023). The 2006 NPC, although a much older data source compared to others reviewed, has questions that would allow for estimates of return international migrants in Nigeria. Information on duration of current usual residence and country of previous residence is collected from all respondents (NPC 2006). Findings of the census are not, however, publicly available.

Surveys

- **The Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS)** is a quarterly household-based survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) since 2022 in Nigeria (NBS 2023). The objective of the survey is to provide high-frequency labour force statistics and it does not include the topic of emigration (National Bureau of Statistics, n.d.).

- **Nigeria Living Standards Survey (NLSS):** A household-based survey designed to collect data on household consumption expenditures, as well as demographic and socio-economic characteristics of household members. The survey has had four editions since it was first implemented and is officially set to occur every 3 to 5 years. However, the period between surveys has reached up to 9 years in practice. The NLSS survey rounds took place in 2003/04, 2009/10, 2018/19 and 2023. Public access survey datasets are available upon request at the National Bureau of Statistics Online Microdata Catalogue. The 2003/04 and 2009/10 editions can likely provide estimates of inflows of return international migrants, as long as sample sizes allow. Respondents are asked if they have ever moved from their current location, how long ago, previous country of residence, occupation and industry while living in that country, and reason for moving.¹³
- **General Household Survey (GHS):** The GHS aims to collect data on agriculture, welfare and socio-economic indicators in Nigeria. A panel survey started in 2010/11, with four rounds since: 2012/13, 2015/16, 2018/19 and 2023/24. Public-use survey datasets are available upon request at the National Bureau of Statistics Online Microdata Catalogue, along with metadata documentation of the surveys. The GHS-Panel tracked individuals who migrated abroad across the survey waves and therefore would be able to provide insights regarding outflows of Nigerian workers, including to the GCC countries, Jordan and Lebanon. The survey's household questionnaire has questions about household members who moved to another country. It is possible to identify the country of destination, duration of residence abroad and demographic characteristics of these members, as well as their reason for migrating, occupation and sector of economic activity (National Bureau of Statistics 2024). The latest survey report provides estimates of number of households reporting having members who migrated for work or receiving international remittances but does not publicize the number of Nigerians abroad and their characteristics. No information on migrant workers by country of destination is publicly available.

Administrative records

- **National Electronic Labour Exchange (NELEX):** NELEX – managed by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment (FMLE) – allows self-registration of job seekers, employers, and recruiters, as well as job search and job placement to take place in the digital environment. The platform allows the FMLE to regulate job offers and promote a safe environment for job-seeking.
- **National Immigration Service (NIS):** Federal Ministry of Interior and NBS are responsible for compiling information on departures from Nigeria. Exit border records from the NIS are processed by the National Population Commission (NPC) (IOM Nigeria 2019). Individuals leaving the country for work purposes can be identified in these records. This information is compiled in annual summaries of various returns and reports received from the Immigration Service on arrivals and departures from Nigeria by air, road or sea for reasons of work, pleasure, returning home, etc., and also on facilities provided during the year by the passport and alien registration offices (IOM Nigeria 2019). However, this information is not publicly available.
- **Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM):** The lead agency overseeing the implementation of the National Diaspora Policy adopted in 2021. The policy itself includes a devoted section on registration of Nigerians in the diaspora to generate reliable statistics, information and other relevant data (NiDCOM 2021). NiDCOM manages the National Identity Management Commission and keeps a registry of Nigerians in the diaspora, by country of residence. While the website has some headline figures on diaspora numbers, there is no evidence of publicly available data on migrant workers by country of destination.

¹³ https://microdata.nigerianstat.gov.ng/index.php/catalog/28/data-dictionary/F25?file_name=Migration%201

4.2.6. Tanzania

Population statistics

- **Population and Housing Census 2022** captures information on non-citizens and those born abroad, and asks about place of previous residence, but was not designed to capture the number of Tanzanians living abroad.

Surveys

- **Integrated Labour Force Survey** conducted every five years and sampling only usual residents in the country, does not capture information on Tanzanian migrants abroad.

Administrative records

- **Work permits:** A review by the ILO assessing data sources for international labour migration in Tanzania found there were many potential administrative data sources, particularly on work permits. However, there was little to no dissemination and data sharing of this information (ILO 2024i). Some data is available upon request and others for a fee, including work permit information from the Prime Minister's Office – Labour, Youth, Employment and Persons with Disability Department. While many of these contain information on workers abroad with disaggregation by sex and occupational classifications, amongst others, the assessment by the ILO does not indicate whether each has country of destination available. Nevertheless, it is likely that the information is available. The different available data sources on work permits would likely contain information on both stock and outflow.

4.2.7. Tunisia

Population statistics

- **Population and Housing Census 2014:** Volume n°5 "Migration characteristics" (in French and in Arabic) publishes statistics on outflows of Tunisian nationals over the five-year period preceding the census (2009-2014) by socio-demographic characteristics, country of destination, year of emigration, reason for emigrating, education level, relation to the surveyed head of household. Information on household members having emigrated during the five years prior to the census was collected from households in Tunisia. However, the information captures only emigrants in the household who have migrated and not whether it was for work; further, it fails to reflect emigrants without household members in Tunisia.

Administrative records

- **Exploratory Study on Placement Opportunities for Tunisian Workers in the Gulf Countries (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar)** (*Etude exploratoire sur les opportunités de placement des travailleurs tunisiens dans les pays du Golfe (Arabie Saoudite, Bahreïn et Qatar)*): The study contains administrative records of placements of Tunisians in three GCC states by two public agencies of international employment (ATCT - *Agence Tunisienne de Coopération Technique*; and ANETI - *Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant*) and by private agencies for international employment (ILO 2023a). While this is an ad hoc study and not a regular source of data, it is included in the analysis for the composition of migrant workers for these three countries of destination.
- **Ministry of Social Affairs, National Migration Observatory** (*Observatoire National des Migrations ONM*): ONM's data portal tabulates the number of Tunisian nationals residing abroad in a given year, by country of residence, based on consular records (expatriates) and postal transfers (remittances) received through the Tunisian postal services. However, this is for the whole diaspora and does not separate out migrant workers.

4.2.8. Uganda

Population statistics

- **The National Population and Housing Census 2024 (NPHC 2024)** is the latest census in Uganda. The three censuses prior to 2024 were conducted in years 2014, 2002 and 1991 (UBOS 2024). The NPHC 2024 has a section on Migration and Forced Displacements, which includes a subsection on Emigration (UBOS 2024). The Household Questionnaire includes questions on respondents' previous residence, reason for migrating, returnee migrants, as well as current emigrants abroad by sex, age, level of education attainment, country of first destination, year of departure, reason for migrating and country of current residence. The UBOS 2024 Census report provides some migration statistics that are publicly available. Data are reported for emigrants from Uganda by sex and region of destination, e.g., Asia, East Africa, Other Africa, Europe, North America, including the main reason for outmigration. From information publicly available as of February 2026, it is not possible to identify number of Ugandan workers residing in the GCC states, Jordan and Lebanon.

Surveys

- **National Labour Force Survey (NLFS):** The NLFS is conducted every 5 years by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) to produce official labour market statistics. The latest took place in 2021, with previous rounds in 2016/17 and 2011/12. The NLFS 2021 questionnaire has 21 questions on emigration, formulated to obtain a range of information about individuals who left Uganda to reside abroad since 2016. However, according to the UBOS LFS report, the sampling frame of the survey, which is based on the National Population and Housing Census 2014, was inadequate to capture statistics on labour outflows. So, despite the efforts to include the topic in the survey, it cannot be used to provide any reliable estimates of emigrants and labour outflows from Uganda.

Administrative records

- **Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), Statistical Abstracts:** The MGLSD publishes annual Statistical Abstracts providing statistics derived from the External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS). Ugandans wanting to migrate abroad for employment can either resort to private recruiters operating in Uganda or register at the EEMIS managed by the External Employment Unit of the MGLSD. The EEMIS is an online platform for job search and job placement of Ugandans abroad. Recruitment agencies licensed by the MGLSD can use it to advertise vacancies which are vetted by the Ministry. The latest available Statistical Abstract is for the period of 2021/22. The report shows indicators such as time series of number of migrant workers deployed abroad since 2016, and each year the distribution of workers deployed by sex and therefore provides an estimate of outflows. It also reports on number of migrant workers abroad by top countries of destination, which vary every year. Some GCC countries, Jordan and Lebanon appear in the list.

4.3. Conclusions

Based on data coverage for international labour migration statistics in ILOSTAT, there are far more entries for countries of destination data (stock and inflows) than from countries of origin (stock of nationals abroad and outflows). This is partly because of data sources used for each and the more common practice of including country of origin (e.g. citizenship or place of birth) in population censuses and labour force surveys (and in the case of the GCC states, administrative records and population registries). Whereas for stock of nationals abroad and outflows, data sources are more likely to be diaspora registries and administrative records, such as placement information and attestations. This is visible in this report; countries of origin covered in this report have lower coverage for stock of nationals abroad and outflows, with only five out of eight African countries of focus having any datapoints.

Indeed, there are datapoints for Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tunisia and Uganda, with no datapoints for Morocco, Nigeria or Tanzania. All the countries with datapoints had outflow information from administrative records. Only Kenya had any information on the stock of nationals abroad, which was based on the Kenya Population and Housing Census and on the question of whether the interviewees had 'ever migrated abroad' and 'reasons for migrating' for which 'employment' is an option - while the data exists, it is not yet provided by country of destination in any published reports. Administrative data, while helpful especially for understanding trends in outflows are, however, limited to regular migrants and typically formal placements, but are likely to be significant undercounts.

In all cases, while sex-disaggregated data was typically collected, very few data sources had information beyond that, such as occupation, institutional sector or economic activity. This makes it difficult to paint a picture of the characteristics of outflows of migrant workers. For instance, the data does not help answer the question of the skill profile of outgoing migrants, how this varies by country and, what profiles are most likely to migrate via formal or official channels versus irregular or unofficial channels.



Characteristics of African migrant workers in the Gulf states, Jordan and Lebanon

Section 5 looks at the characteristics of migrant workers from focal African countries of origin (namely, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Tanzania, Tunisia, Nigeria and Uganda) to the focal countries of destination in the Arab States (Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates). Data is provided from countries of destination and origin, using the data sources outlined in Sections 3 and 4, as follows:

Data from countries of destination

- ▶ Section 5.1. Total stock of African migrant workers in selected Arab States' countries of destination
- ▶ Section 5.2. Inflows of African migrant workers in selected Arab States' countries of destination

Data from countries of origin

- ▶ Section 5.3. Total stock of African migrant workers abroad in selected Arab States' countries of destination
- ▶ Section 5.4. Outflows of African migrant workers to selected Arab States' countries of destination
- ▶ Section 5.5. Inflows of returnees of African migrant workers from selected Arab States' countries of destination

The charts for different countries are provided alongside one another for simplicity in presenting the analysis. However, underlying data are from different data sources, with incomparable definitions and reference periods between countries.

5.1. Total stock of African migrant workers in selected Arab States' countries of destination

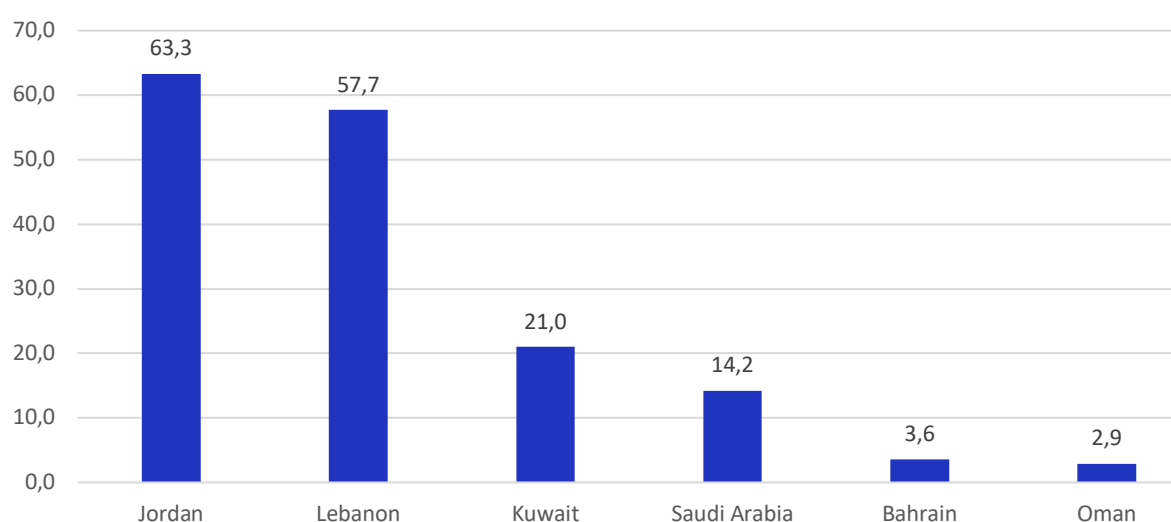
This section provides estimates of international migrant worker stock from selected African countries of origin in Arab States' countries of destination, using data sources covered in Section 3. Section 5.1.1 provides a snapshot of total numbers, using the latest available estimates per country; Section 5.1.2 provides a time series of all available data from 2015 to 2025; Section 5.1.3 provides breakdowns of country of origin where available over time; and Section 5.1.4 provides any additional breakdowns and disaggregation for total migrant worker stock, including by sex, institutional sector and economic activity.

5.1.1. Latest estimates

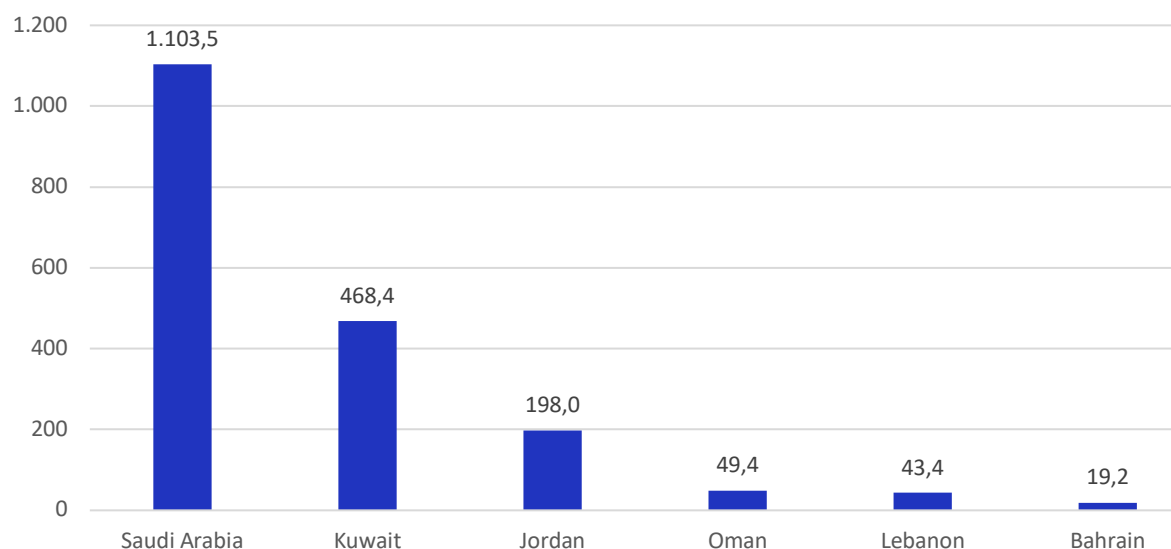
As summarised in Section 3, Table 3.2, six of the eight focal countries of destination have estimates for total migrant stock from focal African countries of origin. Figure 5.1 provides the latest available estimates for these countries of destination (Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman and Saudi Arabia). Only Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have no public estimates of total migrant stock. It shows that as a share of all migrant workers in the country, Jordan has the highest share of migrant workers from the focal African countries, accounting for 63.3 per cent of the total migrant worker stock, followed by Lebanon at 57.7 per cent (Figure 5.1, Panel A). This reflects the differences in characteristics of migrant workers between the GCC states and non-GCC states, namely in this case, Jordan and Lebanon. While there are still African migrant workers in the GCC states, they represent a lower share, at 21 per cent in Kuwait, 14.2 per cent in Saudi Arabia and less than 5 per cent in Bahrain and Oman. Despite this, the number of African migrant workers in absolute terms is highest in Saudi Arabia, based on the latest available data, accounting for more than 1.1 million migrant workers (Figure 5.1, Panel B). This is followed by Kuwait with 468,000 African migrant workers, and Jordan with 198,000.

Figure 5.1. African migrant workers in selected Arab States' countries of destination

Panel A. African migrant workers as a percentage of total foreign workers, selected countries of destination, 2024 or latest available data (percentages)



Panel B. Total African migrant workers in selected countries of destination, 2024 or latest available data (thousands)



Latest years: Bahrain (2023), Jordan (2024), Kuwait (2024), Lebanon (2023), Oman (2022), Saudi Arabia (2022). For detailed notes and source information, see Figure 5.2.

5.1.2. Time series

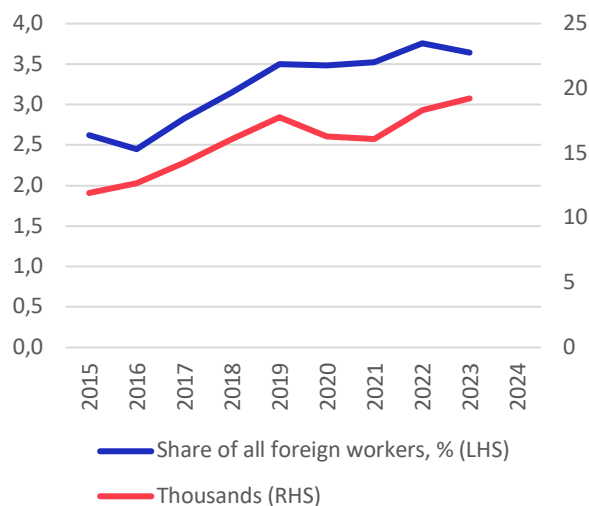
Of the six Arab States' countries of destination with available data, all have a range of datapoints between 2015 and 2025. Figure 5.2 presents this data in terms of total migrant workers from the focal African countries in thousands (on the right-hand axis) and these African migrant workers as a share of all migrant workers in the country as a percentage (on the left-hand axis).

In Bahrain (Panel A), there has been a steady increase over time, both in absolute terms and as a share of all migrant workers. As a share of all migrant workers, these African migrant workers increased from 2.6 per cent to 3.6 per cent, from 2015 to 2023, representing an increase in absolute terms from 11,900 in 2015 to 19,200 in 2023.

In Bahrain, around 76 per cent of migrant workers from the focal African countries were men in 2023, with only a marginal decrease over time. Despite this, women accounted for a higher share of all women migrant workers in Bahrain, at 9.8 per cent in 2023 (up from 6.3 per cent in 2015), compared to men who accounted for 3.4 per cent of all migrant worker men in Bahrain in 2023 (up from 2.1 per cent in 2015) (Figure 5.3, Panels A and B).

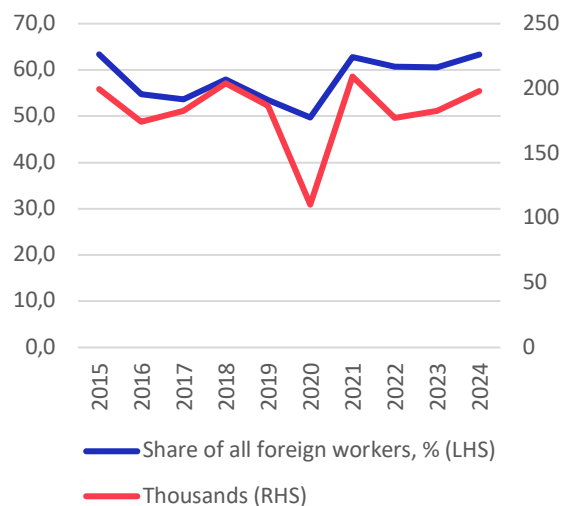
Figure 5.2. Total stock of African migrant workers, by year, 2015-2025, selected Arab countries of destination

Panel A. Bahrain



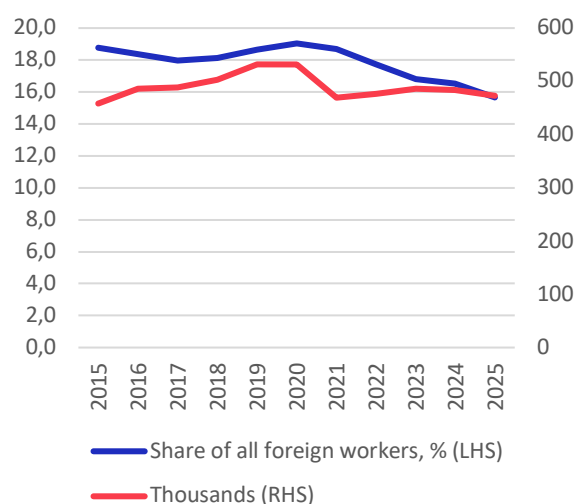
Notes: 'Foreign workers in the public and private sectors by country of citizenship'. For this chart, African migrants refer to citizens of Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria and Uganda. All years are Q4 except 2023 which is Q2. Source: Bahrain Labour Market Indicators, Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), using data from the Expatriate Management System and Social Insurance Organisation.

Panel B. Jordan



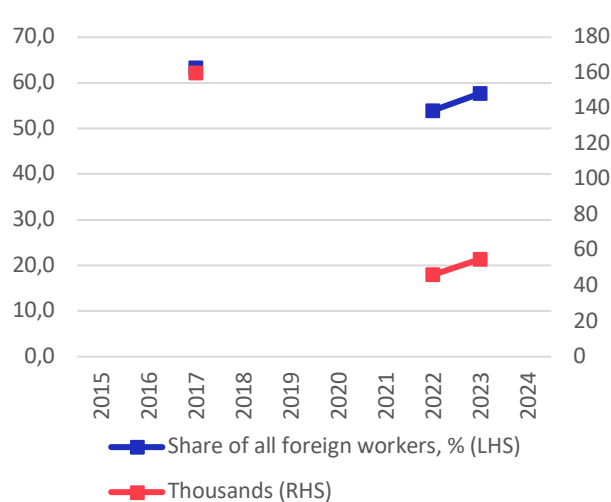
Notes: 'Number of Registered non-Jordanian Workers by Nationality'. For this chart, African migrants refer to citizens of Egypt, Morocco and 'Other Africa'. Source: Jordan Ministry of Labour, National Labour Market Figures Reports.

Panel C. Kuwait



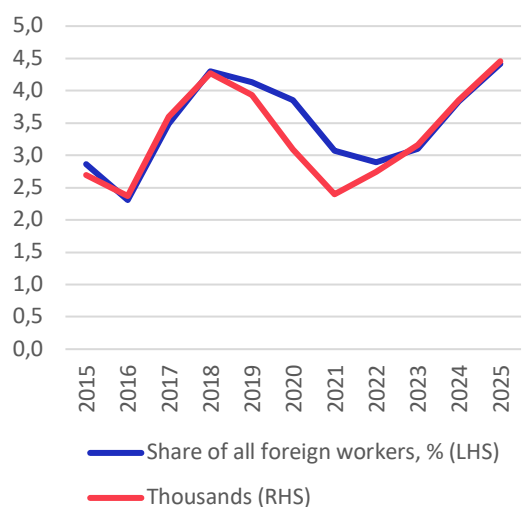
Notes: Employees in all institutional sectors, by country of citizenship (top-10). For this chart, African migrants refer only to citizens of Egypt and Ethiopia. All years are Q3. Source: Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau (CSB), Labour Market Information System (LMIS), Integrated Database.

Panel D. Lebanon



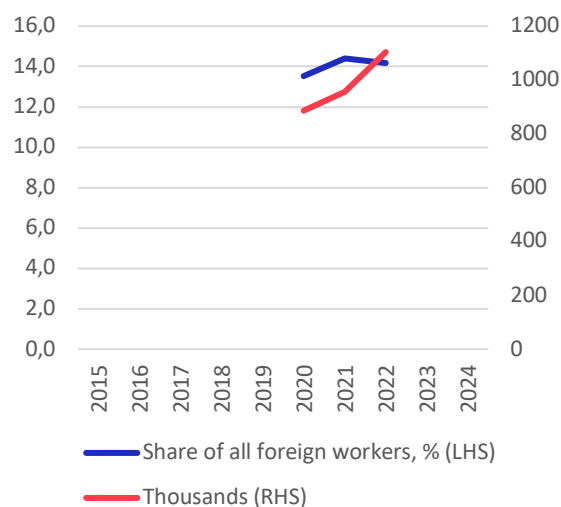
Notes: First time work permits and renewed work permits by nationality. For this chart, African migrants refer to citizens of Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda. Source: Lebanon Ministry of Labour, Labour Permits Statistics.

Panel F. Oman



Notes: Employed foreign workers by country of citizenship. For this chart, African migrants refer only to citizens of Egypt, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda. Reference point is December of each year.
Source: Oman NCSI, Monthly Statistical Bulletin.

Panel G. Saudi Arabia



Notes: Workers employed in the governmental and private sectors by country of citizenship. For this chart, African migrants refer only to citizens of Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda.
Source: Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD).

As total stock represents the total number of migrant workers in the country at a given point in time, trends tend to be relatively stable over time. However, with the onset of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, there is some impact visible over time. This is apparent in the trends for Jordan, for which there was a notable dip in total numbers in 2020, from 186,000 in 2019 to 110,000 in 2020 (Panel B). Levels recovered by 2021 and remained similar to 2024.

In Kuwait, levels have remained relatively stable over the time period with available data, both in absolute terms and relative terms, as a share of total migrant workers (Figure 5.2, Panel C). By sex, however, there are more marked trends (Figure 5.3, Panels C and D). In 2015, women accounted for around 16 per cent of the migrant workers from the focal African countries. This decreased to around 8.5 per cent by 2025. This decrease was driven by reductions in African migrant workers in domestic work. Specifically, Ethiopian women in domestic work in Kuwait. In 2015, around 61 per cent of women migrant workers from the focal African countries were in domestic work and from Ethiopia. This had decreased to 12 per cent by 2025 and contributed to the decrease in women as a share of all migrant workers from the focal African countries.

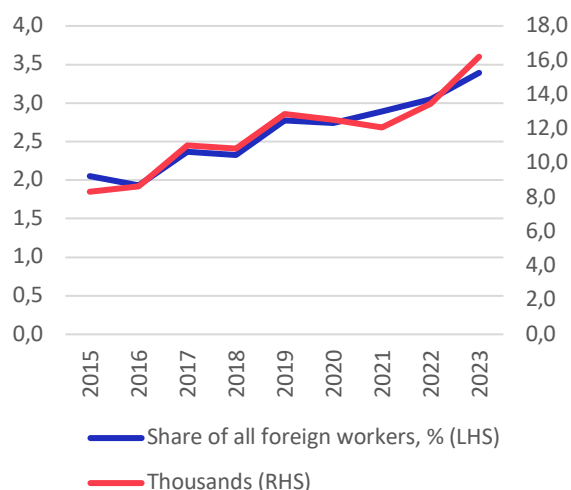
In Lebanon, as outlined in Section 3, there is data for all years from 2014 to 2023. However, the data was often not legible, which means only three datapoints feature in Figure 5.2 (Panel D). In absolute terms, the total stock of African migrant workers decreased from around 160,000 in 2017, to 46,000 in 2022.

Oman was the only country covered with data available for 2025. Figure 5.2, Panel F shows that there has been significant oscillation in the total stock of migrant workers in the country over the past decade. It shows a major decrease from around 75,000 in 2018 to 45,000 in 2021, before increasing again to around 80,000 in 2025. The share of all migrant workers has moved in a similar manner, suggesting the trends reflect the stock of all migrant workers and not just those from the focal African countries. In Oman, around 35 per cent of all migrant workers from the African countries of focus were women (Figure 5.3, Panels E and F).

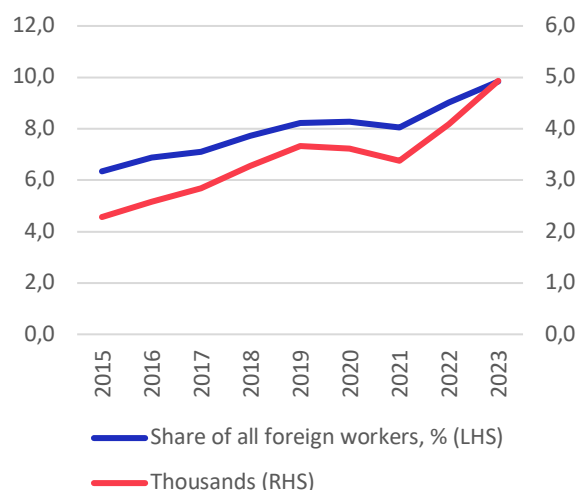
Saudi Arabia only has a snapshot of data from 2020 and 2022 (Figure 5.2, Panel G). It shows that there has been an increase in absolute terms, from 886,000 in 2020 to 1.1 million in 2022, while the share of total migrant workers remains around the same at 14 per cent over this same period. It suggests that there has been an overall increase in migrant workers to a similar degree as the number from the focal African countries. Notably, as the first datapoint is 2020, it is also likely that the 2020 figure represents a dip in the total numbers and numbers for African migrant workers due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the increase to 2022 may reflect a normalisation of numbers.

Figure 5.3. Total stock of migrant workers from selected African countries, by sex, selected countries of destination

Panel A. Bahrain, men



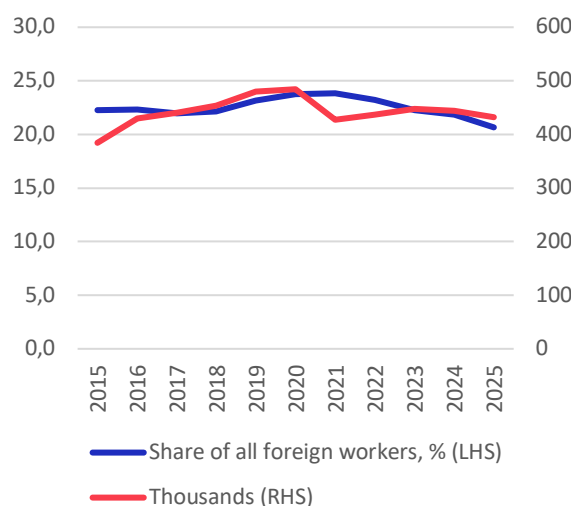
Panel B. Bahrain, women



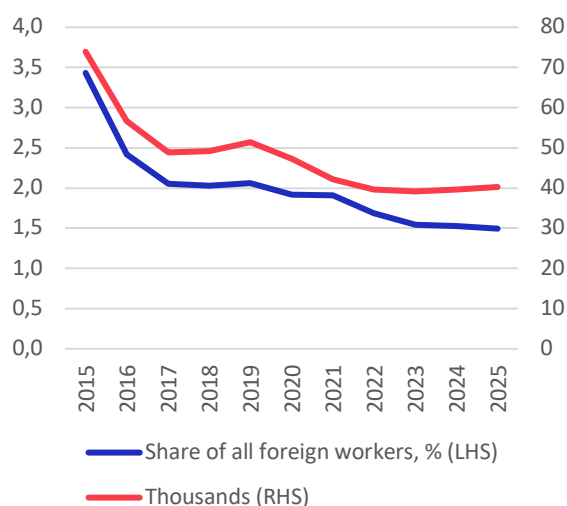
Notes: 'Foreign workers in the public and private sectors by country of citizenship'. For this chart, African migrants refer to citizens of Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria and Uganda. All years are Q4 except 2023 which is Q2. Excludes domestic workers which are only available for selected nationalities.

Source: Bahrain Labour Market Indicators, Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), using data from the Expatriate Management System and Social Insurance Organisation.

Panel C. Kuwait, men



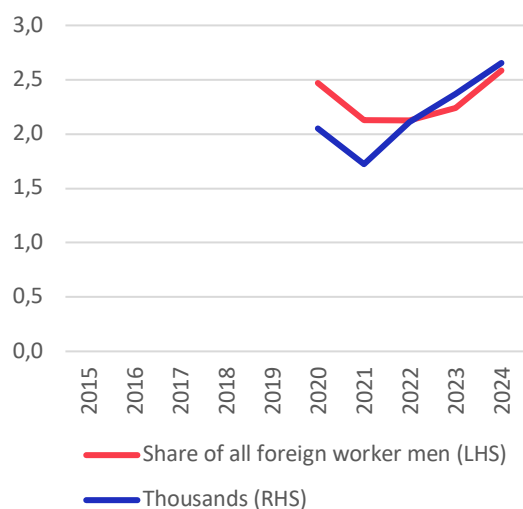
Panel D. Kuwait, women



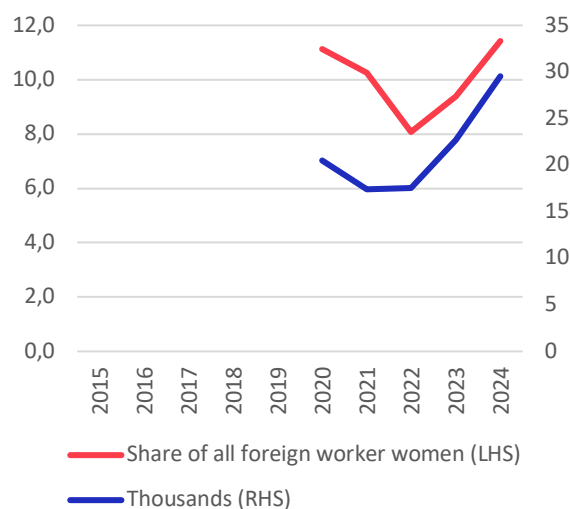
Notes: Employees in all institutional sectors, by country of citizenship (top-10). For this chart, African migrants refer only to citizens of Egypt and Ethiopia. All years are Q3.

Source: Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau (CSB), Labour Market Information System (LMIS), Integrated Database.

Panel E. Oman, men



Panel F. Oman, women



Notes: Expatriate workers by country of citizenship (most numerous countries only). For this chart, African migrants refer only to citizens of Egypt and Tanzania.

Source: Oman NCSI, Statistical Yearbooks.

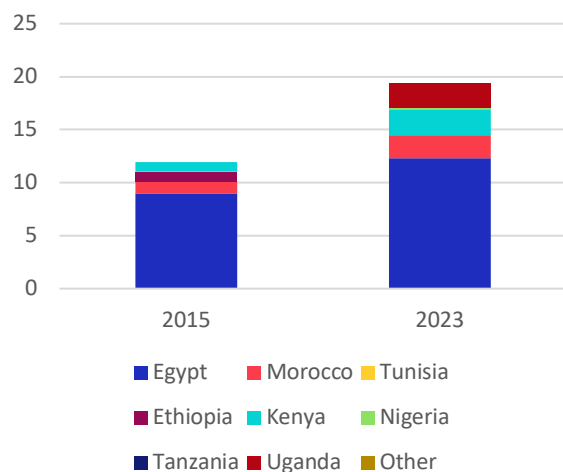
5.1.3. By country of origin

Being able to identify country of origin was a requirement for identifying migrant workers in the Arab States/ countries of destination. Accordingly, this section provides comparisons over time in terms of the country composition. In many cases, the analysis is undermined by the fact that most countries only list the most prevalent or selected countries of origin. This means that other countries may not feature, when actually a significant number are from these countries, but, for instance, they might not be part of the top-10 countries in terms of absolute number. As such, it is important to pay attention to the countries covered in the notes section beneath each figure. All charts have the same colour key for the countries of origin, and through this, it is apparent that Egypt is the most prevalent country of origin for migrant workers in these countries of destination, with the exception of Ethiopia for Lebanon.

Figure 5.4 shows the data points for the periods closest to 2015 and 2025 per country. Panel A shows the composition of the total stock of migrant workers from the focal African countries in Bahrain in 2015 and 2023. While it only covers Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco and Uganda, it shows the numbers increase for all countries of origin, except Ethiopia which does not feature in 2023. It is likely that Ethiopia dropped out of the top countries in terms of number, rather than there being no migrant workers from the country in 2023. Egyptians accounted for the highest share at 75 per cent in 2015, decreasing to 63 per cent of all migrant workers in 2023, despite an increase in absolute terms.

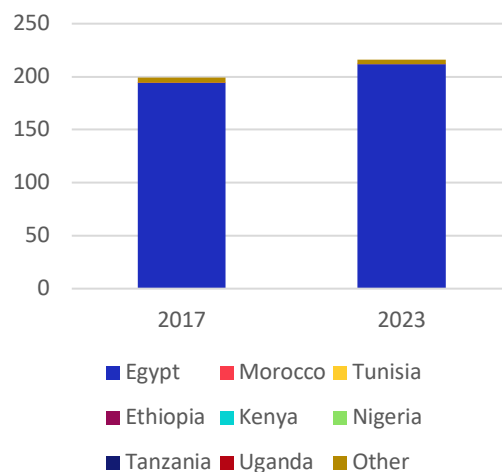
Figure 5.4. Total stock of migrant workers from African countries, by country of origin, 2015 and 2025*, selected countries of destination, thousands

Panel A. Bahrain



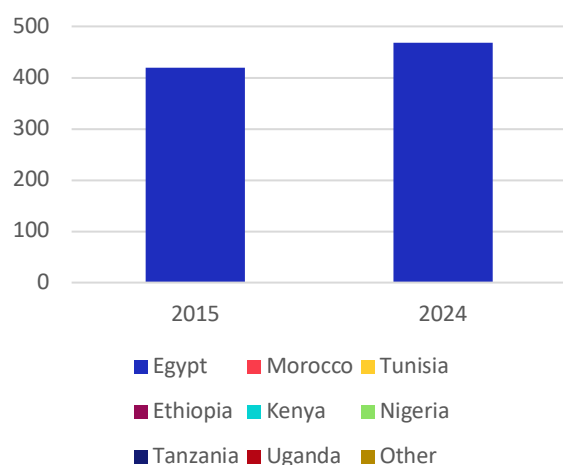
Notes: 'Foreign workers in the public and private sectors by country of citizenship'. For this chart, African migrants refer to citizens of Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco and Uganda. Q4 2015 and Q2 2023. Source: Bahrain Labour Market Indicators, Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), using data from the Expatriate Management System and Social Insurance Organisation.

Panel B. Jordan



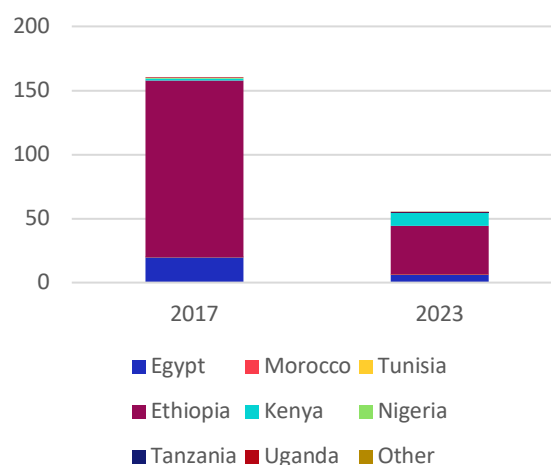
Notes: 'Number of Registered non-Jordanian Workers by Nationality'. For this chart, African migrants refer only to the following countries: Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, 'Other Africa'. Source: Jordan Ministry of Labour, Annual Reports.

Panel C. Kuwait



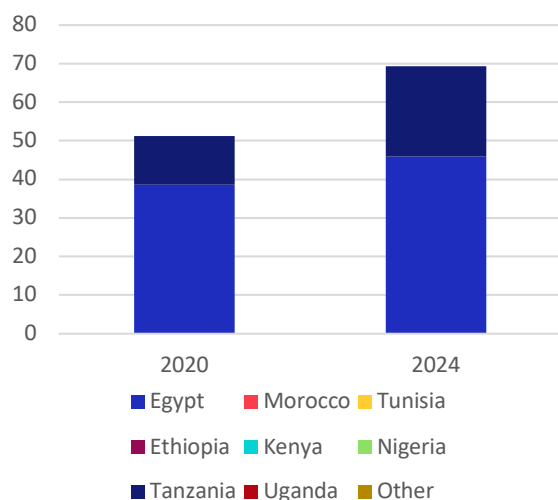
Notes: Workers employed in the private and Government sectors, by country of citizenship (top-10 countries). For this chart, African migrants refer only to Egypt. All years are Q2. Source: Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau (CSB), Labour Market Information System (LMIS), Integrated Database.

Panel D. Lebanon



Notes: First time work permits and renewed work permits by nationality. For this chart, African migrants refer to citizens of Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda. Source: Lebanon Ministry of Labour, Labour Permits Statistics.

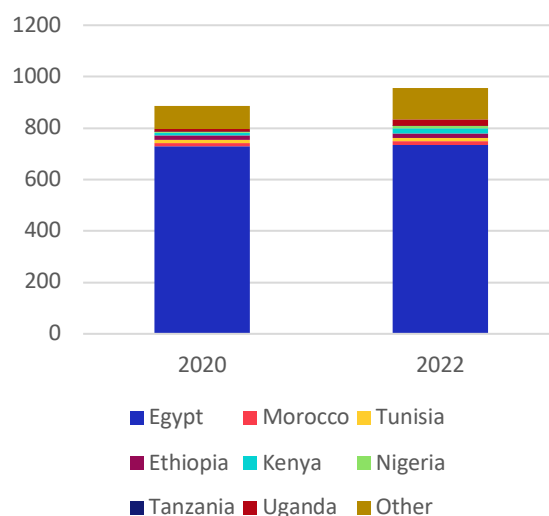
Panel F. Oman



Notes: Expatriate workers by country of citizenship (most numerous countries only). For this chart, African migrants refer only to citizens of Egypt and Tanzania.

Source: Oman NCSI, Statistical Yearbooks.

Panel G. Saudi Arabia



Notes: Workers employed in the governmental and private sectors by country of citizenship. For this chart, African migrants refer only to Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda.

Source: Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD).

In Lebanon (Panel D), the major decrease between 2017 and 2023 was also accompanied by a change in the composition of migrant workers. Ethiopia accounted for 86 per cent of all the focal African migrant workers in 2017 and decreased to less than 70 per cent in 2023. At the same time, migrant workers from Kenya increased from 1 per cent in 2017 to more than 18 per cent of the focal African migrant workers in 2023.

In Jordan (Panel B), Kuwait (Panel C), Oman (Panel F) and Saudi Arabia (Panel G), the changes in the composition remain relatively similar between the two periods. Changes by sex in these cases are most informative when considered alongside institutional sector information (see Section 5.1.4).

5.1.4. Institutional sector

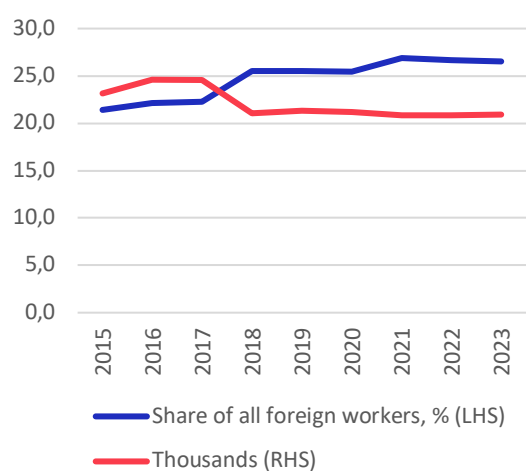
In terms of disaggregation, there is a lack of breakdowns beyond sex-disaggregated data by country or region of origin in the available datasets and publications. The most common type of disaggregation is by institutional sector, i.e. separating by government or public sector employment, private sector employment, and domestic work. This information is outlined in this section.

In Bahrain, data is available for the public sector, private sector and limited data for domestic workers (i.e. the top nationalities). However, even though there is a long list of countries of origin for the public and private sector, there are no cases of any of the focal African countries in the private sector list. This would suggest that migrant workers from all the African countries of focus are either in the public sector, domestic workers or potentially, workers in an irregular situation in the private sector (and not in the data).

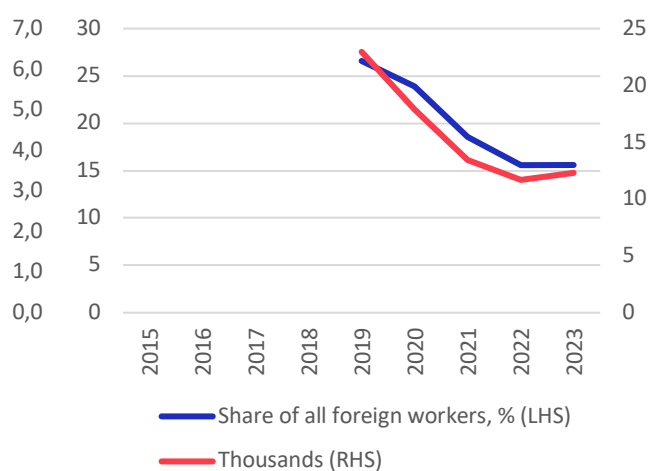
Figure 5.5 shows the total stock of African migrant workers in Bahrain in the public sector and domestic workers. It shows that in the public sector, there were around 5,000 workers from these countries of origin, accounting for around 20 per cent of all the non-Bahraini public sector workers. Most of these workers in the public sector are men, with women making up a negligible amount of the migrant workers in the public sector from these countries of origin. Instead, women are more likely to be domestic workers (noting that for domestic workers only Ethiopians and Kenyans are listed from the focal countries of origin). The number of domestic workers from these countries has been decreasing from 2019 to 2023, from nearly 25,000 to around half this amount. Notably, as the share of these workers of all domestic workers has also decreased, it suggests that domestic workers from these countries have been replaced by domestic workers from other countries of origin.

Figure 5.5. Total stock of African migrant workers in Bahrain by institutional sector and sex

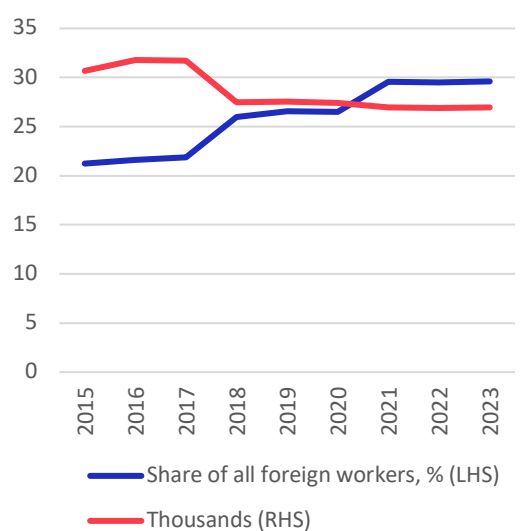
Panel A. Public sector, both sexes



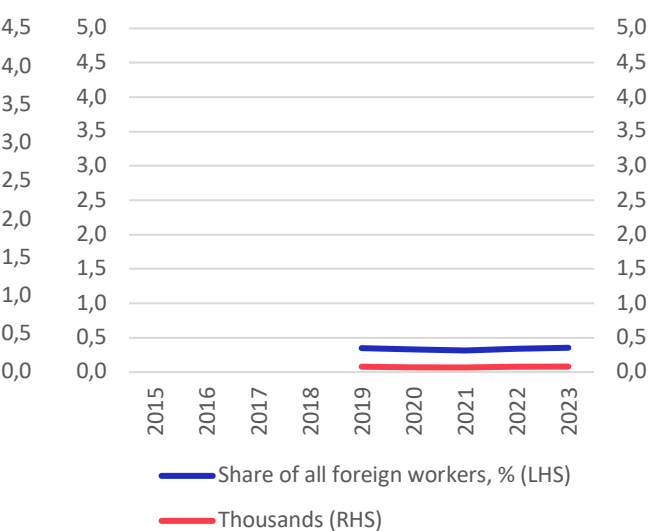
Panel B. Domestic workers, both sexes



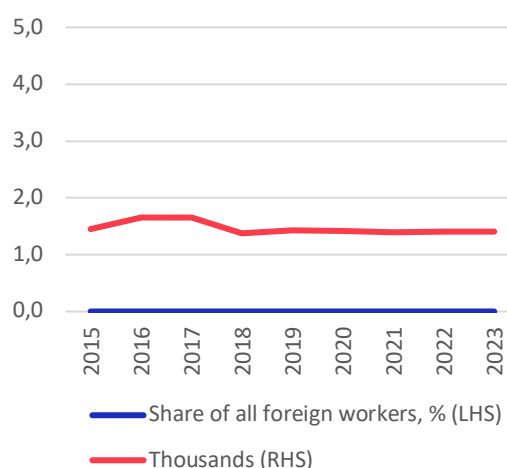
Panel C. Public sector, men



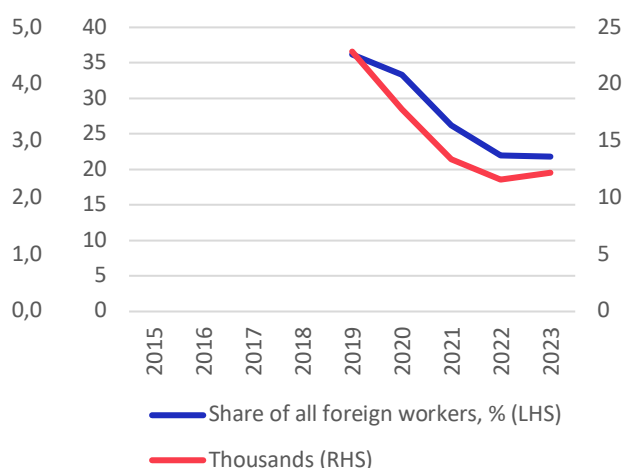
Panel D. Domestic workers, men



Panel E. Public sector, women



Panel F. Domestic workers, women



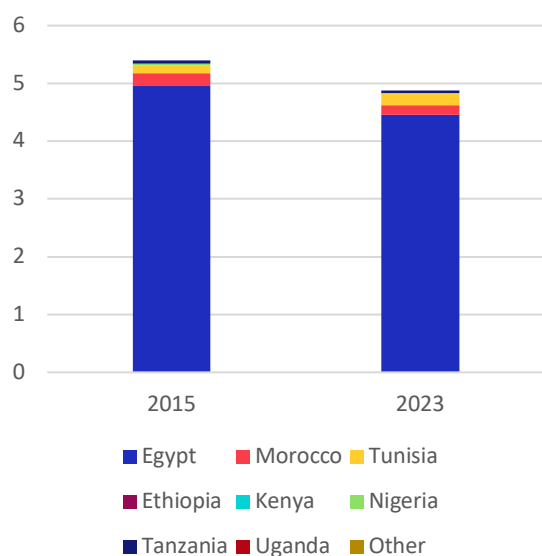
Notes: Public sector: 'Foreign workers in the public sector by country of citizenship'. For this chart, African migrants refer to citizens of Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Tanzania and Tunisia. Domestic workers: Top 8 nationalities, which are only available for Ethiopia and Kenya. All years are Q2.

Source: Bahrain Labour Market Indicators, Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), using data from the Expatriate Management System and Social Insurance Organisation.

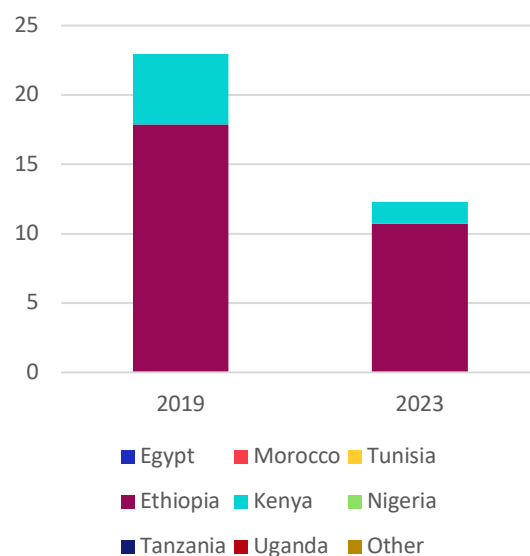
Figure 5.6 shows the composition of African migrant workers by country of origin in Bahrain, for two periods. For the public sector, there has been a slight decline in the total number of migrant workers from these focal African countries, but the composition remains mostly the same, with most of the migrant workers in the public sector coming from Egypt. For domestic workers, most migrant workers from the focal countries of origin were from Ethiopia, but the decline between the two years was experienced by both Ethiopians and Kenyans.

Figure 5.6. Total stock of African migrant workers in Bahrain by institutional sector and country of origin

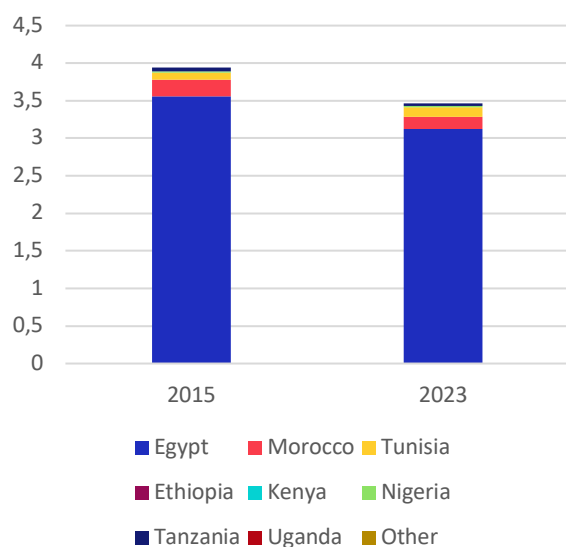
Panel A. Public sector, both sexes



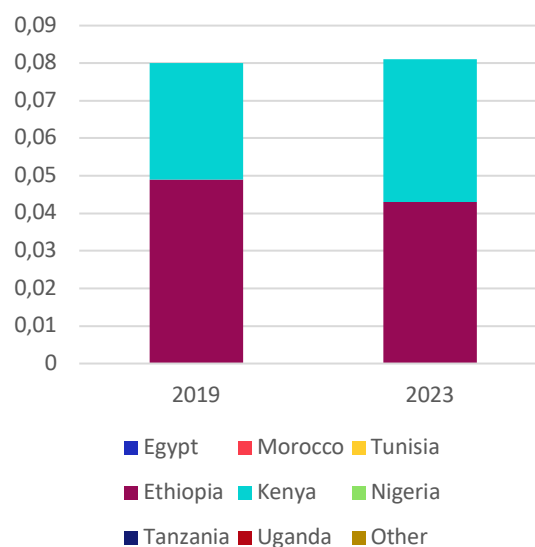
Panel B. Domestic workers, both sexes



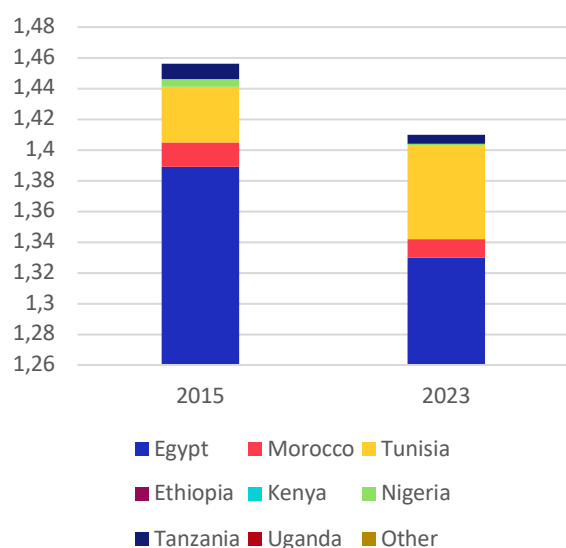
Panel C. Public sector, men



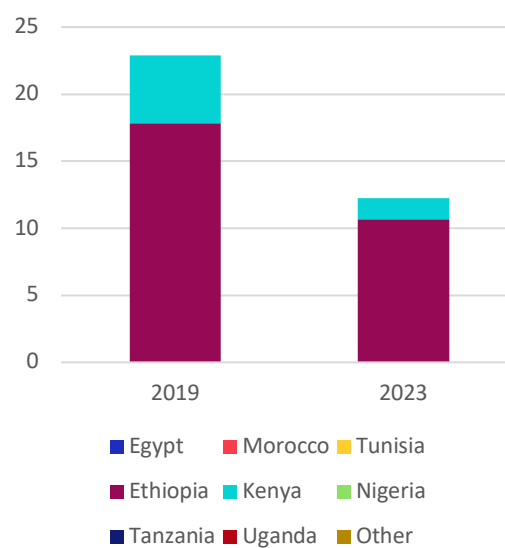
Panel D. Domestic workers, men



Panel E. Public sector, women



Panel F. Domestic workers, women



Notes: Public sector: 'Foreign workers in the public sector by country of citizenship'. For this chart, African migrants refer to citizens of Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Tanzania and Tunisia. Domestic workers: Top 8 nationalities, which are only available for Ethiopia and Kenya. All years are Q2.
Source: Bahrain Labour Market Indicators, Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), using data from the Expatriate Management System and Social Insurance Organisation.

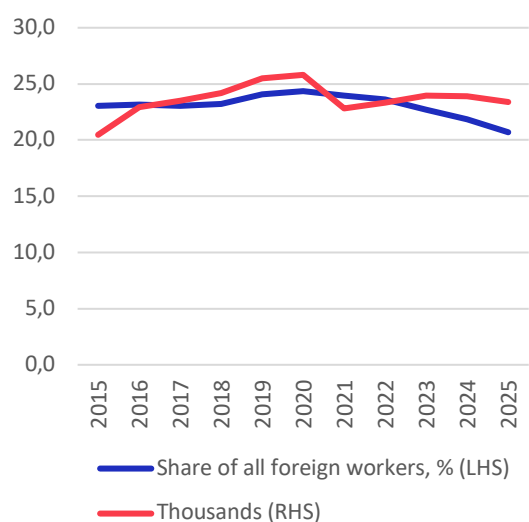
Figure 5.7 presents the stock of migrant workers by institutional sector and sex for Kuwait. For the institutional sector, this is presented in two categories: i) a combined category of public and private sector, and ii) domestic workers. It shows that in the combined private and public sector there was a notable decrease in absolute terms from more than 530,000 migrant workers in 2019 to around 472,000 in 2025. This corresponded to a decrease in the share of all migrant workers from 18.7 per cent to 15.7 per cent over the same period.

The decrease in the private and public sector between 2019 and 2025 was mostly driven by men, who accounted for around 92 per cent of all employment of the focal African countries in Kuwait, decreasing from 479,000 to 432,000 over this period. Meanwhile, employment of women migrant workers from the focal African countries increased over this period, from 32,000 to 35,000. It should be noted that because the data only highlights the most numerous nationalities, only Egyptians feature in the public and private sector values.

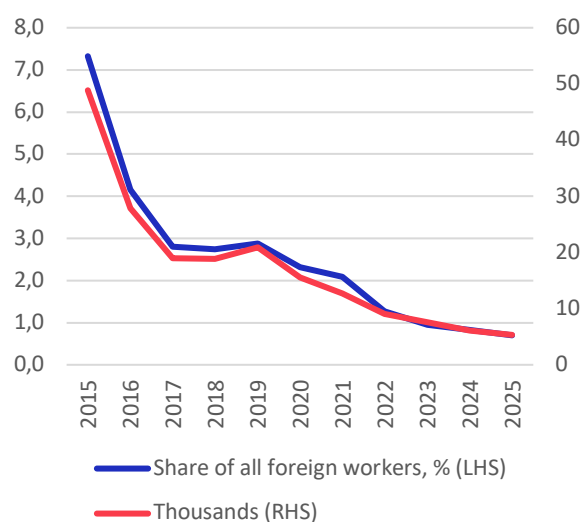
Women from the African countries of origin were more likely than men to be in domestic work, and there were five times more women in domestic work than men. Despite this, there was a major reduction in the number of domestic workers, which was observed for both men and women, decreasing from 49,000 in 2015 to 5,000 in 2025. Again, due to the data only specifying the countries of origin for the most populous countries, only Ethiopians feature among the domestic workers.

Figure 5.7. Total stock of African migrant workers in Kuwait by institutional sector and sex

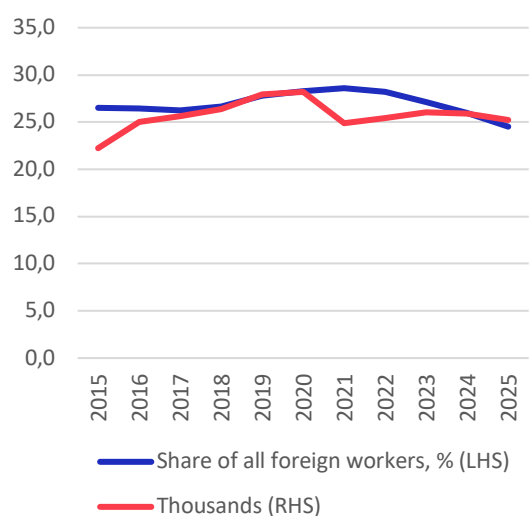
Panel A. Private and public sector, both sexes



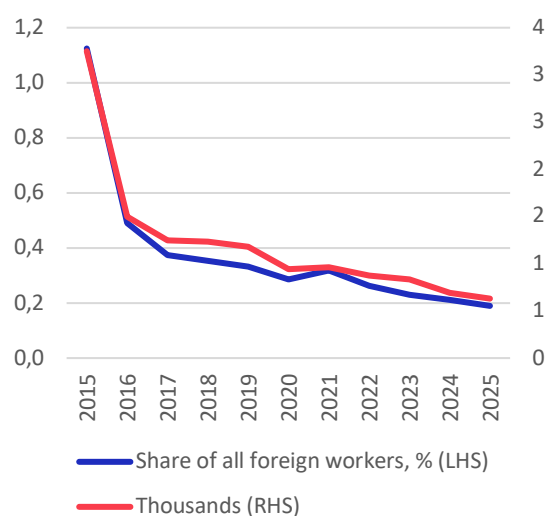
Panel B. Domestic workers, both sexes



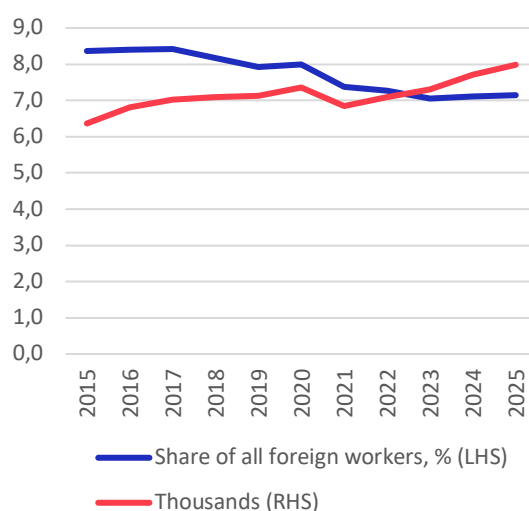
Panel C. Private and public sector, men



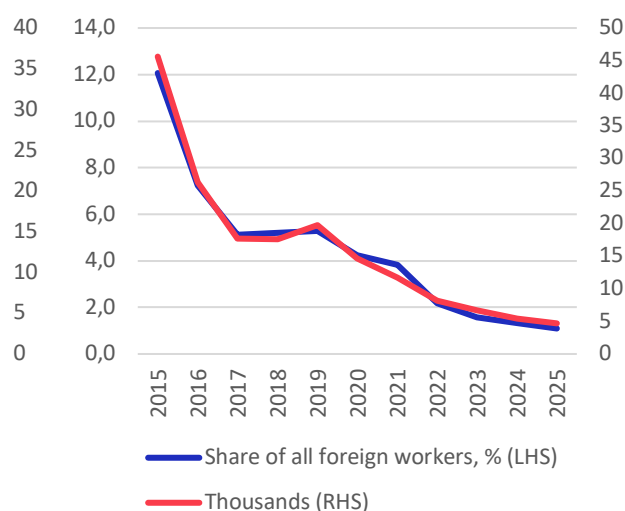
Panel D. Domestic workers, men



Panel E. Private and public sector, women



Panel F. Domestic workers, women



Notes: Employees in all institutional sectors, by country of citizenship (top-10). For this chart, African migrants refer only to citizens of Egypt and Ethiopia. All years are Q3.

Source: Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau (CSB), Labour Market Information System (LMIS), Integrated Database.

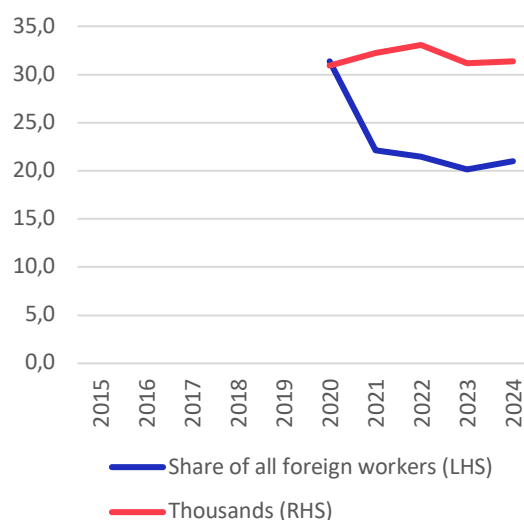
The breakdown by institutional sector for Oman only allows for the government sector and the combined category of the private and domestic sector (Figure 5.8). The majority of migrant workers from the focal African countries of origin were in the government sector, accounting for 83 per cent in 2025. While the number of migrant workers from the focal countries of origin have remained at around 9,000 over the last five years, it has decreased as a share of all migrant workers, from around 30 per cent to just over 20 per cent (Panel A). This suggests that there has been increasing employment of migrant workers from countries outside of the focal African countries of origin over this period.

While there are more men from the focal African countries of origin in the government sector than women (6,300 men to 2,700 women in 2025), the women from these African countries of origin account for a higher share of all foreign employment in the government sector, at 18.3 per cent to 6.6 per cent, respectively.

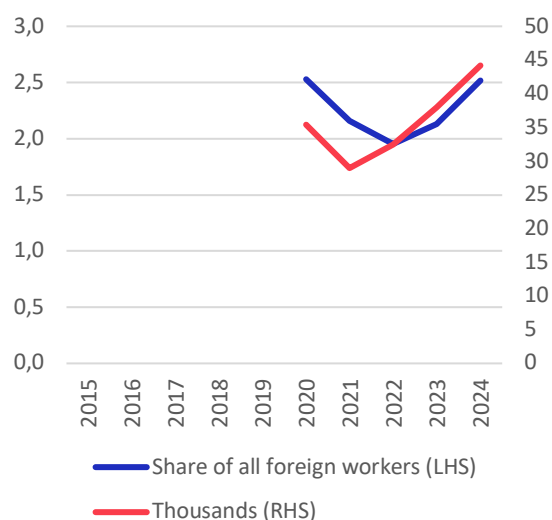
In the combined category of the private sector and domestic sector, there were around 44,200 migrant workers from the focal African countries of origin in 2025. These accounted for around 2.5 per cent of all migrant workers in this combined category. Again, while men made up the majority of employment of the focal African countries of origin in this sector, they only accounted for less than 2.5 per cent of all employment of foreign workers, compared to women from these focal African countries of origin, which accounted for more than 25 per cent.

Figure 5.8. Total stock of African migrant workers in Oman by institutional sector and sex

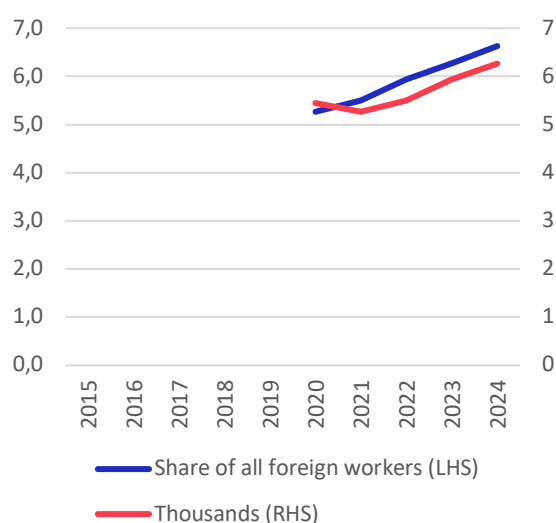
Panel A. Government sector, both sexes



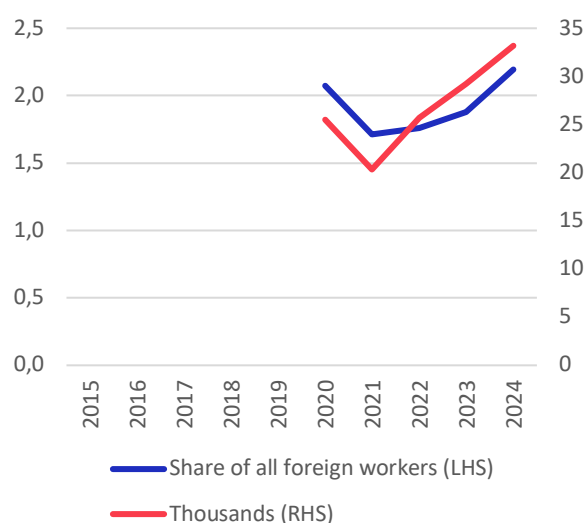
Panel B. Private and domestic sector, both sexes



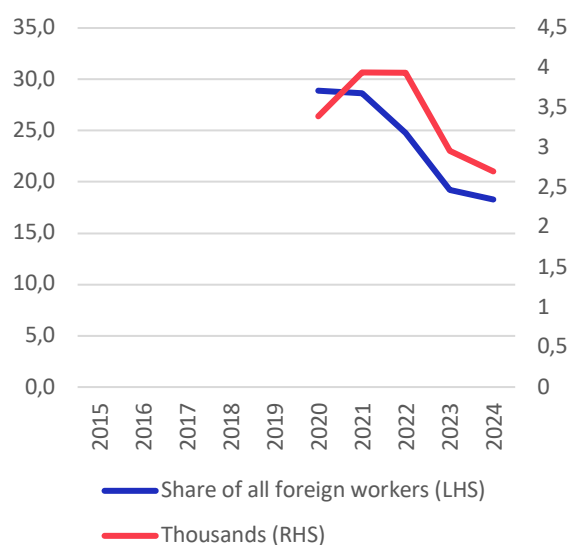
Panel C. Government sector, men



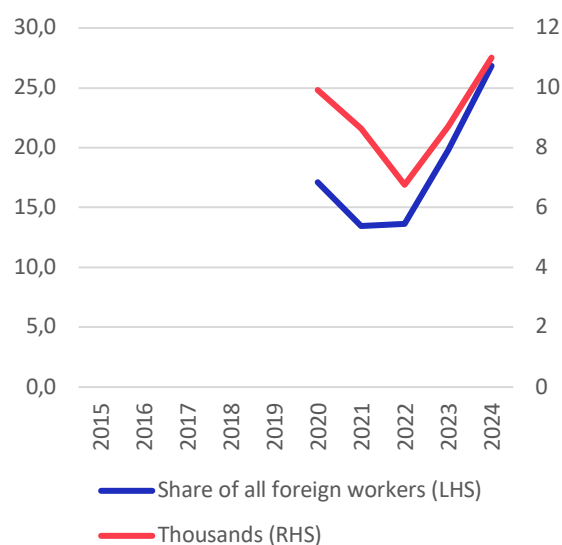
Panel D. Private and domestic sector, men



Panel E. Government sector, women



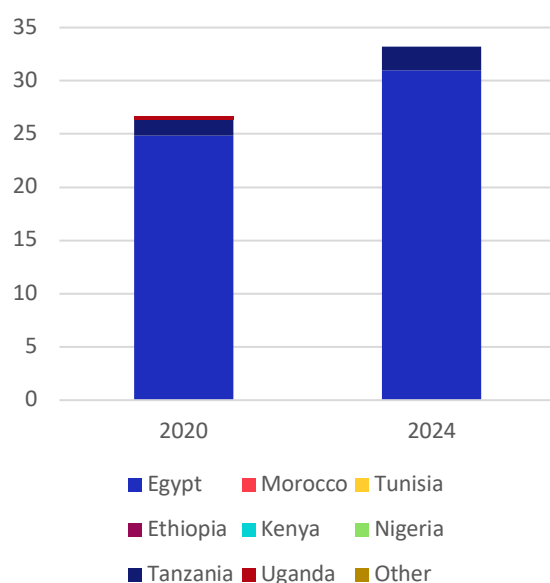
Panel F. Private and domestic sector, women



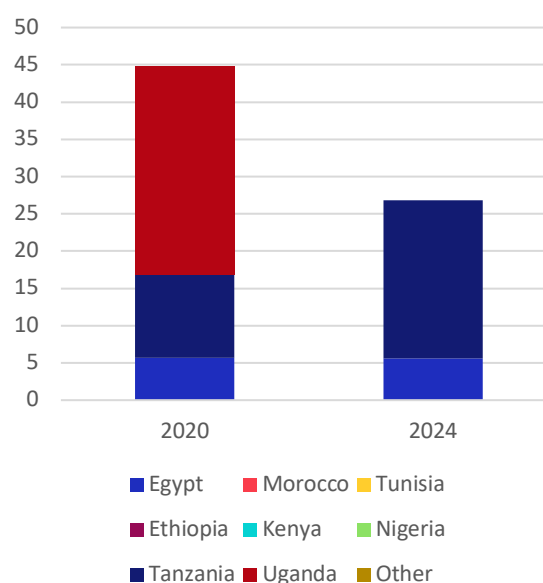
Notes: Expatriate workers by country of citizenship (most numerous countries only). For this chart, African migrants refer only to citizens of Egypt, Tanzania and Uganda.
Source: Oman NCSI, Statistical Yearbooks.

In terms of the countries of origin, the vast majority in the government sector were from Egypt, with only a fraction from Tanzania and Ethiopia. Most of the non-Egyptians were women, as nearly all the men from these focal African countries of origin in the government sector were Egyptian. In the combined private and domestic worker sector, the same was true, where most men were from Egypt, but there was more of a mix of nationalities for women, including Tanzanians and Ethiopians. It suggests that there is likely to be a gender dimension to employment from these African countries of origin in Oman, potentially reflecting the higher propensity of women's employment in the domestic worker sector from different African countries of origin.

Panel E. Government sector, women



Panel F. Private sector and domestic workers, women

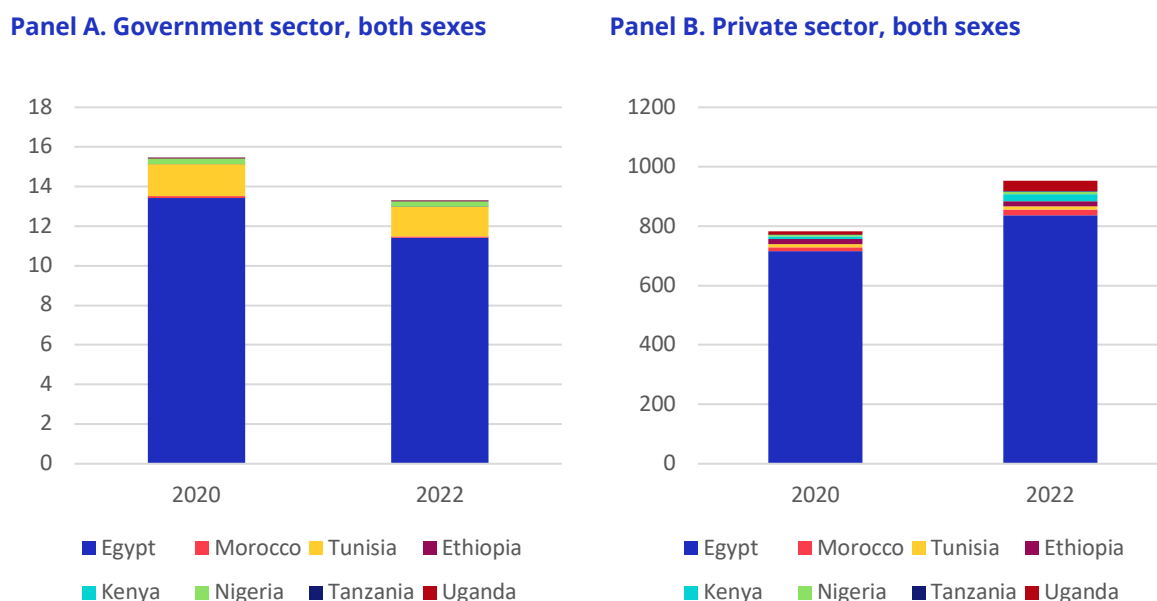


Notes: Expatriate workers by country of citizenship (most numerous countries only). For this chart, African migrants refer only to citizens of Egypt, Tanzania and Uganda.

Source: Oman NCSI, Statistical Yearbooks.

Saudi Arabia only has data available for 2020 and 2022, provided for the government sector and private sector, without separating by sex (Figure 5.10). Between the two periods, there was a slight decrease in employment of migrant workers from the focal African countries of origin in the government sector, but an increase in employment in the private sector. Notably, most workers were employed in the private sector, accounting for 99 per cent of all employment in 2022 – 953,000 in the private sector to 13,300 in the public sector. In both cases, Egyptians were the main nationality of the focal African countries of origin. However, the government sector also had a higher share (11 per cent) of migrant workers from Tunisia. In the private sector, Egyptians accounted for 87 per cent of all the migrant workers from the focal African countries of origin in 2022, with the remaining nationalities accounting for between 1 and 3 per cent each.

Figure 5.10. Total stock of African migrant workers in Saudi Arabia by institutional sector and country of origin (thousands)



Notes: Workers employed in the governmental and private sectors by country of citizenship. For this chart, African migrants refer only to citizens of Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda.

Source: Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD).

5.2. Inflows of African migrant workers to selected Arab States' countries of destination

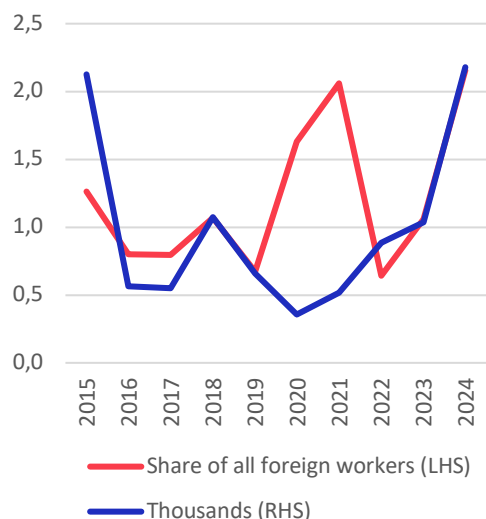
Only two countries of destination had publicly available information on inflows, these were Kuwait and Lebanon. Kuwait had this information disaggregated by sex and institutional sector, which are also covered in this section, and Lebanon had this information by occupation. However, for Lebanon, the data files were not always legible for analysis and occupation data does not align with any national or international occupation codes making it difficult to group categories for analysis, and therefore it is not presented by occupation in this section.

5.2.1. Over time

Trends in inflow data are typically more volatile than stock data, because data on international migrant worker stock is the current level over time, reflecting a balance of new entrants, existing migrant workers and those who leave the country at any given point in time. Inflow data is tied to a reference period – typically annual – and can fluctuate to a greater degree than total stock, owing to changes in policies, external factors (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic) as well as the socio-economic situation, labour demand and labour supply factors in both the countries of origin and destination.

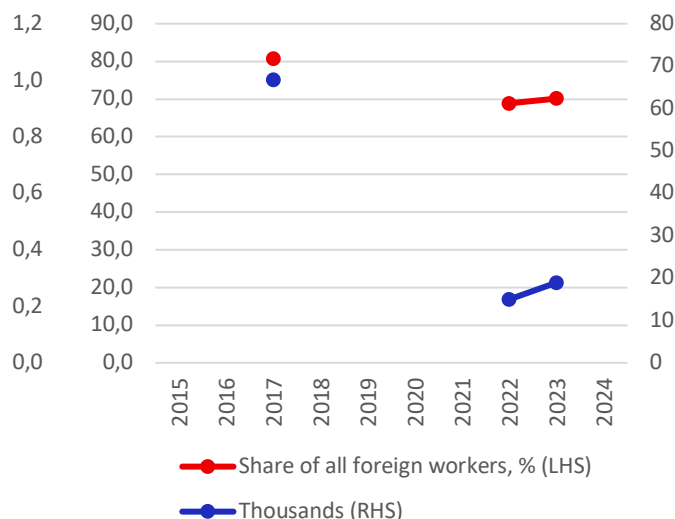
Figure 5.11. Total inflows of migrant workers from selected African countries, by year, 2015-2024, selected countries of destination

Panel A. Kuwait



Notes: Residence permits granted for the first time to migrant workers with contracts to work in the Government sector, private sector and domestic work sector. African migrants in this chart refer only to the group labelled 'non-Arab African migrants'.
Source: Migration Statistics Bulletin, multiple years.

Panel B. Lebanon



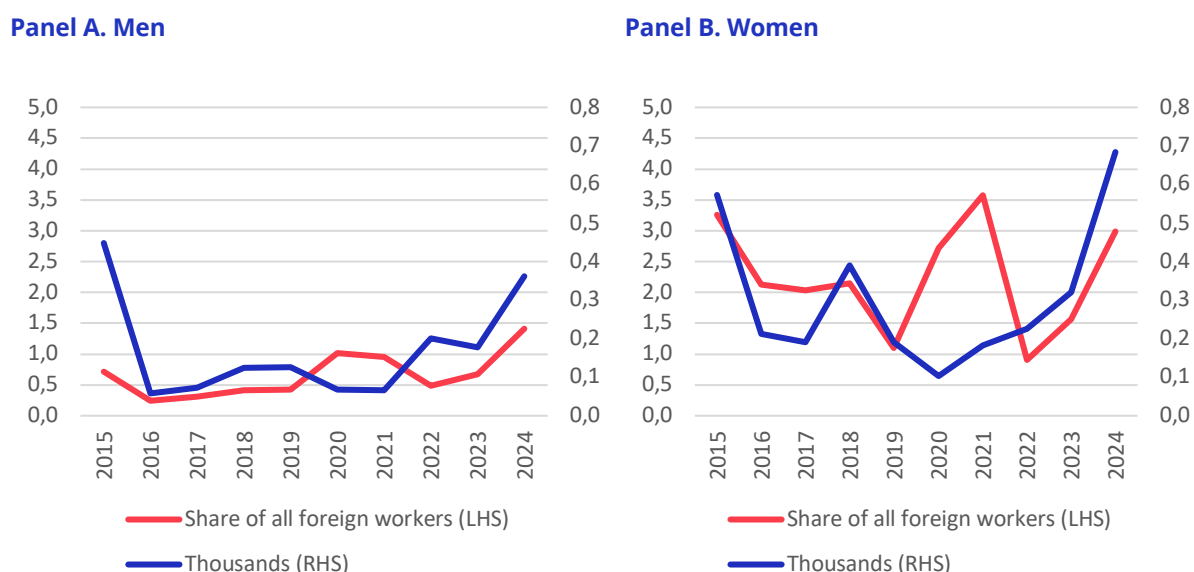
Notes: First time work permits by nationality. For this chart, African migrants refer to citizens of Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda.
Source: Lebanon Ministry of Labour, Labour Permits Statistics.

For inflows to Kuwait (Figure 5.11, Panel A), there is quite a degree of fluctuation year by year. The number of African migrant workers goes from a high of 1,000 in 2015 to a low of around 200 per year in 2020, and back again to 1,000 by 2024. These numbers are very low and only refer to countries Kuwait classifies as 'non-Arab Africa' – which would, for instance, exclude Egypt, which is the most prevalent African country in numbers of migrant workers in the GCC states, Jordan and Lebanon.

By sex, the numbers are very low for Kuwait and therefore should be taken with a degree of caution, but Figure 5.12 shows the inflows over time by men and women. It shows that men had relatively more regular flows over time, but they accounted for a lower share and lower number of migrant workers than women, for whom trends showed more oscillation over time.

In Lebanon (Figure 5.11, Panel B), there is a shortage of time-series to compare longer term, but it shows that total migrant worker inflows from African countries dropped from around 65,000 in 2017 to around 15,000 in 2022. Despite this, it still accounted for around 60 per cent of all inflows in 2022, down from around 80 per cent in 2017, suggesting that inflows from all countries had decreased during this period. Notably, 95 per cent of the inflows in Lebanon were from Ethiopia in 2017, and this dropped to 73 per cent in 2023.

Figure 5.12. Total inflows of migrant workers from selected African countries, Kuwait, by sex



Notes: Residence permits granted for the first time to migrant workers with contracts to work in the Government sector, private sector and domestic work sector. African migrants in this chart refer only to the group labelled 'non-Arab African migrants'.

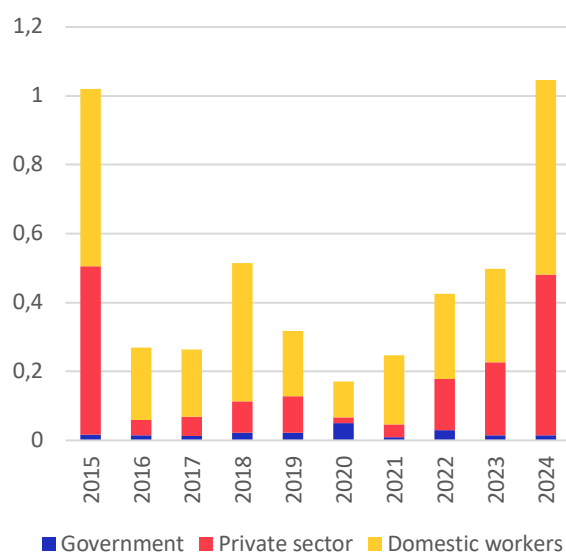
Source: Migration Statistics Bulletin, multiple years.

5.2.2. Institutional sector

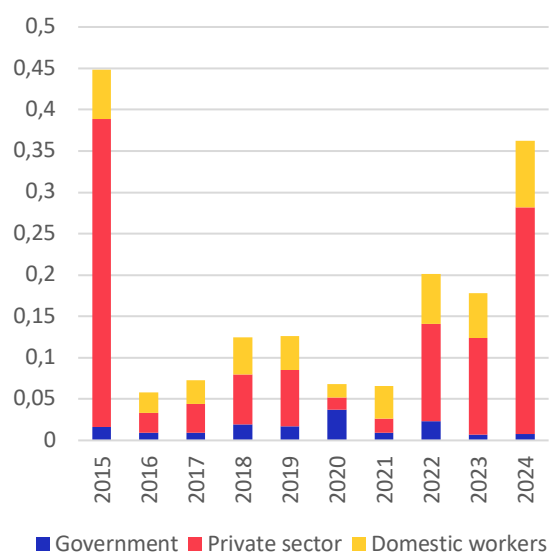
By institutional sector, information is only available on inflows for Kuwait (Figure 5.13). It shows that domestic workers accounted for more than half of all inflows of migrant workers in both 2015 and 2024 (Panel A). Most of the domestic workers were women (85 per cent in 2024). For women migrant worker inflows, domestic workers accounted for 71 per cent of inflows (Panel C). Despite the higher likelihood to be in domestic work, women still only accounted for around 2 per cent of all women migrant worker inflows in the domestic work sector (Panel F). Meanwhile, men were more likely to be in private sector employment (Panel B), with few men and women migrant worker inflows from African countries of origin in the government sector.

Figure 5.13. Total inflows of migrant workers to Kuwait from selected African countries, by sex

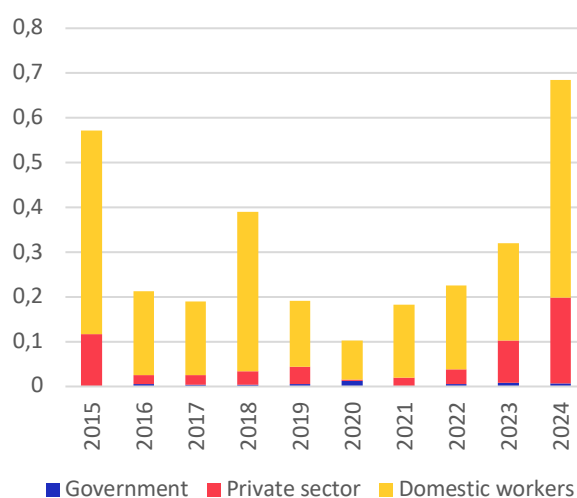
Panel A. Both sexes (thousands)



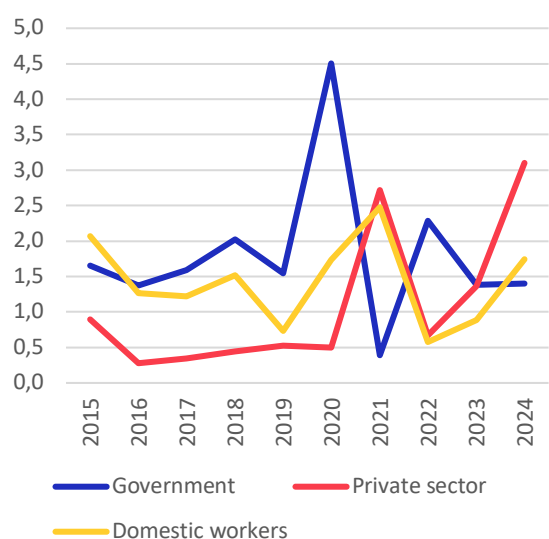
Panel B. Men (thousands)



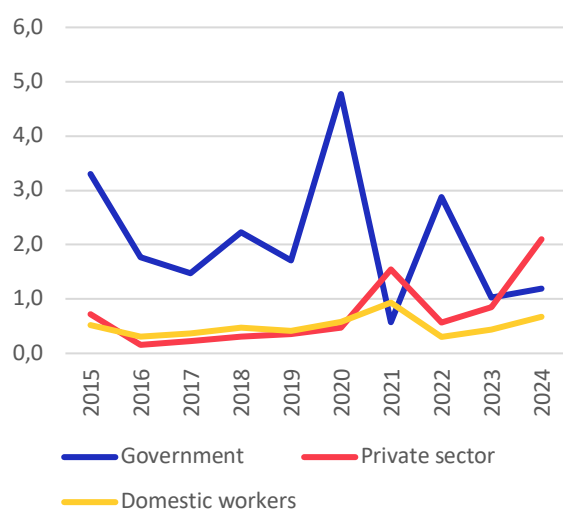
Panel C. Women (thousands)



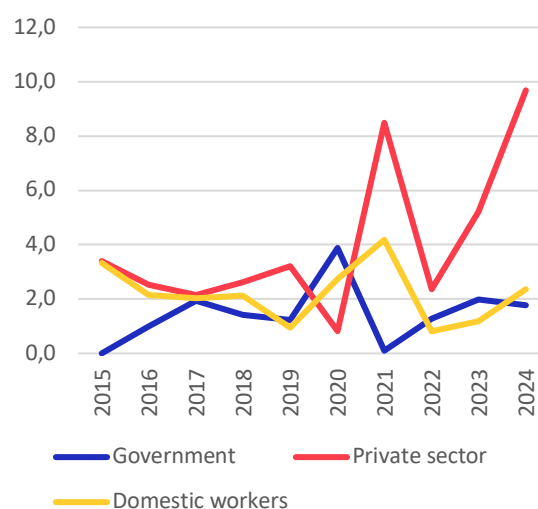
Panel D. Both sexes (percentage)



Panel E. Men (percentage)



Panel F. Women (percentage)



Notes: Residence permits granted for the first time to migrant workers with contracts to work in the Government sector, private sector and domestic work sector. African migrants in this chart refer only to the group labelled 'non-Arab African migrants'.

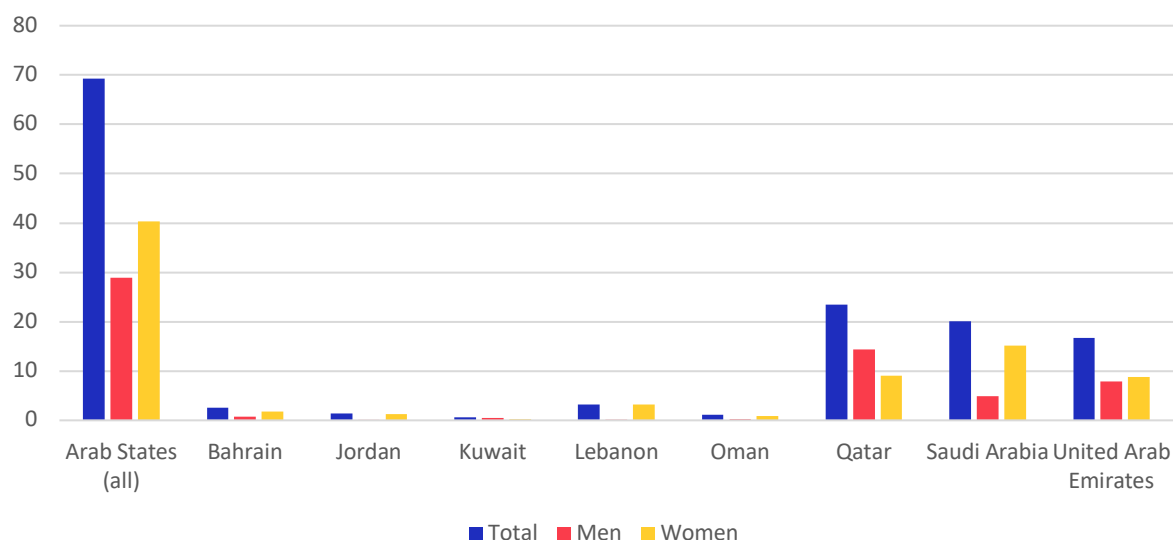
Source: Migration Statistics Bulletin, multiple years.

5.3. Stock of African migrant workers abroad in selected Arab States' countries of destination

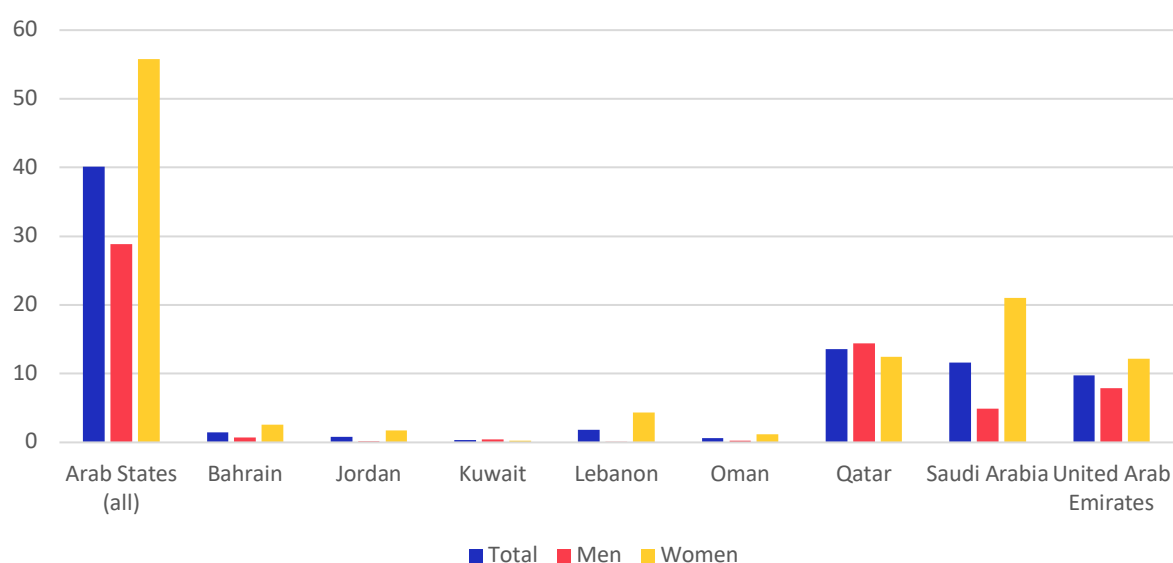
This section uses data from countries of origin and highlights estimates of stock of migrant workers in the Arab States. Only Kenya had data available from the Kenya Population and Housing Census 2019, with information combining emigration for employment and country or region of destination in an emigration module. It identifies all household members who have emigrated over the past 15 years and the reasons for migration, for which 'employment' is one, and used as a proxy for migrant workers for the purpose of this analysis. The Arab States were a destination, over the last 15 years, for 69,000 Kenyan migrant workers (Figure 5.14, Panel A), accounting for 40 per cent of all Kenyan migrant workers abroad (Panel B). Qatar accounted for the highest share of Kenyan migrant workers to the Arab States, at 34 per cent (23,500 workers), followed by Saudi Arabia at 29 per cent (20,100 workers) and the United Arab Emirates at 24 per cent (16,000 workers) (Panel A). By sex, Qatar accounted for 50 per cent of Kenyan migrant worker who are men, and Saudi Arabia accounted for 38 per cent of Kenyan migrant worker who are women.

Figure 5.14. Stock of Kenyan workers by selected countries of destination and sex, last 15 years

Panel A. Kenyan migrant workers in the Arab States in the last 15 years (thousands)



Panel B. Stock of Kenyan migrant workers in Arab States as a share of stock of Kenyan migrant workers in all countries (percentages)



Notes: Migrant workers defined here as emigrants for reasons of employment.
Source: National Population and Household Census 2019.

5.4. Outflows of African migrant workers to selected Arab States' countries of destination

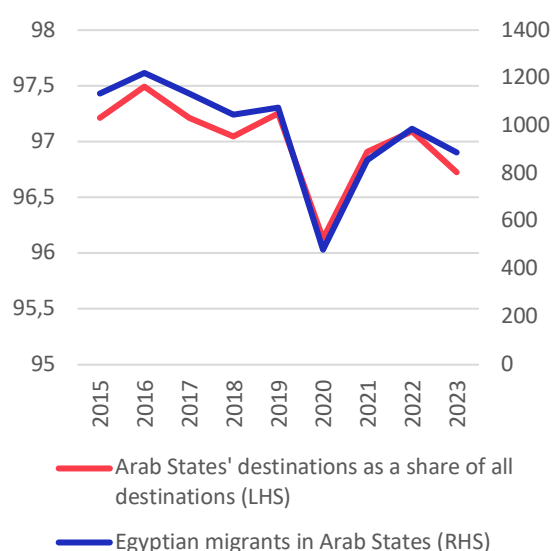
Outflows of African migrant workers by country of destination were more common than stocks of Africans abroad. This data was mostly from administrative records of migrants going abroad for employment, including work permits to work abroad (Egypt), contracts and employment attestations (Kenya) and data processed in Uganda from the External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS).

5.4.1. Over time

There is data for Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda showing flows over time. In Egypt, there were around 1 million Egyptians a year being granted work permits for the first time and going to Arab States' countries of destination in 2023 (Figure 5.15, Panel A). This figure has decreased from a high of around 1.2 million in 2016. It also corresponds to around 97 per cent of all work permits issued, suggesting that the Arab States are the prime destination for Egyptian migrant workers.

Figure 5.15. Outflows of nationals for employment to Arab States, 2015-2024

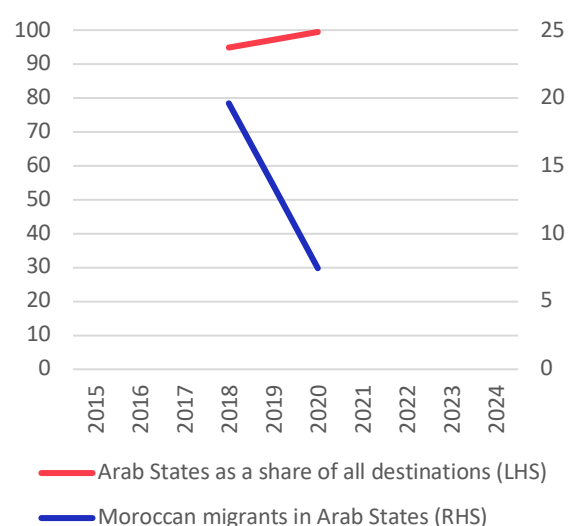
Panel A. Egypt



Notes: Destination categorised as 'Arab States' without specifying the specific countries of destination.

Source: Annual Bulletin of Work Permits: For Egyptians to Work Abroad.

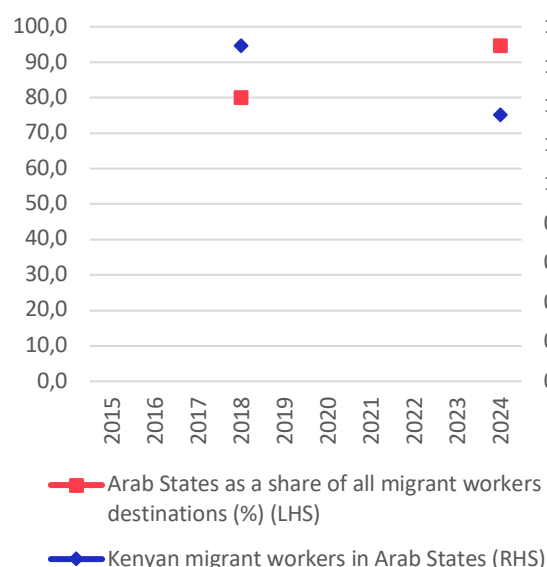
Panel B. Ethiopia



Notes: Outflows of nationals for employment.

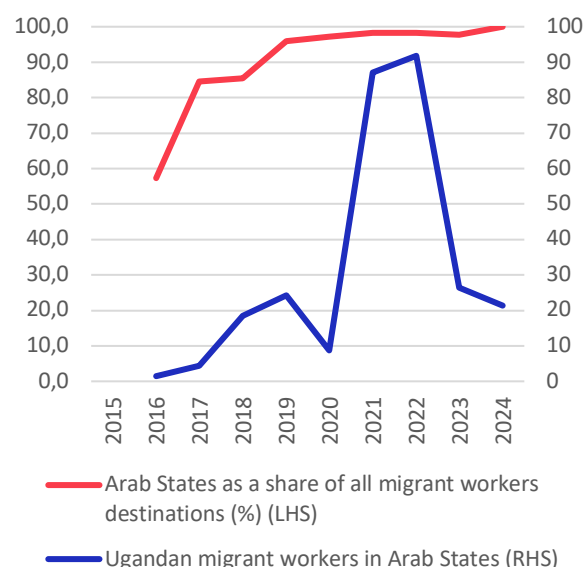
Source: Administrative records of the Ministry of Labour and Skills, submitted to ILOSTAT.

Panel C. Kenya



Notes: Number of contracts and employment attestations of Kenyan migrant workers.
Source: State Department for Labour and Skills Development 2024.

Panel D. Uganda



Notes: Notes: Number of Ugandans migrating abroad for employment.
Source: MGLSD Statistical Abstracts, EEMIS data.

In Ethiopia, there are two datapoints only, for 2018 and 2020. It shows that the number of Ethiopian migrant workers in the Arab States decreased from around 20,000 to 7,500 over this period (Panel B). This is likely to reflect the decrease as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic and more recent data would be more informative. Nonetheless, the share of Ethiopian migrant workers going to the Arab States was estimated at more than 90 per cent, suggesting again that the Arab States are the prime destination for Ethiopian migrant workers.

In Kenya, only two datapoints were available (2018 and 2024). It shows that there were around 1,300 Kenyan migrant workers officially going to the Arab States, according to contract and attestation information held by the State Department for Labour in 2024 (Panel C). The Arab States as a destination accounted for more than 90 per cent of all outflows.

In Uganda, data suggests that around 20,000 migrant workers went to the Arab States in 2024, down from a peak of 90,000 in 2022 (Panel D). Notably, the time-series for Uganda shows the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which stalled the outflow of Ugandan migrant workers, estimated at around 10,000 in 2020, before climbing to nearly 90,000 in 2021. The Arab States have grown as a key destination for Ugandans. Almost all Ugandans in the dataset were destined for the Arab States in 2024, compared to less than 60 per cent in 2016.

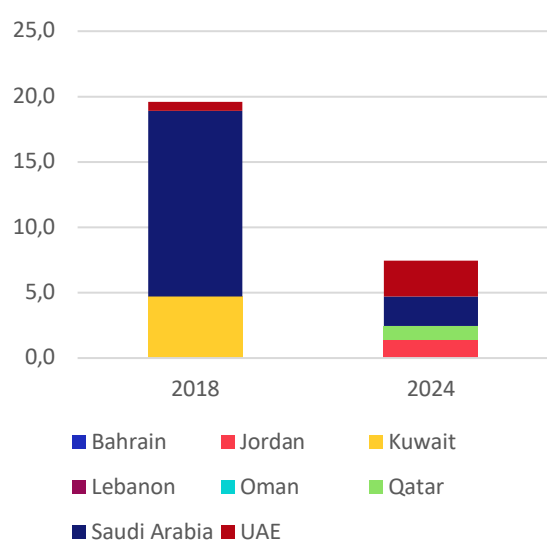
5.4.2. By country of destination

Figure 5.16 shows the main Arab States' countries of destination as available in the outflow data. Using the same colour key for each chart, it is apparent that the countries of destination have changed quite dramatically across the periods and depending on the country of origin. In Ethiopia for instance, in 2018 Kuwait accounted for nearly a quarter of all outflows, but this became a negligible amount by 2024 (Panel A). Instead, Jordan became a significant country of destination for Ethiopians, accounting for around 20 per cent of outflows in 2024 compared to a negligible amount in 2018.

In Kenya, Qatar was a major destination for Kenyan migrant workers in 2018, accounting for nearly 90 per cent of outflows (Panel B). By 2024, this had shifted and Saudi Arabia became the main destination, accounting for 76 per cent of outflows. In Tunisia, the data is focused only on three countries of destination (Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia), and shows that between 2018 and 2021, the composition remained relatively the same, but the number of placements increased (Panel C). Finally, in Uganda, the most noticeable change has been the increase in outflows to Saudi Arabia, which rose from around 200 workers in 2016 to around 20,000 in 2024, accounting for around 92 per cent of outflows in 2024.

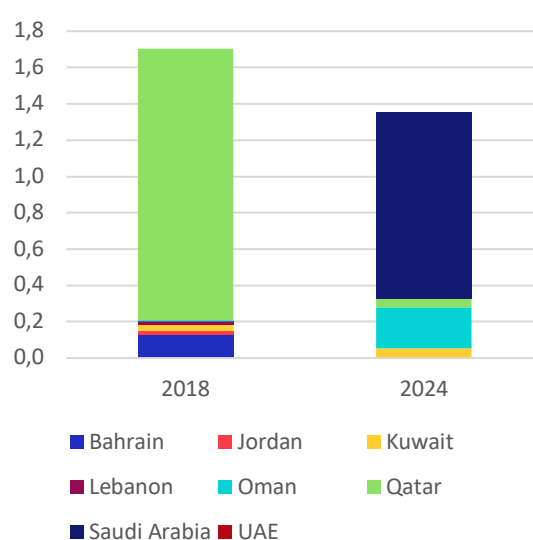
Figure 5.16. Outflow of nationals for employment, by country of destination (thousands)

Panel A. Ethiopia



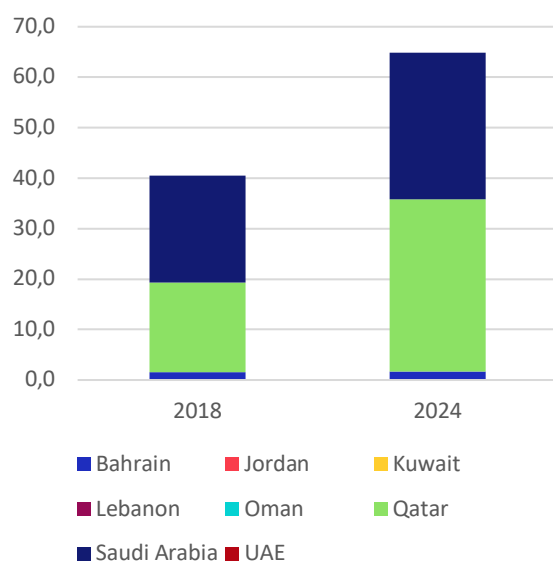
Notes: Number of contracts and employment attestations of Kenyan migrant workers.
Source: State Department for Labour and Skills Development 2024.

Panel B. Kenya



Notes: Outflows of nationals for employment.
Source: Administrative records of the Ministry of Labour and Skills, submitted to ILOSTAT.

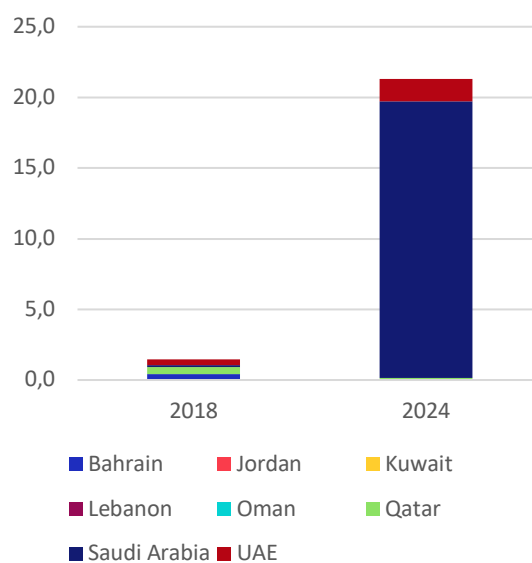
Panel C. Tunisia



Notes: Number of Tunisian migrants in three GCC countries.

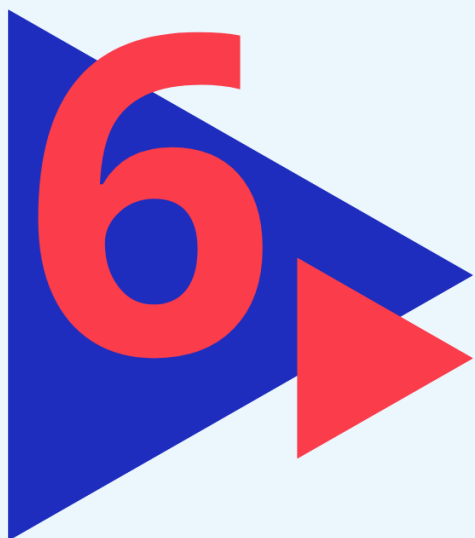
Source: Processing of the registrations in the Consular Affairs Directorate, in: ILO. Étude exploratoire sur les opportunités de placement des travailleurs tunisiens dans les pays du Golfe (Arabie Saoudite, Bahrein et Qatar), ILO, 2023.

Panel D. Uganda



Notes: Notes: Number of Ugandans migrating abroad for employment.

Source: MGLSD Statistical Abstracts, EEMIS data.



Conclusions and recommendations

This report presents an overview of international labour migration statistics for African migrant workers in eight Arab States' countries of destination, including the GCC member states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates), Jordan and Lebanon. For the African countries of origin, the focus was on three North African countries (Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco), and five Sub-Saharan African countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania). The report provides an overview of the data sources for international labour migration statistics in the focal countries of destination and the countries of origin, respectively. Additionally, the report provides a descriptive analysis of the trends and characteristics of African migrant workers in the focal countries of destination based on available data.

This section provides conclusions of the main findings of the report and advances recommendations for the improvement of international labour migration statistics in terms of collection, analysis and dissemination in the Gulf states, Jordan and Lebanon, and focal African countries of origin.

6.1. Expanding data access and dissemination in countries of destination

The political stakes of migration in the Arab States may explain the lack of data or its lack of public availability. In the GCC states, sensitivity regarding demographics and the size of migrant communities, or of individual foreign nationalities may explain why GCC states rarely publish figures of migrant workers disaggregated by country of citizenship. In several GCC states (Saudi Arabia for instance), and in Jordan, the coexistence of high immigration levels and high unemployment rates among citizens, the youth especially, may also explain the shortage of detailed data on migrant workers.

At the same time, what is often published are breakdowns by nationals and non-nationals, without any breakdown by country of origin. This information, while useful for understanding and analysing information in a context of national workforce localisation measures, does not provide insights into the migrant workforce. Such information requires information on country of origin. Further breakdowns by sex and institutional sector should be feasible in most data sources covered in the countries of destination, and where possible, data should be shared by occupation and economic activity. This would help better understand the migrant workforce and in turn better understand national labour markets including aspects around labour and skills demand and mismatches.

A list of recommendations for improving the collection, dissemination and analysis of international labour migration statistics in the focal countries of destination include the following:

- **Raise awareness of the importance of sharing detailed information on migrant workers:** The business case needs to be developed to demonstrate how publishing country of origin information, as well as sex-disaggregated and other relevant data, can contribute to a better understanding of national labour markets, including by informing localisation policies and providing insights into the composition of labour and skills demand, as well as existing mismatches and challenges. International organisations, such as the International Labour Organization can help to make the business case with key stakeholders in the region.
- **All countries of origin should be listed and not just the most prevalent:** A challenge in this report was identifying the focal countries when only the most numerous migrant worker countries were listed. This is useful information but insufficient for fully analysing the labour market data, and results in gaps and breaks in time series, thereby undermining the analysis.
- **Ensure sampling frames are representative of different migrant worker groups:** When surveys are used and not administrative records, migrant workers living in collective quarters are often omitted. The collection and compilation of statistics of these groups should be more fully integrated into national statistical systems through appropriate sampling frames for migrant worker populations, to ensure this population is adequately covered. The omission of these categories in many surveys means that large populations of migrant workers are not captured in the data.
- **Compile and disseminate analysis in a regular and timely manner:** While the countries of destination often have bulletins of information available or access to key tabulations, it is often cumbersome to find and extract, especially over time. Ministries and departments are encouraged to disseminate information on a regular and timely basis. Relevant ministries and departments should also consider the development of analytical reports on the outflows of migrant workers to help inform different stakeholders on trends and characteristics of these movements.

6.2. Improving data availability and access in countries of origin

As outlined in Section 4, there was a relative shortage of data for the focal African countries of origin, and what exists was predominantly outflow data from administrative records. In many cases the countries of origin collected data on nationals abroad and outflows but did not publicly share this information. There can be many reasons for this. One of the main reasons is that often the information is from administrative data sources, and the responsible agency may not recognise the statistical value of this information. Secondly, the responsible agency may not have the resources or expertise to be able to handle the information and disseminate the findings while complying with data security, privacy and other ethics around data sharing. Accordingly, there is a role for national statistics offices to play in highlighting the statistical importance of this administrative data and providing technical support for the processing and dissemination of this information. This can be a long process and can benefit from the development of technical working groups as well as other meetings and workshops that invite attendees from different ministries, drawing attention to the importance of different types of administrative records for improved labour migration governance. At the same time, such meetings can help take stock of existing and potential data sources for international labour migration, and this is recommended as a first step to improving coverage of international labour migration statistics per country.

A list of recommendations for improving the collection, dissemination and analysis of international labour migration statistics in the focal African countries of origin include the following:

- **Establish a technical working group on international labour migration statistics in each country where these do not currently exist,** led by the national statistics office and with representatives from different agencies, including ministries and departments responsible for producing international labour migration statistics as well as users and potential users of these statistics, including those involved in labour migration governance. The purpose of this technical working group would be to raise awareness of the importance of international labour migration statistics and identify support needed for the processing of international labour migration statistics by different agencies.
- **Conduct a mapping exercise of available data on international labour migration statistics:** A first step for understanding what exists and who the key data producing stakeholders are is to conduct a mapping of existing and potential data sources on international labour migration statistics per country. This would entail a mapping of different data sources and their suitability and limitations for capturing information on international migrants. The mapping can be a first step to developing a roadmap for improving international labour migration statistics and can be conducted through the technical working group.
- **Improve coverage, quality and use of relevant administrative records for statistical purposes:** As mentioned above, administrative records are often not processed and disseminated as statistics because the data was not collected primarily for statistical reasons. As such, the national statistics office should provide appropriate support to different ministries and departments in the processing of these administrative records by ensuring compliance with statistical codes of conduct. The process first entails establishing and maintaining relationships, coordination and collaboration between the national statistics offices and the responsible ministries and departments holding the administrative data, which can be facilitated through the technical working groups.
- **Improve knowledge sharing between data producers on methodologies for capturing information on nationals abroad and outflows:** There is potential for national statistics offices to learn from one another's experience on including new questions and modules in official statistics to help gather information on nationals abroad and outflows. The sharing of good practice examples through peer learning is one means of knowledge sharing and can be facilitated through regional workshops and conferences. Such regional mechanisms can be established through existing regional structures and can be introduced with assistance from regional coordination bodies or international organisations such as the International Labour Organization.
- **Compile and disseminate analysis in a regular and timely manner:** What was apparent in the development of this report was that data was often difficult to find and to extract. Ministries and departments can disseminate information on a regular and timely basis, particularly by automating data processing and drafting processes so that bulletins can be produced on a regular basis with little resource-intensive efforts. Beyond this, relevant ministries and departments should also consider the development of analytical reports on the outflows of migrant workers to help inform different stakeholders on trends and characteristics of these movements.

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► Appendix II: Stakeholders

Tables A1-A4 provide the stakeholders contacted as part of this study. Not all stakeholders provided responses.

Table A1: Key stakeholders, Kenya

Category / institution	Department / other
National statistics office	Kenya Bureau of Statistics (KNBS)
Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, State Department for Labour and Skills Development	National Employment Authority
	Directorate of Labour Migration Management
	National Industrial Training Authority
Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs	State Department for Diaspora Affairs
	Diaspora Placement Agency
Ministry of Interior and National Administration	Directorate of Immigrant Services, State Department for Immigration and Citizen
	Kenya National Coordination Mechanism on Migration
Remittances	Central Bank of Kenya
Social partners	Central Organization of Trade Unions, Kenya (COTU-K)
	Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals, and Allied Workers (Kudheihia)
	Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE)
Other	Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF), Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender
	Kenya Human Rights Commission
	Association of Skilled Migrant Agencies of Kenya (ASMAK)

Table A2: Key stakeholders, Nigeria

Category / institution	Department / other
National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)	Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning
Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment	National Electronic Labour Exchange (NELEX) and International Labour Migration
Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM)
	Consular Services
	Nigerians in Diaspora Organizations (NIDO)
Federal Ministry of Interior	National Immigration Service (NIS)
Social partners	Nigeria Labour Congress/ Trade Union Congress
	Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA)
Other	National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs (NCFRMI)
	Employers Association of Private Recruitment Agencies (EAPEAN)

Table A3: Key stakeholders, Uganda

Category / institution	Department / other
National Statistics Office	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD)	External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS)
Diaspora management	Diaspora Department (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
	State House Diaspora Unit
Remittances	Bank of Uganda
Ministry of Interior Affairs	Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control (DCIC)
Social partners	Federation of Uganda Employers
	National Organisation of Trade Unions (NOTU)
Other	Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies

Table A4: Stakeholder consultations, other

Category / institution	Department / other
International Labour Organization (ILO)	ILO Senior Statistician (Pretoria)
	ILO Regional Statistician for Africa (Abidjan)
	ILO Senior Specialist on Labour Statistics (Dakar)
	ILO Specialist, Rights, Migration and Skills Statistics Unit
	ILO Specialist on Labour Migration Statistics, Uganda
	Employment and Migration Specialist, Nigeria

► Appendix III: List of annex documents

Annex I: Kenya Case Study

Annex II: Nigeria Case Study

Annex III: Uganda Case Study



International
Labour
Organization

Statistical Report on African Migrant Workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, Jordan and Lebanon

Annex I Kenya Case Study



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► Executive summary

This Kenya case study has been developed as an annex to the report “Statistical Report on African Migrant Workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, Jordan and Lebanon”. It provides a mapping of international labour migration statistics of Kenyan migrant workers going to the Arab States in Kenyan data sources. As such, it is focused on emigration statistics, providing a detailed overview of available and potential data sources, an analysis of the statistics available, as well as recommendations focused on improving labour outward migration statistics in the country.

Kenya is a net-receiving country for international migration. Most Kenyans who migrate to another country go to countries in the Arabian Gulf or the East Africa Community. The Arab States accounted for 27 per cent of the total stock of Kenyans abroad in 2019, based on the most recent Kenya Population and Housing Census (KHPC) data (2019).

Kenya’s National Migration Policy 2023 provides a basis for national efforts towards building a better framework for collection, analysis and use of data and information on labour migration. With regards to agreements in the Arab States, Kenya has Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) with Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and is seeking to establish further cooperation agreements to increase opportunities for Kenyan skilled workers in countries like Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and Oman. Despite this, there are claims that BLAs are not always properly monitored limiting their capacity to improve migration governance in the specific corridors (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development 2023; Ministry of Labour and Social Protection 2023).

Results from the mapping indicate that Kenya has two available data sources that identify migrant workers going to the Arab States. Namely: i) the attestation records from the State Department for Labour and Skills Development, which contains information on Kenyans whose foreign employment contracts were certified by the government prior to their departure from Kenya; and ii) the KPHC can provide estimates of the stock of nationals abroad by reason for migrating for which ‘employment’ is an option.

Analysis of the attestation records generated valuable insights into labour migration trends and characteristics of workers placed through regular channels in the Kenya to Arab States corridor. It shows that the composition of migrant workers between 2018 and 2024 changed significantly, from predominantly men going to Qatar in 2018, to women going to Saudi Arabia in 2024. This data source included earnings by occupation for selected occupations. It showed that Kenyan care workers in Saudi Arabia earned significantly more than other occupations with earnings data. Despite this, there is a lack of information about the earnings variable to make significant conclusions.

Recommendations presented in this report focus on improving access to data sources which might be able to contribute to estimates of Kenyan migrant workers in the Arab States, as well as supplementary information including metadata. Administrative records hold significant potential, but overall, the improvement of international labour migration statistics would benefit from the establishment of a technical working group on the topic headed by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the case study

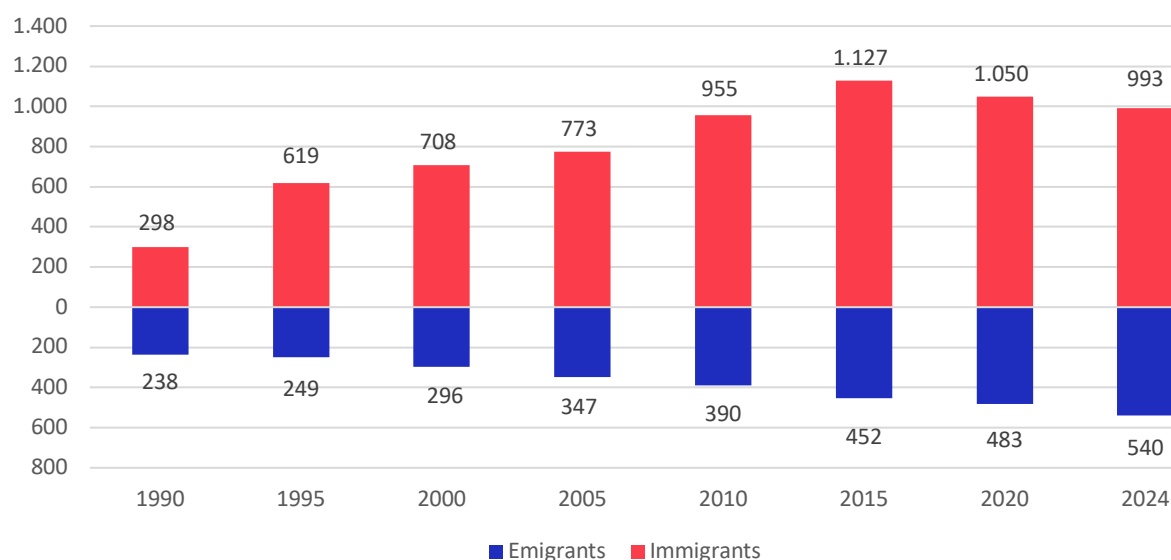
This Kenya case study has been developed as an annex to the report “Statistical Report on African Migrant Workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, Jordan and Lebanon”. The main report reviews and identifies sources of data for mapping African migrant workers in the Africa to Arab States corridor. Eight African origin countries were included in the mapping, namely Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania. The Arab States included in the review were the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, i.e., Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, plus Jordan and Lebanon.

This case study is one of three developed as supplements to the main report, undertaken for Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. This case study, for Kenya, provides a mapping of international labour migration statistics of migrant workers going to the Arab States in Kenyan data sources. As such, it is focused on emigration statistics, providing a detailed overview of available and potential data sources, an analysis of the statistics available, as well as recommendations focused on improving labour outward migration statistics in the country.

1.2. International migration context in Kenya

Kenya is a net-receiving country of international migration. According to the latest UN estimates, there were more immigrants living in Kenya in 2024 than emigrants from Kenya living abroad, even though the number of immigrants has been decreasing over the last decade (Figure 1.1). Immigration to Kenya mostly originates in the East Africa Community (EAC) countries. Somalia, Uganda and South Sudan are among the top origin countries of immigrants in Kenya (UN DESA Population Division 2024).

Figure 1.1. International migrant stock, Kenya, 1990-2024 (thousands)



Data source: UN DESA Population Division 2024.

According to the most recent Population and Housing Census (2019), most Kenyans who migrated to another country either go to countries in the 'Arabian Gulf' or other countries in Africa, mainly in the EAC.¹⁴ In 2019, an estimated 38,000 Kenyans, or around 27 per cent of total the total stock, were in the Gulf States (KNBS 2022a).

The main labour migration drivers for Kenyans are related to unemployment, high informality, widespread low-quality employment in conjunction with pressing family obligations and economic hardships. Youth unemployment is much higher than among the working age population in Kenya, with the lack of opportunities and prospects driving many young low and semi-skilled Kenyans to seek what are perceived as high return work experiences abroad (Bashir 2025; Ministry of Labour and Social Protection 2023).

Forced labour remains common among Kenyan workers in the GCC countries as reported in the literature by workers who have returned to Kenya. Returnees report experiencing instances of harassment, restriction of freedom of movement or communication, abusive employment practices, like deceptive contracts and lack of safety, as well as coercive practices (Global Fund to End Modern Slavery 2022). Reforms have been adopted in some Arab States to improve power balance in foreign worker-host employer relations in sponsorship-based labour migration systems, but enforcement of rules and structural barriers seem to persist (Bashir 2025).

1.3. Labour migration governance

The National Employment Authority was established in 2016 to manage employment of Kenyans in general, including by creating a database of job seekers and facilitating their placement in employment locally or abroad (Republic of Kenya 2016). The National Labour Migration Policy 2023, under coordination of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, aims to improve labour migration governance in general but also serves as a basis for government efforts towards building a better framework for collection, analysis and use of data and information on labour migration. The National Diaspora Policies, adopted in 2014 and revised in 2024, is a related framework that seeks to facilitate government action concerning services offered to Kenyans abroad (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection 2023).

In the Arab States, Kenya has Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) with Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and has initiated negotiations with other countries towards establishing BLAs to facilitate recruitment of Kenyan skilled labour. Countries include Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and Oman. Kenya and the United Arab Emirates have a Memorandum of Understanding on Labour Matters and a Protocol on Domestic Workers to govern labour migration between the countries.¹⁵ Some of the issues with current governance coordination frameworks include limited scopes, including a lack of explicit gender-responsive provisions, and lack of proper implementation. Implementation of BLAs is often not properly monitored limiting their capacity to improve management of migration in specific corridors in practice and improve protection of workers (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development 2023; Ministry of Labour and Social Protection 2023).

¹⁴ Specifically, the total number of Kenyans who ever lived abroad in the 15 years prior to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census (KPHC).

¹⁵ <https://mfa.go.ke/appreciating-kenya-uae-relations>

2. Methodology

Please see the main report for the methodological approach used in the study, including the data mapping framework and the types of information and data sources considered. For the case studies, stakeholder consultations were undertaken as an additional level of information to help verify the information from the review, to identify new and potential data sources, and to access data that is only available upon request. A selection of relevant stakeholders is provided below, along with their relevance. Notably, not all stakeholders contacted were able to provide responses.

The ILO FAIRWAY Project Team provided contact points for the different institutions and departments and consultations with these contact points were made through different means (interviews, email exchanges or questionnaires), depending on factors including: the type of institution; how each institution produces, uses or has relevance for international labour migration statistics; and additional data upon request. While semi-structured interviews and questionnaire templates were developed early in the assignment, the range of stakeholder types and the information sought from each meant that custom questions were developed for each stakeholder.

- **Kenya National Bureau of Statistics:** Responsible for production of national official statistics in Kenya.
- **Directorate of Labour Migration Management, State Department for Labour and Skills Development, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection:** Responsible for labour migration governance, overseeing implementation of the NLMP, leads negotiation of international labour cooperation frameworks, supports protection of Kenyan workers.
- **National Employment Authority (NEA), Ministry of Labour and Social Protection:** Regulates placement of Kenyan workers abroad via private recruiters, licenses private international recruitment agencies and monitors compliance, holder of deployment records.
- **National Industrial Training Authority (NITA), Ministry of Labour and Social Protection:** Provides pre-departure trainings to Kenyan workers placed in vacancies abroad, holder of their certification and training records.
- **State Department for Diaspora Affairs, Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs:** Responsible for government engagement with the Kenyan diaspora, offers protection services to Kenyans abroad and supports negotiation of international labour migration cooperation frameworks.
- **Directorate of Immigrant Services, State Department for Immigration and Citizen, Ministry of Interior and National Administration:** Holder of border exit records.
- **Kenya National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (KNCM):** Centralizes coordination of stakeholders involved in migration governance in Kenya, including labour migration.
- **Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF), Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender:** Implements employment promotion and labour mobility programme for youth.
- **Central Bank of Kenya:** Holder of international remittance flows records.
- **Central Organization of Trade Unions, Kenya (COTU-K):** Represents interests of Kenyan workers in labour migration policy development, advocates for worker protections and fair recruitment.
- **Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals, and Allied Workers (Kudheihia):** Trade union affiliated with COTU-K representing interests of workers in specific sectors, including domestic and care workers.
- **Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE):** Represents interests of private sector companies in Kenya in labour migration policy development.
- **Kenya Human Rights Commission:** Investigates and documents instances of human rights violations in Kenya, including for Kenyan workers abroad.
- **Association of Skilled Migrant Agencies of Kenya (ASMAK):** Organization of private international recruitment agencies in Kenya vetted and licensed by the Kenyan government, holder of deployment records collected by member agencies.

3. Mapping of available and potential data sources in Kenya

This section provides an overview of the labour migration statistics available in Kenya, focused on statistics of migrant workers from Kenya in the Arab States and those going to the Arab States. Information about each data source was compiled via desk review and stakeholder consultations. Description of the data sources is focused on detailing the scope of data available or potentially available, actors responsible for data collection, data accessibility, frequency of data collection, latest available data, as well as data limitations in general. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the mapping in Kenya, listing available and potential sources and the characteristics of their data. Following the table, detailed information is available per data source.

Table 3.1. Summary of data sources

Availability	Name of publication / dataset	Characteristics of data
Available	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Labour Migration Indicators Report: Attestation records and migration clearance desk	Frequency: Annual Latest: 2024 Disaggregation: Sex, occupation, education level Type: Flow
	Kenya Population and Housing Census, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics: Emigrants for reasons of employment	Frequency: Decennial Latest: 2019 Disaggregation: sex, country of residence, reason for migrating Type: Stock
Potential	Quarterly Labour Force Survey & Kenya Continuous Household Survey program, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics: No emigration data available	Frequency: Quarterly Latest: 2022 Disaggregation: Unconfirmed Type: Unconfirmed

	Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS), Kenya National Bureau of Statistics: Nationals who moved to another country for at least 6 months	Frequency: Decennial Latest: 2025/26 Disaggregation: Sex, country of destination, reason for departure Type: Stock, outflow
	Remittances Household Survey, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics: Households receiving remittances	Frequency: one-off Latest: 2025 Disaggregation: Unknown Type: Stock
	National Employment Authority Integrated Management System (NEAIMS), National Employment Authority, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection: Placement of workers in vacancies abroad	Frequency: Unknown Latest: Unknown Disaggregation: sex, country of destination, education, occupation Type: Outflow
	NEAIMS Diaspora Registration, National Employment Authority, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection: Migrant workers abroad	Frequency: Continuous Latest: NA Disaggregation: sex, country of destination, occupation Type: Stock, outflow
	National Industrial Training Authority, State Department of Labour and Skills Development, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection: Kenyans who undertook pre-departure trainings	Frequency: Continuous Latest: NA Disaggregation: Unconfirmed Type: Stock and outflow
	Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF), Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender: Placement of youth workers in vacancies abroad	Frequency: Continuous Latest: NA Disaggregation: Unconfirmed Type: Stock and outflow

Source: Authors' compilation.

3.1. Kenya Population and Housing Census

The 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census (KPHC) is the latest available population census in Kenya. On the theme of “Counting our People for Sustainable Development and Devolution of Services”, it focused on generating statistics to inform implementation of national development plans, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals at national level. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) is the responsible agency for planning and conducting a population census every ten years since 1969. Mobile technologies instead of paper forms were used for the first time in conducting a population census in Kenya in 2019, in an effort to adhere to the latest UN Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses (KNBS 2019).

The 2009 KPHC was the first population census in Kenya to include the emigration topic. Both 2009 and 2019 censuses included a questionnaire module devoted to emigration, with questions specifically targeted at households that reported having members who emigrated in the 15 years prior to each census (KNBS 2024a). Documentation available online pertaining to the 2009 KPHC describes the “Short questionnaire on emigrants” and its 13 data collection items. These would allow identification of Kenyans living in another country by sex, age, highest educational level attained, professional training, country of destination at the time of departure, country of current residence, year of and reason for departure, and use of remittances (KNBS 2009). However, data from this module were not analysed in detail by the KNBS reportedly due to an issue with linking the short emigration questionnaires to the household questionnaires (KNBS 2012). For this reason, only aggregate figures for number of Kenyans abroad were published by KNBS. Data for emigrants for reasons of employment by country of destination was provided by KNBS for inclusion in this study.

The 2019 KPHC questionnaire has a similar emigration module. Public use datasets and accompanying documentation from both KPHC editions are publicly available upon request at the Kenya National Data Archive online portal. The KNBS also published online various KPHC 2019 and 2009 reports presenting their respective methodologies, results and analyses. For both census editions, an analytical report devoted to the migration theme is available, which covers both internal and international migration, with immigration and emigration results being presented and discussed albeit to varying extents. There is also an analytical report on labour migration from the 2019 census, but this does not provide statistics by country of origin. KNBS notes in the reports that population censuses have limitations as sources of emigration statistics, which should be used and interpreted carefully.

In general, population censuses are sparsely timed compared to household sample surveys, and they underestimate any count of emigrants at a given point in time. In population censuses, information collected on emigrants relies on reporting by a household member who stayed in the country, remains alive and is sufficiently well-informed of migration details of absentees residing (and working) in another country. These circumstances exclude information from households wherein all members migrated or those left behind are no longer alive and tend to result in omissions or inaccurate answers. In other instances, migrants may be counted more than once if, for instance, the migrant moved from one household to another before migrating to another country and both households report them as an emigrant (Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2022).

3.2. Quarterly Labour Force Survey & Kenya Continuous Household Survey Program

In Kenya, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) is a modular survey within the Kenya Continuous Household Survey Program (KCHSP). The KCHSP started in 2019 to provide high frequency data on various socio-economic indicators, including on household consumption expenditure and the labour force. It was conducted in every quarter of the years 2019 to 2022 by the KNBS, which publishes Quarterly Labour Force Reports describing the methodology and main results of the surveys, as well as annual Poverty Reports. Between 2019 and 2022 the QLFS included a migration module to obtain information on internal migration and immigration only, and no questions on emigration were included. In 2026, the labour force survey will be relaunched as the Integrated Labour Force Survey (ILFS). The ILFS will start as a pilot and potentially continue as a quarterly survey. It contains questions on resident international migrants, returnees and emigration. The questions on emigration (asked to the head or most knowledgeable person of the household) include country of destination and therefore this future data source should be an important source of information on emigration of Kenyans to the Arab States.

The Survey includes a migration module to obtain information on internal migration and immigration. No questions on emigration are included. But, given its main focus on measuring the standard of living of Kenyans, and extensively mapping out their expenditure and income sources, the KHSP does include the topic of international remittances. Households receiving remittances from individuals in another country can be identified in the survey, as well as the amount of remittances received. If the survey sample allows, this information could potentially be used to provide estimates of the stock of Kenyans abroad. Furthermore, information is collected about the emigrant who is sending remittances to Kenya, including their sex, age, country of residence and duration of residence abroad, sector of employment (using International Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities (ISIC) codes), main channel of transfers used and use of remittances (KNBS 2023).

These data might have important limitations nonetheless, which are usual of surveys that aren't focused on migration. The sample of households that receive remittances might not be large enough to be representative and allow for generalizations about the population receiving them or the emigrants sending them. If the survey sample allows, however, the information could potentially be used to provide estimates of stock of Kenyans abroad actively sending remittances to Kenya.

3.3. Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey

The Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS) was designed to monitor living standards of individuals, households and communities in Kenya and produce data to update three important national statistics databases, namely the Consumer Price Index, Poverty and Inequality, and System of National Accounts. The Survey is conducted by KNBS every ten years and, at the time of writing, has had two complete rounds so far, which took place in 2005/06 and in 2015/16. Public use annual datasets and accompanying documentation for both survey rounds are publicly available upon request at the Kenya National Data Archive online portal. Other surveys were previously carried out in Kenya with similar objectives in terms of scope of data collection since the 1980s until the late 1990s, but these were not reviewed in this study. In July 2025, a new round of data collection for the KIHBS was officially announced covering the 2025/26 period.¹⁶

Although the 2025/26 survey results are not ready at the time of writing this study to allow for an in-depth analysis of the data estimates, documentation relating to its pilot survey can provide insights as to the scope of data being collected. The KIHBS pilot survey was conducted by KNBS, took place in July 2024, and had five questionnaires, including one for collecting data pertaining to household members, at the individual level. This questionnaire included a section (section B) with 18 questions on migration in Kenya, covering internal migration and international migrants residing in Kenya, as well as 10 questions on emigration, including information on Kenyan individuals not living in Kenya (KNBS 2024b). The emigration questions in the pilot survey questionnaire¹⁷ make it possible to estimate the number of Kenyan nationals who moved to another country for a duration of at least 6 months, i.e., changed their country of usual residence, since 2019. These

¹⁶ <https://www.knbs.or.ke/2025-26-kenya-integrated-household-budget-survey-kihbs/>

¹⁷ <https://www.knbs.or.ke/reports/2024-25-kenya-integrated-household-budget-survey-kihbs-pilot-report/>

individuals can be further categorized by sex, country of destination, year of and reason for departure based on responses to other questions in the same section. Provided that these questions were not modified in the survey questionnaire implemented for the actual survey, data from the KIHBS 2025/26 will allow estimation of some key international labour outmigration indicators for Kenya.

Unlike this edition, previous data collection rounds of the KIHBS did not include a devoted questionnaire section on the topic of migration. The 2005/06 edition included a question item on receipt of transfers from outside of Kenya in the 12 months prior to the survey, i.e., remittances. However, within a sample of 13,000 surveyed households, only 125 reported receiving such transfers, which is likely to be an unrepresentative sample of remittance receivers in the country at the time (World Bank, n.d.). Likewise, the 2015/16 edition inquired about whether or not the household received remittances from outside Kenya in the 12 months prior to the survey, and the amount received (KNBS 2022b).

3.4. Remittances Household Survey

The 2025 Remittances Household Survey (RHS) was designed to collect information on remittances entering and exiting Kenyan households. The RHS is the first national household-based survey exclusively dedicated to the topic of remittances in Kenya, aiming to cover a sample of households that either send remittances abroad or receive them in Kenya. The Government of Kenya aims to use data from the survey to base planning, research and formulation of national policies related to supporting remittance flows. Data collected aim to cover the following aspects of remittances in Kenya (KNBS et al., n.d.): the magnitude of flows, efficiency and cost of channels, use and main challenges in sending or receiving remittances.

The RHS survey was conducted from June to September 2025, by the KNBS in partnership with the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) and the independent trust, Financial Sector Deepening Kenya (FSD Kenya). The CBK tracks international remittances that take place through formal channels or authorized international remittance service providers, including commercial banks, money transfer operators and mobile network operators. In addition, the survey also aimed to gather information on remittance flows taking place via informal channels (Central Bank of Kenya 2025). Public use datasets and supporting metadata documentation from the survey is not clearly available online.

3.5. Diaspora Remittances Survey

The Diaspora Remittances Survey (DRS) took place in 2021 with the main objective to improve the quality of remittance statistics in Kenya. It was conducted by the Central Bank of Kenya in collaboration with the KNBS and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It focused on collecting information on remittance channels, challenges faced in sending remittances, knowledge by remitters of investment opportunities in Kenya, use of remittances and COVID-19 impacts on remittances. An online survey questionnaire made available on the CBK website was voluntarily self-administered by members of the Kenyan diaspora. These individuals were sought after, identified and encouraged to participate in the DRS with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, diaspora organizations and other actors in countries of destination. A total of 1321 individuals were surveyed (Central Bank of Kenya 2021).

The DRS collected detailed data on both individuals and their remittances. Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of respondents included sex, age, place of birth, main reason for emigrating, educational attainment, sector of economic activity and income levels and sources. Aspects of remittances covered in the survey included types, i.e., cash or in-kind, value, frequency, purpose, channels, costs and transfer time of remittances, characteristics of recipients and main challenges in remitting cash to Kenya. A DRS report by the CBK is publicly available where results are presented and discussed, but a public use dataset does not seem to be publicly available.

Notably, the survey only covered the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia out of all the GCC countries plus Lebanon and Jordan. Around 9 per cent of respondents were from these three countries while most respondents were from the United States and Europe. Self-selection bias is among the limitations of the DRS, as individuals who volunteer to participate in surveys can be very different from those who do not, which makes findings unrepresentative of the entire Kenyan diaspora. In fact, Kenyans found in the most vulnerable situations abroad would generally be less likely to participate.

3.6. Administrative data sources

All Kenyans going abroad for employment in another country are required to have their employment contracts authenticated, i.e., attestation, by a Labour officer before travel to take up the appointment. Only contracts that comply with Kenyan labour laws are attested.¹⁸ The State Department for Labour and Skills Development published the **Labour Migration Indicators Report, 2024**.¹⁹ It provides an analysis based on data from two administrative sources, namely the attestation records and the Migration Clearance Desk, in the Directorate of Immigration Services, State Department for Immigration and Citizen Services. Data presented in the publication do not cover informal workers, those who leave Kenya without having secured employment contracts, or those who exit the country to seek employment abroad without declaring it in Kenya.

Hired Kenyan migrant workers must obtain a series of documents before leaving Kenya to apply for visa and work permit at the country of destination. When migrating to the GCC states, one of the documents required is a Gulf Approved Medical Centres Association (GAMCA) medical certification, which attests to the worker's physical fitness and absence of communicable diseases. These are provided by GAMCA-accredited hospitals in Kenya (Bashir 2025).

The National Employment Authority (NEA) licenses private recruitment agencies operating in Kenya that recruit Kenyans to work abroad. Accredited agencies that facilitate international recruitment of nationals must submit a demand letter to the NEA whenever they receive a placement demand from an agent in a foreign country, such as the United Arab Emirates. This is currently an online process, taking place via the NEA's portal (Bashir 2025). One of the channels used by recruitment agencies to find qualified workers is the **National Employment Authority Integrated Management System (NEAIMS)** portal. The NEAIMS is a public employment services online platform that allows jobseekers to register and access local and overseas job opportunities.²⁰

The NEAIMS has a section for "Diaspora Registration" where Kenyan citizens working in another country can fill out a form with personal and employment information, as well as regarding the private recruitment agency they used, if any.²¹ The form includes fields for the worker's "Date of departure from Kenya", sex, country of destination, education, which would likely allow an estimation of the total stock of nationals abroad and annual outflows of workers by sex, country of destination and education. Information regarding whether this registration is strictly voluntary was not publicly available.

The **National Industrial Training Authority (NITA)**, in the State Department for Labour and Skills Development, provides pre-departure trainings for Kenyans going abroad for employment, including courses that simulate working conditions for Kenyan workers moving abroad. Recruitment agencies often source qualified workers through NITA referrals, especially in instances when they are looking for individuals who undertook specific types of vocational trainings (Bashir 2025). In terms of labour outmigration statistics, NITA would likely have estimates of the number of individuals who undertook pre-departure trainings, which types of training, and their demographic characteristics.

¹⁸ Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, n.d.

¹⁹ State Department for Labour and Skills Development, 2024.

²⁰ <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/kenya-makes-employment-services-inclusive-ilo's-support-online-job-portal>

²¹ <https://neaims.go.ke/NonRegisteredMigrants.aspx>

The **Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF)**, under the Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender, has a related enterprise development and labour mobility programme targeted at youth, focused on promoting employment creation for youth. One of the service modalities covers individuals aged 18 to 34 planning to migrate for employment.²² The YEDF partners with NITA and private recruiters to support youth jobseekers in securing employment abroad, pre-interview, departure and financial training, as well as loans.²³ The program provides migration loans (up to roughly USD 2330) to cover recruitment expenses, including passport and visa fees, medical examinations, vaccinations, and travel fares. Private recruitment agencies may also apply for the loans on behalf of youth with secured employment contracts. The YEDF also offers pre-departure trainings and professional certification exams for youth. It has had 17,000 participants since its creation in 2006.

Diaspora Placing Agency, State Department for Diaspora Affairs, Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs: It is the government recruitment agency connecting Kenyans with job opportunities abroad and providing employment support. It facilitates the migration journeys without the need for intermediaries. It partners with the Ministry of Labour to develop bilateral corridors and Memorandums of Understanding, accredit recruiters and ensure pre-departure support.

Migration Clearance Desk, Directorate of Immigration Services, State Department for Immigration and Citizen Services, Ministry of Interior and National Administration: Tracks outbound migrants. Partners with the Ministry of Labour to produce labour migration report. Regulates entry and exit of persons in Kenya, offers consular services in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs.

²² See <https://www.youthfund.go.ke/about-us/>

²³ See <https://www.youthfund.go.ke/youth-employment-scheme-abroad/>

4. Analysis of migrant workers' trends and characteristics to the Arab States

This section provides an analysis of Kenyan migrant workers in the Arab States. It draws primarily from publicly available data from attestation records of contracts of Kenyans placed in vacancies abroad - therefore constituting outflows - compiled by the State Department of Labour and Skills Development, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and published in the Ministry's Labour Migration Indicators report (see Section 3). Data is available for 2018, 2019 and 2024; however, inaccuracies in the published 2019 data mean that 2018 and 2024 data are presented as time series in this report, but some additional disaggregation is provided for migrant worker earnings using 2019 data (as this information was not available for 2018 and 2024).

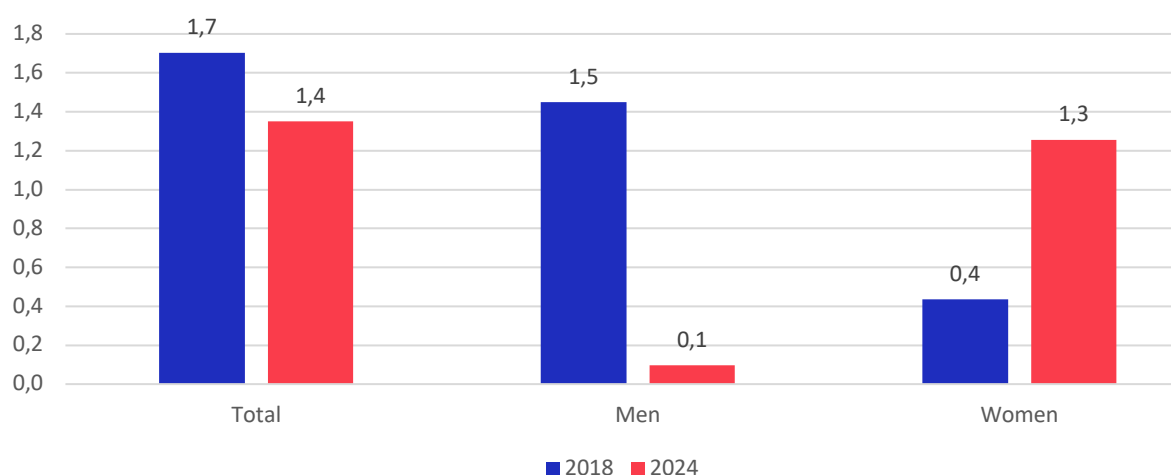
4.1. Outflows of Kenyan migrant workers to the Arab States

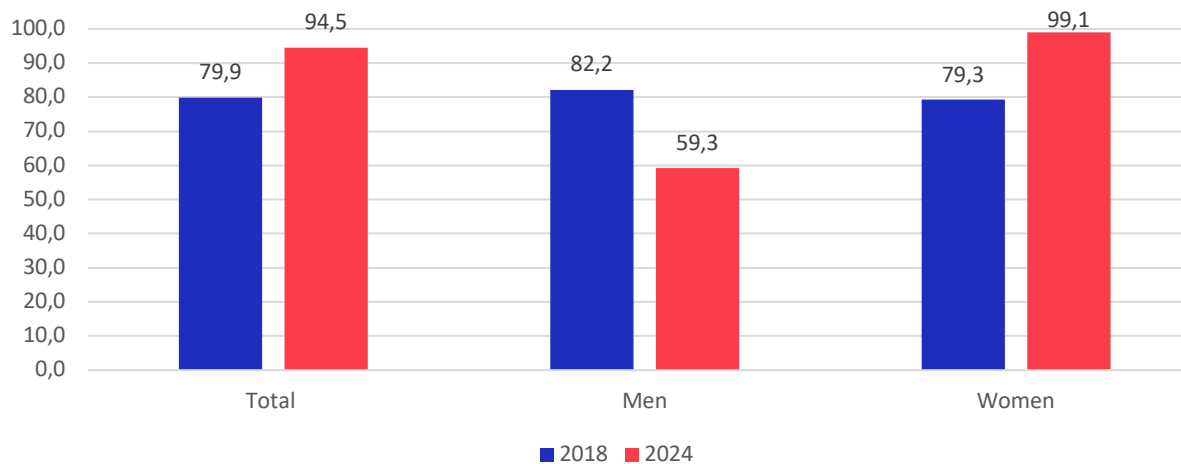
Figure 4.1 shows the outflows of Kenyan migrant workers to the Arab States, in 2018 and 2024, and by sex. It shows that around 1,700 migrant workers were placed in jobs in the Arab States in 2018, decreasing to 1,400 in 2024 (Panel A). By sex, men accounted for the majority of migrant worker outflows in 2018 (85 per cent), accounting for 1,500 workers, but this decreased to less than 100 workers in 2024, equivalent to only 7 per cent of all migrant workers. In contrast, women migrant workers increased from 400 in 2018 to 1,300 in 2024.

As a share of all migrant worker outflows, the Arab States as a destination accounted for nearly 80 per cent of all outflows in 2018, increasing to 94.5 per cent in 2024 (Panel B). This was driven particularly by women outflows to the Arab States. For women alone, in 2018 around 79 per cent of outflows of women were destined for the Arab States, but in 2024 this was 99.1 per cent - accounting for almost all migrant worker outflows of women migrant workers from Kenya. For men, there was a decrease, from 82.2 per cent in 2018, to 59.3 per cent in 2024, suggesting the Arab States became a less common destination for male migrant workers in 2024.

Figure 4.1. Outflows of Kenyan migrant workers to the Arab States, 2018 and 2024

Panel A. Kenyan migrant workers to the Arab States (thousands)

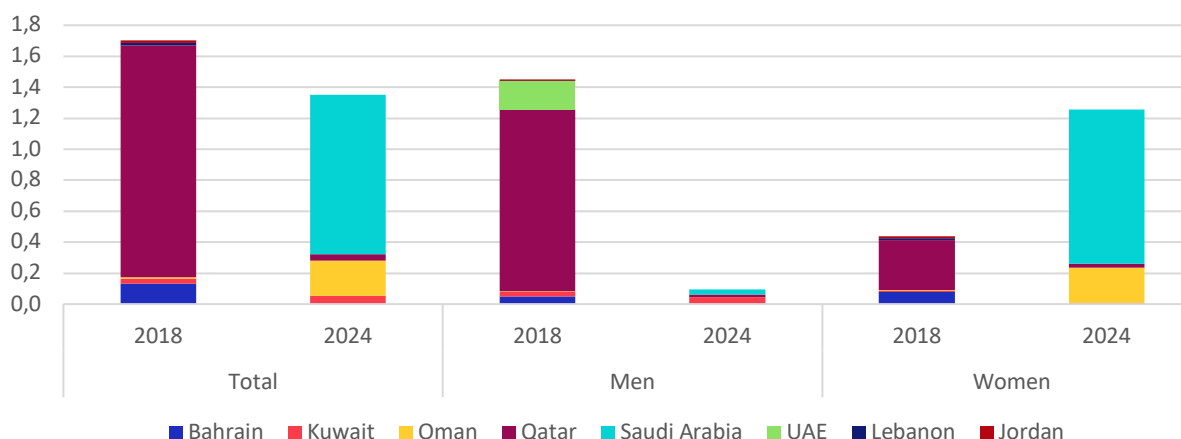


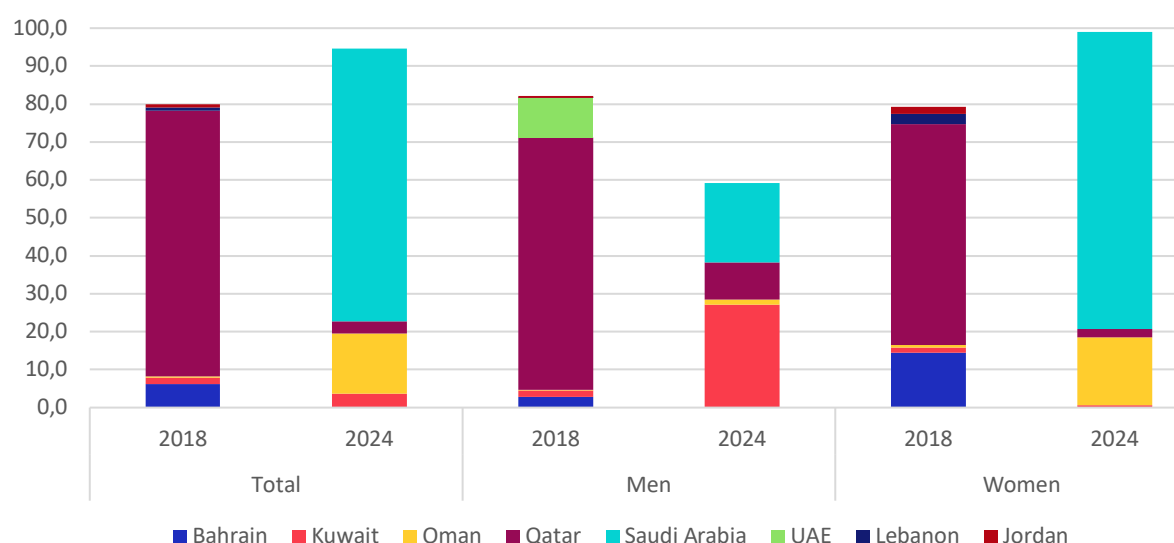
Panel B. Arab States as a share of all Kenyan migrant worker outflows (percentages)

Notes: Number of contracts and employment attestations of Kenyan migrant workers.
Source: State Department for Labour and Skills Development 2024.

4.2. Outflows of Kenyan migrant workers by country of destination

Figure 4.2 shows the Arab States' countries of destination of Kenyan migrant worker outflows, for 2018 and 2024, by sex. It shows that in 2018, the main destination was Qatar, accounting for 1,400 migrant workers (Panel A) and equivalent to 70 per cent of all Kenyan migrant worker outflows in 2018 (Panel B). The composition was very different in 2024, with Saudi Arabia being the main country of destination, accounting for over 1,000 Kenyan migrant worker outflows (Panel A), equivalent to 72 per cent of all migrant worker outflows in 2024 (Panel B). There was a significant gender dimension to the shift, with men accounting for most of the migrant workers going to Qatar in 2018 (78 per cent), and women accounting for the vast majority of migrant workers going to Saudi Arabia in 2024 (97 per cent).

Figure 4.2. Outflows of Kenyan workers by selected countries of destination and sex, 2018 and 2024**Panel A. Kenyan migrant workers to the Arab States (thousands)****Panel B. Kenyan migrant worker outflows as a share of outflows to all countries (percentages)**



Notes: Number of contracts and employment attestations of Kenyan migrant workers.

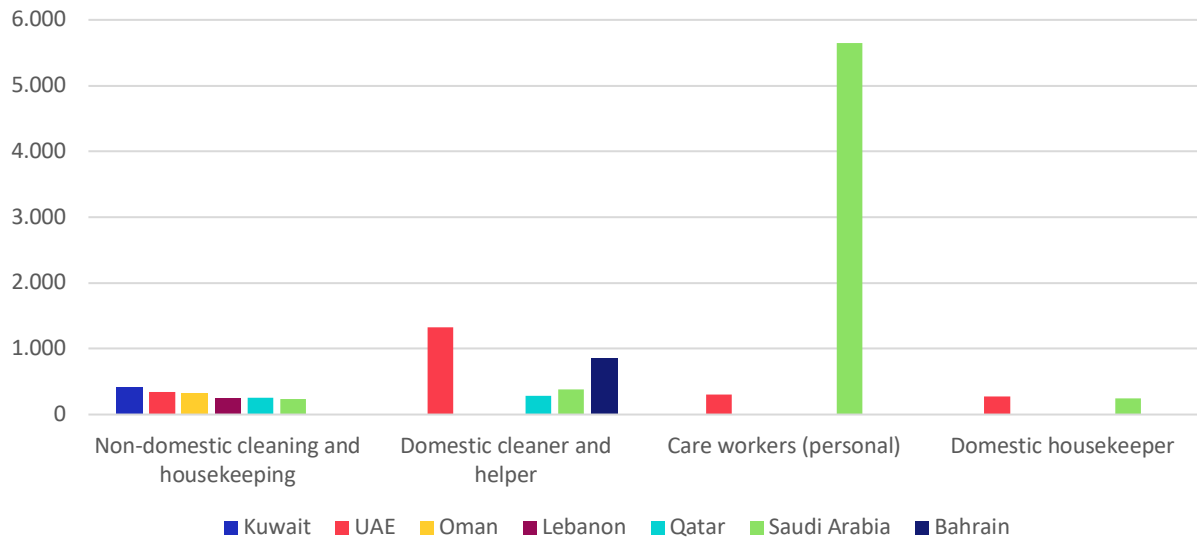
Source: State Department for Labour and Skills Development 2024.

4.3. Additional breakdowns of migrant worker outflows

The data on Kenyan migrant worker outflows contain information on migrant workers by occupation and education levels, however, this is not presented by country of destination. This means it is not possible to analyse the characteristics of those migrant workers going to the Arab States. However, there is information on wages for migrant worker outflows, by country of destination. This is presented in Figure 4.3. It shows the average earnings for four categories of workers: i) non-domestic cleaning and housekeeping; ii) domestic cleaner and helper; iii) care workers (personal); and iv) domestic housekeeper. The data source does not specify for what period these earnings are for (weekly, monthly, annual).

The data shows that for non-domestic cleaning and housekeeping, there is little variation across the different countries with data available, averaging around 307 USD. For domestic cleaners and helpers, only four countries had data points, but it is apparent that those in the United Arab Emirates earned on average significantly more than those in other countries of destination with data available. For instance, the earnings in the UAE at USD 1,321 were significantly higher than USD 285 in Qatar. The largest earnings of those presented across the different occupations were for care workers, for whom Saudi Arabia recorded average earnings of USD 5,652, which compared to USD 300 for care workers in the United Arab Emirates, and an average of USD 424 for all other earnings combined across these four occupations listed. Finally, for domestic housekeepers, only the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia had data points, with average earnings of USD 273 and USD 249 respectively. The lack of methodological information makes it challenging to make further assertions about this data (e.g. reference period for the average earnings and sample size).

Figure 4.3. Average earnings of Kenyan workers by selected occupation and countries of destination, United States dollars (USD), 2019



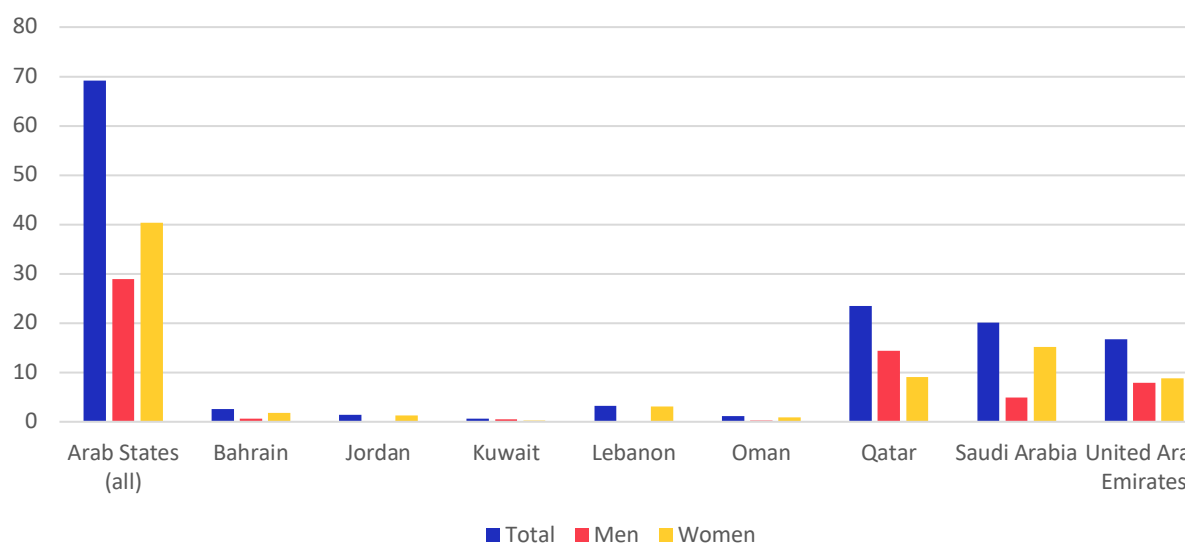
Notes: Based on records of contracts and employment attestations of Kenyan migrant workers. Data source does not specify the period for the earnings (weekly, monthly, annual). UAE = United Arab Emirates. Source: State Department for Labour and Skills Development 2024.

4.4. Stock of Kenyan workers abroad by country of destination

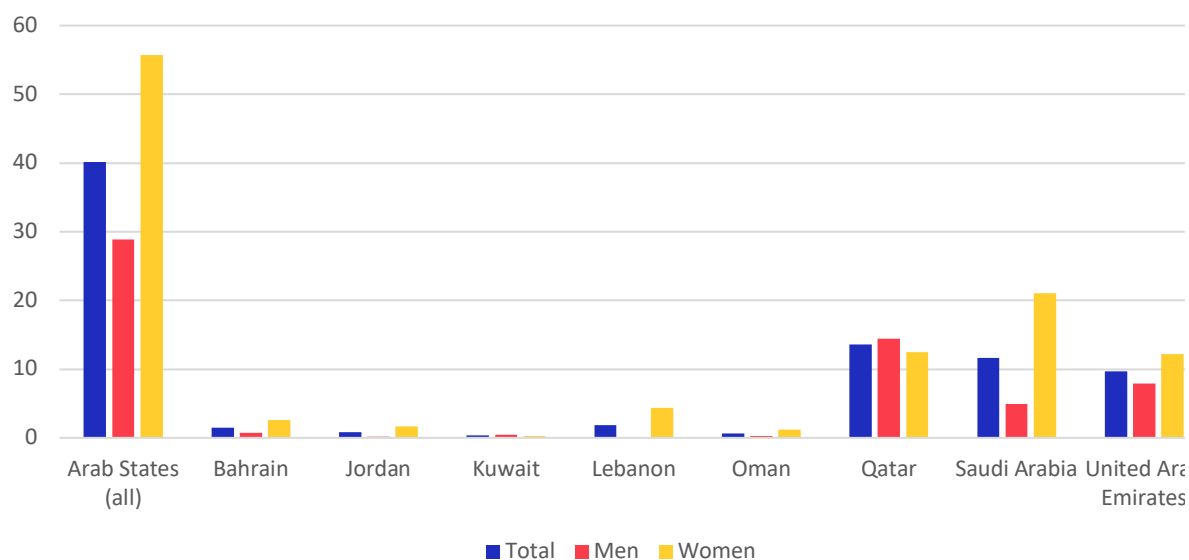
The Kenya Population and Housing Census included a question on household members abroad in an emigration module. It identifies all household members who have emigrated over the past 15 years and the reasons for migration, among which 'employment' is one. Of these, migrant workers to the Arab States accounted for nearly 70 per cent of migrant workers to all countries (Figure 4.4). Qatar accounted for the highest share, at 34 per cent, followed by Saudi Arabia at 29 per cent and the United Arab Emirates at 24 per cent (Panel A). For men, Qatar accounted for 50 per cent, and for women Saudi Arabia accounted for 38 per cent. Together the Arab States were a destination over the last 15 years to 69,000 Kenyan migrant workers (Panel B).

Figure 4.4. Stock of Kenyan workers by selected countries of destination and sex, last 15 years

Panel A. Kenyan migrant workers in the Arab States in the last 15 years (thousands)



Panel B. Stock of Kenyan migrant workers in Arab States as a share of stock of Kenyan migrant workers in all countries (percentages)



Notes: Migrant workers defined here as emigrants for reasons of employment.
Source: National Population and Household Census 2019.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Kenya is a net-receiving country for international migration. Most Kenyans who migrate to another country go to countries in the Arabian Gulf or the East African Community. The stock of Kenyans abroad included similar numbers of men and women, although men were the majority. The Arab States accounted for 27 per cent of the total stock of Kenyans abroad in 2019, based on KNBS data.

High unemployment, informality and poverty coupled with pressing family obligations are significant drivers of labour migration for Kenyans. Kenyan workers in many GCC countries face a high risk of forced labour, with Kenyan returnees who went to work in the GCC reporting instances of harassment, restriction of movement and communication, lack of safety and deceptive contracts.

Kenya's National Migration Policy 2023 provides a basis for national efforts towards building a better framework for the collection, analysis and use of data and information on labour migration. Kenya has BLAs with Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and is seeking to establish further cooperation agreements to increase opportunities for Kenyan skilled workers in countries like Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and Oman. Despite this, there are claims that BLAs are not always properly monitored, limiting their capacity to improve migration governance in the specific corridors (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development 2023; Ministry of Labour and Social Protection 2023).

This case study focused on mapping international labour migration statistical sources in Kenya, with a focus on flows of migrant workers to the Arab States and sought to identify both available and potential national data sources. Results from the mapping indicate that Kenya has two available data sources that identify migrant workers going to the Arab States. Namely: i) the attestation records from the State Department for Labour and Skills Development, which contain information on Kenyans whose foreign employment contracts were certified by the government prior to their departure from Kenya; and ii) the KPHC can provide estimates of the stock of nationals abroad by reason for migrating, for which 'employment' is an option.

Analysis of the attestation records generated valuable insights into labour migration trends and characteristics of workers placed through regular channels in the Kenya to Arab States corridor. It shows that the composition of migrant workers between 2018 and 2024 changed significantly, from predominantly men going to Qatar in 2018, to women going to Saudi Arabia in 2024. This data source included earnings by occupation for selected occupations. It showed that Kenyan care workers in Saudi Arabia earning significantly more than other occupations with earnings data. Despite this, there is a lack of information about the earnings variable to make significant conclusions.

Certain measures can be taken to improve international labour migration statistics in the country for Kenyan migrants going to the Arab States. A list of recommendations for improving the collection, dissemination and analysis of international labour migration statistics includes the following:

- **Introduce or reintegrate questions for capturing migrant worker information in existing data sources:** The data mapping conducted as part of this case study identified data sources with potential to provide estimates of international labour migration stocks and outflows:
 - **Quarterly Labour Force Survey & Kenya Continuous Household Survey Program:** In 2026, the labour force survey will be relaunched as the Integrated Labour Force Survey (ILFS). The ILFS will start as a pilot and potentially continue as a quarterly survey. It contains questions on resident international migrants, returnees and emigration. The questions on emigration (asked to the head or most knowledgeable person of the household) include country of destination and therefore this future data source should be an important source of information on emigration of Kenyans to the Arab States. Notably, there are no envisaged changes to the sample design to ensure coverage of the different groups of migrants of interest. This should be considered to determine whether the survey will generate data with adequate quality for analysis and dissemination.

- **Expand access to datasets and associated materials including metadata:** A number of potential datasets are identified, but it is difficult to ascertain whether these data sources have information that can be used to examine characteristics and estimates of Kenyan migrant workers in the Arab States. Limited access to these data sources makes it more challenging to pinpoint potential gaps and shortcomings of their resulting data. Consultations with national government actors who are holders of these datasets provided valuable input to close many of these knowledge gaps. At the same time, some resources are not yet publicly available, but the relevant data sources are also encouraged to provide breakdowns by country of destination if feasible:
 - **Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey:** The ongoing survey round (2025/26) will likely be able to provide estimates of stocks and outflows of Kenyan workers abroad. This should be explored when the data is publicly available.
 - **Remittances Household Survey:** Questionnaires and metadata are not publicly accessible or easily identified to allow an assessment of the survey content, but the survey sample covers households in Kenya either receiving or sending remittances. This is potentially a data source that could help provide estimates and information on remitters by country of destination to give an idea of migrant worker characteristics in the Arab States.
 - **Administrative records:** A range of administrative records are available, with the potential to identify estimates of the stock and flows to the Arab States. However, the information is not publicly available. This can be addressed through different means, including providing support in data processing if needed. Specific data sources include: NEAIMS – for which official estimates of Kenyans placed abroad via the system do not seem to be publicly accessible; NITA – official estimates of Kenyans who undertook pre-departure trainings do not seem to be publicly accessible; and YEDF – for which, official estimates of Kenyans placed abroad via the system are not publicly accessible.
- **Establish a technical working group on international labour migration statistics,** led by the KNBS, and with representatives from different relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, as well as users and potential users of these statistics. The purpose of this technical working group would be to raise awareness of the importance of international labour migration statistics and identify support needed for the processing of international labour migration statistics by different agencies.

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International
Labour
Organization

Statistical Report on African Migrant Workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, Jordan and Lebanon

Annex II Nigeria Case Study



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► Executive summary

This Nigeria case study has been developed as an annex to the report “Statistical Report on African Migrant Workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, Jordan and Lebanon”. It provides a mapping of international labour migration statistics of Nigerian migrant workers going to the Arab States in Nigerian data sources. As such, it is focused on emigration statistics, providing a detailed overview of available and potential data sources, an analysis of the statistics available, as well as recommendations focused on improving labour outward migration statistics in the country.

Of the nine focal African countries of origin examined as part of the overall study, Nigeria was one of the only countries (alongside Morocco and Tanzania) not to have any official or administrative publicly available data sources on migrant workers going to the Arab States. This is despite the significant number of Nigerian migrant workers in the Arab States as drawn from data in countries of destination (e.g. Bahrain, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, which provide breakdowns by country of origin for migrant workers and include Nigeria).

Despite the lack of available data, Nigeria has a wealth of potential data sources, with official statistics, including the Population and Housing Census, and different surveys capturing information related to Nigerian migrant workers abroad. In all cases, there are different reasons why the information captured is not public. This can be due to low numbers of observations, migration questions being removed from more recent survey rounds, or just a lack of data sharing and access. Recommendations mentioned in this report highlight where there is potential to introduce or reintegrate questions related to emigration in these data sources.

At the same time, a number of administrative records exist that seemingly contain information on labour migration statistics, to allow for the identification of Nigerians going to the Arab States. However, in most cases, information is available internally but not available externally. It would be important to better understand why information is not available for public access – for instance, if it is due to capacity constraints for data processing – and ideally, facilitate the sharing of top-level information via bulletins and briefs, for public consumption.

Efforts to integrate questions on migration into these sources can benefit from the work of the Migration Data Management Working Group, created within the framework of the National Migration Policy, led by the National Population Council and supported by the National Bureau of Statistics, with the participation of key ministries and departments. Their engagement is key to highlight the relevance of different data sources, especially administrative data sources, and coordinate efforts to help improve coverage and dissemination of such statistics (Obiezu and Odimegwu 2021).

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the case study

This Nigeria case study has been developed as an annex to the report “Statistical Report on African Migrant Workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Jordan and Lebanon”. The main report reviews sources of data for mapping African migrant workers in the Africa to Arab States corridor. Eight African origin countries were included in the mapping, namely Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania. The Arab States included in the review were the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries, i.e., Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, plus Jordan and Lebanon.

This case study is one of three developed as supplements to the main report, undertaken for Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. This case study, for Nigeria, provides a mapping of international labour migration statistics of migrant workers going to the Arab States. As such, it is focused on emigration statistics, providing a detailed overview of available and potential data sources, an analysis of the statistics available, as well as recommendations focused on improving labour outward migration statistics in the country. The recommendations are focused on two main areas, namely collection, processing and dissemination of data and statistics of outward labour migration, and scope, quality and reliability of statistics produced.

1.2. Migration context in Nigeria

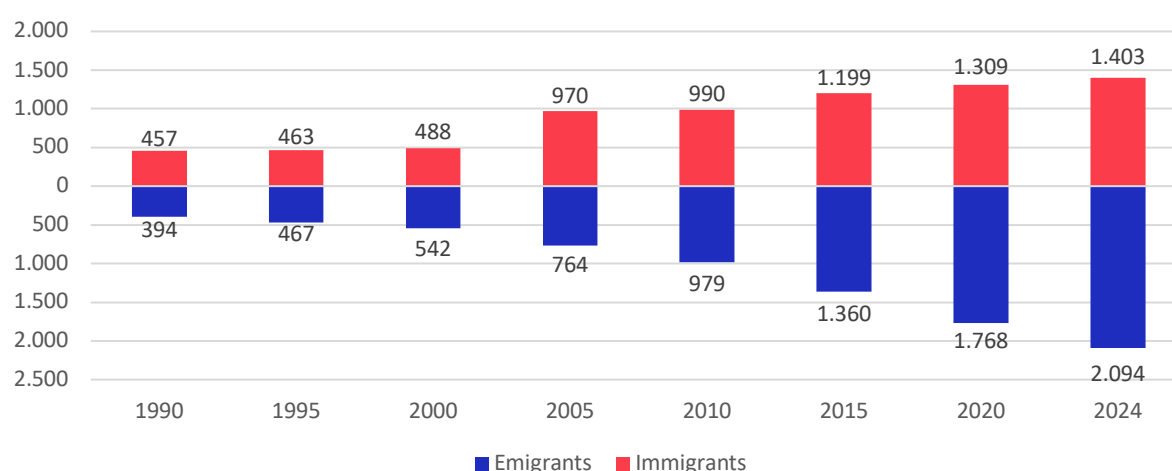
Nigeria is both an origin and destination country for international migration. According to the latest UN estimates, there were more Nigerian emigrants living abroad than immigrants living in Nigeria in 2024 (Figure 1.1). Notably, from 1990 to 2010, numbers of emigrants and immigrants in Nigeria were roughly at the same level, but from 2015 onwards, emigration movements started to grow at a relatively faster pace than immigration.

Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa, with an estimated 237 million people in 2025, and roughly 70 per cent of the population under 30 years old (UN DESA Population Division 2026). Foreigners living in Nigeria are mostly from West African countries. Benin, Ghana and Mali were the top origin countries of immigrants in Nigeria in 2024.

In 2024, it is estimated that around 58 per cent of the stock of Nigerians abroad was in North America and Europe. Countries in West and Central Africa, namely Niger, Cameroon, Benin and Ghana, were the destinations of another 27 per cent of Nigerian emigrants (UN DESA Population Division 2024). Less than 2 per cent of Nigerians were in the Arab States’ focal countries with data available (namely, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia), equivalent to 25,700 (UN DESA Population Division 2024).

Some of the main drivers of emigration in Nigeria are high unemployment, stagnant wages, high informality rates and overall limited employment opportunities or career prospects. Political issues are additional emigration push factors. Security concerns, corruption, weak state governance and poor service delivery are aspects that contribute to increasing emigration movements and are associated with the notion of brain drain in Nigeria (Adelakun et al. 2025; IOM Nigeria 2019).

Labour migration to the Arab States is relatively recent in Nigeria, and Sub-Saharan Africa more broadly, having increased relatively more rapidly in the last two decades. Demand for labour in the Gulf States is increasing for certain sectors and recruitment of foreign labour is becoming more diversified. Recruitment pathways in African countries are often regarded as less regulated in terms of conditions for migrant employment than in migration corridors between the Gulf and Asian countries, for example. Regulation and immigration policies adopted in Europe may have also played a role in redirecting part of these flows of African jobseekers to the Gulf. In addition, more bilateral coordination between Arab States and countries in Africa is essentially promoting recruitment of African labour, which is also reflected in higher outflows of workers to the region. While labour migration has advantages to destination countries, in the form of continuous labour supply, and to Nigeria, in terms of remittance inflows and skills acquisition for nationals for example, Nigerian workers remain vulnerable to labour rights violations, forced labour and human trafficking (Atong et al. 2018; Iskil Lawal et al. 2025; Kinkoh 2025).

Figure 1.1. International migrant stock, Nigeria, 1990-2024 (thousands)

Source: UN DESA Population Division, 2024.

1.3. Labour migration governance

The National Policy on Labour Migration (NPLM) 2014 provided a governance framework for labour migration in Nigeria and recognized the increasing relevance of labour migration for development at a time when remittance inflows surpassed official development assistance. The NPLM also shed light on important issues associated with migration of Nigerian workers abroad, including brain drain and the irregular migration pathways used by most Nigerians wanting to go abroad for work in the absence of government regulation. It also served as a normative basis for establishing international, regional or bilateral cooperation in international migration governance with other states. In 2020, the Government of Nigeria revised the 2014 NPLM and renewed its associated Plan of Action recognizing persisting challenges in labour migration governance, namely the vulnerability of migrant workers, low oversight of private recruitment practices, overall lack of rights awareness among migrants and the lack of data to inform policy implementation (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2020).

More recently, in 2025, the Government of Nigeria validated a revised National Migration Policy (NMP) and its Integrated Implementation Plan.²⁴ The first NMP had been adopted in 2015. Notably, the Migration Data Management Working Group led by the National Population Council with support from the National Bureau of Statistics was a key actor involved in the development of the NPLM 2015 and, previously, the 2013 National Migration Data Management Strategy (NMDMS). In 2025, the Government of Nigeria also updated the NMDMS and a Data Sharing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by data-producing and data-using agencies in Nigeria. The MoU aims to reduce institutional barriers in data sharing practices and improve collaboration among stakeholders to enhance the use of migration data in Nigeria.²⁵

In January 2026, Nigeria signed its first bilateral labour recruitment agreement with Saudi Arabia.²⁶ The agreement is focused on regulating and strengthening official migration channels between the countries to increase protection of Nigerian workers' rights in the corridor and ensure fair recruitment.²⁷ Nigeria is also seeking to strengthen international cooperation in labour migration with Qatar.²⁸ The overall lack of coverage of the Nigeria to Arab States corridor by bilateral labour agreements speaks to the high level of vulnerability of workers in it.

²⁴ See <https://nigeria.iom.int/news/government-nigeria-validates-2025-national-migration-policy>

²⁵ See <https://nationalpopulation.gov.ng/news/npc-partners-launch-national-migration-data-management-strategy-sign-data-sharing-mou>

²⁶ See <https://businesspost.ng/jobs/saudi-arabia-nigeria-sign-workers-recruitment-agreement/>

²⁷ The agreement could not be accessed by the ILO as it has yet to be shared by the government.

²⁸ See https://www.thisdaylive.com/2025/10/31/nigeria-strengthening-bilateral-agreements-on-labour-migration-says-dingyadi/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

2. Methodology

Please see the main report for the methodological approach used in the study, including the data mapping framework and the types of information and data sources considered. For the case studies, stakeholder consultations were undertaken as an additional level of information to help verify the information from the review, to identify new and potential data sources, and to access data that is only available upon request. A selection of relevant stakeholders is provided below, along with their relevance. Notably, not all stakeholders contacted were able to provide responses.

The ILO FAIRWAY Project Team provided contact points for the different institutions and departments and consultations with these contact points were made through different means (interviews, email exchanges or questionnaires), depending on factors including: the type of institution; how each institution produces, uses or has relevance for international labour migration statistics; and additional data upon request. While semi-structured interviews and questionnaire templates were developed early in the assignment, the range of stakeholder types and the information sought from each meant that custom questions were developed for each stakeholder.

- **National Population Commission (NPC):** Responsible for conducting the population census and collecting population statistics, including statistics on migration and vital events.
- **National Bureau of Statistics (NBS):** National Statistical Office, responsible for the production of official national statistics.
- **Department of Employment and Wages, Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment:** Responsible for labour migration governance, licenses private employment agencies for international recruitment, oversees placement of workers abroad and conducts pre-departure training.
- **Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM):** Agency under the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinating government engagement with diaspora matters.
- **Nigerians in Diaspora Organizations (NIDO):** A network of Nigerian diaspora organizations; collaborates with NiDCOM and diplomatic missions to represent interests of the diaspora; collects records of members of diaspora organizations.
- **National Immigration Service (NIS):** Holds records of border exits from Nigeria and partners with the NPC to produce statistics based on those records.
- **Nigeria Labour Congress:** Represents workers, including migrant workers, in engagement with policy discussions; uses labour migration statistics in advocating for workers' rights.
- **Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA):** Employers' organization representing private sector companies in Nigeria in engaging in policy discussions; user of labour migration statistics to understand labour market and mobility dynamics.
- **National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs (NCFRMI):** Coordinates representation of interests of involuntary international migrants; focuses on statistics of refugees and asylum-seekers.
- **Employers Association of Private Recruitment Agencies (EAPEAN):** Organization of private recruitment agencies in Nigeria; key actor involved in the licensing of agents and the recruitment process of nationals to work abroad.

3. Mapping of available and potential data sources in Nigeria

This section provides an overview of the labour migration statistics available in Nigeria, focused on statistics of migrant workers from Nigeria in the Arab States. Information about each data source was compiled via desk review and stakeholder consultations. Description of the data sources is focused on detailing the scope of data available or potentially available, actors responsible for data collection, data accessibility, frequency of data collection, latest available data, as well as data limitations in general. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the mapping in Nigeria, listing available and potential sources and the characteristics of their data. Following the table, detailed information is available per data source.

Table 3.1. Summary of data sources

Availability	Name of publication / dataset	Characteristics of data
Available	NA	NA
Potential	Population and Housing Census, National Population Commission: Returnees	Frequency: Ad hoc Latest: 2006 Disaggregation: Country of previous residence
	National Labour Force Survey (NLFS), National Bureau of Statistics: Migration data not included	Frequency: Quarterly Latest: 2024 Disaggregation: Not available
	Nigeria Living Standards Survey, National Bureau of Statistics: Returnees	Frequency: Every 3 to 5 years Latest: 2009 Disaggregation: Sex, country of previous residence
	General Household Survey, National Bureau of Statistics: Nationals who moved to another country	Frequency: Every 2 to 4 years Latest: 2023/24 Disaggregation: Sex, country of destination, education, sector of economic activity and occupation Type: Outflow

	Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars (PDOS) Department of Employment and Wages, Ministry of Labour: Nigerian workers placed in employment abroad via licensed recruiters	Frequency: Continuous Latest: Disaggregation: Sex, country of destination Type: Outflow
	Exit/Departure Cards, National Population Commission & Nigeria Immigration Service: Nigerians going abroad	Frequency: Continuous Latest: Disaggregation: Sex, country of destination, purpose of travel, occupation Type: Outflow
	Nigerian Diaspora Registry, National Identity Management Commission, Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM): Nigerians in the diaspora	Frequency: Continuous Latest: 2023 Disaggregation: Sex and country of destination Type: Stock

Source: Authors' compilation.

3.1. Population and Housing Census

The most recent Population and Housing Census (PHC) in Nigeria is for the year 2006. The National Population Commission (NPC) is the government body responsible for conducting the population census and collecting population statistics, including statistics on migration and vital events. Another PHC was planned for 2023 in Nigeria but ended up being postponed and has not yet been rescheduled (National Population Commission 2023).²⁹ According to an NPC report detailing questions of the planned 2023 census, it was going to be able to provide estimates of return migrants.³⁰

The 2006 NPC, although a much older data source compared to the others reviewed in this case study, contains questions that would be able to provide estimates of return international migrants in Nigeria. Information on duration of current usual residence and country of previous residence is collected from all respondents (NPC 2006). Data is not available related to Nigerians working abroad by country of destination.

²⁹ See <https://nationalpopulation.gov.ng/press-release/npc-clarifies-misleading-reports-on-census-date>

³⁰ National Population Commission, 2023.

3.2. Nigeria Labour Force Survey

The Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) is a quarterly household-based survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) since 2022 in Nigeria (NBS 2023). The objective of the survey is to provide high-frequency labour force statistics, and it does not include the topic of emigration.³¹

3.3. Nigeria Living Standards Survey

The Nigeria Living Standards Survey (NLSS) is a household-based survey designed to collect data on household consumption expenditures, as well as demographic and socio-economic characteristics of household members. The NLSS is the main source of data for monitoring welfare levels and estimating poverty in Nigeria and is conducted by the NBS in collaboration with the World Bank. The survey has had four editions since it was first implemented and is officially set to occur every 3 to 5 years; however, the period between surveys has reached up to 9 years in practice. The NLSS survey rounds took place in 2003/04, 2009/10, 2018/19 and 2023. Public access survey datasets are available upon request at the National Bureau of Statistics Online Microdata Catalogue.

Based on the questionnaires, the 2003/04 and 2009/10 editions would provide estimates of inflows of return international migrants, if sample sizes were sufficient. Respondents are asked if they have ever moved from their current location, how long ago, their previous country of residence, occupation and industry while living in that country, and reason for moving.³² The 2018/19 edition had several changes in relation to previous rounds, which aimed to improve overall survey efficiency and the methodology for estimating consumption expenditures of families. One of the main improvements was the use of Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) software and mobile devices to design and collect data. Other improvements concern the modules and questions used, and implementation techniques of questionnaires, which increased data quality for estimating welfare levels but no longer allow for comparability with data from previous survey rounds (National Bureau of Statistics, n.d.-c, 2020). One of the changes in the 2018/19 round concerns the topic of migration. Internal migration is still covered but it is no longer possible to estimate international return migration as was the case in previous rounds (National Bureau of Statistics, n.d.-c). Documentation from the 2023 survey does not seem to be available publicly online to allow an assessment of the survey content.

3.4. General Household Survey

The General Household Survey (GHS) aims to collect data on agriculture, welfare and socio-economic indicators in Nigeria. The NBS conducts the survey in collaboration with the World Bank and is funded by the Government of Nigeria, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the World Bank. A panel survey started in 2010/11, when a sub-sample of the GHS was selected to participate. The GHS-Panel has had four rounds since: in 2012/13, 2015/16, 2018/19 and 2023/24. Each of the five waves of the survey had two data collection periods over the period of a year, the post-planting and the post-harvest visits. Public use survey datasets are available upon request at the National Bureau of Statistics Online Microdata Catalogue, along with metadata documentation of the surveys.

The GHS-Panel tracked individuals who migrated abroad across the survey waves and could provide insights regarding outflows of Nigerian workers, including to the GCC countries, Jordan and Lebanon; however, stakeholder consultations suggested the dataset was not suitable for such estimates.³³ The survey's household questionnaire has questions about household members who moved to another country. It is possible to identify the country of destination, duration of residence abroad and demographic characteristics of these members, as well as their reason for migrating, occupation and sector of economic activity (National Bureau of Statistics 2024b).

³¹ National Bureau of Statistics, n.d.-b.

³² See https://microdata.nigerianstat.gov.ng/index.php/catalog/28/data-dictionary/F25?file_name=Migration%201

³³ The NBS indicated in the questionnaire that the survey cannot provide estimates of emigration in Kenya.

The survey reports provide estimates of the number of households reporting having members who migrated for work or receiving international remittances. In 2012, around 0.9 per cent of households reported labour migration as a shock-coping mechanism, while 2.8 per cent reported receiving remittances. In 2023/24, around 6 per cent of households reported receiving international remittances across the country, or 11.5 per cent of urban households and 3.9 per cent of rural households (National Bureau of Statistics, n.d.-a). If each of these households is considered to have one unique remittance sender abroad, at least 13 million Nigerians are estimated to be in the diaspora in the reference period.

The survey report, however, does not publicize the number of Nigerians abroad and their characteristics. Public access datasets are available upon request through NBS and World Bank portals (National Bureau of Statistics 2024a). A dataset with 2010-2019 panel data is available, as are waves 2 to 5 datasets.

3.5. Administrative data sources

Nigerians who migrate to the Arab States for work will generally do so via intermediaries operating in Nigeria or they may apply for vacancies abroad via the digital National Electronic Labour Exchange (NELEX) platform, managed by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment (FMLE). NELEX allows self-registration of job seekers, employers, and recruiters, as well as job search and job placement to take place in the digital environment. The platform allows the FMLE to regulate job offers and promote a safe environment for job-seeking.

NELEX also has **Skills Upgrading and Vocational Training Centres (SUVTCs)** where the Employability Training Program is conducted. Through this Program, job seekers can receive practical job search skills and access to the NELEX platform in computerized facilities.³⁴ There are seven SUVTCs in Nigeria, including one in Abuja. Three of these centres also host the Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs), which offer the same range of public employment services to migrant workers, in addition to advice on regular labour migration channels and use of licensed recruiters, psycho-social support, counselling and referrals to other services. Intending, actual and return migrants can benefit from MRC services, as well as immigrants residing in Nigeria (ILO 2022).

Through **Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars (PDOS)**, the FMLE collects records of Nigerian workers placed in employment abroad. The PDOS is provided for individuals whose placement was intermediated by private employment agencies licensed for international recruitment by FMLE. These records are uploaded to the NELEX platform. Public use datasets derived from NELEX records are not currently available according to FMLE. The PDOS records can be used to estimate the outflow of nationals to the Arab States, however, it lacks coverage of workers using irregular channels to migrate.³⁵ Nigerians who migrate through private recruitment agencies lacking FMLE's license to operate in Nigeria or are hired without intermediaries will be left out of official migrant worker job placement statistics obtained by the FMLE.

Licensed private recruitment agencies also keep detailed records of workers deployed abroad. However, these records do not seem to be aggregated outside of government at national level and in a consistent format.³⁶ The **Employers Association for Private Employment Agencies of Nigeria (EAPEAN)** holds records of deployed workers hired through members of the EAPEAN. These records are obtained by the EAPEAN from licensed recruitment agencies involved in the recruitment of the workers. Records are disaggregated by sex, country of destination, sector and contract type. The data is proprietary and not public but some degree of aggregated industry engagement is accessible via EAPEAN.³⁷

³⁴ See [https://nelex.gov.ng/events/Employability%20Training#:~:text=Content%20\(Event%20Description\)%20The%20Employability.and%20excel%20in%20the%20workplace](https://nelex.gov.ng/events/Employability%20Training#:~:text=Content%20(Event%20Description)%20The%20Employability.and%20excel%20in%20the%20workplace)

³⁵ Questionnaire answers by FMLE.

³⁶ Questionnaire answers by the EAPEAN.

³⁷ Questionnaire answers by the EAPEAN.

The National Immigration Service (NIS), Federal Ministry of Interior, and NBS are responsible for compiling information on the departure of individuals from Nigeria. Exit border records from the NIS are processed by the National Population Commission (NPC). Individuals leaving the country for work purposes can be identified in these records, as departure cards seem to include a field for “purpose of travel”. Other data fields include age, sex, nationality, occupation and place of departure (IOM Nigeria 2019). Despite collecting this information, it was not possible to ascertain whether the information is available publicly or available upon request.

The Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM) is the lead agency overseeing implementation of the National Diaspora Policy adopted in 2021. The policy includes a devoted section on registration of Nigerians in the diaspora to generate reliable statistics, information and other relevant data.³⁸ NiDCOM seems to keep a registry of the Nigerians in the diaspora, with records disaggregated by sex and country of residence. The form used to collect information is available online and the resulting data seems to be in use for production of statistics.³⁹ The agency also deals with grievances of Nigerians abroad. Despite collecting this information, it was not possible to ascertain whether public use datasets are available publicly, or available upon request.

Nigerians in Diaspora Organizations (NIDO), Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs: The information includes personal profiles, level of education attained, and work activities. However, it was not possible to obtain detailed information on the underlying data to use in this case study.

³⁸ NiDCOM, 2021.

³⁹ See <https://nidcom.gov.ng/registry/>

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Nigeria is a net emigration country for international migration. According to the latest UN estimates, Nigerians tend to migrate to developed countries, with roughly 60 per cent of the Nigerian stock of nationals abroad estimated to live in the United States or Europe. Less than 2 per cent of the total international migrant stock was estimated to be in the focal Arab States' destination countries with data available (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia).

Labour migration to the Arab States is relatively recent in Nigeria, and Sub-Saharan Africa more broadly, having increased relatively more rapidly in the last two decades. Youth unemployment is very high compared to general unemployment rates, a factor that encourages young workers to seek work and better career prospects in other countries. Further labour migration drivers are connected to poor state governance and security issues.

Over the last decade, Nigeria has adopted and revised national migration governance and international cooperation frameworks to support management of outflows of workers that provide a comprehensive basis for government action. In 2026, an important milestone towards increasing protection of Nigerian workers in the Gulf was achieved as Nigeria signed its first bilateral labour recruitment agreement with Saudi Arabia, aiming to ensure fair recruitment of workers in the corridor.

This case study focused on mapping international labour migration statistical sources in Nigeria, with a focus on emigration to the Arab States, and sought to identify both available and potential national data sources. Results from the mapping indicate that Nigeria has very limited available data that allow for the identification of country of destination, including for the Arab States. An in-depth analysis of the Nigerian outflows of migrant workers was therefore not possible due to the lack of sufficient available data.

Limited access to the different data sources made it challenging to pinpoint potential gaps and shortcomings of their resulting data. Consultations with national government actors who are holders of these datasets provided valuable input to close many of these knowledge gaps. The findings can contribute to improving international labour migration statistics in Nigeria, but it is critical to continue to work alongside these actors to understand and support their priorities in developing national data collection efforts in labour migration.

A list of recommendations for improving the collection, dissemination and analysis of international labour migration statistics includes the following:

- **Introduce or reintegrate questions for capturing migrant worker information in existing data sources** emphasising the relevance of consistent labour migration data collection over time within the sources. The data mapping conducted as part of this case study identified data sources with potential to provide estimates of international labour migration stocks and outflows:
 - **Population and Housing Census** could be used as a source of statistics of returnees, similar to the 2006 edition. Other indicators could be estimated with census data, provided that appropriate questions are included, such as the stock of nationals abroad for employment by sex, education, occupation and sector of economic activity. The UN Handbook on Measuring International Migration through Population Censuses is a key resource providing guidance to countries (Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2022).
 - **Labour force survey:** Other countries in the region use the labour force survey to capture information on emigration. Nigeria could draw from the experience in Uganda, where the country included a set of questions to capture different characteristics of emigrating migrant workers (while the Uganda example did not result in reliable estimates, the questions can be replicated).
 - **Nigeria Living Standards Survey:** Questions used in older editions of the survey would allow for estimates of returnees, including by country of destination. The survey could therefore consider reintegrating some of these questions.

- **General Household Survey:** the survey has a module on emigration, including migrant worker outflows, and seems to track emigrants through the panel rounds. The statistics are not available publicly nor upon request, and the survey does not seem to be considered a valid source for emigration statistics by national stakeholders. If possible, as done with remittance estimates, estimates of nationals abroad disaggregated by reason for migrating, sex and country or region of destination should be made available.
- **Expand the capacity for processing administrative records:** Administrative records are often not processed and disseminated as statistics because the data was not collected primarily for statistical reasons. As such, the National Bureau of Statistics would be best placed to provide appropriate support to different ministries and departments in the processing of these administrative records by ensuring compliance with statistical codes of conduct. The process entails establishing and maintaining relationships, coordination and collaboration between the national statistics offices and the responsible ministries and departments holding the administrative data, which can be facilitated through the technical working groups.
- **Consider sharing information on Nigerian migrant workers going abroad through bulletins and briefs:** While many agencies collect information on Nigerian migrant workers going abroad, including to the Arab States, this information is often internal and not publicly available, or easily accessible. Ministries and departments could consider disseminating key information periodically, through bulletins and briefs. This does require the necessary support to be in place (per the recommendation mentioned above). **Administrative sources:**
 - PDOS and NELEX: Deployment records disaggregated by country of destination are available but not currently accessible publicly or upon request.
 - The NIDCOM seems to keep a registry of the Nigerian diaspora. These records seem to be the basis for producing diaspora statistics by country of destination. The database seems to have limited coverage of the diaspora and public access datasets are not available.
 - The National Population Commission seems to process data from the Nigeria Immigration Service's records produced from departure cards filled by Nigerians at the country's ports of exit, but the migrant worker outflow statistics are not available publicly.
- **Acknowledging data needs of users for improved labour migration governance:** There are various gaps and issues in international labour migration statistics in Nigeria that focus on emigration of nationals for work to the Arab States. National stakeholders, including the Employers Association for Private Employment Agencies of Nigeria (EAPEAN), indicated that effective engagement on labour migration governance in the Nigeria to Arab States corridor requires capturing the entire recruitment and deployment cycle of Nigerian nationals in statistics. Data needs include:
 - Demographic and labour market characteristics of migrant workers: Sex, age, education, occupation, sector of employment;
 - Destination country and employer type;
 - Recruitment pathway: government-to-government, via intermediaries, direct hires;
 - Recruitment costs and fees, including costs paid by the worker and the employer;
 - Contract duration, wages, employment conditions, e.g., hours worked;
 - Incidence of complaints, disputes or contract violations.

In Nigeria, even though there are important issues with processing and sharing of existing data, the main issue underscored by stakeholders of this study who were predominantly data users is related to data collection gaps. These gaps seem to be concerning statistics of recruitment costs and post-deployment outcomes, as well as grievance records often collected at destination countries.

- **Support engagement with the outward labour migration topic by the Migration Data Management Working Group.** The purpose of this technical working group, created within the implementation framework of the NMP 2015 was to manage and harmonize migration data across relevant agencies. In 2025, the NMP and the NMDMS were updated, and an MoU was signed among key migration data producers and users to improve how migration data is managed, shared and used among them. Regarding labour migration data, it is important that the different agencies, particularly the data producers who signed the MoU, identify further support needed for collection, processing and dissemination of international labour migration statistics.

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Statistical Report on African Migrant Workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, Jordan and Lebanon

Annex III Uganda Case Study



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► Executive summary

This Uganda case study has been developed as an annex to the report “Statistical Report on African Migrant Workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, Jordan and Lebanon”. It provides a mapping of international labour migration statistics of Ugandan migrant workers going to the Arab States in Ugandan data sources. As such, it is focused on emigration statistics, providing a detailed overview of available and potential data sources, an analysis of the statistics available, as well as recommendations focused on improving labour outward migration statistics in the country.

Uganda is a net-receiving country for international migration. In recent years, the country has faced increasing migratory pressures as the major destination country of involuntary migrants in Africa. Uganda is also an important origin country of international labour migration, with an estimated 578,000 Ugandans residing in another country in 2024, according to UN estimates. Despite the number of migrants in the Arab States, based on data from countries of destination, and even Uganda’s own national estimates, there are no estimates of nationals in the Arab States by country of destination, including estimates of international migrant stock by UN DESA.

Uganda has a Labour Externalization Programme in place, through which the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) seeks to provide safe recruitment and migration pathways for nationals. Nonetheless, the country still faces challenges in ensuring rights of nationals in some of the main labour migration corridors. In 2025, a National Migration Policy was adopted to strengthen governance of migration, including in terms of improving migration information management. In terms of bilateral cooperation in labour migration with the Arab States, Uganda has signed Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) with Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, and is seeking further international cooperation to expand opportunities for Ugandan workers in countries like Oman, Qatar and Kuwait.

Using data from the External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS), managed by the External Employment Unit of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the report shows that outflows to the Arab States have been increasing in recent years, accounting for all placements via the EEMIS in 2024. Part of this growth has been driven by outflows to Saudi Arabia, which accounted for 85 per cent of all outflows of Ugandans via the EEMIS platform. Notably, growth in outflows to Saudi Arabia, which is largely women in domestic work, increased most sharply since the signing of a BLA in 2017 between the two countries.

Despite the availability of data from the EEMIS, it only includes outflows of those via the EEMIS. There are no estimates available of stock of Ugandans abroad in the Arab States. However, data could be improved by reintegrating key questions in the National Labour Force Survey and disseminating data publicly, including migrant workers by destination from the National Population and Housing Census, 2024, and disaggregated data from the EEMIS, including by sex – an important consideration given the significance of women domestic workers going to the Arab States. The establishment of a technical working group could also help facilitate improved international labour migration statistics of Ugandan migrant workers to the Arab States.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the case study

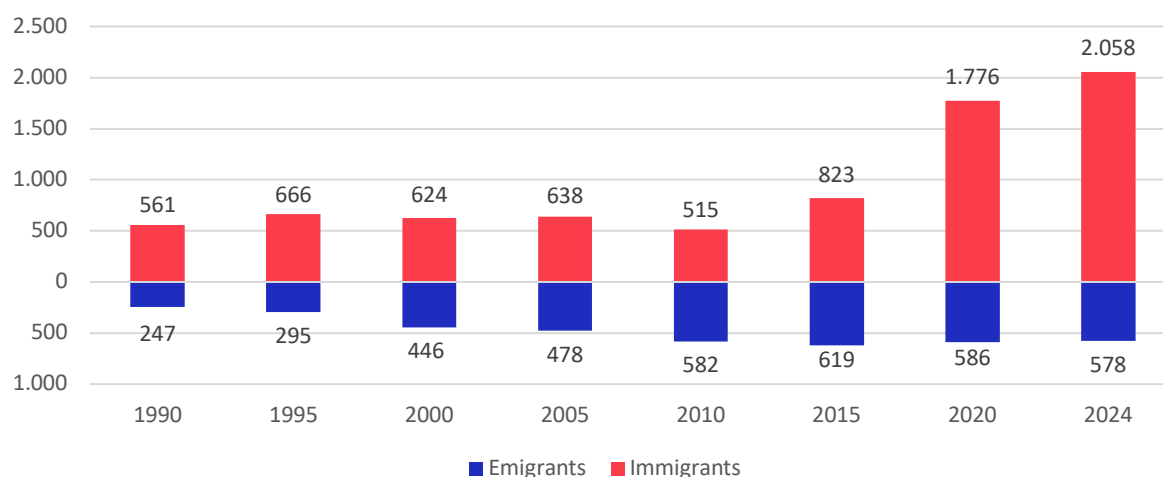
This Uganda case study has been developed as an annex to the report “Statistical Report on African Migrant Workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, Jordan and Lebanon”. The main report reviews sources of data for mapping African migrant workers in the Africa to Arab States corridor. Eight African origin countries were included in the mapping, namely Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania. The Arab States included in the review were the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries, i.e., Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, plus Jordan and Lebanon.

This case study is one of three developed as supplements to the main report, undertaken for Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. This case study, for Uganda, provides a mapping of international labour migration statistics of migrant workers going to the Arab States in Ugandan data sources. As such, it is focused on emigration statistics, providing a detailed overview of available and potential data sources, an analysis of the statistics available, as well as recommendations focused on improving labour outward migration statistics in the country.

1.2. International migration context in Uganda

Uganda is a significant country of destination for international migrants, with higher estimates of foreigners residing in the country than of Ugandans residing abroad (Figure). Uganda hosts one of the largest populations of refugees in Africa due to major forced migration and displacement movements originating in neighbouring or near countries, including South Sudan, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2024, Uganda hosted 1.8 million refugees, including more than 65,500 Sudanese nationals who arrived since 2023 (UNHCR 2025). Other than security reasons, the main reason for immigrants to move to Uganda is family-related (UBOS 2024a).

Figure 1.1. International migrant stock, Uganda, 1990-2024 (thousands)



Source: UN DESA Population Division 2024.

Uganda is also an important country of origin for international migration. More than half of Ugandans abroad live in Asia, and roughly another one quarter lives in East African countries, mainly in Somalia. Ugandans at working age, who migrate for work, represent the majority of Ugandans migrating to other countries. More than 82.5 per cent of Ugandans residing abroad migrated for employment purposes. Women have more often migrated for work compared to men. Among women who migrated abroad, 85.2 per cent migrated for work compared to 77.8 per cent of men (UBOS 2024a). There are no estimates of nationals in the Arab States by country of destination, including estimates of international migrant stock by UN DESA. The Ugandan population is among the youngest in the world: of the total population of 45.9 million people, around 73 per cent are less than 30 years old, and 57 per cent are of working age. Unemployment is one of the main national labour market challenges and a key labour migration push factor for Ugandans at working age (UBOS 2024b; Atong et al. 2018).

Despite progress achieved in improving labour migration governance in the last decade, Ugandan workers abroad remain vulnerable to rights violations, according to qualitative studies assessing their experiences while working abroad. Around 87 per cent of Ugandan migrant workers in the Middle East experienced forced labour and 89 per cent experienced human trafficking. The share of domestic workers, a female-dominated occupation, who experienced human trafficking was higher than of workers in other occupations, at 91 per cent in domestic work, compared to 78 per cent in other occupations (Koogler 2024; ICF 2022).

1.3. Labour migration governance

The Government of Uganda has in place the Labour Externalization Programme, managed by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) through which it seeks to facilitate safe international labour migration pathways for nationals, including through Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) with countries in the main migration corridors for Ugandan workers.

In 2015, a National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM) was created in Uganda as a permanent national migration coordination structure. It convenes government agencies, civil society organizations, private sector, academia and international organizations involved in migration governance. Through the NCM, Uganda adopted the Uganda National Implementation Plan (2024-2028) for the Global Compact for Migration. Some of the priorities of the Uganda GCM-NIP are to collect disaggregated data on migration and promote data and evidence-based migration policy, and promote labour mobility, decent work and ethical recruitment (Office of the Prime Minister 2024). The National Migration Policy was adopted in 2025 with the main goal to strengthen the country's migration governance framework and promote protection of migrants' rights. The Policy addresses national issues related to labour migration, international cooperation in migration, diaspora management and migration data information management, among other areas (Ministry of Internal Affairs 2025).

Uganda has sought to establish BLAs with countries already hosting Ugandan workers or to expand employment opportunities for Ugandans in other countries, such as Oman and Kuwait. Currently, Uganda has a BLA with Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates and Qatar (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development 2023). In 2017, Uganda and Saudi Arabia signed a BLA, with Saudi Arabia being the main destination country of Ugandans abroad, especially of women domestic workers.

2. Methodology

Please see the main report for the methodological approach used in the study, including the data mapping framework and the types of information and data sources considered. The case study also examines potential data sources as well as available data sources in detail. Additionally, for the case studies, stakeholder consultations were undertaken as an additional level of information to help verify the information from the review, to identify new and potential data sources, and to access data that is only available upon request. A selection of relevant stakeholders is provided below, along with their relevance. Notably, not all stakeholders contacted were able to provide responses.

The ILO FAIRWAY Project Team provided contact points for the different institutions and departments and consultations with these contact points were made through different means (interviews, email exchanges or questionnaires), depending on factors including: the type of institution; how each institution produces, uses or has relevance for international labour migration statistics; and additional data upon request. While semi-structured interview and questionnaire templates were developed early in the assignment, the range of stakeholder types and the information sought from each meant that custom questions were developed for each stakeholder.

- **Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS):** Responsible for production of official national statistics.
- **External Employment Unit, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD):** Government agency overseeing placement of Ugandan workers abroad, enforces external employment regulations, licenses international recruitment agencies, manages the external employment information system.
- **Diaspora Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs:** Oversees government engagement with the Ugandan diaspora, facilitates international cooperation frameworks, and offers protection services to the diaspora.
- **State House Diaspora Unit:** Promotes strategic engagement of the Government of Uganda with the diaspora.
- **Bank of Uganda:** Holder of remittance flows records.
- **Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control (DCIC), Ministry of Interior Affairs:** Holder of border exit records.
- **Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE):** Represents interests of private sector companies in Uganda in labour migration policy development.
- **National Organisation of Trade Unions (NOTU):** Represents interests and advocates for protection of Ugandan workers, including Ugandan workers deployed in other countries, in labour migration policy development.
- **Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies (UAERA):** Represents private international recruitment agencies in Uganda, holder of records of worker placement abroad collected by member agencies.

3. Mapping of available and potential data sources in Uganda

This section provides an overview of the labour migration statistics available in Uganda, focused on statistics of migrant workers from Uganda in and going to the Arab States. Information about each data source was compiled via desk review and stakeholders' consultations. Description of the data sources is focused on detailing scope of data available or potentially available, actors responsible for data collection, data accessibility, frequency of data collection, latest available data, as well as data limitations in general. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the mapping in Uganda, listing available and potential sources and characteristics of their data. Following the table, detailed information is available per data source.

Table 3.1. Summary of data sources

Availability	Name of publication / dataset	Characteristics of data
Available	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Statistical Abstracts: Deployment of Ugandans through the External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS)	Frequency: Annual Latest: 2024 Disaggregation: Sex, occupation Type: Outflow
Potential	National Population and Housing Census, Uganda Bureau of Statistics: Number of migrant workers by country of destination	Frequency: Decennial Latest: 2024 Disaggregation: sex, education Type: Stock, outflows
	National Labour Force Survey: Number of emigrants by country of destination	Frequency: Quarterly Latest: NA Disaggregation: sex, occupation, industry, education Type: Stock, outflows

Source: Authors' compilation.

3.1. National Population and Housing Census

The National Population and Housing Census 2024 (NPHC 2024) is the latest census for Uganda. Its main goal was to generate statistics to base planning and support implementation of development plans, such as the National Development Plans (NDPs), East African Community Vision 2050, Africa Agenda 2063 and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs). The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development is the legal authority over the census and the Uganda Bureau of Statistics is responsible for conducting the census, but a National Census Council (NCC) and the National Steering Committee were responsible for managing implementation of the NPHC 2024. The National Steering Committee has representatives from different government bodies, namely the Treasury, UBOS Board of Directors, and other committees at the local level. The three latest censuses prior to 2024 were conducted in years 2014, 2002 and 1991 (UBOS 2024a).

The NPHC 2024 has a section on Migration and Forced Displacements, which includes a subsection on Emigration.⁴⁰ The Household Questionnaire includes questions on respondents' previous residence, reason for migrating, returnee migrants, current emigrants abroad by sex, age, level of education attainment, country of first destination, year of departure, reason for migrating and country of current residence.⁴¹ Even though the use of census data has some limitations for measuring emigration (discussed further below), these data would allow estimation of stocks and outflows of Ugandans disaggregated by country of destination, sex and education of workers abroad, as well as sex and country of previous residence for returnees.

In general, population censuses are sparsely timed compared to household sample surveys, and they underestimate any count of emigrants at a given point in time. In population censuses, information collected on emigrants relies on reporting by a household member who stayed in the country, remains alive and is sufficiently well-informed of migration details of absentees residing (and working) in another country. These circumstances exclude information from households wherein all members migrated or those left behind are no longer alive and tend to result in omissions or inaccurate answers. In other instances, migrants may be counted more than once if, for instance, the migrant moved from one household to another before migrating to another country and both households report them as an emigrant (Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2022).

The UBOS 2024 Census report provides some migration statistics that are publicly available. Data are reported for emigrants from Uganda by sex and region of destination, e.g., Asia, East Africa, Other Africa, Europe, North America, including the main reason for outmigration. From the published data, it is not possible to isolate the number of Ugandan workers residing in the GCC states, Jordan and Lebanon. Absolute figures are not provided in the report; it provides percentage distributions by sex and region of destination of emigrants by main reason for migrating, e.g., among all women migrants, the proportion of women migrant workers or, in East Africa, the proportion of migrant workers (*ibid.*). A public use dataset is not publicly available. Information on migrant workers going to the Arab States would be feasible in the dataset but it is not clear if this information can be shared if requested.

⁴⁰ UBOS, 2024a.

⁴¹ <https://www.scribd.com/document/730874718/Household-Questionnaires-for-Census>

3.2. National Labour Force Survey

The National Labour Force Survey (NLFS) is conducted every 5 years by the UBOS to produce official labour market statistics. The latest one took place in 2021, and previous rounds occurred in 2016/17 and 2011/12. The NLFS 2021 questionnaire has 21 questions on emigration, formulated to obtain a range of information about individuals who left Uganda to reside abroad since 2016. However, according to the UBOS LFS report, the sampling frame of the survey, which is based on the National Population and Housing Census 2014, was inadequate to capture statistics on labour outflows. So, despite the efforts to include the topic in the survey, it cannot be used to provide any reliable estimates of emigrants and labour outflows from Uganda. This is a common issue for countries that have not yet developed surveys specifically devoted to the migration topic, administered to appropriate and better designed samples. Survey samples are developed to include a subset of households with certain characteristics, and unless a representative sample of households with emigrants is used, surveys focused on other topics are unlikely to be able to provide reliable estimates of migration. More recently, the NLFS has shifted to a quarterly survey and there are no longer questions on migration.⁴² There is potential to use future NLFS for estimating stock and flow, by reintroducing the questions from the NLFS 2021, however, with efforts to address the root causes of unreliable data that derived from the NLFS 2021 round.

3.3. Administrative data sources

Ugandans who migrate abroad for employment can either resort to private recruiters operating in Uganda or register directly at the **External Employment Management Information System (EEMIS)**, managed by the External Employment Unit of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. The EEMIS is an online platform for job search and job placement of Ugandans abroad. Recruitment agencies licensed by the MGLSD can use it to advertise vacancies which are vetted by the Ministry. Placement of Ugandans via the EEMIS or licensed recruiters generates records of Ugandans migrating abroad for work. The records include information on job category – one data field from which occupation and sector of economic activity could be derived, country of destination, salary and conditions of employment. International standards, such as for occupation and sector of activity, are not currently applied to collect information from job placements within the platform (ILO 2024; IOM 2022). Not all information is publicly available, but additional information can be available upon request.

Ugandans who do not register at the EEMIS but secure employment abroad via a licensed private recruitment agency also need to obtain clearance from the MGLSD before exiting the country. This documentation will be required by the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control (DCIC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the port of exit from Uganda. Licensed agencies also maintain records of deployed workers and job seekers (ibid.). The EEMIS does not capture data on Ugandans who migrate by using unlicensed intermediaries and exit the country via unsupervised borders.

The MGLSD publishes annual Statistical Abstracts providing statistics derived from the EEMIS. The latest one available is for the period of 2021/22. The reports show indicators such as time series of number of migrant workers deployed abroad from year 2016 onwards, and each year the distribution of workers deployed by sex. It also reports on number of migrant workers abroad by top countries of destination, which vary every year, meaning that size of specific bilateral corridors is only reported as long as they are among top destination countries in the period of analysis. Some GCC countries, Jordan and Lebanon appear in the list sporadically.

The **Diaspora Department & Consular Support Department** collect information on the diaspora through associations of Ugandans abroad, such as the Uganda Belgium Chapter, Uganda Japan Chapter and the Uganda North America Association. According to a recent study, they have low registration due in part to concerns by the diaspora on security and confidentiality of personal information shared (ILO 2024).

Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies monitors placements of Ugandans abroad by the recruitment agencies. It is unclear whether the information collected can form a database or be used to supplement existing data on Ugandan migrants going to the Arab States.

⁴² Stakeholder consultation with ILO expert.

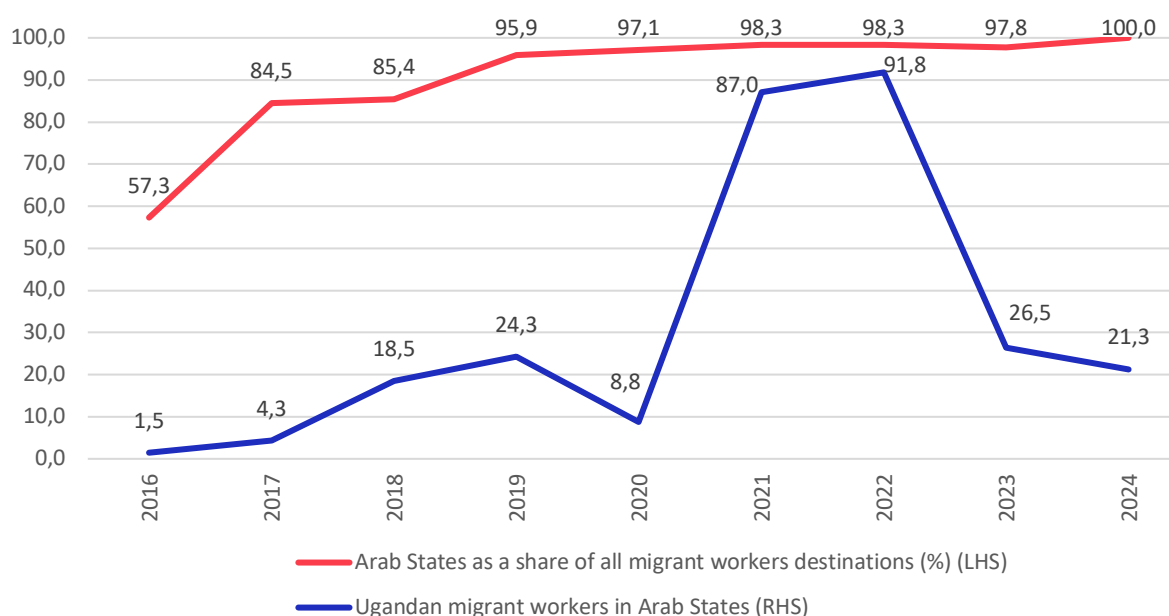
4. Analysis of migrant workers' trends and characteristics to the Arab States

This section provides an analysis of Ugandan migrant workers in the Arab States. It draws primarily from publicly available data from the Ugandan Labour Externalization Program, which means the data represents outflows of Ugandan migrant workers who secured employment via licensed private recruiters in the EEMIS (see Section 3.3).

4.1. Outflows of Ugandan migrant workers to the Arab States

Figure 4.1 shows the outflows of Ugandan migrant workers to the Arab States, using data for workers who secured employment via licensed private recruiters in the EEMIS. It shows that in 2024, around 21,300 Ugandans left the country for the Arab States via licensed private recruiters in the EEMIS. This represents a decrease from 91,800 recorded in 2022. There was a major increase in placements from 2020 to 2022, which coincides with efforts to improve international labour migration governance between Uganda and key partners in the Arab States. More specifically, in 2017, a 5-year BLMA was signed with Saudi Arabia. By the end of 2022, the agreement would be automatically renewed but, instead, it was temporarily suspended and a new one was signed in 2023 after re-negotiations to address issues of rights violations of Ugandan workers in the corridor.⁴³ Most significantly, of the Ugandan workers who secured employment via licensed private recruiters in the EEMIS (i.e. all those recorded in this data), the share increased from less than 60 per cent in 2016, to over 90 per cent by 2019. Such that by 2024, all placements were destined for the Arab States. Sex-disaggregated data is not provided by country of destination, but since 2024 all the migrant workers in the platform were destined for the Arab States, it is possible to ascertain that of these, only 8 per cent were men, and 92 per cent were women.

Figure 4.1. Outflows of Ugandan workers to the Arab States, 2016-2024



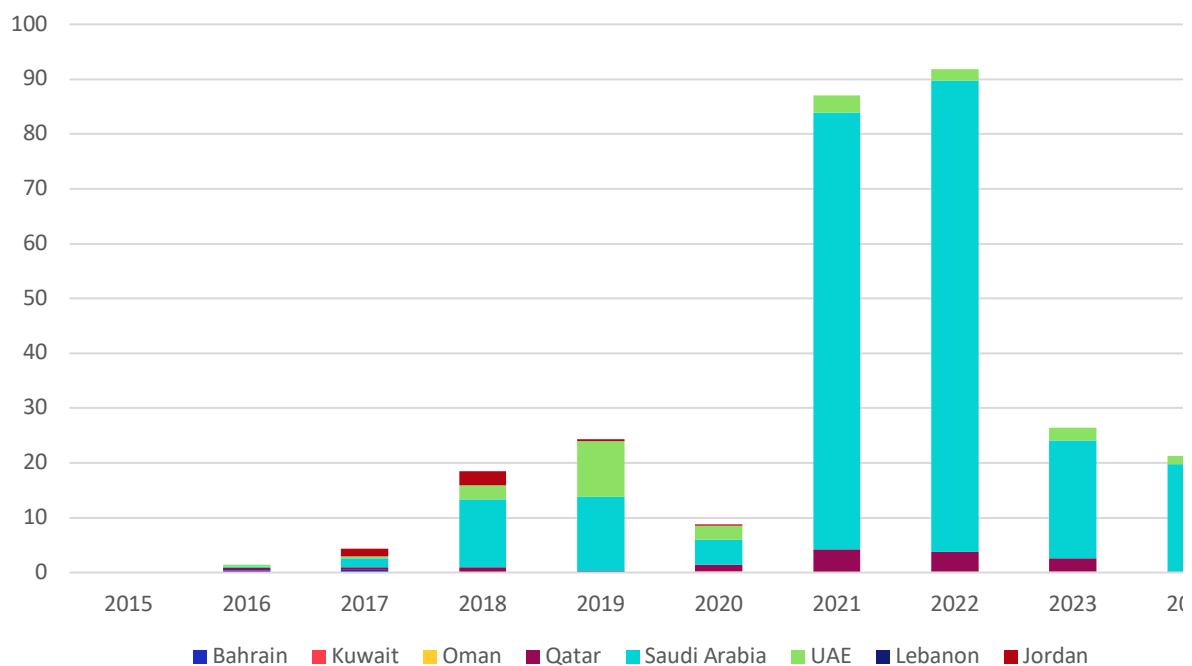
Notes: Number of Ugandans placed in vacancies abroad.
Source: EEMIS.

⁴³ See <https://observer.ug/news/uganda-suspends-labour-export-agreement-with-saudi-arabia/> and https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/01/31/saudi-arabia-a-promised-paradise-turned-into-a-nightmare-for-ugandan-maids_6013745_4.html

4.2. Outflows of Ugandan migrant workers by country of destination

Annual outflow of Ugandan migrant workers who secured employment via licensed private recruiters in the EEMIS is available by country of destination, for the period 2016-2025. Published data is not sex disaggregated. Figure 4.2 shows the composition of the workers destined for the Arab States by country of destination. It shows that Saudi Arabia accounts for the majority of migrant worker outflows over the 2016-2024 period, accounting for 85 per cent of all outflows over this whole period. In 2021 and 2022 alone, a total of 41,000 migrant workers from Uganda were destined for Saudi Arabia.

Figure 4.2. Outflows of Ugandan migrant workers by selected countries of destination, 2016-2024 (thousands)



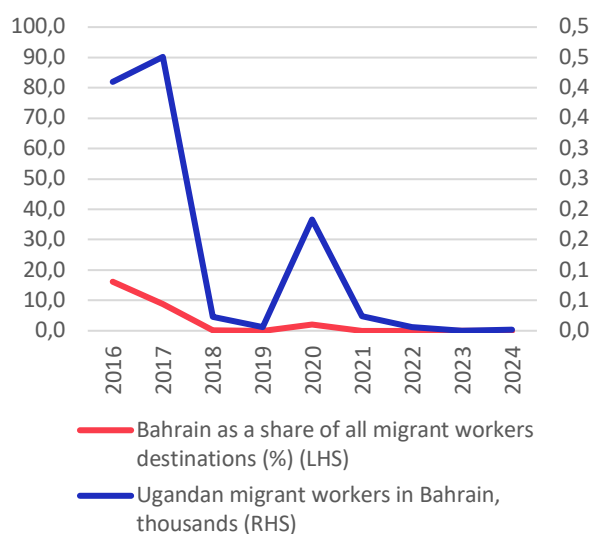
Notes: Number of Ugandans placed in vacancies abroad.
Source: EEMIS.

This information by country of destination is available for both sexes combined, for the period 2016-2024. Figure 4.3 presents the outflow of Ugandan migrant workers per country of destination over this period, in thousands and as a share of all countries of destination. Please note that the scales on the right-hand axis in each chart (i.e. thousands of migrant workers) differ.

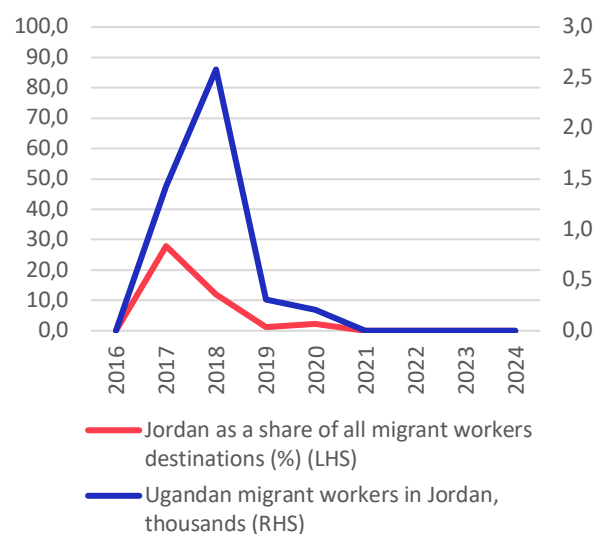
What is most apparent is the increasing share of outflows of Ugandan migrant workers that went to Saudi Arabia (Panel E). The share of Ugandan migrant workers going to Saudi Arabia increased from 7 per cent in 2016 (before the BLA established in 2017), increasing to nearly 60 per cent by 2018 and 92 per cent in 2024. Elsewhere, a sizable share of Ugandan migrant worker outflows has been accounted for by the United Arab Emirates. In 2019, for instance, 40 per cent of all outflows were destined for this country. For all other Arab States, outflows to these destinations were more popular prior to the increased outflows to Saudi Arabia.

Figure 4.3. Outflows of Ugandan migrant workers by selected countries of destination, 2016-2024

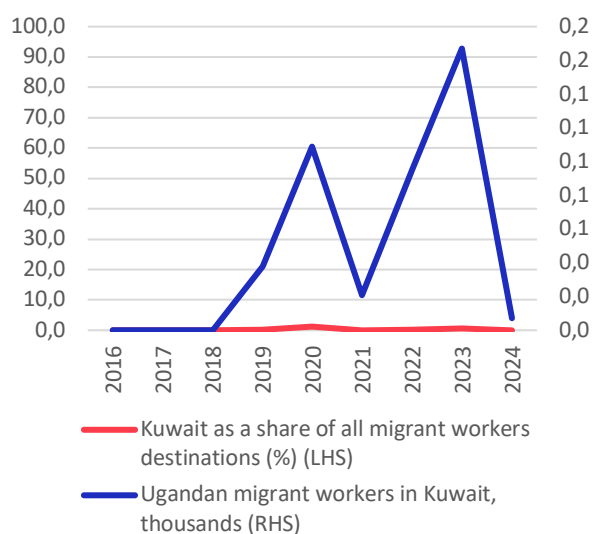
Panel A. Bahrain



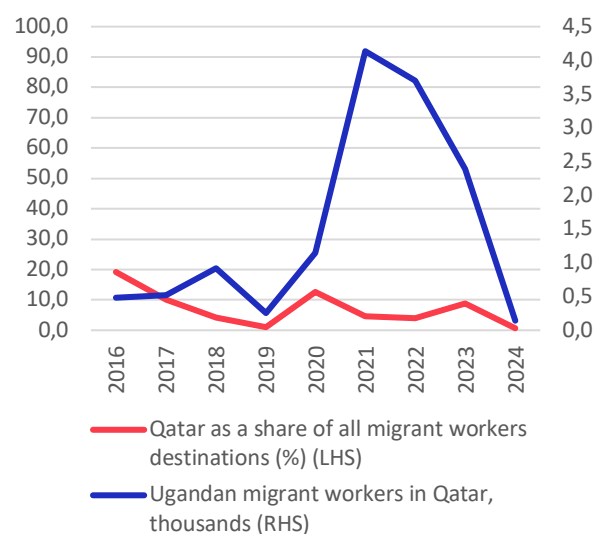
Panel B. Jordan



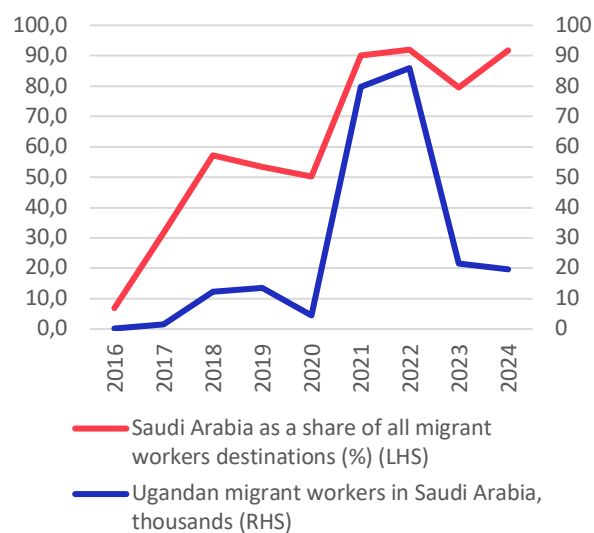
Panel C. Kuwait



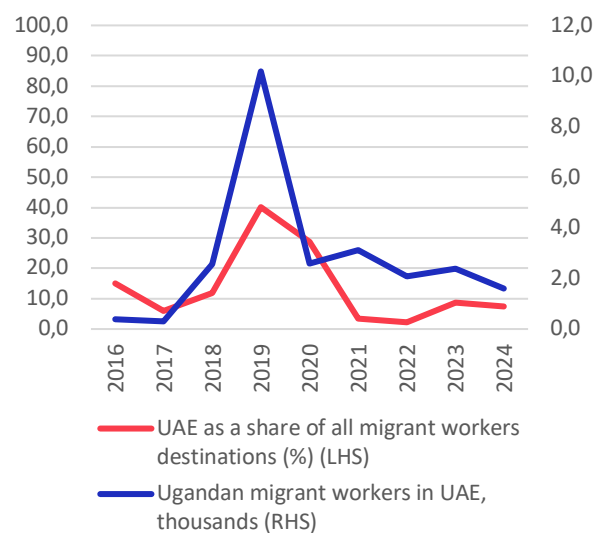
Panel D. Qatar



Panel E. Saudi Arabia



Panel F. United Arab Emirates



Notes: Number of Ugandans placed in vacancies abroad. UAE = United Arab Emirates

Source: EEMIS.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Uganda is a net-receiving country for international migration. In recent years, the country has managed increasing migratory pressures as the major destination country of involuntary migrants in Africa. Uganda is also an important origin country of international labour migration, with an estimated 578,000 Ugandans residing in another country in 2024, according to UN estimates. Despite the number of migrants in the Arab States, based on data from countries of destination, and even Uganda's own national estimates, there are no estimates of nationals in the Arab States by country of destination, including estimates of international migrant stock by UN DESA.

Uganda has a Labour Externalization Programme in place, through which the MoGLSD seeks to provide safe recruitment and migration pathways for nationals. Nonetheless, the country still faces challenges in ensuring rights of nationals in some of the main labour migration corridors. In 2025, a National Migration Policy was adopted to strengthen governance of migration, including in terms of improving migration information management. In terms of bilateral cooperation in labour migration with the Arab States, Uganda has signed BLAs with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, UAE and Qatar, and is seeking further international cooperation to expand opportunities for Ugandan workers in countries like Oman and Kuwait.

This case study focused on mapping international labour migration statistical sources in Uganda, with a focus on emigration to the Arab States, and sought to identify both available and potential national data sources. Results from the mapping indicate that Uganda has a few available data sources, among which one has publicly accessible data, namely the administrative records from the EEMIS platform, which contains information on Ugandans placed in vacancies abroad via regular recruitment channels.

Analysis of this EEMIS data highlighted the growth in placements in the Arab States in recent years. The Arab States as a destination of Ugandan migrant workers in the EEMIS accounted for 100 per cent of placements in 2024, up from 57.3 per cent in 2016. This was driven largely by increasing labour migration to Saudi Arabia (which accounted for 85 per cent of all outflows in the EEMIS between 2016 and 2024). Notably, the increase occurred following the establishment of a BLA between Uganda and Saudi Arabia in 2017. Most of these workers are engaged in domestic work, and many are women, with 92 per cent of all placements in 2024 (to all Arab States) being women.

This information was taken from Statistical Abstracts published by MGLSD. However, further information is gathered in the EEMIS system, including job title, job category, salary and contract type, for which data can be requested. Given the high likelihood of women to migrate from Uganda to the Arab States for work, sex-disaggregated data are fundamental and the starting point to monitor trends and characteristics of workers, who are more likely to perform low-skill occupations and face higher risk of abuse by their employers. This is currently only available for total migrants and not disaggregated by country of destination.

A few administrative sources of international labour migration data were mapped in Uganda, however, detailed information on the scope of data collected, metadata and public use datasets could not be accessed and therefore were not included in the analysis. Limited access to these data sources makes it more challenging to pinpoint potential gaps and shortcomings of their resulting data. Consultations with national government actors who are holders of these datasets provided valuable input to close many of these knowledge gaps. The findings can contribute to improving international labour migration statistics in Uganda, but it is critical to continue to work alongside these actors to understand and support their priorities in developing national data collection efforts in labour migration.

Certain measures can be taken to improve international labour migration statistics in the country for Ugandan migrants going to the Arab States. A list of recommendations for improving the collection, dissemination and analysis of international labour migration statistics includes the following:

- **Introduce or reintegrate questions for capturing migrant worker information in existing data sources:** The data mapping conducted as part of this case study identified data sources with potential to provide estimates of international labour migration stocks and outflows:
 - **National Population and Housing Census, 2024** has information to allow for estimates of stock and flow of international migrants by country of destination. However, this information is not publicly available. For the next census, indicators could be estimated provided that appropriate questions are included, such as, stock of nationals abroad for employment by sex, education, occupation and sector of economic activity. The UN Handbook on Measuring International Migration through Population Censuses is a key resource providing guidance to countries (Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2022).
 - **National Labour Force Survey:** While the 2021 NLFS included a range of questions that would allow for detailed information related to emigration, the results were not considered reliable. Since then, the labour force survey, which has become quarterly, has removed these migration questions. It is recommended to identify the root causes for why the estimates were unreliable and could not be used, and to reintroduce the questions and address these root issues.
- Expand what information is published in the Statistical Abstracts: The EEMIS data published in the MoGLSD's Statistical Abstracts is a valuable source of information on outflows of migrant workers from Uganda to the Arab States. However, there are some gaps. Notably, by sex, in which there is a lack of sex-disaggregated data by country of destination. This would be an important breakdown to include, particularly given the significant migration of Ugandan women as domestic workers to the Arab States region. Other breakdowns could be included in public dissemination materials, including by occupation.
- Establish a technical working group on international labour migration statistics, led by the UBOS, and with representatives from different relevant ministries, including MoGLSD, as well as users and potential users of these statistics. The purpose of this technical working group would be to raise awareness of the importance of international labour migration statistics and identify support needed for the processing of international labour migration statistics by different agencies.

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**International Labour Organization
Regional Office for Africa**

Plateau, CCIA Building
Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
01 BP 3960 Abidjan 01

(+225) 20318900

iloafrica@ilo.org

<https://www.ilo.org/africa>