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# Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in Bahrain

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# Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in Bahrain

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**Abstract:** Mid-2013, estimates of Bahrain's population stood at 1,253,191 persons, of whom 638,361 (51 per cent) were foreign nationals. Most were from Asia (85 per cent) and especially from India (half of all foreign residents). Eighty per cent of expatriates are employed. They account for 77 per cent of the employed population and 81 per cent of the private sector's workforce. Asians are overwhelmingly involved in services and "blue collar" occupations, while Arabs more often fill managerial posts. Immigration flows to the Kingdom increased significantly over the 2000s, fuelled by high oil prices and the ensuing boom in the construction and services sectors. This demonstrates the difficulty to reconcile labour reforms, and especially, the Bahrainisation of the work force, with the maximisation of economic productivity.

**Keywords:** Bahrain, Politics, Policy, Sponsorship, Foreign & National Populations, Foreign Population, Labour Market, National & Foreign Labour, Naturalisation.

## Introduction

The first discovery of oil in the Arab Peninsula took place in Bahrain, in 1932. Previous seasonal migration linked to pearl exploitation was rapidly replaced by inflows of workers from Western countries, Iran, British India, and other Gulf States such as Oman. In spite of such a long history of labour migration to the country, foreign residents did not outnumber Bahraini citizens until the end of the 2000s. By then, oil reserves had considerably reduced and the Kingdom was one of the three least wealthy GCC countries.<sup>1</sup>

From the start of Bahrain's oil exploitation, migration flows of workers to the country took on particular political stakes. Unemployed Bahraini nationals were to be hired in priority for vacant posts in the nascent oil industry;<sup>2</sup> but their lack of experience in the field enticed Bahrain Petroleum Company

(BAPCO) to resort instead to employing skilled and cheap Iranian labourers.<sup>3</sup> However, for fear that these labour migration patterns would encourage Iran's claims over Bahrain, the British Protectorate authorities and Bahrain's ruling family Al-Khalifa supported the recruitment of Indian skilled and semi-skilled professionals. An economic rationale thus confronted political concerns in the management of foreign labour.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, Bahraini workers who were filling the lowest paid position at the bottom of the occupational ladder<sup>5</sup> launched labour protests as early as 1938 and 1954-56. They also formed labour unions, excluding from it the foreign labourers who were viewed as "adjuncts of the Western powers at work in the country".<sup>6</sup> From the first population census conducted in 1941 to Bahrain's independence in 1971, the share of non-nationals remained constant at around 20 per cent.

From the mid-1970s and the oil-boom to the early 2000s, the numbers of foreign nationals surged to a third of the total population. Arab labourers were progressively replaced by Asians, and semi-skilled and skilled expatriates from earlier waves (among who were many Indians) were outnumbered by low-skilled, manual workers. The fragmentation of the workforce also increased with the segmentation of the labour market between a Bahraini-(over)staffed governmental sector – including industrial joint ventures such as BAPCO and ALBA, the aluminium company– and a private sector employing foreign workers in detrimental conditions. The oil slump of the 1980s and 1990s and the ensuing contraction of the public sector led to mounting levels of unemployment among young Bahrainis.

In such a dire situation and also due to its limited oil resources, Bahrain decided to embark on a strong and fast economic liberalisation process. Its economy diversified and expanded into banking and finance, heavy industries and manufacturing, retail, and tourism. Fuelled by the hike in oil prices after 2003, development policies followed "a blueprint that envisions Bahrain as the progressive hub of finance and service industries in the Gulf, a beacon of modernity in the region, and a tourist attraction constructed around the city as a site of consumption."<sup>7</sup> "Mega-real estate projects" directed at expatriates,<sup>8</sup> especially, contributed to the construction boom in the country.

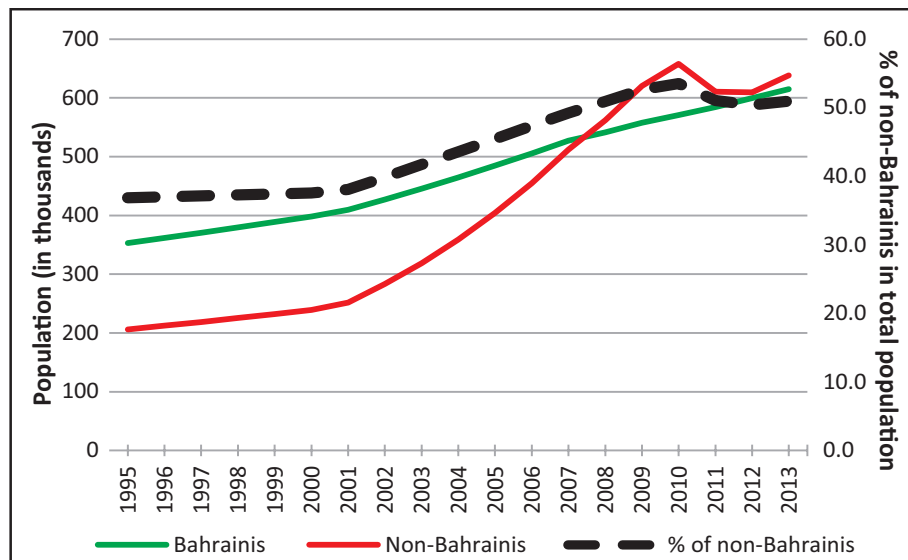
Such economic achievements were also facilitated by increasing flows of foreign workers. The decade witnessed a doubling of the total resident population in the Kingdom and almost a trebling of the number of foreign residents. This seems in contradiction with the major reform of Bahrain's labour market launched in 2004, which aimed at alleviating nationals' massive unemployment. The policy was based on erasing the segmentation of labour between nationals and expatriates by fully liberalising the labour market and on curbing immigration by equalizing the cost of employing nationals and expatriates. The Labour Market Regulation Authority (LMRA) was established in May 2006 and mandated with regulating and controlling work permits for expatriate employees and the self-employed, in addition to issuing licenses for the workforce and recruitment agencies. In order to enforce real competition between nationals and expatriates and thus improve work conditions and wages in the private sector, Bahrain loosened the *kafala* (sponsorship) system in August 2009 by abolishing the mandatory No Objection Certificate hampering expatriates' professional mobility. However, employers opposed this modest move, and since mid-2009, a new law<sup>9</sup> restricts the switching of *kafeel* (sponsor) without the latter's consent to those having spent one full year with their sponsor.<sup>10</sup> In Bahrain, like elsewhere in the Gulf, reform of the management of foreign labour is the subject of significant domestic political tensions.

As a matter of fact, the “natives” vs “foreigners” and migration issues have other political implications in the country. Ever since the time of the British rule, foreigners were hired in the army and police in order to avoid risks of collusion with locals.<sup>11</sup> However, one of the demands of the demonstrators since the start of the uprisings in February 2011 has been to put an end to naturalisation that would impact the communal makeup of the Bahraini population.

## Inward Migration

### Stocks

**Figure 1: Bahrainis and non-Bahrainis in total resident population (mid-year estimates, 1995-2013)**



Source: CIO

Mid-2014, estimates of Bahrain’s population stood at 1,314,562 persons, of whom 638,818 (52 per cent) were foreign nationals.<sup>12</sup> The number of foreign residents rose rapidly during the 2000s and non-nationals accounted for up to 54 per cent of the total population in 2010. Since then, however, a slight decrease in the numbers of non-Bahrainis may be noted. In mid-2013, 509,622 persons or 79.8 per cent of the foreign residents were employed,<sup>13</sup> making up 77 per cent of the total employed population in the Kingdom. Unlike in other GCC states, Bahraini nationals are mostly enrolled in the private sector (63 per cent of the employed Bahraini population as of mid-2013). Most of the foreign labourers are also employed in the private as well as in the domestic sectors: respectively, 78.5 and 20 per cent of the non-Bahraini employed population. The latter accounted for 81 per cent of the private sector’s workforce that year.<sup>14</sup>

The profile of the foreign population is that of a predominantly male (79.3 per cent, or 385 men for 100 women), little educated (82.5 per cent of the total as well as employed foreign populations have below secondary level education)<sup>15</sup> and relatively young population (mean age is 32.6 years),<sup>16</sup> distorted in its age structure: those in the working age group (15-64 years age group) formed 90 per cent of all

non-nationals in 2010.<sup>17</sup> As regards their activity, the bulk of foreign labourers worked in the construction sector (27.9 per cent), in wholesale and retail trade (16.3 per cent), in the private household sector (16 per cent), and in manufacturing (12.4 per cent). Bahrainis, by contrast, were employed in the public administration and defence sector (31 per cent of them, and 35 per cent of men alone). However, a sizeable share of nationals also worked in wholesale and trade (13.2 per cent) and in manufacturing (10.8 per cent).<sup>18</sup> Like elsewhere in the Gulf States, the overwhelming majority of foreign nationals were from Asia (84.4 per cent in 2010).<sup>19</sup> Asians also made up as much as 90 per cent of foreign workers that year; by comparison, Arabs accounted for a mere 4.5 per cent of the workforce. Among Asian nationalities, as of September 2014, Indian nationals alone made up a half of all resident expatriates (49.4 per cent), and 47.7 per cent of foreign workers.<sup>20</sup>

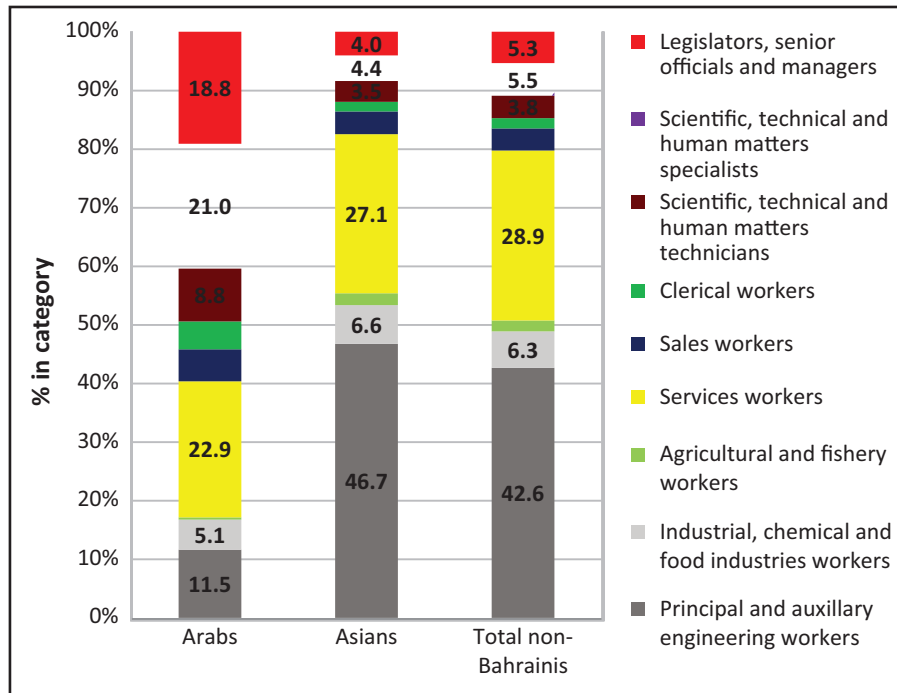
**Table 1: Bahrain's foreign resident population by main countries of origin, migration status and sex ratio (2014)**

Country of citizenship	Total expatriates		Migration status		Sex ratio (men/100 women)
	Number	%	Worker	Family member	
India	257,663	49.4	76.7	23.3	411
Bangladesh	98,221	18.8	96.5	3.5	3,551
Pakistan	48,991	9.4	81.0	19.0	619
Philippines	29,722	5.7	88.9	11.1	77
Sri Lanka	7,627	1.5	78.1	21.9	136
Egypt	19,580	3.8	43.6	56.4	136
Jordan	7,235	1.4	41.5	58.5	138
Yemen	4,723	0.9	54.3	45.7	249
Syria	2,944	0.6	48.3	51.7	176
U.K.	3,927	0.8	57.9	42.1	143
Other countries	40,917	7.8	77.7	22.3	231
<b>Total</b>	<b>521,550</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>79.4</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>385</b>

Source: LMRA Expat Management System (EMS), September-October 2014.

The foreign resident population in Bahrain displays great demographic and socio-economic diversity. Asian populations (Bangladeshis especially) are mostly made up of workers, while Arab populations (with the exception of Yemenis) comprise mainly family dependents. Expectedly, the sex ratio in Arab populations is less imbalanced than among Asians. Filipinos are the only national group made up of a majority of women, probably due to the high share of these nationals employed as female domestic workers in the GCC region.

**Figure 2: Employed non-Bahrainis by occupation and nationality groups (Arabs, Asians, total) (2010)**



Source: Census 2010, CIO.

Like in other Gulf countries, the income level (a minimum of 250 Bahraini Dinars<sup>21</sup> monthly) of the (male) expatriate conditions his right to sponsor family members for residency in Bahrain.<sup>22</sup> Foreign workers in general and Asian workers in particular are most often confined to services and “blue collar” occupations (80 per cent of them as of 2010), and thus unlikely to meet the required conditions. Arab expatriates, by contrast, display more diversity in their occupations: 40 per cent of them were in manual low-skilled sectors but almost a half of these workers were in managerial and higher technical occupations, as opposed to 13 per cent of Asians only.

## Flows

As emphasized earlier, Bahrain’s national and non-national resident populations both rose notably during the 2000s. As of the late 1990s, the demographic growth rates in Bahrain had remained relatively constant at around 2.4 per cent annually for several years. Yet, between 2000 and 2009, a marked increase in nationals’ growth rates (from 2.4 to 4.2 per cent annually) can be noticed.

The registration of vital events in Bahrain is considered excellent by international standards<sup>23</sup> and the country publishes vital statistics disaggregated by nationality. This allows for drawing a simulation scenario of the growth of the Bahraini population, had it been based on natural increase (births minus deaths) only. As indicated in Fig. 3, the actual, observed size of the Bahraini population starts rising

much faster than the simulated national population (that growing through natural increase only) after 2001. An estimate of the unexplained “surplus” within Bahraini population as of 2013 is therefore:

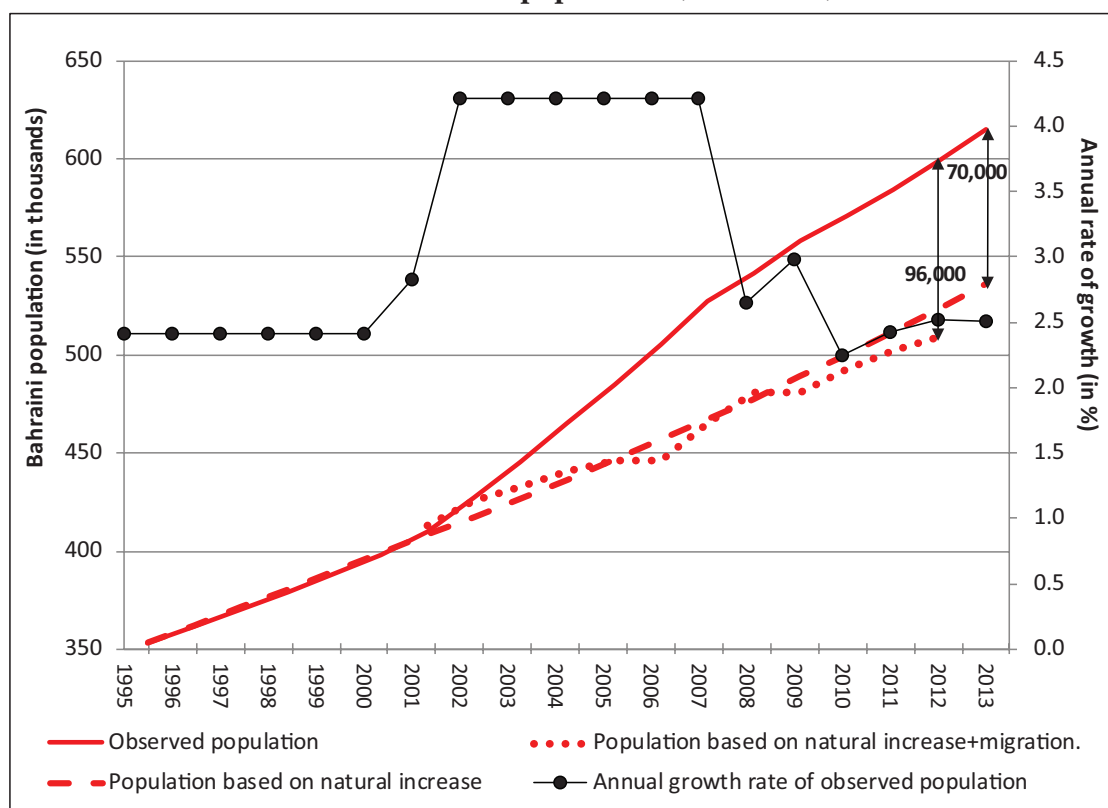
$$\text{B. pop. (2013)} - \text{B. pop. (2000)} - [(\text{sum of B. births (2000-2013)} - \text{sum of B. deaths (2000-2013)})] = 69,667$$

If we introduce in the calculation the other component of the population increase, the Bahraini citizens’ migration movements during the period 2001-2012,<sup>24</sup> the “surplus” expands:

$$\text{B. pop. (2013)} - \text{B. pop. (2000)} - [(\text{sum of B. births (2000-2013)} - \text{sum of B. deaths (2000-2013)}) - [\text{sum of B. arrivals (2001-2012)} - \text{sum of B. departures (2001-2012)})] = 95,743$$

This “surplus” of Bahraini nationals, in the range of 70,000 to 96,000 persons in 2012-2013, thus represents between 11 and 16 per cent of the Bahraini citizens recorded that year.<sup>25</sup> Part of these persons are probably naturalised foreign nationals.<sup>26</sup>

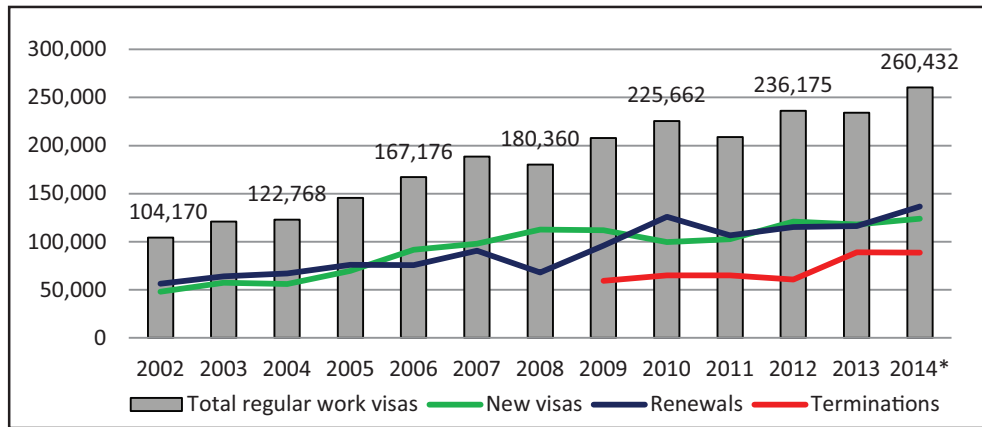
**Figure 3: The possible effect of naturalisations on the growth of the Bahraini national population (1995-2013)**



Source of data: Author’s calculations, based on births, death and population figures for Bahraini nationals published by CIO.



**Figure 4: Flows of foreign workers to Bahrain (2002-2014)**

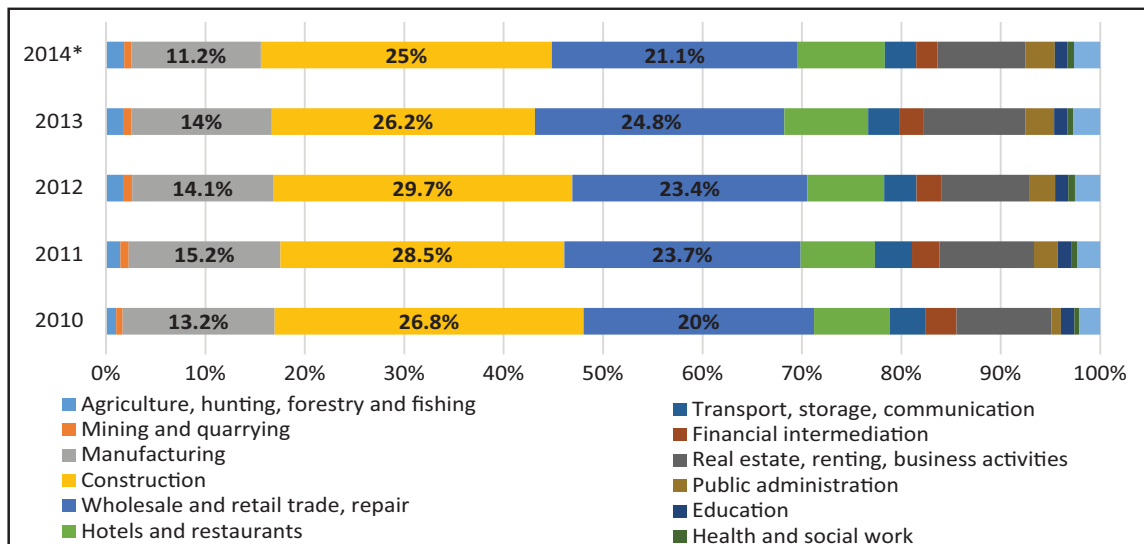


Source: MoL (2002-2007) and EMS, LMRA (2008-2014).

\* Values for Q4 of 2014 are extrapolated from Q1 to Q3 figures. Employment visa figures do not include domestic workers. Visa figures are the sum of new and renewed visas for the year.

As regards foreign workers, during the 2000s, the number of those granted regular work visas alone (new and renewed) more than doubled, from 104,000 in 2002 to 236,000 in 2012.<sup>27</sup> The number of work visa terminations also went up, however, from 60,000 in 2009 to around 88,500 in 2013. However, in spite of some moderate variations from one year to the next in the number of visas delivered, the general trend remains upward.

**Figure 5: Distribution of visas by economic activity sector (2010-2014)**



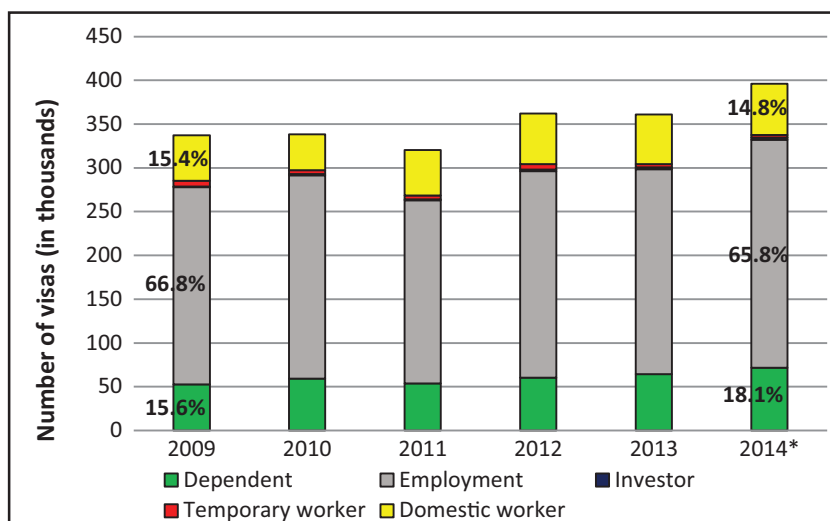
Source: EMS, LMRA.

\* Values for Q4 of 2014 are extrapolated from Q1 to Q3 figures. Visa figures are the sum of new and renewed visas granted per year, to all categories of residents: regular and temporary workers, business people, family dependants. They do not include domestic workers.

The booming development of certain economic sectors, such as construction, in the Kingdom has been steadily attracting and retaining foreign workers as witnessed in the distribution of visas<sup>28</sup> by economic activity sector. Most visas are granted to expatriates bound for the construction sector. During the third quarter of 2014, the sector actually recorded a rate of growth of more than 12 per cent.<sup>29</sup> The retail trade sector, too, has been a magnet for flows of foreign workers, in line with the Kingdom’s consumption- and service-oriented economy as noted earlier. These indicators reflect the continued reliance of Bahrain’s economy on large numbers of low wage expatriate workers in such labour-intensive sectors as manufacturing, retail trade, and construction.

This is also confirmed by the moderate, but steady increase in the inflows of foreign residents as a whole over the last five years as evident from permits issued: from 337,187 permits (visas) in 2009 to 361,016 in 2013, including domestic workers. The relative distribution between the main categories (dependent, regular worker, temporary worker,<sup>30</sup> and domestic worker), however, remains similar across recent years. Although data on permits granted by occupation sector are missing to confirm such an assertion, this suggests that no qualitative change in the skill profile of foreign labourers in Bahrain is likely in the near future. As noted earlier, the share of family dependents within expatriate populations is an indication of the skill and occupation profile of the foreign workers: the higher the latter, the more likely they are to be financially able to sponsor their next-of-kin for family reunion in the Gulf.

**Figure 6: Flows of foreign residents by type of visa granted (2009–2014)**



Source: EMS, LMRA and MoL.

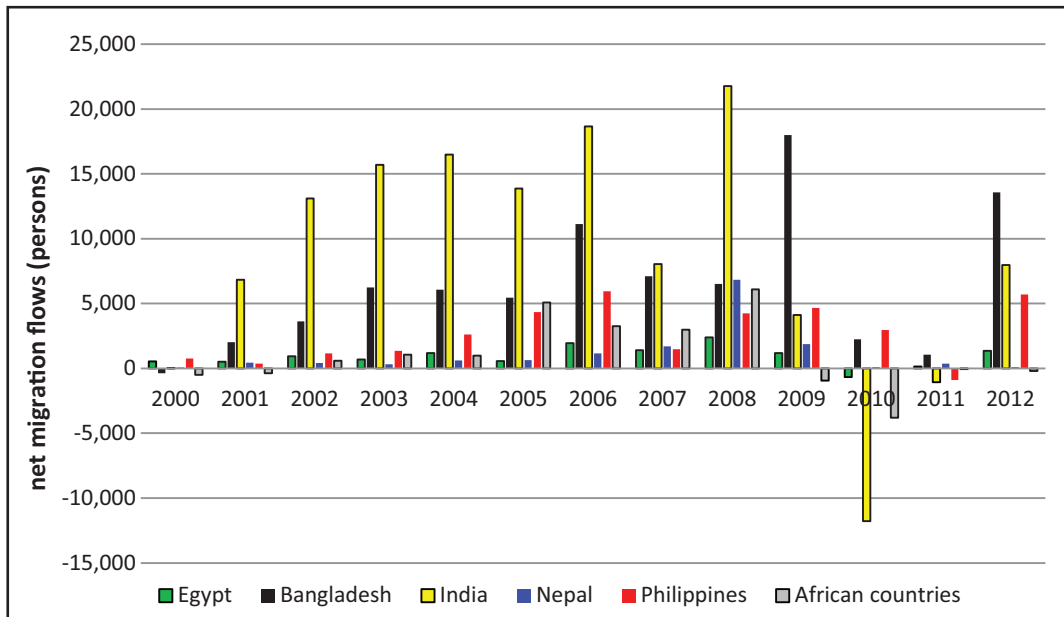
\* Values for Q4 of 2014 are extrapolated from Q1 to Q3 figures. Visa figures are the sum of new and renewed visas for the year.

The data thus do not point at obvious, marked changes in the patterns of foreign workers’ recruitment, either due to the financial crisis of 2008 or to the onset of the political unrest in the Kingdom since 2011. This appears surprising in view of the slowdown in economic growth entailed by these events.

As pointed out by Birks, Seccombe, and Sinclair (1986: 810) in a study on Kuwait, a drop in new work permits issued rapidly followed cuts in government expenditures in the early 1980s, while renewals

of permits simultaneously increased. This suggested that foreign labourers were kept in reserve until economic recovery, a strategy of “labour-hoarding” used by employers at the time of economic difficulties. Such a sequence of events was indeed witnessed in 2009-2010 (Fig. 4), as renewals of permits almost doubled from 68,000 to 126,000 and started outnumbering the new permits delivered. Such a scenario also may point to the longer settlement of some foreign residents in Bahrain.

**Figure 7: Net migration flows to Bahrain (selected countries of origin, 2000-2012)**



Source: Ministry of Interior.

More generally, however, the upward trend in the total number of visas, new and renewed, granted to all categories of foreign residents seems to be contradictory to the decrease in the total number of expatriates observed earlier. The terminations of visas went up after 2012 as we have noticed. Nevertheless, the several campaigns organised by LMRA since its inception, aiming to regularise or facilitate the exit of foreign workers in irregular situation, may also have enticed some expatriates to leave Bahrain. In 2010, for instance, LMRA officials claimed they were planning to send home or legalise more than 40,000 irregular workers by the end of the year.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the global net migration flows (inward minus outward movements of persons across Bahrain’s borders)<sup>32</sup> went down notably over the period 2009-2011. Among some national communities such as the Indians, as well as among nationals from African countries, more exits than entries were actually recorded in 2010. This suggests that some expulsions of irregulars did take place.

As for the sustained levels of permits’ delivery, they may, to a certain extent, stem from the regularisation of undocumented workers. Fighting irregularity and enhancing governmental control over the labour market has become a concern in Bahrain like elsewhere in the GCC countries.

Yet, it should be noted that Bahrain’s labour market reform measures did not succeed in enhancing the professional mobility of foreign workers as was initially planned for by the government and LMRA. Most recent data indicate that 10,647 (about 11 per cent) of the 97,059 labour visas delivered during

the third quarter of 2014 resulted from a transfer of visa. However, in spite of the abolition of the No Objection Certificate, which prior to 2009 would prevent foreign workers from switching *kafeel* (sponsor) without the latter's permission, only 1.2 per cent of these transfers of sponsorship actually happened without the employer's consent.<sup>33</sup>

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## Endnotes

1. GDP per capita around US \$25,000 for 2010-2014, a level similar to that of Saudi Arabia and Oman, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>.
2. Agreements passed between the Al-Khalifa, rulers of Bahrain, and the American and British oil companies See Louër 2008: 34.
3. Seccombe and Lawless, 1986, 551.
4. Louër, 2008: 34
5. The Westerners filled most managerial posts, while clerical and technical workers were predominantly from the Indian subcontinent as well as Iran and the Arab Middle East. As for the locals, they occupied the lowest positions, had comparatively mediocre working and living conditions in the industrial sector, and received lower wages than foreign workers: in 1948, BAPCO (Bahrain Petroleum Company) Bahraini employees' salaries were half that of Indian employees (Lawless and Seccombe, 1986: 568).
6. Louër, 2008: 35
7. Gardner 2008
8. AlShehabi 2015.
9. Art 25, Law 19, 2006.
10. Dito 2015.
11. AlShehabi 2011.
12. Central Informatics Organisation (CIO), population statistics section, 2013 (latest data as of January 2015) [http://www.cio.gov.bh/cio\\_eng/Stats\\_SubDetailed.aspx?subcatid=604](http://www.cio.gov.bh/cio_eng/Stats_SubDetailed.aspx?subcatid=604). The estimates of population growth are based on the results of 2010 census and on the population register's records.
13. Includes all civilian employed persons in the private and public sectors (insured, uninsured, and self-employed), as well as domestic workers. As of Q3 2014 (last data available at the time of writing), the employed non-Bahrainis were 521,656 or 77.1 per cent of the total employed workforce. LMRA, Bahrain Labour Market Indicators, Issue 27, Third quarter, 2014 [http://lmra.bh/portal/files/cms/shared/file/Newsletter/NewsletterQ3\(En\).pdf](http://lmra.bh/portal/files/cms/shared/file/Newsletter/NewsletterQ3(En).pdf).
14. <http://gulfmigration.eu/bahrain-estimated-total-employed-population-by-nationality-bahraininon-bahraini-and-sector-public-private-domestic-quarterly-q1-2003-q1-2014/>.
15. The figures refer to census 2010 data: <http://gulfmigration.eu/population-aged-15-years-old-by-nationality-group-sex-and-highest-education-level-2010/> and <http://gulfmigration.eu/bahrain-employed-population-15-years-old-by-nationality-bahraininon-bahraini-sex-and-highest-educational-level-2010/>.
16. Refers to census 2010 data: <http://gulfmigration.eu/national-and-non-national-populations-by-aggregated-age-groups-in-gcc-countries-national-statistics-latest-year-or-period-available/>.
17. <http://gulfmigration.eu/national-and-non-national-populations-by-aggregated-age-groups-in-gcc-countries-national-statistics-latest-year-or-period-available/>.
18. The figures are taken from the 2010 census, since LMRA data do not (to date) provide a comprehensive picture of the employed population as a whole. The non-civilian employed persons (the Armed Forces and

Defence sector) as well as domestic workers (until September 2014) in particular are excluded from LMRA files emanating from GOSI (private sector), PFC (public sector), or the EMS (Expat Management System).

19. Census data, <http://gulfmigration.eu/population-by-nationality-group-and-sex-2010/>
20. Quarterly data taken from the expatriate management system of LMRA, [http://blmi.lmra.bh/mi\\_glossary.xml#LMRA%20Expatriate%20Management%20System%20\(EMS\)](http://blmi.lmra.bh/mi_glossary.xml#LMRA%20Expatriate%20Management%20System%20(EMS)). The figures include domestic workers, but exclude work visas for artists and certain other categories of workers in non-civilian organisations (Armed Forces, for instance).
21. \$665 or 580 Euros as of December 2014.
22. Articles 2 & 3, Decision No. 121/2007. See M. Zahra, [http://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/exno/GLMM\\_EN\\_2015\\_01.pdf](http://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/exno/GLMM_EN_2015_01.pdf).
23. As stated in an assessment of Bahrain's Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System by the UN: "The most recent quality assessment was in 2006 and the completeness for the registration of all five vital events was found to be close to 100%" (U.N. Technical Report on the Status of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in ESCWA Region, United Nations, ESA/STAT/2009/9, p. 4 [§15]) <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/vitalstatkb/Attachment26.aspx>.
24. The data on arrivals and departures by citizenship are available only for this period.
25. Population estimates and vital statistics (births, deaths) disaggregated by nationality are published on CIO's website ("Statistics", then "Population" or "Vital statistics-Births, deaths" [http://www.cio.gov.bh/CIO\\_ENG/Stats\\_SubDetailed.aspx?subcatid=604](http://www.cio.gov.bh/CIO_ENG/Stats_SubDetailed.aspx?subcatid=604)).

<b>Bahraini population and factors of demographic growth (1995-2013)</b>								
	B. pop. observed (mid-year)	B. births (mid-year)*	B. deaths (mid-year)*	B. pop. based on natural increase (mid-year)	B. arrivals (mid-year)*	B. departures (mid-year)*	B. pop. based on natural increase + migration (mid-year)	Population growth rate
	(1)			(2)			(3)	
1994	344,479							
1995	352,900	10,384	1,477	353,387**	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.42
1996	361,530	10,347	1,521	362,213	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.42
1997	370,377	10,566	1,473	371,306	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.42
1998	379,435	10,810	1,565	380,550	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.42
1999	388,714	11,039	1,601	389,988	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.42
2000	398,221	11,113	1,565	399,536	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.42
2001	409,623	10,700	1,583	408,652	1,220,900	1,216,638	412,914	2.82
2002	427,245	10,491	1,633	417,510	1,307,439	1,299,409	425,540	4.21
2003	445,631	10,929	1,705	426,734	1,406,016	1,400,162	432,589	4.21
2004	464,807	11,512	1,770	436,476	1,548,277	1,544,400	440,354	4.21
2005	484,811	11,846	1,804	446,519	1,722,822	1,723,369	445,972	4.21
2006	505,671	11,847	1,805	456,561	1,885,442	1,895,642	446,360	4.21
2007	527,434	11,986	1,790	466,757	2,024,222	2,025,865	465,114	4.21
2008	541,587	12,601	1,840	477,518	2,269,846	2,266,136	481,228	2.65
2009	558,011	13,213	1,897	488,834	2,438,324	2,445,862	481,296	2.99
2010	570,687	13,543	1,899	500,478	2,219,851	2,227,199	493,130	2.25
2011	584,688	13,518	1,993	512,003	1,124,010	1,133,531	502,481	2.42
2012	599,629	14,087	2,068	524,022	1,531,073	1,546,085	509,010	2.52
2013	614,830	14,940	2,032	536,930	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.50

**Source of data :** births, deaths, arrivals, departures and population figures (col. (1)) for Bahraini nationals published by CIO.

Population figures in columns (2) and (3) are author's calculations, based on CIO published data.

\* Published figures were end-of-the-year figures.

Mid-year figures for year  $n$  were obtained the following way:  $[x(\text{year } n) + x(\text{year } n - 1)] / 2$ .

\*\* Pop (2) (1995) = pop (1) (1994)+births (1995)-deaths (1995)

26. This hike in population growth rates during the period could also be due to the following fact: between 2001 (the year of census) and 2007 (the year the Central Population Register [CPR] became operational), population could only be estimated. In such a case, a share of the population increase would come from the inclusion of unregistered citizens into the CPR throughout the period.
27. Figures of labour permits/visas are taken from the Ministry of Labour records (2002-2007) and from the Expatriate Management System of LMRA (2008-2014).
28. Includes all categories of visas processed by the Expat Management System (EMS) of the LMRA: family dependents, temporary, business, and regular workers. Until September 2014, the EMS system excluded domestic workers from its scope and they were placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour. Since September 2014, the processing of documents for domestic workers has been incorporated within LMRA's assignments.
29. This was after suffering a slowdown following the 2008 global economic recession and the 2011 political crisis.
30. Temporary worker: a worker engaged to work in an enterprise for a short period, i.e., for less than two years and usually six months (Expatriate Management System [EMS] glossary).
31. <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=279526>.
32. As recorded by the Ministry of Interior at border crossings and published in Statistical Yearbooks under the "Arrivals and Departures" section.
33. LMRA. Bahrain Labour Market Indicators, Issue 27, Third quarter, 2014 [http://lmra.bh/portal/files/cms/shared/file/Newsletter/NewsletterQ3\(En\).pdf](http://lmra.bh/portal/files/cms/shared/file/Newsletter/NewsletterQ3(En).pdf). The low turnover of expatriate workers, and especially without the sponsor's consent, was also pointed out by Steffen Hertog (2014: 13).



### About the Author



**Françoise De Bel-Air** (Ph.D.) is a researcher and consultant based in Paris, France. A socio-demographer by training, she specialises in the political demography of Arab countries, with an emphasis on the Middle Eastern and Gulf States. She has been a research fellow and programme manager in the French Institute for the Near East (IFPO) in Amman, Jordan. She is currently involved in several European and international projects focusing on recent changes in family structures in the Arab world, highly-skilled and female migration, as well as GCC countries' demographic dynamics and policies. She has published over thirty-five book chapters, scientific articles and research papers, and an edited volume on Migration and Politics in the Middle East (2006). She is currently working on a book on Jordan and the refugee issue. Contact: [f\\_dba@hotmail.com](mailto:f_dba@hotmail.com)

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**Short Reference:** F. De Bel-Air, "Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in Bahrain," Explanatory Note No. 6/2015, GLMM, <http://gulfmigration.eu>

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