Beacon Legal

THE 2026

IN-HOUSE SALARY REPORT

UAE & SAUDI ARABIA

SPECIALIST LEGAL RECRUITMENT

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IN-HOUSE SALARY REPORT

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2026 SO FAR

The in-house legal market across the UAE has remained active into 2026. It hasn't been constant across every sector, but the demand is still very much there.

We've seen hiring pick up in waves — particularly across some of the larger entities in Abu Dhabi, where leadership changes and internal restructures have driven the need to rebuild or strengthen legal teams.
The main areas of demand haven't really changed:

- Energy (Oil & Gas and wider infrastructure)
- Financial Services & Investments (sovereign wealth funds, private capital)
- Technology (particularly AI, fintech and digital platforms)

What has changed is how businesses are hiring.
It's more considered.
More focused on specific skill sets.
And often tied directly to business-critical projects rather than general team growth.

Across the GCC, in-house roles still make up a significant proportion of legal hiring activity — particularly as more organisations continue to build out internal capabilities rather than rely externally.

Saudi Arabia is also continuing to influence the wider regional market. With major projects underway and long-term initiatives linked to Vision 2030 and the 2034 FIFA World Cup, there's ongoing demand for legal professionals across areas like infrastructure, commercial, regulatory and large-scale project work.

We're also continuing to see strong demand for bilingual legal talent, particularly those with regional experience.

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LEGAL HIRING - OUTLOOK FOR THE REST OF 2026

1. Return to Office Expectations

Across the Middle East, organisations are continuing to prioritise in-office presence, particularly for mid-to-senior legal roles.
This is especially evident in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, where leadership teams are placing greater emphasis on in-person collaboration to support decision-making, strengthen team culture, and ensure alignment on complex, business-critical projects.
For legal functions, this has translated into a stronger focus on visibility, stakeholder engagement, and closer integration with commercial teams.

2. Demand in Tech, Corporate & Investments

There remains robust demand for lawyers with experience in technology, corporate transactions, commercial contracts, and investments. As regional economies continue to diversify and digitise, legal teams are playing a critical role in M&A, venture capital, and investment structuring. Legal professionals who understand both regulatory frameworks and commercial drivers are in high demand.

3. Tourism, Leisure & Hospitality on the Rise

The recently announced Disneyland Abu Dhabi project is a clear signal of the region's growing investment in tourism, entertainment, and hospitality infrastructure. With tourism playing an increasingly central role in economic diversification strategies, we expect a surge in demand for legal counsel in areas such as real estate, franchising, IP, commercial contracts, and regulatory licensing.

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LEGAL HIRING - OUTLOOK FOR THE REST OF 2026

4. Expansion in Funds & Financial Services

Private equity, sovereign wealth, and venture capital activity remain strong across the region. Legal teams with expertise in funds formation, asset management, and investment advisory are in high demand. These roles often require lawyers who can operate across borders and structure complex deals, combining corporate, financial, and regulatory knowledge.

5. Localisation & Leadership Pipelines

Nationalisation policies like Saudisation and Emiratisation remain top of mind, particularly for leadership succession planning. Bilingual professionals with strong local ties are increasingly sought after. That said, high-growth sectors such as fintech, AI, renewable energy, and digital assets still look globally for legal expertise, especially when domestic talent pools remain limited.

6. UAE: A Global Legal Talent Magnet

The UAE continues to attract global legal talent, leveraging its lifestyle appeal, favourable tax environment, and world-class infrastructure. Global mobility programmes are increasingly used to relocate in-house lawyers internally, helping companies manage hiring costs and retain company DNA. However, this often comes with a trade-off – while transferees may align well with company values, they may lack essential regional market knowledge, creating a learning curve for navigating local legal landscapes.

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IN-HOUSE SALARIES

THE UAE

(AED PER MONTH)

Title	Salary Low	Salary Mid	Salary High
Chief Legal Officer	100,000	125,000	175,000
General Counsel	70,000	100,000	160,000
Head of Legal/ Legal Director (10 PQE)	60,000	75,000	90,000
Senior Legal Counsel (5-9 PQE)	40,000	55,000	70,000
Legal Counsel (2-4 PQE)	30,000	40,000	50,000
Associate Legal Counsel (NQ-1 PQE)	25,000	32,500	37,500

Salaries are gross monthly salary (basic, housing and transportation), not including benefits such as education, flights & bonus

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KEY STATS - THE UAE

Median Tenure

2.3 years

of people staying in their roles in the UAE

Gender Diversity

Where is the UAE gaining and losing talent?

Location	Lost Talent	Gained Talent	Ratio	Net Change
United Kingdom	32	91	+2.8	+59
Egypt	23	64	+2.8	+41
Saudi Arabia	26	15	-1.7	-11
India	13	32	+2.5	+19
Russia	6	20	+3.3	+14
Australia	6	19	+3.2	+13

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IN-HOUSE SALARIES
SAUDI ARABIA

(SAR PER MONTH)

Title	Salary Low	Salary Mid	Salary High
Chief Legal Officer	120,000	150,000	240,000
General Counsel	100,000	130,000	200,000
Head of Legal/ Legal Director (10 PQE)	80,000	95,000	110,000
Senior Legal Counsel (5-9 PQE)	50,000	65,000	80,000
Legal Counsel (2-4 PQE)	35,000	45,000	60,000
Associate Legal Counsel (NQ-1 PQE)	30,000	35,000	45,000

Salaries are gross monthly salary (basic, housing and transportation), not including benefits such as education, flights & bonus

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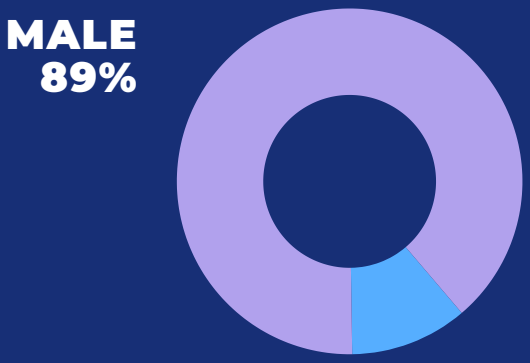
KEY STATS - KSA

Median Tenure

2.2 years

of people staying in their roles in the KSA

Gender Diversity



Where is the KSA gaining and losing talent?

Location	Lost Talent	Gained Talent	Ratio	Net Change
Egypt	12	58	+4.8	+46
UAE	15	26	+1.7	+11
United Kingdom	5	15	+3	+10
Sudan	0	15	+25	+15
Other	4	10	+2.5	+6

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INSIGHTS FROM OUR BENCHMARKING SURVEY

1

INDUSTRY ACTIVITY

The industries with highest legal recruitment activity were Energy (Oil, Gas and Renewables), Tech/Media/Telco (AI, Machine Learning, Apps, Health-Tech, Edu-Tech), and Funds & Investments (Sovereign Wealth, Cross-Border M&A).

2

DO YOU COVER MORE THAN JUST LEGAL?

Most GCs (65.4%) sat on their company's Executive leadership team, and most (76.9%) covered CoSec/Governance/Risk & Compliance as part of their role.

3

BONUS

The most common bonus structure was a discretionary bonus, with up to 3 months' basic salary, based on personal & company KPIs.
The best bonus structure in the market was up to 100% of salary.

4

EDUCATION ALLOWANCE

46% of GCs are offered education allowance. The lower end of offers provided 30K AED p/y for up to 2 children, and the best offered full payment for up to 4 children.

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INSIGHTS FROM OUR BENCHMARKING SURVEY

5

FLIGHT ALLOWANCE

61% are offered flight allowance, ranging from 1 economy return ticket per year to one's home country, to business class return tickets for themselves and their family to one's home country.

6

WORKING HOURS

The number of hours worked per week ranged between GCs, with **42%** of respondents at **51-60 hours, 38%** at **41-50** hours, and **11%** working over 61 hours a week.

7

DO YOU HAVE A RESOURCED TEAM?

Crucially, **61%** described their legal team as "under-resourced", with just **26%** describing their team as "perfectly resourced".

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CONTACT US

If you have questions or are interested in a new role in the UAE or Saudi Arabia, please reach out.

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