

MASHREQ GLOBAL DIGEST

GCC

July 13 – July 19



This edition of Market Digest highlights key macroeconomic indicators in the GCC region, recent developments in finance and trade, and notable deals—offering valuable insights into the country's current economic trends.

Macroeconomic News

GCC GDP to Grow 3.6% in 2025

According to the Institute of International Finance (IIF), the GCC's real GDP is set to grow from 2% in 2024 to 3.6% in 2025, driven by higher oil output and strong non-oil sector growth of 3.9%. This is supported by ongoing investment in infrastructure, tourism, and renewables. Inflation remains low, and financial risks are minimal due to high reserves, low debt levels, and strong banking systems. Capital inflows are expected to reach \$202 billion, led by FDI in the UAE and portfolio flows in Saudi Arabia, while outbound investment—especially to the U.S.—continues to rise, reflecting the region's growing role in global markets.

Reference: [Khaleej Times](#)



GCC Population Hits 61.2 Million by End of 2024

The Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat) announced that the GCC population reached 61.2 million by the end of 2024, an increase of over 2.1 million people compared to 2023. Males make up approximately 62.8% of the population. The sex ratio stands at 169 males per 100 females, higher than the global average of 101 males per 100 females. This imbalance is largely due to the high number of male expatriate workers who migrate to the region for jobs in industries such as construction, oil, and other sectors, often without their families. The GCC population accounts for 0.7% of the world's total.

Reference: [WAM](#)

Gulf Real Estate Rules Shift

Saudi Arabia has approved a new law allowing foreigners to buy property in selected areas of Riyadh and Jeddah, starting January 2026. The move supports Vision 2030, aiming to attract foreign investment, grow tourism, and reduce economic reliance on oil. Meanwhile, Kuwait is moving in the other direction. A draft decree proposes stricter rules on foreign ownership of private residential properties, even when held through listed companies or real estate funds. The goal is to protect Kuwait's demographic balance and prevent misuse of housing for speculative investments. However, GCC citizens will continue to enjoy property privileges.

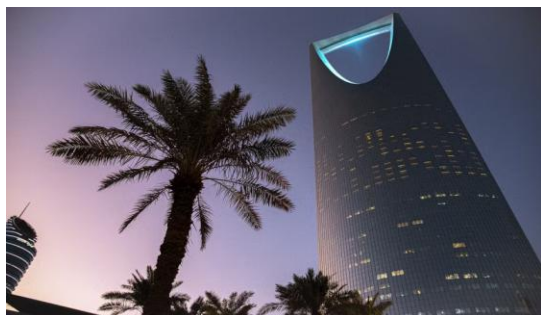
Reference: [Zawya](#), [Middle East Eye](#)



UAE Leads GCC in Hiring Growth

According to Cooper Fitch, the UAE recorded the highest hiring growth in the GCC at 4% in Q2 2025, driven by strong activity in financial services, real estate, and technology. Hiring slowed in other GCC countries due to Eid holidays, with Saudi Arabia and Oman at 2%, Bahrain at 1%, and contractions in Kuwait (-4%) and Qatar (-3%). Demand rose for senior roles in finance, legal, sales, digital transformation, and AI, though many firms shifted to short-term consultants over permanent hires.

Reference: [Khaleej Times](#)



GCC Airlines Expand Global Routes in 2025

In 2025, GCC airlines from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Oman, and Bahrain are launching over 100 new international routes. Airlines like Saudia, Qatar Airways, Emirates, and Oman Air are connecting the Gulf to cities in the US, Europe, Africa, and Asia. This growth strengthens the region as a major travel hub, making it easier for business and leisure travelers to explore new destinations. These new routes boost tourism and trade, highlighting the GCC's growing role in global air travel.

Reference: [Travel and Tour World](#)

Financial News

GCC Investors Can Now Invest Directly in Saudi Stock Market

New regulations by Saudi Arabia's Capital Market Authority allow residents of GCC countries, including expatriates, to invest directly in the main Saudi stock market. This move simplifies account openings, removes previous restrictions, and aligns with Vision 2030 goals to attract more local and international investors. The reforms also expand fund distribution through licensed digital platforms, enhance investor protections, and give REITs more flexibility to invest in development projects without strict limits—strengthening Saudi Arabia's position as a key regional financial hub.

Reference: [Arab News](#)



GCC Wealth Management Shifts with Tech and Client Expectations

The 2025 EY report reveals GCC investors are increasing advisor engagement, with 55% holding more meetings due to market volatility. Nearly half seek to work with multiple wealth providers, signaling reduced loyalty. Alternative investments are favored, with 69% already allocating assets there. Trust in AI stands at 13%, and 71% expect its integration into wealth management products despite concerns about data security. This shows how GCC investors are evolving rapidly.

Reference: [The Peninsula Qatar](#)

Rise every day

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GCC IPOs Raise \$3.4B in H1 2025



In the first half of 2025, GCC IPO proceeds fell 6% year-on-year to \$3.4 billion, despite a slight increase in listings—24 versus 23 in H1 2024. Saudi Arabia dominated the market, raising \$2.86 billion across 22 IPOs, a 36% increase from last year. However, only 10 of the 24 IPOs showed positive returns compared to their offer price. The decline reflects geopolitical and economic uncertainties, but the steady IPO count shows market resilience and ongoing interest. Activity suggests GCC equity markets remain active, with recovery potential as conditions stabilize.

Reference: [Zawya](#)

Foreign Investors Boost GCC Stock Buying to \$4.2B in Q2

According to Kamco Invest, foreign investors poured \$4.2 billion into GCC equities in Q2 2025 — a 50% jump from Q1 — driven by strong earnings and ongoing reforms. This marked the sixth consecutive quarter of inflows, with H1 net foreign investment reaching \$7 billion. Saudi led with \$1.4 billion, driven by market reforms, followed by UAE (\$1.33 billion) and Kuwait (\$696 million). Oman and Bahrain saw outflows. Strong earnings, IPO activity, and economic reforms are fueling global interest.

Reference: [Arab News](#)



Trade & Deals

GCC to Launch Unified Customs Data Platform

The GCC Customs Union Authority has signed a deal with Malomatia to develop a unified digital platform for exchanging customs data among member states. The initiative aims to modernize customs infrastructure, streamline goods movement, and improve data accuracy and compliance. It marks a major step toward deeper Gulf economic integration, supporting faster customs clearance, better risk analysis, and stronger coordination across borders through secure digital connectivity.

Reference: [Zawya](#)

EU and GCC Launch Strategic Talks

The EU will begin strategic partnership talks with the six GCC countries to boost ties beyond trade. The move complements long-stalled free trade negotiations and aims to strengthen cooperation in security, investment, and foreign policy. In 2023, the EU was the GCC's second-largest import partner (€93.8 billion) and fourth-largest export partner (€76.3 billion). EU officials say the new agreements could deliver a “major boost” to trade, stability, and regional cooperation.

Reference: [The National News](#)

GCC Secretary-General Stresses Timely Completion of Gulf Railway Project

The GCC Secretary-General, Jasem Albudaiwi, reaffirmed the commitment to complete the GCC Railway Project on time. The project aims to boost economic growth and regional integration by linking member states with a rail network. At a Riyadh meeting, officials reviewed progress and praised the work done. Albudaiwi urged the Gulf Railway Authority to accelerate efforts to ensure timely completion, emphasizing its role in strengthening economic and logistical ties in the Gulf.

Reference: [Zawya](#)

Markets

Market Dashboard

- The S&P 500 rose 0.6% this week, the Nasdaq gained 1.5%, and the Dow slipped 0.07%, as markets navigated mixed earnings, economic data, and renewed concerns over tariffs. A brief dip followed reports of potential 15–20% U.S. tariffs on EU goods, but investor confidence remained resilient. Strong retail sales and improved consumer sentiment provided support, even as inflation worries persisted. Although 81% of early S&P 500 earnings surpassed expectations, stock reactions varied, reflecting cautious optimism amid uncertainty.
- Bitcoin had a strong week, hitting a new all-time high above \$123,000 before retreating to around \$118,000. The rally was driven by growing institutional interest, progress in U.S. stablecoin regulation, and major companies increasing their Bitcoin holdings. Crypto ETFs are drawing more institutional money, though analysts warn a drop below \$90,000 could hurt corporate holders. So far this year, Bitcoin has outperformed traditional markets with gains of about 25%.
- Gold ended the week nearly flat at around \$3,350/oz, as strong U.S. retail sales and jobless claims, along with a firm dollar, weighed on sentiment. It slipped 0.2% for the week, with markets torn between solid economic data and expectations of Fed rate cuts later this month. While gold thrives on uncertainty and low rates, its recent rally may be losing steam.
- Oil prices finished the week down about 1.5%, with Brent closing at \$69.28 and WTI at \$67.34 per barrel. Markets remained cautious as mixed U.S. economic signals and renewed tariff threats offset concerns over fresh EU sanctions on Russian energy. While consumer sentiment in the U.S. improved, weak housing data and fears of inflation from potential new tariffs weighed on demand outlook. New restrictions on Russian oil flows failed to lift prices significantly, reflecting doubts about enforcement and global supply impact.
- The dollar posted a weekly gain despite slipping against the euro on Friday. Mixed inflation data and tariff-driven uncertainty kept markets on edge, while Trump's criticism of Fed Chair Powell added pressure. The euro, sterling, and yen all weakened against the dollar for the week, reflecting investor caution.

Indicators	11-Jul-25	18-Jul-25	% Change
S&P 500	6,259.75	6,296.79	0.59%
Bitcoin	117,516.99	118,003.23	0.41%
Gold	3,355.91	3,350.40	-0.16%
Crude Oil	70.36	69.28	-1.53%
EUR/USD	1.1703	1.1618	-0.73%

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