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[QU announces results of the Guest Workers' Welfare Index 2018](#)



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The Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at Qatar University (QU) recently completed the first-ever effort to measure and track the welfare of blue-collar guest workers in Qatar.

This Guest Worker Welfare Index was initiated with a closed expert workshop convened at SESRI in January 2016 that brought together local and international scholars, stakeholders, and policymakers. The welfare of migrant laborers around the world has received significant attention from the global media and scholarly community. In the Gulf, much of this attention has been directed towards Qatar, especially since the announcement of the FIFA 2022 World Cup. However, much of the public discussion of the problems has not been based on unbiased, quantitative and qualitative measurements that can be generalized to the overall migrant labor population. Reliable data are needed to properly assess the issues surrounding worker welfare in aggregate, to identify domains where welfare is lower or higher, and ultimately, to address those issues in most need of improvement.

The Guest Workers' Welfare Index (GWWI) is based on results from a nationally-representative survey conducted with 1,015 blue-collar guest workers in Qatar, and which will be continued annually. The largest group of respondents came from Nepal (34%), followed by India (26%), Bangladesh (19%), Pakistan (7%), Sri Lanka (5%), Egypt (4%), Philippines (1%), and other countries (4%). In terms of occupation, more than three quarters of respondents (82%) were employed as construction workers (15%), drivers (11%), cleaners (11%), electricians (9%), masons (8%), security guards (8%), carpenters (8%) foremen (6%) and craftsmen (6%).

With this number of completed interviews, the maximum sampling error is +/- 3.4 percentage points. The survey was conducted during April 2017 and evaluated several aspects of working and living conditions of these workers, including safety and security at working sites and living compounds, human rights and labor rights, finance and remittances, as well as their treatment by their employers. By examining the responses from the workers themselves, the goal is to have an objective and reliable index which reflects the actual conditions of workers in Qatar and which can measure changes in these conditions over time. While the term "guest workers" covers all foreign workers in Qatar, the GWWI focuses specifically on the welfare of blue-collar workers, defined as low skilled individuals living in labor camps and collective housing.

From the 2016 expert workshop, SESRI developed the questionnaire which served as the basis for the selection of the variables used in the Index. Then SESRI researchers utilized factor analysis to identify the most relevant variables from the observed data points which became the core dimensions of the index. This is the same method used to construct other notable indices such as consumer confidence indices. One of the main policy recommendations is develop programs for workers so that they are more aware of their rights and have a fuller understanding of the information in their contracts. Going forward, SESRI will conduct the GWWI survey annually, with the second wave

scheduled in May 2018. The first survey identified many important areas of strength, as well as those in need of improvement, but additional data are needed to measure trends.

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