RELOCATE2UAE | EMPLOYMENT

Working in the UAE Complete Employment Guide 2026/27

Contracts, probation, notice, leave, gratuity, pay rules, non-competes, resignation, termination, redundancy, changing jobs and unemployment insurance, checked against the law itself.

Last reviewed 11 October 2026 | Next review 15 January 2027

Last reviewed: 11 October 2026 | **Next review:** 15 January 2027 | **Applies to:** private sector employees in all seven emirates, with separate notes for DIFC and ADGM

QUICK ANSWER

Most private sector jobs in the UAE are governed by Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021 and overseen by the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MOHRE). Contracts are fixed term, probation is capped at six months, notice runs from 30 to 90 days, annual leave is 30 days, and expatriates who complete a year earn an end-of-service gratuity of 21 days' basic pay per year for the first five years and 30 days per year after that. Salaries must go through the Wage Protection System and, since 1 June 2026, are due on the first day of the month. Unemployment insurance (ILOE) is compulsory and costs AED 5 or AED 10 a month.

PLEASE READ

This guide is general information, not legal advice. It summarises UAE law as we read it on 11 October 2026 and cannot account for your contract, your employer's policies or your free zone. Where a point is uncertain we say so. For anything that turns on your own facts, speak to a licensed UAE employment lawyer. Davidson & Co., our legal partner, is the firm we suggest.

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How to read this guide

Every factual claim carries a source tag so you can see how much weight it will bear.

Tag	What it means
LAW	Taken from the text of a UAE law or its executive regulations, read on the official UAE Legislation platform
OFFICIAL	Published by a government body such as MOHRE, u.ae or the ILOE insurance pool
REPORTED	Reported by a named law firm or established news outlet; we have not read the underlying instrument ourselves
ESTIMATE	A date or figure that is expected but not yet confirmed
VERIFY	Sources disagree or the rule is unclear; confirm before relying on it

Article numbers refer to Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021 ("the Labour Law") unless we say otherwise. "ER" means its Executive Regulations, Cabinet Resolution No. 1 of 2022. The Arabic text of every UAE law prevails over any translation.

UAE employment law at a glance

Topic	The rule	Source
Governing law	Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021, in force since 2 February 2022, amended three times	LAW
Regulator	MOHRE for mainland employers; free zone authorities administer employment in their zones	LAW Art. 1, REPORTED
Contract type	Fixed term only, renewable, with no maximum length in the current text	LAW Art. 8
Probation	Six months at most, once per employer	LAW Art. 9
Working hours	8 a day or 48 a week; two hours a day fewer in Ramadan	LAW Art. 17, ER Art. 15
Overtime	Basic pay plus 25%, or plus 50% between 10pm and 4am; normally two hours a day at most	LAW Art. 19
Weekly rest	At least one paid day	LAW Art. 21
Annual leave	30 days a year; two days a month between six and twelve months' service	LAW Art. 29
Sick leave	Up to 90 days a year after probation: 15 full pay, 30 half pay, 45 unpaid	LAW Art. 31
Maternity leave	60 days: 45 full pay, 15 half pay, no minimum service	LAW Art. 30
Parental leave	5 working days for either parent within six months of the birth	LAW Art. 32
Notice period	30 to 90 days, as written in the contract	LAW Art. 43
Gratuity	21 days' basic pay per year for years one to five, 30 days per year after, capped at two years' wage	LAW Art. 51
Final pay deadline	Within 14 days of the contract ending	LAW Art. 53

Topic	The rule	Source
Salary payment	Through the Wage Protection System; due on the 1st of the month since 1 June 2026	LAW ER Art. 16, REPORTED
Minimum wage	None for expatriates; AED 6,000 a month for Emiratis in the private sector from 1 January 2026	LAW Art. 27, REPORTED
Non-compete	Allowed for up to two years if limited by time, place and type of work	LAW Art. 10
Unemployment insurance	Compulsory; AED 5 or AED 10 a month; pays 60% of basic salary for up to three months	OFFICIAL
Time limit to claim	Two years from the end of the employment relationship	LAW Art. 54(9)

1. Which employment law applies to you

Three separate employment regimes operate in the UAE. Which one covers you depends on where your employer is licensed, not where you live.

Where your employer is licensed	Law that applies	Who you deal with
Mainland (onshore), any emirate	Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021	MOHRE, then the labour courts
Most free zones (for example JAFZA, DMCC, Masdar, RAKEZ)	The same federal Labour Law, administered by the free zone authority	The free zone authority first, then the courts
Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)	DIFC Employment Law No. 2 of 2019, as amended	DIFC Authority and DIFC Courts
Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM)	ADGM Employment Regulations 2024, in force since 1 April 2025	ADGM Registration Authority and ADGM Courts

The federal Labour Law covers every private sector establishment, employer and worker in the country. It does not cover federal or local government employees, members of the armed forces, police and security services, or domestic workers. LAW Art. 3. Domestic workers have their own law, which we cover in our guide to hiring a maid or nanny.

The rights in the Labour Law are minimums. A contract or company policy can give you more, and any term that gives you less is void, as is any waiver of a right the law grants you. LAW Art. 65.

> **CHECK BEFORE YOU RELY ON THIS**
> Your offer letter or contract should name the employing entity and its licence. If the entity is in DIFC or ADGM, most of the numbers in sections 2 to 16 do not apply to you. Go to section 17 first.

Is the UAE labour law the same in Dubai and Abu Dhabi?

Yes. The Labour Law is federal, so the rules on contracts, leave, notice and gratuity are identical in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and the northern emirates. What differs is health insurance (see section 15), the two financial free zones, and local court procedure.

2. MOHRE and the work permit

MOHRE is the federal ministry that issues work permits for mainland private sector jobs, registers employment contracts, runs the Wage Protection System and handles labour complaints. You cannot lawfully work for a mainland employer until MOHRE has issued a work permit for that employer. LAW Art. 6.

Three points protect new arrivals:

- **Your employer pays for hiring you.** An employer may not charge you recruitment or employment fees, directly or indirectly. LAW Art. 6(4). That includes the work permit and employment visa.
- **Your employer may not keep your passport.** Withholding a worker's official documents is prohibited. LAW Art. 13(2).
- **A residence visa is not a work permit.** If you hold a Golden Visa, a Green Visa or a family-sponsored visa, a mainland employer still needs a work permit for you. The regulations list twelve permit types,

including permits for Golden Visa holders, people sponsored by family, part-time work, temporary work and freelancers. LAW ER Art. 6.

The visa side of starting a job, including medical tests, Emirates ID and timelines, is covered step by step in our UAE Visa Requirements Guide.

How to contact MOHRE

Channel	Use it for
Labour Claims and Advisory Centre, 80084	Registering or following up a labour complaint, legal questions OFFICIAL
Call centre and WhatsApp, 600590000	General enquiries, service follow-up OFFICIAL
MOHRE website and MOHRE UAE app	Viewing your contract, filing complaints, checking fines

3. UAE employment contracts

Every employee must have a written contract in two copies, one for each side. LAW Art. 8(1). For a mainland job the contract is registered with MOHRE on an approved template, and you can add clauses to the template as long as they do not undercut the law. LAW ER Art. 10.

What a UAE employment contract must contain

The regulations list the minimum content: the employer's name and address, your name, nationality and date of birth, your qualifications and job title, start date, place of work, working hours, rest days, probation period if any, contract term, the agreed wage including benefits and allowances, annual leave, notice period and the procedure for ending the contract. LAW ER Art. 10(1).

Fixed term contracts and the "three year" myth

All contracts are for a definite period and can be renewed by agreement. LAW Art. 8(3). Unlimited contracts no longer exist for new hires. Many websites still say a UAE contract can run for three years at most. That described the original 2021 text. The consolidated law on the UAE Legislation platform sets no maximum term. LAW Art. 8(3).

Two practical consequences follow:

- Renewals and extensions count as one unbroken period of service for gratuity. LAW Art. 8(4).
- If you and your employer carry on after the end date without signing anything, the contract is treated as extended on the same terms. LAW Art. 8(5).

Work models

Model	What it means	Source
Full time	One employer, full daily hours	LAW Art. 7
Part time	One or more employers for set hours or days	LAW Art. 7
Temporary	Work tied to a specific period or task	LAW Art. 7
Flexible	Hours or days change with the employer's workload	LAW Art. 7
Remote	Work done wholly or partly outside the workplace, full time or part time	LAW ER Art. 5

Model	What it means	Source
Job sharing	Duties and pay split between two or more workers, treated as part time	LAW ER Art. 5

Moving from one model to another needs agreement from both sides and settlement of everything owed under the first contract. LAW ER Art. 10(3).

Language

Contracts must be in Arabic, with a second language you understand alongside it. If the two versions conflict, the Arabic text prevails. LAW Art. 66. Read both columns, or have someone you trust read the Arabic.

Contract checklist before you sign

1. The employing entity and its licence (mainland, free zone, DIFC or ADGM) are named.
2. Basic salary and each allowance are shown separately, and they match your offer letter.
3. The contract term, probation length and notice period are stated.
4. Annual leave is at least 30 calendar days.
5. Any non-compete clause states its duration, geography and the type of work covered.
6. Benefits you were promised (flights, school fees, family health cover, bonus) appear in writing.
7. The Arabic and English versions say the same thing.

Why the split between basic salary and allowances matters so much is explained in our UAE Salary Guide 2026/27.

4. Probation periods

Probation in the UAE can last up to six months from your start date, and an employer can put you on probation only once. If you pass, the probation months count as part of your service. LAW Art. 9.

Notice during probation is not the same in each direction.

Who ends the contract, and why	Written notice required	What else applies	Source
Employer dismisses you	At least 14 days	None	LAW Art. 9(1)
You resign to join another UAE employer	At least one month	Your new employer compensates the old one for recruitment costs unless agreed otherwise	LAW Art. 9(3)
You resign to leave the UAE	At least 14 days	If you return on a new work permit within three months, the new employer pays that compensation unless agreed otherwise	LAW Art. 9(4)

Whoever skips the notice owes the other side pay for the notice period, or for the part not worked. LAW Art. 9(5).

The one-year work permit bar. An expatriate who leaves the country during probation without following these rules will not be given a new work permit for one year from the date of leaving. LAW Art. 9(6). The Ministry can exempt people sponsored by family, Golden Visa holders and workers with skills the country needs. LAW ER Art. 11.

Your rights during probation

- **Sick leave:** no paid sick leave. Your employer may grant unpaid sick leave on a medical report. LAW Art. 31(2).
- **Annual leave:** you accrue it, your employer can agree to let you take it, and you are paid for the unused balance if you do not pass probation. LAW Art. 29(3).
- **Maternity and parental leave:** neither has a minimum service requirement in the law. LAW Art. 30, Art. 32.
- **Non-compete:** does not apply if the contract ends during probation. LAW ER Art. 12(5).
- **Gratuity:** none, because gratuity needs a full year of service. LAW Art. 51.

5. Working hours, overtime and rest days

The normal maximum is 8 hours a day or 48 hours a week. LAW Art. 17. You may not work more than five hours in a row without breaks adding up to at least one hour. LAW Art. 18. Commuting time is not working time, apart from narrow exceptions such as breakdowns of employer transport. LAW ER Art. 15(1).

Overtime pay

Situation	What you are owed	Source
Hours beyond normal working hours	Normal pay for the hour, calculated on basic wage, plus at least 25%	LAW Art. 19(2)
Overtime between 10pm and 4am	Normal pay on basic wage plus at least 50% (shift workers excluded)	LAW Art. 19(3)
Working on your rest day	Another day off, or the day's pay plus at least 50% of basic wage	LAW Art. 19(4)
Working on a public holiday	Another day off, or the day's pay plus at least 50% of basic wage	LAW Art. 28(2)

Overtime is limited to two hours a day unless the work is needed to prevent a serious loss or accident, and total hours may not exceed 144 in any three weeks. You cannot be made to work more than two rest days in a row. LAW Art. 19, ER Art. 15(3).

Who is not covered by the hours limits. Board chairs and members, people in supervisory roles who hold the powers of the employer, ship crews, and shift-based work averaging no more than 56 hours a week are exempt from the maximum hours rules. LAW ER Art. 15(4). In practice many senior managers fall into the second group and have no legal claim to overtime.

Ramadan hours

Normal working hours are reduced by two hours a day during Ramadan. LAW ER Art. 15(2). The law does not limit this to employees who are fasting.

Weekend

The Labour Law guarantees at least one paid rest day a week and leaves the day to the contract or company rules. LAW Art. 21. Government offices moved to a Saturday and Sunday weekend with a half day on Friday in 2022, and most private employers follow a Saturday and Sunday pattern, but that is a choice, not a legal requirement. REPORTED

Midday break

MOHRE bans outdoor work in direct sun from 12:30pm to 3pm between 15 June and 15 September each year. REPORTED The dates are announced annually.

6. Remote work

Remote work is a recognised work model. The regulations define it as work done wholly or partly outside the workplace, with contact between employer and employee by electronic means, on a full-time or part-time basis. LAW ER Art. 5. There is a dedicated remote employment contract template. LAW ER Art. 10(4).

What the law does and does not give you:

- **No right to demand it.** Remote work needs your employer's approval, and the employer may set specific working hours. LAW Art. 17(6).
- **It can be done from inside or outside the UAE.** The same article refers to remote work "from inside or outside the State". LAW Art. 17(6). Working from another country for long periods can affect your residence visa and your tax position at home, so read our UAE Taxation Guide before agreeing to it.
- **Your other rights are unchanged.** Leave, gratuity, notice and pay protection apply in the same way.

Working remotely from the UAE for a foreign employer

This is a different situation. If your employer is outside the UAE, you are not covered by the Labour Law. The usual route is the one-year virtual work residence visa, which requires proof of employment outside the UAE and a monthly income of at least USD 3,500. OFFICIAL The Abu Dhabi Residents Office asks for six months of bank statements. Details are in our visa guide.

7. Salary payments and the Wage Protection System (WPS)

How UAE salaries are structured

The law separates two terms. **Basic wage** is the pay set in your contract, excluding all allowances. **Wage** is the basic wage plus cash allowances and benefits in kind such as housing, transport or cost-of-living allowances. LAW Art. 1.

The distinction decides how much you receive when it matters:

Calculated on basic wage only	Calculated on full wage
End-of-service gratuity	Pay during annual leave
Overtime	Pay during your notice period, and pay in lieu of notice
Unused leave paid out when you leave	Compensation for unlawful termination
Unemployment insurance payout	

Sources: LAW Art. 19, 29, 43, 47, 51; ER Art. 19(2); OFFICIAL ILOE.

Is there a minimum wage in the UAE?

There is no minimum wage for expatriate employees. The Labour Law allows the Cabinet to set one but no general figure has been issued. LAW Art. 27. Emirati nationals in the private sector must be paid at least AED 6,000 a month under work permits issued, renewed or amended from 1 January 2026. REPORTED

Pay must be equal for men and women doing the same work or work of equal value. LAW Art. 4(4).

What the Wage Protection System is

The WPS is the electronic system through which every establishment registered with MOHRE must pay wages, using approved banks and exchange houses, so that the Ministry can see whether staff were paid in full and on time. LAW ER Art. 16.

The WPS rules since 1 June 2026

MOHRE replaced the WPS framework with Ministerial Resolution No. 340 of 2026, in force from 1 June 2026. We have relied on law firm and press summaries of the resolution, so every point in this table is tagged REPORTED.

Rule	Detail
Pay day	Wages for the previous calendar month are due on the 1st of each month. Anything later counts as delayed
Compliance threshold	An employer is compliant if at least 85% of total wages due are paid on time, up from 80%
Individual threshold	You count as paid if you receive at least 85% of your wage and the shortfall is a lawful deduction
New starters	The old 30-day exemption for new employees has gone. You are inside WPS from your first payroll
Day 2 onwards	MOHRE may send warnings
Day 5	MOHRE may suspend new work permits for the employer
Day 11	Repeat offenders within six months may be fined and downgraded
Day 16	For employers of 25 or more in targeted sectors, a labour dispute may be registered automatically
Day 21	Asset attachment, travel bans on responsible individuals and referral to the Public Prosecutor are possible
Free zones	Whether free zones that run their own WPS will follow the same dates was not confirmed when the resolution was issued

CHECK BEFORE YOU RELY ON THIS

Older articles say salaries must be paid "within 15 days of the due date" or "by the 14th of the following month". Those describe the previous resolution. If your mainland employer still pays mid-month for the month before, it is late under the 2026 rule.

What can be deducted from your salary

Deductions are allowed only for a closed list of reasons, each with its own cap. LAW Art. 25.

Reason	Limit
Repaying a loan from your employer, with your written consent, no interest	Within the overall monthly cap
Recovering an overpayment	20% of wage
Pension, social security and insurance contributions required by law	As the law requires
Disciplinary fines under approved company rules	5% of wage
Court-ordered debts	A quarter of wage (maintenance debts can be more)
Damage you caused through fault or breach of instructions	Five days' wage a month
All deductions together	50% of wage

Because WPS now treats you as unpaid below 85%, deductions above 15% in a month are likely to flag your employer even where the Labour Law would allow them. REPORTED

If your salary is late

Your employer must let you do your job or pay you regardless. LAW Art. 26. If wages stop, file a complaint with MOHRE (section 16). During a dispute the Ministry can order the employer to keep paying you for up to two months. LAW Art. 54(5).

8. Annual leave and public holidays

Annual leave entitlement

Length of service	Paid annual leave	Source
Under six months	No statutory entitlement to take leave	LAW Art. 29
Six to twelve months	Two days for each month	LAW Art. 29(1)(b)
One year or more	At least 30 days for each year	LAW Art. 29(1)(a)
Part time	Pro rata to hours worked, with a floor of five working days a year	LAW ER Art. 18

How the rules work in practice:

- **Leave is counted in calendar days.** Weekends and public holidays that fall inside your leave count as leave days unless your contract or company policy is more generous. LAW Art. 29(7).
- **Your employer sets the dates.** It can schedule leave around business needs and must tell you at least one month ahead. LAW Art. 29(4).
- **Carry-over is limited.** You may carry forward up to half of your annual leave to the next year, or agree to be paid for it instead, based on your wage at the time. LAW ER Art. 19(1).
- **Your employer cannot block leave for more than two years.** LAW Art. 29(8).
- **Unused leave is paid when you leave,** whatever the length of the balance, at your basic salary. LAW Art. 29(9), ER Art. 19(2).

UAE public holidays

You are entitled to full pay on official public holidays set by the Cabinet. LAW Art. 28. The list is the same for the public and private sectors under Cabinet Resolution No. 27 of 2024. REPORTED

Holiday	Date
New Year's Day	1 January
Eid Al Fitr	1 to 3 Shawwal (expected 9 to 11 March 2027) ESTIMATE
Arafah Day and Eid Al Adha	9 to 12 Dhu Al Hijjah (expected 15 to 18 May 2027) ESTIMATE
Islamic New Year	1 Muharram, set by moon sighting
Prophet's Birthday	12 Rabi Al Awwal, set by moon sighting
Eid Al Etihad (National Day)	2 and 3 December

Islamic holidays depend on the moon sighting and are confirmed shortly beforehand. Extra days that an emirate grants to its own government staff do not automatically apply to private employers. REPORTED For term dates and long weekends see our UAE School Holiday Calendar 2026 to 2027.

9. Sick leave

After probation you can take up to 90 days of sick leave a year, in one block or in separate periods. LAW Art. 31(3).

Days of sick leave in the year	Pay
First 15 days	Full pay
Next 30 days	Half pay
Remaining 45 days	Unpaid

The conditions:

- Tell your employer within three working days and provide a medical report from a licensed health facility. LAW Art. 31(1).
- There is no paid sick leave during probation. LAW Art. 31(2).
- Sick pay is not due if the illness results from your own misconduct, such as alcohol or drug use, or from breaking safety rules. LAW Art. 31(4), ER Art. 20.
- Your employer may not dismiss you for ill health before you have used the leave the law gives you. LAW Art. 46. If you still cannot return once sick leave is exhausted, the employer may end the contract and must pay everything you are owed. LAW Art. 31(5).

Work injuries are separate. If you are injured at work or develop an occupational illness, your employer pays for treatment and pays your full wage for up to six months, then half wage for up to a further six months. LAW Art. 37.

10. Maternity, paternity and other family leave

Maternity leave in the UAE private sector

A female employee is entitled to 60 days of maternity leave: the first 45 days on full pay and the next 15 days on half pay. LAW Art. 30(1). The law sets no minimum period of service.

Situation	Entitlement	Source
Standard maternity leave	60 days: 45 full pay, 15 half pay	LAW Art. 30(1)
When it can start	Any time from the last day of the month before the expected month of birth, with a medical certificate	LAW Art. 30(5)
Illness of mother or baby linked to pregnancy or birth	Up to 45 further days, unpaid, with a medical certificate	LAW Art. 30(2)
Baby born sick or with a disability needing constant care	30 more days on full pay, extendable by 30 days unpaid	LAW Art. 30(4)
Stillbirth or death of the baby after six months of pregnancy	Full maternity leave still applies	LAW Art. 30(3)
Nursing breaks	One or two breaks a day totalling no more than one hour, for six months from the birth	LAW Art. 30(9)
Protection from dismissal	You cannot be dismissed or given notice because of pregnancy or maternity leave	LAW Art. 30(8)

Maternity leave does not reduce your other leave. LAW Art. 30(6). The 45 days of unpaid illness-related absence do not count towards gratuity. LAW Art. 30(2).

> **CHECK BEFORE YOU RELY ON THIS**
> Some guides quote two hours of nursing breaks a day, or 90 or 98 days of maternity leave. Two hours is not in the current law. Ninety days is the government sector entitlement, and longer leave has been discussed for government staff in the Federal National Council. REPORTED None of that has changed the 60 days that apply to private sector employees.

Paternity (parental) leave

Either parent is entitled to five working days of paid parental leave, taken together or separately within six months of the child's birth. LAW Art. 32(1)(b). For fathers this is the only statutory leave on the birth of a child. Mothers receive it in addition to maternity leave.

Other statutory leave

Leave	Entitlement	Source
Bereavement	5 days for a spouse; 3 days for a parent, child, sibling, grandchild or grandparent	LAW Art. 32(1)(a)
Study leave	10 working days a year to sit exams at a UAE-accredited institution, after two years' service	LAW Art. 32(2)
National service	Paid leave for Emirati employees	LAW Art. 32(3)
Unpaid leave	By agreement with your employer; not counted as service	LAW Art. 33

Hajj leave. The current Labour Law does not list a separate Hajj leave. Articles describing a 30-day statutory Hajj leave are describing the repealed 1980 law. Today it is a matter for your contract, company policy or unpaid leave by agreement. LAW Art. 32, Art. 33.

11. End-of-service gratuity

End-of-service gratuity is a lump sum your employer pays when your job ends, in place of a pension. Expatriate employees who work full time qualify once they complete one year of continuous service. LAW Art. 51(2).

How gratuity is calculated

Period of service	Gratuity earned
Less than one year	Nothing
Each of the first five years	21 days' basic wage
Each year after the fifth	30 days' basic wage
Part years, once you have passed one year	Pro rata

The rules that sit around the formula:

- **It uses your last basic wage,** not your total package. LAW Art. 51(5).
- **Days of unpaid absence are excluded** from your length of service. LAW Art. 51(4).
- **The total is capped at two years' wage.** LAW Art. 51(6).
- **It is the same whether you resign or are dismissed.** The 2021 law dropped the old reductions for resignation, and it contains no clause forfeiting gratuity on dismissal. Dismissal as a disciplinary sanction is expressly "while preserving the worker's right to end-of-service gratuity". LAW Art. 39(1)(g), Art. 51.
- **Your employer can deduct money you owe,** such as an outstanding loan or an amount ordered by a court. LAW Art. 51(7), ER Art. 29.
- **It must be paid within 14 days** of the contract ending, with all other entitlements. LAW Art. 53.

Worked example

Basic salary AED 10,000 a month, seven years' service, no unpaid leave. The law treats a month as 30 days. LAW Art. 67.

Step	Working	Amount
Daily basic wage	10,000 divided by 30	AED 333.33
Years one to five	21 days x 5 years x 333.33	AED 35,000
Years six and seven	30 days x 2 years x 333.33	AED 20,000
Gratuity		AED 55,000

Some payroll teams calculate the daily rate as basic salary x 12 divided by 365, which gives a slightly lower figure. Ask which method your employer uses. Our free calculator at the end of this guide uses the 30-day month.

CHECK BEFORE YOU RELY ON THIS

Gratuity is an unfunded promise from your employer, not money held in your name. If the company fails, you are a creditor. Workers' entitlements rank ahead of most other debts, after sums owed to the public treasury and court-ordered family maintenance. LAW Art. 65(7). Treat gratuity as a bonus when you plan your savings, not as your pension. Our UAE Wealth Management guide covers how expats build long-term savings here.

Who gets something different

Group	What applies	Source
Emirati employees	Pension and social security instead of gratuity	LAW Art. 51(1)
Part time and job sharing	Gratuity scaled by contracted hours against full-time hours	LAW ER Art. 30(1)
Temporary work, or service under one year	No gratuity	LAW ER Art. 30(2)
Employees whose employer has joined the Savings Scheme	Monthly employer contributions to an investment fund replace future gratuity accrual	REPORTED
DIFC employees	A funded workplace savings plan (DEWS or another qualifying scheme) replaced gratuity from 1 February 2020	REPORTED
ADGM employees	Gratuity, with the option of a pension or savings scheme instead	REPORTED

The alternative Savings Scheme

Cabinet Resolution No. 96 of 2023 created a voluntary alternative to gratuity for mainland and most free zone employers. An employer that opts in pays a monthly contribution into a licensed investment fund: 5.83% of basic salary for employees with under five years' service and 8.33% after that. Gratuity earned before the switch is preserved and paid when you leave. The scheme remains voluntary. REPORTED

12. Non-compete clauses

A UAE employer may include a non-compete clause only if your job gives you knowledge of its clients or access to its business secrets. To be valid the clause must be limited in time, place and type of work to what is needed to protect a legitimate business interest, and it cannot run for more than two years after the contract ends. LAW Art. 10(1).

Question	Answer	Source
Maximum length	Two years from the end of the contract	LAW Art. 10(1)
What the clause must specify	Geographical scope, duration and the nature of the work that would harm the employer	LAW ER Art. 12(1)
Who has to prove harm	The employer, in court	LAW ER Art. 12(2)
If the employer ends the contract unlawfully	The clause is void	LAW Art. 10(2)
If the contract ends during probation	You are exempt	LAW ER Art. 12(5)(b)

Question	Answer	Source
Can it be bought out?	Yes. You or your new employer may pay the old employer up to three months of your wage, with its written agreement	LAW ER Art. 12(5)(a)
Can it be waived?	Yes, by written agreement	LAW ER Art. 12(4)
Time limit for the employer to sue	One year from discovering the breach	LAW Art. 10(3)

The regulations also say the clause "shall not be applicable if the cause of terminating the contract is due to the employer's will" or the employer's breach. LAW ER Art. 12(3). Read literally, that would release anyone whose employer chose to end the contract. The wording comes from the official English translation, and how far courts apply it is a point for a lawyer. VERIFY

> **IN DOUBT?**
> A non-compete is the clause most worth paying a lawyer to read before you resign, not after. Davidson & Co., our legal partner, can advise on your specific contract.

13. Resignation and notice periods

How to resign in the UAE

Either side may end the contract for a legitimate reason by giving written notice and working the notice period in the contract, which must be between 30 and 90 days. LAW Art. 43(1).

1. **Check your contract** for the notice period, any non-compete and any repayment clauses (relocation costs, training, sign-on bonus).
2. **Resign in writing** and keep proof of the date.
3. **Work your notice** if your employer asks you to. You are paid your full wage throughout. LAW Art. 43(2).
4. **Agree any early release in writing.** Notice can be shortened or waived by agreement. LAW Art. 43(2).
5. **Collect your final settlement** within 14 days of your last day. LAW Art. 53.

Notice period rules

Rule	Detail	Source
Length	30 to 90 days, as the contract says	LAW Art. 43(1)
Same for both sides	Unless the difference favours the employee	LAW Art. 43(2)
Pay during notice	Full wage, based on your last pay	LAW Art. 43(2)
Leaving without notice	You owe the other side pay for the whole notice period or the part not worked. This applies to employers too	LAW Art. 43(3)
Notice given while you are on leave	Starts the day after you are due back, unless agreed otherwise	LAW Art. 35
Job-hunting time	If the employer gave notice, one unpaid day off a week to look for work, with three days' warning to the employer	LAW Art. 43(5)

When you can leave without notice

You may walk away without notice and keep all your end-of-service rights in four situations. LAW Art. 45.

1. Your employer has breached its obligations to you, you notified MOHRE at least 14 working days before leaving, and the employer did not put matters right after the Ministry contacted it.
2. Your employer or its representative assaulted or harassed you, and you reported it to the authorities and MOHRE within five working days of being able to.
3. There is a serious danger to your safety or health at work that the employer knew about and did not address.
4. You were assigned work fundamentally different from your contract without your written consent, outside genuine emergencies.

Each has conditions. Leaving first and arguing later risks an absconding report (see section 14).

14. Termination, redundancy and changing jobs

How a UAE employment contract can end

The law lists nine ways a contract ends: written agreement, expiry of the term, notice by either side, death of the employer where the contract was personal to them, death or permanent total disability of the employee, a final prison sentence of three months or more, permanent closure of the business, bankruptcy or insolvency or exceptional economic reasons, and failure to meet work permit renewal conditions for reasons outside the employer's control. LAW Art. 42.

Dismissal with notice

An employer can end the contract for a legitimate reason by giving the contractual notice in writing. LAW Art. 43. The law does not define "legitimate reason". Poor performance and business restructuring are the usual grounds.

Dismissal without notice

An employer may dismiss without notice only on one of ten grounds, only after a written investigation, and only by a written decision that gives reasons. LAW Art. 44.

1. Using a false identity or forged certificates or documents.
2. A mistake causing serious material loss, or deliberate damage to the employer's property, reported to MOHRE within seven working days.
3. Breaking written, displayed safety rules you were told about.
4. Failing in your basic duties despite a written investigation and two warnings of dismissal.
5. Disclosing trade secrets, causing loss or personal gain.
6. Being drunk or under the influence of drugs at work, or committing an act against public morals in the workplace.
7. Assaulting the employer, a manager or a colleague at work.
8. Unexcused absence of more than 20 non-consecutive days or more than 7 days in a row.
9. Abusing your position for personal gain.
10. Working for another establishment without following the rules.

Disciplinary action has its own time limits. An employee cannot be accused of an offence more than 30 days after it was discovered, and a sanction cannot be imposed more than 60 days after the investigation ends. LAW ER Art. 24(4). Even after summary dismissal you are still owed gratuity, unpaid wages and unused leave.

Unlawful termination

The Labour Law treats a dismissal as unlawful when it is made because you filed a serious complaint with MOHRE or brought a claim against your employer that proved to be true. A court can then award compensation of up to three months' wage, on top of your notice pay and gratuity. LAW Art. 47.

That is narrower than the unfair dismissal rules in the UK, Ireland or Australia. There is no general right to challenge a dismissal as unreasonable, and no reinstatement. Other specific protections do apply: you cannot be dismissed because of pregnancy or maternity leave, or for ill health before your sick leave is used. LAW Art. 30(8), Art. 46. Discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, religion, nationality, social origin or disability is prohibited, as are harassment, bullying and violence at work. LAW Art. 4, Art. 14.

Redundancy in the UAE

UAE mainland law has no separate redundancy procedure and no statutory redundancy pay. A redundancy is handled in one of two ways.

Route	When it applies	What you receive
Termination with notice	The employer restructures or cuts roles and relies on a "legitimate reason"	Notice or pay in lieu, gratuity, unused leave, repatriation ticket
Termination for economic reasons	A court has declared the employer bankrupt or insolvent, or the authorities have decided it cannot continue for exceptional economic reasons beyond its control	The same entitlements, claimed in the insolvency if the company cannot pay

Sources: LAW Art. 42(8), Art. 43; ER Art. 25.

If you are made redundant, this is what the law gives you:

- Full wage for your notice period, or payment in lieu. LAW Art. 43.
- End-of-service gratuity if you have a year's service. LAW Art. 51.
- Payment for unused annual leave at basic salary. LAW ER Art. 19(2).
- A ticket to your point of hire or another agreed place, unless you join another employer in the UAE. LAW Art. 13(12).
- A free experience certificate on request, which may not include anything that harms your reputation. LAW Art. 13(11).
- All of it within 14 days. LAW Art. 53.
- Up to 30 days to move out of employer-provided housing. LAW Art. 16(10).
- A claim on your unemployment insurance if you qualify (section 15).

Any enhanced redundancy package is a matter of negotiation or company policy.

> **CHECK BEFORE YOU RELY ON THIS**
> You will usually be asked to sign a final settlement or release when you are paid. A waiver of rights the Labour Law gives you is void. LAW Art. 65(3). Even so, do not sign that you have received money before it reaches your account, and take advice if the figures look wrong.

Your final settlement checklist

1. Salary up to your last day, including notice pay.
2. Gratuity, with the calculation shown.
3. Unused annual leave at basic salary.
4. Any contractual bonus, commission or allowance that has fallen due.
5. Repatriation ticket or its value, if you are leaving the country.
6. Experience certificate.
7. Written confirmation of when your work permit and residence visa will be cancelled.

Changing jobs in the UAE

Once your contract has ended lawfully, by expiry or by notice, you are free to move to another employer. LAW Art. 49, ER Art. 27. The new employer applies for a new work permit, and the old one is cancelled. You do not need to leave the country if this is done within your grace period.

The steps for a mainland employee:

1. Receive and accept the new offer in writing.
2. Resign in writing and serve your notice (or agree a shorter one).
3. Collect your final settlement and experience certificate.
4. Your old employer cancels your work permit and residence visa.
5. Your new employer applies for a new work permit and residence visa.
6. Re-check your unemployment insurance and health cover under the new employer.

Do I need a no objection certificate (NOC)? The Labour Law does not require your employer's consent to move once the contract has ended in line with the law. LAW Art. 49. Some free zones and regulated professions have their own transfer procedures, so ask the new employer's HR team what applies.

How a work permit bar ("labour ban") happens

Situation	Consequence	Source
Leaving the UAE during probation without the required notice	No new work permit for one year from departure	LAW Art. 9(6)
Stopping work without a legitimate reason before your contract ends	No new work permit for one year from the absence	LAW Art. 50
Being absent for more than seven days in a row with your employer unable to reach you	The employer can report your absence to MOHRE	LAW ER Art. 28(1)

People sponsored by family, Golden Visa holders, workers with skills the country needs and anyone returning to the same employer are exempt from the one-year bar. LAW ER Art. 28(2). The safest course is never to stop turning up. Resign in writing, or file a MOHRE complaint and follow the process.

Your visa after a job ends

When your residence visa is cancelled you get a grace period to find a new sponsor or leave. It ranges from 30 to 180 days depending on your visa category and skill level. REPORTED The exact date is printed on your cancellation document, and you can check it on the ICP smart services portal. Do not rely on a figure from a website, including this one. Self-sponsored visas such as the Golden Visa and Green Visa are not cancelled when you lose a job. See our visa guide for the routes open to you.

15. Unemployment insurance (ILOE) and health insurance

What ILOE is

The Involuntary Loss of Employment scheme is the UAE's compulsory unemployment insurance, created by Federal Decree-Law No. 13 of 2022 and in force since 1 January 2023. It pays a monthly cash benefit to employees who lose their job for reasons other than resignation or disciplinary dismissal. OFFICIAL

ILOE cost and payout

	Category A	Category B
Basic salary	AED 16,000 or less	Above AED 16,000
Premium	AED 5 a month plus VAT	AED 10 a month plus VAT
Benefit	60% of average basic salary over the last six months	60% of average basic salary over the last six months
Monthly cap	AED 10,000	AED 20,000
Length of each claim	Up to 3 months	Up to 3 months
Lifetime limit	12 monthly benefits across your whole working life in the UAE	12 monthly benefits

Source: OFFICIAL iloe.ae.

Example. On a basic salary of AED 12,000 you pay AED 5 a month and would receive AED 7,200 a month for up to three months. On a basic salary of AED 40,000 you pay AED 10 a month, and 60% would be AED 24,000, so you receive the cap of AED 20,000.

Who must subscribe

Emiratis and residents working in the private sector and the federal government must subscribe. Exempt groups are investors who own the business they work in, domestic workers, workers on temporary contracts, juveniles under 18 and retirees drawing a pension who have taken a new job. OFFICIAL

Subscribing is your responsibility, not your employer's, and you pay the premium yourself. REPORTED MOHRE has said that employees whose work permits were issued after 1 October 2023 must subscribe within four months. REPORTED

Conditions for an ILOE claim

All of the following must be true. OFFICIAL iloe.ae.

1. You have been subscribed for at least 12 consecutive months.
2. Your premiums are fully paid.
3. You did not resign.
4. You were not dismissed for disciplinary reasons.

5 You claim within 30 days of the termination date, or of the settlement of a labour case referred to court.

6 There is no absconding complaint against you.

7 You are legally present in the UAE.

8 There is no fraud, and the employer is a real business.

Payments stop if you start a new job during the benefit period. OFFICIAL u.ae.

How to subscribe

The ILOE portal (iloe.ae) and the ILOE mobile app are free. Exchange houses, business service centres, telecom bills, kiosks and bank apps are also available and may add a service charge. Policies run for one or two years and can be paid monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or annually. OFFICIAL

ILOE fines

Breach	Fine	Source
Not subscribing	AED 400	OFFICIAL u.ae
Not paying premiums for more than three months	Policy cancelled, plus a fine quoted as AED 400 on u.ae and AED 200 in MOHRE statements	VERIFY

MOHRE has said unpaid fines can block new work permits and be deducted from salary or gratuity. REPORTED

> **CHECK BEFORE YOU RELY ON THIS**
> ILOE and gratuity are separate. Claiming one does not reduce the other. ILOE is calculated on basic salary, so a package built on a low basic and high allowances produces a small benefit. Whether employees of DIFC and ADGM entities must subscribe is described inconsistently by commentators. Check your status on the ILOE portal with your Emirates ID. VERIFY

Health insurance

Your employer must bear the cost of your medical care under the legislation in force. LAW Art. 13(8). Since 1 January 2025 employer-paid health insurance has been a condition of issuing or renewing a residence permit in every emirate, with a basic package from AED 320 a year for the northern emirates. OFFICIAL Dubai and Abu Dhabi have their own longer-standing schemes, and Abu Dhabi's extends to dependants. Our UAE Healthcare and Health Insurance Guide explains what each minimum plan covers.

16. Labour complaints and disputes

How to file a labour complaint with MOHRE

Step	What happens	Source
1. Register	File through 80084, the MOHRE website or the MOHRE UAE app. You need your work permit or passport number. It is free	OFFICIAL
2. Mediation	A Ministry representative contacts both sides, normally within 14 days, to seek an amicable settlement	OFFICIAL

Step	What happens	Source
3a. Claims up to AED 50,000	MOHRE issues a binding decision that can be enforced like a court judgment	LAW Art. 54(2)
3b. Claims above AED 50,000	If mediation fails, MOHRE refers the dispute to the labour court with its recommendation	LAW Art. 54(4)
4. Challenging a MOHRE decision	Either side can file a case at the Court of First Instance within 15 working days. The court rules within 30 working days and its judgment is final	LAW Art. 54(3)

Points that catch people out:

- **Time limit.** A claim cannot be heard more than two years after the employment relationship ended. LAW Art. 54(9). Older guides quoting one year from the date the right fell due describe the rule before the 2024 amendment.
- **Do not wait.** MOHRE's procedures ask that complaints be registered within 30 days of the breach. REPORTED
- **Court fees.** Labour claims by workers worth up to AED 100,000 are exempt from court fees at every stage. LAW Art. 55.
- **Pay during the dispute.** MOHRE can order your employer to keep paying wages for up to two months. LAW Art. 54(5).
- **Free zone employees** normally raise the complaint with the free zone authority first. REPORTED
- **DIFC and ADGM employees** use the DIFC Courts or ADGM Courts, not MOHRE.

> **IN DOUBT?**
> If your claim is above AED 50,000, involves a non-compete or a senior role, or your employer is in DIFC or ADGM, get advice before you file. Davidson & Co., our legal partner, can advise on your specific case.

17. DIFC and ADGM: how the financial free zones differ

If you are employed by an entity licensed in DIFC or ADGM, the federal Labour Law does not apply to your contract. The table below is a summary drawn from law firm commentary, not from our own reading of the two laws, so treat every DIFC and ADGM figure as REPORTED and confirm it against your contract.

Topic	Mainland	DIFC	ADGM
Law	Federal Decree-Law 33 of 2021	Employment Law No. 2 of 2019, as amended	Employment Regulations 2024 (from 1 April 2025)
Annual leave	30 calendar days	20 working days	20 working days
Sick leave	90 days: 15 full, 30 half, 45 unpaid	60 working days: 10 full, 20 half, 30 unpaid	60 working days on a similar scale
Maternity leave	60 days: 45 full, 15 half	65 working days: 33 full, 32 half, after 12 months' service	65 working days, with a qualifying period for pay
Paternity leave	5 working days	5 working days	5 working days
Minimum notice	30 to 90 days by contract	7 days under 3 months' service, 30 days up to 5 years, 90 days after 5 years	7 days under 3 months' service, 30 days after
End of service	Gratuity, capped at two years' wage	Monthly employer contributions of 5.83% or 8.33% of basic to a savings plan	Gratuity with no two-year cap, or an optional savings scheme
Overtime	Statutory rates	Set by the law and contract	No statutory overtime rate; left to the contract
Disputes	MOHRE, then labour courts	DIFC Courts	ADGM Courts

Two differences matter most to professionals. Annual leave is counted in working days, so 20 working days is about four weeks, close to the mainland's 30 calendar days. And in DIFC your end-of-service money is paid into a fund in your name every month, which protects it if your employer fails.

18. What changed in 2025 and 2026

Date	Change	Source
1 January 2025	Employer-paid health insurance became compulsory in all seven emirates	OFFICIAL
1 April 2025	ADGM Employment Regulations 2024 replaced the 2019 regulations	REPORTED
1 January 2026	AED 6,000 minimum monthly wage for Emiratis in the private sector	REPORTED
27 January 2026	Six months of bank statements required for the remote work visa	REPORTED
1 June 2026	New WPS resolution: salaries due on the 1st, 85% threshold, faster penalties	REPORTED

Has the UAE labour law changed in 2026? The main Labour Law has not been amended in 2025 or 2026 as far as we can find. The UAE Legislation platform shows the last update to its text as 29 July 2024. LAW Headlines about a "new UAE labour law 2026" are describing ministerial resolutions and tougher

enforcement, mainly the WPS rules above.

The amendments that are already in the consolidated text:

- **2022:** the cap on contract length was removed.
- **From 1 January 2024:** MOHRE gained the power to decide claims up to AED 50,000.
- **From 31 August 2024:** the time limit for claims became two years from the end of employment, challenges to MOHRE decisions moved to the Court of First Instance, and fines for hiring without a work permit rose to between AED 100,000 and AED 1 million. LAW Art. 54, Art. 60. The effective dates are REPORTED.

19. Seven things commonly got wrong

What you may have read	What the law says	Source
"UAE contracts last three years at most"	The current text sets no maximum term	LAW Art. 8(3)
"You lose part of your gratuity if you resign"	Not under the 2021 law. The formula is the same however the job ends	LAW Art. 51
"Employers can sack you on the spot in probation"	They must give 14 days' written notice	LAW Art. 9(1)
"Salaries can be paid up to the 15th"	Since 1 June 2026 they are due on the 1st	REPORTED
"You get 30 days' Hajj leave"	Not a statutory leave under the current law	LAW Art. 32
"You have one year to bring a claim"	Two years from the end of employment	LAW Art. 54(9)
"Gratuity is based on your full salary"	Basic wage only	LAW Art. 51(2)

20. Checklists

Before you accept a UAE job offer

1. Confirm which law applies: mainland, free zone, DIFC or ADGM.
2. Ask for the split between basic salary and allowances in writing.
3. Check probation length and notice period.
4. Read any non-compete for duration, geography and scope.
5. Confirm health insurance for you and, if relevant, your family.
6. Get flights, school fees, relocation and bonus terms into the contract.
7. Ask about repayment clauses if you leave early.
8. Compare the package against your costs with our UAE Cost of Living Guide.

In your first 30 days of work

1. Sign and keep a copy of your registered contract.
2. Subscribe to ILOE on iloe.ae and set a reminder to keep premiums paid.
3. Check your first salary arrives through WPS on time and matches the contract.
4. Collect your health insurance card.
5. Save your work permit number and the MOHRE app login.

More arrival tasks are in Your First 30 Days in the UAE.

If you lose your job

1. Ask for the termination in writing with the reason and your last day.
2. Note the 14-day deadline for your final settlement.
3. Check your gratuity and leave figures with the calculator below.
4. File your ILOE claim within 30 days.
5. Check your visa grace period on your cancellation document.
6. Do not sign for money you have not received.
7. If the figures are wrong, call MOHRE on 80084.

Frequently asked questions

What is the labour law in the UAE?

The main law is Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021 Regulating Labour Relations, which took effect on 2 February 2022 and replaced the 1980 Labour Law. It covers all private sector employers and employees in the seven emirates except those in DIFC and ADGM, and it is enforced by MOHRE. LAW

How long is the probation period in the UAE?

Up to six months. An employer can dismiss you during probation with 14 days' written notice. If you resign to join another UAE employer you must give one month's notice, and 14 days if you are leaving the country. LAW Art. 9.

What is the notice period in the UAE?

Between 30 and 90 days, as written in your contract. It must be the same for both sides unless the difference favours the employee. You are paid your full wage while you work it. LAW Art. 43.

How is gratuity calculated in the UAE?

Divide your last monthly basic salary by 30 to get a daily rate. Multiply it by 21 for each of your first five years of service and by 30 for each year after that. You need at least one year of service, part years count pro rata, and the total is capped at two years' wage. LAW Art. 51.

Do I get gratuity if I resign?

Yes, provided you have completed one year of continuous service. Under the current law the calculation is the same whether you resign or are dismissed. LAW Art. 51.

How many days of annual leave do employees get in the UAE?

At least 30 calendar days a year after one year of service, and two days a month between six and twelve months. Up to half can be carried forward. LAW Art. 29, ER Art. 19.

How much sick leave do you get in the UAE?

Up to 90 days a year after probation: the first 15 days on full pay, the next 30 on half pay and the last 45 unpaid. You must notify your employer within three working days with a medical report. LAW Art. 31.

How long is maternity leave in the UAE private sector?

60 days: 45 on full pay and 15 on half pay, with no minimum length of service. A further 45 unpaid days are available for illness linked to the pregnancy or birth. LAW Art. 30.

Is there paternity leave in the UAE?

Yes. Either parent gets five working days of paid parental leave, to be used within six months of the birth. LAW Art. 32.

What are the working hours in the UAE?

Eight hours a day or 48 hours a week in the private sector, reduced by two hours a day during Ramadan. Overtime is paid at basic pay plus 25%, or plus 50% between 10pm and 4am. LAW Art. 17, Art. 19.

What is WPS in the UAE?

The Wage Protection System is the electronic payroll system that MOHRE-registered employers must use to pay salaries through approved banks and exchange houses. Since 1 June 2026 wages are due on the first day of the month for the month just worked. LAW ER Art. 16, REPORTED

Is unemployment insurance mandatory in the UAE?

Yes, for private sector and federal government employees. It costs AED 5 a month if your basic salary is AED 16,000 or less and AED 10 a month above that. The fine for not subscribing is AED 400. OFFICIAL

How much does ILOE pay if I lose my job?

60% of your average basic salary over the previous six months, capped at AED 10,000 or AED 20,000 a month depending on your category, for up to three months per claim. You need 12 consecutive months of subscription and must claim within 30 days. OFFICIAL

Are non-compete clauses enforceable in the UAE?

They can be, if the clause is limited in time (two years at most), place and type of work, and the employer can prove harm in court. The clause is void if the employer ended your contract unlawfully and does not apply if you leave during probation. LAW Art. 10, ER Art. 12.

Can my employer terminate me without notice in the UAE?

Only on one of ten grounds listed in Article 44, such as forged documents, assault or prolonged unexcused absence, and only after a written investigation and a written, reasoned decision. Otherwise the contractual notice applies. LAW Art. 44.

What am I entitled to if I am made redundant in the UAE?

Your notice pay, end-of-service gratuity, payment for unused leave, a ticket home if you are leaving the country and an experience certificate, all within 14 days. There is no statutory redundancy pay on top. If you qualify, you can also claim unemployment insurance. LAW Art. 13, 43, 51, 53.

Can I change jobs in the UAE without a NOC?

Once your contract has ended in line with the law, you can move to a new employer on a new work permit, and the Labour Law does not require your old employer's consent. Some free zones and professions have their own procedures. LAW Art. 49.

What is a labour ban in the UAE?

It is a one-year bar on getting a new work permit. It applies if you leave the UAE during probation without proper notice, or stop work without a legitimate reason before your contract ends. Golden Visa holders, family-sponsored residents and workers with needed skills are exempt. LAW Art. 9, Art. 50; ER Art. 28.

Can my employer keep my passport?

No. Employers are prohibited from withholding a worker's official documents. LAW Art. 13(2).

How long do I have to make a labour claim in the UAE?

Two years from the date your employment ended. MOHRE asks for complaints to be registered promptly, so do not wait. LAW Art. 54(9).

Does the UAE labour law apply in free zones?

In most free zones, yes: the federal law applies and the free zone authority administers it. DIFC and ADGM are the exceptions and have their own employment laws and courts. REPORTED

Is there a minimum wage in the UAE?

Not for expatriates. Emirati nationals working in the private sector must be paid at least AED 6,000 a month from 1 January 2026. LAW Art. 27, REPORTED

Free tool: UAE Employment Toolkit

The toolkit that accompanies this guide works out your gratuity, estimates a full final settlement, shows your ILOE cost and payout, and tells you the notice you owe if you leave during probation. It runs in your browser and stores nothing.

Related guides

- UAE Salary Guide 2026/27: pay by profession, packages and what a good salary looks like
- UAE Visa Requirements Guide: work visas, Golden and Green Visas, family sponsorship
- UAE Job Opportunities: where the roles are
- UAE Cost of Living Guide 2026: what your salary needs to cover
- UAE Healthcare and Health Insurance Guide: what your employer must insure
- UAE Taxation Guide: tax residency and your home country
- Teacher Relocation Guide and Healthcare Licensing Guide: profession-specific contracts and licensing
- UAE Business Setup Guide: if you plan to work for yourself
- Hiring a Maid or Nanny in the UAE: the separate law for domestic workers

Sources

Primary sources read for this guide on 11 October 2026:

- Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021 Concerning Regulating Labour Relations, consolidated English text, UAE Legislation platform (uaelegislation.gov.ae/en/legislations/1541)
- Cabinet Resolution No. 1 of 2022, Executive Regulations of the Labour Law, UAE Legislation platform (uaelegislation.gov.ae/en/legislations/1547)
- ILOE insurance pool, scheme terms and FAQ (iloe.ae)
- UAE Government portal, Unemployment Insurance Scheme (u.ae), last updated 4 December 2025
- MOHRE, How to File a Labour Complaint; Register Labour Complaints service page; Health Insurance Scheme page (mohre.gov.ae)
- Abu Dhabi Residents Office, Remote Work Visa (adro.gov.ae)

Secondary sources, used for points tagged REPORTED:

- Morgan Lewis, "UAE Introduces New Wage Protection System Resolution Effective 1 June 2026", 22 May 2026
- Clyde & Co, Al Tamimi & Company and HFW commentaries on the ADGM Employment Regulations 2024
- DLA Piper and Clyde & Co on DIFC Employment Law amendments and the alternative end-of-service scheme
- K&L Gates and Squire Patton Boggs on the 2021 Labour Law and Cabinet Resolution No. 96 of 2023
- Gulf News, Khaleej Times and the Emirates News Agency (WAM) reporting MOHRE announcements

Legal notice

Relocate2UAE is an independent information platform, not a law firm, an employment adviser or a government body. This guide is general information only and is not legal advice. It reflects our reading of UAE law and official guidance on 11 October 2026. Laws, ministerial resolutions and official procedures change, sometimes without notice, and the Arabic text of any UAE law prevails over the English translations we have used.

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