



# Working Hours Report 2023

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Q4 2019 to Q4 2022





# Working Hours Report 2023

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Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Q1 2019 to Q4 2022

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## About the National Labor Observatory (NLO)

“The National Labor Observatory (NLO) is the main and trusted source of labor market data and visualizations. Its role is to support entities, experts and beneficiaries to enable them to make decisions and develop policies based on labor market reports, statistical analysis, and research visualizations.”

The National Labor Observatory  
Riyadh - Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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# Executive summary

## Key report findings

### Average weekly working hours:

- **Non-Saudi female employees recorded the longest average weekly working hours:** Saudi employees recorded an average of (41) working hours per week, compared to (47) hours for non-Saudis. Moreover, non-saudi female employees recorded the longest hours across nationality and gender dimensions at (48) hours per week, which corresponds to the maximum number of weekly working hours allowed by the Saudi Labor Law.

### Working hours by educational level:

- **Employees without an education degree recorded the longest average weekly working hours:** The average working hours for employees without an education degree reached (48) hours per week, almost one full working day (7 hours) higher compared to the average working hours for PhD degree holders.
- **The difference in working hours between Saudi and non-Saudi employees decreased with higher education level:** The difference in working hours between Saudi and non-Saudi employees gradually decreases as the level of educational degree increases, with a notable difference reaching (-7%) between Saudi and non-Saudi employees with a doctorate degree.

### Working hours by economic activities:

- **Saudi employees worked longer hours in mining and quarrying activities compared to non-Saudis:** Saudi employees recorded an average of (46) working hours per week in the mining and quarrying sector in Q4 2022. This is (2%) higher as compared to the average weekly working hours recorded by non-Saudis in the sector, which reached (45) hours in Q4 2022.
- **Saudi employees in the construction sector recorded an average of (43) working hours per week, exceeding the average weekly working hours recorded in most benchmarked countries by up to (6) hours.** This can be attributed to the economic development efforts driving the expansion of construction activities through large scale infrastructure and giga projects such as NEOM, the Red Sea Project, etc.



## Introduction

The Working Hours report presents a comprehensive analysis of weekly working hours recorded by the labor force in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and compares key findings with benchmarked countries. The report seeks to explore various demographic and sector-specific factors related to employment and working hours and ultimately aims to support the formulation of policies geared towards labor force and economic development.

## Methodology

The report analyzes key labor market statistics and examines average weekly working hours across nationality, gender, educational level, and economic activity dimensions. Furthermore, the report compares working hours in Saudi Arabia with benchmarked G20 countries, selected based on the level of economic development, geographical location, and labor market policies.

### **The report relies on the following set of data sources:**

- General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT) data from Q1 (2019) to Q4 (2022)
- The International Labour Organization open data sets including key labor force statistics for Q4 (2022).

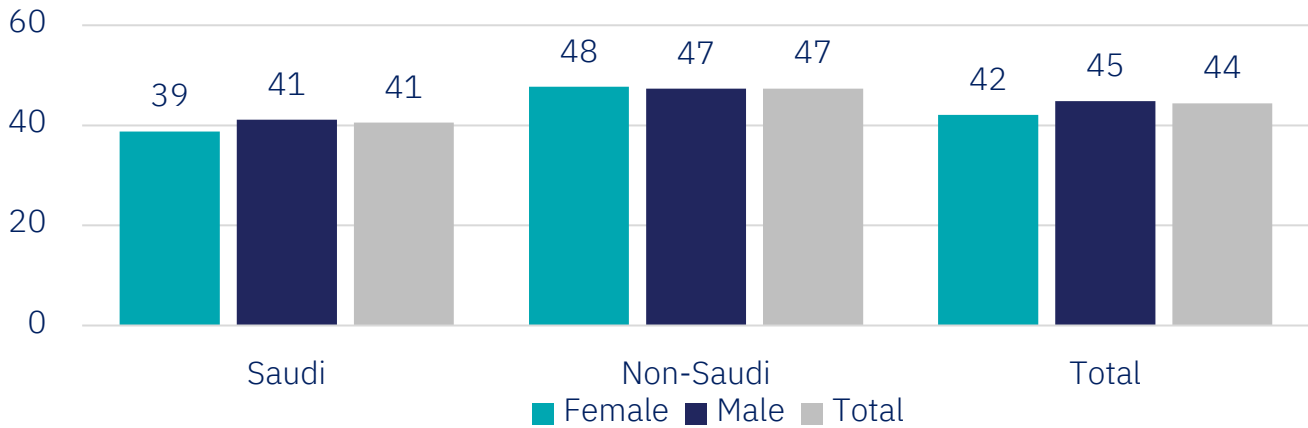
### **Reporting period:**

This report analyzes quarterly data from Q1 (2019) until Q4 (2022).

# Average weekly working hours

The average weekly working hours is an indicator that measures the average working hours recorded by employees (aged 15 years and above). It is calculated as the ratio of the total number of working hours recorded to the total number of employees.

Figure (1): Average weekly working hours by nationality and gender (Q4 -2022)

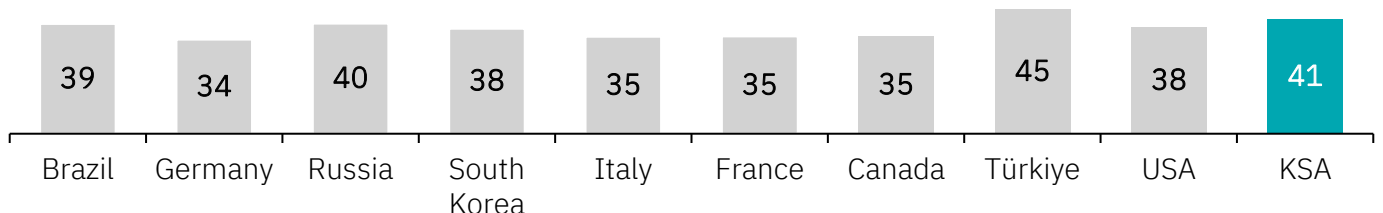


Source: General Authority for Statistics

Saudi employees worked (41) hours per week in Q4 2022, an average that is 6 hours (or nearly a full working day) less as compared to non-saudi employees who recorded an average of (47) weekly working hours in the same period.

Moreover, non-Saudi females recorded the longest working hours across nationality and gender dimensions with an average of (48) working hours per week, which is the maximum number of working hours allowed by the Saudi Labor Law, compared to (39) hours per week for Saudi female employees.

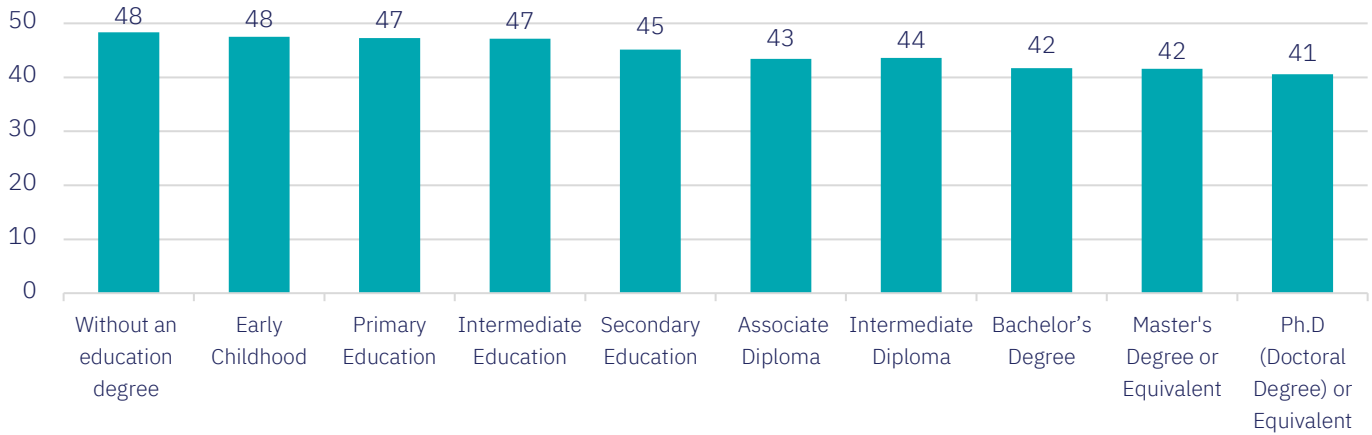
Figure (2): Average weekly working hours for Saudi employees compared to benchmarked countries (Q4 – 2022)



Saudi employees recorded longer working hours in Q4 2022 compared to several G20 countries. Notably, the average weekly working hours for Saudi employees was comparable to those in the United States, Russia, and Brazil, and higher than the average working hours in Canada, France, Italy, and Germany by (6) to (7) hours.

# Working hours by educational level

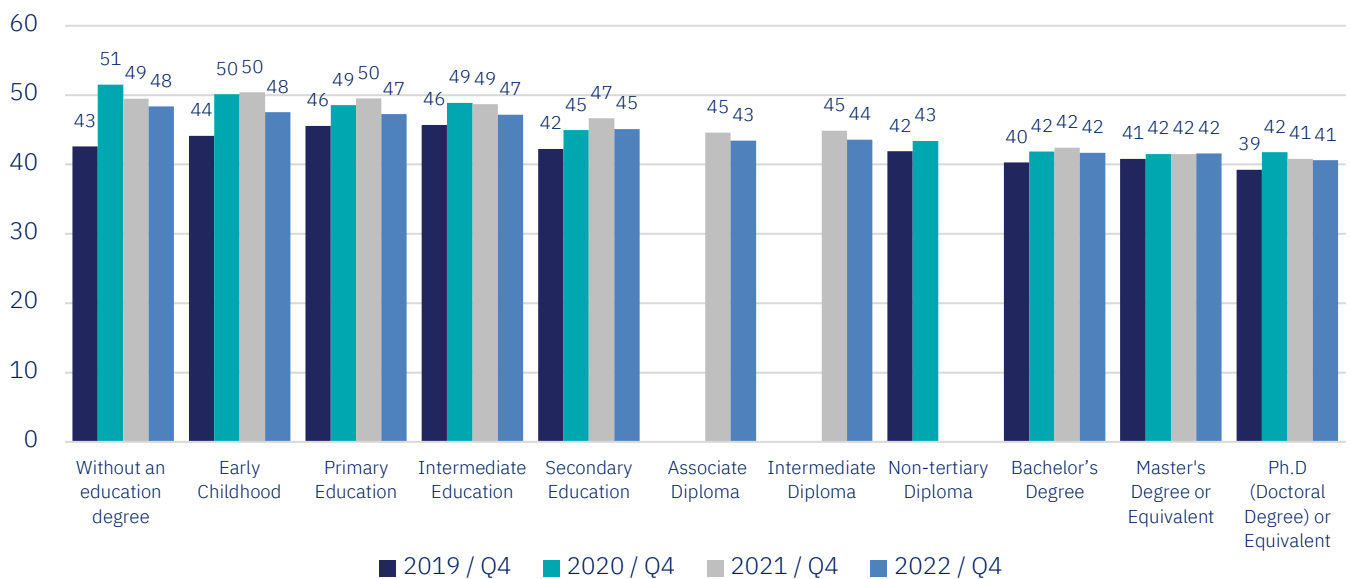
Figure (3): Average working hours for Saudi and non-Saudi employees by educational level (Q4-2022)



Source: GASTAT

PhD degree holders recorded an average of (41) working hours per week, while employees without an education degree reached an average of (48) hours, (7) hours higher as compared to PhD holders. This indicates that individuals with higher educational degrees typically work in occupations that require fewer working hours.

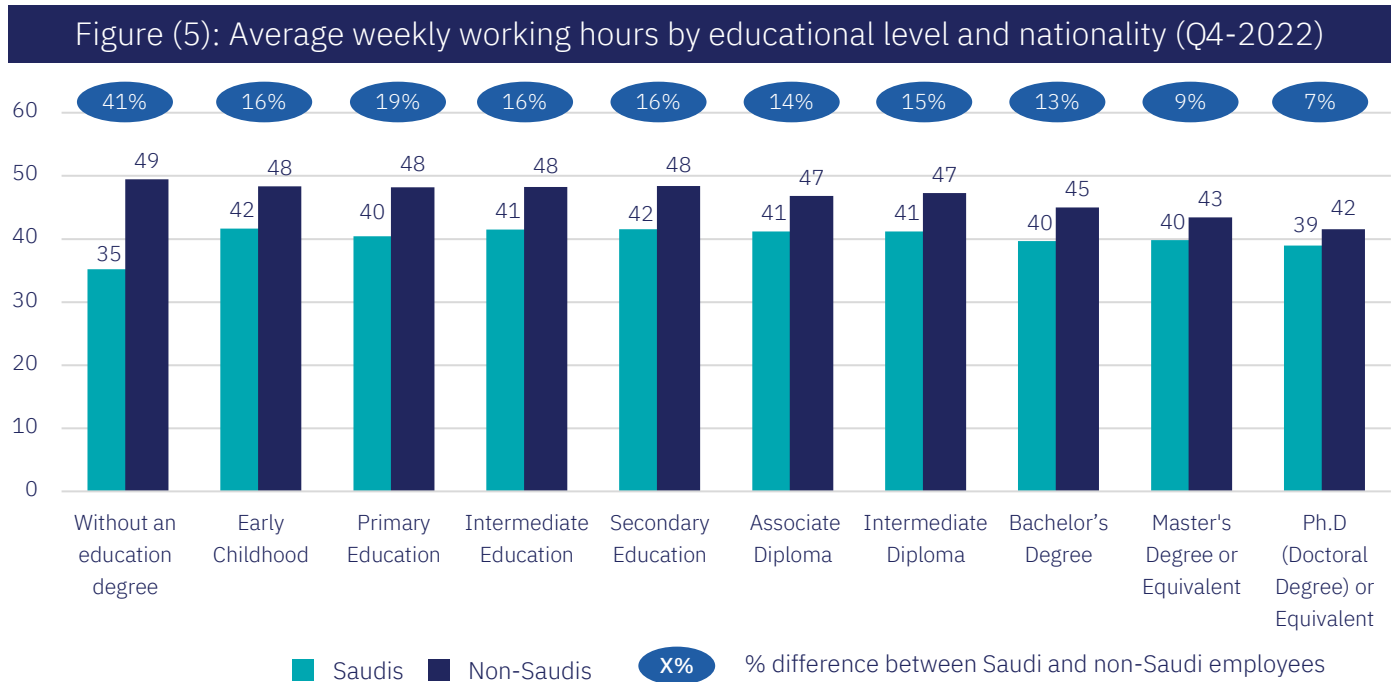
Figure (4): Average working hours for Saudi and non-Saudi employees by educational level (comparison of Q4 working hours from 2019 until 2022)



Source: GASTAT

Data for (intermediate diploma, associate diploma, non-tertiary diploma) levels has not been published for some quarters.

The average weekly working hours notably increased in 2020 and 2021, mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This increase could be linked to the widespread shift to remote work in response to health restrictions and lockdown measures implemented to limit the spread of the virus.

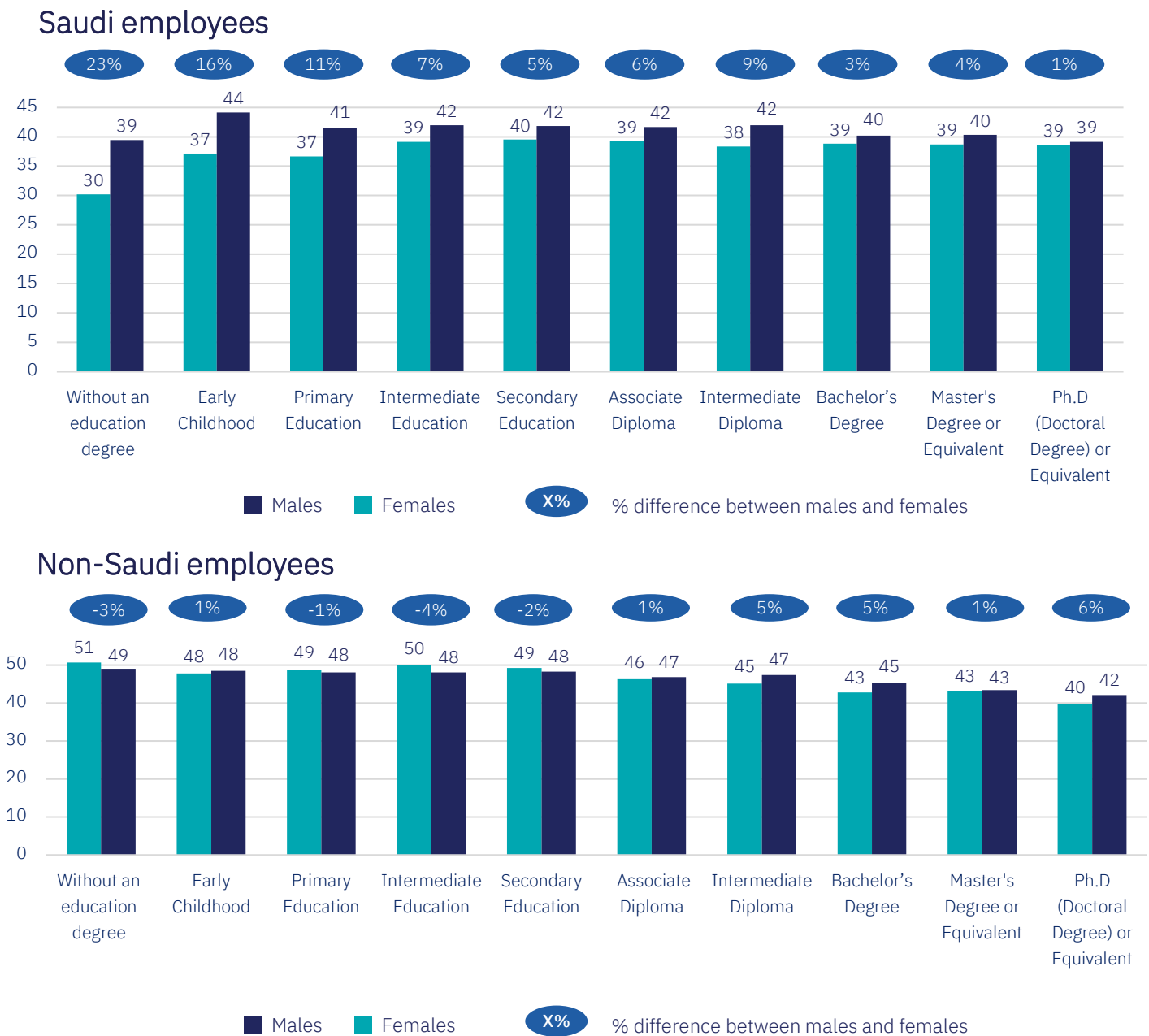


Source: GASTAT

Saudi employees without an education degree recorded an average of (35) working hours per week, (41%) less than the average weekly working hours recorded by non-Saudi employees, which stood at (49) hours per week, as illustrated in Figure (4).

The difference in average working hours between Saudi and non-Saudi employees gradually decreased with higher educational levels, reaching a (7%) difference among PhD holders. However, an exception to this trend was observed among primary education degree holders where the difference in working hours between Saudi and non-Saudi employees increased to (19%) compared to (16%) for early childhood education degree holders.

Figure (6): Average weekly working hours across educational levels by nationality and gender (Q4-2022)

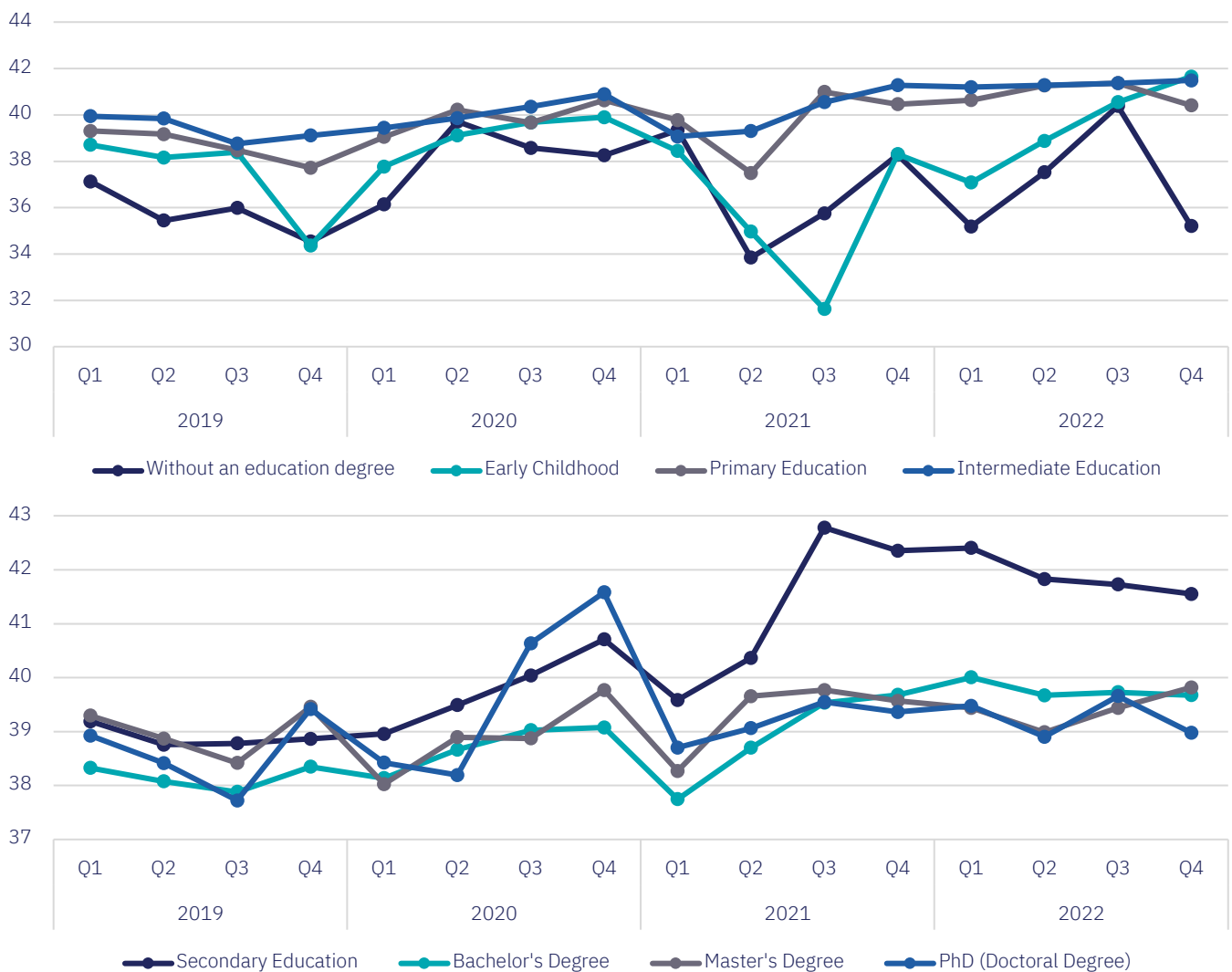


Source: GASTAT

Saudi male employees recorded longer working hours compared to Saudi females across various educational levels in Q4 2022, whereas non-Saudi male and female employees recorded similar average working hours.

As shown in figure (5), the difference in average weekly working hours between Saudi male and female employees decreases with the increase in educational level. Whereby the biggest difference in average working hours was recorded for Saudi male employees without an education degree who worked around (9) hours more per week compared to Saudi females, indicating a (23%) difference.

Figure (7): Average working hours for Saudi employees by educational level (Q1 2019 - Q4 2022)



Source: GASTAT

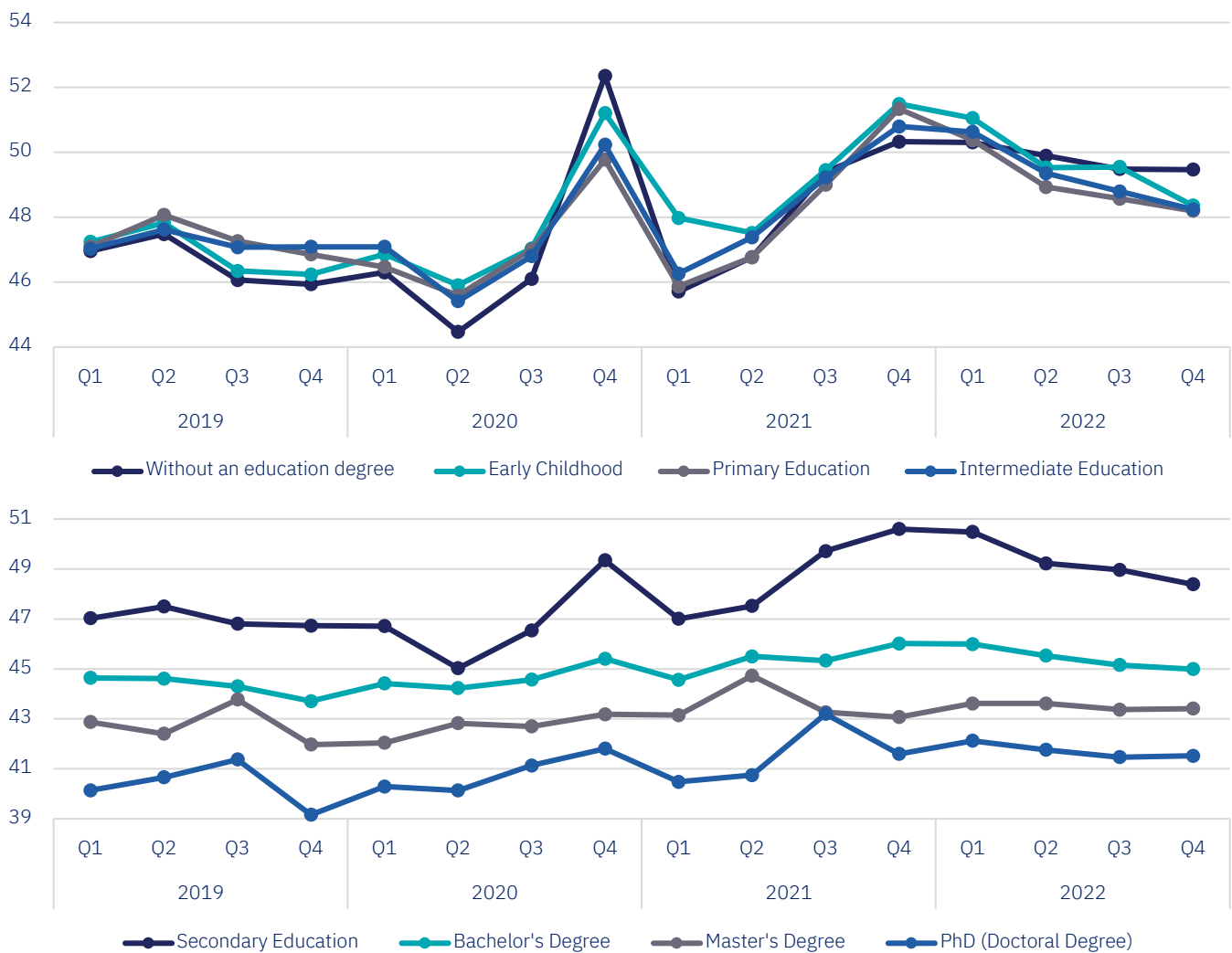
Educational levels (Higher diploma, intermediate diploma, and associate diploma) were excluded due to unavailability of data across all quarters.

The average weekly working hours for Saudi employees without an education degree and those with early childhood education fluctuated over the past four years, ranging between (34) and (40) hours, and (32) and (42) hours, respectively. In contrast, employees with primary and intermediate education degrees maintained more consistent hours, averaging between (37) and (41) hours per week.

The average weekly working hours for Saudi employees with secondary education degree increased from Q1 until Q4 of 2020, faced a slight decline in Q1 2021, followed by an increase until the end of Q3 2021. This trend indicates an overall increase in average working hours for this group.

Saudi employees with post-secondary education degree maintained consistent working hours with slight variations occurring in 2021 and 2022, indicating stability in economic and labor market conditions for this group.

Figure (8): Average working hours for non-Saudi employees by educational level (Q1 2019- Q4 2022)



Source: GASTAT

Educational levels (Higher diploma, intermediate diploma, and associate diploma) were excluded due to unavailability of data across all quarters.

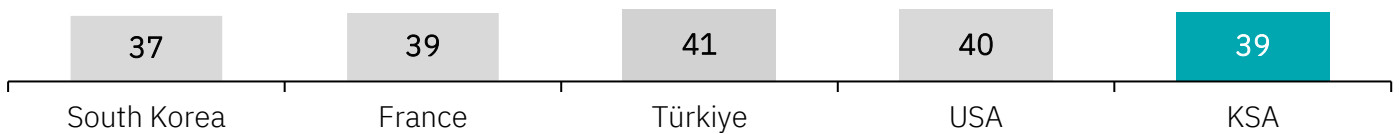
Average weekly working hours for non-Saudi employees across multiple educational levels increased during the pandemic, particularly in Q4 2020. This indicates that the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in an increase in work-related pressures particularly in the health and education sectors.

Non-Saudi employees without an education degree recorded the largest fluctuation in working hours, ranging between (44) and (52) hours per week, whereas employees holding a PhD degree recorded the least fluctuation in working hours, ranging between (39) and (43) hours per week. Moreover, non-Saudi employees holding Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees recorded minor fluctuations in average working hours from Q4 2021 until Q4 2022, indicating a stability in working hours for this group.

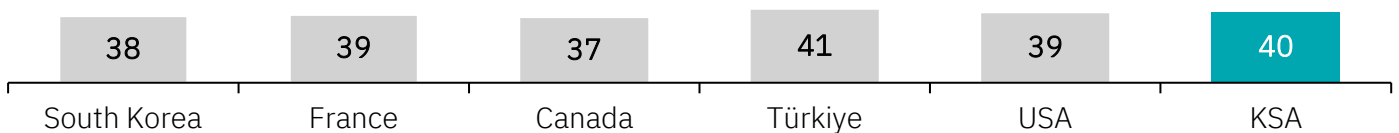
Figure (9): Average weekly working hours for local employees in benchmarked countries by educational level (Q4 – 2022)

Figure (9) provides a comparison of average weekly working hours between Saudi employees and benchmarked G20 countries across educational levels. Countries were selected based on the level of economic development, geographical location, and labor market policies.

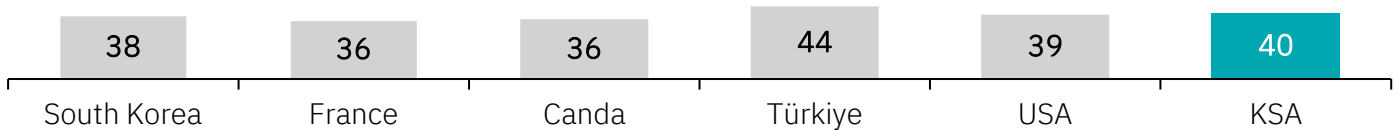
### Ph.D (Doctoral Degree) or Equivalent



### Master's Degree or Equivalent



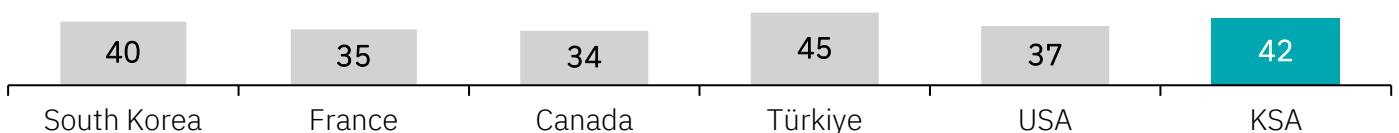
### Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent



### Intermediate Diploma

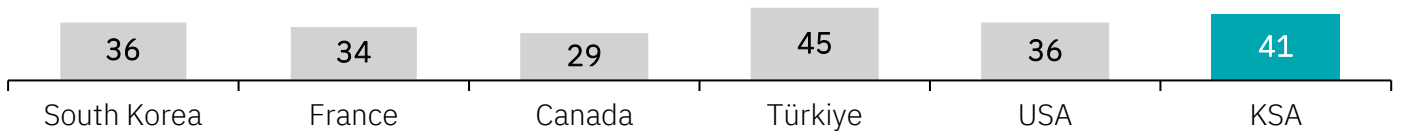


### Secondary Education

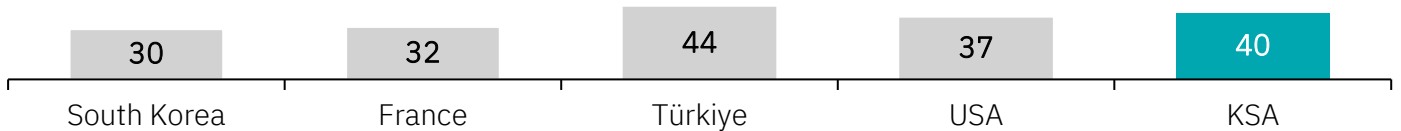




## Intermediate Education



## Primary Education



## Early Childhood



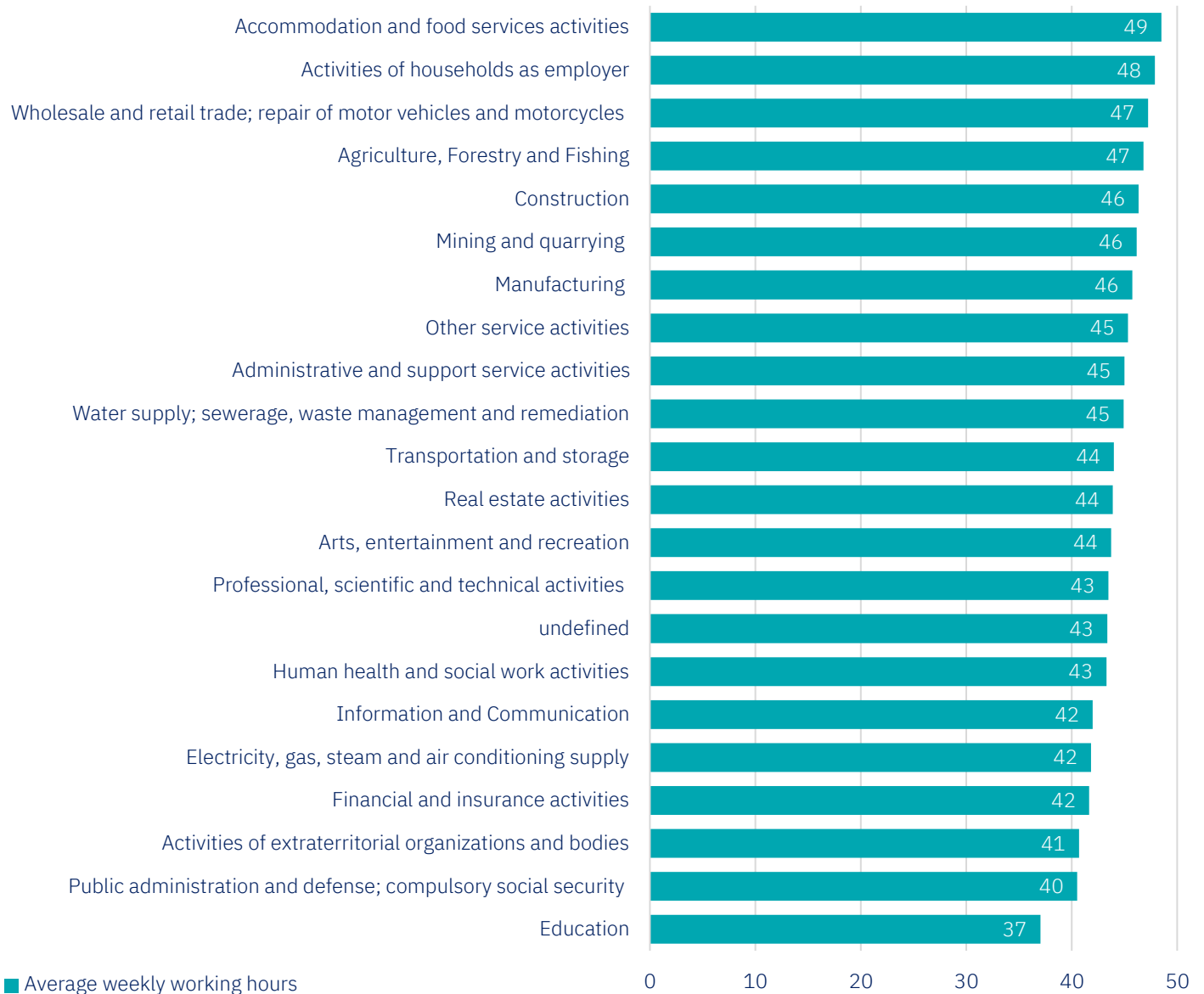
Source: GASTAT

- The educational levels (Associate Diploma, Without an Educational Degree) were excluded due to the unavailability of data for all countries.
- Some G20 countries provide working hours data based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97), which does not align with the unified Saudi classification of educational levels and specializations, following the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-11). Therefore, the focus was on G20 countries that adhere to the ISCED-11 classification, allowing for a comparison of working hours across educational levels in KSA.

Saudi employees recorded longer average weekly working hours across all educational levels compared to selected G20 countries, except for Türkiye, which recorded (1) - (4) more working hours across the different education levels as compared to Saudi Arabia.

# Working hours by economic activities

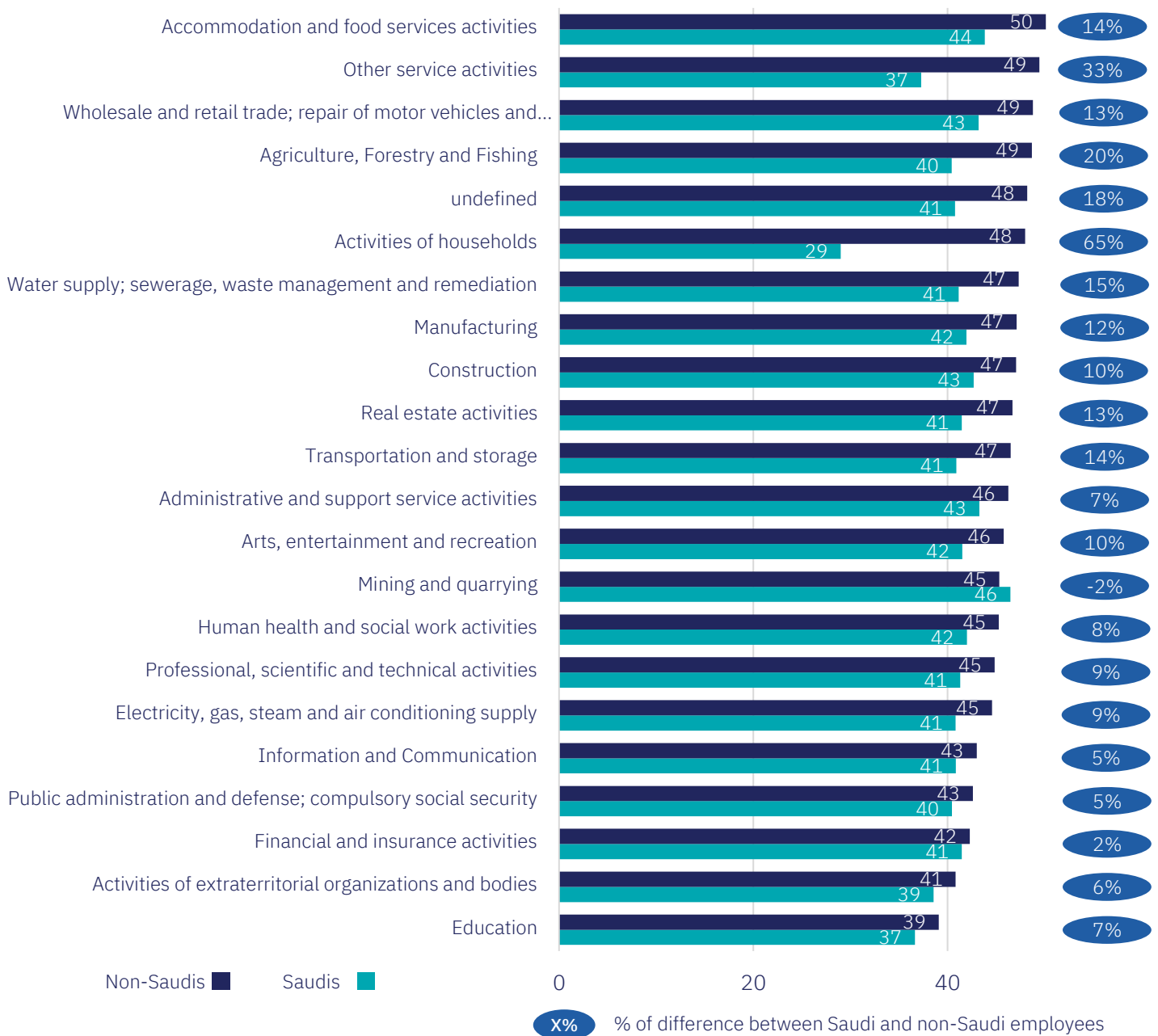
Figure (10): Average weekly working hours for Saudi and non-Saudi employees by economic activities (Q4-2022)



Source: GASTAT

Shortest working hours by economic activities were recorded by employees in education who averaged (37) hours per week in Q4 2022. On the other hand, the longest working hours were recorded by employees in accommodation and food services activities, who averaged (49) working hours per week, followed by employees in household activities, with an average of (48) hours per week.

Figure (11): Average weekly working hours by economic activities and nationality (Q4 -2022)



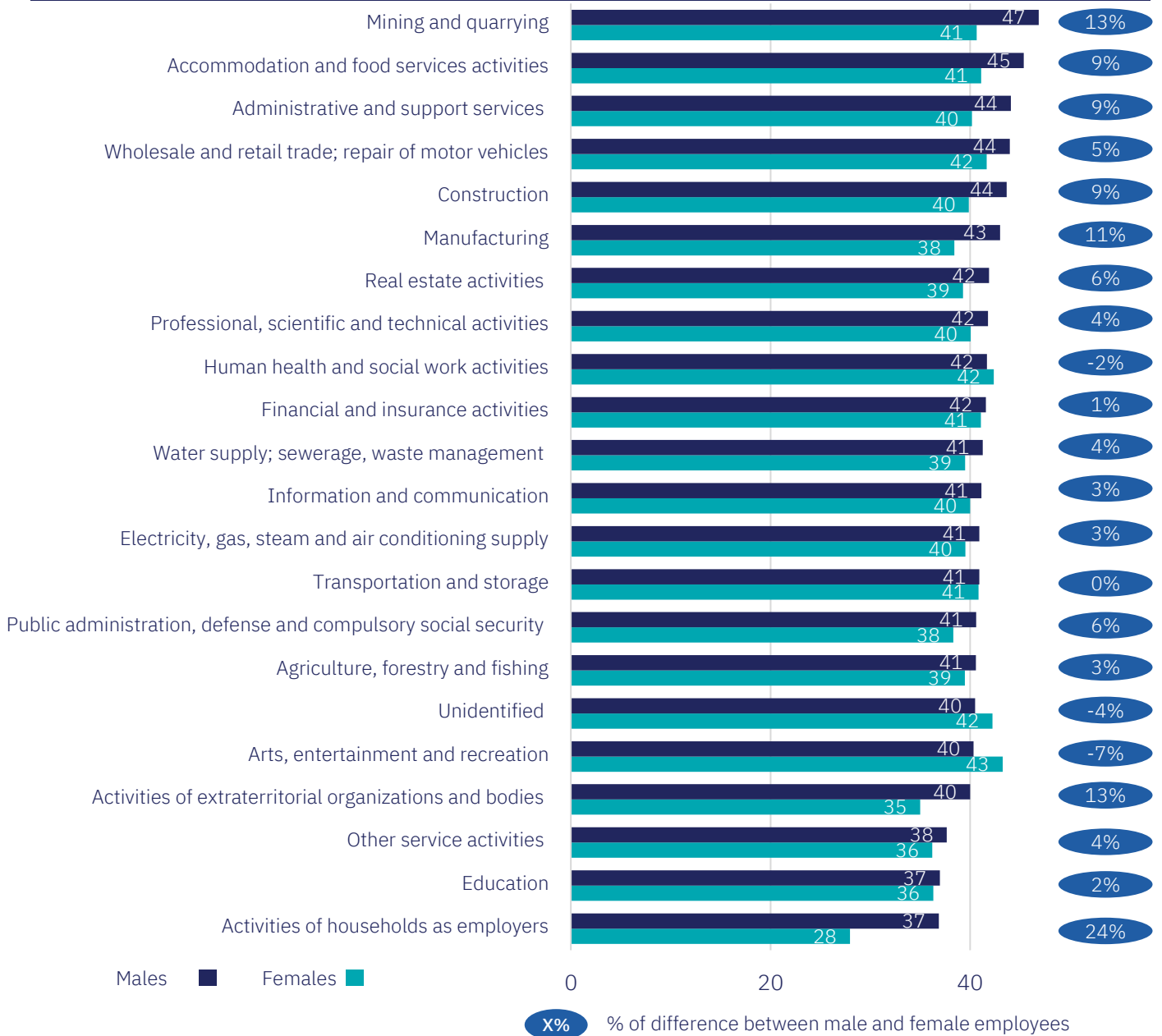
Source: GASTAT

The classification gradually decreased from the highest average to the lowest average weekly working hours for non-Saudis.

Saudi employees recorded their longest average weekly working hours in mining and quarrying activities, at (46) hours. This is (2%) higher compared to non-Saudi employees who recorded an average of (45) hours within the same activities. As for non-Saudi employees, the longest average weekly working hours were recorded in accommodation and food services activities, at (50) hours per week, compared to (44) hours for Saudis, i.e., a difference of (14%).

The largest difference in the average weekly working hours between Saudi and non-Saudi employees was observed in household activities where the difference reached (65%).

Figure (12): Average weekly working hours for Saudi employees by economic activities and gender (Q4- 2022)



Source: GASTAT

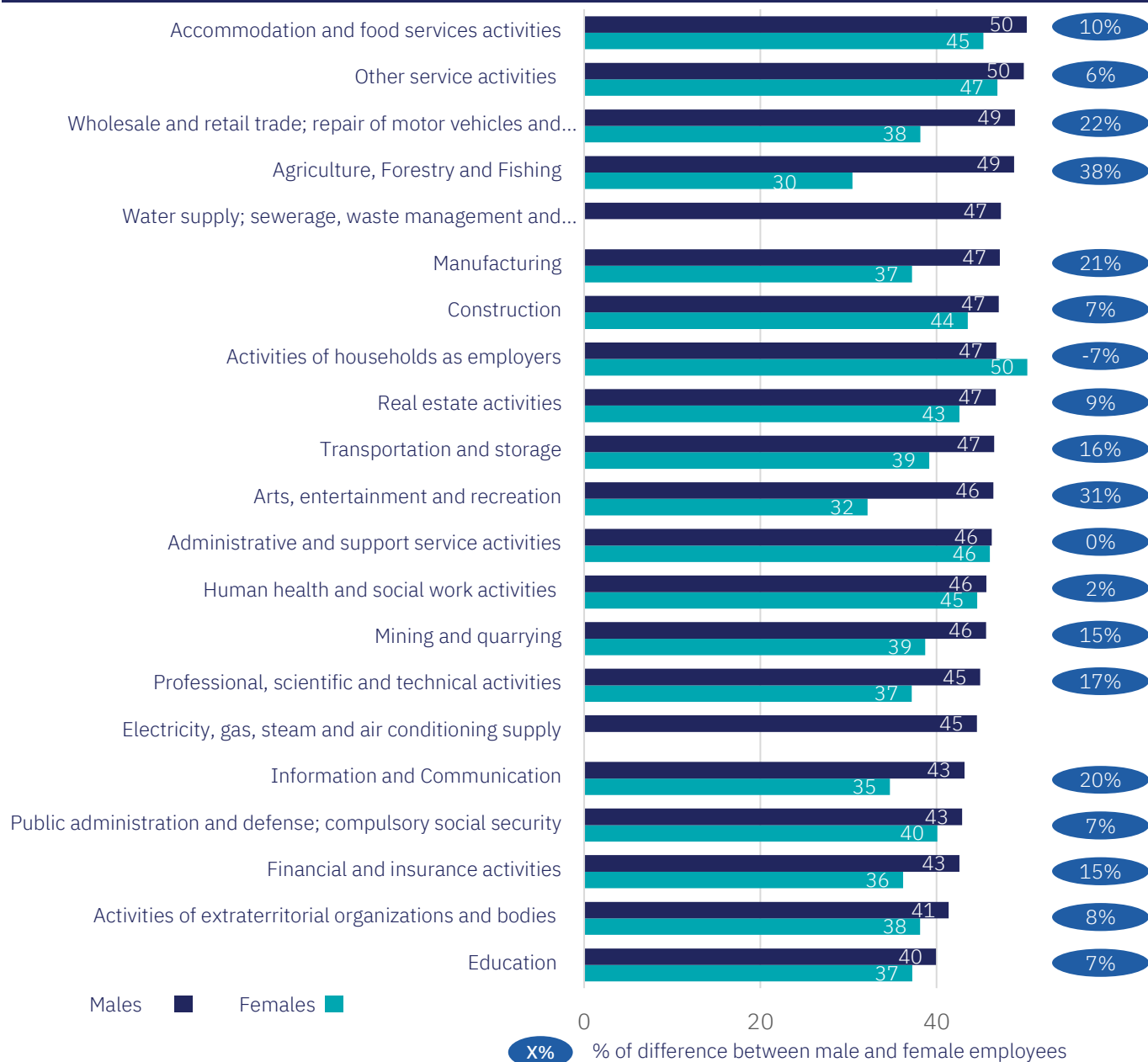
The classification gradually decreased from the highest average to the lowest average weekly working hours for males.

Saudi male employees recorded their longest average weekly working hours in mining and quarrying activities, at (47) hours, compared to (41) hours for Saudi females.

As for Saudi female employees, the longest average weekly working hours were recorded in arts, entertainment and recreation activities at (43) hours, which is (7%) higher compared to Saudi males who recorded an average of (40) hours.

The largest difference in average weekly working hours between Saudi male and female employees was observed in household activities, at (24%), followed by activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies, and mining and quarrying activities, where the difference reached (13%).

Figure (13): Average weekly working hours for non-Saudi employees by economic activities and gender (Q4- 2022)



Source: GASTAT

The classification gradually decreased from the highest average to the lowest average weekly working hours for males.

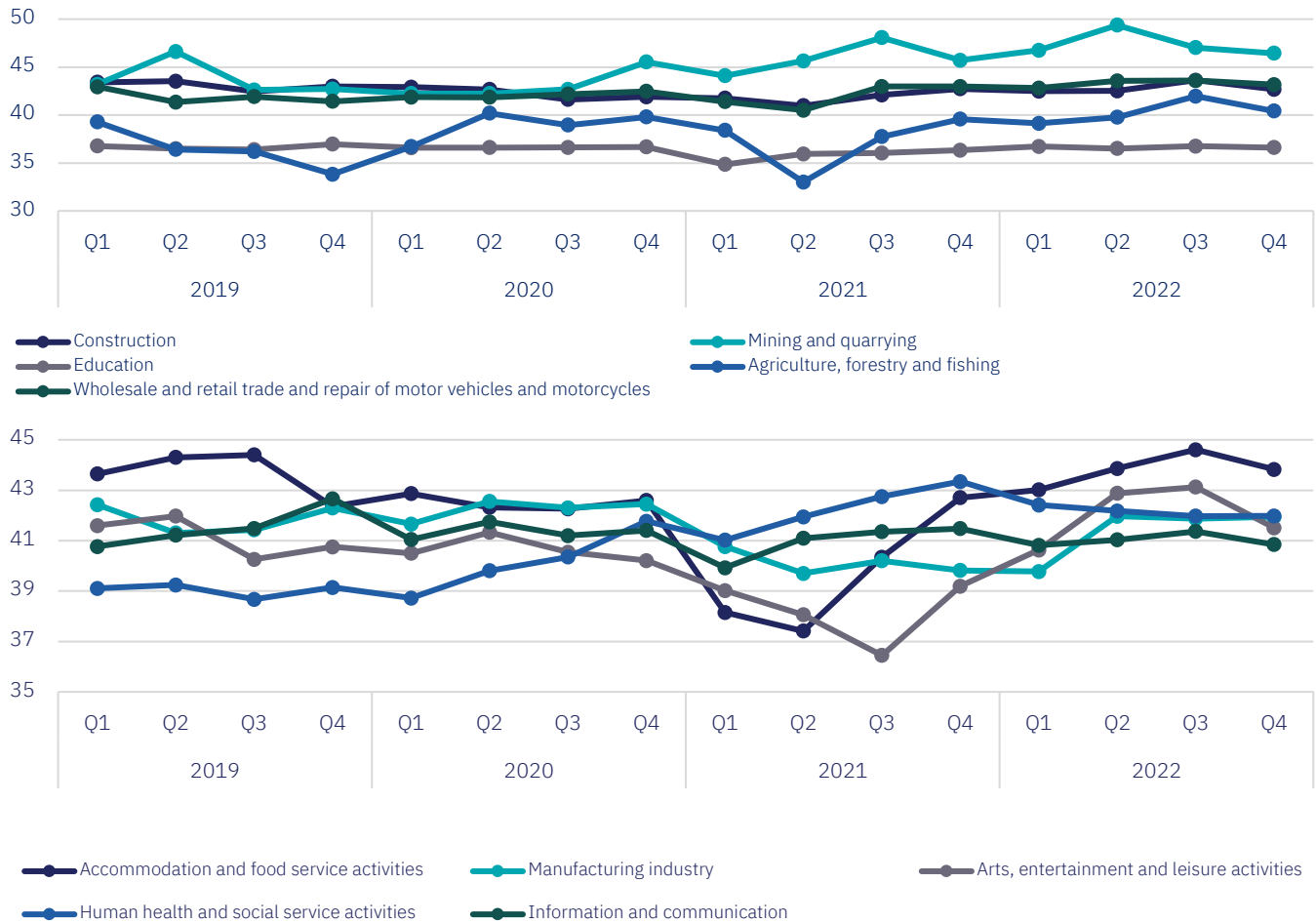
Non-Saudi male employees recorded their longest weekly working hours in accommodation and food services, with an average of (50) working hours. This is (10%) higher compared to non-Saudi females who averaged (45) hours per week.

As for non-Saudi female employees, the longest average weekly working hours were recorded in household activities, at (50) hours per week, which is (7%) higher compared to non-Saudi males who averaged (47) hours per week.

The largest difference in average weekly working hours between non-Saudi male and female employees was observed in agriculture, forestry, and fishing activities at (38%), whereby average weekly working hours for non-Saudi males exceeded those for non-Saudi females by (19) hours.

Non-Saudi female employees did not report any working hours in electricity, gas, steam & air conditioning supply, and water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities. This can be attributed to the fact that sample sizes might not have been sufficient to provide relevant outcomes.

**Figure (14): Average weekly working hours for Saudi employees across selected economic activities (Q1 2019 - Q4 2022)**

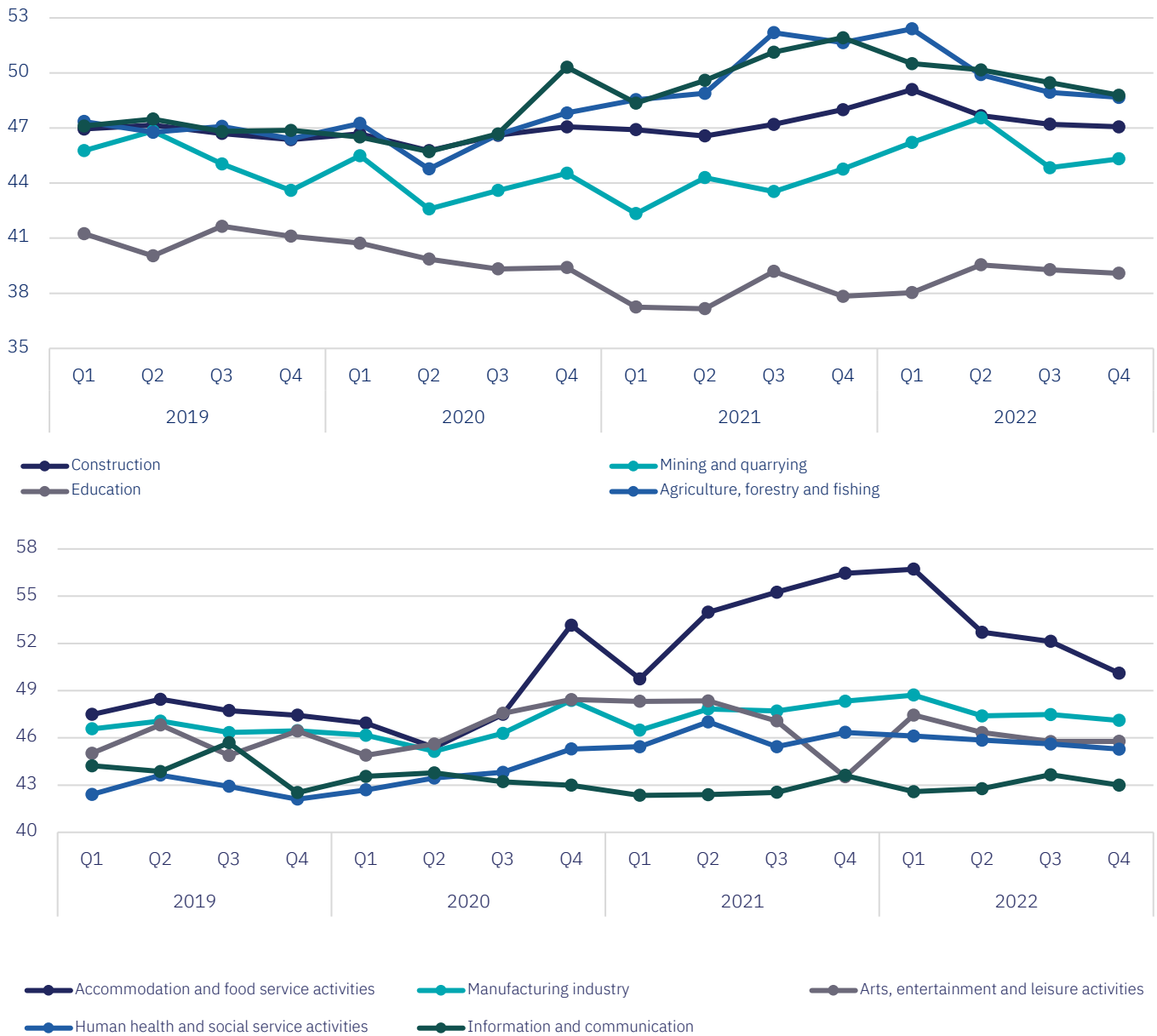


Source: GASTAT

Figure (14) exhibits the fluctuation in the average weekly working hours for Saudi employees across selected economic activities from 2019 until 2022. Notably, the most significant fluctuation in weekly working hours was recorded in agriculture, forestry and fishing activities, with average working hours ranging between (33) and (42) hours. Similar trends were observed in arts, entertainment, and recreation activities, where the average weekly working hours ranged between (36) and (43) hours. On the other hand, the least fluctuations in working hours were observed in construction activities as well as wholesale and retail trade activities, with an average ranging between (40) and (44) hours per week.

The average weekly working hours across various economic activities decreased in 2021, most likely due to the precautionary and preventive measures implemented to limit the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure (15): Average weekly working hours for non-Saudis across selected economic activities (Q1 2019 - Q4 2022)



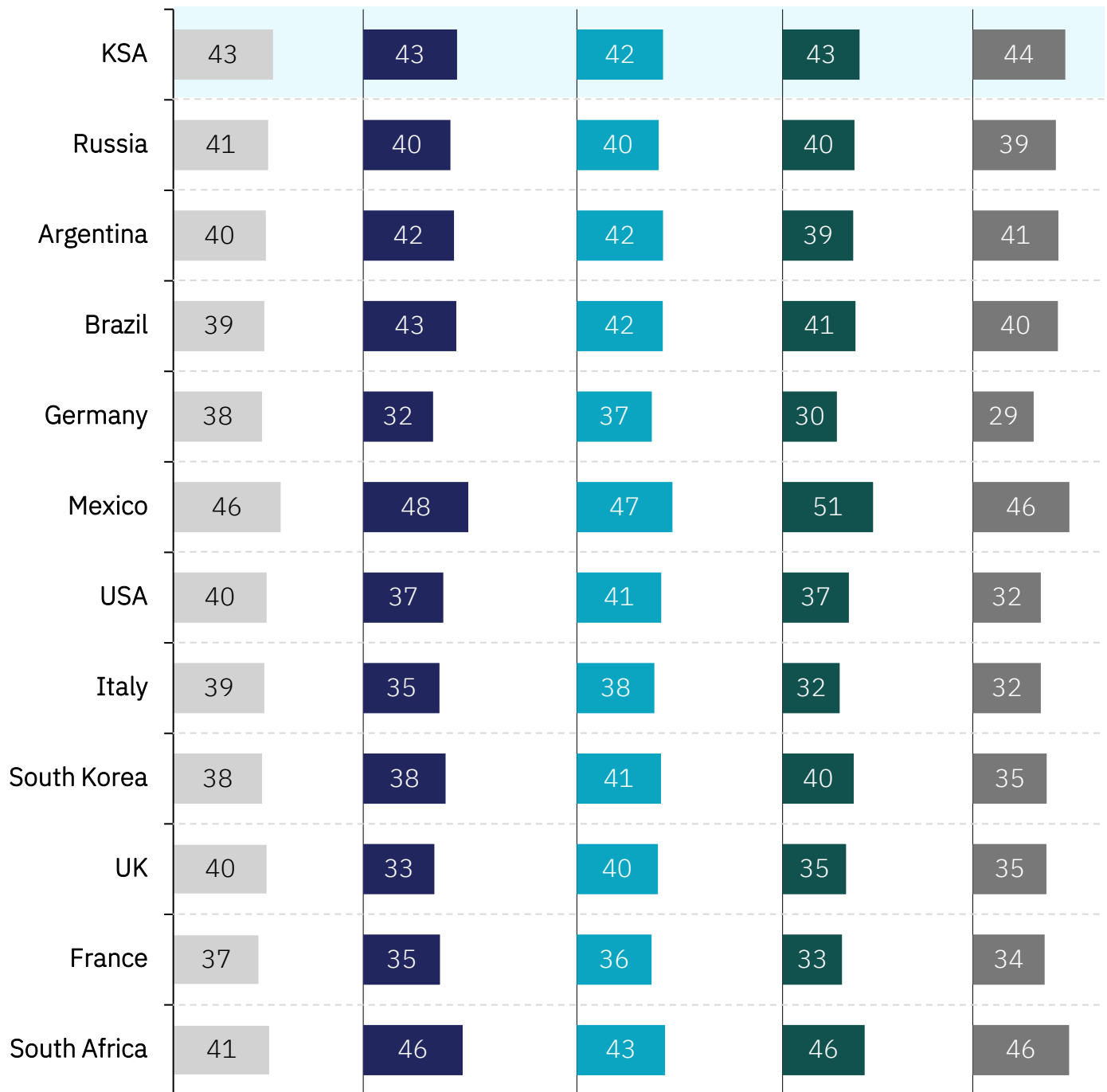
Source: General Authority for Statistics

Non-Saudi employees recorded stable average working hours across multiple economic activities from 2019 to 2022, except for accommodation and food services activities, where average weekly working hours significantly increased from Q3 2020 until Q1 2022 followed by a subsequent decrease reaching (50) hours per week by the end of Q4 2022— exceeding the maximum hours allowed by Saudi Labor Law by (2) hours.

The education sector recorded the lowest working hours among selected economic activities, ranging between (37) and (42) hours per week.

Figure (16): Average weekly working hours for local employees by selected economic activities in benchmarked countries (Q4 - 2022)

Figure (16) compares average weekly working hours between Saudi employees and benchmarked G20 countries across key activities which represent the top five economic activities in terms of total number of employees in KSA in Q4 2022. Benchmarked countries were selected based on the level of economic development, geographical location, and labor market policies.



Construction
  Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
  Administrative and support services activities
  Accommodation and food services activities
  Manufacturing



## Key findings from figure (16):

Saudi employees in construction activities recorded an average of (43) weekly working hours, exceeding the average hours recorded in most benchmarked countries by up to (6) hours. This can be attributed to the economic development efforts driving construction activities through infrastructure projects and giga projects, such as NEOM, the Red Sea Project, and others.

Saudi employees in wholesale and retail trade activities recorded an average of (43) weekly working hours, which is equivalent to the average recorded in Brazil. Notably, the shortest working hours in this sector were recorded in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Germany, with averages observed to be about (9) to (10) hours less compared to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi employees in manufacturing recorded an average (42) working hours per week. This is in-line with the averages observed in most benchmarked countries, which generally fall within the range of (40) to (43) hours per week. However, France and Germany stand out with lower average working hours in the manufacturing sector, at (36) and (37) hours per week, respectively.

Saudi employees in administrative and support services activities, as well as accommodation and food services activities recorded an average of (43) and (44) weekly working hours, respectively. This is significantly higher (by 13 to 15 working hours) compared to other benchmarked European countries: Italy, Germany, UK, and France.

Despite the Kingdom's efforts, including studying the reduction of standard weekly working hours to (40) hours, giving all Saudi working mothers (with an infant younger than 24 months) an extra breastfeeding hour break aside from the official daily working hours, as well as implementing reduced working hours during the month of Ramadan, the difference in working hours compared to benchmarked European countries can be attributed to additional policies being implemented in Europe. For example, France and Italy have set the maximum weekly working hours at (35) and (40) hours, respectively. Several European countries are also providing increased working hours flexibility whereby normal working hours can be carried out through various flexible arrangements / agreements that define the distribution of workload. Moreover, countries are offering additional flexibility to parents with young children, whereby an additional break of 30 minutes is included if daily working time exceeds 6 hours.

# Summary of findings

**Analysis of working hours in KSA exhibits positive trends towards economic development. However, to enhance labor productivity, it is essential to focus on key practical measures as follows:**

## **Setting targeted objectives for managing working hours:**

Work-life balance is a prevailing trend in advanced economies, achieved through decreasing working hours and increasing flexibility. Furthermore, setting clear objectives for working hours that are aligned with both sectoral and national policies, establishing productivity indicators, and developing periodic performance reports are key measures to effectively manage working hours and thus promote economic development in the Kingdom.

## **Implementing the maximum working hours for specific activities:**

Further research is required to explore activities where non-Saudi employees recorded average weekly working hours of (50) hours, particularly in the accommodation and food services sector, with the aim to:

- Understand the implications of increased working hours.
- Activate effective policies to reduce working hours in-line with national standards for example: setting maximum working hours.
- Define suitable KPIs to measure the performance of strategic objectives related to reducing working hours.
- Maintain appropriate levels of occupational health and safety.
- Maintain workforce productivity.

## **Investing in research and analysis infrastructure:**

Investment in research and analysis infrastructure is essential to collect and analyze standardized data on average weekly working hours, with the aim to:

- Determine trends related to employment, productivity, and hourly rates.
- Gather data on full-time, part-time and self employment work arrangements to forecast and generate effective labor insights in order to contribute to the development of employment policies in the Kingdom.

# References and classifications used

- General Authority for Statistics
- International Labour Organization
- National Classification of Economic Activities (ISIC-4)

## Economic activities ISIC-4

1. Real estate activities
2. Financial and insurance activities
3. Professional, scientific and technical activities
4. Administrative and support services activities
5. Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use
6. Accommodation and food services activities
7. Public administration, defense and compulsory social security
8. Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
9. Construction
10. Education
11. Human health and social work activities
12. Mining and quarrying
13. Manufacturing
14. Information and communication
15. Transportation and storage
16. Arts, entertainment and recreation
17. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
18. Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities
19. Agriculture, forestry and fishing
20. Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies
21. Other service activities

# Report Glossary

Term	Definition
<b>Private sector</b>	Individuals, institutions and private companies, those belonging to the joint and public sectors, including government institutions with independent budgets
<b>Public sector</b>	Includes all government entities such as ministries, authorities, government institutions, municipalities, public schools, universities, institutes, government hospitals, military sectors, and government banks such as the Social Development Bank and the Agricultural Bank, as well as development funds
<b>Basic working hours</b>	The total number of official hours that the employee worked in the organization during the assignment period.
<b>Economic activity</b>	All the work or services an organization undertakes to generate a return, which may not always be financial; this is evident in charitable organizations that rely on donations for their operations.
<b>Employees</b>	Individuals who have engaged in employment, whether as regular or temporary employees, employers, or those who are self-employed, and have worked for at least one hour in exchange for pay or profit.
<b>Saudi Employees</b>	Saudis who have worked at least one hour for pay or profit as regular or temporary employees, employers, or self-employed
<b>Non-Saudi Employees</b>	Foreigners who have worked at least one hour for pay or profit as regular or temporary employees, employers, or self-employed
<b>Educational level</b>	<p><b>The highest academic qualification attained by an individual. This can be categorized into various levels, including but not limited to:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Primary: If the individual successfully completed primary education.</li> <li>2. Intermediate (middle school): If the individual successfully completed the intermediate education stage or its equivalent.</li> <li>3. Post-preparatory diploma: If the individual successfully completed a post-preparatory diploma or its equivalent.</li> <li>4. Secondary (high school) or its equivalent: If the individual successfully completed secondary education or its equivalent.</li> <li>5. Post-secondary diploma: If the individual successfully completed post-secondary and undergrad education and obtained a diploma in any specialty.</li> <li>6. University degree: If the individual completed education at the university level.</li> <li>7. Postgraduate diploma: If the individual obtained postgraduate after the university.</li> <li>8. Master's degree: If the individual obtained a master's degree after the university.</li> <li>9. Ph.D (Doctoral degree): if the individual obtained a doctorate degree.</li> </ol> <p><b>Individuals without academic qualifications, will be categorized as follows:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Illiterate: An individual lacking the ability to read and write in any language, and without any formal education.</li> <li>ii. Reads only: An individual capable of reading in any language but lacks the ability to write.</li> <li>iii. Reads and writes: An individual without formal education but capable of reading and writing basic sentences in their daily life in any language.</li> </ol>

# About the report

The “Working Hours Report” is an annual report issued by the National Labor Observatory (NLO) that presents a comprehensive analysis of weekly working hours recorded by the labor force in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and compares key findings with benchmarked countries.

The report seeks to explore various demographic and sector-specific factors related to employment and working hours and ultimately aims to support the formulation of policies geared towards labor force and economic development.





