Labor Migration in Asia

Fair Recruitment, Training, and Development

ADBInstitute

OECD

International Labour Organization

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FOREWORD

As this report highlights, labor migration remains a defining feature of economic development across Asia. In 2024, labor migration flows from Asia slightly declined from the record levels of 2023, reflecting a complex interplay of policy shifts, labor market dynamics, and evolving destination preferences. Despite this moderation, about 6.5 million workers were deployed abroad, with more than half heading to Gulf Cooperation Council countries. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations region also remained a significant destination. Some bilateral flows declined sharply due to policy changes in certain key destination countries, while others increased.

The report underscores the continued importance of labor migration to both origin and destination countries. Demographic pressures, labor shortages in key sectors, and policy reforms in several Asian economies have contributed to sustained demand for migrant workers. At the same time, new and emerging destinations in East Asia and Europe are reshaping the migration landscape. Remittance flows to Asia and the Pacific remained robust, reaching over $370 billion and accounting for more than 43% of global remittances.

The gender and skills composition of labor migration continues to evolve. While the share of women among migrant workers rebounded to 30% in 2024, significant variations remain across countries, highlighting the need for more inclusive migration policies. Similarly, while some countries have been successful in deploying more skilled workers, low wage migration continues to predominate.

In May 2024, the 14th Roundtable on Labor Migration in Asia was held in Tokyo, Japan, jointly organized by the Asian Development Bank Institute, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the International Labour Organization. The roundtable focused on “Maximizing the Impact of Labor Migration on Development,” reflecting the need to utilize knowledge-sharing platforms to explore best practices and policy solutions. This report builds on the discussions of the roundtable and presents new evidence and analysis on these critical themes.

The 2025 edition of *Labor Migration in Asia: Fair Recruitment, Training, and Development* includes four chapters and two statistical annexes. Chapter 1 provides an overview of labor migration trends in Asia, including flows by origin and destination, gender, and skills composition. Chapter 2 examines fair recruitment practices, drawing on recent data and country experiences to assess progress and persistent challenges. Chapter 3 explores training and skills development for migrant workers, including models for training potential labor migrants in origin countries, including development-cooperation-supported initiatives, public–private partnerships, and sector-specific initiatives. Finally, Chapter 4 examines remittance flows with a specific analysis on the relationship between deployment, remittances, and development in two important origin countries, Nepal and the Philippines.

Labor migration offers significant opportunities for development, but it also presents risks that must be managed through sound policies and cooperation. This publication aims to support evidence-based policymaking by providing timely data, comparative analysis, and practical insights. We hope it continues to serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in Asia and beyond.

We extend our sincere thanks to the team that organized the 14th Roundtable and to the authors of this year’s report for their important contributions.

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The Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the International Labour Organization (ILO) organized the 14th ADBI–OECD–ILO Roundtable on Labor Migration in Asia: Maximizing the Impact of Labor Migration on Development on 28–29 May 2024 in Tokyo. This publication analyzes the trends in labor migration in Asia and builds on the outcomes of the 14th roundtable. Chapter 1 reviews labor migration trends through 2024, including shifts by origin, destination, and migrant composition. Chapter 2 examines recruitment challenges for migrant workers, policy responses, and the ILO's Fair Recruitment Initiative. Chapter 3 explores pre-departure skills training models and the need for better alignment with migration pathways and employer needs. Finally, Chapter 4 focuses on remittances as a vital development resource, noting associated risks like brain drain and overreliance on remittances.

This publication was coordinated by a team consisting of Joy Blessilda Sinay from ADBI, Jean-Christophe Dumont and Jonathan Chaloff from the OECD, and Nilim Baruah from the ILO.

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CHAPTER 1

Trends in Labor Migration in Asia

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1.1 Introduction

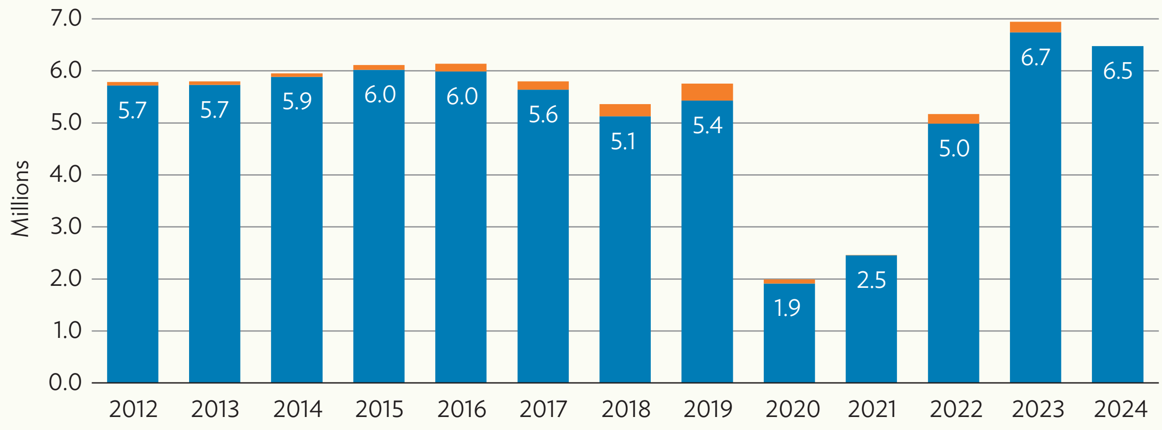
2023 was a record year for labor migration outflows in Asia. However, the figures for 2024 are somewhat lower. This figure reflects the contrasting impact of limits in some of the main destinations for Asian workers, compensated by the opening or expansion of others—especially developed economies. Indeed, a number of Asian destination economies have seen a shift in recent years toward labor migration policies that grant more possibilities for migrant workers to enter employment and even to remain long term. The unemployment rate has remained low in most Asian destination economies. Both Japan and the Republic of Korea have unemployment rates below 3%, and the rate is low in other destination economies in the region. Other traditional destinations of labor migrants in Asia have seen more restrictions, although this has not always been related to slack labor markets but rather concern over abuse of the labor migration system.

This chapter provides an overview of labor migration trends until the through the end of 2024 with the most recent data available covering most major Asian economies as well as the main destinations in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries for labor migrants from Asia. After describing the changing trends by origin and destination, and student mobility, the chapter provides an overview of available trends in the skill and gender composition of labor migrants from Asia.

1.2 Changing Trends: The Post-COVID-19 Rebound Appears to Have Ended

From 2021 to 2023, reported outflows from the major Asian origin countries of migrant workers were increasing steadily, after the dramatic collapse during the novel coronavirus disease (COVID19) pandemic and related border closures and economic disruption. In 2023, the rebound exceeded the 2019 figures, suggesting a new trend toward increased deployment of labor migrants from Asian origin countries. However, in 2024, this increase was reversed, and deployment fell to 6.5 million, from 6.7 million, for the 13 origin countries reporting outflows for employment (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Total Outflows of Workers from Selected Asian Countries, 2012–2024



Note: Total of the 13 countries presented in Table 1.1. Myanmar (shown in orange) is estimated for 2023 and missing for 2024.

Source: National authorities.

The picture was different for different origin countries, however. The Philippines, which comprises 38% of the total 2024 figure shown in Table 1.1, saw outflows increase by 6%. Sri Lanka reached record deployment levels, a 6% increase from 2023, while labor contract deployment from the People's Republic of China (PRC) increased by 18%. Most origin countries in Asia saw declines, however, sometimes quite significant: –22% in Bangladesh and –16% in Pakistan. These two countries still comprise 16% and 11% of the total deployments in 2024, respectively.

Overall, more than half of these labor migration flows (3.40 million) are directed to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. This was a 7% increase from 2023 to 2024. The main origin country of flows to the region from Asia is the Philippines, which accounted for more than 1 million deployments. However, most of these Filipino workers (88%) were redeployments, up from 70% in 2023, while new placements fell by 25% in 2024, suggesting a slowdown in recruitment of new overseas Filipino workers in the region.

Saudi Arabia was the destination for about 1.8 million Asian workers in 2024 (Table 1.2). This is 7% more than in 2023 and a new high. The increase was driven by workers from Bangladesh, the main origin country, which increased 26% after a decline in 2023, to send a record number of 629,000 workers to Saudi Arabia. This was driven partly by an expansion in Saudi infrastructure development and partly because other destinations for Bangladeshi workers imposed restrictions in 2024. Inflows from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia reversed the declining trend of 2023 and recorded a 6% increase in 2024. Inflows from Nepal rose by more than 30%.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was the second main GCC country of destination for Asian migrant workers in 2024 with 754,000 entries (-2% compared to 2023). The top origin countries were the Philippines (+23%) and Nepal (+122%), while inflows from Pakistan and Bangladesh fell 2024 by 72% and 52%, respectively. India replaced Bangladesh as the third origin country, with an increase of 56%.

Table 1.1: Outflows of Workers from Selected Asian Countries, 2012–2024 (‘000)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2023/24 % change	2019/24 % change
Philippines	1,802	1,836	1,833	1,844	2,112	1,993	1,845	2,157	550	743	1,206	2,331	2,474	6%	15%
Bangladesh	608	409	426	556	758	1,009	734	700	218	617	1,136	1,305	1,012	−22%	45%
Pakistan	635	620	752	947	839	496	382	625	225	288	832	863	727	−16%	16%
Nepal	385	451	520	499	404	383	354	236	190	72	349	494	460	−7%	95%
India	747	817	805	781	521	391	340	368	94	133	373	398	389	−2%	6%
PRC	512	527	562	530	494	522	492	487	301	323	259	347	409	18%	−16%
Sri Lanka	282	293	301	263	243	212	211	190	54	122	311	298	313	5%	65%
Indonesia	495	512	430	276	235	262	284	277	113	73	201	275	297	8%	7%
Myanmar	68	67	65	95	146	162	234	330	75	3	187	203	...		
Viet Nam	80	88	107	116	126	135	143	153	79	45	143	160	159	−1%	4%
Thailand	134	131	120	117	114	91	115	114	41	37	88	105	95	−9%	−16%
Lao PDR	7	23	8	51	58	49	120	54	28	0	53	105	98	−7%	82%
Cambodia	35	23	25	41	86	96	105	68	23	3	34	60	45	−26%	−34%
Total	5,790	5,797	5,953	6,117	6,137	5,801	5,359	5,758	1,990	2,459	5,172	6,944	6,479	−7%	13%

... = data not available, PRC = People’s Republic of China, Lao PDR = Lao People’s Democratic Republic.

Notes:
1. Total for Myanmar in 2023 is estimated.
2. Philippines series include seafarers.

Source: National authorities.

Table 1.2: Flows of Workers to Gulf Cooperation Council Countries, Main Sending Countries, 2024 and % change 2023–2024

	Bangladesh		India		Indonesia		Nepal		Pakistan		Philippines		Sri Lanka		Total	
	2024	% change	2024	% change	2024	% change	FY2024	% change	2024	% change	2024	% change	2024	% change	2024	% change
Saudi Arabia	628,564	26	168,567	−16	7,759	23	73,095	31	452,562	6	398,768	−5	47,500	-10	1,776,815	7
United Arab Emirates	47,166	−52	111,791	56	1,244	27	131,026	122	64,130	−72	346,823	23	51,550	78	753,730	−2
Oman	358	−100	24,399	14	165	62	2,905	7	81,587	36	21 215	6	7,600	28	138,229	−42
Qatar	74,422	33	23,947	−22	783	155	40,932	1	40,818	−26	50,822	9	46,000	42	377,724	7
Kuwait	33,031	−10	40,187	−17	640	51	28,776	−8	1,883	−19	83,511	19	77,546	93	265,574	16
Bahrain	0		8,668	18	89	62	5,116	29	25,198	89	21,274	3	...		60,345	25
Total GCC	783,541	−4	377,559	−1	10,680	55	281,850	46	666,178	−15	1022,413	10	230,196	41	3,372,417	3

... = data not available, FY = fiscal year, GCC = Gulf Cooperation Council.

Note: For Nepal, data refer to fiscal year, starting 16 July.

Source: National authorities of origin countries.

Flows to Qatar from the main origin countries rose by 7% in 2024, to 377,000. Deployment from India to Qatar fell by 22% while that from Sri Lanka rose by 42%, and flows from Bangladesh rose by 33%.

Deployment to Kuwait was up 16% in 2024, at 265,000, with a shift in origin countries from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India to—mostly notably—Sri Lanka, which doubled, and to Nepal and the Philippines.

Oman has seen declining labor migration flows, which fell by 42% in 2024 to 138,000. Labor migration from Bangladesh to Oman was suspended on 31 October 2023 and was only restored for selected skilled occupations (e.g., doctors, engineers, nurses, teachers, and accountants) in June 2024. This was due to Omani concern over abuse of labor migration channels involving spurious job offers as well as migration through visit visas instead of through official labor migration channels. For Bangladesh, this stoppage meant that deployment to Oman fell from 128,000 in 2023 to less than 400 in 2024. However, Oman pledged in 2024 to provide a path to regularization for almost 100,000 Bangladeshi workers who had fallen into undocumented status. As part of its "Omanization" policy, Oman further suspended visa issuance for many lower skill jobs for all foreign nationals from September 2024, further impacting labor migration flows to the country.

Table 1.3: Flows of Workers to ASEAN Countries, by Origin and Destination, 2024

Origin	Indonesia	Nepal	Bangladesh	India	Lao PDR	Pakistan	Philippines	Thailand	Viet Nam	Sri Lanka	Cambodia	PRC	Total
Destination	2024	2023/24	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2023	2023	2023	2024
Singapore	10,819	207	56,878	...	...	85	220,463	3,402	1,544	2,675	32	29,115	293,398
Malaysia	51,723	81,382	93,632	5,710	...	5,790	31,519	7,961	...	3,221	...	3,109	277,717
Thailand	3	4	...	10	91,682	...	18,137	...	...	87	43,291	1,109	109,866
Brunei Darussalam	3,183	484	205	...	....	217	14,425	470	...	...	...	1,832	18,985
Total	65,728	82,118	150,715	5,723	97,951	6,092	307,034	12,395	1,544	6,071	43,323	65,776	723,031
Change from 2023	−20.8%	−62.8%	−62.9%	−62.7%	−9.7%	−71.2%	18.6%	−13.1%	−15.9%	...	...	...	−35.6%

... = data not available, ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations, PRC = People's Republic of China, Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Notes: Nepal without reentry. Philippines and Thailand total is for all ASEAN. PRC total is for all ASEAN, 2023. Cambodia and Sri Lanka are 2023. Myanmar is excluded.

Source: National authorities of origin countries.

According to deployment figures from origin countries (excluding the PRC, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia, for which only 2023 data are available), about 723,000 Asian workers went to an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) country in 2024, a 36% decline from 2023 (Table 1.3), although missing figures for Myanmar may explain part of this decline (see Box 1.1). The decline, however, was entirely driven by fewer deployments to Malaysia – which fell from 720,000 in 2023 to 280,000 in 2024. This follows a post-COVID-19 rise in 2023, from both Bangladesh and Nepal, as well as Indonesia.

The decline in deployment to Malaysia was related to the suspension in May 2024 of labor migration from most origin countries. In May 2024, the Malaysian government temporarily suspended the intake of new foreign workers from the 15 labor-sending countries included in its main foreign-worker stream.[1] This policy shift was driven by mounting concerns over the rise in recruitment violations—particularly from Bangladesh, which was the largest source country as of 2023—and related reported violations of workers' rights.

In addition, the 2018 Malaysia–Nepal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on labor migration had a 5-year term and ended in 2023; it remains under renegotiation. These developments have resulted in a sharp decline in the number of workers from both countries: entries of Bangladeshi workers dropped from 352,000 to 94,000, while Nepali workers declined from 220,000 to 81,000. Despite these restrictions, labor mobility between Indonesia and Malaysia continues on a more fluid basis due to the existing arrangement allowing movement in 3-month cycles. Notably, the number of Filipino workers departing for Malaysia has increased slightly, from 30,000 to 32,000, suggesting a degree of resilience in certain migration channels

Singapore saw an increase in inflows in 2024, to account for almost 40% of deployments from ASEAN countries, primarily from the Philippines and from Bangladesh. The increases continue a trend in deployment to Singapore from these countries at the levels seen in the late 2010s.

The figures for Thailand—excluding deployment from Myanmar and Cambodia—increased from 85,000 to 110,000. Notably, deployment from the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) rose to almost 100,000 in 2024. Thailand, in 2024, introduced a major policy to regularize undocumented migrant workers (and their children) from Myanmar, the Lao PDR, and Cambodia. Some permit durations were also extended from 2 to 4 years, and the period for job changes was increased. In addition, the Thai government extended work permits by 6 months for Cambodian and Myanmar workers and 3 months for workers from the Lao PDR and Viet Nam. These measures aimed to stabilize the existing migrant workforce from these four countries, which grew to 2.4 million in 2023, up from 2.1 million 2020.

The PRC also sends workers to ASEAN countries. Although 2024 data are not yet available, in 2023, about 66,000 workers moved to ASEAN countries, primarily to Singapore (29,000), Indonesia (21,000), the Lao PDR (4,000), and Malaysia (3,100).

Outside ASEAN and the GCC countries, and excluding OECD countries, Taipei,China is the destination of many Asian workers. For Indonesian workers, it became the top destination for deployment in 2023, with 83,000 deployments. It has also been the top destination for Thai workers since 2012 (34,000 in 2024), and it is a significant destination from Viet Nam, with 62,000 deployments in 2024, second only to Japan.

[1] Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Viet Nam, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Philippines, India.

The deployment figures cited above do not tell the full story. Not all migrant workers in destination economies are counted in origin-country deployment figures, since some may arrive through other channels, including through irregular migration. One method to capture total flows is to look at figures for stocks of labor migrants reported destination countries. Indeed, destination economies do not consistently report inflows, but do report stock, although not always by origin. Thailand recorded 2.3 million migrant workers in February 2023, Malaysia 1.8 million in September 2023, and Singapore 1.5 million in June 2023.

In Brunei Darussalam, the effort to prioritize employment of the local labor force has led to some restrictions in the petroleum and gas sector since 2022 and increased compliance efforts. This represents a change in direction from the post-COVID-19 acceleration of processing times and the lighter requirements placed on employers in some sectors in 2021 due to lack of manpower. The number of foreign workers in Brunei Darussalam nonetheless exceeded 75,000 in 2024, a record number and about 50% higher than a decade earlier. The stock—including workers outside the regular work permit system—may be higher; Brunei Darussalam reported 400,000 migrant workers in 2021.

Box 1.1: Developments in Labor Migration from Myanmar

In the past decade, Myanmar became an important origin country for workers in Asia, with growing numbers going not only to historical destinations such as Thailand but also to Japan and the Republic of Korea. Since 2023, conflict and war in Myanmar, as well as reduced governance capacity, have interrupted statistical reporting on deployments even as interest in working abroad rose. The picture of trends is not clear. One factor affecting overseas employment is Myanmar conscription law. The military government of Myanmar introduced restrictions on overseas employment in April 2024, barring men aged 23-31 from departing; this restriction was extended to age 35 in January 2025. The regime suspended all departures in mid-February 2025 up to March 2025, when a cap on deployments was imposed on all regime-licensed overseas employment agencies. In August 2024, the Ministry of Labor imposed a requirement on all workers abroad to remit at least 25% of their wages, through designated official channels. The government, which issues Overseas Worker Identification Cards to those going abroad, already taxed foreign income at 2%. Job agencies must not only ensure that their workers remit the required minimum, but already from 2024 are responsible for bringing back workers who have been called up for conscription. The Myanmar government has also disrupted the agency industry; in 2024, the private body responsible for licensing, renamed Myanmar Overseas Employment Agency Association—withdrew licensing for numerous agencies.

Even in the absence of official deployment statistics, labor migration from Myanmar is continuing. The number of registered migrant workers from Myanmar in Thailand reached almost 2.3 million in 2024, up from 1.5 million in 2020. Most, however, were regularized in Thailand, rather than arriving through formal labor migration channels.

Source: Authors.

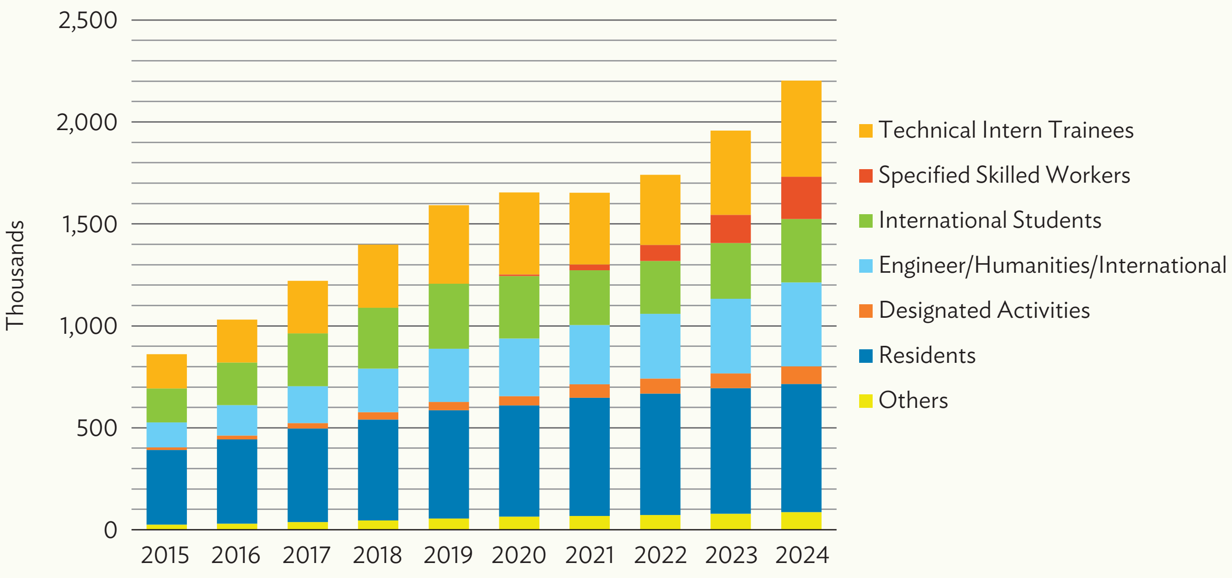
1.3 Labor Migration to OECD and non-OECD Asian Economies

Labor migration to Asian OECD countries and other economies in the region has expanded greatly in recent years, interrupted only by the pandemic. Demographics play a role, with shrinking youth cohorts in most developed economies in the region, as well as fewer new entrants to the labor force willing to take on some of the lower paid and less-skilled jobs in manufacturing, services, and agriculture. Policies have opened in a number of destination economies, to allow higher numbers of workers, or to extend eligibility to additional sectors or occupations. This section reviews the different evidence available on inflows and employment of migrant workers in Asian destinations.

Between 2015 and 2019, the number of foreigners employed in Japan surged from 908,000 to 1,660,000, marking an average annual growth of 16%. As Japan gradually reopened its economy, foreign employment resumed its growth in 2022 (5.5%), followed by annual increases of 12% in both 2023 and 2024. Japan expanded the eligible occupations in its rapidly-expanding Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) system.

According to data from Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (Figure 1.2), as of October 2024, 2.3 million foreigners were employed in Japan. Some categories of residence status have increased more sharply than others. The most rapid increases were in the status of residence linked to skilled employment. The SSW category showed particularly rapid growth, rising to 207,000 workers, a 49% year-on-year increase. The number of technical intern trainees increased as well, albeit with a more modest increase, of approximately 14%, to 471,000, 23% more than in 2019. In 2024, the number of foreign workers under the Engineer/Humanities/International Services category reached 411,000, 12% increase from the previous year and more than double the number in 2019. Students also increased by 14% to 312,000 in 2024, nearly exceeding their 2019 figure.

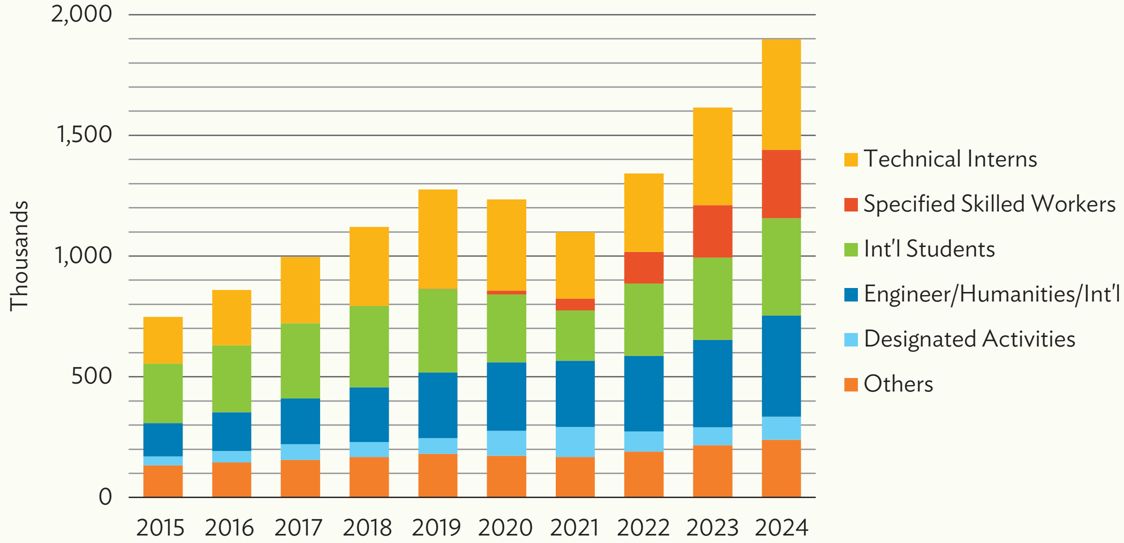
Figure 1.2: Japan, Stock of Foreigners Employed, 2015–2024



Source: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Japan. Figures for October of each year.

Figures on total foreign residents from Japan's Immigration Service Agency under the Ministry of Justice mirror this trend. According to the agency (Figure 1.3), the total number of foreign residents holding a student visa (including those not currently employed) reached 402,000, already surpassing the 2019 figure. This number is now roughly equivalent to that of those under the Engineer/Humanities/International Services category.

Figure 1.3: Japan, Stock of Foreigners with Work or Study Related Residence Status, 2015–2024



Source: Immigration Services Agency, Ministry of Justice, Japan. Figures for the end of each year.

Over 80% of foreign workers in Japan originate from Asia (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Japan). Between 2019 and 2024, notable shifts occurred in the composition of foreign workers by nationality. While the proportion of workers from Viet Nam remained steady at around 25%, and those from the Philippines hovered around 10%, the share of workers from the PRC declined sharply from 25% to 18%. In contrast, the proportions of workers from Indonesia, Myanmar, and Nepal increased significantly, each accounting for approximately 5%–8% by 2024. In 2024, citizens from Viet Nam comprised the largest group, with 571,000 individuals employed, marking a 10% increase from 2023. Among them, 223,000 held technical intern status (compared to 183,000 in 2022 and 209,000 in 2023), followed by 98,700 under the Engineer/Humanities/International services category, 90,600 as SSW and 80,300 as international students. While most countries of origin experienced growth in numbers, Myanmar and Indonesia notably recorded the highest year-on-year growth rates at 61% and 40%, respectively.

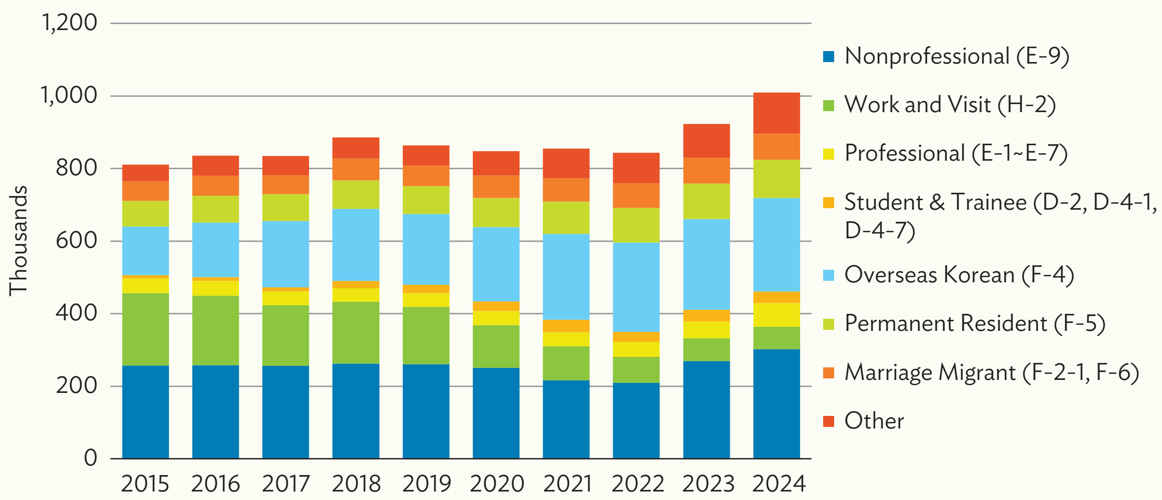
In the Republic of Korea, the number of foreigners employed also saw a notable increase of 9%, to reach record highs in 2023 (923,000) and again in 2024 (1 million) (Figure 1.4). This growth can be attributed to a surge in nonprofessional E-9 visa holders, which increased 29% from 209,000 in 2022 to 269,000 in 2023 and 303,000 in 2024. The E-9 visa is issued to workers employed under the Employment Permit System, in lower-skill occupations in certain sectors—primarily manufacturing, and mostly in small and medium-sized enterprises. The Republic of Korea also expanded the number of occupations in which E-9 workers could be recruited and employed, in 2024 and again in 2025.

The E-9 visa allows employment up to almost 10 years if the worker meets renewal conditions. Annual entry quotas are set by the government of the Republic of Korea. The increase was a result of an expansion of the annual admission quota for E-9 workers to 120,000 and 165,000 in 2024. In 2024, in terms of sectors of employment, the manufacturing industries were allotted 95,000 E-9 workers and agriculture 16,000. However, in 2024, due to changes in the economic climate and increased utilization of other employment-eligible visa types—such as the E-7 (special activity) and E-8 (seasonal work)—demand for E-9 workers declined, and the number of new E-9 employment permits issued was lower than the quota, at just 78,000, mostly in manufacturing (62,000) and agriculture (7,400). Taking into account the arrivals in 2024, labor supply and demand projections, the economic outlook, and the results of demand surveys conducted with employers and relevant ministries, the government set the E9 quota for 2025 at 130,000 (manufacturing 72,000, agriculture 10,000, fishery 8,500). However, in addition to the E-9 visa, the government also sets a quota for seasonal workers (E-8); this was increased from 68,000 in 2024 to 75,000 for 2025.

The number of employed foreigners holding visas for more skilled employment increased from 46,000 in 2023 to 65,000 in 2024. Furthermore, the number of student and trainee visa holders, as well as professional visa holders, also experienced notable increases of 18% and 12%, respectively.

Among the 1 million employed foreigners in the Republic of Korea, 87% are Asian nationals. The PRC nationals are the largest group employed (over 40%). Among them, most (89%) are ethnic Korean Chinese. The number of employed ethnic Korean Chinese rose in 2024, while that of other Chinese fell. Most of the overall increase in 2024, however, was in other Asian workers. The number of foreign nationals from Viet Nam continues to increase, by 18% annually in 2024, to constitute 12% of the employed foreign population. Excluding the PRC and Viet Nam, other Asian nationalities in employment rose 15%.

Figure 1.4: Republic of Korea, Stock of Foreigners Employed, 2015–2024

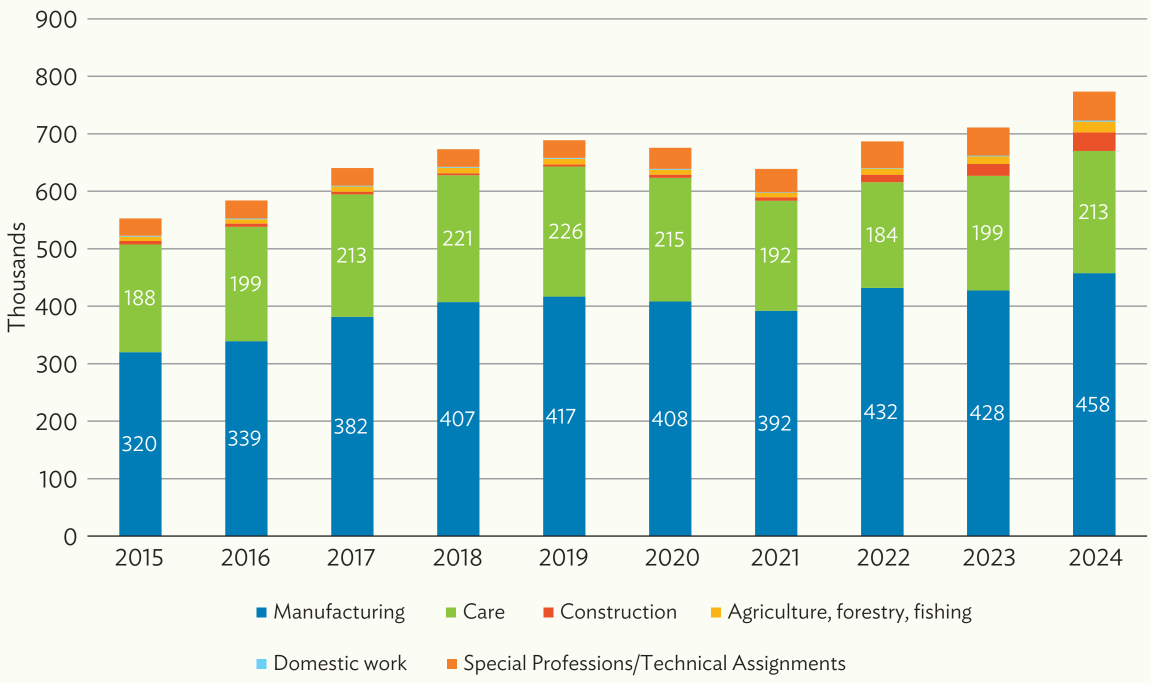


Source: Survey on Immigrants' Living Conditions and Labor Force, Ministry of Justice and Statistics Korea.

One Asian non-OECD economy that attracts numerous workers from the region is Taipei,China. The government in 2022 outlined plans to attract an additional 400,000 foreign workers by 2030. The strategy involves enhancing the recruitment of white-collar foreign professionals, drawing in and retaining more international students of ethnic Chinese background, and increasing the retention of young migrant workers with vocational or university education. Moreover, in response to labor shortages in mid-skilled occupations, Taipei,China implemented the Foreign Worker Retention Program in 2022. This program institutionalized the transition of foreign labor migrants into Intermediate Skilled Workers based on skills and wage levels, effectively lifting the restriction on their maximum period of stay. The impact has been substantial: 805 workers transitioned under the program in 2022, 19,191 in 2023, and 32,512 in 2024, with the majority shifting from low-skilled labor migrant status. A bridging program introduced in April 2024 allowed—for the first time—higher-salary skilled foreigners in certain occupations to move from long-term temporary permits to stay indefinitely and apply for permanent residency if they meet the conditions.[2] Furthermore, under the National Talent Competitiveness Leap Program (2024–2027), the National Development Council aims to attract an additional 120,000 Foreign Professionals by 2028, in addition to the 71,000 already accepted as of June 2024.

In Taipei,China, the foreign workforce increased by 8.8%, rising from 711,000 in 2023 to 773,000 in 2024 (Figure 1.5). Foreign workers in Taipei,China can be broadly classified into two streams: labor migrants employed in sectors such as manufacturing, construction, agriculture, fisheries, caregiving, and domestic work; and foreign workers engaged in Special Professions or Technical Assignments (including teachers, engineers, investors, and managers). In 2024, the former group increased by 9.2% compared to the previous year, driven mainly by a 7% rebound in the manufacturing sector—which had shown a slight decline trend in the previous year—and sustained growth of over 50% in the construction sector. The latter group grew by 4.1%, maintaining a similar pace to the previous year.

Figure 1.5: Taipei,China, Stock of Foreign Workforce by Sector, 2015–2024



Source: Workforce Development Agency, Ministry of Labor, Taipei,China.

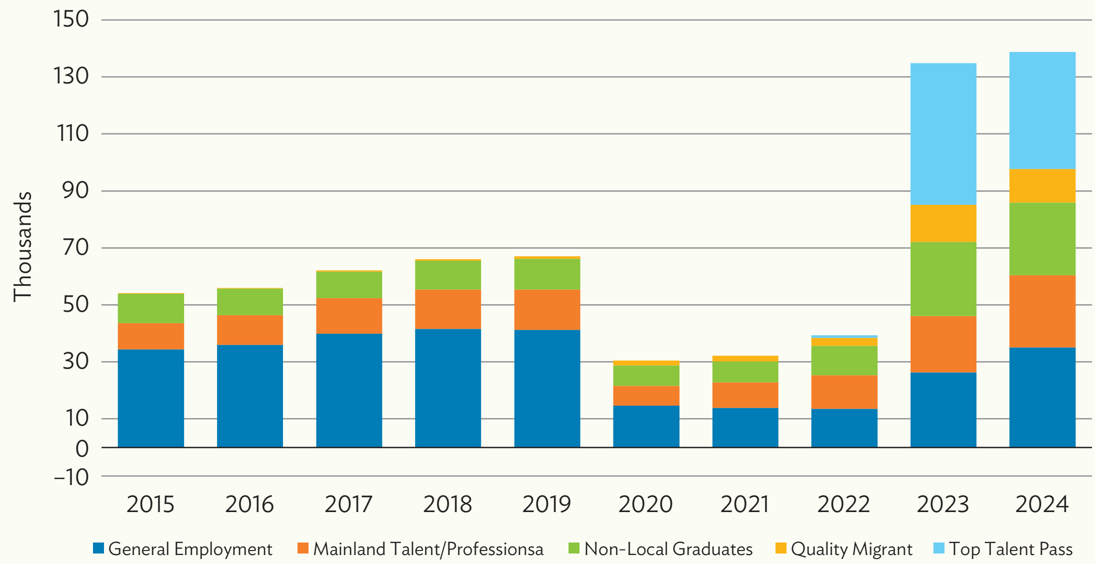
[2] In April 2024, Taipei,China introduced a bridging program for skilled foreigners working in certain sectors, including fishing, manufacturing, construction, and care work. By mid-October 2024, more than 36,000 applications had been approved (22,423 in care work, or 60%). Employers committed to raise the salaries of these workers; the new status allows not only indefinite stay but application for permanent residency if the worker meets the conditions.

Regarding nationality composition, among labor migrants, Indonesians accounted for 38%, Vietnamese 31%, Filipinos 22%, and Thais 10% as of 2024. The number of Indonesians working under these different programs increased by over 10%, the highest growth rate for any nationality. 78% of foreign workers engaged in the social welfare sector were from Indonesia. Additionally, a memorandum of understanding on labor cooperation between Taipei,China and India was signed in February 2024, aiming to facilitate the acceptance of 1,000 Indian workers into the manufacturing sector. For the category of Special Professions or Technical Assignments, the top nationalities were Indonesians (17%), followed by Japanese (12%), Indians (12%), and Vietnamese (11%). Vietnamese workers in this category showed the most significant year-on-year increase, rising by 23%.

In terms of gender, employment of male and female foreign workers grew by 10.3% and 7.2%, respectively. In particular, the care and domestic work sectors, where foreign workers are predominantly women, have shown a gradual recovery, although not back to the pre-COVID-19 level.

A notable turnaround in migration trends has occurred in Hong Kong, China (Figure 1.6), where the main visa categories have seen approvals increase sharply in 2023–2024. The Top Talent Pass, introduced in last 2022, has increased numbers; 95% of recipients are from the PRC. In the General Employment Scheme, many of the admissions are for jobs in non-specified sectors and half of all admissions have relatively low salaries (below $2,560 per month). More than half of the applicants approved come from OECD countries. The non-local graduate scheme and Quality Migrant scheme are also almost entirely dominated by PRC applicants, most with a master's degree or higher.

Figure 1.6: Hong Kong, China, Selected Employment Visas/Entry Permits, 2015–2024



Note: The "Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates" has been expanded to include graduates from the GBA campuses of Hong Kong, China universities since 28 December 2022.

Source: Immigration Department, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

In Singapore, where the labor market remains tight and the resident unemployment rate below 3%, the salary thresholds for different categories of work permit for foreigners were raised in 2024, largely to reduce the risk of exploitation. Other changes—such as reducing sector dependency ratios—also went in the direction of constraining the growth in recourse to foreign workers. The total foreign workforce in Singapore, however, reached 1.58 million at the end of 2024, a 3.3% increase from the previous year, which had already surpassed the 2019 levels (Table 1.4). Work permit holders rose by nearly 5%, including migrant domestic workers and those in the construction, marine shipyard, and process sectors. Other work passes also saw a 6.7% increase. In contrast, the number of Employment Pass and S Pass (mid-level skilled) holders showed a slight decline.

The Singapore government continued to tighten the overall number of S Pass and work permit holders through quota reductions. Generally, companies are limited in hiring S Pass holders to 10% of the total workforce in the services sector and 15% in the construction, manufacturing, marine shipyard, and process sectors, ensuring a balance with the local workforce. The number of S Pass holders did not however significantly decrease. This can be attributed to the new Manpower for Strategic Economic Priorities (M-SEP) scheme introduced in December 2022, which allows high-value companies to address skills shortages through exceptions to the quota requirements.

Table 1.4: Singapore, Foreign Workforce Numbers, 2019–2024

Pass Type	December 2019	December 2020	December 2021	December 2022	December 2023	December 2024
Employment Pass	193,700	177,100	161,700	187,300	205,400	202,100
S Pass	200,000	174,000	161,800	177,900	178,500	178,200
Work Permit (Total)	999,000	848,200	849,700	1,033,500	1,113,000	1,165,900
- Work Permit (Migrant Domestic Workers)	261,800	247,400	246,300	268,500	286,300	301,600
- Work Permit (Construction, Marine Shipyard, and Process)	370,100	311,100	318,500	415,000	441,100	456,800
- Work Permit (Other)	34,700	32,200	27,200	25,400	28,500	30,400
Other Work Passes	1,427,400	1,231,500	1,200,400	1,424,200	1,525,500	1,576,500
Total Foreign Workforce	**1,165,600**	**984,100**	**954,100**	**1,155,700**	**1,239,200**	**1,274,900**

Notes: Data may not add up to the total due to rounding. The Singapore Employment Pass is for highly-skilled professionals and has a minimum salary requirement. The S Pass is for mid-level skilled staff with salary requirements.

Source: Ministry of Manpower, Singapore.

While the economies discussed above are the most notable destinations for labor migration, other countries which are traditionally origin countries for labor migrants also receive growing numbers of labor migrants. These include Indonesia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam (Box 1.2).

Box 1.2: Foreign Workers in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam

The number of foreign nationals in Indonesia under work permits continues to rise, growing from 112,000 in 2022 to 121,000 in 2023, and reaching 134,000 in 2024 (Table 1.5). Most foreign workers are employed in the secondary (63,000) and tertiary (68,000) sectors, with a smaller portion (3,500) in the primary sector. East Asian nationals account for the majority, led by workers from the PRC (73,000), Japan (11,000), and the Republic of Korea (9,600). 2024 saw increased immigration enforcement targeting foreign nationals' compliance with work and residence regulations. Indonesian authorities have increased onsite audits and random inspections to ensure that foreign employees are properly documented and working within the scope of their permits. Employers must report any changes in job roles, personal details, or work locations within 30 days, with stricter penalties for noncompliance—including potential fines and deportation. These developments reflect the government's push to better regulate a growing foreign workforce and to align with national labor and economic priorities.

In the Philippines, foreign worker policy has been tightened in recent years. On of the main concerns is the Philippine offshore gaming operator sector—online gambling largely—for which many permits are issued. In 2025, the Department of Labor and Employment introduced new labor market testing rules and other requirements for employers to obtain an Alien Employment Permit (AEP). An Economic Needs Test assesses whether hiring a foreign national will contribute to the country's economic development. The labor market test now requires—in addition to a newspaper vacancy advertisement—also publication with the public matching platform and with the public employment services. Several measures make the AEP more accessible, such as statutory processing times or out-of-country application.

For Viet Nam, while official statistics are limited, available data shows that the number of foreign nationals holding work permits decreased from 122,000 in June 2019 to 93,000 in June 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, before rising again to 132,000 in 2023. Viet Nam has introduced incremental changes to its regulations on foreign workers, aiming to tighten administrative control while responding to labor market needs. Updates clarified requirements for work permits, job positions, and qualifications, with stricter documentation or renewal rules.

Table 1.5: Foreign workers in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam, 2012–2024

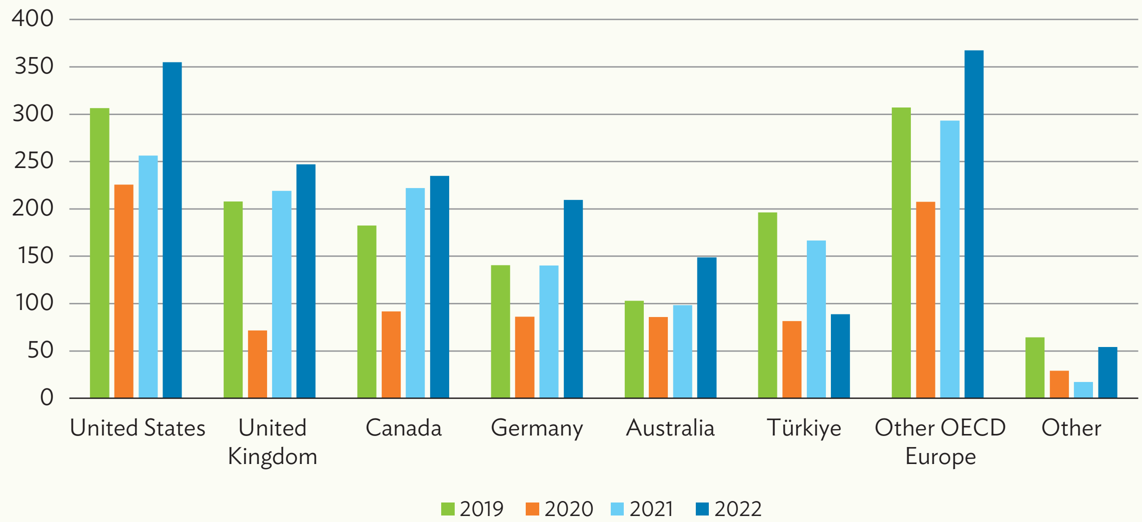
Year	Indonesia	Philippines	Viet Nam
2012	72,427	–	–
2013	68,957	–	–
2014	68,762	–	–
2015	69,025	–	83,500
2016	74,183	–	–
2017	85,974	–	83,172
2018	95,335	–	–
2019	109,546	158,710	–
2020	93,761	110,508	93,425
2021	88,271	57,459	101,550
2022	111,746	62,439	–
2023	121,206	69,612	132,381
2024	133,979	60,312	149,195

Sources: Indonesia: Foreign Manpower Utilization Permits Issued by the Ministry of Manpower; Philippines: AEPs issued by the Department of Labor and Employment; Viet Nam: foreign workers registered with the MOLISA.

1.4 Labor Migration to non-Asian OECD Countries

The most recent figures for migration to OECD countries by nationality covers 2022. Total migration to the OECD from Asian origin countries—which includes all reasons for migration—reached 2.5 million in 2022, slightly higher than its 2019 level. About two-thirds of Asian migration to OECD—or 1.7 million people—was to destinations outside Asia. The main destinations were the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and Australia (Figure 1.7).

Figure 1.7: Top 10 non-Asian OECD Destinations for Migration from Asia, 2019–2022 ('000)

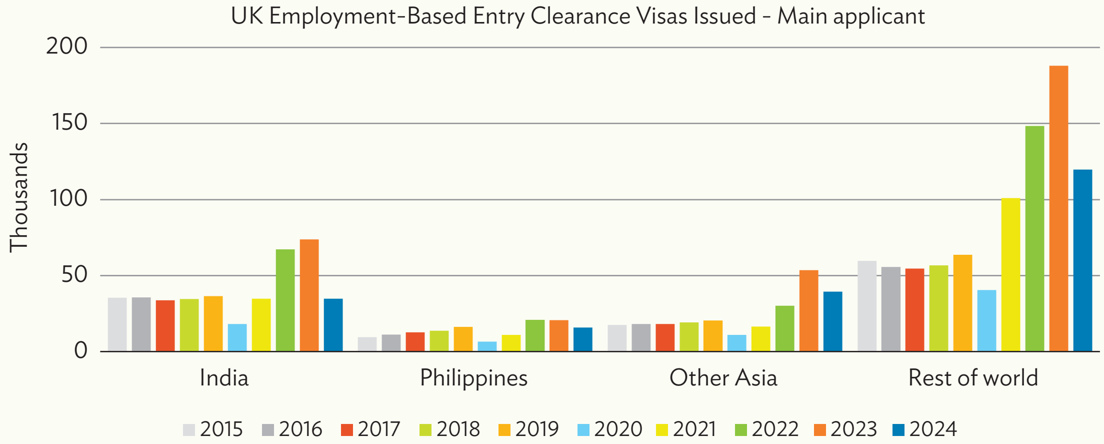


Source: OECD International Migration Database (2024).

Labor migration is just one part of migration to OECD countries, which also receive family and humanitarian migrants, and migrants within free-mobility areas, as well as other less numerous categories. The trend in labor migration to OECD countries has been increasing. Labor and economic-category migration to OECD countries, whether temporary or permanent, rose sharply in 2022 (OECD 2024). Permanent-type labor migration rose 36% between 2021 and 2022, and at 1.1 million new permanent migrants was well above its level of the 2010s. In terms of temporary-type labor migration, more than 2.4 million work permits and authorizations were granted in OECD countries (excluding Poland) in 2022, a 77% year-on-year increase from 2021 and 14% above the 2019 levels. This section examines labor and economic-class migration to several non-Asian OECD destinations of relevance for migration from Asia.

Looking at individual OECD destination countries, it is possible to identify more recent (2024) labor migration flows by category and origin. Labor migration to the United Kingdom from Asia collapsed in 2024, as evidenced by the issuance of 210,000 employment-based entry clearance visas to migrant workers (main applicants). This is 37% fewer than the 2023 record high of 336,000 and also less than the total for 2022 (267,000) (Figure 1.8).

Figure 1.8: **Labor Migration from Asia to the United Kingdom, 2015–2024**



Note: Employment-based entry clearance visas issued for main applicant. Employment Based Migration is former Tier 1, 2, and 5.

Source: United Kingdom Home Office.

Among the total labor visas issued in 2024, 43% (or 90,000) were granted to individuals from Asian countries—a 39% decrease from 148,000 in 2023. Almost all major Asian countries of origin, except the Republic of Korea and Japan, experienced year-on-year declines. The top three Asian source countries—India, the Philippines, and Pakistan—fell by 53%, 23%, and 27%, respectively. In contrast, the two Asian OECD countries saw large increases—the Republic of Korea up 72% and Japan up 60%. The three main subcategories of labor visas issued to Asian nationals were: Skilled Worker (32,500 visas), Skilled Worker Health and Care (14,800 visas, a 79% decrease), and Overseas Domestic Worker (18,300 visas). In fact, the decrease in inflows to the United Kingdom primarily reflects the tightening of the care worker route, which reversed 2022's policy changes that had lowered the income threshold for work in the care sector and removed the cap on admissions (Box 1.3).

Asia has long been the primary region of origin for permanent immigrants to Canada, particularly in economic categories. Most of these permanent-type migrants were already residing in Canada on temporary work or study permits. Since 2015, approximately 60% of new permanent admissions have originated from Asia (Figure 1.10). However, in 2024, this share declined to 56%—the lowest level since 2015. The major Asian countries contributing to this trend include India, which accounted for 60% of all Asian economic migrants, followed by the Philippines (14.4%) and the PRC (11.3%). While inflows from India and the PRC declined by 9% and 15%, respectively, inflows from the Philippines and rose by 23% and from Pakistan by 8%. As a result, for the first time since 2018, the number of migrants from the Philippines exceeded those from the PRC. Despite the Canadian government's earlier 2024 target of a 6% annual increase in economic admissions, economic migration from Asia fell by 3% (from 166,400 to 157,200). The targets for economic migration were since revised downward. In contrast, overall economic migration to Canada increased by 3% in 2024, including a 17% rise in inflows from non-Asian countries.

Box 1.3: The United Kingdom Health and Care Worker Visa and its Uptake by Asian Workers and Dependents

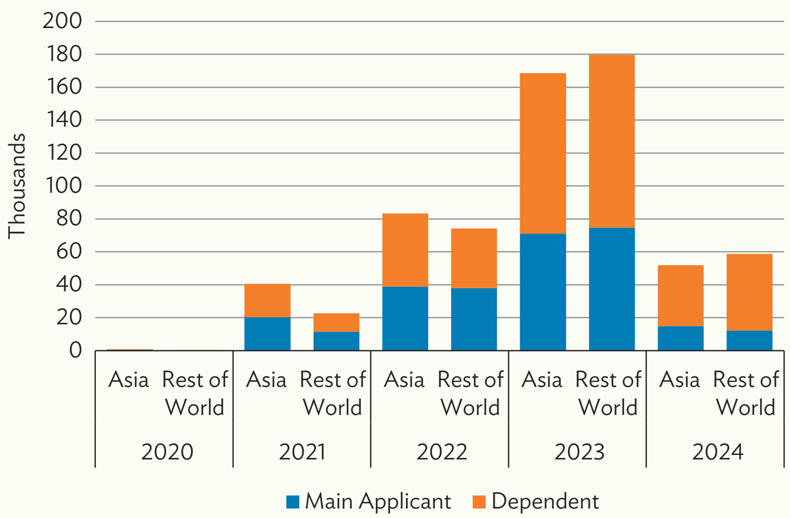
The UK Health and Care Worker visa, introduced in August 2020, allowed qualified medical professionals—including doctors, nurses, and social care workers—to work in eligible roles within the National Health Service (NHS), NHS suppliers, or adult social care in the UK. To qualify, applicants must have a confirmed job offer from a UK employer approved by the Home Office, a Certificate of Sponsorship detailing the role, meet minimum salary thresholds (which vary by occupation), and demonstrate English language proficiency. The visa was valid for up to 5 years and could be extended indefinitely, initially with the possibility of applying for permanent settlement after 5 years. Visa holders could bring eligible dependents, who would have labor market access. This access for dependents made the visa particularly attractive and many workers arrived with dependents.

Most recipients of the UK Health and Care Worker visa were employed in adult social care roles. The visa was initially introduced to attract qualified healthcare professionals, but in 2022, care workers and senior care workers were included on the Shortage Occupation List, which significantly increased visa applications for these roles. Subsequent visa grants shifted toward social care workers and senior care workers.

About half of all these visas were granted to applicants and their dependents from Asian countries (48% in 2023 and 47% in 2024, respectively). More than one-fourth of the total came from India (28% in 2023 and 27% in 2024, respectively).

The route was restricted in 2023, leading to a reduction in approvals, and closed in May 2025.

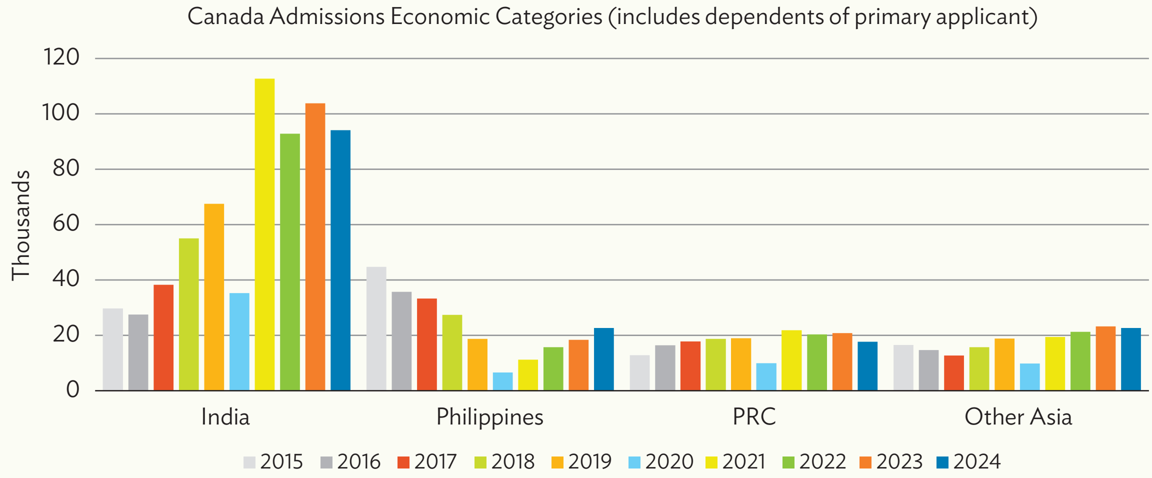
Figure 1.9: Health and Care Worker Visas issued 2020–2024, by Origin and Category



Source: UK Home Office.

Temporary labor migration to Canada follows a different pattern, with Asia not the main continent of origin. Indeed, the share of Asia in total temporary labor migration has been increasing, but still only reached 35% of the total in 2023 and 41% in 2024 (Figure 1.11). Most temporary foreign workers arrive from Central America, but India still accounted for 15% in 2023 and then 21% in 2024, and Philippines 12% in both years.

Figure 1.10: Labor Migration from Asia to Canada, 2015–2024

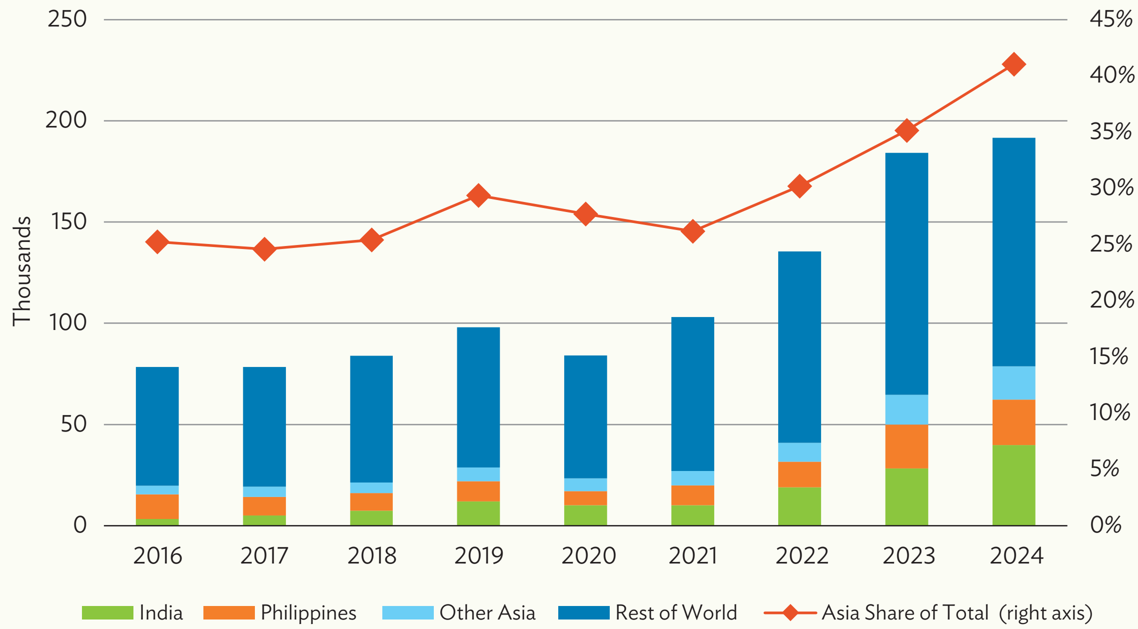


PRC = People's Republic of China.

Note: Canada admissions economic categories (includes dependents of primary applicant).

Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Figure 1.11: Temporary Foreign Worker Admissions in Canada by Nationality, 2016–2024

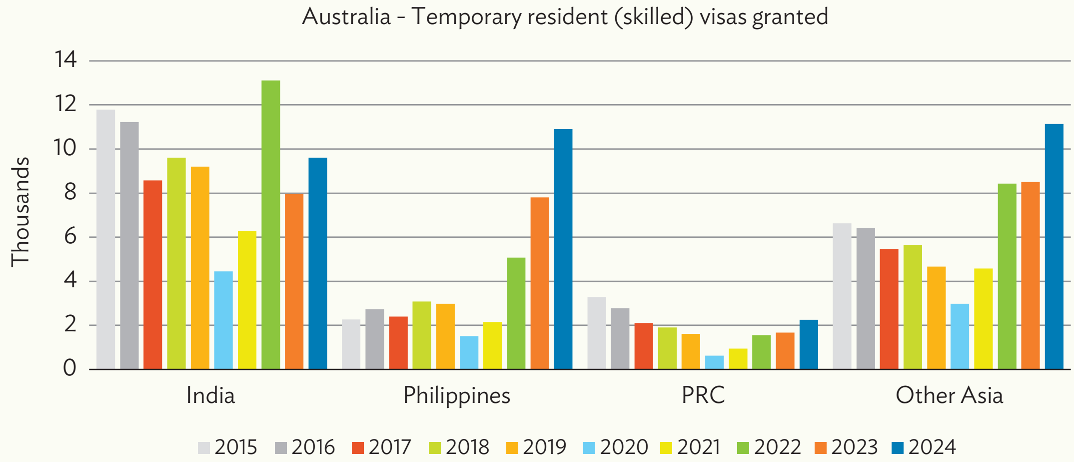


Note: Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) work permit holders by year in which permit(s) became effective.

Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Turning to Australia, temporary skilled labor migration from Asia experienced a significant 31% increase in 2024, reaching 33,900 admissions compared to 25,800 in 2023 (Figure 1.12). The top five countries of origin—the Philippines, India, the PRC, Nepal, and Sri Lanka—accounted for nearly 80% of the total flow. The number of Temporary Resident (Skilled) visas granted to citizens of the main origin countries increased significantly: 21% for India, 40% for the Philippines, and 36% for the PRC. A similar upward trend was observed for other Asian countries as well.

Figure 1.12: Temporary Skilled Labor Migration from Asia to Australia, 2015–2024



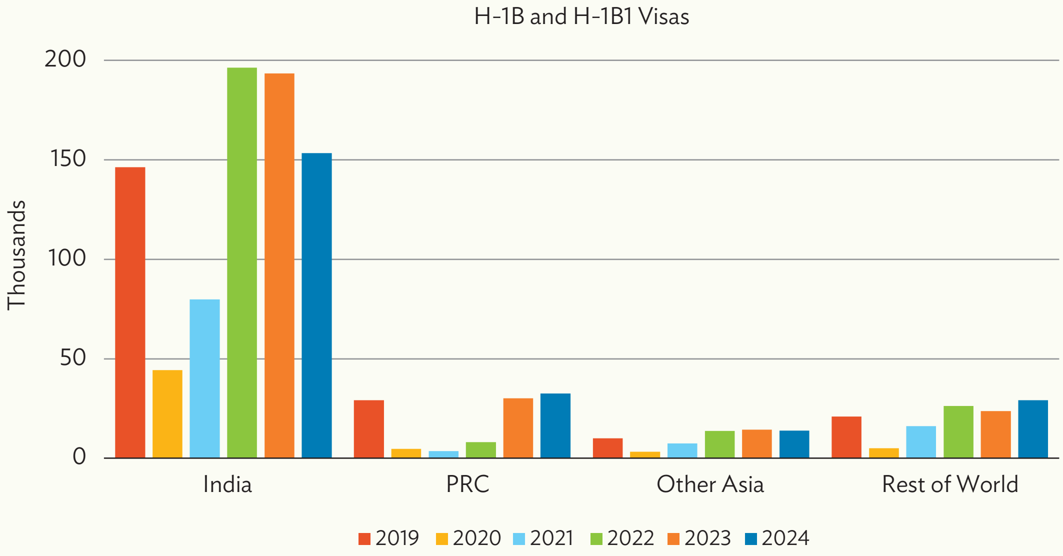
PRC = People's Republic of China.

Note: Temporary resident (skilled) visas granted.

Source: Australian Department of Home Affairs.

Shifting focus to skilled workers in the United States, nonimmigrant visa issuances (Figure 1.13) exclusively reflect visa issuances abroad for new and renewing non-immigrants. Issuances of H-1B visas inside the United States—to graduating international students, for example—are not included in these figures. The share of Indians among H-1B visa issuances—while the majority—has been declining, from 80% in 2022 to 67% in 2024. The share of H-1B visa recipients from the PRC increased to 14% in 2024. In absolute numbers, nearly 153,400 Indian workers were issued an H-1B visa during 2024, representing a 21% decrease and driving the overall decline in H-1B visa issuance. The growth for workers from the PRC was 8%. Workers from other Asian countries received a total of about 14,000 visas in 2024, comparable to the 2023 level.

Figure 1.13: H-1B Visa Issuances by the United States, by Country of Nationality of Recipient, 2019–2024



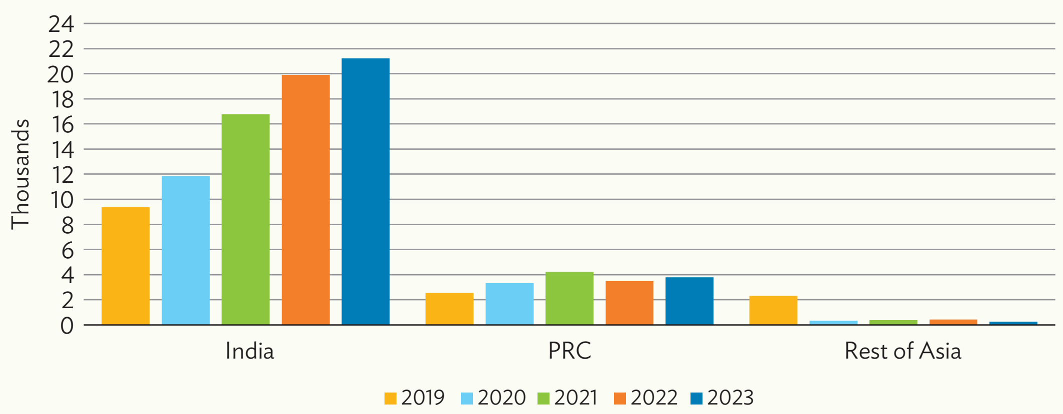
PRC = People's Republic of China.

Note: Includes H-1B and H-1B1 visas.

Source: United States Department of State.

Some skilled migration from Asia to the European Union (EU) occurs through the EU Blue Card scheme for highly qualified workers. Focusing exclusively on this type of residence permit, the share of Asian nationals among skilled workers has remained relatively stable since 2019, hovering around 35%. In 2023, the number of Indian workers increased by 7%, while the number of workers from the PRC rebounded by 9% following a steep decline the previous year (Figure 1.14).

Figure 1.14: European Union Blue Card (Highly-qualified Workers) Issuances by Origin, 2020–2023



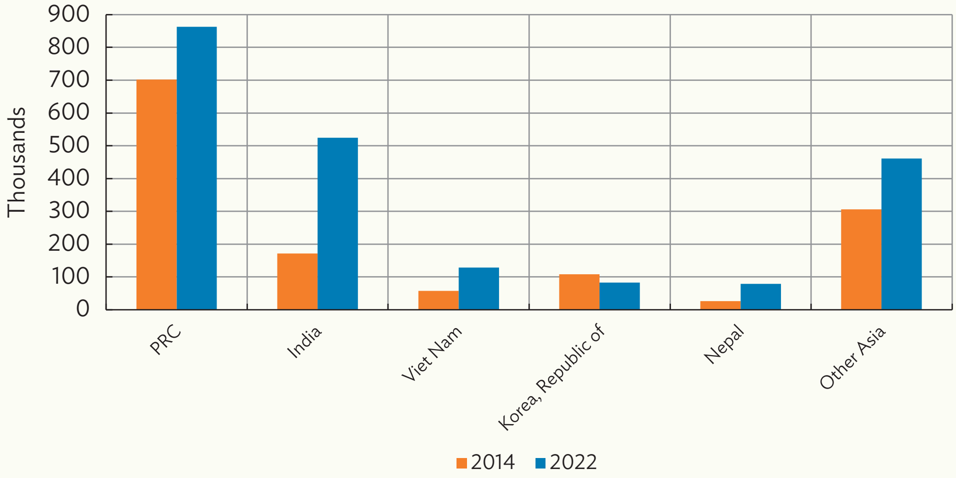
PRC = People's Republic of China.

Source: Eurostat.

1.5 International Student Mobility to and from Asia

In 2022, there were 4.6 million international students (including students who were admitted on grounds other than study, such as family reunification or humanitarian migration as well as foreign students benefitting from a free mobility agreement) enrolled in OECD countries. Of these, 46% were from Asia. Between 2014 and 2022, the number of international students from Asia increased by 56%. All the main Asian origin countries increased (Figure 1.15). The largest relative increases were for Indians and Nepalese studying in OECD countries, both of which doubled. Viet Nam increase by 125%, while the Republic of Korea saw instead a 24% decline.

Figure 1.15: Top Five Asian Nationalities of International Tertiary-level Students Enrolled in OECD Countries, 2014 and 2022



Source: OECD Data Explorer, Number of Mobile Students Enrolled and Graduated by Country of Origin. https://data-explorer.oecd.org/ (accessed 30 June 2025).

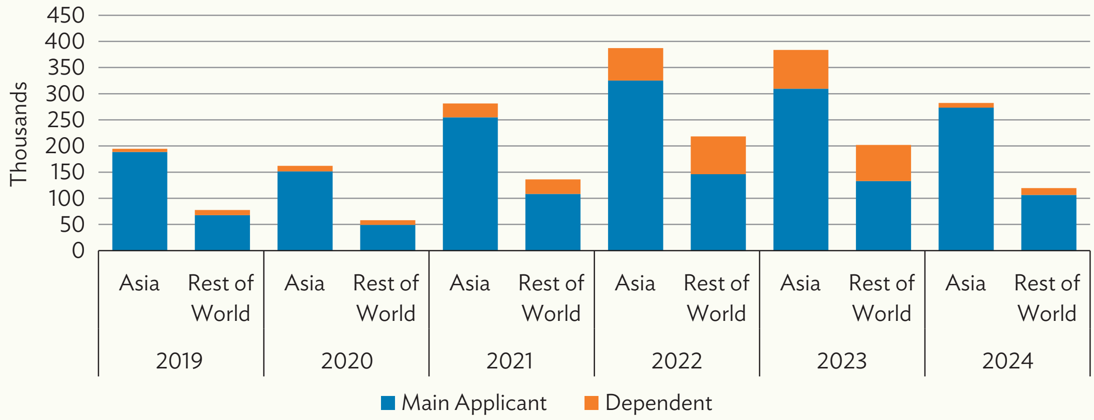
International student enrolment in OECD countries appears to have expanded since 2022, although comparative data are not yet available. In the United Kingdom, for example, there was a sharp increase in student migration in 2022–2023, with much coming from Asia (Box 1.4). Increases were also sharp in Canada in 2022–2023.

Box 1.4: The Rise and Fall in Asian Student Migration to the United Kingdom, 2021–2024

The United Kingdom (UK) saw a sharp increase in international students in 2021–2023 (Figure 1.16). This was not only due to the increase in European Union (EU) students following Brexit; indeed, most of the international students admitted to the United Kingdom for study come from Asia. During 2021–2023, Asian students comprised 70% of total student inflows—about one-quarter from the PRC and one-quarter from India.

Several factors contributed to the sharp increase in international students in 2021–2023. The post-graduate work extension allowed graduates to remain at least two years for employment in the United Kingdom without restriction, which made 1-year Master's level courses very attractive for those looking for a route into the UK for employment. Further, until 2024, students enrolled in postgraduate courses (UK RQF level 7 or above, including taught Master's students) of a duration of at least 9 months or more were allowed to dependents. Their dependents had largely unrestricted labor market access. Many students arrived with dependents. A number of changes in 2024 restricted the ability to bring dependents, the duration of post-graduate extensions and the conditions for sponsorship by educational institutions. This led to a decline in the number of student visas.

Figure 1.16: Student Visas Issued by Citizenship, United Kingdom, 2019–2024



Note: Student admissions are Tier 4 Study channel.

Source: Home Office.

Looking at non-OECD Asian destinations of international students, figures suggest that the pandemic and associated restrictions have had a dramatic negative effect on the enrollment of international students in the PRC. The PRC had set an objective in 2020 of bringing 500,000 international students (including language, exchange, and non-degree students) by 2020: the number of international students in higher education institutions was 307,000 in 2018 and 333,000 in 2019. The number fell to 274,000 in 2020, 256,000 in 2021, 253,000 in 2022, and 254,019 in 2023, raising the question of how the PRC will restore its attractiveness for international students. Notably, the number of American students dropped from around 15,000 in 2013 to just 350 in 2023, and the number of students from the Republic of Korea, once over 50,600 in 2017, had declined by 78% by early 2025.

Malaysia is another significant destination of international students in Asia. Numbers peaked in 2017, at about 136,000, before falling around 95,000 from 2019 to 2021 and only slightly increasing in 2022 to 104,000. In 2023, international enrolment rose to 115,000.

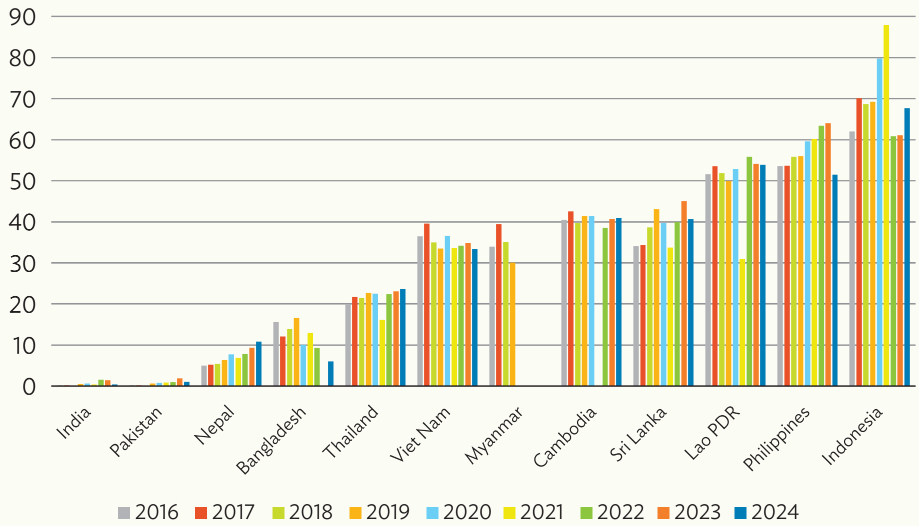
1.6 Gender Composition of Deployment of Workers from Asian Countries

The share of women among migrant workers from Asian countries remained relatively stable until 2019, peaking at 32.8%. It declined during the COVID-19 period, reaching a low in 2021. In 2024, however, the average across countries (shown in Figure 1.17) rose to 30%, marking a modest rebound.

Some countries continue to maintain or regain high shares of women among their migrant workers. In the Philippines, the share of women among landbased deployments had been steadily rising since 2016, reaching almost two-thirds in 2023, before falling sharply to 52% in 2024 (Figure 1.17). Indonesia now has the highest share of women in outflows at 68%, reflecting a return to pre-COVID-19 levels, although still below the 2021 peak of 88%. The Lao PDR is another country where women account for at least half of all migrant workers.

Others report a lower share of women. Sri Lanka, historically a major sender of women for domestic and care work abroad, saw women comprise the majority of outflows until the mid-2000s, and maintain a gender-balanced share until 2012. The share then dropped to one-third by 2017, as domestic work

Figure 1.17: Share of Women Among Labor Migrants by Selected Origin Countries, 2016–2024 (%)



Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Note: The data used here are deployment data, so they exclude most skilled workers who are able to depart outside the managed deployment channels as well as those who move irregularly in more precarious and low-paid work. For example, data for India do not include nurses (and other skilled workers) including in occupations with a higher representation of women. For the Philippines, data refer to landbased overseas Filipino workers. 2023–2024 data for Cambodia are stock data.

Sources: Official data from national authorities; ILO International Labor Migration Statistics (ILMS).

became less frequent among foreign workers, but has since partially recovered, reaching 40% in 2024, as women take on different jobs abroad. In Cambodia, women made up 41% of the overseas workforce in 2024, similar to the 2016–2020 average. Viet Nam has seen a gradual decline, from 39% in 2017 to 33% in 2024, especially as new destinations open up with deployment for male-dominated occupations. In Thailand, women represented 24% of migrant workers in 2024, up from 20% in 2016. Bangladesh stands out for a sharp drop, from 17% in 2019 to just 6% in 2024. This is mainly due to a shift toward Saudi Arabia, its top destination (66%), where only 6% of Bangladeshi workers were women in 2024, compared to a gender-balanced share in 2016.

In both Pakistan and India, very few women migrate through official deployment channels. In 2024, women accounted for just 1% of deployments from Pakistan and 0.4% from India. These figures exclude high-skilled or irregular migrants, as well as those using free movement arrangements like the India–Nepal border. They also exclude emigration by Indian nurses, who are largely women, although the departure data are not available by gender; these numbers, however, would not be enough to change the overall picture of deployment by gender from India.

1.7 Skill Levels of Migrants Deployed in Gulf Cooperation Council Countries and Asian Economies

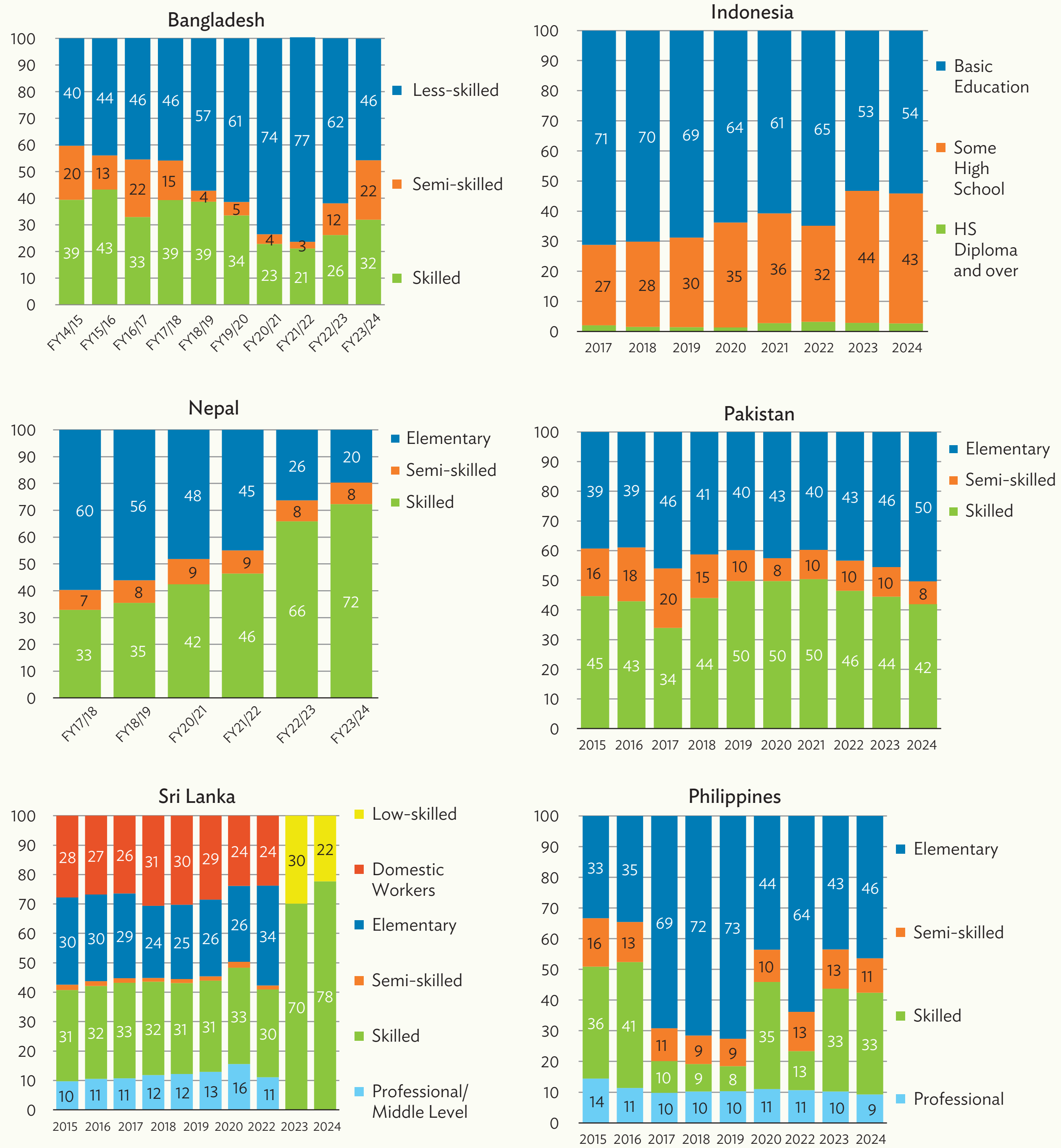
Most Asian origin countries continue to aim to send more skilled workers abroad. This policy continues. In 2024, for example, the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment set a target of sending 340,000 Sri Lankans abroad for foreign employment in 2025, up from 315,000 in 2024, and the target is also to shift the ratio of skilled/low-skilled workers from 65/35 in 2024 to 75/25 in 2025. The bureau plans to partly leverage direct recruitment processes for skilled occupations in specific countries: 15,900 to Israel, 9,000 to Japan, and 8,000 to the Republic of Korea.

A large proportion of migrant workers from Asian countries deployed in the GCC countries or in Asia occupy lowskilled jobs, mostly in the construction or domestic and care sectors. However, clear signs of an increase in average skill level were visible until 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery that followed blurred the picture, with strong variations in the number of departures of workers and in the sectors concerned. As a result, the skill composition of worker outflows evolved in different directions by country of origin.

In some countries, the share of skilled workers among those deployed abroad has declined. In Pakistan, the proportion of skilled workers peaked at 50% between 2019 and 2021, but dropped to 42% by 2024—similar to levels seen in the mid-2010s. Meanwhile, the share of low-skilled (elementary occupation) workers rose to a record 50%. A similar trend is observed in the Philippines, where the share of skilled workers declined from 41% in 2016 to 33% in both 2023 and 2024. Over the same period, the share of workers in elementary occupations rose from 33% in 2015 to 46% in 2024 (Figure 1.18).

In contrast, several countries have seen an upward trend in the skill level of their overseas workers. In Sri Lanka, although the classification system changed in 2023, recent data suggest a renewed rise in skilled migration. After reaching 49% in 2021 and briefly dropping to 41% in 2022, the skilled share appears to be recovering. In Indonesia, education levels among migrant workers have improved, with 46% having at least some high school education in 2024—an increase of nearly 20 percentage points from 2017. In Nepal, data from the Department of Foreign Employment show a sustained shift toward skilled migration: the share of skilled workers rose from 33% in fiscal year (FY)2017–18 to 72% in FY2023–24. In absolute terms, skilled deployments more than doubled, while less-skilled deployments fell sharply. In Bangladesh, the composition in FY2023–24 also shifted notably, with 32% of workers classified as skilled and 22% as semi-skilled—nearly double the levels seen in FY2020–22.

Figure 1.18: Workers by Skill Category, Selected Origin Countries, 2015–2024
(%)



HS = high school, FY = financial year.

Note: Categories are those reported in national data. For Indonesia, basic education includes junior high and primary school. For Nepal, skilled includes the categories skilled, highly skilled, and professional. For Pakistan, skilled includes the national categories skilled, highly qualified, and highly skilled. For Sri Lanka, the series breaks in 2023 due to reclassification. Skilled includes the categories skilled, professional, and middle level/clerical, and from 2023 also elementary. For the Philippines, The groups are ISCO 1-3 (professional), 4-6 (skilled), 7-8 (semi-skilled), and 9 (elementary).

Source: National data.

Reference

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2024. *International Migration Outlook 2024*. https://doi.org/10.1787/50b0353e-en

CHAPTER 2

Fair Recruitment in Asia: Issues, Challenges, and Progress Achieved[1]

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2.1 Introduction

The importance of fair and ethical recruitment has been underlined in global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Compact for Migration. While there has been progress toward fair recruitment in the last 8 years in the form of improved national laws, more systematic monitoring of recruitment costs, adoption of business codes of conduct, remediation of recruitment costs, institution of complaint mechanisms and support services, much remains to be done as witnessed from continuing recruitment malpractices. Worker-paid recruitment fees and related costs are often high and range from 7 to 18 months of wages in some migration corridors in Asia. Workers are tied to employers in the form of their work permits, and stringent restrictions are placed on employer changes. There is also often a vast gap between legislation and enforcement.

Based on literature reviews and data and information from International Labour Organization (ILO) technical staff and projects, this chapter:

- Surveys recent trends and challenges in recruitment of low-wage migrant workers—both women and men—in the region
- Reviews recent measures by governments and other stakeholders in the region to address fair recruitment
- Highlights contributions of ILO's Fair Recruitment Initiative in the region
- Identifies issues for the way forward

2.2 Definition of Fair Recruitment and Modalities of Recruitment in Asia

2.2.1 Definition of Fair Recruitment

The term "fair recruitment" was not used in ILO migrant worker instruments of 1949 and 1975, while the Recommendation on Private Employment Agencies, 1997 (No. 188) stated that "Private employment agencies and the competent authority should take measures to promote the utilization of proper, fair and efficient selection methods". Fair recruitment became commonly used in the ILO following the elaboration of the ILO Fair Migration Agenda in 2014, which included fair recruitment as one of its main pillars. The ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment and Definition of Recruitment Fees and Costs (ILO 2019) elaborate the principles underlying fair

[1] This chapter was prepared by the International Labour Organization's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP). It was authored by Piyasiri Wickramasekara (Independent Consultant), and Ratna Mathai-Luke (Technical Officer, ILO ROAP). It was reviewed by Nilim Baruah (Senior Migration Specialist, ILO ROAP). The chapter also benefited from feedback from other ILO colleagues including Maria Gallotti.

recruitment. Fair recruitment can be generally understood as recruitment carried out within the law, in line with international labor standards, and with respect for human rights, without discrimination and protecting workers from abusive situations. It applies to recruitment within and national borders (ILO 2022a).

2.2.2 Recruitment Modalities—Evidence from Countries in Asia

The chapter has drawn on available summary results from recent SDG Indicator 10.7.1 surveys in the region conducted in Bangladesh (BBS 2020, 2023), Cambodia (NIS 2021), the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) (Habiyakare and Zhong 2019), Maldives (MBS 2023), the Philippines (ILO 2023a), and Viet Nam (ILO 2021b, 2022b).

Methods of recruitment play a major role in determining returns from labor migration for migrant workers. Data from the recruitment cost indicator (RCI) surveys can be used to ascertain the relative importance of different modalities of recruitment of migrant workers. They can vary by gender, origin country, destination country, and migratory status (regular or irregular).[2]

Apart from private recruitment agencies that play a dominant role, there are other recruitment channels for migrant workers (Table 2.1a). Data on migration into Thailand from its neighboring countries show that many migrant workers (66% of surveyed Cambodian workers and 51% of surveyed Lao PDR workers) were directly employed by an employer (ILO 2020). The share of Myanmar respondents who entered via direct employment was lower at 35%. In Thailand, direct employment of migrant workers remains an important recruitment channel, either under the memorandum of understanding (MOU) schemes that Thailand has with its neighboring countries, the Border Pass, or via the regularization that Thailand undertakes at periodic intervals via Cabinet resolutions for migrant workers who are already present in the country (United Nations Network in Thailand 2024).

In the Philippines, where direct recruitment is prohibited for a majority of occupations, over 50% of respondents reported migrating through private recruitment agencies, while only 8.2% reported migration due to job transfer or direct employment. In comparison to other countries of origin such as Bangladesh (2020 data) and Viet Nam (2021 data), the use of private recruitment agencies is also the preferred recruitment channel for Vietnamese migrant workers (36.2%), while in Bangladesh, relatives and friends arranged migration in 51.5% of the cases (see Table 2.1b).

In Maldives, overall the share of employment via registered private recruitment agencies is 65%, although the popularity of this recruitment channel varies by gender. The majority (68%) of women migrant workers who took part in the survey reported migrating through job transfers or direct employment, while 32% of women migrants used private recruitment agencies. Men migrant workers on the other hand reported using private recruitment agencies (66%), government agencies (13%), and connections through friends and family (19%) to find jobs. Only 3% reported job transfers or direct employment.

In terms of regular and irregular channels (Tables 2.2a and 2.2b), in the Philippines, the majority (84.2%) of overseas Filipino migrant workers reported migrating through regular channels using work visas, while 13.1% used irregular channels or entry. The remaining 2.7% left the country legally but without a work visa (for example, on tourist visas). For Cambodian, the Lao PDR, and Myanmar workers in

[2] The data may not be strictly comparable across the sources because they have not used the same categories for sources. In the Philippines, the "other" category constitutes 15% whereas other sources do not use that. Another ambiguous category is "Job transfer/employer" which is not explained in the sources. Employer source is explained as direct hiring by the employer. This can be the case when migrant workers are remigrating to the same employer. (For women, this channel is important in Maldives, but the numbers are small).

Thailand, the 2020 ILO study revealed that only 13% of Cambodian workers, 42% of Myanmar workers, and 55% of Lao PDR workers had entered the country via regular channels; the remaining had used irregular methods.[3] The proportion was even between men and women, with more men and women entering Thailand via irregular channels (64% each).

Table 2.1a: Recruitment Methods for Migrant Workers in Countries of Destination, Percent of Total, Selected Countries

	Thailand (2019, %) N = 1,200				Maldives (2021, %) N = 73,537
Recruitment Modality	Cambodia	Myanmar	Lao People's Democratic Republic	All origin countries	Total
Through a licensed or registered recruitment agency	1	21	20	14	65
Through a non-registered broker	26	17	20	21	
Direct employment by an employer/job transfer	66	35	51	49	4
Through government agency					13
Through friends or family	7	24	8	14	18
Independently/on your own	2	3	2	2	
Other					
Total percentage	100	100	101	100	100

Sources: ILO (2020), MBS (2023).

Table 2.1b: Recruitment Methods for Migrant Workers in Country of Origin, Percent of Total, Selected Countries

Recruitment Modality	Bangladesh (2020, %)	Philippines (2019, %)	Viet Nam (2021, %)
Through a private recruitment agency/ organization	18.3*	51.6	36.2
Individual recruiter/broker	24.9	2.2	26.2
Direct employment by an employer/job transfer/ direct recruiter	3.4	8.2	4.4
Through government agency	1.1	14.0	18.4
Through friends or family	51.5	10.5	12.1
Other	0.7	13.6	2.7
Total sample size	1,200	3,153	250,287

* This combined number includes both local and foreign agencies.

Sources: ILO (2022b, 2023a), BBS (2020).

[3] This includes those who had entered the country via irregular channels and had since got regularized.

Table 2.2a: Migratory Status of Workers, Philippines 2019 (%)

By Legal Migration Status	Male	Female	Total
Regular immigration with a work visa	83.9	84.4	84.2
Regular immigration without a work visa*	3.5	2.0	2.7
Not through regular channel or entry port	12.6	13.6	13.1
Total (N = 2,196)	100.0	100.0	100.0

* In fact, this emigration while legal at the point of departure given that there may be a visa (as a tourist) can be considered irregular if a work permit is not obtained in the country of destination.

Source: ILO (2023a).

Table 2.2b: Migrant Workers: Modes of Entry into Thailand, 2019

Mode of Entry	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%
Level 1: Regular	432	36.0	196	35.7	236	36.3
Level 2: Irregular & NV completed	197	16.4	85	15.5	112	17.2
Level 3: Irregular NV ongoing	163	13.6	63	11.5	100	15.4
Level 4: Fully irregular	408	34.0	205	37.3	203	31.2
Total	1,200	100	549	100	651	100

NV = national verification.

Source: ILO (2020).

2.3 Worker Paid Recruitment Fees, Costs, and Wages: Summary Information from SDG Target 10.7.1 Surveys for the Asia and Pacific

2.3.1 Definition of the Recruitment Cost Indicator

The recruitment cost indicator (RCI), or SDG indicator 10.7.1, was adopted as one of the two indicators for monitoring progress on SDG target 10.7 (Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies). The SDG indicator 10.7.1 or the RCI, the methodology of which was developed by the ILO and World Bank, is calculated as a ratio between the total recruitment costs paid by a migrant worker and the first month of earnings in the first job within the past three years. It shows the number of months that a migrant worker must work to cover the recruitment costs (ILO and World Bank 2019). High recruitments costs and resulting debt bondage seriously erode the benefits of labor migration for migrant workers and their families. The best situation is where migrant workers do not pay any charges for recruitment and placement of a job abroad as recommended in the ILO Convention, 1997 (No. 181) on private employment agencies, the 2016 ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines on Fair Recruitment and the 2019 ILO Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs, although exceptions are permitted.

2.3.2 Recruitment Cost Indicator for Selected Countries

Table 2.3 shows the recruitment cost indicator for selected countries. The picture is mixed with the RCI ranging from low to high across countries. The RCI can still vary widely within each country depending on the country of destination, the economic sector or the demand for a particular skill set or occupation, gender, method of recruitment and migratory status. While a low RCI may point to a better migration process, it does not automatically indicate decent work and living conditions experienced by workers in the destination country.

Table 2.3: Recruitment Cost Indicators 10.7.1, Selected Countries

Country	Year of Survey	Women	Men	Total
Bangladesh	2020	5.6	19.0	17.6
Bangladesh LFS	2022	7.8	15.1	14.6
Cambodia	2019	0.7	0.6	0.7
Lao PDR	2017	0.33	0.32	0.33
Maldives (COD)	2019	3.9	8.3	8.2
Philippines	2019	1.4	1.1	1.2
Thailand (COD)	2018	2.0	1.9	1.9
Viet Nam	2019 pilot survey	7.4	7.3	7.4
Viet Nam	2021 LFS	7.6	7.2	7.4

COD = country of destination, LFS = Labour Force Survey, Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Source: Based on sources listed in first para of Section 2.2.2. Bangladesh (BBS 2020, 2023); Cambodia (NIS 2021); Lao PDR (Habiyakare and Zhong 2019); Maldives (MBS 2023); Philippines (ILO 2023a), and Viet Nam (ILO 2021b, 2022b).

Based on Table 2.3, we can identify two types of migration corridors.

(i) Low-cost Corridors in ASEAN

There is a clear pattern with some Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries (Cambodia, the Lao PDR, and the Philippines) reporting very low RCI. For Cambodia and the Lao PDR, it is lower than 1, implying that migrant workers can recover the cost within less than 1 month. There is hardly any difference for men and women workers. This could reflect lower costs of transport in migrating to Thailand from neighboring countries and use of low-cost informal channels as well.

The RCI for workers in the Philippines is 1.2 with a higher RCI of 1.4 for women workers (ILO 2023a and Table 2.3). The Philippines RCI survey (ILO 2023a) noted with concern the high RCI for to Filipino workers in low-skilled occupations in Taipei,China and Hong Kong, China being double of those who worked in Saudi Arabia. It recommended:

> Considering that costs such as travel costs may be lower going into neighbouring [Taipei,China] or [Hong Kong, China] than to Gulf countries, combined with the fact that earnings would be expected to be higher in these two destinations, calls for further consideration of agreements protecting migrant workers going into [Taipei,China] and [Hong Kong, China], including on the minimum wage acceptable for occupations such as domestic workers. (ILO 2023a: 4)

The same report highlighted whether the current bilateral migration agreements were serving the intended purposes (see Section 2.6).

(ii) High-cost Corridors—Maldives with South Asian Countries and Viet Nam with East Asia

Table 2.4 shows that the RCI is comparatively high for South Asian countries migrating to Maldives as a destination. The overall RCI for Maldives is 8.2 months while it was lower for women workers at 3.9 months,[4] but most workers are men who registered 8.3 months.

Table 2.4: Maldives: Recruitment Process and Recruitment Cost Indicator, 2019

Process of Recruitment	Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Sri Lanka
Recruitment cost indicator	11.2	4.3	4.3	3.6
By job recruitment process				
Job transfer or employer	5.7	2.0	5.2	0.1
Government agency	13.8	3.4	3.9	2.4
Private recruitment agency or individual recruiter	10.8	4.6	4.9	3.6
Family member, relative, or friend	12.5	4.4	3.6	11.7
Total (N)	58,233	12,348	815	2,360

Source: MBS (2023).

It is notable that Bangladesh has the highest RCI among South Asian countries. Unusually, the government agency charge in Bangladesh is higher than that for private recruitment agents. The 2020 survey of migration costs in Bangladesh (BBS 2020) also confirmed this pattern of high recruitment charges.

Recruitment by family, friends, and relatives does not necessarily lead to lower costs—this source can be as exploitative or more exploitative than others. Bangladesh and Sri Lankan workers recorded an RCI of around 12 months of wages to recover recruitment costs. In contrast, Viet Nam showed a different situation with the lowest RCI for those migrant workers who had found jobs through family and relatives for other destinations.

Among ASEAN countries, Viet Nam stands out as a country of origin with high migration costs. Women pay slightly more than men, but the majority are male workers.

By legal migration status, the RCI was highest for those who used regular immigration channels. For those who did not go through a regular immigration channel, the RCI was 5.9 (ILO 2022b). It is also notable that the state organization channel also came with high cost. Compared to others, the family and friends option led to the lowest RCI.

[4] The data refer only to migrant women workers living in collective quarters, who tend to have supervisory or managerial roles (high-skilled), which could explain the low RCI for women (ILO 2024c).

Table 2.5: Viet Nam: Recruitment Cost Indicator by Method of Job Acquisition Abroad, 2021

Method of Job Acquisition	Recruitment Cost Indicator
From state organization in Viet Nam	7.3
From private recruitment organization in Viet Nam	7.6
Via individual recruiter and/or broker	8.0
Via family members, relatives, friends	5.7
Other	5.3

Source: ILO (2022b).

2.3.3 Recruitment Cost Indicator by Skill Level

Fees can generally be regressive for workers in low-wage or elementary occupations (also seen as being lower-skilled), given their lack of bargaining power and poor access to information. Table 2.6 provides support for this trend of low- and middle-skilled workers having a higher RCI in most cases. This may lead to situations where workers may try to overstay to recover high costs and make more savings. Gender wise, there is no consistent picture with women paying much less in Bangladesh and Maldives, but paying slightly more in the Lao PDR, the Philippines, and Viet Nam.

Table 2.6: Recruitment Cost Indicator by Worker Skills

Country	Recruitment Cost Indicator by Skill Level
Bangladesh 2020	Skilled workers 14.1 months Low-skilled 20.2 months
Maldives	High-skill occupations 2.3 months Medium-skill workers 8.5 months Low skilled workers 7.6 months
Philippines 2019	Primary 1.6, secondary 1.5, tertiary 1.1 Low-skilled 1.5, middle-skilled 1.3, high-skilled 0.8
Viet Nam 2021	High-skilled 5.7, medium-skilled 7.5, low-skilled 7.1

Source: Compiled from the respective survey reports (cited in first para of 2.2.2).

2.3.4 Recruitment Cost Indicator by Migratory Status

An interesting question is whether migration through informal channels or unofficial makes a difference to RCI. While the initial recruitment cost will be lower for such workers, there is also the risk that irregular status could lead to lower wages, exploitation, trafficking, and the inability to report abuses to the authorities for fear of deportation.

- *Philippines*

By legal migration status, those workers going abroad via irregular channels had the lowest RCI, at 0.9 months (Table 2.7). All channels were more expensive for women than for men, with those moving legally, but without declaring it is for labor migration, as the highest at 1.5 months for women (against just 1 month for men).

Table 2.7: Recruitment Cost Indicator by Legal Migration Status, Philippines 2019

Migratory Status	Male	Female	Total
1. Regular immigration with a work visa	1.1	1.4	1.2
2. Regular immigration without a work visa	1.0	1.5	1.1
3. Not through regular channel or entry port	0.7	0.9	0.9

Source: ILO (2023a).

- *Thailand with Cambodia, the Lao PDR, and Myanmar corridor*

The RCI was higher than for the Philippines at around 1.9 months of earnings, but relatively better than other corridors. The RCI estimates for men and women were similar (1.9 and 2.0 respectively). But there are wide variations by country of origin: 1.4 for Myanmar workers, 2.3 for Lao PDR workers, and 2.5 for Cambodian workers (ILO 2020).

54% of all migrant workers reported that they had made a payment to a recruitment agency or broker in Thailand. However, the Thailand Royal Ordinance concerning the Management of Migrant Workers prohibits intermediaries from charging migrant workers fees for their services.

Surveyed workers experienced decent work deficits despite paying lower fees with poor working conditions, including the inability to join a union, and lack of access to severance pay, or paid maternity leave. Only about one in ten enjoyed paid annual leave, paid public holidays, and paid sick leave. Most workers reported working without a written contract (99% of all Cambodian workers, and 96% and 72% in agriculture and domestic work, respectively).

Lower cost of recruitment by irregular channels, thus, is associated with high costs in terms of access to protection once in the destination country. As the ILO study (ILO 2020) noted, the social costs for workers in irregular status are higher:

> While paying less in recruitment costs and fees, irregular migrant workers make a trade-off when they choose not to get the required documentation. Irregular workers are more likely to earn less, have poorer employment conditions, and have more limited labor rights. Irregular workers work more days per week and are less likely to have an off-day (ILO 2020: 82).

2.4 Why Ensuring Fair Recruitment is an Uphill Battle

First, there are too many workers chasing too few jobs. For example, 1.4 million workers registered for 10,000 jobs in the Malaysian plantation sector under the 2012 government-to-government MOU between Bangladesh and Malaysia. Potential migrants, therefore, can easily fall prey to unscrupulous agencies (registered and unregistered). Countries of destination may not be concerned because they have access to pools of workers from different countries.

It also reflects governance issues in both countries of origin and countries of destination. The ILO Committee of Experts in its general survey of migrant worker instruments in 2016 stated: “In recent years, it has become increasingly clear that governance of recruitment practices has an essential role to play in preventing migrant workers from experiencing abusive and fraudulent conditions, including trafficking in persons and forced labour” (ILO 2016: 65). In Bangladesh, the Anti-Corruption Commission has launched an investigation into a recruitment syndicate led by four former Members of

Parliament of the Awami League government (Abdullah 2024). In Malaysia, five senior officials of the Ministry of Human Resources were sacked following revelations about Bangladesh recruitment scams (Parkaran 2023).

Even with fair recruitment, employer tied visas in destination countries, and sponsorship or the Kafala system[5] in GCC countries are bound to expose workers to abuse and exploitation. Restrictive sponsorship requirements, and retention of travel and identity documents can lead to forced labour practices with limited mobility for workers. Global supply chains and subcontracting also make it easier to evade responsibilities for worker abuses.

Some or most of the causes of forced labor are linked to the recruitment process. In Asia and the Pacific, forced labor is a critical issue, with the region hosting more than half of the global total of people in forced labor, amounting to 15.1 million individuals (ILO 2024b). Forced labor in the region spans various sectors, including agriculture, industry, services, and domestic work. The ILO estimated that illegal profits from recruitment fees and related costs are substantial and generated US$5.6 billion in annual illegal profits or 15% of total annual illegal profits from international migrants in forced labor (ILO 2024b). The ILO Committee of Experts has recommended to several countries to take measures to fully protect workers against abusive practices amounting to forced labor.[6]

There are several gaps in relation to the achievement of fair recruitment.

First are the legal gaps. Existing legislation can be inadequate or leave many loopholes that unscrupulous private employment agencies can exploit. Laws of many Asian origin countries provide for levying of fees by private employment agencies. Almost half of the countries reviewed by the ILO global study (2024a) do not have an official or formal definition of the concept. The primary approach to regulating recruitment fees and related costs is to apply caps or ceilings on fees and costs charged to workers (ILO 2024a, 2024c). Article 7 (2) of the ILO Migration for Employment Convention, 1949 (No. 97) states that "the services rendered by its public employment service to migrants for employment are rendered free". But state recruitment services in some countries in the region (Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, among others) charge fees[7] to migrant workers as observed in the Republic of Korea's Employment Permit System.

Although legislation may provide specific complaints mechanisms, there are barriers to access to justice in both countries of origin and destination. The ILO has identified good practices and recommendations to improve recruitment-related access to justice measures for migrant workers across countries of origin and destination (ILO 2023b).

5 In the GCC countries (and also in Jordan and Lebanon), each migrant worker has to be sponsored by a citizen of the host country. The sponsor employer, also known as a kafeel, is responsible for the worker's legal status including employment permit and residence visa. Thus, the sponsor has complete control over the worker because the latter cannot change employment or leave the country without the permission of the sponsor.

6 Cited in ILO (2024a). This is based on review of implementation of Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Protocol, 2014 (P029) which they have ratified. For Sri Lanka, reference is made to the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (C.122).

7 For Bangladesh, a service charge along with other administrative costs is charged (BOESL 2022, p. 42). For Sri Lanka, in addition to the language exam and health insurance costs, the SLBFE also charges a registration fee (https://www.slbfe.lk/new-renew-registration/), while Viet Nam's Overseas Labor Centre charges a dispatch fee (Quýnh 2025).

Second, a major gap relates to enforcement of existing laws and regulations. Despite the existence of an array of laws and regulations, the fact remains that migrant workers are being abused and exploited both at home and abroad in recruitment and placement processes (ILO 2021a; Wickramasekara and Baruah 2017; Denney et al. 2023). These indicate a large enforcement gap where there is weak monitoring and violators are rarely prosecuted. Migrant workers find it difficult to take private employment agencies in origin countries to courts and tribunals because of lack of resources and absence of needed documents such as receipts for payment. In destination countries, these barriers are more pronounced because of lack of language skills, fear of retaliation by employers and recruiters, unfamiliarity with local laws and absence of access to legal aid. The number of inspectors relative to the number of recruitment agencies is often insufficient in Asian countries which limits the ability of authorities to conduct thorough inspections and monitor compliance effectively (ILO 2021a). Soft laws in the form of ethical codes of conduct are either missing key features of fair recruitment or reflect weak compliance Limited capacity and insufficient allocation of resources are key obstacles to effective enforcement in many countries of origin (Andrees, Nasri, and Swiniarski 2015; ILO 2021a; Wickramasekara and Baruah 2017). Denney et al. (2024) have noted that special economic zones (SEZs) in Southeast Asia contribute to migrant exploitation through attractive but deceptive job offers, and weak regulatory environments.

A case study of recent recruitment fraud involving Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia highlights that even migrant workers moving legally under the signed MOU can be subject to fraudulent recruitment through collusion between Bangladesh and Malaysian syndicates of intermediaries (Box 2.1).

Box 2.1: Recruitment of Bangladeshi Workers in Malaysia

- 2007 ban on workers from Bangladesh due to cases of fraudulent recruitment which left migrant workers stranded in the airport.
- 2012 Government-to-government scheme for plantation workers: Only 10,000 workers hired between 2012 to 2015.
- 2016 Government-to-Government Plus scheme providing for private employment agencies. Stopped in 2018 due to exploitation of migrant workers by a syndicate of Bangladesh agents colluding with Malaysian agents.
- New MOU signed in December 2021 for resumption of labor flows
  - Malaysia wanted to include only 25 private employment agencies from Bangladesh but finally 100 were selected (Hasan 2024).
  - From the beginning of 2023, hundreds of migrant workers from Bangladesh and Nepal arrived in Malaysia through regular channels and after paying hefty fees to recruiters in Bangladesh amounting to $5,000–$6,000 colluding with Malaysian agents while the legal fee cap was $660.
  - Some Malaysian companies used fake documentation to obtain work permit quotas not linked to job vacancies with Bangladeshi workers ending up with no jobs after legally migrating to Malaysia (Malaysiakini newspaper exposure)
  - Malaysian recruitment agencies found obtaining work permits and re-selling them to employers (Kurnar 2024).
- Workers trying to lodge police reports in Johor arrested and put in detention.
- Rights groups and media (Malaysiakini), Malaysian Trades Union Congress highlighted the plight of the victims and called for their release.
- The UN Human Rights Experts issued a press release under special procedures highlighting corruptive practices and urging Malaysia and Bangladesh to investigate and address the situation (OHCHR 2024).
- The Malaysian government set a deadline (21 April 2024) for employers to get visa approval for new migrant workers with a parallel 31 May 2024 deadline to bring them into the country. Thereafter, visas for low-skilled workers were frozen until a full review.
- No clear indication of the status of stranded Bangladesh workers' current status or government policy.
- Following Malaysian PM's visit to Bangladesh on 4 October 2024, the PM promised to absorb those with permits and also address corruption.
- Bestinet and its online Foreign Workers Centralized Management System at the heart of the controversy with their political links (Abrar 2024).
- Bangladesh has asked for the extradition of Aminul Islam, the founder of Bestinet and his associate from Bangladesh (Raul Amin) over alleged migrant worker trafficking and extortion (Malay Mail 2024a).
- There is no information on the current status of the Bangladeshi workers affected by the recruitment scam—whether they have been provided with alternative employment.

Source: Compiled by Piyasiri Wickramasekara.

2.4.1 Normative and Legal Frameworks

Applicable International Conventions

All universal human rights instruments, ILO core conventions, migrant-specific conventions, and other labor standards apply to all migrant workers. Given that unethical recruitment could lead to situations of trafficking and forced labor, especially for women migrants, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and ILO core conventions on forced labor and discrimination are particularly relevant to migrant workers.

Three migrant-specific international conventions also apply to migrant workers:

- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families, 1990
- Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97) - C97
- Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) - C143

The following instruments are particularly relevant to recruitment issues and private employment agencies.

(a) Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181) and the related Recommendation No. 188
(b) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and the related Recommendation No. 201
(c) Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (P029): calls for protecting persons, particularly migrant workers, from abusive and fraudulent practices during recruitment; eliminate the charging of recruitment fees to workers to prevent debt bondage and other forms of economic coercion

ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181) and accompanying Recommendation, 1997 (No.188)
Convention No. 181 recognized the legitimacy of private employment agencies carrying out their tasks, together with and in cooperation with public employment services. While the convention recognizes private agencies' important role, its major provisions relate to the adoption of measures by ratifying States to regulate these agencies to protect migrant workers and prevent abuses. Article 7(1) of Convention No. 181 stipulates, "Private employment agencies shall not charge directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, any fees or related costs to workers." Fiji, Japan, and Mongolia are the three Asian and Pacific countries to have ratified this convention so far. A number of European countries (which are destinations of Asian migrant workers) have ratified the convention.

ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and Recommendation, 2011 (No. 201)
The ILO Domestic Workers Convention addresses in particular the problems faced by one of the most vulnerable categories—migrant domestic workers.

The main provisions relate to promotion and protection of human rights; protection from abuse, harassment, and violence; fair terms of employment and working and living conditions; information on terms and conditions of employment; hours of work and remuneration; and measures for protection from abusive practices of private employment agencies. Article 15 spells out provisions in relation to private employment agencies. In Asia, the Philippines has ratified this convention. Key destination countries in Europe have also ratified this convention.

ILO and UN Nonbinding Instruments

The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration, 2006, comprises nonbinding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labor migration (ILO 2006). It also comprises detailed guidelines on the licensing and supervision of recruitment and contracting agencies for migrant workers under its Principle 13.[8]

[8] Principle 13: Governments in both origin and destination countries should give due consideration to licensing and supervising recruitment and placement services for migrant workers in accordance with the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), and its Recommendation (No. 188).

ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment (2016) and Definition of Recruitment Fees and Costs (2019)

An ILO tripartite meeting of experts adopted 13 general principles for fair recruitment in 2016 (ILO 2019). The key provisions are a recruitment process in line with international human rights and fundamental rights at work, recruitment responding to labor market needs, and no recruitment fees or related costs to be borne by workers or job seekers. These general principles are accompanied by 31 operational guidelines stipulating the responsibilities of governments, enterprises, public employment services, labor recruiters, and employers. The principles and guidelines aim to inform the current and future work of the ILO and of other organizations, national legislation, and the social partners on promoting and ensuring fair recruitment.

The definition of recruitment fees and related costs recognizes the principle that workers shall not be charged directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, any fees or related costs for their recruitment. This comprehensive definition is guided by international labor standards and should be read together with the principles and guidelines. The definition was adopted by a Tripartite Meeting of Experts, held in Geneva in November 2018.

Together this guidance forms a comprehensive approach to realizing fair recruitment through development, implementation and enforcement of laws and policies aiming to regulate the recruitment industry and protect workers' rights.

Further, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration calls on States to "Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work" (Objective 6) (UN 2018). This also aligns with the SDG target 8.8 "Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment" and SDG target 10.7 "Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies".

National Legislation

According to the second edition of the *ILO Global Study on Recruitment Fees and Related Costs* (ILO 2024a) there is no consensus across countries on what constitutes recruitment fees and related costs, and some countries do not have an official or formal definition of these terms. In a number of cases, governments issue general declarations or statements regulating the payment of fees and related costs, often without detailed breakdowns. It is common to apply caps or ceilings on the fees and costs that can be charged to workers for their recruitment.

An important development is the introduction or revision of laws and regulations on recruitment in several countries since 2020. Table 2.8 summarizes the developments.

Notwithstanding this progress, the ILO's global study on recruitment costs concludes that there is a need for more detailed and standardized definitions and regulations to ensure fair recruitment practices across the region.

Table 2.8: Ratification of Recruitment-related Conventions and Protocols

Country	Law/provision	Recruitment Provisions
Bangladesh	Overseas Employment and Migrants (amendment) Bill, 2023	Provision to include subagents/intermediaries operating within the overseas employment recruitment sector in the legal framework
Viet Nam	Law on Contract Based Vietnamese Overseas Workers 69/2020/QH14 (Law No. 69) in November 2020, which, together with five sub-laws, came into force in January 2022	Includes specific provisions on recruitment fees and cost categories. It eliminates brokerage fees that employees must pay to service enterprises/PEAs engaged in outbound worker services (Guest Worker Service Providers) .
	Directive 20-CT/TW on Strengthening the Leadership of the Party in the Work of Sending Vietnamese Workers to Work Abroad in the New Situation. 12 December 2022	Recognizes the importance of reducing fees and costs charged to migrant workers and making them more transparent and by improving inspection of recruitment agencies and ensuring effective law enforcement. (ILO 2024a)
Mongolia	Labour Migration Law, December 2021	Provides the legal basis for the recruitment and employment of Mongolian citizens abroad
		Prohibits worker-paid recruitment fees
		Prohibits forced labor, discrimination, child labor, and overly long working hours
Indonesia	Regulation of the Board for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BP2MI) No. 1/2021, (amended BP2MI Regulation No. 9/2020 concerning Exemption from Indonesian Migrant Workers Placement Fees)	Fees are to be charged to the employer; placement fees related to work training and work competency certificates are to be charged to the local government.
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic Ministerial Agreement No. 1050 on the Management of Employment Service Enterprises (adopted on 25 March 2022)	Several articles state that recruitment-related costs and fees should not be borne by workers
		Article 23 requires employment service enterprises to cover "pre-departure training, food, accommodation, relevant documentation and travel costs for workers in preparing them to work in the domestic and international labor markets".
		Article 38 prohibits these enterprises from charging "workers employment service fees".

Source: ILO (2024a).

2.4.2 Bilateral Labor Migration Instruments[9] and their Reference to Fair Recruitment

The following section looks at Bilateral Labor Migration Instruments (BLMIs) signed by Asia and Pacific countries since 2017 and how they have handled recruitment issues. Out of 43 BLMIs, full texts are available for 30 BLMIs because some are unpublished or classified. India has signed 11 BLMIs including several with European Union member countries. Pakistan has signed five BLMIs but only the one with Japan is publicly made available by Japan. Among destinations, Japan (Specified Skilled Worker [SSW] Memoranda of Cooperation [MOC]) and the United Kingdom (UK) (Healthcare Worker MOUs) have signed the most BLMIs.

[9] This chapter prefers to use Bilateral Labor Migration Instruments (BLMIs) that can cover all modalities of bilateral instruments (agreements, MOUs, protocols, etc.) over the ILO-preferred term Bilateral Labor Migration Agreements (BLMAs) since it strictly applies to only legally binding bilateral labor agreements.

To analyze the 30 BLMIs, a search was made for terms such as "fair and ethical recruitment", references to applicable laws, permitted modalities of recruitment (e.g., only by licensed agencies), prohibition or regulation of fees charged to migrant workers, specification or breakdown of recruitment fees and related costs, spelling out which cost items are to be met by workers and/or employers, control or regulations of costs, redress mechanisms in case of violation of laws and information exchange on recruitment related matters. Twenty-seven of the instruments referred to recruitment in some form.

A few MOUs have combined "fair" with "ethical" recruitment. The terms ethical and/or unethical occur in six instruments with 12 instances. The UK Healthcare worker BLMIs refer to the shared commitment of both parties "to observe fair, ethical and sustainable recruitment in the employment of overseas healthcare professionals anchored on the laws and regulations of both countries". India–EU migration-mobility partnerships covered multiple objectives—skilled labor and student mobility, curbing irregular migration and readmission. They referred to "fair mobility" and "fair migration" (which could encompass fair recruitment, although explicit reference to recruitment is missing).

Some agreements considered here were adopted before the ILO definition of recruitment fees and related costs. The Germany–Indonesia Agreement on health professionals mentions that it is "guided by international principles for the ethical recruitment of skilled workers".

The General Agreement in the Field of Manpower between the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Government of Nepal signed on 18 October 2017 is considered to be one of the most comprehensive agreements in the region with extensive references to fair recruitment provisions (Wickramasekara 2018). While it does not prohibit placement fees,[10] it calls for adoption of legal measures to assure a smooth, fair, transparent, and legal recruitment process, control, and regulation of costs in both countries, legal measures against those violating applicable laws, access to complaints, and specifies specific cost items to be paid by the Jordanian employers.

Prohibition of fees is found in some BLMIs. The MOU between the Australian Government and the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga in support of Australia's Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) 2017, recognizes that non-levy of any recruitment costs or subjected to excessive up-front charges is critical to the success of the program. It spells out the requirements for fair recruitment through the temporary employment cycle as follows:

> In particular, recruitment arrangements will ensure that Tongan seasonal workers are provided with adequate information prior to departure and after arrival in Australia (including regarding the role and function of unions); are not subject to recruitment agency fees

The 2022 Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Nepal on Recruitment of Health Care Professionals refers to: "SHARING the mutual commitment to observe fair, ethical and sustainable recruitment for the employment of Nepali healthcare professionals in the UK" in the Preamble.[11] This phrase is repeated in the UK's healthcare worker agreements with most other Asian countries. Under general guiding principles, it adds:

[10] Article 5: Responsibilities of the Second Party (Nepal). f) Ensure that workers have not been charged any fees by recruitment agencies in Nepal beyond those stipulated by the Government of Nepal. The issue is that Nepal has legalized recruitment fees at a nominal level although in practice recruitment agencies would charge much more.

[11] The contents of a Preamble do not carry the same legal validity as the main articles of an agreement (communication from Janelle Diller, former ILO legal adviser).

> No employer, recruitment or placement agency or any entity shall collect any placement fee, costs incurred by recruitment agency and other fees, directly or indirectly, from any Nepali healthcare professional to be deployed, that contravene the applicable laws and the rules and regulations of both countries. Interested applicants may need to fund some of the costs associated with recruitment, though for those recruited it is expected that these will normally be reimbursed by employers.

Article 11 of the MOU between Indonesia and Malaysia[12] on domestic workers states under Components of the Cost Structure: "1. The Parties ensure that the IDMW shall not bear any cost related to his/her employment in Malaysia.; 2. Any cost derived from the implementation of policies, laws, and regulations issued by the Government of Malaysia shall be borne by the Employer and paid fully in Malaysia".

Transparency about the fees to be paid by the employer or the worker is a laudable provision in this MOU. The MOU between Indonesia and Malaysia lists all the cost components incurred in the recruitment and placement process in Indonesia and Malaysia and stipulates that all costs will be borne by the employer. This is an obvious improvement over the previous MOU of 2011 where workers were expected to pay part of the fees. The Bangladesh Malaysia MOU of 2021 lists the items to be paid by the employer. These are not consistent with the ILO definition of fees and related costs with many items left out presumably to be paid by the worker. It also adds under responsibilities of the workers: "(ii) The Worker shall bear the expenses of the recruitment costs incurred in Bangladesh."[13]

Information sharing between the two parties to the MOU/MOC is another good practice. Government-to-government bilateral instruments of the Republic of Korea permit the collection of recruitment related-costs by the "sending agency" (government entity), which reflect the actual costs incurred in the recruitment and placement process. While most of the Republic of Korea's MOUs under the Employment Permit System are not publicly accessible, under the 2018 MOU with Bangladesh, the governments of both countries mutually agreed on the fees for taking the Korean language test (EPS-TOPIK) to register on the job seeker roster, as well as the expenses for passport and visa issuance, medical examinations, and airfares for workers who are hired through the Korean government's placement services.

Japan has also entered into several bilateral MOCs with Asian countries for recruitment under its Specified Skilled Worker Programme. They have the same format and do not specify recruitment fees. But it has included provisions for information sharing on the activities of intermediaries in both countries involved in recruitment and job search for special skilled workers regarding funds, deposits or property transfers, or penalties accruing to intermediaries for violation of contracts by candidates.[14] It also requires information sharing on "Collecting fees or other expenses from specified skilled workers and candidates without indicating the calculation basis of the expense, and making them understand the amount and breakdown of the expense".[15] But the MOCs do not contain any information on how the destination country deals with violations of these requirements.

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[12] Memorandum of understanding between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Government of Malaysia on the employment and protection of Indonesian domestic migrant workers in Malaysia, 2021.

[13] Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Malaysia and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on the employment of workers, 2021.

[14] Memorandum of Cooperation Between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of India on a basic framework for partnership for proper operation of the system pertaining to "specified skilled worker".

[15] Basic framework for information partnership: (1) Information-sharing Memorandum of Cooperation Between the Government of Japan and the Government of Republic of India on a basic framework for partnership for proper operation of the system pertaining to "specified skilled worker".

One has to go beyond provisions in BLMIs to assess their actual contributions to fair recruitment. This is because of observed gaps between provisions and actual practice in regard to BLMIs (Wickramasekara 2015). An example is the Bangladesh–Malaysia MOU of 2021 that was intended to address the recruitment malpractices that led to the suspension of the 2016 MOU. However, despite the improved provisions of the MOU, there has been widespread malpractice (see Box 2.1).

The nonbinding nature of MOUs (which comprise the majority of BLMIs) makes it difficult to enforce their provisions legally. Moreover, many BLMIs are not made public the main exceptions being those of India, Japan, the Philippines, and the UK. Copies are often not shared with the two parties directly affected—migrant workers and their employers.

2.4.3 Emerging Good Provisions and Practices

Recent reviews have also documented good or promising practices in the region in the challenging areas of fair recruitment (ILO 2022c; IOM 2024; UN ESCAP 2024).[16]

- *Good practices identified by the Colombo Process study (IOM 2024).*

A thematic working group of the Colombo Process countries has highlighted the achievements and progress of South Asian and Southeast Asian countries in fostering fair and ethical recruitment processes and policies to enhance labor migration governance in the region under three areas (IOM 2024).

a. Achieve zero-cost migration for migrant workers and steer the recruitment industry toward an employer-pay model

Most good practice examples cited in the 2024 International Organization for Migration study relate to the signing of BLMIs by Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan that stipulate maximum fees and recruitment cost items to be paid by employers. For example, it cites Nepal's policy of limiting service fees to recruitment agencies to NR10,000 (about $80) for workers migrating to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Malaysia. In reality, reportedly many migrant workers routinely pay far in excess of the legal cap, with sums of up to NR160,000 (around $1,350) not uncommon (Prakash 2021).

b. Formalize recruitment processes and the role of recruitment actors for improved recruitment outcomes

Positive examples can be found that relate to licensing and legalizing subagents in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Bangladesh passed the Overseas Employment and Migrants (amendment) Bill on 14 September 2023, establishing comprehensive regulations governing sub-agents to ensure transparency, fair conduct, and accountability in the recruitment process. Bangladesh also established a national Vigilance Task Force and mobile courts at the field level to identify and charge recruitment agents and intermediaries engaging in unethical recruitment practices, including illegal extortion of recruitment and related fees. The Philippines requires recruitment actors to undergo prelicensing orientation seminars to make them aware of ethical standards before being allowed to operate.

Nepal has removed a provision in its national labor migration policy that allowed recruiting agencies to hire through subagents, aiming to eliminate fraudulent cases brought by subagents. It formed a Rapid Response Team under the Department of Foreign Employment in December 2021 to combat fraud and irregularities in the foreign employment sector, including unethical recruitment practices. There is,

[16] Good practices under the scope of the ILO's Fair Recruitment Initiative will be discussed in the next section.

however, little information on its effectiveness. Sri Lanka has developed standard operating procedures to strengthen compliance with the national code for ethical conduct of licensed recruitment agencies.

c. Equip migrant workers with information on decent work and safe migration, including on their labor and human rights

Most Asian origin countries carry out predeparture orientation programs to inform workers on the migration process. Several examples are cited as especially illustrative.

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission carries out national publicity campaigns focused on building awareness about migration-related issues. The government operates the Probashi helpline, the Ami Probashi App, and the Probashbondhu Call Center to provide migrant workers with clarifications on their queries and referrals to service providers.

The Philippines operates a 24/7 call center to address inquiries and complaints by migrant workers regarding their foreign employment. Predeparture, preemployment, and post-arrival orientation programs are compulsory and include modules on safe and decent labor migration, terms of job search, terms of employment, and workers' rights.

The Philippines has developed sector-specific information handbooks and manuals targeting land-based migrant workers and seafarers to ensure tailored information provision in view of promoting decent work and safe migration.

Migrant worker resource centres (MRCs) in ASEAN and South Asian countries play a crucial role in providing migrant workers with the necessary information and support to ensure their migration is safe, orderly, and informed. They serve as key points of contact for migrants to access reliable information and assistance throughout their migration journey. For example, Nepal operates MRCs in 39 districts to ensure access to information on safe migration, including ethical recruitment and migrant workers' labor rights. MRCs also provide crucial legal assistance to migrant workers including in instances where individuals have been cheated by recruitment agencies.

- *ASEAN Declaration on the Placement and Protection of Migrant Fishers, May 2023*

This is an important initiative targeting a hard-to-reach group. Migrant fishers in ASEAN have been subject to abusive recruitment practices on fishing vessels. The Declaration recognizes that "fishing is a hard-to-reach sector and could be a hazardous occupation which aggravates the vulnerabilities of migrant fishers to the risk of decent work deficits including but not limited to unacceptable working and living conditions on board fishing vessels, abusive recruitment practices and inadequate labour inspection." Initiated by the Government of Indonesia during its chair of ASEAN in 2023, the Declaration sets out commitments to improve the welfare and protection of migrant fishers. This covers steps to ensure fair recruitment, provide decent working and living conditions, promote occupational safety and health, and expand coverage of labor rights and social protection, and improve access to justice.

- *Fair recruitment and decent employment tool for ASEAN member states, employers, and recruitment agencies*

ASEAN has adopted a voluntary, self-assessment checklist for governments, employers, and recruitment agencies and public employment services to assess progress, track achievements and gaps in ensuring fair recruitment and decent employment practices for migrant workers, covering all stages of the migration cycle. Utilizing recommendations from the 2017 ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour Recommendations, the ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment, and other relevant international labor standards, the checklist serves as a nonbinding and voluntary practical tool that can support ASEAN member states to establish a baseline, and guide development of advisory services and education for employers and recruitment agencies.[17]

- *Monitoring recruitment practices through employers' organizations*

In Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Viet Nam, recruitment agency associations have been granted affiliated membership to national employers' organizations, that are a key ILO constituent representing employers. As a result, issues concerning fair recruitment, from policy dialogue to training for recruitment agencies, can be raised and addressed in appropriate fora.

- *Digitizing recruitment processes*

Digitizing of recruitment processes coupled with databases on recruiters and recruitment transactions promotes transparency and accountability on the part of the recruitment industry. The 16th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour made the recommendation: "Digitalise recruitment, deployment and admission processes with clear timelines for each step and with consideration of national laws and regulations of ASEAN Member States, data privacy and protection of migrant workers' rights" (AFML 2023).

Several South Asian countries have made progress in this area including Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka making efforts to digitize migration governance (IOM 2024; ADBI, ILO, and OECD 2023).

At the same time, increased reliance on digital platforms for recruitment has led to some serious rights abuses against migrant workers in the region. Online scams have targeted migrant domestic workers in Singapore also, although recruitment issues are not mentioned in official documents. Singapore's Ministry of Manpower has now developed a campaign against online scams specifically for migrant domestic workers.[18] Special economic zones (SEZs) in Southeast Asia contribute to migrant exploitation as noted above (Denney et al. 2023). The Lao PDR Golden Triangle SEZ and Myanmar operate cybercrime networks recruiting information technology experts from South Asia and channeling them into forced labor for criminal activities using digital channels (UNODC 2024; Sri Lanka Daily Mirror 2024).

- *Reparation of recruitment costs by private sector enterprises in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia following outside pressure*

There has been progress in securing remedy for exploitative recruitment costs paid by migrant workers from Asia and the Pacific. However, it should be noted that such payback or compensation programs are not a substitute for thorough government-led reform and legislative oversight and enforcement (UN ESCAP 2024). Some examples of reparation are:

> *Reimbursement to plantation workers in Malaysia*: FGV Holdings Berhad, a Malaysian plantation company partly owned by the government, reimbursed RM72.2 million (over $15 million) in recruitment fees to its 19,673 migrant workers, in its efforts to influence the

[17] The checklist was adopted by the ASEAN Labour Ministers' Meeting (ALMM) on 15April 2025; the adoption was noted in the Chair's Statement of the 46th ASEAN Summit on 26 May 2025 (para 73). The adopted checklist is available at https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/17.-Checklist-for-AMS-Governments-Labour-Recruiter-and-Employers-on-Fair-Recruitment-and-Decent-Employment-Practices_adopted-ALMM.pdf.

[18] https://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits/work-permit-for-foreign-domestic-worker/publications-and-resources/staying-safe-from-scams

Withhold Release Order issued by the United States Customs and Border Protection on 30 September 2020. FGV had reimbursed 415 former workers amounting to RM1.77 million (over $377,000) by the end of 2023 (Malay Mail 2024b).

Remediation initiatives benefiting workers in Malaysia: Top Glove is the world's largest medical glove maker from Malaysia. Migrant workers there reportedly have low wages, 72-hour work weeks, unfair salary cuts, crowded dormitories, and other exploitative practices (Ademai 2024). The United States (US) Customs and Border Protection issued a Withhold Release Order banning imports from two units of Top Glove, citing "reasonable evidence of forced labor in the manufacturing process" in July 2020, when there was high demand for personal protective equipment because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Top Glove hired Impactt Limited to conduct a thorough audit of forced labor indicators and propose corrective actions. Following its recommendations, Top Glove spent over $30 million in remediation payments to about 10,000 migrant workers to cover full recruitment costs of workers from Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Nepal, among others, improved their working and living conditions, and established an independent grievance mechanism. The US Customs and Border Protection lifted the Withhold Release Order against Top Glove in September 2021, accepting that the company had adequately addressed all indicators of forced labor. Several other glove manufacturers facing sanctions against forced labor in Malaysia have launched remediation plans.

Reimbursement to workers in Saudi Arabia: The multinational company Amazon has paid $1.9m to more than 700 migrant workers in Saudi Arabia following exposure of labor abuses against migrant workers,[19] including paying high recruitment fees. The media partners (footnote 19) exposed abuses against migrant workers from India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka recruited to work at the online retail giant's warehouses in Saudi Arabia, leading to the positive developments. The average reimbursement to the workers appears to exceed $2,500. Amazon said it has also improved its communications mechanism that allows contract workers to share complaints with Amazon's management (Acharya and Hudson 2024).

2.4.4 ILO's Fair Recruitment Initiative and Progress Toward Fair Recruitment for Migrant Workers in the Region

The Fair Recruitment Initiative (FRI) was launched in 2014 as part of the ILO Fair Migration Agenda. Since its launch, the FRI has been critical to ILO's work in the area of national and international recruitment of workers and has promoted visibility of this issue at international, regional and national levels.

The ILO's FRI is an umbrella project and cuts across most of the ILO's technical cooperation activities in the region. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the FRI's contribution separately to recruitment improvements in Asia and the Pacific.

[19] Joint investigation by the UK Guardian, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), NBC News, and Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism.

The FRI is grounded on four pillars.

Pillar 1 – Enhancing, exchanging and disseminating global knowledge on national and international recruitment processes

Pillar 2 – Improving laws, policies and enforcement to promote fair recruitment

Pillar 3 – Promoting fair business practices

Pillar 4 – Empowering and protecting workers

There has been implementation under all four pillars in Asia with varying coverage. However good practices can be seen under all four pillars. A series of technical cooperation projects in Asia and the Pacific have buttressed fair recruitment processes in the region in all the above areas.

As highlighted in the second edition of the ILO Global Study on Recruitment Fees (ILO 2024a), several legislative changes in Asian countries have been influenced by the ILO's FRI. These relate to laws in Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Lao PDR, Mongolia, Thailand, and Viet Nam, among others (Table 2.9). There is a trend in these toward alignment with principles of fair recruitment and the General Principles and Operational Guidelines on Fair Recruitment. Two countries—Indonesia and Mongolia—have moved from regulated fees to prohibition of recruitment fees (ILO 2024a).

ILO support to developing and improving codes of practice for recruitment agencies has supported Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Viet Nam, among others, to improve their processes. Another initiative is the first Voluntary Code of Conduct on the fair recruitment of domestic workers from the Philippines to Hong Kong, China involving 106 recruitment businesses. It consists of an online worker feedback system for monitoring worker wellbeing and compliance with the code of conduct.

The Ministry of Manpower (Indonesia) and Ministry of Human Resources (Malaysia) validated and published a Fair Recruitment Guide for the Palm Oil Sector for the use of employers and recruitment agencies.

The ILO supported the Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply in the process of monitoring and evaluating participating recruitment agencies' compliance with its Code of Conduct. It has also worked with the association in revising the code and the mechanism used for monitoring, producing a more gender-responsive and effective code.

A major contribution has been the advancement of knowledge through generation of primary data on migrant recruitment. This has been achieved through ILO support to estimation of SDG indicator 10.7.1 through labor force and other surveys carried out in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Fiji, Nepal, Maldives, Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Samoa, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Released data provide a wealth of information for policy makers and other stakeholders for their policies and programs (see Section 2.4).

The ILO 2022 Compendium of promising practices to advance fair recruitment of (migrant) workers highlights the following for the Asia and Pacific region (Box 2.2). Some of these have been referred to above.

Box 2.2: Promising Practices for Fair Recruitment

- Pakistan: Raising Pakistani migrant workers' awareness of their right to fair recruitment
- Thailand: Law amendment concerning management of migrant workers in Thailand
- Viet Nam: Revision of the Law on Contract-Based Overseas Workers
- Nepal: Bilateral labor agreements include provisions related to fair recruitment
- Bangladesh: Government capacity enhanced to promote fair recruitment in bilateral negotiations and arrangements
- India: Blacklisting employers and recruiters abroad to protect Indian migrant workers
- Bangladesh: Piloting fair recruitment from Bangladesh to Qatar in the construction sector
- Indonesia: Developing an instrument for fair recruitment due diligence, and code of conduct for private recruitment agencies
- Nepal and Jordan: Fair recruitment pilot between Nepal and Jordan in the garment sector
- Code of Conduct on the fair recruitment of Filipino migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, China

Source: ILO. 2022c. *Compendium of Promising Practices to Advance Fair Recruitment of (migrant) Workers: 5 years of the Fair Recruitment Initiative.*

2.5 Conclusions and the Way Forward

2.5.1 Conclusions

The analysis in this chapter has reviewed emerging trends and developments in Asia regarding fair recruitment. It has noted positive developments in the form of new or revised legislation and regulations, ratification of international instruments relating to fair recruitment, increasing provisions in BLMIs on fair and ethical recruitment, improved monitoring of recruitment costs and wages in different corridors through surveys to guide policy, greater reliance on codes of practice by the recruitment industry, and the ILO's efforts in the area of fair recruitment.

Yet, there is still a large unfinished agenda for addressing fair and ethical recruitment and counter recruitment malpractices for low-skilled or low-wage workers migrating under temporary programs in the Asia and Pacific region. While workers in some corridors can recover costs of recruitment within 1 or 2 months, high-cost corridors exist where workers require wages of 7–20 months for cost recovery. Actual fees charged to workers go well beyond legally permitted fees, and workers are not fully informed about fees collected. Decent work deficits are common in countries of destination with exclusion of vulnerable groups such as domestic workers from labor laws, inadequate enforcement of labor laws, and related regulations. Employer-tied visas and retention of identity and travel documents are widespread which restrict freedom of mobility for workers. Provisions in BLMIs are often not well enforced. The gap between legislation and enforcement can be wide. These challenges call for action on several fronts as highlighted below.

2.5.2 The Way Forward

- *Reforming legislation and regulatory frameworks in line with international standards*

The promising improvements to national legislation brought about by advocacy and technical support by stakeholders, including international agencies, need to be strengthened, including the development of subordinate legislation. Where not yet done, it is important to review existing legislative and regulatory gaps in both origin and destination countries and align national regulatory frameworks with ILO standards and guidelines (ILO 2024a). As part of this, a campaign to get both origin and destination countries to ratify relevant ILO Conventions, especially C.181 on Private Employment Agencies, should receive attention. The ILO Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs together with the General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment should be widely disseminated in the region for this purpose. It is only when these definitions, principles and guidelines are enshrined in law that legal and regulatory gaps can be addressed.

- *Enforcement of laws and regulations in countries of origin*

Poor enforcement of existing and new laws and regulations on recruitment is a major issue to be addressed. Many Asian and Pacific countries have long standing laws and regulations on recruitment processes. First, there should be political will to implement laws and regulations and counter the influence of vested interests, including sometimes the recruitment industry, in these processes. The engagement of the media, research, and advocacy, and lobbying by concerned stakeholders including migrant workers help to address gaps in enforcement. Recent developments in Bangladesh against syndicates of private recruitment agencies involved in exploitative practices against migrant workers proceeding to Malaysia encouragingly show how public pressure can lead to action being taken.

At the same time, reinforcing regulations and monitoring of private employment agencies and subagents, and ensuring their compliance with ethical standards, is essential. Recent attempts to bring informal and subagents within the ambit of national laws and regulations in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka need to be reviewed and potentially replicated. The subagents need to be made familiar with international principles and guidelines and codes of practice on fair and ethical recruitment. Social partners and civil society organizations can play a useful role here.

Strengthening labor inspection services and building their capacity to monitor the activities of private recruitment agencies including informal subagents is needed. Given the inadequate monitoring capacity of a number of governments, tripartite partners, civil society and other stakeholders may be engaged in a watchdog or supplementary role for monitoring recruitment processes.[20] Worker feedback and rating of recruitment agencies can also be undertaken such as under the International Trade Union Confederation's Migrant Recruitment Advisor Platform.

- *Destination countries to enforce fair recruitment and promote employment mobility for workers*

Destination countries have a major role to play in promoting fair recruitment and ensuring decent work in their countries. They need to review existing applicable laws and regulatory frameworks and improve them to regulate activities by intermediaries within their countries.

Employer-tied visas in most destination countries in Asia and the kafala system in the GCC, Jordan, and Lebanon undermine fair recruitment processes and restrict employment mobility of workers.

[20] Recommendations of the 5th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour, 9-10 October 2012, Cambodia.

Reform of the kafala system has been attempted in Qatar and partly in Saudi Arabia—permitting change of employer under certain conditions. These should be continued to ensure decent work for migrant workers alongside fair recruitment. Simplifications of immigration procedures linked with job vacancies and shortages will also contribute to more formal methods of entry.

Destination countries have to reinforce labor inspection services to ensure decent working and living conditions for migrant workers. BLMIs should incorporate provisions for effective labor inspection. There is need for capacity building of enforcement authorities, particularly labor inspectorates, to detect and handle recruitment–related abuses and ensure decent working and living conditions.

At the same time, strengthening complaints and dispute resolution systems pertaining to recruitment malpractices and ensuring access to justice are a major responsibility of destination countries.

It is important for employers in destination countries to include fair recruitment into due diligence processes, particularly in countries where government regulations and enforcement mechanisms are weak (ILO 2024a). While there are examples of remediation payments by the private sector where employers have reimbursed recruitment fees paid by their workers (see Section 2.4.3) these were mostly due to either sanctions by buyers or wide exposure by the media. But such practices should be adopted as standard policy in all companies hiring migrant workers. ASEAN countries have initiated efforts for employers' education on fair recruitment and decent employment of migrant workers. A regional workshop in 2024 sought to facilitate knowledge exchange on information and good practices from ASEAN members and other countries on training and information materials available for employers and recruitment agencies of migrant workers on fair recruitment and decent employment practices; and to develop an ASEAN checklist for governments, private recruitment agencies and/or public employment services and employers of migrant workers on fair recruitment and decent employment practices to promote consistency and compliance, to guide practical implementation and to facilitate better monitoring and accountability.

In the interest of better governance and ensuring accountability, private recruitment agency associations should be encouraged to seek affiliation with recognized employer federations. There are good examples from Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Viet Nam in this respect.

- *Improving implementation of BLMIs and provisions on recruitment*

Many Asian countries have entered into BLMIs with destination countries for better governance of the migration process including recruitment and protection of workers as noted in the study. Regular monitoring is needed to identify whether recruitment provisions in BLMIs are enforced or not. For example, the practice of requiring employers to pay all recruitment and placement costs of migrant domestic workers from Indonesia to Malaysia is a good provision but evidence is needed on whether it works in practice. Given that most BLMIs lack effective implementation, the two parties need to adopt different procedures for follow up. Development of implementation plans or implementation protocols to accompany such BLMIs is one approach (e.g., New Zealand's Inter-agency Understandings for hiring seasonal workers from Pacific island countries, Jordan's BLMIs). Involving social partners and civil society representatives formally in monitoring and follow up is another option. It is also important to undertake periodic evaluations of BLMIs and address gaps in implementation.

- *Expanding recruitment options*

Employers and jobseekers can be provided with greater recruitment options that reduce the layers of intermediation, and potentially the costs through greater competition. Options other than private recruitment agencies include placement through public enterprises or public employment services and direct recruitment of workers through accredited employers of destination countries. The General Principles and Operational Guidelines apply to all these sources. In Asia and the Pacific, the role of public employment services in overseas recruitment and placement has been limited by the domination of private employment and/or recruitment services. Maldives and the Philippines reported 13%–15% share for public employment services. The Republic of Korea's Employment Permit Service has to some extent revived their role with its focus on state-managed recruitment in 16 countries. While public employment services cannot replace other channels, it is important for these services to develop models of fair and ethical recruitment for private recruitment agencies to emulate.

While direct hiring has been the preferred mode for hiring skilled workers, 50% of low-skilled workers migrating to Thailand from Cambodia, the Lao PDR, and Myanmar reported job transfer or direct hiring by employers; this high number includes migrants who were recruited via the MOU process, the border pass scheme as well as those migrants who were already present in the country and have regularized their stay in Thailand.[21] Some Asian countries including the Philippines have prohibited the use of direct employment by employers. This may be due to protection concerns and possible risks of brain drain. A comprehensive review of the ban on direct hiring by the Philippines highlighted that the context had changed and recommended liberalizing direct hiring for professionals and highly skilled workers while maintaining the ban for less skilled migrants to ensure their protection (Scalabrini Migration Center 2021). However, the Philippines has continued to ban direct recruitment for all workers.

- *Empowering migrant workers*

Migrant workers need to protect themselves more effectively against abusive and exploitative recruitment practices. This requires the right to organize and negotiate with recruiters and employers. Prospects for such organized action is better in origin countries than in most destination countries where the legal framework may inhibit the formation of migrant organizations (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates). Such a strategy requires a multipronged approach.

The provision of reliable and timely information to migrant workers is one pillar of empowering them for fair and ethical recruitment. Under operational guidelines for governments, Article 11 of the ILO's General Principles and Operational Guidelines: states that "Governments should raise awareness of the need for fair recruitment in both the public and private sectors and ensure workers have access to free, comprehensive and accurate information regarding their rights and the conditions of their recruitment and employment" (ILO 2019: 6). Migrant workers need to be briefed about international normative frameworks that spell out their rights. Migrants need to be empowered to make decisions about recruiters based upon robust intelligence about different actors in the market. Information needs to be readily available, especially to women migrant workers, in languages that migrants can understand, at every stage of the migration and recruitment process.

It is, therefore, important to review existing information, predeparture information campaigns, and awareness creation programs for migrant workers on information on working and living conditions in destination countries, communication channels with embassies and destination country authorities, accessing complaints and dispute resolution procedures, and support mechanisms from other stakeholders. Trade unions and civil society organizations including women's organizations have a major role in providing support services to migrant workers to help them take advantage of complaint

[21] Some caution is needed regarding direct hiring survey data for low skilled workers, especially in the Thailand survey. Job transfer mostly applies to skilled workers as intracompany transferees.

mechanisms, organize them, and promote campaigns and advocacy for fair recruitment, among others. Migrant worker resource centres in ASEAN and South Asian countries play a crucial role in providing migrant workers with necessary information and support to ensure their migration processes. Beyond services delivery, however, migrant workers should be empowered to represent their own interests and to safeguard their rights through migrant associations and trade unions.

Empowerment requires access to justice and effective remedies on the part of workers who have undergone violation of their rights. The establishment of a robust complaints and dispute resolution mechanism for migrant workers is, therefore, absolutely needed.

Empowerment of women migrant workers, especially those in vulnerable situations such as women domestic worker in private households, needs special attention.

- *Digitalization in the drive toward fair recruitment*

Digital platforms are useful in accessing information on the migration process including recruitment procedures and credentials of recruitment agencies, and particularly in accessing complaints and grievance handling procedures. Digitalization increases transparency and helps simplifying and streamlining recruitment processes. However, there is also a need for caution on the potential for misinformation and the current proliferation of online recruitment scams. Low-skilled or low-wage migrant workers may not be literate enough or able to afford or access such platforms during their employment abroad (e.g., migrant domestic workers in private households).

- *Broaden scope of data collection on recruitment costs and decent work*

While substantial progress has been made on generation of information on worker-paid recruitment costs in relation to monthly earnings (SDG Indicator 10.7.1), such information is available only for a few countries. Incorporating special modules in labor force surveys is a costly exercise for some countries which may explain the limited data availability on this indicator globally or regionally. Moreover, the above indicator does not provide any information on decent work conditions or vulnerabilities experienced by workers in destination countries. While low recruitment costs and low wages can result in a low RCI, it does not indicate whether the wage offered is a living wage or whether it represents equal pay for work of equal value. Therefore, such surveys have to be supplemented by other studies on working and living conditions of workers in destination countries.

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CHAPTER 3

Training In-country Programming for Would-be Migrants in Asia and the Pacific

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3.1 Introduction

One issue in labor migration that has gained increasing attention in recent years is the question of training labor migrants for the jobs they will perform abroad. This has extended to the question of how to combine training with regular migration opportunities. To address this demand, a range of models has emerged in Asia, and, to a lesser extent, the Pacific. This chapter reviews different Asian and Pacific cases, categorizing them in terms of who is providing training, who is covering the cost, and why. The nature of this training touches on whether the training is part of a development strategy—sometimes supported by overseas development assistance—or due to efforts by employers to secure skills through migration channels.

The literature on the diverse and complex dynamics of labor migration across and from the Asia and Pacific region predominantly focuses on the mechanisms of recruitment and the treatment of those who migrate for work. Thus, discussions on deployment tend to focus on predeparture orientation programming to ensure that migrant workers have basic information about employment rights, cost of living and expectations of life overseas, as well as basic financial literacy, with a view to minimizing bad experiences and reducing the risk of exploitation.

Those who move overseas for work may have skills that are not always well-matched with the needs and regulations of their chosen country of destination, leading to skills waste and poor employment outcomes. Skills matching and accreditation are increasingly relevant policy areas as governments come under pressure to justify that inflows of foreign workers are effectively managed, and as employers identify specific shortages at all levels in the job market.

However, less attention has been paid to the issue of skills training before departure, and how this may be linked to an individual's eligibility for labor migration channels, or how it may complement predeparture orientation programming to ensure that those who are recruited are suitably prepared for the needs and expectations of their future employer. Skills training is critical for ensuring migrants are suitably prepared for the needs and expectations of their future employers. Yet, the issue is significantly under researched. Consequently, the chapter begins to address this gap in the labor migration scholarship by describing the nature of in-country training provided to potential migrants in Asia and the Pacific. It draws on publicly available data and information from secondary sources such as governments, international organizations, recruitment agencies, training institutions, and media databases. It also uses primary data from presentations delivered by international and national agencies at various platforms. A key finding is that there is a need for more in-depth research on the issue area.

3.2 Who Trains Labor Migrants?

Who provides and funds training varies widely. Historically, aspirant migrants followed training provided in origin countries, using resources invested by the origin country to improve development prospects, or paid by the aspirant migrants themselves and provided through private or public training institutions in the origin country. Origin country governments are often involved not least to ensure some form of accreditation for training undertaken. Nonprofit and for-profit providers also provide training of various quality and with implications for the quality of employment that ensues.

In recent decades, destination country involvement in training has increased, in some cases related to development cooperation initiatives with development agencies to build human capital. There are also models of cooperation between countries of origin and countries of destination to develop training capacity and programs oriented toward use of specific bilateral regular labor migration channels. A further development is private sector involvement in training in origin countries, with the employer organizing and funding training—directly or indirectly—without a development perspective.

3.2.1 Country of Origin Support for Training for Labor Migration

In most cases, education and training systems prepare workers for the domestic labor market. However, a number of governments in Asian and Pacific economies invest in managing emigration as an element of their national employment strategies. As a consequence, training schools may prepare nationals for overseas work, or be established specifically for overseas work. Such institutions and curricula are not generally established, however, through partnerships with destination countries. This is distinct from international branch campuses, which may have some links with labor migration opportunities (Box 3.1).

The most developed training programs for overseas employment can be found in the Philippines, dating back many decades (Ortiga 2020). These can range from domestic worker programming, to higher education intended to develop professionals ready for migration, with nursing a key sector for overseas employment. Training, however, is still often and largely through private educational institutions, which have been dogged with reports of poor performance, and even concerns of creating a surplus of potential overseas workers unable to find employment (Ortiga 2020).

Public-sector training for employment abroad may be limited in duration, scope, and content. The Sri Lankan National Policy and Action Plan on Migration for Employment 2023–2027 views the skilling of the potential emigrating population as critical for success of Sri Lankan nationals in the global labor market. The training offered by the Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment focuses on caregiving, domestic work, language skills, and destination country orientation.[1] This basic predeparture training does not offer advanced competences. Mandatory residential training for first-time migrant domestic workers is at a cost to the migrant of about $75.

Indeed, technical training by public institutions for migration is less common. In Bangladesh, the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) offers vocational skills training through dozens of technical training centers across the country, which range from skilled trades to engineering,

[1] https://www.slbfe.lk/training-program/

and include shorter skills development courses and on the job training and apprenticeships (Islam n.d.). In addition, housekeeping courses are offered for potential overseas workers, with the curriculum prepared by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the BMET offers language training in Korean, English, Japanese, and Arabic, reflecting major overseas markets. This system is intended to meet both domestic and overseas demand. The BMET monitors which skills are in demand in key destination countries for migrants, in order to adapt training for these markets. A review of the functioning of the technical training centers highlighted challenges associated with delivering and scaling-up training programs, notably a shortage of qualified trainers and outdated curricula and training materials, which is limiting both the supply of skilled workers, and their suitability for modern labor markets (Barkat and Ahmed 2014), which continues to be a challenge (Islam 2024).

Given the wide range of training courses aimed at aspirant migrants, the Bangladesh government has partnered with the private sector to produce an app—Ami Probashi—which consolidates the migration process, including registration with the government, and which offers a portal to available government-approved training programs. Intended to streamline processes, and eliminate expensive intermediaries, the app reflects the government's interest in sending more skilled migrants overseas (News Times 2024).

Box 3.1: International Branch Campuses and Their Link to Labor Migration

The number of international branch campuses, and franchising of curricula for students interested in acquiring skills accredited by an educational institution of another country, has been expanding. This transnational education may involve universities licensing their curricula to existing higher education institutions; in other cases, physical branch campuses have been established. For example, the Malaysian government has established higher education "zones" in collaboration with private partners, which have helped the country become a hub for international branch campuses, including from Australia, the People's Republic of China, India, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (UK) (ICEF Monitor 2016). Singapore hosts universities, from INSEAD to MIT, complementing its own national universities.

While not strictly training-in-country for migration, the accredited programs offer students greater flexibility and marketability in the international labor market, and they may find it easier to find high-skilled employment in the country of the educational institution (Levatino 2017). For programs that contain an element of in-person tuition, some post-graduate work rights may ensue, as in the UK, where graduates engaged in overseas study may take up a graduate visa if they have spent at least 12 months of the overall course in the UK.[1]

Source: Authors.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/graduate-visa/course-you-studied

3.2.2 Training with Support from Development Agencies

Destination country involvement in origin-country training often originates in partnership programs with high-income country development agencies. The usual objective is to seek to improve outcomes of labor migration outcomes from a broader socioeconomic perspective, including contributions to the origin country economy through greater remittance amounts from each worker. For example, the German Development Agency (GIZ) has developed a vocational training pilot, "Partnerships for Development-oriented Vocational Training and Labour Migration". The pilot is offered in several different countries. In Viet Nam, the pilot offers students vocational training, specifically in metal-cutting, as well as intensive guidance and mentorship, German language skills, and cultural and soft skills. The pilot was conducted in close coordination with Viet Nam's Ministry of Labour and the education providers with which it works directly. However, while development agencies may be more advanced in their capacity to support vocational training programming, they may lack the networks necessary to offer and ensure successful post-arrival employment.

Investment in origin-country capacity may be easier for development agencies that have a tradition in this area. For example, the German Federal Employment Agency supports a project with chambers of commerce to recruit and support the migration of skilled workers from Viet Nam and India in several key sectors including information and communication technology, electrical engineering, and catering. While the project, "Hand in Hand for International Talent", helps migrants with visa processes and qualifications recognition, matching them with willing employers, the only in-country training is German language courses.

Development agencies may bring together different partners across developing countries, in partnership with implementers. For example, the IOM undertook a 4-year Poverty Reduction Through Safe Migration, Skills Development and Enhanced Job Placement (PROMISE) project, which included skills development modules in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, for migration to Thailand, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (Spence 2022). Another example is a pilot project for a skills partnership between Cambodia and Thailand focused on short-term mobility of Cambodian trainee workers in bricklaying and plastering in line with the standards set by the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute. The training involved on-the-job technical and soft-skills training, with short courses on both construction skills and occupational health and safety,[2] and the pilot was supported by the Employer Confederation of Thailand and the Cambodian Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (Spence 2022).

Development-agency funded projects are generally constrained by time-limited project cycles and the objective of capacity building for handover and exit. However, there are also opportunities to build institutions. The Asia-Pacific Training Coalition (APTC), funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, is one such example, and is described below. The Republic of Korea–Sri Lanka National Vocational Training Institute, another example, is funded by the Export–Import Bank of Korea and the Korea International Cooperation Agency. It trains workers in Sri Lanka in a range of skills from welding to robotics, and although the institute is predominantly intended to build skills in Sri Lanka itself, it also offers language and predeparture courses (Rodrigo 2024).

In-country training programs that have been developed through bilateral or multilateral partnerships tend to focus on vocational education and training and skilled trades, from horticulture, construction, meat processing, welding, or garment industries, where some specific skills are required, but where training is not overly lengthy or cumbersome. These are also sectors where initial training is necessary, but much of the skills development comes from later on-the-job experience.

The APTC—an Australian-funded initiative supporting vocational training across a number of Pacific island countries since 2007—was not initially developed with a view to facilitating migration to Australia, or within the region. However, with the expansion of the revamped Pacific Australian Labour Mobility scheme, the initiative has increased its focus on aligning training programs with the needs of potential

[2] See IOM (2021) for examples of the work.

employers in Australia. In Papua New Guinea (PNG), several dozen workers have been offered training in aged care in preparation for work in Australia, through a partnership of the APTC and the PNG's government's Labour Mobility Unit (APTC 2024a). In the Solomon Islands, workers are being given training in meat processing through the APTC to enable those trained to take up jobs through the PALM scheme (APTC 2024b). So far, numbers trained for overseas work are small compared to those trained by the APTC for the domestic labor markets in Pacific island countries.

Other initiatives are still in an initial phase. A partnership has been established between Finland and Pakistan to strengthen training and employment opportunities in the areas of hospitality and care work.[3] The €1.5 million ($USD 1.6 million) project will train 500 students in hospitality or care work for an initial 6-month period in Pakistan, following a curriculum developed jointly by the National University of Technology in Islamabad and the Turku Vocational Institute, bringing the former in line with Finnish vocational standards of education. Following this, students will undertake a further 6-months practical training, alongside lessons in the Finnish language, culture, and society. Finally, 150 students will be offered advanced training and hands-on experience in Finland through a 3-month internship.

Other projects focused on skilled trades include a Swiss-funded program in Nepal focused on upgrading skills in garment manufacturing, masonry, shuttering carpentry, plumbing, scaffolding, and electricity work for migration, although there are no placements on offer in Switzerland,[4] and an IOM-facilitated pilot in Cambodia to train workers in bricklaying and plastering to Thai technical and vocational education and training standards in order to facilitate migration.

Indirectly, training and certification requirements imposed as eligibility criteria for labor migrants in destination countries can stimulate course development in the origin country, although without the former participating in capacity building or costs. For example, Singapore sets its curriculum for construction sector workers and approved companies in origin countries to provide training and testing (Baruah, Mathai-Luke, and Chen 2024). In Bangladesh, the official testing capacity is capped, and the high demand for access to these tests raises their value for aspirant migrants and grants market power to training providers, who can charge high rates and—in some cases—sell testing slots to unofficial training centers (Transient Workers Count Too 2013).

Destination countries may engage collectively with origin countries to build training capacity to prepare prospective migrants. The European Union (EU), for example, has announced a €3 million ($3.2 million) talent partnership with Bangladesh that aims to facilitate the movement of 3,000 skilled migrant workers, and which will be implemented by the International Labour Organization, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, and the BMET (ILO 2024). The project aims to upskill Bangladeshi migrant workers in various occupational sectors to meet the skilled labor needs of select EU member states, while establishing legal and safe migration pathways between Bangladesh and the EU member states.[5]

Another form of destination-country investment in origin-country training may come in the form of mitigation of potentially negative effects of migration on development of origin countries. For example, a recruitment agency working to bring healthcare skills to the UK National Health Service has launched a Nursing to Nurture scheme in the Philippines that seeks to invest in the training of one

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3 See ICMPD's Migration Partnership Facility summary of the project, https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/mpf-projects/63-pakistan-finland-international-cooperation-vocational-talent-and-mobility-boost-pafiic/preview.
4 See http://www.sami.org.np/access-to-skills. According to SaMi, the major destination countries for Nepalese migrant workers are Malaysia and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (SaMi Programme 2024).
5 www.ilo.org/projects-and-partnerships/projects/supporting-talent-partnership-bangladesh

nurse in-country for every nurse that is recruited through its programming, with a goal of training 500 professionals to stay in-country.[6]

Technology is also streamlining the ability of destination countries to help provide access to training. First, online rather than in-person training is more prevalent, aided by the experiences of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, but also facilitating training for those who may be balancing work and study. Second, using technology to access accredited courses, and link training to the emigration process. The Human Resource Development Service in the Republic of Korea has made online and digital language study and testing materials available for free to prospective migrants.[7]

3.2.3 Private Sector Training

Partnership with the private sector and nongovernment actors, including reputable education institutions, can contribute to stronger outcomes, not least to ensure workers are as job ready as future employers would expect.

Beyond the highly publicized (though limited) training programs in countries of origin funded by countries of destination, a broad network of private sector training programs offers fee based, largely low-skilled or vocational, training for those seeking employment overseas. These have varying degrees of professionality, track record, and many offer limited information about the quality and accreditation of courses. Some are linked to recruitment agencies, although not necessarily explicitly.

This includes examples of training programs that are effectively part corporate social responsibility initiatives, and part skills recruitment. For example, Porsche has invested in the training of underprivileged Filipino youth, contributing equipment and insight into the curriculum to a Manila-based technical institute, from which 40 graduates are selected annually for in-job training by Porsche. Graduates of this training can be hired by dealerships around the world, and dealerships who hire a graduate then cover the costs of training and placement (Business Advisory Group on Migration 2024). Despite being small scale, the program meets a specific employer need, while managing to diffuse costs through franchise employment.

Training in the origin country by destination country governments may also involve local authorities. For example, under a pilot starting in March 2025, the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Employment and Labor and the Korean city of Ulsan are training foreign workers in shipbuilding. Ulsan leads customized training for shipbuilding workers in Uzbekistan; the ministry arranges for trainees to work in small and medium-sized enterprises in Ulsan using the E-9 (nonprofessional employee) visa. The training lasts 3 months, and is meant for five different activities, each with its own module. The Ministry expects 280 trainees to enter the Republic of Korea by the end of 2025 (Lee 2025).

Private sector training can be valuable. Employers often have the clearest and most up to date information about workforce skill needs and can offer a combination of study and on-the-job training. Further, candidates engaging in training may be more likely to have a job offer, though this may, in the long-run, tie individuals to employers, and limit future career progression. In addition, professional online courses, offering micro credentialing and support to develop soft skills, may be more useful for experienced workers looking to bridge the gap between their experience and expectations in the country of destination.

[6] www.resourcefinderuk.com/blog/nursing-to-nurture-our-exclusive-programme-designed-to-support-the-next-generation-of-nurses/

[7] https://epstopik.hrdkorea.or.kr/epstopik/book/std/standarTextDesc.do?lang=en

3.2.4 Public–Private Partnerships: Training in Origin Countries for Japan's Specified Skilled Worker System

Skills-based migration channels can directly stimulate interest by destination-country actors to invest in training in the origin country in order to ensure access to a recruitment channel. Japan's Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) system, first introduced in 2019, offers an opportunity to obtain a status of residence for employment in specific sectors subject to passing a skills test (OECD 2024). The system has been slowly rolled out and by mid-2024 employed more than 250,000 workers in Japan. It operates alongside another program, the longstanding Technical Internship Training Program (TITP), which has involved much less training in the origin country and lower skills expectations for new arrivals. The TITP will be replaced by a new program, Employment for Skill Development, which will link to SSW system more directly. Candidates wishing to work in Japan choose between two routes, with the SSW system requiring more substantial investment in language and occupational skills in order to pass the test.

The SSW system has created a number of opportunities for training in origin countries and interest by Japanese organizations in fostering skills development. Some are through private sector partnerships, while others are in cooperation with the public training bodies in origin countries, and with the employer in the destination country. In some cases, the placement agency is involved in the training, while in others, it is the end employer who establishes the curriculum or adapts the training program in the origin country.

Many recruitment businesses have started to develop training programs in different SSW fields, partnering with origin country public institutions. For example, the Zenken Corporation conducts overseas recruitment mainly in the nursing care sector, recruiting and training personnel mainly from India and Indonesia. In India, it has a partnership with the National Skill Development Corporation International (NSDCI), a non-profit public company. Zenken and the NSDCI jointly develop curricula that include training to prepare for work in Japan; this includes knowledge about Japan, nursing care in Japan, and the SSW system. It also includes training in Japanese culture and recreation, as nursing carers organize events for residents of elderly care facilities. The curricula also prepare for the tests required in this sector (Japanese language and nursing care skills evaluation test). The NSDCI recruits mainly from nursing colleges in India. The NSDCI offers Japanese language lessons and test preparation (around 1,200 hours in total for 6–8 months) and Zenken provides cultural adaption training, practical communication lessons, and orientation for work in Japan (around 20–50 hours). The training fee is paid by the students to the center, but extra costs such as accommodation fee, food, and utilities, and the SSW examination fee are not charged. In 2023, 25 candidates finished the SSW course in India; in 2024, 150 students were expected to finish.[8]

Another example is the approach taken by MOS Food Services, which operates a major hamburger chain in Japan, with stores in Asian countries. It runs a program called "Viet Nam Kazoku" [family] to train candidates in Viet Nam for the SSW system and recruit and place them in Japan. The program was first created in 2019 to achieve diversity, respond to labor shortages, and address a multilingual customer base. Sixty workers had been placed by 2024. MOS partners with Danang Vocational Tourism College to provide a program for preparing for the food service industry SSW exam, and practical training such as customer service methods. Additionally, Japanese language education is carried out in collaboration with Japanese language schools. The cost of these additional programs and exam fees

[8] Once in Japan, workers may follow an educational program developed by Zenken to study to pass the exam for certified care workers (which would allow them to acquire a different residence status and remain indefinitely). The post-arrival program consists of e-learning content and live online lessons and is delivered in cohort-based training.

are covered by the firm. Further, as the SSW exam for the food service industry has not yet been held in Viet Nam, MOS supports their costs to travel to Thailand to take the exam.

A further example is PERSOL Global Workforce Co., Ltd, a group company of PERSOL, a human resources services company in Japan. Established in 2019, it specializes in providing human resources services to foreign nationals. It is involved in education and training in Indonesia, India, and Nepal. In 2024, the company recruited or introduced around 500 workers in the SSW program, of which over 90% were recruited in the origin country. The company focuses mainly in the fields of nursing care and agriculture. The company also focuses on training SSW candidates, and provides programs to educational institutions in some countries. For example, the company signed a memorandum of understanding in 2023 with the Indonesian Centre for Agricultural Education (ICAE)—a public vocational education center operated under the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture—for human resource development and employment. Specifically, PERSOL Global Workforce provides Japanese language education programs for students at Indonesian public agricultural schools identified by the ICAE, for them to prepare for the SSW test and to work in Japan. In India, the company concluded an agreement with the NSDCI, for the recruitment and training of personnel. The NSDCI established a Japanese language education center in northern India, where PERSOL Global NSDC International (a subsidiary of the National Skills Development Corporation of India) bears part of the cost. It provides educational curricula for screened students, to help them prepare for the SSW agricultural examinations, and recruits and dispatches students who pass the SSW exams. PERSOL introduces human resources to host companies in Japan and provides support after arrival to the employer and the worker. The NSDCI recruits people with an agricultural background who want to work in Japan and the students attend the program for about 5 months. The training fees are covered by the trainees and the organizations, which are provided curriculum.

Beyond this collaboration, PERSOL is working with the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture to promote a project to provide Japanese language education to students of Indonesian public agricultural schools and arrange for them to travel to Japan as workers after graduation. The aim is to improve the quality standards of Indonesian agricultural producers by giving them an opportunity to learn highly-productive Japanese farming and livestock farming techniques, with the expectation that some of them return to Indonesia to apply these techniques.

These public–private partnerships exist alongside examples of direct private fee-based involvement in training by destination-country intermediaries. One example is Esuhai Co., Ltd, a large sending organization and operator of Japanese language schools in Viet Nam. While it has historically sent workers from Viet Nam to Japan under the TITP, it has also begun training for the SSW program as tests started to be widely conducted in Viet Nam from 2024. The company is training SSWs mainly in the field of automobile maintenance, recruiting from those who studied engineering. It offers Japanese language training to prepare for the tests and subsequent work. The training fee is paid by the students—as has historically been the case with TITP candidates. Part of the cost is borne by the company that recruits the SSW, in accordance with Vietnamese regulations regarding workers deploying abroad.

3.3 Sectors for Training in Country of Origin

Not all sectors are ripe for training in-country within the scope of labor migration, and there is a trade-off between the time to train and costs involved, and the demand for specific skills. Destination-country tailored programming in high-skilled sectors is less prevalent, due to the high costs and long duration involved, even while greater alignment between origin and destination country curricula might overcome key challenges such as skills recognition.

Much of the focus in training in origin countries has been on the health sector, especially nursing and long-term care work. This chapter examines two other sectors: the maritime sector and the domestic sector.

3.3.1 Firm-driven Training in Country of Origin for the Maritime Sector

Japan has collaborated with other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and beyond on maritime training initiatives. For instance, the Japanese government partnered with eight ASEAN countries—the Philippines, Indonesia, the Lao PDR, Singapore, Viet Nam, Thailand, Myanmar, and Malaysia—on the 2009 Japan–ASEAN Seafarer Cooperative Program.[9] The program aimed to address the global shortage of maritime officers, improve the safety of merchant marine engaging in international trade, protect the marine environment, and strengthen international competitiveness through three projects: the onboard training environment promotion project, the seafarers and training improvement project, and the seafarers' information project. The Japanese government also recently signed a bilateral cooperation agreement with the Panama Maritime Authority on the mutual recognition of training and certification according to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) 1978 (Labrut 2022). Consequently, a Japanese shipping company, Mistui O.S.K. Lines approved the recruitment of approximately 10 cadets from Panama (Panama Maritime Authority 2023).

Beyond this, Japanese companies have established maritime training institutes across the region in response to the upskilling and development needs of seafarers on board vessels. For example, Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha Line developed the K Line Maritime Academy Masterplan as a strategy to enhance the company's ship management structure and competitiveness, which culminated in the establishment of the K Line Maritime Academy (KLMA) across Europe and Asia, providing training to seafarers from India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Viet Nam, the PRC, Japan, and Eastern European countries who board the K Line vessels. KLMA Philippines is the largest institute.[10] It offers the K Line Filipino Scholarship Program that covers a range of benefits, including tuition fees, cost of living stipend, international onboard training experiment, a career plan, and assurance of employment.

Similarly, NYK Maritime College is a curriculum, textbook, and method approach developed by the Japanese shipping line NYK. It operates training centers in the Philippines and in Singapore. The Philippines training academy (NYK–TDG Maritime Academy) was established in 2007 and had graduated more than 1,500 students by 2024. The 4-year training program is financed through loans that are later repaid following employment. The firm offers onboard training for 180 cadets annually, drawn from different training institutions including the NYK Maritime College.

Thus, the Japanese government and private companies have financed and delivered maritime training programs in countries of origin to address shortages in maritime personnel and development needs.

3.3.2 Expansion of Maritime Sector Training in Pacific Island Countries

There are some sectors where demand for workers is high, and the skills required can only be acquired as a result of intensive, highly specific training, such as the maritime industry. Here, a large investment in training schools has taken place across Asia and the Pacific over the past 50 years. For this industry, there are few alternatives but for the private sector to invest in bespoke training.

[9] www.maritime-forum.jp/en/asia/index.html

[10] https://www.klma.com.ph/our-mandate

The maritime training initiatives in the Pacific island countries upskill and prepare seafarers, fishers, and stewards to work on foreign fishing vessels and cruise ships, and are long established, with the first known initiative originating during the colonial period. The Marine Training Centre (previously known as the Marine Training School) was established in 1967 in Kiribati, and similar initiatives soon spread across the region. The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) set up the Fisheries & Maritime Institute in the 1960s, Papua New Guinea (PNG) established the Maritime College in 1975, Tuvalu set up a separate center in 1978, and in the 1980s Tonga created the Fokololo 'O E Hau Maritime School (previously known as the Maritime Polytechnic Institute), and Samoa established the School of Maritime Training. The Solomon Islands established the Institute of Maritime Studies later on, while the Marshall Islands set up the Maritime Vocational Training Centre in 2023. Apart from the institutes in the Solomon Islands and Marshall Islands, the training initiatives were established by Hamburg Sued, a privately-owned German Shipping Company, to address labor shortages in the German maritime industry.

The maritime training initiatives share two features. First, they are founded on two types of partnerships: public–private aid and public aid. Kiribati's Marine Training Centre was initially funded by the then Gilbert and Ellice Islands government, the UK government, the United Nations Development Programme, and British and Western German shipping companies. Its Fisheries Training Center was supported by the government, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and Japan Marine Service Company. Conversely, the Marshall Islands' Maritime Vocational Training Center is based on a bilateral agreement between the Marshall Islands and German governments, financed by GIZ with short courses co-delivered with the International Maritime Organization (IOM).[11,12] Similarly, JICA provided the FSM government with $3.7 million to upgrade the Fisheries & Maritime Institute's training programs and facilities (Embassy of the Federated States of Micronesia 2021).[13] However, the nature of these partnerships fluctuates: shifts in external and internal conditions mean that partners and funding amounts change frequently.

Second, most initiatives align with international maritime and fisheries training standards. The IMO established the STCW in 1978, which is frequently updated. The STCW requires its parties to provide information allowing others to verify the validity and authenticity of seafarers' certificates. In addition, the IMO has developed a series of model courses comprising teaching syllabuses and learning objectives for training institutes. However, courses and programs vary across institutes in the Pacific. Samoa's School of Maritime Training offers Certificates I, II, III, and IV on able seafarer (deck), marine engineering and fishing, whereas Tonga's Fokololo 'O E Hau Maritime School offers programs on general practice rating, able seafarer (deck and engineer), master 4, 5, and 6, dangerous cargo, and basic safety at sea. The variations may be partly the result of differences in the capacities of training institutes—standalone institutes may not be able to offer as many programs and courses as institutes hosted by larger universities and/or colleges. Nevertheless, a handful of Pacific island country training centers (e.g., FSM, Samoa, and PNG) have received the IMO's white-list status, indicating that their training aligns with the STCW and thus is internationally recognized.

Beyond this, PNG's courses and systems align with those of the Australian Maritime College. The number of PNG graduates on Australian shipping vessels is unknown. However, the 2018 Maritime Women's Scholarship—a Pacific Towing, Australian government, Swire Shipping, and Consort Express Lines partnership—produced two cadets who were recruited by local shipping vessels (Jones 2024).

11 https://pacificndc.org/articles/ground-breaking-ceremony-maritime-training-centre-majuro

12 For instance, the IOM assisted the center in delivering the Sea Survival Simulation/Training that covered how to put on a lifejacket, deploy a life-raft, and learn about life-saving equipment. https://www.cmi.edu/college_news/maritime-vocational-training-center-conducted-a-sea-survival-simulation-training/

13 https://www.jica.go.jp/Resource/fsm/english/c8h0vm0000btnbdn-att/fsm_1510.pdf

The nature of maritime, fisheries, and stewardship training partnerships has gradually evolved in four interrelated ways. First, Pacific island country governments are beginning to collaborate with nontraditional partners. In 2018, PNG's Maritime College partnered with the PRC's Zhejiang International National Maritime College to upskill locals and provide overseas employment opportunities. This is purportedly addressing a global shortage of seafarers—a 2016 report forecasted "the need for an additional 147,500 officers by 2024 to service the world merchant fleet" (PNG Post Courier 2018). Similarly, the Asian Development Bank approved an assistance package worth $2 million for Tuvalu's Maritime Training Institute in the early 2000s (ADB 2013). The institute's main donor remains New Zealand.

Second, training centers have been combined, subsumed by universities, and/or rebranded during government reforms. The Fisheries Training Centre—established in 1989 by the Kiribati government in cooperation with the Japan Tuna Company to provide skilled labor for Japanese fishing vessels—was merged with the Marine Training Centre (Borovnik 2003, 2024). Samoa's School of Maritime Training initially merged with the Polytech and later with the National University of Samoa.[14] Likewise, Tonga's Maritime Polytechnic Institute was rebranded as the Fokololo 'O E Hau Maritime School and incorporated into Tonga National University. It is alleged that the government considered shutting the school because overseas shipping companies started refusing its qualifications after an inter-island ferry sank (Bedford, Burson, and Bedford 2014). It is unclear why the reforms occurred, but the amalgamation of the training institutes and rebranding may have contributed to standardize curricula, reduce operational costs, and improve the international reputation of workers.

Third, both international and local companies facilitate the recruitment process. In Kiribati, international and local agencies seem to operate separately. The South Pacific Marine Service—a group of six German companies—used to assign I-Kiribati seafarers to merchant and tuna vessels, and cruise ships until recently (Borovnik 2024). Local agencies also recruited workers but sporadically. For example, the Shipping Agency of Kiribati hired seafarers and hospitality workers for the Norwegian Cruise Liner; Kiribati Fishing Services recruited fishing graduates for the Japanese Fisheries Association for pole and line, purse seine and long-line vessels; the Kiribati Employment Marine Services recruited them for Japanese and Republic of Korean vessels (Nunns and Borovnik 2014). In contrast, the Samoa Shipping Corporation and Mediterranean Shipping Company have worked together for over 40 years to create employment opportunities for trained Samoan sailors (Samoa Global News 2021). Approximately 265 seafarers were on deck in 2021, and the government aimed to have 400 to 500 employed on Mediterranean Shipping Company vessels (Membrebre 2021). In PNG, local companies are more actively recruiting. Rather than focusing outward, PNG is tapping into domestic maritime opportunities. Those graduating from cadetship programs have been employed by Consort Express Lines, Pacific Towing, Kute Shipping, and Lutheran Shipping to work on provincial development projects (Jones 2024). The diminishing presence of international companies may suggest a decreasing global demand for Pacific island country maritime workers but an increase in their regional and local demand.

Fourth, Pacific island governments seem to be tapping into regional labor markets, rather than global markets. Previously, Tuvaluan and I-Kiribati maritime professionals worked on German, British, Republic of Korean, and Japanese vessels. In 2018, 20 Tuvaluan fishers were employed by Tuna Australia in 3-year placements under the Pacific Labour Scheme (Bevitt 2019). Tuna Australia met with the former Tuvalu government to discuss expanding maritime training through additional resources, a new longline fishing training module, annual scholarships, and on-vessel training. On-the-job training

[14] https://nus.edu.ws/about-us/faculties-schools-and-centres/school-of-maritime-training/

was anticipated to build workers' experience in using commercial equipment. Similarly, Australian Fishing Enterprises recruited I-Kiribati fishers for 2 years under the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme to support the local fishing industry.[15] Recently, Kiribati requested the Australian government to consider employing maritime professionals for their vessels under the PALM scheme (Rimon, forthcoming). At the same time, local companies have diversified their regional labor market reach by establishing country offices.[16] In response to the local demand for maritime professionals, PNG shipping companies hired PNG Maritime School graduates to work on, for example, the PNG LPG project in the Gulf Province.

Two factors may explain some of these shifts. First, increased competition prompted the search for alternative labor markets. Pacific maritime professionals are competing for overseas employment opportunities with each other. They are also competing with the Philippines, Indonesia, the PRC, and Russia, who were the top suppliers of seafarers and officers in 2021 (UNCTAD 2021). Second, external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and financial crises prompted an exploration of regional and local labor markets. Despite the European demand for Samoan sailors, many were reluctant to take up the opportunity due to fears of contracting COVID-19 (Faavae 2020). I-Kiribati and Tuvaluan seafarers were stranded in Germany and Australia, further igniting fears of cross-border travel for work (Garbe 2021; Voloder 2021). Following the identification of two positive cases among seafarers, the government of Kiribati shut the borders thereby inhibiting the exit and entry of locals (Radio Kiribati News 2021). Therefore, the combination of fear of contracting the virus and being stranded and closed borders meant governments had to look for domestic employment opportunities.

3.3.3 Training for Work in Domestic Services

Training in less-skilled sectors, notably domestic work, is widespread in countries such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Concerns about the treatment of domestic workers has led to nongovernment organizations entering the training sector in order to ensure predominantly migrant women are adequately prepared for the work ahead, as well as well informed about their rights. For example, the Fair Employment Foundation in Hong Kong, China supports training for domestic workers in the Philippines (who are migrating to Hong Kong, China), which is accredited by the national training authority (first-time migrants are required to complete the Domestic Work NC II Certificate from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority). Courses are provided free of charge. The 12-day Fair Work Training program blends practical skills (in cleaning, cooking, laundry) with cultural orientation, financial planning, and information on rights.[17]

Domestic workers may also be called upon to perform other tasks—including child and elderly care—for which the predeparture training may not prepare them (ILO 2023).

[15] It is unclear to what extent the company engaged with the Marine Training Centre, but workers used existing skills such as mending the nets and baiting on the job (Costigan 2024).

[16] Through Pacific Towing's Fiji office, PNG divers joined Fijian engineers, welders, and a crane operator to complete the wreck retrieval of Southern Phoenix (a container ship) in Suva (Steamships 2019).

[17] https://www.the-care-economy-knowledge-hub.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/17.-Asia_Fair-Employment-Foundation_V2.pdf

3.4 Conclusions

The initial analysis in this chapter remains a partial view of in-country training in Asia and the Pacific region. The issue is still under researched, with the exception of specific assessments related to the development of skill mobility partnerships. The examples cited reflect the extremely scattered nature of experience so far, ranging from small-scale privately managed training programs linked to recruitment, to large-scale national training programs with a migration component (often orientation and language learning). The popularity of some training programs may relate to skills which are perceived to support migration opportunities, without being specifically geared toward migration. Thus, the chapter covers a range of information available, rather than a comprehensive and exhaustive review.

Where bespoke programs exist for in-country training, scale remains a challenge in all but the most focused countries. For example, despite significant investment, the training program supported by the German Development Agency in Viet Nam has been limited to a handful of graduates. In part, this is because these programs remain in the pilot phase, and are focused on building partnerships and exchange on tricky issues such as curriculum content, mutual recognition of skills, and engaging employers to ensure on-the-job training. Indeed, the IOM has noted that the PROMISE project between Cambodia and Thailand was both extremely high in cost per capita, and labor intensive. Recruiters and employers are not always willing to participate in schemes that cost them more than recruitment outside such schemes. Employers may be willing to shoulder costs, however, if they are reassured about skills quality and suitability, and the training also facilitates the migration process (Business Advisory Group on Migration 2024).

During a recent discussion of the Business Advisory Group to the Global Forum on Migration and Development, businesses noted that government-to-government cooperation to produce skilled workers is not delivering for them, as they have more specific needs than can be captured in high-level agreements. Private-sector run programs, linked to recruitment, are thus based on market principles, skilling based on labor demand, and connecting graduates with employers. These are more scalable, as the cost model often involves fees paid by aspirant migrants for the courses, and are shaped specifically to employer needs and possibly also the recruitment process. However, the lack of oversight, both in terms of the quality of training, and whether adequate information is provided about employment rights and the migration process, may mean they are less beneficial for migrants—even when the migrants are paying for them. This may be problematic if training is tied to a specific employer: the benefit of on-the-job training may be undermined if the employer exploits that relationship, and migrants are unable to switch employer. The evolving examples from Japan's SSW program presented in this chapter, provide some indication about how training can be arranged and financed by destination-country actors in the origin country, even if the migrant worker has the possibility to change employer once they arrive in Japan, as long as the new employment is in the same SSW occupation.

Where governments have specifically invested in emigration as a development or employment strategy, in-country training benefits from national oversight and integrated information about employment rights, but also tailoring to potential migration opportunities. Further examination of the impact of this type of approach would be useful to see whether it offers a more sustainable model than development-focused projects. In Bangladesh, for example, most potential migrants must apply for clearance for overseas work, which means the government has data on employment outcomes. In Myanmar, the government oversees a list of accredited vocational training schools, some of which specialize in training for overseas workers.[18] But this government role can also create hurdles to migration: requiring all labor migrants to go through government-led training reinforces the government as gatekeeper to

[18] See list at https://www.nssa.gov.mm/en/info/tc-info.

employment abroad, in the case where—like Myanmar—the government may be using employment opportunities as a means to suppress dissent (Veal 2024).

The quality of training on offer can vary. Anecdotal reviews of domestic worker training highlight the basic information on offer (such as teaching migrants how to use a kettle or vacuum cleaner), but note that providers still charge fees to provide such basic information. In sectors such as aged care, where training standards are more critical, oversight regarding the quality of programming is important. On-the-job training is crucial to learn specific country codes of practice and safety standards (for example, building regulations), which is often not offered as part of in-country training, unless there are specific destination countries involved, such as Germany, Japan, or the Republic of Korea.

The financial partnerships prevalent in the maritime industry may indicate future opportunities. Public–private partnerships increasingly support the establishment of labor mobility industries comprising local education institutes, local recruitment agencies, and—to a lesser extent—international employers, which are regulated by origin governments. They aim to foster development by generating triple wins: domestic upskilling improves education levels and international employability, addressing youth and graduate unemployment; semi-skilled workers address labor shortages in the maritime sector, increasing productivity and profitability; migrant workers send remittances to their families.

Labor mobility industries, however, can be susceptible to unethical practices. Training centers aim to produce large cohorts of graduates as quickly as possible who can be recruited by local agencies for international deployment. While training addresses supply issues, the rapidity of placement may impede quality assurance and due diligence processes by local authorities and institutions, and can result in challenges such as poor-quality graduates, worker abuse, and exploitation. Importantly, the onus to train and employ is on local actors and country of origin governments.

Given the multiple interests—from origin and destination governments, training and recruitment firms, and employers—it is easy to see how high maintenance skills mobility projects have emerged, not least because public–private aid and public aid partnerships provide an opportunity to share the responsibility of worker training and welfare with wealthier destination countries.

Where might this go in the future? Given the lack of deep and comparative analysis on in-country training programs, the direction is not clear. United Nations' agencies have engaged in deeper reflection regarding how to realize efficient outcomes with maintained standards and safety for migrants. There are limited examples of large-scale multi-partner projects. One area that appears to be important is for destination-country actors to partner with origin countries to ensure strong integration of information on rights and prevention of exploitation into their oversight of such programming. While this is one line of action for development partners, the private sector has largely yet to integrate—or insist on—this approach. More broadly, focusing on the role of the origin countries in training related to work abroad may also help reduce the impact of loss of a skilled workforce domestically, and promote complementary skilling to benefit both home and abroad.

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CHAPTER 4

Outward Migration, Remittances, and Socioeconomic Development: The Cases of Nepal and the Philippines[1]

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4.1 Overview

Remittance inflows, hereafter referred to as "remittances", have become a critical source of external finance for promoting socioeconomic development in many developing economies. The increasing global integration in trade, investment, and cross-border migration has significantly expanded employment opportunities in international markets, facilitating a steady rise in remittance flows. According to the World Bank' World Development Indicators database (2023), globally, remittances surpassed official aid by at least 3.7 times, underscoring their growing importance. The United Nations (UN) identifies safe migration and remittances as critical drivers for achieving seven of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth, and reduced inequality.

A wealth of literature highlights remittances as a resilient catalyst for economic development in many developing countries (Ratha, Eigen-Zucchi, and Plaza 2016). On the positive side, remittances have been shown to reduce poverty (Adams and Page 2005), improve household incomes, alleviate credit constraints (Giuliano and Ruiz-Arranz 2009), stimulate demand, stabilize output (Chami, Hakura, and Montiel 2009), and promote investments in health and education (Azizi 2018). They also enhance foreign reserves, create countercyclical stability (Singer 2010), support entrepreneurship by transferring skills and seed capital (Kakhkharov 2019; Woodruff and Zenteno 2007), boost capital formation (Lartey 2013), and foster financial development while reducing poverty (Gupta, Pattillo, and Wagh 2009).

However, remittances also pose challenges. They can fuel import-driven consumption, exacerbate trade deficits (Bhatta 2013), and discourage innovation while encouraging brain drain (Beine, Docquier, and Rapoport 2001, 2008; Özden and Schiff 2006). Additionally, remittances can increase exchange rate appreciation, reducing export competitiveness and hindering long-term growth (Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo 2004). High outward migration often results in labor shortages, rising wages, and inflated production costs, particularly in the industry and agriculture sectors (Ratha, Eigen-Zucchi, and Plaza 2016). Dutch disease effects, such as real exchange rate appreciation, economic dependence, and resource reallocation, further complicate economic growth (Acosta, Lartey, and Mandelman 2009). Moreover, excessive reliance on remittances for daily consumption or investments in unproductive sectors may

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weaken long-term growth potential (Chowdhury, Dhar, and Gazi 2023). Nonetheless, remittances can support domestic investment and economic growth by fostering savings through financial institutions and enhancing aggregate demand (Adams and Page 2005). Investments in health and education funded by remittances contribute to human capital development and strengthen long-term growth and poverty reduction (Acosta et al. 2008; Koechlin and Leon 2007). However, inefficiencies in the financial sector and excessive reliance on remittances may constrain their full potential (Arcand, Berkes, and Panizza 2015). The impact of remittances on economic growth ultimately depends on consumption patterns, financial intermediation, and the structural characteristics of recipient economies (Francois et al. 2022).

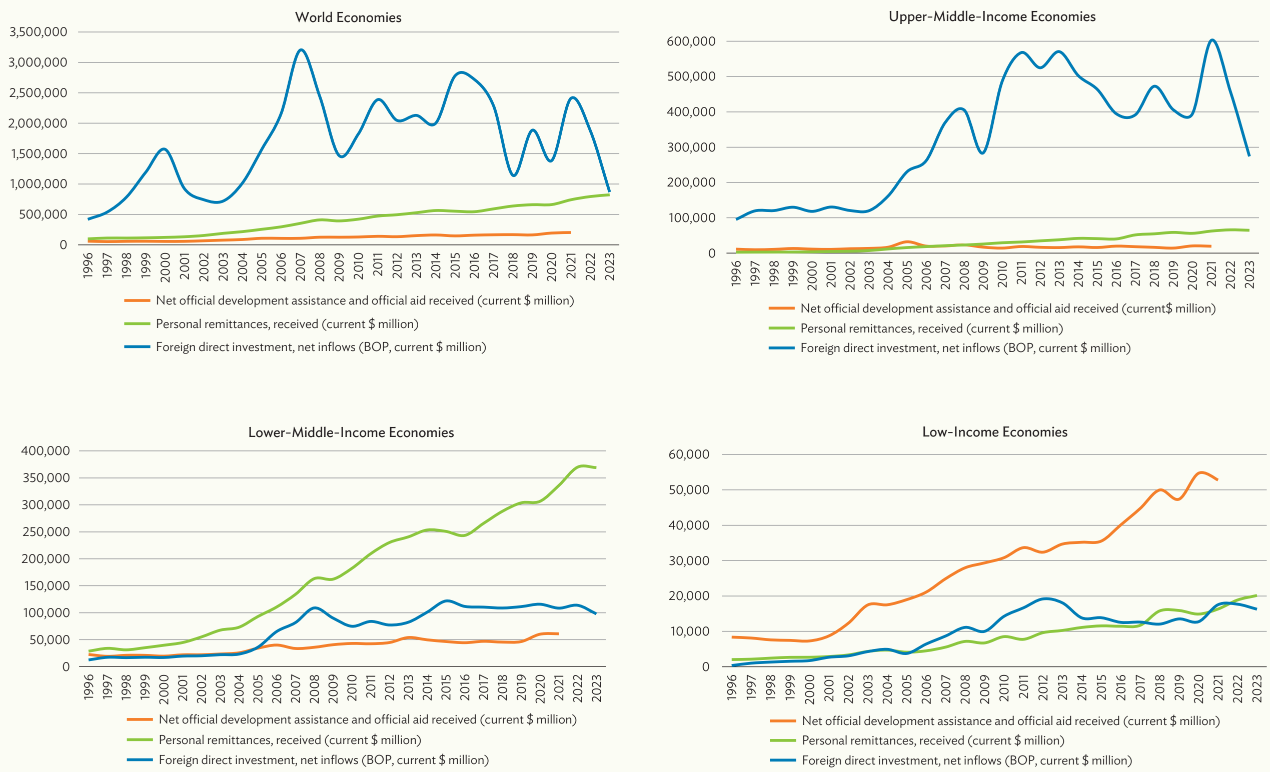
4.1.1 Remittances as a Source of External Finance

According to World Bank 2023 data, global remittance flows reached a record high of over $800 billion in 2023, nearly matching the volume of foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows. This convergence highlights a significant shift, as FDI inflows have become increasingly inconsistent and have sharply declined in recent years, particularly following the global financial crisis in 2007–2008. Key factors driving this decline include reduced global liquidity, the economic disruptions caused by the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, rising inflation, interest rate hikes, geopolitical tensions, the rise of protectionism, a shift toward domestic markets, lower investment returns in developing economies, and rapid technological changes. As a result, remittances—characterized by their stability and consistent growth—have emerged as a vital external financial resource for developing economies. Remittance inflows are approximately 3.66 times greater than the combined net official development assistance (ODA) and official aid these economies receive globally.

A comparison of remittances, ODA, foreign aid and development assistance, and FDI net inflows as key sources of external finance reveals distinct patterns across different stages of economic development. In developing economies at mid-development stages, remittances have become indispensable. Figure 4.1 illustrates the evolving trends of these three financial sources across the world and three income levels and provides specific insights into Nepal's context. In upper-middle-income economies, FDI remains the dominant source of external finance, reflecting these nations' ability to attract stable capital flows due to enhanced infrastructure, diversified economic structures, advanced financial sectors, higher levels of human capital, and improved institutional quality. However, FDI flows across all income levels have stagnated and become increasingly volatile over the last 2 decades, underscoring the challenges posed by global economic instability and deglobalization.

In contrast, remittances dominate FDI inflows in lower-middle-income economies, averaging nearly eight times the size of FDI inflows between 2017 and 2021. Meanwhile, ODA and official aid remain relatively low compared to remittances and FDI in these economies. In low-income countries, ODA and official aid constitute the most significant external financial flows, vastly exceeding both FDI and remittances. Limited trade and investment integration restrict FDI inflows in these economies, while remittances, although smaller than ODA, remain a reliable and steadily growing financial source despite low levels of cross-border labor mobility. Notably, between 2017 and 2021, ODA and official aid were approximately 3.5 times greater than these economies' average remittance and FDI flows.

Figure 4.1: Emerging Trends of External Sources of Finance



BOP = balance of payments.

Source: World Development Indicators (accessed November 2024).

4.1.2 Brain Drain and Social Harmony

Brain drain is the biggest challenge of developing economies with high outward migration levels. The migration of skilled workers can significantly lead to domestic labor shortages in key sectors.

Outmigration of skilled labor can have long-term detrimental effects on the domestic economy, such as brain drain and a shortage of human capital. It also influences key aspects of human development, including life expectancy, education, and gross national income per capita (Acosta, Lartey, and Mandelman 2009; Beine, Docquier, and Rapoport 2001; Ratha 2005). However, remittances provide vital financial support, which can foster dependency on foreign income and potentially weaken family and community ties due to prolonged separation. Brain drain remains a significant concern for countries with huge outward migration as skilled workers migrate abroad for better opportunities, depleting the nation’s talent pool and undermining long-term economic prospects. While remittances from migrant workers enhance household welfare, losing skilled labor hinders innovation and productivity in critical sectors. On the other hand, outward migration can be beneficial for the country in the long term, as returning migrants bring not only financial capital but also valuable skills. Consequently, temporary losses may transform into long-term gains, ultimately contributing to economic growth.

4.1.3 Migration, Social Harmony, and Cultural Identity

Foreign labor migration substantially impacts social harmony and cultural identity in the remittance recipient country, as the adjustment process of balancing modern influences with traditional values could be challenging. Further, this reshapes cultural identities and may challenge social cohesion in rural areas as global exposure alters local norms. Cooray (2012a) argues that there are substantial social implications in household dynamics and community structure due to outward migration.

Billions of people worldwide live and work outside their country. In many developing countries, millions of young and productive people are working in foreign lands. One of the most pertinent yet overlooked or under-discussed topics in a migrant's original society is the impact of migration on the left-behind family members in their marriages and relationships.

Thapa et al. (2019) mention that a marital relationship is based on trust, emotion, and respect and is surrounded by social norms. It is hard to uncover the reality they found that spousal separation had a substantial impact on delaying pregnancy, difficulties in conceiving after returning, and disrupted marital relations. Left-behind partners are in constant fear of their partner's infidelity, fear divorce, experience divorce while their partners are away, and express anger toward their partners for having left family behind (Fernández-Sánchez et al. 2020). The effects of migration on the health of children are conflicting as remittances support the improvement of health, purchase of food, and access to health care facilities but negatively affect psychological development by increasing the risk of depression, anxiety, care deficit, aggressive behavior, antisocial activities, and substance abuse (Rai and Dangal 2021).

Additionally, migration has allowed diversification, maximized family livelihoods, and generated savings for social and cultural needs. With all the interconnections above, we can conclude that the funds migrant workers send home are associated with social costs.

4.2 Nepal

In the case of Nepal, a lower-middle-income country since July 2020 (World Bank classification), remittances have driven a significant economic transformation—from an agriculture-based subsistence economy to a remittance-driven consumption economy (Panthi and Devkota 2024). Despite their importance, the overall implications of remittances for Nepal's economic development remain debated. Studies highlight various impacts, such as poverty reduction (Lokshin, Bontch-Osmolovski, and Glinskaya 2010; Panday and Williams 2011; Wagle 2012), trade deficits (Bhatta 2013), exchange rate appreciation, Dutch disease effects (Sapkota 2013), agricultural challenges (Bohra-Mishra 2013; Kapri and Ghimire 2020; Maharjan, Bauer, and Knerr 2012; Tuladhar, Sapkota, and Adhikari 2014), and economic growth dynamics (Dhungel 2018; Panthi and Devkota 2024; Uprety 2017).

As one of the highest remittance-receiving economies relative to gross domestic product (GDP), Nepal benefits significantly from remittances in terms of livelihoods, financial and social capital, and improvements in health and education (Acharya and Leon-Gonzalez 2012; Sapkota 2013; Wagle 2012). While some studies suggest a contradictory relationship between remittances and economic growth (Dhungel 2018; Uprety 2017), others emphasize their stabilizing effects on consumption and aggregate demand (Panthi and Devkota 2023, 2024; Singh and Pradhan 2023).

Given these dynamics, a comprehensive assessment of the impact of remittances on macroeconomic and socioeconomic indicators in Nepal is critical. This case study explores the consequences of high outward migration and remittance inflows on socioeconomic development, focusing on Nepal as a high remittance-receiving economy. The section is structured as follows: (i) the history and prospects of outward migration and remittances in Nepal, (ii) assessment of the socioeconomic implications of remittances in Nepal, and (iii) conclusion with policy recommendations based on the findings.

For Nepal, remittances have become the most critical source of external financial inflows, surpassing both FDI and ODA. Their scale and consistency have firmly established remittances as the country's primary source of foreign currency, playing a crucial role in supporting the economy amid global economic uncertainties. Despite its low-income status until 2020, Nepal did not rely heavily on ODA due to the massive flow of remittances in relation to the size of the economy. However, the country cannot attract FDI (despite its potential for green energy, tourism, agriculture, transport, and other sectors) because it is located between growing economies like India and the People's Republic of China.

4.2.1 Brief History and Prospects of Outward Migration in Nepal

Outward labor migration has been a defining feature of Nepal's socioeconomic landscape for centuries. As Seddon, Adhikari, and Gurung (2002) noted, Nepalese individuals have sought employment abroad since the early 19th century, initially travelling to Lahore (now in Pakistan) to join the Sikh ruler's army. These early migrants earned the moniker "Lahure," a term still used to describe Nepalese working overseas. During the British Empire's rule in India, Nepalese migrants expanded their horizons, venturing into South Asia and Southeast Asia. A significant turning point in Nepal's migration history occurred with the recruitment of Nepalese soldiers into the British Gurkhas in 1815–1816, marking the beginning of a 200-year tradition of working abroad and sending remittances home. According to a 2019 report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), nearly half of Nepalese households had at least one member working overseas or recently returned.

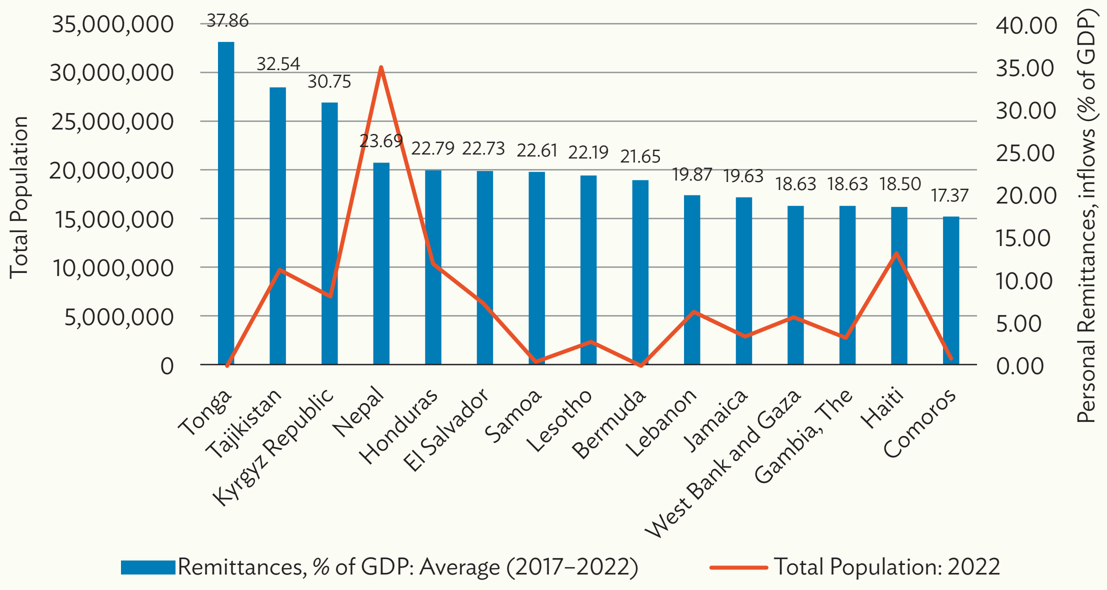
This was further fueled after the liberalization of the Nepalese economy in terms of trade, investment, and finance in the 1990s. This trend was exacerbated by the decade-long civil conflict (1996–2006), which drove many young Nepalese to seek employment abroad. A structural shift occurred in 2001, during the apex of the domestic civil war and following the royal family massacre, as Nepal's industrial capacity and agricultural productivity declined, making remittances an essential source of household income. As per the World Bank's database, between 2000 and 2015, the share of remittances as a percentage of GDP of Nepal surged from 2.03% to 27.63%, reflecting the dire state of domestic employment opportunities caused by the conflict and prolonged political instability after the 2006 peace accord. Today, remittances remain a cornerstone of Nepalese livelihoods and economic activity, highlighting the country's heavy dependence on this external financial lifeline.

Over time, migration destinations have diversified. India used to be a major migration destination before 2000. However, the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia have been major migration destinations in recent decades. The 2020 census revealed that approximately 2.2 million Nepalese (excluding those with citizenship abroad) worked overseas, primarily in Malaysia and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These destinations have become the primary hubs for Nepalese labor, establishing Nepal as a key labor supplier to the GCC (Malla and Rosenbaum 2017). In recent years, migration patterns have further diversified, with increasing numbers of Nepalese moving to Europe, North America, East Asia, and

Australia, often starting as students before securing employment in their host countries. The COVID-19 pandemic, which slowed Nepal's domestic economy, further fueled this migration surge. A recent Asian Development Bank study reported a 102% increase in Nepalese migration between 2019 and 2023, with Malaysia emerging as the top destination for Nepalese workers in 2023 (ADB 2024). The UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar remained the most popular destinations within the GCC. Additionally, International Labor Organization (ILO) data highlight emerging destinations in Europe, including Romania, Croatia, Malta, and Poland, which collectively attracted significant Nepalese workers in the 2022/2023 fiscal year (ILO 2024).

This large-scale migration carries profound implications for both Nepal and the host countries, shaping labor markets, economic dynamics, and bilateral relationships. Nepal has become one of the world's leading recipients of remittance inflows, which are vital for household expenditures. According to the World Bank's database, Nepal ranks fourth globally in remittances as a percentage of GDP, following Tajikistan, Tonga, and Samoa (Figure 4.2). It further emphasizes this dependence, with remittances accounting for over one-quarter of Nepal's GDP, significantly higher than Pakistan's 7.8% among South Asian economies. These figures highlight the critical role of remittances in sustaining Nepal's economy and its households, even as the country grapples with the broader socioeconomic challenges posed by high levels of outward migration.

Figure 4.2: High-Remittance Receiving Economies and Population



GDP = gross domestic product.

Source: World Development Indicators (accessed November 2024).

4.2.2 Impacts of Outward Migration and Remittances on Socioeconomic Development in Nepal

This section briefly analyses the socioeconomic and development implications of outward migration and remittances in Nepal. It focuses on key areas such as natural resources, institutional quality, consumption, savings, macroeconomic stability, poverty reduction, inequality, as well as its contribution to the financial sector, health, education, and human capital. Furthermore, this section looks at the relationship between outward migration, the industrial structure, government revenue, and the growth of the service sector. Additionally, we explain the nexus between outward migration, remittances, imports, and the trade deficit. Other critical topics include the influence of migration on fertility rates and aging populations, as well as the effects of migration on social harmony and cultural identity.

Outward Migration, Remittances, and Natural Resources

High-remittance-receiving economies rely heavily on outward migration due to limited domestic economic opportunities. These economies vary widely in their natural resource endowments, as illustrated in Table 4.1. While some are rich in resources, others face significant constraints in resource availability.

World Bank data from 2017–2022, shown in Table 4.1, rank Nepal as the fourth-largest recipient of remittances globally as a percentage of GDP. Among the top 15 high-remittance-receiving countries, Nepal stands out, ranking first in population size, arable land area (measured in hectares), and total renewable internal freshwater resources (billion cubic meters) and second in forest coverage (measured in square kilometers).

These figures highlight a paradox: Nepal struggles to create sufficient domestic employment opportunities despite being resource-rich. Its abundant natural resources, particularly land and labor—traditionally considered cornerstones of economic growth—have not translated into robust job creation within the country. This persistent shortfall has driven a large segment of the youth population to seek work abroad, reflecting the challenges of leveraging domestic resources to foster sustainable economic development.

Table 4.1: Natural Resources of High-Remittance Receiving Economies

Economy	Remittances, % of GDP Average 2017–2022	Total Population 2022	Arable Land (hectares) 2021	Forest Area (square kilometers) 2021	Renewable Internal Freshwater Resources (billion cubic meters) 2021
Tonga	37.86	106,858	20,000	90	NA
Tajikistan	32.54	9,952,787	838,000	4,248	63.46
Kyrgyz Republic	30.75	6,974,900	1,287,400	13,336	48.93
Nepal	23.69	30,547,580	2,113,700	59,620	198.20
Honduras	22.79	10,432,860	1,018,000	63,383	90.66
El Salvador	22.73	6,336,392	721,000	5,794	15.63
Samoa	22.61	222,382	11,290	1,612	NA
Lesotho	22.19	2,305,825	429,000	345	5.23
Bermuda	21.65	63,595	300	10	NA
Lebanon	19.87	5,489,739	139,300	1,439	4.80
Jamaica	19.63	2,827,377	120,000	6,008	10.82
West Bank and Gaza	18.63	5,043,612	41,900	101	0.81
Gambia, The	18.63	2,705,992	440,000	2,369	3.00
Haiti	18.50	11,584,996	1,005,000	3,442	13.01
Comoros	17.37	836,774	65,000	325	1.20

NA = not available.

Data Sources: World Development Indicators (accessed November 2024).

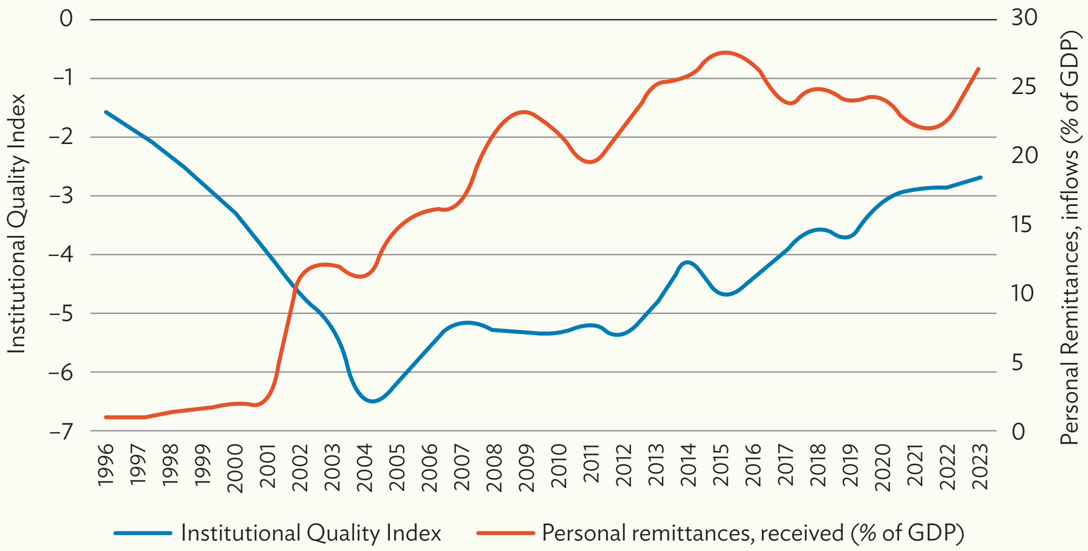
4.2.3 Remittances and Institutional Quality in Nepal

The impact of remittances is deeply connected to the quality of institutions, which significantly influences how effectively these funds are utilized. Robust institutional systems are pivotal in channeling remittances into productive economic activities (Panthi and Devkota 2023). They promote transparency, good governance, and efficient resource allocation, ensuring that remittance inflows contribute to sustainable development. Conversely, weak institutional frameworks often result in inefficiencies, corruption, and the suboptimal use of remittances. In Nepal, strengthening institutional quality—through enhanced governance, robust legal frameworks, and anti-corruption initiatives—could magnify the developmental impact of remittances, fostering long-term economic growth and resilience.

However, a surge in remittances can erode public loyalty toward the government by substituting public goods with private ones, which may inadvertently encourage corruption (Abdih et al. 2012). Nepal has experienced significant institutional shifts over the past few decades. The establishment of multiparty democracy in the 1990s marked the beginning of economic and financial liberalization. However, a decade-long civil war, coupled with the royal family massacre in 2001, destabilized the country, ultimately transitioning its political system into a federal democratic republic in 2008, ending over 200 years of monarchy.

The institutional quality of Nepal deteriorated sharply during the civil war (1996–2006), coinciding with a surge in outmigration. These disruptions caused structural shifts in remittance inflows around 2002 and a noticeable decline in institutional quality by 2005. Political instability persisted until the promulgation of a new constitution in 2015. Figure 4.3 shows that Nepal's overall institutional quality has gradually improved since 2006, although progress remains uneven. Consequently, there is limited optimism about the return of migrant workers to actively participate in the country's economic activities as institutional challenges continue to deter reintegration.

Figure 4.3: Remittances and Institutional Quality Index, Nepal



GDP = gross domestic product.

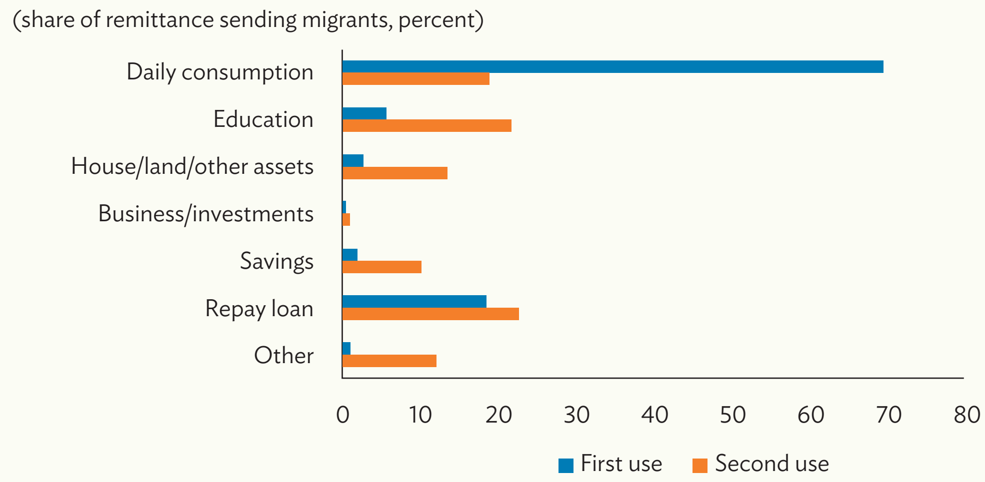
Notes: The overall institutional quality index is derived by aggregating six key indicators from the Worldwide Governance Indicators dataset: control of corruption, government effectiveness, political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, regulatory quality, rule of law, and voice and accountability. Data for 1997, 1999, and 2001, which are missing in the original dataset, were estimated using linear interpolation to ensure a complete and consistent time series.

Sources: World Development Indicators and Worldwide Governance Indicators (accessed November 2024).

4.2.4 Stable Consumption, Savings, and Macroeconomic Stability

Existing studies suggest that approximately 80% of remittances in Nepal are allocated to daily consumption, followed by loan repayments, property purchases, educational expenses, and capital formation activities (Sapkota 2013). In 2023, remittances accounted for more than 20% of the average household expenditure in Nepal—a figure nearly three times higher than the average for neighboring South Asian countries (World Bank 2024). Figure 4.4 highlights the use of remittances from migrant family members in Nepal. These remittances, directly transferred from migrants to their families, have proven instrumental in alleviating poverty by supplementing household incomes and improving living standards, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas (Adams and Page 2005). They enable households to spend more on housing, education, healthcare, and other necessities, yet a predominant focus on consumption limits their potential to drive sustainable development.

Figure 4.4: Uses of Remittances, Nepal



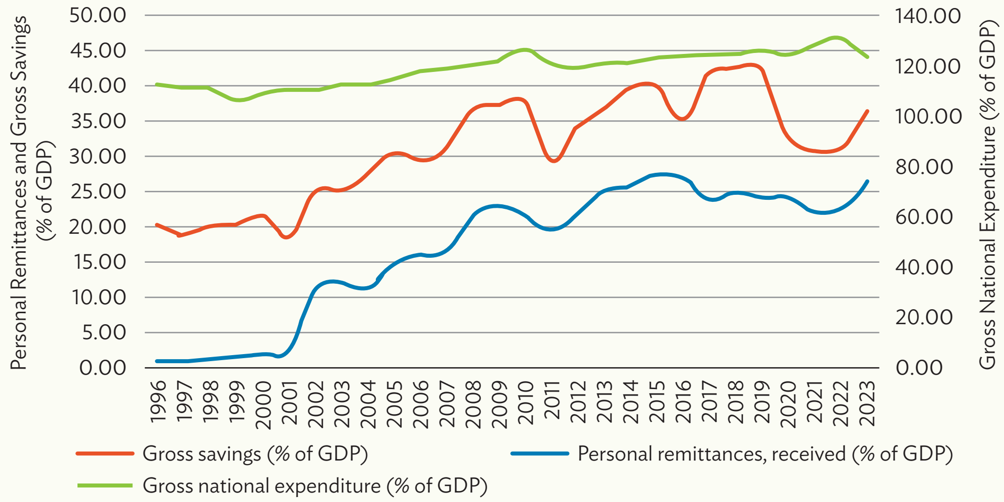
Source: World Bank staff calculations (2024).

The inflow of remittances has also played a crucial role in stabilizing and enhancing domestic consumption, contributing to gross national expenditure, which has consistently remained between 40% and 45% of Nepal's GDP despite a significant outflow of the active population. However, a substantial portion of these remittance inflows is funneled into savings through formal or informal financial institutions, which boosts gross savings, a critical driver for long-term capital accumulation and economic growth. For instance, remittances as a percentage of GDP surged from 2.45% in 2001 to 27.63% in 2015, paralleled by an increase in gross domestic savings from 18.55% to 40.09% during the same period (Figure 4.5).

While these inflows have contributed to Nepal's foreign exchange reserves—stabilizing the exchange rate, reducing reliance on external borrowing, and financing imports—they have also reshaped the economy, increasing dependency on imports due to the narrow domestic industrial base. This reliance has led to a trade deficit, transforming Nepal into a remittance-imports-dependent economy. Nonetheless, remittances have been key in maintaining macroeconomic stability by linking household consumption, aggregate demand, international trade, and foreign exchange reserves (Panthi and Devkota 2024; Singh and Pradhan 2023).

Beyond household-level impacts, remittances have also pooled resources at the community level, funding infrastructure projects such as schools, roads, and water supply systems. These contributions have often served as substitutes for government expenditure, reducing dependence on central government funding and fostering local economic development through small and medium-sized enterprises (Dahal 2014).

Figure 4.5: Remittance Inflows, Gross National Expenditure, and Gross Savings, Nepal



GDP = gross domestic product.

Source: World Development Indicators (accessed November 2024).

Despite these benefits, the heavy reliance on remittances introduces vulnerabilities to Nepal's economy, particularly during economic downturns in migrant-receiving countries. Such disruptions can undermine household income and broader financial stability, emphasizing the need for strategies to reduce remittance dependence while channeling them toward productive investments. Achieving this balance is critical for fostering long-term, sustainable growth in Nepal.

4.2.5 Migration, Poverty, and Inequality

A significant body of existing literature has confirmed that remittances significantly impact poverty alleviation and income equality in many developing economies (World Bank 2007). Similarly, the remittances have profoundly affected the socioeconomic dynamics in Nepal. It has created both opportunities and challenges for the Nepalese economy. Over 30% of the poverty reduction between 2011 and 2023 is directly attributed to personal remittances (World Bank 2024). Furthermore, the World Bank's Systemic Country Diagnostic Report mentions that remittances accounted for 27% of all poverty reduction from 1996 to 2011.

Furthermore, remittances have played a significant role in reducing poverty, improving living standards, and supporting education at the household level, including access to higher education (Pant 2011; Thieme and Wyss 2005). Likewise, the remittance inflows have contributed to decreased horizontal inequality across Nepal due to outmigration from various regions. Remitted funds even reach rural and remote areas, lower castes and ethnic groups, thereby reducing disparities (Wagle 2012). Moreover, remittances flow to various corners of the remittance-receiving economies and help to reduce regional disparities, especially in underdeveloped areas, by mitigating financial constraints at the household level.

4.2.6 Remittances and Domestic Financial Sector Development

Remittances are crucial in promoting financial development and enhancing economic growth, particularly in developing countries like Nepal. A well-functioning financial sector is essential for efficiently channeling remittances into productive investments, boosting liquidity, and facilitating economic growth. As remittance inflows increase, the demand for formal banking services rises, expanding the financial sector. Therefore, remittances promote financial inclusion, increase credit availability, and drive investment, especially in sectors like small and medium-sized enterprises in those economies which have weak credit markets (Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo 2006).

In Nepal, remittance inflows have significantly contributed to the growth of the financial sector, particularly following the reform and liberalization of the mid-1980s. Remittances have enhanced liquidity in the banking system, allowing for greater credit availability and fostering financial intermediation. As remittance-receiving households gain better access to financial services, they are more likely to save funds in financial institutions and invest in education, healthcare, and business ventures, stimulating economic growth and poverty reduction through gross national savings (Rapoport and Docquier 2006).

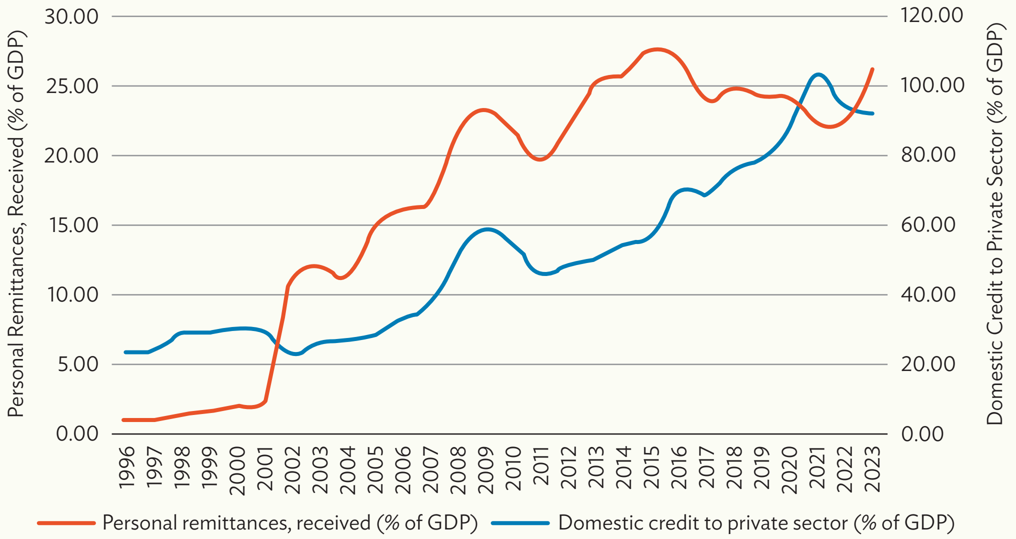
Additionally, remittances have positively influenced financial development in Nepal by increasing the capital base of banks and microfinance institutions. These institutions, in turn, have expanded their services to meet the growing demand for loans and savings products. Evidence suggests that remittance-receiving households in Nepal are more likely to engage with formal financial institutions, resulting in improved financial literacy and more productive use of savings. Therefore, the financial access and depth of the financial sector, especially financial institutions, have made significant progress since 2002 (Figure 4.6).

Remittances also help alleviate liquidity constraints, allowing households and businesses to make investments that would otherwise be difficult due to limited access to credit. This channel has proven vital for developing entrepreneurship and expanding small businesses in Nepal. As these businesses grow, they contribute to the overall economy, fostering sustainable development.

Therefore, remittances have become an essential driver of financial development in Nepal, increasing the depth and accessibility of the financial sector. Remittances are pivotal in supporting economic growth by improving access to credit, expanding financial services, and promoting savings and investment. Enhanced financial development, in turn, helps to maximize the productive potential of remittances, contributing to Nepal's broader economic development goals.

Remittances encourage remittance-receiving households to use formal channels of financial transfers and some portion of remittances as savings to mitigate future uncertainty. Therefore, it significantly contributes to the growth of banks and financial sectors, improving financial access and depth in the long run. Moreover, the contribution of remittances to gross savings provides resources to banks and financial institutions to finance domestic economic activities. Nepal has made significant progress in financial sector development as a remittance-receiving economy. Remittances have contributed to the expansion of bank branches and financial sectors in various corners of the economy, improving financial inclusion significantly. More specifically, it has improved access and depth of financial institutions rather than financial markets, as Nepal is still in the early stages of economic development.

Figure 4.6: Remittance Inflows and Financial Development, Nepal



GDP = gross domestic product.

Source: World Development Indicators (accessed November 2024).

4.2.7 Migration, Health, Education, and Human Capital

Few studies have indicated that remittances positively impact Nepal's human capital. For example, (Dahal 2014) showed that increasing remittance inflows positively impact human capital accumulation. Similarly, based on the *Nepal Living Standards Survey 1995/1996* (Central Bureau of Statistics 2015), remittances positively impact household expenditure on children's education and the human capital formation of school-age boys and girls (Bansak and Chezum 2009). Further, a similar study by Vogel and Korinek (2012) on the Nepal Living Standards Survey 2003/2004 confirms the finding. Additionally, remittances can positively impact education, especially girls' education (Shrestha 2017).

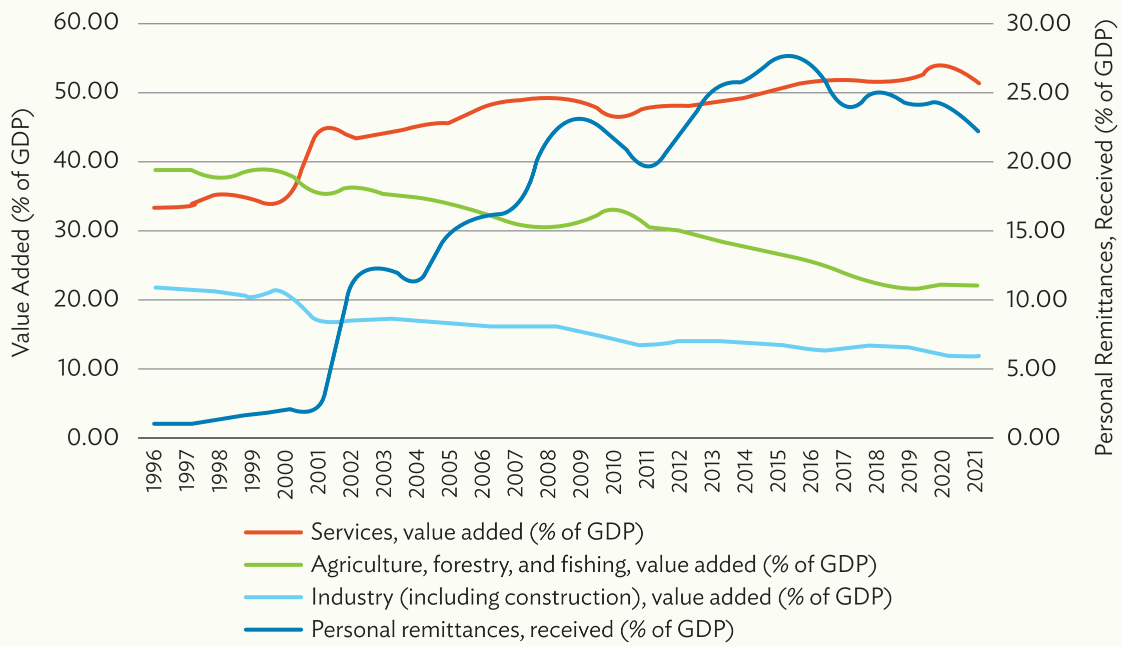
As discussed above, remittances are used for health and education after daily consumption in Nepal. Therefore, there have been significant improvements in human capital through household-level investment in health and education in Nepal. Families receiving remittances prioritize education and healthcare, contributing to the better human capital of the nation. Remittances create space for expanding the size of the economy, increasing the labor force, and total productivity in the long run. They have long-term benefits for Nepal's labor force and productivity. However, the small and decreasing size of the industry sector has not motivated school and university graduates to use their knowledge and skills within the economy. Due to the low productivity–low performance nexus of domestic output, the outward migration of previous decades has led to a higher outward migration to new generations as they get more opportunities in high-income destination countries. In this sense, there could be another nexus of intergenerational outward migration. Existing outward migration may promote more migration of new generations with improved levels of health and education if the domestic economy suffers longer due to poor performance of the industry sector or overall economy.

4.2.8 Industrial Structure, Migration, and Boom of the Service Sector

Nepal's economy traditionally depends on agriculture, which significantly supports rural households. However, it has shifted toward a remittance-based consumption economy. This change affects household and consumption patterns, as well as the industrial structure and dynamics of the country's economy. With the decline in agriculture's share and increasing urbanization, the service sector is expanding rapidly, while the small and slow-growing industry sector remains limited. Nepal's service sector, including food services, transport, tourism, and real estate, has seen substantial growth, mainly driven by consumption and remittance inflows from imports. These sectors experienced 4.5% growth in fiscal year 2024 (World Bank 2024). Additionally, the transport, accommodation, and food service subsectors saw double-digit expansion, fueled by a notable 30.7% increase in tourist arrivals.

It is important to note that the industry sector has not prospered due to domestic civil war and a prolonged political transition. Agriculture is struggling with declining and low productivity, and Nepal faces challenges in achieving economic growth because of the lack of sustainable foreign investment. In this context, understanding the key source of finance behind the significant development of Nepal's service sector over the last two years is crucial. Nepal's recent economic growth has been driven entirely by the service sector, with remittances being the main factor (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7: Remittance Inflows and Economic Structure, Nepal



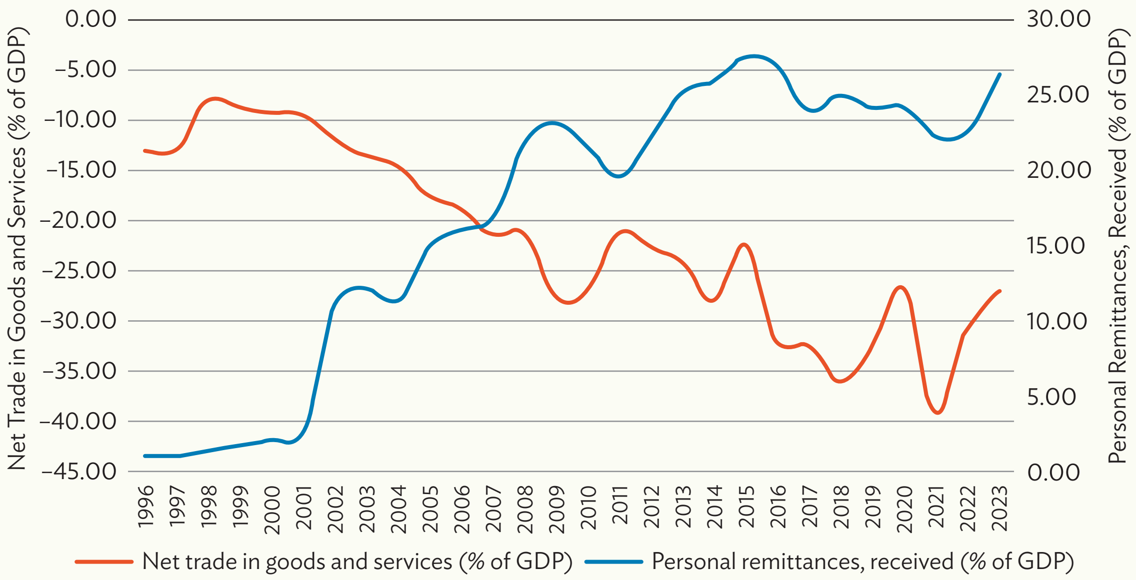
GDP =gross domestic product.

Source: World Development Indicators (accessed November 2024).

4.2.9 Outward Migration–Remittances–Imports–Trade Deficit Nexus

The paradox of Nepal with its high inflows of remittances lies in their impact on increasing imports and the trade deficit. For example, Bhatta (2013) indicated that remittances lead to increased imports and thus increase the trade deficit in Nepal. The slow-performing industry sector, low-productive agriculture sector, and the consumption-oriented spillover of remittances through the financial system could be the factors behind these effects. Dahal (2014) also confirmed that remittances negatively affect international trade in Nepal. However, there has been some improvement in reducing the trade deficit and increasing remittances after COVID-19, as shown in Figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8: Remittance Inflows and Trade Deficit, Nepal



GDP = gross domestic product.

Source: World Development Indicators (accessed November 2024).

According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB 2024), Nepal recorded a positive current account balance in 2024 for the first time in 8 years. This remarkable turnaround was attributed to a sharp increase in remittance inflows and reduced imports. Remittances rose from 23.2% to 25.3% of GDP, while the share of imports in the economy declined from 34.7% to 32.9% of GDP. Exports of goods and services also experienced modest growth, increasing by 0.6 percentage points to 7.6% of GDP, driven primarily by a rise in service exports. Together, these developments contributed to a significant improvement in Nepal's external sector performance. As per the Asian Development Bank's Macroeconomic Update 2024, remittance inflows helped narrow Nepal's trade deficit in 2024.

Nepal's economy is deeply entrenched in a remittance–consumption–import cycle, where remittances finance rising imports, exacerbating the trade deficit. In 2019, imports constituted 41% of GDP, significantly outpacing exports, which accounted for only 8%. This disparity highlights a structural imbalance in the economy. While remittances offer short-term relief, their heavy reliance undermines long-term sustainable growth, emphasizing the urgent need for economic diversification to mitigate associated risks.

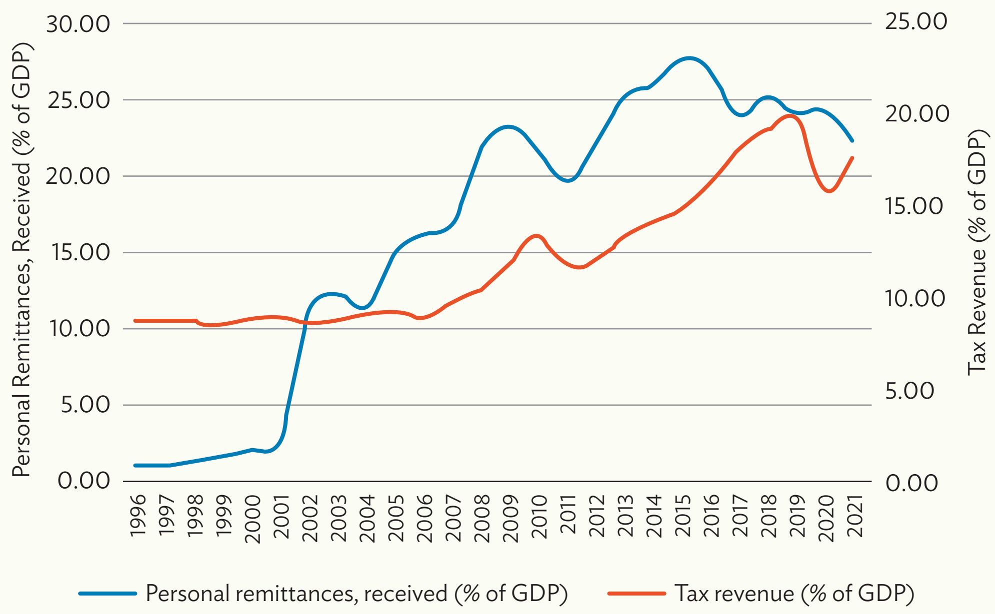
The trade deficit's expansion and stable remittance inflows are expected to reduce the current account surplus from 3.9% of GDP in 2024 to an average of 2.2% over 2025–2026. Remittances are projected to stabilize at approximately 25% of GDP during this period. Despite ongoing efforts to attract FDI, inflows are anticipated to remain minimal.

Under the baseline scenario, foreign exchange reserves are projected to remain sufficient to cover over nine months by the end of 2026. However, the current account surplus is expected to narrow further due to a widening trade deficit driven by merchandise and service import increases. While merchandise imports are forecasted to rise in response to recovering domestic demand, their value will likely remain below the record-high levels of 2022 due to lower commodity prices and reduced electricity imports.

4.2.10 Migration, Size of Government, and Government Revenue

As the fourth highest remittance-receiving country in the world as a percentage of GDP, Nepal has become highly dependent on remittances to collect government revenue. Remittance inflows indirectly influence the size of the government (Sapkota 2013). As per the World Bank Development Indicators, the increasing imports are becoming vital for tax revenue, which has increased from 8.78% in 2006 to 19.81% in 2019 (Figure 4.9). Decomposing tax revenue reveals that most of these increases come from consumption and import taxes. However, the government cannot expand capital expenditure, and the size of the government is increasing through recurrent spending. Low expenditure on capital formation has created a limited government capacity to grow its revenue base and pushed nations to rely further on consumption and import-based tax revenue. The recent sharp increase in remittance inflows and a reduction in imports have improved the current account balance in 2024 for the first time in 8 years (ADB 2024). However, it has resulted in an economic slowdown, import restrictions, and a recovery of remittances after COVID-19.

Figure 4.9: Remittances and Tax Revenue, Nepal



GDP = gross domestic product.

Source: World Development Indicators (accessed November 2024).

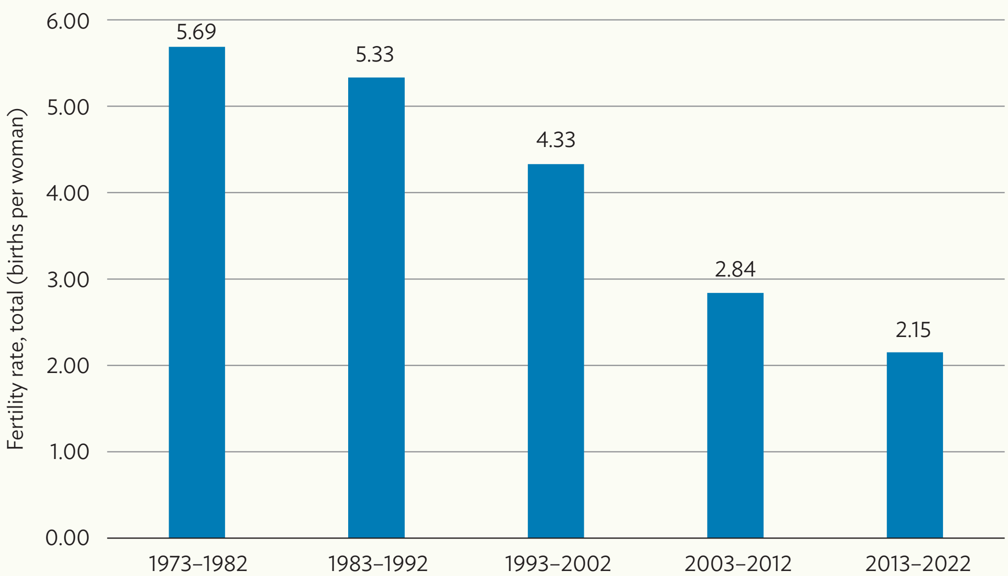
Migrant Reintegration

Limited economic opportunities in the home country impose challenges for the reintegration of returnees. Many migrants either remigrate or remain unemployed or out of the labor force. According to the 2017/18 Nepal Labor Force Survey, more than half (55.8%) of returnees were either unemployed or out of the labor force. Among those who secured employment, over 75% were engaged in the informal sector, primarily through basic self-employment in agriculture as contributing to family workers. Furthermore, the advanced skills acquired by returnees abroad often do not align with the demands of the domestic labor market. Only a small proportion of returnees effectively apply the skills gained overseas. This mismatch between skills and opportunities and the lack of a conducive economic environment perpetuates high remigration rates, preventing Nepal from fully benefiting from the human capital and financial resources returned by returnees.

Migration, Fertility, and Aging Society

Foreign labor migration also directly impacts Nepal's demographics, influencing fertility rates. The report from the Ministry of Health and Population (Government of Nepal 2022) highlights one key factor in spousal separation caused by migration, which reduces the likelihood of having children. Along with shifting marriage patterns, it has led to a decrease in fertility rates over time. Additionally, it has significantly influenced Nepal's declining fertility rates as younger populations move abroad for work. As of 2023, Nepal's total fertility rate (TFR) was approximately 1.9 children per woman, a replacement level of 2.1. As per the Demographics Report 2017, from 1961 to 2001, Nepal's average annual population growth rate exceeded 2%. By 2001–2011, this had dropped to 1.25%, primarily due to an absentee population of around 1.92 million. Among Nepal's demographic changes, the decline in the TFR is particularly striking. TFR is defined as the age number of children a woman would have by the end of her childbearing years under current fertility rates, dropping from 5.69 children per woman in 1973–1982 to 2.15 in 2013–2022 (Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10: Total Fertility Rates, Nepal, 1980–2015



Source: World Development Indicators (accessed November 2024).

This decline reflects societal and economic changes, including the influences of foreign employment on family structures and reproductive decisions. This trend accelerates demographic aging, which could strain social security systems and economic productivity. The above discussion proves Nepal has undergone a rapid demographic transition driven by socioeconomic progress. Nevertheless, migration has also indirectly improved life expectancy by boosting income and access to healthcare, positively affecting human development indicators such as health outcomes and well-being.

4.2.11 Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This section on Nepal examined the implications of outward migration and remittance inflows on Nepal's various socioeconomic development indicators as a high remittance-receiving economy. While migration provides significant economic benefits through remittances, its far-reaching consequences for Nepal are complex. On the one hand, remittances contribute to household welfare, government revenue, and improved healthcare and education outcomes. On the other hand, they have led to a reliance on imports and consumption-based taxes, which limit the government's capacity to invest in capital expenditure and promote long-term economic growth. Additionally, the outmigration of skilled labor has resulted in a brain drain, hindering innovation and economic development. Despite the financial benefits of remittances, Nepal faces challenges in reintegrating returnees and addressing the skills mismatch that limits the potential contributions of these workers.

The demographic effects of migration are equally profound, particularly in declining fertility rates and an aging population, which pose significant challenges to Nepal's future economic sustainability and the viability of its social security systems. Beyond economics, migration also has a notable social impact, especially on family relationships, mental health, and community cohesion. While remittances provide crucial financial support, left-behind families' emotional and psychological costs are considerable.

Policy makers must focus on fostering domestic economic opportunities to reduce reliance on migration while addressing the negative social and demographic consequences of migration. Efforts to integrate returnees into the labor market, enhance the government's capacity for development investment, and mitigate the social costs of migration should be central to Nepal's long-term policy agenda.

However, a critical concern in high remittance-receiving economies like Nepal is converting remittances into productive investments. In the early stages of economic development, meeting daily consumption needs is essential. Yet, at the government, community, and household levels, efforts to channel remittance into productive sectors—such as health and education, infrastructure, modern agriculture, and manufacturing—can significantly enhance economic diversification to productivity and reduce long-term dependency on remittances. Failure to direct these inflows toward investment can lead to an over-reliance on consumption and contribute to a growing trade deficit. A careful and sustained policy intervention is required to avoid paralyzing the economy. The country must focus on developing human capital, improving institutional quality, expanding financial markets, and promoting industry sectors to channel remittances into productive activities, thus reducing the long-term pressure of outward migration.

Overdependence on remittances remains a primary concern for Nepal's economy. With remittances accounting for nearly 25% of GDP, the economy is vulnerable to global shocks, such as changes in migration policies or economic conditions in destination countries. While remittances have been a critical driver of Nepal's economy by increasing savings, national expenditure, and improving household welfare, policies must focus on channeling these inflows into productive investments to ensure long-term economic growth and resilience. However, as remittances are private funds, any such efforts should be voluntary and incentive-based, encouraging migrants to invest in sectors that contribute to economic development.

4.3 The Philippines[2]

The Philippines is one of the major source countries of international migrants, sending over 2 million workers every year (pre-pandemic) since 2016. Based on the United Nations (UN's) International Migrant Stock 2024 (UN DESA 2024), approximately 7 million Filipinos live abroad, making up 6.1% of the country's total population. These migrants, mostly in high-income countries in Europe and North America, contributed $39.1 billion in remittances in 2023, or 9% of the country's GDP.

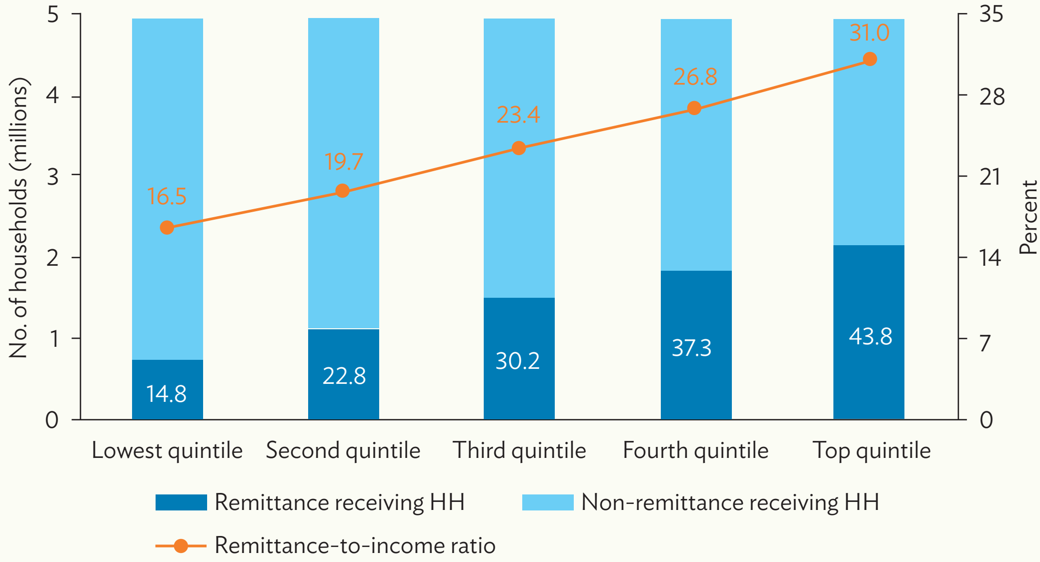
Remittances are mainly transferred to migrants' families in their home countries, supporting their daily consumption and, to some extent, financing their entrepreneurial activities and investments in real estate and property. The stable flow of these funds, as was generally observed during the pandemic, prompts a large body of empirical literature examining their short- and long-term effects, both at the micro-level via recipient families' income and poverty status and macro-level through strong economic growth and other macroeconomic fundamentals. Many empirical studies also focused on gaining deeper insights on how such effects are carried through, mostly identifying various channels, such as its influence over household savings and investment behavior.

4.3.1 Remittance-receiving Households in the Philippines

Using the 2018 Family Income and Expenditure Survey, around 29.7% of Filipino households reported to have received cash from abroad, largely in the form of international remittances. With higher wages earned abroad supplementing domestic income, remittance-recipient households are heavily represented in the higher income quintiles. Figure 4.11 shows that households receiving remittances are distributed across all income groups, with notably a higher proportion among wealthier households. de Haas (2010) argues that poverty decreases the ability of the poor to assume the initial costs as well as risks related to migrating. Relatedly, the share of remittances in total household income is higher among wealthier groups, comprising 16% in the lowest income quintile and 31% in the highest. Data also show that the share of remittances to total household income in the top quintile exceeds the share of income from wages and salaries.

[2] This section is based on the original paper by A. Kikkawa, R. Gaspar, K. Kim, M. Mariasingham, and C. M. Zamora. 2024. Measuring the Contribution of International Remittances to Household Expenditures and Economic Output: A Micro–Macro Analysis for the Philippines. Asian Development Bank Economics Working Paper Series No. 714. http://dx.doi.org/10.22617/WPS240025-2

Figure 4.11: Distribution of Filipino Households Receiving International Remittances, by Income Quintile, 2018



HH = household.

Note: The numbers inside the blue bar represent the share of remittance-receiving households of the total number of households per income quintile.

Source: Family Income and Expenditure Survey 2018 (Philippines).

4.3.2 Impact of Remittances: Micro and Macro Views

Several microeconomic studies document how these transfers improved the living conditions of recipient families. In the Philippines, Yang and Martinez (2006) found that an increase in remittances, equivalent to 10% of household income, reduced poverty rates of recipient households by 2.8 percentage points. Remittances help households manage income shocks (Yang and Choi 2007). Amare and Hohfeld (2016) found that remittances helped recipient households in rural Viet Nam accumulate assets and escape poverty.

Remittances also encourage productive activities. Yang (2008) reported that Filipino households channeled remittances for education and microenterprises, while Adams and Cuecuecha (2010) observed increases in education and housing spending among remittance recipients in Guatemala. In Nepal, Mishra, Kondratjeva, and Shively (2022) estimated that a 10% increase in remittances led to an 8% increase in education spending. However, some studies also flagged unintended consequences of remittances, driving conspicuous consumption or disincentivizing human capital investment, especially if migrant jobs require low skills or when children are sent to work (McKenzie and Rapoport 2011; Ang, Sugiyarto, and Jha 2009; Gao, Kikkawa, and Kang 2021). Other studies found that remittances reduce work incentives among recipient households (Acosta, Lartey, and Mandelman 2009; Murakami, Yamada, and Sioson 2021).

At the macro level, remittances fuel economic growth (Cooray 2012b; Giuliano and Ruiz-Arranz 2009; Goce-Dakila and Dakila 2009; and Meyer and Shera 2017). Cooray (2012b) found that a 1% increase in migrant remittances contributed to a 0.01% increase in growth in South Asia. The impact is reported to be more pronounced in countries with less developed financial systems, as remittances help overcome liquidity constraints (Meyer and Shera 2017). Remittance inflows are therefore linked to poverty reduction (Adams and Page 2005; Ahmed, Sugiyarto, and Jha 2010; Yoshino, Taghizadeh-Hesary, and Otsuka 2017). Adams and Page (2005) found that a 10% increase in international remittances per capita leads to a 3.5% decline in the percentage of people living in poverty. Studies also highlight the countercyclical nature of remittances, supporting economic resilience during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Kikkawa et al. 2021).

Micro and macro studies offer complementary insights into the impact of remittances on households, communities, and the overall economy. However, differences in definitions and data sources make consistent evaluation challenging. Micro studies focus on household-reported remittances, while macro studies rely on financial institutions' data, explaining the gap in reported figures and growth trends (Clemens and McKenzie 2018). Macro data captures remittances that migrants directly transferred to their personal bank accounts or investments, which may not be disclosed to family members. Ducanes (2010) argued that the rise of electronic banking services, facilitating inter-account transfers, widens the gap between remittances reported by households in the Family Income and Expenditure Survey and the total international remittance inflows by Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (central bank of the Philippines). Further, funds sent through informal channels, which families may report but are less likely reflected in official data, exacerbate these discrepancies.

4.3.3 Integrating Micro-level Insights into Macro-level Analytical Framework: The Case for the Philippines

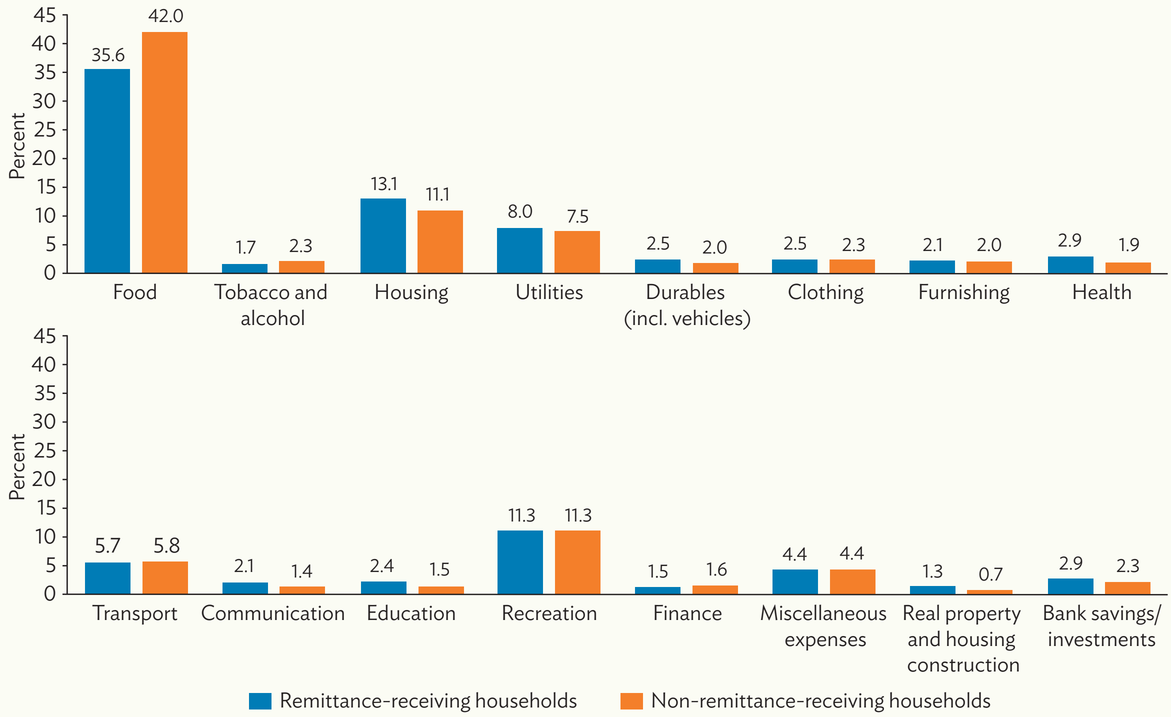
Discrepancies in data lead to differences in micro and macro analyses of remittances' impact on migrants' countries of origin. Key challenges in reconciling these perspectives include (i) the treatment of imported goods and services purchased with remittances, which enhance household welfare but minimally contribute to domestic output, and (ii) significant heterogeneity in consumption patterns between remittance-receiving and non-receiving households, which microeconomic studies account for, but macroeconomic analyses often overlook by assuming average consumption patterns.

Kikkawa et al. (2024), using the Philippines as a case study, establishes an analytical approach that integrates the micro-level data of remittances reported by the household income and expenditure survey into a macro input-output framework, and examines how the reported expenditures—both consumption and savings or investments—of remittance-recipient households flow through various industries and the overall economy.

4.3.4 Heterogeneity in Spending Patterns: Nonrecipient versus Remittance Recipient Households

Household expenditures financed by remittances were estimated at ₱742.2 billion (or $14.1 billion), representing less than half (44%) of the total international remittance inflows reported by Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas for that year. Expenditure patterns vary between remittance recipient households and non-recipients (Figure 4.12). Food expenditures account for 35.6% of recipient households' total spending, compared to 42% for nonrecipient households. In contrast, recipient households allocate more toward housing and productivity-enhancing areas like health and education. They also invest more in real estate, home repairs or construction, and allocate funds for bank savings or other investments.

Figure 4.12: Share of Broad Expenditure Items to Total Expenditure, Philippines, 2018

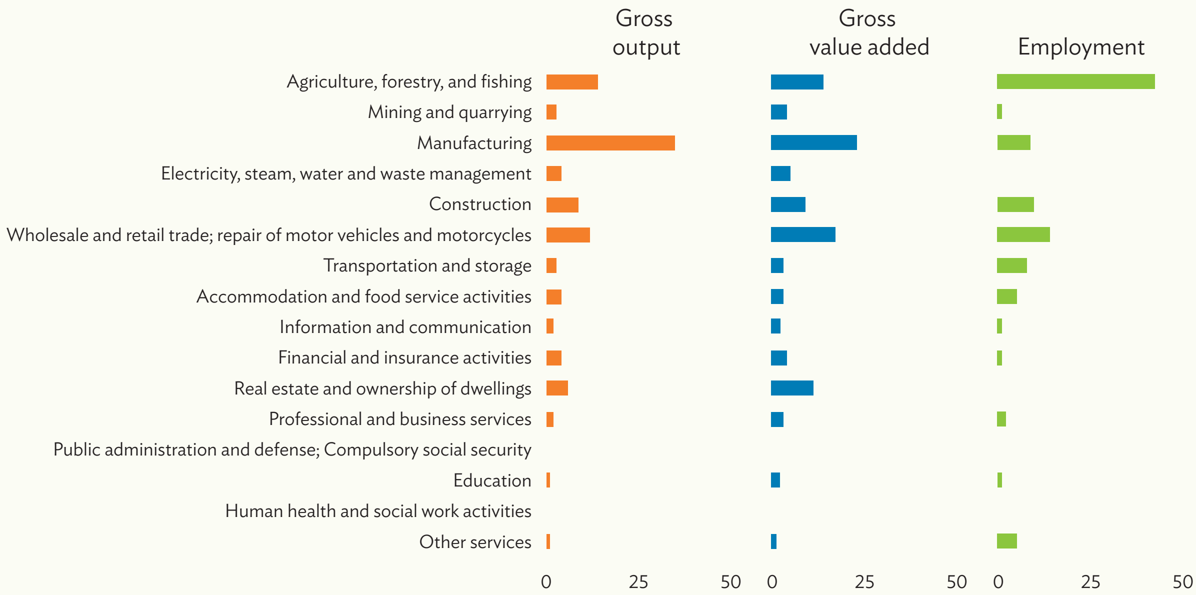


Source: Family Income and Expenditure Survey 2018 (Philippines).

Around 72.9% of remittance income is spent on consumption, with the remainder saved or invested in capital formation activities such as real estate and construction. About 84.3% of remittance-induced demand is for domestic products, while 15.7% is for imports, which do not contribute to domestic output except in the retail sector. Feeding these granular-level insights into the input–output analysis, remittance-driven final demand contributed 3.5% to total output, 3.4% to GDP, and 3.7% to total employment in 2018.

Figure 4.13 presents the distribution of sectoral impact of remittances. The manufacturing sector generated the highest value added (25% of GDP contribution), followed by wholesale and retail trade (17%), and agriculture, forestry, and fishing (14%). Both manufacturing and agriculture benefitted from strong sectoral interdependence and high output multipliers, while retail trade benefitted from its strong forward linkages. The savings and investment portion of remittance income further boosted economic output, particularly through spending on real estate and construction.

Figure 4.13: Sectoral Distribution of Remittances Contribution, Philippines (%), 2018



Source: Kikkawa et al. (2024).

4.3.5 Harnessing Remittances Toward Social Mobility and Development

The proposed micro–macro analysis serves as a valuable policy tool, systematically tracing remittance flows from households to industries to assess their impact on productive sectors, value addition, and employment. By accounting for differences in consumption patterns between remittance-receiving and non-receiving households, it provides more precise estimates than traditional macro-level analyses.

The Philippines case highlights the potential of remittances to drive long-term development, as remittance-receiving households allocate a larger share of their income to investments in education, and other productive activities. Policy makers can leverage this trend by designing targeted programs that could ensure that remittance inflows translate into sustained economic growth and social mobility.

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ANNEX 1

ECONOMY-SPECIFIC NOTES

BANGLADESH 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)
2012	152.1	1,071	6.5
2022	169.4	1,804	7.1
2023	171.5	1,885	5.8
2024	173.6	NA	NA

Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	56.0
Unemployment (total labor force)	4.7

Immigrant population in Bangladesh

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	988	0.77	46	17.8	68.4		
2015	1,422	0.91	47	15.3	65.2		
2020	2,115	1.28	48	13.4	58.0		
2024	2,906	1.67	48	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, FY2022–2023	**Total**
Number of foreign workers ('000)	85.5
% of total employment	

Stock of international students ('000)	**2009**		**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
	1.6		2.1	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.2	1.9	2.3	2.3	2.0

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
							4.7	4.3	5.9	7.8	6.3

Emigration from Bangladesh to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Bangladesh living in OECD countries	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	161.9	123.6	285.5	390.4	295.9	686.3
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	33.0	24.4	57.4	18.4	24.5	21.0
15–24 (% of population 15+)	17.2	23.1	19.7	9.6	11.0	10.2
25–64 (% of population 15+)	78.2	73.3	76.1	85.5	84.0	84.9
Total emigration rates (%)	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.5	0.6
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	2.7	2.0	2.4	4.0	6.5	4.8

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**48.6**	**50.8**	**50.9**	**51.6**	**53.8**	**53.3**	**39.8**	**50.5**	**71.8**
Italy	12.7	12.4	10.7	14.6	13.4	11.8	7.8	14.6	21.1
United States	14.4	13.4	18.4	14.6	15.6	15.0	9.1	6.3	10.5
Korea, Republic of	2.3	2.9	2.9	2.7	3.3	2.8	1.1	1.0	7.3
Portugal	0.4	0.7	0.4	0.7	2.0	2.4	2.2	2.1	6.2
Japan	2.0	2.4	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.5	1.4	0.7	6.1

Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**20.6**	**21.4**	**23.1**	**24.6**	**27.2**	**31.3**	**35.3**	**39.9**	**61.9**
United Kingdom	4.9	3.6	3.1	2.5	2.3	2.6	3.2	6.6	12.6
United States	4.8	5.4	6.5	7.0	7.4	8.1	8.7	8.5	10.5
Canada	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.2	2.3	3.7	5.1	5.8	6.9

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Total									
Saudi Arabia								2,116.2	
United Arab Emirates									
Malaysia									
Kuwait									
Oman									

Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Total	**758.0**	**1,009.0**	**734.0**	**700.0**	**218.0**	**617.0**	**1,136.0**	**1,305.5**	**1,012.0**
Saudi Arabia	143.9	551.3	257.3	399.0	161.7	457.2	612.4	497.7	628.6
Malaysia	40.1	99.8	175.9	0.5	0.1	0.0	50.1	351.7	93.6
Qatar	120.4	82.0	76.6	50.3	3.6	11.2	24.4	56.1	74.4
Singapore	54.7	40.4	41.4	49.8	10.1	27.9	64.4	53.3	56.9
United Arab Emirates	8.1	4.1	3.2	3.3	1.1	29.2	101.8	98.4	47.2

Net migration rate (per thousand)	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
	−5.7	−5.7	−6.4	−6.3	−6.2	−6.0	−5.9	−3.2	−3.2	−2.7

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
	15,296	13,574	13,502	15,566	18,364	21,752	22,206	21,505	22,070	

CAMBODIA 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)
2012	14.8	992	7.3
2022	17.2	2,011	5.1
2023	17.4	2,084	5.0
2024	17.6	NA	NA

Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	80.0
Unemployment (total labor force)	0.3

Immigrant population in Cambodia

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	146	1.20	51	22.5	32.8	NA	NA
2015	74	0.48	46	17.3	71.8		
2020	79	0.47	46	12.3	74.8		
2024	84	0.48	46	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2021	Total	Agriculture	Industry	Services
Number of foreign workers ('000)	26.2	8.9	8.6	8.8
% of total employment		34.1%	33.0%	33.8%

Stock of international students ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
								0.5			

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
						15.9					

Emigration from Cambodia to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Cambodia living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)			239.1	130.1	162.2	292.3
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)			15.2	5.9	8.8	7.5
15–24 (% of population 15+)			11.8	5.8	5.0	5.3
25–64 (% of population 15+)			81.1	76.7	78.2	77.5
Total emigration rates (%)			3.2	2.5	2.9	2.7
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)			52.7	16.7	29.0	21.0

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**16.4**	**17.1**	**19.6**	**20.1**	**18.8**	**20.8**	**10.1**	**8.3**	**25.7**
Korea, Republic of	9.5	9.6	10.2	9.5	8.7	9.9	3.5	4.6	12.0
Japan	2.3	3.7	4.2	4.8	5.0	6.3	3.7	0.5	8.8
United States	2.4	1.8	3.0	3.9	3.1	2.6	1.5	1.7	3.2
Australia	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.7
France	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**2.7**	**2.9**	**3.1**	**3.5**	**3.8**	**4.5**	**4.8**	**4.8**	**5.6**
Australia	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.3	1.7	1.9	1.8	2.0
United States	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.8	1.0	1.0
Japan	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total			**1,220.6**			**1,301.6**		**1,356.6**	**1,382.9**
Thailand			1,134.2			1,220.2		1,262.2	1,292.3
Korea, Republic of			48.7			45.9		51.0	
Malaysia			30.1			23.0		22.3	
Japan			6.7			11.5		20.1	
Singapore			0.9			0.8		0.9	
Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Total	**85.6**	**96.4**	**105.0**	**68.0**	**22.8**	**3.3**	**33.7**		**44.9**
Thailand	76.4	87.9	96.7	57.8	18.6		18.4	43.3	
Korea, Republic of	7.4	6.0	4.9	5.9	0.9	2.6	8.9		
Japan	1.6	2.3	3.0	3.9	3.1	0.6	6.4		
Singapore	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Malaysia	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0		0.0		

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	–3.7	–3.2	–4.6	–5.3	–3.5	0.0	–1.6	–1.8	–1.8	–1.9

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	1,185	1,199	1,287	1,431	2,659	2,588	2,539	2,616	2,782	2,950

HONG KONG, CHINA 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	7.2	39,888	1.7	Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	57.0
2022	7.3	43,282	−3.7	Unemployment (total labor force)	2.8
2023	7.5	43,573	3.3		
2024	7.4	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in Hong Kong, China

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	2,669	39.81	54	7.2	63.2	NA	NA
2015	2,841	38.57	61	7.0	63.1		
2020	2,962	39.55	63	7.7	61.6		
2024	3,063	41.31	63	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2021	Total	Miscellaneous social and personal services	Import/export, wholesale and retail trades	Real estate, professional, and business services	Financing and insurance	Accommodation and food services	Public administration, education, human health, and social work activities	Construction	Transportation, storage, postal, and courier services	Other	
Number of foreign workers ('000)	450.1	326.5	22.8	20.5	17.9	17.5	16.2	9.8	9.8	9.3	
% of total employment		74.4	3.2	3.8	7.3	5.7	2.9	3.1	3.0	3.1	
Stock of international students ('000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
	30.0	32.0	32.0	34.3	37.3	42.6	47.3	46.9	53.9	63.7	
Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
		34.4	36.0	40.0	41.6	41.3	14.6	13.8	13.5	26.3	35.1

Emigration from Hong Kong, China to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Hong Kong, China living in OECD countries	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	188.5	199.9	388.4	291.8	332.7	624.5
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	6.3	7.7	14.0	7.2	7.1	7.2
15–24 (% of population 15+)	24.8	20.7	22.7	11.5	8.3	9.8
25–64 (% of population 15+)	69.7	73.7	71.8	74.4	77.9	76.2
Total emigration rates (%)	6.5	6.6	6.6	8.8	8.7	8.7
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)				16.7	17.0	16.9

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**
Total	**9.4**	**6.7**	**6.9**	**13.8**	**17.4**	**17.3**	**15.2**	**6.1**	**56.3**
United Kingdom	3.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	1.3	48.9
Australia	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.7	1.3	3.9
Canada	0.8	0.6	0.6	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.0	2.3
Korea, Republic of	0.7	0.9	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.6
Japan	0.9	1.1	1.3	1.6	2.3	2.2	2.3	1.1	0.3
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**34.3**	**35.7**	**36.7**	**35.9**	**35.9**	**35.6**	**34.7**	**33.8**	**37.2**
United Kingdom	14.7	16.2	16.7	16.6	16.3	16.3	16.3	16.6	17.4
Australia	9.1	8.8	9.3	9.2	9.6	9.7	8.8	8.2	9.0
United States	8.5	8.5	8.0	7.5	7.0	6.7	6.5	5.8	5.9

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Total									

Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Total									

Net migration rate (per thousand)	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
	1.4	1.4	1.1	−0.2	−1.0	−0.2	−0.5	−0.5	−0.5	−2.6

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
	387	399	437	425	451	427	453	419	454	

INDIA 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	1,274.5	1,337	5.5	Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	55.6
2022	1,425.4	2,086	7.0	Unemployment (total labor force)	4.2
2023	1,438.1	2,236	8.2		
2024	1,450.9	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in India

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	6,392	0.60	49	7.1	57.8	73.1	3.0
2015	5,252	0.40	54	9.2	65.1	NA	NA
2020	4,930	0.35	56	9.5	64.6		
2024	4,796	0.33	57	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector	Total
Number of foreign workers ('000)	
% of total employment	

Stock of international students ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	39.0	42.0	44.8	46.7	46.1	47.4	49.3	48.0	46.7	45.7	
Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024

Emigration from India to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in India living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	1,027.6	943.0	1,970.6	2,545.0	2,280.6	4,825.6
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	264.2	226.6	490.8	27.0	26.9	26.9
15–24 (% of population 15+)	10.2	11.0	10.6	9.3	7.6	8.5
25–64 (% of population 15+)	80.0	77.7	78.9	79.1	78.8	79.0
Total emigration rates (%)	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	2.9	3.8	3.2	2.7	3.7	3.1

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**241.6**	**235.5**	**241.8**	**260.8**	**292.2**	**316.2**	**197.5**	**356.6**	**456.3**
United States	76.3	62.8	63.0	59.1	58.9	53.8	45.8	92.6	125.1
Canada	38.3	39.5	39.8	51.7	70.0	85.6	42.9	127.9	118.2
Germany	22.4	26.1	27.7	29.5	33.7	39.1	20.5	34.1	53.4
Australia	39.6	34.7	38.6	40.0	33.1	32.6	24.5	26.4	44.5
Netherlands	5.1	6.1	7.2	8.6	10.6	12.3	5.9	9.8	14.6
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**172.2**	**222.2**	**262.2**	**290.6**	**316.9**	**390.2**	**436.3**	**424.2**	**591.8**
United States	82.2	112.7	135.7	142.6	135.9	133.3	128.6	109.3	150.0
United Kingdom	19.6	18.2	16.7	16.4	19.6	27.3	55.2	83.9	126.1
Canada	15.7	16.3	19.9	32.6	34.8	74.3	95.0	93.8	104.9

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total	**10,401.2**	**13,327.4**	**10,453.2**	**13,459.2**			**13,448.6**	**13,601.8**	**15,850.6**
United Arab Emirates	2,800.0	2,800.0	3,100.0	3,419.9			3,419.9	3,425.1	3,554.3
Saudi Arabia	3,050.0	3,253.9	2,812.4	2,592.2			2,592.2	2,594.9	2,460.6
Kuwait	921.7	918.0	928.4	1,028.3			1,028.3	1,029.9	993.3
Oman	795.1	783.0	688.2	779.4			779.4	781.1	684.8
Qatar	600.0	697.0	691.5	745.8			745.8	746.6	835.2
Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total	**521.0**	**391.0**	**340.0**	**368.0**	**94.1**	**132.7**	**373.4**	**398.3**	**389.3**
Saudi Arabia	165.4	78.6	72.4	161.1	44.3	32.8	178.6	200.7	168.6
United Arab Emirates	163.7	150.0	112.1	76.1	17.9	10.8	33.2	71.7	111.8
Kuwait	72.4	56.4	57.6	45.7	8.1	10.2	71.4	48.2	40.2
Oman	63.2	53.3	36.0	28.4	7.2	19.5	32.0	21.3	24.4
Qatar	30.6	24.8	34.5	31.8	8.9	49.6	30.9	30.7	23.9

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	−0.5	0.1	−0.2	−0.4	−0.7	−0.1	−0.2	−1.0	−0.7	−0.4

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	68,910	62,744	68,967	78,790	83,332	83,149	89,375	111,222	119,526	

INDONESIA 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	250.2	2,960	6.0	Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	67.0
2022	278.8	4,025	5.3	Unemployment (total labor force)	3.3
2023	281.2	4,193	5.0		
2024	283.5	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in Indonesia

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	288	0.13	41	21.1	47.0	33.0	46.0
2015	192	0.07	46	26.6	55.1	NA	NA
2020	307	0.11	46	21.4	64.3		
2024	446	0.16	46	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2024	Total	Industry	Services	Agriculture and Maritime
Number of foreign workers ('000)	134.0	47.5	49.8	2.7
% of total employment	0.1			

Stock of international students ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
		7.3	7.7	7.8	7.7						

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	77.1	80.4	86.0	95.3	109.5	93.8	88.3	111.7	121.2	134.0

Emigration from Indonesia to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Indonesia living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	162.3	177.3	339.6	159.8	205.2	365.0
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	22.0	26.4	48.4	15.0	14.8	14.9
15–24 (% of population 15+)	13.7	11.3	12.4	14.7	8.9	11.4
25–64 (% of population 15+)	65.4	61.8	63.5	57.4	62.2	60.1
Total emigration rates (%)	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	3.2	4.2	3.6	0.9	1.1	1.0

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**33.3**	**33.7**	**38.8**	**39.1**	**47.8**	**53.7**	**27.1**	**22.2**	**85.5**
Japan	11.8	14.3	16.8	19.6	23.2	28.8	13.7	2.3	51.3
Korea, Republic of	10.5	8.5	9.0	6.9	10.7	9.8	3.4	3.1	16.7
Türkiye	NA	NA	1.2	1.6	2.1	2.7	1.3	5.7	4.2
Germany	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.6	3.0	3.0	1.9	2.4	3.4
Australia	2.4	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.4	1.6	2.1	2.3
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**29.3**	**32.2**	**34.4**	**36.2**	**37.3**	**39.8**	**40.7**	**39.5**	**49.0**
Australia	9.5	10.2	10.7	11.0	12.2	13.9	12.9	11.7	11.5
United States	8.6	8.9	9.3	8.8	8.5	8.0	8.0	7.4	7.8
Japan	2.4	2.5	2.9	3.6	4.2	4.7	5.1	5.1	5.0

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**3,256.0**	**4,300.0**	**4,900.0**			**3,700.0**			
Saudi Arabia	1,500.0								
Malaysia	917.9								
Taipei,China	146.2								
Hong Kong, China	140.6								
Singapore	106.0								

Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total	**235.0**	**262.0**	**284.0**	**277.0**	**113.0**	**73.0**	**200.8**	**275.0**	**297.4**
Taipei,China	14.4	68.1	73.9	70.8	53.2	52.3	60.1	65.9	99.8
Malaysia	77.1	62.8	72.4	79.6	34.3	7.8	53.5	83.2	84.6
Hong Kong, China	87.6	89.0	90.7	79.7	14.6	0.6	43.2	72.3	51.7
Korea, Republic of	17.7	13.4	18.3	19.4	4.5	3.2	6.6	7.9	10.8
Japan	13.5	6.5	5.9	7.0	1.9	0.7	4.7	6.3	7.8

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	–0.1	–0.1	–0.1	–0.1	–0.1	–0.1	0.0	–0.1	–0.1	–0.1

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	9,659	8,907	8,990	11,215	11,666	9,651	9,402	13,089	14,467	16,038

JAPAN 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	127.6	33,518	1.4	Employment / population ratio (15+, Total)	63.2
2022	125.1	36,203	1.0	Unemployment (total labor force)	2.6
2023	124.5	36,990	1.7		
2024	123.8	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in Japan

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	1,652	1.30	52	15.7	66.6	NA	NA
2015	2,577	2.03	53	15.7	67.4		
2020	3,289	2.60	51	8.3	75.3		
2024	3,410	2.76	50	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2024	Total	Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	Construction	Manufacturing	Information, communication, transportation	Wholesale, retail	Hospitality, restaurants	Education	Health and welfare	Services	Other
Number of foreign workers ('000)	2,302.6	64.8	178.4	598.3	165.7	298.3	273.3	82.9	116.4	361.5	162.9
% of total employment		2.8	7.7	26.0	7.2	13.0	11.9	3.6	5.1	15.7	7.1

Stock of international students ('000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
	184.2	208.4	239.3	267.0	299.0	312.2	279.6	242.4	231.1	279.3	336.7
Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
	160.3	190.0	208.8	237.5	278.6	306.8	164.0	20.2	307.8	349.2	351.2

Emigration from Japan to OECD countries

Stock of persons born in Japan living in OECD countries	2000 Men	2000 Women	2000 Total	2015/16 Men	2015/16 Women	2015/16 Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	215.6	348.7	564.3	266.5	437.5	704.0
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	68.4	93.5	161.9	25.9	18.0	21.1
15–24 (% of population 15+)	15.0	12.7	13.6	13.3	8.3	10.2
25–64 (% of population 15+)	81.0	73.3	76.2	74.8	73.1	73.8
Total emigration rates (%)	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.6
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	0.7	1.0	0.9	0.8	1.2	1.0

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**28.5**	**28.2**	**28.7**	**28.4**	**28.7**	**29.7**	**20.1**	**24.2**	**28.1**
Korea, Republic of	4.7	4.6	4.7	4.5	5.2	5.1	4.5	6.1	7.2
Germany	6.7	6.9	7.0	6.9	7.1	7.2	3.0	4.1	5.6
United States	5.5	5.3	5.1	4.6	4.3	4.5	3.8	3.9	4.1
Netherlands	1.1	1.2	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.1	1.3	1.7
France	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.0	1.1	1.2
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	29.2	28.4	**29.2**	**29.1**	**29.1**	**29.5**	**29.7**	**26.3**	**34.7**
United States	15.5	15.1	15.4	14.8	14.9	14.7	14.2	13.4	12.7
United Kingdom	3.1	3.1	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.6	3.0
Australia	1.8	1.7	1.7	2.2	2.4	2.9	2.7	2.4	2.7

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Total									

Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Total									

Net migration rate (per thousand)	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
	1.3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	0.3	-0.3	1.4	1.4	1.2

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
		3,830	4,443	4,369	4,389	4,888	5,294	5,408	4,687	

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)
2012	6.5	1,777	8.0
2022	7.6	2,589	2.7
2023	7.7	2,649	3.7
2024	7.8	NA	NA

Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	66.1
Unemployment (total labor force)	1.2

Immigrant population in the Lao People's Democratic Republic

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	22	0.40	47	19.7	55.9	49.5	8.2
2015	46	0.67	36	15.3	71.5	NA	NA
2020	49	0.66	36	11.2	75.9		
2024	51	0.66	36	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2022	Total	Agriculture	Industry	Services
Number of foreign workers ('000)	19.5	11.7	1.5	6.3
% of total employment		60.0	7.6	32.4

Stock of international students ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5				

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
						6.9			12.8		

Emigration from the Lao People's Democratic Republic to OECD countries

Stock of persons born in the Lao People's Democratic Republic living in OECD countries	2000			2015/16		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	132.8	131.4	264.1	122.3	131.7	253.9
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	4.4	5.8	10.2	2.4	6.0	4.2
15–24 (% of population 15+)	13.8	13.7	13.8	2.4	3.2	2.8
25–64 (% of population 15+)	81.2	79.0	80.1	84.6	82.2	83.4
Total emigration rates (%)	8.3	8.1	8.2	5.1	5.4	5.2
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	23.8	29.2	25.9	9.5	13.4	11.1

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**2.2**	**2.6**	**2.6**	**2.6**	**2.8**	**3.2**	**1.4**	**1.2**	**3.4**
Korea, Republic of	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.3	1.3
Japan	0.7	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.4	0.4	0.1	1.1
United States	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.8	0.5	0.3	0.6
Hungary	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
France	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**0.8**	**0.7**	**0.8**	**0.9**	**1.0**	**1.1**	**1.2**	**1.1**	**1.6**
Australia	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Hungary	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3
Japan	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total						**110.0**			

Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total	**58.3**	**49.4**	**90.0**	**54.1**	**28.1**	**0.2**	**52.8**	**105.0**	98.0
Thailand			89.8	53.8	28.0		51.7	101.5	91.7
Korea, Republic of			0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.3	2.8	5.6
Japan			0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.8	0.6	0.7

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	–1.9	–1.7	–1.5	–1.4	–1.4	–1.4	–1.4	–1.3	–1.3	–1.3

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
		189	243	240	297	232	220	240	287	

MALAYSIA — 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)
2012	29.7	8,711	5.5
2022	34.7	11,174	8.9
2023	35.1	11,430	3.6
2024	35.6	NA	NA

Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	65.7
Unemployment (total labor force)	3.8

Immigrant population in Malaysia

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	1,614	7.03	45	22.6	54.6	91.3	5.9
2015	3,513	11.25	41	26.9	62.9	NA	NA
2020	3,719	10.97	31	27.7	63.4		
2024	3,807	10.71	23	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2023	Total	Agriculture	Industry	Services
Number of foreign workers ('000)	2,004	474.4	675.1	854.6
% of total employment		23.7	33.7	42.6

Stock of international students ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	99.6	111.4	124.1	100.8	122.8	82.0	89.2	92.5	100.4	109.0	

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	62.6	76.1	60.0	65.1	58.9				46.2		42.0

Emigration from Malaysia to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Malaysia living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000s)	98.6	115.7	214.3	152.6	179.2	331.8
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000s)	16.9	18.8	35.7	23.1	20.6	21.8
15–24 (% of population 15+)	23.9	19.0	21.2	17.9	14.7	16.2
25–64 (% of population 15+)	71.2	75.3	73.5	69.3	70.4	69.9
Total emigration rates (%)	1.2	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.6	1.5
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	5.7	6.7	6.2	4.5	5.6	5.0

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**19.2**	**21.0**	**14.1**	**16.8**	**16.7**	**15.0**	**9.0**	**9.4**	**14.9**
Australia	4.5	4.0	4.1	4.2	3.4	2.5	2.1	2.9	3.7
Japan	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.7	2.9	2.9	1.3	0.7	3.0
New Zealand	1.6	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.9	0.9	0.4	2.1
Korea, Republic of	1.2	1.3	1.5	3.8	4.1	3.3	1.2	0.8	1.9
United States	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.0	1.0	1.2
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**47.7**	**49.2**	**50.9**	**50.1**	**49.9**	**48.2**	**44.3**	**36.5**	**39.7**
United Kingdom	15.6	17.0	17.4	16.4	15.0	14.1	13.5	11.5	12.1
Australia	15.4	15.0	15.3	15.1	15.7	16.1	14.1	11.4	10.8
United States	7.3	7.9	8.4	8.5	8.6	7.7	6.7	4.9	4.6

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total									

Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total									

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	6.0	7.0	7.0	6.7	6.1	3.0	5.5	5.4	5.2	4.9

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	1,644	1,604	1,649	1,686	1,597	1,427	1,552	1,618	1,704	

MONGOLIA 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	2.8	3,374	12.3	Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	60.6
2022	3.4	4,206	5.0	Unemployment (total labor force)	5.4
2023	3.5	4,457	7.4		
2024	3.5	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in Mongolia

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	8	0.33	44	14.1	72.8	NA	NA
2015	20	0.67	33	8.9	71.4		
2020	21	0.65	33	12.5	69.5		
2024	23	0.65	33	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2023	Total	Mining and quarrying	Education	Wholesale, retail, vehicle repair	Manufacturing	Transportation	Construction	Agriculture	Agriculture
Number of foreign workers ('000)	8.0	2.3	1.2	1.1	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.0	0.0
% of total employment		28.1	15.1	14.2	5.8	6.2	9.9	0.3	

Stock of international students ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	1.1	1.2	1.5	1.5	1.6	2.3	n.a.	n.a.	1.5	3.6	3.7

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	5.9	4.7	4.5	4.6	4.4	5.6	3.9	6.5	8.0

Emigration from Mongolia to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Mongolia living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	1.8	2.6	4.4	15.6	24.0	39.7
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)				55.1	55.6	55.4
15–24 (% of population 15+)			27.2	27.6	18.4	22.1
25–64 (% of population 15+)			70.3	71.5	80.9	77.2
Total emigration rates (%)		0.3	0.3	1.5	2.1	1.8
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)		1.5	1.3	2.8	3.0	2.9

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**9.3**	**14.9**	**14.9**	**20.1**	**20.1**	**19.1**	**12.9**	**9.2**	**23.1**
Korea, Republic of	4.0	8.3	8.2	11.8	10.2	8.7	7.1	3.8	10.8
Japan	2.0	2.3	2.5	3.2	3.7	4.1	2.3	0.5	6.2
Czechia	0.2	0.6	0.7	1.2	1.5	1.3	0.7	0.7	1.1
Hungary	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.7	0.8	0.3	0.4	1.1
United States	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.5	0.8	1.0
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**7.5**	**7.4**	**7.9**	**8.8**	**10.1**	**11.5**	**12.9**	**12.5**	**14.4**
Korea, Republic of	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.7	3.4	4.6	5.2	4.9	4.8
Japan	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.4	1.6	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.0
Australia	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.7

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total						**44.0**	**50.0**		
Korea, Republic of							6.7		
Czechia							4.0		

Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total									

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	1.4	1.9	2.2	2.5	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	261	260	273	441	561	549	471	399	455	

MYANMAR 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	50.2	949	7.3	Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	55.1
2022	53.8	1,175	4.0	Unemployment (total labor force)	3.0
2023	54.1	1,178	1.0		
2024	54.5	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in Myanmar

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	98	0.22	47	18.1	60.1	NA	NA
2015	73	0.14	45	13.8	63.7		
2020	76	0.14	45	13.1	65.2		
2024	79	0.15	45	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector	Total
Number of foreign workers ('000)	
% of total employment	

Stock of international students ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
					0.5						

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018

Emigration from Myanmar to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Myanmar living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)				106.5	113.0	219.6
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)				29.8	31.6	30.7
15–24 (% of population 15+)				15.3	13.8	14.5
25–64 (% of population 15+)				74.0	74.3	74.2
Total emigration rates (%)				0.6	0.6	0.6
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)				1.8	1.5	1.6

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2021
Total	26.3	31.4	33.4	34.5	29.6	25.6	14.6	7.4	35.2	7.4
Japan	3.3	5.2	6.1	7.6	8.1	11.6	6.2	1.4	19.5	3.0
Korea, Republic of	5.1	5.2	6.7	6.3	7.4	5.9	1.9	1.5	10.2	1.5
United States	14.2	17.1	17.0	17.3	11.1	6.4	5.3	3.0	3.5	1.4
Australia	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.2	1.9	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.4
Germany	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.2
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2021**
Total	**3.9**	**4.2**	**4.9**	**5.5**	**6.8**	**8.3**	**8.9**	**8.5**	**9.3**	**8.5**
Japan	1.2	1.2	1.6	1.8	2.6	3.3	3.7	3.5	2.9	3.5
United States	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.7	1.9	1.9	1.8	2.0	1.8
Australia	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.4	1.2

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total			**2,021.9**						
Thailand			1,418.5						
Malaysia			304.0						
Singapore			79.7						
People's Republic of China			92.3						
Japan			7.6						
Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023e**
Total	**95.0**	**146.0**	**162.0**	**234.0**	**330.0**	**75.0**	**3.0**	**187.5**	**203.0**
Thailand	53.6	102.7	148.9	198.0	238.1	58.6	0.0	105.7	98.7
Malaysia	35.0	33.9	3.3	24.8	78.8	10.6	0.0	35.0	48.9
Singapore	0.4	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.1	1.3	21.3	19.6
Japan	1.7	2.4	3.3	3.9	6.7	4.7	1.5	14.1	
Korea, Republic of	4.5	5.7	5.7	6.1	4.8	0.7	0.0	8.4	

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	–1.8	–1.7	–2.0	–2.2	–1.9	–1.2	–0.7	–0.7	–0.6	–0.7

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	1,934	2,255	2,453	2,673	2,553	2,672	1,282	1,261	1,100	

NEPAL 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	27.3	781	4.7	Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	39.7
2022	29.7	1114	5.6	Unemployment (total labor force)	10.7
2023	29.7	1136	2.0		
2024	29.7	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in Nepal

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	718	2.92	66	20.4	59.5	NA	NA
2015	509	1.83	69	16.1	69.8		
2020	488	1.68	70	11.9	76.0		
2024	471	1.59	70	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2022	Total
Number of foreign workers ('000)	10.0
% of total employment	

Stock of international students ('000)	2011	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	0.1										

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
		1.2	1.6	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.0			

Emigration from Nepal to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Nepal living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)			23.9	171.6	136.0	307.6
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)			8.7	36.8	41.2	38.8
15–24 (% of population 15+)			24.0	25.5	24.0	24.8
25–64 (% of population 15+)			75.0	72.5	73.6	73.0
Total emigration rates (%)			0.2	1.6	1.2	1.4
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)			2.2	12.3	20.8	15.0

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**39.0**	**43.1**	**46.2**	**47.0**	**50.3**	**48.7**	**29.1**	**28.4**	**97.0**
Japan	11.5	13.4	14.1	14.5	13.0	13.1	4.2	1.5	44.5
Korea, Republic of	6.8	6.5	8.7	8.6	9.8	8.8	3.0	1.0	16.0
Australia	4.4	4.2	5.1	4.4	3.0	3.8	4.7	6.8	13.4
United States	8.6	9.3	10.2	9.5	9.9	8.8	6.7	7.2	11.8
Portugal	0.9	1.4	1.3	1.7	4.2	5.0	3.9	2.8	3.9
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**26.1**	**30.7**	**38.9**	**52.1**	**68.7**	**78.4**	**81.1**	**72.4**	**82.9**
Australia	9.2	11.8	14.7	21.1	32.9	41.9	40.8	33.0	38.7
Japan	3.1	5.1	8.4	12.8	14.5	15.0	18.4	18.4	16.5
United States	7.6	7.9	9.9	12.3	14.4	14.1	12.7	10.9	10.9

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total									
Saudi Arabia									297.6

Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2019–2020	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024
Total	404.0	383.0	354.0	236.0	190.0	72.0	348.9	494.2	460.1
United Arab Emirates	52.8	57.9	60.2	62.8	52.1	11.6	53.8	59.2	131.0
Malaysia	61.0	95.2	104.2	10.0	39.2	0.1	26.1	219.4	81.4
Saudi Arabia	138.5	72.9	41.0	46.1	39.3	23.3	125.4	55.8	73.1
Qatar	129.0	121.1	103.2	75.0	29.8	22.1	76.8	40.5	40.9
Kuwait	10.0	13.1	17.6	16.0	9.0	0.0	22.8	31.4	28.8

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	–7.9	–12.2	–13.2	–10.5	6.4	5.6	4.4	–12.8	–13.8	–13.5

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	6,730	6,612	6,928	8,287	8,244	8,108	8,226	9,069	10,396	

PAKISTAN — 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	202.2	1,310	3.0	Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	52.6
2022	243.7	1,642	4.8	Unemployment (total labor force)	5.5
2023	247.5	1,616	0.0		
2024	251.3	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in Pakistan

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	4,182	2.70	46	7.7	60.4	NA	NA
2015	3,507	1.61	47	7.0	60.0		
2020	3,277	1.39	45	8.0	66.8		
2024	4,176	1.66	48	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector	Total
Number of foreign workers ('000)	
% of total employment	

Stock of international students ('000)	2003	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	0.4										

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018–2019	2019–2020	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023
							4.5	3.5	5.0		

Emigration from Pakistan to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Pakistan living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	375.0	293.7	668.7	806.7	620.5	1 427.2
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	79.8	60.4	140.2	20.4	19.6	20.0
15–24 (% of population 15+)	13.9	15.4	14.5	12.4	11.8	12.1
25–64 (% of population 15+)	80.3	78.2	79.3	79.9	79.9	79.9
Total emigration rates (%)	0.9	0.7	0.8	1.2	1.0	1.1
Emigration rates of the highly educated (%)	3.1	3.6	3.3	7.3	9.2	8.0

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**79.5**	**99.4**	**96.0**	**92.1**	**91.5**	**97.4**	**73.4**	**109.5**	**102.6**
United Kingdom	11.0	8.0	11.0	15.0	9.9	16.0	14.7	27.3	n.a.
Italy	9.6	11.4	14.7	15.0	13.2	9.9	9.7	14.3	16.7
Spain	5.3	4.8	6.4	6.6	8.7	11.7	7.4	15.9	16.6
Canada	9.1	11.3	11.3	7.7	9.5	10.8	6.2	8.5	11.6
Germany	9.5	24.5	12.2	9.0	9.8	10.1	6.9	9.2	11.4
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**28.6**	**31.2**	**35.0**	**36.8**	**40.7**	**43.8**	**46.2**	**51.4**	**83.8**
United Kingdom	6.6	6.1	5.5	5.2	5.6	6.5	7.8	12.9	23.0
Australia	6.3	8.2	10.0	10.1	11.3	12.2	11.3	9.5	10.3
United States	4.8	5.2	6.1	6.9	7.4	7.6	7.5	7.1	8.2

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total									
Saudi Arabia							1,814.7		

Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total	**839.0**	**496.0**	**382.0**	**625.0**	**225.0**	**288.0**	**832.3**	**862.6**	**727.4**
Saudi Arabia	462.6	143.4	100.9	332.7	136.4	155.8	514.9	427.0	452.6
Oman	45.1	42.4	27.2	28.4	10.3	38.4	82.4	60.0	81.6
United Arab Emirates	295.6	275.4	208.6	211.2	53.7	27.4	128.5	229.9	64.1
Qatar	9.7	11.6	21.0	19.3	7.4	38.0	58.0	55.1	40.8
Malaysia	10.6	7.2	9.9	11.3	2.3	0.1	6.2	20.9	25.2

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	−10.0	−10.4	−7.1	−5.8	−5.1	−2.4	−2.4	−5.4	−6.5	−5.6

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	19,306	19,819	19,856	21,193	22,252	26,089	31,312	30,176	26,558	34,914

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	1,354.2	6,592	7.9	Employment / population ratio (15+, Total)	65.4
2022	1,412.2	11,556	3.0	Unemployment (total labor force)	4.6
2023	1,410.7	12,175	5.2		
2024	1,419.3	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in the People's Republic of China

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	721	0.06	41	13.5	61.9	NA	NA
2015	1,196	0.09	44	14.1	59.3		
2020	1,415	0.10	48	14.6	60.2		
2024	1,639	0.12	52	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2020	**Total**
Number of foreign workers ('000)	444.3
% of total employment	

Stock of international students ('000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
	108.2	123.1	137.5	157.1	178.3	201.2	225.1	221.7	210.9	200.9	

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
					336.0						

Emigration from the People's Republic of China to OECD countries

Stock of persons born in the People's Republic of China living in OECD countries	2000			2015/16		
	Men	**Women**	**Total**	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	976.3	1,089.8	2,066.1	2,057.5	2,562.6	4,620.1
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	217.0	250.7	467.7	28.0	27.5	27.8
15–24 (% of population 15+)	12.3	11.4	11.8	17.4	16.2	16.8
25–64 (% of population 15+)	73.1	73.4	73.3	68.6	70.9	69.9
Total emigration rates (%)	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.4
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	1.5	2.3	1.8	1.2	1.8	1.5

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**555.9**	**545.1**	**551.6**	**563.0**	**565.8**	**572.0**	**275.6**	**301.8**	**414.3**
Japan	99.7	101.9	104.9	112.1	117.1	133.9	46.3	15.3	99.0
Korea, republic of	193.8	177.8	166.5	157.8	170.2	139.4	97.0	95.5	95.9
United States	78.3	76.6	84.5	74.3	67.8	62.3	41.7	49.7	68.1
Australia	28.5	29.4	30.9	31.1	27.7	27.2	20.1	21.0	35.7
Canada	25.2	20.2	28.1	31.6	31.3	31.8	17.6	33.3	35.6
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**702.8**	**743.3**	**788.8**	**844.4**	**904.5**	**955.6**	**976.9**	**885.2**	**958.7**
United States	266.1	291.1	309.8	321.6	333.9	340.2	343.8	295.4	278.5
United Kingdom	86.2	91.5	89.3	96.5	107.8	122.1	143.9	145.8	154.6
Japan	85.2	79.2	76.5	79.4	84.1	91.5	99.1	99.5	96.6

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Total	**969.0**	**979.0**	**997.0**	**997.0**	**992.0**	**623.0**	**592.0**	**543.3**	**540.9**
Singapore							44.1	42.1	46.9
Indonesia							25.1	28.6	23.1
Israel							11.4	13.5	18.6
Saudi Arabia							14.3	10.7	11.4
Iraq							13.0	9.8	9.8
Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Total	**530.0**	**494.0**	**522.0**	**492.0**	**487.0**	**301.0**	**323.0**	**259.0**	**346.8**
Singapore							28.9	23.0	29.1
Indonesia							15.4	18.7	20.8
Uzbekistan							2.3	2.8	9.7
Israel							4.4	4.8	9.5
Taipei,China							8.1	7.6	9.1

Net migration rate (per thousand)	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
	−0.5	−0.1	−0.1	−0.1	−0.5	−0.1	−0.3	−0.2	−0.4	−0.2

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
	33,105	26,883	28,676	24,306	18,294	18,876	22,480	26,094	29,110	

PHILIPPINES 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)
2012	98.0	2,589	6.9
2022	114.0	3,578	7.6
2023	114.9	3,746	5.5
2024	115.8	NA	NA

Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	61.0
Unemployment (total labor force)	2.2

Immigrant population in the Philippines

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	157	0.20	45	15.8	53.4	54.8	11.9
2015	132	0.13	39	12.5	52.7	NA	NA
2020	87	0.08	30	12.9	53.0		
2024	87	0.08	30	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2024	Total
Number of foreign workers ('000)	60.3
% of total employment	

Stock of international students ('000)	2008	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	2.7								17.2		

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	22.7	24.3	28.4	42.0	45.3	54.2	158.7	106.6	70.2	62.3	69.9

Emigration from the Philippines to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in the Philippines living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	745.8	1192.1	1938.0	1349.3	2200.0	3549.3
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	107.5	168.8	276.4	16.4	16.3	16.3
15–24 (% of population 15+)	13.9	9.6	11.3	12.3	7.5	9.3
25–64 (% of population 15+)	75.7	80.5	78.6	73.6	76.7	75.5
Total emigration rates (%)	3.1	4.8	3.9	3.9	6.1	5.0
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	5.3	8.1	6.8	11.8	16.2	14.3

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**161.3**	**182.6**	**172.1**	**174.8**	**168.5**	**171.4**	**86.0**	**95.8**	**160.0**
United States	49.2	56.0	52.2	48.7	46.9	45.6	25.2	27.5	36.3
Japan	19.9	24.0	26.2	29.6	31.3	34.7	12.7	4.9	34.4
Canada	40.0	50.8	41.8	40.9	35.1	27.8	11.0	18.0	22.1
Korea, Republic of	10.7	9.9	9.5	9.0	10.1	9.1	2.9	1.8	13.6
Australia	10.3	11.9	12.0	12.1	10.9	9.2	8.5	9.8	13.3
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**11.3**	**12.3**	**13.8**	**14.5**	**15.9**	**19.7**	**23.1**	**22.6**	**28.3**
Australia	4.2	4.4	5.1	5.2	6.0	9.3	10.1	9.6	10.0
Canada	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.9	0.9	1.6	2.8	3.0	5.6
United States	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.3	3.4	3.4	2.9	3.4

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	2,447.0	2,240.4	2,338.6	2,299.1	2,202.0	1,771.5	1,825.0	1,963.0	2,156.6
Saudi Arabia	604.4	533.2	594.0	558.4	493.2	485.5	445.3	451.6	431.3
United Arab Emirates	379.3	356.2	357.8	361.1	290.7	289.6	262.8	269.0	293.3
Kuwait	141.9	143.4	156.7	131.7	136.5	132.8	107.7	151.2	140.2
Hong Kong, China	144.4	125.5	152.0	143.8	165.2	161.1	122.3	119.8	138.0
Taipei,China	110.1								133.7
Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Total	1,670.0	1,595.0	1,507.0	1,649.0	3,33.0	397.0	820.4	1,752.1	1,970.1
Saudi Arabia	460.1	433.6		412.5	86.8		143.8	419.8	398.8
United Arab Emirates	276.3	265.5		269.9	50.8		166.2	282.9	346.8
Hong Kong, China	171.0	162.2		163.5	32.4		74.7	179.8	220.5
Singapore	116.5	144.5		159.1	32.3		44.8	187.2	207.6
Qatar	141.3	122.6		121.8	23.5		82.0	136.6	150.8

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	–3.7	–2.9	–2.4	–1.5	–0.1	–0.4	–0.8	–1.9	–1.4	–1.4

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	29,799	31,142	32,810	33,809	35,167	34,883	36,685	38,049	39,097	

REPUBLIC OF KOREA 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	50.2	26,680	2.4	Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	64.2
2022	51.7	33,690	2.6	Unemployment (total labor force)	2.6
2023	51.7	34,121	1.4		
2024	51.7	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in the Republic of Korea

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	144	0.31	40	26.8	66.4	NA	NA
2015	1,312	2.57	42	21.4	66.1		
2020	1,723	3.32	44	21.6	66.0		
2024	1,812	3.50	47	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2023	Total	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Mining and quarrying	Manufacturing	Construction	Wholesales and Retails, Food, Lodging	Business, personal, public service & others	Electricity, Transportation, Telecommunication, Finance
Number of foreign workers ('000)	923.0	61.0	412.0	411.0	112.0	170.0	143.0	25.0
% of total employment	3.3	4.0	11.1	9.1	5.3	3.1	1.3	0.7

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Stock of international students ('000)	52.5	54.5	61.9	70.8	84.7	98.9	111.6	118.5	123.3		
Inflows of foreign workers ('000)						264.0	79.5	38.2	197.0	300.9	367.0

Emigration from the Republic of Korea to OECD countries

Stock of persons born in the Republic of Korea living in OECD countries	2000 Men	2000 Women	2000 Total	2015/16 Men	2015/16 Women	2015/16 Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	628.9	817.2	1,446.1	766.3	1,020.4	1,786.7
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	88.0	105.3	193.3	14.8	13.3	14.0
15–24 (% of population 15+)	16.8	15.4	16.0	12.4	9.3	10.6
25–64 (% of population 15+)	74.6	74.9	74.8	71.5	72.7	72.2
Total emigration rates (%)	2.2	2.9	2.6	3.6	4.6	4.1
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	2.9	4.8	3.7	3.8	5.9	4.8

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**70.9**	**66.0**	**73.3**	**73.6**	**77.0**	**81.1**	**43.2**	**38.5**	**62.8**
United States	21.1	22.6	25.6	28.0	32.4	33.9	8.3	2.9	23.1
Canada	20.2	17.0	21.7	19.0	17.5	18.3	16.1	12.2	16.1
Germany	6.3	7.2	7.7	8.2	7.9	7.7	3.9	4.1	6.1
Japan	4.5	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.8	6.1	3.3	8.2	5.5
Australia	3.8	3.6	3.3	3.2	2.2	2.5	2.6	2.4	3.2
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**108.1**	**102.7**	**99.8**	**99.4**	**96.6**	**97.0**	**97.5**	**83.8**	**92.9**
United States	67.6	64.0	60.5	56.2	52.4	49.6	47.0	38.8	40.1
Japan	15.0	13.5	13.0	13.1	13.2	14.3	15.8	14.8	13.0
Australia	6.6	6.2	6.1	8.3	8.4	8.6	8.2	7.2	6.7

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total									

Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total									

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	5.4	1.8	2.0	2.3	2.5	2.2	−0.3	1.7	1.7	1.5

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	6,464	6,524	6,526	7,125	7,166	7,435	7,742	7,815	7,653	

SINGAPORE 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	5.3	51,679	4.4	Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	69.8
2022	5.6	67,949	3.8	Unemployment (total labor force)	3.2
2023	5.9	65,422	1.1		
2024	5.8	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in Singapore

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	1,319	32.70	55	5.2	73.2	NA	NA
2015	2,535	45.89	57	8.1	71.8		
2020	2,589	46.07	57	8.7	72.3		
2024	2,842	48.72	57	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2022	Total	Agriculture	Industry	Services
Number of foreign workers ('000)	1,424.2	5.2	622.3	796.7
% of total employment	36.6	21.2	63.2	27.6

Stock of international students ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
			53.1	53.2	51.8	53.0	55.0	58.3	66.3		

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024

Emigration from Singapore to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Singapore living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	48.5	58.1	106.6	66.4	90.0	156.4
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	9.1	10.8	19.9	19.6	18.1	18.7
15–24 (% of population 15+)	19.3	17.0	18.0	21.2	15.3	17.8
25–64 (% of population 15+)	76.2	78.0	77.2	70.7	71.1	71.0
Total emigration rates (%)	3.0	3.6	3.3	2.7	3.7	3.2
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	8.6	11.3	9.9	2.9	4.2	3.5

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**9.2**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**12.6**	**12.6**	**12.4**	**3.9**	**4.4**	**6.2**
Australia	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.4	1.2	0.9	1.2	1.8
Japan	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.9	1.0	0.3	0.2	1.0
United States	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.9
United Kingdom	3.0	1.0	1.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	0.3	0.6	0.6
Korea	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.5
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**22.2**	**23.0**	**23.5**	**22.3**	**22.2**	**21.8**	**20.1**	**18.0**	**19.8**
United Kingdom	6.8	7.3	7.5	7.3	7.0	6.8	6.8	6.6	6.1
Australia	8.8	8.8	8.9	7.9	8.0	7.8	6.3	5.3	5.8
United States	4.6	4.7	4.5	4.4	4.2	4.1	3.9	3.3	3.7

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total	**200.0**	**207.0**	**212.2**	**212.5**	**213.4**				

Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total									

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	7.6	2.5	–1.6	3.9	0.2	–25.9	–7.9	38.0	4.7	3.4

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

SRI LANKA 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	21.0	3,512	8.6	Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	49.7
2022	22.2	4,036	−7.3	Unemployment (total labor force)	5.0
2023	22.0	3,969	−2.3		
2024	23.1	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in Sri Lanka

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	40	0.21	45	3.6	63.1	41.8	13.4
2015	40	0.18	48	19.0	36.5	NA	NA
2020	40	0.18	47	21.1	44.0		
2024	41	0.18	47	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2022	Total
Number of foreign workers ('000)	23.6
% of total employment	

Stock of international students ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	0.9	1.0	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.6	1.8	NA

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
		13.7	16.9	15.1		4.9	4.6	10.7	15.9	

Emigration from Sri Lanka to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Sri Lanka living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	169.2	147.7	317.0	353.5	329.0	682.5
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	26.7	30.5	57.2	13.9	16.4	15.1
15–24 (% of population 15+)	14.6	15.2	14.9	8.6	6.6	7.6
25–64 (% of population 15+)	79.8	76.8	78.4	81.9	82.3	82.1
Total emigration rates (%)	2.4	2.1	2.3	4.3	3.8	4.0
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	27.2	28.7	27.7	8.2	6.0	7.0

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**30.4**	**31.0**	**29.9**	**27.0**	**24.7**	**25.0**	**17.8**	**17.6**	**39.1**
Japan	2.2	3.1	4.7	5.6	4.0	3.3	2.9	0.8	9.9
Korea, Republic of	4.8	5.5	7.1	3.9	3.9	4.1	1.2	1.4	7.7
Australia	4.5	3.9	3.8	3.2	2.7	2.7	2.4	3.2	4.8
Canada	2.6	1.8	1.5	2.2	2.2	2.2	1.3	2.0	2.5
United States	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.2	2.5
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**12.4**	**12.5**	**14.1**	**15.8**	**18.9**	**22.9**	**23.9**	**22.1**	**26.0**
Australia	4.4	4.9	6.1	7.0	8.8	11.3	10.5	9.1	9.5
Japan	2.9	2.8	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.0	2.6	4.1
United Kingdom	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.8	2.9	4.3	5.5	4.7	3.2

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2008	2009	2010		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total	**1,792.4**	**1,831.4**	**1,932.2**						
Saudi Arabia		600.0							
Kuwait		200.0							
United Arab Emirates		150.0							
Qatar									
Lebanon									

Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total	**243.0**	**212.0**	**211.0**	**190.0**	**54.0**	**122.0**	**300.0**	**297.7**	**312.8**
Saudi Arabia	63.4	37.7	35.9	35.5	9.4	27.4	53.9	63.9	47.5
Kuwait	32.4	37.4	47.0	43.1	8.0	12.7	79.1	62.3	77.5
United Arab Emirates	40.1	36.7	32.8	32.9	10.7	20.1	35.6	38.5	51.6
Qatar	59.5	56.6	50.8	40.8	9.7	30.3	72.0	48.5	46.0
Maldives	6.1	6.3	7.3	7.8	2.4	7.1	12.8	12.0	12.0

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	−1.4	−0.8	−1.0	−1.3	−1.3	−1.3	−1.3	−1.2	−1.2	−1.2

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	7,000	7,262	7,190	7,043	6,749	7,140	5,522	3,819	6,023	

TAIPEI,CHINA 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators (2023, %)	
2013	23.4	21,973	2.5	Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	57.2
2023	23.4	32,358	1.4	Unemployment (total labor force)	3.5
2024	23.2	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in Taipei,China

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	450	2.0	57	NA	NA	NA	NA
2015	866	3.68	66				
2020	1,055	4.46	63				
2024	1,136	4.90	60				

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2024	Total	Agriculture, forestry, fishing	Manufacturing	Construction	Care
Number of foreign workers ('000)	753.4	18.9	457.6	32.0	212.7
% of total employment					

Stock of international students ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	14.1	15.8	17.8	21.2	28.4	31.8	32.0	34.5	32.0		
Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024

Emigration from Taipei,China to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Taipei,China living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	191.6	238.3	429.9	226.9	318.9	545.9
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	42.5	54.0	96.4	15.3	15.7	15.5
15–24 (% of population 15+)	22.4	17.4	19.6	11.1	9.3	10.0
25–64 (% of population 15+)	73.7	78.5	76.4	74.1	77.9	76.3
Total emigration rates (%)	2.2	2.7	2.4	2.2	3.0	2.6
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	5.3	7.0	6.0	4.6	6.4	5.4

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**18.2**	**21.7**	**26.0**	**27.8**	**30.1**	**32.5**	**16.1**	**13.1**	**22.7**
Japan	7.7	10.8	12.2	13.7	14.9	16.3	4.2	1.3	9.4
United States	4.7	4.9	5.1	4.9	5.2	5.8	4.7	4.2	5.0
Korea, Republic of	2.0	2.0	2.3	2.5	2.8	2.7	1.9	1.6	2.1
Australia	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.0
Germany	NA	NA	1.7	1.9	2.0	2.1	1.0	1.1	1.6
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Total				**67.7**	**71.5**	**60.3**	**53.1**		
United States	21.1	21.5	22.5	22.9	23.7	19.7	20.5		
Australia				18.2	18.4	15.6	11.9		
Japan				10.3	9.6	7.2	4.9		

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**726.0**	**724.0**	**728.0**	**736.0**	**737.0**	**739.0**	**501.0**	**319.0**	**473.0**
People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong, China and Macau, China)	427.0	420.0	407.0	405.0	404.0	395.0	242.0	163.0	177.0
Southeast Asia	113.0	111.0	111.0	109.0	112.0	120.0	86.0	40.0	71.0
United States	86.0	92.0	99.0	101.0	95.0	92.0	77.0	54.0	103.0
Japan and Republic of Korea								23.0	40.0

Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total									

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	0.5	1.2	0.7	0.4	0.7	−0.9	−6.2	−1.1	−1.4	−1.1

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

THAILAND 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	69.2	5,426	7.2	Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	66.5
2022	71.7	6,273	2.6	Unemployment (total labor force)	0.7
2023	71.7	6,394	2.6		
2024	71.7	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in Thailand

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	771	1.22	50	30.8	47.0	84.7	9.9
2015	2,853	4.04	44	16.6	67.8	NA	NA
2020	3,015	4.21	44	16.6	67.8		
2024	3,179	4.44	44	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2021	Total	Agriculture	Industry	Services
Number of foreign workers ('000)	1,099.5	138.6	592.4	364.3
% of total employment	2.9	1.1	7.2	2.1

Stock of international students ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
			31.6				25.1		27.1	29.9	40.9

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	117.9	120.6	125.1	122.9	147.1	149.6	112.4	86.7	72.6	89.1	120.2

Emigration from Thailand to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Thailand living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	90.8	180.0	270.8	171.1	438.7	609.8
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	15.8	33.9	49.7	17.6	21.2	20.2
15–24 (% of population 15+)	38.7	21.8	27.5	23.3	9.9	13.7
25–64 (% of population 15+)	59.6	76.3	70.7	69.4	82.8	79.0
Total emigration rates (%)	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.6	1.5	1.0
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	2.4	3.1	2.8	1.4	2.9	2.2

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**84.8**	**60.3**	**65.0**	**108.5**	**118.5**	**92.7**	**31.4**	**24.6**	**66.1**
Korea, Republic of	48.3	20.1	28.5	71.5	80.3	53.3	8.7	5.2	34.7
Japan	14.3	14.5	15.4	16.4	17.1	17.9	6.4	1.6	13.1
United States	4.0	4.1	4.4	4.0	3.9	4.5	3.3	3.5	4.0
Germany	3.1	3.2	3.4	3.4	3.9	3.7	2.8	2.8	3.4
Australia	2.7	2.5	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.3	2.0	2.4	2.7
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**21.4**	**23.5**	**24.5**	**26.4**	**27.2**	**26.9**	**26.5**	**21.9**	**25.5**
Australia	2.9	4.8	5.7	7.4	7.8	7.7	6.8	6.1	6.5
United Kingdom	6.2	6.1	6.0	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.7	4.5	5.4
United States	7.1	7.1	6.9	6.4	6.4	6.0	5.8	4.8	4.9

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total					**153.3**	**168.4**	**154.9**	**149.5**	
Taipei,China					74.2	77.0	71.8	68.6	
Malaysia						3.5		3.3	
Singapore						4.3	3.5	2.7	
Hong Kong, China						2.7		1.8	
United Arab Emirates						3.1		1.4	
Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Total	**114.4**	**91.0**	**115.4**	**113.8**	**40.8**	**37.3**	**88.2**	**104.4**	**95.1**
Taipei,China	35.0	35.2	33.5	32.2	13.7	6.8	25.4	32.4	34.1
Korea, Republic of	12.6	12.6	12.5	12.5	3.1	3.2	8.6	13.0	13.6
Japan	8.6	9.2	9.2	9.6	4.8	0.6	8.1	9.7	8.0
Malaysia	3.3	7.1	8.2	7.9	3.2	1.3	4.4	8.4	8.0
Israel	8.6	7.5	8.3	9.1	2.5	6.1	9.4	6.4	5.1

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	0.5	1.6	0.9	0.2	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.3

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	5,895	6,270	6,720	7,466	8,162	8,257	9,065	8,917	9,692	

VIET NAM 2025

KEY INDICATORS

	Population (million)	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)	GDP growth rate (annual, %)	Labor market indicators 2024, % (modeled ILO estimate)	
2012	89.3	2,229	5.5	Employment / population ratio (15+, total)	73.7
2022	99.7	3,604	8.1	Unemployment (total labor force)	1.4
2023	100.4	3,760	5.0		
2024	101.0	NA	NA		

Immigrant population in Viet Nam

	Stock of foreign-born population (0+)			Foreign-born population, 15 years old and over			
	Total ('000)	% of population	% women	% 15–24	% 25–64	% low-educated	% high-educated
2000	86	0.11	50	21.0	50.5	NA	NA
2015	101	0.11	54	14.0	68.0		
2020	201	0.20	52	11.9	69.1		
2024	326	0.32	53	NA	NA		

Stock of foreign workers by sector, 2024	Total
Number of foreign workers ('000)	149.2
% of total employment	

Stock of international students ('000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	2.5	2.9	5.6	4.2		7.3	8.6	8.4	7.8	NA	NA

Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	43.0	52.6	55.4	56.9	74.0	78.4	76.3	83.6			

Emigration from Viet Nam to OECD countries

	2000			2015/16		
Stock of persons born in Viet Nam living in OECD countries	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Emigrant population 15+ ('000)	747.4	768.6	1515.9	1,016.5	1,179.2	2,195.7
Recent emigrants 15+ ('000)	63.0	86.1	149.1	8.7	12.3	10.6
15–24 (% of population 15+)	12.5	12.1	12.3	9.4	8.2	8.8
25–64 (% of population 15+)	81.1	79.9	80.5	76.5	76.6	76.5
Total emigration rates (%)	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	3.1	3.0
Emigration rates of the high-educated (%)	17.1	19.8	18.2	9.9	10.8	10.4

Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	**125.3**	**151.7**	**184.7**	**213.9**	**243.5**	**282.0**	**154.8**	**89.8**	**240.1**
Japan	43.0	65.9	77.5	98.6	123.3	148.2	71.1	24.2	127.9
Korea, Republic of	28.0	30.2	40.1	48.0	56.0	61.3	28.0	17.4	51.7
United States	29.4	30.4	40.1	37.9	33.4	39.2	29.5	16.1	23.8
Germany	5.1	6.1	7.0	7.0	8.5	8.8	7.5	7.7	12.2
Australia	5.2	5.1	5.4	5.5	5.2	5.5	5.1	7.8	8.0
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Total	**57.1**	**63.6**	**78.2**	**90.2**	**104.3**	**122.7**	**133.1**	**133.1**	**142.7**
Japan	6.1	10.6	19.2	26.8	34.3	40.6	44.1	43.3	38.5
Korea, Republic of	2.1	2.5	3.4	4.7	7.8	13.2	19.1	24.9	26.8
United States	17.9	19.3	22.2	23.2	25.6	26.0	25.2	23.2	21.9

Workers deployed abroad

Stock of workers abroad (5 main destinations, '000)	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total							**580.0**	**650.0**	
Taipei,China						200.0	206.2		
Malaysia		74.8			70.0				
Russian Federation									
Lao People's Democratic Republic				30.0					
Saudi Arabia									
Flows of workers deployed (5 main destinations, '000)	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Total	**126.0**	**135.0**	**143.0**	**152.5**	**79.0**	**45.1**	**142.8**	**160.0**	**158.6**
Japan	39.9	54.5	68.7	82.7	38.9	19.5	67.3	80.0	71.5
Taipei,China	68.2	66.9	60.4	54.5	34.6	19.5	59.3	58.6	62.3
Korea, Republic of	8.5	5.2	6.5	7.2	1.3	1.0	10.0	11.6	13.6
People's Republic of China	0.0	0.0	0.0	..	0.6	1.8	0.9	1.8	2.3
Singapore	0.0	0.1	0.1	..	0.5	0.7	1.8	1.4	1.5

Net migration rate (per thousand)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	−0.1	1.8	1.5	1.0	0.0	−0.1	−0.1	−0.8	−0.8	−0.6

Remittance inflows (current $ million)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	8,051	8,556	9,406	10,191	10,885	10,715	12,722	13,200	14,000	

GENERAL NOTES

1. All tables with top three/five destinations are ranked by decreasing order of frequency for the last year available
2. Data on remittances for 2016 are estimates
3. "NA" data not available
4. Educational attainment levels are defined according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997).
   "Low-educated" persons have completed at best lower secondary education (ISCED 0/1/2).
   "Medium-educated" have completed at best post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 3/4).
   "Highly-educated" persons hold at least a first stage tertiary degree (ISCED 5/6).
5. The definition of non-citizen students was only used for the economies for which no data on non-resident students were available.
6. Data on international students in the Asian economies is only for degree programs (undergraduate and upward) and do not include short-term language courses
7. Stock of foreign workers in economy by sector reports figures for the four largest employers of foreign workers.

DATA SOURCES

Data	Source
Key indicators	World Bank. World Development Indicators
Population in 2024	United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, International Migrant Stock 2024: Destination
Stock of foreign-born population (0+)	
Total immigrant population 0+ ('000)	United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, International Migrant Stock 2024: Destination
% of total population 0+	United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, International Migrant Stock 2024: Destination
% of women	United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, International Migrant Stock 2024: Destination
Age structure (2000, %) (population 15+):	DIOC-E 2000
Education (2000, %) (population 15+):	DIOC-E 2000
Stock of International Students	UIS Education database unless otherwise specified. Break in series in 2013
Inflows of Foreign Workers	ILO-ILMS
Stock of persons living in OECD countries	DIOC-E 2000, DIOC 2000, DIOC 2010, DIOC 2015, Barro and Lee (2010) and Lutz et al. (2010)
Legal migration flows to OECD (5 main destinations, '000)	OECD International Migration Database (IMD)
Stock of international students (3 main destinations, '000)	OECD Education and Skills database
Net Migration Rate	United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. World Population Prospects 2024
Remittance Inflows	World Bank. Migration and Remittances Data

METADATA		
	Comments	**Source**
Bangladesh		
Stock of foreign workers by sector		Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA)
International students	Public and private universities summed	University Grants Commission
Inflow of foreign workers ('000)	New Permits only	Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA)
Stock of workers abroad in non-OECD countries		Population and Housing Census 2011
Flows of workers deployed to non-OECD countries	All totals include OECD countries and the category "others"	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET)
Cambodia		
Stock of foreign workers by sector		ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN
Inflows of foreign workers ('000)		ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN
Stock of workers abroad in non-OECD countries		Khmer Times
Flows of workers deployed to non-OECD countries		ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN, Khmer Times
Remittance inflows (current $ million)	Only in 2024	Khmer Times
Hong Kong, China		
Inflow of foreign workers ('000)		Annual report, Immigration Department
Emigrant population living in OECD countries	Some destination countries such as Germany, United Kingdom, and United States are not included	
India		
Stock of workers abroad in non-OECD countries	Nonresident Indians. Includes all NRIs, whether workers or not. Series break from "Nonresident Indians" from "overseas Indians"	Ministry of External Affairs (Annual Reports).
Flows of workers deployed to non-OECD countries		Ministry of External Affairs, Department of Overseas Employment database, emigrate.gov.in; Country wise Emigration Clearances (ECs) obtained by RAs and Direct Recruitment by Fes, 2015-2016 E-migrate (https://emigrate.gov.in/ext/home.action)
Indonesia		
Stock of foreign workers by sector		Foreign Manpower Utilization Permits Issued by the Ministry of Manpower
Stock of foreign workers	Trade includes wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants	Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration
Stock of workers in non-OECD countries		World Bank presentation "Malaysia-Indonesia Remittance Corridor"; news reports.
Flows of workers deployed to non-OECD countries	All totals include OECD countries and the category "others"	BNP2TKI (Placement and Protection Agency)

Japan		
Stock of foreign workers		Status of reporting on the employment of foreign workers, and Labor Force Survey, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
Stock of international students ('000)	The total number of those in higher education and language schools	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)
Inflows of foreign workers	The number for Highly Skilled Professional, Entrepreneurship, and Employment Visa (高度専門職＋起業＋就業)	Number of Visas Issued, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan *Up to 2019: Statistics on Legal Migrants, Immigration Bureau of Japan
Lao PDR		
Stock of foreign workers by sector		ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN
Inflows of foreign workers ('000)		ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN
Flows of workers deployed to non-OECD countries		ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN, LAOSIS (Laos Statistical Information Service)
Malaysia		
Stock of foreign workers by sector		ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN
Inflows of foreign workers ('000)		ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN
Mongolia		
Stock of foreign workers		National Statistics Office of Mongolia
Inflows of foreign workers ('000)	Foreign workers with labour contract	National Statistics Office of Mongolia
Myanmar		
Flows of workers deployed to non-OECD countries	Adjusted from Myanmar Fiscal Year to calendar year using quarterly data	Central Statistical Organization of Myanmar
Stock of workers in non-OECD countries		Central Statistical Organization of Myanmar
Nepal		
Flows of workers deployed to non-OECD countries	Excludes re-entries. All totals include OECD countries	Department of Foreign Employment, for Nepalese Fiscal Years (mid-July to mid-July)
Pakistan		
Inflows of foreign workers	Work visas granted to expatriates.	Board of Investment, Prime Minister's Office.
Flows of workers deployed to non-OECD countries	All totals include OECD countries	Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment

People's Republic of China		
Stock of foreign workers		Residents for purpose of employment, 2020 Census (preliminary), National Bureau of Statistics
Emigrant population living in OECD countries	Some destination economies such as Germany and United States include Taipei,China and Hong Kong, China data	
Stock of workers in non-OECD countries	All totals include OECD countries	National Bureau of Statistics
Flows of workers deployed to non-OECD countries	All totals include OECD countries	National Bureau of Statistics
Philippines		
Stock of foreign workers by sector		AEPs issued by the Department of Labor and Employment
Inflows of foreign workers ('000)		ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN
Stock of workers in non-OECD countries		Survey on Overseas Filipinos, The Philippine Statistics Authority
Flows of workers deployed to non-OECD countries	All totals include OECD countries, new and rehired deployments	Department of Migrant Workers
Republic of Korea		
Stock of foreign workers		Korean Statistical Information Service
Inflows of foreign workers	E (employment) Visa entries	Korean Statistical Information Service
Singapore		
Stock of foreign workers by sector		ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN
Sri Lanka		
Inflows of foreign workers		Issuance of residence visas for private and public sector employment, Board of Investment and construction, Department of Immigration and Emigration
Stock of workers in non-OECD countries		Institute of Policy Studies (2008): "International Migration Outlook, Sri Lanka" (original source: Bureau of Foreign Employment); "Sri Lanka Country Study" by Judith Shaw (original source: SLBFE 2005); "Policy on Labour Migration for Cambodia", ILO and Department of Employment and Manpower Cambodia, June 2010
Flows of workers deployed to non-OECD countries	All totals include OECD countries	Bureau of Foreign Employment, Central Bank of Sri Lanka
Taipei,China		
Stock of foreign workers		Workforce Development Agency, Ministry of Labor, Taipei,China.
Emigrant population living in OECD countries	Some destination countries such as Austraria, Germany, and United States are not included.	
International students in OECD countries	Number of students obtaining visas from foreign nations	Ministry of Education, UNESCO UIS
Stock of workers in non-OECD countries	All totals include OECD countries	Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics (People's Republic of China includes Hong Kong, China and Macau, China)

Thailand		
Stock of foreign workers by sector		ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN
Inflows of foreign workers ('000s)		ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN
Stock of workers in ? non-OECD countries	Includes "illegal workers"	ILO-ILMS, Overseas Employment Administration Division
Flows of workers deployed to non-OECD countries	All totals include OECD countries. Includes New and Re-entries	Overseas Employment Administration Division
Viet Nam		
Stock of foreign workers by sector		Foreign workers registered with the MOLISA
Inflows of foreign workers ('000s)		ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN
Stock of workers in non-OECD countries		MOLISA, country presentation at ADBI-OECD-ILO roundtable
Flows of workers deployed to non-OECD countries		MOLISA, ILO ILMS Database in ASEAN

ANNEX 2

COMPARATIVE TABLES

Table A2.1: Inflows from Asia to the OECD by Economy of Origin ('000)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Afghanistan	17	20	15	13	13	16	15	11	13	18	24	29	35	34	45	139	153	105	103	101	71	127	170
Azerbaijan	1	2	5	4	4	4	5	3	3	3	6	4	4	4	5	6	23	28	30	34	15	34	30
Bangladesh	23	24	19	22	30	37	42	34	40	50	50	50	42	43	47	51	51	52	54	53	40	50	72
Bhutan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	9	14	13	11	9	7	5	7	5	3	2	1	1
Brunei Darussalam	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cambodia	4	5	5	5	6	7	11	9	10	9	10	12	15	16	16	17	20	20	19	21	10	8	26
China, People's Republic of	282	334	335	322	367	438	503	518	530	460	508	531	504	547	555	541	553	563	566	572	276	302	414
Georgia	1	2	7	7	8	11	10	9	8	8	8	9	10	11	12	14	19	22	24	30	17	29	29
Hong Kong, China	10	12	13	12	10	8	10	8	8	6	9	7	6	9	7	7	14	17	17	15	6	56	NA
India	113	151	161	145	192	213	206	213	215	227	253	243	229	241	263	268	278	310	354	407	229	417	456
Indonesia	29	32	33	31	27	35	30	27	31	22	25	29	31	36	35	35	39	39	48	54	27	23	86
Japan	34	38	39	35	36	42	34	32	29	34	32	34	37	37	34	37	35	29	30	31	21	25	28
Kazakhstan	5	4	17	15	12	9	8	7	7	7	8	9	7	9	11	12	19	25	31	32	20	35	41
Korea, Republic of	59	69	62	54	57	66	68	72	79	78	76	71	71	75	70	65	73	73	77	81	43	39	63
Kyrgyz Republic	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	11	14	15	16	8	17	17
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2	2	2	1	2	2	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	3
Malaysia	11	14	12	13	16	11	12	20	24	20	22	17	21	23	19	22	16	17	17	15	9	9	15
Maldives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mongolia	6	6	4	7	8	11	15	15	15	9	10	9	10	9	8	15	15	20	20	19	13	9	23
Myanmar	2	3	3	3	3	5	11	10	10	23	19	24	27	23	23	27	29	34	30	26	15	7	35
Nepal	4	3	5	6	8	9	14	17	19	23	25	30	33	39	42	47	49	47	50	49	29	28	97
Pakistan	54	59	49	47	73	74	83	74	76	77	100	106	84	73	78	99	96	92	91	97	73	110	103
Philippines	165	188	195	192	211	192	173	169	158	164	168	161	160	152	158	181	173	175	169	171	86	96	160
Singapore	6	6	6	5	6	7	7	7	7	5	7	9	9	8	9	7	7	13	13	12	4	4	6
Sri Lanka	23	21	22	24	23	28	28	21	33	33	41	36	35	30	29	31	30	27	25	25	18	18	39
Tajikistan	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	4	5	4	6	4	8	9
Taipei,China	16	21	21	15	20	17	32	33	22	24	20	18	17	22	18	22	26	28	30	32	16	13	23
Thailand	32	35	34	35	36	47	51	48	47	47	50	53	59	61	87	64	68	109	119	93	31	25	66
Timor-Leste	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
Turkmenistan	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	0	1	9	21	36	81	18	25	13
Uzbekistan	8	6	8	11	8	9	11	12	20	13	16	16	19	19	21	21	33	45	43	58	28	59	52
Viet Nam	52	60	64	55	66	78	82	88	98	76	87	95	94	102	125	152	186	214	243	282	155	90	240
Total Asia	**960**	**1,117**	**1,139**	**1,083**	**1,245**	**1,379**	**1,470**	**1,465**	**1,511**	**1,449**	**1,593**	**1,621**	**1,578**	**1,645**	**1,734**	**1,896**	**2,038**	**2,154**	**2,265**	**2,421**	**1,286**	**1,667**	**2,318**

Source: OECD International Migration Database.

Table A2.2: Outflows of Workers from Asian Economies, by Destination

	Bangladesh												
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Gulf Cooperation Council countries													
United Arab Emirates	215,452	14,241	24,232	25,271	8,131	4,135	3,235	3,318	1,082	29,202	101,775	98,422	47,166
Saudi Arabia	21,232	12,654	10,657	58,270	143,913	551,308	257,317	399,000	161,726	457,227	612,418	497,674	628,564
Oman	170,326	134,028	105,748	129,859	188,247	89,704	72,504	72,654	21,071	55,009	179,612	127,883	358
Kuwait	2	6	3,094	17,472	38,188	49,604	27,637	12,299	1,744	1,848	20,422	36,548	33,031
Bahrain	21,777	25,155	23,378	20,720	72,167	19,318	811	133	3	11	10	1	0
Qatar	28,801	57,584	87,575	123,965	120,382	82,012	76,560	50,292	3,608	11,158	24,447	56,148	74,422
Other Middle East													
Jordan	11,726	21,383	20,338	22,093	23,017	20,449	9,724	20,347	3,769	13,816	12,231	8,626	15,413
Lebanon	14,864	15,098	16,640	19,113	15,095	8,327	5,991	4,863	488	235	858	2,594	4,225
Iraq	359	7,456	13,627	13,982	4,738	3,819	19,567	9,266		5	64	92	68
Israel													
Asia, OECD													
Japan	420	41	55	99	165	145	163	229	142	3	508	967	1,088
Korea, Republic of	1,447	2,121	1,748	2,359	1,980	1,829	2,287	1,647	208	108	5,910	4,996	3,038
Asia, non-OECD													
Singapore	58,657	60,057	54,750	55,523	54,730	40,401	41,393	49,829	10,085	27,875	64,383	53,265	56,878
Malaysia	804	3,853	5,134	30,483	40,126	99,787	175,927	545	125	28	50,090	351,683	93,632
Taipei,China													
Thailand													
Hong Kong, China													
Macau, China													
Maldives													
Brunei Darussalam	5,038	5,971	6,633	6,354	5,836	8,587	4,480	3,628	530	12	1,850	1,081	205
Indonesia													
India													
China, People's Republic of													
Other Destinations													
Italy	9,280	4,792	856	44	3	1		2		653	7,594	16,879	1,164
Mauritius	5,421	5,961	5,938	4,753	4,679	5,942	6,608	7,576	2,014	215	5,484	1,201	7
United Kingdom				4	11	7	8	11	21	123	942	10,383	3,550

Source: National sources.

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Table A2.2 *continued*

	India												
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Gulf Cooperation Council countries													
United Arab Emirates	141,138	202,016	224,033	225,718	163,731	149,962	112,059	76,112	17,891	10,844	33,233	71,687	111,791
Saudi Arabia	357,503	354,169	329,937	308,380	165,356	78,611	72,399	161,103	44,316	32,845	178,630	200,713	168,567
Oman	84,384	63,398	51,318	85,054	63,224	53,332	36,037	28,392	7,206	19,452	31,994	21,336	24,399
Kuwait	55,868	70,072	80,419	66,579	72,402	56,380	57,613	45,712	8,107	10,158	71,432	48,212	40,187
Bahrain	20,150	17,269	14,220	15,623	11,964	11,516	9,142	9,997	4,175	6,382	10,232	7,376	8,668
Qatar	63,096	78,367	75,935	59,384	30,619	24,759	34,471	31,810	8,907	49,579	30,871	30,683	23,947
Other Middle East													
Jordan	1,819	1,462	2,133	2,047	2,742	2,341	1,941	3,941	317	2,386	2,487	1,187	3,150
Lebanon	288	281	313	341	316	110	109	160	21	54	282	200	130
Iraq	925	6,553	3,054	1	0	0	0	162	759	935	1,430	1,599	2,754
Israel													
Asia, OECD													
Japan	420	41	55	99	165	145	163	229	142	3	508	967	1,088
Korea, Republic of	1,447	2,121	1,748	2,359	1,980	1,829	2,287	1,647	208	108	5,910	4,996	3,038
Asia, non-OECD													
Singapore													
Malaysia	21,241	22,388	22,926	20,908	10,604	14,002	16,370	10,633	2,435	36	12,836	15,319	5,710
Taipei,China													
Thailand	9	15	53	10	1	0	6	24	10	1	3	4	10
Hong Kong, China													
Macau, China													
Maldives													
Brunei Darussalam													
Indonesia	11	38	29	6	1	10	10	0	1	0	0	0	3
India													
China, People's Republic of													
Other Destinations													
Mauritius													
Romania													

Source: National sources.

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Table A2.2 *continued*

	Indonesia												
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Gulf Cooperation Council countries													
United Arab Emirates	35,571	44,505	17,962	7,619	2,575	1,667	726	578	117	437	548	976	1,244
Saudi Arabia	40,655	45,394	44,325	23,000	13,538	6,471	5,894	7,018	1,793	747	4,676	6,310	7,759
Oman	8,836	10,719	19,141	6,766	1,014	1,085	749	471	65	37	115		165
Kuwait	2,518	2,534	1,714	310	987	1,162	1,172	782	74		718	425	640
Bahrain	6,328	5,384	5,472	2,570	123	125	86	130					89
Qatar	20,380	16,237	7,862	2,460	1,355	1,037	587	217	42	219	848	307	783
Other Middle East													
Jordan	106	0	0	103	65		7	48	2	33			57
Lebanon													6
Iraq													0
Israel													0
Asia, OECD													
Japan	3,293	3,042	2,428	468	279	538	458	486	749	359	5,832	9,673	12,720
Korea, Republic of	13,593	15,374	11,848	5,501	5,912	3,728	6,905	6,193	641	174	11,554	12,580	10,750
Asia, non-OECD													
Singapore	41,556	34,655	31,680	20,895	17,700	13,379	18,324	19,354	4,474	3,217	6,624	7,898	10,819
Malaysia	134,023	150,236	127,827	97,635	87,616	88,991	90,671	79,663	14,630	563	43,163	72,260	51,723
Taipei,China	81,071	83,544	82,665	75,303	77,087	62,823	72,373	79,574	34,287	7,789	53,459	83,216	84,581
Thailand	1,035	1,041	717	90	6	6	11						3
Hong Kong, China	45,478	41,769	35,050	15,322	14,434	68,103	73,917	70,840	53,178	52,278	60,096	65,916	99,773
Macau, China													39
Maldives							322	292	73	449	1,164	330	591
Brunei Darussalam	13,146	11,269	11,616	9,993	8,152	6,623	5,707	5,639	1,202	0	513	2,872	3,183
Indonesia													–
India	535	409	203	68	97								2
China, People's Republic of	1,967	2,055	915	108	65	84	22						40
Other Destinations													
Italy	3,691	3,746	1,295	1,516	851	1,010	1,204	1,349	411	3,225	3,582	3,519	3,535
Mauritius	982	1,017	838	144	5								28
Poland							102	430	837	1,195	1,897	1,524	1,320
Romania							25	34	34	83	288	221	377
Türkiye	1,209	1,518	1,246	1,108	498	811	1,005	730	47	874	1,489	2,289	2,630

Source: National sources.

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Table A2.2 *continued*

	Nepal												
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Gulf Cooperation Council countries													
United Arab Emirates	34,503	58,586	55,426	53,094	52,793	57,887	60,244	62,776	52,085	11,611	53,844	59,152	131,026
Saudi Arabia	68,103	96,903	86,613	96,887	138,529	72,892	40,962	46,080	39,279	23,324	125,369	55,791	73,095
Oman	1,884	3,931	3,952	3,470	3,059	3,066	3,059	2,722	1,996	1,556	3,626	2,716	2,905
Kuwait	9,165	17,376	20,196	9,634	10,049	13,134	17,555	15,995	8,974	2	22,786	31,410	28,776
Bahrain	3,100	4,255	4,418	4,168	3,146	3,911	4,862	4,633	3,305	3,146	7,592	3,952	5,116
Qatar	44,883	103,932	128,550	124,050	129,038	121,128	103,179	75,024	29,835	22,131	76,823	40,517	40,932
Other Middle East													
Jordan	558	520	440	385	1,232	2,745	1,944	1,458	2,374	930	927	621	1,976
Lebanon	2	181	447	181	167	146	22	11	5	2	3	7	14
Iraq													
Israel	7	0	0	0	189	132	118	58	14	1	306	786	333
Asia, OECD													
Japan					3,844	2,238	761	959	939	553	2,478	5,839	10,500
Korea, Republic of					80	90	27	22	50	16	173	21,870	12,837
Asia, non-OECD													
Singapore					89	148	127	206	85	28	188	220	207
Malaysia	96,272	158,663	210,009	196,497	60,979	95,244	104,209	9,999	39,167	107	26,091	219,357	81,382
Taipei,China					0							1	2
Thailand					21	26	31	30	5	2	12	29	34
Hong Kong, China	140	143	139	163	360	175	175	88	91	0	0	58	117
Macau, China	359	318	391	484				739	572	0	0	603	1,013
Maldives	7	25	104	45				1,974	887	1,008	2,735	3,994	5,958
Brunei Darussalam					150	158	144	143	121	5	285	862	484
Indonesia					6	1	5	1	13	1	1	4	11
India													
China, People's Republic of					181	186	269	448	151	66	1	74	165
Other Destinations													
Croatia								7	645	1,087	5,206	7,186	14,240
Malta								1,717	1,668	64	1,268	5,603	4,766
Mauritius								90	74	46	260	519	7,397
Poland								1,108	184	453	1,502	4,915	1,649
Romania	71	35	14	1				1,178	1,930	1,912	6,418	13,137	12,700
United Kingdom								60	38	315	2,808	2,248	2,469

Source: National sources.

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Table A2.2 *continued*

	Pakistan												
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Gulf Cooperation Council countries													
United Arab Emirates	182,630	273,234	350,522	326,986	295,647	275,436	208,635	211,216	53,676	27,442	128,477	229,894	64,130
Saudi Arabia	358,560	270,502	312,489	522,750	462,598	143,363	100,910	332,713	136,376	155,777	514,909	426,951	452,562
Oman	69,407	47,794	39,793	47,788	45,085	42,362	27,202	28,391	10,348	38,350	82,380	60,046	81,587
Kuwait	5	229	132	164	770	773	493	126	419	1,607	2,089	2,328	1,883
Bahrain	10,530	9,600	9,226	9,029	8,226	7,919	5,745	8,189	7,843	12,977	13,653	13,345	25,198
Qatar	7,320	8,119	10,042	12,741	9,706	11,592	20,993	19,327	7,422	37,987	57,999	55,112	40,818
Other Middle East													
Jordan	279	345	328	321	282	285	170	205	54	334	349	244	308
Lebanon	23	15	57	33	42	24	27	12	1	7	12	19	278
Iraq	32	951	1,041	709	543	599	756	2,306	1,177	2,819	2,387	4,307	6,650
Israel													
Asia, OECD													
Japan	62	44	69	82	102	153	258	391	356	17	900	1,184	1,518
Korea, Republic of	7	12	46	13	17	9	13	25	64	91	2,025	1,638	668
Asia, non-OECD													
Singapore	47	42	76	68	33	54	65	82	37	21	95	87	85
Malaysia	1,309	2,031	20,577	20,216	10,625	7,174	9,881	11,323	2,301	106	6,175	20,905	5,790
Taipei,China													
Thailand													
Hong Kong, China	17	20	38	29	38	54	57	60	52	52	75	122	134
Macau, China													
Maldives													
Brunei Darussalam	74	67	48	85	85	212	225	187	32	7	202	146	217
Indonesia													
India													
China, People's Republic of	220	155	254	355	482	457	854	1,252	298	607	673	1,794	1,886
Other Destinations													
Greece	0	0	0	2	3	2	3	1	1	15	579	2,914	1,487
Italy	3,361	2,068	1,563	431	242	141	86	20	6	77	350	1,360	1,049
Mauritius													
Romania	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,263	4,947	1,357
United Kingdom	183	158	250	260	346	340	587	903	804	1,034	2,922	16,449	13,695

Source: National sources.

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Table A2.2 *continued*

	Philippines												
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Gulf Cooperation Council countries													
United Arab Emirates	259,546	261,119	246,231	227,076	276,278	265,498		269,921	50,759		166,171	282,896	346,823
Saudi Arabia	330,040	382,553	402,837	406,089	460,121	433,567		412,521	86,817		143,847	419,776	398,768
Oman	16,048	16,577	15,880	22,274	27,579	25,399		25,364	5,904			19,942	21,215
Kuwait	75,286	67,856	70,098	86,019	109,615	107,604		125,457	11,083		100,619	70,124	83,511
Bahrain	22,271	20,546	18,958	21,428	21,429	21,388		20,887	5,021		11,097	20,773	21,274
Qatar	104,622	94,195	114,511	133,169	141,304	122,619		121,832	23,513		82,046	138,193	150,822
Other Middle East													
Jordan	3,025	2,223	3,393	7,253	9,970	7,063		7,758	1,524			5,805	5,844
Lebanon	1,227	2,874	3,010	3,694	3,959	4,179		3,886	734			2,866	70
Iraq				487	525	521		1,066	71			719	812
Israel	4,582	4,385	4,590		6,392	6,879		7,748	1,717			8,426	7,791
Asia, OECD													
Japan	9,947	10,936	12,815	14,161	21,363	21,924		32,844	10,579		24,575	45,724	50,706
Korea, Republic of	8,979	11,664	11,958	11,418	13,592	13,479		14,221	3,121			16,977	22,135
Asia, non-OECD													
Singapore	172,690	173,666	140,205	141,453	171,014	162,223		163,546	32,379		74,734	182,331	220,463
Malaysia	38,407	34,088	31,451	26,199	33,178	33,194		30,871	5,826		15,094	29,884	31,519
Taipei,China	41,492	41,145	58,681	62,598	65,364	69,235		71,132	16,113		19,978	66,475	100,612
Thailand	9,204	8,659	6,653	7,204	9,321	10,405		12,719	2,305			14,063	18,137
Hong Kong, China	131,680	130,686	105,737	85,704	116,467	144,535		159,093	32,261		44,839	175,877	207,590
Macau, China				9,756	14,088	17,790		24,941	3,624			20,364	28,040
Maldives				1,214	1,492	1,404		1,881	485			2,460	2,720
Brunei Darussalam	14,907	17,000	11,478	14,088	10,099	14,925		13,836	2,433			13,945	14,425
Indonesia	5,166	5,489	5,007	3,880	5,302	4,984		5,014	1,840			5,533	6,664
India				466	581	386		279	58			273	388
China, People's Republic of	9,969	9,829	6,229	6,564	9,166	9,369		10,040	1,171			5,727	8,305
Other Destinations													
Mauritius				37	53	51		15	8			46	55
Romania				249	229	278		608	156			1,037	1,173

Source: National sources.

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Table A2.2 *continued*

	Sri Lanka												
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Gulf Cooperation Council countries													
United Arab Emirates	38,234	48,502	50,347	43,666	40,124	36,667	32,836	32,866	10,708	20,050	35,563	38,451	51,550
Saudi Arabia	97,993	80,887	80,480	74,894	63,389	37,745	35,866	35,478	9,402	27,417	53,902	63,929	47,500
Oman	4,889	5,317	5,759	7,082	9,748	8,865	8,345	9,016	2,714	6,416	10,669	6,648	7,600
Kuwait	44,229	42,740	43,552	38,473	32,415	37,410	46,951	43,089	8,036	12,730	79,123	62,277	77,546
Bahrain	4,533	4,547	3,979	3,722	3,222	3,002	2,922	3,017	1,047	1,896	3,370	3,168	
Qatar	57,478	80,724	84,622	65,139	59,527	56,637	50,774	40,785	9,651	30,334	71,954	48,521	46,000
Other Middle East													
Jordan	10,387	7,060	6,197	4,809	3,870	3,925	4,163	4,611	955	2,095	5,597	5,549	
Lebanon	3,945	3,537	3,058	2,604	2,640	2,408	2,229	1,902	537	703	1,284	1,254	
Iraq				110	171	162	262	183				204	
Israel	1,768	1,944	2,010	1,986	2,274	2,498	2,033	1,559		1,264	1,632	1,912	9,665
Asia, OECD													
Japan	112	118	88	106	144	402				807	4,410	5,644	8,665
Korea, Republic of	5,629	5,402	6,686	6,967	8,609	5,807	5,409	6,207	1,292	1,426	6,120	9,746	7,098
Asia, non-OECD													
Singapore	980	1,265	1,470	1,461	1,840	1,795	1,917	2,124	762	1,178	3,007	2,675	
Malaysia	2,691	3,297	3,312	3,239	2,916	1,996	2,455	3,296	522	266	1,941	3,221	
Taipei,China													
Thailand	2				11	16	30	31			52	87	
Hong Kong, China	449	513	468	493	573	636	584	624	216		127	710	
Macau, China													
Maldives	4,044	3,485	4,511	4,813	6,116	6,279	7,298	7,767	2,383	7,082	12,816	11,986	12,000
Brunei Darussalam	11	15	12	9	14	9	8	17	3				
Indonesia					20	21						88	
India	97	11	136	121	187	157						206	
China, People's Republic of	6	3	5	11	6	10	12	17					
Other Destinations													
Mauritius	273	382	149	196	250	140	195	91	31	0		208	
Romania				128	139	225	482	2,315		3,002	3,012	11,748	9,800
Seychelles										860	1,606	1,424	

Source: National sources.

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Table A2.2 *continued*

	Thailand												
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Gulf Cooperation Council countries													
United Arab Emirates	7,245	5,495	5,038	4,623	4,014	3,270	2,326	1,931	541	479	1,261	1,183	1,126
Saudi Arabia	517	509	446	36	358	297	220	199	40	15	88	250	258
Oman	298	280	260	245	370	288	295	306	75	66	169	149	103
Kuwait	1,792	1,729	1,626	2,448	1,265	1,703	1,917	1,391	189	51	442	513	442
Bahrain	1,106	969	888	853	904	807	641	601	148	72	244	277	275
Qatar	2,623	2,392	2,449	2,273	1,562	904	554	482	111	131	300	350	385
Other Middle East													
Jordan						13	17	16	3	2	206	11	59
Lebanon						42	35	33	5	6	7	6	7
Iraq									1				
Israel	5,126	8,393	7,618	7,144	8,629	7,494	8,260	9,122	2,547	6,081	9,417	6,415	5,063
Asia, OECD													
Japan	8,596	6,904	7,614	7,705	8,610	9,196	9,180	9,600	4,778	637	8,147	9,656	7,955
Korea, Republic of	10,393	11,758	9,835	189	12,609	12,609	12,476	12,529	3,130	3,249	8,571	13,039	
Asia, non-OECD													
Singapore	11,864	10,728	8,191	7,265	5,843	5,399	4,553	3,819	1,078	1,189	3,064	3,690	3,402
Malaysia	4,441	3,852	3,237	3,318	3,263	7,141	8,182	7,919	3,185	1,324	4,402	8,369	7,961
Taipei,China	39,128	34,631	37,105	34,738	35,027	35,199	33,546	32,204	13,707	6,751	25,372	32,436	34,100
Thailand													
Hong Kong, China	2,533	2,225	2,209	2,185	2,160	2,296	2,028	1,770	36	240	836	1,582	2,331
Macau, China									61			287	207
Maldives									45			60	57
Brunei Darussalam	2,697	2,489	1,944	1,846	1,461	1,299	1,109	1,109	281	31	453	581	470
Indonesia	2,480	3,210	3,103	2,538	1,967	1,724	1,636	1,355	353	306	551	639	562
India	2,480	3,210	3,103	1,860	1,646	1,468	1,432	1,391	372	322	553	718	680
China, People's Republic of	923	1,169	725	405	261	398	287	231	36	5	6	79	66
Other Destinations													
Finland												2,863	682
Lao People's Democratic Republic												2,351	2,289
Mauritius												1	
Romania									18		7	3	12
Sweden												6,000	1,357
United States												2,073	3,367

Source: National sources.

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Table A2.2 *continued*

	Viet Nam												
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Gulf Cooperation Council countries													
United Arab Emirates	1,731	2,075	831	286	136	222	26			107			
Saudi Arabia	2,360	1,703	4,191	3,975	16	3,626	1,920	1,375	57	50	168	444	660
Oman	154	25	57	86	0	0	46						
Kuwait	440	31	30	54	40	9							
Bahrain	11	16	9										
Qatar	105	206	850	455	702	201	73		776				
Other Middle East													
Jordan	20	0	0										
Lebanon													
Iraq													
Israel	210	141	484	268	250	104							
Asia, OECD													
Japan	8,775	9,686	19,766	27,010	39,938	54,504	68,737	82,703	38,891	19,510	67,295	80,010	71,518
Korea, Republic of	9,228	5,446	7,242	6,019	8,482	5,178	6,538	7,215	1,309	1,036	9,968	11,626	13,649
Asia, non-OECD													
Singapore	107	149	92	31	29	79	117		537	713	1,822	1,355	1,544
Malaysia	9,298	7,564	5,139	7,354	2,079	1,551	1,102	454				480	
Taipei,China	30,533	46,368	62,124	67,121	68,244	66,926	60,369	54,480	34,573	19,531	59,306	58,620	62,282
Thailand	0	0	0	0		0							
Hong Kong, China	0	0	0		11	4	23					584	582
Macau, China		2,294	2,516	493	266	348	263	401				169	
Maldives													346
Brunei Darussalam	74	18	0	0		0							
Indonesia	0	0	0	0		0							
India													
China, People's Republic of	0	4	0		7	0			594	1,820	910	1,806	2,335
Other Destinations													
Hungary							25			465	775	1,539	759
Poland						14	86	310		194	494	797	331
Mauritius													
Romania		94	218	0	8	683	1,319	3,478	924	795	721	840	1,023

Source: National sources.

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Table A2.2 *continued*

	Cambodia												
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Gulf Cooperation Council countries													
United Arab Emirates													
Saudi Arabia													
Oman													
Kuwait													
Bahrain													
Qatar													
Other Middle East													
Jordan													
Lebanon													
Iraq													
Israel													
Asia, OECD													
Japan	102	111	518	1,399	1,562	2,280	3,002	3,945	3,109	631	6,365		
Korea, Republic of	8,132	8,820	7,671	7,073	7,371	5,967	4,870	5,938	919	2,577	8,880		
Asia, non-OECD													
Singapore	0	111	190	99	87	138	287	135	39		47	32	
Malaysia	180	90	470	807	123	27	53	69	26				
Taipei,China													
Thailand	26,390	13,468	15,839	16,163	76,433	87,909	60,333	57,823	18,625		18,417	43,291	
Hong Kong, China													
Macau, China													
Maldives													
Brunei Darussalam													
Indonesia													
India													
China, People's Republic of					0	15							
Other Destinations													
Mauritius													
Romania													

Source: International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS database) - ILOSTAT.

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Table A2.2 *continued*

	Myanmar												
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Gulf Cooperation Council countries													
United Arab Emirates	39	0	14	77	271	127	214	323	83	67	425		
Saudi Arabia													
Oman													
Kuwait	1	0	0	0		0	0						
Bahrain													
Qatar	10	77	15	0	73	135	87	116	19	52	473		
Other Middle East													
Jordan						0	296	1 115	164	227	609		
Lebanon													
Iraq													
Israel													
Asia, OECD													
Japan	0	36	518	1,678	2,384	3,331	3,889	6,690	4,680	1,534	14,094		
Korea, Republic of	3,669	4,003	4,482	4,475	5,731	5,676	6,105	4,756	738	28	8,368		
Asia, non-OECD													
Singapore	452	791	501	431	707	355	504	467	86	1,348	21,295	2,675	
Malaysia	26,921	25,905	25,892	35,022	33,920	3,305	24,773	78,781	10,636	27	34,964	3,221	
Taipei,China													
Thailand	37,347	36,029	33,188	53,578	102,722	148,942	198,017	238,082	58,642	25	105,682	87	
Hong Kong, China													
Macau, China						6	9	9	0	0			
Maldives													
Brunei Darussalam													
Indonesia													
India													
China, People's Republic of													
Other Destinations													
Mauritius													
Romania													

Source: National sources.

Table A2.3: Migrant Remittance Inflows in Asian Economies, 2000–2022
($ million)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Afghanistan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	90	141	378	179	219	347	253	349	628	823	804	829	789	320	370	300	
Azerbaijan	57	104	163	156	204	623	790	1,268	1,518	1,255	1,410	1,893	1,990	1,733	1,846	1,270	643	1,133	1,226	1,275	1,403	1,527	3,950	2,800	
Bangladesh	1,968	2,105	2,858	3,192	3,584	4,315	5,428	6,562	8,941	10,521	10,850	12,071	14,120	13,867	14,988	15,296	13,574	13,502	15,566	18,364	21,752	22,206	21,505	22,070	
Bhutan	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	3	4	5	8	10	18	12	14	20	34	43	58	57	83	73	88	75	
Brunei Darussalam	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	
Cambodia	103	113	123	128	147	164	184	186	188	142	557	611	855	1,003	1,103	1,185	1,199	1,287	1,431	2,659	2,588	2,539	2,616	2,782	2,950
China, People's Republic of	758	1,209	2,354	4,620	6,640	23,626	27,565	38,395	47,743	41,600	52,460	61,576	57,987	59,491	62,332	63,938	61,000	63,876	67,414	68,398	59,507	53,000	51,000	49,500	
Georgia	206	219	226	248	359	446	627	883	1065	1,112	1,184	1,547	1,770	1,945	1,986	1,459	1,521	1,794	2,034	2,258	2,110	2,644	3,854	4,500	
Hong Kong, China	136	153	121	120	240	297	294	317	355	348	340	352	367	360	372	387	399	437	425	451	427	453	419	454	
India	12,883	14,273	15,736	20,999	18,750	22,125	28,334	37,217	49,977	49,204	53,480	62,499	68,821	69,970	70,389	68,910	62,744	68,967	78,790	83,332	83,149	89,375	111,222	119,526	
Indonesia	1,190	1,046	1,259	1,489	1,866	5,420	5,722	6,174	6,794	6,793	6,916	6,924	7,212	7,614	8,551	9,659	8,907	8,990	11,215	11,666	9,651	9,402	13,089	14,467	16,038
Japan	773	1,250	1,127	811	774	905	1,177	1,384	1,732	1,595	1,684	2,132	2,540	2,364	3,734	3,325	3,830	4,443	4,369	4,389	4,888	5,294	5,408	4,687	
Kazakhstan	68	85	111	42	57	62	84	143	126	198	226	180	283	341	401	294	384	560	618	506	374	310	481	440	
Korea, Republic of	4,524	4,516	5,135	5,875	5,935	5,200	4,850	5,155	6,978	6,000	5,854	6,602	6,589	6475	6,574	6,464	6,524	6,526	7,125	7,166	7,435	7,742	7,815	7,653	
Kyrgyz Republic	2	5	30	70	179	313	473	704	1,223	982	1,266	1,709	2,031	2,278	2,243	1,688	1,995	2,486	2,689	2,411	2,423	2,792	3,225	2,600	
Lao People's Democratic Republic	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	6	18	38	42	110	203	170	188	189	189	243	240	297	232	220	240	287	
Macau, China	..	..	47	48	53	53	55	54	52	48	47	48	47	49	37	40	28	35	42	55	66	74	83	90	
Malaysia	342	367	435	571	802	1,117	1,365	1,556	1,329	1,131	1,103	1,211	1,294	1,423	1,580	1,644	1,604	1,649	1,686	1,597	1,427	1,552	1,618	1,704	
Maldives	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	8	6	5	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	
Mongolia	1	27	69	79	203	177	155	178	225	200	266	250	324	257	255	261	260	273	441	561	549	471	399	455	
Myanmar	102	116	105	84	117	129	115	81	55	54	115	127	275	1,644	1,808	1,934	2,255	2,453	2,673	2,553	2,672	1,282	1,261	1,100	
Nepal	111	147	678	771	823	1,212	1,453	1,734	2,727	2,983	3,464	4,217	4,793	5,584	5,889	6,730	6,612	6,928	8,287	8,244	8,108	8,226	9,069	10,396	
Pakistan	1,075	1,461	3,554	3,964	3,945	4,280	5,121	5,998	7,039	8,717	9,690	12,263	14,007	14,629	17,244	19,306	19,819	19,856	21,193	22,252	26,089	31,312	30,176	26,558	34,914
Philippines	6,924	8,760	9,735	10,239	11,468	13,733	15,496	16,437	18,851	19,960	21,557	23,054	24,610	26,717	28,691	29,799	31,142	32,810	33,809	35,167	34,883	36,685	38,049	39,097	
Singapore	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Sri lanka	1,154	1,170	1,296	1,423	1,574	1,976	2,167	2,507	2,925	3,337	4,123	5,153	6,000	6,422	7,036	7,000	7,262	7,190	7,043	6,749	7,140	5,522	3,819	6,023	
Tajikistan	..	..	79	146	252	564	976	1,514	2,278	1,566	2,021	2,722	3,222	3,698	3,384	2,259	1,867	2,237	2,183	2,322	2,187	2,922	5,346	5,700	
Taipei,China	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Thailand	1,697	1,252	1,380	1,607	1,622	1,187	1,333	1,635	1,898	3,808	4,433	5,256	5,657	6,585	6,524	5,895	6,270	6,720	7,466	8,162	8,257	9,065	8,917	9,692	
Turkmenistan	..	..	..	..	..	..	14	30	50	34	24	23	27	35	31	16	8	5	1	2	2	1	1	0	
Uzbekistan	..	..	..	..	..	..	1,421	1,709	3,632	2,180	3,438	4,910	6,090	6,443	6,815	4,843	5,795	7,130	7,610	8,546	7,084	9,277	16,736	16,100	
Viet Nam	1,340	1,100	1,770	2,100	2,310	3,150	3,800	6,180	6,805	6,020	7,569	8,326	7,912	9,429	9,794	8,051	8,556	9,406	10,191	10,885	10,715	12,722	13,200	14,000	
Total	**35,417**	**39,479**	**48,394**	**58,787**	**61,906**	**91,076**	**109,009**	**138,019**	**174,622**	**169,973**	**194,507**	**225,958**	**239,264**	**250,891**	**264,066**	**262,211**	**255,053**	**271,806**	**296,633**	**311,158**	**305,992**	**317,015**	**350,686**	**365,858**	

Note: All numbers are in current $.
Source: World Bank.

Table A2.4: Net Migration Rate
(per 1,000 population)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Afghanistan	−50.967	−10.494	40.244	10.879	−11.426	10.284	2.268	−32.856	8.147	−2.206	−5.921	13.101	2.246
Azerbaijan	1.95	1.97	1.81	1.566	1.588	1.911	1.941	1.938	1.683	0.098	0.15	0.182	0.212
Bangladesh	−3.809	−5.393	−5.901	−6.358	−6.79	−7.163	−7.458	−7.66	−7.75	−7.624	−7.317	−5.527	−5.352
Bhutan	6.601	6.343	6.4	6.149	5.598	1.281	−1.913	−2.288	−2.241	−1.88	−1.314	−0.654	0.028
Brunei Darussalam	5.085	4.707	4.408	3.99	3.573	3.24	2.825	6.177	6.377	6.466	6.319	3.503	0.853
Cambodia	−4.089	−4.251	−4.297	−4.37	−4.453	−4.5	−4.422	−4.96	−3.615	−3.457	−3.433	−3.46	−3.538
China, People’s Republic of	−0.049	−0.138	−0.592	−0.474	−0.592	−0.079	−0.576	−0.786	−0.573	−0.132	−0.136	−0.306	−0.043
Georgia	−31.2	−26.361	−14.18	−7.606	−7.548	−7.753	−7.939	−8.101	−8.237	−8.359	−9.396	−9.783	−10.234
Hong Kong, China	8.763	4.629	3.063	2.588	1.186	−0.215	1.449	4.381	3.626	2.701	1.17	3.032	4.938
India	−0.136	−0.065	−0.667	−0.543	−0.182	−0.805	−0.292	−0.871	−0.844	−0.255	−0.041	−0.196	−0.156
Indonesia	−0.198	−0.293	−0.378	−0.434	−0.338	−0.333	−0.324	−0.326	−0.339	−0.303	−0.234	−0.163	−0.114
Japan	0.185	0.468	0.477	0.586	0.54	0.884	1.016	1.078	1.113	0.979	1.029	0.763	0.531
Kazakhstan	−0.565	−0.471	−0.528	−1.018	−1.441	−1.263	−1.349	−1.614	−2.301	−0.467	−0.406	−0.185	−0.261
Korea, Republic of	−1.817	−0.595	−0.383	−0.673	−0.892	−0.999	−0.592	−0.878	−0.406	0.109	1.067	5.495	5.683
Kyrgyz Republic	−4.63	−5.066	−5.531	−5.948	−6.167	−6.917	−10.122	−10.219	−12.055	−2.654	−1.187	−1.818	−2.195
Lao People’s Democratic Republic	−6.254	−6.077	−5.987	−6.419	−6.939	−4.112	−4.24	−4.497	−4.605	−4.734	−4.743	−4.752	−4.429
Macau, China	10.919	16.112	25.201	24.92	24.338	23.302	22.467	21.713	20.943	19.547	17.908	15.046	11.61
Malaysia	5.464	7.379	8.141	8.084	8.405	8.742	8.819	8.511	7.344	6.344	5.485	4.193	4.55
Maldives	1.064	1.953	2.082	1.949	2.216	1.886	15.95	18.984	17.952	17.495	17.653	17.692	17.579
Mongolia	−4.578	−4.134	−3.573	−3.167	−3.204	−3.481	−4.617	−5.836	−6.558	−5.63	−2.385	−0.184	0.126
Myanmar	−2.357	−2.865	−3.249	−3.552	−3.606	−3.9	−3.894	−3.844	−3.731	−3.258	−2.376	−1.674	−1.235
Nepal	−5.996	−5.972	−6.069	−6.552	−7.585	−8.021	−9.089	−9.427	−9.69	−9.794	−9.874	−12.655	−13.499
Pakistan	1.633	−0.344	−4.005	−1.311	−0.378	−1.082	−1.024	3.124	−0.743	−0.094	−2.168	−4.371	−7.936
Philippines	−0.425	−3.04	−3.232	−2.928	−3.169	−3.705	−6.331	−2.481	−5.377	−1.742	0.141	−2.443	0.955
Singapore	13.684	10.939	−9.651	−7.252	12.099	21.559	30.774	41.834	36.653	19.289	14.294	17.339	14.83
Sri Lanka	6.422	0.983	−5.338	−5.392	−4.221	−5.866	−5.26	−5.353	−4.709	−3.909	−4.697	−4.324	−1.982
Tajikistan	−2.207	−3.068	−3.143	−3.388	−3.694	−4.037	−4.334	−4.563	−4.75	−4.897	−4.408	−3.934	−1.514
Taipei,China	−2.048	−0.005	0.048	−0.624	0.091	0.576	1.602	1.022	1.145	1.747	0.774	0.816	1.103
Thailand	1.931	1.521	1.637	1.633	1.638	1.523	1.538	1.498	1.587	1.628	0.77	0.965	1.066
Timor-Leste	54.05	60.522	40.874	−13.971	−17.703	1.855	2.236	2.093	0.977	0.111	0.433	−0.143	−0.537
Turkmenistan	3.257	3.632	3.942	3.624	2.872	2.031	1.479	1.218	1.26	1.221	1.19	1.23	1.227
Uzbekistan	−2.685	−1.939	−1.877	−1.715	−1.492	−1.267	−1.094	−0.998	−0.874	−0.729	−0.718	−0.707	−0.696
Viet Nam	−1.87	−2.278	−2.46	−2.716	−2.744	−2.569	5.871	6.263	6.705	−0.215	−0.051	−0.052	−0.054

Source: “Crude rate of net migration” in UN Data Portal (UNDESA). https://population.un.org/dataportal/ (accessed July 2025).

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Afghanistan	0.573	7.133	−8.463	−4.122	−2.003	−1	0.242	3.676	−13.719	−15.954	−1.181	−1.034	−1.697
Azerbaijan	0.241	0.111	0.11	0.473	−1.136	−3.741	0.038	0.105	0.105	0.883	−8.153	1.051	0.84
Bangladesh	−5.513	−5.629	−5.705	−5.713	−6.395	−6.293	−6.166	−6.028	−5.933	−3.247	−3.207	−2.727	−2.289
Bhutan	0.426	0.617	0.608	1.492	0.38	0.378	0.375	0.373	0.37	0.373	0.37	−0.35	0.572
Brunei Darussalam	0.693	0.727	0.843	0.971	1.017	1.028	1.03	1.033	0	0	0	0	0
Cambodia	−3.596	−3.672	−3.719	−3.238	−4.626	−5.327	−3.475	0	−1.592	−1.823	−1.827	−1.869	−1.763
China, People's Republic of	−0.137	−0.267	−0.463	−0.109	−0.067	−0.14	−0.461	−0.064	−0.266	−0.206	−0.399	−0.225	−0.189
Georgia	−10.532	−4.231	−3.513	−2.792	−2.08	−1.364	−1.425	−0.721	−0.723	7.115	0.526	0.458	0.337
Hong Kong, China	3.28	2.794	1.432	1.385	1.07	−0.164	−0.958	−0.24	−0.458	−0.459	−0.46	−2.599	2.415
India	−0.117	−0.173	−0.493	0.06	−0.185	−0.429	−0.705	−0.053	−0.247	−0.95	−0.681	−0.435	−0.339
Indonesia	−0.108	−0.108	−0.109	−0.11	−0.11	−0.111	−0.112	−0.068	−0.041	−0.134	−0.133	−0.136	−0.138
Japan	0.52	0.456	1.327	2.475	2.539	2.526	2.511	0.333	−0.278	1.4	1.407	1.239	1.142
Kazakhstan	−0.224	−0.571	−0.111	0.516	1.139	−0.351	0.135	−0.447	−0.497	2.284	−0.237	−0.358	−0.424
Korea, Republic of	6.03	6.095	5.422	1.785	2.021	2.289	2.485	2.172	−0.324	1.696	1.697	1.469	1.272
Kyrgyz Republic	−1.668	−1.601	−0.845	0.194	1.214	0.551	7.284	8.209	6.775	1.811	0.792	0.507	0.249
Lao People's Democratic Republic	−4.158	−4.01	−1.91	−1.65	−1.482	−1.446	−1.424	−1.403	−1.383	−1.323	−1.305	−1.324	−1.352
Macau, China	11.942	11.203	12.107	12.101	13.034	13.536	13.364	12.945	12.344	12.42	12.336	2.249	−0.455
Malaysia	4.959	5.206	6.009	6.988	7.037	6.744	6.079	3.007	5.499	5.423	5.155	4.915	4.631
Maldives	17.404	18.616	21.777	21.252	20.849	20.37	19.781	19.203	18.235	−5.102	−5.469	−4.588	−4.311
Mongolia	0.528	1.003	1.447	1.852	2.2	2.466	2.679	0	0	0	0	0.024	0.023
Myanmar	−1.251	−1.478	−1.842	−1.707	−2.031	−2.192	−1.915	−1.249	−0.663	−0.651	−0.646	−0.697	−0.723
Nepal	−13.522	−11.208	−7.945	−12.225	−13.166	−10.511	6.412	5.597	4.411	−12.765	−13.8	−13.533	−12.313
Pakistan	−9.032	−9.511	−9.997	−10.404	−7.052	−5.771	−5.101	−2.38	−2.362	−5.427	−6.544	−5.576	−4.84
Philippines	−2.14	−1.894	−3.71	−2.897	−2.438	−1.495	−0.056	−0.419	−0.753	−1.946	−1.43	−1.384	−1.279
Singapore	9.688	7.357	7.575	2.463	−1.585	3.873	0.153	−25.899	−7.939	38.026	4.663	3.431	2.877
Sri Lanka	−1.768	−1.563	−1.371	−0.839	−1.011	−1.286	−1.268	−1.324	−1.303	−1.201	−1.219	−1.179	−1.323
Tajikistan	−1.991	−1.657	−0.886	−0.926	−0.45	−0.657	−0.949	−0.366	−0.358	−1.67	−1.925	−2.005	−2.003
Taipei,China	0.278	0.559	0.454	1.161	0.745	0.405	0.723	−0.897	−6.186	−1.064	−1.406	−1.113	−0.906
Thailand	0.966	0.788	0.461	1.594	0.939	0.154	0.073	0.451	−0.029	0.302	0.274	0.325	0.384
Timor-Leste	−1.041	−0.811	−0.017	0.169	1.331	2.4	3.03	2.86	2.304	−4.031	−4.06	−1.822	−1.797
Turkmenistan	1.227	1.431	1.599	2.101	2.563	2.899	2.901	2.865	2.484	1.956	2.037	1.954	1.742
Uzbekistan	−0.686	−0.674	−0.538	−0.474	−0.42	−0.356	−0.283	−0.274	−0.269	−0.143	−0.168	−0.194	−0.189
Viet Nam	−0.055	−0.053	−0.053	1.784	1.463	1.004	−0.021	−0.066	−0.055	−0.792	−0.815	−0.591	−0.474

Table A2.5: International Students in OECD Countries by Economy of Origin

	Number of international tertiary students enrolled			Of which at master's and doctoral level	As a percentage of total tertiary	Number of graduates at master's and doctoral level
	2021	2022	% change	2022	2022	2022
Afghanistan	11,124	12,045	8	4,810	40	697
Azerbaijan	30,983	37,083	20	10,718	29	2,227
Bangladesh	39,946	51,440	29	31,567	61	5,187
Bhutan	2,547	2,930	15	1,378	47	435
Brunei Darussalam	1,225	1,212	–1	238	20	79
Cambodia	4,768	5,004	5	1,590	32	569
China, People's Republic of	885,232	862,767	–3	419,853	49	155,502
Georgia	5,493	5,516	0	2,527	46	570
Hong Kong, China	33,787	36,454	8	8,739	24	3,424
India	424,213	524,548	24	317,351	60	70,452
Indonesia	39,486	42,036	6	13,693	33	4,086
Japan	26,338	28,073	7	9,781	35	2,002
Kazakhstan	15,940	19,506	22	5,672	29	1,277
Korea, Republic of	83,838	82,384	–2	28,384	34	3,294
Kyrgyz Republic	4,280	5,219	22	1,485	28	254
Lao People's Democratic Republic	1,137	1,254	10	438	35	212
Malaysia	36,499	36,094	–1	8,281	23	3,124
Maldives	480	497	4	167	34	65
Mongolia	12,519	12,606	1	4,165	33	1,484
Myanmar	8,480	8,901	5	2,175	24	536
Nepal	72,362	79,501	10	19,012	24	3,626
Pakistan	51,364	67,348	31	40,327	60	9,194
Philippines	22,635	26,261	16	6,619	25	1,439
Singapore	17,951	18,303	2	5,319	29	2,172
Sri Lanka	22,101	23,863	8	10,525	44	2,048
Tajikistan	1,632	1,864	14	581	31	100
Taipei,China	..	..	..	..	..	..
Thailand	21,927	23,125	5	9,218	40	2,493
Turkmenistan	20,141	16,031	–20	1,015	6	130
Uzbekistan	17,808	20,146	13	3,836	19	927
Viet Nam	133,092	128,471	–3	20,317	16	6,209
Total	**2,049,329**	**2,180,482**	**6**	**989,781**	**45**	**283,814**
Rest of the world	2,276,072	2,442,130	7	1,104,521	45	276,230
Total	4,325,401	4,622,612	7	2,094,302	45	560,044
Share of Asia (%)	**47**	**47**		**47**		**51**

Note: Data for graduates in Japan, the Republic Korea, and the United States are not available.

Source: OECD. Online Education Database. www.oecd.org/education/database.htm (accessed June 2025).

Labor Migration in Asia

Fair Recruitment, Training, and Development

This report is based on the discussions at the 14th ADBI-OECD-ILO Roundtable on Labor Migration in Asia: Maximizing the Impact of Labor Migration on Development, held on 28-29 May 2024 in Tokyo, Japan. The annual roundtable brings together labor experts and policymakers from across Asia to discuss trends in labor migration and emerging policy and issues on migrant workers.

Chapter 1 reviews labor migration trends through the end of 2024, highlighting shifts by origin, destination, and student mobility, and the evolving skill and gender composition of Asian migrants. Chapter 2 examines recent trends and challenges in migrant worker recruitment in the region, reviews policy responses and the International Labour Organization's Fair Recruitment Initiative, and outlines key issues for future action. In Chapter 3, authors explore emerging models of pre-departure skills training for labor migrants in Asia and the Pacific, highlighting gaps in research and the need for better alignment between training, migration pathways, and employer needs. Finally, Chapter 4 highlights remittances as a key source of external finance that supports development and poverty reduction, while also noting risks such as brain drain, trade imbalances, and economic overreliance on remittances.

Statistical annexes provide updated economy-specific notes and comparative tables on country-level migration flows.

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International Labour Organization

The ILO is a specialized United Nations agency with a constitutional mandate to protect migrant workers, and it does so as part of its overarching goal of advancing social justice and promoting decent work.
Its objectives are to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection, and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues. Its tripartite structure provides a unique platform for promoting decent work. Making fair migration a reality is high on the ILO agenda, at the global level and in the Asia-Pacific region.
The ILO has 187 member states.

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