Public Attitudes to Migrant Workers

A FOUR COUNTRY STUDY

PREPARED BY THE ILO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC AND THE ILO TRIANGLE PROJECT

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Outline

- Background
- Methodology
- Survey Results
- KAP Barometer
Background and Rationale
Why do attitudes matter?

- Attitudes may translate into actions and behaviours that negatively impact on certain individuals and groups in society.

- Policy makers and politicians may be drawn to introduce policies in accordance with actual or perceived public preferences.

A global trend

- In Europe, polls on attitudes towards migrants show large differences between Member States, but the overall conclusion is that public perception of migration tends to be increasingly negative.  

- 39% of Asian Britons, 34% of white Britons and 21% of black Britons want all immigration into the UK to be stopped permanently, or at least until the economy improves.  
  Populus / Searchlight Educational Trust (2011)

- Almost two thirds (63%) of UK employers report that non-EU workers have allowed them to increase productivity. 43% say they are struggling to fill vacancies from within the UK or from EU countries.  
  CIPD / KPMG (2011)
ILO Tripartite Action to Protect Migrant Workers from Labour Exploitation (the TRIANGLE project) aims to strengthen the formulation and implementation of recruitment and labour protection policies and practices.

In Thailand and Malaysia, the TRIANGLE project will cooperate with constituents and partners on a campaign to promote understanding with migrant workers. The campaign will highlight the contribution migrants make to the economy and society, counter misconceptions and promote the right to equal treatment.

The findings of this survey will be used in the design of the campaign, and serve as a baseline against which to measure the impact of the survey.
Methodology
As this is a four-country study, special attention was given to survey design and methodology to ensure consistency in data collection. At the same time, there was a need to consider quality of information in relation to the cost of data collection.

The sample size in each country was set to $n=1000$. This is deemed a large enough sample to be representative of any given population.

In Thailand and Malaysia, face-to-face interviews were carried out across four provinces/states.

In Korea and Singapore, data collection is significantly more expensive. As these countries have some of the world’s highest levels of internet penetration, it was decided that online data collection would be far more cost-effective.
Target groups and sample distribution

In each country, target respondents were the general population aged 18 years or older, with a 50/50 split between males and females.

The sample in Korea and Singapore is nationally representative. For Malaysia and Thailand, areas with high numbers of migrant workers were selected.

Ethnicity was taken into account in both Malaysia and Singapore in terms of Malay, Chinese and Indian/other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural*</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>1006</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surat Thani</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiang Mai</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samut Sakorn</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3167</td>
<td>843</td>
<td>4020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: only semi-rural areas are included in Singapore and Korea
Sampling in Thailand and Malaysia was through multistage random sampling in both urban and rural locations using the following procedure.

- First, a number of urban centers are randomly selected in the chosen provinces/states.
- Sub-districts are then selected inside those urban centers to represent the urban proportion of the sample. Rural villages are also randomly selected outside the urban centers. The urban/rural split is proportionate to the population in each province.
- In each selected sub-district, a random walk method is conducted to select dwellings.
- Within each dwelling the Kish Grid method is used to select a respondent 18 years or older. Should the selected respondent not be home, up to three call backs are made before declaring a non-response.

- The final samples were weighted to reflect the actual population distribution.
Sampling: Face to Face

To ensure the samples were representative based on province, sex and age, the final samples were weighted to bring them in line with the population of the selected provinces.

Quotas were also used to ensure representation across urban and rural areas within the selected provinces and in Malaysia, quotas were also used to obtain representation across ethnic groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Thailand sample</th>
<th>Thailand Weighted Sample</th>
<th>Malaysia sample</th>
<th>Malaysia Weighted Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 34</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 44</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 Or older</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian and others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four key provinces</td>
<td>Four key provinces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sampling: Online

The sampling methodology in Korea and Singapore was systematic random sampling from an online panel list with soft quotas on key population parameters (i.e. sex, age, geographic location, etc.). To ensure the sample was nationally representative based on sex and age, the final samples were weighted to bring them in line with the national population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Korea sample</th>
<th>Korea Weighted Sample</th>
<th>Singapore sample</th>
<th>Singapore Weighted Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 or older</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 areas including 7 largest cities</td>
<td>All 5 Regions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondent Profile

On average, respondents in Korea and Singapore have a higher level of education and are more affluent as seen by their higher socioeconomic status (SES). Malaysia is in turn ahead of Thailand based on the same criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Thailand n=1014</th>
<th>Malaysia n=1000</th>
<th>Korea n=1000</th>
<th>Singapore n=1006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employer</strong> (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work Sector</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail &amp; wholesale</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior high school</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior high school</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma or higher</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income (SES)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES C</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES DE</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Findings
The number of information sources differs significantly between countries.

Respondents in Thailand got their information from 1.6 sources, on average, while people in Singapore have an average of 3.4 sources.

In Thailand, most people receive information about migrant workers through news and media reports. “Word of mouth” is much higher in Singapore and Malaysia.

### From where have you heard or learned about migrant workers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Thailand n=904 (%)</th>
<th>Malaysia n=994 (%)</th>
<th>Korea n=973 (%)</th>
<th>Singapore n=976 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News and media reports</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film or Documentary</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through work or colleagues</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through family and friends</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read a book</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public service announcement</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average number of sources</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: Those who have heard about migrant workers
The respondents most likely to have encountered migrants were in Singapore and Malaysia – where foreign workers make up approximately 30% and 20% of the total workforce respectively. Thai respondents had the lowest level of interaction, with some four out of ten people having had no encounters with migrant workers. Most encounters take place in the general community.
Relationship with migrant workers

The vast majority of respondents in Singapore know foreign workers personally, and most are either personal friends or colleagues at work. In contrast, a much smaller proportion of respondents in Thailand know migrant workers personally.

Respondents in Singapore and Malaysia were far more likely to employ a migrant domestic worker than respondents in Thailand.
National and migrant workers should be treated equally.

MWs are needed to fill labor shortages.

MWs make a net contribution to economy.

MWs are often exploited.

Migrant wages have impact on the wages of national workers.

Tying work permits to one employer can lead to mistreatment of MWs.

High costs and complex procedures contribute to unauthorized MWs.

Proportion of respondents believing these statements to be “True”:

- Thailand
- Malaysia
- Korea
- Singapore

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Attitude analysis

- Statements to gauge attitudes were formulated in the third person, allowing respondents to answer more truthfully without attaching themselves to the issue.

- Since most people are reluctant to come across as xenophobic or prejudicial, statements were framed as negatives, and respondents had to strongly disagree in order to demonstrate a positive attitude.

- Attitudes were measured on a four point scale. Positive and negative attitudes were identified as shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don’t agree at all</th>
<th>Don’t really agree</th>
<th>Agree to some extent</th>
<th>Agree completely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Attitude</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Negative Attitude</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attitudes

Proportion of respondents that “Agree to some extent” or “Agree completely”

- Reduce opportunities for skilled workers from ASEAN countries
- Migrants are threatening the country’s culture and heritage
- Migrant workers are a drain on the national economy
- Migrants commit a high number of crimes
- The authorities do enough to protect migrants from being exploited
- Unauthorized migrants cannot expect to have any rights at work
- Migrant workers cannot expect the same pay for the same job
- Government policies to admit migrants should be more restrictive

Thailand
Malaysia
Korea
Singapore
Proportion of respondents that said “Yes, they have” or “Yes, they would”

- Have helped a migrant worker to integrate into society or get ahead at work
- Have educated friends about some positive aspect about migrant workers
- Would report and follow up on the use of migrant children in dangerous work
- Would report and follow up on suspected employer abuse of migrant workers
- Would pay/Have paid the fees for registration and work permit for a domestic migrant worker

Graph showing the proportion of respondents from Thailand, Malaysia, Korea, and Singapore.
The vast majority of respondents in all four countries agree that it is better to crack down on employers of unregistered migrant workers rather than the migrant workers themselves.

The sentiment in Thailand is particularly strong whereas in Malaysia and Korea, around one in five people disagree with the idea.
Migrants’ ability to adapt to life in Thailand

- Laos PDR
- Myanmar
- China
- Cambodia
- Vietnam

Legend:
- Don't adapt
- Adapt to some extent
- Adapt very well

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Migrants’ ability to adapt to life in Malaysia

- Indonesia
- Bangladesh
- Nepal
- China
- Myanmar
- Thailand
- Cambodia
- Vietnam

Legend:
- Red: Don't adapt
- Yellow: Adapt to some extent
- Green: Adapt very well

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Migrants’ ability to adapt to life in Singapore

- China: [Bar Chart]
- Indonesia: [Bar Chart]
- Thailand: [Bar Chart]
- Bangladesh: [Bar Chart]
- Myanmar: [Bar Chart]
- Vietnam: [Bar Chart]
- Nepal: [Bar Chart]
- Cambodia: [Bar Chart]

Legend:
- Red: Don’t adapt
- Yellow: Adapt to some extent
- Green: Adapt very well

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Migrants’ ability to adapt to life in Korea

- China
- Vietnam
- Thailand
- Bangladesh
- Nepal
- Myanmar
- Cambodia

Legend:
- Red: Don't adapt
- Yellow: Adapt to some extent
- Green: Adapt very well

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KAP Barometer
KAP Barometer Framework

The KAP Barometer is an indicator into which knowledge, attitudinal and behavioral measures have been incorporated to form a one-number score.

The KAP Barometer divides the general population into three groups based on their level of support towards migrants (knowledge and non-discriminatory attitudes).

This Framework was developed by Rapid Asia.
The KAP Barometer score is a tool for comparing the level of support for migrant workers across different segments of the population:

- In Singapore and Malaysia, the more highly educated people are, the more supportive they are of migrant workers.
- In Korea, the older people are the more supportive they are of migrant workers.
- In both Thailand and Malaysia there is a very distinct difference in support between regions whereas in Singapore and Korea the support across regions is quite homogeneous.
- Across all four countries, those who know migrant workers personally, either through work or socially, show significantly higher levels of support.
KAP score by country

Proportion of respondents demonstrating ‘support’ for migrant workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Low support</th>
<th>Moderate support</th>
<th>High support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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KAP score by education

**Thailand**

**Malaysia**

**Korea**

**Singapore**

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KAP score by age

**Thailand**

- 18-24: 26%
- 25-34: 25%
- 35-44: 22%
- 45-54: 30%
- 55+: 20%

**Malaysia**

- 18-24: 18%
- 25-34: 17%
- 35-44: 18%
- 45-54: 21%
- 55+: 24%

**Korea**

- 18-24: 45%
- 25-34: 45%
- 35-44: 51%
- 45-54: 57%
- 55+: 58%

**Singapore**

- 18-24: 36%
- 25-34: 37%
- 35-44: 42%
- 45-54: 39%
- 55+: 46%
KAP score by region

Thailand

KAP Barometer

Percent

Chiang Mai: 2
Surat Thani: 5
Samut Sakorn: 23
Bangkok: 35

Malaysia

KAP Barometer

Percent

Selangor: 13
Pahang: 18
KL: 18
Perak: 40

Korea

KAP Barometer

Percent

Urban: 50
Semi Rural: 51

Singapore

KAP Barometer

Percent

North east: 37
South east: 38
Central: 41
North west: 42
South west: 42

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KAP score by interaction with migrants

Thailand

Malaysia

Korea

Singapore

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KAP score by ‘employment decision-makers’

Thailand

- Yes: 41
- No: 18

Malaysia

- Yes: 36
- No: 17

Korea

- Yes: 60
- No: 50

Singapore

- Yes: 48
- No: 37

Base: Those employed and working

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KAP score by employer of migrant domestic worker

Thailand

Korea

Malaysia

Singapore

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Contact information

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