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ASEAN

Making women migrant workers count:

**Sex disaggregation of labour migration statistics in ASEAN
(2019 data)**

2020



Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence
against women and girls





ILMS brief

ASEAN

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Introduction

Labour migration is multi-layered, and persons moving have intersecting identities and diverse experiences. Labour migration data, disaggregated by sex and other factors, is therefore valuable. It allows policy to be gender-responsive and accurate because decision makers know who exactly interventions are for. Without full details, policy interventions carry risks of not having intended effects, or indeed of causing inadvertent harm.

The International Labour Migration Statistics Database (ILMS) for ASEAN is the first of its kind in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The ILMS gathers data from official government sources regarding stocks and flows of migrant workers. It is published on the ILOSTAT Database portal, a global research tool used by policy-makers, researchers, academics and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to inform policy design, development and implementation.

The ILMS facilitates a better understanding of migration processes in and out of the ASEAN region; enables analysis by characteristics such as sex, sector and age; and facilitates study of the relative status of women and other groups

of migrant workers for gender-responsive policy making that leaves no group behind.

The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative Safe and Fair programme implemented by the ILO and UN Women is working at national levels with ASEAN governments to strengthen sex disaggregation of national labour migration statistics. The ILMS Database was established by the ILO TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme, which facilitates on-going regional level dialogue and collection of statistics.

Although labour migration statistics in ASEAN have improved in the last few years, data in the region remains incomplete per the ILO-ILMS framework, which follows internationally agreed concepts, definitions, and standards.

Policymakers in countries of destination need detailed and reliable data to inform policy areas related to available labour force, tax income and public goods expenditures and provision – such as education, social protection, and health care, including services to address violence and other abuses when they occur.

There is a demand for information on women migrant workers; where they might be located;





what sector they are in; and what specific needs they might have. Such information, in turn, can be used to enable adequate labour market regulation, targeted workplace inspection, and human rights protection in relation to some of the specific risks women migrant workers can face within countries of destination. Prevention or response measures for ending violence against women may be targeted especially in sectors where women make up the majority.

The share of women in the outflow of nationals for employment in all ASEAN countries of origin has been on the increase since 2012. Better information on women migrant workers could help country of origin governments, including consular officials and labour attaché, understand and respond to their needs, facilitating safe and fair migration.

Global and regional frameworks

The importance of collecting and sharing accurate, comparable and reliable sex-disaggregated data on migration has been emphasized in international and regional targets and recommendations, as follows:

1. Sustainable Development Goal: 17.18

- Target 17.18: By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and **reliable data disaggregated** by income, **gender**, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

2. ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML) Recommendations

- 5th AFML 2012, Recommendation 7: Sharing existing **sex-disaggregated data** and information on labour migration, job availabilities and employment conditions in accordance with the labour laws of ASEAN Member States that are useful to facilitate effective deployment of migrant workers.

- 10th AFML 2017, Recommendation 16: Promote collection and sharing of standardized labour migration **data disaggregated by sex** and occupations including migrant domestic work.

3. ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration (2006)

- ...[I]mproving government capacity and structures for collecting and analyzing labour migration data, including **sex-disaggregated** and other data, and applying it to labour migration policy is suggested.

4. Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018)

- Core indicators are to be **disaggregated by sex**.

5. Guidelines concerning statistics of labour migration, 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (2018)

- Objective 1: Commit to strengthen the global evidence base on international migration by improving and investing in the collection, analysis and dissemination of accurate, reliable, comparable data, **disaggregated by sex**, age, migration status and other characteristics relevant in national contexts, while upholding the right to privacy under international human rights law and protecting personal data.



What do we know already? 2019 ILMS data on women migrant workers

Introductory notes for interpreting ILMS data

All the ASEAN Member States (AMS) provide data on migrant populations and most countries provide data on the migrant labour force, disaggregated by sex. It must be noted however that the ILMS Database only covers documented migrant workers and must be read and analyzed with that qualification. Governments face challenges in collecting data on the sizable population of undocumented migrant workers within ASEAN. Though estimates can be made, undocumented migrant workers are not well captured in official government data on labour migration.

Further, at present AMS data underestimate countries' actual international migrant worker stocks either because coverage of surveys is limited to citizens, or due to methodological or sampling issues. As an indicative illustration from the broader South-East Asia and the Pacific subregion, the ILO estimates that the actual number of documented migrant workers residing in the subregion is 11.6 million (ILO, 2018). Of the estimated 11.6 million migrant workers in the subregion in 2017, 5.2 million are women (ILO, 2018). These figures reveal the near equal share of women migrant workers across the region. The estimate is built from both administrative and survey data sources. However, if one only looks at Labour Force Surveys in ASEAN net destination countries, only 6.1 million international migrants of working-age in ASEAN are captured. Of these, only 4.7 million are workers.

Women migrant workers in ASEAN countries of origin

Data show that since 2012 the share of women in the outflows of nationals for employment has increased for ASEAN countries of origin: Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, and Viet Nam (figure 1, data for the Philippines is not available).

In 2018, data on the total outflow of nationals from Cambodia, Myanmar, and Viet Nam, show that men are the majority (62 per cent, on average) of the migrant workers registering in ASEAN countries of origin to work abroad. However, in Lao PDR and Indonesia women constitute the majority of annual outflows of migrant workers with 52 per cent and 70 per cent respectively.

Sex-disaggregated data on the outflow of nationals for employment for Lao PDR show an increasing outflow of women nationals for employment since 2012, with women's share increasing 6 percentage points to 2018 and representing 52 per cent of the total outflow (figure 2). In Indonesia, from 2012 to 2018, the outflow of nationals registering for employment has decreased 43 per cent due to various government policy restrictions on migration to certain destinations (figure 3); yet at the same time the share of women in such outflows increased by 23 per cent, from 57 per cent in 2012 to 70 per cent in 2018 (figure 1).

Inflows of return migrant workers in Indonesia have oscillated during the period 2014-2018 but remain at the same initial level, with women representing the majority each year (figure 4). In 2018, the share of women is 63 per cent of the total inflow of return migrants in Indonesia.

Measurement of return labour migration is one of the key gaps in statistics of international labour migration in ASEAN. Apart from data from Indonesia, as mentioned, return labour migration is seldom recorded in administrative records or surveys.

Figure 1. Share of women in total outflow of nationals for employment in select countries of origin

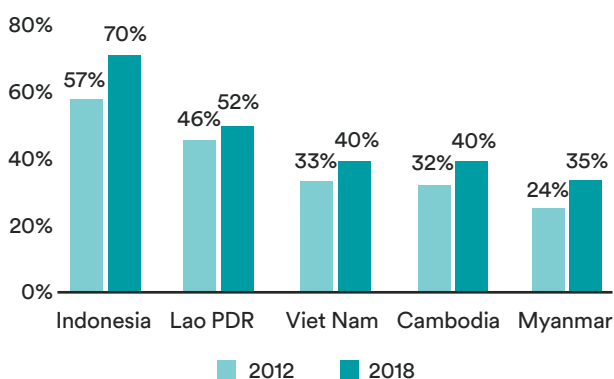




Figure 2. Outflow of Lao PDR nationals for employment by sex, 2012 and 2018

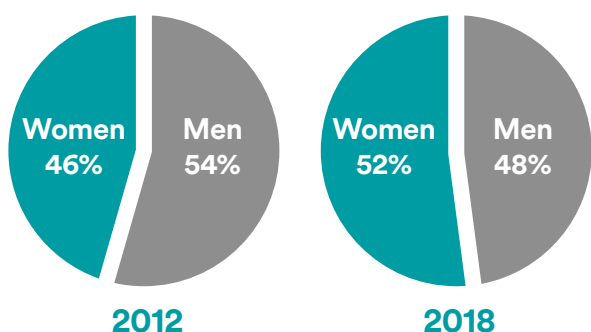


Figure 3. Trends in outflows of nationals for employment by sex (in thousands), Indonesia 2012-18

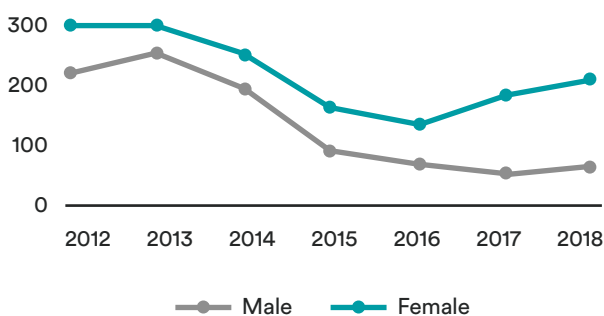
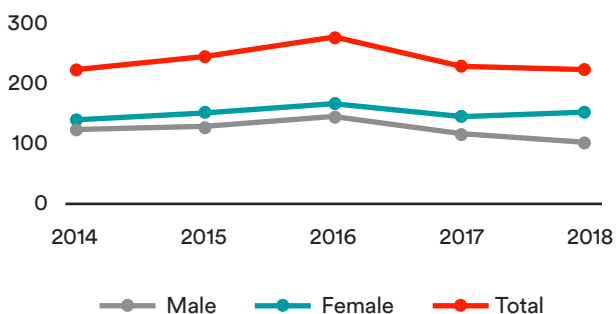


Figure 4. Trends in inflows of return migrant workers in Indonesia by sex (in thousands), 2014-18

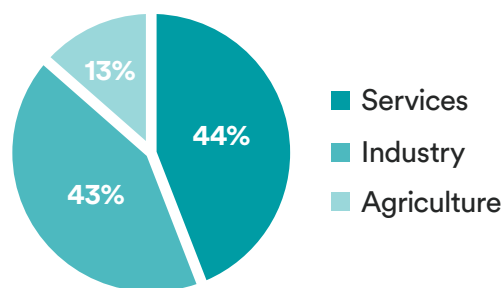


Women migrant workers in ASEAN countries of destination

In 2018, the stock of international migrant workers¹ in ASEAN countries of destination, namely Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, was estimated at 4.7 million,² with Malaysia and Singapore as top destinations. The majority of documented migrant workers in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand are men, with women representing 41 per cent of total in Thailand, and 29 per cent in Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia.

Malaysia and Thailand have the highest shares of female youth workers (aged 15-24), with 34 and 27 per cent, respectively, of migrant women employed being youth.

Figure 5. Migrant workers in ASEAN countries of destination³ by economic activity, 2018



Economic activity of migrant workers

The vast majority, almost 90 per cent, of international migrant workers in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, work in the service and industry sectors, with more women migrant workers in service jobs than other sectors (figure 5). Women migrant workers in ASEAN⁴ represent 45 per cent, on average, of documented migrants in the service sector, and 22 per cent of migrants in industry.

¹ 'International migrant workers' are working-age international migrants who are employed or unemployed in their current country of residence or, if non-residents, were present in the country of measurement and had labour attachment to that country during the reference period.

² This is an underestimate considering the limitations of the official data.

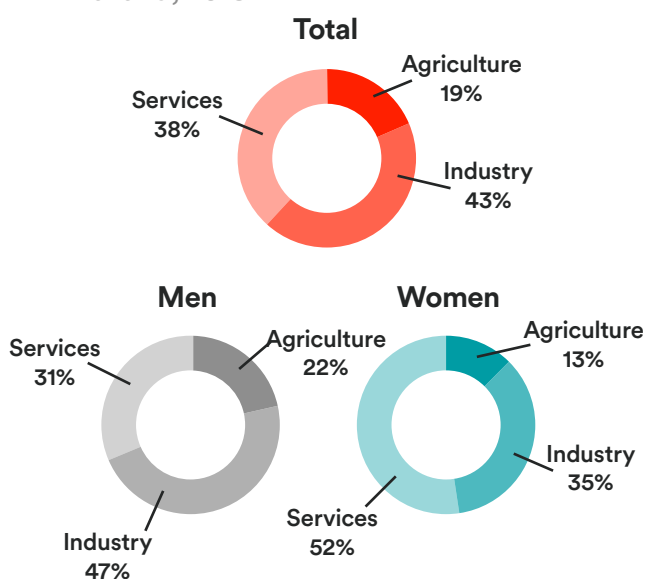
³ Includes Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

⁴ Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand; Singapore did not share sex-disaggregated data on migrant workers by economic activity.



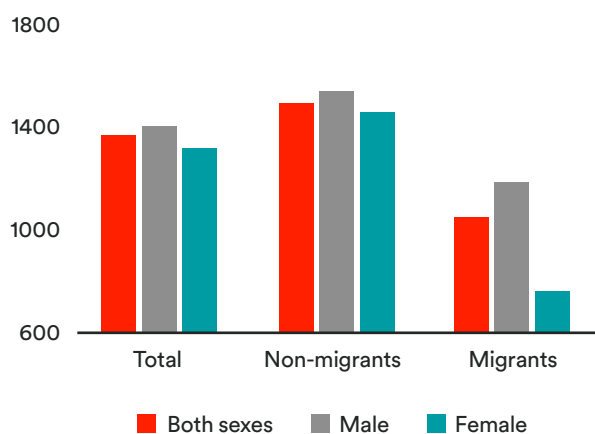
Taken together, in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand, the share of men migrant workers, compared to the total, is lower by 7 percentage points in services, higher by 4 percentage points in industry and 3 percentage points in agriculture. On the other hand, the share of women migrant workers is higher by 14 percentage points in services, and lower by 8 points and 6 points in industry and agriculture, respectively (figure 6).

Figure 6: Economic activity of migrant workers, in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand, 2018



Higher labour force participation rates of migrant men can be attributed to the fact that women are more likely than men to migrate for reasons other than employment, such as family reunification. Moreover, women migrants often have fewer decent work opportunities, face more discrimination and social stigma in accessing the labour market, and do not receive equal treatment. Women migrant workers often face discrimination based on both gender and migrant status.

Figure 7. Mean monthly wages in Brunei Darussalam by sex and migrant status (in Brunei dollars), 2018



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Wages earned by migrant workers

Wages can be used as a proxy for job-quality in the labour market. When comparing wages, the ILMS shows that migrant workers receive lower pay than non-migrants, and women migrant workers have the lowest pay. For instance, in Brunei Darussalam, the wage gap for both sexes is substantial with men earning 114 Brunei dollar more, per month, than women, and women migrant workers earning less than half of what non-migrant women earn (figure 7).

Profile of the international migrant labour force

In ASEAN, international women and men migrants have higher labour force participation rates than non-migrants, and men have higher participation than women across both migrant and non-migrant groups.





The need for sex-disaggregated data and safeguards

Why is some data missing?

ASEAN Member States (AMS) rely heavily on administrative records to collect labour migration statistics. Yet in some countries such records lack details on the sex of migrant workers and do not provide enough details for targeted and informed policy-making aimed at better protection of women migrant workers.

In addition, some national surveys in the region disaggregate by sex, but do not sample a large enough population of migrant workers to be able to make statistically significant disaggregations.

Finally some AMS still lack migration or migratory status as a variable for disaggregation of labour market statistics in official data sources, leaving whole populations of migrants sometimes invisible in the labour force and, ultimately, more vulnerable at work if policies are not properly directed.

Rationale for fully disaggregating data: Why does it matter for women migrant workers?

It is hard for governments to justify or even anticipate the provision of support services for an invisible population. Accurate statistics make visible women who have migrated.

By making labour migration data complete and publicly available, it can inform policy in both countries of origin and destination. For instance, ILMS Table 10 data on average monthly wages shows that women migrant workers are the lowest paid owing to the kind of work they do (table 1). Many are employed in the domestic work sector, which is not covered by minimum wage laws in all countries (ILO, 2016b). Advocacy for non-discrimination and for inclusion of domestic work in minimum wage laws can be fully informed and grounded when based on disaggregated information

about migrant wages. However, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Singapore and Viet Nam do not provide data on average monthly wages by sex.

Countries of origin can use sex-disaggregated data on returnee women migrant workers for re-integration purposes, working towards ensuring that re-migration is a choice rather than a necessity for survival. Only Indonesia has such disaggregated data, with the remaining five net ASEAN countries of origin lacking or not able to provide data to the ILMS. Better understanding of the skills return migrants gain during their time abroad, and of what savings and remittances women bring home with them could help policy-makers understand how migration could best benefit their own country's development. Such data could help potential women migrant workers make more informed decisions about their migration options.

Moreover, such data corrects skewed perceptions on women migrant workers; and to formulate better policies. However, with lack of data, some sectors are perceived as male-dominant when in fact they have a sizable female workforce. For instance, nearly 40 per cent of migrant workers in Thailand's construction sector are women but it is usually considered a men-dominant sector (ILO, 2016a). If women are invisible in such sectors, women-specific support may not reach them. Prevention or response measures aimed at ending violence against women are sometimes focused only on stereotypically gendered sectors, missing significant numbers of women in need of such services in other fields of employment.

The collection of administrative records on migrants, employed migrants, and nationals abroad could be expanded in most cases to include information on their sex, employment status, nationality and birth place. This would help stakeholders to form a much more detailed and gendered profile of migrant workers, which would, in turn, enable more targetable policy interventions to emerge.



Safeguards in data collection

Both administrative and survey data collection should be promoted along with confidentiality and non-use of statistical data for legal purposes. It should be ensured that the data is anonymous, and that the collection of such data does not end in arrest or deportation of women migrant workers. This is crucial, especially in the contexts of data collection on health or violence against women.

When databases or microdata from surveys or administrative records are used for and other purposes this inhibits irregular migrants particularly from enjoying their basic rights such as access to health care and justice when they fear arrest by authorities. Confidentiality ensures effective access to the rights, entitlements and protections enshrined in international law, such as in

the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). By decoupling social services and health care data from immigration and police authorities, data 'firewalls' are created. 'Firewalls' create data separation 'in respect of identifying, documenting or reporting on immigration status', thus ensuring migrants can access essential services (Crépeau, F. and Hastie, B., 2015).





What is needed for full sex-disaggregation of labour migration data in ASEAN?

The ILO promotes measures to protect migrant workers through a rights-based approach based on ILMS data. It is important to promote labour migration that improves the welfare of migrant workers and their families, taking gender fully into account to ensure equality of migration outcomes and protections of gender-specific rights, such as freedom from violence and harassment at work.

From 2019 the ILMS has required for disaggregation by sex for all its indicators. However, currently 51 per cent of the 21 indicators are completed in the AMS.

Country-specific gaps in sex disaggregation

Of the AMS – Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand – provide sex-disaggregated data on inflows of migrants by country of origin and on inflows of working-age migrants by level of education. Similarly, only half of the AMS – Cambodia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand – provide sex-disaggregated data on nationals abroad by country of residence.

Sex-disaggregated data on the outflows of nationals by country of destination is submitted only by Philippines and on the outflows of nationals for employment by education is submitted only by Indonesia and Thailand.

Despite the huge advantages of collecting sex-disaggregated data to develop policy responses, many countries do not or are unable to provide such data. Among the ASEAN Member States, Indonesia and Thailand have supplied the most sex-disaggregated data, with 90 per cent and 86 per cent completeness respectively; while Singapore's and Viet Nam's submissions are just 14 per cent complete (figure 8).

Sex-disaggregated data (table 1) is still needed in:

- Brunei Darussalam, data needed for 11 tables: inflows of migrants and working-age migrants; stock and flow of nationals abroad; and the inflows of return migrants.
- Cambodia, data needed for 7 tables: international migrant stock, disaggregated by place of birth or citizenship; non-citizen working-age population and unemployment by age; outflows of nationals by country of destination; outflows of nationals for employment by country of destination; outflows of nationals for employment by education, economic activity and occupation (data already includes sex-disaggregation for the outflows of nationals for employment by country of residence and country of destination); and inflows of return migrants.
- Indonesia, data needed for 2 tables: stock of nationals abroad; and flow of nationals by sex and by country of destination.
- Lao People's Democratic Republic, data needed for 14 tables: international migrant stock, disaggregated by place of birth or citizenship, working-age population by education, employment by occupation, unemployment by age, average monthly wages of employees; international migrant flows; stock of nationals abroad; flow of nationals abroad (data already includes sex-disaggregated data for outflows of nationals for employment by sex and country of destination); and inflows of return migrants.
- Malaysia, data needed for 7 tables: stock and flow of nationals abroad; and the inflows of return migrants.
- Myanmar, data needed for 17 tables: international migrant stock, disaggregated by place of birth or citizenship, of working-age population and non-citizen working-age population



by education; employment by economic activity, occupation and status in employment; employed foreign-born persons; unemployment by age and average monthly wages of employees; international migrant flows; flow of nationals abroad (already has gender-disaggregated data for outflows of nationals for employment by sex and country of destination); and inflows of return migrants.

- Philippines, data needed for 5 tables: inflows of foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population by country of birth or citizenship and level of education; outflows of nationals for employment by education and economic activity; and inflows of return migrants.
- Singapore, data needed for 18 tables: international migrant stock, disaggregated by place of birth or citizenship, of working-age population by age and education, of foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population,

employment by occupation, status in employment, employed foreign-born persons, unemployment by age and average monthly wages of employees; international migrant flow; flow of nationals abroad; and inflows of return migrants.

- Thailand, data needed for 3 tables: outflows of nationals by country of destination, outflows of nationals for employment by economic activity; and inflows of return migrants.
- Viet Nam, data needed for 18 tables: international migrant stock, disaggregated by place of birth or citizenship, of working-age population by education, of foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population, employment by age, economic activity, occupation, status in employment, employed foreign-born persons, unemployment by age and average monthly wages of employees; international migrant flow; stock of nationals abroad; flow

Figure 8. Percentage of completeness of ILMS Database indicators, by country

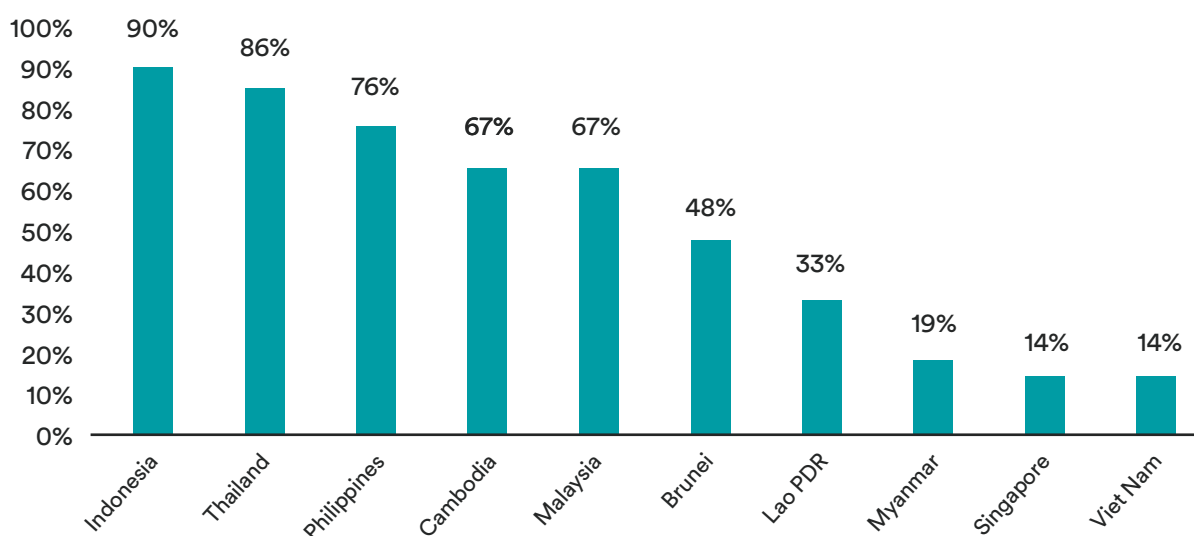




Table 1: ILMS tables completed by country, 2019

Indicators (2019)	BRN	KHM	IDN	LAO	MYS	MMR	PHL	SGP	THA	VNM
MODULE A. International migrant stock										
1. Working-age population by sex, age and place of birth or citizenship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
2. Working-age population by sex, education and place of birth or citizenship	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
3. Foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population by sex and country of birth or citizenship	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
4. Employment by sex, age and place of birth or citizenship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
5. Employment by sex, economic activity and place of birth or citizenship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
6. Employment by sex, occupation and place of birth or citizenship	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
7. Employment by sex, status in employment and place of birth or citizenship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
8. Employed foreign-born persons by sex and country of birth or citizenship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
9. Unemployment by sex, age and place of birth or citizenship	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
10. Mean nominal monthly earnings of employees by sex and place of birth or citizenship	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
MODULE B. International migrant flow										
11. Inflows of migrants by sex and country of origin	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
12. Inflows of working-age migrants by sex and level of education	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
13. Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen employed persons by sex and economic activity	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
14. Inflow of foreign-born employed persons by sex and occupation	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
MODULE C. Nationals abroad										
15. Stock of nationals abroad by sex and country of residence	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
16. Inflow of nationals returned from abroad by sex and country of previous residence	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
17. Outflows of nationals by sex and by country of destination	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
18. Outflows of nationals for employment by sex and country of destination	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
19. Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and education	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
20. Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and economic activity	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
21. Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and occupation	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Total national tables submitted in 2019	10	15	19	7	14	5	16	3	18	3

✓ Sex-disaggregated data available

✗ Sex-disaggregated data not available



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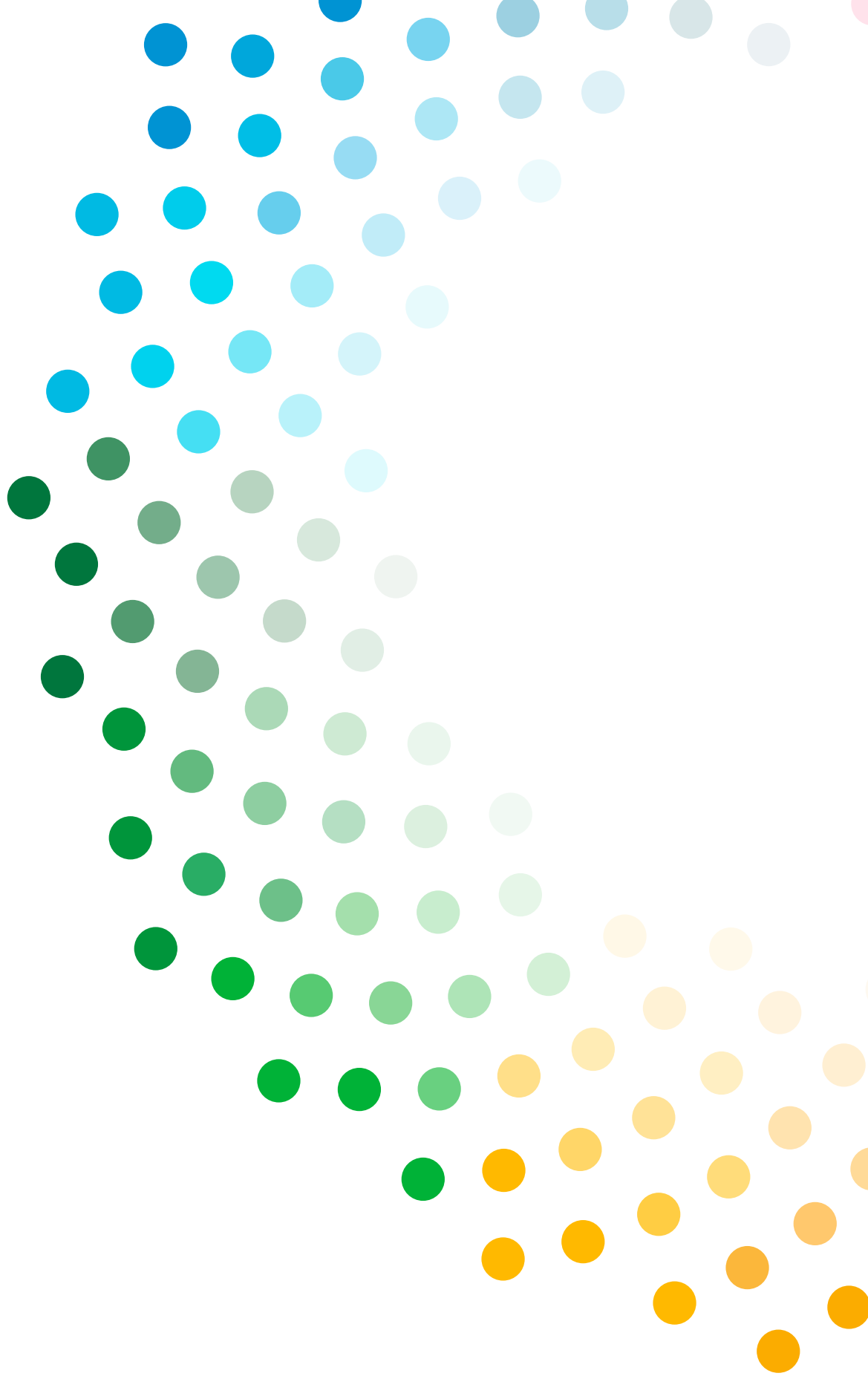
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Making women migrant workers count: Sex disaggregation of labour migration statistics in ASEAN (2019 data)

The International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) Database in ASEAN has been published annually since December 2014. In validating, annotating and gathering information from relevant surveys and administrative records produced in ASEAN, ILMS Database in ASEAN fills an important knowledge gap for national and regional policy-makers and for the broader research community. In 2019 ILMS was updated to ensure data disaggregations by sex for all data categories. This allows for a concerted focus on data on women migrant workers throughout ASEAN. The collection and use of data on women migrant workers in ASEAN ensures that women are counted and seen. Only with accurate data, can governments form evidence-based, gender-responsive policies and tripartite-plus partners ensure essential service provision is proportionate to women's numbers in labour migration.

The Spotlight Initiative is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030. It is the world's largest targeted effort to end all forms of violence against women and girls. Launched with a seed funding commitment of €500 million from the European Union, the Spotlight Initiative represents an unprecedented global effort to invest in gender equality as a precondition and driver for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. As a demonstration fund for action on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Spotlight Initiative is demonstrating that a significant, concerted and comprehensive investment in gender equality and ending violence can make a transformative difference in the lives of women and girls.

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