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► Measuring labour migration in ASEAN:

Analysis from the ILO's International
Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS)
Database



In partnership with

Canada

► **Measuring labour migration in ASEAN:**

Analysis from the ILO's International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) Database

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Foreword

The International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) Database is the first such database put together in ASEAN and has been made possible by the serious commitment, attention and support of the governments of the ASEAN Member States.

The aim of this report is to showcase the rich data that have been collected from ASEAN Member States up to 2020 and to illustrate the most recent labour migration trends. While a variety of national data sources already exist, the report highlights the need for ongoing coordination, data sharing and transparency among Member States. It encourages Member States to ensure their variables and classifications are harmonized with the latest international standards, so that findings can be compared both internally and internationally. It pinpoints specific collection gaps within each Member State and offers solutions for expanding, improving and synchronizing future surveys and censuses as well as administrative data. Across the region, more surveys are including questions on migration. Governments are also increasingly working to ensure sample sizes are large enough to capture migrant workers and also large enough to be able to disaggregate on the basis of sex and other factors to a statistically significant degree.

The ASEAN Member States showed great leadership in 2007 when they agreed on the need to “facilitate data-sharing on matters related to migrant workers” under the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. The importance of improving relevant data has also been regularly raised and recommended at the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML) and is part of the Sustainable Development Goals. The 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2018 issued new Guidelines concerning Statistics of International Labour Migration, revising statistical definitions to match migrant workers’ patterns of movement today. The ICLS was also aware of why labour migration statistics matter, noting the following:

“To be effective, [labour migration] policies must be based on strong evidence, including the number of international migrant workers involved, their characteristics and their employment patterns.”

ASEAN policymakers need a robust, comprehensive and lasting evidence base on international labour migration. By informing policy decisions at the highest levels, such information will benefit countries of origin and destination alike. It will benefit international women and men migrants currently living and working in the region as well as the region’s nationals living and working abroad. It will also help the countless family members, children and other dependents who rely on the income, skills and networks of migrant workers. I trust that this report will provide a basis for policy dialogue and help generate fruitful solutions for improving and harmonizing existing data sources across the region. Only with clear-sighted labour migration policies, underpinned by a strong, reliable and timely evidence base, will we be able to ensure migrant workers have adequate access to gender-sensitive labour rights protection and decent work.



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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACSS	ASEAN Community Statistical System
AFML	ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
IAEG-SDGs	Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators
ILMS	international labour migration statistics
ILOSTAT	ILO Department of Statistics
ISCO-08	International Standard Classification of Occupations, 2008
LFS	labour force survey
LSB	Lao Statistical Bureau
NSO	national statistical office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs





1. Introduction

South-East Asia is one of the most dynamic regions in Asia. Composed of ten countries, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has a combined population of about 650 million people. In the last two decades, labour migration has emerged as a significant driver of economic growth and development in the region, as well as a safety net for families and communities who depend on migrants earning a livelihood outside of their home country. The region holds both countries of net origin (Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, the Philippines and Viet Nam) and destination (Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand).

Per government data submitted to the International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) Database in ASEAN, there are about 5.1 million employed migrants in the region. In 2019, Malaysia and Thailand were among the top 20 countries globally with the largest stocks of international migrants. Migrants from the region working abroad increased from 2.2 million in 2014 to 2.9 million in 2018. Indonesia and the Philippines are among the top 20 countries with the largest diaspora populations in the world, ranked 14th and 9th respectively in 2020 (UNDESA, 2020). The international remittances received by the region increased from US\$48 billion in 2010 to US\$78 billion in 2019. As demographic and development differences continue to widen in the region and other parts of the world, this trend is projected to further increase in the future.

Given how many migrant workers are in and from the region, it is imperative for ASEAN Member States to generate basic data regularly and consistently on:

- number of migrant workers disaggregated by sex;
- what countries migrant workers come from;
- where they migrate to;
- in what sectors or occupations women and men migrants are employed;
- under what conditions they work; and
- their skills and education profiles.

These elements are crucial for understanding the role and contributions of migrant workers in ASEAN labour markets and for informing policies to improve the protection of their rights and their eventual reintegration. International labour migration statistics provide precisely this information.

The detailed analysis in this report acts in complement with other data and databases, including the international migration stock data that the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) collects and shares. The UNDESA international migration stock data *estimate* the origin and flows of *international migrants*; while the ILMS Database in ASEAN includes *actual government-reported* numbers of *working international migrants*, primarily those in a regular status (see more in section 2.1 below).

The ILO, through its TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme, started the collection of international labour migration statistics (ILMS) in ASEAN in 2013, and has since published ILMS annually. The first of this series of analytical reporting on ILMS was also published in 2015. Data collection in ASEAN countries has since improved over the past eight collection rounds, and the completeness of the ILMS Database in ASEAN increased to 57 per cent in 2019 when analysed against the ILO's ILMS template.¹ From 2013 to 2018, the ILMS template in ASEAN had a different configuration than the current one. In 2019 the ILMS template was changed to now offer a more comprehensive platform for data on labour migration. After the 2019 changes in template, all international labour migration statistics are now disaggregated by sex, and, when other disaggregation variables are requested, the new data collection templates are consistent for different levels of disaggregation within international standards.

¹ Note that these figures are counting what new data are given in that year. Readers must take into consideration that some data will necessarily be left blank – for instance, if the data rely on a census or other survey that is collected in other years and/or not annually.

This current report has three objectives. First, it makes key data from the ILMS Database in ASEAN available and accessible for data users. It presents the latest statistics on international labour migration in ASEAN, providing a comprehensive picture of the demographic profiles and work-characteristics of migrant workers in the labour markets of ASEAN countries of destination, as well as the flows of labour migration to and from the ASEAN region. This way the report contributes to providing an evidence base for policymaking and research on labour migration in ASEAN.

Second, this report takes stock of the progress made and lessons learned in measuring labour migration in ASEAN since the 2013 launch of the ILMS Database in ASEAN. It provides an analytical perspective of each country's labour migration data generation and collection capacity, and recommends what can be improved, added and supported. Putting in place statistical policy and programme measures recommended in this report will help the ASEAN region to produce a labour migration statistics database that is consistent with international frameworks and is responsive to efforts at ensuring that migrant workers, their employers and countries in the region have access to decent work.

A more complete set of data in the ILMS Database is also needed to be able to generate estimates of migrant workers in the region (versus only relying on government-reported data). An estimate for the region would provide policymakers with even better information with which to drive evidence-based decisions.



Third, the report assesses national statistical sources on ILMS in ASEAN Member States against international frameworks involving labour migration and statistics. Key international frameworks are the:

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015);
- SDG Global Indicator Framework (2017);
- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018); and
- 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) Guidelines concerning Statistics of International Labour Migration (2018).

These frameworks have added new requirements on how labour migration statistics are to be collected in ASEAN and globally. The ICLS' adoption of new guidelines in 2018 provided the conceptual framework to tackle and address fragmented statistical sources between government institutions, and eventually promote national and international comparability of those statistics. Further, SDG targets 8.8 and 10.7 specifically provide for labour migration-related statistics to be generated.

Integrating these new frameworks, this report assesses the current state of international labour migration statistics in ASEAN in conjunction with the new approach in ILMS data collection (2019 revision), in order to verify the capacities of ASEAN Member States to generate and share data; identify gaps in data collection; and provide the appropriate support in order to jointly contribute to a transparent, up-to-date and policy-relevant ILMS database. It is expected that the ILMS Database in ASEAN will sustainably become part of the regular data collection of ASEAN Member States; where countries map out occasional gaps and identify appropriate data collection responses to further strengthen labour migration data generation and sharing in ASEAN.

This report was developed using the results of the various ILMS data collections from 2013 to 2020. It looks at individual country data submissions over the period and takes note of the continuing gaps and improvements made by each country. It also looks at other data sources that complement the ILMS Database, such as those from the UNDESA, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. It underwent cross-checking and validation with the nationally designated ILMS Focal Points for the 2020 round of data collection. It also was reviewed for consistency and accuracy by the ILO TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme and ILO Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT).

There are four parts to this report. After the introduction, the second chapter looks at the ILMS data collection process. Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the different frameworks to which this report adheres. Chapter 4 presents the data collected from 2013 to 2020. Chapter 5 assesses the current status of ILMS in ASEAN and analyses lessons learned from the data collections over the years. Chapter 6 concludes and puts forward recommendations for further strengthening of international labour migration statistics in ASEAN.

The report analyses ILMS data collected in 2020 from 2019 national data sources. As a result, the data and analysis do not show the devastating impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on migrant workers and labour migration flows in the ASEAN region. For analysis of COVID-19 impacts on migrant workers in ASEAN, see, for example, the ADBI, OECD and ILO (2021) joint publication [*Labor Migration in Asia: Impacts of the COVID-19 Crisis and the Post-Pandemic Future*](#), as well as ILO publications "[Experiences of Migrant Workers during COVID-19 in ASEAN Countries: Rights at Work, Migration during the Pandemic, and Remigration Plans \(Second Assessment\)](#)" (2021a) and [Supporting Migrant Workers during the Pandemic for a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community: Thematic Background Paper for the 13th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour](#) (2021b).



2. Collection of international labour migration statistics (ILMS) in ASEAN

The ILMS Database was initiated in 1998 and maintained until 2006 by ILOSTAT together with the Statistics Department of the European Union (Eurostat), the United Nations Statistics Department, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. From 2012 to 2018, the ILMS Database in ASEAN was reinvigorated by the ILO's TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme in coordination with the ILO Regional Labour Statistician, ILO Department of Statistics and offices covering the ten ASEAN Member States. In 2018, the ILO re-initiated the global collection of ILMS data, and these data are published online in the ILOSTAT portal ² as submitted by the ASEAN Member States. The ILMS Database responds to an increasing need for migrant labour in the region and beyond. The TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme and ILOSTAT have worked closely with government agencies and officials to deliver a reliable, comprehensive, comparable and tractable information source for cross-border labour migration originating or arriving in ASEAN Member States.

Even with the reintroduction of global collection of ILMS data by ILOSTAT, the TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme has continued its close engagement with the collection of ILMS in ASEAN. The ILO's approach to supporting the collection of ILMS in ASEAN involves:

- Nomination of ILMS focal points in national institutions producing labour migration data in each ASEAN Member State;
- Regular capacity-building of national ILMS focal experts at annual regional technical meetings of focal experts;
- Supporting focal experts in completing the data collection templates circulated by ILOSTAT;
- Technical support to improve national data sources, including labour force surveys, population censuses and administrative data; and
- Supporting country-level capacity-building, coordination and harmonization.

This chapter describes key features of the annual data collection process and sources of ILMS data, and also covers the configuration of the ILMS Database modules and templates.

► 2.1. What does the ILMS Database cover?

International labour migration statistics collected in the ILMS Database primarily cover stock and flows of migrants who are “currently employed, unemployed and looking for employment in their present country of residence”. These ILMS include the number of migrant workers in a country as well as their demographic characteristics and employment patterns, including their working conditions, employment-related earnings and level of qualification of workers, among others.

It is important to explain the bases of defining the collected data. Specifically, “international migrants” are defined as persons who have changed their country of usual residence. As a subset of that, “international migrants of working age” correspond to international migrants aged 15 and older. International migrant

² See <https://ilostat.ilo.org>.

workers are also of working age, but can either be: (i) in employment or unemployment in the country of their usual residence, or (ii) if they are not usual residents or non-resident foreign workers, present in the country of measurement and with a labour attachment to that country during the reference period. Thus international migrant workers can include international migrants as well as those who are non-resident foreign workers. The ILO ILMS Database, specifically compiles information on indicators of stocks, inflows and outflows of “international migrants of working age” and “international migrant workers” – the latter of which are defined in the context of their current labour force attachment.³ In the ILMS Database these data are disaggregated by main socio-economic and work characteristics and updated annually or less frequently depending on the country and the data source as collected by the countries themselves. These definitions distinguish the ILMS Database publication of government-reported numbers of international migrant workers and international migrants of working age, from the estimates of international migrants periodically published by UNDESA's Population Division. Because the ILMS Database captures government-reported figures, the data are primarily of migrant workers in a regular status.

► 2.2 How is labour migration data collected?

The ILO's ILMS data collection is done annually through a network of focal points at ASEAN national statistical offices (NSOs) and other related government agencies. This network of focal points has been established and maintained by the TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme.⁴ These focal points are critical for data collection and unified data submission to the ILMS Database, since there are various data coming from different sources and institutions in each ASEAN Member State. The focal points are officially nominated by the specific government body and introduced to the ILO. The number of focal points for each country varies, depending on the number of institutions producing international labour migration statistics in the country. Table 1 below lists the institutions in each country involved in collecting data for the ILMS Database.

► **Table 1. Institutions with focal points involved in the ILMS Database in ASEAN, as of September 2021**

Country	Ministry or department
Brunei Darussalam	Department of Economic Planning and Statistics, Ministry of Finance and Economy Department of Labour, Ministry of Home Affairs
Cambodia	National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning Department of Employment and Manpower, Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
Indonesia	Directorate of Statistic for Population and Employment, BPS-Statistics Indonesia Development and Information Center, The Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Board of the Republic of Indonesia (BP2MI) Directorate of Development of Placement and Protection of Indonesia Migrant Workers, Ministry of Manpower Directorate General of Immigration, Ministry of Law and Human Rights Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Statistics Division, Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning and Investment

³ As per paragraph 14 of the Guidelines concerning Statistics of International Migration (ILO 2018a): “The concept of international migrant workers is meant to measure the current labour attachment of international migrants in a country, irrespective of the initial purpose of migration, and of others who are not usual residents of the country but have current labour attachment in the country of measurement.”

⁴ Having a focal point in an NSO is the first item on a list of best practices on global data reporting for the SDGs according to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs).

Malaysia	Bureau of Labour Statistics, Department of Statistics Ministry of Home Affairs Ministry of Human Resource
Philippines	Philippines Statistics Authority Bureau of Local Employment, Department of Labour and Employment Planning Branch, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Department of Labour and Employment Commission on Filipinos Overseas Bureau of Immigration
Singapore	Ministry of Manpower Department of Statistics Singapore
Thailand	Ministry of Labour National Statistics Office Royal Thai Police
Viet Nam	General Statistics Office, Ministry of Planning and Investment Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs Ministry of Public Security, Immigration Department

ASEAN data compiled in the ILMS Database come from a variety of national-level official sources, such as population censuses, household-based surveys, labour force surveys and government administrative databases (see list of sources by country in table 2). While the United Nations (UN) recommends countries to measure international migration through population censuses (something that some ASEAN Member States are seeking to achieve in their upcoming or ongoing population censuses), this is not yet possible for all ASEAN Member States. To date, the Member States have not all consistently included data collection items to identify international migrant workers in their population census questionnaires. In addition, censuses are usually conducted every ten years. As a result, the main official source of labour migration statistics in ASEAN Member States continues to be the labour force survey (LFS). However, not all ASEAN Member States regularly conduct LFS; and if they do, not all include survey questions that identify international migrant workers. Thus, administrative records kept by ASEAN Member States' international migration regulatory systems are also included in the ILMS Database, albeit without consistency in terms of their scope or content. This is because administrative agencies are not all organized in the same way across the various ASEAN Member States, and therefore the definitions and data collected are not standardized. Note also that some countries have more data sources than others. In addition, it is important to note that the frequency of data collection differs by country and by method of collection. Challenges related to coverage and quality of national data sources are discussed in detail in sections 5.1 and 5.2 below.

► **Table 2. List of data sources and institutions involved in ILMS data generation, by country**

Country	Name of source
Brunei Darussalam	Labour Force Survey Population and Housing Census 2016 Census Update Administrative Records of the Department of Immigration and National Registration
Cambodia	Labour Force and Child Labour Survey General Population Census Inter-Censal Survey Socio-Economic Survey Economic Census Administrative records of the Department of Employment

Indonesia	Labour force survey – SAKERNAS (Bahasa and English) Population Census Inter-Censal Population Survey Administrative records of the Directorate of Controlling of Foreign Employment Administrative records of the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Board of the Republic of Indonesia (BP2MI)
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Labour Force Survey Population Census Administrative records of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
Malaysia	Labour Force Survey Population and Housing Census Administrative records of the Immigration Bureau (all covered persons are employed)
Myanmar	Population and Housing Census Intercensal Survey Labour Force, Child Labour and School-to-Work Transition Survey Labour force survey Administrative records of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population
Philippines	Census of Population and Housing Covers foreign nationals Labour force survey Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos (covers Filipinos only) Survey on Overseas Filipinos (covers Filipinos only) Administrative records of the Bureau of Immigration Administrative records of the Bureau of Local Employment Administrative records of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (covers Filipinos only) Administrative records of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (covers Filipinos only)
Singapore	Comprehensive Labour Force Survey Census of Population Administrative records of the Ministry of Manpower Administrative records of the Singapore Department of Statistics
Thailand	Labour force survey Population and Housing Census Administrative records of the Office of Foreign Workers Administration Administrative records of the Office of Overseas Employment Administration Administrative records of the Immigration Bureau
Viet Nam	Labour force survey (covers Vietnamese only) Population and Housing Census (covers Vietnamese only) Administrative records of the Department of Overseas Labour (covers Vietnamese only) Administrative records of the Bureau of Employment

Source: ILMS Regional and Country Workshops in 2020.

The data collected is standardized through a template developed by the ILO that all ASEAN Member States receive and into which they input their data. The focal points submit the template to the ILO. Details of the template are discussed in section 2.3. These templates have been revised and improved, with new ones rolled out for the 2019 data collection to offer a more efficient and comprehensive interface for focal points. These improvements include:

1. Specific metadata fields that request the exact information needed to validate and publish data reported on ILOSTAT;

2. More space for entering statistics under each indicator, including for different levels of disaggregation variables that can be chosen by the focal point according to the data available in their country; and
3. Due space for “notes” under each indicator, where focal points are advised to include all relevant information on the data provided, including, for example, on statistical methods used to harmonize or adjust statistics under an indicator.

After each data collection round, validation is done through follow-up exchanges between the focal point and the ILO TRIANGLE in ASEAN and ILOSTAT teams. Cross-checked data are then added to the ILOSTAT web platform at: <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

To efficiently organize and clarify the process of data collection and to respond to challenges prior to actual data collection, the ILO TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme organizes an annual Regional Technical Meeting of ILMS Focal Points. This meeting typically occurs before the template is sent to the ASEAN Member States. During this meeting, the following agenda is discussed:

1. Share and discuss global and regional updates on collection of labour migration statistics and SDG reporting;
2. Review current status of ILMS Database in ASEAN;
3. Discuss lessons learned from the previous round of ILMS collection in ASEAN, and identify ways to further improve data collection and sharing among AMS;
4. Discuss next steps in improving quality and sex-disaggregation of data sources at the country level; and
5. Prepare for the next round of ILMS data collection.

During these meetings the ILO provides a review of the basics and contexts of the ILMS, and explains the data gathering process. ASEAN Member States focal point specialists, for their part, share experiences, challenges and difficulties they encountered when collecting migration data. The meeting ends with scoping of next steps in improving quality and consistency of data collection.

In 2020, in addition to the regular regional meeting, the ILO also initiated country-level meetings to follow up on the issues identified at the regional meeting (with support from the ILO–UN Women Safe and Fair programme). The country-specific meetings were held in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the Philippines and Viet Nam as pilots in 2020.

Even after eight rounds of ILMS collection in ASEAN, data collection gaps exist due to various reasons. Some countries face coordination and communication challenges among the agencies producing relevant data; while some countries are not yet able to produce all ILMS indicators. For some countries, there is no single agency that centralizes data requests and flows, which can lead to duplicate reports, unharmonized data, data inconsistency and a larger burden to respond to more data requests than needed. Remaining gaps and challenges related to the collection of ILMS in ASEAN are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 below.

► 2.3. ILMS Database modules: What data are collected?

Configuration of the ILMS Database consists of three modules with indicators that have been updated and improved over the years. The modules’ contents are as follows:

- Module A – Indicators on “stocks of migrant workers”;
- Module B – Indicators on “inflows of migrant workers”; and
- Module C – Indicators on “outflows of migrant workers”, “return flows of migrant workers” and “stock of migrant workers abroad” (see box 1).

From 2013 to 2018, the ILMS template in ASEAN had a different configuration than the current one. The current questionnaire includes an updated list of indicators and a change in the configuration of the

database. For the sake of brevity and consistency, the previous configuration is denoted as 2013–18 (refer to box 1) and the current configuration as 2019 (see box 2). It should be noted that the changes made in the ILMS questionnaire configuration have not altered the main elements of each module. The 2013–18 configuration required less-specific metadata in data submissions and provided less room for disaggregation variables within some of the indicators. The 2013–18 configuration was updated because the resulting metadata elements collected were sometimes incomplete or inconsistent across indicators and/or data sources, and even more so across countries, despite notes and metadata necessary for the correct interpretation of corresponding data being submitted.

► **Box 1. Configuration of the ILMS Database in ASEAN, 2013–18**

Module A. International migrant stock

1. Resident population by sex, age and labour market status, total and migrants [population]
2. Resident population by sex, age and labour market status, total and migrants [labour force]
3. Resident population by sex, age and labour market status, total and migrants [employed]
4. Working-age population by sex and education, total and migrants
5. Migrants by country of origin
6. Employed migrants by country of origin
7. Employment by economic activity, total and migrants
8. Employment by occupation, total and migrants
9. Employment by sex and status in employment, total and migrants
10. Average monthly employment-related income of employed persons by sex, total and migrants

Module B. International migrant flow

11. Inflows of migrants by sex and country of origin
12. Inflows of working-age migrants by sex and education
13. Inflows of employed migrants by economic activity
14. Inflows of employed migrants by occupation

Module C. Nationals abroad

15. Stock of nationals abroad by sex and country of residence
16. Outflows of nationals by sex and country of destination
17. Outflows of nationals for employment by sex and country of destination
18. Outflows of nationals for employment by sex and education
19. Outflows of nationals for employment by economic activity
20. Outflows of nationals for employment by occupation
21. Inflows of return migrants by sex and previous country of residence

► **Box 2. Current configuration of the ILMS Database, 2019 onwards**

Module A. International migrant stock

1. Working-age population by sex, age and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
2. Working-age population by sex, education and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
3. Foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population by sex and country of birth or citizenship (Persons)
4. Employment by sex, age and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
5. Employment by sex, economic activity and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
6. Employment by sex, occupation and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
7. Employment by sex, status in employment and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
8. Employed foreign-born persons by sex and country of birth or citizenship (Persons)
9. Unemployment by sex, age and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
10. Mean nominal monthly earnings of employees by sex and place of birth or citizenship (Local currency)

Module B. International migrant flow

11. Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population by sex and country of birth or citizenship (Persons)
12. Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population by sex and education (Persons)
13. Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen employed persons by sex and economic activity (Persons)
14. Inflow of foreign-born employed persons by sex and occupation (Persons)

Module C. Nationals abroad

15. Stock of nationals abroad by sex and country of residence (Persons)
16. Inflow of nationals returned from abroad by sex and country of previous residence (Persons)
17. Outflow of nationals by sex and country of destination (Persons)
18. Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and country of destination (Persons)
19. Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and education (Persons)
20. Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and economic activity (Persons)
21. Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and occupation (Persons)

In addition to the “open answer” metadata and notes field, the 2013–18 ILMS template did not offer room to collect indicators by different levels of disaggregation variables. For example, space for data disaggregated by age groups (to make possible the identification of youth workers, core-age workers and elderly workers) was limited to youth in the 2013–18 template. Likewise, disaggregation by sex was not included for all indicators, so these data were not shared, even when they were available. For variables such as education, occupation/skills level of workers and data on economic activity, new international standards of classifications necessitated changes in the levels of their disaggregation.

In relation to data encoding and integration facilitation, the templates were also adjusted to improve the experiences of both the focal points when filling in national data as well as the ILO officials who revise data, conduct clarification rounds with focal points, and submit data to digital tools that operate error checks before final validation and publication on ILOSTAT.

In general, the new ILMS Database template now offers a more comprehensive platform for data on labour migration consistent with the collection of ILMS at the global level. It should be noted that that new ILMS Database in ASEAN template was also introduced when the ILOSTAT ILMS Database at the global level was reinitiated. All international labour migration statistics are now disaggregated by sex, and when other disaggregation variables are requested, the new data collection templates are consistent for different levels of disaggregation within international standards.

When assessed against the ILMS templates, the completeness of the ILMS Database in ASEAN is currently at 57 per cent due to persistent data collection and data sharing gaps. The degree of completeness of the ILMS Database in ASEAN is discussed in detail in section 5.1.



3. International frameworks on the measurement of international labour migration

Since the collection of ILMS was reinitiated in ASEAN by the ILO in 2013, many changes have taken place in the international frameworks guiding measurement of international labour migration. This chapter introduces these frameworks in terms of how they impact data collection for the ILMS Database in ASEAN. ASEAN Member States' ability to follow these international frameworks in their data collection is analysed further in detail in section 5.1 below.

► 3.1. The SDG Global Indicator Framework and its relevance to ILMS data collection

The SDGs are a global commitment to “transforming our world” and “leaving no one behind”, notably women and men migrant workers. The SDGs consist of 17 goals and 169 targets that summarize the interconnected social, economic, political and environmental objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The key labour migration targets in the SDGs are target 8.8 on “protect[ing] labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment” and target 10.7 on facilitating “orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of well-managed migration policies” (UNGA 2015). Apart from this, there are many migration-related targets included in other Goals. Disaggregation by migratory status is a recommendation in a capacity-building target (17.18, see box 3). Specifically, target 17.18 aims for increased availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data that have “migratory status” as a mandatory disaggregation variable whenever relevant in the national context, essentially “leaving no one behind” in the process of achieving, monitoring and reporting progress in sustainable development. Disaggregation of statistics is seen as fundamental for the full implementation of the Global Indicator Framework. As a reflection of the “universality” principle of the 2030 Agenda, the global indicators are meant to be disaggregated where relevant by migratory status, sex and other variables.

In addition to the SDG targets, UN Member States would monitor and report progress on the 2030 Agenda using the SDGs' Global Indicator Framework. The Framework was developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), under the UN Statistical Commission. The Framework is meant to be complemented with regional-level and national-level indicators that are to be developed locally and well-adjusted to the local context. Also part of the SDG targets is the improvement of the statistical capacity of UN Member States (the aforementioned target 17.18). This capacity improvement includes improvement in data analysis for the global reporting processes and improved maintenance of national monitoring processes.

► **Box 3. Integration of “international migration” in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

The Declaration of the 2030 Agenda highlights migrants as a group in particular need of human rights protection, including the following actions to be taken:

- respect the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status;
- take into account the vulnerabilities of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons;
- recognize the contribution of migration to global sustainable development;
- address forced displacement and humanitarian crises;
- promote international cooperation;
- strengthen the resilience of host communities; and
- support the right of citizens to return to their country of origin.

At least ten of the 169 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets include references to international migration, migrant workers or mobility, including:

SDG target(s)	Relevance to international migration/migrant workers
3.c	Strengthen and retain the health workforce in developing countries
4.b	Increase the number of scholarships for study abroad
5.2/8.7/16.2	Eradicate human trafficking
8.8	Protect labour rights of migrant workers
10.7	Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration
10.c	Reduce transaction costs of remittances
16.9	Establish legal identity, including through birth registration
17.18	Capacity to increase availability of data disaggregated by migratory status, along with other overarching disaggregation variables.

Source: UNDESA 2015.

To facilitate implementation of the Global Indicator Framework by UN Member States, the large set of 231 unique SDG indicators is organized on a tier system, with each indicator's tier designation being based on the methodological development of the indicator and data availability on the international level.⁵ Each SDG indicator is under the custody of various UN agencies or partner agencies that are responsible for global reporting on that indicator and its development, both methodologically and in terms of global data availability.

The ILO is the focal point to the UN for labour statistics and the custodian agency of 14 decent work indicators in the SDG Agenda, including labour migration indicators that fall under SDG targets 8.8 and 10.7 (see figure 1). Indicators 8.8.1 and 8.8.2 are related to ensuring the rights of workers at the workplace, as well as ensuring a safe and secure environment. Indicator 10.7.1 is for measurement of recruitment costs borne by migrant workers. All global indicators are recommended to be used with as many disaggregation variables as relevant to local contexts; this means that “migratory status” and “sex” shall be used to measure outcomes of migrant workers across labour market indicators in ASEAN Member States. On 28 December 2020, the IAEG-SDGs updated the tier classifications of the 231

⁵ Quoting from the IAEG-SDGs, below is the tier system of SDG indicators:

- Tier I: Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, and data are regularly produced by countries for at least 50 per cent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant.
- Tier II: Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, but data are not regularly produced by countries.
- Tier III: No internationally established methodology or standards are yet available for the indicator, but methodology/standards are being (or will be) developed or tested.

indicators. About 130 indicators fall under Tier I, 97 under Tier II, and four indicators fall under multiple tiers.

► **Figure 1. Indicators in the SDG Global Indicator Framework for which ILO is custodian, by methodological tier**

Tier I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions 8.2.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person 8.5.2 Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities 8.6.1 Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training 8.7.1 Proportion and number of children aged 5–17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age 10.4.1 Labour share of GDP
Tier II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/ systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and poor and the vulnerable. 8.3.1 Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex 8.5.1 Average hourly earnings of employees, by occupation and persons with disabilities 8.8.1 Fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 workers, by sex and migrant status 8.8.2 Level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on ILO textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status 8.b.1 Existence of a developed and operationalized national strategy for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy 10.7.1 Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in the country of destination

Tier classifications as of 28 December 2020. Source: UNSTAT 2020.

ASEAN Member States have committed to following up and reviewing all progress made in achieving the SDGs and SDG targets. With respect to labour migration-related targets and indicators, there is still limited shared evidence that all ASEAN Member States duly measure progress on indicators such as 10.7.1 (on recruitment costs of migrant workers), or that they are systematically applying migratory status as a disaggregation variable across all relevant instances of decent work. For the labour migration agenda (under the ILO's mandate), the ILO's work on the collection of ILMS directly contributes to increasing the use of migratory status as a disaggregation variable. The ILO also promotes including the measurement of recruitment costs borne by migrant workers in forthcoming national labour force surveys (see box 4).

► **Box 4. Measurement of recruitment costs**

ASEAN Member States have committed to monitoring statistics and reporting on international recruitment costs, given the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. SDG Indicator 10.7.1 is the following: "Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in country of destination."

The ILMS currently measures income earned in country of destination. Further information is needed to measure recruitment cost as a proportion of that earned income. The reduction of recruitment costs is expected given the regulation of recruitment practices and fees, which will ultimately facilitate the mobility of people. Some countries in ASEAN already measure, or plan to measure, the recruitment costs borne by workers through additional questions in their labour force surveys. Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic included the topic of international recruitment costs in their latest labour force surveys; Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam have also begun preparations to measure recruitment costs.

► **Box 5. Disaggregating by migratory status**

With SDG target 17.18, countries are required to disaggregate statistics by migratory status whenever such disaggregation becomes relevant in the national context. Disaggregating by migratory status allows countries to inclusively cover migrant workers in labour and social protection, to highlight their contributions to national development, and to know who and how to help during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. ASEAN Member States' ability to collect statistics disaggregated by migratory status is discussed in detail in section 5.1 below.

Note that the 20th ICLS Guidelines concerning Statistics of International Labour Migration, 2018, described in the next section, use the term "migration status", rather than "migratory status".

► **3.2. ICLS Guidelines concerning Labour Migration Statistics**

International standards on labour statistics are important in guiding the harmonization of migration statistics at the national and international levels and help integrate labour migration into national development strategies.

Prior to 2018, the key international standards on labour migration statistics included the UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration (adopted in 1976 and revised in 1998), as well as the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (adopted in 2013). The ICLS sets international standards to guide the efforts of countries in regard to determining – in a uniform manner – who is an international migrant worker, both within national statistical systems and across borders.

To this end, in 2018 the 20th ICLS adopted the Guidelines concerning Statistics of International Labour Migration (ILO 2018a, see also box 6 below). While the Guidelines were formulated on a general level, they aim to guide national and regional efforts in tackling the practical challenges identified on those levels in harmonizing international labour migration statistics. The UN Statistics Division is also currently revising the 1998 Recommendations, given the observed progress in statistics generation for topics such as labour migration, refugees, displaced people, etc. Yet amid developments at the global level, migration statistics within the ASEAN Member States remain fragmented as a result of discrepancies in concepts, definitions and methodologies, thereby posing difficulties in regard to comparing country-level data.

► **Box 6. 20th ICLS Guidelines concerning Statistics of International Labour Migration, 2018**

The International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) meets every five years. Participants include experts from governments (mostly appointed from ministries responsible for labour and national statistical offices) as well as from employers' and workers' organizations. The ICLS makes recommendations on selected topics related to labour statistics through resolutions and guidelines. These recommendations are then approved by the Governing Body of the ILO before becoming part of the set of international standards on labour statistics. These standards usually relate to concepts, definitions, classifications and other methodological procedures that are agreed as representing best practice in the respective areas. When national data producers adopt these standards it will increase the likelihood of having internationally comparable labour statistics (as well as being comparable across time within a particular country).

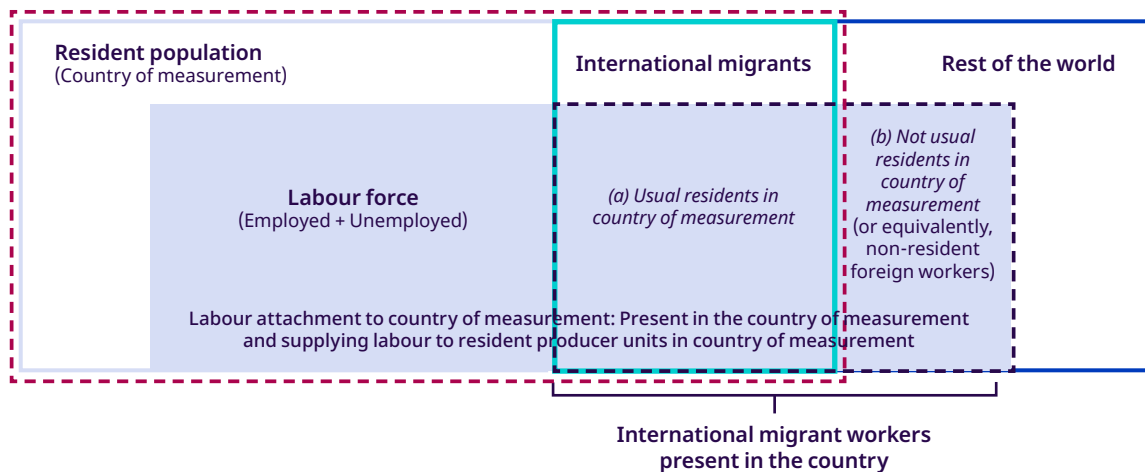
An important addition to the international normative framework was 2018 adoption of the 20th ICLS Guidelines concerning Statistics of International Labour Migration. The Guidelines seek to support countries to develop their own statistics on labour migration, provide a conceptual framework that will help tackle fragmentation of statistical sources between government institutions, and promote national and international comparability of those data. The Guidelines concerning Statistics of International Labour Migration aim to:

1. enhance protection of migrant workers with interests of countries of origin and destination being taken into consideration alongside migrant workers' interests;
2. maximize developmental benefits of international labour migration for all; and
3. better match labour demand and supply across countries.

The 20th ICLS proposed definition of "international migrant workers" does not change or impact the current UN definition of international migrants. The definition provides a wider conceptual framework to current migration challenges faced, essentially ending the invisibility of some groups in official statistics. A "migrant worker" is a combination of two concepts, a demographic one (their place of birth or place of previous residence, or citizenship) that relates to the "migrant" portion of the term, and a socio-economic one (economic activity) that relates to the "worker" half of the term. In this sense, the Guidelines address full identification of what are commonly called "international migrant workers" and refer to three concepts: **(1) for-work international migrants; (2) return international migrant workers and (3) international migrant workers.**

One of the main messages from the conceptual and measurement frameworks for international labour migration adopted by the 20th ICLS is the aim to assure proper coverage of the reference population of interest, in line with the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Census, Revision 3 (2017). In order to extensively cover international migrant workers present in a country, NSOs need to establish among residents of the country those who are both international migrants (based on demographic characteristics) as well as part of the labour force (based on work characteristics). In addition, persons who are not usual residents in a country (see figure 2) but who are in the labour force or in the potential labour force or any other forms of work should be counted. These include individuals "such as frontier workers, seasonal workers, itinerant workers, documented and undocumented migrant workers, project-tied workers, specified-employment workers, seafarers and workers on an offshore installation" (ILO 2018a, p.3).

Source: ILO 2018a.

► **Figure 2. Schematic representation of the measurement framework for international migrant workers**

Source: ILO 2018a.

► 3.3. United Nations Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

The international normative framework on international migration saw another important addition in 2018 with the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) by the UN General Assembly in December 2018. The GCM achieved an unprecedented commitment from many UN Member States on all dimensions of international migration, including support for international cooperation in governance of labour migration.

The GCM carries 23 objectives, and Objective 1 covers migration statistics, namely: “Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data for the basis of evidence-based policies.” The GCM mandates 11 actions in relation to Objective 1:

1. Formulate comprehensive strategies for local, national, regional and global migration data (especially by harmonizing data collection and strengthening data analysis and dissemination);
2. Improve international comparability and compatibility of migration statistics and migration statistical systems;
3. Develop a global programme to bolster national statistics offices to collect, analyse and share data on migration;
4. Collect, analyse and use data on the effects and benefits of migration, and the contributions of migrants to sustainable development;
5. Develop and collaborate to run and improve existing global and regional databases on migration;
6. Establish regional centres for research and training on migration;
7. Improve national-level data collecting by integration migration-related topics into national census – hopefully allowing for disaggregated data;
8. Conduct household, labour force and other national surveys that integrate migrant-related variables;
9. Enhance collaboration by national statistical offices to produce migration statistics (including data from administrative sources, population registers, surveys, etc.);
10. Develop and use country-specific migration profiles with disaggregated data; and
11. Cooperate with relevant stakeholders to study the links between migration and sustainable development (UNGA 2018).

Actions related to Objective 1 of the GCM are closely aligned with the objectives of the ILO's work on international labour migration statistics.



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► 3.4. ASEAN regional frameworks on labour migration data collection

ASEAN has also developed its own regional commitment to migration statistics. This commitment is enshrined in article 18 of the 2007 ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, which states that ASEAN Member States will: “Facilitate data sharing on matters related to migrant workers, for the purpose of enhancing policies and programmes concerning migrant workers in both sending and receiving states.”

The ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (2017) further provides that ASEAN Member States will: “Facilitate information sharing through development or strengthening of their respective database and information systems on matters relating to migrant workers, for the purpose of enhancing policies and programmes concerning migrant workers in both Sending and Receiving States” (art. 53).

The ILMS Database in ASEAN responds to these commitments by ASEAN Member States, as an ILO-led activity.

The ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML) is an annual regional policy forum that adopts recommendations to advance the implementation of the 2007 ASEAN Declaration and 2017 ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. Each year the AFML is carried out in a tripartite-plus manner with the involvement of governments, employers' organizations, workers' organizations and civil society organizations from all ASEAN Member States, with support from the ASEAN Secretariat, the ILO, the International Organization for Migration and UN Women. Across the 14 AFMLs to date, discussions of migration statistics have been inserted into various areas given the varied themes of the annual meeting. A total of 16 AFML recommendations relate to migration statistics, either directly and indirectly.

The 6th AFML in 2013 focused on labour migration data, and eight of the 20 recommendations of that AFML covered migration statistics. Four of these eight recommendations relate to the ILMS Database in ASEAN:

1. setting up "a regional and updated database on labour migration";
2. developing an "ASEAN Framework on Labour Migration Statistics";
3. setting up a "Working Group on International Labour Migration Statistics" that should meet regularly; and
4. having a "regular exchange of labour migration data between countries of destination and origin to ensure coherence of such data" (ASEAN 2013).

In addition, a fifth recommendation listed the specific datasets required of ASEAN Member States. These recommendations helped set and establish the annual ILMS collection process led by the ILO in 2013.

The ASEAN Statistics Division (ASEANstats) is one of the divisions under the ASEAN Economic Community Department of the ASEAN Secretariat, and is in charge of providing statistical services to the ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN bodies and ASEAN stakeholders. The main functions of ASEANstats are:

- development of regional indicators, data frameworks and systems for monitoring ASEAN Community goals and initiatives;
- compilation, consolidation, dissemination and communication of statistical information on the ASEAN region and its Member States;
- provision of statistical services to the ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN bodies and ASEAN stakeholders;
- harmonization of ASEAN statistics – standardization of concepts, definitions, classifications, and approaches;
- implementation, coordination and facilitation of regional statistical programmes and activities, including those of the working groups and task forces within the ASEAN Framework of Cooperation in Statistics, with guidance from the ASEAN Community Statistical System (ACSS) Committee; and
- implementation of policies and facilitation of partnerships between the ACSS Committee, ASEAN bodies, and international/regional statistical communities (ASEANstats, n.d.).

ASEANstats does not currently collect statistics on international labour migration in the ASEAN region.



▶ 4

4. Latest statistics on international labour migration in ASEAN

This chapter presents and discusses the main ILMS collected from the ten ASEAN Member States. The ILMS Database in ASEAN contains a rich set of data on the presence of international migrant workers of working age in the labour markets of ASEAN Member States, with details on their socio demographic profiles and work characteristics, such as sectors of employment, occupations and wages. In addition, the ILMS Database in ASEAN includes data on inflows of international migrant workers, outflows of labour migration from the ASEAN region as well as inflows of return migrant workers to the region. While acknowledging the importance of the ILMS Database in ASEAN as a data source, it is important to note, however, the limitations related to completeness, quality and comparability of the data compiled in the database. These limitations are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

► 4.1. Overview of international migration in ASEAN

Before starting a closer analysis of ILMS in ASEAN, it is good to provide a broad overview of international migration in the region – estimates capturing both workers and those not in the labour market.

According to UNDESA estimates, of the total of 10.1 million international migrants living in ASEAN's net destination countries – Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand – 9.1 million are international migrants of working age, and 7.1 million are intra-ASEAN migrants who came from origin countries within the region. With international migration trending upward since the 1990s (table 3), in 2019 Thailand and Malaysia were considered to have the 17th and 18th largest stocks of international migrants in the world, respectively, placing them second and third in Asia, only behind India (UNDESA 2019). In 2019, the estimated total international migrant stock of these two countries was more than 7.1 million, including 3.1 million women. Migrants represent 5.2 per cent of Thailand's total population, and 10.7 per cent of Malaysia's. The other two ASEAN net destination countries – Brunei Darussalam and Singapore – have the highest shares of migrants within their total populations. Singapore's estimated migrant stock (2.1 million, 55.9 per cent women) representing 37.1 per cent of the population in 2019, and Brunei Darussalam's estimated migrant stock (110,600, 43.4 per cent women) represents 25.5 per cent of the total population. Brunei Darussalam is the only one of the net destination countries where the share of international migrants in the total population has decreased over the last 20 years (see table 3). For the other net destination countries this share has been increasing. In Singapore it did decrease over the last 10 years, though the 20-year trend has shown increase.

Among net origin countries, the Philippines has the ninth-largest diaspora population in the world and the fourth-largest in Asia – behind India, China and Bangladesh. Not far behind, Indonesia has the 11th largest diaspora population in the world and the fifth-largest in Asia (UNDESA 2019). The next largest diaspora populations among ASEAN origin countries are Myanmar, Viet Nam, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia (table 4). The stock of nationals abroad from ASEAN origin countries has grown threefold since 1990, with the stock of Myanmar nationals abroad growing by more than a factor of five over the period. The share of women in the stock of nationals abroad from ASEAN net origin countries increased for most of countries from 1990 to 2019, but decreased for Myanmar and the Philippines.

► **Table 3. International migrant stock in ASEAN countries by country of destination, 2000-2019**

Country	International migrant stock as a percentage of the total population			Total migrant stock (000)	Share of women in total migrant stock	Working-age migrant stock (000)	Share of women in working-age migrant stock	Net migration (000)
	2000	2010	2019					
Brunei Darussalam	28.9	25.9	25.5	111	43.4%	105	43.1%	64
Cambodia	1.2	0.6	0.5	79	46.1%	73	45.9%	-1 019
Indonesia	0.1	0.1	0.1	353	41.8%	317	41.5%	-4 180
Lao PDR	0.4	0.5	0.7	48	35.6%	44	34.2%	-1 299
Malaysia	6.3	8.6	10.7	3 430	38.9 %	3 111	37.9%	1 741
Myanmar	0.2	0.2	0.1	76	45.2%	65	43.7%	-3 623
Philippines	0.4	0.2	0.2	219	48.2%	167	46.6%	-5 159
Singapore	33.6	42.2	37.1	2 156	55.9 %	1 980	56.1%	1 815
Thailand	2.0	4.8	5.2	3 635	49.8 %	3 234	49.4%	2 615
Viet Nam	0.1	0.1	0.1	76	42.1%	67	40.5%	-2 608

Notes: Blue font indicates that a country is a net destination country of international migrants. Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic. Source: UNDESA 2019.

► **Table 4. Estimated stocks of nationals abroad in ASEAN countries (in thousands), 1990-2019**

Country	1990		2000		2010		2019	
	Total	Share of women	Total	Share of women	Total	Share of women	Total	Share of women
Brunei Darussalam	26	40.7%	45	39.9%	44	40.3%	47	41.2%
Cambodia	355	50.8%	460	51.3%	953	52.7%	1 098	53.6%
Indonesia	1 638	41.9%	2 431	44.5%	3 429	44.4%	4 533	45.0%
Lao PDR	483	50.9%	649	51.1%	1 199	53.8%	1 347	55.7%
Malaysia	563	50.8%	1 204	55.0%	1 599	53.8%	1 689	56.6%
Myanmar	685	45.1%	1 224	46.4%	2 470	44.0%	3 699	37.2%
Philippines	2 034	59.0%	3 092	57.3%	4 719	54.2%	5 377	53.6%
Singapore	156	52.3%	193	52.7%	278	51.7%	341	52.3%
Thailand	311	60.5%	537	62.8%	774	63.6%	1 020	64.4%
Viet Nam	1 238	48.6%	1 885	48.7%	2 356	49.2%	2 684	51.0%

Notes: Blue font indicates that a country is a net origin country of international migrants. Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic. Source: UNDESA 2019.

From the two above tables, it is interesting to note that net origin countries can have substantial numbers of migrants inside their own borders as well. While still small percentages compared to the total populations, the nominal figures are in the hundreds of thousands in Indonesia and the Philippines, for instance. Similarly, net countries of destination may also have large numbers of nationals abroad – Malaysia and Thailand both had over 1 million nationals abroad in 2019. Critically, this means that regardless of whether countries are typically labelled as origin or destination countries, they all have bi-directional flows, and therefore data collection on migrant inflows, outflows and stocks are essential for all countries. Over time, demographics shift, and ASEAN Member States need the statistical infrastructure to be able to capture these shifts.

► 4.2. Overview of ASEAN labour markets for total, migrant and non-migrant populations

The ILMS Database in ASEAN includes main labour market statistics from the 2019 labour force surveys (LFS) of ASEAN Member States, and allows for comparison between total, non-migrant and migrant populations, whenever available (table 5).

► **Table 5. Selected labour-market indicators for total, non-migrant and migrant populations**

Reference year	ASEAN net countries of destination				ASEAN net countries of origin			
	Brunei Darussalam 2019	Malaysia 2019	Singapore 2019	Thailand 2019	Cambodia 2019	Indonesia 2019	Lao PDR 2019	Viet Nam 2019
Type of source	LFS	LFS	LFS & administrative records*	LFS	LFS	LFS	LFS	LFS
Number (in thousands)								
Working-age population	369.8	22 685.2		56 678.9	11 514.7	200 485.1	4 758.0	73 393.5
– Non-migrants	264.8	19 956.2	–	55 400.9	11 475.8	200 293.0	4 748.3	72 709.3
– Migrants	105	2 728.4	–	1 278.1	38.9	192.1	9.5	129.9
Labour force	238.2	15 581.5		37 854.4	7 980.8	136 807.7	1 940.2	51 620.9
– Non-migrants	155.9	13 305.5	–	36 749.2	7 951.4	136 680.1	1 936.5	51 552.8
– Migrants	82.3	2 276.0	–	1 105.2	29.3	127.6	3.7	68.1
Employed	221.7	15 073.4	3 784.3	37 482.9	7 883.1	131 895.9	1 757.7	50 567.9
– Non-migrants	139.8	12 836.8	2,356.8	36 380.3	7 854.0	131 774.8	1 754.0	50 500.4
– Migrants	81.9	2 236.6	1 427.4	1 102.6	29.1	121.2	3.7	67.5
Unemployed	16.5	508.2		371.5	97.7	4 911.8	n.a	1 053
– Non-migrants	16.1	468.7	–	368.9	97.4	4 905.4	n.a	1052.4
– Migrants	0.4	39.4	–	2.6	0.3	6.4	n.a	0.6
Outside the labour force	131.6	7 103.7	–	18 824.5	3 533.9	63 677.4	2 817.8	21 272.6
– Non-migrants	108.9	6 651.3	–	18 651.7	3 524.4	63 612.9	2 811.8	21 156.5
– Migrants	22.7	452.4	–	172.8	9.5	64.5	5.8	61.8
Percentage (%)								
Labour force participation rate	64.4	68.7		66.8	69.3	68.2	40.8	70.3
– Non-migrants	58.9	66.7	–	66.3	69.3	68.2	40.8	70.9
– Migrants	78.4	83.4	–	86.5	75.5	66.4	39.3	52.4
Employment-to-population ratio	93.1	66.4		66.1	68.5	65.8	36.9	68.9
– Non-migrants	89.7	64.3	–	65.7	68.4	65.8	36.9	69.5
– Migrants	99.5	82.0	–	86.3	74.9	63.1	39.3	52
Unemployment rate	6.9	3.3	–	0.7	1.2	3.6	n.a	2
– Non-migrants	29.2	3.5	–	0.7	1.2	3.6	n.a	2
– Migrants	1.2	1.7	–	0.2	0.9	5.0	n.a	–
Youth unemployment rate	21.4	10.5	–	2.1	2.5	13.6	n.a	6.9
– Non-migrants	29.2	12.5	–	2.2	2.5	13.6	n.a	6.9
– Migrants	1.2	3.7	–	0.5	5.0	9.1	n.a	2.4

Reference year	ASEAN net countries of destination				ASEAN net countries of origin			
	Brunei Darussalam 2019	Malaysia 2019	Singapore 2019	Thailand 2019	Cambodia 2019	Indonesia 2019	Lao PDR 2019	Viet Nam 2019
Type of source	LFS	LFS	LFS & administrative records*	LFS	LFS	LFS	LFS	LFS
Number (in thousands)								
Working-age population	28.4	12	–	2.3	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.2
Labour force	34.5	14.6	–	2.9	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.1
Employed	36.9	14.8	–	2.9	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.1
Unemployed	2.4	7.8	–	0.7	0.1	0.1	n.a	0.1
Youth unemployed	1.5	7.9	–	0.6	0.8	0.1	n.a	–

– = nil; LFS = labour force survey.

Notes: **Brunei Darussalam**, international migration defined on the basis of birthplace (LFS 2019); **Cambodia**, international migration defined on the basis of citizenship (LFS 2019); **Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR)**, international migration defined on the basis of citizenship (LFS 2017); **Indonesia**, international migration defined on the basis of birthplace (LFS 2019); **Malaysia**, international migration defined on the basis of citizenship (LFS 2019); **Singapore**, international migration defined on the basis of citizenship (*Administrative Records and estimations from Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower, 2019, per ILOSTAT 2020); **Thailand**, international migration defined on the basis of birthplace (LFS and Migration Survey 2019); **Viet Nam**, international migration defined on the basis of birthplace (LFS 2019). Please note that ILOSTAT calculations from microdata may use different unemployment definitions than ASEAN Member States, including Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia.

Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

Table 5 above presents three subsets: (a) basic employment statistics; (b) employment statistics shares; and (c) migrant shares. Missing entries in this table are due to a few situations:

1. countries where international migrant stocks are too small to appear in national surveys;
2. countries where surveys cover only citizens and not all residents as recommended by the UN and the ILO (such as, surveys in the Philippines, Singapore and Viet Nam);
3. countries with limited processing and sharing data practices (as may be the case for Malaysia); or
4. simply countries not collecting data (as in the case of Myanmar).

In all ASEAN destination countries that share data, employment-to-population ratios and labour force participation rates are higher for migrants than for non-migrants, and unemployment rates are consistently lower for migrants than for non-migrants (table 5). These numbers illustrate well the idea that international migrants of working age in ASEAN are much more likely to be in the labour force than not, and if part of the labour force, migrants are more likely to be employed and engaged in the labour market.

According to the international labour migration statistics collected for 2019, migrant workers made up 37 per cent in Brunei Darussalam, 15 per cent in Malaysia and 3 per cent in Thailand.⁶ These countries, plus Singapore, have significant numbers of employed migrants in the labour force. Based on the available LFS data in table 5, ASEAN governments have counted 5.1 million employed migrants in the region. This includes net origin ASEAN Member States' identification of migrant workers in their labour force, though corresponding to very low proportions within their total labour force.

The above employed migrant worker count of 5.1 million highlights the remaining gaps in the ILMS Database in ASEAN. Even if the number of employed migrants does not represent the total number of migrant workers and even accounting for the fact that the total number of migrant workers is missing for some ASEAN countries, there is a stark contrast with the 2019 UNDESA estimate of 10.1 million international migrants and 9.1 million international migrants of working age living in ASEAN net destination countries. The difference between these international estimates and national official statistics shows that at least a few million migrant workers are still out of reach of ASEAN Member

⁶ The administrative records of the Ministry of Labour, Department of Employment show a larger number of migrant workers in Thailand than the LFS. Thus this rate is likely to be higher.

States' official data collection. This is either voluntary (where survey coverage is still limited to citizens); due to methodological or sampling issues that reflect the overall challenges in measuring international labour migration; or due to non-reporting to ILO. Further issues emerge if only looking at LFS figures. Administrative sources, for instance Department of Employment records in Thailand, can in some cases show higher numbers than those captured in LFS's. These limitations in the ILMS Database in ASEAN are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Regardless of the limitations, the ILMS Database in ASEAN is an important source of data on the labour market position of migrant workers in ASEAN, as these data are not an estimate and are not available from other sources. The ILMS Database provides countries with data they can use to develop and implement policies, and at the same time influence others in the region to catch up in providing data for their own needs and for regional labour market cooperation. Data from both origin and destination countries in any given migration corridor also allow for triangulation. For example, in instances where migrant workers in an irregular situation are able to take advantage of opportunities for regularization in the destination country, statistics on labour migration may not match in the origin and destination countries. Regular data sharing can help countries bridge asymmetries in knowledge.

The ILMS data presented in the following subsections, provides a perspective on how migrant workers have contributed to labour force quantity and quality in the ASEAN region. By way of giving context to the following analysis, it is important to note that the collection of ILMS data continues to be a challenge for all ASEAN Member States. Most of the charts and tables below are, therefore, necessarily based on data from countries with more complete submissions. This does not mean, however, that those which are not covered below do not have the data, only that it is not yet in the ILMS Database in ASEAN.

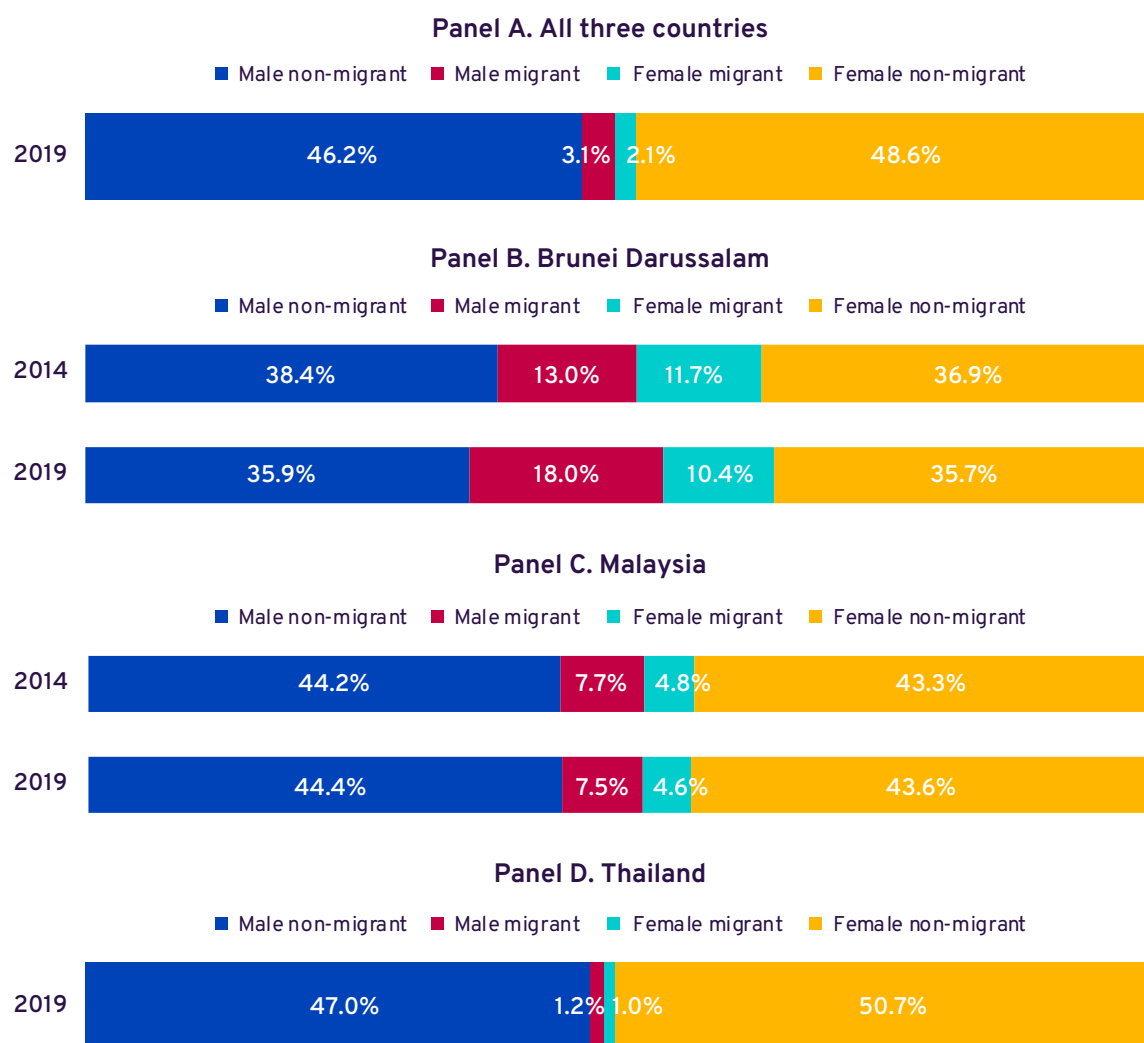
► 4.3. International migrant workers in the labour markets of ASEAN countries of destination

4.3.1. Working age international migrants

Across the total combined working-age populations of Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand, the share of migrants was 5.2 per cent in 2019: 2.2 per cent in Thailand,⁷ 12.1 in Malaysia and 28.4 in Brunei Darussalam (figure 3). In recent years, Brunei Darussalam has seen the total migrant share increase 3.7 per cent from 2014 to 2019, though there has been a decrease in the share of working-age migrant women in the country, which decreased from 11.7 per cent in 2014 to 10.4 per cent in 2019. These figures could be underreported, especially for Thailand and Malaysia, given the remaining challenges in measuring labour migration. For example, administrative records produced by the Department of Employment in Thailand's Ministry of Labour put the number of (registered) migrant workers at 2.8 million in 2019 (ILO 2019a), while the LFS only captured data on 1.1 million migrant workers.

In line with ILO global estimates for international migration (ILO 2018), the share of men in the migrant working-age population for which there is data in ASEAN has increased over the last five years. In 2019, women corresponded to 37.9 per cent of migrants of working age in Malaysia and to 36.7 per cent in Brunei Darussalam; both shares have decreased relative to 2014, though Malaysia's decline is marginal and Brunei Darussalam's figures are not a large fraction of the ASEAN total (table 6).

⁷ The administrative records of the Ministry of Labour, Department of Employment show a larger number of migrant workers in Thailand than the LFS. Thus this rate is likely to be higher.

► **Figure 3. Working age population in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand by migration status and sex (%), 2014 and 2019**

Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

► **Table 6. Share of women in working-age population in ASEAN destination countries (%), 2014 and 2019**

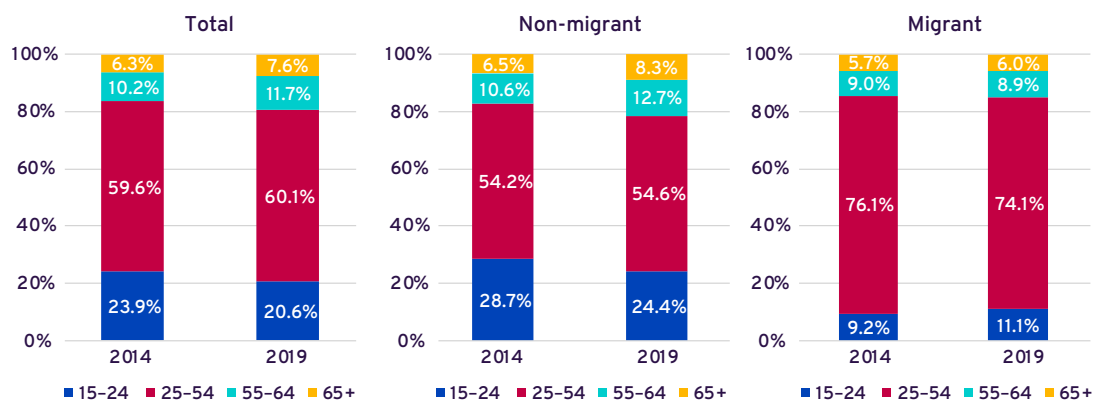
Country	2014		2019	
	Migrant	Non-migrant	Migrant	Non-migrant
Brunei Darussalam	47.2	49.0	36.7	49.9
Malaysia	38.2	49.5	37.9	49.6
Thailand	–	–	45.5	51.9

Notes: Thailand has no data in 2014. Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

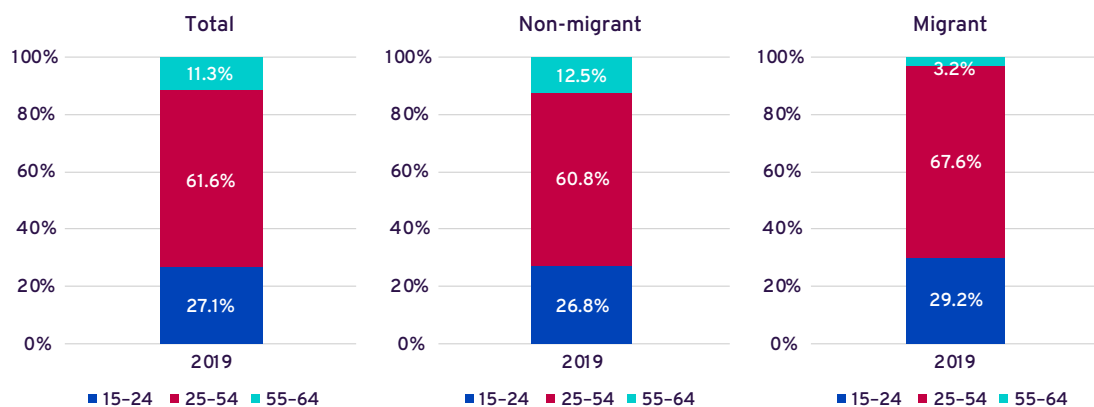
Migrants of working age in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand are mostly in their prime age (25–54 years old), with youth workers (ages 15–24) being the second-largest group, followed by workers older than 54 years (figure 4). Among the three countries, the share of youth among the migrant working-age population is highest in Malaysia (29.2 per cent) and Thailand (17.6 per cent); in both countries the share of youth among working-age migrants is higher than among working-age non-migrants. Per figure 4, in Brunei Darussalam the age distribution of the working-age migrant population has skewed younger in 2019 than it did in 2014.

► Figure 4. Age distribution of total, migrant and non-migrant working-age populations in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand (%), 2014 and 2019

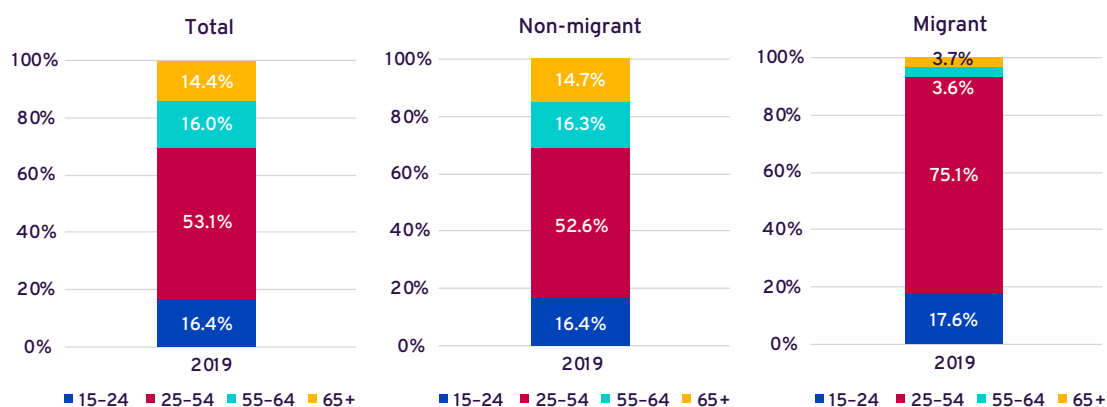
Panel A. Brunei Darussalam, 2014 and 2019



Panel B. Malaysia, 2019



Panel C. Thailand, 2019



Notes: 2014 data were not available for Malaysia and Thailand in ILOSTAT. Working-age population in Malaysia, as measured by the labour force survey, covers persons aged 15–64. Brunei Darussalam and Thailand include data for persons aged 65 and over. Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

4.3.2. International migrants in the labour force: High rates of participation

The labour force refers to all working-age persons either employed or seeking and available for employment within a country's resident working-age population. Although official statistics from ASEAN Member States are not considered to provide an accurate estimation of the size of their migrant worker stocks, in Brunei Darussalam, more than one-third (34.5 per cent) of the labour force is constituted by migrants, totalling 82 thousand persons. The Thai migrant labour force corresponds to 2.9 per cent of the total resident labour force, with 1.1 million migrants officially reported in 2019 (table 7).⁸

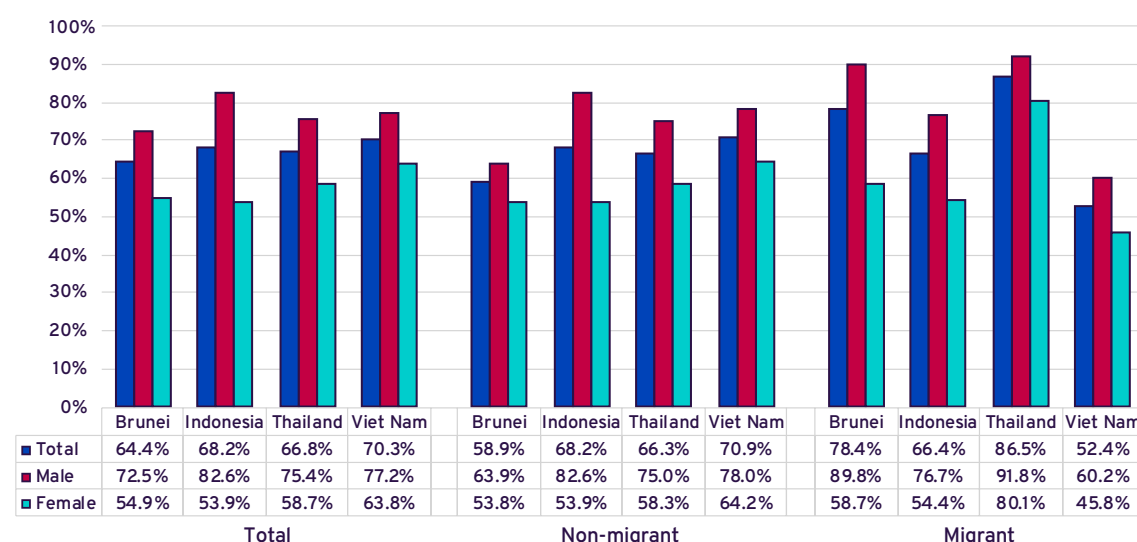
► **Table 7. Migrant labour force in selected ASEAN countries (in thousands), 2019**

Country	Migrants in the labour force
Brunei Darussalam	82
Thailand	1 105

Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

In most ASEAN net destination countries, international migrant workers of both sexes have higher labour force participation rates than non-migrants, and men have a higher participation rate than women across both the migrant and non-migrant groups. Non-migrant labour force participation rates in Brunei Darussalam are 63.9 per cent for men and 53.8 per cent for women; while the corresponding migrant rates are 89.8 and 58.7 per cent, respectively. In Thailand, non-migrant rates are 75 and 58.3 per cent for men and women, respectively; while migrants' rates correspond to 91.8 and 80.1 per cent (figure 5). For net origin countries like Indonesia and Viet Nam, the pattern is reversed, suggesting that a smaller proportion of international migrants are participating in the labour force compared to nationals.

► **Figure 5. Labour force participation rate in selected ASEAN countries by sex and migration status (%), 2019**



Note: Brunei = Brunei Darussalam. ILOSTAT calculations from microdata may use different unemployment definitions than ASEAN Member States, including Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia. Source: ILOSTAT 2020

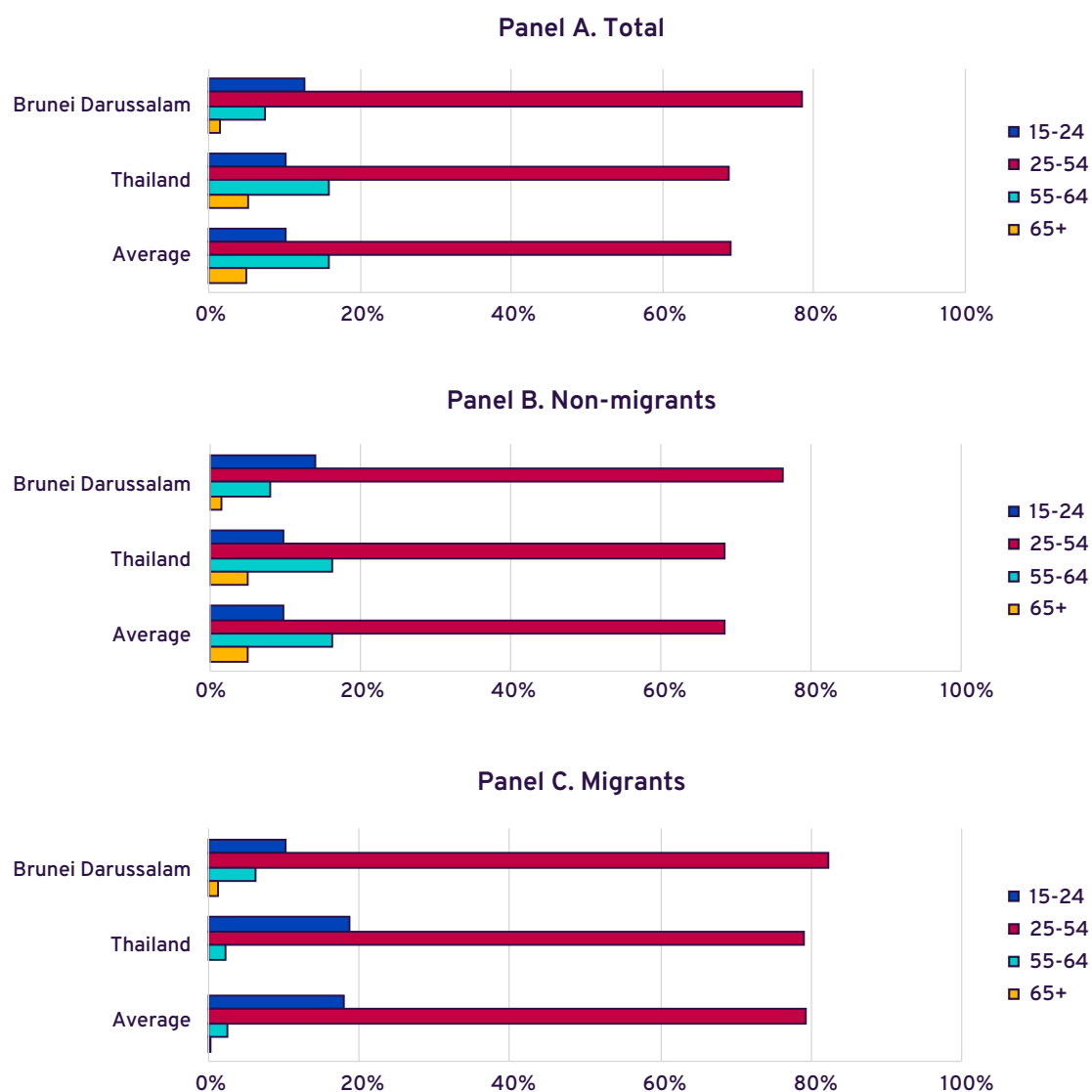
The proportion of youth in the migrant labour force is larger than among non-migrants in Thailand. This may reveal that youth are migrating for employment in ASEAN destination countries due to limited or lack of opportunities to transition from school to work in their home countries or that the labour market in destination countries may be looking for younger workers. It may also show that a substantial portion of the migrant labour force likely lack training and experience, consequently placing them in jobs where they earn lower wages and have lower job quality than non-migrants or older migrant workers in ASEAN

⁸ The administrative records of the Ministry of Labour, Department of Employment show that at the end of 2019 Thailand hosted a total of 2.9 million registered migrant workers, comprising at least 7.6 per cent of the workforce. This number does not take into account migrant workers in an irregular status, whose inclusion would likely make the rate even higher.

destinations. In Thailand youth represent 19 per cent of the total migrant labour force. However, the opposite trend is true in Brunei Darussalam, and youth make up 10 per cent of the migrant labour force, a number lower than the percentage of youth in the non-migrant labour force.

Based on the data from Brunei Darussalam and Thailand, it can be observed that the majority of migrant workers are of prime age – that is, 25–54 – and that prime-age adults have a higher participation rate in the migrant labour force than they do in the non-migrant labour force. In 2019, 79 per cent of the migrant labour force across these two countries was aged 25–54 years old, compared to 69 per cent of non-migrants (figure 6). In this age segment, each of the two countries reflected a higher degree of prime age migrant participation vis-à-vis their non-migrant counterparts. This may mean that origin countries are losing their most productive workers to host countries. There is some compensation, however, through remittances sent back to origin countries.

► **Figure 6. Age distribution of total, non-migrant and migrant labour force in Brunei Darussalam and Thailand (%), 2019**



Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

4.3.3. Profile of employed migrants: Older men and younger women

The measurement of employed migrants in this subsection is different than that of migrant workers in the labour force (as discussed in the previous section). Those in the labour force also include those currently without a job (so long as they are seeking and available for employment); while the measurement discussed here concerns only those international migrants in the labour force who are employed.

In 2019, the number of employed migrants in ASEAN net destination countries was reported to be at 4.8 million, with Malaysia and Singapore as the top destinations in ASEAN for employed migrants based on current data measurements. Note however, per section 4.2, that when employed migrants in countries of net origin are also included, this number rises to 5.1 million. Men make up the majority of employed migrants in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand, with women accounting for an average of 35 per cent of employed migrants across the three net destination countries for which we have sex-disaggregated data (table 8).

► **Table 8. Employed migrants in ASEAN labour migration net destination countries, 2019**

Country	Brunei Darussalam	Malaysia	Singapore	Thailand
Total	81,895	2 236 600	1 427 400	1 102 638
Male	59,569	1 529 900	-	638 294
Female	22,326	706 700	-	464 344
Female share (%)	27%	32%	-	42%

Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

Age and migration corridors

The majority of employed migrants of both sexes in net destination countries are aged 25–54. Among women migrant workers, the proportion of employed youth workers is higher than for men in Thailand, 21.9 per cent of employed migrant women being youths, as opposed to 16.1 per cent comparatively for men (table 9). Thailand's employment of migrant women youths is also much higher than for Brunei, where only 7.0 per cent of employed migrant women are youths.

Table 10 shows that the majority of employed working-age migrants in ASEAN are nationals of other ASEAN countries. In Thailand, most employed working-age migrants come from countries sharing territorial borders: Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao the People's Democratic Republic. Figure 7 provides a breakdown of the origins of employed migrants for countries for which the ILMS Database has data: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Thailand. Indonesia is not a net country of destination, yet looking at the demographics of employed migrants there is still important. Their visibility in statistics may raise the attention of policymakers to include them in much needed social protection. It can be noted that in the countries of destination where we have statistics, there is a single dominant source of migrants from South-East Asian neighbouring countries: Indonesia for Brunei Darussalam; Timor-Leste for Indonesia; and Myanmar for Thailand.

► **Table 9. Age composition of employed migrants in selected ASEAN countries by sex (%), 2019**

Sex	Brunei Darussalam	Thailand	Average
Both sexes	100	100	100
15–24	10.1	18.5	18.0
25–54	82.3	79.0	79.3
55–64	6.4	2.2	2.5
65+	1.2	0.2	0.3

Sex	Brunei Darussalam	Thailand	Average
Male	100	100	100
15–24	11.3	16.1	15.7
25–54	81.0	81.2	81.2
55–64	6.7	2.4	2.8
65+	1.0	0.2	0.3
Female	100	100	100
15–24	7.0	21.9	21.2
25–54	85.9	75.9	76.4
55–64	5.5	1.9	2.1
65+	1.6	1.2	0.2

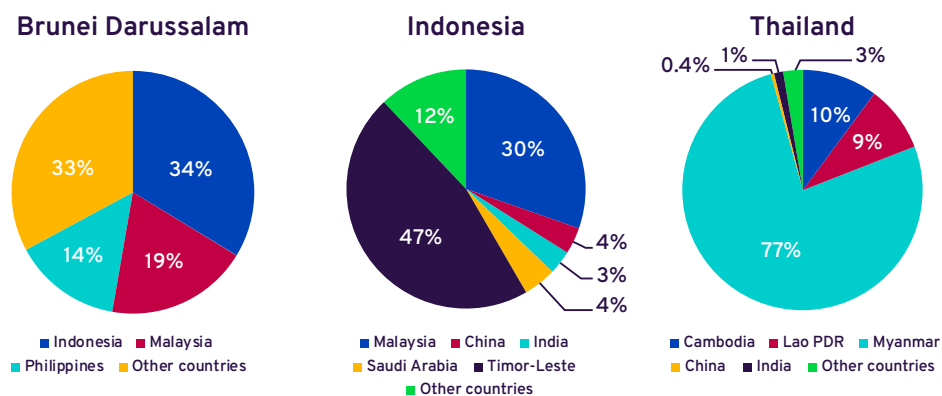
Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

► **Table 10. Stock of employed migrants in four ASEAN Member States, 2019**

Country of destination	Region of origin	No. of non-citizen workers
Brunei Darussalam	ASEAN	54 794
	Other	27 101
Indonesia	ASEAN	34 322
	Other	79 515
Malaysia	n/a	2 236 600
Thailand	ASEAN	1 056 461
	Other	46 173
Total		3 534 966

n/a = not available. Notes: Malaysia does not currently share migrant worker stock data by country of origin.

Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

► **Figure 7. Employed migrants by country of origin, selected countries (%), 2019**

Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

4.3.4. Economic activity: Gendered sectors of work

Almost 90 per cent of employed migrants in ASEAN net destination countries are working in the services and industry sectors (table 11), with women migrants being more represented in service jobs than in other economic sectors. Migrant women in the services sector, which includes domestic work, represent on average 55.3 per cent of all migrant women workers in these countries; 33.8 per cent of migrant women working in the industry sector; and only 11 per cent of migrant women working in agriculture. In Thailand the highest share of employed migrants are industry workers, and in Brunei Darussalam the highest share of employed migrants are services workers (table 11).

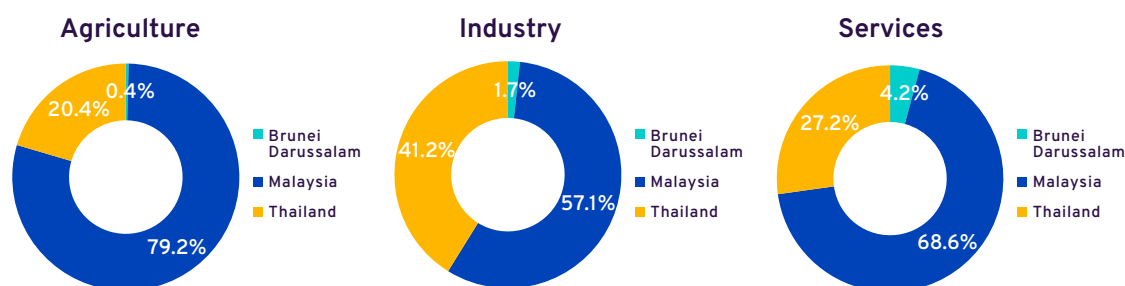
Across all of the employed migrants in ASEAN net destination countries, as seen in figure 8, Malaysia has the highest share of workers in the region in all three sector groups.

► **Table 11. Employed migrants in net destination countries by economic activity and female share (%), 2019**

Economic activity	Brunei Darussalam		Malaysia		Thailand		Average female % *
	Total %	Female %	Total %	Female %	Total %	Female %	
Agriculture	3.1	0.9	22.0	11.5	11.5	10.7	11.0
Industry	31.7	7.2	39.2	22.4	57.2	52.4	33.8
Services	65.2	91.9	38.9	66.2	31.3	36.9	55.3

Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

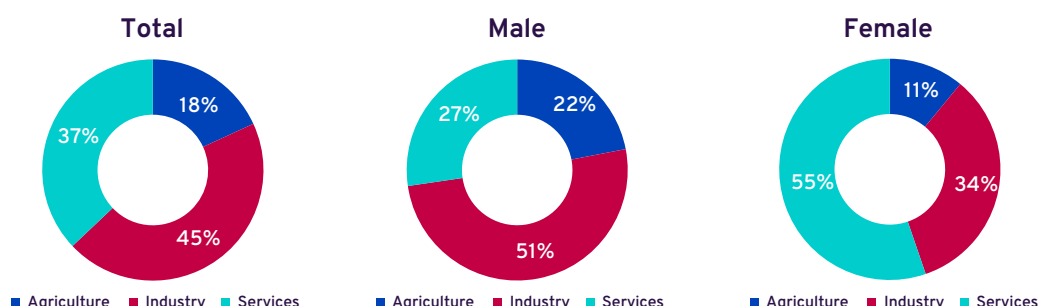
► **Figure 8. Employed migrants in net destination countries in services, industry and agriculture (%), 2019**



Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

Men make up the majority (65 per cent) among employed migrants in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand. Across Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand, half of all employed men migrant workers (51 per cent) are working in the industry sector. Most employed women migrant workers (55 per cent) are working in the services sector, including domestic work (figure 9). Gendered sectoral segregation is due to discriminatory hiring practices, and in some cases discriminatory policies that mandate only one gender can work in certain sectors. These hiring practices, in addition to gendered skills training and cultural ideas (that many workers also hold) about what is “women’s work” versus “men’s work”, result in sectors of work, such as some subsectors of the services industry like domestic work, that are overly represented by one gender (see Napier-Moore 2017, box 2).

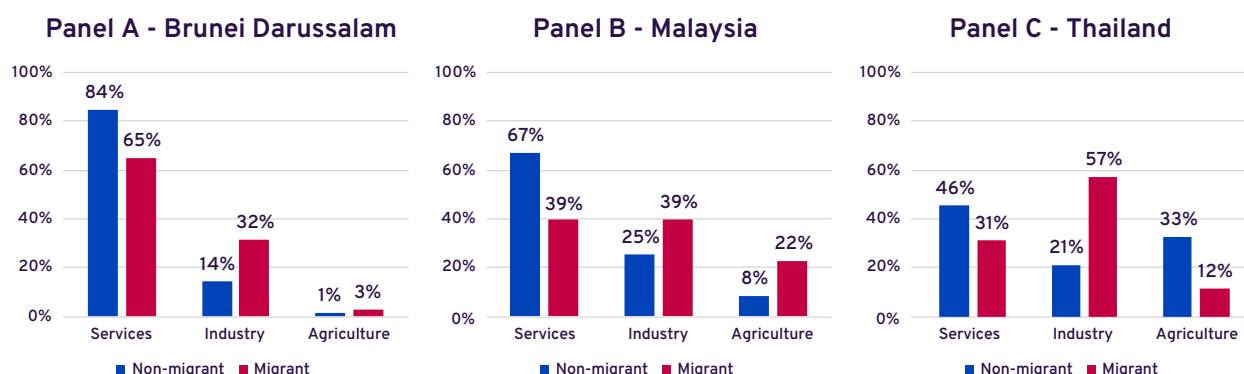
► **Figure 9. Economic activity allocation of total, male and female employed migrant workers in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand (%), 2019**



Note: Economic activities defined based on ISIC Rev. 4. Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

Figure 10 compares the employment shares of migrants and non-migrants across the agriculture, industry and services sectors in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand. In the industry sector in all three countries a higher percentage among migrants are working in the sector, than non-migrants (see figure 10). In Thailand, for instance 57 per cent of employed migrants are working in industry as opposed to 21 per cent of nationals. The services sector, however, is employing a larger percentage among nationals in all countries than among migrants.

► **Figure 10. Employment sectors in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand by migration status (%), 2019**



Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

4.3.5. Skills: Majority in medium-skilled jobs

Based on the 2019 data of Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand, the share of employed migrant workers holding jobs defined as elementary occupations is 38 per cent, and among these migrants employed in elementary occupations, women account for more than one-third of jobholders in each country (table 12). Per the ILO's International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08), skills categories are defined according to the similarities of tasks and duties involved in the job. Elementary occupations refer to jobs that involve manual or physical tasks and use of hand-held tools; medium skill occupations refer to jobs that require the ability to read and write and perform simple math, as well as a high level of motor skills; and high-skill occupations refer to jobs that require performance of complex technical and practical tasks, and/or complex problem-solving, decision-making and creativity tasks (ILO 2012). Across these three ASEAN destination countries, most employed migrant workers are in medium-skilled jobs (56.9 per cent).

In Brunei Darussalam and to a lesser extent in Thailand there are gender differences in the occupational skill levels of the jobs held by migrants. In Brunei Darussalam, 44.6 per cent of employed women migrants work in elementary occupations, versus just 26.2 per cent of men, and in Thailand, 40.5 per cent of employed women migrants are in elementary occupations versus 36.5 per cent of men. Malaysia's data

shows the opposite trend with 34.8 per cent of employed women migrants in elementary occupations versus 39.7 per cent of men.

The economic structure and admission policies of net destination countries dictate their demand for and intake of migrant workers. Brunei Darussalam employs a much larger proportion of high-skilled workers, with 27.5 per cent of employed men migrant workers and 22.1 per cent of women working in occupations considered high-skilled. By comparison, just 5.8 per cent of employed migrants in Malaysia are in high-skilled jobs, and the proportion is even lower in Thailand, at just 2.0 per cent.

► **Table 12. Distribution of employed migrant workers in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand by occupation skill level and sex (in thousands), 2019**

Sex	Occupation skill level	Brunei Darussalam		Malaysia		Thailand	
		Total (000)	Share	Total (000)	Share	Total (000)	Share
Male and female	High skill	21	26.0%	131	5.8%	22	2.0%
	Medium skill	35	42.7%	1 253	56.2%	660	59.8%
	Elementary	26	31.3%	853	38.1%	421	38.2%
	Total	82	100.0%	2 237	100.0%	1 103	100.0%
Male	High skill	16	27.5%	104	6.8%	15	2.3%
	Medium skill	28	46.3%	819	53.5%	391	61.2%
	Elementary	16	26.2%	607	39.7%	233	36.5%
	Total	60	100.0%	1 530	100.0%	638	100.0%
Female	High skill	5	22.1%	27	3.8%	7	1.4%
	Medium skill	7	33.3%	434	61.4%	269	58.0%
	Elementary	10	44.6%	246	34.8%	188	40.5%
	Total	22	100.0%	707	100.0%	464	100.0%

Notes: Aggregate levels of occupation are based on ISCO-08.

Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

The fact that majority of employed migrant workers in Malaysia and Thailand are in occupations classified as middle-skilled is quite surprising, as neither of these countries have admission policies or memoranda of understanding (MOUs) on labour migration for recruitment of medium-skilled migrant workers. Malaysia maintains a distinction between migrants who are “contract foreign workers” (workers in elementary occupations) and those who are “expatriates” (high-skilled workers in managerial, professional or technical positions). In Thailand, migrant workers in elementary occupations are recruited through bilateral MOUs on labour with Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam. Employment of migrant workers in Thailand is further restricted by the list of occupations and professions appended to the Occupations and Professions Prohibited for Foreign Workers Royal Decree B.E. 2522 (ILO 2019b). The likely explanation for the presence of so many migrant workers in medium-skilled jobs is that they were hired as low-skilled workers but then acquired skills on the job and in fact perform medium-skilled jobs.

Though gender differentials must be taken into account, the fact that the majority of migrant workers in three of the ASEAN net destination countries are in medium-skilled work shows that the movement of people within ASEAN could create skills vacuums in the origin countries these migrant workers have left. Continuing skills upgrading for potential migrants, those already in destination countries, and those who have returned is important for the creation and sustainability of a skilled workforce in countries of origin and destination.

Self-employment: Vulnerability or entrepreneurship?

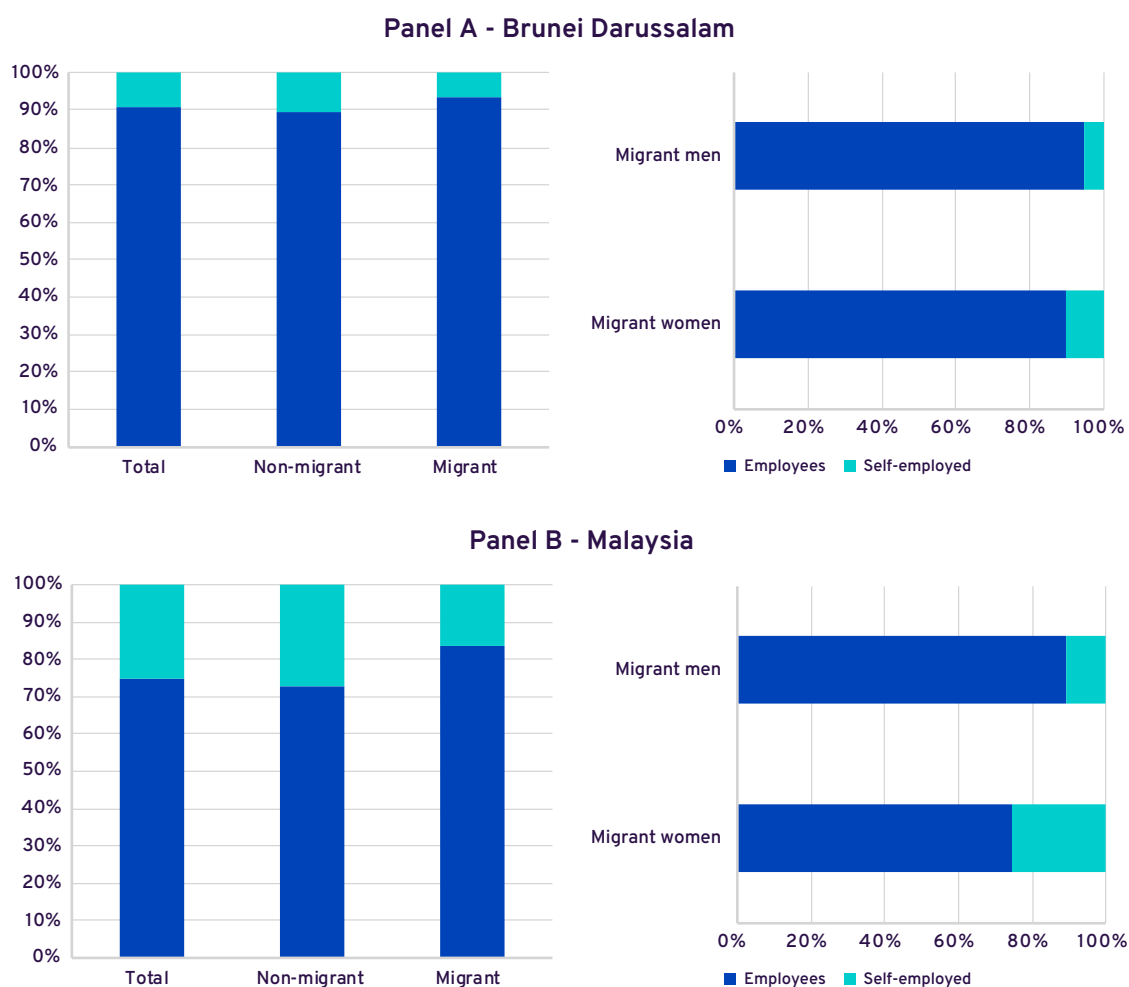
In 2019, about 443,000 migrant workers in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand were considered to be self-employed. Self-employed workers are generally more vulnerable in the labour market in terms of the economic risk associated with their jobs and overall job quality – that is, job security, basic remuneration, income security, working time and legal guarantees. Own-account workers and contributing family workers are the two categories of employment within self-employment that are

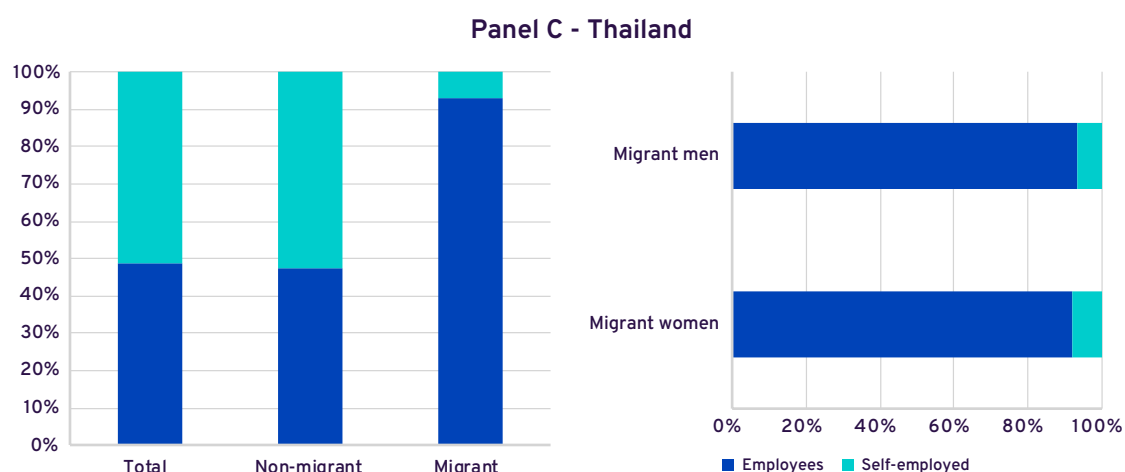
categorized to be (as well as a proxy for measuring) in vulnerable employment (ILO 2018c), and often overlap with informal employment. Employers are also categorized as self-employed, and cannot be separated from other self-employed workers in the available data.

It is important to note that in Malaysia and Thailand migrant workers' work permits tie the workers to a specific employer and are only valid for a particular job. Transfer to another employer is generally not possible (Kouba and Baruah 2019). Therefore, the presence of self-employed migrant workers in Malaysia and Thailand highlights issues relating to the informal economy and irregular migration in these countries. While self-employment often leads to losses in job security and job quality, on the flip side, some migrant workers may prefer it as self-employment can provide opportunities for higher income and greater flexibility, for instance, as a street vendor, in sex work or in construction contracting.

The share of self-employed migrant women is relatively larger in Malaysia than in Brunei Darussalam or Thailand. In Thailand, the share of self-employed migrant workers is almost equal for both men and women. In Malaysia, there is a stark difference, with more than 25 per cent of women migrant workers being self-employed, versus 11 per cent of men (figure 11).

► **Figure 11. Total, non-migrant and migrant employment in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Thailand by employment status and sex (%), 2019**



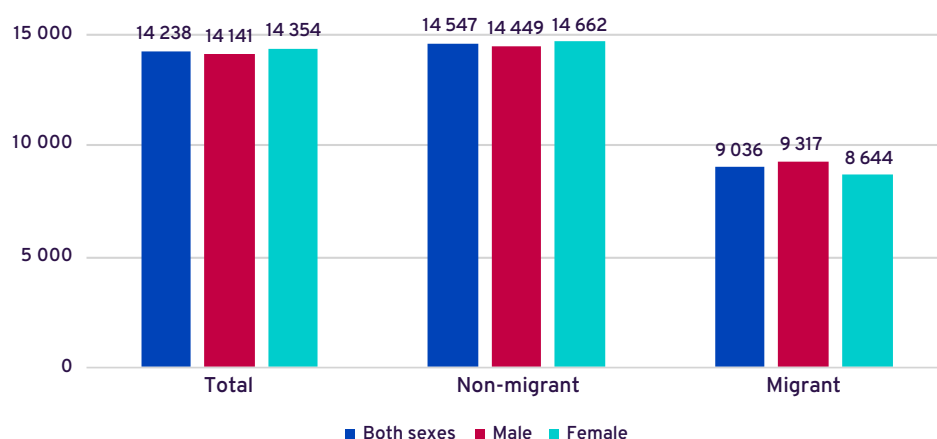


Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

4.3.6. Monthly wages: Low for migrants, even lower for women migrants

In Thailand, migrant workers on average and in aggregate receive a monthly wage that is 38 per cent lower than their non-migrant counterparts. This difference becomes more pronounced when compared by sex. The difference for men migrant workers is about 35 per cent less than their non-migrant counterparts; while women migrant workers receive about 41 per cent less. Within the same sector, pay discrimination favouring nationals above migrants, and men above women, has been documented in Thailand (see for instance Napier-Moore and Sheill 2016).

► **Figure 12. Average wages in Thailand (in local currency) by migration status and sex, 2019**



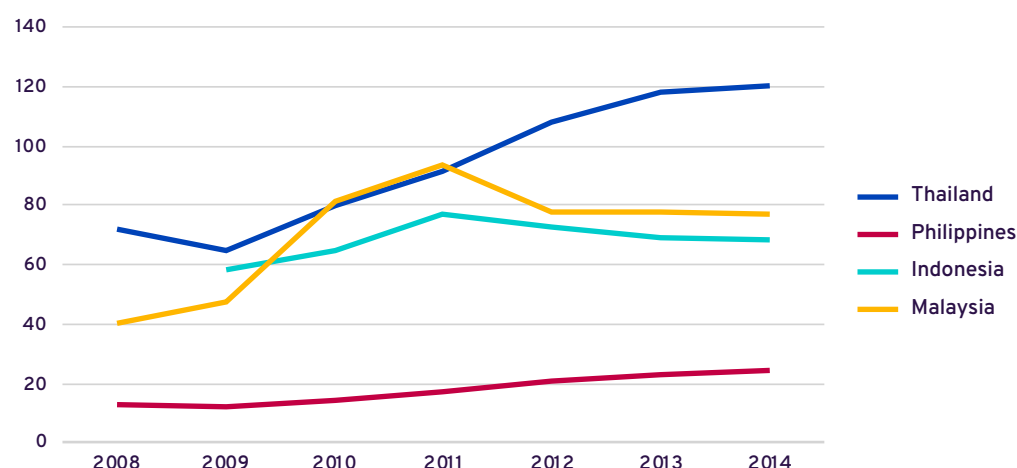
Note: Figures for Thailand are in Thai baht. Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

► 4.4. Inflows of international migrant workers to ASEAN countries of destination

Data on inflows of migrants of working age have not been updated in the ILMS Database by ASEAN Member States for 2018 and 2019. Based on the latest data available in the ILMS Database, only four ASEAN Member States have submitted this data in the past: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. Among them, Malaysia and Thailand have documented the largest annual inflows of working-age migrants (figure 13). It is important to note that some migrants stay in destination countries for periods longer than one year, and are therefore not captured in the annual inflow data; these migrants' characteristics could instead be captured in data with larger reference periods, such as five years, or in a country's migrant stock data.

As inflow data from ASEAN Member States is limited, this section considers the inflows to net origin countries, as well as inflows to net destinations.

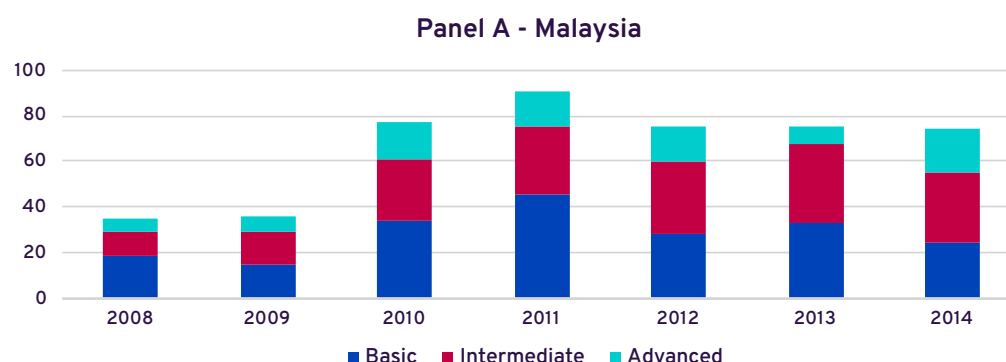
► **Figure 13. Annual inflows of migrant working-age population in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand (in thousands), 2008–14**

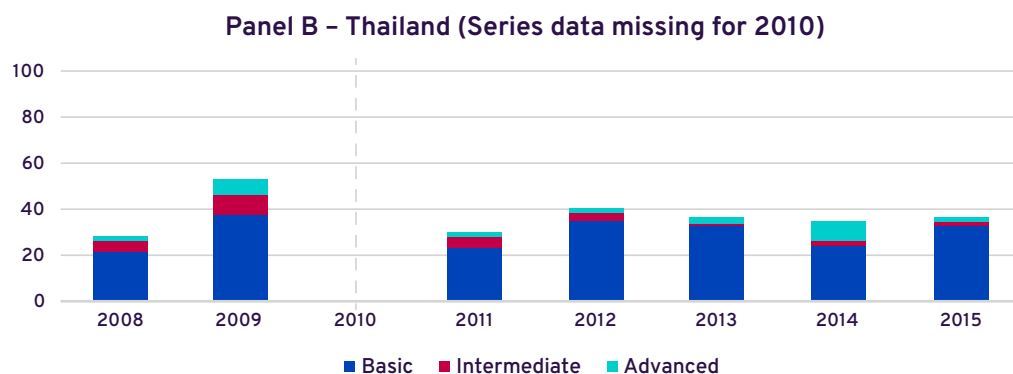


Note: There are no data for Indonesia in 2008. Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

In terms of the level of education of migrants, those who entered Malaysia were much more likely to have an intermediate level of education than those who entered Thailand. Between 2008 and 2015, the vast majority of migrant workers entering Thailand had attained only a basic level of education, which is to say a primary or less than primary education (figure 14, panel B). In Malaysia, only one third of the working-age migrants who entered the country in 2014 had a basic education, while 41 per cent had intermediate education and one quarter of them had advanced education.

► **Figure 14. Inflows of migrant working-age population in Malaysia and Thailand by highest level of education attainment (in thousands), 2008–15**

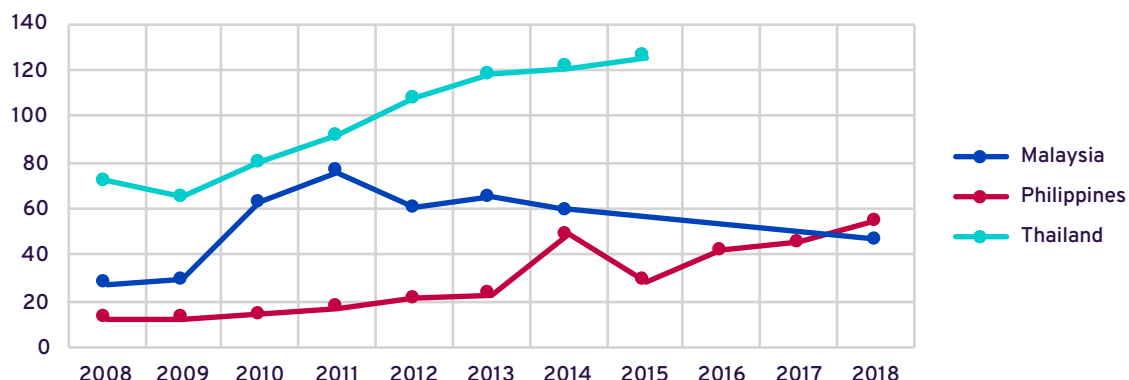




Notes: There are no data for Malaysia in 2015, nor for Thailand in 2010. Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

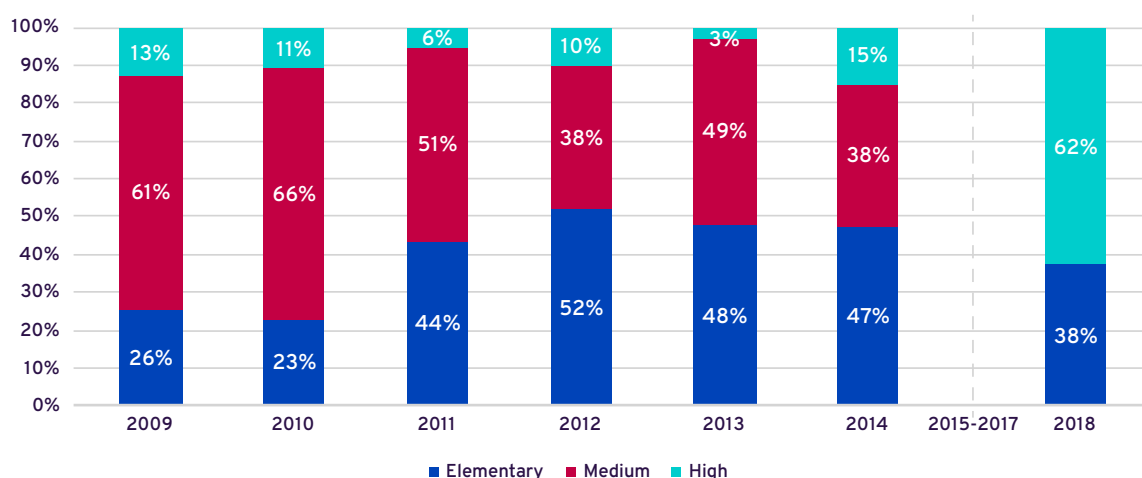
Inflows of migrant workers into the three ASEAN countries that provide this data have almost doubled since the end of the last decade (figure 15). Malaysia had a jump in annual inflows of migrant workers between 2009 and 2010, with declining numbers since. While in Thailand and Philippines the increases have been steadier, especially over the last five years that data is available. In the Philippines the number of migrant workers entering in 2018 increased more than four times in relation to 2008 (figure 15).



► **Figure 15. Annual inflows of employed migrants to selected countries (in thousands), 2009–18 available data**

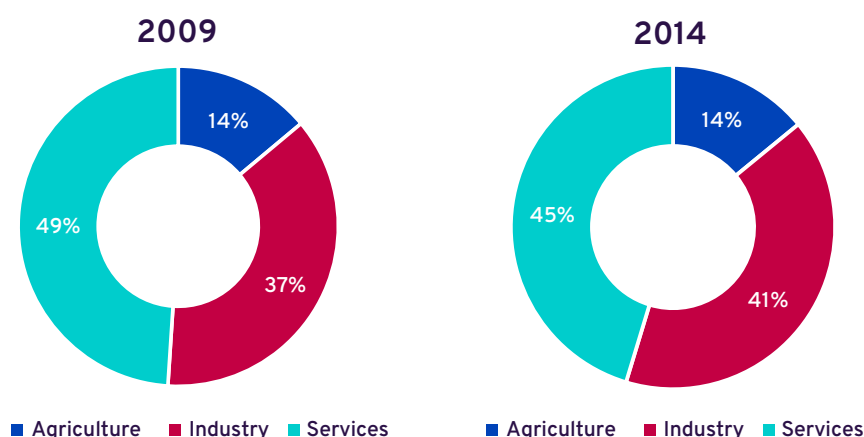
Note: There are no data in Malaysia between 2015 and 2017, and for Thailand after 2015. Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

According to official records from latest Malaysia LFS, roughly 38 per cent of migrant workers who entered the country between 2016 and 2019 are working in jobs defined as elementary occupations. This represents an increase in comparison to 2009, but a decrease in comparison to more recent inflows (2011–2015). The share of new migrant workers in medium-skill jobs decreased over the same period.

► **Figure 16. Distribution of inflows of employed migrants in Malaysia by job-skill level (%), 2009–2014, 2018**

Note: There are no data during 2015 and 2017. Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

Employed migrant worker inflow data from Thailand and Malaysia showcases that the distribution of these workers in each economy sector remains fairly stable, with a minor shift from the service sector to the industrial sector from 2009 to 2014. The industrial sector employed 37 per cent of migrant workers who entered Malaysia and Thailand in 2009, compared to 41 per cent in 2014; while employment in the services sector decreased from 49 per cent of newly arrived migrant workers to 45 per cent (figure 17).

► **Figure 17. Distribution of inflows of employed migrant workers by broad economic sector in Malaysia and Thailand (combined), 2009 and 2014**

Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

► 4.5. Labour migration from and back to ASEAN countries of origin

ASEAN origin countries have been consistently able to provide data on the number of migrants leaving their countries for work. These data are mostly collected from administrative sources. This section presents data on annual outflows of nationals leaving ASEAN Member States for employment purposes.

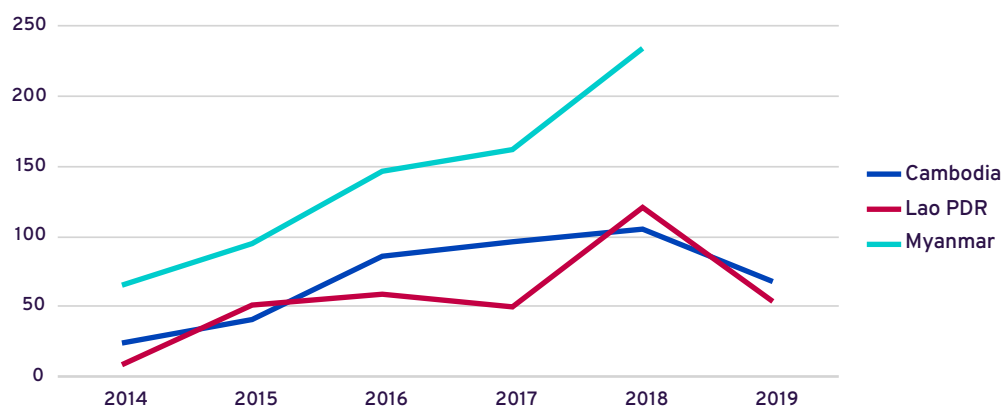
4.5.1. Trends in outflows of nationals from ASEAN countries

Less than 3 million migrant workers originated in 2019 from origin countries the region that provide data (table 13). Countries with comparatively larger outflows like Indonesia and the Philippines are missing data in ILOSTAT. The figures related to ASEAN nationals going abroad for work show that among those providing data Viet Nam is the leading origin country in ASEAN, followed Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Work abroad has become a reality for many in these origin countries, with this being especially observable in the significant increases seen in the documented outflows from Myanmar (figure 18). The increasing outflow trends for Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic were reversed in 2019.

► **Table 13. Outflows of nationals for employment from select net origin countries, 2019**

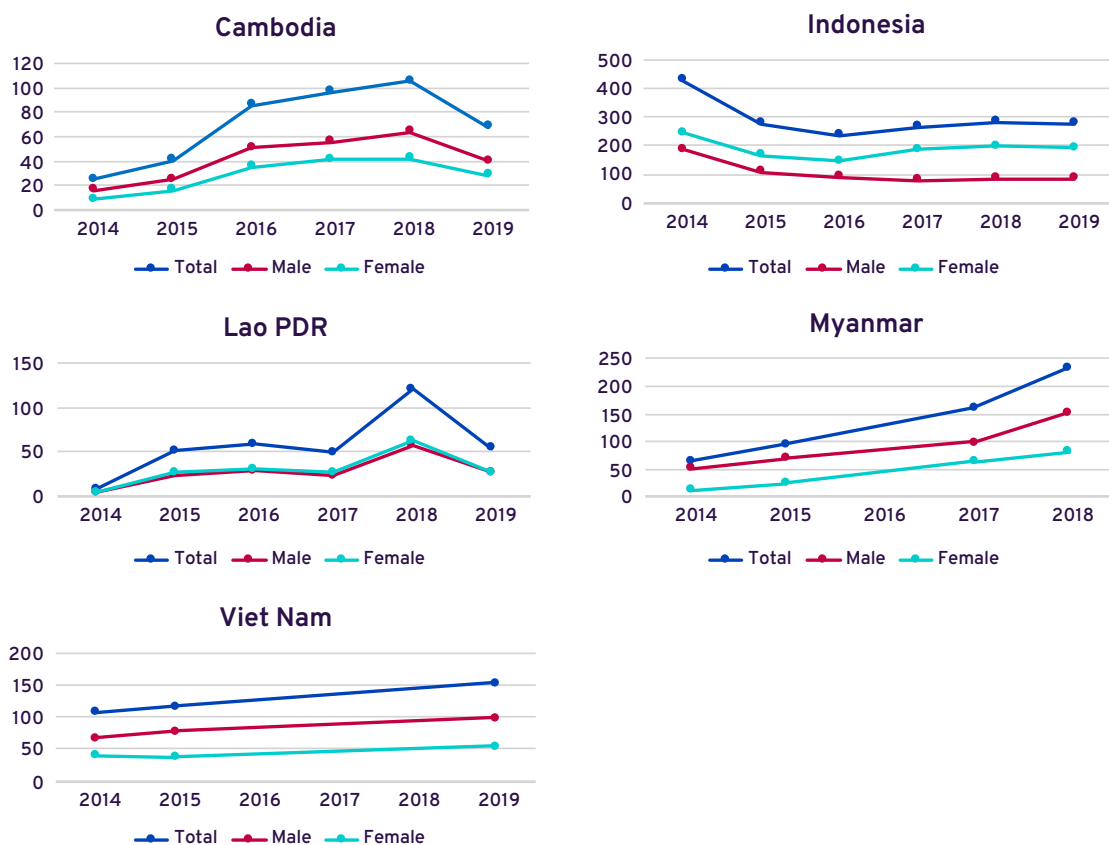
	Cambodia	Lao PDR	Viet Nam	
Total	68 040	54 091	152 530	
Male	39 839	27 068	97 830	
Female	28 201	27 023	54 700	
Female share (%)	41.4	49.9	35.9	

Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

► **Figure 18. Outflows of nationals registering to work abroad in selected ASEAN countries of origin (in thousands), 2014–19**

Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic. Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

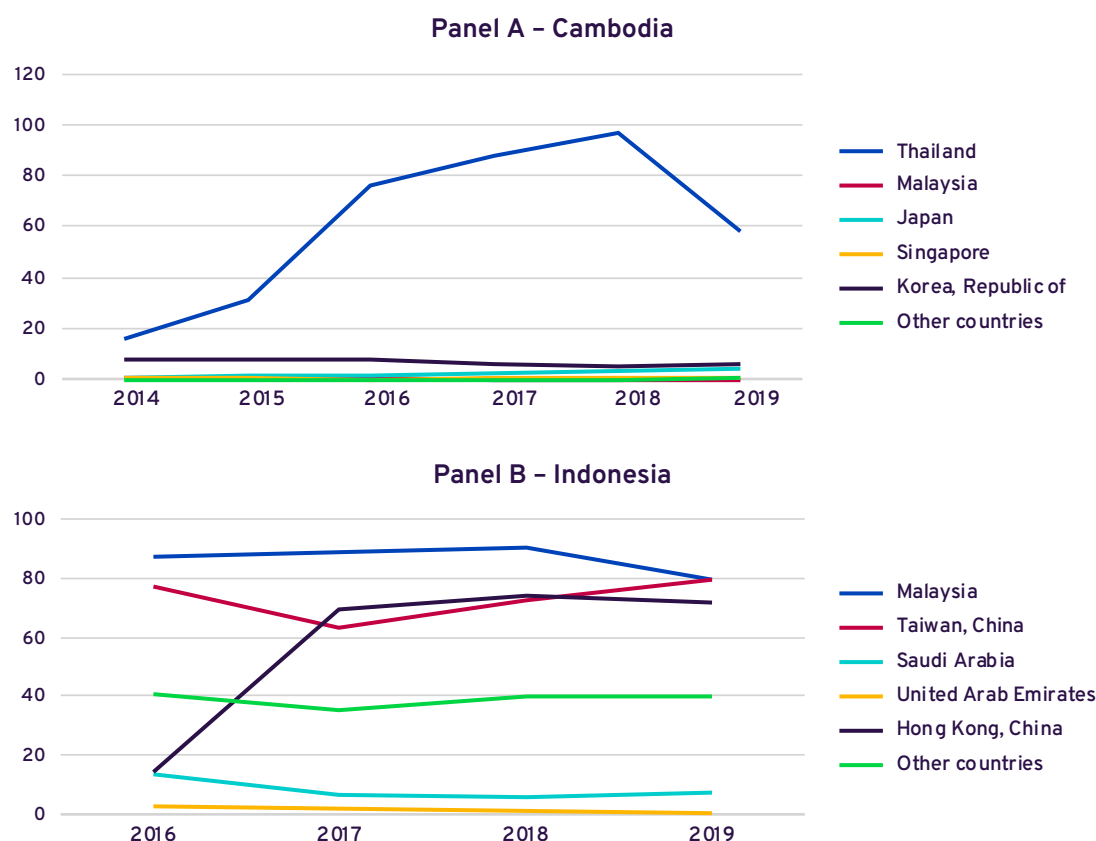
For almost all ASEAN countries, the majority of outflows are men; on average, across the region, 40 per cent are women. However, women constitute the majority of annual migrant worker outflows from Indonesia and are at parity with men in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (figure 19). It should be noted that these figures are primarily coming from the records of government agencies, which can vary according to the purpose of each administrative database, and they usually cover only migrants who had self-registered to work abroad or who migrated with the assistance of an employment agency. These data unfortunately only cover outflows of "for-work international migrants", leaving out international migrant workers who have not migrated with the initial purpose of undertaking or seeking employment, yet eventually begin to search for a job in the country of destination.

► **Figure 19. Outflows of nationals registering to work abroad in selected ASEAN countries by sex (in thousands), 2014–19**

Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

The top intra-ASEAN migration destinations for ASEAN nationals are Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, however data on outflows by destination is only available in ILOSTAT from Cambodia and Indonesia. For Cambodia workers, Thailand has consistently been the main destination of migrant workers. For migrant workers from Indonesia, the main intra-ASEAN destination is Malaysia. The top extra-ASEAN destinations for migrant workers from Cambodia are the Republic of Korea and Japan. The top extra-ASEAN destinations for Indonesian nationals are Hong Kong (China) and Taiwan (China) (figure 20).

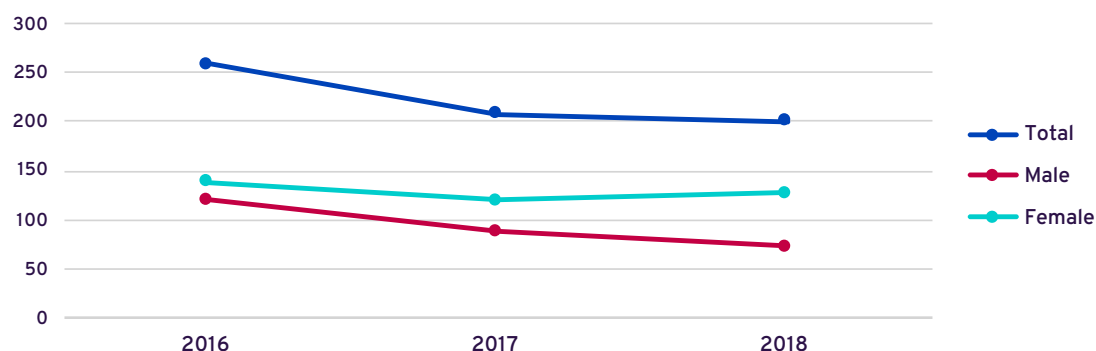
► **Figure 20. Outflows of nationals registering to work abroad in selected ASEAN countries, by destination (in thousands), 2014–19**



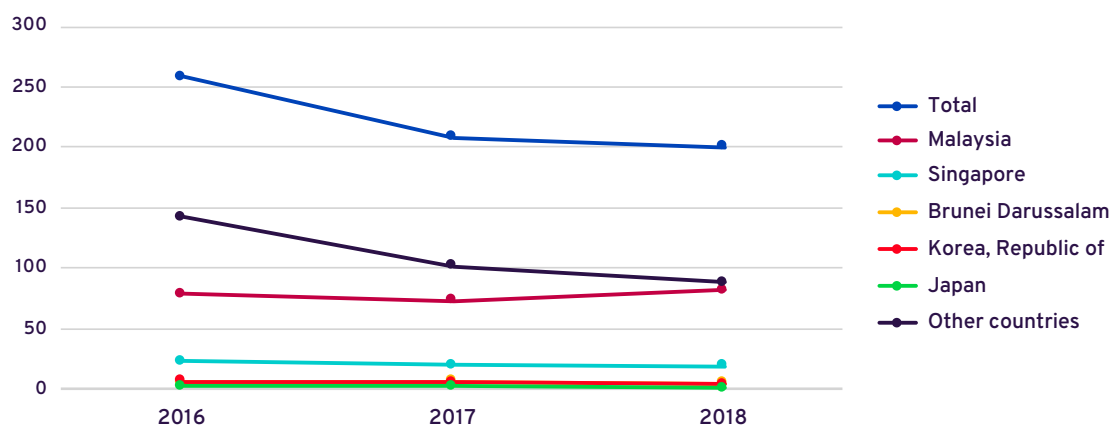
Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

4.5.2. Trends in inflows of return migrant workers: Very little data

Indonesia is the only ASEAN Member State that has shared statistics on return migration with the ILO so far. Malaysia and Thailand have undergone migration surveys, and it is possible that they have data on return migrants but these have not yet been shared. Inflow numbers of return migrant workers in Indonesia have declined slightly during the period analysed (2016–18) (figure 22). If disaggregated by country of previous residence, the trend is reversed when looking at return flows of those who had been living in Malaysia have increased in recent years (figure 23).

► **Figure 21. Inflows of return migrant workers to Indonesia by sex (in thousands), 2016–18**

Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

► **Figure 22. Inflows of return migrant workers to Indonesia by country of previous residence (in thousands), 2016–18**

Source: ILOSTAT 2020.

Complete statistics on return labour migration are essential for origin countries to be able to reintegrate these workers into their labour markets. Such data can measure the experience gained by return migrant workers – often in higher productivity countries – including their previous work experience abroad, skills and qualifications acquired, and their overall current economic situation in comparison to other workers. Return migrants (both inflows and stocks) can be captured through surveys and censuses, and these indicators, along with demographic and labour characteristics, can reveal the substantial potential contribution these returnee workers can make by properly harnessing their acquired skills and fostering the utilization of the capital and commercial acumen they may have accrued while abroad. Aside from remittances, return migration flows are actually where origin countries stand to gain the most from international migration, and there should be consistent measurement of such flows in all ASEAN net origin countries. Also, migrant workers classified by previous country of residence or labour attachment will allow characterization of return labour migration directionality, helping origin countries to map migration corridors and improve their management.

As highlighted in the previous edition of the ILMS analytical report, measurement of return labour migration is one of the key gaps in international labour migration statistics in ASEAN origin countries. Apart from Indonesia, as presented above, return labour migration remains a topic seldom included in administrative records, labour force surveys, censuses and other surveys.



► 5

5. Current status of international labour migrant statistics in ASEAN and remaining challenges

The ILMS Database in ASEAN is a rich source of data on the mobility and labour market position of migrant workers in the ASEAN region, though the data remain limited in their quality, completeness and comparability. Due to remaining weaknesses in data collection systems, the ILMS data currently understate the total number of migrant workers in ASEAN.

This chapter analyses the status of and remaining gaps in the ILMS Database in ASEAN when assessed against the ILO's ILMS template and the ICLS guidelines. The analysis focuses on three factors, namely the completeness of the ILMS Database; the coverage and quality of national data sources; and coordination and harmonization issues.

Completeness of the ILMS Database – When analysed against the ILO's ILMS template, the completeness of the ILMS Database in ASEAN stood at 57 per cent in 2019. In addition, a substantive proportion of these data are dated. The reasons for incomplete data submission by ASEAN Member States include gaps in data collection at the country level, gaps in data processing, and in some cases non-reporting to the ILO. The key to improving the completeness of the ILMS Database in ASEAN is strengthening national data sources to expand data collection to cover all ILMS modules and to enable disaggregation of data by migration status. Existing gaps in the ILMS Database in ASEAN and next steps for improving national data sources are discussed in sections 5.1 and 5.2.

Coverage and quality of ILMS – Even where national sources for ILMS exist, the quality and coverage of these sources may present challenges. As noted above, UNDESA estimates that ASEAN is home to 10.1 million international migrants, including 9.1 million international migrants of working age, yet the total count of employed migrant workers by the governments of ASEAN's net destination countries comes to just 5.1 million, highlighting that at least a few million migrant workers are still out of reach of ASEAN Member States' official data collection. This stark contrast in figures may be the result of a variety of reasons, including methodological or sampling issues, legal limitations, non-reporting to the ILO, or overall challenges in measurement of international labour migration. These limitations and suggestions for improvement in the ILMS Database in ASEAN are discussed in detail in sections 5.1 and 5.2.

Coordination and harmonization issues – Limited coordination and harmonization efforts constitute an additional obstacle for accurate interpretation of the available ILMS and assessment of their meaning, leading also to the issue of comparability of data between countries and between sources within the same country. Challenges and recommendations related to coordination and harmonization are discussed in sections 5.1 and 5.3.

► 5.1. Status of the ILMS Database in ASEAN: Much progress, yet incomplete

5.1.1. Completeness status of the ILMS Database in ASEAN

ASEAN and its Member States have achieved considerable progress in developing a regional labour market information system that increasingly includes international labour migration statistics. Improvements seen from ASEAN Member States include the following:

- Revision of data collection instruments so that surveys have begun to include key elements for measuring international labour migration;
- Inclusion of labour migration indicators in national statistical systems; and
- Improvements in building national statistical offices' (NSOs') technical capacity and data-sharing platforms.

These measures represent manifold progress for ASEAN Member States in measuring international migrant workers.

Despite these improvements, statistics on labour migration in ASEAN remain scarce and incomplete in some countries. This observation surfaces when available labour migration statistics are analysed against the ILO-ILMS framework of modules and indicators. Indeed, the analyses and presentation of data made in Chapter 4 above is limited, and could be much more robust and informative with more full data across the region. The issue stems mainly from migration status not being included as a variable for disaggregation in the labour market statistics of some ASEAN Member States. The situation thus does not allow for analyses of decent work indicators for migrant workers. The lack of disaggregated data has also led to entire segments of international migrants in the labour force to become invisible to governments, and to possibly become vulnerable at work if corresponding social protections are not afforded to them. For instance, armed with information on women migrant workers (where they might be located; what sectors they are in; and what specific needs they might have), governments can enable adequate labour market regulation, targeted workplace inspections, consular and labour attaché services, and human rights protection in relation to some of the specific risks women migrant workers can face pre-departure, within countries of destination, and even on return (ILO and UN Women 2020).

Table 14 shows Module A (International Migrant Stock) and Module B (International Migrant Flow) in the ILMS Database registered improvements in 2020 over 2019, but Module C (Nationals Abroad) tallied negative progress. Table 15 provides a detailed summary of how each ASEAN Member State has provided inputs into the different modules and indicators of the ILMS Database (in the 2013–18 and 2019 ILMS configurations, see section 2.3 for details of the differences). In the table, the gaps are identified either as: (i) a data collection gap – data that is not collected/not yet available in the ASEAN Member States statistical system (that is, in their census, LFS or administrative data collection); or (ii) a data processing/sharing gap, which basically represents data that have been reported before, but were not provided during the most recent ILMS Database data collection.

► **Table 14. Comparison of ILMS module coverage between 2019 and 2020 collections**

Module	2019	2020	Coverage improvement
Module A – International Migrant Stock		38%	55%
Module B – International Migrant Flow		18%	22%
Module C – Nationals Abroad		20%	16%
			-4%

► Table 15. Concise summary of the data collected by country, 2019–20

[illegible]

Table	Brunei Darussalam	Cambodia	Indonesia	Lao PDR	Malaysia	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Viet Nam	Total (●)	Total (○)	Total (-)
Table 21. Outflows of nationals for employment by occupation	-	-	●	-	-	-	○	-	○	-	1	2	7
Total no. of tables collected in 2020 (●):	10	15	14	3	7	1	4	2	10	9	75		
Total data reported in previous years (○):	0	1	4	10	6	5	8	1	8	2		45	
Total gaps in data collection (-):	11	5	3	8	8	15	9	18	3	10			90
Percentage of gaps in data collection in total	52	24	14	38	38	71	43	86	14	48			43

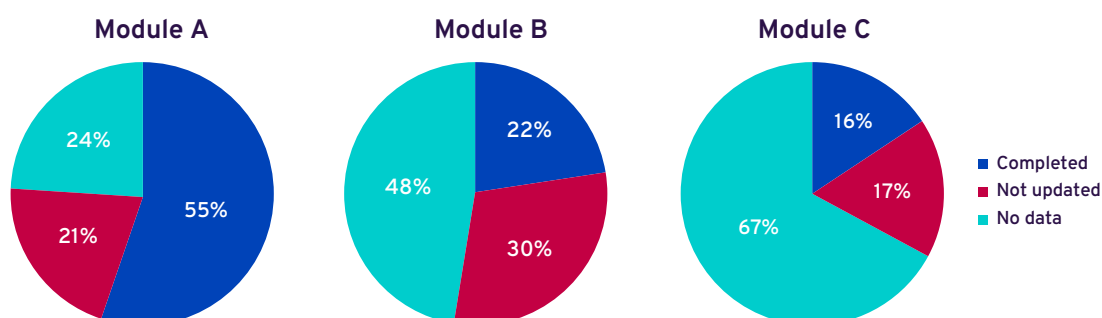
Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic. Note: This table presents the current table configuration of the ILMS Database in ASEAN, introduced in 2019.

Legend:

- Indicates that the table was completed during the 2020 data collection.
- Indicates that the table was completed during previous collection round(s), but not during the 2020 collection period, ie. data exists in ILOSTAT but it is not from the most recent year.
- Indicates a gap in data collection (data not collected in 2020 or in any previous collection rounds).

Figure 23 provides a summary of how the three modules of the ILMS Database were completed in this latest 2020 round of data collection (for 2019 data). There remain a significant number of data collection gaps – more than one in every three possible data entries in the ILMS Database in ASEAN. Among the ASEAN Member States, Cambodia has the lowest data collection gap for this latest year, with only 6 tables not updated with 2019 data. On the other end of the spectrum, Myanmar has the highest number of data collection gaps, with only 1 table updated with 2019 data and 15 tables unfilled. The data collection gaps among the other ASEAN Member States range between 11 and 19 tables unfilled with 2019 data. This suggests that all ten ASEAN Member States still need to work on developing steps to measure international labour migration so as to cover all basic statistical indicators.

► **Figure 23. Completeness of ILMS Database in ASEAN, 2020 submissions**



Source: Calculation based on ILOSTAT 2020.

- Module A has the highest completion as data needed are available from LFS or censuses, which generally speaking are regularly conducted. ASEAN Member States that are unable to complete these tables either do not have specific questions on migrants or citizenship in their surveys, such as the Philippines.
- Module B on the inflow of migrants has only 22 per cent of data completed. Of the tables in Module B, 48 per cent have collection gaps, while 30 per cent were previously filled up but were not updated or the data were not shared in the latest year.
- Data collection gaps are more frequent under Module C on nationals abroad. Over two-thirds (67 per cent) of tables remain unfilled. This means that some data are not collected at present because they are not included in any of the collection methods used by the ASEAN Member States concerned. It is also possible that some of the relevant data were collected, but not processed or shared. Similarly, 17 per cent of tables have not been updated with new data, suggesting

irregularity of collection. It can also mean there has been a change in how data were collected or a change in the terms of institutional responsibility.

Since collection for the ILMS Database in ASEAN began in 2013, 57 per cent of the tables in the database have been filled in at some point. Now, however, some of the data have become dated due to lack of updates.

Only 36 per cent of data were filled in the last data collection round. Another 21 per cent were not updated but had been filled in previously (that is, sometime in the past with data from 2012–18), and a larger 43 per cent have yet to be collected at all. The differences in ASEAN Member States' collection infrastructures, timing, funding, capacities and sharing protocols are among the challenges being faced in increasing the completion of the tables.

Comparing the latest collection (2019 data) and the previous collection (2018 data), it can be observed that ASEAN Member States were able to increase coverage for Modules A and B. Nonetheless, data collection for Module C deteriorated, suggesting further challenges.

5.1.2. Analysis of ILMS completeness by country

This section reviews the efforts by ASEAN countries (since 2015) to improve their data collection efforts, as well as issues surrounding these initiatives related to labour migration statistics. This section looks at the extent to which individual ASEAN Member States provide complete or incomplete datasets for the ILMS. It attempts to map out if an individual country can provide data for some indicators, and if it has the capacity to regularly collect, produce and share data covering these ILMS indicators. With the recent release of the ICLS Guidelines on Labour Migration Statistics, ASEAN Member States have an important and comprehensive tool to guide their efforts to improve ILMS and address challenges, and this report can also be used as an additional tool for contextualizing their own efforts in relation to latest efforts by other ASEAN Member States.

As the country-level information below will show, some countries have been able to be bolder in pursuing visions of an overall integrated statistical system (even if still in the planning stage), while others are hampered by more nationalist politics requiring surveys to not include non-nationals. Some countries have histories of migration that have led to a wide array of migration data and (perhaps an excessive number of) migration data producers. Others are seeing shifting trends in migration and starting to consider whether they need to collect new and different data. For instance, some net origin countries are finding that more and more incoming migrant workers are within their borders, and they do not yet have sophisticated systems to collect data on these migrant workers. Similarly, net migrant destination countries do not usually count outflows of their citizens who go overseas for work.

Brunei Darussalam

Current statistics produced by Brunei Darussalam cover all tables on migration flows in Module A, but do not cover any of the tables in Modules B and Module C. Data submitted for Module A are complete, disaggregated, available according to both citizenship and birthplace definitions, and are updated annually. Compared to the earlier version of the ILMS template (2013–18 configuration) where Brunei Darussalam had 2 out of 14 tables completed; for the latest round of collection the country has submitted the data for 10 out of the 21 tables. Thus, Brunei Darussalam's level of completeness for the ILMS rose from 14 per cent in 2013, to 48 per cent in 2020. Representatives from Brunei Darussalam's NSO and relevant ministries say the country's current data collection system does not have the tools in place to monitor all indicators. They understand that data collection gaps in Module B persist, and they consider these more critical than the gaps in Module C given the relevance that statistics on migrant worker inflows have for a net destination country.

Brunei Darussalam has increased the frequency of conducting its LFS since the last edition of the ILMS Analytical report. Since 2017 the Brunei Darussalam LFS has been conducted annually, whereas previously the LFS had been rolled out on an ad hoc basis. This is a significant improvement for the Brunei labour market information system. Further in 2021, the country is expected to conduct its Population Census, which could help further populate the data for ILMS in detail.

Cambodia

Cambodia had been able to complete one data entry for nine out of 10 tables in Module A, none in Module B, and for two of seven tables in Module C in the 2013–18 ILMS Database template. Most of these data entries are relatively old, corresponding to a few different surveys that occurred on an ad hoc basis during years 2009–13 (including the LFS). Cambodia's 2019 LFS and census have allowed it to improve data entry in almost all modules. From only one entry in the 2019 collection, the country was able to input 15 entries for the 2020 round, for an improvement of 67 per cent from the previous year.

For the 2020 round collection, Cambodia completed entries in all the tables of Module B. In Module C, the country remains unable to fill in data in five tables. It should be noted, however, that administrative records could be used to provide annual estimates for one currently missing indicator in Module C. Moreover, considering that Cambodia is a net origin country, the various and persisting gaps in Module C show that its capacity to consistently monitor some indicators that are especially relevant for origin countries is very limited.

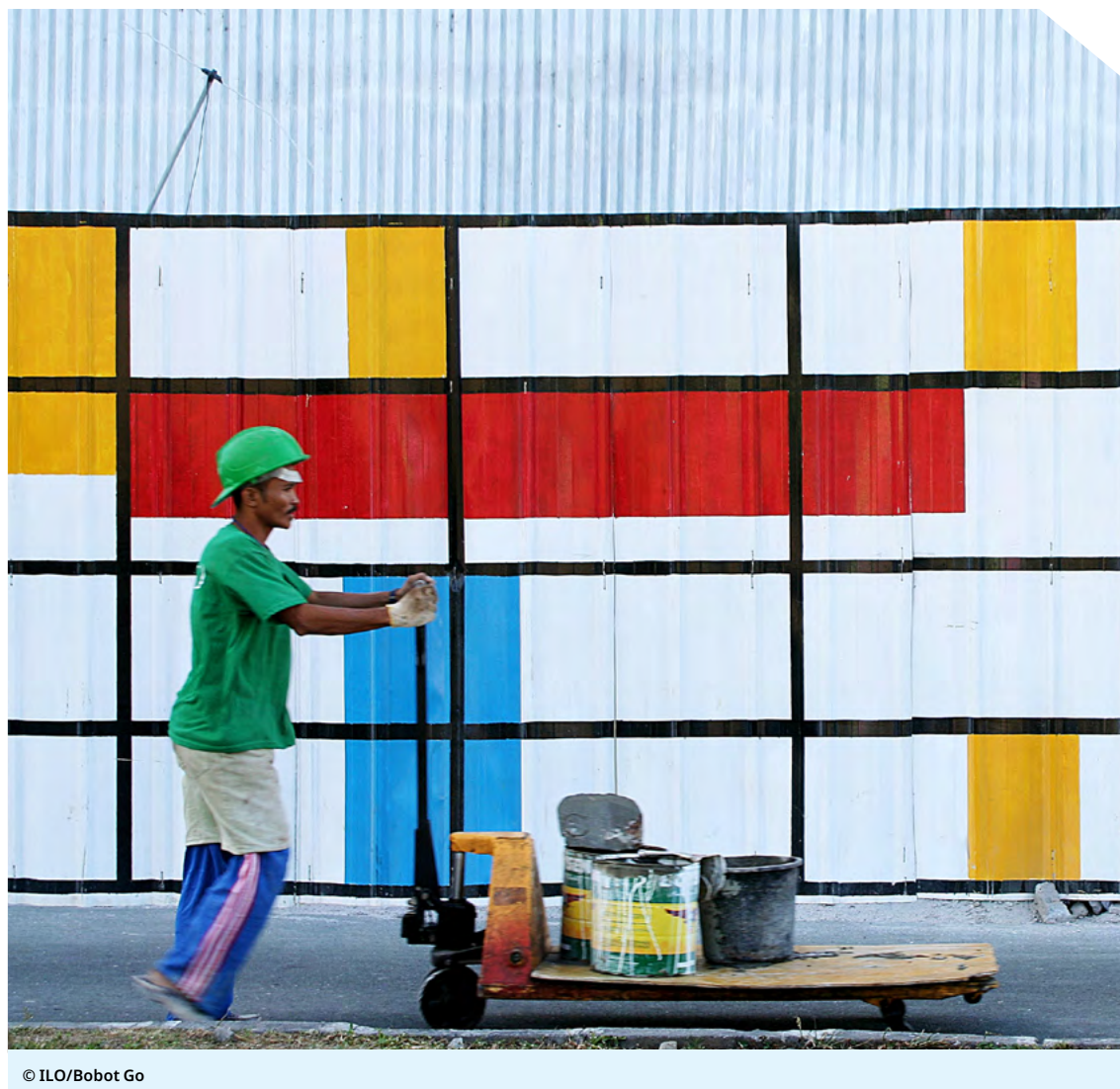
Indonesia

Indonesia is the ASEAN Member States with the highest completion rate of ILMS indicators in the database. It has at least one data entry for 18 out of 21 tables. The country has previously completed all tables, and therefore can serve as the model for other ASEAN Member States. The country currently produces and shares international labour migration data in a relatively consistent manner. Indonesia has also put in place mechanisms to cover and monitor almost all ILMS indicators. The gap highlighted by the assessment on “stock of nationals abroad” (that is, the number of citizens who have their usual residence in another country during the period of reference) is critical given Indonesia's decades-long status as an origin country of migrants.

This gap cannot be closed by existing data from Indonesia's population censuses (which only cover usual residents). The short form of the 2020 Census did not include migration data, but will do so moving forward. But until this change takes effect, total overseas migration could perhaps be partly estimated through the use of administrative data sources documenting the outflows of Indonesian citizens. Another setback for Indonesia's ILMS submission relates to the limited coverage of available statistics under indicators for Module B. Indonesia's available administrative records cover only high-skilled, more-educated migrants. Current census and survey data in Indonesia can complement the estimates for Module B, increasing the coverage of data to include figures on migrants by skill level and educational attainment. For the 2020 collection, however, Indonesia's submission was limited to Modules A and C. It is expected that this will change in next rounds of data collection, as the LFS is now conducted twice a year and the population census commenced in 2020. Details of Indonesia's approach on improving its overall integrated statistical system are discussed in section 5.1.4.

Lao People's Democratic Republic

The Lao People's Democratic Republic was able to fill up all Module A when the 2013–18 ILMS template configuration was in place. However, challenges remain in regard to the frequency of data collection, including LFS. The last LFS was conducted in 2017, and the last census in 2015. The next LFS is expected to take place in 2021. Hence, it is critical for the country to improve its administrative data collection efforts to fill the gaps. Further development of administrative records from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has taken place, making it possible to use these records more fully. In the latest data collection (2020), the country was able to fill in three tables based on administrative data. This was an improvement from 2019, when it only filled in two tables. The additional table came from Module B, and included data on the inflow of foreign citizens for work. Specific challenges exist, however, as the census and intercensal surveys need further revision to include labour migration questions. The Lao Statistical Bureau (LSB) reported to ILO in an ILMS meeting that they will look into this for 2021. Migration questions – and sampling – may also be included in the LFS by 2022. The Ministry of Public Security reports working to revise immigration entry and exit forms to capture the work status of migrants entering and leaving the country, as well as what country outgoing migrants are going to.



Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare representatives have previously noted challenges in interministerial data sharing and have proposed a central database as well as the need for continual training of district and provincial authorities to collect administrative data, given staff changes. The LSB has noted a political/administrative restriction that if data are not published or endorsed by the LSB, they cannot be used or reported. Thus, some data may be available that are not yet approved for sharing. The Department of Immigration, for instance, has monthly administrative data, some of which are provided to the LSB, and which must then be published before use in the ILMS Database.

Malaysia

Malaysia has put in place effective mechanisms to cover statistics of stocks and inward flows of international migrant workers. In the 2020 collection, Malaysia had at least one data entry for nine tables in Module A, and the country has previously completed all tables under Module B. However, Malaysia has no data entries for tables under Module C. Most ILMS data gaps for Malaysia in Module C may be collection gaps, as these data are not covered in Malaysia's latest census or surveys, and administrative records that could potentially provide estimates have not been identified.

Nevertheless, Malaysia's capacity to monitor most indicators under Module A shows a higher degree of consistency compared to other countries in the region. Data on international migrant stocks are produced and available according to a definition of international migrants based on citizenship (these data are updated annually and disaggregated as requested). All indicators under Module B are also consistently covered by surveys, but not all disaggregated data are available.

Myanmar

Four out of the ten tables in Module A had previously been completed by Myanmar, and two out of seven tables were completed under Module C in the 2013–18 ILMS template configuration. The Module A tables, however, have not been updated since 2014. In the last two updating periods in 2019 and 2020,⁹ only one table in Module C was completed. As with other countries of origin, the more critical gaps in the ILMS Database are the ones in Module C. Even so, it is also important to note Myanmar's data collection gaps for Module B, no tables of which have been filled to date.

All persisting gaps identified for Myanmar relate to limited data processing and sharing practices in regard to labour migration statistics, rather than collection gaps in the national data collection system. Existing data sources, like the LFS, seem to be able to produce estimates for all current gaps in the ILMS Database, including on return migration. In fact, various forms of LFS were conducted in the three years leading up to 2020. But the available data need to be processed according to ILMS indicators and using standards comparable to international standards. The Department of Labour reports that the LFS sampling size is a barrier to making inputs into the ILMS Database tables. Nonetheless, many items were said to have been added to the 2021 LFS – particularly on sex, citizenship and status of employment. However, the 2021 LFS has now been postponed to future years due to COVID-19 and the current political situation.

The Philippines

The Philippines has previously completed four tables under Module A, all of the tables under Module B, and three tables under Module C. As a country with a long history of outbound migration and large numbers of migrants abroad, the Philippines has put in place effective mechanisms to monitor workers departing for abroad, including through household-based surveys (the annual Survey on Overseas Filipinos), the census and administrative data. The few tables that have never been completed represent ILMS collection gaps, as these data do not exist. In particular, birthplace data is not collected in most major data collection instruments, which limits the Philippines' ability to complete some of the Module A tables concerning the migrant population in the country. Module B, on the other hand, is amply covered through the administrative data processes, and is completely up to date.

Data sharing gaps related to Module C may have to be addressed, given the Philippines' stature as ASEAN's largest origin country of migrants and migrant workers. The ILO can offer Philippine authorities further support for data processing using the ILMS Database if anonymized survey microdata sets are made available to the ILO Statistics Department. Some data needed for Module C may be available, but not necessarily organized according to the current specifications of the ILMS Database.

Singapore

Singapore has previously completed only three ILMS tables in total. Although Singapore is among the ASEAN countries hosting large stocks of international migrants, it is also the Member State that shares the least labour migration data with the global community. Data gaps make up 86 per cent of Singapore's tables in the ILMS Database. Among other sources, Singapore's annual LFS primarily produces estimates for residents. Non-resident employment is sourced from administrative sources. In Module A, Singapore has completed only one out of ten tables in the 2020 data collection round. Tables in Module A include gaps that it would appear can be filled by extant LFS and administrative data, but these data are not shared. However, as indicated by the Ministry of Manpower of Singapore, non-resident unemployment data is not as relevant in Singapore's context since a work pass is required for non-residents to work in Singapore.

The migration data sharing practices of Singapore are highly limited, despite consensual ASEAN agreements and AFML recommendations on data sharing (see section 3.4). A specific aggregated dataset is available for Singapore's survey. Singapore data that are shared with the ILO come from administrative records and the country's LFS. No data have been shared for Module B, and only one out of seven tables under Module C has been completed. Gaps identified for Singapore in Modules B and C may

⁹ Note that the last data collection period was before the February 2020 coup.

correspond to non-production of these data, though labour migration administration is quite developed in the country.

Thailand

Thailand has the second-highest completion rate of ILMS in the database, having previously completed Modules A and B, as well as four out of seven tables under Module C. In the 2020 collection, Thailand completed all of Module A. All remaining ILMS gaps for Thailand seem to correspond to collection gaps in the national statistical system, and are all related to Module C. The Thai NSO began to consistently share LFS data for all tables in module A. For Module B, the data provided came from administrative sources that cover only migrant workers in paid-employment, leaving out the self-employed and those more likely to be in vulnerable employment. This is an issue that could perhaps be addressed with better coordination between the hosts of relevant administrative databases, such as the Ministry of Labour, the Immigration Bureau and the National Statistics Office. These agencies could work together on data integration and eventually address current issues, such as the partial coverage of incoming migrant workers by administrative databases, and fill all the gaps in the country's ILMS. =

Viet Nam

Viet Nam has completed about 43 per cent of tables.¹⁰ In Module A, seven out of ten tables have been filled; in Module B, two out of four tables have been previously filled; and one out of seven tables has been filled in Module C. Viet Nam's challenge is similar to that of some ASEAN Member States in that data collection is focused on citizens, and thus leaves out migrant data. By law, the country's published LFS and census data are of Vietnamese citizens only. As with other ASEAN net origin countries, efforts to address gaps in Module C are more pressing than for the other modules. Viet Nam has experienced growing outflows of nationals for overseas work, and the country seems to have limited capacity to monitor these outbound flows. Currently, the country relies entirely on administrative records to monitor ILMS indicators, but the ILO and Viet Nam's General Statistics Office can begin discussions to start collecting international labour migration data by 2021. Interpretation or bilingual enumerators will be needed for this effort.

5.1.3. Summary of issues

The previous sections provided a context and perspective of the overall challenges being faced by ASEAN Member States as a group and as individual countries in regard to collecting and coordinating labour migration statistics. In some cases these gaps are due to national statistical systems not collecting data on some ILMS modules, while in other cases national sources exist, but they are not disaggregated by migration status. In some countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore, many of the gaps are likely due to non-reporting of the data to the ILO. And in the case of some countries, gaps are related to infrequent data collection.

As migration statistics come from many sources, the key to improving completeness of ILMS is strengthening national data collection. It is important that what is collected is useful and relevant initially for statistical purposes and eventually for better policy responses. It is also critical that these data apply national standards that are themselves based on the latest international standards – most importantly the 20th ICLS Guidelines concerning Statistics on International Labour Migration. In addition, establishing or improving data sharing channels among NSOs and national data providers can help countries build a more dynamic, harmonized, up-to-date national labour market information systems that cover statistics on international labour migration. These harmonized, updated data will then organically feed into regional and international systems.

Much of the ILMS datasets produced by the four ASEAN net destination countries come from regular nationwide household-based surveys. Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore have at least annual statistical updates on labour migration stocks and flows thanks to their surveys of population samples. In addition to decennial censuses, other prevailing household surveys and administrative

¹⁰ Viet Nam completed only one table during the 2020 round of collection. However, the data have been updated in ILOSTAT as of June 2021 based on the country's 2019 LFS.

databases capture those who are entering or exiting borders, those who are self-registering based on an administrative rule, or those searching for employment services offered by government.

The six ASEAN net origin countries have more complex and structural issues in regard to the regular and comprehensive production of statistics on international labour migration. Measuring of outward labour migration remains limited. Current efforts to measure labour migration in most origin countries – apart from the Philippines and Indonesia – remain restricted to measuring official outflows of workers who have registered for overseas work via public employment agencies or via licensed recruitment agencies. However, these administrative records do not capture a complete picture; for example, they do not count family members of the migrant, who may themselves eventually migrate for reunification purposes and then enter the labour force in the destination country at a later date.

Other workers who also do not get counted include those who do not go through official, regular migration channels to migrate or to seek work in another country, or even those who have not changed their country of usual residency, such as seafarers. This lack of a comprehensive framework that can measure all types of migrant workers leaving or returning to origin countries in ASEAN may pose problems for governments and relevant line ministries. In order to improve statistics on nationals working abroad, the ILO is currently developing and testing modules for net origin countries to capture return migrants and absentees through household-based surveys like the LFS (see section 5.1).

The following items summarize the continuing challenges in generating a sustainable, coordinated and policy-relevant ILMS in ASEAN:

- Persistent gaps in international labour stock indicators in ILMS Module A, such as:
 - migrants of working age;
 - migrant labour force; and
 - employed or unemployed migrants (examples of countries with gaps under this indicator: the Philippines and Viet Nam).
- Persistent gaps in and low frequency of data collection for indicators related to Module C – Nationals Abroad, such as “stock of nationals abroad” and its variations. Only the Philippines and Singapore have annually updated estimates and time series data for this indicator in the ILMS Database.
- Continued lack of disaggregated data by sex for some estimates, mainly those originating from administrative sources, but also from surveys with inadequate migrant sample sizes.
- Low frequency of primary data estimates in the LFS of some countries, such as Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Myanmar.

5.1.4. Next steps in improving national ILMS data sources in ASEAN

As noted above, the key to improving completeness of the ILMS Database is strengthening national data collection. ASEAN Member States should continue to move ahead with the goal of covering international labour migration as a topic in their national statistical systems. A good exercise in this regard is to improve the coordination and integration of data between the NSOs and ministries that share the responsibility of collecting these statistics (see section 5.3).

It is imperative for ASEAN Member States to take stock of their current national statistical systems and consider how the existing systems can help be improved by aligning them to the 20th ICLS Guidelines concerning Statistics on International Labour Migration. These Guidelines provide the definitions and bases needed to having a comparable and sustained international labour migration database. To enable disaggregation of national data sources by migration status, it is crucial to ensure that three migration items – “country of citizenship”, “country of birth” and “labour force status” – are included in the data collection instruments.

The three critical data sources for ILMS in ASEAN are the population censuses, LFS and administrative data collections. These existing systems are compared below to pinpoint the aspects that can be improved.



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Population censuses

Agencies responsible for population censuses should ensure recommended and standardized measurement of migrants and labour force status. Demographic items such as sex, age, country of birth and country of citizenship are often, but not all, included in the population censuses of ASEAN Member States more consistently and often than migration characteristics like purpose of migration or duration of stay.

Among socio-demographic characteristics however, some ASEAN Member States do not measure “country of last usual residence”, “country of citizenship” or “country of birth”. Myanmar, the Philippines and Viet Nam are missing three or more items recommended to identify and characterize international migrants. All ASEAN Member States except for Viet Nam use either country of citizenship or country of birth (or both) to identify international migrants in their population census. This approach can help identify linkages between international migrant workers and their, sex, age, marital status and highest level of educational attainment. Moreover, identified migrant workers can be categorized by a few of their main work characteristics, such as labour force status (if employed or unemployed), economic activity, occupation or skills level, and status in employment (self-employment etc). Most ASEAN Member States, however, have not include these other work-related items in their latest population censuses.

Including migration characteristics – that is, questions on country of citizenship and country of birth – in population censuses came out as less consistent than socio-demographic characteristics in ASEAN countries. Countries like Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand inquire with residents about their purpose for migration. Myanmar has the most “complete” census in terms of information gathered on residents' migration characteristics, with three migration items; while most ASEAN Member States include one or two items of this type in their population censuses. The Philippines and Viet Nam have excluded “main migration characteristics” from their censuses.

Inconsistencies like these observations above create difficulties for ASEAN Member States to align themselves to the ICLS. These inconsistencies also contribute to the difficulty of comparing migration data across the region, much less to compare data with other regions or inform regional estimates. As has been observed in Chapter 4 of this report, it is not easy to make such data comparisons as even differing interpretations of the definition of an international labour migrant can create confusion among data producers within the ASEAN Member States.

Labour force surveys

Labour force surveys (LFS) can be considered the ASEAN region's main source of labour market statistics. These surveys currently take place on at least an annual basis in all net destination countries as well as in Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines¹¹ and Viet Nam. The LFS in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia still occur on an ad hoc basis, with latest ones available being for 2017 and 2019, respectively.

In general, LFS in ASEAN contain questions on "country of birth" or "country of citizenship" in latest questionnaires. All net destination countries have questions concerning socio-demographic characteristics, which are necessary for defining international migrant workers, along with many others. Other cross-country gaps are more frequent, like those for the data item "country of last usual residence", which allow countries to identify directionality of international labour migration movements through these surveys.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia have the most complete LFS in ASEAN in terms of including main socio-demographic and work characteristics (these being recommended by the ICLS to measure international labour migration). Another country with a fairly complete LFS is Singapore, which has two LFS, one that takes place monthly and another annually. The latter is the Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, which can produce estimates on residents by most socio-demographic characteristics, with the exception of "country of last usual residence". Singapore's two LFS have gaps in coverage in regard to main migration or work characteristics as recommended by the ICLS; these LFS cannot, for instance, produce estimates of migrant workers' remittances or social security coverage.

The LFS of Myanmar and Viet Nam have the smallest degree of coverage of main socio-demographic characteristics among ASEAN Member States. Both countries have not included items such as "country of birth" or "country of citizenship" in their latest LFS, and thus, are not able to identify migrant workers through these surveys. Myanmar included these items in its 2015 LFS, and pre-coup had planned to include them again in 2021 or the next comprehensive LFS.

The LFS of Thailand includes a migration module yearly in Q4 and is conducted at the household level. This method, however, omits migrant workers who reside at workplaces, such as in on-site accommodation in construction, agriculture or manufacturing. Hence, the current LFS underreports the total number of migrant workers in Thailand, as evidenced by higher numbers of documented international migrant workers reported by the Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour administrative records.

This assessment of key data collection items in the latest surveys and censuses aims to flag readiness of countries to apply measurement of international labour migration in ASEAN according to the 20th ICLS Guidelines. Considering the recent launch of these Guidelines, most countries are still trying to adjust their own statistics or are planning to begin such adjustments soon. This approach can work as a baseline for the region and for ASEAN Member States to base their future progress on incorporating these new global international labour migration statistics guidelines into their own national guidelines (as considered suitable by each country).

Administrative data

All ASEAN Member States produce international labour migration data originating from administrative sources. These administrative databases surface as a result of state regulation of international migration and labour migration – with data collected upon entry, return, during the stay and/or upon exit of migrants and migrant workers in these countries. Many of these databases, which contain relevant ILMS

¹¹ Monthly, beginning in January 2021.

indicators, consist of work permits issued to international migrants or registration under specific national regulatory systems of nationals leaving for employment abroad, already abroad or returning. These databases are kept by ministries or departments of labour, like in the cases of Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. Other databases relevant to the topic are kept by immigration departments, as in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Myanmar and Philippines. A couple of countries have further developed specific administrative bodies to collect and disseminate international labour migration data, as is the case of Indonesia and the Philippines, with the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Board of the Republic of Indonesia (BP2MI) and the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration, respectively (table 16).

Most ASEAN Member States collect administrative data on both incoming international migrant workers and outgoing nationals heading abroad for employment. The exceptions are Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia, which only collect administrative data on incoming international migrant workers, and Cambodia for only collecting information on outgoing nationals migrating for employment. Moreover, Indonesia is the only ASEAN Member States where administrative records on return migrants are also being collected and shared.

The extent of the information collected by these administrative databases varies significantly. While all of the identified databases provide a certain aggregate estimate (for example, total work permits issued in a reference period), some databases also disaggregate the collected data by sex or education. In some cases, the administrative databases provide information on the socio-economic and work characteristics of migrant workers. Indonesia and Thailand, for example, possess administrative records on nationals abroad for employment that can be disaggregated by sex, country of destination, highest education level attained and other work characteristics.

Whenever administrative records can be used for statistical purposes, are harmonized with other national data sources, and are based on national standards that are convertible to international ones, their use is advised. These administrative data can complement other national data sources and help estimate international labour migration more accurately. Indonesia, for example, has been working on the integration of all sources of migration data through the One Data on International Migration initiative (UNESCAP 2020). This project was developed in response to the Government recognizing the lack of consistency between the concepts, definitions, standards and methodologies applied by each data source, as well as their poor coverage, among other challenges.¹²

► **Table 16. Administrative data on international labour migration, ASEAN Member States**

Countries	Administrative database host	Scope	Disaggregation variables
Brunei Darussalam	Department of Immigration and National Registration, Ministry of Home Affairs	International migrants	Citizenship, sex, labour force status
Cambodia	Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training	Nationals abroad for employment	Sex, country of destination
Indonesia	Directorate of Controlling of Foreign Employment, Ministry of Manpower	International migrant workers	Citizenship, sex, highest education attainment, economic activity, occupation
	Directorate General of Immigration, Ministry of Law and Human Rights	International migrants	Citizenship, nature of migration, gender, age, purpose of migration
	The Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Board of the Republic of Indonesia (BP2MI)	Nationals abroad for employment	Sex, country of destination, highest education attainment, economic activity, occupation
	BP2MI	Return Indonesian workers	Sex, country of previous residence

¹² An example of these challenges can be seen in the example of the Philippines. Since the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act (No. 8042) was enacted in 1995, the Philippine Government has long been mandated to create a shared government system on international migration (SGISM). This system is meant to integrate all data sources on overseas Filipinos. The law has even been amended twice in the last decade, and the number of data generators expanded to include non-migration agencies that have social and economic services for overseas Filipinos. The SGISM, however, remains unfunded and unimplemented.

Countries	Administrative database host	Scope	Disaggregation variables
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Nationals abroad for employment	Country of destination
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Labour	International migrant workers	Citizenship, economic activity
	Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Labour	Nationals abroad for employment	Sex
Malaysia	Immigration Bureau	International migrant workers	Citizenship
Myanmar	Department of Population, Immigration and National Registration	International migrant workers	Citizenship, sex
	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security	Nationals abroad for employment	Sex, country of destination
Philippines	Commission of Filipinos Overseas	All nationals abroad	Country of destination, sex, age, education, civil status, occupation before migration
	Philippines Overseas Employment Administration	Nationals abroad for employment	Country of destination
	Bureau of Immigration	International migrants	Citizenship, sex, age, labour force status
	Bureau of Local Employment, Department of Labour and Employment	International migrant workers	Citizenship, sex, education, economic activity, occupation
Singapore	Ministry of Manpower and Department of Statistics	International migrants	Citizenship, sex, labour force status, economic activity
	Department of Statistics	All nationals abroad	Sex
Thailand	Office of Foreign Workers Administration, Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour	International migrant workers	Citizenship, sex, economic activity, occupation
	Office of Overseas Employment Administration, Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour	Nationals abroad for employment	Sex, country of destination, highest education attainment, occupation
Viet Nam	Bureau of Employment, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs	International migrant workers	Citizenship
	Department of Overseas Labour, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs	Nationals abroad for employment	Citizenship, sex

Lessons learned

Most countries of destination in ASEAN have been dealing with growing numbers of workers in their country who either are citizens of another country or born in another country. These countries have managed to acknowledge these workers in most, if not all, statistics by including information on “labour force status” and “place of birth and/or citizenship” in the latest relevant national data collection instruments. Once these migration questions are in place, countries can use other questions already present in these surveys – for instance, about sex and sector of work – to extract more demographic details.

Countries of origin in ASEAN, on the other hand, still have gaps concerning data disaggregation by migration status. These countries are not dealing with large international migrant stocks, but rather with large stocks of their citizens working abroad or of return migrant workers. Adaption of a broader data collection system, in line with SDG target 17.18, would need to be included in administrative databases. Data such as the migration and labour force status of absent citizens can provide information about those who are working abroad at the time of measurement, and about the previous migration status of residents, in order to capture those who are return migrant workers.

► 5.2. Improving coverage and quality of ILMS

Another challenge facing measuring labour migration is the lack of quality and coverage of national data sources. As noted above in section 4.2, the total count of 5.1 million employed migrant worker in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand highlights that at least a few million migrant workers are still out of reach of ASEAN Member States' official data collection. Even if the number of employed migrants does not represent the total of migrant workers, and even if the total number of migrant workers is missing for some ASEAN countries, the contrast with the UNDESA estimate of 10.1 million international migrants living in ASEAN is a stark one. This section discusses the reason behind these coverage and quality issues, and suggests next steps in addressing them

Sampling and methodology issues

Insufficient coverage of migrant workers in national statistics is related, among others, to issues concerning sampling methodologies. Censuses and LFS are usually carried out as household-based surveys, which may not cover migrant workers residing at workplaces, such as construction sites, factories, plantations, or private households in the case of domestic workers. Other groups of workers that may be beyond the reach of current sampling methodologies include self-employed migrants, those working in the informal economy, and those with irregular status.

In destination countries where international migrants in an irregular status are a significant part of the population and labour force, careful sampling procedures need to be developed and regularly updated. These will lead to data that correspond to a sample representing the size and characteristics of migrant workers in the population, regardless of their status. It is important that migrants know that by participating in the survey their data are confidential and will not be shared with immigration authorities who may deport them if found.

Insufficient coverage of international migrant workers in national survey samples raises the issue of the statistical significance of analyses resting on ILMS data, especially for small groups. In countries with large stocks of migrant workers, their inclusion needs to be sufficient to produce statistical significance for migrant worker groups and sub-groups, including those defined by the main socio-demographic, migration and work characteristics recommended by the 20th ICLS. Without large enough samples of migrant workers some ASEAN Member States have, for instance, struggled to sex-disaggregate their migrant worker data.

With regard to coverage, ILMS as proposed in the ICLS Guidelines should cover all persons who are usual residents of a country, regardless of nationality or country of birth, as well as persons who are not usual residents but are in the labour force of the country. Although due consideration is given here to the changing nature of international labour migration, it continues to be difficult to identify, for example, who exactly is or is not covered in ASEAN Member States' official statistics among migrant worker groups, and for the groups who are covered, what their coverage limitations are. The number of workers in an irregular status, who are at the margin of government regulation, are among those not entirely reflected in the available data, particularly in administrative records.

Some of the issues encountered with ASEAN Member States' existing primary sources of international labour migration statistics are possibly related to capacity or to governments' focus in producing these statistics. The data collection methodologies behind these statistics currently have many gaps. In some cases, household-based surveys or even population censuses do not allow linking a person's current (or previous) migrant status and work status. The "foreign-born" or "non-citizens" are excluded in the definition of "usual residents" in data collected from a survey or census. As well, variables such as "migration", "demographic" and "work" also are excluded in some questionnaires used for data collection.

See Appendix 1 for ILO's model labour force survey for paper and pencil interviewing (PAPI) of demographic and background characteristics (version 5, September 2020).

National capacity and priorities

Even if gaps and data imbalances under each of the ILMS modules have been addressed, there remain substantive challenges ahead. Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Singapore produce and share international labour migration statistics relevant to their own national contexts. In these countries, most of their major data collection tools generate apt labour market statistics – allowing estimates to be disaggregated by migration status while using relevant related administrative databases. However, Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam collect international labour migration data either less frequently or they do not measure labour migration in some of their official data collection tools. In some cases, data generated by some administrative registers in these countries are still collected via paper forms, which are not always processed or shared with the national statistical office. This manner of data collection makes the use of administrative data for statistical purposes difficult.

If ASEAN Member States continue to possess limited capacities to monitor growing international migration inflows and outflows, a significant part of the movements of cross-border workers will remain unmapped and unaccounted for. The lack of data will lead to limited responses to labour migration issues prevailing in ASEAN, such as the exploitation of migrant workers, gendered pay gaps and gendered hiring, forced labour and trafficking, return and reintegration challenges, and brain drain.

The ILO can also be of assistance to ASEAN Member States in their efforts to build national capacity. Processing of ILMS data coming from household-based surveys can be supported by the ILO, this being an effort to identify and address gaps in data processing and sharing. Further, countries’ burden of data sharing with the ILO can further be lightened if each ASEAN Member State starts publishing their complete ILMS in individual country reports and statistical annexes for their LFS and population censuses.

► 5.3. Improving coordination and harmonization

Limited interagency coordination at the country level, as well as limited harmonization efforts at the regional level pose further challenges to the collection of ILMS in ASEAN.

A good exercise for all countries that are moving ahead in their goals to cover the topic of international labour migration in their national statistical systems is to improve coordination and integration between data from NSOs and ministries sharing the responsibility for collecting these statistics. To this end, countries can start by coordinating country-level meetings between ILMS providers to discuss data integration. The national statistical system can appoint a point person and a partner government agency that produces administrative data on international labour migrants to help facilitate these coordination meetings.

An example here is the Philippine Statistics Authority, which convenes an Inter-Agency Committee on Migration Statistics, which even has a mandate from the national statistical system.¹³ Indonesia’s One Data on International Migration initiative is another example. Other national statistical systems in ASEAN can adopt approaches similar to those of the Philippines and Indonesia in their own settings.

Countries should also consider building their own mapping of ILMS datasets according to latest available sources. This chapter has highlighted the data that exist and that are missing in each ASEAN Member State. Given the contents of this report, the individual ASEAN Member States’ national statistical systems can calibrate their labour migration statistics to fit the present modules of the ILMS Database in ASEAN. In addition, the national statistical systems can employ the following statistical compilation and policy formulation measures:

¹³ As per the Philippine Statistics Authority’s [Memorandum Order on Reconstituting and Expanding the Interagency Committee on Migration Statistics \(No. 4 of 2018\)](#).

- Define the priorities and strategies in the process to achieve more complete and better statistics that fit the national context.
- Flag concepts, definitions, standards and methodologies applied by each ILMS data source, as well as their potential strengths and weaknesses, and assess how the 20th ICLS Guidelines can help harmonize and improve the quality and completeness of these migration datasets in each individual ASEAN Member State.
- Draft recommendations and plans to improve labour migration statistics within one's own institutional framework. Countries can base their efforts on the existing ILMS framework of the ILO, which is meant to facilitate measurement and comparability of these statistics worldwide.

Limited harmonization efforts constitute an additional obstacle to accurate interpretation of ILMS availability and assessment of ILMS meaning, which can impact the comparability of data between countries and between sources within the same country. It is problematic to compare data from different countries and sources when it is not always clear what standards or definitions are being used for the relevant concepts that frame the population covered and their characteristics, not to mention other potential caveats of the data. Hence caution is still advised to users of the ILMS Database in ASEAN in regard to interpreting data and metadata, and in the overall aggregating, comparing or analysing of figures.

In ASEAN, data incomparability occurs due to differing methodologies, concepts, definitions and standards being applied by the various agencies producing data – both within a country and between different countries. This situation limits the use of official statistics produced for policy purposes, and leads to different estimates for the same indicator on the national level. Likewise, even if data are centralized, national statistics are likely to differ between countries in terms of methodology and data collection practices – or might not at all exist.

Better data coordination between data providers will improve data reporting channels between ASEAN Member States and the ILO. Current channels can be improved by more prominent roles being given to the NSOs of some countries in centralizing data reporting.

► 5.4. Strengthening of ASEAN cooperation on labour migration statistics

As explained in section 3.4, the 2007 ASEAN Declaration and the 2017 ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers have established a legal mandate for labour migration statistics and their compilation, harmonization and reporting for the entirety of ASEAN. Improved coordination and plans for data integration in the ILMS Database would better equip ASEAN Member States to face challenges concerning the collection gaps highlighted in this report. Such coordination will help each ASEAN Member State ensure the collection of statistics fit for the ILMS Database and assist States to find steps to address data gaps.

The annual Regional Technical Meetings of ILMS Focal Points organized by the ILO TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme (see section 2.2) have so far been the key forums for bringing together focal points from each national statistical system to discuss country- and regional-level updates and progress in the collection of ILMS in ASEAN. Going forward, the ASEAN Statistics Division (see section 3.4) could play a stronger role in the collection and sharing of labour migration statistics in ASEAN and in the harmonizing of methodologies across the region.



6



6. Conclusions and recommendations

This report has presented the latest statistics on international labour migration in ASEAN, providing a comprehensive picture of the demographic profiles and work characteristics of migrant workers in ASEAN destination labour markets, as well as flows of labour migration to and from countries in the ASEAN region. As such, the ILMS Database in ASEAN is an essential source of international labour migration statistics that helps monitor labour migration movements as part of ASEAN's labour markets and labour market information systems. The state of labour migration statistics in ASEAN is partly due to efforts by the ILO to consolidate country-level data through the ILMS Database in ASEAN. Data presented here from the ASEAN Member States reveal the evolution of these individual countries' migration statistics since 2012, when regionwide ILMS collection began.

The report shows that ASEAN's net destination countries can offer statistics for foreign-born and/or non-citizen stocks within their resident working-age population and within their employed and unemployed members of the labour force. These statistics can be further disaggregated by sex, age, education, economic activity, occupation and employment status. In the future, ASEAN net destination countries might also monitor the wages of migrant workers and compare these with those of non-migrants holding similar jobs. These data can also be disaggregated by sex, allowing for analysis of migrant and gender wage gaps. Statistics on annual inflows of migrant workers are also available in most net destination countries, disaggregated by education, skills-level or economic activity. For their part, net origin countries can offer annual statistics of outflows of nationals registering to work abroad. Some origin countries can offer return migration statistics, and even further contribute to SDG reporting, as with the two ASEAN Member States that are already able to report on estimated international recruitment costs using LFS.

This report has also outlined the limitations of the ILMS Database in ASEAN and the remaining statistical issues related to measuring international labour migration in ASEAN Member States. While the current ILMS Database in ASEAN has many strengths, challenges facing the migration statistical systems of ASEAN Member States are still substantial when assessed against the ILO's ILMS templates and the 20th ICLS Guidelines concerning Statistics on International Labour Migration.

Further, it should be noted that the current ILMS Database in ASEAN represents an ILO-led initiative, while it could be owned by the region through ASEAN and countrywide efforts to improve migration statistical systems, possibly under the leadership of the ASEAN Statistics Division. Such a regional initiative would fulfil the ASEAN Member States' international commitments under the SDGs, the GCM and the ICLS Guidelines, and help operationalize ASEAN's mandates on migrant workers.

The recommendations provided below aim at improving the collection, harmonization, presentation and national-to-regional consolidation of labour migration statistics in ASEAN. The hope is that the ILMS Database for ASEAN becomes staple fare, nationally and regionally sustained, and addresses statistical and policy-based needs for ASEAN and its Member States on international labour migration and development.

1. Review questionnaires for all relevant censuses, labour force surveys and other relevant data sources to ensure that, at a minimum, key questions on labour force status, citizenship, country of birth and sex are included to enable disaggregation by migration status and sex, as required under SDG Target 17.18 and ICLS Guidelines. Specifically, countries should check and apply the standards and overall framework proposed by the 20th ICLS Guidelines concerning Statistics on Labour Migration. "Migration status" should be a disaggregation variable available across all decent work indicators. To enable sex disaggregation of the data, a question on sex also needs to be included with a large enough sample to allow for disaggregation.
2. Strengthen national administrative records collected upon entry, return, during the stay and/or upon exit of migrants and migrant workers to enable such records to be used for collecting

labour migration data. Definitions in administrative records should be harmonized with the definitions used in other national data sources and be based on national and international standards. Existing administrative records should be submitted to ILMS.

3. Improve the sampling methodologies, frequency and consistency of data collection. Better sampling can capture diverse migrant workers in ASEAN countries, including those residing at their workplace, those with irregular status, and those in hard-to-reach sectors. Greater frequency of data collection can expand and sustain information gathered and will address input gaps, leading to more consistent data.
4. Remove legal barriers for measuring labour migration, where such barriers exist. For example, Viet Nam should revise national legislation that focuses data collection on citizens only, leaving out migrant data.
5. Strengthen commitment to sharing labour migration data. As noted above, non-reporting of data to the ILO is likely one key factor behind ILMS data gaps for Malaysia and Singapore. In some other countries sharing gaps may be due to limited data processing capacity or limited coordination for submission. Hence, part of the role of ASEAN could be to help encourage Member States to share their labour migration data. This is critical to providing an overall assessment that is policy responsive and directly actionable for each ASEAN Member State, and also to enable the development of representative regional estimates.
6. Improve coordination between data producers and harmonize methodologies. ASEAN Member States need to improve inter-agency coordination among data producers in regard to measuring international labour migration statistics. Lack of coordination has been observed in some country reporting. Some ASEAN Member States also need to increase the technical capacity of government agencies producing international labour migration statistics. ASEAN Member States are also recommended to monitor the SDGs – as well as SDG-related global monitoring and reporting processes – related to international labour migration.
7. Strengthen ASEAN leadership in collecting and sharing of labour migration and harmonizing methods across the region. The ILMS Database in ASEAN is the region's opportunity to showcase to other regions and to origin and destination countries that statistical coordination, harmonization and comparability can work. ASEAN can present itself as a showcase of how to produce comparable, useful international labour migration statistics.

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Appendix 1. ILO model labour force survey for paper and pencil interviewing (PAPI): Demographic and background characteristics (version 5, September 2020)

International Migration Status (MIG)			
For all household members			
MIG_1	(Were/was) (you/name) born in [survey country]?	Yes	01 <input type="checkbox"/> ► MIG_6
		No	02 <input type="checkbox"/>
MIG_2	In which country (were/was) (you/ name) born?	A. _____ Name of country B. _____ Code of country 997 Don't know	
MIG_3	When did (you/name) arrive to live in [survey country]?	A. _____ Month (MM 97 Don't know B. _____ Year(yyyy) ► MIG_5 9997 don't know	
MIG_4	How long (have/has) (you/name) been living in [survey country]...?	<i>Read</i> Less than 12 months 01 <input type="checkbox"/> One year to less than 5 years 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Five years to less than 10 years 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Ten years or more 04 <input type="checkbox"/>	
MIG_5	What was (your/name's) main reason for moving to [survey country]?	To take up a job 01 <input type="checkbox"/> Job transfer 02 <input type="checkbox"/>	

		To look for a paid job	03 <input type="checkbox"/>	
		To look for any other work	04 <input type="checkbox"/>	
		To study	05 <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Marriage	06 <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Family moved/joining family	07 <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Medical treatment, health	08 <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Conflict, insecurity, natural disaster	09 <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Lifestyle, cost-of-living	10 <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Other (specify):_____	11 <input type="checkbox"/>	
MIG_6	(Are/is) (you/name) a citizen of...?	<i>Read and mark all that apply</i>		
		[Survey country] a.	► DIF_1	
		Another country b.		
		<i>Do not read</i>		
		[Stateless] c.0	► DIF_1	
MIG_7	Which other country (are/is) (you/name) a citizen of...?	A. _____ Name of country B. _____ Code of country 997 don't know		

Measuring labour migration in ASEAN

Analysis from the ILO's International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) Database

The International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) Database in ASEAN was launched in 2013 and has been published annually since 2014. In validating, annotating and gathering together ASEAN Member States' data from national surveys and administrative records, the ILMS Database in ASEAN fills a knowledge gap for national and regional policy-makers and for the broader research community.

This report showcases the rich data collected from ASEAN Member States and illustrates labour migration trends. It presents the latest statistics on international labour migration in ASEAN, providing a comprehensive picture of the demographic profiles and work-characteristics of migrant workers in the labour markets of ASEAN countries of destination, as well as the flows of labour migration to and from the ASEAN region.

Second, this report takes stock of the current status, successes and challenges in measuring labour migration in the ASEAN region. The report highlights the need for ongoing coordination and data sharing among Member States, and also offers solutions for expanding and improving data collection in line with the latest international standards. By informing policy decisions at the highest levels, international labour migration statistics benefit both countries of origin and destination, as well as the women and men migrant workers currently living and working in the region and beyond.

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