



► ILO Brief

June 2021¹

Experiences of migrant workers during COVID-19 in ASEAN countries:

Rights at work, migration during the pandemic, and remigration plans (Second assessment)

Context and introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected migrant workers worldwide, exacerbating the challenges they faced before the pandemic and creating new obstacles for migrant workers seeking to improve their lives and livelihoods. As of February 20 2021, Indonesia and the Philippines reported the highest numbers of infections within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, with Cambodia ², the Lao People's Democratic Republic ³, and Viet Nam ⁴ reporting relatively low numbers of cases and related deaths. Myanmar ⁵, since August 2020, and Malaysia ⁶, since October 2020, have seen a steep increase in cases, emerging as the newest coronavirus hotspots in Asia. Cambodia and Thailand were experiencing a "third wave" in March and April 2021, whereas Singapore and Brunei Darussalam had contained the spread as of February 2021. Overall, ASEAN governments responded quickly with rapid containment actions, including mobility restrictions and communication efforts to alert the public about safety measures and the need for COVID 19 testing, although testing capacity varied. ⁷

The ILO conducted an initial rapid assessment survey from late March to the end of April 2020. This study – conducted from mid-October to December 2020 – is a follow-up to the initial assessment and focuses on migrant workers in countries of destination. While the first assessment looked into the emerging information, protection needs

and working conditions resulting from the pandemic, this assessment will look deeper into specific issues, such as wages and the impact of COVID-19 on working hours, layoffs and COVID-19-related stress.

As the emerging evidence suggests that the impacts of COVID-19 have been exacerbated for women ⁸ – who face a higher risk of losing their livelihoods, having their labour rights violated and having less capacity to absorb economic shocks – gender dimensions of the pandemic are highlighted where applicable in the report. This brief aims to give voice to migrant workers by summarizing the responses of 456 migrant workers, with half of the respondents being women who participated in the survey. Respondents were mainly from the domestic and care work sector (28 per cent), the construction sector (24 per cent), and the service sector (19 per cent). Among respondents, 252 were in countries of destination (Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand) and 204 in countries of origin (Myanmar and the Philippines). Of migrant workers interviewed in countries of destination, 29 per cent were from Indonesia, 23 per cent from Myanmar, 14 per cent each from the Philippines and Bangladesh, and around 5 per cent each from Nepal, China, Cambodia, India and other countries, including Malaysia and Sri Lanka. The migrant workers interviewed in the countries of origin (Myanmar and Philippines) were nationals of these countries and who had returned home from abroad since March 2020.

Key findings

Among migrant workers in countries of destination and countries of origin:

- Almost 40 per cent of all respondents have not been tested for COVID-19 (38 per cent), either on arrival in the origin or destination country, with more women (49 per cent) than men (27 per cent) not tested.⁹ Testing of migrant workers was more commonly performed upon return to their country of origin than in countries of destination. Nearly three-quarters (78 per cent) of respondents in Myanmar and the Philippines reported being tested upon their return home, as opposed to 45 per cent of respondents in countries of destination.¹⁰
- For most migrant workers in countries of origin, COVID-19 tests were paid for by either the government or insurance (96 per cent). However, more people in destination countries paid themselves (15 per cent), with the remainder paid for by either their employer, government or insurance.¹¹

Migrant workers in destination countries (Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand):

COVID-19-related stress

- An overwhelming majority of respondents (83 per cent)¹² reported severe worry, stress or sadness during COVID-19, with more women than men noting stress (87 per cent versus 78 per cent). Migrant worker respondents were primarily worried about family, money, how to get home, losing their jobs, and to some extent, about prolonged quarantine and isolation. Respondents also expressed confusion about where to turn to with their problems and to feel supported.

Job retention and job loss

- Eighty per cent of respondents were still employed at the time of the interview,¹³ with more men (90 per cent) than women (69 per cent) employed. A third of the women respondents were no longer working (31 per cent). This could be related to the informal nature of their employment, as almost 50 per cent of women who are no longer employed were previously employed in domestic work.

- Of the migrant workers no longer working, 52 per cent lost their job because their employer terminated the contract prematurely without compensation.¹⁴
- Almost 70 per cent of the women whose contract was terminated prematurely without compensation were in the domestic work sector.

Loss of wages

- Around half of the migrant workers in Malaysia and Thailand saw their wages drop due to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁵ On average, monthly wages dropped from US\$299 to US\$253 in Thailand, US\$420 to US\$343 in Malaysia and US\$982 to US\$750 in Singapore. Women migrant workers, who already earned less than their male counterparts, were disproportionately affected, with women migrant workers in Singapore experiencing the most significant losses (37 per cent of their wages on average), followed by men migrant workers in Malaysia (22 per cent) and women migrant workers in Thailand (18 per cent).¹⁶
- The unequal wage loss burden placed on women in Singapore can be attributed to the fact that 96 per cent of women respondents in Singapore were domestic workers.

Working hour and overtime losses

- The average total weekly working hours of migrant workers dropped by two hours from 55 hours per week before the pandemic to 53 hours during COVID-19.¹⁷ Migrant workers in Malaysia and Thailand saw the most significant drop in working hours, with a three-hour decline per week on average. However, migrant workers in Singapore actually saw their average working hours per week increase by one hour.
- The overtime hours worked on average per week dropped to 13 hours.¹⁸ Migrant workers in Thailand saw a dramatic loss in overtime hours worked, losing half of their overtime hours compared to pre-pandemic levels (52 per cent); migrant workers in Malaysia lost a quarter, and those in Singapore lost one-eighth of their overtime hours.

Key findings (cont.)

- A majority of the migrant workers in Singapore and Thailand experienced a loss in overtime pay during the pandemic, with migrant women in Singapore, most of them engaged in domestic work, sharing the most significant losses (72 per cent), followed by migrant men in Thailand (59 per cent), most of them engaged in factory work.

Social security

- Of the migrant workers no longer working, most responded that they were not receiving any salary payments and benefits. In addition, a majority said that they have no savings to cover their immediate needs, such as food (67 per cent), healthcare (79 per cent), housing (77 per cent) and personal needs (69 per cent).¹⁹
- Among migrants no longer working, 43 per cent received social security, compensation for unemployment/retrenchment or any other state-funded emergency livelihood support (up from 3 per cent in the previous assessment).²⁰

Safety and health on the job

- In their current job or most recent job, most of the migrant workers (94 per cent) had personal protective equipment (PPE), including masks, gloves and hand sanitizer, to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission at work.²¹ More than half of the respondents (59 per cent) said that their employer provided the PPE, though over a third reported buying it themselves (35 per cent).
- A majority of the respondents said that they have enough space at work (95 out of 121); just about one third of the respondents have enough space during transport to and from work; and about half have enough room in their accommodation to practice social distancing.
- Given that 65 per cent of the women migrant workers in this study are employed in the domestic work sector, it is likely that this disproportionate effect on women is because of the nature of their work in close quarters within private households.

Accommodation

- Overall, almost 60 per cent of respondents in destination countries reported that their sleeping area is just one to five square meters in size. However, this was true for only 38 per cent of the migrant workers in Malaysia.
- On problems with their accommodation:²²
 - one in four said that they were not allowed to leave (28 per cent) and that they had no privacy (24 per cent);
 - nearly a fifth of the migrant workers said that their accommodation was not safe (18 per cent) and was crowded (17 per cent);
 - a fourth said that their accommodation had more than 10 people were living in the room (26 per cent); and
 - some said that their accommodation was detrimental to their health (16 per cent), that they were not able to access enough food (14 per cent), and they were locked in their accommodation (13 per cent).
- Women migrant workers were disproportionately affected compared to men migrant workers on the following
 - not allowed to leave (33 per cent versus 24 per cent)
 - no privacy (32 per cent versus 17 per cent)
 - crowding (23 per cent versus 12 per cent)
 - locked in their accommodation (18 per cent versus 8 per cent)

Visa

- Most of the respondents said that they had been able to renew their visa and work permit from within the country of destination (79 per cent).²³ However, this varied by country of destination, with almost all Singapore migrant workers (97 per cent) able to renew their visa and work permit from within the country, but roughly a third of migrant workers in Malaysia (34 per cent) and Thailand (27 per cent) being unable to do so.

Key findings (cont.)

Remittances

- More than a third of the respondents (36 per cent) said that there had been changes in how much they remit at the time of the interview compared to pre-COVID-19, in January and February 2020, ²⁴ with slightly more women (38 per cent) than men migrant workers (34 per cent) reporting change.
- One in four reported that they remit less (25 per cent) than before, and a few said that they remit more (11 per cent). The reasons for the decline in remittances included income losses due to job loss or overtime loss and a fall in exchange rates. Conversely, those who remitted more said they had to remit more money to provide for their family's needs.

Employment challenges and abuses related to COVID-19

- 64 per cent of employed respondents in the destination countries said they faced employment challenges or abuses related to COVID-19. ²⁵ This represents an increase from the 32 per cent reported in the previous assessment. The most-reported violations (experienced by roughly one in four employed respondents) were:
 - the employer keeps their passport or other legal documents;
 - they do not have social security/insurance;
 - their employer restricted mobile phone use; and
 - they received unequal pay and allowances compared with nationals.
- Concerning harassment in the workplace, one in four respondents – predominantly more women than men – reported that shouting or insults (30 per cent women versus 18 per cent men) ²⁶ and bullying or threats to hurt people (26 per cent women versus 11 per cent men) ²⁷ at their workplace were either very common or common.
- Among the respondents who reported shouting or insults as being common in their workplace, 55 per cent were domestic workers; among the respondents who reported hitting, pushing or use of a weapon as being common, 57 per cent were

domestic workers; and among the respondents who reported bullying or threats to hurt people as being common, 48 per cent were domestic workers (see figure 30). Nearly a third (30 per cent) of the respondents who reported unwanted or sexual comments or touching were domestic workers. The other worst affected sectors were the construction sector followed by factory work.

Migrant workers in countries of origin (Myanmar and Philippines):

Job and wage losses

- Among returnees, 51 per cent voluntarily left their jobs in countries of destination. In addition, 37 per cent had their contracts ended prematurely with or without compensation (9 per cent with and 28 per cent without), predominantly because of staff retrenchment or workplace closures due to COVID-19. Only 11 per cent indicated that their employment ended at the agreed time. ²⁸
- A sectoral breakdown of the reasons for employment termination highlights that a large proportion of migrant workers in the construction sector (49 per cent) and the oil/gas industry (77 per cent), as well as a third or more of the migrant workers in services (38 per cent), domestic work (33 per cent) and factory work (27 per cent) had their contracts terminated by the employer with or without compensation.
- Forty per cent of the returnees said that there was a period when they had no work and could not return home. ²⁹

Savings

- Forty per cent or more of the returnees had savings to cover their immediate needs after the termination of the previous employment, such as food (64 per cent), healthcare (43 per cent), housing (42 per cent) and personal needs (53 per cent). ³⁰ But fewer women than men had savings to cover immediate needs, especially for healthcare (39 per cent women versus 46 per cent men) and housing needs (35 per cent women versus 49 per cent men).

Key findings (cont.)

- In all, 88 per cent of the returnees did not receive any assistance from the host government or their embassy before the return journey.

Journey home and situation since the return

- Nearly half of the returnees (49 per cent) paid for their return journey themselves, with the share of women paying themselves slightly higher (55 per cent). For about 40 per cent of returnees, the return journey was either paid by their employer or their origin country government, with more men (59 per cent) having their journey being paid for by the employer, and more women (56 per cent) having theirs paid for by the government.³¹
- Since returning, a minority of the returnees (12 per cent) experienced some form of discrimination or adverse treatment because they were returnees.³²
- Nearly a third of the returnees (31 per cent) were engaged in paid work after their return, more Myanmar than Philippines returnees (42 per cent versus 19 per cent).³³ A majority (74 per cent) of those who have no job yet are looking for paid work, with more Philippines than Myanmar returnees looking for work (84 per cent versus 59 per cent).³⁴
- The majority (70 per cent) of the returnees said their current economic situation worsened after COVID compared to pre-COVID, with more Myanmar than Philippines returnees sharing that opinion (76 per cent versus 65 per cent) and no notable gender differences.³⁵
- Despite economic hardships, just around half of the returnees received any assistance, services or support – such as food and financial aid or counselling and advice – from the government³⁶ (40 per cent), community or religious organizations (11 per cent), non-government organizations (22 per cent) or trade unions (7 per cent) since their return.³⁷

Re-migration and deployment

- More than half of the returnees said they would need financial assistance to support their family or business (57 per cent), and 27 per cent said they needed livelihood support. Other support needs cited by returnees included livelihoods training and support with the remigration process.
- Though the situation is fluid, many returnees seeking to remigrate were not getting regular updates on the current situation concerning migration and the pandemic, with women less likely to be regularly informed than men (33 per cent versus 37 per cent), and Myanmar returnees (44 per cent) more likely to be regularly informed than those of the Philippines (32 per cent).³⁸
- The overwhelming majority of returnees intending to remigrate (83 per cent) thought that migration costs were now higher than during their previous migration.³⁹ Most of them said they would pay for this migration cost either by securing a loan (61 per cent) or through deductions from future wages (37 per cent).⁴⁰
- Almost half of the returned migrant workers to Myanmar and the Philippines were planning to remigrate outside of the country for work within the next six months, with a greater proportion of men (58 per cent) than women (43 per cent) planning to remigrate. However, as the pandemic progressed, Myanmar returnees dropped their remigration plans, with just 23 per cent planning to remigrate compared to almost 60 per cent⁴¹ in the previous assessment.⁴² However, remigration plans might change further due to the vastly different political climate in Myanmar due to the coup and the imminent economic and humanitarian crisis.
- Almost half of the returnees with plans to remigrate said they were experiencing delays in departing (48 per cent),⁴³ and an overwhelming majority of those with delays attributed it to the COVID-19 situation (79 per cent).⁴⁴

Methodology

The survey was implemented by the ILO’s migration projects in South-East Asia from October 2020 to December 2020. The survey was conducted by ILO partners, primarily Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs) ⁴⁵ and other community-based partners with direct access to migrant workers. This research focused on key ASEAN countries of destination Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore, as well as two countries of origin – the Philippines and Myanmar.

The survey employed mixed methods, complementing qualitative and quantitative approaches to highlight the experiences and voices of migrant workers and the nuances behind the numbers. Data was collected from October to December 2020 through structured interviews directly with migrant workers or by migrant workers completing questionnaires themselves. The assessment captured varied experiences, including impacts of COVID-19 on pay (including reductions, wage and benefit theft, unpaid overtime), hours, layoffs, employment challenges, stress and abuse related to COVID-19, access to unemployment benefits and state-funded emergency livelihood support, migration journey and related costs, housing, access to return and reintegration services, and remigration and deployment.

Surveys were translated into migrant languages, and where it was anticipated, migrant workers would be able to access and complete the survey, also put online. MRCs and civil society organizations administered the survey to migrant worker respondents in the MRCs or communities nearby, using purposive sampling. As much of the region was in lockdown, not all interviews were face-to-face and had to be conducted either by phone or online.

The survey was undertaken with care to use best practices concerning informed consent, confidentiality, and follow-up care or referrals if requested by the migrant worker. As such, the survey did not capture whether migrant workers were documented or undocumented. It was ensured that interviews were private and that women researchers conducted the interviews with women, as women migrant workers may be asked about and may talk about gender-based discrimination or other abuses, including violence. In some cases, survey participants did not want to answer questions, and not all questions were relevant to every person’s situation. Therefore, response numbers vary for each question, and the total number of respondents

for a given question is indicated in graphs and endnotes. Due to limitations given the locations of ILO MRCs and civil society partners and restrictions on movement hampering survey administration, aggregates can only give an indicative estimate of the situation regionally. While not generalizable, data and quotes accurately reflect the responses of migrant workers surveyed.

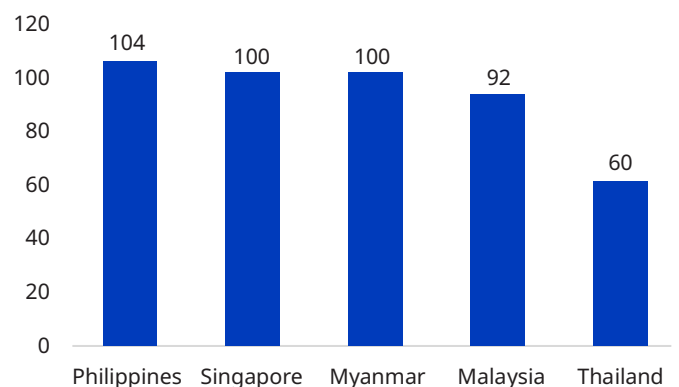
Note on Myanmar

On February 1 2021, after data collection for this brief was concluded, the military declared a state of emergency in Myanmar on the grounds of alleged electoral fraud. All legislative, judicial and executive powers were transferred to the Commander-in-Chief. A Civil Disobedience Movement commenced across the country shortly after the military takeover, and most of public life was disrupted. The country’s efforts to contain the COVID-19 pandemic have been stopped to the most extent.

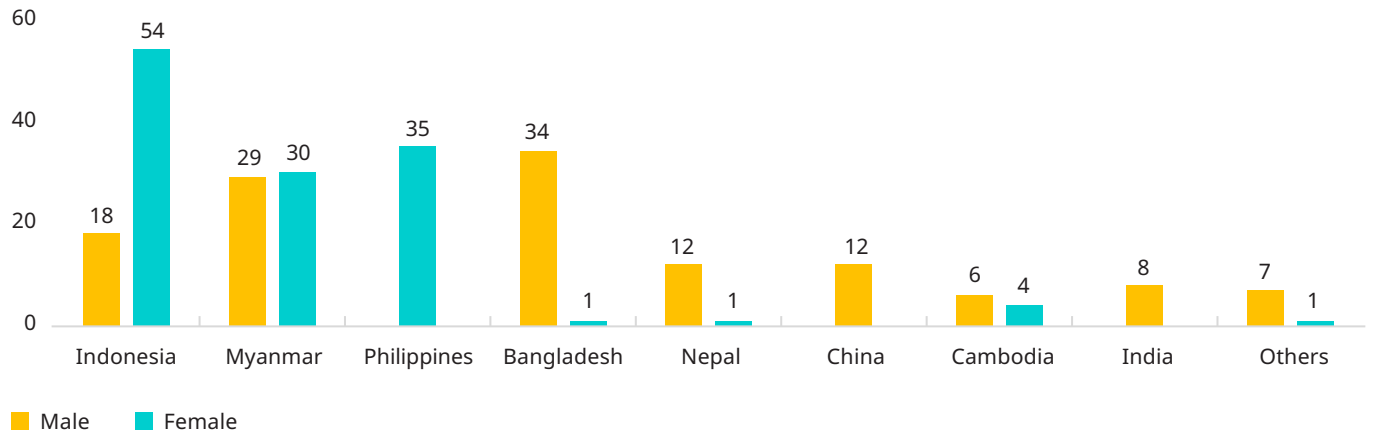
Who was surveyed?

Of the 456 ASEAN migrant workers surveyed, 252 (126 women) were in destination countries (Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand) and either working at the time of the survey or having worked in the destination country previously. In addition, 204 (102 women) had returned to their countries of origin (Myanmar and the Philippines, see figure 1).

► **Figure 1. Respondents interviewed per country (n=456)**

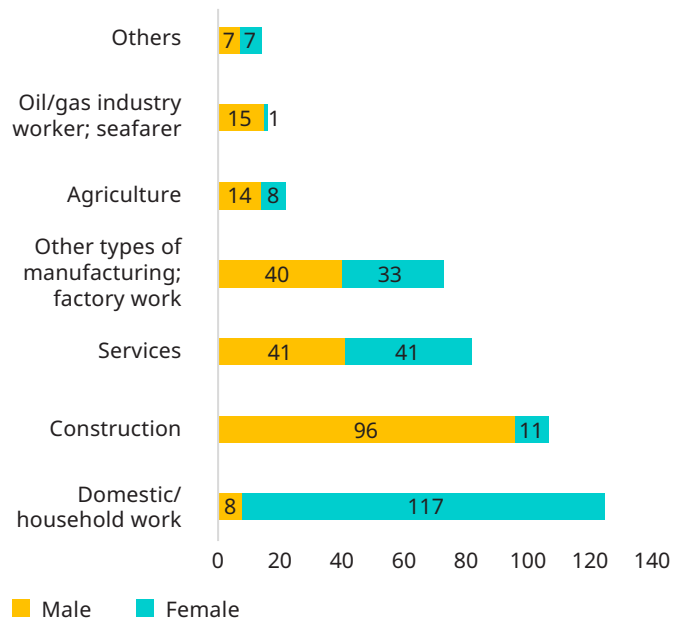


► **Figure 2. Nationality of respondents in destination countries, by sex (n=252)**



Among the 252 migrant workers interviewed in countries of destination, 29 per cent were from Indonesia, 23 per cent from Myanmar, 14 per cent each from the Philippines and Bangladesh and around 5 per cent each from Nepal, China, Cambodia, India and others, including Malaysia and Sri Lanka (see figure 2 for disaggregation by sex). This survey's sample is not aiming to be representative of migrant workers in countries of destination. Sectors in which respondents were employed included: domestic and care work (28 per cent); construction (24 per cent); the service sector, including hospitality, tourism, entertainment, shops; clerical/office services; cleaning services, and security (19 per cent); manufacturing (17 per cent); and other sectors (12 per cent), including agriculture, seafarers, education, healthcare, seafood processing and fishing. See figure 3 for sex-disaggregated data on employment by sector.

► **Figure 3. Respondents' sector of work, by sex (n=439)**

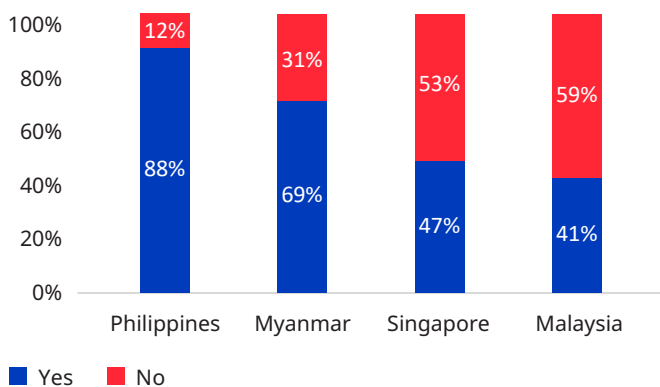


► 1. COVID-19: Health, symptoms and COVID-19-related stress of migrant workers

COVID-19 testing

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (62 per cent) said they had been tested for COVID-19 (not including temperature tests) either on return to origin countries upon arrival or while in countries of destination.⁴⁶ Of those who were tested, most were administered a PCR swab test (98 per cent).⁴⁷ Migrant workers in countries of origin reported higher testing rates, with the Philippines having testing 88 per cent of all returnees and Myanmar 69 per cent. On the other hand, fewer than half of the respondents in Singapore (47 per cent) and Malaysia (41 per cent) reported being tested (see figure 4).

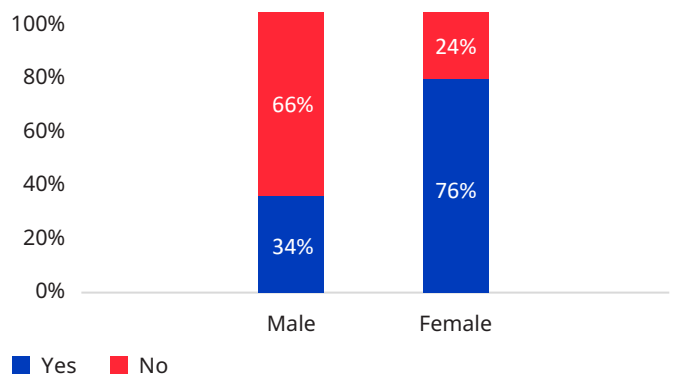
► **Figure 4. Respondents tested for COVID-19, by country (n=384)**



Among respondents in countries of origin, 78 per cent had been tested upon arrival in their home country, with no notable differences between men and women. However, among the 45 per cent of respondents who were tested in the countries of destination, a significantly greater proportion were men (66 per cent) than women (24 per cent) (see figure 5). This disproportionate lack of testing of women migrant workers is driven by the female-dominated domestic work sector, as 90 per cent of migrant women domestic workers surveyed had not been tested. By contrast, 67 per cent of the tested country of destination respondents were in Singapore, and out of those, 85 per cent were working in the male-dominated construction sector. This is hardly surprising, as migrant workers living in camps, where infections spread quickly during the pandemic onset, were tested. For most people in countries of origin, tests were

paid for by either the government or insurance (96 per cent). However, more people in the destination countries ended up paying themselves (15 per cent), with the remaining 85 per cent of tests having been paid for by either the employer, the government or insurance.⁴⁸ None of the respondents in origin countries and very few in destination countries had symptoms, and accordingly, just 2 per cent received medical attention related to COVID-19.⁴⁹

► **Figure 5. Respondents tested for COVID-19 in countries of destination, by sex (n=186¹)**



¹ 186 respondents in countries of destination except for Thailand.

Of those tested, 79 per cent in the countries of destination (excluding Thailand) and 40 per cent in the countries of origin said they received their results in one to three days.⁵⁰

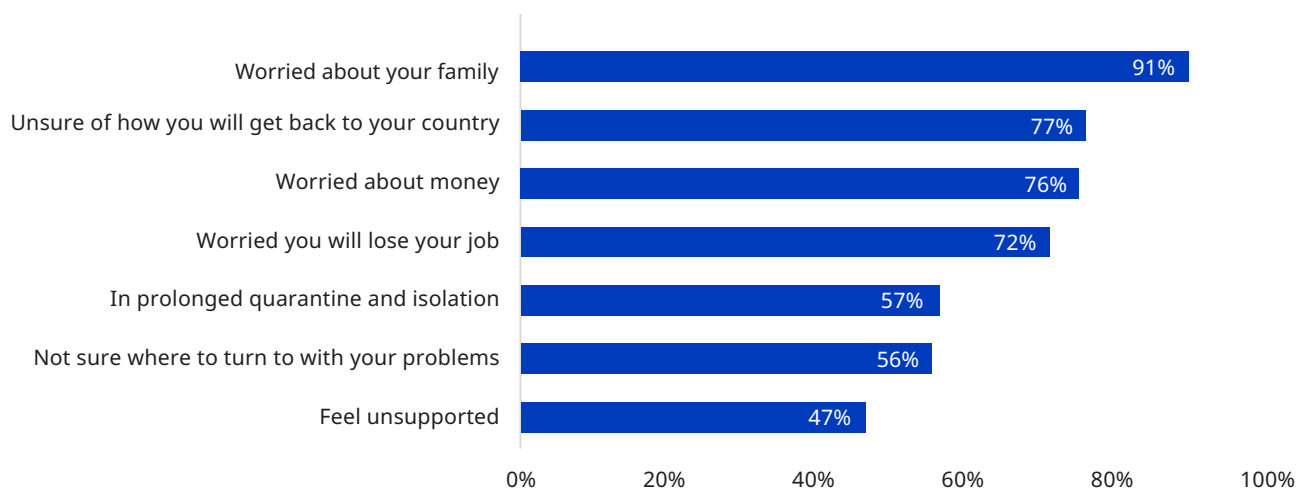
Mental health

Mental health has been a significant challenge for migrant workers in both the countries of origin and countries of destination. An overwhelming majority in the countries of destination (83 per cent) reported that they felt severe worry, stress or sadness during COVID-19, with more women than men reporting stress (87 per cent versus 78 per cent).⁵¹ Migrant workers in Thailand (94 per cent) and Malaysia (91 per cent) were more likely to report feeling stress compared to those in Singapore (68 per cent), with women more likely than men to report being worried. Respondents were primarily concerned with family, how to get home, money, and losing their job. They were concerned to some extent about prolonged quarantine and isolation, where to turn to with their problems, and feel unsupported (see figure 6).

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► **Figure 6. Reasons for severe worry, stress, or sadness among migrant workers in countries of destination (n=variable ¹)**



Note: Respondents could choose multiple reasons for their stress, and hence the percentages adding up to greater than 100 per cent.

¹ 215 respondents in countries of destination answered the question on being worried about money; 223 on worried about family; 210 on unsure of how they will get back to their country; 215 on worried whether they will lose their job; 189 on being in prolonged quarantine and isolation; 187 on feeling unsupported; and 194 on not sure where to turn to with their problems. Each respondent selected more than one option.

► 2. Job-related impacts of COVID-19

Job retention and job loss

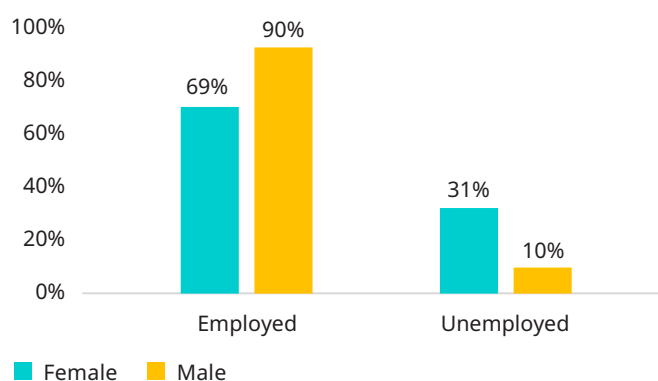
Migrant workers in destination

In destination countries, 80 per cent of respondents were employed at the time of the interview, with more men (90 per cent) than women (69 per cent) employed, while a third of the women respondents were no longer working (31 per cent, see figure 7). Almost half of the women who were no longer working were previously employed in the domestic work sector (49 per cent).⁵² However, increased unemployment in destination countries is not fully captured in this number. Many migrant workers who had lost their jobs are likely to have returned to countries of origin before the survey.

Among the destination country migrant workers who were no longer working, just over half (52 per cent) lost their job because the employer terminated their contract prematurely without compensation. In comparison, an additional 41 per cent either ended the employment at the agreed date or chose to end it prematurely to return home.⁵³ Among women who were no longer working, roughly three in five (63 per cent) had their employment contract terminated prematurely without compensation, as opposed to just 25 per cent of men who were no longer working. Conversely,

among men who were no longer working, two in five (42 per cent) had their contract end at the agreed date, which was valid for only 16 per cent of women who were no longer working.⁵⁴ The precarious situation of women migrant workers may be attributed to the lack of labour protections in the domestic work sectors of the destination countries, as almost 70 per cent of the women whose contracts were terminated prematurely without compensation were domestic workers.⁵⁵

► **Figure 7. Employment status among respondents in countries of destination, by sex (n=250 ¹)**



¹ 92 respondents in Malaysia, 98 in Singapore and 60 in Thailand.

Migrant returnees in origin countries

Among returnees, 51 per cent left jobs voluntarily before the end date of their contracts, 37 per cent had employers who ended their contracts prematurely with (9 per cent) or without compensation (28 per cent), and 11 per cent had a contract that was due to end (see figure 8). Further, as below, some employers laid off undocumented workers first.

Our employer hired new 20 [migrant workers under a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding] and asked us to find another job. ... We could not find a new job as we did not have necessary documents. Finally, I decided to return home as I was not OK. The contract term remains in effect for one year.

► Myanmar male factory worker in Thailand

I lost my job because [the] restaurant closed down due to COVID-19.

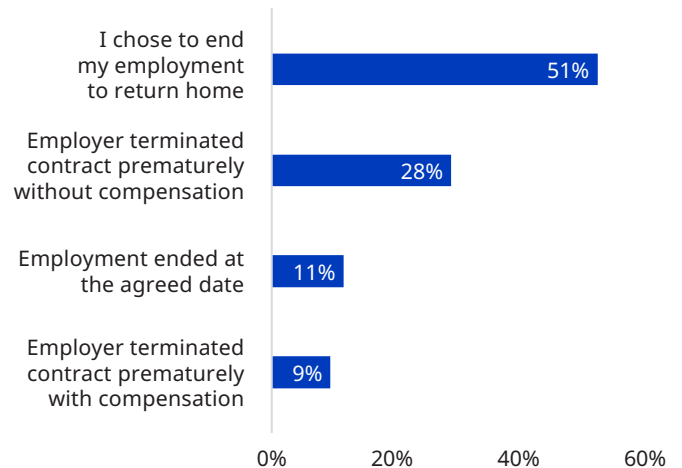
► Myanmar female migrant worker returned from the service sector in Thailand

I decided to return home due to the spread of COVID-19 in Thailand.

► Myanmar male migrant worker returned from the service sector in Thailand

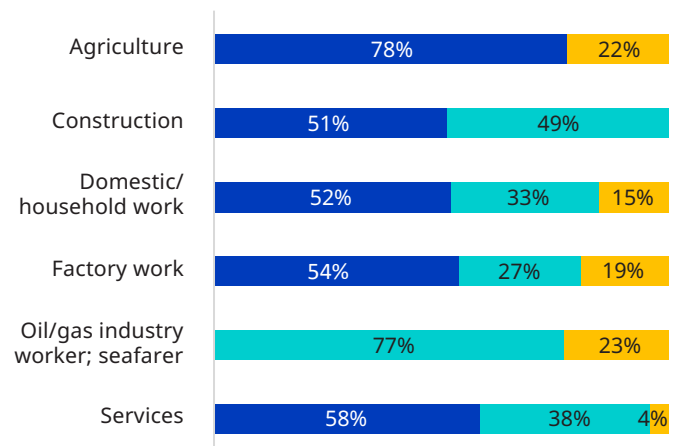


► **Figure 8. Job-related reasons for return to Myanmar and the Philippines (n=195)**



A sectoral breakdown of the reasons for employment termination among returnees highlights that nearly half or more of returnee migrant workers who had been employed in the construction sector (49 per cent) or oil/gas industry and seafarers (77 per cent) had their contracts terminated by their employer (either with or without compensation) (see figure 9).

► **Figure 9. Reason for employment termination of returnees, by sector (n=195)**



- I chose to end my employment to return home
- Employer terminated contract prematurely with/without compensation
- Employment ended at the agreed date

Among returnees who said their employer terminated their contract prematurely (with or without compensation), 71 per cent specified that it was because of staff retrenchment or workplace closures due to COVID-19:

► [My] company is in the process of restructuring its operation due to severe reduction in workload and my position is no longer required in the new organizational structure.

► Philippines female migrant worker returned from the construction sector in the United Arab Emirates

► From March 15, 2020, our company advises 'No Work, No Pay' [and also] there is no compensation.

► Philippines male migrant worker returned from the service sector in the United Arab Emirates

Among returnees who said they chose to end their employment to return home, their exact reasons for doing so included: worries about their health; wanting to stay with family amid the pandemic; or border closures or other uncertainties of the pandemic. For example, three in four Myanmar returnees (75 per cent) chose to end their employment to return home to live together with family amid the uncertainties of the pandemic, including job losses, wage loss, border closures and arrests due to violations of movement restrictions. On the other hand, most Philippines returnees (60 per cent) had employers who ended their contracts prematurely (with or without compensation) due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regardless of which party (employer or worker) initiated the termination, many migrant workers are now jobless:

► Due to COVID-19, I had no overtime fees, could not save money and transfer money to my family. On top of that, the salary of our factory is low, and with these situations, it's difficult to survive, and finally, I decided to return home.

► Myanmar female migrant worker returned from factory work in Thailand

► I didn't know how long the COVID-19 pandemic would take, so I decided to come back home to stay together with my family.

► Myanmar female migrant worker returned from the service sector in Thailand

► Wages gradually decreased during COVID-19. I decided to return home as [the] cost of living allowance and baht price became high, and I could not send remittance to my family.

► Myanmar female migrant worker returned from the agriculture sector in Thailand

Payment of wages

The impact of COVID-19 has been far-reaching, with labour market conditions deteriorating further as income and working-hour losses surge. In South-East Asia, the working-hour losses are equivalent to 87 million full-time jobs in the first three quarters of 2020, assuming a working week of 48 hours⁵⁶. Pay (including reductions, wage and benefit theft, unpaid overtime), hours, and layoffs have been affected by COVID-19, and have affected women and men differently.

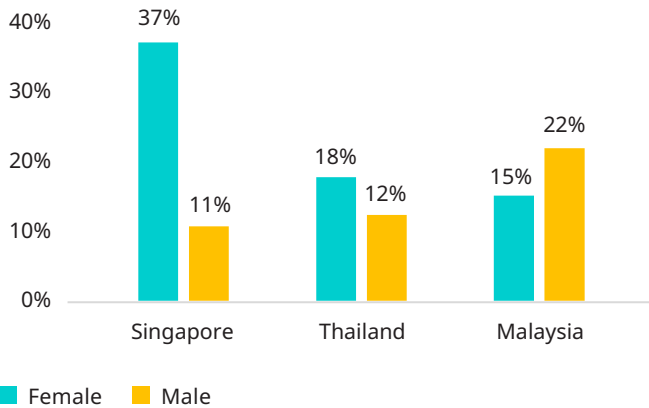
Wage loss experienced during COVID-19

In all three destination countries in this study, over a third of the migrant worker respondents (36 per cent) saw their average wages per month drop during COVID-19. On average, their monthly wages dropped from US\$299 to US\$253 in Thailand; US\$420 to US\$343 in Malaysia; and US\$982 to US\$750 in Singapore. Women migrant workers, who already earn less than their male counterparts, were disproportionately negatively affected, with women migrant workers in Singapore experiencing the most significant losses (37 per cent, on average) followed by men migrant workers in Malaysia (22 per cent) and women migrant workers in Thailand (18 per cent; see figure 10). The unequal burden on women can be attributed to the fact that 96 per cent of women respondents in Singapore and 56 per cent of women respondents in Malaysia were domestic workers. The significant wage losses experienced by women domestic workers in Singapore illustrates the more severe effect of COVID-19 among migrant workers employed in occupations fully or partially excluded from protections under prevailing labour laws, such as domestic work.

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Rights at work, migration during the pandemic, and remigration plans (Second assessment)

► **Figure 10. Average wage loss experienced during COVID-19 in countries of destination, by sex (%) (n=variable ¹)**

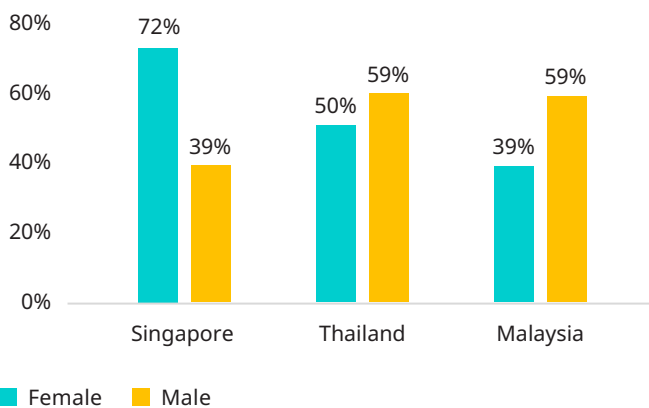


¹ Of the 225 respondents who answered the question on salary before COVID-19, and 223 respondents who answered the question on salary during COVID-19.

Overtime pay losses during COVID-19

A majority of the migrant workers in Singapore and Thailand experienced a loss in overtime pay during the pandemic. Gender and sectoral analysis reveal that migrant women in Singapore, most of them engaged in domestic work, experienced enormous overtime pay losses (72 per cent, on average), followed by migrant men in Malaysia, most of them engaged in construction work and migrant men in Thailand, most of them engaged in factory work (59 per cent; see figure 11).

► **Figure 11. Overtime pay losses during COVID-19, by sex (n=variable ¹)**



¹ Of the 94 respondents who answered the question on overtime pay before COVID-19, and 87 respondents answered the question on overtime pay during COVID-19 question.

Wage deductions

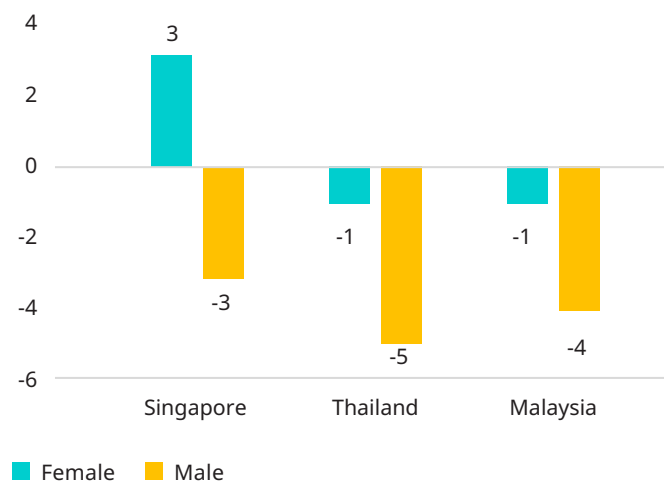
In Thailand, many respondents reported that wage deductions, both before and during the pandemic, were for social security or document fees. The deductions on average per month were US\$18 before ⁵⁷ and US\$15 during COVID-19. In Malaysia, the deductions before the pandemic were on average US\$50 for accommodation, utilities or unpaid leave, and US\$59 during the pandemic. However, during the pandemic, a few migrant workers in Malaysia ⁵⁸ reported additional deductions for COVID-19 testing, bringing their monthly deductions to roughly US\$70, despite the Malaysian Government's directive for employers to bear the cost of testing. ⁵⁹ In Singapore, the deductions were US\$194 on average before ⁶⁰ the pandemic but increased to an average of US\$268 during the pandemic ⁶¹.

Working hour and overtime losses

Working hour losses

The average weekly working hours of migrant worker respondents dropped by two hours, from 55 hours per week before the pandemic to 53 hours per week during COVID-19. ⁶² Migrant workers in Malaysia and Thailand saw the most significant drop in working hours, with a three-hour decline per week on average. Migrant workers in Singapore, however, actually saw an increase in total working hours of one hour per week on average. Gender differences emerge when the data are disaggregated by sex, with men migrant workers having suffered considerably greater working hour losses than women migrant workers (see figure 12). Women migrant workers in Singapore, predominantly employed in domestic work, saw an increase in total working hours of three hours per week on average. Men migrant workers in Thailand, primarily employed in construction and factories, were the most heavily affected, with total working hours dropping by five hours per week on average, followed by men migrant workers in Malaysia, primarily employed in factory work, services and construction, who experienced an average drop of four hours and Singapore, primarily employed in construction work, with a decline three hours. Women migrant workers in Malaysia and Thailand saw their total weekly working hours drop by an hour on average during the pandemic.

► **Figure 12. Average change in total working hours per week in destination countries during COVID-19 compared to before the pandemic, by sex (n=variable¹)**



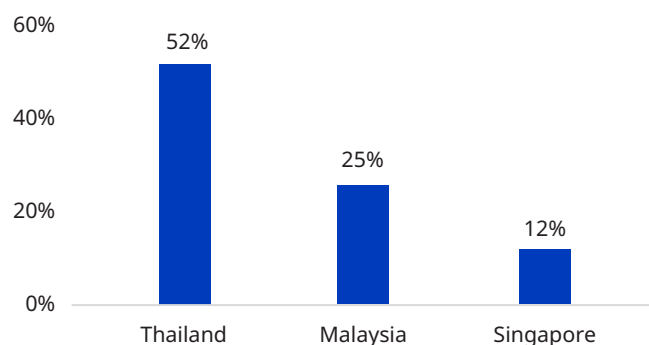
¹ Of the 155 respondents who answered the question on total working hours before COVID-19, and 139 respondents responded to the question on total working hours during COVID-19 question.

Overtime losses

In destination countries, the overtime hours worked on average per week before COVID-19 (pre-March 2020) were 24 hours per week, with migrant workers in Thailand clocking the highest (27 hours per week); migrant workers in Singapore clocking the least (11 hours per week), and the migrant workers in Malaysia averaging 21 hours per week. During the pandemic, the average overtime hours worked dropped to 13 hours per week.⁶³ Migrant workers in Thailand saw significant losses, losing half of their overtime hours compared to pre-pandemic levels; migrant workers in Malaysia lost a quarter of their overtime hours; those in Singapore lost one-eighth of their overtime hours (see figure 13).



► **Figure 13. Reduction in average overtime hours worked in destination countries during COVID-19 compared to before the pandemic (%) (n=variable¹)**



¹ Of the 69 respondents who answered the question on overtime hours worked before COVID-19, and 47 respondents who answered the question on overtime hours worked during COVID-19 question.

Access to social security, emergency support and other forms of livelihood support

Migrant workers increasingly faced food and money shortages as the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in movement restrictions and job, wage and working hour losses.⁶⁴ For instance, during lockdowns, unemployed migrant workers were stranded in Thailand with ambiguous immigration statuses, and many slipped through the gaps in the Government's social safety nets.⁶⁵

Of the 20 per cent of the migrant workers in destination countries who reported that they were no longer working, most said they were not receiving any wage payments or benefits.⁶⁶ Moreover, a majority said that they did not have enough savings to cover their immediate needs, such as healthcare (79 per cent), housing (77 per cent) and personal needs (69 per cent), and food (67 per cent). At the same time, a majority said they did rely on the support of family (71 per cent) and NGOs (62 per cent). Around 40 per cent said that they did depend on the government (39 per cent), trade union (42 per cent) or loan (39 per cent).⁶⁷ However, just 43 per cent received social security, compensation for unemployment/retrenchment or any form of state-funded emergency livelihood support.⁶⁸

Forty per cent of returnee respondents reported having experienced a period in the destination country when they had no work and could not return,⁶⁹ and a majority (66 per cent) reported struggling for one to three months without wages⁷⁰. Among the returnees, at least 40 per cent did have enough savings to cover immediate needs in the period prior to return, such as food (64 per cent), healthcare (43 per cent), housing (42 per cent) and personal needs (53 per cent). Still, fewer women than men had

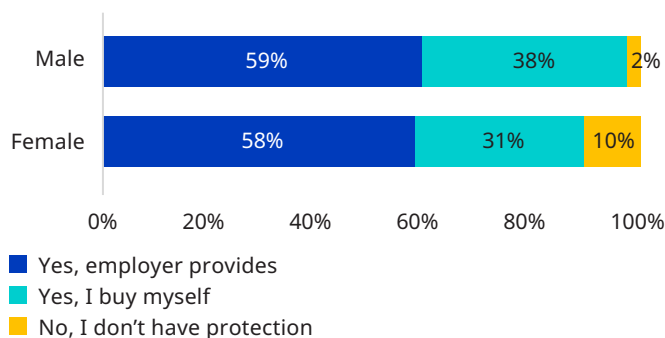
savings to cover immediate needs, especially healthcare (39 per cent women versus 46 per cent men) and housing needs (35 per cent women versus 49 per cent men).⁷¹ However, 88 per cent of the returnees did not receive any assistance from the destination government or their home country embassy during this period. A minority (10 per cent) had taken a new loan to cover their expenses during this period. The average loan availed was US\$269 for the Myanmar returnees and US\$759 for the Philippines returnees.⁷²

Safety and health in the job

Since the original rapid assessment was published in June 2020, the safety and health impacts of COVID-19 deepened further in almost all ASEAN countries. For example, in Singapore, the poor living conditions of migrant workers in dormitories was linked to increased transmissions.⁷³ In Thailand, an outbreak in December 2020 at a seafood market in Samut Sakorn near Bangkok led to nationalistic rhetoric blaming foreigners for disease transmission. These attitudes were demonstrated in discriminatory behaviours towards migrant workers.^{74,75} In some cases, migrant workers were abandoned by employers after movement restrictions were imposed in certain areas as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.⁷⁶

In their current jobs or most recent jobs in destination countries, most respondents (94 per cent) had personal protective equipment (PPE), including masks, gloves and hand sanitizer, to protect against COVID-19 transmission at work. While more than half of the respondents (59 per cent) said that the employer provided them with PPE, a third said they bought it themselves (35 per cent). However, the 6 per cent who reported not having protection were predominantly women employed in the domestic work sector (81 per cent of those without protection, see figure 14).⁷⁷

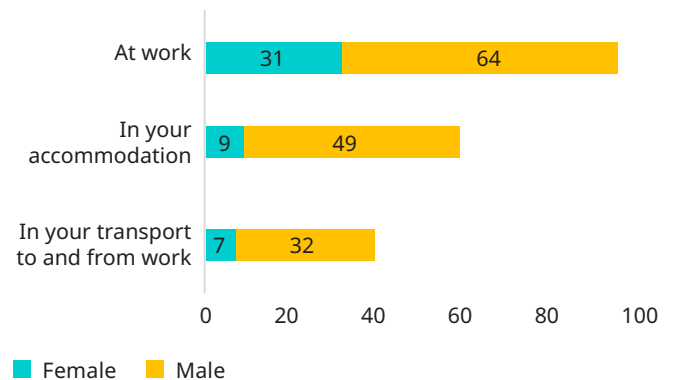
► **Figure 14. Migrant workers provided with PPE in destination country, by sex (n=247¹)**



¹ Percentages are rounded.

On having enough space to practice social distancing either at work or in their accommodation or transport to and from work, a majority of the respondents said that they have enough space at work (95 out of 121); just about one third of the respondents have enough space during transport to and from work; and about half have enough room in their accommodation to practice social distancing. Figure 15 presents a breakdown by gender of respondents who reported having enough space in various environments – work, accommodation and transport. Women are disproportionately affected by a lack of adequate space to practice social distancing with the proportion of women reporting lack of space in each environment more than men. Given that 65 per cent of the women migrant workers in this study are employed in the domestic work sector, it is likely that this disproportionate effect on women is because of their work in close quarters within private households.

► **Figure 15. Migrant workers with enough space to practice social distancing in destination countries, by sex (n=121¹)**



¹ Respondents could choose more than one option. 47 responses were from women, 74 responses were from men.

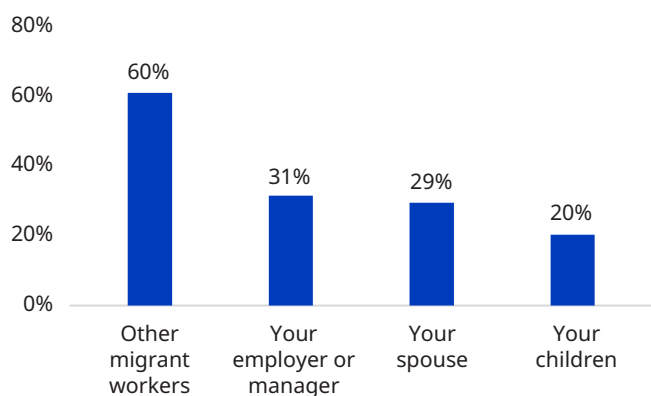
Accommodation

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of migrant workers to the virus as a result of their poor living conditions. In Singapore, reports emerged of “packing 12, 16 or 20 men into a room with double-decker bunks spaced no more than a metre apart”.⁷⁸ As of February 2021, a total of 91 per cent (down from 95 per cent in November 2020) of Singapore’s almost 60,000 COVID-19 cases have been migrant dorm residents.⁷⁹ Reports of “hot-bedding”, sharing of beds among migrant workers on alternating shifts emerged, exacerbated during lockdowns or stay at home orders, when every migrant worker had to remain in the accommodation.

Migrant workers living with other people

More than half of the respondents lived with other migrant workers (60 per cent; with men more likely than women to live with other migrants⁸⁰), and a third were living with their spouse (29 per cent). A third were living with their employer or manager (31 per cent, see figure 16), with more women than men within this living arrangement (49 per cent versus 10 per cent), as most of the women respondents are domestic workers.⁸¹ A fifth were living with their children (20 per cent), and nearly half reported that caregiving work increased during COVID-19 (48 per cent).⁸²

► **Figure 16. Share of migrant workers living with other people (n=variable¹)**

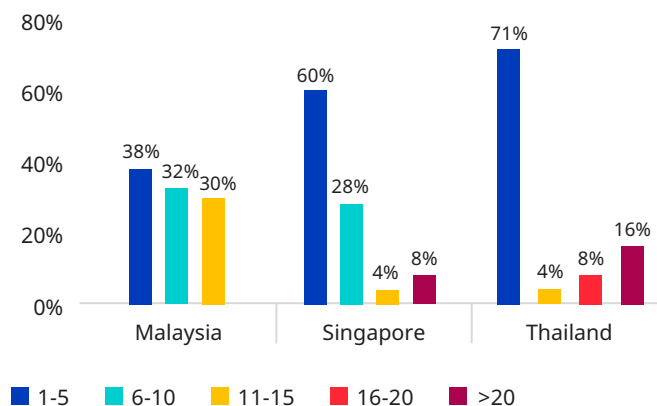


¹ Number of respondents varies for each question, ranging from 167 to 187.

Almost 60 per cent of the migrant workers reported that the floor area of their sleeping area is between 1 to 5 square meters, and a fifth said that it is 6 to 10 square meters. Deviating from average, just 38 per cent of the migrant workers in Malaysia had a sleeping area of 1 to 5 square metres (see figure 17). The sectors with the highest likelihood of having a sleeping area of just 1–5 square meters were domestic work (71 per cent), the service sector (67 per cent) and construction (60 per cent).



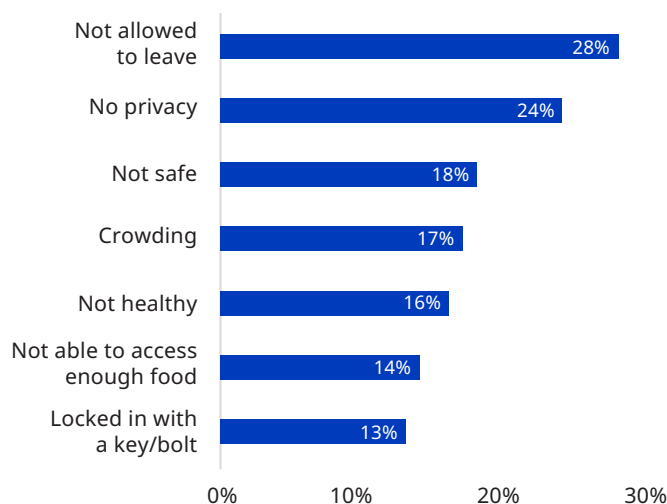
► **Figure 17. Floor area of your sleeping area in square meters, by country of destination (n=136)**



Problems with accommodation

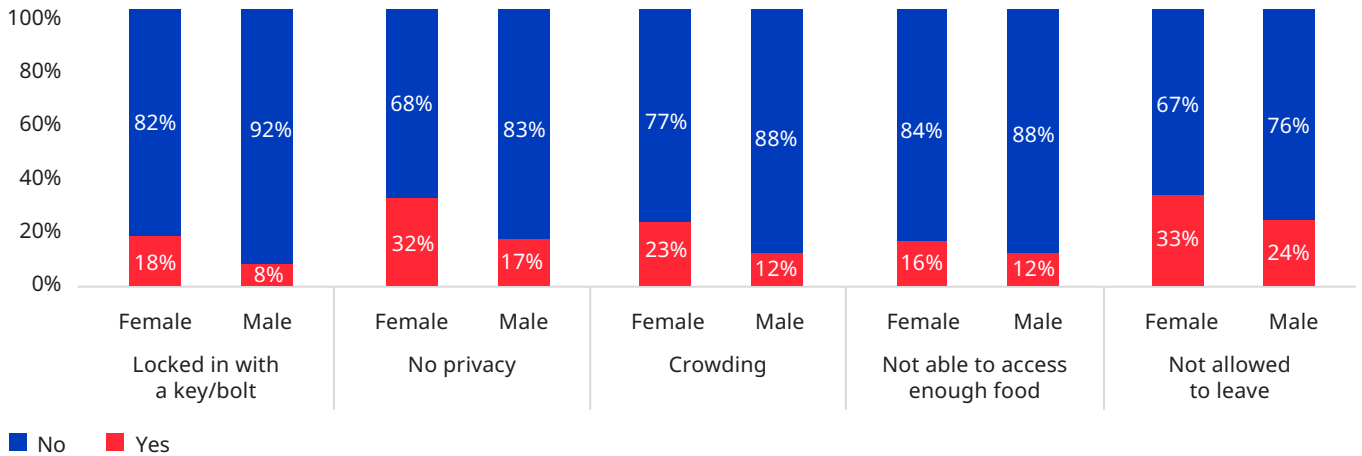
When migrant workers were asked if they had any problems with their accommodation, one in four said they were not allowed to leave (28 per cent) and had no privacy (24 per cent). Around a fifth of the migrant workers said that their accommodation was not safe (18 per cent) and was crowded (17 per cent). Looking at the number of people sharing a room, one-quarter said that their housing was crowded (26 per cent), as more than ten people were living in the room, and an equal number said that there were four to six people in their room (26 per cent). In addition, some said that their accommodation was not healthy (16 per cent); they were not able to access enough food (14 per cent); and they were locked in with a key (13 per cent). See figure 18.

► **Figure 18. Problems with migrant workers' accommodation (n=variable¹)**



¹ Number of respondents varies for each question, ranging from 195 to 219.

► **Figure 19. Problems with women migrant workers' accommodation, (n=variable ¹)**



¹ Number of respondents varies for each question, ranging from 195 to 219.

Of the three destination countries, migrant workers in Thailand reported worse accommodation conditions, with close to half of the migrant workers reporting that they were not allowed to leave (47 per cent); roughly a third saying that their accommodation offered no privacy (37 per cent), was not healthy (34 per cent), was not safe (33 per cent), that they did not receive enough food (31 per cent), and that they stayed in a crowded environment (29 per cent); and nearly a fourth reported that they were locked in (23 per cent). A higher percentage of women migrant workers reported poor living conditions compared to men migrant workers (see figure 19).

Several respondents detailed the problems they had with their accommodation.

► Sleeping in the storeroom, with the air-con exhaust pointing towards the storeroom, without a ventilator and with an employer also hovering around my sleeping area, it feels very unsafe. [My] employer also hovers outside the door when I shower.

► Indonesian female migrant worker in the domestic work sector in Singapore

► [The accommodation has] no good toilets or bathroom [and] also no kitchen.

► Nepalese male migrant worker in the service sector in Malaysia

The majority of respondents who reported not being able to leave their accommodation felt they had no freedom and would not be able to go out so long as they worked for the employer. Some migrant workers said they have no privacy, as their accommodation was crowded and had no private sleeping area.

► Employers do not allow workers to leave their homes because they fear COVID-19 infections.

► Indonesian male migrant worker in factory work in Malaysia

► [We do not have] keys to private rooms and [the] rooms [are not] soundproofed - the walls are only partitions.

► Indonesian male migrant worker in the construction sector in Malaysia

► [I] don't have my sleeping room, anyone can come in and out of the room.

► Indonesian female migrant worker in the domestic work sector in Singapore

Housing norms and regulations

There are a few ILO Conventions and Recommendations concerning housing. The Workers Housing Recommendation, 1961 (No. 115), states that the competent authority, “in order to ensure structural safety and reasonable levels of decency, hygiene and comfort, establish minimum housing standards in the light of local conditions and take appropriate measures to enforce these standards” (Para. 19). It also suggests that special attention should be given to the housing of migrant workers and their families, with a view to achieving as rapidly as possible equality of treatment between migrant workers and national workers.

Other provisions relating to worker housing are included the Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention, 1962 (No. 117), and the Migrant Workers Recommendation, 1975 (No. 151). Some sector-specific standards, such as the Plantations Convention, 1958 (No. 110), call for the provision of “adequate housing accommodation” (Art. 85). The Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189) and Recommendation (No. 201), 2011, provide provisions for accommodation, such as “a separate, private room that is suitably furnished, adequately ventilated and equipped with a lock, the key to which should be provided to the domestic worker” (Recommendation No. 201, Para. 17(a)). The Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), states in Article 3 that the “world of work” extends to employer-provided accommodation.

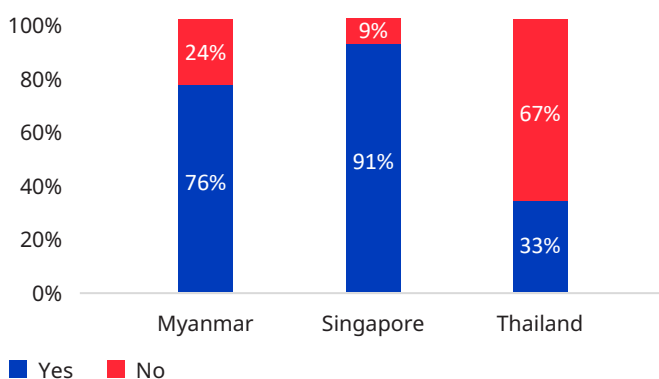
In humanitarian settings, the Sphere Standards provide for a minimum space of 3.5 square metres of living space per person, excluding cooking space, bathing area and sanitation facility, and 4.5 to 5.5 square metres of living space per person in urban settings where internal cooking space and bathing and/ or sanitation facilities are included, and an internal floor-to-ceiling height of at least 2.6 metres (in hot climates) at the highest point. When the duration of stay extends, the habitable space calculations must be revisited (upwards).

Remittances

As the economic crisis caused due to the COVID-19 pandemic deepened, remittances sent home by migrant workers in ASEAN declined by 8 per cent, comparing October 2020 and October 2019 data.⁸³

A majority of the destination country respondents (71 per cent) said they remit money regularly to their families.⁸⁴ Migrant workers remitted on average per month: US\$221 from Malaysia, US\$290 from Thailand and US\$491 from Singapore.⁸⁵ Most migrant workers in Singapore (91 per cent) and a majority in Malaysia (76 per cent) – but only a third in Thailand (33 per cent) – remit money regularly (see figure 20).

► **Figure 20. Migrant workers remit money regularly to family back home (n=249)**



More than a third of the respondents (36 per cent) said that there had been changes in how much they remit at the time of the interview compared to pre-COVID-19, in January and February 2020, with slightly more women (38 per cent) than men migrant workers (34 per cent) reporting change. While one in four reported that they remit less (25 per cent) than before, a few said that they remit more (11 per cent).⁸⁶ The reasons for declining remittances included income losses due to job loss or overtime payment loss and fluctuations in exchange rates. Those who remitted more said they had to send more money to provide for their family’s needs. Disaggregation by the destination country (see figure 21) shows that 39 per cent in Malaysia remitted less (US\$126 now versus US\$221 before, on average), 19 per cent in Singapore remitted less (US\$458 now versus US\$491 before, on average), and 12 per cent in Thailand remitted less.^{87,88}

Due to COVID-19, the exchange rate has been moving down, and it affects my remittances badly that I can hardly put some to my savings.

► Philippines female migrant worker in the domestic work sector in Singapore

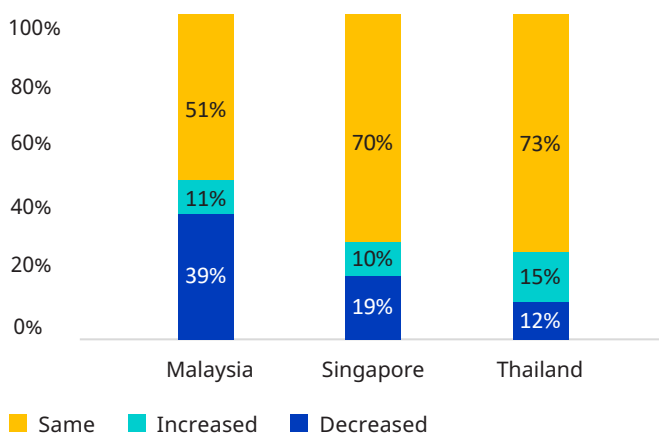
► I don't have enough money to send [to my family in Sri Lanka] because [I have] no work [now].
► Sri Lankan female migrant worker in the service sector in Malaysia

► I give less now because no more overtime.
► Indonesian female migrant worker in the service sector in Malaysia

► [I send] extra remittances to the family during the COVID-19 crisis.
► Philippines female migrant worker in the domestic work sector in Malaysia

► Because mostly in my home country many of my family cannot work, so I need to send money for them.
► Philippines female migrant worker in the domestic work sector in Singapore

► **Figure 21. Change in remittances now compared to before COVID among respondents who reported a change in their remittances (n=variable ¹)**

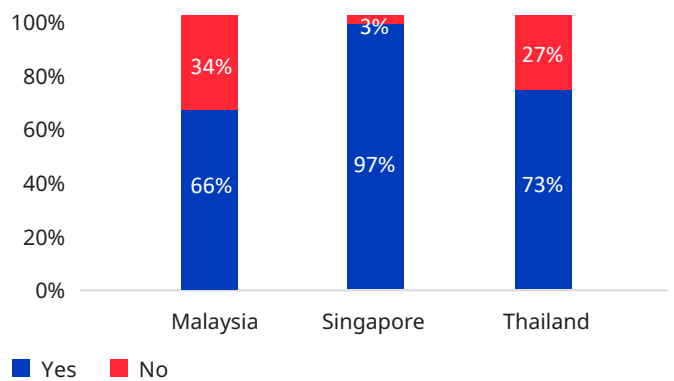


¹ Number of responses: n=57 for Malaysia, n=77 for Singapore and n=26 for Thailand. Percentages are rounded.

Visa

Most of the destination country respondents reported having been able to renew their visa and work permit from within the country (79 per cent). However, this varied by country of destination, with almost all migrant workers in Singapore (97 per cent) able to renew their visa and work permit from within the country, but about a third of migrant workers in Malaysia (34 per cent) and Thailand (27 per cent) were unable to do so (see figure 22).

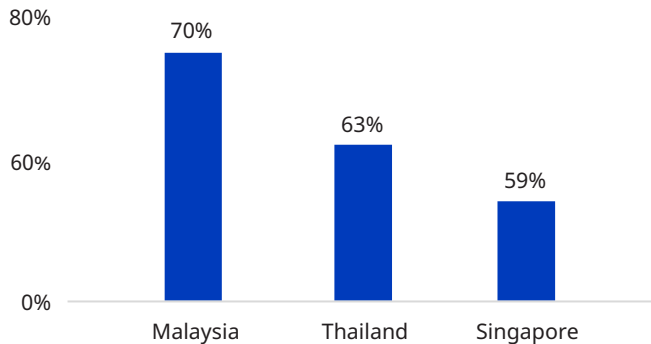
► **Figure 22. Migrant workers able to renew their visa and work permit from within the country (n=241)**



Employment challenges and abuses related to COVID-19

As the pandemic has progressed, migrant workers saw increased violence, harassment, coercion or other rights abuses. In some places, migrants have faced increased discrimination and stricter mobility restrictions than nationals. In countries of destination, 64 per cent of currently employed respondents said they faced employment challenges or abuses related to COVID-19, ⁸⁹ an increase from the 32 per cent reported in the initial brief. However, this experience varied by country of destination, with 70 per cent in Malaysia, 63 per cent in Thailand and 59 per cent in Singapore reporting employment challenges or abuses (see figure 23). Among destination country respondents no longer working, as might be expected, the proportion reporting problems increased, with 75 per cent saying they faced employment challenges and abuses related to COVID-19 (an increase from 43 per cent in the previous assessment). Among the unemployed respondents who reported experiencing problems, women substantially outnumbered men (74 per cent women versus 26 per cent men). ⁹⁰

► **Figure 23. Experienced employment-related challenges/abuses related to COVID-19 by country of destination, employed respondents only (n=variable ¹)**



¹ Of the 77 employed respondents in Malaysia, 41 in Thailand and 81 in Singapore.

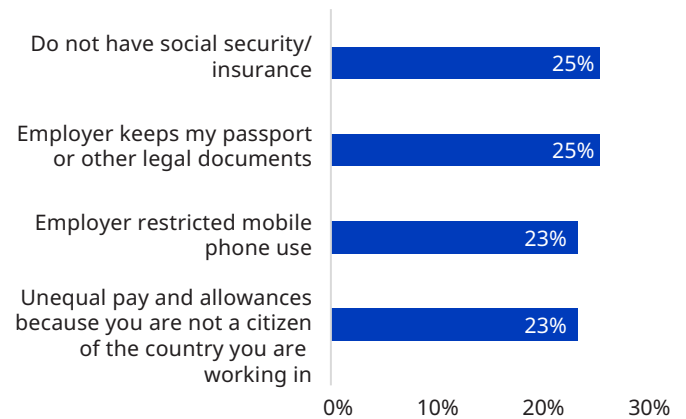
However, migrant workers were reluctant to take action to resolve their problems, with four in five returnees (83 per cent) saying they would not want to document their case for follow-up legal support even if they experienced any employment-related challenges/abuses related to the COVID-19 epidemic.⁹¹ Women were less likely to want their case to be documented, with 87 per cent of women saying they would decline versus 79 per cent of men.

Coercion, withheld documents, and other labour rights violations

The most-reported abuses, with roughly one in four respondents having experienced them, were the following: employers keeping their passport or other legal documents; not having social security/insurance (where these are required by law); employers restricting mobile phone use; and receiving unequal pay and allowances because they are not a citizen of the country of destination (see figure 24). Employment-related challenges/abuses predominantly faced by women migrant workers are presented in figure 25.

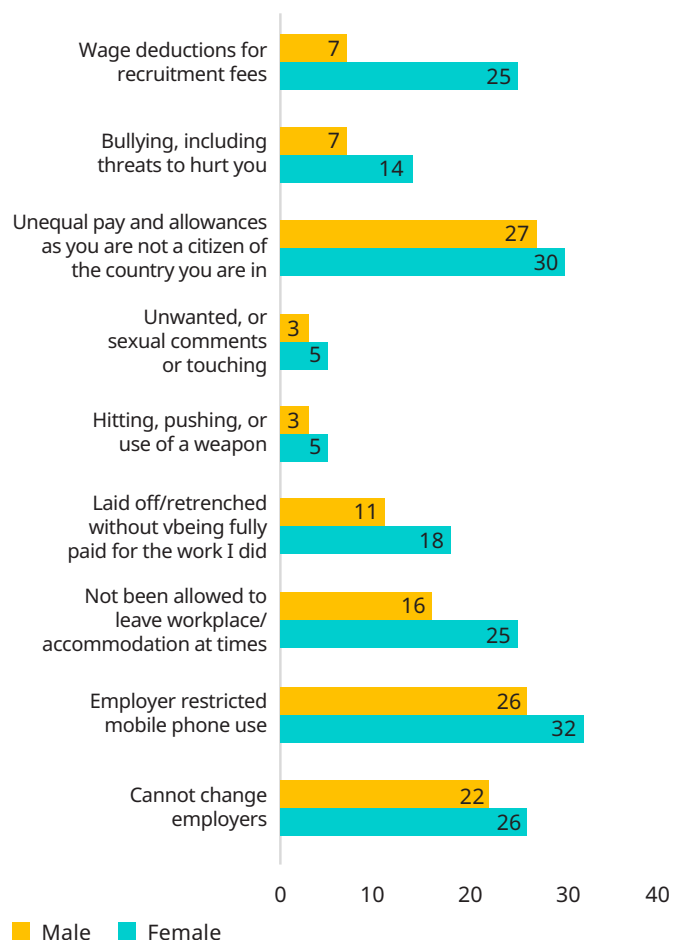


► **Figure 24. Employment-related challenges/abuses faced by migrant workers (n=variable ¹)**



¹ Number of respondents varies for each question, ranging from 57 to 63.

► **Figure 25. Employment-related challenges/abuses predominantly faced by women migrant workers (n=variable ¹)**



¹ Number of respondents varies for each question, ranging from 8 to 58.

Women migrant workers highlighted a few other challenges they faced:

► Increase in work hours, decrease in rest hours, cannot leave the employer’s house for leisure.

► Indonesian female migrant worker in domestic work sector in Malaysia.

► [I] cannot go to work because the employer is afraid that I [will] bring the virus.

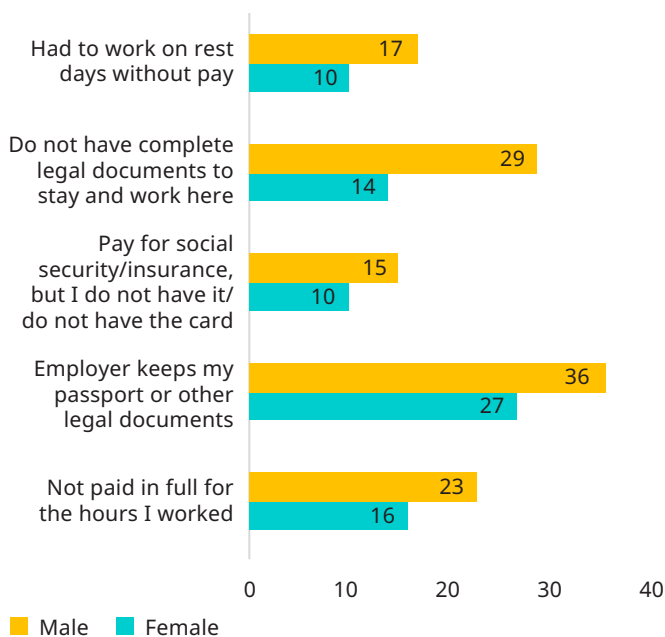
► Indonesian female migrant worker in domestic work sector in Malaysia.

► [I am allowed] twice and just 10 minutes in a day for [the] toilet.

► Nepalese female migrant worker in the service sector in Malaysia

Employment-related challenges/abuses predominantly faced by men migrant workers are presented in figure 26.

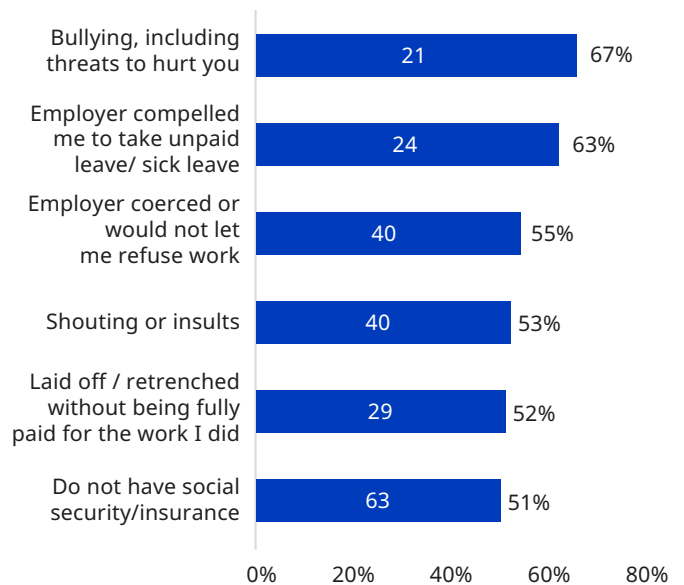
► **Figure 26. Employment-related challenges/abuses predominantly faced by men migrant workers (n=variable ¹)**



¹ Number of respondents varies for each question, ranging from 25 to 63.

Respondents mentioned numerous employment-related challenges/abuses they have encountered. The most frequently mentioned are presented in figures 27–29 below, each covering a different destination country.

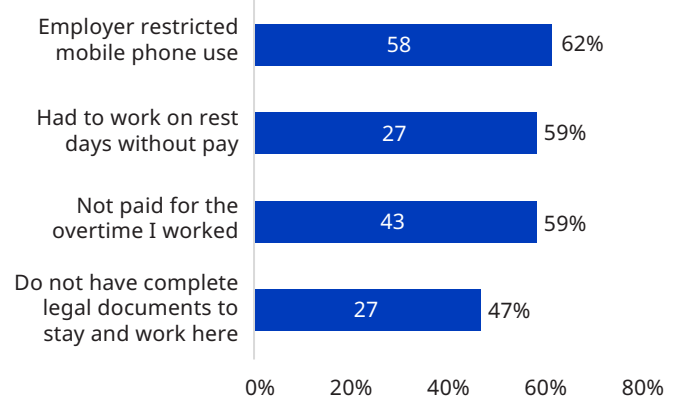
► **Figure 27. Employment-related challenges/abuses predominantly faced by migrant workers in Malaysia (n=variable ¹)**



Note: The total number of responses for each category is mentioned inside the bar, and the percentage represents the share of Malaysian respondents in the total.

¹ The number of responses for each category varies from 21 to 63.

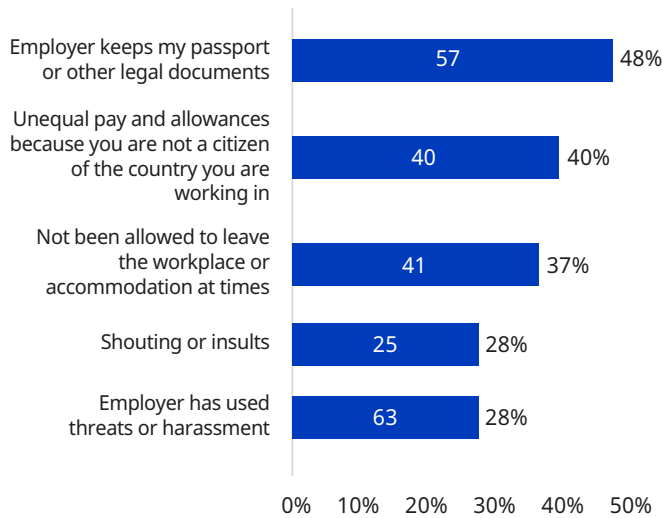
► **Figure 28. Employment-related challenges/abuses predominantly faced by migrant workers in Thailand (n=variable ¹)**



Note: The total number of responses for each category is mentioned inside the bar, and the percentage represents the share of Thailand respondents in the total.

¹ The number of responses for each category varies from 27 to 58.

► **Figure 29. Employment-related challenges/abuses faced by migrant workers in Singapore (n=variable ¹)**



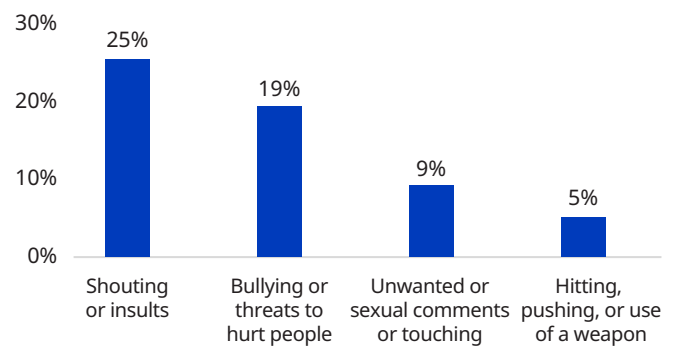
Note: The total number of responses for each category is mentioned inside the bar, and the percentage represents the share of Singapore respondents in the total.

¹ The number of responses for each category varies from 25 to 63.

Harassment and violence in the workplace

The study did not comprehensively cover the issues of violence and harassment, as there were concerns about collecting data ethically. However, in instances where the partners were able to ensure confidentiality and migrant workers were comfortable to speak, issues related to violence and harassment emerged. While a third of the respondents chose not to answer owing to privacy reasons, one in four respondents reported that shouting or insults and one in five reported that bullying or threats to hurt people at their workplace were typical (see figure 30). Differences emerged across destinations, with migrant workers from Singapore, the majority employed in domestic work, more likely to report that shouting or insults and bullying or threats to hurt people were common.

► **Figure 30. Harassment and violence in the workplace reported as common/very common (n=variable ¹)**



¹ Number of respondents varies for each question, ranging from 158 to 208. The percentages in this figure refer only to those respondents who reported these various forms of harassment/violence as being common.

When asked if migrant workers know where they could get help, the majority said they would report to a non-governmental organization. Others said they would report to the embassy, police, a workers' association or the Labour Ministry.

► Send SMS/call the number of the HOME Organization Singapore [an NGO] helpdesk.

► Indonesian female migrant worker in the domestic work sector in Singapore

► Contact our group AMMPO [Association of Overseas Filipino Workers in Malaysia], so our leader could ask help from local authorities.

► Philippines female migrant worker in the domestic work sector in Malaysia

► Inform the police or some other trusted labour organization, like MTUC [Malaysian Trades Union Congress].

► Nepalese male migrant worker in the service sector in Malaysia



► 3. Return to countries of origin during the pandemic

Large numbers of migrant workers have returned home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 520,000 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Philippines Government repatriating more than 400,000 OFWs as of January 16 2021.⁹² However, stays in quarantine facilities amid delays in testing have resulted in growing stress among returnees. While the Philippines Government has provided financial and welfare assistance for returnees, reintegration programs to provide employment and sustainable livelihood opportunities need to be strengthened.⁹³

Similarly, in Myanmar, 167,798 migrant workers returned from Thailand, China and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic through official and unofficial border crossings as of October 26 2020,⁹⁴ as government officials initially struggled to enforce quarantine rules. The Myanmar Government responded quickly, organizing the return of migrant workers and set up 7,000 quarantine facilities around the country. In addition, trade unions and civil society assisted incoming migrants through food aid to quarantine facilities, covering transportation costs, and providing legal assistance for migrants with unclaimed benefits or recruitment/labour cases.⁹⁵ However, these response efforts have been put to a standstill after the military takeover on February 1 2021, with disruptions in COVID-19 testing and treatment capacity, remittance services and humanitarian operations.

The journey and crossing borders

Most of the origin country respondents (98 per cent) travelled home during the pandemic after March 2020.⁹⁶ Nearly half of the returnees (49 per cent) paid for the return journey themselves, with the share of women who paid for their own journey being slightly higher (55 per cent). For about 40 per cent of origin country respondents, the return journey was either paid for by their employer or their origin country’s government. Among those respondents whose journeys were paid for by employers, a majority were men (59 per cent), whereas government-paid journeys were more common for women (56 per cent).⁹⁷ In addition, while a majority of Myanmar returnees paid for the journey themselves (76 per cent); a minority of the Philippines returnees paid for themselves (22 per cent), with employers (41 per cent) and the Government (22 per cent) paying for a majority of the returnees.

Eleven per cent of returnees stated that women were either treated differently or faced specific problems in the return/repatriation process,⁹⁸ ranging from neglect by the employer to inadequate treatment, including discrimination and non-payment of compensation or benefits.

► Not given proper compensation, being neglected by the employer that is why they experience difficulty in waiting for repatriation.

► Philippines domestic worker returned from work in Jordan

► When we would like to know something and ask the people, they did not keep patience – sometimes even shouting at us. Thus, as a woman, we received this kind of attitude.

► Myanmar female returned from the service sector in Thailand

Situation since return

Since returning, 12 per cent of the returnees reported some form of discrimination or adverse treatment due to their status as migrant returnees.⁹⁹ In addition, the community and neighbours feared that the returnees were carriers of the virus, and they did not socialize with them.¹⁰⁰

► Some thought that returned migrants bring COVID-19 diseases.

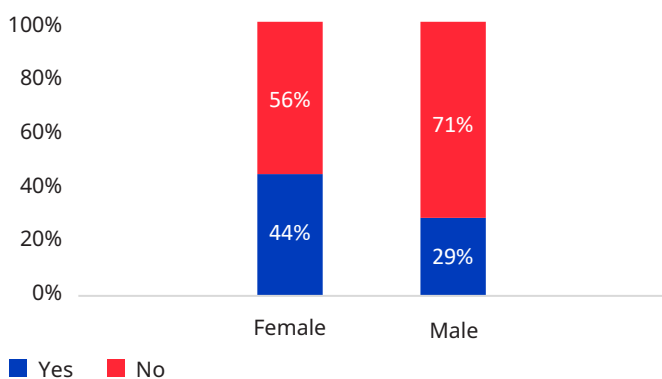
► Myanmar female returned from factory work in Thailand

► When I just came back from Thailand, my neighbours were so scared of the disease, so they asked me not to visit their houses.

► Myanmar female returned from domestic work in Thailand

Nearly a third of the returnees (31 per cent) were engaged in paid work after their return, more Myanmar than Philippines returnees (42 per cent versus 19 per cent).¹⁰¹ There were no notable gender differences among those who have and have not found paid work. Most of the returnees in paid work were either engaged in agriculture (39 per cent), or the service sector (36 per cent), and a majority of them (73 per cent) had to look for one to three months before getting their current job.¹⁰² On average, the employed Myanmar returnees earned US\$5 per day (7,261 kyats), with women earning 29 per cent less than men; while employed Filipino returnees earned US\$8 per day (379 pesos), with women earning 34 per cent less than men in their current jobs.¹⁰³ Almost 40 per cent of the employed migrant returnees were using their skills gained abroad in their current job, with women being more likely to do so than men (44 per cent versus 29 per cent, see figure 31). Among the women using their skills gained abroad, 58 per cent were in the domestic work sector.¹⁰⁴ Employed migrant returnees were using the skills gained, ranging from people skills, soft skills, cooking and cleaning to sewing and construction in their current job.¹⁰⁵ However, many employed migrant returnees cannot use their skills as they worked in a different sector now, not related to work skills gained abroad.

► **Figure 31. Using the skills gained abroad in current job (n=103¹)**



¹ This figure only considers returnees who were employed at the time they were surveyed. 54 women and 49 men answered this question.

While most of the employed returnees were engaged in work they wanted to do (61 per cent), some were interested instead in a range of other things, such as having their own business, remigrating, or working in the service sector.¹⁰⁶ Among unemployed respondents, a majority (74 per cent) were looking for paid work, with more Philippines than Myanmar returnees looking for work (84 per cent versus 59 per cent).¹⁰⁷

Current economic situation

When the returnees were asked to describe the current economic situation of their family, the majority (70 per cent) said that their condition worsened after COVID-19, with more Myanmar than Filipino returnees sharing that opinion (76 per cent versus 65 per cent) and no notable gender differences in the data.¹⁰⁸ Despite economic hardships, just around half of the returnees received any assistance, services or support – such as food and financial aid, or counselling and advice – from government¹⁰⁹ (40 per cent), community or religious organizations (11 per cent), non-government organizations (22 per cent) or trade unions (7 per cent) since their return.¹¹⁰ Of those who received assistance, it was in the form of food and transport assistance, counselling and advice, cash and food assistance from the government, or financial aid for business.¹¹¹

A majority of returnees said that their family could survive only up to a maximum of six months without assistance, with 31 per cent saying they could survive less than a month and 48 per cent saying two to six months.¹¹² In addition, more than half of the returnees said they would need financial assistance to support their family or business (57 per cent), and 27 per cent said they needed livelihood support. Other areas of support cited as being needed by respondents included livelihoods training (4 per cent) and support with the remigration process (4 per cent).

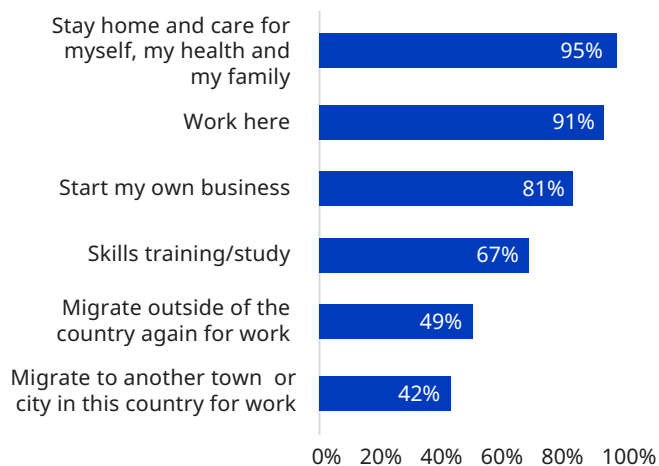


► 4. Out migration during the pandemic and future migration plans

Returnees' medium-term plans

Philippines and Myanmar returnees' medium-term plans for the next six months include staying home and caring for themselves and their family (95 per cent), work (91 per cent), starting their own business (81 per cent), skills training/study (67 per cent), remigrating outside the country for work (49 per cent) and/or migrating to another town or city in their own country for work (42 per cent, see figure 32). Respondents could mention multiple non-mutually exclusive plans. For example, if planning to start their own business, the top three choices were setting up a home-based convenience store, restaurant or catering service and online business.¹¹³ However, as it is probably not possible to work, start a business, train and remigrate all within the next 6 months, there is a lack of assurance in these responses.

► **Figure 32. Medium-term plans of returnee migrant workers to Myanmar and the Philippines for the next six months (n=variable¹)**



¹ The number of respondents varies per plan, and respondents could choose more than one: Stay home and care for myself, my health and my family – 146 respondents; Skills training/study – 138; Migrate to another town or city in this country for work – 119; Work here – 147; Start my own business – 170; and Migrate outside of the country again for work – 152.

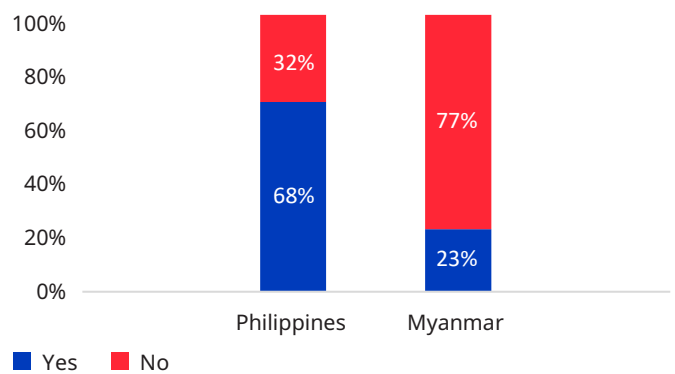
Re-migration and deployment

Re-migration plans

Almost half of the returnee migrant workers in Myanmar and the Philippines were planning to remigrate outside of the country for work in the next six months, with more men (58 per cent) than women (43 per cent) planning to remigrate. The remigration plans also vary by country of origin, with every two in three returnees to the Philippines

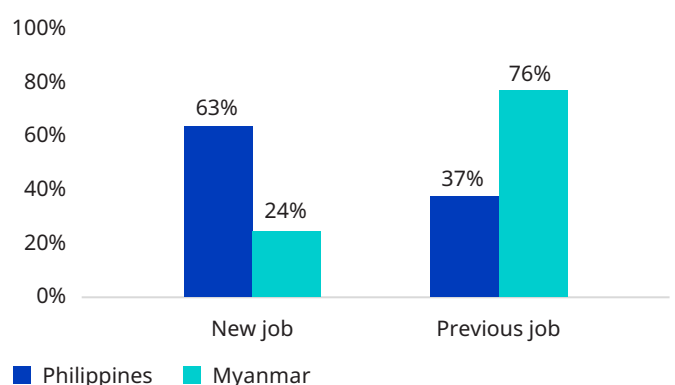
(68 per cent) and just 23 per cent of Myanmar returnees planning to remigrate (see figure 33). The low willingness of Myanmar migrant workers suggests that as the pandemic progressed, Myanmar returnees dropped their remigration plans because, in the previous assessment, almost 60 per cent¹¹⁴ reported that they were planning to remigrate.¹¹⁵ However, remigration plans might change further due to the vastly different political climate in Myanmar.

► **Figure 33. Remigration outside of the country for work in the next six months, by country of origin (n=166)**



Most returnees who plan to remigrate anticipate doing so when restrictions are lifted (55 per cent).¹¹⁶ A majority (63 per cent) of the returnees to the Philippines who intend to remigrate in the next six months are planning to secure a new job overseas, which is quite different to the response of returnees to Myanmar planning to remigrate, as 76 per cent of them are planning on returning to their previous employment (see figure 34).

► **Figure 34. Returnees planning on remigrating within the next six months to take up a new job or previous job, by country of origin (n=98)**

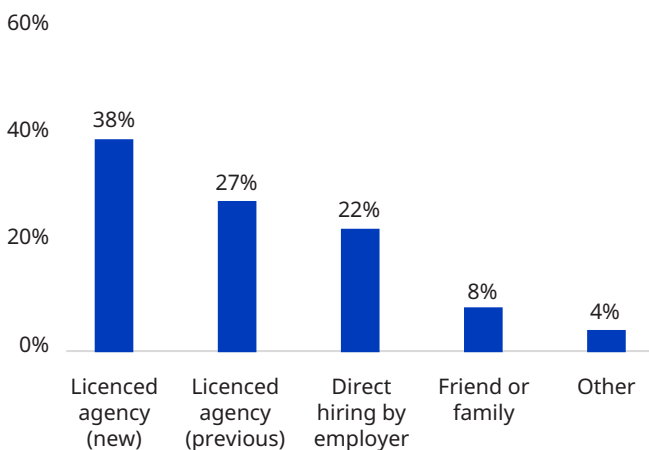


► ILO brief

Experiences of migrant workers during COVID-19 in ASEAN countries:
Rights at work, migration during the pandemic, and remigration plans (Second assessment)

Returnee respondents who intend to remigrate plan to seek employment abroad primarily through a licenced agency, either a new one (38 per cent) or the same agency as previously used (27 per cent). Another 22 per cent intend to secure employment abroad via direct hiring by the employer (see figure 35). While nearly four in five Philippines returnees intend to remigrate (78 per cent) plan to utilize the services of a licenced agency, just one in four Myanmar returnees who plan to remigrate (27 per cent) plan to use a licenced agency. Also, a third of the Myanmar returnees (35 per cent) and almost a fifth of the Filipino returnees (18 per cent) intend to get directly hired by the employer.

► **Figure 35. Intended method of seeking employment when returnees remigrate (n=99)**



Almost half of the returnees who have plans to remigrate (48 per cent)¹¹⁷ said they were experiencing a delay in departing, and an overwhelming majority (79 per cent)¹¹⁸ attributed the delay in departure to the COVID-19 situation. The reasons for delays range from COVID-19-related restrictions, delayed/cancelled flights, border closures, and delays in processing documents.¹¹⁹ In addition, some returnees said that they faced other problems, such as financial difficulties, that were preventing them from remigrating (26 per cent).¹²⁰

► **Mae Sai border gate didn't open due to COVID-19.**

► Myanmar female migrant worker returned from the service sector in Thailand

► **There are currently travel restrictions, and many checkpoints blocked the road.**

► Myanmar male migrant worker returned from the service sector in Thailand

► **[I am experiencing a delay in departing] because my agency did not provide my travel documents.**

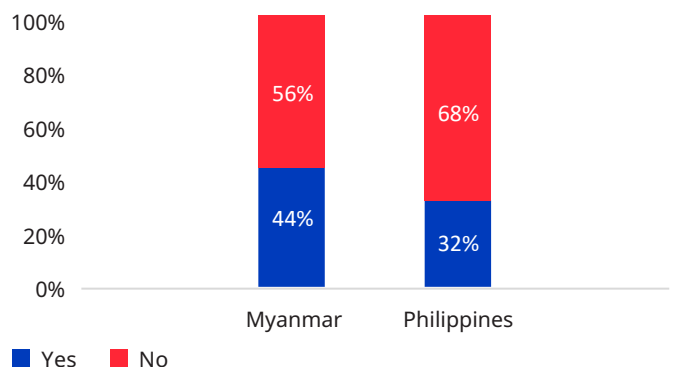
► Philippines female migrant worker returned from the domestic work sector in Hong Kong, China

Information dissemination on remigration

Migrant workers in countries of origin, transit and destination are struggling to make informed decisions due to continually evolving information on restrictions, often presented in the country of destination's language. Therefore, migrants and those who have returned need dependable access to relevant information on mobility restrictions and on the services available to them to facilitate safe and orderly migration.

Most migrants in origin countries find information about remigrating mainly through family and friends, recruitment agencies, news and social media, and MRCs. Many (65 per cent) do not get regular updates on their migration journey. Women were less likely to report being regularly informed than men (33 per cent versus 37 per cent, respectively), and a greater proportion of Myanmar returnees (44 per cent) reported being regularly informed than those of the Philippines (32 per cent, see figure 36). When regular updates were received, it was mainly from family or friends, recruitment agencies, online and social media channels, or the company.

► **Figure 36. Receive regular updates on planned migration (n=110)**



Almost half of the returnees with plans to remigrate (47 per cent) received no information on health regulations, COVID-19 testing, and quarantine in the country to which they intended to migrate, with more women (57 per cent) more likely than men (38 per cent) to have received no information.¹²¹ Returnees in Myanmar with plans to remigrate (70 per cent) received more regular updates than those in the Philippines (46 per cent).¹²² Returnees in the Philippines were told that they would need to quarantine and take a swab test in the destination country (83 per cent), and that they must wear face masks and observe social distancing (17 per cent).¹²³ Myanmar returnees reported being given information on quarantine and COVID-19 testing (25 per cent), wearing masks and washing hands (38 per cent) and the situation in the destination country (38 per cent).¹²⁴

Quarantine is required at the destination country, and upon arrival, there will be COVID-19 testing again before starting with work.

► Philippines female domestic worker returned from Saudi Arabia

I will have to stay 14 days quarantine in Thailand. I will have to pay 2,000 baht for [a] medical check-up.

► Myanmar male migrant worker returned from the construction sector in Thailand and planning to remigrate to Thailand

Some returnees were given information on what would happen if they were not allowed to migrate. Myanmar returnees were warned that they might be arrested if they travel without approval or travel as undocumented workers.¹²⁵

Undocumented migrants can be arrested and if we do [migrate] when destination country [does] not allow, [they] can arrest [us].

► Myanmar female migrant worker returned from the manufacturing sector in Thailand and planning to remigrate to Thailand

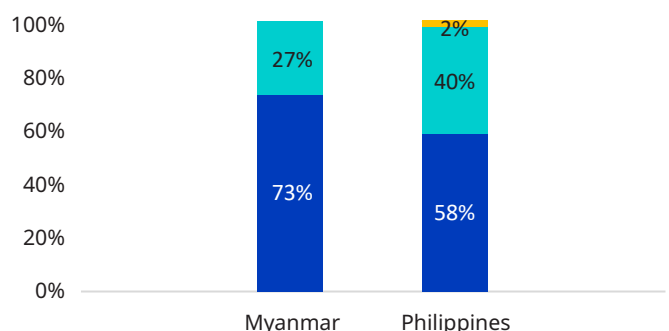
Many of those planning to remigrate (65 per cent) were not informed about the costs of the health regulations in their potential destination or who will be responsible for paying those costs. More women (73 per cent) than men (55 per cent) were not given this information.¹²⁶

Migration costs

Based on the responses of Myanmar returnees with plans to remigrate, the average expenses they had to pay or will have to pay to migrate this time is US\$375, with women expecting to pay more than men (US\$405 versus US\$346, respectively). Philippines returnees had paid or will pay an average amount of US\$576, with men spending more than women (US\$591 versus US\$552, respectively).¹²⁷ More than half of the returnees said they did not know what the money is for, with more returnees to the Philippines (57 per cent) unaware than those of Myanmar (36 per cent).¹²⁸

The majority of the returnees planning to remigrate (83 per cent) thought that the migration costs this time were more expensive than their previous migration. More women (89 per cent) than men (77 per cent) felt that it was more expensive this time.¹²⁹ Most returnees planning to remigrate said they would pay for this migration cost either by securing a loan (61 per cent) or by deductions from wages (37 per cent). More women than men reported that they would opt for a loan (65 per cent versus 59 per cent), and far more Myanmar returnees (73 per cent) said that they would opt for a loan than the Philippines returnees (58 per cent; see figure 37).

► Figure 37. Method by which returnees who intend to remigrate plan to pay for migration costs (n=54)



Legend:
■ Self paid & be refunded by company
■ Salary deduction
■ Loan

► ILO brief

Experiences of migrant workers during COVID-19 in ASEAN countries:
Rights at work, migration during the pandemic, and remigration plans (Second assessment)

Some returnees intending to remigrate (41 per cent) thought that the fees and costs specific for their recruitment were more expensive than the first time they migrated.¹³⁰ According to these respondents, the top three things they were paying more for are the placement or processing fee, increased travelling costs due to COVID-19 restrictions, and accommodation. Most of the returnees were not given any information about what would happen to their fees and costs paid if they were not allowed to migrate (78 per cent), with a higher percentage of Philippines migrants (89 per cent) not receiving information compared to Myanmar returnees (48 per cent).¹³¹ Among those who have been told that they cannot depart, only some (38 per cent) were assured that they would get the recruitment costs and fees back.¹³² More than half of those who were told they cannot depart (55 per cent) said they would get the recruitment costs and fees back through their agency.¹³³

Reintegration

Returnees were asked what they need to successfully reintegrate into the community and labour market if they stay in their home country. Most Philippines returnees reported needing support to set up a business (88 per cent) and financial capital (48 per cent). Others said they need employment opportunities (15 per cent), skills development and community participation (1 per cent each). Among Myanmar returnees, roughly a third expressed a need for financial capital (34 per cent) and support with employment opportunities (32 per cent); a fifth need support for business (22 per cent); and some said they need community participation (16 per cent) and skills development (15 per cent). See figure 38.



- As I want to open my own shop, I need financial capital.

► Myanmar female migrant worker returned from the domestic work sector in Thailand

- I need to be healthy and have good interpersonal skills as well as job skills.

► Myanmar female migrant worker returned from the manufacturing sector in Thailand

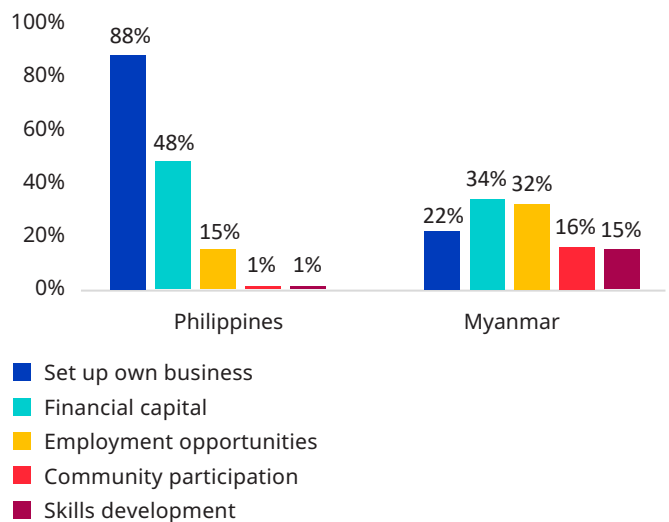
- Start own sari-sari store [home-based store], develop it to recover from the pandemic and be with the family. [Also need] financial assistance and livelihood.

► Philippines female migrant worker returned from the domestic work sector in Kuwait

- If I [have] to stay here in the Philippines, I will continue my college degree for my future. I will help people who [are] also in times of need.

► Philippines male migrant worker returned from the service sector in the United Arab Emirates.

► **Figure 38. Support needed to successfully reintegrate into the community and the labour market, by origin country (n=95 for the Philippines, and n=82 for Myanmar¹)**



¹ More than one response possible.

► 5. Concluding recommendations

Following the findings from this survey, the following recommendations are proposed for consideration.¹³⁴

For governments and stakeholders in countries of origin

1. Develop, or expand existing mechanisms to support women and men migrant workers who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19, including finding new employment, skills recognition or reskilling/upskilling, livelihood support, and reintegration programmes.
2. Ensure that returnee migrants and families of migrants are included in social protection, stimulus measures and any emergency relief. Promote enrolment in national reintegration programmes, where they are available.
3. Support citizens abroad who would like to return home, are stranded, have lost jobs, or face rights violations, including non- or underpayment of wages, lack of social security, lack of workplace safety, forced labour, violence and harassment, as well as the related stress emerging from these.
4. Ensure returnees and citizens stranded abroad can access reliable information, social security benefits, legal remedies and compensation for unfair treatment, forced labour, violence and harassment. Ensure that, when abroad, they have interpretive services available and that women migrant workers can speak to women service providers to assist in their accessing justice.
5. Tackle discrimination and stigmatization of returnee migrant workers through public information campaigns.
6. Migrant workers are waiting for movement restrictions to be lifted to remigrate. Measures must be taken to ensure potential migrant workers are provided with correct information. Governments should have in place guidelines and protocols for deployment responding to public health needs around COVID-19 and ensure that COVID-19-related recruitment costs are not passed onto migrant workers.
7. Any recruitment-related costs and fees paid by migrant workers who have not been deployed should be returned to them. In addition, ensure migrant workers can liquidate any contracts and receive any payments due to them under their recruitment agreements.

8. Support returnees who expect to remigrate to their former jobs. As their migration status may be unclear, support them to ensure their documents are in order before remigration.

For governments and stakeholders in countries of destination

9. Migrant workers are losing income due to the loss of working hours and the loss of overtime pay. Therefore, in case of retrenchment or temporary work stoppage, ensure that all migrant workers, including irregular migrant workers, receive due wages, social security and other benefits arising from past employment.
10. Recruitment agencies in countries of origin should coordinate with counterparts and employers in destination countries to ensure that workers' contracts are fulfilled, and workers are safe, especially with regard to COVID-19 testing, the provision of PPE, wages, social security, rest periods and grievance redress.
11. Dismissals should only be made when the need is genuine, and other alternatives have been exhausted. Such alternatives may include reducing work hours, limiting or restricting the hiring of new employees, limiting over time, and implementing temporary layoffs.
12. Occupational safety and health (OSH) standards need to be followed at workplaces, during transport to the workplaces, and adequate housing standards set and followed for migrant workers' accommodation. Reduce migrant workers' exposure to COVID-19 infection at work and in housing by enabling social distancing, hand-washing and access to PPE.
13. Ensure all migrant workers' access to emergency medical care, including COVID-19 testing and treatment as required. Delink fear of sanctions for immigration violations and the health concerns of migrants.
14. Develop mechanisms to support migrant workers who have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 crisis to find new employment. For example, allow the changing of employers, ease visa extensions, and consider extending grace periods allowed to find new employment before work permits and visas expire.

15. Ensure that all migrant workers, including irregular migrant workers, have access to legal remedies and compensation for unfair treatment, forced labour, and violence and harassment, as well as access to interpretive services to assist in their accessing justice in these cases. In addition, ensure women service providers are available to assist women migrant workers in accessing justice.
16. Ensure that women migrant workers' specific needs are respected in cases of violence, including support from women first responder officials. Shelters for survivors of violence should be kept operational. Existing hotlines should be enhanced to provide counselling on violence against women, including women migrant workers, and to provide referrals. Take measures to prevent gender-based violence and harassment at work and during quarantine, and in the case of domestic workers, in the house as well.
17. Ensure that all migrant workers, including those who do not have regular immigration status, who face loss of work and income, have access to humanitarian assistance and emergency relief, including food, shelter and the provision of PPE such as masks and hand sanitizers. The specific needs of women in these circumstances should be considered and responded to.
18. For new or returning migrants entering destination countries, employers or governments should cover the costs of COVID-19 tests and quarantine. This should not be a cost for migrant workers to pay upfront or as deductions from future pay. In addition, attention should be paid to women's specific needs in quarantine shelters.
19. Provide access to migrant workers, especially domestic migrant workers and laid-off migrant workers, to mental health support and services. In addition, stigmatization, xenophobia and discrimination against migrant workers, especially those infected by COVID-19, should be addressed through public campaigns, among others.
20. Create administrative separation between immigration enforcement activities and public service provision to allow migrant workers to seek primary healthcare, including testing and treatment for COVID-19. Fear of arrest and detention may push undocumented migrant workers further into hiding and prevent them from seeking treatment, with negative consequences for their health and increased risk of COVID-19 spreading to others.



ILO labour migration projects in ASEAN

Bridge project (From Protocol to Practice: A Bridge to Global Action on Forced Labour), funded by US Department of Labour, aims to strengthen Malaysia’s compliance with international labour standards, particularly on forced labour and child labour, and to promote the ratification and application of Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930.

Developing International and Internal Labour Migration Governance in Myanmar (DIILM) is funded by the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund and works with tripartite constituents in Myanmar to strengthen the legislative and policy framework governing labour migration.

Law 72 project supports the Vietnamese Government in the revision of the Law on Contract-based Vietnamese Overseas Workers (Law 72) through coordinated consultation, technical support and advocacy input to the revision of the law, as well as awareness-building activities.

Migrant Workers Empowerment and Advocacy Project (MWEA), funded by the US Department of Labor, empowers Malaysian civil society to better support migrant workers; empowers women and men migrant workers to realize their rights; and inspires Malaysian youth to demonstrate increased support for the rights and welfare of migrant workers.

REFRAME project is a European Union (EU)-funded global action aiming at preventing and reducing abusive and fraudulent recruitment practices and maximizing the protection of migrant workers in the recruitment process and their contribution to development.

Safe and Fair: Realizing women migrant workers’ rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region is part of the multi-year EU–UN Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls. Safe and Fair is implemented by the ILO and UN Women in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and led by the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

Ship to Shore Rights South-East Asia is a programme implemented by the ILO in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Development Programme. The objectives of the programme include strengthening legal frameworks, protecting labour rights, and empowering workers in the fishing and seafood processing sectors.

TRIANGLE in ASEAN is a partnership between the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Global Affairs Canada, and the ILO. TRIANGLE in ASEAN delivers technical assistance and support with the overall goal of maximizing the contribution of labour migration to equitable, inclusive and stable growth in ASEAN.

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Livelihoods and Food Security Fund



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Contact details

Nilim Baruah
Senior Migration Specialist,
Decent Work Team

ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
11th Floor, United Nations Building
Rajdamnern Nok Avenue Bangkok
10200, Thailand

T. +662 288 1234
F. +662 280 1735
E. baruah@ilo.org
W. www.ilo.org

Endnotes

- 1 This brief was prepared by Swathi Jakkula and Andreas Schmidt at the ILO. Research was facilitated and conducted by Yen Ne Foo, Sinthia Harkrisnowo, Hkun Sa Mun Htoi, Maya Iskarini, Natthanicha Lephilbert, Cho Thae Naing, Rebecca Napier-Moore, Aung Thet Paing, Wai Hnin Po, Jacqueline Pollock, Florida Sandanasamy, Rex Varona, and May Thu Win at the ILO, in partnership with: the Community leaders in Malaysia, Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME) in Singapore, ILO Developing International and Internal Labour Migration Governance in Myanmar (DIILM), ILO TRIANGLE in ASEAN, ILO–UN Women Safe and Fair partners in Myanmar, International Domestic Workers Federation and its affiliates, Malaysian Trades Union Congress, MAP Foundation (Thailand), OFW Negros Occidental Federation, Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor, Raks Thai Foundation, Safe and Fair Philippines Communities of Practice (CoP) in Mindanao and Visayas, Serantau Malaysia, Singapore Working Group on Migrant Workers, Tabaco OFW and Migrants Federation (TALUBO) and Tenaganita. Inputs and review were provided by Nilim Baruah, Deepa Bharathi, Anna Engblom, Benjamin Harkins, Anna Olsen, and Marja Paavilainen at ILO.
- 2 533 confirmed cases with 0 deaths as of 20 February 2021 (WHO COVID-19 dashboard).
- 3 45 confirmed cases with 0 deaths as of 20 February 2021 (WHO COVID-19 dashboard).
- 4 2,368 confirmed cases with 35 deaths as of 20 February 2021 (WHO COVID-19 dashboard).
- 5 141,735 confirmed cases with 3,196 deaths as of 20 February 2021 (WHO COVID-19 dashboard).
- 6 280,272 confirmed cases with 1,051 deaths as of 20 February 2021 (WHO COVID-19 dashboard).
- 7 United Nations, “The Impact of COVID-19 on South-East Asia”, UN Policy Brief, July, 2020.
- 8 UN Women, “Addressing the Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women Migrant Workers”, UN Women Guidance Note, 2020.
- 9 Of the 384 respondents in the countries of origin and destination combined (excluding Thailand data on this question due to quality issues).
- 10 Of the 198 respondents who answered this question in countries of origin and 186 who answered in countries of destination (excluding Thailand data on this question due to quality issues).
- 11 Of the 155 respondents who answered this question in countries of origin and 72 in countries of destination.
- 12 Of the 225 respondents in countries of destination who answered this question.
- 13 Of 250 respondents who answered this question, 199 responded that they are still employed and 51 no longer employed.
- 14 A total of 44 respondents answered this question, out of the 51 who said they are currently unemployed.
- 15 Of the 140 respondents in Malaysia and Thailand who answered this question.
- 16 Of the 225 respondents who answered the question on salary before COVID-19 and 223 respondents who answered the question on salary during COVID-19 question.
- 17 Of the 155 respondents who answered the question on total working hours before COVID-19 and 139 respondents who answered the question on total working hours during COVID-19 question.
- 18 Overtime hours before the pandemic based on 69 responses for this question, and after the pandemic based on the 47 responses for this question.
- 19 Of the 38 who answered this question, just one respondent said that he is receiving salary payments and benefits.
- 20 Of the 28 respondents who answered this question.
- 21 Of the 247 respondents who answered this question.
- 22 Number of respondents varies for each question, ranging from 195 to 219.
- 23 Of the 241 respondents who answered this question.
- 24 Of the 160 respondents who answered this question.
- 25 Of the 199 respondents who are currently employed.
- 26 Of the 208 respondents who answered this question.
- 27 Of the 158 respondents who answered this question.
- 28 Of the 196 returnees who answered this question.
- 29 Of the 198 returnees who answered this question.
- 30 Of the 182 returnees who answered the question on food, 168 on housing and 167 on healthcare and personal needs.
- 31 Of the 200 returnees who answered this question.
- 32 Of the 196 returnees who answered this question.
- 33 Of the 197 returnees who answered this question.
- 34 Of the 152 returnees who answered this question.
- 35 Of the 197 returnees who answered this question.
- 36 Including village leaders or township administration.
- 37 Of the 188 returnees who answered the question on government, 149 on community or religious organization, 161 on NGOs and 153 on trade unions.
- 38 Of the 111 returnees who answered this question.
- 39 Of the 64 returnees who answered this question.
- 40 Of the 56 returnees who answered this question.
- 41 Of the 89 Myanmar returnees who answered this question in the previous assessment.
- 42 In the previous assessment, the ILO and partners in Myanmar specifically asked questions about returnees’ long-term plans. Similar data were not available for Philippines returnees.
- 43 Of the 114 returnees who answered this question.
- 44 Of the 61 returnees who answered this question.

- 45 MRCs deliver services directly to migrant workers and their communities in countries of origin and destination through partnerships with government institutions, trade unions and civil society organizations. MRCs provide information and counselling before and during the migration process, and provide a safe space to ask questions, lodge complaints and receive legal aid. MRCs supported by ILO–UN Women Safe and Fair programme also provide information support for referrals to survivors of violence. Counselling is provided at the MRCs and in communities through outreach activities, in addition to online and over the phone. The ILO currently supports more than 40 MRCs in nine ASEAN countries.
- 46 Of the 384 respondents in the countries of origin and destination combined. Thailand was excluded.
- 47 Of the 209 respondents who answered this question.
- 48 Of the 155 respondents who answered this question in countries of origin and 72 in countries of destination.
- 49 Of the 191 respondents who answered this question in countries of origin and 202 respondents who answered this question in countries of destination.
- 50 Of the 132 respondents in countries of origin and 71 respondents in countries of destination who answered this question.
- 51 Of the 225 respondents in countries of destination who answered this question.
- 52 Of the 39 women respondents who were no longer working.
- 53 A total of 44 respondents answered this question, out of the 50 who said they are currently unemployed.
- 54 Of the 32 female and 12 male returnees who answered this question.
- 55 Of the 12 female returnees who said that their employer terminated the contract prematurely without compensation.
- 56 ILO, “ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work”, sixth edition, 23 September, 2020.
- 57 For all three countries, averages of deductions are based on the 56 responses on before COVID-19 question and on the 48 responses for the during COVID-19 question.
- 58 Value estimated from the 5 of the 26 responses from migrant workers in Malaysia who answered the question.
- 59 Rashvinjeets S. Bedi, Ismail Sabri: “Compulsory COVID-19 Tests for all Foreign Workers (Updated)”, in *The Star*, 4 May 2020.
- 60 Values based on the 56 responses for this question.
- 61 Values based on the 48 responses for this question.
- 62 Of the 155 respondents who answered the question on total working hours before COVID-19, and 139 respondents who answered the question on total working hours during COVID-19 question.
- 63 Overtime hours before the pandemic based on 69 responses for this question, and after the pandemic based on the 47 responses for this question.
- 64 Sandar Nyan. “‘I Guess We’re Just Supposed to Starve’ – Laid-Off Myanmar Migrants Denied Wages and Trapped by Thailand Lockdown”, in *Myanmar Now*, 14 May 2020.
- 65 Steve Sandford. “Thailand’s Migrant Workers Struggle to Qualify for Aid During Pandemic”, in *Voice of America*, 17 June 2020,
- 66 Of the 38 who answered this question, just one respondent said that he is receiving salary payments and benefits.
- 67 Of the 42 respondents who answered the question on family, 28 on government, 34 on NGOs, 36 on trade unions and new loan.
- 68 Of the 28 respondents who answered this question.
- 69 Of the 198 returnees who answered this question.
- 70 Of the 73 returnees who answered this question.
- 71 Of the 182 returnees who answered the question on food, 168 on housing and 167 on healthcare and personal needs.
- 72 Of the 24 returnees who answered this question.
- 73 Yvette Tan, “Covid-19 Singapore: A ‘Pandemic of Inequality’ Exposed”, in *BBC News*, 17 September 2020.
- 74 Panarat Thepgumpanat, “Anti-Myanmar Hate Speech Flares in Thailand over Virus”, in *Reuters*, 24 December 2020.
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- 76 “Myanmar Migrant Worker Says His Seafood Market Boss Started Chain of COVID-19 Infections”, Radio Free Asia, 23 December 2020.
- 77 A total of 16 respondents answered that they did not have protection.
- 78 TWC2, “The Dorms Are Not the Problem”, 1 May 2020.
- 79 Singapore, Ministry of Health, “COVID-19 Situation Report”, accessed 20 February 2021
- 80 Of those living with other migrant workers, 73 per cent are men and 27 per cent are women.
- 81 Of the 187 respondents, 80 per cent men and 37 per cent women live with other migrants.
- 82 Of the 81 respondents who answered this question.
- 83 World Bank, “Annual Remittances Data (Updated as of October 2020)”, World Bank Migration and Remittances Data: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>.
- 84 Of the 249 respondents who answered this question.
- 85 Average from the 63 migrant workers in Malaysia, 20 migrant workers in Thailand and 82 migrant workers in Singapore who answered this question.
- 86 Of the 160 respondents who answered this question.
- 87 No sufficient data for Thailand: just seven responses specifying the amounts with four reporting an increase.
- 88 Average from the 19 migrant workers in Malaysia and 12 migrant workers in Singapore who said their remittances declined.
- 89 Of the 199 respondents who are currently employed.
- 90 Of the 50 respondents who were no longer working and answered this question.
- 91 Of the 150 returnees who answered this question.
- 92 Philippines, Department of Labor and Employment, “400k OFWs Sent Home”, press release, 17 January 2021.
- 93 Karen Anne S. Liao, “Emergency Returns: COVID-19 and the Repatriation of Filipino Migrant Workers”, *COMPAS Coronavirus and Mobility Forum Blog*, 2 June 2020.
- 94 IOM, “IOM Myanmar COVID-19 Response Situation Report 12”, 26 October 2020.

- 95 ILO, “COVID-19: Impact on Migrant Workers and Country Response in Myanmar”, ILO Briefing Note, 22 June 2020.
- 96 Of the 197 returnees who answered this question.
- 97 Of the 200 returnees who answered this question.
- 98 Of the 194 returnees who answered this question.
- 99 Of the 196 returnees who answered this question.
- 100 Of the 30 returnees who answered this question.
- 101 Of the 197 returnees who answered this question.
- 102 Of the 41 returnees who answered this question.
- 103 Of the 28 Myanmar returnees and 13 Filipino returnees who answered this question.
- 104 Of the 24 migrant women returnees who said they use skills gained abroad.
- 105 Of the 41 returnees who answered this question.
- 106 Of the 22 returnees who answered this question.
- 107 Of the 152 returnees who answered this question.
- 108 Of the 197 returnees who answered this question.
- 109 Including village leaders or township administration.
- 110 Of the 188 returnees who answered the question on government, 149 on community or religious organization, 161 on NGOs and 153 on trade unions.
- 111 Of the 87 returnees who answered this question.
- 112 Of the 124 returnees who answered this question.
- 113 A total of 132 returnees answered this question.
- 114 Of the 89 Myanmar returnees who answered this question in the previous assessment.
- 115 In the previous assessment, the ILO and partners in Myanmar specifically asked questions about returnees’ long-term plans. Similar data were not available for Philippines returnees.
- 116 Of the 93 returnees who answered this question.
- 117 Of the 114 returnees who answered this question.
- 118 Of the 62 returnees who answered this question.
- 119 A total of 45 returnees answered this question.
- 120 Of the 110 returnees who answered this question.
- 121 Of the 95 returnees who answered this question.
- 122 Of the 27 Myanmar and 68 returnees who answered this question.
- 123 A total of 29 Philippines returnees answered this question.
- 124 A total of 8 Myanmar returnees answered this question.
- 125 A total of 5 of the 7 Myanmar returnees who answered this question.
- 126 Of the 80 returnees who answered this question.
- 127 Percentages based on the 14 returnees who answered this question.
- 128 Of the 95 returnees who answered this question.
- 129 Of the 63 returnees who answered this question.
- 130 Of the 86 returnees who answered this question.
- 131 Of the 96 returnees who answered this question.
- 132 Of the 82 returnees who answered this question.
- 133 Of the 29 returnees who answered this question.
- 134 See also: ASEAN, “The 13th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML)”, 2020.
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