

Annual Statistical Report of Foreign Employment 2017

This is the twenty second series of annual statistical report published by the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment that provides a continuous review of the trend and development of the foreign employment industry in Sri Lanka.



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PREFACE

The Annual Statistical Report is a product of the Research Division of the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment. (SLBFE). This report is compiled annually by using the available data at the Information Technology Division of the SLBFE and various other data sources including publications, with the view to provide useful information to the policy planners, researchers and others who are interested on statistics pertaining to migration. This report provides statistics and brief analytical review on foreign employment.

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Overview

Recent trends in international migration

International migrants are defined as persons who stay outside their country of birth for at least one year. The number of international migrants has increased from 103 million to 220 million during the period from 1980 to 2010.

Outside of general definitions of migration and migrant, such as those found in dictionaries, there exist various specific definitions of key migration-related terms, including in legal, administrative, research and statistical spheres.^a There is no universally agreed definition of migration or migrant, however, several definitions are widely accepted and have been developed in different settings, such as those set out in UN DESA's 1998 Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration.^b Technical definitions, concepts and categories of migrants and migration are necessarily informed by geographic, legal, political, methodological, temporal and other factors. For example, there are numerous ways in which migration events can be defined, including in relation to place of birth, citizenship, place of residence and duration of stay.^c This is important when it comes to quantifying and analysing the effects of migration and migrants (however defined). We encourage readers to refer to primary sources cited in the chapter for information on specific definitions and categorizations underlying the data. A summary of key technical definitions of migration-related terms is provided in appendix A. Readers may also find the IOM Glossary on Migration to be a useful reference.

UN DESA produces estimates of the number of international migrants globally. The following discussion draws on its estimates, which are based on data provided by States.²⁶ The United Nations Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration defines an international migrant as any person who has changed his or her country of usual residence, distinguishing between “short-term migrants” (those who have changed their country of usual residence for at least three months, but less than one year) and “long-term migrants” (those who have done so for at least one year). However, not all countries use this definition in practice.²⁷ Some countries use different criteria to identify international migrants by, for example, applying different minimum durations of residence. Differences in concepts and definitions, as well as data collection methodologies between countries, hinder full comparability of national statistics on international migrants. Overall, the estimated number of international migrants has increased over the past four-and-a-half decades. The total estimated 244 million people living in a country other than their country of birth in 2015 is almost 100 million more than in 1990 (when it was 153 million), and over three times the estimated number in 1970 (84 million; see table 1).²⁸ While the proportion of international migrants globally has increased over this period, it is evident that the vast majority of people continue to live in the country in which they were born. Most international migrants in 2015 (around 72%) were of working age (20 to 64 years of age), with a slight decrease in migrants aged less than 20 between 2000 and 2015 (17% to 15%), and a constant share (around 12%) of international migrants aged 65 years or more since 2000.

In 2013, the figure was 232 million, and is projected to be doubled reaching 400 million by 2050¹. However, in 2013, international migrants comprised only about 3.2% of the world population, compared to 2.9% in 1990². Human migration is an age-old phenomenon that stretches back to the earliest periods of human history. In the modern era, emigration and immigration continue to provide States, societies and migrants with many opportunities. At the same time, migration has emerged in the last few years as a critical political and policy challenge in matters such as integration, displacement, safe migration and border management. In 2015, there were an estimated 244 million international migrants globally (3.3% of the world's population) an increase from an estimated 155 million people in 2000 (2.8% of the world's population).²² Internal migration is even more prevalent, with the most recent global estimate indicating that more than 740 million people had migrated within their own country of birth.²³

The number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly over the past fifteen years reaching 244 million in 2015, up from 222 million in 2010, 191 million in 2005 and 173 million in 2000. Between 2000 and 2005, the international migrant stock grew by an average of 2 per cent per year. During the period 2005-2010, the annual growth rate accelerated, reaching 3 per cent. Since then, however, it has slowed, falling to around 1.9 per cent per year during the period 2010-2015. In 2015, two thirds (67 per

cent) of all international migrants were living in just twenty countries. The largest number of international migrants (47 million) resided in the United States of America, equal to about a fifth of the world's total. Germany and the Russian Federation hosted the second and third largest numbers of migrants worldwide (12 million each), followed by Saudi Arabia (10 million).³

Women comprise slightly less than half of all international migrants. The share of female migrants fell from 49 per cent in 2000 to 48 per cent in 2015. Female migrants outnumber male migrants in Europe and Northern America, while in Africa and Asia, particularly Western Asia, migrants are predominantly men.⁹

The median age of international migrants worldwide was 39 years in 2015, a slight increase from 38 years in 2000. Yet in some major areas, the migrant stock is becoming younger. Between 2000 and 2015, the median age of international migrants declined in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania. Most migrants worldwide are of working age. In 2015, 72 per cent of all international migrants were aged 20 to 64 years, compared to 58 per cent of the total population. Younger persons, below age 20, tend to be under represented amongst international migrants. Globally, 15 per cent of all migrants were under 20 years of age, compared to 34 per cent of the total population. Thirteen per cent of migrants worldwide were at least 65 years old, nearly twice as high as the percentage of persons aged 65 or over globally.¹⁰

There are considerable differences across major areas in the proportion of women among all international migrants. Since 2000, the proportion of female migrants increased in all major areas with the exception of Africa and Asia. In Europe, the female share of migrants rose from 51.6 per cent in 2000 to 52.4 per cent in 2015. Likewise, in Northern America, the percentage of women among all international migrants rose from 50.5 to 51.2 per cent during this period. The larger proportion of female migrants in those major areas was mainly the outcome of the aging in place of migrants who had arrived decades earlier and the fact that females, including female migrants, tend to have longer life expectancies compared to males. By contrast, in Asia the percentage of female migrants fell from 45.6 per cent in 2000 to 42 per cent in 2015. The reason for this decline rests primarily with the high concentration of males among recent migrant inflows.¹¹

In Asia, the number of male migrants grew significantly more than the number of female migrants. The stock of male migrants in Asia grew by 62 per cent, from 27 million in 2000 to 44 million in 2015. This increase was fuelled in part by the strong demand for male migrant workers in the oil-producing countries of Western Asia. The stock of female migrants in Asia increased by 40 per cent from 22 million in 2000 to 32 million in 2015. Africa also experienced a more pronounced growth in male migrants (42 per cent) during the period 2000 - 2015 compared to female migrants (37 per cent). By contrast, in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America and Oceania, the stock of female migrants grew more rapidly than the stock of male migrants.¹²

The countries of northern region (called as “developed countries”) in the world have given shelter for 136 million international migrants, while the developing countries in the southern region have sheltered 96 million international migrants. The most international migrants are in the working age (20 to 64 years) and account for 74 per cent of the total. Women account for 48 per cent of all international migrants.³

According to the United Nations Population Division, South Asians were the largest group of international migrants living outside of their home region in 2013. Out of the 36 million international migrants from South Asia, 13.5 million resided in the oil-producing countries in Western Asia. International migrants originating from Central America, including Mexico represented another large group of migrants living outside their home region. About 16.3 million, out of 17.4 million Central American migrants lived in the US. Europe and Asia host nearly two-thirds of all international migrants worldwide. Europe remains the most popular destination region with 72 million international migrants in 2013, compared to 71 million in Asia. Since 1990, Northern America recorded the largest gain in the absolute number of international migrants, adding 25 million, and experienced the fastest growth in migrant stock by an average of 2.8 per cent per year. The Majority of people are economic migrants. There's a prominent claim among immigration opponents that the majority of people who are entering Europe through irregular means during this crisis are not refugees, but rather economic migrants searching for economic opportunities.⁵

When the regions of destinations are concerned, Asia had the largest increase of international migrants since 2000, adding some 20 million migrants in 13 years. This growth was mainly caused by the increasing demand for foreign labour in the oil-producing countries of Western Asia and in South-Eastern Asian countries with rapidly growing economies, such as Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand⁶.

Nearly two thirds of all international migrants worldwide live in Europe or Asia. In 2015, 76 million international migrants were residing in Europe, compared to 75 million in Asia. Northern America hosted the third largest number of international migrants (54 million), followed by Africa (21 million), Latin America and the Caribbean (9 million), and Oceania (8 million) Between 2000 and 2015, Asia added more international migrants than any other major area.

Asia gained some 26 million international migrants during this period or 1.7 million additional migrants per annum. Europe added the second largest number of international migrants between 2000 and 2015 (20 million, or 1.3 million per year), followed by Northern America (14 million, or 0.9 million per year) and Africa (6 million, or 0.4 million per year). Latin America and the Caribbean and Oceania added comparatively smaller numbers of migrants during this period (3 million, or 0.2 million per year each). Despite this continued growth, international migrants accounted for less than 2 per cent of the population of Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. By contrast, in Europe, Northern America and Oceania international migrants comprised at least 10 per cent of the population.⁷

Between 1990 and 2017, the number of international migrants worldwide rose by over 105million, or by 69 per cent. Most of this increase occurred from 2005 to 2017, when some 5.6million migrants were added annually, compared to an average of 2.5 million from 1990 to 2005. In the period between 1990 and 2000, the international migrant stock grew at an average annual rate of change of 1.2 per cent, compared to 2.4 per cent from 2000 and 2010 and 2.3 per cent from 2010 to 2017. Between 1990 and 2017, the developed regions gained 64 million international migrants, which was 60 per cent of the 105 million added worldwide, whereas the developing regions added 41 million, or 40 per cent. While the North grew at a steady average annual rate of 2.3 per cent in the period from 1990 to 2010, this rate has since declined to 1.6 per cent in the period from 2010 to 2017. For the South, the average annual rate of change was slightly negative(-0.1 per cent) from 1990 to 2000, but has been positive since then. The number of international migrants living in the South grew at an average annual rate of 2.6 per cent from 2000 to 2010 and at 3.2 per cent from 2010 to 2017, surpassing the pace of increase in the North. Since 2000, 60 per cent of the increase of the total number of international migrants reflected movements between countries located in the South. The increase in the number of international migrants in the developed regions resulted from an increase in the number of migrants coming from both the South and the North. Of the 64 million international migrants added in the North between 1990 and 2017, 48 million, or 76 per cent, were born in the South. The remaining 16 million international migrants, or 24 per cent, originated from a country located in the North.²⁹

In the developing countries, the growth of the migrant population resulted mainly from an increase in the number of migrants born in the South. Between 1990 and 2017, the migrant population originating from the South and living in the South grew from 57 million to 97 million, a 70 per cent increase (figure I.1). Of the 41 million foreign-born persons added in the South during this period, around 96 per cent were born in the developing regions, whereas just four per cent originated from a country of the North. Worldwide, international migrants accounted for a relatively small share of the total population, comprising about 3.4 per cent of the world's population in 2017, compared to 2.9 per cent in 1990. In the North, international migrants constituted 11.6 per cent of the total population in 2017 compared to 1.8 per cent in the developing regions. Between 1990 and 2017, the number of international migrants as a share of the total population increased in the North, but changed very little in the South.³⁰

Between 1990 and 2017, Asia recorded the largest gain in the number of international migrants, adding 31 million, followed by Northern America (30 million) and Europe (29 million). Of the 31 million international migrants added in Asia during this period, 28 million, or 89 per cent, were born in other countries of Asia. For Europe and Northern America, the pattern was more diversified. Of the 29 million international migrants gained by Europe during this period, 46 per cent were born in Europe, 24 per cent in Asia, nearly 17 per cent in Africa and 12 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. For Northern

America, over 16 million, or 55 per cent of the 30 million migrants gained between 1990 and 2017, were born in Latin America and the Caribbean, while 11 million, or 37 per cent, originated from Asia and just over 2 million, or 7 per cent, from Africa. Asia, Europe and Northern America accounted for over 85 per cent of the increase in the number of international migrants between 1990 and 2017 (figure I.2). Asia experienced the fastest growth in the migrant population since 2000. During the period from 2010 to 2017, Asia added on average 2.0 million migrants per annum. Europe experienced the second fastest increase during the period from 2000 to 2010, at a yearly average of 1.4 million migrants, followed by Northern America (1.1 million). During 2010-2017, Africa experienced the second fastest growth in the migrant population, increasing by an average of 1.1 million per year, while the annual increase of the migrant population in Europe and Northern America averaged around 1.0 million persons. While Northern America added the third largest number of international migrants since the year 2000, the number of international migrants added annually has declined from 1.3 million during the period 1990 to 2000, to 1.1 million the following ten years and just under 1 million for the period between 2010 and 2017. Moreover, between 2010 and 2017, Northern America added only half as many international migrants as did Asia. Meanwhile, Africa, which experienced a relatively small increase in the number of international migrants between 1990 and 2010, gained slightly more migrants than Europe and Northern America from 2010 to 2017. In 2017, Asia-to-Asia constituted the largest regional migration corridor in the world, with some 63 million international migrants born in that region residing in another country of Asia. From 2000 to 2010, the Asia-to-Asia corridor grew by an average of 1.5 million international migrants per year, a figure that increased to 1.7 million between 2010 and 2017 (figure I.4). Europe-to-Europe was the second largest regional corridor in 2017, with around 41 million international migrants born in Europe living in another country of Europe. The average annual increase in the Europe-to-Europe migrant stock has been around 0.6 million since 2000.³¹

The Asia-to-Europe corridor, the fourth largest in 2017, with 20 million international migrants from Asia residing in Europe, recorded a decline in the average number of migrants added per year from 2010 to 2017 compared to the period between 2000 and 2010. The Africa-to-Africa corridor, with 19 million international migrants in 2017, represented the fifth largest in the world. Between 2010 and 2017, the number of African migrants residing in Africa increased faster than any other regional corridor, except for the Asia-to-Asia corridor.³²

¹-Philip Martin, "The Global Challenge of Managing Migration", Population Bulletin 68, No. 02 (2013).

²-OECD-UNDESA, "World Migration in Figures", October 2013

³- International Migration Report – 2015

⁹- do

¹⁰-do

¹¹- Population Division of Dept. of Economic & Social Affairs, United Nations, International migration report 2015.

²²-N DESA, 2015^a.

²³-UNDP, 2009.

^a-See, for example, Poulain and Perrin, 2001.

^b-UN DESA, 1998.

^c- See, for example, de Beer et al., 2010.²⁵ In general, explanatory notes, caveats, limitations and methodologies on specific sources of data can be extensive and are therefore not included in this chapter. However, sources have been clearly identified so that readers can refer to them.

²⁶-Data are also provided to UN DESA by territories and administrative units. For a summary on UN DESA stock data sources, methodology and caveats,

²⁷-UN DESA, 1998.

²⁸-UN DESA, 2008.

⁴- Population Division of Dept. of Economic & Social Affairs, United Nations, Press Release 11th Sept. 2013.

⁵- Nick Robins – Early world reporter, The Huffington post

⁶- Population Division of Dept. of Economic & Social Affairs, United Nations, Press Release 11th Sept. 2013.

⁷- Population Division of Dept. of Economic & Social Affairs, United Nations, Press Release 11th Sept. 2013.

⁸- International Migration Report 2015

¹²- International Migration Report- 2015

²⁹-United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division *International Migration Report 2017*

³⁰-Do

³¹-Do

³²-Do

The Sri Lankan Context

The Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) has been established under the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment Act No. 21 of 1985 as amended by the Act No. 04 of 1994 and Act No. 56 of 2009. The SLBFE which is currently under the purview of Ministry of Telecommunication, Digital Infrastructure and Foreign Employment is the sole authority in Sri Lanka which is primarily responsible for governance and regulation of industry of the foreign employment for Sri Lankans, protection and welfare of migrant workers and their family members, and promotion and development of employment opportunities for Sri Lankans outside Sri Lanka.

Foreign employment has become the second largest source of foreign exchange in the Sri Lankan economy during the past few years. Since 1970's when formal employment migration commenced, foreign employment has generated substantial inflows of remittance while relieving pressure on unemployment of youth by providing employment abroad. A total of 212,162 persons (males 66%, females 34%) left for foreign employment in 2017. During the year 2016, the worker's remittances accounted for a sum of Rs. million 1,091,972 and it was 8.2% of the GDP of the Country, Foreign employment has also been important in terms of skills transfer, investment, brain circulation in addition to contributing to overcome the problems of balance of payment, unemployment etc. However, it is obvious that labour migration has both positive and negative socio-economic and other consequences.

Analysis of statistics discloses that the total departures for foreign employment in 2017 decreased by 12.6% compared to 2016. The continuous decline in departures for foreign employment observed since 2014 can be mainly attributable to the policy actions taken by the government to minimize the departures of unskilled labour, particularly in the housemaid category. The lower demand and government policies on migrant workers in destination markets, particularly in the Middle-East, also had a significant impact on the drop in the departures for foreign employment. The increased demand for labour in various sectors within the country could also be a reason for this observed drop. Decrease in departures through private sources by 7.2% and decrease also in recruitment by licensed foreign employment agencies by 22% caused this change in total departures.

Accordingly, the total number of departures for foreign employment was 212,162 in 2017, compared to 242,816 in 2016. The female departures declined by 11.7 per cent to 72,891 and male departures declined by 13.1 per cent to 139,271 in 2017, compared to 2016. The female representation is around 34 per cent of the total departures for foreign employment, which is far below the housemaid centered 53 per cent representation a decade ago. Migration of women for employment, to a greater extent, remained steady from 1995 to 2017 and declined to 125 % in 2017 due to the rapid downward swing in men's migration. Further, several policy decisions taken by the SLBFE during the latter half of the year 2013 have also caused the decline in number of females who migrated in 2014. Increasing the minimum age limit of women migrating for domestic work, upgrading the training given to female domestic workers to the level 3 of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and making this qualification compulsory for women migrating to Saudi Arabia for domestic work, and introducing the mandatory requirement for potential women migrant workers to submit a family background report etc; are among the most influential policy decisions.

In terms of skill levels, departures for foreign employment have declined across all categories. The unskilled and housemaid categories still account for around 55 per cent of total departures. Only 3 per cent of worker departures were under the professional category and 3.4 per cent of worker departures were under the middle level category. It is noteworthy that departures for professional and middle level categories showed a decline in 2017, compared to 2016 despite the increasing demand for professionals and skilled employees in many countries including the Gulf economies, which are highly focused on creating knowledge-based economies at present. Despite the authorities' continuous efforts to channel job placements through registered agencies, around 68 per cent of the migrant workers have used private sources to access foreign labour markets. This could result in vulnerability in foreign employment due to lack of

protection over employment rights and other social hazards abroad. Sri Lankans have obtained employment opportunities across 108 countries in 2017 and almost 90 per cent are employed in the Middle East, which continued to be the dominant migrant destination. In June 2017, several countries such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt severed diplomatic ties with Qatar, which annually hosts around a quarter of Sri Lankan job seekers. Accordingly, the migrant worker departures to Qatar declined to 56,644 in 2017, compared to 59,523 in 2016.

All departures have been decreased of manpower levels. Middle level female departures and female clerical & related departures has been a nominal increase. Those were 0.5 Per cent for Middle level and 1.2 per cent for Clerical & related over 2016. Otherwise total departure of professional level departures contribution has declined by 3.1, contribution of Middle level also has been a notable decline. It was a 13.4 per cent over 2016. Clerical and related level recruitment also declined by 14.7 per cent over year 2016. Skilled level departures also has decline by 9.9 per cent over year 2016. That was 68,993 persons for skilled level that record was degradation of year 2011 skilled level departures.

Considering the districts wise departures, Colombo district contributed to 13% of total departures for employment while the Gampaha district has recorded the second highest percentage of 11% and third highest recorded 9.2 per cent from Kandy district in 2017. Batticaloa district contributed to 7.2% of total number of departures for foreign employment as the fourth.

Middle East remains as the major destination of Sri Lankan migrant employees while the Kingdom of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates are the major receiving countries in the region. In 2017, 79% of the total migrant employees were recruited by those four Middle Eastern countries. When the manpower level departures in year 2017 is concerned, the highest number was the skilled level departures to Qatar and it was 27,666. The second was the housemaid level job categories for Kuwait and it was 23,655. The third record was the Unskilled level jobs for Qatar. It was 18, 297 unskilled persons. Consider major receiving country of housemaid was Saudi Arabia in last few years. But the housemaid departures has decline in the year 2017. It was a decreased by 53 per cent over year 2016. (11,381 housemaid in year 2017 and 24,360 housemaid in year 2016) Japan, Turkey, New Zealand, Rumania and Uganda are new destination countries of labour receiving country of Sri Lanka. All they major recruited were skilled level categories. Considering year 2016 and 2017 foreign employment departures New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Angola, Turkey, Fiji, and Sudan can introduce new approaching countries in foreign employment industry of the Sri Lanka.

Although the statistics given in this report implies that the number of vacancies was significantly higher than the number of recruitment, a further analysis reveals that the actual number of available vacancies would be somewhat lower than the figures indicated in the statistical tables, as certain foreign employment agencies or the employers place the same job order (a list of vacancies) with several local licensed foreign employment agencies (multiple errors). In addition, increase in local wage levels, cost of recruitment, and decrease in wage levels offered by foreign employers are amongst the factors lowering the motivation of Sri Lankan employees to go for foreign employment.

Dependence of the Sri Lankan economy on worker remittances needs to be reduced. Socio-economic developments such as high youth unemployment have led several Middle Eastern countries to implement national policies to create jobs for the locals and restrict migrant labour. Such scenarios raise significant threats to the ability of Sri Lankan migrant workers in securing jobs in these markets. In addition, increasing demand for skilled labour and large scale investment on technology to reduce the labour cost could limit the number of foreign job opportunities available for Sri Lankans in the near future. Hence, it is important that vocational and professional training systems match the international standards so that employment opportunities in higher skilled categories in existing markets and new markets in developed countries can be secured. Meanwhile, a substantial portion of the unskilled and middle level foreign job seekers could be channeled towards local industries, which are facing severe labour shortages despite comparably higher wages. In the overall context, long term measures should be brought in to ease the over-dependency on worker-remittances by gradually improving export capacity and Foreign Direct Investments. The Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) continued various programmes to regulate the labour migration process while empowering migrant workers and their families. Ensuring trustworthy foreign employment for Sri Lankan migrant workers, the SLBFE conducted 224 raids on illegal recruitment activities during the year 2017, which is an increase of 27 per cent compared to 2016. The SLBFE also filed 239 court cases against illegal agencies and licensed agencies that violated the law during 2017, using its mandate to regulate the industry. As a welfare measure on the safety of migrant workers, the SLBFE paid a total of Rs. 139.2 million to an insurance scheme that covered 212,470 migrant workers during 2017. A total of 1,966 migrant workers were repatriated due to problems encountered in host countries, utilizing Rs. 78.8 million of the insurance scheme and Workers' Welfare Fund, during 2017. With the view of facilitating the island wide migrant workers' network, measures are being taken to establish Migrant Resource Centers in provinces with a high outflow of migrant workers.