

# 1 Recent trends in emigration from Indonesia

---

This chapter examines recent trends in emigration from Indonesia to the main OECD and non-OECD destination countries. In order to better understand the recent evolution in emigration flows, this chapter first traces the historical context of emigration from Indonesia, particularly since its independence from the Netherlands. Given the importance of temporary labour migration flows of Indonesian nationals to Asian and Middle Eastern countries, the chapter analyses the recent evolution and nature of these flows using available information on the placement of Indonesian migrant workers. The chapter further examines recent migration flows to the main OECD destination countries using data on residence permits issued to Indonesian nationals. Finally, the last section examines emigration intentions among the Indonesian population and the main determining factors of the desire to emigrate.

---

# In Brief

## Key findings

- International migration from Indonesia consists primarily of low-skilled temporary labour flows directed mainly towards non-OECD countries in the ASEAN area and the Middle East. Malaysia is the main destination for temporary Indonesian migrant workers, followed by Chinese Taipei, Singapore, Hong Kong (China) and Saudi Arabia.
- Temporary labour migration flows from Indonesia have significantly declined over the past decade: from 645 000 in 2008, the number of Indonesian nationals deployed abroad to work fell to 276 500 in 2019 (-57%).
- This decline mostly stems from the bans imposed by the Indonesian Government in the early and mid-2010s on sending migrant workers to the Middle East, following the large and increasing number of complaints of abuse and exploitation of Indonesian migrant women in those countries.
- Since 2011, the annual number of Indonesian migrant workers placed abroad decreased in all destination economies except for Hong Kong (China), where it increased from 35 000 in 2014 to over 53 000 in 2019, and Chinese Taipei, where flows remained high and steady.
- Close to 70% of Indonesian migrant workers placed overseas in 2019 came from the Java region, especially from East Java. Other key origin regions were West Nusa Tenggara, Lampung and North Sumatra.
- Women and individuals with low education levels are overrepresented in temporary labour migration flows from Indonesia. In 2019, women accounted for 70% of Indonesian migrant workers deployed abroad.
- This predominance of women is reflected in Indonesian migrant workers' occupations in destination countries: over 50% of them work as domestic workers or caregivers.
- Between 2000 and 2019, Indonesia was the fourth ASEAN country with the largest legal migration flows to OECD countries, with more than 53 000 Indonesian nationals migrating to OECD countries in 2019.
- Among OECD countries, Japan and Korea attract the largest inflows of Indonesian nationals, with close to 29 000 Indonesian nationals migrating to Japan in 2019 and 10 000 migrating to Korea that same year. Other significant OECD destination countries include the United Kingdom and Germany (about 3 000 persons respectively in 2019), Turkey (2 700), the United States and the Netherlands (1 800).
- Migration flows from Indonesia to OECD countries are mainly driven by work and educational reasons.
- Only 2% of adults living in Indonesia express the intention to emigrate permanently, the lowest share among all ASEAN countries (11% on average).

## Historical context of emigration from Indonesia

With more than 273 million people, Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world. Its geographic location, at the heart of some of the most important trade routes, notably connecting East Asia to the Middle East, has favoured international trade and mobility from and to Indonesia long before the colonial era. Flows to Indonesia were therefore originally composed of merchants, spice traders, preachers or teachers, mostly from other Asian and Middle Eastern countries (Missbach and Palmer, 2018<sup>[1]</sup>). From the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and during the colonisation by the Netherlands, migration from Indonesia was heavily controlled and limited by the colonial power. Hugo (2006<sup>[2]</sup>) argues that the bulk of emigration flows during this period were forced and had to serve the interests of the colonial regime. The colonial administration therefore sent Indonesian labour migrants to Malaysia and Singapore, where they worked as smallholders, construction and plantation workers (Melchert, 2017<sup>[3]</sup>). They were also sent to New Caledonia and Suriname, another Dutch colony, where they mainly worked in plantations (Sugiyanto, 2017<sup>[4]</sup>).

After Indonesia gained its independence in 1949, and for the next ten years, thousands of Dutch were repatriated to the Netherlands, as well as many soldiers who had fought for the Dutch during the independence war. In addition to the exodus of Dutch citizens, many Chinese Indonesians also left the country during the late 1950s to settle in China (Missbach and Palmer, 2018<sup>[1]</sup>). These emigration flows partly stemmed from discrimination practices in place in Indonesia.

During the New Order regime under the presidency of Suharto (1966-98), emigration was also motivated by political struggles: a large number of dissidents left the country to continue fighting against the regime from abroad. These individuals mostly came from the regions of Aceh, East Timor and West Papua and migrated to neighbouring countries – Malaysia, Australia and Papua New Guinea.

Furthermore, given the growth of the working-age population and the lack of employment opportunities in Indonesia, the country rapidly became a major emigration country in Southeast Asia. The oil boom of the 1980s pushed a large number of Indonesian to migrate to Saudi Arabia. These mostly unskilled migrants also increasingly went to Malaysia to work. The Suharto regime was the first to regulate migration and established the Centre for Overseas Employment (AKAN) in 1984 (Melchert, 2017<sup>[3]</sup>). Temporary labour migration abroad became a strategy for the government to reduce labour surpluses and unemployment in the country. Given the high labour demand in the domestic and care sectors in destination countries such as Saudi Arabia, women quickly became overrepresented in outflows of Indonesian migrant workers. At the same time, Indonesian emigrants who migrated more permanently settled in other destination countries, mainly the Netherlands, the United States, Australia and Canada (Hugo, 2000<sup>[5]</sup>).

The financial crisis faced by Asian countries in 1997 affected international migration movements in Indonesia. Among Asian countries, Indonesia was hit the hardest by the crisis and saw its population increasingly emigrating with the objective of finding better employment opportunities and living conditions abroad. After a decade of rapid and strong economic growth, the financial crisis resulted in the depreciation of the Indonesian rupiah and in growing levels of inflation, unemployment and poverty. More than 5 million Indonesians lost their jobs between 1997 and 1998 (Melchert, 2017<sup>[3]</sup>). The number of deployed Indonesian migrant workers – still dominated by women – increased by 75% during the first year of the crisis (Hugo, 2000<sup>[5]</sup>). Following this increase and as these Indonesian overseas workers were especially prone to exploitation and abuse, the government established in 2007 the National Body for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Labour (BNP2TKI<sup>1</sup>) under the authority of the Ministry of Workforce and Transmigration (Ananta and Arifin, 2017<sup>[6]</sup>). In addition to official labour migration, the flows of undocumented Indonesians were, not only much more substantial, but also grew faster, especially to Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong (China) or Chinese Taipei.

Created in 1967 by Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) aims at promoting political, economic and cultural integration in the region, through notably achieving free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labour, and freer flow of

capital among member countries. The establishment in 2015 of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was a step further in achieving these objectives. However, although about 85% of migrants in ASEAN are low-skilled, Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs), which allow workers with recognised skills and experience to work in another ASEAN country, only concern seven skilled occupations<sup>2</sup> (Adhisti, 2018<sup>[7]</sup>). Furthermore, the number of low-skilled migrants from Indonesia is the highest among ASEAN countries.

## Recent trends in temporary labour migration flows from Indonesia

The majority of migration flows from Indonesia are characterised by temporary low-skilled labour migration. Most of these outflows are not directed towards OECD countries, except for Japan and Korea, the only two Asian OECD countries. Rather, Indonesian workers have been migrating temporarily to Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern countries. The legal pathways for these temporary labour migration flows have been facilitated and enhanced by the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BNP2MI). Indonesian nationals can obtain fixed-term work contracts abroad, generally up to two or three years. Although temporary migrant workers cannot decide to stay permanently in their country of destination, the high recruitment fees can entice them to work longer than expected in the country (IOM, 2010<sup>[8]</sup>).

Nonetheless, faced with the difficulty in accessing these legal migration channels – which notably induce high recruitment and migrations costs for migrants and substantial bureaucratic processes, a significant number of Indonesian nationals migrate irregularly, notably to other ASEAN countries and especially to Malaysia. These irregular migration flows are however very difficult to measure.

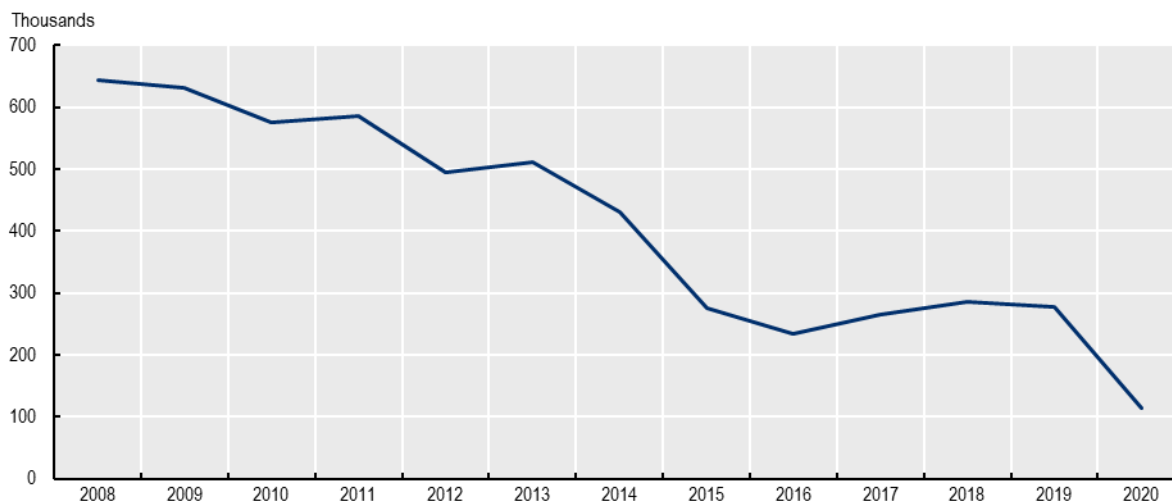
### ***The increasing awareness of abuse in destination countries led to a recent decline in temporary labour migration flows from Indonesia***

Temporary labour migration flows from Indonesia have significantly declined over the past decade. From about 645 000 in 2008, the number of Indonesian nationals deployed abroad to work fell to 276 500 in 2019 (- 57%) according to data published by the BNP2TMI (Figure 1.1). In 2020, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of placements of Indonesian migrant workers further decreased to reach 113 000 (see Box 1.1).

The main factor explaining this decline in temporary migration flows is related to the exploitation and abuse experienced by Indonesian overseas workers in destination countries, especially in Middle Eastern countries and in Malaysia. Regarding Malaysia, Indonesian migrant workers were banned from migrating to the country from 2009 to 2011. Given the large and increasing number of complaints of abuse from Indonesian migrants – mostly women – in the Middle East, and the execution of an Indonesian domestic worker in Saudi Arabia, the Indonesian Government imposed a moratorium preventing Indonesian migrant workers from going to Saudi Arabia to work in the domestic sector in 2011. In 2015, the government implemented a ban on sending all Indonesian migrant workers to 21 countries in the Middle East after two additional migrant women were executed in Saudi Arabia. The increasing awareness of abuse and exploitation experienced by Indonesian migrant workers abroad might have disincentivised a share of Indonesian candidates for temporary migration.

Other factors can also explain this decline, among which the rising level of the minimum wage in Indonesia, making foreign wages less attractive, as well as the decrease in fertility rates over the past 20 years. This decline in fertility rates is especially true in the Java region where most domestic workers come from (Ananta and Arifin, 2017<sup>[6]</sup>). Indeed, in 2019, close to 70% of Indonesian temporary migrant workers came from the Java region and especially from East Java while 46% of the Indonesian population lives in the three Java provinces. The rest of Indonesian migrant workers come from West Western Lesser Sunda Islands (11%), Lampung (8%) and North Sumatra (6%) (see Annex Figure 1.A.1).

**Figure 1.1. Annual number of placements of Indonesian migrant workers abroad, 2008-20**



Source: National Agency for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers (BNP2MI) (2021).

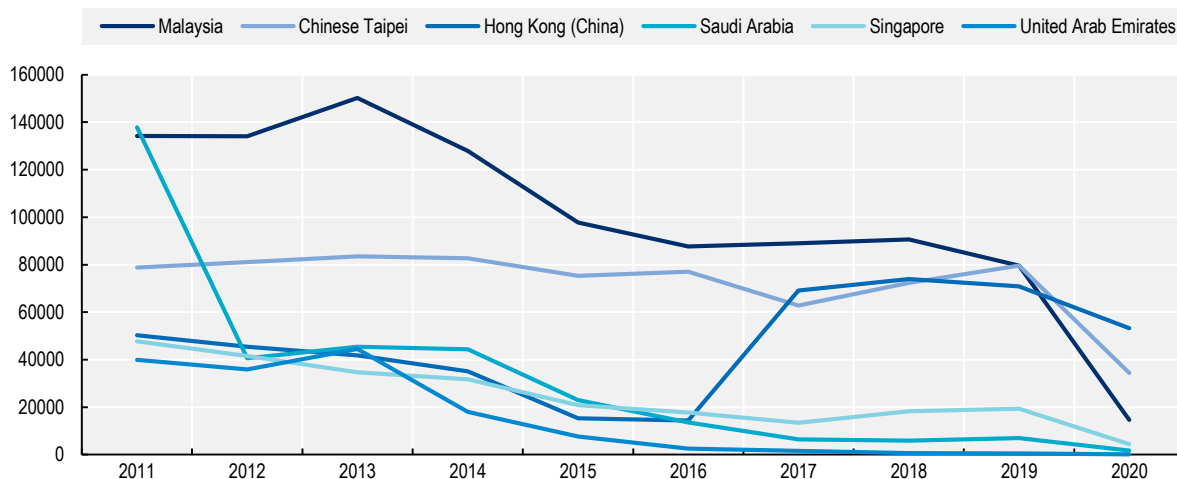
### ***Malaysia has been the top destination country of Indonesian temporary migrant workers***

Over the past decade, Malaysia has been the first destination for Indonesian temporary migrant workers, followed by Chinese Taipei, Singapore, Hong Kong (China) and Saudi Arabia (Figure 1.2). Although the number of Indonesian migrant workers deployed to Malaysia declined by 41%, from about 134 200 in 2011 to 79 600 in 2019, Malaysia still remained the first recipient of Indonesian migrant workers in 2019, tied with Chinese Taipei. Close to 60% of Indonesian migrant workers abroad went to Malaysia or Chinese Taipei that year. Malaysia has been a traditional destination country for Indonesian emigrants: within the ASEAN region, the second largest migration corridor is from Indonesia to Malaysia, the first one being from Myanmar to Thailand (Adhisti, 2018<sup>[7]</sup>). The linguistic, cultural and historical ties between the two countries, the geographical proximity and the institutionalised network of worker placement agencies and sponsors in Malaysia, are some of the determining factors of labour migration from Indonesia to Malaysia (IOM, 2010<sup>[8]</sup>).

Middle Eastern countries, and especially those from the Gulf region, have also been major recipients of Indonesian migrant workers. Out of the first ten destination countries for Indonesian workers placed abroad in 2019, five were located in the Gulf region. In the 2000s, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrein, Jordan and Qatar together attracted the largest flows of Indonesian migrant workers after Malaysia (IOM, 2010<sup>[8]</sup>). Figure 1.2 shows that the flows of Indonesian temporary labour migrants to Saudi Arabia decreased by 95% between 2011 and 2019. In 2011, Saudi Arabia was the first destination country with close to 138 000 Indonesian migrant workers migrating to the country, while it was the case for only 7 000 migrant workers in 2019. Similarly, flows to the United Arab Emirates and Qatar decreased drastically over that same period. This decrease results from the ban imposed by the Indonesian Government on sending Indonesian temporary migrant workers to Saudi Arabia from 2011 and to 21 countries in the Middle East in 2015 and coincides therefore as well with a decrease in the number of complaints by Indonesian nationals in Saudi Arabia. However, in parallel to this decrease, the number of complaints from Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia increased following the lift of the ban on temporary migration to Malaysia in 2011.

With the ban on labour migration to Middle Eastern countries, Indonesian nationals continued to migrate to Asian destinations, notably Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong (China) and Singapore. Over the last five years of this decade, flows of Indonesian migrant workers to Hong Kong (China) increased substantially: this number grew from 35 000 to 53 000 between 2014 and 2019 (Figure 1.2). Flows to Chinese Taipei have remained steady and at a relatively high level between 2011 and 2019. However, labour migration flows from Indonesia have declined in all the other destination countries.

**Figure 1.2. Annual number of placements of Indonesian migrant workers in main destination economies, 2011-20**



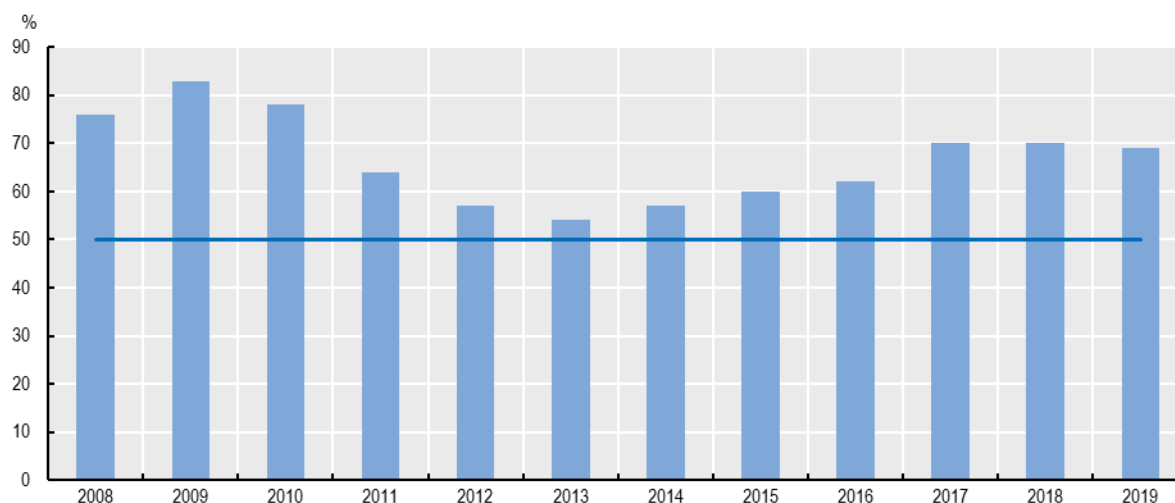
Source: National Agency for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers (BNP2MI) (2021).

### ***Women and low-skilled migrants are overrepresented among recent Indonesian nationals deployed abroad***

Women are overrepresented in the temporary labour migration flows of Indonesian nationals: in 2019, they accounted for 70% of Indonesian migrant workers deployed abroad (Annex Figure 1.A.1). This predominance of women in migration flows from Indonesia is reflected in the distribution of Indonesian migrants' occupations in destination countries. In 2019, 31% of them worked as domestic workers and 20% as caregivers. Because these occupations are considered “feminine”, the increasing demand for migrant labour in these sectors has led to the overrepresentation of women in low-skilled migration flows. In contrast, Indonesian migrant men tend to work in manufacturing or agriculture. In 2009, women accounted for over 80% of Indonesian migrant workers deployed abroad. Figure 1.3 shows that this share gradually decreased to reach just over 50% in 2013. This decrease can be explained by the ban imposed on Indonesian workers migrating to the Middle East in the early 2010s in the objective of reducing abuse and exploitation of these women. Yet, the share of women rose again and has been around 70% since 2017.

Indonesian migrant workers migrating to Asian and Middle Eastern countries have on average low education levels. In 2019, out of 276 500 Indonesian workers deployed abroad, only about 4 000 had graduated from high school or higher (i.e. 1.4% of the total). For 32% of them, elementary school was their highest education level and 37% attained junior high school.

Figure 1.3. Share of women in annual deployment of Indonesian migrant workers abroad, 2008-19



Source: National Agency for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers (BNP2MI) (2021).

### Box 1.1. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migration flows from Indonesia

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the implementation of strict restrictions – among which border closures – in Asian countries, which significantly affected migration flows in general, as well as the deployment of migrant workers in Asia. Some countries decided to stop the deployment to destination countries affected by the pandemic. In addition, business closure and economic slowdown induced by the pandemic sometimes led to a decline in labour demand in destination countries. Finally, the sharp reduction in commercial flights hampered international mobility (ADBI/OECD/ILO, 2021<sup>[9]</sup>).

The deployment of Indonesian migrant workers abroad especially declined in April 2020, as outflows were 90% lower than in April 2019. Outflows from Indonesia picked up again in October 2020. However, the number of Indonesian migrant workers deployed in 2020 (113 000) declined by 60% compared to 2019 (276 500) (see Figure 1.1).

Although the number of Indonesian migrant workers deployed abroad was already following a decreasing trend, the decline in outflows in 2020 compared to 2019 was much more significant than it was in 2019 compared to 2018. Malaysia – first destination country for Indonesian emigrants – considerably reduced the number of visa issuance for foreign workers in April and May 2020, but resumed issuance in June (ADBI/OECD/ILO, 2021<sup>[9]</sup>). During that period, the country stopped the admission of low-skilled temporary migrant workers and temporary labour migration flows from Indonesia to Malaysia decreased by 82% in 2020. Furthermore, the number of Indonesian migrant workers deployed decreased by around 75% in Saudi Arabia and in Singapore, and by 80 to 90% in Brunei Darussalam, the United Arab Emirates, Korea, Qatar and Oman. Flows to Hong Kong (China) declined by 25% and those to Chinese Taipei declined by 57%.

The COVID-19 pandemic also provoked the return of many Indonesian migrant workers to their hometowns. It is estimated that around 180 000 Indonesian migrant workers returned to Indonesian within the early stages of the pandemic.

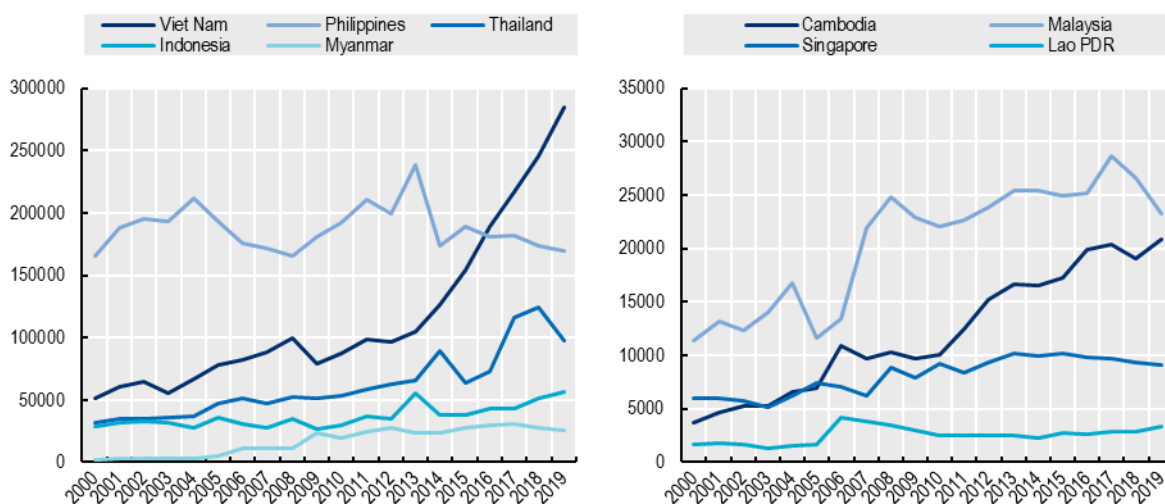


## Recent migration flows from Indonesia to OECD countries

### **Indonesia is the fourth ASEAN country with the largest emigration flows to OECD countries**

According to the *OECD International Migration Database* (see Annex A), between 2000 and 2019, Indonesia was the fourth ASEAN country with the largest legal migration flows to OECD countries. In 2019, flows from Viet Nam, the Philippines and Thailand were higher than flows from Indonesia (Figure 1.4). If migration flows from the Philippines were distinctly higher than those from other ASEAN countries until 2016 (fluctuating between 165 000 and 230 000 persons per year), flows from Viet Nam grew considerably and exceeded the volume of flows from the Philippines in 2017. This increase in flows from Viet Nam is attributable to a substantial rise in migration to Japan since 2012 (+ 660% between 2012 and 2019), resulting from the expansion of the Technical Intern Training Programme. Therefore, in 2019, more than 284 000 Vietnamese nationals migrated to OECD countries against 170 000 and 97 000 persons from the Philippines and Thailand respectively. Flows from Indonesia to the OECD area were substantially lower, reaching about 57 000 persons in 2019.

**Figure 1.4. Annual migration flows from ASEAN countries to OECD countries, 2000-19**



Note: Data are obtained from the sum of standardised gross flows for countries where they are available. Flows from Brunei Darussalam are not included in the chart and flows from this country fluctuate between 100 and 1 400 persons per year.

Source: OECD International Migration Database (2021). Flows from the United Kingdom come from Eurostat (2021), "First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship" (database).

### **A slower growth in migration flows to the OECD area than most ASEAN countries over the past decade**

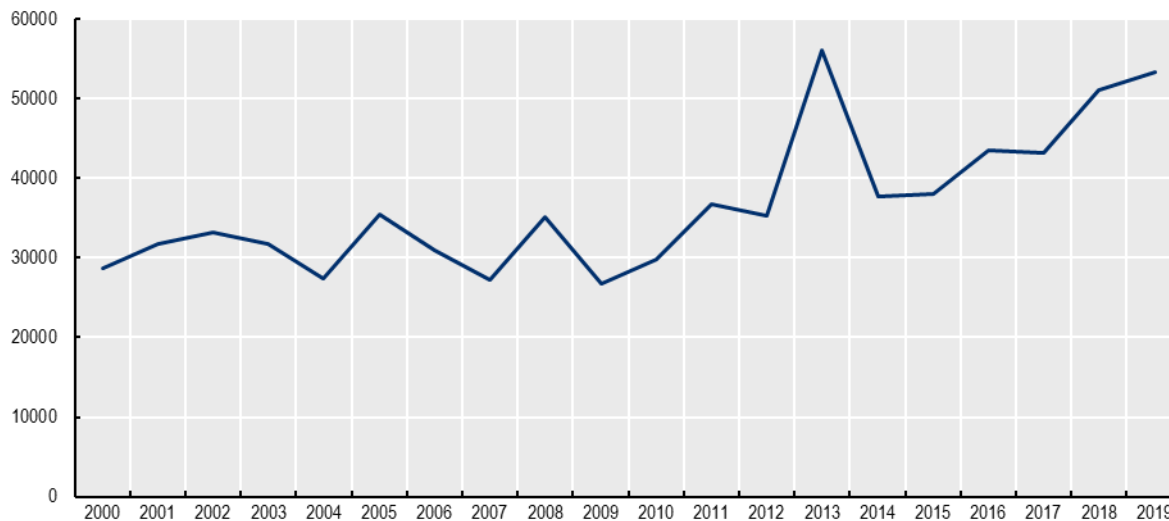
Migration flows from Indonesia to OECD countries grew by 98% between 2000 and 2019. Overall, this growth has not been as strong as that of most other ASEAN countries. Flows from Malaysia and Thailand grew by 105% and 200% respectively, while the growth in flows from Cambodia and Viet Nam was around 450%. The strongest growth in emigration flows to the OECD was that of Myanmar (more than 900%). In contrast, flows from Singapore, the Philippines and Brunei Darussalam overall grew slower.

The relatively slower growth in flows from Indonesia to OECD countries over the past 20 years is only attributable to the stagnation in flows over the first decade. Between 2000 and 2010, migration flows from



Indonesia to OECD countries only grew by 4%. During this period, the annual number of entries fluctuated between about 27 000 and 35 500 (Figure 1.5). However, flows grew by 90% between 2010 and 2019, the third strongest growth rate among ASEAN countries after Viet Nam and Cambodia.

**Figure 1.5. Migration flows of Indonesian nationals to OECD countries, 2000-19**



Note: Data are obtained from the sum of standardised gross flows for countries where they are available.

Source: OECD International Migration Database (2021). Data on flows to the United Kingdom come from Eurostat (2021), "First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship", (database).

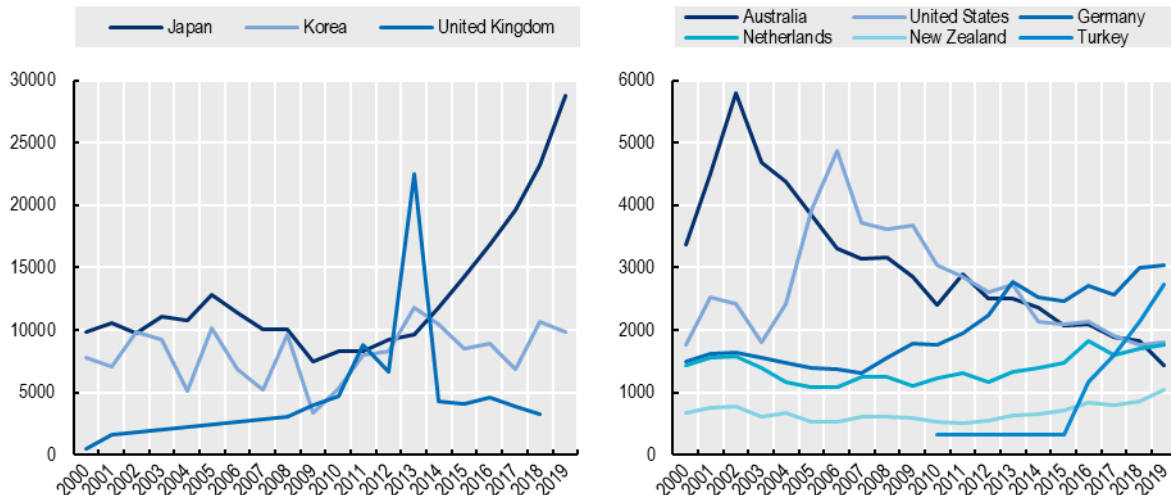
### ***Among OECD countries, Japan and Korea receive the largest inflows of Indonesian nationals***

Japan was by far the main recipient of Indonesian nationals of all OECD countries in 2019, with inflows reaching a peak of 28 800 persons that year (Figure 1.6). Korea is the second OECD destination country for Indonesian nationals, registering close to 10 000 entries in 2019. Beyond these two countries, in 2019, OECD destination countries for Indonesian emigrants include the United Kingdom and Germany (about 3 000 persons respectively), Turkey, (2 700), and finally the United States and the Netherlands (1 800).

Although Japan remained Indonesian nationals' first OECD destination country during the first decade, migration flows to the country first stagnated around 10 800 persons per year from 2000 to 2005 and slightly decreased until 2009 (Figure 1.6). However, the number of Indonesian nationals migrating to Japan has significantly increased since 2013. Indeed, flows grew by 200% between 2013 and 2019, gradually exceeding flows to other OECD countries. The stronger growth in migration flows from Indonesia to OECD countries observed since 2010 mostly results from the substantial increase in flows to Japan. In the recent years, Japan has seen a significant increase in migration inflows from other Asian countries, and especially from Viet Nam, a growth largely attributable to the expansion of Japans' Technical Internship Programme (ADB/OECD/ILO, 2021<sup>[9]</sup>). In contrast, flows to Korea have fluctuated between about 3 400 and 11 800 between 2000 and 2019, overall increasing by 25% between 2000 and 2019 (Figure 1.6).

On average over the past decade, around 5 000 Indonesian nationals have migrated to the United Kingdom each year. Australia was an important OECD destination country in the early 2000s, especially in 2002 when close to 6 000 Indonesian nationals went to the country. This number gradually declined during the next years (- 75% between 2002 and 2019). Similarly, flows from Indonesia to the United States significantly increased between 2003 and 2006, peaking at 5 000 persons that year and substantially decreased until 2019. In contrast to these declining trends, migration flows from Indonesia increased to Germany in the 2010s and to Turkey from 2015 onwards (Figure 1.6).

**Figure 1.6. Migration flows of Indonesian nationals to main OECD destination countries, 2000-19**

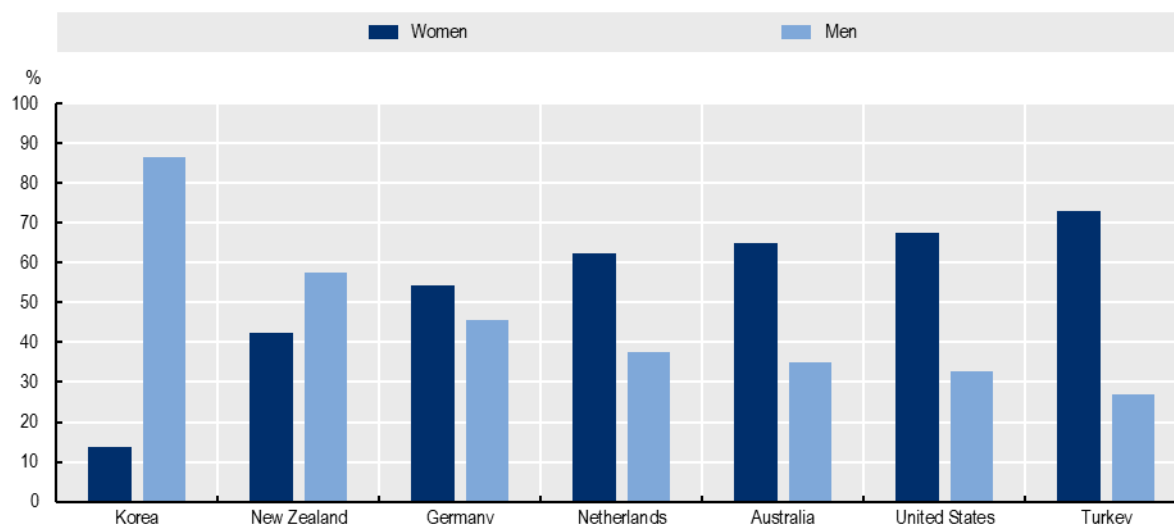


Note: Data on flows to the United Kingdom are not available from 2002 to 2007. Data on flows to Turkey are not available before 2010 and from 2011 to 2014.

Source: OECD International Migration Database (2021). Data on flows to the United Kingdom come from Eurostat (2021), "First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship" (database).

Women are overrepresented in the recent migration flows from Indonesia to most of the main OECD destination countries, except Korea and New Zealand (Figure 1.7). Only 14% of Indonesian nationals migrating to Korea in 2019 were women. According to the data published by the Ministry of Justice of Korea on permits issued to Indonesian nationals, women are much more likely to migrate to Korea for education and family reasons, while men are mostly issued temporary low-skilled professional visas, where they mainly work in construction, manufacturing, agriculture or fishery. However, as detailed above, Indonesian migrant women strongly respond to the high demand for female migrant labour in domestic and care sectors in some Asian and Middle Eastern countries. In contrast, the share of women is especially high in flows to Turkey: in 2019, they accounted for 73% of Indonesian nationals migrating to Turkey. If this share is lower in Australia (67%), the United States (65%) and the Netherlands (62%), women are still substantially more numerous than their male counterparts among Indonesians migrating to these countries.

**Figure 1.7. Distribution by sex of migration flows of Indonesian nationals to main destination OECD countries, 2019**



Note: Data on flows to the United Kingdom and to Japan disaggregated by sex are not available.

Source: OECD International Migration Database (2021).

### ***Migration flows from Indonesia to OECD countries are mainly driven by work and educational reasons***

The bulk of migration flows from Indonesia to Asian OECD countries consists of temporary labour migration. In Japan, a significant share of these temporary labour migration flows occur in the context of the Japanese Technical Intern Training Programme (TITP). This temporary labour programme allow foreign migrant workers to work in small and medium-sized enterprises for a maximum duration of 5 years, during which they are supposed to acquire skills. The number of Indonesian nationals participating to the TITP increased fivefold from less than 4 000 in 2010 to more than 18 000 in 2019. In July of that year Japan signed a Memorandum of Co-operation with 14 countries including Indonesia in order to strengthen the TITP in the context of the creation of the Specified Skilled Worker Programme (OECD, 2020<sub>[10]</sub>). This led to an intensification in the temporary migration flows from Indonesia to Japan in 2019.

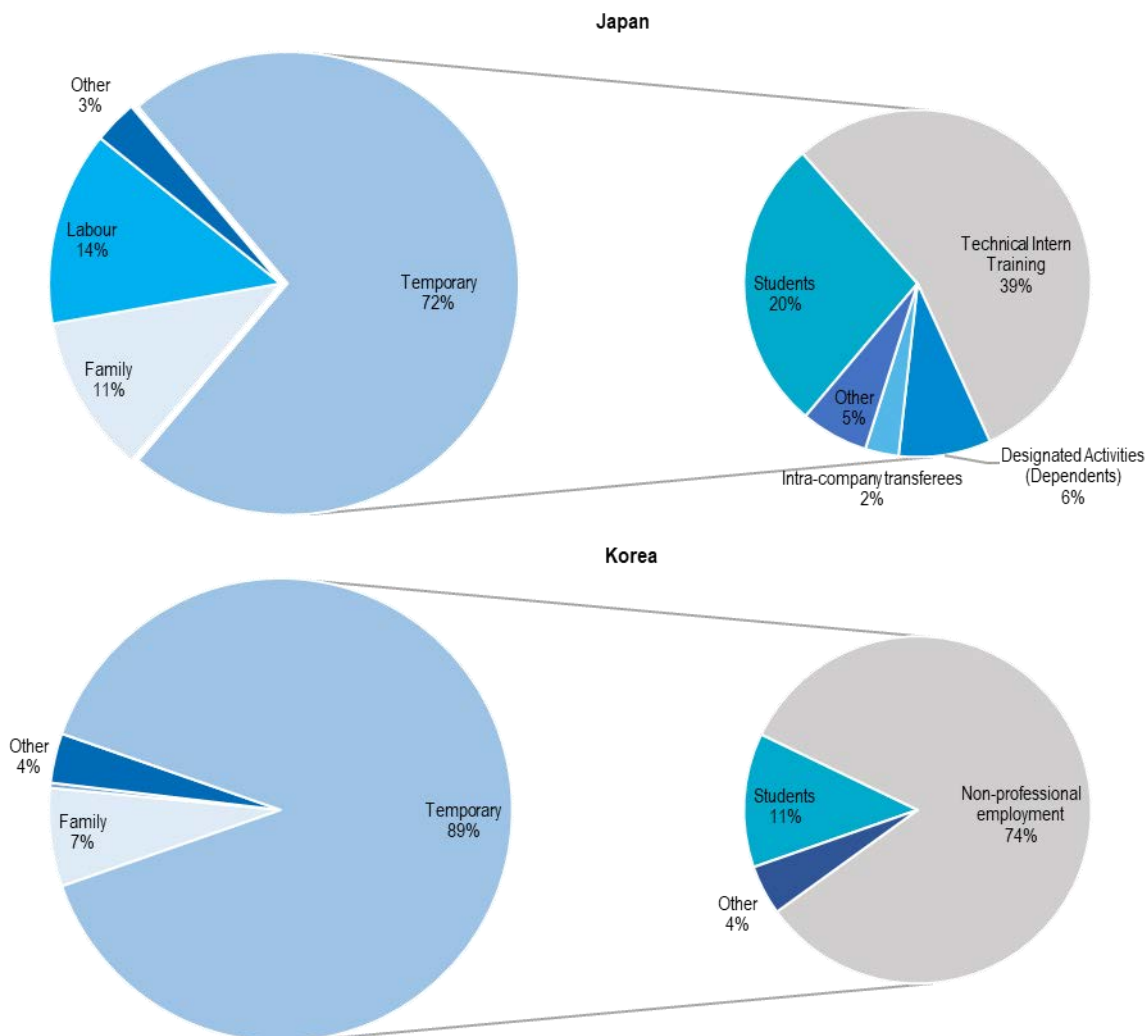
Likewise, 89% of permits issued to Indonesian nationals by Korea in 2019 were temporary permits, among which the large majority were issued for work reasons (Figure 1.8). About 14 000 temporary work permits were issued to low-skilled Indonesian nationals and around 400 to highly skilled Indonesians. Therefore, migration from Indonesia to Korea is mainly characterised by low-skilled temporary labour migration flows, organised through the Korean Employment Service System (EPS). The EPS is the largest OECD temporary foreign worker programme operating on a bilateral basis. Indonesia signed this bilateral agreement with Korea in 2004, and has become one of the main origin countries sending temporary migrant workers to Korea (OECD, 2019<sub>[11]</sub>).

In addition to temporary work visas, Japan and Korea also issue a substantial number of temporary visas to Indonesian nationals for educational reasons. In 2019, Korea issued 2 700 student permits to Indonesian nationals, representing 11% of temporary permits. However, permits issued for educational reasons accounted for 20% of temporary permits issued by Japan to Indonesian nationals (9 000 in 2019) (Figure 1.8).

Regarding longer-term permits, almost 30% of residence permits issued by Japan are permanent permits, divided between family and highly skilled work permits: in 2019, about 6 300 Indonesian nationals received

visas for professional reasons, mostly delivered to dependants, and more than 5 000 were issued visas for family reasons. In contrast, longer-term permits only represented 10% of the total number of permits issued by Korea to Indonesian nationals in 2019. Korea issued 1 600 permits to Indonesian nationals for family reasons and close to 100 for work reason, mostly destined to corporate investors (Figure 1.8).

**Figure 1.8. Visas issued to Indonesian nationals by Japan and Korea, by grounds of admission, 2019**



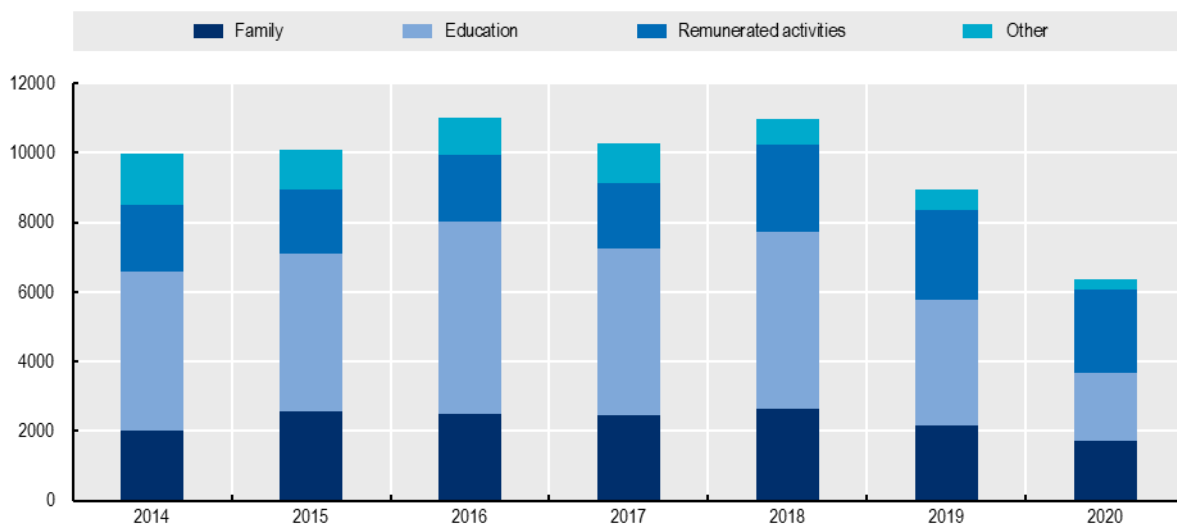
Note: The second pie chart on the right refers to the decomposition of the “temporary” category illustrated on the first pie chart on the left.  
Source: Ministry of Justice of Japan (2020) and Ministry of Justice of Korea (2020).

Migration flows from Indonesia to Australia are mainly temporary and driven by educational reasons. In 2019, more than 80% of permits issued to Indonesian nationals by Australia were temporary permits among which 78% were student permits. In Australia, Indonesia is one of the main origin countries in terms of international student.

Many Indonesian nationals migrating to European countries do so for education purposes. On average between 2014 and 2020, 45% of first residence permits issued to Indonesian nationals by European countries were issued for educational reasons (Figure 1.9). Permits issued for family and work reasons accounted for respectively 24% and 22% of all residence permits issued during that period, while 10% of

them were delivered for other reasons – a category mainly including permits issued for humanitarian reasons. More than 70% of permits issued for educational reasons were permits valid for more than 12 months. However, permits issued for remunerated activities reasons were more likely to be short-term permits: only 43% of them were valid for more than 12 months.

**Figure 1.9. Residence permits issued by European countries to Indonesian nationals by reason, 2010-20**



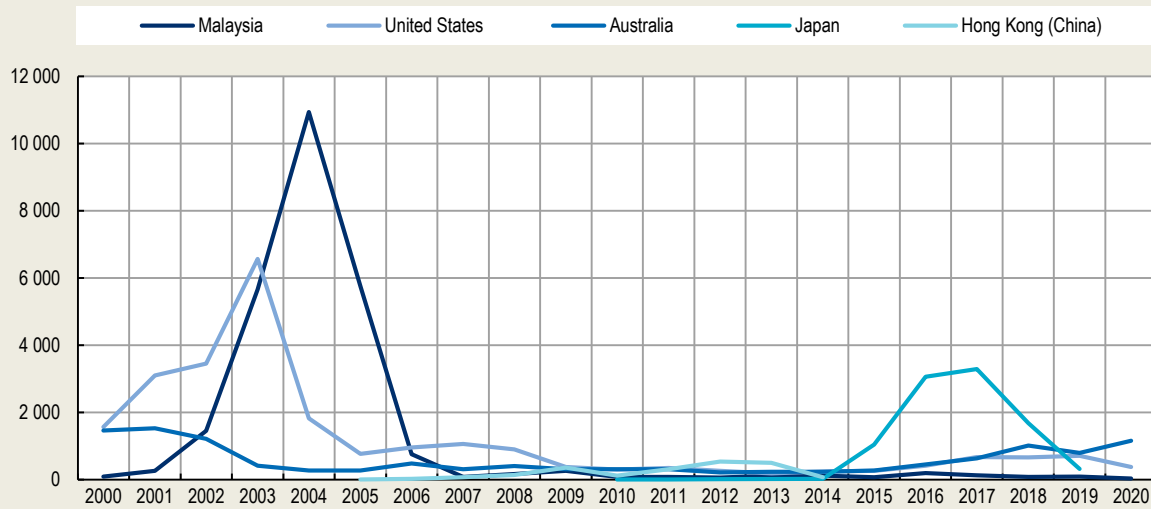
Note: The data correspond to the first residence permits issued to Indonesian nationals for all durations.

Source: Eurostat (2020), "First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship" (database).

### Box 1.2. Evolution of the flows of Indonesian asylum applicants in the world

According to the UNHCR database on asylum, 2 170 Indonesian nationals submitted an asylum claim in 2019. Overall, since 2000, the annual number of asylum claims has been relatively low, except in the early 2000s. Between 2000 and 2005, the number of Indonesian asylum applicants soared to reach more than 13 300 asylum claims in the world, concentrated for the most part in Malaysia and in the United States. As illustrated in Figure 1.10, the United States received 6 600 asylum claims from Indonesian nationals in 2003 and 10 900 Indonesians submitted an asylum application in Malaysia in 2004. This increase in the number of Indonesian asylum seekers partly resulted from the conflict between the Indonesian armed forces and the Free Aceh Movement, a separatist political movement in the province of Aceh located in the North of Sumatra. This conflict lasted from 1976 to 2004 and provoked the displacement of a large number of Acehnese people. Specifically, the collapse of the peace process and the military operations launched by Indonesian forces in May 2003 led to a substantial rise in the flows of Acehnese asylum seekers to Malaysia. Furthermore, the consequences of the 1998 anti-Chinese Indonesian riots pushed hundreds of Chinese Indonesian Christians to migrate to the United States (Missbach and Palmer, 2018<sup>[1]</sup>). Between 2005 and 2014, the number of Indonesian asylum claims remained low and stagnated around 1 300. However, between 2014 and 2017, the number of asylum claims grew more than six fold and these Indonesian nationals exclusively sought protection in Japan.

**Figure 1.10. Annual number of asylum claims submitted by Indonesian nationals in the world, 2000-21**



Source: UNHCR, Refugee Statistics (2021).

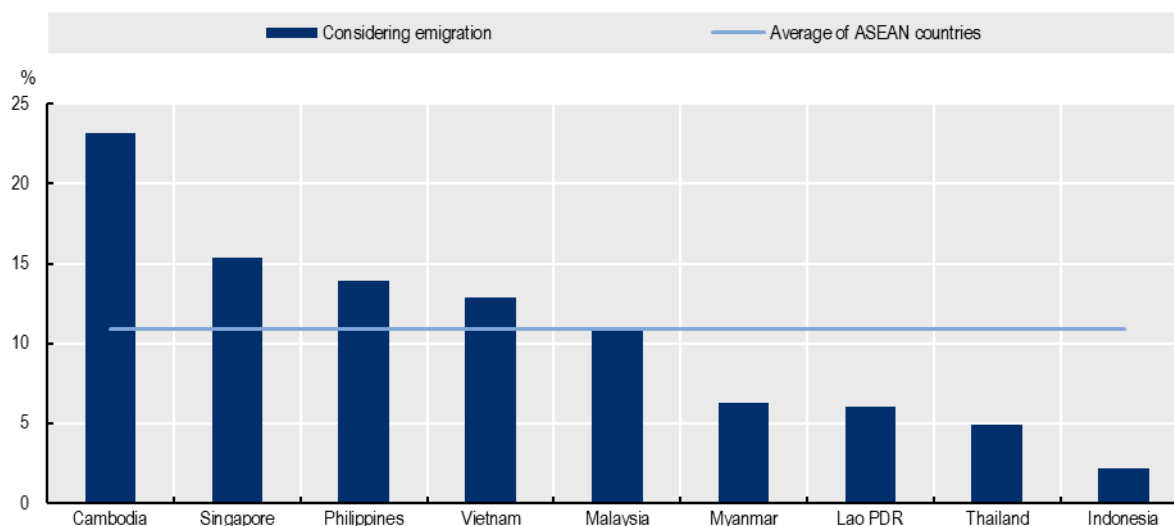
## Emigration prospects among the Indonesian population

Apprehending emigration intentions among the population living in Indonesia provides a better understanding of the scope and reasons of Indonesian emigration flows. Furthermore, emigration intentions can provide useful insights into future trends in these flows. The Gallup World Poll (see Annex A) collects information on the emigration intentions of persons born and residing in Indonesia aged 15 years or older. The availability of data on the characteristics of these individuals makes it possible to analyse correlations between intentions to leave the country and various socio-economic variables such as education level and employment status.

Between 2010 and 2021, only 2.2% of persons living in Indonesia aged 15 or older expressed the intention to emigrate permanently (Figure 1.11). This share is the lowest among all ASEAN countries. On average, 11% of the population living in ASEAN countries expressed the desire to leave their country, which is 9 percentage points higher than within the Indonesian population. If intentions to emigrate in Thailand, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and Myanmar are only slightly higher than in Indonesia (5%, 6% and 6% respectively), some ASEAN countries present much higher emigration intentions. Especially, 23% of Cambodians indicated a wish to leave permanently the country, while it was the case for 15% of the Singaporean population, 14% of Malaysian and 13% of Vietnamese populations. On average since 2010, the reported favourite destination countries of Indonesians wishing to emigrate were Japan (14%), the United States (11%), Malaysia (10%), Australia (9%) and Singapore (6%). These desired destinations are consistent with the actual main destination countries of Indonesian emigrants.

**Figure 1.11. Emigration intentions in ASEAN countries, 2010-21**

Share of the population (aged 15 and over) who consider emigrating permanently



Note: Data on emigration intentions are not available in 2019 and 2020 for all selected countries. Data on emigration intentions in Lao PDR are available in 2011 and 2017 only. In Myanmar, they are available between 2012 and 2017. Data on emigration intentions in Brunei Darussalam are not available.

Source: Gallup World Poll (2021).

As in every country of Southeast Asia, individuals aged 15-24 in Indonesia are more likely to express the intention to emigrate than the overall population. Between 2010 and 2018, 5% of young Indonesians expressed the desire to leave the country – 3 percentage points higher than the global population. This share is also lower than the share of young people intending to emigrate in other ASEAN countries.

Emigration intentions also vary according to education levels: individuals with a higher education level expressed higher emigration intentions (6%), while 3.5% of those with an intermediate education level and less than 1% of low skilled Indonesians indicated wishing to leave the country permanently. Furthermore, the employment situation influences the intention to emigrate: employed individuals are more likely to express the wish to leave the country than individuals declaring themselves unemployed or out of the workforce. Given the predominance of temporary migration flows in emigration patterns from Indonesia, it is probable that emigration intentions would be higher if the question concerned the intention to emigrate temporarily rather than permanently.

## Conclusion

International emigration from Indonesia consists primarily of temporary labour migration flows to non-OECD countries. The lack of employment opportunities and the effects of the financial 1997 Asian financial crisis intensified temporary outflows of Indonesian workers to Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern countries. Increasing complaints and awareness of abuse of Indonesian temporary migrant workers, who for the most part are women working as domestic workers or caregivers, have led the Indonesian Government to implement bans on sending migrants to the Middle East. This entailed a significant decline in the annual deployment of Indonesian migrant workers overseas, especially to Saudi Arabia, which used to be their main destination country. Malaysia, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong (China) and Singapore now attract the largest flows of temporary Indonesian migrant workers. Indonesian nationals also migrate to OECD countries, especially to Japan and Korea, but also to the United Kingdom, Germany,



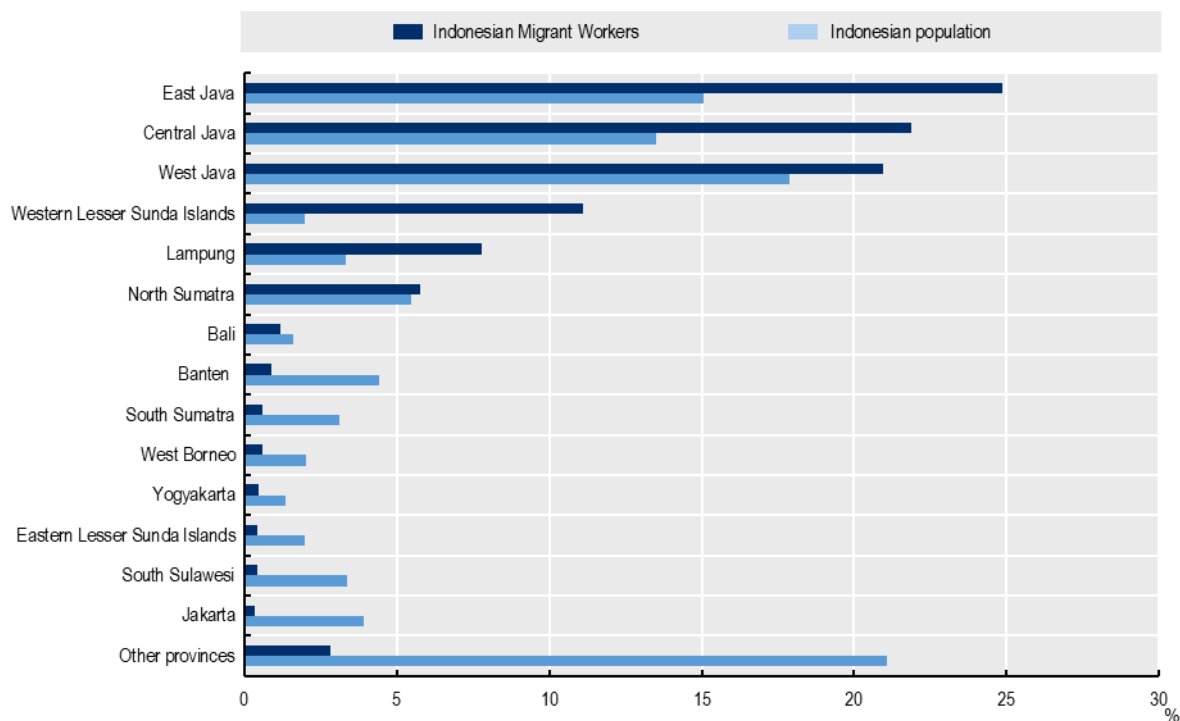
and Turkey. Migration flows to Australia and the United States have recently followed a declining trend. Residence permits issued annually by OECD countries to Indonesian nationals are mostly issued for work and educational reasons. Only 2% of the Indonesian population express the intention to permanently leave the country. Although emigration intentions are higher among young and highly skilled Indonesians, these remain very low compared to other ASEAN countries.

## References

- ADBI/OECD/ILO (2021), *Labor Migration in Asia: Impacts of the COVID-19 Crisis and the Post-Pandemic Future*, OECD Publishing, Paris/ADBI, Tokyo, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a5d6e6aa-en>. [9]
- Adhisti, M. (2018), "Free Movement of Skilled Labor Within the Asean Economic Community", *Economics Development Analysis Journal*, Vol. 6/2, pp. 192-208, <https://doi.org/10.15294/edaj.v6i2.22217>. [7]
- Ananta, A. and E. Arifin (2017), "Emerging Patterns of Indonesia's International Migration", *Malaysian Journal of Economic Studies*, Vol. 51/1. [6]
- Hugo, G. (2006), "Forced Migration in Indonesia: Historical Perspectives", *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol. 15/1, pp. 53-92, <https://doi.org/10.1177/011719680601500104>. [2]
- Hugo, G. (2000), "The Crisis and International Population Movement in Indonesia", *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol. 9/1, pp. 93-129, <https://doi.org/10.1177/011719680000900104>. [5]
- IOM (2010), *Labour Migration from Indonesia: An overview of Indonesian migration to selected destinations in Asia and the Middle East*, International Organization for Migration. [8]
- Melchert, P. (2017), "Indonesian Migrants in Taiwan: Religion and Lifestyle", *Working Papers in Social Anthropology*, University of Münster 4. [3]
- Missbach, A. and W. Palmer (2018), "Indonesia: A Country Grappling with Migrant Protection at Home and Abroad", *Migration Information Source*, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/indonesia-country-grappling-migrant-protection-home-and-abroad>. [1]
- OECD (2020), *International Migration Outlook 2020*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ec98f531-en>. [10]
- OECD (2019), *Recruiting Immigrant Workers: Korea 2019*, OECD Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264307872-en>. [12]
- OECD (2019), *Recruiting Immigrant Workers: Korea 2019*, Recruiting Immigrant Workers, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264307872-en>. [11]
- Sugiyanto, E. (2017), "Strategic Planning for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Labor in restraining non Procedural Indonesian Labor: A Study on BNP2TKI", *International Journal of Applied Engineering Research*, Vol. 12/15. [4]

## Annex 1.A. Additional figures

Annex Figure 1.A.1. Indonesian migrant workers deployed abroad in 2019, by province of origin



Source: National Agency for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers (BNP2MI) (2021).

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Now named BNP2MI.

<sup>2</sup> Engineering services, architectural services, nursing services, medical practitioners, dental practitioners, accountancy services and surveying qualifications.



**From:**  
**A Review of Indonesian Emigrants**

**Access the complete publication at:**  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/48a8a873-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2022), "Recent trends in emigration from Indonesia", in *A Review of Indonesian Emigrants*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/f12f95cd-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.