



East Asia & Pacific Gender



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Why do Indonesian Men and Women Choose Undocumented Migration? Exploring Gender Differences in Labor Migration Patterns

KEY FINDINGS

- Only about 1 in 10 Indonesians aged 18 to 40 and interested in migrating abroad know the requirements for documented migration
- Gender differences in the propensity to become undocumented migrants may be driven by time constraints due to higher care burden women face

CONTEXT

Migrant workers are a key part of Indonesia's economy. The equivalent of almost 7% of Indonesia's labor force, an estimated 9 million people, work overseas. In 2016, over IDR 159 trillion (US\$11.2 billion) was sent back to Indonesia in the form of remittances¹. Indonesians working abroad earn on average 4 times their wages from the last job at home, while receiving remittances from overseas workers reduce the probability of households being poor by 27%².

Undocumented migration increases risk and lowers returns to working abroad.³ Only an estimated one-third of current Indonesian migrant workers have signed a contract prior to departure, and more than half do not have the required documents for migration⁴.

1 Formal remittances constitute about one percent of the country's GDP. Source: KNOMAD. 2019. *Migration and Development Brief 31*. Washington DC: World Bank.
 2 Adams, R., & Cuecuecha, A. (2011). The Economic Impact of International Migration and Remittances on Poverty and Household Consumption and Investment in Indonesia. Policy Research Working Paper 5433.
 3 To be considered documented, or procedural, a prospective migrant needs to have presented the required nine documents (marriage certificate [if applicable], permission letter from parent/spouse/guardian, passport, visa, skills and health certificates, migrant worker placement agreement, employment agreement and BPJS social security membership number) to the local office of the national agency for migrant placement and protection.
 4 World Bank International Migration and Remittances Survey 2014 (WB-IMR 2014).

EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC GENDER INNOVATION LAB

EAPGIL carries out impact evaluations and inferential research to generate evidence on what works in closing gender gaps in assets, economic opportunities, and agency, and how closing these gaps can help achieve other development outcomes. Ultimately, EAPGIL seeks to increase the welfare of women and men in East Asia and the Pacific by promoting the uptake of effective policies and programs identified based on evidence.

Consequently, they face multiple risks: from physical violence to unsafe workplaces and economic exploitation⁵. They are also less likely to reap the full benefits of migration: our data suggest that undocumented migrants earn 24.9% lower wages abroad and send 43.6% less money home.⁶

WHAT DID WE DO?

A team of researchers from the World Bank, in cooperation with Indonesia's Ministry of Manpower (MoM), collected data on migration from 13,372 Indonesians between the ages of 18 and 40 in 179 villages across six provinces between July and October in 2018.⁷ The data is from the baseline survey of an impact evaluation of the MoM's *Desmigratif* program, which facilitates documented migration through a set of innovative outreach methods, from now on referred to as Indonesia Safe Migration Survey. Through *Desmigratif*, MoM will build Migration Information Centers (MICs) in target villages to make formal information more accessible for residents of rural areas. Two experimental interventions will complement MICs: a SMS-based application, which makes information on migration easily accessible and "edutainment" campaigns where videos on migration will be screened in accessible areas

in target villages. Building on the findings in the recent *Indonesia's Global Workers* report, we use our survey data to explore gender differences in the reasons why potential migrants may choose undocumented routes.

WHAT DID WE FIND?

Most Indonesians, including those interested in migrating, do not have accurate information about documented migration. Only 10% of Indonesians surveyed could name the four primary documents required to work abroad. The numbers did not greatly increase with interest in migration: 12% of respondents who expressed interest in migrating could name all four documents (Figure 1). Men and women are equally poorly informed.

Where people get their information is linked to how much they know and how they would migrate. If most potential migrants are unaware of the requirements for migration, where might they go to get that information? Those respondents who intend to get information from formal sources are more knowledgeable about required documents. For example, only 12% and 13% of those relying on friends and on brokers⁹, respectively, can name all the documents required for migration. The

FIGURE 1: MOST RESPONDENTS ARE UNAWARE OF THE DOCUMENTS NEEDED TO REGISTER FOR MIGRATION

Share of respondents interested in migration who could name four documents necessary to register formally, among those interested in migration

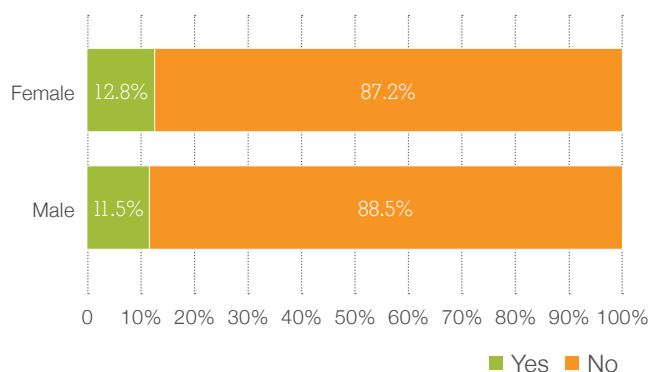
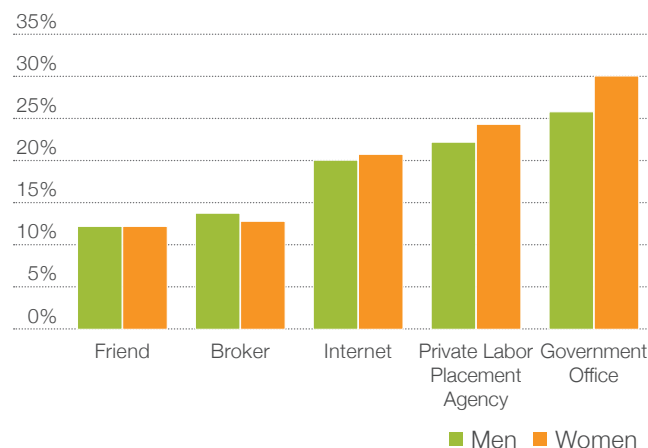


FIGURE 2: WHERE PEOPLE GET INFORMATION MATTERS

Figure 2: Share of respondents who are correct about the documents needed for migration, by information source



Source: Authors' calculation using Indonesia's Safe Migration Survey (ISMS) 2018.⁸

Note: gender differences are not statistically significant

5 World Bank. 2016. *Indonesia's Global Workers: Juggling Opportunity & Risks*. Jakarta: World Bank.

6 A note on the data provided further on in the brief.

7 Provinces surveyed were East Java, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, South Sulawesi, and East Nusa Tenggara. 18 to 40 is the most common age range for Indonesian foreign workers.

8 As all data presented in this brief are from the Indonesia's Safe Migration Survey 2018, reference to the source will be omitted henceforth.

9 Our study defines migration brokers as **individuals** who recruit overseas workers and often assist with job placement and paperwork. Under the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2017 on Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (e.g. Article 69), brokers are prohibited from being involved in the placement process. Therefore, Indonesians employed and placed using the assistance of brokers are more likely to not be recognized as documented migrants.

fraction is about twice as high among those who rely on private labor placement agency or government agencies¹⁰: 24% and 26% respectively. Notably, gender differences are within a range of 1 percentage point and not statistically significant (Figure 2).

Gender plays an important role in determining where migrants register to work abroad. Beyond sources of information, we also ask potential migrants where they would look for job vacancies¹¹. Women are more likely to look for jobs through brokers, while men are more likely to rely on government agencies such as labor offices for their job search (Figure 3). Information sources also matter for registration: both men and women who say they would get information from brokers are much more likely to register through them as well (Figure 4). Notably, women are only more likely than men to register through brokers if they get information from them (Figure 4); among respondents who say they would not get information with a broker, men are more likely to say they would register with one.

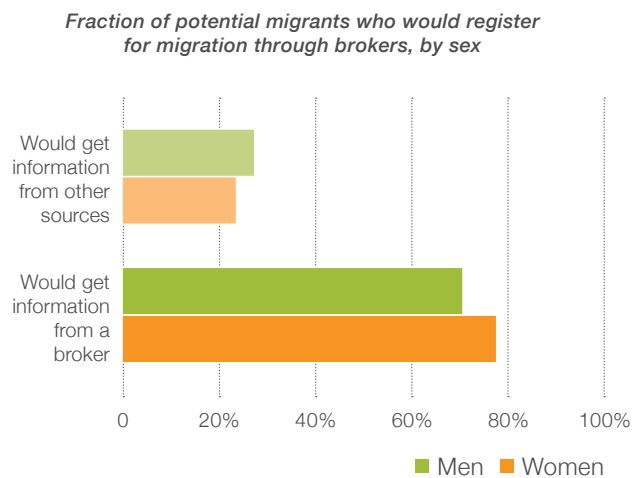
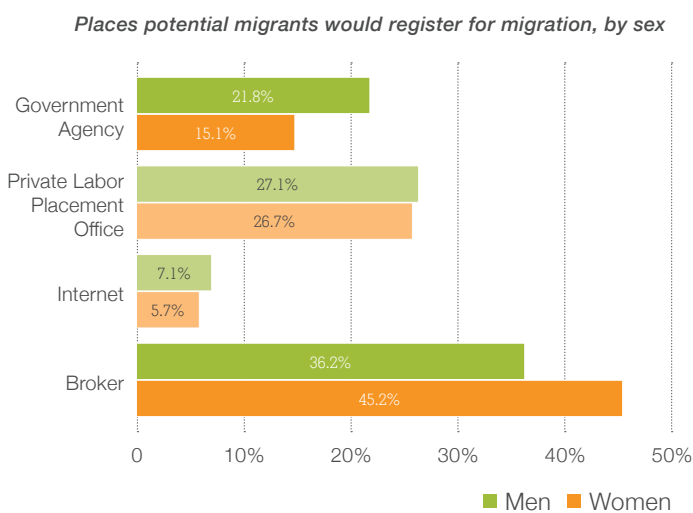
Time constraints may play a role in making women more vulnerable to undocumented migration. In our overall sub-sample of respondents interested in working abroad, women are 25% more likely than men to say they would register through a broker. Conversely,

men are 47.5% more likely than women to say they would register with a formal agency¹². However, these differences are almost entirely driven by women with children under the age of 15: women with no young children show migration preferences that are nearly identical to those of men (Figure 5).

If women without young children show the same preferences as men, what could be driving these differences for women who are taking care of children? Women are more likely to bear the lion's share of time-consuming childcare responsibilities. Labor offices and other government agencies often require long travel times as they can be quite far from those in rural villages and operate during limited number of hours¹³. Meanwhile, informal brokers are often located in potential migrants' neighborhoods and can travel directly to their houses for recruitment or assistance with registration. Of the respondents in our sample who were contacted by brokers, 47% were visited in their own homes, while 34% visited the broker's home. In addition, documented migration in Indonesia is a complicated process, requiring at least 17 separate steps¹⁴. The time burden due to gendered responsibilities may be a significant factor in elevating the risk of undocumented migration among Indonesian women.

FIGURE 3: WOMEN ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO UNDOCUMENTED MIGRATION

FIGURE 4: PEOPLE WHO WOULD GET INFORMATION FROM BROKERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO REGISTER WITH THEM



Note: dark bars represent statistically significant differences between sexes.

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10 Government agencies include labor offices of the Ministry of Manpower and local offices of National Agency for the Protection and Placement of International Migrant Workers (BNP2TKI).

11 To become a documented migrant, one needs to apply for jobs that are approved by relevant government agencies. Brokers may have access to other jobs, including the ones that were not approved by both labor-demanding countries and the Indonesian authorities.

12 We convert percentage points from figure 3 into percent.

13 Government managed, labor offices are typically located in the district capital. The average distance between a village head's office and the district capital is 45.6 km (PODES 2014).

14 World Bank. 2019. *Indonesia's Migration System: Spotlight on the Documentation Process to Better Protect Overseas Workers*. Washington D.C.: World Bank.

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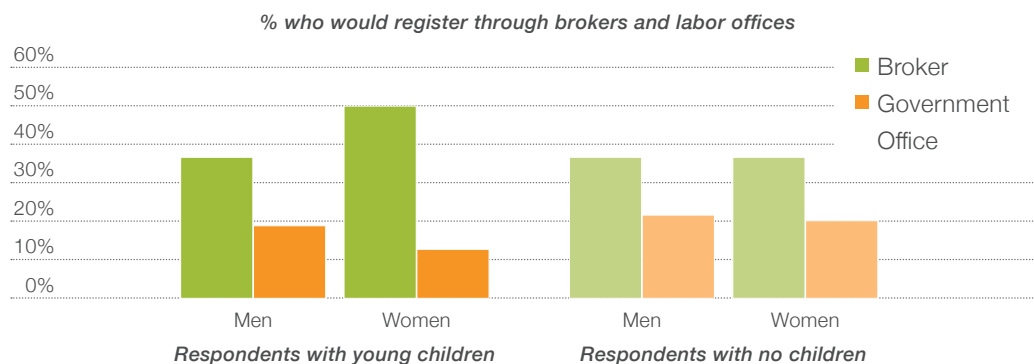
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WHAT ARE THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS?

1. There is a need for dissemination of information about migration with a gender focus. Our data highlight the current lack of knowledge about documented migration among potential migrants in Indonesia, as well as the propensity of both men and women to become undocumented migrants. Earlier studies suggest that men and women are vulnerable in different ways. While men are less likely to experience emotional and physical abuse, they are still likely to become victims of financial exploitation. Top destinations for men and women also vary: women are more likely to go as domestic workers to Middle East, and men as farm and construction workers to Malaysia¹⁵. Information should be targeted to men and women with gender-specific vulnerabilities in mind.

2. Time constraints play an important role in increasing the risk of undocumented migration. Most of the gender gap in intent to migrate through brokers is explained by differences between mothers with and without children, suggesting a time constraint. Combined with lengthy and complicated procedures, this time constraint may prevent women from following documented route. An important first step is simplification and shortening of the documentation process for formal migration¹⁶. Additionally, innovative methods to reach time-constrained potential migrants may go a long way in reducing their propensity to rely on informal sources. One option could be investing in making information remotely accessible, for example, through digital media and/or migration information hotlines. Digital access to information can be useful for migrants who may not be able spare the time or incur travel costs associated with visiting MICs or labor offices. Moreover, digital media are a cost-effective way of providing standardized information on migration.

FIGURE 5: WOMEN'S MIGRATION PREFERENCES ONLY DIFFER FROM MEN'S WHEN THEY HAVE YOUNG CHILDREN



Note: Dark bars show statistically significant differences between sexes.

3. Information should be disseminated in more diverse ways. Our data underscore the many ways in which potential migrants get their information about migration, and the different ways in which they migrate abroad. Information dissemination should reflect this diversity. Aside from setting up MICs in more remote areas, as is currently being implemented in the Ministry of Manpower's Desmigratif program, information could also be spread through more innovative measures. This would include technology-based methods such as SMS campaigns on legal migration and screening of migration-related films in accessible areas.¹⁷ This "edutainment" intervention can provide information in a more accessible format, make risks associated with migration more salient, and has been proven to be an effective way of changing behavior in other contexts.¹⁸

¹⁵ World Bank. 2016. *Indonesia's Global Workers: Juggling Opportunity & Risks*. Jakarta: World Bank.

¹⁶ World Bank. 2019. *Indonesia's Migration System: Spotlight on the Documentation Process to Better Protect Overseas Workers*. Washington D.C.: World Bank

¹⁷ See World Bank, 2019, "Indonesia: Information Dissemination to Achieve Safe Labor Migration", for further discussions on promising information dissemination strategies.

¹⁸ Banerjee, A., La Ferrara, E., Orozco, V., 2015. *Changing Norms and Behavior of Young People in Nigeria: An Evaluation of Entertainment TV*. Bocconi University, Mimeo.