



# ► Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers

Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019



▶ **Measuring Sustainable  
Development Goal indicator  
10.7.1 on the recruitment costs  
of migrant workers**

Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

May 2021

Copyright © International Labour Organization 2021  
First published 2021

Publications of the International Labour Office enjoy copyright under Protocol 2 of the Universal Copyright Convention. Nevertheless, short excerpts from them may be reproduced without authorization, on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation, application should be made to ILO Publications (Rights and Licensing), International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, or by email: [rights@ilo.org](mailto:rights@ilo.org). The International Labour Office welcomes such applications.

Libraries, institutions and other users registered with a reproduction rights organization may make copies in accordance with the licences issued to them for this purpose. Visit [www.ifrro.org](http://www.ifrro.org) to find the reproduction rights organization in your country.

---

ISBN 9789220346402 (web PDF)

---

The designations employed in ILO publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the International Labour Office concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the International Labour Office of the opinions expressed in them.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the International Labour Office, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

This publication has been funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Canadian Government through the Global Affairs Canada, and by the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the International Labour Organization and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Australian or Canadian Government, or the European Union.

Information on ILO publications and digital products can be found at: [www.ilo.org/publns](http://www.ilo.org/publns).

---

All photos: © ILO

Printed in Thailand

## ► Foreword

---

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marked a milestone for the rights of migrant workers by mainstreaming migration as an integral component. For the first time, migration related targets and indicators were incorporated into such an agenda. Specifically, target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) calls for facilitating orderly, safe and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies with, for its monitoring, the SDG indicator 10.7.1 on “Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in country of destination”. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank, as joint custodial agencies of this indicator, developed guidelines and a manual for measuring this indicator and have been supporting countries in its piloting and measurement at national level.

This report on *Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers: Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019*, presents an assessment of the pilot process on measuring SDG indicator 10.7.1, undertaken by the General Statistics Office of Viet Nam (GSO), in collaboration with the ILO, during the quarter four of the 2019 country's Labour Force Survey. The pilot process constituted a first attempt by Viet Nam in the production of this indicator at national level, while also looking at issues and difficulties for integrating such measurement in an existing household survey for sustainability.

The report presents the findings of this pilot survey covering Vietnamese nationals who had worked abroad within the past three years (prior to the survey) and had returned, even if temporarily. Where possible, relevant data on youth and gender disparities are included. Results of this pilot cannot be used yet as official data for Viet Nam on this indicator, but they provide an indication on the burden of recruitment process to migrant workers, with a number of conclusions in line with existing findings in previous ILO–World Bank studies. The pilot process was implemented in the field in 2019, few months before the current Covid-19 pandemic; the report does not therefore include any reference to the likely COVID-19 impact on Vietnamese return migrant workers. However, as we complete this first report, the world and Viet Nam continue to face the consequences of COVID-19, and future measurements of SDG indicator 10.7.1 shall include the assessment of such impact.

A major technical finding of this pilot process in Viet Nam is a confirmation of challenges for integrating migration-related data collection into an existing household survey, such as the Labour Force Survey. Using one quarter only of the survey provided quite a small sample size in terms of return migrant workers, even for a sending country with a large Labour Force Survey quarterly sample size of more than 50,000 households. A keen recommendation from the technical side is therefore either (i) to increase the measurement and sample size of the recruitment cost indicator by extending it to more quarters in the year, ideally to the whole year, or (ii) to revise the sampling design of the Labour Force Survey, such as in oversampling for a better capture of return migrants in the sample. Considering the importance of this indicator for Viet Nam, as it is also included in the country's work plan for methodological developments, the ILO and GSO Viet Nam have agreed to continue this measurement in 2021, with an attempt to cover the sample of the Labour Force Survey for the whole year.

However, the results of this current pilot measurement on the recruitment costs of migrant workers shed light on future areas of policy focus when tackling issues related to high recruitment fees and related costs of Vietnamese migrant workers going to work abroad, including differentials, such as by sex, main corridors, main industries and main occupations.

## ▶ Contents

---

▶ <b>Foreword</b>	<b>i</b>
▶ <b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>v</b>
▶ <b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>vi</b>
▶ <b>Executive summary</b>	<b>vii</b>
▶ <b>1. Demographic characteristics of return migrant workers</b>	<b>1</b>
▶ <b>2. Employment characteristics of return migrant workers</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Return migrant workers by industry and occupation	4
2.2 Return migrant workers by recruitment process and legal status	5
▶ <b>3. Recruitment costs of return migrant workers</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 Recruitment costs of return migrant workers by industry and occupation	8
3.2 Recruitment costs of return migrant workers by recruitment process and legal status	11
▶ <b>4. First-month earnings during the first job abroad</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 First-month earnings of return migrant workers by industry and occupation	15
4.2 First-month earnings of return migrant workers by recruitment process and legal status	16
▶ <b>5. Recruitment cost indicator</b>	<b>20</b>
5.1 Recruitment cost indicator by industry and occupation	20
5.2 Confirmation of results with the self-assessment question	22
5.3 Recruitment cost indicator by recruitment process and legal status	24
5.4 Return migrant workers with no recruitment costs	27
5.5 Zero recruitment costs is a distant prospect	28
▶ <b>6. Summarized findings and policy implications</b>	<b>30</b>
6.1 Statistical findings	30
6.2 Policy implications	31
▶ <b>References</b>	<b>34</b>
▶ <b>Annex</b>	<b>35</b>
A1. Statistical concepts and definitions – Summary	35
A2. Summary information on survey methodology	36
A3. Additional statistical tables	40

## ► List of figures

---

<b>Figure 1.1</b>	Return migrant workers, by age group	2
<b>Figure 1.2</b>	Return migrant workers, by sex and age group	3
<b>Figure 1.3</b>	Return migrant workers, by sex and last country or territory of destination abroad	3
<b>Figure 2.1</b>	Return migrant workers, by sex and main industry	4
<b>Figure 2.2</b>	Return migrant workers, by last country or territory of destination abroad and main occupations (skills)	5
<b>Figure 2.3</b>	Return migrant workers, by sex and recruitment process	6
<b>Figure 2.4</b>	Return migrant workers, by sex and legal migration status	6
<b>Figure 3.1</b>	Average recruitment costs, by last country or territory of destination abroad and main industry	10
<b>Figure 3.2</b>	Return migrant workers, by main industry and main occupation (skills)	11
<b>Figure 3.3</b>	Average recruitment costs of return migrant workers, by sex and recruitment process	12
<b>Figure 3.4</b>	Average recruitment costs, by legal migration status	12
<b>Figure 3.5</b>	Average recruitment costs, by recruitment process and last country or territory of destination abroad	13
<b>Figure 4.1</b>	Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers, by sex and recruitment process	17
<b>Figure 4.2</b>	Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers, by sex and legal migration status	17
<b>Figure 4.3</b>	Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers, by recruitment process and last country or territory of destination abroad	18
<b>Figure 4.4</b>	Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers, by legal migration status and last country or territory of destination abroad	19
<b>Figure 5.1</b>	Recruitment cost indicator, by last country or territory of destination abroad and main industry	23
<b>Figure 5.2</b>	Recruitment cost indicator, by main occupation (skills) and last country or territory of destination abroad	24
<b>Figure 5.3</b>	Recruitment cost indicator, by recruitment process and last country or territory of destination abroad	26
<b>Figure 5.4</b>	Recruitment cost indicator, by legal migration status and last country or territory of destination abroad	26
<b>Figure 5.5</b>	Return migrant workers with no recruitment costs, by last country or territory of destination abroad	27
<b>Figure 5.6</b>	Return migrant workers with no recruitment costs, by sex and last country or territory of destination abroad	27
<b>Figure 5.7</b>	Return migrant workers with no recruitment costs, by recruitment process	28
<b>Figure 5.8</b>	Return migrant workers with no recruitment costs, by legal migration status	28

## ► List of tables

---

<b>Table 1.1</b>	Selected indicators on return migrant workers, by sex	1
<b>Table 3.1</b>	Average recruitment costs of return migrant workers, by sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills)	8
<b>Table 3.2</b>	Average recruitment costs of return migrant workers, by last country or territory of destination abroad, sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills)	9
<b>Table 4.1</b>	Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers, by sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills)	15
<b>Table 4.2</b>	Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers, by last country or territory of destination abroad, sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills)	16
<b>Table 5.1</b>	Recruitment cost indicator and proportion of migrant workers with recruitment costs, by sex, age, geographic location, main industry and main occupation (skills)	21
<b>Table 5.2</b>	Recruitment cost indicator, by last country or territory of destination abroad, sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills)	22
<b>Table 5.3</b>	Recruitment cost indicator and proportion of migrant workers with recruitment costs, by sex, recruitment process and legal migration status	24
<b>Table 5.4</b>	Recruitment cost indicator, by last country or territory of destination abroad, recruitment process and legal migration status	25
<b>Table A3.1</b>	Return migrant workers, by sex and age	40
<b>Table A3.2</b>	Return migrant workers, by sex, age, last country or territory of destination abroad and main geographic location	41
<b>Table A3.3</b>	Return migrant workers by sex, main industry and main occupation (skills)	42
<b>Table A3.4</b>	Return migrant workers, by country or territory of destination, age, main industry and main occupation (skills)	42
<b>Table A3.5</b>	Return migrant workers, by sex, recruitment process and legal migration status	43
<b>Table A3.6</b>	Return migrant workers, by last country or territory of destination abroad, recruitment process and legal migration status	43
<b>Table A3.7</b>	Return migrant workers, by sex and detailed job recruitment process	44
<b>Table A3.8</b>	Return migrant workers, by country or territory of destination, recruitment process and legal migration status	44
<b>Table A3.9</b>	Recruitment costs of return migrant workers, total and average, by sex and age (ten-year age groups)	45
<b>Table A3.10</b>	Recruitment costs of return migrant workers, total and average, by country or territory of destination and age group	45
<b>Table A3.11</b>	Recruitment costs of return migrant workers, total and average, by sex, recruitment process and legal migration status	46
<b>Table A3.12</b>	Recruitment costs of return migrant workers, total and average, by country or territory of destination, recruitment process and legal migration status	47
<b>Table A3.13</b>	Recruitment costs, total and average, by sex and age group	48
<b>Table A3.14</b>	Recruitment costs, total and average, by country or territory of destination and age group	49
<b>Table A3.15</b>	Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers by sex, recruitment process, and legal migration status	49
<b>Table A3.16</b>	Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers by country or territory of destination, recruitment process and legal migration status (thousands dong)	50
<b>Table A3.17</b>	Proportion of migrant workers with no recruitment costs, by sex and age (ten-year age groups)	50
<b>Table A3.18</b>	Total and average recruitment costs of return migrant workers, by sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills)	51
<b>Table A3.19</b>	Total and average recruitment costs of return migrant workers, by last country or territory of destination abroad, sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills)	52

## ► Acknowledgements

---

This report, *Measuring Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 10.7.1 on the Recruitment Costs of Migrant Workers: Results of Viet Nam Pilot Survey 2019*, is the result of a collaborative effort of many colleagues, from ILO headquarters, the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, the ILO Country Office for Viet Nam and the General Statistics Office of Viet Nam. The report presents the results of pilot research on the Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 using the Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, quarter four.

This research received funding from the TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme and the global REFRAME programme. TRIANGLE in ASEAN is a partnership between the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 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 towards achieving equitable, inclusive and stable growth in the ASEAN region. REFRAME represents the ILO Global Action to Improve the Recruitment Framework of Labour Migration, funded by the European Union. It delivers technical assistance and support, with the overall objective of preventing and reducing abusive and fraudulent recruitment practices and maximizing the protection of migrant workers in the recruitment process as well as their contribution to development. The research was generously supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Global Affairs Canada and the European Union.

The main authors are Tite Habiyakare and Thi Viet Giang Dao. The following ILO and GSO colleagues provided major contributions and inputs to the analyses and tables presented in this report: Valentina Barucci, Sara Elder, Anna Engblom, Alan Michael Hewson, Jane Hodge, Maria Gallotti, Jesse Mertens, Anna Olsen, Nguyen Thi Mai Thuy and Nguyen Thi Le Van from the ILO, as well as Vu Thi Thu Thuy, Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai and Nguyen Thi Ngoc Lan from the GSO. The ILO Country Office in Hanoi and GSO acknowledge the comments, suggestions and logistical contributions provided by other ILO and GSO colleagues.

Karen Emmons edited the text, and Nattawarath Hengviriyapanich designed the cover and layout of the report, in line with ILO recommended standard publications. From the ILO, Chanitda Wiwatchanon assisted with the publication, while Monrudee Sucharitakul and Cao Thi Ngoc Anh provided administrative support throughout the report preparation and production process.



## ▶ Abbreviations

---

<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>GSO</b>	General Statistics Office of Viet Nam
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>ISCO</b>	International Standard Classification of Occupations
<b>RCI</b>	recruitment cost indicator
<b>REFRAME</b>	Global Action to Improve the Recruitment Framework of Labour Migration
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals

## ► Executive summary

---

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development constitutes an important milestone for the rights of international migrants and migrant workers by mainstreaming migration as an integral component of the goals' implementation and monitoring. Evidence repeatedly shows that abuses at the recruitment stage can severely curtail positive migration outcomes and, more specifically, that the payment of recruitment fees and related costs significantly increases the risk to workers of experiencing forced labour, debt bondage and human trafficking. Reducing crippling recruitment fees and related costs could lead to enormous benefits: It would facilitate access to foreign employment opportunities, and it would help counter irregular migration and result in larger remittance flows to migrant households, which could be used for education, health care and other productive uses.

This is the first time that migration-related indicators were incorporated into global goals. Specifically, target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) calls for facilitating orderly, safe and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. This target includes indicator 10.7.1 on "Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in country of destination". The core principle in this SDG indicator, that the costs of recruitment should not be borne by workers, is also reflected in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181) and the General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment, which reiterate that "No recruitment fees or related costs should be charged to, or otherwise borne by, workers or jobseekers" (ILO, 2016).

The ILO and the World Bank, as joint custodian agencies for SDG indicator 10.7.1, developed a methodology for measuring the indicator and thus estimating progress relative to reducing or eliminating fees and related costs. The two agencies are responsible for ensuring that information regarding the indicator is produced and disseminated by countries. Guidelines for measuring the recruitment cost indicator also were developed and include discussion on the concepts to be measured and suggestions for sampling and data collection strategies as well as the questionnaire to be used (ILO and World Bank 2019a).

To assess the implementation of Viet Nam's National Action Plan for 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda Target 10.6 (equivalent to the global SDG target 10.7), the General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSO), in collaboration with the ILO, tested a survey module on recruitment costs of migrant workers in the fourth quarter of the 2019 Labour Force Survey, targeting return migrant workers. They followed the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians *Guidelines Concerning Statistics of International Labour Migration* (ILO 2018), which specify inclusion of persons who have returned temporarily from abroad yet still reside in a foreign country or territory at the time of the survey. The pilot test represents an exploration towards building a data collection system for the regular production of indicator 113 on "Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in last country of destination abroad" under the Viet Nam Sustainable Development Goal statistical indicators.

The GSO adapted the questionnaire and guidelines developed by the ILO and the World Bank (2019b). This report highlights the results of the pilot test, covering a sample of 1,095 return migrant workers. However, the results do not yet represent national official data on this indicator. Data presented in this report were not purposely weighted, meaning that the conclusions are only valid for the covered sample.

Even though Viet Nam has one of the larger Labour Force Survey quarterly sample sizes in the region, at more than 50,000 households, using only one quarter for the testing generated a small sample size in terms of return migrant workers. Additional options to increase the sample size should be considered in the future, such as by (i) extending the period coverage to more quarters in the year, ideally to the whole year or (ii) revising the sampling design of the survey (through oversampling) to better capture return migrants in the sample (see further considerations on this in the Annex).

## Survey sample dimensions and results

The sample involved 1,095 return migrant workers (both regular and irregular migrants), of which 811 (or 74.1 per cent) were male and 284 (or 25.9 per cent) were female (see the following table). The results show differential levels in the recruitment costs in terms of the country or territory of destination (last country or territory of destination abroad), sex and sectors (industries). The average earnings of the surveyed migrant workers during their first month of working abroad within the past three years was about 20.7 million Vietnamese dong (approximately US\$893), roughly the same amount for both male and female return migrant workers. The average recruitment costs paid by these migrant workers amounted to 152 million dong (\$6,543), with women paying marginally more than the men. The overall recruitment cost indicator is an estimated 7.4 months. This means that it took the Vietnamese workers an average of 7.4 months to earn the equivalent of what they spent to access their job abroad. There was little difference by sex, with women making the equivalent amount in 7.4 months while men earned it within 7.3 months.

### Survey sample highlights

	Male	Female	Total
Return migrant workers (persons)	811	284	1 095
Average recruitment costs paid by migrant workers (thousands dong)	151 560	152 565	151 820
Average first-month earnings of migrant workers (thousands dong)	20 692	20 733	20 702
Recruitment cost indicator	7.3	7.4	7.4

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

### Demographics, geographic location and main corridors

There were more men than women in the sample, at 74.1 per cent and 25.9 per cent, respectively. Despite possible sampling issues, the male-dominated distribution of migrant workers was roughly in line with official statistics of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs for regular migrants (ILO 2021). Workers aged 25 or older accounted for about 73.4 per cent of the total sample, leaving only 26.6 per cent for young migrant workers (aged 15 to 24 years). Three fourths of the migrant workers in the survey came from rural areas.

There was no one predominant corridor (or country or territory of destination) among return migrant workers. The three more popular destinations overseas were Taiwan (China) (with 25.1 per cent of the survey workers having a job there), Japan (22.7 per cent) and the Republic of Korea (22.4 per cent).

### Skills and industries

Medium-skilled workers constituted the largest share of the sample (77.8 per cent), composed mainly of services and sales workers, skilled agriculture workers and craft and plant workers. Elementary occupations or low skills represented only 20.6 per cent of return migrant workers, and only 1.6 per cent of return migrant workers in the sample were in high-skill occupations (managers, professionals and technicians).

The main industry of return migrant workers was in processing and manufacturing, with close to half of the sample in that industry (45.7 per cent), followed by agriculture, forestry and fishery (19.3 per cent) and construction (14.6 per cent). The remaining workers were involved in services (20.4 per cent in total), including only 3 per cent in domestic work-related activities.

### Recruitment cost indicator (RCI)

The RCI, or SDG indicator 10.7.1, is calculated as a ratio between the total recruitment costs paid by a migrant worker and the first month of earnings in the first job abroad within the past three years (see details in the Annex). Its actual interpretation is the number of months that a migrant worker must work to cover (pay back) the recruitment costs (ILO and World Bank 2019a, para. 52).

As noted, the survey found that Vietnamese return migrant workers spent on average more than seven months of their salary (7.4 months) to pay back the recruitment costs for the job abroad. There were considerable variations in the RCI, depending on the variables (age and sex, main industry of work, skill level and country or territory of destination abroad). For example, women younger than 25 paid more in recruitment costs, equivalent to 9.3 months of their salary, than women aged 25 or older, who paid the equivalent of 6.4 months. Men in services paid the most, at the equivalent of 11.2 months of salary, while women in construction paid the least, at only 1.1 months. Women in high-skill occupations paid the equivalent of 2.6 months, compared with 7.7 months of their male counterparts in medium-skill jobs. Women going to the Republic of Korea paid on average the equivalent of 9.5 months of their salary, while men going to China paid recruitment costs equivalent to only 0.6 month of their first-month earnings.

## Summary of policy implications

### Reducing the financial cost of migrant workers' recruitment

A critical role of migration policies is to reduce the financial costs of recruitment incurred by migrant workers seeking jobs abroad and thus increase free access to jobs abroad for more migrant workers. Migration policies also should increase opportunities for local businesses in need of migrant workers' talents to recruit foreign workers. The ultimate policy aim should be that no migrant worker pays any fee or cost to access employment abroad. This pilot test has shown that the modality of recruitment, or recruitment channels, matter. The data indicate that private recruitment agencies are among the most expensive recruitment channels for migrant workers. This calls for an improvement and expansion of public and government-to-government arrangements so that they are less costly for migrant workers. It also calls for stronger enforcement of private recruitment agency regulations, such as ensuring that the allowable costs to charge migrant workers are not exceeded.

### Deploying fair and effective labour recruitment policies for all migrant workers

For the short and medium terms, policies should ensure that recruitment costs can be regulated fairly for women and men of all ages and for all occupations and countries where they want to go for work. Such policies are needed to address diversity and inequalities in recruitment costs, particularly protect young and women migrant workers and ensure labour market efficiency and competitiveness. Reduced recruitment costs would also ensure a more effective labour market functioning, promote better skills matching and limit employers' exposure to reputational damage linked to abusive practices.



### **Reaping the benefit of migration for both sending and receiving countries**

Reducing the crippling migration costs and inequalities in these costs could lead to more migrants “winning” from the migration process. Such a win means more people from low-income households can access foreign employment opportunities, that they are prevented from falling into exploitive situations linked to heavy debt and, ultimately, that larger remittance flows to migrants’ households and their communities can be used for education, health care and other productive uses. Migrant workers can also spend or invest in their countries of destination rather than spending a bulk of their earnings to pay back debt, hence contributing to boosting local businesses and the local economy.

### **Identifying and protecting the most vulnerable groups**

As this report shows, women, low-skilled workers and young workers, who are often the most vulnerable to labour abuses, are also those who pay the most for recruitment in terms of their earnings at their destination. It also shows that the cost of recruitment varies significantly along different migration corridors and occupations at destination. A deep understanding of such disaggregated costs is critical not only for designing appropriate policy and regulatory responses but to ensure that they are then properly monitored and enforced, especially for groups of workers who are at higher risk of exploitation.

### **Strengthening the implementation, application and monitoring of existing regulations to protect migrant workers**

The survey results suggest that steps must continue in Viet Nam and in destination countries and territories to reduce recruitment fees and related costs paid by migrant workers. As per international Conventions,<sup>1</sup> employers should pay some of these fees and costs, while others can be eliminated or significantly reduced by governments (such as costs for visas, passports, training costs, airfares, medical examination, work permit, documentation and contribution to social insurance schemes). Governments can also reduce recruitment costs by setting up state-funded job portals and explore government-to-government arrangements. Mechanisms for direct recruitment by employers can be set up to bypass the services of agencies and brokers.

### **Improving the availability and dissemination of information base on costs paid by migrant workers**

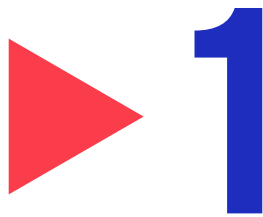
This should include gathering and disseminating information on the current situation that migrant workers face in terms of recruitment costs, such as more detailed information and on where costs should be monitored and reduced. But it should also include disseminating accurate information on the legal or policy provisions to protect migrant workers, such as on the allowable maximum costs and fees related to recruitment that are to be paid by migrant workers.

### **Generating better national data for the monitoring and adjustment of policies to protect Vietnamese migrant workers**

Although this survey was a pilot study on measuring SDG indicator 10.7.1, the results shed light on recruitment-related vulnerabilities in a disaggregated way, reflecting the importance of gender, skills or occupation and destination country or territory as the factors that determine the costs that workers pay for a job abroad. This exercise, if repeated regularly, can allow for effective monitoring of progress in reducing the recruitment costs of migrant workers. Additional studies can also help compare the current practices with laws and policy regulations. Existing laws may be rightly moving towards the prohibition of fees, but this seems to be still far in practice, as seen in the findings. This calls not just for more stringent regulatory efforts but also for enforcement and monitoring. More of such studies could also lead to better global comparisons and promote healthy competition by comparing how different countries fare in terms of recruitment costs, particularly within the same economic community, such as ASEAN.

---

<sup>1</sup> Such as the ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention No. 181 and the ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment (ILO 2016).



# Demographic characteristics of return migrant workers

The surveyed migrant workers concentrated in the 20–39 age group (accounting for 78 per cent of the sample; see details in the Annex), which is understandable because Viet Nam has a young age structure (figure 1.1). Across all age groups and countries or territory of destination, men accounted for a significantly higher percentage than women in the sample (table 1.1). The share of male workers typically was double or triple that of female workers. The most outstanding gap emerged in the subgroup of workers who went to China, with 86 per cent men and only 14 per cent women (figures 1.2 and 1.3).

► Table 1.1 Selected indicators on return migrant workers, by sex (percentage)

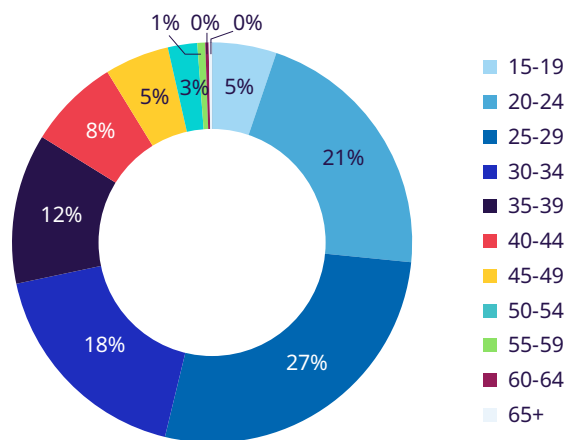
	Male		Female		Total	
Return migrant workers, total	100.0	811	100.0	284	100.0	1 095
<i>By main age group (% distribution)</i>						
15–24	24.0	195	33.8	96	26.6	291
25+	76.0	616	66.2	188	73.4	804
<i>By main geographic location (% distribution)</i>						
Urban	26.1	212	31.3	89	27.5	301
Rural	73.9	599	68.7	195	72.5	794

► **Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers**  
Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

	Male		Female		Total	
<b>By industry or economic activity (% distribution)</b>						
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	21.5	174	13.0	37	19.3	211
Construction	18.7	152	2.8	8	14.6	160
Other industries (**)	44.9	364	47.9	136	45.7	500
Wholesale and retail trade	4.2	34	3.9	11	4.1	45
Household work	0.2*	2*	10.9	31	3.0	33
Other services	10.5	85	21.5	61	13.3	146
<b>By occupation or skills (% distribution)</b>						
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	1.5	12	2.1*	6*	1.6	18
Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill)	80.8	655	69.4	197	77.8	852
Elementary occupations (low skill)	17.8	144	28.5	81	20.5	225
<b>By main last country or territory of destination abroad (% distribution)</b>						
Japan	18.4	149	35.2	100	22.7	249
Republic of Korea	24.5	199	16.2	46	22.4	245
Taiwan (China)	25.3	205	24.6	70	25.1	275
China	13.6	110	6.3	18	11.7	128
Other	18.2	148	17.6	50	18.1	198

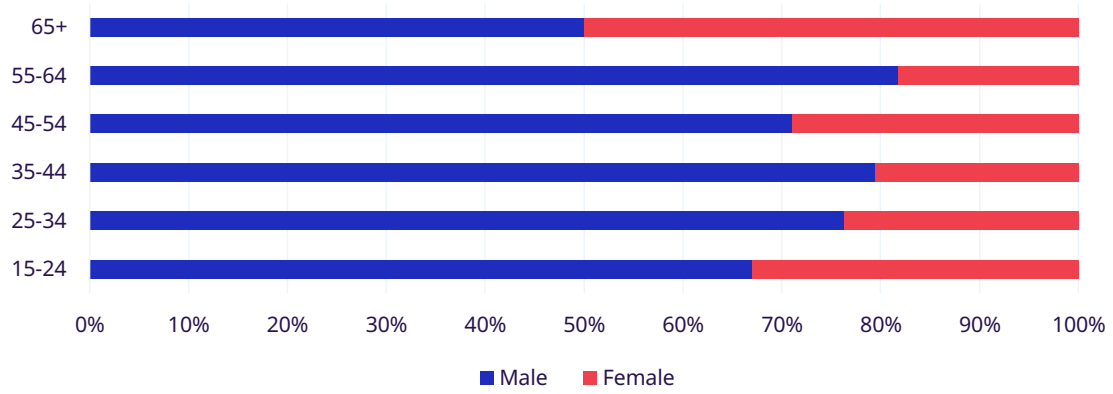
Note: (1) Percentages might not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding. This applies to all tables throughout this report.  
 (2) \*=Data refer to few sample cases, and most were not used in the analysis; where used, they should be taken with caution.  
 (3) \*\*=Throughout the report, the category "Other industries" actually contains only processing and manufacturing industries.  
 Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Figure 1.1 Return migrant workers, by age group (percentage)**



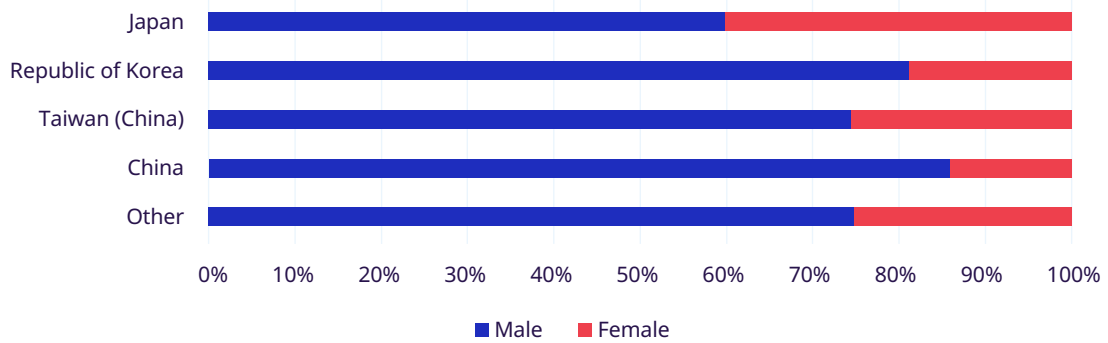
Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► Figure 1.2 Return migrant workers, by sex and age group (percentage)



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

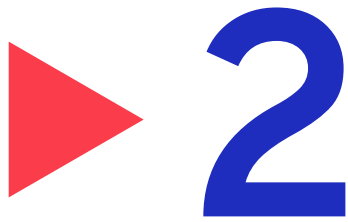
► Figure 1.3 Return migrant workers, by sex and last country or territory of destination abroad (percentage)



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.







# Employment characteristics of return migrant workers

---

Medium-skilled workers constituted the largest share of the sample (at 77.8 per cent). Elementary occupations or low skills represented only 20.6 per cent of return migrant workers, and only 1.6 per cent of return migrant workers were in high-skill occupations.

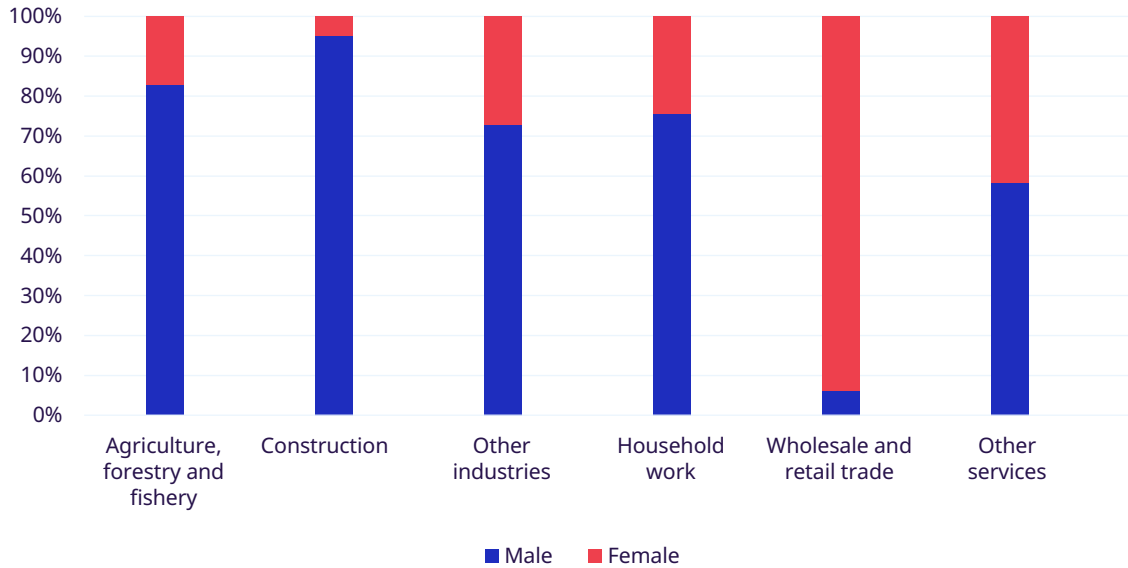
The main industries of return migrant workers were processing and manufacturing, with nearly half of the sample in them (45.7 per cent), followed by agriculture, forestry and fishery (19.3 per cent) and construction (14.6 per cent). The remaining workers were involved in services (20.4 per cent).

Most migrant workers from the sample went overseas either through a regular channel with a work visa (82 per cent) or through a private recruitment agency or individual recruiter (60 per cent).

## 2.1 Return migrant workers by industry and occupation

In most industries (or economic activity), the share of male workers was double or triple that of female workers. The gap was most pronounced in construction, where roughly 95 per cent of workers were male and 5 per cent were female (figure 2.1). The only economic activity with the reverse larger portion of female workers was household work, with 95 per cent female and 5 per cent male workers (but any conclusion here should be made with caution because there were few household workers overall as well as few men in this group and thus not statistically reliable).

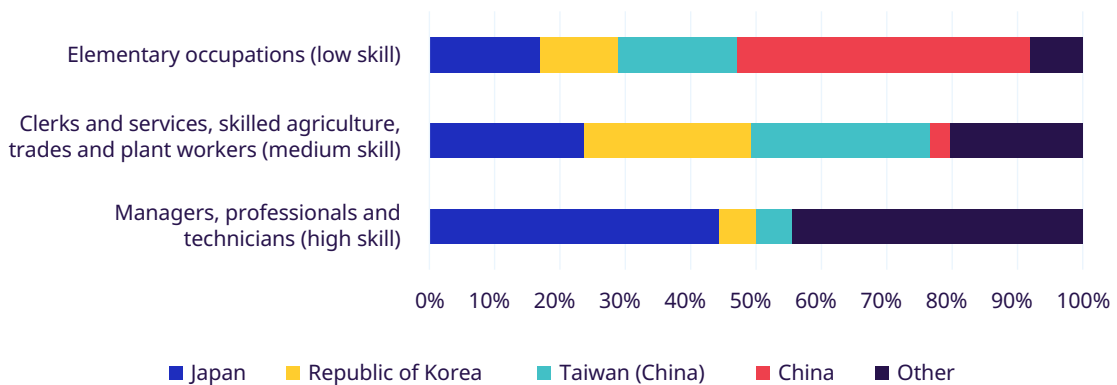
► Figure 2.1 Return migrant workers, by sex and main industry (percentage)



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

Japan and the group of “other” countries attracted most of the high-skilled workers, with up to 80 per cent of the total managers, professionals and technicians going to those destinations. Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers were distributed almost the same for Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan (China) and other countries, ranging from 20 per cent to 28 per cent (figure 2.2). The most popular destination for low-skilled workers was China (at 45 per cent), followed by Taiwan (China) (at 18 per cent) and Japan (at roughly 17 per cent).

► Figure 2.2 Return migrant workers, by last country or territory of destination abroad and main occupations (skills) (percentage)



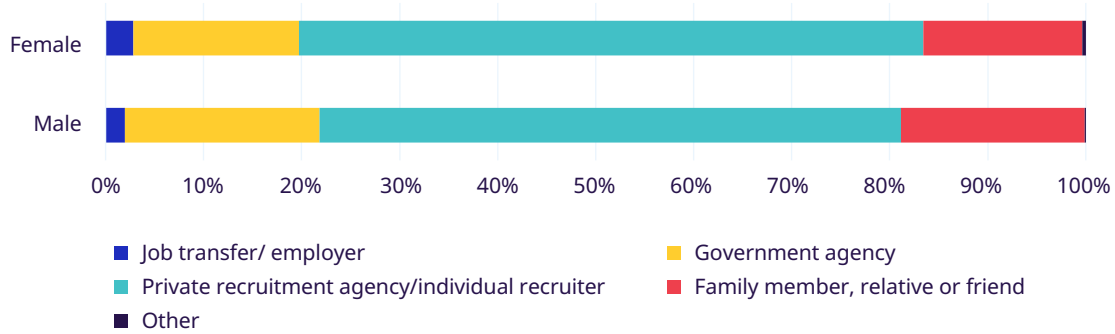
Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

## 2.2 Return migrant workers by recruitment process and legal status

The returned migrant workers were asked about their recruitment process: How did they obtain the first job abroad? (The question was mostly to assess if it was through a public or private agency or through a friend or relative). They were also asked which legal status they had when they entered the country or territory for that first job abroad, whether they entered through regular immigration (with or without a work visa) or through an irregular channel or entry port.

Most migrant workers from the sample went overseas either through a regular channel with a work visa (82 per cent) or through a private recruitment agency or individual recruiter (60 per cent). The male workers far outnumbered the female workers in all categories of the recruitment process and legal migration status (figures 2.3 and 2.4). However, the survey sample may have captured regular migrant workers more than the irregular ones. In a 2018 study, slightly more than half of the sample of migrant workers from Viet Nam (52 per cent) travelled as regular migrants (Harkins, Lindgren and Suravoranon 2018).

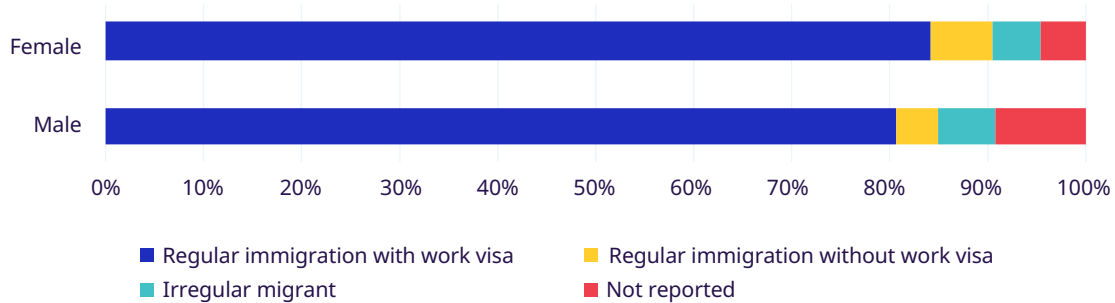
► **Figure 2.3 Return migrant workers, by sex and recruitment process (percentage)**



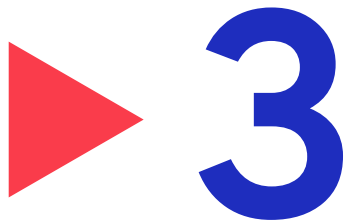
Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

The data in figures 2.3 and 2.4 indicate that, proportionally, women tended to more slightly use a private recruitment agency, individual recruiter or had a job transfer than men, who were slightly larger in proportion in using a government agency and a family member, relative or friend. There were also slightly more women in regular immigration (with or without a visa) than men, in relative terms, although more men than women did not report their entry status.

► **Figure 2.4 Return migrant workers, by sex and legal migration status (percentage)**



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.



## Recruitment costs of return migrant workers

---

**For migrant workers, recruitment costs “refer to ‘any fees or costs incurred in the recruitment process in order for workers to secure employment or placement, regardless of the manner, timing or location of their imposition or collection’” (ILO and World Bank 2019a, para. 21; ILO 2016).**

The costs must be borne by workers and include all items, such as recruiters’ charges, training preparations specific to the job, visa and document fee if related to the job, transportation, medical and insurance costs as well as interest payment on debt incurred to cover those other recruitment costs.

The average recruitment costs paid by return migrant workers in the sample was estimated at nearly 152 million dong (equivalent to \$6,543). The total recruitment costs paid by the whole sample was an estimated 166,091 million dong (about \$7.2 million).<sup>2</sup>

The highest average recruitment costs was paid by services workers who went to the Republic of Korea (the most expensive corridor), at 257 million dong (\$11,086), while the lowest recruitment costs was paid by agriculture, forestry and fishery workers who went to China (the cheapest of the main corridors for Vietnamese migrant workers), at only 2.2 million dong (\$93). This average excludes household workers, who were few in number in the sample but who paid the highest average costs for jobs in the Republic of Korea.

---

<sup>2</sup> Using the United Nations exchange rate of November 2019 (at 23,202 dong per \$1), available at: <https://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.php>.

### 3.1 Recruitment costs of return migrant workers by industry and occupation

On average, the younger migrant workers (aged 15–24 years) bore the highest costs, and the older workers (aged 25 and older) paid the least overall in recruitment costs (table 3.1). By age and sex, the oldest woman in the sample paid the lowest amount in recruitment costs, at only 133,000 dong. In general, the female return migrant workers had paid lower recruitment costs than their male counterparts in all main industries (with the exception of manufacturing or other industries, for which their average costs was higher than what the men had paid). The recruitment costs paid were significantly lower in construction (possibly because women were fewer in number in these industries and there is generally less demand for women in them). Among skill level, the migrant workers in the medium-skill occupations had paid the largest amount of recruitment costs on average, as high as 171 million dong (172 million dong for men and 169 million dong for women). The recruitment costs of low-skilled female workers were found to be more than twice that of their male counterparts and also higher than what high-skilled female workers paid to access a job abroad. This was the opposite situation for male workers (high-skilled male workers paid more than three times than their male counterparts in low-skill occupations).

► **Table 3.1 Average recruitment costs of return migrant workers, by sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills) (thousands dong)**

	Male	Female	Total
<b>Average recruitment costs of return migrant workers</b>	<b>151 560</b>	<b>152 565</b>	<b>151 820</b>
<b>By main age group</b>			
15–24	164 648	190 853	173 232
25+	147 417	133 218	144 097
<b>By economic activity (industry)</b>			
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	143 496	125 056	140 335
Construction	141 018	37 313	135 833
Other industries	143 782	162 879	148 976
Wholesale and retail trade	170 241	113 682	156 416
Household work	140 000*	123 871	124 848
Other services	213 027	182 516	200 279
<b>By occupation (skills)</b>			
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	194 167	85 000	157 778
Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill)	171 740	168 658	171 030
Elementary occupations (low skill)	56 218	118 630	78 686

Note: \*=Data refer to few sample cases, and most were not used in the analysis; where they are used, they should be taken with caution.

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

The average recruitment costs for jobs in China were found to be the lowest among all countries and territory in the sample, at less than 50 million dong, whether by sex or by age group (table 3.2), with the exception of one household worker who had paid nearly 200 million dong. The recruitment costs to work in all other countries were more than 100 million dong in total per person, for men and women. Jobs in the Republic of Korea and Japan had the highest recruitment costs, at more than 200 million dong per person. Access to jobs in China, Taiwan (China) and other countries cost roughly 120–140 million dong per person. For jobs in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan (China), male workers paid about 20–40 million dong more than their female counterparts. The workers younger than 25 paid more than workers aged 25 or older for recruitment costs associated with jobs in the Republic of Korea, Taiwan (China) and other countries but less than what was needed for going to China. The two age groups who went to Japan paid equally for their recruitment costs.

► **Table 3.2 Average recruitment costs of return migrant workers, by last country or territory of destination abroad, sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills) (thousands dong)**

	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
<b>Average recruitment costs of return migrant workers</b>	<b>199 827</b>	<b>225 280</b>	<b>132 468</b>	<b>8 680</b>	<b>120 206</b>	<b>151 820</b>
<i>By sex</i>						
Male	207 645	228 410	138 482	5 560	118 393	151 560
Female	188 061	211 739	114 857	27 750	125 570	152 565
<i>By main age group</i>						
15–24	198 608	254 583	145 980	6 177	188 403	173 232
25+	201 008	218 140	129 539	9 698	106 067	144 097
<i>By economic activity (industry)</i>						
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	208 696	253 026	139 625	2 166	129 092	140 335
Construction	216 244	223 240	124 000	44 717	61 125	135 833
Other industries	197 907	188 049	137 775	8 717	83 238	148 976
Wholesale and retail trade	195 000	237 000	123 750	10 917	135 480	156 416
Household work	20 000*	300 000*	111 875	200 000*	152 500*	124 848
Other services	190 688	257 222	93 444	17 550	207 400	200 279
<i>By occupation (skills)</i>						
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	182 500	50 000*	140 000*	–	148 750	157 778
Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill)	202 902	233 689	136 480	18 659	125 271	171 030
Elementary occupations (low skill)	187 132	164 185	109 488	6 012	59 117	78 686

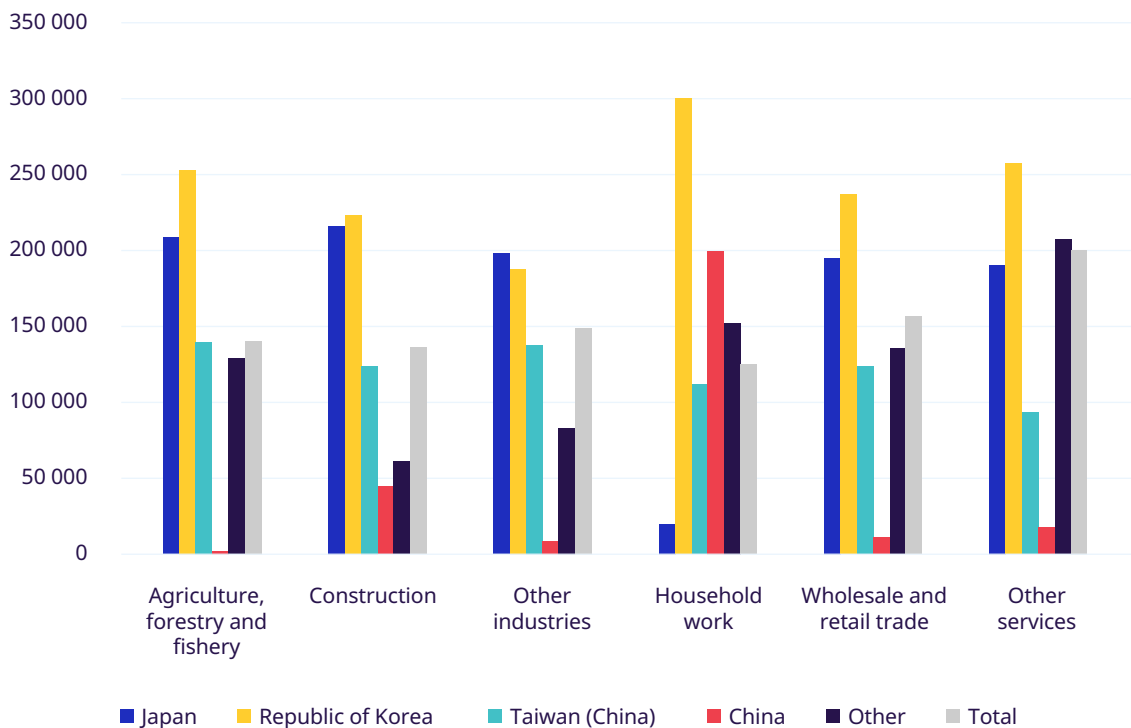
Note: \*=Data refer to few sample cases, and most were not used in the analysis; where they are used, they should be taken with caution.

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers**  
Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

In terms of economic activities (excluding household work, which had few cases in all destinations except in Taiwan, China), construction seem to have been the more expensive jobs to access in Japan. Recruitment costs in agriculture, forestry and fishery were slightly more expensive in Taiwan (China), while services seemed to have been the more costly for migrant workers to access in the Republic of Korea (figure 3.1). On average, services jobs were more expensive to access among all the destination countries or territories, including the others not cited by name.

► **Figure 3.1 Average recruitment costs, by last country or territory of destination abroad and main industry (thousands dong)**



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

In Taiwan (China), where available data on household workers are the most reliable, the average recruitment costs was 111.9 million dong (\$4,822) per person, which was about 20 million dong lower than the average for all of the surveyed migrant workers. Despite the small number, household workers going to Japan paid the least in recruitment costs and earned the most among household workers in all the countries or territories cited. They only spent on average 20 million dong for an average income of 40 million dong in the first month. Japan has ratified International Labour Organization (ILO) Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181) and has strict regulations that prohibit charging migrant workers for fees in domestic work, which may explain the data. However, the small number of household workers in the sample does not allow for reliable comparisons of costs paid with other sectors and countries, and the data on household work must be used with caution.

Migrant workers who had medium-skill occupations (such as clerks, services, sales, skilled agriculture and plant workers) were charged the most on average for pursuing employment abroad (figure 3.2). In the Republic of Korea, medium-skilled workers paid up to 234 million dong to access their job, while high-skilled persons paid only up to 50 million dong and low-skilled workers paid up to 164 million dong. The gaps were smaller in other countries or territory, such as Japan, where everyone in that subsample paid around 180–200 million dong for their recruitment expenses.

► Figure 3.2 Return migrant workers, by main industry and main occupation (skills)



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

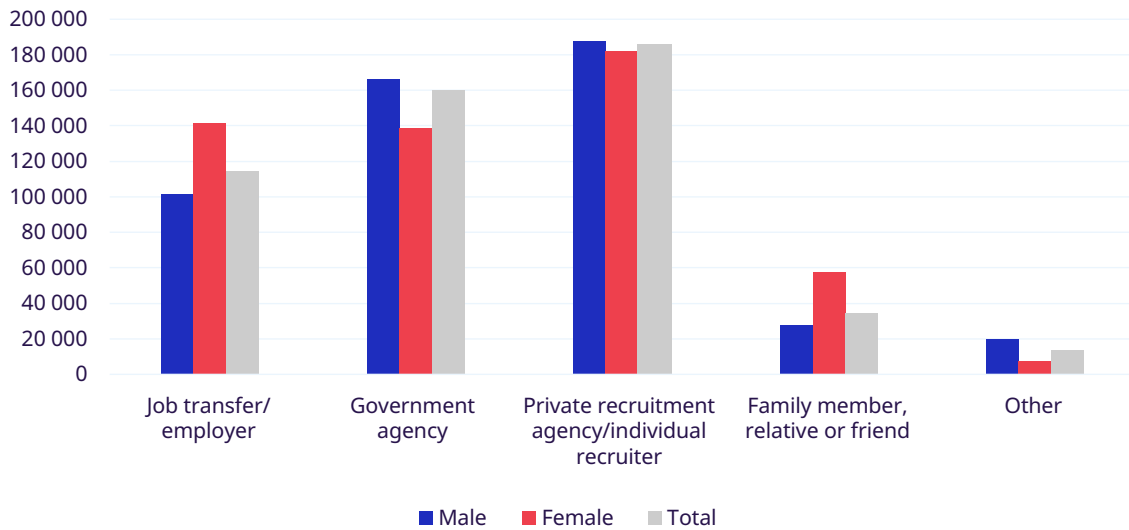
### 3.2 Recruitment costs of return migrant workers by recruitment process and legal status

On average, workers who relied on a family member or friend for accessing a job paid the least in recruitment costs, at roughly 35 million dong and 13.5 million dong, respectively (figure 3.3). In using any of the other channels, workers paid more than 100 million dong each, with a private recruitment agency and individual recruiter the most expensive, at up to 180 million dong. Government agencies charged workers slightly less, at 160 million dong on average per person. Recruitment costs associated with a job transfer or direct employer recruitment averaged about 115 million dong. Looking closely at the disaggregation by sex, there was diversity across all channels. Male workers paid considerably more than female counterparts when using a government agency, while it was the opposite with a job transfer or accessing a job through an informal channel via a friend, relative or family member.



► **Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers**  
Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

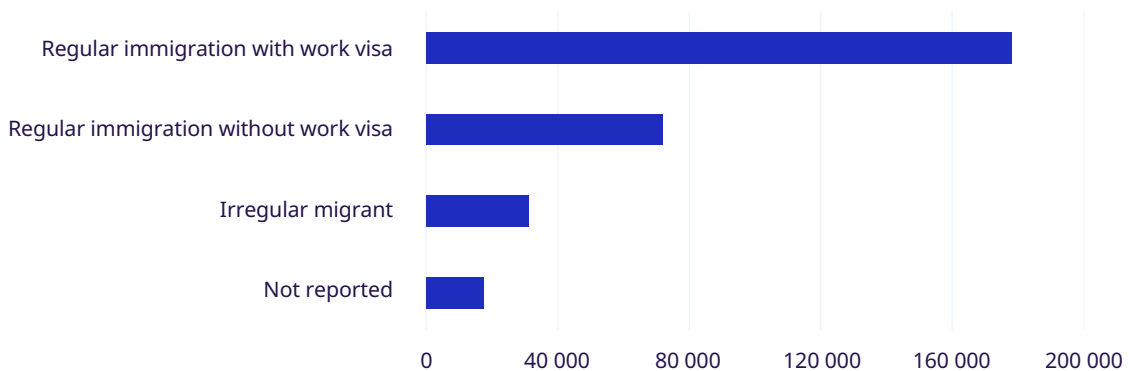
► **Figure 3.3 Average recruitment costs of return migrant workers, by sex and recruitment process (thousands dong)**



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

Recruitment costs were highest for persons migrating regularly with a work visa, at approximately 178 million dong. It dropped by roughly two thirds for persons who migrated without a work visa (figure 3.4). Irregular migrants and those who did not provide any answer to this question paid far less than the other groups of workers (respectively, 31 million dong and 18 million dong).

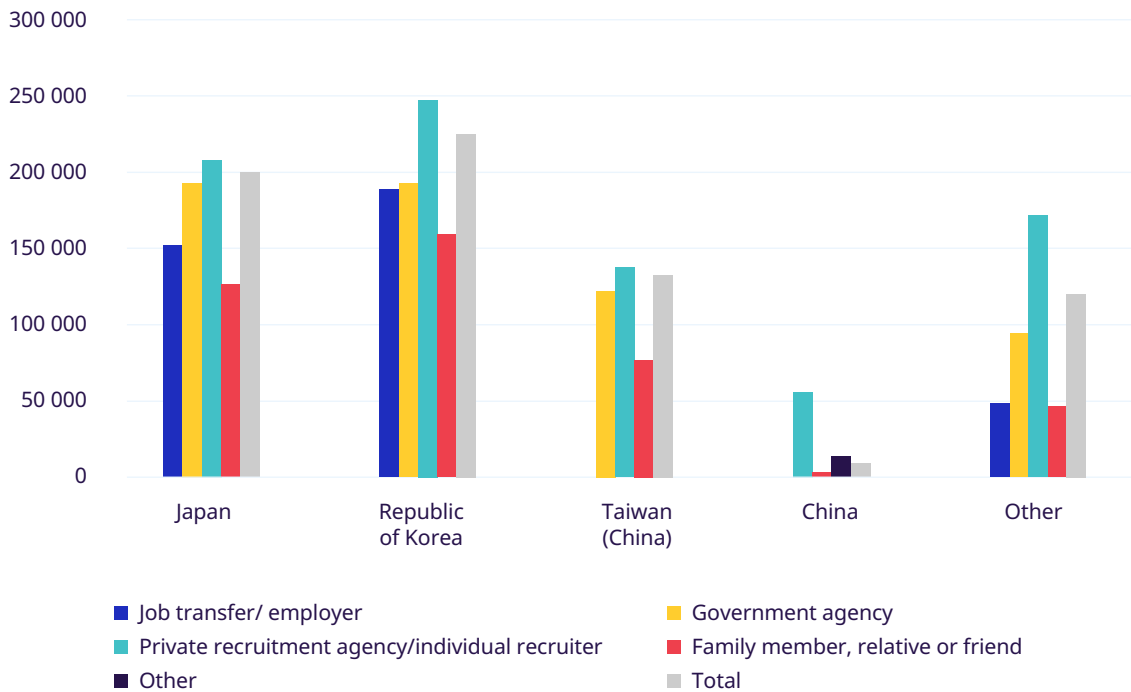
► **Figure 3.4 Average recruitment costs, by legal migration status (thousands dong)**



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

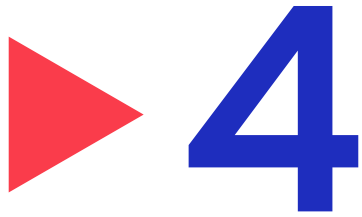
By destination, migrant workers who went to China paid significantly lower fees to access their job, in comparison with workers who went to all other countries or territories cited, at slightly less than 10 million dong on average (figure 3.5). Although far exceeding the average amount paid for a job in China, the second “cheapest” destination for a job was Taiwan (China), at about 130 million dong. It was about 120 million dong on average for all the other destinations not cited by name. Jobs in the Republic of Korea cost the most to access, at roughly 225 million dong on average per person, closely followed by jobs in Japan that cost an average of 200 million dong to access. Across all countries and territories, the private and individual recruitment agencies seemed to charge workers the highest fees, while family members, relatives and friends were the cheapest channel to use.

► **Figure 3.5 Average recruitment costs, by recruitment process and last country or territory of destination abroad (thousands dong)**



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.





## First-month earnings during the first job abroad

---

The guidelines for collecting recruitment cost data for SDG indicator 10.7.1 “recommend that the statistics or estimates on costs and earnings used to calculate 10.7.1 should refer to the first job obtained in the last country or territory of destination within recent years (for example, in the three years prior to the survey year)” (ILO and World Bank 2019a, para. 20). The guidelines also recommend “to collect information on the actual income earned as a wage or salary for the first month of employment within the reference period..., including bonuses, other earnings and deductions in wages made to recover any recruitment costs initially paid by the employer” (ILO and World Bank 2019a, para. 28).

The average earnings for all return migrant workers in the sample during their first job’s first month of work abroad in the past three years was an estimated 20.7 million dong (equivalent to \$892). The total earnings in the first month for the whole sample was an estimated 22,648.4 million dong (about \$976,000).

The high-skilled migrant workers (managers, professionals and technicians) who had worked in Japan (the most lucrative corridor) earned the most in their first month on average, at 43.8 million dong (\$1,886). While the agriculture, forestry and fishery workers in China (the lowest-paying of the corridors for Vietnamese migrant workers) earned the least in their first month, at only 6.8 million dong (\$291).

## 4.1 First-month earnings of return migrant workers by industry and occupation

The first-month earnings of migrant workers were equivalent for both general age groups, at around 21 million dong on average. However, across sectors and economic activities, differences appeared: workers in construction earned an average of about 26 million dong, while household workers earned about 9 million dong less, at 17 million dong (table 4.1). The highest average first-month pay by industry went to female workers in construction, at nearly 34 million dong (about \$1,463), although these findings should be taken with caution because there were far fewer women than men in the sample. By occupations and skills, high-skilled workers earned much more than the medium- and low-skilled workers. In general, their pay was 1.5 times greater than that of medium-skilled workers and more than double that of low-skilled workers. Men in high-skilled occupations earned the highest average, at 40 million dong (about \$1,735).

► Table 4.1 Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers, by sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills) (thousands dong)

	Male	Female	Total
Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers	20 692	20 733	20 702
<i>By main age group</i>			
15–24	21 197	20 458	20 955
25+	20 532	20 872	20 611
<i>By economic activity (industry)</i>			
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	17 987	17 558	17 913
Construction	25 266	33 938	25 700
Other industries	20 597	21 683	20 893
Wholesale and retail trade	19 588	14 627	18 376
Household work	13 500*	16 952	16 742
Other services	19 064	21 779	20 198
<i>By occupation (skills)</i>			
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	40 250	30 317	36 939
Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill)	22 221	21 979	22 165
Elementary occupations (low skill)	12 105	17 007	13 870

Note: \*=Data refer to few sample cases, and most were not used in the analysis; where they are used, they should be taken with caution.

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Table 4.2 Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers, by last country or territory of destination abroad, sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills) (thousands dong)**

	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other
<b>Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers</b>	<b>28 225</b>	<b>25 437</b>	<b>16 905</b>	<b>8 568</b>	<b>18 540</b>
<i>By sex</i>					
Male	30 436	26 188	16 569	8 646	18 153
Female	24 896	22 185	17 890	8 089	19 686
<i>By main age group</i>					
15–24	27 416	22 667	15 371	7 662	17 868
25+	29 008	26 112	17 238	8 936	18 680
<i>By industry or economic activity</i>					
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	25 130	26 130	15 196	6 755	24 154
Construction	40 359	27 820	22 452	13 167	18 093
Other industries	27 487	26 672	16 518	10 858	15 178
Wholesale and retail trade	19 143	22 308	14 750	9 667	19 060
Household work	40 000*	15 000*	14 979	25 000*	18 833*
Other services	22 013	20 528	16 333	8 450	20 576
<i>By occupation (skills)</i>					
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	43 750	18 000*	22 000*	–	34 363
Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill)	28 531	25 691	16 989	14 426	18 469
Elementary occupations (low skill)	23 329	23 667	16 305	7 002	12 194

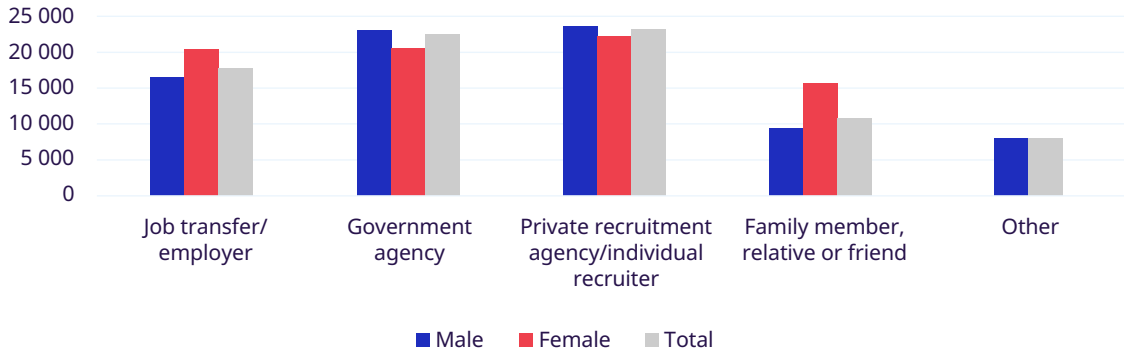
Note: \*=Data refer to few sample cases, and most were not used in the analysis; where they are used, they should be taken with caution.

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

## 4.2 First-month earnings of return migrant workers by recruitment process and legal status

Across the three channels of job transfer, government recruitment agency and private agency, the first-month earnings hovered around 20 million dong on average, with the monthly income for jobs associated with the latter two channels slightly higher, at around 22–23 million dong on average. The first-month earnings for jobs accessed through a family member, relative, friend (at 11 million dong) or other (at 8 million dong), were significantly lower than people who found jobs through the other channels. Within each channel, there was no considerable difference between male and female workers' income. Compared with the statistics on recruitment costs, it seems that the people who paid more to access a job abroad also had relatively greater first-month earnings than people who paid lower recruitment costs.

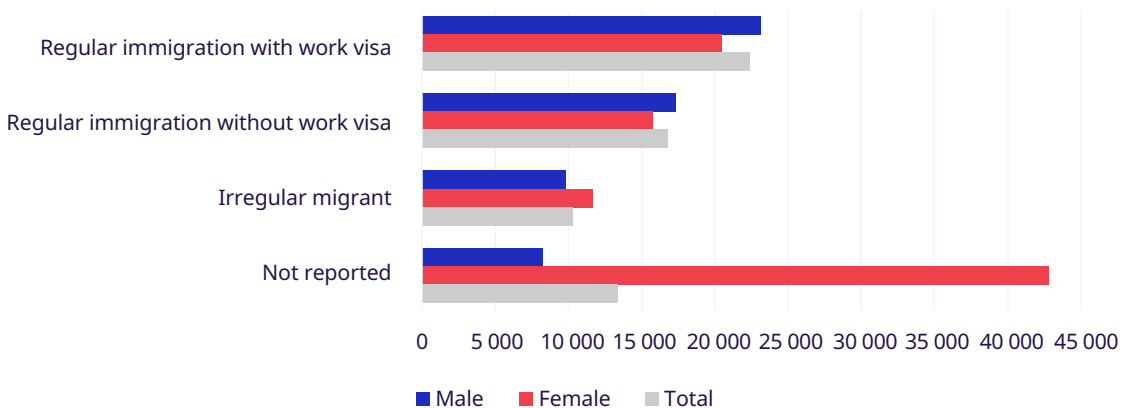
► **Figure 4.1 Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers, by sex and recruitment process (thousands dong)**



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

Similar to the statistics on average recruitment costs, workers migrating with a work visa generally earned more than migrants without a work visa, at 20–25 million dong in the first month (figure 4.2). Workers with regular immigration without a work visa were paid 15–20 million dong in their first month on the job. Those who migrated irregularly or did not answer the question did not pay much to access their job abroad but also did not receive much monthly income, at 10–13 million dong each. There was an unusual peak in the pay of female workers who did not report their migration status, at up to 43 million dong for the first-month income. This was due to two women who were paid extremely well, at 150 million dong and 250 million dong (one in construction and the other in manufacturing). Without these two situations, the average first-month earnings of all other women workers would be around 9 million dong. The male workers earned more than female counterparts in the regular cases, but less so than the two-highest paid women.

► **Figure 4.2 Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers, by sex and legal migration status (thousands dong)**



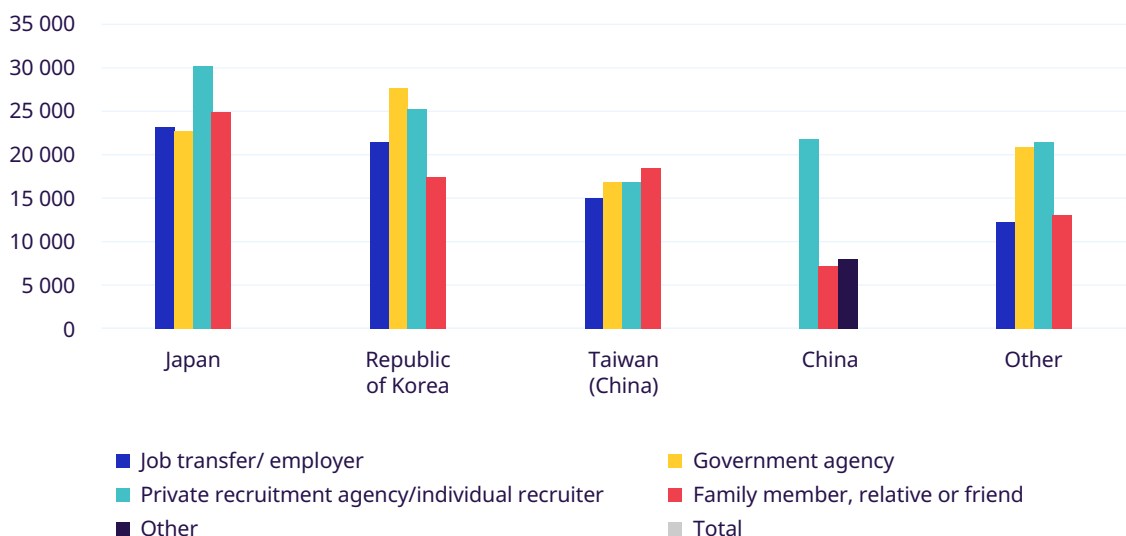
Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers**  
Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

Comparing the first-month earnings across destinations and different channels of recruitment, income was clearly greatest in Japan and the Republic of Korea no matter how workers were recruited, with earnings ranging from 17 million dong to 35 million dong (figure 4.3). But these two countries were also the most expensive in terms of recruitment costs. The first-month income in China and Taiwan (China) was the lowest among all the countries and territory cited and the cheapest destinations in terms of recruitment costs. Similar studies corroborate these findings (see for example, Miller 2019).

Across all destinations, workers who used a private recruitment agency or individual recruiter to access a job abroad received the most or second-most income in their first month of working. This relationship seems most evident from the experiences in China, where workers who used a private channel earned 22 million dong on average in the first month, almost three times more than earnings associated with all the other recruitment channels. In Japan, workers who had used a private recruitment agency or an individual recruiter earned on average 30 million dong in their first month on the job, whereas all the other migrants who had gone there through other channels were paid less than 25 million dong.

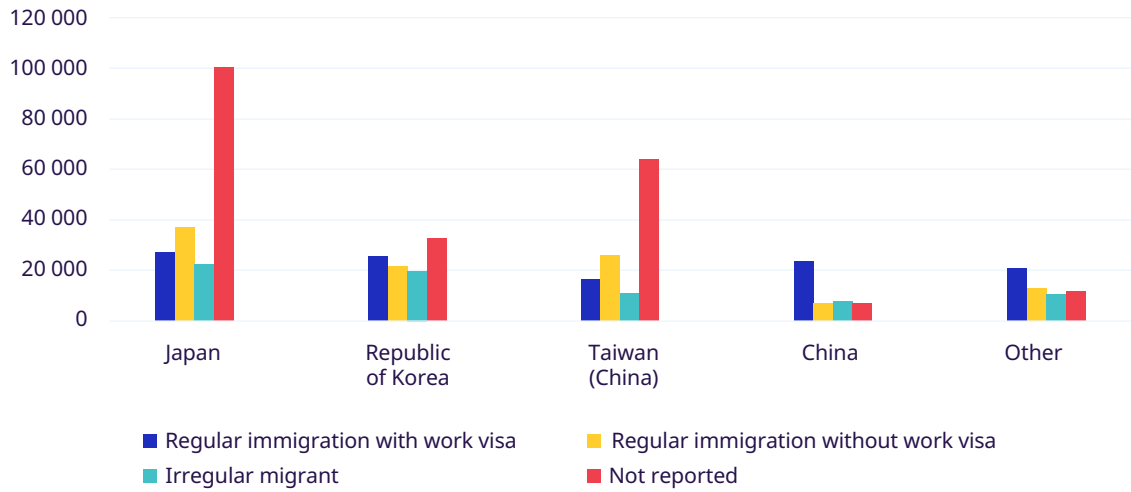
► **Figure 4.3 Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers, by recruitment process and last country or territory of destination abroad (thousands dong)**



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

The migrant workers who did not answer the question on migration status seemed to have earned the most among all the migrants who had been to Japan, the Republic of Korea or Taiwan (China) (figure 4.4). As mentioned in section 4.2, this is due to two outliers who were highly paid compared with the others. The remaining migration routes did not seem to vary considerably; in general, regular migrants earned more than irregular migrants. Also, there were only a few persons reporting irregular status or not reporting any status while working in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan (China), thus the data should be used with caution. However, at least one previous study echoed the findings in this pilot study (see Harkins, Lindgren and Suravoranon 2018).

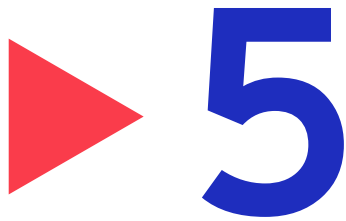
► Figure 4.4 Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers, by legal migration status and last country or territory of destination abroad (thousands dong)



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.







# Recruitment cost indicator

---

**The recruitment cost indicator (RCI) of each subgroup is measured by dividing the total recruitment costs by the total first-month earnings of the whole subgroup. The statistic is interpreted as the equivalent number of months of salary or wages used to pay back the recruitment costs.**

The survey found that, on average, return Vietnamese migrant workers had to use around 7.4 months of their earnings to pay back or recoup the recruitment costs for a job abroad. As this chapter articulates, there were considerable variations in the RCI, depending on age, sex, industry or the sector of work, skill level and country or territory of destination abroad.

## 5.1 Recruitment cost indicator by industry and occupation

The RCI was higher among the migrant workers who were younger than 25 than those who were aged 25 or older, although the difference was not that stark (table 5.1). Migrant workers aged 15–24 needed to use more than eight months of their income to either pay back or recoup what was spent on the recruitment costs, while workers aged 25 or older needed seven months of their income (see Annex table A3.14 for more age group disaggregation). Migrant workers from urban areas also used, on average, more of their income to pay back or recover what was spent on their recruitment costs than workers from rural areas (at 8.5 months versus 6.9 months).

► Table 5.1 Recruitment cost indicator and proportion of migrant workers with recruitment costs (%), by sex, age, geographic location, main industry and main occupation (skills)

	Male		Female		Total	
	RCI	% with costs*	RCI	% with costs	RCI	% with costs
Recruitment cost indicator (RCI) and migrant workers with costs (%)	7.3	96.9	7.4	97.2	7.4	97.0
<i>By main age group</i>						
15–24	7.8	95.4	9.3	97.9	8.3	96.2
25+	7.2	97.4	6.4	96.8	7.0	97.3
<i>By main geographic location</i>						
Urban	8.9	96.2	7.7	96.6	8.5	96.3
Rural	6.7	97.2	7.2	97.4	6.9	97.2
<i>By industry or economic activity</i>						
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	8.0	91.0	7.1	91.7	7.8	92.0
Construction	5.6	100.0	1.1	100.0	5.3	100.0
Other industries	7.0	98.9	7.5	99.3	7.1	99.0
Wholesale and retail trade	8.7	96.9	7.8	81.8	8.5	93.0
Household work	10.4**	100.0**	7.3	100.0	7.5	100.0
Other services	11.2	95.5	8.4	96.8	9.9	96.0
<i>By occupation (skills)</i>						
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	4.8	71.4	2.8	33.3	4.3	60.0
Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill)	7.7	98.8	7.7	99.0	7.7	99.0
Elementary occupations (low skill)	4.6	89.6	7.0	95.1	5.7	92.0

Note: (1) \*=Percentage of workers with costs indicates the share of workers who had to pay recruitment costs (reported costs greater than zero) among the workers surveyed. The reverse was the proportion of migrant workers who did not pay any costs, a statistic that should be published along with the RCI, as recommended in the guidelines for SDG indicator 10.7.1 (ILO and World Bank 2019a).

(2) \*\*=Data refer to few sample cases, and most were not used in the analysis; where they are used, they should be taken with caution. Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

A migrant worker in services, such as hospitality, medical care, education or training, had to use nearly ten months of their earnings on average to pay for their recruitment costs. Men in those industries actually had to use more than the overall average, at 11.2 months, of their income to cover their recruitment costs, making them the grouping in terms of economic activity that used the most of their earnings. Female migrant workers in construction had to use the least amount of their earnings, at roughly one month of income. The RCI for their male counterparts (in those main industries) was the lowest among all economic activities, at 5.6 months.

Regarding occupation and skill level, the RCI was highest among medium-skilled workers, who had to use 7.7 equivalent of their first-month earnings to cover the recruitment costs. This proportion shrank to 5.7 months and 4.3 months for low-skilled and high-skilled workers, respectively.

## 5.2 Confirmation of results with the self-assessment question

The data from the self-assessment of return migrant workers on how many months it took them or will take them to pay for their recruitment costs indicate slightly more of their earnings (more time needed), although it was not much more than what the statistical calculations using the indicator definition concluded. On average, return migrant workers estimated that they had to work or will have to work about 8.7 months to recover the total cost of accessing their job abroad (slightly longer than the 7.4 months from the calculated indicator). Between the sexes, the men estimated slightly less time (at 8.5 months) than the women (at 9.1 months). The longest estimate came from the youth, who seemed to think it would take them ten months on average.

The Republic of Korea emerged as the “most expensive” country to go to for work (table 5.2). The recruitment costs for a job there were about nine times the first-month income, which means a migrant worker needed to work at least nine months to pay back the total recruitment costs. China remains the most affordable country to go to, based on the workers’ who went there having the lowest average recruitment costs and the lowest RCI, at about one month of earnings. Yet, there was a greater gender differential: female workers who went to China had to pay more than three times their first-month earnings on average to cover their recruitment costs, while their male counterparts only had to pay half of their first month of earnings on average.

► Table 5.2 Recruitment cost indicator, by last country or territory of destination abroad, sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills)

	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
Recruitment cost indicator	7.1	8.9	7.8	1.0	6.5	7.4
<i>By sex</i>						
Male	6.8	8.7	8.4	0.6	6.5	7.4
Female	7.5	9.5	6.4	3.4	6.4	7.3
<i>By main age group</i>						
15–24	7.2	11.2	9.5	0.8	10.5	8.3
25+	6.9	8.4	7.5	1.1	5.7	7.0
<i>By industry or economic activity</i>						
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	8.3	9.7	9.2	0.3	5.3	7.8
Construction	5.4	8.0	5.5	3.4	3.4	5.3
Other industries	7.2	7.1	8.3	0.8	5.5	7.2
Wholesale and retail trade	10.2	10.6	8.4	1.1	7.1	8.5
Household work	0.5*	20.0*	7.5	8.0*	8.1	7.5
Other services	8.7	12.5	5.7	2.1	10.0	9.9
<i>By occupation (skills)</i>						
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	4.2	2.8*	6.4*	–	4.3	5.7
Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill)	7.1	9.1	8.0	1.3	6.8	7.7
Elementary occupations (low skill)	8.0	6.9	6.7	0.9	4.8	4.3

Note: \*=Data refer to few sample cases, and most were not used in the analysis; where they are used, they should be taken with caution.

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

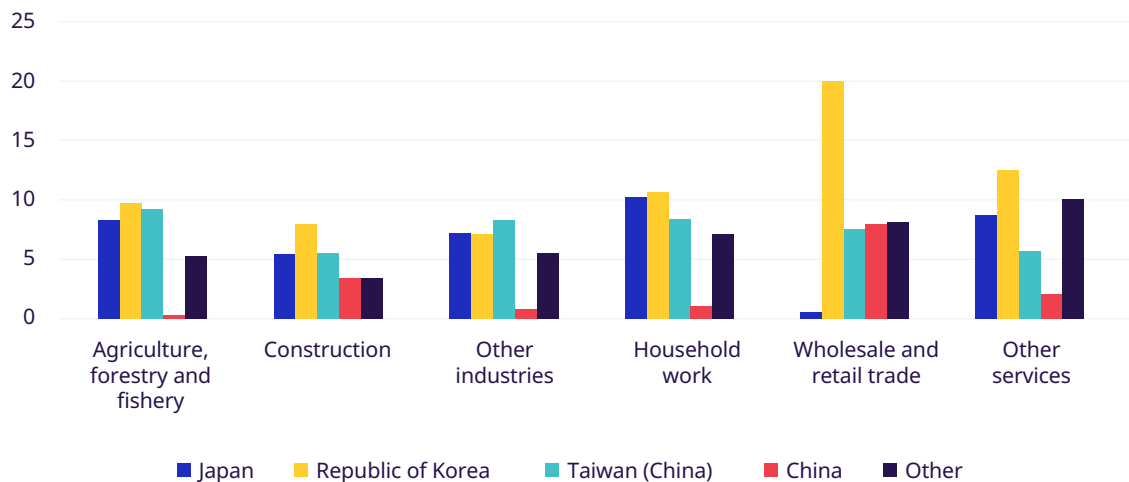
Regarding age groups, the younger workers paid relatively more in average recruitment costs than older workers in all countries and territories except China, where the costs were comparable between the two age groups. The Vietnamese male workers aged 15–24 who went to the Republic of Korea paid recruitment costs equivalent of up to 11 times their monthly earnings. People aged 25 or older paid a relatively lower amount to go to the Republic of Korea, but it still was as high as 8.4 months of their earnings.

In addition to workers who had gone to China having the lowest RCI, the younger workers (aged 15 to 24 years) who went there paid less for their recruitment costs among the four main destinations than the workers aged 25 or older, although the difference was small (at 0.8 months for youth and 1.1 months for adults).

The Republic of Korea was also the most expensive destination for migrant workers in all economic activities (figure 5.1), with the exception of wholesale and retail trade, which had the highest recruitment costs for jobs in Japan, and manufacturing (other industries), which had the more expensive access in Taiwan (China). Although included in the tables here, the data on household workers must be used with caution due to the small numbers in the sample.

In terms of all economic activities, China remained the cheapest country to access (except for household work, for which the numbers were too small for reliable conclusions). Compared with the findings on earnings in the previous chapter, jobs in China were also the lowest paid.

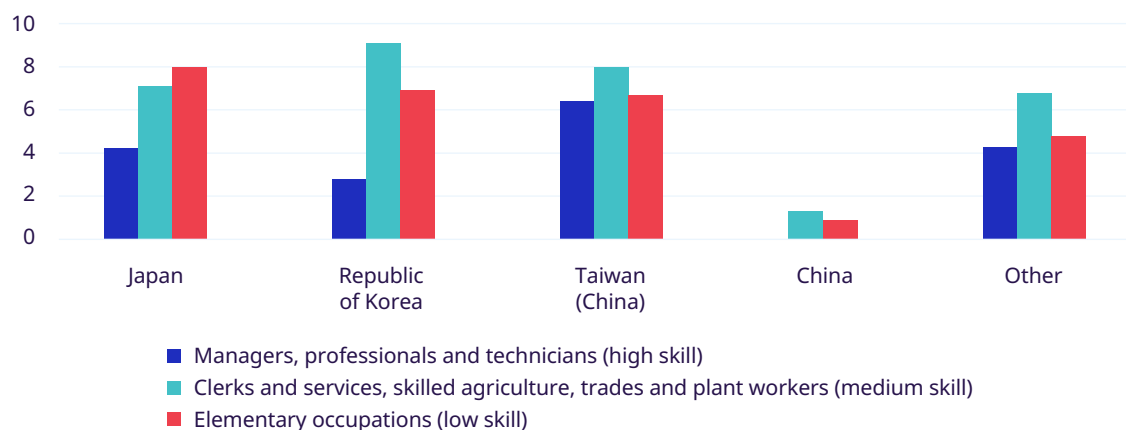
► **Figure 5.1 Recruitment cost indicator, by last country or territory of destination abroad and main industry**



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

High-skilled migrant workers, no matter which country or territory abroad where they worked, paid the least in terms of the equivalence to their first month of earnings (figure 5.2). This could be because highly skilled workers and professionals are in a better bargaining position than workers in elementary occupations. Yet, workers in the medium-skill occupations were charged the most of all workers to access jobs in all countries or territories, except Japan, where it was the low-skill occupations that were the most expensive to access in terms of their earnings and the number of months required to cover the recruitment expenses.

► Figure 5.2 Recruitment cost indicator, by main occupation (skills) and last country or territory of destination abroad



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

## 5.3 Recruitment cost indicator by recruitment process and legal status

The RCI was highest among workers recruited via private agencies and individual recruiters and lowest among workers recruited via a family member, relative or friend. The female migrant workers paid slightly more than their male counterparts in all recruitment processes, with the exception of government agencies, for which the male migrant workers who used them paid more than the female workers did.

► Table 5.3 Recruitment cost indicator and proportion of migrant workers with recruitment costs (percentage), by sex, recruitment process and legal migration status

	Male		Female		Total	
	RCI	% with costs	RCI	% with costs	RCI	% with costs
<b>Recruitment cost indicator (RCI) and migrant workers with costs (percentage)</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>96.9</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>97.2</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>97.0</b>
<b>By job recruitment process</b>						
Job transfer or employer	6.2	75.0	6.9	75.0	6.5	75.0
Government agency	7.2	100.0	6.7	97.9	7.1	99.5
Private recruitment agency or individual recruiter	7.9	99.4	8.2	100.0	8.0	99.6
Family member, relative or friend	3.0	88.2	3.7	89.1	3.2	88.4
Other	2.5*	100.0*	-	100.0*	1.7*	100.0*
<b>By legal migration status</b>						
Regular immigration with work visa	7.8	99.5	8.4	98.8	8.0	99.3
Regular immigration without work visa	3.8	91.4	5.3	94.4	4.3	92.5
Irregular migrant	2.8	70.2	3.7	78.6	3.1	72.1
Not reported	1.9	93.3	0.6	92.3	1.3	93.2

Note: \*=Data refer to few sample cases, and most were not used in the analysis; where they are used, they should be taken with caution.

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

Regarding RCI by legal migration status, those who did not respond to the question used the smallest share of their income to cover their recruitment costs, at only 1.3 months of earnings (table 5.4). Persons migrating with a work visa had to use more of their income for their recruitment expenses, at 8 months of earnings. The RCI of regular immigration with a work visa was much greater than for regular immigration without a work visa (at 4.3 months of earnings) and for irregular migration (at 3.1 months of earnings). This was similar to the trends observed in the results for recruitment costs (Chapter 4) as well as earnings in this chapter.

When these findings were disaggregated by sex, the female workers emerged as having had to use a slightly larger portion of their income on their recruitment expenses than the male workers in all migration statuses, except for those who did not respond.

► **Table 5.4 Recruitment cost indicator, by last country or territory of destination abroad, recruitment process and legal migration status**

	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
<b>Recruitment cost indicator (RCI)</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>7.3</b>
<i>By job recruitment process</i>						
Job transfer or employer	6.6	8.8	–*	–	3.9	6.5
Government agency	8.5	7.0	7.2	–*	4.5	7.1
Private recruitment agency or individual recruiter	6.9	9.8	8.2	2.6	8.0	8.0
Family member, relative or friend	5.1	9.1	4.2	0.4	3.6	3.2
Other	–	–	–	1.7*	–	1.7*
<i>By legal migration status</i>						
Regular immigration with work visa	7.5	8.9	8.3	2.0	7.0	8.0
Regular immigration without work visa	5.0	–	0.7*	0.6	4.7	4.3
Irregular migrant	3.6*	9.9	6.8*	1.0	1.6	3.1
Not reported	1.2*	4.1*	1.0*	0.5	3.0	1.3

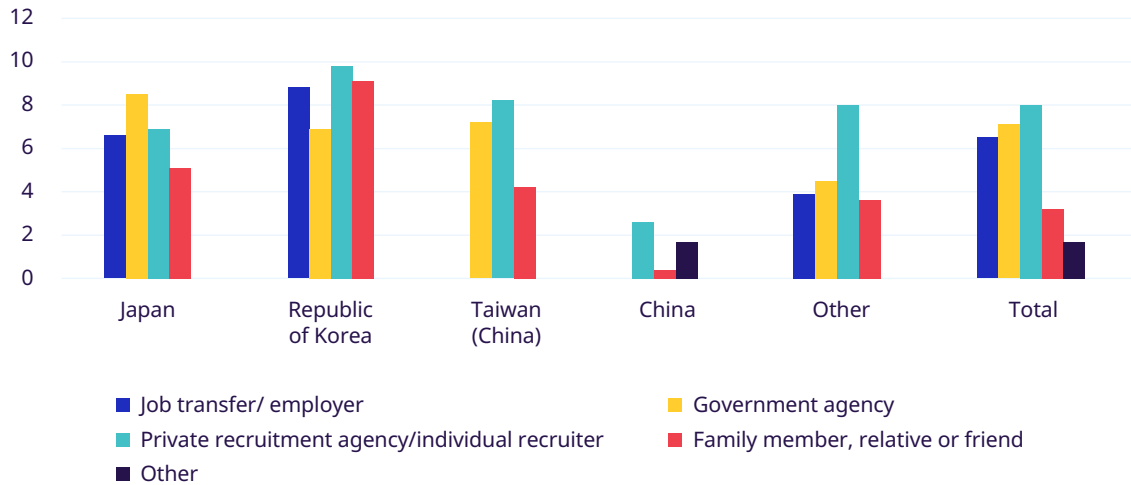
Note: \*=Data refer to few sample cases, and most were not used in the analysis; where they are used, they should be taken with caution.

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

It was relatively more expensive for the migrant workers choosing to work in the Republic of Korea via a private recruitment agency or individual recruiter (figure 5.3) because they had to pay up to almost 9.8 times of their first-month income for their jobs. The second-most expensive channel was via family members, relatives and friends, again in the Republic of Korea, which cost up to 9.1 times of the first-month earnings for the surveyed workers. The cheapest channel was recruitment via family members, relatives or friends in China, at only 0.4 months of salary. Not surprising, going to the Republic of Korea as an irregular immigrant seemed to be the most expensive, equivalent to 9.9 months of earnings, although the data cover only a small portion of the sample. Most of the migrant workers in Taiwan (China) went there with a regular visa (97.1 per cent); thus, the data on other migration status refer to a small number of cases and are not reliable.

► **Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers**  
Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

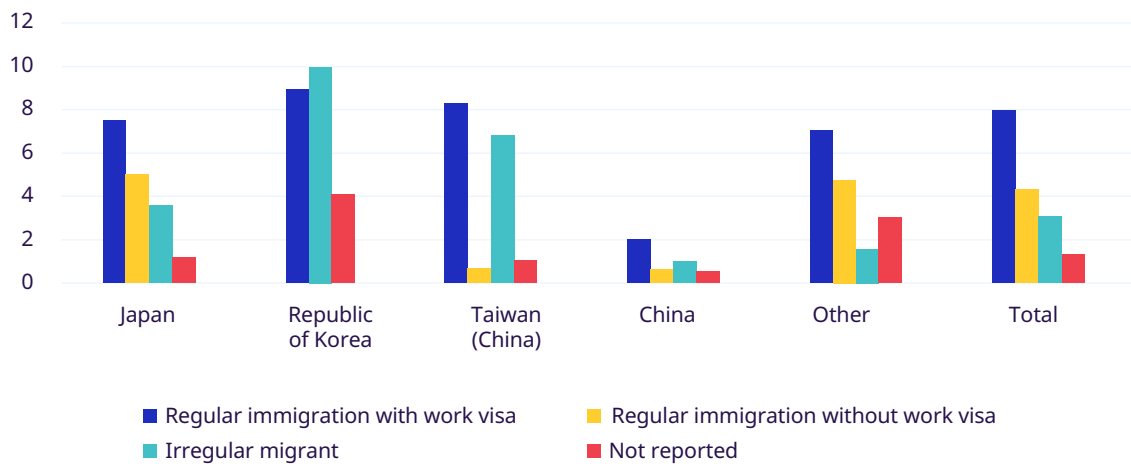
► **Figure 5.3 Recruitment cost indicator, by recruitment process and last country or territory of destination abroad**



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

Regular immigration with a work visa seemed the most expensive in all destinations except the Republic of Korea, where irregular migrants had a higher RCI (at 9.9 months). Those who did not answer the question regarding migration status had a lower RCI across all countries, at a maximum of recruitment costs equivalent to 4.1 months of earnings (figure 5.4). However, due to the small number of such cases, the only reliable data are for China and other destinations, as well as for the total.

► **Figure 5.4 Recruitment cost indicator, by legal migration status and last country or territory of destination abroad**



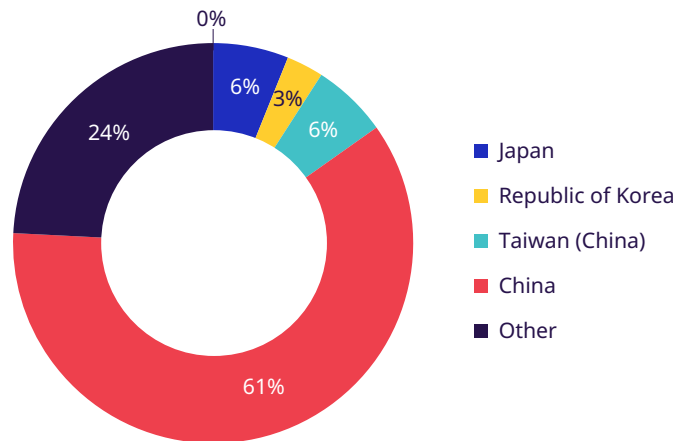
Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

## 5.4 Return migrant workers with no recruitment costs

Only 3 per cent of return migrant workers did not pay any recruitment fees or related costs to work abroad. Two thirds of them worked in China, mostly in agriculture, forestry and fishery. The few others who did not incur any recruitment costs had jobs in manufacturing and wholesale and retail trade in other countries. The migrant workers with no recruitment costs were mostly involved in low- and medium-skill occupations. However, due to the small number (only 33 workers), the data and conclusions should be used with caution.

Even though there were return migrant workers who were not charged anything to access their job in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan (China) (figure 5.5), the majority of the surveyed workers had gone to China (61 per cent), while 24 per cent went to other destinations not specified here.

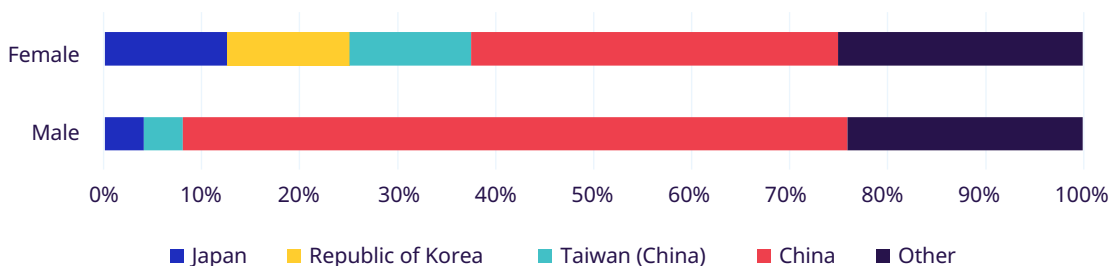
► Figure 5.5 Return migrant workers with no recruitment costs, by last country or territory of destination abroad (percentage)



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

The trends were similar for men and women, with the exception that the sample had relatively more men than women working in China (figure 5.6). The data also show (figure 5.7) that migrant workers who paid no recruitment costs obtained their job overseas mainly via a family member, relative or friend (at 70 per cent). A few of them had a job transfer or were directly recruited by an employer (18 per cent). More than a half of them (at 52 per cent) were irregular migrant workers (see figure 5.8).

► Figure 5.6 Return migrant workers with no recruitment costs, by sex and last country or territory of destination abroad (percentage)

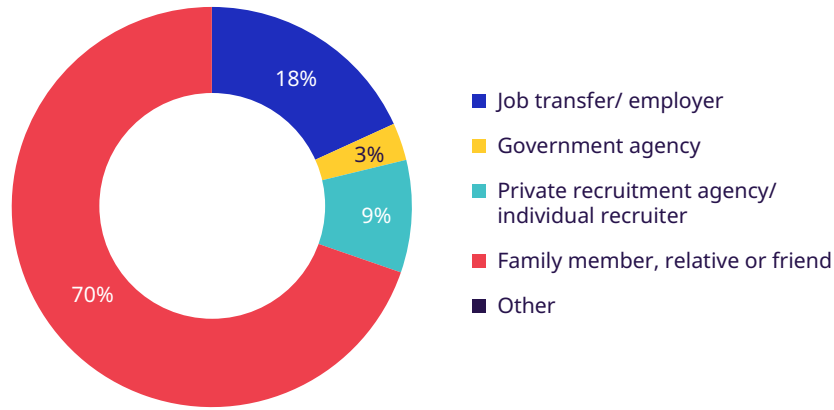


Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.



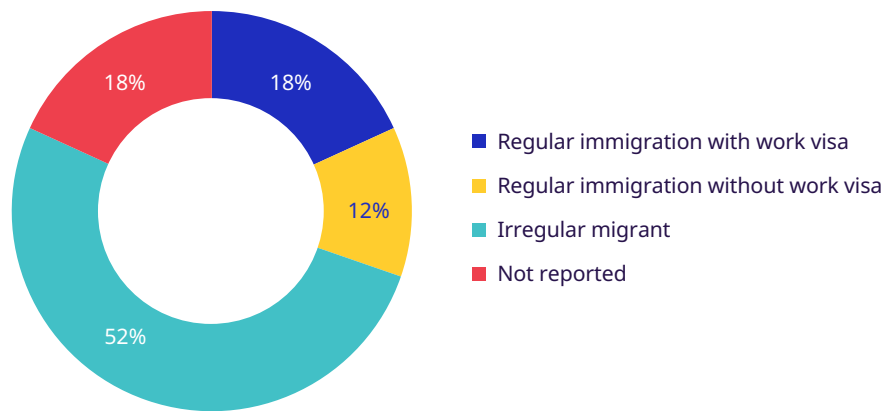
► **Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers**  
Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

► **Figure 5.7 Return migrant workers with no recruitment costs, by recruitment process (percentage)**



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Figure 5.8 Return migrant workers with no recruitment costs, by legal migration status (percentage)**



Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

### 5.5 Zero recruitment costs is a distant prospect

The recruitment cost indicator, or SDG indicator 10.7.1, was adopted as one of the two indicators for monitoring progress on SDG target 10.7 (Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies). In line with international Conventions (such as ILO Convention No. 181 on private employment agencies) and international principles and recommendations – that no migrant worker should pay any fee for a job abroad (ILO 2016), SDG indicator 10.7.1 was adopted with the understanding that the encouraged practice was to move towards zero recruitment fees and related costs for migrant workers. The guidelines for SDG indicator 10.7.1 recommend that countries publish statistics for this indicator along with statistics on the migrant workers with no recruitment costs.

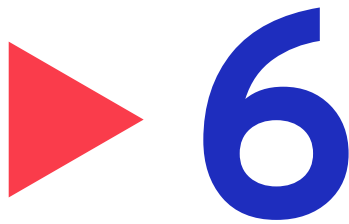
Only 3 per cent of the Vietnamese return migrant workers in this survey sample did not pay any recruitment fees – a situation far from the international principles and recommendations. By skill level, that proportion shrunk to only 1 per cent for the people who went abroad for medium-skill jobs, who were the majority in the sample (more than three quarters). However, and not surprising, about 40 per cent of the people in the few high-skill occupations (managers, professionals and technicians) did not pay any fees.

On average, the recruitment costs were equivalent to more than seven months of working abroad. These costs remain largely legal in Viet Nam, and even charged by the government agencies as well as the private recruitment agencies. The data also indicate that high recruitment costs are still associated with high earnings and possibly with a greater chance of securing a decent job abroad, as previous studies also revealed (for example, Miller 2019). As in the previous studies, the findings here indicate that the more expensive corridors (countries or territories of destination), such as Japan, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan (China), lead to higher wages and most likely to more secure and protected jobs.

More than 70 per cent of the Vietnamese workers in the sample worked in those three more expensive destinations (Japan, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan (China)). In addition to higher wages, previous studies (such as Miller 2019) have shown that these destinations provide better protection of labour rights, and Vietnamese migrant workers seemed to experience fewer labour rights abuses when working there. As long as migrant workers expect more gains by paying more, there will be a market for lucrative recruitment institutions, be it public or private, formal or informal.

Future studies on recruitment costs may want to look at the many other aspects that migrant workers consider before investing for work in a country abroad. This would engender a broader picture of the factors that go into migrant workers' decision-making process for picking a destination country or territory and on how these factors rank among migrant workers. Other such considerations can be living conditions in destination countries, having contacts there, security, ease and swiftness of the recruitment process, availability of information on jobs abroad, language and communication.





# Summarized findings and policy implications

---

## 6.1 Statistical findings

### Demographics and geographic location

The demographic variables of return migrant workers entailed prominently more men than women, at 74.1 per cent and 25.9 per cent, respectively. Although there could be a sampling selection issue, the male-dominated distribution of migrant workers was roughly in line with official statistics published by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs for regular migrants (ILO 2021). Workers aged 25 and older accounted for about 73.4 per cent of the total sample, leaving 26.6 per cent of workers aged 15–24. The same distribution by sex persists when the data were disaggregated by geographic location, in which three fourths of the migrant workers surveyed came from rural areas.

### Main corridors or destination countries or territories

There was no one predominant corridor (or country or territory of destination abroad) for the Vietnamese return migrant workers. But the three popular destinations were Taiwan (China) (at 25.1 per cent), Japan (at 22.7 per cent) and the Republic of Korea (at 22.4 per cent).

### Main skills and industries

In terms of occupations or main skills, medium-skilled workers constituted the largest share of the sample (at 77.8 per cent), composed mainly of services and wholesale and retail trade workers, skilled agriculture workers and craft and plant workers. Elementary occupations or low skills represented only 20.6 per cent of return migrant workers, and only 1.6 per cent of return migrant workers were in high-skill occupations (managers, professionals and technicians).

The main industries of return migrant workers were processing and manufacturing, with nearly half of the sample in them (45.7 per cent), followed by agriculture, forestry and fishery (19.3 per cent) and construction (14.6 per cent). The remaining workers were involved in services (20.4 per cent), including only 3 per cent in domestic work.

## Recruitment costs and earnings, averages

The average recruitment costs of return migrant workers were an estimated 151.8 million dong (equivalent to \$6,543). The highest average recruitment costs were paid by services workers to access jobs in the Republic of Korea (the most expensive corridor), at 257 million dong (\$11,086). The lowest recruitment costs were paid by agriculture, forestry and fishery workers who went to China (the cheapest of the main corridors for Vietnamese migrant workers), at only 2.2 million dong (\$93).

For incomes, the average earnings of return migrant workers for their first month of work abroad in the last three years was an estimated 20.7 million dong (equivalent to \$892). The highest average earnings in the first month were received by high-skill migrant workers (managers, professionals and technicians) who worked in Japan (the most lucrative corridor), at 43.8 million dong (\$1,886). The lowest average salary was paid to agriculture, forestry and fishery workers in China (the lowest paid of the main corridors for Vietnamese migrant workers in terms of earnings), at only 6.8 million dong (\$291).

## Recruitment cost indicator

The RCI, or SDG indicator 10.7.1, is expressed as the “recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in country of destination” (ILO and World Bank 2019a) and is calculated as the ratio between the total recruitment costs paid by a migrant worker and the first month of salary of the same migrant worker in their first job abroad within the past three years (see details in Annex A1). Its actual interpretation is the number of months of salary that a migrant worker must use to cover (pay back) their recruitment costs (ILO and World Bank 2019a, para. 52).

The survey found that, on average, the Vietnamese return migrant workers had to use more than seven months of their salary (7.4 months) to cover the recruitment costs for a job abroad. There were considerable variations in the RCI, depending on the variables, such as the age and sex: young women aged 15–24 had to use 9.3 months of their salary on average, while women aged 25 or older used an average of 6.4 months of their salary to cover their recruitment expenses. In terms of industry or the sector of work, men in services used the greatest portion of their first-year income, at 11.2 months of salary, against an average of only 1.1 months of earnings by women in construction. As for skill level, women in high-skill occupations used only 2.8 months of their income on average, compared with 7.7 months of average earnings by their female counterparts with medium skills for their recruitment costs. And by country or territory of destination abroad, women who went to the Republic of Korea used on average 9.5 months of their salary, while men going to China used only 0.6 months of their salary on average to cover their recruitment costs.

## 6.2 Policy implications

The principle that “labour is not a commodity” from the ILO Declaration of Philadelphia (ILO 1944) and hence that workers should not pay any fee or related cost to access employment (ILO 2016) is at the very core of the ILO mandate and its work since its creation. For many years, however, concerns have been raised over recruitment-related abuses, in particular the collection of recruitment fees and related costs from workers, especially low-skilled workers, and the risks of debt bondage and human trafficking linked to repayment of recruitment fees (ILO 2020).

With recruitment processes becoming more complex (such as with the addition of screening tests and placement in more remote work locations), workers willingly or not have assumed more expenses in their search for a desired job. The high cost of migration resulting from recruitment malpractices, collusion between recruiters in origin and destination countries, bureaucracy and poor regulation are known to constitute the most serious impediments to realizing sustainable development outcomes from international migration. This often translates into workers’ exploitation, discrimination and inequalities in the workplace and decent work deficits as well as skill underutilization and job mismatches.

Data generated through an increasing number of associated recruitment costs surveys suggest that these costs can amount to 17 months or more of average monthly earnings in some corridors (for example, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2020). As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, workers around the world face new challenges in their recruitment process while the issue of payment of recruitment fees and related costs persists. Workers may no longer be able to be deployed (redeployed) due to travel restrictions or they may experience delays in processing their documentation, with the obvious risk of losing their job. They may already have paid fees and costs related to their recruitment or deployment and now endure difficulty obtaining reimbursement.

Studies also suggest that recruitment costs can vary significantly, based on the personal characteristics of migrant workers (by sex, educational attainment and skills, for example), the type of job or industry they will work in at the destination as well as the country or territory of destination. The reasons for this relate to a variety of factors, ranging from higher travel costs and differentiated regulatory frameworks per country or territory to sector-specific labour migration movements and unequal access to information and resources of certain groups of workers, such as women or workers with low levels of education or skill attainment. The results from this recruitment costs study in Viet Nam confirm these factors.

The results from the piloted additional questions in the Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019 suggest several policy implications.

#### **Reducing the financial cost of migrant workers' recruitment**

A critical role of migration policies is to reduce the financial costs of recruitment incurred by migrant workers seeking jobs abroad and thus increase free access to jobs abroad for more migrant workers. Migration policies also should increase opportunities for local businesses in need of migrant workers' talents to recruit foreign workers. The ultimate policy aim should be that no migrant worker pays any fee or cost to access employment abroad. This pilot test has shown that the modality of recruitment, or recruitment channels, matter. The data indicate that private recruitment agencies are among the most expensive recruitment channels for migrant workers. This calls for an improvement and expansion of public and government-to-government arrangements so that they are less costly for migrant workers. It also calls for stronger enforcement of private recruitment agency regulations, such as ensuring that the allowable costs to charge migrant workers by national legislation are not exceeded.

#### **Deploying fair and effective labour recruitment policies for all migrant workers**

For the short and medium terms, policies should ensure that recruitment costs can be regulated fairly for women and men of all ages and for all occupations and countries where they want to go for work. Such policies are needed to address diversity and inequalities in recruitment costs, particularly protect young and women migrant workers and ensure labour market efficiency and competitiveness. Reduced recruitment costs would also ensure a more effective labour market functioning, promote better skills matching and limit employers' exposure to reputational damage linked to abusive practices.

#### **Reaping the benefit of migration for both sending and receiving countries**

Reducing the crippling migration costs and inequalities in these costs could lead to more migrants "winning" from the migration process. Such a win means more people from low-income households can access foreign employment opportunities, that they are prevented from falling into exploitive situations linked to heavy debt and, ultimately, that larger remittance flows to migrants' households and their communities can be used for education, health care and other productive uses. Migrant workers can also spend or invest in their countries of destination rather than spending a bulk of their earnings to pay back debt, hence contributing to boosting local businesses and the local economy.

### **Identifying and protecting the most vulnerable groups**

As this report shows, women, low-skilled workers and young workers, who are often the most vulnerable to labour abuses, are also those who pay the most for recruitment in terms of their earnings at their destination. It also shows that the cost of recruitment varies significantly along different migration corridors and occupations at destination. A deep understanding of such disaggregated costs is critical not only for designing appropriate policy and regulatory responses but to ensure that they are then properly monitored and enforced, especially for groups of workers who are at higher risk of exploitation.

### **Strengthening the implementation, application and monitoring of existing regulations to protect migrant workers**

The survey results suggest that steps must continue in Viet Nam and in destination countries and territories to reduce recruitment fees and related costs paid by migrant workers. As per international Conventions,<sup>3</sup> employers should pay some of these fees and costs, while others can be eliminated or significantly reduced by governments (such as costs for visas, passports, training costs, airfares, medical examination, work permit, documentation and contribution to social insurance schemes). Governments can also reduce recruitment costs by setting up state-funded job portals and explore government-to-government arrangements. Mechanisms for direct recruitment by employers can be set up to bypass the services of agencies and brokers.

### **Improving the availability and dissemination of information based on costs paid by migrant workers**

This should include gathering and disseminating information on the current situation that migrant workers face in terms of recruitment costs, such as more detailed information and on where costs should be monitored and reduced. But it should also include disseminating accurate information on the legal or policy provisions to protect migrant workers, such as on the allowable maximum costs and fees related to recruitment that are to be paid by migrant workers.

### **Generating better national data for the monitoring and adjustment of policies to protect Vietnamese migrant workers**

Although this survey was a pilot study on measuring SDG indicator 10.7.1, the results shed light on recruitment-related vulnerabilities in a disaggregated way, reflecting the importance of gender, skills or occupation and destination country or territory as the factors that determine the costs that workers pay for a job abroad. This exercise, if repeated regularly, can allow for effective monitoring of progress in reducing the recruitment costs of migrant workers. Additional studies can also help compare the current practices with laws and policy regulations. Existing laws may be rightly moving towards the prohibition of fees, but this seems to be still far in practice, as seen in the findings. This calls not just for more stringent regulatory efforts but also for enforcement and monitoring. More of such studies could also lead to better global comparisons and promote healthy competition by comparing how different countries fare in terms of recruitment costs, particularly within the same economic community, such as ASEAN.

---

3 Such as the ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention No. 181 and the ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment (ILO 2016).

## ► References

---

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). 2020. *Cost of migration survey 2020*. Dhaka. July. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS\\_766198/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS_766198/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed 10 March 2021).

General Statistics Office of Viet Nam (GSO). 2020. Report of the pilot of the module on recruitment costs of international migration in Viet Nam. Draft submitted to ILO (unpublished). Hanoi. Mar.

Harkins, B., D. Lindgren, and T. Suravoranon. 2018. *Risks and rewards: Outcomes of labour migration in South-East Asia – Key findings in Viet Nam*. Hanoi: ILO and International Organization for Migration. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/hanoi/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS\\_630870/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/hanoi/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS_630870/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed 11 March 2021).

International Labour Organization (ILO). 1944. Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the International Labour Organisation. ILO Declaration of Philadelphia. Twenty-sixth Session of the General Conference of the International Labour Organization. Philadelphia. May.

———. 2016. *General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment*. Geneva. Sep. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms\\_536263.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_536263.pdf) (accessed January 2021).

———. 2018. *Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration*. 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians. Geneva. Oct. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_648922.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_648922.pdf) (accessed March 2021).

———. 2020. *A global comparative study on defining recruitment fees and related costs: Interregional research on law, policy and practice*. Geneva. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/publications/WCMS\\_761729/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/publications/WCMS_761729/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed 10 March 2021).

———. 2021. *TRIANGLE in ASEAN quarterly briefing note*. Hanoi. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS\\_428584/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS_428584/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed 10 March 2021).

———, and World Bank. 2019a. *Statistics for SDG indicator 10.7.1: Guidelines for their collection*. Geneva. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/publications/WCMS\\_670175/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/publications/WCMS_670175/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed January 2021).

———. 2019b. *Operational manual on recruitment costs – SDG 10.7.1*. Geneva. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/WCMS\\_745663/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/WCMS_745663/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed January 2021).

Miller, J. 2019. *More choices, more power: Opportunities for women's empowerment in labour migration from Viet Nam*. Bangkok: ILO.

Viet Nam Government Office. 2017. *Viet Nam's national action plan for 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda* (Decision 633/QD-TTg). Hanoi. May.

## ► Annexes

---

### A1. Statistical concepts and definitions – Summary

The statistics used in this report cover individual return migrant workers who were identified during the fourth quarter of conducting the Labour Force Survey of 2019 in Viet Nam. The following concepts were used to determine the target population and to calculate the recruitment costs data.

#### Return international migrant workers

Vietnamese persons who had returned from a job abroad constituted the **target population** and in this report are characterized as “current residents of the country who were previously international migrant workers in another country or countries” (ILO 2018, 8). They left Viet Nam (their country of usual residence) with the declared intention to work in another country or territory as a wage or salary earner, a limitation introduced by the SDG indicator 10.7.1 guidelines (ILO and World Bank 2019a). Those who went abroad for other travelling purposes or who can commute for work across an international border on a daily or weekly basis without changing the country or territory of usual residence were not considered for this study, even though they are included in the concept of return international migrant workers (ILO 2018). The intention to work includes both formal and informal recruitment processes in which workers did not look for a job overseas via any organization or company but did it themselves or through friends or family channels. Included also are non-resident Vietnamese who were found visiting households in the country, while still residing and working outside Viet Nam.

#### The reference period for costs and earnings

The measurement of costs and earnings was done only for the first job obtained in the last country or territory of destination abroad within the past three years of employment abroad. Migrants whose first job was obtained more than three years before the survey were not included out of concern for their memory recall of recruitment costs paid long ago.

#### Recruitment cost indicator

The RCI, or SDG indicator 10.7.1, is expressed as the “recruitment costs borne by an employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in country of destination” (ILO and World Bank 2019a) and is the ratio between a “cost” measure and an “income” measure. For computing the RCI, total recruitment costs and total earnings for the first month abroad (within the past three years) were used for each sub-classification or category considered (or disaggregation presented). The aggregate values of a whole subgroup’s recruitment costs and first-month incomes were calculated. Then the total recruitment costs was divided by the total first-month income to arrive at the proportion of recruitment costs in total first-month income for the respective subgroup. This also can be expressed as the **number of months** equivalent to the first month of earnings that the migrant worker had to pay to get a job abroad.

For data on recruitment costs and first month of earnings abroad during the past three years, the average or mean values as well as the aggregate or sum values were also included. To obtain the mean value of, for example, recruitment costs for a given subgroup, first the total recruitment costs of that subgroup was calculated. Then it was divided by the total number of return migrant workers in the subgroup. This measurement was similar for the average of the first-month earnings.



### Recruitment costs

From the guidelines for the collection of [Statistics for SDG Indicator 10.7.1](#), “recruitment costs refer to any fees or costs incurred in the recruitment process in order for workers to secure employment or placement, regardless of the manner, timing or location of their imposition or collection”. Recruitment costs consist of a diverse set of expenditures that are listed in both the guidelines (ILO and World Bank, 2019a, para. 24) and the [Operational Manual on Recruitment Costs – SDG 10.7.1](#) and further detailed in the ILO definition of recruitment fees and related costs. These include a range of items from recruitment agencies’ fees to travel costs to medical and administrative expenses required to access employment abroad.

Recruitment costs items to acquire the first job overseas comprise the following main costs (summarized from 14 items in the guidelines):

- Documentation, such as passport, visa, medical exam and tests, pre-departure training, skill assessment, insurance fee, contract approval fee, travel and security clearance.
- Fee paid to recruiter or broker or recruitment agency, including any deposit in the case of Vietnamese workers.
- Travel costs, including accommodation.
- Any other formal or informal payments, such as payment to friends and relatives who helped to find the job, other informal payments or fees and interest on money borrowed.

As in the guidelines for collecting statistics for SDG indicator 10.7.1 (ILO and World Bank 2019a), these costs are the total amount that migrant workers and/or their families pay to find, qualify for and maintain a job offer from a foreign employer and to reach the place of employment for the first job abroad.

In Viet Nam, there are also cases in which migrant workers pay a deposit before leaving to work abroad, and by law, the deposit is paid back to the migrant worker upon their return or additional agreed conditions. Such deposits should not be included in recruitment costs. However, if a migrant worker does not get the deposit back, then it should be included as part of the recruitment costs (self-declaration by the migrant worker).

### First month of earnings

In line with the guidelines (ILO and World Bank 2019a), the survey asked workers about their first-month income of their first job abroad within the past three years. In line with the guidelines, this income included tangible and intangible bonuses. It also included any deductions by the employers, such as for debt repayment.

## A2. Summary information on survey methodology

### A2.1 Survey scope and coverage

The survey covered 1,095 return migrant workers who were Vietnamese and either residing in the country or who were resident and worked abroad in a first job during the past three years. They were either aged 15 and older who went abroad to live and work for a salary and had returned to live in Viet Nam or they were aged 15 and older who were temporary visitors in households in Viet Nam at the time of survey but still living and working abroad. Both cases should have had a job abroad in the last country or territory of destination that started within the past three years.

The survey focused on reporting the total recruitment costs and the first-month earnings in the first job in the last country or territory of destination. However, additional characteristics, such as demographics of migrant workers and characteristics of the first job (industry, occupation) were also collected.

## A2.2 Sampling design and field data collection

The survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2019 and was integrated into the Labour Force Survey of the same time. However, according to the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, due to the flow of information that needs to comply with the Labour Force Survey questionnaire, some variables of return migrant workers were missed, such as marital status, educational attainment, current employment status, etc. Another complication related to the guidelines recommendations that migrant workers' earnings should be collected for the first month of the first job abroad within the past three years, and this made it difficult to obtain a sizeable sample for reliable statistics (particularly for required disaggregation) because many workers had forgotten this information.

In addition, because the Labour Force Survey is a household sample survey and not designed to capture international migration, the number of return migrants who worked abroad may be insufficient in the sample to reflect the real situation. There was no specific oversampling for migration in the Labour Force Survey. Secondary sources of information may provide a basis for better sampling of return migrant workers, such as information about remittances through the banking system or additional information on return migrant workers during the household listing period before choosing selected households for the survey as well as information from the latest population census of 2019.

A better sampling design targeting more return migrant workers should be added to the next Labour Force Survey sampling design, without necessarily jeopardizing the main sample for core labour force statistics.

## A2.3 Main classifications used in this report

The following categories were used for this report. These are also among major or overarching disaggregation variables for the SDG indicators.

### Geographic location

Indicates whether the worker resides in an urban or rural area in Viet Nam. This characteristic is identified by the responses on the province, district and commune where the worker lives. The classification follows Decree No. 42/2009/ND-CP issued on 7 May 2009 by the Government on the classification of urban and rural areas in Viet Nam, as well as Decision No. 124/2004/QĐ-TTg issued on 8 July 2004 by the prime minister on table of codes for administrative divisions, in which all cities and towns are called urban areas, and the remaining are rural ones.

### Sex

The variable (statistical) categories are male and female, providing an eye on gender differentials and gender inequality issues through all other relevant variables and indicators.

### Age

The interviewees are grouped into three major age ranges: 15–24, 25–64 and 65 and older. The guidelines for collecting SDG indicator 10.7.1. statistics do not cover persons younger than 15 years, therefore no one younger than 15 was included. Two other group classifications are also considered: age groups by five years and age groups by ten years. In the former case, there are 11 groups and in the latter case six age groups. The dissemination by tighter age range is to see how changes occur more closely. However, due to the small sample size, only the three age groups cited here were used in the report. And because the group aged 65 years and older had few people, often only two groups are used in the report: youth (aged 15–24) and adults (25 years and older).

### **Occupation**

Based on the major ten groups of Viet Nam Standard Classification of Occupations of 2009 (broadly aligned to the international classification of ISCO-08), three main groups were created and used in this report, equivalent to three main skill levels: managers, professionals and technicians (high skill), clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill) and elementary occupation (low skill).

### **Economic activity**

This characterizes the industrial classification of all economic activities, as aligned to ISIC Rev.4. The activities are regrouped to identify the four main industries likely to employ migrant workers: agriculture, construction, wholesale and retail trade and domestic work. ISIC Rev.4 major 21 divisions were then classified into the following six main groups in the report:

- ▶ agriculture, forestry and fishery;
- ▶ construction;
- ▶ other industries (which in this report comprises mostly processing and manufacturing);
- ▶ wholesale and retail trade;
- ▶ household work; and
- ▶ other services (such as hospitality, education and training, and entertainment);

### **Job recruitment process**

This indicator describes how workers found their job in the foreign destination, including job transfer or employer; government agency; private recruitment agency or individual recruiter; family member, relative or friend; and other.

### **Countries of last destination abroad**

There are four main countries or territory of destination where return migrant workers had been: Japan, Republic of Korea, Taiwan (China) and China. The remaining countries were grouped into "other countries".

### **Legal migration status**

Workers either migrated regularly or irregularly. In the case of regular migration, workers may have had a work visa or not. Workers could refuse to answer the question related to legal status, in which case they were grouped as "not reported".

### **Recruitment costs**

As in section A.1, recruitment costs include all expenses related to the application, training, health care and other services that help workers to obtain and secure employment status in other countries.

### **First-month income**

This first-month income comes from the first job obtained during the past three years reported by workers.

### Recruitment cost indicator (RCI) of individuals

Proportion of recruitment costs in the monthly employment earnings, is a ratio of costs to earnings:

$$RCI = f\left(\frac{C_k}{E_k}\right)$$

where:  $f$  may take on various functions' forms, such as: mean, median and fourth quintile  
 $C_k$  = is the recruitment costs paid by individual migrant worker  $k$ ;  
 $E_k$  = is the first month earning of the same migrant worker  $k$ .

This indicator is disaggregated by different categories of recruitment process, legal migration status, occupation, major industries and major occupations as presented previously. The indicator was produced only for migrant workers with recruitment costs and earnings that were not zero. Separate statistics were presented for the few migrant workers with no recruitment costs.

### A2.4 Methodological recommendations for future surveys

For future surveys, the GSO should integrate the recruitment costs module in the Labour Force Survey in a way that allows the collection of information regarding a number of essential demographic indicators, such as educational attainment and marital status, and also to obtain the weights of return migrant workers in total population of the country. It is suggested that if this Labour Force Survey integration is unavailable or is too expensive for the country, the GSO may consider other methodologies as recommended by ILO and the World Bank in the SDG indicator 10.7.1 guidelines.

Possible considerations could also be to run a standalone recruitment costs survey, as some countries have done. The GSO may also consider additional questions on earnings as an additional approach when the first-month earnings taken from the first job within the past three years abroad are challenging for workers' memory. The average earnings during the first job could be added, as done in a couple other countries. Additional questions on earnings are available in the long form of the recruitment costs module prepared by the ILO and the World Bank (2019b).



### A3. Additional statistical tables

► Table A3.1 Return migrant workers, by sex and age

Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Return migrant workers (total)</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>1 095</b>
<i>By ten-year age group (% distribution)</i>			
15-24	24.0	33.8	26.6
25-34	46.5	41.2	45.1
35-44	21.0	15.5	19.5
45-54	7.3	8.4	7.6
55-64	1.1	0.7	1.0
65+	0.1	0.4	0.2
Urban	Male	Female	Total
<b>Return migrant workers (total)</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>301</b>
<i>By ten-year age group (% distribution)</i>			
15-24	22.6	22.5	22.6
25-34	46.2	49.4	47.2
35-44	23.6	18.0	21.9
45-54	6.1	7.9	6.6
55-64	0.9	2.2	1.3
65+	0.5	-	0.3
Rural	Male	Female	Total
<b>Return migrant workers (total)</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>794</b>
<i>By ten-year age group (% distribution)</i>			
15-24	24.5	39.0	28.1
25-34	46.6	37.4	44.3
35-44	20.0	14.4	18.6
45-54	7.7	8.7	7.9
55-64	1.2	-	0.9
65+	-	0.5	0.1

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► Table A3.2 Return migrant workers, by sex, age, last country or territory of destination abroad and main geographic location

Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Return migrant workers (total)</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>1 095</b>
<i>By main age group (% distribution)</i>			
15–24	24.1	33.8	26.6
25+	76.0	66.2	73.4
<i>By last country or territory of destination abroad (% distribution)</i>			
China	13.6	6.4	11.7
Japan	18.4	35.2	22.7
Republic of Korea	24.5	16.2	22.4
Taiwan (China)	25.3	24.6	25.1
Other	18.2	17.6	18.1
Urban	Male	Female	Total
<b>Return migrant workers (total urban)</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>301</b>
<i>By main age group (% distribution)</i>			
15–24	22.6	22.5	22.6
25+	77.4	77.5	77.4
<i>By last country or territory of destination abroad (% distribution)</i>			
China	1.9	1.1	1.7
Japan	17.5	33.7	22.3
Republic of Korea	37.3	13.5	30.2
Taiwan (China)	24.5	25.8	24.9
Other	18.9	25.8	20.9
Rural	Male	Female	Total
<b>Return migrant workers (total rural)</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>794</b>
<i>By main age group (% distribution)</i>			
15–24	24.5	39.0	28.1
25+	75.5	61.0	71.9
<i>By last country or territory of destination abroad (% distribution)</i>			
China	17.7	8.7	15.5
Japan	18.7	35.9	22.9
Republic of Korea	20.0	17.4	19.4
Taiwan (China)	25.5	24.1	25.2
Other	18.0	13.8	17.0

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers**  
Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

► **Table A3.3 Return migrant workers by sex, main industry and main occupation (skills)**

	Male	Female	Total
<b>Return migrant workers (aged 15+), total</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>1 095</b>
<i>By industry or economic activity (% distribution)</i>			
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	21.5	13.0	19.3
Construction	18.7	2.8	14.6
Other industries	44.9	47.9	45.7
Household work	0.2	10.9	3.0
Wholesale and retail trade	4.2	3.9	4.1
Other services	10.5	21.5	13.3
<i>By occupation or skills (% distribution)</i>			
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	1.5	2.1	1.6
Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill)	80.8	69.4	77.8
Elementary occupations (low skill)	17.8	28.5	20.5

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Table A3.4 Return migrant workers, by country or territory of destination, age, main industry and main occupation (skills)**

	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
<b>Return migrant workers (aged 15+), total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>1 095</b>
<i>By main age group (% distribution)</i>						
15–24	49.4	19.6	17.8	28.9	17.1	26.6
25+	50.6	80.4	82.2	71.1	82.8	73.4
<i>By industry or economic activity (% distribution)</i>						
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	9.3	31.4	8.7	57.0	6.6	19.2
Construction	15.7	10.2	11.3	4.7	29.8	14.6
Other industries	55.6	38.0	66.5	28.1	25.3	45.7
Wholesale and retail trade	2.8	5.3	1.5	4.7	7.6	4.1
Household work	0.4	0.4	8.7	0.8	3.0	3.0
Other services	16.1	14.7	3.3	4.7	27.8	13.3
<i>By occupation or skills (% distribution)</i>						
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	3.2	0.4	0.4	-	4.0	1.6
Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill)	81.5	88.6	84.7	21.1	86.9	77.8
Elementary occupations (low skill)	15.3	11.0	14.9	78.9	9.1	20.6

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► Table A3.5 Return migrant workers, by sex, recruitment process and legal migration status

	Male	Female	Total
<b>Return migrant workers (aged 15+), total</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>1 095</b>
<i>By job recruitment process</i>			
Job transfer or employer	16	8	24
Government agency	161	48	209
Private recruitment agency or individual recruiter	481	181	662
Family member, relative or friend	152	46	198
Other	1	1	2
<i>By legal migration status</i>			
Regular immigration with work visa	654	239	893
Regular immigration without work visa	35	18	53
Irregular migrant	47	14	61
Not reported	75	13	88

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► Table A3.6 Return migrant workers, by last country or territory of destination abroad, recruitment process and legal migration status

	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
<b>Return migrant workers (aged 15+), total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>1 095</b>
<i>By job recruitment process</i>						
Job transfer or employer	5	8	1	–	10	24
Government agency	53	71	59	1	25	209
Private recruitment agency or individual recruiter	179	154	209	13	107	662
Family member, relative or friend	12	12	6	112	56	198
Other	–	–	–	2	–	2
<i>By legal migration status</i>						
Regular immigration with work visa	235	231	267	11	149	893
Regular immigration without work visa	8	7	3	15	20	53
Irregular migrant	3	5	2	36	15	61
Not reported	3	2	3	66	14	88

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.



► **Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers**  
Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

► **Table A3.7 Return migrant workers, by sex and detailed job recruitment process**

	Male	Female	Total
<b>Return migrant workers (aged 15+), total</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>1 095</b>
<i>By job recruitment process</i>			
Job transfer	6	2	8
Through home government agency	159	44	203
Through destination government agency	2	4	6
Private recruitment agency at home	267	97	364
Private recruitment agency at destination country or territory	7	3	10
Employer in destination country or territory	10	6	16
Individual recruiter or broker	207	81	288
Family member or relative	83	36	119
Friend	69	10	79
Newspaper ad, website	-	-	-
Other	1	1	2
Not reported	-	-	-

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Table A3.8 Return migrant workers, by country or territory of destination, recruitment process and legal migration status**

	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
<b>Return migrant workers (aged 15+), total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>1 095</b>
<i>By job recruitment process</i>						
Job transfer	1	2	1	-	4	8
Through home government agency	52	69	58	-	24	203
Through destination government agency	1	2	1	1	1	6
Private recruitment agency at home	116	70	115	2	61	364
Private recruitment agency at destination country or territory	5	1	1	1	2	10
Employer in destination country or territory	4	6	-	-	6	16
Individual recruiter or broker	58	83	93	10	44	288
Family member or relative	8	10	6	48	47	119
Friend	4	2	-	64	9	79
Newspaper ad, website	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	0	0	0	2	0	2
Not reported	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► Table A3.9 Recruitment costs of return migrant workers, total and average, by sex and age (ten-year age groups) (thousands dong)

Total recruitment costs	Male	Female	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	122 915 296	43 176 000	166 091 296
<i>By ten-year age group</i>			
15-24	32 106 400	18 131 000	50 237 400
25-34	61 922 946	17 806 200	79 729 146
35-44	21 968 500	4 633 600	26 602 100
45-54	6 153 650	2 560 000	8 713 650
55-64	663 800	45 000	708 800
65+	100 000	200	100 200
Average recruitment costs	Male	Female	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	151 560	152 565	151 820
<i>By ten-year age group</i>			
15-24	164 648	190 853	173 232
25-34	164 252	152 190	161 395
35-44	129 226	105 309	124 309
45-54	104 299	106 667	104 984
55-64	73 756	22 500	64 436
65+	100 000	200	50 100

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► Table A3.10 Recruitment costs of return migrant workers, total and average, by country or territory of destination and age group (thousands dong)

Total recruitment costs	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	49 557 150	55 193 600	36 428 796	1 111 050	23 800 700	166 091 296
<i>By ten-year age group</i>						
15-24	24 230 150	12 220 000	7 153 000	228 550	6 405 700	50 237 400
25-34	22 353 500	29 014 600	18 168 096	325 750	9 867 200	79 729 146
35-44	2 303 500	10 088 000	8 640 700	107 600	5 462 300	26 602 100
45-54	670 000	3 591 000	2 177 000	448 650	1 827 000	8 713 650
55-64	-	280 000	290 000	300	138 500	708 800
65+	-	-	-	200	100 000	100 200

► **Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers**  
Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

Average recruitment costs	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	199 827	225 280	132 468	8 680	120 206	151 820
<b>By ten-year age group</b>						
15–24	198 608	254 583	145 980	6 177	188 403	173 232
25–34	199 585	228 461	137 637	7 403	124 901	161 395
35–44	230 350	197 804	118 366	4 138	101 154	124 309
45–54	167 500	211 235	114 579	24 925	73 080	104 984
55–64	–	140 000	145 000	150	27 700	64 436
65+	–	–	–	200	100 000	50 100

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Table A3.11 Recruitment costs of return migrant workers, total and average, by sex, recruitment process and legal migration status (thousands dong)**

Total recruitment costs	Male	Female	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	122 915 296	43 176 000	166 091 296
<b>By job recruitment process</b>			
Job transfer or employer	1 622 000	1 132 000	2 754 000
Government agency	26 823 400	6 648 000	33 471 400
Private recruitment agency or individual recruiter	90 232 846	32 752 000	122 984 846
Family member, relative or friend	4 217 050	2 637 000	6 854 050
Other	20 000	7 000	27 000
<b>By legal migration status</b>			
Regular immigration with work visa	118 120 946	40 709 500	158 830 446
Regular immigration without work visa	2 303 800	1 506 000	3 809 800
Irregular migrant	1 301 700	603 000	1 904 700
Not reported	1 188 850	357 500	1 546 350
Average recruitment costs:	Male	Female	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	151 560	152 565	151 820
<b>By job recruitment process</b>			
Job transfer or employer	101 375	141 500	114 750
Government agency	166 605	138 500	160 150
Private recruitment agency or individual recruiter	187 594	181 956	186 059
Family member, relative or friend	27 744	57 326	34 616
Other	20 000	7 000	13 500

<i>By legal migration status</i>			
Regular immigration with work visa	180 613	171 048	178 061
Regular immigration without work visa	65 823	83 667	71 883
Irregular migrant	27 696	43 071	31 225
Not reported	15 851	27 500	17 572

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Table A3.12 Recruitment costs of return migrant workers, total and average, by country or territory of destination, recruitment process and legal migration status (thousands dong)**

Total recruitment costs	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	49 557 150	55 193 600	36 428 796	1 111 050	23 800 700	166 091 296
<i>By job recruitment process</i>						
Job transfer or employer	760 000	1 510 000	–	–	484 000	2 754 000
Government agency	10 232 000	13 670 600	7 212 700	500	2 355 600	33 471 400
Private recruitment agency or individual recruiter	37 047 650	38 103 000	28 754 096	725 100	18 355 000	122 984 846
Family member, relative or friend	1 517 500	1 910 000	462 000	358 450	2 606 100	6 854 050
Other	–	–	–	27 000	–	27 000
<i>By legal migration status</i>						
Regular immigration with work visa	47 486 150	52 947 600	36 031 796	527 300	21 837 600	158 830 446
Regular immigration without work visa	1 480 000	990 000	52 000	66 800	1 221 000	3 809 800
Irregular migrant	241 000	990 000	150 000	276 200	247 500	1 904 700
Not reported	350 000	266 000	195 000	240 750	494 600	1 546 350
Average recruitment costs	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	199 827	225 280	132 468	8 680	120 206	151 820
<i>By job recruitment process</i>						
Job transfer or employer	152 000	188 750	–	–	48 400	114 750
Government agency	193 057	192 544	122 249	500	94 224	160 150
Private recruitment agency or individual recruiter	208 133	247 422	137 579	55 777	171 542	186 059
Family member, relative or friend	126 458	159 167	77 000	3 200	46 538	34 616
Other	–	–	–	13 500	–	13 500

► **Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers**  
Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

<i>By legal migration status</i>						
Regular immigration with work visa	202 932	229 210	134 951	47 936	146 561	178 061
Regular immigration without work visa	185 000	141 429	17 333	4 453	61 050	71 883
Irregular migrant	80 333	198 000	75 000	7 672	16 500	31 225
Not reported	116 667	133 000	65 000	3 648	35 329	17 572

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Table A3.13 Recruitment costs, total and average, by sex and age group**

Total recruitment costs	Male	Female	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	122 915 296	43 176 000	166 091 296
<i>By ten-year age group</i>			
15-24	32 106 400	18 131 000	50 237 400
25-34	61 922 946	17 806 200	79 729 146
35-44	21 968 500	4 633 600	26 602 100
45-54	6 153 650	2 560 000	8 713 650
55-64	663 800	45 000	708 800
65+	100 000	200	100 200
Average recruitment costs	Male	Female	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	151 560	152 565	151 820
<i>By ten-year age group</i>			
15-24	164 648	190 853	173 232
25-34	164 252	152 190	161 395
35-44	129 227	105 309	124 309
45-54	104 299	106 667	104 984
55-64	73 756	22 500	64 436
65+	100 000	200	50 100

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Table A3.14 Recruitment costs, total and average, by country or territory of destination and age group**

Total recruitment costs	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
	49 557 150	55 193 600	36 428 796	1 111 050	23 800 700	166 091 296
<i>By ten-year age group</i>						
15-24	24 230 150	12 220 000	7 153 000	228 550	6 405 700	50 237 400
25-34	22 353 500	29 014 600	18 168 096	325 750	9 867 200	79 729 146
35-44	2 303 500	10 088 000	8 640 700	107 600	5 462 300	26 602 100
45-54	670 000	3 591 000	2 177 000	448 650	1 827 000	8 713 650
55-64	-	280 000	290 000	300	138 500	708 800
65+	-	-	-	200	100 000	100 200
Average recruitment costs	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
	199 827	225 280	132 468	8 680	120 206	151 820
<i>By ten-year age group</i>						
15-24	198 608	254 583	145 980	6 177	188 403	173 232
25-34	199 585	228 461	137 637	7 403	124 901	161 395
35-44	230 350	197 804	118 366	4 139	101 154	124 309
45-54	167 500	211 235	114 579	24 925	73 080	104 984
55-64	-	140 000	145 000	150	27 700	64 437
65+	-	-	-	200	100 000	50 100

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Table A3.15 Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers by sex, recruitment process, and legal migration status (thousands dong)**

	Male	Female	Total
Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers	20 692	20 733	20 702
<i>By job recruitment process</i>			
Job transfer or employer	16 438	20 363	17 746
Government agency	22 997	20 623	22 452
Private recruitment agency or individual recruiter	23 657	22 138	23 244
Family member, relative or friend	9 397	15 692	10 859
Other	8 000	-	8 000
<i>By legal migration status</i>			
Regular immigration with work visa	23 084	20 443	22 380
Regular immigration without work visa	17 300	15 722	16 764
Irregular migrant	9 811	11 636	10 230
Not reported	8 229	42 785	13 334

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers**  
Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

► **Table A3.16 Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers by country or territory of destination, recruitment process and legal migration status (thousands dong)**

	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
Average first-month earnings of return migrant workers	28 225	25 437	16 905	8 568	18 540	20 702
<i>By job recruitment process</i>						
Job transfer or employer	23 200	21 500	15 000	-	12 290	17 746
Government agency	22 736	27 711	16 907	-	20 896	22 452
Private recruitment agency or individual recruiter	30 219	25 214	16 868	21 769	21 435	23 244
Family member, relative or friend	24 977	17 458	18 500	7 122	13 075	10 859
Other	-	-	-	8 000	-	8 000
<i>By legal migration status</i>						
Regular immigration with work visa	27 078	25 617	16 318	23 545	20 757	22 380
Regular immigration without work visa	37 000	21 429	26 000	7 153	12 860	16 764
Irregular migrant	22 333	19 900	11 000	7 722	10 500	10 230
Not reported	100 167	32 500	64 000	6 855	11 679	13 334

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► **Table A3.17 Proportion of migrant workers with no recruitment costs, by sex and age (ten-year age groups)**

	Male	Female	Total
Migrant workers with no recruitment costs, total	25	8	33
<i>By ten-year age group</i>			
15-24	36.0	25.0	33.3
25-34	32.0	37.5	33.3
35-44	16.0	37.5	21.2
45-54	16.0	-	12.1
55-64	-	-	-
65+	-	-	-

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

► Table A3.18 Total and average recruitment costs of return migrant workers, by sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills) (thousands dong)

Total recruitment costs	Male	Female	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	122 915 296	43 176 000	166 091 296
<i>By main age group</i>			
15-24	32 106 400	18 131 000	50 237 400
25+	90 808 896	25 045 000	115 853 896
<i>By industry or economic activity</i>			
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	24 968 350	4 502 000	29 470 350
Construction	21 434 700	298 500	21 733 200
Other industries	52 336 746	22 151 500	74 488 246
Wholesale and retail trade	5 788 200	1 250 500	7 038 700
Household work	280 000	3 840 000	4 120 000
Other services	18 107 300	11 133 500	29 240 800
<i>By occupation (skills)</i>			
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	2 330 000	510 000	2 840 000
Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill)	112 489 946	33 057 000	145 546 946
Elementary occupations (low skill)	8 095 350	9 609 000	17 704 350
Average recruitment costs	Male	Female	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	151 560	152 565	151 820
<i>By main age group</i>			
15-24	164 648	190 853	173 232
25+	147 417	133 218	144 097
<i>By industry or economic activity</i>			
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	143 496	125 056	140 335
Construction	141 018	37 313	135 833
Other industries	143 782	162 879	148 976
Wholesale and retail trade	170 241	113 682	156 416
Household work	140 000	123 871	124 848
Other services	213 027	182 516	200 279
<i>By occupation (skills)</i>			
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	194 167	85 000	157 778
Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill)	171 740	168 658	171 030
Elementary occupations (low skill)	56 218	118 630	78 686

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.



► Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1  
on the recruitment costs of migrant workers  
Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

► Table A3.19 Total and average recruitment costs of return migrant workers, by last country or territory of destination abroad, sex, age, main industry and main occupation (skills) (thousands dong)

Total recruitment costs	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	49 557 150	55 193 600	36 428 796	1 111 050	23 800 700	166 091 296
<i>By sex</i>						
Male	30 939 150	45 453 600	28 388 796	611 550	17 522 200	122 915 296
Female	18 618 000	9 740 000	8 040 000	499 500	6 278 500	43 176 000
<i>By main age group</i>						
15-24	24 230 150	12 220 000	7 153 000	228 550	6 405 700	50 237 400
25+	25 327 000	42 973 600	29 275 796	882 500	17 395 000	115 853 896
<i>By industry or economic activity</i>						
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	4 800 000	19 483 000	3 351 000	158 150	1 678 200	29 470 350
Construction	8 433 500	5 581 000	3 844 000	268 300	3 606 400	21 733 200
Other industries	27 311 150	17 488 600	25 212 796	313 800	4 161 900	74 488 246
Wholesale and retail trade	1 365 000	3 081 000	495 000	65 500	2 032 200	7 038 700
Household work	20 000	300 000	2 685 000	200 000	915 000	4 120 000
Other services	7 627 500	9 260 000	841 000	105 300	11 407 000	29 240 800
<i>By occupation (skills)</i>						
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	1 460 000	50 000	140 000	-	1 190 000	2 840 000
Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill)	40 986 150	50 710 600	31 799 796	503 800	21 546 600	145 546 946
Elementary occupations (low skill)	7 111 000	4 433 000	4 489 000	607 250	1 064 100	17 704 350
Average recruitment costs	Japan	Republic of Korea	Taiwan (China)	China	Other	Total
Recruitment costs of return migrant workers	199 827	225 280	132 468	8 680	120 206	151 820
<i>By sex</i>						
Male	207 645	228 410	138 482	5 560	118 393	151 560
Female	188 061	211 739	114 857	27 750	125 570	152 565
<i>By main age group</i>						
15-24	198 608	254 583	145 980	6 177	188 403	173 232
25+	201 008	218 140	129 539	9 698	106 067	144 097

<i>By industry or economic activity</i>						
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	208 696	253 026	139 625	2 166	129 092	140 335
Construction	216 244	223 240	124 000	44 717	61 125	135 833
Other industries	197 907	188 049	137 775	8 717	83 238	148 976
Wholesale and retail trade	195 000	237 000	123 750	10 917	135 480	156 416
Household work	20 000	300 000	111 875	200 000	152 500	124 848
Other services	190 688	257 222	93 444	17 550	207 400	200 279
<i>By occupation (skills)</i>						
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	182 500	50 000	140 000	-	148 750	157 778
Clerks and services, skilled agriculture, trades and plant workers (medium skill)	202 902	233 689	136 480	18 659	125 271	171 030
Elementary occupations (low skill)	187 132	164 185	109 488	6 012	59 117	78 686

Source: Viet Nam Labour Force Survey 2019, Quarter IV.

## Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers: Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marked a milestone for the rights of migrant workers by mainstreaming migration as an integral component, with migration related targets and indicators incorporated into the agenda. Specifically, target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) calls for facilitating orderly, safe and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies with, for its monitoring, the SDG indicator 10.7.1 on “Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in country of destination”. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank, as joint custodial agencies of this indicator, developed guidelines and a manual for measuring this indicator and have been supporting countries in its piloting and measurement at national level.

This report on *Measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1 on the recruitment costs of migrant workers: Results of Viet Nam pilot survey 2019*, presents findings of the pilot process on measuring SDG indicator 10.7.1, undertaken by the General Statistics Office of Viet Nam (GSO), in collaboration with the ILO, during the quarter four of the 2019 country’s Labour Force Survey. Results of this pilot process cannot be used yet as official data for Viet Nam on this indicator. However they provide an indication on the burden of recruitment process to migrant workers, and shed light on future areas of policy focus when tackling issues related to high recruitment fees and related costs of Vietnamese migrant workers going to work abroad, including on disparities such as by sex, main corridors, main industries and main occupations.

### ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

United Nations Building  
Rajdamnern Nok Avenue  
Bangkok 10200, Thailand

T: +662 288 1234  
F: +622 280 1735  
E: [BANGKOK@ilo.org](mailto:BANGKOK@ilo.org)  
[www.ilo.org/asia](http://www.ilo.org/asia)

ISBN 978-92-2-034640-2

