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Labour Migration Landscape in Asia: Recent Trends in Migration and Policies

ADB-IOEAD-ILO Roundtable on Labour Migration in Asia

Tokyo, 27-28 January 2014

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1. Labour migration landscape in Asia

The UN has estimated that the world's stock of migrants, defined as persons residing outside their country of birth, as **232 million** in 2013.

48 percent are women.

30 percent of migrants (71 million) are in Asia. Since 2000 Asia added 20 million migrants or 1.6 million per year - more than any region (UN, DESA, 2013)

These numbers still do not fully reflect the significance of the migrant work-force in destination countries and economic sectors.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, a destination for many migrant workers from South and South East Asia, rely on foreign labour to fill over 90% of private sector jobs.

MWs account for almost a third of workers in manufacturing, construction and agriculture in Malaysia.





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1. Labour migration landscape in Asia

The directions of labour migration flows in Asia are mainly three-fold and intra-regional:

- Labour Migration flows from South Asia and South East Asia to GCC countries;
- Labour migration flows to and within the ASEAN region;
- Labour migration to East Asia which is mainly from countries in South East Asia.

Labour migration largely occurs under temporary migration regimes and for less skilled work. Women comprise 42 per cent of the stocks (UN,DESA) and are concentrated in domestic work.

The region is marked by substantial remittance inflows. There were six Asian countries among the top 10 remittance receiving countries in 2013 (World Bank).

Skilled labour flows to OECD countries particularly from India, Philippines, China; and student migration.



Outflow of Workers from Selected Asian Countries to the GCC in 2012



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Destination Origin	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE	Total
Bangladesh	21, 777	2	170, 326	28, 801	21, 232	215, 452	457, 590
India	20, 150	55, 868	84, 384	63, 096	357, 503	141, 138	722, 139
Nepal	33, 076	64, 219	17, 083	690, 395	492, 896	313, 416	1, 611, 085
Pakistan	10, 530	5	69, 407	7, 320	358, 560	182, 630	628, 452
Sri Lanka	4, 536	44, 242	4, 885	57, 506	97, 967	38, 295	247, 431
Philippines	22, 271	75, 286	-	104, 622	330, 040	259, 546	791, 765
Indonesia (as of Sep 2012)	4, 725	1, 766	6, 247	14, 889	27, 859	24, 986	80, 472
Vietnam (as of Sep 2011)	32	-	-	300	11300	7600	19, 232
Total	88,657	201,492	338,294	378,764	1,258,511	954,829	3,420,565

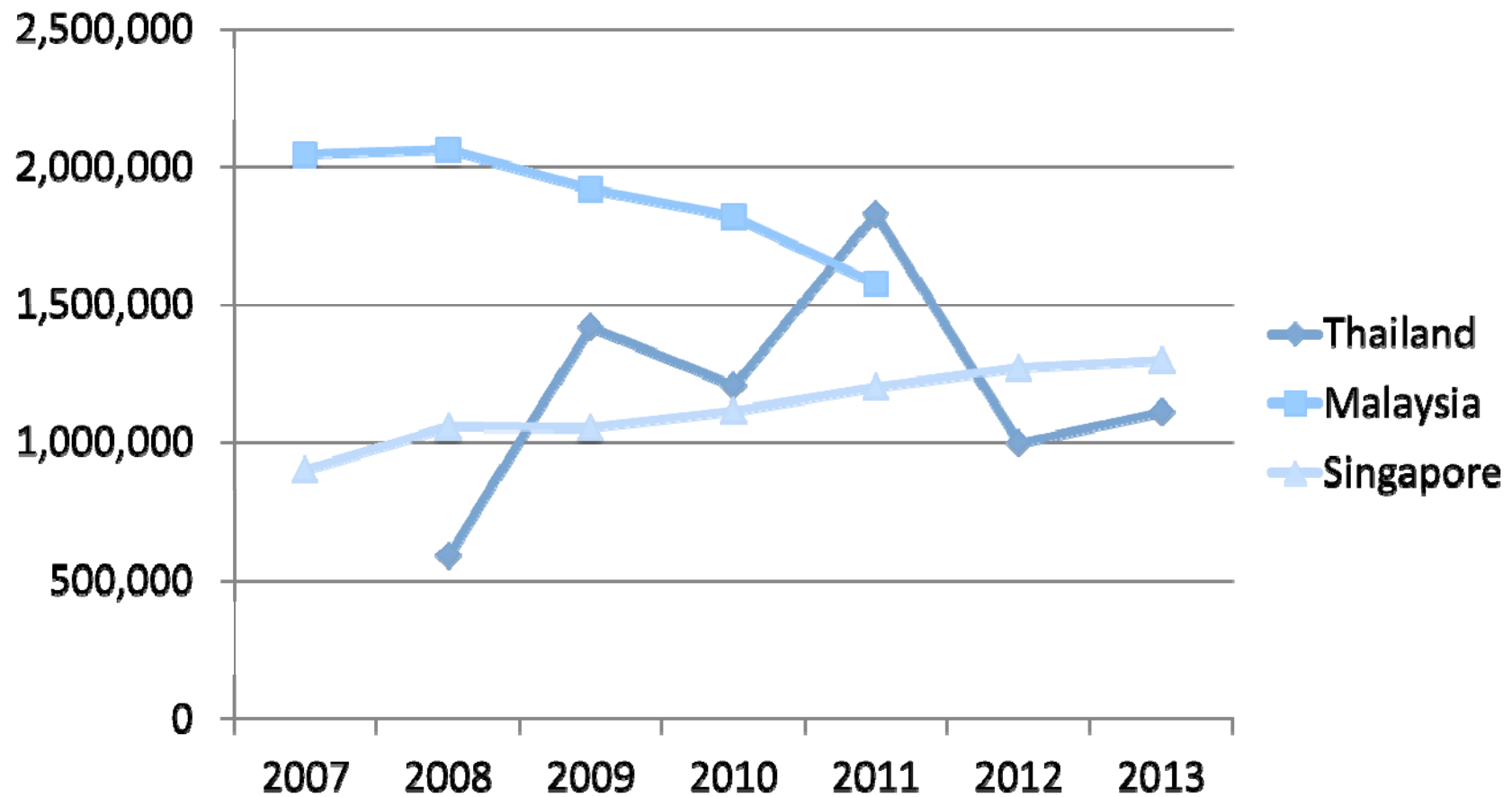
National (State) sources



Stocks of foreign workers in destination countries in S.E Asia



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Sources: Ministry of Manpower, Singapore; Ministry of Human Resources, Malaysia; Ministry of Labour, Thailand

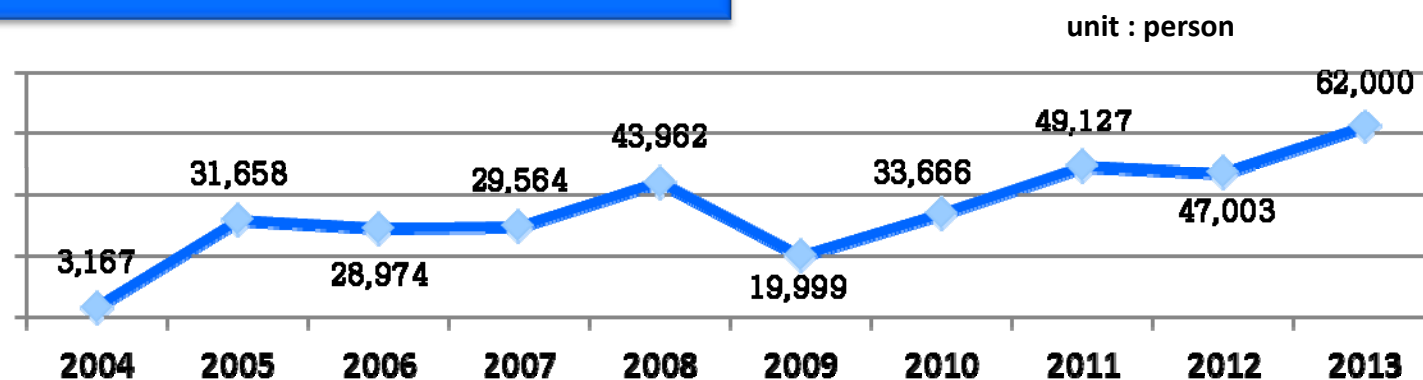




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Entry of foreign workers to R.O. Korea by year

Statistics of foreign workers' entry



Source: Ministry of Employment and Labour, Republic of Korea

Note: 2013 figure is the quota for EPS entrants that year



2. Driving Forces: Continuing Demand for Migrant Workers and Economic Disparities



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Economic growth, demographic factors, labour shortages and the large wage differential between countries of origin and destination fuels labour migration.

Many jobs have to be filled by migrant workers, including in construction, manufacturing, agriculture, fishing and seafood processing and domestic work.

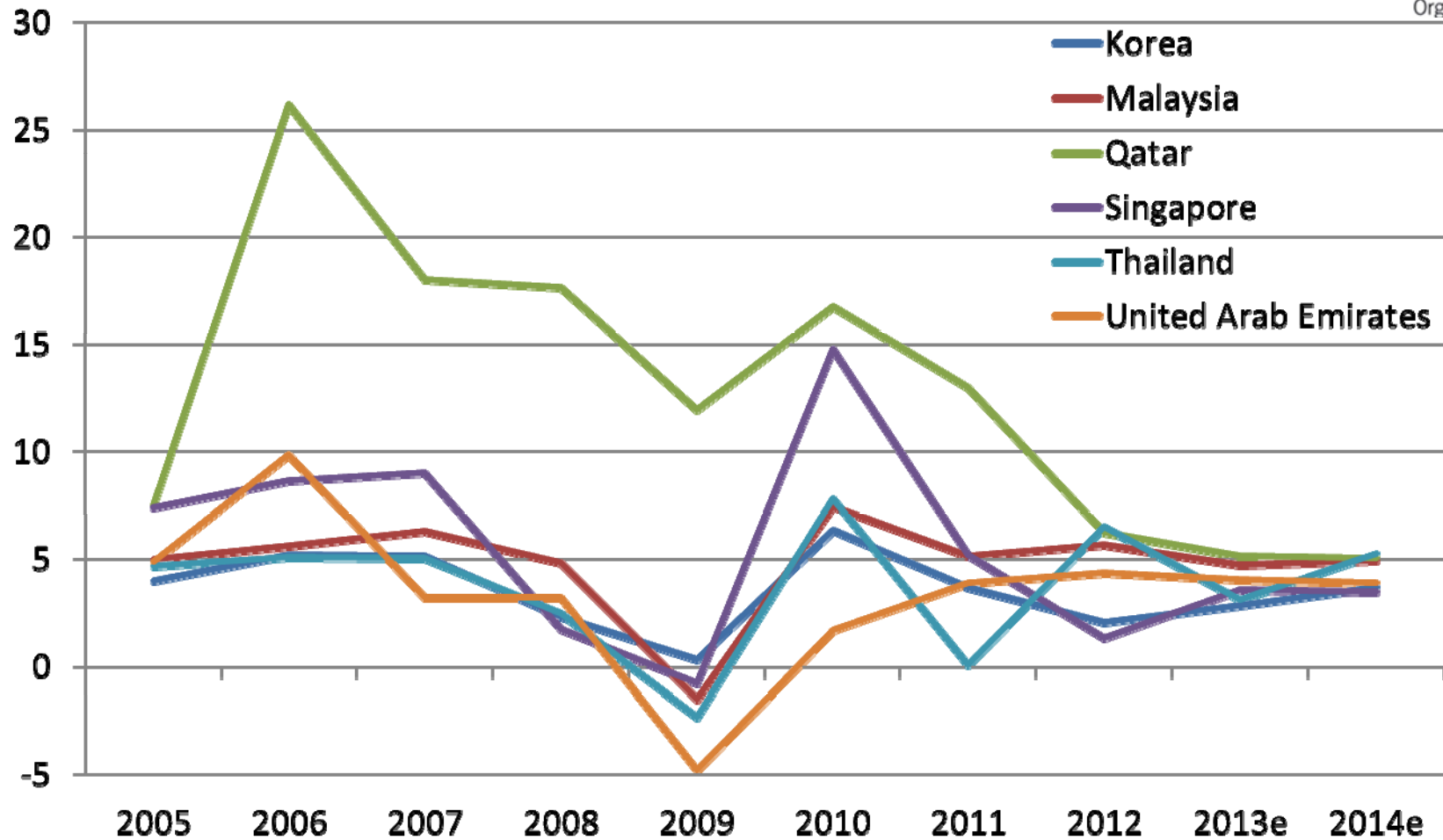
Geographical proximity, networks and recruitment also influence labour migration.



Real GDP growth rate for selected countries in Asia, 2005-2014e (%)



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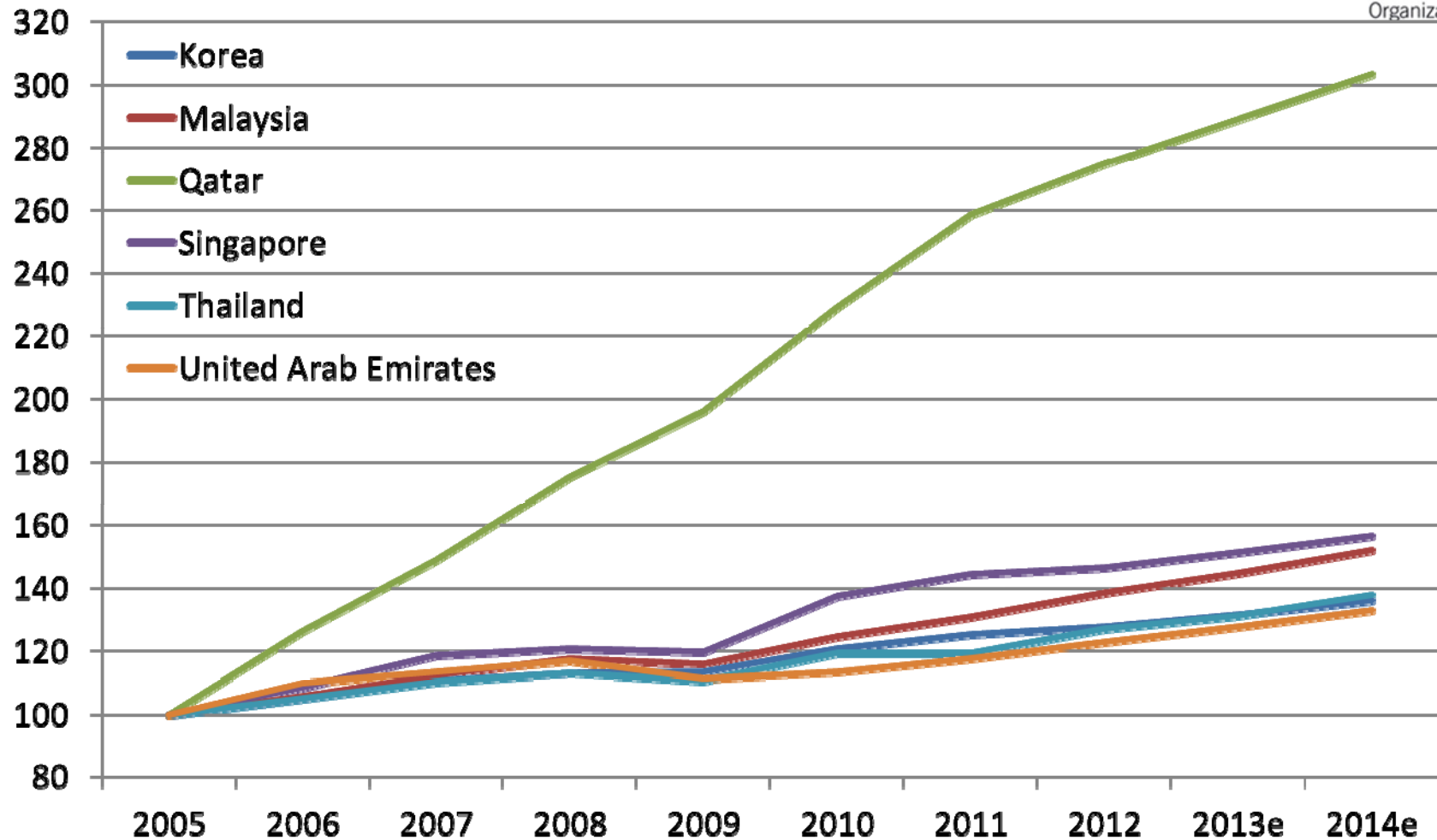
Source: International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Database*, October 2013.



Real GDP growth index for selected countries in Asia, 2005-2014e (2005=100)



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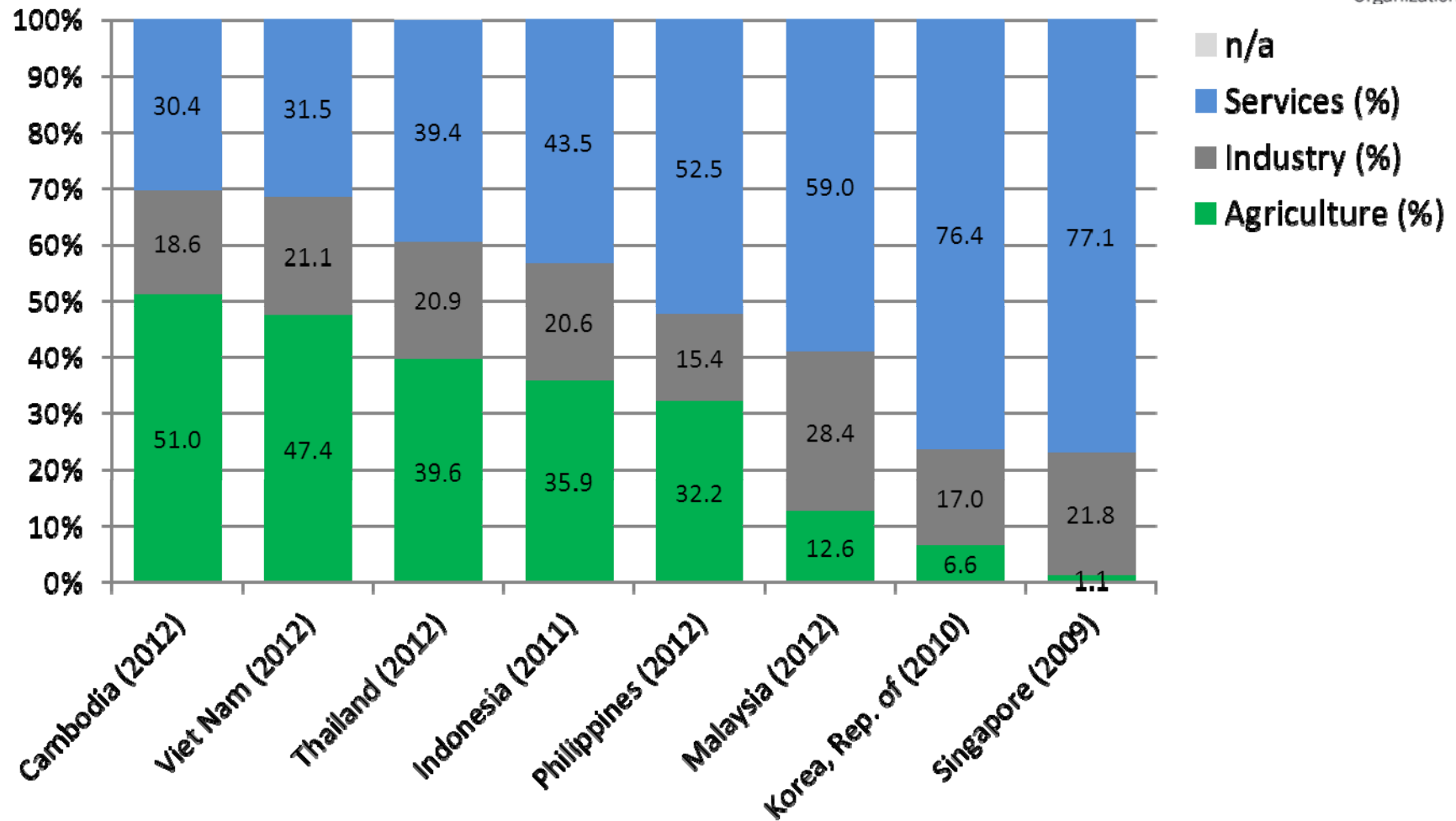
Source: International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Database*, October 2013.

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Structure of Employment

Employment by aggregate sector in selected countries, latest



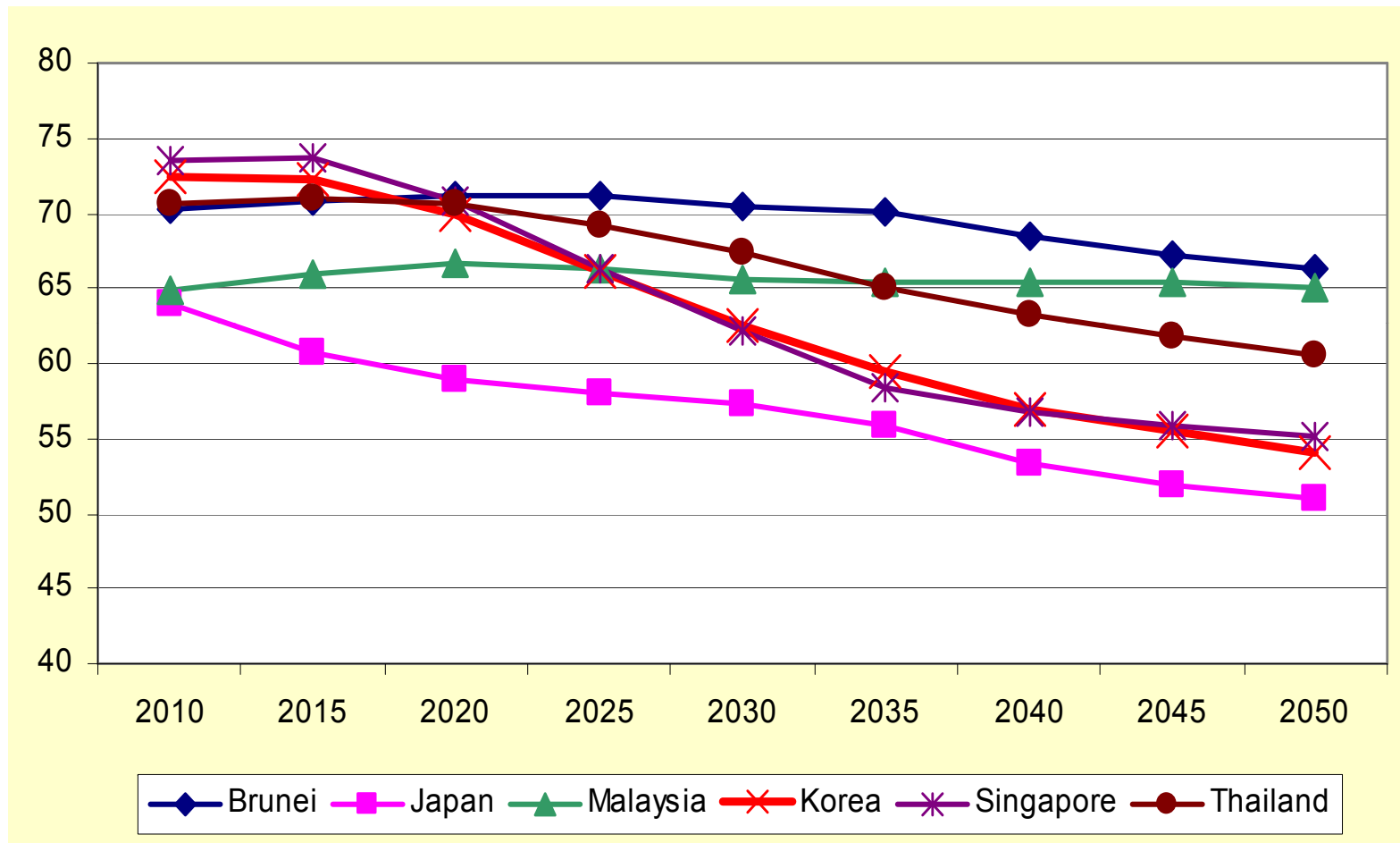
Source: ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM), employment by aggregate sector.



Per cent Share of Working Age (15-64) in Total Population



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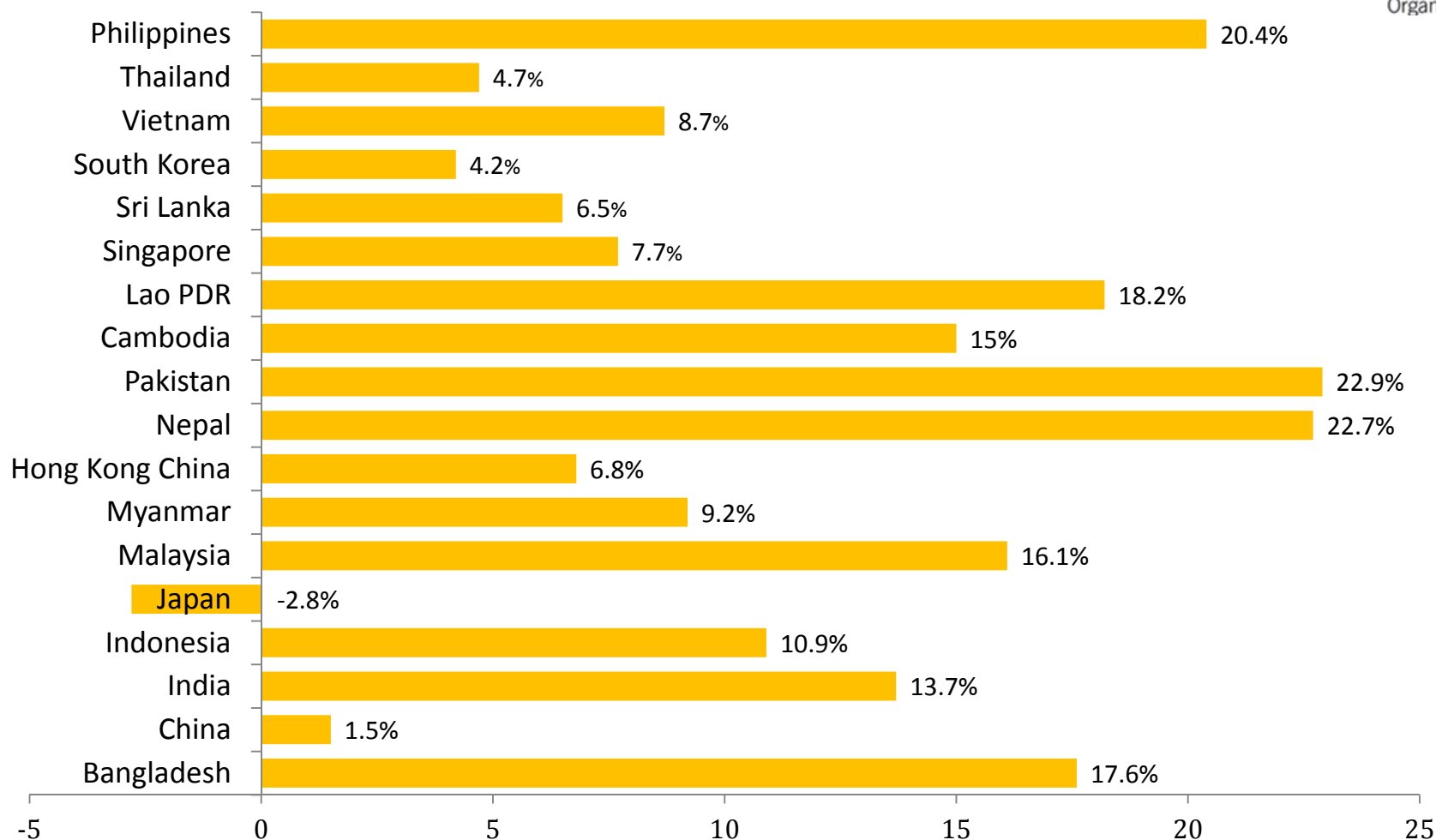
Source: UN World Population Prospects: the 2010 Revision





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Labour Force Growth (%), 2012-2020



Source: ILO, *Trends Econometric Models*.

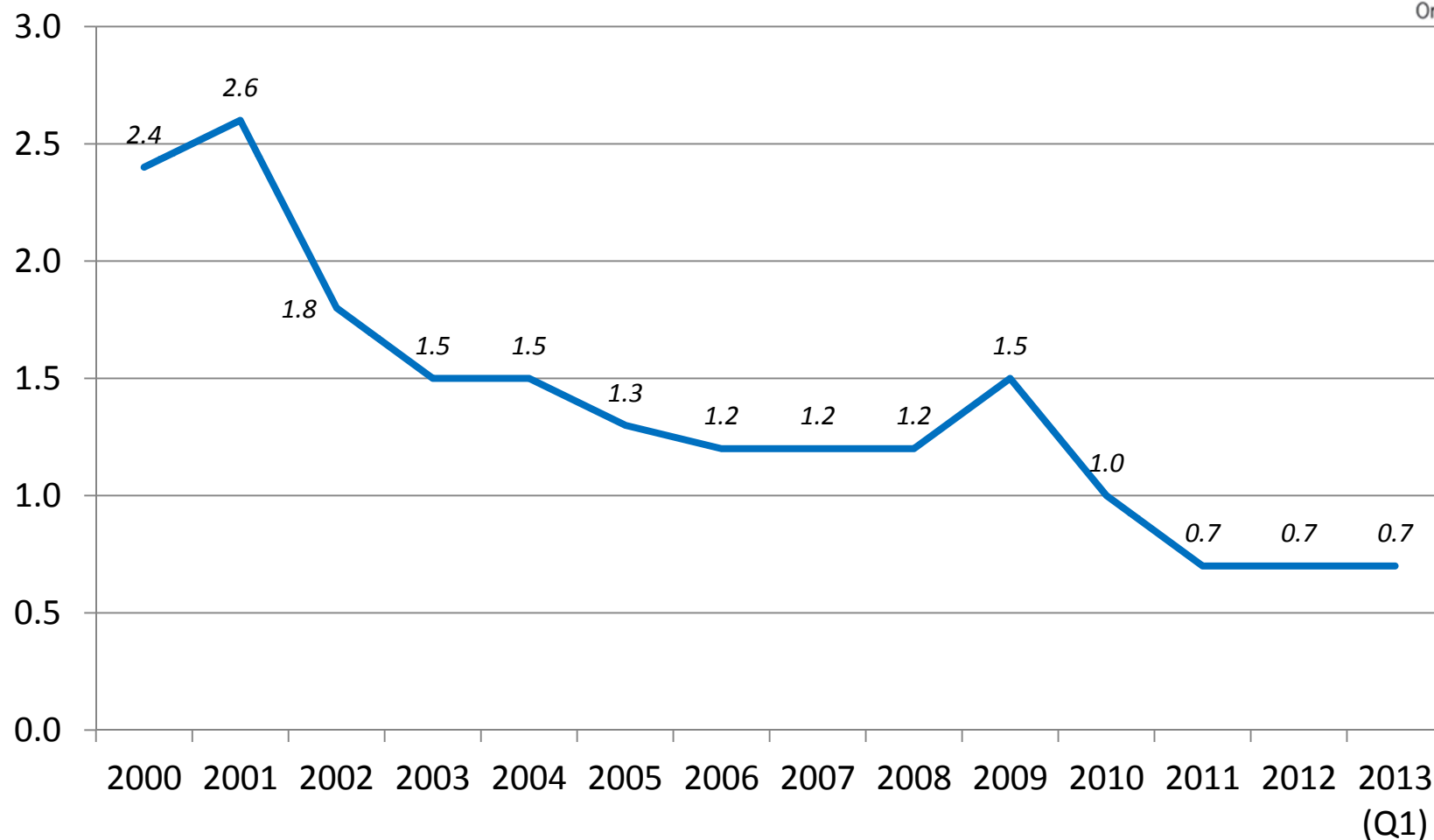
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Thailand: Unemployment rate (%), 2000-2012



Source: ILO, *Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM)*, Total unemployment (national estimates).

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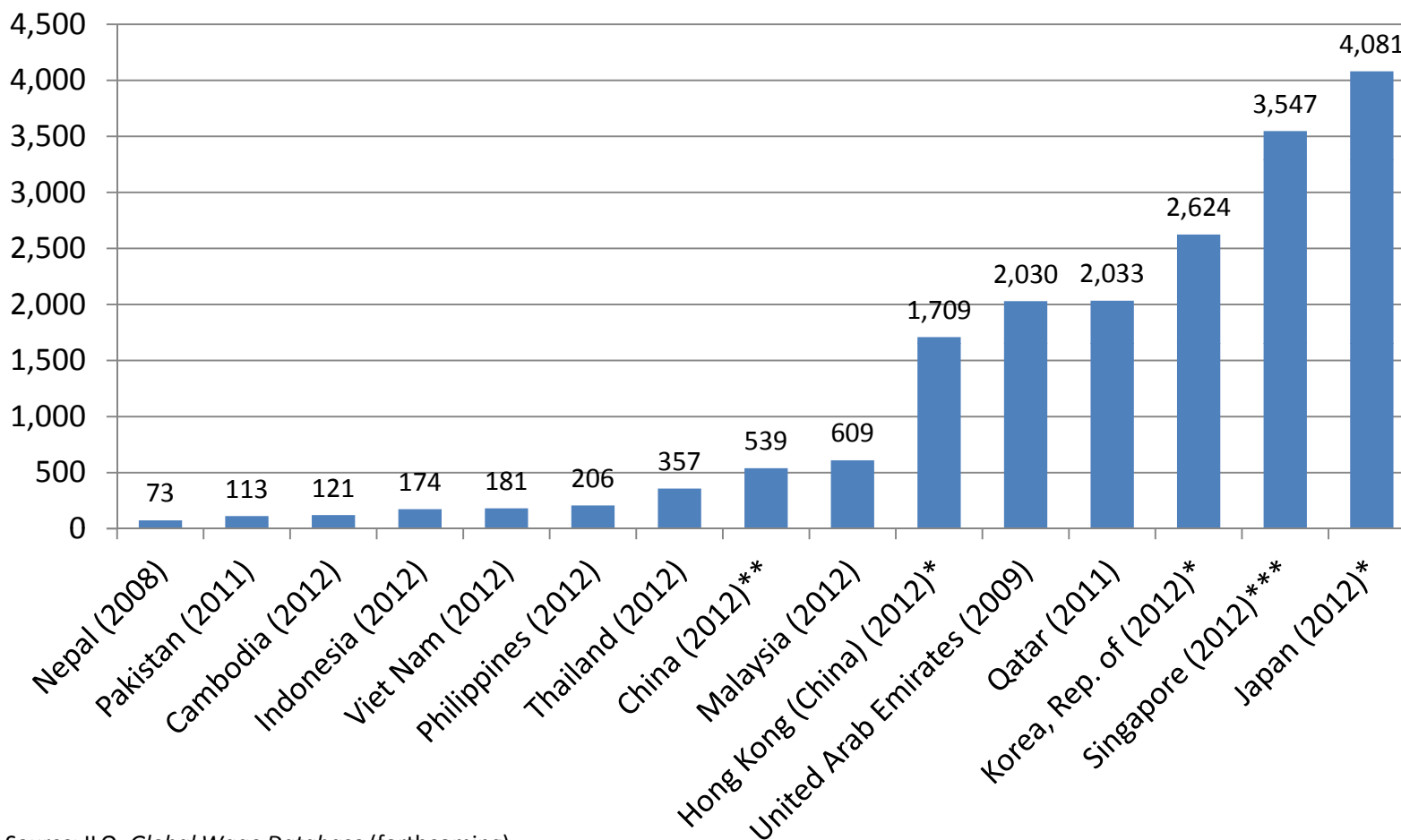
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Driving Forces: Wages Disparities

Average monthly wage in US\$ (2012 or latest available)



Source: ILO, *Global Wage Database* (forthcoming)

NOTES: Non-monthly rates were converted into monthly assuming a five-day working week and 52 weeks in a 12-month year (i.e. daily rate converted into monthly using $\times 5 \times 52 / 12$). All figures are based on labour force survey, except: *Based on an establishment survey with broad coverage (Hong Kong (China) and Japan refer only to full-time employees); **Based on an establishment survey, calculated as employment-weighted average of urban units and private enterprises; ***Based on administrative records from the Central Provident Fund Board.

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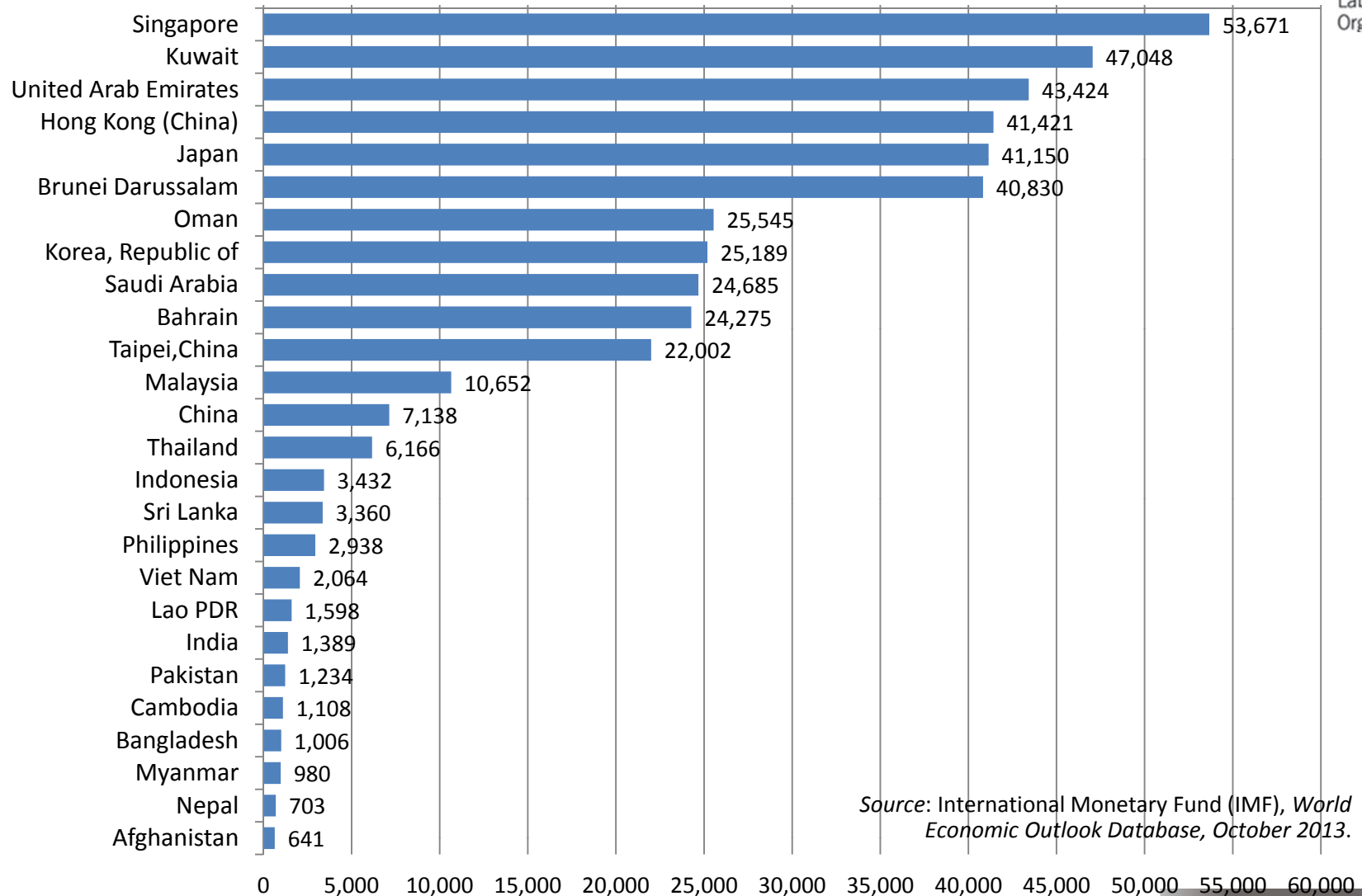
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Driving Forces: GDP Per Capita

Gross domestic product per capita, current prices (US\$), 2014e



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Source: International Monetary Fund (IMF), *World Economic Outlook Database*, October 2013.





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3. Some Key Issues and Policy Responses

3.1 Labour Mobility and Admissions Policy

To meet labour shortages Asian countries of have responded in three ways:

- countries of destination have developed temporary labour migration regimes for low skilled migration and have often entered into bilateral agreements or MOUs with countries of origin.
- countries in the ASEAN are moving towards free movement of professionals.
- countries of origin not able to absorb their labour force, are promoting foreign employment.

Challenges:

- recognition of qualifications: while MRAS have been reached in 7 professions in ASEAN, work remains on defining competency-based qualifications and benchmarks.
- MOUs: can be more effective in promoting legal migration and protection; are being used more widely – in 2013 KSA has entered into specific MOUs.
- return and reintegration: more attention being given in Sri Lanka and the Philippines

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3.2 Reducing Recruitment Costs

Private recruitment agencies account for a majority of workers placed abroad from the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Thailand.

However given that the supply of workers in lower wage countries far outstrips the demand and that there are far more workers intending to work abroad than there are jobs, migrant workers are highly vulnerable to abuses during recruitment. Such abuses include high fees and costs, misrepresentation, failure to meet placement obligations and contract substitution.





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3.3 Improving Recruitment

1. Assess ratification of C 181. Put in place legislation to regulate recruitment. *Cambodia has issued Prakas in 2013*
2. Ensure that a complaints mechanism is in place and support services to avail of the mechanisms. *2% of outbound MWs in Thailand filed a complaint in 2006-2010*
3. Consider more options for matching employers and job seekers: not only via private recruitment agencies, but also via public placement agencies, direct – accredited employer-worker; Reduce layers of intermediation. *G to G process in Korea (47,000 MWs entered in 2012);*
4. Transparency in costs. *Philippines rules and regulations specify type of costs*
5. Development and implementation of Codes of Conduct.





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3.4 Rights of Migrant Workers

UN GA HLD on migration and development in October 2013 underscored the need to protect the human rights of all migrants; protect women migrants in all sectors including domestic work and respect the rights of migrants in their workplaces.

This call for action resonates strongly with the ASEAN Declaration on the protection and promotion of the rights of MWs (2007).

The most recent ILO Convention is the Domestic Worker Convention, 2011 (No. 189), which recognizes domestic work as work and provides a historic opportunity to make decent work a reality for domestic workers.





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3.4 Rights of Migrant Workers / Post admission

National legislation in East and Southeast Asia generally provides for equal treatment between nationals and migrants in terms of remuneration and labour protection.

However there are differences with nationals with regards to:

- Changing employers
- Unrestricted trade union rights
- Family unification
- Social security

Workers in such occupations as fishing and domestic work are either not covered by labor legislation or enforcement is weak.

Measures to address overstay remain a priority with destination country governments





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3.5 Public perceptions of migrants

The UN SG's 8 point Agenda calls for Improving the Public Perceptions of Migrants – takes information and leadership to reinforce positive messages about the benefits of migration.

Migrants contribute significantly to host societies. Many migrants, family members and countries of origin benefit from migration. The challenges should not be minimized. Options to migration should be increased.

A positive image of migrants should be generated in line with their development contribution.



Campaigns to promote a positive image of migrants



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ILO 2010 study on public attitudes towards migrant workers in four destination countries in Asia informed the development of:

- *Saphan Siang* (Bridge of Voices) in Thailand (ILO, IOM, ESCAP, World Vision International)
- Migration Works (Malaysia) (UN agencies and CSOs)



Focus on promoting better understanding between nationals and migrants by countering misconceptions and informing the public about the positive social and economic contributions that migrants make.



Activities: online community; 'A Positive Image' photo competition and exhibition; PSA development in Malaysia; events for International Migrants Day



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Thank you

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