

CARE MIGRATION AND GENDER DYNAMICS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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Panel on the dynamics shifts of migration
and mobility in Asia

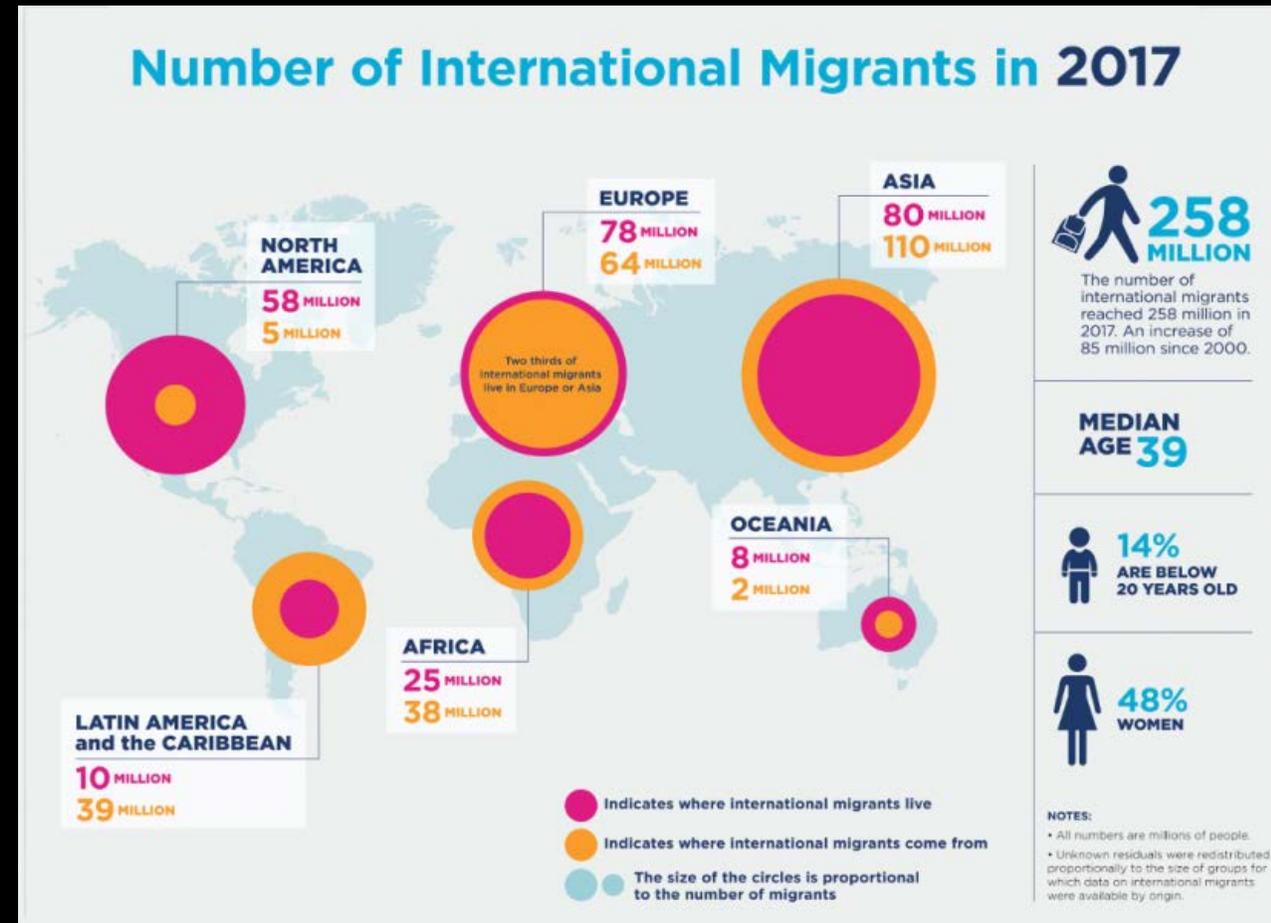
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ASIAN MIGRATIONS

In recent decades, Asia has experienced dramatic economic growth as well as a **widening of differences** among countries with regard to standards of living and the supply and demand for labour.

In turn there has been a rapid rise in migration not only from the region but also **within the region**.

- In 2017, some 110 million of the world's estimated 258 million international migrants originate from Asia while 80 million international migrants also live in Asia. In other words, Asia produces the largest share of international migrants on the move and is a place of sojourn for the largest share of migrants.
- In Asia, women comprise more than half (55%) of the total number of international migrants (80 million).

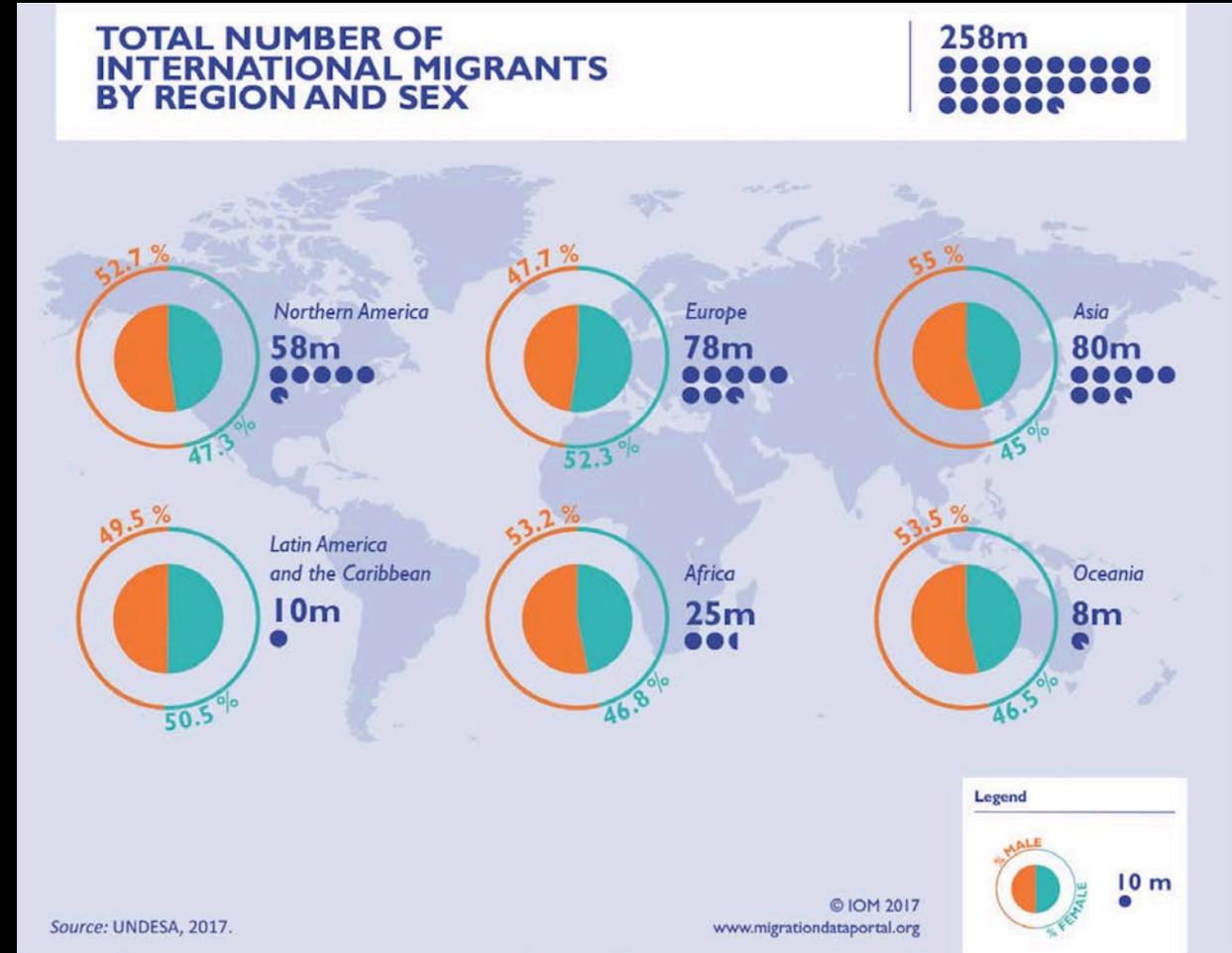


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RAPID FERTILITY DECLINE & THE ELDERCARE PREDICAMENT IN ASIA

Accompanying the rise in cost of living and of raising children in the developed economies in Asia, fertility rates have plummeted to levels well below that of replacement in countries such as China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand.

This has aggravated the trend of rapid ageing, leading to higher elderly dependency ratios in more affluent societies, as life expectancies continue to rise and family units become smaller.

GENDER DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD LABOUR

- With women's growing participation in the workforce in rapidly industrializing countries and globalizing cities, they shoulder the triple burden of career building, child-raising, and eldercare.
- Women's work is made more challenging not least because the household division of labour by gender remains relatively rigidly drawn in many households.
- A looming crisis of care in Asian societies?



INCREASING FEMINISATION OF MIGRATION & “CARE MIGRATION”

In developing Southeast Asia, migration has become feminized as women take an increasingly prominent part in contract labour systems.

- Women now comprise the majority of migrant workers legally deployed from the Philippines and Indonesia, of which most are employed as workers in the domestic, care and entertainment sectors.
- Rising demand for women from less developed area to migrate overseas as **paid domestic workers and careworkers** as a result of the intensification of the ‘**care deficit**’ (Hochschild, 1995) in advanced industrialized countries where reproductive labour is being shifted from the household to the market.

Indonesian women outside a training centre for domestic workers in Jakarta

Indonesian domestic workers arriving in Singapore

INCREASING FEMINISATION OF MIGRATION

Another significant category in terms of international migratory flows in the region is constituted by the growing numbers of **female marriage migrants** from developing countries in SEA, becoming an increasingly notable presence in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia.

Commercialised matchmaking
and marriage migration

“GLOBAL HOUSEHOLDING”

“Global householding” (Douglass, 2006)

- emphasizes the view that the formation and sustenance of households is increasingly reliant on the international movement of people and transactions among household members residing across borders in more than one national territory.

Exemplified by the rapid increase in Asia of:

- ❖ employing non-familial migrant domestic workers
- ❖ international or cross-border marriages
- ❖ raising and educating children abroad
- ❖ frequent flier lifestyles: border crossings to link productive (work) and reproductive (family) activities

GLOBAL HOUSEHOLDING: OUTSOURCING OF CAREWORK WITHIN THE FAMILY TO NON- FAMILIAL OTHERS

By outsourcing domestic and care work to other Southeast Asian women from less developed economies in the region at a low cost, socially and economically privileged Singapore women trade in their class privilege for (partial) freedom from the burden of household reproductive labour.

FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS IN SINGAPORE

Dependency on female migrant labour to address the **growing care deficit** is apparent in the increase in the number of foreign domestic workers in recent times.

- ❖ One in five households employs a live-in domestic worker
- ❖ Close to a quarter of a million foreign domestic workers, mainly from Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar

Regime of 'permanent temporariness'

- ❖ Highly managed system of two-year **work permits** for easy repatriation + **foreign worker levy** to regulate numbers
- ❖ Admitted into the nation-state as disposal labour **without any residency rights**
- ❖ Subject to measures that **circumscribe family formation** and close off the possibility of sinking roots into Singapore society: they cannot bring along any dependents, are prohibited from marrying Singapore citizens and permanent residents, and are immediately repatriated if found to be pregnant.

ILO ILO

The Foreign Domestic Worker as Part of the Family?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISovsVvX8Bg>



LIBERAL FAMILIALISM

Ochiai (2010) coined the phrase '**liberal familialism**', where the cost of purchasing care labour is borne by the family but where filial piety is outsourced to others whose services are bought from across international borders.



A foreign domestic worker watching a television drama with her elderly Singaporean employer.

FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS AS 'FAMILY' SUBSTITUTE CAREGIVERS IN SINGAPORE

A 2010 national survey found that of those aged 60 and above, only 55% had a family member as the primary caregiver; the rest depended on a foreign domestic worker for primary care.

Of those with a foreign domestic worker, 79% had hired them specifically to look after aged persons and 89% had the foreign domestic worker as the primary caregiver (Chan, 2010).

GLOBAL HOUSEHOLDING CROSS-BORDER MARRIAGES

A Vietnamese Bride Matchmaking Agency in Singapore

Somewhat analogous to the practice of middle-class families recruiting migrant domestic workers for householding purposes, working-class families without the financial means draw on unpaid care labour by recruiting **'foreign brides'**.

With globalization and expanding educational and career opportunities for women in Singapore, Singaporean men from the lower socio-economic strata who feel positionally 'left behind' by local women's participation in the workforce are seeking to fill the care deficit in their households through international marriage with women from the less developed countries in the region who are considered more 'traditional' and willing to take on procreation and caring roles in sustaining the household (Yeoh, Chee and Vu 2014).

“FOREIGN BRIDES” IN SINGAPORE

Increase in international marriages in globalizing Asian cities such as Singapore introduces ‘diversity’ into the primary relations that constitute the family.

- ❖ Cross-nationality marriages involving at least one Singapore resident spouse accounted for 41.4% (2015) of all marriages registered in Singapore.
- ❖ Inter-ethnic marriages accounted for 21.5% (2015) of all marriages

top news
Singapore, September 30, 2015

More mixed unions and remarriages

Data shows 5 per cent are increasingly marrying outside their own ethnic groups



2011: Record number of marriages

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Marriages	15,648	16,991	17,206	17,206	21,208

Mixed marriages

Category	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Chinese groom & European bride	41 (0.2%)	29 (0.2%)	29 (0.2%)	29 (0.2%)	29 (0.2%)
Chinese groom & African bride	81 (0.4%)	78 (0.5%)	78 (0.5%)	78 (0.5%)	78 (0.5%)
Chinese groom & Arab bride	232 (1.1%)	232 (1.4%)	232 (1.4%)	232 (1.4%)	232 (1.4%)
Chinese groom & Other* bride	1,364 (6.4%)	1,364 (8.0%)	1,364 (7.9%)	1,364 (7.9%)	1,364 (8.8%)
Malay groom & Chinese bride	1,782 (8.4%)	1,782 (10.5%)	1,782 (10.4%)	1,782 (10.4%)	1,782 (11.4%)
Malay groom & Indian bride	471 (2.2%)	471 (2.8%)	471 (2.8%)	471 (2.8%)	471 (3.1%)
Indian groom & Chinese bride	1,111 (5.2%)	1,111 (6.5%)	1,111 (6.4%)	1,111 (6.4%)	1,111 (7.1%)
Indian groom & Malay bride	227 (1.1%)	227 (1.3%)	227 (1.3%)	227 (1.3%)	227 (1.5%)
Other* groom & Other* bride	227 (1.1%)	227 (1.3%)	227 (1.3%)	227 (1.3%)	227 (1.5%)

Remarriages

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Remarriages	1,867	2,122	2,122	2,122	2,441

UP: Singapore men and their foreign Asian brides



UP: Chinese bride, Caucasian groom



top news
Singapore 30, 2015

[special report: marriage in singapore]

UP: Singapore men and their foreign Asian brides

UP: Chinese bride, Caucasian groom

By the end of 2015, the number of mixed unions and remarriages in Singapore has increased significantly, reflecting a growing trend of inter-ethnic and cross-nationality marriages. The data shows that 5 per cent of marriages in 2015 were mixed unions, up from 4.1 per cent in 2011. This increase is driven by a rise in inter-ethnic marriages, particularly between Chinese and Malay couples, and a growing number of remarriages.

The 2015 data shows a record number of marriages, with 21,208 registered in the year. This is a significant increase from 15,648 in 2011. The growth is attributed to a combination of factors, including a rising number of mixed unions and remarriages. In 2015, 8,800 marriages were mixed unions, up from 6,500 in 2011. This represents a 35 per cent increase in mixed unions over the four-year period.

Among the mixed unions, the most common combination is Chinese groom and Malay bride, which accounted for 8.4 per cent of all marriages in 2015. Other notable combinations include Chinese groom and Arab bride (1.1 per cent), Chinese groom and African bride (0.4 per cent), and Chinese groom and European bride (0.2 per cent). The data also shows a significant increase in remarriages, with 2,441 registered in 2015, up from 1,867 in 2011. This represents a 31 per cent increase in remarriages over the four-year period.

The increase in mixed unions and remarriages is a reflection of Singapore's diverse and globalized society. As the country continues to attract international talent and investment, the cultural and ethnic mix of its population is becoming increasingly diverse. This diversity is reflected in the growing number of inter-ethnic and cross-nationality marriages, which are contributing to a more inclusive and multicultural society.

The data also highlights the importance of family and community support in the success of these marriages. Many couples who enter into mixed unions or remarriages face unique challenges, such as cultural differences and language barriers. However, with the support of family and community, these couples can overcome these challenges and build strong, lasting relationships. The growing number of mixed unions and remarriages in Singapore is a testament to the resilience and adaptability of its people, and a sign of a more open and包容 society.

CARE MIGRATIONS AT SOURCE

- ▶ Further down the global care chain, increasing care migrations originating from developing countries in Asia suggest that millions of **left-behind children** are growing up for part or all of their young lives in the absence of a migrant father, a migrant mother, or both, and under the care of a 'single' parent or other surrogate caregivers.
- ▶ Migration studies point to the durability of the **woman-carer model** where the care vacuum resulting from the absence of migrant mothers is often filled by female relatives such as grandmothers and aunts.

A surrogate caregiver.

Female Labour Migration
In
South-East Asia:

Change &
Continuity

☒ Indonesia
☒ Philippines
☒ Thailand
☒ Yunnan (China)



MORE FLEXIBLE GENDER PRACTICES OF CARE IN SOURCE COMMUNITIES?

Hoang and Yeoh (2012) “calls into question the commonly held view of the delinquent left-behind husband who is resistant to adjust his family duties in the woman’s absence”.

- Instead, left-behind Southeast Asian men struggle to live up to highly moralistic **masculine ideals of being both ‘good fathers’ and ‘independent breadwinners’** when their wives are working abroad, by taking on at least some care functions that signified parental love and authority while holding on to paid work (even if monetary returns are low) for a semblance of economic autonomy. **A repackaging of fathering identities?**

IMPLICATIONS

- ▶ The rise of care migrations and global householding practices compels us to rethink **gender notions in the social provisioning of everyday and generational care** at different segments of the care chain.
- ▶ **Women's** continued reproductive work needs to be recognized and valorised:
 - ▶ this includes not only the care labour of those who remain 'at home' with their families,
 - ▶ but also those who contribute as migrant labourers to meeting the care needs in households of wealthier nations, and at the same time provide long-distance care to their own families across transnational spaces.
- ▶ At the same time, **men's** roles in providing care to their families also need to be acknowledged and affirmed as a significant element of masculine identities and a crucial resource in transnational families and globalizing households.

IMPLICATIONS

- ▶ A consistent finding of the research on caring practices along the care chain is that the **costs** – emotional, psychological and material – of global householding or living transnationally as a family is being kept high by the asymmetric reliance on female reproductive labour alone.
- ▶ Costs could be lowered if the care migration is built on **more egalitarian models of gender relations** where sharing the burden of domestic and care work is given the same weight as sharing the burden of economic provision (Kabeer, 2007).
- ▶ Value in migration studies to put the analytical spotlight on the **household** as the prime site where inequitable gender relations and hierarchies are being normalised and reproduced, to open up possibilities for more flexible gender structures.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!