



Social cohesion, migration policies and the perception of migrant workers in the Asia-Pacific region

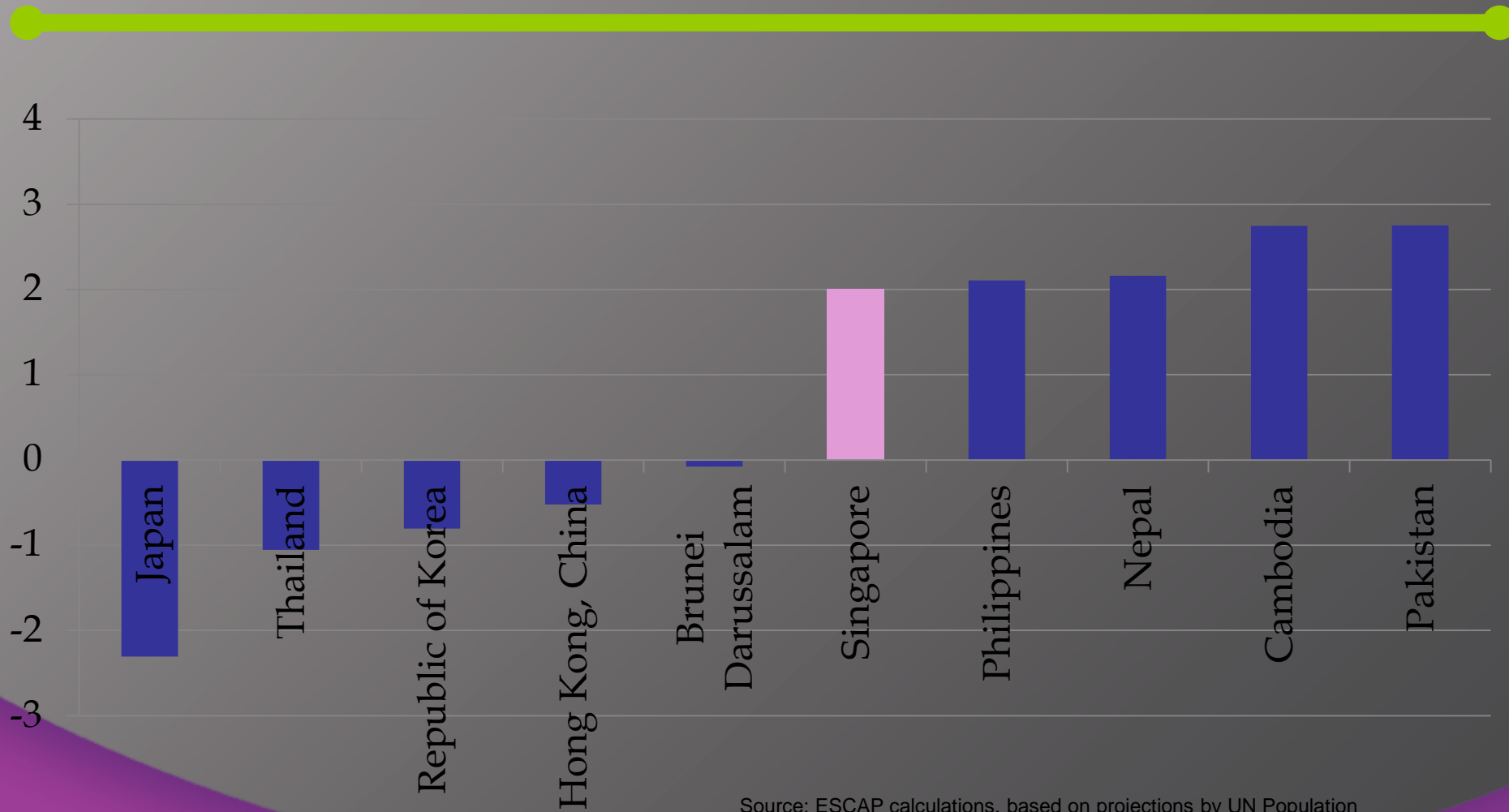
Vanessa Steinmayer, Population Affairs Officer

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EU-Asia Dialogue*

Outline

- ⇒ Demographic situation and migration in Asia and the Pacific
- ⇒ Existing migration policies and frameworks in select countries of Asia and the Pacific
- ⇒ Perception of migrant workers in select countries of the Asia-Pacific region
- ⇒ Summary

Young labour force already shrinking in some countries ...

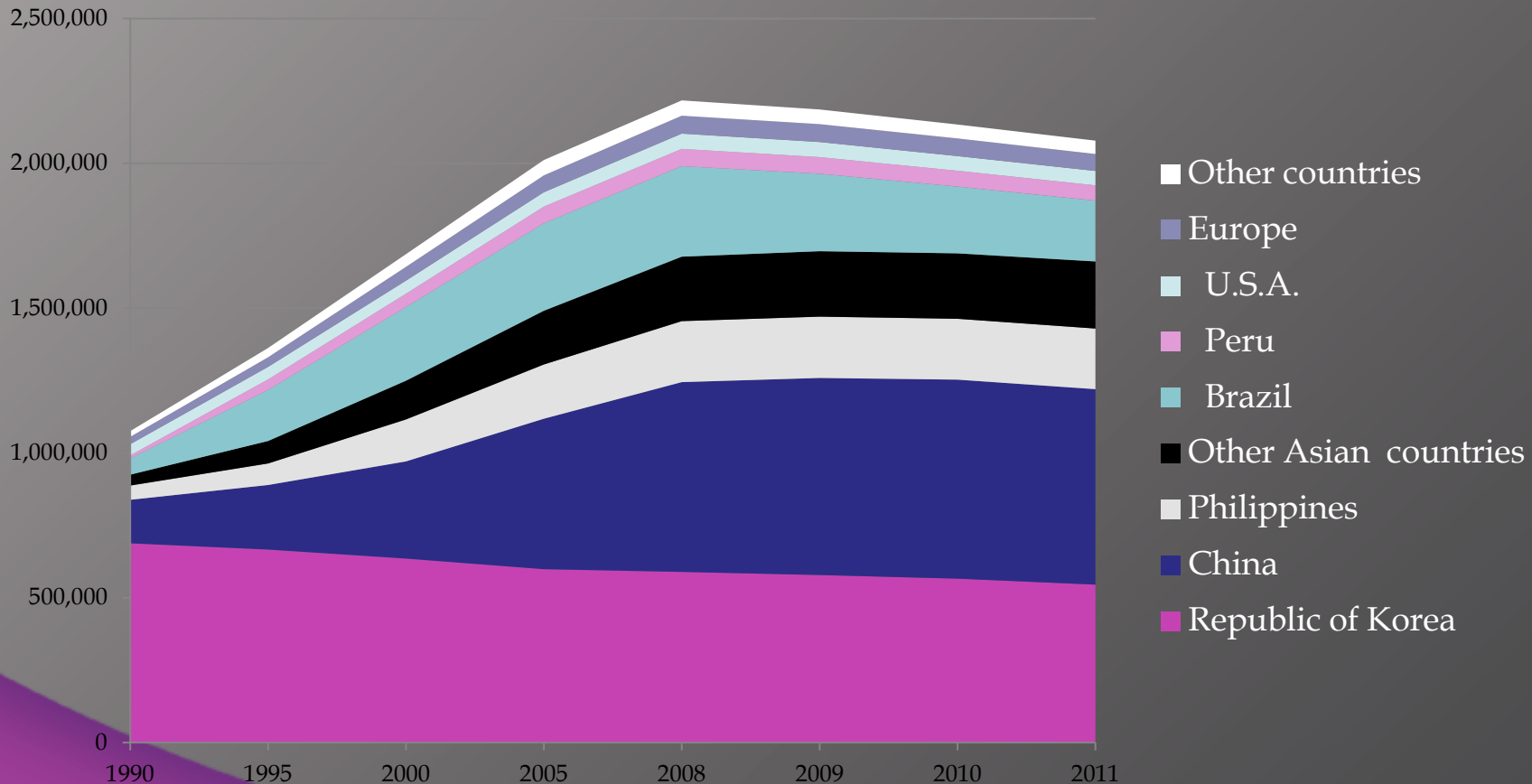


Source: ESCAP calculations, based on projections by UN Population Division

Many countries in the region host large numbers of foreign workers

| | Number of foreigners/foreign workers in the country | Main countries of origin |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Republic of Korea | About 1 million in 2011 -29% “work visit” (for ethnic Koreans), 23% Employment Permit System (EPS), 7% students, 6% permanent residents | “Work visit”: 95% from China EPS: Viet Nam (30%, Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand (each 11-12%) Students: China |
| Thailand | About 4 million – of them about 1 million with work permit | Myanmar (80%), Cambodia, Lao PDR |
| Malaysia | About 1.8 million regular migrants – large numbers of irregular migrants | Indonesia (about 50%), Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar – irregular migrants mostly from Indonesia |
| Hong Kong, China | About 313,000 foreign domestic workers | Indonesia, Philippines |

Number of migrants in Japan doubled between 1990 and 2008

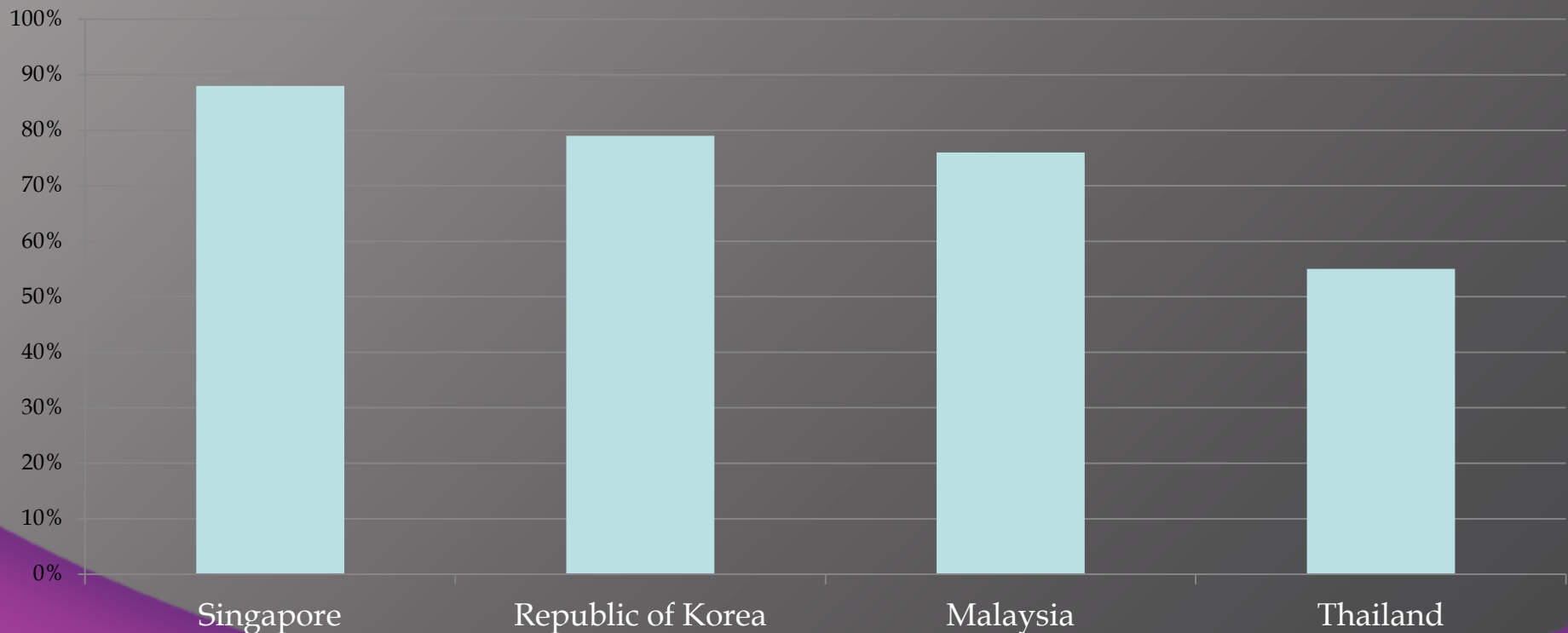


Only few countries adopt migration as an option to address demographic challenges

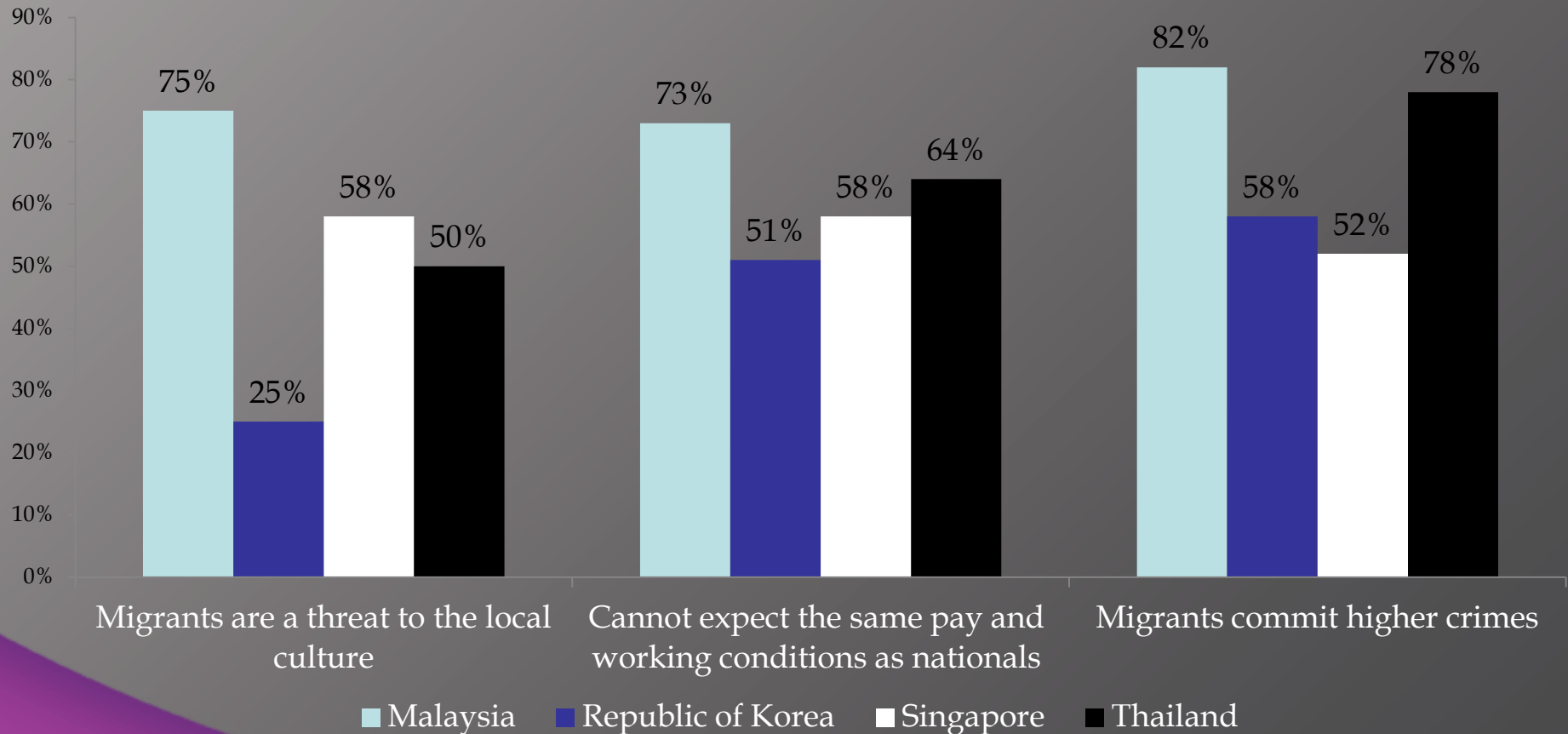
- ⇒ Thailand: issuing work permits to migrants as a temporary solution
- ⇒ Japan: encouraging only in-migration of highly-skilled professionals
- ⇒ Malaysia: due to high number of irregular migrants, migration considered a security issue
- ⇒ Republic of Korea: quota system to accept temporary low-skilled workers, “multiculturalism” policy with integration courses for foreign spouses and in some cases those on “work visit” (ethnic Koreans)
- ⇒ Hong Kong, China: highly-skilled migrants can receive permanent resident status after 7 years – but not domestic workers

Recognition that migrants are needed in certain economic niches ...

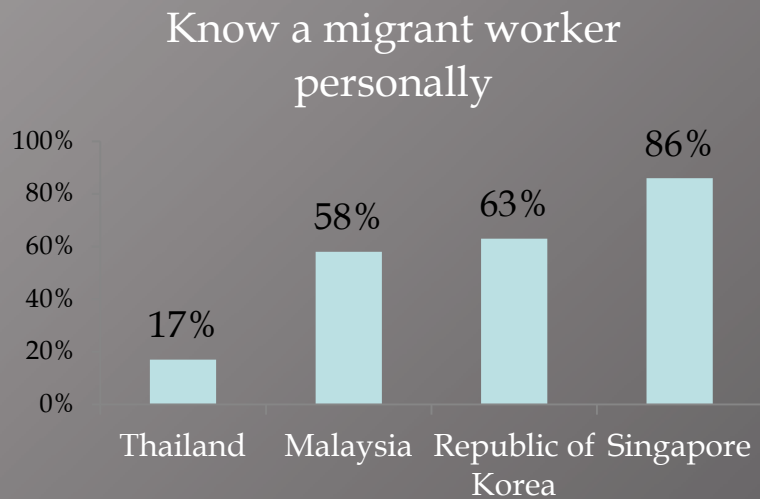
Agree that migrant workers are needed to fill certain niches of the labour market



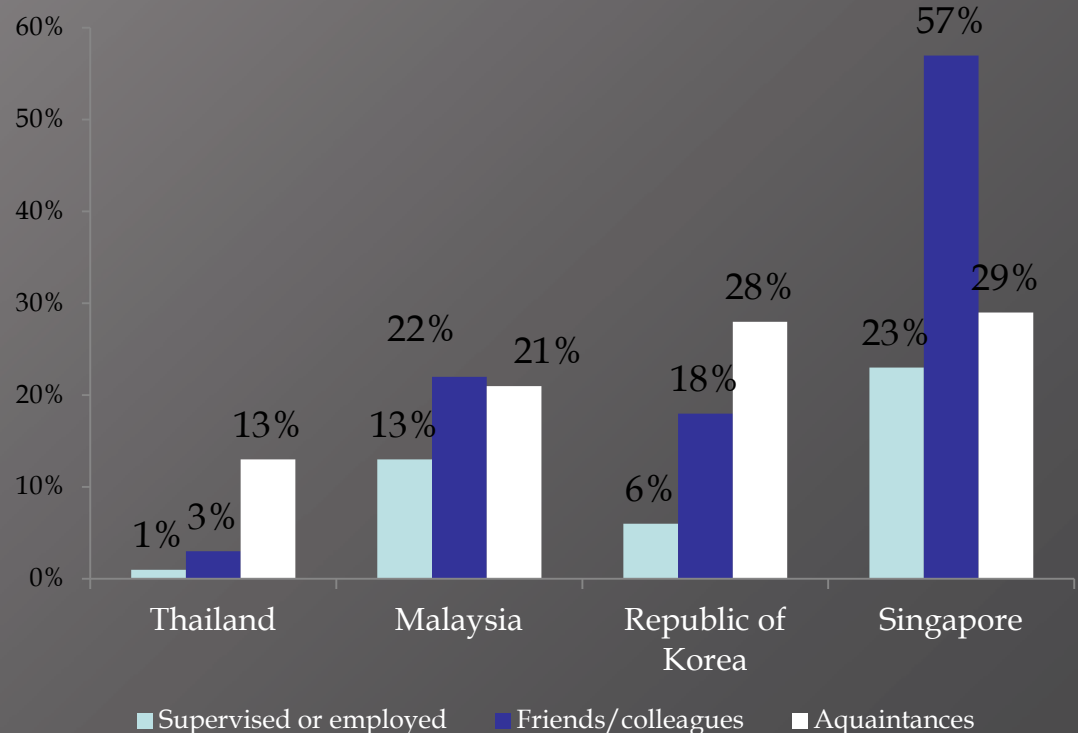
But negative perception and lack of recognition for rights



Sometimes limited relationships between migrants and host country population



Type of encounter with migrants



ASEAN: Increasing commitments towards the protection of migrant workers

ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant workers

⇒ “**CONFIRMING** our shared responsibility to realize a common vision for a secure and prosperous ASEAN Community by improving the quality of life of its people and strengthening its cultural identity towards a people-centered ASEAN through, among others, measures on the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers;

⇒ **RECOGNISING** the contributions of migrant workers to the society and economy of both receiving states and sending states of ASEAN;”

⇒ Obligations include: “Intensify efforts to protect the fundamental human rights, promote the welfare and uphold human dignity of migrant workers.”

Summary

- ⇒ Only few countries consider “integration” policies – particularly not for low-skilled workers
- ⇒ There are negative perceptions against migrant workers and the notions that migrants do not adapt in spite of relative cultural proximity
- ⇒ Negative perceptions against migrant workers provide little support for pro-migrant policies.
- ⇒ Public campaigns needed to improve the perception of migrant workers – example: www.saphansiang.org

Coherent immigration policies will be a first step before integration policies can be considered – regular status of migrants will be required to promote social cohesion.



THANK YOU

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escap-sdd@un.org
www.unescap.org*