



Labor migration policies in East Asia and the Pacific

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Migration policies matter – e.g. discrepancies between labor demand and migration policies can lead to irregular migration

Migrant workers may become irregular by...



Irregular entry



Overstaying



Violations of employment visa conditions (including through employer changes)

Reasons for irregular migration include...



Costs of regular migration



Complexity of the regular migration process



Lack of clarity on the legal and social protection benefits of regular migration



Restrictive migration policies

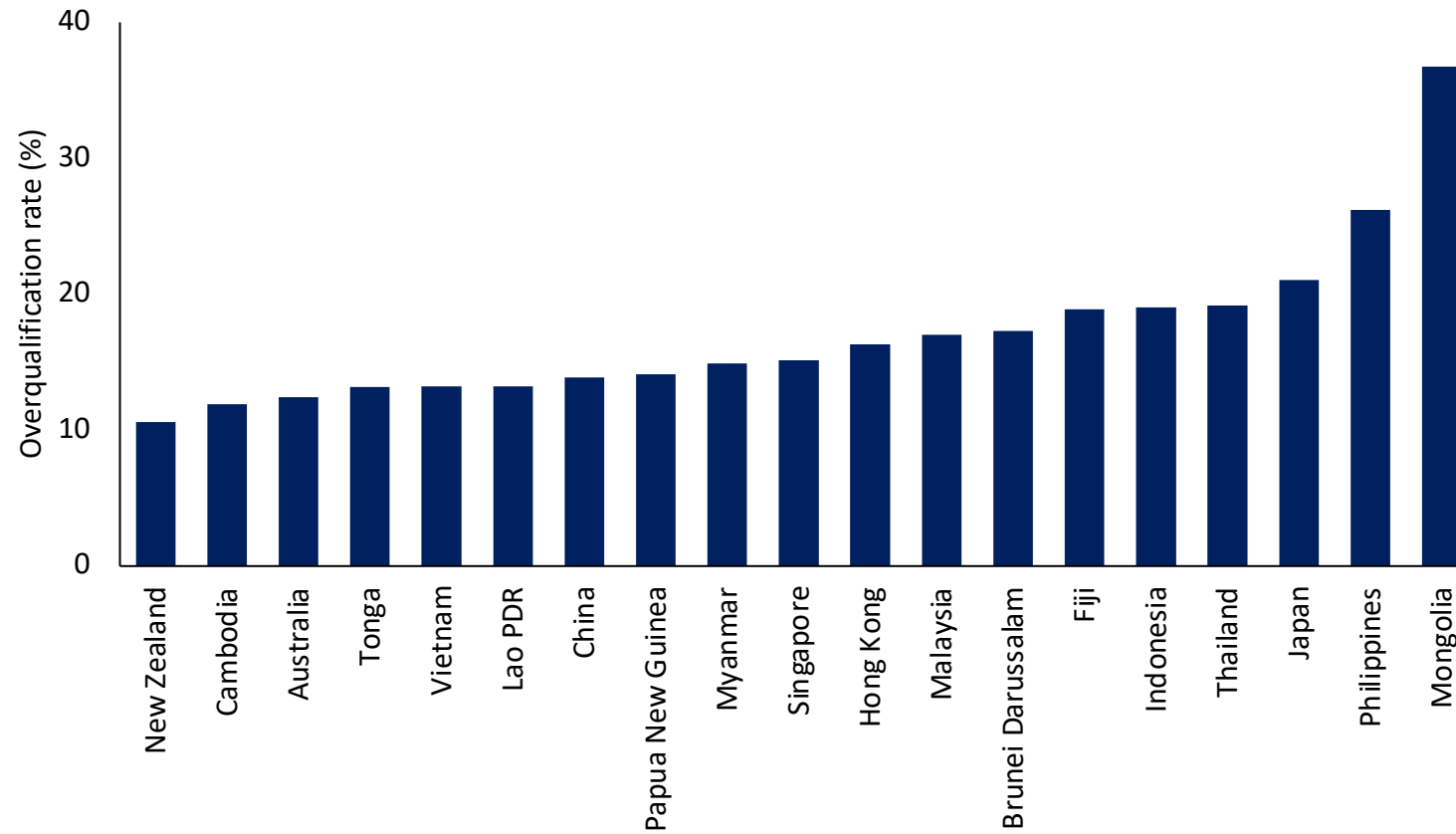


Lack of grievance redress mechanisms



Migration policies matter: e.g., Brain waste can be minimized through the recognition of qualifications

Overqualification rate of the foreign-born population



Source: OECD Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC)

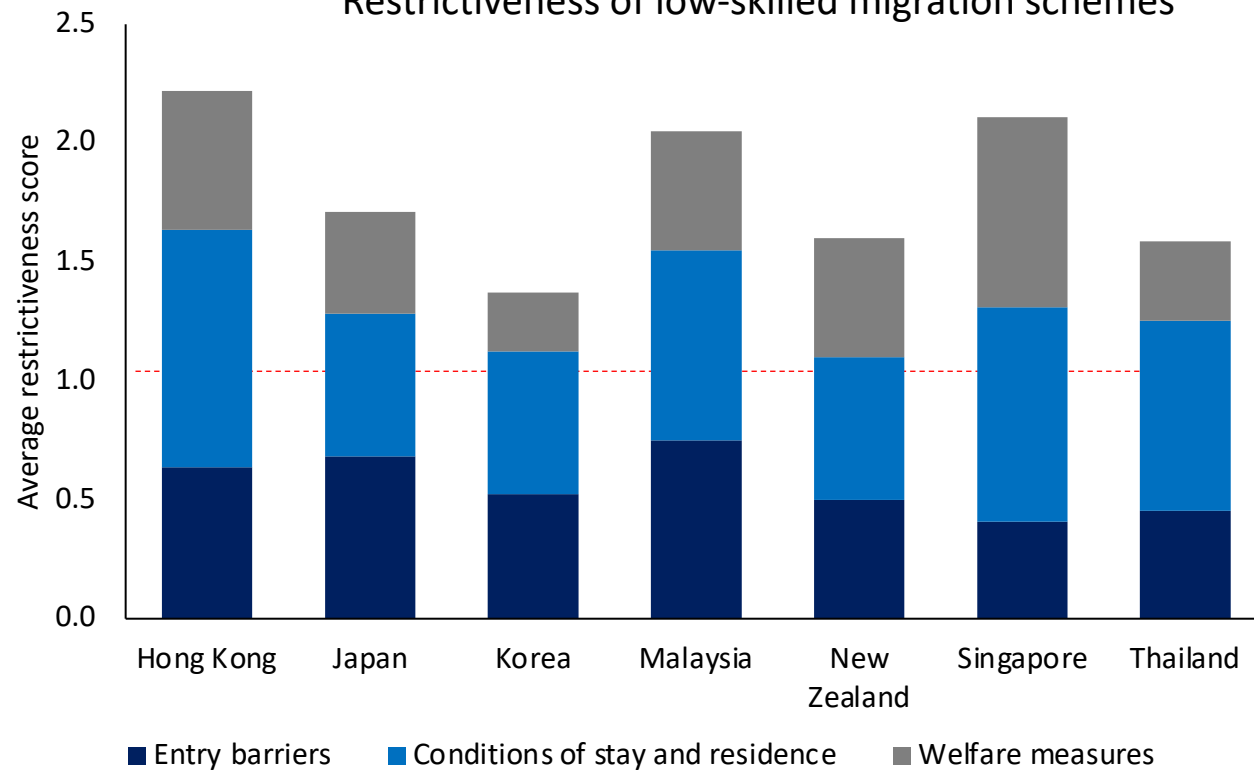
What migration policy is (and is not)

- Outcome of political bargaining
- Informed by multiple objectives
- Not 'one' policy, but comprises many measures/initiatives
- These should be mutually reinforcing, but can often be *ad hoc*, fragmented, and (at worst) contradictory

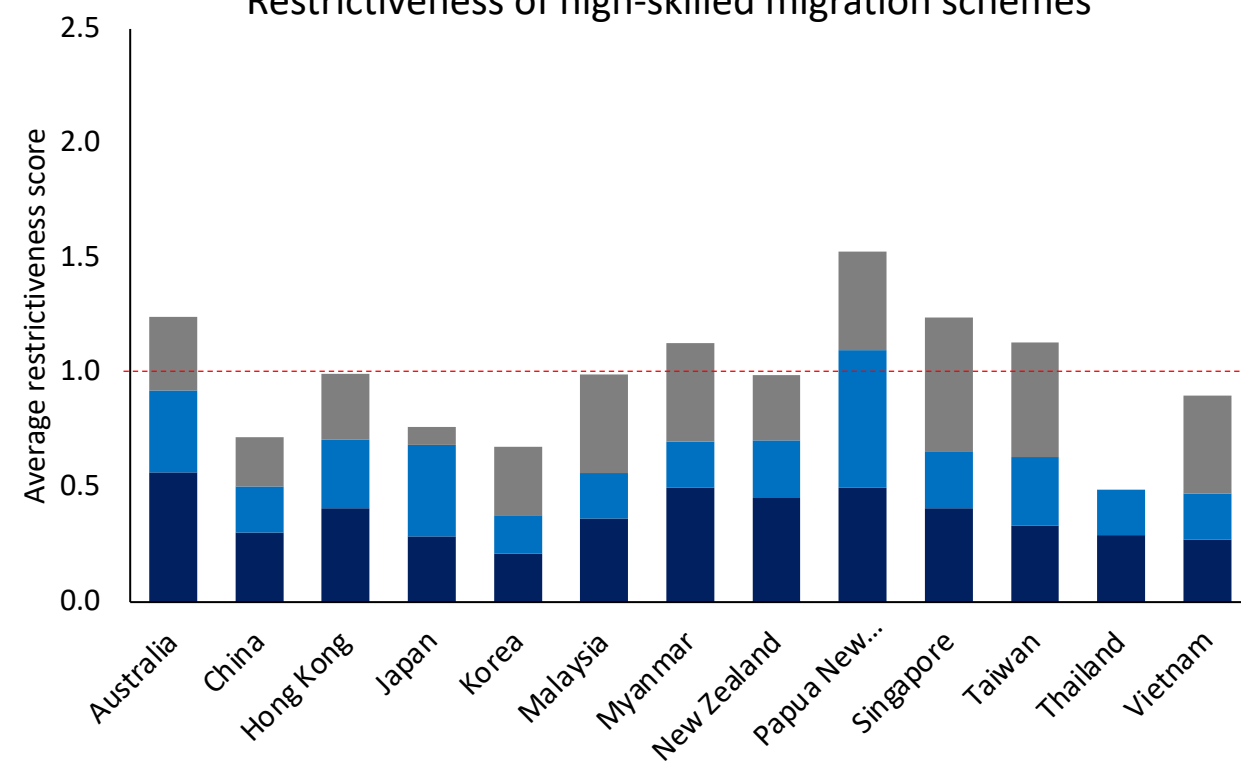
- High-skilled migration managed by destination countries
- Low-skilled migration by bilateral labor agreements (a role for origin countries, though significance varies)

There remain significant restrictions to labor mobility, especially in the case of low-skilled migration

Restrictiveness of low-skilled migration schemes



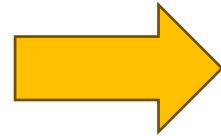
Restrictiveness of high-skilled migration schemes



Changes in migration policies reflect the use of migration as a long-term development strategy, particularly in ageing societies



Rapid aging
+
Labor and skills
shortages



Pathway to higher-skilled visa categories



More equal treatment of migrant workers



Introduction of pathways to permanent residence

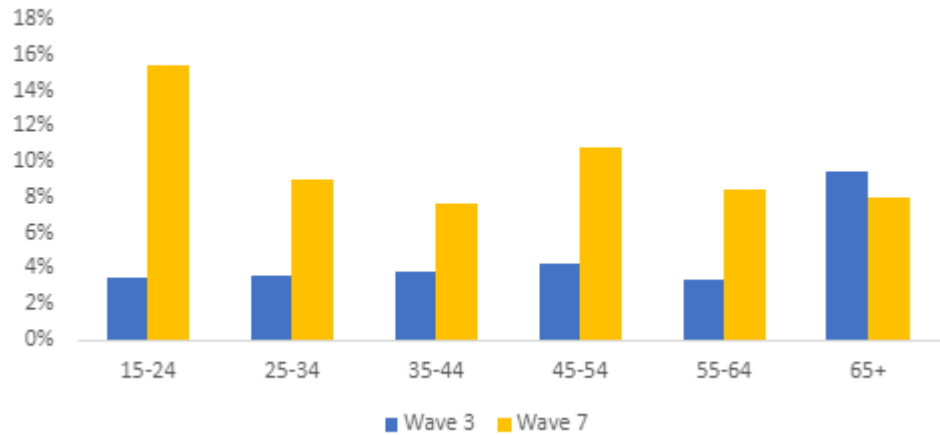


Integration of migrants

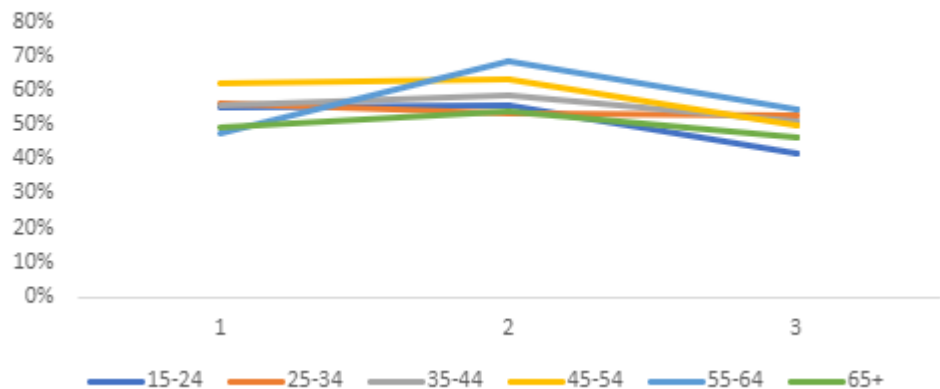
But, public perception matters...

View on 'Not wanting immigrants as neighbors' differs considerably across countries, and evolves over time

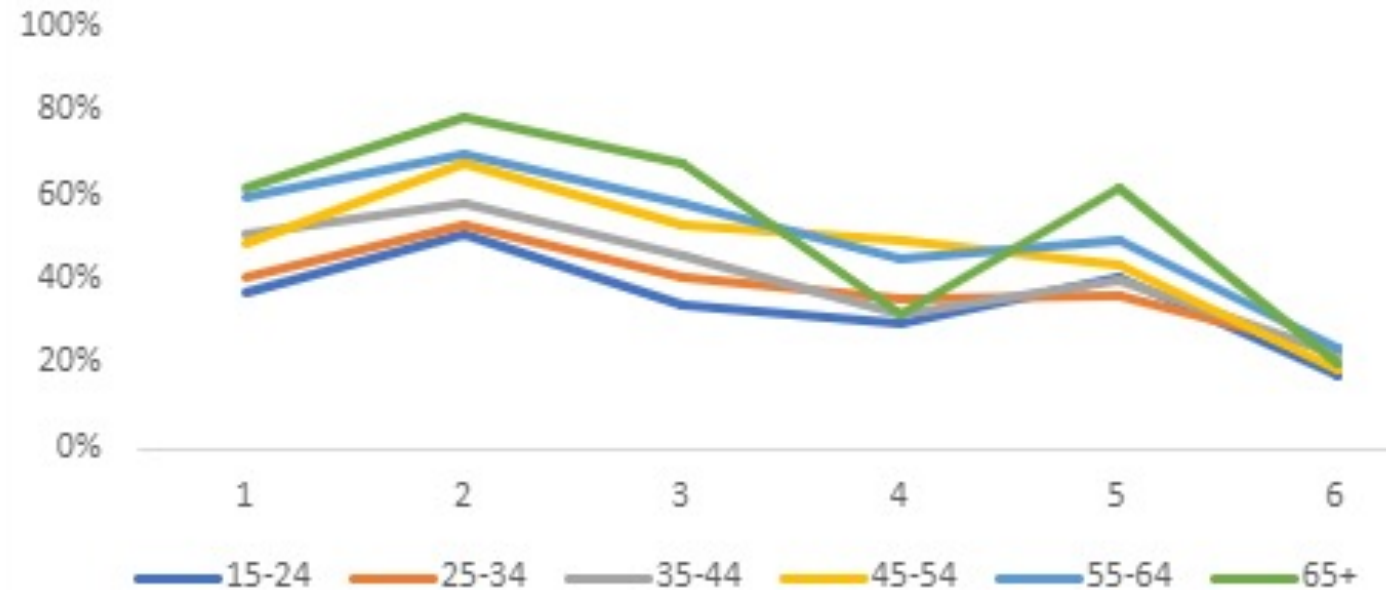
Australia



Malaysia



South Korea



Key takeaways

- Migration policies matter – they shape (and constrain) migration, thereby impacting outcomes from migration
- Migration policy serves multiple objectives and is the outcome of political bargaining. It is less than perfect
- There remain significant restrictions to labor mobility, especially in the case of low-skilled migration
- However, we increasingly see moves towards less restrictive migration policies within EAP given economic demand for migrant workers ... something facilitated by shifts in public opinion

Thank you