





MAURITIUS LABOUR MIGRATION TRENDS REPORT

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► Executive summary

This Mauritius Labour Migration Trends Report has been prepared under the Southern Africa Migration Management (SAMM) project. The report presents an overview of international labour migration statistics (ILMS) in Mauritius, in a context of coverage in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region. It assesses the main data sources as well as potential additional data sources, that could contribute to greater coverage and depth of ILMS in the country. Additionally, the report draws from recent data to present characteristics of labour migration in Mauritius, as well as a top-level analysis of the impact of migrants on the native-born labour force. The report concludes with recommendations for improving ILMS for evidence-based labour migration governance.

Mauritius does not currently have a standalone Labour Force Survey and relies instead on labour statistics gathered through the Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey (CMPHS) which excludes migrants from the sample. As a result, the main source of ILMS in Mauritius for a comprehensive overview of different characteristics of migrant workers, particularly the international stock of migrant workers, is the Housing and Population Census, despite being implemented only every 10-years.

What Mauritius lacks in more traditional data sources, it makes up in alternative data sources, including the Census of Economic Activities, the Survey of Employment and Earnings and administrative data, particularly valid work permit data, amongst other sources. Noting that none will include irregular migrant workers. This means that data is available for different insights on regular international labour migration, including international migrant stock and international migrant inflows. The main gap is for data on nationals abroad, including the stock of nationals abroad and outflows of nationals – a finding that is consistent with a recent review of migration data in Mauritius (IOM 2022), although there is evidence that this information might be available by the Passport and Immigration Office (PIO).

A summary of findings from the report are as followed:

- ▶ The Housing and Population Census 2022 estimates the total working age (aged 16+) migrant population at 39,990, representing an increase of 62.2 per cent since 2011. The composition of migrants also changed substantially, with women decreasing as a share of total migrants from 45.4 per cent to 21.6 per cent, between 2011 and 2022. Much of this decline is tied to the labour market, and the decline in the number of women entering the country to work.
- ▶ Another shift was in the education composition of migrants and their occupational skill levels. Between 2011 and 2022, the share of migrants with basic levels of education increased from 63 per cent to 74 per cent, and over this same period, the share of migrants in low-skilled occupations increased from 11.1 per cent to 54.4 per cent. This shift reflects a change in labour demand for migrants from middle-skilled jobs to low-skilled jobs.

- ▶ Work permit data a proxy measure of employment of migrants in the country records 31,736 valid work permits as of December 2023. Valid work permits do not take into account other types of permits that would allow migrants to work, including Certificates of Exemption, Occupation Permits and Youth Professional Occupation Permit, but does allow for consistent and comparable trends over time. Valid work permits have grown from around 25,000 in December 2004, to a peak of nearly 45,000 prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. The trends in valid work permits over the past two decades also show that there has been a decreasing share of women in total labour migration. Women accounted for around 15 per cent of total valid work permits as of December 2023, down from 42 per cent as of December 2004
- ▶ As of 2023, 73 per cent of all valid work permits were from Bangladesh or India. Such that 37 per cent of valid work permits were accounted for by Bangladeshi nationals, and 35.7 per cent by Indian nationals (Figure 4.7). A further 14.5 per cent were accounted for by Malagasy Republic (Madagascar), as well as other South Asian nationals including Nepal (8 per cent), Sri Lanka (1.9 per cent). Other countries, including China and other African countries, such as Kenya, South Africa and Mozambique, accounted for a relatively small share, at less than 1 per cent each.
- ▶ With a reliance on work permits for non-Mauritians, most non-Mauritians are employees, with few prospects for self-employment. Nearly all non-Mauritian workers in Mauritius are wage and salaried employees, with less than 3 per cent in self-employment (despite being feasible under an Occupation Permit), based on findings from the Housing and Population Census 2022. Wage and salaried employment is typically regarded as a more desirable status in employment than self-employment, as it affords more regular salaries, higher job security and access and eligibility to benefits such as paid annual and sick leave. This is not always the case however.
- ▶ According to the Survey of Employment and Earnings, most migrant workers are engaged in Export Processing Zones (EPZs), although this has declined over the last five years. A total of 58.7 per cent of all employed non-Mauritians were engaged in EPZs. This was down from 78.2 per cent in 2018. In fact, non-Mauritians accounted for nearly half of all employment in EPZs, compared to 7.8 per cent of all employment outside of EPZs. Most of this employment in EPZs is in manufacturing and construction.
- ▶ Valid work permits show that for women, employment in industry has been on a long-term decline, decreasing from 12,000 in 2010 to around 4,100 in 2023. Part of this is accountable by growth in construction relative to manufacturing (both components of the industry broad sector group, whereby construction has an almost negligible share of women migrant workers.
- Non-Mauritians typically earn less than their Mauritian counterparts where most non-Mauritians are employed, including in manufacturing and construction. In 2022, non-Mauritians earned around 85 per cent of their Mauritian counterparts in manufacturing and around 90 per cent in construction and wholesale and retail trade. These figures do not necessarily imply there

- is discrimination and different treatment, instead, it can reflect a range of factors, including different roles and occupations typically undertaken by Mauritians versus non-Mauritians.
- ▶ Impact analyses showed that there were no significant effects of migrants on the Mauritian labour force. Impact analysis based on 2011 Housing and Population Census data showed that there were no statistically significant positive or negative effects on the native labour force from the migrant population. This means that while there were no significant positive effects on the employment-to-population ratio or paid employment rate, there were also no significant negative effects. Similar analysis on more recent data would be recommended.

The following are a summary of potential steps for Mauritius to improve its labour migration statistics:

- ▶ Sample migrant households in the Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey: While there is a range of alternative data available on migrant workers from different data sources, these are not representative of the population (except the Housing and Population Census). As such, collecting information that is more representative on a regular basis would serve to better inform the country of the characteristics and trends of international migrant workers in the country, as well as living conditions of migrants. The CMPHS would be the optimal source of data to do this.
- ▶ Facilitate steps for harmonisation between and within different data sources on migrant worker definitions: While the different data sources are important for understanding labour migration in the country, different definitions used, as well as coverage and other underlying methodological differences, render estimates incomparable between different sources, or in fact within a single source between years. One option is to leverage the definitions and standards promoted by International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Labour Market Observatory, which is a regional labour market and labour migration information system, to centralise harmonisation efforts at the national level through templates and guidance and spearheaded by Statistics Mauritius. The process entails collaboration between government agencies, research institutions, and regional bodies to ensure consistent application of harmonized definitions across all data collection stages. Actionable steps involve capacity-building initiatives for local data collectors and analysts to standardize methodologies in line with international standards, thereby improving data quality and comparability across time and data source.
- ▶ Improve data collection on nationals abroad: At present, the only source of data that has information on nationals abroad is the Housing and Population Census, however, this is limited due to timeframe restrictions for the question. According to a recent review, the Housing and Population Census is insufficient for comprehensively assessing emigrants in the country (IOM 2022). Gathering information on nationals abroad is a complex endeavour, with caveats and limitations on different data sources. It is recommended to start by considering first what admin data sources might contain information on nationals abroad, e.g. placements of Mauritians abroad based on Memorandums of Understanding for insights into outflows. Secondly, to

consider what options there are for adding questions to existing surveys to gain insights into nationals abroad, such as questions on absent family members. Finally, to consider standalone surveys or registrations for gathering information on Mauritians abroad, such as establishing a diaspora registration database.

▶ Systematically publish labour migration statistics: While different institutions publish information on migrant workers, a standalone regular assessment of labour migration in the country, pulling together different sources would help navigate the different data sources and contribute to evidence-based policymaking (including from the PIO, the Economic and Development Board (EDB), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Police Department, Mauritius All in One form for Ministry of Health, and others).

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the report

This Mauritius Labour Migration Trends Report has been prepared under the Southern Africa Migration Management (SAMM) project. The SAMM project is an inter-agency project with an overall objective to improve migration management in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region, guided by and contributing to the realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Each country in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region can be considered to different degrees to be countries of origin, transit and / or destination for labour migration. However, while labour migration is characteristic of the region, there remains a lack of data collected, disseminated and analysed on international labour migration statistics (ILMS).

Improving the knowledge base on migration and labour migration statistics can contribute to improved understanding of migration dynamics, labour market implications and therefore labour migration governance, as well as better understanding of issues related to social exclusion and poverty and other socioeconomic considerations. Ultimately, improved migration and labour migration statistics contributes to stronger evidence-based policymaking, which is particularly relevant in the context of developing Action Plans and Policy Frameworks on labour migration.

The report first presents an overview of the methodology, including key concepts and definitions (Section 2), before presenting an overview of coverage of ILMS in Mauritius in relation to the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region. Section 2 also assesses data sources and potential data sources for addressing limitations and filling data gaps. Section 3 provides an overview of recent labour migration trends using the Mauritius Labour Force Survey data, and Section 4 concludes and provides recommendations.

1.2. Mauritius migration context

There has been consistently more emigration from Mauritius than immigration over time, with 182,000 Mauritian citizens registered as living overseas in year 2020, according to the United Nations World Population Prospects (UNDESA 2020). This compares to estimates of around 28,000 migrants in Mauritius for the same year (ibid.). Such figures for foreign nationals in Mauritius seem an underestimate based on other estimates, including establishment surveys that suggest there are around 28,000 foreign workers of working-age (aged 16+) employed in large establishments as of March 2022 (Statistics Mauritius 2023), and as of December 2023 there were around 31,736 valid work permits in Mauritius (Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training 2023).

Additional ambiguity around the number of foreign nationals in Mauritius also stems from a lack of figures or estimates on irregular migration in the country. The absence of porous land borders means that Mauritius does not experience the inflows that might be more common in countries with contiguous borders, however, the work permit process that is tied to each new employer that

a migrant worker is employed by, means that large number of irregular migrants who have either entered with tourist visas in the past, outstayed their visas and/or left the employment for which their work permit is associated, then become irregular (Humuth 2018). The prospects of deportation mean that many irregular migrants work informally in the country and are not captured in estimates of migrant stock in the country. As a result, most estimates for total migrant stock in the country (as well as estimates of migrant workers) are likely to undercount the total number.

Over the past decades, migration to and from Mauritius has consisted of the following types: sustained emigration of highly-educated Mauritians, resulting in the 'brain drain' of skilled Mauritian workers; migration of youth to Canada for short-term periods; inflows of wealthy migrants seeking residence in Mauritius; and contract migrant workers (Lincoln 2012).

As outlined in further detail in this report, much of the international migrant stock in Mauritius is made up of migrant workers. Part of this is due to employment of migrant workers in Export Processing Zones (EPZ). EPZ were first established in the 1970s, initially for textile manufacturing, with a key aim to boost employment and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The success of these EPZ quickly resulted in labour shortages (Lincoln 2012) bringing the first sizeable wave of migrant workers to the country. As of 2024, many of the migrant workers employed in EPZ are in the textile manufacturing and construction sectors (UNDP Mauritius 2020).

Climate change is also playing a role in migration into and out of Mauritius, with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) identifying climate change as a 'major driver of human mobility' in the country (IOM 2023). For countries of origin, it may also be driving decision-making factor, for instance given a large and growing number come from Bangladesh which is seeing increasing climate-change related displacement and emigration. Finally, a sustained economic slowdown following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic may have also contributed to the increase in movement of Indian and Bangladeshi workers to Mauritius (UNDP Mauritius 2020; SAMM 2022). Despite this, there are no specific provisions in law for those – Mauritian or otherwise – who are forced to move due to the effects of climate change (IOM 2023).

There are very few refugees (Migrants and Refugees Section 2023) recorded in Mauritius and the country is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention, meaning that it has "neither national legislation on asylum nor procedures establishing rights and guarantees for asylum seekers and refugees" (Migrants and Refugees Section 2023) (ibid.).

1.3. Labour migration governance

All migrants who wish to work in Mauritius must obtain a work permit from the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, which is outlined in the non-citizens (Employment Restriction) Act 1973. It stipulates that "a non-citizen shall not engage in any occupation in Mauritius for reward or profit or be employed in Mauritius unless there is in force in relation to him a valid permit and he engages in the occupation or is employed in accordance with any condition which may be specified in the permit. The Act also stipulates that "no person shall have a non-citizen in his

employment in Mauritius without there being in force a valid permit in relation to that employment." A Certificate of Exemption is available for certain activities and migrants who are exempted from a work permit for their period of employment in Mauritius, as outlined in the Employment (Non-Citizens) (Restriction) Exemptions Regulations 1970.

Regular migrant workers in Mauritius should enjoy the same rights as citizens. The Mauritian constitution and supporting acts dictate that there should be no discrimination between citizens and migrants on the grounds of the country's human rights. This means that migrant workers should be guaranteed free health care services and the same terms and conditions of employment as working citizens, including minimum wages (SAMM 2019). Just as for Mauritian workers, migrant workers are also legally protected against discrimination the Workers' Rights Act of 2019 (IOM 2023).

Mauritius's 2008 Employment Act (Government of Mauritius 2008) also guarantees all workers, in theory including migrant workers, the right to engage in collective bargaining and protection against victimization or termination of employment. The Ministry of Labour states that it carries out inspections to ensure equal treatment of Mauritian and migrant workers (SAMM 2021). Mauritius' Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training has a dedicated Work Permit Unit and aims to promote "safe, orderly and regular migration" to align with the UN Sustainable Development Goal Target 10.7 (SAMM 2021).

Mauritius published a "Migration and Development Policy" and accompanying action plan in 2018, making it one of few Southern African countries to have a dedicated migration policy (SAMM 2022). However, this plan focuses on attracting skilled labour, addressing internal unemployment and boosting investment and innovation, rather than the protection of migrant workers. One of the stated policy aims is in fact to reduce the reliance on foreign workers, by ensuring the Mauritian workforce's skills better matches the country's needs (SAMM 2022).

Existing Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BMLA) exist with countries such as China, Qatar and Nepal, which can be a helpful vehicle to deliver labour migration governance, as well as other circular labour migration agreements that enable Mauritian workers to gain professional experience and training in other countries before returning to the Republic of Mauritius. Despite these, agreements with India and Bangladesh have not yet been reached and poor access to information on rights reportedly hinders the implementation of existing BMLAs for migrant workers (SAMM 2021).

The 2021 Tripartite Dialogue concluded that Mauritius was without the laws and regulations to protect migrant workers adequately (SAMM 2021). As a result, the report made the following recommendations:

 To develop a Code of Conduct and standards for the hiring and ongoing employment of migrant workers;

- To improve the resources and capabilities of the government unit that conducts workplace inspections;
- To introduce national laws and regulations to that specifically protect migrant workers;
- To develop a national action plan against human trafficking; and
- To improve the collection, analysis and accuracy of labour market statistics, seen as "critical for the development of sound policies on labour migration" (SAMM 2019).

1.4. Labour migration statistics

In 2020, the SAMM project published a brief summarising indicators for labour migration in the region (ILO 2020). This brief also contains a shortlist of what can be considered the minimum or core indicators on labour migration. The shortlist can be drawn from a list of 21 indicators used by the ILO for its ILMS Database, spanning three categories: i) international migrant stock, ii) migrant flows (inflows) and iii) nationals abroad (stock of migrants abroad, outflows and returnees).¹

The International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Statistics Department compiles ILMS and publishes these in its ILMS Database, available on ILOSTAT (ILO, n.d.). The information in the ILMS Database complies with the guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration endorsed at the 20th International Conference for Labour Statisticians (ILCS) (ILO 2018). The ILO ILMS database, which is compiled from publicly available data as well as information shared by national focal points, can serve as a gauge of what ILMS is available in a country or region.

The ILO has also developed a comprehensive methodology for global and regional estimates of migrant workers which uses available data, and proxies and modelled estimates to fill gaps. There is a distinct lack of real data points for the African region to feed into the models. Improvements in the regional and global estimates of migrant workers can be improved by improved data availability for ILMS in the African region.

2. Methodology

2.1. Objectives

Given the context outlined in Section 1, this Mauritius Labour Migration Trends report aims to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of labour migration in the country, and specifically to draw attention to the available data on international labour migration statistics and the gaps therein.

¹ See Concepts and Definitions section of this report, as well as additional concepts and definitions in Appendix II.

2.2. Methodological framework

This Mauritius Labour Migration Trends report follows a common approach being applied to labour migration studies of other countries in the region under the SAMM project. Accordingly, the proposed methodological framework has this in mind. It is based primarily on desk research, and will follow the following steps as part of the process:

Mapping of available and potential ILMS data sources

- i) Assessment of coverage for international labour migration statistics indicators by assessing coverage (by indicator and year) in the ILO ILMS Database (with comparisons to the wider region of Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean);
- ii) Assessment of available and potential additional data on labour migration that is not included in the ILO ILMS Database, including official data sources (e.g. Population Censuses and Household Surveys) as well as administrative data sources;

Analysis of available data on ILMS

- i) Assessment of recent trends and estimates from different data sources (from official reports and also from available microdata) on:
 - a. International migrant stock
 - b. Migrant flows (inflows)
 - c. Nationals abroad (stock of migrants, outflows and returnees)
- ii) Overview of analysis and findings from recent literature on labour migration in Mauritius (a preliminary list of secondary literature can be found in Appendix I), including findings on labour market integration, human capital and economic impacts, drawing from the OECD/ILO reports on contributions of immigrants to the economy (OECD and ILO 2018b; 2018a);

Conclusions and recommendations

- i) Summary of data coverage, gaps and ways of filling gaps through data sources currently used or with potential to be used.
- ii) Summary of other measures and steps that could be followed to bolster international labour migration statistics in Mauritius.

2.3. Key concepts and definitions

The following concepts and definitions are those used for ILMS, in line with the ICLS Guidelines Concerning Statistics of International Labour Migration (ILO 2018). Those provided below are a selection related to the main categories of labour migration statistics analysed in Section 3.²

Place of birth

This variable refers to the country of birth criterion for international migration definition and distinguishes a country's native-born population from the foreign-born.

Country of destination

An emigrant's country of destination is the country, other than his country of citizenship, to which that person transfers his or her usual residence.

Foreign-born population

For a given country, comprises all individuals born outside the country.

Stock of international migrants (foreign-born or foreign-citizens)

For a given country, refers to the number either foreign-born individuals or foreign-citizens in a country at a given period of time.

Inflow of international migrants (foreign-born or foreign-citizens)

Depending on the criterion used to define international migration, the inflow of international migrants includes either foreign-born individuals or foreign-citizens who moved to the country during the reference period to establish usual residence there.

Inflow of nationals returned from abroad (returnees)

Refers to the number of citizens who return from a period of residence abroad to live again in their country of citizenship during the reference period.

Outflow of nationals

For a given country, refers to the number of its citizens who left their country of citizenship to establish usual residence in another country during a given period of time.

Outflow of nationals for employment

The outflow of nationals for employment includes only the citizens who left their country for employment purposes, or "for work" emigrants. This group therefore excludes accompanying family members whose purpose of migration was not employment at the time of entry.

² For a detailed and comprehensive list of all international labour migration statistics concepts and definitions, including labour market concepts, please consult the ILOSTAT <u>Guide to reporting International Labour Migration Statistics to the ILO using the Excel questionnaire</u> (ILO, 2021).

Stock of nationals abroad

For a given country, refers to the number of its citizens who have their usual residence in another country at a given period of time.

3. International labour migration statistics and data sources in Mauritius

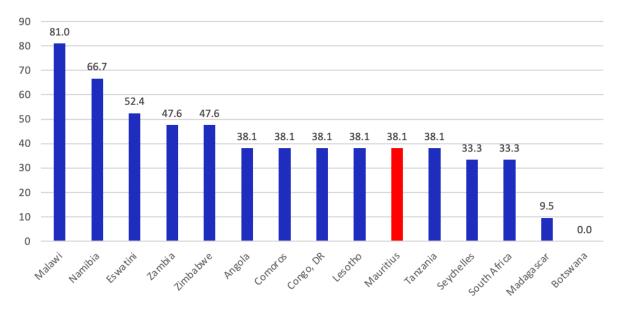
International labour migration statistics (ILMS) can encapsulate a wide range of indicators. This makes it challenging to benchmark coverage and prioritise the expansion of different indicators. To facilitate the assessment of ILMS indicator coverage, a selection of indicators is assessed in this report, these are a set of 21 indicators used to populate the ILOSTAT ILMS Database (Appendix II). Additionally, the SAMM project has identified a subset of these, that are considered minimum indicators (ILO 2020). These minimum indicators are derived from different indicators of the 21 indicators in ILO ILMS Database. For the purpose of this report, the benchmark for Mauritius will be based on the 21 indicators, with special attention to those that are highlighted as SAMM minimum indicators.

3.1. International labour migration statistics indicator coverage

3.1.1. Coverage of main indicators

For the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region, there is a distinct shortage of ILMS available, and Mauritius has amongst the lowest coverage. Figure 3.1 shows for each of the countries in the region, the percentage of the 21 indicators with any datapoint in the ILO ILMS Database. Mauritius has datapoints for nearly 40 per cent of the indicators, which is a median level of coverage for countries in the region, with the same coverage as countries including Angola and Tanzania.





Note: Congo, DR = Democratic Republic of the Congo; Tanzania = United Republic of Tanzania. Source: ILOSTAT ILMS Database, available at https://ilostat.ilo.org [Accessed 28 September 2023]

For the region as a whole, such findings on the shortage of data are echoed by the most recent edition of the African Union's Report on Labour Migration Statistics in Africa (African Union Commission et al. 2021). It should be noted however, that absence of data in the ILO ILMS Database, or public data, does not mean it does not exist, data might also not yet be processed or shared externally. This is the case with Mauritius, where (as outlined in Section 3.2), additional data exists that could be used to update and populate multiple sections of the ILMS Database for Mauritius, including information on inflows by sex, economic activity and occupation.

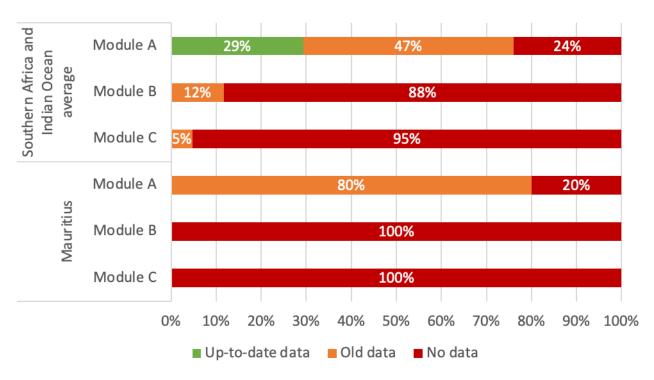
Box 1: ILO International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) Database modules

There are three main modules in the ILO ILMS Database, Modules A, B and C (see Concepts and Definitions in the Methodology section):

- Module A includes information for international migrant stock, while relies largely on population census data and Labour Force Surveys. Because these data sources are typically more readily and publicly available in different countries, coverage for Module A tends to be best across all countries in the ILO ILMS database.
- Module B refers to international migrant flows, which specifically refers to inflows of
 migrants and migrant workers. Data for Module B tends to rely on administrative data
 sources such as work permits and visa information (although other sources can also
 provide this data), which is not always readily available in countries of origin, resulting in
 lower coverage.
- Module C provides information on nationals abroad, including the stock of migrants abroad, returnees and outflows of nationals abroad. Again, this relies on administrative data and coverage tends to be the poorest of the three modules in the ILO ILMS Database globally.

Coverage for Mauritius relative to the region is shown, by module, in Figure 3.2. For Mauritius, the Housing and Population Census provides the estimates for module A (see Box 1). The latest data is for 2011, which is considerably outdated and suggests more recent data could be added from more recent data sources, including the forthcoming Housing and Population Census 2022 (see Section 3.2 for an overview of alternative data sources). There is an absence of data included for modules B and C. These modules typically rely on administrative data sources, such as work permits, and information from placement agencies. Such information exists and would fill at least tables 11, 13 and 14. Notably, there is data available for stock of migrants abroad and departure, as well as other information that could be used to fill Table 15 as well as tables on outflows.

► Figure 3.2: Coverage of ILO ILMS Database Modules A to C, Mauritius versus Southern Africa and Indian Ocean average



Source: ILOSTAT ILMS Database, available at https://ilostat.ilo.org [Accessed 28 September 2023]

Figure 3.3 shows coverage for each table within the different modules (see Appendix II for a list of the tables). For individual tables, data is missing in Module A for 'Table 5: 'Employment by sex, economic activity and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)' and Table 10: 'Mean nominal monthly earnings of employees by sex and place of birth or citizenship (Local currency)'. Both variables are available from alternative data sources to the Housing and Population Census, including the Census of Economic Activities, which provides some indication as to employment by economic activity, as well as the Survey of Employment and Earnings, which also gives breakdowns by economic activity. Additionally, information on work permits highlights both the issuance of new work permits, but also information on all valid permits and exemptions to a given date. This therefore provides estimates on international migrant stock and could be used to populate other tables in the Module, providing data for additional years of data as well as triangulating data from the Housing and Population Census and other data sources.

For Module B, and Module C there is no data in the database for Mauritius, and there are few options for data on nationals abroad (for Module C). Yet, the Module B, there is a wealth of information from work permit data, which is available by economic activity, occupation and other breakdowns, including country of origin. This would allow for coverage of tables 11, 13 and 14.

Section 3.2. provides an overview of existing and potential data sources and finds that there are a number of questions in the surveys and Census, in particular, that could be used to provide backdated and new data on ILMS. These would increase the coverage in the ILMS Database and also provide the users, especially researchers, with valuable information for evidence-based

policymaking. An initial assessment suggests that at least five more tables could be filled in, that currently lack data, which would raise the coverage rate to 62 per cent, one of the highest in the region.

► Figure 3.3: Latest year of available data in the ILO ILMS Database, Mauritius and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean countries

		Angola	Botswana	Comoros	Congo, DR	Eswatini	Lesotho	Madagascar	Malawi	Mauritius	Namibia	Seychelles	South Africa	Tanzania	Zambia	Zimbabwe
	Table 1	2021	2022	2021	2020	2021	2019	2022	2020	2011	2018	2020	2017	2020	2021	2021
	Table 2	2021	2022	2021	2020	2021	2019	2012	2020	2011	2018	2020	2017	2020	2021	2021
	Table 3					2021			2018	2011	2018				2017	2021
⋖	Table 4	2021	2022	2021	2020	2021	2019	2022	2020	2011	2018	2020	2017	2020	2021	2021
Module A	Table 5	2021	2022	2021	2012	2021	2019	2022	2018		2018	2020	2017	2020	2021	2021
lod	Table 6	2021	2022	2021	2020	2021	2019	2022	2018	2011	2018	2020	2017	2020	2021	2021
2	Table 7	2021	2022	2021	2020	2021	2019	2022	2018	2011	2018	2020	2017	2020	2021	2021
	Table 8					2021			2018	2011	2018				2018	2021
	Table 9	2021	2022	2021	2012	2021	2019	2022	2020	2011	2018	2020	2017	2014	2021	2021
	Table 10	2021	2022	2021	2012	2021	2019	2012	2013		2018			2020	2021	2021
В	Table 11								2018		2018					
ale	Table 12										2018					
Module	Table 13								2018		2018					
2	Table 14								2018		2018					
	Table 15					2017			2018							
	Table 16								2018							
e C	Table 17								2018							
Module C	Table 18								2018							
Σ	Table 19															
	Table 20															
	Table 21															

Note: Congo, DR = Democratic Republic of the Congo; Tanzania = United Republic of Tanzania. Source: ILOSTAT ILMS Database, available at https://ilostat.ilo.org [Accessed 28 September 2023]

3.2. Overview of available and potential data sources on international labour migration statistics

This section provides an overview of available statistics in Mauritius from which to examine labour migration characteristics and trends. It should be noted that a report exists and should be referred to as appropriate that critically examines national migration data in the country was published in 2022 and provides a comprehensive overview of all migration data (i.e. not limited to labour migration) (IOM 2022). The IOM report highlights shortfalls in the system including a lack of information on Mauritians living abroad and the need for some efforts towards harmonization – both issues are echoed by this *Mauritius Labour Migration Trends report*. Finally, an electronic

information platform exists in Mauritius called the Info Highway. This platform facilitates sharing of data among government agencies and is intended to facilitate inter-governmental sharing of migration data via the Government's e-Services (IOM 2022). It has facilitated some degree of data sharing between agencies and has the potential to be leveraged for facilitating further harmonisation between different data sources on ILMS.

3.2.1. Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey

Mauritius's Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey (CMPHS) serves as the main source of labour market information for the country. This survey – which is conducted every month and with results published quarterly and annually – acts in lieu of a Labour Force Survey, and information on a range of labour force, employment and unemployment characteristics is published in annual reports. However, the CMPHS is limited to Mauritian households only. This eliminates the possibility of capturing information on labour migration from the survey. It is not clear why non-Mauritians are not covered in this survey. Given the number of non-Mauritians in the country and the significance of non-Mauritians to the labour market and the economy, there could be benefits to increasing the survey to cover non-Mauritian households for better understanding of the labour market and the role and contribution of migrant workers.

3.2.2. Housing and Population Census

The Mauritius Housing and Population Census is a reliable source of information on migrants and migrant workers. The Housing and Population Census is conducted every 10-11 years, with the last three being 2022, 2011 and 2000. The Housing and Population Census includes detailed questions on labour market characteristics that are sufficiently detailed to allow for compliance and alignment with ICLS guidelines. In general, Population Census data is also a good source of data for gathering information on small population groups, for which migrant workers can be considered. The main downside of using the census data for migrant worker estimates and characteristics is the infrequency of its implementation.

The Census includes more questions on migration and allows for migration to be classified by citizenship with detailed information on usual residence (see Section 2.3 on concepts and definitions). Notably, the Census also asks for information on household members who live abroad and have done so for more than 12 months, including information such as education level and whether they work. This could help fill a significant gap in emigration statistics in the country, including on migrant workers. But otherwise, the Census provides an important source of information for international migrant stock in Mauritius.

Notably, the 2011 Housing and Population Census identifies migrants by nationality, whereas the 2022 Housing and Population census identifies migrants-based nationality and also place of birth. This could lead to some discrepancies when analysing migration trends between the two years. As outlined in a IOM Mauritius migration profile, it was highlighted also that the 2000 Census and 2011

Census used different definitions of residency, which meant they were not strictly comparable (IOM 2013). In fact, the same source notes that such differences contribute to different numbers of foreigners in the census, to residency permit data and work permit data (ibid.).

3.2.3. Census of Economic Activities

The Census of Economic Activities was implemented in 2002, 2007, 2013, and 2018 (the eighth Census of Economic Activities in Mauritius and Rodrigues is being conducted from January 2023 to March 2025, with 2023 as reference year). Production units were asked to report data relating either to the corresponding year, or the accounting year covering most of the year, or their best estimates if specific data was not available. The Census of Economic Activities is conducted in two phases – Phase I covers a sample of production units (i.e. those engaging less than 10 persons) and Phase II covers all large units, that is those with ten or more persons.

The dataset for the most recent year (2018) consists of 2,119 large and 3,971 small establishments; for 2013, it contains 2,219 large and 3,678 small establishments; and for 2007, it contains 2,032 large and 3,409 small establishments. The number of establishments by economic activity are included in the census are listed in Table A.2 of Appendix III.

The survey asked production units to describe their main and secondary activities, and National Standard Industrial Classification (NSIC) codes were included in the dataset. The surveys captured information on ownership and employees (including contributing family workers and outworkers), and the gender and citizenship (Mauritian or expatriate) of each employee. The survey also collected information on labour costs, including breakdowns on overtime, contributions to pensions, severance, training costs, etc. The rest of the survey focused on other expenditures (such as cost of goods, information and communication technology, etc.), income, inventories, and assets.

The data itself was rich in findings, but with some issues that undermined analysis. For instance, there was a large disparity in the variables gathered between all datasets. For example, in 2018, total wage expenditure is broken into "wages paid to Mauritians" and "wages paid to foreigners" for large organizations. However, this breakdown is not provided in the data for small organizations; instead, the dataset for small organizations breaks down wages costs by male and female employees, but this breakdown by gender does not appear in the large organization dataset. In the 2013 dataset, "wages paid to Mauritians vs. foreigners" also does not appear, this time in either of the large or small datasets, but there is now a breakdown in the large dataset for males and females. This sort of inconsistency between the data occurs regularly across all three years and even between industries within the same year and organization size (e.g., between construction and education in 2013). The main data issue is the lack of organizational and variable consistency between years of the census and between the large and small datasets. At the same time, there are some estimates that the total number of employees captured in the Survey of Employment and Earnings, represents only around half of the workforce (IOM 2013). This could result in biases and have other implications for making inferences from the data.

Despite this, the information is informative as a means of gathering information on both the stock of international migrant workers, by sex (where available) and also by economic activity. Thereby allowing for triangulation of the same variables in other data sources. Importantly, it would provide an estimate for Table 5: 'Employment by sex, economic activity and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)' in the ILO ILMS Database, which is currently lacking a datapoint. The main limitation at present, is the fact that the last available dataset is 2018, which means more other data sources, including the Survey of Employment and Earnings, provides more recent estimates.

3.2.4. Survey of Employment and Earnings

The Survey of Employment, Earnings and Hours of Work in Large Establishments (referred to in this report as the Survey of Employment and Earnings) has been implemented annually from the year 2000 to 2022. The dataset includes 3,946 establishments in 2018, 3,891 in 2019, 3,821 in 2020, 3,683 in 2021 and 3,614 in 2022. The number of establishments by economic activity are included in the Survey of Employment and Earnings are listed in Table A.1 of Appendix III.

The survey asked large companies to provide a description of the main business activity, and NSIC codes were included in the dataset. The dataset also included a variable categorizing each company into a labour "sector" (i.e. EPZ, non-EPZ, etc.). The survey captured information about the employer and type of ownership, and then focused on statistics for employment, earnings, and the use of internet technologies. Both employment and earnings information is broken down into "Mauritian" and "non-Mauritian" categories, with wages divided into salaries/basic wages, overtime payments, regular payments at the end of each pay period, and other (non-regular) payments. The number of outworkers was also counted, but the amount spent on their labour was not gathered. The number of male and female employees was also counted, but labour costs did not include breakdowns by gender.

The Survey of Employment and Earnings was valuable for information on international migrant stock by economic activity, and sex (where available), but significantly, also for wages. It would therefore serve to fill Table 10: 'Mean nominal monthly earnings of employees by sex and place of birth or citizenship (Local currency)' in the ILO ILMS Database, which is currently lacking a datapoint for Mauritius. It would also provide up to date and historical data for Table 5: 'Employment by sex, economic activity and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)', which is also lacking a datapoint. The main limitation is that it provides only a partial picture of total employment, owing to a sample of large enterprises only.

3.2.5. Administrative data sources

Administrative data sources refer to data that is primarily collected for administrative reasons and not statistical reasons, such as work permit information, visa information and others. Often the statistical value is not recognised by the ministries, departments and agencies that are responsible for the administrative data, and access or sharing the data with the national statistics office, requires

a process of awareness, as well as sometimes development of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and also technical support (to comply with statistical ethics, data security and privacy, such as anonymising data).

All migrants who wish to work in Mauritius must obtain a work permit from the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, which is outlined in the non-citizens (Employment Restriction) Act 1973. It stipulates that "a non-citizen shall not engage in any occupation in Mauritius for reward or profit or be employed in Mauritius unless there is in force in relation to him a valid permit and he engages in the occupation, or is employed in accordance with any condition which may be specified in the permit. The Act also stipulates that "no person shall have a non-citizen in his employment in Mauritius without there being in force a valid permit in relation to that employment." A Certificate of Exemption is available for certain activities and migrants who are exempted from a work permit for their period of employment in Mauritius, as outlined in the Employment (Non-Citizens) (Restriction) Exemptions Regulations 1970.

The information is hosted and published by the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, and serves as a comprehensive set of information spanning from 2004 to 2023. The information includes valid and new work permits (and exemptions) issued, by economic activity, sex and country of nationality, which allows for both an estimate of international migrant stock, as well as international migrant inflows. The limitation is that new work permits issued include those who are renewing permits or changing jobs within Mauritius, but even with this caveat, it is an important proxy, and could be used to provide valuable insights on inflows. For the ILO ILMS Database, it would provide information for multiple tables on inflows, thereby filling gaps where there are currently no estimates.

Every person entering or leaving the country is required to fill in an international embarkation/ disembarkation card which is checked against the passenger's passport when passing though immigration control. The information is used to update the database at the Passport and Immigration Office (PIO). The PIO also used to keep a register of official emigrants, defined as people who have a permit to emigrate to another country.

Additionally, administrative data is held by the Economic Development Board (EDB) on Occupation, Youth Professional Occupation, Residence and Permanent Residence Permit. Meanwhile, there are other potential sources of data, including data from the National Pension Scheme that covers migrant workers, and held by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity; and from the Prime Minister's Office including the Central Population Database.

4. Labour migration trends and characteristics in Mauritius

There are different estimates for total number of working-age migrants in Mauritius, but the official estimate from the Housing and Population Census estimates the number (aged 16+), based on citizenship (i.e. non-Mauritian), at 39,990 in 2022, up from 24,654 in 2011. For the purposes of this report and the labour market analysis of this chapter, the Housing and Population Census (2011 and 2022) is the foremost source of data for migrant workers in Mauritius, but other data sources, particularly from the Survey of Employment and Earnings as well as work permit data, are regularly cited in the chapter. The age-range for the working-age population throughout is 16+.

4.1. Demographic characteristics

The Housing and Population Census estimates the total migrant working-age population to have increased by 62 per cent between 2011 and 2022. The vast majority of this shift was accounted for by men, which more than doubled from 13,499 in 2011 to 31,333 in 2022. The majority of the increase were also adults (aged 25+) In contrast, the number of migrant women decreased by 22.7 per cent. The share of women in the total non-Mauritian population has decreased from 45.4 per cent in 2011 to 21.6 per cent in 2022. This decline in the female share of the non-Mauritian population is also shown in other data sources (see Section 4.2). Much of this decline is tied to the labour market, and the decline in the number of women entering the country to work.

▶ Table 4.1: Selected demographic characteristics, non-Mauritian population, 2011-2022

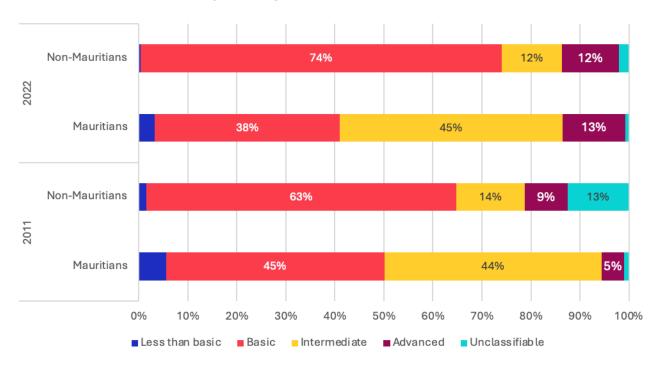
Frequency (000s)	2011	2022	Change 2011-2022 (%)
Working-age population (aged 16+)	24,654	39,990	+62.2
Aged-16-24	3,640	3,800	+4.4
Aged 25+	21,014	36,200	+72.3
Men	13,449	31,333	-133.0
Women	11,205	8,657	-22.7
Distribution (%)	2011	2022	Change 2011-2022 (pp)
Aged-16-24	14.8	9.5	-5.3
Aged 25+	85.2	90.5	+5.3
Men	54.6	78.4	+23.8

World 45.4 21.0 -25.0

Source: Mauritius Housing and Population Census, 2011 and 2022

The non-Mauritian population had a significantly higher share with basic levels of education than the Mauritian population, and this has increased further in 2022. Nearly three-quarters of the non-Mauritian population in 2022 had basic levels of education, comparted with 38 per cent of the Mauritian population. Only 12 per cent had intermediate levels of education, compared to 45 per cent of the Mauritian population. This likely directly reflects the types of work that non-Mauritians are engaged in, with a vast majority in low and middle-skilled jobs (see Section 4.2).

► Figure 4.1: Composition of migrant and non-migrant populations by level of educational attainment, 2011 and 2022 (percentages)



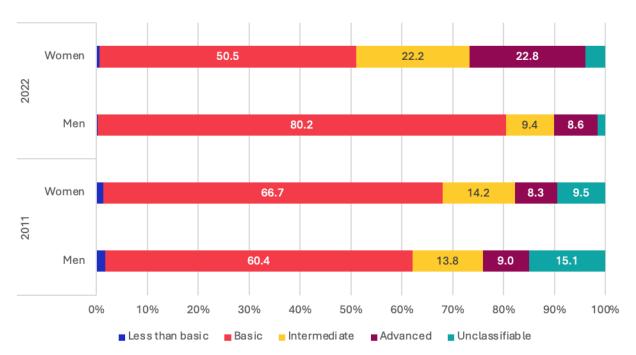
Source: Mauritius Housing and Population Census, 2011 and 2022

The non-Mauritian population had a significantly higher share with basic levels of education than the Mauritian population, and this has increased further in 2022. Nearly three-quarters of the non-Mauritian population in 2022 had basic levels of education, comparted with 38 per cent of the Mauritian population. Only 12 per cent had intermediate levels of education, compared to 45 per cent of the Mauritian population. This likely directly reflects the types of work that non-Mauritians are engaged in, with a vast majority in low and middle-skilled jobs (see Section 4.2). There was little difference in educational attainment by sex of the non-Mauritian population, just a slightly higher percentage of women with basic levels of education than men.

Migrant men were more likely to have lower levels of education on average than migrant women in 2022, a gap that has widened since 2011. A total of 80 per cent of non-Mauritian men had basic levels of education in 2011, compared to around half of the non-Mauritian women (Figure 4.3).

Instead, women were more likely to have either intermediate or advanced levels of education. Notably, this has changed relatively significantly since 2011. In 2011, women and men had much more similar levels of education, it is likely that the labour demand of migrant men and women respectively has shifted over the past decade, and this is reflected in the educational composition.

► Figure 4.3: Composition of non-migrant populations by level of educational attainment and sex, 2011 and 2022 (percentages)



Source: Mauritius Housing and Population Census, 2011 and 2022

4.2. Labour market characteristics

According to the Housing and Population Census, there were 35,300 non-Mauritians in the labour force in Mauritius in 2022, up from 21,800 in 2011. This corresponds to a labour force participation rate of 88.3 per cent, unchanged from 2011. The labour force participation rate compares with 57.9 per cent for Mauritians in 2011, and 55.2 per cent of Mauritians in 2022. While migrant populations often have higher labour force participation rates than the local population, owing to the drivers of migration, as well as relatively stringent measures for work permits and visas, the labour force participation rate for non-Mauritians is exceptionally high. This suggests that: i) despite Mauritius being a destination for relatively wealthy retirees, the majority of non-Mauritians are in the labour market, ii) there are very few non-Mauritians outside of the labour market (around 11 per cent), which suggests most non-Mauritians in the country are likely without dependents. This may be the case given the majority of migrants are engaged in the EPZs.

Around 35,000 non-Mauritians were in employment in 2022, according to the Housing and Population Census, up from 21,600 in 2011. This corresponds to an employment to population ratio of 87.5 per cent for non-Mauritians in 2022, almost changed from 2011 (Figure 4.3, Panel B). Alike

the labour force participation rate, it is particularly high and compares to 50.9 per cent for Mauritians in 2022, itself down from 53.5 per cent in 2011. It suggests that 9 out of every 10 non-Mauritians in the country are in employment, thereby corresponding with both low levels of those outside of the labour force as well as low levels of unemployment of non-Mauritians.

► Figure 4.3: Labour force participation rate and employment to population ratio, Mauritian and non-Mauritian working-age populations, 2011 and 2022 (percentages)

Panel A: Labour force participation rate

Panel B: Employment-to-population ratio



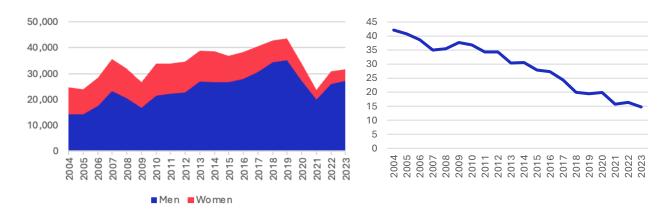
Source: Mauritius Housing and Population Census, 2011 and 2022

Work permit data – another measure of total employment of migrants in the country – records 31,736 valid work permits as of December 2023. This measure does not include those awarded 'exceptions', i.e. relief from the need for work permits, Occupation Permits or Youth Professional Occupation Permits but does allow for consistent and comparable trends over time. Valid work permits have grown from around 25,000 in December 2004, to a peak of nearly 45,000 prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 (Figure 4.4). During the COVID-19 pandemic years, valid work permits decreased to a low of around 23,700 in 2021, before rising again in 2022 to nearly 31,000.

► Figure 4.4: Composition of total employment of non-Mauritians by sex, based on valid work permits, 2004-2023

Panel A: Total valid work permits, by sex (freq.)

Panel B: Women as a share of total (Percentage)



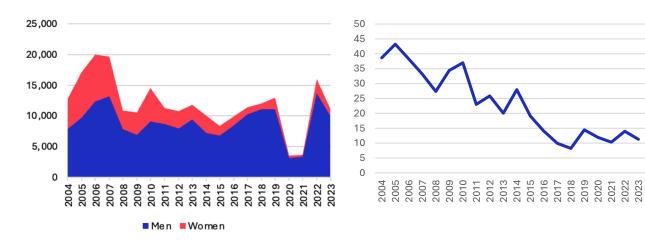
Source: National Employment Department - Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training. Table 30 (a) - Number of valid work permits by industrial group & sex, Island of Mauritius, as at end of December 2004 - 2019, as at end of November 2020 and as at end of December 2023.

The trends in valid work permits over the past two decades show that there has been a decreasing share of women in total labour migration. Women accounted for around 15 per cent of total valid work permits as of December 2023, down from 42 per cent as of December 2004 (Figure 4.5, Panel B). This is likely a reflection of the changing sectoral composition of jobs done by men and women respectively, with women migrant workers traditionally more likely to be engaged in textile manufacturing in Mauritius (see section on industry). The gendered dimension is also visible in the decrease in women as a share of new entrants to Mauritius (i.e. year-to-year). Figure 4.5, Panel B, shows that women accounted for 11 per cent of new work permits issued in 2023, down from nearly 45 per cent in 2005.

► Figure 4.5: Inflows of migrant workers (proxied by new work permits issued), by sex, 2004-2023

Panel A: Inflows by sex (freq.)

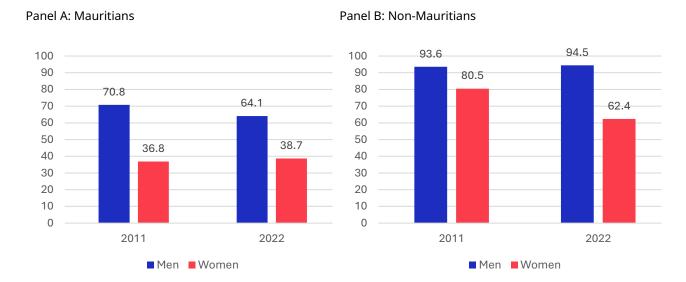




Note: Inflows here proxied by the issuance of new work permits, which includes those who change jobs in-country Source: National Employment Department - Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training. Table 27 - Number of new work permits issued by industrial group and sex, Island of Mauritius, 2004 – 2023.

The Housing and Population Census 2022 shows that migrant women have a lower employment to population ratio than men, at 62.4 per cent compared to 94.5 per cent for men. This compares to 38.7 per cent and 64.1 per cent for Mauritian women and men respectively, in 2022 (Figure 4.6). It shows that the female employment-to-population ratio for non-Mauritians has declined only significantly in the last decade, from 80.5 per cent in 2011. Total employment for non-Mauritian women declined from 9,000 in 2011 to 5,400 in 2022, the working-age population has declined to a lesser degree from 11,200 in 2011 to 8,600 in 2022, corresponding to the declining employment-to-population ratio. This is in line with wider evidence that the number of employed non-Mauritian women in the country has been declining, as it suggests that more working women have left the country than non-working women.

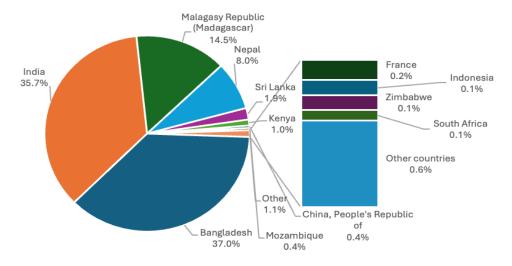
► Figure 4.6: Employment-to-population ratios, Mauritian and non-Mauritian working-age population, by sex, 2011 and 2022 (percentages)



Source: Mauritius Housing and Population Census, 2011 and 2022

As of 2023, 73 per cent of all valid work permits were from Bangladesh or India. Such that 37 per cent of valid work permits were accounted for by Bangladeshi nationals, and 35.7 per cent by Indian nationals (Figure 4.7). A further 14.5 per cent were accounted for by Malagasy Republic (Madagascar), as well as other South Asian nationals including Nepal (8 per cent), Sri Lanka (1.9 per cent). Other countries, including China and other African countries, such as Kenya, South Africa and Mozambique, accounted for a relatively small share, at less than 1 per cent each.

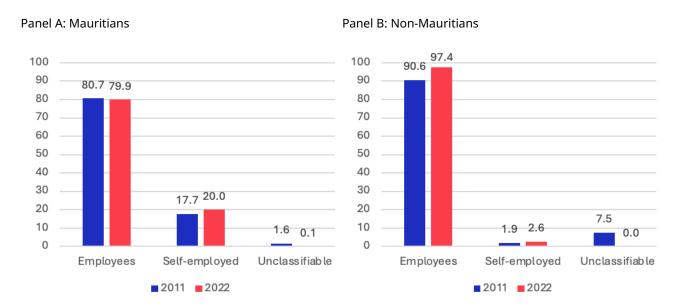
► Figure 4.7: Composition of total employment by country of origin, based on valid work permits and exceptions as of July 2023 (percentages)



Source: Source: National Employment Department - Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training. Table 31 (a) - Number of valid work permits by country of origin & sex, Island of Mauritius, as at end of December 2005 - 2019, as at end of November 2020, as at end of December 2021 to 2023

With a reliance on work permits for non-Mauritians, most non-Mauritians are employees, with few prospects for self-employment. Nearly all non-Mauritian workers in Mauritius are wage and salaried employees, with less than 3 per cent in self-employment (despite being feasible under an Occupation Permit), based on findings from the Housing and Population Census 2022 (Figure 4.8). Wage and salaried employment is typically regarded as a more desirable status in employment than self-employment, as it affords more regular salaries, higher job security and access and eligibility to benefits such as paid annual and sick leave. This is not always the case however. For instance, a qualitative study of Bangladeshi migrant workers in Mauritian construction, food and textile manufacturing firms found evidence of poor working conditions, including large dormitory-style accommodation, long working hours, the presence of curfews and restrictions on living with siblings or a partner (Sambajee and Scholarios 2023). Interviewed participants also demonstrated high levels of anxiety and depression. The study did, however, acknowledge that many enjoyed paid sick leave and vacation and found that workers were able "derive subjective autonomy, recognition and dignity, which underpinned meaningful work" by developing strong interpersonal relationships (ibid.)

► Figure 4.8: Distribution of employment by status in employment, Mauritian and non-Mauritian working-age populations, 2011 and 2022 (percentages)



Source: Mauritius Housing and Population Census, 2011 and 2022.

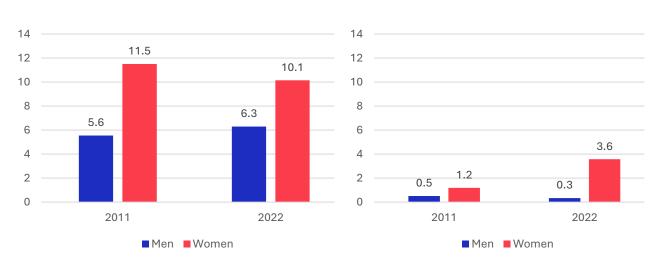
The unemployment rate of non-Mauritians is estimated at less than 1 per cent, compared to 8 per cent for Mauritians. As outlined in earlier sections, the majority of non-Mauritians in the country come into the country on employment permits, and as a result few are outside of paid employment, or even the labour force. This is directly reflected in the unemployment rates from the Housing and Population Census, which shows much lower unemployment rates for non-Mauritians than Mauritians. For non-Mauritians, the unemployment rate was higher for women at 3.6 per cent, compared to men at 0.3 per cent in 2022.

► Figure 4.9: Unemployment rates, Mauritian and non-Mauritian populations, by sex, 2011 and 2022 (percentages)

2022 (percentages)

Panel A: Mauritians

Panel B: Non-Mauritians

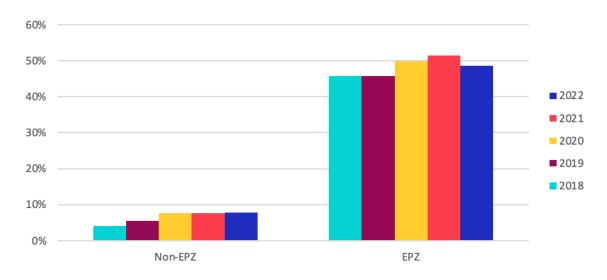


Source: Mauritius Housing and Population Census, 2011 and 2022

Manufacturing and construction sectors remain major sources of employment for the country overall, including for migrant workers. In total, manufacturing and construction make up around 20 per cent of the country's total employment (Statistics Mauritius 2022). As of 2021, 107,000 worked in Mauritius' manufacturing and construction sectors in total (ibid.). with estimates suggesting as many as 40 per cent are migrant workers. This underscores the contributions that migrant workers make to the country's GDP. For example, estimates have found a positive relationship between the number of foreign workers and construction sector GDP in Mauritius, with a 1 per cent rise in foreign workers leading to a 0.04 per cent rise in construction sector growth (Hanoomanjee et al. 2017).

According to the Survey of Employment and Earnings, most migrant workers are engaged in Export Processing Zones (EPZs), although the share has declined over the last five years. According to the Survey of Employment and Earnings, 58.7 per cent of all employed non-Mauritians were engaged in EPZs (Figure 4.10). This was down from 78.2 per cent in 2018. In fact, non-Mauritians accounted for nearly half of all employment in EPZs, compared to 7.8 per cent of all employment outside of EPZs. Most of this employment in EPZs is in manufacturing and construction.

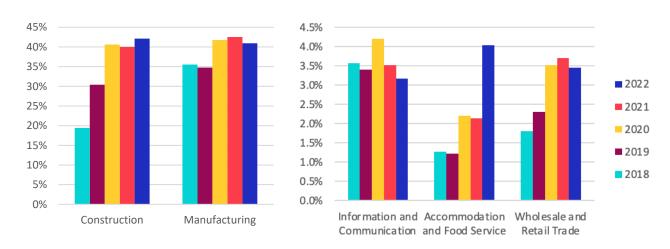
► Figure 4.10: Migrant workers as percentages of total employment, Export Processing Zones (EPZ) and non-EPZ, 2018-2022 (percentages)



Source: Mauritius Survey of Employment and Earnings, 2018-2022

Construction and manufacturing are the two main industries for migrant workers, accounting for over 41 per cent of construction and 42 per cent of manufacturing. The role of migrant workers in construction has growth substantially in recent years, as shown in Figure 4.11, increasing from 19.4 per cent of all employment, to 42.1 per cent, between 2018 and 2022. In manufacturing, the share of migrant workers was already relatively high at 35.5 per cent in 2018, and the increase has been less marked but still significant. Most of these jobs are in EPZs, and outside of EPZs non-Mauritians have a less prominent role in different industries, accounting for between 3 and 5 per cent in information and communication technology, accommodation and food services, and wholesale and retail trade.

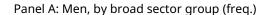
► Figure 4.11: Non-Mauritians as a share of total employment, selected economic activities, 2018-2022 (percentages)

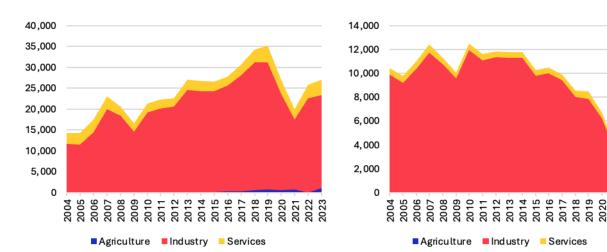


Source: Mauritius Survey of Employment and Earnings, 2018-2022

By broad sector group, valid work permits show that for women, employment in industry has been on a long-term decline, decreasing from 12,000 in 2010 to around 4,100 in 2023 (Figure 4.12, Panel B). This has corresponded to a slight shift in the composition of employment by broad sector group for women, but only marginally, suggesting that there have been similar decreases in services too although the numbers are lower. It suggests long-term factors behind the decline in employment of non-Mauritian women. For men, employment in industry has been on a steady increase in employment in industry, growing from 11,700 in 2004 to 30,800 in 2018 (Figure 12, Panel A). Part of this is accountable by growth in construction relative to manufacturing (both components of the industry broad sector group, whereby construction has an almost negligible share of women migrant workers.

► Figure 4.12: Composition of total employment of non-Mauritians by sex and broad sector group, based on valid work permits, 2004-2023





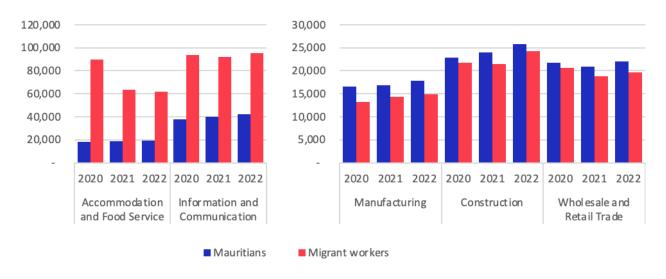
Panel B: Women, by broad sector group (freq.)

Source: National Employment Department - Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training. Table 30 (a) - Number of valid work permits by industrial group & sex, Island of Mauritius, as at end of December 2004 - 2019, as at end of November 2020 and as at end of December 2023.

Following industrial action and negotiations in preceding years that were focused on EPZ workers, in 2018 Mauritius introduced a minimum wage equivalent to \$257 per month (ITUC 2023). In practice, there is evidence of migrant workers still experiencing discrimination, for example receiving significantly lower average wages for comparable jobs. In one study, the difference was found to be up to \$90 per month, the equivalent of almost half the minimum salary (ITUC 2008). This has partially been attributed to workers being unaware of their rights, likely exacerbated by language barriers such as among Bangladeshi workers (UNDP Mauritius 2020), despite efforts by the Government to disseminate information in several languages about workers' rights (IOM 2023). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have also been reports that migrants have more frequently faced delays in receiving their salary, or received only partial wages (UNDP Mauritius 2020).

Non-Mauritians typically earn less than their Mauritian counterparts where most non-Mauritians are employed, including manufacturing and construction. As observed in Figure 4.13, in 2022, non-Mauritians earned around 85 per cent of their Mauritian counterparts in manufacturing and around 90 per cent in construction and wholesale and retail trade. These figures do not necessarily imply there is discrimination and different treatment, instead, it can reflect a range of factors, including different roles and occupations typically undertaken by Mauritians versus non-Mauritians. In accommodation and food services, as well as information and communication, non-Mauritians were found to earn considerably more than Mauritians on average, potentially reflecting the higher skilled nature of migrant workers in the hospitality sector, including hotels, as well as information technology.

► Figure 4.13: Median wages (total wage costs per employee), selected economic activities, Mauritians and migrant workers, 2020-2022 (Mauritian Rupees)



Source: Mauritius Survey of Employment and Earnings, 2018-2022

Major shifts have taken place in terms of the occupational skill composition of migrant workers in Mauritius. In 2011, the majority of non-Mauritians in the country, according to the Housing and Population Census, are in medium skilled occupations (Figure 4.14), accounting for nearly three-quarters of all employment of non-Mauritians. However, by 2022 this has dropped to 38 per cent, with a larger share of migrant employment in low-skilled occupations. This is consistent with the changes observed in the educational composition of migrants, which showed an increased share in 2022 of migrants with basic levels of education.

Despite this, there is still likely to be a premium labour cost for higher-skilled non-Mauritians. Around 8 per cent of employed migrants are considered high-skilled, down from 13 per cent in 2011. These higher skilled workers, while a lower share of total employment than the Mauritian population (at 17.8 per cent), are likely to be employed in higher value-added activities, including in finance and insurance activities, real estate and professional, scientific and technical activities, all economic activities with relatively high median wages (Figure 4.15).

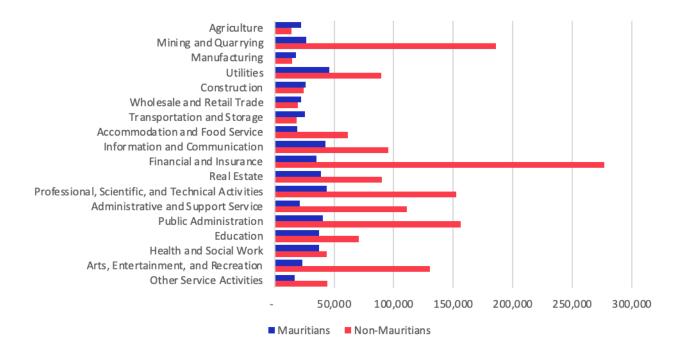
► Figure 4.14: Distribution of employment by occupational skill level, Mauritians and non-Mauritians, 2011 and 2022 (percentages)

Panel A: Mauritians Panel B: Non-Mauritians 80 80 72.3 70 70 59.8 61.8 54.3 60 60 50 50 38.0 40 40 16.2 30 23.9 30 17.8 20 20 12.7 11.1 7.7 10 10 0 0 Low skilled Medium skilled High skilled Low skilled High skilled Medium skilled 2011 2022 **■**2011 **■**2022

Source: Mauritius Housing and Population Census, 2011 and 2022.

Indeed, the highest median wages (based on total wage costs per employee) were observed in high value-added sectors. These included 'financial and insurance', 'mining and quarrying' and 'public administration', collectively accounting for only less than 1 per cent of all non-Mauritian employment.

► Figure 4.15: Median wages (total wage costs per employee), selected economic activities, Mauritians and migrant workers, 2022 (Mauritian Rupees)



Source: Mauritius Survey of Employment and Earnings, 2022\

4.3. Impact of migrants on the native-born labour force

The section presents a top-level assessment of the impact of migrant workers on the native-born labour market. The purpose of the analysis is to provide general indications of the impact of migrant (foreign-born) workers on labour force dependent variables, in terms of the significance and direction (+ or -) of the coefficients in regression analysis. A limited number of variables were included as control in the analysis, which simplified the analysis and reduced the R-squared to an interpretable level.

4.3.1. Methodology

The analysis draws heavily from the approaches used in a series of reports on the contribution of immigrants to the economies in host countries (e.g. South Africa (OECD and ILO 2018b) and Ghana (OECD and ILO 2018a)). The analysis in these reports include a full set of interaction variables between control variables of education, work experience, and year. Following Borjas (2003), skill cells based on education and experience are used to assess how labour market outcomes of nativeborn workers of a certain skill level are affected by the proportion of migrant workers of the same skill level (Borjas 2003).

Breusch-Pagan tests were conducted on preliminary regressions which indicated high Chi-square values, recommending a rejection of the null hypothesis of normal error terms. To address this, heteroskedasticity is addressed while still using ordinary least squares (OLS) estimators by including robust standard errors through clustering as done in other research (Edo 2015). The methodology of the skill cells was comparable to those used in relevant research (Borjas 2003; Gerfin and Kaiser 2010; Edo 2015), with only minor differences applied to education groups.

The final model includes a simple regression of the independent variable: 'migrants as a percentage of the labour force' on a series of dependent variables including: the employment to population ratio of native-born population; the unemployment rate of the native-born population; paid employment as a share of the total native-born employed population; the vulnerable employment rate and women as a share of the native-born labour force. Control variables include year of the data, and 'skill cells', which is a categorical variable with four levels, corresponding to a matrix of low/high education and work experience. The data for Mauritius includes 7,781 observations for a single year, using a sample of the Housing and Population Census 2011. Wage data was not available in this dataset. There were no observations of unemployment in this sample of data.

The Mauritius dataset only contained a single year of data (2011); therefore, this variable was not necessary as a control variable in equations for this country. Please note, for this analysis, the definition of a migrant was based on place of birth rather than citizenship.

4.3.2. Main findings

Table 4.2 shows the results of a series of regression analyses where the purpose was to determine the impact that migrants have on the native-born labour force. The results show that there are no statistically significant impacts of migrants on these labour market outcomes in Mauritius.

► Table 4.2: Summary of regression results

Independent variable	Result
(1) Employment-to-population ratio of native-born population	0
(2) Unemployment rate of native-born labour force	N/A
(3) Paid employment rate of native-born employed population	0
(4) Vulnerable employment rate of native-born population	0
(5) Women's share of native-born labour force	0

Note: The table reports the sign of impact of the ratio of immigrants (their percentage of the economically active population) in individual regression analyses, where the dependent variable was the above-listed labour market outcome. Variables included as controls in analysis included time period (year of data), and education*experience values.

o = no significant effect; + = a significant positive effect; - = a significant negative effect.

A value is considered significant at p<.05. R-square values for individual regressions ranged from 0.246 for regression 4 to 0.468 for regression 5.

The final regression is close to marginal significance, with a positive coefficient with a p-value at p=.107. This indicates there may be a trend where an increase in the proportion of migrants in the labour force is associated with an increase in the share of women compared to men in the labour force. If so, this would indicate that increased numbers of migrants in the labour force are associated with increased economic opportunity for Mauritian women. However, it should be noted that this is not significant at p<.05, so should only be interpreted as a possible avenue for future investigation.

In this sample of the Housing and Population Census 2011, there were no persons categorised as being unemployed (i.e. satisfying the criteria of not working, being available for work and actively looking for work). Even the application of looser definitions (e.g. removing the 'actively seeking' component, added no observations). It would be beneficial to conduct this analysis on a larger sample of the Housing and Population Census 2011 to allow for the observation of unemployed persons, as well as to conduct the analysis on more recent Census data.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The Mauritius Labour Migration Trends Report has provided an overview of coverage of International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) in Mauritius, as well as a brief assessment of current and potential sources of data for labour migration in the country. It also provided an outline of recent trends and characteristics of migrant workers in the country, drawing from multiple data sources.

The most common source of ILMS in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region is the Labour Force Survey, however, Mauritius does not currently have a Labour Force Survey, relying instead on labour statistics gathered through the Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey (CMPHS), which excludes migrants from the sample. As a result, the main source of ILMS in Mauritius for a comprehensive overview of different characteristics of migrant workers, particularly the international stock of migrant workers, is the Housing and Population Census, despite being implemented only every 10-years.

There are, however, a range of alternative data sources capturing information on migrant workers in the country, including the Census of Economic Activities, the Survey of Employment and Earnings and administrative data, particularly work permit data. This means that data is available for different insights on international labour migration, including international migrant stock and international migrant inflows. The main gap is for data on nationals abroad, including the stock of nationals abroad and outflows of nationals — a finding that is consistent with a recent review of migration data in Mauritius (IOM 2022). The following are a summary of potential steps for Mauritius to improve its labour migration statistics:

- ▶ Sample migrant households in the Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey: While there is a range of alternative data available on migrant workers from different data sources, these are not representative of the population (except the Housing and Population Census). As such, collecting information that is more representative on a regular basis would serve to better inform the country of the characteristics and trends of international migrant workers in the country, as well as living conditions of migrants. The Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey would be the optimal source of data to do this.
- ▶ Facilitate steps for harmonisation between and within different data sources on migrant worker definitions: While the different data sources are important for understanding labour migration in the country, different definitions used, as well as coverage and other underlying methodological differences, render estimates incomparable between different sources, or in fact within a single source between years. One option is to leverage the definitions and standards promoted by International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Sothern African Development Community (SADC) Labour Market Observatory, which is a regional labour market and labour migration information system, to centralise harmonisation efforts at the national level through templates and guidance and spearheaded by Statistics Mauritius. The process entails collaboration between government

agencies, research institutions, and regional bodies to ensure consistent application of harmonized definitions across all data collection stages. Actionable steps involve capacity-building initiatives for local data collectors and analysts to standardize methodologies in line with international standards, thereby improving data quality and comparability across time and data source.

- ▶ Improve data collection on nationals abroad: At present, the only source of data that has information on nationals abroad is the Housing and Population Census, however, this is limited due to timeframe restrictions for the question. According to a recent review, the Housing and Population Census is insufficient for comprehensively assessing emigrants in the country (IOM 2022). Gathering information on nationals abroad is a complex endeavour, with caveats and limitations on different data sources. It is recommended to start by considering first what admin data sources might contain information on nationals abroad, e.g. placements of Mauritians abroad based on Memorandums of Understanding for insights into outflows. Secondly, to consider what options there are for adding questions to existing surveys to gain insights into nationals abroad, such as questions on absent family members. Finally, to consider standalone surveys or registrations for gathering information on Mauritians abroad, such as establishing a diaspora registration database.
- ▶ Systematically publish labour migration statistics: While different institutions publish information on migrant workers, a standalone regular assessment of labour migration in the country, pulling together different sources would help navigate the different data sources and contribute to evidence-based policymaking (including from the PIO, the Economic and Development Board (EDB), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Police Department, Mauritius All in one form for Ministry of Health, and others).

► Appendix I: References

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► Appendix II : Tables in the ILOSTAT ILMS questionnaire

#	MODULE A. INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT STOCK
1	Working-age population by sex, age and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
2	Working-age population by sex, education and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
3	Foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population by sex and country of birth or citizenship (Persons)
4	Employment by sex, age and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
5	Employment by sex, economic activity and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
6	Employment by sex, occupation and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
7	Employment by sex, status in employment and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
8	Employed foreign-born persons by sex and country of birth or citizenship (Persons)
9	Unemployment by sex, age and place of birth or citizenship (Persons)
10	Mean nominal monthly earnings of employees by sex and place of birth or citizenship (Local currency)
#	MODULE B. INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT FLOW
11	Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population by sex and country of birth or citizenship (Persons)
11	
	(Persons)
12	(Persons) Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population by sex and education (Persons)
12	(Persons) Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population by sex and education (Persons) Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen employed persons by sex and economic activity (Persons)
12 13	(Persons) Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population by sex and education (Persons) Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen employed persons by sex and economic activity (Persons) Inflow of foreign-born employed persons by sex and occupation (Persons)
12 13 14 #	(Persons) Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population by sex and education (Persons) Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen employed persons by sex and economic activity (Persons) Inflow of foreign-born employed persons by sex and occupation (Persons) MODULE C. NATIONALS ABROAD
12 13 14 #	(Persons) Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen working-age population by sex and education (Persons) Inflow of foreign-born or non-citizen employed persons by sex and economic activity (Persons) Inflow of foreign-born employed persons by sex and occupation (Persons) MODULE C. NATIONALS ABROAD Stock of nationals abroad by sex and country of residence (Persons)

19	Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and education (Persons)
20	Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and economic activity (Persons)
21	Outflow of nationals for employment by sex and occupation (Persons)

► Appendix III: Additional data tables

► Table A1: Number of large establishments sampled in the Survey of Employment and Earnings, 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Agriculture	178	189	161	151	150
Mining and Quarrying	20	19	16	16	16
Manufacturing	535	547	358	319	296
Utilities	14	14	10	10	10
Construction	129	131	119	114	104
Wholesale and Retail Trade	448	473	426	413	399
Transportation and Storage	88	93	64	55	53
Accommodation and Food Service	194	197	179	175	173
Information and Communication	84	90	76	69	70
Financial and Insurance	243	244	229	224	225
Real Estate	30	32	30	26	26
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Activities	193	200	168	156	154
Administrative and Support Service	112	121	99	84	84
Public Administration	451	469	484	476	471
Education	511	513	507	502	497
Health and Social Work	455	458	433	421	416
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	78	79	61	57	56
Other Service Activities	30	37	14	28	13
Other/Misc.	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL:	3793	3906	3434	3296	3213

▶ Table A2: Number of production units interviewed in Census of Economic Activities, large and small establishments, 2007, 2013 and 2018

	Large firms			Small firms			
	2007	2013	2018	2007	2013	2018	
Agriculture	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Mining and Quarrying	0	16	13	0	0	6	
Manufacturing	663	569	546	577	900	862	
Utilities	111	20	20	182	0	5	
Construction	1	93	105	0	117	286	
Wholesale and Retail Trade	36	437	435	124	1414	1194	
Transportation and Storage	358	81	69	1461	251	336	
Accommodation and Food Service	144	163	211	236	214	292	
Information and Communication	95	94	82	261	30	45	
Financial and Insurance	107	175	95	13	35	47	
Real Estate	0	27	34	0	8	32	
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Activities	237	121	139	181	79	167	
Administrative and Support Service	158	111	120	104	120	180	
Public Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Education	34	164	77	43	118	118	
Health and Social Work	0	58	62	0	60	87	
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	88	61	76	227	99	127	
Other Service Activities	0	29	35	0	233	187	
Other/Misc.	0	0	0	0	0	0	
TOTAL:	2032	2219	2119	3409	3678	3971	



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