5 Movement of People

Migration

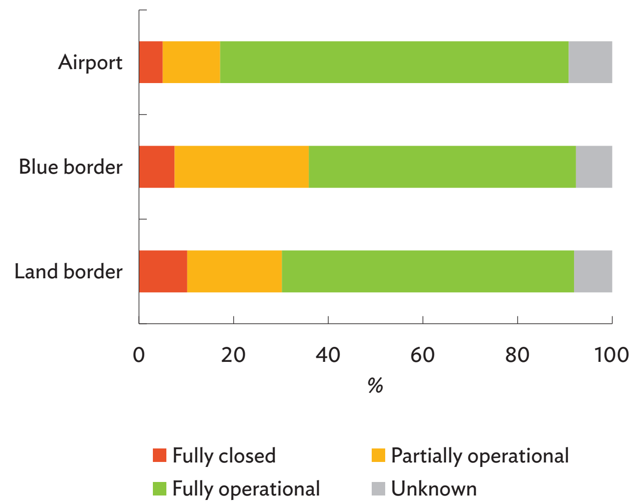
International Migration, the Continued Effects of COVID-19, and Emerging Global Shocks

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and new global shocks continue to roil international migration dynamics as more economies open their borders and ease travel requirements.

The widespread administration of vaccine programs has enabled major migrant host economies to begin rolling back restrictions on human mobility in 2022. As vaccination rates picked up, blanket travel restrictions evolved into conditional entry requirements, and eventually most major extraregional hosts of migrants from Asia and the Pacific began relaxing entry protocols.[60] Stringent entry requirements were lifted or replaced with proof of vaccination, negative COVID-19 test results before entry, and/or completion of conditional quarantine mandates imposed on emigrant workers. International travel has since resumed, with 73.7% of airports and close to 60% of land and water borders fully operational by December 2022 (Figure 5.1).

The top extraregional host economies of Asian migrants are in the Middle East, North America, and Europe (Table 5.1). These hosts were home to 125.6 million migrants in 2020, 40.6% of them from Asia. As of 31 December 2022, these economies accounted for 30.1% of COVID-19 cases and 30.9% of COVID-19 deaths globally. The United States (US) remains the top destination of migrants globally, including those from Asia. Between 1990 and 2020, Asian migrants in the US had nearly tripled, from 4.5 million to 12.5 million. Despite registering the highest shares of COVID-19 cases and deaths, the US remains the priority destination of migrants, with its health infrastructure and the availability and ease of access to COVID-19 vaccines.[61] Canada's various migration pathways also make it attractive

Figure 5.1: Status of International Points of Entry—Global
(as of December 2022)



Source: International Organization for Migration. COVID-19 Mobility Impacts. https://migration.iom.int/ (accessed December 2022).

[60] Asia and the Pacific, or Asia, consists of the 49 regional member economies of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The composition of economies for Central Asia, East Asia, the Pacific and Oceania, South Asia, and Southeast Asia are outlined in ADB. Asia Regional Integration Center. Economy Groupings. https://aric.adb.org/integrationindicators/groupings.

[61] When the administration of President Joe Biden took over, it immediately sought to reverse immigration restrictions imposed by former President Donald Trump, including lifting restrictions that drastically reduced the number of visas issued by the US (Krogstad and Gonzalez-Barrera 2022).

to Asian migrants—the stock of Asian migrants in Canada had increased 3.3 times between 1990 and 2020. Migrants from top-sending economies such as India, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, and Viet Nam comprised 74.3% of Asian migrants in North American economies in 2020.

Work opportunities in the Middle East continue to appeal to migrant workers, especially those from South Asia. At least 60% of Asian migrants were in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in 2020. Germany, the second-largest migrant host economy in the world, hosted 2.4 million migrants from the Asian region in 2020 and has been actively seeking skilled migrant workers, even those from outside the European Union (EU), to address its worsening labor shortage (Reuters 2022). Many of these host economies had already lifted COVID-19 travel requirements as part of their national strategy "to live with the COVID-19 virus."

In 2021, signs of global economic recovery were apparent despite the persistence of COVID-19 and the emergence of its new variants. Powered by expansionary fiscal and accommodative monetary policies, global gross domestic product (GDP) gained rapidly, growing 5.5%–6.0% for the year as the world emerged from the lockdown-induced recession of 2020. The trajectory of events, however, drastically changed with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, global inflation, and rising interest rates, subduing consumer demand and tightening labor markets in 2022.

Outbound migration from Asia continued amid evolving external risks in a pandemic environment.

Accounting for 1 of 3 global migrants, the pattern of outmigration from Asia to major host economies hardly changed. Between 2015 and 2020, the stock of Asian migrants in major regional destinations increased—North America (up 3.0%), Europe (up 10.5%), and the Middle East (up 17.3%) (Figure 5.2).

Among the top migrant-sending economies in the region, 7 suffered GDP contractions in 2020, ranging from –0.9% for Pakistan to 9.5% for the Philippines (ADB 2022). These top migrant-sending Asian economies accounted for 15.8% (104.1 million) of global COVID-19 cases and 13.9% (0.9 million) of global COVID-19 deaths. The economies also had generally stricter responses to the pandemic, based on the stringency index, policies for contact tracing, face coverings, and vaccine roll-out relative to the Asian and global averages (Table 5.2).

Table 5.1: Top Extraregional Host Economies of Asia and Pacific Migrants

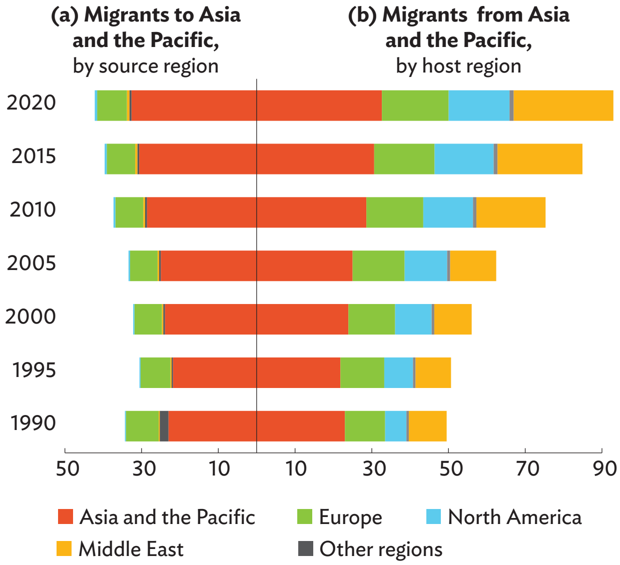
	Stock of migrants, in million (share of migrants from Asia and the Pacific)	**COVID-19 cases per thousand population** (share of global total)	**COVID-19 deaths per thousand population** (share of global total)
United States	50.6 (24.7%)	297.8 (15.3%)	3.2 (16.3%)
Germany	15.6 (15.7%)	448.2 (5.7%)	1.9 (2.4%)
Saudi Arabia	13.5 (69.9%)	22.7 (0.1%)	0.3 (0.1%)
Russian Federation	11.6 (58.5%)	148.5 (3.3%)	2.7 (5.8%)
United Kingdom	9.4 (30.5%)	357.5 (3.7%)	3.2 (3.2%)
United Arab Emirates	8.7 (75.9%)	110.9 (0.2%)	0.2 (0.04%)
Canada	8.0 (41.6%)	117.2 (0.7%)	1.3 (0.7%)
Kuwait	3.1 (72.3%)	155.3 (0.1%)	0.6 (0.04%)
Iran	2.8 (97.6%)	85.4 (1.1%)	1.6 (2.2%)
Oman	2.4 (88.2%)	87.2 (0.1%)	1.0 (0.1%)
Top 10 hosts	125.6 (40.6%)	243.7 (30.1%)	2.5 (30.9%)

COVID-19 = coronavirus disease.

Note: Data are as of 31 December 2022; global COVID-19 cases totaled 660,300,641 while global COVID-19 deaths totaled 6,689,977.

Sources: ADB calculations using data from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. International Migrant Stock 2020. https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock (accessed May 2022); and Mathieu et al. (2020).

Figure 5.2: Migration to and from Asia and the Pacific, by Region, 1990–2020 (million)



Source: ADB calculations using data from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. International Migrant Stock 2020. https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock (accessed May 2022).

For major Asian emigrants, outbound migration was one way to secure income flow, especially with their origin economy in dire straits. In the Philippines, over 300,000 overseas Filipino workers had returned by December 2020, at a time when local unemployment reached its highest level in decades—a survey by International Organization for Migration indicated that 48% of these returnees had remigration plans, given difficulty finding income-earning opportunities in the local labor market (Kang and Latoja 2022).[62] In some major migrant-sending economies, there were massive repatriation activities just as local outputs were contracting significantly. As vaccines became available and borders opened in the Middle East, migrants began to gradually return in 2021 (Figure 5.3). Granted that migrant outflows remain way below 2019 levels, the numbers have improved. In Indonesia and Pakistan, the share of outmigrants in 2022 exceeded the 2019 level. This gradual recovery in the pace of migration helped facilitate remittances to the migrant-sending economies

Table 5.2: Top 10 Migrant Sending Economies in Asia and the Pacific and COVID-19 Indexes

	Stock of Outmigrants (million, per '000 population)	**COVID-19 Cases** (million, share of global total)	**COVID-19 Death** (per '000, share of global total)	**Containment and Health Index** (0-100)
India	17.9 (12.6)	44.1 (6.8%)	530.7 (7.9%)	44.4
PRC	10.5 (7.3)	1.9 (0.3%)	5.2 (0.1%)	78.0
Bangladesh	7.4 (43.2)	2.0 (0.3%)	29.4 (0.4%)	28.0
Pakistan	6.3 (26.8)	1.6 (0.2%)	30.6 (0.5%)	49.9
Philippines	6.1 (52.7)	4.1 (0.6%)	65.4 (1.0%)	41.3
Indonesia	4.6 (16.7)	6.7 (1.0%)	160.6 (2.4%)	48.0
Kazakhstan	4.2 (216.7)	1.5 (0.2%)	19.1 (0.3%)	19.1
Viet Nam	3.4 (34.5)	11.5 (1.7%)	43.2 (0.6%)	39.9
Nepal	2.6 (85.1)	1.0 (0.2%)	12.0 (0.2%)	35.4
Republic of Korea	2.2 (42.5)	29.1 (4.4%)	32.2 (0.5%)	34.5
Asia and the Pacific	93.0 (21.5)	177.2 (26.8%)	1,197.4 (17.9%)	32.1

COVID-19 = coronavirus disease 2019, PRC = People's Republic of China.

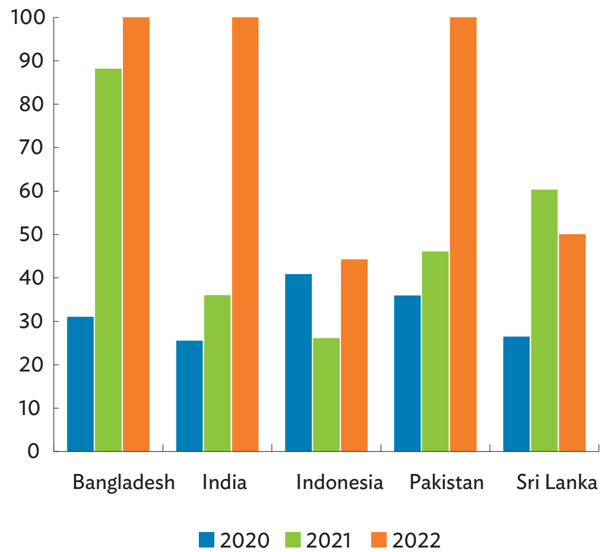
Notes: Data are as of 31 December 2022; global COVID-19 cases totaled 660,300,641 and global COVID-19 deaths, 6,689,977. The Containment and Health Index builds on the stringency index, using its nine indicators plus testing policy, extent of contact tracing, polices to wear face coverings, and policies around vaccine roll-out. A higher score indicates a stricter response (100 = strictest response).

Sources: ADB calculations using data from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. International Migrant Stock 2020. https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock (accessed May 2022); and Mathieu et al. (2020).

[62] This figure refers to the number of overseas Filipino workers repatriated through efforts of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines.

burdened by the pandemic-induced recession and inflicted by the variants of COVID-19 and the slow rollout of vaccines.

Figure 5.3: Outflow of Migrants from Selected Asian Economies (% share of 2019 level)



Sources: Government of Bangladesh, Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training. http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/stattisticalDataAction; Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. Performance Smartboard. http://meadashboard.gov.in/indicators/15; Government of Pakistan, Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment. https://beoe.gov.pk/reports-and-statistics (all accessed January 2023); and Kikkawa et al. (2022).

Despite aggravated labor market conditions for migrants due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Central Asia experienced large inflows of migration and money transfers as more Russian skilled workers and businesses relocated to the subregion.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 unleashed a torrent of sudden changes that would impact global trade flows, inflate commodity prices, alter growth estimates, and escalate tensions along some borders. It also increased demand for humanitarian assistance for affected migrants.[63] With 6.7 million Central Asian migrants in the Russian Federation, sanctions imposed on that economy immediately affected labor market dynamics, as many Central Asian workers returned to their origin economies. Migrants faced financial difficulties and either lost their jobs, took shorter work hours, or took another job to maintain the same support provided to families back home (Hashimova 2022, Najibullah 2022, Al Jazeera 2022).

Meanwhile, Russian workers and entrepreneurs have been relocating to Central Asia since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, improving the manpower landscape in the subregion. Armenia recorded a 50% year-on-year increase in the number of information technology (IT) workers on account of Russian technology firms moving their staff abroad (Borak 2022). The ease of doing business has attracted Russian businesses and entrepreneurs to Armenia as well as to Georgia and Azerbaijan (Mgdesyan 2022). The relocation of Russian skilled workers (managers and IT specialists) has been a boon for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan—government officials in Tashkent even expedited work and residency permits, tax benefits, and housing and child-care assistance as it anticipated the inflow of around 100,000 Russian IT specialists (Najibullah 2022, Tomas 2022).

New trends are emerging in job opportunities for Asian migrant workers as major developed host economies pursue post-pandemic goals.

The pandemic wiped out a decade's progress in employment rates among immigrants, but it also showcased the depth of migrants' contributions to their host economies and shed light on the range of skills and professions of workers deemed essential in a crisis (OECD 2020). For instance, 13% of essential workers in the EU are immigrants while 30% of doctors and 27% of farm workers in the US are foreign-born (Foresti 2020).

[63] One month into the Russian invasion of Ukraine, "some 13 million people are estimated to be stranded in affected areas or unable to leave due to heightened security risks, destruction of bridges and roads, as well as lack of resources or information on where to find safety and accommodation" (Billing 2022).

Other key occupations, such as work in construction and mining, food service and processing, and domestic care are performed mostly by migrants. Amid the decline in migrant flows, the pandemic led to a dramatic structural transformation of the labor market and has underscored the dependence of these destination economies on migrant workers (TASS 2021).

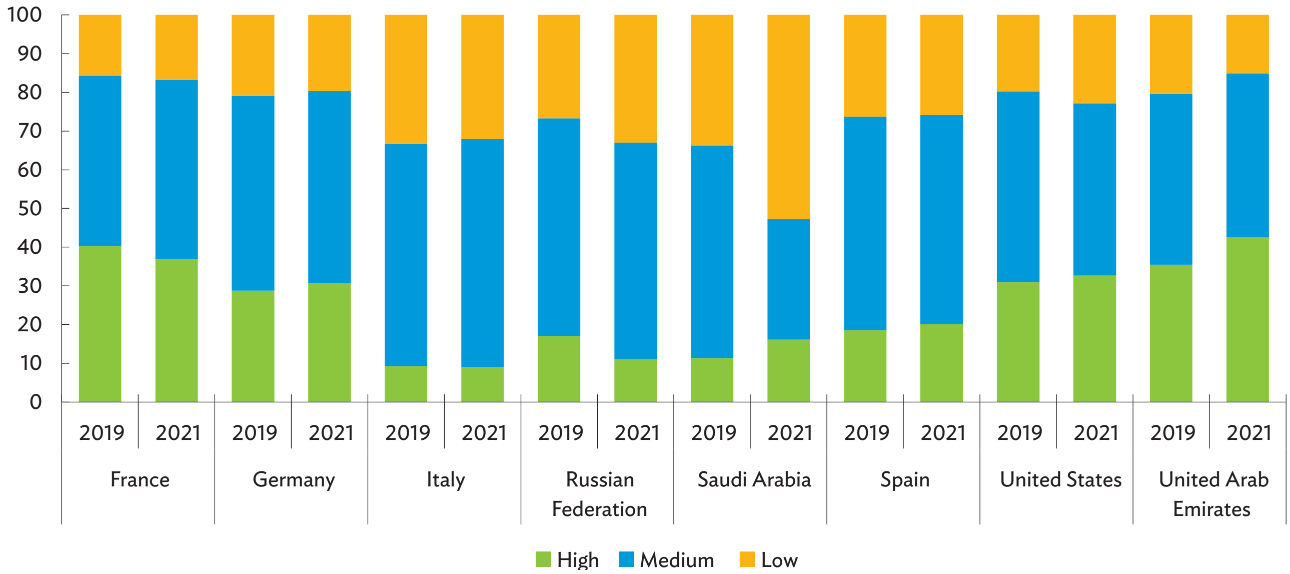
On the demand side, a shift toward skilled workers seems to be occurring in the demand for migrant labor in host economies to complement strategic economic focus toward technology, automation, and other high-value industries. Compared with 2019, there was a slightly higher percentage of employed highly skilled migrants in Germany, Saudi Arabia, Spain, the US, and the United Arab Emirates (Figure 5.3a). Among intraregional host economies, however, results were mixed—the share of highly skilled migrants was higher in Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand; but lower for Malaysia and Viet Nam (Figure 5.3b). Saudi Arabia launched its Skills Verification Program in 2021 as part of its Vision 2030 to keep the inflow of foreign labor aligned with the manpower development needs of the economy and to reduce the inflow of unskilled migrant labor (Abujaleel 2021). Germany, which put into force the Immigration Act for Skilled Workers in March 2020, is further simplifying procedures to accelerate the inflow of migrant labor into the economy—it needs 400,000 annually to mitigate the labor impact of its aging population (Government of Germany Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2021; Look 2022).

Labor shortages in some host economies underscore the importance of migrant labor in several key industries (Canadian Manufacturing 2022, Child 2021, Ivanova 2022, Riley 2022). Within Asia, shortages in migrant labor were also reported by Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, and Viet Nam (Nguyen 2021; Lee 2022; Lee, Latiff, and Chu 2022; Thaiger 2022). These shortages threatened to derail economic recovery and were costing firms in forgone output and sales contracts. The combination of changes in migration policies to accommodate the inflow of more migrant workers in answer to the labor shortage and rising demand for more skilled workers suggest more job opportunities are available and augurs well for Asian migrants (Figure 5.4).

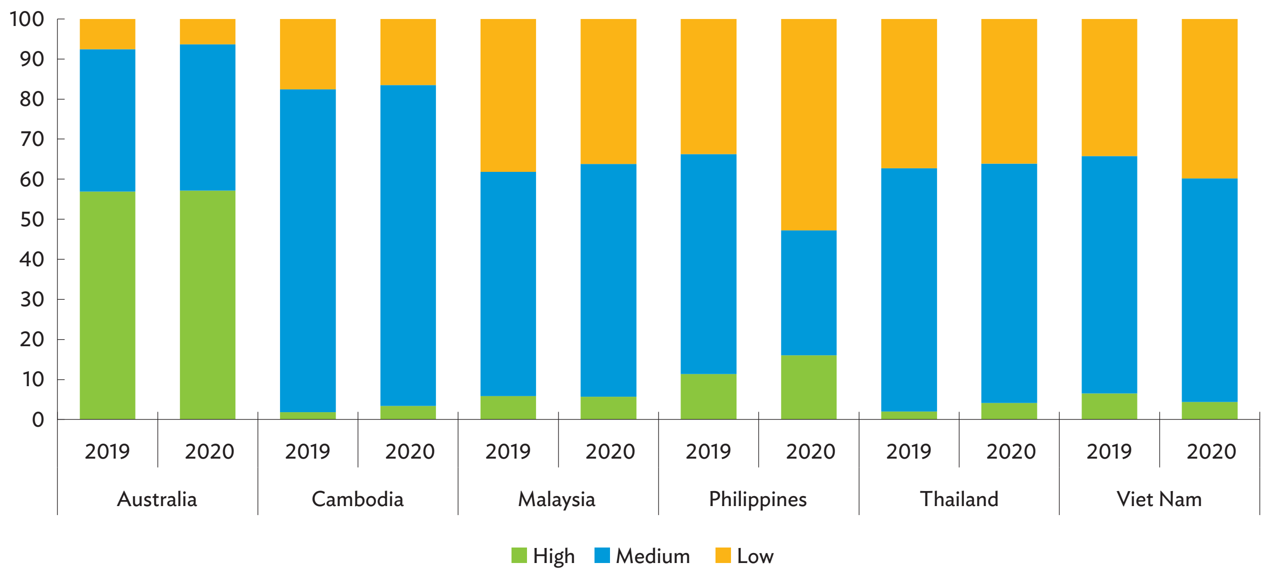
Figure 5.5 illustrates how migrant flows are faring in select developed host economies. In some economies, it might take a while before pre-pandemic migration levels are reached as labor markets, migration policy, and economic targets evolve in both sending and host economies. In the US, work visas issued to Asian migrants had been on a massive decline relative to 2019—they were 32% lower in 2020 and 68.2% in 2021. The work visa ban impacted US technology firms, which disproportionately employ migrant workers, mostly from South Asia (Wiessner 2020). The relocation of US firms hiring mostly migrant workers to other economies such as Canada and the PRC also caused labor market pain (Lee 2020). In Canada, travel restrictions have produced a backlog in the inventory of migration applications. Invitations to apply via federal high-skilled streams were also paused to help manage the processing of applications inventory. This could account for the declining trend in the total number of visas issued under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program—relative to 2019, total visas issued under the program declined by 14.2% in 2020 and 37.7% in 2021. In the United Kingdom (UK), migrants from Asia and Oceania (particularly from Australia, New Zealand, and India) were found to have high-skilled jobs working as teachers, IT specialists, doctors and nurses, and managers, in stark contrast to the low-skilled jobs held by migrants from the new EU-accession economies (Fernandez-Reino and Rienzo 2022). UK work visas issued to Asian migrants fell 43.5% in 2020 but rebounded 58.9% in 2021. Work visas issued by New Zealand grew 14.3% in 2021 after initially falling 23.1% in 2020. In August 2022, the New Zealand government introduced temporary changes in immigration rules to accelerate the inflow of foreign workers and help plug labor market gaps, including providing median wage exemptions to crucial sectors through sector agreements, temporarily doubling numbers under the Working Holiday Scheme, and extending visas for 6 months to migrant workers already in the economy (Mint 2022). The government also announced changes to make it easier for health workers to migrate, including fast tracking and covering

Figure 5.4: Distribution of Employed Migrants in Major Host Economies by Level of Skills (% of total)

(a) Extraregional host economies



(b) Intraregional host economies

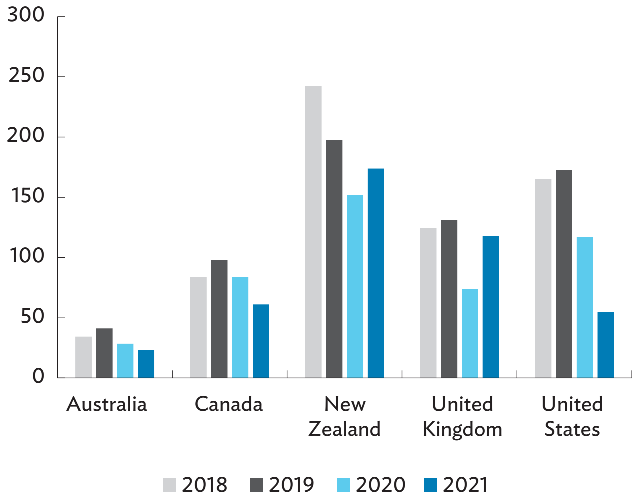


Sources: ADB calculations using data from Government of Saudi Arabia, General Authority for Statistics. Labor Force. https://www.stats.gov.sa/en/814; Government of the United Arab Emirates, Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre. Statistics. https://fcsc.gov.ae/en-us/Pages/Statistics/Statistics.aspx; International Labour Organization (ILO). ILOSTAT Database. International Standard Classification of Occupations. https://ilostat.ilo.org/resources/concepts-and-definitions/classification-occupation; and ILO. ILOSTAT Database. Data. https://ilostat.ilo.org/data (all accessed November 2022).

NZ$10,000 of an overseas nurses' registration cost, as well as other health-care worker training and national and international recruitment drives, and setting up a dedicated immigration support service to make it easier for workers to move to New Zealand (Witton 2022).[64]

[64] New Zealand requires internationally qualified nurses to complete a competency assessment program that takes 8 weeks and costs $10,000 before they can work in New Zealand. Similar courses in the UK and Australia have changed to help internationally qualified nurses to register in less time and at lower cost (Bhatia 2022).

Figure 5.5: Visas Issued to Asian Migrants in Select Migrant Host Economies (thousand)



Notes: Australia data refer to visas issued under the Temporary Skill Shortage and Temporary (Work) Skilled Visa programs; Canada data refer to Temporary Foreign Worker Program Work Permit holders; New Zealand data refer to work visas issued; United Kingdom data refer to work visas issued to Asian migrants; and United States data refer to total first and second half visas granted to migrants from Asia and the Pacific.

Sources: ADB calculations using data from Government of Australia, Department of Home Affairs. Visa Statistics. https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-statistics/statistics/visa-statistics; Government of Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada. Temporary Foreign Worker Program 2021 Q1-2022Q3. https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/e8745429-21e7-4a73-b3f5-90a779b78d1e; Government of the United Kingdom, Home Office. Immigration Statistics. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release; Government of the United States, Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs. Visa Statistics. https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-statistics.html (all accessed July 2022).

In Australia, the pandemic caused temporary visa holders to leave their jobs in aged care, agriculture, construction, and hospitality, causing a skills shortage which disrupted the Australian workforce (Croft 2021). Responding to its economic and labor market needs, the skills stream of Australia's migration program has focused on granting visas to migrants with the capacity to drive economic growth and investment, particularly to applicants under the employer-sponsored scheme and the business, innovation, and investment program. Under the Temporary Skill Shortage program, total visas granted in fiscal year 2020–2021 had declined 18.5% and were only 56.2% of the pre-pandemic total. The slow return of migrant workers to Australia may have been caused by pandemic border policies that left "a lingering level of uncertainty among potential skilled migrants" (Wright 2022). With unemployment at a 48-year low of 3.5%, business groups have called for an increase in the migration cap from 160,000 per year to 200,000 annually for the next 2 years to ease the labor shortage and help boost Australia's relative advantage in data science and digital technology (Read 2022).

Developments in Migration Governance and Implications for Asia

Improved migration governance could foster inclusive and sustainable economic recovery in the region.

The pandemic may have changed the immediate context of migration, but it has not changed the underlying beneficial reality of international migration for economies of origin and destination, or for migrants and their families (Newland 2020). Supporting the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), adopted in 2018, through its six policy dimensions—migrant rights; whole-of-government and evidence-based policies; cooperation and partnerships; socioeconomic well-being; mobility dimensions of crises; and safe, orderly, and regular migration—means that more economies will work together to implement the GCM's objectives which, in turn, will help them move beyond the crisis and generate the essential building blocks of global recovery.[65]

However, the GCM is a nonbinding document and therefore needs economies that would champion its overarching goal of international cooperation and the sharing of best practices on international migration in all its dimensions. To this end, the United Nations identified

[65] The GCM, prepared under the auspices of the United Nations, is the first intergovernmentally negotiated agreement covering all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. It (i) supports international cooperation on the governance of international migration, (ii) provides participating economies with a comprehensive menu of policy options to address international migration issues, and (iii) gives participating economies the freedom to pursue implementation based on their own migration realities and capacities (United Nations. Global Compact for Migration. https://www.un.org/en/migration2022/global-compact-for-migration).

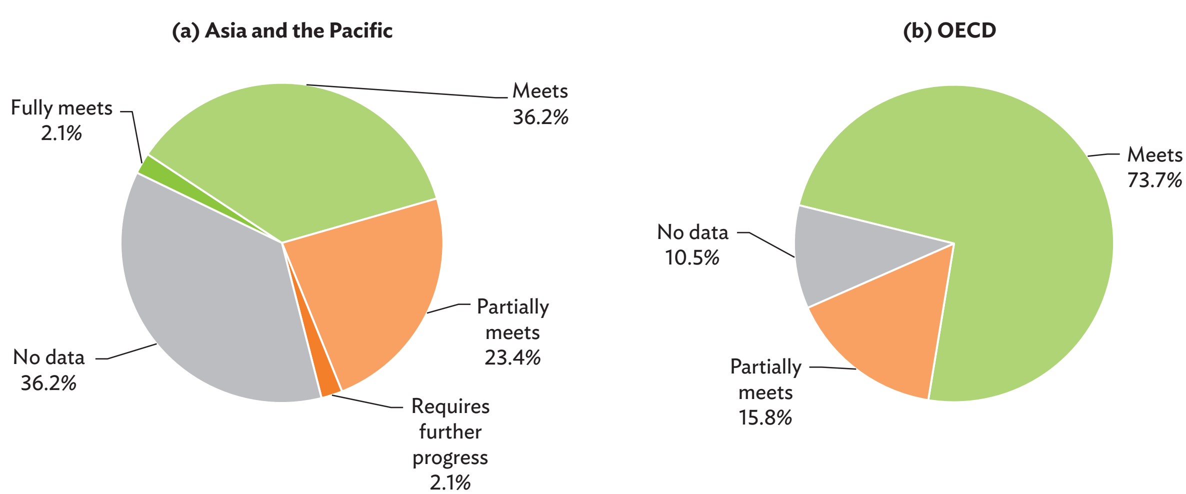
six economies in Asia as GCM champion economies since 2018—Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Thailand (IOM 2021).

Figure 5.6 illustrates policy progress on GCM goals. In Asia, only 36% of participating economies meet policy requirements to support the GCM and 23% partially meet them. By comparison, at least three-quarters of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) economies meet the requirements. Significant data gaps also exist; in the OECD, no policy status information exists on 10.5% of its economies, and in Asia, on 36%. These gaps underscore the need for improving data collection related to migration and for facilitating better communication among participating economies. The Philippines took a step in this direction in 2018, when it began compiling survey-based baseline information on domestic and international migration of its citizens to eventually standardize and harmonize migration data (Philippine News Agency 2022). The recently established Department of Migrant Workers also provides an online portal for registration and employment opportunities for a more comprehensive management of Filipino migrant data.

Policy status in top host economies of migrants from Asia is diverse in support of the GCM (Table 5.3). Most notable among these economies is the absence of information from the US and the United Arab Emirates, host to 20.6% of Asian migrants. Other reporting top host economies fully meet policies to support the sixth dimension of the GCM, but more work needs to be done to promote migrant rights, socioeconomic well-being, and mobility in crises, for both extraregional and intraregional host economies. The region will also benefit from improved better sharing of policies and best practices, especially since intraregional migration in Asia is a considerable share of the total.

Despite economies championing GCM goals, enhanced participation among signatory economies remains a challenge (Ratha 2021). The perceived impact of (im)migration on citizens, especially as it affects jobs and earnings—amid loud anti-immigrant sentiment and xenophobia, especially during the pandemic—seems to drown out the established benefits of migration to societies in destination economies. The lack of external sources of financing to support public spending on migrant populations is another obstacle, given a debt

Figure 5.6: Status of Policies to Facilitate Orderly, Safe, Regular, and Responsible Migration and Mobility of People, 2021



OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Source: ADB calculations using data from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division and International Organization for Migration (2021).

overhang in many economies. Likewise, constrained economic recovery in developed migrant host economies is a hurdle, even though the international community is counting on these to lead migration governance.

Now more than ever, international migration needs vigorous global partnerships for effective governance. To rally support for migration policies at the national level, it is instructive to integrate migration policies into development and governance policies at the local level, where the drivers and effects of migration are strongly felt (Riallant 2017). Doing so would allow local and regional authorities to funnel their expertise and knowledge into national policy, making for more responsive and relevant national migration policies that are implementable, measurable, and can be sustainably monitored at the local level. This approach would be particularly useful in anchoring the environmental and climate dimensions of the international migration governance agenda. Although most people displaced or migrating as a result of climate impacts are staying within their economies of origin, the accelerating trend of global displacement related to climate impacts is increasing cross-border movements as well. Mainstreaming discussion of how climate and environmental factors

Table 5.3: Status of Policies to Facilitate the Global Compact on Migration in Major Migrant Host Economies

	Host Economies	Overall Summary	Migrant Rights	Whole-of-Government/ Evidence-Based Policies	Cooperation and Partnerships	Socioeconomic Well-Being	Mobility Dimensions of Crises	Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration
Top extraregional hosts	United States	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
	Saudi Arabia	Meets	Partially meets	Fully meets	Meets	Fully meets	Fully meets	Fully meets
	Russian Federation	Meets	Partially meets	Fully meets	Fully meets	Partially meets	Meets	Fully meets
	UAE	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
	Canada	Meets	Meets	Fully meets	Fully meets	Fully meets	Fully meets	Fully meets
	UK	Meets	Meets	Fully meets	Fully meets	Meets	Meets	Fully meets
	Iran	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
	Germany	Meets	Meets	Meets	Fully meets	Fully meets	Meets	Fully meets
	Kuwait	Partially meets	Partially meets	Meets	Meets	Fully meets	Partially meets	Fully meets
	Oman	Partially meets	Partially meets	Fully meets	Partially meets	Requires further progress	Fully meets	Fully meets
Top intraregional hosts	India	Partially meets	Requires further progress	Fully meets	Fully meets	Meets	Requires further progress	Requires further progress
	Australia	Meets	Meets	Fully meets	Fully meets	Fully meets	Meets	Fully meets
	Thailand	Meets	Meets	Fully meets	Fully meets	Fully meets	Fully meets	Fully meets
	Malaysia	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
	Pakistan	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
	Hong Kong, China	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
	Singapore	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
	Japan	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Fully meets	Fully meets
	Bangladesh	Partially meets	Requires further progress	Meets	Fully meets	Fully meets	Requires further progress	Partially meets
	Republic of Korea	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data

Legend:

Fully meets
Meets
Partially meets
Requires further progress
No data

UAE = United Arab Emirates, UK = United Kingdom.

Source: ADB calculations using data from United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division and International Organization for Migration (2021).

are reinforcing push factors for global migration will not only benefit migration-focused policy process, but also reinforce the role of migrants as positive contributors to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Since the pandemic, additional reforms and initiatives have been implemented to improve migrants' access to labor markets, social protection, and basic services. In late 2020, Saudi Arabia launched a labor reform initiative to ease out of the "kafala" system and place greater emphasis on job mobility and the contractual relationship between employers and foreign employees (Shadmand et al. 2020).[66] Under this reform, employees could choose and change jobs more easily, while employers will benefit from a more mobile and flexible labor force that could respond better to the diversification objectives of Saudi Arabia (IOM 2020). Qatar has also initiated reforms to protect and improve workers' conditions and guarantee their rights, provide training programs to promote innovation, and prepare the workforce for modern digital transformation (The Peninsula 2022).

In Southeast Asia, Singapore and the Philippines signed the Joint Communique on the Recruitment of Filipino Healthcare Workers in September 2022 for the continued deployment of Filipino health workers to Singapore, and to promote greater bilateral cooperation in the field of health care (Parrocha 2022). Nongovernment organizations in Thailand have initiated a program to develop Thai language and computer literacy skills among migrant workers to improve their quality of life and ensure migrant workers have proper access to welfare and assistance while working in Thailand (Pattaya Mail 2022). In Central Asia, Uzbeks going abroad for temporary work were granted 20% discounts on tickets for the National Railway Company and the National Air Company. This included a partial reimbursement of the transport cost up to SUM300,000 once a year (United Nations Network on Migration 2020). The Government of Uzbekistan also removed the state monopoly in employment of citizens abroad and allowed private employment agencies to participate in job selection, recruitment, and information and consulting services in employment. It also established a social protection fund for migrant workers during emergencies such as injury, lost documents, financial need, deportation, among others.

Migration is a vital human experience in search of better opportunities and a fundamental reality. Transitioning from the ravages of the pandemic calls for a better narrative to make the case for practical and sustainable approaches to international migration governance (Foresti, Rajah, and Bither 2022). Developing the skills and talents of global migrants is essential to achieve economic and social aspirations while reinforcing the contribution of migration to development. More importantly, migration governance should articulate the urgency of providing and promoting legal pathways to migration, without which the relevance of skill levels and job opportunities is diluted. At the national level, innovative attempts at digitalizing key migrant services and the growth of online services in employment administration must be maintained and reviewed for sustainable enhancement (Kikkawa et al. 2022). Stronger cooperation and collaboration between origin and destination economies could help usher in bilateral and regional labor agreements. This could lower costs of migration, help standardize deployment of health and safety protocols, create more thorough licensing and monitoring of recruitment agencies, and help control irregular migration.

66 Kafala is a sponsorship system that regulates the relationship between employers and migrant workers and is common in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, and most Arab gulf economies (Robinson 2021). The labor reform initiative of Saudi Arabia, which will eventually replace the "kafala" system, was passed via Resolution No. 51848/1442 of the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development and became effective on 14 March 2021.

Remittances

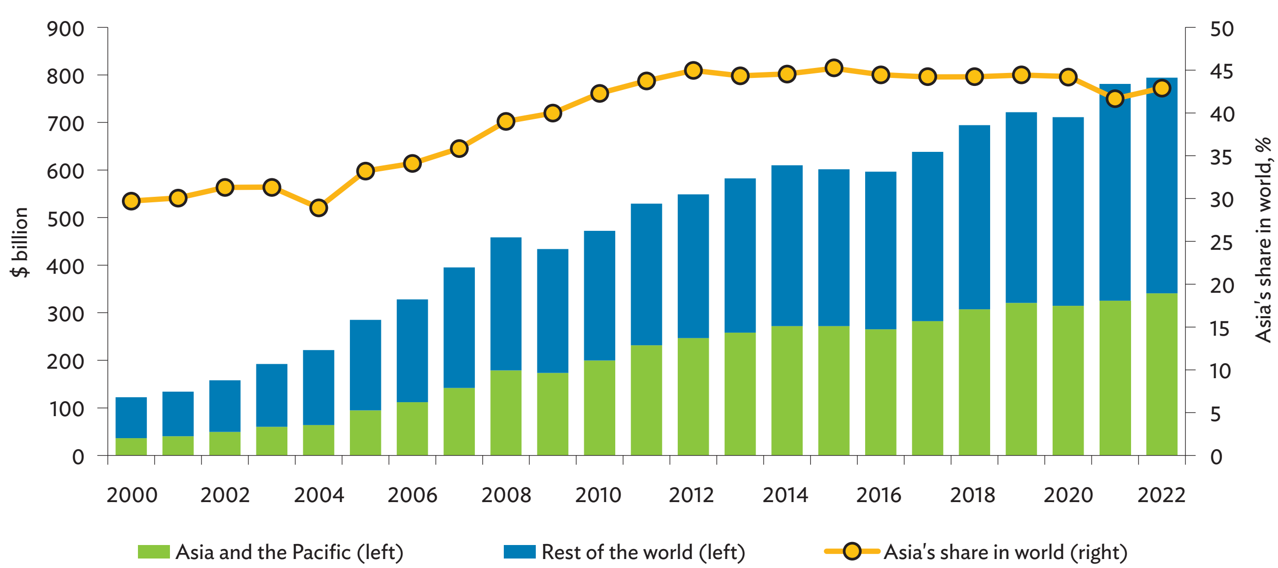
Growth in global remittance inflows leaped 9.9% in 2021 to $781.1 billion, from a 1.5% contraction in 2020. In a display of resilience, inflows to Asia increased 3.4% to $325.5 billion in 2021, and are estimated to grow 4.7% to $340.7 billion in 2022.

Amid ongoing economic strain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, global remittance inflows rebounded in 2021, growing by a new record 9.9% in 2021, its highest since 2011 (Figure 5.7). This resilience of inflows underscores migrants' commitment to supporting their families and communities (over 800 million beneficiaries globally), enabled by a strong pickup in economic activity and employment in major host economies, which implemented massive fiscal stimulus programs and accommodative monetary policy (Ratha et al. 2022a). For instance, the American Rescue Plan helped job creation and migrant workers' incomes and strengthened income flows to recipient economies primarily dependent on US-based remittance outflows, such as in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

After a dip of 1.9% in 2020, remittance inflows to Asia rebounded by 3.4% in 2021, reaching $325.5 billion, as noted. A combination of factors, both external and domestic, underpinned the recovery of remittance inflows in 2021, even as the pandemic entered its second year. Easing of COVID-19 curbs and better-than-expected economic recovery in several major hosts in North America, the Middle East, and Europe in 2021 helped revive labor demand and supported the emigration of migrant workers who had returned to their home economies in 2020 (Ratha et al. 2022a). A new record high of $340.7 billion in inflows into Asia is estimated in 2022 as the demand for outmigrant labor from the region is expected to remain robust among high-income economies (Ratha et al. 2022b).

As an important source of external finance for the region, on average, remittances are 43% the size of foreign direct investment (FDI) and at least 10 times the size of official development assistance in 2010–2020 (Figure 5.7a). Since 2019, remittance inflows had also overtaken tourism receipts as the second-largest type of financial inflow into the region. A ray of hope in macroeconomic scenarios in developed host economies alongside fiscal support enabled migrants from Asia to

Figure 5.7: Remittance Inflows to Asia and the Pacific, and the World



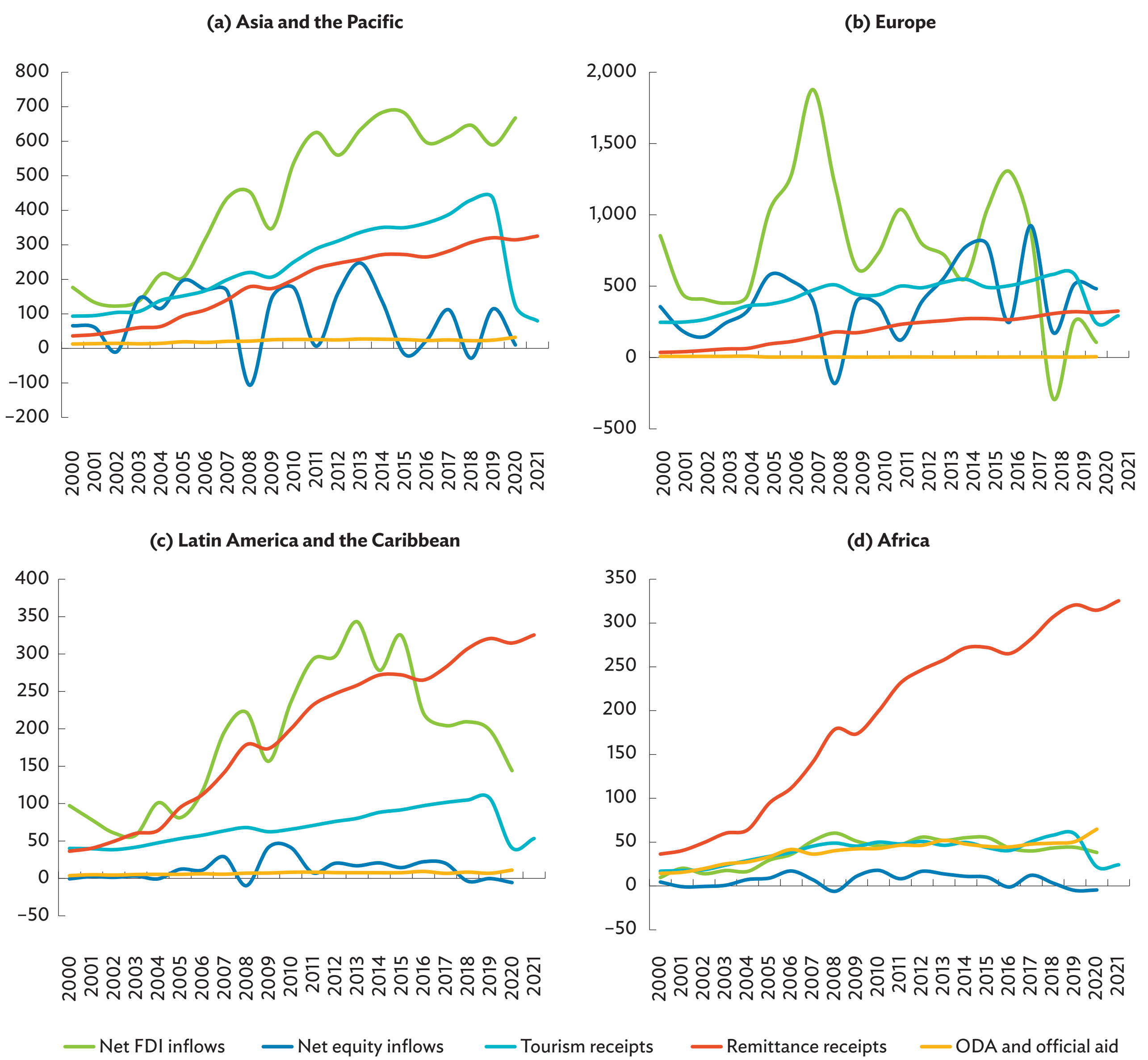
Note: Data for 2022 are estimates.

Source: ADB calculations using data from the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD) Remittances Data. http://www.knomad.org/data/remittances (accessed December 2022).

remit more in 2021. Remittances to the region bolster financial resilience for the poorest of the poor and build financial independence (IFAD 2018).

The share of remittance inflows relative to other external flows differs across regions (Figure 5.8). In Latin America and the Caribbean, remittances benefited from better performance and employment numbers in the US (where 57.3% of outmigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean reside). Additionally, migrants' altruistic response to the ongoing effects of COVID-19 impacts and adverse impact of hurricanes caused remittance flows to grow to their highest in 2021, both in relative (25.0%) and nominal level terms ($26.4 billion). These financial flows from migrants have also become key external resources against the backdrop of the weak investments. As a proportion of FDI, Latin America and the Caribbean's share of remittances rose from 22% in

Figure 5.8: Financial Flows in Selected Regions ($ billion)



FDI = foreign direct investment, ODA = official development assistance.

Sources: ADB calculations using data from the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD). Remittances Data. http://www.knomad.org/data/remittances; and World Bank. World Development Indicators. https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators (both accessed December 2022).

2010–2012 to 49% in 2019. During the first year of the pandemic, in 2020, remittance inflows were 72% the size of FDI. Remittances are an essential source of foreign exchange reserves particularly for economies in Latin America and the Caribbean with current account deficits and where these flows account for at least a quarter of GDP, such as El Salvador (26.4%), Honduras (25.5%), and Jamaica (24.0%).

In contrast, remittance inflows to Europe trail tourism receipts and portfolio inflows (Figure 5.7c). In 2020, remittance inflows to Europe ($174.7 billion) were 64% higher than FDI, which suffered a 58.2% decline over the previous year. As economic momentum and energy prices improved, remittance inflows to Europe increased $17.3 billion in 2021 over 2020, led by flows to France and Germany, which make up 27% of total remittances to the region. In Africa, remittance inflows, which totaled $84.0 billion in 2020, are the region's key source of external finance and has exceeded FDI inflows since 2010 (Figure 5.7d). Compared with other regions, Africa registered the second-highest growth in remittances in 2021 (14.4%), riding on the economic recovery in the US and Europe (Mdoe 2021). The additional $12.1 billion in inflows—of which 68% were from Egypt, Nigeria, and Morocco—made for essential cover for the dip in the region's investments and tourism receipts (Table 5.4). In 2022, remittance inflows are foreseen to continue to grow in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa. Inflows to Asia will continue to benefit from robust migrant outflows and bilateral labor arrangements with key host economies, while sustained strong growth in the US labor market will continue to be the dominant element supporting inflows to Latin America and the Caribbean. Inflows to Africa will moderate but remain positive as the region navigates the impact of the external environment on food production and prices, and the effect of a slowdown in the euro area, a major source of remittance, on the incomes of African migrants (Ratha et al. 2022b).

Remittance Flows to Asian Subregions Amid External Shocks

Remittance inflows to Asian subregions improved in 2021, except in East Asia and Oceania. In 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine led to large, unexpected money transfers into Central Asia.

About 47.7% of total remittances to Asia flowed to South Asia, defying the pandemic odds for the second year in a row. Inflows to the subregion grew 6.7% in 2021, fueled primarily by inflows to India and Pakistan (Table 5.5). In the US, real sector improvement, vaccine availability, and wage hikes, benefited many South Asian migrants, many of whom are highly skilled and enjoy higher-income jobs (Ratha et al. 2022a). Remittances from the Middle East to South Asia also improved in 2021 as migrant flows were revived to near pre-pandemic levels. After a minute contraction in 2020, remittance flows to India grew 7.5%

Table 5.4: Remittance Inflows by Recipient Region

Region	Share of Total 2021	Remittance Inflows ($ billion) 2021	Remittance Inflows ($ billion) 2022e	Growth 2021	Growth 2022e	Level Change ($ billion) 2021	Level Change ($ billion) 2022e
Asia and the Pacific	41.7%	325.5	340.7	3.4%	4.7%	10.8	15.3
Europe	24.6%	192.0	176.7	9.9%	–8.0%	17.3	–15.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	16.8%	131.3	143.5	26.0%	9.3%	27.1	12.2
Middle East	3.2%	25.2	23.4	9.9%	–6.9%	2.3	–1.7
North America	1.0%	7.7	6.3	3.4%	–17.9%	0.3	–1.4
Africa	12.3%	96.2	100.2	14.4%	4.2%	12.1	4.1

e = estimate.

Source: ADB calculations using data from Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD). Remittances Data. http://www.knomad.org/data/remittances (accessed December 2022).

in 2021 to $89.4 billion, spurred as migrants responded strongly to the massive COVID-19 infections and deaths due to the Delta variant. Flows to Bhutan, on the other hand, declined sharply by 30.9% in 2021 from a high of 47.3% in 2020.

Remittance flows are essential to easing external account pressures, as in Pakistan and Sri Lanka (Box 5.1). Pakistan was able to sustain its double-digit growth in inflows in 2021—20.0% in 2021 and 17.2% in 2020, as government incentives continued to influence formal remittance flows. Bhutan and Sri Lanka saw remittances contract sharply in 2021. Embroiled in economic woes in recent years, the Sri Lankan economy suffers high levels of public debt, high deficits, and high macroeconomic volatility (Weerakoon, Kumar, and Dime 2019).

Remittance inflows to Southeast Asia improved to $78.3 billion in 2021 and reversed a 3.0% contraction in 2020 with 3.4% growth in 2021. Higher inflows to the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam more than compensated for the decline in flows to other economies in the subregion. All three economies are recipients of remittances from the US and are anticipated to account for 88.8% of the $3.0 billion additional inflows to the subregion in 2022 (Ratha et al. 2022b). The Philippines, in particular, received about 40% of its 2021 inflows from the US (Ratha et al. 2022a).

Led by robust inflows to Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, the Pacific experienced double-digit growth (36.5%) in 2021 for the second year in a row. Economies in the Pacific are dependent on remittances more than any other region in the world. In absolute terms, remittance inflows are small, around $1 billion. However, remittances are the third most important source of external financial resources to the subregion, after official development assistance and FDI. In Tonga, Samoa, and the Marshall Islands, remittances are at least 12% of GDP (Figure 5.8b). And although most of the Pacific economies receive the least amount of remittance inflows, these are nonetheless significant in per capita terms—in Tonga and Samoa, for instance, remittance per capita was 30%-50% of GDP per capita in nominal terms (Figure 5.8c). Remittance inflows to Oceania and East Asia continued to drop. Remittances to the PRC, the second-largest recipient economy in 2021, declined 10.9% to $53 billion in 2021, relative to $59.5 billion in 2020.

Central Asia rebounded with a strong double-digit growth (25.0%) in 2021 after inflows contracted by 10.8% in 2020. Inflows rose by $4.2 billion to $21 billion in 2021 as higher inflows went to the Uzbekistan (up $2.2 billion), Tajikistan (up $0.7 billion), and Georgia (up $0.5 billion) and to a lesser extent, the Kyrgyz Republic (up $0.4 billion), Armenia (up $0.3 billion), and Azerbaijan (up $0.1 billion). In 2021, higher energy prices boosted recovery in the

Table 5.5: Remittance Inflows by Recipient Subregions

Region	Share of Total, 2021	Remittance Inflows ($ billion)		Growth		Level Change ($ billion)	
		2021	2022[e]	2021	2022[e]	2021	2022[e]
South Asia	48.2%	157.0	162.5	6.7%	3.5%	9.9	5.5
Southeast Asia	24.1%	78.3	81.4	3.4%	3.9%	2.6	3.0
East Asia	20.6%	67.0	65.2	−8.0%	−2.6%	−5.8	−1.7
Central Asia	6.5%	21.0	29.7	25.0%	41.5%	4.2	8.7
Oceania	0.3%	0.9	0.8	−29.6%	−18.9%	−0.4	−0.2
Pacific	0.4%	1.2	1.1	36.5%	−5.9%	0.3	8.7
Asia and the Pacific	100%	325.5	340.7	3.4%	4.7%	10.8	15.3

e = estimate.

Source: ADB calculations using data from Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD). Remittances Data. http://www.knomad.org/data/remittances (accessed May 2022).

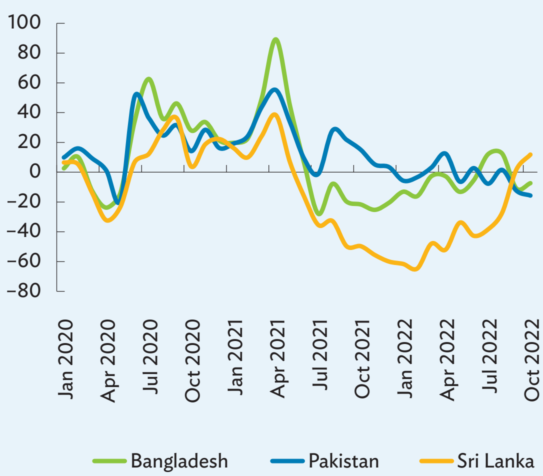
Box 5.1: Economic Crisis and Remittance Inflows: The Cases of Sri Lanka and Pakistan

Sri Lanka is currently reeling from an economic crisis driven primarily by years of fiscal and balance of payment deficits, linked to low revenue collection, restrictive trade regime, and sluggish tourism industry. In addition to external financing from India, it also sought the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for possible bailout measures.[a]

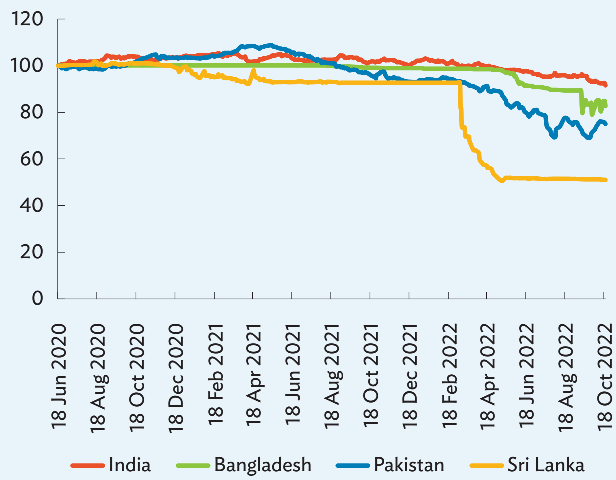
Pakistan is also under duress. In July, it reached an initial agreement with the IMF to replenish its foreign currency reserves, a resumption of the bailout package originally signed in 2019.[b] Owing to soaring energy prices and an elevated import bill, the economy is experiencing a huge current account deficit, reaching as high as $17.4 billion from fiscal year 2022 (4.6% of gross domestic product [GDP]) from $2.82 (0.8% of GDP) in the last fiscal year according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

After remittances put in a robust performance amid the pandemic—showing 5.8% growth in 2020 ($7.1 billion), remittance inflows to Sri Lanka (6.5% of GDP and a major source of foreign exchange reserves), plunged 22.7% year-on-year in 2021 ($5.5 billion) and 51.6% in January–June 2022 (box figure 1). The sharp decline resulted mainly from a dive in the official foreign exchange rate that triggered the prevalence of informal remittance channels (box figure 2). Remittances to Pakistan (9% of GDP), on the other hand, grew 20% in 2021 ($31.1 billion), following a 17.2% growth in 2020 ($26.1 billion), propelled by government incentives and a strong response from migrants to the pandemic. For the first half of 2022, remittances to Pakistan managed to grow 0.6%.

1: Monthly Remittance Inflows
(year-on-year, %)



2: Selected South Asian Currencies
(16 June 2020 = 100)



Sources: ADB calculations using data from CEIC Data Company; Government of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bank. Open Data Initiative. https://www.bb.org.bd/en/index.php/econdata/index; Government of Pakistan, State Bank of Pakistan. Economic Data. https://www.sbp.org.pk/ecodata/index2.asp; and Government of Sri Lanka, Central Bank of Sri Lanka. Economic Indicators. https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/en/statistics/economic-indicators (all accessed December 2022).

Since the onset of the pandemic, governments have offered incentives to encourage migrant workers to send remittances through formal channels. Pakistan launched the Sohni Dharti Remittance Program in 2021, which awards cash-convertible points for every remittance transaction made. Prior to this, the Roshan Digital Account enabled nonresident Pakistanis to digitally open bank accounts in Pakistan.[c]

In Sri Lanka, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka offered an additional SLRs for each dollar remitted in December 2021, on top of the SLRs2 per US dollar given earlier in December 2020, under the “Incentive Scheme on Inward Workers’ Remittances” program. Aside from this, the central bank has also borne the transaction costs of migrant remittances, up to a certain limit, starting in February 2022.

continued on next page

Box 5.1 continued

However, the policy effects were diluted by capital control and changes in foreign exchange policies that have widened the gap between official and unofficial foreign exchange rates. The official exchange rate pegged between SLRs200–SLRs203 per US dollar resulted in a huge disparity in the exchange rate offered by the central bank and the black/kerb market, estimated to be more than SLRs25 per US dollar, from July to November 2021 (Weeraratne 2021). This prompted migrant workers to use informal channels known as the "hawala" system, which offer more attractive rates. This also led to a steeper decline in formal remittances (Shivani and Ritzema 1999).[d] The intensifying economic distress of migrants' families further drove migrant workers to seek higher returns to their foreign exchange in the parallel market.

The opposite is happening in Pakistan, however, with government incentives and policy measures working effectively to attract remittances. However, this does not imply the absence of informal channels. In fact, remittances coursed through informal channels are estimated at around $7 billion–$8 billion per year as they offer better terms on the rate and transaction fees (Siddiqui 2020).

[a] Discussions between IMF and Sri Lanka are under way as of 31 July, after the IMF concluded its visit on 30 June 2022, with a view of reaching a staff-level agreement and Executive Board approval.

[b] International Monetary Fund. World Economic Outlook October 2022 Database. https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2022/October (accessed December 2022).

[c] Government of Pakistan, State Bank of Pakistan. Roshan Digital Account https://www.sbp.org.pk/rda/index.html; and Government of Pakistan, State Bank of Pakistan. Sohni Dharti Remittance Program. https://www.sbp.org.pk/sohnidharti/index.html.

[d] Shivani and Ritzema (1999) argue that about 13% of total remittances to Sri Lanka are leaked through the "hawala" system. But this share seems to have grown in the recent past, according to former deputy governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. Jayamaha (2006) noted that 30%–40% of remittances were coursed through informal institutional channels.

Sources: ADB staff using Jayamaha (2006); Shivani and Ritzema (1999); Siddiqui (2020); and Weeraratne (2021).

Russian Federation and resulted in increased demand for highly skilled migrants in the oil and education sectors, as well as low-skilled migrants in agriculture and construction. Reentry was also allowed to 300,000 migrant workers and Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Ratha et al. 2021). These developments benefited cross-border labor mobility and influenced remittance flows.

Remittances are important to several economies in Central Asia, in volume (Uzbekistan is among the top 10 remittance recipient economies) and as a share of GDP, such as in Armenia, Georgia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan (Figures 5.9a and 5.9b). Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Central Asia has experienced large inflows of Russian nationals and

Figure 5.9: Top 10 Remittance Recipient Economies in Asia and the Pacific

(a) $ billion

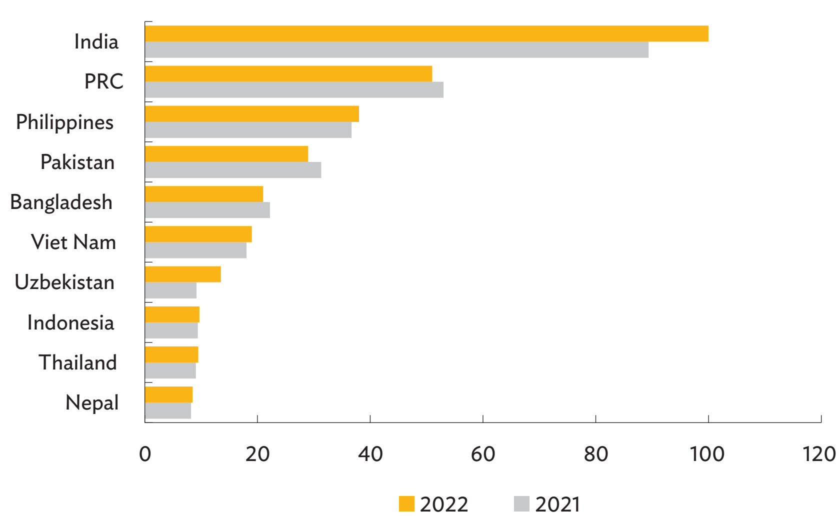


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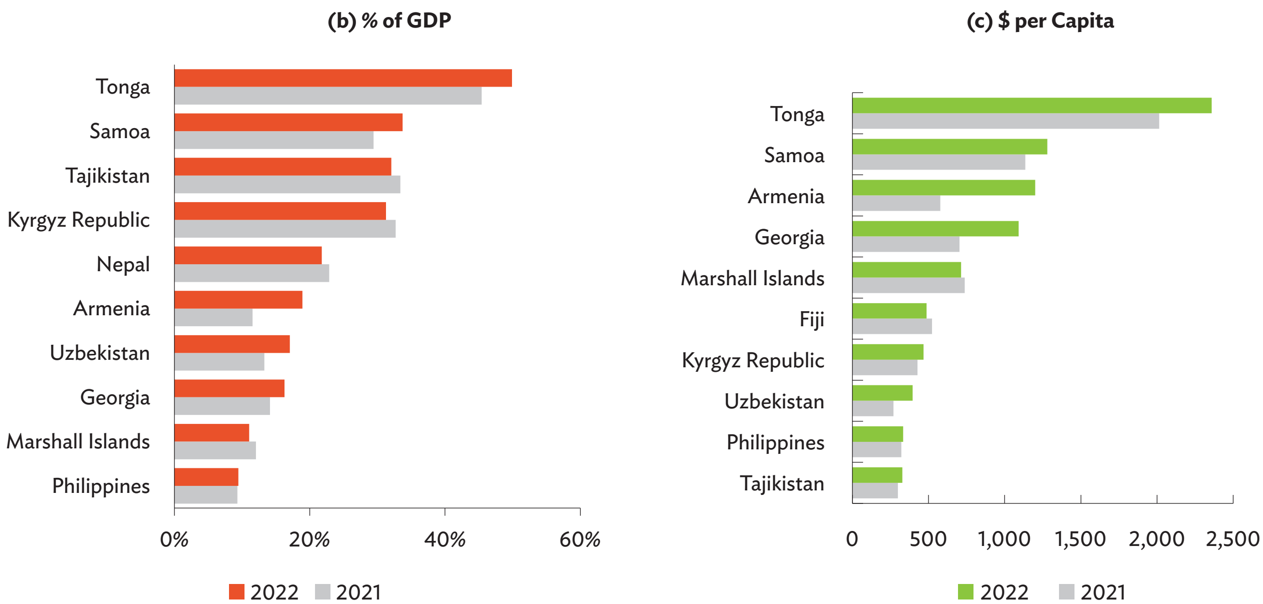
Figure 5.9 continued



PRC = People's Republic of China.

Sources: Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD). Remittances Data. http://www.knomad.org/data/remittances; International Monetary Fund. World Economic Outlook October 2022 Database. https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2022/October (both accessed December 2022); and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2022).

related money transfers into the subregion (Box 5.2). Inflows to the subregion are estimated to gallop to 41.5% in 2022 as conscription activities of the Russian Federation increase the demand for labor from Central Asia while the subregion itself is benefiting from money transfers related to the relocation of Russian businesses and skilled workers (Ratha et al. 2022b).

High inflation and interest rate hikes could lead to a significant delay in economic recovery in major migrant host economies in 2022 and onward. The Russian invasion of Ukraine adds more uncertainty to the outlook for remittance inflows to Asia.

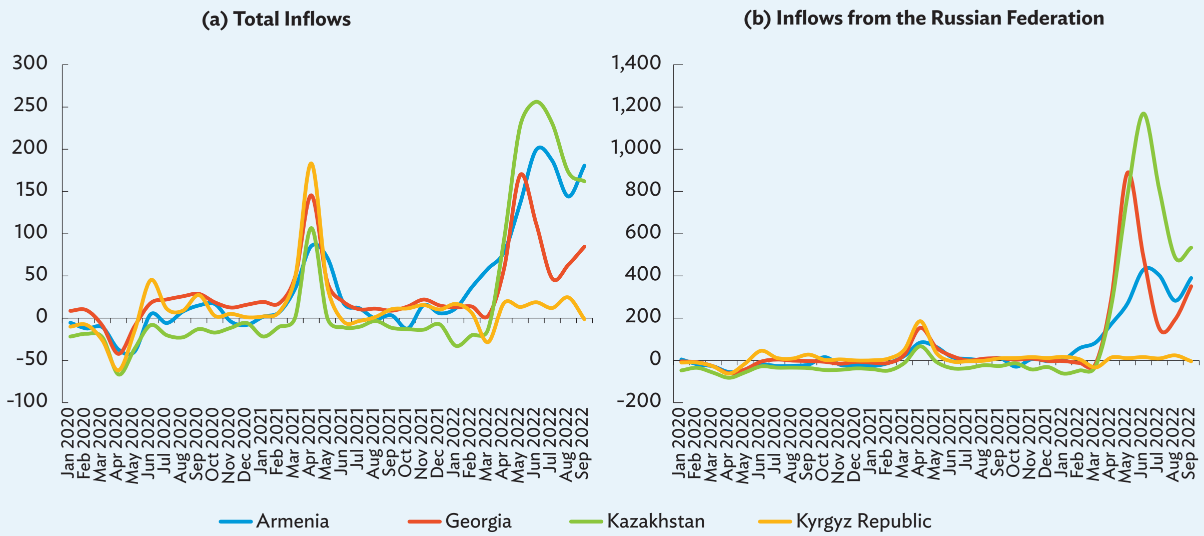
Asia has been resolute in its efforts to move out of the pandemic's shadow and advance toward a stronger, more resilient new normal. An increasing number of economies have reopened borders and have either eliminated or eased COVID-19 restrictions. In the process, the region has benefited from mobility-driven economic activities that primed the wheels of economic recovery. Remittance inflows have also been resilient despite the obstacles related to the pandemic. However, these gains have been eclipsed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which fueled rising food and gas prices, and monetary tightening in advanced economies (ADB 2022).

The redlining issue of high inflation has important implications for most economies in the region. Growth prospects for developing Asia have been revised downward to 4.2% (from 4.3%) in 2022 and 4.0% (from 4.9%) in 2023 while the regional inflation forecast was adjusted to 4.4% in 2022 and 4.2% in 2023. Prolonged season of soaring prices could thus lead to reduced real wages and loss of employment opportunities for migrants in major host economies. They could also threaten the consumption and savings possibilities for remittance-dependent households in the region. Amid rising inflationary pressures across the world, its

Box 5.2: The Impact of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine on Money Transfers to Central Asia

Central Asian economies were immediately impacted by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Within 2 months of the invasion, money transfers, which include remittances, into Kazakhstan contracted 20.0% and 13.2% in February and March 2022 (box figure 1).[a] Year-on-year monthly inflows to the Kyrgyz Republic fell 28.4% in March 2022 while flows from the Russian Federation dipped 33.2%. However, by April 2022, year-on-year growth indicated some unusually high rates of money transfers (box figure 2). Money transfers from the Russian Federation to Armenia nearly doubled and had at least quadrupled by June. Meanwhile, on average, monthly transfers to Georgia have gone up fourfold from April to August. In Kazakhstan, money transfers from the Russian Federation have grown by an average of no less than 700% (year-on-year) within the same period—inflows in April ($40.4 million) were at least 2.5 times the 2021 level, and peaked to $66.9 million in June. Money transfers from the Russian Federation have also been robust in the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan where the demand for migrant labor is rising (Usov 2022).

1: Monthly Money Transfers to Central Asian Economies (year-on-year growth, %)



Sources: ADB calculations using data from the Government of Armenia, Central Bank of Armenia. External Sector Statistics. https://www.cba.am/en/SitePages/statexternalsector.aspx; Government of Georgia, National Bank of Georgia. Statistics Data. https://nbg.gov.ge/en/statistics/statistics-data; Government of Kazakhstan, National Bank of Kazakhstan. Statistics. https://www.nationalbank.kz/en/page/statistika; and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic. External Sector of the Economy. https://www.nbkr.kg/index1.jsp?item=128&lang=ENG (all accessed December 2022).

According to relevant central bank figures, Armenia received about 40% of its annual money transfers from the Russian Federation in 2021. However, the share in the second quarter of 2022 significantly rose to 66% due to a large inflow of Russian nationals into Armenia and related funds transferred from the Russian Federation (see figure). This is also the case for Georgia and Kazakhstan where the share increased to 50%–60% from about 20% in 2021. In the Kyrgyz Republic, majority of the inflows have been from the Russian Federation.

Meanwhile, sanctions on the Russian Federation have affected international payment systems. Cards by Visa and Mastercard issued in the Russian Federation no longer work abroad and the MIR card is used in its stead. MIR bank cards are also issued by 10 economies that accept them, including Armenia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Viet Nam (Bunina 2022). In the Kyrgyz Republic, Russian nationals have been transferring or bringing large amounts of rubles in and then cashing them out as US dollars, causing a 7%–10% deficit of the currency to requirements (Imanaliyeva 2022). Although the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic had banned companies from taking dollars out of the economy, no such prohibition is in place for individuals.

Inflows of Russians to most Central Asian economies are expected to benefit the volume of money transfers accompanying the relocation of Russian-speaking families and enterprises. Households seeking to obtain international payment cards are placing their foreign currency savings in Central Asia while Russian businesses

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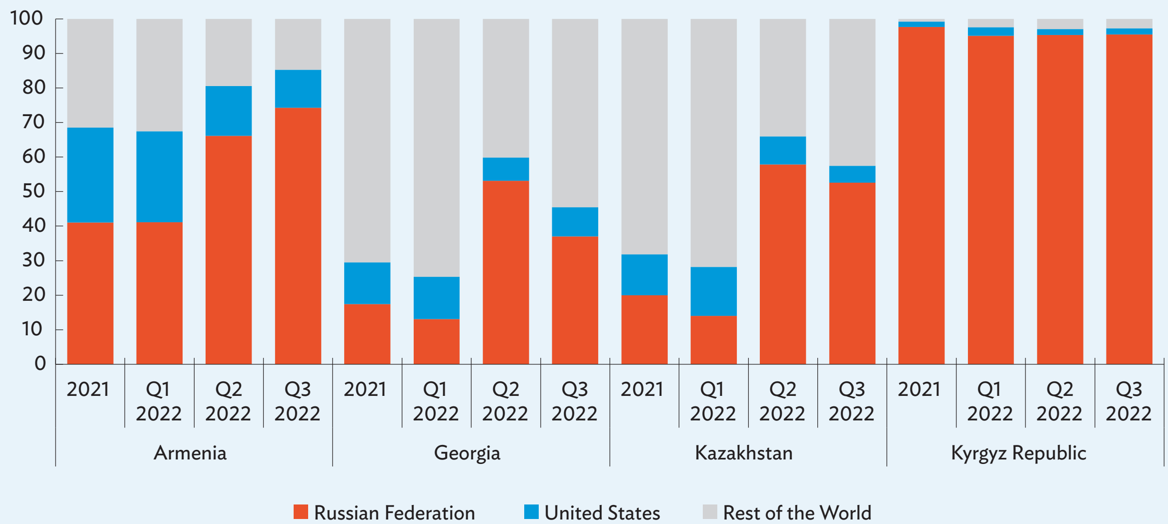
Box 5.2 continued

are attracted to special economic zones in Central Asia, such as Uzbekistan's IT Park, which appeal to digital nomads and exporters of information technology services. Hence, despite the huge uncertainty stemming from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it appears Central Asian economies are regaining their footing. High revenues from the exports of hydrocarbon, gas, and oil are benefiting Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (ADB 2022). Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic are also benefiting from reexports of computers to the Russian Federation. ADB's growth forecast for Central Asia is 4.8% in 2022 and 4.2% in 2023. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD 2022) has also set optimistic growth rates for the subregion— 4.3% in 2022 and 4.9% in 2023.

2: Source of Money Transfers to Selected Central Asian Economies (% of total)



Q = quarter.

Sources: ADB calculations using data from the Government of Armenia, Central Bank of Armenia. External Sector Statistics. https://www.cba.am/en/SitePages/statexternalsector.aspx; Government of Georgia, National Bank of Georgia. Statistics Data. https://nbg.gov.ge/en/statistics/statistics-data; Government of Kazakhstan, National Bank of Kazakhstan. Statistics. https://www.nationalbank.kz/en/page/statistika; and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic. External Sector of the Economy. https://www.nbkr.kg/index1.jsp?item=128&lang=ENG (all accessed December 2022).

[a] According to the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual (IMF 2010), remittances mainly consist of all current transfers between residents and nonresidents; and net earnings of nonresident workers. In general, being present for 1 year or more in a territory or intending to do is sufficient to qualify as being a resident. Short trips to other economies do not lead to a change of residence.

Sources: ADB staff using ADB (2022); Bunina (2022); EBRD (2022); Imanaliyeva (2022); IMF (2010); and Usov (2022).

implication for remittances is increasingly important as they are significant external sources of income in many economies in developing Asia.

Given the current high-price environment and tight financial conditions, the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, policy uncertainty, and a slowdown in global growth, the outlook for remittances shows moderation in 2022 as spikes in prices erode wages, and pandemic-related support programs end in host economies (IFAD 2022). Meanwhile, strong job growth in the US and renewed demand for migrant labor in other developed host economies will help boost the growth of remittance flows to the region.

Harnessing Remittance Resilience through Vigorous Policy Approach

Better remittance infrastructure and greater use of technology/digital channels help reduce average cost of remittances to achieve the relevant Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and promote financial inclusion.

As a lifeline to many families, bringing down the cost of remitting money will benefit migrants and their beneficiaries and encourage use of formal remittance channels. Indeed, reducing the price to remit to 3% is an SDG. According to the World Bank (2022), cutting existing remittance prices by at least 5 percentage points could save up to $16 billion a year, and for migrants from lower middle-income economies, cutting remittance fees by even 2 percentage points could translate into $12 billion of annual savings.

As of the second quarter (Q) of 2022, the average cost of sending $200 anywhere in the world was 6.0% of the remittance amount, double the SDG target (Figure 5.10a). The rate was lower in Asia, at 5.0%, but subregional variations can be significant. For instance, rates in the Pacific have been historically higher than the global rate and nearly twice the regional average. Remittance costs in Central Asia (until Q4 2021) and South Asia are lower than other subregions.

The majority of formal remittances are over-the-counter, cash-in/cash-out transactions, which are the costliest in most regions relative to other transfer channels (Figure 5.10b). Cash remittances sent through banks were lowest in Central Asia (5.6%), but rates for money sent through money transfer operators are lowest in South Asia (3.8%). Although cash sent through these operators costs less than when sent through banks, it usually comes with various additional fees across various stages of the transfer until the local currency cash equivalent is received by the intended household beneficiary from the nearest branch, which is often not near at all (Aneja and Etter 2021).

In 2020 (and 2021), lockdowns and social distancing rules hindered mobility and thus personal transactions, including through informal channels.[67] This boosted the use of digitalized remittance channels, which lifted the capture of formal remittance data. Digitalization is less costly than cash transfers and has reinforced the adoption of mobile money, the most affordable among payment instruments, averaging 2.6% in Asia and 3.5% globally, as of Q2 2022.

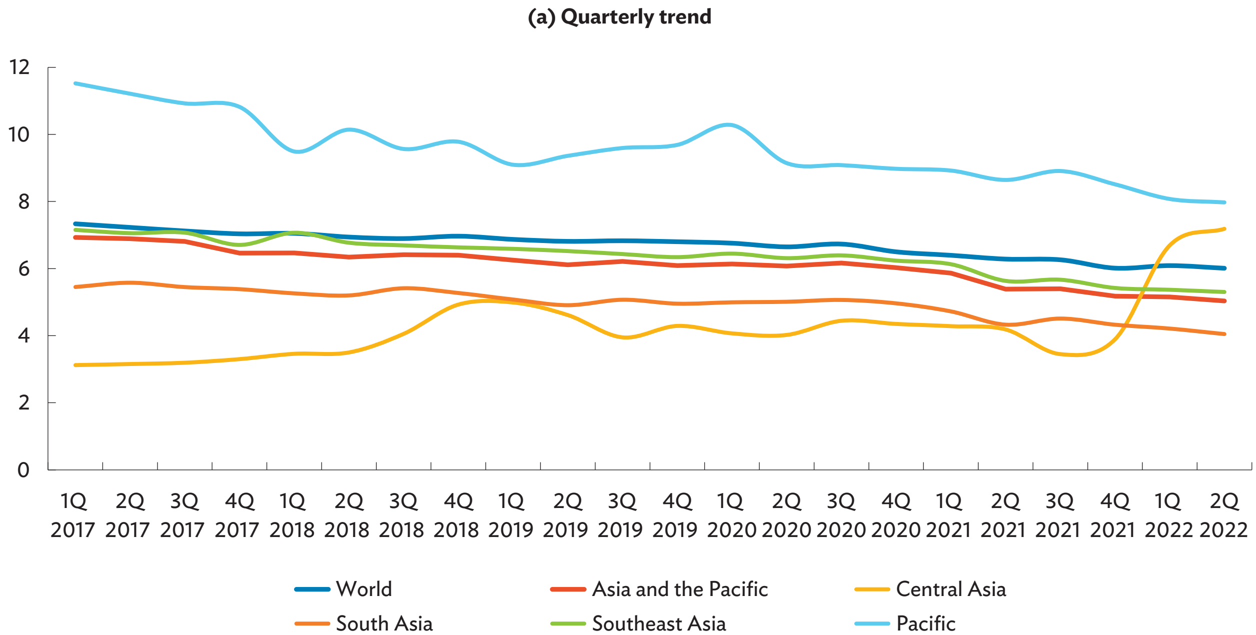
Advancing knowledge transfer on digital financial platforms could help sustain the momentum of digital usage among migrant senders and simultaneously advance the financial inclusion of migrants and their families. One example is the regional electronic know-your-customer initiative of the Reserve Banks of Australia and New Zealand which would allow digital verification of clients in the entire Pacific and more customers into the fold of banking services in economies where access to personal documents might be limited or nonexistent (Pinczewski and Capal 2022). Promoting greater transparency, such as making publicly available up-to-the-minute comparison tables indicating the cheapest way to send money from one economy to another, could also help lower remittance costs.

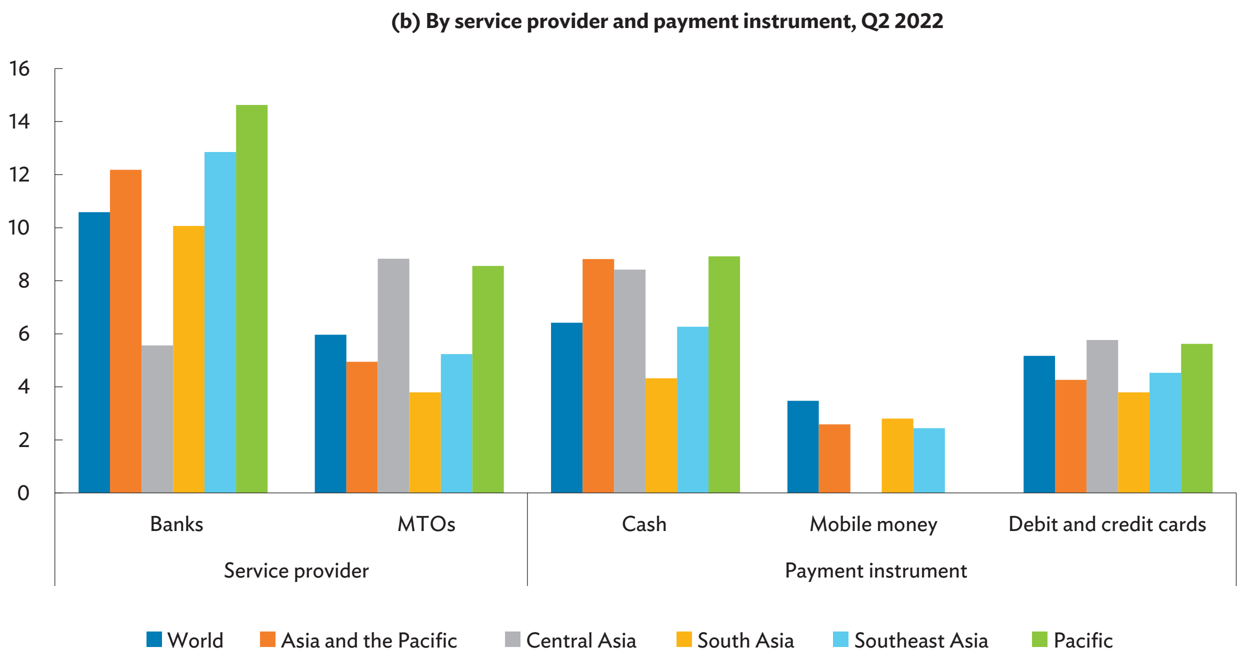
Changes in the legal and regulatory environment governing the remittance market could contribute to interoperability of cross-border remittances and further promote formal remittance channels.

The legal and regulatory environment surrounding remittances must be brought up to speed with industry changes. Outdated regulatory barriers on both sending and receiving ends result in higher and less transparent costs for the 2 billion transactions a year—most amounting to just $200–$300 each (IFAD 2018).

67 For less accessible communities or people remitting relatively small amounts on a regular basis, informal channels such as the “hawala” system, which are commonly used in Bangladesh and Pakistan, may be cost-effective in the sense that funds are sent through unregulated large networks. However, informal channels can be used as a conduit for criminal activity and distort the true picture of recipient economies’ balance of payments, which, in turn, could harm credit ratings and make it harder and more expensive to finance the kinds of large-scale initiatives needed by these economies to develop (Aneja and Etter 2021).

Figure 5.10: Average Total Cost of Remitting $200 (% of transaction amount)





MTO = money transfer operator, Q = quarter.

Source: ADB calculations using data from World Bank. Remittance Prices Worldwide. https://remittanceprices.worldbank.org/ (accessed August 2022).

Remittance families generally spent about 70% of remittances on basic needs, leaving about 30% that could be saved and invested in asset-building or income-generating activities to help families establish livelihoods and begin securing their future. However, access to financial services is key, and many families, especially in rural areas, cannot save, borrow, and invest money through formal financial services.

Reducing regulatory barriers and onboarding banks could reduce the gaps in converting remittances into savings and investment instruments. Regulators and private sector companies need to make more joint efforts to harmonize legal and regulatory frameworks between economies to support digitalization and the birth of new remittance-linked financial products. While it is true that financial inclusion has improved from 68.5% in 2017 to 76.2% in 2021, the reality remains that a substantial majority of remittance-receiving families are mostly in rural areas outside the envelope of financial inclusion.[68]

The remittance environment also depends on the level of infrastructure that serves as good foundation for advancing interoperability possibilities. To this end, Australia, Japan, and the US have partnered in funding the construction of a new undersea cable in the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, and Nauru to enhance internet connectivity (Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific 2021).

Financial products and green investments to mobilize remittance flows could promote resilience among beneficiary households and communities and improve welfare.

Remittance inflows have improved the quality of life of household beneficiaries, especially in developing economies. Although about 70% of remittances are spent on consumption needs, many remittance-receiving families consistently demonstrate a commitment to save and/or invest given the opportunity, using channels they understand and trust.[69] Whatever savings these families might have are often not sufficiently invested in productive sectors that could generate revenue streams for themselves and their immediate communities. Clearly, these gaps suggest that programs on financial literacy could be ramped up to advance the cause of financial inclusions. Greater engagement of players in the financial services industry could also bridge the gap and assist families in converting their savings into investment products that could be the first step in wealth creation. Promoting entrepreneurship using diaspora savings could have far-reaching impact in generating sustainable livelihood and contributing to community development (Ahamed 2022).

Advancing the digitalization of remittances could also make it possible to link remittance inflows into a wider suite of financial services such as savings, credit, insurance, investments, and pensions, something that is difficult to accomplish for as long as most remittances are cash-based (Aneja and Etter 2021). In Bangladesh, the government in late 2019 implemented a compulsory insurance system for migrants. Under this policy, the Wage Earners' Welfare Board provides a 50% premium of Tk500 for coverage of Tk200,000. This is also equivalent to 20% premium for a coverage of Tk500,000. The government also completed the Bangladesh Migration Crisis Operational Framework, which articulates the roles of various agencies in assisting the more than 12 million migrants in host economies during periods of emergency and crises (United Nations Network on Migration 2021).

Tourism

International Tourism Trends

Asia is showing strong recovery although international tourist arrivals remain well below those of 2019.

After being turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the global tourism sector is on the path of gradual recovery. The pace of recovery in 2021 was weak, with global tourism arrivals only 30.4% of the 2019 level (UNWTO 2022a). The pace has since picked up, fueled by the easing of COVID-19-related border restrictions, supported by improved vaccine administration, and strong pent-up demand in

[68] Data refer to the percentage of the population aged 15 and older who report having an account at any type of financial institution or using a money mobile service based on the World Bank. Global Financial Inclusion Database. https://databank.worldbank.org/source/global-financial-inclusion# (accessed December 2022).

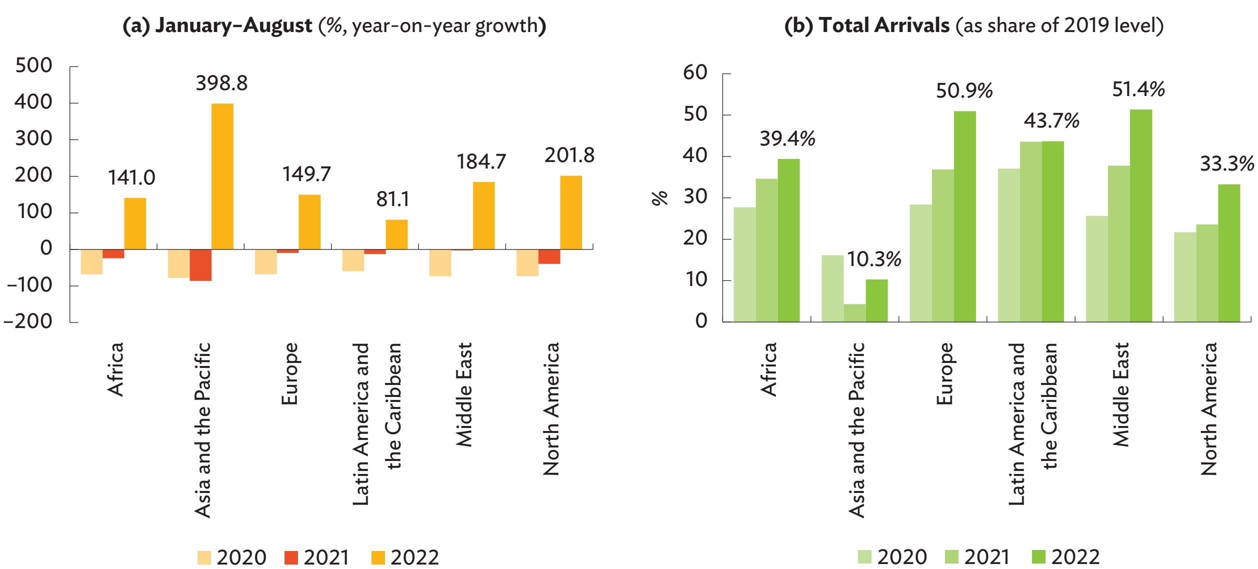
[69] Global Forums on Remittances, Investment and Development. Topic: Remittance Families and Development. https://gfrid.org/topics/remittance-families-and-development.

Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East. As a result, international tourist arrivals to major regions were 513.5 million from January to August of 2022, at least twice the 201.2 million in the same period in 2021.

By region, Asia recorded a bullish year-on-year growth in tourist arrivals (398.8%) during the first 8 months of 2022 (Figure 5.11a). However, even if cumulative arrivals to the region were five times the volume during the same months in 2021, the flow of tourists from January to August (35.3 million) was only about 10.3% of the pre-pandemic figure of 343.4 million in 2019 (Figure 5.11b). In comparison, Europe's year-on-year growth (149.7%) propelled the region to reach 50.9% of its pre-pandemic tourist arrival figure, while arrivals to the Middle East have achieved 51.4% of pre-pandemic arrivals traffic.

While tourist arrivals to Asia are trending upward, subregions vary. Data in Q3 2022 indicate an upswing for all subregions, with robust year-on-year growth rates ranging from 119.4% in Central Asia to 1148.5% for Southeast Asia, highlighting the role of easier travel requirements and open borders in recovering tourism arrivals (Figure 5.12). Despite this high year-on-year growth, arrivals to Southeast Asia were only 15% of pre-pandemic levels. Within the first 9 months of 2022, arrivals to Central Asia, and South Asia were about 50% of 2019 levels. In East Asia, the recovery of tourism will be a long road, given the restrictive travel-related policies of some economies in the region. The PRC, which until recently, maintained its grip on zero-COVID policy, by far the most stringent approach, and had resulted in severe curtailment of international travel for Chinese tourists and a huge loss to global tourism, especially for PRC-dependent tourism markets (Li et al. 2022).[70] Chinese travelers spent about $255 billion in international tourism in 2019, and outbound travel restrictions since the pandemic began have resulted in a global slump in tourism activities catering to the Chinese market (Kotoky 2022). Hong Kong, China's maintenance of restrictions, such as quarantine and testing in some jurisdictions, has starved the economy of tourists, slowing its recovery attempts and making it a relative laggard to other subregions (Riordan et al. 2022).

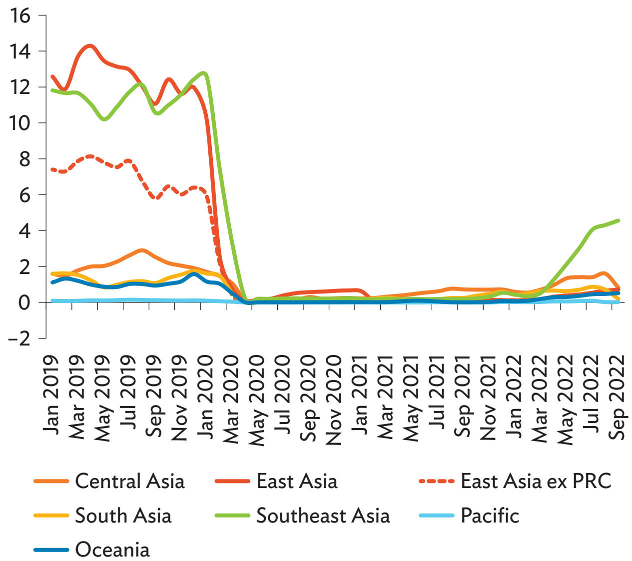
Figure 5.11: International Tourist Arrivals



Source: ADB calculations using data from United Nations World Tourism Organization. Tourism Recovery Tracker. https://www.unwto.org/tourism-data/unwto-tourism-recovery-tracker (accessed December 2022).

[70] On 7 December 2022, the PRC government unveiled a broad easing of its strict zero-COVID policy. Key changes include the following: (i) for intra-PRC regional travel, PCR tests and health codes will no longer be checked; (ii) quarantine and isolation will be allowed from home; and (iii) in high-risk areas, lockdowns will be lifted if no new case is found on the fifth day (Che, Chien, and Stevenson 2022).

Figure 5.12: Monthly Tourist Arrivals by Asian Subregions
(January 2019 = 100)



ex PRC = excluding People's Republic of China.

Source: ADB calculations using data from United Nations World Tourism Organization. Tourism Data Dashboard. https://www.unwto.org/tourism-data/unwto-tourism-dashboard (accessed December 2022).

The variation in pace of recovery is due to differences in national policies to reopen borders while being mindful of health and hygiene. For instance, nearly all Southeast Asian economies have eased COVID-19-related travel restrictions to reopen the travel industry while adopting precautionary measures (such as high vaccination rate, directives for COVID-19 infection, greater safety, and hygiene standards) and guidelines to help people live with the COVID-19 virus. Singapore, for instance, has eased various COVID-19 community measures including relaxing limits on social gathering group sizes as part of the nationwide approach to learn to live with the COVID-19 virus, while simultaneously enforcing vaccination-differentiated safety management and related health measures to complement its open-border strategies (Tan 2022).

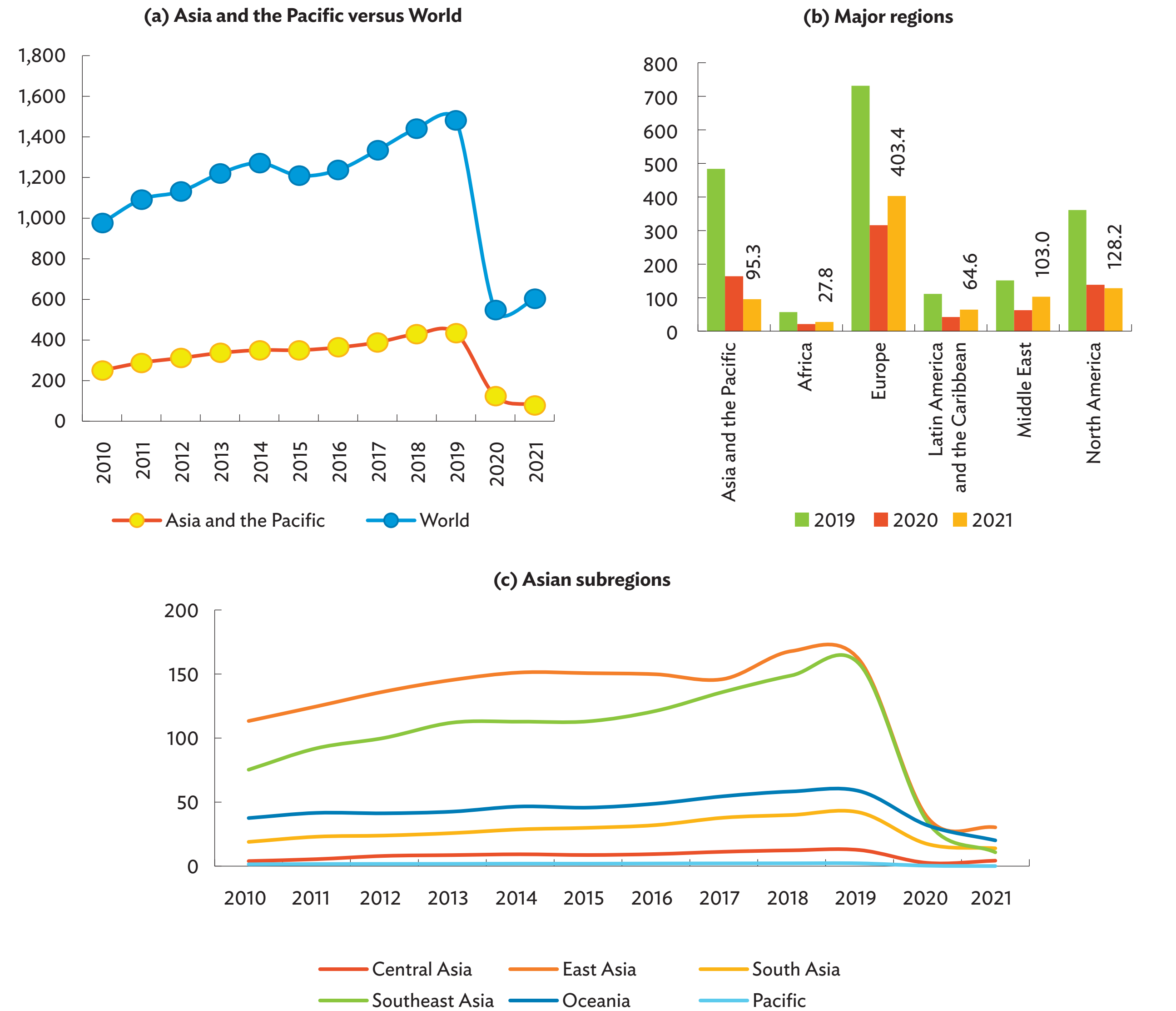
Tourism receipts reflect tourist arrivals. International tourism receipts improved to $621.0 billion in 2021 from a low of $548 billion in 2020 (UNWTO 2022a). However, this is only 42% of the $1.5 trillion of 2019 (Figure 5.13a). Similarly, in Asia, recovery in tourism receipts lagged in 2021—$95.3 billion of tourism earnings for the region were only 19.7% of the 2019 level and 58.0% of 2020 (Figure 5.13b). Europe recorded the most improvement in nominal terms, with 27.6% growth over 2020, 55.1% of the pre-pandemic level.

International tourism receipts peaked in 2019 across most of the Asian subregions (East Asia and the Pacific peaked in 2018) and plunged afterward (Figure 5.13c). Receipts contracted in 2020 and 2021 due to pandemic-related factors (with the exception of Central Asia's 70% growth in 2021). In 2021, tourism receipts to Central Asia, South Asia, and Oceania were at least one-third of the 2019 level. For the rest of the subregions, recovering tourism earnings will require more than just reopening borders and relaxing travel protocols. The blow to international tourism in 2020–2021 was the most severe since 2000 (Box 5.3).

The setback to tourism during the pandemic has hurt overall economies and external sectors, although recovery is underway. COVID-19 slashed tourism's total contribution to global GDP by 54.9% in 2020 (for $4.9 trillion in GDP loss), while recovering some ground in 2021 (Table 5.6) (WTTC 2022). In Asia, tourism's contribution to GDP likewise plunged in 2020, reaching 52% of the 2019 level in 2021. Indeed, while all subregions are inching toward the 2019 level, some are doing so faster than the others. For example, tourism's contribution to GDP in 2021 for Central Asia was 49% of the 2019 level, 36% for Southeast Asia, and 32% for the Pacific.

Export revenue from tourism activities declined steeply in 2020—the region's total export revenues from international tourism fell 71.2% in 2020 and 36.3% in 2021. Across subregions, the pandemic hurt three subregions the most—Central Asia, the Pacific, and Southeast Asia. In these subregions, export revenues from tourism in 2020 were just one-fifth of the pre-pandemic level. In 2021, Central Asia recovered to about one-third of its 2019 export revenue levels, but Southeast Asia and the Pacific were still struggling, with revenues equal to less than 10% of what they were before the pandemic struck.

Figure 5.13: International Tourism Receipts ($ billion)



Source: ADB calculations using data from United Nations World Tourism Organization. UNWTO Tourism Data Dashboard. https://www.unwto.org/tourism-data/unwto-tourism-dashboard (accessed November 2022).

The recovery of tourist arrivals in Asia is trending behind other regions due to the slow opening of borders, staggered reopening policies, and the slow pace of vaccinations.

Asia's cautious stance on reopening borders and its comparatively more restrictive travel policies have caused the region to lag behind the global average. The region has been relatively careful in reopening borders. In Q1 2021, about 33.6% of Asian destinations were not accessible compared with only 11% of destinations in the rest of the world (Figure 5.14). By Q2 2022, although the proportion of closed destinations in Asia declined to 16.8%, it was still higher than the 0.6% for the rest of the world. As more economies began eliminating most (if not all) of COVID-19 entry requirements, the share of closed destinations declined further to 1.8% by Q4 2022 for Asian destinations.

Asian economies also planned for a staggered reopening, with some opening in phases or parts of their jurisdictions. For example, Thailand followed phased

Table 5.6: International Tourism: Export Revenues and Contribution to Gross Domestic Product—Asia and the Pacific

	Export Revenue from Tourism ($ billion)			Export Revenue from Tourism (as share of 2019 level)		Total Contribution to GDP ($ billion)		
Asian Subregions	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2020**	**2021**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**
Central Asia	12.6	2.5	4.3	19.9%	33.8%	22.0	7.7	10.7
East Asia	160.9	38.1	30.3	23.7%	18.8%	2,079.9	923.8	1,081.8
Oceania	41.9	17.3	13.9	41.2%	33.3%	180.1	106.5	98.7
Pacific	157.6	34.7	10.8	22.0%	6.8%	2.9	1.1	0.9
South Asia	58.5	31.9	20.2	54.5%	34.5%	255.6	148.6	204.6
Southeast Asia	2.2	0.4	0.1	16.9%	3.5%	395.6	137.9	143.2
Asia and the Pacific	433.8	124.9	79.5	28.8%	18.3%	2,936.1	1,325.5	1,539.9

GDP = gross domestic product.

Note: Export revenue from tourism refers to the sum of international receipts from passenger travel items and transport items.

Sources: United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2022a); UNWTO. Tourism Data Dashboard. https://www.unwto.org/tourism-data/unwto-tourism-dashboard; World Bank. World Development Indicators. https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators (both accessed November 2022); and World Travel and Tourism Council. Economic Impact Reports. https://wttc.org/Research/Economic-Impact.

Box 5.3: The Sharpest Downturn in International Tourism Since 2000

Global tourism enjoyed a decade of brisk uninterrupted growth from 2010 to 2019, after weathering different crises in 2000–2009 that had constrained the flow of international tourists (box figure).

The attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City on 11 September 2001 shocked the world and had considerable impact on aviation and travel protocols. Although no airline in the United States (US) immediately failed, within 4 years, employment in the US airline industry had fallen by 28% as 150,000 jobs were lost; every major US international carrier filed for bankruptcy protection (except American Airlines); and it was not until 2005 that available airline seats reached pre-9/11 peak levels (Clark 2007, US Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics 2021). Despite the ensuing geopolitical ramifications of 9/11, international tourist arrivals grew 2.7% to 702.4 million in 2002 as growth in other regions eclipsed the decline in tourist flows in North America. In Asia, arrivals climbed 9.0% to 116.1 million in 2002.

Meanwhile, in 2002, the bombings in Bali, Indonesia caused a steep drop in tourism in Indonesia (11.2%) and in the Asian region (8.9%). The severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) viral outbreak in late 2002–2003 impacted the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong, China most severely (Cherry 2004, Little 2020). The advice of the World Health Organization was to postpone nonessential travel to affected economies, hitting Asian tourism, which had the most infected areas (ADB 2003).

An empirical study by Kuo et al. (2008) revealed that in advanced economies, infectious diseases had statistically insignificant effect on tourism flows. But in developing economies, especially where such diseases tend to be more prevalent and health infrastructure lags, the magnitude and statistical significance is much greater. For SARS, a 10% increase in the number of confirmed infections led to a decline of about 8% in international tourist arrivals to developing economies—almost twice as much as the average impact on all economies.

The global financial crisis in the second half of 2008 that caused a drop in business and consumer confidence led to a global recession that moved international tourist arrivals into negative territory in the second half of 2008 after a 5% increase in the first half (UNWTO 2009). As a result, global arrivals in 2008 increased 1.7% year-on-year while tourist arrivals to Asia rose 0.9%. In 2009, the impact of the global financial crisis on tourism manifested as a 4.2% contraction in international arrivals (–2.0% in Asia). Displaying resilience, tourism rebounded in 2010, with 76.7 million additional arrivals over 2009, or growth equivalent to 8.7% (11.7% growth for Asia). International receipts were also estimated to have increased by about 5%–6% in real terms.

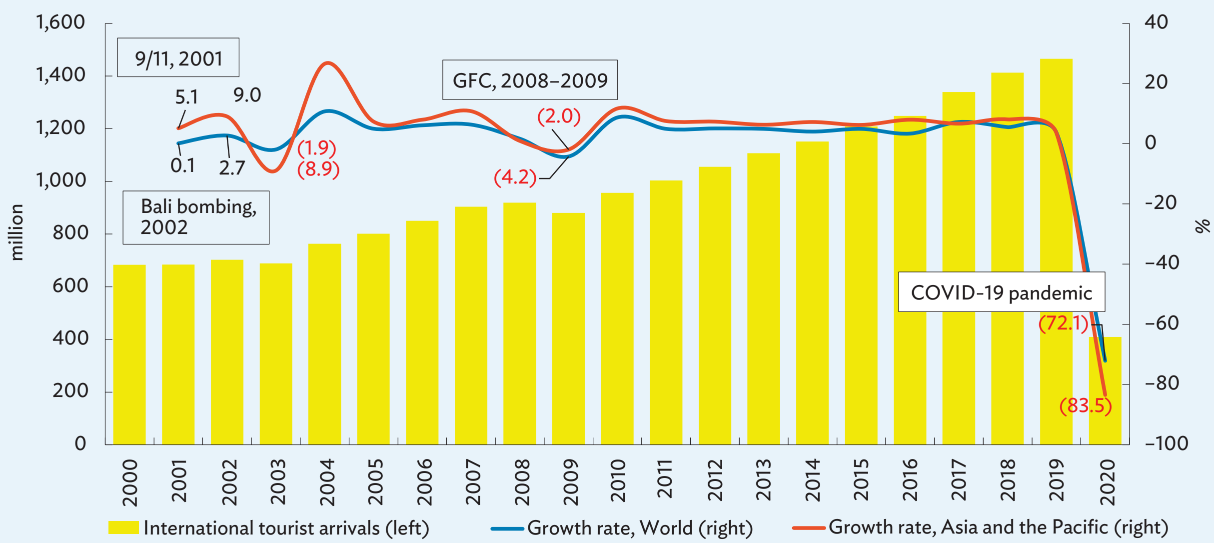
From 2010 to 2019, international tourist arrivals rose by an annual average of 4.9%. About 1.5 billion tourist arrivals were recorded in 2019. During this period, global tourism was riding high and mighty: it created 1 in every 10 jobs;

continued on next page

Box 5.3 continued

earned $1.7 trillion in export revenues; and generated $3.5 trillion in direct tourism GDP (UNWTO 2020). It was not until the first quarter of 2020, that the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent restrictions on travel and domestic mobility turned the global tourism sector on its head. All of the previous crises that the global tourism economy encountered and surpassed seemed to be "minor bumps on the road" compared with the wrath of the coronavirus pandemic (World Economic Forum 2022). Labeled as "the worst year in tourism history" by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the pandemic slashed international arrivals by 1 billion, put 100 million–120 million direct tourism jobs at risk, disproportionately diminished the employment of informal and migrant workers (particularly women and youth) and risked compromising the progress of the UN Sustainable Development Goads (Goretti et al. 2021). As a result of travel and mobility restrictions, the estimated loss in export revenues was $1.3 trillion, more than 11 times the loss recorded during the 2009 global economic crisis (UNWTO 2021).

International Tourist Arrivals and Growth Rates—Asia and the Pacific versus the World



GFC = global financial crisis.

Note: Numbers in parentheses are negative.

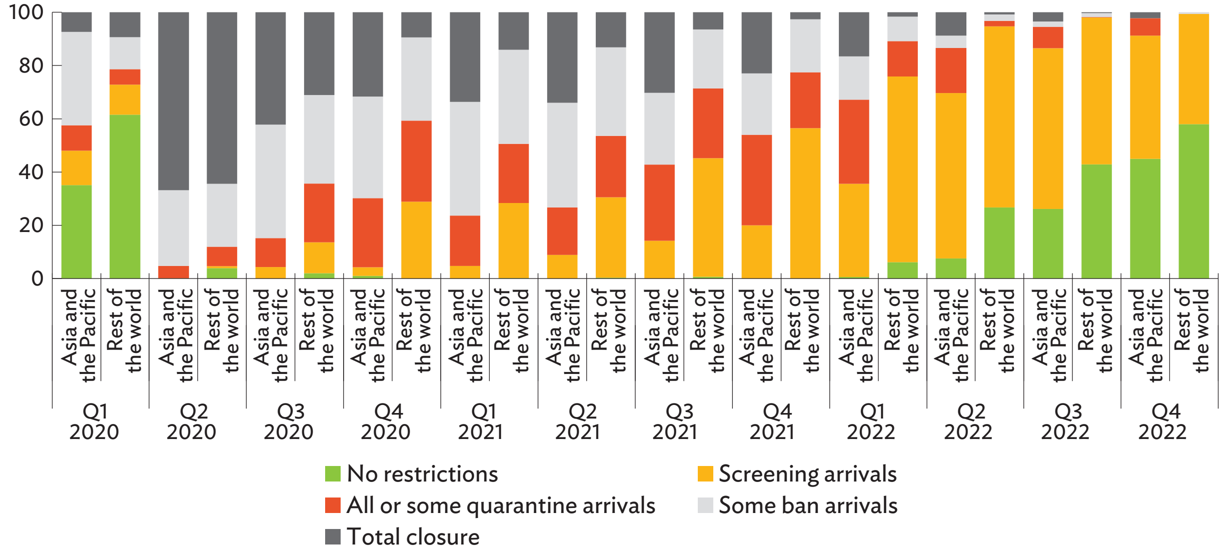
Sources: ADB calculations using data from United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2004). Tourism Barometer. https://www.unwto.org/; UNWTO. Tourism Statistics. https://www.e-unwto.org/toc/unwtotfb/current (accessed August 2022); UNWTO (2004); and World Bank. World Development Indicators. https://databank.worldbank.org/ (all accessed August 2022).

Sources: ADB staff compilation using ADB (2003); Cherry (2004); Clark (2007); Goretti et al. (2021); Kuo et al. (2008); Little (2020); US Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics (2021); UNWTO (2009, 2021, 2022b); and World Economic Forum (2022).

reopening between July 2021, when they announced the Phuket Sandbox, and July 2022, when they removed the Thailand Pass registration scheme. These initiatives led to a record an eightfold increase in average monthly arrivals, from 56,159 in June–December 2021 to 457,740 in January–July 2022.[71] Australia, which shut its borders from March 2020, began to welcome tourists only from 21 February 2022. Since then, monthly arrivals have been growing at an average rate of 25.4%, quadrupling from February (90,460) to September (371,850). Japan's decision to finally allow independent inbound tourism from 11 October 2022 immediately caused a surge in travel demand, especially for the cherry blossom season in 2023. As of January 2023, 99 economies

[71] UNWTO. Tourism Data Dashboard. Global and Regional Tourism Performance. https://www.unwto.org/tourism-data/global-and-regional-tourism-performance (accessed October 2022).

Figure 5.14: International Travel Restrictions (% of total)



Q = quarter.

Source: ADB calculations using data from University of Oxford, Blavatnik School of Government. Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker Database. https://github.com/OxCGRT/covid-policy-tracker/tree/master/data/timeseries (accessed October 2022). In Hale et al. (2021).

(of which 34% are in Europe; 13% in Asia) are without any COVID-19 restrictions.[72] These restriction-free economies accounted for 31% of arrivals and 23% of tourism receipts volume in 2019.

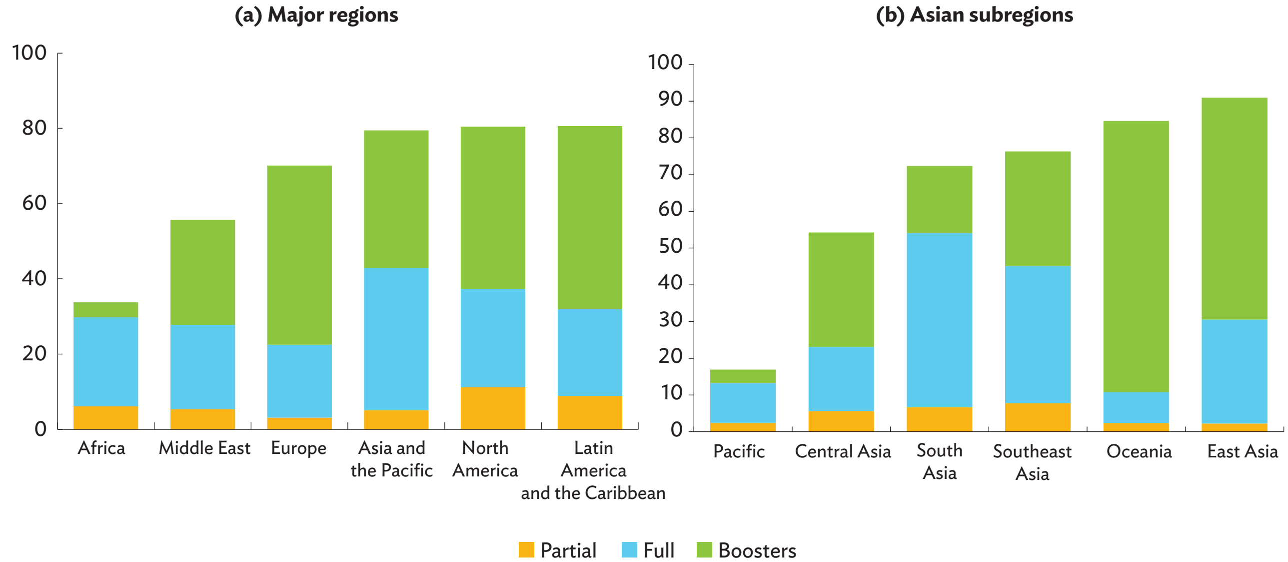
The time and pace of the rollout of COVID-19 vaccination programs was an important factor in reopening the borders and restoring travel confidence for the tourism industry.[73] In major regions where about 70% of the population have received complete COVID-19 and booster vaccination, empirical results show that lower COVID-19 infection and death rates have helped to enhance tourism recovery (Okafor and Yan 2022) (Figure 5.15a). Trends in international arrivals to these regions in the first half of 2022 indicate that the tourism economy in these regions is clearly poised for take-off.

In Asia, that path to recovery is nuanced and, in some subregions, laden with obstacles. Higher vaccination coverage does not immediately lead to higher probability of tourism recovery, as domestic COVID-19 containment policies and travelers' perceptions of health, safety, and hygiene are equally important determinants to boost cross-border mobility. In East Asia, for example, about 90% of the population have been vaccinated, but its COVID-19 restrictions remain stricter than in other subregions (Figure 5.15b). In Southeast Asia, where travel restrictions have been considerably relaxed, the percentage of the population fully vaccinated against COVID-19 ranges from a low of 60% in Timor-Leste to as high as 100% in Brunei Darussalam—82% in Malaysia; 63% in the Philippines; 75% in Thailand (Figure 5.16). The subregion was the most visited region during January–July 2022, followed by Central Asia. Meanwhile, for the Pacific, other than an uneven pace of vaccination, the region suffers from lack of transport competitiveness to kickstart a tourism recovery in the aftermath of the pandemic (Park et al. 2021).

[72] UNWTO. Tourism Recovery Tracker. https://www.unwto.org/tourism-data/unwto-tourism-recovery-tracker (accessed November 2022).

[73] The direct effects of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout on tourism recovery efforts have not yet been definitively established in literature. The key factors that could determine the successful outcomes from vaccination rollout programs include varying degrees of vaccine hesitancy, uneven distribution and/or limited availability of vaccines (especially in developing economies), and different levels of efficacies of different vaccines. This implies that high vaccination coverage alone may not be enough for the tourism sector to rebound, but that the number of vaccinated people per million population must significantly outpace the number of COVID-19 deaths per million.

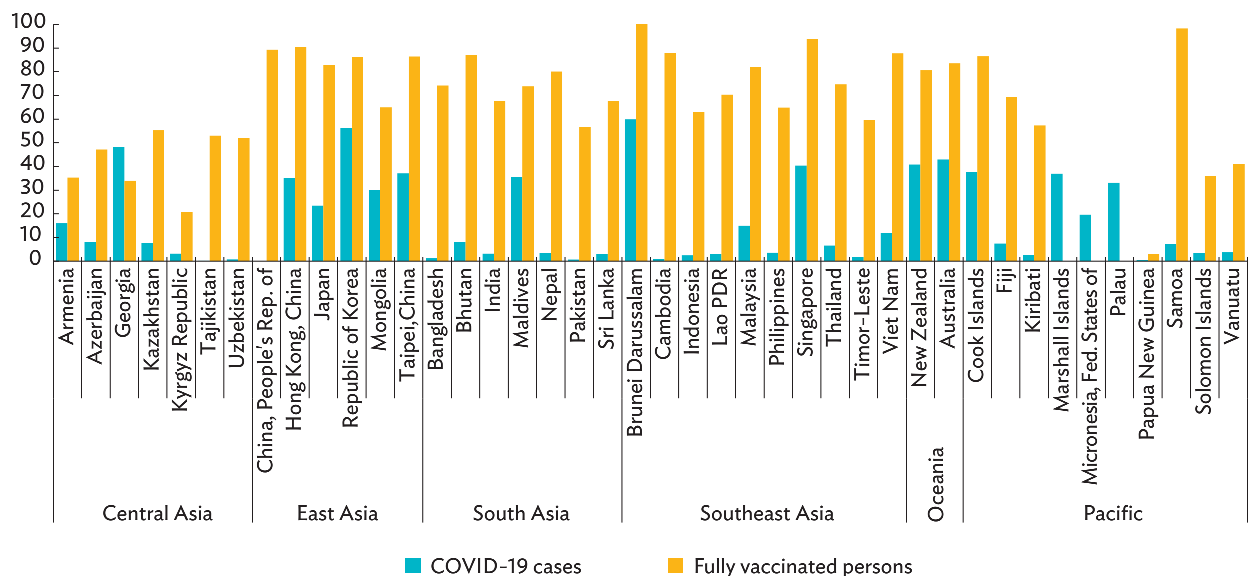
Figure 5.15: COVID-19 Vaccination Profile by Region (% of the population)



Note: Latest available data are used at the economy level.

Source: ADB calculations using data from CEIC Data Company.

Figure 5.16: Fully Vaccinated Persons and COVID-19 Cases (% of population)



COVID-19 = coronavirus disease, Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Source: ADB calculations using data from Mathieu et al. (2020).

Status of Tourism's Rebound Efforts and Experts' Outlook on Recovery

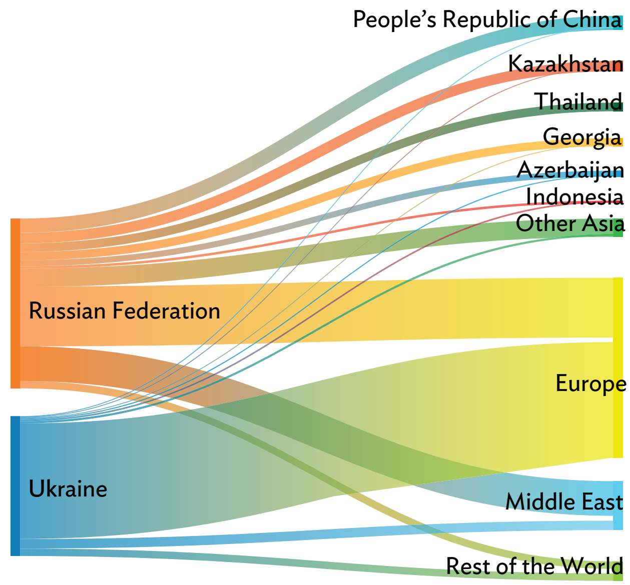
Pressures from external risks are dampening recovery momentum. Experts foresee the rebound of international tourism to 2019 levels by 2024.

The estimated global economic slowdown, rising inflation and interest rates, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine have brought additional downside risks to tourism and increased uncertainty on the return of confidence to global travel (UNWTO 2022a, 2022c). The invasion represents a downside risk for tourism even for Asia. Pre-pandemic travel patterns suggest that

Asia accounted for one-third (33.1%) of the Russian outbound tourism market. The loss of inbound tourists from the Russian Federation will affect the PRC, some Central Asian economies, and Thailand—in 2019, around half of Asia-bound travelers from the Russian Federation visited Kazakhstan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Thailand (Figure 5.17). In the case of Ukraine, its outbound travelers are mostly Europe-bound—only 2.6% visited Asia. The longer-term impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine would be through the effects of airspace restrictions and rising oil prices which, in turn, could impact airfares and stall the recovery of international travel (Figure 5.18).

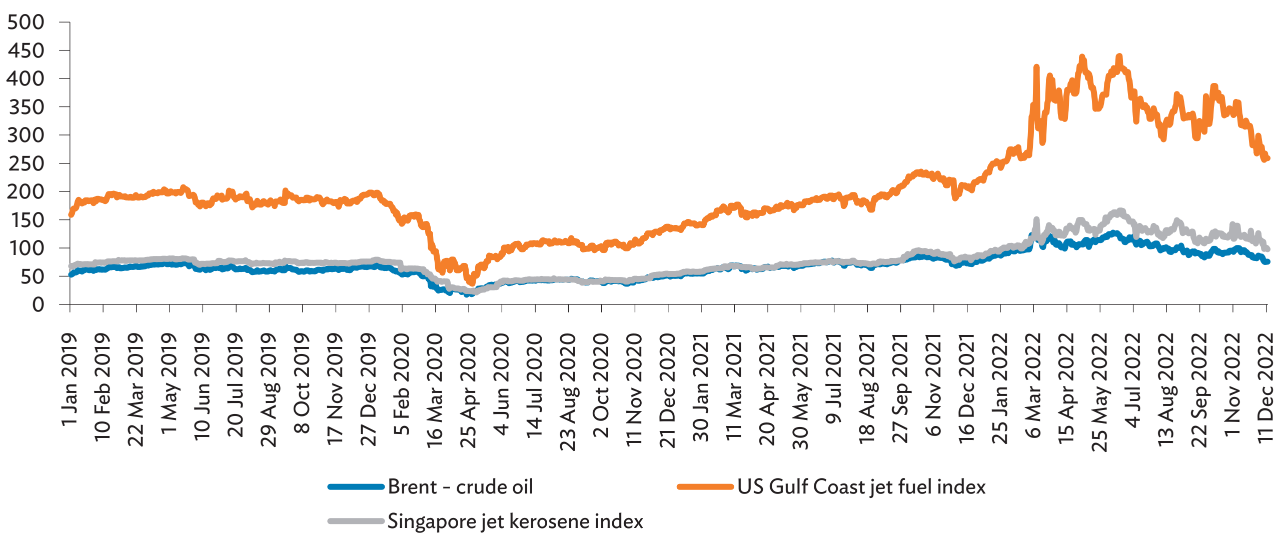
Tourism recovery is also affected by rising oil prices, which is making travel expensive. Airlines, which have just started to return to normal operations, are under pressure from soaring jet fuel prices—in Asia, jet fuel prices are up 73.3% year-on-year (Figure 5.16).[74] This affects the ability of airlines to offer competitive airfares and a range of flights they can operate (Bowerman 2022). In addition, consumer travel plans will be more discerning,[75] amid reduced purchasing

Figure 5.17: Outbound Tourism from the Russian Federation and Ukraine, 2019



Source: ADB calculations using data from United Nations World Tourism Organization. Tourism Satellite Accounts. http://statistics.unwto.org (accessed December 2022).

Figure 5.18: Crude Oil and Jet Fuel Price Indexes



Source: ADB calculations using data from Bloomberg.

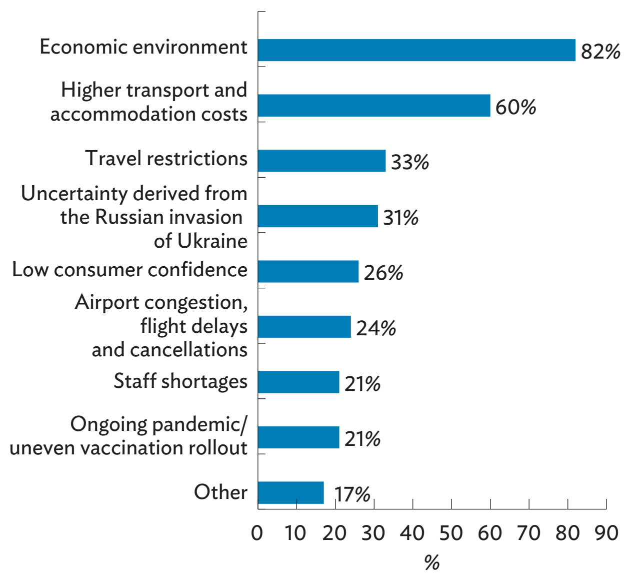
[74] Based on average Singapore jet kerosene spot prices from January to November 2021 and for the same months in 2022, data accessed from Bloomberg.

[75] A survey in the United Kingdom indicated that the rising cost of living, rising cost of fuel, and personal finances are the top three constraints to taking an overnight trip (Visit Britain 2022).

power and discretionary incomes due to rising interest rates and inflation arising from supply chain disruption since the pandemic.

Results of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Confidence Index survey conducted for the UNWTO Panel of Experts in September 2022 revealed that 78% see better prospects for 2022. About 27% of experts see a potential return of international arrivals to 2019 levels in 2023 (down from 48% in the May 2022 survey), while 61% believe it will occur in 2024 or later.[76] Globally, improvements in the economic environment, reining in high prices, and continuous easing of travel restrictions will help boost the recovery of global tourism (Figure 5.19).

Figure 5.19: Barriers to Recovery of Global Tourism



Note: Data were published in September 2022.

Source: UNWTO (2022a).

In Asia, the easing/removal of travel restrictions and accelerated vaccination rollout to further control the pandemic will benefit ongoing tourism recovery efforts in the region. A survey by AirAsia Philippines (2022) of 1,605 respondents indicated that 60% are willing to travel domestically and at least 50% are willing to travel internationally in case travel restrictions are further relaxed. Meanwhile, travel sentiment remains robust among Europeans, with 58% planning to travel at least twice despite rising inflation, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the ongoing pandemic (European Travel Commission 2022).

Meanwhile, the World Travel and Tourism Council estimates an annual average growth rate of 5.8% from 2022 to 2032 in international tourism versus the 2.7% increase in global GDP, and the creation of 126 million new jobs within the next decade (WTTC 2022). The travel and tourism industry's portion of GDP is forecast to reach $8.4 trillion in 2022 and $9.6 trillion in 2023 globally, marking the return to its pre-pandemic level. Tourism jobs are projected to recover to 324 million in 2023. In Asia, travel and tourism's contribution to GDP is set to hit $2.7 trillion in 2022, before returning to the 2019 level in 2023. Ultimately, the pace and expanse of the tourism recovery will depend on how cross-economy policy responses develop as the pandemic evolves (Goretti et al. 2021).

Essential Focus Areas for Sustainable Tourism Recovery

In Asia, a proper reboot of the tourism economy requires addressing the challenges facing the sector even before the pandemic.

Even before COVID-19, the region's tourism sector was facing several challenges. These included a narrow source market, over-tourism, infrastructure and connectivity, informal economy, and a lack of data collection and analysis across tourism value chain activities. Several tourism-dependent economies also entered the pandemic "with limited fiscal space, weak public sector balance sheets, inadequate external buffers, and foreign exchange revenues concentrated in tourism," which made managing the extreme repercussion of the pandemic severely challenging (Goretti et al. 2021). Post-pandemic recovery in Asia will need policy options that build sustainability and resilience. While some of these can be developed at the domestic level, others need greater regional cooperation to address the prolonged challenges.

[76] In UNWTO (2022b), it was forecast that 55% to 70% of international arrivals will reach pre-pandemic levels in 2022.

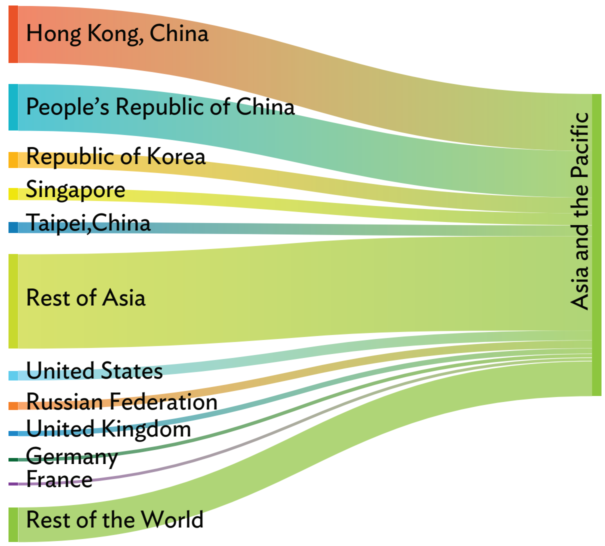
Expand tourism markets by recalibrating approaches to economic partnerships and forging diverse ties outside of traditional sources of international visitors.

Tourism-dependent economies must build strategic partnerships and explore new source markets other than their traditional ones. Tourism in Asia is driven highly by arrivals from East Asian economies—in 2019, 47.0% of total tourist arrivals to Asia were from Hong Kong, China (87.4 million); the People's Republic of China (70.3 million); the Republic of Korea (23.3 million); Taipei,China (16.5 million); Japan (15.5 million); and Mongolia (2.1 million) (Figure 5.20). These five economies were also among the top intraregional source markets and accounted for 59.5% of intra-Asian travelers in 2019. Leading extraregional visitors to Asia include the US (14.6 million), the Russian Federation (11.9 million), the UK (7.2 million), Germany (4.5 million), and France (3.8 million). With the onset of COVID-19 in 2020, arrivals from the top source markets of intra-Asian tourism saw a year-on-year drop of 93.2% (200.2 million). The same from the leading extra-Asian markets fell by 90.9% (34.1 million), showing relatively lesser vulnerability when compared with Asian travelers.

While Asia must capitalize on its traditional source market of neighboring economies, it should also explore ways to attract more international tourists from non-regional markets. Outbound tourism may remain subdued in the coming year as the PRC remains relatively closed to overseas leisure travel even when many economies are open to PRC travelers. To compensate for the revenue loss from fewer PRC tourists, Asian economies should work to restore traveler confidence from existing source markets. They can build partnerships with local brands of the source economies to generate familiarity and instill confidence and can secure sustainable destination labels for tourist spots and hotels to convince people to travel.

The region should also pay attention to alternative market sources and cooperate on common or compatible travel standards. Adopting best practices that include accelerating the pace of vaccination can contribute to more effective tourism recovery. Better coordination and communication toward harmonized travel protocols can expedite efforts to reinvigorate tourism. For instance, there have been

Figure 5.20: Source Markets for Inbound Tourism in Asia and the Pacific, 2019



Source: ADB calculations using data from United Nations World Tourism Organization. Tourism Satellite Accounts. http://statistics.unwto.org (accessed December 2022).

discussions of an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-recognized digital vaccination certificate, but 3 years into the pandemic, such a mutually recognized health measure, which would have been an ideal take-off point for harmonization of related travel protocols within the subregion, has yet to come into existence. In addition, the economic effects of the travel shutdown on jobs, businesses, and livelihood have all contributed to the reduced financial capacity to travel, in addition to the different perceptions about health risks and travel safety. Hence, despite the loud volume of so-called revenge travel and pent-up demand, predicting travel flows remains an exercise of uncertain possibilities (Bowerman 2022).

Government and destination management organizations should enhance partnerships to help restructure the sector to lure new kinds of travelers. As more borders reopen and work arrangements become more flexible, governments can benefit from leveraging this new normal and work with industry players and other stakeholders to better capture this newly emerging market segment. Thailand, a leading tourism economy in Asia, is riding the potential of the new normal with its systematic shift from mass tourism to more higher value-added tourism using the DASH Program (Box 5.4).

Box 5.4: Thailand's Tourism Transformation Approach: DASH Model

Thailand was the most visited destination in Southeast Asia until the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic hammered its tourism industry. From an annual average of 37.9 million visitors in 2017–2019, arrivals plunged 82.3% to 6.7 million in 2020 and 0.4 million in 2021.

Realizing the immense vulnerability to its tourism sector to external global health shocks, mobility restrictions, and limited source markets, Thailand has embarked on a strategic, multipronged approach to revitalize and transform its tourism industry toward a stronger and sustainable, more responsible, more digital, and more inclusive tourism.

Using a "DASH" model to underpin its transformative goals and action plans, Thailand intends to boost ***domestic travel*** by focusing on both tourists and tourism operators; ***accelerate demand*** by diversifying its source markets and targeting high-income segments; ***shape supply*** toward quality and sustainable income for all sectors by focusing on responsible tourism and digitalization; and ***healing*** the Thai economy through tourism by leveraging the 5Fs (food, film, fashion, festival, and fight) and 4Ms (music, museum, master, and meta).

The DASH model, focused on a domestic tourism transformation, is targeting 160 million trips and B656 billion from specific segments for innovative travel experiences—including "workcation," "staycation," wellness, sports, and responsible tourism. In international tourism, Thailand is looking to achieve an immediate target of 10 million international tourists and revenues of B625 billion by the end of 2022, in light of formally recognizing COVID-19 as an endemic virus and fully lifting entry requirements related to the pandemic from 1 October 2022 (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2022a).

This diversification approach is banking on strong intraregional ties, especially in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—in 2019, 79.2% of international visitors to Thailand were intraregional, of which 35.4% were from ASEAN economies. Recent bilateral initiatives include working with India and the Republic of Korea, as well as with Canada, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye to boost bilateral tourism flow (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2022b, 2022c, 2022d, 2022e, 2022f). Meanwhile, the "Amazing Thailand Workplace Paradise" campaign is marketed to entice remote workers from long-haul international markets. A long-term resident visa of up to 10 years (and extendable) has been introduced for high-net-worth foreigners to live and do business in Thailand, with the view of attracting 1 million visa holders under the scheme and generating B1 trillion in investments and real property sales in the next 5 years. On the other hand, the short haul international segment is targeting leisure travelers, students, and digital nomads. To push sustainability across the tourism value chain, tourism enterprises are encouraged to adopt the bio-circular-green model into their regular operations, such as adopting the use of renewable energy in accommodation infrastructures.

International tourism receipts accounted for 11% of gross domestic product (GDP) ($59.7 billion) in 2019 but plunged to $5.1 billion (or 1% of GDP) in 2021. The pickup in arrivals during the first three quarters of 2022 offer the possibility that travel receipts have begun recovery and will continue to do so well into 2023/2024. As Thailand continues to drive investments in infrastructure and facilities supporting tourism, and induces encouraging GDP growth, one could look forward to the return of a vibrant tourism industry as a key contributor to growth in the short and medium term.

Sources: ADB staff using Tourism Authority of Thailand (2022a , 2022b, 2022c, 2022d, 2022e, 2022f).

Managing volumes of tourist inflow must be in line with the goals of protecting and preserving heritage and cultural sites and the environment.

Targeting high arrival numbers was the pre-pandemic norm of the Asian tourism strategy, backed by the premise that more visitors would lead to more tourism revenues. But this strategy compromised the areas of tourism management tasked with assessing tourist inflows against the costs of hosting too many visitors. Mass tourism, which is associated with over-tourism, ensued in many go-to places in Asia. Too many visitors in each place and time undermine the tourism experience by focusing on tourism's natural assets and aggravating problems of pollution, sewage, and wastewater management, environmental degradation, and even caused the destruction of some important cultural and heritage sites. Examples of destinations that fell prey to over-tourism include Boracay in the Philippines, Maya Bay in Thailand, and Sipadan Island in Malaysia. Mass tourism could also result in the gentrification of tourist-heavy neighborhoods, which raise the cost of living to the point that even the locals could be forced to relocate.

Tourists are motivated to visit Asian destinations primarily because of the local landscapes, biodiversity, heritage, and cultures, making it imperative to retain and preserve as much natural resources while adapting to the changing social, environmental, and climatic conditions (The ASEAN Post 2018). Incentivizing measures to help distribute tourism traffic throughout the year could reduce the potential for hordes of tourists to chafe against environmentally friendly tourism action plans. Destinations could have caps on visitor numbers during peak season and instead offer discounted rates at other times of the year. A destination could also temporarily close to allow for some of the environmental damage caused by mass tourism to be repaired.

Fortify investments in tourism infrastructure and harness (digitalization) technology to promote sustainability and evidence-based policy making.

Mobility and connectivity are fundamental drivers of a sustainable and inclusive tourism sector. Post COVID-19, transport, hygiene, health care, and internet connectivity assume great importance in travelers' choices of tourist destination. Investments in this infrastructure are thus essential to improve tourism readiness for Asian destinations. For example, in ASEAN, while the number of passenger arrivals grew by an annual average of 9.5% from 2008 to 2019, the international aircraft traffic increased 7% annually over the same period. These trends must be studied alongside gateway development plans to ensure there are enough airports and means of transport to support tourism growth. At the subregional level, these types of investment needs will vary. For instance, Central Asia, with its nascent tourism sector, stands to benefit from rapid investments in all modes of transport to boost connectivity.[77]

Further investments in the physical and technological infrastructure are necessary to enhance the competitiveness of Asian tourism. Greater public–private engagement should be encouraged to facilitate a shift toward digitally enabled self-guided tourism that may not require group travel. With greater digitalization, governments should work with small and medium-sized enterprises to enable them to embrace digital tools and capabilities to increase the resilience of their business operation. Reskilling and training of tourism employees will be crucial to adjust to the new normal, while mitigating adverse impact of job loss in the sector. Accordingly, governments, private players, and tourists should work together to create transparency and enable data flow among tourist sending and receiving destinations.

Contribute to promoting tourism's social safety structure by addressing informality in employment.

The informal segment is an integral part of the nature of Asian tourism. This is because most tourism work and businesses are seasonal, and the regulations and enforcement of laws related to legal hiring and remuneration practices are often weak. Most tourism workers are employed on a part-time or occasional basis, or as an additional job, and the sector is characterized by high turnover and limited access to social safety nets (Goretti et al. 2021).

Some economies employ migrants in their tourism industry, particularly lower-wage workers from neighboring economies or workers from rural areas within the same economy. In Australia, for instance, migrants employed in the tourism and hospitality

[77] Among the recent initiatives in Central Asia to address the connectivity issue while promoting collaboration to deepen tourism and cultural linkages is the opening of regular flights on the Almaty–Yerevan route, providing impetus to the development of mutual tourism between Kazakhstan and Armenia (Kazinform 2022). Meanwhile, India has expressed its willingness to cooperate, invest, and build connectivity within Central Asia (Schulz 2022).

industry are one of the largest users of temporary work visas. In Thailand, it is estimated that a fifth of workers in the hospitality sector come from the low-wage Southeast Asian economies. In ASEAN, nearly 97% of unemployed migrants in tourism have no access to their host economy's social safety nets (Goretti et al. 2021). Strong bilateral and regional cooperation are necessary to address tourism informality in the region.

Refocusing on resilience, inclusivity, and innovation (creative transformation) will boost industry strength and generate quality tourism products.

The pandemic has invited a rethink of medium- and long-term tourism strategies. The crisis thus brings with it the opportunity to align the tourism sector toward a more resilient, human-centered future (ILO 2021). Economies must redesign their tourism models, while creating opportunities for diversification within and beyond the industry, through policy support and structural reforms. There's no standard template to reinvigorate each tourism economy. The road to recovery will differ, just as the new normal for international tourism will be unique for each economy. Asian destinations must shift their messaging from the traditional sun-sea-and-sand type of tourism to one that is more interactive, environment-friendly, and engages the local community. Trends indicate a growing demand for formerly niche tourism products involving nature, heritage, and cultural experiences such as ecotourism, mountain tourism, food and wine tourism, health tourism, farm tourism, spiritual tourism, and even senior citizen tourism.

Regional cooperation remains crucial to accelerate tourism recovery.

The global tourism industry has endured the intense pressure of rebirth and transformation. With the pandemic in its third year, regional cooperation among economies remains of great relevance for recovery and sustainability. ASEAN has always paid great attention to promoting intraregional tourism as its policy priority. It has developed the ASEAN Tourism Forum, a cooperative regional effort to promote the ASEAN region as one tourist destination, and has also endorsed the ASEAN declaration on digital tourism to use digital means to improve the competitiveness of the sector. It has also signed the ASEAN–EU Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement, the world's first bloc-to-bloc air transport agreement that allows airlines of ASEAN and the EU to fly any number of passenger and cargo services between both regions. Not only will this arrangement enhance passenger and air cargo traffic, it will also provide cooperation between ASEAN and the EU in areas such as aviation safety, air traffic management, consumer protection, and environmental and social issues (Government of Singapore, Ministry of Transport 2022). Meanwhile, the Government of Cambodia, the host of the 40th ASEAN Tourism Forum, called on tourism ministers and health institutions of ASEAN member states to develop a common ASEAN-wide system for the certification of full vaccination—a vaccination passport or digital health pass—for the region and to gradually ease travel restrictions while providing the highest level of vigilance (Phnom Penh Post 2022).

The enthusiasm of regional cooperation also finds its way in how tourism transformation is approached at the national or bilateral level. One example is the Philippines, which has recently embarked on a series of initiatives to reinforce its bilateral and regional ties with major tourism partners while boosting relations with new markets (Rocamora 2022). It has renewed its tourism cooperation with Brunei Darussalam and Thailand for 2022–2028 and is crafting a new tourism cooperation agreement with Malaysia to revive arrivals which had declined by 10.2% between 2015 and 2019. A joint working group to implement tourism cooperation programs with the Republic of Korea is also expected to restore the volume of arrivals. As part of its market diversification efforts, potential partnerships are being explored with Israel and the EU, while discussions with Japan aim to foster deeper bilateral relations in the travel and tourism segment.

The pandemic has provided many interesting lessons and opened areas of vulnerabilities. While much can be resolved by multifaceted national policies, addressing complex challenges of concentrated source markets, inadequate transport and internet connectivity, and regulating environment degradation will require regional cooperation. This will enable pooling of resources and development of commensurate cross-border rules for sustainable and resilient movement of people across borders.

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