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## Migration trends of Southeast Asian women to Korea period 2009 – 2022<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*Over the past decades, the number of international migrants has increased sharply worldwide. This is a common phenomenon, taking place throughout the process of human development under the influences of the political, economic, cultural or social context of the originating or receiving country.*

*This paper will focus on researching the migration trends of Southeast Asian women to Korea based on statistics; From there, some conclusions are drawn about the situations, characteristics as well as predicting the migration trend of Southeast Asian women to Korea. The research object is the migration trend of Southeast Asian women to Korea, focusing mainly on the period from 2009 to 2022.*

**Keywords:** *migrant women, Southeast Asia, Korea, from 2009 to 2022*

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## Introduction

Over the past decades, the number of international migrants has increased sharply worldwide. Clause 7, Article 3 of Vietnam's 2003 Population Ordinance defines "Migration is the movement of population from one country to reside in another country, from one administrative unit to another". Tran Thi Hong Minh (2021) also defines migration as follows: "Migration is the change of human residence, from one territorial unit to another within a certain period of time, every year or 5 years in the periodic census". This is a common phenomenon, taking place throughout the process of human development under the influence of the political, economic, cultural or social context of the originating or receiving country. And the motivation to migrate often comes from many factors, of which the most important factors are income and the search for development opportunities. In Southeast Asia, migration in general and working migration in particular is one of the characteristics of the region, and is also one of the reasons for economic growth and regional development. Besides intra-bloc migration (migration between Southeast Asian countries), the trend of extra-bloc migration (from Southeast Asia to countries in other regions) is also becoming more and more vibrant. Korea, as a developed country with a dynamic economy in Asia, is a promising destination for many Southeast Asian citizens. However, the trend of mass migration can lead to a series of problems related to health, human rights, or security and stability in the receiving country. Analyzing the migration trend of a specific population will help provide an overall view, thereby helping to make accurate predictions, which is the basis for policy making as well as finding solutions to the problem. mathematics related to migration issues, or multicultural society. This study will focus on studying the migration trends of Southeast Asian women to Korea based on statistics; From there, we draw some conclusions about the situation, characteristics as well as predict the migration trend of Southeast Asian women to Korea in the near future.

### 1. Subject and scope of research

In a volatile world economic and political context, international migration is increasingly becoming an issue receiving attention from the international community. Today, the complex effects of the world context on international migration are impossible to measure, however, statistical data on international migration can help us better understand its characteristics. main causes and consequences of this activity. In each country, awareness of building a statistical system related to migration is emphasized, in order to serve effective policy making based on reliable and relevant statistical data sources. update. Depending on each country's policy, statistical data can be collected by different ministries, or gathered and published by a certain authority.

As stated in the introduction, this study focuses on analyzing the migration situation of Southeast Asian women to Korea. Therefore, the research object is the migration trend of Southeast Asian women to Korea, the research space is Korea and the research period is from 2009 to 2021. Data used for the research The study is official statistics published by the Korea Statistics Office (KOSIS) at the website <https://kosis.kr/>. In order to clarify the trends as well as fluctuations in the migration trend of women from Southeast Asian countries to Korea in recent years, the writer focuses on two specific data sources: 1) data on the epidemic. international transfers (국제이동) from Southeast Asian countries to Korea, provided by the Korean General Statistics Office. The numbers were published from 2000-2021, focusing on the number

of women entering Korea by each nationality and each year; 2) data on foreigners residing in Korea (체류외국인) in the period from 2009 - 2022 provided by the Immigration Management Office - Ministry of Justice. Because the published statistical data have differences in time periods as above, to increase the accuracy, science, and persuasiveness of the research results, the writer will only focus on analyzing statistical data in the same period. a statistical period of the Ministry of Justice is the period from 2009 to 2022<sup>2</sup>.

Regarding the scope of research, both of these data sources include statistics including short-term migrants such as tourists, news reporters, public service...; and also those who enter the country with the goal of longer-term migration such as studying abroad, technical training, working (seasonal workers, long-term workers), or migrating for marriage. But in this article, in order to have an overview, the writer will analyze based on the overall number of people entering and residing in Korea (including both short-term and long-term migration); Investigations and analyzes of the number of people entering the country for each specific migration purpose will be carried out in subsequent studies.

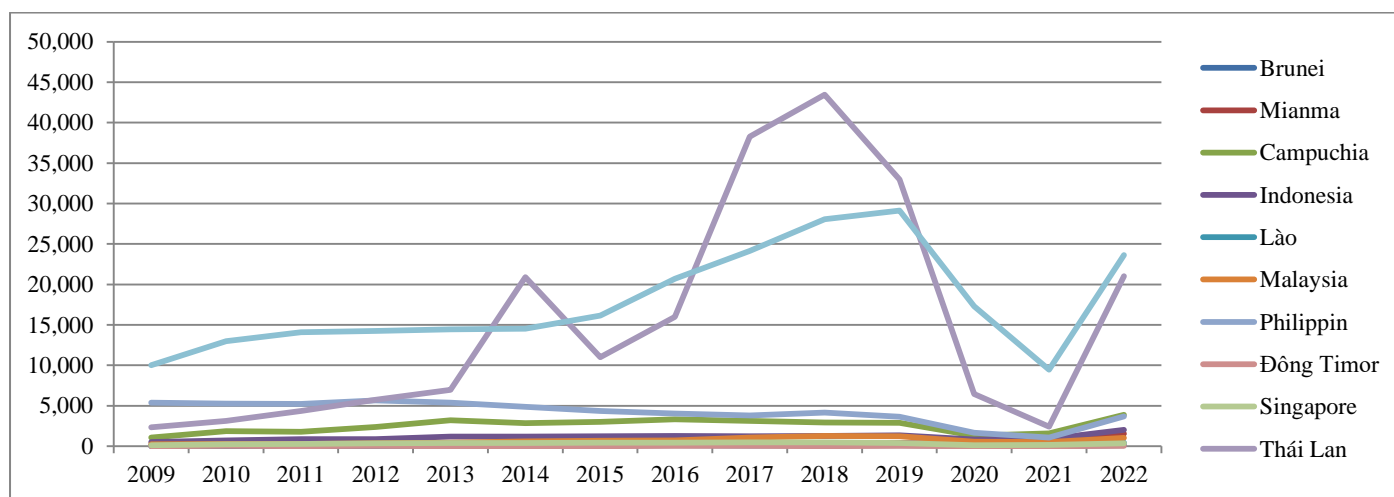
## 2. Research results

### 2.1. *The international mobility situation of Southeast Asian women to Korea*

The change in the international mobility trend of Southeast Asian women to Korea can be tracked according to the numbers listed in the following table and chart.

<sup>2</sup> At the time the writer conducted research and data survey, KOSIS had only updated the numbers until the end of November 2023 but did not have a total number for 2023.

Figure 1: Number of women from Southeast Asian countries entering Korea each year



Source: Compiled by the writer from statistics of the Korean General Statistics Office <https://kosis.kr/index/index.do>.

Table 1: Number of women from Southeast Asian countries entering Korea each year (Unit: person)

Nation	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Brunei	3	4	10	46	79	112	92	103	83	100	101	16	12	108
Mianma	93	101	107	98	122	148	171	241	262	314	405	332	626	1,551
Campuchia	1,052	1,855	1,788	2,362	3,215	2,837	3,002	3,340	3,128	2,909	2,877	1,315	1,577	3,893
Indonesia	498	701	854	874	1,184	1,196	1,237	1,274	1,216	1,254	1,344	834	897	1,998
Laos	29	70	142	155	163	158	139	145	168	172	259	147	157	433
Malaysia	222	266	288	347	450	587	687	706	1,061	1,281	1,216	550	511	1,041
Philippines	5,370	5,259	5,218	5,658	5,374	4,880	4,335	4,035	3,803	4,165	3,633	1,677	1,060	3,691
Easst Timor	2	51	15	31	7	13	8	19	21	14	19	3	13	26
Singapore	129	230	286	345	374	404	413	449	476	456	375	134	165	336
Thailand	2,313	3,127	4,366	5,744	6,964	20,904	11,019	16,005	38,285	43,463	32,965	6,463	2,395	21,000
Vietnam	9,993	12,972	14,088	14,241	14,437	14,535	16,145	20,702	24,142	28,070	29,130	17,285	9,474	23,620

Source: Compiled by the writer from statistics from the Korean General Statistics Office; <https://kosis.kr/index/index.do>.

Looking at the data in the table and chart above, we can draw some conclusions about the characteristics of the movement trend of Southeast Asian women to Korea as follows:

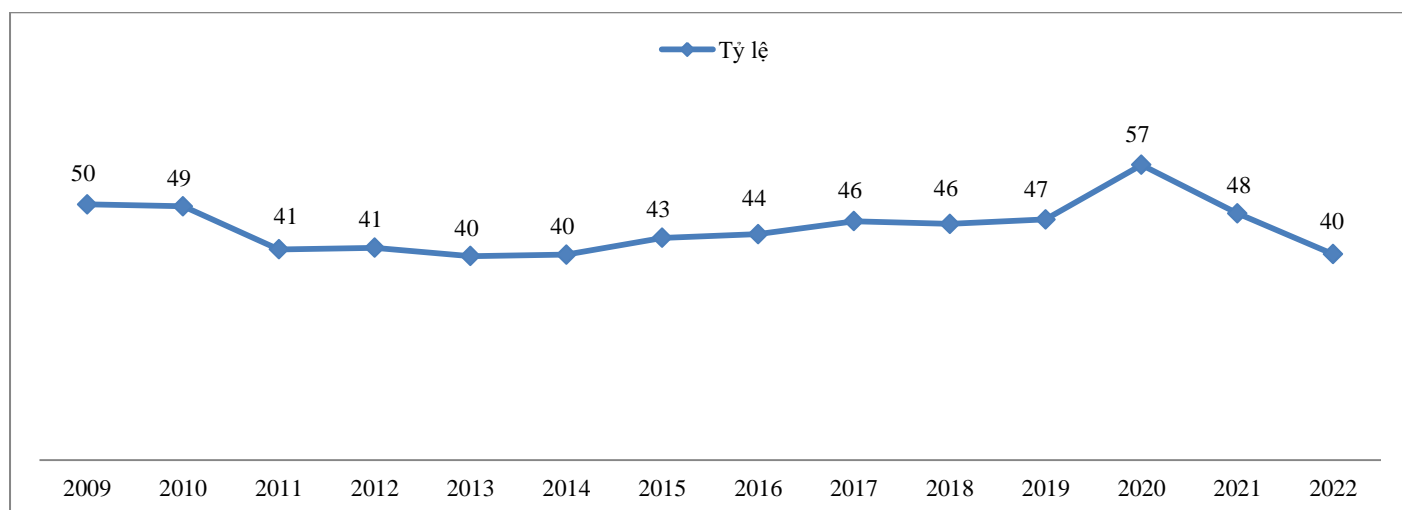
Firstly, Thailand and Vietnam lead Southeast Asia in the number of women moving to Korea. Looking at the chart, we can see that the countries with the most prominent numbers of women entering Korea are Thailand and Vietnam. Among them, Thailand ranked first with the highest number of women migrating to Korea at the time of 43,463 people (2018), and at a time when countries were closed due to epidemics, the number of women entering the country was high. still ranked number 2 with 2,395 people (2021). Vietnam is also a country with a very high number of women migrating to Korea, at times ranking first in the region such as in 2010 with 12,972 people, nearly 4 times more than the second ranked country, Thailand; or in 2015 with 20,702 people. In contrast, Brunei, East Timor, and Laos are the group of 3 countries with the lowest number of women migrating to Korea, specifically in 2009 3, 2, 29 respectively. In the following years, Brunei and East Timor The number of women entering Korea is still recorded as very low, especially in the case of East Timor, where at the highest point there were only 51 women entering Korea (in 2010). Laos is also the country with the lowest number of women entering Korea in Southeast Asia, even at the highest point it was only 259 people, equal to 1/110 times compared to Vietnam at the same time. . It can be predicted that this difference in the number of female migrants comes from the different migration needs of different countries. Among the most mentioned migration purposes (international marriage, working, studying abroad...), Vietnam is often named as the country with a high proportion of women migrating for marriage. is high in Korea, while Thailand is a country with a large working force migrating to this country.

Secondly, the number of Southeast Asian women entering Korea tends to increase in the period from 2009 to 2018. Some countries still have the number of women entering Korea continuing to increase in 2019, but The general trend is a sharp decrease in the 3 years from 2019 to 2021, due to the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic with the closed-door policy and strict control of Southeast Asian countries as well as Korea. After the world successfully controlled the Covid epidemic, countries opened their doors to receive the wave of international migration again, so in 2022,

the number of women immigrating to Korea increased rapidly, approaching and Some countries even exceed the number of 2017. This shows that the demand for immigration to Korea by women from Southeast Asian countries is always very high and is not expected to decrease in the near future. the next few years. Among them, two countries that recorded a sharp increase in the number of women entering Korea were Thailand and Vietnam. The number of Thai women moving to Korea has increased from 3,229 in 2000 to 43,463 in 2018, an increase of 13.5 times. Vietnam recorded the number of women entering Korea in 2000 as 2,570 people and also increased 10.9 times after 18 years, reaching 28,070 in 2018. Unlike most other countries, this number continued to increase in 2019 to 29,130 people and began to decrease from 2020. However, contrary to the general increasing trend, the Philippines is a country with a gradually decreasing number of women entering Korea, from 5,370 women entering the country last year. 2009 to 4,165 people in 2018, and continued to decrease in the following years. This trend comes from many reasons, including the Korean government's promotion of cooperation with Southeast Asian countries, especially the New Southern Policy of President Moon Jae In's administration. (announced in November 2017), FTA agreements between Korea and ASEAN (based on the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation signed in 2005), visa-free travel agreement between Korea Country with 4 Southeast Asian countries (including Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei).... Besides, objective external causes such as fluctuations in the world economy, shortage jobs, the massive wave of internal and external migration in Southeast Asia in general... also contribute to the increasing trend of women migrating to Korea - a developed country in the region. with income levels and living standards much higher than most Southeast Asian countries.

Thirdly, women account for a lower proportion of the total number of Southeast Asians entering Korea, at the highest point it only reached 50% (in 2010), the common level is from 40-44%. In 2020, this rate reached 57%, then decreased to 48% in 2021 and 40% in 2022. However, this is the period affected by Covid -19 so it does not show the regularity. At the same time, although the rate has decreased, the actual number is still increasing rapidly (an increase of more than 6,000 people compared to 2020 - the time when the Covid epidemic arose). In addition, the rate of Southeast Asian women migrating to Korea has always maintained a rate of over 40% throughout the entire period, even increasing slightly from 41% to 47% in the years from 2012 to 2019.

**Figure 2: Percentage of Southeast Asian women entering Korea over the years (%)**



**Source:** Compiled by the writer from statistics of the Korean General Statistics Office <https://kosis.kr/index/index.do>.

Thus, through analyzing the data above, we can see the feminization trend in the wave of movement from Southeast Asia to Korea, shown by the increasing number of Southeast Asian women entering Korea. increasing trend over the years. This feminization trend can be seen more clearly in the rate of women entering Korea in each country, especially after 2010 as shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Percentage of women from Southeast Asian countries entering Korea over the years (Unit: %)**

Nation	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Brunei	43	29	100	75	69	83	77	82	82	83	76	84	67	73
Mianma	5	16	4	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	7	18	43	15
Campuchia	41	50	28	25	31	30	31	33	33	33	29	38	34	32
Indonesia	15	13	11	11	10	11	14	14	18	12	14	25	29	12
Laos	45	60	59	67	60	59	62	67	67	45	49	65	46	33
Malaysia	51	46	48	49	47	50	53	46	28	31	37	45	68	54
Philippines	60	58	55	57	45	46	44	42	42	41	40	57	57	27
East Timor	2	15	8	6	2	5	2	3	6	4	3	7	4	2

Singapore	57	61	64	55	60	65	67	62	64	62	65	52	60	64
Thailand	40	45	42	42	38	43	55	56	54	54	62	74	46	60
Vietnam	61	57	51	58	65	52	53	52	50	50	47	62	54	46

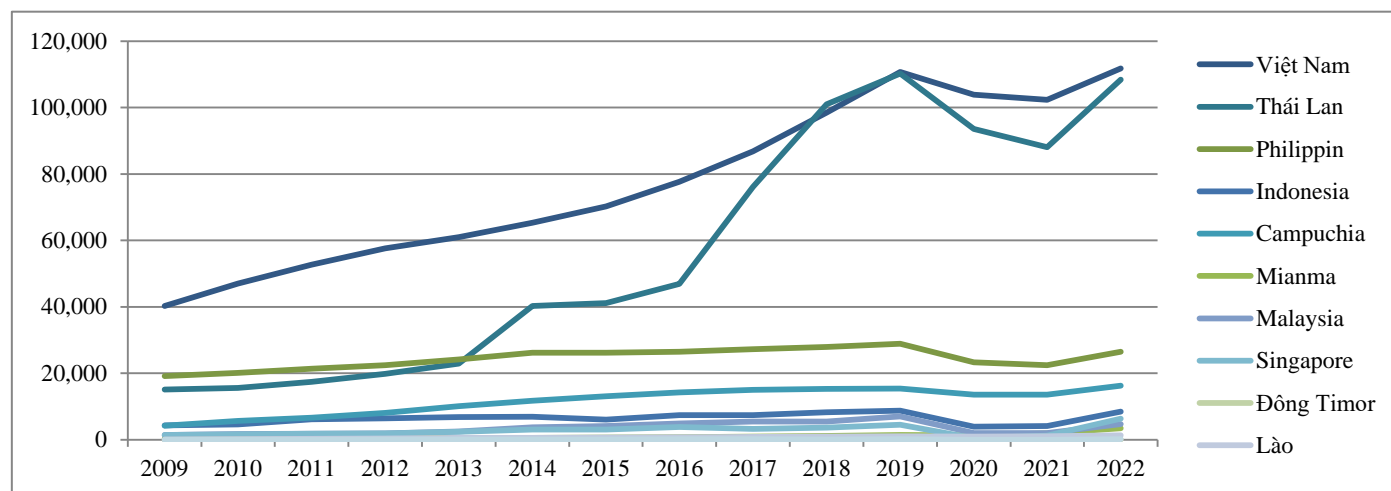
**Source:** Compiled by the writer from statistics from the Korean General Statistics Office <https://kosis.kr/index/index.do>.

In **Table 2** above, you can see the countries and years with the proportion of women entering the country reaching 50% or more. It can be seen that the two countries with the largest number of women entering Korea are Thailand and Vietnam, which are also two countries with a relatively high percentage of women entering Korea, maintaining a similar or overwhelming male ratio. Besides, there are some countries such as Laos, Malaysia and especially Brunei and Singapore that maintain a high female ratio for a long time.

## 2.2. Residence situation of Southeast Asian women in Korea

The situation of Southeast Asian women residing in Korea has been summarized by the writer in the table below.

**Figure 3. Situation of women from Southeast Asian countries residing in Korea over the years**



**Source:** Compiled by the writer from statistics from the Korean General Statistics Office <https://kosis.kr/index/index.do>.

**Table 3: Number of women from Southeast Asian countries residing in Korea over the years**

Nation	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Vietnam	40,294	46,993	52,703	57,623	61,016	65,355	70,247	77,657	86,853	98,482	110,707	103,836	102,288	111,800
Thailand	15,129	15,646	17,401	19,812	22,900	40,324	41,108	46,918	76,115	100,963	110,198	93,542	88,039	108,398
Philippines	19,214	20,122	21,379	22,483	24,144	26,217	26,170	26,524	27,265	27,945	28,907	23,314	22,450	26,482
Indonesia	4,307	4,604	6,211	6,478	6,830	6,907	6,095	7,451	7,409	8,244	8,813	3,993	4,126	8,479
Cambodia	4,191	5,686	6,680	8,104	10,153	11,716	13,134	14,286	15,034	15,276	15,406	13,572	13,612	16,301
Myanmar	344	387	473	480	532	602	645	803	933	1,121	1,427	1,350	1,883	3,459
Malaysia	1,469	1,745	1,814	1,932	2,517	3,775	4,119	4,956	5,519	5,455	7,008	1,993	2,059	4,711
Singapore	1,446	1,593	1,849	1,928	2,450	3,095	3,042	3,809	3,251	3,676	4,543	443	1,219	6,338
East Timor	5	54	71	92	87	83	56	58	66	75	71	57	63	76
Laos	103	180	286	408	546	589	689	783	853	997	1,096	953	1,027	1,359
Brunei	28	31	36	51	89	128	108	149	144	143	181	32	41	203

**Source:** Compiled by the writer from statistics from the Korean General Statistics Office <https://kosis.kr/index/index.do>.

Looking at the data in **Table 3** and the chart above, it can be seen that the situation of Southeast Asian women residing in Korea has similarities and differences with the movement trend of Southeast Asian women to Korea as analyzed. accumulation in the above section.

Firstly, Vietnam is the country with the highest number of women residing in Korea compared to Southeast Asian countries. In 2019, the number of Vietnamese women residing in Korea reached 110,707 people. In particular, although Thailand ranked first in the number of women entering Korea, the number of women residing in Korea only ranked second, and only accelerated to catch up with Vietnam in the period from 2017 onwards. The reason may stem from the highest proportion of Vietnamese women migrating for international marriage to Korea, so their residence time is often longer and more stable than Thai women moving to Korea. International for employment and study abroad purposes. Similarly, although the number of women migrating is only at an average level in the region, due to the high rate of women migrating to Korea

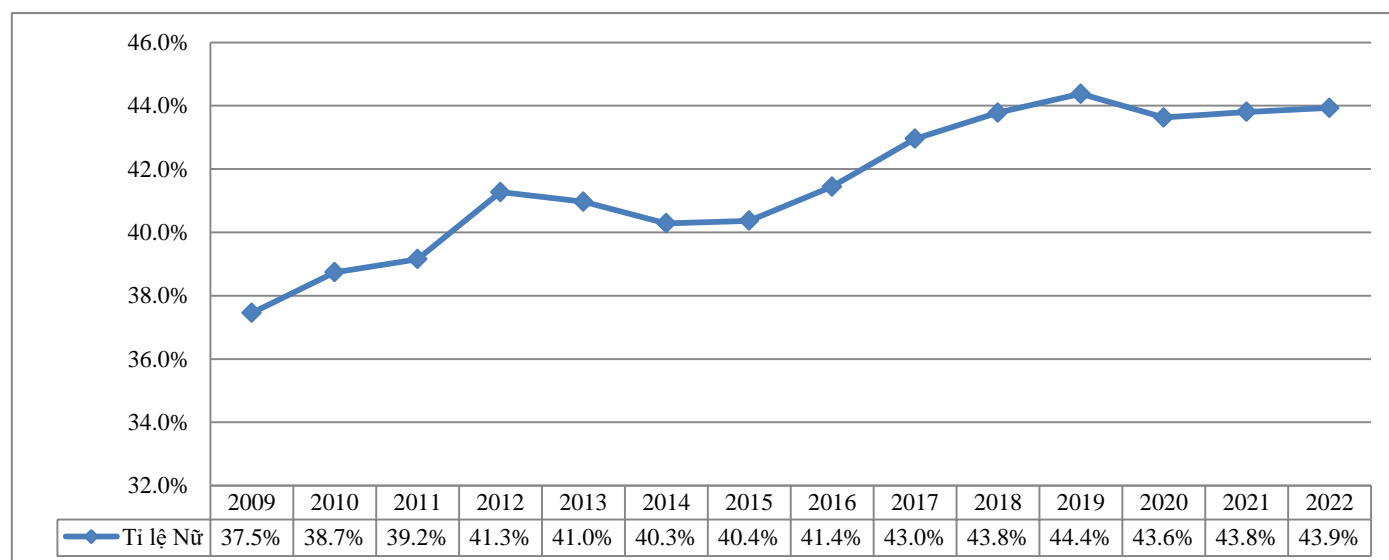


for international marriage, the Philippines is a country with a high number of women migrating to Korea. Residents in Korea ranked third in the region, even higher than Thailand in the period 2009-2013. In the opposite direction, Brunei, East Timor, Laos and Myanmar are the group of 4 countries with the lowest number of women residing in Korea over the years, in which the number of East Timorese women residing in Korea always remains below 100 people, Brunei's highest number only reached 149 people.

Secondly, the number of Southeast Asian women residing in Korea tends to increase steadily over the years from 2009 to 2019, and decrease sharply from 2020, due to the number of repatriated women (mainly those studying abroad). students, workers) under the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. Thailand is the country with the fastest growth in the number of women residing in Korea, in just 10 years from 2009 to 2019 it increased from 15,129 people to 110,198. people in 2019, an increase of 7.3 times. Vietnam and Cambodia are also two countries recording high growth rates. In just 10 years from 2009 to 2019, the number of women residing in Korea has increased more than 3 times. In 2019, Cambodia reached 15,406 people; twice as much as the next country, Indonesia, with 8,813 people. Different from the international migration trend, the number of women from all Southeast Asian countries in Korea maintained an increase or slightly increased in the period from 2009 to 2019, and only decreased due to the mutation factor: impact of the epidemic.

The proportion of women in the total number of Southeast Asians residing in Korea from 2009 to 2021 is also lower than men, the highest level is 44.4% (2019), and the lowest is 37% (2009). As a rule, the proportion of Southeast Asian women residing in Korea is quite stable and increases slightly over the entire period. Although there are still periods of decline, the decline is below 1% and then continues to increase.

**Figure 4: Percentage of Southeast Asian women residing in Korea over the years**



**Source:** Compiled by the writer from statistics from the Korean General Statistics Office <https://kosis.kr/index/index.do>.

Fluctuations in the proportion of women from each Southeast Asian country residing in Korea are presented specifically in **Table 4**.

**Table 4: Proportion of women from Southeast Asian countries residing in Korea over the years**

Nation	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Vietnam	44%	45%	45%	48%	51%	50%	51%	52%	51%	50%	49%	49%	49%	48%
Thailand	34%	35%	38%	43%	42%	43%	44%	47%	50%	51%	52%	52%	51%	54%
Philippines	42%	43%	45%	53%	51%	49%	48%	47%	47%	46%	46%	47%	48%	46%
Indonesia	14%	15%	17%	17%	16%	15%	13%	16%	16%	17%	18%	11%	12%	17%
Campuchia	46%	47%	39%	33%	32%	31%	30%	31%	32%	32%	32%	33%	33%	33%
Mianma	8%	8%	7%	5%	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	5%	5%	7%	10%
Malaysia	50%	51%	52%	51%	51%	53%	54%	52%	44%	45%	47%	36%	41%	49%
Singapore	57%	54%	56%	56%	57%	57%	57%	57%	59%	59%	57%	54%	55%	57%
East Timor	5%	12%	12%	9%	7%	6%	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	2%
Laos	47%	54%	57%	63%	65%	66%	69%	68%	70%	64%	60%	62%	61%	50%
Brunei	52%	41%	61%	60%	60%	61%	62%	66%	62%	61%	59%	62%	61%	60%

**Source:** Compiled by the writer from statistics from the Korean General Statistics Office <https://kosis.kr/index/index.do>

From Table 4, it can be seen that Myanmar and East Timor are two countries with a very low percentage of women residing in Korea (less than 10%), and it can be predicted that citizens of these two countries will migrate to Korea. Those countries mainly work in sections where women do not dominate such as working or studying abroad. In contrast, the countries with a high proportion of women migrating for marriage, such as Vietnam and the Philippines, all have a proportion of women at over 40% and approximately 50%. Some countries with an exceptionally high percentage of women residing in Korea are, in order, Laos (highest level 70%), Brunei (highest level 66%), or Singapore (highest level 59%). The reasons for the difference in these rates are related to the migration purpose of each specific subject, and will be explored by the writer in future studies.

### 3 Conclusion

Through analyzing data on women from Southeast Asian countries moving and residing in Korea in the period from 2009 to 2021 based on statistical data of the Korean General Statistics Office and the Immigration Management Office. scene – Ministry of Justice of Korea, some conclusions can be drawn about the migration wave of Southeast Asian women to Korea as follows:

*Firstly*, the migration trend of Southeast Asian women to Korea is recorded. Vietnam and Thailand have the most women migrating to Korea; The countries with very little movement are East Timor and Brunei. It can be predicted that this discrepancy in migration trends stems from the bilateral diplomatic relations between countries, as well as differences in the purposes of migration (mainly in areas such as international marriage people, working, study abroad...).

*Secondly*, the migration trend of Southeast Asian women to Korea tends to increase steadily over the years from 2000 to 2019, and decrease sharply from 2020 due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. After Covid is repelled, the migration trend increased sharply and gradually approached the pre-epidemic figure. Some countries maintain an increasing trend over the years such as Vietnam and Cambodia, while some countries tend to stagnate and decrease slightly in recent years such as the Philippines or Indonesia (this is most clearly shown through trend of women moving to Korea).

*Thirdly*, the proportion of women among the total number of Southeast Asians migrating to Korea remains lower than that of men, but tends to increase over the years.

From the above conclusions, we can see the feminization trend in the wave of migration from Southeast Asia to Korea. It is predicted that with the open-door policy of countries, especially in Korea - a country that especially needs foreign human resources to recover economically after the epidemic, this feminization trend will continue, and the number of Southeast Asian women migrating to Korea will continue to increase in the near future. However, the purposes of migration will become increasingly diverse. Besides the group of women migrating for international marriage, there will be more and more Southeast Asian women moving to Korea for the purpose of studying abroad, jobs (even highly specialized jobs, or working in the fields of business, commerce...). With this feminization trend of the migration wave from Southeast Asia to Korea, issues related to migrant women have become an issue that

attracts a lot of attention from relevant Korean ministries, agencies and officials.

Multicultural society is an era trend that cannot be denied or resisted in current Korean society. The driving force of this modern trend comes from multicultural families, a large foreign workforce, and even international students and graduates studying in Korea. A range of issues related to social integration, increasing the economic, political and social participation of immigrant women, as well as issues related to the protection of human rights. Equality in access to social services... for migrant women from Southeast Asia are issues that need timely attention and policies from the Korean government. As for Southeast Asian countries, besides some main problems of international brides such as lack of language ability, cultural or social knowledge; or the problems of current migrant workers such as low skills, low accessibility and legal protection have happened. Joining hands with the host country - South Korea, to sign mutual legal assistance agreements and protect the rights of our people is also an urgent issue. With the attention and efforts of all parties, the migration trend of Southeast Asian women to Korea will be helped in the right direction, with human resources increasingly improving in quality, meeting the global needs of modernization of today's countries.

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