

Gender and migration data: Korean Case Study

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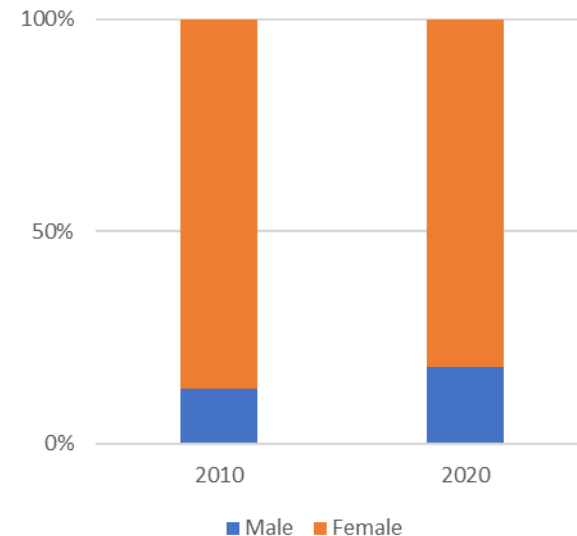
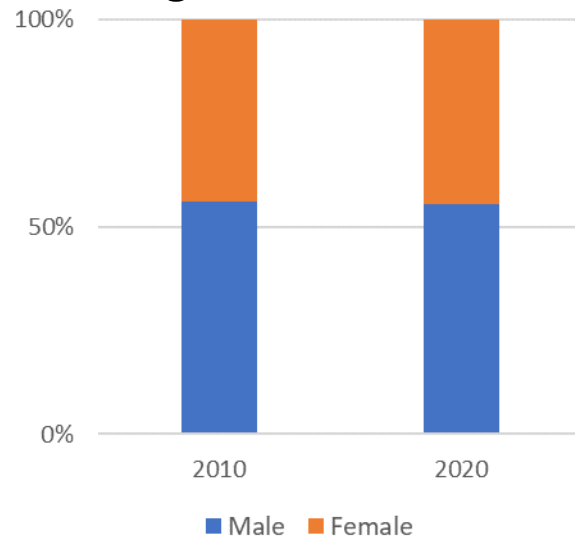
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Motivation

- **The feminization of migration** at the global level masks various migration patterns and processes
- An overview of demographic details and further breakdowns of international migration data **in the combination of gender** are required to
 - Understand the gendered migration patterns
 - Address gender-relevant migration issues
 - Support gender-responsive migration policies
- Collecting and analyzing the good quality and reliable **gender-disaggregated data and gender statistics** is important!

Background

- **The Republic of Korea** has been increasingly recognizing the need for international migration as central to continued economic growth (Lee, 2015)
 - there is one category of migrants that is highly feminized with more than 80 percent being female: **marriage migrants** (UN DESA, 2020; Statistics Korea, 2020)
 - the gender-related aspects of migration to Korea can be explored with various **gender-disaggregated migration data** being made available



Sex ratio of international immigrants (left) and marriage migrants (right) in Korea

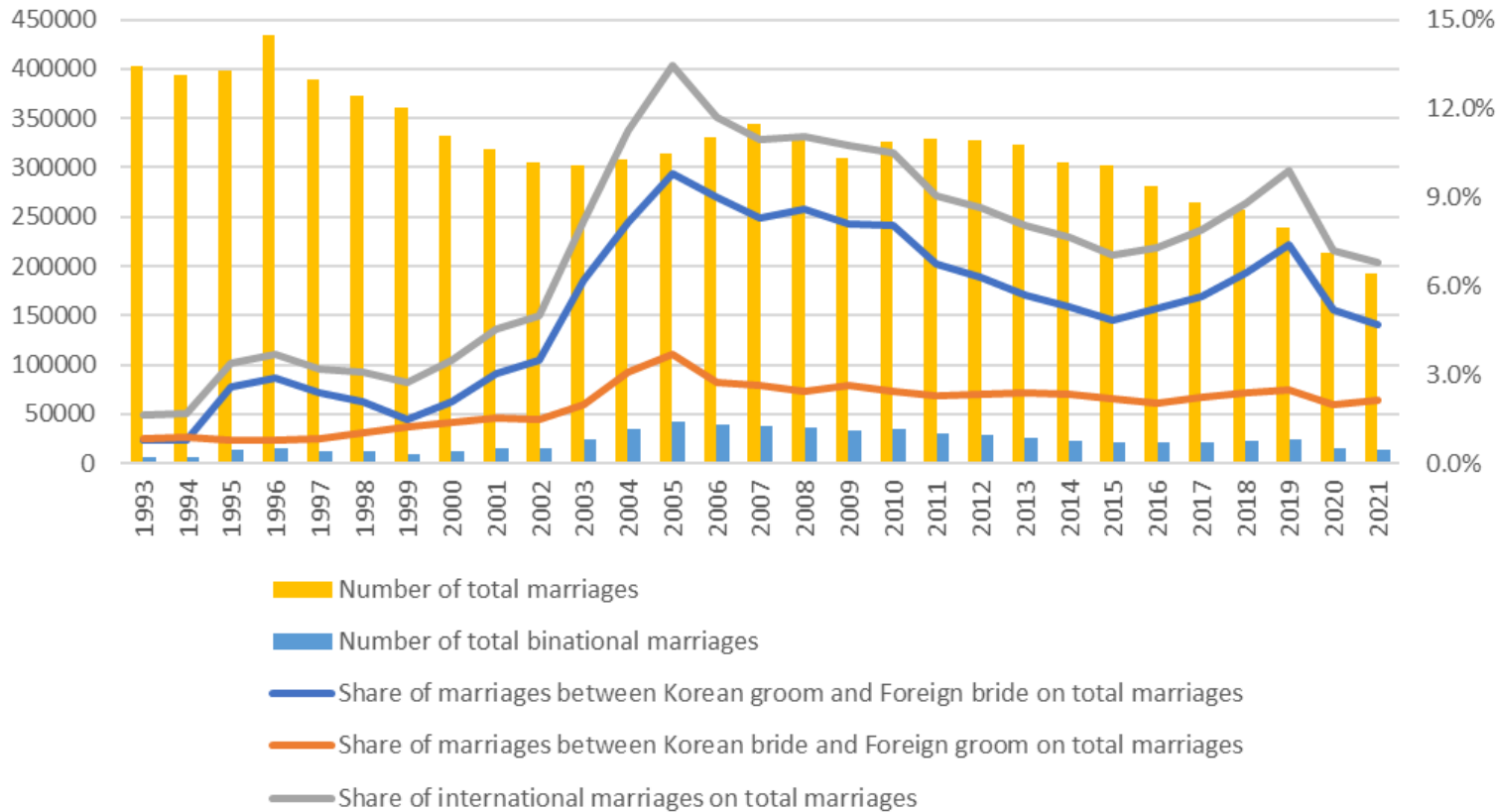
Source: UN DESA, 2020; Korean Immigration Service Statistics (2020)

Methodology and Data

- Gendered ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors of international migration to Korea
- Overall migrant population and marriage migrants in Korea by gender, place of residence, country of origin, and visa category
- Impacts of COVID-19 on marriage migrants in Korea from a gender perspective
- Marriage migration policies in Korea

- The essential demographic characteristics, such as age, sex, and country of origin, are covered. Additionally, data on marital status, educational attainment, labor-related characteristics, and household size are used
 - International Migrant Stock (UN DESA, 2020)
 - Korea Immigration Service Statistics (Ministry of Justice (MoJ), 1991-2021)
 - Vital Statistics of Immigrants (Statistics Korea, 1993-2021)
 - Surveys on Immigrant Living Conditions and Labor Force (MoJ and Statistics Korea, 2018- 2021)
 - Marriage Brokerage Statistics (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2014, 2017 and 2020)
 - National Survey of Multicultural Families (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2018)

Historical trends in marriage migration to Korea



- **Explosion (1993 - 2005)**
 - Driven by the marriages between Korean men and foreign women
 - Growth of the binational marriage brokerage business
- **Decrease (2005 - 2015)**
 - More restrictions on marriage brokerage agencies
 - The saturated marriage market in rural areas.
- **Recovery (2015 - 2019)**
 - Continuing decrease trends in the number of newlyweds in Korean domestic marriage

Socio-demographic characteristics of the marriage migrants

#1: Binational marriages are common between foreign brides and Korean males

- In 2020, there were approximately 138,000 women admitted as marriage migrants, or 82% of total marriage migrants, while only 31,000 marriage migrants were male
- Marriage migrants always took up a significant share (at least 25%) of female migrants in Korea

#2: The age and education gap between bride and groom is significant in binational marriages

- The average age of female marriage migrants was approximately 37.3 which is almost ten years younger than that of Korean male spouses (47.8 years old).
- Educational attainment distribution shows that nearly 90% of female marriage migrants did not complete elementary education while more than 80% of their Korean husbands finished upper secondary education

#3: Immigrant wives in Korea are over-represented in rural areas

- Female marriage migrants are more concentrated in depopulated rural areas in Korea, where unmarried male residents face a shrunk pool of marriage partners due to the “rural flight” of females

Socio-demographic characteristics of the marriage migrants

#4: There exist different characteristics of spouses in the case of males and females marrying foreigners

- Female marriage migrants come from Asian countries – China, Vietnam, Philippines and Thailand
- Korean females are, however, marrying men from a broader range of countries – mainly from Asia but also from North America

#5: There are many female naturalized Koreans who acquired citizenship through marriage

- Eight out of ten naturalized Koreans have been female, and eight out of ten female naturalized Koreans have been marriage migrants

#6: Less than 50% of marriage migrants are economically active

- Among around 168,000 female marriage migrants in 2019, 77,000 (46%) were economically active and 72,000 (43%) were employed mainly in mining & manufacturing and wholesale, retail trade, accommodation, and food sectors
- They are highly represented in elementary occupations (37.1%) and craft, machine operators, and assemblers (27.6%)

Impacts of COVID-19 on marriage migrants in Korea

Female marriage migrants' labor market situation, 2018-2021

	Total (E + U + I)	Employed (E)	Unemplo- yed (U)	Inactive (I)	Labor Force Participat ion Rate $(1 - \frac{I}{E+U+I})$	Employ- ment Rate $(\frac{E}{E+U+I})$	Unemplo- yment Rate $(\frac{U}{E+U})$
2018	90,414	44,435	2,073	43,906	51.4%	49.1%	4.5%
2019	90,484	39,254	2,408	48,822	46.0%	43.4%	5.8%
2020	99,142	43,848	3,719	51,575	48.0%	44.2%	7.8%
2021	102,173	43,479	4,319	54,375	46.8%	42.6%	9.0%

Note: Respondents are aged more than 14. The economically active population includes the employed (E) and the unemployed (U). Previously marriage migrants who now are naturalized Koreans are not included.

Source: Surveys on Immigrant Living Conditions and Labor Force (2018-2021)

- Compared to 2019, the number of arrivals of female marriage migrants declined by around 116,000 persons or 91% in 2021
- The number of marriage migrants nevertheless increased in 2020 and 2021 as they were not restricted to exiting and re-entering Korea
- From 2018-2019 to 2020-2021, the unemployment rate the female marriage migrants almost doubled.
- However, the labor force participation rate stayed relatively stable from 2019-2021.

Conclusions

- A series of Korean data gives a unique opportunity to study how the gendered marriage migration originated from social contexts in Korea and to identify the characteristics of the main actors in marriage migration
- Understanding the patterns of marriage migration and the characteristics of marriage migrants is essential in establishing and implementing migration and social integration policies
- The trends, patterns, and policies using various quality micro-datasets will pave the way to develop a causal model in future research to better explain marriage migration decisions and marriage migrants' successful economic and social integration
- This timely report sheds light on the importance of gender data in policy evaluation with a particular focus on marriage migrants which will lead to a successful implementation of the upcoming basic plan for the next years