



COLLECTIVE INSIGHTS

**ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS OF
IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN THE SOUTH
AND SOUTH-EAST ASIAN REGIONS
– EMERGING TRENDS OF TRAVEL
DOCUMENT AND IDENTITY FRAUD**

MARCH 2023

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COLLECTIVE INSIGHTS

ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN THE SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST ASIAN REGIONS – EMERGING TRENDS OF TRAVEL DOCUMENT AND IDENTITY FRAUD

International Organization for Migration Regional Office
for Asia and the Pacific, and United Nations Office on Drugs
and Crime Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific

March 2023



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



IOM

UN MIGRATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the product of a joint initiative between the Document Examination Support Centre (DESC) of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific (ROSEAP). The primary aim of this study was to describe trends of travel and identity fraud in the South and South-east Asian regions. Special focus was given to the overall trends of fraudulent travel documents used according to demographic characteristics and to the interception of individuals travelling as imposters versus individuals travelling with forged or counterfeit documents. Secondary to this aim, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the interception of fraudulent travel documents in the South and South-east Asian regions was also explored. The report covers the following countries in South and South-east Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Quantitative data sources that were considered for the study included: IOM's Verifier Travel Document and Bearer Cases (Verifier TD&B); IOM's Asian Network for Document Examination (ANDEX) Fraudulent Documents Reporting System (AFDRS); IOM's Verifier TD&B Newsletter Cases; and UNODC's Voluntary Reporting System on Migrant Smuggling and Related Conduct (VRS-MSRC). In total, the report represents 21,008 documents scanned using Verifier TD&B between 2014 and 2021, 1,841 documents scanned using the AFDRS system between 2015 and 2021, and 867,007 irregular migration cases provided in the VRS-MSRC system between 2008 and 2017.

The study found that the prevalence of travel and identity fraud in South and South-east Asia is significant. The study further found that there is an important relationship between gender and fraudulent document use. Data presented in this report show that gender was associated with the interception of fraudulent travel documents when stratified by year, with males being consistently more likely to be intercepted than females. Males and females between the ages of 0 and 17 years were intercepted with fraudulent documents in equal numbers, while individuals between 0 and 17 years of age who were intercepted with genuine documents were more likely to be male than female (55.8% versus 40.3%). The ratio of males to females being intercepted with genuine travel documents was consistent. Males 18–60 years of age were much more likely to be intercepted with fraudulent travel documents than females of the same age group.

The top five countries of arrival represented 81.8 per cent of all arrival countries (Thailand, Viet Nam, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates and India). In contrast, for migrants continuing their journey the most common destinations were outside of the Asia region (common destinations included the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Australia, Serbia and Germany).

The study found that the COVID-19 pandemic affected the interception of fraudulent travel documents; however, the pandemic did not affect the declining proportional trend of genuine versus fraudulent documents being intercepted. The average number of intercepted documents decreased by 69.8 per cent during the pandemic, and the proportion of fraudulent documents intercepted continued to decrease in 2020 and 2021. The study also found that COVID-19 travel restrictions did not affect male and female irregular migrants equally. More women in proportion to the number of men were intercepted with fraudulent documents during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 (an average of 3.3 males were intercepted for every female during 2017–2019 versus an average of 2.7 males were intercepted for every female during 2020–2021).

The report concludes with several key recommendations, which may strengthen fraudulent document data collection and sharing, and ultimately reduce fraudulent document use in migration: (1) facilitate better transfer of technical expertise for travel document verification; (2) facilitate better exchange of information and collaboration on regional best practices for addressing fraudulent travel document use; and (3) increase regular reporting and verification of data.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACCBP	Anti-Crime Capacity-Building Program (Canada)
AFDRS	ANDEX Fraudulent Documents Reporting System
ANDEX	Asian Network for Document Examination
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BDT	Bangladeshi taka
DESC	Document Examination Support Center
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
INTERPOL	The International Police Criminal Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MRZ	Machine-Readable Zone
SAR	Special Administrative Region
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SLTD	Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (INTERPOL)
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNODC ROSEAP	UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific
USD	United States Dollar
Verifier TD&B	Verifier Travel Document and Bearer
VRS-MSRC	Voluntary Reporting System on Migrant Smuggling and Related Conduct

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Border	A border is a real or artificial line that separates geographic areas. Borders are political boundaries. ¹
Border control point	A border control point is a point through which entry into and exit from a country is regulated by the relevant national authorities (including land, air, and sea border crossing points). ²
Citizen	A person having a legal bond with a State who is recognized as a national of a certain country, with all the rights and responsibilities that entails.
Citizenship	The legal bond between an individual and a State.
Counterfeit	Any travel or identity document that has been entirely reproduced to imitate the appearance of a genuine passport. ³
Country of destination	The final country a person intends to reach when engaging in regular or irregular migration.
Country of origin	In the migration context, a country of nationality or of former habitual residence of a person or group of persons who have migrated abroad, irrespective of whether they migrate regularly or irregularly.
Country of transit	A country or countries of passage positioned along a migrant's route to an intended destination.
Forgery	Fraudulent alteration of any part of a genuine travel document.
Fraudulent document	Any travel or identity document that has been falsely made or altered in some material way by anyone other than a person or agency lawfully authorized to make or issue the travel or identity document on behalf of a State; or that has been improperly issued or obtained through misrepresentation, corruption, or duress or in any other unlawful manner; or that is being used by a person other than the rightful holder.
Gender	The socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power, and influence that society ascribes to males and females on a differential basis. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men, but the relationship between them.

¹ National Geographic, Resource Library ENCYCLOPEDIA ENTRY: Border (Washington, D.C., 2022): www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/border/.

² IOM, International Migration Law: Glossary on Migration (Geneva, 2019): https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf. The other terms that are from this source include border control point, citizen, citizenship, country of destination, country of origin, country of transit, fraudulent document, gender, genuine travel document, illegal entry, irregular migration, migrant smuggling, primary inspection, secondary inspection, smuggled migrant, and trafficking in persons.

³ INTERPOL, Identity and travel document fraud (Lyon): www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Counterfeit-currency-and-security-documents/Identity-and-travel-document-fraud. The other term that is from this source includes forgery.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Genuine travel document	A passport obtained from the mandated authority, containing correct details of the holder and remains unaltered.
Illegal entry	Crossing borders without complying with the necessary requirements for legal entry into the receiving State.
Illegal exit	An attempt to leave a State's territory without complying with the necessary requirements for legal entry into the receiving State.
Imposter	A person who applies for and obtains a document by assuming a false identity, or a person who alters his physical appearance to represent himself as another person for the purpose of using that person's document. ⁴
Irregular migrant	A person who moves or has moved across an international border and is not authorized to enter or to stay in a State pursuant to the law of that State and to international agreements to which that State is a party.
Irregular migration	Movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit, or destination. ⁵
Migrant smuggling	The procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.
Primary inspection	In the context of cross-border movements, the preliminary assessment at a border crossing point of persons seeking admission into a State and of their identity and travel documents aimed at deciding on admission or referral to secondary inspection.
Secondary inspection	In the context of admission into a State, in cases of doubt in the primary inspection during the admission procedure or if the applicant appears on a watchlist or alert database, the additional interview or investigation to which the applicant for admission is submitted.
Smuggled migrant	A migrant who is or has been the object of the crime of smuggling, regardless of whether the perpetrator is identified, apprehended, prosecuted, or convicted.
Trafficking in persons	The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. ⁶

⁴ ICAO, Doc 9303 Machine Readable Travel Documents Eight Edition Part 1: Introduction (Québec 2021): Microsoft Word - Doc.9303.Pt.01.8th.Ed.alltext.en.INPROGRESS.CC.docx (icao.int).

⁵ IOM, Key Migration Terms (Geneva 2022): www.iom.int/key-migration-terms.

⁶ Article 3, United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

This report about emerging trends of travel document and identity fraud was developed for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific (ROSEAP). The report provides a follow up to IOM's 2018 "Collective insights into irregular migration in South-east Asia and South Asia - Emerging trends of travel document and identity fraud"⁷ report by providing new findings and up to date evidence on document and identity fraud in travel. The current report provides recommendations for future data collection and unification of data collection methodology for governments within the South and South-east Asia regions to help develop new generations of the Verifier Travel Document and Bearer System (Verifier TD&B) and the ANDEX Fraudulent Documents Reporting System (AFDRS).

Travel document and identity fraud occurs in the context of irregular migration. Irregular migration is defined by IOM as "the movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination".⁸ It is estimated that one-third of migrant workers in the South and South-east Asian regions are in an irregular status – this creates significant challenges for countries to ensure safe, orderly, and regular migration in accordance with the Global Compact for Migration.⁹ As highlighted by UNODC, fraudulent documents are widely used to facilitate irregular migration, including migrant smuggling, in Asia and indeed, in most regions of the world.¹⁰ Irregular migration is often driven by a variety of reasons, such as socioeconomic conditions, family reunification, or changing political contexts, among others. Migrants' irregular status in transit and destination countries has various negative implications for migrants. Employers may take advantage of the lack of legal status of irregular migrants and ignore labour laws¹¹ by creating a reserve pool of exploitable migrant labour that can be utilized without reference to local laws. Additional risks irregular migrants incur due to their lack of legal status include social exclusion, discrimination, long working hours, as well as no or limited access to basic necessities such as education and health care.¹²

⁷ IOM, Collective Insights into irregular migration in Southeast Asia and South Asia (Bangkok, 2018): https://cb4ibm01.azurewebsites.net/desc/assets/documents/Trends_Analysis_Report.pdf.

⁸ IOM, Key migration terms: www.iom.int/key-migration-terms.

⁹ IOM, Asia-Pacific Migration Data Report (2020).

¹⁰ UNODC, Facilitators of smuggling of migrants: Fraudulent documents, money laundering, and corruption (Vienna, 2019): www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2019/UNODC_Facilitators_of_Smuggling_of_Migrants_in_Southeast_Asia.pdf.

¹¹ UNODC, Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants (Vienna, 2018): www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glosom/GLOSOM_2018_web_small.pdf.

¹² UNODC, Facilitators of smuggling of migrants: Fraudulent documents, money laundering, and corruption (Vienna, 2019): www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2019/UNODC_Facilitators_of_Smuggling_of_Migrants_in_Southeast_Asia.pdf.

Despite the prevalence of irregular migration, and the use of fraudulent documents during irregular migration, there is only a limited body of literature that discusses the phenomenon of fraudulent documents. In particular, there is a lack of information on the prevalence of travel and identity fraud to facilitate irregular entry to destination countries. This report aims to address existing knowledge gaps and contribute to the knowledge base on the use of travel and identity fraud in the South and South-east Asia regions.

The structure of this report is as follows: The section after this Introduction presents the aim and objectives of the study. The report then explains the geographic scope of the study, and the research methods. The main section of the report presents the findings of the study on the prevalence of travel and identity fraud documents during the period 2014 to 2021. This includes an overall analysis of fraudulent travel documents use, and the type of fraudulent documents used at the time of interception. Gender, age group, and country of interception further stratify the results. Migrant flows describing the country individuals are arriving from and where they were travelling to next are also discussed in this section. A subsequent section summarizes the results of the analysis. The report concludes with some recommendations on next steps for improving the identification of fraudulent documents and strengthening information sharing on fraudulent documents in the South and South-east Asia regions.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to explore trends in document and identity fraud in travel in the South and South-east Asia regions.

The study objectives included:

- Describing trends in: individuals travelling as imposters; individuals travelling with fraudulent documents; overall trends in use of fraudulent travel documents by age and gender of those apprehended; and identifying country-specific trends in fraudulent document use.
- Exploring how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the interception of fraudulent travel documents in the South and South-east Asia regions.
- Identifying gaps and challenges for national immigration authorities in identifying and reporting document and identity fraud in travel in Asia.
- Providing recommendations for governments to improve current practices in the areas of data collection and management.
- Identifying next steps for IOM and UNODC ROSEAP in organizing programmes of capacity-building for national immigration authorities.

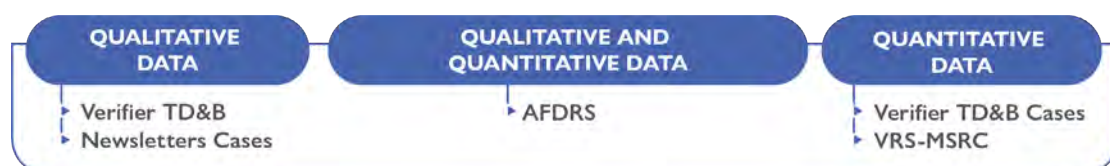
SCOPE

This report covers irregular migration using fraudulent documents from, through, and to the following countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.

METHODS

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach. Data were drawn from both qualitative and quantitative sources. Quantitative sources included: IOM's Verifier TD&B; IOM's Asian Network for Document Examination (ANDEX) Fraudulent Documents Reporting System (AFDRS); IOM's Verifier TD&B Newsletter Cases; and UNODC's Voluntary Reporting System on Migrant Smuggling and Related Conduct (VRS-MSRC). Qualitative data included information provided in Verifier TD&B newsletter Cases.

Figure 1: Sources of data included in the study



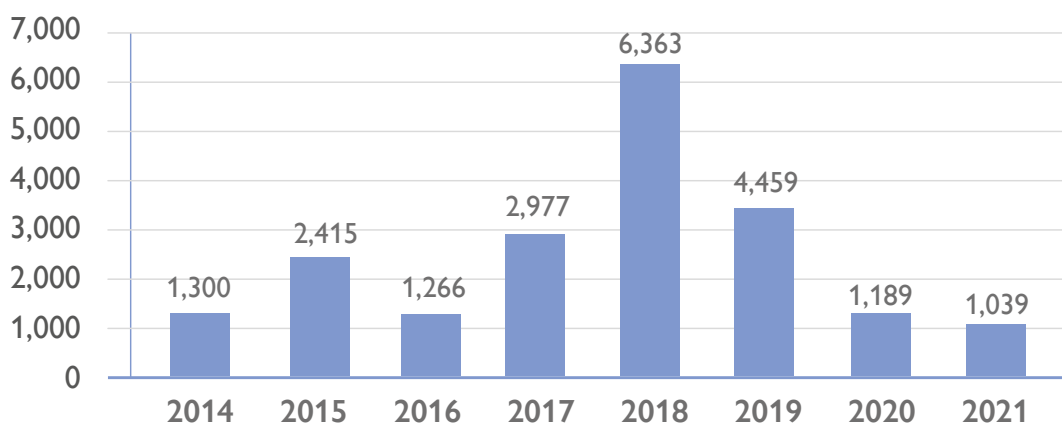
The combination of multiple sources of data helped to provide a more nuanced analysis of the use of fraudulent travel documents in South and South-east Asia, and triangulate findings across the different data sources.

Verifier Travel Document and Bearer (Verifier TD&B)

Developed by IOM in 2014, Verifier TD&B is a user-friendly secondary inspection system for travel document and identity verification. The system is designed to read a passport's Machine-Readable Zone (MRZ) and the contactless chip, check several digital security features and compare the stored biometric identifiers against those of the bearer. The system then generates a detailed report on the individual in question. Currently, the Verifier TD&B does not require integration or interoperability with other existing systems, nor an Internet connection to be functional. Verifier TD&B data is voluntarily shared with the Document Examination Support Centre (DESC) and only contains non-sensitive information of cases scanned within the system. Data collected by Verifier TD&B include the number of scanned documents, number of imposters, the number of fraudulent travel documents detected, details on age and gender, and the issuing State of the passport (if that is the travel document used).

As of September 2021, the Verifier TD&B system is implemented in 19 countries and with a total of 46 workstations including five training and research locations.¹³ Within the countries represented in this report, the majority of Verifier TD&B workstations are installed at airports (25 airports), but seven land border points of entry also use Verifier TD&B. To date, information retrieved from the Verifier TD&B¹⁴ dataset provides the largest number of observations, and thus constitutes the most important subset of data. In special cases, countries provide in-depth insights on intercepted cases identified at secondary inspection that were detected when a travel document was scanned with the Verifier TD&B. Such details include not only the date of interception and the type of fraud case, but also non-sensitive information on age, gender, travel routes, issuing country of the travel document, and the fraudulent travel document used. Figure 2 below shows the usage of the system in terms of the total number of travel documents referred to secondary inspection and scanned from the first installation in 2014 until September 2021.¹⁵

Figure 2 : Total number of documents scanned Verifier TD&B by year, 2014 to 2021



¹³ IOM, Verifier Travel Document and Bearer: <https://cb4ibm.iom.int/desc/assets/documents/Verifier%20TD&B%20Factsheet%20Sep%202021.pdf>.

¹⁴ See Annex B.

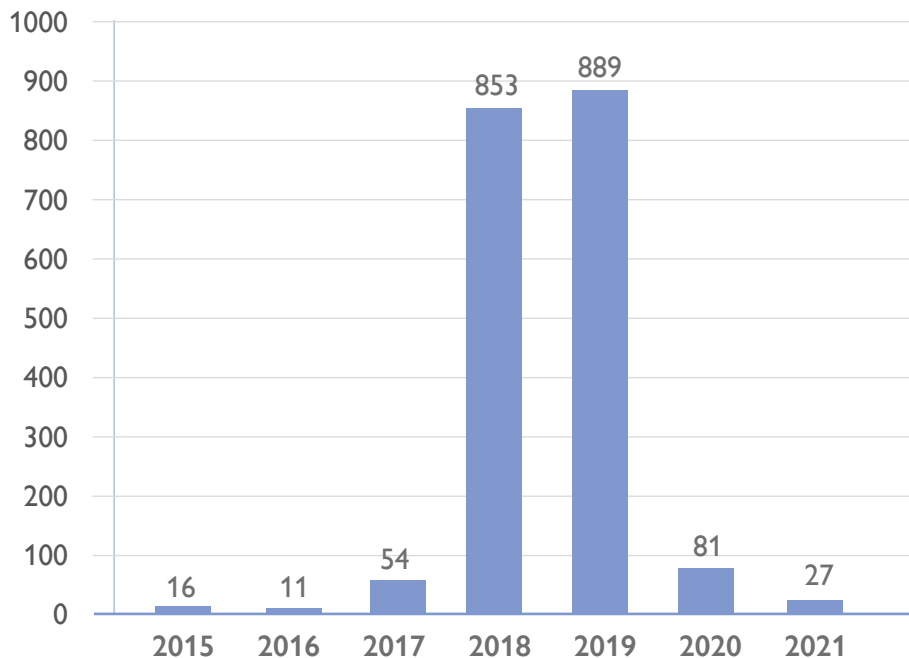
¹⁵ Before 2017, Verifier TD&B only collected information on the number of travel documents scanned, the number of imposters, and the number of fraudulent travel documents detected. However, with Verifier TD&B's upgrade in July 2017 additional statistics on demographics and issuing State of the passport used is captured (if that was the document used during interception).

Asian Network of Document Examination and Fraudulent Documents Reporting System

The Asian Network of Document Examination (ANDEX) was formally established in 2013 as a regional platform for law enforcement officials to share information about fraudulent travel document detection and emerging trends to address irregular migration, migrant smuggling, and trafficking in persons. The ANDEX Fraudulent Documents Reporting System (AFDRS) is a web-based platform for sharing information that was developed in 2015 for ANDEX Member States (Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam) to better communicate details of intercepted individuals carrying fraudulent travel documents. As a pilot initiative, the AFDRS was piloted in some of the ANDEX countries to collect data about where the fraudulent document was used, the nationality of the user, additional travel documents carried by the user when intercepted, and information on travel routes (for example, transit stops, destinations, arrivals).

The AFDRS data used for this report focuses on information about the Member States of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam. AFDRS data includes information from 2015 to September 2021.

Figure 3: Total number of fraudulent documents in AFDRS by year, 2015 to 2021



IOM's Verifier TD&B Newsletter Cases

Quarterly Verifier TD&B Newsletters and eDashboards were also included in the data analysis of this report. Fourteen Verifier TD&B newsletters from March 2018 to June 2021 were reviewed for the study. IOM compiles and distributes the Verifier TD&B Newsletter on a quarterly basis to provide more detailed information of cases intercepted and concrete patterns of travel documents and identity fraud in the region. An interactive dashboard presents these patterns visually on a secure, user-friendly platform to convey key indicators at a glance.¹⁶

The cases are similar to data compiled through the AFDRS and contain specifics of the particular fraud cases intercepted, such as specific information of forgeries in cases where a fraudulent travel document was used, original nationality of the passport bearer, as well as the travel document used when intercepted. While these case findings do not provide quantitative data that contributed to this report's statistical analysis, they do provide qualitative information, as well as important context to the results by elucidating how the results fit into the use of fraudulent travel documents in the Asia region as a whole.

Voluntary Reporting System on Migrant Smuggling and Related Conduct (VRS-MSRC)

The UNODC ROSEAP launched the VRS-MSRC, in support of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons, and Related Transnational Crime (the Bali Process) in July 2013. The database was operational until 2020. The VRS-MSRC was a tool for State authorities to securely report and share up-to-date data and information on migrant smuggling and related conduct. Based upon the principle of mutual information sharing, only States that provided data had access to the information and data provided by other States. Twenty-four Member States and territories contributed data to the VRS-MSRC: Australia, Cambodia, Fiji, France, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, the Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Türkiye, Tuvalu, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, New Caledonia (reported by France), and Norfolk Island. Ten VRS-MSRC Member States were in the Pacific; ten in Asia; four in other regions - Europe and North America; and two in other territories - New Caledonia (reported by France) and Norfolk Island.

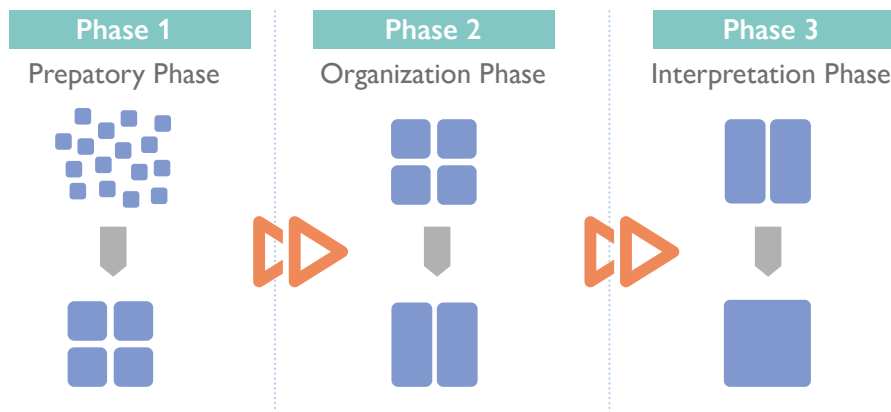
¹⁶ See: <https://cb4ibm.iom.int/desc/>.

¹⁷ See glossary of terms: "Genuine document" refers to "a passport obtained from the mandated authority, containing correct details of the holder and remains unaltered".

DATA ANALYSIS

In the first phase of data processing, each source of data was assessed for variables that were applicable to the analysis. In the second phase of data processing, it was determined which data and information across the datasets were comparable. During this phase, datasets were cleaned and variables were selected for analysis. In the third phase of data processing statistical analysis was conducted. Cross-tabulations were used to describe the frequencies of genuine documents¹⁷ scanned, the total amount of fraudulent documents scanned, and the kind of fraudulent status of the individual intercepted.

Figure 4: Phases of data processing and manipulation



The fraudulent status of an individual was categorized as either:

- “Imposter”, which is defined as “a person who applies for and obtains a document by assuming a false identity, or a person who alters his physical appearance to represent himself as another person for the purpose of using that person’s document”; or
- As a bearer of a fraudulent document, which is defined as “any travel or identity document that has been falsely made or altered in some material way by anyone other than a person or agency lawfully authorized to make or issue the travel or identity document on behalf of a State or that has been improperly issued or obtained through misrepresentation, corruption, or duress or in any other unlawful manner; or that is being used by a person other than the rightful holder”.¹⁸

These outcomes were stratified by the following characteristics: (1) year of interception; (2)sex; and (3) country of interception.

Univariate statistical tests, such as Chi-square and Fisher exact tests, were used to determine the association of the study’s categorical variables with year, gender, and country of inception respectively. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Mann-Whitney U Test were used to compare averages of interceptions for outcomes of interest over different years. Maps indicating the number of individuals intercepted, the country of arrival, and the next destination country were used to visualize the flow of irregular migration for the countries investigated in this analysis. The statistical software R version 3.14 and QGIS version 3.16 were used to perform all statistical calculations and production of maps.

¹⁸ The terms are derived from IOM, International Migration Law: Glossary on Migration (Geneva, 2019): https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf.

Limitations

Data from AFDRS, VRS-MSRC, and Verifier TD&B do not align for all variables because officials who input data sometimes include cases intercepted with their own secondary inspection systems. Additionally, the data collection methodology is different for each dataset and therefore the data cannot be linked electronically. However, datasets were analysed separately as each source of data provided unique information that helped to describe emerging trends in fraudulent travel document use across South and South-east Asia.

The data contained in the VRS-MSRC is collected using a different system than data collected for the AFDRS and Verifier TD&B. Data collection for the VRS-MSRC was discontinued in 2020, and while the trends and findings derived from the VRS-MSRC are comparable to the findings derived from the AFDRS and Verifier TD&B databases, combining the datasets was not possible. The inability to link the VRS-MSRC, AFDRS, and Verifier TD&B data sets electronically for analysis did not inhibit our ability to discuss migration trends across these sources of data for similar years. Additionally, data from the VRS-MSRC was only used to assess the number of individuals intercepted with fraudulent documents living in countries they have migrated to, which was a stand-alone analysis of migration trends that is complimentary but different from this report's analysis of individuals who are intercepted with fraudulent travel documentation while in the process of migrating.

Data from the AFDRS does not contain the number of genuine documents scanned and therefore cannot be used to provide relative proportions of fraudulent versus genuine travel documents scanned for each country. However, this report was able to calculate the proportions of fraudulent versus genuine travel documents scanned for each country using data from Verifier TD&B.

Because the AFDRS database originated from data collected using the Verifier TD&B systems, data collected for the AFDRS does not contain information on gender or age. Conversely, only the AFDRS data contains information on the arrival and destination countries of each case of fraud. In 2017, Verifier TD&B was upgraded to include information on gender,¹⁹ age group (0–17, 18–30, 31–45, 46–60, 61–75, 76+), and passport used for each scanned document. Verifier TD&B before 2017 does not contain this information. While the the AFDRS database and data from Verifier TD&B before 2017 do not contain demographic information about age and sex, this report uses a combined five years of demographic data from Verifier TD&B to assess fraudulent travel document trends by age and gender.

Due to the nature of immigration inspection, not all individuals who migrate have their travel documents scanned by officials at secondary inspection. Therefore, instances of fraudulent travel documents and identities may be underreported and not fully reflected in the analysis of this report. Further, there may be no records of migration where free movement between two countries is permitted. This is particularly true of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Member States, as outlined in the ASEAN Agreement on Visa Exemption. This agreement provides a framework for ASEAN Member States to negotiate and conclude separate bilateral protocols to exempt citizens of other ASEAN Member States from visa requirements for a period of stay of up to 14 days. Finally, it should be mentioned that border officers may choose to scan some gender, age groups, and races over others, which could affect data collection.

¹⁹ As defined by ICAO's Doc 9303: www.icao.int/publications/Documents/9303_p4_cons_en.pdf. However, for the purpose of this analysis, only those with "female" and "male" indications on their travel documents were taken into account.

²⁰ ASEAN, ASEAN Framework Agreement on Visa Exemption (Jakarta, 2002): <http://agreement.asean.org/media/download/20160831072909.pdf>.

FINDINGS

PREVALENCE OF FRAUDULENT AND GENUINE TRAVEL DOCUMENT USE, 2014 to 2021

FINDINGS

PREVALENCE OF FRAUDULENT AND GENUINE TRAVEL DOCUMENT USE, 2014 to 2021

Secondary inspection immigration officers from the 12 countries discussed in this report scanned 21,008 documents using Verifier TD&B between 2014 and 2021. Over 50 per cent of these documents were scanned during 2018 (30.3%; n=6,363) and 2019 (21.2%; n=4,459). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent border closures and mobility restrictions, only 1,189 documents were scanned in 2020, and 1,039 documents were scanned in 2021, representing only 10.6 per cent of all documents scanned. While the total number of fraudulent travel documents used varied each year (see Table 1), the proportional trend of fraudulent travel documents intercepted as a percentage of total documents generally decreased each year between 2014 and 2021 (see Figure 5). The decreasing number of intercepted fraud cases could be due to a variety of reasons, such as a genuine decrease of fraudulent migration cases in response to smugglers and other perpetrators being aware of the increasingly stringent border control mechanisms present at, in particular, airports.

Figure 5: Proportion of scanned fraudulent travel documents by year, 2014 to 2021

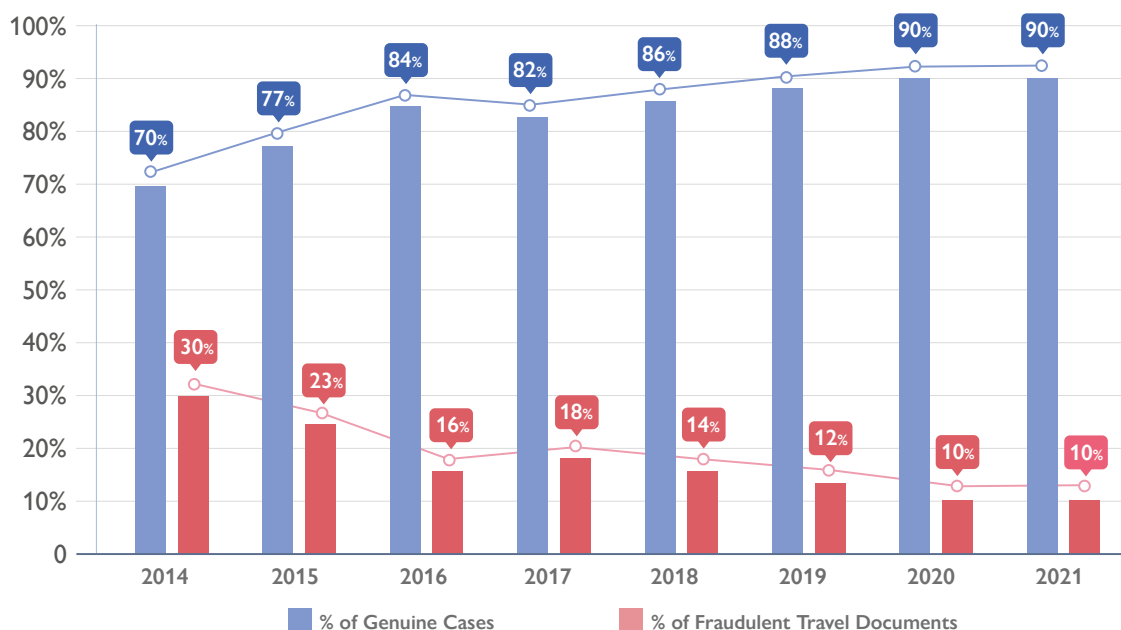


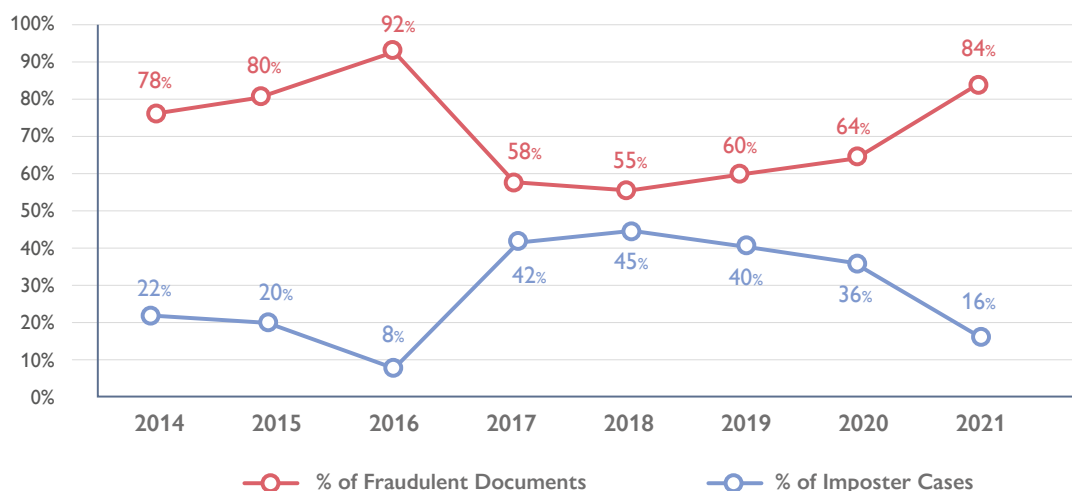
Table 1: Proportion of fraudulent, imposter, and genuine cases, 2014 to 2021

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
% of genuine cases	70%	77%	84%	82%	86%	88%	90%	90%
% of fraudulent travel documents	30%	23%	16%	18%	14%	12%	10%	10%
Total number of scanned documents	1 300	2 415	1 266	2 977	6 363	4 459	1 189	1 039

The proportion of individuals using fraudulent documents versus intercepted imposter cases peaked in 2016, when 92 per cent of intercepted cases were found to be using fraudulent documents. This proportion then decreased to a low of 55 per cent of intercepted cases being classified as having fraudulent documents in 2018 and then increased again to 84 per cent of intercepted cases being classified as having fraudulent documents in 2021 (see Table 2). **This almost cyclical pattern of individuals using fraudulent documents versus individuals posing as an imposter could suggest that groups who engage in migrant smuggling and/or trafficking in persons are receptive to what forms of fraudulent identification work best for entering a country illegally and can adapt relatively quickly to security changes.** While this trend is apparent overall, the cyclical pattern is particularly apparent for some countries. For example, at Hazrat Shahjalal Airport in Bangladesh, there is a clear switch in the predominant type of fraudulent document used between 2014 to 2017, when intercepting individuals with fraudulent travel documents was common, and 2018 to 2020 when intercepting imposter cases was the most common.

Table 2: Percentage of fraudulent document versus imposter cases, 2014 to 2021

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
% of fraudulent documents	78%	80%	92%	58%	55%	60%	65%	84%
% of imposter cases	22%	20%	8%	42%	45%	40%	35%	16%
Total number of fraud cases	384	557	201	541	977	621	119	107

Figure 6: Trends of imposter cases and fraudulent documents relative to total fraud cases, 2014 to 2021

SEX AND AGE ANALYSIS

With the Verifier TD&B's upgrade in July 2017, DESC was able to collect data on gender, age group (0–17, 18–30, 31–45, 46–60, 61–75, 76+), and the issuing country of the documents presented. Of the sources of data used for this analysis, only data from Verifier TD&B collects data on sex and age and is, therefore, the only dataset used for this portion of the analysis.

The association between sex, year and type of fraud

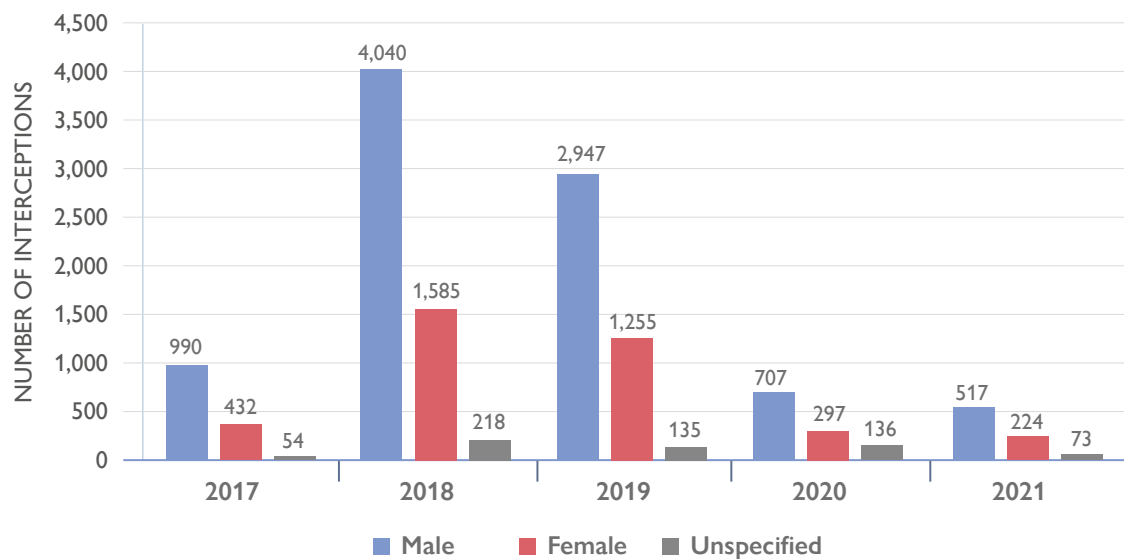
While the number of scanned documents varied by year, the proportion of documents scanned belonging to males and females for each year did not vary significantly ($\chi^2 = 8.6$, $df=9$, p -value = 0.07). This suggests that the proportion of male and female travellers remained relatively consistent over the years, even if the overall number of migrants changed (Table 3 and Figure 7).

Table 3: Number of interceptions by sex and year, 2017 to 2021*

	Male	Female	Unspecified
2017	990 (10.8)	432 (11.4)	54 (8.8)
2018	4 040 (43.9)	1 585 (41.8)	218 (35.4)
2019	2 947 (32.0)	1 255 (33.1)	135 (21.9)
2020	707 (7.7)	297 (7.8)	136 (22.1)
2021	517 (5.6)	224 (5.9)	73 (11.9)
Total	9 201	3 793	616

*Numbers in parentheses represent column per cent.

Figure 7: Number of interceptions by sex and year, 2017 to 2021



Sex was also significantly associated with fraudulent travel documents when stratified by year ($\chi^2 = 77$, $df=20$, p -value <0.001). At its peak, **the difference between the proportion of males and females intercepted with fraudulent travel documents was greatest in 2018, with males (69.1%) being almost three times as likely to be intercepted as females (27.1%) with fraudulent documents** (4.8% of fraudulent documents intercepted did not specify gender). **This contrasts with the proportion of males and females intercepted with fraudulent travel documents in 2017, where one female was found to be using fraudulent travel documents for every 2 males intercepted** (Tables 4 and Figure 8). The results suggest that **men are consistently the majority of individuals intercepted with fraudulent travel documents between the years 2017 and 2021** ($\chi^2 = 1020$, $df=12$, p -value <0.001).

There was a significant decrease in the proportion of intercepted women with fraudulent travel documents between 2017 and 2018 (28.6% versus 19.9%); however, the proportion of women intercepted increased in 2019 and remained statistically consistent from 2019 through 2021. The proportion of intercepted individuals whose gender was unspecified almost tripled between 2019 and 2020 (3.1% versus 9.0%). It is unclear why there was almost a 300 per cent increase in the number of individuals with unspecified gender given that Verifier TD&B automatically collects gender data. Individuals intercepted with fraudulent travel documents were significantly more likely than individuals with genuine travel documents to have an unspecified gender for all years.

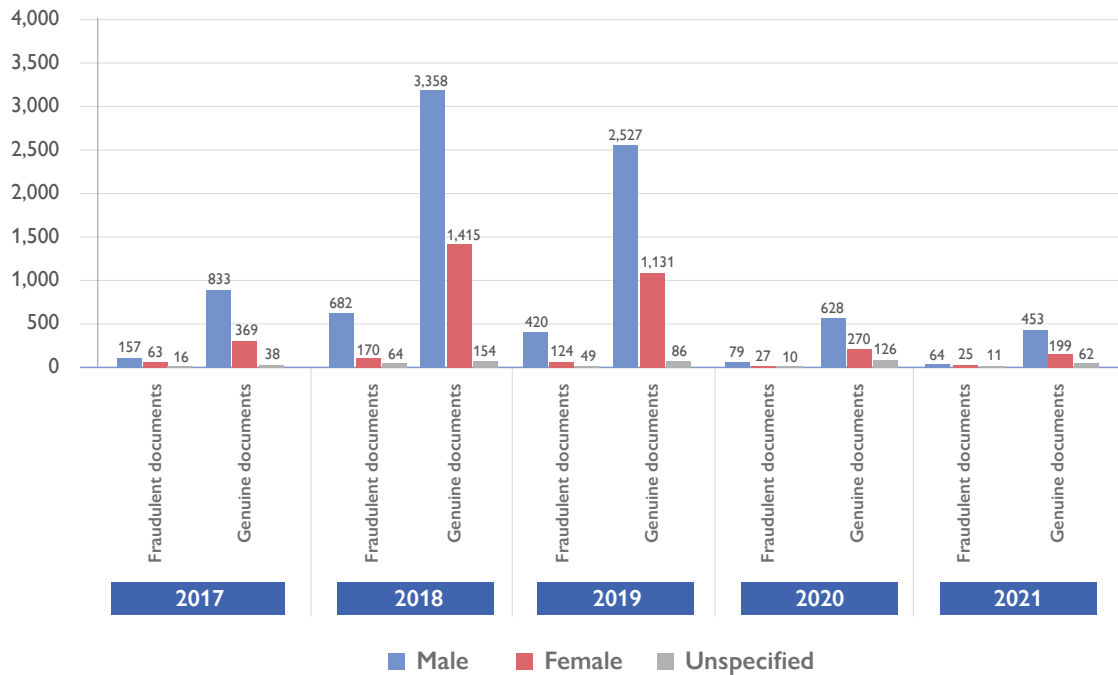
Table 4: Number of interceptions by sex and year for genuine and total fraudulent documents, 2017 to 2021*

	2017		2018		2019		2020	
	Fraudulent documents	Genuine documents	Fraudulent documents	Genuine documents	Fraudulent documents	Genuine documents	Fraudulent documents	Genuine documents
Male	157 (66.5)	833 (67.2)	682 (74.5)	3 358 (68.1)	420 (70.8)	2 527 (67.5)	79 (68.1)	628 (61.3)
Female	63 (26.7)	369 (29.8)	170 (18.5)	1 415 (28.7)	124 (20.9)	1 131 (30.2)	27 (23.3)	270 (26.4)
Unspecified	16 (6.7)	38 (3.0)	64 (7.0)	154 (3.1)	49 (3.1)	86 (2.3)	10 (8.6)	126 (12.3)
Total	236	1240	916	4 927	593	3 744	116	1 024

*Numbers in parentheses represent column per cent.



Figure 8: Number of individuals intercepted by sex and type of fraudulent document per year, 2017 to 2021



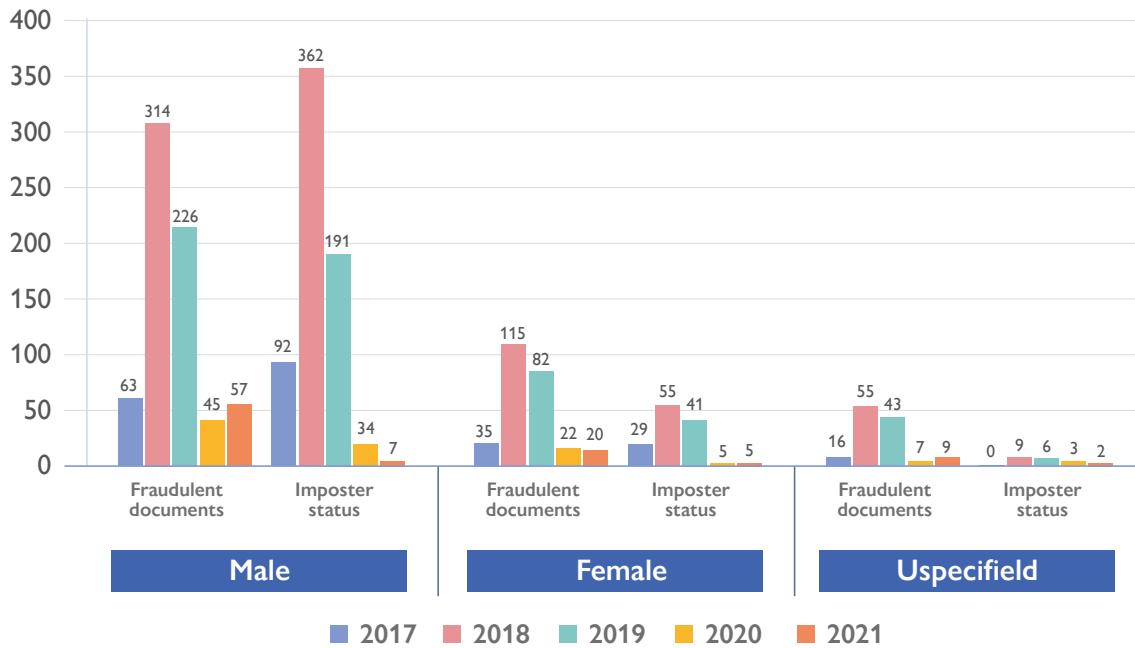
During 2017 and 2018, the most common form of fraud for males was impersonation (2017: 59.3%, and 2018: 53.6%); however, beginning in 2019, interception with fraudulent documents became significantly more common for males ($\chi^2 = 52.1$, $df=10$, p -value <0.001). For females, the use of fraudulent documents and identities alternated each year until 2021, when females were more likely to be intercepted with fraudulent documents for two years in a row. While these percentages represent overall trends, the association between sex and fraudulent document use varies by country. The percentage of interceptions with an unspecified sex significantly decreased in 2020 and 2021 (Tables 5 and Figure 9).

Table 5: Number of individuals intercepted by sex and type of fraudulent document per year, 2017 to 2021*

	Male		Female		Unspecified gender	
	Fraudulent documents	Imposter status	Fraudulent documents	Imposter status	Fraudulent documents	Imposter status
2017	63 (8.9)	92 (13.4)	35 (12.8)	29 (21.5)	16 (12.3)	0 (0)
2018	314 (44.5)	363 (52.8)	115 (42.0)	55 (40.7)	55 (42.3)	9 (45.0)
2019	226 (32.1)	193 (27.8)	82 (29.9)	42 (30.3)	43 (33.1)	6 (30.0)
2020	45 (6.4)	34 (5.0)	22 (8.3)	5 (3.7)	7 (5.4)	3 (15.0)
2021	57 (8.1)	7 (1.0)	20 (8.0)	5 (3.7)	9 (6.9)	2 (10.0)
Total	705	686	274	135	130	20

*Numbers in parentheses represent column per cent.

Figure 9: Interceptions by sex and type of document per year, 2017 to 2021



The association between age, sex and type of fraud

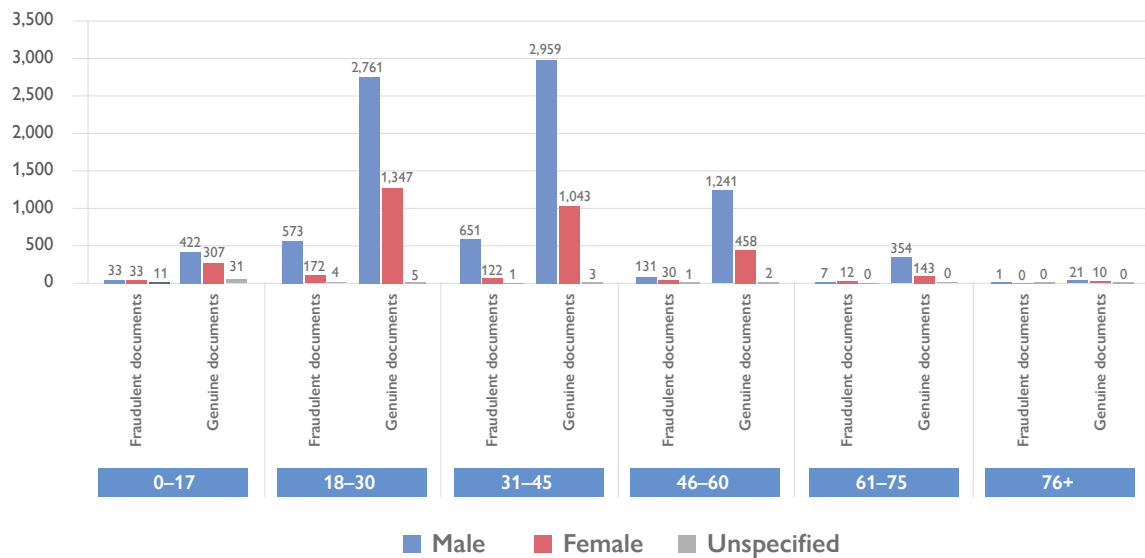
Age group differed significantly by gender ($\chi^2 = 139.9$, $df=12$, p -value <0.001). There was a larger percentage of female travellers under the age of 30 (51.0%) compared to the same age group of male travellers (41.0%). Conversely, more males were between the ages of 31-45 (38.1%) than females in the same age group (31.5%) (Table 6 and Figure 10). The overwhelming majority of intercepted fraudulent cases with an unspecified gender were for individuals under 30 years of age (87.8%). These cases were more likely to be intercepted with fraudulent documents rather than intercepted as an imposter.

Table 6: Number of interceptions by sex and age*

	0-17	18-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	76+	Total
Male	422 (55.5)	2 761 (67.1)	2 959 (73.0)	1 241 (72.9)	354 (71.2)	21 (67.7)	7 758 (69.8)
Female	307 (40.4)	1 347 (32.8)	1 043 (26.0)	458 (26.9)	143 (28.8)	10 (32.3)	3 308 (29.8)
Unspecified	31 (4.1)	5 (0.1)	3 (0.01)	2 (0.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	41 (0.4)
Total	760	4 113	4 005	1 701	497	31	11 107

*Numbers in parentheses represent column per cent.

Figure 10: Number of interceptions by sex and age



While males were the most likely to be intercepted across all age groups (Table 7 and Figure 11), this was not the case when age groups were stratified by sex and type of fraudulent documents used ($\chi^2 = 714$, $df=22$, p -value <0.001). Males and females between the ages of 0 and 17 were intercepted with fraudulent documents in equal proportions, while individuals between 0 and 17 who were intercepted with genuine documents were more likely to be male than female (55.8% versus 40.3%). **Females comprised the majority (63.2% versus 36.8) of the individuals intercepted with fraudulent documents between the ages of 61 and 75.**

The ratio of males to females and the type of documents they were intercepted with differed significantly by age. While the male to female ratio

of people intercepted with genuine documents remained relatively flat regardless of age group, the male to female ratio of people intercepted with fraudulent travel documents follows a curve across age groups. The values for this curve range from 0.6 for people aged 61–75, to 5.3 for people aged 31–45 (Table 8 and Figure 12). This suggests that while the ratio of males to females being intercepted with genuine travel documents is relatively consistent, **males aged 18–60 years of age were much more likely to be intercepted with fraudulent travel documents than females of the same age group.** Fraudulent travel documents were the most common type of fraud intercepted, except for males between the ages of 31–45 years who were more likely to be intercepted as an imposter than with fraudulent travel documents (Table 9).

Table 7: Number of interceptions by age group and sex by fraudulent document*

	0-17	18-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	76+	Total
Male	422 (55.5)	2 761 (67.1)	2 959 (73.0)	1 241 (72.9)	354 (71.2)	21 (67.7)	7 758 (69.8)
Female	307 (40.4)	1 347 (32.8)	1 043 (26.0)	458 (26.9)	143 (28.8)	10 (32.3)	3 308 (29.8)
Unspecified	31 (4.1)	5 (0.1)	3 (0.01)	2 (0.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	41 (0.4)
Total	760	4 113	4 005	1 701	497	31	11 107

*Numbers in parentheses represent column per cent

Figure 11: Number of interceptions by age group and sex

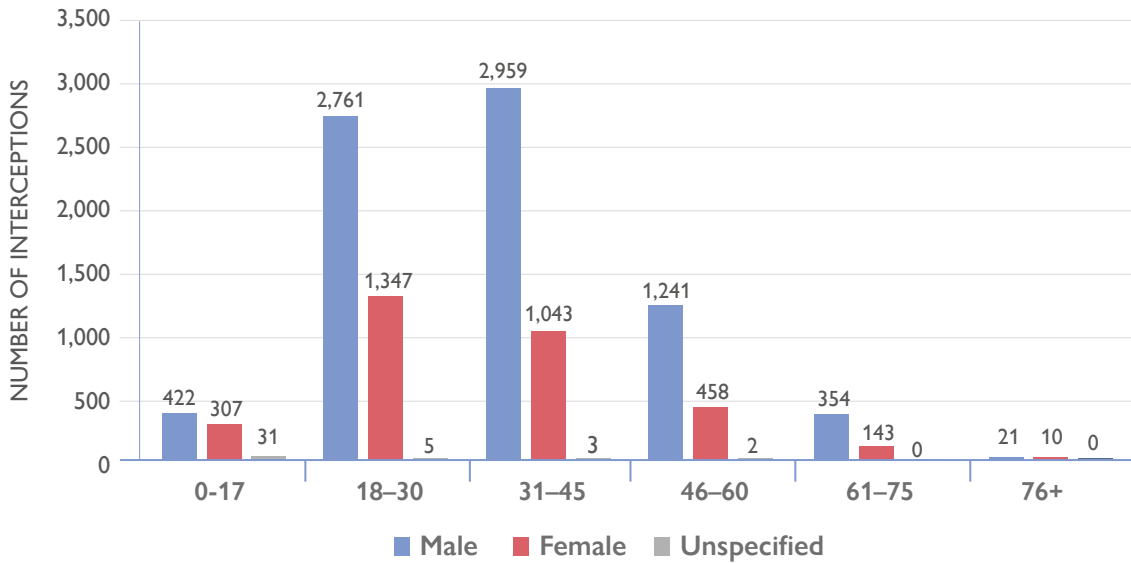


Table 8: Number of interceptions by sex and year for fraudulent documents and imposter status*

	Male		Female		Unspecified gender	
	Fraudulent documents	Imposter status	Fraudulent documents	Imposter status	Fraudulent documents	Imposter status
0-17	27 (3.8)	6 (0.9)	26 (10.8)	7 (5.4)	11 (68.8)	0 (0)
18-30	305 (43.2)	267 (39.1)	117 (48.3)	57 (43.4)	4 (25.0)	0 (0)
31-45	301 (42.5)	348 (50.5)	73 (30.0)	50 (38.8)	1 (6.3)	0 (0)
46-60	67 (9.5)	64 (9.3)	17 (7.1)	13 (10.1)	0 (0)	1 (100.0)
61-75	6 (0.9)	1 (0.1)	9 (3.8)	3 (2.3)	0 (0)	0 (0)
76+	1 (0.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total	707	686	242	130	16	1

*Numbers in parentheses represent column per cent.

Figure 12: Ratio of male / female interceptions for genuine and fraudulent documents by age group

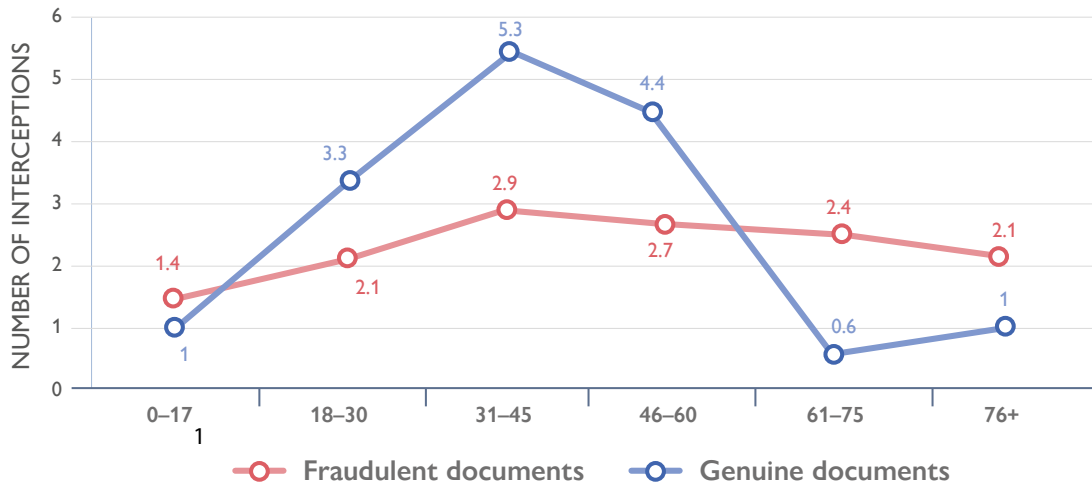


Table 9: Number of interceptions by sex, age group and type of document used*

	0–17		18–30		31–45		46–60		61–75	
	Fraudulent documents	Genuine documents	Fraudulent documents	Genuine documents	Fraudulent documents	Genuine documents	Fraudulent documents	Genuine documents	Fraudulent documents	Genuine documents
Male	33 (42.9)	422 (55.8)	573 (76.6)	2 761 (68.3)	651 (84.1)	2 959 (74.9)	131 (80.9)	1241 (72.9)	7 (36.8)	354 (69.2)
Female	33 (42.9)	307 (40.3)	172 (22.8)	1 347 (31.6)	122 (15.8)	1 043 (25.0)	30 (18.5)	458 (26.9)	12 (63.2)	143 (30.8)
Unspecified	11 (14.2)	31 (3.9)	4 (0.5)	5 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	3 (0.1)	1 (0.6)	2 (0.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Ratio of Male/Female	1	1.4	3.3	2.2	5.3	2.8	4.4	2.7	0.6	2.4
Total	77	760	745	4 112	767	3 272	162	1 701	19	497

*Numbers in parentheses represent column per cent.



ANALYSIS OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND TRAVEL ROUTES

Ports of entry that use Verifier TD&B

Between 2014 and 2021, there were 34 points of entry operated by the 12 countries that scanned travel documents using Verifier TD&B in this analysis. As of September 2021, this represents 69.4 per cent of the total number of points of entry where Verifier TD&B is used (46 total points of entry) and 63.2 per cent of the total number of countries that use Verifier TD&B (19 countries use Verifier TD&B).²¹ While every country reported Verifier TD&B in use in at least one airport, only Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia and Thailand reported using Verifier TD&B at land border control posts (Annex B).

Out of the 34 points of entry, 24 points were airports, 7 were land borders, and 3 were training/research centres, of which only the Malaysia Immigration Forensic Centre training/research centre intercepted the most individuals (120 individuals) (Table 10). The number of points of entry varied where some countries, such as Afghanistan and Bangladesh have a single point of entry using Verifier TD&B, and other countries such as Thailand have the largest number of entry points using Verifier TD&B (8 entry points).

Analysis identified that there was no significant difference in the number of interceptions between airports and land borders (z-score = -1.14, p-value <0.25). However, the range of interceptions per airport was larger than the range of interceptions for land border crossings (Airports: 6–6166 versus 18–843). This could suggest that while land points of entry intercept equal amounts of individuals as airports, some entry points do not use Verifier TD&B to scan travel documents frequently, which might need improvement to better address irregular migration (Table 11). This study was unable to determine the percentage of travel documents selected for inspection with Verifier TD&B per year because it was not possible to obtain official numbers of individuals passing through each point of entry. However, the number of travel documents selected for inspection with Verifier TD&B per year is relatively low compared to the volume of individuals passing through each point of entry.

Table 10: Characteristics of interceptions by type of check point, 2014 to 2021*

Type of point of entry	Number of entry points	Number of interceptions	The average number of interceptions	Q1	Q2	Q3	min	max
Airport	24	12 121	484.3	37	83	358	0	3 040
Land	7	2 704	369.1	130.5	271	575	181	843

*Data for 2021 was only collected up until July.

²¹ Verifier Travel Document and Bearer: <https://cb4ibm.iom.int/desc/assets/documents/Verifier%20TD&B%20Factsheet%20Sep%202021.pdf>.

²² Wikipedia, Shahjalal International Airport: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahjalal_International_Airport#cite_note-6.

Number of interceptions and the use of fraudulent travel documents by country

The total number of scanned documents each year varied by country ($\chi^2 = 937$, $df=33$, p -value <0.001) (Table 12). There was an overall increase in the number of documents scanned each year until the COVID-19 pandemic years of 2020 and 2021. This overall increase generally reflects the time it takes countries to become familiar with and fully utilize Verifier TD&B technology for fraudulent travel document detection. However, the data reflects the possibility that on a country level, some countries could scan their largest number of documents right after they received Verifier TD&B (a large number of scanned documents in the early years, with a general decrease over time), while some countries need longer periods of time to familiarize themselves with the system (low number of scans in the beginning with an increase in the number of scans over time).

Only six of the 12 countries included in this study scanned documents for all years between 2014 and 2021 (Bangladesh, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand). Some of the missing information could be due to border closures and additional travel restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.²³ Of the countries missing data for at least one year, most were missing data for the years 2020 and 2021, the years of the COVID-19 pandemic. If we

remove 2020 and 2021 from our assessment, we find that 10 out of 12 countries reported interceptions for all years between 2017 and 2019. **This suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic affected the ability of countries to either scan or report on fraudulent travel documents.**

The ratio of the number of travel documents scanned significantly varied by sex and country scanning the documents ($\chi^2 = 46.8$, $df=11$, p -value <0.001) (Figure 13). **The ratio of males versus female travellers' travel documents scanned was highest for Bangladesh (6 males for every 1 female scanned) and was lowest for the Philippines (1.4 males scanned for every 1 female).**²⁴ The large gender disparities in scanned travel documents could be due to the type of migration that the citizens of each country typically engage in. Migrants originating from Bangladesh are most likely to work in male dominated fields like fishing or factory work,^{25, 26} while migrants originating from the Philippines are most likely to be employed as domestic labour or in professional positions that are not as male-dominated as fishing and factory work.^{27, 28} It is also possible that border officials express a bias towards selecting men for document verification, as they are aware that men are more likely to be found with fraudulent travel documents than women.

²³ Aiko Kikkawa Takenaka, James Villafuerte, Raymond Gaspar, Badri Narayanan, COVID-19 Impact on international migration, remittances, and recipient households in developing Asia. Asian Development Bank (Manila, 2020).

²⁴ No travel documents scanned in Viet Nam contained information on gender.

²⁵ Laura Boudreau, Rachel Heath, Tyler McCormick, Migrants, information, and working conditions in Bangladeshi garment factories. International Growth Center. Report No.: F-31406-BGD-1 (2018).

²⁶ Barai, M.K., Development dynamics of remittances in Bangladesh. SAGE Open (2020).

²⁷ Claire Dennis, Total number of OFWs estimated at 2.2 Million. Philippine Statistics Authority. Report No. 2020-099 (2020).

²⁸ Marie McAuliffe, Binod Khadria, Céline Bauloz, Michelle Nguyen, Sophie Qu, Adrian Kitimbo, World Migration Report 2020. International Organization for Migration (Geneva, 2020).

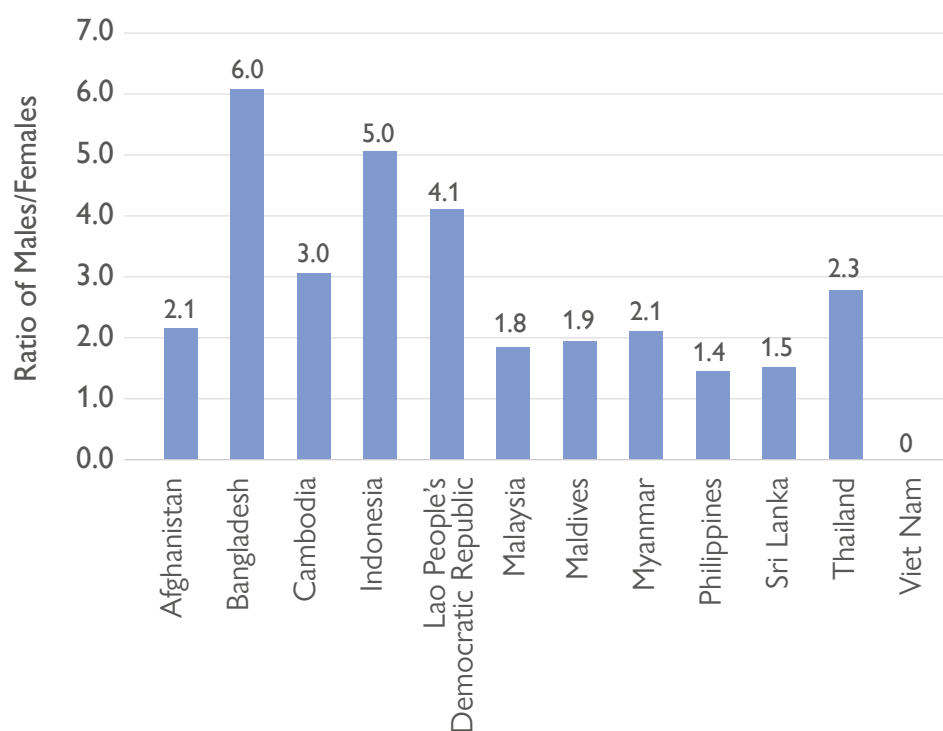
Table 11: Number of total interceptions by country of origin and sex**

	Male	Female	Unspecified	Total
Afghanistan	636 (58.4)	308 (28.3)	145 (13.3)	1 089
Bangladesh	1 992 (83.1)	330 (13.8)	75 (3.1)	2 397
Cambodia	613 (74.8)	206 (25.1)	1 (0.1)	820
Indonesia	15 (83.3)	3 (16.7)	0 (0)	18
Lao People's Democratic Republic	673 (79.8)	165 (19.6)	5 (0.6)	843
Malaysia	261 (64.2)	144 (35.5)	1 (0.3)	406
Maldives	597 (63.5)	308 (32.8)	35 (3.7)	940
Myanmar	1310 (67.9)	622 (32.1)	6 (0.4)	1 938
Philippines (the)	249 (57.1)	182 (41.7)	5 (1.2)	436
Sri Lanka	1 150 (50.8)	779 (34.4)	332 (14.7)	2 261
Thailand	1 705 (69.3)	746 (30.3)	11 (0.4)	2 462
Viet Nam*	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

*No gender data for documents scanned in Viet Nam.

**Numbers in parentheses represent row per cent.

Figure 13: Ratio of male/female traveller's travel documents scanned by country*



*Numbers in parentheses represent column per cent.

Table 12: Number of documents scanned by the country of interception, stratified by country and year*

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Afghanistan	154 (12.3)	588 (47.2)	459 (36.0)	0 (0)	43 (3.5)	1 244
Bangladesh	592 (19.5)	833 (27.4)	691 (22.7)	340 (11.2)	584 (19.2)	3 040
Cambodia	196 (19.5)	581 (57.8)	207 (20.6)	22 (2.2)	0 (0)	1 006
Indonesia	0 (0)	18 (100.0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	18
Lao People's Democratic Republic	61 (7.1)	440 (57.8)	229 (26.7)	125 (14.6)	4 (0.5)	859
Malaysia	102 (24.2)	232 (55.1)	68 (16.2)	19 (4.5)	0 (0)	421
Maldives	94 (9.5)	286 (28.9)	269 (27.3)	130 (13.2)	208 (21.1)	987
Myanmar	20 (1.0)	1 399 (71.0)	552 (28.0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 971
Philippines (the)	20 (4.6)	221 (50.5)	163 (37.2)	10 (2.3)	24 (5.5)	438
Sri Lanka	102 (4.4)	767 (32.7)	889 (37.9)	412 (2.3)	174 (7.4)	2 344
Thailand	462 (18.5)	982 (39.2)	925 (37.0)	131 (5.2)	2 (0.01)	2 502
Viet Nam	58 (71.6)	16 (19.8)	7 (8.6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	81

*Numbers in parentheses represent row per cent.

While the number of scanned documents generally fluctuated by year for each country, the ratio of fraudulent travel documents to genuine travel documents scanned by each country decreased or remained consistent each year. This is consistent with the study's findings that, overall, the yearly percentage of intercepted fraudulent documents is declining (Table 13). Type of fraudulent travel document also significantly varied by country, particularly when stratified by gender ($\chi^2 = 46.8$, $df=11$, p -value <0.001).

Table 13: Type of fraudulent travel document stratified by country, sex, and year*

	Male	Female	Unspecified	2020	2021	Total
	Fraudulent documents	Imposter status	Fraudulent documents	Imposter status	Fraudulent documents	Imposter status
Afghanistan	56 (7.5)	4 (0.6)	55 (20.1)	10 (7.4)	68 (52.3)	6 (30.0)
Bangladesh	63 (9.0)	434 (63.3)	3 (1.1)	30 (22.2)	16 (12.3)	1 (5.0)
Cambodia	8 (1.1)	2 (0.3)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Indonesia	1 (0.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Lao People's Democratic Republic	37 (5.3)	70 (10.2)	3 (1.1)	3 (2.2)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)
Malaysia	65 (9.3)	33 (4.8)	18 (6.6)	9 (6.7)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)
Maldives	143 (20.4)	31 (4.5)	62 (22.6)	17 (12.6)	5 (3.8)	2 (10.0)
Philippines (the)	81 (11.5)	2 (0.3)	52 (19.0)	1 (0.7)	4 (3.1)	0 (0)
Sri Lanka	115 (16.4)	15 (2.2)	44 (16.1)	10 (7.4)	34 (26.2)	9 (45.0)
Thailand	136 (19.4)	95 (13.8)	36 (13.1)	54 (40.0)	1 (0.8)	2 (10.0)
Viet Nam	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

*Numbers in parentheses represent column per cent.

OVERALL DEPICTION OF ARRIVALS, DESTINATION, AND FRAUDULENT DOCUMENT TYPE UPON INTERCEPTION

Data from the AFDRS characterized the arrivals and intended destinations of individuals who were intercepted with fraudulent documents, and the type of fraudulent documents used when intercepted. Out of 1,841 interceptions in the AFDRS database with information on the type of fraudulent documents used, **the most common fraudulent documents intercepted was a national passport (63.2%) followed by a fraudulent visa (22.2%)** (Table 14). In total there were 110 nationalities represented at the time of interception. **The top five most intercepted nationalities equalled 1,157 individuals and represented 62.7 per cent of all intercepted nationalities. The following nationalities were the most intercepted: 437 individuals from India (23.7% of total), 403 individuals from Thailand (21.8% of total), 140 individuals from Viet Nam (7.6% of total), 91 individuals from Iran (4.9% of total), and 86 individuals from People's Republic China (4.7% of total). The most questioned travel documents represented 50.5 per cent of all questioned travel documents and included the following countries: the United Kingdom (12.5% of total), India (11.6% of total),**

Viet Nam (5.9% of total), Thailand (5.7% of total), Australia (4.6% of total), France (3.8% of total), Germany (3.8% of total) and Sweden (2.6% of total).

Out of 1,143 cases intercepted, most intended destinations were outside of the Asia region and included the following most common destinations: the Republic of Korea (12.8% of total),²⁹ the United Kingdom (11.0% of total), Mexico (8.0% of total), Australia (7.6% of total), Serbia (7.3% of total) and Germany (6.3% of total). The most reported destinations represented 52.9 per cent of all destinations and were 6 out of 95 destination countries (Table 15). **All but one of the top five countries of arrival were from the Asia region and the top five countries of arrival represented 81.8 per cent of all arrival countries. The following countries were the top five countries of arrival: Thailand (66.6% of total), Viet Nam (5.0% of total), Malaysia (4.2% of total), the United Arab Emirates (3.3% of total), and India (2.6% of total)** (Table 14).

²⁹ All of the cases intended to go to the Republic of Korea were solely reported by Thailand. Thus, this does not reflect that the Republic of Korea is the main destination for Asia and the Pacific countries. This information only conveys the situation of Thailand and not of other countries.

Table 14: Overall depiction of arrivals, destinations, and type of fraudulent document type used upon interceptions in AFDRS Data

Type of Document Intercepted	Counts	Percentage of total Respondents
ID Card	173	9.4%
National Passport	1 163	63.2%
Visa	408	22.2%
Other	97	5.3%
Most Common Nationalities Intercepted (out of 1,846)		
India	437	23.7%
Thailand	403	21.8%
Viet Nam	140	7.6%
Islamic Republic of Iran	91	4.9%
People's Republic of China	86	4.7%
Most Questioned Travel Document (out of 1,846)		
United Kingdom (the)	230	12.5%
India	215	11.6%
Viet Nam	108	5.9%
Thailand	106	5.7%
Australia	84	4.6%
France	71	3.8%
Germany	70	3.8%
Sweden	50	2.6%
Most Common Destinations of Intercepted Individuals (out of 1,143)		
Republic of Korea (the)	146	12.8%
United Kingdom (the)	126	11.0%
Mexico	92	8.0%
Australia	87	7.6%
Serbia	84	7.3%
Germany	72	6.3%
Most Common Countries of Arrival for Intercepted Individuals (out of 1,135)		
Thailand	756	66.6%
Viet Nam	57	5.0%
Malaysia	48	4.2%
United Arab Emirates (the)	37	3.3%

TRAVEL ROUTES BY COUNTRY

Of the 1,848 interceptions in the AFDRS database with information on the country of interception, 1,136 (61.5%) interceptions had information on the country they arrived from, and 1,169 (63.2%) interceptions had information on the country of the intended destination. This data was mapped in conjunction with the Verifier TD&B interceptions containing complete data on the country the individuals were intercepted in, along with the issuing country for the travel document. This combined analysis provides a more holistic representation of the travel routes taken by irregular migrants within Asia. Below is an assessment of the irregular migration context for intercepted individuals by country.



Afghanistan

Secondary inspection officials scanned a total of 1,347 documents between 2014 and 2021.³⁰ Of these, 272 of them were found to be fraud cases (20.2%), of which 232 cases of fraudulent travel documents (17.2%) and 40 imposter cases (3.9%) (Table 15). During the first year (2014) that the Verifier TD&B was used in Afghanistan, 86 per cent of interceptions were of imposter cases while only 14 per cent of intercepted cases were fraudulent travel documents. However, from 2015 onward fraudulent travel documents became the most intercepted cases of fraudulent documents for each year after in Afghanistan (Table 16 and Figure 14). Fraudulent identification from 24 different issuing countries was intercepted in Afghanistan during the study period. The top three most common countries represented by the fraudulent travel documents represented 48.3 per cent of all intercepted travel documents and included, Canada (16.7%), New Zealand (15.8%) and Ukraine (15.8%). This report was unable to assess what countries individuals were arriving from upon interception or where they were departing to because AFDRS does not collect information from Afghanistan.

Table 15: Type of documents scanned by Verifier TD&B in Afghanistan, 2014 to 2021

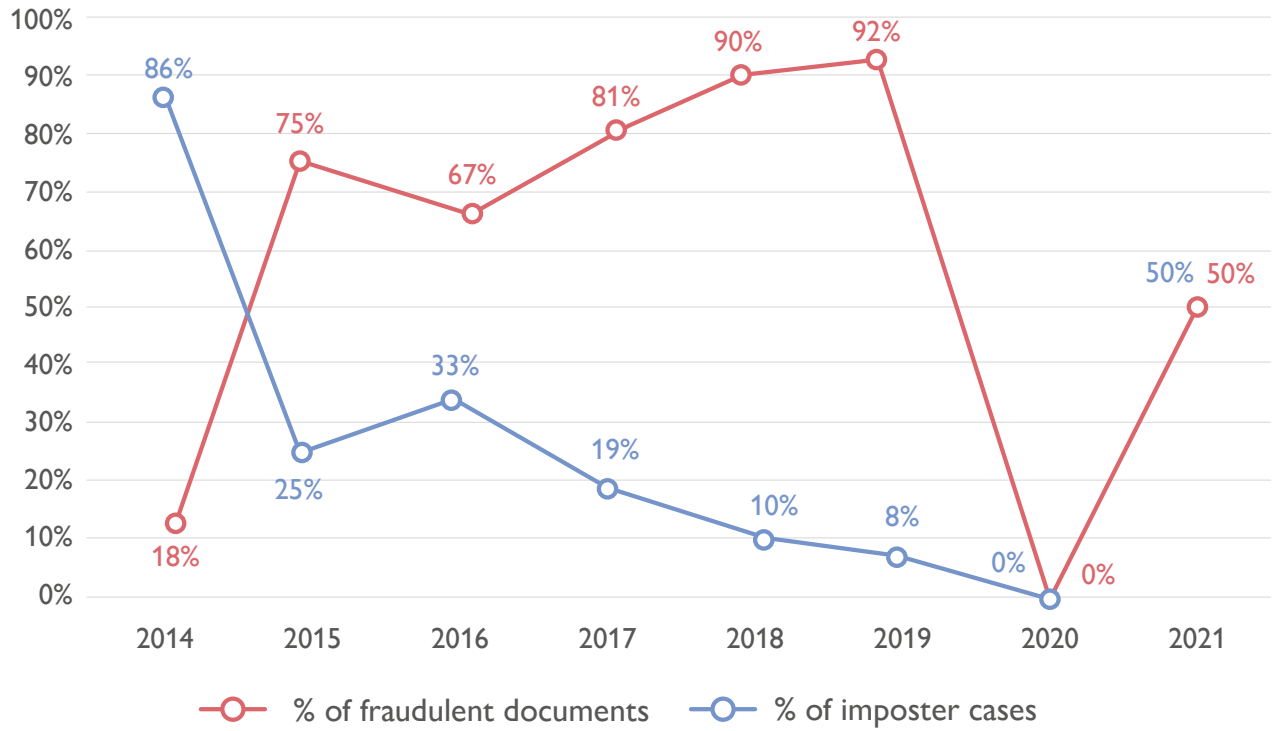
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Genuine documents	41	10	12	128	461	382	0	41
Fraudulent documents	1	18	6	21	114	71	0	1
Imposter cases	6	6	3	5	13	6	0	1
Total	48	34	21	154	588	459	0	43

Table 16: Proportion of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Afghanistan, 2014 to 2021

Trends	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fraudulent documents	14%	75%	67%	81%	90%	92%	0	50%
Imposter cases	86%	25%	33%	19%	10%	8%	0	50%
Imposter cases	6	6	3	5	13	6	0	1
Total	48	34	21	154	588	459	0	43

³⁰ As of July 2021, IOM no longer requests/includes information from Afghanistan.

Figure 14: Trends of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by years in Afghanistan, 2014 to 2021



Bangladesh

A total of 6,166 travel documents were scanned by Verifier TD&B in Bangladesh between the years 2014 and 2021. Of these, 1,482 were found to be fraudulent (24.1%), with 841 cases of fraudulent travel documents (13.6%) and 641 imposter cases (10.4%) (Table 16). From 2014 to 2018, the most common type of fraud cases intercepted were fraudulent documents. However, this trend reversed in 2019 and continued through 2021, when imposters were the most intercepted form of fraud (Table 17 and Figure 16). The proportion of total cases intercepted compared to all scans in Bangladesh remained relatively consistent from 2014 to 2019 with an average of 27.5 per cent of interceptions of fraud. However, the proportion of total fraud cases intercepted compared to all scans in Bangladesh decreased in 2020 and 2021 to an average of 4.8 per cent of interceptions being fraudulent. This decline in fraudulent interceptions may be due to the COVID-19 pandemic straining border control resources; however, research is needed to determine the exact cause of the dramatic decline. Fraudulent documents from 31 different issuing countries were

intercepted in Bangladesh during the study period. The top three most common countries of issuance of fraudulent documents represented 86.0 per cent of all intercepted travel documents and included Bangladesh (66.1%), Morocco (17.8%) and Malaysia (2.1%). Almost two-thirds of fraudulent travel documents intercepted in Bangladesh listed Bangladesh as the issuing country, suggesting that Bangladesh could be a major source of fraudulent travel documents for irregular migrants. It is also possible that many of the travellers intercepted with Bangladeshi passports are Bangladeshi nationals who could not afford the cost of applying for an authentic Bangladeshi passport. The per capita income in Bangladesh for 2020 was BDT 28,000 (USD 2,500),³¹ while the cost of a basic 48-page Bangladeshi passport is approximately BDT 5,750.³² This makes applying for a passport as a Bangladeshi national potentially very expensive and could promote the use of cheaper fraudulent travel documents.

Table 17: Type of documents scanned by Verifier TD&B in Bangladesh, 2014 to 2021

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Genuine documents	429	1 078	495	725	537	535	315	570
Fraudulent documents	193	306	125	142	49	9	4	13
Imposter cases	43	72	0	110	247	147	21	1
Total	665	1 456	620	977	833	691	340	584

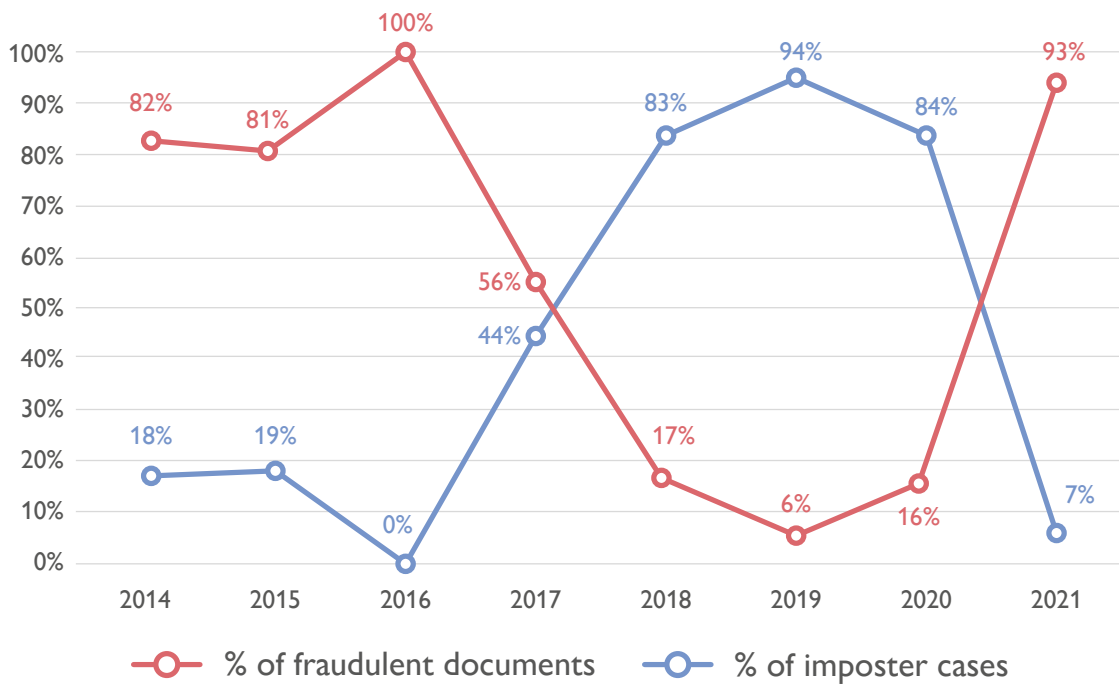
³¹ The Financial Express, Per capita income in Bangladesh crosses USD2,500GDP per capita (current USD) – Bangladesh: <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/per-capita-income-in-bangladesh-crosses-2500-1636017729>.

³² Government of Bangladesh, Department of Immigration and Passports. E-Passport Fees: www.epassport.gov.bd/instructions/passport-fees.

Table 18: Proportion of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Bangladesh

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fraudulent documents	82%	81%	100%	56%	17%	6%	16%	93%
Imposter cases	18%	19%	0%	44%	83%	94%	84%	7%

Figure 15: Trends of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Bangladesh, 2014 to 2021





Cambodia

Between the years 2014 and 2021, 1,121 travel documents were scanned by Verifier TD&B in Cambodia. Only 39 (3.4%) of secondary scans were found to be fraudulent, with the majority of fraudulent interceptions being fraudulent travel documents (3.3%) (Table 19). It is possible that there are so few interceptions of fraud cases compared to genuine cases because Cambodia has not traditionally been a destination country for irregular migration compared to its neighbouring countries like Thailand and Malaysia³³ (Table 20 and Figure 18). Fraudulent documents from only a few countries were intercepted in Cambodia, along with only one country being listed as a destination for an intercepted traveller leaving Cambodia (Viet Nam) (Figure 19).

Table 19: Type of documents scanned by Verifier TD&B in Cambodia during the years 2014 to 2021

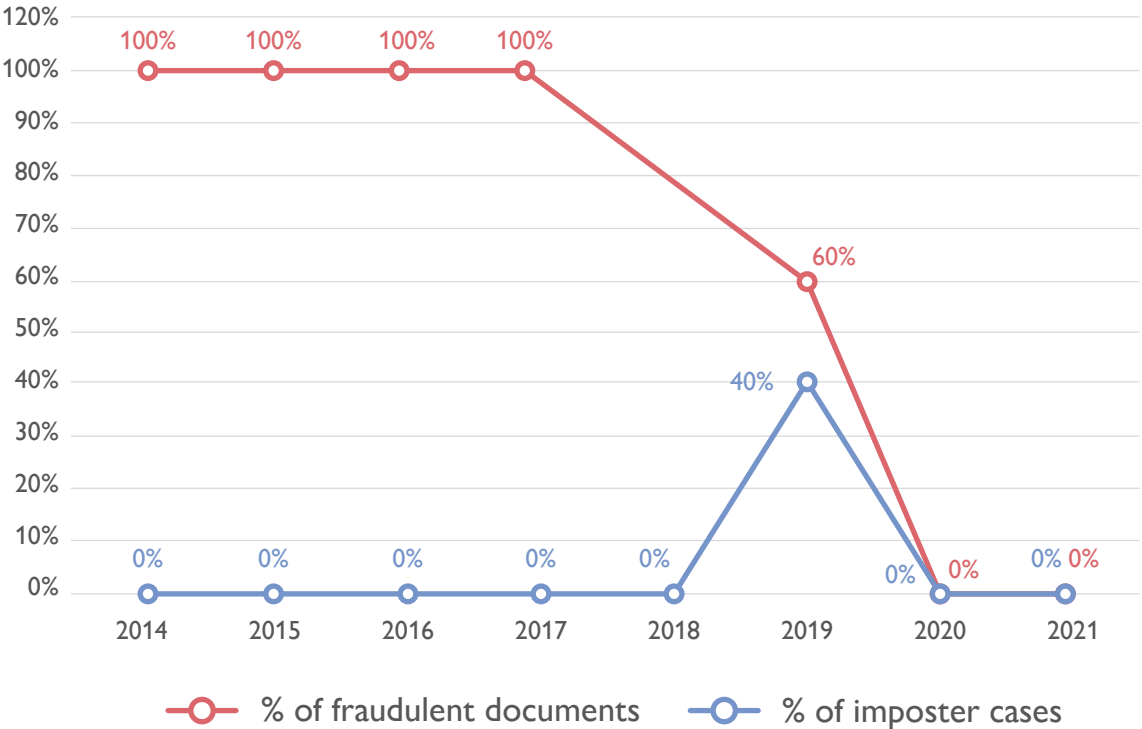
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Genuine documents	27	22	30	204	575	202	22	0
Fraudulent documents	18	2	4	4	6	3	0	0
Imposter cases	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Total	45	24	34	208	581	207	22	0

³³ IOM, Asia-Pacific Migration Data Report (Bangkok, 2020).

Table 20: Proportion of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Cambodia, 2014 to 2021

Trends	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fraudulent documents	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	60%	0	0
Imposter cases	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	40%	0	0

Figure 16: Trends of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Cambodia



Indonesia

While travel document data for Indonesia is collected through both Verifier TD&B and the AFDRS, the only years during which data was collected were 2016 (8 cases intercepted) and 2018 (18 cases intercepted) (Table 21 and Figure 20). Of the 26 intercepted cases, 4 (15.3%) were found to be fraudulent (Figure 20).

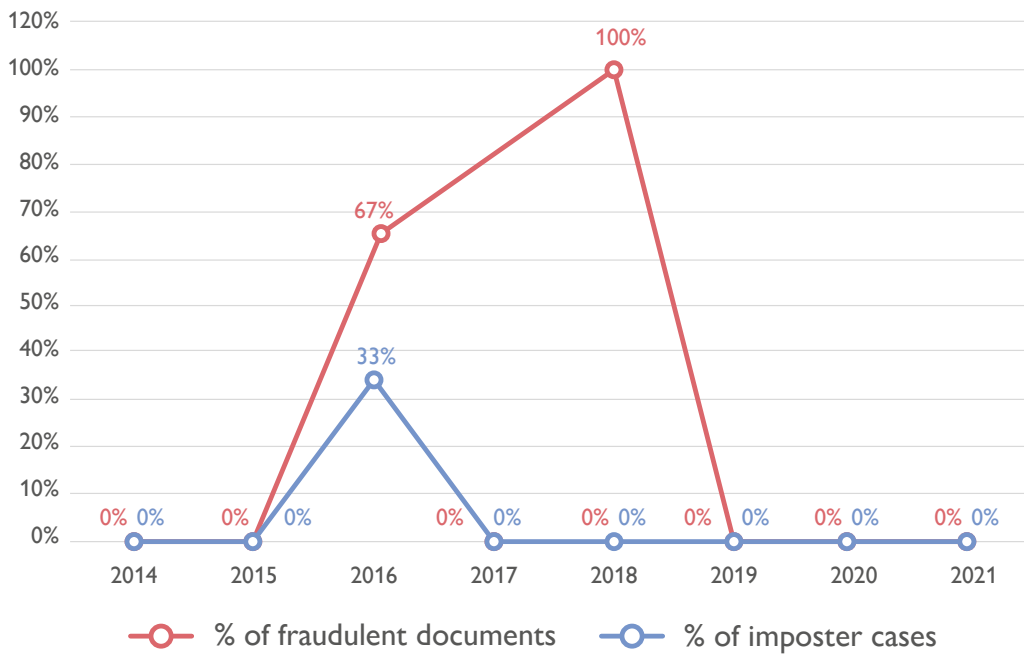
Table 21: Type of documents scanned by Verifier TD&B in Indonesia during the years 2014 to 2021

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Genuine documents	0	0	5	0	17	0	0	0
Fraudulent documents	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
Imposter cases	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	8	0	18	0	0	0

Table 22: Proportion of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Indonesia, 2014 to 2021

Trends	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fraudulent documents	0	0	67%	0	100%	0	0	0
Imposter cases	0	0	33%	0	0%	0	0	0

Figure 17: Trends of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Indonesia, 2014 to 2021



Lao People's Democratic Republic

From 2015 to 2021, 941 documents were scanned using Verifier TD&B (Table 23), of which 5.2 per cent were found to be fraudulent. **Unlike most countries covered in this report, the predominant type of fraud cases intercepted** in Lao People's Democratic Republic were imposters (Table 24 and Figure 22).³⁴ A significantly higher proportion of males versus females were intercepted in Lao People's Democratic Republic than from neighbouring Cambodia or Thailand ($\chi^2 = 14.11$, $df=2$, p -value <0.001), and this could be because the majority of nationals of Lao People's Democratic Republic who travel for work are employed in farming or factory work.³⁵

Fraudulent documents from 30 different issuing countries were intercepted in Lao People's Democratic Republic during the study period. The top three most common countries of issuance of intercepted fraudulent travel documents represented 30.9 per cent of all intercepted travel documents and included India (13.3%), Malaysia (8.8%) and Viet Nam (8.8%). Given the multiple different countries represented by intercepted documents in Lao People's

Democratic Republic, combined with the fact that Lao People's Democratic Republic itself is not a major contributor of fraudulent travel documents, reflects that Lao People's Democratic Republic is likely a transit hub for irregular migrant travellers (Figure 23). Lao People's Democratic Republic is considered a "land-linked" country that shares borders with five different countries and 27 international land border checkpoints along with four international airports.³⁶ Having several land border control points, Lao People's Democratic Republic has the second highest number of scanned documents from a land border crossing with approximately 40 per cent of scanned documents

coming from the Thailand–Laos Friendship Bridge 1. The number of Laotians emigrating to neighbouring countries, mostly ASEAN member countries, has increased from 122,437 people in 2014 to 277,845 people in 2018.³⁷ The increase in emigration volume is possibly an underestimation of the number of Laotians who are engaging in migrant work, as the Thailand–Laos Friendship Bridges see approximately 5,000 border crossings a day.³⁸

³⁴ IOM, Verifier TD&B Newsletter No22. Verifier TD&B Newsletter. 22nd ed (2018).

³⁵ IOM, An analysis of migration trends of Lao migrants for Lao People's Democratic Republic in two selected provinces: Savannakhet and Xayaboury (Vientiane, 2020).

³⁶ IOM, IOM Training for Frontline Border Officials - Achievements of ACCBP Projects Conducted in Lao People's Democratic Republic.

³⁷ IOM, An analysis of migration trends of Lao migrants for Lao People's Democratic Republic in two selected provinces: Savannakhet and Xayaboury (Vientiane, 2020).

³⁸ Bangkok Post, Thai–Lao Friendship Bridges no.3 and 4 (2011): www.bangkokpost.com/learning/advanced/221957/thai-lao-friendship-bridges-no-3-and-4.

Case Study 1

Instances of crossing the Thailand–Lao People’s Democratic Republic border³⁹

Case studies reported in the Verifier TD&B Newsletters support the results of this report that both males and females are intercepted in fraud cases. Two out of 14 Verifier TD&B Newsletter reviewed for this report indicated two cases pertaining nationals from Lao People’s Democratic Republic between March 2018 and October 2018 who were intercepted in Thailand.

One interception highlighted an imposter case. On 27 March 2018, a female traveller from Lao People’s Democratic Republic attempted to enter Thailand where upon an immigration official noticed that the photo in her passport did not match the female traveller. When comparing the live photo of the passenger and the picture in the chip, Verifier TD&B showed a match percentage of 11 per

cent. Officers conducted a more in-depth interview, during which the woman could not correctly answer basic questions about her own person, such as the date of birth as appeared on the passport. Another interception was the use of fraudulent travel documents. On 10 October 2018, a male individual arriving from Lao People’s Democratic Republic presented his Taiwan Province of the People’s Republic of China ePassport to border officials, who noticed several inconsistencies in the biodata. The passport was selected for secondary inspection, upon which it was discovered that the photo in the chip was different from the photo on the biodata page.

While these two cases represented different type of fraud, as indicated in Table 23 and 24 imposters remain the most intercepted cases.

Table 23: Type of documents scanned by Verifier TD&B in Lao People’s Democratic Republic during the years 2014 to 2021

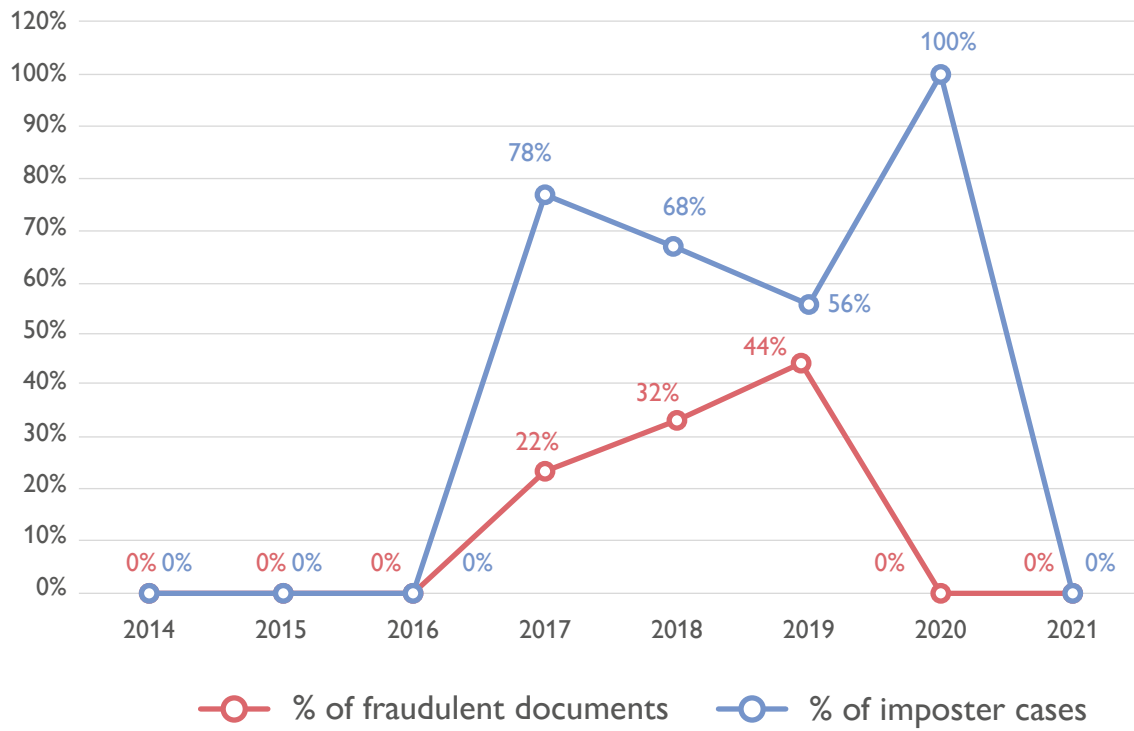
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Genuine documents	0	52	28	52	361	197	123	4
Fraudulent documents	0	0	0	2	25	14	0	0
Imposter cases	0	0	0	7	54	18	4	0
Total	0	52	28	61	440	229	127	4

Table 24: Proportion of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by years in Lao People’s Democratic Republic

Trends	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fraudulent documents	0	0	0	22.2%	31.6%	43.8%	0%	0
Imposter cases	0	0	0	77.8%	68.4%	56.3%	100.0%	0

³⁹ IOM, Verifier TD&B Newsletter No22. Verifier TD&B Newsletter: 22nd ed (2018).

Figure 18: Trends of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2014 to 2021



Malaysia

Six hundred and four documents were scanned in Malaysia between 2014 and 2021. During that time, 196 (31.2%) scanned documents were found to be fraudulent, with 129 (21.4%) interceptions for fraudulent travel documents and 67 (11.0%) interceptions for imposter cases (Table 25). Significantly more women were intercepted in Malaysia (35.5% of people intercepted) than in neighbouring Thailand (30.3%) or Cambodia (25.1%) ($\chi^2 = 15.33$, $df=2$, p -value <0.001). This could be because Malaysia employs more migrant workers in domestic and service industries than other neighbouring countries and more females than males typically work in these industries. The proportion of intercepted imposter cases versus intercepted fraudulent documents cases was found to be almost cyclical. During the years 2014 and 2015, most intercepted fraud cases were imposter cases. However, fraudulent documents cases were the majority of intercepts during the years 2016 through 2018. This changed again in 2019, but fraudulent documents cases returned to the majority of intercepts during the years 2020 and 2021 (Table 26 and Figure 24). Fraudulent documents from 22 different issuing countries were intercepted in Malaysia during the study period. The top three most common countries represented by the fraudulent travel documents represented 52.6 per cent of all intercepted travel documents and included Indonesia (25.4%), Malaysia (14.9%), and Thailand (12.3%) (Figure 25). Most intercepted travel documents in Malaysia are from Asian countries (83.3%), which supports multiple reports stating that Malaysia is a top destination country for migrants from the South and South-east Asian region.^{40, 41}

Table 25: Type of documents scanned by Verifier TD&B in Malaysia during the years 2014 to 2021

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Genuine documents	28	15	40	129	135	47	14	0
Fraudulent documents	6	6	6	23	75	9	4	0
Imposter cases	11	10	2	9	22	12	1	0
Total	45	31	48	161	232	68	19	0

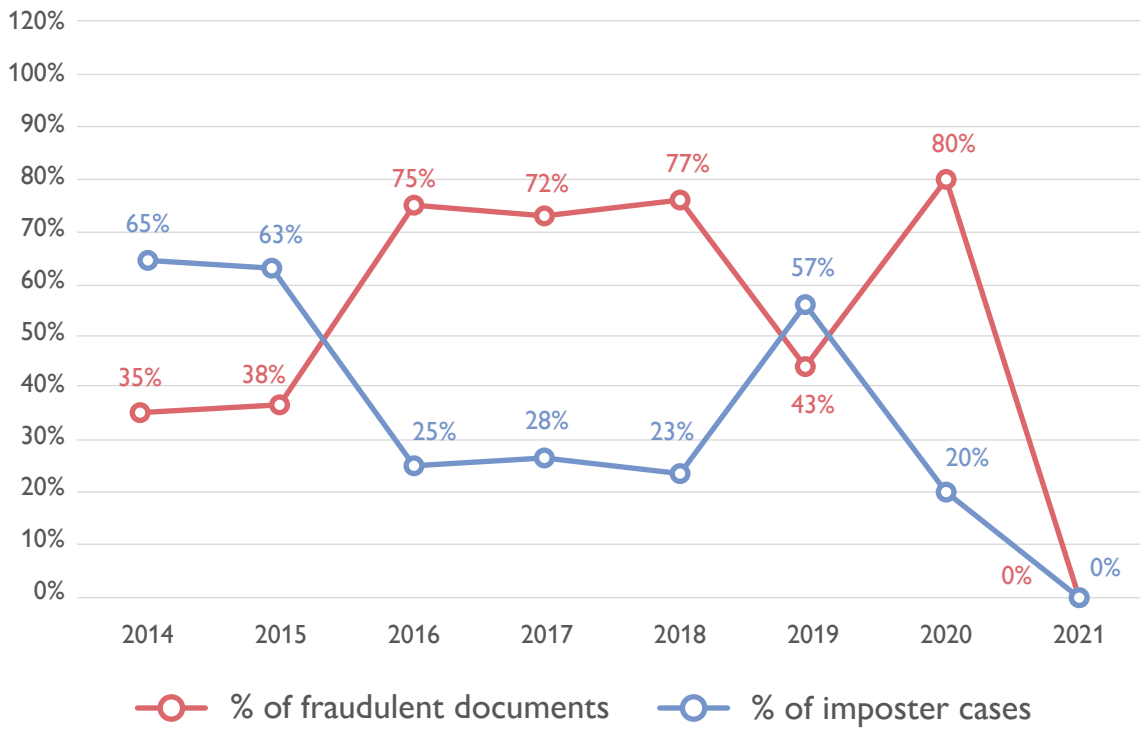
Table 26: Proportion of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by years in Malaysia

Trends	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fraudulent documents	35%	38%	75%	72%	77%	43%	80%	0
Imposter cases	65%	63%	25%	28%	23%	57%	20%	0

⁴⁰ Chul Ju Kim, Jean-Christophe Dumont, Panudda Boonpala, Labor migration in Asia-Increasing the development impact of migration through finance and technology. Asian Development Bank Institute (2018).

⁴¹ United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Asia-Pacific migration report 2020: Assessing implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (Bangkok, 2020).

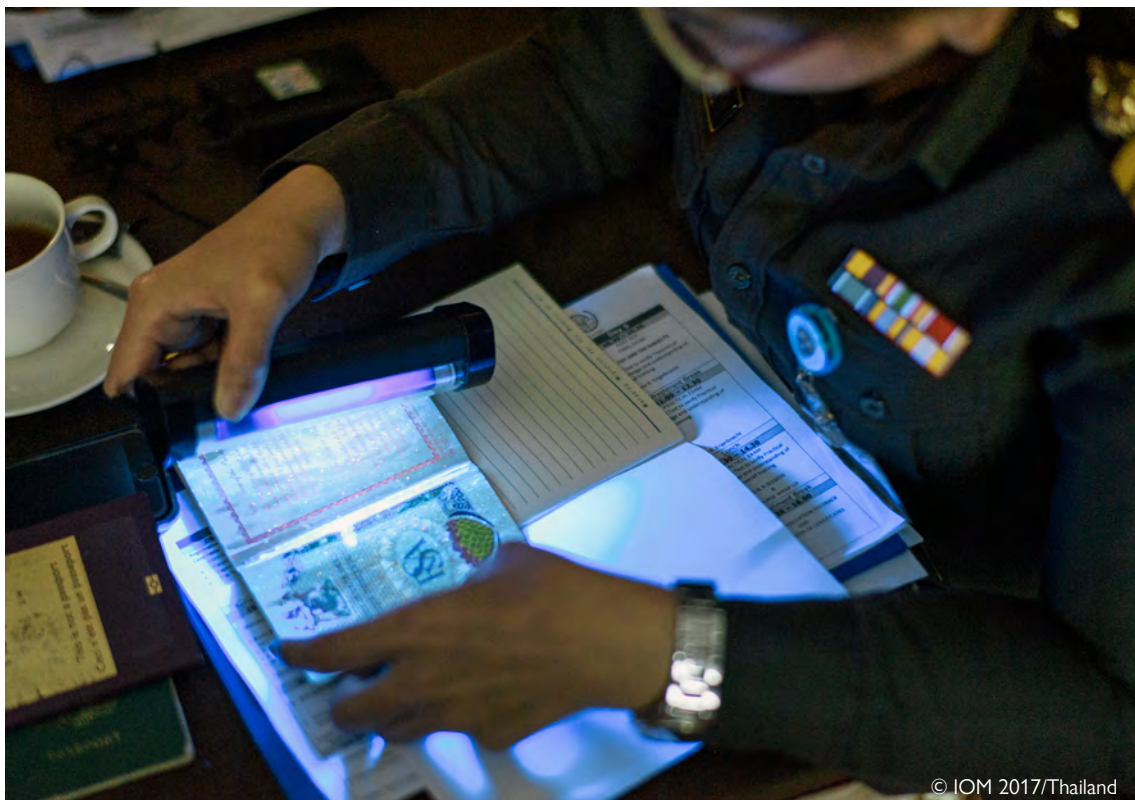
Figure 19: Trends of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Malaysia, 2014 to 2021



Maldives

Maldives has one of the highest proportions of intercepted fraudulent travel documents relative to the number of total documents scanned (25.4%). Of the 1,775 documents scanned between 2014 and 2021 (Table 27), 434 (25.4%) were found to be fraudulent, with the majority of fraud cases being fraudulent travel documents (19.9%). Fraudulent travel documents were consistently the most likely fraud case to be intercepted during the study period. **While fraudulent documents were the most likely to be intercepted, the proportion of fraudulent travel documents versus imposter cases significantly varied by year, ranging from 70 per cent of intercepted cases being fraudulent travel documents in 2019 to 100 per cent of intercepted cases being fraudulent travel documents intercepted in 2016.** During the study period, Maldives intercepted fraudulent documents from 46 different issuing countries. **The top three most common issuing countries for fraudulent travel documents represented 25.9 per cent of all intercepted travel documents and included the United Arab Emirates (10.7%), France (8.9%) and Belgium (6.3%) (Figure 25).** Maldives is one of the few countries in this study where the majority of travel documents intercepted are not from the Asia region. Rather, European, and Middle Eastern countries represented the majority of intercepted documents (79.5%). Maldives may be a potential transit country for migrants. Except for Cote d'Ivoire, Indonesia and Japan, 95.6 per cent of fraudulent documents intercepted upon departure were from a European or Middle Eastern country (Figure 27). This suggests that migrants could be using Maldives as a potential stop on their way to Europe or the Middle East.⁴²

⁴² IOM, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (2021). Verifier TD&B Newsletter No 34. Verifier TD&B Newsletter. 34th ed (2021).



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Case Study 2

Maldives as a transit to other destination countries ⁴³

Several cases studies reported in the Verifier TD&B Newsletters support the study findings that Maldives is a popular transit country for migrants travelling to other destinations, particularly to countries in the Middle East. Many of these case studies also support the findings that individuals who were intercepted with fraudulent travel documents were caught using fraudulent documents and were not normally intercepted as an imposter. Of the 14 Verifier TD&B Newsletters reviewed for this report ten newsletters reported cases pertaining to individuals from Maldives. The total number of individuals represented in these case studies was 35 individuals, 22 were male, seven were female, and the sex of six individuals was unknown. Twenty-six cases were of individuals intercepted with fraudulent travel documents and nine cases were imposters. For example, On 8 February 2021, a male passenger arriving from Cairo (Egypt) and intending to travel onwards to Istanbul (Türkiye) presented a Mexican passport. Upon secondary inspection with Verifier TD&B followed by a more in-depth interview, it was

confirmed that the traveller was not a Mexican national. He was from Maldives and was travelling on a stolen or lost Mexican passport. In addition to supporting the study findings that travelling through Maldives is a popular route to the Middle East, these case studies support the fact that many of the individuals intercepted with fraudulent travel documents in the Maldives are also male. On 20 April 2019, a male passenger arriving from Abu Dhabi presented a Czech ePassport to border officials. Upon the secondary investigation, the Czechia ePassport was subsequently checked using Verifier TD&B, which revealed that the passport chip could not be found and the biodata page appeared different under the UV light.



Table 27: Type of documents scanned by Verifier TD&B in Maldives during the years 2014 to 2021

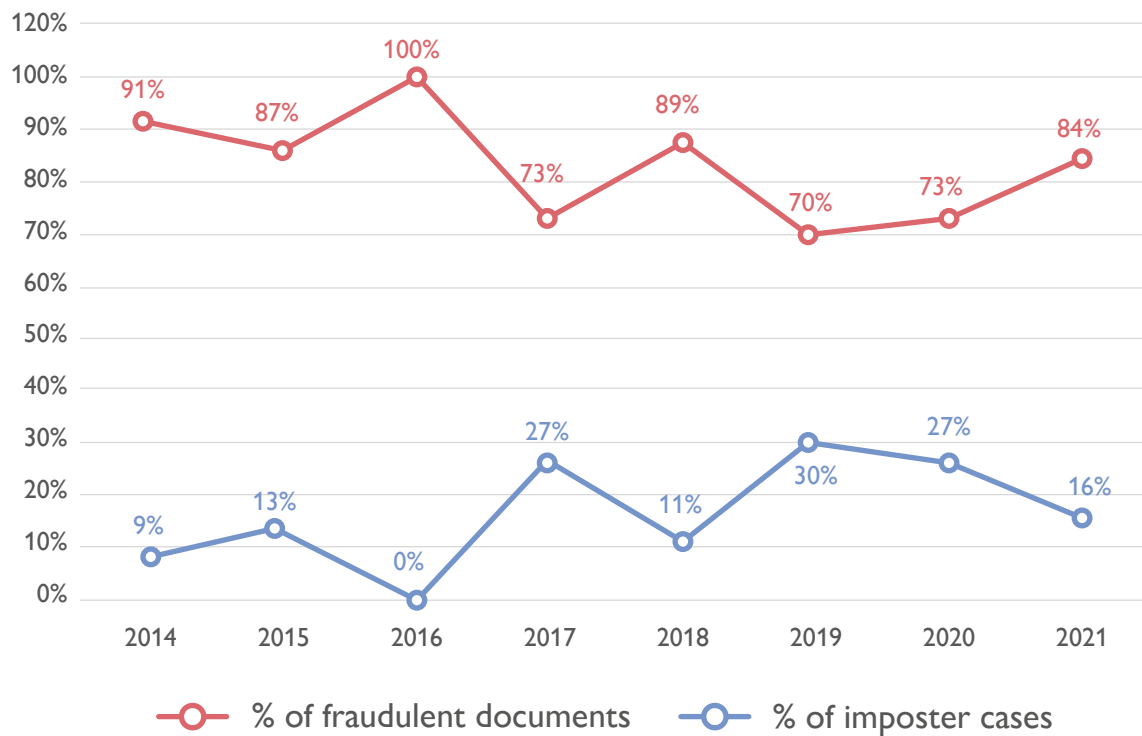
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Genuine documents	238	190	77	189	222	180	100	0
Fraudulent documents	59	40	13	47	57	62	22	0
Imposter cases	6	6	0	17	7	27	8	0
Total	303	236	90	253	286	269	130	0

⁴³ IOM, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (2021). Verifier TD&B Newsletter No 34. Verifier TD&B Newsletter. 34th ed (2021).

Table 28: Proportion of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Maldives, 2014 to 2021

Trends	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fraudulent documents	91%	87%	100%	73%	89%	70%	73%	84%
Imposter cases	9%	13%	0%	27%	11%	30%	27%	16%

Figure 20: Trends of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in the Maldives, 2014 to 2021





© IOM 2021. Source: Sankham, Mae Sot, Thailand

Myanmar

Verifier TD&B was used to scan 1,121 travel documents in Myanmar between the years 2014 and 2021 (Table 29). Of these documents, only 16 (0.7%) were found to be fraudulent (Table 26 and Figure 24).⁴⁴ Myanmar has in the recent past been a major country of origin for migration among the ASEAN Member States.⁴⁵ The Government of Myanmar has estimated that some 4.25 million Myanmar nationals are living abroad, most of which are primarily employed in neighbouring Thailand.⁴⁶ UNODC has indicated that 112,384 migrants from Myanmar who attempted to enter Thailand in an irregular manner were apprehended in 2008 alone.⁴⁷ This figure rose to 113,894 in 2009, 117,681 in 2010, and 118,100 in 2011, before declining to 75,546 and 84,543 in 2012 and 2013 respectively.⁴⁸ While there is no data from the AFDRS on intercepted arrivals and departures from Myanmar, intercepted arrivals in neighbouring Thailand and Malaysia contain a significant proportion of individuals from Myanmar. This is consistent with IOM findings suggesting that the majority of Myanmar migrants are hosted in these two countries.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ IOM, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Verifier TD&B Newsletter No 25. Verifier TD&B Newsletter. 25th ed (2018).

⁴⁵ United States Department of State, Trafficking in persons report 2021 (2021): www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/.

⁴⁶ IOM Country Office in Myanmar, Myanmar overseas employment agencies explore pathways to more ethical (2018): www.iom.int/news/myanmar-overseas-employment-agencies-explore-pathways-more-ethical-recruitment.

⁴⁷ UNODC, Migrant Smuggling in Asia: A thematic review of literature (Bangkok, 2012).

⁴⁸ UNODC, Migrant Smuggling in Asia: A thematic review of literature (Bangkok, 2012).

⁴⁹ David Ndegwa, Migrants from Myanmar and Risks Faced Abroad. International Organization for Migration (Geneva, 2016).

Case Study 3

Repeated attempts of passport alteration⁵⁰

Thailand is a major destination for migrants originating in Myanmar. The two countries share a large land border and are both ASEAN Member States. Both of these factors have the potential to increase the likelihood that fraudulent travel documents will be used when crossing the Thai–Myanmar border. This is particularly true of individuals who are denied entry into a country using their original travel documentation. Case studies from the Verifier TD&B Newsletter have found that some individuals attempted to alter their own rejected passport in an effort to bypass border controls. Of the 14 Verifier TD&B Newsletters reviewed for this report, eight newsletters reported cases pertaining to individuals from Thailand who were intercepted with fraudulent travel documents between March 2018 and June 2021. The total number of cases represented was 31. Twelve cases were males, eight were females, and thirteen were

of unknown sex. Twenty-six cases were of individuals intercepted with fraudulent travel documents and five cases were imposters. For example, on 12 October 2018, six passengers travelling with Myanmar passports were checked while attempting to enter Thailand at Don Mueang International Airport. They were repatriated to Myanmar on 14 October 2018. On 15 October 2018, four of the previously repatriated passengers were apprehended attempting to re-enter Thailand through the same airport. These individuals were caught altering the “Entry Denied” stamp applied few days earlier.



Table 29: Type of documents scanned by Verifier TD&B in Myanmar during the years 2014 to 2021

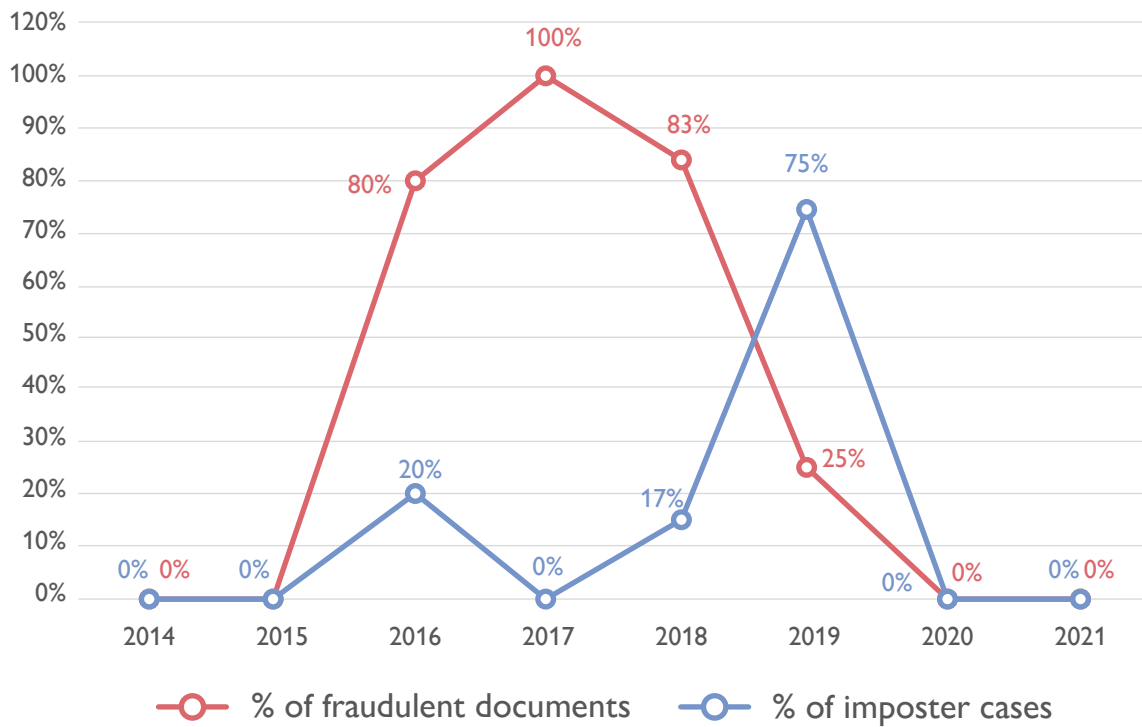
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Genuine documents	0	9	196	19	1 393	548	0	0
Fraudulent documents	0	0	4	1	5	1	0	0
Imposter cases	0	0	1	0	1	3	0	0
Total	0	9	201	20	1 399	552	0	0

⁵⁰ IOM, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Verifier TD&B Newsletter No 25. Verifier TD&B Newsletter. 25th ed (2018).

Table 30: Proportion of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Myanmar, 2014 to 2021

Trends	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fraudulent documents	0	0	80%	100%	83%	25%	0	0
Imposter cases	0	0	20%	0%	17%	75%	0	0

Figure 21: Trends of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Myanmar, 2014 to 2021



The Philippines

Nearly 500 individuals were scanned using Verifier TD&B in the Philippines during the years 2014 to 2021 (Table 31). One hundred and forty-seven (29.6%) of the scanned documents were found to be fraudulent. The majority of fraud cases involved fraudulent travel documents (28.9%), while only a small number of individuals were intercepted as imposters (0.7%) (Table 32 and Figure 30). There was a significant decline in the average number of documents scanned between the years 2014 and 2019 (Average: 77.2) and the years 2020 and 2021 (Average: 17) which is likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic straining border control resources or a possible decline in the number of passengers connecting to the Philippines. However, while the number of documents scanned declined, the proportion of fraudulent documents intercepted remained almost equal between the years 2014 and 2019 (Average: 26.6%) and the years 2020 and 2021 (Average: 26.3%), suggesting that officials maintained a consistent level of engagement through the years.

Fraudulent documents from 27 different issuing countries were intercepted in the Philippines during the study period (Figure 31). The top three most common countries represented by intercepted

fraudulent documents represented 56.5% of all intercepted travel documents and included the Philippines (43.5%), People's Republic China (7.2%) and Mexico (5.8%) (Figure 31). It is possible that in addition to being a source of migration, the Philippines is a transit country for individuals moving to more developed countries. This is supported by the fact that all eight of the countries listed as destinations for intercepted individuals were developed countries (Canada; Macao SAR, China; Malaysia; the Philippines; Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China; Thailand; the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America). Data from this study shows that the Philippines has the largest percentage of intercepted females with 41.7 per cent of all interceptions from 2014 to 2021 being females. This is significantly more intercepted females than the number of females intercepted in Malaysia (35.5%), the country with the second most intercepted females in this study (35.5%) ($\chi^2 = 3.91$, $df=1$, p -value <0.04). A large proportion of Philippine migrant women travel to developed countries for employment as domestic workers – the government of the Philippines has enacted several programmes aimed at enhancing the safety of female migrants in response to the exploitation of domestic workers from the Philippines.⁵¹

Table 31: Type of documents scanned by Verifier TD&B in the Philippines during the years 2014 to 2021

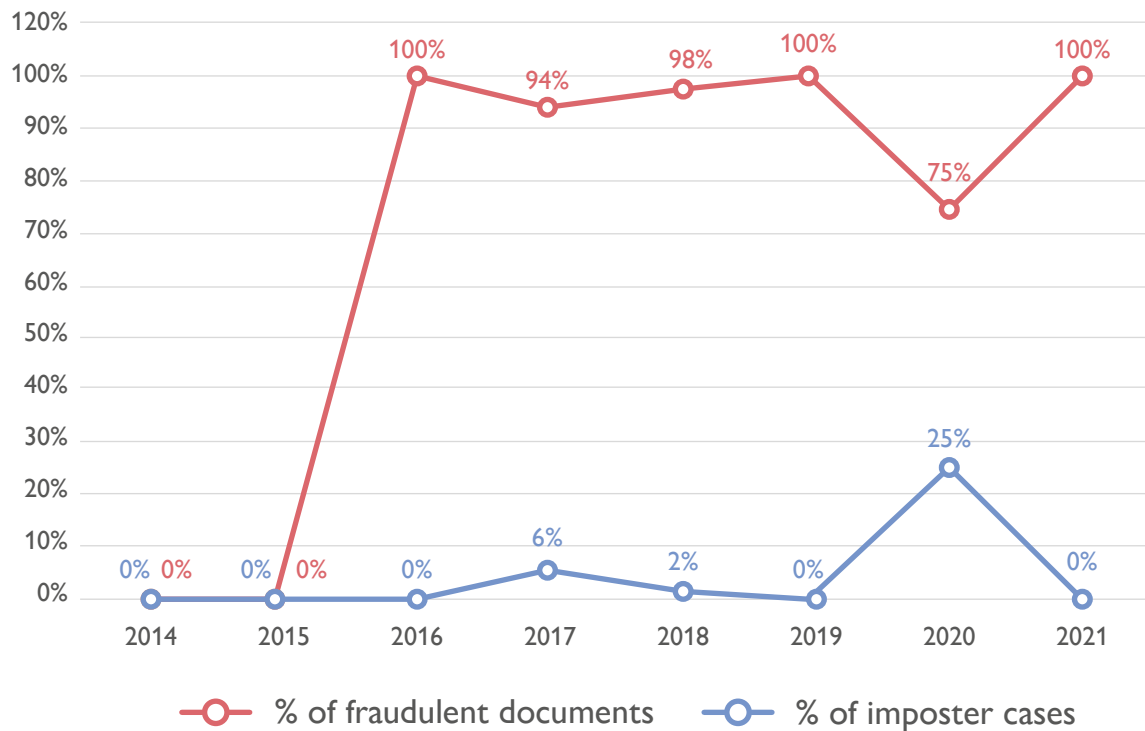
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Genuine documents	0	17	9	36	160	101	6	21
Fraudulent documents	0	0	1	15	60	62	3	3
Imposter cases	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
Total	0	17	10	52	221	163	10	24

⁵¹ UN-Women, Filipino women in international migration: Situation analysis, policy context and international mechanisms (Quezon City, 2015).

Table 32: Proportion of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by years in the Philippines

Trends	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fraudulent documents	0	0	100%	94%	98%	100%	75%	100%
Imposter cases	0	0	0%	6%	2%	0%	25%	0%

Figure 22: Trends of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in the Philippines, 2014 to 2021



Sri Lanka

A total of 2,595 travel documents were scanned by Verifier TD&B in Sri Lanka between the years 2014 and 2021 (Table 33). Of these, 263 (10.1%) of scanned documents were found to be fraudulent. The majority of intercepted fraudulent documents were fraudulent travel documents (8.3%), while only a small number of individuals were intercepted as imposters (1.8%) (Table 34 and Figure 32). The proportion of fraudulent documents intercepted remained almost equal between the years of the study period. Fraudulent documents from 28 different issuing countries were intercepted in Sri Lanka during the study period (Figure 31). **The three most common countries represented by the fraudulent travel documents represented 41.6 per cent of all intercepted travel documents in Sri Lanka and included Italy (17.2%), Sri Lanka (15.8%) and Malaysia (8.6%)** (Figure 33). While Sri Lanka was the second most common country represented by fraudulent travel documents, the total percentage of fraudulent travel documents originating from Sri Lanka was smaller than the host countries of places like Bangladesh or the Philippines, suggesting that Sri Lanka is not a major source of fraudulent travel documents. Except for India, all 12 of the countries listed as destinations for individuals who were intercepted were of high-income countries (the United Kingdom, Kuwait, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Italy, Germany, Greece, Albania, Algeria, Canada and France). This suggests that Sri Lanka is not a final destination for these migrants and that Sri Lanka is most likely a transit country for migrants to try to reach more developed countries.⁵²

⁵² IOM, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Verifier TD&B Newsletter No 33 (2020).



Case Study 4

Sri Lanka, Bandaranaike International Airport, Colombo – Counterfeit identification card ⁵³

The results of this study suggest that Sri Lanka periodically experiences increase in the number of imposter cases intercepted using Verifier TD&B. Increases in the interception of imposter cases is particularly interesting as it is significantly harder to detect imposter cases than cases of fraudulent travel documents. This is because imposters are often carrying valid travel documentation that eludes detection because it is legally valid when scanned. Cases studies on imposters can help give border officials insights into how imposter cases typically act, which could be helpful for detecting future imposter cases. Of the 14 Verifier TD&B Newsletters reviewed for this report, 5 newsletters reported cases pertaining to individuals from Sri Lanka who were intercepted with fraudulent documentation between March 2018 and June 2021. The total number of cases represented in the Verifier TD&B Newsletters was 20, of which 13 were males, four were females, and the sex of three cases was not reported. Eleven cases were of individuals intercepted with fraudulent travel documents and nine cases were of imposters. In two unrelated cases, one female passenger (on 26 February 2021) and one male passenger (on 11 March 2021) were intercepted while attempting to travel onwards to Canada. In both instances, the passengers presented Canadian ePassports

at the Qatar Airways counter and the airline staff noticed discrepancies between the passengers and the pictures on the biodata pages. The airline staff referred each case, respectively, to the airport's Border Surveillance Unit (BSU), Department of Immigration and Emigration, Sri Lanka, for further checks. The Canadian ePassports were then checked using Verifier TD&B, which revealed that the MRZ check digits, paper and ink checks, as well as the chip verification for both ePassports, were all correct. However, when comparing the live photos of the passengers and the pictures in the respective ePassports' chips, Verifier TD&B showed 12 per cent and 37.5 per cent match percentages, respectively. Subsequently, more in-depth interviews were conducted, during which the passengers admitted that they are Sri Lankan nationals attempting to travel onwards to Canada. It was concluded that these were both cases of imposter. In cases like these, Verifier TD&B has proven to be an indispensable tool for detecting imposters that would have otherwise eluded detection.



⁵³ IOM Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Verifier TD&B Newsletter No 34 (2021).

Table 33: Type of documents scanned by Verifier TD&B in Sri Lanka during the years 2014 to 2021

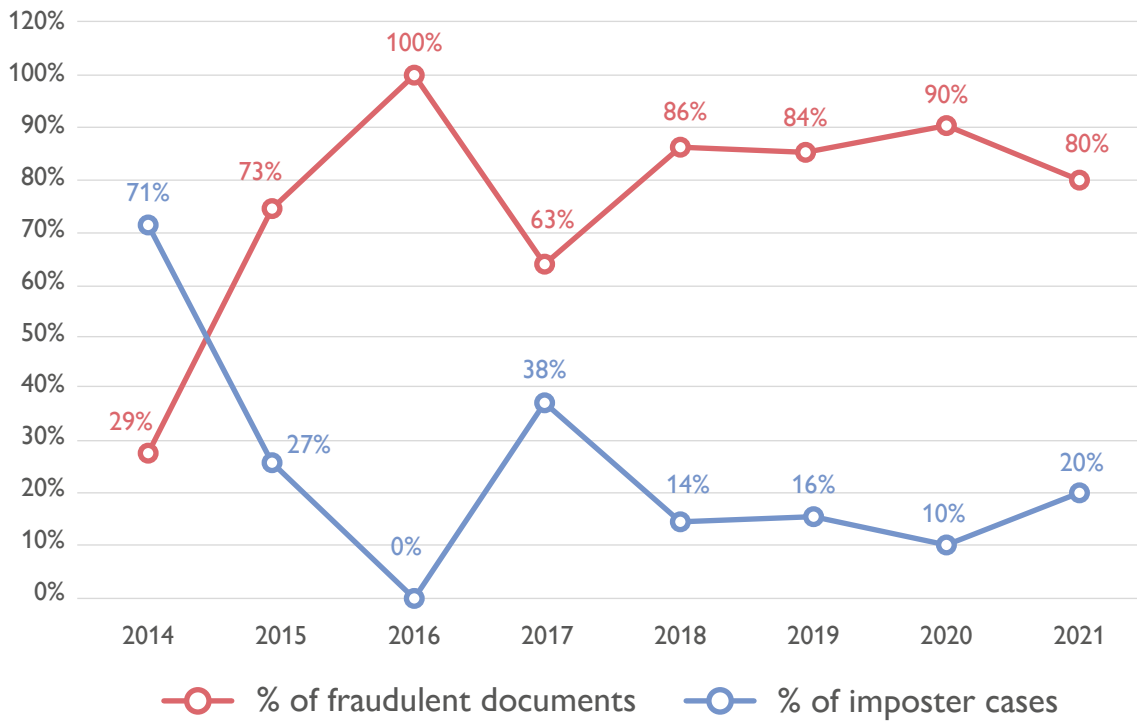
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Genuine documents	26	139	44	114	695	792	373	149
Fraudulent documents	2	8	4	5	62	81	35	20
Imposter cases	5	3	0	3	10	16	4	5
Total	33	150	48	122	767	889	412	174

Table 34: Proportion of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Sri Lanka, 2014 to 2021

Trends	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fraudulent documents	29%	73%	100%	63%	86%	84%	90%	80%
Imposter cases	71%	27%	0%	38%	14%	16%	10%	20%



Figure 23: Trends of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Sri Lanka, 2014 to 2021



Thailand

Of the target countries, Thailand scanned the second most documents between the years 2014 and 2021, with 3,453 documents. Of these, 15.1 per cent of all documents scanned were found to be fraudulent (Table 35), with 305 cases of fraudulent travel documents (8.9%) and 214 cases of fraud being imposters (6.2%) (Table 36). The proportion of intercepted fraudulent travel documents compared to imposter cases was almost cyclical between the years 2014 and 2021. **From 2014 to 2016, the most common type of intercepted fraud was fraudulent travel documents. This trend reversed in 2017 and 2018 with imposter cases being the most likely to be intercepted and the trend returned to fraudulent travel documents being the most intercepted for the years 2019 and 2020.** This suggests that people and organizations who facilitate the use of fraudulent documents for migration are adapting to what triggers the interception of a migrant at a point of entry (Figure 34). **Documents from over 57 different issuing countries were intercepted in Thailand. The top three most common countries represented by the fraudulent travel documents intercepted represented only 20.5% of all intercepted travel documents and included Bulgaria (7.0%), People's Republic of China (7.0%) and Malaysia (6.6%) in almost equal amounts** (Figure 33). This suggests that Thailand is a destination country for a wide variety of migrants from all over the world, not just from the Asia region (Figure 35). The study results also show that Thailand is also a prolific transit country for migrants travelling to other destinations, as demonstrated by 89 different departure destinations listed for intercepted individuals, along with the 32 different countries that individuals listed as arriving from. Having such a large number of interceptions from individuals arriving from several different countries, who then plan on departing to a widely varying amount of different destination countries suggest that Thailand is a major country of interest for irregular migration. This is supported by IOM reports stating that Thailand hosts approximately 3.6 million migrants (9.2%) and that by mid-2020 Thailand became the 4th largest destination country for migrants, behind Australia, India and People's Republic of China.⁵⁴

Table 35: Type of documents scanned by Verifier TD&B in Thailand during the years 2014 to 2021

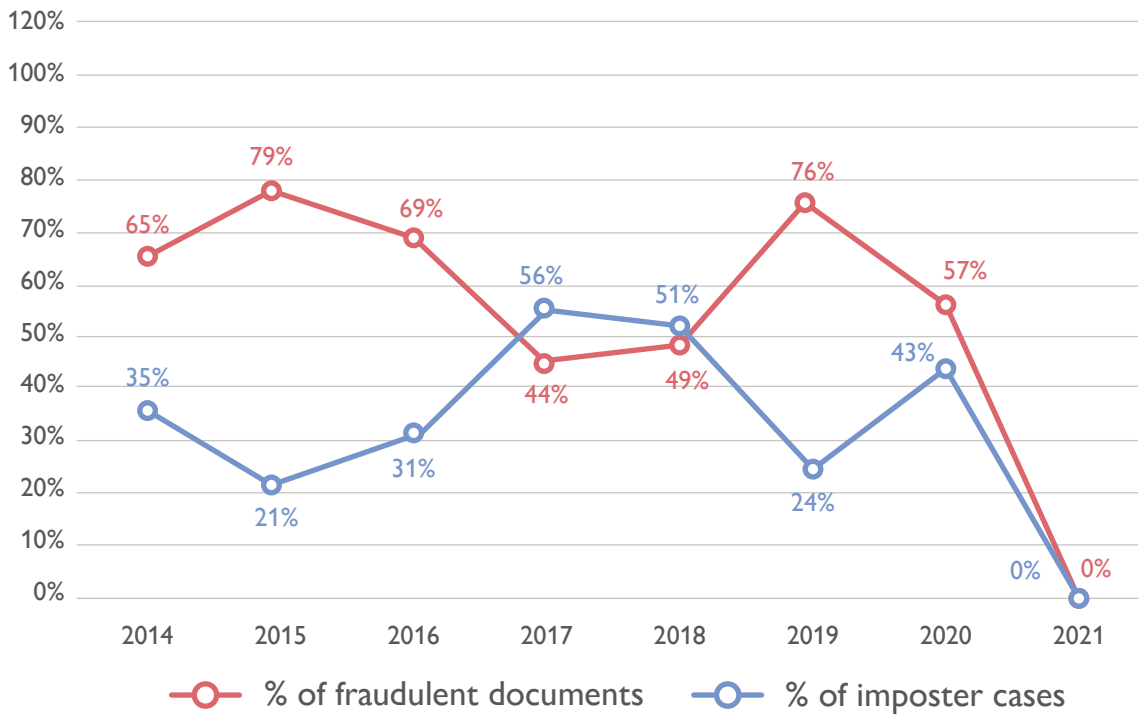
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Genuine documents	127	237	89	701	814	847	117	2
Fraudulent documents	22	63	20	51	82	59	8	0
Imposter cases	12	17	9	65	86	19	6	0
Total	161	317	118	817	982	925	131	2

Table 36: Proportion of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by years in Thailand, 2014 to 2021

Trends	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fraudulent documents	65%	79%	69%	44%	49%	76%	57%	0
Imposter cases	35%	21%	31%	56%	51%	24%	43%	0

⁵⁴ UN ESCAP, Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020: Assessing Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (Bangkok, 2020).

Figure 24: Trends of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by years in Thailand, 2014 to 2021



Viet Nam

While Viet Nam is included in the list of countries in this report, the AFDRS does not contain any information on Viet Nam travel routes. Additionally, only 186 cases of travel documents were scanned by Verifier TD&B during the study period. All 186 interceptions were scanned between 2015 and 2019 and all of them were found to be genuine.

Table 37: Type of documents scanned by Verifier TD&B in Viet Nam during the years 2014 to 2021

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Genuine documents	0	89	16	58	16	7	0	0
Fraudulent documents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Imposter cases	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	89	16	58	16	7	0	0

Table 38: Proportion of fraudulent documents cases versus imposter cases by year in Viet Nam, 2014 to 2021

Trends	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fraudulent documents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Imposter cases	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



INTERCEPTION OF INDIVIDUALS USING FRAUDULENT DOCUMENTS WHILE LIVING IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

VRS-MSRC data used in this report is from the years 2008 to 2017 and contains information on the number of individuals intercepted with fraudulent documents living in countries they have migrated to (Annex A). In total, the VRS-MSRC data used for this report represents 867,007 individuals who were intercepted in 47 different countries. Of the countries that this report focuses on, Afghanistan had the most individuals living in a foreign country who were intercepted with fraudulent travel documents (33.4%) and Maldives had the least (less than 0.1%). Excluding Maldives, only two countries (Australia and Ukraine) intercepted residents from all 12 of the South and South-east Asian countries this report focuses on. Individuals from Afghanistan were intercepted in the largest number of different countries (31 countries), followed by Bangladesh (29 countries) and Viet Nam (27 countries). In total, these three countries represent 59.6 per cent of all individuals intercepted while living in a foreign country with fraudulent travel documents. The vast majority of intercepted individuals from Afghanistan were intercepted in a European country (89.6%), while most Bangladeshis were intercepted while living in Saudi Arabia (84.3%) and most individuals from Viet Nam were intercepted in either the Republic of Korea (47.0%), France (12.9%), or Germany (16.8%). While data from the VRS-MSRC spans from 2008 to 2017 and data from

the AFDRS used in this report spans the period 2015 to 2021, information on the top destination countries for intercepted individuals in the AFDRS does align with data from the VRS-MSRC. The United Kingdom, Serbia, Germany and France were four of the five most popular destinations for intercepted individuals, and each of these countries represents a large proportion of individuals intercepted while living in a country with fraudulent travel documents. Interestingly, countries that are considered major destination countries for migrants, such as the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, are not large sources of migrants who were intercepted with fraudulent documents while living in a foreign country. Collectively, the Philippines (5.4%), Indonesia (1.3%) and Malaysia (0.9%), only contributed to 7.6 per cent of all migrants who were intercepted with fraudulent documents while living in a foreign country. In each of these countries, most individuals were intercepted in another Asian country. Individuals from the Philippines were most likely to be intercepted while living in either the Republic of Korea (56.4%) or Japan (26.8%). Individuals from Indonesia were most likely to be intercepted while living in either Japan (49.9%) or Macao SAR, China (39.3%), while individuals from Malaysia were most likely to be intercepted while residing in New Zealand (49.5%).

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This section provides a brief interpretation and analysis of fraudulent travel documents used during irregular migration in the South and South-east Asian regions as reported in the Verifier TD&B, AFDRS, and VRS-MSRC data systems. In this section the results of the study are discussed in a deeper context to help provide information on migration trends to improve the detection of individuals using fraudulent travel documents.

Association of sex with the use of fraudulent travel documents in irregular migration in the South and South-east Asian regions

The ability to access information about migration, the costs and opportunities of migration, and access to support services during emigration are all affected by an individual's gender. Not only does including gender in the analysis of migration facilitate a better understanding of migration in terms of how migratory labour is divided by gender, but it also helps to explain how gender affects the contributions made by men and women to their home country. Incorporating gender as a key variable of interest in data collection is also critical to an equitable approach to migration. This is reflected in several sustainable development goals (SDG) with cross-cutting themes on migration and gender equality such as SDG 5, SDG 17.18, and SDG 8.8.12 that are relevant to different aspects of gender and migration.⁵⁵

The results of this study show that males are consistently intercepted in higher proportions than females. The average proportion of males intercepted across all years of this study is 67.7 per cent, which is significantly higher than the estimated proportion of female migrants worldwide (48.0%)⁵⁶ and is higher than the proportion of female migrants from the Asia region (52.4%).⁵⁷ This disparity in the proportion of individuals intercepted by sex extends to a country level analysis. For example, this study found that the travel documents of females were less likely to be scanned than the documents of males for countries such as the Philippines (42.2% of all scanned documents in the Philippines) and Thailand (30.4% of all scanned documents in Thailand), where the proportion of female migrants from these countries is known to be 54.5 per cent⁵⁸ and 61 per cent respectively.⁵⁹ This in turn could potentially cause the under-detection of female migrants who use fraudulent travel documents, which could lead to higher levels of females being smuggled or trafficked. While the proportion of males intercepted with fraudulent travel documents compared to the total number of males intercepted was generally higher than for females, suggesting that males are more likely to use fraudulent travel documents, the disparity in interceptions by sex is high enough to compare to the fact that two out of every three people whose documents scanned are male.

⁵⁵ United Nations, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (New York, 2015).

⁵⁶ Marie McAuliffe, Binod Khadria, Céline Bauloz, Michelle Nguyen, Sophie Qu, Adrian Kitimbo, *World Migration Report 2020*, Geneva (2020).

⁵⁷ Marie McAuliffe, Binod Khadria, Céline Bauloz, Michelle Nguyen, Sophie Qu, Adrian Kitimbo, *World Migration Report 2020*, Geneva (2020).

⁵⁸ Mohyuddin, Sabiha Iman, *Female Migrant Labor in the Philippines: The Institutionalization of traditional gender roles in the name of economic development*, *Pursuit - The Journal of Undergraduate Research at The University of Tennessee*: Vol. 8: Iss. 1, Article 10 (2017).

⁵⁹ IOM, *Migration data in South-eastern Asia* (2021): www.migrationdataportal.org/regional-data-overview/south-eastern-asia.

Yearly trends of fraudulent travel documents in irregular migration in the South and South-east Asian regions

The study results show that the overall use of fraudulent travel documents has been declining with the expanded use of Verifier TD&B and AFDRS data systems. This is in contrast with the overall increasing number of international migrants, from 220 million international migrants in 2010 to over 281 million international migrants in 2020.⁶⁰ In particular, the number of individuals engaged in overseas labour migration in Asia and the Pacific increased by 22.8 per cent during the same time period, from 66.1 million migrants in 2010 to 85.6 million migrants in 2020.⁶¹ The study results suggest that the use of Verifier TD&B and AFDRS data systems might be working as a deterrent against individuals travelling with fraudulent travel documents. It is also possible that irregular migrants using fraudulent documents could be using methods that are difficult to detect.

The results of this study indicate that the proportion of individuals intercepted using fraudulent travel documents versus individuals intercepted as imposters often rise and fall yearly. The change in the proportion of intercepted imposters versus individuals using fraudulent travel documents would suggest that individuals who help facilitate irregular migration are aware of the use of document verification systems such as Verifier TD&B and are potentially responding to it.

The potential effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the interception of fraudulent travel documents

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only changed the volume and composition of migration across regions, but it has also changed the broader context in which people travel.⁶² The pandemic has changed the way migrants engage in cross-border travel, the role of employment agencies and smuggling networks, and how migrants access overseas employment opportunities. It is clear the COVID-19 pandemic has altered mobility, but it has not affected everyone in the same way or to the same extent. Some people have been able to use their resources and nationality to continue to travel across borders for work, study, or tourism. Business travellers have consistently been able to move more easily in comparison to migrant workers since the beginning of the pandemic, particularly travellers with access to COVID-19 vaccinations and rapid COVID-19 testing.⁶³ Conversely, migrant workers are less likely to be able to absorb the direct costs associated with quarantining and COVID-19 testing, as well as the indirect opportunity costs of time out of work.⁶⁴ Perhaps one of the greatest disparities to develop during the pandemic is the disproportional distribution of vaccines to some countries well before others.^{65,66} Many irregular migrants do not have the same access to vaccinations that other individuals do, and this could promote the development of fraudulent COVID-19 documents, which is already being seen in countries

⁶⁰ Marie McAuliffe, Anna Triandafyllidou, World Migration Report 2022, Geneva (2021).

⁶¹ IOM, Asia-Pacific Migration Data Report 2020 (2020).

⁶² Benton M, Batalova J, Davidoff-Gore S, Schmidt T., COVID-19 and the state of global mobility in 2020 (Geneva, 2021).

⁶³ Benton M, Batalova J, Davidoff-Gore S, Schmidt T., COVID-19 and the state of global mobility in 2020 (Geneva, 2021).

⁶⁴ Dhruva G. Stranded by pandemic, Bangladeshi migrant workers grapple with uncertainty (2020): <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2020/07/10/stranded-by-pandemic-bangladeshi-migrant-workers-grapple-with-uncertainty>.

⁶⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Requirement for Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination for Air Passengers (2021): www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/proof-of-vaccination.html.

⁶⁶ World Health Organization, Interim position paper: considerations regarding proof of COVID-19 vaccination for international travellers (2021): www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/interim-position-paper-considerations-regarding-proof-of-covid-19-vaccination-for-international-travellers.

in Europe and beyond.^{67, 68} COVID-19's continued strain on migration services is likely to increase rates of trafficking and smuggling. A survey conducted by the Mixed Migration Centre reports that 37 per cent of migrants express a greater demand for smugglers' services as the severity of COVID-19 travel restrictions increased.⁶⁹ However, the increased demand for smuggling services could increase the risk of exposure to violence and abuse of rights, as 61 per cent of respondents in the same survey reported that smugglers have begun using increasingly more dangerous routes due to the pandemic.⁷⁰

While this study found that the average number of intercepted documents decreased by 69.8 per cent during the pandemic years (average from 2017 to 2019=3239.3, average from 2020 and 2021=977), the proportion of fraudulent documents versus genuine documents intercepted decreased in 2020 and 2021 compared to previous years. This suggests that regardless of the total volume of intercepted documents, fewer fraudulent documents were being intercepted. It is possible that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the ecosystem of fraudulent document creation and migrant workers were unable to obtain fraudulent documents. It is also possible that the facilitators of fraudulent document use have adapted to the ways illegal documents are intercepted. The decline in interceptions has been happening since before the pandemic, suggesting that the pandemic is not the only reason for the proportional decline. We also know there is a thriving black market for fraudulent COVID-19 medical documents;⁷¹ the facilitators of fraudulent travel documents may be copying or working in parallel with the methods of these providers.

This study found that COVID-19 travel restrictions did not affect men and women equally. More women in proportion to the number of men were intercepted with fraudulent documents during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 than during the years before the pandemic (an average of 3.3 males were intercepted for every female during 2017–2019 versus an average of 2.7 males were intercepted for every female during 2020–2021). This change could be because a large number of women work in key professions needed during the pandemic such as health-care workers, elderly caregivers, social workers, and food production, and are thus vital to the economy during the COVID-19 response.⁷² Globally, approximately 70 per cent of the 136 million health-care and social workers are women, which means that a large number of jobs held by women were still available during the pandemic. The increase in the proportion of women intercepted with fraudulent travel documents during the pandemic years could mean that the pool of potential female fraudulent document holders was either increasing or staying the same, while the pool of male fraudulent document holders was decreasing.⁷³ As governments adopt new measures to manage the pandemic based on best practices and lessons learned during the implementation of travel measures, it will be important to adapt how border officials screen travellers for fraudulent travel documents, as it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the use of fraudulent travel documentation.

⁶⁷ Schengen Visa Info, Austrian authorities have detected 500 Fake COVID Certificates since March (2021): www.schengenvisa.info/news/austrian-authorities-have-detected-500-fake-covid-certificates-since-march/.

⁶⁸ Sarah Turnbull, CBSA has intercepted hundreds of fake COVID-19 tests, vaccine documents (2021): www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/cbsa-has-intercepted-hundreds-of-fake-covid-19-tests-vaccine-documents-1.5687354.

⁶⁹ Mixed Migration Centre, COVID-19 global thematic update #1: Impact of COVID-19 on migrant smuggling (Copenhagen, 2021).

⁷⁰ Mixed Migration Centre, COVID-19 global thematic update #1: Impact of COVID-19 on migrant smuggling (Copenhagen, 2021).

⁷¹ Checkpoint Software Technologies. A passport to freedom? Fake COVID-19 test results and vaccination certificates offered on Darknet and hacking forums (2021): <https://blog.checkpoint.com/2021/03/22/a-passport-to-freedom-fake-covid-19-test-results-and-vaccination-certificates-offered-on-darknet-and-hacking-forums/>.

⁷² United Nations Population Division: International migrant stock 2019 (2019): www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp.

⁷³ ILO Monitor, COVID-19 and the world of work. Second edition Updated estimates and analysis (2020): www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_740877.pdf.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study suggest that gender, age, and the country where the interception took place all greatly affect the rates of intercepting individuals with fraudulent travel documents. This study also found that the issuing country of the travel documents presented when intercepted was associated with an individual's country of arrival and the individual's next country of destination. The results presented in this report will help to contribute to building a regional standard for data collection and sharing of non-personal and non-sensitive information. This final section of the report provides several key recommendations for improving the regional response to the use of fraudulent documents in travel.

Facilitate better transfer of technical expertise for travel document verification

A major function of DESC is to support law enforcement officials when conducting secondary inspections on questioned travel documents by helping to provide information to make educated decisions on the status of travel documents. In this regard, the Verifier TD&B system can collect non-specific data on a variety of factors, such as sex, age, and the type of travel document used in fraud and imposter cases to help better inform officials on the documents being inspected. The system is constantly being adapted to provide better information and currently, Verifier TD&B is being harmonized to work with The International Police Criminal Organization (INTERPOL) Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) database so when a travel document is checked with Verifier TD&B, the system will automatically check the document against the SLTD database. The results will support border and other law enforcement officials in better addressing transnational crimes involving fraudulent travel documents and false identities. However, technical advances in detection hardware are only as good as the users taking advantage of them. Based on the study findings **it is recommended that the DESC provide additional support to border officials using the Verifier TD&B system to ensure that it is used to the best of its ability.** The study results show that some countries experience a lag in reporting from the time of first installing the Verifier TD&B system to when countries begin reporting significant amounts of data. Study results also indicate that several countries experience a few years of consistent use of the Verifier TD&B system immediately after first installing it, only for the usage of the system to decrease dramatically after a few years. For these countries, it could be highly beneficial for the DESC to provide additional trainings and refresher courses on how to use the Verifier TD&B system.

Facilitate better exchange of information and collaboration on regional best practices for addressing fraudulent travel document use

The development of a centralized tool for disseminating information on irregular migration and fraudulent travel document use would be highly beneficial to government officials who could utilize this information to form actionable policies. The results provided in this report demonstrate the utility of information dissemination tools, whereby trends and factors affecting irregular migration and fraudulent document use are made more informative through the collective sharing of information by member countries. Potential web-based platforms for sharing information on migration and fraudulent travel document use, such as the AFDRS, are excellent tools to be used as a regional information sharing network for experienced senior law enforcement officials to share best practices in travel document examination and verification. Given that most of the countries that this report focuses on are either destinations or countries of origin for migrants, it would be highly beneficial to improve communications and exchanges of information between countries to help mitigate the use of fraudulent document use. In particular, it would be beneficial to implement standardized benchmarks and protocols for document checks, roles and responsibilities, and referral processes. One of the

major difficulties with utilizing the data presented in this report is that each country voluntarily collects and reports their data in different ways. A standardized system of reporting for all States that use the data collection systems in this report would help to make future analysis more comprehensive by promoting better intra-agency and inter-agency cooperation. To help facilitate the development of better data collection systems, government officials could take advantage of international for a such as the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML).⁷⁴ This forum is an open platform for the discussion of good practices and ideas between governments and organizations on key issues facing migrant workers in South-east Asia to develop recommendations that promote the principles of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. While all countries included in this analysis use the same verification tools, it is clear that each country has its own method of approaching travel document verification. Better cooperation between agencies and countries on travel document verification could help streamline and strengthen verification practices.

⁷⁴ International Labour Organization, The ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour: www.ilo.org/asia/WCMS_214213/lang--en/index.htm.

Increase regular reporting and verification of data

The verification and reporting of migration data is critical for accurate analysis of migration trends. Some countries that utilize Verifier TD&B and AFDRS systems regularly report information, but several countries discussed in this analysis do not. Additionally, several countries did not report data during the years of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is critical to understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected irregular migration. The lack of reporting from some countries may also be due to a lack of staff capacity, particularly during the years of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is recommended that IOM and UNODC ROSEAP engage more with participating member countries to help facilitate data collection and sharing. This may require being in frequent communication with countries that utilize systems such as Verifier TD&B and AFDRS to encourage them to collect and share data. This would involve regular engagement with relevant counterparts including immigration officials and primary and secondary inspection personnel.

Overall, data collection in supporting regional trends analysis is imperative for enhancing the knowledge and understanding of irregular migration and the movement of individuals using fraudulent travel documents within the South and South-east Asia regions as well as migration flows worldwide. Regional trends analysis can show significant variations of how different countries in the South and South-east Asian region are connected to the phenomenon of irregular migration, with some countries shifting from transit to destination countries over the years. In summation, any future initiatives in supporting Member States can include:

1. A stronger engagement with national focal points, with IOM and UNODC providing more individualized and more frequent interactions including for relevant training, and facilitating information exchange;
2. Continued research in the area of irregular migration to further understand regional trends challenges and patterns.



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CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

This report analysed trends of fraudulent travel documents and identities intercepted in the South and South-east Asian region. In total, the report represents 21,008 documents scanned using Verifier TD&B between 2014 and 2021, 1,841 documents scanned using the AFDRS system between 2015 and 2021, and 867,007 documents scanned using the VRS-MSRC system between 2008 and 2017. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent border closures, however, only 10.6 per cent of all documents included from databases that were operational during the COVID pandemic were scanned during 2020 and 2021, which suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic affected the volume of documents scanned by Verifier TD&B. Despite the disruption of scanning activity during the COVID-19 pandemic, the proportion of fraudulent travel documents intercepted as a percentage of total documents generally decreased each year.

Gender was associated with the interception of fraudulent travel documents when stratified by year, with males being consistently more likely to be intercepted than females. The significance of gender and fraudulent document interception was exacerbated by age. Males and females between the ages of 0 and 17 were intercepted with fraudulent documents in equal proportions, while individuals between 0 and 17 who were intercepted with genuine documents were more likely to be male than female (55.8% versus 40.3%). Additionally, the ratio of males to females being intercepted with genuine travel documents was consistent, while males 18–60 years of age were much more likely to be intercepted with fraudulent travel documents than females of the same age group. The total number of scanned documents each year varied by country, and within each country, the number of travel documents scanned significantly varied by

sex. This gender disparity in scanned travel documents could be due to the type of migration the citizens of each country typically engage in when they leave their home country for employment.

While travel documents were intercepted from 110 different issuing countries, all but one of the top five countries of arrival were from the Asia region. The top five countries of arrival represented 81.8 per cent of all arrival countries (Thailand, Viet Nam, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates and India). In contrast, for migrants continuing their journey the most common next-destinations were outside of the Asia region (the most common destinations included the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Australia, Serbia and Germany). This suggests that a large portion of fraudulent document use intercepted in the South and South-east Asian regions originates in the same region. However, for a large number of migrants in the South and South-east Asian regions were not the most common final destination. This information coincides with the study results indicating that many of the individuals who were intercepted with fraudulent travel documents while living in a foreign country were living in a country that was not in the South and South-east Asian regions.

The results of this study suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic affected the interception of fraudulent travel documents, but the pandemic did not affect the declining proportional trend of genuine versus fraudulent documents being intercepted. The average number of intercepted documents decreased by 69.8 per cent during the pandemic years and the proportion of fraudulent documents intercepted continued to decrease in 2020 and 2021. This suggests that regardless of the total number of intercepted documents, fewer fraudulent documents

were being intercepted as a whole. The study also found that COVID-19 travel restrictions did not affect male and female irregular migrants equally. More women in proportion to the number of men were intercepted with fraudulent documents during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 (an average of 3.3 males were intercepted for every female during 2017–2019 versus an average of 2.7 males were intercepted for every female during 2020–2021). This could be because jobs that are traditionally filled by males, such as factory work, were severely affected by the pandemic, while jobs that are traditionally filled by females, such as domestic work and health care, were less affected.

As countries continue to combat the use of fraudulent travel documents and identities to facilitate safe regular and orderly migration, it will be increasingly important for immigration officials to have access to timely, evidence-based information for better decision-making during secondary inspection. The trends analysed in this report provide insights on the correlations of gender, age, and country of issued passport on fraudulent travel document use over time, and this information will help government officials better monitor the trends of fraudulent travel document use across the South and South-east Asian regions.



ANNEXES

ANNEX A: Interception of residents using fraudulent documents by country of residence

ANNEX A:

Interception of residents using fraudulent documents
by country/territory of residence

	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Cambodia	Indonesia	Lao People's Democratic Republic
Australia	29	275	51	195	17
Austria	4 546	533	0	0	0
Belarus	3 413	0	0	0	0
Belgium	0	325	8	31	4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	108	6	0	1	0
Bulgaria	19 118	0	0	0	0
Croatia	2 519	249	0	0	0
Czechia	74	0	0	0	0
Denmark	268	0	0	0	0
Estonia	33	0	0	0	0
Finland	1 683	0	0	0	0
France	77 271	1 520	39	96	63
Germany	83 125	1 809	0	0	0
Hungary	116	1	0	0	0
Indonesia	1 167	81	0	0	0
Italy	387	261	0	0	0
Japan	0	0	0	5 427	0
Lao People's Democratic Republic	0	0	0	0	0
Latvia	14	4	0	5	0
Lithuania	72	2	2	0	0
Maldives	0	3 705	0	0	0
Micronesia (Federated States of)	0	0	0	0	0
Montenegro	6	4	0	0	0

	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Cambodia	Indonesia	Lao People's Democratic Republic
Myanmar	0	1719	0	56	2
New Zealand	0	0	0	613	0
North Macedonia	179	0	0	0	0
Norway	2962	150	0	0	0
Papua New Guinea	0	5	0	0	0
Poland	72	88	0	0	0
Republic of Korea	0	0	0	0	0
Republic of Moldova	0	1	0	0	0
Romania	16	0	0	0	0
Saudi Arabia	26 169	125 378	0	0	0
Serbia	4 664	25	0	0	0
Slovakia	727	79	0	0	0
Slovenia	0	0	0	0	0
Solomon Islands	0	0	0	17	0
Spain	357	4 986	1	125	0
Sri Lanka	0	334	0	0	0
Sweden	49 963	565	0	3	0
Thailand	0	0	5784	0	74 683
Türkiye	2 499	281	0	0	0
Ukraine	569	180	1	10	2
United Kingdom	7 800	6 080	0	0	0
French Polynesia	0	0	0	0	0
Macao SAR, China	0	0	0	4 266	0
New Caledonia	0	0	0	10	0
Total	289 926	148 646	5 886	10 855	74 771

ANNEX B

Country ports of entry that use Verifier TD&B

	Location	Type of Border Check Point	Number of Interceptions between 2014–2021
Afghanistan	Hamid Karzai International Airport	Airport	1 347
Bangladesh	Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport	Airport	6 166
Cambodia	Phnom Penh International Airport (pre-check)	Airport	170
	Phnom Penh International Airport	Airport	186
	Poipet International Border Checkpoint	Land Border Control Post	765
Indonesia	Soekarno-Hatta International Airport	Airport	26
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Luang Prabang International Airport	Airport	215
	Thailand–Laos Friendship Bridge 1	Land Border Control Post	406
	Wattay International Airport	Airport	436
Malaysia	Bukit Kayu Hitam Land Border	Land Border Control Post	181
	Kota Kinabalu International Airport	Airport	10
	Kuala Lumpur International Airport	Airport	197
	Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2	Airport	42
	Kuching International Airport	Airport	6
	Malaysia Immigration Forensic Centre	Training/Research Centre	120
	Penang International Airport	Airport	48
Maldives	Velana International Airport	Airport	1 658
	Gan International Airport	Airport	75
	Immigration HQ	Training/Research Centre	42

	Location	Type of Border Check Point	Number of Interceptions between 2014–2021
Myanmar	Yangon International Airport Terminal 1	Airport	1 959
	Yangon International Airport Terminal 2	Airport	222
Philippines (the)	Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 1	Airport	128
	Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3	Airport	369
Sri Lanka	Bandaranaike International Airport	Airport	2 595
Thailand	Aranyaprathet Border Checkpoint	Airport	183
	Chiang Mai International	Land Border Control Post	271
	Don Mueang International Airport	Airport	388
	Phuket International Airport	Airport	63
	Sadao Border Checkpoint	Land Border Control Post	272
	Suvarnabhumi International Airport (Arrivals)	Airport	1 371
	Suvarnabhumi International Airport (Departures)	Airport	62
	Thailand–Laos Friendship Bridge 1	Land Border Control Post	843
Viet Nam	Noi Bai International Airport	Airport	165
	Tan Son Nhat International Airport	Airport	21



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