

## Social Integration of Migrant Workers and Marriage Migrant Women in Korea\*

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*This article aims to examine the current situation regarding the social integration of migrant workers and marriage migrant women into the Seoul Metropolitan Area. I introduced the concept of the multicultural migrant integration model that includes a social psychological dimension and multicultural orientation absent in previous models. The data for this study came from a survey of 100 migrant workers and 100 female marriage migrants in the Seoul Metropolitan Area conducted between April 1 and May 30, 2020. The main findings are as follows: with regards to systemic integration, migrant workers and marriage migrants do not fare well in the economy or education, but they do well in housing and health. In value integration, the two groups have a low sense of belonging and trust in Korean society. One noticeable difference is that migrant workers want to practice multiculturalism, but marriage migrant women are under pressure to assimilate to Korean culture.*

**Keywords:** *migrant integration, multicultural migrant integration, social integration, migrant workers, marriage migrant women*

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## Introduction

Migrant integration is an increasingly important issue in Northeast Asia. Like its neighboring Northeast Asian countries, Japan and Taiwan, Korea has experienced population decline due to low fertility and aging. This trend is considered a serious threat to the sustainable development of the country. To make up for the shortage of labor and spouses, Korea has accepted migrant workers and marriage migrants. This entry of people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds has transformed Korea into a multiethnic and multicultural society (Lie 2001; Kymlicka and He 2005; Yoon 2013).

An important policy task in a multiethnic, multicultural society is coexistence and cooperation among various ethnic and cultural groups. When migrants are no longer sojourners, but settlers and practical members of society, their host society needs to approach them from the perspective of integration, not adaptation. Whereas the adaptation perspective focuses on providing the material basis for adaptation, an integration perspective emphasizes mental, as well as material, incorporation into the host society (Deutsch 1978). Another important difference is that the former is largely a matter to be dealt with only by migrants while the latter is a reciprocal process between migrants and natives (Threadgold and Court 2005; International Organization for Migration 2011).

Integration is an appropriate policy goal for a society where the migrant population has become significant and they are substantial members of society. There is a tendency in human migration for what begins as a short stay to become a long-term or permanent settlement, as we can observe in the migration of Europeans and Asians to the United States (Handlin 1973; Yoon 1997) and the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia (Barrett 2012). Swiss writer Max Frisch said, "We wanted a labor force, but human beings came," referring to the guest worker programs in European countries in the 1960s (Sunata 2010). Since migrants are human beings, no matter how short-term and economical migration is, once migration begins, settlement is inevitable, even if there is a difference in degree. Korea is no exception to this rule. Migrant workers who enter Korea as short-term workers under the Employment Permit System can stay for up to four years and ten months, and if their employers apply for their continued employment, they can work for up to another four years and ten months. It is marriage migrant women who accelerate the process of migration leading to settlement in Korea. They enter Korea for settlement from the beginning, forming families and raising

children. They became targets of the Korean government's active inclusion and assimilation policy because they contribute to the reproduction of Korea's population.

However, the current situation of migrants in Korea seems to be far from the ideal of social integration. Despite the efforts of the Korean government, civil society, and migrants during the past three decades, human rights violations against migrants are still common in the workplace and everyday life (Kim and Choi 2011; Kim et al. 2019; Yoon et al. 2017). The public's perception and attitudes toward migrants have changed from paternalism to apathy and are now aggravating to the level of hatred (Yoon 2019). Now, in Korea, it seems that we are entering the age of backlash, in which attacks against women and migrants are publicly expressed. Some influential politicians are arguing for the abolition of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family or opposing the payment of disaster relief aid to foreigners during the COVID-19 crisis. International human rights organizations point out that the freedom and social rights of migrant workers, marriage migrants, undocumented foreigners, and refugee applicants are still being seriously infringed upon (Kim et al. 2019). If migrants are not guaranteed their basic rights and do not have a sense of belonging to society, coexistence and cooperation—the ideals of a multicultural society—cannot be achieved.

In this research, I will analyze the level and issues related to the social integration of migrant workers and marriage migrant women, the two most representative migrant groups in Korea. Previous research has developed models and indices of migrant integration relevant to the Korean context (Chun et al. 2013; Chung et al. 2012; Jeong et al. 2014; Han and Choi 2018; Moon and Chun 2012; Seol and Kim 2008), but few studies have analyzed comprehensive aspects of social integration. I developed a new concept called "multicultural migrant integration" to overcome the limitations of existing concepts; and, I used this concept, as well as related indicators, to measure the level of social integration of migrant workers and marriage migrant women.

## Theoretical Background

### *Existing Definitions and Measurements of Migrant Integration*

As migrant integration becomes an important issue and policy task, researchers have developed various definitions and measurement of migrant

integration. One of the most well-known indices is the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX). The MIPEX was employed to measure the situations of migrant integration in 15 European countries in 2004. The latest MIPEX V, published in 2019, estimated the status of migrant integration in a total of 52 countries.

The MIPEX calculates the level of migrant integration in each country, based on specialist reviews of each country's laws, policies, and publications related to issues of migrant integration. The MIPEX is composed of the eight policy areas (labor market mobility, family reunion for third-country nationals, education, political participation, health, long-term residence, access to nationality, anti-discrimination), and each policy area has four strands or dimensions (e.g., access, eligibility, security, and rights); furthermore, each dimension consists of three to seven sub-categories (Niessen 2014, p. 9). The MIPEX score varies from 0 to 100, where a higher score indicates better integration policy for migrants in the host country. In the 2019 survey, the average score of all participating countries was 50. Korea scored 56 points, placing it 20th among the 52 participating countries. As Figure 1 shows, Korea scored above the MIPEX average in labor market mobility, education, and political participation, but scored below the MIPEX average in family reunion, health, access to nationality, and anti-discrimination.

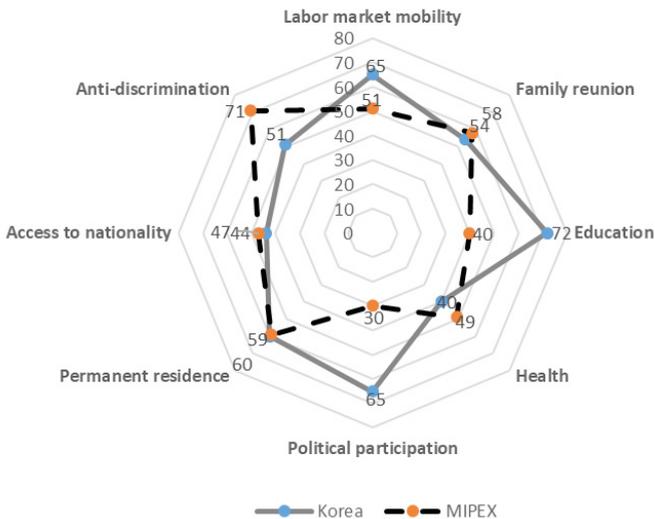


FIG. 1.—MIPEX SCORES FOR KOREA AND ALL PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES (2019)

Source: Migrant Integration Policy Index 2020

Ager and Strang (2008) developed another internationally widely model for migrant integration. These two Scottish scholars examined the social integration of refugees in the United Kingdom and proposed a framework that consists of four elements; the foundation, facilitators, social connection, and markers and means of integration. Here, the foundation refers to the protection of the rights and citizenship of migrants. The acquisition of permanent residency and citizenship is the essential base for social integration, so the level of rights and services given to permanent residents and citizens determines the success or failure of migrant integration. Facilitators consist of language and cultural knowledge as well as safety and stability. Language and cultural knowledge refer to migrants' acquisition and the skill of host society's language, culture, interpretation, and translation services provided by public organizations for migrants and their settlement as well as intercultural education to establish mutual interaction between migrants and natives. Safety and stability refers to the protection of migrants from racial discrimination, violence, and bullying as well as the provision of equal opportunity for migrants to participate in the host society. Social connection consists of three different types of networks: social bridges that migrants form with natives, social bonds that migrants form with their fellow group members, and social links that enable migrants to have access to government services. Finally, markers and means are both indicators of achievement regarding integration as measured in areas of employment, housing, education, and health.

Because of the page limit, I will not attempt a detailed evaluation and criticism of both MIPEX and Ager and Strang's model. However, one important point worth noting is that neither incorporates the social psychological dimension of migrant integration, such as a sense of belonging and trust. Migrants who are isolated from a majority group without a sense of belonging cannot be considered fully incorporated into mainstream society. Another point is that the index of migrant integration should incorporate indicators that can measure reciprocal changes in attitudes and behavior of both natives and migrants, because integration is a mutual process. According to Berry's Model of Acculturation—which is divided into assimilation, integration, isolation, and marginality—integration refers to the maintenance of migrant's traditional culture and identity as well as active participation in the host society's social and cultural domains (Berry 1987). Thus, even when a migrant achieves parity with natives in social and economic status but is denied the right to practice their own culture and identity, they are in a mode of assimilation, not integration. I include

multicultural orientation as an indicator of the mode of integration that measures the degree to which migrants want to assimilate to their host society and culture or maintain their home culture and identity.

### *Multicultural Migrant Integration as a New Model*

I propose a new concept called “multicultural migrant integration” that synthesizes migrant integration and multiculturalism—the two representative approaches to the relationship between migrants and natives in a multicultural society. The concept of migrant integration, also called “civic integration” by Joppke (2007; 2017), focuses on the protection or provision of basic rights to migrants, such as equal access to employment, education, housing, and health, and it demands migrants participate in the host society. By contrast, multiculturalism emphasizes the cultural right of migrants and ethnic minorities to maintain their language, religion, and identity (Kymlicka 1995; Parekh 2006). Multiculturalism is often criticized as being cultural relativism, perpetuating cultural differences between groups, and dividing the country into multiple ethnic nationalisms (Barry 2013). Since the concept of migrant integration focuses on material and institutional integration and the concept of multiculturalism emphasizes cultural and psychological integration, when the two are combined, complete social integration of migrants can be achieved. The new concept of multicultural migrant integration incorporates both material and mental aspects of integration, and integration is achieved when migrants reach parity with natives in material integration while migrants and natives share an equal sense of identity and belonging as members of society. To be more specific, it is defined as a process through which migrants become members of the host society by maintaining their ethnic group culture while adapting to the host society’s culture, securing safe and stable living conditions and equal opportunities, having a sense of belonging to the host society, and developing close relations and connections with natives and the host society (Yoon 2019).

Kreckel (1990, p. 90) distinguished between two types of integration: systemic integration and value integration. Systemic integration is an integration of political and economic systems, while value integration is the process and outcome of achieving a common identity by sharing common values. Material markers of integration as proposed by Ager and Strang—the economy, housing, education, and health—are indicators of systematic integration. I added political participation as another area of systemic integration that was absent in Ager and Strang’s original model of migrant

**TABLE 1**  
**DOMAIN AND INDICATORS OF MULTICULTURAL MIGRANT INTEGRATION**

Domain of integration	Sub-domain	Indicators
Systemic integration	Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employment rate</li> <li>- Class of worker</li> <li>- Industry</li> <li>- Occupation</li> <li>- Hours of work</li> <li>- Monthly wage</li> <li>- Monthly household income</li> <li>- Subjective class</li> <li>- Level of economic difficulty</li> </ul>
	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Type of house</li> <li>- Type of home ownership</li> <li>- Comfort of living space</li> <li>- Safety of living space</li> <li>- Level of residential difficulty</li> </ul>
	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Level of education</li> <li>- Additional education received in Korea</li> <li>- Vocational training in Korea</li> <li>- Level of educational difficulty</li> </ul>
	Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Level of subjective health</li> <li>- Rate of illness</li> <li>- Level of mental health</li> <li>- Health problems</li> <li>- Access to hospital</li> <li>- Coverage of health insurance</li> <li>- Level of health difficulties</li> </ul>
	Political participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participation in local elections</li> <li>- Participation in National Assembly elections</li> <li>- Participation in presidential elections</li> </ul>
Value integration	Sense of belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sense of belonging as a member of the local community</li> <li>- Sense of belonging as a member of Korean society</li> </ul>
	Sense of trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sense of trust in equal opportunities for foreigners</li> </ul>
	Multicultural orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attitudes toward assimilation or multiculturalism</li> </ul>

integration. I also added value integration to the Ager and Strang model that did not have a social psychological dimension of integration. This refers to the respect and sharing of values between migrants and natives and it consists of a sense of belonging, a sense of trust, and multicultural orientation. Table 1 lists the domains and indicators of the multicultural migrant integration model.

Indicators for systemic integration were measured using the same question items used in surveys such as the Korean General Social Survey, so explanations of conventional question items will be omitted due to space limitations. However, the level of perceived difficulty for achieving integration in each area of systemic integration was asked in the following ways: "Have you had any difficulties in performing socio-economic activities in Korea due to your status of residence in the past year or not?" Responses to this question were measured using a 5-Point Likert Scale where 1 indicated "not difficult at all," 3 meant "so-so," and 5 meant "very difficult." Sense of belonging was measured by the following questions: "How much do you feel like you are a resident belonging to the community you live in (city, county, ward)?" and "How much do you feel like you are a member of Korean society?" The responses to these questions were measured on a 5-Point Likert Scale with 1 indicating "not strongly at all;" 3, "so-so," and 5, "very strongly." Sense of trust was measured with the following statements: "Being a foreigner, it is difficult to be the same as a Korean," "If foreigners work hard, they can achieve the same status as Koreans," and "Foreigners can become managers if they have the ability." The responses to these statements were measured the same way as the sense of belonging questions. Multicultural orientation was measured via the following statements: "Foreigners must abandon their foreign ways of thinking and lifestyle when they live in Korea," "It is good to have diverse races, religions, and cultures coexist in any country," and "It is desirable for foreigners to maintain their home culture and identity." The responses to these statements were also measured the same way as before.

## Data and Research Method

The main data used in this study were collected from a survey of 100 migrant workers and 100 female marriage migrants in the Seoul Metropolitan Area. Face-to-face surveys were conducted between April 1 and May 30, 2020 by professional interviewers of a survey research firm called EMBRAIN.

Because a sampling frame of migrant workers and marriage migrant women was not available, the research team received a list of potential respondents from support centers for migrant workers and marriage migrant women in the Seoul Metropolitan Area, and interviewed them using questionnaires translated into Chinese, Vietnamese, and English. Quota sampling was used to select the respondents and gender, age, and nationality were used as criteria for determining the quota for the sample. Because China, Vietnam, and the Philippines are the major nationality groups of migrants in Korea, the respondents were drawn from these three nationality groups. This survey was conducted as the author's personal project, so it could not be a comprehensive survey on a national scale. For this reason, this research is a preliminary investigation in preparation for larger and more comprehensive research to come later. Thus, the findings of this research should be regarded as being exploratory.

This study uses descriptive statistical analysis to measure the integration level of migrant workers and marriage migrant women using indicators of the multicultural migrant integration model proposed by the author. Since there are no previous studies that systematically measured the integration level of the two migrant groups using the migrant integration model, this article focuses on investigating the level and characteristics of integration according to individual indicators and presenting the results in tables. The integration level for each indicator was measured on a 5-Point Likert Scale where 1 means "not well at all," 2, "not well;" 3, "so-so;" 4, "well;" and 5, "very well." To report the overall level of integration, I calculate the total integration index by summing the values of the assessed levels of systemic integration and value integration, giving equal weight to each indicator. Also, I calculated the average level of difficulty with regards to the economy, housing, education, health, and social psychology as a measure of the level of integration.

## Results

### *Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

The main demographic characteristics of the migrant worker respondents are as follows. First, more men (69%) than women (31%) were selected, representing a higher proportion of men in the total migrant worker population. Second, by age, respondents in their 30s were selected at a high

**TABLE 2**  
**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Category		Migrant workers		Marriage migrant women	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Gender	Men	69	69.0	0	0.0
	Women	31	31.0	100	100.0
Age (years)	Under 29	21	21.0	21	21.0
	30-39	40	40.0	35	35.0
	40-49	21	21.0	24	24.0
	Over 50	18	18.0	20	20.0
Nationality	China	50	50.0	50	50.0
	Vietnam	25	25.0	25	25.0
	The Philippines	25	25.0	25	25.0
Length of residence (years)	Less than 3	17	17.0	8	8
	3-5	29	29.0	14	14.0
	5-10	26	26.0	29	29.0
	10-15	17	17.0	25	25.0
	15-20	6	6.0	11	11.0
	Over 20	5	5.0	13	13.0
Visa type	Short-term Visit (C-3)	4	4.0	0	0.0
	Short-term Employee (C-4)	3	3.0	0	0.0
	Non-professional (E-9)	40	40.0	0	0.0
	Work and Visit (H-2)	19	19.0	0	0.0
	Family Visitor (F-1)	1	1.0	0	0.0
	Overseas Korean (F-4)	13	13.0	9	9.0
	Permanent Resident (F-5)	0	0.0	13	13.0
	Marriage Migrant (F-6)	0	0.0	28	28.0
	Naturalized	0	0.0	49	49.0

rate (40%). Third, by nationality, Chinese accounted for 50% of respondents, and Vietnamese and Filipinos each made up 25%. Fourth, by length of residence, 46% lived in Korea for less than 5 years, and 28% stayed longer than 10 years. Fifth, by visa status, 40% had the non-professional visa (E-9); Korean-Chinese people had special and privileged visas, like the work and visit visa (H-2, 19%) and the overseas Korean visa (F-4, 13%), that allow them to stay longer and engage in a wider range of jobs than E-9 visa holders.

The demographic characteristics of the marriage migrant women are as follows. First, by age, respondents in their 30s were selected at a high rate (35%). Second, by nationality, Chinese accounted for 50% of respondents, and Vietnamese and Filipinos each made up 25%. Third, by length of residence, more than half (54%) lived in Korea for between 5 and 15 years. Fourth, by visa status, about half (49%) were naturalized and 28% had the marriage migrant visa (F-6), and 13% had permanent resident status. The main difference between the two groups of respondents was that marriage migrant women respondents had a longer length of residence and more permanent status of residence than the migrant worker respondents.

### *Level of Systemic Integration*

#### **(1) Economy**

Migrant workers have a high rate of employment and engage mainly in regular work. Of respondents, 95% were employed, 61.1% were regular workers, 24.2% temporary workers, 6.3% daily workers, and 7.4% self-employed workers. They worked mainly in low-skilled manufacturing or service jobs. On average, they worked 46.4 hours per week (with a standard deviation =7.8) and earned less than 3 million won per month, while their household earned less than 4 million won per month (cf. the monthly household income of Korean urban workers, as of February, 2020, is 5.4 million won). Their subjective class was mainly lower class (39%) or middle lower class (37%). Given their class of work, work hours, wages, and subjective class, their level of economic integration is assessed being “not well” (2 on a 5-Point Likert Scale). When asked about economic difficulties in the past year, 26% of respondents reported economic difficulties in the past year, with their average level of economic difficulties being a 3.11 (sd=0.71) on a 5-point scale.

Marriage migrant women do not fare well in the economy either. Only 49% were employed, with 38.8% of those employed being regular workers, 24.5% temporary workers, and 22.4% daily workers. They worked mainly in

**TABLE 3**  
**LEVEL OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION (%)**

Category		Migrant workers	Marriage migrant women
Employment status	Employed	95.0	49.0
	Regular worker	61.1	38.8
	Temporary worker	24.2	24.5
	Daily worker	6.3	22.4
	Self-employed	7.4	8.1
Industry	Manufacturing	35.2	14.8
	Wholesale and retail	22.9	22.2
	Accommodation and restaurant business	18.8	44.4
	Personal service	6.3	13.0
Occupation	Service and sales workers	46.9	77.8
	Skilled workers and related workers	18.8	9.3
	Unskilled worker	11.5	9.3
	Equipment and machine operators and assembly workers	10.4	0.0
	Technician and semi-professionals	5.2	0.0
	Professionals	4.2	0.0
Subjective class	Middle	20.0	15.0
	Middle lower	37.0	53.0
	Lower	39.0	31.0
	Underclass	2.0	0.0
Level of economic difficulty	Not difficult	16.0	18.0
	So-so	58.0	49.0
	Difficult	26.0	33.0
	Average score	3.11 (sd=0.71)	3.19 (sd=0.81)

low skill personal service and sales jobs, such as domestic service, eldercare, and childcare. Of respondents, 77% worked in personal service or sales jobs in the accommodations and restaurant sector or at wholesale and retail businesses. On average, they worked 38.2 hours per week ( $sd=8.67$ ) and 46.2% earned less than 1.5 million won, while 75% of their households earned less than 4 million won per week. Their subjective class was mainly middle lower class (53.5%) or lower class (31%). Considering their class of worker, work hours, wages, and subjective class, the level of economic integration for marriage migrant women was assessed as “not well” (2 on a 5-point scale). Of respondents, 33% reported economic difficulties in the past year and their average level of economic difficulties was 3.19 ( $sd=0.81$ ).

## (2) Housing

Housing of migrant workers is not stable and is of poor quality. Of respondents, 46% lived in a row house, villa, or multi-family house; 25% lived in a dormitory or company lodging; 16% in an inn, motel, or boarding house; and only 9% in an apartment. Most lived in rented or leased housing: monthly rent with a deposit (38%) and long-term lease on a deposit basis (30%). However, their perceived level of comfort and the security of their living space was close to “well”: 63% answered that their living space was “comfortable” and the average level of comfort was 3.52 ( $sd=0.78$ ) (better than “so-so”), while 62% answered that their living space was “safe” and the average level of safety was 3.65 ( $sd=0.78$ ) (better than “so-so”). They did not report serious difficulties due to housing problems, though 27% reported difficulty due to housing problems and the average level of residential difficulty was 2.99 ( $sd=0.78$ ), which is the level of “so-so.” Thus, their level of residential integration was assessed as being “so-so.”

The housing conditions of the sample of migrant workers used in this study were found to be better than the poor living conditions of migrant workers pointed out in previous studies. According to the report of the National Human Rights Commission of Korea in 2012, 63% of migrant workers were found to live in container rooms or plastic houses next to factories (National Human Rights Commission 2012, p. 16). Results of the 2020 Ministry of Employment and Labor’s survey on the residential environment of migrant workers in the agricultural and fishery sector pointed out that the living environment of migrant workers working in the agricultural and livestock industry in rural areas is particularly poor because they often live in plastic houses and barns, not for residential purposes (Nam et al. 2021, p. 21). However, since the migrant workers participating in this

**TABLE 4**  
**LEVEL OF RESIDENTIAL INTEGRATION (%)**

Category		Migrant workers	Marriage migrant women
Type of house	Row house, villa, or multi-family house	46.0	61.0
	Dormitory or company lodging	25.0	0.0
	Inn, motel, or boarding house	16.0	1.0
	Apartment	9.0	24.0
	Detached house	0.0	14.0
Type of home ownership	Monthly rent with deposit	38.0	26.0
	Monthly rent without deposit	6.0	2.0
	Long-term lease on a deposit basis	30.0	53.0
	Own home	18.8	19.0
Level of residential difficulty	Not difficult	25.0	38.0
	So-so	48.0	39.0
	Difficult	27.0	23.0
	Average score	2.99 (sd=0.78)	2.85 (sd=0.85)

study are engaged in manufacturing, wholesale and retail, accommodation and restaurant business, and personal service rather than in the agricultural and livestock industry, they appear to live in better residential environments than those in rural areas.

Housing of marriage migrant women is more stable than that of migrant workers. Of respondents, 61% lived in a row house, villa, or multi-family house; 24% in an apartment; and 14% in a detached house. The home ownership rate was 19%, and 79% lived with monthly rent or a long-term lease with a deposit. The perceived level of comfort and security regarding living spaces was close to “well”: 57% answered that their living space was “comfortable” and the average level of comfort was 3.43 (sd=0.92), while 63% answered that their living space was “safe” and the average level of safety was 3.57 (sd=0.93). They did not report serious difficulties due to housing problems, though 23% reported difficulty due to housing problems and the average level of residential difficulty was 2.85 (sd=0.85), close to “so-so.”

Thus, their level of residential integration was assessed as being “well.”

**(3) Education**

The level of education of migrant workers is not high: half of respondents received high school education, 16% college, and 24% university education. Ninety percent did not receive any additional education in Korea. However, a sizable number of them (42%) received vocational training in Korea for the purpose of safety and performance in the workplace. Vocational training is implemented over a short period of time upon entry, and individual human capital can be improved through one’s own experience in the workplace. Migrant workers are not subject to educational integration in the host society due to the temporary status of their residence. Thus, their level of educational integration is assessed “not well.” Despite these limitations, probably because of the nature of the work they perform, their level of education does not seem to pose serious difficulties in their socioeconomic activities. Only 8% reported difficulties due to their level of education and the average level of difficulty was 2.51 (sd=0.81), which is better than “so-so.”

The level of education of marriage migrant women is lower than that of migrant workers, with most of them not having received any additional

**TABLE 5**  
**LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION (%)**

Category		Migrant workers	Marriage migrant women
Level of education	Middle school or lower	10.0	14.0
	High school	46.0	62.0
	College	25.0	19.0
	4-year university or higher	16.0	5.0
Education received in Korea	Not received	90	99.0
Vocational training	Not received	58.0	68.0
Level of difficulty due to education	Not difficult	48.0	55.0
	So-so	44.0	32.0
	Difficult	8.0	13.0
	Average score	2.51 (sd=0.81)	2.57 (sd=0.81)

education in Korea. Of respondents, 76% had high school or less, 19% college, and 5% university or graduate education. Ninety-nine percent did not receive any additional education in Korea, and 68% did not receive any vocational training. Unlike migrant workers, marriage migrant women are the main target of the Korean government's social integration policy, but they were found to not be actively utilizing Korea's educational services. Thus, their level of educational integration is assessed as being "not well." However, their low level of education and lack of additional education in Korea did not seem to be big obstacles in their socioeconomic activities. Only 13% responded they had difficulties due to their level of education and their average level of difficulty was 2.57 (sd=0.81), which is better than "so-so."

#### (4) Health

Migrant workers report a high level of physical and mental health: 86% reported that they were "healthy" and their average level of health was 3.98 (close to the level of "healthy"); 13% reported illness, 21% reported feeling

TABLE 6  
LEVEL OF HEALTH INTEGRATION (%)

Category		Migrant workers	Marriage migrant women
Level of subjective health	Not healthy	6.0	5.0
	So-so	8.0	31.0
	Healthy	86.0	64.5
	Average level of health	3.98 (sd=0.71)	3.68 (sd=0.71)
Mental problems	Felt sad or desperate enough to interfere with daily life	21.0	19.0
Illness	Yes	13.0	15.0
Access to hospital	Not able to go to hospital when I wanted to go	14.0	15.0
Health insurance	No	20.0	2.0
Level of difficulty due to health	Not difficult	60.0	61.0
	So-so	26.0	25.0
	Difficult	14.0	14.0
	Average score	2.45 (sd=0.88)	2.47 (sd=0.85)

sad or desperate for more than two weeks, 26% reported difficulties in daily life due to health problems, but their average level of difficulty due to health problems was 2.45 (sd=0.88), which is better than “so-so.” They are covered by company or local insurance and have good access to hospitals: only 14% reported they were unable to go to the hospital even when they wanted to go, 20% did not have any insurance, 29% had company health insurance, and 21% had local health insurance. They did not have serious difficulties due to health problems. Thus, their level of health is assessed as being “well.”

Marriage migrant women reported a high level of physical and mental health as well: 64% reported that they were “healthy” and their average level of health was 3.68 (close to the level of “healthy”), 15% reported illness, and 19% reported feeling sad or desperate for more than two weeks. They are more rigorously covered by health insurance and have better access to hospitals than migrant workers. Only 2% did not have any insurance, where as 50% had company health insurance and 34% had local health insurance. Fifteen percent reported they were unable to go to the hospital even they wanted to go. They did not have serious difficulties due to health problems, though 10% reported difficulties in daily life due to health problems and their average level of difficulty was 2.38 (sd=0.85), which is better than “so-so.” Thus, their overall level of health was assessed as being “well.”

### (5) Political Participation

Korean law allows only Korean citizens to participate in the presidential and National Assembly elections. However, permanent residents have the right to participate in local elections. Because migrant workers have difficulty in obtaining permanent residency or citizenship, political participation is systematically blocked. Of migrant workers, 80% reported that they do not have voting rights, only 8% said they participated in the 2017 presidential election, and just 2% participated in the 2016 National Assembly election and 2018 local elections. Thus, their level of political integration is assessed as being “not well at all” (1 on a 5-point scale).

Marriage migrant women immigrated for the purpose of settlement, so among them the rate of people who achieved permanent resident status or citizenship is high. In fact, in the sample of marriage migrant women used for this study, the percentage of permanent residents was 13% and the percentage of citizens was 49%. However, the percentage of respondents who actually voted in the elections, even in local elections, was not high. Many factors seem to be responsible for their low level of political participation, including a lack of knowledge or interest, but it is clear that they are not fully integrated

**TABLE 7**  
**LEVEL OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION (%)**

Category	Migrant workers			Marriage migrant women		
	Voted	Did not vote	No voting rights	Voted	Did not vote	No voting rights
2017 presidential election	8.0	5.0	87.0	14.0	24.0	62.0
2016 national assembly election	2.0	11.0	87.0	11.0	24.0	65.0
2018 local election	2.0	11.0	87.0	15.0	28.0	57.0

in the political process. Thus, their level of political integration is assessed as being “not well” (2 on a 5-point scale).

#### *Level of Value Integration*

Migrant workers have a low sense of belonging to the community in which they live and Korean society as a whole. Of respondents, only 28% reported that they felt like they were a resident of the community they live in and their average score for sense of belonging to the local community was 2.82 (sd=0.91), close to the level of “not very strongly.”<sup>1</sup> Only 21% reported they felt like a member of Korean society and their average score for sense of belonging to Korean society was 2.86 (sd=0.84), close to the level of “not very strongly.” They also have a low sense of trust regarding equal opportunity for foreigners. To the statement “Being a foreigner, it is difficult to be the same as a Korean,” 60% agreed and 12% disagreed. To the statement “If foreigners work hard, they can achieve the same status as Koreans,” 32% agreed and 28% disagreed. To the statement “Foreigners can become managers if they have the ability,” 44% agreed and 21% disagreed. As a mode of integration, they prefer multiculturalism to assimilation; 41% disagreed with the statement “Foreigners must abandon their foreign ways of thinking and lifestyle when they live in Korea,” 55% agreed with the statement “It is good to have diverse races, religions, and cultures coexist in any country,” and 48% agreed with the statement “It is desirable for foreigners to maintain their home culture and identity.” Given the low level of sense of belonging and trust in Korean

<sup>1</sup> The sense of belonging to the local community was measured on a 5-Point Likert Scale where 1 means “not strongly at all,” 3 means “so-so,” and 5 means “very strongly.”

**TABLE 8**  
**LEVEL OF VALUE INTEGRATION (%)**

	Category	Migrant workers	Marriage migrant women
Sense of belonging	Felt like a resident of the community they lived in	28	33.0
	Average score	2.82 (sd=0.91)	2.99 (sd=0.90)
	Felt like a member of Korean society	21	30.0
	Average score	2.86 (sd =0.84)	2.97 (sd=0.92)
Sense of trust	Being a foreigner, it is difficult to be the same as a Korean	60.0	57.0
	If foreigners work hard, they can achieve the same status as Koreans	32.0	31.0
	Foreigners can become managers if they have the ability	44.0	34.0
Multicultural orientation	Foreigners must abandon their foreign ways of thinking and lifestyle when they live in Korea	30.0	48.0
	It is good to have diverse races, religions, and cultures coexist in any country	55.0	58.0
	It is desirable for foreigners to maintain their home culture and identity	48.0	41.0
Level of difficulty in being recognized as an equal member of society	Not difficult	22.0	34.0
	So-so	46.0	37.0
	Difficult	32.0	29.0
	Average score	3.17 (sd=0.85)	3.01 (sd=0.90)

society, the level of value integration among migrant workers was assessed as being “not well.”

Marriage migrant women have a low sense of belonging to the community they live in and Korean society; only 33% felt like they were residents of the community and 30% felt like they were members of Korean society. They have a moderate sense of trust regarding equal opportunity for foreigners. To the statement “Being a foreigner, it is difficult to be the same as a Korean,” 57% agreed and 23% disagreed. To the statement “If foreigners work hard, they can achieve the same status as Koreans,” 31% agreed and 21% disagreed. To the statement “Foreigners can become managers if they have the ability,” 34% agreed and 18% disagreed. As a mode of integration, they seem to be caught between pressure to assimilate to Korean culture and desire to maintain their ethnic identity and culture; 48% agreed that foreigners must abandon foreign ways of thinking and lifestyle (26% disagreed), and 41% agreed that it was desirable for foreigners to maintain their home culture and identity (4% disagreed). Given the low level of the sense of belonging and trust, the level of value integration among migrant workers was assessed as being “not well.”

To assess the overall level of integration, I evaluated the level of integration in each area, considering the detailed indicators. With regards to the economy, migrant workers do not fare well, and marriage migrant women are in a particularly dire situation—their employment rate is low and their jobs are not stable. In housing, the two groups fare well, and their perceived level of comfort and the security of their living space is high. In education, the two groups are not highly educated and do not receive additional education in Korea. Migrant workers are systematically blocked from entering the Korean public education system, and marriage migrant women do not actively utilize Korea’s educational services although they are the main target of the government’s social integration policy. For health, the two groups do well in both their perceived level of health and the access to medical services and insurance they enjoy. In the sense of belonging and trust, the two groups show low levels of value integration. It was a surprising result that marriage migrant women who settle in Korean society have an equally low sense of belonging and trust as migrant workers do. Moreover, they feel a strong pressure to assimilate into Korean society and culture.

When I compute the average score for both systemic and value integration, both migrant workers and marriage migrant women do not fare well; the average score was 2.5 (between “not well” and “so-so”) for migrant workers and marriage migrant women. In this study, I gave equal weight to

**TABLE 9**  
**SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SYSTEMIC AND VALUE INTEGRATION (%)**

	Domain	Migrant workers	Marriage migrant women
Systemic integration	Economy	Not well 2	Not well at all 1
	Housing	So-so 3	So-so 3
	Education	Not well 2	Not well 2
	Health	Well 4	Well 4
	Political participation	Not well at all 1	Not well 2
	Average score	2.40	2.40
Value integration	Sense of belonging	Not well 2	Not well 2
	Sense of trust	Not well 2	So-so 3
	Multicultural orientation	Well 4	So-so 3
	Average score	2.66	2.66
Total integration	Average score	2.50	2.50
Level of difficulty	Economy	3.11	3.19
	Housing	2.99	2.85
	Education	2.51	2.57
	Health	2.45	2.47
	Value	3.17	3.01
	Average score	2.85	2.82

the 8 sub-domains of integration because I do not have sufficient knowledge to distinguish the relative significance of each area of integration. However, if we agree that the economy is the critical foundation for social integration and give a greater weight to the economy, then the total score of integration of both migrant workers and marriage migrant women would be lower than 2.5, close to 2. Also, because marriage migrant women face greater problems with regards to employment and income, their level of integration would be lower than that of migrant workers. I hope for a follow-up study to develop a weighted system to measure the level of migrant integration more precisely.

## Conclusion

In this article, I introduced the multicultural migrant integration model and measured the level of integration of migrant workers and marriage migrant women. The systemic integration of migrant workers and marriage migrant women has shown mixed results; the two groups do not fare well in the economic or educational dimensions, but they do well with regards to housing and health. Value integration is not good either; the two groups have a low sense of belonging and trust in Korean society. One noticeable difference between the two groups with regards to value integration is that migrant workers maintain their unique culture and identity while marriage migrant women are caught between pressure for assimilation to Korean culture and a desire to maintain their ethnic identity and culture.

When we compare the two groups, they are not equally well integrated into Korean society in either a material or mental sense. They also experience almost the same level of difficulty with regards to performing socioeconomic activities in the spheres of the economy, housing, education, and health. This result is unexpected considering the fundamental differences between the two groups. It is understandable that migrant workers may not be well integrated into Korean society on systematic or value level due to the weak foundation of their integration. However, the low level of social integration among marriage migrant women is something we should pay attention to because they are permanent residents, have been incorporated into the existing family system, and are subject to the government's active social integration policy.

An important implication of this study is that it is necessary to raise the low levels of social integration of marriage immigrant women because they are permanent members of Korean society and play an important role in nurturing the next generation. Since migrant integration is composed of systemic integration and value integration, we should strive to improve the two domains simultaneously. On the one hand, institutional efforts should be made to raise the human capital (Korean language skills, education, and job training) of marriage migrant women and eliminate discrimination against them. On the other hand, efforts should be made to improve the general public's perceptions of marriage migrant women so that they are regarded and accepted as equal and capable members of Korean society.

This study is exploratory in nature due to the limitations of the data, thus it is difficult to generalize the results. Furthermore, in this article, I focused

on a comparison of migrant workers and marriage migrant women but could not fully analyze differences in levels of social integration according to the country of origin within the migrant worker or marriage migrant women groups. Subsequent studies need to analyze in detail differences in the level of social integration and the causes of differences among different nationality groups. However, the concept of multicultural immigrant integration proposed here can contribute to our comprehensive understanding of migrant integration. In follow-up studies, I expect that the social integration of migrants can be studied more scientifically and systematically by expanding to more diverse types of migrant groups and conducting a nationally representative sample survey.

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