

The Pacific Labour Mobility Survey: Findings from the worker survey

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Three goals for today

1. Introduce the **Pacific Labour Mobility Survey** project
2. Share some **findings from the worker survey**
3. Feedback and **discussion**

The Pacific Labor Mobility Survey

The Pacific Labour Mobility Survey (PLMS) is the **first and only independent large-sample survey** to collect **quantitative data** on a wide range of economic and social indicators on **workers** across all three schemes, **their households**, and **non-labor sending households**.

- Offers **unique insights** from **asking thousands of workers their views** (c.f., industry, government, trade union, or journalist-mediated views of a smaller number individuals).
- Quantitative data is **complemented** by **100s of in-depth qualitative interviews**, which confirm the quantitative findings and help bring out additional nuances.

We share a **selection of the findings** from the **PLMS worker data today**, focused on worker perspectives and social impacts.

A more **detailed report** on all the findings from the first wave of the PLMS will be released later this year, along with the **underlying data** and a launch at the Australasian AID Conference and PLAMM

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Preview of four key results

1. **The majority of workers are very satisfied**, overall and across many specific dimensions. No meaningful deterioration
2. **Social outcomes, on balance, are net positive**, and, importantly, large-scale qualitative work done in parallel finds the same.
3. **This does not mean there are no issues**: dissatisfaction around deductions remains high, workers are interested to change employers, and aggregate data masks details of specific cases.
4. **PLMS corroborates prior evidence on economic gains** related to income, expenditure, and remittances, for example:
 - Aus-Tonga place premium is 3-4x; Vanuatu, 9-10x
 - Substantial shares of this are remitted
 - Per capita expenditures and savings are around twenty percent higher in migrant-sending households

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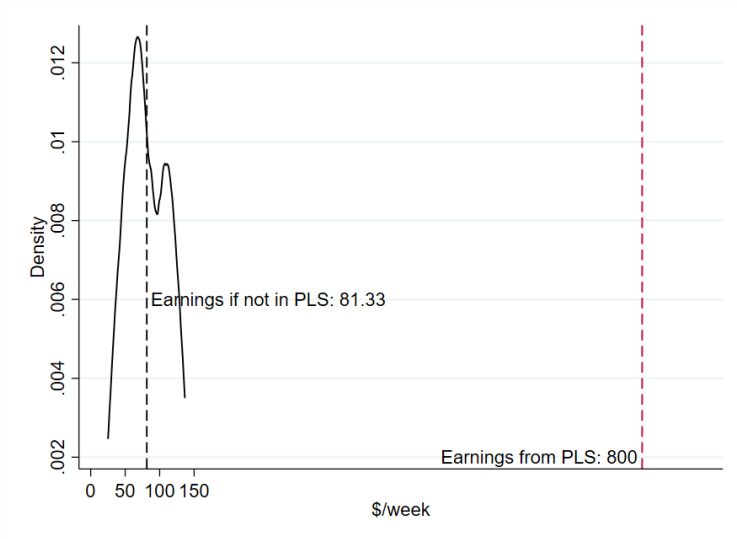
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New “place premium” estimates

Earnings gains for workers from Vanuatu are almost 10x



The Pacific Labour Mobility Survey—Wave One

Pacific Labour Mobility Survey

Motivation

Long-standing collaboration between the ANU and World Bank to:

1. Address many shortfalls in the current Pacific migration and data landscape, at least with respect to survey data
2. Provide an important systematic update to our knowledge of workers (focus of today's presentation) and households
3. Estimate the development impacts of the main Pacific labour mobility schemes, comparatively, now, and over time

These shortfalls include fragmentation, availability, coverage, comparability, content, quality/rigour, and lack of longitudinal data.

Data collection

Voluntary, strictly confidential, and objective

Data are collected by experienced survey firms under our guidance, based on **total survey error framework** and **extensive quality control**:

- **Worker survey:** phone-based in Australia and New Zealand (Dec 2022–Mar 2023)
- **Household survey:** face-to-face in Tonga (Nov 2021–Jan 2022), and phone-based in Tonga (supplementary), Kiribati, and Vanuatu due to COVID-19 (Dec 2022–Mar 2023)

Sample sizes:

- 2,085 workers: Kiribati, 248; Tonga, 762; Vanuatu, 1,075
- 1,455 sending households (many linked to workers)
- 1626 non-participating households

Survey design

Key features and points of differentiation

- **Longitudinal:** tracking migrants and their families over time. First panel survey for the Pacific region ever.
- **Control group:** non-migrant households and detailed information on selection, migration history, and networks
- **Omnibus nature:** covers a wide range of both objective economic and social indicators (incl. consumption, education, labour, migration, gender) and subjective perceptions to serve as a general resource
- **Open-access:** carefully de-identified, anonymized data will be made freely and publicly available

Summary statistics

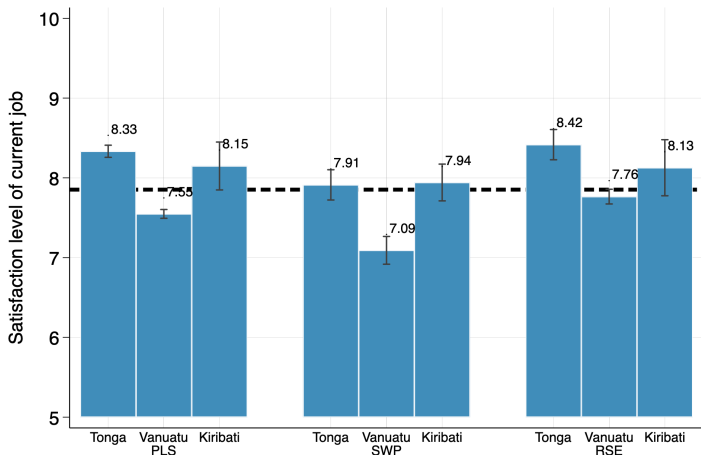
2,085 worker sample in Australia and New Zealand

	SWP	PLS	RSE	Total
Nationality				
Tonga	38.30	29.33	26.90	32.44
Vanuatu	54.47	48.08	64.33	55.94
Kiribati	7.23	22.60	8.77	11.63
Gender				
Female	25.11	28.61	19.69	24.30
Male	74.89	71.39	80.31	75.70
Age group				
19-29	35.60	47.60	27.10	35.99
30-39	41.70	39.90	41.72	41.25
40-49	18.30	12.02	23.59	18.36
50+	4.40	0.48	7.60	4.41
Marital status				
Single or never married	32.48	41.83	24.95	32.50
Legally married	43.83	37.74	49.71	44.12
Customary married	18.87	16.35	22.03	19.22
Divorced/separated	4.26	2.88	2.73	3.43

Some key results from the worker survey

Satisfaction with current job is high

“Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?”



Note the Y axis starts at 5. Scale is 1 to 10, where 1= Not at all satisfied; 5= It was just ok; 10= Extremely satisfied

No meaningful deterioration over time

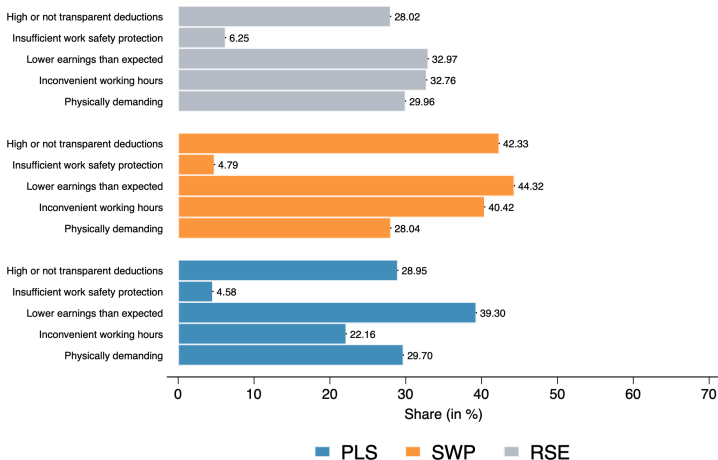
Notable given rapid growth and pandemic disruptions

	PLS22	SWP22	RSE22	SWP20	RSE20	SWP15
Tonga	8.7	9.0	8.9	9.2	7.1	9.9
Vanuatu	8.2	8.4	8.1	7.0	7.9	6.3
Kiribati	8.3	9.0	8.1	8.4	8.5	N/A
Male	8.6	8.6	8.5	7.9	8.3	N/A
Female	8.3	8.6	8.2	7.6	7.6	N/A
Returnee	8.5	8.9	8.4	8.2	8.3	N/A
First Timer	8.4	8.2	8.0	7.1	7.8	N/A

Note: 2020 figures from “Pacific Labor Mobility, Migration and Remittances in Times of COVID-19” (World Bank, 2021), and 2015 figures from World Bank’s 2017 report on the Seasonal Worker Program, collected across a few years, and the question is the workers’ satisfaction rating out of 10 of their working experience in the host country (c.f., the satisfaction with the current job reported in the previous slide; the country satisfaction is systematically slightly higher than the job satisfaction)

Reasons for dissatisfaction

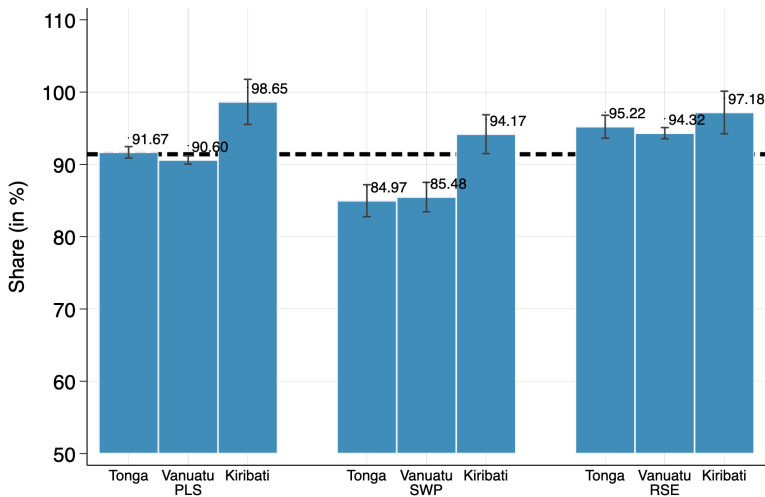
Amongst the 7 % reportedly dissatisfied with working conditions



Note: question here is "What are you not satisfied with?" and asked to the 7 percent who responded "no" to the separate question (not the ten point one) "Are you satisfied with your current working conditions?"

Most workers feel fairly treated by employers

“During this trip, have you been fairly treated by your employer?”



Note: binary question, with yes/no answer.

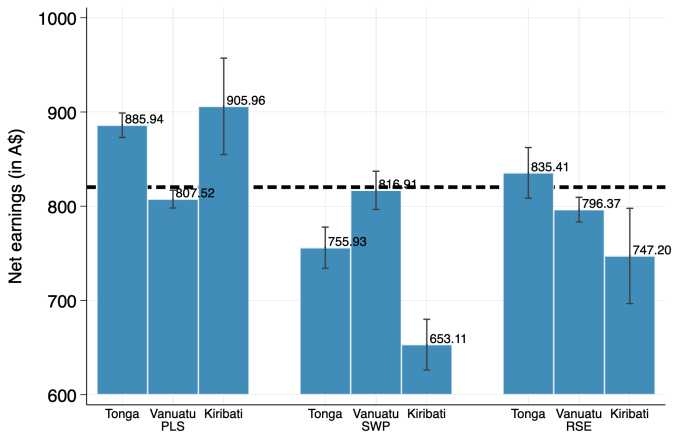
Additional findings from qualitative work

Extensive qualitative interviews, many hundreds, with people in sending communities, including returned workers, also revealed similar findings and quite **widespread support**.

- **Workers were generally satisfied with work.** Some concerns raised over fluctuating hours.
- **Most people felt like they are treated fairly.** A few instances of bullying and harassment were reported.
- **Some women found contracts were too long and inflexible,** even seasonal, and did not want to be separated from family so long.
- Concerns were raised about **medical insurance** and **access to health services**, and employers in particular felt inadequate coverage, for example, for pregnancy.

How much pay do workers take home?

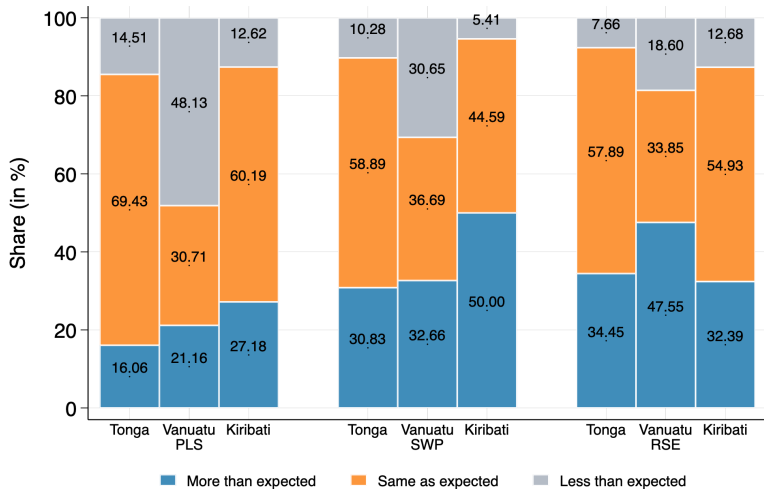
“How much did you earn last week after taxes and deductions?”



Hours and sector (different hourly earnings) together explain much of the variation in total net weekly earnings. Deductions, specifically whether paid off, also matter.

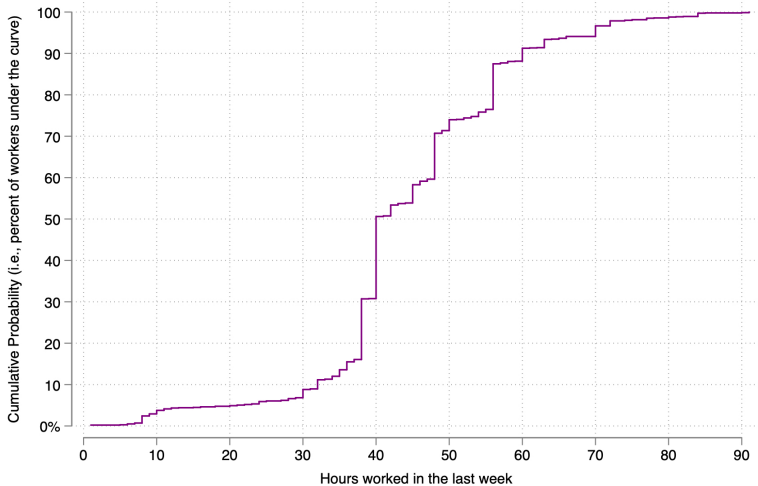
Earnings expectations are typically met

“Your earnings from working in [scheme] are...”



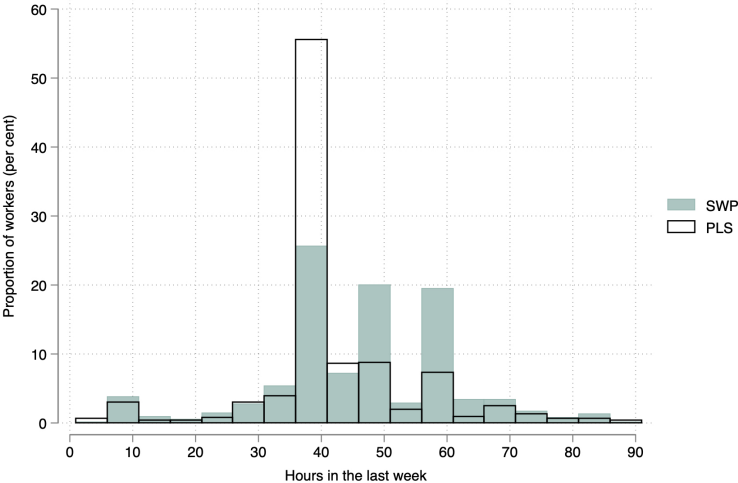
Do PALM workers get enough hours?

“ In the last 7 days, how many hours did you work?”



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Expenditure in host country

A\$	PLS	SWP	RSE	All
Food (weekly)	89	79	78	81
Phone and internet	25	23	18	22
Entertainment	10	11	11	11
Cigarettes	10	12	11	11
Alcohol	16	16	12	14
Other	17	25	25	22
Total weekly consumption	167	165	155	162
Total monthly consumption	725	715	670	703
Accommodation—OOP (monthly)	63	36	22	38
Accommodation—Deduction	290	305	365	320
Health insurance—OOP	16	15	9	13
Health insurance—Deduction	73	60	81	70
Flights—OOP	78	45	23	46
Flights—Deduction	74	272	219	203
Transport—OOP	42	16	9	20
Transport—Deductions	69	100	77	85

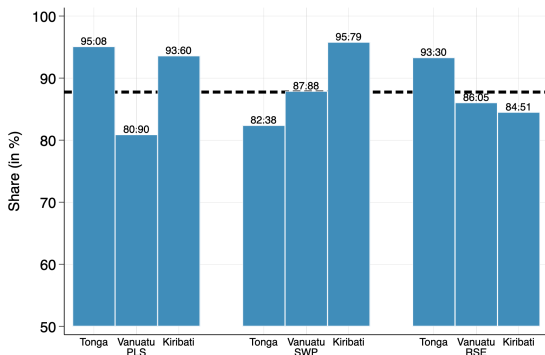
Expenditure in host country

Monthly worker aggregates

	PLS	SWP	RSE	All
Pre-departure related deductions, inc. flight	835	713	674	732
Total monthly deductions	1266	1178	1197	1207
Total monthly expenditure inc. deductions	2190	2005	1930	2029
Total monthly expenditure excl. deductions	924	827	733	822
Post-tax earnings, including deductions	4527	4832	4965	4796
Post-tax earnings, excl. deductions	3261	3654	3767	3589
Exp. share of post-tax earnings, inc. deductions	48%	41%	39%	42%
Ded. share of post-tax earnings, inc. deductions	28%	24%	24%	25%

Satisfaction with accommodation is high

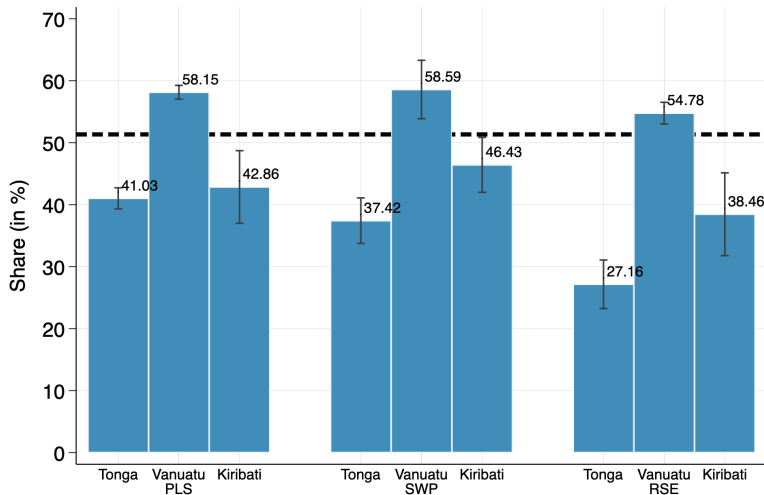
“Are you satisfied with your current accommodation?” (yes/no)



Qualitative data reveal critical areas for improvement, especially in regards to gender segregation. Mixed accommodation is often not culturally appropriate. Both men and women feel uncomfortable with it, to varying degrees and employers sometimes won't hire women if they can't provide segregated.

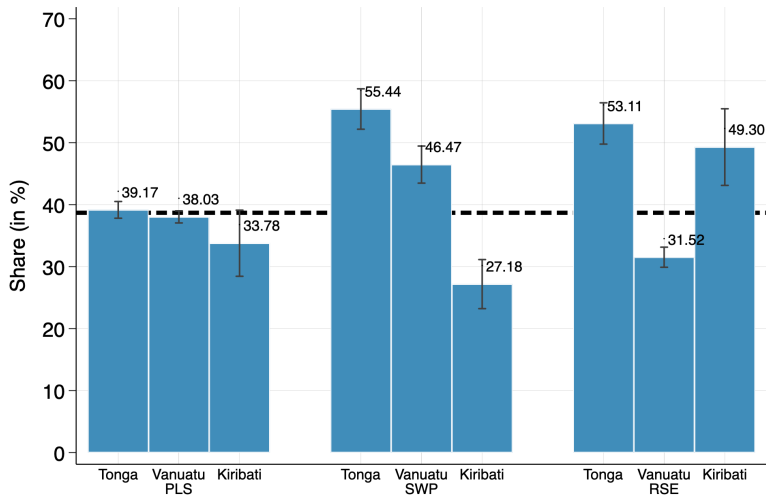
Dissatisfaction with deductions is high

“Do you consider the deductions excessive or unfair?” (Y/N)



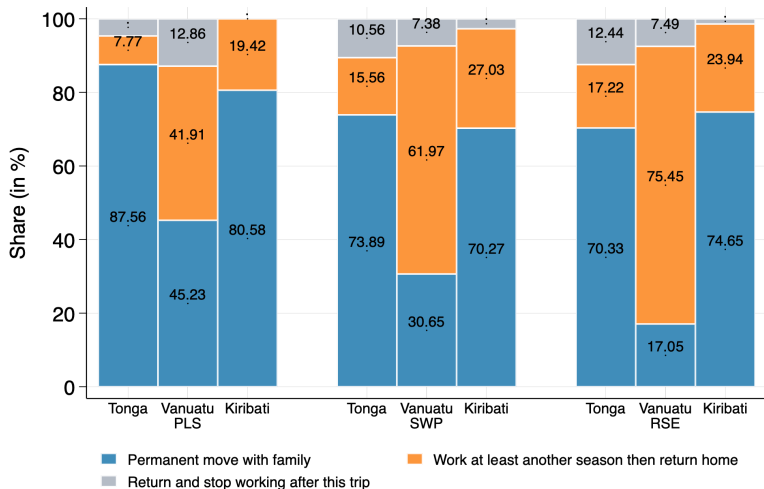
Many are interested to change employer

“If given a chance, would you prefer to work for a different employer?” (Y/N)



Many workers want to migrate permanently

And many workers want to return home at some point

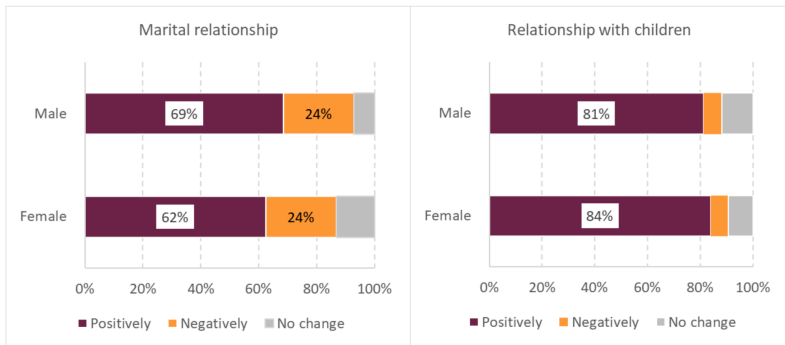


Q: "If you could choose, which option would you prefer..."

Pacific perspectives on social impacts

Most workers report positive social impacts

Results from workers, on their marital relationships

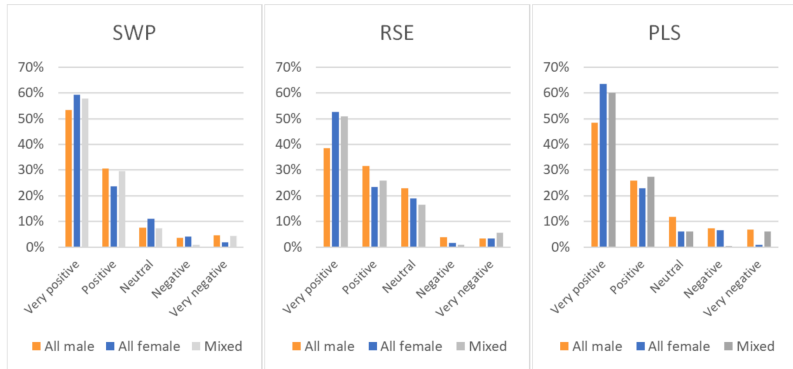


Source: World Bank, 2022, Labor Mobility Omnibus - Migrant Worker Survey

Q: "In your opinion, how has your marital relationship changed since you participated in the [scheme]?"

Most sending HHs perceive positive impacts

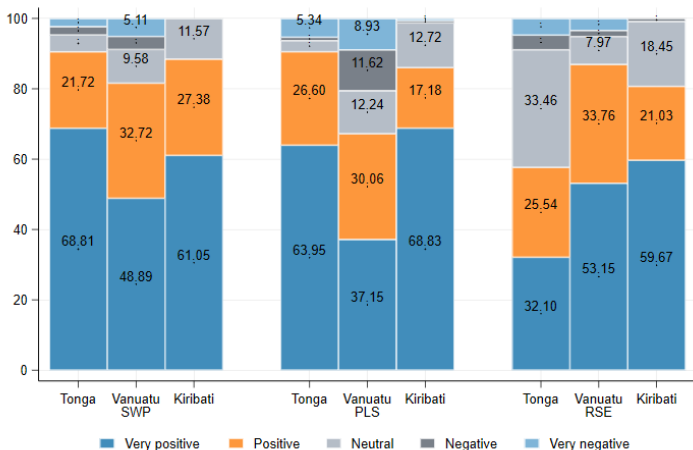
Results on sending households themselves



Q: "What has been the impact of the SWP on your household? Very positive, positive, neutral, negative, or very negative?"

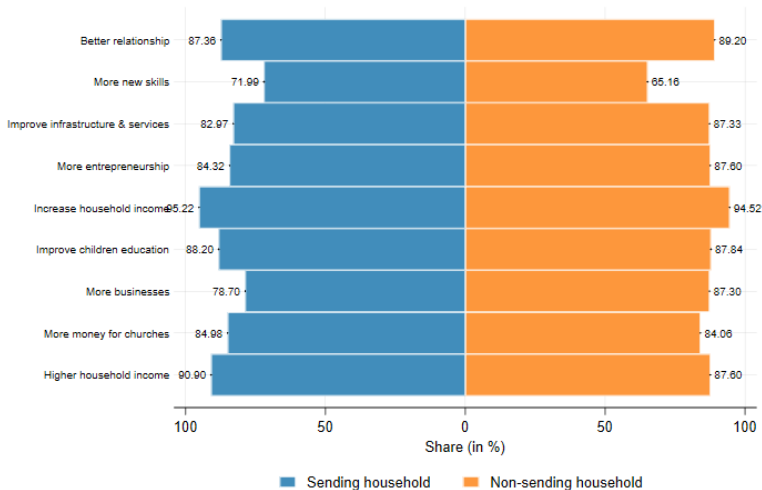
Most non-migrants perceive positive impacts

Results from the non-sending household sample



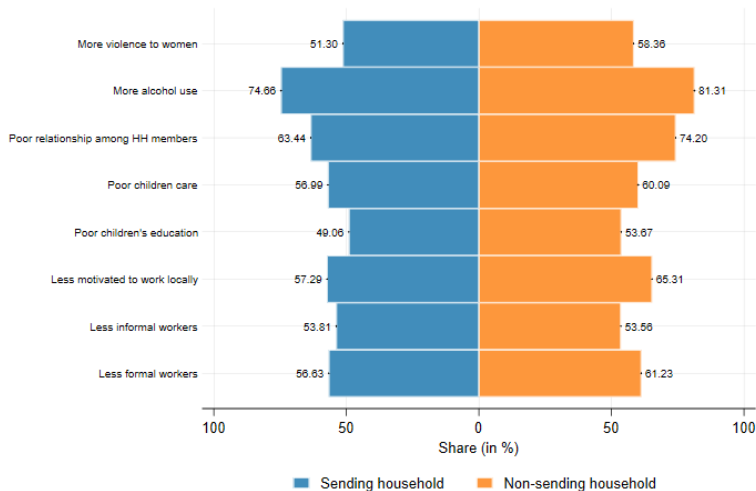
Q: "What has been the impact on your community from households participating in SWP, PLS or RSE? Very positive, positive, neutral, negative, or very negative?"

Reasons for positive impacts



Q: "Have you seen ... [each of these categories]" (Y/N)

Reasons for negative impacts



Q: "Have you seen ... [each of these categories]" (Y/N)

Similar findings emerge from qualitative work

The new qualitative data also suggest that, while sending households and communities do perceive some social costs and feel these need to be addressed, they felt that the **social benefits outweigh these costs.**

- Positive economic impacts
- Numerous accounts of positive relationship impacts, including women leaving abusive relationships thanks to income and increased self-esteem and confidence from participating
- Numerous accounts of negative impacts on relationships, including family breakdown
- Some reports of localised labour shortages and increased substance abuse among men

Conclusion

Recap of key results

- **The Pacific Labour Mobility Survey corroborates and extends prior evidence on the economic benefits of labour mobility**, including income gains, remittances, and job satisfaction.
- **The majority of workers are very satisfied**, overall and across many specific dimensions.
- Yet, **on specific issues there is room for improvement**, for example on deductions and worker mobility.
- Together with a large new qualitative study, PLMS also points towards **net social benefits**, although there are certainly cases of particular issues, especially around gender.

The Development Policy Centre and the World Bank gratefully acknowledge funding and support from DFAT for the first wave of the Pacific Labour Mobility Survey

We additionally acknowledge the time, effort, patience, and support of the thousands of respondents, our survey partners, field teams, and other partners, especially the public servants, PLF, employers, and community organisations, which helped make this project possible.

Thank you kindly for your attention

Please send any comments or questions
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