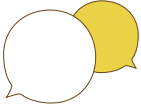
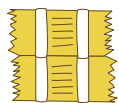
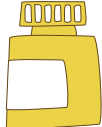
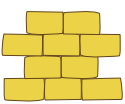




Foreign Workers' Call Center



Data for 2018



Background

The aim of the bilateral agreements for the recruitment of foreign workers¹ in various fields is to put an end to the phenomenon of illegal recruitment fees while recruiting highly suitable workers aware of their rights and obligations in Israel. The bilateral agreements contribute to the prevention of harm to workers, modern slavery and human trafficking. In 2010, the Israeli government signed a bilateral (inter-governmental) agreement with the government of Thailand, implemented as part of the Thailand-Israel Cooperation project (TIC), with the aim of preventing the collection of illegal recruitment fees from foreign workers in the agricultural sector. The terms of the agreement came into effect in 2012. Later, similar agreements were signed with the governments of Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, the Ukraine and China in the construction sector. In 2015, agreements to implement a pilot project in the caregiving sector were signed with the governments of Nepal and Sri Lanka. In addition, beginning in 2010, seasonal agricultural workers from Sri Lanka arrived in Israel as part of a bilateral agreement.² In the course of 2019 another bilateral agreement signed between Israel and the Philippines in 2018 will come into effect, and workers from this country will begin to arrive in Israel to work in the caregiving and hotel sectors. To this day, about 42,000 male and female workers have entered Israel as part of the bilateral agreements. From these, about 28,000 are agricultural workers; about 14,000 are construction workers; and 136 are employed as part of a pilot project in the caregiving sector. About 34,000 workers were still in Israel at the end of 2018. The bilateral agreements are currently under review and development, prior to the drafting of additional agreements for the future.

In July 2012, as part of the bilateral agreements, the Center for the International Migration and Integration (CIMI) founded, in collaboration with the Population and Immigration Authority (PIBA), a telephone call center for foreign workers in Israel, providing a resource for workers in their native languages. This call center is operated by CIMI; calls to the center are registered as inquiries or complaints and transferred to PIBA. PIBA then refers the inquiry or complaint

to the relevant unit(s) in the authorized government ministries. The call data is compiled by a computerized system that directs the calls to their appropriate destinations; this system also allows for the systematic collection of call data and its analysis. This booklet presents data collected since the establishment of the call center and specifically since the launching of the computerized system in 2014.³

CIMI, a non-profit organization founded by JDC-Israel, operates in collaboration with PIBA and both governmental and non-governmental organizations in the workers' countries of origin. As part of this activity the organization assists in advertising the possibility of working in Israel as part of the bilateral agreement, sorting the suitable workers and coordinating their trips to Israel. CIMI also provides instruction to workers and information about their rights.

The bilateral agreements have significantly reduced the collection of illegal recruitment fees and, as a result, the cost of arriving in Israel has dropped from tens of thousands of dollars to several hundred dollars paid legally. As part of the agreements to this day a sum of nearly \$297,385,300 has been saved in the sectors covered by the bilateral agreements (agriculture and construction) and/or in the pilot agreement of the caregiving sector.⁴

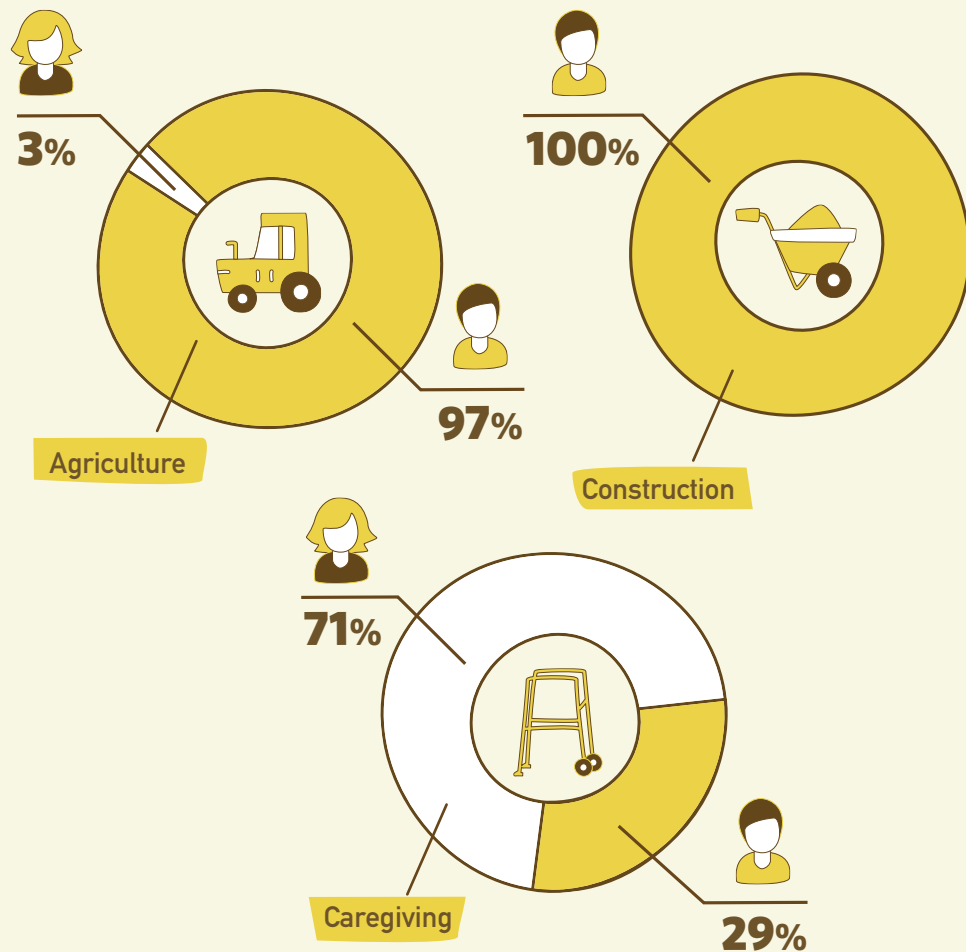
Foreign Workers Arriving as Part of the Bilateral Agreements



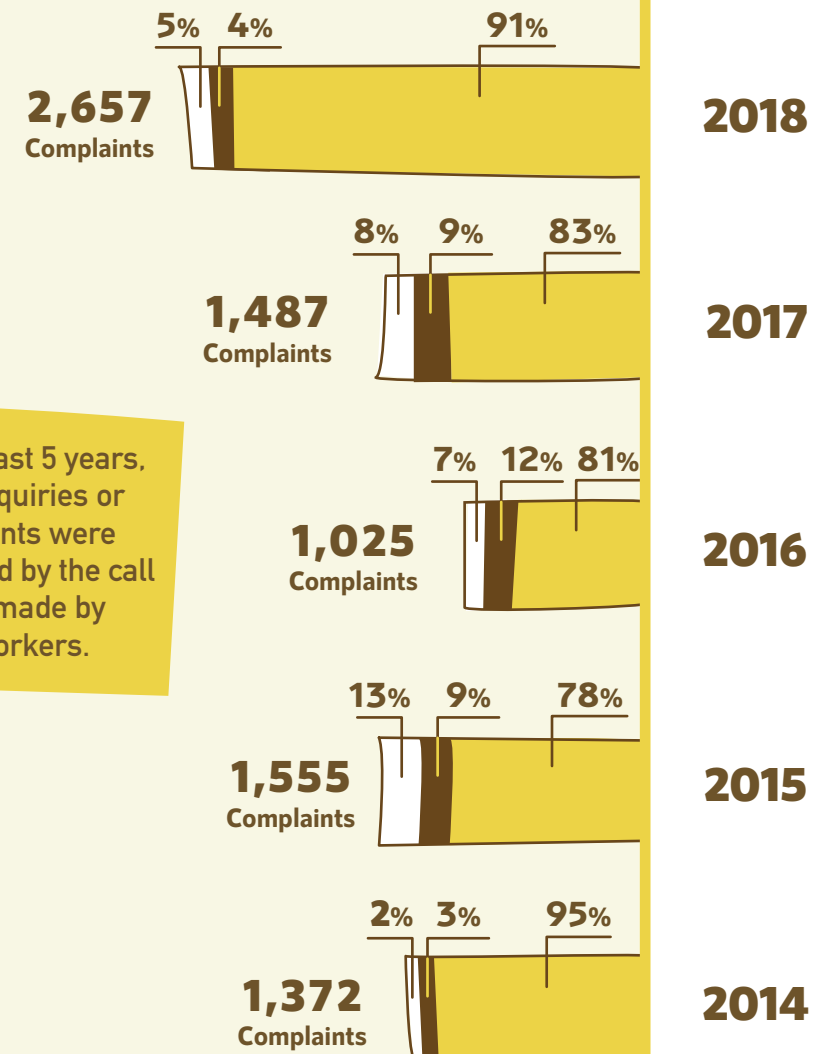
1,882 entries of Sri Lankan seasonal agricultural workers were registered. Since in some cases workers enter the country more than once, it is not possible to extrapolate, the actual number of Sri Lankan workers in Israel based on this information. Therefore, this data was not included in the graph.

Foreign Workers Arriving as Part of the Bilateral Agreements

Percentage of Male and Female Workers by Sector






Inquiries⁶ and Complaints Received by the Call Center




In the past 5 years, 8,096 inquiries or complaints were recorded by the call center, made by 5,711 workers.




Distribution According to Sector

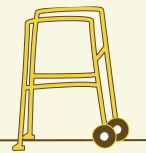
Agricultural sector

	1,291	1,402	813	1,036	1,261
	704	680	434	628	763
	11,582	14,849	19,216	21,551	21,948
%	3%	3%	2%	5%	6%
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018







Caregiving Sector

	23	23	39
	20	19	31
	59	90	133
%	34%	21%	23%
	2016	2017	2018

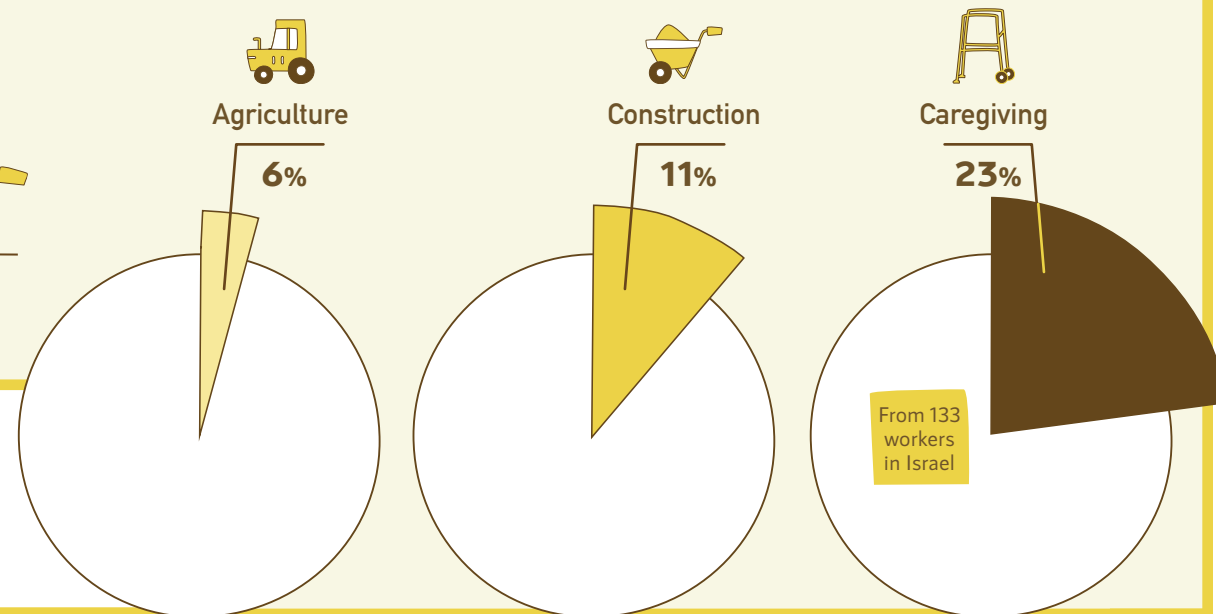


Construction Sector

	81	151	189	428	1,492
	75	128	139	354	1,099
	1,473	2,333	4,267	5,821	10,365
%	5%	5%	3%	6%	11%
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018



% of workers calling the center in 2018, out of the total number of workers in Israel



In 2018 the highest number of inquiries was made by workers in the construction sector rather than agricultural workers as in previous years. This is the case despite the fact that the total number of construction workers is lower than the number of agriculture workers, which is the largest population of workers included in the bilateral agreement.

Complaint Handling Procedure



Example of complaint handling procedure by the PIBA Enforcement Unit:

"Today we arrived in Israel, and when we reached our living quarters, we saw a dusty, neglected caravan, without blankets or pillows and without kitchen utensils. These are not adequate living conditions. We really need help before the weekend so we have a place to live."

The call center transferred the call to the PIBA complaint coordinator marking it as urgent. The coordinator transferred the case for urgent handling by the PIBA Enforcement Unit. The PIBA Enforcement Unit contacted the employer immediately and ordered him to prepare the living quarters for the workers and provide them with the necessary equipment.

The call center translator spoke with the worker the same evening and he confirmed that *"the employer brought us pillows and blankets, and now he's working on cleaning and arranging the place and the kitchen utensils."* The worker was also given a telephone number he could call on the weekend if anything urgent came up. After the weekend the call center translator contacted the worker again, and he reported that *"the living conditions problem was solved and everything is fine now."*

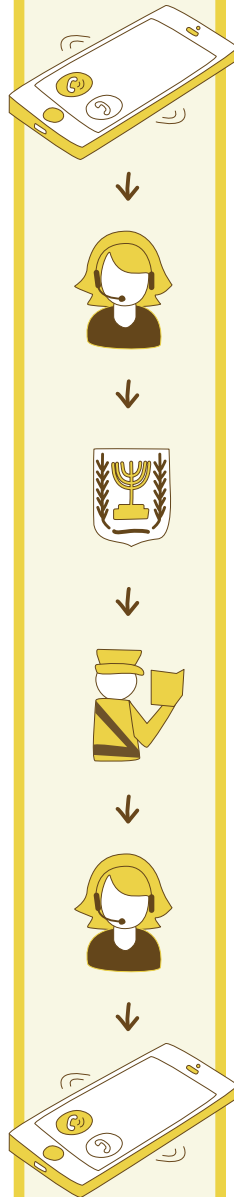
Example of complaint handling procedure by the Regulation and Enforcement Administration of the Ministry of Labor, Welfare, and Social Services

"My employer didn't pay my February wages."

The call center transferred the case to the PIBA coordinator. The PIBA coordinator transferred the complaint to the Inquiries and Complaints Department at the Ministry of Labor and Welfare, and from there it was transferred for handling by the Administrative Enforcement Branch.

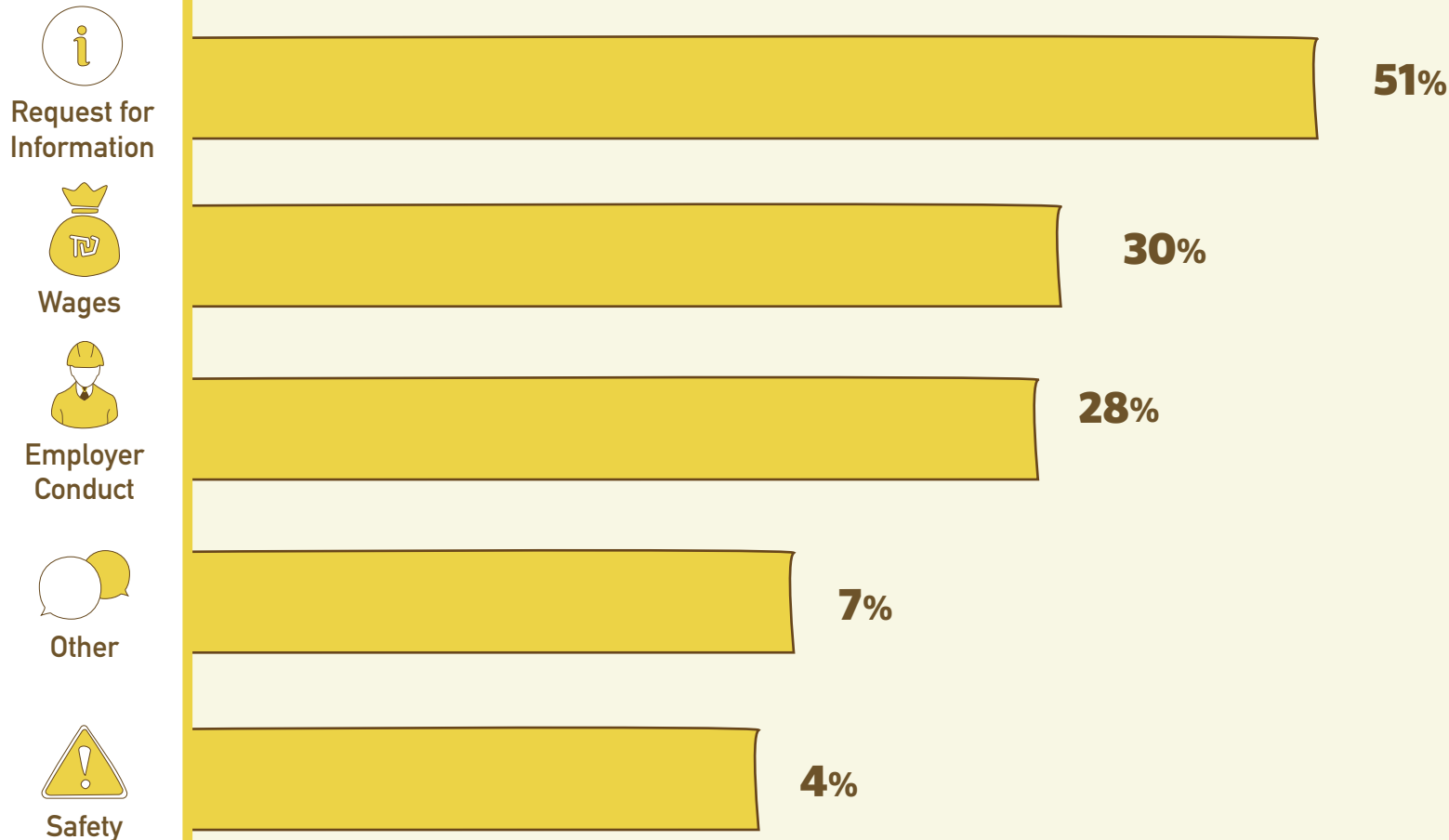
The Administrative Enforcement Branch opened an investigation, which found that the employer had not paid the worker a minimum wage. Following the investigation procedure, the employer was issued a notice requiring him to pay a fine. In addition the employer was issued two administrative warnings regarding non-provision of a wage slip and holding back wages. The Inquiries and Complaints Department at the Ministry of Labor informed the call center.

The call center contacted the worker and informed him of the developments. He was also provided with information on how to submit a lawsuit in a civil court demanding the sums the employer owes him.



Subjects of Inquiries and Complaints⁹

Main Issues of Inquiries and Complaints* (Percent)**



Breakdown of calls requesting information:

- 27% - locating the manpower company
- 23% - information on visas
- 12% - information on workers' right



Breakdown of wage complaints:

- 36% - unpaid wages
- 26% - wages do not comply with the law
- 11% - wages are paid without a slip



Breakdown of complaints regarding the conduct of an employer or a manpower agency:

- 15% - employer conduct
- 14% - the manpower agency failed to assist regarding change of employers
- 9% - the manpower agency failed to assist in other matters



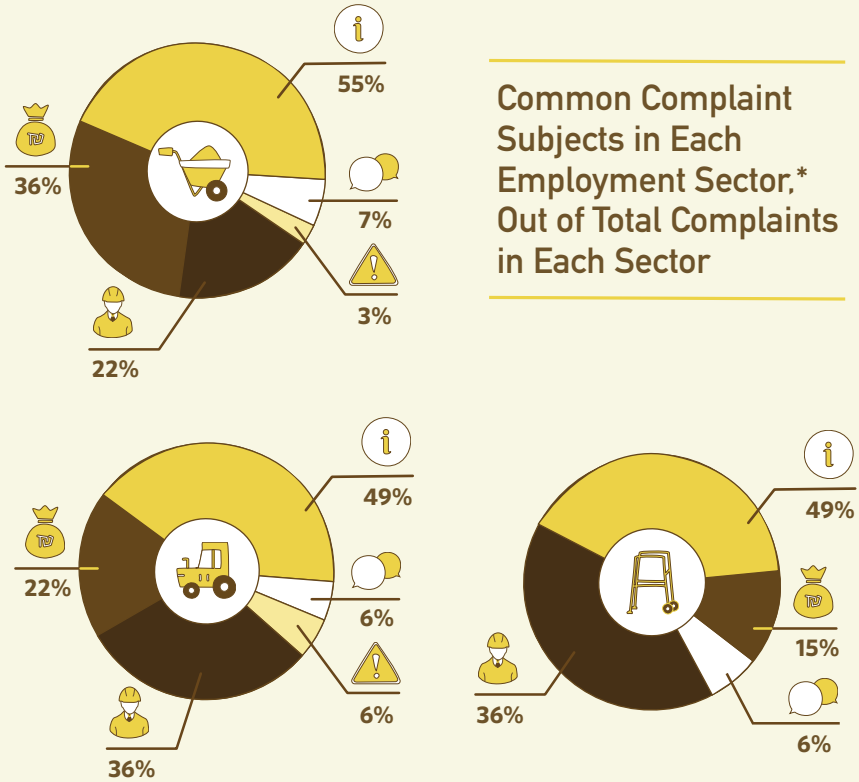
Out of calls on other subjects:

- 34% - medical condition
- 25% - non-withdrawal of deposit
- 8% - lack of work permit

* In addition there were 10 complaints regarding brokerage fees collected from workers for employer transfers in Israel

** The percentage represents the number of times a specific subject was raised in an inquiry, out of the total number of inquiries and complaints. A complaint can contain more than one subject, so that the percentages in the diagram do not add up to 100%.

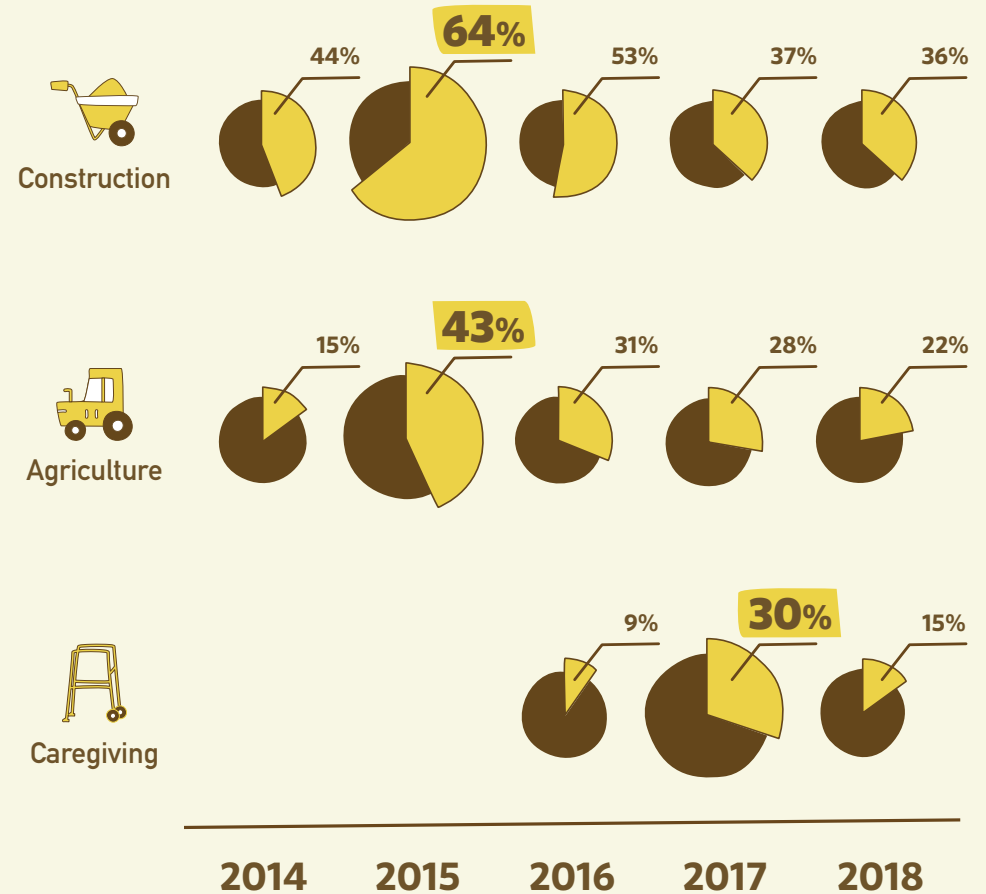
Percentages of Complaint Subjects by Sector



In all the sectors the majority of inquiries were requests for information. Next were complaints regarding employer conduct, except in the construction sector, where the second largest category was complaints regarding wages.



Percentage of Complaints regarding Wages, by Sector - Major Trends¹⁰

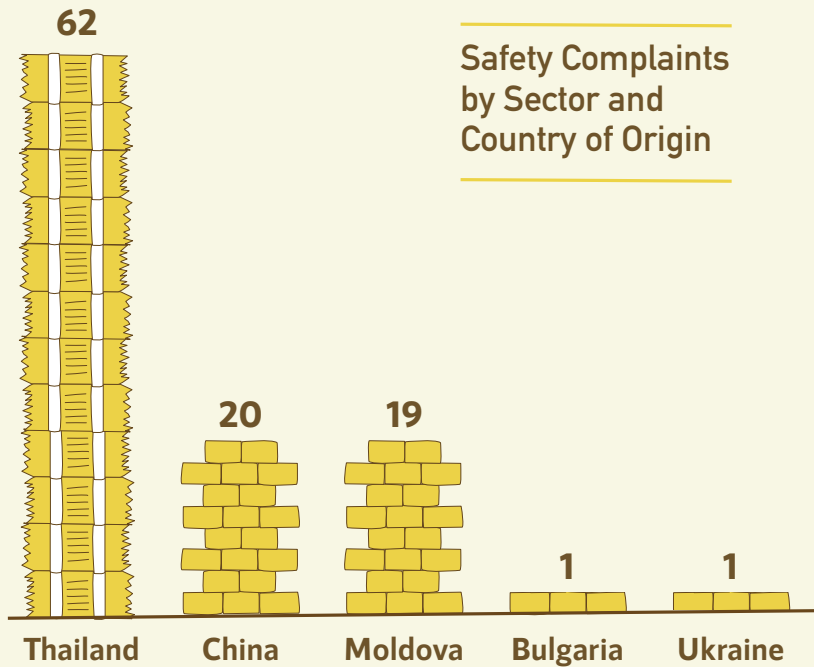


The length of time that has elapsed since the agreement's implementation correlates with the percentage of complaints regarding wages by workers included in the agreement.

* The graph does not include seasonal workers in agriculture, by whom very few inquiries were made to the call center in 2018



Complaints regarding Safety



This year, 103 complaints were submitted concerning safety conditions – 4% of the total number of complaints in 2018. These were submitted exclusively by workers in the agriculture and construction sectors. This finding is similar to those of previous years. The majority of complaints – 61% – were submitted by Thai workers in the agriculture sector. The other complaints were in the construction sector, submitted mostly by Chinese (19%) and Moldavian workers (18%). All of the complaints were referred for further handling by the Safety Administration of the Labor Ministry, except for complaints by agriculture workers, which were transferred to the Agriculture Safety Administration.



Agriculture



Construction

Summary of the Handling of Inquiries and Complaints

Inquiries and complaints are referred to the responsible bodies according to their subject. The length of time needed to address the complaint varies in accordance with its contents and circumstances. For the most part, the call center assists in providing information, PIBA handles employer/manpower agency conduct and changing employers, and the Ministry of Labor, Welfare, and Social Services handles complaints regarding wages¹¹ and work safety.

Out of the 2,657 inquiries and complaints submitted to the call center in the past year:

1,634 complaints required a response from the call center **out of which** **1,630** were addressed and closed

669 complaints were transferred to PIBA¹² **out of which** **638** were addressed and closed by the responsible bodies at PIBA

Out of the complaints transferred to the Enforcement Unit, violations were found in 7 complaints, and no violations were found in 24 complaints.

326 complaints were transferred to the Ministry of Labor, Welfare, and Social Services

284 were transferred to the Regulation and Enforcement Administration:

170 complaints which are currently being investigated and handled by the Regulation and Enforcement Administration. 114 of these complaints were closed. In 33 complaints, monetary fines were imposed on employers; in 13 complaints, the investigation has been completed and decisions are pending; 12 complaints were closed without findings; 25 complaints were closed due to an existing procedure against the employer; and 31 complaints were closed for other reasons.¹³

The other 42 complaints were transferred to the Agriculture Safety Administration.

1. The terms in this booklet refer to the different groups as formulated in Israeli law. They do not necessarily reflect the terms used by CIMI and the way in which the organization views the use of these terms.
2. Seasonal workers arrive for a period of 4 to 8 months in order to serve the needs of seasonal work in many crops in the agricultural sector. At the end of the season the worker returns to his or her country of origin (unlike a permanent worker, for whom the employer must find alternative employment with other farmers at the end of the season). Moreover, in the following year the employer may invite the same workers trained on his farm in the previous year.
3. The data in the different parts of the booklet is accurate as of its date of publication.
4. The estimation of the sums saved in illegal recruitment fees in each of the sectors is based on the report titled "The Effectiveness of the Bilateral Agreements: Recruitment, Implementation of Rights, Living Conditions, and Employment of Migrant Workers from Thailand, China, Sri Lanka, and Nepal in Israel, 2011-2018," Rebeca Raijman and Nona Kushinirovitch, 2018. For regulations on the sums that can be legally collected from foreign workers for services by a manpower agency in the agriculture and caregiving sectors, see the website of the Israeli Employment Service, https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/law01/500_818.htm
5. The data regarding the number of workers arriving as part of the agreements is cumulative.
6. The Call Center receives inquiries on various subjects. Some of the inquiries are complaints that are referred to other parties and handled by them. See p. 8.
7. Other sources include: Thai Embassy in Israel, La Strada organization (Moldova), the Moldovan Employment Bureau.
8. The enforcement units include: the PIBA Enforcement Unit, ; the Regulation and Enforcement Administration of the Ministry of Labor, Welfare, and Social Services, ; the Safety Administration at the Ministry of Labor, Welfare, and Social Services, ; the Ombudsman for Foreign Workers Rights at the Ministry of Labor, Welfare, and Social Services, ; the Israel Police.
9. In 2018, slight changes were made in the categories of each subject, such as wages and requests for information. This may affect the distribution of subjects in comparison to previous years.
10. The agreements came into effect in 2012, however the computerized system only began collecting data in 2014.
11. In the case of complaints regarding wages, the Regulation and Enforcement Administration at the Ministry of Labor cannot return sums of money owed to the worker, but can only issue an administrative or criminal sanction to the employer after completing an investigation into the case. Therefore, regardless of whether the handling of the case with the employer has ended or is ongoing, in order to receive legal aid and compensation the worker must, in parallel, submit a lawsuit through a civil court.
12. The responsible bodies are: PIBA Call Center coordinators, the Enforcement Unit, the Administrative Enforcement Branch, and the Payments Branch.
13. Other reasons include: the worker rescinded his complaint; the complaint lacked details; lack of cooperation by the worker; the complaint was submitted in parallel through other channels.

The Center for International
Migration and Integration
www.cimi.org.il

The Population and
Immigration Authority
www.piba.gov.il

