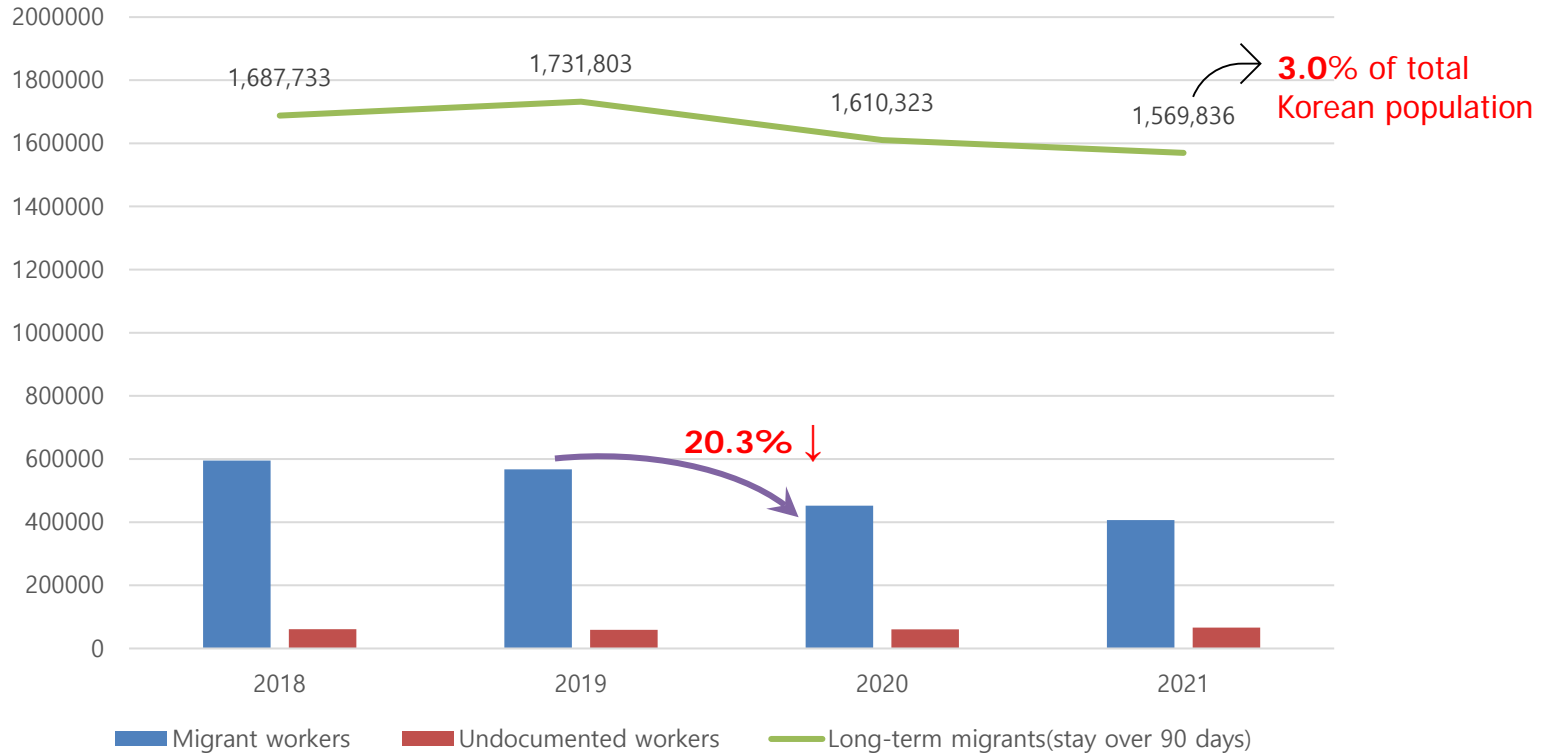




Promoting Migrants' Health: from Coexistence to Symbiotic Relationship

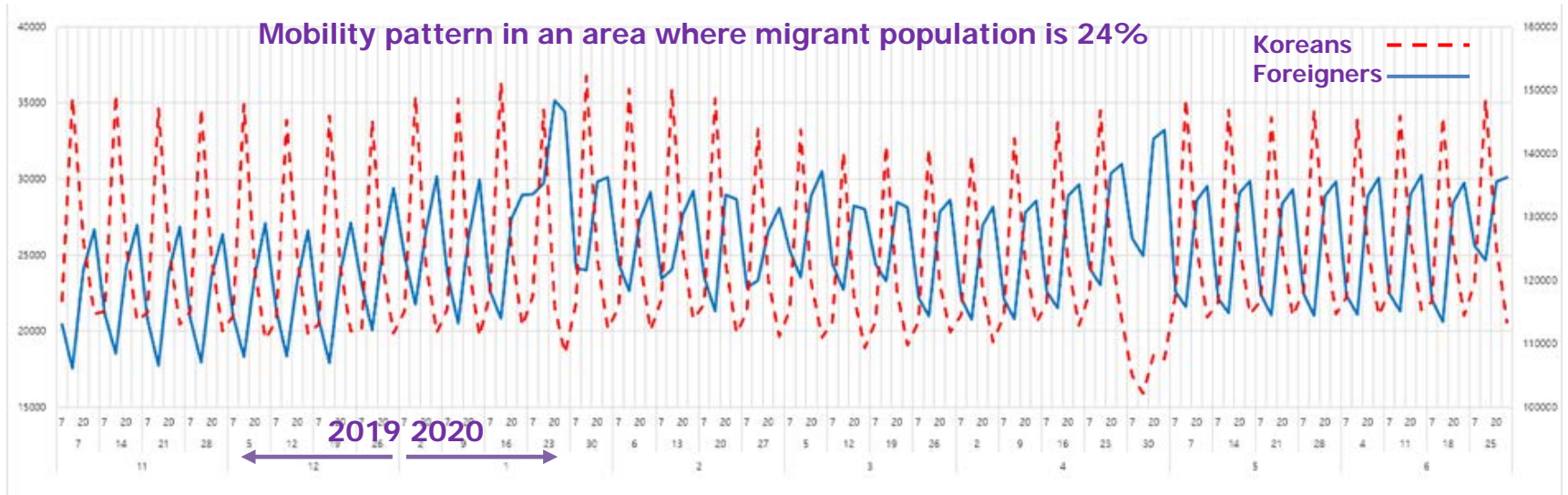
Juyoung Jang, Ph.D.
Policy Researcher
Migration Research & Training Centre

Migrant Population in South Korea



Migrants: Invisible Others

- ✓ 'Rarely seen migrants in the neighborhood': 4.5% (2018) → 12.4% (2022)
- ✓ Mobility patterns of Koreans and migrant workers differ



Migrants' Right to Health



- ✓ Right to health: “the right to the highest attainable standard of health (Constitution of the WHO, 1946)”
- ✓ States have obligations to allocate maximum available resources without discrimination
- ✓ The accessibility should be physically available, affordable, and informed

National Health Insurance Plan for Migrants



- ✓ Mandatory to enroll the national health insurance plan
- ✓ Seasonal workers, asylum seekers, undocumented workers: ineligible for enrollment
- ✓ Cost for migrants working for small business or self-employed is higher than for Koreans
- ✓ Failure in payments affects visa status
- ✓ Information on the national health insurance plan is not disseminated effectively

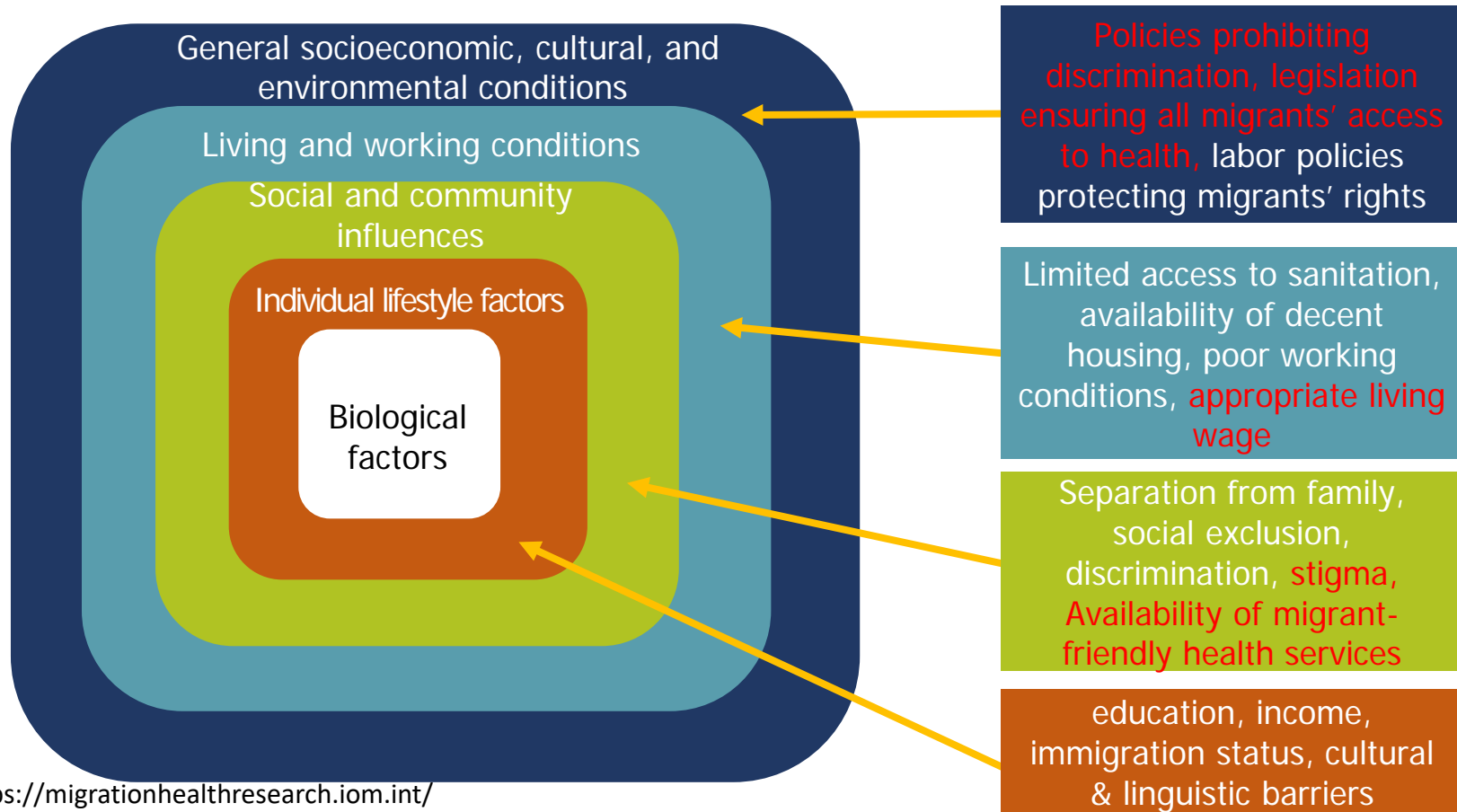
Barriers to Health Care Access

Ever had an experience of unable to visit a hospital when sick in the past year: 6.1%

	%
Language barriers	30.0
Medical expenses	27.9
Time constraints	23.5
Little information on hospitals	7.7
Others	10.7

2022 Survey on Immigrants' Living Conditions and Labour Force. n = 1,461 (N = 23,962)

Social Determinants of Migrants' Health



Coexisting but Invisible: the early pandemic



- ✓ Discriminatory policy practices
 - Announced ethnic enclaves as the most vulnerable to COVID-19, fostering stigmatization
 - Restricting right to purchasing government-supplied facial masks based on immigration status and the national health insurance plan
- ✓ The absence of system ensuring migrants' right to health resulted in the hierarchical prevention measures

Change of Perspectives: Symbiotic Relationship



- ✓ Better understanding of the nature of infectious diseases
 - “No one is safe until everyone is safe”
 - Inclusive preventive and treatment policies
- ✓ Civil society’s bottom-up demands changing policy practices
 - Criticizing policy practices discriminating migrants
 - Providing prompt translations of quarantine regulations and support programs
 - Establishing networks among stake-holders

Change of Perspectives: Symbiotic Relationship



- ✓ Shortage of migrant labor due to
 - Travel restrictions and quarantine requirements
 - Policy banning the permanent settlement of low-skilled migrant workers
 - Increased demands of health caregivers and seasonal workers
- ✓ Media generated public discourse about migrants and their rights
 - Disseminated information on labor shortage and related issues
 - Criticized discriminatory policy threatens the public safety

Promoting Vaccination



	1 st dose	2 nd dose	Booster
Documented foreigners	81.9 %	79.7 %	34.4 %
Undocumented foreigners	89.9 %	87.5 %	36.1 %
Koreans	86.8 %	85.1 %	47.2%

Record of January, 2022.

- ✓ Open access to vaccination regardless of immigration status
- ✓ Undocumented foreigners could get vaccination without providing personal information
- ✓ Exempted the penalty of overstay for vaccinated undocumented foreigners
- ✓ “Vaccine Bus” : proactive measure to encourage migrant workers’ vaccination

Bad practice: Financial assistance



- ✓ State relief payments excluded most of foreigners
 - 1st round: included only marriage migrants and permanent residents
 - From the 2nd round: include foreign business owners
 - 5th round: expanded eligibility for foreigners based on income, household composition, national health insurance plan
- ✓ Local governments' financial assistance eligibility varied
 - National Human Rights Commission advised to include all registered foreign residents

Good practice: Financial assistance



- ✓ Monetary support for hospitalized or quarantined included documented migrant workers
- ✓ Medical expenses for foreigners residing in Korea were covered
- ✓ State loan program for migrant workers

- ✓ Whole-of-government & Whole-of-society approaches
 - Government agencies traditionally not dealing with migrants got to know the multidimensional reality of migration
 - Developing and implementing policies targeting migrants should be addressed through cooperations
 - COVID-19 enlightened the relationship between the host society and migrants is symbiotic, not coexisting
 - Fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote migrants' right to health

- ✓ Banning the settlement of low-skilled migrant workers encourage overstays
 - Could be severe labor shortages if another pandemic occurs
 - Settled low-skilled workers with experiences of policy practices during the pandemic are needed
- ✓ Lack of administrative systems ensuring migrants' healthcare
 - Supporting migrants relied on NGOs and volunteers
 - Vulnerable to operating during the pandemic