

2015 Data

of the hotline for migrant workers
within the framework of bilateral
agreements



Data Summary

for the Year of 2015

In 2012, the governments of Israel and Thailand signed a bilateral agreement aimed at stopping the collection of illegal commission fees from migrant workers arriving in Israel to work in the agricultural sector. This effort is governed through the Thailand-Israel Cooperation Project (TIC). The Israeli government later signed similar agreements concerning migrant workers in the construction industry with the governments of Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania. To date, more than 26,000 migrant workers have arrived in Israel in accordance with these agreements. As part of future intentions to sign similar agreements, bilateral agreements are currently in a process of review and development, and the hotline data analysis supports this effort. The goals of the bilateral agreements as a whole are to eradicate illegal recruitment fees and eliminate debt bondage and human trafficking while enabling recruitment of qualified workers who are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

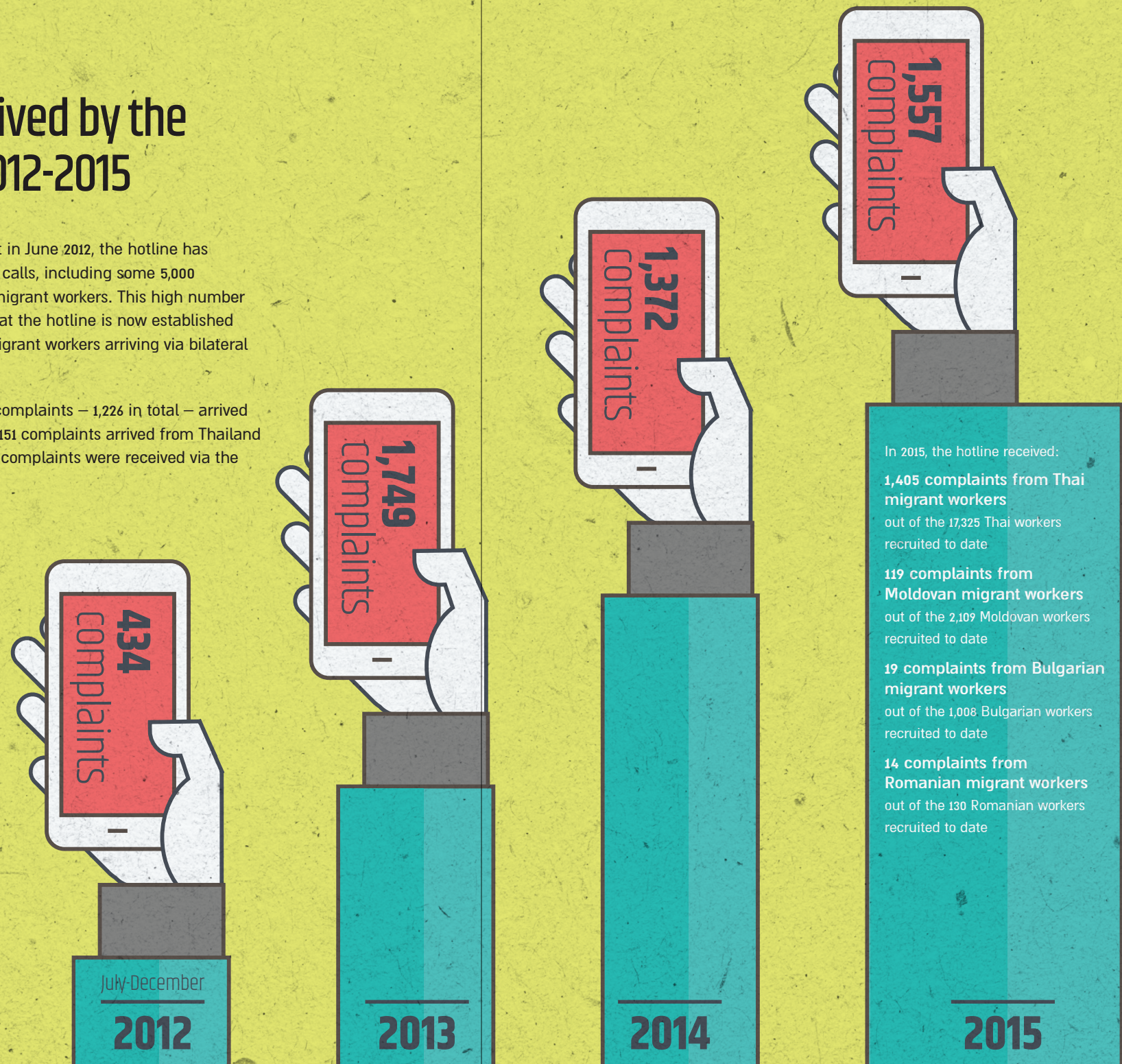
As part of these agreements, the Population Immigration and Border Authority (PIBA) partnered with the Center for International Migration and Integration (CIMI) to operate a hotline for migrant workers, providing information and registering complaints in the languages of the migrants. CIMI forwards incoming inquiries or complaints to PIBA, which in turn refers cases to the relevant government agencies.

CIMI was founded by the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) Israel, and works in cooperation with PIBA and other government and non-government agencies in Israel and sending countries. As part of its labor migration program, CIMI provides various services which include advertising employment opportunities, screening suitable workers, providing training and informing workers of their rights, coordinating their movement and assisting Israel in meeting its responsibility to protect migrants.

Calls received by the hotline 2012-2015

Since its establishment in June 2012, the hotline has received around 40,000 calls, including some 5,000 complaints from 3,421 migrant workers. This high number of appeals indicates that the hotline is now established as a primary tool for migrant workers arriving via bilateral agreements.

In 2015, most of the complaints – 1,226 in total – arrived directly to the hotline; 151 complaints arrived from Thailand via the TIC project; 145 complaints were received via the Thai embassy in Israel.



Example for the procedure of handling a complaint

1. Worker

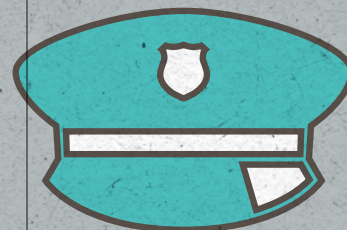
Calling to make a complaint



2. The hotline

Forwarding the complaint to PIBA*

1-700-707-889



3. The Handling Units¹

Handling and response



4. PIBA

Updating the hotline

Worker complaint number 4951

A migrant worker in the agricultural sector has been employed over the past eight months in a Moshav (cooperative agricultural village) in the south.

His complaint: He requested that the manpower agency which initially placed him change his employer because the payment terms of his employment were below the official minimum wage. Furthermore, he does not receive his pay slips, and payments are delayed; His accommodation is inadequate and there is only one shower serving ten people.

The hotline

forwards the complaint to PIBA

The PIBA coordinator calls the manpower agency and demands that they act immediately by transferring the worker to another employer. At the same time, the PIBA coordinator submits the case to open an investigation, to the combined attention of the PIBA Enforcement Unit and the Enforcement Unit of the Ministry of Economy, as per their defined statutory roles.

The handling units

handling and response

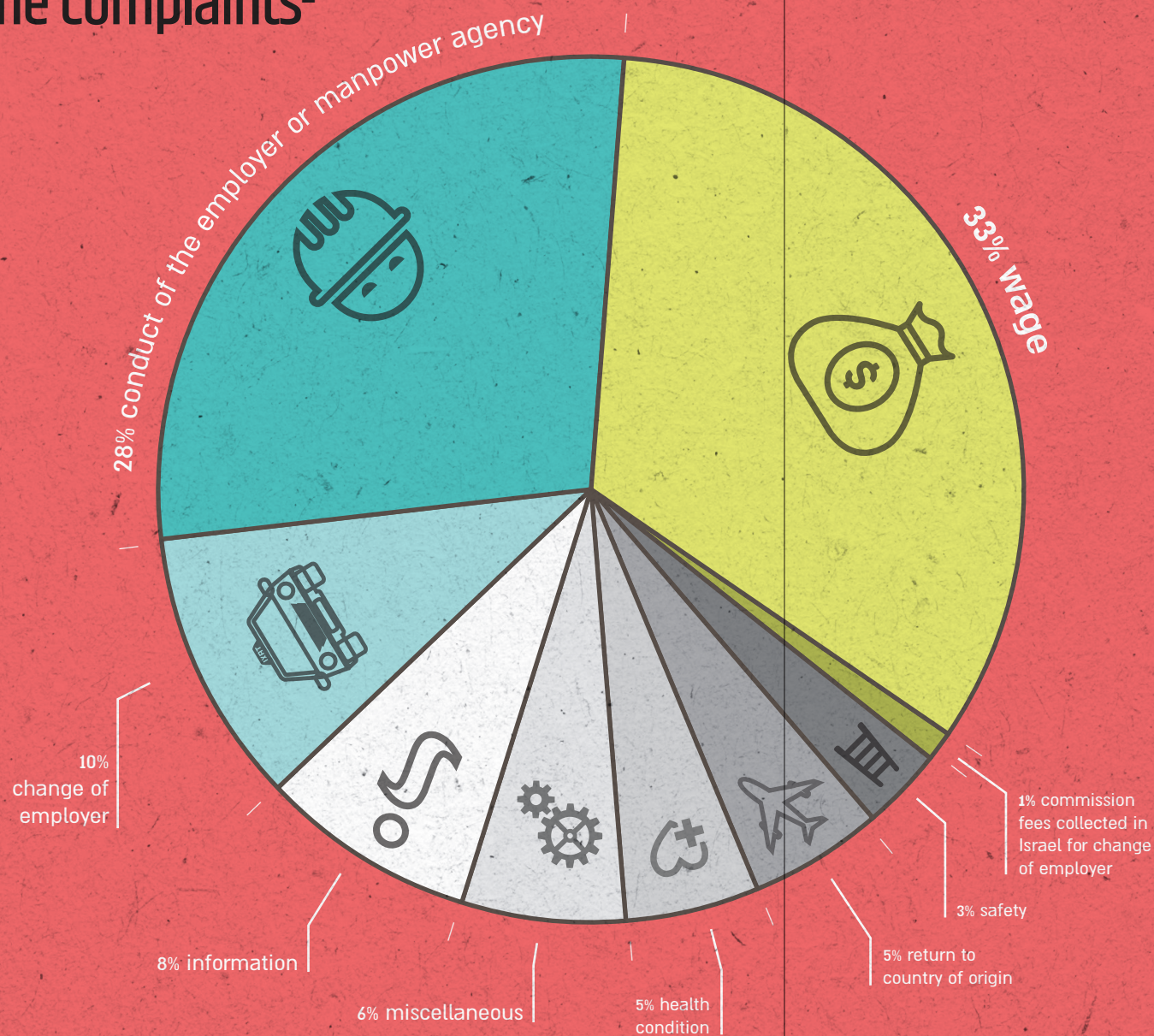
In the course of PIBA's investigation, the accommodation is inspected and violations registered. The complaint concerning the accommodations is managed by the PIBA Enforcement Unit. Complaints regarding wages are handled by the Enforcement Unit of the Ministry of Economy.

PIBA updating the hotline

The hotline updates the worker.

The worker reports that the manpower agency responsible for his placement has transferred him to another employer and that, following the immediate intervention by PIBA, his last wages were paid to him. He is satisfied with his new place of employment. In case of any problems, he will call the manpower agency's interpreter. He thanks the hotline for remedying the situation.

Issues arising in the complaints²



Breakdown of wage complaints:

- 40%** wage is not according to the law
- 21%** wage is not accompanied by a pay slip
- 13%** delayed wage
- 26%** other



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

- 23%** accommodation
- 21%** employer's treatment
- 19%** unemployment
- 37%** other (for example, worker dismissed following a complaint, lack for available interpreter, or manpower agency unavailable).



Breakdown of information request topics:

- 32%** payment of wage terms
- 21%** visa
- 14%** locating a private agency
- 10%** locating the worker by a family member
- 23%** other



Breakdown of safety complaint topics:

- 83%** handling pesticides without protective gear
- 17%** other

The state of the handling of applications and complaints



557 Complaints are in Process

They were forwarded to PIBA, which reported that they had been transferred to the relevant authorities.

- 12 handled by PIBA:
- 460 handled by the Ministry of Economy.
- 82 handled by another agency.
- 3 handled by the hotline.



1,000 Closed Complaints

Complaints that were investigated and closed by the hotline³, PIBA, or the Ministry of Economy.

Main issues for complaints and their state of handling



Wage complaints 704 complaints

529 being handled
175 closed



Employer's treatment 150 complaints

37 being handled
113 closed



Accommodation 167 complaints

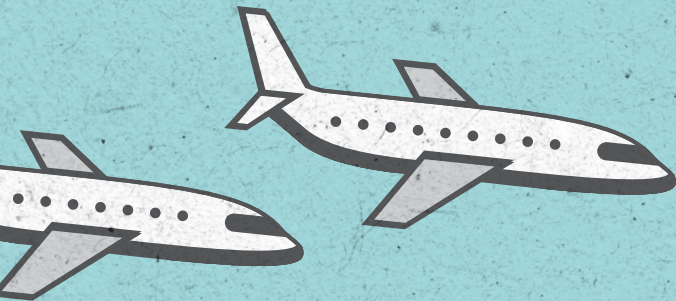
119 being handled
48 closed

5 Bilateral agreements - cost of arriving in Israel⁴

2012 was the first year that recruitment of bilateral workers for the construction and agriculture sectors was conducted solely via bilateral agreements. These agreements significantly reduced the phenomenon of illegal recruitment fees, and as a result, the cost of arriving in Israel was reduced from tens of thousands of dollars to a few hundreds of dollars paid legally.

To date the bilateral agreements have saved migrant workers in the construction and agriculture sectors some

\$192,000,000



6 Costs of arriving to work in Israel since the bilateral agreements⁵

In the construction sector:



✓ with bilateral agreement

- Bulgaria ● \$504
- Moldova ● \$310
- Romania ● \$300



✗ without a bilateral agreement

China ● \$21,759

In the agriculture sector:



Thailand



✓ after the bilateral agreement

● \$2,200



✗ before the bilateral agreement

● \$9,149

Notes

- 1 The handling units include: PIBA Enforcement Unit, Ministry of Economy Enforcement Unit, The Ombudswoman for Migrant Workers in the Ministry of Economy, The Israel Police.
- 2 In 2015, the hotline started to separately record complaints in the categories of health condition and safety.
- 3 In 2015, 344 inquiries were received by the hotline and were addressed and closed immediately.
- 4 The source of data for Bulgaria, China and Thailand: Rebeca Raijman and Nonna Kushnirovich (2014), 'Recruitment of Migrant Workers in Agriculture and Construction in Israel: the Impact of Bilateral Agreements'.
- 5 Following these agreements, the costs paid by migrant workers to arrive in Israel include mainly the fees for medical examinations and the cost of a flight ticket. In the agriculture sector, costs include the commissions for recruitment and placement services allowed according to Israeli law.

**Center for International
Migration and
Integration**

www.cimi.org.il

