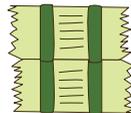
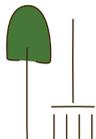
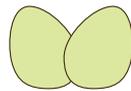




רשות האוכלוסין וההגירה
 Population & Immigration Authority
 سلطة السكان والهجرة

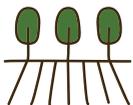


Foreign Workers' Call Center

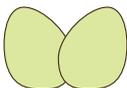
Data for



2018



Data on Agricultural Workers of
 the Thailand Israel Cooperation



Background

The aim of the bilateral agreements for the recruitment of foreign workers 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.¹ 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. To this day, about 28,000 male and female agricultural workers arrived in Israel from Thailand as part of the TIC project, and 21,758 of them 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.

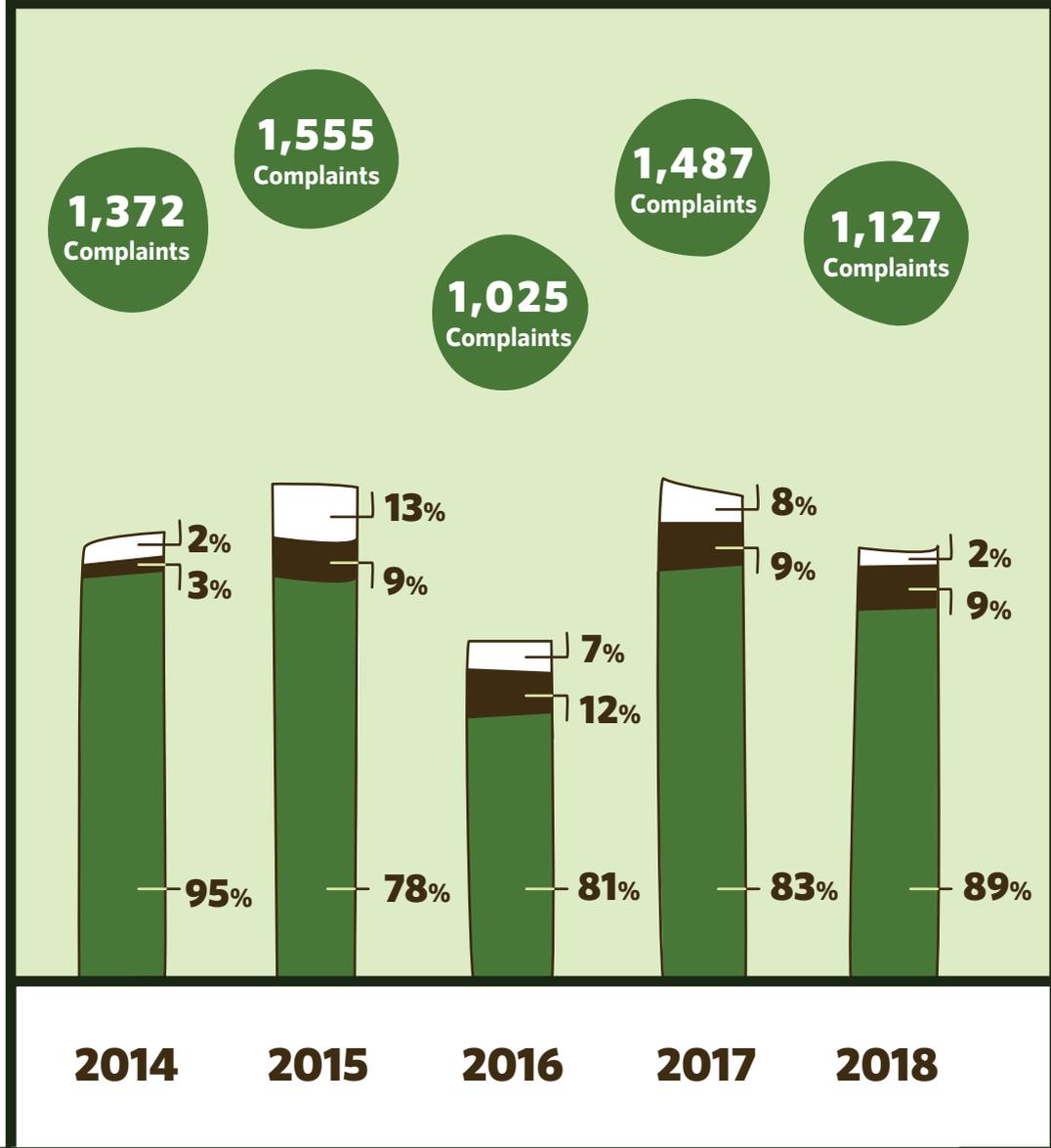
In July 2012 as part of the bilateral agreements, the Center for International Migration and Integration (CIMI), in collaboration with the Population and Immigration Authority (PIBA), founded a telephone call center for foreign workers in Israel providing a resource for workers in their native languages. 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 on TIC workers collected since the establishment of the call center and specifically since the launching of the computerized system in 2014.²

CIMI, a non-profit organization founded by JDC-Israel, operates in collaboration with PIBA, governmental and non-governmental organizations in the workers' countries of origin. The organization assists in advertising the possibility of arriving to work 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 funds 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, a sum of nearly \$196,512,000 has already been saved by agricultural workers from Thailand.³

Inquiries⁴ and Complaints Received by the Call Center



Complaint Handling Procedure



Example of complaint handling procedure by the PIBA complaint coordinator:

"I would like to change my employer immediately. Our work manager nearly attacked me without reason. I want an immediate transfer, although the employer proposed that I stay. I tried to call the manpower agency several times but they never answer the phone."

The call center transferred the case to the PIBA complaint coordinator marking it as urgent. After being contacted urgently by the coordinator, the agency promised to transfer the worker the next day, but then reported that the worker said that *"now everything is fine and he would prefer to stay with the employer."*

A translator spoke with the worker, and he confirmed the agency's report, saying that *"the employer mediated between me and the other worker and separated us at work, and now I prefer to stay."*

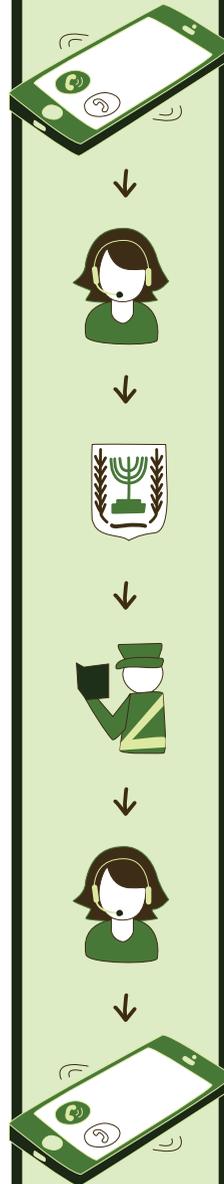
Example of complaint handling procedure by the Regulation and Enforcement Administration of the Ministry of Labor, Welfare, and Social Services:

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

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.

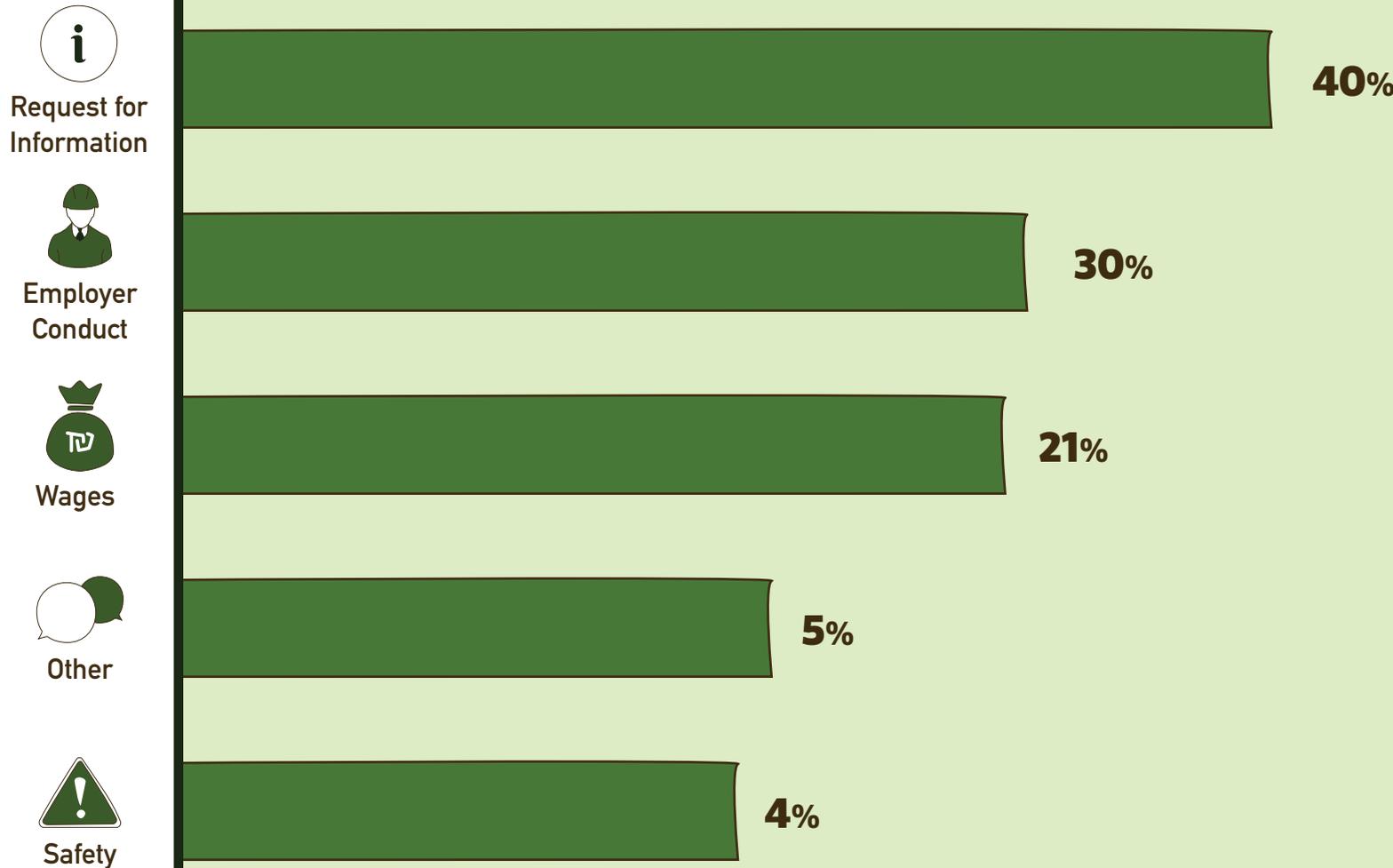
The Administrative Enforcement Branch opened an investigation, which found that the employer had not paid the worker a minimum wage. Following the investigation procedure the employer was issued a notice requiring him to pay a fine. In addition the employer was issued two administrative warnings regarding 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.



Issues of Inquiries and Complaints⁷

Percentage of the issue's appearance out of the total number of inquiries and complaints



Breakdown of calls requesting information:

- 28% - request of information on severance pay
- 19% - questions regarding workers' rights in different fields
- 19% - request of information on employer transfer



Breakdown of calls on employer or manpower agency conduct:

- 22% - manpower agency failed to assist in employer transfer
- 15% - the manpower agency failed to assist in other matters
- 14% - employer conduct



Breakdown of wage complaints:

- 39% - wages do not comply with the laws
- 26% - unpaid wages
- 16% - wages are paid without a slip

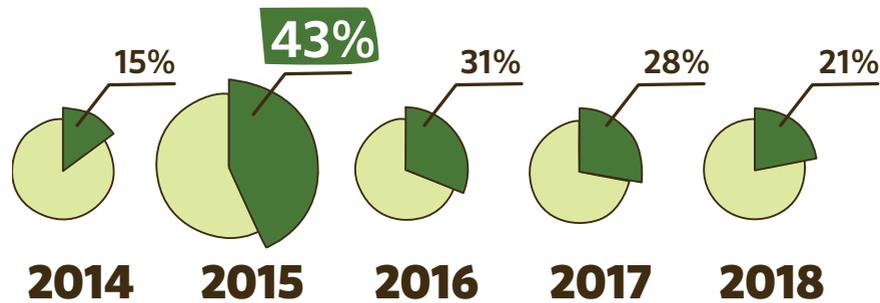


Out of calls on other subjects:

- 34% - worker without a work permit
- 34% - medical condition
- 16% - violence of co-workers

Characteristics of Complaints

% of Complaints regarding Wages as a Percentage of Total Yearly Complaint



Safety Complaints in the Agriculture Sector, by Issue



Side effects of exposure to chemicals

52



Severance pay claim from the National Insurance Institute

2



Work-related accidents

9

20 of the workers injured by chemicals explicitly stated in the questionnaire that this was their reason for leaving Israel.

Out of 63 safety complaints, 52 (83%) concern dangerous exposure to agricultural chemicals

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 according to its contents and subject. 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 wages⁸ and work safety.

Out of the 1,127 inquiries and complaints that reached the call center in the past year:

909

complaints required a response from the call center

out of which

708 were

addressed and closed

279

complaints were transferred to PIBA

out of which

251 were

addressed and closed by the responsible bodies at PIBA⁹

Out of the complaints transferred to the Enforcement Unit, violations were found in 7 complaints, and no violations were found in 14 complaints.

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

out of which

95 were transferred to the Regulation and Enforcement Administration:

as follows: 44 complaints are currently being investigated and handled by the Regulation and Enforcement Administration; 51 complaints were closed. Of these, in 8 cases the investigation has been completed and decisions are pending; in 19 complaints, monetary fines were imposed on employers; 8 complaints were closed without findings. 7 complaints were closed due to a procedure pending against the employer; and 9 complaints were closed for other reasons.¹⁰

The other 42 inquiries and complaints were transferred to the Safety Administration.

Footnotes

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. The data in the different parts of the booklet is accurate as of its date of publication.
3. The estimated savings in recruitment fees for each sector are based on the findings in 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 Rajzman and Nona Kushnirovich, 2018. For regulations on the sums that can be legally collected by a manpower agency in the agriculture sector, according to the law on collection from foreign workers in lieu of recruitment services, see the website of the Israeli Employment Service, https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/law01/500_818.htm.
4. The call center receives inquiries on various subjects. Some of the inquiries are complaints that are transferred to other bodies for handling. See page 8.
5. Other sources include: the Thai Embassy in Israel.
6. 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.

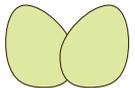
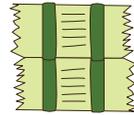
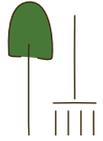
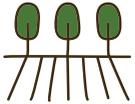
7. The percentage represents the number of times the issue arose out of the total number of inquiries and complaints.

8. 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, file a lawsuit through a civil court.

9. The responsible bodies are: PIBA Call Center coordinators, the Enforcement Unit, the Administrative Enforcement Branch, and the Payment Branch.

10. Other reasons include: the worker rescinded the complaint, the complaint lacks details, the worker is uncooperative, the complaint was previously received through other channels.



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

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

