

MIGRATION PATHWAYS

S Pass

Overview

The government sees the immigrant workforce as key to Singapore's economic development. The S Pass allows mid-level skilled staff of all nationalities with relevant qualifications and work experience to work in Singapore.

Why was it started?

Singapore has long recognized the value of foreign workers for its economic development. Migrants sustain many industries.

How does it work?

Prospective S Pass holders need to have a degree or specialized technical certificate, multiple years of experience, and an offer for a job that pays at least US\$2,500 a month. Employers pay a monthly levy of US\$330 or US\$650, depending on how many foreign nationals work at the company.

A quota capped the number of S Pass holders at 13 percent of a company's workforce in the services sector and 20 percent in all other sectors. On January 1, 2021, it was reduced to 20 percent for the manufacturing sector and 18 percent for all other sectors. Beginning January 1, 2023, the quota for all sectors, excluding services, will be set at 15 percent.

The S Pass is valid for up to two years and is renewable. S Pass holders are able to apply for passes for their family members and to gain permanent residency and citizenship.



Country of Destination
SINGAPORE

Country of Origin
NOT SPECIFIED

Skill
SERVICES, MARINE AND SHIPYARD ACTIVITIES, AND CONSTRUCTION 

Skill Level
MID-LEVEL

Timeline
APRIL 1987–ONGOING

Beneficiaries
ABOUT 174,000 IN 2020

Countries all around the world utilize migration pathways to train and bring over workers with needed skills. The CGD Migration Pathways database documents these pathways to promote innovation in this space. To explore the database, visit GSP.cgdev.org.

What impact has it had?

Various programs have been launched to facilitate the inflow of talent to Singapore, including company grant schemes to ease the costs of employing skilled foreigners, a housing scheme to aid in the short-term accommodation needs of skilled foreign-born workers, recruitment missions abroad, and regular networking and information sessions held in major cities worldwide.

These welcoming policies led 43 percent of Singaporeans to report that the government tended to foreign workers more than its own people. Such sentiments forced immigration into the political debate in the 2011 election. Popular disapproval of immigration policy led to modest restrictions in immigration policy for high-skilled workers. Wage levels for the Employment Pass (EP), Q Pass, and S Pass were raised, and more restrictions were put in place on the entry of family members. Companies were required to advertise their job vacancies to local Singaporeans for at least 14 days on the jobs bank employment website operated by the Workforce Development Agency before applying for a visa on behalf of a prospective foreign employee.

Further readings

For more information, see the [Singaporean Government S Pass website](#).

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Iwasaki, K. 2015. "Singapore's strategies for attracting highly-skilled foreign human resources: How does Singapore recruit foreign talent?" *RIM Pacific Business and Industries* 15(56): 2-27. <https://www.jri.co.jp/MediaLibrary/file/english/periodical/rim/2015/56.pdf>

Yang, H., P. Yang, and S. Zhan. 2017. "Immigration, population, and foreign workforce in Singapore: An overview of trends, policies, and issues." *HSSE Online* 6(1): 10, 25. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317616450_Immigration_Population_and_Foreign_Workforce_in_Singapore_An_Overview_of_Trends_Policies_and_Issues



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