



Making Money, Missing Home

Experiences of Timorese Labour Migrants to the UK

Andrew McWilliam



Migration phases



Timorese migrants in Peterborough UK

1993-2000 Student Activists gain political asylum to Portugal and continue protest activities in the UK (London, Oxford and Liverpool)

2000-2010 Gradual take up of labour migration to the UK, travelling on Portuguese passports and working in low skill, minimum wage shift work/service industries

2010-2020 Expansion of migration with reliable internet/social media, cheap airfares and easier access to Portuguese passports. 5,350 Timorese in UK reported in the 2015 National Census.

2019 Survey Results

Capturing general patterns of migration practice and experience

- All were Fataluku respondents (who made up 30% of migrants to UK)
- 70 respondents : 20% in Dili (14) 80% in LosPalos (and surrounding villages) [56]

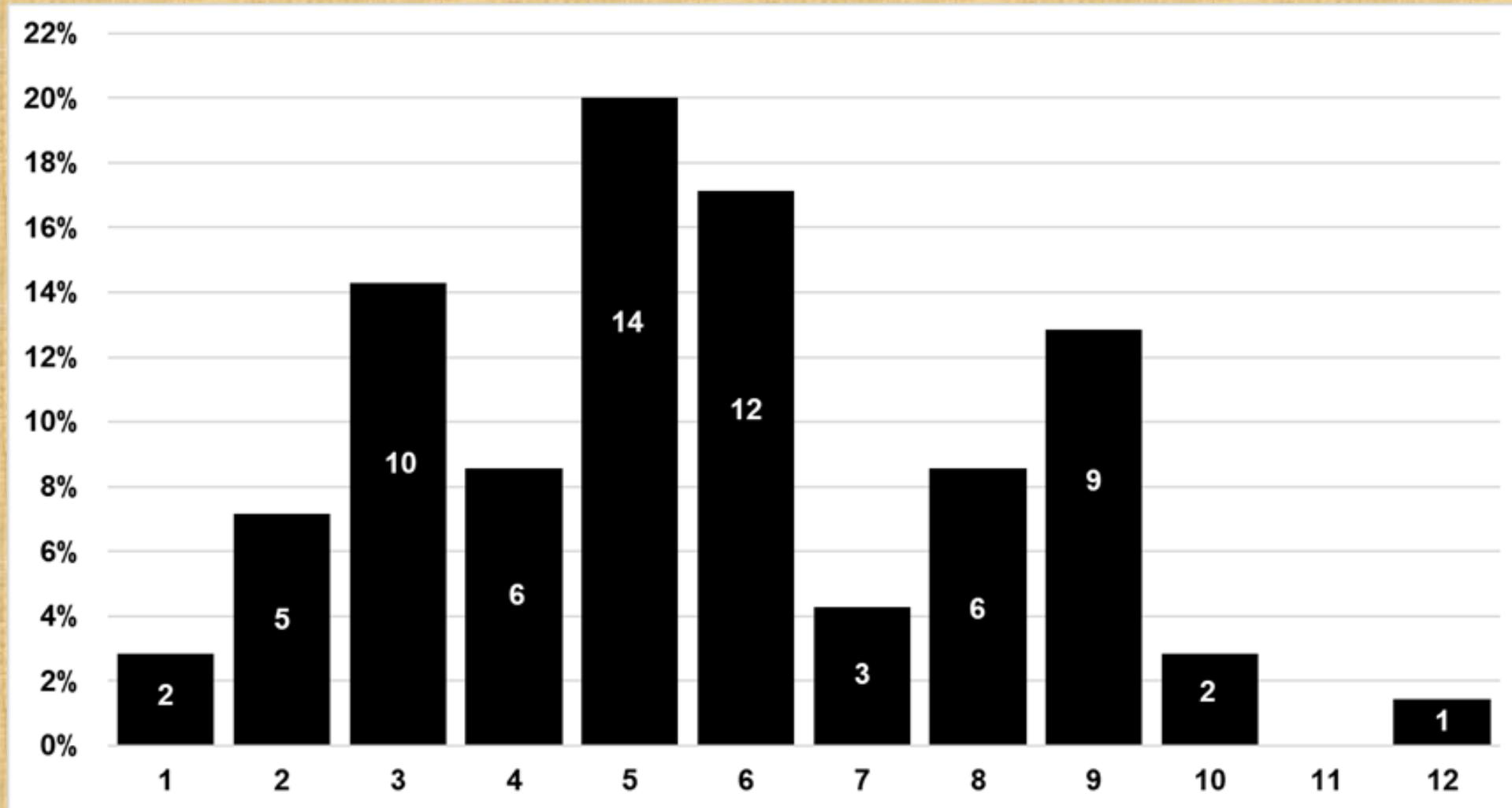
Consistent with previous surveys:

Most participants were young (under 36)

Most were male (10% female)

Majority worked in England (80%), (17% to Northern Ireland, (1%) to Scotland

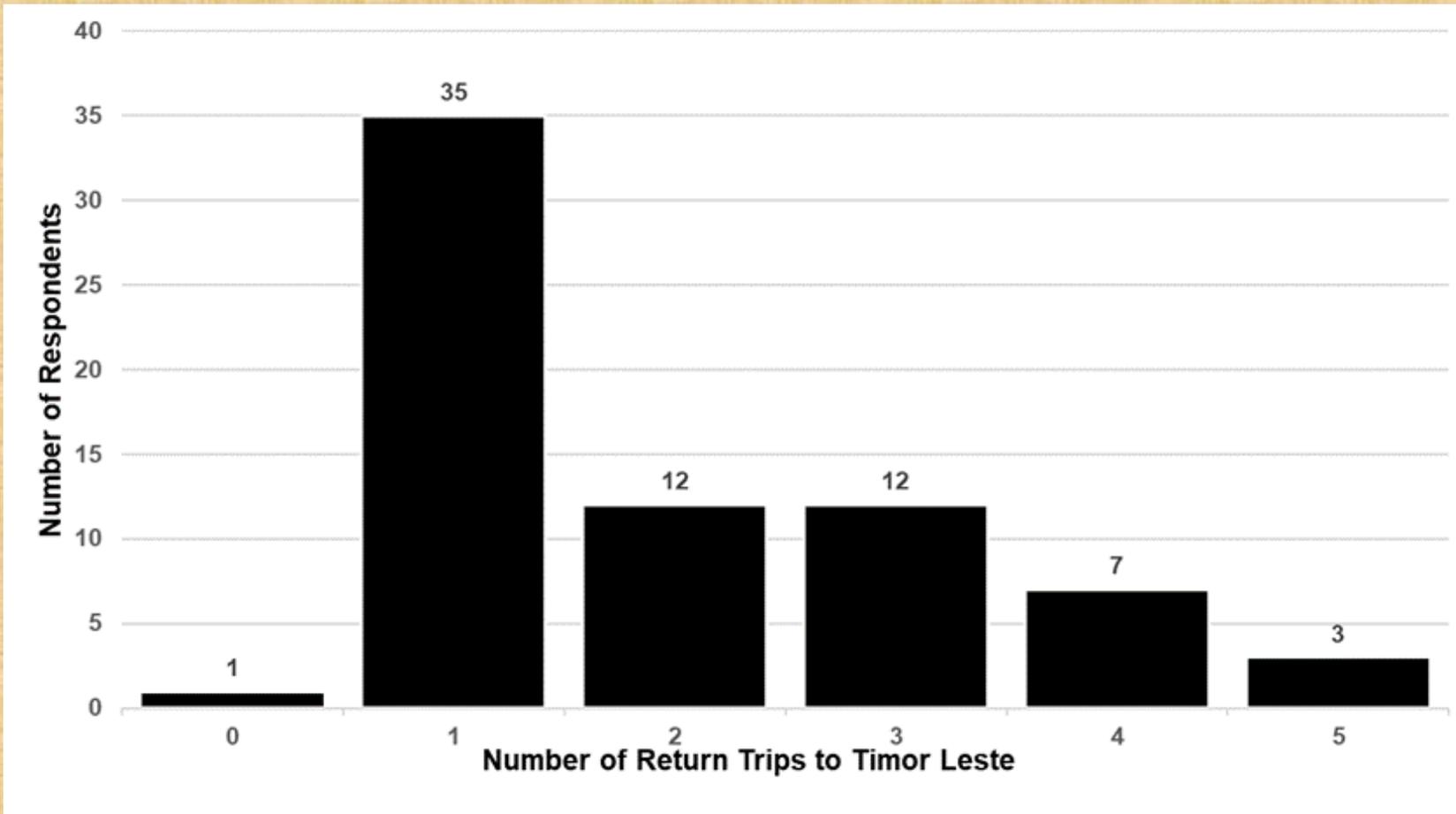
Years spent by migrants working in the UK



YEARS

Numbers of migrants

Return Visits to Timor-Leste



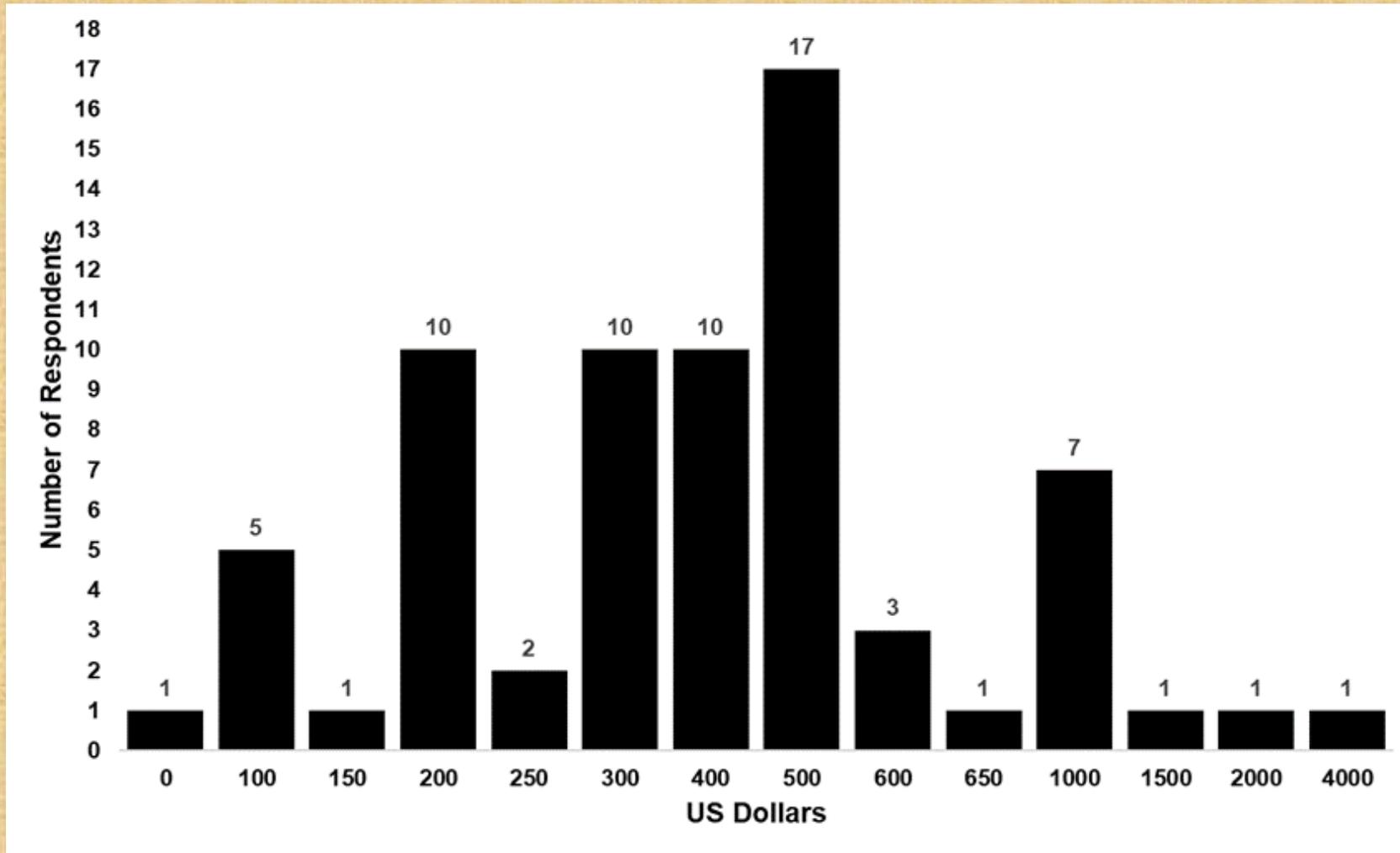
Return Visits became common
(36 hour flight)

Correlation between time away
and number of return visits.

Enabling factors:

- Reliable Internet and regular Communication
- Cheap Airfares (\$1500)
- Romances on line.

Monthly Remittances to Timor Leste



98% of labour migrants sent remittances home.

53% sent between USD 300-500 per month.

Cash delivered through Western Union transfers and hand carried on visits.

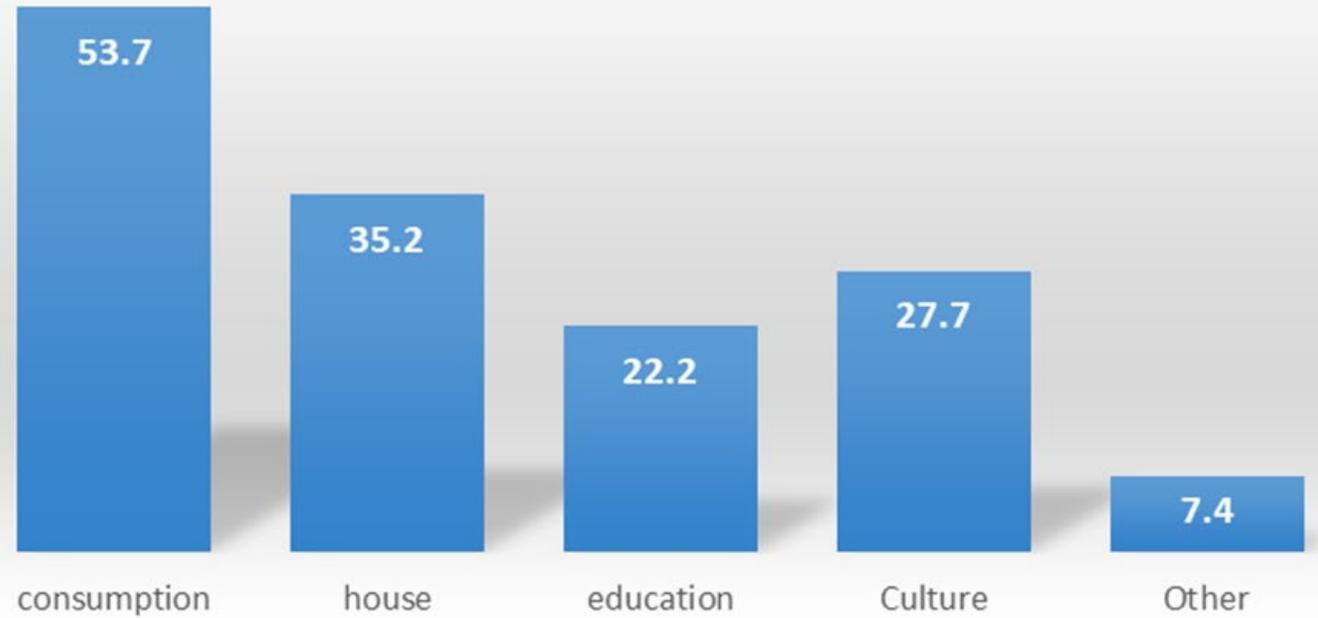
Total Remitted funds from UK to Timor-Leste in 2015 = (USD) 18,700,227.

Migration work as sacrifice for benefit of family

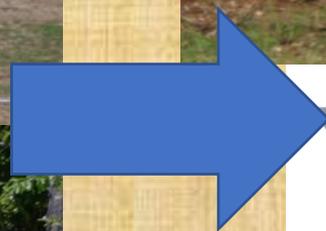
Key Findings

- 1) Many migrants fund % of consumption for Timor based families – esp. rice
[Remittances replace staple food crops]
- 2) House repair/ rebuilding a high priority
- 3) Cultural gifts for exchange obligations – ritual events, weddings, funerals and grave repair
- 4) Education of siblings – schooling and university costs.

Use of Remittance funds



Transformed housing

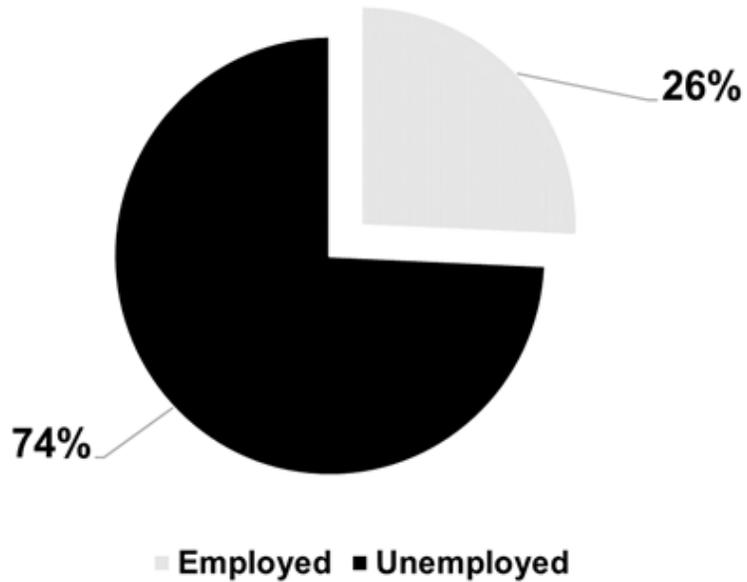


Contributing to funerals and other family exchange obligations

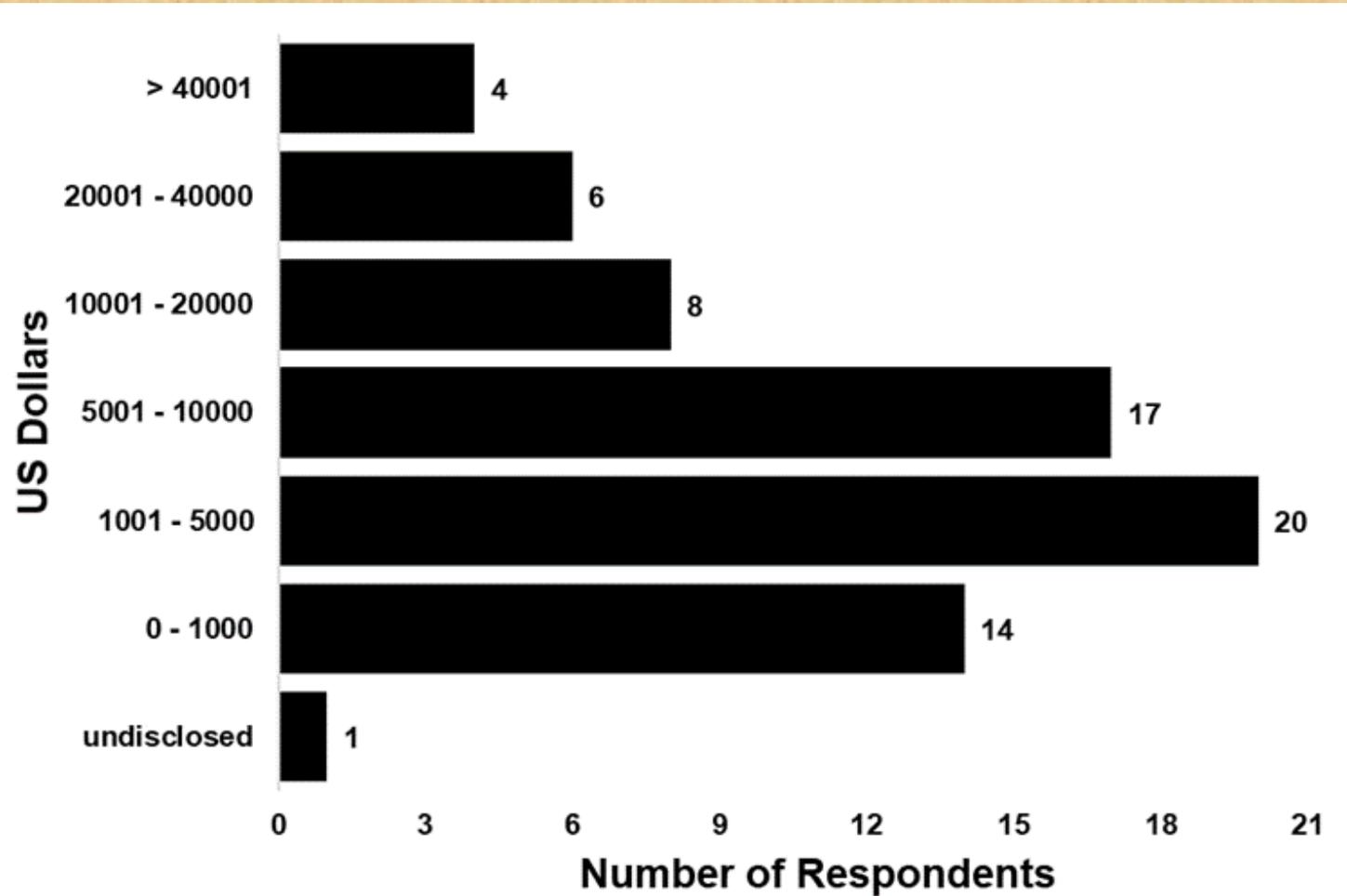


On return

Savings from Work overseas



Employment status



50% of migrants returned with USD5000 or less.
14% of migrants returned with more than USD20,000.

Investing in the building boom



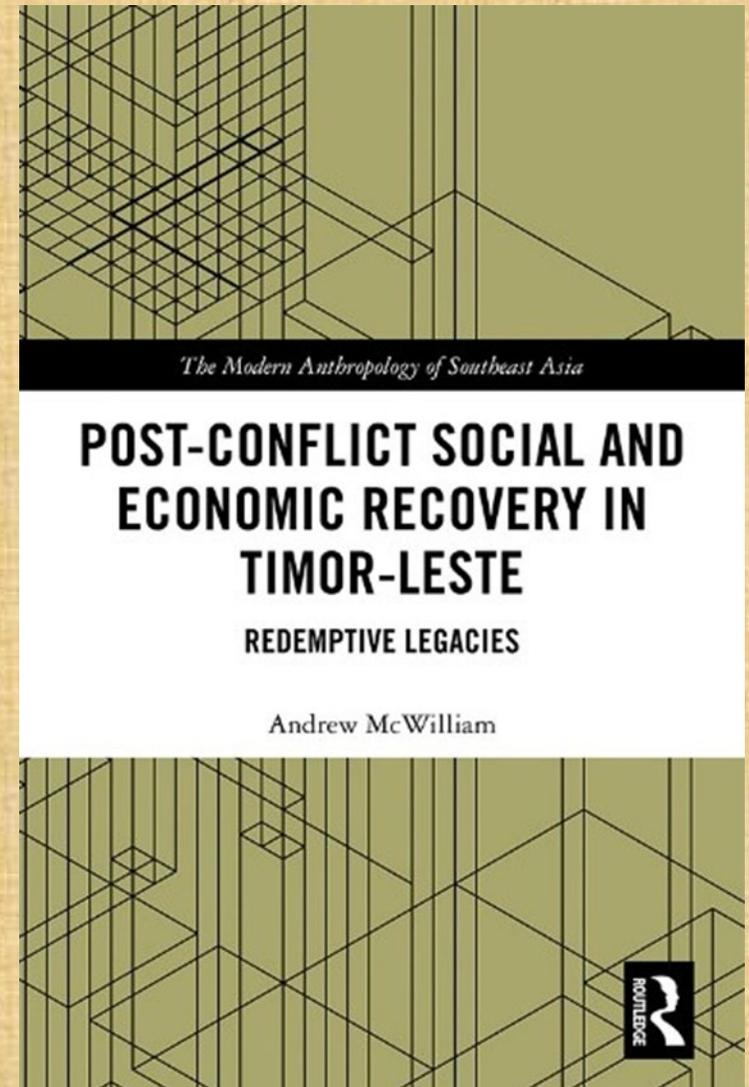
Reflections on the UK migrant experience

- 1) What did they enjoy about their UK migration experience?
 - * 43 (61%) of respondents mentioned the money earned (*kontenti ho osan*), 13 (18.5%) referred to paid work they gained
- 2) What were difficult aspects of being away?
 - * Constant sense of being 'far from their families' (*do'ok husi familia*). (missing home)
- 3) Respondents intention of returning the UK for further work
 - * 61 (87%) planning to return.

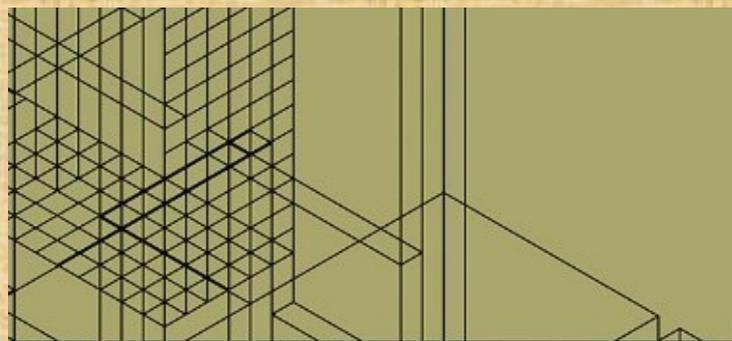
Acknowledgments

Survey was conducted under the auspices
of ARC Discovery Grant: DP160104519
'Spiritual Ecologies and Customary
Governance in Post-conflict East Timor'

Thanks to Carmeneza Dos Santos
Moneteiro and NGO Fundamor



For more detailed discussion see
monograph (2020).



The Modern Anthropology of Southeast Asia

**POST-CONFLICT SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN
TIMOR-LESTE**

REDEMPTIVE LEGACIES

Andrew McWilliam

