

CAMBODIA

RETURNING MIGRANTS SURVEY

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)
DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX (DTM)



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Australian Government



From
the People of Japan

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BACKGROUND

In 2017, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) estimated that over one million of Cambodian nationals lived abroad¹. A majority of them are labour migrants seeking employment opportunities and better wages. Thailand is the preferred destination country for Cambodian labour migrants, where they are employed in construction, manufacturing and agricultural sectors². By 2017, as many as 723,911 Cambodian nationals were granted the right to reside in Thailand³. However, according to a joint ILO and IOM study, less than a third of Cambodian migrants use regular channels of migration⁴.

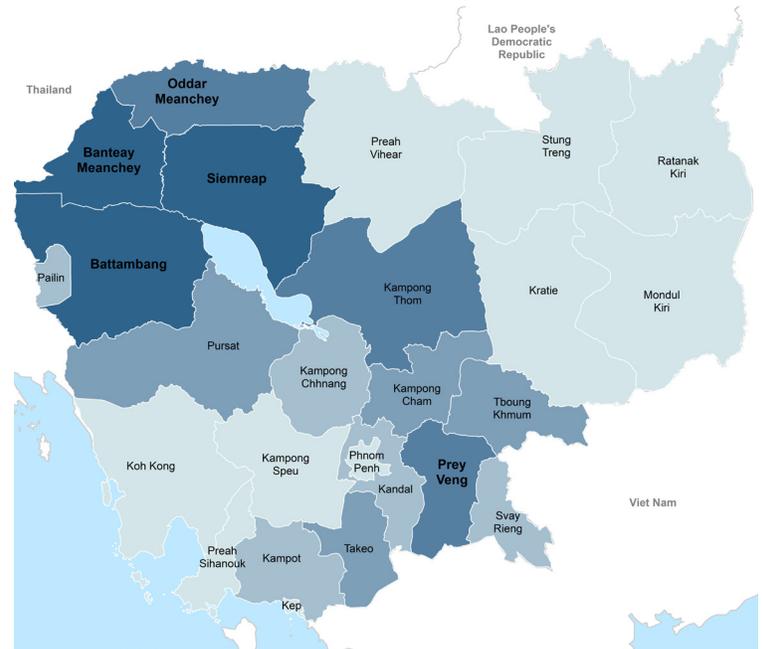
As Thailand began to curb the COVID-19 pandemic by reducing its economic activities and closing its borders, more than 100,000 Cambodian migrant workers have crossed the border from Thailand to Cambodia since March 2020. However, back in Cambodia these migrants face underreported challenges and vulnerabilities. Moreover, there are concerns whether returning migrants have access to adequate information on COVID-19 and resources to protect themselves against this virus. Therefore, IOM Cambodia conducted a survey to better understand the returning migrants' challenges and vulnerabilities as well as their awareness of COVID-19 related information.

Data was collected remotely through phone-based surveys collected by eight IOM enumerators between 19 and 24 June 2020. The IOM Cambodia research team selected the five provinces with the highest numbers of returning migrants to be surveyed. In these provinces, a random sample of 242 respondents was identified and interviewed. The study targeted specifically Cambodian migrants who returned from Thailand between March and June 2020.

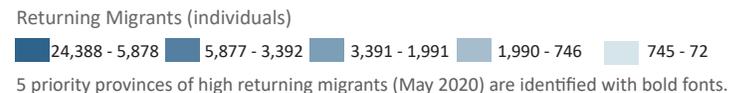
The survey results highlighted various socio-economic vulnerabilities and challenges experienced by migrants since their return to Cambodia. Nearly all respondents are concerned about their ability to find employment as their income levels have decreased. Migrants who have returned from Thailand have also reported lack of mental health, psychosocial and social support. It appears that the wave of returnees could contribute to altering the economic landscape in their host communities, as a small proportion of them have reported they would be keen to start their own business or start an income generating activity. As the vast majority of surveyed migrants still plan to re-migrate when it is safe to do so, the timely question whether these aspirations can be strengthened to become long-term investments to benefit the whole community remains unanswered.

1. UNDESA, *International Emigrants*, 2017.
2. ILO/IOM, *Risks and Rewards: Outcomes of Labour Migration in South-East Asia*, 2017

TARGET PROVINCES MAP AND TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

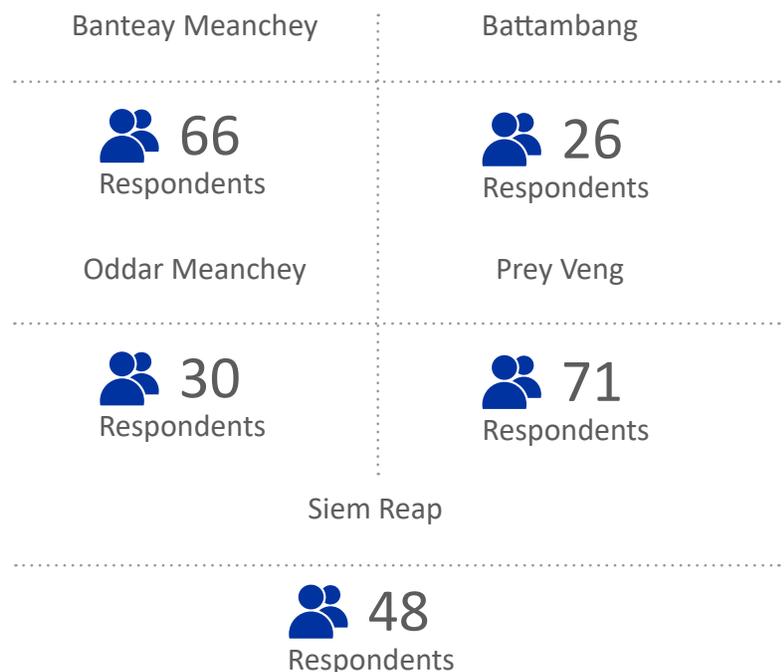


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Data Source: Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX), Royal Government of Cambodia, IOM



242 TOTAL RESPONDENTS

NUMBER OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS OF RETURNING MIGRANTS BY PROVINCE

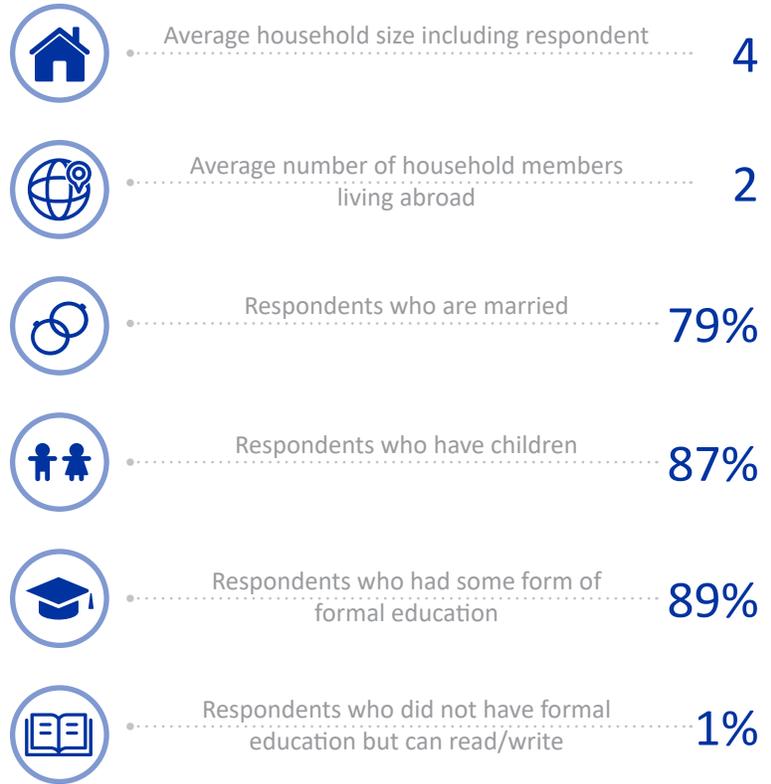
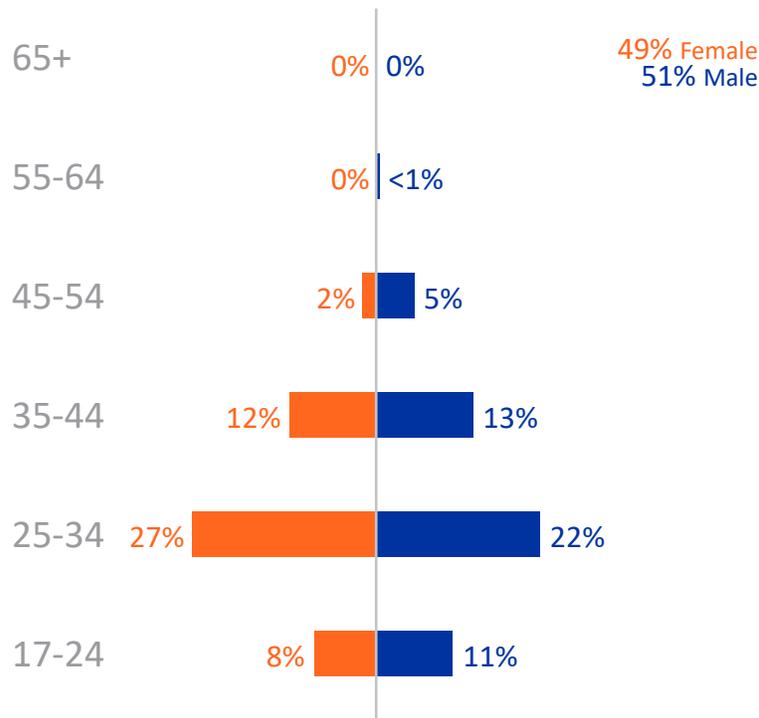


3. IOM, *Flow Monitoring Surveys: Insights into the Profiles and Vulnerabilities of Cambodian Migrants to Thailand*, 2019
4. See 2.



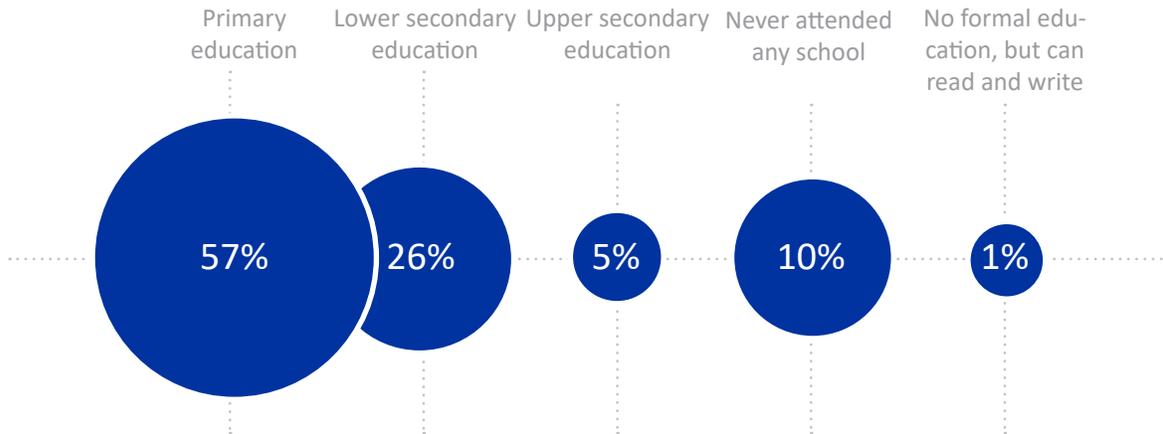
DEMOGRAPHICS OF RETURNING MIGRANTS

POPULATION PYRAMID*



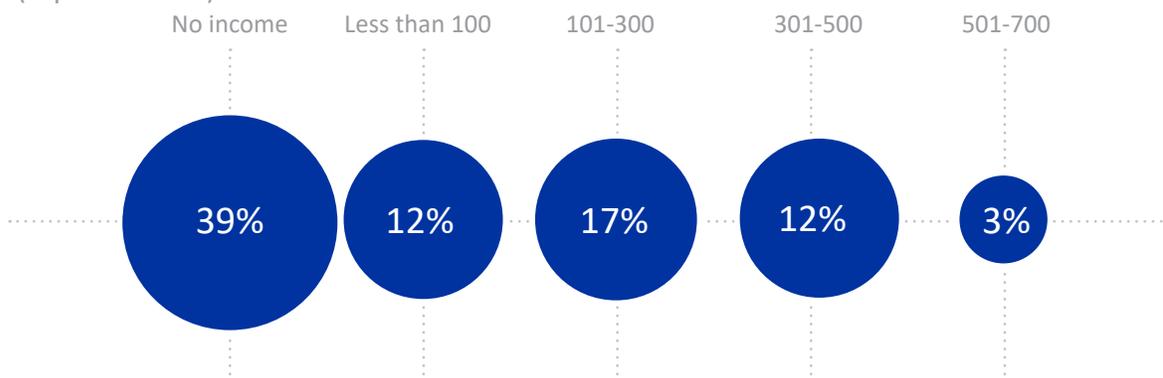
*The population pyramid is only representative for the respondents to this survey.

EDUCATION LEVEL (top 5 answers)



The proportion of male (51%) respondents was slightly higher than female (49%) respondents. The highest proportion included adults between the age of 25 and 34 years old. Most migrants returning from Thailand were low skilled labour workers, with primary education (57%), lower secondary education (26%) or no formal education (10%). Nearly 40 per cent of the respondents reported to have no income (39%) at the moment. Another 41 per cent had an average monthly household income between 100 and 500 USD. Only three per cent had an average income higher than 700 USD per month.

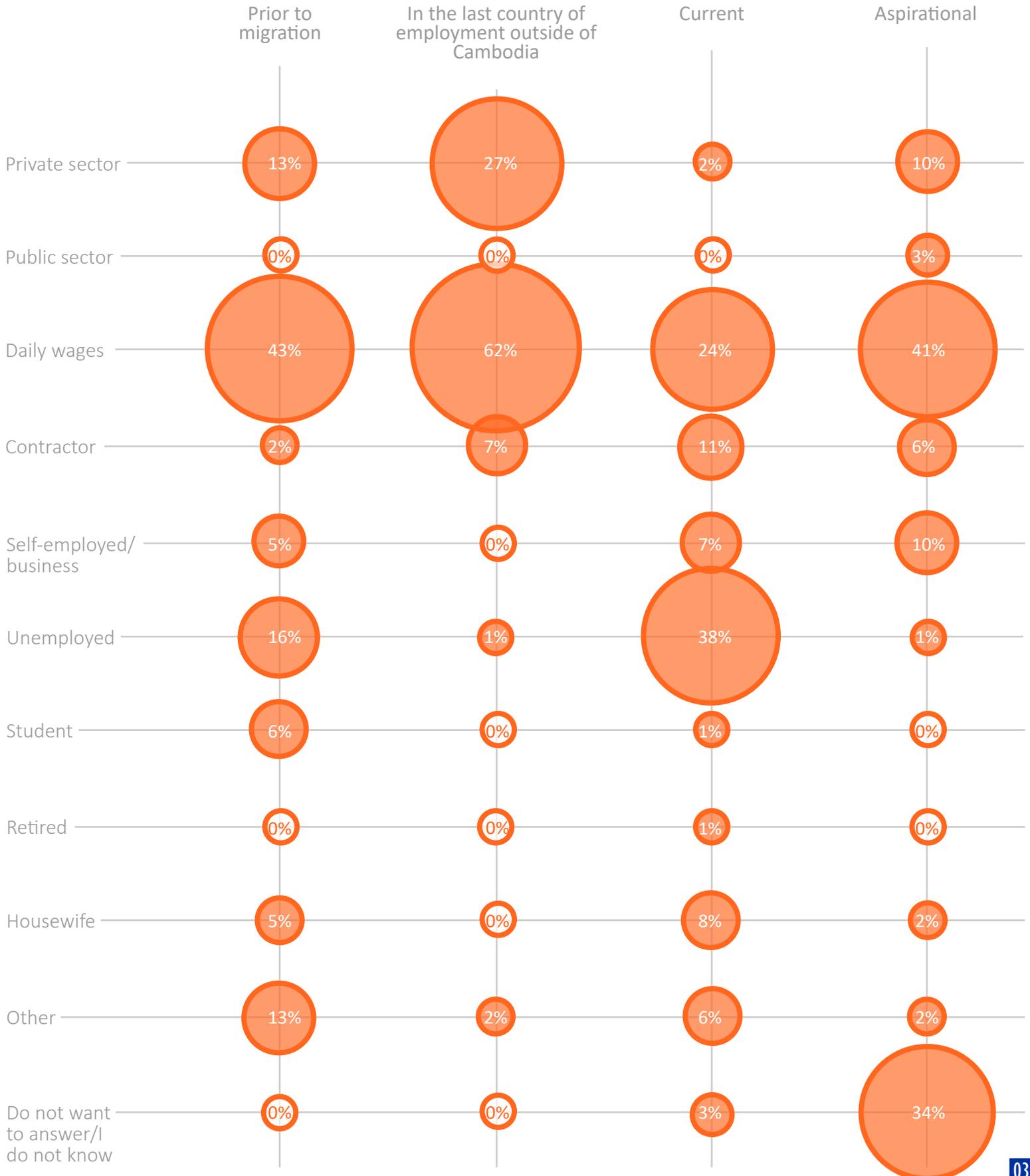
CURRENT TOTAL AVERAGE MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN USD (top 5 answers)





EMPLOYMENT OF RETURNING MIGRANTS

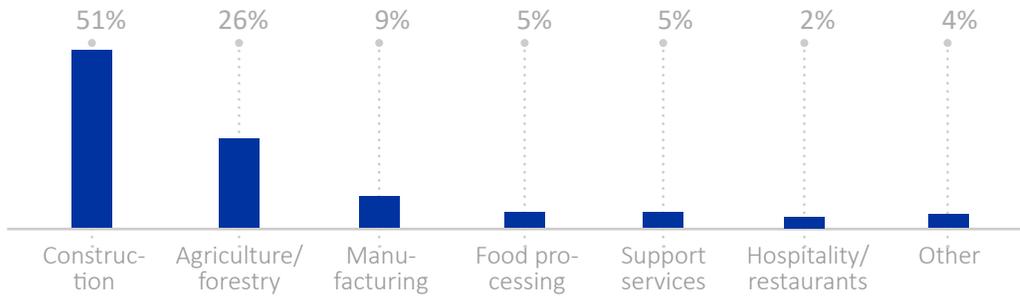
EMPLOYMENT STATUS (multiple answers possible)



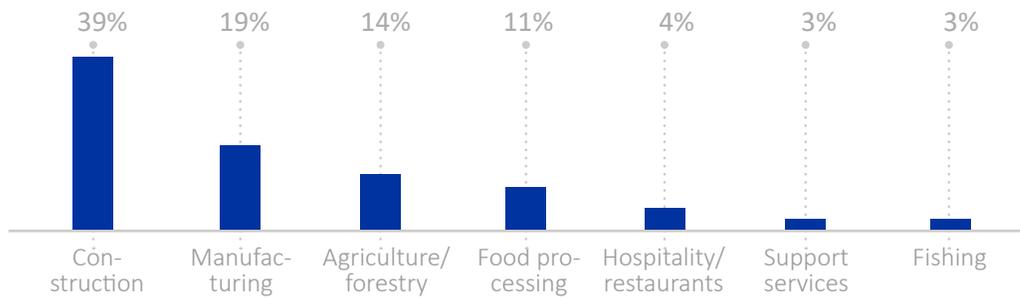


OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR* (top 7 answers)

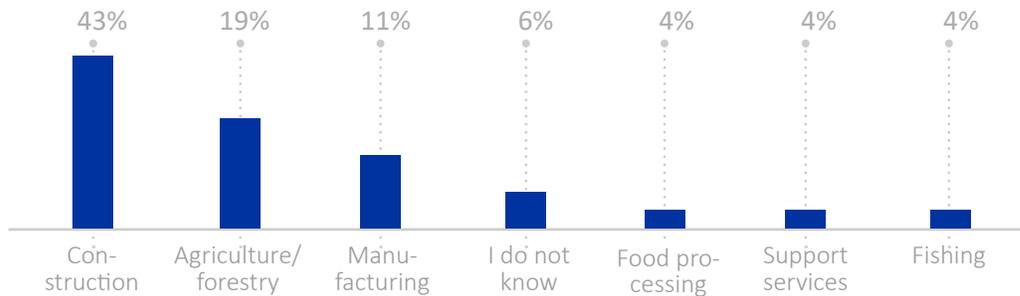
PRIOR TO MIGRATION



IN THE LAST COUNTRY OF EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE OF CAMBODIA

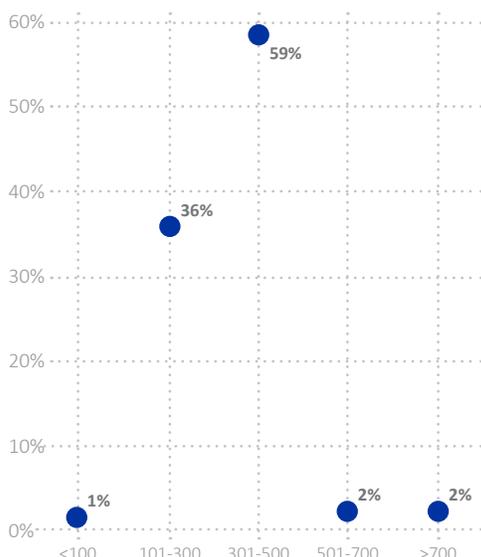


ASPIRATIONAL



*This question was only answered by respondents who indicated that their employment was in the private sector, the public sector or in daily wages.

MONTHLY INCOME IN LAST COUNTRY OF EMPLOYMENT (USD)



SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND CAPITAL MONEY

If you plan to be self-employed, do you have capital money to start your business?

68%
NO

If no, then how do you plan to arrange for capital money? (top 3, multiple answers possible)

53%
Family finance

41%
Loan

53%
Do not want to answer

Respondents were asked about their employment status during different periods in their lives. Before they left Cambodia, a large proportion of respondents indicated that they worked for daily wages (43%). However, 16 per cent reported to be unemployed before they left. In the last country of employment, most of respondents worked for daily wages (62%) and in the private sector (27%). Only one per cent reported to be unemployed. For current employment status, 38 per cent of respondents indicated to be unemployed, followed by those relying on daily wages (24%) and contractor fees (11%). Regarding future income opportunities, most respondents prefer to work for daily wages (41%). Nevertheless, 34 per cent indicated that they do not know yet or do not want to answer.

Cambodian migrants who migrated abroad for work tend to work in the same sectors they used to work in the country of origin (mainly construction, agriculture, manufacturing, and food processing). Their existing experience closely corresponds to their future aspirations, as nearly three quarters of the respondents expressed their preference for future work in construction, agriculture and manufacturing.

Almost all migrants surveyed responded their average monthly income in the last country of employment was in the wide bracket of 101-500 USD, with only one per cent reporting a monthly income of less than 100 USD and four per cent reporting a monthly income higher than 501 USD.

Only 10 per cent of surveyed migrants responded they would like to be self-employed or own a business. However, a vast majority of these respondents (68%) reported not having the capital needed to start finance their business.



MIGRATION JOURNEY OF RETURNING MIGRANTS

WHEN DID YOU LEAVE YOUR HOME PROVINCE?



FROM WHICH COUNTRY DID YOU RETURN?

100%
Thailand



DID YOU GO ABROAD THROUGH A PRIVATE RECRUITMENT AGENCY (MOU PROCESS)?

26% YES



HOW MUCH DID YOU PAY FOR THE FACILITATION OF MIGRATION?

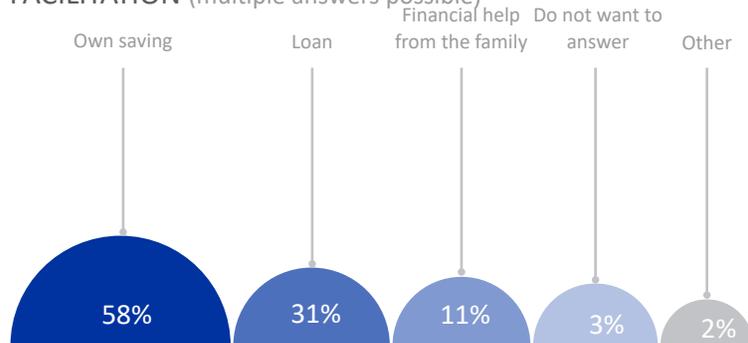
USD 348

Average amount paid by those who used a Private Recruitment Agency (MOU Process) to go abroad

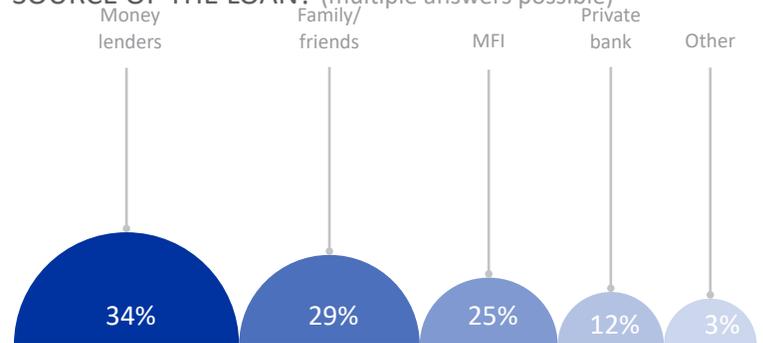
USD 304

Average amount paid by those who did not use a Private Recruitment Agency (MOU Process) to go abroad

HOW DID YOU OBTAIN MONEY FOR MIGRATION FACILITATION (multiple answers possible)

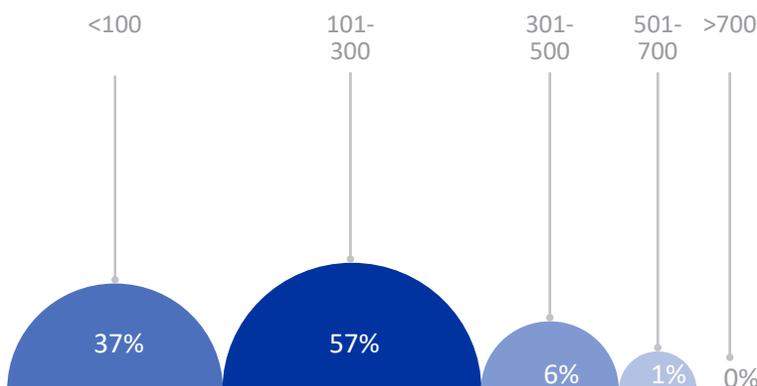


IF YOU USED A LOAN TO OBTAIN MONEY, WHAT WAS THE SOURCE OF THE LOAN? (multiple answers possible)

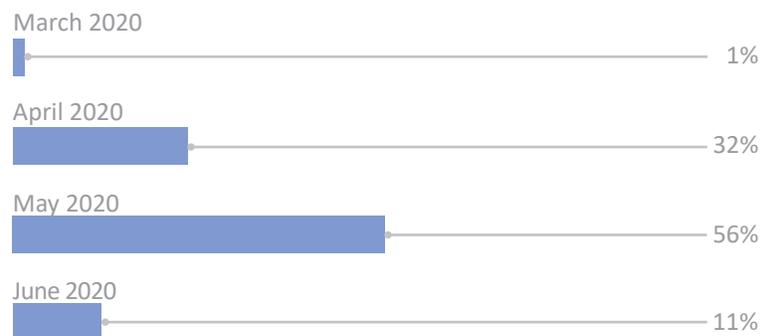


REMITTANCES (USD) (top 4 answers)

74% Of respondents sent money home every month

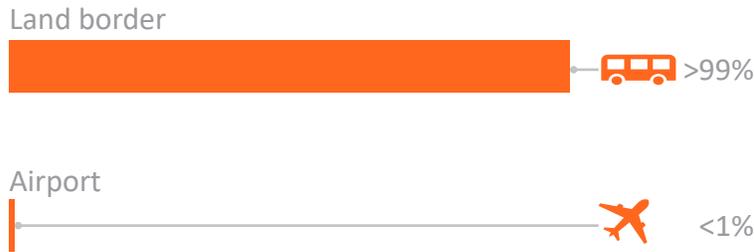


WHEN DID YOU RETURN TO CAMBODIA?

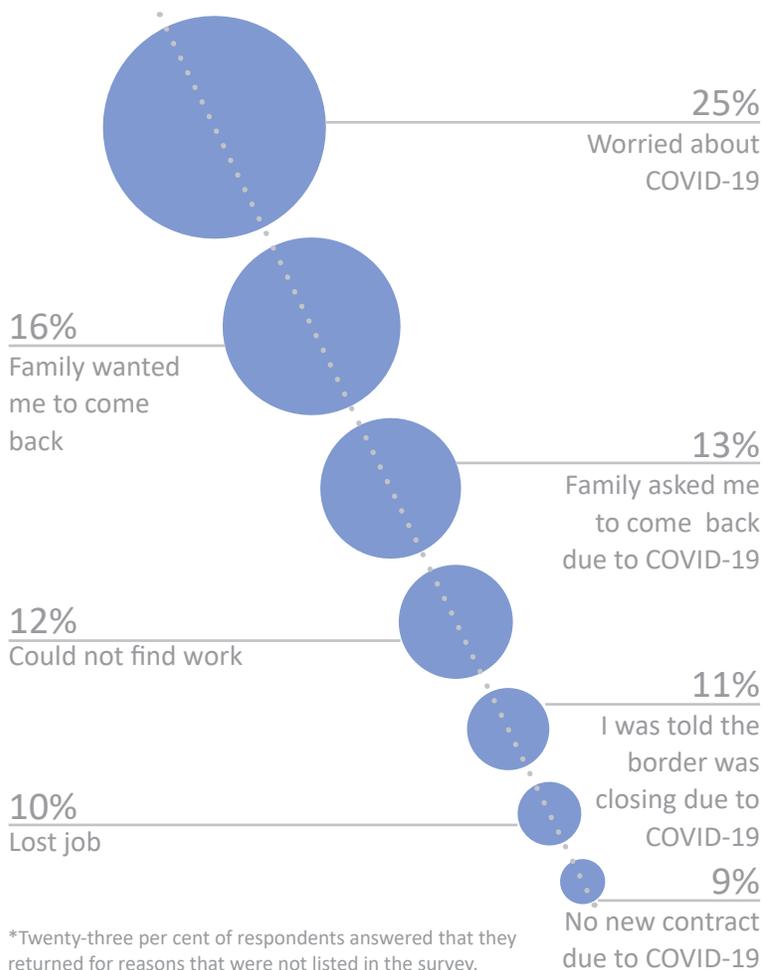




WHAT WAS YOUR POINT OF ENTRY?

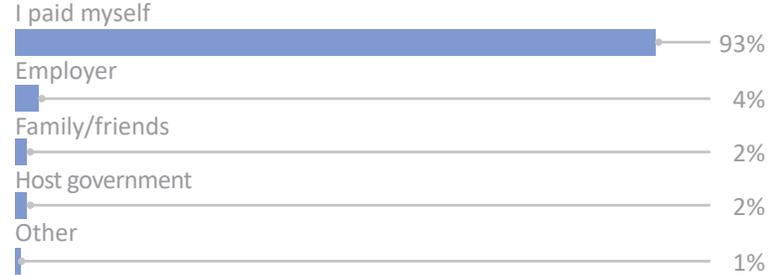


WHY DID YOU RETURN TO CAMBODIA*? (top 7 answers, multiple answers possible)

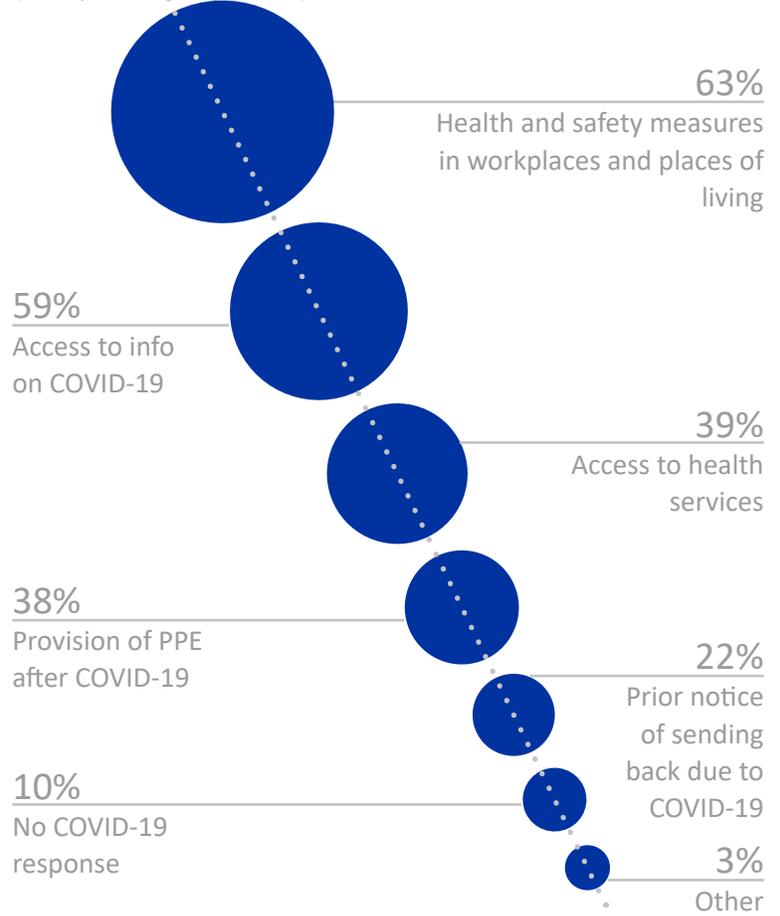


One out of four of the respondents indicated that they returned because they were worried about COVID-19. Another 16 per cent of the respondents returned because their family wanted them to come back, 13 per cent were asked to return specifically because of COVID-19. Other reasons to return included the inability to find work (12%), the border that was closing due to COVID-19 (11%) and contract that did not get renewed due to COVID-19 (9%).

WHO PAID FOR YOUR RETURN JOURNEY? (multiple answers possible)



IF YOU RETURNED TO CAMBODIA DUE TO COVID-19, WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THE HOST COUNTRY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC? (multiple answers possible)



Respondents who reported having returned due to COVID-19 concerns, were further asked about their experience in the host country once the pandemic had started. It appears that a vast majority of migrants had access to health and safety measures at work and at home (63%) and information on COVID-19 (59%). However, only 39 per cent reported access to healthcare services. Ten per cent reported there was no COVID-19 response.



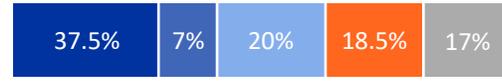
CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY RETURNING MIGRANTS

HAVE YOU FACED ANY CHALLENGES SINCE YOUR RETURN?

45% YES



DROP (%) IN HOUSEHOLD IN-COME AFTER RETURN



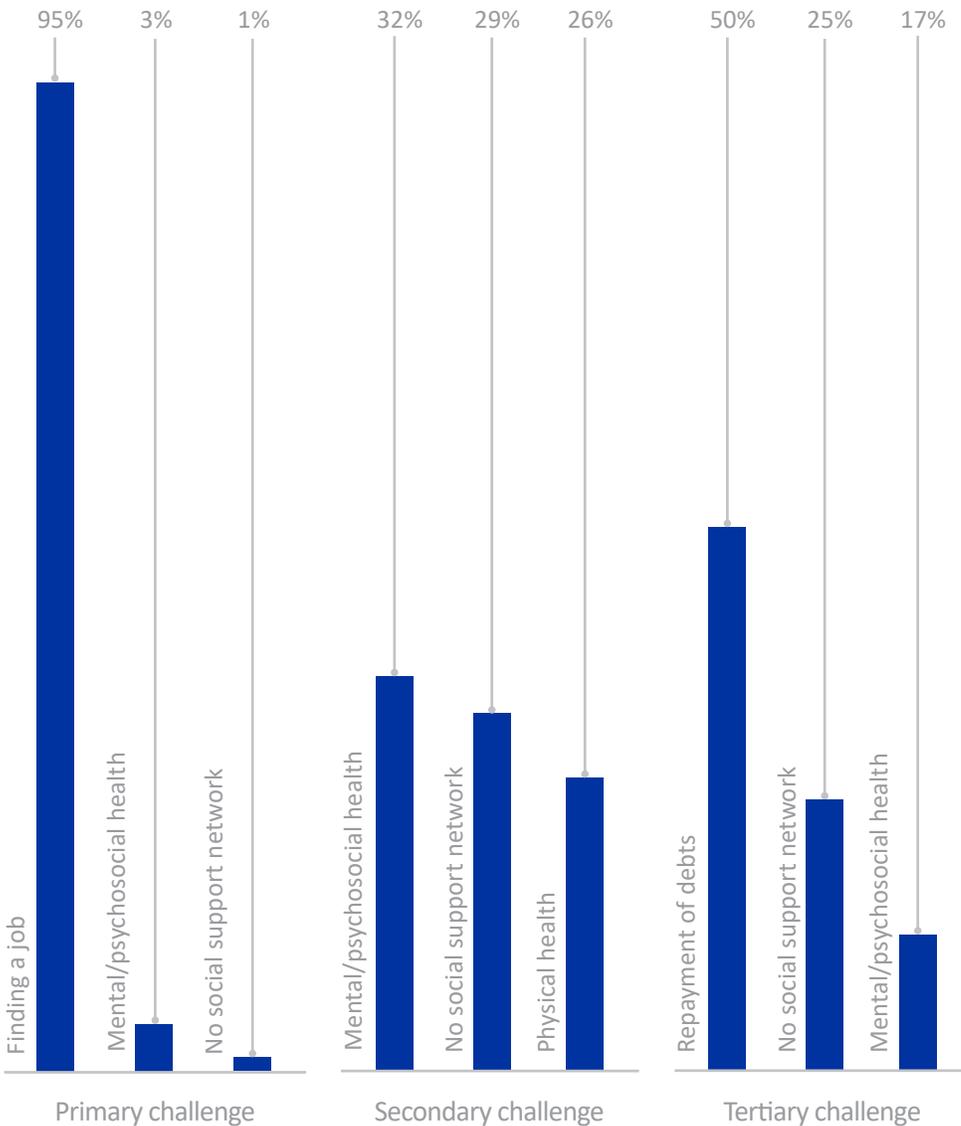
Drop in household income after return



Forty-five percent of respondents indicated that they experienced challenges since they returned to their community.

However, when probed further about the impact of COVID-19 crisis and their return on their income, a vast majority have indicated they have experienced reductions in their household income. Only 38 per cent of the migrants surveyed did not report any decrease in their household income.

IF YOU EXPERIENCED CHALLENGES SINCE YOUR RETURN, WHAT CHALLENGES DID YOU EXPERIENCE? (top 3 answers)



Respondents were also asked to list their three biggest challenges since their return. Finding a job is unmistakably the biggest challenge faced by the returning migrants at the moment (95%). Among other challenges, respondents named mental/psychosocial health, no social support network, physical health and repayment of debts.

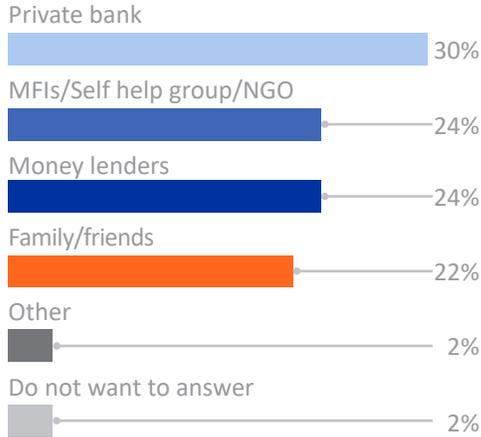


DEBT AMONG RETURNING MIGRANTS

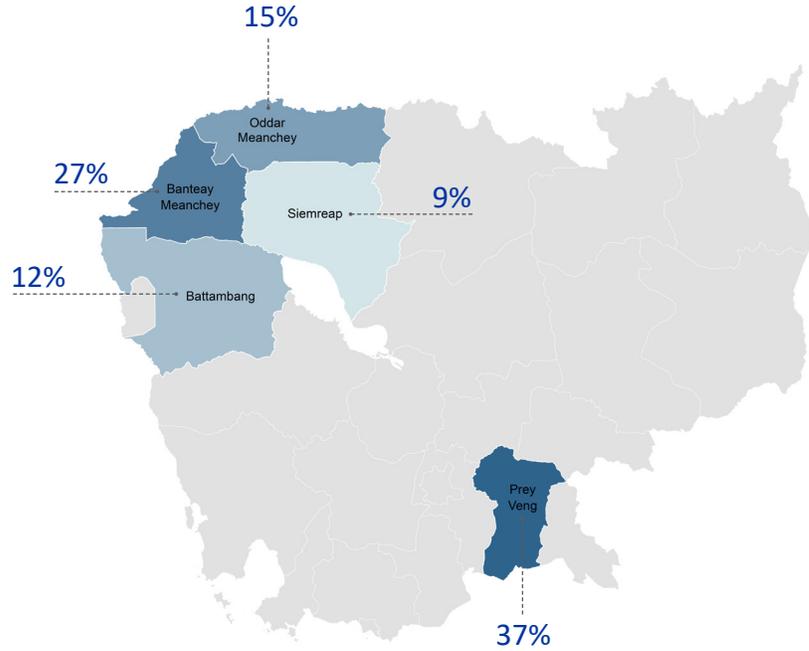
38%

Of respondents/respondent households owed debt

To whom do you owe your debt? (multiple answers possible)



RESPONDENTS WHO OWE DEBT BY PROVINCE



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PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS/RESPONDENT HOUSEHOLDS THAT OWE DEBT BY PROVINCE AND LENDER TYPE (top 4 answers, multiple answers possible)

Legend by type of lender: Money lenders (dark blue), MFIs/Self Help Group/NGO (medium blue), Private bank (light blue), Family/friends (orange)

1. Banteay Meanchey



4. Prey Veng



2. Battambang



5. Siem Reap

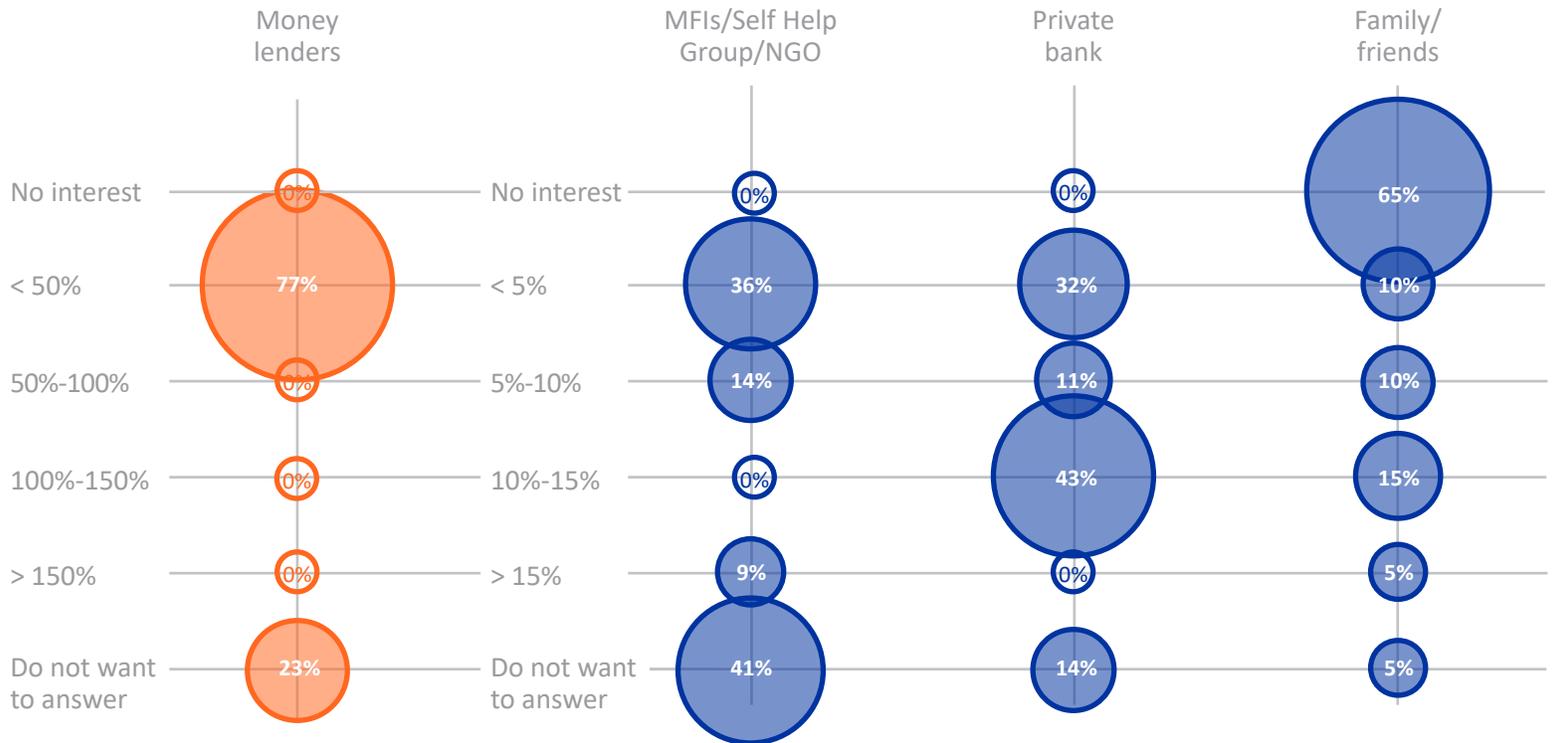


3. Oddar Meanchey





INTEREST RATES



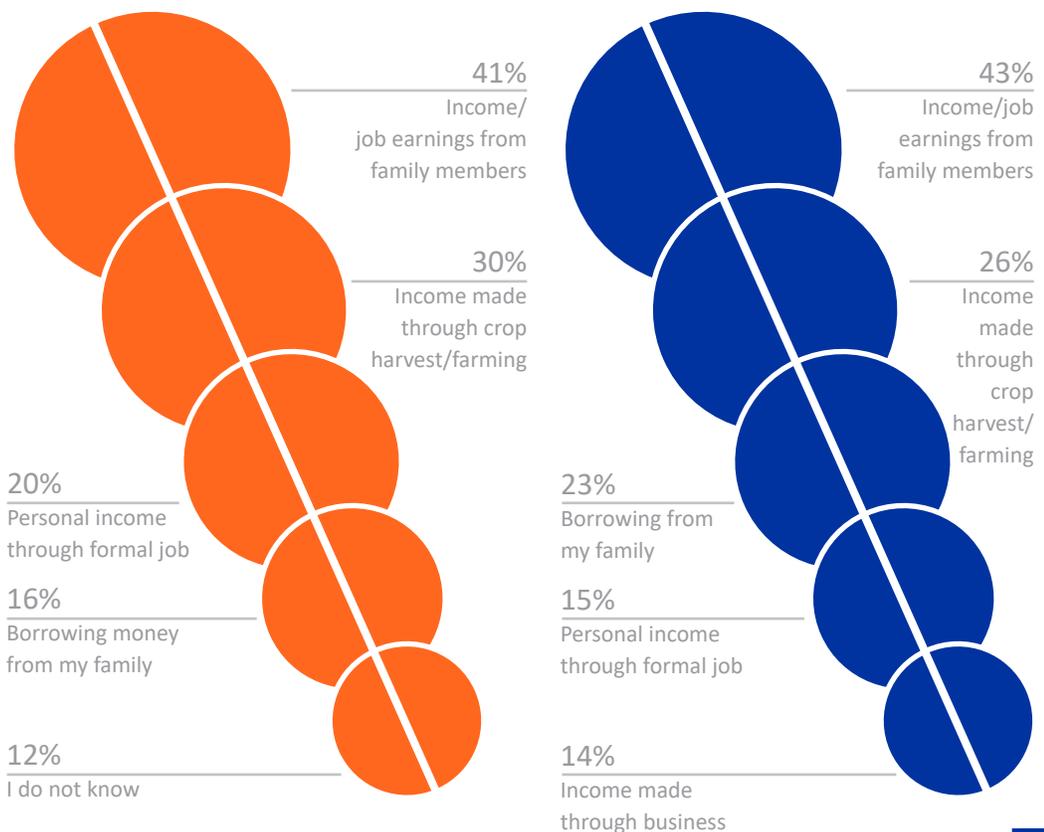
Thirty-eight per cent of respondents that were interviewed for this survey reported that they, or their household, owed debt. Nearly one third of respondents owed their debt to a private bank (30%). Twenty-four per cent to money lenders and another 24 per cent to MFI, a Self-Help Group or an NGO. Finally, 22 per cent owed their debt to family and friends.

The survey also intended to capture whether the migrants' return affected their plans to repay their debt. The intention to repay debt with income/job earnings from family members have remained steady. Similarly, income made through crop harvest/farming was the second most frequent method of debt repayment before and after return. It appears that the migrants' return might lead to their further indebtedness, as seven per cent more respondents declared they plan to borrow money from their families to repay their debt. However, 14 per cent of surveyed migrants reported they plan to generate income through their own business to repay their debt.

DEBT REPAYMENT (top 5 answers, multiple answers possible)

Before your return, how did you plan to repay this debt?

How do you plan to repay this debt now?



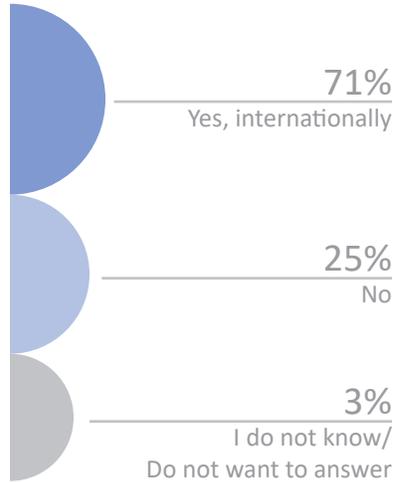


FUTURE ASPIRATIONS OF RETURNING MIGRANTS

When interviewed about their future migration plans, 71 per cent of respondents expressed the desire to re-migrate. A large proportion of those that want to re-migrate want to do so after COVID-19 ends (86%). Moreover, all of the respondents who want to re-migrate reported they wish to re-migrate back to Thailand, where they have just returned from.

Finally, with regard to skills training, only one per cent of respondents reported to have taken a training to upgrade their skills. Sixty-seven per cent of those who had a training also received a training certificate. Only 24 per cent of respondents said they are interested in upgrading their skills sets.

DO YOU WANT TO RE-MIGRATE?



1%

Of respondents have taken training to upgrade their skill set in Cambodia

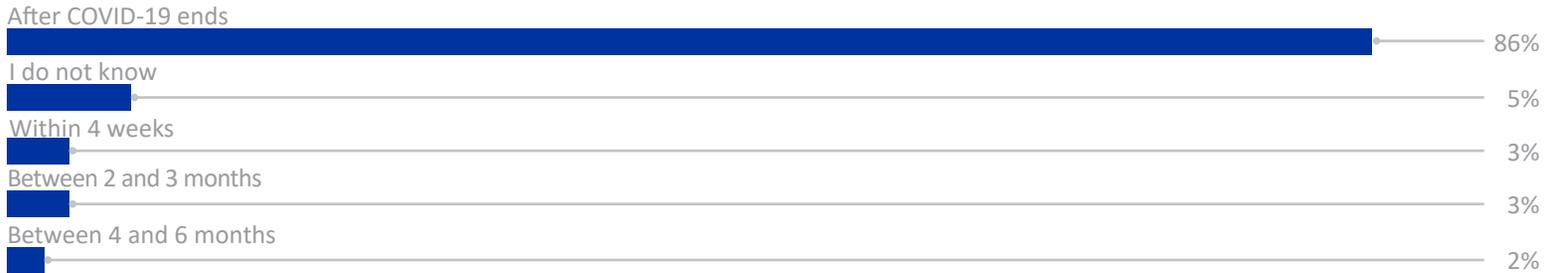
67%

Of respondents who have taken training to upgrade their skill set have a **training certificate**

24%

Of respondents are interested in upgrading their skill set

IF YOU WISH TO RE-MIGRATE, WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO DO SO?



DO YOU WANT TO RE-MIGRATE TO THE SAME COUNTRY?

100% YES

Percentage of respondents who want to re-migrate to the same country

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?

100%

Percentage of respondents who want to re-migrate to Thailand





DTM

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