FLOW MONITORING SURVEY: INSIGHTS INTO THE PROFILES AND VULNERABILITIES OF MYANMAR MIGRANTS TO THAILAND (RANONG-KAWTHAUNG)

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)

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DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX (DTM)

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures and Tables

Figures

Tables

Maps

Pictures

Introduction

International labour migration plays a key role in the South-East Asian context. In Thailand, factors such as an ageing population, a low unemployment rate and continued economic growth have led to a structural demand for migrant labour over the past decades. According to the 2019 UN Thailand Migration Report, "the number of non-Thai residents within the country has increased from an estimated 3.7 million in 2014 to 4.9 million in 2018"(p. XI). This estimate includes approximately 3.9 million migrant workers from Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam. Out of the total migrant worker population, an estimated 2.3 million individuals come from Myanmar alone, making it the primary country of origin for migrant workers in Thailand. Furthermore, as official statistics do not include the number of undocumented migrants, it is believed that the actual number of migrants living and working in Thailand is higher still.[1]

To gain a better understanding of the migration patterns and the nature of labour migration flows from Myanmar to Thailand - with a particular focus on any possible vulnerabilities - IOM Thailand's Migrant Assistance and Counter-Trafficking Unit initiated a survey exercise in January 2020 in Ranong Province, using one of the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) tools - the Flow Monitoring Survey (FMS) component. Flow Monitoring is a tool designed to track movement flows, and the overall situation at key points of origin, transit and destination. It is an optimal tool to provide a more detailed understanding of the migration situation at the Thai-Myanmar border. With special consideration to the experience of migrant workers, IOM aimed to gain a deeper understanding of migrants' profiles, drivers of migration, level of preparedness for migration, as well as associated vulnerabilities and return intentions. This data collection was part of a larger regional activity undertaken since 2018 across various countries in Southeast Asia. It built upon Flow Monitoring activities established along the Thai-Myanmar border in Tak Province, Thailand, from June 2018 until May 2019 as well as Flow Monitoring activities along the Thai-Cambodia border, from March 2019 until September 2019, and Flow Monitoring activities along the Thai-Lao border, from mid-July to mid-August 2019.

From mid-January to mid-March 2020, a total of 2,013 respondents were surveyed in Ranong Province, of whom 1,962 (943 female) identified as migrant workers. The 1,962 migrant workers were categorized in two different migrant groups. The first group was comprised of incoming migrants, arriving in Thailand prior to starting employment (n=909) and the second group were outgoing migrants, returning to Myanmar after their employment ended (n=1,053). Two different survey tools were designed to capture the most accurate information possible for both target groups. The findings serve to identify migration patterns, as well as common challenges and vulnerabilities, and can be used to better inform policy and programming for the protection and assistance of migrant workers. Data collected in Ranong Province can also be used to explore differences and similarities with the experiences of Myanmar labour migrants entering Thailand through Tak Province, as well as contribute to further exploring the varying migration patterns and vulnerabilities of labour migrants from Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic to Thailand.

Finally, as this data was collected prior to the implementation of COVID-19 related restrictions in Thailand, it can also serve as a reliable baseline on the experiences and vulnerabilities of Myanmar labour migrants to Thailand, prior to the economic consequences of the ongoing pandemic.

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[1]United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand (2019). Thailand Migration Report 2019. Bangkok. Retrieved from:http://thailand.iom.int/sites/default/files/document/publications/Thailand%20Report%202019_22012019_LowRes.pdf

Executive Summary

Migrant Profiles

Myanmar migrant workers entering or exiting Thailand in Ranong Province were predominately married males between 21 and 40 years of age with primary school education. The majority of respondents had children, who were most often in Myanmar. The most common length of stay in Thailand was over a year, and the main province of destination was Ranong, followed by Chumphon, and Surat Thani. Tanintharyi, Yangon and Mon State were the main migrant-sending states in Myanmar. Most respondents identified as being of Barmar, Tanintharyi, Mon or mixed ethnicity.

Drivers of Migration

In total, 16 per cent of the sample was unemployed before migrating to Thailand. The data indicates that the unemployment rate prior to migration was higher amongst females (19%) than males (13%). Prior to migration, a third of the sample were employed on a daily wage basis and one in five respondents were self-employed. The main reason for migration cited was employment (78%), followed by the employment of a spouse (20%). Around half of the sample population had prior experience of migrating to Thailand for employment. Myanmar migrants stated preferring migrating to Thailand over other countries in the region because of its geographical proximity and easily accessible labour market. The presence of family and friends in Thailand was also reported as an important factor for migrating to Thailand. The importance of family and friends in Thailand, and of returning migrants as key sources of information prior to migration, reinforces the migration network theory which suggests that migrants usually depend on pre-established networks in their country of destination.

Pre-migration Preparations and Arrangements

Most migrants had a job lined up before undertaking their migration journey to Thailand. Respondents mainly found their job through the help of family or friends in Thailand. Manufacturing, agriculture and construction were the most common sectors of employment. On average, migrants paid around 125 USD for their migration journey. No noticeable difference was observed in this regard between incoming and outgoing migrants or between male and female respondents. Ways to finance the cost of migration were also quite homogeneous across the entire sample population. Respondents predominantly financed their migration with their savings and income, but also by borrowing money from family and friends at home or in Thailand. Support was mostly received from family or friends in Thailand, family and friends in Myanmar and brokers. Most commonly, support actors helped migrants with transportation arrangements, employment and documentation.

Migrants' Vulnerabilities

On average, migrants ranked their ability to speak, understand and read Thai as relatively low. With respect to documentation status, all but 5 per cent of the sample population reported they had documents to enter Thailand. However, one in five daily workers entered Thailand without any form of documentation. The highest proportion of respondents who entered Thailand without any documents was amongst people who worked in the agricultural sector. One in three respondents earned below the median minimum wage of 320 THB per day.[2] Fewer than one in ten people reported experiencing problems during their journey to Thailand, with only minor differences reported by male and female respondents or by incoming and outgoing migrants. The proportion of incoming migrants who

expected to face problems at the workplace (6%) was below the share of returning migrants who actually faced challenges at work (14%). Family and friends in Thailand were the main support mechanism in case of problems in Thailand. Six out of ten respondents sent or were planning to send remittances. On average, returning migrants reported remitting 105 USD per month.

Return

Aside from those respondents who were returning to Myanmar to visit family and friends, common reasons for return were the end of a visa or work permit, the family of respondents wanting them to come back, or the termination of an employment contract. Almost a quarter of returning migrants expected to face some sort of challenge upon return to Myanmar. These challenges were mostly associated with finding income-generating opportunities or with their physical health. Approximately one in ten respondents from the return sample population reported their intention to migrate again. In most cases, they reported wanting to migrate to Thailand again. Higher wages and better work conditions in countries of destination were cited as the primary reasons for the intention to re-migrate. Roughly seven out of ten respondents reported that they have more savings now as compared to when they migrated to Thailand, and around six out of ten migrants reported that their general financial situation improved through migration.

[2]Daily minimum wage varies from province to province in Thailand, with 320 THB per day representing the median minimum wage as of 1 January 2020

Picture 1 - Migrant departs Thailand from Hua Thanon border crossing point in Kra Buri district

Methodology

The methodology used for this study builds on that used for similar data collection exercises conducted in Tak Province from June to December 2018 and subsequently in Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic in 2019. To enable comparisions to be drawn, the survey used in this study is also designed on the basis of previous research and uses the same research questions and key thematic areas as in prior data collection. This study analyzes data collected between January and March 2020 in Ranong Province, at the southern part of the Thai-Myanmar border. The data collection was conducted using two different survey tools designed to capture the most accurate information about incoming and returning Myanmar migrant workers (see Table 1).

Table 1 - DTM Survey Tools

Tool	Target Population	Definition
FMS Tool 1	Myanmar migrants that are crossing the border from Myanmar into Thailand	Myanmar nationals that are entering Thailand with the intention to work, irrespective of whether they come to Thailand for daily work or intend to stay longer. Work is defined as taking up employment from an employer, i.e. self-employment is not considered working in this survey.
FMS Tool 2	Myanmar migrants that are returning from Thailand to Myanmar	Myanmar nationals that are going back/ returning to Myanmar after having worked for at least one day in Thailand. Work is defined as taking up employment from an employer, i.e. self-employment is not considered working in this survey.

The analysis is based on surveys collected in Ranong Mueang and Kra Buri Districts, in Ranong Province. A total of 937 surveys were collected with survey Tool 1 - incoming Myanmar migrants to Thailand, and 1,076 surveys were collected with survey Tool 2 - returning Myanmar migrants to Myanmar. The combined sample population of the two tools consists of 2,013 respondents, of whom 1,962 individuals were identified as Myanmar migrant workers. The Flow Monitoring Surveys conducted at select border crossing points were designed to collect and compile structured data to increase the overall understanding of labour migration trends between Thailand and Myanmar. The analysis of the survey data will follow the structure of the pre-designed thematic areas as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 - Thematic Areas

1	2	3	4	5
Migrant profiles (demographics + socio-economic)	Drivers of migration	Pre-migration arrangements/ preparations	Vulnerabilities en route and upon arrival in Thailand	Reasons for return and challenges upon return

Geographical Location

For the purpose of this assessment, data was collected across a total of six locations – three in Ranong Mueang district and three in Kra Buri distict. Locations were selected on the basis of key informant interviews held with both government and non-governmental counterparts, as well as through ob-servation. During the observation phase, the team conducted field visits at the border and identified the main formal and informal crossing points for labour migration, as well as key transit locations for incoming and returning Myanmar migrant workers. Enumerators were then deployed to identify the main hours and days for crossings and/or transit, as well as any possible data collection related challenges. Through the observation phase, the following Flow Monitoring Survey points were identified:

- The official border crossing point at Saphan Pla Pier in Ranong Mueang
- Ranong Bus Station, where migrant workers transit to go to other parts of Thailand
- The Immigration Detention Centre (IDC)
- Unofficial border crossing points and nearby waiting/transit areas where migrant workers get picked up by employers

Locations of Flow Monitoring Survey points are identified on Map 1 (p. 9).

Data Collection Implementation

Enumerators were deployed to Flow Monitoring Survey points to collect close-ended survey data on Myanmar migrants crossing the border into Thailand for employment purposes or returning to Myanmar after concluding their labour migration. All data was collected by enumerators recruited and trained by IOM staff. In order to establish a positive relationship and sense of trust with the local population, as well as to avoid difficulties due to language barriers between respondents and interviewers, IOM only recruited local border residents who know the area, the target population and Myanmar language well. All enumerators were trained for two days on the survey content and set-up procedures and were provided with one-on-one mentoring all throughout the duration of the data collection. The survey data was collected using the KoboCollect application installed on tablets. The KoboCollect application automatically uploads completed surveys online. This makes it easier to monitor daily data entries and target compliances.

Sample Size

In order to calculate sample size, the team had access to official statistics from the Thai Immigration Bureau. Enumerators also conducted a counting exercise at unofficial border crossing points over a period of two weeks, in order to estimate the volume of daily flows for locations where official data was not available. Recognizing that border crossings are subject to seasonal shifts, however, it was determined that two weeks of data was not sufficient to estimate a correct sample size. The team therefore preferred to calculate the target sample size using an unknown population, with a 99 per cent confidence level and a confidence interval ranging from 5 to 3 per cent.

Table 3 - Sample Size Overview

Direction of Flows	Target sample size	Actual Number of respondents
Inflows	666 – 1,849	**909**
Outflows	666 – 1,849	**1,053**
TOTAL	666 – 1,849	**1,962**

Data Limitations

The data presented in this study should not be considered as representative of all Myanmar migrant workers that are coming to Thailand or returning to Myanmar. This data analysis only provides information on those Myanmar migrant workers that entered or exited Thailand through selected crossing points in Ranong Province at the time of the assessment. This data does not provide information on migrants who entered or exited Thailand in any other location or at any other point in time. This is important to underline, as migration trends and vulnerabilities of Myanmar migrant workers may have changed significantly as a result of the changed economic landscape post- COVID-19.

For numeric variables such as remittances, wages and the cost of migration, large outliers were removed from the analysis to avoid skewing results. In some cases, this might lead to slight inaccuracies in the results, especially when taking the mean of these numeric variables. To keep this bias to a minimum, we present different range brackets for remittances, wages and journey costs.

Data Analysis

Ranong Province Data

Between 10 January 2020 and 22 March 2020, IOM Thailand collected a total of 2,013 surveys using two questionnaire tools designed using the DTM Flow Monitoring component and adapted to fit the context of cross-border labour migration in Ranong Province, Thailand. To capture the migrant population traveling from Myanmar to Thailand, the Tool 1 survey asked migrants if they intended to stay in Thailand or if they had plans to travel further. The results show that 11 survey respondents out of the 937 surveyed under Tool 1 reported that they did not wish to stay in Thailand. Of these 11 respondents, the majority intended to travel on further to Malaysia (8 individuals) and the remainder to the People's Republic of China (2 individuals) and Bangladesh (1 individual). Furthermore, 30 respondents reported that they did not have the intention to work in Thailand. All these respondents who did not wish to stay and/ or work in Thailand, comprising 41 individuals, were removed from the sample. In addition, another 10 observations were removed during the data cleaning process. The total sample size for analysis in the end was then n= 1,962. Of the 1,962 surveys, a total of 1,443 interviews were collected in the district of Ranong Mueang and 519 surveys were collected in the district of Kra Buri. Looking at the two survey tools, 909 surveys were collected with Tool 1 (incoming Myanmar nationals) and 1,053 surveys with Tool 2 (returning Myanmar nationals).

Map 1 - Locations of Data Collection
● Official crossing point ● Unofficial crossing point ● Bus Station

Thailand

Ranong Province

Locations in Ranong Mueang District

Locations in Kra Buri District

Thematic Area 1 - Migrant Profiles

Myanmar migrant workers entering or exiting Thailand in Ranong Province were predominately married males between 21 and 40 years of age with primary school education. The majority of respondents had children, who were most often in Myanmar. The most common length of stay in Thailand was over a year, and the main province of destination was Ranong, followed by Chumphon, and Surat Thani. Tanintharyi, Yangon and Mon State were the main migrant-sending states in Myanmar. Most respondents identified as being of Barmar, Tanintharyi, Mon or mixed ethnicity.

Socio-Demographic Profiles

Looking at the full dataset of Myanmar migrant workers (n=1,962), the data indicates that all but 4 respondents identified as Myanmar nationals, with the remaining 4 identifying as Myanmar Muslims. The gender distribution was similar between incoming and returning migrants and overall, 52 per cent of the sample population were males and 48 per cent females. This figure is slightly different from the gender distribution identified during DTM data collection in Tak Province between June and December 2018, where the share of males was reported at 57 per cent.

Looking at age, it was found that the average respondent was 33 years old. The largest cohorts of participants were between 21 and 30 years old (39%) and between 31 and 40 years old (33%).

The data collection confirms the trend observed in Tak Province, namely that Myanmar migrants tend to be married (68%) rather than single (25%). Again, similarly to what was observed during data collection in Tak Province, most respondents indicated having children (63%). The share was slightly higher among incoming migrants (66%) than returning migrants (61%). More females reported having children (71%) than males (56%). When looking at the location of children, around 71 per cent of the sample population with children reported having at least one child in Myanmar, while 41 per cent reported having at least one child with them in Thailand.

Figure 1 - Population Pyramid (n=1,962)*

FEMALE 943 (48%) MALE 1,012 (52%)

Age	Female	Male
61+	0%	0%
51-60	2%	2%
41-50	8%	8%
31-40	15%	18%
21-30	19%	20%
15-20	4%	4%
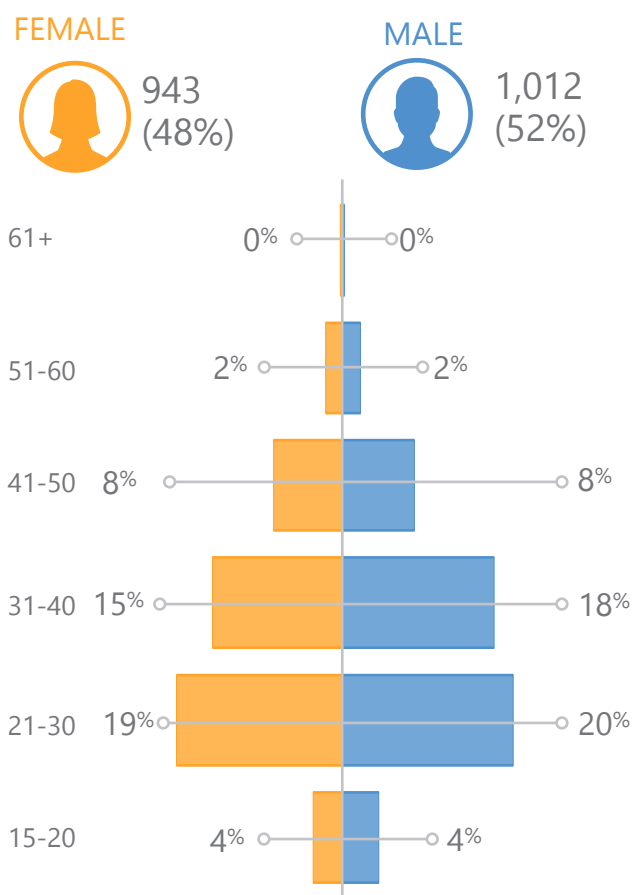
Figure 2 - Share of Respondents with Children (n=1,962)

Total: **63%** Yes
Incoming: **66%** Yes
Returning: **61%** Yes
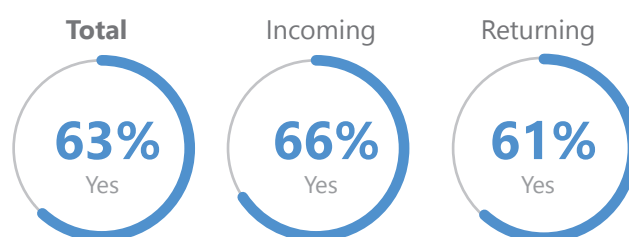
Figure 3 - Marital Status (n=1,962)

7% separated/divorced, widowed or engaged

25% Single

68% Married/civil union
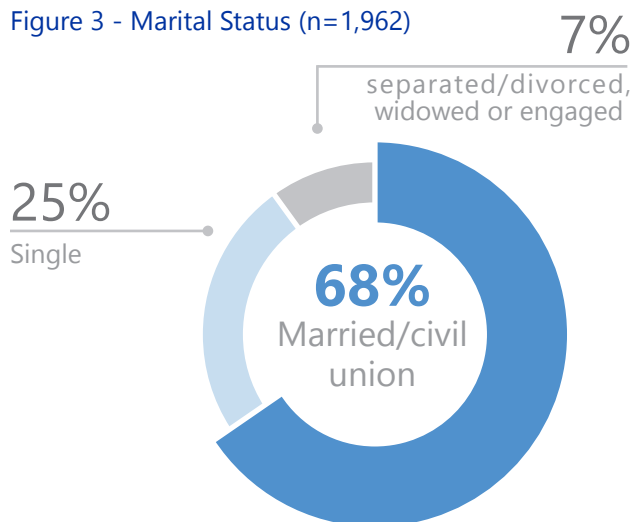
*Note: 7 respondents reported their gender as "other". Due to the low number of respondents in this category, when analyzing gender differences, they were removed from the sample population.

This latter figure is quite different from what was observed during DTM data collection in Tak Province, where the share of respondents with children in Thailand was just below 22 per cent. Looking at the full sample from Ranong Province, around 7 per cent reported having children living in a third country which is neither Thailand nor Myanmar. Overall, more females reported being accompanied by their children to Thailand than males (43 vs. 39 per cent).

On average, according to this assessment, most Myanmar migrant workers have completed primary education (53%) or secondary education (33%). No noticeable difference was observed between the education level of incoming migrants and returning migrants. However, female respondents were more likely to have completed secondary education as compared to male respondents (38% compared to 32%), and their education level was generally higher. Overall, 8 per cent of respondents did not have any education, and less than 1 per cent reported having completed a bachelor's degree or higher levels of education. Figure 4 shows the overall education level by gender.

Figure 4 - Overall Education Level by Gender (n=1,955)   ● Female ● Male

| No education | Primary education | Secondary education | Other (religious education, vocational training, bachelor's degree or higher) |
| 8% 8% | 52% 55% | 38% 32% | 2% 5% |
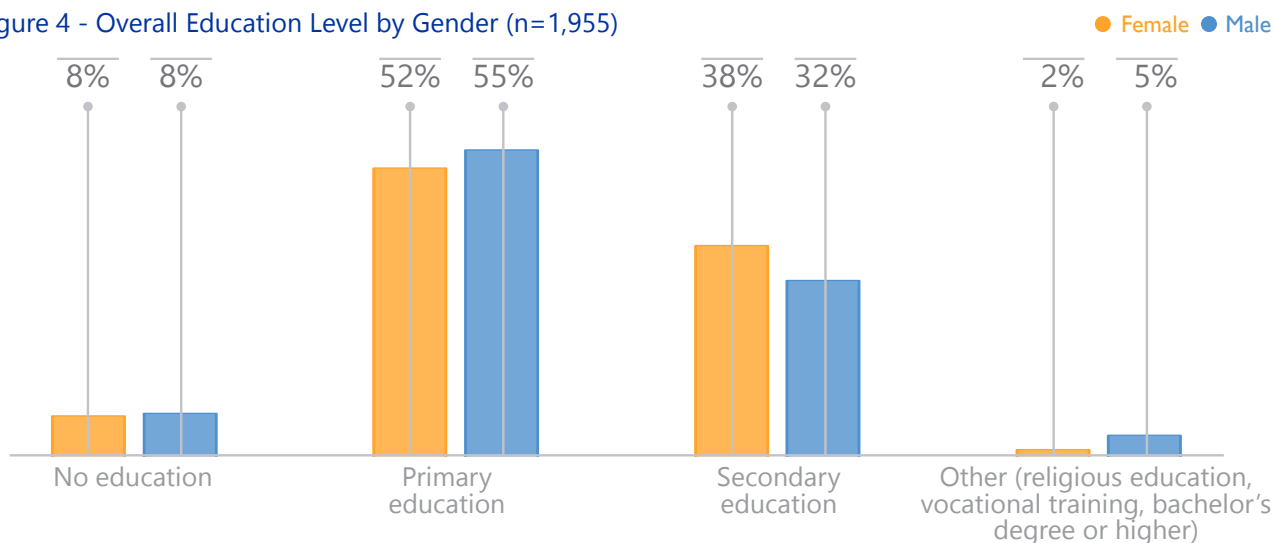
Length of Stay in Thailand

Incoming migrants were asked about their intended duration of stay in Thailand while returning migrants were asked to specify how long they stayed in Thailand. The results of this assessment are similar to findings from Tak Province, showing that most incoming migrants intend to stay in Thailand for over a year. As shown in Figure 5 below, 64 per cent of incoming migrants reported the intention to stay in Thailand for over a year. The actual length of stay in Thailand for most returning migrants was also over a year (66%).

Figure 5 - Expected Length of Stay in Thailand (Incoming Migrants) vs Actual Time Spent in Thailand (Returning Migrants) (n=1,962)   ● Incoming migrants ● Returning migrants

	Returning	Incoming
Daily work	7%	5%
Less than 1 month	1%	1%
1 month - 6 months	8%	5%
7 months - 1 year	14%	10%
Over 1 year	66%	64%
Permanently		2%
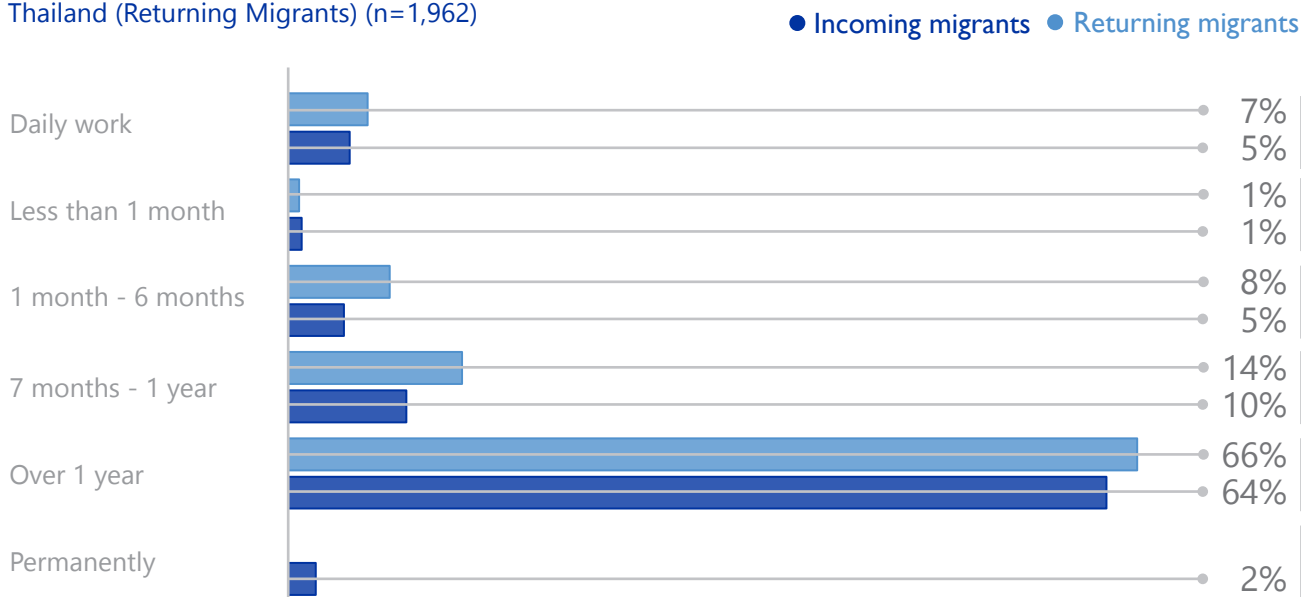
Note: 13 per cent of incoming migrants and 4 per cent of returning migrants answered either "I don't know" or "I do not want to answer".

Places of Origin and Destination

Of the total sample, all but 11 migrants reported that Myanmar was their last country of residence before coming to Thailand. The remaining 11 Myanmar migrants reported that their last country of residence was either Malaysia, the People's Republic of China, or Bangladesh.

Those respondents who reported that their last country of residence was Myanmar were asked which was their last state of residence in Myanmar before migrating to Thailand. As illustrated in the figure below, 63 per cent of the total population came from Tanintharyi, which is the Myanmar state bordering Ranong Province. This finding reinforces the idea that, amongst other factors, geographical proximity is an important consideration in the decision to migrate to Thailand. In order, the other primary places of origin for Myanmar migrant workers were Mon State (11%), Yangon Region (9%) and Rakhine State (4%).

The primary ethnicities identified in this assessment were Barmar (52%), Tanintharyi (23%), Mon (9%) and mixed ethnicity (5%). The distribution is similar between incoming and returning migrants. Barmar, as one of the most common ethnicities in Myanmar, was the largest represented ethnic group. There are some differences in the ethnicity of migrants identified in this report as compared to what was observed during DTM data collection in Tak Province. In Tak, the second and third most common ethnicities reported among Myanmar migrants coming to Thailand were Karen (20%) and Mon (14.5%).

Figure 6 - Main States of Origin by Population Group (n=1,810)

	Tanintharyi	Mon	Yangon	Rakhine	Other
Total	63%	11%	9%	4%	13%
Incoming	65%	9%	8%	5%	13%
Returning	61%	14%	9%	3%	13%
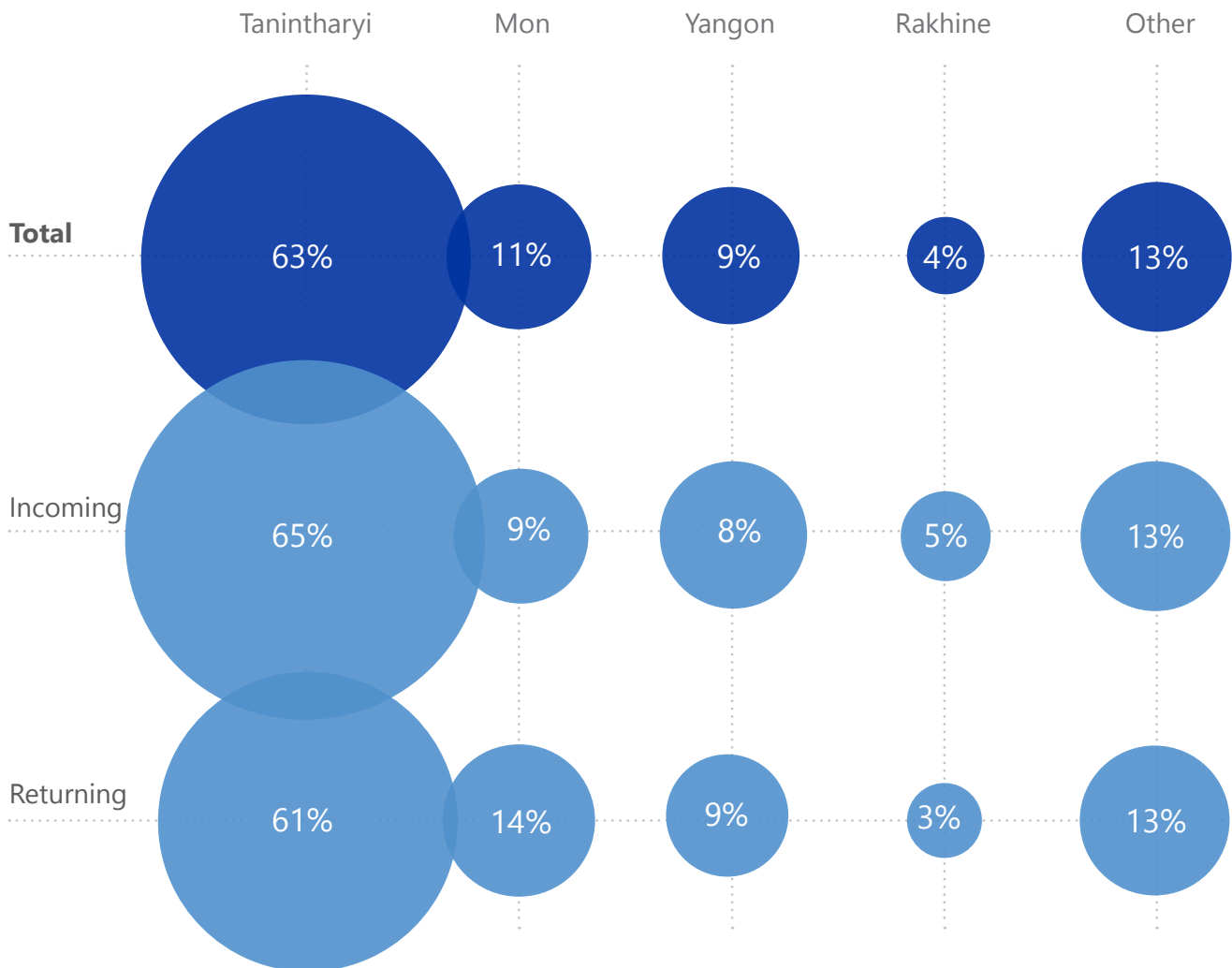
Map 2 - Last State of Residence in Myanmar (n=1,810)

PROPORTION OF MIGRANTS SURVEYED

- 0%
- >0% - 1%
- >1% - 2%
- >2% - 5%
- >5% - 10%
- >10% - 20%
- >20%

BHUTAN

INDIA

BANGLADESH

CHINA

VIET NAM

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

THAILAND

CAMBODIA

KACHIN

SAGAING

SHAN (NORTH)

CHIN

MANDALAY

SHAN (SOUTH)

SHAN (EAST)

RAKHINE

MAGWAY

NAY PYI TAW

KAYAH

BAGO (WEST)

BAGO (EAST)

YANGON

KAYIN

AYEYARWADY

MON

TANINTHARYI

Kilometers

0   75   150   300

The boundaries and names shown and the designation used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM

As part of this assessment, incoming migrants were asked about their intended province of destination in Thailand, and returning migrants were asked which provinces they had lived in. This data collection provides valuable information on migration patterns, as well as differences in living and working conditions across the various Thai provinces, allowing for more targeted programmatic interventions.

The results of this assessment indicate substantially different provinces of destinations when compared to data collection undertaken in Tak Province. While Myanmar migrants entering through crossing points in Tak Province reported their destinations as Bangkok (35.5%), Tak (11%), Chon Buri (8%) or Samut Sakhon (7%), incoming migrants in Ranong reported their intention to stay in Ranong (32%), or to travel on to Chumphon (12%), Surat Thani (12%), Krabi (9%) or Phuket (6%). As a point of comparison, just 6 per cent of incoming migrants population in Ranong intend to live Bangkok.

In this assessment, some key differences were observed between incoming and returning migrants. While 71 per cent of returning migrants reported having lived and worked in Ranong Province, just 32 per cent of incoming migrants indicated Ranong as their province of destination.

Figure 7 - Main Provinces of Destination by Population Group (n=1,959)
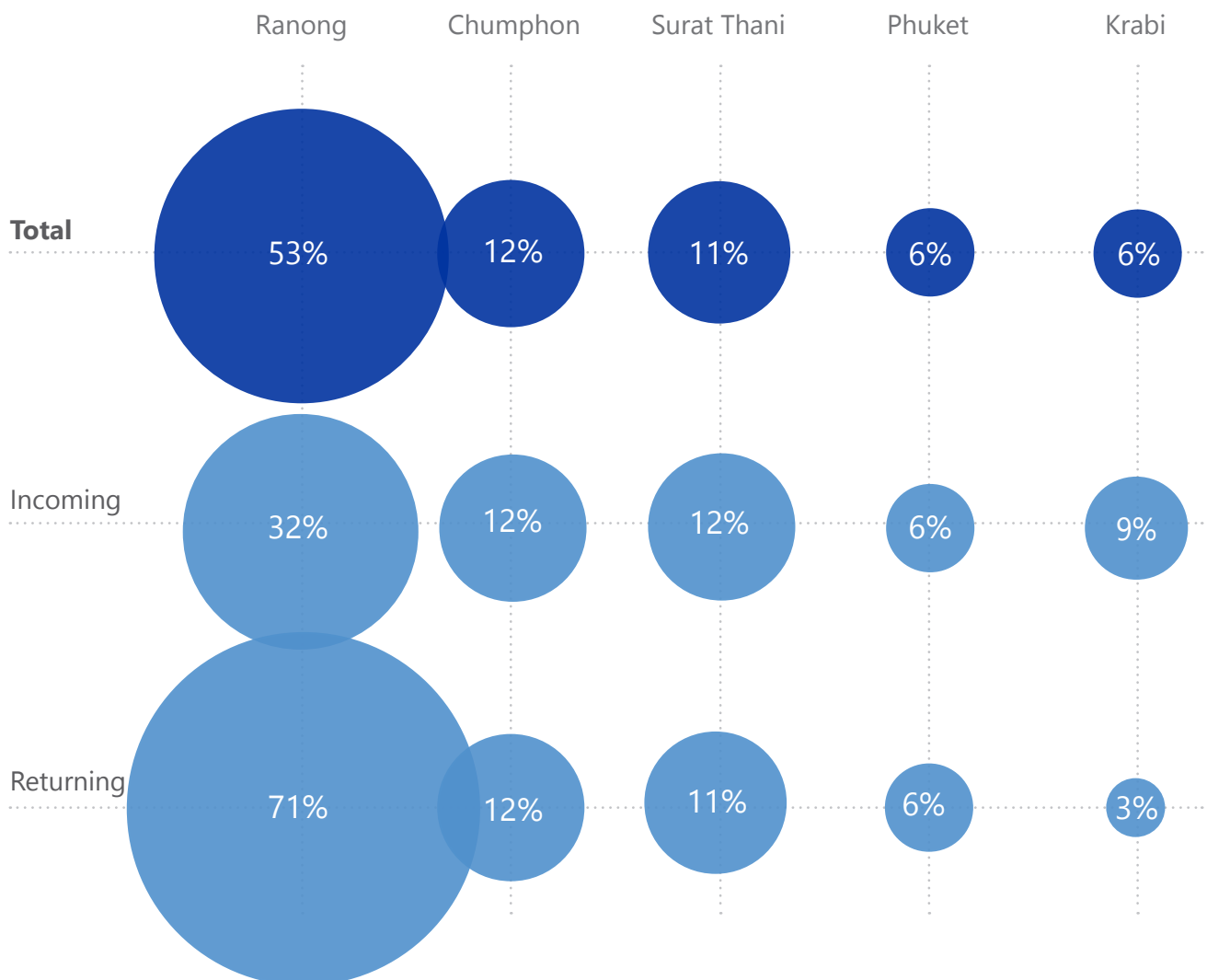
Note: Totals do not add up to 100% because this was a multiple answer question.

Map 3 - Intended Province of Destination in Thailand (Incoming Migrants) (n=906)

VIET NAM

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

MYANMAR

MAE HONG SON

UDON THANI

MAHA SARAKHAM

NAKHON SAWAN

UBON RATCHATHANI

NAKHON RATCHASIMA

ANG THONG

KANCHANABURI

PATHUM THANI

NAKHON PATHOM

PRACHIN BURI

BANGKOK

SAMUT SAKHON

SAMUT PRAKAN

SAMUT SONGKHRAM

CHON BURI

PHETCHABURI

CAMBODIA

PRACHUAP KHIRI KHAN

CHUMPHON

RANONG

SURAT THANI

PHANGNGA

NAKHON SI THAMMARAT

PHUKET

KRABI

PHATTHALUNG

TRANG

SONGKHLA

PATTANI

SATUN

PROPORTION OF MIGRANTS SURVEYED

0%

>0% - 1%

>1% - 2%

>2% - 5%

>5% - 10%

>10% - 20%

>20%

YALA

MALAYSIA

Kilometers

0   62.5   125   250

The boundaries and names shown and the designation used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM

INDONESIA

15

Picture 2 - Khao Fachi border crossing point in Kra Buri district

Picture 3 - DTM enumerator interviews Myanmar migrant worker at Ranong Bus Station

Thematic Area 2 - Drivers of Migration

In total, 16 per cent of the sample was unemployed before migrating to Thailand. The data indicates that the unemployment rate prior to migration was higher amongst females (19%) than males (13%). Prior to migration, a third of the sample were employed on a daily wage basis and one in five respondents were self-employed. The main reason for migration cited was employment (78%), followed by the employment of a spouse (20%). Around half of the sample population had prior experience of migrating to Thailand for employment. Myanmar migrants stated preferring migrating to Thailand over other countries in the region because of its geographical proximity and easily accessible labour market. The presence of family and friends in Thailand was also reported as an important factor for migrating to Thailand. The importance of family and friends in Thailand, and of returning migrants as key sources of information prior to migration, reinforces the migration network theory which suggests that migrants usually depend on pre-established networks in their country of destination.

Figure 8 - Employment Status before Migration by Population Group (n=1,962)

● Employed   ● Student   ● Unemployed   ● Retired/other/do not want to answer

Total	Incoming	Returning
68% Employed	64% Employed	71% Employed
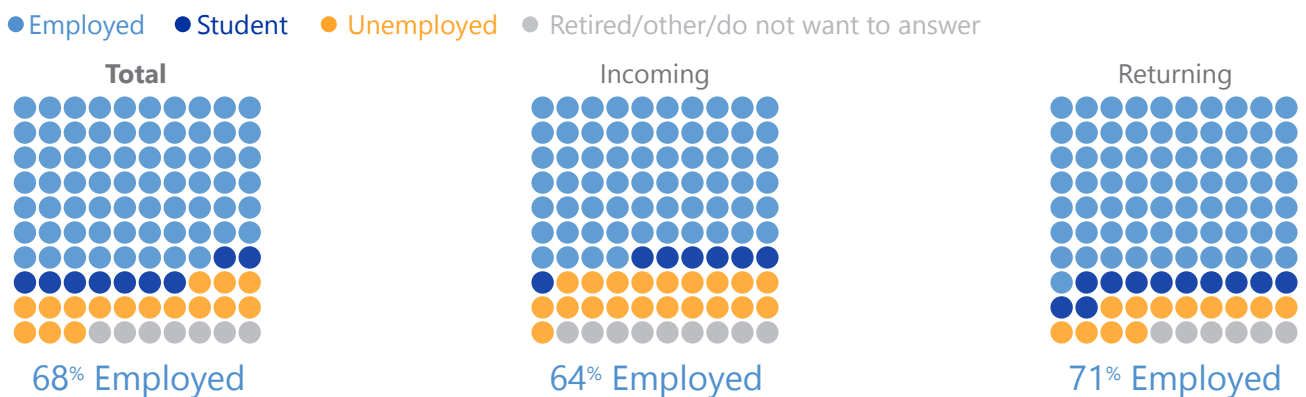
Socio-Economic Profiles

Factors that push a person to migrate cannot be evaluated in isolation, and should be considered in relation to factors that might attract a migrant to a specific destination or country. Individual-level factors, such as the pre-migration socio-economic characteristics of migrants, also play a key role in the decision to migrate, and are therefore considered in this assessment.

For both population groups, the most common forms of employment prior to migration included daily wage labour (28% for incoming migrants and 31% for returning migrants) or self-employment (24% for incoming migrants and 15% for returning migrants). The unemployment rate prior to migration was 20 per cent for incoming migrants and 12 per cent for returning migrants.

Figure 9 - Overall Employment Status before Migration (n=1,962)

30%	19%	18%	16%
Daily wages	Self-employed	Employed in the private sector	Unemployed
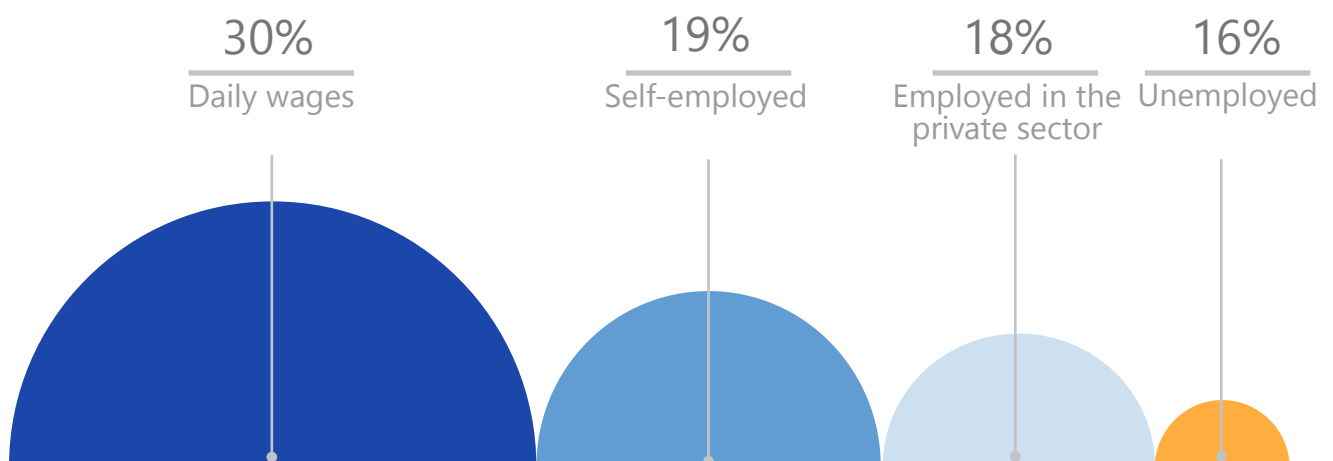
Note: The remaining 17 per cent of respondents reported either studying (9.3%), doing unpaid family work (5.2%), being retired (0.2%) or doing other types of work (1.8%) including woking for the public sector.

Differences between male and female respondents were observed in terms of the employment status before migration. Unemployment was higher amongst females (19%) than males (13%), while male respondents were more likely to be employed for daily wage labour (37% compared to 23% for females) and in the private sector (19% compared to 16% for females).

Figure 10 - Employment Status before Migration by Gender (n=1,955)

● Female ● Male

	Daily wages	Self-employed	Employed in private sector	Unemployed	Student	Other
Female	23%	21%	16%	19%	11%	10%
Male	37%	18%	19%	13%	8%	5%
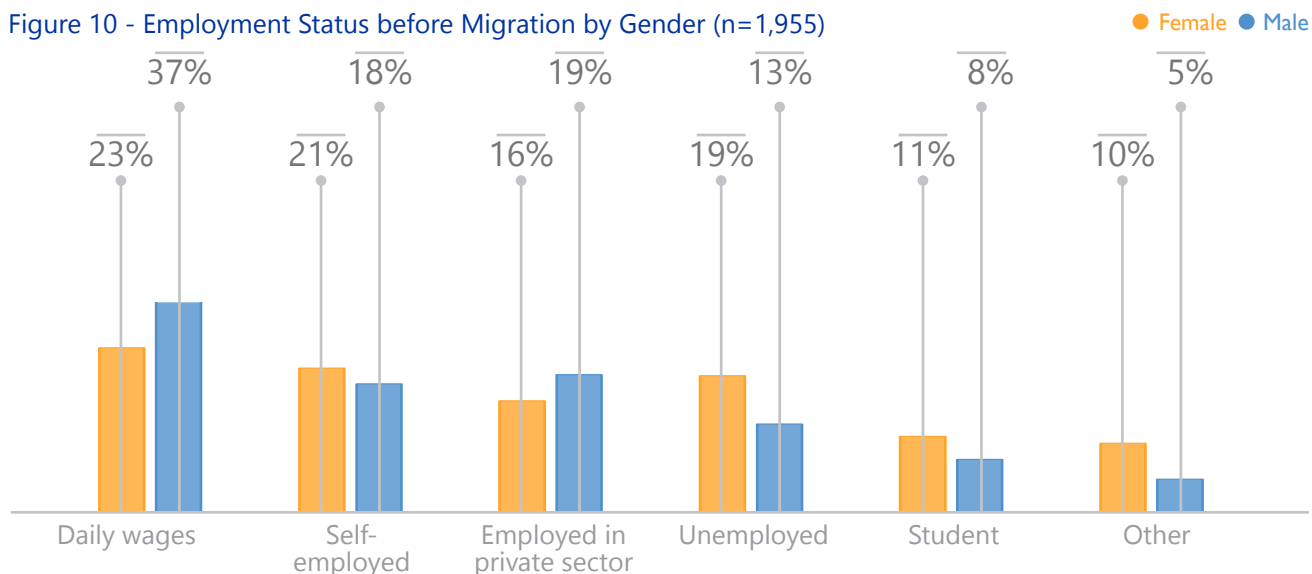
Reasons for Leaving Myanmar

To further unpack drivers of migration, respondents were asked to cite their main reasons for leaving Myanmar. Several respondents reported more than one reason, reinforcing the concept that the decision to migrate is shaped by multiple concurring factors. Nonetheless, employment-related reasons were most often cited, with 78 per cent of the total sample reporting migrating for their employment and 20 per cent for the employment of their spouse or partner. Another reason given for leaving Myanmar was to reunite with family and friends in Thailand, as cited by 21 per cent of respondents. Furthermore, 4 per cent of the sample population reported that they were migrating because they did not own any agricultural land to work in Myanmar. All other responses were selected by fewer than 2 per cent of respondents. Overall, when looking at the decision to migrate, the data indicates that male respondents were more likely than females to migrate for their own employment (81% for males and 75% for females). Conversely, female respondents were almost twice as likely to migrate for the employment of their partner or spouse as male respondents (14% for males and 27% for females). A Females were also more likely than males to be migrating for the purpose of reunification with family and friends (19% for males, and 24% for females).

Figure 11 - Main Reason for Leaving Myanmar by Gender (n=1,955)

Total

78%
Employment
(myself)

Female

75%
Employment
(myself)

Male

81%
Employment
(myself)
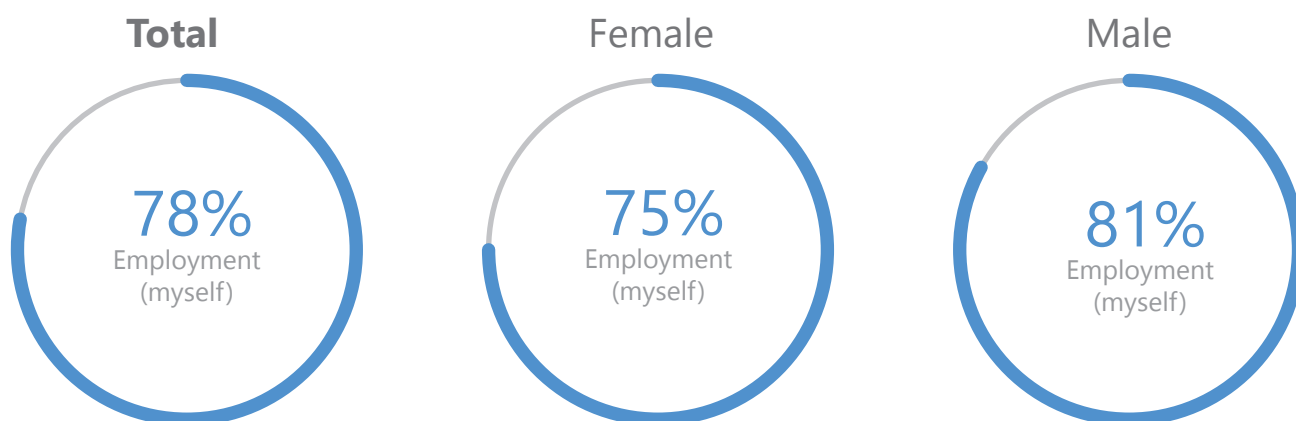
Figure 12 - Prior Labour Migration by Population Group (n=1,962)

Total

49%
of the sample population had worked in Thailand before

Incoming migrants

53%
of incoming migrants had worked in Thailand before

Returning migrants

46%
of returning migrants had worked in Thailand before
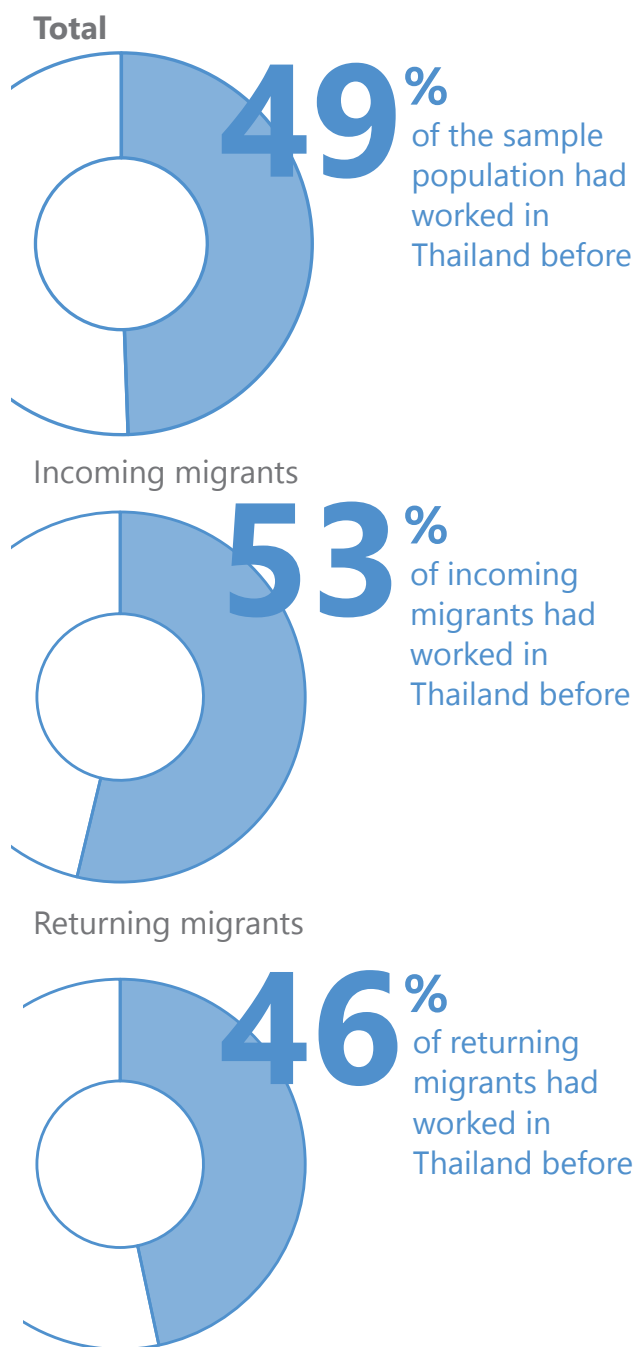
Decision-Making Process

Amongst the numerous factors influencing the decision to migrate is prior migration experience, with those who have migrated before being more likely to migrate again. In addition, people with previous experiences of migration to a given country of destination may have fewer vulnerabilities through their knowledge of the country, their network of local contacts and potentially their familiarity with the language spoken at destination.

For these reasons, respondents were asked if they had lived and worked in Thailand prior to this migration. Results show that just below half of the respondents had. Prior migration to Thailand was slightly more common among incoming migrants (53%) than returning migrants (46%).

Those migrants with a previous history of labour migration to Thailand were asked about the employment sector in which they had worked at the time of that migration. Twenty-six per cent reported having worked in agriculture and forestry, 20 per cent in construction and 13 per cent in manufacturing and other factory work. Figure 13 provides a breakdown of the main sectors of employment by population group, highlighting the differences between incoming and returning migrants.

Female respondents accounted for 49 per cent of migrants with prior work experience in Thailand. However, the primary sectors of previous employment differed when considering only female respondents: 1) manufacturing and other factory work (22%); 2) wholesale retail and trade (14%); 3) food processing (13%).

Figure 13 - Primary Sectors of Employment During Previous Migration to Thailand by Population Group (n=855)

● Total   ● Incoming   ● Returning

	Agriculture and forestry			Construction			Manufacturing and other factory work		
	26%	18%	35%	20%	23%	17%	19%	25%	13%
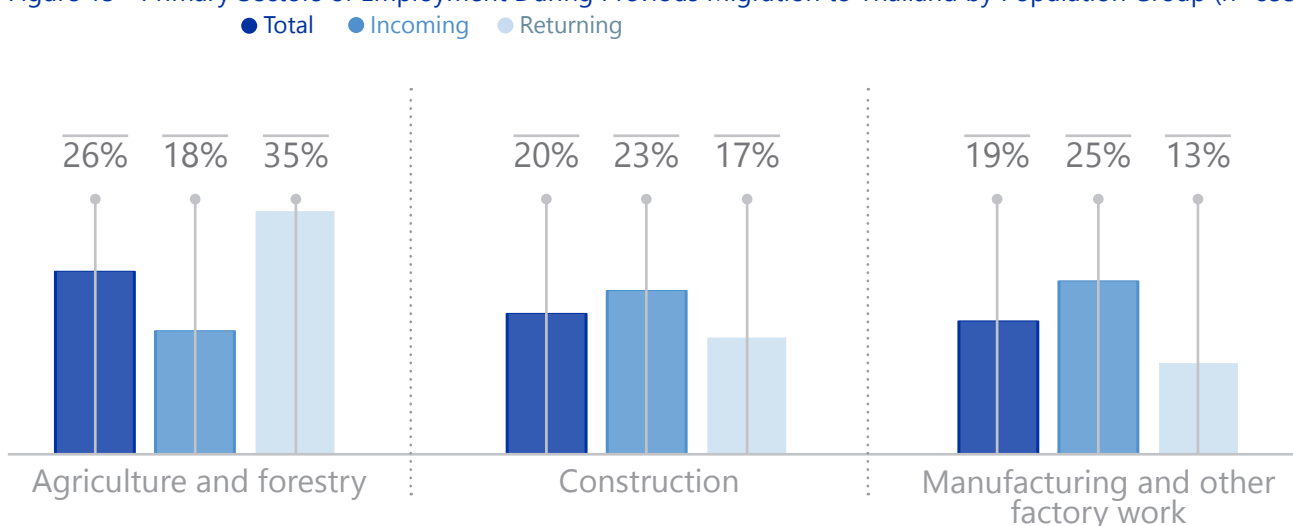
Respondents were asked why they preferred to migrate to Thailand over another country in the region. On average, each participant selected between two and three reasons, again underlining that the decision to migrate is influenced by a multitude of factors. By looking at the response options it appears that the most common reasons for coming to Thailand over another country in the region have to do with geographical proximity (61%), easier access to jobs (36%), the presence of family and friends in Thailand (36%) and higher incomes (33%).

In terms of the main sources of information used to learn about life in Thailand, most respondents indicated that they obtained information from family and friends in Thailand (61%). Other common sources of information were returnees who had previously lived in Thailand (34%), and family and friends in Myanmar (31%). As mentioned, the presence of family and friends in Thailand was one of the main reasons for preferring Thailand as a destination country and was also the primary source of information about life in Thailand. This finding aligns with previous DTM assessments undertaken in Tak Province, and underscores the importance of pre-existing social networks in the country of destination to shaping the migration process.

On the whole, male and female respondents reported obtaining information about life in Thailand in near identical ways, although female respondents were slightly more likely than male respondents to rely on people who previously lived in Thailand for information (35% versus 33%) and male respondents were slightly more likely to rely on social media for information (14% versus 11%).

Figure 14 - Sources of Information about Life in Thailand (n=1,962)

61%	34%	31%	18%	13%	8%
Family and friends in Thailand	People who previously lived in Thailand	Family and friends in Myanmar	My previous migration to Thailand	Social media	Agent/ broker
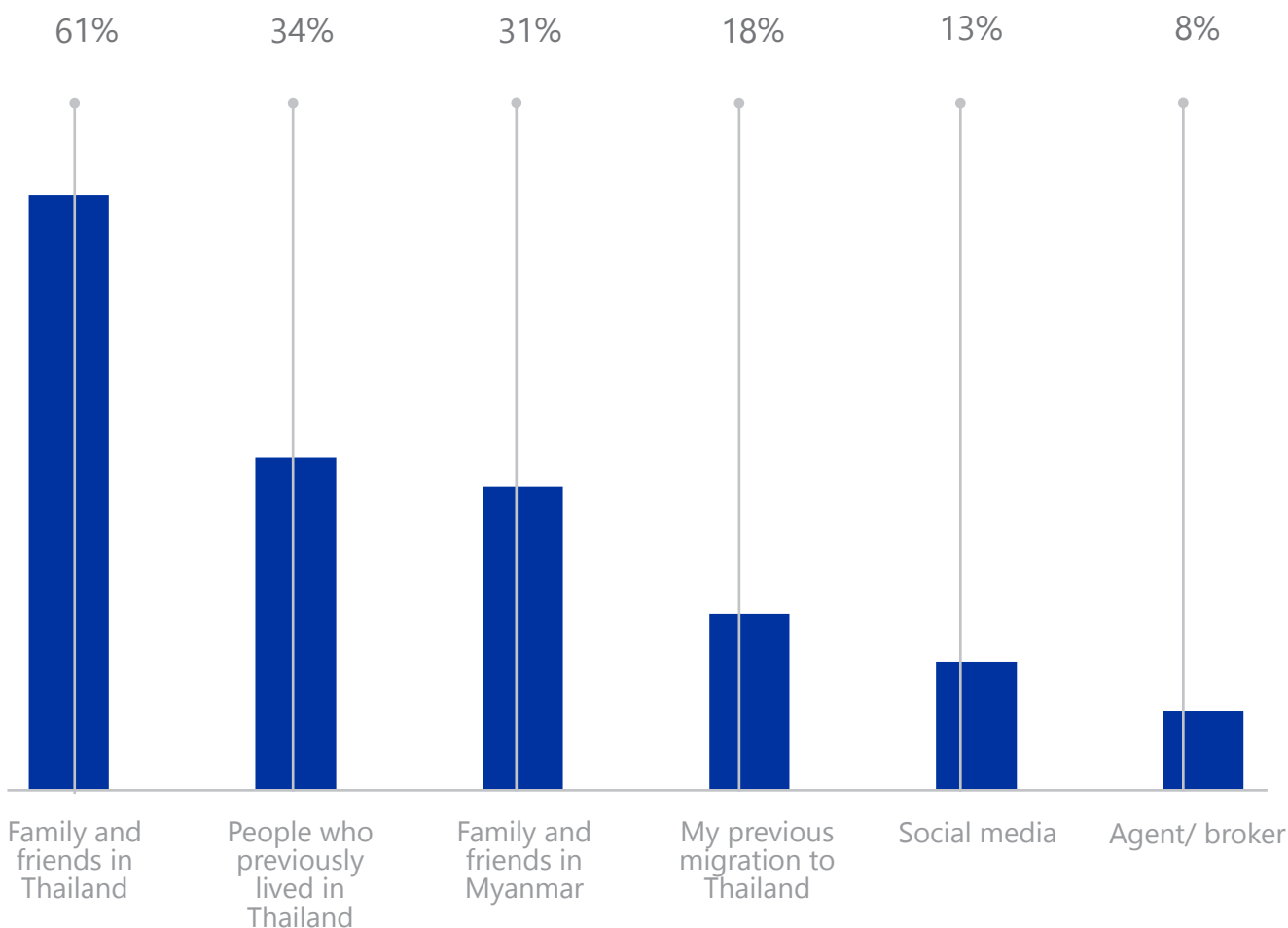
Note: Totals do not add up to 100% because this was a multiple answer question.

Thematic Area 3 - Pre-migration Preparations and Arrangements

Most migrants had a job lined up before undertaking their migration journey to Thailand. Respondents mainly found their job through the help of family or friends in Thailand. Manufacturing, agriculture and construction were the most common sectors of employment. On average, migrants paid around 125 USD for their migration journey. No noticeable difference was observed in this regard between incoming and outgoing migrants or between male and female respondents. Ways to finance the cost of migration were also quite homogeneous across the entire sample population. Respondents predominantly financed their migration with their savings and income, but also by borrowing money from family and friends at home or in Thailand. Support was mostly received from family or friends in Thailand, family and friends in Myanmar and brokers. Most commonly, support actors helped migrants with transportation arrangements, employment and documentation.

Employment arrangements

As identified in previous DTM assessments undertaken in Tak Province, Myanmar migrants prefer to make their employment arrangements before coming to Thailand. This trend was also confirmed in this study, with 90 per cent of incoming migrants and 69 per cent of returning migrants affirming that they already had a job lined up before their departure. Females were more likely than males to have made employment arrangements before their migration (82% of females compared to 76% of males).

In most cases, respondents reported that they received help from family and friends in Thailand (66%) or in Myanmar (13%) to make employment arrangements. Around 10 per cent of the sample received help from an agent/broker. No noticeable differences between sexes and population groups were observed, suggesting that most migrants have similar support mechanisms when it comes to organizing employment in Thailand.

Figure 15 - How Employment Was Obtained by Population Group (n=1,663)

● Family and/or friends in Thailand   ● Family and/or friends in Myanmar   ● Knew the employer   ● Agent/broker

	Total	Incoming	Returning
Family and/or friends in Thailand	66%	65%	66%
Family and/or friends in Myanmar	13%	11%	14%
Knew the employer	6%	6%	6%
Agent/broker	10%	9%	11%
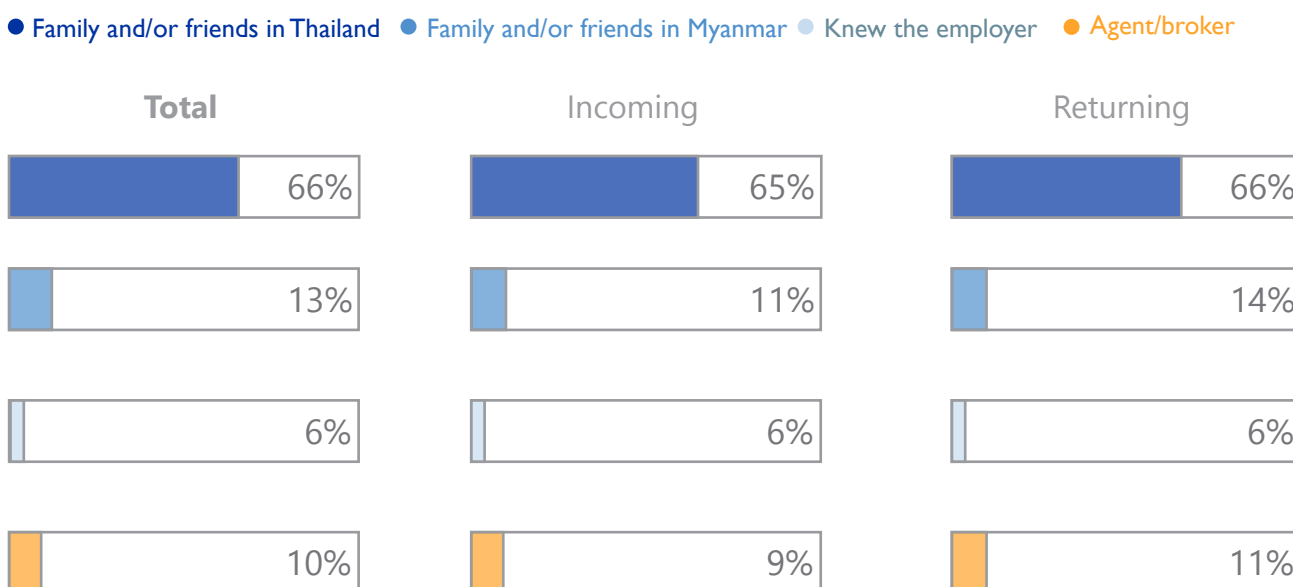
The two leading sectors of employment in Thailand were manufacturing and other factory work (24%), and agriculture and forestry (20%). When comparing employment sectors for male and female respondents, several differences were observed. While 30 per cent of the female population reported manufacturing and other factory work as their main sector of employment, only 19 per cent of males did. On the other hand, 24 per cent of males reported working in agriculture, 18 per cent in construction and 15 per cent in fisheries, while the share of females working in these sectors was 15 per cent, 7 per cent and 3 per cent respectively.

Figure 16 - Main Employment Sectors in Thailand (n=1,595)

● Male ● Female

24%
Manufacturing
and factory work

20%
Agriculture and
forestry

9%
Fishing

7%
Food
processing

13%
Construction

7%
Hospitality and
food services
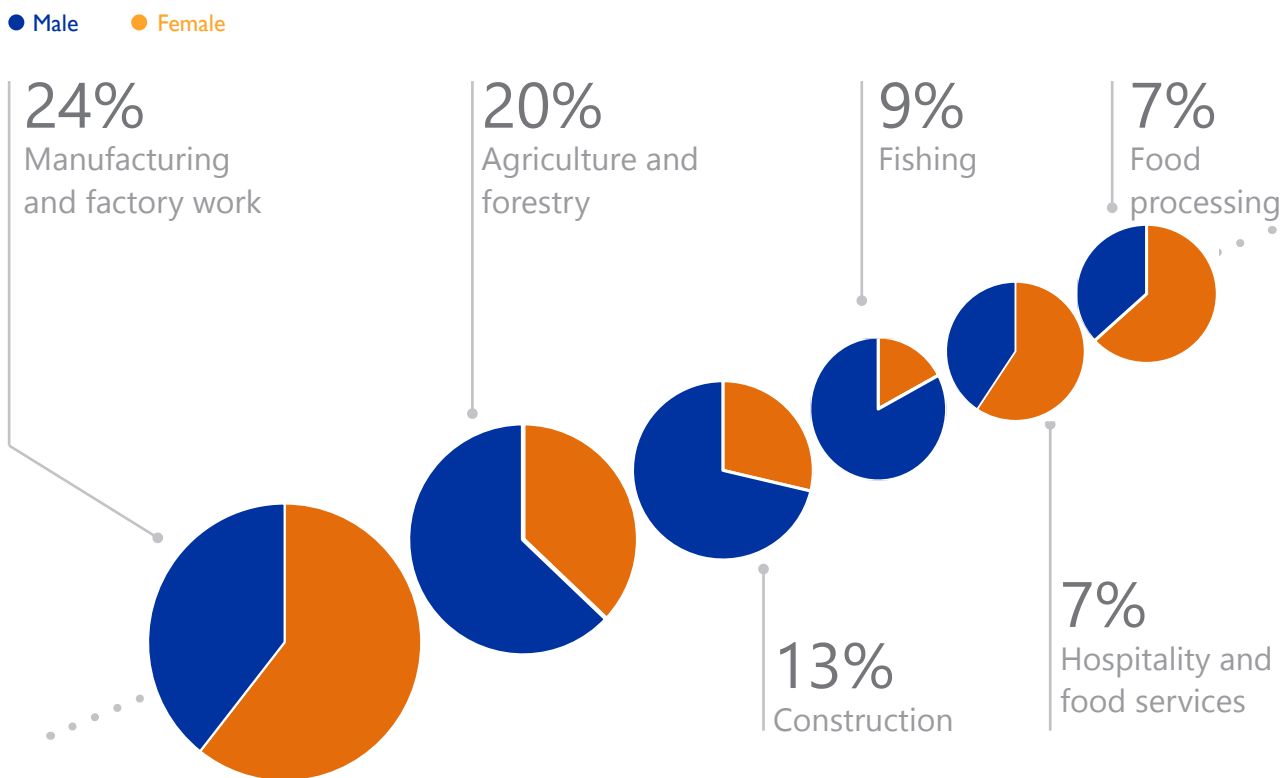
Note: The remaining 20 per cent of respondents reported either working in the wholesale and retail trade (6%), as domestic workers (5%) or doing other types of work (9%).

Migration Costs

To learn more about the migration journey from Myanmar to Thailand, migrants were also asked about the cost of their journey and the ways in which they paid for it. Migration costs were quite homogeneous between population groups, with incoming migrants paying on average 123 USD and returning migrants 127 USD. A larger difference was observed between the average migration cost sustained by female respondents (117 USD) and male respondents (132 USD). As also shown in Figure 15, which provides an overview of the various migration costs by gender, female respondents were more likely than males to pay between 1 and 49 USD for their migration.

When comparing the migration costs sustained by migrants interviewed in Ranong, with those interviewed in previous assessments in Tak, it is observed that migrants in Ranong pay on average less for their migration journey. This is likely because they often live and work closer to the border than migrants surveyed in Tak, who were more likely to migrate further into Thailand and on to Bangkok.

Figure 17 - Migration Costs by Gender (n=1,864)

● 1 - 49 USD   ● 50 - 99 USD   ● 100 - 199 USD   ● 200 - 299 USD   ● 300+ USD
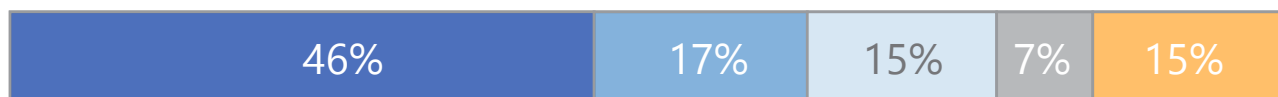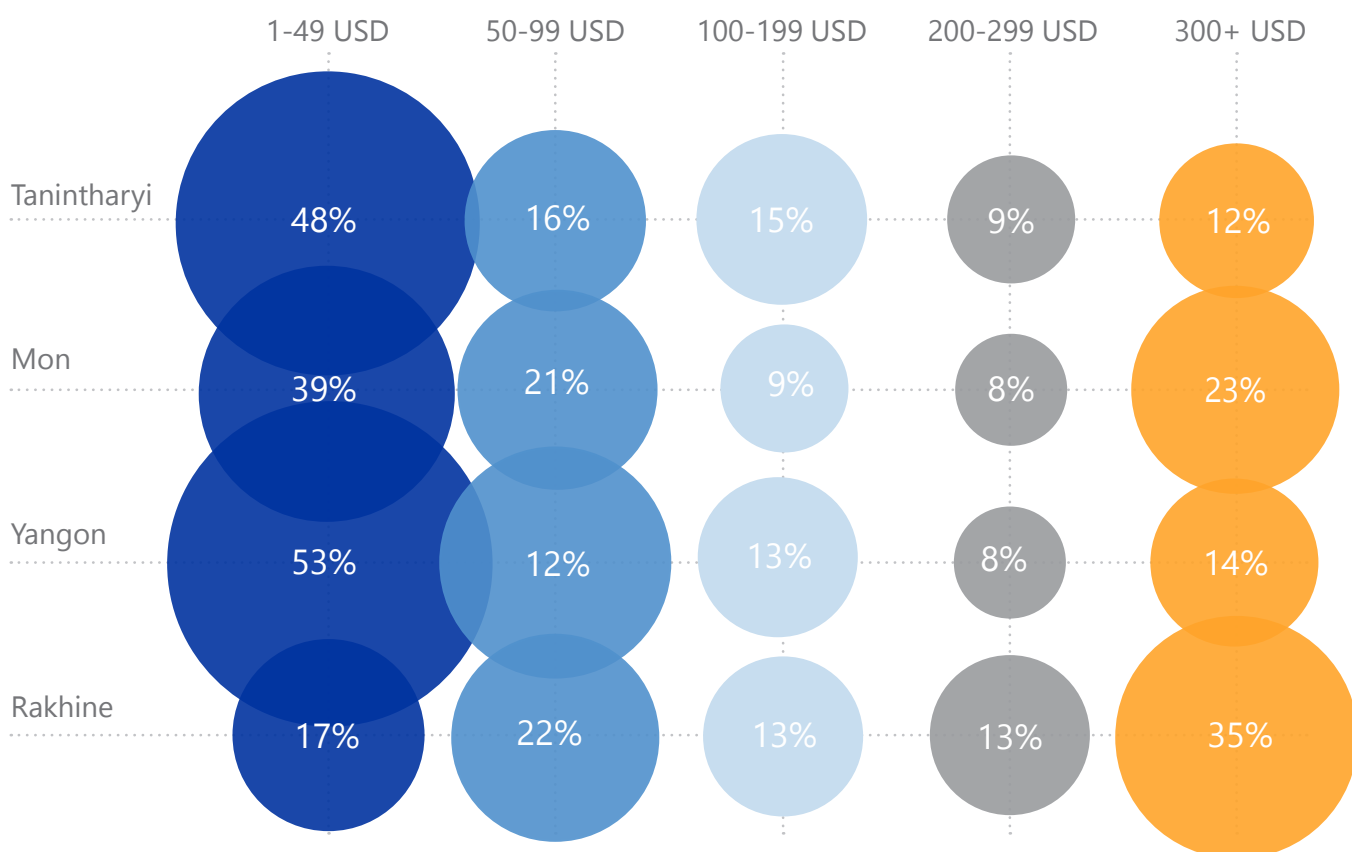
Female

| 52% | 16% | 11% | 8% | 13% |

Male

| 46% | 17% | 15% | 7% | 15% |

Figure 18 - Overall Migration Cost by State of Origin (n=1,495)

	1-49 USD	50-99 USD	100-199 USD	200-299 USD	300+ USD
Tanintharyi	48%	16%	15%	9%	12%
Mon	39%	21%	9%	8%	23%
Yangon	53%	12%	13%	8%	14%
Rakhine	17%	22%	13%	13%	35%

As geographical distance is a factor influencing migration costs, travel expenses were also analyzed by state of origin in Myanmar (Figure 18). Overall, respondents from Tanintharyi and Yangon were the most likely to pay less for their migration journey, with 48 per cent and 53 per cent of the total population paying between 1 and 49 USD for their migration. On the other hand, respondents from Rakhine State reported the highest migration related costs, with 48 per cent of the population paying more than 200 USD to migrate to Thailand.

High migration costs could lead to potential vulnerability, should migrants take out debt in order to cover them. To further explore this possible area of vulnerability, migrants were asked how they paid for their migration journey. No significant difference was observed between male and female respondents, although male respondents were slightly more likely to borrow from family and friends in Myanmar than female respondents (18% versus 16%) and female respondents were slightly more likely to sell assets than male respondents (11% versus 9%). As illustrated in Figure 19, relying on savings was the most common strategy, adopted by 68 per cent of respondents. Other common ways to pay for the migration journey were borrowing money from family and friends in Myanmar (17%) or Thailand (14%) or selling assets (10%). Forty per cent of respondents reported relying on more than one source of funding to finance their migration.

Looking at the entire sample population, 37 per cent of respondents reported relying on some form of borrowing in order to finance their migration or part of their migration, and 22 per cent relied exclusively on borrowing to finance their migration. A correlation was also observed between geographical distance and borrowing to finance migration as respondents from Tanintharyi were less likely to report having borrowed in order to migrate (34%) than respondents from Mon (49%), Rakhine (47%) or Yangon (44%).

In terms of travel arrangements, migrants were also asked who they travelled to Thailand with (multiple answer question). About a third of respondents reported travelling alone, and a third reported travelling in a group with other labour migrants. Twenty-five per cent reported travelling with their spouse, 17 per cent with friends, 15 per cent with other relatives and only one per cent with a broker.

Figure 19 - Main Sources to Finance the Migration Journey (n=1,962)

| 68% | 17% | 14% | 10% | 4% |

| Savings | Borrowing from family and friends in Myanmar | Borrowing from family and friends in Thailand | Selling assets | Borrowing from employer |
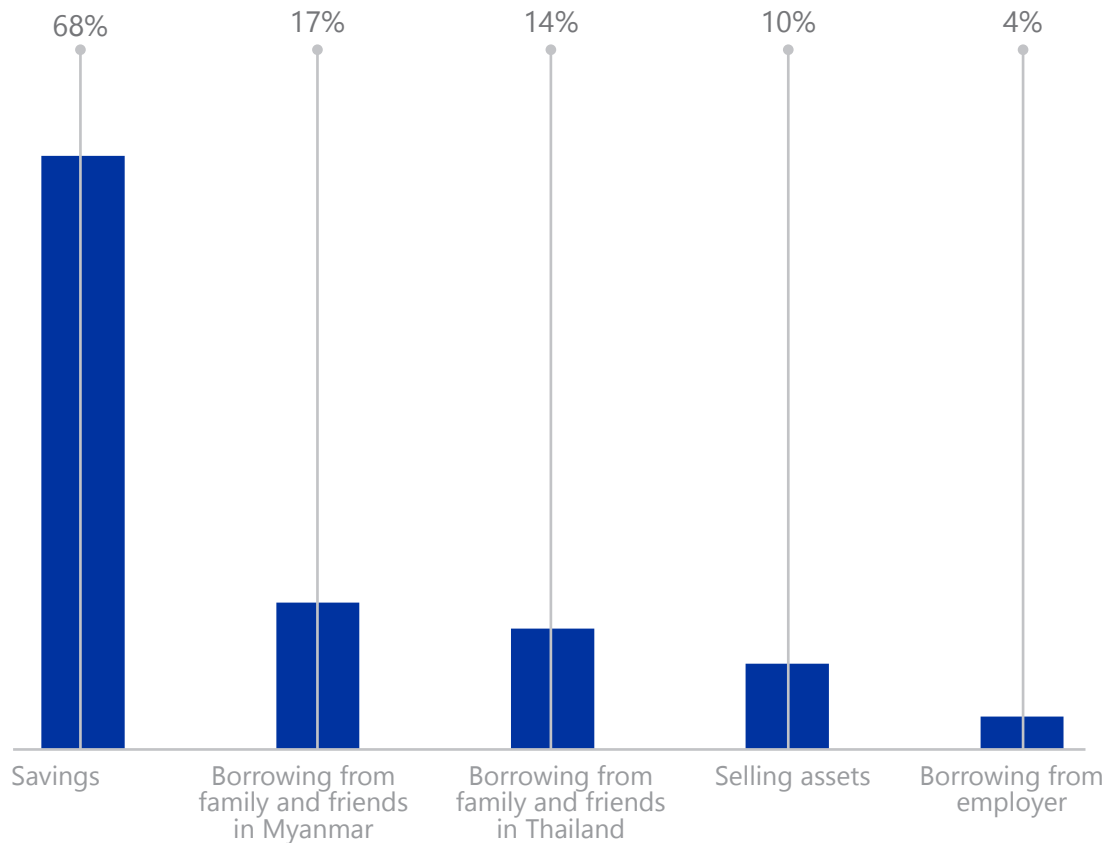
Note: Totals do not add up to 100% because this was a multiple answer question.

Support Mechanisms

Beyond financial support, respondents were also asked if someone helped them to prepare for their journey, and if so, who helped them and how. Respondents were asked to name up to two distinct support actors and clearly define what type of help they provided. This type of question can provide valuable insight into the kind of needs migrants have, as well as information on the support actors they rely on. Overall, 60 per cent of the sample reported receiving support prior to their departure.

Figure 20 - Support Received in Migration Preparations by Gender (n=1,851)   ● Yes ● No

Total

60%
YES

NO
40%

Male   64%   36%

Female   56%   44%
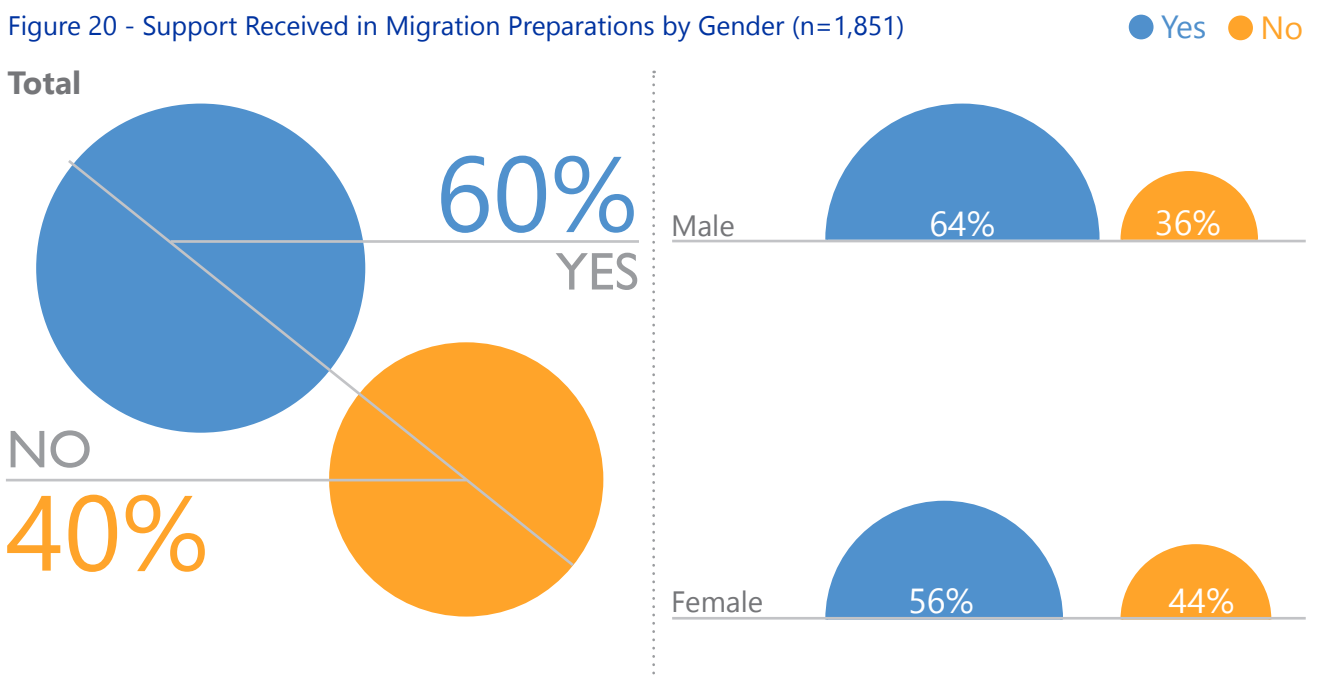
The sex distribution across both tools indicates that male respondents were more likely to receive support (64%) than female respondents (56%).

Overall, family and friends in Thailand (49%) or Myanmar (26%) were identified as the primary support actors. Perhaps unsurprisingly, incoming migrants were more likely than returning migrants to indicate family and friends in Myanmar as their primary support actor (31% for incoming migrants and 21% for returning migrants). Support actors were relatively similar for male and female respondents. When asked if a secondary actor supported their migration, 42 per cent of the respondents reported that they only received help from one person. However, the proportion was 50 per cent for returning migrants and 32 per cent for incoming migrants, showing that migrants coming to Thailand were likely to rely on the support of more than one actor. The second most common support actor was again family and friends in Thailand, as reported by 19 per cent of the respondents. Hence, family and friends in Thailand were the primary and secondary support actors most frequently identified, indicating once again the pivotal role of migration networks in the country of destination.

When asked about the type of support received, most respondents named more than one area where they received support, indicating that a single support actor would help the migrant with different aspects of their migration. Results show that the type of support received prior to migration is quite homogeneous across population groups. The primary type of support received related to transportation, s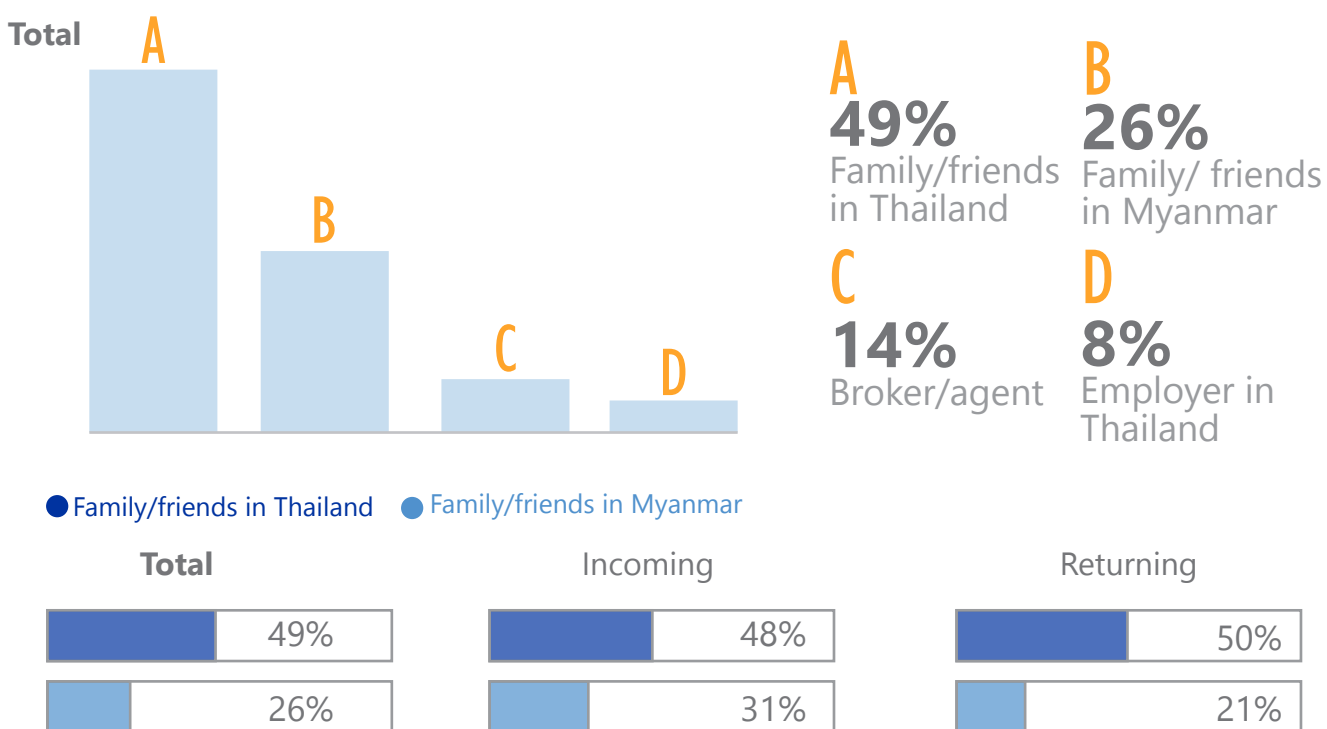elected by 3 in 4 participants (73%). Other commonly reported types of support related to employment (41%), documentation (33%) and accommodation (21%). The only noticeable difference between population groups in the type of support received was related to documentation. While 27 per cent of incoming migrants reported receiving help in relation to documentation, this share was 10 percentage point higher for returning migrants (37%).

Interesting differences arise when cross-referencing documentation status with the type of help received. The 48 respondents who received support and hold a border pass document were less likely to receive help with transportation and more prone to receive help with their documentation than the rest of the sample population. This is likely because only migrants who reside close to the border with Ranong are eligible for border pass documents and would therefore have less far to travel. On the other hand, only 22 per cent of the migrants travelling under a government to government MoU who reported receiving support (n=129) were helped with their documents, as compared to 33 per cent of the sample population.

Figure 21 - Overall Migration Preparation Support by Population Group (n=1,113)

Total

A
49%
Family/friends in Thailand

B
26%
Family/ friends in Myanmar

C
14%
Broker/agent

D
8%
Employer in Thailand

● Family/friends in Thailand ● Family/friends in Myanmar

Total	Incoming	Returning
49%	48%	50%
26%	31%	21%

Picture 4 - DTM enumerator talking to a migrant at Saphan Pla Pier

Picture 5 - Myanmar migrants arriving in Thailand by boat

Thematic Area 4 - Migrants' Vulnerabilities

On average, migrants ranked their ability to speak, understand and read Thai as relatively low. With respect to documentation status, all but 5 per cent of the sample population reported they had documents to enter Thailand. However, one in five daily workers entered Thailand without any form of documentation. The highest proportion of respondents who entered Thailand without any documents was amongst people who worked in the agricultural sector. One in three respondents earned below the median minimum wage of 320 THB per day. Fewer than one in ten people reported experiencing problems during their journey to Thailand, with only minor differences reported by male and female respondents or by incoming and outgoing migrants. The proportion of incoming migrants who expected to face problems at the workplace (6%) was below the share of returning migrants who actually faced challenges at work (14%). Family and friends in Thailand were the main support mechanism in case of problems in Thailand. Six out of ten respondents sent or were planning to send remittances. On average, returning migrants reported remitting 105 USD per month.

Language Skills

Each step of the migration process can be associated with specific challenges and vulnerabilities. Upon destination, one of the vulnerability factors to consider is the capacity to speak, understand and read the language of the country of destination. Respondents were therefore asked to rank their ability in Thai language using a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest level of ability).

Out of the total sample population, 69 per cent of the respondents rated their ability to understand Thai towards the lower end of the scale, at either 1 or 2. The share of people who rated their ability to speak Thai at either 1 or 2 was 78 per cent, and for the ability to read Thai was 96 per cent.

Returning migrants and were also asked if their ability in Thai has increased as compared to when they first migrated to Thailand. While 9 per cent of the total reported that their Thai had not improved, 51 per cent reported that it had improved a bit, and 40 per cent that it had improved a lot.

Figure 22 - Thai Language Ability by Migration Experience (n=1,962)

Scale of 1 to 5 - 1 = lowest, 5 = highest

	Speaking Thai			**Understanding Thai**	
1	40%	1	56%	1	35%	1	49%
2	38%	2	20%	2	31%	2	19%
3	17%	3	13%	3	24%	3	13%
4	3%	4	4%	4	5%	4	6%
5	2%	5	5%	5	4%	5	12%

Previously worked in Thailand / First time working in Thailand | Previously worked in Thailand / First time working in Thailand
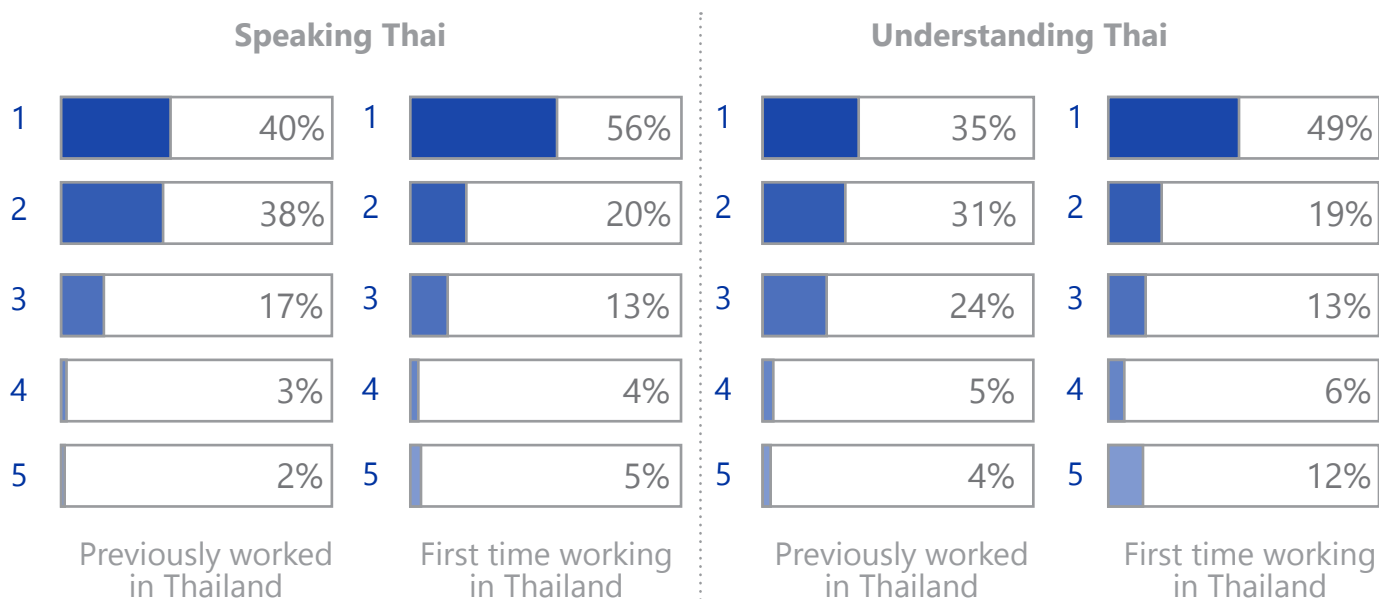
Note: 2% of the respondents who were migrating to Thailand for the first time did not want to answer this question.

Note: 1% of the respondents who had previously worked in Thailand and 1% of those who were migrating to Thailand for the first time did not want to answer this question.

Documentation Status

Another indicator of potential vulnerability considered in this study was the documentation status of migrants, both to enter Thailand and to work in Thailand. Migrants with proper documentation are generally entitled to benefits and support from social protection mechanisms and can more easily have recourse to justice when their rights are violated. As undocumented migrants are afforded fewer protections, they are generally believed to be at higher risk of exploitation and to have increased vulnerabilities.
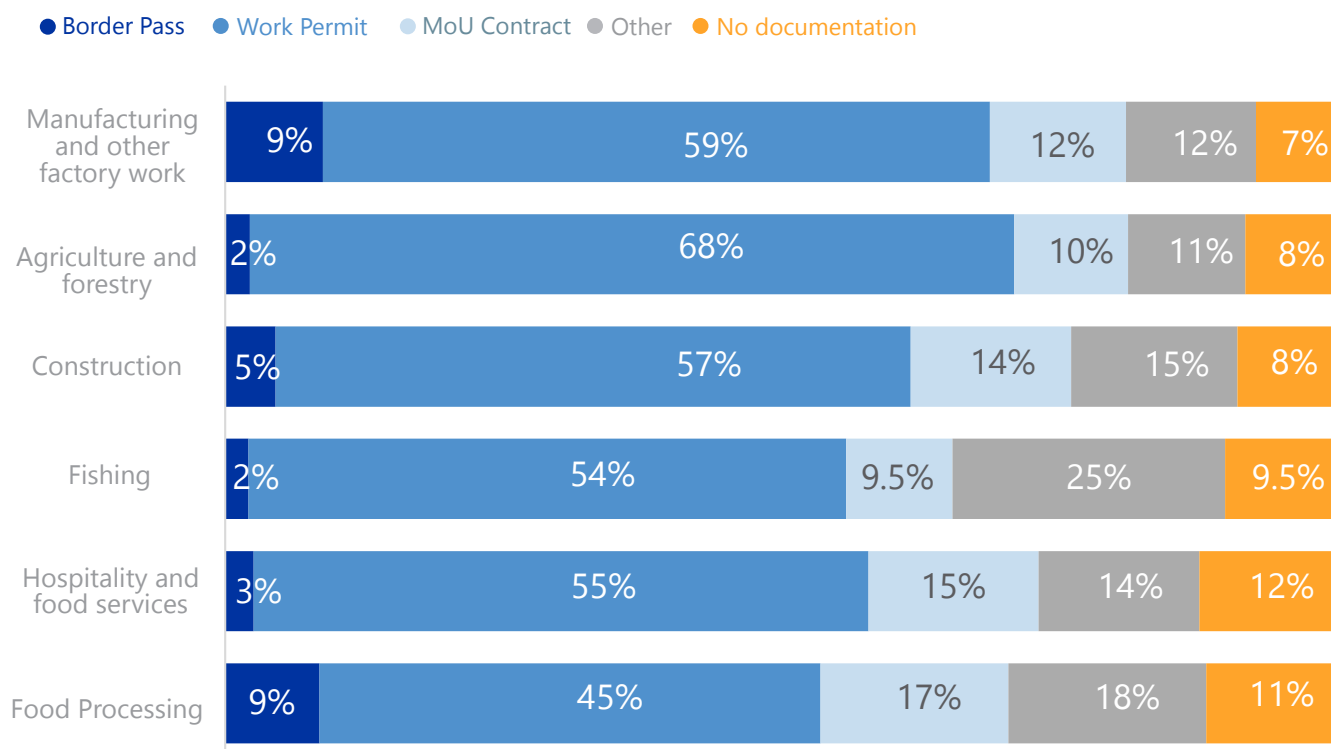
Overall, 95 per cent of the sample entered Thailand with some form of documentation, while 5 per cent did not have any documentation at all. The share of undocumented migrants was much higher amongst daily labourers (23%). Among migrants entering Thailand without any form of documentation, 78 per cent were male and only 22 per cent female. Amongst the total population, the most common ways to enter Thailand were with a Certificate of Identity (36%), an international passport (24%) and a border pass (20%). Respondents without previous migration experience to Thailand were more likely than migrants with previous migration experience to have a border pass (34% vs 7%). They were, however, less likely to be travelling on a Certificate of Identity than those with prior migration experience (22% vs 49%). When looking at the different documents used by incoming and returning migrants, it was observed that incoming migrants tend to rely more on international passports (34%) than returning migrants (14%). Conversely, the share of people with a border pass was twice as high among returning migrants (26%) than incoming migrants (13%).

Figure 23 - Documentation Used to Enter Thailand by Population Group (n=1,962)
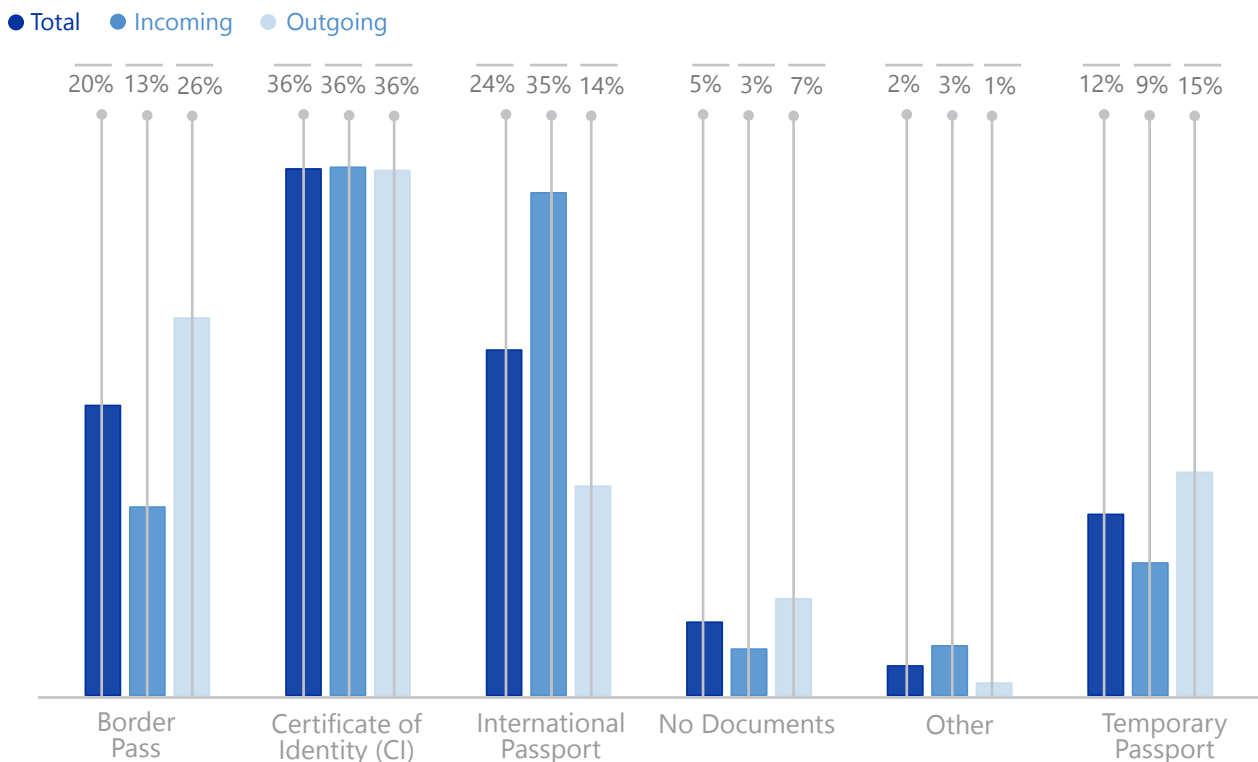
Migrants were also asked if they had the required documentation to work in Thailand. Overall, 90 per cent of the sample population reported that they did, 9 per cent did not and 1 per cent did not want to answer this question. Among migrants without required work documentation, 68 per cent were male versus 32 per cent female. The share of migrants with work related documents was 86 per cent for incoming migrants and 93 per cent for returning migrants. The sector of employment with the highest share of undocumented migrants was agriculture and forestry (12%). Migrants who reported having the proper documentation to work in Thailand were asked to specify what type of documents they had. Overall, 68 per cent had a work permit, 12 per cent had a government MoU contract and 6 per cent had a border pass. The specific documents used differed substantially between population groups. Out of the returning migrants, 83 per cent had a work permit, 4 per cent an MoU contract and 7 per cent a border pass. However, 50 per cent of incoming migrants had a work permit 20 per cent an MoU contract and 4 per cent a border pass.

Figure 24 - Overall Documentation Status by Employment Sector (n=1,595)

● Border Pass ● Work Permit ● MoU Contract ● Other ● No documentation

Sector	Border Pass	Work Permit	MoU Contract	Other	No documentation
Manufacturing and other factory work	9%	59%	12%	12%	7%
Agriculture and forestry	2%	68%	10%	11%	8%
Construction	5%	57%	14%	15%	8%
Fishing	2%	54%	9.5%	25%	9.5%
Hospitality and food services	3%	55%	15%	14%	12%
Food Processing	9%	45%	17%	18%	11%

Note: Totals do not all add up to 100% as a small number of respondents (less than 1%) did not want to answer this question
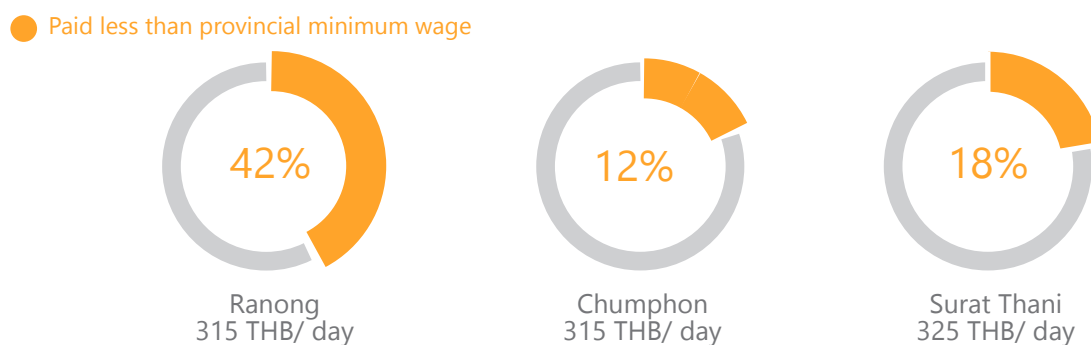
Contract Conditions and Wages

Respondents who reported having documentation to work in Thailand were asked an additional set of questions with regard to their contract situation. Firstly, they were asked if they saw their employment contract prior to migration, and 62 per cent of the total sample reported that they did not. While differences between sexes were negligible, it was found that 53 per cent of incoming migrants did not see their employment contract while this share was 70 per cent for returning migrants. The 656 respondents who saw their contracts (37%) were asked if they signed it themselves or not (1% of the sample population did not want to answer this question). Overall, 74 per cent of incoming migrants and 84 per cent of returning migrants stated that they signed their employment contract themselves. To better understand if contracts were shared in a language understood by the migrant population, respondents were asked in which language their contract was written (multiple answer question). Around 67 per cent of the contracts were in Thai language, only 23 per cent in Myanmar language and 19 per cent in English. Out of the returning migrant population, 78 per cent reported that the name of the employer on their contract was the same as their actual employer, 13 per cent of them said that the names did not match, and 9 per cent did not remember or did not answer this question.

Each respondent was asked if they knew their daily wage before starting employment. Around 80 per cent of the respondents reported knowing their daily wages beforehand. This share was 85 per cent for incoming migrants and 76 per cent for returning migrants. On average, the sample population expected to be paid 360 THB per day. Males generally expected to be paid 385 THB per day while females expected 335 THB. Returning respondents were also asked if their promised wages matched their actual wages. In only 3 per cent of cases was the salary promised higher than the actual salary received. In 63 per cent of cases, the promised and actual salary matched, and in 33 per cent of cases the actual salary was higher than that promised.
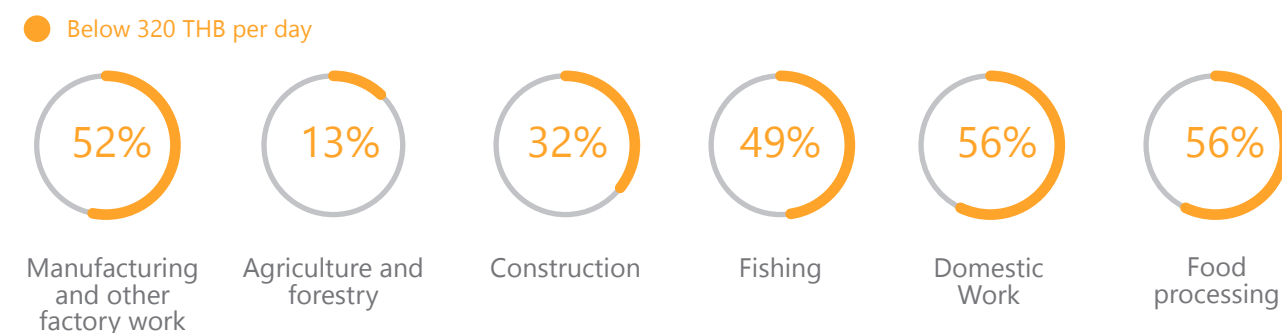
Taking the median minimum wage of 320 THB a day, 36 per cent of returning migrants who knew their salary prior to migration (n=759) reported having earned wages below this amount. The share of people who earned below 320 THB a day was 55 per cent amongst respondents who entered Thailand with a border pass and 57 per cent for those who had a temporary passport. However, respondents who enter Thailand on a border pass in Ranong are only eligible to work in Ranong where the provincial minimum wage is 315 THB a day. The share of border pass holders who received a salary of less than 315 THB a day was 48 per cent.

Figure 25 - Daily Wages by Main Provinces of Destination (Returning Migrants) (n=574)

● Paid less than provincial minimum wage

| 42% | 12% | 18% |
| Ranong 315 THB/ day | Chumphon 315 THB/ day | Surat Thani 325 THB/ day |

Looking at medium minimum wage does not fully illustrate compliance with minimum wage standards, however, as minimum wage differs by province. Looking at the three primary provinces of destination (Figure 25), it becomes apparent that migrants are far less likely to be paid minimum wage in Ranong than in Chumpon or Surat Thani. Twenty-eight per cent of migrants who worked in Phuket and 44 per cent of migrants who worked in Krabi also reported being paid below the provincial minimum wage. However, due to the small sample size of respondents for Phuket and Krabi, these figures cannot be considered as being representative.

Figure 26 - Daily Wages by Employment Sector (Returning Migrants) (n=420)

● Below 320 THB per day

| 52% | 13% | 32% | 49% | 56% | 56% |
| Manufacturing and other factory work | Agriculture and forestry | Construction | Fishing | Domestic Work | Food processing |

In Figure 26, the sub sample of returning migrants who knew their daily wage before migration was analyzed to further explore eventual linkages between salary and sector of employment. Figure 26 shows the share of returning migrants who earned below 320 THB by sector of employment. While just 13 per cent of the respondents working in agriculture and forestry, and 32 per cent of these working in construction earned below the median minimum wage, the share was above 50 per cent for other sectors of employment. Specifically, 52 per cent of the returning migrants employed in manufacturing, 56 per cent of those employed as domestic workers and 56 per cent of those involved in food processing were earning below the 320 THB threshold.

Finally, respondents were also asked how many hours they expected to work and if their expected working hours matched their actual working hours. On average, respondents expected to work just over 8 hours per day. In 59 per cent of cases, expected hours matched actual hours, in 17 per cent of cases migrants had to work more than expected and in 8 per cent of cases they reported working less. The remaining 16 per cent of respondents did not know or did not want to answer this question.
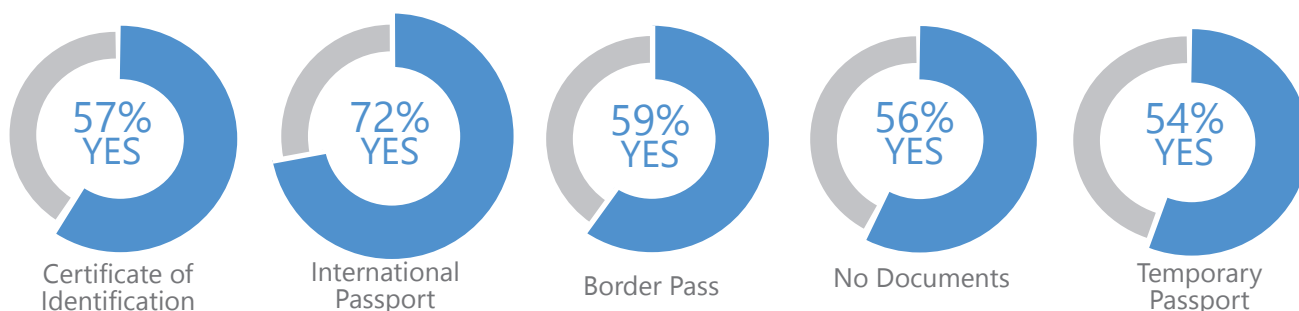
Remittances

Overall, 65 per cent of incoming migrants were planning on sending money home during their stay in Thailand, 23 per cent were not, and 12 per cent were either daily workers or did not know yet. The share of migrants who actually sent remittances home as reported by returning migrants is slightly smaller, with 59 per cent reporting that they had sent money back to Myanmar while working in Thailand.

Returning male migrants were more likely to report having sent remittances than returning female migrants (62% versus 57%). On average, returning migrants reported remitting 105 USD per month, with male migrants, on average, remitting marginally more than female migrants (106 USD versus 104 USD). This can perhaps be explained by the fact that male respondents typically earned more than female respondents.
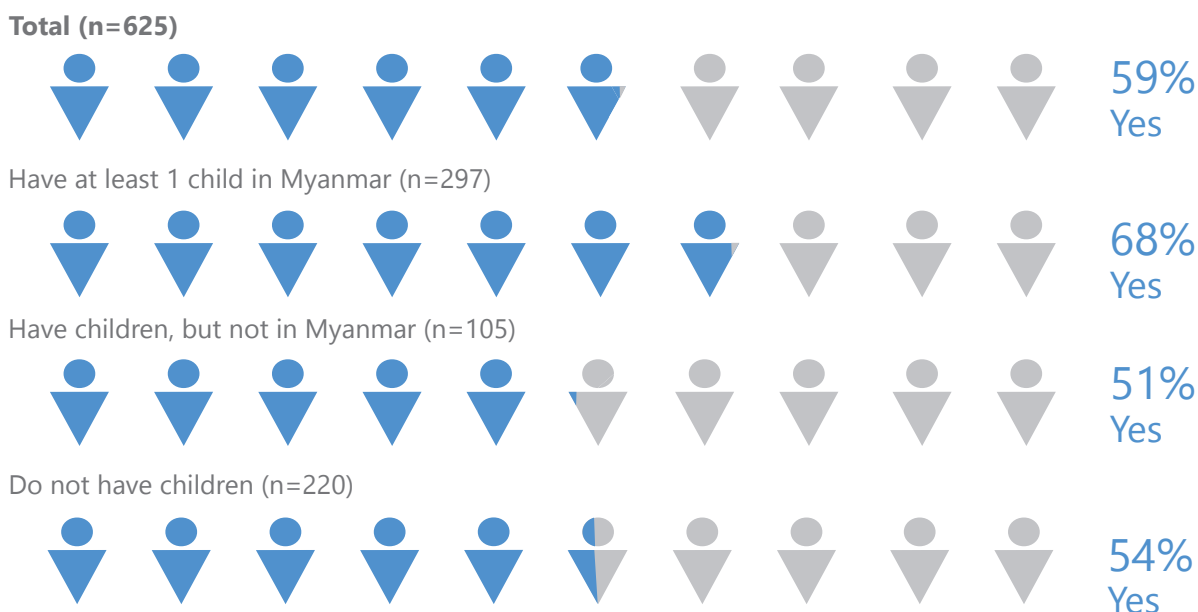
As illustrated in Figure 27, the share of respondents who sent back remittances varies based on the type of documentation used to enter Thailand. Overall, 72 per cent of migrants with an international passport sent remittances back home. Undocumented migrants were the group with the lowest proportion who sent back remittances (56%). When crosschecking remittances with wages, it appears that migrants who earned below 320 THB were less likely to send remittances back home than respondents earning above 320 THB.

Figure 27 - Remittance Sending by Document used to Enter Thailand (Returning Migrants) (n=1,053)

57% YES	72% YES	59% YES	56% YES	54% YES
Certificate of Identification	International Passport	Border Pass	No Documents	Temporary Passport

As shown in Figure 28, contrary to previous DTM assessments in Thailand, it was found here that respondents with a child in Myanmar were more likely than their counterparts to send remittances back home. In total, 68 per cent of this population sent remittances back to Myanmar compared to only 54 per cent of respondents who did not have children and to 51 per cent of respondents who had children not in Myanmar.

Figure 28 - Remittance Sending by Location of Children (Returning Migrants) (n=1,053)

Total (n=625)

59% Yes

Have at least 1 child in Myanmar (n=297)

68% Yes

Have children, but not in Myanmar (n=105)

51% Yes

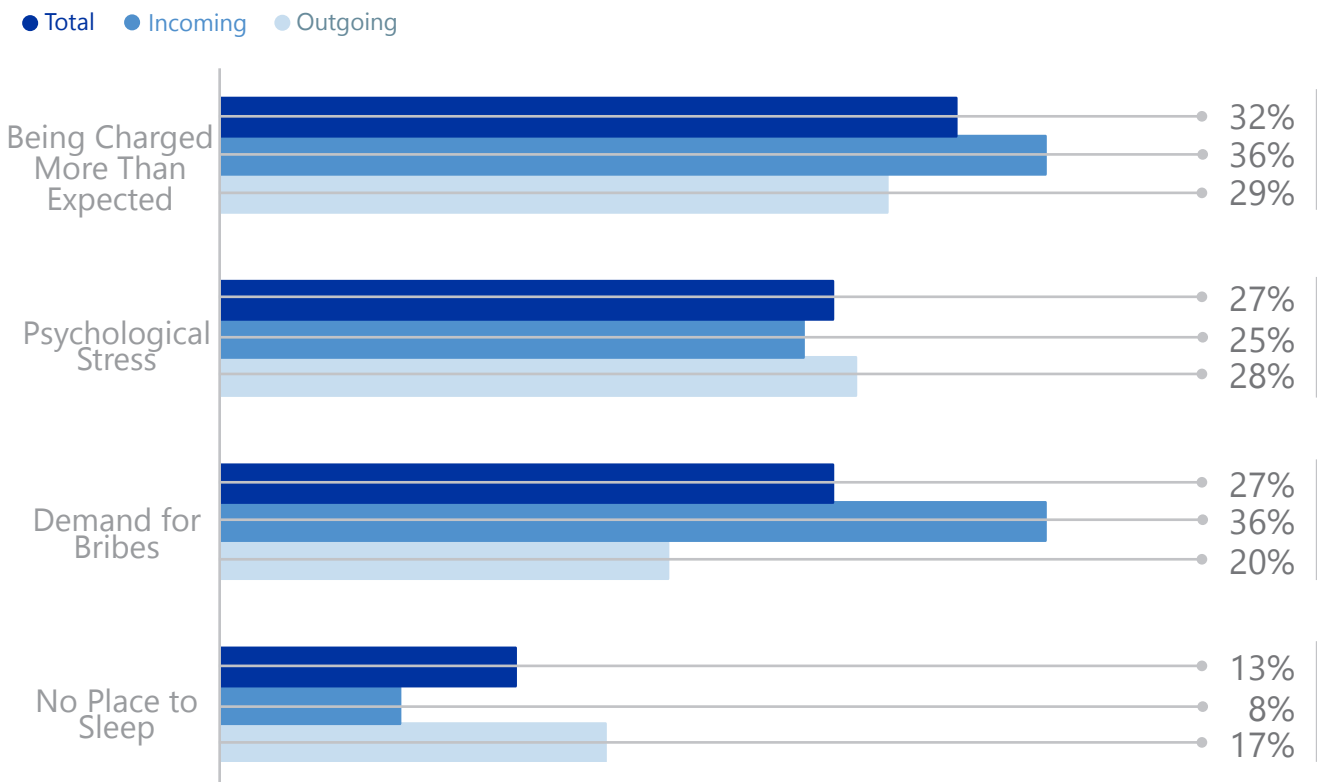Do not have children (n=220)

54% Yes

Returning migrants were also asked if they received remittances from their family while living in Thailand. Overall, one in ten respondents (10%) did receive remittances while in Thailand. This share was equal between male and female respondents.

Problems en Route and at the Workplace in Thailand

To further unpack migrant vulnerabilities, respondents were asked if they had faced any problems during their migration journey to Thailand, and about actual or expected problems at the workplace. In total, 7 per cent of the sample population reported facing problems during their migration journey. Among migrants who reported encountering problems during their migration journey, 60 per cent were male and 40 per cent female. Differences also emerge when looking at the state of origin in Myanmar. As reported in Thematic Area 1, over 60 per cent of the sample population comes from Tanintharyi, which directly borders Thailand in Ranong Province. Just 5 per cent of migrants from Tanintharyi reported facing problems while en route to Thailand. Conversely, respondents from other Myanmar States located further away from the border were more likely to face problems. In total, around 15 per cent of respondents from Rakhine and Bago East faced problems while traveling to Thailand.

As illustrated by Figure 29, main problems along the journey include being charged more than expected (32%), psychological stress (27%), and demands for bribes (27%). Other problems reported included not having a place to sleep (13%), detention (9%), misinformation (8%), personal threats (6%) and documents being taken away (4%).

Figure 29 - Problems en Route by Population Group (n=135)

● Total   ● Incoming   ● Outgoing

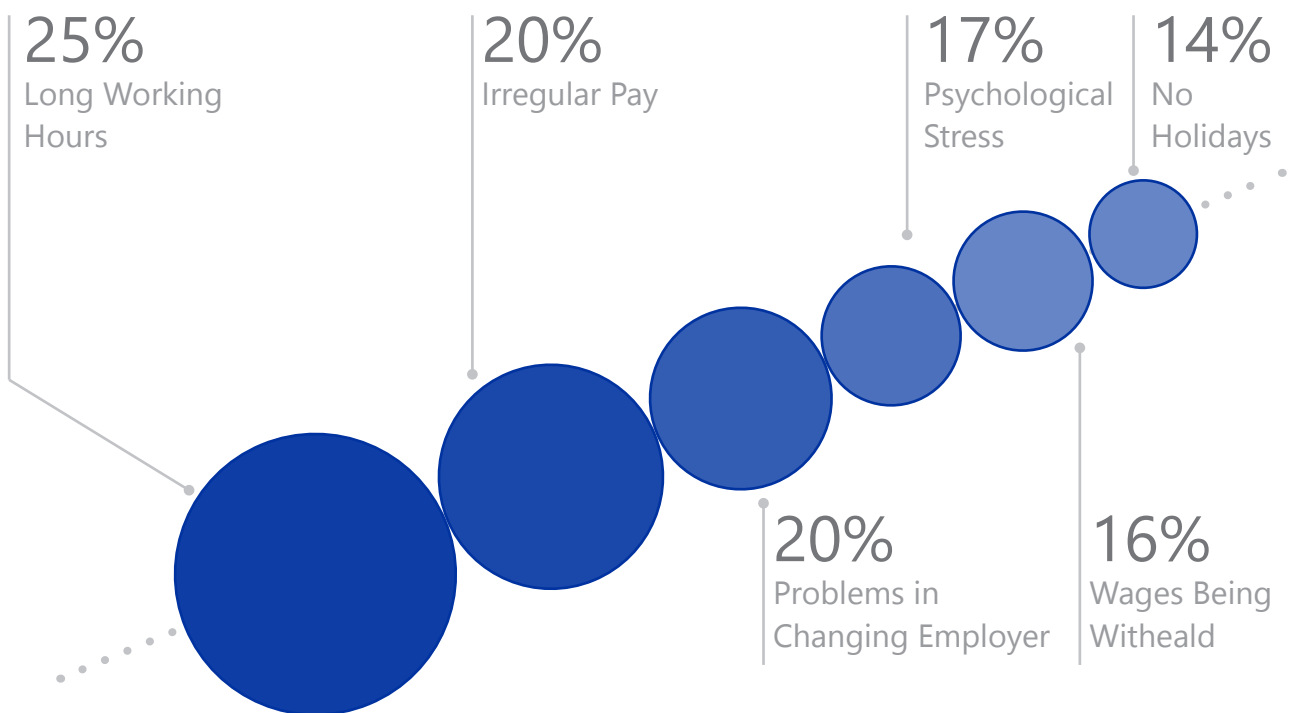|		
Being Charged More Than Expected		32%
		36%
		29%
Psychological Stress		27%
		25%
		28%
Demand for Bribes		27%
		36%
		20%
No Place to Sleep		13%
		8%
		17%

Note: Totals do not add up to 100% because this was a multiple answer question.

Only six per cent of incoming migrants expected to face problems at the workplace in Thailand. However, 14 per cent of returning migrant indicated that they had actually faced problems at the workplace. This discrepancy might seem unusual as half of the incoming migrants reported prior work experience in Thailand, and so might have been expected to have greater awareness of possible problems or challenges. However, it is possible that if they decided to migrate again, this is because their previous migration experiences were positive, resulting in lower expectations of facing workplace problems. As indicated in the graph below, the most common problems at the workplace reported by returning migrants were long working hours (25%), irregular pay (20%), and problems in changing their employer (20%). Fifty-six per cent of the returning migrants who reported facing problems at the workplace were male versus 44 per cent female.

Returning migrants were also asked whether or not they knew of a support mechanism in case of problems in Thailand, and 40 per cent reported that they did. Those returning migrants who faced problems at the workplace were also asked if they sought support and from whom. In total, 39 per cent (n=57) of respondents indicated that they asked for support. In 51 per cent of cases they sought help from family and friends in Thailand, while in 28 per cent of cases the sought help from an agent or broker. When asked if the support actor was able to help them 61 per cent (n=35) of respondents replied "yes" and 33 per cent replied "partially" (n=19). Returning migrants who faced problems but did not seek help (n=90) were asked why they did not reach out for support. They generally cited several reasons for this, most commonly fear of losing their employment (60%; n=54), fear of repercussions (50%; n=45) or not knowing who to go to (39%; n=35).

Figure 30 - Problems at Workplace (Returning Migrants) (n=147)

25%
Long Working Hours

20%
Irregular Pay

17%
Psychological Stress

14%
No Holidays

20%
Problems in Changing Employer

16%
Wages Being Witheald

Note: Totals do not add up to 100% because this was a multiple answer question.

Incoming migrants were also asked if they knew where to seek support in case of problems at the workplace. Overall, 57 per cent knew where to seek help while 17 per cent did not. Twenty-six per cent of incoming migrants had not thought about this yet. Incoming migrants were also asked who they would turn to in case of problems. Again, family and friends in Thailand (61%) or Myanmar (27%) were cited as primary support mechanisms. Figure 31 further illustrates known support mechanisms by migrant group.

Figure 31 - Main Known Support Mechanism in Thailand by Population Group (n=929)

● Family and/or friends in Thailand ● Family and/or friends in Myanmar ● Myanmar Authorities ● Police ● Agent/broker

	Total (n=929)	Incoming (n=511)	Returning (n=418)
Family and/or friends in Thailand	61%	75%	50%
Family and/or friends in Myanmar	27%	34%	21%
Myanmar Authorities	24%	39%	12%
Police	19%	25%	14%
Agent/broker	18%	19%	17%
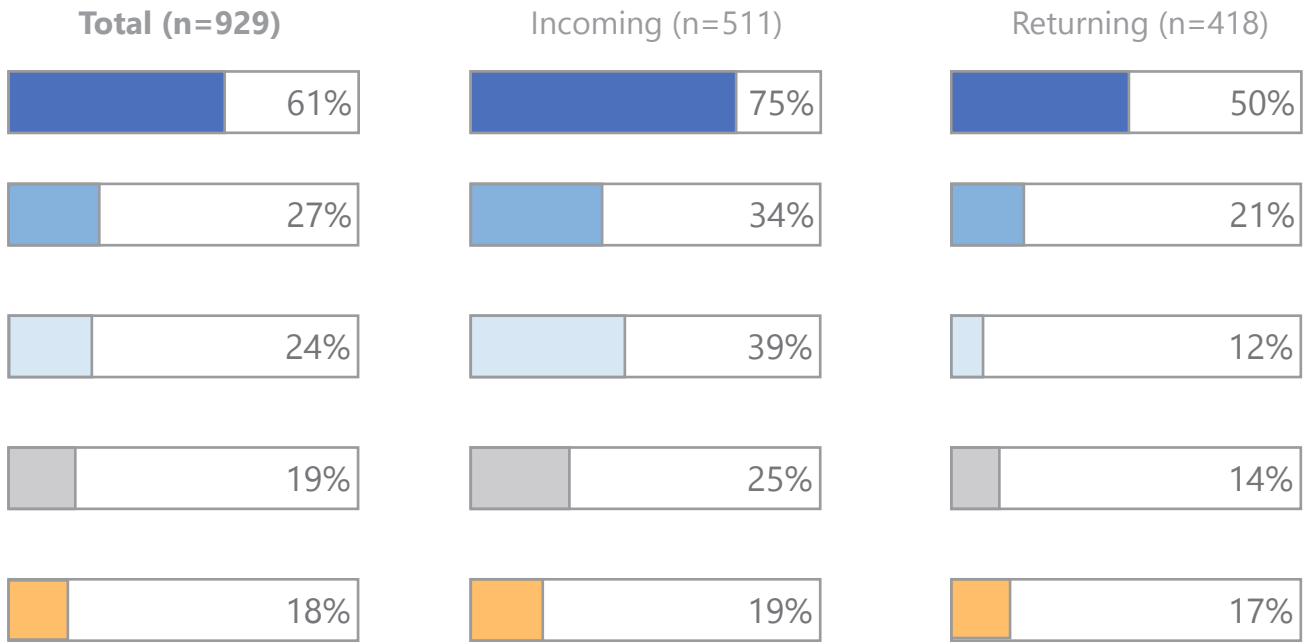
Note: Totals do not add up to 100% because this was a multiple answer question.
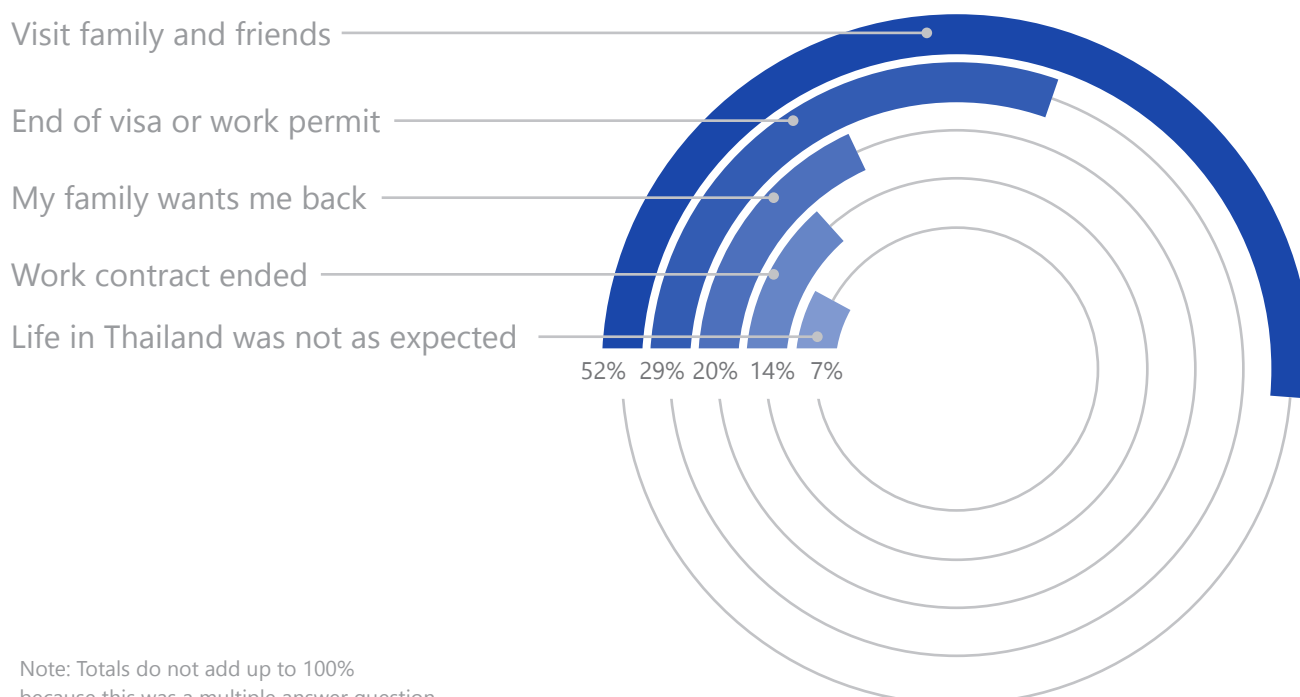
Thematic Area 5 - Return

Aside from those respondents who were returning to Myanmar to visit family and friends, common reasons for return were the end of a visa or work permit, the family of respondents wanting them to come back, or the termination of an employment contract. Almost a quarter of returning migrants expected to face some sort of challenge upon return to Myanmar. These challenges were mostly associated with finding income-generating opportunities or with their physical health. Approximately one in ten respondents from the return sample population reported their intention to migrate again. In most cases, they reported wanting to migrate to Thailand again. Higher wages and better work conditions in countries of destination were cited as the primary reasons for the intention to re-migrate. Roughly seven out of ten respondents reported that they have more savings now as compared to when they migrated to Thailand, and around six out of ten migrants reported that their general financial situation improved through migration.

Questions for Thematic Area 5 were only asked to returning migrants, as this thematic area centers on the topic of return. Similar to reasons given for undertaking migration, reasons for return were varied and multiple respondents selected more than one reason for return. Over 50 per cent of returning migrants stated that they were going back to Myanmar to visit family and friends. Around 30 per cent said that they were returning because their work permit or visa had expired. Twenty per cent said that they were going back because their family in Myanmar wanted them to. Reasons for return were quite homogeneous among male and female respondents.

Migrants who were returning to Myanmar for a longer period of time, and not just to visit family and friends, were also asked if they expected to face any challenges upon return. Overall, 77 per cent of this sub-sample did not expect any challenges. Those who did expect challenges cited difficulties in finding a job (19%), challenges with their physical health (6%) and the repayment of debts (4%).

When asked about future migration intentions, 64 per cent of the returning sample reported that they do not want to migrate again, 12 per cent intended to migrate again and 20 per cent were undecided. In total, 86 respondents appeared to have future migration intentions. Of these respondents, 65 intend to migrate to Thailand again (75%), 11 to Malaysia (14%) and the rest to other destinations. Reasons for migrating again included higher wages (47%; n=40), better work conditions (43%; n=37), to rejoin family and friends (38%; n=33) and better living conditions (36%; n=31) at destination.

Figure 32 - Reasons for Return (Returning Migrants) (n=969)

Visit family and friends

End of visa or work permit

My family wants me back

Work contract ended

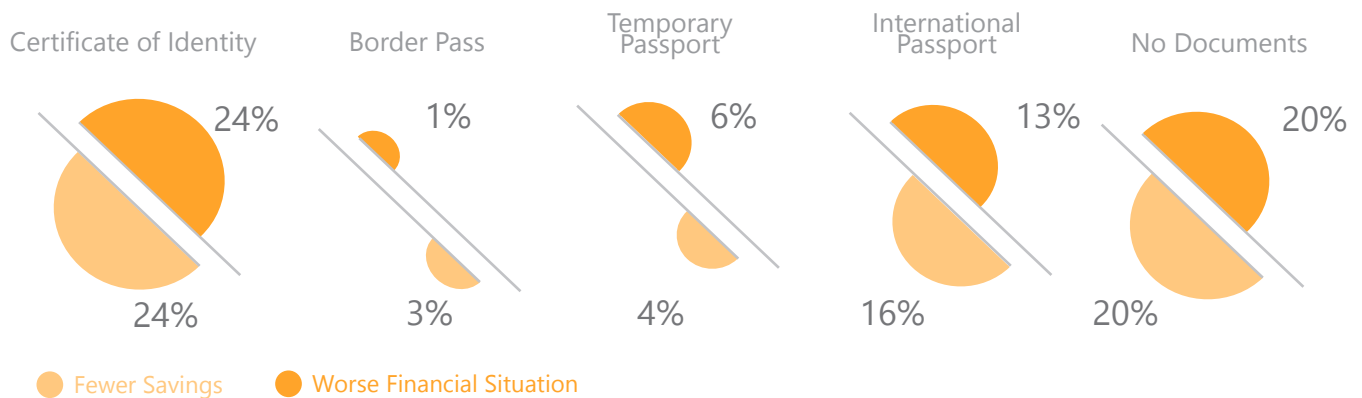Life in Thailand was not as expected

52% 29% 20% 14% 7%

Note: Totals do not add up to 100%
because this was a multiple answer question.

To further analyze potential migration-related vulnerabilities, returning migrants were asked two questions to assess how their financial situation had changed due to migration. In total, 83 per cent of returning migrants reported having either more savings (67%) or the same level of savings (16%) as compared to prior their migration. However, a correlation was observed between the level of savings and the form of documentation used to enter Thailand. It was observed that migrants with a border pass or with a temporary passport were the most likely to have increased their savings (74% for a border pass, 81% for a temporary passport). Conversely, migrants who entered Thailand with a Certificate of Identity (CI) were the group most likely to report having fewer savings post-migration (24%), even when compared to migrants who entered Thailand without any documentation (20%).
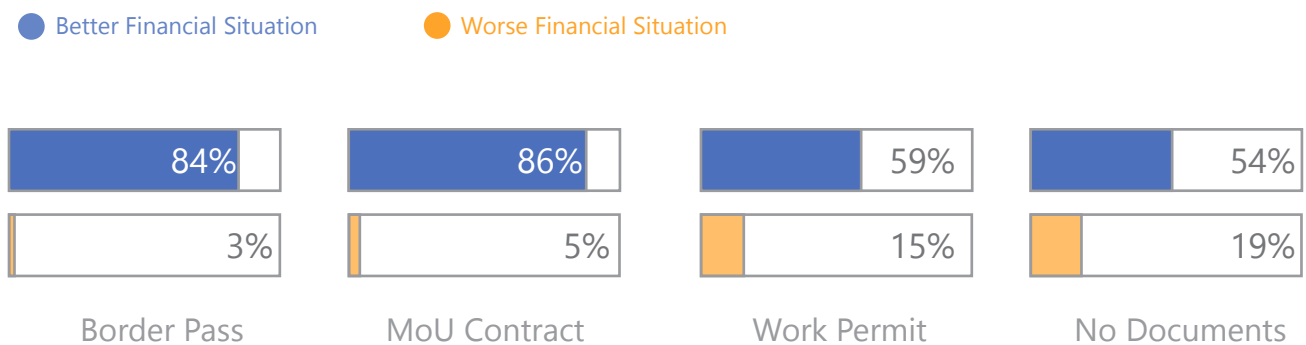
Similarly to what is indicated with respect to savings, the share of respondents who reported that their financial situation has improved due to migration was 62 per cent and the share of people who reported that it stayed the same was 22 per cent. In total, 13 per cent of returning migrants reported that their financial situation worsened as a result of migration. Three per cent of the respondents did not want to answer this question. When analyzing the financial situation of migrants post-migration with the type of work document used, it is observed that respondents with a work permit were less likely to report improved financial outcomes (59%) as compared to persons holding an MoU contract (86%) or a border pass (84%).

Figure 33 - Status of Savings and General Financial Situation by Document to Enter Thailand (n=1053)

Certificate of Identity — 24% / 24%
Border Pass — 1% / 3%
Temporary Passport — 6% / 4%
International Passport — 13% / 16%
No Documents — 20% / 20%

● Fewer Savings   ● Worse Financial Situation

Respondents who reported that their financial situation was worse than pre-migration were also asked the reason why their financial situation had deteriorated. Most commonly, they reported that they found a job but they were not able to make enough money (53%; n=75), that they now have a bigger family to care for (43%; n=60), or that they were not able to find a job (20%; n=28). By looking at possible differences between sexes, the data indicates that female respondents were more likely than male respondents to mention that their financial situation deteriorated because now they have a bigger family to care for (52% female vs 37% male).

Figure 34 - Status of General Financial Situation by Type of Work Document (n=1053)

● Better Financial Situation   ● Worse Financial Situation

Border Pass	MoU Contract	Work Permit	No Documents
84%	86%	59%	54%
3%	5%	15%	19%

Picture 6 - DTM enumerator surveys a Myanmar migrant worker at Saphan Pla Pier

Picture 7 - Unofficial border crossing point at Soi Wang Tu, Kra Buri district

Recommendations

- The data collected from 1,968 Myanmar migrant workers between January and March 2020 provides useful insights into the profiles and vulnerabilities of Myanmar migrants to Thailand. However, this data collection was only undertaken in Ranong Province and is not representative of all Myanmar migrant workers coming to Thailand. In order to develop a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the key migration trends and vulnerabilities prior to the advent of COVID-19, it is recommended to look at this data in conjunction with that collected in Tak Province between June and December 2018 to further explore commonalities and areas of concern. In addition, given that similar data collection exercises were undertaken in Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic in 2019, it is suggested to compare these different datasets with those collected for Myanmar migrant workers in order to identify regional migration trends, vulnerabilities and potential policy gaps.

- The results of this assessment indicate that despite having slightly higher levels of education than their male counterparts, on average, female migrant workers were paid less than male migrant workers. They were also less likely to receive pre-migration support. To reinforce gender equality, pre-migration support mechanisms for prospective female migrants should be strengthened. In Thailand, efforts to ensure equal pay for equal work should also be reinforced.

- The central role played by Myanmar nationals living in Thailand as trusted support actors for aspirant migrants should be recognized and reflected in programming and policy responses. This assessment shows that family and friends in Thailand support the migration journey in a multitude of ways: they provide migration-related information and support, help migrants to find employment, and also act as a support systemin case of challenges. In order to ensure that the information and support they provide is valid and sufficient, however, efforts should be made by government and non-governmental actors to regularly engage with existing migrant communities and to provide them with comprehensive and updated information in a language they understand.

- While migrants in Thailand on a Certificate of Identity (CI) were more likely to receive higher wages than migrants with no documentation, the findings from this assessment show that this did not always result in improved financial outcomes. In fact, migrants with a CI were more likely to report having fewer savings and a worse financial situation post-migration than undocumented migrants. This underlines the need to continue simplifying processes and reducing costs for legal migration options, so as to create clearer financial incentives for migrating through regular channels.

- To better prepare migrants for potential problems at the workplace and during the migration journey, increased efforts should be made through information campaigns and outreach to sensitize prospective migrants to the challenges of migration and connect them to relevant support mechanisms. This is particularly recommended as returning migrants were twice as likely to report workplace challenges than incoming migrants reported expecting them. According to this assessment, migrants traveling from states located further away from the border were also more likely to face challenges while travelling to Thailand than those living close to the border. Challenges were especially prevalent for respondents from Rakhine and Bago East, and as such it is suggested to focus outreach and interventions on these specific states of origin.

- Finally, it is important to note that the current COVID-19 pandemic has already had consequential impacts on Thailand's economy, as well as on the global economy, and that these impacts are likely to become more pronounced as restrictions remain in place. This is likely to significantly alter and exacerbate the vulnerabilities of migrant workers coming to Thailand. While this assessment, and ones preceding it, serve as a reliable baseline for the pre- COVID-19 context, further data collection to better understand changes in trends and vulnerabilities is strongly advised once Thailand reopens its borders to migrant workers.

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