



RAPID ASSESSMENT: COVID-19 RELATED VULNERABILITIES AND PERCEPTIONS OF MYANMAR MIGRANTS IN MUEANG RANONG DISTRICT, RANONG PROVINCE, THAILAND

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)
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BACKGROUND

In light of the outbreak of COVID-19 in Thailand, migrants and non-Thai populations, irrespective of their legal status, face a new set of challenges and vulnerabilities. Movement restrictions and the disruption of many income-generating activities pose a significant burden on migrants and non-Thai populations employed in both the formal and informal sectors. With limited or no access to technology, limited capacity to cope and adapt, limited or no savings, inadequate access to social services, and uncertainty about their legal status and potential to access healthcare services, hundreds of thousands of migrants and non-nationals have left Thailand since late March 2020.

However, the full extent to which these challenges and vulnerabilities are affecting migrant communities and non-nationals who have opted to remain in Thailand, or had no choice but to remain in Thailand, remains unknown. It is also unclear whether migrant communities and non-nationals are receiving sufficient information about COVID-19 or have access to the resources which will allow them to maintain the hygiene and sanitation standards required for effective protection. To fill these data gaps and inform possible responses, IOM initiated a number of data collection exercises to collect information on the COVID-19 knowledge and related vulnerabilities of non-Thai populations in Thailand, including two rounds of a rapid assessment undertaken with key informants in April and May 2020.

Building on these data collection exercises, and in order to obtain more specific and targeted information, IOM conducted individual migrant survey in the district of Mueang Ranong in the border province of Ranong, Thailand. The survey focuses on six thematic areas: 1) Migrant profiles; 2) Drivers of migration; 3) Employment; 4) Impacts of COVID-19; 5) COVID-19 related vulnerabilities; and 6) Return intentions.

DATA LIMITATIONS

This data analysis only provides information on Myanmar migrants living in Mueang Ranong district at the time of assessment. The data does not provide information on migrants living in any other part of Thailand.

STATISTICAL NOTE

General note: For the purpose of this assessment, respondents were included in the sample if they identified as Myanmar nationals, did not hold Thai citizenship, were resident in Mueang Ranong district at the time of the survey and had been in Thailand for a duration of at least one month

Multiple answer: When the label "multiple answers" is found next to a graph or a question it indicates that a single respondent was allowed to provide more than one answer. For this reason, totals do not add up to 100%.

DISCLAIMER - The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this report can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of IOM, its Member States, the United States, or other donors. The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the work do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

METHODOLOGY

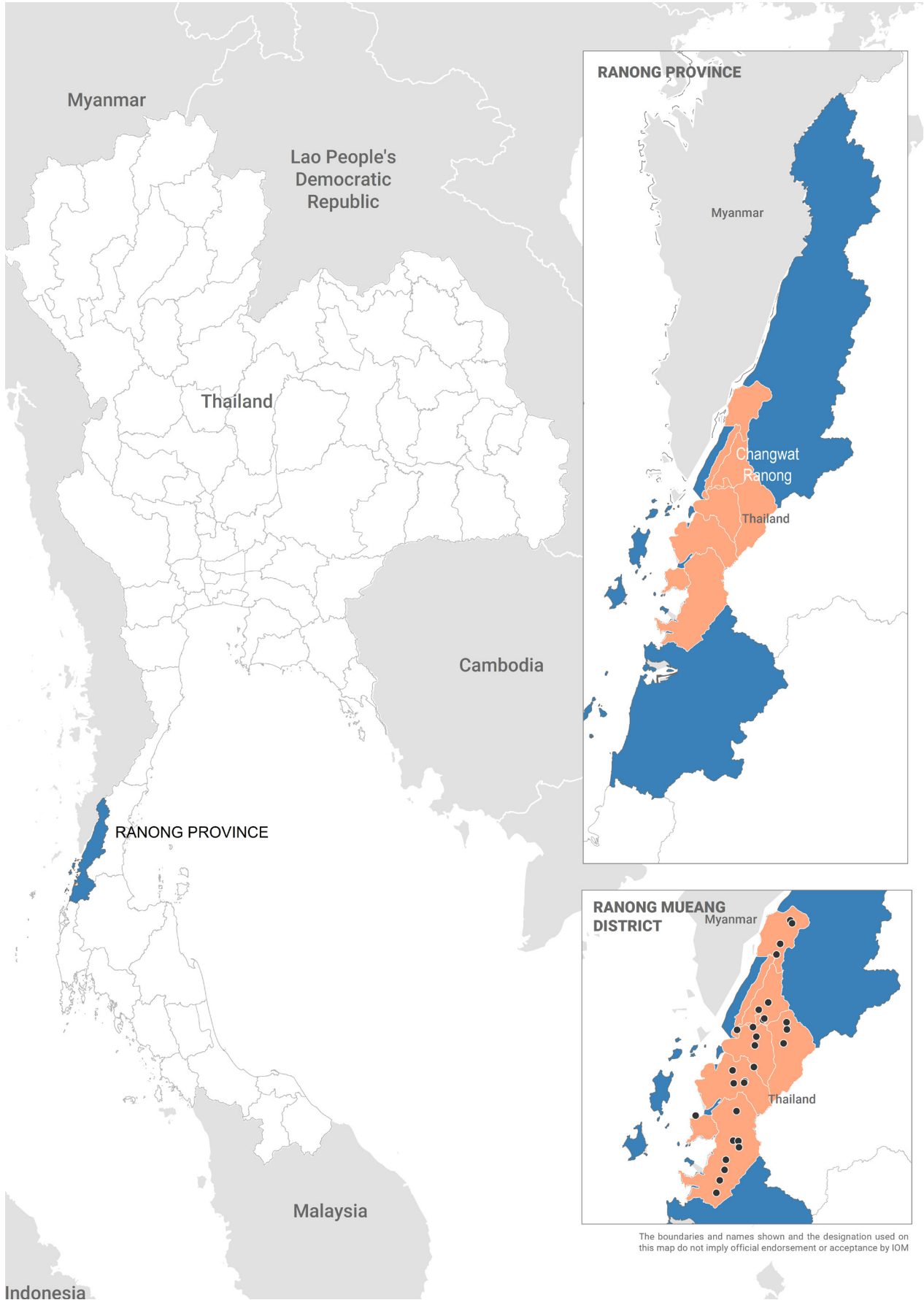
The Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is a set of tools and methodologies, which enable systematic and regular primary data collection, analysis and dissemination of population movements, human mobility and forced migration (both internal and cross-border). Originally designed to serve the humanitarian community during crises, DTM has been implemented to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

By using a key informant masterlist for Mueang Ranong district composed of village leaders, representatives from local administration, representatives from local health institutions and migrant community representatives, IOM applied a snowball sampling method to identify a participant sample that would be representative at the district level of the Myanmar migrant population in Mueang Ranong with a 90 per cent confidence level and 6.4 per cent margin of error. The Myanmar migrant population was determined on the basis of a village-level assessment undertaken by IOM Thailand in Mueang Ranong district in April 2020.

The team adopted a stratified sampling strategy with the objective of interviewing 164 adult Myanmar migrants proportionally stratified by sex and sub-district. Despite the increased costs and complexities of this methodology, this allowed for the sample to be more representative of the real population. Data was collected both through phone surveys and in person with a total of 182 migrants by 4 trained enumerators (50% female) between 25 July and 5 August. During the data cleaning process, a total of 18 excess interviews were randomly removed from their sub-group to follow the proportional allocation of the sample population.

Due to the sampling method being non-randomized, external validity of the study is limited, and generalizations should be avoided. Nonetheless, the results of this assessment can provide insight into the challenges and vulnerabilities facing Myanmar migrants in Mueang Ranong district of Ranong province.

GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE



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

THEMATIC AREA 1 - MIGRANT PROFILES



164

RESPONDENTS SURVEYED



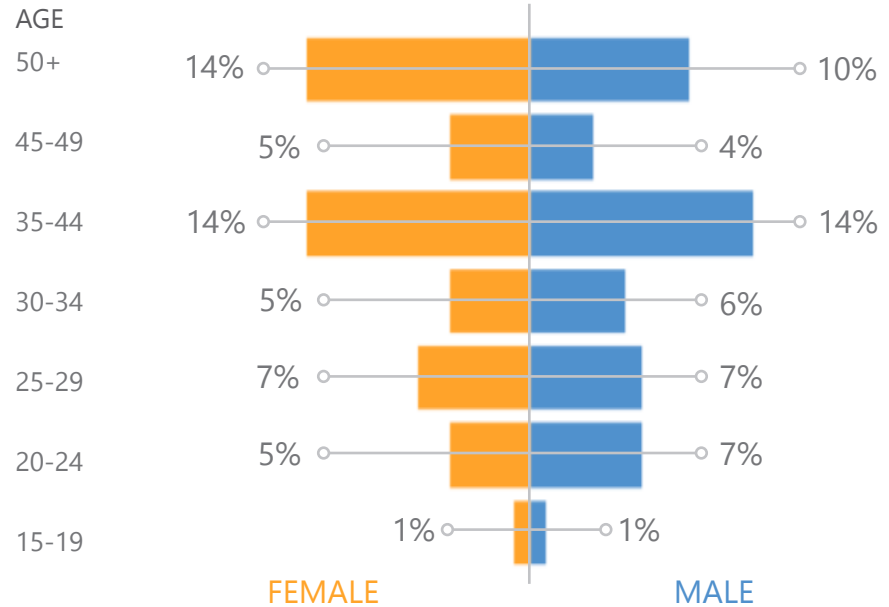
84 (51%)
FEMALE



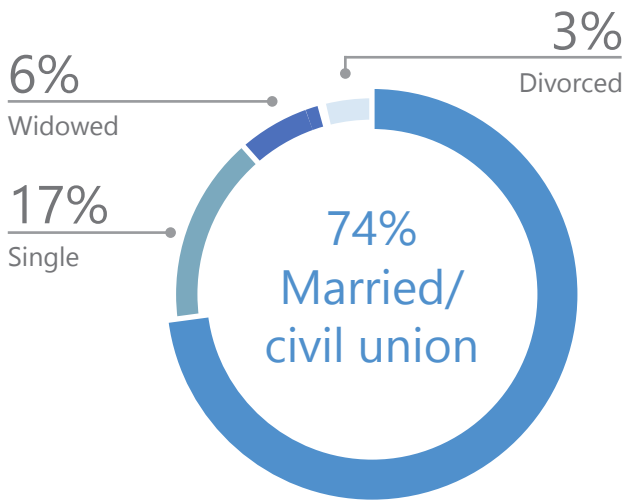
80 (49%)
MALE

In total, 164 respondents were interviewed for this assessment. The average age of respondents was 39 years and females (51%) represented the majority of the sample population.

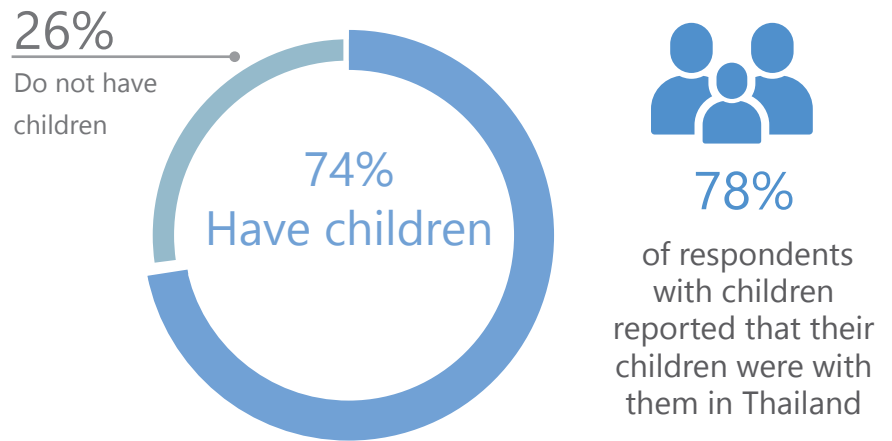
Population Pyramid



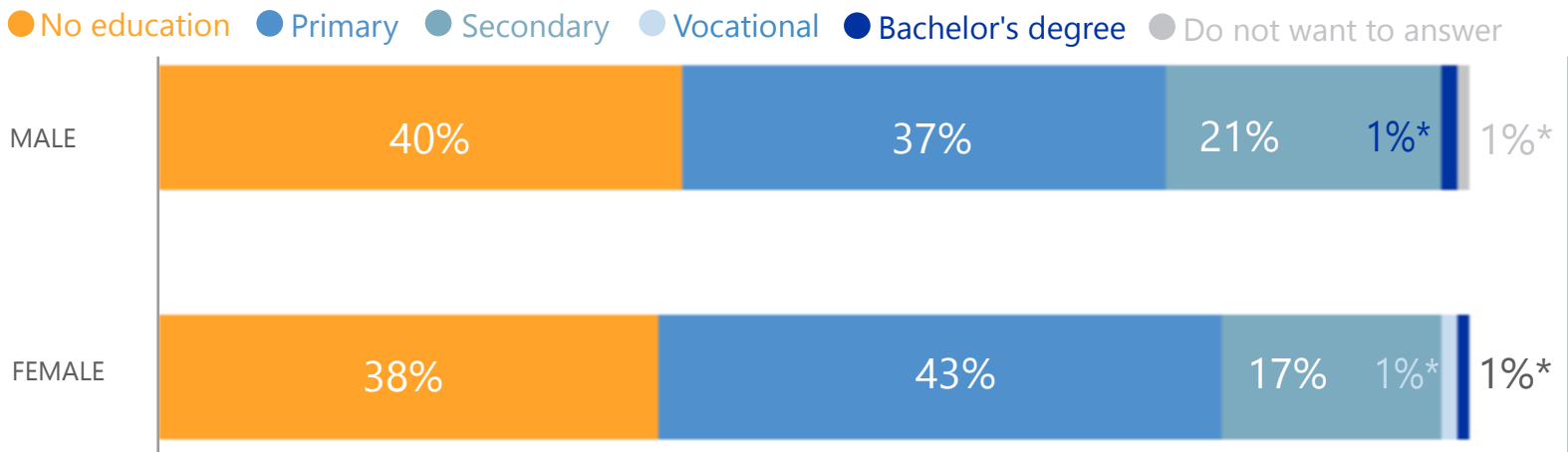
Marital status



Respondents with children

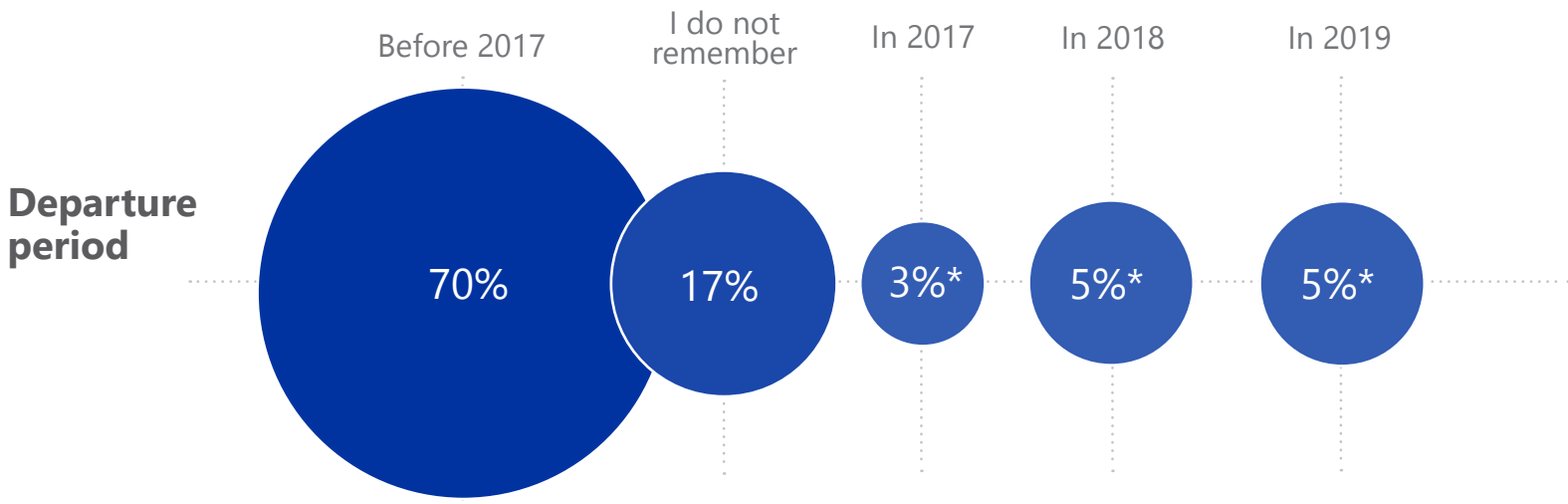


Education level by sex



*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

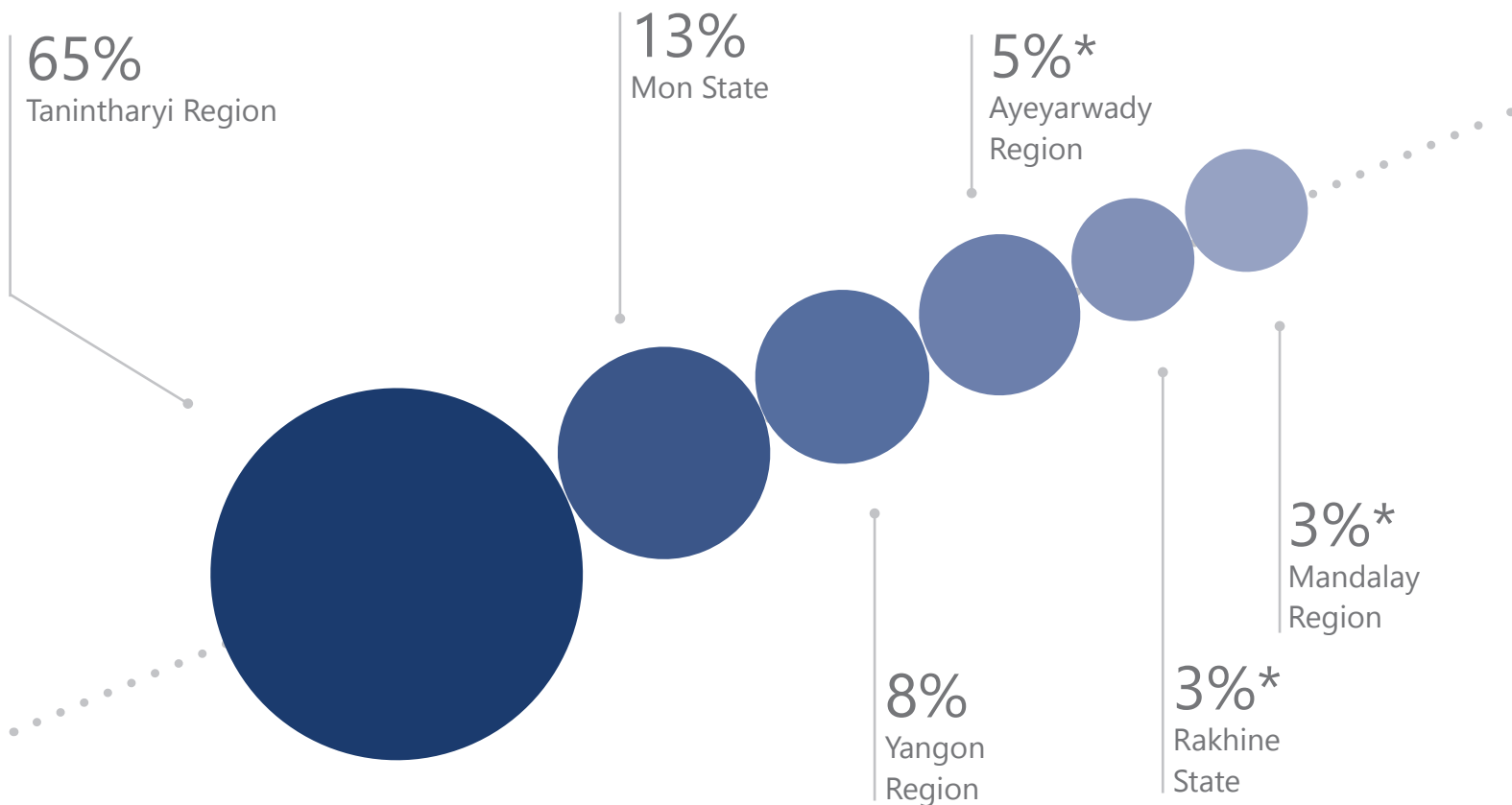
Departure from Myanmar



*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

Last place of residence in Myanmar

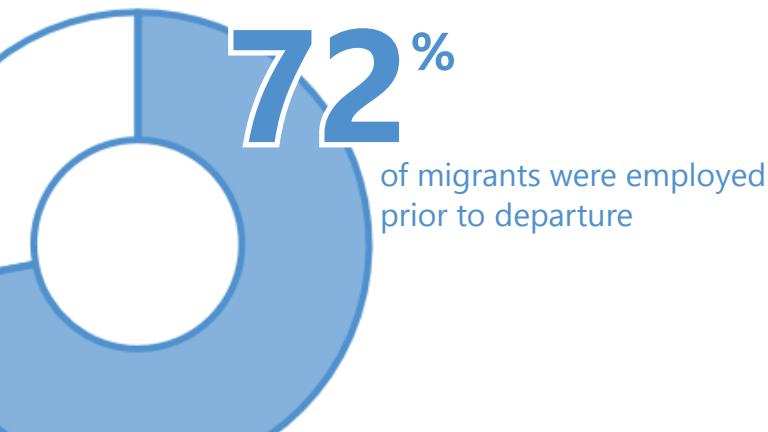
(Top 6 answers only)



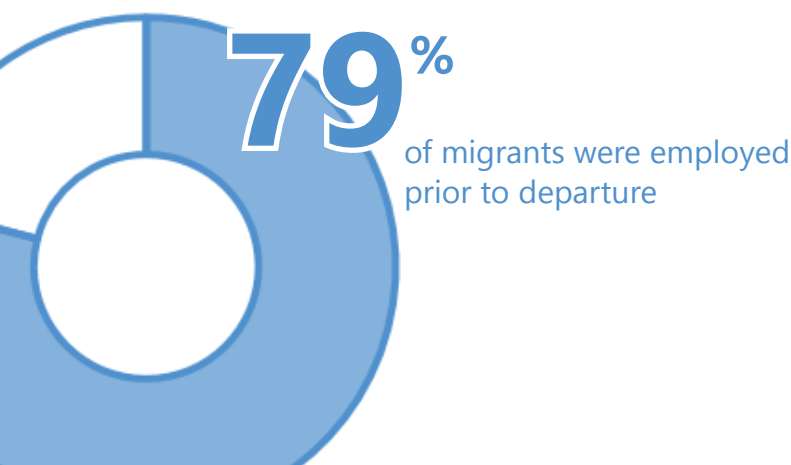
*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

Employment status prior migration by sex

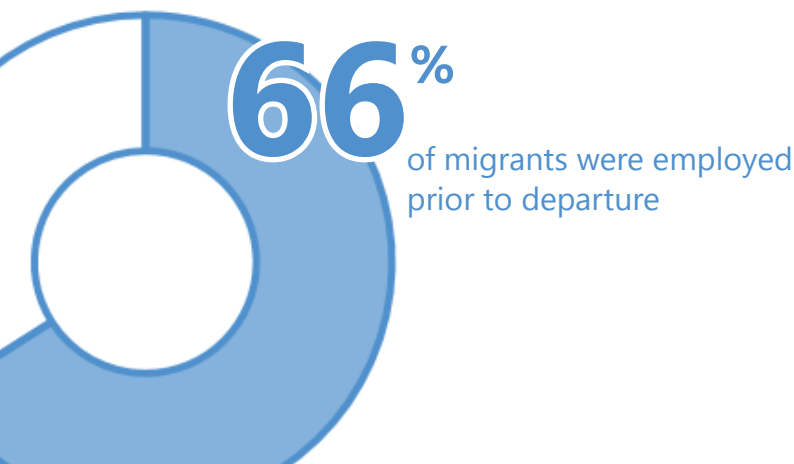
TOTAL migrants who were employed before migrating to Thailand



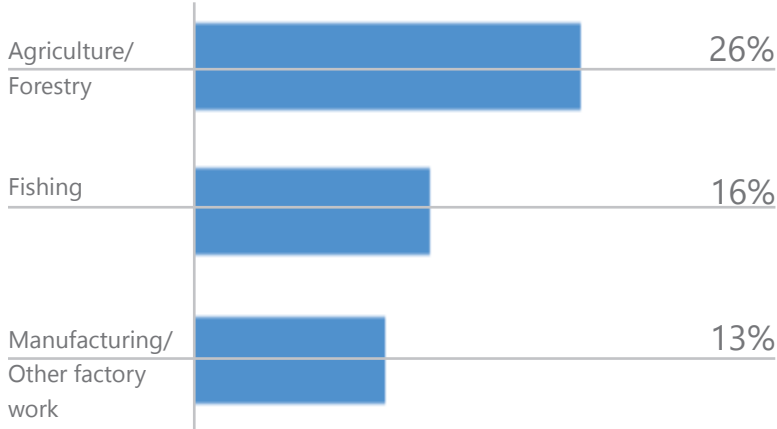
MALE migrants who were employed before migrating to Thailand



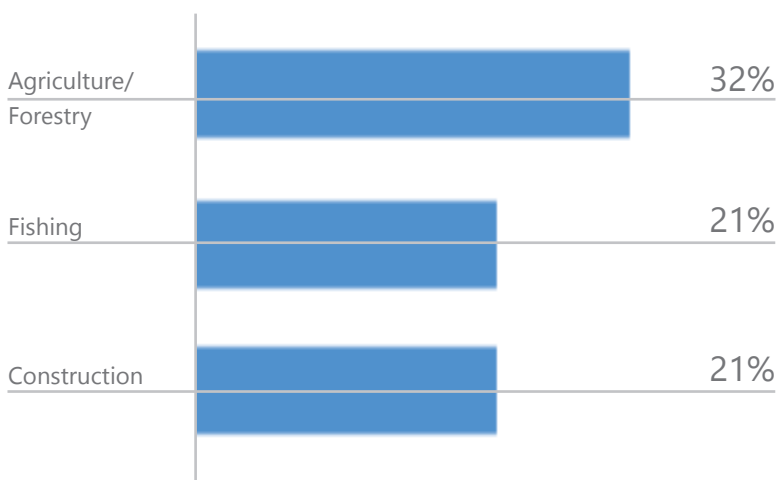
FEMALE migrants who were employed before migrating to Thailand



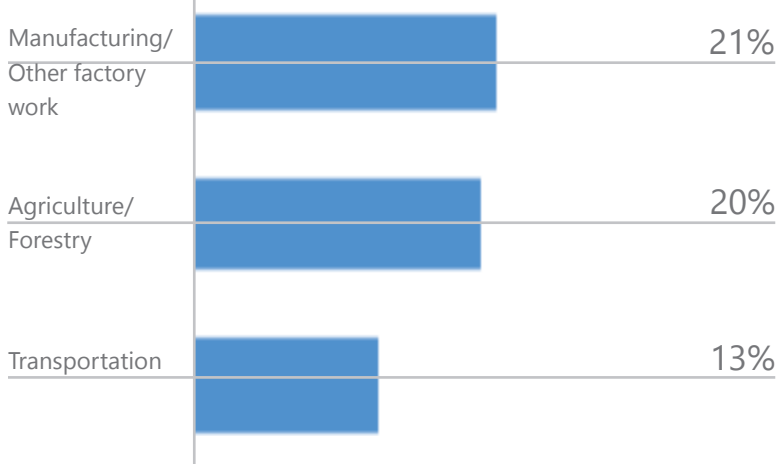
Sector of employment prior to migration to Thailand (Top 3 answers only)



Sector of employment prior to migration to Thailand (Top 3 answers only)



Sector of employment prior to migration to Thailand (Top 3 answers only)



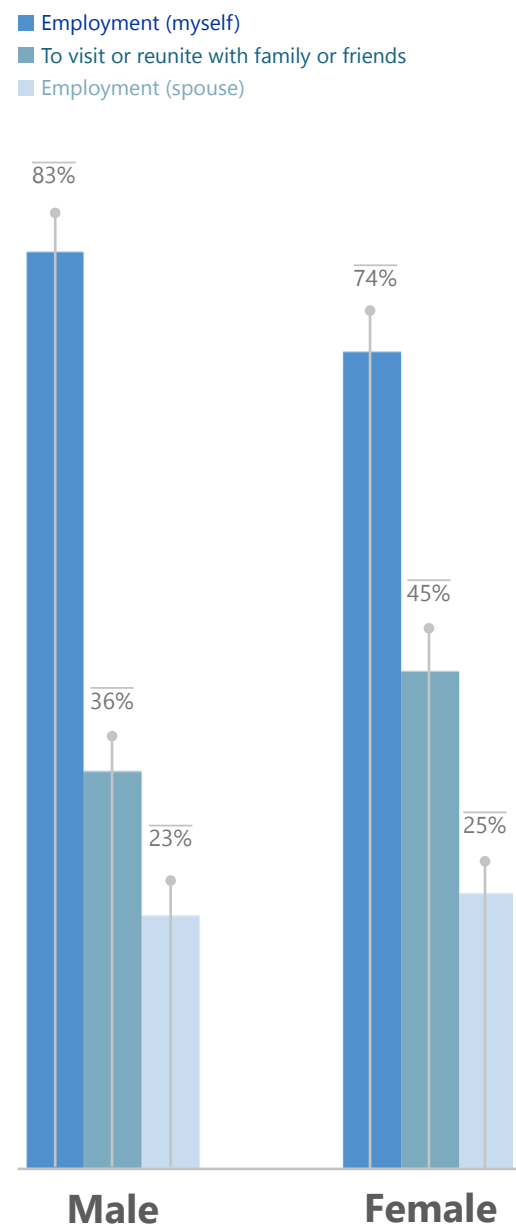
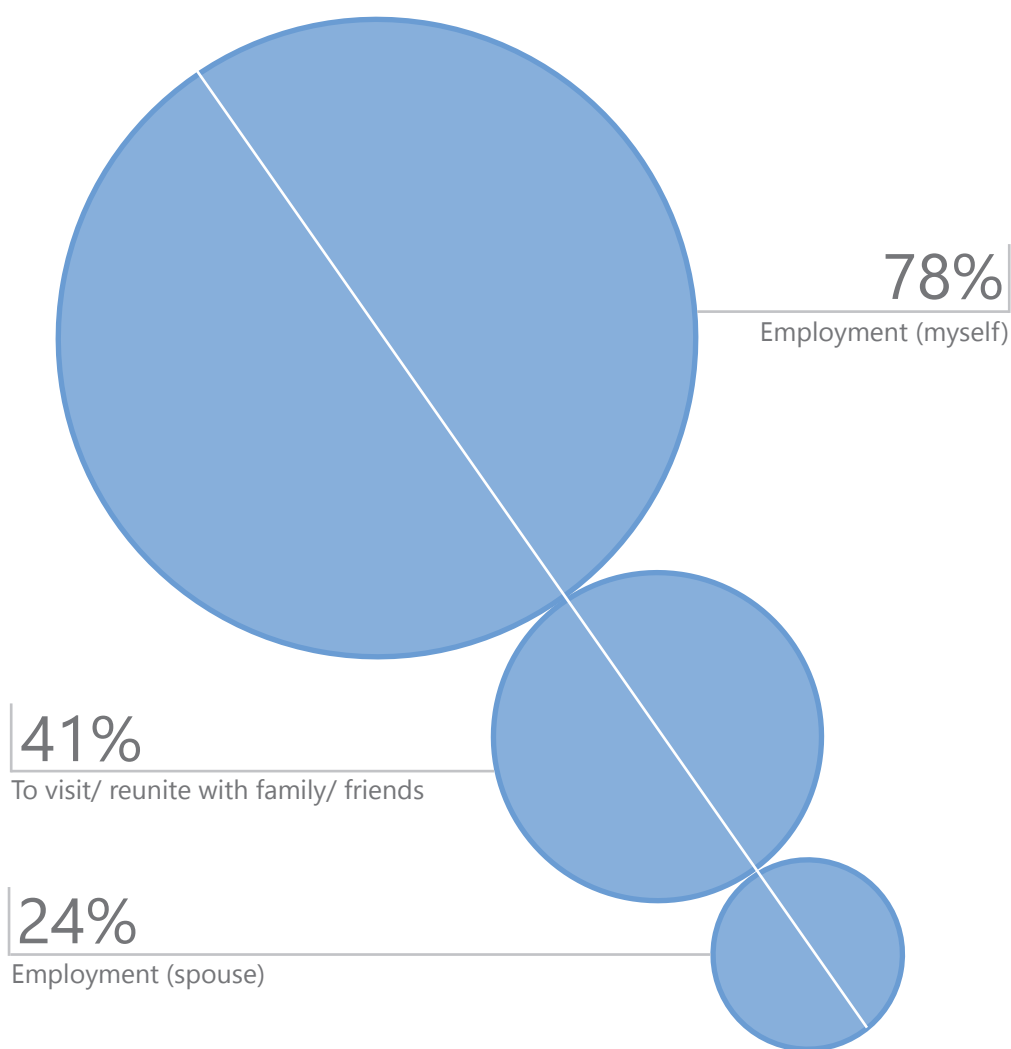
THEMATIC AREA 2 - DRIVERS OF MIGRATION

Respondents were asked a series of questions related to their reasons for migration to Thailand. One of the primary motives for migration is economic opportunity; 78 per cent of respondents reported migrating to Thailand to take up employment and 24 per cent reported accompanying a spouse who intended to take up employment.

When looking at the main reasons for migration by sex, the findings indicate that a larger share of female respondents migrated to Thailand to visit or reunite with family or friends (45%) and to accompany spouses taking up employment (25%) while a larger share of male respondents left Myanmar to take up employment in Thailand (83%).

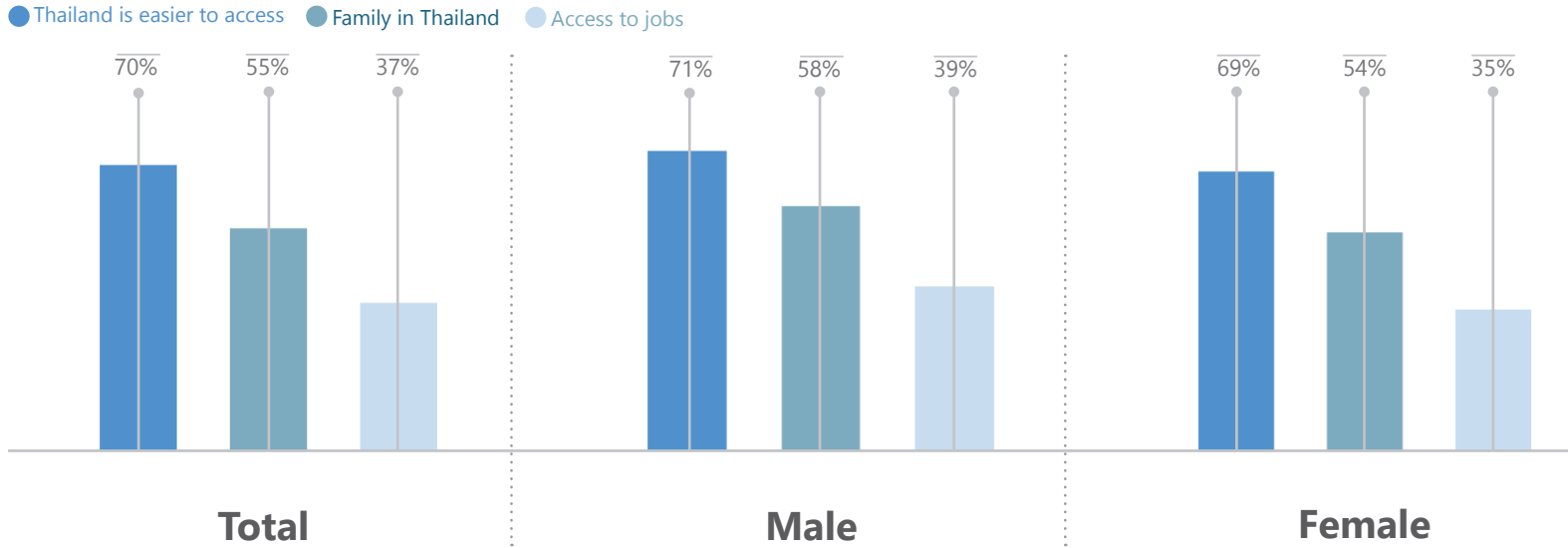
Main reasons for migration by sex (Multiple answers possible; top 3 answers only)

Total

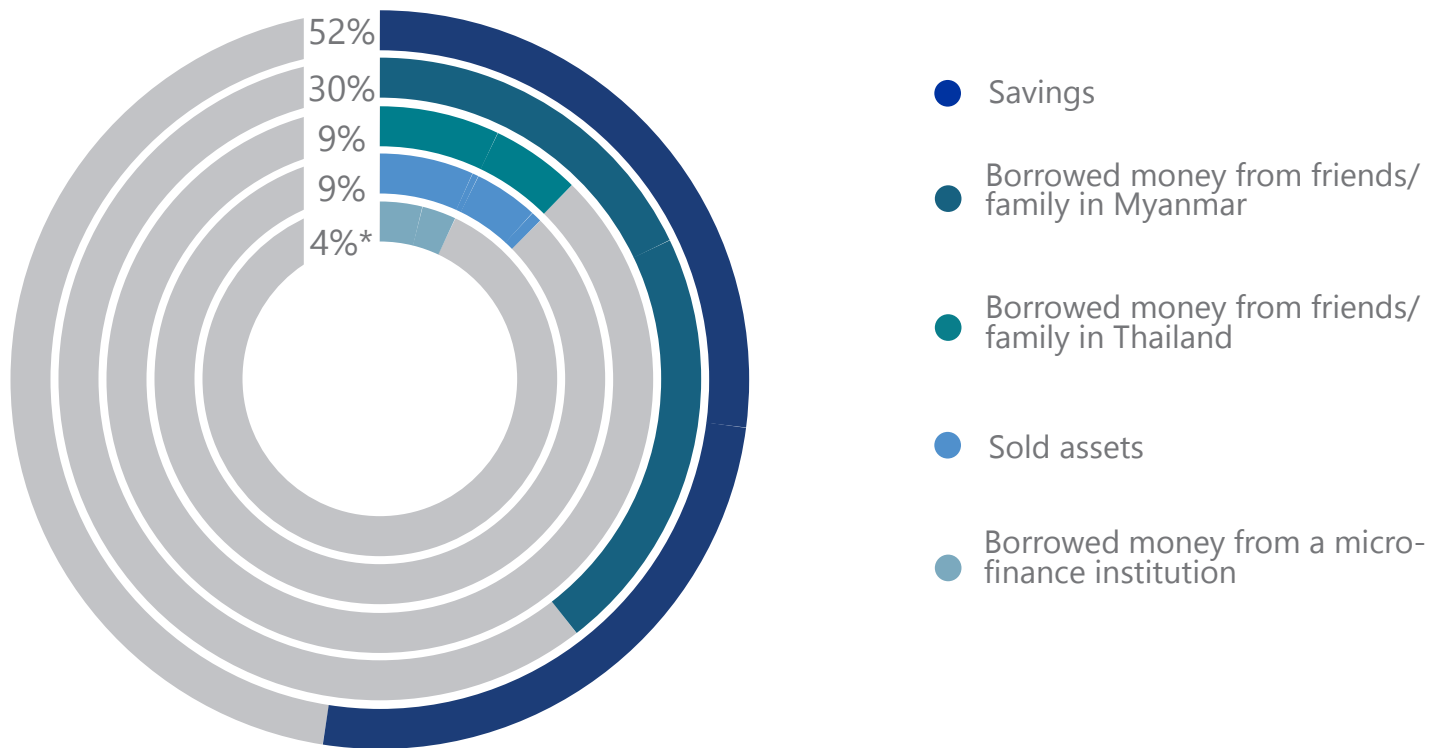


Reasons for choosing Thailand over another country in the region by sex

(Multiple answers possible; top 3 answers only)



Ways to finance the migration journey (Multiple answers possible)



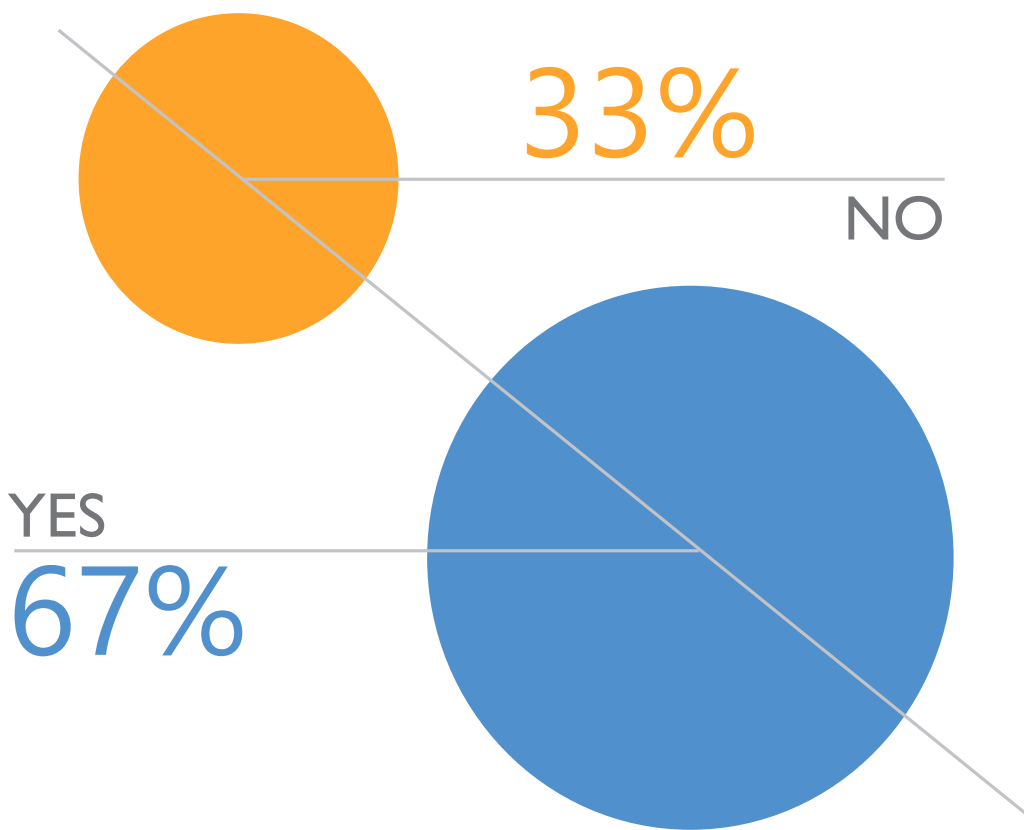
*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

When considering drivers for migration to Thailand, the majority of Myanmar migrants (70%) stated preferring migrating to Thailand because of its geographical proximity to Myanmar. Other significant reasons given include the presence of family in Thailand (55%) and comparatively easier access to the labour market (37%). To learn more about the migration journey, migrants were also asked how they paid for the expenses of migration. While more than half of the respondents financed migration with their savings (52%), the share of those who had to borrow money from friends or family in Myanmar or Thailand or from a micro-finance institution was 43 per cent.

THEMATIC AREA 3 - EMPLOYMENT

Are you currently working in Thailand?

TOTAL



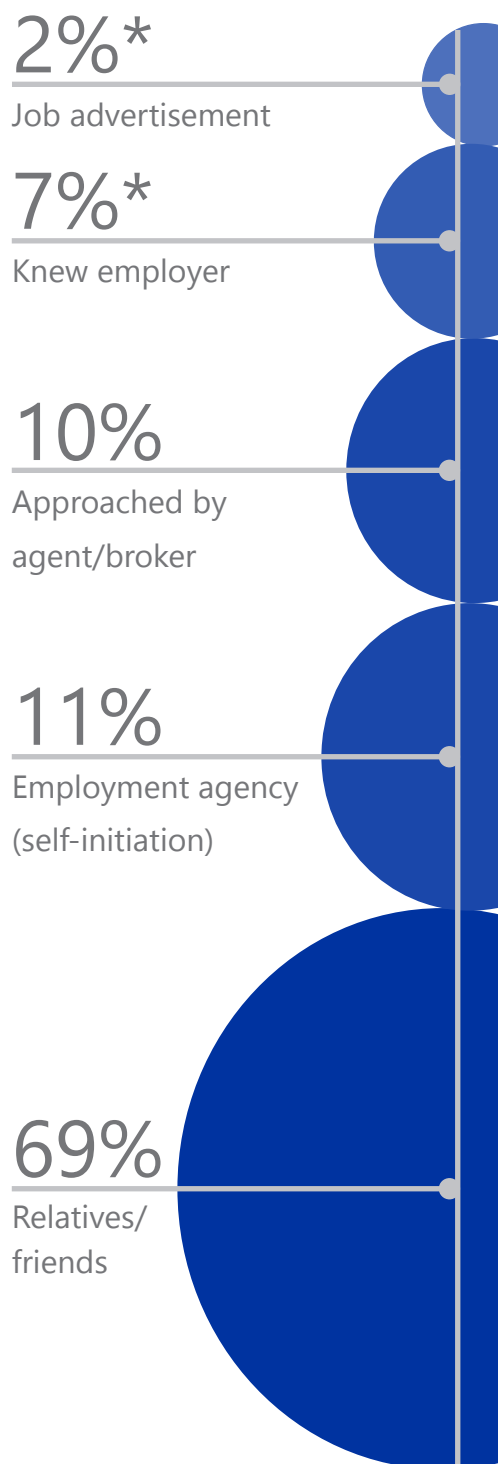
In order to better understand the work-related challenges of Myanmar migrants in Mueang Ranong district - and in particular to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on migrant employment - respondents were asked questions about their employment situation.

In total, 67 per cent of the sample was employed during the data collection period. On the whole, male respondents were far more likely than female respondents to be employed (83% versus 51%).

Sixty-nine per cent of the respondents who were employed reported that they obtained employment with the support of relatives or friends in Thailand (65%) and Myanmar (4%). Eleven per cent were approached by an agent or broker and 10 per cent went through an employment agency. Obtaining work directly through the employer (7%) or job vacancies (2%) were also mentioned as another ways to obtain employment. The data also indicates that 96 per cent of the sample currently employed in Thailand reported having legal permission to work in the country.

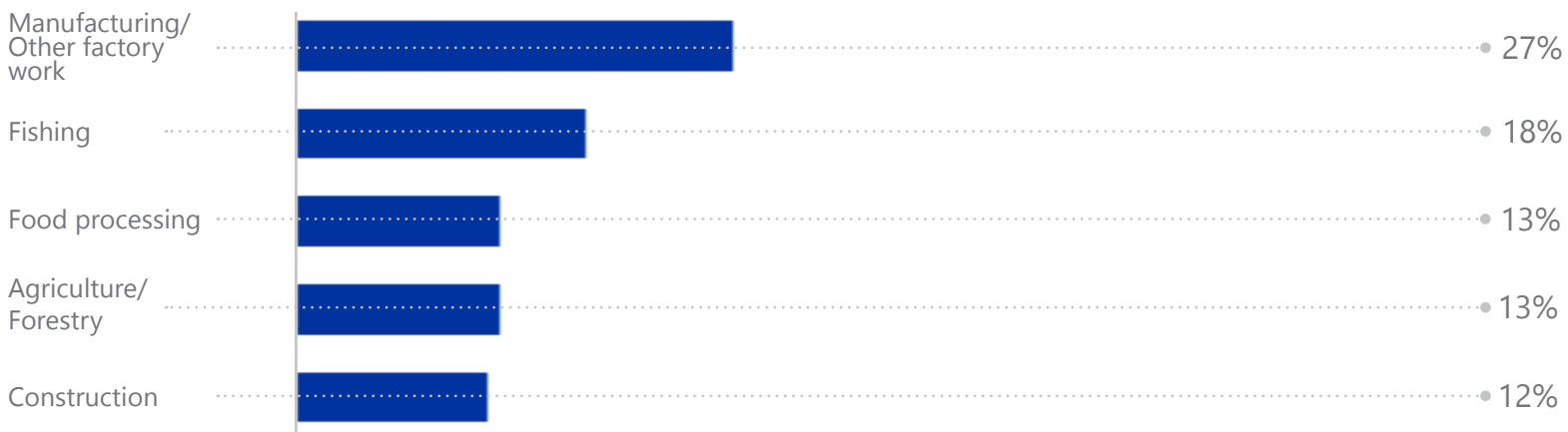
How did you find your job?

(Top 5 answers only)



*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

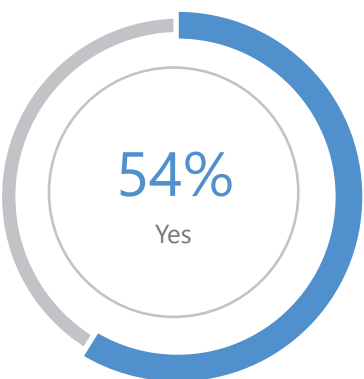
Primary sectors of current employment in Thailand (Top 5 answers only)



The findings indicate that the two leading sectors of employment in Mueang Ranong district are manufacturing and other factory work (27%) and fishing (18%). The leading sector of employment for female respondents was manufacturing and other factory work, with 30 per cent of females employed in this sector. The leading sector of employment for male respondents was fishing, with 22 per cent of males employed in this sector.

In order to gain a better understanding of how the outbreak of COVID-19 affected the employment situation of Myanmar migrants in Mueang Ranong district, respondents were asked a series of questions related to their salary and working hours both before and after the outbreak of COVID-19. In total, 44 per cent of those who were employed reported getting paid less than 315 THB, the minimum daily wage in Ranong province. Among migrants who saw a reduction in their wages after the outbreak of COVID-19, only a quarter were previously being paid equal to or above the provincial minimum wage of 315 THB. This indicates that employers who were not paying their workers minimum wage prior to COVID-19 were more likely to further reduce the salaries of their employees than employers who were paying minimum wage prior to COVID-19. Thirty-five percent of respondents who are currently employed reported reduced working hours after the outbreak of COVID-19 in Thailand.

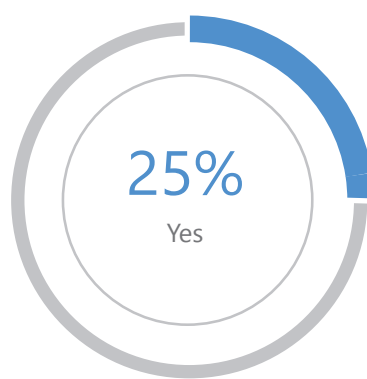
Do you currently make equal to or above 315 THB?



If you have a job, has your salary changed since the COVID-19 outbreak?



If you now earn less, was your previous daily wage equal to or above 315 THB?



If you have a job, have your working hours changed since the COVID-19 outbreak?



Note: 2% of the respondents did not want to answer this question

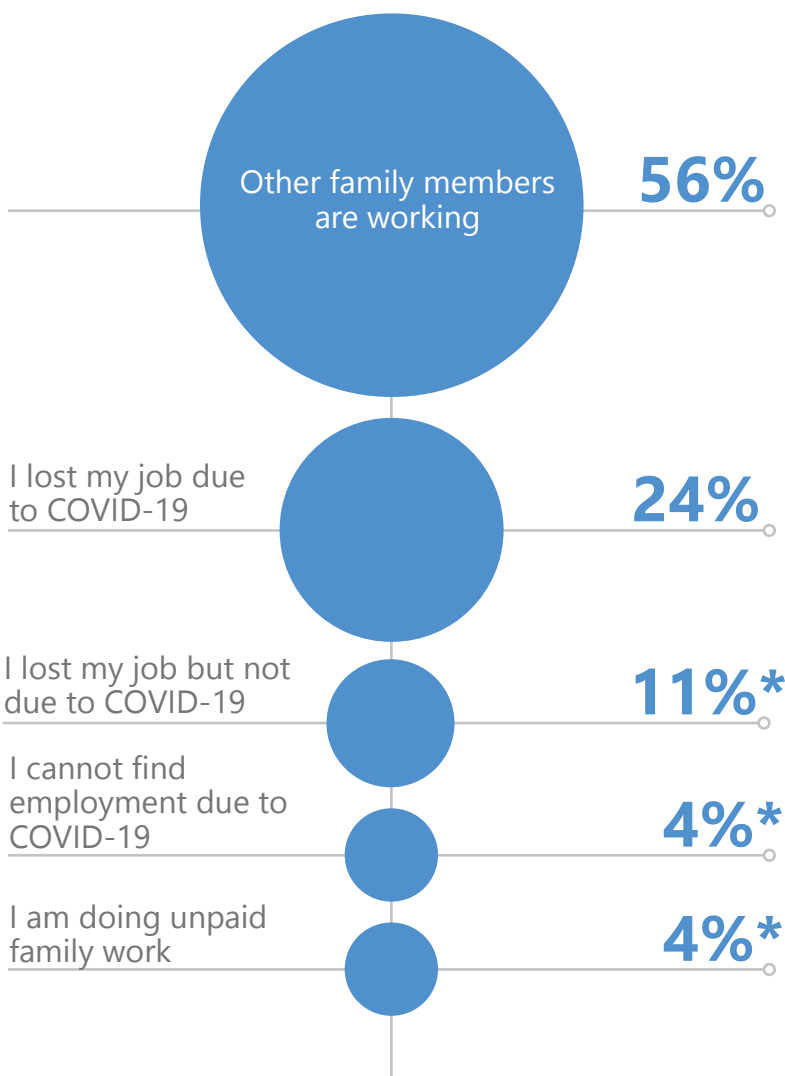
Note: 1% of the respondents now earn more and 1% did not want to answer this question

Note: 2% of the respondents did not want to answer this question

Note: 2% of the respondents now work more hours and 1% did not want to answer this question

Main reason migrants do not have a job

Note: Question asked only to persons who are not currently employed. One per cent of respondents answered "Other".



Among the 33 per cent of respondents who indicated being unemployed at the time of assessment, 76 per cent were female and 24 per cent were male. In order to explore further the impact of COVID-19 on the employment of Myanmar migrants in Mueang Ranong district, respondents were asked the main reason for their unemployment.

The findings indicate that 72 per cent of respondents reported that their unemployment was not related to the outbreak of COVID-19. Fifty-six per cent of the sample opted not to work because other family members were working. This was more often the case for female respondents than male respondents (87% versus 13%).

Eleven percent of respondents also reported losing their jobs for reasons unrelated to COVID-19. However, 28 per cent of the sample reported that they lost their job (24%) and were not able to find employment (4%) due to COVID-19.

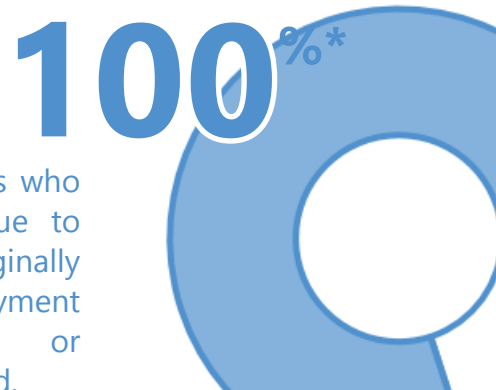
*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents



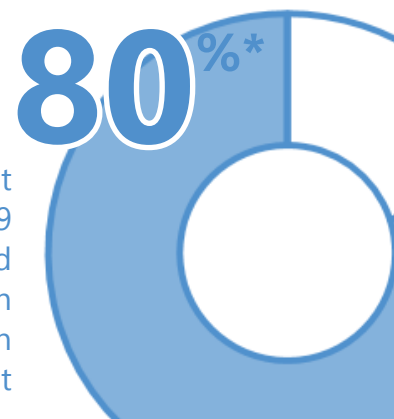


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If you lost your job due to COVID-19, how had you originally found that job?



of female migrants who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 had originally obtained employment through friends or relatives in Thailand.



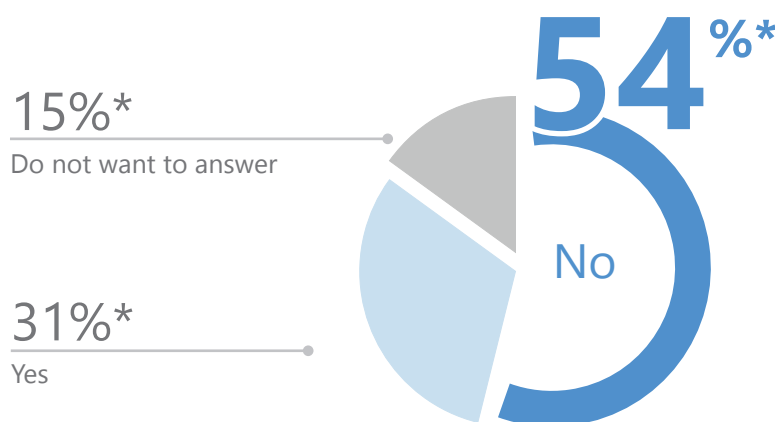
of male migrants who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 had originally obtained employment through friends or relatives in Thailand and 20 percent through job vacancies.

Migrants who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 were asked how they had originally obtained their prior employment and if they were being paid minimum wage in those jobs.

In total, 92 per cent of migrants who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 found their previous employment through relatives or friends in Thailand and 8 per cent via job vacancies or advertisements. When asked if they were being paid equal to or above 315 THB in their previous employment, over half of the sample (54%) reported having a salary below the provincial minimum wage.

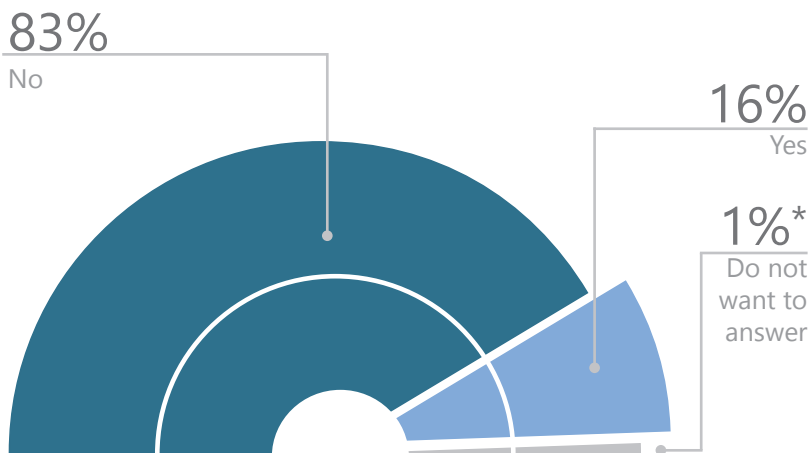
However, it's important to note that the sample size of migrants who lost their jobs due to the outbreak of COVID-19 is relatively small and these findings should not be considered representative.

If you lost your job due to COVID-19, was your daily wage in that job equal to or above 315 THB?



*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

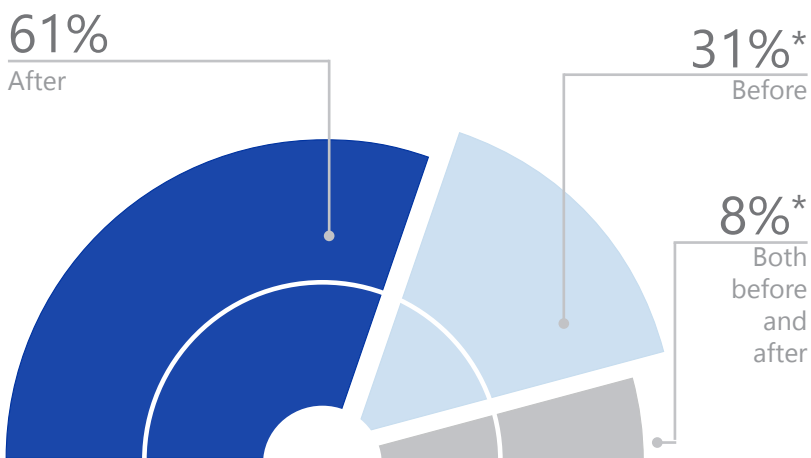
Have you experienced any challenges at the workplace?



When asked if they had experienced any challenges or problems at the workplace in Thailand, 16 per cent of the sample population reported that they did. The data indicates no significant differences in facing challenges between male and female migrants.

*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

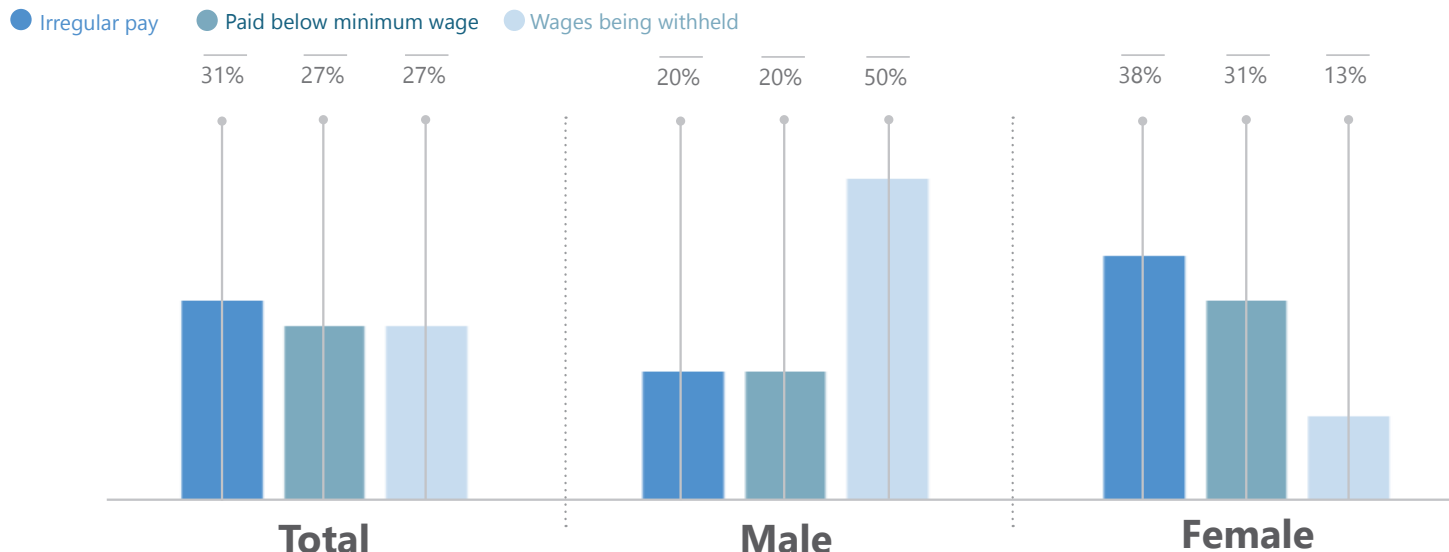
If yes, was it before or after the outbreak of COVID-19?



To further unpack COVID-19 related vulnerabilities, respondents who faced challenges were asked to specify when the problem at their workplace occurred. The data reveals that over half of the sample population (61%) encountered challenges at their workplace after the COVID-19 outbreak with 31 per cent facing challenges prior to the outbreak and 8 per cent reporting challenges both before and after the outbreak of COVID-19.

*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

Type of challenges at the workplace in Thailand by sex (Top 3 answers only)



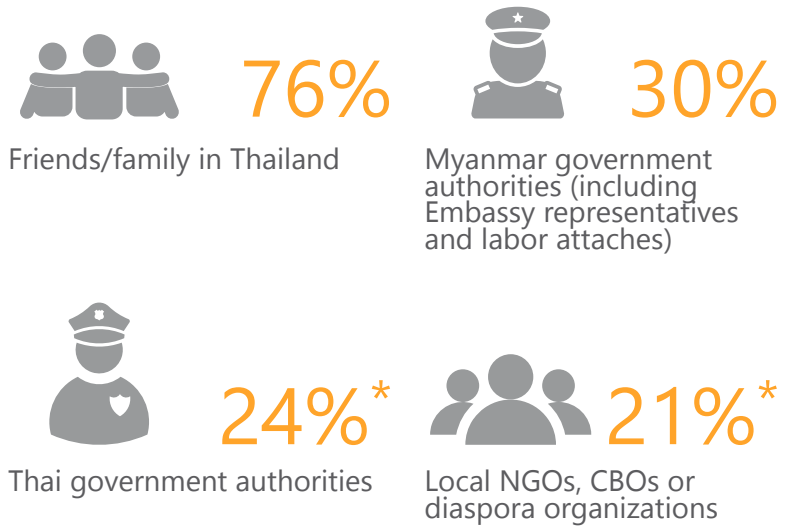
Note: There were 26 respondents to this question and therefore the sample size for each percentage shown in this dataset is fewer than 10 respondents

In case of problems at the workplace do you know how to get support?



of migrants reported that they are aware of available support mechanisms; 47 per cent did not know how to get support when they face problems at work and thirty-two per cent reported they never thought about it. Friends and family in Thailand (76%) and Myanmar government authorities (30%) were identified as the primary support actors respondents would reach out to in case of problems.

If yes, from whom? (Multiple answers possible)

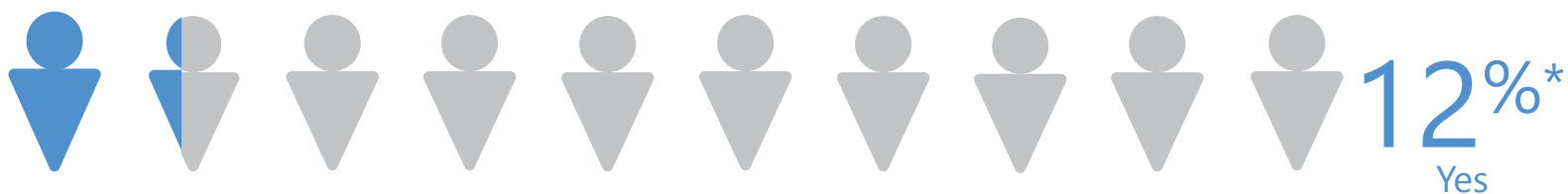


*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

Among migrants who reported facing challenges at the workplace, the most commonly faced problems related to the payment of wages. Thirty-one per cent reported experiencing irregular pay, 27 per cent reported their wages being withheld, and 27 per cent reported being paid below minimum wage. When looking at challenges at the workplace by sex, male respondents were more likely to experience their wages being withheld, and female respondents were more likely to experience irregular pay.

Only 12 per cent of the respondents who reported facing challenges at the workplace sought help from available support mechanisms. Friends and family in Thailand, government authorities, and local NGOs, CBOs, or diaspora organizations were identified as the primary support actors. When asked if the support actors were able to resolve their problems, 67 percent of respondents indicated 'yes' and 33 per cent indicated 'partially'.

Share of respondents facing challenges who sought help



*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

Main reasons for not seeking help (Multiple answers possible; top 4 answers only)

55%
Fear of repercussion

45%
Did not know
any support actors

27%*
Fear of
losing employment

9%*
Did not trust
support
entities

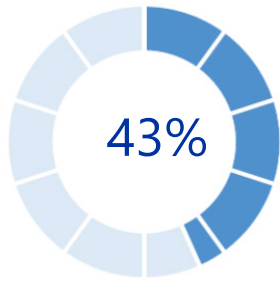
*The sample size for this percentage is lower than 10 respondents



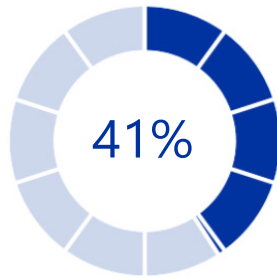
THEMATIC AREA 4 - IMPACTS OF COVID-19

What is the main way in which your financial situation has changed due to COVID-19?

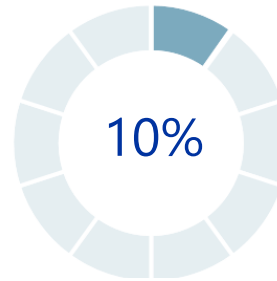
Note: 1% of the respondents answered "Other".



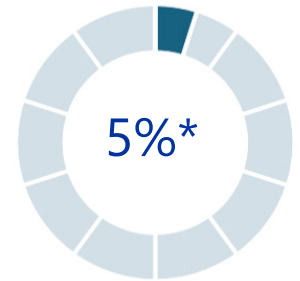
Less income and face financial challenges



It did not change



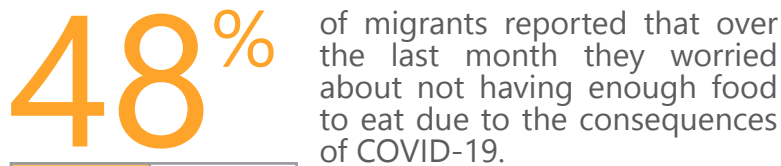
Have debt



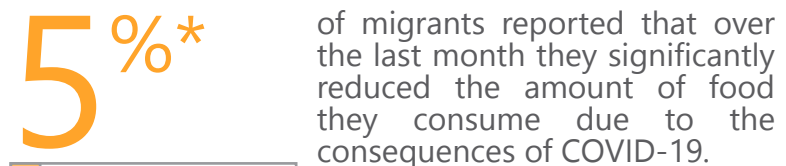
Less income but do not face financial challenges

*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

Impact of COVID-19 on food consumption of Myanmar migrants

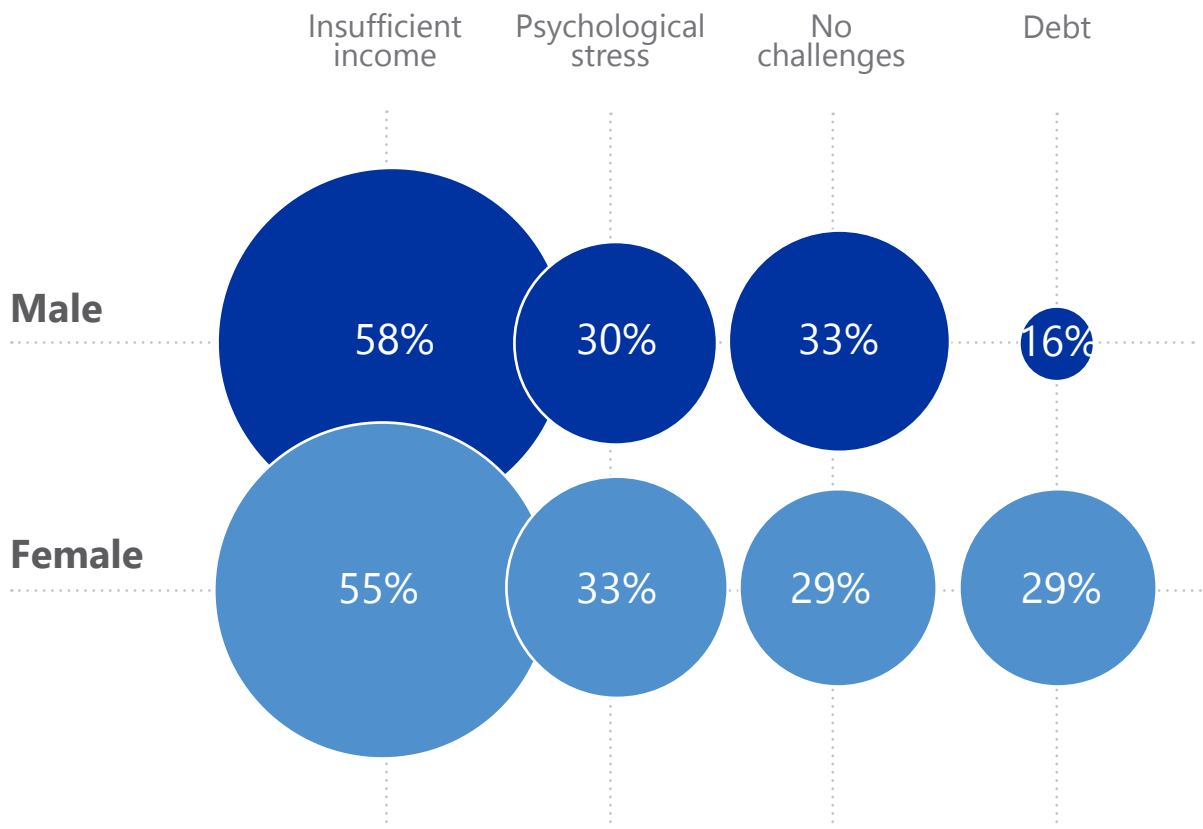


*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents



Main challenges faced by Myanmar migrants since the outbreak of COVID-19

(Multiple answers possible; top 4 answers only)



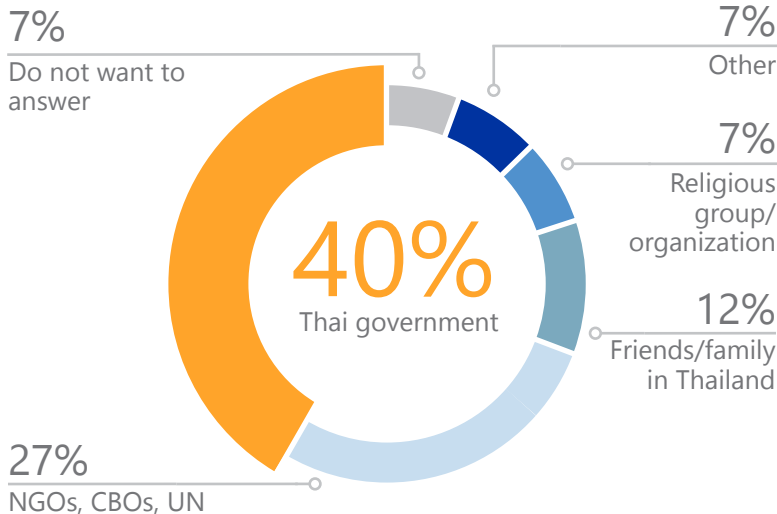
Migrants were asked what were the main challenges they encountered since the outbreak of COVID-19. Insufficient income was the most frequently cited challenge among male (58%) and female (55%) respondents. Thirty per cent of male and 33 per cent of female respondents also reported an increase in psychological stress as a result of COVID-19. Male and female respondents also cited debt as a COVID-19 related challenges, although this was more commonly reported by female respondents than male respondents (29% versus 16%).

Share of respondents who received assistance related to COVID-19 challenges

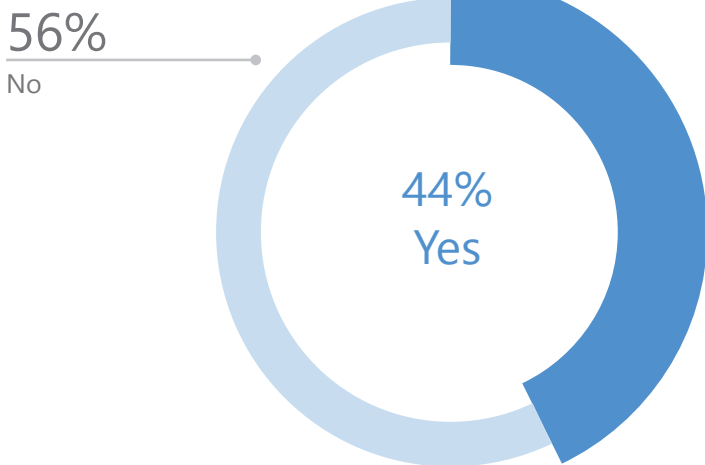


of migrants reported that they received assistance related to COVID-19 challenges. Seventy-seven per cent did not and 13 per cent reported facing no challenges due to COVID-19. The Thai government (40%) and NGOs, CBOs, or the UN (27%) were identified as the primary actors who provided assistance to the sample population.

If yes, from whom?



Share of respondents who sent remittances home prior to COVID-19

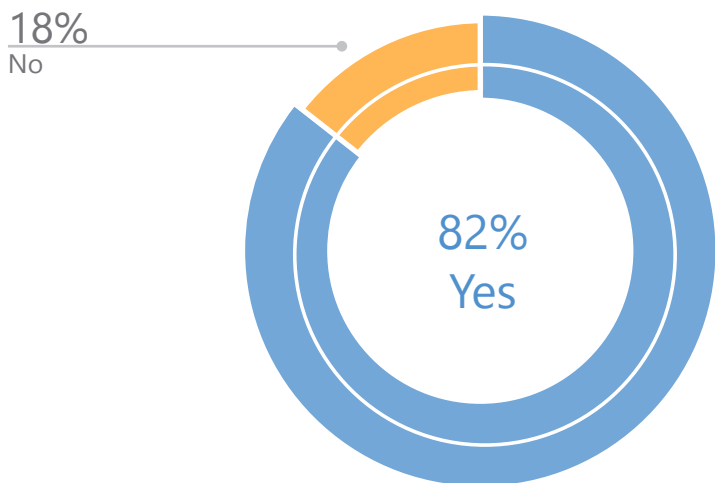


To further ascertain the effect of COVID-19 on Myanmar migrant populations, respondents were asked if they sent remittances during their time in Thailand and if the amount sent changed due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

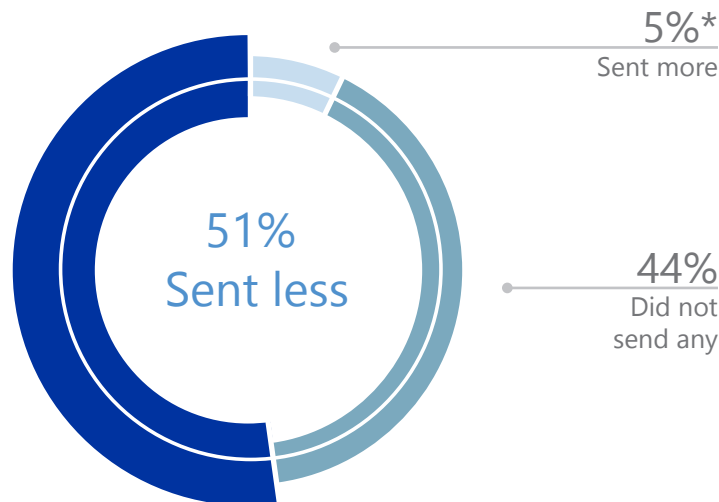
In total, 44 per cent of the sample population sent earnings back home prior to COVID-19 but for 82 per cent of respondents the amount now being sent has changed. For those who reported a change in the volume of remittances being sent, 51 per cent reported sending less money, 44 per cent reported no longer sending any remittances and only 5 per cent reported remitting more.

These changes to the remittance flows imply that the economic consequences of COVID-19 on Myanmar migrants in Mueang Ranong district are not only impacting the migrants themselves, but also their friends and relatives dependent on incoming remittances.

If yes, did the amount of money you send change because of COVID-19?



If yes, how?



*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

THEMATIC AREA 5 - COVID-19 - RELATED VULNERABILITIES

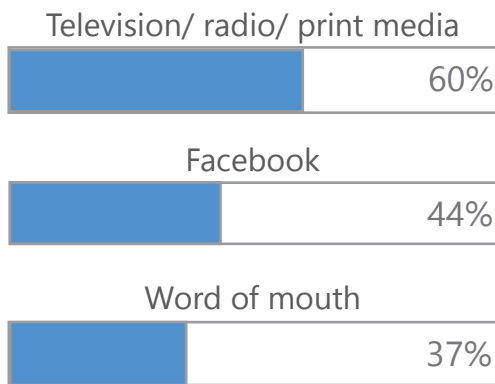
Share of respondents who have access to water, soap and personal protective equipment (PPE)



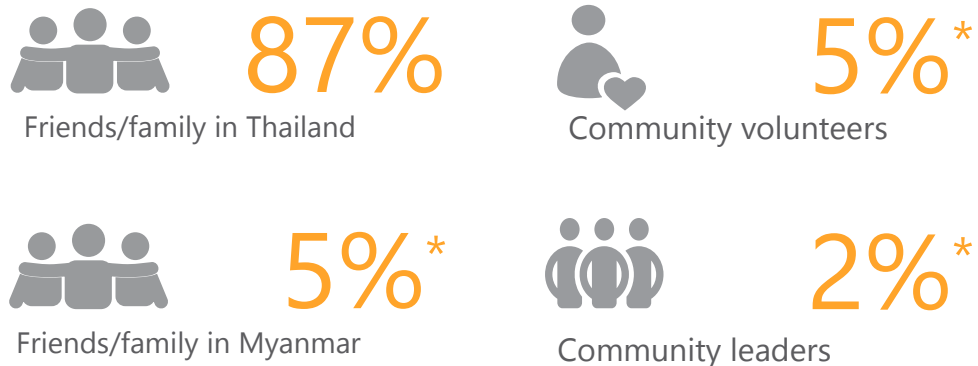
Ninety-three per cent of the sample population reported that they have access to water for domestic uses; 97 per cent have access to soap; 68 per cent to hand sanitizer and 99 per cent to face masks. When compared to earlier assessments undertaken by IOM with key informants, the data would seem to suggest that access to hand sanitizer and face masks has increased significantly over the past months.

Main sources of information on COVID-19

(Multiple answer question)



Main sources for word of mouth (Multiple answer question)



*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

Are information, education and communication (IEC) materials on COVID-19 being distributed?



of migrants reported that information, education and communication materials on COVID-19 are not being distributed in their areas while 40 per cent reported receiving IEC materials from the government (32%) and NGOs or CBOs (31%).

Is IEC material on COVID-19 being understood?

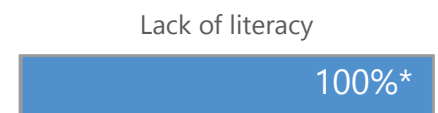
Note: 3% of the respondents answered "I do not know" and another 3% did not want to answer this question



of migrants reported that information on COVID-19 is difficult to understand while 55 per cent reported understanding the material easily. Thirty-five per cent of respondents reported average levels of understanding.

Reasons why information on COVID-19 is not being understood

(Multiple answer question)

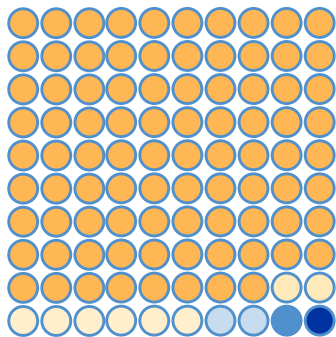


Among migrants who reported difficulties in understanding COVID-19 IEC materials, all reported that this was due to their inability to read written information provided. However, due to the small number of respondents to this question, this should not be considered representative.

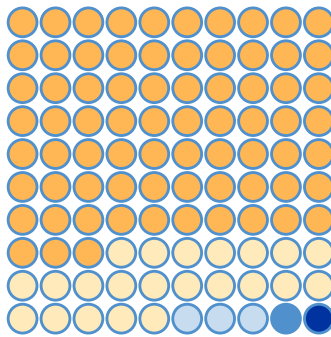
*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

Thai language abilities

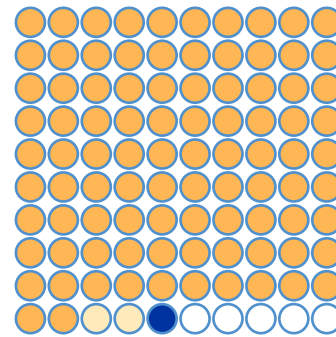
Speaking



Comprehension



Reading



Scale of 1-5, where 1 = lowest level of ability and 5 = highest level of ability

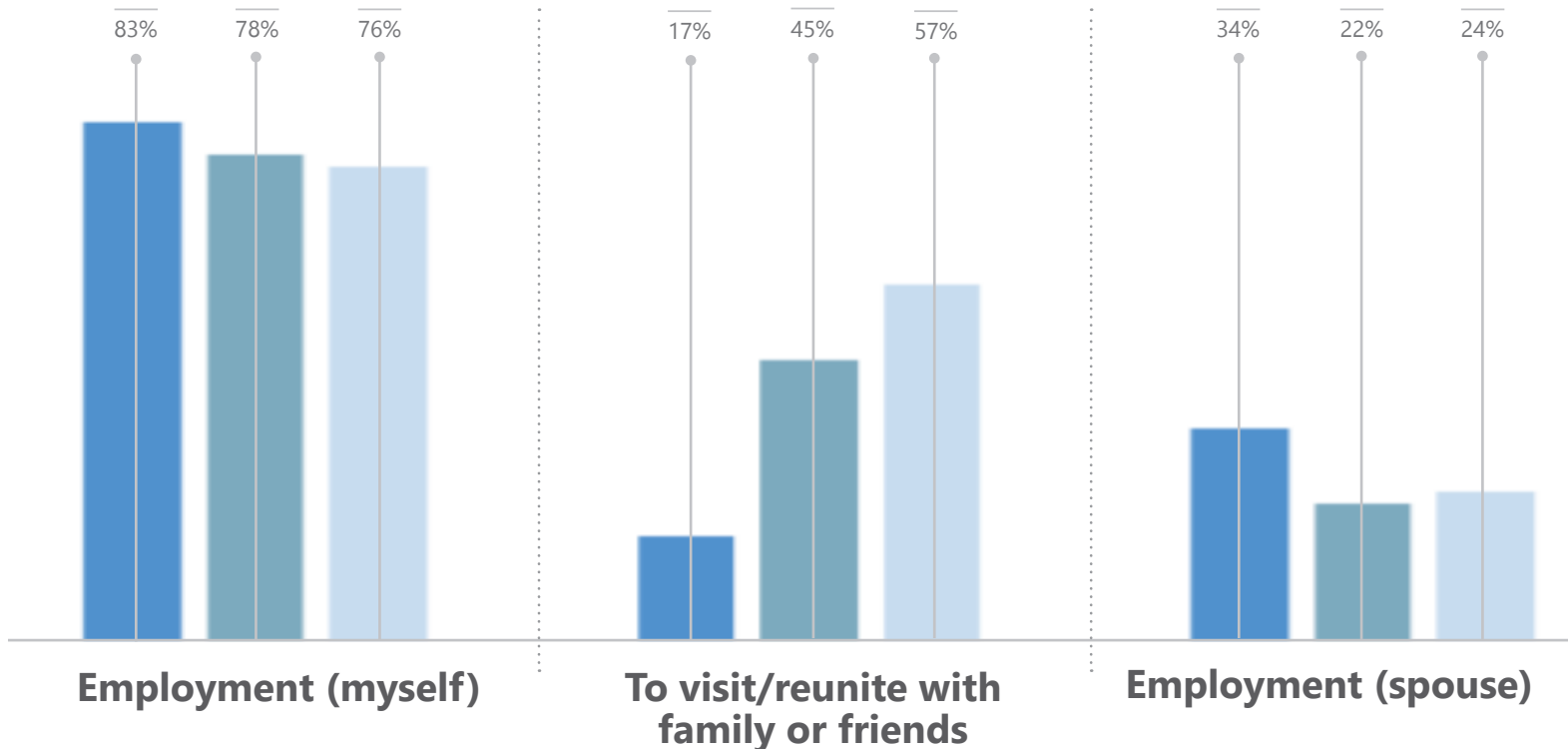
● 1
 ● 2
 ● 3
 ● 4
 ● 5
 ○ I do not know

One of the main indicators that can be used to identify vulnerability is language proficiency. Respondents were asked to evaluate their abilities to speak, understand, and read Thai when they first arrived in Thailand on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 corresponds to the lowest level of ability and 5 to the highest. The data shows that upon arrival in Thailand, a significant majority of the sample ranked their ability to speak (88%), read (92%), or understand (73%) Thai at the lowest level on the scale. However, when asked if their Thai has improved, 24 per cent indicated high levels of improvement, 63 per cent indicated a bit of improvement and only 13 per cent reported no improvement at all in their Thai language abilities.

Main form of documentation for living in Thailand by reason for migration

(Multiple answers possible; top 3 answers only)

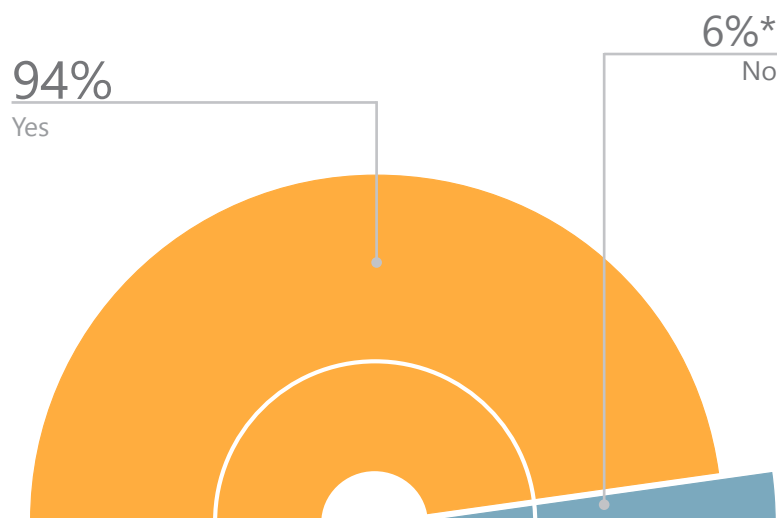
● Border pass
 ● Certificate of Identity
 ● Temporary passport



Share of respondents with legal permission to work in Thailand

After the Emergency Decree was announced on 23 March 2020, Thailand began to close its border checkpoints with neighbouring countries, leaving some migrants facing uncertainty over their immigration status and right to work in the country.

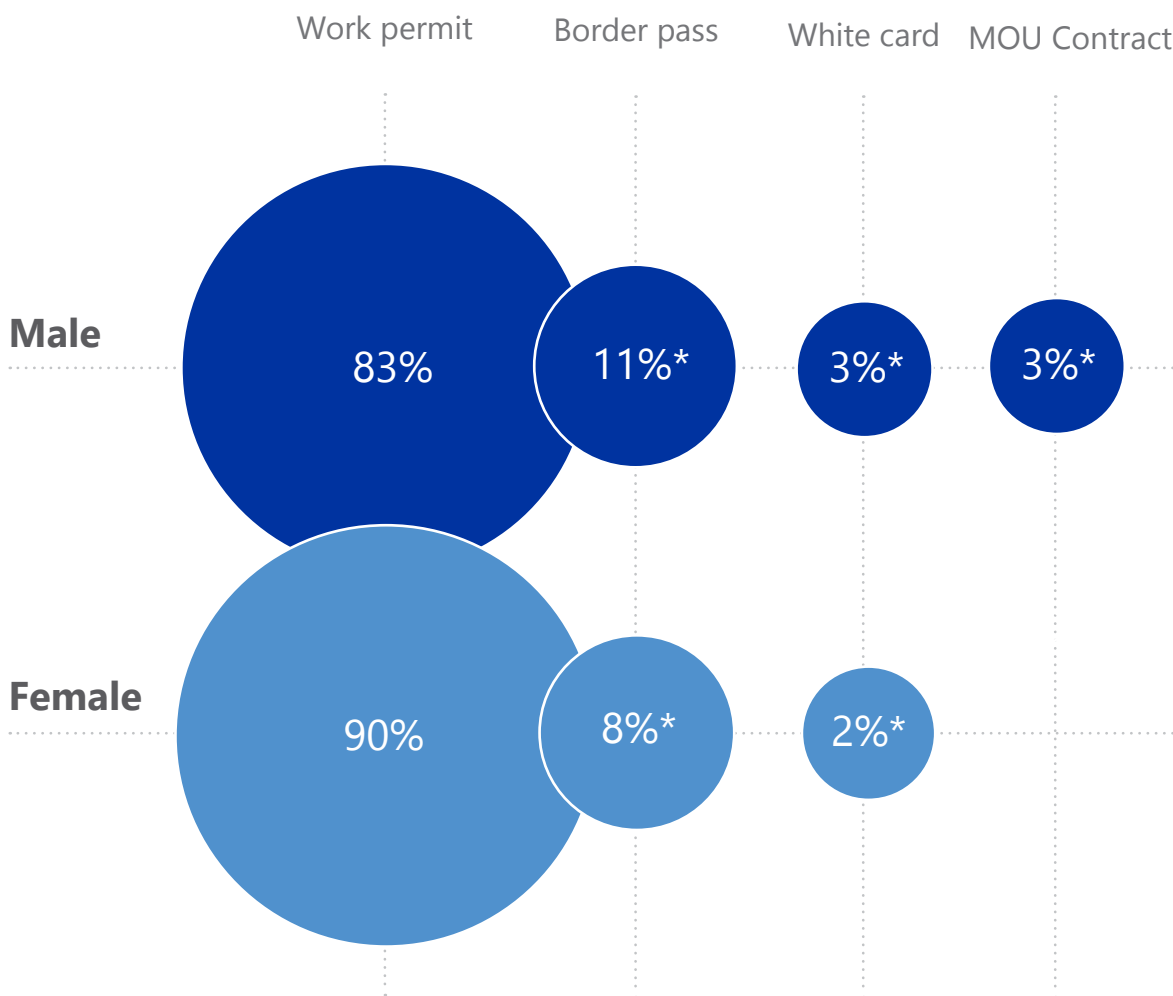
Overall, 94 per cent of the respondents who are employed, lost work or are seeking work reported having the right to work in Thailand while 6 per cent did not. The data also indicates that 95% of men who had worked, were working or were seeking to work in Thailand had legal permission to do so compared to 94% of women.



*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

Main type of work document by sex

Note: Question asked only to respondents who reported having legal permission to work



Among the 94 per cent of respondents who reported legal permission to work in Thailand, their primary work document was their work permit (86%). Ninety per cent of female migrants reported having a work permit.

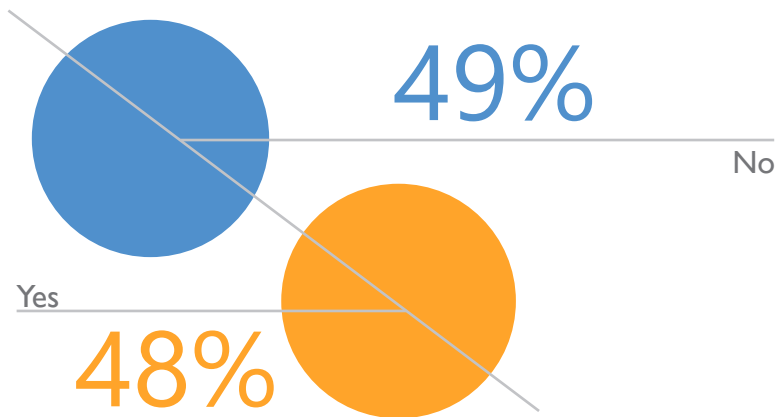
Other types of work documentation reported by migrants include border passes, white cards, and MOU contracts. None of the female respondents reported holding an MOU contract.

*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

THEMATIC AREA 6 - RETURN INTENTIONS

Share of respondents with concrete plans to return to Myanmar in the coming year

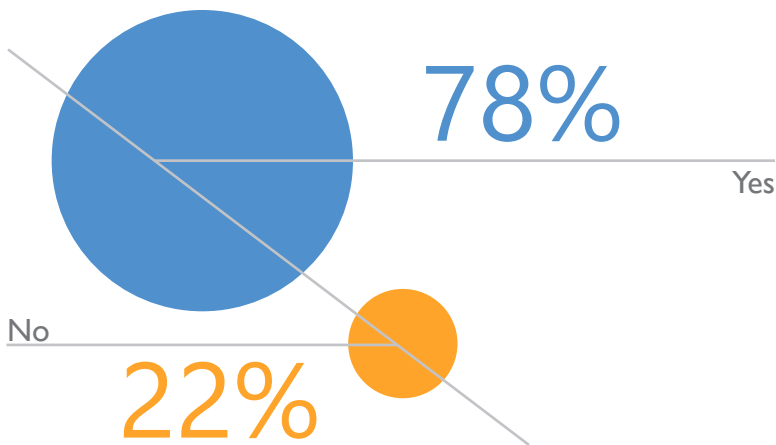
Note: 3% of respondents did not want to answer this question



With Thailand's borders still closed as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19, respondents were asked a series of questions about their plans to return to Myanmar and whether their plans had changed due to COVID-19. Respondents were also asked about expected challenges upon their return.

When asked if the respondents had concrete plans to return to Myanmar in the upcoming year, 49 per cent of respondents reported that they had no plans to go back to Myanmar while 48 per cent had plans to return in the upcoming year. The sex breakdown is identical across this variable.

Share of respondents who changed their return plans due to COVID-19



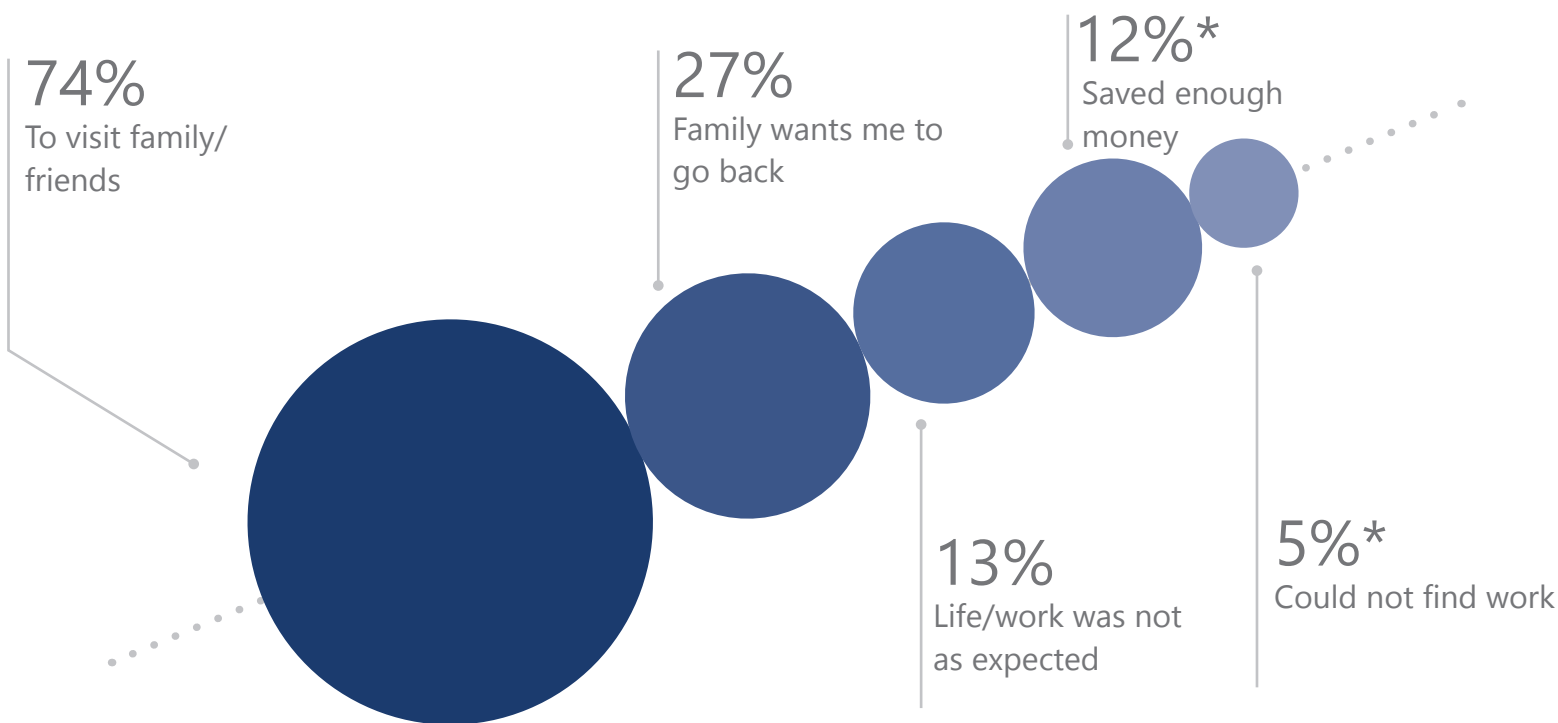
How did your plan change?



of migrants whose plans have changed due to COVID-19 reported that they wanted to go back to Myanmar but were now unable to do so due to mobility restrictions imposed by Myanmar and Thai governments along the border.



Main reasons for wanting to return to Myanmar (Multiple answers possible; top 5 answers only)

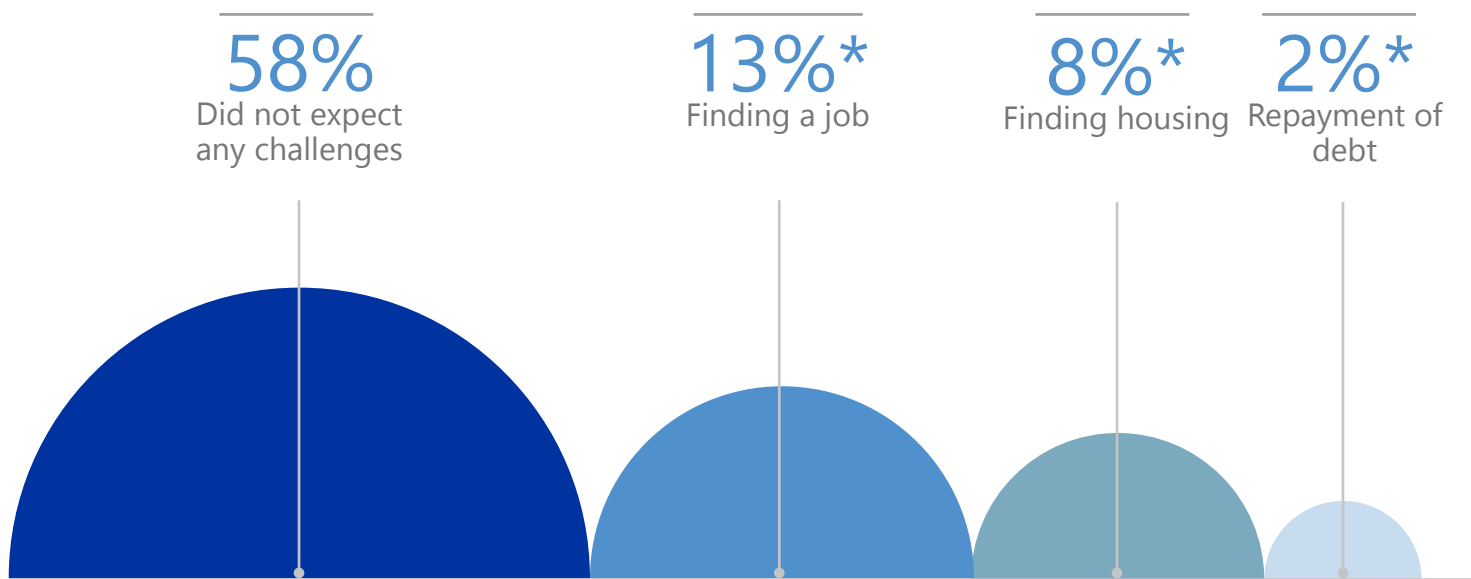


*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents

When asked why respondents wanted to return to Myanmar, several reasons were cited. The most common reasons included wanting to visit family and friends (74%); family wanting them to return home (27%); life or work in Thailand not being as expected (13%); having saved enough money (12%) and not being able to find work in Thailand (5%). Respondents planning to return for reasons other than a short-term visit were also asked if they expected to face any challenges on return to Myanmar. Challenges expected included finding a job (13%), finding housing (8%), and the repayment of debt (2%).

Main challenges expected upon return to Myanmar

(Multiple answers possible; top 4 answers only)



*The sample size for this percentage is fewer than 10 respondents



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