

FLOW MONITORING FINDINGS: PROFILES OF MYANMAR NATIONALS CROSSING INTO THAILAND

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)
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INTRODUCTION

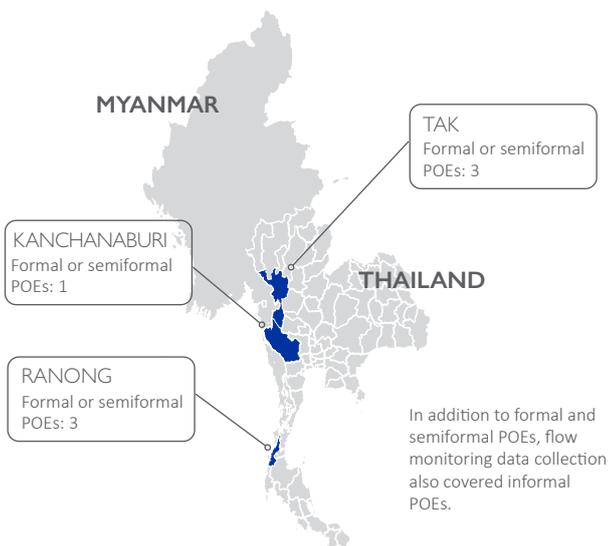
SCOPE

To gain a better understanding of the mobility dynamics and vulnerabilities of Myanmar nationals entering Thailand, IOM Thailand initiated flow monitoring activities at key points of entry (POEs) in Tak, Ranong, and Kanchanaburi border provinces in 2023 using IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) tools. Flow monitoring aims track the scale and characteristics of Myanmar nationals’ mobility along the Myanmar-Thailand border, including the volume of movements and intended destinations of migrants, their reasons for movement, intended lengths of stay, and expectations about work sectors and conditions. The tool provides critical insights into current mobility dynamics in the context of the socio-economic and security situation in Myanmar following the military takeover in February 2021. The following report extends findings from the mid-year flow monitoring report published in September 2023. It covers the entire year of 2023 in Tak and Ranong, and additionally includes analysis of Kanchanaburi province from September to December 2023.

METHODOLOGY

Flow monitoring activities consist of two interlinked exercises: Flow Monitoring Counting (FMC) and Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS). FMC requires field staff to count all individuals entering Thailand at selected border points during active hours every day for a week to approximate the influx volume of each point. The FMS tool is used to interview incoming individuals, determining the proportion of Thai and non-Thai individuals among the target population and capturing details regarding the latter’s migration profiles and expectations. Field staff aim to interview one person out of every few individuals who enter Thailand via their assigned border point. FMC and FMS are conducted simultaneously at each point for one week every month. Tak, Kanchanaburi, and Ranong were chosen due to pre-existing information indicating that the three provinces experience a substantial volume of entries of Myanmar nationals.

MAP 1: GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE



DISCLAIMER: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

From January to December 2023, IOM’s Migration Data and Research Unit (MDRU) interviewed a total of 4,693 incoming Myanmar nationals to Thailand, with 2,366 interviewed in Tak province (50%), 2,310 in Ranong province (49%), and 17 in Kanchanaburi province (1%).

LIMITATIONS

The information in this report relates only to Myanmar nationals who have crossed at assessed border points in Tak, Ranong, and Kanchanaburi provinces at the time of assessment. The analysis should only be considered as indicative. Additionally, biases due to self-reporting may exist, with certain indicators possibly being under-reported or over-reported due to the subjectivity and perceptions of respondents. These biases should be taken into consideration when interpreting findings. It should be noted that some questions were only asked to a subset of respondents who answered affirmatively to preceding questions. In the report, graph titles with an asterisk denote questions where respondents could provide multiple answers. As a result, the totals for these graphs may exceed 100 per cent. Furthermore, as flow monitoring expanded to Kanchanaburi province in September 2023, data for this province between September and December are also included in the overall analysis. However, due to the small sample size in Kanchanaburi, findings are not presented separately for this province. Finally, due to changes in the survey tool in May 2023 that allowed for more accurate determination of respondents’ documentation status, findings may have been slightly impacted during this time.

Keeping these limitations in mind, the findings can shed light on current migration trends and patterns of movement along the Thailand-Myanmar border. This information can be used to inform evidence-based programs to address the needs of new arrivals and migrant communities.

TABLE 1: SURVEY POPULATION

| OVERALL | | |
|-------------------|---------|-------|
| TOTAL RESPONDENTS | % WOMEN | % MEN |
| 4,693 | 61% | 39% |
| TAK | | |
| TOTAL RESPONDENTS | % WOMEN | % MEN |
| 2,366 | 62% | 38% |
| RANONG | | |
| TOTAL RESPONDENTS | % WOMEN | % MEN |
| 2,310 | 60% | 40% |
| KANCHANABURI | | |
| TOTAL RESPONDENTS | % WOMEN | % MEN |
| 17 | 76% | 24% |

MOBILITY DYNAMICS

The topography of Tak’s border with Myanmar is characterized by a thin river, the Moei, in the north, and agricultural land and forest in the south. Ranong’s northern border with Myanmar is similar to Tak’s, consisting of a narrow river called the Kra Buri, however, its southern border is defined by a large estuary that flows into the Andaman Sea. In contrast, Kanchanaburi’s border with Myanmar is predominately surrounded by forests and hills. In both Tak and Ranong, there are semi-formal and informal entry points. The former have some presence of government authorities, whilst the latter do not. In addition, both Tak and Ranong have large formal points of entry (POEs) that feed into prominent border cities in Thailand, those being the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge which connects to Mae Sot city in Tak and Saphan Pla pier which connects to Ranong city in Ranong. In Kanchanaburi, there is reportedly one main entry point: the Three Pagoda Temporary Border Crossing Point, a semi-formal point of entry with some presence of government authorities and surrounded by residential areas and markets, with nearby villages located on either side of the border.

The following analysis categorizes incoming Myanmar nationals into two groups: short-term arrivals are those who intend to stay in Thailand for one week or less while longer-term arrivals are those who intend to stay in Thailand for more than one week,¹ including also those who do not yet know how long they will stay in the country. The rationale behind defining these two groups is based on the difference in their migration profiles. Short-term arrivals only spend a limited time in Thailand, meaning their

center of life continues to be based in bordering Myanmar. Meanwhile, longer-term arrivals may be shifting their center of life to Thailand and their presence ought to be considered when planning the provision of services and assistance. Much of the border area in Tak, Kanchanaburi, and Ranong sees frequent circular movements between the two countries, resulting in most respondents being short-term arrivals (83%) than longer-term arrivals (17%) in 2023. As a result, analysis on factors like drivers of migration and documentation status would be skewed without disaggregating longer-term from short-term arrivals. The following report presents findings on short-term arrivals first, then on longer-term arrivals.

FIGURE 1: PROPORTIONS OF SHORT- AND LONGER -TERM RESPONDENTS

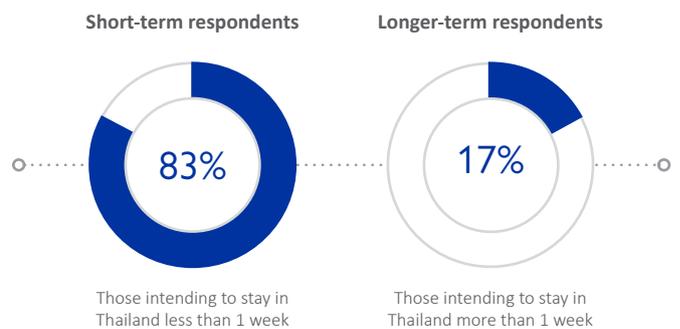


PHOTO Boat shore in Ranong. © IOM 2023/Somruedee KARNPHAKDEE

¹ Those planning to stay for less than one year made up less than 20 per cent of longer-term arrival respondents.

SHORT-TERM ARRIVALS

MIGRATION PROFILES AND DRIVERS OF MIGRATION

Myanmar nationals entering Thailand for less than one week (short-term arrivals) make up the bulk of entries in both Tak and Ranong in 2023. Short-term arrivals tend to stay in the province where they crossed and do not travel further into Thailand: nearly all of the respondents in Tak and 92 per cent in Ranong. Among short-term arrivals, 37 per cent were men and 63 per cent were women. Main origin states among respondents in Tak include Kayin (89%), with which Tak shares the entire length of its border, Mon (3%), just west of Kayin, and Yangon (2%), the region hosting Myanmar’s largest city. Among respondents in Ranong, main origin states include Tanintharyi (81%), which shares the Kra Buri river with Ranong, Yangon (12%), and Rakhine (3%), in western Myanmar.

In both provinces, reasons for movement were primarily to visit friends or family (49%), conduct trade (43%), or access healthcare (15%). Among those reporting trade as reason for movement, it was more common to enter Thailand to only buy items (applicable for 89%) than to only sell items (33%). In Ranong, 18 per cent of respondents reported being motivated by Thailand’s better cost of living (compared to only 3% in Tak), whilst 19 per cent reported crossing to access healthcare (compared to 12% in Tak).

Respondents were also asked about repeat movements across the border. Fifteen per cent of respondents, a decrease from one

third in the first half of 2023, who indicated having previously entered Thailand in the past 12 months reported having come to Thailand for trade (buying or selling items) at least 12 times throughout the year – on average once a month or more. Half of those reported crossing more than 52 times in the past year – on average once a week or more. Eight per cent of respondents reported visiting friends or family in Thailand at least once a month on average, with a further 20 per cent having come to Thailand for the same reason in the past year but less frequently (a decrease from 40% reported in the first half of the year). Repeat movements were also driven by accessing healthcare, for which nine per cent of respondents reported crossing the border in the past year. Overall, more than half (52%) of short-term arrivals did not possess any documentation allowing them to stay in Thailand. Among those with documentation, eight per cent held documentation allowing longer-term stays, such as passports with visas, non-Thai identification cards, or labour cards. A further 40 per cent held documentation that allows only short-term stays, like a border pass.

TOP ORIGIN STATES/REGIONS

| TAK | RANONG |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Kayin state.....89% | Tanintharyi region.....81% |
| Mon state.....3% | Yangon region.....12% |
| Yangon region.....2% | Rakhine state.....3% |

3,898 SHORT-TERM RESPONDENTS TOTAL

FIGURE 2: MAIN REASONS FOR MIGRATION AMONG SHORT-TERM RESPONDENTS*

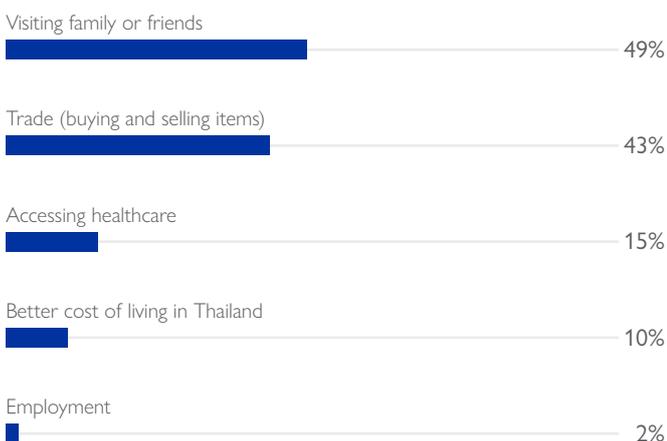


FIGURE 3: DOCUMENTATION STATUS AMONG SHORT-TERM RESPONDENTS

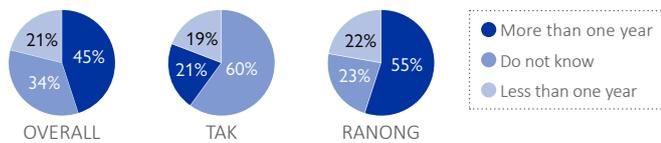


LONGER-TERM ARRIVALS

MIGRATION PROFILES AND DRIVERS OF MIGRATION

Three groups of longer-term arrivals are distinguished in the analysis: those planning to stay in Thailand for less than one year, those planning to stay for more than one year, and those who did not know how long they would stay at the time of interview. The proportions of these categories varied between provinces.

FIGURE 4: LENGTH OF STAY AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS



In Ranong, respondents were more likely to indicate that they planned to stay in Thailand for over a year (55%), while those in Tak were more often uncertain about their length of stay, with 60 per cent responding “I do not know” when asked. Among longer-term arrivals, 47 per cent were men and 53 per cent were women.

The majority of respondents reported having family or friends in their destination location (92%), indicating the significance of existing social networks in Thailand. Around half of all respondents reported that they were entering Thailand accompanied by their children (53%), with family crossings being more common in Ranong (57%) than in Tak (43%). In both provinces, women respondents were more likely (59%) to be traveling with children than men (45%). Most respondents were engaged or married (66%) and around a quarter were single (26%).

Reasons for migration were more diverse among longer-term arrivals compared to short-term arrivals, with respondents

citing visiting family or friends (50%) and employment (41%) as prominent reasons (these reasons differ from short-term arrivals whereby 43% of respondents reported trade as a top reason and only 2% reported employment as a reason). Thailand’s better cost of living (26%), trade (15%), accessing healthcare (14%), and conflict (12%) also motivated longer-term movements. In addition, trade was more frequently cited by women (25%) than by men (10%), while employment and Thailand’s better cost of living were cited more often by men (60% and 30%, respectively) than by women (45% and 31%, respectively). Furthermore, a significantly higher proportion of respondents in Ranong cited employment (52%) and Thailand’s better cost of living (30%) as reasons for migration compared to respondents in Tak (15% and 16%, respectively).

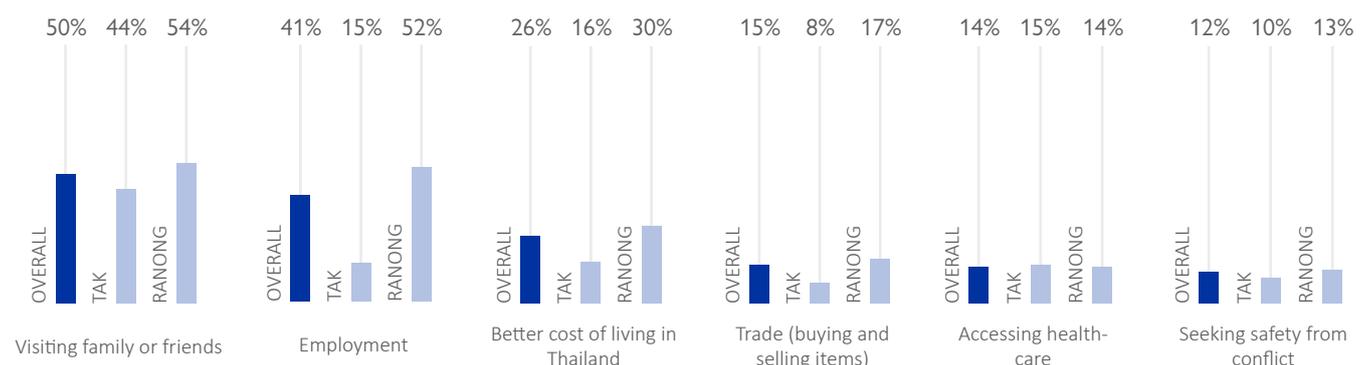


38 per cent of respondents indicated having a child who was left behind in their origin country. Children were considered as left behind when located in a country other than Thailand and when the respondent’s partner/spouse was not located in the same country as the children.

Reasons related to safety (conflict, discrimination, and crime) are more common among longer-term arrivals (25%) compared to short-term (1%). They are also more likely to be cited by respondents who are uncertain about their length of stay in Thailand. Those who did not know how long they would be staying in Thailand were overall three times more likely to indicate conflict as a reason for migration compared to other longer-term respondents. In Tak, they were five times more likely. Women in Tak were more likely to cite conflict compared to men (11% compared to 8%) while more men were more likely to cite conflict compared to women in Ranong (19% compared to 6%).²

795 LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS TOTAL

FIGURE 5: MAIN REASONS FOR MIGRATION AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS*



² Since the 2021 military takeover in Myanmar, the Royal Thai Government has recorded multiple influx events of Myanmar nationals seeking safety via Thailand’s western border, but due to the geographic coverage of the flow monitoring activities, these events are not necessarily reflected in the data.

Longer-term arrivals were slightly less likely than short-term arrivals (52%) to be undocumented. Forty-eight per cent of longer-term respondents were found to lack documentation, accounting for nearly two-thirds (61%) of respondents in Ranong and nearly a third (31%) in Tak. Nineteen per cent of respondents, a significant decrease from 47 per cent in the first half of 2023, held passports with visas, non-Thai identification cards, or labour cards – documents that allow long-term stay in Thailand. While respondents in Ranong were more likely than those in Tak to hold passports with visas (12% compared to 1%), respondents in Tak were more likely to hold other types of long-term documentation (19% compared to 5%). Those who did not know how long they would be staying in Thailand were more likely to have short-term documentation (38%), like a border pass, or no documentation (50%).

Throughout 2023, respondents' documentation status varied with the share of those without official documentation increasing throughout the year and the share of those with short-term documentation decreasing. In Tak, the proportion of respondents without documentation increased from 17 per cent between January and February to 66 per cent between November and December, with a notable spike during the first quarter of the year. On the other hand, the proportion of respondents with short-term documentation decreased from 77 per cent between January and February to 22 per cent between November and December. The proportion of respondents holding long-term documentation stayed consistent throughout the year. Similarly, in Ranong, the share of respondents who lacked documentation significantly increased throughout 2023 (from 28% between January and February to 91% between November and December). Like in Tak, short-term documentation holders decreased over the year.



Migrants residing in Thailand under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) accounted for five and eight per cent of respondents interviewed at POEs in Tak and Ranong, respectively. As of December 2023, 282,516 Myanmar nationals are officially registered under the MoU according to Thailand's Department of Employment.

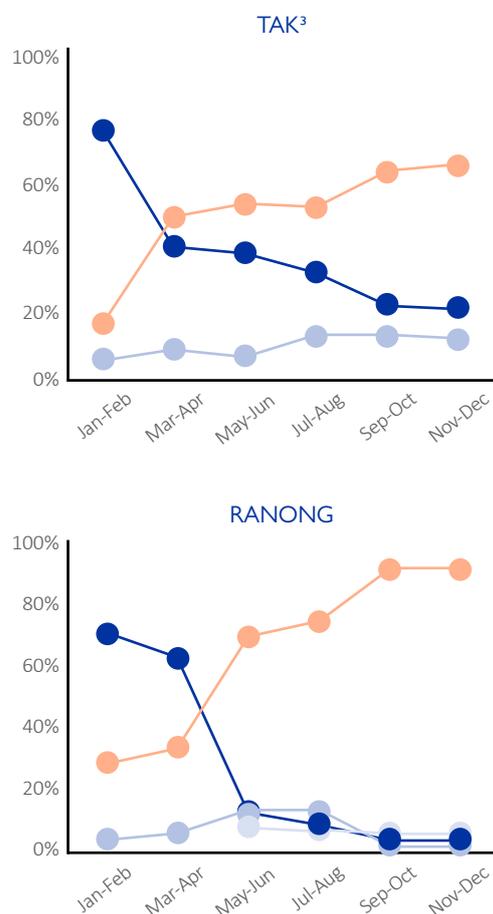


PHOTO: Three Pagoda Temporary Border Crossing Point, Kanchanaburi province. © IOM 2023/Somruedee KARNPHAKDEE

FIGURE 6: DOCUMENTATION STATUS AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS



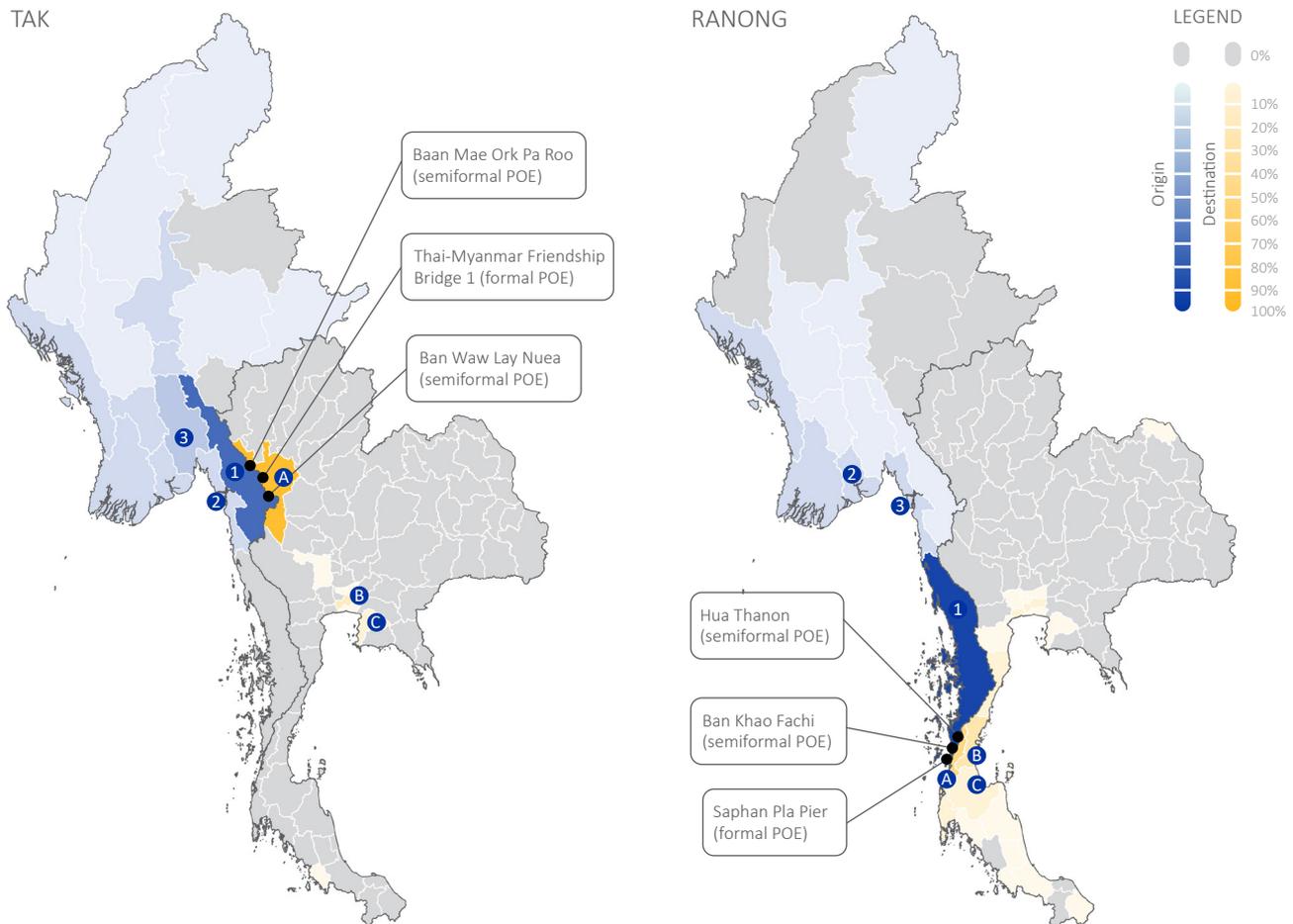
FIGURE 7: DOCUMENTATION STATUS AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS (BI-MONTHLY)



Over a third (34%) of respondents in Tak and 72 per cent of respondents in Ranong reported having someone who helped them prepare for their journey. In both provinces, those who helped were mainly friends or family (87%), but brokers accounted for eight per cent of migration facilitators in Ranong and recruiters and employers accounted for five per cent. In Tak, brokers accounted for three per cent.

3 One per cent of longer-term respondents between July and August reported having a passport with a visa.

MAP 2: ORIGIN AND DESTINATION LOCATIONS AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS



In addition to formal and semiformal POEs, flow monitoring data collection also covered informal POEs.

DISCLAIMER: These maps are for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

TOP ORIGIN STATES/REGIONS

TAK

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Kayin state..... | 65% |
| 2. Mon state..... | 8% |
| 3. Bago (East) region..... | 7% |

RANONG

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Tanintharyi region..... | 80% |
| 2. Yangon region..... | 6% |
| 3. Mon state..... | 5% |

TOP DESTINATION PROVINCES

TAK

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| A. Tak..... | 72% |
| B. Bangkok..... | 22% |
| C. Chonburi..... | 4% |

RANONG

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| A. Ranong..... | 59% |
| B. Chumphon..... | 19% |
| C. Surat Thani..... | 7% |

The above maps provide insight into the origin and destination locations of longer-term arrivals for Tak and Ranong. Like short-term respondents, longer-term respondents in Tak most often originate in Kayin state (65%) while those in Ranong most often originate in Tanintharyi region (80%). For Tak, Mon state (8%) and Bago (East) region (7%) are the next most common origin locations among longer-term respondents. For Ranong, Yangon region (6%) and Mon state (5%) are the next most common.

Longer-term respondents often intend to stay in the province of entry (72% in Tak and 59% in Ranong), but in smaller proportions compared to short-term respondents. Moreover, longer-term respondents are more likely to intend to go to different and more of a variety of provinces compared to short-term respondents. For example, one fifth of respondents in Tak intend to go to Bangkok (22%) and four per cent to Chonburi. One fourth of respondents in Ranong plan to travel to other southern provinces such as Chumphon (19%), Surat

Thani (7%) and Phuket (6%). Additionally, the proportion of longer-term arrivals in Tak whose intended destination was Tak increased throughout 2023, from 78 per cent between January and February to 98 per cent between November and December. On the other hand, longer-term respondents in Ranong whose intended destination was Ranong decreased throughout the year, from 61 per cent between January and February to 39 per cent between November and December 2023.

Overall, among respondents travelling to Bangkok, reasons for migration are overwhelmingly employment (70%) or Thailand's better cost of living (56%), with a small contingent of respondents intended for Bangkok also citing visiting friends and family (10%), trade (7%), and accessing healthcare (4%). In contrast, respondents travelling to Chumphon cite slightly more diverse reasons for migration, including employment (75%), visiting friends and family (57%), Thailand's better cost of living (37%), and trade (17%).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILES AND EXPECTATIONS

Overall, seven per cent of respondents overall reported not having any education at all. Among respondents who had attended some school, 82 per cent had not completed secondary school, with nearly half (42%) not having completed primary school either. Respondents in Tak, however, were slightly more likely to have completed primary school (43%) compared to those in Ranong (39%). Notably, in Tak, five per cent had post-secondary education.

When asked about their usual profession, 34 per cent of respondents reported working in agriculture (including fishing), 15 per cent in hospitality (including working in hotels and restaurants), and 14 per cent, mainly women (22% compared to 4% of men), said that they were usually unemployed. Additionally, seven per cent reported usually working in construction and six per cent in manufacturing. An agricultural professional background was more common in Ranong (38%) compared to Tak (26%). Furthermore, a greater proportion of respondents in Tak (20%) indicated being unemployed compared to in Ranong (11%).

Those who responded that they were entering Thailand for employment purposes were also asked about which work sector they were planning to seek employment in. In Ranong, matching their primary professional background, nearly half (48%) of respondents were planning to work in agriculture, followed by hospitality (18%), construction (12%) and manufacturing (8%). While men and women in Ranong intended to work in agriculture in near equal proportions (49% and 46%, respectively), intention to work in hospitality was more highly represented among women (26%) compared to men (13%), while the reverse was true for construction (19% among men and 3% among women). Respondents in Tak, on the other hand, were more likely planning to work in manufacturing (35%), particularly women (47%) compared to men (25%). Like in Ranong, men and women in Tak intended to work in agriculture in equal proportions (both at 6%). However, this was not the case during the first half of 2023, where 26 per cent of men intended to work in agriculture compared to 11 per cent of women.

FIGURE 8: EDUCATION LEVELS AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS⁴

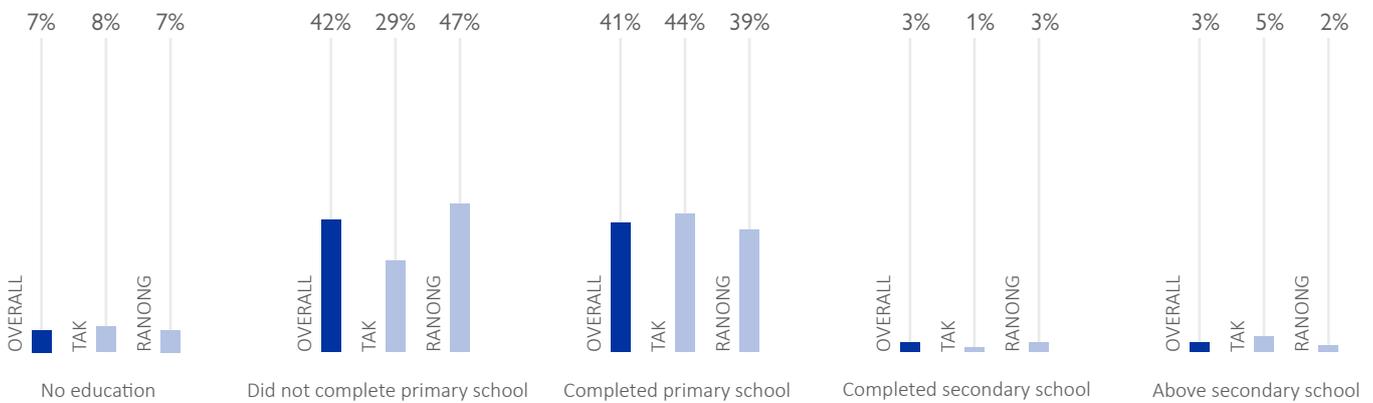


TABLE 2: MAIN WORK SECTORS OF LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS PRIOR TO ARRIVAL IN THAILAND

| | OVERALL | TAK | RANONG |
|-------------------|---------|-----|--------|
| Agriculture | 34% | 26% | 38% |
| Construction | 7% | 4% | 9% |
| Hospitality | 15% | 11% | 17% |
| Manufacturing | 6% | 7% | 6% |
| None (unemployed) | 14% | 20% | 11% |
| Street vendor | 5% | 5% | 3% |

TABLE 3: MAIN ASPIRATIONAL WORK SECTORS AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS

| | OVERALL | TAK | RANONG |
|---------------|---------|-----|--------|
| Agriculture | 43% | 6% | 48% |
| Construction | 14% | 27% | 12% |
| Domestic work | 3% | 6% | 2% |
| Hospitality | 17% | 12% | 18% |
| Manufacturing | 11% | 35% | 8% |
| Unknown | 7% | 9% | 7% |

⁴ Four per cent of longer-term respondents (13% in Tak and 2% in Ranong) did not want to answer.

Regarding their expected earnings, those indicating employment as a reason for movement in Tak estimated they would earn around 400 THB per day. Those pursuing agricultural work estimated lowest, at around 280 THB per day, while those pursuing hospitality estimated highest, at around 490 THB per day. Women estimated a slightly lower wage than men (around 390 THB compared to 420 THB). These trends were similar in Ranong, even though aspirational wages were higher overall. Respondents in Ranong expected to earn around 510 THB per day, with those seeking domestic work estimating lowest, at 320 THB, and those seeking work in hospitality estimating highest, at 650 THB. Women expected to earn around 470 THB per day while men expected around 530 THB per day. Although not all respondents planned to stay in Tak and Ranong, the minimum wage in both provinces is 332 THB per day. Thus, 87 per cent of all respondents who were entering for employment reasons indicated that they expected earning above 332 THB

per day. Complementary data from IOM’s 2023 Multisectoral Assessment of Needs (MSA) indicated that among Myanmar migrants living in Tak, 84 per cent earned below minimum wage, and among those living in Ranong, 56 per cent earned below minimum wage.

The majority of respondents (87%) confirmed they already had a job lined up upon their arrival. This proportion was significantly higher in Ranong (90%) compared to Tak (59%). Moreover, the proportion with a job lined up in Tak decreased by 12 per cent from the first half of the year when the proportion was 71 per cent. Overall, respondents with a job lined up was highest among those who planned to work in agriculture (99%) and hospitality (96%). Additionally, respondents without friends or family in their destination location were more likely to have a job already lined up (95%) compared to those with friends or family in the destination (88%).

FIGURE 9: AVERAGE EXPECTED WAGE AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS BY MAIN ASPIRATIONAL WORK SECTORS

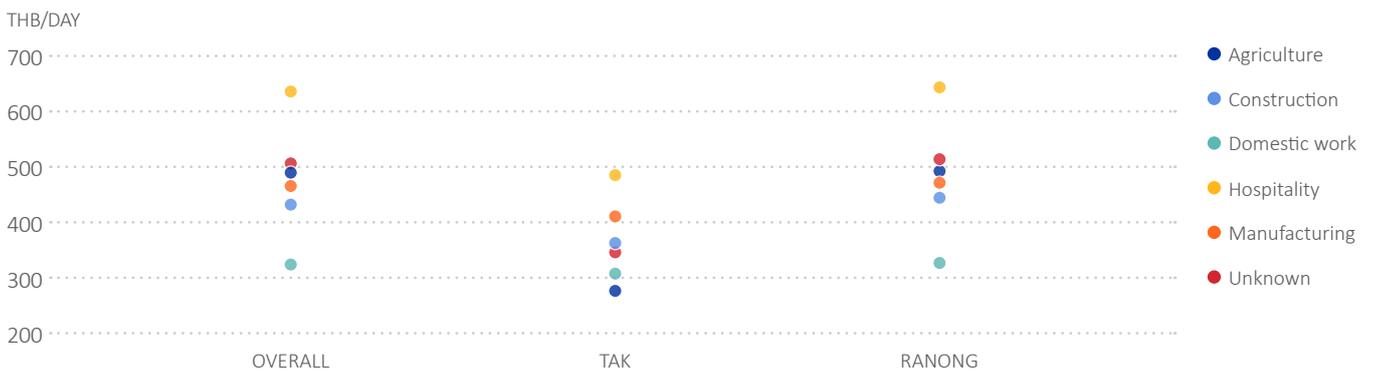


PHOTO: Pak Nam checkpoint, where people must stop to register before entering Ranong through Saphan Pla POE. © IOM 2023/Somruedee KARNPHAKDEE

KEY FINDINGS

- Most entries (83%) from Myanmar to Thailand are for short-term stays, while 17 per cent are longer-term entries.
- Reasons for migration among short-term arrivals are mainly visiting family or friends (49%), trade (43%), and accessing healthcare (15%). Main reasons for migration among longer-term arrivals include visiting family or friends (50%), employment (41%), and the better cost of living in Thailand (26%).
- Conflict was cited by 12 per cent of longer-term respondents as a reason for entry. Additionally, women in Tak were more likely to cite conflict compared to men (11% compared to 8%) while the reverse was true for Ranong (6% compared to 19%).
- Key destination provinces outside Tak and Ranong included Bangkok and Chumphon, with Surat Thani and Chonburi also featuring among the top three destinations for longer-term respondents in Ranong and Tak, respectively.
- Longer-term arrivals in Tak mostly intended to work in manufacturing (35%), particularly women. In Ranong, they mostly intended to work in agriculture (including fishing) (48%), hospitality (18%), construction (12%), and manufacturing (8%).
- In both Tak and Ranong, longer-term arrivals without documentation increased throughout the year (nearly four times in Tak and three times in Ranong).
- Expectations about wage conditions in Thailand may not be on par with the reality. Most respondents (87%) who were entering for employment reasons indicated that they expected earning above 332 THB per day (the applicable minimum wage in both Tak and Ranong). This aligns with data from IOM's 2023 Multisectoral Assessment of Needs (MSA) conducted among Myanmar migrants which indicated that approximately 84 per cent of Myanmar nationals residing in Tak province and 56 per cent of those in Ranong province were earning below minimum wage.
- The majority of respondents who entered Thailand for employment reasons already had a job lined up upon arrival (87%).
- Over a third (38%) of respondents indicated having left behind a child in a location outside Thailand where their partner/spouse was not residing either.
- Around half of all respondents (53%) reported that they were entering Thailand accompanied by their children.



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