FLOW MONITORING SURVEYS: INSIGHTS INTO THE PROFILES AND VULNERABILITIES OF MYANMAR MIGRANTS TO THAILAND (ROUND TWO)

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)
DECEMBER 2018

DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX (DTM)

This report is funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) under the "Asia Regional Migration Program". The report was written by Michelle Münstermann and edited by Nathalie Hanley (IOM Thailand). Further editorial support was provided by IOM's Global DTM Support Team. Survey questions were designed with key inputs from IOM Thailand's Migrant Assistance and Counter-Trafficking Unit, and survey data was collected and analyzed using IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) tool, with technical guidance and support from IOM's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the Global DTM Support Team.

For further information, please contact:
DTM Thailand
Email: DTMThailand@iom.int

Publisher: International Organization for Migration
18th Floor, Rajanakarn Building
3 South Sathorn Road
10120 Sathorn, Bangkok
Thailand

Tel.: +66 2 343 93 00

Fax: +66 2 343 94 99

Email: iomthailand@iom.int

Website: www.iom.int

Tables of Contents

Table of Figures and Tables

Figures

Tables

Maps

Pictures

Summary

Labour migration plays a key role in the South-East Asian context, particularly in Thailand. For a number of reasons, including the country's steady economic growth over the past decades and the consequent need for labour, Thailand has continued to attract low-skilled workers from neighbouring countries. In the 2017 UN Migration Report[1], the official number of international migrants in Thailand was estimated to be 3,589,000. However, the actual number of migrants living in Thailand is believed to be higher still, as undocumented migrants are not accounted for in official statistics. Nationals from Myanmar make up the largest migrant worker population in Thailand, with recent estimates putting the figure at 2.3 million individuals.[2]

In order to gain a better understanding of the migration patterns and the nature of 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 May 2018 in the province of Tak, using one of the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) tools – the so-called Flow Monitoring 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 Thailand aimed to find out more about migrants' profiles, drivers of migration, level of preparedness for migration, as well as associated vulnerabilities and return intentions.

From mid-June until mid-August 2018, a total of 4,284 Myanmar nationals were surveyed in the province of Tak, of whom 3,765 were identified as migrant workers. The 3,765 migrant workers fell into two different migrant groups. The first group was comprised of incoming migrants, arriving in Thailand prior to starting employment and the second group of outgoing migrants, returning after their employment ended. Two different survey tools were designed to capture the most accurate information possible for both target groups. The findings served to identify migration patterns as well as common challenges and vulnerabilities.

In September 2018, IOM Thailand published "Flow Monitoring Surveys: Insights into the Profiles and Vulnerabilities of Myanmar Migrants to Thailand", which analyzed the first round of survey data collected in Mae Sot and Phop Phra between mid-June and mid-August 2018. The initial report included an extensive theoretical section, reviewing existing literature for the five thematic areas of interest: Myanmar migrant profiles, drivers of migration, pre-migration preparations and arrangements, migrant vulnerabilities and return intentions.

From mid-August to mid-October 2018, a total of 3,233 Myanmar nationals were surveyed in the province of Tak, of whom 3,013 were identified as migrant workers. This report will analyze the results of this second round of data collection, building on the first report published with a more detailed analysis of the data and examining the similarities and differences in results between the two rounds of data collection. In so doing, the report aims to advance a more comprehensive picture of Myanmar migrants in Thailand, with the larger dataset increasing the representativeness of findings. This report will follow the same structure as the first one; it will analyze the most interesting findings per thematic area and examine various correlations and dimensions of interest (including but not limited to gender, education, documentation status, employment sector or duration of stay in Thailand).

1 United Nations (2017). 2017: International Migration Report. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2017_Highlights.pdf

2 IOM (2013). Assessing potential changes in the migration patterns of Myanmar migrants and their impacts on Thailand. Retrieved from: https://thailand.iom.int/assessing-potential-changes-migration-patterns-myanmar-migrants-and-their-impacts-thailand

Since many of the respondents had worked in Thailand before, the main findings of the report show that the information and expectations that incoming migrants have do not differ much from the experiences and impressions that outgoing migrants have when returning from Thailand. Furthermore, the data also supports many of the statements made in the first report published in September 2018.

The results of the second round of data collection show that Myanmar migrants coming to Thailand for employment are predominately married male individuals with an average age of 30 years having either primary or secondary school education. The average preferred time to stay in Thailand was over a year, and the main provinces of destination correspond to the findings in Round One of data collection, namely Bangkok, Samut Sakhon, Chon Buri and Tak. Kayin and Mon State, together with the Bago East region, remain the main migrant-sending states within Myanmar.

A little under a quarter of the sample was unemployed before leaving Myanmar. Employment was the main reason cited for coming to Thailand, and the data shows that migration seems to be cyclical as a large share of the migrants surveyed had been to Thailand to seek employment before (particularly among the incoming migrants).

As identified during the first round of data collection, migrants prefer to arrange employment before coming to Thailand, mainly through the help of family or friends in Thailand. Manufacturing and construction are particularly popular sectors of employment. Returning migrants reported paying, on average, more than twice what incoming migrants paid for their migration journeys. This can be attributed to the fact that returning migrants travelled further into Thailand. In order to finance the cost of migration, incoming migrants relied predominantly on their savings and income, whereas returning migrants more frequently reported having borrowed money from a variety of different actors. Returning migrants reported having sent, on average, USD 200 in remittances home every month. Having children in Myanmar does not appear to be a determining factor in remittance-sending behaviour. However, migrants with proper documentation appear to be more likely to send remittances than those with no documentation. Migrants earning above the median minimum wage are also more likely to send back remittances than those earning below it.

On average, migrants ranked their ability to speak, understand and particularly read Thai as relatively low. Of those incoming migrants who had previously lived in Thailand, a larger share ranked their speaking and comprehension skills at medium to high levels. With respect to documentation status, those employed in the agriculture and domestic work sectors were more likely not to have any form of documentation. Respondents that worked in Tak province frequently reported wages below the provincial minimum wage, as did respondents returning from Bangkok, while migrants returning from Chon Buri and Samut Sakhon provinces reported, on average, higher wages than the provincial daily minimum wage. Fewer incoming migrants reported experiencing problems during their journeys than returning migrants, and incoming migrants also rarely expected to face problems at the workplace in Thailand.

In contrast over a third of returning migrants reported having faced some kind of problem at the workplace and almost two thirds of the return sample expected to face challenges upon their return, mostly associated with their mental or physical health, as well as with finding a job. For roughly half of the migrants, their general financial situation improved through migration. For those that reported their financial situation as having deteriorated, the main reasons were attributed to not making enough money in Thailand or to accumulating debt. There seems to be a positive correlation between borrowing money to fund the migration journey and being financially worse off.

Picture 1- DTM enumerator explaining a photo consent form to a respondent

Methodology

The data analyzed in this report is collected using the same methodology as that of the first report published in September 2018, "Flow Monitoring Surveys: Insights into the Profiles and Vulnerabilities of Myanmar Migrants to Thailand". While the first report considered data collected between mid-June and mid-August 2018, this report analyzes data collected between mid-August and mid-October 2018. As in the previous report, the data collection was conducted using two different survey tools designed to capture the most accurate information possible 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.

As in the first report, the analysis is based on surveys collected both in Mae Sot and Phop Phra districts, in the province of Tak. The sample consists of 3,198 Myanmar nationals migrating to Thailand of whom 3,013 individuals indicated having come to Thailand for the purpose of employment. A total of 2,416 surveys were collected with survey Tool 1 – incoming Myanmar migrants to Thailand, and 782 surveys were collected with survey Tool 2 – returning Myanmar migrants to Myanmar.

The Flow Monitoring Surveys conducted at select border crossing points are designed to collect and compile structured data in order to advance the overall understanding of current trends and migration flows between Thailand and Myanmar. The analysis of the survey data will follow the structure of the pre-designed thematic areas 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

Data Limitations

With regard to data collected using Tool 2 (returning Myanmar migrants), 70 per cent of the surveys (552 out of 782) were conducted in the Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) in Mae Sot.[3] The survey data therefore over-represents the deportee population of Myanmar migrants and results may over-report migrant vulnerabilities. The report will point out this potential bias whenever relevant to the interpretation of data findings.

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. In order to keep this bias to a minimum, we present different range brackets for remittances, wages and journey costs.

The data collected should also not be regarded as representative of all Myanmar migrants coming to Thailand or returning to Myanmar as the data collection activity only provides information on those Myanmar nationals that enter or exit through select crossing points in Tak province. With regard to migrants using other entry and exit locations in Thailand, this data cannot provide any information.

3 In the first round of data collection, 60 per cent of Tool 2 surveys were conducted in the Mae Sot Immigration Detention Centre

Data Analysis

Between 13 August and 12 October 2018, IOM Thailand collected a total of 3,233 surveys using two questionnaire tools designed using the DTM Flow Monitoring component and adapted to fit the context in Tak province. In order to only capture the migrant population traveling from Myanmar to Thailand, at the beginning of the Tool 1 survey migrants were asked if they intended to stay in Thailand or if they had plans to travel further. The results show that 35 survey respondents out of the 2,531 surveys under Tool 1 reported that they did not wish to stay in Thailand (1.4%). Of these 35 respondents, the majority intended to travel on further to Malaysia (26 individuals), Indonesia (2 individuals) or other countries in the ASEAN region (7 individuals). After discovering that these respondents did not wish to stay in Thailand, the 35 surveys were removed from the sample; the total sample size for analysis in the end was then n= 3,198.

Of the 3,198 surveys a total of 2,973 interviews were collected in the district of Mae Sot, and 225 surveys were collected in the district of Phop Phra. Looking at the two survey tools, 2,416 surveys were collected with Tool 1 (Incoming Myanmar nationals) and 782 surveys with Tool 2 (Returning Myanmar nationals). The analysis section below follows the structure of the different thematic areas; whenever possible the study also establishes relationships and cross tabulations between the different thematic areas.

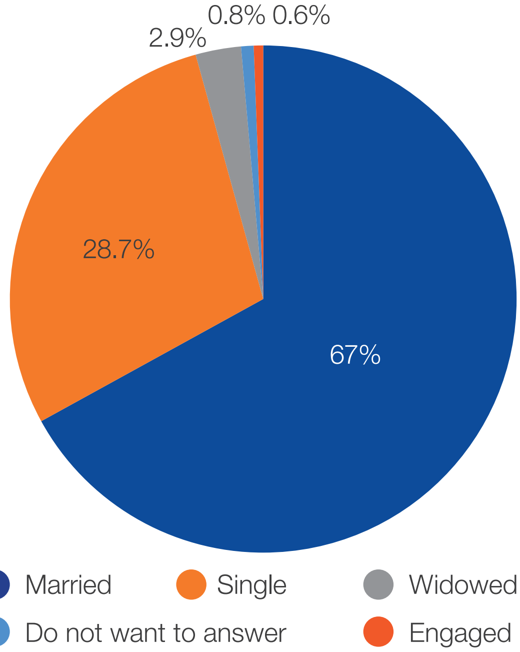
Emphasis is also placed on comparison between the two survey tools, as well as between the two rounds of data collection. Whenever results vary greatly between the two data rounds, the analysis looks holistically at the full data set, which combines the data of the two rounds of data collection.

Thematic Area 1 – Migrant Profiles

In relation to migrant profiles, the results of the second round of data collection largely correspond with the findings identified in the first report. Differences can be observed with regard to duration of stay in Thailand, as well as ethnicity. Return migrants in Round One of data collection on average stayed longer in Thailand than return migrants in Round Two. The Mon ethnic group was also less represented in the return sample in Round Two.

With the focus of this data collection exercise on Myanmar nationals coming to and returning from Thailand, the survey first asks about the respondents' nationality. Results show that 98 per cent of the sample identified themselves as being of Myanmar origin, with the remaining two per cent identifying as Myanmar Muslims. The results of this round of data collection (Round Two) slightly over-represent male respondents (58%). While there is a slight increase in male respondents in comparison to Round One results, the two survey tools under Round Two show the exact same sex breakdown. The age breakdown is almost identical to that of Round One respondents: the group of respondents between ages 16 and 30 comprised the largest share at 59 per cent, followed by the age group of 31 to 45 years (36%). Returning respondents are slightly older than incoming respondents. As already identified in Round One, Myanmar migrants in Thailand tend to be married (67%). Looking at the two sample populations more closely, returning respondents reported being single slightly more often than incoming migrants (35% and 27% respectively). Exactly as was reported in Round One, the majority of respondents also reported having at least one child (56%). Of this 56 per cent, the majority, over 80 per cent, reported that at least one of their children was living in Myanmar and roughly 25 per cent reported they were with at least one of their children in Thailand. Less than 10 per cent of both samples had children living in two different locations.

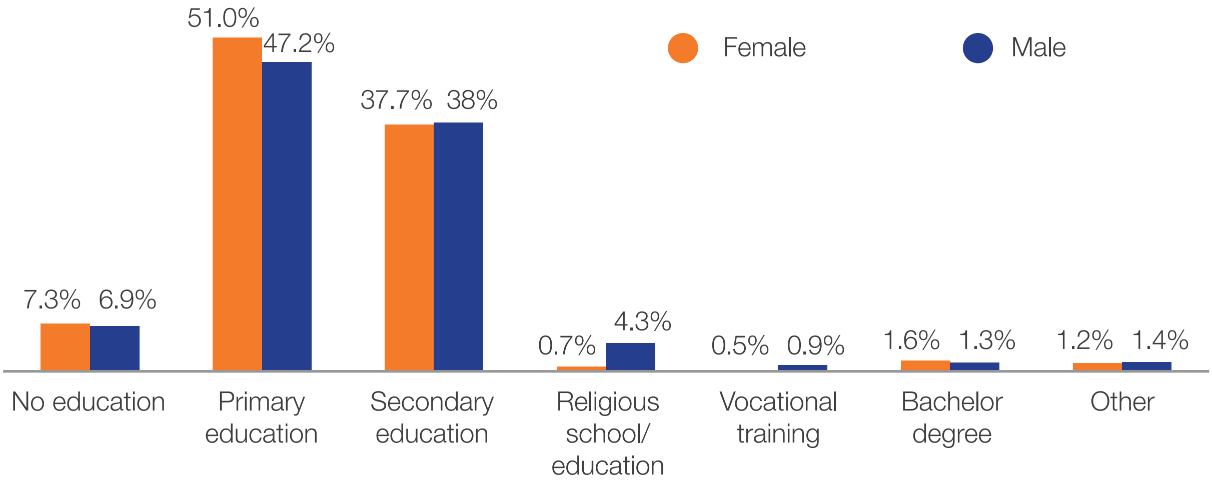
Figure 1 - Marital Status



As in Round One, the return sample seems to have a slightly higher education level with a larger share of those having completed secondary education (47% compared to 35% for incoming migrants). The share of those with no formal education lies between six and eight per cent for both population groups. Looking at the gender distribution across the different levels of education, Figure 2 shows no significant difference. The exception lies in the case of religious school education, reported slightly more often by men. There also seems to be no clear link between age and level of education.

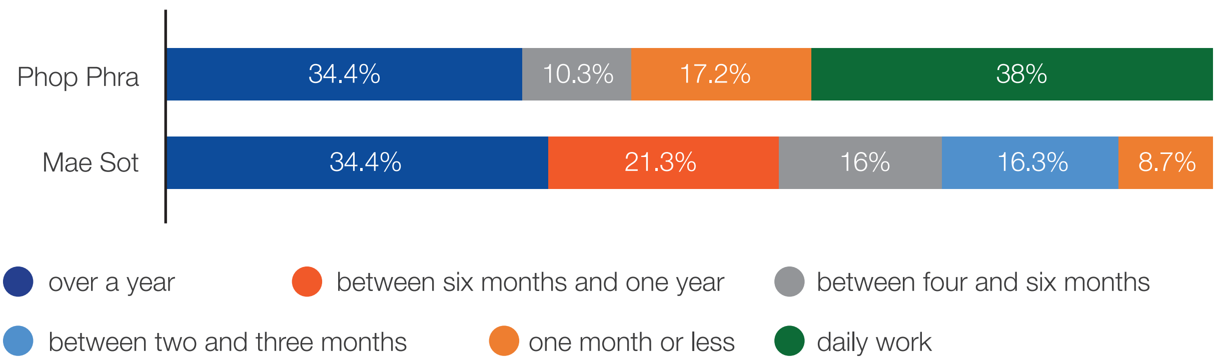
Respondents were also asked about their (intended) duration of stay in Thailand. Looking at the intentions of incoming migrants, the majority expressed their wish to stay in Thailand for over a year (62%), followed by those that were not yet sure about their intended duration (23%) and those that intended to stay between six months and one year (7%). The remaining eight per cent intended to stay anywhere between one day and six months.

Figure 2 - Level of Education by Gender



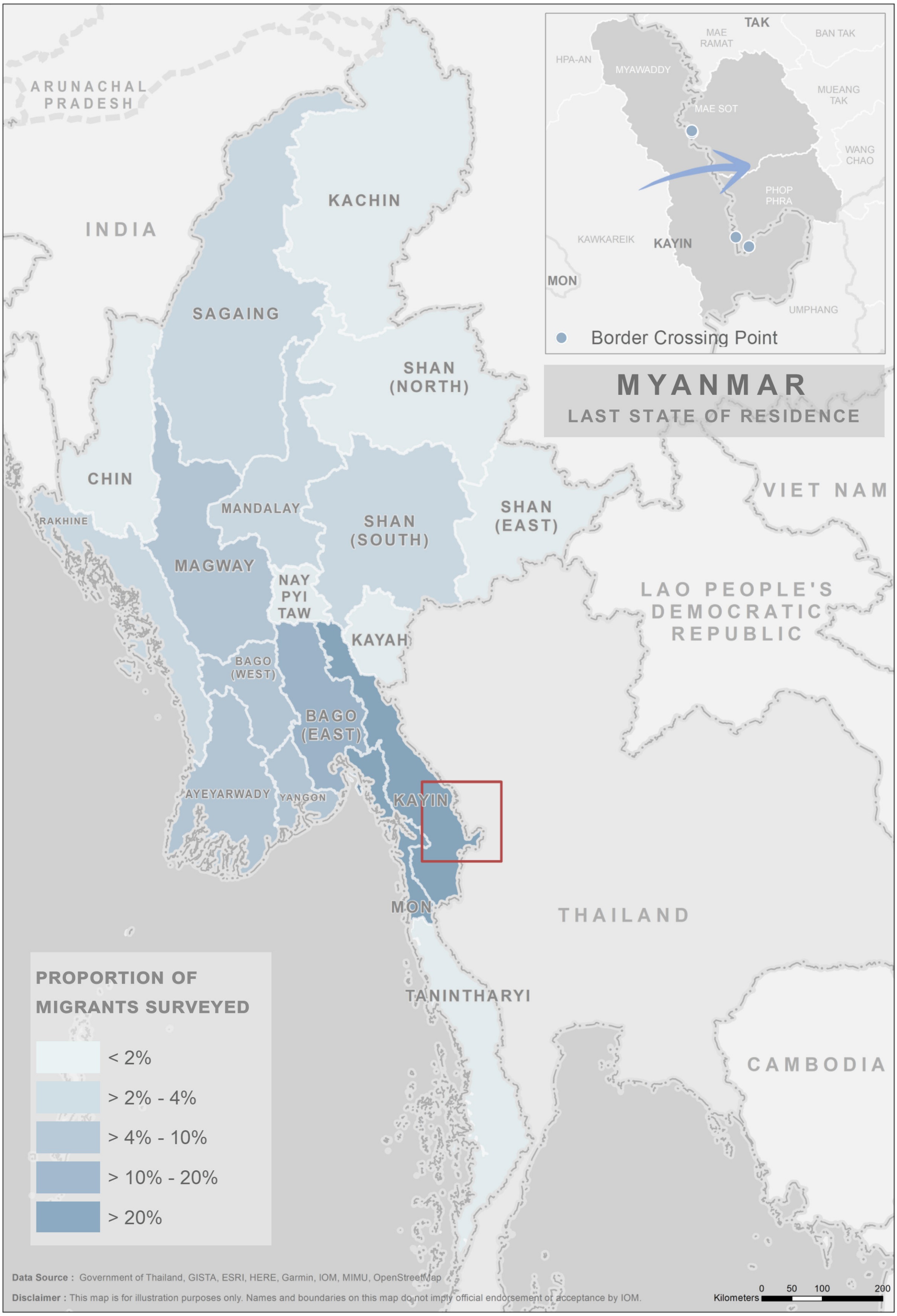
Looking at the return sample, the largest share (36%) indicated having stayed over a year in Thailand, 20 per cent between six months and one year, 16 per cent between four and six months and another 16 per cent between two and three months. The return sample data appears different from the Round One report where over 50 per cent indicated having stayed in Thailand for over a year. Respondents were asked if the time that they had wanted to be away matched with the time actually spent away, and 55 per cent answered affirmatively, while 17 per cent said the times did not match, 25 per cent did not know initially how long they wanted to stay in Thailand and three per cent did not want to answer. The majority of the sub-group that reported staying in Thailand for a different time period than intended (mostly shorter than one year) said that they had originally planned to be away for over a year. Looking at the survey locations (see Figure 3) it becomes clear that shorter term migration seems to be more popular within Phop Phra district, which supports anecdotal knowledge that many Myanmar nationals entering through Phop Phra intend to stay in the area only for daily work or short term seasonal employment.

Figure 3 - Duration of Stay in Thailand by Location of Entry (Returning Migrants)



Other than a very small share (0.5%) that had previously lived in China, Bangladesh or another country, almost all respondents named Myanmar as their last place of origin (99.5%). Most respondents came from Kayin State (23%), Mon State (22%), Bago East Region (13.5%) and Magway Region (7.5%) within Myanmar.

Map 1 - State of Origin in Myanmar



Both the states of origin within Myanmar as well as ethnic groups were similar between the two rounds of data collection. The dominant ethnic groups in both population groups in Round Two were Barmar (51% and 48% respectively) and Karen (20% and 15% respectively). The two populations differ, however, in the other main ethnic groups; 16 per cent of the incoming migrants identified themselves as belonging to the Mon ethnic group, with smaller percentages identifying as Mixed or Pao-O, whereas nine per cent of returning migrants named Pa-O as their ethnic group followed by Shan in eight per cent of the cases and Mon in only seven per cent of the cases (see Table 3).

Table 3 - Top Five Ethnic Groups by Population Group

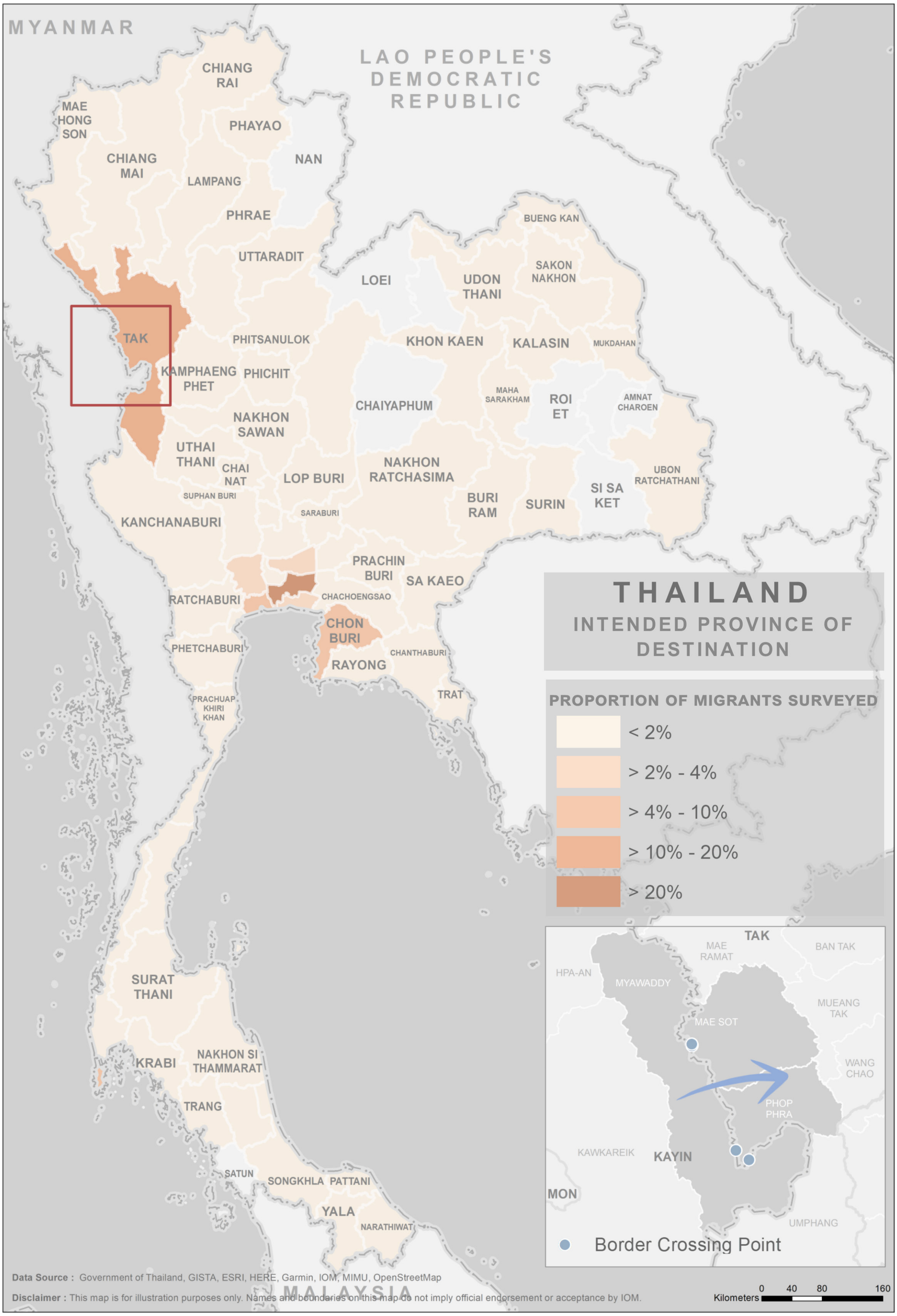
Tool 1 - Inflows			Tool 2 - Outflows		
Ethnicity	#	%	Ethnicity	#	%
1. Barmar	1,236	51.5%	1. Barmar	359	48.3%
2. Karen	480	20%	2. Karen	115	15.5%
3. Mon	380	15.8%	3. Pa-O	65	8.7%
4. Mixed	88	3.6%	4. Shan	62	8.3%
5. Pa-O	69	2.4%	5. Mon	58	7.8%

In order to better understand the profile of Myanmar nationals migrating to Thailand it is also important to identify the intended provinces of destination within Thailand – the destinations can provide valuable information on migration patterns, as well as on living and working conditions, ultimately allowing for more targeted programmatic interventions. While incoming migrants were asked about their intended destination province in Thailand (single-answer), returning migrants were asked which provinces they had lived in during their last migration experience (multiple-answer).

As identified in the Round One findings, Bangkok is the most popular province of destination within Thailand with 35.5 per cent of incoming migrants reporting Bangkok as their chosen destination and 42 per cent of returning migrants reporting that Bangkok was one of their destination provinces. Other popular provinces were Tak, Chon Buri and Samut Sakhon.

Looking more closely at the results, these statistics support the claim made in the Round One report that Mae Sot is a strategic transit point for Myanmar nationals migrating all over Thailand. Incoming migrants identified in Phop Phra on the other hand predominately reported staying in the province of Tak (95%).

Map 2 - Intended Province of Destination (Incoming Migrants)



Picture 2 - DTM interview at one of the survey locations in Phop Phra

Thematic Area 2 – Drivers of Migration

The results of Round Two data collection on drivers of migration are largely similar to the Round One findings. Differences exist with regard to prior migration experience – returning migrants in the second round of data of collection are less likely to have worked in Thailand before. The new sample also shows a greater reliance on social media as a source of information about life in Thailand.

The data reveals that the most common forms of previous employment in Myanmar for both population groups were daily employment and self-employment, which can be explained by the fact that many of the respondents reported having previously worked on farms, which either belonged to them or on which they were hired to work on a daily basis. The distributions however vary slightly by population group. Incoming migrants seem to have relied more heavily on daily wages and returning migrants on self-employment.

Looking at employment status before migration in more detail, the data shows that the unemployment rate is especially high for the younger population (see Figure 5). With respect to gender distribution, men seem to be more likely to be employed on daily wages, as well as more likely to be self-employed, which is similar to the results found during the Round One analysis. The unemployment rate is slightly unevenly distributed between male and female respondents, since of all respondents reporting to have been unemployed, 55 per cent were female, and 45 per cent were male.

Figure 4 - Employment Sector by Population Group

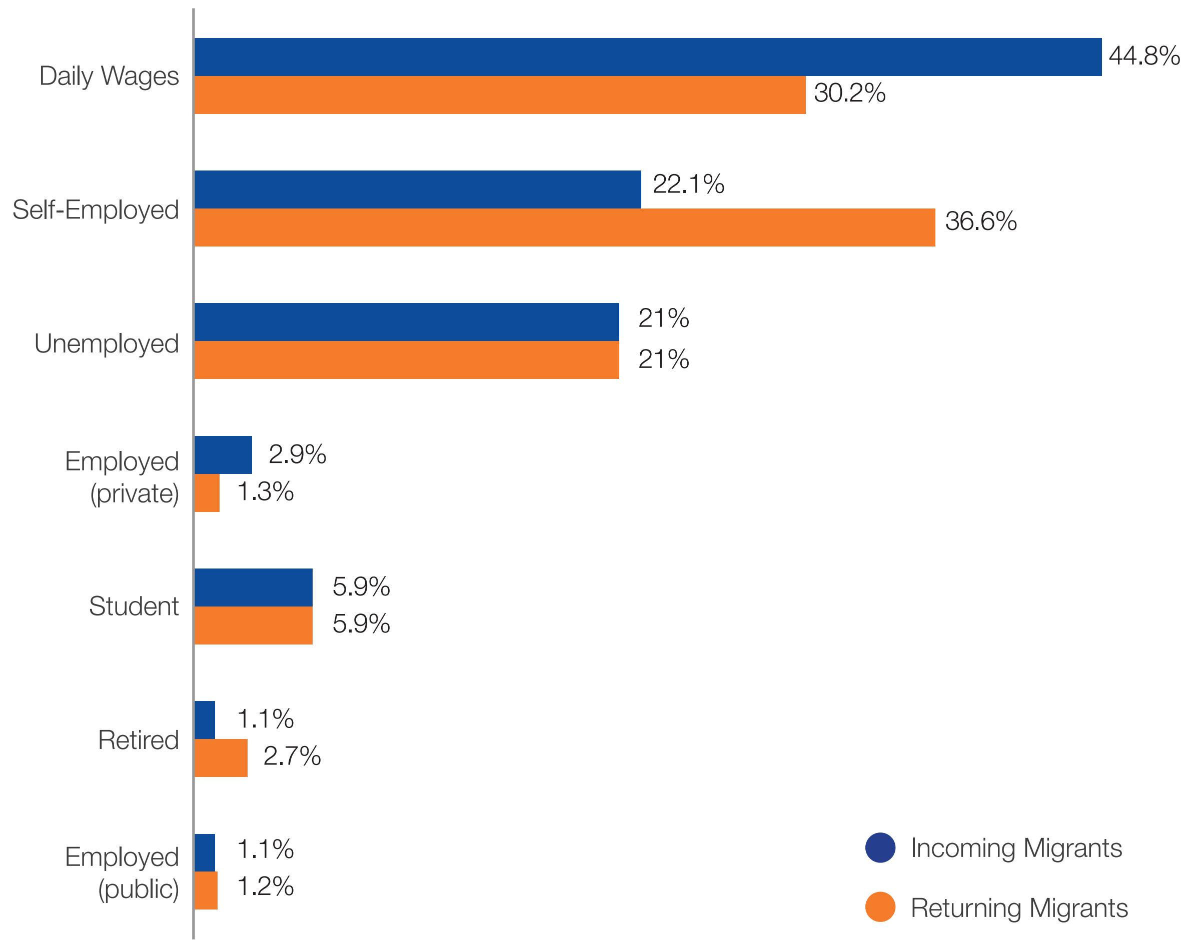
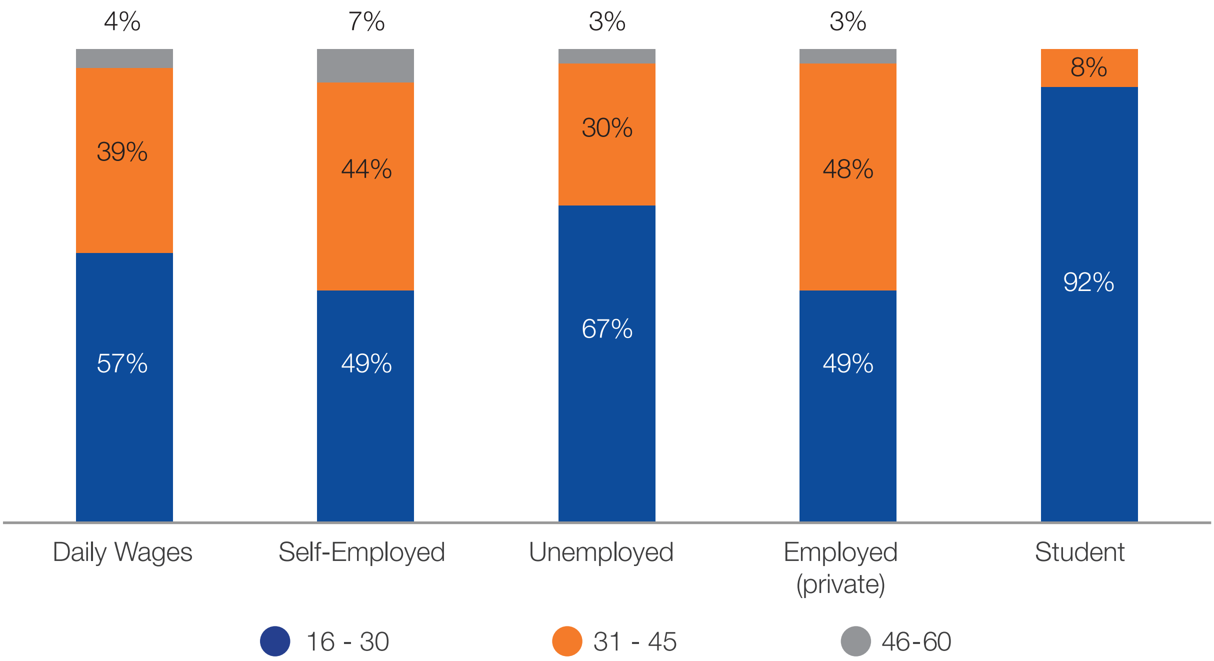


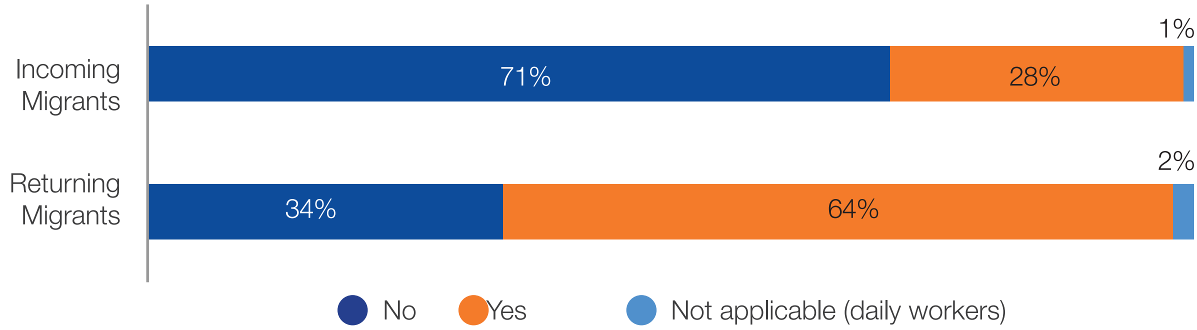
Figure 5 - Employment Status by Age Distribution



In identifying their main reasons for leaving Myanmar and coming to Thailand, the majority reported having come for the purpose of employment (for themselves), namely 84 per cent of respondents in the case of incoming migrants and 88 per cent for returning migrants. Other reasons named were employment of their spouse (11.5% for incoming migrants; 4% for returning migrants), to escape food insecurity (6% for incoming migrants; 8% for returning migrants), as well as to visit friends and family (5% for each population group). As already identified during the Round One data analysis, very few of the respondents named reasons related to violence and persecution (1.5% for incoming migrants; 1% for returning migrants).

Respondents that did not name employment for themselves as one of their reasons for coming to Thailand were asked if they still planned on working in Thailand (incoming migrants) or if they did work in Thailand during their stay although it might not have been their initial plan (returning migrants). For the inflow sample, 75 per cent reported that they indeed intended to find employment, 14 per cent reported that they would not be looking to find work and 11 per cent were not yet sure. For the return sample, 75 per cent reported that they had worked in Thailand although this was not their original plan, 22 per cent denied having worked during their stay and 3 per cent did not want to answer the question. This question is particularly relevant in order to continue with the survey, as the following questions mainly relate to work experiences and expectations. Therefore, those that did not intend to work in Thailand or reported not having worked during their last stay in Thailand were excluded from the sample. The new sample size from this question forward is 3,013 individuals.

Figure 6 - First Time Coming to Work in Thailand by Population Group

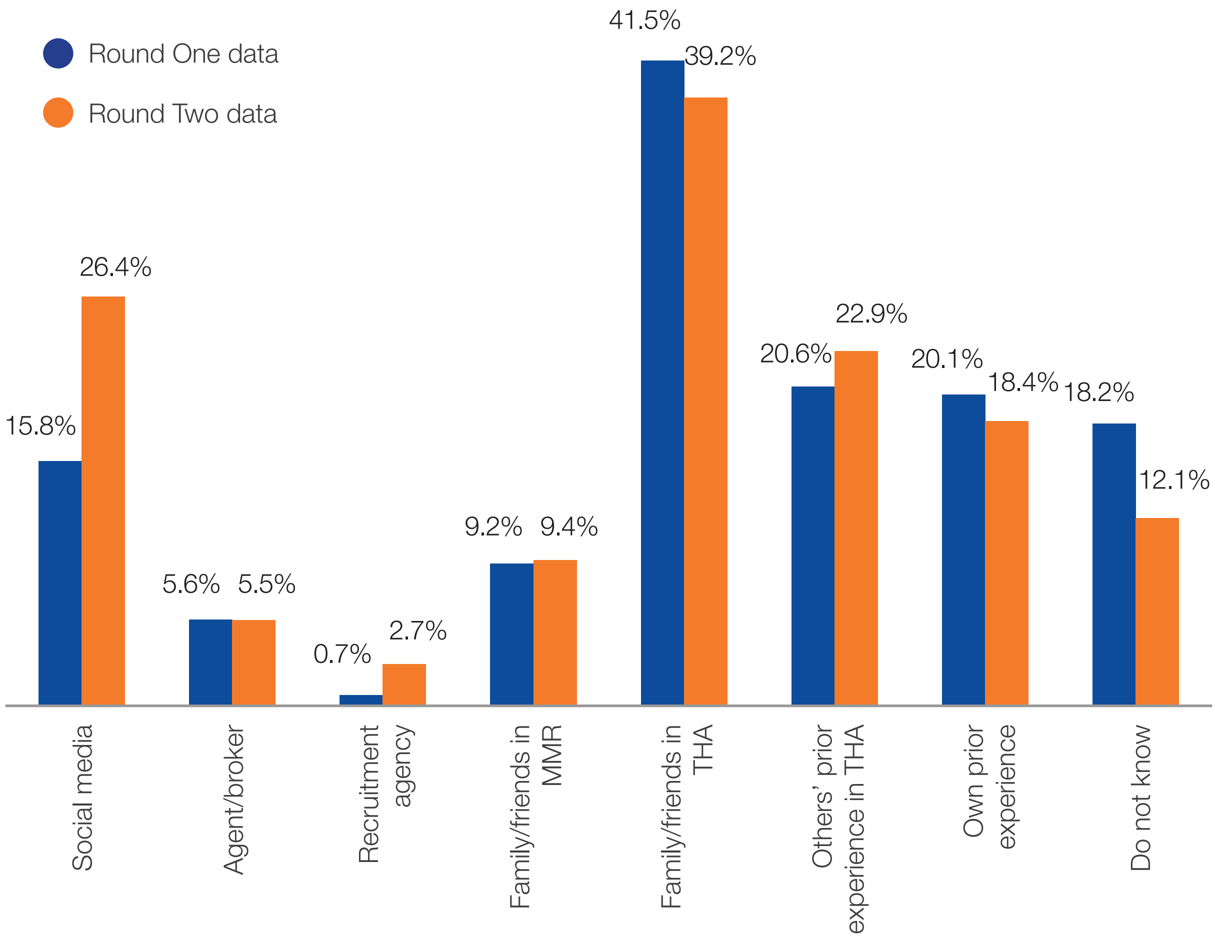


Migrants were asked if this was the first time they had travelled to Thailand for work. While, for 71 per cent of incoming migrants, this was not their first time coming to Thailand for work, the share was only at 34 per cent for returning migrants. These results differ from the previous round of data analysis, as although returning migrants in Round One were also less likely to have previously migrated, the difference was not as large. Looking at the states of origin in Myanmar, it becomes clear that respondents from closer to the border (Kayin State, Mon State and the Bago Region (East)) were more likely to have worked in Thailand before.

When asked why they preferred to migrate to Thailand over another country in the region, results were very similar to the Round One findings as the majority replied that "Thailand [was] the easiest to access", with other responses including "access to jobs being easier", there being "higher incomes" and "having family and/or friends in Thailand".

While the reasons for choosing Thailand over another country in the region are similar in both data rounds, when asked about their sources of information on life in Thailand, responses vary slightly across the two rounds. While family/friends living in Thailand is still one of the main sources of information (41% for incoming migrants; 35% for returning migrants), as well as their own experience (18% for incoming migrants; 21% for returning migrants) and experiences from other migrants (25% for incoming migrants; 17% for returning migrants), social media seems to play a much greater role for this sample. Of the incoming migrants, 25 per cent reported having relied on information from social media, while for returning migrants the share was 31 per cent. In contrast, 18 per cent of incoming migrants reported having relied on social media in Round One, and only 10 per cent of returning migrants.

Figure 7 - Sources of Information about Life in Thailand by Data Collection Round

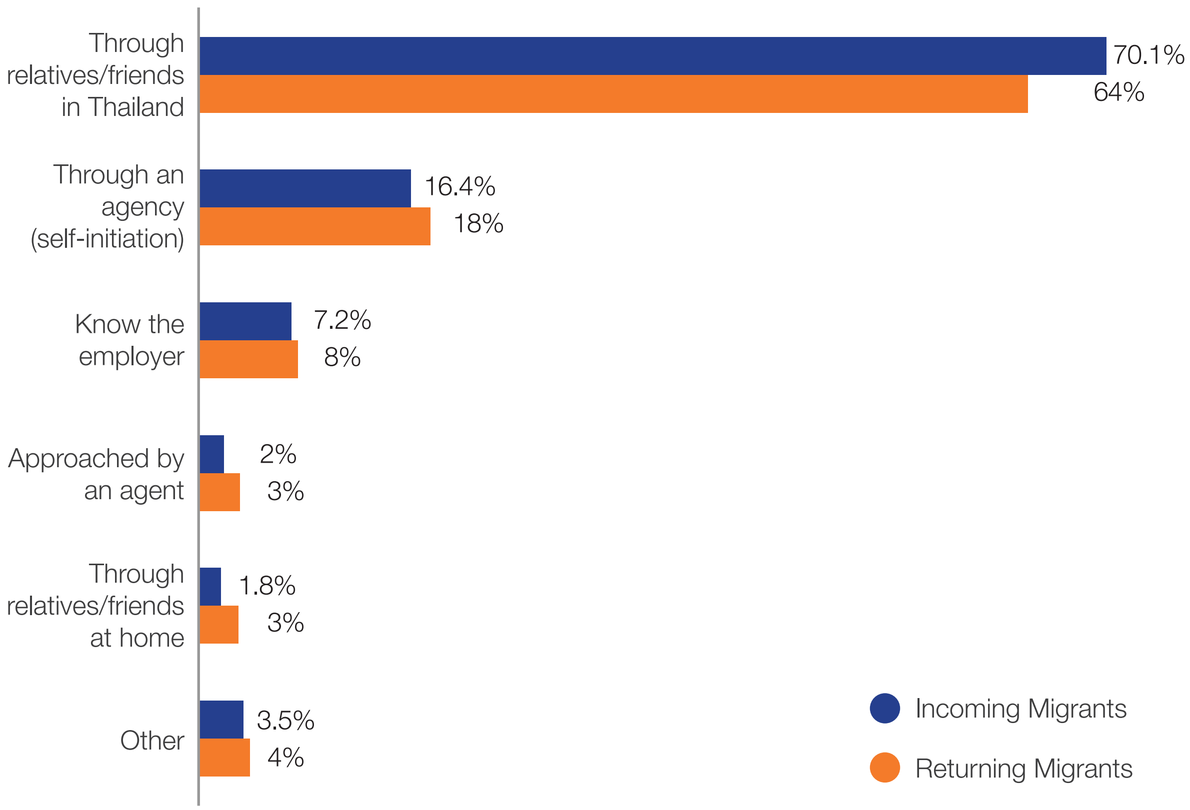


Thematic Area 3 – Pre-migration Preparations and Arrangements

The results of the second round of data collection on pre-migration preparation and arrangements both confirm and challenge some of the earlier findings. While the Round One report already identified that migrants prefer to arrange employment pre-migration, the second round of data collection confirms this finding with a higher degree of confidence. Although the costs of migration differ between rounds, just as in the Round One report, returning migrants reported to have spent more than twice the amount incoming migrants did. Furthermore, the data from Round Two hints at greater levels of indebtedness among migrants as larger shares reported borrowing money to finance their journeys.

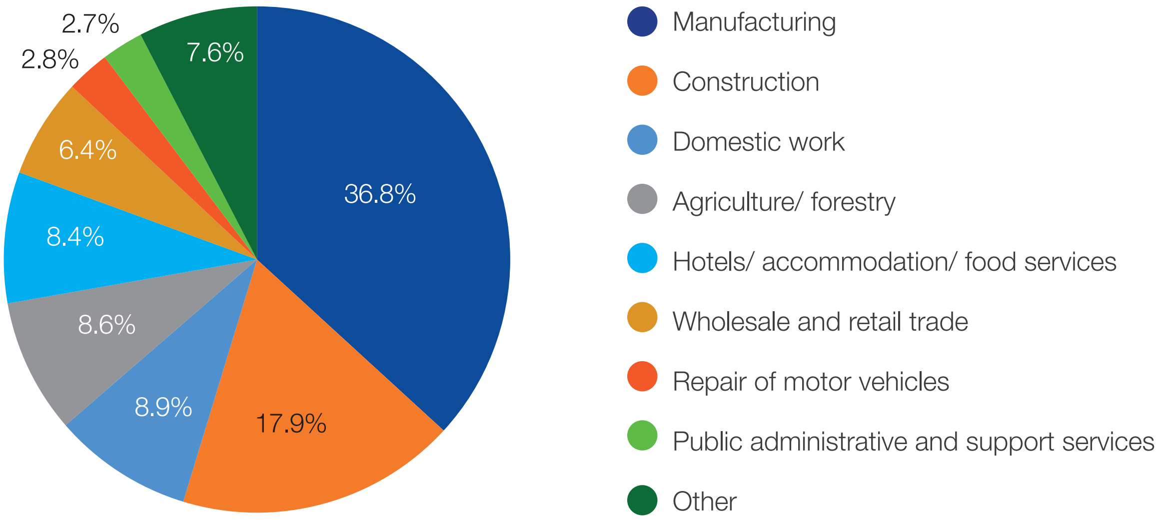
As identified in the Round One data analysis, migrants prefer to make employment arrangements before coming to Thailand. Although this trend was already clearly visible during the first round of data collection, it was even more evident in the second round of data collection, with 92 per cent of incoming migrants affirming that they already had a job lined up and 78 per cent of the return sample indicating that they did. Looking at the correlation between having a job lined up and having worked in Thailand before, the data shows that the share of those who had a job lined up was slightly larger among those who had already been to Thailand. Surprisingly however, and contrary to Round One findings, incoming migrants did not commonly report having found work through knowing their employer (see Figure 8), even though the share of incoming migrants that had previously worked in Thailand was more than twice as high. These changes could potentially be attributed to the implementation of the Royal Ordinance on Foreign Worker Management (B.E. 2560) as of 1 July 2018.

Figure 8 - How Employment Was Obtained by Population Group



Looking at the main sectors of employment, the two primary sectors remain the same as in the first round of data collection, namely manufacturing (37%) and construction (18%). However, in the second round of data collection, domestic work (9%) and agriculture/forestry (9%) were as commonly mentioned as work related to hotels/accommodation and the hospitality industry (8%), which was the third largest sector identified in Round One.

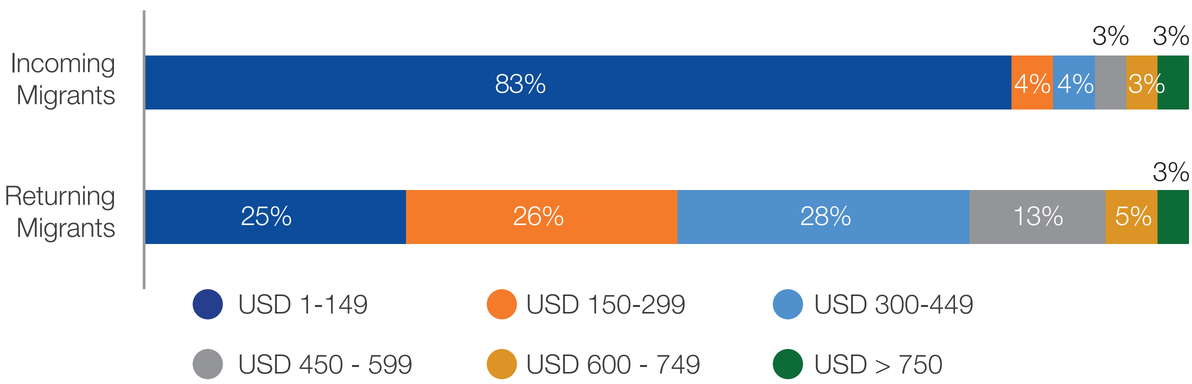
Figure 9 - Main Employment Sectors in Thailand



Comparing the different employment sectors with the intended destinations in Thailand, the data shows that while Bangkok seemed to be the most popular destination for employment related to hotels/accommodation/ food services and domestic work (both over 45%), Tak seems to be especially popular for work in the agricultural sector (70%) and Samut Sakhon for employment related to the fishing industry (43%).

Migrants were also asked how much their journeys cost them and how they were able to finance their migration. Although the overall amounts differ, as in the Round One report where returning migrants paid three times as much as incoming migrants, returning migrants during Round Two reported having spent more than twice the amount that incoming migrants did (on average USD 306 and USD 130 respectively). The amount returning migrants cited was slightly closer to the amount reported during the Round One phase (USD 282 - a difference of USD 24) than that of incoming migrants (USD 96 – a difference of USD 34). In order to get a more complete understanding and avoid skewing results through potential outliers, it is also important to look at the different cost brackets to identify patterns in migration costs. As Figure 10 clearly shows, over 80 per cent of incoming migrants paid between 1 and 149 USD while only 25 per cent of returning migrants fall in this lower bracket.

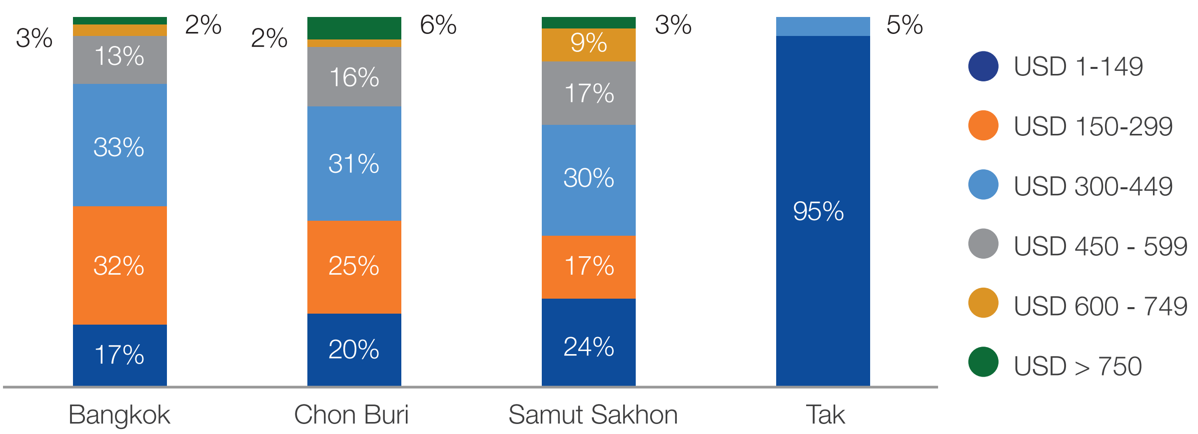
Figure 10 - Migration Costs by Population Group



As explained in the first report, the large majority of returning migrants did not stay in Tak province but returned from provinces further south. The same can be said about incoming migrants: only a small share intended to stay in Tak province, therefore they have most likely yet to spend the full amount needed to reach their intended destination in Thailand.

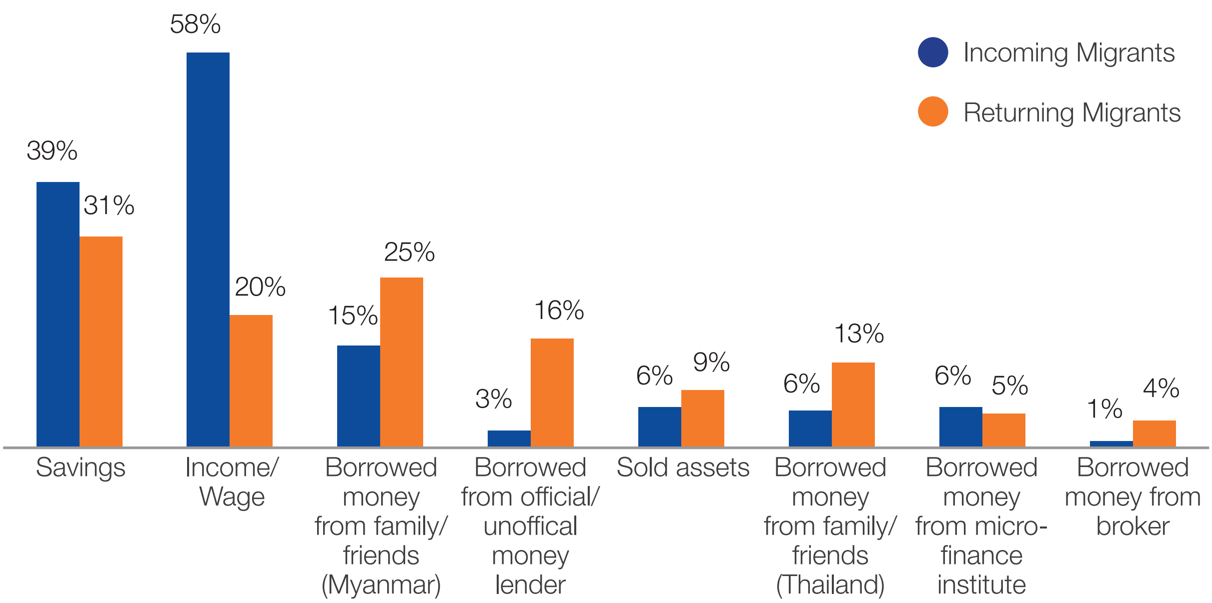
Looking at the return data and at provinces further south in Thailand with the highest share of migrants, the data indicates that for provinces like Bangkok, Chon Buri or Samut Sakhon, migrants tend to spend amounts in the higher cost brackets, while those returning from Tak predominately paid amounts at the lower end of the cost range (see Figure 11).

Figure 11 - Migration Cost by Province of Destination (Return Migrants)



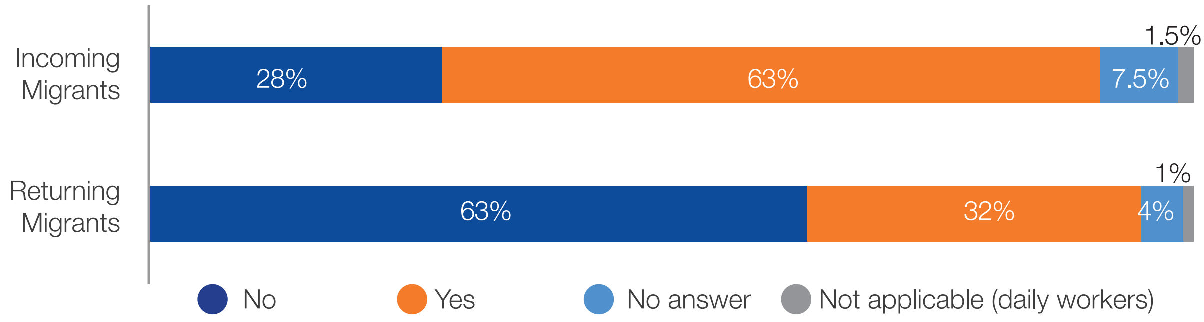
The costs of migration can give indications about migrants' vulnerabilities in the long run – taking out loans can especially increase the risk of becoming vulnerable. Therefore, migrants were asked about how they financed their journeys. As in Round One, for incoming migrants savings as well as income or wages appear to be the main sources used to pay for journeys. While for the return sample these sources were important as well, borrowing money from family and friends or other actors seems to have been a more commonly used resource. Compiling the different sources for borrowing money, 71 per cent of returning migrants borrowed money from at least one source. For incoming migrants this share is only 36 per cent (see Figure 12). Although the trend of returning migrants being more likely to have borrowed money was already apparent in Round One data, the number was not quite as high at 63 per cent.

Figure 12 - Main Sources to Finance the Migration Journey by Population Group



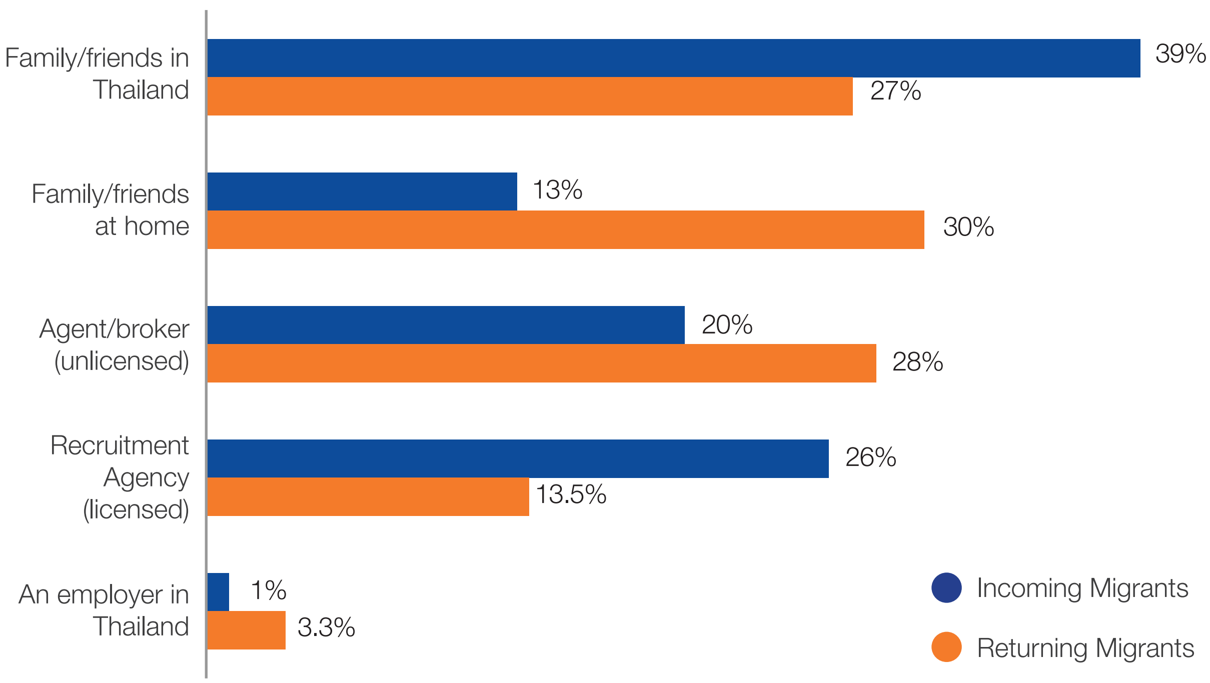
Respondents were also asked if someone helped them prepare for their journey, and, if so, who helped them and how. This question can give some valuable insight into migration dynamics, especially if brokers were involved or if migrants largely made their own arrangements. While incoming respondents largely reported not having received any support in preparing for their journey (63%), this share is significantly smaller for returning migrants at only 28 per cent. Returning migrants had also been identified as more likely to receive support with their preparations in the first round of data analysis, however the difference between the two samples was not as significant. Not only is there a difference in the likelihood of receiving support between the two groups, but also in the actors involved. Incoming migrants relied heavily on their family/friends in Thailand (39%), as well as formal/licensed recruitment agencies (26%) but also on unlicensed agents (20%) and family/friends in Myanmar (13%). Returning migrants predominately relied on family/friends at home in Myanmar (30%), followed by unlicensed agents (28%) and family friends in Thailand (27%). Only 13 per cent relied on formal recruitment agencies.

Figure 13 - Support Received in Migration Preparations



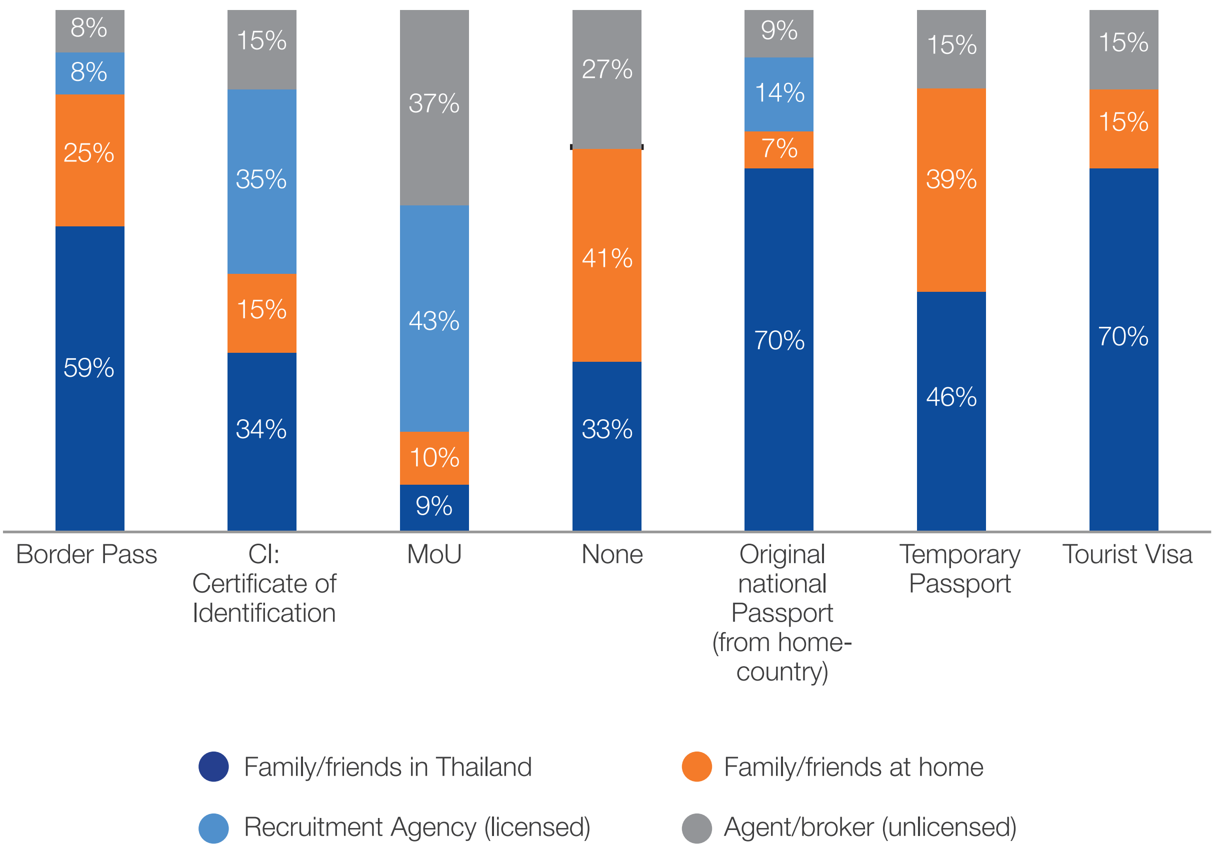
Looking at the correlation between the documentation status of migrants and actors involved, licensed recruitment agencies seemed to be commonly named as support mechanisms when the respondents held an MoU contract or a Certificate of Identification (CI), while respondents with no documentation relied heavily on the support of family and friends in both Thailand and Myanmar, as well as that of unlicensed brokers.

Figure 14 - Actors Involved in the Migration Preparations



Although both population groups mainly received support in arranging transportation, employment, accommodation and documentation, the distributions between the two samples varied. Most respondents named more than one area where they received support. Incoming migrants reported having received support in making employment arrangements (67%), as well as with transportation (57%), accommodation (27%) and their documentation status (20%). Almost all returning migrants received transportation support (92%), in addition to support with employment (42%), finding accommodation (22%) and to a lesser extent with their documentation status (9%). When asked if there was a second actor involved in supporting preparations it can be particularly noted that in 40 per cent of the cases returning migrants named an unlicensed broker.

Figure 15 - Migration Preparation Support by Documentation Status



Picture 3 - Myanmar migrants coming off the boat to Thailand

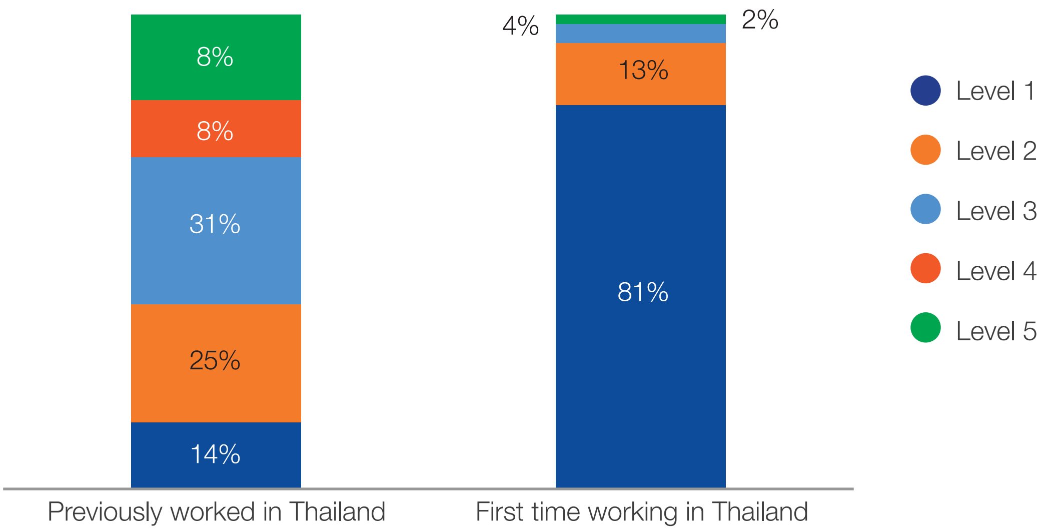
Picture 4 - DTM interview at the Mae Sot Immigration Detention Centre

Thematic Area 4 – Migrants' Vulnerabilities

The results of the second round of data collection on migrants' vulnerabilities show a number of similarities with the Round One report – for example, incoming migrants seem to have better Thai language skills than returning migrants. Although the different forms of documentation are similar in the two rounds of data collection, contract conditions seem to be better for the Round Two sample as almost all migrants saw and signed their own contracts. As in Round One, on average migrants seem to remit more money than they earn. The data also further supports the suggestion made in Round One that incoming migrants tend to underestimate the potential for problems at the workplace.

Migrants can become vulnerable at different points in their migration experience for a variety of reasons and circumstances. This study uses a number of proxies and indicators to learn more about Myanmar migrant workers' vulnerabilities. One indicator considered is the ability to communicate in Thai. Respondents were asked to rank their ability to speak, understand and read Thai from a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest level of ability). As in Round One, returning migrants rank their average Thai speaking and comprehension skills lower than incoming migrants do. Thirty-four per cent of incoming respondents ranked their speaking skills at the lowest level (1) and 31 per cent ranked their comprehension skills at the lowest level. Conversely, 70 per cent of returning migrants ranked themselves at the lowest level for speaking Thai and 65 per cent ranked themselves at the lowest level for understanding Thai. Many incoming migrants had previously worked in Thailand, and the data shows that of those incoming migrants with previous experience in Thailand a larger share ranked their speaking and understanding abilities at the medium or higher levels, with only 14 per cent ranking their speaking ability and 11 per cent ranking their understanding ability at the lowest level (see Figure 16).

Figure 16 - Thai Speaking Ability by Migration Experience (Incoming Migrants)

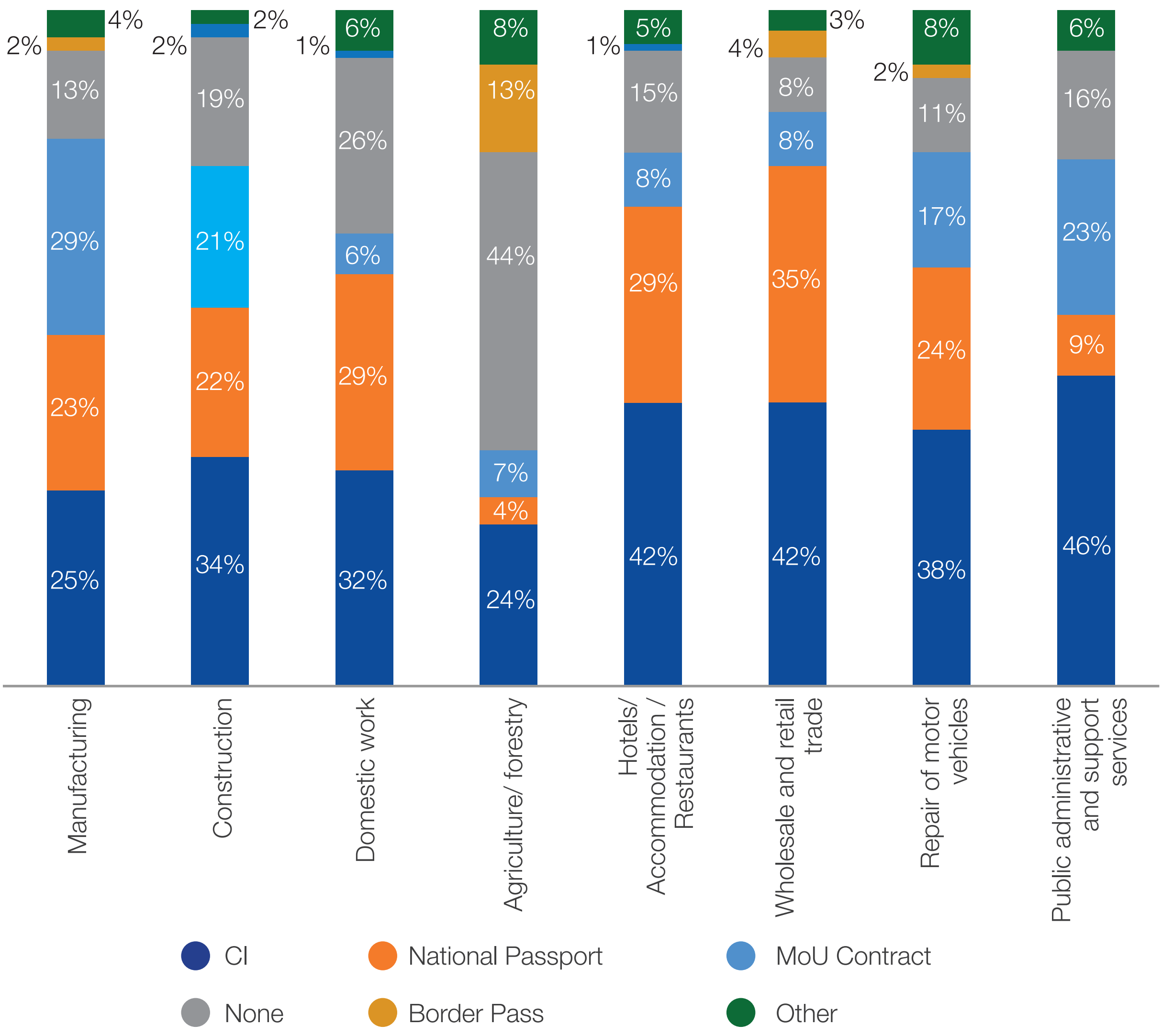


For incoming respondents, the data also shows that those originating from the border states of Kayin and Mon more frequently ranked their speaking and comprehension skills at the medium to high end. The same cannot be said for the return sample; no correlation seems to exist between language skills and the state of origin in Myanmar. Looking at the main provinces of destination for returning migrants, there also seems to be no correlation between province of destination and Thai speaking abilities.

As for the ability to read Thai, as in the Round One report, the vast majority of both samples reported being unable to read any Thai and ranked themselves at the lowest end of the scale (93% of incoming migrants; 97% of returning migrants).

A second indicator used to assess Myanmar workers' vulnerability is access to legal status in Thailand. Incoming migrants most commonly reported having a Certificate of Identification, or CI (39%), a national passport (28%) or holding an MoU contract (20%). Only four per cent claimed not to have proper documents for working in Thailand. For the return sample, the largest share did not have any documents (58%), followed by those with a CI (16%) and those holding an MoU contract (11%). As explained in the Round One report and in the limitations section of this report, this result should be viewed with caution, as it is most likely biased by the fact that 70 per cent of returning migrants were interviewed in Mae Sot's Immigration Detention Centre (IDC), before their return/deportation to Myanmar. Of those surveyed in the IDC, 79 per cent lacked documentation.

Figure 17 - Documentation Status by Employment Sector

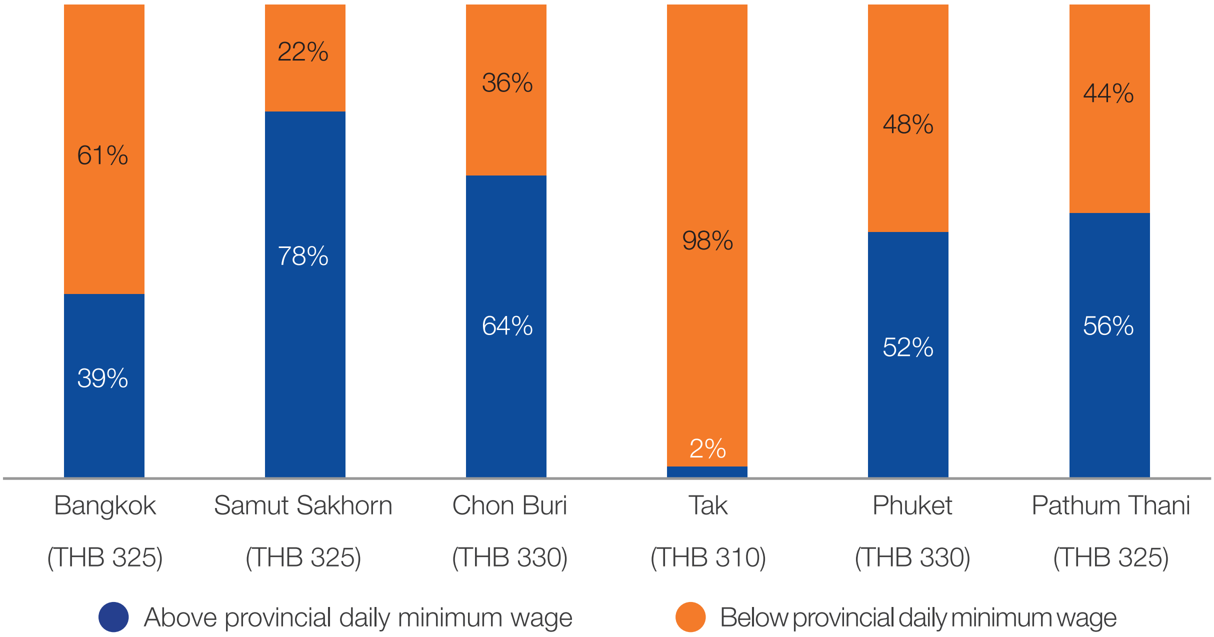


Looking at the different forms of documentation in relation to different employment sectors, the data shows that agriculture seems to be the sector where migrants most often do not have proper documentation (44%), followed by domestic work (26%). MoU contracts seem to be regularly held in the manufacturing (29%) and public administration sectors (23%). While the Certificate of Identification is prominent in all employment sectors, the public administration (46%), wholesale and retail (42%), and hotel/accommodation/restaurant (42%) industries have the highest shares of migrants holding a CI.

Migrant workers that reported holding an MoU contract or a pink card were asked some follow-up questions about their employment contracts. These questions were limited to this sub-sample as the other documents are not necessarily linked to holding a work permit or employment contract.

The sub-sample of 571 migrants was asked if they had ever seen their employment contracts. Unlike in Round One where almost one quarter of respondents had not seen their employment contract, the share is much smaller in the Round Two results, namely only 6 per cent. Of the 94 per cent that reported having seen their employment contract, 98 per cent also reported having signed the contract themselves. Ninety-two per cent indicated that they signed the contract in more than one language. The majority had signed their contract in both Myanmar language and Thai (81%). In order to gain more information about potential exploitation and misconduct by agents, returning migrants were also asked if the name on their original contract matched the name of the first employer they worked for. Of the sub-sample (80 individuals), 11 per cent reported that the names did not match, while another 6 per cent were not willing to answer the question.

Figure 18 - Daily Wages by Province in Thailand (Returning Migrants)

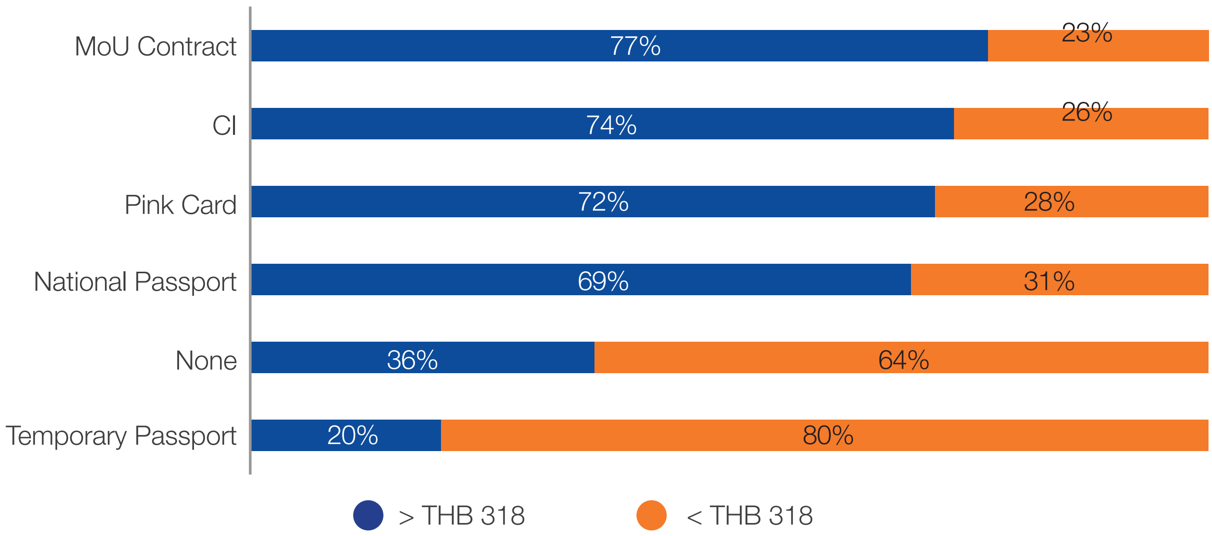


Working conditions and contract conditions can also be used as indicators for potential vulnerabilities at the work place. Each respondent was asked if they knew their daily wage before starting employment. The majority in both samples knew their daily wages beforehand (91% for incoming migrants; 85% for returning migrants). On average, incoming migrants expected to be paid THB 352 a day while returning migrants reported that on average they earned THB 322 a day. These results largely correspond with Round One results. Taking the median minimum wage of THB 318, 49 per cent of the return sample reported having earned wages below this amount. The daily minimum wage however varies depending on the province in Thailand. Taking the main provinces of destination in Thailand individually and correlating them with their respective minimum wage provides a clearer and more detailed picture. As Figure 18 shows, the clear majority of respondents working in Tak reported wages below the provincial minimum wage, as did respondents returning from Bangkok. Migrants returning from Chon Buri and Samut Sakhon reported, on average, higher wages than the provincial daily minimum wage.[4]

4 It needs to be acknowledged that this analysis might not be entirely accurate since returning migrants often named several provinces in Thailand where they worked, therefore sometimes it is not possible to assign the daily wage to the exact province in Thailand Some of the results should also not be over-interpreted due to small sample sizes (e.g. Phuket or Pathum Thani)

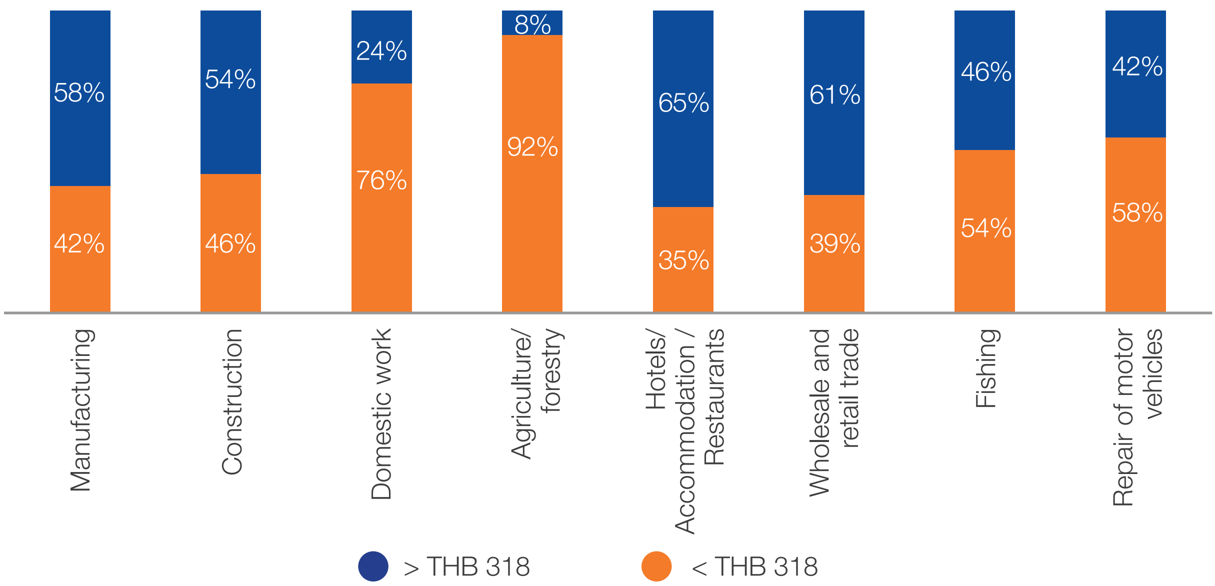
The relationship between receiving the minimum wage and documentation can also provide some crucial insight into the working and living conditions of migrant workers and where they might be most vulnerable. As migrants worked across different provinces in Thailand, the analysis will use the median daily wage of THB 318 as a reference. As suspected, migrants that reported not holding any valid documentation are more likely to be paid below the median minimum wage. Holding an MoU contract or a Certificate of Identification (CI) seems to increase the chances of receiving wages above THB 318.[5]

Figure 19 - Daily Wages by Documentation Status (Returning Migrants)



As in Round One, the data shows that migrants working in sectors like agriculture/forestry and domestic work often reported wages below the median minimum daily wage. Employment industries such as hotel/ accommodation/ restaurants and wholesale/ retail seem to be better paying sectors. A little over half of migrants working in construction and manufacturing jobs reported being paid above THB 318 as seen in Figure 20.[6]

Figure 20 - Median Minimum Wage by Employment Sector

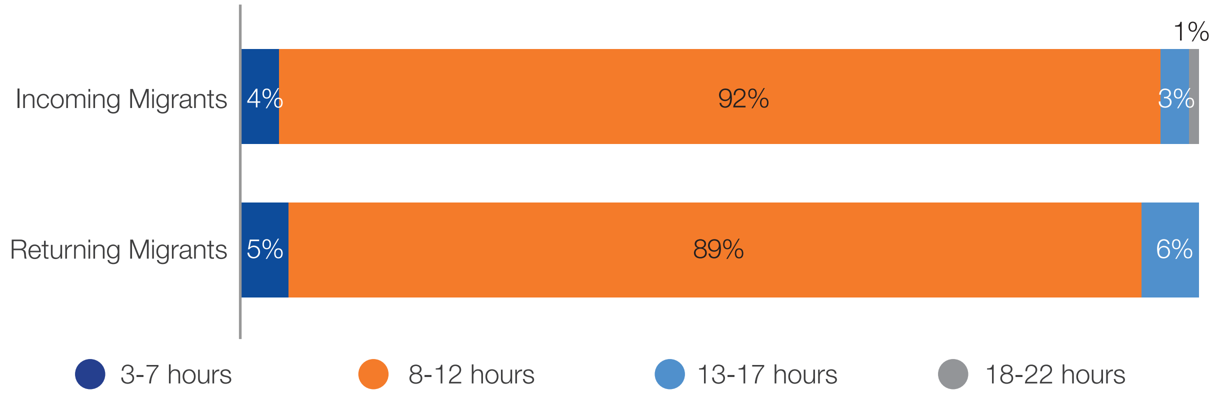


5 Some of the results should not be over-interpreted due to small sample sizes (e.g. Pink Card or Temporary Passport)

6 Some of the results should not be over-interpreted due to small sample sizes (e.g. wholesale and retail, fishing or repair of motor vehicles)

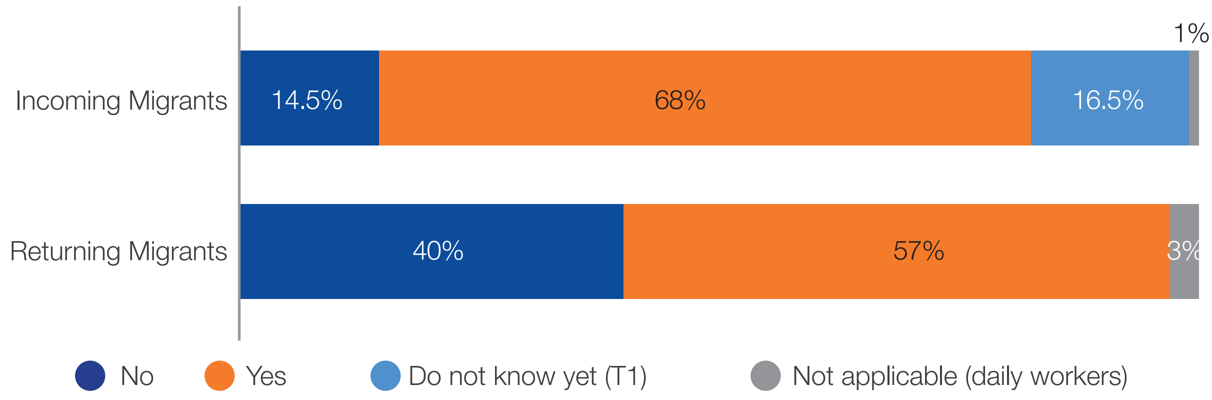
As identified during Round One, 89 per cent of the return sample confirmed that their expected and actual wages matched. Nine per cent stated that the actual wage was lower than expected. A similar question was asked about daily working hours. For both samples, the vast majority expected and actually worked between eight and twelve hours a day. Ninety-two per cent of incoming migrants expected to work between eight and twelve hours a day, and 89 per cent of the return sample reported that they had worked on average between eight and twelve hours a day.

Figure 21 - Average Daily Working Hours by Population Group



With regard to remittances, incoming migrants seem to have concrete plans to send remittances back to Myanmar once they arrive in Thailand. When asked if they planned to send remittances, 68 per cent answered affirmatively. Another 16 per cent were not yet sure whether they would have the means to send money back, and 14 per cent said that they would not send any money. This figure is slightly higher than the percentage of the return sample that reported they were able to send money back to Myanmar during their stay in Thailand (57%). Forty per cent clearly stated that they were not able to send any money home at all. The average amounts that migrants intended to remit or reported to have remitted largely match the numbers from the Round One report. Incoming migrants indicated on average that in the upcoming six months they planned to remit around 650 USD (USD 108 per month), while the 57 per cent of the return sample that had sent back remittances indicated an average amount of USD 200 per month.

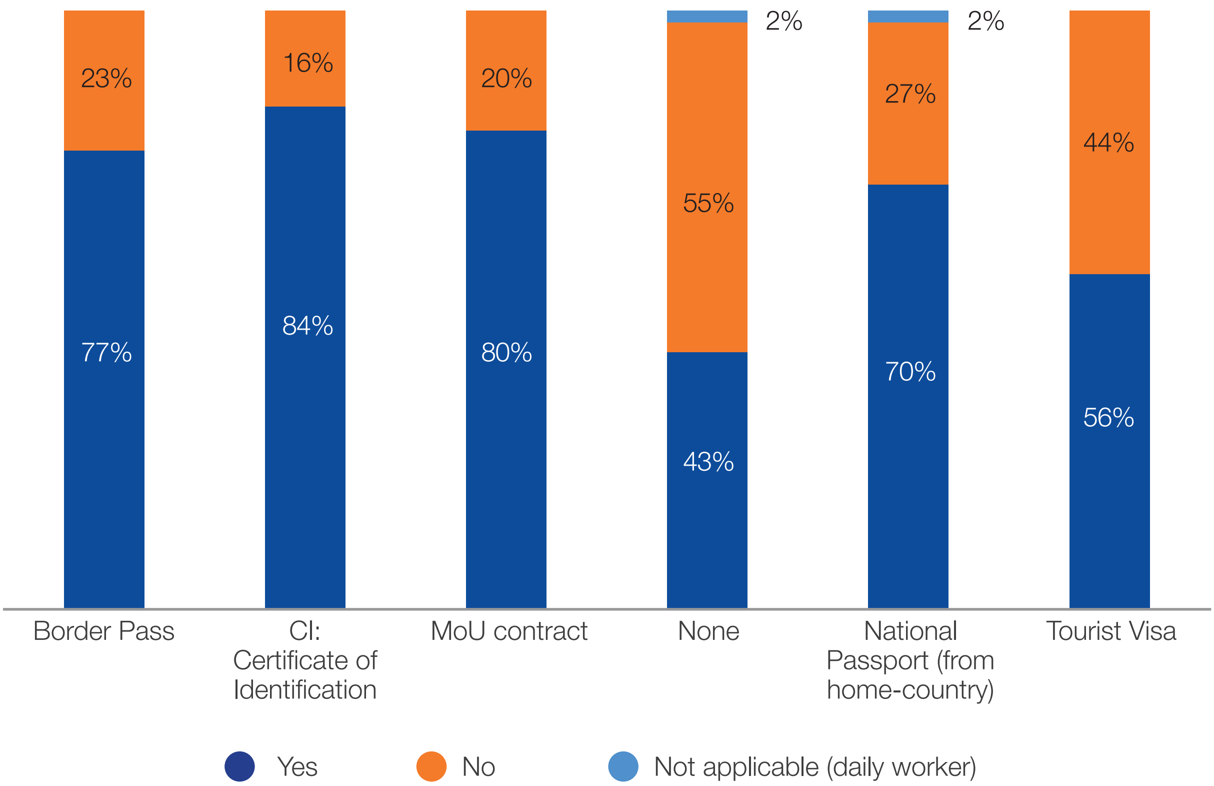
Figure 22 - Remittance Sending by Population Group



As the data shows, the average amount of remittances sent per month is well above the average monthly income. Looking at the influence of the different employment sectors on the amount of money remitted, a positive correlation can be established. It appears that respondents reporting having sent remittance while working in the agriculture/forestry sector tended to remit, on average, lower remittances, while of those that remitted money and worked in the tourist/accommodation/food service industry remitted higher amounts. These results should not be over-interpreted, however, since the sub-samples for migrants remitting money in these employment sectors is not representative of the sample as a whole.

As identified in the first section on demographic profiles, over 80 per cent of the overall sample (and 85% of returning migrants) reported having at least one child still living in Myanmar. Having children in Myanmar might seem to increase the likelihood of sending remittances back home, however the data from the second round of data analysis shows that having children in Myanmar does not seem to be a determining factor in remittance-sending behaviour. However, migrants with a regular migration status appear to be significantly more likely to send back remittances than those with no documentation (see Figure 23).

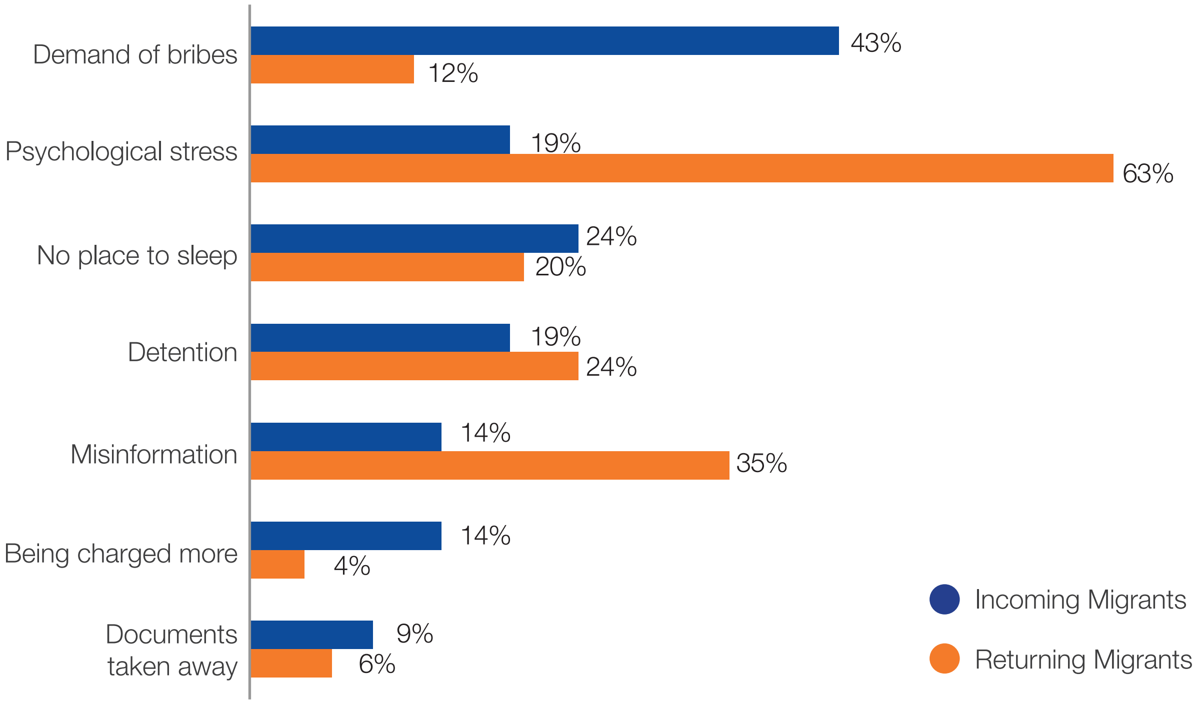
Figure 23 - Remittance Sending by Documentation Status (Returning Migrants)



Taking the median minimum daily wage of THB 318 and cross-relating it to the likelihood of sending remittances home, the data shows that for the share of returning migrants that sent back remittances, 60 per cent earned above the median minimum wage, while of those respondents that did not send back remittances, 62 per cent earned below the medium minimum wage. However, the data does not indicate any correlation between sending back remittances and having borrowed money for the migration journey.

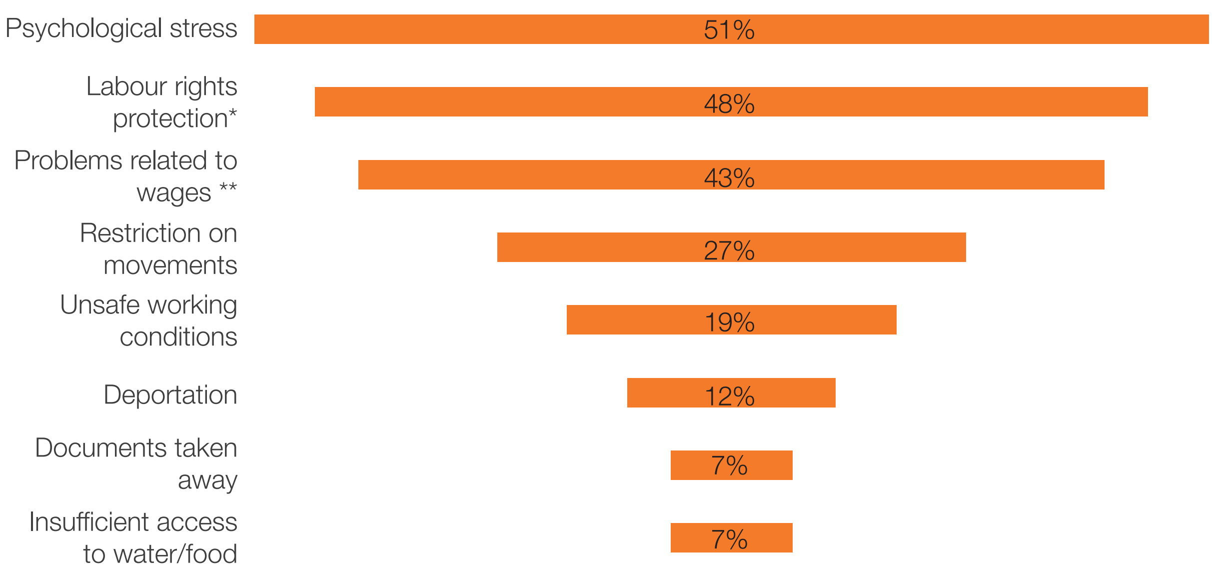
To better understand migrant workers' vulnerabilities, the respondents were asked directly if they had faced any problems during their journey to Thailand (or journey so far, for incoming migrants), as well as about problems at the workplace. Incoming migrants were asked about their expectations of problems at the workplace. Only 5 percent of incoming migrants reported facing problems during their journey, compared to 17 percent of the return sample. This differs from Round One findings where across both samples a very low share reported problems. Looking at the problems reported, differences can be observed between the two samples (see Figure 24).

Figure 24 - Problems en Route by Population Group



As already identified in the Round One report, in the case of problems at the workplace, there are apparent differences between incoming and returning migrants. As in Round One, only five percent of incoming migrants expect to face problems at their workplace. However, 35 percent of the return sample reported having faced problems. This discrepancy is surprising as 90 percent of incoming migrants reported prior work experience in Thailand, and could therefore be expected to be more attuned to potential problems. Looking at the main problems reported by returning migrants, they range from problems related to wages (illegal wage deductions or being paid below the minimum wage), to labour rights protection (having no holidays or no regular breaks) to problems related to unsafe working conditions and health issues (see Figure 25).

Figure 25 - Problems at Workplace (Returning Migrants)

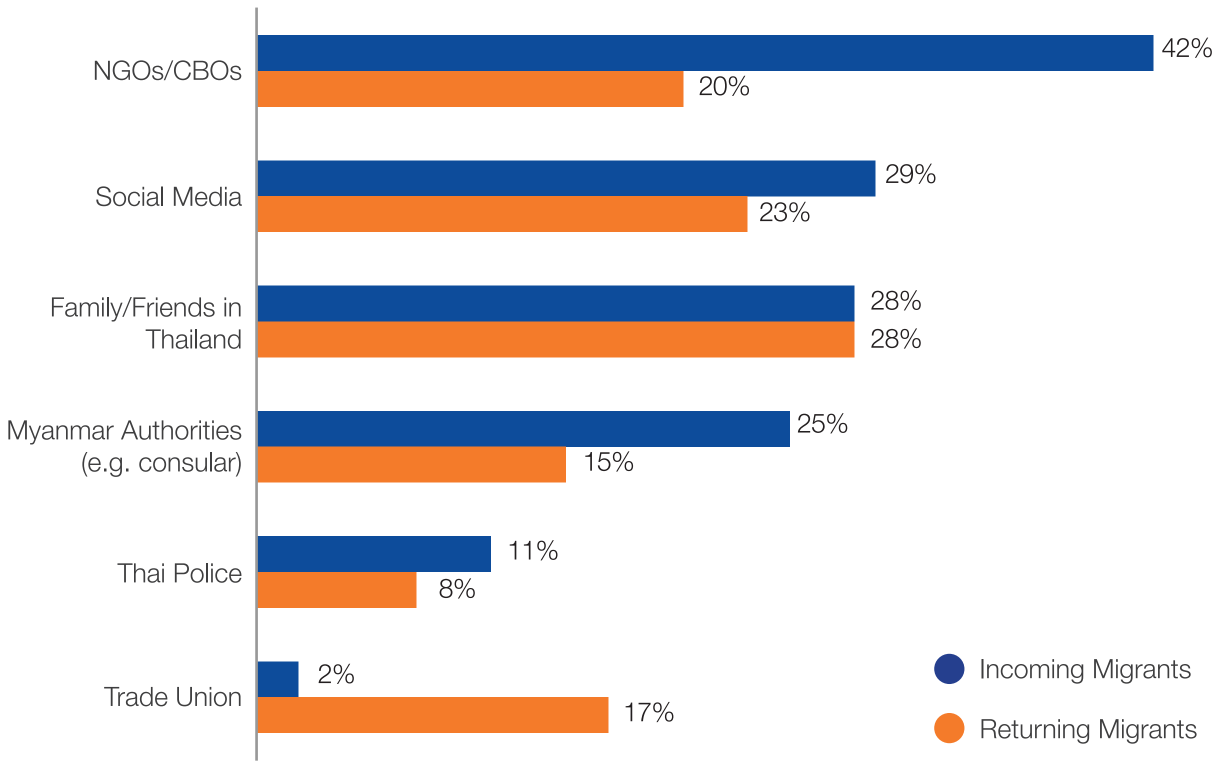


* Labour rights protection includes: long working hours, no breaks and no holidays

** Problems related to wages include: paid below minimum wage, illegal wage deductions, wages being withheld and irregular pay

To overcome these challenges, proper support systems need to be in place. Migrants were asked if they knew of any support mechanisms in case of problems in Thailand. Similar to the results observed in the Round One report, 40 per cent of incoming migrants reported knowing actors who could help them in case of need. The share was slightly lower for returning migrants at only 34 per cent. There does not seem to be any positive relationship between gender and being aware of support mechanisms in Thailand in case of facing problems. Figure 26 below shows the main support mechanisms known by population group. NGO/CBOs, as well as social media and family or friends in Thailand seem to be the most common actors migrants would turn to for support.

Figure 26 - Main Known Support Mechanism in Thailand by Population Group



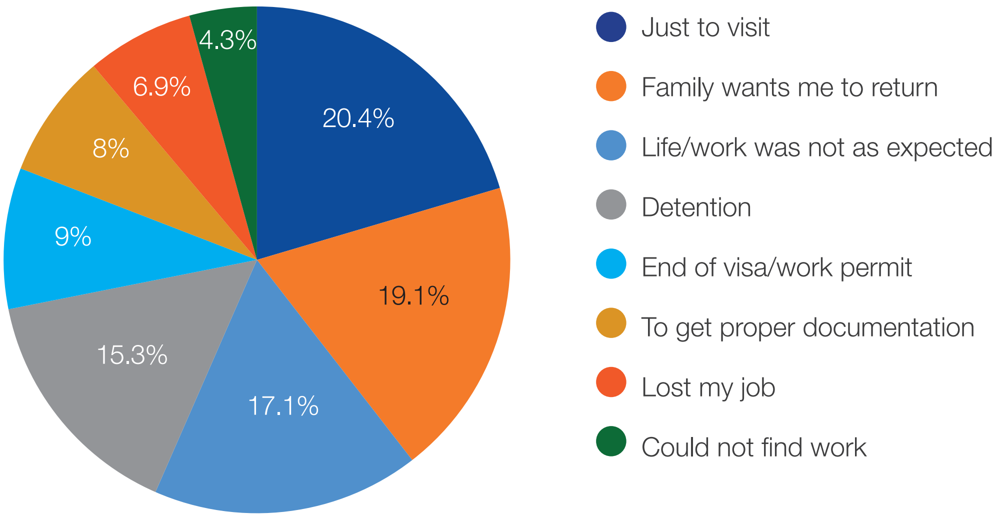
With regard to the return sample, when asked if they had received the support needed when faced with problems, only 53 per cent answered affirmatively. Twenty-five per cent acknowledged receiving partial support, 16 per cent did not want to answer the question and four per cent said they did not receive the required support. Women reported having received support when they asked for it slightly more often than men did (56% vs 49%).

Thematic Area 5 – Return

The results of the second round of data collection on return to Myanmar show that the sample seem to be anticipating more challenges upon return than respondents from the first round, although the nature of these challenges remains largely the same. Fewer migrants than during the first round expressed an intention to migrate again in the near future. Although in general migrants seemed to have improved their financial and savings situations through migration, the share with positive outcomes is smaller than that identified in the Round One sample.

In addition to being asked their reason for return, respondents were asked if they expected to face challenges upon return to Myanmar. Only 37 per cent of respondents did not expect to face any challenges upon return, compared to 65 per cent in the Round One report. The remaining 73 per cent who expected challenges named problems related to their mental health (32%), finding a job (16%), their physical health (10%) finding housing (9%) and the repayment of debt (6%).

Figure 27 - Reasons for Return (Returning Migrants)



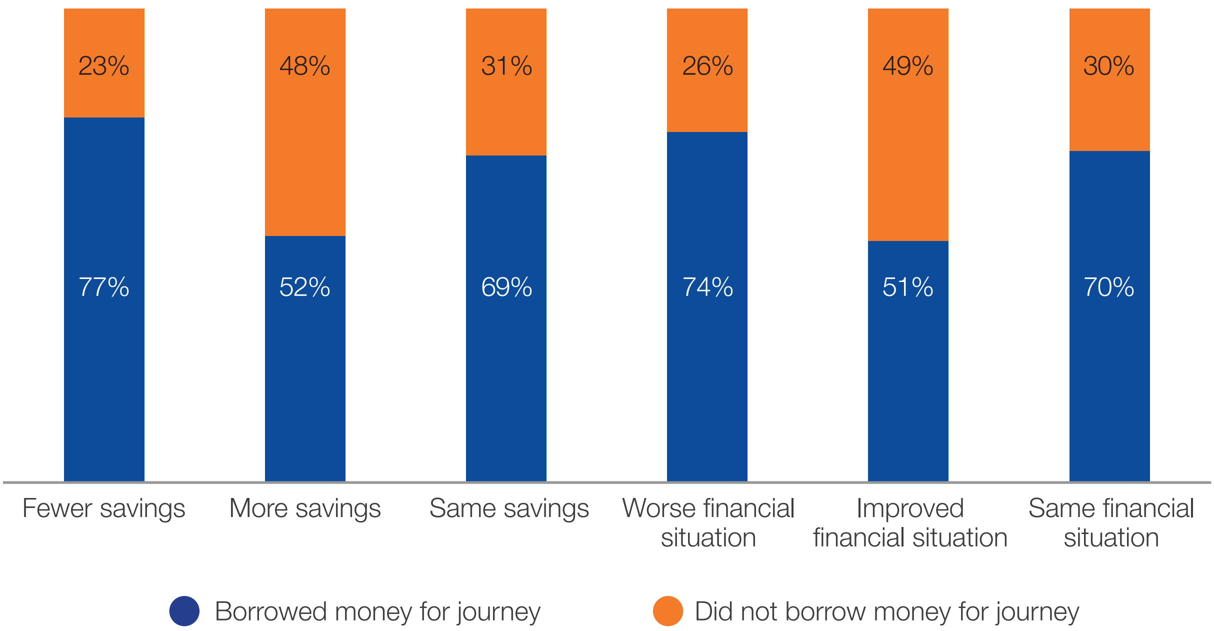
In addition to being asked their reason for return, respondents were asked if they expected to face challenges upon return to Myanmar. Only 37 per cent of respondents did not expect to face any challenges upon return, compared to 65 per cent in the Round One report. The remaining 73 per cent who expected challenges named problems related to their mental health (32%), finding a job (16%), their physical health (10%) finding housing (9%) and the repayment of debt (6%).

The share of migrants that considered migrating again was slightly lower in this sample (32%) than in the Round One data (41%). Another 49 per cent said they are not considering migrating again, and 19 per cent were uncertain about their future migration plans. Of the 32 per cent that wanted to migrate again, 97 per cent reported that they would return to Thailand, while two per cent named Malaysia and one percent did not yet know where they wanted to go to next. As for their reasons for migrating again, 48 per cent cited better job opportunities, 47 per cent referred higher wages and 32 per cent also mentioned family and friends still being in Thailand.[7]

7 Respondents could choose multiple reasons, which is why these percentages add up to more than 100%.

As previous research has shown, migrants can incur debt through their migration experience, often by failing to anticipate certain costs or by expecting to earn more money than they actually do. The survey therefore included a few simple questions on the respondents' financial situations upon return. Although Round Two data shows that overall the general financial and savings situations of returning migrants improved, the results are not as overly positive as in the Round One report. The majority (61%) still reported that their general savings situation had improved through migration, though 16 per cent also reported that their savings had depleted, and 16 per cent said that it had stayed the same; the remaining 7 per cent did not want to answer the question. Regarding their general financial situation, 57 per cent of the return sample reported that their situation had improved, however almost one quarter (21%) reported that it had gotten worse and 16 per cent indicated that it had remained the same; the remaining 6 per cent did not feel comfortable answering the question. When asked why their financial situation had deteriorated, 69 per cent reported that they were not able to make enough money with their job in Thailand, 40 per cent also named debts and 20 per cent said they were not able to find a good enough job. As mentioned before, borrowing money can often have a negative impact on a migrant's overall financial situation as they might not have anticipated certain costs or have expected to earn more money than they actually did. Looking at the sub-sample with fewer savings after migration and whose overall financial situation deteriorated, the data suggests a positive correlation between borrowing money and worse financial outcomes.

Figure 28 - Status of Savings and Financial Situation by Having Borrowed Money for the Migration Journey



As Figure 28 shows, on average, migrants who indicated having fewer savings, as well as being financially worse off after migration, also seemed more likely to have borrowed money for their journey to Thailand. Of those that reported having the same level of savings and that their financial situation had remained the same, the sample suggests that they were also more likely to have borrowed money for their migration journey.

Picture 5 - A woman waiting at the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge

Conclusion

Summary of Findings

The results of this second round of data collection are useful in providing further empirical data to confirm and, at times, challenge anecdotal knowledge and preconceptions about cross border movements and labour migration between Thailand and Myanmar. Having multiple rounds of data collection makes it possible to compare data gathered at different points in time, and to confirm or challenge previously identified findings.

The data collection activity in Tak province took place in Mae Sot and Phop Phra districts within a timeframe of two months. A total of 3,198 Myanmar migrants were surveyed, of whom 2,416 were incoming migrants and 782 were returning migrants. A total of 2,973 surveys were collected in the district of Mae Sot and 225 surveys in the district of Phop Phra.

Migrants' Profiles

The sample's sex ratio was slightly uneven with 58 per cent of male respondents. As identified during the first round of data collection, respondents tended to be married with an average age of 30 years and either primary or secondary school education. The average preferred length of stay in Thailand was over a year, although migrants coming through Phop Phra tend to stay for shorter periods of time. The main provinces of destination correspond to the Round One findings, namely Bangkok, Samut Sakhon, Chon Buri and Tak. Kayin and Mon State, together with the Bago East region remain the main migrant sending states within Myanmar.

Drivers of Migration

A little under a quarter of the sample was unemployed before coming to Thailand, and of those that reported being unemployed a large portion were younger in age. Employment was also the main reason reported for coming to Thailand, and the data shows that migration seems to be cyclical in nature as a large share of migrants had worked in Thailand before (especially among the sub-sample of incoming migrants). Thailand was reported as the preferred country of destination in the region because of the perceived ease of geographical access, as well as the ease of access to its employment market. Migrants received information about life in Thailand primarily through family and friends living in Thailand.

Pre-migration Preparations and Arrangements

As identified in Round One, migrants prefer to arrange employment before coming to Thailand, primarily through the help of family or friends in Thailand. The employment sectors of manufacturing and construction are particularly popular. Returning migrants had, on average, paid more than twice as much as incoming migrants in migration costs, which can be attributed to the fact that returning migrants had travelled further into Thailand. Returning migrants more frequently reported having borrowed money from a variety of different actors, while incoming migrants relied more heavily on their savings and income. Returning migrants also tended to have received more support in their migration arrangements, especially from family and friends in both Myanmar and Thailand and through unlicensed brokers. Migrants without documentation or those travelling through the MoU process most frequently used unlicensed brokers. Support was especially needed with arranging transportation, as well as with finding employment, accommodation and to a lesser extent with supporting documentation.

Migrants' Vulnerabilities

On average, migrants ranked their skills in speaking, understanding and especially reading Thai as relatively low. Of those incoming migrants who had previously lived in Thailand, a larger share ranked their speaking and understanding abilities at the medium to high levels. In terms of documentation status, those in the agriculture and domestic work sectors were more likely not to have proper documentation. MoU contracts seemed to be predominantly held in the manufacturing and public administration sectors. Respondents that worked in Tak overwhelmingly reported wages below the provincial minimum wage as did a majority of respondents returning from Bangkok. Migrants returning from Chon Buri and Samut Sakhon reported, on average, higher wages than the provincial daily minimum wage. Migrants that worked in sectors like agriculture/forestry and domestic work reported wages below the median minimum wage while employment industries such as hotel/ accommodation/ restaurants and wholesale/ retail seem to be higher paying sectors. Returning migrants reported having sent, on average, USD 200 in remittances home per month. Looking at different factors influencing remittance-sending behaviour, the data shows that having children in Myanmar does not seem to be a determining factor in sending back remittances, however migrants with proper documentation appear to be more likely to send remittances than those with no documentation, as do migrants earning above the median minimum wage. Incoming migrants reported fewer problems during the journey than returning migrants and had low expectations of problems at the workplace in Thailand. In contrast, 35 per cent of returning migrants reported having faced at least one challenge at the workplace.

Return

Almost two thirds of the return sample expected to face challenges upon their return, mostly associated with their mental or physical health, as well as with finding a job. Fewer reported wanting to migrate again than in Round One, however those with the intention to migrate again primarily wanted to return to Thailand citing better job opportunities and higher wages. For roughly half of the returning migrants, their savings and general financial situation improved through migration. For those that reported that their financial situation deteriorated, the main reasons were attributed to not making enough money in Thailand or to accumulating debt. There seems to be a positive correlation between borrowing money for the migration journey and worse financial outcomes.

Next steps

The findings presented in this report examine the second round of data collected under IOM Thailand's flow monitoring activities in Tak province. A third and final round of data collection will take place from mid-October to mid-December 2018. Having three rounds of data collection will help to verify findings and control for robustness of results. A final report will be published in early 2019, considering not only the results of the third round of data collection, but also presenting a comprehensive overview of the full six months of data collected

IOM Thailand
18th Floor, Rajanakarn Building
3 South Sathorn Road
Bangkok 10120

Tel: (+66) 2-343-9300
Fax: (+66) 2-343-9399
Email: iomthailand@iom.int
Website: www.iom.int