

FLOW MONITORING FINDINGS: PROFILES OF MYANMAR NATIONALS CROSSING INTO THAILAND

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)
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INTRODUCTION

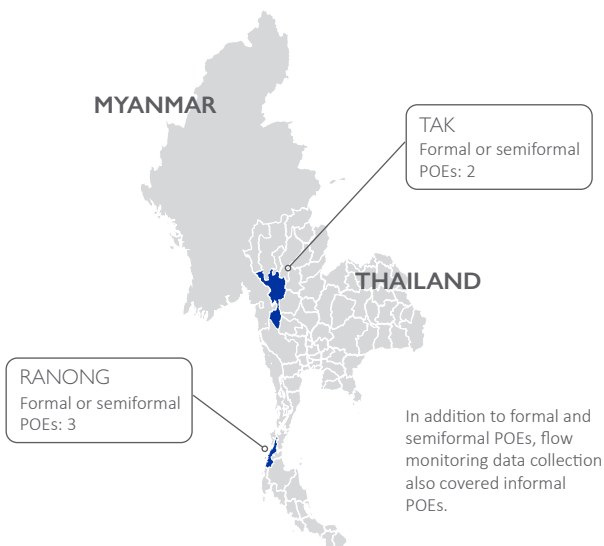
SCOPE

To gain a better understanding of the mobility dynamics and vulnerabilities of Myanmar nationals entering Thailand, IOM Thailand’s initiated flow monitoring activities at key points of entry (POEs) in Tak and Ranong provinces at the beginning of 2023 using IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) tools. Flow monitoring is designed to track the scale and characteristics of human mobility along the border, including the volume, intended destinations, reasons for movement, intended lengths of stay, and expectations about work sectors and conditions. The activity 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.

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 and Ranong were chosen due to pre-existing information indicating that the two provinces experience a substantial volume of entries.

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 June 2023, IOM MDRU interviewed a total of 3,091 incoming Myanmar nationals to Thailand, with 1,179 interviewed in Tak province and 1,912 in Ranong province.

LIMITATIONS

The information in this report relates only to Myanmar nationals who have crossed at assessed border points in Tak and Ranong 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. 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. Finally, due to changes in the survey tool that allowed for more accurate determination of respondents’ documentation status, statistics on documentation throughout the report are derived only from a subset of the total survey population; those who were interviewed with the new survey tool once it was implemented in May – June 2023.

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	
NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	3,091
% Women	61%
% Men	39%
Average age	38 years
TAK	
NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	1,179
% Women	65%
% Men	35%
Average age	38 years
RANONG	
NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	1,912
% Women	59%
% Men	41%
Average age	37 years

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 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.

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 week¹, 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 and Ranong sees frequent circular movements between the two countries, resulting in most respondents being short-term arrivals (82%). 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 LONG-TERM ENTRIES

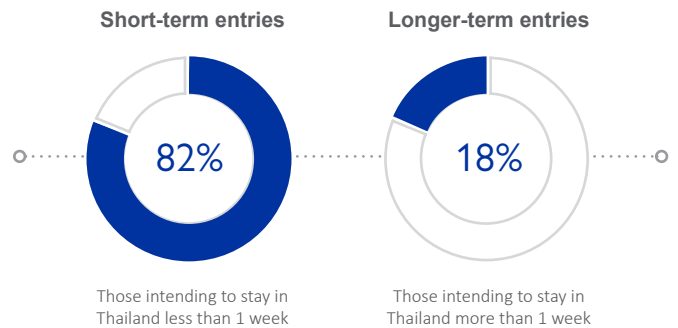


PHOTO Border crossing point on the Moei river. © IOM 2022/Sonia BLUE

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

Those entering Thailand for less than one week (short-term arrivals) make up the bulk of entries in both Tak and Ranong. Short-term arrivals tend to stay in the province where they crossed and do not travel further into Thailand: nearly 100 per cent of respondents in Tak and 92 per cent in Ranong. Main origin states among respondents in Tak include Kayin (88%), with which Tak shares the entire length of its border, Mon (4%), just west of Kayin, and Yangon (3%), the region hosting Myanmar’s largest city. Among respondents in Ranong, main origin states include Tanintharyi (79%), which shares the Kra Buri river with Ranong, Yangon (15%), and Rakhine (4%), in western Myanmar.

In both provinces, reasons for movement were primarily to visit friends or family (48%), conduct trade (41%), 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 50%) than to only sell items (17%), with 33 per cent doing both. In Ranong, 16 per cent of respondents reported being motivated by Thailand’s better cost of living (compared to only 3% in Tak), whilst eight per cent reported crossing for employment (compared to 4% in Tak). Although the phenomenon of children crossing the border on a frequent short-term basis to access education has been observed in other key-informant based data collection exercises, this was

not captured by the flow monitoring activity, as only people over 18 years old were interviewed.

Respondents were also asked about repeat movements across the border. A third (33%) of respondents 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. Ten per cent of respondents reported visiting friends or family in Thailand at least once a month on average, with a further 41 per cent having come to Thailand for the same reason in the past year but less frequently. Repeat movements were also driven by accessing healthcare, for which 17 per cent of respondents reported crossing the border in the past year.

Overall, many short-term arrivals (66%) did not possess any documentation allowing them to stay in Thailand. Among those with documentation, 13 per cent held documentation allowing longer-term stays, such as passports with visas, non-Thai identification cards, or labour cards. A further 21 per cent held documentation that allows only short-term stays, like a border pass.

2,339 SHORT-TERM RESPONDENTS TOTAL

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

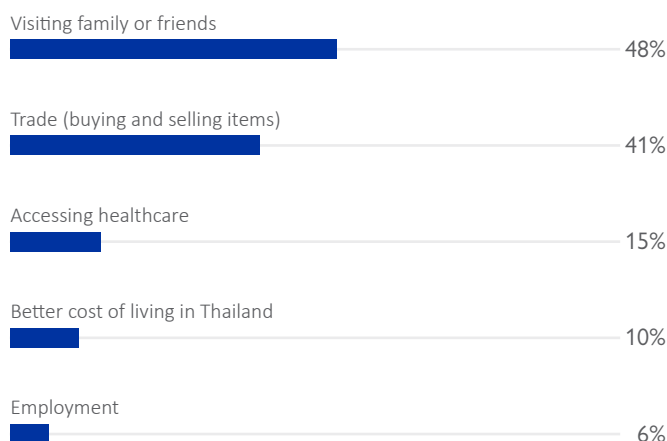


FIGURE 3: DOCUMENTATION STATUS AMONG SHORT-TERM RESPONDENTS



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. In Ranong, respondents were more likely to indicate that they planned to stay in Thailand for over a year (58%), while those in Tak were more often uncertain about their length of stay, with 54 per cent responding “I do not know” when asked. In both provinces, however, those planning to stay for less than one year made up less than 20 per cent of longer-term arrival respondents.

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 (54%), with family crossings being more common in Ranong (57%) than in Tak (40%). In both provinces, women respondents were more likely to be traveling with children than men (60% compared to 49% overall). Most respondents were engaged or married (67%) and around a quarter were single (27%).

39 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.

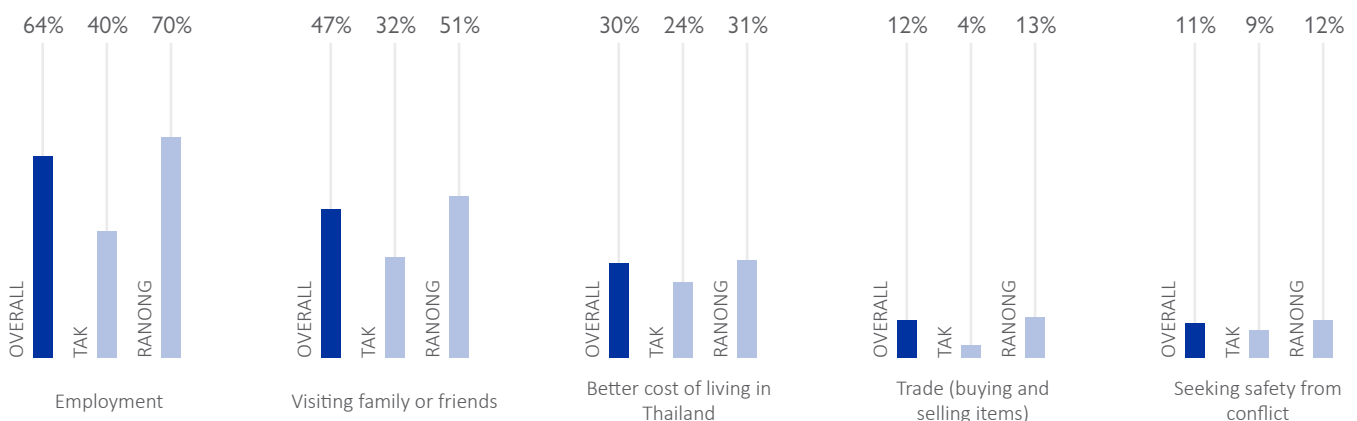


Reasons for migration were more diverse among longer-term arrivals compared to short-term arrivals, with employment being the most prominent reason (64%). Visiting friends or family was also cited by nearly half (47%) of respondents, whilst Thailand’s better cost of living (30%), trade (12%), and conflict (11%) also motivated movements. Discrimination (8%) and crime (8%) were further factors motivating movement to Thailand, cited primarily among respondents in Ranong. Reasons related to safety (conflict, discrimination, and crime) are not only more common among longer-term arrivals (12%) compared to short-term (1%), but also, are 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 four times more likely to indicate conflict as a reason for migration compared to other longer-term respondents. In Tak, they were nine times more likely. Notably, women in Tak were more likely to cite conflict compared to men (13% compared to 2%) while the reverse was true for Ranong (6% compared to 17%). 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.

Among respondents who reported entering Thailand in the past, reasons for repeat movements across the border were most commonly employment and visiting friends or family, though safety and health were also important motivators.

752 LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS TOTAL

FIGURE 4: MAIN REASONS FOR MIGRATION AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS*



Longer-term arrivals were less likely than short-term arrivals to be undocumented, but 43 per cent of longer-term respondents were found to lack documentation, accounting for nearly half (46%) of respondents in Ranong and nearly a quarter (23%) in Tak. At the same time, 47 per cent of respondents 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 (41% compared to 30%), respondents in Tak were significantly more likely to hold other types of long-term documentation (33% compared to 3%), especially non-Thai identification cards (29%). Those who did not know how long they would be staying in Thailand were more likely to have short-term documentation, like a border pass, or no documentation.

Almost half (46%) 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 (86%), but brokers accounted for eight per cent of migration facilitators in Ranong and recruiters and employers accounted for six per cent. In Tak, these same proportions were two per cent and three per cent, respectively.

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 June 2023, 311,811 Myanmar nationals are officially registered under the MoU according to Thailand's Department of Employment.



FIGURE 5: DOCUMENTATION STATUS AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS

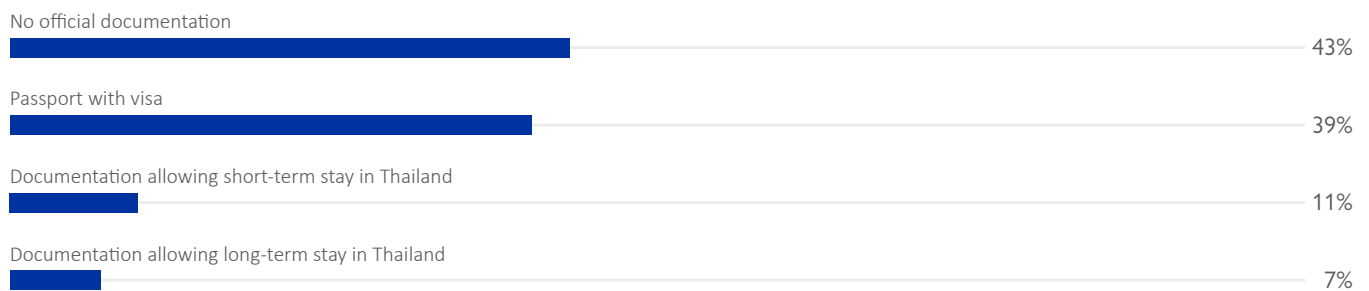
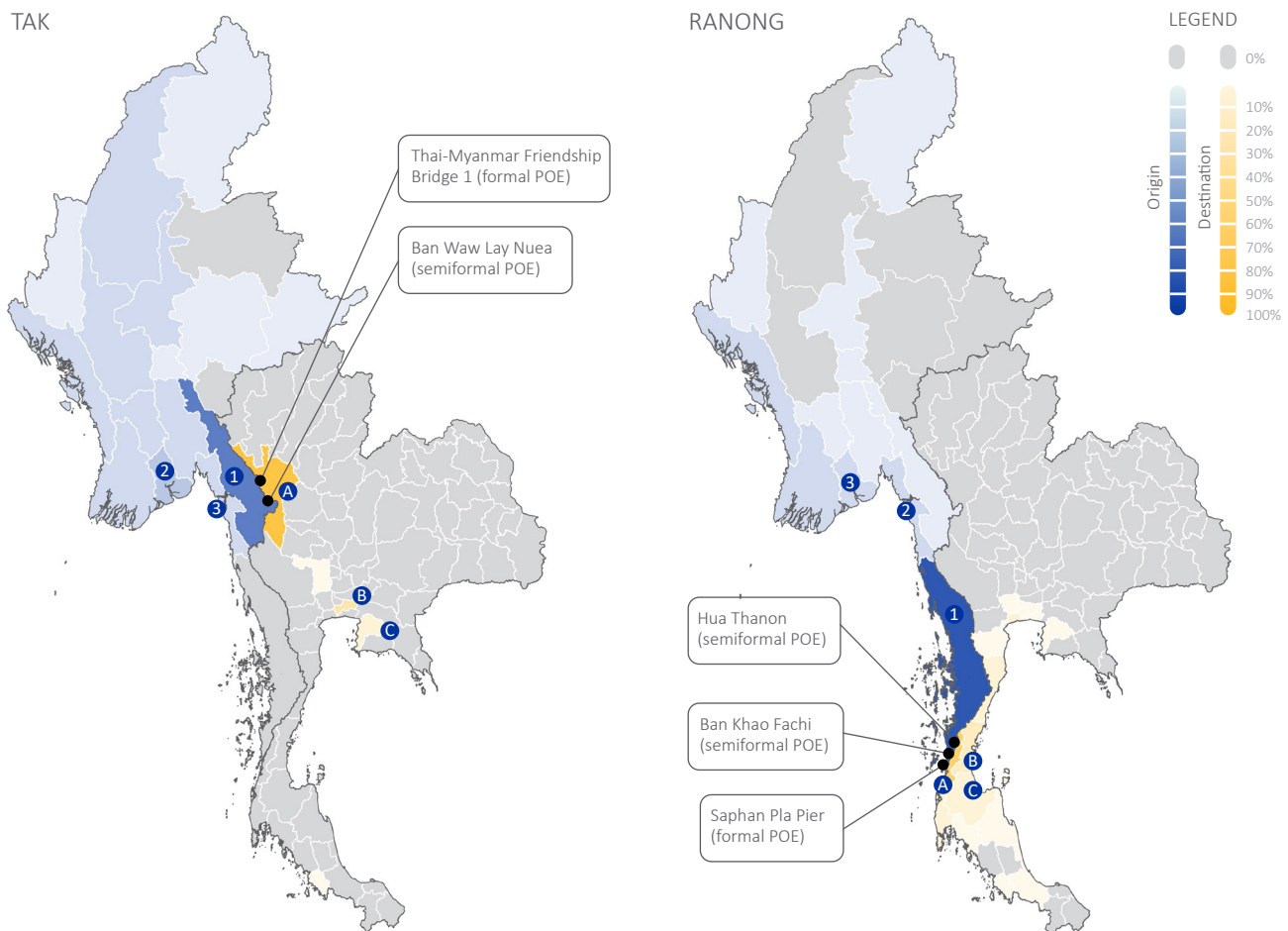


PHOTO Pak Nam checkpoint, where people must stop to register before entering Ranong through Saphan Pla POE. © IOM 2023/Somruedee KARNPHAKDEE

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.

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TAK	TOP 3 ORIGINS	TOP 3 DESTINATIONS
	1. Kayin state.....56% 2. Yangon region.....10% 3. Mon state.....9%	A. Tak province.....72% B. Bangkok province.....22% C. Chonburi province.....4%

RANONG	TOP 3 ORIGINS	TOP 3 DESTINATIONS
	1. Tanintharyi region.....79% 2. Mon state.....6% 3. Yangon region.....6%	A. Ranong province.....59% B. Chumphon province.....19% C. Surat Thani province.....7%

The following 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 (56%) while those in Ranong most often originate in Tanintharyi region (79%). For both Tak and Ranong, Yangon region and Mon state are the next most common origin locations among longer-term respondents (10% and 9%, respectively, in Tak and 6% each in Ranong).

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. Accordingly, longer-term respondents are more likely to intend to go to different provinces compared to short-term respondents. One

fifth of respondents in Tak intend to go to Bangkok (22%) and 4 per cent to Chonburi. One fourth of respondents in Ranong plan to travel to other southern provinces such as Chumphon (19%) and Surat Thani (7%).

Among respondents traveling to Bangkok and Chonburi from Tak, reasons for migration are overwhelmingly employment or Thailand's better cost of living, with a small contingent of respondents intended for Bangkok also citing safety reasons (4%). In contrast, respondents traveling to Chumphon or Surat Thani from Ranong cite more diverse reasons for migration, including visiting friends and family, accessing health, trade, and seeking safety, similar to reasons cited by those intending to stay in Ranong. They also cited employment and Thailand's better cost of living.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILES AND EXPECTATIONS

Overall, eight per cent of respondents overall reported not having any education at all. Among respondents who had attended some school, 86 per cent had not completed secondary school, with nearly half (45%) not having completed primary school either. Respondents in Tak, however, were more likely to have completed primary school (52%) compared to those in Ranong (38%), and a notable proportion had post-secondary education (9%).

When asked what their usual profession was, 35 per cent of respondents reported working in agriculture (including fishing), 17 per cent in hospitality (including working in hotels and restaurants), and 13 per cent, mainly women, said that they were usually unemployed. Additionally, 9 per cent reported usually working in construction and 8 per cent in manufacturing. An agricultural professional background was more common in Ranong (39%) compared to Tak, where respondents were more evenly distributed between hospitality (19%), agriculture (18%), and manufacturing (15%), whilst 18 per cent indicated usually being unemployed.

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 (46%) of respondents were planning to work in agriculture, followed by hospitality (17%) and construction (12%). While men and women in Ranong intended to work in agriculture in near equal proportions (46% and 45%), intention to work in hospitality was more highly represented among women (25%) compared to men (11%), while the reverse was true for construction (18% among men and 3% among women). Respondents in Tak, on the other hand, were more likely to plan to work in manufacturing (40%), particularly women (41%). A notable proportion of women were also pursuing domestic work (18%). Men, on the other hand, were distributed mainly between agriculture (26%), construction (22%), and manufacturing (22%).

FIGURE 6: EDUCATION LEVELS AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS

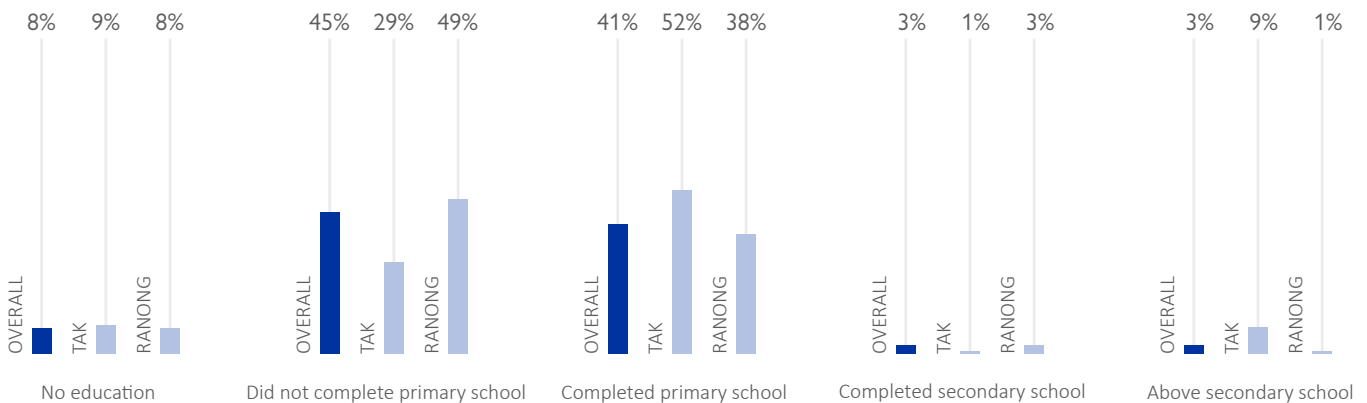


TABLE 2: MAIN WORK SECTORS OF LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS PRIOR TO ARRIVAL IN THAILAND

	OVERALL	TAK	RANONG
Agriculture	35%	18%	39%
Construction	9%	7%	10%
Domestic work	3%	4%	3%
Hospitality	17%	19%	16%
Manufacturing	8%	15%	6%
None (unemployed)	13%	18%	12%

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

	OVERALL	TAK	RANONG
Agriculture	43%	18%	46%
Construction	13%	16%	12%
Domestic work	3%	9%	2%
Hospitality	16%	13%	17%
Manufacturing	11%	31%	9%
Unknown	9%	9%	9%

Regarding their expected wages, those indicating employment as a reason for movement in Tak estimated they would earn around 370 THB per day. Those pursuing domestic or agricultural work estimated lowest, at around 300 THB per day, while those pursuing hospitality estimated highest, at around 460 THB per day. Women estimated a slightly lower wage than men (around 360 THB compared to 390 THB). These trends were consistent in Ranong, even though aspirational wages were higher overall. Respondents in Ranong expected to earn around 490 THB per day, with those seeking domestic work estimating lowest, at 320 THB, and those seeking work in hospitality estimating highest, at 580 THB. Women expected to earn around 460 THB per day while men expected around 510 THB per day. For reference, although not all respondents planned to stay in Tak and Ranong, the minimum wage in both provinces is 332 THB per day. Complementary data from IOM’s 2022 Multisectoral

Assessment of Needs (MSA) indicated that among Myanmar migrants living in Thailand, at least 61 per cent earned below minimum wage (83% in Tak and 51% in Ranong). The same assessment also showed that women earned consistently less than men among Myanmar migrants in Thailand.

The vast majority of respondents (86%) confirmed they already had a job lined up upon their arrival. This proportion was slightly higher in Ranong (88%) compared to Tak (71%). It was also highest among those who planned to work in agriculture (97%) and hospitality (94%) and lowest among those who planned to work in construction (85%) and domestic work (80%) overall. Respondents without friends or family in their destination location were more likely to have a job already lined up (97%) compared to those with friends or family in the destination (85%).

FIGURE 7: AVERAGE EXPECTED WAGE AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS BY MAIN ASPIRATIONAL WORK SECTORS

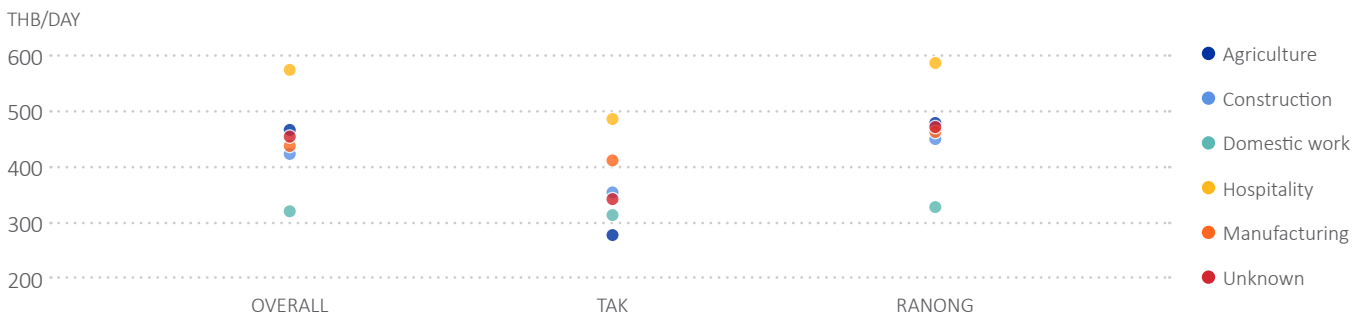


PHOTO Boat shore in Ranong. © IOM 2023/Somruedee KARNPHAKDEE

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Regarding their language skills, around two thirds of respondents in Ranong (67%) and one third in Tak (36%) reported being able to speak Thai. Thai language skills were consistently high among those intending to work in hospitality, but they were also high among those planning to work in domestic work, agriculture, and manufacturing in Ranong.

Respondents from Tak were marginally more confident in speaking English than those in Ranong, with 16 per cent reporting they could speak English compared to Ranong's 10 per cent. Roughly one fifth of respondents in both Tak and Ranong indicated being able to read and write in English, while being able to read or write in Thai was much less common.

TABLE 4: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO CAN **SPEAK THAI** AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS BY MAIN ASPIRATIONAL WORK SECTORS

	OVERALL	TAK	RANONG
Agriculture	87%	38%	88%
Construction	48%	56%	47%
Domestic work	68%	40%	80%
Hospitality	90%	86%	90%
Manufacturing	72%	59%	78%
Unknown	18%	20%	18%

TABLE 5: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO CAN **READ THAI** AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS BY MAIN ASPIRATIONAL WORK SECTORS

	OVERALL	TAK	RANONG
Agriculture	5%	14%	5%
Construction	5%	0%	6%
Domestic work	0%	0%	0%
Hospitality	15%	43%	13%
Manufacturing	7%	0%	11%
Unknown	2%	20%	0%

TABLE 6: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO CAN **SPEAK ENGLISH** AMONG LONGER-TERM RESPONDENTS BY MAIN ASPIRATIONAL WORK SECTORS

	OVERALL	TAK	RANONG
Agriculture	5%	0%	6%
Construction	3%	0%	4%
Domestic work	7%	20%	0%
Hospitality	10%	0%	11%
Manufacturing	11%	6%	14%
Unknown	14%	20%	13%

KEY FINDINGS

- Entries from Myanmar to Thailand comprise two distinct types of flows: those for short-term stays of up to one week (82%), and longer-term entries (18%).
- Reasons for migration among short-term arrivals are mainly trade (48%), visiting family or friends (41%), and accessing healthcare (15%). Main reasons for migration among longer-term arrivals include employment (64%), visiting family or friends (47%), and the better cost of living in Thailand (30%).
- Conflict was cited by 11 per cent of longer-term respondents as a reason for entry.
- Key destination provinces outside Tak and Ranong included Bangkok and Chumphon, with Surat Thani and Chonburi also featuring among the top three destinations among longer-term respondents in Ranong and Tak, respectively.
- Longer-term arrivals in Tak mostly intended to work in manufacturing (31%), agriculture (18%), and construction (16%). In Ranong, they mostly intended to work in agriculture (including fishing) (46%), hospitality (17%), and construction (12%).
- Expectations about wage conditions in Thailand may not be on par with the reality. Many respondents (91%) who were entering for employment reasons indicated that they expected earning above 332 THB/day (the applicable minimum wage in both Tak and Ranong), whilst previous assessments have shown the majority of Myanmar nationals residing in the two provinces earning below minimum wage.
- Most respondents who entered Thailand for employment reasons already had a job lined up upon arrival (86%).
- Thai language skills were lower in Tak than in Ranong. In Tak, those intending to work in construction (56%), domestic work (40%), and agriculture (38%) were least likely to speak Thai. In Ranong, those in construction (47%) were least likely to speak Thai.
- Over a third (39%) 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 (54%) reported that they were entering Thailand accompanied by their children.



PHOTO Children play a few meters away from the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge 1 in Mae Sot city. © IOM 2022/Sonia BLUE