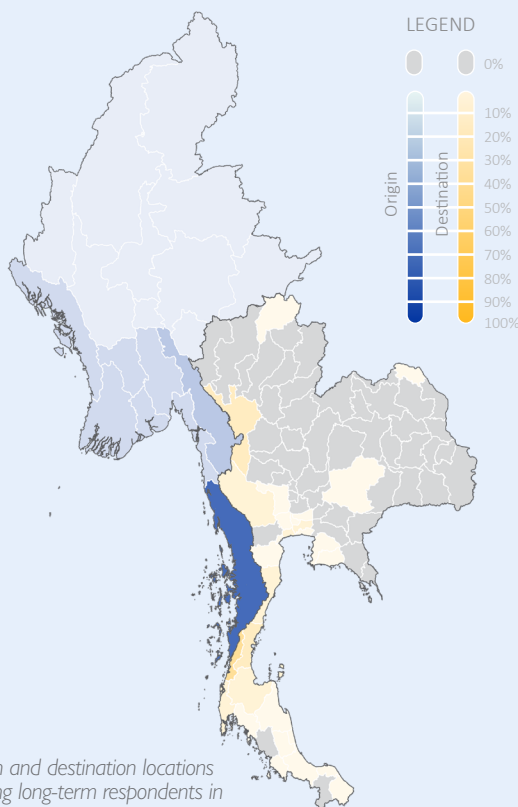


# Overview of Myanmar Nationals in Thailand



This brief provides an in-depth analysis of the movements and stocks of Myanmar nationals in Thailand based on the data collected by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) from January 2023 to March 2024.

## MOVEMENTS FROM MYANMAR TO THAILAND SINCE 2023<sup>1</sup>



Origin and destination locations among long-term respondents in 2023

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

An estimated **1.5 million** Myanmar nationals entered Thailand

On average, **22,000** long-term entries per month

Long-term entries increased by **50%** in January and February 2024 compared to early 2023

Between January and February 2024, entries increased by **30%** and remained stable between February and March 2024

**60%** of long-term arrivals have no documentation

**25%** of long-term arrivals cite conflict and discrimination as reasons for entry

- The Thailand-Myanmar border is the largest country-to-country migration corridor in Southeast Asia. Being over 2,400 kilometers, it is ranked one of the 20 largest corridors in the world.
- According to IOM monitoring activities, 1.5 million Myanmar nationals crossed the border from January 2023 through February 2024. On average, 21 per cent of arrivals intend to stay in Thailand for one week or more or are undecided about their length of stay in Thailand (long-term entries).
- IOM observes an increase in people crossing the border from Myanmar; especially long-term Myanmar nationals.
- Since March 2023, IOM monitoring activities indicate that 60 per cent of long-term Myanmar nationals had no documentation, exposing them to higher risks of violence, exploitation and abuse. By comparison in January and February 2023, less than 20 per cent entered Thailand without documentation.
- Economic factors are the main reasons for entry, including seeking employment, trade, and seeking better costs of living.
- Reasons related to safety such as conflict and discrimination are mentioned by 25 per cent of long-term arrivals compared to one per cent among short-term arrivals. This reason was more often cited among those who are uncertain about their length of stay in the country.

<sup>1</sup> Information based on IOM Thailand DTM Flow Monitoring in Tak, Ranong and Kancharaburi provinces.

<sup>2</sup> IOM internal study on labour cards (2023).

<sup>3</sup> Information based on 10 Multisectoral Assessments of Needs conducted in 2023/2024: Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Chumphon, Kancharaburi, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Ranong, Samut Sakhon, and Tak. Data is disaggregated by year of arrival from 2008 and before to 2023 (including January and February 2024). When relevant, data is also disaggregated by sex and by province of residence in Thailand. In addition, the section on regular pathways is based on the Department of Employment statistics.

<sup>4</sup> Less than one per cent of respondents identified as other gender, including migrants in an irregular situation.

## VULNERABILITIES AND NEEDS OF MYANMAR NATIONALS IN THAILAND FROM 2008 ONWARDS<sup>3</sup>

### REGULAR PATHWAYS

As of March 2024, based on the Department of Employment data, **2,308,166** Myanmar nationals are registered migrant workers, the highest number in recent years. They represent **70 per cent** of total registered migrants in Thailand. The primary means of regularizing migrants in Thailand is based on the Cabinet Resolutions.

**88%** of Myanmar migrant workers obtained regularization through in-country registration windows (2,036,082 as of March 2024)

**12%** of the total number of Myanmar workers in Thailand are registered under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) process (266,942)

**<1%** seasonal work permit holders

IOM evidence indicates that there are discrepancies between the official cost to obtain relevant documents for regularizations set at THB 2,530 by the Royal Thai Government (RTG) and the true cost faced by migrants up to THB 30,000.<sup>2</sup>

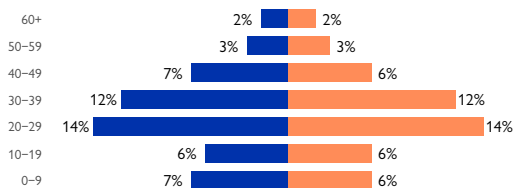
### IRREGULAR MIGRANT POPULATION

Official registers often fail to capture the migrant population. As of February 2024, IOM estimates of the size of the migrant population in border provinces exceed official registers by a factor of 5.4 in Mae Hong Son, 3.5 in Tak and 2.9 in Chiang Rai.

### DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE<sup>4</sup>

**49%** Men **51%** Women

Age of the respondents (%)



**35** average age

**2.5** average household size

### TOP ORIGIN STATES/REGIONS

**KAYIN STATE (20%)**

**TANINTHARYI REGION (17%)**

**MON STATE (13%)**

IOM observed that over the years, a shift in origin states/regions from Kayin and Tanintharyi to Ayeyarwady and Bago (West). Starting from 2022, Mandalay and Yangon saw a significant increase in their share of nationals coming to Thailand.

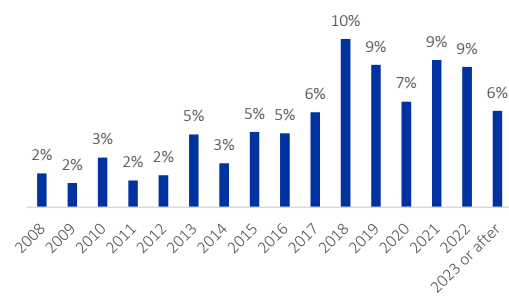
IOM also observed a shift in year 2013 in the destination provinces from Kanchanaburi and Tak to provinces further

away from the border, particularly in the Great Bangkok Area. Chiang Rai additionally became a more popular destination province from 2022 onwards.

IOM assessments found a relation between the state/region of origin and the province of destination: for instance, those from Kayin are mostly in Tak, Pathum Thani, Kanchanaburi and Nonthaburi; while those from Tanintharyi are in Ranong, Chumphon, and Kanchanaburi and those from Mon are mainly in Samut Sakhon.

### CIRCUMSTANCES OF MIGRATION

Entries by year of arrival

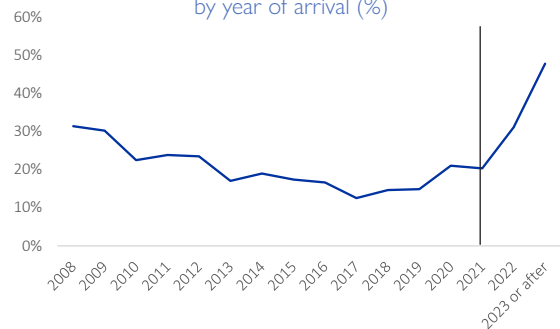


Among the population of Myanmar nationals living in Thailand today, the proportion of those that arrived between 2008 and 2018 increased gradually over the years. A spike in the proportion of arrivals occurred in 2018, but then decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020) before going back to previous levels in 2019 onward. One quarter arrived after the military takeover in 2021.

**23%** in an irregular situation **19%** Men **27%** Women

Tak province hosted the highest proportion (75%) of Myanmar nationals in irregular situations compared to the other assessed provinces.

Irregular status at the time of the survey by year of arrival (%)



Despite the steady number of entries from 2018 onwards, there was a significant increase in irregular entries following the military takeover (2021). Respondents also report paying local law enforcement up to THB 300 per month to avoid deportation.

### MAIN MIGRATION COSTS

**TRAVEL (64%)**

**BROKER (46%)**

**DOCUMENTATION (28%)**

The average migration cost to Greater Bangkok Area is the highest (from 16,000 to 20,000 THB on average), mainly due to brokers' fees. MOU workers face challenges in accessing information on the process (24%) and on the employer (23%) as well as finding a trustworthy agent/broker (17%).

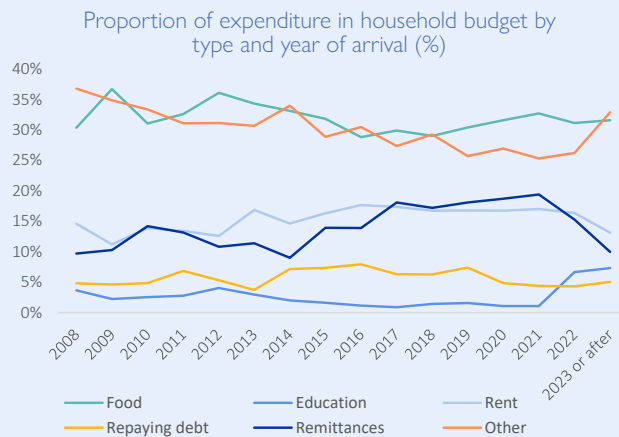
# Overview of Myanmar Migrants in Thailand



Co-funded by the European Union



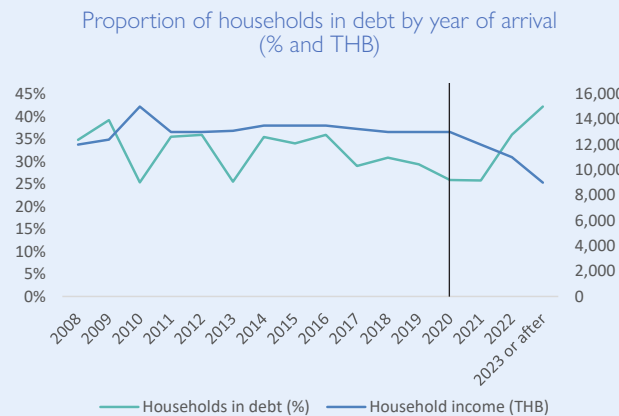
## ECONOMIC SITUATION AND BUDGET



As year of arrival becomes more recent, the weights of education **increase** in the budget, while rent and remittances **decrease**.

Overall, 41 per cent of Myanmar nationals remit on average 1,500 THB monthly. Greater Bangkok Area and Ranong tend to remit on a larger scale, both in terms of the proportion of households remitting (above 50%) and the amount of money sent (above 2,000 THB monthly).

For those who arrived in 2022 and after, the proportion of those who remit and the amount sent decreased.



The economic condition of Myanmar nationals worsens as their year of arrival becomes more recent, with a **decreasing median household income among those who arrived in 2020 onward**. In addition, the potential lack of time to repay for the migration costs could explain **the growing proportion of households living in debt especially among those who arrived after the coup (2021)**.



>40% of recent arrivals spend more than what they earn

30,000 THB average debt level

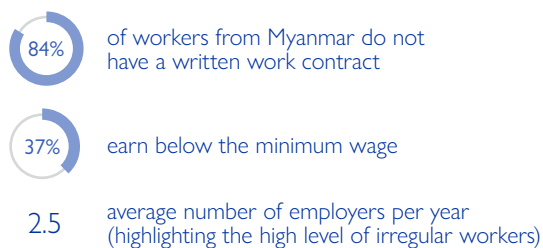
The level of debt is particularly high among Myanmar nationals based in Chiang Mai (50,000 THB), Kanchanaburi (44,500 THB), Chiang Rai (37,000 THB) and Tak (35,000 THB). To cope with lower earnings, migrants who arrived in more recent years tend to diversify their sources of income, relying more on assistance from family and/or friends, begging, going into debt, and/or spend their savings. Moreover, the proportion of households receiving remittances in Thailand is higher for those who arrived in 2022 onward (28% since 2023).

## REASONS TO BORROW

- FOOD (57%)
- HOUSING (52%)
- HEALTH (37%)
- MIGRATION (34%)
- EDUCATION (16%)

Borrowing to cover food expenses is common among Myanmar nationals based in Tak (77%) and Kanchanaburi (65%), while borrowing to cover migration costs is frequently cited by those located in Greater Bangkok Area as well as by those in Chumphon and Ranong. As year of arrival becomes more recent, migration becomes the main reason for borrowing money (56% since 2023).

## EMPLOYMENT



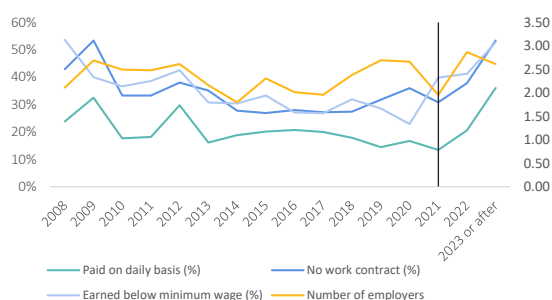
## WORK SECTORS

AGRICULTURE (21%)  
 FOOD PRODUCTION (20%)  
 SERVICES (18%)  
 VENDOR (17%)  
 CONSTRUCTION (16%)

Construction, domestic work, and hospitality are gendered work sectors (towards men for the former and towards women for the latter two). Agriculture is the main work sector among workers from Myanmar in Kanchanaburi, Chumphon, and Tak, services in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, food production in Ranong, Samut Sakhon, and Pathum Thani, and vendor in Bangkok, Nonthaburi, and Pathum Thani.

Women earn on average less than men (350 THB and 400 THB, respectively), migrants in Tak earn an average of 200 THB.

### Precarious employment conditions by year of arrival



Recent arrivals (starting from 2021) have more precarious employment conditions than those who arrived prior to 2021, particularly in Tak and Kanchanaburi. Although Myanmar nationals are mainly paid on a monthly basis, there is an increased proportion of daily workers in recent years.

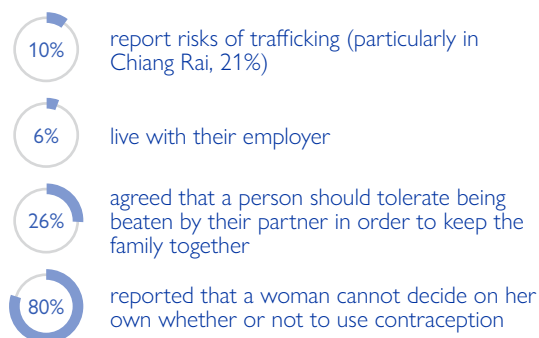
## EDUCATION

### MAIN BARRIERS TO ACCESSING EDUCATION

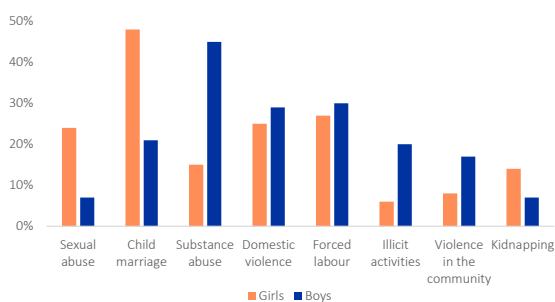
DISTANCE (40%)  
 COST (35%)  
 LACK OF DOCUMENTATION (30%)  
 LANGUAGE (26%)  
 SAFETY (21%)

Supporting family tasks are becoming a more commonly cited reason for children not attending school once they reach secondary school-age (increasing over 14 times from primary school-age for girls and more than four times for boys). The lack of safety and distance are a frequent concern in Kanchanaburi, while the cost is a notable concern in Bangkok and Pathum Thani.

## PROTECTION



### Most common perceived risks for girls and boys



Disparities in the perceived risks for girls and boys were apparent with sexual abuse, child marriage, and kidnapping as common risks for girls and substance abuse, the participation in illicit activities, and violence as frequent risks for boys.

## HEALTH



### MAIN BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HEALTH SERVICES

LANGUAGE (50%)  
 COST (45%)  
 DISTANCE (42%)  
 FEAR OF BEING ARRESTED (23%)  
 DISCRIMINATION (22%)

Barriers to accessing health services are more often cited by households who recently arrived (24%). Costs and the fear of being arrested are more common barriers for those who arrived in 2023 onwards (51% and 39%, respectively).

The proportion of households reporting having no members covered by any type of insurance is on average 32 per cent. The share is higher for the ones who arrived from 2019 onwards, with the highest proportion for arrivals in 2023 and after (52% of households with no individuals insured).

## ACCOMMODATION

