MULTI-SECTORAL ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS AMONG MYANMAR MIGRANTS IN THE GREATER BANGKOK AREA: KEY FINDINGS

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)
JUNE - AUGUST 2023

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STATISTICAL NOTE: All United States Dollar (USD) values that have been converted from Thai Baht (THB) use the UN Operational Rate of Exchange from 30 September 2023 of 35.27 THB to 1 USD.

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This report aims to provide details on key findings regarding the multi-sectoral conditions, needs and challenges among the Myanmar migrant population in the Greater Bangkok Area as captured between June to August 2023 by IOM's Multi-Sectoral Assessment of Needs (MSA). The purpose of this assessment is to provide detailed multi and inter-sectoral analysis of the magnitude and severity of needs among migrant populations, identify vulnerable population groups and geographic areas with the most acute needs, inform development assistance planning and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets, and provide sectoral and inter-sectoral baselines for future assessments. This report includes key findings and related analyses on migration history, economic status, education, employment, health access, and shelter access.

The Multi-Sector Assessment of Needs was implemented using a household survey conducted in three provinces with migrants present in the Greater Bangkok Area: Bangkok, Nonthaburi, and Pathum Thani. Due to the high number of indicators of interest, the survey was split into two tools: the first focusing on questions about multi-sectoral conditions (**TOOL 1**) and the second assessing access to services (**TOOL 2**). The tool was developed by IOM's Migration Data and Research Unit (MDRU) in collaboration with various sectoral IOM units specialized in labor, health, and protection topics, among others. The household survey was answered by 2,260 respondents. The combined number of respondents and their household members is 3,555 individuals.

Respondents were interviewed using either one of these tools, never both. Some questions, however, particularly those regarding demographics and migration history, were covered in both tools to understand the basic profiles of all participating respondents and their households. As a result, the sample size for data analysis varies between indicators. Questions which appeared only in one of the tools but were answered by all respondents remain representative at a 90 per cent confidence interval with a 5 per cent margin of error. Questions which were covered in both tools have a 95 per cent confidence interval with a 5 per cent margin of error.

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE
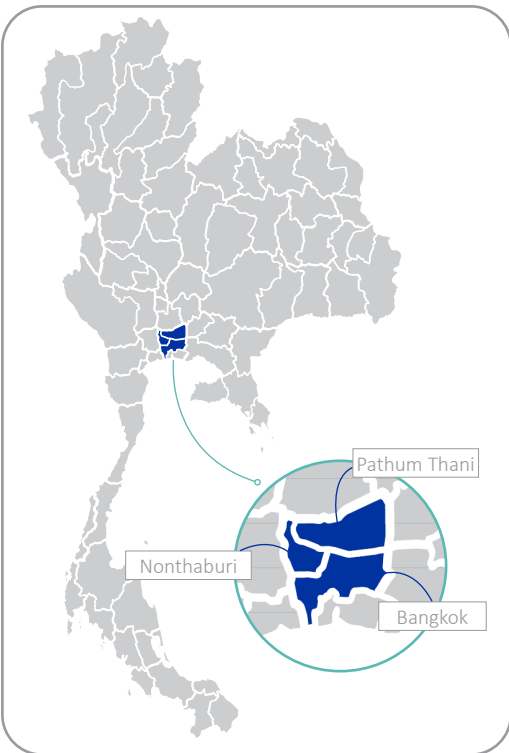
RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

| BANGKOK	
TOTAL RESPONDENTS TOOL 1	336
TOTAL RESPONDENTS TOOL 2	398
% WOMEN	40%
% MEN	56%
% OTHER GENDER	4%
NONTHABURI	
TOTAL RESPONDENTS TOOL 1	319
TOTAL RESPONDENTS TOOL 2	357
% WOMEN	32%
% MEN	67%
% OTHER GENDER	1%
PATHUM THANI	
TOTAL RESPONDENTS TOOL 1	342
TOTAL RESPONDENTS TOOL 2	508
% WOMEN	33%
% MEN	67%
% OTHER GENDER	<1%

KEY FINDING 1

MIGRATION IN THE GREATER BANGKGKOK AREA IS NOT A NEW PHENOMENON, BUT OVER **A QUARTER OF MIGRANTS IN THE GREATER BANGKOK AREA HAVE ARRIVED SINCE 2021**

- The majority of recent arrivals (those who arrived since 2021) **have not migrated to Thailand before and have lived in Thailand for less than 2 years.**
- Pathum Thani is the province with the largest share of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) migrants (28%), compared to 16 per cent in Bangkok and 17 per cent in Nonthaburi.
- Across all assessed provinces, **the majority of respondents confirmed an intention to return permanently to Myanmar in the future.**

YEARS OF ARRIVAL
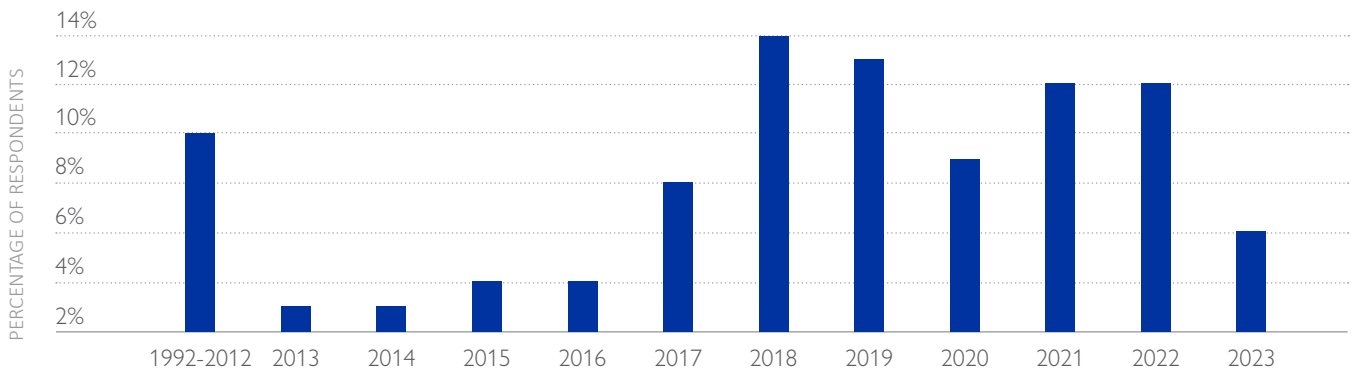
- While both recent and non-recent arrivals most commonly come from Kayin (21% and 34%, respectively) or Mon state (10% and 12%, respectively), recent arrivals who are first-time migrants Thailand are more likely to come from Yangon (10%) compared to non-recent arrivals (4%). Additionally, **the origin states of recent arrivals are more diverse than those of non-recent arrivals**. Over half (56%) of those who arrived prior to 2021 come from just three states (Kayin, Mon, and Ayeyarwady) while the same states account for only 38 per cent of recent arrivals who are first-time migrants in Thailand.

ORIGIN STATES/REGIONS IN MYANMAR

First-time migrants who arrived after the military takeover

Yangon
Kayin
Mon

Respondents who arrived after the military takeover but who have migrated to Thailand before

Mandalay
Ayeyarwady
Kayin

Respondents who arrived before the military takeover

Ayeyarwady
Kayin
Mon

Percentage   0   10   20   30
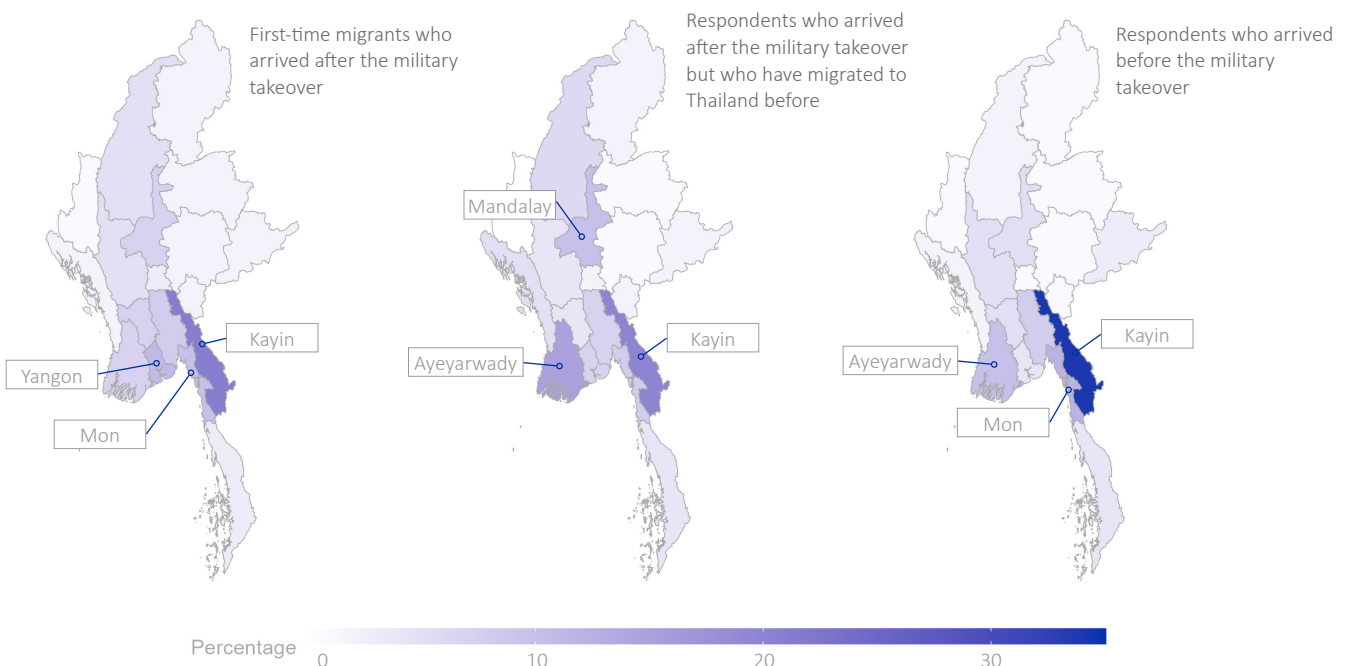
SCI DATA AND ORIGIN STATES/REGIONS BY CURRENT PROVINCE LOCATION

Origin areas and social connectivity are shown to have visible correlations, especially for Kayin state. The maps on this page provide insight into correlations regarding online connections between states/regions in Myanmar and provinces in Thailand, compared to origin locations of migrants. The circles in the maps represent the number of respondents who reported originating from each region or state in either Myanmar according to the MSA survey, while the dark blue gradient of each province is based on Meta's Social Connectedness Index (SCI). This index measures the strength of connectedness between two geographic areas as represented by Facebook friendship ties. The methodology of the SCI uses the number of Facebook users in location A and B, as well as the number of Facebook friendship connections between the two, to calculate the relative probability of a Facebook friendship link between a given Facebook user in location A and one in location B. For example, if the SCI measure is twice as large, a Facebook user in location A is twice as likely to be connected with a Facebook user in location B.


BANGKOK

NONTHABURI

PATHUM THANI
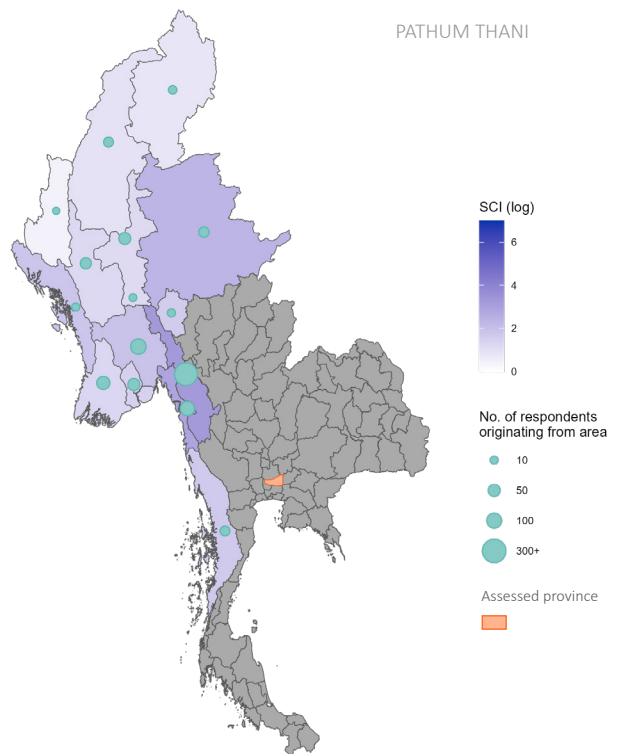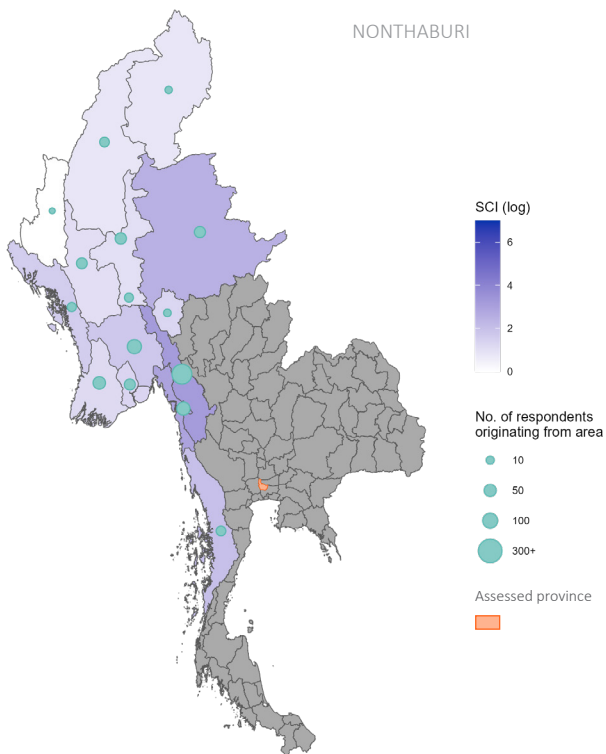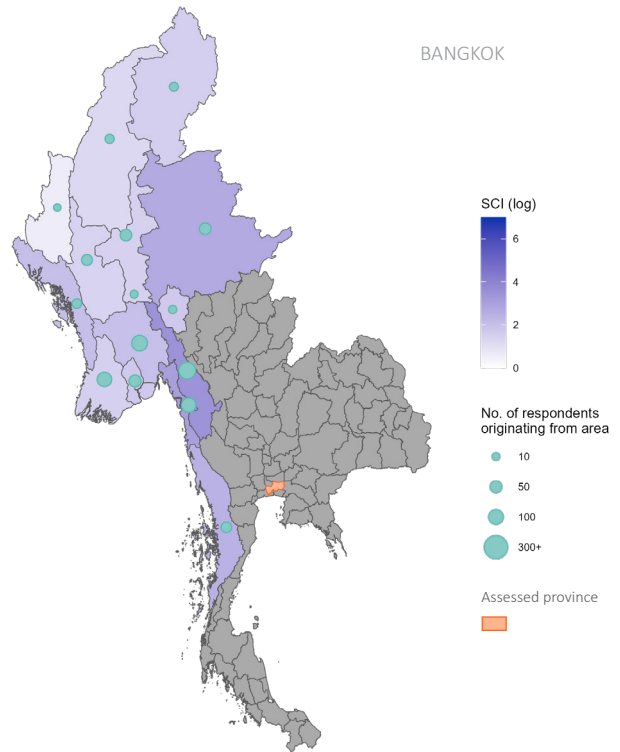
KEY FINDING 2

MOST MIGRANTS ARE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE, HAVING WORKED FOR BETWEEN 10 AND 11 MONTHS ON AVERAGE IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

- **The majority (68%) were employed for all 12 months in the last year.** The contribution of migrants to Thailand's economy is widely acknowledged. Thailand's ageing population, low unemployment rate, and continued economic growth all contribute to demand for migrant workers (IOM Thailand Migration Report 2019).

- Whilst on average, respondents had worked for more than two employers in the past 12 months, the turnover was higher in Bangkok at an average 3.7 employers per year, compared to 2.8 in Nonthaburi and 2.0 in Pathum Thani.

- Seventy-six per cent of respondents reported having worked for only one employer, whereas 14 per cent of respondents had worked for 13 employers or more (considered as doing freelance or daily work).

- Considering that work permits in Thailand are bound to specific employers, **the turnover affecting a quarter (24%) of respondents suggests that even some of those who possess work permits may find themselves in a de facto situation of irregularity**. This can lead to increased vulnerability and an absence of worker protection. **More than 1 in 10 respondents are paid below minimum wage.**

NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS
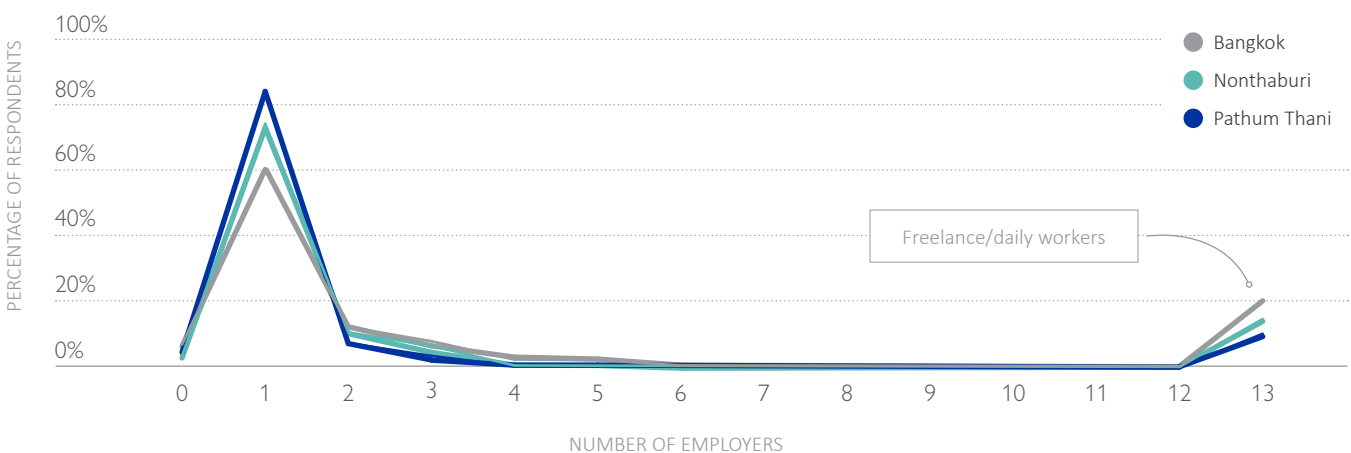
- Findings further show that only 1 in 5 respondents hold a written contract, a third lack any contract, and around 1 in 10 have not received all agreed wages and benefits. Where agreements are made only verbally, they are particularly difficult to enforce, but even where a written contract exists, migrants may be hesitant to report abuse and malpractice in fear of retaliation.

- Notably, lack of contracts was less widespread in Pathum Thani (26%) than Bangkok (42%) and Nonthaburi (44%), with Pathum Thani also being the province that reported the highest share of MoU migrants.

- **In addition to vulnerabilities regarding abuse and malpractice, adults and children faced risks related to forced labour.** Over a quarter (28%) of respondents cited forced labour as a major protection risk among adults. Respondents also specified child labour as a major risk among girls (39%) and boys (48%).

- When asked about legal services related to rights violations (including in the workplace), 9 out of 10 respondents were unaware of any such services. Among those who were aware, 79 per cent reported facing barriers to these services.

DAILY WAGE

Average daily wage was highest in Pathum Thani (around 540 THB or 15 USD) and lowest in Nonthaburi (around 430 THB or 12 USD). These wages stand in contrast to those reported by Myanmar migrants in border provinces such as Tak and Ranong in IOM Thailand's Multi-Sectoral Assessment of Needs in 2022, which found that 75 per cent of respondents in Tak and 24 per cent in Ranong earned less than 315 THB (around 9 USD) per day.

DAILY WAGE BY SECTOR
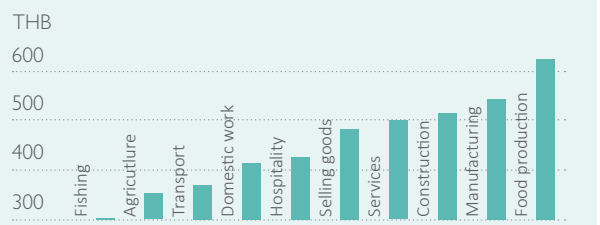
KEY FINDING 3

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF MIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS HAS IMPROVED IN THE LAST YEAR, BUT **HOUSEHOLD DEBT REMAINS A CHALLENGE**

- Respondents reported a slight improvement, on average, in their household's economic status in the past year. This effect held true despite an increased cost of living reported by households. As the maps below show, some variations existed across assessed locations.

- A comparison of those who arrived in the three years since the military takeover (2021-2023) to those who arrived in the three years prior (2018-2020) does not show any significant difference in economic status or cost of living. However, those who arrived in 2023 reported a marginal decrease in their economic status.

- At the same time, **29 per cent of respondent households face debt**, most often due to costs associated with housing, food, and migration costs. On average, households owed around 18,000 THB (around 500 USD). The average percentage of household monthly expenditure on debt repayments was 6 per cent.

- Regarding savings, around a quarter (23%) of households reported spending more than they earned in the last month. On average, monthly savings amounted to around 4,600 Thai Baht (around 130 USD) while average monthly overspending amounted to around 3,500 Thai Baht (around 100 USD).

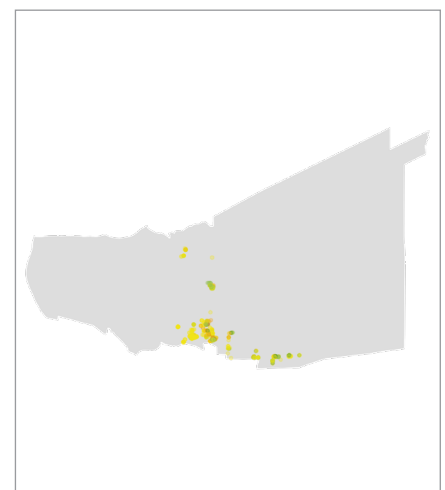### PERCEIVED CHANGE IN ECONOMIC STATUS OVER THE PAST YEAR

🟢 Significantly improved 🟢 Somewhat improved 🟡 No change 🔴 Somewhat deteriorated 🔴 Significantly deteriorated

One dot represents one household
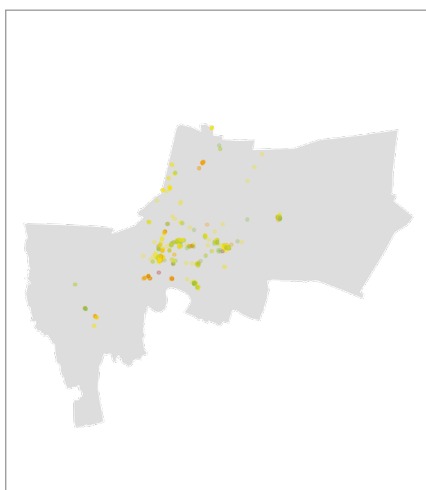
BANGKOK
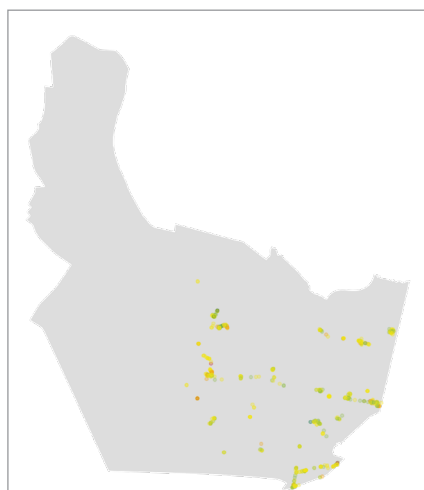
NONTHABURI

PATHUM THANI

REMITTANCES

Remittances accounted for 30 per cent of household expenditure on average, with 52 per cent of respondents reporting having sent remittances during the month prior. Sending remittances can help improve the living situation of family members and others left behind in Myanmar, allowing them to meet basic household needs, access essential goods and services, send their children to school or set up their businesses. In 2022, remittances comprised around three per cent of Myanmar's GDP (World Bank). In September 2023, the de facto authorities in Myanmar ordered all overseas workers remit a quarter of their earnings every month or every three months via the country's banking system, according to a mandated exchange rate. The current reference exchange rate is just 56 kyats to the Thai baht, whilst the going market rate is around 100 kyats per baht. The announcement stated that migrant workers who do not comply would be barred from working overseas for three years after their current work permit expires (The Irrawaddy). The de facto authorities also recently announced an amended foreign income tax policy, taking effect from 1st October 2023 and obliging every Myanmar migrant worker to pay a tax of 10 per cent of their income in foreign currencies (Myanma Alinn Daily).

KEY FINDING 4

ACCESS TO EDUCATION REMAINS INSUFFICIENT - **OVER HALF OF CHILDREN IN ASSESSED HOUSEHOLDS WERE REPORTED TO NOT ATTEND SCHOOL**

- The minority of respondents (8%) reported having children who live in their households. This may be partially reflective of the profile of the population, who are predominantly young adults in their 20s and 30s living alone (60%).
- Among migrant children, more than half were unable to attend school, with **percentages for those out of school increasing with rising age across all three assessed provinces.**
- Among migrant children who attended school in Pathum Thani, they mainly attended Migrant Learning Centers (79%), compared to only 14 per cent of those in Bangkok province, where private schools (36%) and public schools (29%) were the most attended learning spaces. However, Bangkok also reported the highest share of children attending Community Learning Centers (14%), which were not reported as being used in the other provinces. In addition, the lack of MLCs in Nonthaburi was mentioned by migrant community leaders in a follow-up engagement.
- **Children also face other risks, including child marriage,** which was present in over 1 of every 10 households that had children. Child marriage was also cited by 69 per cent of respondents as a major risk facing girls.

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Official policies regarding access to education for migrant children in Thailand stand in accordance with the related stipulations in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, allowing all children access to school regardless of migration status. However, some obstacles still exist in practice. **Respondents most often cited factors such as expense, distance, and language differences as barriers to sending children to school**. Migrant community leaders pointed out a lack of information regarding enrolment of migrant children lacking birth certificates. Similar findings can be found in UNICEF'S Make Learning Count: Migrant Learning Center registration in Thailand report from 2023. Lack of documentation was also cited as a barrier among secondary school-aged boys (25%), a concern that has potentially been heightened since the recent deportation of over 100 undocumented students from a school in Ang Thong province, slightly north of Bangkok (Bangkok Post).

PHOTO: Myanmar migrants play sepak takraw at an apartment complex in the Greater Bangkok Area. © IOM 2022/Sonia BLUE

ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE IS LIMITED, WITH SIGNIFICANT VARIATIONS ACROSS PROVINCES REGARDING ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

- Overall, health insurance coverage remains insufficient, with nearly half of households (48%) having none of their members insured. **The lack of health insurance was particularly prevalent in Bangkok (65%), followed by Nonthaburi (52%).** Pathum Thani reported 29 per cent of households as uninsured. A cross-analysis shows that the higher rate of insured households in Pathum Thani is correlated with the higher share of MoU migrants in the province.

- However, the higher share of households with some or all members having health insurance did not necessarily translate into better health access. One in ten households (11%) had tried to access health services in the past three months. Of those who sought health service access in **Pathum Thani, 23 per cent reported experiencing barriers to accessing health services, compared to eight**

per cent in Bangkok and six per cent in Nonthaburi. Language was reported as the biggest obstacle (73%), followed by expense (58%). Follow-up engagements with migrant community leaders emphasized the need for translators at health facilities.

- Three-quarters of respondents were unaware of medical services and 9 out of 10 were unaware of psychosocial services. Those who were aware reported barriers to accessing these services, including distance, infrequence of services, and expense. Men were more likely than women to have used either service.

- Health risks related to substance abuse are prevalent among both adults and children, especially in Pathum Thani and Bangkok. Overall, respondents cited substance abuse as the most common risk among adults (65%) and the second most common risk among boys (40%).

BARRIERS TO HEALTH

BANGKOK

Language	70%
Expense	40%
Infrequent services	27%

NONTHABURI

Expense	57%
Language	43%
Discrimination	38%

PATHUM THANI

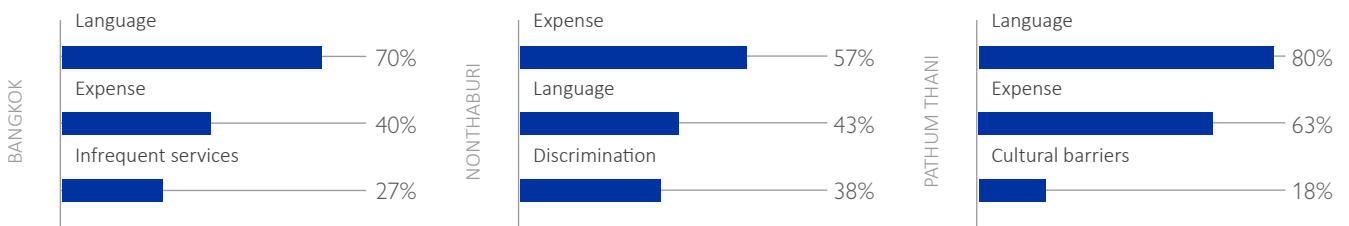|	
Language	80%
Expense	63%
Cultural barriers	18%

PHOTO: Apartment complex housing migrants in the Greater Bangkok Area. © IOM 2022/Sonia BLUE

KEY FINDING 6

THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF MIGRANTS POSE SEVERAL RISKS, AND FEW MIGRANTS ARE AWARE OF SHELTER SERVICES

- Housing conditions were found to be poor (in regards to structural integrity) for close to half of all assessed households (44 per cent on average) across the three assessed provinces.
- **Other risks can relate to migrants sharing accommodation with their employer** (8 per cent on average, up to 15 per cent in Pathum Thani).

- Waste and trash, as well as stagnant water, were visible near around a third of the assessed households, with conditions being better in Nonthaburi than Pathum Thani.
- **Nearly all (98%) respondent households were connected to the electricity grid**, however, only five per cent reported using renewable energy.

PHOTO: Apartment complex housing migrants in the Greater Bangkok Area. © IOM 2022/Sonia BLUE