



ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE FÉDÉRALE DE LAUSANNE

Unveiling the untold stories in the  
Land of Smiles: a comparative  
analysis on expatriates and Burmese  
workers in Thailand

HUM-501

International Migration and Emerging Asia II

---

355469 Takuya Ishii  
369939 Rik de Vries  
314675 Thilo Palomeras  
315921 Adrien Feillard

March 6, 2025

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1	Legal framework of Thailand migration policy and work policy . . . . .	3
1.2	Definition of digital nomads and Thailand's visa policy . . . . .	4
<b>2</b>	<b>Perspectives on migrants: motives, lives &amp; challenges</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	Study on Western Expats in Thailand . . . . .	5
2.2	Study on Asian Expats in Thailand . . . . .	9
2.2.1	Japanese Expats in Thailand . . . . .	9
2.2.2	Chinese migrants in Thailand . . . . .	12
2.3	Study on Burmese migrant workers in Thailand . . . . .	13
2.3.1	Drivers of Myanmar to Thailand migration . . . . .	13
2.3.2	The Reality of Migration Processes from Myanmar to Thailand . . . . .	16
2.3.3	Working around the clock: treatment and integration of Burmese workers	17
2.3.4	Sex workers: A window to human trafficking in Thailand . . . . .	20
<b>3</b>	<b>Discussion and comparison between Expats and Burmese Workers</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Limitations of the research</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>23</b>

# 1 Introduction

Human mobility has always existed, but it has drastically increased during the 21st century.<sup>1</sup> It forms an essential part of social systems: migration is today a key global issue. In this report, we will focus on the international migration to Thailand. With the aging of the Thai population,<sup>2</sup> there has been an increasing demand for migrant workers. In 2010, Thailand already had around 2.9 million migrant workers,<sup>3</sup> and their contribution is estimated to be 4.3 to 6.6% of Thailand's GDP back then. In 2019, an updated report outlines how the migrant population had grown to 4.9 million.<sup>4</sup> The largest part of these people, around 3.9 million, came from other ASEAN countries such as Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Since the Thai working force is around 38.7 million, these migrants from the region alone already account for more than 10 percent of the active working force in Thailand. When it comes to skilled workers entering Thailand, data from the Department of Employment shows that migrants come from all around the world, but predominantly from Asia followed by anglophone countries like UK and the USA (see Figure 1).

There seems to be a strong correlation between the home countries of these workers and the type of occupations they take up in Thailand, and as a result, various names and stereotypes are given to these workers. For this report the term expatriates (or expats for short) will refer to the individuals who are high skilled workers and have moved to Thailand from economically more developed countries and the term migrant will refer to the individuals who are low skilled workers and have moved to Thailand from a lower or equally economically developed country. Moreover, the different categories of workers, from high-skilled expatriates to low-skilled migrants, experience Thailand's social and economic environment in vastly different ways. While expatriates may benefit from structured support systems and often enjoy a higher standard of living, low-skilled workers face numerous challenges including lower wages, limited legal protections, and often harsh working conditions. However each social class have different challenges to face and different opportunities. In this project, we will examine and compare the two contrasting categories of workers: expatriates and low-skilled migrant workers through economic, political, cultural and social aspects in their lives in Thailand as foreigners. We will also determine the driving factors of such migration for both categories. We will refer them as "push" and "pull" factors ; the reasons why migrants and expats are leaving their country and why they are choosing Thailand. Among the diverse demography of low-skilled migrant workers in Thailand, we will particularly focus on the Burmese as they constitute Thailand's largest migrant population, contributing to 6.2% of it's GDP<sup>5</sup> and is an essential workforce in

---

1. Aidan Findlater and Isaac I. Bogoch, "Human Mobility and the Global Spread of Infectious Diseases: A Focus on Air Travel," *Trends in Parasitology* 34, no. 9 (2018): 772–783, ISSN: 1471-4922, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pt.2018.07.004>.

2. Kua Wongboonsin, "Growing concerns for the aging population in Thailand," *Journal of Demography* 14, no. 1 (1998): 88, <https://digital.car.chula.ac.th/jdm/vol14/iss1/5>.

3. International Labor Organization and United Nations Women, *Public attitudes towards migrant workers in Thailand*, Research Brief, 2021, 11, [https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/issue-briefs/WCMS\\_766634/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/issue-briefs/WCMS_766634/lang-en/index.htm).

4. International Labor Organization and United Nations, *Thailand Migration Report 2019*, Publication, 2019, 220, <https://thailand.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Thailand-Migration-Report-2019.pdf>.

5. Inge Brees, "Burden or Boon: The Impact of Burmese Refugees on Thailand," *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, 2010, 35–47, accessed April 24, 2024.

2014		2015		2016		2017	
Country	Total	Country	Total	Country	Total	Country	Total
Japan	37,301	Japan	36,666	Japan	36,468	Japan	36,550
China	17,860	China	18,811	China	22,162	China	23,633
Philippines	12,780	Philippines	13,416	Philippines	14,374	Philippines	15,196
UK	11,095	UK	10,784	India	12,421	India	13,550
India	11,433	India	11,964	UK	10,601	UK	10,392
USA	9,079	USA	8,775	USA	8,645	USA	8,227
Korea (ROK)	6,100	Korea (ROK)	6,065	Korea (ROK)	5,979	Korea (ROK)	6,035
France	4,445	France	4,685	France	5,011	France	5,136
Taiwan	4,956	Taiwan	5,271	Taiwan	5,463	Taiwan	5,718
Australia	3,551	Australia	3,464	Australia	3,422	Russia	2,962
Other	9,328	Other	8,046	Other	8,746	Other	9,143
<b>Total</b>	<b>127,928</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>127,947</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>133,292</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>136,542</b>

Figure 1: Work permit issuance for professional and skilled occupations by nationality (2014–17).<sup>7</sup>

sectors such as fisheries, manufacturing, hospitality, and agriculture.<sup>6</sup>

Specifically, we will try and answer the following two related research questions in this study:

- What motivates foreign workers: expats, and Burmese workers, to come to Thailand for employment?
- What are the typical challenges expats and Burmese migrant workers face in Thai society, and how do they integrate into it?

We will answer these questions by first looking at the legal framework in Thailand. Following this, we explore the situation of expats in Thailand, differentiating Western expats and Asian expats. Subsequently, we will determine the drivers of the Burmese migration in Thailand and then, we will look into the situation of the Burmese migrant workers. Finally, discussion and limitation of our project will follow with emphasis on the comparison of expats and Burmese migrant workers.

## 1.1 Legal framework of Thailand migration policy and work policy

To obtain a work permit in Thailand there are 11 requirements for foreigners to submit. Amongst those steps, they must have a valid non-immigrant visa and are prohibited from various jobs. This includes manual work, work in agriculture and fishery, civil engineering, or street vending.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, information regarding the foreigner's future employment is to be submitted to the government by the company such as their activities, the location of their work, and health and education certificate. Foreigners also need to pay a tax accompanied by proof of payment and meet a minimum monthly salary that changes between nationalities. For example, Myanmar's migrants must have a minimum salary of 25,000 THB (Thai baht)

6. Amnesty International, *Thailand The Plight of Burmese Migrant Workers*, Analysis Report, 2005, 21, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa39/001/2005/en/>.

7. International Labor Organization and United Nations, *Thailand Migration Report 2019*, Publication, 2019, 220, <https://thailand.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Thailand-Migration-Report-2019.pdf>

8. Thailand Law Online, "Prohibited occupations and work-permit in Thailand," <https://www.thailandlawonline.com/thai-company-and-foreign-business-law/prohibited-occupations-thailand-work-permit>.

which corresponds to ~675 USD (United States Dollar), whereas 60,000 THB (~1,620 USD) per month is required for foreigners coming from Canada, Japan and the United States. Under the Labour Protection Act, all employers are required to provide 13 official public holidays per year with 6 additional days after a full year of service, 30 working days per year of annual sick leave with full pay, and 90 days of maternity leave with half of it fully paid.<sup>9</sup>

Severe penalties are imposed in case of non-compliance to these Thai labour laws; Thai and non-Thai people alike may receive a fine from 5,000 BHT (~135 USD) up to 100,000 BHT (~2,700 USD) depending on the accusations and an imprisonment period than can go up to 10 years.<sup>10</sup>

Amongst the list of 40 prohibited occupations for foreigners, 27 are strictly prohibited and 13 are allowed under certain conditions since December 2020,<sup>11</sup> including labour work and street vending. The conditions are to have an employer and be permitted to enter Thailand by Immigration Law under MoUs or agreement between the Thai government and the foreign government.<sup>12</sup> MoU stands for Memorandum of Understanding, and it is a legally non-binding document displaying an agreement between 2 parties. When it comes to immigration, the MoU concerns nationals wanting to work in Thailand and it is concluded respectively between Thailand and its neighbouring countries.<sup>13</sup>

## 1.2 Definition of digital nomads and Thailand's visa policy

The phenomenon of digital nomadism has been expanding since the 2010s and exploded with the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the adoption of remote work.<sup>14</sup> For this project, it is important to distinguish a digital nomad and an expat. A digital nomad is a person who travels abroad and works remotely (using digital technologies) at the same time, whereas an expat is a working professional who goes abroad for a job opportunity for which he cannot work remotely. There are a number of stereotypes concerning digital nomads, such as always chasing some new landscapes to discover, and working on their laptops on beautiful beaches... The status is typically associated with “web developers, travel vloggers, podcast launch consultants, online English teachers, digital marketers, and lifestyle coaches”.<sup>15</sup> However, some digital nomads experience loneliness and stress due to their non-sedentary lifestyle. We can see on Figure 2 the Top 10 digital nomad destinations, Thailand is the first Asian destination and takes second place behind Portugal. Digital nomads are mainly coming from Western countries like the US, Canada, those in Europe, or Australia. Thailand is a popular destination for them because of

---

9. Thailand Law Online, “Foreign Business work permit in Thailand,” <https://www.thailandlawonline.com/thai-company-and-foreign-business-law/work-permit-for-foreigners-in-thailand>.

10. Thailand Law Online, *Thailand Visa and Immigration Law BE 2522 or 1979*, Accessed: 2024-04-19, <https://www.thailandlawonline.com/thai-family-and-marriage-law/thailand-immigration-law>.

11. Bangkok Post, *Foreign workers granted permits to work except in 40 prohibited occupations*, Bangkok Post, Accessed: 2024-05-14, 2021, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/pr/2085143/foreign-workers-granted-permits-to-work-except-in-40-prohibited-occupations>.

12. Acclime Thailand, *Restricted Jobs For Foreigners In Thailand*, Acclime Thailand, Accessed: 2024-05-14, 2024, <https://thailand.acclime.com/guides/restricted-jobs/>.

13. Will Kenton, *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Defined, What's in It, Pros/Cons, MOU vs. MOA*, Investopedia, Accessed: 2024-05-14, February 2024, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/mou.asp>.

14. Dave Cook, “What is a digital nomad? Definition and taxonomy in the era of mainstream remote work,” *World Leisure Journal* 65, no. 2 (2023): 256–275.

15. Paul Green, “Disruptions of self, place and mobility: Digital nomads in Chiang Mai, Thailand,” *Mobilities* 15, no. 3 (2020): 431–445.

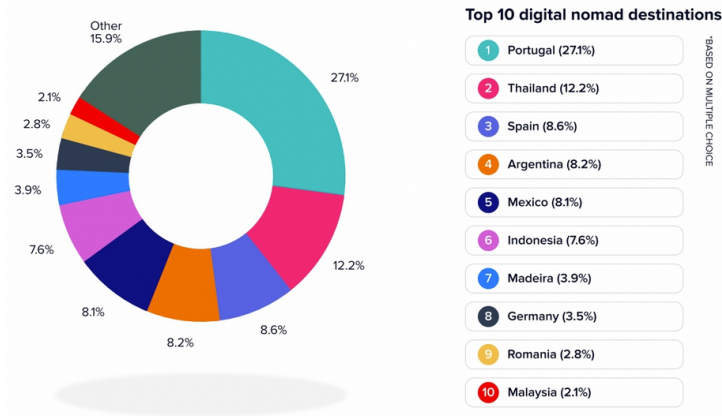


Figure 2: Digital nomad favorite destination (Adapted from Siôn Geschwindt, The Next Web, 2023)

its tourist attractions (landscapes, culture...), high accessibility to the Internet, including lots of co-working spaces. Indeed, numerous work-leisure spaces have emerged in Thailand to meet the demands of digital nomads, offering a diverse range of amenities and services.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Chiang Mai, the largest city in northern Thailand, is one of the most popular destinations for digital nomads in Thailand, often called the “digital nomad capital”.

Currently, there is no digital nomad visa in Thailand. Meanwhile, the Long Term Residency (LTR) permit introduced in 2022 is addressed to high-skilled workers staying for a long period (maximum 10 years), hence it includes expats according to our definition. The tourist visa in Thailand is valid for two months, and it does not authorize gainful employment. However, the majority of digital nomads use this entry method as they just need a laptop and an internet connection. Finally, the Smart Visa is for professional workers, investors, and entrepreneurs granting the right to stay in Thailand for 4 years. Although it is not impossible for digital nomads to apply for this category, most of them choose to take advantage of the tourist visa to remain in the country.

## 2 Perspectives on migrants: motives, lives & challenges

### 2.1 Study on Western Expats in Thailand

In this section, we will specially focus on the Western expats in Thailand. In Table 1, it would, for instance, concern the UK, USA, France, and Australia, hence a total of 27,700 work permit issuance for professional and skilled occupations in 2016, which represents about 21% of the total this year.

Typically, migration flows from underdeveloped to more developed nations as migrants often seek improved economic and political conditions. However, a significant portion of international migrants move in the opposite direction, we will delve into the reasons behind this phenomenon.

A study by Robert W Howard, “The migration of westerners to Thailand: an unusual flow from developed to developing world,” *International Migration* 47, no. 2 (2009): 193–225, surveyed a sample of one thousand Western expatriates in Thailand to gather insights into their

<sup>16</sup> Marko Orel, “Life is better in flip flops. Digital nomads and their transformational travels to Thailand,” *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research* 15, no. 1 (2021): 3–9.

	All Respondents (N = 1003)	Marginals (N = 366)
Median age	43 years	38 years
Percent male	96.61	96.99
Most frequent nationalities		
UK	30.71	33.61
USA	29.01	24.04
Australia	13.36	14.75
Canada	5.38	5.46
Netherlands	3.49	3.57
Germany	2.99	3.57
Educational level		
High school or less	16.25	20.22
Some post-secondary	18.45	18.85
Bachelors degree	38.99	43.99
Postgraduate degree	26.02	16.39
Current marital status		
Married to Thai	30	27.32
Live-in Thai partner	17.95	20.22
Married to non-Thai	3.1	4.64
Never married	27.12	34.7
Residence		
Bangkok	54.59	56.56
Pattaya	14.37	11.2
Chiang Mai	6.49	8.57
Phuket	5.79	6.01
Hua Hin	1.5	1.64
Ko Samui	1.1	1.91
Other	16	15.85
Living 11 or 12 months a year in Thailand	67	70.22

Figure 3: Survey 1 by Robert W Howard

motivations for choosing the country, their assimilation experiences, overall well-being, and the reason for departure for those who had left Thailand. We will present the findings through four distinct tables and discuss the key observations.

Firstly, all the participants of the survey have lived for at least one year in Thailand. They are not all workers, among them are retirees, but also “marginals” who first came for tourism and then decided to stay, which will not be discussed this time. In the study, they estimated the number of white foreign residents in Thailand to be around 100,000 individuals, which represents only 0.15% of the Thai population.

We can see in figure 3 that the median age is 43 years, most of the migrants are men and the most frequent nationalities are UK and USA (around 30% each, which is coherent with 1). Furthermore, approximately one-third have bachelor’s and postgraduate degrees, representing the “highly skilled worker” category. It is interesting to note that 30% are married to Thai and 18% are not married but are living with a Thai partner. Marital status provides valuable insights into the integration of expatriates into Thai society, with a significant portion appearing to seek connections with Thai partners. Additionally, it’s notable that over half of the sample resided in Bangkok, the capital city where employment opportunities are most abundant. It is a very attractive city, acting as a central travel hub in Southeast Asia and drawing in millions of tourists each year.<sup>17</sup>

The most relevant table for our study is Table 4, where the motivations for migrating to Thailand are given, as the reasons for departure. Over half of the sample expressed that the Thai lifestyle was a motivating factor for them. This encompasses various aspects such as the cuisine, culture, and interactions with the local people, making it a broad yet significant aspect of their

17. Robert D Garrett, “Moving from the Global North to the Global South: Understanding Self-initiated Expatriation to Bangkok, Thailand” (PhD diss., Oklahoma State University, 2019).

	All Respondents (N = 1003)	Marginals (N = 366)
Reason/s moved to Thailand		
Thai lifestyle	53.84	62.84
Low living costs	41.67	43.72
Thai women/men	36.49	47.54
Climate	35.39	40.98
Thai culture	31.42	37.98
Dislike home country	27.22	36.34
To take up job	26.42	0
Other	16.05	22.13
Thai partner returned	5.58	0
	All Leavers (N = 312)	Marginals (N = 140)
Reason/s left Thailand		
Financial	38.46	58.57
Left expat job	33.65	6.43
Disillusioned with Thailand	18.59	22.86
Visa reasons	10.26	12.14
Missed life in West	9.29	12.86
Other	24.68	28.57
Would still leave		
Yes	53.21	52.86
Uncertain	21.79	23.57
No	23.08	22.14
Would return if won \$10 million lottery	54.17	50

Figure 4: Survey 2 by Robert W Howard

decision-making process. These factors are especially relevant for digital nomads, also known as “lifestyle migrants”. In the second position (42% of the sample) is a more precise motivation, which are the low living costs. A surprising motivation (in third place, with 37% of the sample) is the Thai women/men, this category includes the expats who want a social life with an open and friendly attitude from the locals, but also the ones who are seeking attractive sexual partners or romantic relationships. Then we find other motivations like the climate and the Thai culture, and the first “push” factor, 27% disliked aspects of their home country, like the high living costs, the political situation, the cold winters (in Europe or Canada for instance)... Another study<sup>18</sup> uncovered negative push factors like divorce, professional exhaustion, or unsuccessful business within their country of origin. Finally, 26% of the sample came to Thailand for a job.

Concerning the reasons for departure, the major one was the financial aspect (38%), 34% left Thailand after leaving their expat job, and they had no more reason to stay abroad. Nearly one-fifth left because they were disappointed with their life in Thailand. The drawbacks of life in this country are mainly the local corruption (for example in the police department: they are often controlling the traffic and they request tremendous amounts of money from white foreigners if speed regulation is not respected), difficulties in communicating with locals because of the language, some of the expats in the sample even encountered racism from Thais. Moreover, 10% just left because of Visa issues, and also 10% left because they simply missed life in the West. The financial aspect plays a crucial role because 54% of those who left would return to Thailand if they won 10 million USD at the lottery.

Figure 5 is about the assimilation of the Western expats in Thailand. Half of the sample stated to have a good knowledge of Thai culture, only 1% had little to no knowledge. In fact, around 60% were willing to learn more about the culture. Concerning the Thai language, 15% were fluent to very fluent, and also 15% could not speak or only a few words, the rest were in

18. Garrett, “Moving from the Global North to the Global South: Understanding Self-initiated Expatriation to Bangkok, Thailand.”



	All Respondents (N = 1003)	Marginals (N = 366)
Knowledge of Thai culture		
Excellent	15.15	16.12
Good	54.14	54.92
Some	26.92	25.14
Little	2	2.46
Little to none	0.9	5.46
Want to learn more about Thai culture		
Yes	59.92	59.02
In between	28.41	29.23
No	10.67	10.66
Fluency in Thai language		
Very fluent	3.29	3.83
Fluent	12.86	13.39
In between	31.61	35.79
Some	35.39	31.69
Little or none	15.75	14.21

Figure 5: Survey 3 by Robert W Howard

	All Respondents (N = 1003)	Marginals (N = 366)
Own well-being		
Excellent	39.08	33.06
Good	47.76	50.55
Neutral	9.47	11.48
Poor	2.39	3.28
Very poor	0.3	0
Other farangs' well-being		
Excellent	20.14	14.75
Good	54.84	54.37
Neutral	17.95	24.59
Poor	4.39	3.01
Very poor	1.1	1.37
Acceptance of farangs in general		
Excellent	11.27	9.02
Good	47.96	44.81
Neutral	25.42	29.78
Poor	11.37	12.02
Very poor	2.89	3.28
Feel accepted oneself		
Yes	55.03	49.18
Somewhat	36.89	40.44
No	6.78	8.2
Persons mainly socialized with		
Other farangs	46.06	41.26
Thai friends	22.23	21.58
Thai spouse	8.47	8.2
Thais in bar scene	5.83	7.38
Other	15.75	19.13

Figure 6: Survey 3 by Robert W Howard

between.

The last part of the survey was about the well-being (Figure 6). The majority were feeling excellent or good during their time in Thailand, and only 2% felt poor. Here, in the table, the term *farang* refers to white foreigners and his badly connotated.<sup>19</sup> In relation to sexual well-being, prostitution in Thailand can take place in a different manner compared to how it is done in many Western countries and can be confusing to expats. For example, in Europe, a prostitute will generally wait in the street for a customer and directly talk about the price of the service, whereas in Thailand she will not ask directly ask for money but will benefit from the standard of living of the *farang* on long-term.

Relationships between *farangs* and Thai girls began with the arrival of American military men in 1962, a significant number among them maintained Thai mistresses, often labeled as

19. Erik Cohen, "Thai girls and Farang men the edge of ambiguity," *Annals of tourism Research* 9, no. 3 (1982): 403–428.

“hired wives” or “rented wives”. The boundary between emotional love and prostitution is very delicate in relationships between *farangs* and Thai women. This can be one of the disillusion of Western expats, who came to seek love but don’t know for sure if their Thai spouse or girlfriend loves them or their money. Moreover, while the identity of Western men affords them social standing, it also cultivates feelings of heightened vulnerability and social detachment.<sup>20</sup> Being far away from home, *farangs* are not used to local customs and surroundings, and this makes them an easy prey for swindlers. Furthermore, only 22% socialized most with Thai friends, whereas 46% socialized most with other Westerners. Primarily, the language barrier contributes significantly to this phenomenon, as it’s often easier to communicate and foster friendships with individuals who share the same culture. However, another factor influencing the low percentage of expatriates forming friendships with Thais is the historical backdrop of unequal relations between Westerners and Thais dating back in the colonial era. Despite Thailand never being formally colonized, it has experienced foreign influence, particularly economic dominance from Britain, and served as a buffer zone between French and British colonies in Southeast Asia.<sup>21</sup>

In summary, there are numerous motivations for Western expatriates to relocate to Thailand, extending beyond job opportunities. Factors such as the Thai lifestyle, climate, and attractive sexual partners contribute to the allure. While many expatriates endeavor to integrate by learning the language and forming relationships with Thai people, others opt to remain within expat circles, particularly those with short-term stays. The majority report positive experiences in Thailand, with only a minority feeling disconnected, insecure, or intellectually unstimulated by Thai culture. Nonetheless, the primary reasons for departure typically revolve around financial or visa-related challenges.

## 2.2 Study on Asian Expats in Thailand

Besides Western expats, there are also large Asian expat populations in Thailand. If we take another look at Table 1, we can see that the largest populations coming from Asia in 2014-2017 are coming from Japan and China. Since that year, both of these groups have grown significantly too.

### 2.2.1 Japanese Expats in Thailand

Data from 2024 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan shows that a little over 72000 Japanese people were living in Thailand, a number that has been relatively stable over the past 4 years.<sup>22</sup> This is significant, as at the same time the amount of Japanese people overseas in general has decreased by over 8%. Thailand is home to the 5<sup>th</sup> largest Japanese overseas community, after the US, China, Australia, and Canada. The data also shows that around 70%

---

20. Megan Lafferty and Kristen Hill Maher, “The expat life with a Thai wife: Thailand as an imagined space of masculine transformation,” in *Contemporary socio-cultural and political perspectives in Thailand* (Springer, 2013), 311–327.

21. Garrett, “Moving from the Global North to the Global South: Understanding Self-initiated Expatriation to Bangkok, Thailand.”

22. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Survey statistics on Japanese people living overseas*, 2023, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/toko/tokei/hojin/index.html>.

of these Japanese nationals live in Thailand's capital, Bangkok. Another 10% resides in the Chon Buri province, home to, among others, the province capital with the same name and the city of Pattaya.

This links directly to one of the main reasons Japanese people migrate to Thailand. An increasing number of Japanese nationals in Thailand identify as *lifestyle migrants*.<sup>2324</sup> Lifestyle migrants have come to be understood as 'relatively affluent individuals of all ages, moving either part-time or full-time, to places which, for various reasons, signify, for the migrant, a better quality of life'.<sup>2526</sup> For the Japanese people, this comes for a variety of reasons. Young people often have a desire to leave the country to escape the stress of Japanese society.<sup>27</sup> This desire is then further amplified by the struggles young Japanese people face finding jobs since the Japanese asset price bubble burst in 1991. In interviews, many Japanese people who made the move mention how Thailand, in contrast to Japan, has a culture of freedom, spiritual affluence, easygoingness, and friendly people. There are also ample business opportunities (such as opening a Japanese restaurant, or trading) and low cost of living. These economic benefits are not only in the present but are going to be stronger in the future. Where Japan's population has been aging and its economy has been slowing, Thailand is still developing and its economy is growing.

Within the group of younger Japanese people in Thailand, there is also a gender imbalance. Young female Japanese citizens are more likely to move overseas than young male Japanese. A large reason for this could be the major gender imbalance that is an issue plaguing Japan. According to the World Economic Forum, Japan has the worst gender equality in all of East and Southeast Asia & the Pacific.<sup>28</sup> Worldwide, it ranks 125th out of 146 included countries. Therefore many young Japanese women leave the country to enjoy a larger range of opportunities and often find husbands abroad who are open to more flexibility and less bound to gender stereotypes.<sup>29</sup>

When it comes to Japanese males, it used to be the case that a large part of them were sent as corporate expatriates. However, the number of Japanese expatriates has been steadily decreasing for a long time. Research from 1998 shows a large decline up until that point in time<sup>30</sup> and recent numbers strongly suggest that this trend continues, as can be seen in Figure

---

23. Miwa Shibuya, "Collective Imaginings in the Interactions of a Lifestyle Migrant Community: Japanese Retirees in Chiang Mai, Thailand," *SOKENDAI Review of Cultural and Social Studies* 19 (2023): 260–242, <https://core.ac.uk/download/561049296.pdf>.

24. Mayumi Ono, "Descending from Japan: Lifestyle mobility of Japanese male youth to Thailand," *Asian Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (September 2015): 249–264, ISSN: 2168-4227, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1683478x.2015.1117220>.

25. Michaela Benson and Karen O'Reilly, "Migration and the Search for a Better Way of Life: A Critical Exploration of Lifestyle Migration," *The Sociological Review* 57, no. 4 (November 2009): 608–625, ISSN: 1467-954X, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954x.2009.01864.x>.

26. Rob Stones et al., "One world is not enough: the structured phenomenology of lifestyle migrants in East Asia," *The British Journal of Sociology* 70, no. 1 (2018): 44–69, ISSN: 1468-4446, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12357>.

27. Ono, "Descending from Japan: Lifestyle mobility of Japanese male youth to Thailand."

28. World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*, 2023, [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf).

29. Karen Kelsky, *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams* (Duke University Press, 2001), ISBN: 9780822383277, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822383277>.

30. Paul W. Beamish and Andrew C. Inkpen, "Japanese firms and the decline of the Japanese expatriate," *Journal of World Business* 33, no. 1 (1998): 35–50, ISSN: 1090-9516, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1090-9516\(98\)80003-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1090-9516(98)80003-5).

7.

Regardless of their intention, the process of migration is not without its challenges and complexities. Once a Japanese person decides to move to Thailand, they will face a set of obstacles. A study conducted in 2012 interviewed 10 elderly (age 60+) Japanese nationals living in Thailand and asked them about their experiences.<sup>31</sup> Even though the participants had been living in Thailand for 9 years on average already, none of them confidently spoke the Thai language. They mentioned the difficulties faced when initiating banking transactions, finding accommodation, and renewing their visa. While overseas, Japanese people tend to cluster together, shopping at Japanese stores, eating Japanese food at Japanese-owned restaurants, and spending their free time in Japanese communities.

A different study on British lifestyle migrants to Thailand uncovered some of the same issues.<sup>32</sup> A big issue as a transnational lifestyle migrant, they say, is finding a new social circle in the destination country. Another point is having a blurred image of belonging. People living in another country often have a strong sense of belonging to the country they have set sail from, and some sense of belonging to the country they arrived in, which puts them in a special place. After arriving in their new home countries, these people often embark on an ethnic adhesive assimilation trajectory. This is the path to adapting in different ways, and in various degrees, to the host society. Here they blend some aspects of their own culture with some of the host society. Social isolation, as discussed, will hamper integration into the host society and therefore further spur more social isolation.

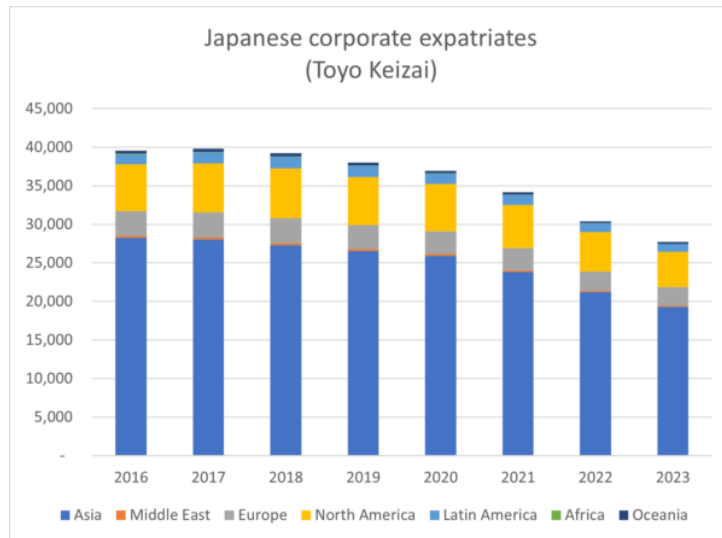


Figure 7: The amount of Japanese corporate expatriates globally, as measured by Toyo Keizai Data Services<sup>33</sup>

31. Prathurong Hongsraragon et al., “Determining Factors for and Social Integration of Japanese Lifestyle Migrants in Bangkok, Thailand: a Case Study” 29, no. 1 (2015): 71–78, <https://he01.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jhealithres/article/view/79965>.

32. Stones et al., “One world is not enough: the structured phenomenology of lifestyle migrants in East Asia.”

33. Pernille Rudlin, *What is behind the 30% drop since 2016 in Japanese corporate expatriates?*, 2023, <https://rudlinconsulting.com/japanese-companies-localizing-virtual-global-assignments/>

### 2.2.2 Chinese migrants in Thailand

The second largest group of professional immigrants in Thailand, according to Table 1, is the group of Chinese immigrants. Since the making of this table, the amount of Chinese nationals in Thailand has far overtaken the Japanese community. There are no official statistics, but estimates from the Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore put the number of Chinese people in Thailand at around 110,000-130,000.<sup>34</sup> The new Chinese immigrants, or *xin yimin* (新移民) as they are called, move to Thailand for five main reasons. They come as entrepreneurs, employees for a company, lifestyle migrants, students, and accompanying family members of someone from the previous four categories.<sup>35</sup>

The Thai Immigration Bureau has documented the province in which foreign nationals extend their visas. The distribution over the country for the Chinese in Thailand can be seen in the map in Figure 8. In contrast to the Japanese community, where 80% are located in two provinces, the Chinese are far more spread out over the country. Here, the two largest host provinces, Bangkok and Tak, are only home to about 26% of Chinese people.

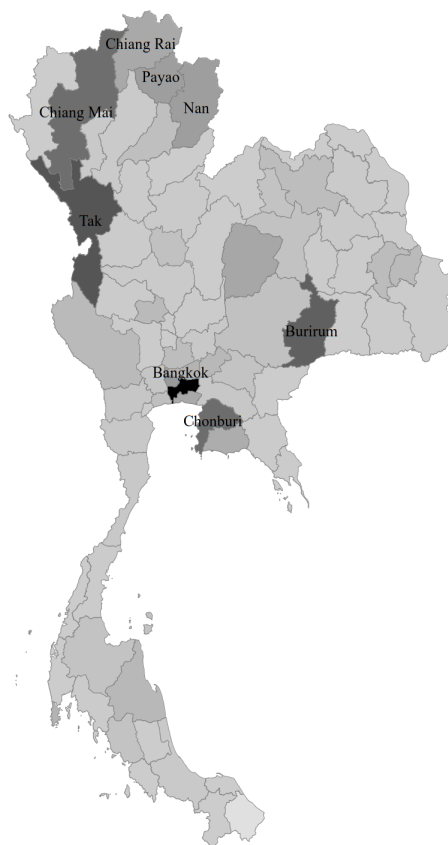


Figure 8: Regions where Chinese nationals extend their visa<sup>36</sup>

Some reasons for Chinese people to come to Thailand overlap with the reasons for the

---

34. Sivarin Lertpusit, *New Chinese Migrants in Thailand and the Perceived Impact on Thai People*, 2023, [http://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/TRS11\\_23.pdf](http://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/TRS11_23.pdf).

35. Jiangyu Li and Aranya Siriphon, "Consumption, ongoingness and everyday-life embeddedness: Lifestyle experiences of Chinese transient migrants in Chiang Mai, Thailand," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 31, no. 4 (2022): 511–535, ISSN: 0117-1968, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01171968221145339>.

36. Lertpusit

Japanese to come. A less stressful lifestyle and affordable living expenses are among those. Interview respondents also mention political and economic differences as major factors. More specifically, these respondents prefer Thailand's free economy and the ability to purchase a car without restrictions. Thailand has been actively promoting Chinese education, language, and cultural connections to attract investment from China.<sup>37</sup> This has led to considerable amounts of Chinese students enrolling in Thai institutes for higher education. The advantages of studying in Thailand are manifold. Thai universities offer internationally recognized degrees for a low tuition fee. As education in China is very competitive, this makes for a good alternative. These students, along with people coming for business and work reasons, often learn the Thai language. The Chinese from the other two groups: lifestyle migrants and accompanying family members often do not.

Immigrants from the prior three groups are often welcomed with open arms. They give Thai entrepreneurs access to more capital, open new trade routes and thus improve exports, and also spend money in Thailand, boosting the local economy. One example is the boost for Thai language schools as a result of outsiders moving in. Chinese businesses also bring in their more advanced technologies and knowledge when opening up shop in Thailand. This knowledge transfer often happens around technologies such as e-commerce, electric vehicles, and infrastructure projects.

However, there are also major drawbacks to the Chinese migration. Thais perceive the new Chinese immigrants (the *xin yimin*, 新移民) as lacking social manners. In interviews, Thai respondents say these people often litter, cut in lines, ignore traffic laws, break legal and civil regulations, are generally loud, and commit offensive acts.<sup>38</sup> These negative stereotypes strongly hinder integration and hamper business opportunities. This then leads to social exclusion and the creation of parallel communities.

## 2.3 Study on Burmese migrant workers in Thailand

### 2.3.1 Drivers of Myanmar to Thailand migration

The phenomenon of migration from Myanmar to Thailand is a significant aspect of the socio-economic landscape of Southeast Asia. In 2017, migrants from Myanmar represented a substantial 69% of the total number of low-skilled migrant workers in Thailand who held work permits.<sup>39</sup> This overwhelming majority underscores the reliance of Thailand's economy on the labor provided by its neighboring country's populace. Although Myanmar possesses some cultural similarities with Thailand, such as the same primary religion (Theravada Buddhism),

---

37. Ryan D Skaggs, Nitus Chukaew, and Jordan Stephens, "Characterizing Chinese influence in Thailand," *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 2023, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/3606690/characterizing-chinese-influence-in-thailand/>.

38. Aranya Siriphon, Fanzura Banu, and Pagon Gatchalee, *New Chinese Migrants in Chiang Mai: Parallel Paths for Social Interaction and Cultural Adjustment*, 2022, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2022-30-new-chinese-migrants-in-chiang-mai-parallel-paths-for-social-interaction-and-cultural-adjustment-by-aranya-siriphon-fanzura-banu-and-pagon-gatchalee/>.

39. United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand, "Thailand migration report 2019" (United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand Bangkok, Thailand, 2019).

many differences exist, for example, the writing and semantics of the Burmese and Thai languages are very different. Therefore, it is important to understand the reasons for migrating to a country very different from their home.

Myanmar's economic situation is a critical driver of this migration trend. Ranking as the nation with the lowest GDP per capita in East Asia and the Pacific region, Myanmar's economic challenges push its citizens to seek better livelihoods abroad. Thailand presents a more favorable economic environment, with a minimum wage that is significantly higher, approximately 10.20 USD compared to Myanmar's 2.77 USD. This stark disparity not only offers a better standard of living for the migrants but also enables them to remit a portion of their earnings back to their families in Myanmar, thus supporting their relatives from afar.

Myanmar's economic struggles have been exacerbated by recent political instability. Post-2020, following the military coup, Myanmar's unemployment rates soared, while Thailand maintained steady lower unemployment figures. The promise of job availability and the allure of higher wages draw many from Myanmar to Thailand, with these factors being the predominant reasons for the migration of the Burmese people. However, the path to legal employment in Thailand is not without hurdles. The process of obtaining a work permit can be arduous and costly, especially for low-skilled laborers who often resort to brokers. Consequently, this leads to a substantial number of migrants engaging in undocumented work, which carries its own set of risks and vulnerabilities.

In 2020 the military-affiliated party of Myanmar significant loss in the parliamentary elections led to a rejection of the results and subsequent coup d'état on February 1, 2021. The military junta's establishment of martial law and suppression of public dissent have ignited a civil conflict that has propelled the migration of Burmese people to neighboring nations, including Thailand. Human Rights Watch reported that in response to the coup, at least 45,000 individuals sought refuge in Thailand, putting pressure on the already strained temporary shelters housing refugees since the mid-1980s. The Thai government's pushback against these refugees has compelled many to seek alternative, often illicit, entry methods into the country, frequently relying on brokers.

The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) compiled by Daniel Kaufmann and Aart Kraay provide a multidimensional view of governance quality across over 200 countries from 1996 to 2023,<sup>42</sup> encompassing metrics such as Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, and Control of Corruption. According to the data, Myanmar exhibits notably low scores across all governance indicators, with a brief improvement observed around 2011 during the dissolution of the previous military junta, only to decline following the 2020 coup.

In contrast, Thailand has demonstrated relative stability, maintaining a constitutional monarchy since the 2006 military coup. Despite experiencing terrorist activities linked to opposition groups, the Thai government has managed to uphold a level of stability that has not drastically affected the everyday lives of its citizens. While Thailand's regime can be characterized as

---

41. Daniel Kaufmann and Aart Kraay, "Governance indicators evolution between Myanmar and Thailand from 1996 and 2023," accessed October 4, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators/interactive-data-access>

42. Daniel Kaufmann and Aart Kraay.

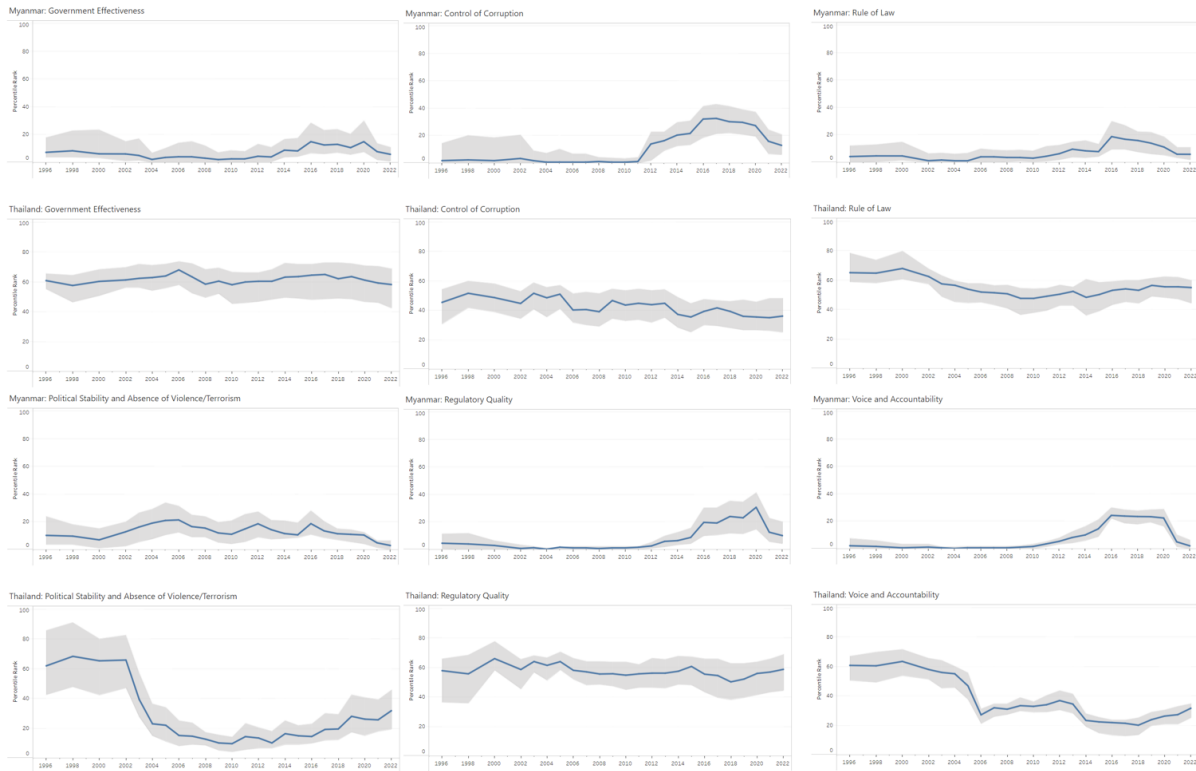


Figure 9: Comparative evolution of governance indicators between Myanmar and Thailand between 1996 and 2023<sup>41</sup>

oppressive and authoritarian, it is perceived as less extreme compared to the current situation in Myanmar.

Although healthcare access is not explicitly a driver of migration for Burmese people it contributes to the higher standard of living they pursue and it significantly differentiates between the two countries. The Health Access and Quality Index is a measurement based on the death rates from 32 causes of death that could be avoided by time and effective medical care. Out of 100, Myanmar had an index of 48.4 and Thailand had an index of 70.8 in 2015.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, Thailand possesses a universal healthcare system for Thai people that extends to all legal residents and aims to reach also non-legal residents.<sup>44</sup>

Social networks play a significant role, with many individuals migrating through the assistance of a relatives or friends already established in Thailand. Around 52% of Myanmar prepare for their migration with the help of family or friends located either in Myanmar or already established in Thailand.<sup>45</sup> These close social connections not only facilitate the migration process but also provide a support system for new arrivals as they navigate the challenges of assimilating into a new country and workforce. It contributes to the primary reason of migration, amongst other actors, which is the ease of entry into Thailand.<sup>46</sup>

43. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2017) – processed by Our World in Data, “HAQ Index (IHME (2017)),” <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/healthcare-access-and-quality-index>.

44. Migration in Thailand, “Thailand migration report 2019.”

45. Siwat Chairattana and Thawatchai Khanawiwat, *The Report on the Route of Migration from Myanmar and Cambodia to Thailand*, Plan International Thailand, Accessed: 2024-05-14, 2020, [https://plan-international.org/uploads/sites/82/2022/02/migration\\_route\\_report.eng\\_.fairfish.pdf](https://plan-international.org/uploads/sites/82/2022/02/migration_route_report.eng_.fairfish.pdf).

46. Chairattana and Khanawiwat.



### 2.3.2 The Reality of Migration Processes from Myanmar to Thailand

As explained in the legal framework explanations (see 1.1), migrants are subject to several restrictions. All those requirements that are asked of migrants highlight the difficulty of obtaining a work permit, partly explaining the number of illegal migrants. Additionally, according to the Global Knowledge Index, Myanmar ranks 118 out of 133 countries. It displays the population’s under-education and explains the difficulty of fulfilling the legal process without the help of a broker or through corruption. For migrants, the process is also time-consuming and costly. To legally enter the country, they are subject to a pre-departure process in their home country under MoU arrangement. The system incorporates the issuing of passports, visas, work permits and health insurance, as well as pre-departure training for migrants. The bilateral arrangement encompasses both government agencies (e.g., labour Departments), aspiring migrants, employers, and licensed recruitment agencies in regulating temporary labour migration.<sup>47</sup> However, this system doesn’t work in practice, due to the prohibitive costs and over-complexity of the process. An additional barrier for Myanmar migrants is the difficulty of accessing formal documents, such as birth certificates, because of authoritarian rule and ethnic conflicts. Since 2016, the Thai government has tried to address this issue by delivering informal work permits to illegal migrants, known as “pink cards,” using them as a way to convert illegal migrant workers into the MoU system. However, they are more restrictive than work permits. Migrants are not allowed to cross provincial delimitation beyond their workplace.<sup>48</sup>

All those difficulties resulted in massive illegal entries into Thai territory by Myanmar migrants. Although it is difficult to estimate the total number of illegal workers, some studies give insight into its scale. It is estimated that 91% of Myanmar migrant workers enter the country using irregular channels<sup>49</sup> and in 2021, more than 42400 migrants have been arrested for entering the country illegally.<sup>50</sup>

Table 1: Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants to Thailand (2013)<sup>51</sup>

Migration Route	Percentage (%)
Family and Friends	43.3
Brokers	37.7
On their own	18.5
Formal Recruitment Process (MoU)	0.5

On the other hand, the use of brokers is much more practical and used (see Table 1). Where it would take 3 to 6 months to be allowed to migrate to Thailand legally and around 700 USD to pay for necessary documents and other fees, brokers would allow them to enter the country within days and would cost between 100 to 150 USD.<sup>52</sup> One other way for migrants that is

47. Sverre Molland, “Safe migration: Re-embedding as anticipatory, de-territorial governance,” *Population, Space and Place* n/a, no. n/a, e2750, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2750>, eprint: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/psp.2750>, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/psp.2750>.

48. Molland.

49. Migration in Thailand, “Thailand migration report 2019.”

50. Post Reporters, “42,000 illegal migrants caught this year,” Accessed: 2024-05-14, *Bangkok Post*, December 2021, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2235699/42-000-illegal-migrants-caught-this-year>.

52. Migration in Thailand, “Thailand migration report 2019.”

widely used is to enter the country with their passport and a 1-month tourist visa without coming back to their home country after their visa's expiration.<sup>53</sup>

It is also convenient for employers to hire illegal workers informally and then legalize their status because the MoU system would require them to travel to the country of origin, with no assurance of success or finding the right workers. Therefore, employers tap into the large pool of migrant workers that are already in Thailand and need to formalize their status.<sup>54</sup> This “public secret” doesn’t always come to a negative outcome for Myanmar migrants, but in some cases, those system flaws lead to the exploitation of migrants by employers.

### 2.3.3 Working around the clock: treatment and integration of Burmese workers

Without prior working experience in Thailand, newly-arrived Burmese migrants tend to occupy low-skilled labour-intensive jobs in sectors such as agriculture, fishery, and textile industry.<sup>55</sup> Many of these are so-called 3D (dirty, dangerous, and demeaning) jobs with underpaid salary which Thai people are reluctant to take.<sup>57</sup> In the following sections, we will first provide an overview of the living and working conditions surrounding these Burmese migrant workers. In particular, we will focus on those who engage in the fishery and the garment industry owing to the availability of literature. Secondly, there exist certain advantages to being an unregistered migrant over a registered migrant in Thailand, which is a category that most Burmese workers fall into. We will examine this trade-off, with a particular focus on whether the ongoing increasing governmental control of non-skilled migrants is beneficial to Burmese workers. Thirdly, we will discuss the difficulties encountered by Burmese migrants as they integrate to Thailand. Although many of the challenges are not unique to Burmese but can also be experienced by any migrant population, our research highlights the discrimination ingrained in Thai society.

To illustrate the lives of Burmese migrant workers in Thailand, we will first describe the working conditions of fishery and garment factory workers where many Burmese are to be found. While both sectors are characterized by long working hours, the demographics of workers in these two scenes are contrasting. The garment factory workers are mostly young single women, and they account for up to 80% of the workers in some facilities.<sup>60</sup> Their typical work day consists of two shifts, from 8 am to 5 pm and 6 to 9 pm with two 30-minute breaks, amounting to 11 hrs of labour.<sup>61</sup> Although the conditions are arduous by many developed countries’ standards, the Burmese sometimes prefer to work longer hours to gain extra income for overtime work,

---

53. Molland, “Safe migration: Re-embedding as anticipatory, de-territorial governance.”

54. Molland.

55. Myanmar Development Observatory, *Seeking opportunities elsewhere: Exploring the lives and challenges of Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand* (United Nations Myanmar, 2023), 60, accessed March 27, 2024, <https://myanmar.un.org/en/254675-seeking-opportunities-elsewhere-exploring-lives-and-challenges-myanmar-migrant-workers>.

56. Kornkanok Sarapirom, Muensakda Pongsak, and Thitiporn Sriwanna, “Lifestyles of Myanmar migrant workers under Thai socio-cultural context: A challenge of state management in the future | Interdisciplinary Research Review,” October 21, 2020, accessed March 27, 2024, <https://ph02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jtir/article/view/240032>.

57. Ruth. Pearson and Kyoko. Kusakabe, *Thailand's hidden workforce : Burmese migrant women factory workers*, Publication Title: Thailand's hidden workforce : Burmese migrant women factory workers (London: Zed Books, 2012), 13, ISBN: 978-1-84813-984-8.

59. Sarapirom, Pongsak, and Sriwanna

60. Pearson and Kusakabe, *Thailand's hidden workforce : Burmese migrant women factory workers*, 77–78.

61. Pearson and Kusakabe, 85.

## Share of Migrant Workers in Thai Labour Market (%)

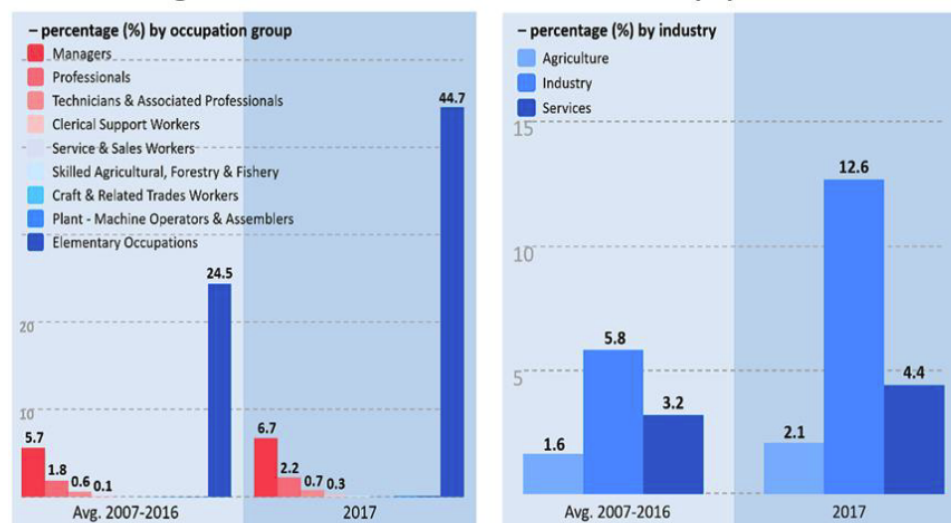


Figure 10: Group-wise (left) & industry-wise (right) distribution of migrant workers in Thailand. Adapted from Sarapirom, Pongsak & Sriwana (2020), *Interdisciplinary Research Review*, 10, Figure 1.<sup>59</sup>

and some claim that the conditions are much better than factories in Myanmar.<sup>62</sup> In the fishery sector, on the other hand, most workers are young males due to the physical intensity of the labour.<sup>63</sup> According to the questionnaire completed by 596 migrant fishers from Rayong, Samut Sakhon, Ranong and Songkhla provinces, 25% of workers reported more than 17 hours of work per day while 41.1% of them claimed to work indefinite hours. Furthermore, 16.9% of the interviewees self-identified as victims of human trafficking among which 26% of them came from Myanmar. The financial obligation was the most prevailing reason which was keeping these workers as hostages, and employers could withhold their pay or confiscate identity documents to exploit their labour.

As the media coverage exposed these harsh working conditions of fishery workers, the pressure from international communities pushed the Thai government to enact a number of regulations, making the fishery one of the most controlled and strictly regulated sectors for Burmese migrant workers.<sup>64</sup><sup>65</sup><sup>66</sup> However, this comes with a further sacrifice of more expense for migrant workers. In order to navigate complex immigration paperwork, they often have to rely on brokers or agencies charging high fees to the client. For migrant workers, this can potentially create more dependence on employers since workers desperately need to recover the initial cost,

62. Pearson and Kusakabe, *Thailand's hidden workforce : Burmese migrant women factory workers*, 88.

63. Koichi Fujita et al., "Myanmar migrant laborers in Ranong, Thailand," Publisher: Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-JETRO), *IDE Discussion Paper* 257 (2010), accessed March 15, 2024, <https://ir.ide.go.jp/records/37914>.

64. Alin Kadfak and Marie Widengård, "From fish to fishworker traceability in Thai fisheries reform," Publisher: SAGE Publications Ltd STM, *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 6, no. 2 (June 1, 2023): 1322–1342, ISSN: 2514-8486, accessed March 31, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1177/25148486221104992>.

65. Patpicha Tanakasempipat, "Thousands of Thai fishermen protest against tough industry regulations," *Reuters*, December 17, 2019, accessed March 31, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN1YL0VX/>.

66. Supang Chantavanich, Samarn Laodumrongchai, and Christina Stringer, "Under the shadow: Forced labour among sea fishers in Thailand," *Marine Policy* 68 (June 1, 2016): 1–7, ISSN: 0308-597X, accessed March 6, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2015.12.015>.

in addition to the fact that only a short unemployment period is allowed after they lose their job to stay in the country. In other words, the stringent registration process deprives migrant workers of their mobility, previously allowing them to escape abusive employers. Although we discussed fishery as an example, it is probable that Burmese migrant workers in other sectors are navigating the same dilemma every time the Thai immigration law concerning registration is modified. While more rigorous documentation of migrant workers admittedly comes with these negative effects, there are obvious benefits when it comes to receiving social and medical support. As a country that provides universal health care, be it registered or unregistered, all residents in Thailand are entitled to public health insurance.<sup>67</sup> However, the inscription process requires the submission of identity documents which unregistered migrant workers are often lacking. In fact, the survey of 2,249 migrant workers conducted across 13 provinces in Thailand shows that undocumented migrant workers are markedly less likely to visit both public and private hospitals (see Figure 11). Although one might hypothesize that unregistered workers are overall younger than registered ones and thus, they are less in need of medical attention, it is presumable that providing proper legal documentation to migrant workers can improve their access to medicine. Considering the fact that 75% of the influx of documented migrant workers comes from Myanmar,<sup>68</sup> it is reasonable to assume that the trade-off between being registered/unregistered concerns many Burmese migrant workers.

As is often the case with many migrants, Burmese migrant workers undergo mental and socio-cultural challenges as they adapt to life in Thailand. A series of interviews with 36 Burmese workers in Samut Sakhon Province provides a glimpse of some of these struggles.<sup>71</sup> To start with, for those who work at a factory, their long working hours prevent them from participating in local activities and force them to stay inside the factory. Indeed, it is reported that the study participants worked 12 hours per day on average and only had 4 days off per month. The isolation from the local community seems to be exacerbated by the fear of encountering discrimination within what little time is left for the workers to go out. Indeed, one interviewee expressed being self-conscious at a local market dreading that someone might spot them as Burmese, not Thai. And their perception is not merely an illusion. While it does not speak for all Thais, it is mentioned that popular culture such as dramas and novels repeatedly portrays the past invasion and historical atrocity of Burmese people such as the destruction of Ayutthaya in 1767, and the Burmese are radically associated with negative sentiment, reinforcing the division between the Thais and the Burmese.<sup>72</sup> Despite the adversities, some Burmese migrants do manage to integrate into Thailand well and start a life with a Thai partner. However, an anecdote from a worker who married a Thai-Chinese man indicates that the frustration from

---

67. Orawan Tawaytibhongs and Joris Michielsen, “Universal Health Coverage for Undocumented Migrant Workers in Thailand: Challenges in Policy Implementation,” Publisher: Opat Publishing Group, *Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences* 5, no. 3 (August 5, 2022): 206–214, ISSN: 2690-0688, accessed April 1, 2024, <https://www.opastpublishers.com/peer-review/universal-health-coverage-for-undocumented-migrant-workers-in-thailand-challenges-in-policy-implementation-3571.html>.

68. Observatory, *Seeking opportunities elsewhere*.

70. Observatory, 40

71. Sarapirom, Pongsak, and Sriwanna, “Lifestyles of Myanmar migrant workers under Thai socio-cultural context.”

72. Carole Faucher, “Capturing Otherness: Self-Identity and Feelings of Non-Belonging Among Educated Burmese in Thailand,” Number: 2, *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 54–81, ISSN: 2246-2163, accessed March 28, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.22439/cjas.v28i2.3429>.

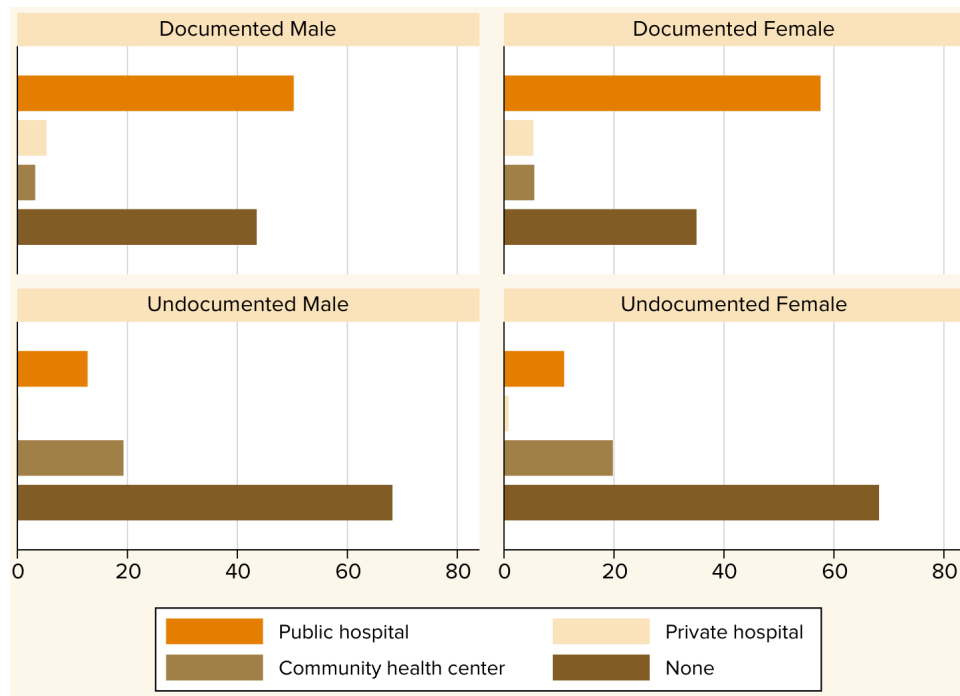


Figure 11: The figure is based on the survey of 2,249 Myanmar migrant workers conducted in 13 different provinces. The x-axis indicates the percentage of workers in each category. Adapted from Myanmar Development Observatory (2023), *United Nations Myanmar*, 40, Figure 21.<sup>70</sup>

intercultural differences is not uncommon.<sup>73</sup> As they confided during the interview, they had become a member of a “hierarchical and mixed tradition structure family” and felt as if most of their autonomy was removed from themselves.

### 2.3.4 Sex workers: A window to human trafficking in Thailand

Despite the difficulty of obtaining an accurate statistic, some of the case studies and first-hand accounts suggest that a sizable number of Burmese women work in the sex industry.<sup>74,75</sup> Therefore, we think it is imperative to spotlight Burmese sex workers in Thailand in our discussion. While some of them voluntarily chose to work in Thailand, the literature reveals that a number of them are victims of human trafficking and thus, facing a distinct set of challenges. According to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “sex workers” are defined as providers of sexual services in exchange for economic benefit between adults.<sup>76</sup> Thai policy regarding prostitution is ambiguous as it is strictly illegal and it is forbidden to advertise it in public. However, it represents a significant part of Thai society as 300,000 sex workers are estimated and would contribute up to 6.4 billion USD per year,<sup>77</sup> which is equivalent to 3% of Thailand’s GDP ac-

73. Sarapirom, Pongsak, and Sriwanna, “Lifestyles of Myanmar migrant workers under Thai socio-cultural context.”

74. Sima Barmania, “Thailand’s migrant sex workers struggle to access health care,” Publisher: Elsevier, *The Lancet* 382, no. 9891 (August 10, 2013): 493–494, ISSN: 0140-6736, 1474-547X, accessed March 27, 2024, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(13\)61681-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(13)61681-5).

75. Fujita et al., “Myanmar migrant laborers in Ranong, Thailand.”

76. Migration in Thailand, “Thailand migration report 2019.”

77. Migration in Thailand.

cording to the 2015 study.<sup>78</sup> The criminalization of sex work institutes a structural barrier that prevents sex workers, especially migrants, from seeking legal protection and accessing justice and leads to exploitation by *thaokae* or pimp through debt repaying.<sup>79</sup> *Thaokaes* (translating to boss) is an essential figure for some of the migrants in Thailand, especially in the sex industry. They are business owners, landlords, pimps, and brokers from which migrants are in financial debt due to their previous expenses such as paying smugglers to pass the border, medical bills, fines for arrests or processing fee for work permit. Being in contact with a *thaokae* helps to find a job and for a lot of migrant women, they are the gateway into the sex work industry. Without prior notice, they get in debt to the *thaokae* and they set the time they have to work for them or set the amount of debt they need to repay. As a very lucrative business, those women start prostitution as a means to get money rapidly. According to interviews with some of them,<sup>80</sup> they can earn between 8.15 USD and 32.62 USD per client, which is above the mean salary in this country. This pattern of “recruitment” falls into the following definition of human trafficking: *recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit.*<sup>81</sup> Human trafficking is not uncommon in Thailand, it is stated as a tier 2 country of the rankings by the Trafficking in Persons Report.<sup>82</sup> It means that governments do not fully comply with all of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA)’s minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards and it is the second worst ranking possible. The global slavery index emphasizes this statement as Thailand has the 3rd strongest response to modern slavery out of the 32 countries of the Asia Pacific region.<sup>83</sup>

### 3 Discussion and comparison between Expats and Burmese Workers

The motivations behind migrating to Thailand vary widely, often influenced by factors such as nationality and social standing. However, there are a few common points that unite all immigrants, the biggest one of which is economic opportunity. Thailand’s expansive job market, spanning from low-skilled to high-skilled positions, coupled with its comparatively lower cost of living, is ideal for individuals seeking a better lifestyle, whether from Western countries, China, or Japan. Adaptation and motivation were different concerning Western expats, Asian expats, and Burmese migrants.

For expatriates, job prospects stand as a primary driving force, as they are often sent by their companies. Besides the job market, these individuals are drawn by an array of *pull factors*, including Thailand’s enchanting landscapes, beautiful beaches, delicious cuisine, and tropical

78. Chattrika Napatanapong and Ratsameechan Saowakhon, *Thailand should legalise prostitution*, Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), Accessed: 2024-05-15, July 2022, <https://tdri.or.th/en/2022/07/thailand-should-legalise-prostitution/>.

79. Migration in Thailand, “Thailand migration report 2019.”

80. Fujita et al., “Myanmar migrant laborers in Ranong, Thailand.”

81. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Human-Trafficking*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Accessed: 2024-05-15, 2023, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-Trafficking/Human-Trafficking.html>.

82. U.S. Department of State, *2023 Trafficking in Persons Report*, U.S. Department of State, Accessed: 2024-05-15, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

83. Walk Free Foundation, *Modern slavery in Thailand*, Walk Free Foundation, Accessed: 2024-05-15, 2023, <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/country-studies/thailand/>.

climate. These factors explain why Thailand attracts so much tourists and digital nomads each year. Conversely, Burmese workers find themselves influenced more by the *push factors*, compelled to flee the critical political situation and the economic hardships of Myanmar. With Myanmar’s standard of living among the world’s lowest and its governance marked by instability and corruption, Thailand presents a lifeline for those seeking refuge and opportunity. Chinese and Japanese people in Thailand alike often seek an escape from their high-pressure societies and the challenges of securing employment. Thailand’s rapidly developing economy provides great grounds for them to achieve this goal. For Chinese migrants, “push factors” were also linked to China’s political situation, the many restrictions, and the lack of liberty. For students, Thailand is also a way to escape the competitive Chinese education system. Japanese expats move because they are either sent by their companies or to escape the large gender imbalances in Japan. Expats coming from Western countries have experienced different push factors, such as the rising cost of living and difficulties in securing housing in many developed economies.

Another crucial aspect is the assimilation of all these different categories of international migrant, and how they are perceived by the Thai population. Discrimination and negative stereotypes from the local Thai population can hinder the integration of both expatriates and Burmese workers, exacerbating the isolation caused by the language barrier. Historical factors both seem to influence the image of Western expats and Burmese workers. While the image of outsiders necessarily follows Caucasian expats due to the colonial era that South East Asia experienced in the past, the association of the Burmese with rogue, brutal invaders that once destroyed the Ayutthaya Kingdom still exists in Thai popular culture. Especially for Burmese people, our literature review suggests that not only low-skilled workers but also highly-educated individuals of Burmese origin face discrimination in Thai society.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, it is crucial to note that distinct stereotypes can be developed for different ethnic groups even when they all share the same category as expats. For instance, while Thais may perceive the Chinese as rude and lacking social manners, the same reputation doesn’t seem to exist for the Japanese.

Indeed, integration in Thailand is very different for the different kinds of groups discussed. Western expats regularly find Thai partners but most fail to learn the language. Japanese expats continue this trend and often stick to a community from their own region even stronger than Western expats. This creates parallel communities as exemplified by Bangkok’s Little Tokyo. The Chinese tend to make stronger connections with the local Thai population, depending on their reason for moving. However, they are sometimes met with strong negative stereotypes, hindering integration. These stereotypes are also a major roadblock for the Burmese migrants moving to Thailand. Some do manage to integrate into Thai society and find Thai partners.

## 4 Limitations of the research

One major limitation of doing research in emerging countries is that data is not widely available and the quality of data is not guaranteed. This is why statistics in this paper are mostly from large international organizations that produce reliable statistics on Thailand, or estimates by scholars. Even the data that is available and officially produced by Thailand’s ministries is biased, because of the complications described in earlier chapters. As obtaining a work permit

---

84. Faucher, “Capturing Otherness.”

can be challenging for some groups, a lot of people moving to Thailand for work skip this step and stay on other sorts of visas instead. Another limitation concerned the western expats study, the data is somehow biased by the fact that marginals participated to the survey. Their characteristics are quite different to the expat category as they don't necessarily have a high-skilled job in Thailand.

## 5 Conclusion

In this report, we compared two categories of international migrants; expats and migrants. The support of this study was the migration to Thailand. We considered Western and Asian expats, and we differentiated them from the digital nomads, which are also an important community in Thailand. Concerning migrants, we chose to focus on Burmese workers, as a massive migration has existed between Myanmar and Thailand since the 80s. The first question we asked ourselves was about the motivation of all these different categories of international migrants to come to Thailand.

Expats have a few common reasons and a few origin-specific reasons for coming to Thailand. Thailand's pull factors are plentiful: good weather, beautiful nature, tasty food, low cost of living, an already large expat community, and many job opportunities. Some Western expats also come to Thailand to find spouses. When it comes to push factors, for Chinese and Japanese expats a large one is to escape the pressure in their home countries. Limited job opportunities at home also play a part for both groups. Japanese females have an extra motivator, namely the large gender imbalance in Japanese society. Chinese people tend to come for the differently managed economy and freedoms that are found in Thailand but not at home.

Burmese workers have many different reasons to migrate. The primary reason is the easy access to the country. Because of the migration system flaws and the wide use of brokers it allows cheap and fast migration. Thailand also benefits from a higher minimum wage and easier job access. It allows numerous families in Myanmar to live with the remittance financial help of their relatives who migrated. On the other hand, Myanmar is subject to political instability since the 2021 coup d'état by the military junta and it leads to an increase of the migrants inflow at the Myanmar-Thailand border. Overall Thailand is a financially stable country that can easily attract the Burmese population seeking a higher standard of living.

After investigating about the motivation of going to Thailand, we asked ourselves a second relevant question, concerning their assimilation in Thailand, their well-being, and how they were perceived from the local population.

Expats generally don't integrate very well in Thailand. Western expats sometimes find Thai partners but feel excluded from society. Although they do make efforts to learn the Thai language, many of them experience difficulty conversing with locals. They do feel connected in Thai society and among the ones who left, the primary reasons concern visa and financial issues. On the other hand, Japanese expats usually do not integrate well into Thai society. They tend to stay within Japanese communities and make little effort to learn the Thai language. This leads to the creation of parallel communities. For Chinese people, it depends on their motivations for moving to Thailand. Students, entrepreneurs, and foreign workers do tend to learn the language well. However, accompanying family members and lifestyle migrants often



do not. Chinese people are seen with mixed views in Thailand. They are seen as good for the economy: bringing modern technologies, enabling exports to the Chinese market, spending money in Thailand, and transferring knowledge. However, culturally, they are met with many negative stereotypes which hamper their ability to integrate into Thai society.

The stereotypes against Burmese workers also exist, and they are more likely to take a form of discrimination due to the historical rivalry going back for centuries. Socio-cultural adaptation and linguistic barrier challenges expats and the Burmese equally. However, Burmese migrant workers also face distinct challenges that are not typically faced by expats. Among which we highlighted were excessively long working hours with sometimes arduous working condition, potentially exploitative employers and the dilemma of registration, both of them preventing the Burmese to integrate well into the society.

There is a considerable risk of human-trafficking while they stay in Thailand, and this has to be acutely addressed by the authority. However, all those difficulties and challenges doesn't necessarily undermine the access to new and profitable opportunities that Thailand has to offer to the Burmese.

Finally, it could be interesting to do further research on the comparative analysis between expats and migrants in other continents, seeing if the situation regarding migration in the Land of Smile is unique or not.

## References

- Acclime Thailand. *Restricted Jobs For Foreigners In Thailand*. Acclime Thailand. Accessed: 2024-05-14, 2024. <https://thailand.acclime.com/guides/restricted-jobs/>.
- Amnesty International. *Thailand The Plight of Burmese Migrant Workers*. Analysis Report, 2005. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa39/001/2005/en/>.
- Bangkok Post. *Foreign workers granted permits to work except in 40 prohibited occupations*. Bangkok Post. Accessed: 2024-05-14, 2021. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/pr/2085143/foreign-workers-granted-permits-to-work-except-in-40-prohibited-occupations>.
- Barmania, Sima. “Thailand’s migrant sex workers struggle to access health care.” Publisher: Elsevier, *The Lancet* 382, no. 9891 (August 10, 2013): 493–494. ISSN: 0140-6736, 1474-547X, accessed March 27, 2024. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(13\)61681-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(13)61681-5).
- Beamish, Paul W., and Andrew C. Inkpen. “Japanese firms and the decline of the Japanese expatriate.” *Journal of World Business* 33, no. 1 (1998): 35–50. ISSN: 1090-9516. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1090-9516\(98\)80003-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1090-9516(98)80003-5).
- Benson, Michaela, and Karen O’Reilly. “Migration and the Search for a Better Way of Life: A Critical Exploration of Lifestyle Migration.” *The Sociological Review* 57, no. 4 (November 2009): 608–625. ISSN: 1467-954X. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954x.2009.01864.x>.
- Brees, Inge. “Burden or Boon: The Impact of Burmese Refugees on Thailand.” *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, 2010, 35–47. Accessed April 24, 2024.
- Chairattana, Siwat, and Thawatchai Khanawiwat. *The Report on the Route of Migration from Myanmar and Cambodia to Thailand*. Plan International Thailand. Accessed: 2024-05-14, 2020. [https://plan-international.org/uploads/sites/82/2022/02/migration\\_route\\_report\\_eng\\_.fairfish.pdf](https://plan-international.org/uploads/sites/82/2022/02/migration_route_report_eng_.fairfish.pdf).
- Chantavanich, Supang, Samarn Laodumrongchai, and Christina Stringer. “Under the shadow: Forced labour among sea fishers in Thailand.” *Marine Policy* 68 (June 1, 2016): 1–7. ISSN: 0308-597X, accessed March 6, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2015.12.015>.
- Cohen, Erik. “Thai girls and Farang men the edge of ambiguity.” *Annals of tourism Research* 9, no. 3 (1982): 403–428.
- Cook, Dave. “What is a digital nomad? Definition and taxonomy in the era of mainstream remote work.” *World Leisure Journal* 65, no. 2 (2023): 256–275.
- Daniel Kaufmann and Aart Kraay. “Governance indicators evolution between Myanmar and Thailand from 1996 and 2023.” Accessed October 4, 2024. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators/interactive-data-access>.
- Faucher, Carole. “Capturing Otherness: Self-Identity and Feelings of Non-Belonging Among Educated Burmese in Thailand.” Number: 2, *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 54–81. ISSN: 2246-2163, accessed March 28, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.22439/cjas.v28i2.3429>.

- Findlater, Aidan, and Isaac I. Bogoch. “Human Mobility and the Global Spread of Infectious Diseases: A Focus on Air Travel.” *Trends in Parasitology* 34, no. 9 (2018): 772–783. ISSN: 1471-4922. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pt.2018.07.004>.
- Foreign Affairs of Japan, Ministry of. *Survey statistics on Japanese people living overseas*, 2023. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/toko/tokei/hojin/index.html>.
- Forum, World Economic. *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*, 2023. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf).
- Fujita, Koichi, Tamaki Endo, Ikuko Okamoto, Yoshihiro Nakanishi, and Miwa Yamada. “Myanmar migrant laborers in Ranong, Thailand.” Publisher: Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-JETRO), *IDE Discussion Paper* 257 (2010). Accessed March 15, 2024. <https://ir.ide.go.jp/records/37914>.
- Garrett, Robert D. “Moving from the Global North to the Global South: Understanding Self-initiated Expatriation to Bangkok, Thailand.” PhD diss., Oklahoma State University, 2019.
- Green, Paul. “Disruptions of self, place and mobility: Digital nomads in Chiang Mai, Thailand.” *Mobilities* 15, no. 3 (2020): 431–445.
- Hongsranagon, Prathurng, Rattana Panriansaen, Kantapong Prabsangob, and Chakkris Muadchaithong. “Determining Factors for and Social Integration of Japanese Lifestyle Migrants in Bangkok, Thailand: a Case Study” 29, no. 1 (2015): 71–78. <https://he01.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jhealthres/article/view/79965>.
- Howard, Robert W. “The migration of westerners to Thailand: an unusual flow from developed to developing world.” *International Migration* 47, no. 2 (2009): 193–225.
- Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2017) – processed by Our World in Data. “HAQ Index (IHME (2017)).” <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/healthcare-access-and-quality-index>.
- International Labor Organization and United Nations. *Thailand Migration Report 2019*. Publication, 2019. <https://thailand.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Thailand-Migration-Report-2019.pdf>.
- International Labor Organization and United Nations Women. *Public attitudes towards migrant workers in Thailand*. Research Brief, 2021. [https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/issue-briefs/WCMS\\_766634/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/issue-briefs/WCMS_766634/lang-en/index.htm).
- Kadfak, Alin, and Marie Widengård. “From fish to fishworker traceability in Thai fisheries reform.” Publisher: SAGE Publications Ltd STM, *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 6, no. 2 (June 1, 2023): 1322–1342. ISSN: 2514-8486, accessed March 31, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1177/25148486221104992>.
- Kelsky, Karen. *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams*. Duke University Press, 2001. ISBN: 9780822383277. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822383277>.

- Kenton, Will. *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Defined, What's in It, Pros/Cons, MOU vs. MOA*. Investopedia. Accessed: 2024-05-14, February 2024. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/mou.asp>.
- Lafferty, Megan, and Kristen Hill Maher. "The expat life with a Thai wife: Thailand as an imagined space of masculine transformation." In *Contemporary socio-cultural and political perspectives in Thailand*, 311–327. Springer, 2013.
- Lertpusit, Sivarin. *New Chinese Migrants in Thailand and the Perceived Impact on Thai People*, 2023. [https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/TRS11\\_23.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/TRS11_23.pdf).
- Li, Jiangyu, and Aranya Siriphon. "Consumption, ongoingness and everyday-life embeddedness: Lifestyle experiences of Chinese transient migrants in Chiang Mai, Thailand." *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 31, no. 4 (2022): 511–535. ISSN: 0117-1968. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01171968221145339>.
- Migration in Thailand, United Nations Thematic Working Group on. "Thailand migration report 2019." United Nations Thematic Working Group on Migration in Thailand Bangkok, Thailand, 2019.
- Molland, Sverre. "Safe migration: Re-embedding as anticipatory, de-territorial governance." *Population, Space and Place* n/a, no. n/a, e2750. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2750>. eprint: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/psp.2750>. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/psp.2750>.
- Napatanapong, Chattrika, and Ratsameechan Saowakhon. *Thailand should legalise prostitution*. Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI). Accessed: 2024-05-15, July 2022. <https://tdri.or.th/en/2022/07/thailand-should-legalise-prostitution/>.
- Observatory, Myanmar Development. *Seeking opportunities elsewhere: Exploring the lives and challenges of Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand*. United Nations Myanmar, 2023. Accessed March 27, 2024. <https://myanmar.un.org/en/254675-seeking-opportunities-elsewhere-exploring-lives-and-challenges-myanmar-migrant-workers>.
- Ono, Mayumi. "Descending from Japan: Lifestyle mobility of Japanese male youth to Thailand." *Asian Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (September 2015): 249–264. ISSN: 2168-4227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1683478x.2015.1117220>.
- Orel, Marko. "Life is better in flip flops. Digital nomads and their transformational travels to Thailand." *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research* 15, no. 1 (2021): 3–9.
- Pearson, Ruth., and Kyoko. Kusakabe. *Thailand's hidden workforce : Burmese migrant women factory workers*. Publication Title: Thailand's hidden workforce : Burmese migrant women factory workers. London: Zed Books, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-84813-984-8.
- Reporters, Post. "42,000 illegal migrants caught this year." Accessed: 2024-05-14, *Bangkok Post*, December 2021. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2235699/42-000-illegal-migrants-caught-this-year>.

- Rudlin, Pernille. *What is behind the 30% drop since 2016 in Japanese corporate expatriates?*, 2023. <https://rudlinconsulting.com/japanese-companies-localizing-virtual-global-assignments/>.
- Sarapirom, Kornkanok, Muensakda Pongsak, and Thitiporn Sriwanna. “Lifestyles of Myanmar migrant workers under Thai socio-cultural context: A challenge of state management in the future | Interdisciplinary Research Review,” October 21, 2020. Accessed March 27, 2024. <https://ph02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jtir/article/view/240032>.
- Shibuya, Miwa. “Collective Imaginings in the Interactions of a Lifestyle Migrant Community: Japanese Retirees in Chiang Mai, Thailand.” *SOKENDAI Review of Cultural and Social Studies* 19 (2023): 260–242. <https://core.ac.uk/download/561049296.pdf>.
- Siriphon, Aranya, Fanzura Banu, and Pagon Gatchalee. *New Chinese Migrants in Chiang Mai: Parallel Paths for Social Interaction and Cultural Adjustment*, 2022. <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2022-30-new-chinese-migrants-in-chiang-mai-parallel-paths-for-social-interaction-and-cultural-adjustment-by-aranya-siriphon-fanzura-banu-and-pagon-gatchalee/>.
- Skaggs, Ryan D, Nitus Chukaew, and Jordan Stephens. “Characterizing Chinese influence in Thailand.” *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 2023. <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/3606690/characterizing-chinese-influence-in-thailand/>.
- Stones, Rob, Kate Botterill, Maggy Lee, and Karen O’Reilly. “One world is not enough: the structured phenomenology of lifestyle migrants in East Asia.” *The British Journal of Sociology* 70, no. 1 (2018): 44–69. ISSN: 1468-4446. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12357>.
- Tanakasempipat, Patpicha. “Thousands of Thai fishermen protest against tough industry regulations.” *Reuters*, December 17, 2019. Accessed March 31, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN1YL0VX/>.
- Tawaytibhongs, Orawan, and Joris Michielsen. “Universal Health Coverage for Undocumented Migrant Workers in Thailand: Challenges in Policy Implementation.” Publisher: Opast Publishing Group, *Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences* 5, no. 3 (August 5, 2022): 206–214. ISSN: 2690-0688, accessed April 1, 2024. <https://www.opastpublishers.com/peer-review/universal-health-coverage-for-undocumented-migrant-workers-in-thailand-challenges-in-policy-implementation-3571.html>.
- Thailand Law Online. “Foreign Business work permit in Thailand.” <https://www.thailandlawonline.com/thai-company-and-foreign-business-law/work-permit-for-foreigners-in-thailand>.
- . “Prohibited occupations and work-permit in Thailand.” <https://www.thailandlawonline.com/thai-company-and-foreign-business-law/prohibited-occupations-thailand-work-permit>.
- . *Thailand Visa and Immigration Law BE 2522 or 1979*. Accessed: 2024-04-19. <https://www.thailandlawonline.com/thai-family-and-marriage-law/thailand-immigration-law>.

U.S. Department of State. *2023 Trafficking in Persons Report*. U.S. Department of State. Accessed: 2024-05-15, 2023. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Human-Trafficking*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Accessed: 2024-05-15, 2023. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-Trafficking/Human-Trafficking.html>.

Walk Free Foundation. *Modern slavery in Thailand*. Walk Free Foundation. Accessed: 2024-05-15, 2023. <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/country-studies/thailand/>.

Wongboonsin, Kua. "Growing concerns for the aging population in Thailand." *Journal of Demography* 14, no. 1 (1998): 88. <https://digital.car.chula.ac.th/jdm/vol14/iss1/5>.