



ECONOMICS
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

Digital Skills Assessment for Enhancing Literacy in Thailand's Migrant Community

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01 | Introduction

Understanding the role of migrants in the economy and society, and challenges faced



- Migration is a powerful driver of sustainable development for migrants and their communities
- Thailand has roughly 3 million migrant workers primarily from
 - Myanmar
 - Cambodia
 - Lao People's Democratic Republic
- Thai economy has a structural reliance on contributions from migrant workers to fill labour market gaps, particularly in low-skilled occupations

“Despite their significant contributions, migrant workers continue to be subject to poor wages and working conditions, social exclusion and a lack of skills development opportunities”

- Technological advancements and digitalization necessitate the development of digital skills
- Less than half of workers possess digital skills necessary to accommodate for digitalization (OECD, 2016)
- The **lack of digital skills is even more pronounced among migrant workers** in Thailand due to limited access to formal education and training programmes (ITU, 2018)

“As a result, migrant workers may face digital exclusion and be trapped in a cycle of low-wage, low-skilled work”

- In response to the challenges migrant workers face in Thailand, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) launched the **Poverty Reduction through Safe Migration, Skills Development, and Enhanced Job Placement in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, and Thailand (PROMISE)** programme in 2017
- IOM under PROMISE collaborated with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) on this report to assess the current digital skills level and needs of migrant workers and examine the perception of employers to distinguish the type of skills, if any, that are required for migrants to live and work in Thailand
- **Main objectives of this report:**
 - to provide evidence-based input for the development of digital skills training programmes
 - to identify entry points for the promotion of digital inclusion among migrant workers in Thailand, ultimately bridging any existing digital divides

02 | Project Background

Literature review on migrant workers in Thailand and digital skills assessment

- Despite being generally covered under multiple labour protection acts, the work performed by migrant workers continues to be characterized by **high levels of informality, poor living and working conditions, unethical recruitment practices, low wages, withheld wages and other forms of exploitation** (International Labour Organization, 2022)
- Prior to the initiation of PROMISE, the skills development programmes in Thailand mainly targeted Thai workers because the country's legal framework mostly only allowed the employment of migrant workers from neighbouring countries in manual, labour-intensive work
- PROMISE has been actively mainstreaming skills development in labour migration governance, through the implementation of skills trainings for migrant workers in Thailand in collaboration with relevant government agencies, employers and employer associations, and skills development providers.

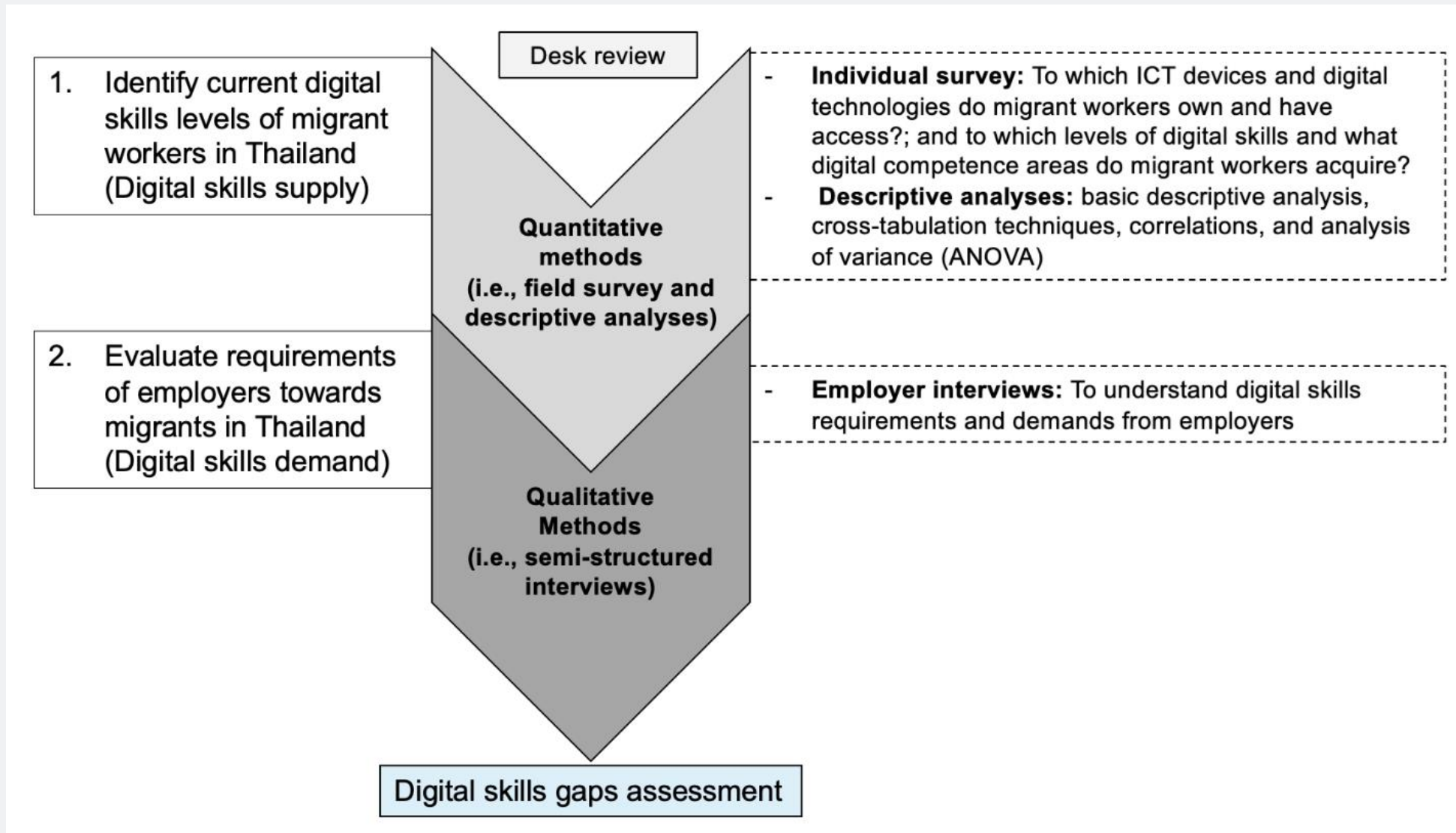
As information and communication technologies (ICTs) continue to transform many segments of labour markets, digital skills play an important role for migrant workers throughout the stages of migration

- ICTs can facilitate access to crucial information about job opportunities, informing decision-making of would-be migrant workers
- Digital skills improve employability, social inclusion, communication with family members, as well as access to news, services, information, and recreation.
- Migrants' ability to access information about their rights and responsibilities can reduce the risk of abusive practices from employers, recruiters, landlords or service providers

- The European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (Vuorikari et al., 2016), also known as DigComp 2.0, offers a tool to measure and improve citizens' digital competence. Its conceptual reference model divides digital skills into five competence areas:
 - Information and data literacy
 - Communication and collaboration
 - Digital content creation
 - Safety
 - Problem solving
- This study examined migrant workers' **digital behaviours, skill gaps and learning constraints.**
- The study has used the **five core competence areas** along with the **usage frequency** of various types of applications, **barriers to digital technology learning** and **employer demand** for digital skills to provide a comprehensive understanding of the digital skills of migrant workers in Thailand

03 | Preparing the Study

Data collection, methodology and approach



04 | Understanding the Digital Skills Divide

Measuring the digital skills level of migrant workers

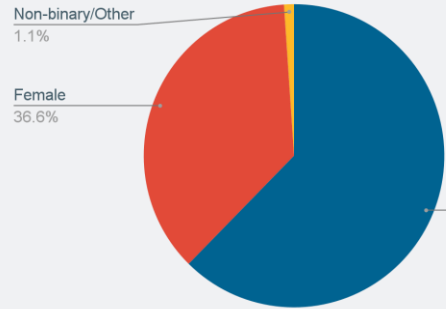


Understanding the Digital Skills Divide

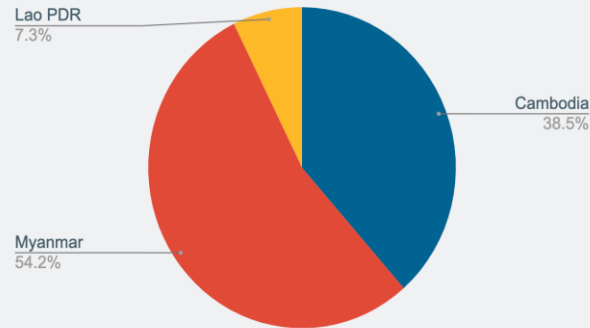


Sample Statistics

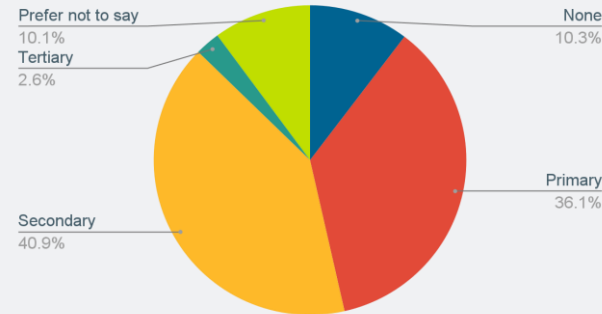
Gender



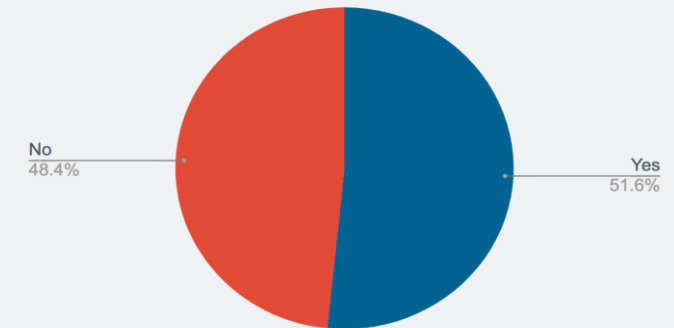
Country of Origin



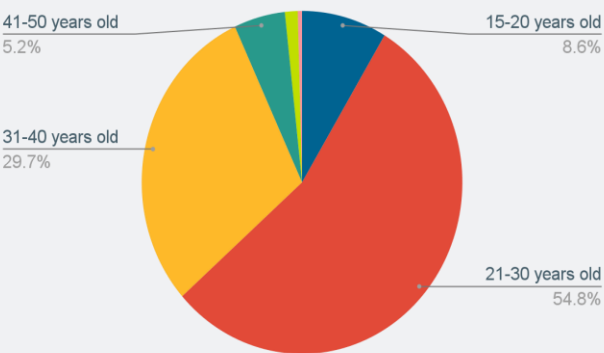
Highest Level of Education



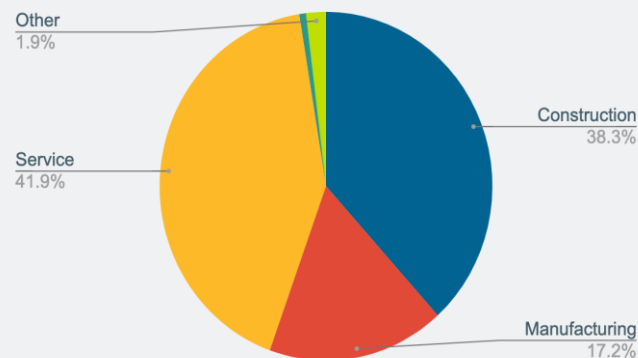
Living with Family Members or Relatives



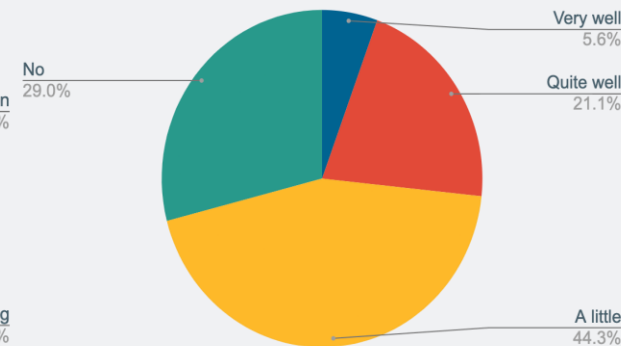
Age



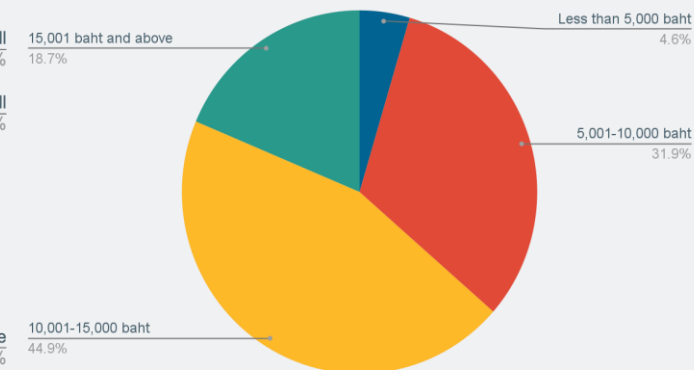
Field of Current Job



Proficiency Level in Thai



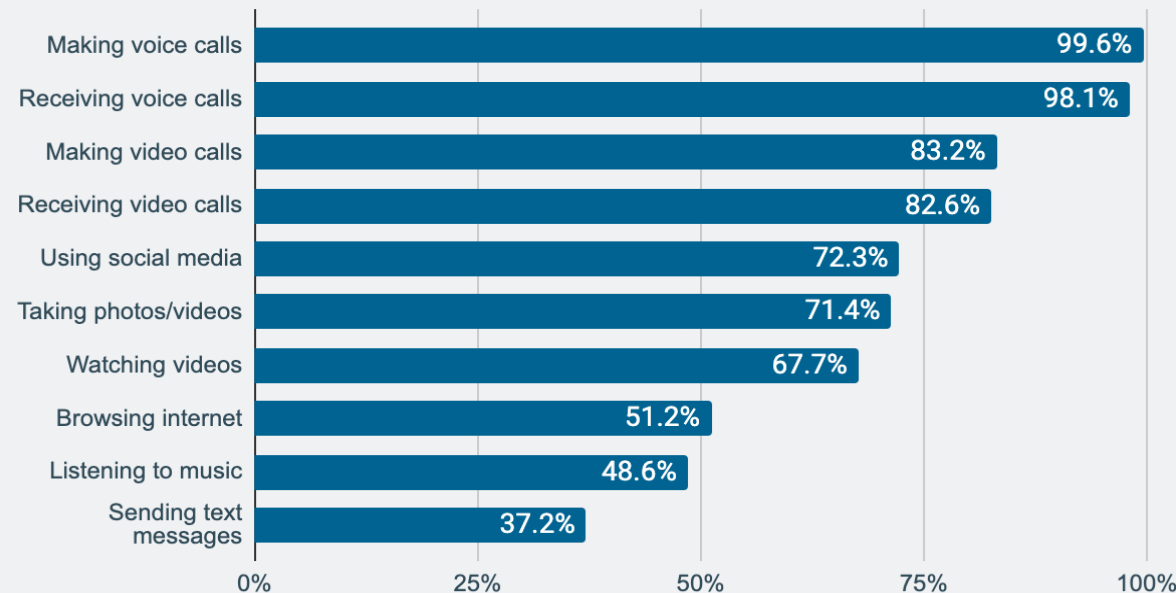
Monthly salary



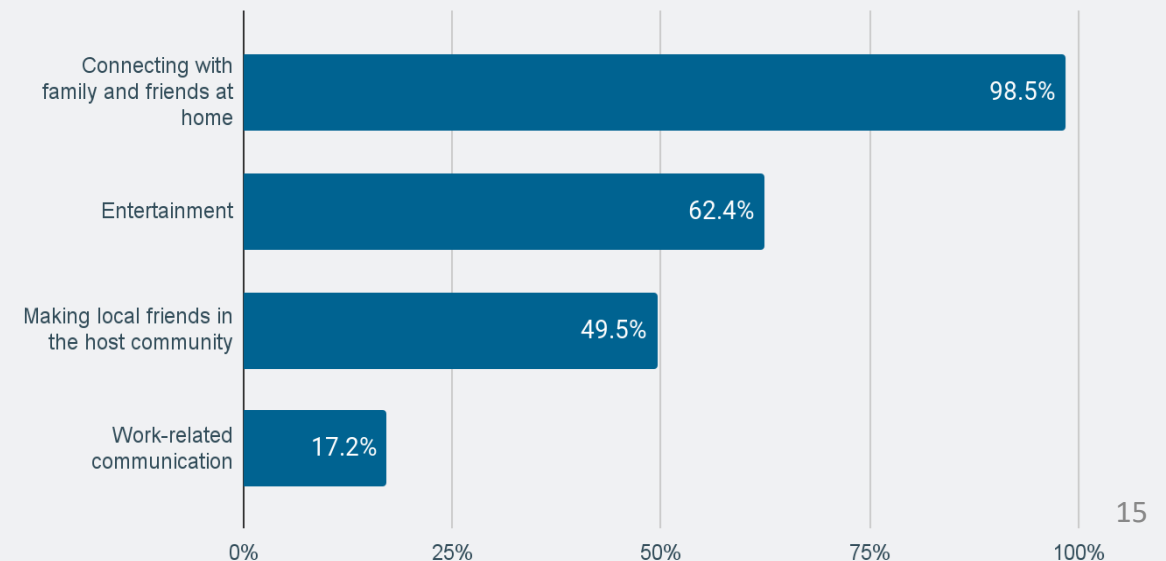
Findings about Digital Technology Usage

- 95.3% use smartphones on a daily basis
- 27.3% of respondents who do not own a smartphone had one but gave it to their family members
- 16% of the total sample indicated that they could not afford a smartphone.
- 0.7% of the respondents reported that they did not know how to use it.
- More than 80% of the respondents use their own WIFI or data plan, while approximately 14% have fixed broadband at home.
- 98% do not have tablets and laptops. They indicated that the devices were unnecessary.

10 Most Used Functions of Smartphones



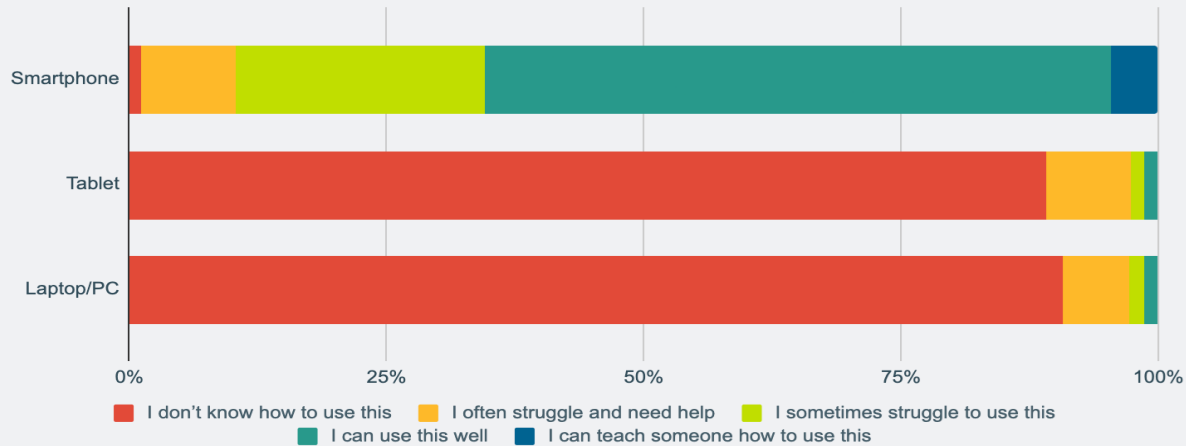
Main reasons for using digital technology (selected)



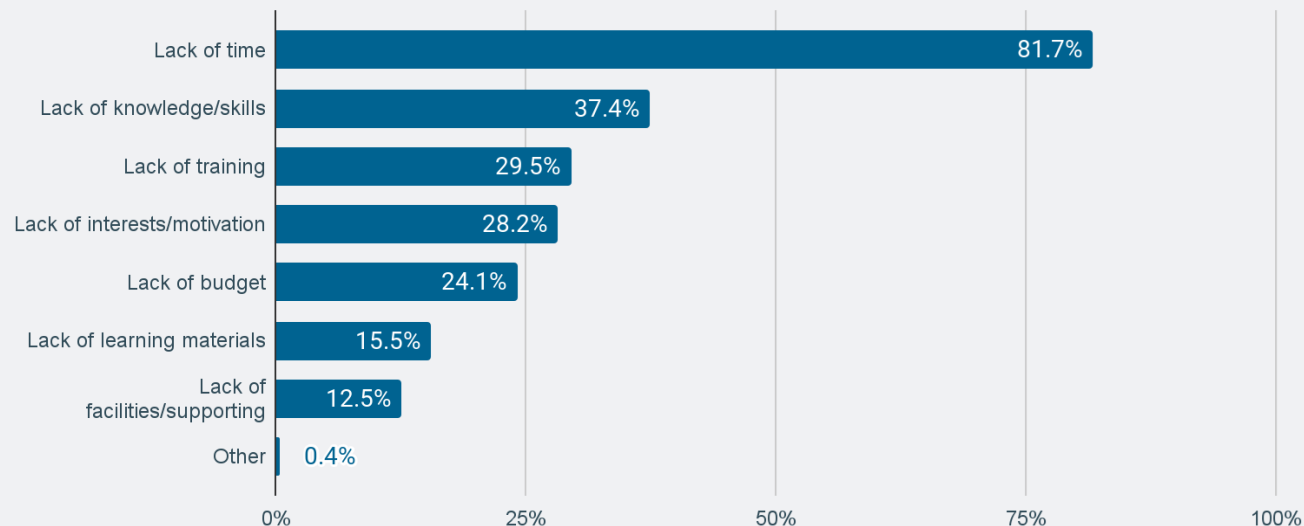
Understanding the Digital Skills Divide



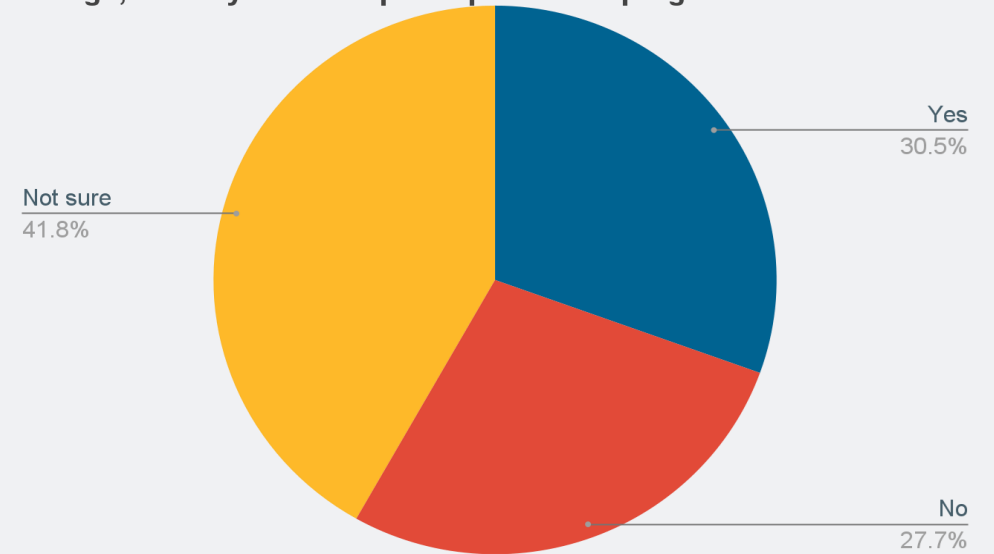
Self-reported Proficiency Level in Using Different Digital Devices



Factors that Limit Migrant Workers' Learning of Digital Skills



If the digital skills training programmes are available online free of charge, would you like to participate in the programs?



Digital Skills Training Programmes Interested by Respondents

Digital skills	Percentage	Description
Online banking transaction skills	65% (300 respondents)	Be able to register and apply for online services, buy and sell goods and services, and administer and manage transactions online.
Communication and collaboration skills	65% (300 respondents)	Be able to communicate with others digitally using email and other messaging applications, and interact and collaborate safely online such as post messages, photographs, or videos on social media platforms.
Operation skills	45% (207 respondents)	Be able to operate business practices online such as downloading and saving photos or files online, completing online forms, and opening a browser to find and use a website.
Problem solving skills	43% (200 respondents)	Be able to solve technical problems when operating devices, programmes, or applications, such as updating/reinstall/closing programmes, restart computer, re-connect Wi-Fi network, checking the internet connection, and finding solutions to problems using digital tools such as online tutorials, FAQs and advice forums.
Online safety skills	37% (173 respondents)	Be able to protect devices, personal data, and privacy by using anti-viruses and passwords for websites and accounts.

05 | Closing the Gap

Understanding the digital skills demand and requirements of employers



Key Insights from Interviews with Employers

- There were varying levels of support in promoting digital skills among migrants workers
- Most employers see the benefit of digital communication skills through messaging applications
- Employers from small-sized companies were more likely to consider digital skills beneficial for improving the lives of migrant workers and to offer support in providing training. A few of them expressed willingness to increase wages for migrant workers who obtained work-related digital skills such as Microsoft Office and product design programs
- Employers from larger companies tended not to see the benefits of migrant workers acquiring digital skills as they are primarily hired for manual labour and low-skills jobs
- Discrimination in the workplace can impede the improvement of digital skills of migrant workers as some employers reported that Thai white-collar workers did not want to work alongside migrant workers in the office or were afraid of losing their jobs to migrants with digital skills
- While employers' attitudes toward migrants' work-related digital skill varied, almost all of them acknowledged the value of digital life skills, particularly in messaging and online banking applications

06 | Conclusion and Recommendations

Bridging the digital skills divide

Conclusion

- Despite the significant contributions migrant workers make to the Thai economy, their employment in primarily low-skilled occupations and limited skills development opportunities increase their vulnerabilities to digital exclusion
- This study aims to assess the current digital skills level and needs of migrant workers and examines the perception of employers to distinguish the type of skills, if any, that are required for migrants to live and work in Thailand

Conclusion - Factors contributing to digital skills

- There were no significant differences in the digital skill levels among migrant workers in terms of gender, age or nationality, with only some exceptions
- Education, income, and Thai language proficiency levels were most strongly correlated with digital skill levels
- Migrant workers employed in the service sector reported the highest levels of skills in most digital competence areas followed by those employed in the construction sector

Conclusion - Gaps in digital skills development among migrant workers

- A majority of migrants (82%) indicated lack of time as the main obstacle in learning new digital skills
- Online banking/transaction and communication and collaboration were the skills migrants were most interested in learning (65%)

Conclusion - Employers' perceptions of digital skills among migrant workers

- Employers in the construction and manufacturing sectors primarily reported requiring the use of smartphone messaging applications such as LINE or Facebook Messenger among migrant workers to facilitate work-related communication
- Migrant workers were reportedly eligible for promotions in the service sector if they acquired digital skills and Thai language proficiency
- Employers from small companies were more likely to consider work-related digital skills beneficial for improving the lives migrant workers and to offer support in work-related digital skills training, compared to employers from larger companies
- Although only some employers recognized the benefits of work-related digital skills, most employers acknowledged the value of digital life skills
- Some employers are hesitant to invest in work-related digital skills, as they primarily employed migrants in low-skilled and labour-intensive roles, noting that positions requiring digital skills were already fulfilled by Thai workers.

Recommendations for Government Authorities

- **Raise awareness** of digital public services through post-arrival orientation sessions and **ensure service platforms are accessible** through smartphones and **in migrants' languages**
- **Leverage social media platforms** to disseminate important information to migrant communities
- **Expand scope of employment and digital skills development opportunities** for migrant workers as means of advancing the Thailand 4.0 initiative
- **Address xenophobia** among Thai employers and employees through evidence-based information and digital campaigns

Recommendations for Development Partners and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

- **Customize a digital skills training curriculum** designed to meet the specific needs of migrant workers. Training modules should include:
 - Online banking applications and remittance channels
 - Instant messaging applications and social media platforms
 - Digital safety
 - Access to information and data literacy
 - Language translation applications
- Training modules should be **short, time-flexible, digitalized** and easily **accessible through smartphones in the migrants' native languages**
- Pilot a specializing in-person **training programme on using computers** for interested migrant workers, **especially in the service sector**

Recommendations for Employers and Employer Associations

- **Coordinate with development partners** and CSOs to disseminate digital skills training programmes
- **Incorporate a digital life skills component** into existing pre-employment orientation programmes and training initiatives for migrant workers
- **Ensure the inclusion of migrant workers** in all internal efforts to digitalize work processes and procedures within the enterprise



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Thank You!



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