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Youth series | Report 1

A GENERATION ON THE MOVE:

Youth Migration and Perceptions in Myanmar

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CATI	Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing
ERO	Ethnic Resistance Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ID	Identification
JLPT	Japanese Language Proficiency Test
MYS	Myanmar Youth Survey
OWIC	Overseas Workers Identification Card
PJ	Passport for Job
PPS	People's Pulse Survey
PV	Passport for Visit
SAC	State Administrative Council
SSPC	State Security and Peace Commission
SSW	Specified Skilled Workers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Myanmar's youth stand at the crossroads of crisis and hope. This report captures their perceptions across a range of indicators that directly affect their present and future in a society under duress due to political upheaval, economic instability, and escalating conflict. Drawing on the Myanmar Youth Survey 2024, which captured insights from over 7,000 young individuals across the country, it uncovers the profound challenges and aspirations expressed by a generation grappling with uncertainty. And this was before the recent earthquake. Since the military takeover in 2021, an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 young people have been relocating to foreign countries to escape the conditions they face in Myanmar. This exodus is reshaping Myanmar's demographic and labour landscape, with early indications of a shrinking middle segment of the population — particularly among working-age youth who form the backbone of the country's human capital.

Nearly 40 percent of surveyed youth would consider leaving the country if they had the opportunity, driven by the collapse of socio-economic structures, ongoing armed conflicts, and the introduction of the conscription law. Skilled professionals and educated young people are more likely to leave, threatening the nation with a looming brain drain that could significantly undermine economic recovery and stability. Over 55 percent believe the country is headed in the wrong direction, citing pervasive insecurity, deteriorating education systems, and limited economic opportunities. The ripple effects of these challenges are stark, with international migration emerging as a key strategy for survival and advancement. Yet, despite the hardships, a cautious optimism prevails, with 45 percent envisioning a better future within five years.

For many young people, leaving Myanmar provides a pathway to safety, education, and financial stability. Yet, it also poses risks of exploitation, irregular migration, and the erosion of national human capital. Notably, 90 percent of youth who plan to migrate express a strong desire to return — if political and economic conditions improve — highlighting their enduring connection to their homes and homeland.

This report underscores the importance of targeted engagement by cooperation partners, both within Myanmar and across its diaspora. While many challenges can only be addressed through structural change, there are meaningful actions that can be taken now to support youth who remain, as well as those who have left. Investing in education, livelihoods, and local resilience can offer immediate relief and restore a degree of agency for young people navigating an uncertain present. At the same time, engaging the diaspora and facilitating opportunities for skills development, knowledge exchange, and future reintegration can help ensure that those who have left remain connected and positioned to contribute when conditions allow. Myanmar's youth — whether at home or abroad — hold the promise and the potential for the country's future.

1 INTRODUCTION

During the democratic transition in the early 2010s, Myanmar experienced a period of relative stability and openness, accelerated economic growth, and increased international engagement. The period of transition allowed young people to grow up in a context different from what their parents had experienced, with expanded access to information, socio-economic opportunities, and democratic freedom. This environment nurtured a generation expecting to grow up in a society where such rights would be preserved.

However, the trajectory was sharply disrupted by the military takeover in February 2021, which led to a reversal of democratic freedoms and a deepening economic crisis. The events that followed included violent crackdowns on protests, widespread arrests, and severe restrictions on political and civil liberties. Youth were the major catalysts driving the nationwide resistance movement. Protestors took to the streets with young people on the front lines. For a generation raised with relatively expanded freedoms, the military takeover represented not only a political crisis but also a disruption of identity, sense of belonging, and future aspirations.

Amid this complex environment, Myanmar's youth represent both the potential for change and a group disproportionately affected by conflict and hence highly vulnerable. The crisis has severely undermined their access to education, skills, and economic opportunity. The recently reimposed military conscription law

has further fueled fear and distrust, pushing many young people to hide or flee the country. For some, international migration offers a pathway to education, economic prospects, and safety. For others, staying in Myanmar reflects resilience in the face of adversity, a commitment to family and community, a desire to actively resist the military, or simply a lack of viable options for departure.

Historically, internal and international migration have significantly shaped Myanmar's demographics and labour dynamics. Since 2000, international migration has steadily increased, reflecting substantial demographic shifts over time. In 2000, the international migration rate stood at 1.5 percent, rising to 4.3 percent by 2010, 4.9 percent in 2015, and 6.8 percent in 2020. By 2024, it is projected to reach 7.9 percent, underscoring a sustained upward trend.[1] This growth suggests that international migration had already been becoming more prevalent even before recent developments, though the context and conditions driving migration have varied over the years.

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) estimates that between December 2021 and June 2024, around 17 percent of Myanmar's total population and 28 percent of the adult population — approximately 9 million people aged 15 and above — migrated domestically or internationally.[2] Young people have consistently comprised a significant share of both internal and international migrants. According

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1   Calculation based on migration data from UN Population Division and population data from the World Population Overview
2   IFPRI (2025). Monitoring Individual Migration in Myanmar: December 2021 - June 2024. International Food Policy Research Institute.
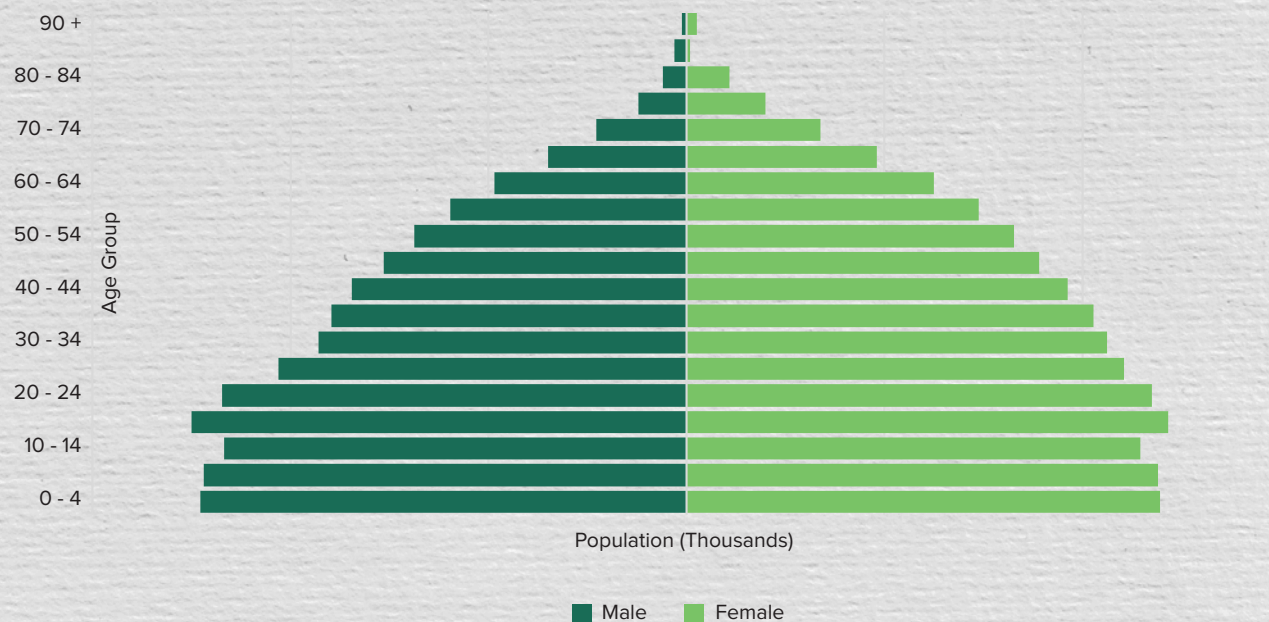
Source: 2023 UNFPA's Population Projection, based on census data

to UNDP's *People's Pulse 2023* data, as reflected in the report *Migration in Myanmar: Moving to Cope*[3], 74 percent of internal migrants were young adults aged 18 to 34. These trends highlight the central role youth play in Myanmar's migration landscape and underline the broader implications for the country's human capital and development trajectory.

According to the 2014 nationwide population census, individuals aged 15 to 34 make up over one-third of Myanmar's total population.[4] As seen in Figure 1, Myanmar has a "youth bulge," with the potential to provide a "demographic dividend" if supported by effective social, economic, and employment policies, along with significant investments in education and health. In their absence, however, the current high outflow of young people is straining the country's human capital, leading to labour shortages, with many companies struggling to fill skilled positions today.

Sectors such as engineering, ICT, and construction are expected to face even more significant shortages in the coming years, which could hinder economic recovery and productivity. At the same time, international migration can bring positive outcomes. Migrants often earn higher salaries, send remittances back home, and acquire valuable skills that can address local labour market needs upon their return.

This report captures the perspectives of youth who remain in Myanmar, examining their current state, interest in migrating abroad, the drivers behind their decisions, preferred destinations, and should they leave, their openness to returning in the future. It triangulates these views with their perceptions of the country's direction, including the prospects for peace. By doing so, the analysis offers valuable insights into Myanmar's evolving socio-political landscape and helps inform interventions that support both those who stay and those who may eventually return.

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3   UNDP (2024). Migration in Myanmar: Moving to Cope. United Nations Development Programme.

4   In 2014, Myanmar's total population exceeded 50 million, with slightly over 17 million individuals aged between 15 and 34 years, classified as youth. Myanmar has yet to conduct a new nationwide population census, that is comprehensive across all the states and regions. According to estimated population data published by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Myanmar's population is projected to be around 55.77 million for the period of 2022-2023 (April to March). During this same period, the youth population is estimated to be over 18.3 million. However, Myanmar's population growth rate remains low, at just 0.7 percent per annum.

Data and Methodology

The report is based on the Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (MYS) with a sample of 7,187 youth (18-35 years old)[5] across all states and regions within Myanmar. The survey was undertaken using Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) during the second half of 2024. The questionnaire included critical aspects such as economic conditions, access to basic services, security concerns, governance, women's rights, environmental distress, and mental health issues. It also captured young people's perceptions on Myanmar's future and their migration aspirations, the latter serving as the analytical focus of this paper.

To ensure representativeness, survey weights based on the 2014 census were applied to further calibrate the results with population demographics and to account for non-responses. Appendix Table 1 summarizes the main characteristics of the 7,187 youth respondents, including urban/rural location, states/regions, gender, marital status, education status, and age group.

In addition to quantitative survey, qualitative insights from in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are also integrated into analysis. Appendix Table 2 displays an overview of the FGDs.

Limitations

The survey data collection employed the CATI method, whereby interviews were conducted via telephone. This approach was necessary due to security and access constraints across Myanmar. While CATI enabled broader geographic coverage under challenging conditions, it inherently excluded individuals without access to a telephone, potentially leaving out some of the most marginalized, poorest, displaced, and vulnerable individuals.

Moreover, due to the security situation and connectivity restrictions, it was difficult to collect quantitative data in certain areas of Myanmar, resulting in a low sample and underrepresentation in some locations. Most notably, the sample size for Kayah was significantly lower than anticipated (see Appendix Table 1).

The survey also aimed for a gender-balanced sample with an equal number of male and female respondents. Ultimately, women were slightly overrepresented, accounting for 58% of the final sample, while men comprised 42%,

To mitigate these limitations, survey weights were applied, to align the sample more closely with the national demographic. Moreover, the findings from the quantitative survey were systematically triangulated with qualitative insights from FGDs. This mixed-methods approach enabled a more nuanced understanding of youth realities, validated key trends, and helped address potential gaps resulting from coverage and access challenges in the quantitative data.

Figure 2: Sample allocation of survey data collection

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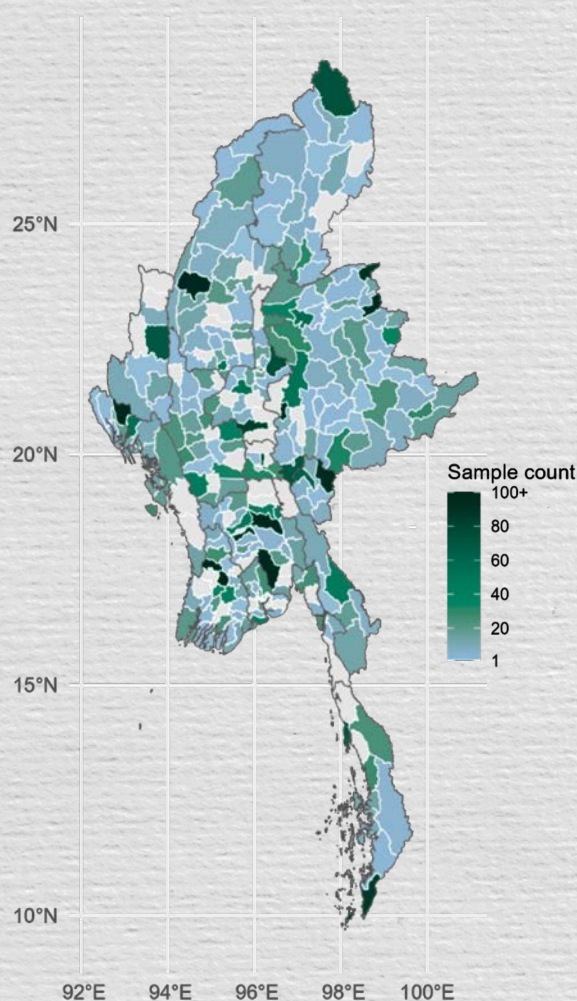
5   For the Myanmar Youth Survey, Myanmar's 2017 National Youth Policy was used to identify the age range of young people. According to the Policy, individuals between the ages of 15 and 34 are identified as youth. However, due to the need of permission to collect data from underage population, the MYS covers individuals who are 18 to 35 years old.

2

A GENERATION ON THE MOVE

Key takeaways:

➡️ **High Youth Migration Intentions:** Around 40% of Myanmar's youth would leave if given the chance, compounding an already significant diaspora.

➡️ **Main Drivers: Economic Hardship and Insecurity:** Lack of employment, deteriorating education, armed conflict, human rights violations, and fear of conscription are the primary push factors.

➡️ **Brain Drain Risk:** Youth with higher education are more likely to migrate, raising serious concerns about a future shortage of skilled workers.

➡️ **Barriers and Risks to Migration:** Financial constraints, legal restrictions on travel documents, and rising irregular migration expose youth to greater vulnerabilities.

➡️ **Strong Willingness to Return:** Nearly 90% of those considering migration – meaning 40% of the total surveyed - express a desire to return if political and economic conditions improve.

Rising Migration Intent

Around 40 percent of youth would consider leaving the country if given the chance. The willingness to migrate varies by state and region, as shown in Figure 3. For example, young people from Tanintharyi, Mandalay, and Sagaing report the lowest inclinations to leave, with rates around 31–33 percent. In contrast, Rakhine, where armed conflicts have escalated since November 2023,[6] shows the highest migration intentions, with over 60 percent of youth considering leaving. Meanwhile, Yangon, the economic hub, and Rakhine's neighboring Chin State also display high levels of migration aspirations, with around 50 percent of youth respondents expressing a desire to migrate. The high percentage for Yangon partly reflects its role as a destination for internal migrants from rural areas, often serving as a transit point for those seeking to leave the country.[7]

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6   Hlaing, K.H. (2023). Ceasefire Breach: Operation 1027 shakes western Myanmar. The Diplomat.
7   UNDP (2024) Migration in Myanmar: Moving to Cope.

Willingness to leave Myanmar and preferred destination
(by state/region and country of preference)

Japan

USA

Kachin
36.1%

Sagaing
33.7%

Chin
48.0%

Shan
36.0%

Mandalay
31.7%

Magway
39.9%

Nay Pyi Taw
36.0%

Rakhine
60.3%

Kayah
36.0%

Bago
46.2%

Ayeyarwady
34.6%

Yangon
51.7%

Kayin
38.6%

Mon
42.1%

Singapore

Thailand

Tanintharyi
31.3%
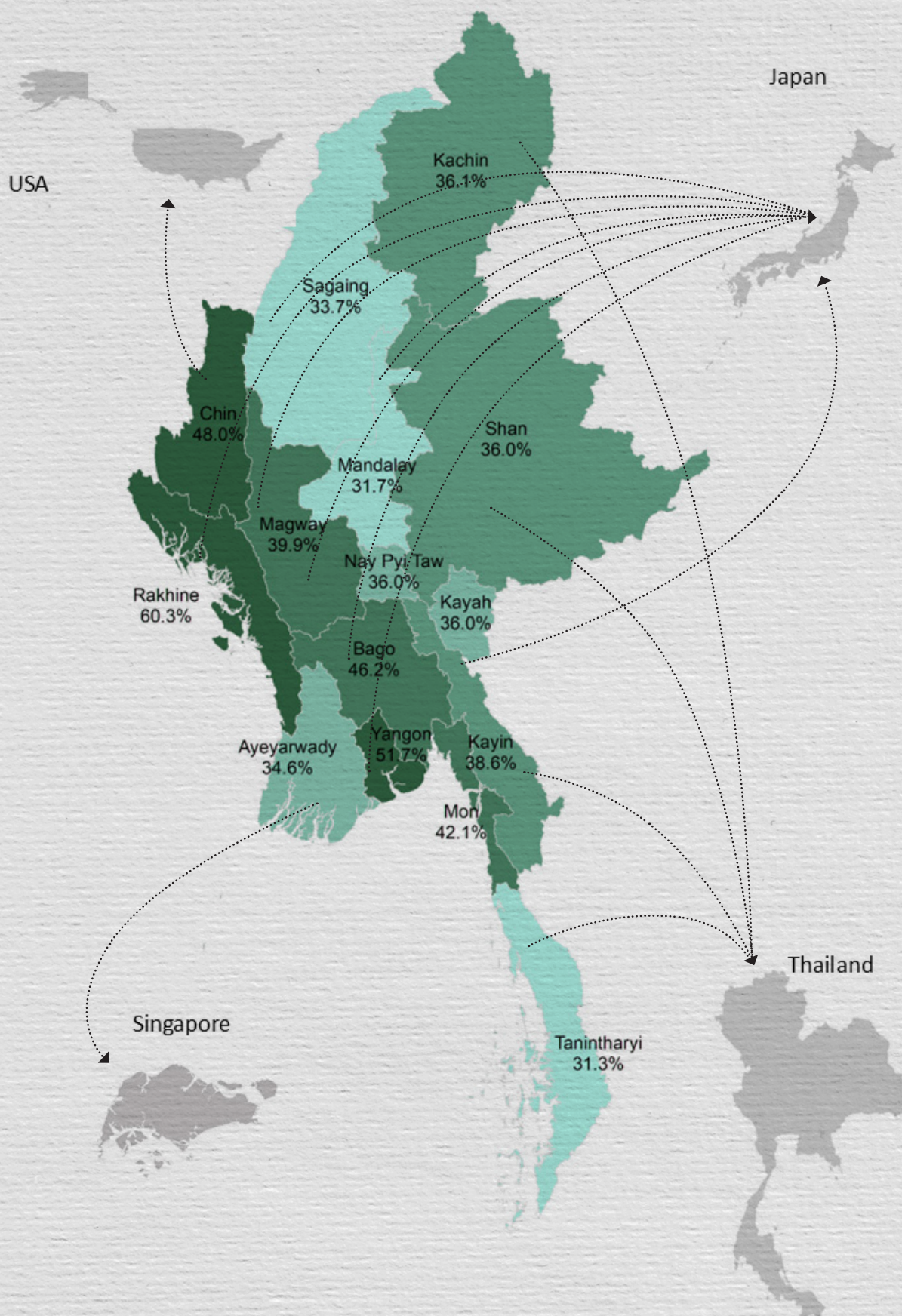
Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Since 2021, an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 Myanmar youth (aged 18–35) have migrated abroad — a conservative figure based on triangulated data from UNDP assessments, IOM monitoring and Thai labour market studies. Thailand remains the primary destination, with IOM estimating that approximately 1.3 million Myanmar nationals entered Thailand in 2024 alone. Of these, nearly one-third expressed intent to stay long-term.[8]

The level of education is a key factor influencing migration aspirations. Individuals with higher educational attainment are significantly more likely to consider migration, due to better employment prospects, social networks, financial resources needed for migration, and a stronger sense of agency (see Appendix Table 3). The over-representation of youth with higher education considering migration is concerning for Myanmar's labour supply in critical sectors such as health, education, and engineering. Given the already low overall levels of educational attainment in the country and the growing demand for skilled, labour, the potential outflow of highly educated youth poses a serious risk to future workforce capacity and development.[9]

The focus group discussions conducted in eight states and regions across Myanmar, as well as in Thailand, further explored motivations behind youth migration. A majority of the participants were driven by aspirations for better educational opportunities, improved economic prospects, and overall quality of life. One participant from Rakhine noted:

> *"Yes, if I had a chance, I would leave Myanmar. I will leave because the jobs are not good here. If wages are 10,000 (MMK), but costs are 15,000 (MMK), it is not convenient. Education and the economy are getting worse. I also do not want to experience the pain of war again."*

Participants also highlighted the opportunity to resume unfinished education programmes or degrees, experience a different lifestyle, and have a 'normal'

youth experience. For others, fears surrounding the conscription law were influential. However, not all participants expressed a wish to leave. Several emphasized a sense of duty toward family, community, and nation rebuilding. A participant from Kachin State shared:

> *"I will continue living with my family and working here. As I have a responsibility for the development of this area, I will not migrate."*

Despite those committed to staying in Myanmar, the overall scale of migration and the strong migration intent paint a worrying picture for the country's human capital. A 2024 World Bank study reported that many firms are already facing employee shortages as individuals resign to migrate abroad.[10] If migration predominantly involves highly skilled or highly educated individuals, there is a risk of brain drain, which will impede economic growth and productivity. On the other hand, there are many benefits from migration, both for the migrants themselves, their families, and the wider economy. The same study suggests that Myanmar migrants in Thailand increase their earnings by 170 percent, leading to higher living standards and the possibility of sending remittances back home.[11] Migration can also increase individuals' skills. If migrants return, the skills and increased productivity they have acquired can benefit the Myanmar economy in the future.

Drivers of migration

Various theories and models have aimed to explain why individuals choose to migrate. Among them is the widely referenced push-pull framework, which views migration as a strategy to optimize individual or family welfare. "Push factors" are conditions that drive individuals away from their home countries, while "pull factors" are opportunities in the desired destination.[12] Key push factors driving both internal and international migration in Myanmar include prolonged armed conflicts, limited economic and educational opportunities, climate change, land dispossession, and

8   IOM (2016). Migrants from Myanmar and risks faced abroad. International Organization for Migration.
9   World Bank (2024). High-skilled migration from Myanmar: Responses to signals of political and economic stabilization. World Bank Group: Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice.
10   World Bank (2024). Myanmar Economic Monitor: Compounding crises, Special Focus: International Migration from Myanmar. The World Bank Group.
11   Ibid
12   Lee, E. (1966). A Theory of Migration. Demography, 3(1), 47-57.

fragile livelihoods, among others.[13] On the other hand, pull factors include higher living standards, higher wages, and sustained economic growth in destination countries where the population is aging and the labour force is shrinking.[14, 15] The wage difference between Myanmar and destination countries is an important factor driving migration from Myanmar, and the wage gap has further widened in recent years.[16]

Another, more recent model for understanding migration is the "aspiration-capability" model, conceptualized by sociologist Hein de Haas, which explains migration as a function of both people's aspirations to move and their capability to do so.[17] Aspirations refer to a person's desire to migrate, driven by factors such as socio-economic conditions, safety, personal ambitions, or perceived opportunities abroad. Capabilities, on the other hand, encompass the resources and conditions that make the aspiration to migrate possible, such as required skills, financial means, access to networks, and legal pathways. The model emphasizes that migration is not solely a response to poverty or conflict. Instead, it highlights a more complex dynamic: migration aspirations often rise with improving socio-economic conditions, as greater access to information and resources makes migration a viable option. However, if capabilities do not match aspirations, people may experience "frustrated migration," where they desire to move but lack the means to do so. This section will discuss migration from Myanmar with both these models in mind.

Key Drivers of Migration: Socio-Economic Pressures and Enduring Insecurity

As shown in Figure 4, two broad sets of factors are driving youth migration aspirations in Myanmar: socio-economic pressures and a pervasive climate of insecurity. The primary reason cited by 75 percent of youth considering migration is the lack of economic

and employment opportunities within the country. Around 12 percent cited limited access to quality. These socio-economic challenges severely constrain young people's prospects, fueling aspirations to seek better opportunities abroad.

At the same time, insecurity-related drivers exert a powerful influence. Around 22 percent of youth cited armed conflict as a primary reason for wanting to leave, while 12 percent pointed to the lack of basic human rights. These responses reflect broader concerns tied to Myanmar's deteriorating security environment, encompassing direct exposure to violence, systemic repression, and the breakdown of rule of law.

One critical manifestation of this insecurity is the heightened concern around forced recruitment. Since the enforcement of the 2010 People's Military Service Law on February 10, 2024, the prospect of mandatory military service has emerged as a distinct push factor.[18] Under this law, male citizens aged 18–35 and female citizens aged 18–27 are required to serve in the Myanmar Armed Forces for up to five years, with plans to recruit 60,000 individuals annually from an estimated pool of 14 million eligible youth. In parallel, reports of forced recruitment by some Ethnic Resistance Organizations (EROs) have further compounded the risks for young people across the country.

Qualitative insights from FGDs corroborate these patterns. Youth described multiple layers of coercion, including lottery systems administered by the State Administration Council (SAC)[19], direct arrests for conscription, and recruitment pressures from EROs. In response, many youth have reported adopting various coping strategies- such as paying bribes, going underground, joining resistance forces, or migrating abroad. Although the conscription law ranks as the fifth most frequently mentioned factor as a reason for considering migration (mentioned by nearly 9 percent of survey respondents), FGDs findings suggest that it often compounds with broader fears about personal safety and basic freedoms.

13   Ma, A. (2017). Labour migration from Myanmar: Remittances, reforms, and challenges. Migration Policy Institute.
14   World Bank (2024). High-skilled migration from Myanmar: Responses to signals of political and economic stabilization. World Bank Group: Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice.
15   World Bank (2024). Myanmar Economic Monitor: Compounding crises, Special Focus: International Migration from Myanmar.
16   Ibid.
17   de Haas, H. (2021). A theory of migration: the aspirations-capabilities framework. Comparative Migration Studies, 9(8).
18   ISP (2024). Pandemonium: The Conscription Law and Five Negative Potential Consequences. Institute for Strategy and Policy (ISP).
19   At the time of data collection, Myanmar's de facto administrative body was known as the State Administration Council (SAC). As of 31 July 2025, the SAC was rebranded as the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC). This report continues to refer to the entity as SAC, reflecting its designation during the survey period.

	Male	Female	Total

Legend:
- Employment opportunity
- Armed conflict
- Lack of human rights
- Education opportunity
- Security & safety
- Conscription law
- Personal/family reasons
- Better living environment
- Others

Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Note: Respondents were allowed to select multiple reasons for considering migration; therefore, percentages do not sum to 100 percent, either within each State/Region or across areas categorized by dominant territorial presence or other breakdowns.

The threat of conscription is cited more frequently by male respondents (13 percent) than by female respondents (5 percent), though recent reports suggest increasing efforts to recruit women as well.

Geographical variances

Reasons for leaving Myanmar vary by states and regions, as illustrated in Figure 5. Employment opportunity emerged as the primary factor across all states and regions, with particularly high percentages in Kayah, Magway, and Mon, where around 80 percent of respondents cited it as a key reason for considering migration, compared to 74 percent national average (see Appendix Table 4). Chin and Kachin stood out with higher shares of respondents citing armed conflict, with 44 percent in Chin and 41 percent in Kachin. In some states and regions, the absence of human rights seems more prominent than educational concerns in motivating young people to migrate, primarily in Kachin, where 22 percent of all respondents cited 'Lack of human rights' as a reason for considering migration, followed by Bago (16%) and Kayin (16%). The conscription law was most cited in Nay Pyi Taw (13% of all respondents residing there), followed by Magway and Shan, at 12 percent respectively.

Figure 5: Factors influencing youth migration intensions (by state/region)
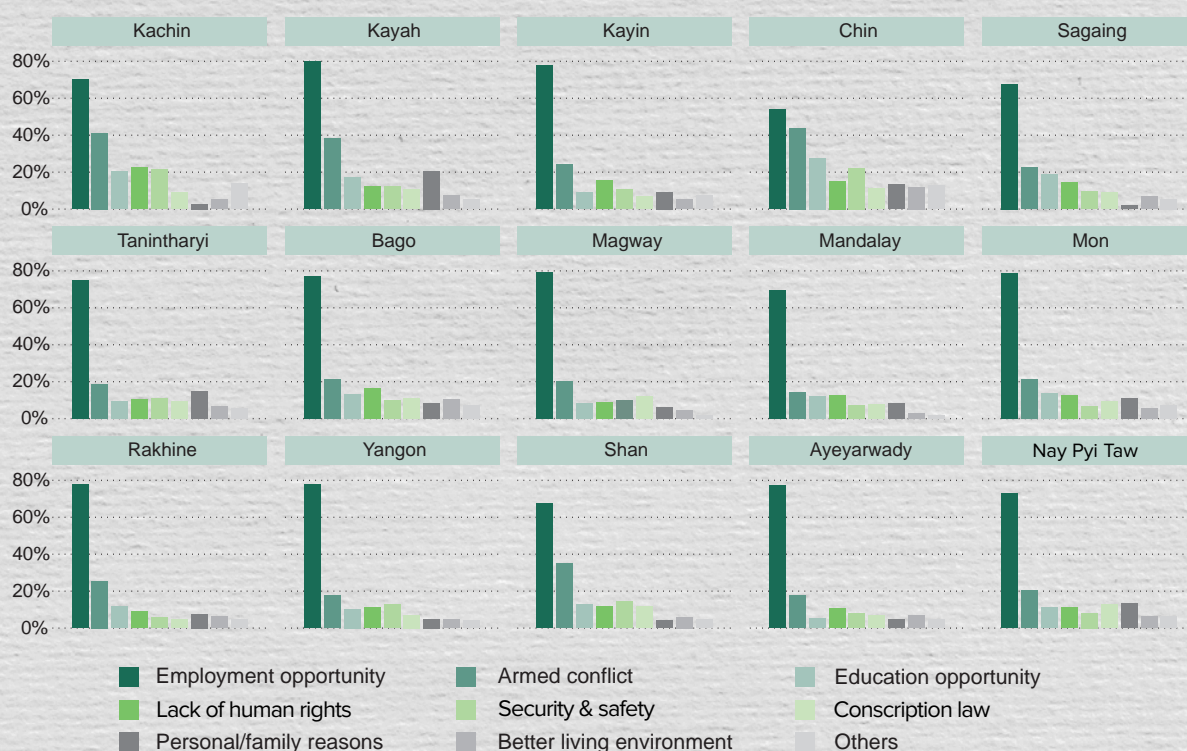
Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Note: Respondents were allowed to select multiple reasons for considering migration; therefore, percentages do not sum to 100 percent, either within each State/Region or across areas categorized by dominant territorial presence or other breakdowns.

However, these factors are not independent of each other. The decision to migrate is often a consequence of several intertwined factors that are not mutually exclusive. Conflict, insecurity, lack of human rights, and conscription law, for example, can directly drive migration as individuals seek physical safety. Simultaneously, conflict acts as an indirect driver by disrupting economic livelihoods and limiting opportunities, compelling people to explore economic prospects elsewhere. A 2024 UNDP report showed that states and regions more affected by ongoing conflict also exhibit a greater economic recession[20], which will further incentivize people to migrate.

"Young people face two options: either become soldiers to fight or leave the country."

Male Informant, Kayah

"If the country moves forward this way, young people will disappear from the community by going into forests (joining armed forces), migrating to foreign country and serving the military service, among others."

Female Informant, Yangon

20   UNDP (2024). Poverty and the Household Economy of Myanmar: A Disappearing Middle Class. United Nations Development Programme.

Capabilities to migrate

The push-pull model, as described above, despite some limitations, can be used as a tool to understand how individuals' aspirations are shaped. However, it does not adequately explain the complex and nuanced process of migration decision-making. To migrate, individuals need to have both the willingness to migrate and the capacity to migrate, which, among many factors, are influenced by policies, financial means, networks, documents, etc. As discussed above, the aspiration-capability migration model encompasses these factors.

In the context of Myanmar, aspiring migrants face many barriers, ranging from financial constraints to a lack of legal pathways for migration. The ability of individuals in Myanmar to migrate both internally and internationally is highly correlated with household wealth and access to credit.[21] Those who cannot afford migration expenses upfront often rely on small-scale loans or informal borrowing to finance their journey. For example, most Myanmar migrants in Thailand funded their migration through personal savings or loans from family and friends, often opting for less expensive, informal migration paths.[22] A recent report by IFPRI suggests that 75 percent of migrants or their families took out loans to finance their journey.[23] Thereby, the financial pressures stop many from attempting to migrate. As one male respondent from Yangon noted:

> *"I want to go abroad for educational purpose. However, leaving the country is financially burdensome. […] Migrating to a foreign country is only feasible when one is financially strong."*

In addition to economic constraints, additional administrative barriers were introduced to control international migration. The main constraint is on the ability to apply for or renew passports, particularly for conscription-aged male youth. Since May 2024, men aged 23–31 have faced restrictions on overseas employment-related travel, including the suspension of existing permits and limitations on converting Passports for Job (PJ) to Passports for Visit (PV). New requirements have also been introduced for renewing Overseas Workers Identification Cards (OWICs),

including proof of income tax payment, discouraging migrants living abroad from extending their passports or reissuing their documents. The by-law enacted on 23 January 2025, enforcing military recruitment, further restricts male youth aged 18–35 from applying for OWIC, thereby preventing them from seeking employment abroad.

The Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 collected information on the respondents' access to travel documents. Nearly half of the respondents who expressed an interest in migration do not possess any valid travel documentation (see Appendix Table 7), and over 90 percent have never had such documents (see Appendix Table 8). In light of current restrictions imposed by the SAC, these gaps in documentation are likely to lead to increased reliance on irregular migration pathways, raising the risk of exposure to limited legal protection and heightened vulnerability in destination countries.

Anina (alias), a 19-year-old woman from Thaton of Mon state who identifies herself as a part of LGBTQIA community, harbors hope of moving to Thailand, a neighboring country that she believes could offer her a chance to thrive. "It's better there," she says simply, her eyes glinting with the promise of a new life where opportunities might be more abundant and discrimination less severe. Although she has not yet been able to make the journey, her vision of Thailand remains steadfast—a place where she can finally find the success and peace that has eluded her in Myanmar. However, Anina (alias) lacks an ID card, an essential document needed for obtaining a passport and crossing borders legally. Without it, her dreams of moving abroad seem distant, but she remains determined. "If I can't get it legally, I'll find another way," she says.

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21   World Bank (2016). A country on the move: Domestic migration in two regions of Myanmar. The World Bank Myanmar.

22   UNDP (2023). Seeking Opportunities Elsewhere: Exploring the lives and challenges of Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand. United Nations Development Programme.

23   IFPRI (2024). Those who leave and those who stay: Individual migration in Myanmar during a time of crisis. International Food Policy Research Institute.

Trends in destinations dynamics

Prior to the military takeover, available data indicates that most Myanmar migrants tended to migrate to nearby destinations. Thailand, which shares a 1,300-mile border with Myanmar, was the most common destination.[24] As of April 2023, 75 percent of the 2.5 million documented migrants residing in Thailand were from Myanmar,[25] excluding a significant number of undocumented individuals.[26] Other common destinations included Bangladesh, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and the United States.[27] Thailand and Malaysia primarily attracted economic migrants, whereas most individuals migrating to Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia were conflict-driven refugees.

But, according to the MYS 2024 (Figure 6), Japan has emerged as the most desirable destination among youth considering migration. Facing a rapidly aging population, Japan has created legal pathways for foreign workers, including long-term work visas for skilled labour. Myanmar is one of 14 countries with which Japan has signed a Memorandum of Cooperation, and it announced plans to recruit more Myanmar workers.[28] The number of Myanmar workers in Japan rose sharply from 27,798 in 2019 to 47,498 in 2022.[29] Furthermore, Myanmar nationals accounted for the largest group of applicants for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) in December 2022, with over 52,000 registered and nearly 46,000 sitting for the exam, a requirement for employment under Japan's Specified Skilled Workers (SSW) programmes.[30]

Thailand also remains a top destination, mentioned by nearly 18 percent of youth considering migration (Figure 6). South Korea ranks thirds, with 17 percent of respondents, drawn by relatively high wages for seasonal work.

In the heart of Kayah State, where the hills once whispered peace, a young woman named Phyu (alias) lives a life marked by uncertainty, hardship, but resilience. At 27 years, she has experienced more than her fair share of upheaval. Her story, like many others in the region, is one of survival amidst the cruel realities of conflict, displacement, and economic hardship. Despite the dire circumstances, Phyu holds onto a glimmer of hope. She dreams of a future outside Myanmar – a life free from the constant fear and uncertainty. "If I could, I'd go to Korea," she says, laughing softly. "Even if it's worse, at least I'll be able to breathe a bit. Here, we're constantly being targeted and killed," she exclaimed. In her heart, she holds onto the hope that one day, her family will find peace – whether in their homeland or somewhere far away where they can simply live without fear.

Intentions to return

Nearly 90 percent of those who expressed an intent to migrate also expressed a willingness to return to Myanmar, as shown in Figure 7. While there are some regional variations – such as lower return intentions among respondents in Kachin (75%) and Yangon (85%) - the overall willingness to return remains high across all demographic groups, regardless of gender or education level (see Appendix Table 9).

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24   Ma, A. (2017). Labour migration from Myanmar: Remittances, reforms, and challenges.
25   MWG, CRSP and Burman Concern Forum (2023). The situation of migrant workers and refugees in Thailand: Policy recommendations and reform of concerned laws. MWG.
26   UNDP (2023). Seeking Opportunities Elsewhere: Exploring the lives and challenges of Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand. United Nations Development Programme.
27   IOM (2016). Migrants from Myanmar and risks faced abroad. International Organization for Migration.
28   GNLM (2023). Japan to recruit nearly 1,000 Myanmar workers. The Global New Light of Myanmar.
29   Mainichi (2023). More Myanmar youth choose work in Japan as homeland endures military rule. Mainichi Japan.
30   OECD (2024). Recruiting Immigrant Workers: Japan 2024. OECD Publishing.

Desired destinations of youth considering migration

25.1%
17.6%
17.1%
14.6%
7.3%
6.3%
3.6%
2.8%
2.0%
1.6%
1.9%

■ Japan   ■ Thailand   ■ South Korea   ■ Singapore
■ USA   ■ Malaysia   ■ European countries ■ UAE/Dubai
■ China   ■ Australia   ■ Others
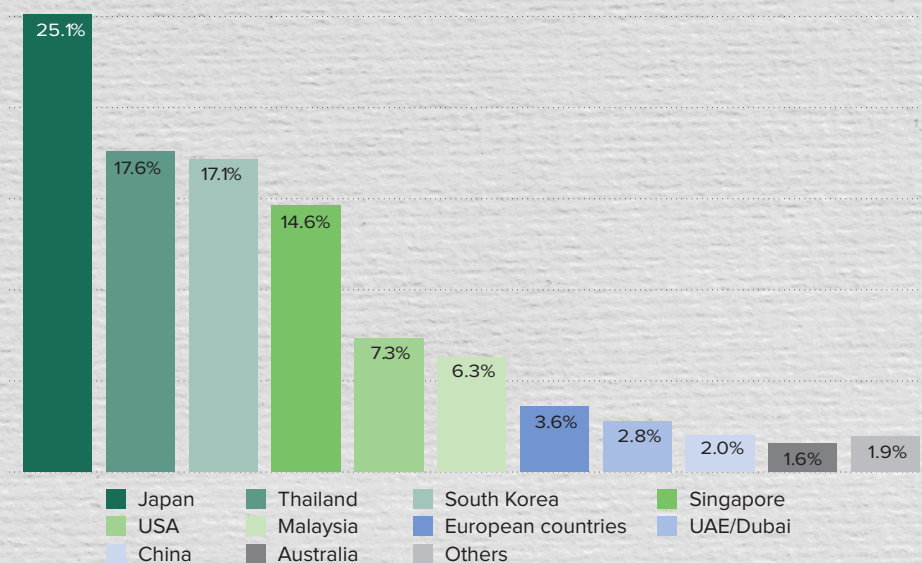
Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Figure 7: Willingness of youth to return to Myanmar of those with migration intent (by state/region and sex)

Kachin 75.2%
Sagaing 90.8%
Chin 87.0%
Mandalay 93.3%
Shan 90.7%
Magway 93.9%
Nay Pyi Taw 94.1%
Rakhine 92.2%
Kayah 82.8%
Bago 90.7%
Ayeyarwady 91.2%
Yangon 85.2%
Kayin 90.9%
Mon 89.8%
Tanintharyi 94.2%

Among the FGD participants, most indicated a willingness to return if conditions improved. A female respondent from Rakhine State noted:

"I am willing to return to Myanmar if both political and economic situations improve."

Participants who have already migrated to Thailand also expressed a desire to return if conditions improve, particularly regarding politics and security. One participant from Thailand shared:

"I want to go back to Myanmar if the political situation gets better. Despite having good conditions here, I will return to my country. I left due to the conscription law, but I will go back when things improve because I love my country."

Another youth participant echoed this sentiment, stating:

"I am willing to return to Myanmar if security conditions improve. Those who left want to go back home."

Thus, positive changes in political and economic conditions are essential to encouraging Myanmar youth — both those currently abroad and those considering migration — to remain in or return to the country.

Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP). Note: The questions were only asked to those who consider migrating.

3 SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS

Key takeaways:

➡️ **Majority View the Country Moving in the Wrong Direction:** Over 55% of youth perceive Myanmar as heading in the wrong direction, with the highest levels of dissatisfaction seen in conflict-affected areas like Shan, Chin, and Rakhine.

➡️ **Higher Education Linked to Stronger Dissatisfaction and Migration Intentions:** Youth with higher education levels are more likely to express dissatisfaction with the country's trajectory and more inclined to consider migration.

➡️ **Cautious Optimism Despite Challenges:** Despite widespread dissatisfaction, over 45% of youth believe their lives could improve within five years, with optimism particularly strong among female respondents and persists even in conflict-affected regions, like Rakhine.

➡️ **Strong Belief in the Possibility of Peace:** Around 68% of youth believe achieving peace in Myanmar is possible, and 66% strongly support ceasefire and reconciliation efforts, though those considering migration are more pessimistic.

➡️ **Desire for Both Democracy and Socio-Economic Development:** Over 62% of youth emphasize the importance of achieving both democracy and socio-economic development, with slightly different priorities among those considering migration.

Perceptions of the Country's Direction

Perceptions of the country's direction play an important role in shaping youth migration decisions. The MYS 2024 asked respondents, "Do you think society in Myanmar is going in the right or wrong direction?" More than 55 percent of youth respondents indicated they believe the country is going in the wrong direction (see Figure 8). In contrast, only around 17 percent viewed the direction as positive, while 28 percent responded 'Don't Know'. Geographical differences are evident. States and regions such as Shan (65%), Chin (63%), Rakhine (63%), and Yangon (59%) reported the highest share of young people selecting 'Wrong Direction'. With the exception of Yangon, these areas were most adversely affected by conflict and insecurity, especially following Operation 1027 in late 2023. Unsurprisingly, Nay Pyi Taw — SAC-dominated and insulated from active conflict — has the highest share of respondents citing 'right direction' (24%).

The gender-disaggregated data does not reveal any significant differences between women and men. However, disaggregating the data by education level reveals noteworthy differences (see Appendix Table 5). The proportion of respondents indicating 'Wrong Direction' increases with higher levels of education. In contrast, the proportion citing 'Right Direction' decreases as educational attainment rises. These patterns may also reflect differing expectations, access to information, and levels of civic engagement among youth with varying educational backgrounds.

The survey triangulated the variations in youth perceptions for SAC-dominated, opposition-dominated, or mixed areas at the time of data collection. While overall perceptions were broadly similar across the areas, youth in opposition-dominated areas were somewhat more likely to view the country as moving in the wrong direction (58%) compared to those in SAC-dominated (55%) and mixed areas (54%).

Figure 8: Perceptions on direction (by state/region and sex)
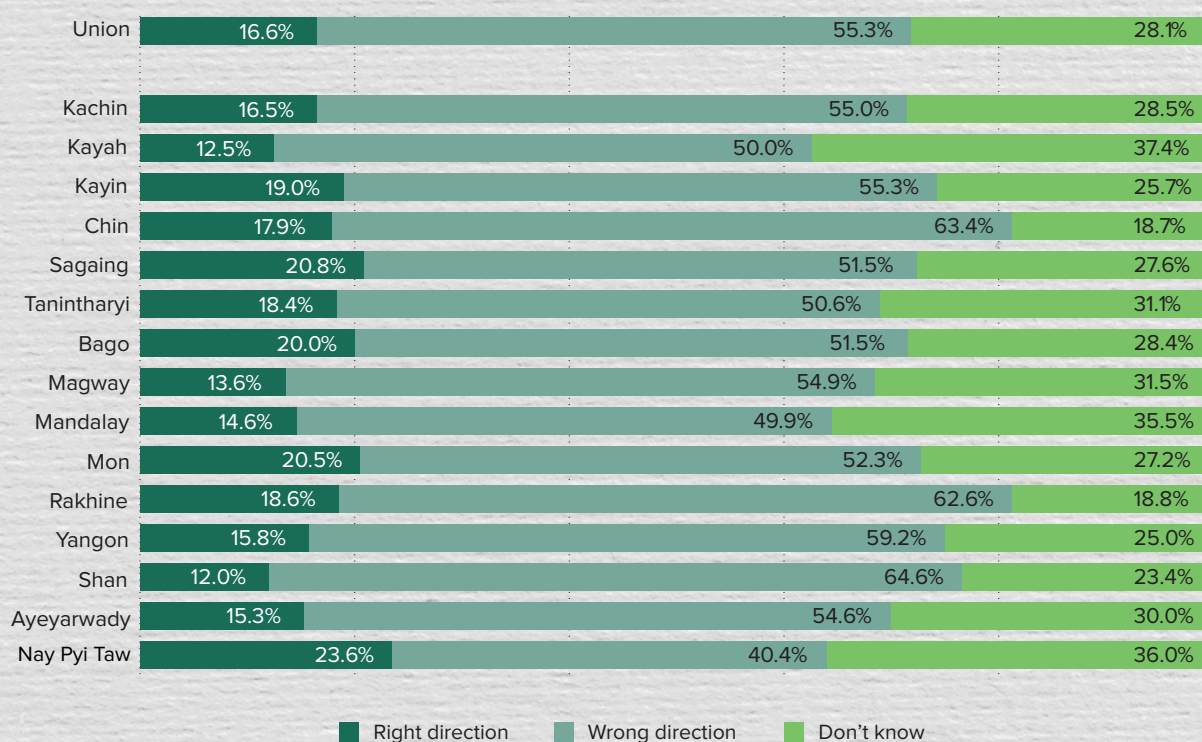
Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Perceptions on direction (by the area of control)

| Opposition | SAC | Mixed |

Opposition
- 17.8% Right direction
- 58.2% Wrong direction
- 23.9% Don't know

SAC
- 15.8% Right direction
- 55.4% Wrong direction
- 28.8% Don't know

Mixed
- 18.5% Right direction
- 53.8% Wrong direction
- 27.8% Don't know

■ Right direction   ■ Wrong direction   ■ Don't know
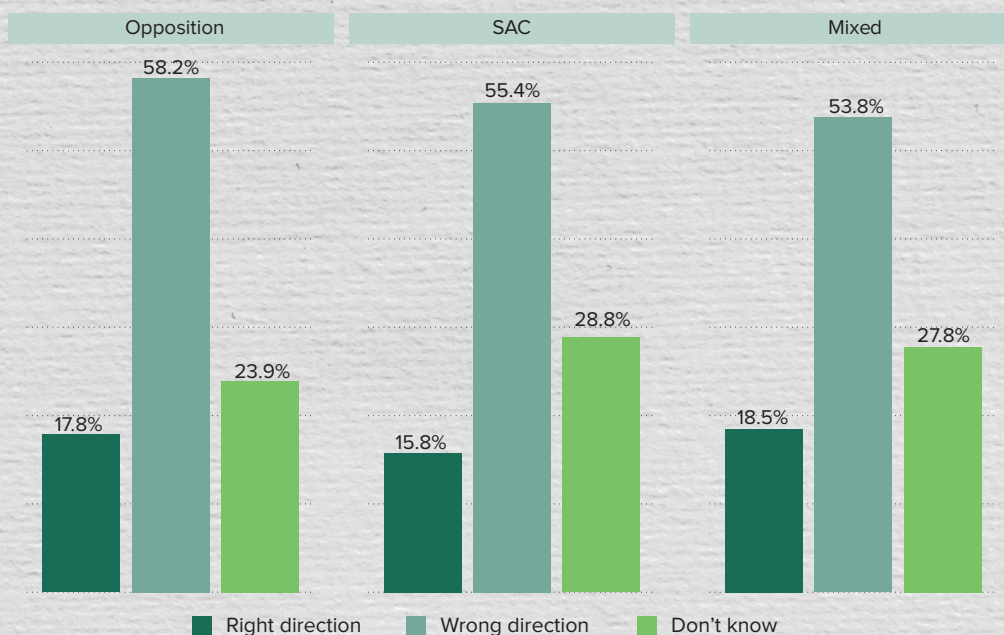
Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

A large majority of participants in FGDs expressed concerns about the country's direction. Responses frequently referred to socio-economic decline and the erosion of political freedoms. Frequently used terms included *'going backward', 'chaotic', 'instability', 'loss', 'challenging', 'worsening', 'dissatisfaction', 'wrongdoing', 'deterioration',* and *'struggling'* when talking about Myanmar's current trajectory. A female participant from Rakhine State voiced her frustration:

> *"Myanmar is going in the wrong direction. Since the military takeover, brutal control over the public, armed conflicts, and displacement have destroyed all aspects of socio-economic life."*

Educational challenges also emerged as a prevalent theme, with multiple respondents highlighting the declining quality of education and limited opportunities for young people. A male respondent from Yangon commented:

> *"Given the current situation, I think the country is on the wrong track. Young people have lost their future. The quality of education has deteriorated."*

Another informant from Kayah echoed this sentiment:

> *"Young people will lose their future. They have lost their former goals and stopped their educational journey."*

In the quantitative data, approximately 17 percent believed that the country is moving in the right direction. However, only a few FGD participants shared this view, and for those who did, 'Right Direction' was often linked to the ongoing revolutionary movements. For example, a female interviewee from Kayah, the first state to establish an interim governing body — the Karenni State Interim Executive Council (IEC)[31] — expressed optimism about the resistance efforts:

> *"I think Myanmar is going in the right direction – for the people, for democracy. Since the time of my grandparents, we have suffered because of the military. So, I think the current situation is on the right path."*

A larger share of those considering migration (66%) perceive the country as heading in the wrong direction, compared to the other 48% not considering migration. This supports the view that dissatisfaction with the country's trajectory is a key underlying driver of migration aspirations. Further disaggregation of one's perception of society and education levels reveals that for those who cited 'Wrong Direction' and hold a higher education, the willingness to migrate is highest and stands at 60 percent (see Appendix Table 6).

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31   The Irrawaddy (2023). Kayah becomes first Myanmar state to set up revolutionary governing body. The Irrawaddy.

Figure 10:   Perceptions on direction (by willingness to migrate/return and sex)

	Right direction	Wrong direction	Don't know
Considers migration	13.9%	65.6%	20.5%
Does not consider migration	18.6%	48.1%	33.4%
Willing to return	14.2%	64.7%	21.2%
Not willing to return	10.1%	75.3%	14.6%
Male	18.0%	57.8%	24.2%
Female	15.1%	52.7%	32.2%
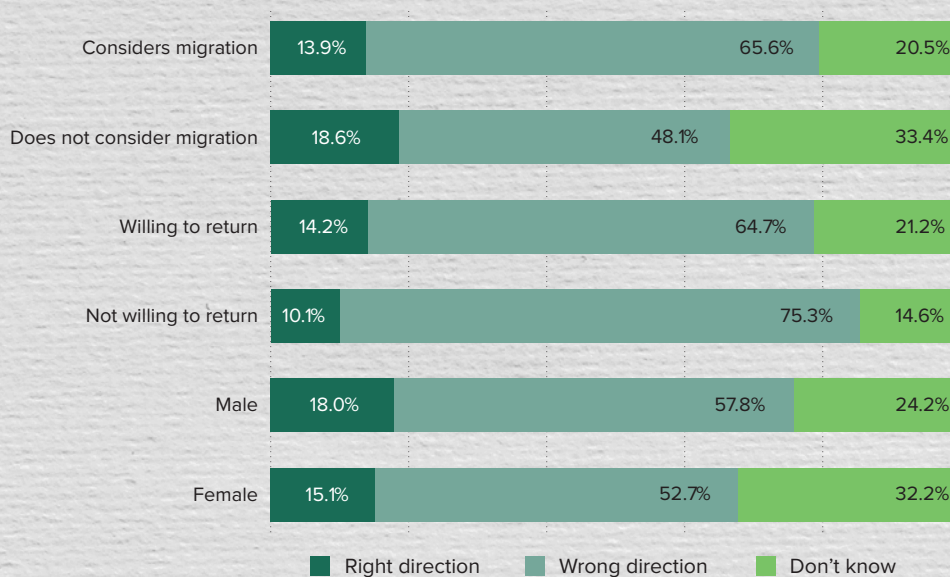
Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Cautious optimism

A significant proportion of youth remain cautiously optimistic about the future of Myanmar over the next five years and the possibility of building peace in the country.

As shown in Figure 11, over 45 percent of young respondents believe their lives — and those of their peers — will be better or much better within the next five years, while 22 percent expect conditions to be worse or much worse. Twenty-three percent of respondents indicated 'Don't Know,' while nearly 10 percent foresee little to no change. The 45 percent relates with a degree of optimism among youth that better times may lie ahead, with the sentiment notably stronger among female respondents — around 50 percent expressed a positive outlook, compared to about 39 percent of young men.

Figure 11:   Future outlook on lives of youth in five years from now (by sex)
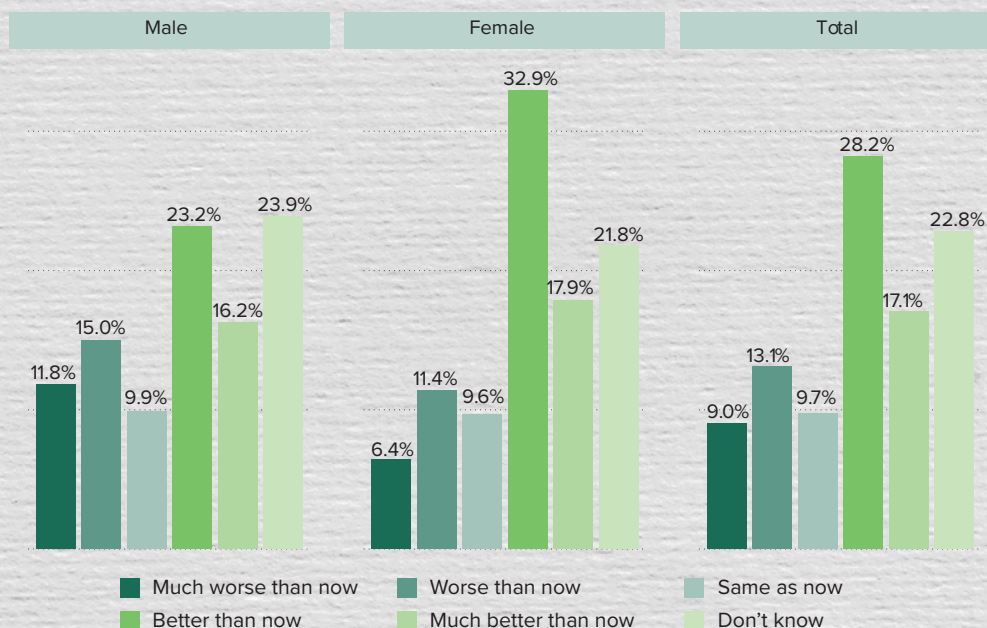
	Much worse than now	Worse than now	Same as now	Better than now	Much better than now	Don't know
Male	11.8%	15.0%	9.9%	23.2%	16.2%	23.9%
Female	6.4%	11.4%	9.6%	32.9%	17.9%	21.8%
Total	9.0%	13.1%	9.7%	28.2%	17.1%	22.8%

Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Future outlook on lives of youth in five years from now (by state/region)
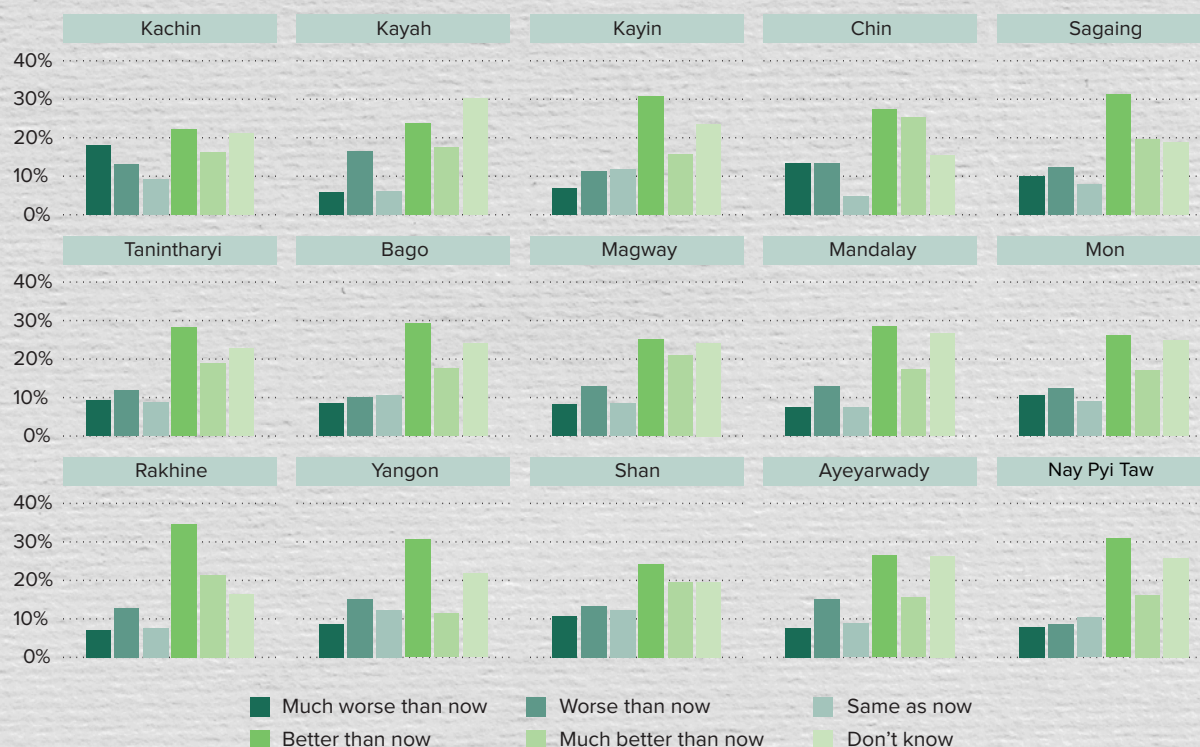
Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Perceptions of youth's future in Myanmar over the next five years vary by state and region, as illustrated in Figure 12. Despite widespread negative views on the country's current direction (as explained in Figure 8), positive outlooks outweigh negative ones regarding youth's future in every state and region. In particular, over 55 percent of youth in Rakhine, a state facing intensified armed conflict and potential economic collapse, foresee an improved future. The reasons behind this hopeful outlook ranges from a belief that conditions cannot worsen further to an emerging sense of hope tied to potential autonomy and revolutionary movements. One FGD participant from Rakhine shared:

"If the war continues, I see a bleak future for education, health, and the economy, with fewer job opportunities. However, if Rakhine state gains autonomy, I think it will improve more than before."

Concerns remain high, however, as many youth in Rakhine highlighted persistent issues such as food insecurity, limited access to healthcare, declining economic activity, deteriorating education, and increased drug use. According to the UNDP's 2023 Poverty Report, over 66 percent of Rakhine's population lives below the poverty line, making it the second poorest region in Myanmar after Chin. Despite these challenges, young respondents in Rakhine expressed hope that, with peace, improvements in health, education, living standards, and the economy are possible, underscoring the interconnected need for both socio-economic and political stability.

Figure 13 presents the perspectives of youth considering migrating and those planning to remain in Myanmar regarding the future of young people over the next five years. A majority in both groups express optimism, with 43 percent of potential migrants and 47 percent of those considering staying behind expressing optimism for the future. However, among youth who do not plan to return once they have migrated, 50 percent express a pessimistic view, whereas those intending to return are more hopeful.

Future outlook on lives of youth in five years from now
(by willingness to migrate/return and sex)

	Much worse than now	Worse than now	Same as now	Better than now	Much better than now	Don't know
Considers migration	12.4%	16.1%	10.1%	27.5%	15.7%	18.2%
Does not consider migration	6.8%	11.3%	9.6%	28.9%	18.1%	25.3%
Willing to return	11.1%	15.2%	10.0%	28.6%	16.4%	18.7%
Not willing to return	24.6%	25.3%	11.3%	17.1%	9.9%	11.9%
Male	11.8%	15.0%	9.9%	23.2%	16.2%	23.9%
Female	6.4%	11.4%	9.6%	32.9%	17.9%	21.8%
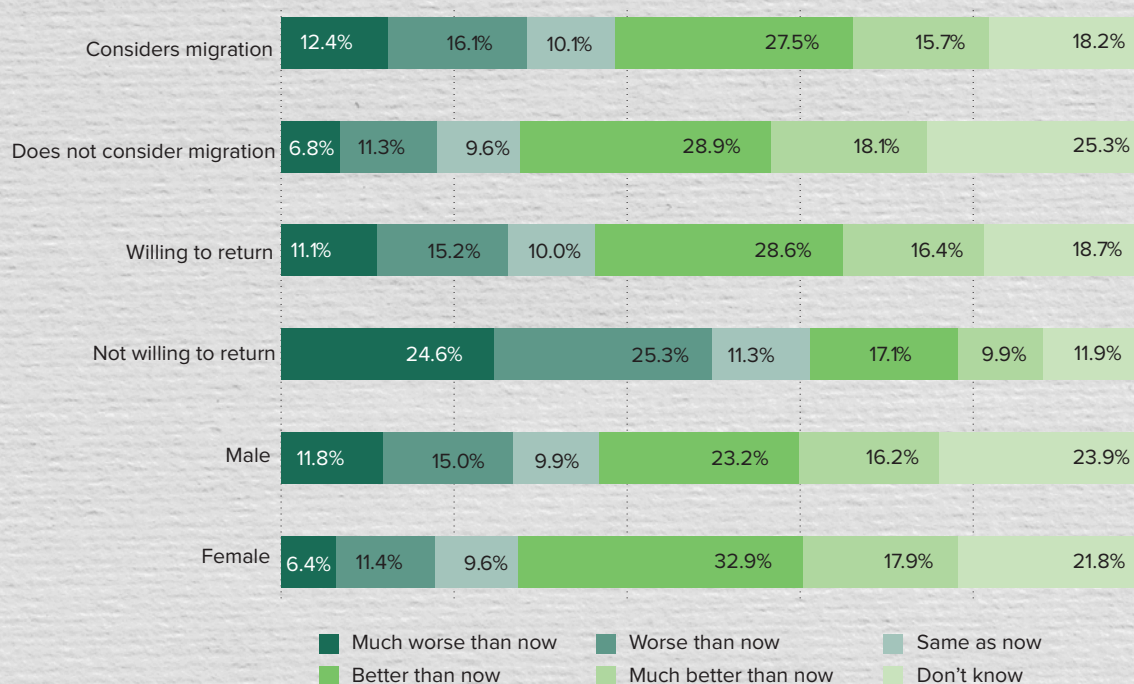
Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Believing in Peace

Over 68 percent of surveyed youth believe that achieving peace in Myanmar is possible. However, a small share — 17 percent — doubt the possibility of establishing peace, as displayed in Figure 14. The rate of skepticism varies notably across states and regions, with the highest percentages in Kachin (26%), Shan (23%), and Rakhine (22%).

In alignment with the desire for peace, over 66 percent strongly support the establishment of a ceasefire and reconciliation between opposing groups. Overall, according to Figure 15, the majority of youth either "strongly" or "somewhat" support efforts to achieve a ceasefire and political reconciliation. Conversely, only five percent either somewhat or strongly oppose efforts toward ceasefire and reconciliation.

Perceptions on the possibility of prevailing peace (by state/region and sex)

Possible ■ **Impossible** ■ **Don't know**

Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Figure 15: Support towards the establishment of ceasefire and reconciliation (by state/region and sex)

■ **Strongly support** ■ **Somewhat oppose** ■ **Don't know**

Somewhat support **Strongly oppose**
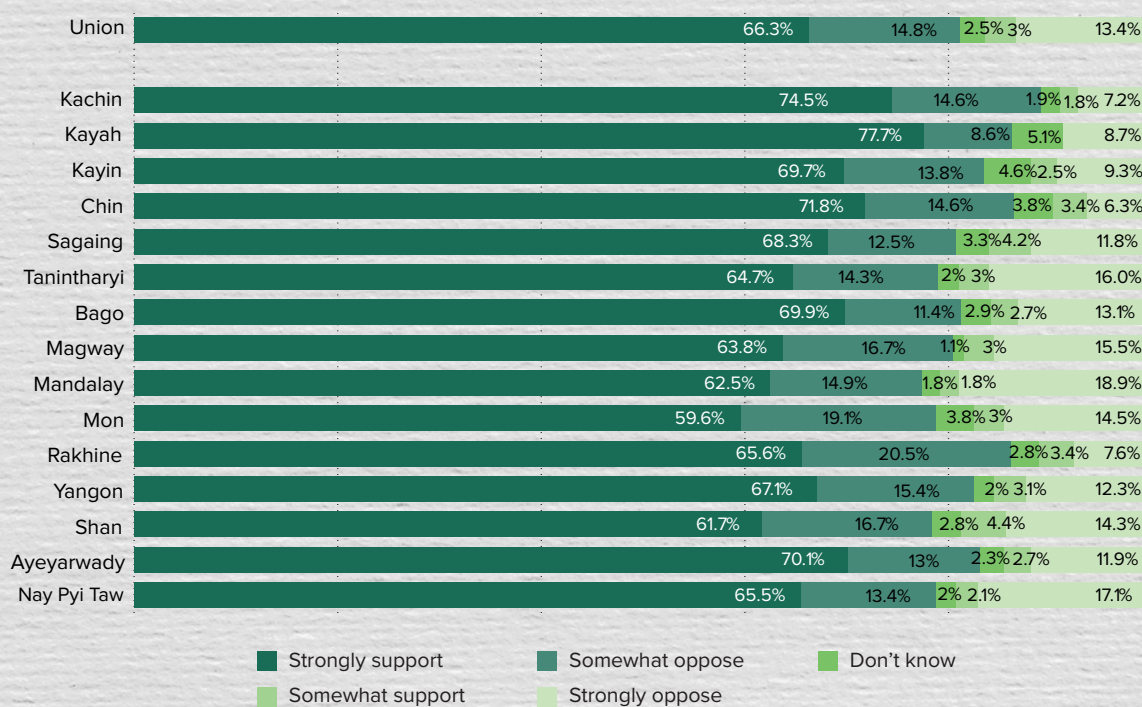
Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Further disaggregation on whether the respondents live in SAC-dominated, opposition-dominated, or mixed areas reveals that there are no significant differences with respect to the belief that establishing peace is possible.

Figure 16 shows that the majority of the respondents believe that establishing peace is possible, regardless of the entity controlling their area of residence.

Youth perceptions of peacebuilding (Figure 17), along with their support for a ceasefire and political reconciliation (Figure 18), were analyzed in relation to their migration and return intentions. As shown in Figure 17, youth considering migration are more pessimistic about peace prospects, with 23 percent believing peace cannot be achieved, compared to 13 percent of those who do not consider migrating. Moreover, those who consider migration express higher opposition to ceasefire and reconciliation, with 7 percent expressing opposition towards these initiatives, compared to 5 percent for those not considering migration.

Figure 16:   Perceptions on the possibility of prevailing peace (by state/region and governing body)

Opposition
- 11.5%
- 19.7%
- 68.8%

SAC
- 14.4%
- 17.2%
- 68.4%

Mixed
- 16.1%
- 16.1%
- 67.8%

Total
- 14.5%
- 17.2%
- 68.3%

■ Possible   ■ Impossible   ■ Don't know
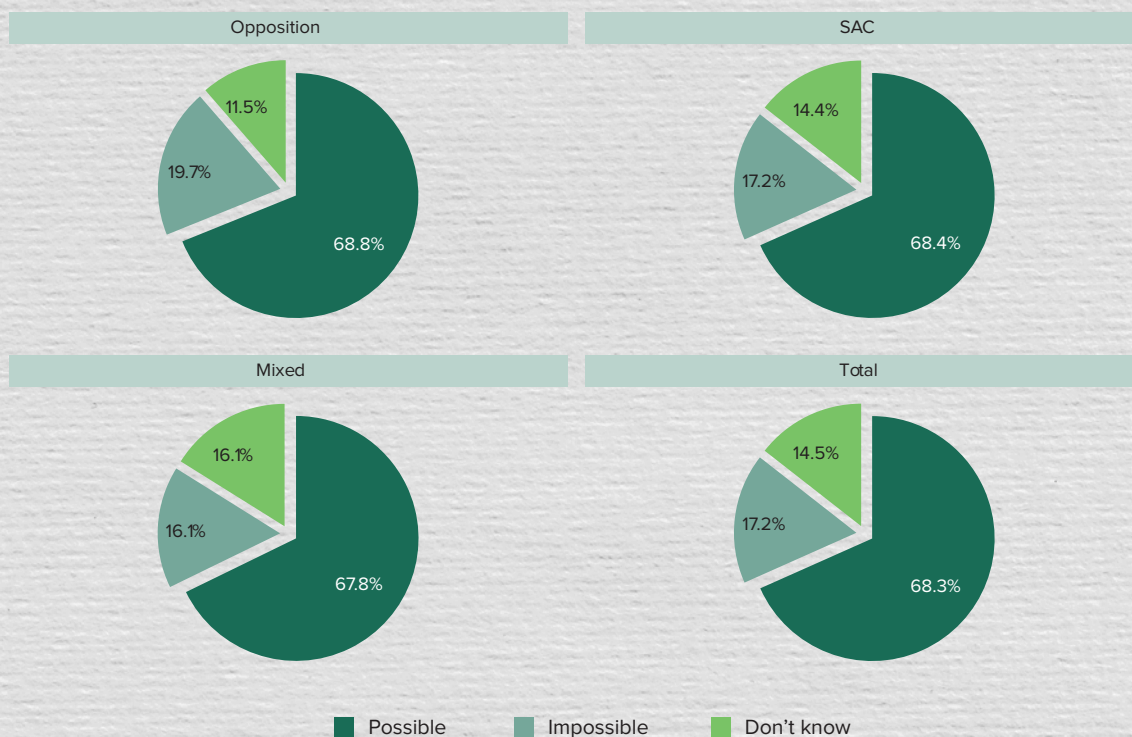
Yin (alias), a 33-year-old woman from the rural township of Taungoo, remains hopeful for the future despite the strain floods have placed on her farming business and the potential conscription of her husband under the military law. However, her hope is rooted in her belief that peace will return to Myanmar, and that her daughter, now in kindergarten, will grow up with better opportunities. Unlike her generation, who had to travel far for higher education, Yin is determined that her child will finish school locally, a luxury she did not have.

Perceptions on the possibility of prevailing peace (by willingness to migrate/return and sex)

Possible 52%
Impossible 38%
Don't know 10%
Not willing to return

Possible 69%
Impossible 21%
Don't know 10%
Willing to return

Considers migration

Impossible 13%
Don't know 17%
Possible 69%
Does not consider migration

Impossible 23%
Don't know 10%
Possible 67%

Legend:
■ Considers migration
■ Does not consider migration
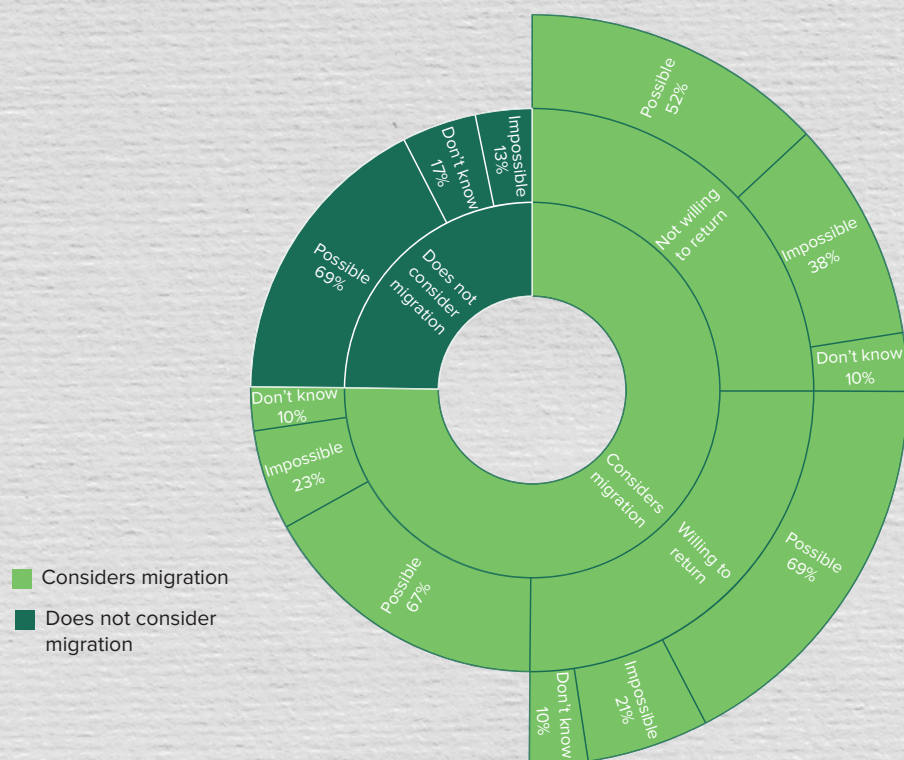
Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Figure 18: Support of ceasefire and reconciliation (by willingness to migrate/return and sex)

Legend:
■ Strongly support
■ Somewhat oppose
■ Don't know
■ Somewhat support
■ Strongly oppose
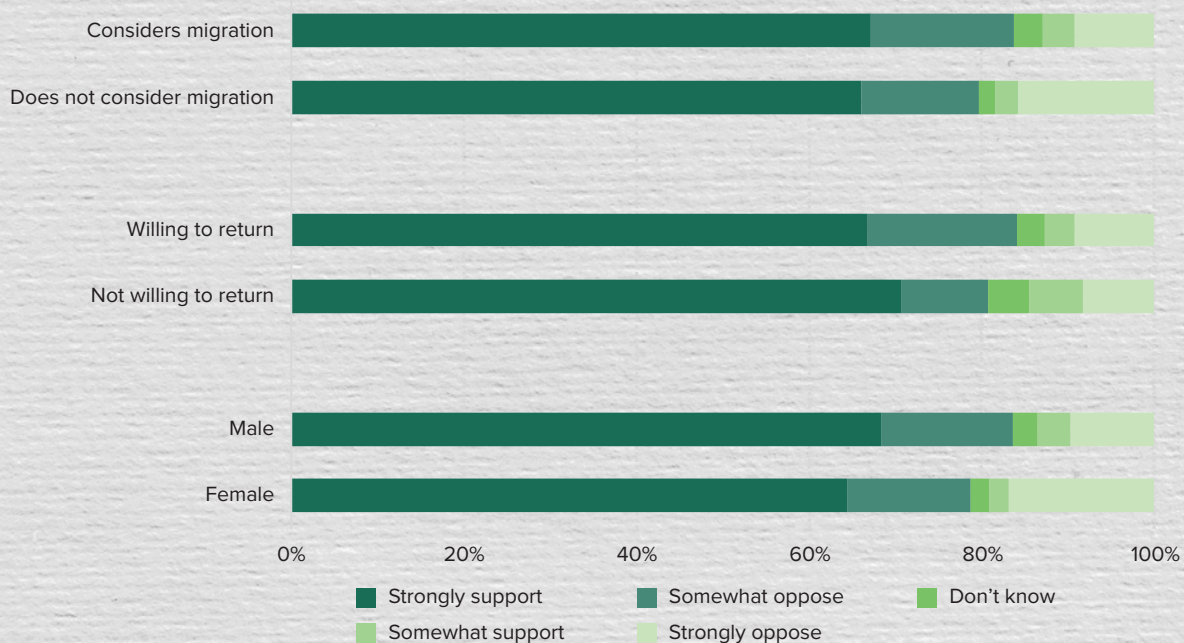
Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Furthermore, as Figure 17 shows, youth who do not intend to return after migrating are significantly more pessimistic about the prospects for peace — 38 percent express doubt — compared to only 21 percent among those who wish to return. Similarly, Figure 18 indicates that 11 percent of youth who do not plan to return somewhat or strongly oppose a ceasefire and reconciliation, compared to just 7 percent among those who do plan to return. These findings highlight how young people's views on the likelihood of lasting peace and political reconciliation in Myanmar strongly shape their decisions about returning after migration.

Vision of youth: Democracy and Development

When asked about the importance of socio-economic development and a political transition to democracy in Myanmar, over 62 percent of youth respondents said that both were equally important (see Figure 19). While a significant portion remained uncertain, 14 percent prioritized democracy and another 14 percent emphasized socio-economic development.

Figure 19: Preferences towards democratic transition and socio-economic development (by state/region)

	Both	Democracy	Socio-economic	Don't know
Union	62.2%	14.0%	13.9%	9.9%
Kachin	68.7%	11.7%	13.8%	5.8%
Kayah	70.4%	12.6%	9.6%	7.4%
Kayin	61.7%	12.1%	18.7%	7.5%
Chin	54.8%	30.1%	10.7%	4.4%
Sagaing	60.8%	19.3%	12.1%	7.7%
Tanintharyi	64.7%	10.7%	14.1%	10.5%
Bago	62.4%	15.0%	12.7%	9.9%
Magway	62.1%	14.1%	12.3%	11.5%
Mandalay	53.9%	12.6%	18.3%	15.3%
Mon	62.4%	13.2%	14.8%	9.6%
Rakhine	57.9%	17.6%	17.4%	7.0%
Yangon	62.5%	14.7%	13.7%	9.1%
Shan	67.7%	11.3%	12.5%	8.4%
Ayeyarwady	64.2%	12.1%	12.9%	10.8%
Nay Pyi Taw	64.5%	9.5%	13.9%	12.1%
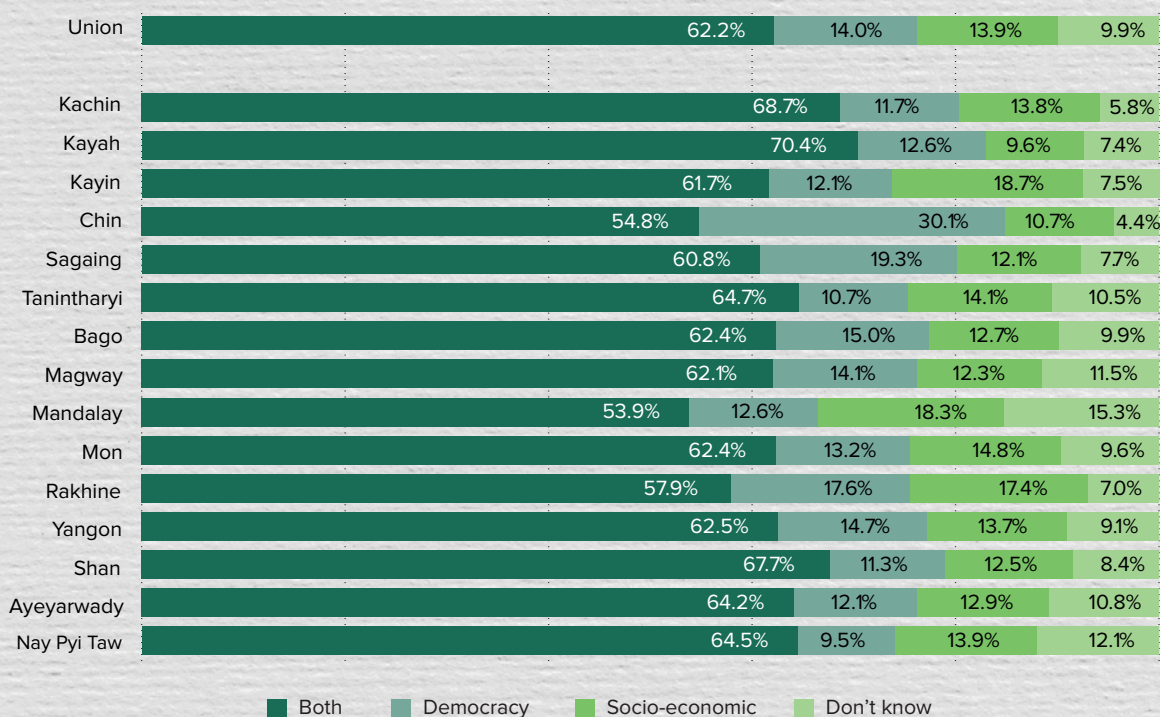
Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

Gender differences also emerged: men were more likely to favor democracy, while a higher percentage of women selected 'Don't Know.' Urban and rural respondents showed little to no variation in their views. However, support for both socio-economic development and democracy rose with higher levels of education (see Appendix Table 10).

The majority of both those considering migration and those choosing to stay behind emphasize the importance of socio-economic development and the country's transition towards democracy. As shown in Figure 20, 65 percent of potential youth migrants and 60 percent of those who do not consider migration recognize this importance. However, among respondents more inclined to migrate, a greater percentage prioritize democracy exclusively (17%) compared to those who prioritize socio-economic development exclusively (12%). In contrast, among those who do not consider migrating, 15 percent prioritize socio-economic development only, while 12 percent choose democracy only. The transition to democracy is particularly significant for potential youth migrants, as a substantial portion of both those willing to return and those not willing to return prioritize democracy over socio-economic development for their country.

Figure 20: Preferences towards democratic transition and socio-economic development (by willingness to migrate/return and sex)
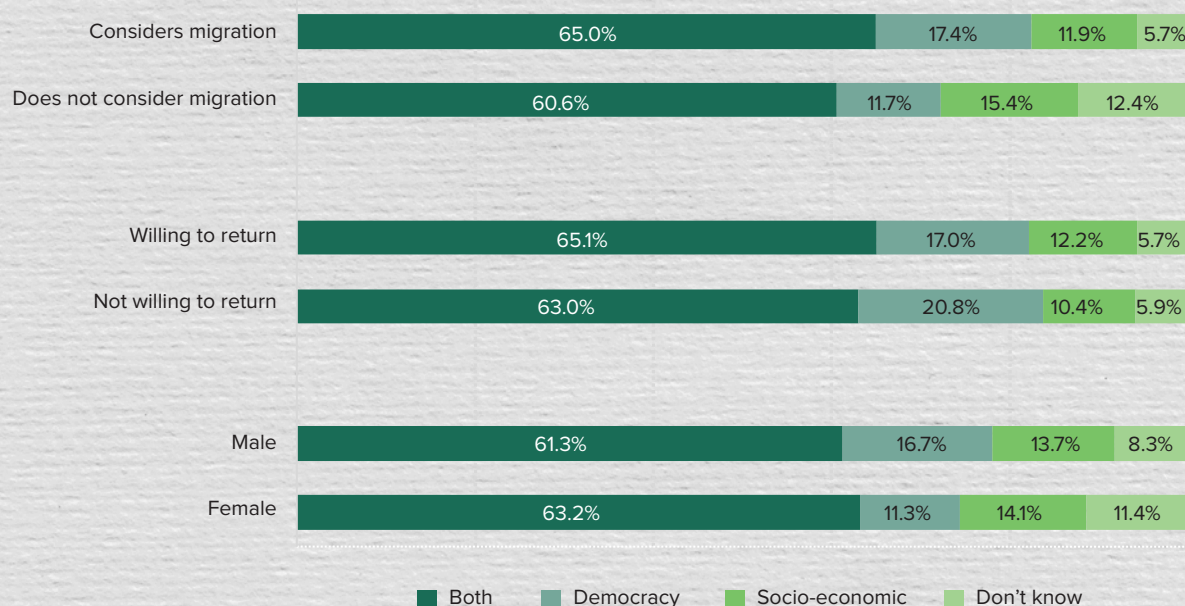
Source: Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 (UNDP)

4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Myanmar Youth Survey 2024 highlights the perceptions of a generation grappling with a weakened economy and a nation in conflict. Many young people in Myanmar grew up during a time of expanding political and civil freedoms, but the 2021 military takeover drastically altered the country's trajectory, plunging Myanmar into political and economic instability.

Youth have played a significant role in the resistance movement and nationwide protests, while simultaneously being among the most adversely affected by the crisis. The disruption in access to education and employment opportunities led to widespread school dropouts and incomplete university studies. Once characterized by hope and opportunity, this generation now faces significant challenges in securing stable employment and a promising future.

Survey results reveal that 40 percent of Myanmar youth would consider leaving the country if given the chance — a figure that reflects only those still in the country, as many others have already migrated. The lack of economic and employment opportunities stands out as the most cited reason for wanting to migrate. Persistent conflict, education opportunities, and a lack of human rights were also commonly cited factors. The reintroduction of the conscription law further fuels migration aspirations, and was cited as a common factor, especially among young men. The migration of young people risks leading to long-term implications for Myanmar's human capital and economic stability.

More than 55 percent of youth believe society is headed in the wrong direction, with education, the economy, job prospects, conflict, and politics cited as key factors. Despite this, many remain optimistic about the future, with a larger share expressing hope for the future rather than pessimism. Notably, 64 percent of youth believe peace is achievable, and nearly 75 percent somewhat or strongly support a ceasefire and reconciliation efforts.

The significant rise in the number of outbound migrants has created additional economic stress upon businesses, particularly labour-intensive industries like construction and garments. Businesses are struggling to fill vacancies due to a lack of applicants, a lack of skills, and/or demands for higher wages. While the eventual return of youth migrants will depend on conducive security and political conditions, as well as stronger economic prospects, immediate efforts should focus on supporting those who remain — particularly in regions of the country where conflict and instability continue to significantly constrain opportunities and hope.

Recommendations

Building on the findings of this study, the following recommendations outline targeted, practical pathways to address the rising tide of youth migration from Myanmar. They aim to strengthen the conditions for young people to build a future within the country, while also supporting those who have left and may one day return. While these actions are shaped by a difficult context of conflict, economic collapse, and shrinking civic space, the proposals adopt a multidimensional approach to navigate and mitigate risks. These are not proposed as sequential steps, but as a set of interconnected options that must be pursued with full recognition of the limitations in the current political, fiscal, and operating space.

1. Addressing Economic and Employment Drivers of Migration

- **Expand youth entrepreneurship and skills training** through openness for vocational education, mentorship, and partnerships with NGOs, the private sector, and educational institutions, wherever possible.

- **Improve access to finance** by providing microgrants, youth-focused credit schemes, and financial literacy support, especially in conflict-affected and marginalized areas.

- **Stimulate local and rural economies** by supporting SMEs in labour-intensive sectors such as agriculture and tourism, and supporting community based economic resilience.

- **Enhance digital and remote work opportunities** through investments in digital infrastructure, online job platforms, and digital literacy training as access permits. Stable and affordable internet connectivity remains a high priority.

- **Develop infrastructure and transport connectivity** to improve access to markets, services, and employment opportunities in underserved regions, with private sector providers.

2. Investing in Education and Training

- **Expand access to remote and digital education** to ensure learning continuity in conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas.

- **Rebuild and reopen educational institutions** damaged by conflict, ensuring they are inclusive, safe, and accessible for all youth.

- **Enhance technical and vocational education opportunities,** aligning training with domestic and international labour market needs. Offer apprenticeships, internships, and business incubation, helping youth transition from learning to earning.

- **Strengthen higher education pathways** through international partnerships and scholarship programmes, with incentives to return and contribute to national development.

- **Support alternative education pathways** including informal, non-formal, and community-led learning initiatives to address gaps for displaced and marginalized youth.

- **Ensure equal access to learning for young women, girls, and other marginalized groups** in all the above.

3. Including Youth in Peacebuilding and Reconciliation

- **Support youth-led community peace initiatives** by providing leadership training and conflict-resolution skills to promote grassroots peacebuilding.

- **Fund community-based peacebuilding programmes** that empower youth to mediate conflict, foster inclusion, and build trust within divided communities.

- **Offer platforms for youth engagement in peace efforts,** ensuring they have a voice in shaping the future of their communities.

4. Expanding Legal Pathways for Safe Migration

- **Negotiate and expand labour agreements with destination countries** to enable safe, legal employment opportunities for Myanmar youth.

- **Develop targeted visa programmes for students and young professionals** seeking to study or work abroad through regulated channels.

- **Strengthen protections for migrant workers,** including pre-departure training, legal assistance, and access to health and social services in destination countries.

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APPENDIX TABLES

Summary of the Survey Respondents' Information

	Sample	%
Total Respondents	7187	100
Urban/Rural		
Urban	2402	33.42
Rural	4785	66.58
State/Region		
Kachin	118	1.64
Kayah	57	0.79
Kayin	420	5.84
Chin	404	5.62
Sagaing	557	7.75
Tanintharyi	459	6.39
Bago	584	8.13
Magway	604	8.40
Mandalay	601	8.36
Mon	562	7.82
Rakhine	525	7.30
Yangon	605	8.42
Shan	572	7.96
Ayeyarwady	600	8.35
Nay Pyi Taw	519	7.22
Sex		
Male	3051	42.45
Female	4136	57.55
Marital status		
Single	3758	52.29
Married	3280	45.64
Living with partner	3	0.04
Widow	46	0.64
Divorced	60	0.83
Separated	40	0.56
Age group		
18-24 yrs	2972	41.35
25-35 yrs	4215	58.65
Education		
No formal education or less than primary	853	11.87
Completed primary school	1,859	25.87
Completed middle school	1,740	24.21
Completed high school	884	12.30
Higher education	1,851	25.75

State/Region	No. of FGDs	Type	Gender		No. of Participants
			Male	Female	
Kachin	1	Mixed	3	3	6
	2	Female		6	6
	3	Male	6		6
Kayah	1	Male	7		7
	2	Female		7	7
	3	Mixed	3	3	6
	4	PWD-Mixed	4	2	6
Bago-East	1	Male	6		6
	2	Female		6	6
	3	Mixed	2	4	6
Northern Shan State	1	Male	8		8
	2	Female		8	8
	3	Mixed	3	3	6
Kayin	1	Male	5		5
	2	Female		5	5
	3	Mixed	2	4	6
Rakhine	1	Male	7		7
	2	Female		7	7
	3	Mixed	3	4	7
	4	Male	5		5
	5	Female		5	5
	6	Mixed	3	2	5
Yangon	1	Male	5		5
	2	Female		5	5
	3	Mixed	1	3	4
	4	Mixed	3	2	5
	5	LGBTQIA	4	2	6
	6	PWD-Mixed	2	3	5
	7	PWD-Male	5		5
	8	PWD-Female		5	5
Mandalay	1	PWD-Mixed	3	3	6
Thai	1	Male	5		5
	2	Mixed	2	3	5
Total	33		97	95	192

Would you consider leaving Myanmar if you had the opportunity?

Categories	Yes	No
Union	40.07	59.93
State/Region		
Kachin	36.10	63.90
Kayah	35.95	64.05
Kayin	38.55	61.45
Chin	48.02	51.98
Sagaing	33.70	66.30
Tanintharyi	31.31	68.69
Bago	46.24	53.76
Magway	39.87	60.13
Mandalay	31.74	68.26
Mon	42.13	57.87
Rakhine	60.27	39.73
Yangon	51.65	48.35
Shan	36.02	63.98
Ayeyarwady	34.61	65.39
Nay Pyi Taw	35.95	64.05
Sex		
Male	42.77	57.23
Female	37.52	62.48
Age Range		
18-24 yrs	48.57	51.43
25-35 yrs	34.18	65.82
Disability		
With disability	36.75	63.25
Without disability	40.25	59.75
Education		
No formal education or less than primary	23.78	76.22
Completed primary school	31.21	68.79
Completed middle school	38.58	61.42
Completed high school	51.31	48.69
Higher education	52.63	47.37
Territorial presence		
Opposition	44.49	55.51
SAC	40.48	59.52
Mixed	37.07	62.93

Appendix Table 4: Why would you leave Myanmar? (Multiple Selection)

Categories	Armed Conflict	Security and Safety	Lack of Human Rights	Environ-mental Concerns	Education Opportu-nities	Employ-ment Opport-unities	Personal and/or Family Reasons	Health Concern	Better Living Condi-tion	Everyone around me is leaving	Conscri-ption Law	Others	Prefer not to respond
Union	22.14	10.74	12.44	1.47	11.89	74.34	6.33	1.03	5.95	1.01	8.87	1.52	2.02
Urban/Rural													
Urban	21.79	11.20	12.36	1.28	13.58	73.94	5.42	0.76	5.25	0.74	8.52	2.27	2.47
Rural	22.42	10.37	12.51	1.63	10.53	74.66	7.06	1.25	6.51	1.23	9.15	0.92	1.66
State/Region													
Kachin	41.15	21.37	22.38	7.39	20.27	70.24	2.81	4.46	5.28	0.00	8.90	2.02	0.00
Kayah	38.25	12.22	12.22	5.02	17.15	79.74	20.66	0.00	7.20	0.00	10.78	0.00	0.00
Kayin	24.10	10.52	15.45	3.11	9.07	77.84	9.21	0.00	5.02	2.96	7.01	1.20	0.59
Chin	43.85	22.28	15.23	4.22	27.72	53.87	13.36	4.72	12.04	2.48	11.16	1.33	2.51
Sagaing	22.40	9.50	14.36	0.53	18.64	67.76	2.14	3.54	6.87	1.03	9.12	0.38	1.53
Tanintharyi	18.61	10.89	10.65	1.99	9.45	74.94	14.62	0.00	6.91	1.84	9.59	1.80	1.20
Bago	21.17	10.15	16.27	3.09	13.07	77.37	8.31	1.51	10.44	2.19	11.24	0.65	1.72
Magway	20.46	10.17	9.08	1.25	8.63	79.13	6.13	0.00	4.35	0.00	12.36	0.73	1.97
Mandalay	14.43	7.57	12.79	1.10	12.28	69.54	8.54	0.00	2.79	0.60	7.65	0.45	1.65
Mon	21.36	6.88	12.52	3.21	13.60	78.69	11.28	0.40	5.50	2.51	9.63	1.39	2.30
Rakhine	25.51	5.58	9.12	0.97	11.81	77.86	7.62	1.72	6.12	0.58	4.78	1.38	2.21
Yangon	17.82	12.88	11.07	0.37	10.39	77.68	4.98	0.27	4.78	0.28	7.10	3.08	2.36
Shan	34.93	14.36	11.90	0.59	12.77	67.60	4.08	0.00	5.97	1.59	11.68	2.42	2.71
Ayeyarwady	17.59	8.01	10.74	1.07	5.33	77.11	4.46	1.49	6.88	1.12	6.79	1.05	2.38
Nay Pyi Taw	20.37	8.17	11.18	2.33	11.18	72.90	13.39	2.16	6.46	1.01	12.86	0.64	3.37
Sex													
Male	24.96	10.70	15.24	1.63	12.49	74.86	6.23	1.24	7.99	1.09	12.47	0.97	1.50
Female	19.11	10.78	9.44	1.31	11.24	73.79	6.44	0.80	3.75	0.92	5.01	2.11	2.58
Age Range													
18-24 yrs	20.36	7.87	11.57	1.32	12.72	72.12	7.56	0.52	5.31	1.07	8.49	0.75	2.49
25-35 yrs	23.89	13.56	13.30	1.62	11.07	76.53	5.13	1.53	6.57	0.94	9.24	2.28	1.55

Appendix Table 4: Why would you leave Myanmar? (Multiple Selection) *Cont.*

Categories	Armed Conflict	Security and Safety	Lack of Human Rights	Environ-mental Concerns	Education Opportu-nities	Employ-ment Opport-unities	Personal and/or Family Reasons	Health Concern	Better Living Condi-tion	Everyone around me is leaving	Conscri-ption Law	Others	Prefer not to respond
Disability													
With disability	24.75	3.76	14.30	1.10	11.87	70.30	11.04	1.29	6.97	4.13	13.16	1.16	1.41
Without disability	22.01	11.09	12.35	1.49	11.89	74.55	6.10	1.02	5.89	0.85	8.66	1.54	2.05
Education													
No formal education or less than primary	17.72	9.36	11.30	0.84	5.03	76.80	7.19	1.19	3.21	1.28	7.28	2.01	1.72
Completed primary school	17.71	7.57	10.99	2.18	5.49	80.40	8.23	0.99	5.28	1.32	10.08	1.03	1.17
Completed middle school	24.04	9.40	10.17	1.78	9.52	74.52	7.63	1.25	5.21	0.78	11.11	1.62	1.30
Completed high school	21.80	10.15	14.23	1.35	15.51	69.66	5.77	0.58	7.03	1.75	9.03	1.14	2.66
Higher education	24.50	13.98	14.28	1.03	17.07	72.09	4.43	1.06	6.92	0.62	6.95	1.80	2.78
Territorial presence													
Opposition	30.62	12.36	13.09	2.42	16.99	68.66	5.87	1.63	5.94	0.90	6.06	1.37	2.34
SAC	20.22	10.35	12.44	1.25	10.92	76.05	6.57	0.96	6.41	1.13	8.66	1.74	2.14
Mixed	24.22	11.37	12.25	1.77	12.70	71.56	5.84	0.99	4.12	0.67	10.93	0.87	1.37
Territorial presence (by Sex)													
Opposition, Male	32.71	10.16	15.09	1.89	19.01	64.21	5.57	1.62	7.37	0.74	7.38	2.31	2.87
Opposition, Female	28.53	14.56	11.08	2.95	14.97	73.11	6.16	1.64	4.51	1.05	4.74	0.42	1.81
SAC, Male	24.41	10.82	16.15	1.50	11.33	77.15	7.13	1.25	8.69	1.43	12.82	1.03	1.46
SAC, Female	15.80	9.86	8.52	0.98	10.49	74.90	5.97	0.65	3.99	0.81	4.27	2.48	2.86
Mixed, Male	22.86	10.82	12.61	1.96	13.43	72.77	3.68	1.07	5.59	0.15	13.58	0.12	0.82
Mixed, Female	25.78	12.00	11.84	1.56	11.86	70.16	8.32	0.90	2.42	1.27	7.86	1.74	2.01

Appendix Table 5: Based on your experience, do you think society in Myanmar today is going in the right or wrong direction?

Categories	Right	Wrong	Don't know
Union	16.56	55.30	28.14
State/Region			
Kachin	16.50	54.97	28.54
Kayah	12.53	50.05	37.42
Kayin	18.98	55.31	25.71
Chin	17.92	63.37	18.71
Sagaing	20.85	51.52	27.63
Tanintharyi	18.37	50.57	31.06
Bago	20.03	51.54	28.43
Magway	13.60	54.89	31.51
Mandalay	14.62	49.86	35.52
Mon	20.50	52.27	27.23
Rakhine	18.59	62.65	18.77
Yangon	15.77	59.20	25.03
Shan	12.03	64.61	23.36
Ayeyarwady	15.34	54.61	30.05
Nay Pyi Taw	23.57	40.44	35.99
Sex			
Male	17.95	57.86	24.18
Female	15.13	52.70	32.16
Education			
No formal education or less than primary	21.21	41.42	37.38
Completed primary school	18.25	47.02	34.73
Completed middle school	17.01	56.48	26.51
Completed high school	14.64	63.50	21.86
Higher education	13.15	65.24	21.61
Education (by Sex)			
No formal education or less than primary	22.58	41.35	36.07
Completed primary school	19.23	48.66	32.11
Completed middle school	18.88	62.01	19.11
Completed high school	16.06	65.19	18.76
Higher education	14.23	68.58	17.19
No education or less than primary	19.94	41.48	38.58
Completed primary school	17.08	45.08	37.84
Completed middle school	14.99	50.46	34.55
Completed high school	13.32	61.92	24.76
Higher education	12.18	62.27	25.55
Age Range			
18-24 yrs	17.78	59.40	22.82
25-35 yrs	15.63	52.22	32.15
Disability			
With disability	13.89	54.05	32.06
Without disability	16.70	55.37	27.93
Territorial presence			
Opposition	17.85	58.24	23.91
SAC	15.76	55.40	28.84
Mixed	18.47	53.78	27.75

Youth's perceptions upon direction of the country and their migration considerations (by Education)

a. When respondents choose wrong direction

Categories	Yes	No	Prefer not to respond
No formal education or less than primary	34.27	65.58	0.16
Completed primary school	37.81	61.89	0.30
Completed middle school	46.95	52.68	0.37
Completed high school	58.77	41.23	0.00
Higher education	60.40	39.30	0.30

b. When respondents choose right direction

Categories	Yes	No	Prefer not to respond
No formal education or less than primary	19.29	80.71	0.00
Completed primary school	31.67	68.33	0.00
Completed middle school	33.79	66.21	0.00
Completed high school	51.47	47.06	1.47
Higher education	45.43	54.57	0.00

Will you have travel documents with you or have access to them on your journey?

Categories	Yes	No
Union	53.13	46.87
Urban/Rural		
Urban	55.26	44.74
Rural	51.44	48.56
State/Region		
Kachin	43.37	56.63
Kayah	47.59	52.41
Kayin	44.67	55.33
Chin	40.80	59.20
Sagaing	45.19	54.81
Tanintharyi	55.03	44.97
Bago	60.35	39.65
Magway	49.30	50.70
Mandalay	59.01	40.99
Mon	44.58	55.42
Rakhine	54.36	45.64
Yangon	57.81	42.19
Shan	50.55	49.45
Ayeyarwady	51.70	48.30
Nay Pyi Taw	50.91	49.09
Sex		
Male	45.39	54.61
Female	61.42	38.58
Age Range		
18-24 yrs	51.14	48.86
25-35 yrs	55.09	44.91
Disability		
With disability	47.50	52.50
Without disability	53.42	46.58
Education		
No formal education or less than primary	49.41	50.59
Completed primary school	44.65	55.35
Completed middle school	54.04	45.96
Completed high school	53.19	46.81
Higher education	58.24	41.76

If you will not have travel documents with you or have access to them on your journey, why?

Categories	Never had any	Lost	Stolen	Someone else has/will have them	Prefer not to respond
Union	91.61	2.07	0.36	5.58	0.38
Urban/Rural					
Urban	91.02	1.57	0.09	6.57	0.74
Rural	92.05	2.44	0.55	4.85	0.12
State/Region					
Kachin	95.83	0.00	0.00	4.17	0.00
Kayah	91.81	8.19	0.00	0.00	0.00
Kayin	88.80	4.45	0.00	6.75	0.00
Chin	92.72	2.90	0.00	4.38	0.00
Sagaing	89.14	3.79	2.87	4.21	0.00
Tanintharyi	84.04	7.49	0.00	6.97	1.49
Bago	92.46	2.85	0.00	4.69	0.00
Magway	94.63	2.03	0.00	3.34	0.00
Mandalay	91.91	2.50	0.00	5.58	0.00
Mon	90.54	3.05	0.87	4.68	0.86
Rakhine	92.89	2.02	0.00	5.09	0.00
Yangon	87.57	1.70	0.00	9.90	0.83
Shan	94.39	1.04	0.00	3.23	1.35
Ayeyarwady	95.26	0.00	0.00	4.74	0.00
Nay Pyi Taw	92.38	0.00	1.02	6.60	0.00
Sex					
Male	92.39	2.26	0.46	4.37	0.52
Female	90.43	1.78	0.21	7.41	0.17
Age Range					
18-24 yrs	92.77	1.80	0.05	4.69	0.68
25-35 yrs	90.37	2.35	0.69	6.53	0.06
Disability					
With disability	94.66	0.77	0.00	4.57	0.00
Without disability	91.44	2.14	0.38	5.64	0.40
Education					
No formal education or less than primary	95.09	0.78	0.00	4.13	0.00
Completed primary school	93.76	1.52	0.88	3.03	0.81
Completed middle school	91.24	1.23	0.17	7.36	0.00
Completed high school	87.97	4.06	0.74	7.23	0.00
Higher education	91.02	2.52	0.00	5.87	0.59

Categories	Possible	Impossible	Don't know
Union	89.73	9.48	0.78
State/Region			
Kachin	75.21	20.94	3.85
Kayah	82.85	17.15	0.00
Kayin	90.90	8.50	0.61
Chin	87.03	11.53	1.44
Sagaing	90.80	8.62	0.58
Tanintharyi	94.25	4.90	0.85
Bago	90.73	9.27	0.00
Magway	93.93	5.66	0.41
Mandalay	93.32	6.68	0.00
Mon	89.84	7.93	2.22
Rakhine	92.24	6.25	1.51
Yangon	85.23	13.62	1.16
Shan	90.72	8.86	0.42
Ayeyarwady	91.17	8.19	0.64
Nay Pyi Taw	94.15	5.85	0.00
Sex			
Male	89.98	9.22	0.80
Female	89.47	9.77	0.77
Age Range			
18-24 yrs	91.01	7.92	1.08
25-35 yrs	88.48	11.03	0.49
Disability			
With disability	85.67	14.02	0.31
Without disability	89.94	9.26	0.81
Education			
No formal education or less than primary	91.94	8.06	0.00
Completed primary school	91.78	7.88	0.34
Completed middle school	89.58	10.08	0.34
Completed high school	90.89	8.36	0.75
Higher education	87.73	10.77	1.49
Territorial presence			
Opposition	92.51	6.50	0.99
SAC	89.21	10.09	0.70
Mixed	89.95	9.07	0.98

Appendix Table 10: Do you think socio-economic development in the country is more important than the country's political transition to democracy?

Categories	Socio-economic development should come first	Democracy should come first	Both should improve together	Don't know
Union	13.94	13.97	62.21	9.87
State/Region				
Kachin	13.77	11.74	68.67	5.82
Kayah	9.56	12.57	70.45	7.43
Kayin	18.69	12.11	61.72	7.47
Chin	10.70	30.06	54.79	4.45
Sagaing	12.10	19.34	60.81	7.74
Tanintharyi	14.12	10.66	64.68	10.54
Bago	12.69	14.97	62.42	9.92
Magway	12.26	14.11	62.09	11.55
Mandalay	18.25	12.59	53.89	15.27
Mon	14.80	13.22	62.37	9.61
Rakhine	17.44	17.63	57.94	6.99
Yangon	13.72	14.68	62.54	9.06
Shan	12.53	11.31	67.73	8.43
Ayeyarwady	12.93	12.13	64.15	10.79
Nay Pyi Taw	13.89	9.51	64.55	12.06
Sex				
Male	13.73	16.75	61.25	8.27
Female	14.14	11.26	63.15	11.44
Age Range				
18-24 yrs	13.06	15.47	62.54	8.93
25-35 yrs	14.56	12.92	61.98	10.54
Disability				
With disability	13.61	18.46	55.55	12.39
Without disability	13.96	13.72	62.59	9.73
Education				
No formal education or less than primary	16.61	13.37	53.06	16.96
Completed primary school	13.33	13.95	59.81	12.92
Completed middle school	12.87	14.91	64.10	8.12
Completed high school	13.30	14.24	63.49	8.96
Higher education	14.56	13.34	66.30	5.80
Territorial presence				
Opposition	14.92	16.42	60.88	7.79
SAC	14.16	12.87	62.55	10.42
Mixed	12.93	16.28	61.92	8.87