



► What are migrant youth's career interests after high school?

A survey of grade 12 migrant students based in Mae Sot District, Thailand

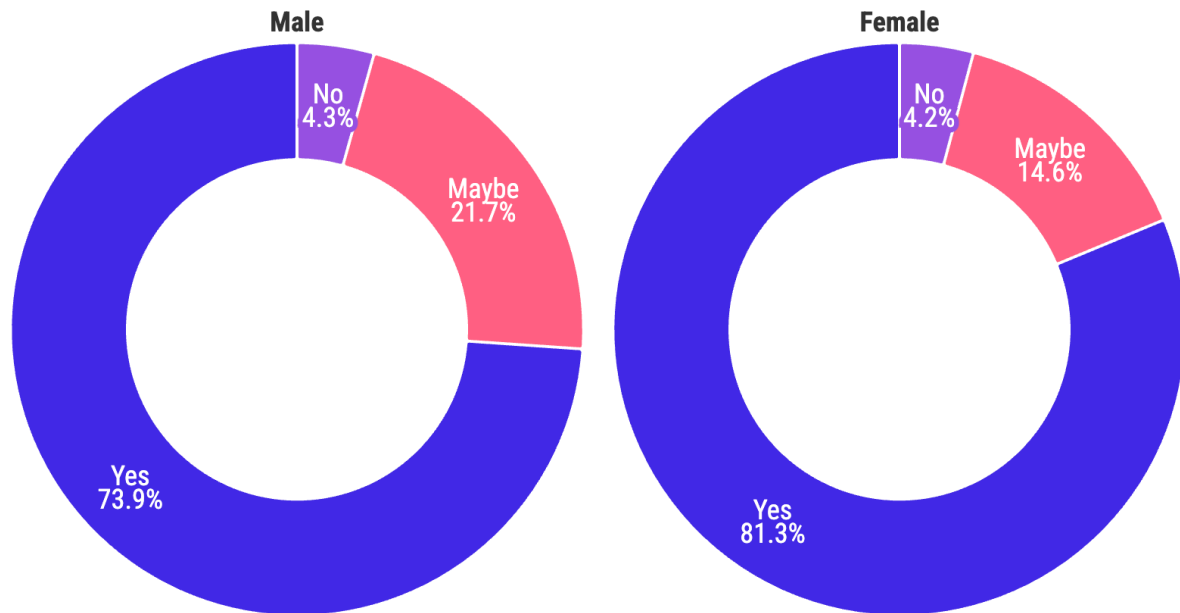
A total of 96 migrant grade 12 high school students participated in a voluntary survey at the Inclusive Education Foundation career booth and were asked a total of seven questions. The survey was offered in Burmese and English and administered using laptop computers to observe students' level of comfort with typing and navigation. Six different migrant learning centers were invited to the career fair event held at Kamphaeng Phet Rajabhat University Mae Sot (KPRU-MS) and facilitated by Cotton On Foundation Thailand.

While we aimed to capture a wide range of perspectives, our sample represents about 28% of the total grade 12 migrant student population in Tak Province.¹ Our statistical analysis indicates a 10% margin of error within a 95% confidence interval. Therefore, while the survey

¹ A total of 337 grade 12 students attend migrant learning centers in Mae Sot District. Source: [Migrant Education Coordination Center](#), December 2023 Student Data. Accessed 26/01/2024.

provides a meaningful snapshot of the career interests among migrant high school students, it may not capture the full diversity of interests and beliefs among students.

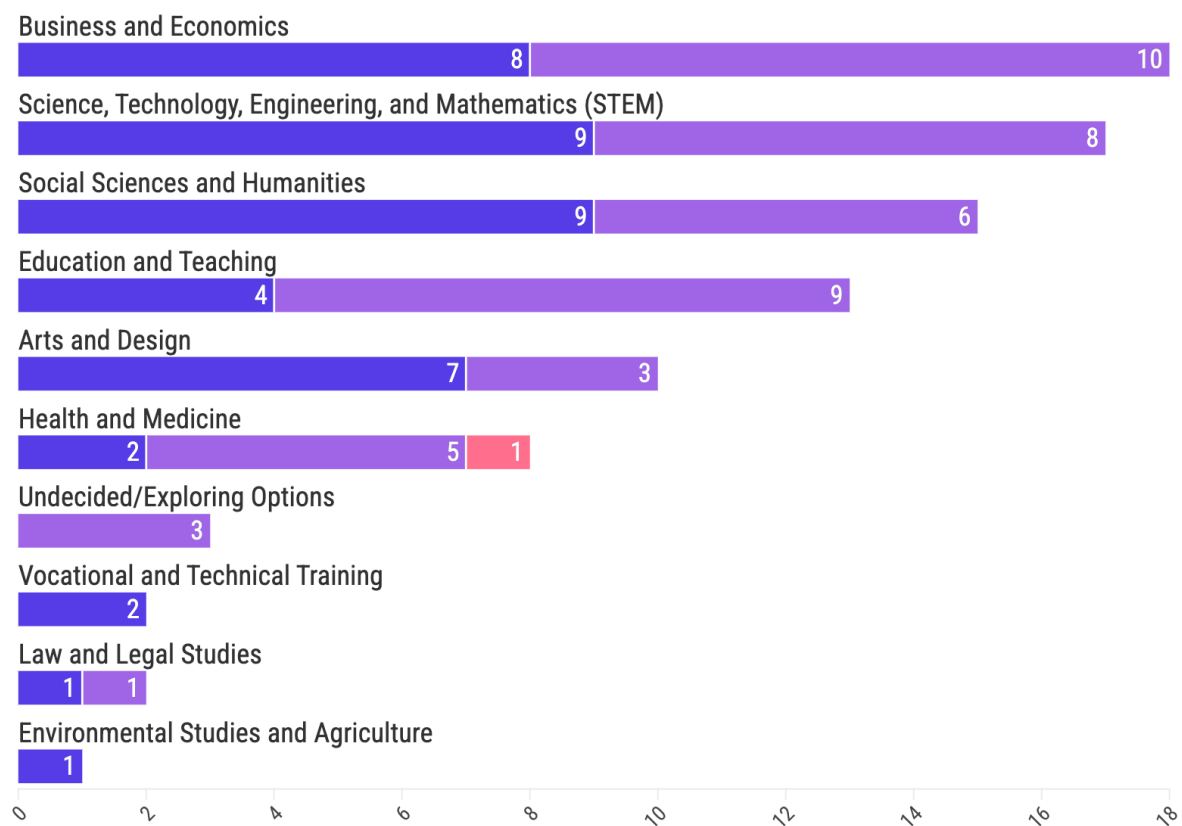
Q1. Are you planning to pursue more education after high school?



A total of 46 males, 48 females, and 2 individuals identifying as non-binary participated in the survey. A significant majority of the students surveyed indicated that they intend to pursue further education after high school, suggesting a strong value placed on higher education. Notably, female students show a higher intent towards further studies compared to male students. Only a small fraction of both genders—4.2% of female and 4.3% of male students—plan not to pursue further education, indicating a broad consensus on the value of continued learning.

Q2. What field of study are you interested in?

Gender ■ Male ■ Female ■ Other



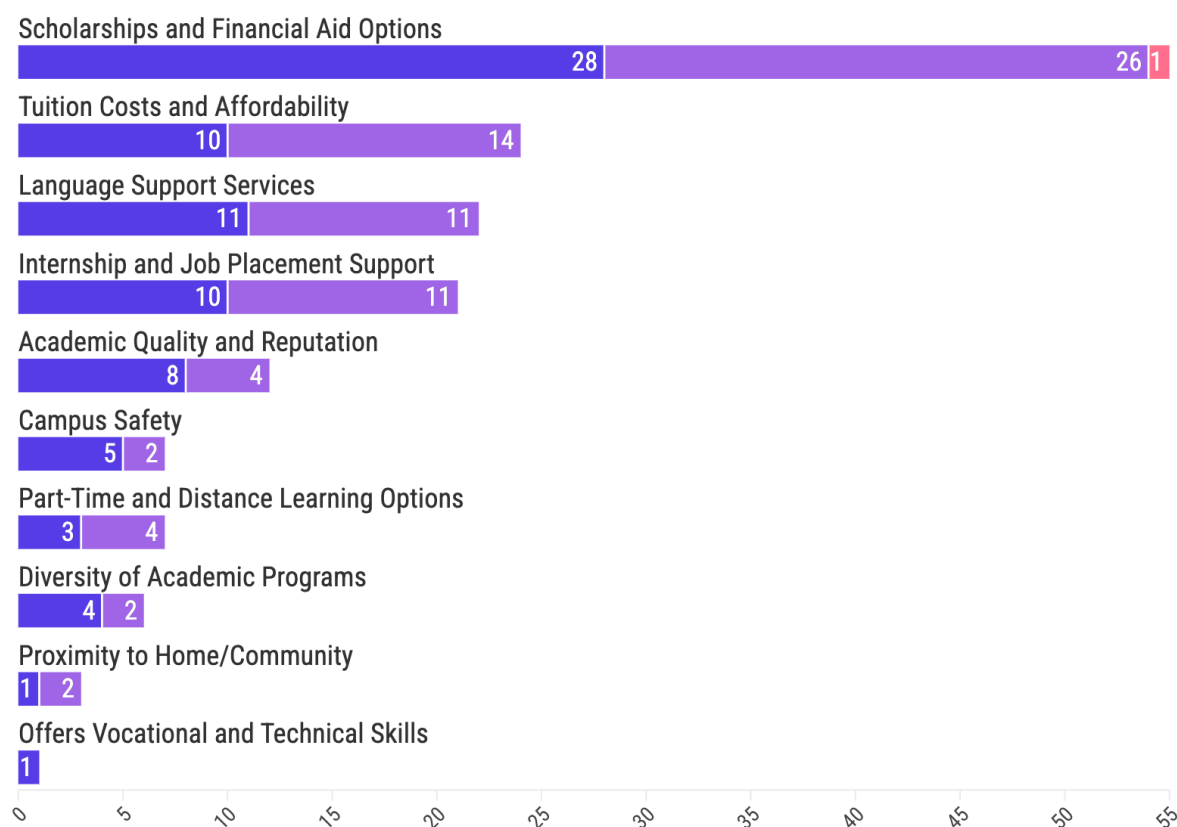
The fields of business and economics, as well as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), emerged as the most popular, with notable interest in social sciences and humanities. These preferences indicate an interest towards subjects that are traditionally associated with robust career prospects.

However, we also note that a significant number of students are interested in arts and design and education and teaching, reflecting a diverse range of interests within the community. The visualization also reveals a distribution of interests across genders, with certain fields like health and medicine and education and teaching attracting more female students.

Lastly, survey responses suggest that more female students are undecided about their future fields of study than male students.

Q3. What factors are most important to you in choosing a higher education program?

Gender ■ Male ■ Female ■ Other



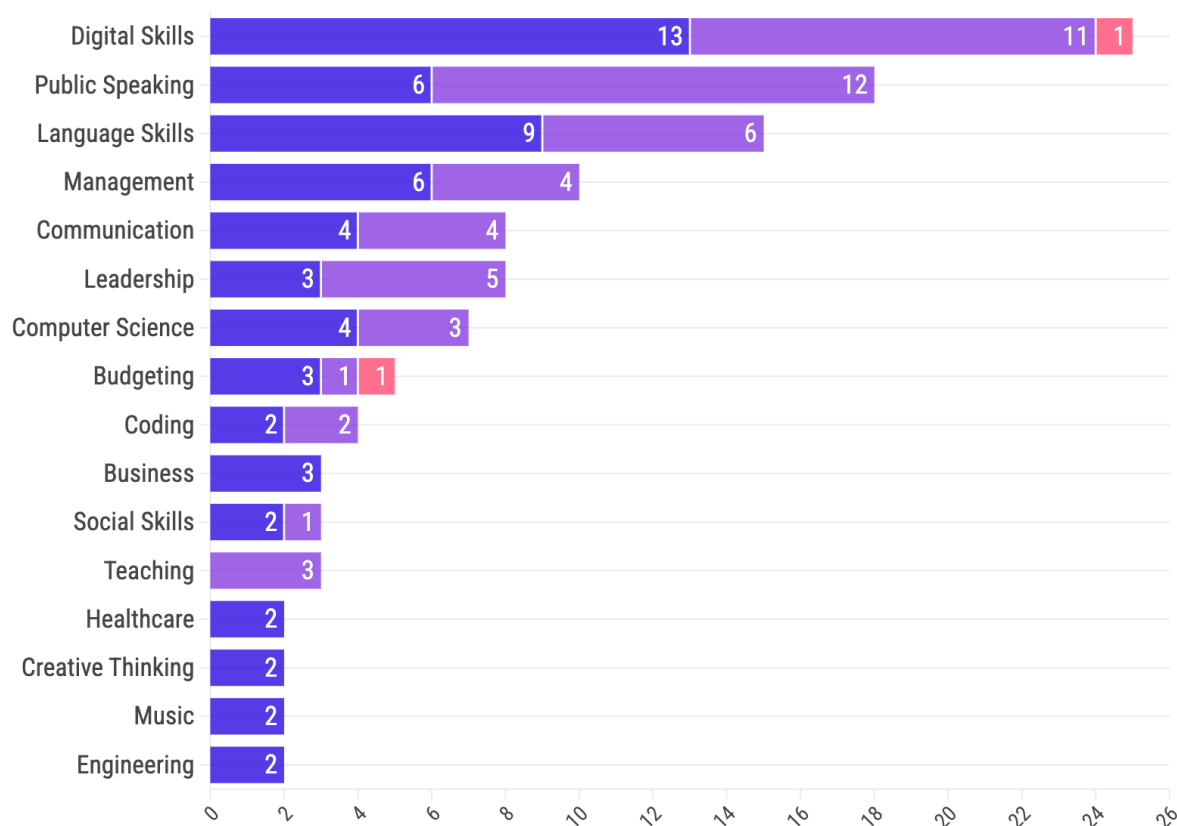
In selecting a higher education program, scholarships and financial aid options emerged as the paramount concern for students, regardless of gender. This was closely followed by an emphasis on tuition costs and affordability, reflecting a practical consideration of financial constraints.

Language support services (which refers to classes taught in students' second or third language with wraparound support like language classes) and internship and job placement support also received balanced attention, indicating a desire for comprehensive educational support that extends beyond the classroom and into future employment prospects.

Overall, the data underscores the significance of financial and structural support in educational decision-making among youth. Factors such as academic quality and reputation, part-time and distance learning options, and proximity to home/community are relatively distant concerns for most grade 12 migrant high school youth.

Q4. What skills are you most interested in learning?

Gender ■ Male ■ Female ■ Other



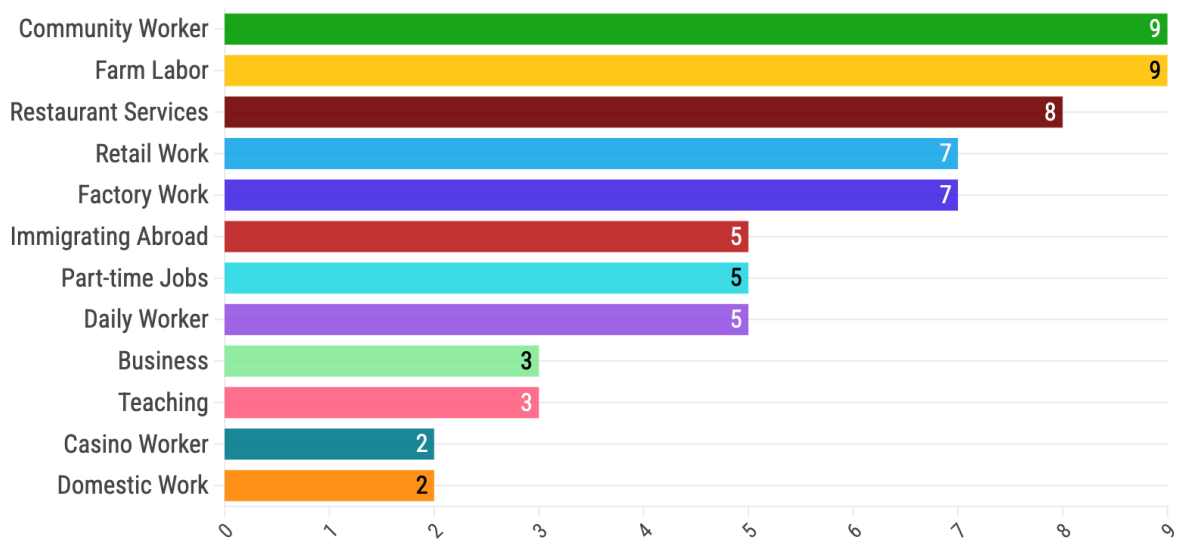
The survey data showcases a keen interest in digital skills among the students, with males indicating this as their top skill of interest. Notably, public speaking follows closely, particularly for female students, suggesting an awareness of its importance in both educational and professional settings. Language skills also rank highly, reflecting the value placed on communication in a multilingual world.

Overall, the emphasis on digital skills aligns with the global trend towards digital literacy as a crucial competency in the modern job market. This inclination towards technology, coupled with the desire to improve public speaking and language skills, indicates a student body that is preparing for a dynamic and interconnected global workforce.

We also observed that this was a difficult question for students to answer. Both digital skills and public speaking were provided as examples to students, which may explain their higher representation in this survey.

Skills mentioned only once include the following: *Math, Physics, Video Editing, Technology, Research, Filmmaking, Data Analysis, Photoshop, Networking, Illustration, Teamwork, Community Development, Problem Solving, Social Work, Public Administration, Online Content Creation, Project Management, Entrepreneurship, Environmental Conservation*

Q5. What are the most common ways that youth in your community earn money?



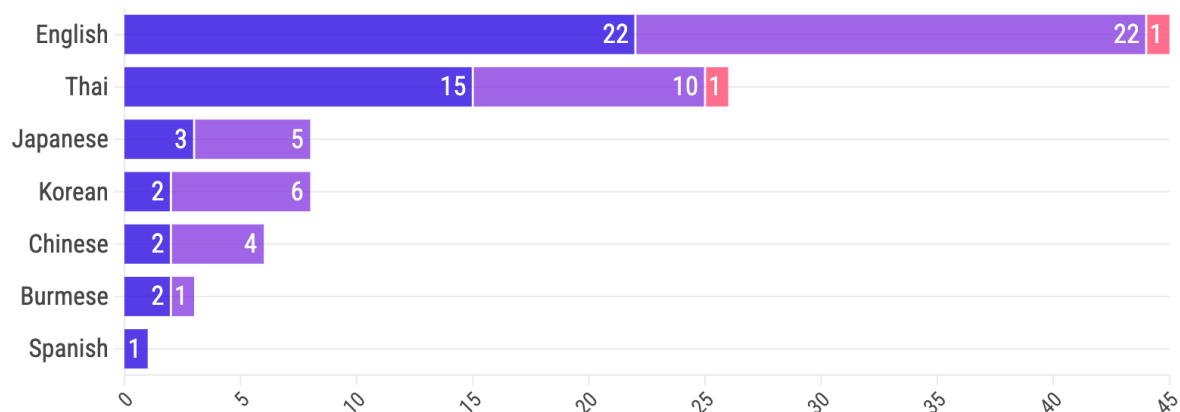
These findings present an important contrast between the current income-generating activities of youth in the community and their educational and career aspirations. While community workers (employees of community-based organizations) and farm labor are the most common means of earning money, reflecting the community's agrarian and service-oriented economic base, students expressed a stronger interest in fields such as business and economics, STEM, and health and medicine. This suggests a desire to transition from traditional, locally dominant work to more globalized and possibly urban-centric career paths.

Such a divergence implies that while students may be engaged in community and farm work out of necessity or availability, their ambitions are set in sectors that promise broader opportunities and potentially different lifestyle outcomes. The data could thus be indicative of a generational shift, where youth aspire to careers that may not yet be fully accessible or developed in their immediate environment.

Income generating activities mentioned only once include the following: *Online Gaming, Construction Work, Translation, Freelancing, Web Development, Art, Housemaid, Selling Drugs*

Q6. If you were to learn another language, which one would you choose?

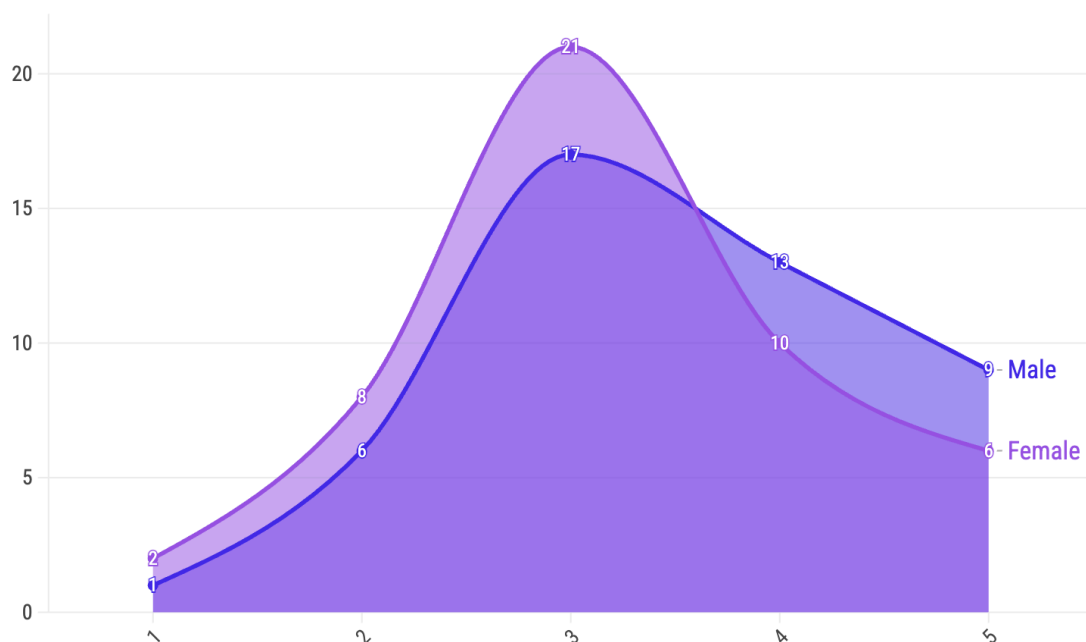
Gender ■ Male ■ Female ■ Other



The survey reveals a strong inclination towards English, with both male and female students favoring it as the additional language of choice. This preference underscores the perceived value of English in global communication and its potential to open doors to further educational and career opportunities. Thai also ranks highly, and would have likely been at parity with English had students been able to choose two additional languages. The interest in East Asian languages like Japanese and Korean, more pronounced among female students, not only maps onto global economic trends but also aligns with the broader cultural influences that these students are exposed to and value.

Q7. How comfortable do you feel using a laptop?

A "1" indicates they have never used a laptop before, while a "5" indicates that they feel very confident using a laptop



This graph depicts laptop comfort levels among students and provides valuable insights into digital literacy among grade 12 migrant high school students. A peak at level 3 for both

genders suggests that most students possess a moderate familiarity with using laptops, indicating a foundation of digital skills. Notably, male students show a broader distribution of comfort levels, with a substantial number feeling very confident (level 5). In contrast, female students demonstrate a more concentrated comfort towards the middle range (level 3), with a distribution that skews overall towards feeling less comfortable with laptops.

Our observations of students using the laptop supports the self-reported data, though we also noted generally slow typing rates (less than 25 words per minute) and some difficulty navigating the survey form.

Recommendations

The survey reveals that most grade 12 migrant high school students are planning to pursue further education following graduation. Based on these findings, we make several broad recommendations:

- Expand scholarship and financial aid options to remove economic barriers to higher education for motivated students, particularly in business and economics and STEM-focused pathways.
- Offer technology-focused longitudinal courses (3-6 months in length) to enhance students' core digital competencies.
- Equip more migrant learning centers with computer labs and provide wrap-around support to teachers to include core digital competencies in their curriculum. We recommend small-form desktop PCs with replaceable peripherals, such as keyboards, mice, and monitors.
- Create opportunities for students to hone their public speaking skills by organizing presentations and speaking engagements within their schools and the wider community.
- Implement mentorship and career development programs to assist students in making more informed decisions about their futures, particularly around pursuing key skill-based competencies that support their aspirations
- Facilitate and support more language learning programs, recognizing the demand for English, Thai, and East Asian languages.
- Advocate for internships, apprenticeships, and training in fields that align with students' career aspirations.
- Develop and scale-up post-secondary education programs that serve to bridge migrant high school students' ambitions with higher education opportunities.

While this research brief has focused on migrant youth's career interests, there is still a significant gap in understanding the skills and experiences that employers prioritize when hiring migrant youth. Our final recommendation is to support a youth-led labor market assessment to explore the more qualitative features of youth aspirations and understand the demand-side and political economy of employing migrant youth from the Thai-Myanmar border area.

Recommended Citation

Grunawalt, P. & Kanawng, S. (2024). *What are migrant youth's career interests after high school? A survey of migrant high school students based in Mae Sot District, Thailand*. The Inclusive Education Foundation. Mae Sot, Thailand.