



Thailand's Social Outlook of Q3/2025

Key social situations in the third quarter of 2025 are elaborated as follows: the employment situation contracted slightly, while the unemployment rate clearly decreased. Household debt (Q2/2025) continued to contract, while non-performing loans (NPLs) still require monitoring. Meanwhile, the safety of life and property and the situation regarding consumer protection and alcohol consumption worsened, while illness from monitored diseases decreased. Moreover, two other interesting social situations were presented: (1) The Aging Economy (Silver Economy) and New Business Opportunities and (2) Returning Migrant Workers: From Choice to Chance. This report also introduces the article “Lessons from International VAT Rate Increases.”

The labor situation in the third quarter of 2025 contracted slightly, with employment in the non-agricultural sectors expanding while the agricultural sector continued to decline. Emphasis must be placed on controlling commodity price levels and preparing measures to assist farmers after the flood situation subsides.

In the third quarter of 2025, the total number of employed persons was 39.9 million, a decrease of 0.5 percent from the same period in 2024. Employment in the agricultural sector contracted by 2.9 percent due to the flood situation. In contrast, the non-agricultural sectors expanded by 0.6 percent, especially the transportation and storage sector, which expanded by 4.9 percent. This was followed by the manufacturing sector and the wholesale and retail trade sector, which increased by 2.6 percent and 1.5 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, the hotel and restaurant sector and the construction sector decreased by 0.6 percent and 5.4 percent, respectively. **The average weekly working hours remained relatively stable**, with the overall at 43.1 hours per week and the private sector at 47.5 hours per week. The number of underemployed workers and overtime workers decreased by 25.7 percent and 6.9 percent, respectively. **The wages** for private sector employees and formal workers increased by 1.3 percent and 1.6 percent, respectively. However, the average wage for the self-employed workers decreased by 2.9 percent, leading to an overall decrease in average wages of 0.3 percent. Consequently, this reduction could undermine workers' spending capacity. **The overall unemployment rate decreased** to 0.76 percent, representing 310,000 unemployed persons. The unemployment rate within the social security system was 1.9 percent, a slight increase from the same period last year. Meanwhile, the number of quasi-unemployed workers increased by 8.7 percent due to an increase in this group within the agricultural sector.

The issues that require significant attention include: 1) **controlling commodity price levels** to maintain workers' spending capacity, which requires regulating the pricing of goods and services, particularly for essential items; and 2) **preparing measures to support farmers after**

the flood situation subsides, involving the swift disbursement of financial aid and compensation, as well as establishing comprehensive rehabilitation and support measures such as providing new production factors (such as seeds, fertilizers, and tools) to aid recovery.

The decrease in household debt in the second quarter of 2025 was attributed to a contraction in financial institution credit, leading to a reduction in the ratio of household debt to GDP. Despite this, the ability of households to service their debt remains a crucial area for monitoring. Several key actions are required, including accelerating assistance for home loan debtors to prevent foreclosures; ensuring flood-affected households have supported access to new credit sources; and actively publicizing and monitoring the "Quick Debt Settlement, Move Forward" project, with an emphasis on finding mechanisms to extend its coverage to include non-bank debtors.

In the second quarter of 2025, household debt totaled 16.31 trillion baht, a decrease of 0.3 percent. This reduction stemmed from increased caution in issuing new credit due to a worsening in the credit quality of households. As a result, the ratio of household debt to GDP decreased to 86.8 percent, down from 87.1 percent in the first quarter. However, the value of Non-Performing Loans (NPLs) from the credit bureau reached 1.24 trillion baht, representing an NPLs-to-total-credit ratio of 9.11 percent. This is an increase from 8.78 percent in the previous quarter, with an upward adjustment seen across all loan categories. However, the ratio of Special Mention Loans (SMLs) overdue by 1 to 3 months to total credit decreased due to the continued implementation of debt restructuring measures, suggesting that the amount of bad debt may trend downward in the near future.

The issues that require significant attention include: 1) **Accelerating assistance for home loan debtors before they face foreclosure**, as there is a current trend of increasing residential properties being seized and put up for auction. This requires expedited debt mediation to prevent the loss of homes; 2) **Promoting access to credit measures for flood-affected households**, with relevant agencies setting flexible loan conditions and effectively publicizing these measures to ensure timely aid and reduce reliance on informal debt; and 3) **Publicizing and monitoring the implementation of the "Quick Debt Settlement, Move Forward" project**, while finding mechanisms to extend its coverage to non-bank debtors to guarantee that all eligible borrowers have comprehensive access to debt resolution.

The incidence of monitored diseases in the third quarter of 2025 decreased, but attention is needed for the increased outbreak of Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and the flood situation, which could lead to waterborne diseases. An operational plan should be prepared to deal with annual flooding.

In the third quarter of 2025, the cases of monitored decreased by 3.06 percent, although cases of Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease and Encephalitis increased. Meanwhile, mental health issues saw a reduction. **Currently, an issue requiring ongoing surveillance is the increase in patients with Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).** From January 1 to October 20, 2025, there were 32,923 cumulative cases and 3 deaths, nearly four times higher than the total for all of

2024, particularly affecting children. Prevention methods include maintaining cleanliness and receiving the preventative vaccine. Moreover, the **current flood situation may lead to waterborne diseases** such as skin diseases, respiratory illnesses, conjunctivitis (pink eye), gastrointestinal infections, leptospirosis, and dengue fever. Increased personal hygiene and self-protection are necessary. An operational plan and readiness preparations should be developed to manage flooding in order to reduce impacts and damages to the economy, society, and the public.

Consumption of alcohol and tobacco in the third quarter of 2025 increased.

In the third quarter of 2025, expenditure on the consumption of alcohol and tobacco increased by 0.2 percent. Specifically, alcohol consumption rose by 0.7 percent, while tobacco consumption decreased by 0.6 percent compared to the same period last year. Moreover, issues that require monitoring and attention include: 1) **Adjusting attitudes and behaviors regarding alcohol consumption, particularly among children and youth**, as some still believe moderate drinking is beneficial for health, despite recent research indicating this is untrue; and 2) **Preventing the illegal import of e-cigarettes** (vapes) which may contain hazardous substances that could cause severe, even fatal, health impacts.

The decrease in safety and security of life and property in the third quarter of 2025 was due to an increase in both criminal cases and road traffic accidents. To address these issues, priorities must include elevating international cooperation to intercept and dismantle drug trafficking networks, implementing measures to prevent the use of Thailand as a base for fraudulent call center scams, and proactively promoting driving skills alongside correct knowledge of traffic laws among the public.

In the third quarter of 2025, total criminal cases increased by 13.4 percent compared to the same quarter in 2024. This rise was driven by an increase in narcotics cases and crimes against property, while crimes against life, body, and sexual offenses decreased. **Regarding road accidents**, the cumulative number of reported incidents increased by 1.4 percent from the same quarter in 2024, with the number of injuries rising, while the number of fatalities and permanent disabilities decreased. The issues that require significant attention include: 1) **Elevating international cooperation to intercept and dismantle drug trafficking networks**. This involves focusing on promoting joint operations with neighboring countries to intercept and suppress narcotics, alongside cooperation in law enforcement; 2) **Preventing the use of Thailand as a base for deception by call center scams**. The public can assist in this by observing the behavior of suspicious groups and reporting tips to the hotline number 1559; 3) **Promoting correct driving skills and knowledge of traffic laws**, especially among youth, through various channels. Examples include the "New Generation Students with Driver's Licenses" project run by the Department of Land Transport in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Moreover, there is a need to publicize correct knowledge about the use of electric bicycles, such as restricting their use to specific areas or villages.

Consumer complaints increased in the third quarter of 2025, covering both issues with goods and services and telecommunications. Attention must be focused on regulating Live commerce sales, improving the after-sales service quality for EV cars, and providing consumer protection in the events and concert business.

In the third quarter of 2025, overall consumer complaints increased by 34.4 percent compared to the same period last year. Complaints registered with the Office of the Consumer Protection Board (OCPB) regarding goods and services and those related to telecommunications received by the NBTC (National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission) Office increased by 34.0 percent and 44.8 percent, respectively. The issues that require significant attention include: 1) **Regulating "Live" product sales (Live Commerce)**. There must be monitoring and inspection of products sold live by merchants/influencers, especially those requiring FDA approval. Clear regulatory measures for merchants/influencers may also need to be established; 2) **Elevating the quality of after-sales service for EV cars**. Consideration may need to be given to establishing additional conditions for maintenance and after-sales service to ensure fairness for consumers; and 3) **Consumer protection in the events and concert business**. Regulations or mandates should be introduced to oversee this sector, covering the definition of service terms, conditions for sale/resale/refunds, and potentially studying the issuance of regulations to prohibit the use of bots for purchasing concert tickets.

The Aging Economy (Silver Economy) and New Business Opportunities

Thailand officially entered a complete aged society in 2024, with the proportion of the elderly population reaching 20 percent of the total population, and it is projected to become a super-aged society by 2033. This demographic shift presents an opportunity to create additional economic value known as the "Silver Economy," where the elderly can function as both consumers with demands for specific goods and services, and as workers who contribute their knowledge and experience to the workforce. The Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) forecasts that elderly spending will grow from 2.18 trillion baht in 2023 to 3.50 trillion baht in 2033. Over 67 percent of this growth represents a new economic value that presents significant business. Current examples of new businesses are as follows: 1) **Employment**, such as *Grab Whaikao* (Elderly Grab), which encourages active seniors to generate income by becoming partners who drive passengers or deliver goods on the platform; and the *Rent a Lhoong, Rent a Yaay* (Rent an Uncle, Rent a Grandma) service, which allows the public to exchange life perspectives and seek encouragement from experienced seniors with positive attitudes, while participating in various activities. This creates income alongside social interaction; 2) **Physical Health and Care Services**, such as *Go MAMMA*, which is an integrated taxi service for the elderly, covering everything from picking them up at home, waiting during their appointments, and dropping them back home; and *Talat Noi Healthy Nails*, which provides medical nail cutting services by retired professional nurses to assist seniors with abnormally ingrown or curved nails, including bedridden elderly patients who cannot cut their own nails; and 3) **Mental Health Promotion**, such as *Senior Tour, Sparkling Heart*, which are travel tours designed for the elderly

and include staff trained in first aid to provide care and update families on the situation; and *Young Happy*, which opens a space for seniors to learn and participate in joint activities through various training courses. It also organizes the "House to Homestay: Convert House, Generate Income" project to provide instruction on home renovation, management, access to funding, and legal registration (e.g., Lhoong Chuan Paar Ree Homestay in Phayao Province).

The examples above reflect business opportunities related to the elderly that do not necessarily have to be large-scale. Therefore, there should be mechanisms to support and enhance the potential of the Silver Economy, including **the development of a clear strategy for the aging economy and the designation of a lead agency to drive implementation**, such as the Department of Older Persons. Concurrently, efforts must be made to **create opportunities and develop the potential of seniors to remain in the labor market**, as well as to **develop a comprehensive database** covering both goods and services for the elderly, in order to foster the sustainable growth of the Silver Economy.

Returning Migrant Workers: From Choice to Chance

The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC), in collaboration with the Social and Business Development Research Center (SAB), conducted a survey on the motivations and factors influencing the relocation of workers back to their hometowns and the environmental conditions for returning migrant workers to enhance the local economy. The target group comprised of early-career workers aged 20–35 years who had completed a higher vocational certificate or higher and had migrated to work in key economic provinces, including Bangkok, Chonburi, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, and Songkhla, with a total sample size of 2,563 respondents. The survey found that **the main reasons early-career workers moved to economic provinces were job-related**, with 60.5 percent intended to move for employment purposes, while 21.5 percent initially moved for education. Nearly all of them chose to continue working in the province where they graduated because they perceived better income and welfare compared to their hometowns, as well as familiarity with the environment. **The trend of returning to the hometown was relatively low and often delayed.** Only one-third of respondents expressed a likelihood of moving back. Among them, government employees tended to return upon retirement, while private-sector employees and self-employed workers planned to return once they had achieved their savings goals. The survey identified **several obstacles preventing workers returning to the hometown**, including: 1) Loss of income and benefits, as current earnings were higher than hometown and allowed for savings. 2) Existing obligations, such as home ownership, children's education in the economic province, or debt. And 3) Diminished attachment to their hometowns, as many viewed the economic provinces as their home rather than their hometown. The survey also founded that **the key factors that could motivate them to return are strong economic and social support systems.** Examples include: special incentives for government and private-sector employees returning to work locally, as well as financial support programs for self-employed individuals. Furthermore, some workers prioritized an improved quality of life in local areas, such as comprehensive public

transportation, stable electricity, water supply, and internet connectivity. Notably, they emphasized the need for an education system of equivalent quality to that in the economic provinces. This could help attract workers with children to return and simultaneously serve as a means to produce skilled local workforce for enterprises in the area.

The above findings indicate that the government should prioritize retaining workers in their hometowns to avoid the constraints that arise once they relocate to major economic provinces. These measures should include: 1) Develop economic opportunities in the hometown by scaling up secondary-city development policies, promoting investments connected to the supply chains of major economic provinces, and advancing the development of regional economic corridors, alongside accelerating the expansion of regional rail transport systems; 2) Establish funding sources and supporting knowledge and skill development for local occupations; 3) Enhance the quality and coverage of public utilities, education, and healthcare services within local communities; and 4) strengthen attachment to the hometown and build networks for returning workers.

Lessons from International VAT Rate Increases

Thailand has consistently pursued a deficit fiscal policy and carries a high level of public debt due to increasing welfare provision and economic stimulus policies, while revenue collection remains constrained. Consequently, value-added tax (VAT) has become a major source of government revenue, accounting for nearly one-third of total revenue collected. However, Thailand's VAT rate of 7 percent remains the sixth-lowest in the world and is lower than neighboring countries, despite VAT playing an increasingly important role compared to other tax revenues. This pattern aligns with many countries that have increased their VAT rates. Moreover, adjusting the VAT rate serves as an effective tool for boosting government revenue.

International experiences with raising VAT rate offer several interesting lessons, including:

- 1) **Clear objectives for raising VAT rates.** For example, *Singapore and Japan* explicitly stated that additional VAT revenue would be used to expand social welfare, such as elderly care, early childhood education, and infrastructure improvements;
- 2) **Multiple approaches to VAT adjustments.** *Japan and the United Kingdom* adopted a dual-rate system, with a standard rate for general goods and a reduced rate for essential goods, while *Singapore* implemented a single-rate system;
- 3) **Gradual VAT increases.** *Singapore and Japan* implemented incremental VAT hikes, alongside assessments of economic readiness before adjustment;
- 4) **Transition periods for adaptation.** *The United Kingdom* announced new VAT rates around six months in advance to allow time for adjustment;
- 5) **Supportive measures after VAT increases.** *Japan* introduced measures to stimulate consumption following VAT hikes, such as increased housing subsidies and mandatory electronic invoicing systems. *Singapore* provided cost-of-living relief through automatic financial assistance payouts, ensuring citizens received immediate support. *Colombia* introduced VAT-free days to encourage spending among low-income households and implemented measures to prevent tax evasion and encourage businesses to enter the VAT system;
- 6) **Public communication and transparency.** *Japan and Singapore* emphasized

continuous communication with the public and businesses through multiple channels, along with disclosing expenditure plans for the increased VAT revenue to show transparency.

Increasing the VAT rate would **enhance government revenue**, helping **restore fiscal stability and balance**, while **enabling the expansion of more comprehensive welfare benefits**, particularly when the purpose of the VAT increase is clearly tied to welfare improvements. For example, *Japan* has used VAT revenue to support free early childhood education for children aged 3–5. Moreover, improving the invoicing system alongside VAT adjustments can help **broaden the tax base and reduce tax evasion**. In the case of Thailand, research by the Kasikorn Research Center indicates that a 1 percent increase in the VAT rate could raise government revenue by 0.5 percent of GDP, or approximately 93 billion baht. This additional revenue could fund major programs such as the elderly allowance (91 billion baht), the State Welfare Card scheme (55.8 billion baht), or the Child Support Grant program (17.6 billion baht). Therefore, raising VAT, with well-designed policies and mitigation measures, could strengthen long-term fiscal sustainability. This includes clear objectives, public communication, support for low-income groups, and transparent use of revenue, along with accounting for fiscal needs, administrative capacity, and economic conditions,

Key Social Indicators

Key Components	2023 Year	2024 Year	2023				2024				2025		
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Year	Year	Q1	Q2	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
1. Employment ^{1/}													
Workforce (Thousands)	40,407.2	40,556.6	40,281.0	40,302.2	40,531.8	40,673.9	40,226.4	40,178.1	40,484.1	40,537.7	40,484.1	40,114.4	40,196.3
% YOY	1.4	-0.2	1.7	1.4	1.1	1.3	-0.1	-0.3	-0.1	-0.3	0.6	-0.2	-0.7
Employed Person (Thousands)	39,912.0	39,806.4	39,629.2	39,677.5	40,091.3	40,250.1	39,579.0	39,500.7	40,039.5	40,106.2	39,383.3	39,510.0	39,852.1
% YOY	1.8	-0.3	2.4	1.7	1.3	1.7	-0.1	-0.4	-0.1	-0.4	-0.5	0.02	-0.5
Unemployed Person (Thousands)	395.2	402.2	421.1	429.0	401.2	329.3	407.7	429.1	413.9	358.2	357.7	365.5	307.5
Unemployed Rate (%)	0.98	1.00	1.05	-21.5	0.99	0.81	1.01	1.07	1.02	0.88	0.88	0.91	0.76
Underemployed Person (Thousands)	202.1	192.3	227.9	202.6	166.9	210.9	199.5	162.4	191.9	223.6	176.3	155.9	142.6
2. Household Debt ^{2/}													
Household debt value (Trillion baht)	16.4	16.4	16.0	16.1	16.2	16.4	16.4	16.4	16.4	16.4	16.3	16.3	N.A.
% YOY	3.0	0.2	3.8	3.8	3.3	3.0	2.4	1.6	0.8	0.2	-0.3	-0.3	N.A.
Ratio to GDP (percent)	91.3	88.4	90.7	90.8	90.8	91.3	90.7	89.7	88.9	88.4	87.1	86.8	N.A.
NPL (Billion baht) ^{3/}	1.05	1.22	0.95	1.03	1.05	1.05	1.09	1.16	1.20	1.22	1.19	1.24	N.A.
% YOY	6.6	16.4	-0.2	-7.3	-4.0	6.6	14.9	12.2	14.1	16.4	8.7	6.9	N.A.
% NPL to Total Loan	7.65	8.94	7.18	7.66	7.73	7.65	8.01	8.48	8.78	8.94	8.78	9.11	N.A.
3. Health and Illness													
Number of patients under disease surveillance (person) ^{4/}													
- Measles	317	1,868	58	88	107	113	543	136	504	685	389	352	212
- Meningococcal fever	11	11	2	2	4	3	2	2	3	4	2	2	6
- Encephalitis	893	967	303	209	194	187	516	216	242	193	312	435	413
- Cholera	3	4	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	2	1	1	4
- Hands, feet and mouth	64,021	89,794	11,483	9,305	29,974	13,636	15,957	7,847	49,410	16,380	10,684	13,004	68,510
- Dysentery	1,541	1,823	401	370	396	314	485	373	553	432	506	598	556
- Pneumonia	292,676	398,201	78,403	57,880	81,054	76,945	96,395	75,975	115,246	110,585	138,418	97,040	103,517
- Leptospirosis	4,460	4,187	622	797	1,591	1,473	767	732	1,308	1,340	782	955	1,287
- Dengue fever	157,142	103,601	10,948	23,636	76,579	46,568	24,131	17,702	42,328	19,440	7,236	15,036	24,918
- Influenza	478,175	650,931	39,457	25,682	211,103	202,741	121,074	99,895	220,228	209,734	267,952	130,683	217,452
- Rabies	4	3	1	1	0	2	0	1	2	1	4	2	1
3.1 Rate per 100,000 population of death with major chronic non-communicable diseases													
- High blood pressure	13.50	N.A.	No quarterly data available										
- Ischaemic heart disease	33.50	N.A.											
- Cerebrovascular disease	58.30	N.A.											
- Diabetes	22.00	N.A.											
- Cancer and tumors	132.60	N.A.											
4. Safety of life and property ^{5/}													
- Against life, body, and sexuality crimes (cases)	18,716	19,714	4,641	4,790	4,601	4,684	4,809	4,709	5,231	4,965	5,083	4,878	4,762
- Property crimes (cases)	63,527	72,482	14,839	14,308	16,854	17,526	16,546	16,356	20,765	18,815	19,755	18,484	21,221
- Narcotics (cases)	303,414	364,528	84,551	70,069	69,204	79,590	85,278	87,455	95,505	96,290	92,601	97,720	111,792
- Receiving notification of cumulative victims ^{6/}	822,828	869,232	208,616	200,054	196,850	217,308	224,121	203,848	212,637	228,626	225,919	204,797	215,580
- Fatalities due land accidents (deaths)	14,122	14,173	3,782	3,349	3,133	3,658	3,748	3,450	3,131	3,844	3,408	3,080	2,716
5. Consumer Protection													
5.1 Number of Complaints filed to OCPB ^{7/} (case)													
- Contracts	1,924	2,172	477	561	455	431	467	420	686	599	625	666	469
- Labelling	2,421	2,860	793	508	474	646	584	533	886	857	911	850	664
- Advertising	3,634	2,594	2,474	330	360	470	807	397	742	648	788	674	530
- Direct Selling and Direct Marketing	2,378	2,793	741	513	588	536	609	600	711	873	1,418	744	1,258
- Others	21,807	14,989	8,146	5,592	4,428	3,641	3,319	3,567	3,869	4,234	4,310	5,603	6,315
5.2 Consumer Complaints filed to NBTC ^{8/} (case)	1,593	1,459	474	371	297	451	414	340	310	395	394	367	449

Source : ^{1/} Labor force survey report, National Statistical Office, Ministry of Digital Economy and Society

^{2/} Bank of Thailand

^{3/} National Credit Bureau

^{4/} Bureau of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health

^{5/} Criminal Record and Information Management Enterprise System (CRIMES), Royal Thai Police

^{6/} Claims filed under Protection for Motor Vehicle Victims Act., Road Accidents Data Center for Road Safety Culture (THAI RSC)

^{7/} Office of the Consumer Protection Board, Office of the Prime Minister

^{8/} Office of The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC)