



Thailand's Social Outlook of Q2/2024

Key social situations in the second quarter of 2024 revealed significant trends, including a slowdown in the labor market and safety and security. The growth rate of household debt slowed down in the first quarter of 2024, and quality of loans showed a continuous decline, with consumer complaints decreasing. Meanwhile, there has been an increase in cases of monitored diseases, as well as alcohol and tobacco consumption. In addition, 3 interesting social situations are presented in this report: (1) Festival Economy: How to Make it Thrive (2) Threats in the virtual world: Sexual harassment against children and youth online (3) Fast Fashion and Its Environmental Impact This report also presents the article “How can we prepare for equal marriage?”

The labor market situation in the second quarter of 2024 has slowed down due to a continuous decline in employment in the agricultural sector. However, non-agricultural sectors have expanded in all sectors. Meanwhile, working hours and wages have remained relatively stable, and the unemployment rate has slightly increased to 1.07 percent.

The labor force in the second quarter of 2024 amounted to 39.5 million people, down from the same period in 2023 by 0.4 percent. This decline was due to a decrease in employment in the agricultural sector by 5.0 percent, while non-agricultural sectors expanded by 1.5 percent. The transportation and storage sector showed improvement, expanding by 9.0 percent, followed by the hotel and restaurant sector, which continued to grow positively at 4.9 percent. This growth was driven by the tourism boom during the Songkran festival. The manufacturing sector also improved due to the recovery in exports, while the construction sector slowed down due to a decline in demand for housing. **Working hours have remained relatively stable compared to the same period last year**, with the overall and private sectors averaging 42.8 and 46.6 hours per week, respectively. Meanwhile, overtime work has increased by 2.5 percent. The number of underemployed and marginally employed persons has decreased by 19.8 percent and 8.7 percent, respectively.

The unemployment rate has increased slightly to 1.07 percent, representing 430,000 unemployed individuals. **Key issues to monitor in the future** include: 1) **the adaptation of the workforce to acquire skills aligned with future labor market demands.** The World Economic Forum (WEF) predicts that by 2027, over 42 percent of jobs in the business sector will be automated. A survey conducted by Microsoft Thailand in collaboration with LinkedIn found that over 74 percent of Thai executives are reluctant to hire employees lacking AI skills; 2) **the impact of SMEs' liquidity shortages and increasing economic risks on employment.** SMEs are a significant source of employment, but they are currently facing liquidity issues. Non-performing

loans (NPLs) as a percentage of total loans reached 7.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2023, nearly doubling. Moreover, the cost index for micro and medium-sized businesses has increased, which could lead to job cuts; and 3) **the impact of floods on agricultural production and farmers' income**. Recent floods have damaged 308,238 rai of agricultural land. With a forecast of 60 - 80 percent of the country experiencing thunderstorms between mid-July and September 2024, the agricultural sector is at risk of further damage. This could negatively impact farmers' income, increase production costs, and affect their ability to repay debts.

Household debt growth slowed down in the first quarter of 2024, while household debt servicing capacity continued to decline. Key issues to be addressed include the need to accelerate debt restructuring for credit card borrowers facing repayment difficulties, and the proliferation of easily accessible informal loans which could lead to over-indebtedness.

In the first quarter of 2024, household debt reached 16.37 trillion baht, representing a 2.5 percent growth, which slowed down from the 3.0 percent growth in the previous quarter. This amounted to 90.8 percent of GDP, a decrease from 91.4 percent in the previous quarter. The slowdown in household debt growth was observed across almost all types of loans. This was partly due to households having high debt burdens and a decline in credit quality, leading financial institutions to tighten their lending criteria for households. The quality of household loans has continued to deteriorate. Non-performing loans for consumer credit at commercial banks amounted to 163 billion baht, representing 2.99 percent of total loans, up from 2.88 percent in the previous quarter. This marks a continuous increase for the fifth consecutive quarter. There are **important key issues to address**, such as 1) **The urgent need to restructure debts for credit cardholders struggling to make payments** after the Bank of Thailand increased the minimum payment from 5 percent to 8 percent from the January 2024 billing cycle. This adjustment has caused some borrowers to struggle to adapt and face repayment challenges; and 2) **Diverse forms of informal lending**, especially through social media, which offer easy access to credit and high-interest rates, potentially leading to excessive debt. There is a high risk of becoming deeply in debt due to exorbitant interest rates in informal lending, especially among young people.

There was an increase in cases of monitored diseases in the second quarter of 2024. Of particular concern is the rise in asthma cases, the spread of malaria, and an increase in deaths from stroke.

In the second quarter of 2024, there was a 72.1 percent increase in monitored diseases, driven by the surge in cases of seasonal illnesses such as influenza and pneumonia. Meanwhile, mental health conditions showed improvement. There are **key issues to address**, such as 1) **the continued increase in asthma cases**; 2) **the ongoing surveillance of malaria outbreaks**; and 3) **the rising number of deaths from stroke**.

Consumption of alcohol and cigarettes increased in the second quarter of 2024. Media campaigns need to be enhanced to decrease alcohol consumption and foster positive attitudes about drinking among young people. Moreover, there is a need to intensify efforts to crack down on the smuggling of e-cigarettes, which has been on the rise.

Alcohol and cigarette consumption increased by 1.0 percent, with alcohol consumption specifically rising by 3.2 percent while cigarette consumption decreased by 1.9 percent due to the festive season tourism. There are **key issues to address**, such as 1) **Children and youth are not aware of anti-alcohol campaigns**. Despite continuous campaigns promoting abstinence from alcohol in 2023, it was found that alcohol consumption among children and youth actually increased compared to 2022.; and 2) **The rise in the smuggling of e-cigarettes**, which has a negative impact on public health.

Public safety and security took a downturn in the second quarter of 2023. Key issues include the violation of children and youth's rights by educational personnel, the monitoring of sports gambling, and the risk of accidents from public construction projects.

In the second quarter of 2024, total criminal cases increased by 26.7 percent compared to the same quarter in 2023. This increase was driven by a rise in drug-related cases, property crimes, and cases involving life, body, and sexual offenses. Regarding reported road accidents, there was a 0.6 percent increase in the total number of victims compared to the same quarter in 2023. The increase was driven by a rise in cumulative injuries, while cumulative fatalities and disabilities decreased. **Key issues to be addressed** include: 1) **The violation of children's and youth's rights by educational personnel**. Data from the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in 2023 revealed 2,618 cases of student insecurity, of which 8.6 percent were cases of rights violations, such as excessive punishment of students. Furthermore, it was found that teachers were creating and disseminating content on social media about students without the consent of parents or students, which constitutes a violation of personal data protection (PDPA) and is an offense under the Child Protection Act B.E. 2546; 2) **Monitor of sports gambling**, particularly soccer, which has a year-round season, has led to a significant increase of 449.7 percent in related cases in the second quarter of 2024 compared to the previous quarter; and 3) **The risk of accidents from public construction projects is a growing concern**. Between 2018 and 2023, a total of 2,249 road accidents were attributed to large-scale public construction projects. This trend continues due to various factors such as falling construction materials, vehicles falling into construction ditches due to a lack of warning signs.

Complaints filed with the Consumer Protection Board (CPB) and the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) have decreased. However, there are still ongoing issues with online shopping, such as consumers being required to record videos while opening packages, and the risks associated with iCloud pledging services.

Overall consumer complaints in the second quarter of 2024 decreased by 25.6 percent compared to the same period last year. Complaints related to goods and services filed with the CPB and NBTC dropped by 26.5 percent and 8.4 percent, respectively. Nevertheless, there are still **pressing issues that require attention**. Firstly, **consumers are increasingly expected to prove their purchases, especially online, by recording unboxing videos**. More than 42.4 percent of the overall complaints regarding goods and services stem from online purchases. A major issue is damaged or incorrect products, which sellers often refuse to take responsibility for without a video recording of the unboxing. Secondly, **the security of personal data when using iCloud pledging services** remains a concern, as there is a risk of personal information being misused for other purposes. Moreover, users may be charged interest rates that exceed legal limits.

Festival Economy: How to Make it Thrive

The increasing focus on activities that cater to various lifestyles has led to the development and diversification of festivals, making them increasingly popular and growing trends. In 2024, the global market for activity-based tourism, including festivals, is expected to reach 1.63 trillion US dollars and is projected to grow more than 1.5 times within the next 10 years. Moreover, festivals offer various benefits, such as generating income for local communities, promoting local culture, and facilitating the development of local infrastructure. Given these advantages, many countries, including Thailand, have utilized festivals as a tool to drive their economies (Festival Economy). Thailand has been actively promoting and elevating festivals under the creative economy initiative, with the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) serving as the primary agency supporting festival organization.

However, in the past, Thailand's festival organizing has revealed several challenges. Large-scale festivals are relatively scarce, most events have low attendance, and there is limited local engagement. Moreover, there are constraints such as traffic congestion, increased prices for goods and services, insufficient service points, and crime. By studying successful global festivals, Thailand can identify solutions and strategies to address these issues appropriately within its own context. 1) **Creating a unique selling point for a festival that differentiates it from others can be achieved by leveraging the strengths of a unique culture**. For example, *the Rio Carnival* in Brazil incorporates the vibrant dance of samba, giving it a charm and distinctiveness that sets it apart from carnivals in other countries. **Creativity and innovation can be added**, such as the *La Tomatina festival* in Spain, which originated from a food fight using tomatoes; 2) **Enhancing safety measures to build trust among participants**. For example, during *the Rio Carnival*, **laws are enforced** to protect and ensure the safety of women. Similarly, *the La Tomatina festival* has implemented measures to **limit the number of attendees and has prepared for safety and emergency situations**. Moreover, **technology is being used in event management**, such as the implementation of advanced weapon detection technology at the global hip-hop festival, *Rolling Loud*; 3) **Providing amenities for attendees**. For example, Belgium has implemented support measures for the *Tomorrowland*

music festival, such as connecting transportation systems, including airport shuttles and trains, to the event venue. They also offer package deals that include event tickets, flights, accommodations, and other amenities like lockers, restrooms, charging stations, etc. The event is also designed with accessibility for people with disabilities in mind; 4) **Public relations and targeted marketing for the festival.** For example, the *Edinburgh Festival Fringe* in Scotland systematically collects and segments tourist data to understand their target audience and tailor marketing efforts accordingly. They also utilize social media for widespread promotion; 5) **Government support and collaboration between the public and private sectors, as well as local authorities.** Roles and responsibilities should be distributed according to expertise. For example, in South Korea's *mud festival*, local authorities organize activities utilizing the mud, while educational institutions contribute by developing cultural plans to attract tourists; and 6) **Managing the environmental impact of festivals.** *The Coachella* music and arts festival in the United States promotes waste reduction by encouraging attendees to bring empty bottles in exchange for water or other souvenirs.

Threats in the virtual world: Sexual harassment against children and youth online

The growing prevalence of online sexual harassment on social media is having a devastating impact on children and youth. Victims of this abuse are at a higher risk of developing social, emotional, and mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and even engaging in criminal behaviors as a result of their trauma. ECPAT International, a UNICEF-affiliated organization, has identified Thailand as one of the 25 countries facing a serious crisis of online child sexual abuse in 2024. This finding aligns with the data from the Royal Thai Police, which shows a sharp rise in reported cases of online child sexual abuse, increasing from 48 in 2017 to 540 in 2023. There are various levels of online sexual harassment against children include 1) **Low-level Harassment**—This type of harassment is often characterized by the perpetrator not considering their actions as harmful. It typically involves disturbances through non-specific comments, such as groups of individuals with a sexual interest in young girls (lolicon) who make sexually suggestive comments about school-aged children; 2) **Moderate-level Harassment**—This focuses on repeated actions designed to cause emotional distress to an individual victim. It often manifests as ongoing harassment, sexual humiliation intended to cause embarrassment, and the gradual invasion of personal privacy; and 3) **Severe/High-level Harassment**—This is characterized by violent and aggressive actions, can cause significant emotional and psychological harm. This level of harassment is a clear violation of sexual abuse laws. Examples include enticing a minor into a romantic relationship for the purpose of coercing them into sexual acts, recording these acts without their consent, and exploiting the victim by charging others to view the recordings.

Online sexual harassment can occur in many forms. In some cases, the perpetrators may not fully consider the impact on the victims. This is partly due to witnessing such acts in daily life, such as in various media, compounded by limited knowledge about child and parental rights, as well as a lack of accessible support systems. UNICEF's 2022 report found that

nearly half of young people don't know how to get help if they or their friends experience online sexual abuse. Many don't see themselves as victims, and others are too ashamed to report it, leading to an underreporting of these crimes.

The aforementioned situation highlights the urgent need for Thailand to implement effective prevention and intervention measures. These include: 1) **Cultivating a culture of prevention by addressing the issue of complacency towards sexual harassment**, starting within families who should closely monitor their children's media usage. At the community and government levels, there should be clear punitive measures in place; 2) **Providing education on rights and the risks of online sexual harassment** by educational institutions and communities; and 3) **Raising awareness about the evolving nature of online threats**. Families should teach their children about the importance of protecting personal information, while educational institutions should integrate lessons on sexual grooming into their curricula as a fundamental part of the learning process.

Fast Fashion and Its Environmental Impact

The fast fashion industry is rapidly growing, creating employment opportunities worldwide. However, the industry's production processes significantly impact the environment and society. The key **environmental impacts** include 1) **Greenhouse gas emissions**—fast fashion contributes to 10 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions, surpassing the aviation and shipping industries combined. These emissions are expected to increase by nearly 50 percent by 2030; 2) **Massive water consumption and water and air pollution from dyeing and finishing processes**—the production of one cotton shirt requires 2,700 liters of water, which is equivalent to the amount one person would drink in over 2.5 years. Additionally, the dyeing and finishing processes introduce toxic chemicals into water systems, exacerbating pollution; 3) **Increase in non-biodegradable waste**—approximately 100 billion pieces of clothing are produced globally each year, with 92 million tons ending up in landfills. By 2033, this waste is projected to increase to 134 million tons per year, with only 1 percent being recyclable. Moreover, many garments contain plastics, like microplastics, which are not only difficult to decompose but also harmful to the living being; and 4) **Loss of biodiversity and environmental degradation**—the cultivation of raw materials, such as cotton farming, often involves extensive use of pesticides and herbicides, which are toxic to the nervous systems of living beings. This leads to biodiversity loss and soil degradation. In terms of **the societal front**, fast fashion has several impacts, including 1) **Culture of overconsumption**—which not only increases waste but also diminishes people's appreciation of product purchases, driven by promotional advertising that encourages unnecessary purchases and shifts societal values, such as the pursuit of an influencer-driven lifestyle; 2) **Health issues**—fast fashion products are often contaminated with chemicals, particularly microplastics, which can accumulate in the body and pose long-term health risks. These risks could affect both the consumers and, more severely, the workers involved in the production process; 3) **Copyright infringement**—fast fashion frequently involves the unauthorized copying of designs from luxury brands or famous designers to produce

cheaper imitation products; and 4) **labor rights violations**—fast fashion often results in labor rights violations in an effort to minimize production costs, including unpaid overtime, sexual abuse, and illegal child labor, particularly prevalent in Asian countries that serve as major production hubs.

The widespread impacts of fast fashion have prompted global awareness and the implementation of measures to mitigate its effects. **Thailand could consider the following strategies to prevent and reduce potential problems**, such as: 1) **Encouraging the textile industry to adopt sustainable fashion and textile recycling** by reducing the use of harmful chemicals that negatively impact the environment and health. This involves supporting technology that enhances production efficiency and lifts product standards to meet international criteria; 2) **Enhancing the separation and data collection of various waste types, particularly textile waste**, which is projected to increase significantly in the future; and 3) **Implementing guidelines for advertising fast fashion products to ensure they consider environmental impacts**. This includes requiring detailed information about the production process, carbon emissions, and raising consumer awareness.

How can we prepare for equal marriage?

When the Civil and Commercial Code Amendment Act (No. ...) B.E. ..., commonly known as the Marriage Equality Act, is enacted and comes into effect, LGBTQ+ couples will gain several legal rights. These include : 1) The right to establish a family; 2) The right to jointly adopt children; 3) Property and inheritance rights; and 4) The right to care for spouses. The change in legal status will also extend to other benefits, such as those associated with civil servant welfare, including the right to claim medical expenses and receive a bequest. For private sector employees, recognizing spouses as legal heirs will provide access to a retirement pension, benefits from the social security fund, and funeral expenses for those who arrange the funeral, as well as the right to be beneficiaries of life insurance.

The Marriage Equality Act also helps stimulate the economy, particularly in businesses related to marriage. A study by The Williams Institute in the United States found that marriage equality could boost the economy by 3.8 billion US dollars. In Thailand, data from Ipsos in 2023 estimated that around 9 percent of the adult population, or over 4.4 million people, identify as LGBTQ+ . If these individuals marry at the same rate as heterosexual couples, this could result in approximately 12,000 additional weddings each year, generating an estimated economic value of 1.7 billion baht annually and creating opportunities for the growth of various related businesses. Moreover, marriage equality could enhance access to credit and property ownership, leading to social benefits such as more stable family relationships due to greater stability in family relationships through legal security for couples. Additionally, allowing LGBTQ+ couples to adopt children could help reduce the issue of children growing up without a family.

However, there are several issues that need to be addressed and implemented once the law comes into effect, including: 1) **Reviewing relevant laws and preparing for government operations**, through amending the laws, rules, regulations, orders, and cabinet

resolutions that refer to the terms “ husband” and “ wife” to be interpreted as referring to spouses registered under this Act. This will necessitate a review of 51 laws, while the government must prepare for adjustments in registration, documentation, and relevant certifications; 2) **Addressing interconnected issues arising from increased rights for LGBTQ+ couples**, specifically issues involving adopted children, who may still face restrictions on medical and educational expenses while retaining rights from their biological parents. This could result in children not receiving their entitled benefits and placing a financial burden on adoptive parents. Consideration should be given to allowing adoptive parents to grant these rights to their adopted children; 3) **Preparing businesses to support LGBTQ+ communities**, by studying the consumption behavior of LGBTQ+ individuals to develop effective marketing strategies for products and services, as well as promoting the development of new businesses catering specifically to this community, such as LGBTQ+ health clinics; 4) **Fostering understanding of LGBTQ+ diversity in society**, by creating awareness and respect for the rights and opinions of all parties. This includes working together to build emotional resilience, particularly for children and youth in LGBTQ+ families, and adjusting societal practices, such as Father’s or Mother’s Day activities; and 5) **Preparing a budget to support increased welfare benefits**, due to the potential for higher medical expenses for civil servant spouses and reduced tax revenue due to increased deductions for spouses and parents of spouses, necessitating budget adjustmet

Key Social Indicators

Components	2022	2023	2022				2023				2024	
	Year	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
1. Employment^{1/}												
Workforce (Thousands)	39,903.3	40,447.2	39,622.8	39,764.0	40,088.6	40,142.5	40,281.0	40,302.2	40,531.8	40,673.9	40,226.4	40,178.1
% YOY	0.2	1.4	-0.6	-0.3	0.9	1.0	1.7	1.4	1.1	1.3	-0.1	-0.3
Employed Person (Thousands)	39,221.1	39,912.0	38,720.2	39,010.9	39,566.0	39,591.7	39,629.2	39,677.5	40,091.3	40,250.1	39,579.0	39,500.7
% YOY	1.0	1.8	0.2	0.3	2.1	1.5	2.4	1.7	1.3	1.7	-0.1	-0.4
Unemployed Person (Thousands)	527.0	395.2	607.6	546.6	491.4	462.5	421.1	429.0	401.2	329.3	407.7	429.1
Unemployment Rate (%)	1.32	0.98	1.53	1.37	1.23	1.15	1.05	-21.5	0.99	0.81	1.01	1.07
Underemployed Person (Thousands)	273.3	202.1	319.1	263.6	234.5	275.9	227.9	202.6	166.9	210.9	191.5	162.4
2. Household Debt^{2/}												
Household debt value (Trillion baht)	15.9	16.4	15.4	15.5	15.7	15.9	16.0	16.1	16.2	16.4	16.4	N.A.
% YOY	3.8	3.0	3.6	3.4	4.1	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.4	3.0	2.5	N.A.
Ratio to GDP (%)	91.4	91.4	93.7	92.8	91.5	91.4	90.7	90.8	91.0	91.4	90.8	N.A.
NPL (Billion baht)	140.4	157.8	146.5	142.7	140.6	140.4	144.0	146.5	151.8	157.8	162.6	N.A.
% YOY	-2.3	12.4	-1.5	-5.1	-6.0	-2.3	-1.7	2.7	7.9	12.4	12.9	N.A.
% NPL to Total Loan	2.62	2.88	2.78	2.69	2.62	2.62	2.68	2.71	2.79	2.88	2.99	N.A.
3. Health and Illness												
Number of patients under disease surveillance (person)^{3/}												
- Measles	249	317	32	38	96	82	58	88	107	113	543	136
- Meningococcal fever	18	11	3	2	3	10	2	2	4	3	2	2
- Encephalitis	923	893	241	213	264	205	303	209	194	187	316	216
- Cholera	5	3	1	0	1	3	1	0	1	1	2	0
- Hands, feet and mouth	98,982	64,021	740	4,734	79,223	14,285	11,483	9,305	29,974	13,636	15,957	7,847
- Dysentery	1,572	1,541	352	382	467	371	461	370	396	314	485	373
- Pneumonia	231,105	292,676	51,849	50,300	68,072	60,884	78,443	57,880	81,054	76,945	96,395	75,975
- Leptospirosis	3,601	4,460	231	529	1,376	1,465	622	797	1,591	1,473	767	732
- Dengue fever	45,145	157,142	1,461	9,485	19,625	14,574	10,948	23,636	76,579	46,548	24,131	17,702
- Influenza	79,374	478,175	8,247	4,859	31,498	34,770	39,457	25,682	211,103	202,741	121,074	99,895
- Rabies	3	4	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	2	0	1
Rate per 100,000 population of death with major chronic non-communicable diseases												
- High blood pressure	15.40	N.A.	No quarterly data available								N.A.	N.A.
- Ischaemic heart disease	35.10	N.A.									N.A.	N.A.
- Cerebrovascular disease	58.00	N.A.									N.A.	N.A.
- Diabetes	25.90	N.A.									N.A.	N.A.
- Cancer and tumors	127.90	N.A.									N.A.	N.A.
4. Safety of life and property^{4/}												
- Against life, body, and sexuality crimes (cases)	15,166	18,696	3,697	3,695	3,820	3,954	4,637	4,788	4,596	4,675	5,151	4,900
- Property crimes (cases)	50,438	63,313	11,549	12,014	13,404	13,471	14,781	14,251	16,825	17,456	17,429	17,007
- Narcotics (cases)	361,290	303,829	86,493	92,224	87,189	95,384	84,546	70,060	69,371	79,906	90,143	91,014
- Receiving notification of cumulative victims ^{5/}	942,158	821,882	225,219	225,856	246,265	244,554	208,612	200,037	196,822	217,234	223,241	201,049
- Fatalities due to land accidents (deaths)	14,965	14,126	3,510	3,570	3,649	4,285	3,781	3,547	3,133	3,653	3,734	3,272
5. Consumer Protection												
5.1 Number of Complaints filed to OCPB^{6/}												
- Contracts	2,815	1,924	432	796	1,202	385	477	561	455	431	467	420
- Labelling	4,368	2,421	830	1,018	1,652	868	793	508	474	646	584	533
- Advertising	4,709	3,634	740	1,995	1,220	754	2,474	330	360	470	807	397
- Direct Selling and Direct Marketing	4,779	2,378	538	1,093	1,971	1,177	741	513	588	536	609	600
- Others	3,565	21,807	-	-	-	3,565	8,146	5,592	4,428	3,641	3,319	3,567
5.2 Consumer Complaints filed to NBTC^{7/} (case)												
	3,431	1,593	1,780	624	502	525	474	371	297	451	414	340

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

^{2/} Bank of Thailand

^{3/} Bureau of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Health

^{4/} Criminal Record Information, Royal Thai Police

^{5/} Claims filed under Protection for Motor Vehicle Victims Act., Road Accidents Data Center for Road Safety Culture (THAI RSC)

^{6/} Office of the Consumer Protection Board, Office of the Prime Minister

^{7/} Office of The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC)