YOUTH PULSE | RAPID OPINION POLL

Fuel Prices Rising: How Young People in Thailand Are Coping

What 435 adolescents and young people in Thailand told us about how rising fuel prices are affecting their lives.

JULY 2026

Disclaimer: UNICEF Thailand conducted a rapid online survey of 435 adolescents and young people aged 15–24 between June and July 2026 to better understand how rising fuel prices and the increasing cost of living are affecting their households, education and well-being.

The questionnaire was distributed through youth networks across Thailand. As the survey used a self-selected online sample, and most respondents were students, the findings reflect only the experiences of the young people who took part in the survey and cannot be generalized to the entire adolescent and youth population in Thailand.

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KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

Six numbers that tell the story

What 435 adolescents and young people in Thailand told us about how the oil crisis is affecting their lives.

43%

feel a serious household impact

Report that rising fuel prices have affected their household “a lot” or reached a “crisis” level, leading to financial pressure and reductions in other spending.

59%

are cutting essential spending

Report that their household has recently reduced spending on essentials such as food, transport, healthcare or education.

84%

feel the impact through transport

Identify transport as one of the areas most affected by rising fuel prices, followed by food and electricity.

52%

have reduced education-related spending

Among those with education expenses, over half reduced at least one area (school transport, internet or devices, tutoring, or learning materials).

64%

report increased financial stress

Report experiencing greater stress or worry because of financial pressure. Asked separately how often they had felt this over the past three months, around one in three said “often” or “almost all the time”.

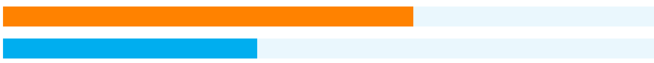
50%

prefer cash assistance

When asked to choose the most helpful form of government assistance, half selected cash. Open-ended responses also show that young people are looking beyond immediate financial support and calling for action on underlying cost drivers, including fuel prices, public transport, food and utilities.

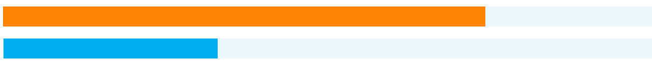
THE IMPACT IS NOT FELT EQUALLY

63% vs **39%**



Young people with a disability or health limitation (n = 57) report a severe household impact, compared with those without (n = 378).

74% vs **33%**



Respondents living in the North (n = 35) report a severe household impact, compared with those living in Bangkok (n = 114).

Differences between subgroups, based on small numbers of respondents. See page 7 for the full analysis and subgroup sizes.

WHO WE HEARD FROM

435 young voices, from every region

The poll reached a young, predominantly in-school population. This profile matters for interpreting the results: students depend on daily transport to reach their education and have limited flexibility in their spending, so rising fuel and food prices translate quickly into difficult choices.

AGE GROUP

15–17 yrs	18–24 yrs
61%	39%

GENDER

Female	59%
Male	38%
Gender-diverse	3%

CURRENT STATUS

Studying	92%
Working / in training	8%
Not in education or work	1%

WHERE RESPONDENTS LIVE

Bangkok	26%
East	25%
Central	18%
Northeast	14%
South	9%
North	8%

MONTHLY LIVING COSTS

62% spend 5,000 baht or less a month on their own living costs, leaving little room when fuel, fares and food rise together.

Respondents reported their own monthly living expenses, not household income.

PHYSICAL OR HEALTH LIMITATIONS

13% report a health or physical limitation affecting mobility or daily life.

HOW THE POLL WAS RUN

Online questionnaire (Microsoft Forms) shared through youth networks, open during June–July 2026, a fielding window of approximately four weeks; 435 responses, average completion time 5 minutes 33 seconds.

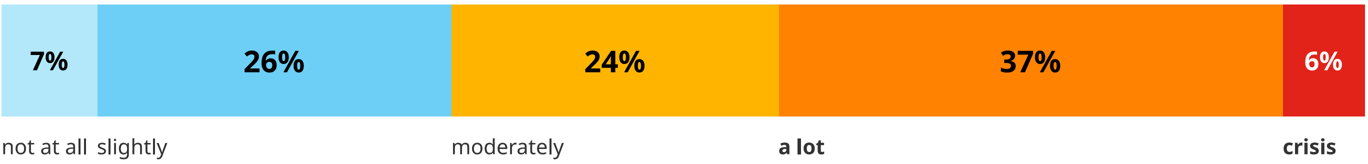
READING THE NUMBERS

This is a self-selected online sample, student-heavy, predominantly female (59%) and skewed towards Bangkok and the East. Results describe the young people surveyed, not all Thai youth. Percentages use the number answering each question, so bases vary; multi-choice questions sum to more than 100%, and components may not sum to totals because of rounding.

Overall impact, and where it hits hardest

Since fuel prices began rising in March 2026, almost all respondents report at least some effect on their household. Asked which areas of life are most affected, young people point overwhelmingly to transport (84%), followed by food (51%), energy bills (38%) and education expenses (21%).

HOW HARD HAS IT HIT YOUR HOUSEHOLD?

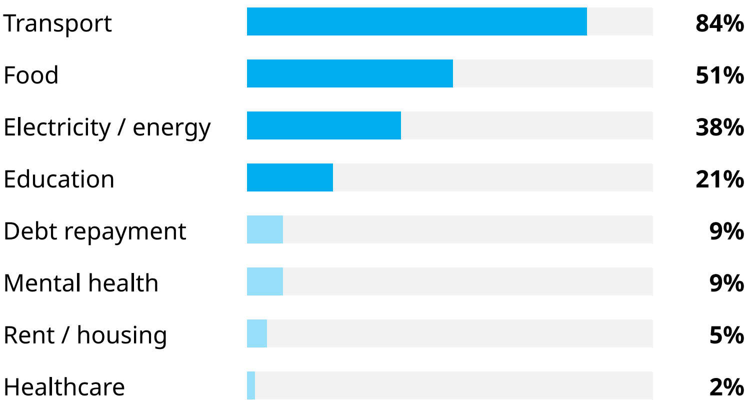


"A lot" = finances very tight, other spending being cut · "Crisis" = already in crisis, barely able to cope. "Severe household impact" combines the two. Components may not sum to the total shown because of rounding.

Over four in ten respondents (**43%**) report that fuel prices have hit their household hard, finances stretched or in crisis, while two-thirds (**66%**) report at least a moderate impact.

59% of households have recently cut back on essentials, food, transport, healthcare or education. Only **13%** say they have not; the rest are unsure.

AREAS OF LIFE HIT HARDEST (up to 3 choices)



THE NEXT 3 MONTHS

35% expect things to stay the same

31% expect to improve

20% expect to get worse

14% are unsure

Most respondents expect no improvement in the next three months (35% no change, 20% worse), though 31% expect things to get better.

How young people and their families are coping, and at what cost

The strategies reported range from everyday economies to decisions that can carry lasting costs for young people's nutrition, learning and financial security.

COPING STRATEGIES REPORTED (% of respondents; multiple choice)

46% **Cut leisure & social activities**

Going out, meeting friends, entertainment

43% **Travel less or changed commute**

Fewer trips, cheaper modes

33% **Eating less or cheaper food**

A potential nutrition concern in this age group

17% **Drawing down savings**

Household financial reserves being used up

16% **Working more, or starting to work**

Can reduce time for study and rest

13% **Reduced sport & learning activities**

Clubs, classes, community life

10% **Delaying utility & phone bills**

Payment arrears beginning to accumulate

7% **Delaying or skipping education expenses**

A direct risk to continuity of learning

6% **Borrowing money**

Including informal lenders

4% **Reducing healthcare spending**

Care postponed or foregone

SPOTLIGHT · EDUCATION

52% of those in education report that their household has reduced education-related spending because of fuel prices. International evidence indicates that cuts to school transport and connectivity are often early precursors of attendance and learning difficulties.

Cut in multiple areas	20%
Transport to school	12%
Internet / devices	9%
Tutoring / activities	7%
Learning materials	4%

Shares are of respondents in education (excluding "not applicable"). This differs from the 21% on the previous page: there, respondents named up to three areas of life most affected; here they were asked directly about education spending.

PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACTS

Financial stress and young people's well-being

The survey suggests that the effects of rising fuel prices extend beyond household finances. Financial pressure is associated with increased stress and changes in young people's emotional well-being, daily functioning, and social participation. While this rapid online poll cannot establish causal relationships, it provides early evidence that rising living costs may also be affecting adolescents' and young people's overall well-being.

FEELING MORE STRESSED OR WORRIED BECAUSE OF MONEY?

no	not sure	slightly stressed	very stressed
20%	16%	50%	14%

Nearly two-thirds (**64%**) of respondents reported feeling more stressed or worried because of financial pressure.

1 in 3 reported frequent financial stress

Asked separately how often they had felt stressed or worried about money in the past three months, 32% answered "often" or "almost all the time". The band above reports intensity, not frequency.

REPORTED EFFECTS OF FINANCIAL STRESS (multiple choice)

Feeling less motivated	24%
Seeing friends less / feeling isolated	23%
Difficulty concentrating	20%
Sleep problems	16%
More family conflict	11%
No impact	17%

Bars are scaled to the largest response (24%).

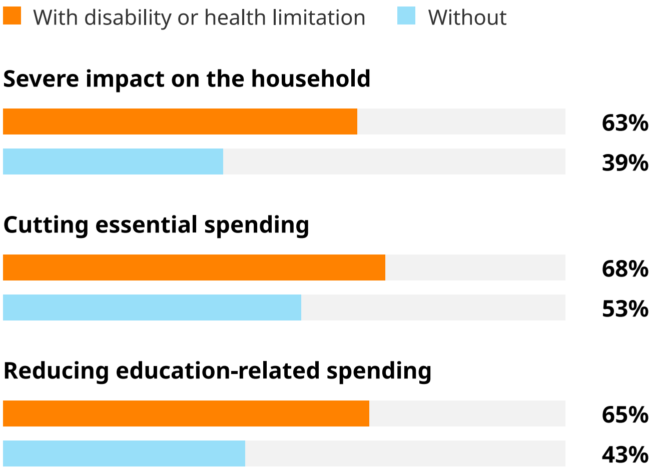
The most commonly reported effects of financial stress were reduced motivation (24%), spending less time with friends (23%), and difficulty concentrating (20%). Together, these findings suggest that financial pressure may be affecting both learning and social participation, with potential implications for adolescent well-being. While the survey cannot establish causality, it highlights psychosocial impacts that warrant continued monitoring alongside economic indicators.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GROUPS

Who is feeling the impact most?

While rising fuel prices are affecting young people across Thailand, the survey suggests that some groups are facing a substantially heavier burden than others. The clearest disparities are observed among respondents with disabilities or health limitations, and among those living in the North and Northeast. These findings should be interpreted as patterns within the survey sample rather than representative estimates for all young people in Thailand.

YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES FACE GREATER CHALLENGES

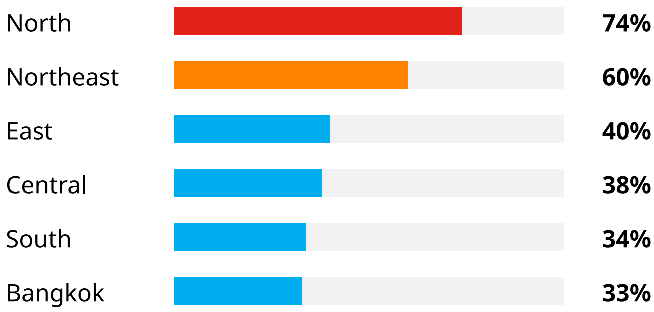


These findings suggest that rising living costs may place disproportionate pressure on young people who are already facing barriers related to disability or health limitations.

n = 57 with a disability or health limitation; n = 378 without.

IMPACTS VARY CONSIDERABLY ACROSS REGIONS

Respondents reporting a severe impact from rising fuel prices, by region



Respondents in the Northeast were also the most likely to report cutting essential spending (72 per cent), followed by the South (68 per cent) and the North (66 per cent).

Regional bases are small: North (n = 35), South (n = 38), Northeast (n = 60), Central (n = 80), East (n = 108), Bangkok (n = 114).

OLDER YOUTH ARE SOMEWHAT MORE LIKELY TO REDUCE SPENDING

Young people aged 18–24 were more likely to report cutting essential spending than adolescents aged 15–17 (**62 per cent** compared with **51 per cent**). This may reflect greater direct responsibility for transport, education or household expenses among older respondents.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The survey suggests that the impacts of rising fuel prices are not experienced equally. Respondents with disabilities or health limitations, as well as those living in the North and Northeast, reported the greatest levels of hardship. These findings highlight the importance of ensuring that support measures are responsive to the needs of vulnerable groups and account for regional differences in how rising living costs are experienced.

Subgroup bases: disability or health limitation (n = 57); North (n = 35); South (n = 38); Northeast (n = 60); Central (n = 80); East (n = 108); Bangkok (n = 114). Differences between small subgroups should be read with caution.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

What type of support do young people prefer?

Respondents were asked about government action in two ways. First, they selected their preferred form of financial assistance from a predefined list. They were then invited to describe—in their own words—what government should do to help households cope with rising living costs. Together, these findings provide complementary insights into young people's priorities.

PREFERRED FORM OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORT (one choice)

Cash assistance	**50%**
Vouchers	**24%**
Help paying utility bills	**13%**
Debt relief	**11%**

Excludes nine “other” responses (2%), so shares sum to 98%.

KEY FINDING

Nearly three-quarters of respondents selected either cash assistance or vouchers, indicating a strong preference for measures that provide immediate financial relief to households facing higher living costs.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRIORITIES IN THEIR OWN WORDS

When invited to respond in their own words, many young people looked beyond immediate financial assistance and focused on addressing the drivers of rising living costs. The most common suggestions included reducing fuel prices, improving affordable public transport, providing targeted support to low-income households and students, and helping to contain increases in food and utility costs.

> The government should temporarily reduce fuel prices or fuel taxes and improve affordable public transport.

> Help low-income families and students with travel costs while prices remain high.

> Control the prices of fuel, electricity and food because everything becomes more expensive.

> Support should continue for as long as prices remain high, not just as a one-time measure.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Together, the findings suggest that young people are looking for both immediate financial support to help households cope with rising costs and broader policy measures that address the underlying drivers of higher living expenses.

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