

IS THAILAND ON THE PATH TO AN INCLUSIVE RECOVERY?

FINDINGS FROM THE FIRST ROUND OF A
HIGH FREQUENCY SURVEY 2022



Country context

- In 2022, as COVID-19 restrictions started to ease in Thailand, the economy – driven primarily by private consumption and tourism – has rebounded and is on a steady recovery track. In the third quarter of 2022 economy expanded by 4.5 % accelerating from 2.5 % in the second quarter and projected to accelerate further (NESDC). While it is a significant progress compared to 1.6 % growth in 2021 and 6.2 % contraction in 2020, the rate is lower than in some other countries in the region.
- The government has taken a series of measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Studies have shown that without the special social protection measures at the early stages of the pandemic, poverty would have increased several-fold. However, significant inequalities persist, and poverty levels have not returned to the pre-pandemic situation. According to the National Economic and Development Council, in 2021, the poverty rate among children was 9.9%, significantly higher than that of the overall population (6.3%).
- While the economic recovery has continued to pick up in 2022, not all segments of the economy and groups of people are recovering equally. Recent increases in food and energy prices are worsening the situation and may reverse earlier gains that Thailand has made in poverty reduction and human capital investment.

Introduction

- UNICEF's Thailand High-Frequency Surveys are intended to 'unpack' the post-COVID recovery and track recovery trajectories of various population groups across socio-economic dimensions, in such areas as employment, income, food security, coping strategies, education, and health.
- The survey focuses on tracking the impact of COVID-19 as well as other shocks, specifically the increases in food and energy prices.
- This note presents the findings of the first round of the survey, conducted between August/September 2022. The second round is planned for January 2023.
- High-frequency data enables taking the 'pulse', capturing trends and providing timely information for decision making.

METHODOLOGY



Survey Methodology

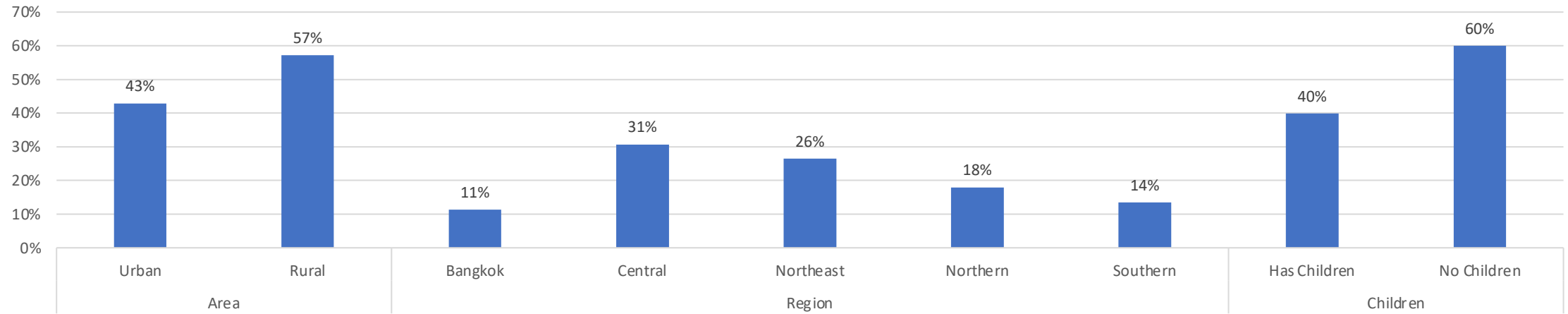
- The first round of UNICEF's Thailand High-Frequency Survey targeted a sample of 2,583 adults aged 18 years and older with access to mobile phones. Survey results are representative at the national level, across 5 regions, urban/rural, households with and without children.
- The survey was carried out from August 5th to September 14th by GeoPoll using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) and randomized digit dialing (RDD).
- The survey's content was designed to monitor the impact of COVID-19 across key social and economic dimensions affecting the welfare of households and children.

The questionnaire focuses on the following thematic modules:

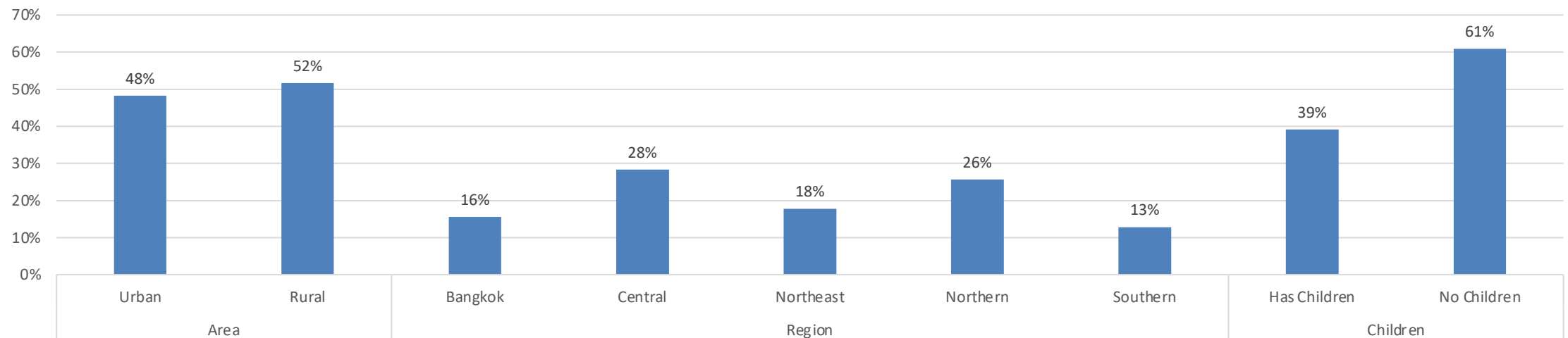
- 1. Employment**
- 2. Childcare**
- 3. Income**
- 4. Inflation**
- 5. Coping Strategies**
- 6. Food Security**
- 7. Social Assistance**
- 8. Education /
Early Childhood Development**
- 9. Health and Vaccination**

Key household demographic characteristics

Respondent Demographics



2019 Thailand Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) Demographics



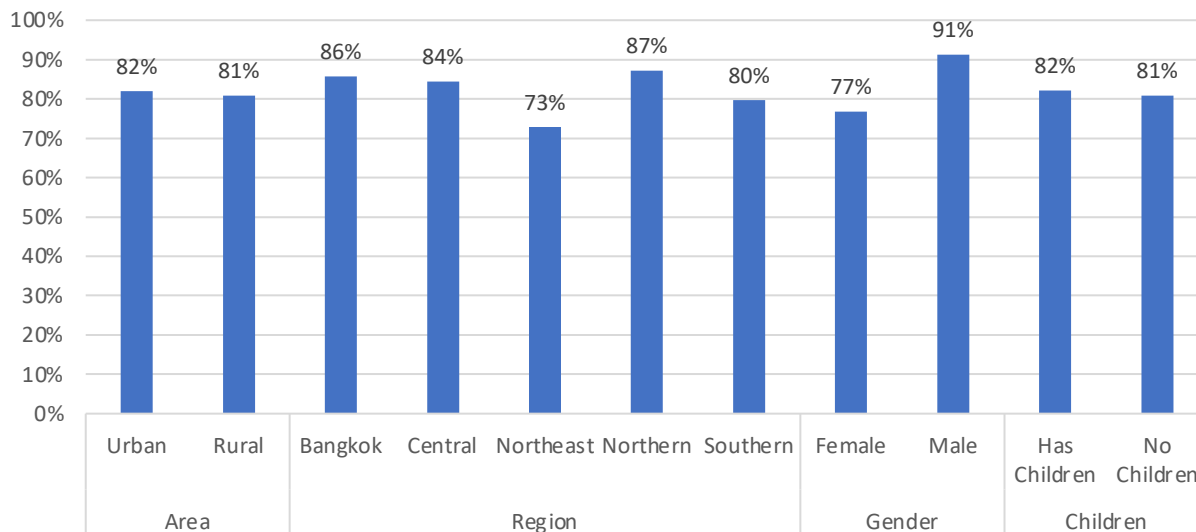
EMPLOYMENT



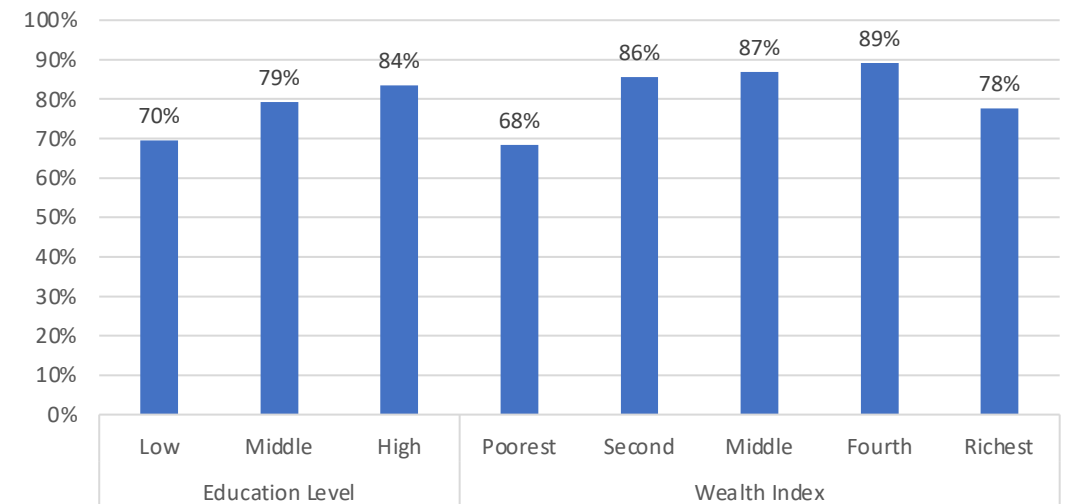
The labour situation reflects the recovery from COVID-19, but significant variations remain across population groups

- **81% indicated that they were working in Aug/Sept 2022.**
- Overall employment increased compared to the 2021 World Bank's Survey¹. It is also in line with key national statistics indicating improvements in the general employment situation².
- However, there are significant variations in employment across population groups, with the lowest proportion working observed in the Northeast (73%), among those with less education (70%), and among the poorest (68%).

Percent of Respondents who worked in last 7 days



Percent of Respondents who worked in last 7 days

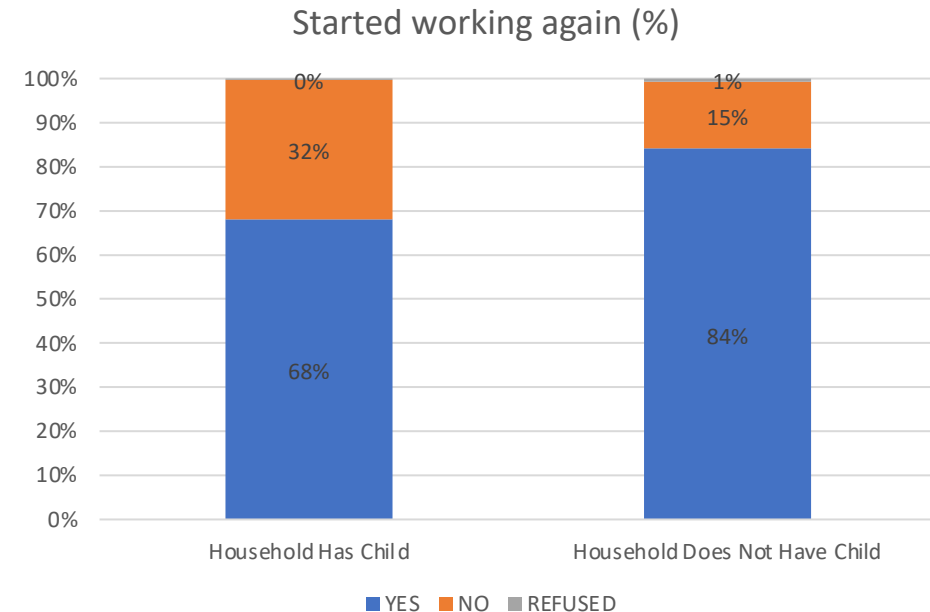
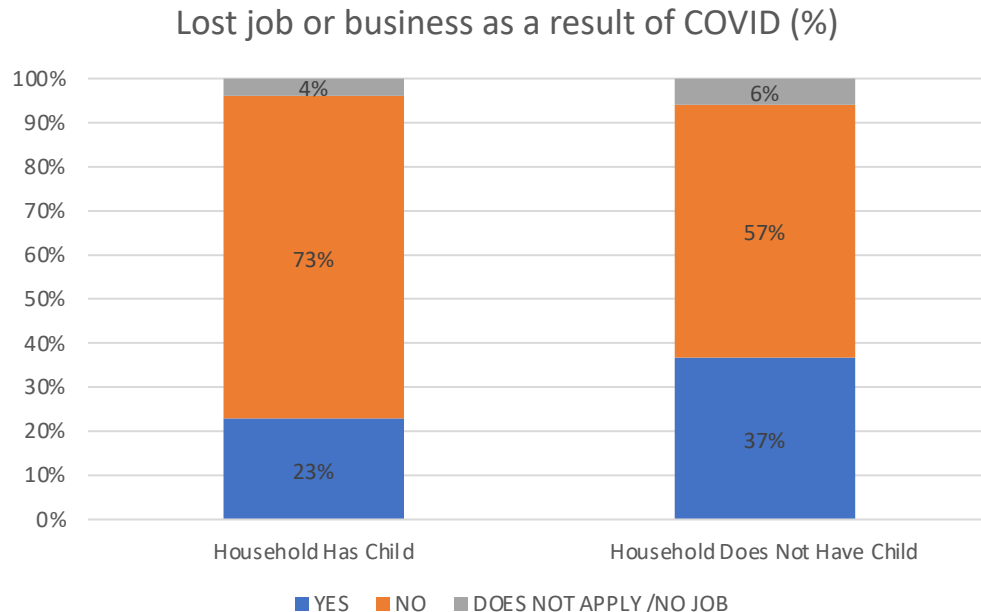


¹ Impact of COVID-19 on Thailand's households, Insights from Rapid Phone Survey, The World Bank, 2021

² Thailand's Social Outlook of Q2/2022, NESDC

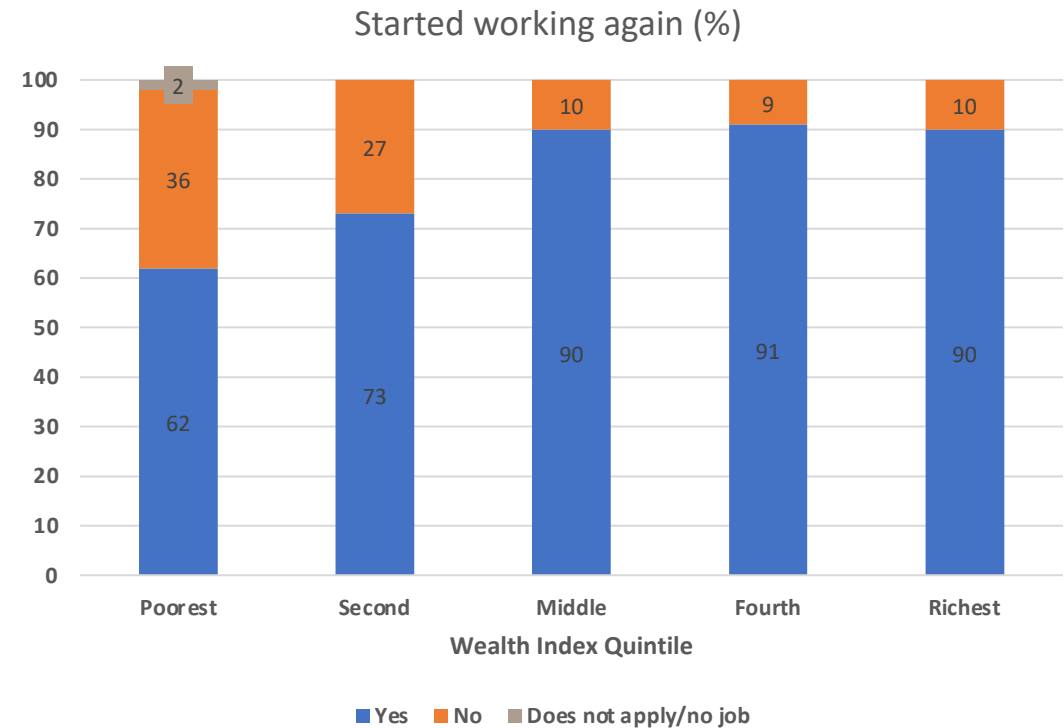
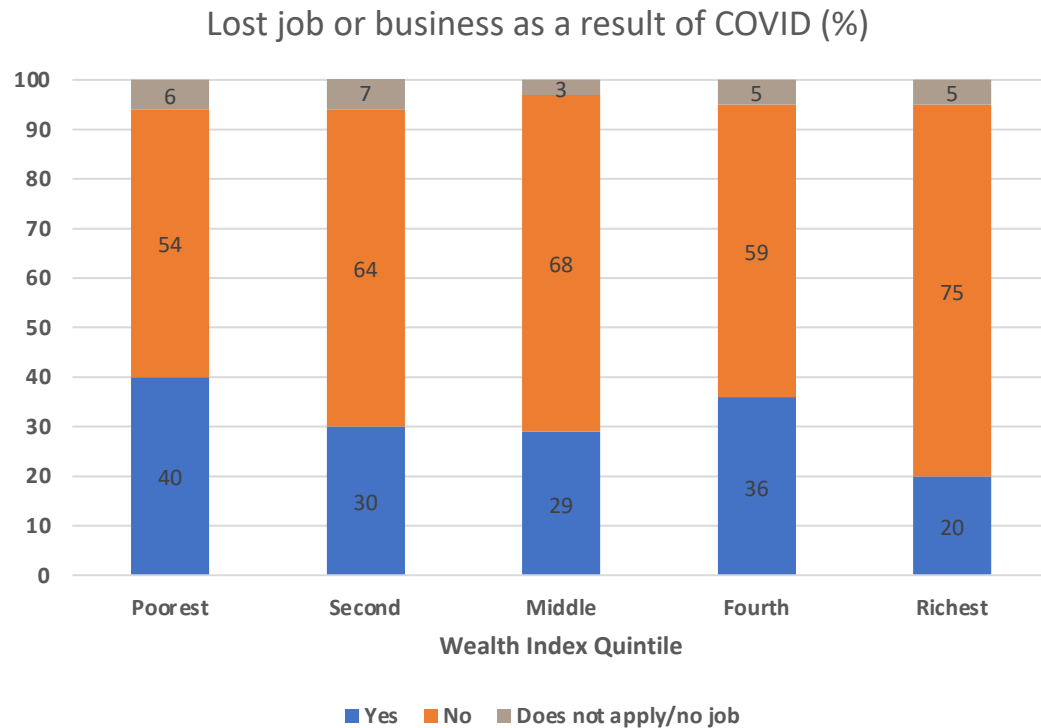
Employment recovery: the trends are uneven

- Overall, 31% of respondents mentioned that they had lost their jobs (or businesses) because of COVID-19. For households with children, the rate was lower than for households without children; (23% and 37% respectively).
- However, **households with children** found it **MORE** difficult to recover and start working again.



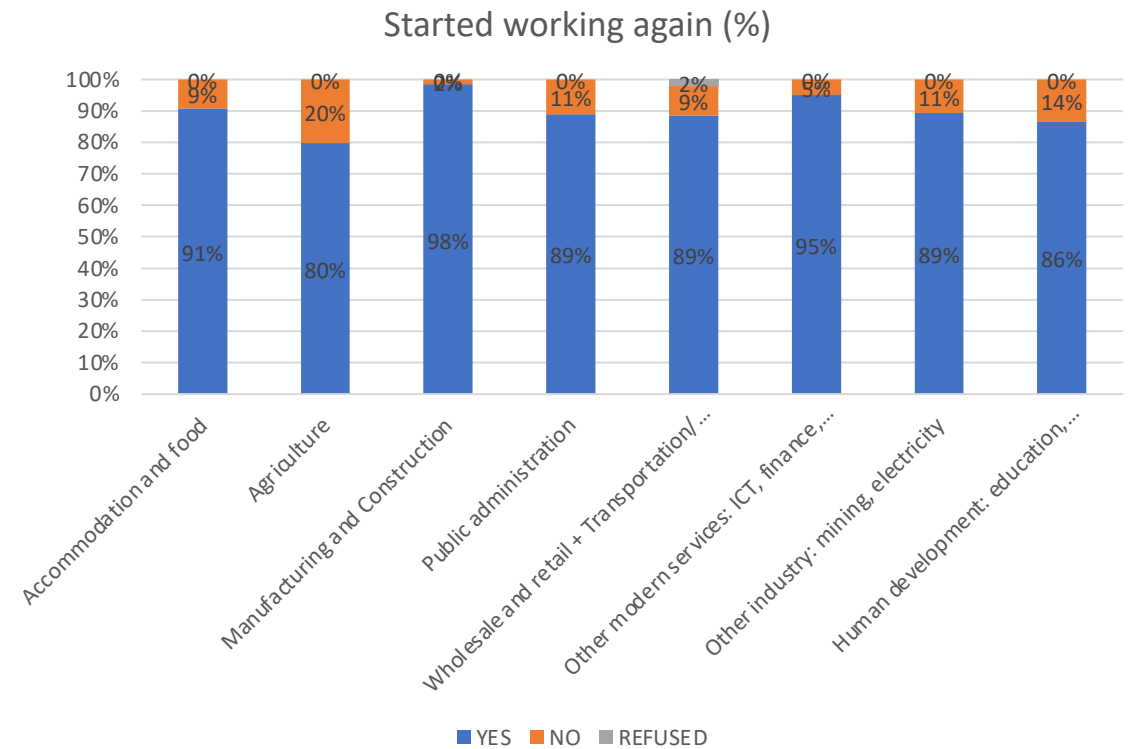
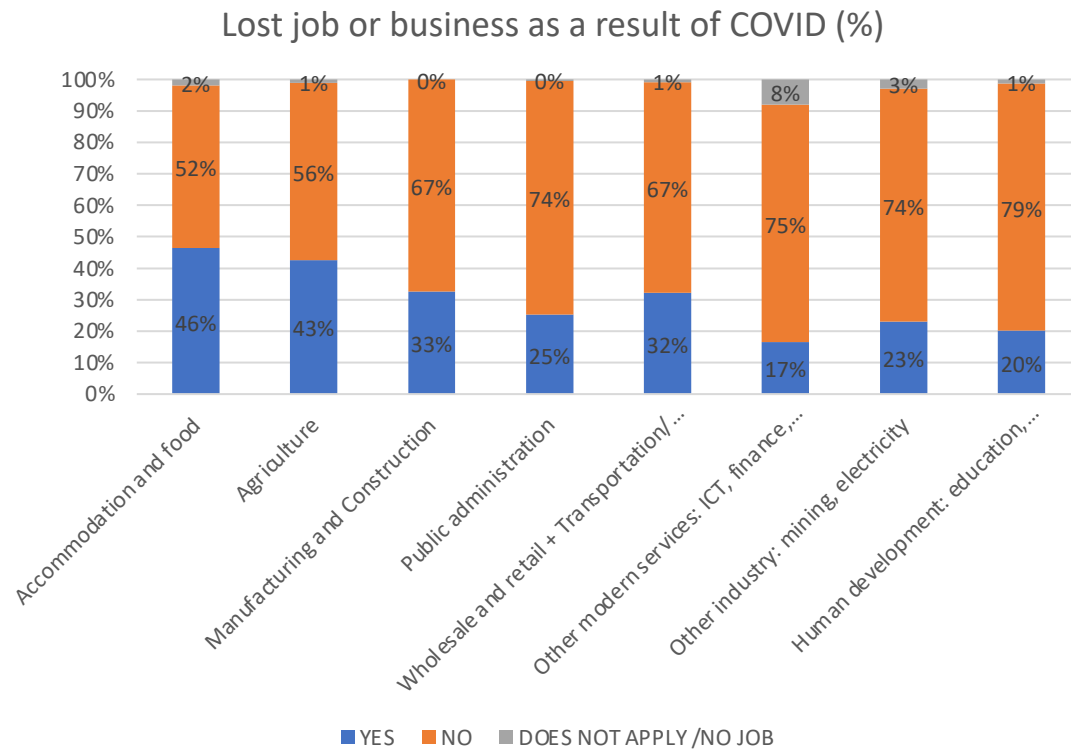
Employment recovery: the trends are uneven

- **The poorest** were also recovering more slowly, as 36% had not been able to start working again compared to 10% of the richest.



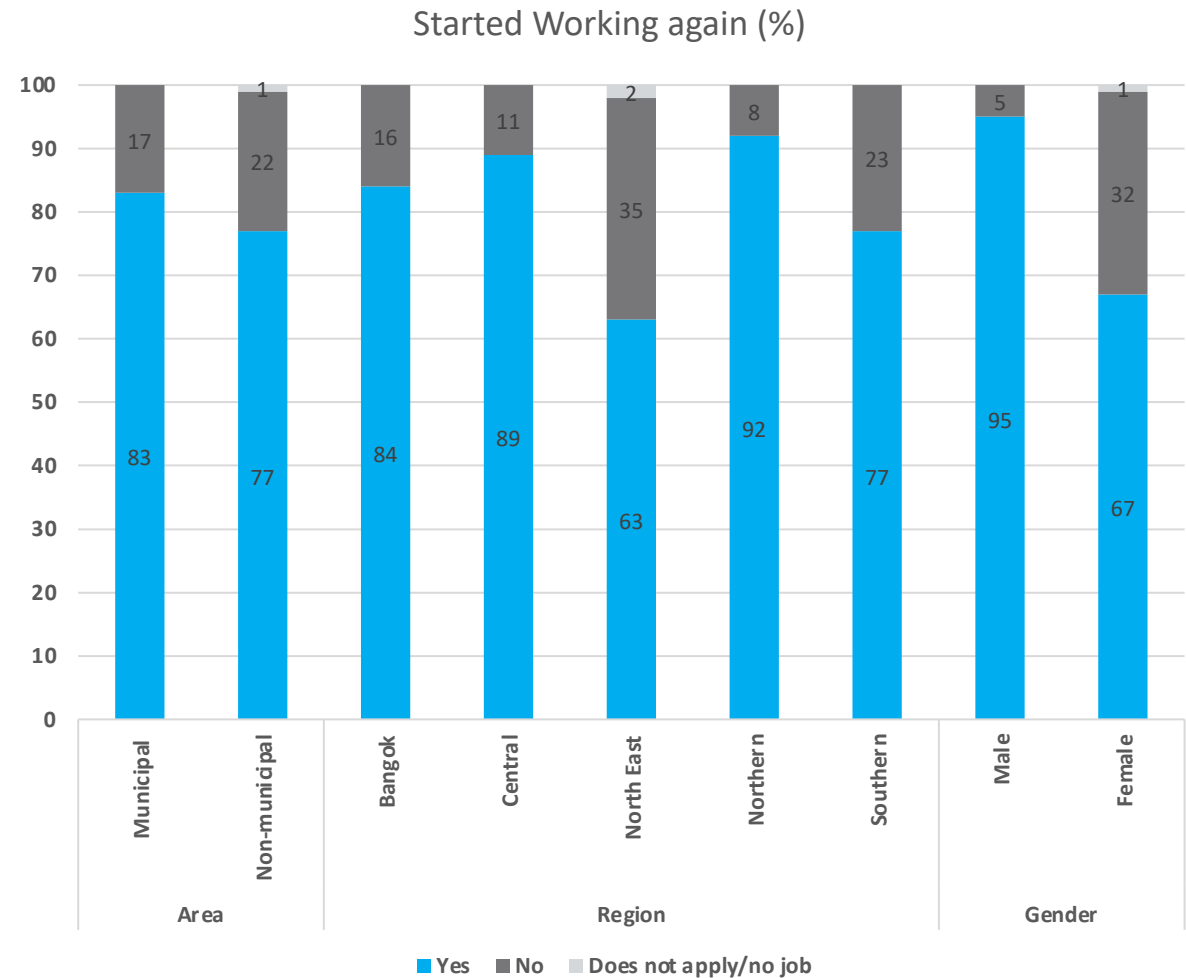
Employment recovery: the trends are uneven

- Respondents in the **manufacturing and construction sectors** were most likely to have returned to work, with 98% of respondents indicating that they had started working again. Employment in the **agricultural sector** was recovering at the slowest rate (80%).



Employment recovery: the trends are uneven

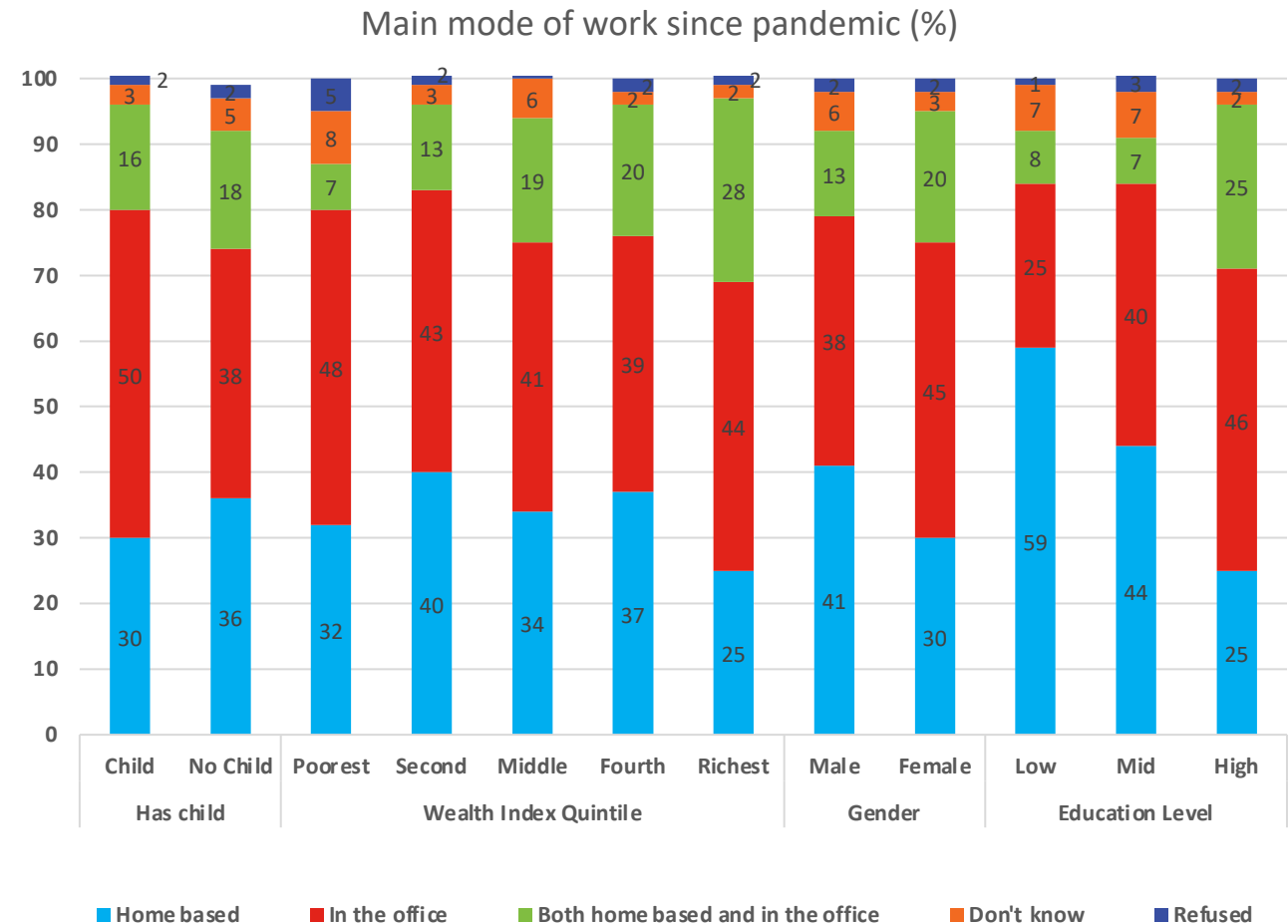
- More respondents had been able to find jobs after losing them from **urban** areas (83%) than from **rural** areas (77%).
- Bangkok and Central regions** had the highest recovery rates (84% and 89% respectively) while Northeast and South had the lowest proportions of respondents who were able to find jobs after having lost them (63% and 77% respectively).
- More **men** (95%) than women (32%) started working again after job loss due to COVID-19.
- Those with the **lowest level of educational attainment** were hit hard in terms of job loss (62%, compared to 35% for mid-level and 26% for high level) and more than half (52%) were not able to start working again.



Hybrid work modality: the MAIN mode of work for around 17% of respondents

Since the beginning of the pandemic, **hybrid modality** (office and home) had become more prevalent:

- among the better-off (28%) than among the poorest (7%),
- among women (20%) than among men (13%), and
- for respondents with higher education (25%) than those with lower educational attainment (8%).

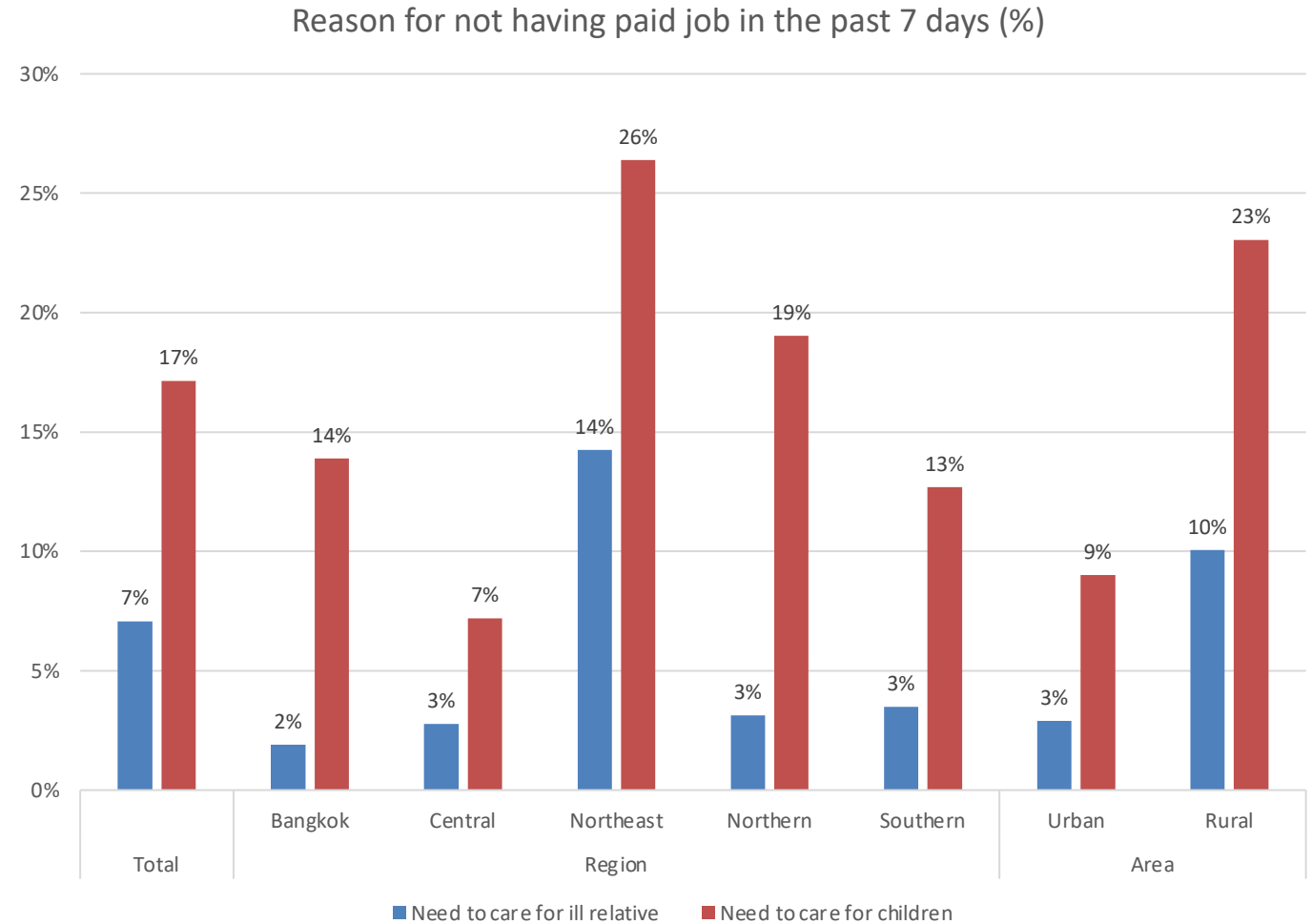


CARE CRISIS



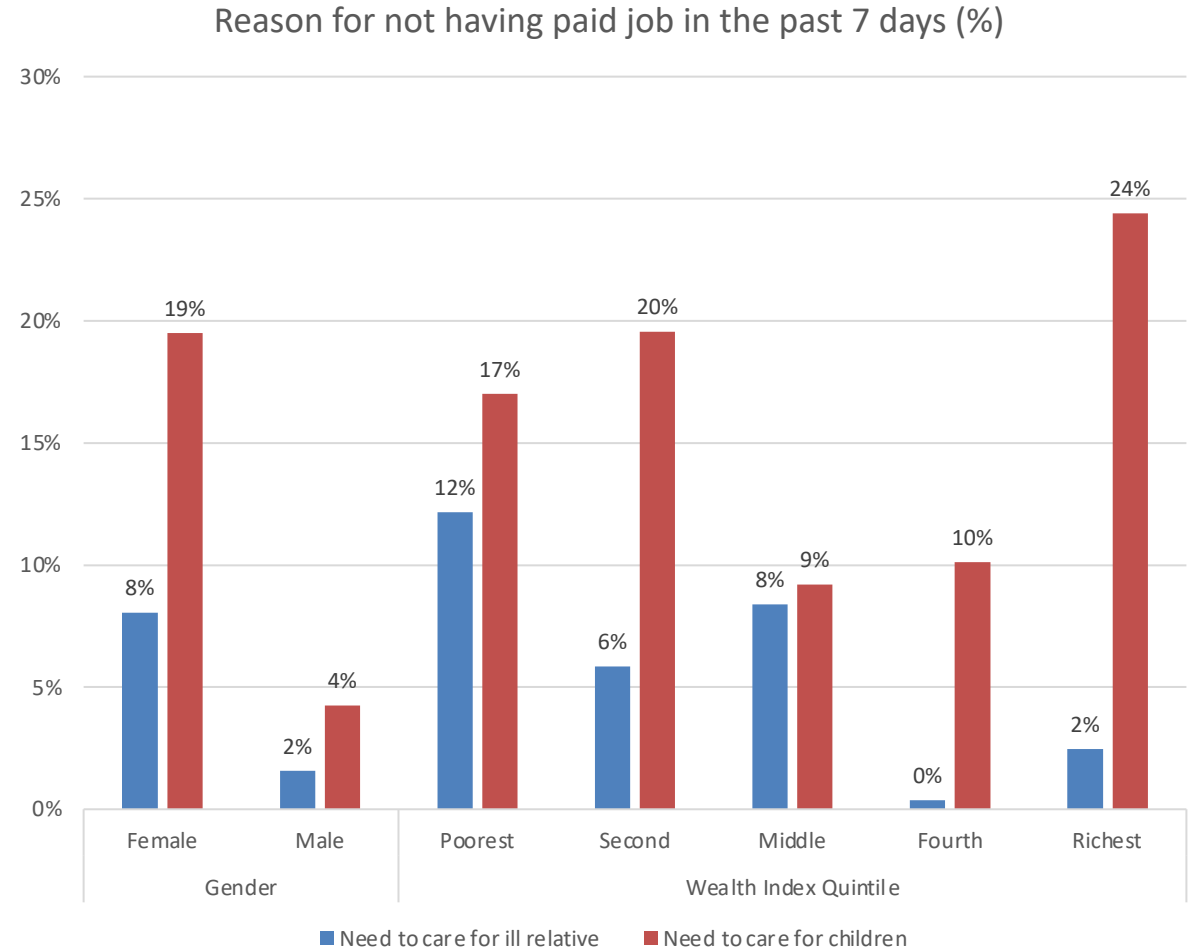
Care obligations: a critical obstacle for employment

- Of those who did not have paid jobs, the largest proportion indicated that they were not working because they had **to care for children or ill relatives (24%)**; 12% had to miss work because of COVID-19 or because of being in quarantine.
- In the Northeast**, the number of households that had to miss work due to care obligations reached 40%, with 26% of respondents in the Northeast having to care for children.



Care obligations and employment: gender and wealth dimensions

- 4% of men indicated childcare as a reason for not working, while around 19% of **women** were not working because of childcare obligations.
- The **richest and poorest wealth quintiles** indicated that childcare needs were a key reason for not working (24% and 17% respectively), while among middle-income families the proportion was significantly lower (9%).
- In terms of need **to care for ill relatives**, the situation is different: 12% of the poorest were not working for this reason compared to 2% of the richest. One of the explanations may be that the better-off can afford to hire help if relatives fall ill.

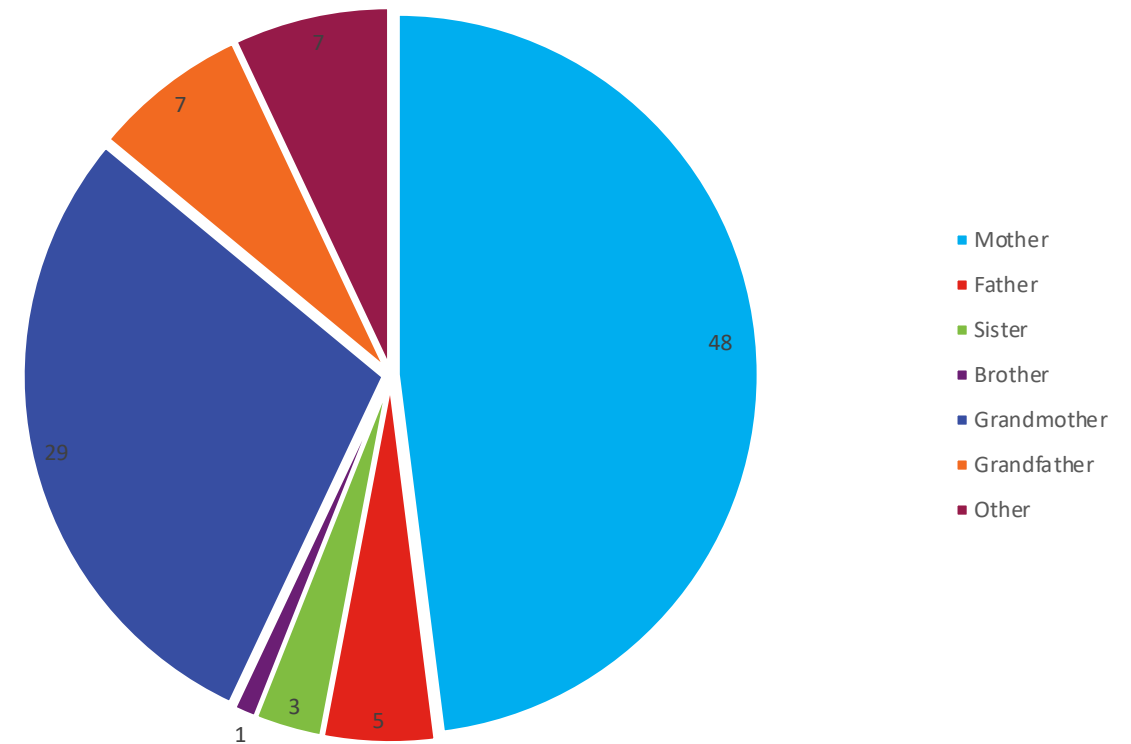


Women bearing the burden of unpaid care obligations for young children

When pre-schools or kindergartens were closed during COVID-19:

- **mothers** were the main care providers in 48% of cases,
- **grandmothers** in 29% of cases,
- **fathers** in 5% of cases.

Main childcare providers for children 0-6 years when pre-school was closed due to COVID (%)



INCOME

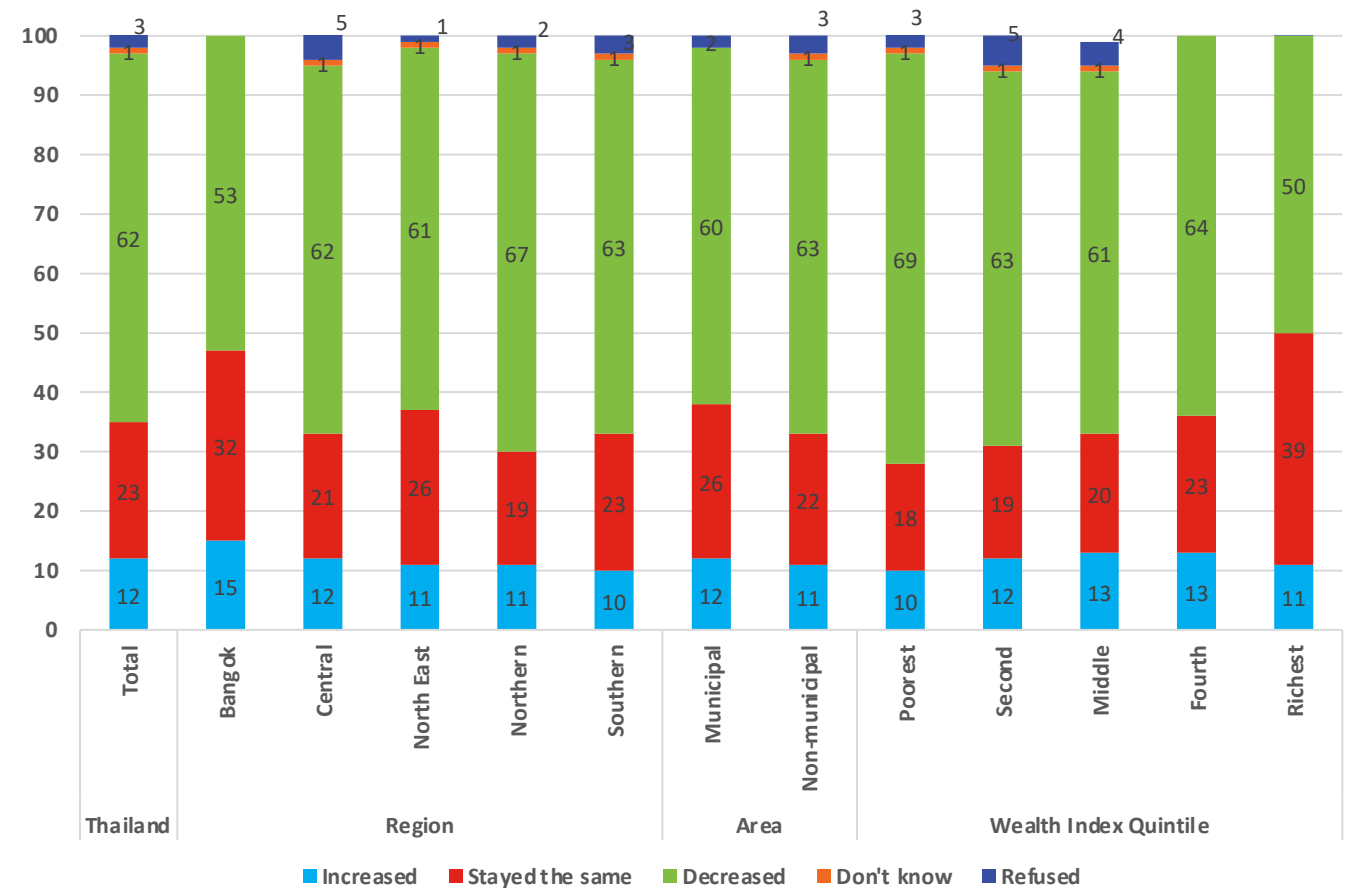


Overall recovery in household incomes is yet to be seen

Despite the easing of quarantine in the first half of 2022, over 60% of households reported a **reduction in incomes compared to a year ago** while around 35% indicated that incomes had increased or stayed the same.

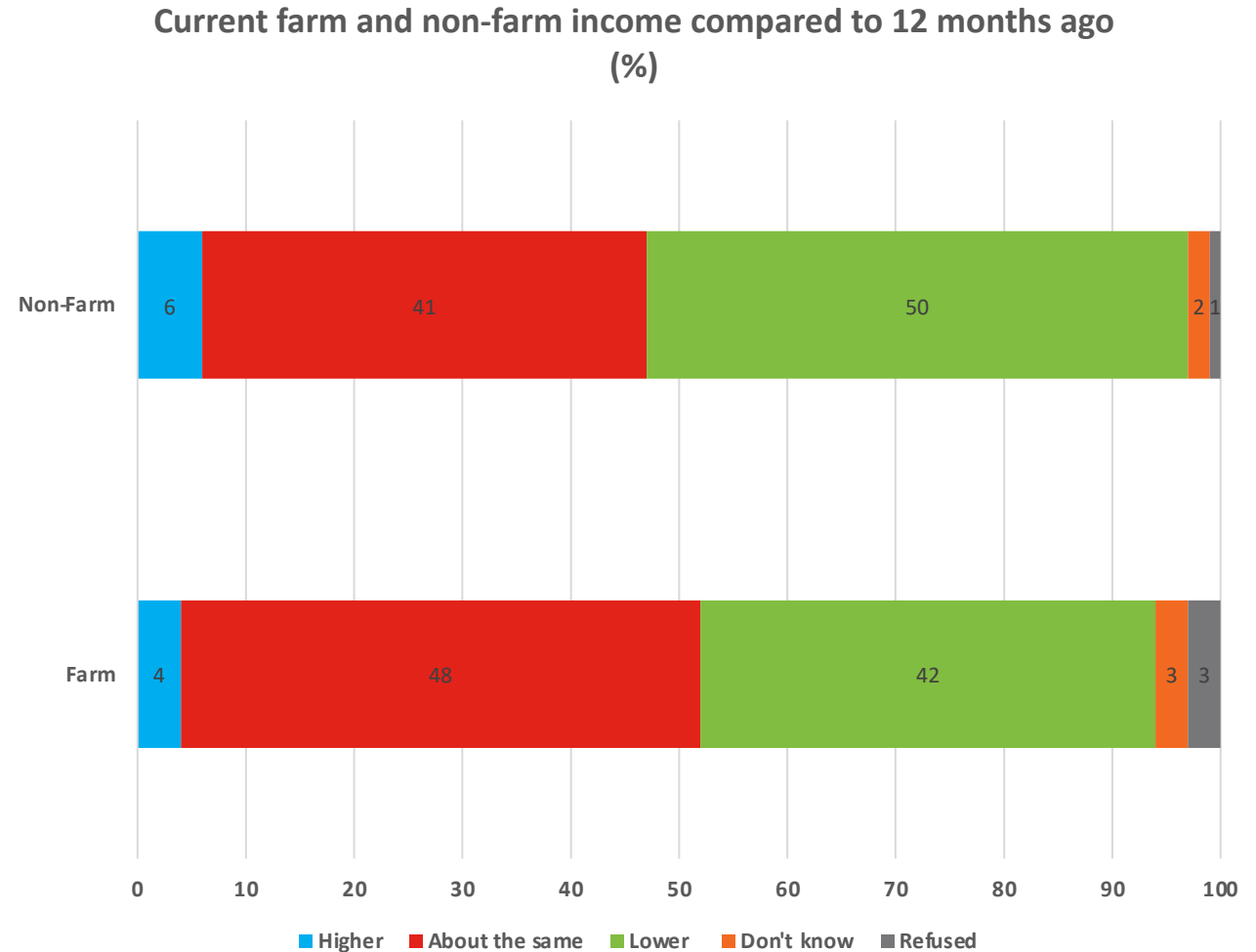
While income decline was the predominant trend over the last 12 months, the magnitude varied across groups.

Status of current household income in a typical month compared to a year ago (%)



Both farming and non-farming businesses were affected by income decline in the previous 12 months

- 42% of households with income from farm activities indicated that their incomes had fallen in the past year, 48% said they were the same and 4% reported they had gone up.
- For non-farm businesses, 50% indicated that incomes had fallen, 41% that it had stayed the same and 6% that it had increased.



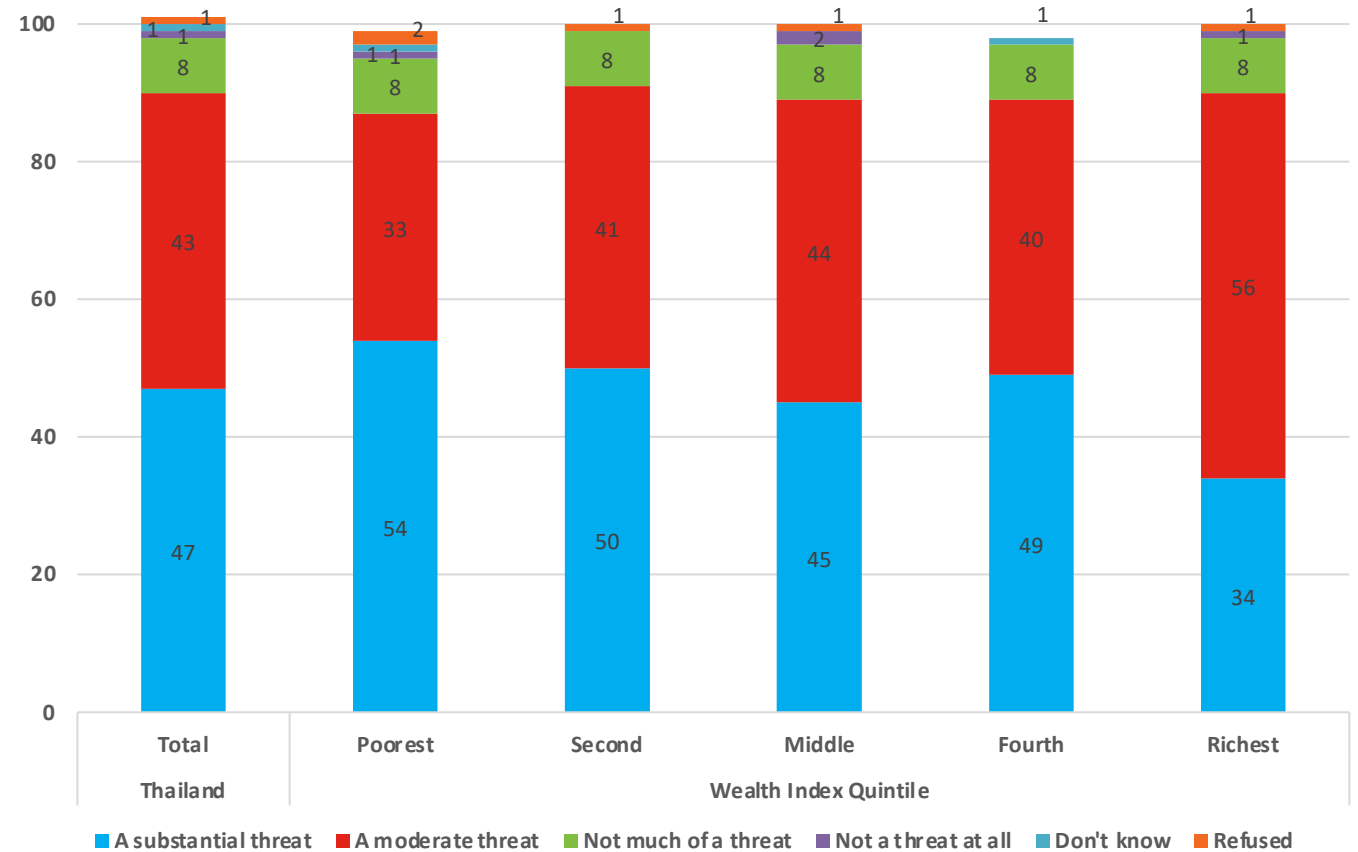
INFLATION



Perceptions of inflation and its effect on household finances

Level of threat of price increase to household finances (%)

- When asked about their perception of price increases over the last 12 months, 99% indicated that **prices had gone up**, with around 80% reporting that prices 'went up a lot'. Only 1% reported prices staying the same.
- Around 90% indicated that this price increase was a threat to their household finances.**
- While inflation affected many respondents, **54% of the poorest** reported that the price increases were a **SUBSTANTIAL** threat to their finances.



While the COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to worry people in Thailand, it is now being overshadowed by inflation

Households indicated that price increases (65%) and COVID-19 (63%) were the two leading issues that worry them. Poverty (49%) and unemployment (35%) occupied third and fourth places.

There are variations across regions. In Bangkok, price increases was an issue to a larger share of households (73%) than COVID-19 (59%). However, in Northern (63%) and Southern provinces (73%) COVID-19 still ranked first.

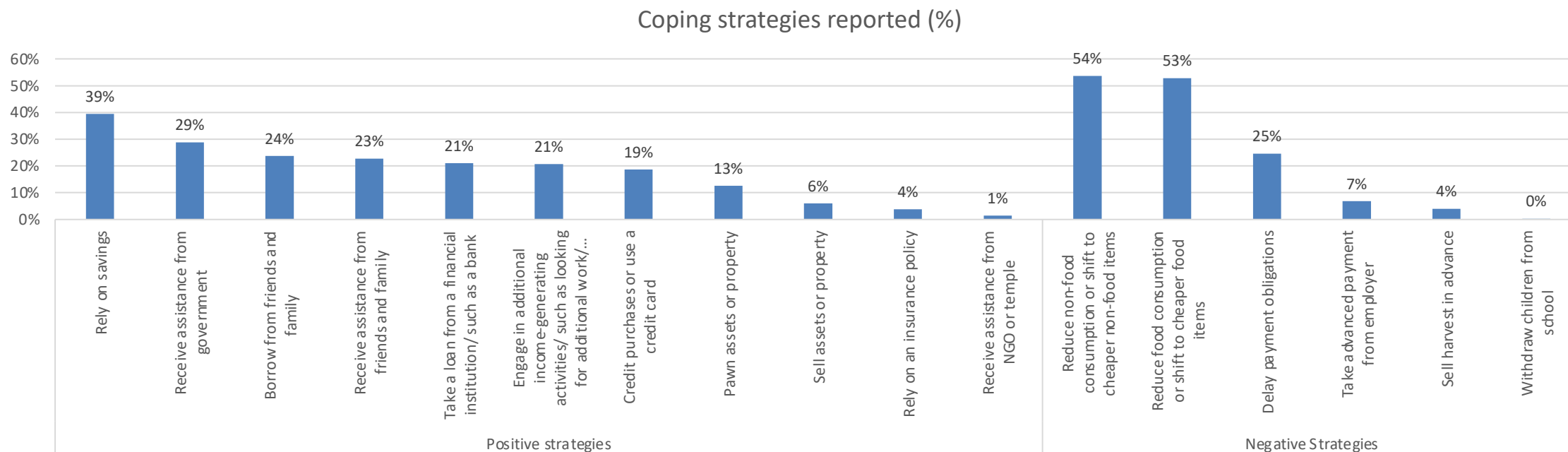
For poor people, inflation (64%) has overtaken COVID-19 (54%), while COVID-19 (73%) remains the top concern for the rich.

COPING STRATEGIES



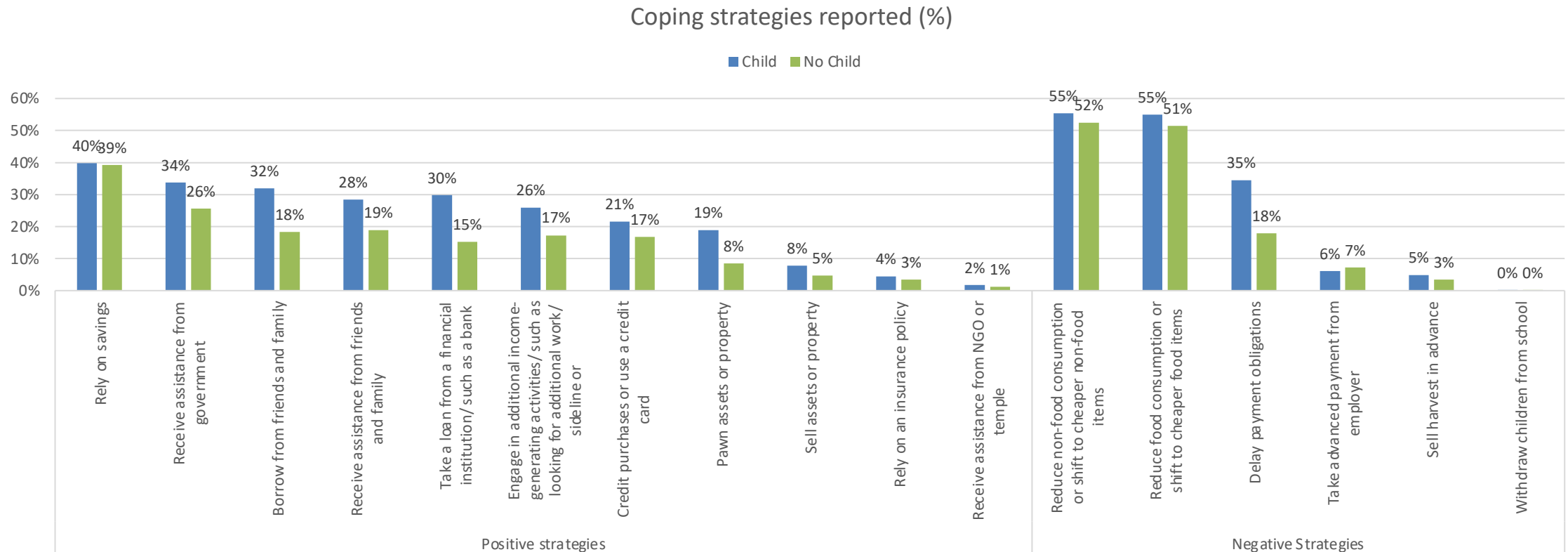
To cope with shocks, households were relying primarily on adverse coping strategies such as reducing food and non-food consumption

- Reductions in food and non-food consumption were the predominant strategies used over the previous 12 months to cope with the shocks brought about by COVID-19 and the heightened cost of living (53% and 54% respectively).
- In terms of positive coping strategies: around 40% of households relied on savings. The government remained an important source of support (29%) as well as direct support from friends (23%) and borrowing from friends (24%).



Household debt: affecting families with children

- Households with children were more likely to delay payment obligations (1/3 of households with children said they had to delay debt payments).
- Households with children were more actively borrowing (both from banks and friends) compared to households without children.
- Households with children were more active pawning assets and property.

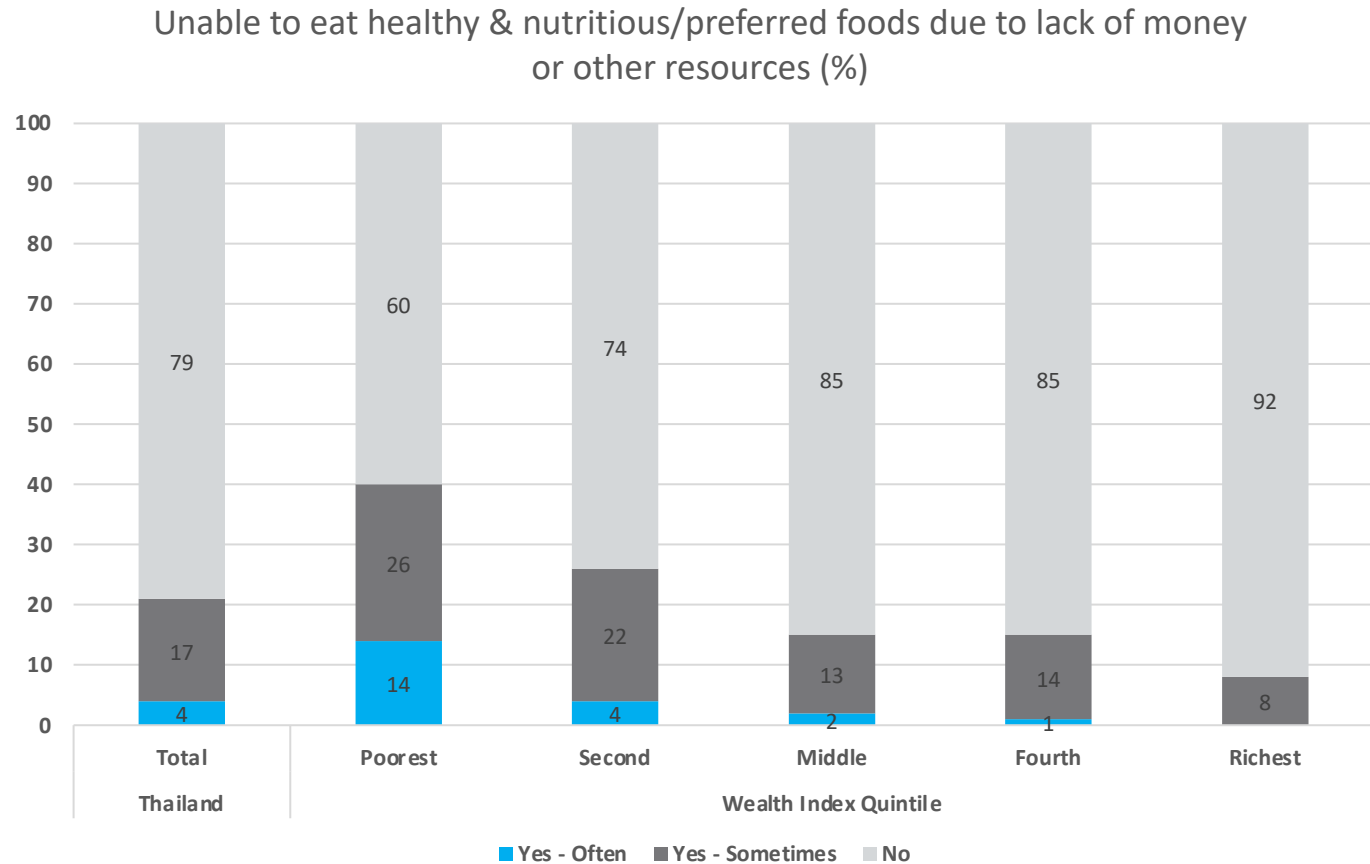


FOOD SECURITY



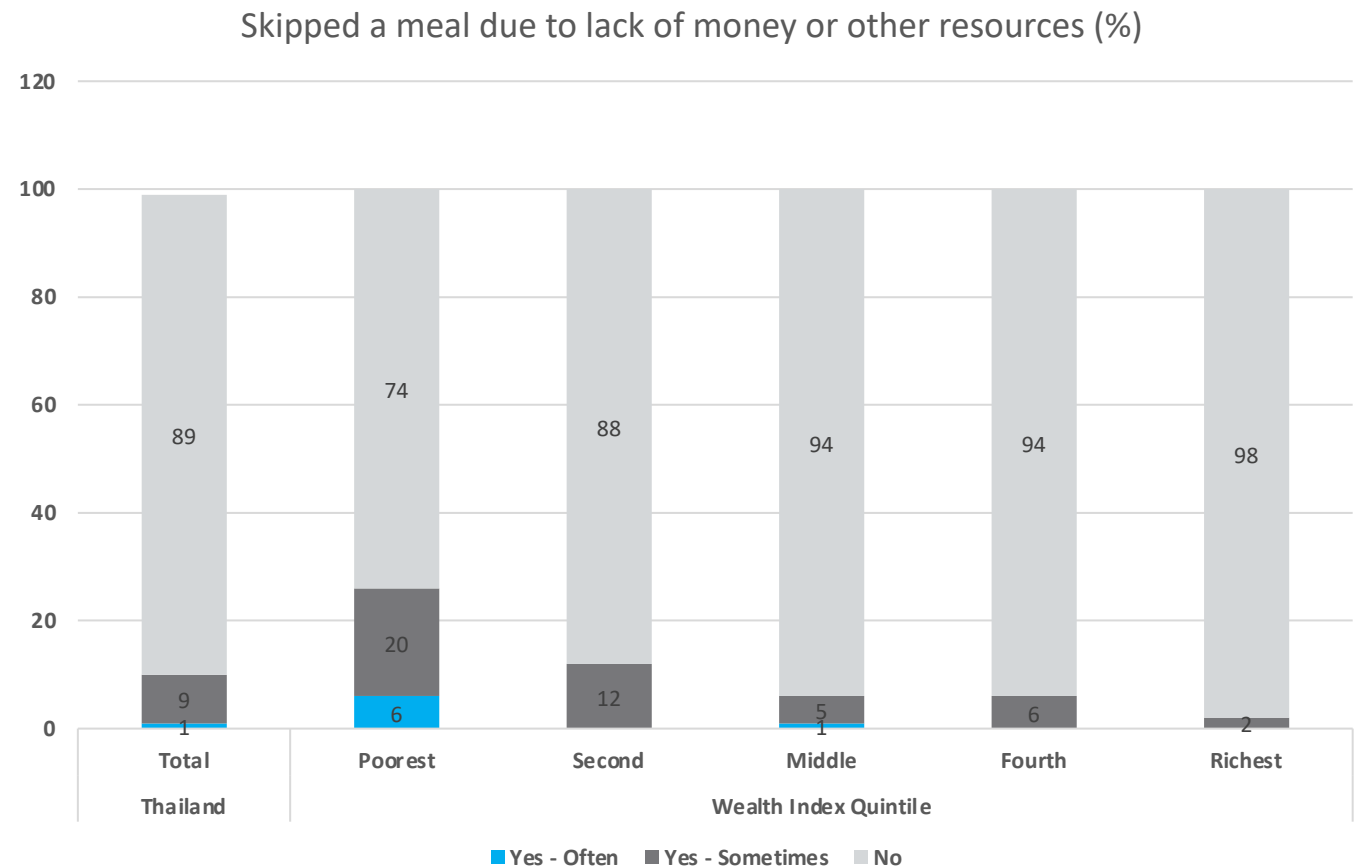
Over 20% of households were unable to eat healthy and nutritious/preferred foods because of a lack of money or other resources

The issue was more pronounced among poorer households (40%).



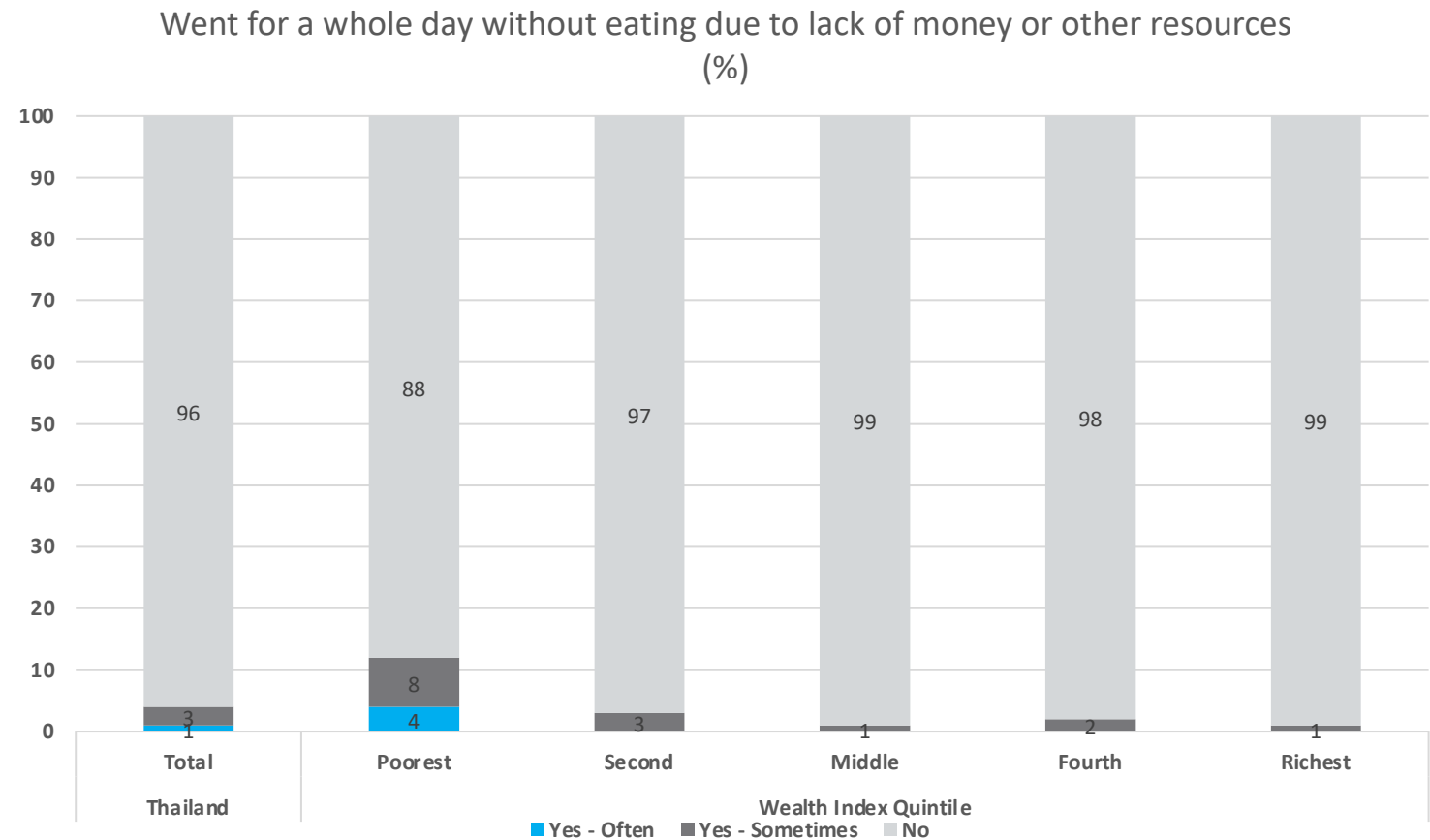
Around 10% of households reported that there had been times when family members had to skip meals because there was not enough money or other resources

The proportion among the poorest quintile reached 26%.



Some households experienced extreme food insecurity - went without eating for a day

4% of all households reported going without eating for a whole day, with the rate significantly higher among poor households (12%).



SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

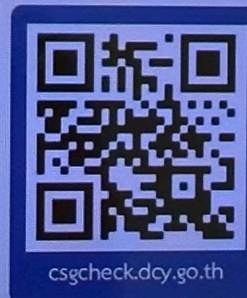


ตรวจสอบสิทธิ

โครงการเงินอุดหนุนเพื่อการเลี้ยงดูเด็กแรกเกิด

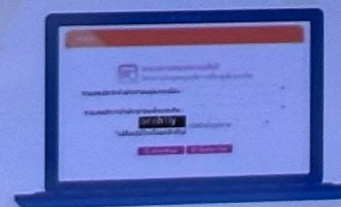
วิธีการเข้าระบบเพื่อตรวจสอบ

1. สแกน QR code นี้
2. หรือตามลิงค์นี้ csgcheck.dcy.go.th



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ขั้นตอนการตรวจสอบสิทธิ

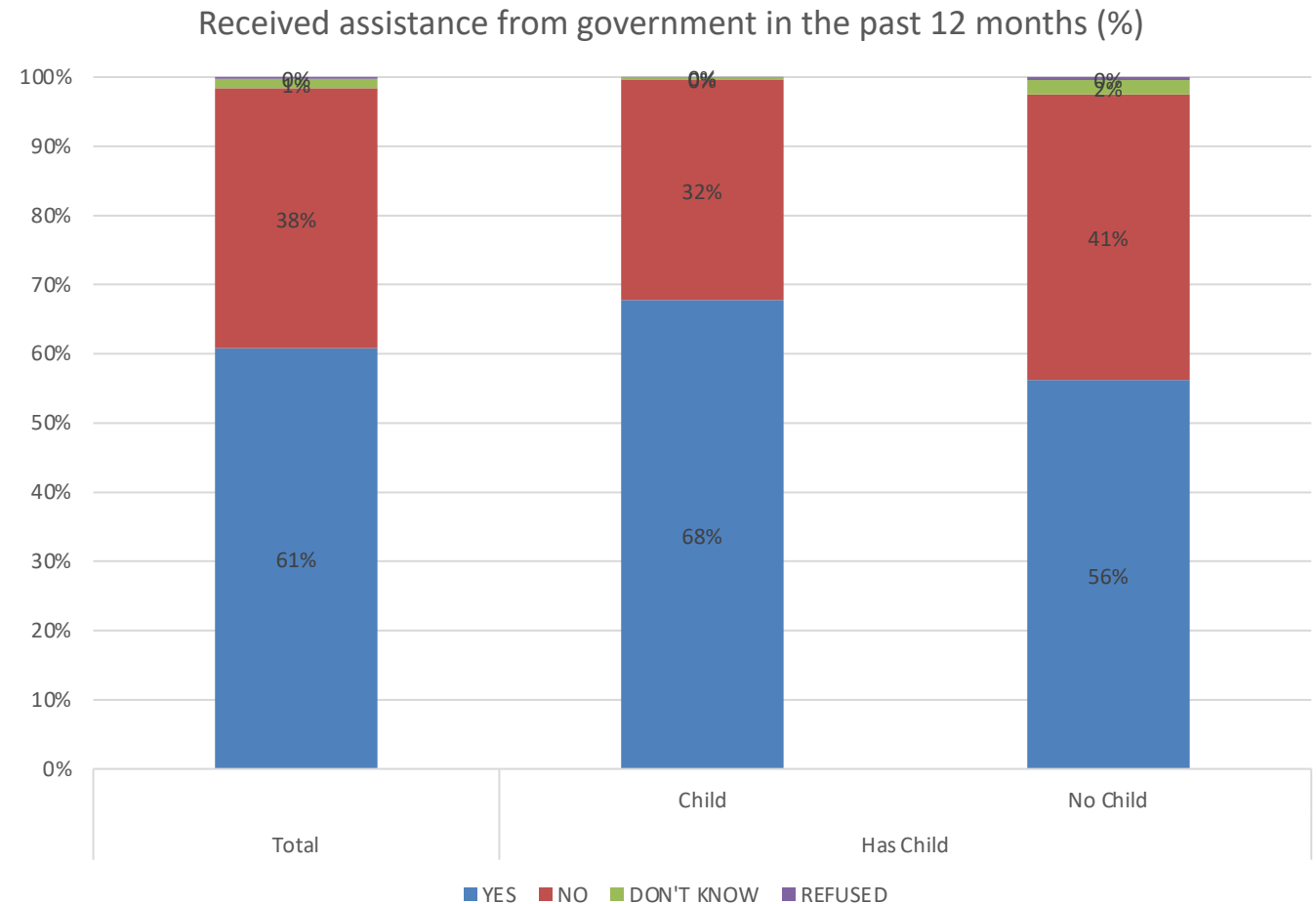


1. ระบุเลขประจำตัวประชาชนผู้ลงทะเบียน
2. ระบุเลขประจำตัวประชาชนเด็กแรกเกิด
3. ระบุรหัสยืนยันรูปภาพ
4. กดค้นหาข้อมูล

หากมีข้อสงสัยสอบถามเพิ่มเติม ☎ 0 2651 6534 หรือ 0 2651 6902 หรือ 0 2651 6920

Over 60% of households reported receiving social assistance from the government

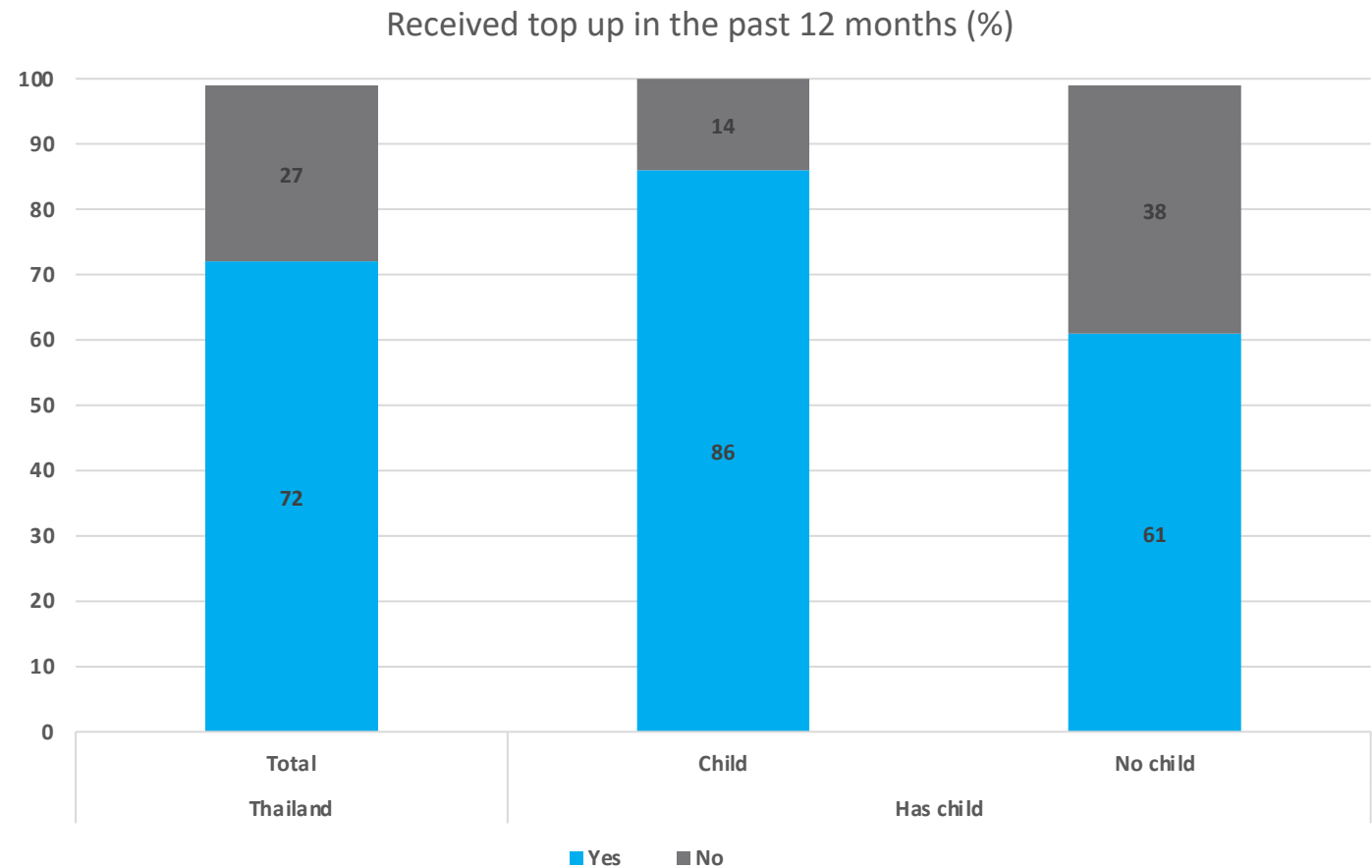
A larger proportion of households with children indicated receiving assistance in the last 12 months (68%), compared to 56% of households without children.



Top-ups for major social assistance programmes played a significant role for many households

Of those who received social assistance, over 70% reported receiving tops-ups during the last 12 months.

A larger proportion of households with children (86%) received top-ups, compared to households without children (61%).



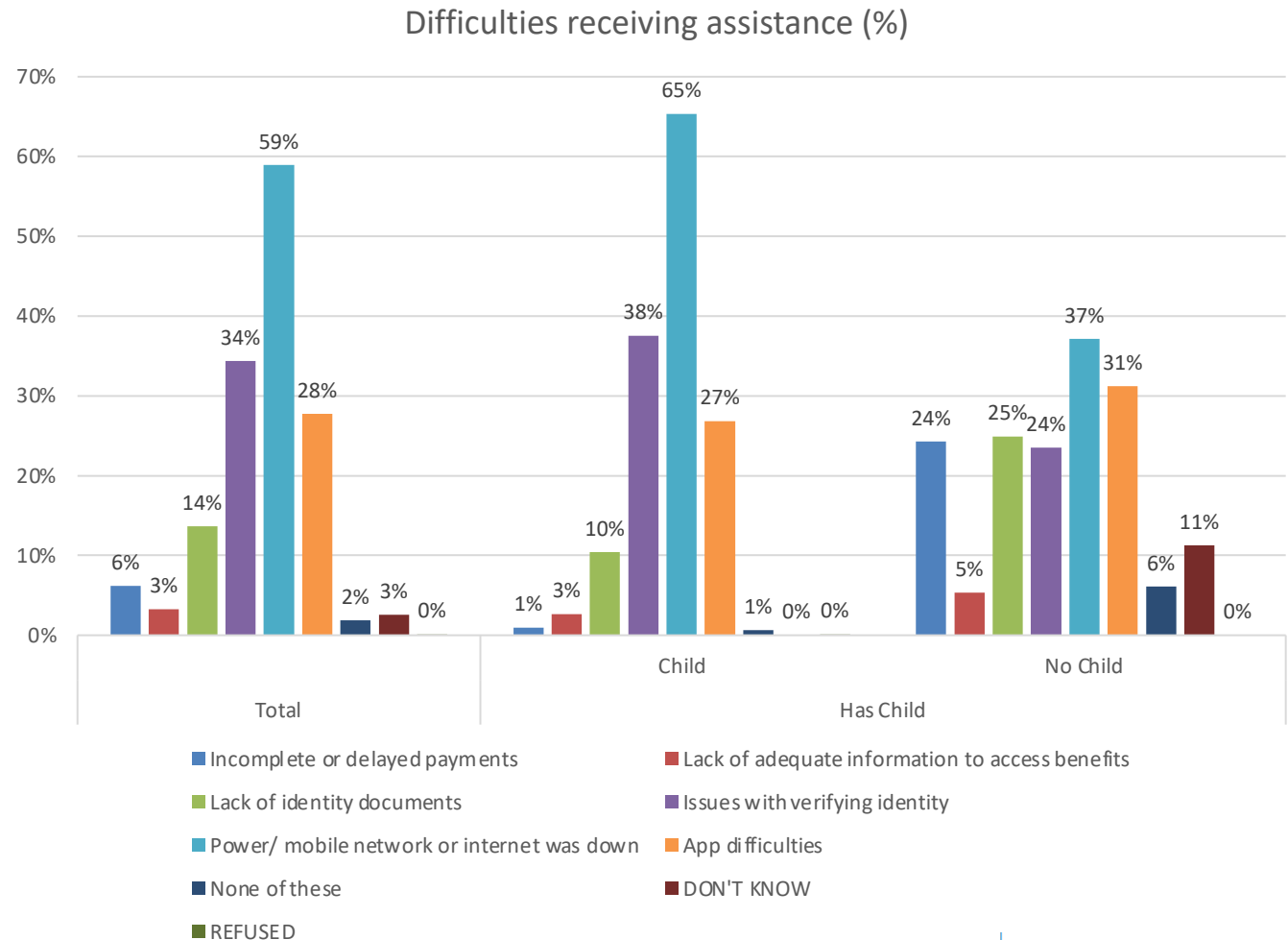
Most people did not experience difficulties obtaining social assistance payments; however 13% indicated problems

- For those who faced difficulties obtaining social assistance, the main issues that households faced were:

- (i) problems with the internet/power**
- (ii) issues verifying identity;**
- (iii) difficulties navigating the application.**

- Issues of verifying identity seem to be much more prevalent in Bangkok (46%).

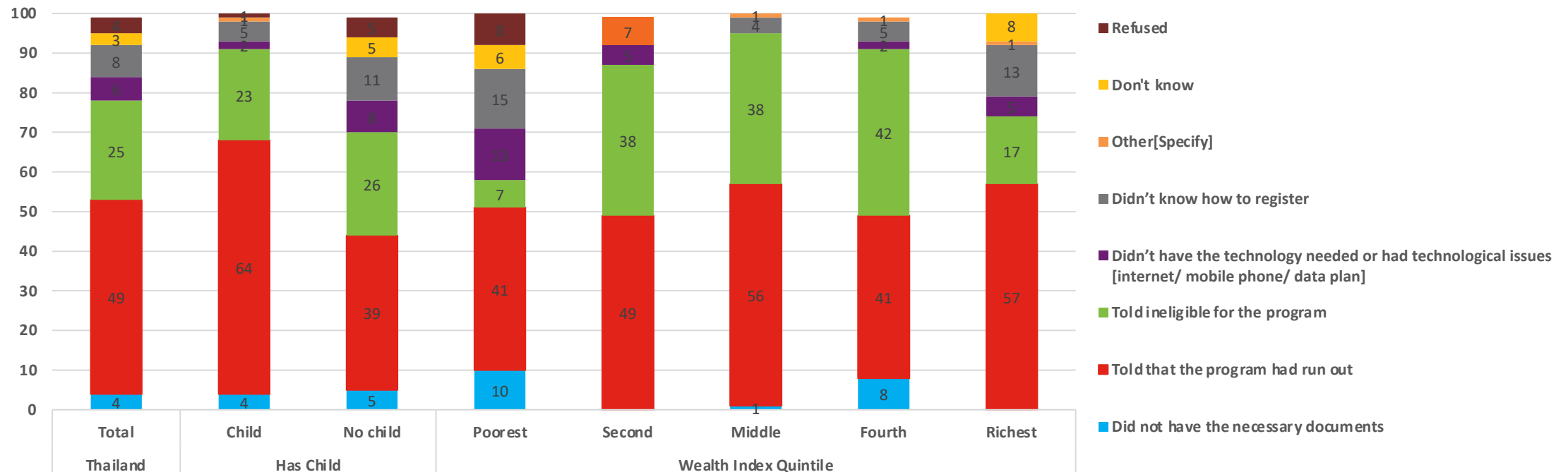
- For households with children, the proportion that reported difficulties was much higher (22%), than for households without children (5%).



Around 7% of households were turned down or unable to register for social assistance programmes; this figure rose to 10% among the poorest

- Among those who could not register, 50% indicated that they were told the programme had run out of funds, this figure reached almost 80% in Bangkok.
- For households with children who could not register, 64% were told that the programme had been discontinued compared to 39% of households without children who could not register.
- Among the poorest larger proportions “did not have the documents” (10%), and “did not have the technology to register” (13%)

Reasons for being turned down or unable to register for government assistance

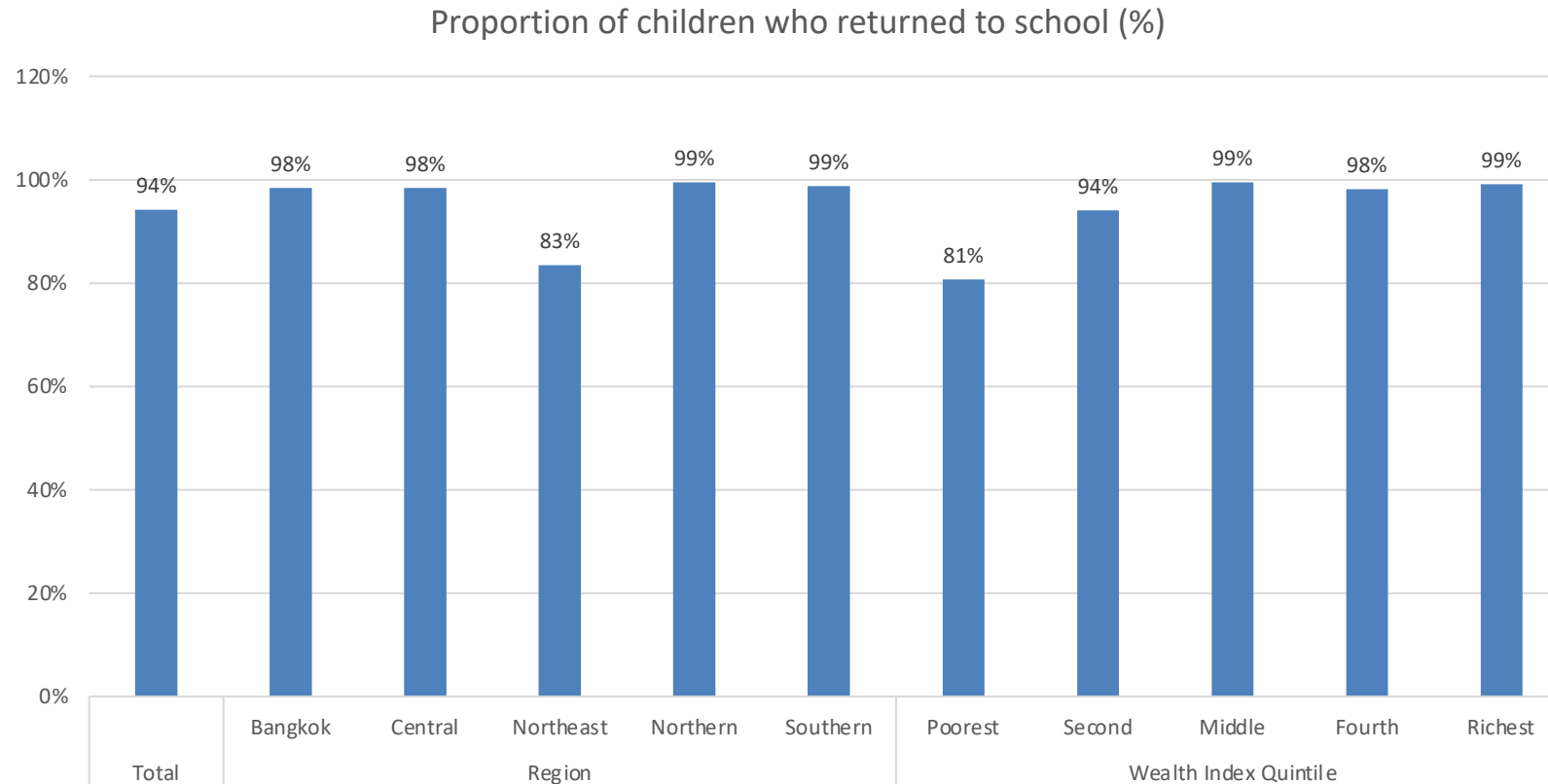


EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT



Most children returned to school, but proportion was significantly lower in Northeast and among the poorest

94% of households indicated that their children (aged 7-17 years) returned to school when the school reopened. However, in the Northeast, only 83% returned. Among the poorest the proportion is even lower: 81%.



- Of those who did NOT return to school when the school reopened, **over 90%** were from the Northeast and all were from the lower income quintiles.

Fear of getting infected with COVID-19 was stated as the main reason for children not to be enrolled in school

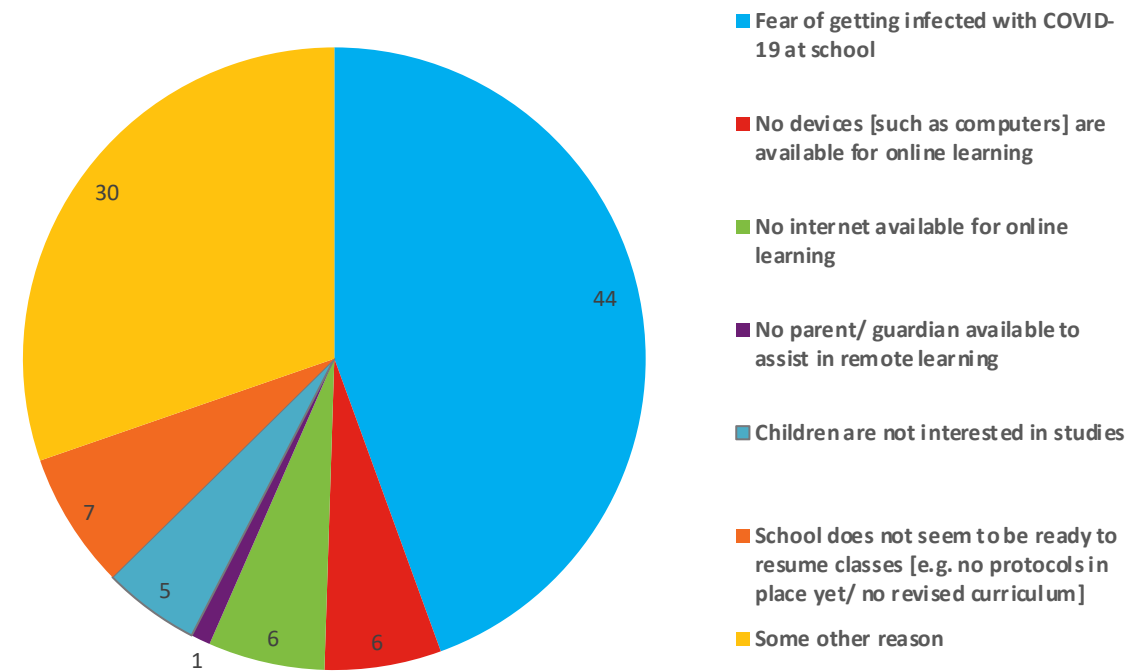
Other reasons included:

(i) school does not seem to be ready to resume classes [e.g. no protocols in place yet/ no revised curriculum] (7%),

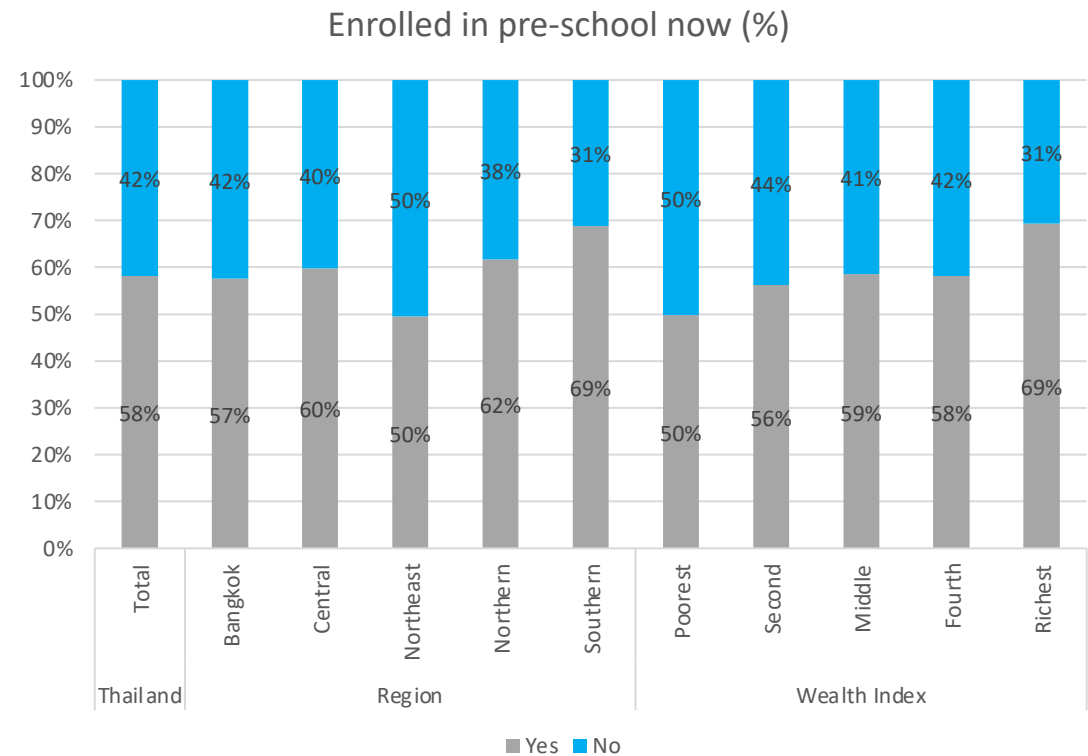
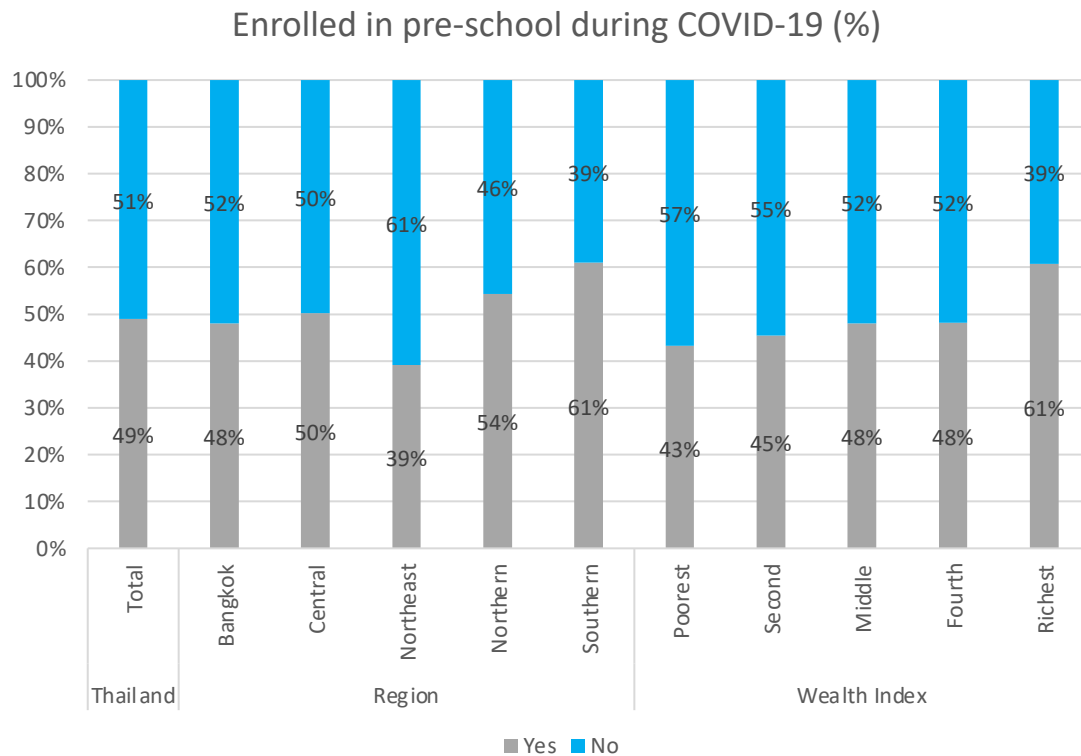
(ii) lack of devices and internet (6% each);

(iii) children are not interested in studies (5%).

Main reason for current non-enrollment in school for children 7-17 years (%)

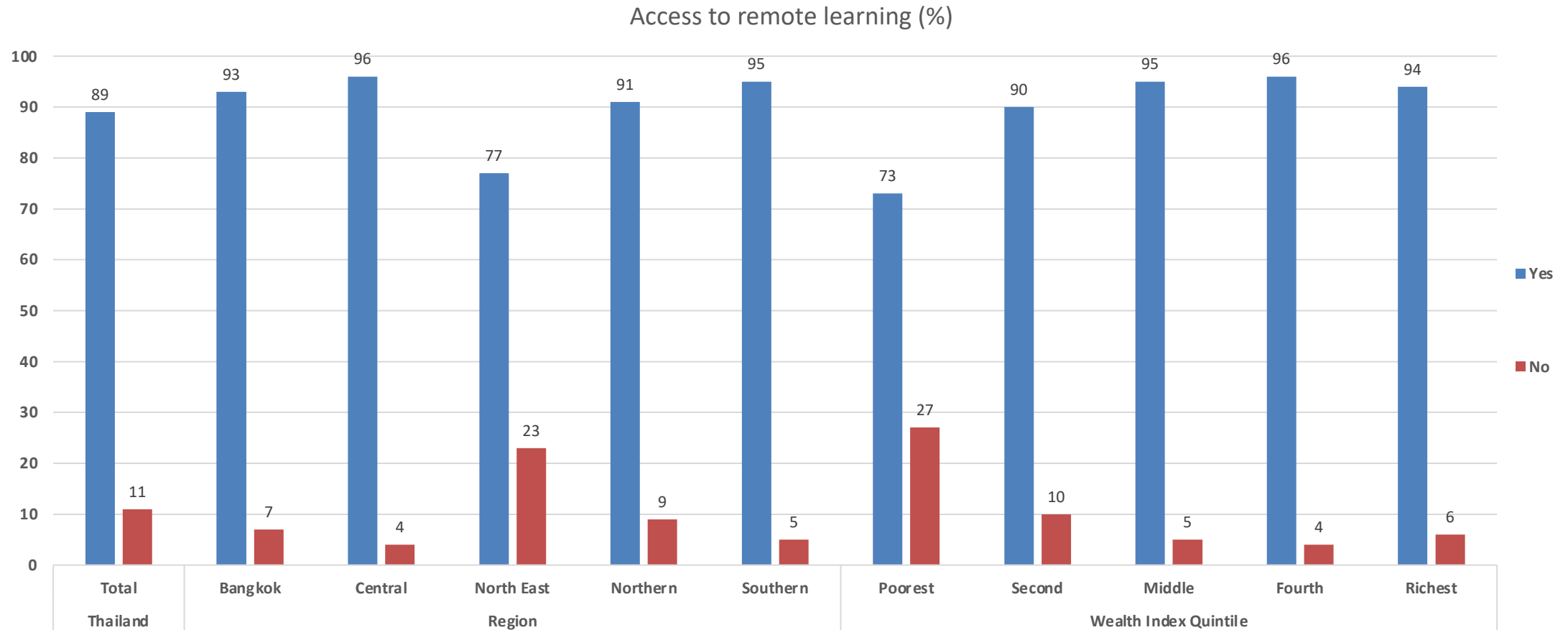


Enrolment in ECD institutions/kindergartens have increased significantly recently in comparison to COVID-19 period



Access to remote learning was a serious issue in Northeast and among the poorest

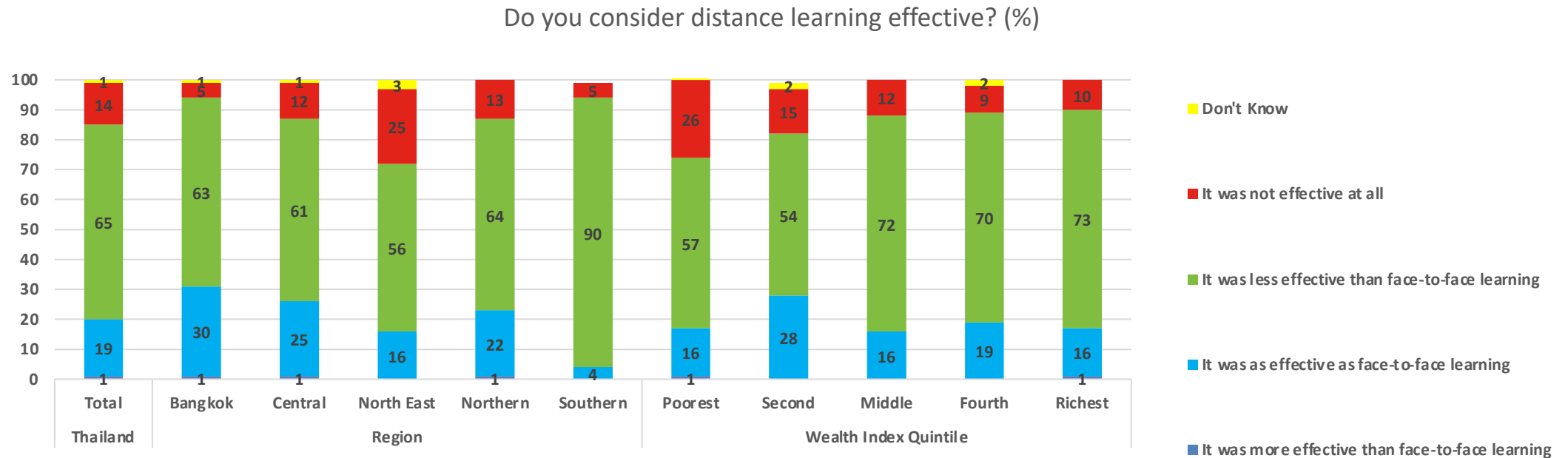
- When schools were closed last semester, 89% of children (aged 7-17 years) accessed remote learning. However, in the Northeast, 77% of children accessed remote learning.
- Among the poor, the proportion of children not accessing remote learning was 27%.



The effectiveness of remote learning (perceptions)

Around 65% stated that distance learning was less effective than face-to-face learning;
And 14% reported that distance learning was **not effective at all**, with Northeast region reaching 25%.

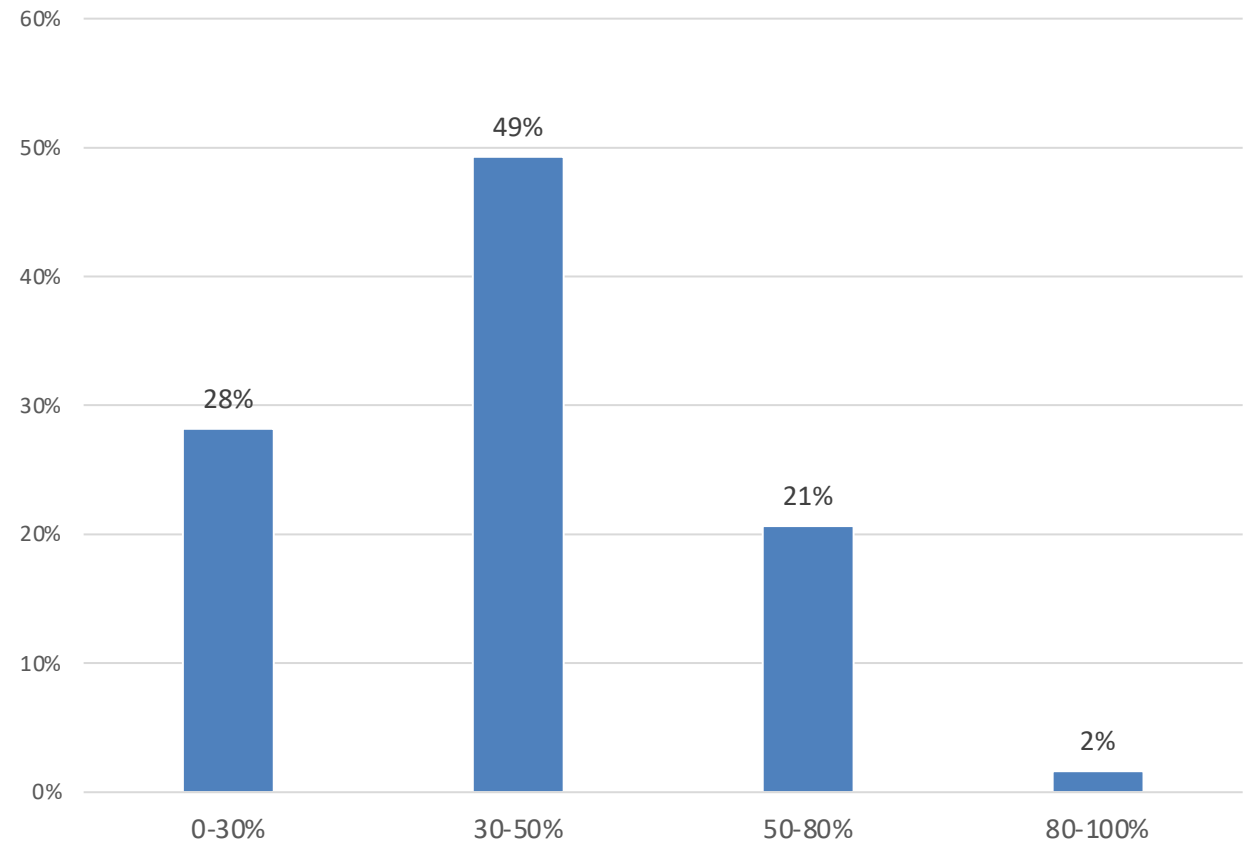
Over 25% of the poorest indicated that distance learning was not effective at all.



Learning loss (perceptions)

When asked about how much on average a child learned from distance learning - around **77% stated less than half** what they would have in face-to-face learning, with around 30% indicating that a child learned a quarter as much as face-to-face learning.

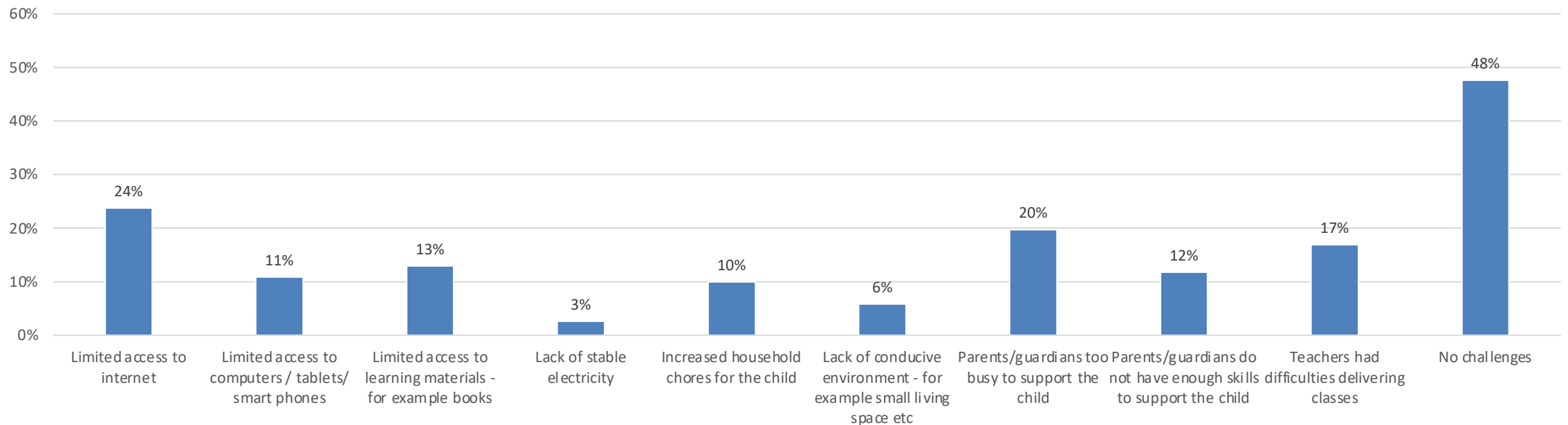
Amount of learning achieved by distance learning, compared to face-to-face (%)



Learning challenges

- 20% stated that children experienced challenges because parents were **'too busy'** to support learning, 12% stated that parents **'did not have enough skills'** to support the children.
- In addition, teachers' limited preparedness to deliver online classes was also a concern.

Amount of learning achieved by distance learning, compared to face-to-face (%)



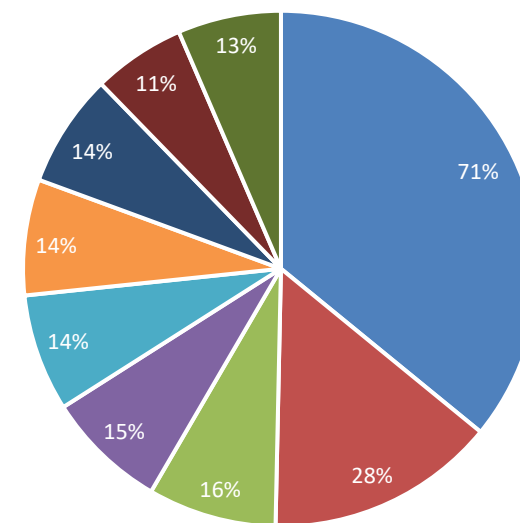
HEALTH AND VACCINATION



98% of respondents reported that all adult members of their households received at least two shots of vaccine against COVID-19

Of those not fully vaccinated, 71% reported 'worries about side effects' as the primary reason for not getting COVID-19 vaccines.

Reasons for not getting COVID-19 vaccine

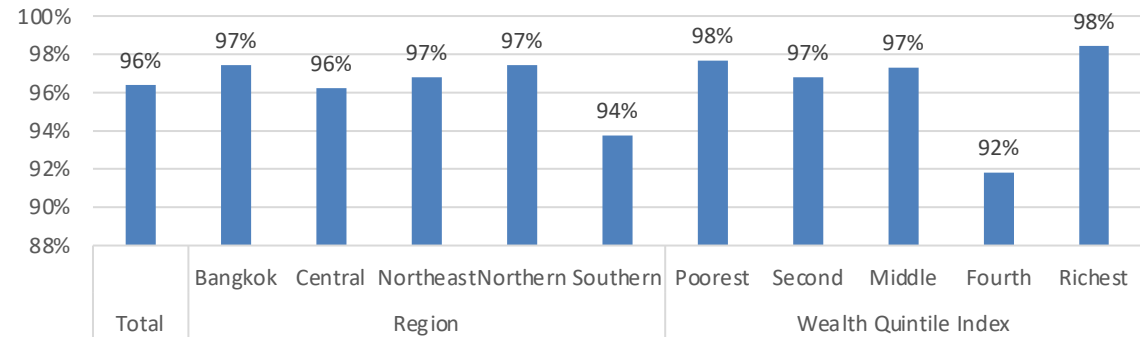


- They are worried about the side effects
- They do not trust the vaccine option that are given
- They don't have the means to get to vaccination site
- They are afraid of infection while going for vaccination
- Other
- They don't think the vaccine will give protection
- They are not at high risk enough from COVID-19
- DON'T KNOW
- They don't have time to go for vaccinations

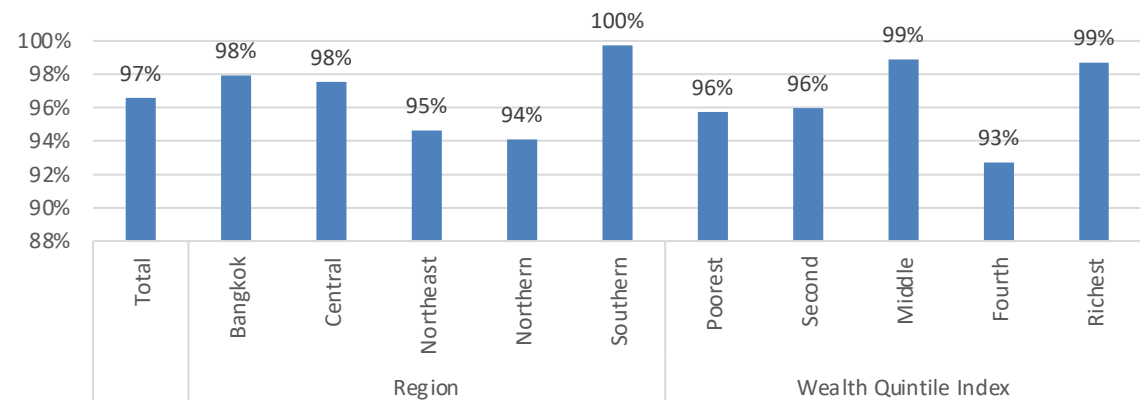
The survey results indicated good overall access to medical services over the last 12 months (including regular check-up services and vaccination), both for adults and for children

These results were relatively homogenous for the poorer and the better-off.

Households that were able to access medical services in last 12 months



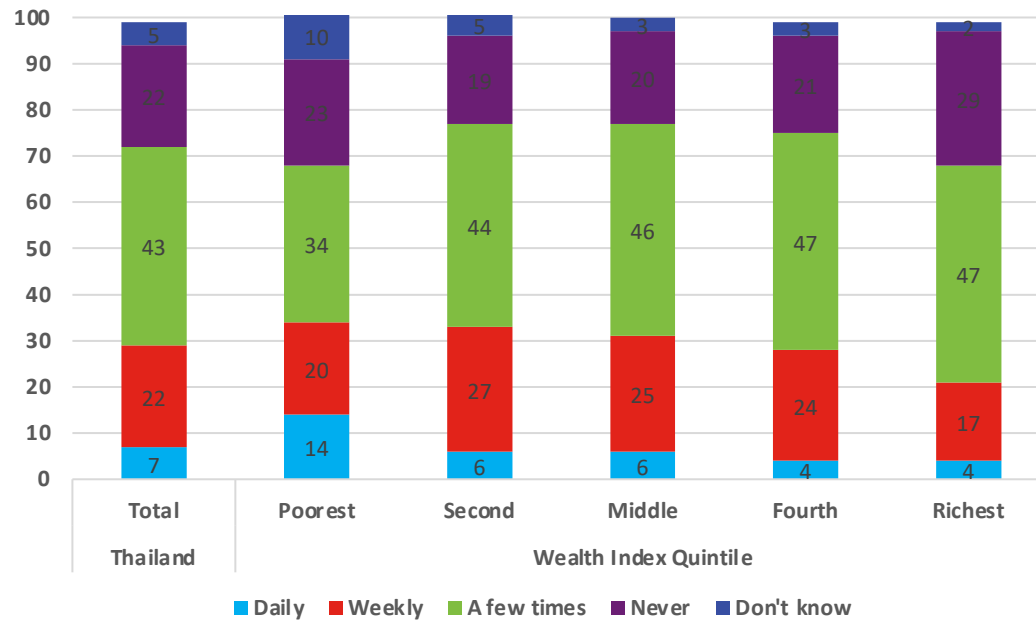
Children (age 0-6) that were able to access medical services in last 12 months



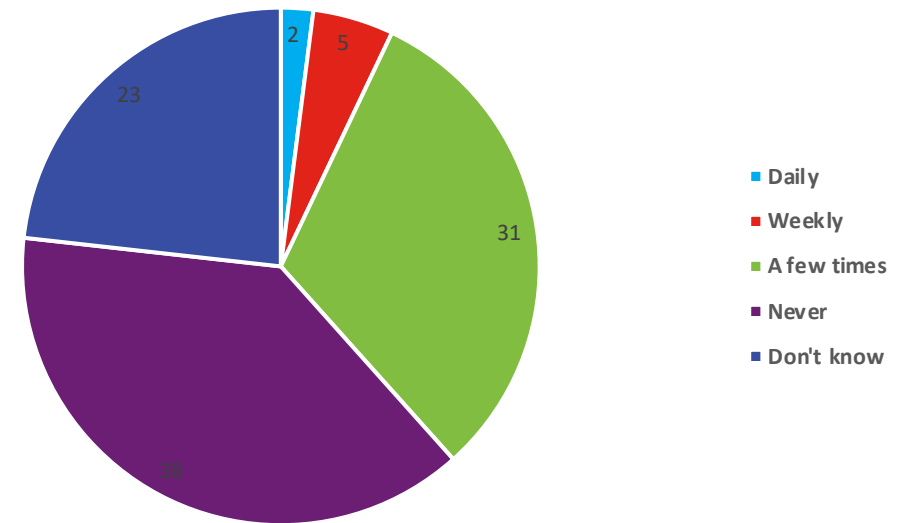
Mental health continues to be an issue

- Around 43% of respondents indicated that they felt very anxious, nervous, or worried a few times over the past month; 22% - weekly; 7% - daily, with higher proportions among the poorer.
- A smaller proportion reported children aged 7-17 years feeling very anxious, nervous, or worried compared to adults. However, a significant share of adults (23%) indicated that they 'do not know' if the child was feeling very anxious, nervous, or worried over the past month.

How often did you feel very anxious, nervous or worried in the last 30 days? (%)



How often children 7-17 years felt very anxious, nervous or worried (%)



Thank you.