

# Workers in Informal Employment in Thailand: A Statistical Snapshot of 2019-2024

This flyer examines data on informal employment<sup>1</sup> in Thailand nationally and in Bangkok from 2019 to 2024 – before, during and after the COVID-19 crisis – with a focus on five groups of workers who are mainly informal.

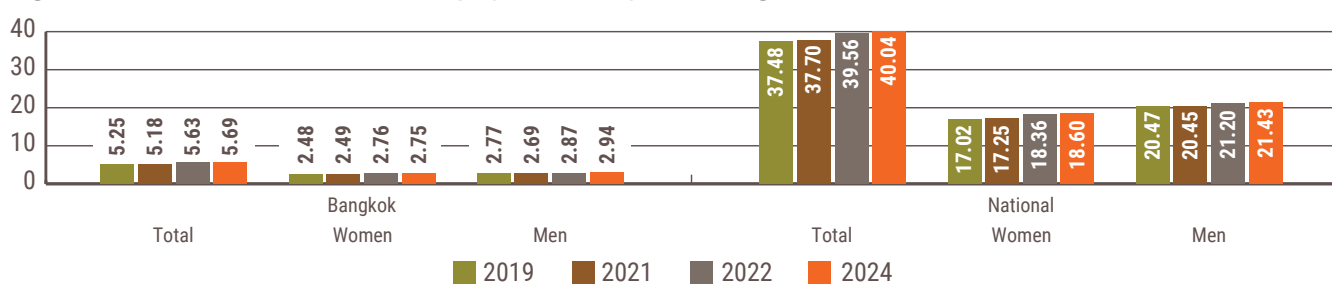
## Employment in Thailand

In Thailand, COVID-19-related restrictions as well as the dissemination of vaccines were effective in curbing the spread of the virus and in limiting the impact on employment. Between 2019 and 2021, employment increased nationally by over 221,000 workers. However, in Bangkok 65,800 jobs were lost. Nationally, women experienced an increase of

232,900 jobs, while men lost almost 11,800 jobs. In Bangkok, women gained 12,900 jobs while men lost 78,700 jobs. The increase in women’s employment and decline in men’s is consistent with the “added worker effect”, where secondary earners enter the workforce in crises to offset reduced earnings of affected primary workers.

As the economy began to recover, women’s employment rate in Bangkok increased from 63 per cent in Q3 2021 to 67 per cent in Q3 2022, while men’s rose from 73 per cent to 77 per cent. Between Q3 2022 and Q3 2024, employment growth slowed but remained positive, with national gains of 474,700 jobs, including 55,400 jobs in Bangkok.

Figure 1: Numbers of women and men employed nationally and in Bangkok, 2019 to 2024 (numbers in millions)



1. In Thailand, informal employment includes the self-employed – own-account workers and employers – whose enterprises are unincorporated (are not registered in the national tax system); an employee who does not have employer-provided social protection or benefits, such as contributions to pensions and medical insurance or entitlement to paid sick leave or annual leave; and all contributing family workers.



Thongmuan Phansanga is a home-based worker in Bangkok.  
Photo credit: Chanakarn Laosarakham

## Informal Employment

Although informal employment declined in Thailand from 72 per cent of total employment in Q3 2019 to 65 per cent in Q3 2024, it continues to be a substantial share of employment. By contrast, in Bangkok the majority of total employment was formal – around 58 per cent in 2019 and 2024.

The decline during the COVID-19 crisis reflects the pandemic’s disruption of economic activities. Government restrictions on mobility

and closure of markets and street vending zones further limited opportunities for workers in informal employment. Nationally, 1.1 million informal jobs were lost between Q3 2019 and Q3 2021, and there were 113,900 informal job losses in Bangkok over the same period. Nationally, women saw a reduction of 410,300 informal jobs, while men saw a reduction of 734,500 informal jobs. Women experienced lower job losses mainly because many worked from or near their homes.

Figure 2: Informal employment as a share of total employment in Thailand and Bangkok by sex (%), 2019 and 2024

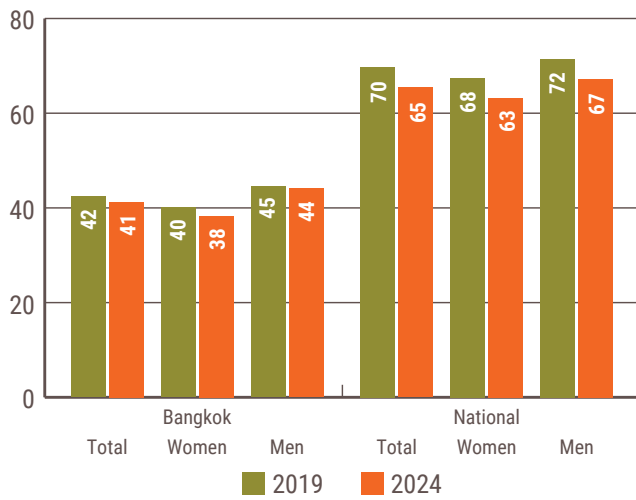
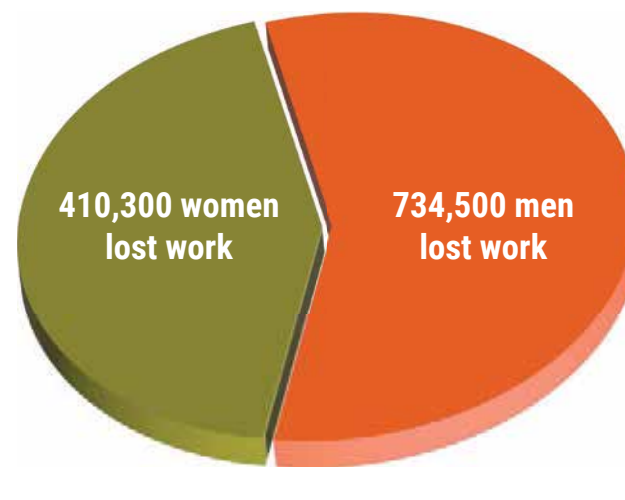


Figure 3: 1.1 million informal jobs were lost in Thailand between 2019 and 2021



Photos right, top to bottom:  
Market trader Renu Develoa, home-based worker  
Thongmuan Phansanga, and domestic worker Kyan Par.  
Credit: Chanakarn Laosarakham

## 5 Groups of Workers

WIEGO focuses on groups of workers who typically are informally employed. The groups of workers covered for this study – domestic workers, home-based workers, market traders (both food and non-food), motorcycle drivers and street vendors (both food and non-food) – together were 18 per cent of total employment in 2024 nationally, and 23 per cent in Bangkok.

This snapshot indicates how these groups and their share of total employment (in parentheses) changed between 2019 and 2024.

**1. Domestic workers** provide services in the homes of others.

National	Bangkok
2019: 311,100 (1%)	111,700 (2%)
2024: 384,400 (1%)	128,600 (2%)

- Domestic workers had a notable share of young workers aged 15 to 24 in 2024: for women, 13 per cent were young domestic workers in Bangkok and 12 per cent, nationally; no young men were in domestic work in Bangkok but young men were 19 per cent of domestic workers, nationally.
- In 2024, 92 per cent of domestic workers in Bangkok and 84 per cent nationally worked more than 40 hours per week.
- Nationwide, domestic worker hourly earnings were about 57 per cent of the national average hourly earnings.

**2. Home-based workers** produce goods or provide services from, in, or around their own home. They are found in several major sectors of the economy.

National	Bangkok
2019: 4,340,500 (12%)	605,900 (12%)
2024: 4,127,900 (10%)	526,900 (9%)

- In 2024, trade comprised 42 to 44 per cent of home-based work and was the largest sector of home-based work in Bangkok and nationally. Manufacturing comprised 21-22 per cent of home-based work in both geographic areas.
- Home-based work remains an important source of employment for women. Home-based workers represented around 13 per cent of women's employment nationally in 2024.



Street vendor Chaniporn Duangnguen.  
Photo credit: Chanakarn Laosarakham

**3. Market traders** sell goods and offer services in public markets.

National	Bangkok
2019: 1,079,500 (3%)	170,500 (3%)
2024: 1,173,100 (3%)	177,500 (3%)

- Among women, the highest earners nationally were market traders selling food, averaging 115 baht per hour while street vendors selling food were the highest earnings in Bangkok (136.6 baht per hour).
- In Thailand, women were more likely than men to work as market traders, especially in the food sector across all areas. During the pandemic, this occupation tapped into the growing platform delivery services. This helped to absorb job losses in tourism and hospitality.



Domestic worker Malee Soblerk.  
Photo credit: Chanakarn Laosarakham



**4. Motorcycle drivers** (taxi and delivery) transport goods, materials or passengers.

	National	Bangkok
2019:	401,100 (1%)	207,700 (4%)
2024:	596,600 (2%)	291,300 (5%)

- Between 2019 and 2024, the number of men motorcycle drivers in Bangkok increased significantly, from 199,000 to 276,400.
- While there were many fewer women motorcycle drivers in the city, their numbers nearly doubled, rising from 8,400 to 15,100.
- Motorcycle drivers experienced significant growth during the COVID-19 crisis with the substantial increase in demand for delivery services in response to restrictions on retail and restaurants. This growth has continued.

**5. Street vendors** sell products or offer services in public spaces (streets, alleys, avenues, parks, etc.).

	National	Bangkok
2019:	813,400 (2%)	142,700 (3%)
2024:	780,700 (2%)	160,500 (3%)

- In Bangkok, street vendors selling food in 2024 had the highest earnings of the worker groups.
- The number of street vendors decreased during the pandemic and then rebounded from 2022 to 2024, with the recovery of tourism.

**Informality among the 5 Groups**

Nationally, the per cent of informal employment of the five worker groups was much higher than the national average for all employed – 83 to 100 per cent in comparison to 65 per cent. Informality remains concentrated in service-oriented and self-employed occupations. Across all regions, informality among home-based workers, market traders and street vendors was over 96 per cent.

**Status in Employment in the 5 Groups**

- Around two-thirds and even more of workers in four of the five occupational groups – market traders, street vendors, motorcycle drivers, and home-based workers – were own-account workers. 95 per cent of domestic workers were employees.
- Nationally, 25 per cent of home-based workers, 26 per cent of market traders, and 24 per cent of street vendors were contributing family workers.
- The status in employment of these workers taken together contrasts with the profiles for all employed; in Bangkok 70 per cent of all employed are employees and 5 per cent are contributing family workers while nationally 48 per cent are employees and 16 per cent are contributing family workers.

**About WIEGO**

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) is a global network focused on empowering the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy to secure their livelihoods. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities, rights, protection and voice. WIEGO promotes change by improving statistics and expanding knowledge on the informal economy, building networks and capacity among informal worker organizations and, jointly with the networks and organizations, influencing local, national and international policies. Visit [www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org)

**About the Data**

Data in this resource are derived from WIEGO Statistical Brief No. 43, Employment in Thailand, 2019-2024: Crisis, Recovery and Informality, by Sasiwimon Warunsiri Paweenawat and Jessica Vechbanyongratana. Available at: <https://www.wiego.org/research-library-publications/employment-thailand-2019-2024-crisis-recovery-informality/>

