



# THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS IN THAILAND

## Brief Assessment of the Implementation of the 3rd Cycle UPR Recommendations

During its 3rd UPR cycle in November 2021, Thailand received two specific recommendations addressing older persons, from Lebanon (to pursue efforts aimed at protecting older persons) and Singapore (to implement a holistic strategy for their economic empowerment). Both were supported and remain only partially implemented. Thailand also accepted, from its 2nd UPR cycle, the Sri Lanka recommendation to ensure equitable access to health services with special attention to older persons.

Thailand became a "complete-aged society" in 2023, with people aged 60 and above accounting for approximately 20 per cent of the population, roughly 13 to 14 million people, and older adults are projected to comprise almost one third of the population by 2040. Between 2022 and 2026, the government adopted the Third National Plan for Older Persons 2023-2037, completed the phased rollout of the "30 Baht Healthcare Anywhere" scheme (January 2024 to January 2025), announced elderly-focused commitments including nationwide Cheewabhibaln Palliative Care Centres and 15,000 new caregiver positions, and expanded the National Health Security Office (NHSO) long-term care workforce in December 2025. Older persons nevertheless continue to face severe challenges. The August 2023 Ministry of Interior regulation restricting the old-age allowance to persons with no or insufficient income was a regressive step inconsistent with Section 11(11) of the Older Persons Act, and a citizens' draft "People's Pension" bill proposing 3,000 baht per month was rejected on fiscal grounds in April 2025. The July 2025 CEDAW Concluding Observations to Thailand (CEDAW/C/THA/CO/8) reinforce many of the concerns raised in this factsheet, these concerns are compounded by the continued absence of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law prohibiting age discrimination and intersectional discrimination. Although Thailand is developing a national Anti-Discrimination Act, the legislation has not yet been enacted and therefore does not currently provide effective legal protection against age-based discrimination in employment, services, healthcare, public participation, digital access or social protection.

In August 2026, the Department of Older Persons opened public consultation on a draft amendment to the Older Persons Act; as of September 2026, it has not been enacted.



## REALITIES ON THE GROUND

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### Challenge 1: The Thai government still lacks a comprehensive, enforceable and adequately funded rights framework for older persons and has not yet adopted comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation protecting older persons against age-based and intersectional discrimination

The Older Persons Act B.E. 2546 (2003) and Sections 27 and 71 of the 2017 Constitution recognise assistance and protection for older persons. However, rights remain fragmented across policies and agencies, framed as welfare rather than enforceable entitlements. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, Thailand still lacks

#### The August 2023 old-age allowance restriction contradicts Section 11(11) of the Older Persons Act

The Ministry of Interior regulation of 11 August 2023, effective 1 October 2023, added a means test requiring new claimants to have no or insufficient income as determined by the National Commission for the Elderly.



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comprehensive legislation prohibiting direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, multiple discrimination and intersectional discrimination on the basis of age. Current legal protections remain fragmented and are insufficient to address ageism in employment, healthcare, financial services, digital services, social protection and public participation. The pending Anti-Discrimination Act provides an important opportunity to prohibit age discrimination and establish remedies, but as of September 2026 it remains unenacted.

The Third National Plan for Older Persons 2023-2037 is an important policy development but is not a substitute for enforceable rights. The August 2026 public consultation on a draft amendment to the Older Persons Act has not yet been enacted.

Any future Anti-Discrimination Act should explicitly recognise and prohibit discrimination arising from the interaction of age, disability, gender, poverty, occupation and climate vulnerability. Older informal workers should be recognised as a group facing multiple and intersectional forms of disadvantage requiring targeted protection measures.

Thailand's own multi-stakeholder human rights processes have increasingly recognised that older persons should be treated as rights-holders rather than passive recipients of welfare. The 2024 and 2025 National Human Rights Assembly resolutions called for stronger protection against age discrimination, recognition of autonomy and dignity, support for an international convention on the rights of older persons, expansion of income security, and measures enabling older persons to live independently within their communities ("Ageing in Place"). These priorities have not yet been comprehensively reflected in enforceable legislation.

Section 11(11) of the Older Persons Act requires the allowance to be paid monthly and to be universal and equitable. The Council of State defended the restriction as constitutional; opposition parties, civil society and Bangkok Post editorial commentary warned it breaches the Elderly Act and risks excluding around 6 million of Thailand's roughly 11 million older persons.

#### Non-Thai and stateless older persons face documentation, language and residence barriers

The allowance is tied to Thai nationality and district-office registration. NHSO-funded community-based long-term care support is also reserved for Thai nationals. Non-Thai, stateless and Indigenous older persons face documentation, language and residence barriers to healthcare, welfare and remedies. Around 90 percent of Indigenous women live in protected forest areas where land ownership is not legally recognised, compounding vulnerability in later life.

#### Digital-by-default services deepen exclusion

Public services and welfare payments increasingly assume digital access. Older persons without devices, connectivity, accessible design, digital literacy or in-person alternatives are systematically excluded. The share of older persons living alone rose from 8.7 percent in 2014 to 12.0 percent in 2021, compounding isolation and access barriers.

#### Age discrimination remains largely unregulated

Age discrimination remains widespread in recruitment, retention, training and promotion. Older persons also face barriers in access to financial products, digital services, social participation and public decision making. While Thailand is considering a comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Act intended to prohibit discrimination across multiple protected characteristics, age has not yet been effectively protected through a dedicated and enforceable legal framework. The absence of accessible complaints mechanisms, sanctions and remedies limits accountability and redress for age discrimination.

### Challenge 2: The old-age allowance and wider pension system do not secure an adequate standard of living

The tiered old-age allowance of 600 to 1,000 baht per month remains in force despite being far below the poverty line and having no automatic indexation. Repeated legislative attempts to reform the allowance have been rejected on fiscal grounds. Contributory schemes provide unequal coverage, with the greatest gaps facing informal workers, women with interrupted contribution histories, rural workers and older persons without Thai nationality. The July 2026 CARE pension formula reform for the Social Security Fund is contested by labour organisations representing Section 33 workers.

#### The tiered allowance remains 600, 700, 800 and 1,000 baht per month

Payment is set at 600 baht for those aged 60 to 69, 700 baht for those aged 70 to 79, 800 baht for those aged 80 to 89, and 1,000 baht for those aged 90 and above. In February 2021, the Prime Minister rejected five legislative proposals to raise the payout to the poverty line, around 3,000 baht per month.

#### The February 2025 flat 1,000 baht proposal remains unenacted

In February 2025, the government announced a plan to scrap the age-based tiers in favour of a flat 1,000 baht for all eligible seniors. In April 2025, then Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra declined to endorse a citizens' draft "People's Pension" bill proposing 3,000 baht per month, citing a projected cost of over 400 billion baht per year. As of September 2026, neither reform has been enacted.





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#### Many older persons have low savings and debt

**41.4%**

of older persons had less than THB 50,000 in savings in 2023



**~2 million**

older Welfare Card holders were in debt



#### Social Security Fund pensioners overwhelmingly receive below-poverty benefits

Approximately 70 percent of Social Security Fund pensioners receive less than 1,708 baht per month, below the poverty line. About 10,000 retirees die each year before receiving what advocates consider an adequate pension. In July 2026, the Cabinet approved a draft ministerial regulation shifting the Fund's old-age pension formula from a 60-month average to a Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) model. Public consultation ran between 1 and 17 October 2025 on the government's law.go.th platform. The State Enterprise Workers' Relations Confederation has opposed the reform, arguing that workers whose earnings rose substantially near retirement could receive lower pensions under a lifetime-earnings formula.

The consensus reached through successive National Human Rights Assembly processes has recognised adequate income security as a human rights obligation, including through universal and multi-tier pension arrangements sufficient to ensure an adequate standard of living. Despite these recommendations, current benefits remain substantially below the poverty line and significant coverage gaps persist for informal workers.

#### Savings and asset positions remain precarious

Only 54.3 percent of older persons had savings in 2023; 41.4 percent had less than 50,000 baht. Around 5.1 million older persons were registered for the State Welfare Card, including about 2 million with debt.

### Challenge 3: Older persons are discriminated against in employment, and older women are disproportionately affected

Continuing to work can support autonomy, but poverty and weak pensions compel many older persons into low-paid, informal and insecure work. Existing labour protection laws do not adequately cover older workers, and age discrimination restricts recruitment, training, promotion and workplace accommodation. Older women face cumulative and intersectional disadvantaged caused by unpaid care, lower lifetime earnings and pension contribution gaps. The 2025 CEDAW Concluding Observations to Thailand explicitly flag older women alongside rural women, Indigenous women and women with disabilities as facing intersecting discrimination.

Climate change and extreme heat increasingly affect older workers, particularly those in informal employment, agriculture, street vending, waste collection and home-based production. Because many older persons continue working beyond retirement age due to inadequate pensions and income insecurity, climate-related occupational risks have become an emerging human rights concern affecting health, income security, decent work and social protection. Older women in informal work often face compounded risks arising from age, gender, poverty, caregiving responsibilities and exposure to climate-related hazards.

#### Most older workers are in informal and low-paid work

In 2023, approximately 5.11 million older persons, 37.5 percent of the older population, were working. Of these, 86.8 percent worked informally, 57.8 percent were in agriculture or fisheries, and 52.7 percent identified low wages as their main work problem. The average monthly wage of employed older persons was 12,151 baht, but only 5,796 baht in agriculture. In 2021, only 9.9 percent of working older persons were in jobs offering legal protections.

#### Age discrimination restricts access to decent work

Factories are unlikely to hire persons over 50. Age discrimination limits recruitment, training, promotion, workplace accommodation and remedies. Economic-empowerment programmes remain fragmented and often emphasise self-employment without addressing decent work, access to capital, digital skills, markets and freedom from exploitation.

#### Older women bear cumulative disadvantage

Studies indicate women exit the labour market earlier than men, around age 45, owing to care-giver roles. They also outlive their husbands and are more likely to be left alone. About 31 percent of a concern expressly raised by the CEDAW Committee in its July 2025 Concluding Observations. Older women experience intersectional discrimination resulting from the interaction of age, gender, caregiving responsibilities, income insecurity, widowhood, disability, ethnicity and social status. CEDAW General Recommendations Nos. 27 and 28 recognize that older women frequently experience compounded forms of discrimination that require targeted legal and policy responses. (Human Rights of Women: Intersectionality and the CEDAW).



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**Pranom Chartyothin, 72, counts coins with a colleague after selling bus tickets in downtown Bangkok.** Like many older people in Thailand, she continued working beyond retirement age amid limited income security.

SOURCE: Reuters (3 February 2016)

Research among informal workers in Thailand found that extreme heat reduces working hours and earnings, with older workers experiencing the greatest impact. Nearly 80 per cent of surveyed workers reported reducing working hours because of heat exposure, while approximately 75 per cent of home-based workers reported losing at least one full working day each month owing to heat-related illness affecting themselves or family members. Older informal workers often lack access to occupational safety protections, income replacement schemes or social protection mechanisms when heat prevents them from working.

In 2025, the National Human Rights Assembly identified ageism and age-based discrimination in employment as systemic barriers affecting older persons' access to work and income. The Assembly called for stronger legal protections against age discrimination and for policies supporting voluntary extension of working life consistent with individual choice and dignity.



### Challenge 4: Health and long-term care coverage is universal in name but unequal in practice

Thailand's Universal Coverage Scheme is a major achievement, and the phased nationwide rollout of the "30 Baht Healthcare Anywhere" scheme was completed on 1 January 2025 with announced elderly-focused commitments. However, older persons still face gaps in geriatric, rehabilitative, mental-health, palliative and long-term care. Care continues to depend heavily on families, with unpaid care falling disproportionately on women. Private residential care is expanding faster than effective oversight, and the built environment remains largely inaccessible.

#### The "30 Baht Healthcare Anywhere" rollout includes elderly-focused commitments requiring independent evaluation

The phased "30 Baht Healthcare Anywhere" scheme was completed on 1 January 2025, allowing patients to access services with a single national ID card. Announced elderly-focused commitments include nationwide Cheewabhibaln Palliative Care Centres and the creation of 15,000 caregiver positions targeting new graduates and retirees. In December 2025, the NHSO announced a further expansion of the long-term care workforce. Implementation, coverage, quality and inclusion of non-Thai older persons have not been independently evaluated.

#### A large and growing population requires long-term care

In 2023, official screening identified 186,008 home-bound and 43,879 bed-ridden older persons. Chronic illness was the most common health issue; 466,622 screened older persons were at risk of falls, and 213,022 had cognitive or memory impairment. Community-based long-term care has expanded, but trained personnel, respite care, assistive devices, home adaptation, rehabilitation and dementia services remain uneven, especially in rural areas.

#### Recent regional policy dialogue reflected in the Bangkok

Recommendations highlights the need to move beyond fragmented health services towards integrated community-led care and long-term care systems that connect healthcare, rehabilitation, social care, caregiver support and ageing-in-place approaches. The Recommendations also stress sustainable financing, workforce development, quality standards and safeguards for both care recipients and caregivers.

#### Care burden is concentrated on families and women

In 2023, 59.9 percent of identified caregivers were children of the older person. Unpaid care falls disproportionately on women and is strained by migration, smaller families and rising dependency ratios. Private-sector residential care lacks consistent registration, staffing, quality, safeguarding and complaint mechanisms.



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**An older passenger is carried across railway tracks by staff to board a train.**

Inaccessible transport infrastructure continues to restrict safe and independent mobility for older persons in Thailand.

**SOURCE:** Bangkok Post (16 January 2020)

#### The public environment is not age-friendly

Particularly in rural areas, access to public services is hampered by inaccessible public transportation. In Bangkok, sidewalks remain narrow, uneven and often crossed by stair-only overpasses. Only some BTS stations have lifts, ramps and escalators, restricting access for older persons and wheelchair users.

Heat-related mortality in Thailand has increased significantly in recent years. Older persons are particularly vulnerable because of declining physiological resilience, chronic illnesses and reliance on heat-exposed occupations such as agriculture, street vending, waste collection and home-based production. Home-based workers reported high rates of heat-related illness, including dizziness, fever, excessive sweating and vomiting, while many also reported increased stress, anxiety and mental-health impacts.

Emerging international and regional guidance increasingly recognises climate resilience as an ageing issue. Older persons, especially those living alone, in poverty, with disabilities, or engaged in heat-exposed work, face heightened risks from extreme heat, floods, disasters and disruptions to care systems.

### Challenge 5: Older persons face violence, neglect and financial exploitation, including a mass wave of digital fraud

Thailand has no dedicated legislation preventing violence, neglect or financial abuse against older persons, despite Section 71 of the 2017 Constitution obliging the State to assist and protect them. The March 2025 Cabinet-approved draft amendment to the Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act B.E. 2550 (2007), and the August 2026 Cabinet-backed further overhaul, would raise penalties and make domestic violence a non-compoundable offence, but neither has been enacted. Digital and financial exploitation has become a mass phenomenon, and fragmented referral systems limit prevention, protection and remedy.

#### Older persons are most at risk of abuse from family members

A study cited in the 2021 factsheet found an alarming increase in rape and sexual harassment of older women, often perpetrated by family members under the influence of alcohol. Under-reporting is severe because of dependency, family pressure, fear of retaliation, inaccessible reporting channels, stigma and limited awareness of rights and services. The 2025 CEDAW Concluding Observations to Thailand raised concerns about the lack of effective investigation and enforcement under the 2007 Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act and about reliance on family reconciliation procedures that undermine survivors' access to justice and safety.

#### Domestic violence law reforms are pending

On 18 March 2025, the Cabinet approved a Ministry of Social Development and Human Security draft amendment to the 2007 Act, raising fines from 6,000 to 60,000 baht and broadening the definition of domestic violence to cover sexual harassment and reputational harm. In August 2026, the Cabinet backed a further overhaul that would make domestic violence a non-compoundable offence, broaden the definition of family member, and, in the words of Minister of Social Development and Human Security Nikorn Soemklang, "help curb crime and the abandonment of children, people with disabilities and older people." As of September 2026, the amendments had not been enacted.

#### Digital and financial fraud has become a mass threat to older persons

According to the Royal Thai Police Cyber Crime Investigation Bureau, older persons aged 60 and above lost 3.15 billion baht to call-centre scams over eight months in 2025-2026. Thailand as a whole lost approximately 60 billion baht to online fraud in 2024, with over 400,000 cases reported in the first quarter of 2024 alone. Between March 2022 and June 2024, over 575,000 online fraud cases were reported nationally, with total damages exceeding 65 billion baht.





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#### Referral, remedy and safeguarding systems are fragmented

Fragmented referral systems and limited specialist support impede prevention, emergency protection, investigation, prosecution, recovery of assets, compensation and psychosocial assistance. Older persons with dementia or disabilities may be denied legal capacity or excluded from decisions without adequate safeguards, supported decision-making or independent advocacy.



## RECOMMENDATIONS



1.

### On Challenge 1: The Thai government still lacks a comprehensive, enforceable and adequately funded rights framework for older persons

1.1

Support the development of a legally binding international convention on the rights of older persons and align domestic legislation, policies and monitoring frameworks with emerging international standards concerning age discrimination, autonomy, independent living, adequate income security, participation and access to care.

1.2

Enact a comprehensive, rights-based amendment to the Older Persons Act B.E. 2546 (2003), developed through accessible consultation with diverse older persons, that prohibits direct, indirect, multiple and intersectional age discrimination and establishes enforceable rights, independent monitoring, complaints procedures, remedies and sanctions, in line with CESCR General Comment No. 6, the UN Principles for Older Persons and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

1.3

Adopt measurable, time-bound and disaggregated indicators for the Third National Plan for Older Persons 2023-2037, with annual public reporting and the meaningful participation of older persons and civil society, including women, persons with disabilities, and rural, ethnic, migrant, Indigenous and stateless older persons.

1.4

Guarantee accessible in-person, telephone and assisted alternatives to every digital public service and benefit, and remove discriminatory nationality and documentation barriers to essential healthcare, care, protection and minimum-income support, including under NHSO-funded long-term care programmes currently restricted to Thai nationals.

1.5

Enact and operationalise a comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Act that explicitly prohibits direct, indirect, multiple and intersectional discrimination, including discrimination based on age, sex, disability, ethnicity, Indigenous status, nationality, migration status and socioeconomic status, establishes independent complaint mechanisms and effective remedies, and guarantees meaningful participation of affected groups in monitoring and implementation



## RECOMMENDATIONS



### 2. On Challenge 2: The old-age allowance and wider pension system do not secure an adequate standard of living

2.1

Repeal the August 2023 Ministry of Interior regulation that introduced means-testing of the old-age allowance, and align implementation with Section 11(11) of the Older Persons Act, which requires the allowance to be universal and equitable.

2.2

Restore and guarantee a universal, non-contributory old-age allowance for all older persons habitually residing in Thailand, without discriminatory nationality or documentation barriers, progressively raise it to at least the national poverty line, and automatically index it to living costs.

2.3

Ensure the CARE formula reform of the Social Security Fund pension is finalised only after transparent, evidence-based consultation with insured workers and pensioners, protects workers whose earnings rose substantially near retirement, and is complemented by an integrated, transparent multi-pillar system covering informal workers, women with interrupted contribution histories and older persons without Thai nationality.

2.4

Expand social protection systems to provide income replacement and emergency support for older informal workers affected by extreme heat, climate-related disasters and environmental shocks, including through adaptation of Social Security Fund Section 40 benefits, climate-responsive cash transfers, disaster assistance and other mechanisms that prevent loss of income during periods when working conditions become unsafe.



### 3. On Challenge 3: Older persons are discriminated against in employment, and older women are disproportionately affected

3.1

Amend and enforce labour and equality laws to prohibit age discrimination across recruitment, employment, training, promotion and termination, and require reasonable workplace accommodation and effective remedies, in line with CESCR General Comment No. 6 and Article 7 of the ICESCR. And ensure the pending Anti-Discrimination Act explicitly prohibits direct, indirect, multiple and intersectional age discrimination across recruitment, employment, training, promotion, remuneration and termination, provides accessible complaints mechanisms and effective remedies, and requires reasonable accommodation for older workers.

3.2

Extend labour inspection, occupational safety, minimum-wage protection and social security to older informal and agricultural workers, while expanding voluntary, accessible employment and skills programmes that do not make benefits conditional on work.

3.3

Ensure the equal right of women to social security in old age and their participation in policy design, so that gender-specific needs arising from unpaid care, contribution gaps and widowhood are addressed, in line with the 2025 CEDAW Concluding Observations to Thailand.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

3.4

Develop and implement age-inclusive climate adaptation measures for workers, including heat-health action plans, accessible early-warning systems, shaded workspaces, cooling facilities, drinking-water access, climate-resilient livelihoods and occupational safety standards covering workers in informal employment, agriculture, home-based work, waste collection and street vending



### 4. On Challenge 4: Health and long-term care coverage is universal in name but unequal in practice

4.1

Independently evaluate the implementation of the "30 Baht Healthcare Anywhere" scheme, the Cheewabhibaln Palliative Care Centres and the 15,000 caregiver positions, disaggregate results by age, sex, disability, nationality, ethnicity and geography, and publish annual reports with civil society participation.

4.2

Guarantee universal access to integrated, person-centred health and long-term care, including home and community care, rehabilitation, assistive technology, dementia, mental-health and palliative services, with priority investment in rural and underserved areas, and adopt enforceable national quality and safeguarding standards for all public and private care services.

4.3

Invest in age-friendly and universal design in urban and rural planning, infrastructure and public transport, in line with the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing and the 1991 UN Principles for Older Persons.

4.4

Recognise extreme heat and climate-related hazards as public-health risks affecting older persons and ensure universal access to heat-related emergency care, heat-health surveillance, community outreach, home-based support and climate-resilient health services, with particular attention to older persons living alone, older women, persons with disabilities and older informal workers



### 5. On Challenge 5: Older persons face violence, neglect and financial exploitation, including a mass wave of digital fraud

5.1

Enact the pending amendment to the Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act B.E. 2550 (2007) as a non-compoundable, survivor-centered offense, ensure it explicitly covers older persons and prohibits family reconciliation, and pair it with a national elder-abuse prevention and response system with a clear legal definition, mandatory safeguarding standards, accessible 24-hour reporting, trained multidisciplinary teams, emergency accommodation, legal aid, psychosocial support, asset recovery and disaggregated public data, in line with the 2025 CEDAW Concluding Observations.

5.2

Require banks, telecommunications providers and digital platforms to implement age-inclusive fraud prevention, rapid transaction holds and accessible complaint and reimbursement procedures, and ensure digital-literacy programmes do not shift responsibility onto victims.

5.3

Empower older persons to access information and justice in line with Article 8 of the UDHR and Articles 2 and 14 of the ICCPR, including through accessible legal aid, interpretation and supported decision-making frameworks that comply with the CRPD.