



RAISING THE LANTERN'S WICK HIGH

A Survey of Myanmar's
Socioeconomic Crisis and Public Resilience

November 2025





PROMOTING LEADERSHIP AND
STRENGTHENING CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Institute for Strategy and Policy – Myanmar

Established in 2016.

"Raising the Lantern's Wick High": A Survey of Myanmar's Socioeconomic Crisis and Public Resilience was published on November 21, 2025, as a translation of the original Burmese version published on November 11, 2025. It is a part of research conducted by the ISP-Myanmar's Socioeconomic Studies. The title, "Raising the Lantern's Wick High," is taken from a cassette story title by late novelist Naing Win Swe, an appreciation of the poem *"The Path of the Son's Return"* by Maung Hla Win (Myingyan).



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Summary of Findings

To assess how conflict-related trade disruptions have affected the public, ISP-Myanmar conducted a nation wide survey in late September 2025. A total of **1,015 respondents** from 85 townships across all 15 regions and states of Myanmar, including the Naypyitaw Council Territory, participated in the study¹.

Survey findings reveal that trade disruptions have caused shortages of daily consumer goods and basic medicines, and prices for these goods have increased by one and a half to twice, or even three or four times, in some areas. The healthcare sector has been hit hard, particularly due to medicine shortages, price surges, and difficult access to healthcare facilities. Livelihoods have also deteriorated, forcing many to switch jobs or struggle with more restricted income. To cope, people have turned inward—cutting back on household budgets, consumption, and relying on support from local charity groups and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to get by.

¹ See the [Survey Methodology](#) for more detail.

The report finds that the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC)'s mismanaged economic policies and administration have upended much of the country's economic system. Survey results also suggest that the SSPC's administrative apparatus has limited capacity to provide relief and promote wellbeing of the citizens. Similarly, the ability of Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs), local defense forces (PDFs and LPDFs), and the National Unity Government (NUG) to offer meaningful assistance remains severely limited as alternative service providers.

Respondents felt that they do not have enough for their needs compared to last year citing rising prices and poor job prospects. As conditions continue to worsen, the public's foremost demands are for employment and personal security. When asked how they viewed current conditions, just over half of respondents said they "can continue to struggle on," while a significant portion also described the situation as "hopeless." Only a small minority believed conditions "will get better."

These findings are preliminary rather than conclusive, underscoring the need for more comprehensive socioeconomic research. Some of the results were also discussed in the October 18, 2025, episode of *30 Minutes with the ISP*, titled "The Spirit Is Willing, but the Flesh Is Weak." The full discussion, with English subtitles, is available on ISP-Myanmar's website and YouTube channel.

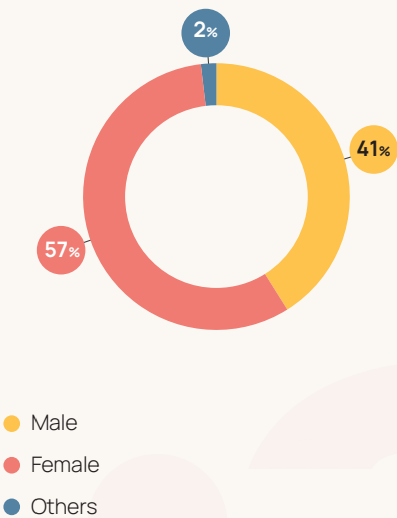


Respondent Demographics

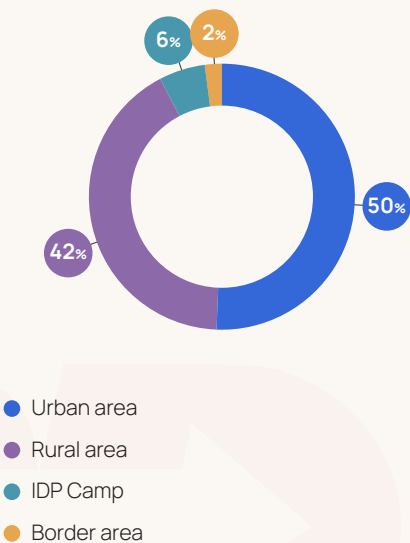
A total of **1,015 respondents** participated in the survey. **57 percent** were female (**579 respondents**), followed by **41 percent** male (**417 respondents**), and **two percent** others (**19 respondents**). The survey covered a mix of locations: urban areas, rural areas, border areas, and IDP (Internally Displaced Person) camps. Participants were 18 years of age and older, with the 26–40 age group the largest, followed by those aged 41–60. In terms of monthly household income, **24 percent (242 respondents)** reported earning between 400,000 and 600,000 MMK, **20 percent (208 respondents)** between 200,000 and 400,000 MMK, and **18 percent (186 respondents)** over 1 million MMK². The survey findings are organized into five sections.

² At the time of Burmese publication on November 11, 2025, the average exchange rate was reported as 1 USD = 4,020 MMK, according to Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) TV News.

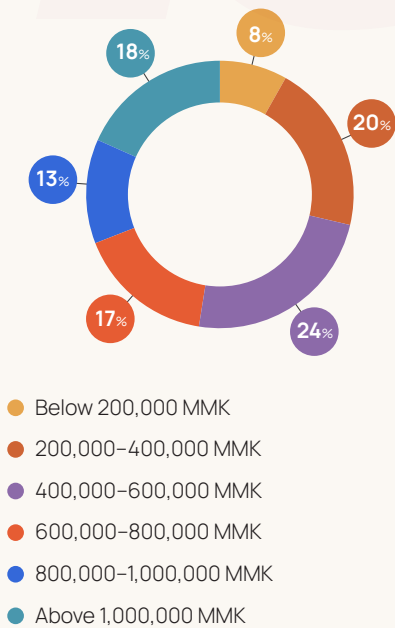
■ Respondents



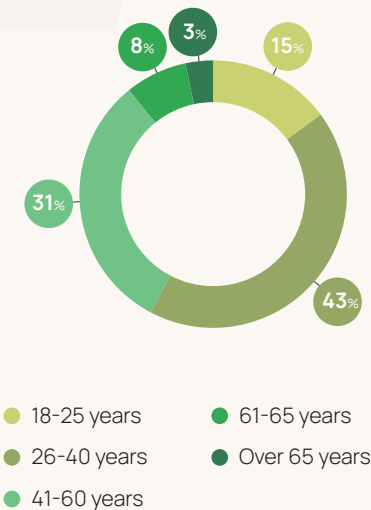
■ Respondents by Location



■ Monthly Household Income

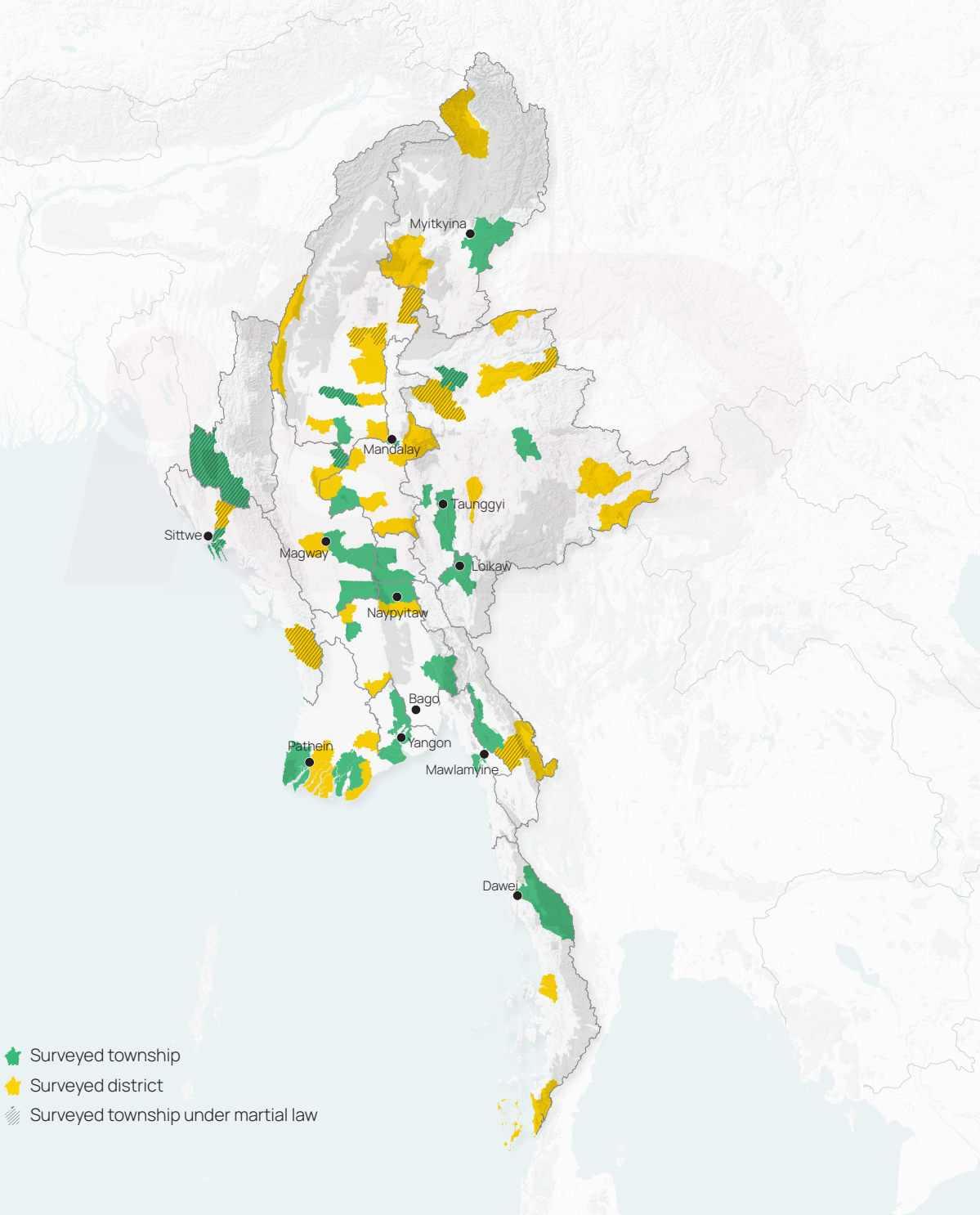


■ Age Group



■ **Surveyed Townships**

In late September 2025, ISP-Myanmar conducted a nationwide survey to assess how conflict-related trade disruptions have affected the public. Among the **85 townships** surveyed, **32** were district townships, and **11** were designated under the regime's martial law.



a

Commodity Shortages and Price Surge

During the 60 days preceding September 23, 2025, a vast majority of respondents—**85 percent (863 respondents)**—reported shortages of imported goods caused by trade blockages (see Figure 1)³.

The most common shortages were everyday consumer goods. Medicine shortages were the second most common, followed by dry food, basic food items and personal hygiene products. **66 percent (674 respondents)** reported shortages of consumer goods, while **61 percent (620 respondents)** cited shortages of basic medicines. Only **three percent (36 respondents)** said they had experienced no shortages (see Figure 2).

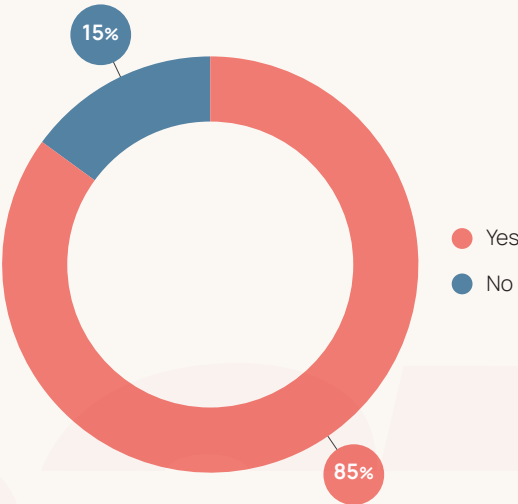
³ The ISP-Myanmar's socioeconomic survey was conducted in the last week of September 2025, enquiring into the implications of trade disruptions by extensive conflict, China's five-cut blockade intervened to get a successful ceasefire in Northern Shan State, and the junta's intentional shutdown order of border trade with Thailand on August 24, 2025. The regime claimed its objective was to curb illegal trade, to cut off revenue for ethnic armed organizations and to regulate foreign-currency exchange so that the Myanmar Kyat appreciates. The survey then explores the experiences of the public within the 60 days preceding September 23.

Rising prices compounded these problems; **48 percent (486 respondents)** said prices had increased by 1.5 times, while **40 percent (403 respondents)** said prices had doubled. Another **seven percent (68 respondents)** and **two percent (22 respondents)**, respectively, reported that prices had risen threefold and fourfold. Only **three percent (36 respondents)** said they had seen no price increase at all (see Figure 3).

Among the **979 respondents** who answered that prices had increased, when they were asked which goods had become more expensive, **79 percent (over 770 respondents)** pointed to daily consumer items and basic foodstuffs while **73 percent (710 respondents)** to basic medicines (see Figure 4). Unsurprisingly, **92 percent (938 respondents)** said these developments had directly affected their families and themselves, while **eight percent (77 respondents)** reported no impact (see Figure 5).

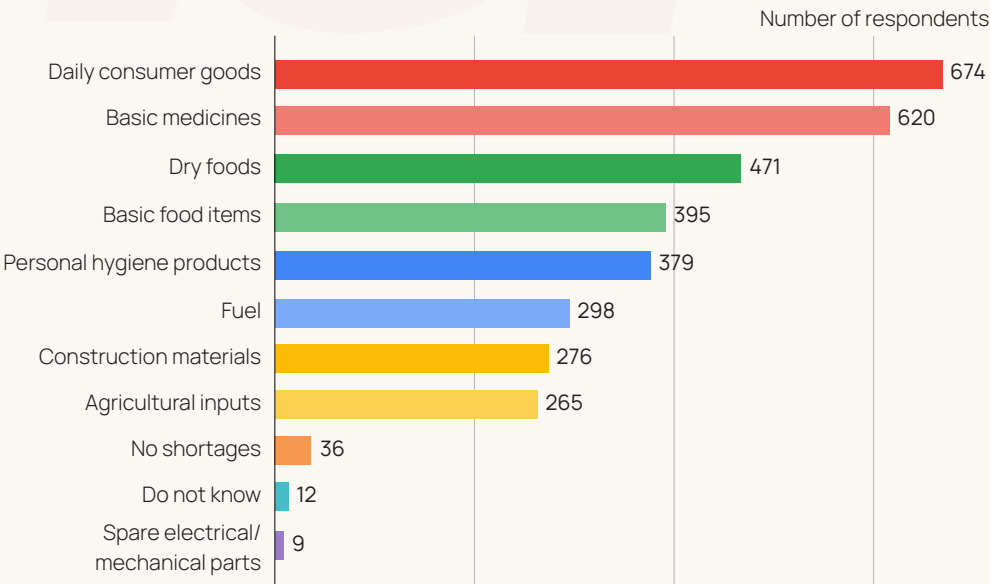
Market conditions have also deteriorated. **Half of the respondents (510 people)** said it had become slightly harder to purchase goods for their households over the past 60 days, and **25 percent (250 respondents)** said conditions had “noticeably worsened.” A further **23 percent (235 respondents)** reported no change, while **1.8 percent (18 respondents)** said the situation had improved, and only **0.2 percent (two respondents)** found that conditions were notably improved (see Figure 6).

■ **Figure 1:** Have there been any shortages of imported goods?



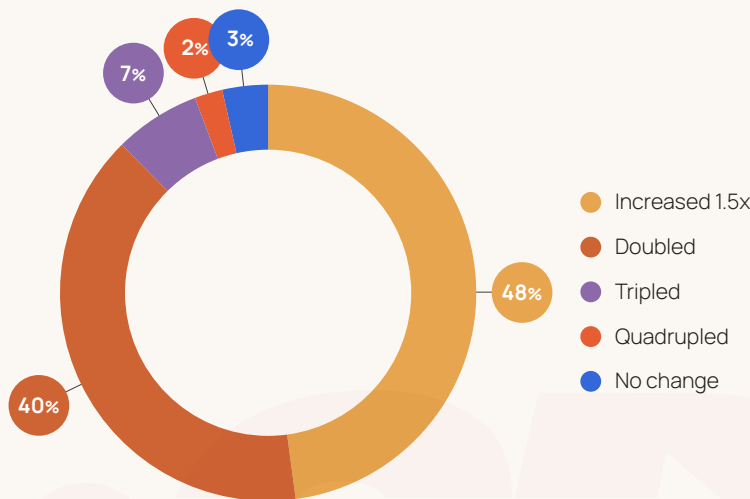
Note: The data reflect conditions during the 60 days leading up to September 23, 2025.

■ **Figure 2:** Which imported goods are currently in short supply in your area?



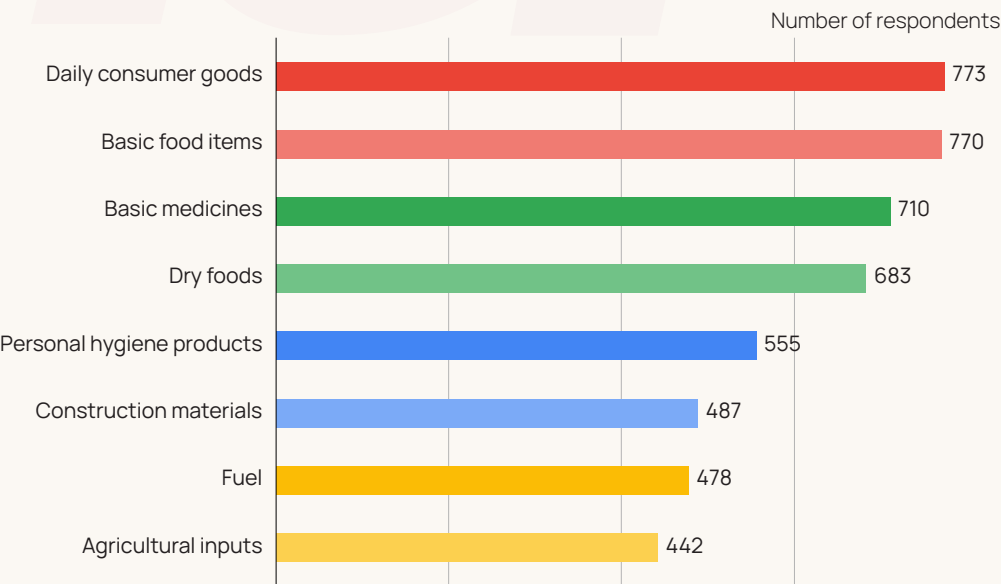
Note: This question allows multiple selections.

Figure 3: Have the prices increased?



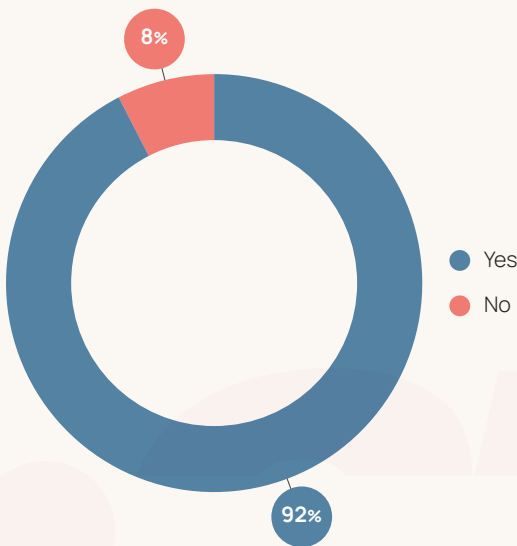
Note: The data reflect conditions during the 60 days leading up to September 23, 2025.

Figure 4: Which goods have become more expensive?



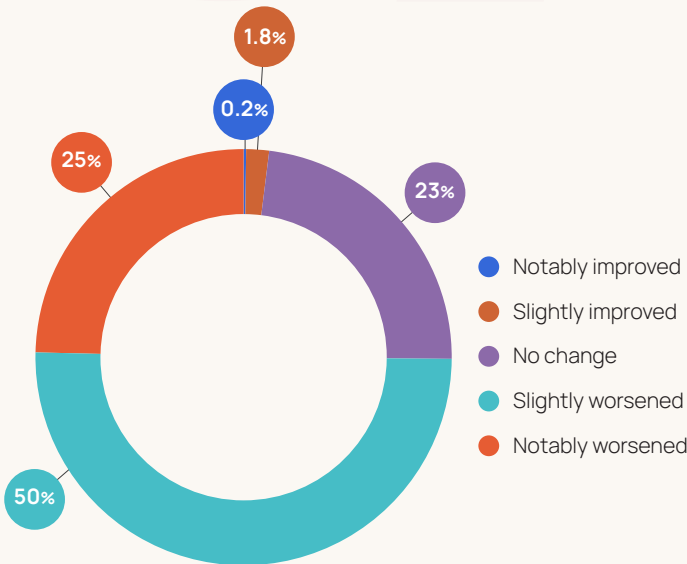
Note: This question allows multiple selections.

■ **Figure 5:** Has your household been impacted by goods shortages and rising prices?



Note: The data reflect conditions during the 60 days leading up to September 23, 2025.

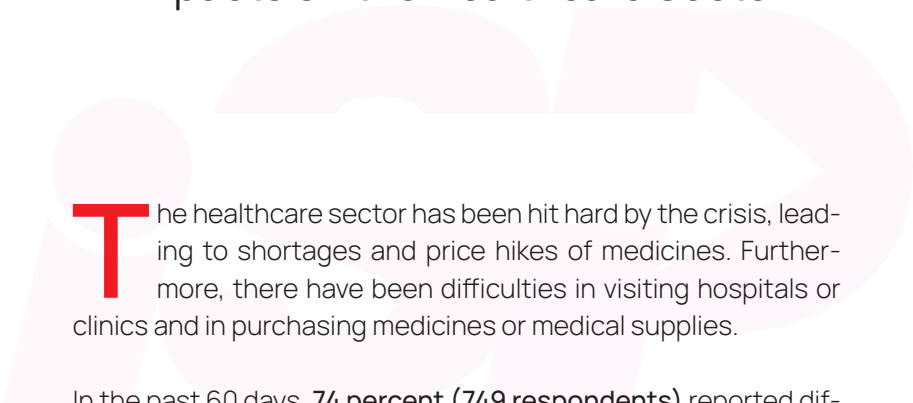
■ **Figure 6:** How available are basic goods for you to purchase for your family?



Note: The data reflect conditions during the 60 days leading up to September 23, 2025.

b

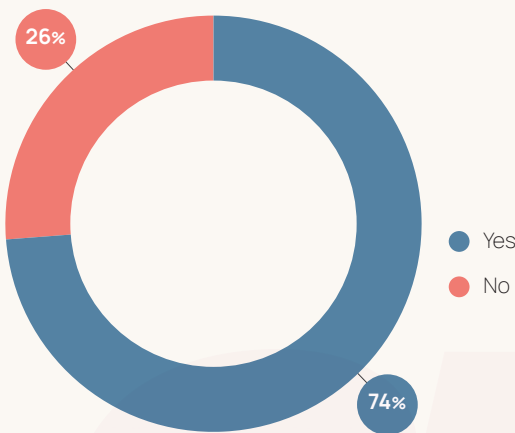
Impacts on the Healthcare Sector



The healthcare sector has been hit hard by the crisis, leading to shortages and price hikes of medicines. Furthermore, there have been difficulties in visiting hospitals or clinics and in purchasing medicines or medical supplies.

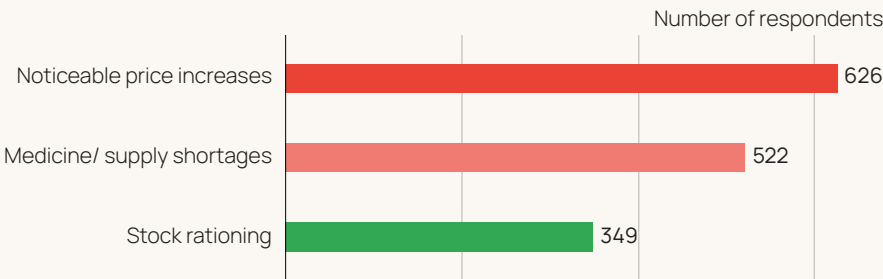
In the past 60 days, **74 percent (749 respondents)** reported difficulties in purchasing medicines or medical supplies (see Figure 7), primarily due to sharp price increases (see Figure 8). While **60 percent (606 respondents)** said they could still reach hospitals or clinics without major difficulty, **27 percent (270 respondents)** found it hard to do so, **10 percent (107 respondents)** could only go occasionally, and **three percent (32 respondents)** said they could not go at all (see Figure 9).

■ **Figure 7:** Have you experienced any difficulties purchasing medicines or medical supplies?



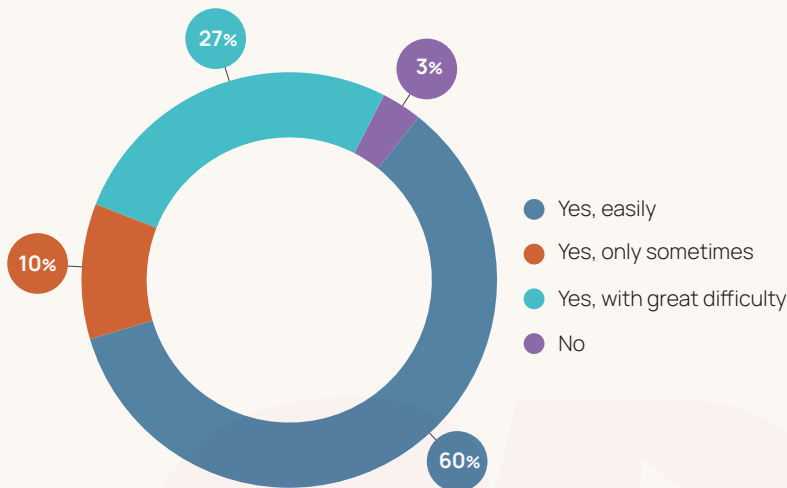
Note: The data reflect conditions during the 60 days leading up to September 23, 2025.

■ **Figure 8:** What are the main difficulties in purchasing medicines or medical supplies?



Note: This question allows multiple selections.

■ Figure 9: Are you able to access hospitals or clinics?



Note: The data reflect conditions during the 60 days leading up to September 23, 2025.

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The full event discussing the findings of this survey
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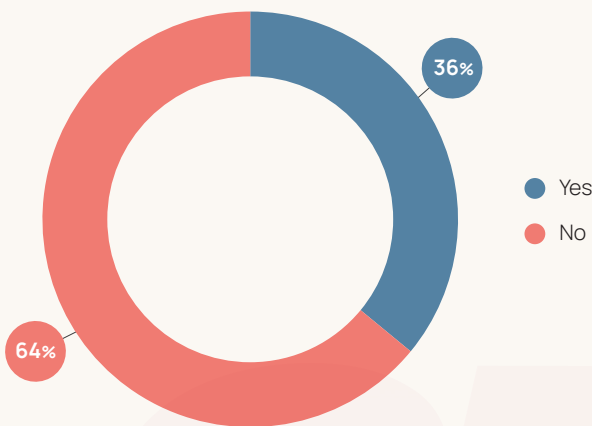


Impacts on Livelihoods

The conflict-driven disruptions along trade routes have also affected the livelihoods of the respondents and their households. When asked whether there had been changes to their job or livelihood within 60 days before September 23, 2025, **36 percent (365 respondents)** reported that they or their family members had experienced such a change, while the other **64 percent (650 respondents)** had not (see Figure 10).

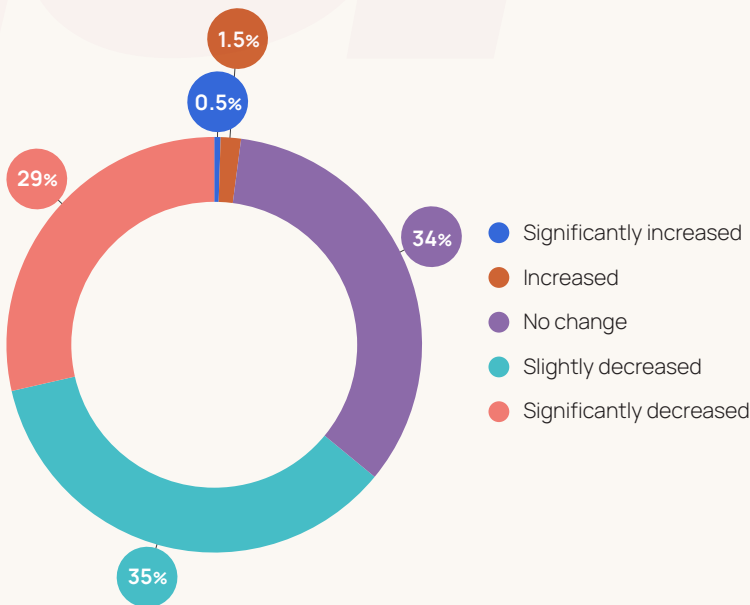
When asked whether their income had changed, **34 percent (344 respondents)** reported no change. Meanwhile, **35 percent (360 respondents)** reported a slight decrease, and **29 percent (290 respondents)** reported a significant decrease. In contrast, a very small percentage of respondents experienced an income increase: only **1.5 percent (16 respondents)** saw a raise, and an even smaller **0.5 percent (five respondents)** reported a significant increase (see Figure 11).

■ Figure 10: Have you had to change your job or livelihood?



Note: The data reflect conditions during the 60 days leading up to September 23, 2025.

■ Figure 11: Has there been a change in your income?



Note: The data reflect conditions during the 60 days leading up to September 23, 2025.

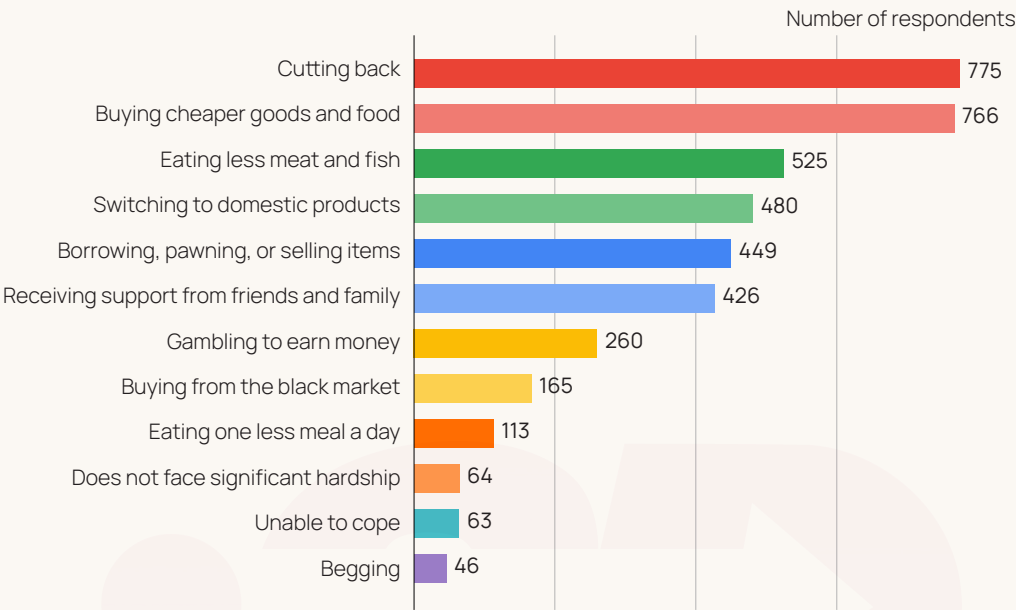


Daily Struggles and Coping Mechanisms

The combination of a declining economy and ongoing armed conflicts has exacerbated the population's socio-economic crisis. In response to the crisis—characterized by insufficient income, commodity shortages, and price hikes—respondents primarily adopted some coping strategies: **76 percent (775 respondents)** reported cutting back, and a very similar **75 percent (766 respondents)** stated they only purchase cheaper goods and food. More than half — **52 percent (525 respondents)** — are also reducing their meat and fish consumption. Other coping strategies include borrowing money, pawning possessions, and eating one less meal a day (see Figure 12).

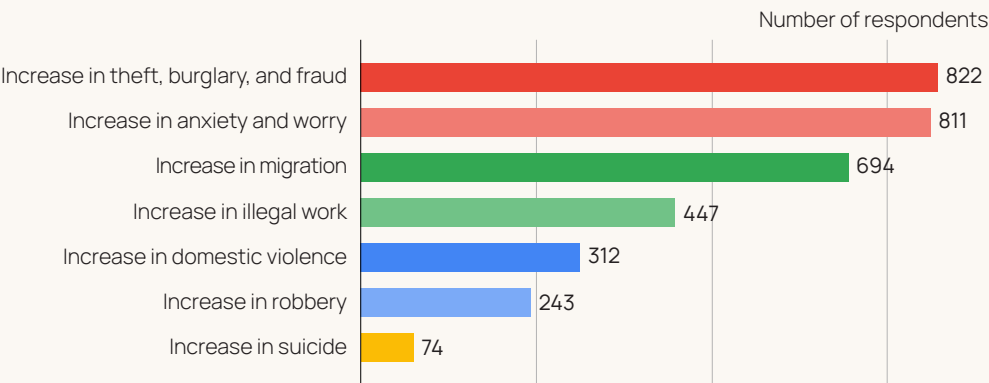
Inquiring into the social impact of the economic crisis, the survey found that **81 percent (822 respondents)** reported a widespread increase in theft, burglary, and fraud, alongside a pervasive rise in anxiety and worry by **80 percent (811 respondents)**. The crisis has spurred an increase in migration, reported by **68 percent (694 respondents)**, and a rise in people engaging in illegal work, reported by **44 percent (447 respondents)**. Alarming, a rise in domestic violence was reported by **31 percent (312 respondents)**; an increase in robbery was observed by **24 percent (243 respondents)**; and, most distressingly, an increase in suicide within the community was reported by **seven percent (74 individuals)** (see Figure 13).

■ Figure 12: How are you and your household coping with current conditions?



Note: This question allows multiple selections.

■ Figure 13: What social impacts have you observed as a result of the economic crisis?




Note: This question allows multiple selections.



Capacity for Support and Hope

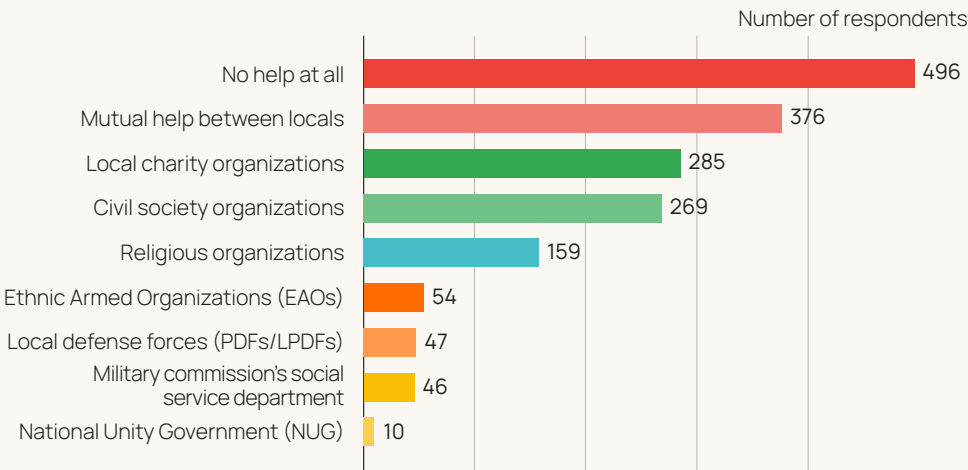
When asked who was providing assistance amid these hardships, nearly half of the respondents—**49 percent (496 people)**—gave a stark answer: “no help at all.” The next most common response is the “mutual help between locals”, answered by **37 percent (376 respondents)**. Moreover, **28 percent (285 respondents)** and **26 percent (269 respondents)** reported the support of local charity groups and civil society organizations, respectively. In sharp contrast, institutional help was reported as minimal. The SSPC’s administrative capacity to provide support is seen as minimal, while that of EAOs, local defense forces (PDFs and LPDFs), and the NUG remains limited (see Figure 14).

Inquiring the question of whether the respondent and the family feel a sense of financial security in 2025 compared to 2024, a striking majority —**89 percent (899 respondents)** —said they do not (see Figure 15). When asked to explain their responses, the respondents cited price increases and an unstable economy (see Figure 16). When asked about the most urgent need amid these immediate pressures, the top answer was job 

- ▶ opportunities, with **80 percent (817 respondents)**. The second most critical need, indicated by **64 percent (647 respondents)**, was security, followed by healthcare services as the third pressing need, at **57 percent (574 respondents)**. Over half (**more than 500 respondents**) cited food and transportation as an urgent need. Education was cited by the relatively smallest proportion of respondents, at **35 percent (355 respondents)** (see Figure 17).

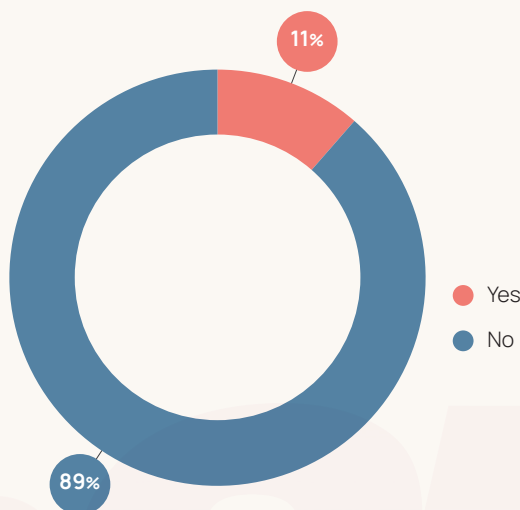
At the end of the survey, when summarizing their views about the ongoing situations, **53 percent (539 respondents)** reported that they can continue to struggle on. However, **42 percent (424 respondents)** believe the situation is hopeless, while only **five percent (52 respondents)** expressed optimism, saying things will get better (see Figure 18).

■ **Figure 14: Who is mainly providing help?**



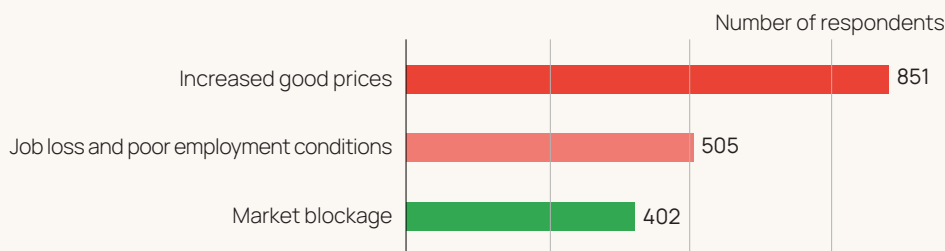
Note: This question allows multiple selections.

■ **Figure 15:** Compared to last year, do you feel that your family has enough resources to meet daily needs?



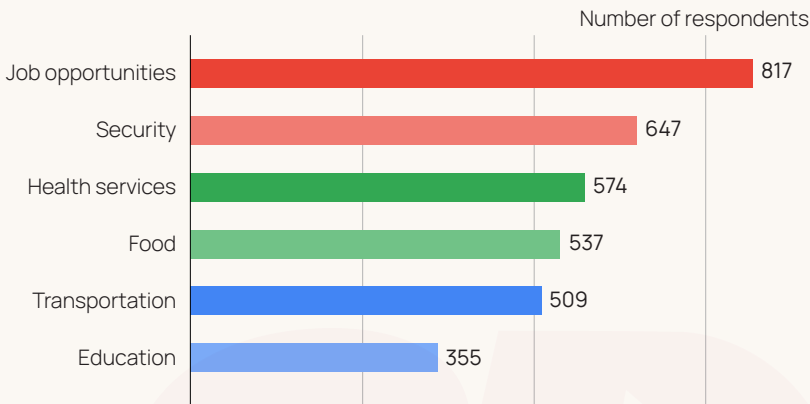
Note: The data reflect conditions during the 60 days leading up to September 23, 2025.

■ **Figure 16:** Why do you feel that your family does not meet daily needs?



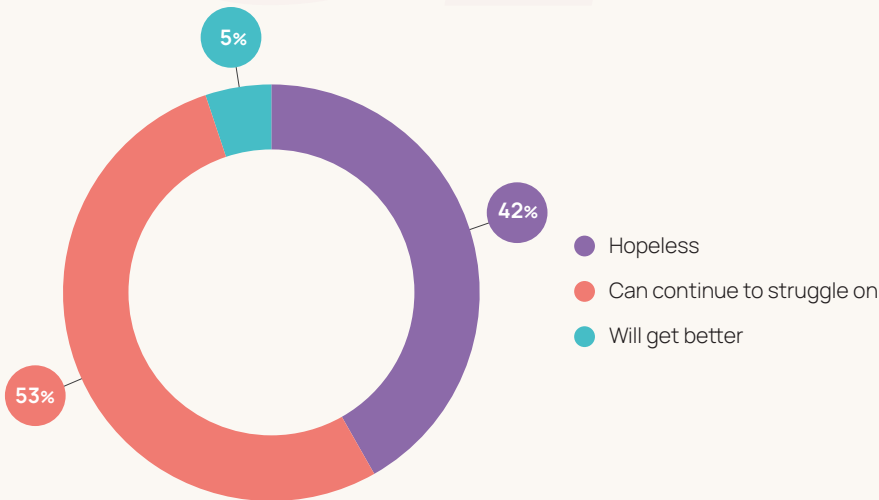
Note: This question allows multiple selections.

■ **Figure 17:** What is the most urgent need amid widespread economic hardship?



Note: This question allows multiple selections.

■ **Figure 18:** How do you view the current situation today?



Note: The data reflect conditions during the 60 days leading up to September 23, 2025.



Survey Methodology

This brief survey was conducted to examine the impact of conflict-related trade blockades on the public. A total of **1,015 respondents** from 85 townships across all 15 regions and states of Myanmar, including the Naypyitaw Council Territory, participated in the study.

A quantitative approach was used in the data-collection. A sampling frame was created for a sample population targeting 1,020 people across 85 townships (12 locals per township). Among these townships, 32 district-level townships and 11 townships under martial law were included, but due to communication difficulties, only 1,015 responses were received.

Purposive sampling was employed, with each township's sample required to meet four criteria: (1) respondents must be local residents of the township, (2) include at least five women, (3) must reside in one of the area types: urban, rural, border, and IDP camp residents, and (4) be aged 18 or older. Data was collected via online surveys, phone calls, and in-person interviews from September 23-28, 2025.

The survey was conducted by the respective research team leaders in accordance with the ISP-Myanmar’s security protocols and ethical guidelines. During the interview, respondents were informed and consented to the secure collection of their personal information and responses in accordance with the ISP-Myanmar’s data security policies. Upon completion of the survey, the data collector stores the collected data in accordance with ISP-Myanmar’s established protocols. ■

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